

Avoch Community Archaeology



Ormond Castle Community Archaeology Project Design

Summary

This project design sets out the aims and methodology for an archaeological survey and evaluation around Ormond Castle, Avoch. The archaeological survey and evaluation will be part of a larger community archaeological project, aimed at involving local members of the public, schools and special interest groups in the investigation, interpretation and management of their local heritage.

The project is managed by Avoch Community Archaeology (ACA), a local group of individuals affiliated to Avoch and Killen Community Council. ACA not only aims to engage local people in gaining a better understanding of their local archaeology while conforming to high standard of archaeological research, but also seeks to enhance and promote the local area.

Ormond Castle is a well-known site on the southern fringes of modern Avoch. It overlooks the village and is close to popular dog walking paths. The little that is known of the site is mainly through documentary sources. Apparently constructed around 1179 and demolished in 1650, the castle is also famed for the role it played in the Scottish Wars of Independence. Excavations apparently carried out in 1883 remain unpublished and very little is actually known about this local landmark.

Location

Avoch is a harbour-village located on the south east coast of the Black Isle, on the Moray Firth. Ormond Castle is located a little to the south west of the village overlooking Avoch bay on a prominent mound which is itself overlooked by Wood Hill a little further to the south west. The Castle Site is centred around national grid reference NH 69646 53582. The castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM4740) and, as well as landowner and tenant permission, ACA will work closely with Historic Environment Scotland and gain Scheduled Monument Consent where necessary.

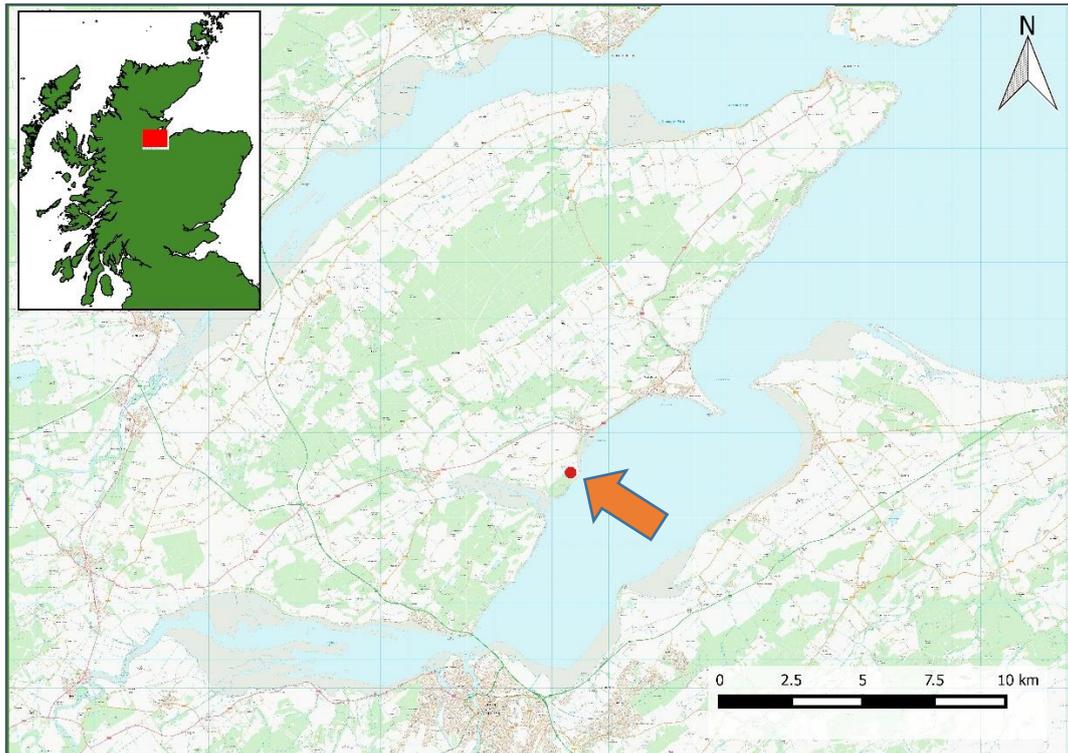


Figure 1: Ormond Castle Location (OS open Data Background)

Archaeological and Historical Background

Ormond Castle is best known as a medieval castle but the use of this natural mound overlooking Avoch bay may stretch back much further.

Sometimes known as 'Lady Hill' as well as 'Ormond (or Ormonde) Hill' the mound is around 76m above sea level and is partially encircled by two ditches on the NE side (Figure 1, Figure 2).



Figure 2: Aerial Photo of Ormond looking South (© James S Bone, 2008)

When the site was visited by the OS in 1970 they interpreted these ditches as part of an Iron Age fort¹ although there is no further evidence to back up this theory and it is possible these could in fact be part of the medieval defences.

The next known activity is the construction of a castle on the hill around 1179.² This appears to have been part of William I's royal building programme to help bring the Moray area under control. William was the grandson of David I and, as such, was continuing his work feudalising Scotland as well as wrestling for control of the North of Scotland with the Norse Earls of Orkney.³ As part of this he is credited with the construction of a string of castles along the Moray coast including Auldearn Mott⁴ and Redcastle⁵ on the Black Isle.

¹ <http://her.highland.gov.uk/singleResult.aspx?uid=MHG8226>

² Beaton, A J. 1885. 'Notes on Ormond or Avoch Castle, in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, with a plan and section; and notice with drawing of bronze Celts found in its vicinity', Proc Soc Antiq Scot Vol. 19 1884-5, p.400

³ Ash M. 1991 'This Noble Harbour' Edinburgh, John Donald Publishers Ltd p10

⁴ <http://portal.historic-scotland.gov.uk/designation/SM9293>

⁵ <https://canmore.org.uk/site/12662/redcastle>

Royal castles at this time were typically in the Norman model of ‘motte and bailey’ and acted as centres of national government often providing law courts for an area.⁶ Ormond does not of course appear to fit the typical ‘pudding bowl’ plan of a motte and bailey such as the Bass of Inverurie⁷ built as Ormond Castle is on the hill. Perhaps a more useful parallel would be the contemporary phase of Aberdour Castle in Fife, but much more work is required to establish the plan of Ormond.⁸

It is not clear who would have administered from the Castle at the time of its construction but by the first Scottish Wars of Independence in the late 1200s it seems to have been the residence of the De Moray family. In 1297 Andrew son of the Lord of Moray is said to have raised his standard at Ormond having escaped imprisonment after the Battle of Dunbar. Andrew’s effective resistance to Edward I’s rule, culminating in the Battle of Stirling Bridge, can be seen as some of the most important events of the wars.⁹ This of course makes Ormond Castle, as his seat, significant not just to the history of the area but to the whole of Scotland.

After the wars of independence the castle passes down through various nobles including Sir John Bisset (builder of Beaulieu Priory)¹⁰ before passing to the crown in the mid-1400s. Finally “It is said to have been destroyed on approach of Cromwell’s army 1650”.¹¹

The castle was ‘surveyed’ and at least partly excavated by Angus Beaton in 1883 (Figure 3). It is unclear how much excavation was undertaken at this time as Beaton describes having ‘several men’ but that they ‘only succeeded in clearing one tower’. The little description that is given implies good depth of deposits and at least some in situ remains:

“A on the plan, which presented a circular appearance before being cleared out, but when dug to a depth of 6 feet revealed an inside opening 9 feet square, with substantially built walls in sandstone and mortar, 4 feet thick. In this tower we found a very fine sandstone door rybat, with the ‘droving’ or chisel marks distinctly clear.”¹²

Aside from a short article in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1885 no further record is known of Beaton’s work. Some remains were apparently sent to Rosehaugh House but their location is now unknown.

⁶ Tabraham C. 2005 ‘*Scotland’s Castles*’ London B T Batsford / Historic Scotland p12

⁷ Tabraham C. 2005 p16

⁸ Tabraham C. 2005 p20

⁹ Watson F. 1998 ‘*Under the Hammer, Edward I and Scotland 1286-1307*’ East Linton Tuckwell Press p46

¹⁰ Beaton, A J. 1885. ‘Notes on Ormond or Avoch Castle, in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, with a plan and section; and notice with drawing of bronze Celts found in its vicinity’, Proc Soc Antiq Scot Vol. 19 1884-5, p.400

¹¹ <http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG8226>

¹² Beaton, A J. 1885 p.403

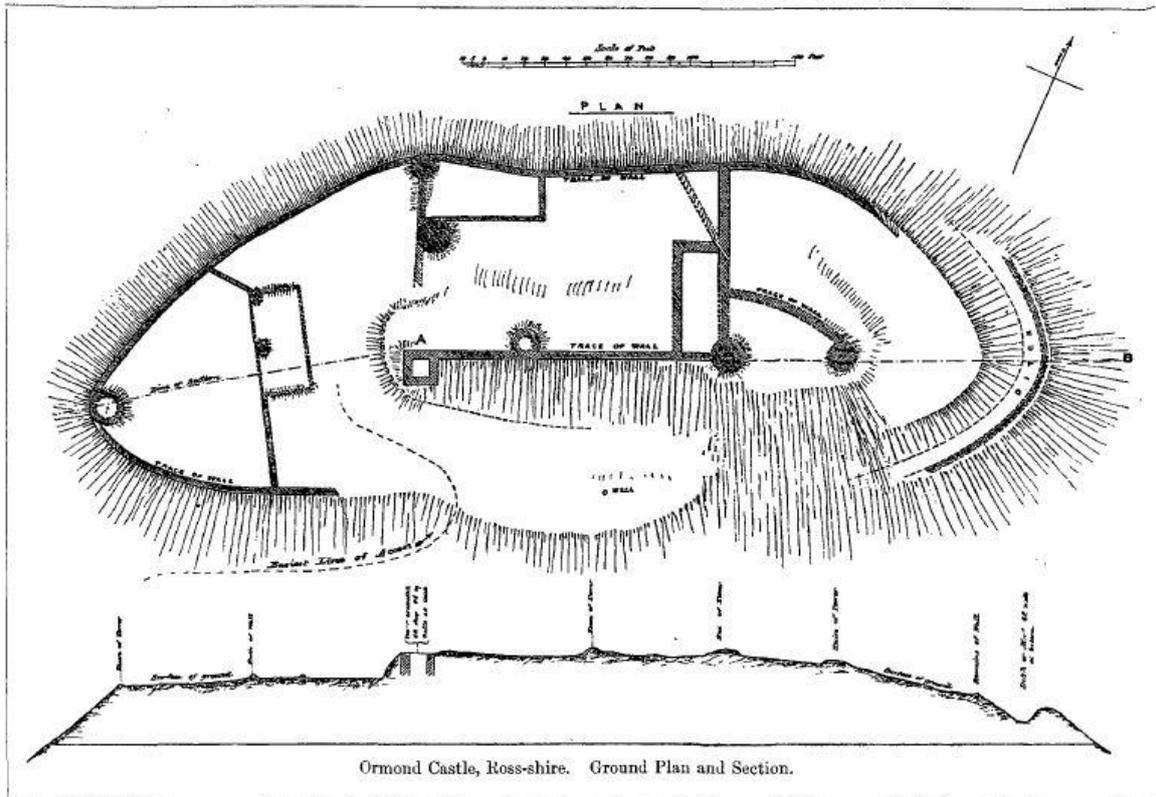


Figure 3: Beaton's plan 1883¹³

Ormond castle is a scheduled ancient monument (SM4740) and was designated in 1989:

“The monument is of national importance because it is a fine field monument of a type rare in Scotland; it is said to have been one of the royal castles built c.1179 and is of further national importance because despite it being covered by hand planted trees the clearly defined remains have the potential to increase understanding of 12th century fortification techniques and military history.”¹⁴

Project Objectives

The Ormond Castle project will focus on four key objectives, these are:

1. Establish Basic Timeline and Phases of Occupation for the Castle
2. Determine a Plan of the Castle
3. Investigate associated Families and Settlements
4. Create Legacy to enable potential future projects and boost the local area.

¹³ Beaton, A J. 1885. 'Notes on Ormond or Avoch Castle, in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, with a plan and section; and notice with drawing of bronze Celts found in its vicinity', Proc Soc Antiq Scot Vol. 19 1884-5, p.402

¹⁴ <http://portal.historic-scotland.gov.uk/hes/web/f?p=PORTAL:DESIGNATION:::::DES:SM4740>

Project Outline

Background

Avoch Community Archaeology (ACA) have already established widespread interest in a community project focusing on the investigation of the Ormond Castle at two public meetings. These were held on the 27th of August and 22nd of September 2015 with the help of AOC Archaeology Group. These meetings were well attended, with approximately 50 interested individuals. At the second of these meetings those attending were asked for their ideas and questions about the castle and the ACA steering group was formed. As well as demonstrating an overwhelming interest in establishing an archaeological research project the questions, ideas and principles highlighted at these meetings have been used to create this project design.

In addition to a desire to better understand Ormond Castle it was felt that this project should create an inclusive opportunity to bring local people together as well as promote the area as a place to visit and spend time. It was also felt that the project should create a legacy of skills and resources that the community would benefit from in years to come. All parts of the project will be shaped by these ideals and are not purely research driven.

Community research

The opportunity for local people to delve into the historical evidence available on the castle will be provided at a number of sessions in Avoch. These sessions will focus on how to carry out documentary research on archaeological sites using both online and other materials. There will also be sessions collecting people's memories about the castle and other local monuments, looking at maps, as well as medieval documentation and how to find and understand it.

These sessions will be used to inform interpretation of the site which will as much as possible be created by participants and will contribute towards fulfilling Project Aims 1, 3 and 4 (page 5).

These sessions will be led by professionals or experienced individuals and combined with venue hire will incur some costs. (See below)

Fieldwork

Fieldwork will be divided into three parts

- 1) Survey
- 2) Field Walking and Metal Detecting
- 3) Excavation

Survey

The project will create three surveys of Ormond Castle. These will provide not just three different perspectives on the castle itself but also provide training opportunities for local

people who will be able to use these skills elsewhere. These will provide a major contribution to the completion of Project Aim 2 (page 5).

3D Photogrammetry Survey

With the help of local enthusiasts, a drone with camera will be used to photograph the site and a 3D model created of the whole hill.

A video ‘fly through’ will then be produced for both the ACA website and for files forming part of the site record.

Although a limited number of participants will be able to take part in this part of the survey it will be combined with a workshop on basic photogrammetry open to all.

Venue hire for the workshop will incur a cost to the project but all other activities will be free.

Plane Table Survey

Working in collaboration with the North of Scotland Archaeology Society (NOSAS) a partial survey of the castle will be carried out. This will mainly be a training opportunity teaching local people how to undertake this kind of survey. Equipment will be borrowed from NOSAS and experienced members of that organisation will be invited to contribute their expertise.

Topographic Survey

This detailed survey will be undertaken with the help of a professional archaeologist experienced in this type of survey. This will be undertaken using a total station and a small group of volunteers. The data collected will be used to create a 3D model of the castle hill as well as 2D plans highlighting the different aspects. Although only a few local people will be able to participate in the creation of this the results will be used to inform other work. The trench locations will be finalised using this data and the results will be disseminated both on the ACA website, with the Highland Historic Environment Record, Historic Environment Scotland and in dissemination materials.

Field Walking and Metal Detecting

These activities provide an excellent opportunity for local people to participate in large numbers in a meaningful piece of fieldwork to help gain an understanding of the general background archaeology. Field walking and Metal Detecting will be carried out in any fields in appropriate condition adjacent to the castle. Metal Detecting will be undertaken in collaboration with local clubs. All of these will be undertaken in a systematic manner using

GPS so 'hot spots' can be identified (see methodology below). This will contribute to Project Aims 3 and 4 (page 5).

This aspect of the project will be dependent on landowner and tenant permissions as well as the timing of ploughing etc. All artefacts recovered will be combined with those from the excavation and treated as in the methodology.

Excavation

Ormond Castle is a scheduled ancient monument (SM4740) and, as well as landowner and tenant permission, ACA will work closely with Historic Environment Scotland and gain Scheduled Monument Consent for all aspects of excavation and connected logistics.

Excavation will focus on the key objectives of the project while restricting damage to the monument as much as possible. In particular this will investigate phases of occupation and a better understanding of the plan of the castle (i.e. original wall thickness etc.).

Excavations will be led by a small professional team of archaeologists with as many local participants as possible, including those with no previous experience. Although numbers will be restricted by the size of trenches priority will be given to local people and effort will be made to help people feel involved through tours delivered during fieldwork.

Post excavation work will also be carried out as much as possible in Avoch in a series of workshops open to all including those with no previous experience. These will include finds cleaning, sorting and drawing as well as sample processing.

This part of the Project will contribute towards all 4 Project Aims (page 5).

Outreach

As well as the community research and post excavation workshops noted above a number of other outreach activities will also form part of this project. These will contribute towards Project Aim 4 (page 5).

Artefact handling

Prior to excavation taking place an artefact handling session focusing on Medieval material will be organised in collaboration with Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and potentially Groam House Museum. This will enable anyone interested to gain a better understanding of physical remains from this period and what can be learned from them. This section will also help people identify artefacts from field walking and what to do if they come across such objects in other contexts.

School Tours

During the excavations tours for visitors (local and others) will be conducted of the site every day. In addition all pupils from Avoch primary school (c.250 individuals) will be invited to visit the site in appropriate sized groups. This will be an opportunity for them to learn about

their local history as well as give a sense of pride in their local area. While on site they will also be given the chance to undertake archaeologically themed activities.

Community Interpretation Project

The community interpretation of the findings of the project will be split in two parts - the first will be the creation of a temporary exhibition to be displayed within Avoch. This will include some of the objects recovered during the excavation as well as information about the project and its findings.

The second aspect of the interpretation project will create a lasting physical creative interpretation of information discovered about the castle and will be placed in a publicly accessible part of the village. This may take the form of a mosaic depicting a castle time-line, or a wooden structure decorated with models of artefacts found during the excavation, or even medieval style tiles decorated with scenes of castle life. The object or objects will be created as much as possible by local people, reflect and point to the castle and things known about it and fit in with the project philosophy: improving and promoting the Avoch and Killen area.

Both aspects are likely to involve a cost in materials and a professional to lead and see through to completion.

Legacy

As well as gaining a better understanding of local heritage the project will also include a number of other activities to create a legacy for the project, fulfilling Project Aim 4 (page 5).

Community cohesion

Community archaeology projects have been shown in many areas to create community cohesion by bringing diverse parts of the community together to achieve something positive. It also creates a sense of pride in an area as people discover the important role their area has played in the past.¹⁵ This is something that is particularly relevant to Avoch and Ormond Castle which is one of only a few physical remains of the key events of the Scottish Wars of Independence (see Archaeological and Historical Background).

Skills

Local people with an interest will be given a range of opportunities to learn new skills through workshops, activities and excavation which can be used not only to look at other archaeological sites but in other areas of life. This will include research, IT and creative thinking skills.

Community Interpretation

This aspect of the project will create an object to promote the area, increase participation in the project and give a focus within the village pointing to the castle.

¹⁵ Simpson F. & Williams H. 2008 'Evaluating Community Archaeology in the UK', Public Archaeology, vol.7, Issue 2 (01 May Summer 2008), p.69-90

Learning resource

A learning resource will be created for the use of local people, particularly Avoch Primary School. This will illustrate medieval life particularly in Ormond Castle. This will be informed both by the documentary research and excavation of the site. It will include some recreated objects and information about the site.

Future Archaeology

Participants who wish to take their archaeology further will be encouraged to join NOSAS - a local SCIO who undertake a range of archaeological activities throughout the Highlands. They also have a range of equipment that can be loaned, such as plane tabling and excavation equipment, as well as a wide range of experience in Highland archaeology. This will give people living around Avoch and Killen to look more closely at their local heritage add to the archaeological record and create new projects.

Methodology

Funding

Funding will be sought from external sources to enable this project. Some parts will be funded in isolation and some aspects such as field walking, metal detecting and photogrammetry survey can be undertaken with no funding. This together with volunteer time and utilising equipment and expertise from local groups (ARCH and NOSAS) will provide good value for money to funders.

Funding will be sought from: Ward Discretionary fund, Heritage Lottery, Creative Scotland, Castle Studies Trust, Inverness Field Club and may be sought from LEADER. We will also be open to other funding opportunities.

Field Walking and Metal Detecting

Before any such work is undertaken appropriate landowner and tenant permission will be gained in writing and copies of this will be retained by ACA for future reference. These agreements will make clear that as an archaeology project all finds after post-excavation analysis will be dealt with through Treasure Trove and are likely to be taken without reward.

Field walking will be conducted with a minimum of three individuals on ploughed fields adjoining the castle site. These will be walked ideally a few days after ploughing or cultivation to allow weathering and exposure of artefacts. Upon arrival on site all participants will be briefed on methodology.

Individuals will walk 1m-2m apart in transects parallel to cultivation lines, wherever possible whole fields will be walked. All artefacts will be recovered to provide a background picture of the area. Artefacts of pre-modern date (i.e. all medieval or earlier artefacts), or in cases of

doubt, will be placed in acid free bags marked with their 6 figure grid reference taken from a hand held GPS.

Metal Detecting will be carried out in a similar fashion with detectorists working in parallel transects across fields adjacent to the castle. All signals will be investigated but excavation will not go deeper than the topsoil. All items will be removed from the field unless they are too large to be managed. Any clearly modern items will be disposed of appropriately while other finds will be placed in acid free bags marked with their 6 figure grid reference taken from a hand held GPS. Detectors will be provided by the individuals involved but as part of the projects they will be asked to accept assistance from other volunteers particularly with digging/ lifting items. Where disturbances are made these will be levelled again before moving on.

All artefacts recovered will be combined with those from any excavation and presented to Treasure Trove along with contextual information after other analysis.

Surveys

3D Photogrammetry Survey

A drone with camera will be used to photograph the hill from several angles to create a 3D model.

Plane Table Survey

A partial survey of the castle will be carried out using tapes, an alidade and scale rule. This will mainly be a training opportunity teaching local people how to undertake this kind of survey. Equipment will be borrowed from NOSAS and experienced members of that organisation will be invited to contribute their expertise. Procedure laid out in the Scotland's Rural Past booklet from the Royal Commission will be used in cases of doubt.¹⁶

Topographic Survey

This detailed survey will be undertaken with the help of a professional archaeologist experienced in this type of survey. This will be undertaken using a total station and a small group of volunteers. The data collected will be used to create a 3D model of the castle hill as well as 2D plans highlighting the different aspects.

¹⁶ http://www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk/pdfs/SRP_Fieldmanual_small.pdf

Excavation

This section is an outline of excavation methodology which will be refined using data from the survey and fully laid out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

Ormond Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM4740) and, as well as landowner and tenant permission, ACA will work closely with Historic Environment Scotland and gain Scheduled Monument Consent for all aspects of excavation and connected logistics.

It is proposed that three trenches be opened within the Scheduled area.

Trench A: 2m by 15m. This trench will cut the possible rampart on the NE side of the hill. This will be used to establish the characteristics of this feature and assess if it belongs to an earlier phase of occupation.

Trench B: 2m by 2m 'test pit'. This will be a re-excavation of Beaton's 1883 excavation to examine the tower he discovered and access any material he may have left. All material from this trench will be sieved to recover all potential remains. This should give a plan of a tower forming part of the Motte without damaging new areas of the structure.

Trench C: 2m by 15m. This trench will access a section of the castle's curtain wall and possible bailey. This will give evidence of possible phasing such as wood to stone construction as well as further clarifying the plan.

The Scheduled area is around 13,970m². The total area of excavation will be 64m² this is less than 0.5% of the total area.

All excavation will be in line with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation (2014)¹⁷ and in line with Highland Council's Standards for Archaeological Work (2012)¹⁸. All excavation, including turf stripping, will be undertaken by hand.

¹⁷ http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CIfAS&GExcavation_1.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1022/standards_for_archaeological_wok

Timetable

Activity	Delivered by	Date
Photogrammetry Survey	ACA and volunteers	Spring 2016
Plane Table Survey	ACA and NOSAS volunteers	Spring 2016
Topographic Survey	Archaeological Contractor	Spring 2016
Pre-excavation archive and research sessions	Professionals or experienced volunteers	Summer 2016
Excavation	Archaeological Contractor	Autumn 2016 (at earliest)
Post-excavation workshops	Archaeological Contractor	Winter 2016 (at earliest)
Post-excavation archive and research sessions	Professionals or experienced volunteers	Winter 2016 (at earliest)
Final analysis and reporting	Archaeological Contractor	Winter 2016 (at earliest)
Community Interpretation Project	Professionals or experienced volunteers	Spring 2017 (at earliest)