

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF INVESTIGATION

In respect of

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RECORDING

at

STONES OF STENNESS GATE INSTALLATION

for

Historic Environment Scotland

by

Kirkdale Archaeology



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INTRODUCTION

OS Grid Reference: HY 306 125

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A programme of archaeological works conducted by Kirkdale Archaeology is required in order to monitor the work associated with the proposed installation of a replacement gate giving access to The Stones of Stenness, and the installation of a new gate (replacing a style) in the far north-west corner of the site giving access to Barnhouse (Fig. 1). Both gates will require new foundations in locations where there has been no previous archaeological excavation.

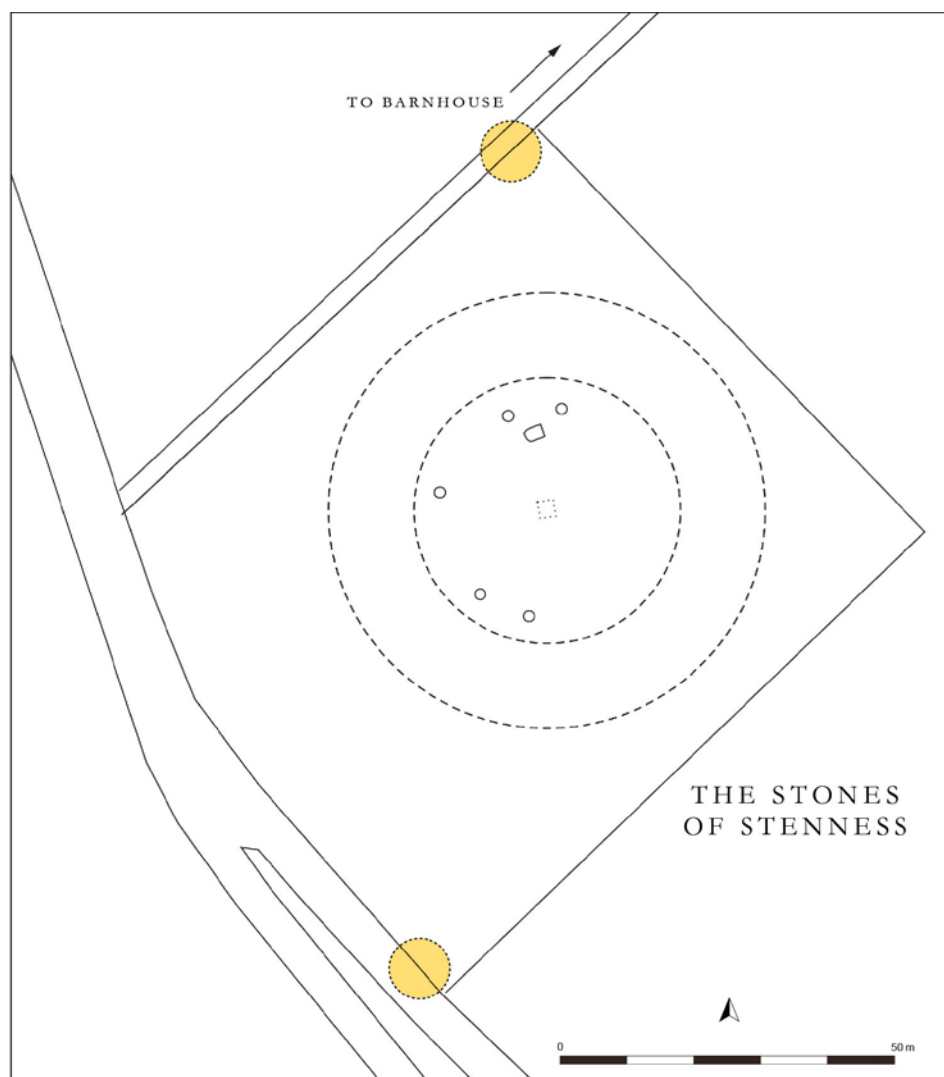


Figure 1: Plan showing the approximate locations of the two proposed gates.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The monument comprises a Neolithic ceremonial enclosure (henge) and stone ring (originally of 12 stones), constructed around 3100-2900 cal. BC. Nearby, the so-called Watch Stone, a tall standing stone, is a part of the same PIC. A contemporaneous settlement at Barnhouse close to the Stones is in the care of Orkney Islands Council.

The henge and stone circle are in an enclosed field of improved pasture. The Watch Stone stands on the roadside at the Bridge of Brodgar, at the southern end of the causeway between the Lochs of Harray and Stenness.

There are a large number of early illustrations of the site, as a result of early antiquarian interest. In 1814 there was an outcry when the farmer began to pull down the stones. The site was scheduled in 1882 and passed into state care in 1906, at which point the fallen stones were re-erected. Early 20th century works include the erection of a 'dolmen'. The original form of the circle remains unclear. In 1999 it became part of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS, the first archaeological site in Scotland to be designated for its cultural values.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND



Plate 1: A late 1800s (?) image of the stones in a cultivated field.

Of all the elements of the WHS, this is probably the best understood site in the sense that there were fairly extensive scientific excavations of its interior in 1973-4 and excavations at the nearby Barnhouse settlement have shed considerable light on what is happening in this area and the

close inter-relationship between the two sites. The ditches of the henge are likely to retain considerable archaeological potential including, in all likelihood, waterlogged deposits.

In 1999 a geophysical survey was carried out across the site, although this did not include the fence lines. The 1999 survey and subsequent work by GSB prospection highlighted the archaeological potential of the location. At least two neolithic settlements have been identified in the near vicinity so far. This close coincidence of evidence for the domestic and ritual spheres of neolithic life is a rare survival. A specific relationship between Stones of Stenness and Barnhouse is suggested by similarities in the layout of the interior features of the Barnhouse Hall and those of the Stones of Stenness, and the fact that radiocarbon dating makes it likely that the Stones and the settlement were used at the same time as each other or in immediate sequence to each other. These monuments were erected in a landscape of open grassland with some cereal cultivation. However, the field in which the stones are situated has been under cultivation, and the stones were enclosed in the 1900s.

Further stone settings are known to have once existed in the immediate vicinity, including the famous Odin's Stone, to which much local colourful folklore attaches.

The fence around the site was erected in the 20th century with no archaeological mitigation. As can be seen in Plate 1, the field has been under plough in the past, which may have caused some disturbance to the archaeological deposits close to the surface.

P R O P O S E D M I T I G A T I O N

Barnhouse Access Style Replacement



Plate 2: The stile providing access to the Barnhouse settlement via the Stones of Stenness.

The new gate will be within an existing fence line. It will be more substantial structure than the existing access point, but as it will form part of an extant arrangement it should not be much more noticeable and will make the route between Barnhouse and Stenness more accessible to visitors.

Stenness Car Park Access Replacement



Plate 2: Car park access gate.

The new gate will replace an existing, larger but less accessible gate in the same location. The new paving proposed will be more extensive on the interior standing stones side of the gate, with only two courses of slabs on the exterior car park side of the gate. The new smaller and simpler gate with paving, which will decrease the erosion of the ground surface on either side of the fence, will have a positive effect on the visual amenity of the site

F I E L D W O R K

Barnhouse Access Style Replacement

This will require a new foundation approximately 1.6m in length (along the existing fence line) x (a maximum of) 0.4m wide x 0.6m deep. There is an existing timber post here which will be removed along with the rest of the style. It is not clear from the information available how large the foundation for the style is. Paving is not required in this location as it does not receive as much foot traffic as the car park gate and therefore does not pond as badly, so the existing turf finish will be reinstated.

All above ground elements of the existing arrangement can be removed by HES MCU or nominated contractor without archaeological supervision. Groundbreaking works to remove the

post and foundation will take place under archaeological watching brief. The trench for the gate and timber post foundation will be excavated as a single entity.

Turf stripping, removal of topsoil and modern deposits will also be undertaken by HES MCU or nominated contractor under archaeological watching brief. Excavation of other deposits will be undertaken archaeologically to the required depth or to the top of the first archaeological layer, whichever is shallower. If significant archaeological features are encountered within the depth of excavation, work will stop and HES Heritage Management will be consulted to determine whether it is appropriate to continue.

Stenness Car Park Access Replacement

This will require a single trench approximately 1.5m in length which will support the metal uprights for a DDA compliant gate and a new timber post. The trench will be approximately 0.6m deep x 0.4m wide, and will abut an existing concrete strainer. The concrete strainer on the other side supporting the existing field gate will remain in place.

All above ground elements of the existing arrangement can be removed by HES MCU or nominated contractor without archaeological supervision. Groundbreaking works to remove any elements of the existing gate which have a foundation will take place under archaeological watching brief.

Turf stripping, removal of topsoil and modern deposits will also be undertaken by HES MCU or nominated contractor under archaeological watching brief. Excavation of other deposits will be undertaken archaeologically to the required depth or to the top of the first archaeological layer, whichever is shallower. If significant archaeological features are encountered within the depth of excavation, work will stop and HES Heritage Management will be consulted to determine whether it is appropriate to continue.

The paving which is proposed for this gate requires only a turf strip with no further ground penetration. The chances of any archaeological features being encountered in the depth of excavation required for the installation of the flags is therefore minimal. In addition, the car park side has more hardstanding than turf, while the stones side is already eroded by footfall. This phase of works can take place without archaeological supervision provided excavation does not precede deeper than turf/topsoil level. If further excavation is required this will take place under archaeological watching brief.

M O N I T O R I N G

This will entail:

- The presence on site of at least one site archaeologist during all ground breaking works.
- The archaeologist should be able to direct rate, location and method of excavation employed by contractor.
- The archaeologist should suspend excavation if necessary, in order to examine / clean / retrieve any archaeological features, surfaces, structures or artefacts that may be exposed during excavation.
- All spoil will be suitably stored for examination before backfill/reinstatement.

A R C H A E O L O G I C A L R E C O R D I N G & E X C A V A T I O N

This will entail:

Drawing

- Confirmation of site plan as supplied by the Client.
- Location plan of all interventions at a suitable scale, 1:50/1:100.
- Detailed, individual area plans of all interventions – at significant stages of excavation if appropriate and on completion of excavation, drawn at a scale of 1:20.
- All sections, or a representative selection, will be drawn in detail at a scale of 1:10.
- All drawing will be annotated with site feature numbers, site code, scale, date and name(s) of staff.

Photography

- Still photographs will be colour digital and will record general location of works, plus detailed coverage during, and on completion of, excavation.
- All photographs will have a suitable scale visible.
- All photographs will be listed in a full photo register (describing content, orientation and date).
- 'Documentary' photographs will also be taken in order to represent site conditions, constraints and resources.
- If appropriate, digital moving coverage will be taken for further illustration of site conditions, constraints and resources.

Site Recording: Buried Archaeology

- Description of all excavated material will be expressed in terms of archaeological features, each of which will be assigned a unique three-digit number. The numbering will also reference the site code and any individual trench number.
- Each discrete feature will be described on site *pro forma*, which will cover stratigraphic relationships, finds, physical description, location, drawing references and interpretation.
- Each feature will also be listed in a feature register – comprising a brief description, date, and feature number.

Sampling

When required, three levels of sampling are proposed for above and below ground investigations:

- **General:** Bulk sample per context removed.
- **Special:** Specific sample identified for later specialist study (charcoal, industrial waste, environmental, infestations, organics).
- **Specialist:** Monitoring of any independent sampling strategy from external specialists (dendrochronological, mortar, paint, *etc.*)

GENERAL ISSUES

In the event of the discovery of significant remains and/or artefacts, which may be impacted by the proposed works, excavation should be suspended until further instruction is received from relevant agencies. At this point the Historic Environment Scotland CRT should also be informed and consulted.

All artefacts, faunal remains and samples will be processed off-site. Disposal and/or examination/conservation of this material will be assessed in the light of results of fieldwork. Any programme of specialist post-excavation work on finds, faunal remains and analysis of samples will be assessed on completion of the fieldwork

Any human remains revealed during the excavation will remain *in situ*. All discoveries of human remains will be reported to the local police and Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

If human remains are to be excavated during any subsequent work, this will be completed in line with Historic Environment Scotland policy on the treatment of human remains.

REPORTING

The results of the Fieldwork and DBA will be presented in an illustrated Data Structures Report (DSR) with accompanying digital documentation as specified by the Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

Copies of the report and digital files will be produced as specified. Typically this comprises:

- Four bound paper copies.
- Two digital versions on CD including all photographs (the latter in tiff or jpeg format).

This will include an assessment of all assemblages and recommendations for any further specialist work. A costed programme for the full sample analysis towards publication of the findings will be included if appropriate, and a short note will be submitted to 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland' and OASIS. The position of all trenches, excavation areas *etc.*, will be supplied on CD disk, as a georeferenced .dxf file, and reports will be submitted within 20 working days of completion of the fieldwork.

ARCHIVE

If there is no further requirement for reporting beyond the DSR and D&E entry, the report and site records will be compiled in a suitable archive comprising primary data and digital documentation as appropriate, suitable for submission to local and national archives.

The archive will follow current guidelines for archival standards set by the Archaeology Data Service and Historic Environment Scotland.

The project archive will be deposited with the NMRS within six months of completion of fieldwork and relevant post-excavation analyses. Finds will be subject to the Scots laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*, and will be reported to the Crown Agent for disposal. Appropriate conservation of finds will be conducted before disposal.

Gordon Ewart
27th October, 2015