



## **TENDER BRIEF FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISOR August – September 2019**

### **Excavation of barrow cemetery for - TARRADALE THROUGH TIME: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE HIGHLANDS**

The North of Scotland Archaeological Society (NOSAS) has funding until 31 March 2020 to undertake a programme of community archaeology in the Tarradale area near Muir of Ord, Ross-shire. The project aims to enable participants of all abilities to achieve a working knowledge and understanding of best practice and acquire transferrable skills in excavation techniques, site recording techniques, handling of artefacts and environmental remains, and post-excavation analysis and interpretation contributing to report writing.

Preliminary investigation, mainly through field walking, has indicated that the area has supported settlement and land exploitation from the Mesolithic period to the present based on the rich estuarine and terrestrial resources of the area. Much of this evidence comes from artefactual and environmental remains in the plough soil as well as from aerial photography and geophysical survey. One of the overall aims of the project is to ascertain through excavation, and other techniques, the degree of survival of archaeological features below the plough soil and to determine the nature, function, character and date of the surviving features. The whole project is scheduled to be completed by May 2020 and is designed as a number of phases with two excavations already completed in 2017, two completed in 2018, and one scheduled for autumn 2019 (the subject of this tender brief). So far the project has been very successful with significant archaeological discoveries having been made. Further information can be found on the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME website and blog

#### **Archaeological Supervisor**

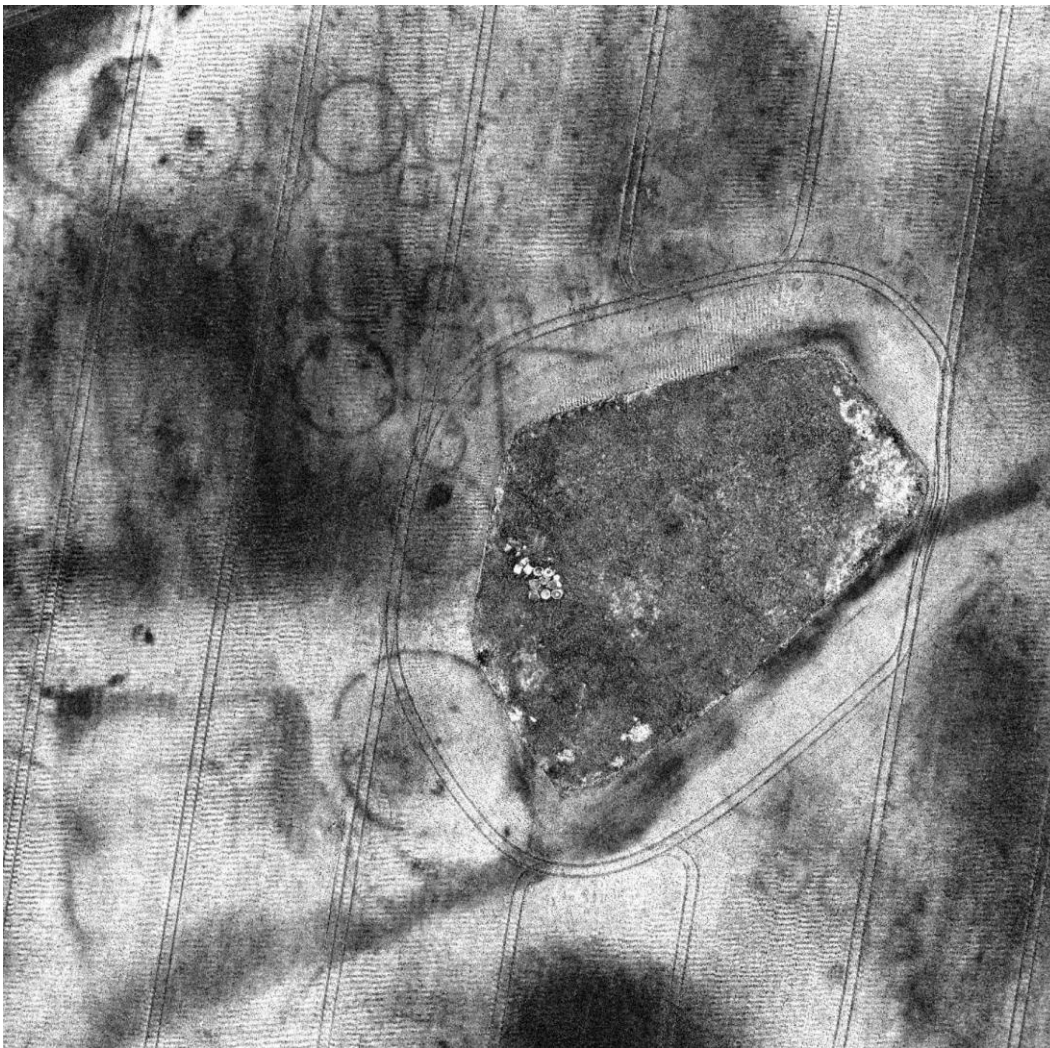
The purpose of this tender brief is to invite applications from suitably qualified archaeologists to lead the last of our excavation-based sub-projects, ie **Tarradale barrow cemetery**. The preliminary timescale for this is excavation from 31 August to 15 September 2019, followed by supervision of initial post-excavation processing, followed by the submission of a DSR for the excavations by the end of December 2019. Although 31 August to 15 September 2019 is the anticipated date for the excavations the actual dates will depend on farming activity, and when the summer crops have been harvested (see below).

The field we propose excavating in 2019 is a field immediately west of Tarradale House and lying at the north-east corner of grid square NH 5448 and including an area of rough land (which is presumed to be an unploughed but probably not undamaged part of the barrow cemetery) centred on grid reference NH 5490 4885. Apart from the unploughed part of the barrow cemetery the rest of field is under annual cultivation and in 2019 it is anticipated that there will be a crop of spring barley to be harvested in August. Sometimes a second crop of stubble turnips is sown immediately after harvesting barley but although the farmer considers that is unlikely to be the case in 2019, there is no guarantee that will not happen. In 2017 excavation took place in a field under a crop of stubble turnips and TARRADALE THROUGH TIME compensated the farmer for the loss of the small area of turnips. If it were necessary to excavate while a crop is growing in 2019, we would encourage the archaeological supervisor to ensure that the minimum area necessary for excavation was damaged. The proposed excavation site is not a scheduled monument and no scheduled monument consent is thus required. However Historic Environment Scotland is aware of our interest in the barrow cemetery site. The landowner is the Burton Property Trust and the land is leased to the Fraser family of Tore Mains farm who cultivate the land assiduously. The Fraser family have been very accommodating of the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME project and we request that any contact with the farmers must be done through the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team in the first instance.

### **Tarradale barrow cemetery**

Information about the barrow cemetery site is available from Canmore (site reference numbers 12684 and 12682). Both references contain essentially the same information but some of the information is now outdated. The “bivallate enclosure” is likely to be a later feature enclosing a game covert and it is unlikely to be the site of Tarradale Castle. The information on Canmore written by Barri Jones about his 1990s excavations at a different site in the same field, which he thought was Roman, are not relevant to this project and no longer considered to be correct (for the latest view see “Survey and excavation at Tarradale, Highland” by Richard Gregory, *PSAS*, 131, 2001). The most useful information is probably the aerial photographs on Canmore (see black and white photograph below), including a recent drone photograph of the whole field which can be found at the end of entry 12684 under ‘My Canmore Image Contributions’. Information on the barrow cemetery can also be found on Highland Historic Environmental Record (HER) under reference numbers MHG9097 and MHG40177.

What appear to be barrows can clearly be seen in the 1788 estate map of Tarradale (see excerpt below). The map shows two areas that are not under rig and furrow cultivation, the upper one labelled ‘brushwood’ corresponding to the square enclosure with a circular feature seen on aerial photographs and the lower one labelled ‘brush’ coinciding with the unploughed area we see today (and which appears to contain the possible outline of a large round barrow). The current unploughed area is now somewhat larger owing to field gathered stones having been dumped there. No maps since 1788 show this lower unploughed area under cultivation.

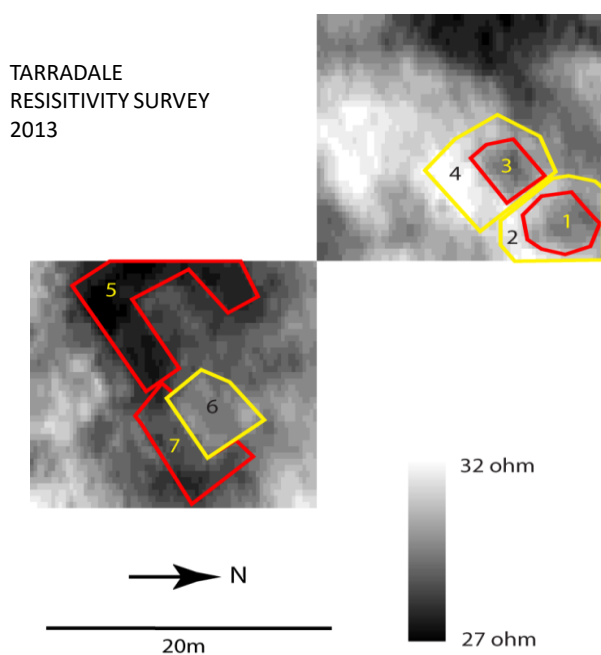


RCAHMS photograph (above); Excerpt from 1788 estate map (below)



## Previous investigations

In 2013, The University of Aberdeen undertook a magnetometer survey of the barrow field and their results suggested that some of the features seen on older aerial photographs may have disappeared. They also undertook a more detailed resistivity survey of a small area of the barrow cemetery to the north of the unploughed area. This survey appeared to show reasonable survival of the ditches of two square barrows.

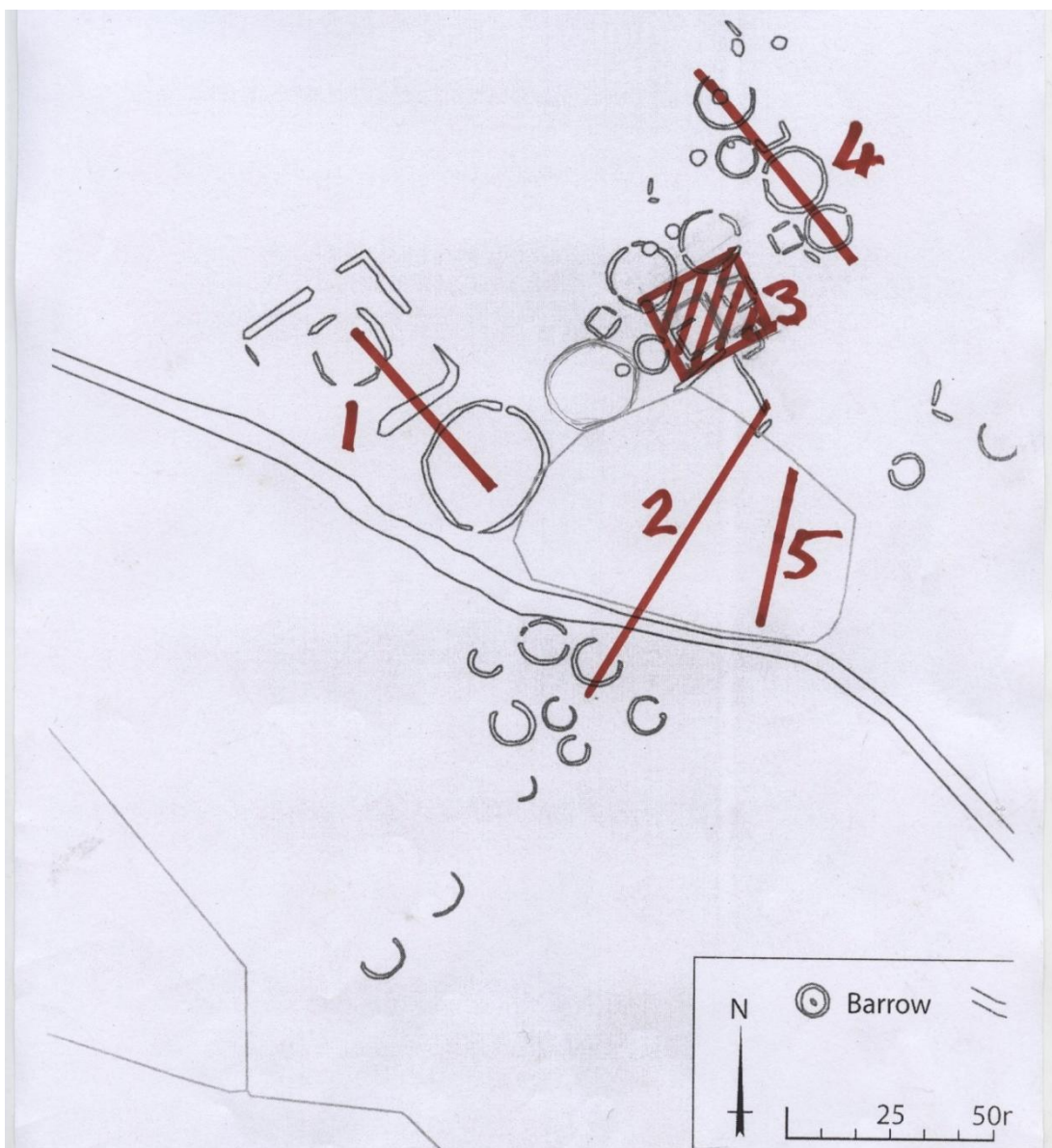


Juliette Mitchell of the University of Aberdeen has prepared a map (below) attempting to clarify the features seen on aerial photographs. Her interpretation suggests a mix of barrows and other enclosures suggesting a complex and possibly multi-period cemetery. The barrow cemetery was probably once much larger but has suffered from plough damage, particularly in recent years as the field is intensively cultivated.



## Objectives and strategy

The objectives of the proposed excavations of 2019 are to locate the archaeological features seen on aerial photographs, to characterise the features and what they represent, to ascertain the nature and extent of the surviving archaeology and as far as possible to obtain datable evidence. The time available for the excavations is relatively limited as the excavation programme for the whole project was formulated as archaeological investigations rather than complete excavation. The TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team have drawn up a plan of the site with suggested areas for trenching but the exact position of trenches will be subject to discussion between the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team and the archaeological supervisor. The plan below is only a suggestion of where we think trenches should be. We have taken a range of opinion as to how much we should excavate and we appreciate that there are only two weeks for excavating part of a very large barrow cemetery.



We do not expect to be able to fully excavate all the opened areas but consider it justified to open these trenches by removing the topsoil to see what may have survived below an intensively cultivated horizon. The principal aims are to assess the degree of survival of the archaeology and to get some idea of the sequencing of the barrows and to retrieve datable evidence. On the plan, the approximate positions of the trenches are suggested for the following reasons. Trench 1 is designed to uncover part of the large ditched enclosures on the north-west of the barrow cemetery. It is not known if the large square-like feature is a barrow or whether it contains a barrow with a later ditched enclosure round it. Trench 2 is planned to cut across the middle of the unploughed area of the barrow cemetery at its highest point. We know that the unploughed area has been badly disturbed by possibly gravel working and also from large dumps of field gathered stones. However, some aerial photographs give a hint of the outline of barrows in the unploughed area and trench 2 is to try and ascertain what may survive. If trench 2 does not reveal much, or the area is too disturbed, trench 5 will be opened as the eastern side of the unploughed block appears to be a less disturbed area of the cemetery. Trench 3 is an area excavation to try and locate part of the dense concentration of square and round barrows. Trench 4 could be a backup if it is considered that there is insufficient evidence emerging from the other trenches.

### **Timetable**

The working timetable is for preliminary work to be done in the week beginning 26 August 2019, i.e. removal of topsoil by digger, bringing equipment to the site and installing a portable lavatory, et cetera. Digging by NOSAS and community volunteers under the supervision of the appointed archaeological supervisor is expected to commence on **Saturday 31 August**. If the crop in the field is not harvested by the end of August 2019 it may be possible to undertake some excavation of the unploughed part of the barrow cemetery which is under rough grass but access to that area would need to cause minimum damage to any adjacent crop that may still be uncut at that time.

The excavations are expected to continue until **Saturday 14 September**, which will be designated as an open day for the public to visit, while **Sunday 15 September 2019** will be a final day for tidying up and moving equipment. Previous excavations under the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME project have depended on the voluntary labour of NOSAS diggers (some of whom are very experienced and act as assistant supervisors and instructors) supplemented by members of the community. That is expected to be the case in 2019 and the number of diggers available will depend on the number of volunteers and the number may vary on a daily basis. Depending on the progress of the excavations and the weather conditions, it may be possible to arrange one or more days off during the period of the excavations. We anticipate that initial post-excavation processing (finds processing, dry and wet sieving, checking records etc) will continue on site (or at Tarradale Gatehouse excavation headquarters) for a number of days after the end of formal excavation. This will be under the overall supervision of the archaeological supervisor with the work mainly being carried out by NOSAS members who are well experienced in this type of initial post-excavation analysis. We request that the appointed archaeological

supervisor approaches the proposed timetable flexibly and, depending on the outcome of the excavations, the date of completion may need to be revised.

The archaeological supervisor will be supported by experienced volunteer assistants (most probably members of NOSAS) and during the excavation phase the supervising archaeologist and the experienced volunteer assistants will be responsible for a daily average of 6-12 trainees (recruited from the local community including less experienced NOSAS members), and 3-6 trainees for the number of days required for on-site or nearby post-excavation work. The archaeological supervisor will report to NOSAS'S TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team through the project director.

### **Archaeological tasks**

The archaeological supervisor will be required to coordinate and supervise the following elements of excavation and post-excavation activities for the project:

- Pre-excavation assessment of the site and marking out trench positions for the digger driver
- Supervision of the digger driver while opening the trenches
- On-site excavation
- On-site survey (including site and feature planning; electronic distance measuring and geo-referencing; taking levels)
- On site recording (including context recording, section and plan drawing, photography, electronic measuring, site excavation diary, video and other site recording)
- Recovery of artefacts and finds processing and initial stabilisation of finds
- Taking and initial processing of soil, environmental and other samples; preparing samples for further analysis
- Submission of a data structure report (DSR) and outline post-excavation research design (PERD)
- Submission of a digital copy of all digitised plans and sections
- Where relevant, training of volunteers in techniques of excavation, recording and finds processing etc, and responding to the needs and abilities of participants
- Safe running of excavation and post-excavation activities
- Dealing appropriately with any human remains that may be found during the excavations  
(Note: TARRADALE THROUGH TIME will inform the local police of the possibility of finding human remains in advance of the excavation commencing. However, there is no indication that human remains survive on the site and it is likely that any such remains will be fragmentary.)

### **Volunteer engagement**

The appointed archaeological supervisor will also work in conjunction with the project's Community and Schools Outreach Coordinator who will be responsible for liaising with the local community. NOSAS will be involved to the extent of supplying experienced volunteers to assist in the excavation and training of trainees.

## **Remuneration**

A fee of £8000 (plus VAT, if charged) is available to engage an archaeological supervisor for the project. The advertised fee will include any local travel and other incidental expenses. Payment will be made as follows:

- £5000 on completion of the excavations (including local post-ex processing)
- £3000 on completion of the DSR and PERD

The project's funding includes separate provision for expert analysis of finds and samples once they have been selected by the archaeological supervisor. The project's funding includes provision for mechanical stripping and backfilling of topsoil where required (subject to discussion with the project management team). The archaeological supervisor will be expected to provide specialist equipment but NOSAS will provide basic excavation equipment and materials for volunteers and trainees if required. A portable lavatory will be made available. The project's headquarters are located at the Gatehouse, Tarradale House, which is located 500m from the excavation site, and will be freely available to the archaeological supervisor as a base during the excavation and post-excavation periods and for finds storage. We anticipate that there will be a local temporary base either in a hut or a tent at the excavation site.

## **Accountability and Responsibility**

The archaeological supervisor will be accountable to the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team via the project director (or appointee) who is in overall charge of all the sub-projects and the wider TARRADALE THROUGH TIME project. Regular site coordination meetings will be held throughout the period of the excavation and post-excavation analysis to monitor, review and evaluate progress and the learning opportunities being provided. The archaeological supervisor will be responsible for undertaking safe excavation work and the completion of all site records, and safe reinstatement of the site to the satisfaction of the landowner and farmer. Wherever possible, contact with the farmer should be made through the project management team. All archaeological work should conform to ISGAP guidelines and be carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) code of practice and standards for archaeological investigation. All archaeological work should also conform to Historic Environment Scotland's guidelines (HES are one of the overall projects funders).

## **Characteristics of the successful applicant:**

The Contract for Services will be determined on the basis that these characteristics will be demonstrated:

### **Essential Characteristics of the Service Provider include:**

- A proven track record of archaeological investigation and reporting, preferably in Scotland
- Experience of working on community excavations with members of the public
- Being professional member(s) of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) or of equivalent standing and experience.
- Evidence of public liability and professional indemnity insurance.
- Being able to travel to and from the site.



### Desirable Characteristics of the Service Provider

This refers to the archaeologist(s) who will actually be working on the project. They should be named in the application and we request that continuity of supervisor(s) for the excavation should be maintained as far as possible.

Persons having the following characteristics will be favoured in the selection process:

- Experience of excavation in the Highlands
- Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written
- A current driving licence
- A track record of delivering outcomes

### Application procedure and evaluation and award criteria

Applications will be reviewed by the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME management team and The contract will be awarded to the bidder who offers a robust delivery option to the TARRADALE THROUGH TIME project having regard to the following evaluation criteria.

High-level criteria	sub criteria	points	%
Price	Value for money (based on what the applicant proposes doing within the budget)	35	35%
Quality	Relevant expertise and knowledge	30	30%
	Approach to undertaking the work within the given timescales	20	20%
	Knowledge of the local area and groups and organisations	10	10%
	Communication skills	5	5%
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Application Process

You are invited to apply for this contract for services by emailing TARRADALE THROUGH TIME at [ttnosas@gmail.com](mailto:ttnosas@gmail.com)

including with your email

- an application describing how you would undertake the above archaeological tasks
- a relevant CV of the supervisor's previous experience, training and qualifications

If you have any queries about the proposed excavation or require further information about the site or how NOSAS will work with the contractor etc, please contact the TTT management team at the above email address by 15 March at the latest.

The closing date for applications is **20 March 2019**.