
INTRODUCTION

Angus Council has granted planning consent for the construction of auction rooms and offices at Plots 3 and 4 on the Brent Avenue Industrial Estate, Montrose, Angus (Planning Reference Number 08/00966/FUL). On the advice of its archaeological advisers, the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, the council attached a condition that a programme of archaeological investigation be undertaken prior to the start of the development.

Terms of Reference relating to this investigation were supplied by the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. The archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Historical Environment Policy and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) whose contents were based on the requirements set out in the Terms of Reference. Copies of the WSI were forwarded to Angus Council and the client, Project Management Scotland Limited. The scheme was agreed by Angus Council's Head of Planning and Building Control before fieldwork began.

The programme comprised a field evaluation, the results of which could have resulted in a subsequent programme in which a larger area was investigated or the surviving record preserved *in situ*.

THE SITE

The development site, which is centred on NO 7138 6040, is located in a vacant plot on the north edge of Montrose, to the immediate east of Coronation Avenue, on the Montrose to Laurencekirk road (A937). It comprises the north half of a level field bounded on its south and east by recently-built industrial units while its north limit is defined by a high embankment which extends some distance to the east, beyond the site. The plot's overall dimensions are approximately 90m east/west by 74m north/south, giving a total area of some 6,660m². The intention was to evaluate this area by excavating at least 8% (approximately 533m²) of it.

On the evidence of aerial photography, the site is encircled by archaeological features of presumed prehistoric origin. They include what appear to be circular house platforms, ring ditches, other circular features, enclosures and linear features. In addition, rig and furrow, presumably of medieval or post-medieval date, has been identified a short distance to the north of the area. These sites are listed by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland under the following site numbers: NO76SW 11; NO76SW 36; and NO76SW 68.

On this evidence, it was considered quite likely that hitherto undetected archaeological features might survive within this area, thus prompting the investigation. The evaluation was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 9th and 10th June 2009 at the behest of Project Management Scotland Limited.

THE EVALUATION

A series of slit trenches were opened using a toothless ditching bucket attached to a 15-tonne 360° tracked excavator supplied by N & L Warden of St Cyrus. The trenches were spread across the site, their precise distribution and lengths being influenced to some extent by the

results obtained from the first ones opened. They were all 2.1m wide, the width of the ditching bucket.

A total of 15 trenches were excavated, their layout being shown in an accompanying plan. Their lengths were:

- Trench 1: 24.0m north/south
- Trench 2: 35.5m north/south
- Trench 3: 27.5m east/west
- Trench 4: 39.0m east/west
- Trench 5: 27.0m east/west
- Trench 6: 9.5m north/south
- Trench 7: 31.0m east/west
- Trench 8: 4.0m east/west
- Trench 9: 10.5m east/west
- Trench 10: 6.0m north/south
- Trench 11: 10.0m north/south
- Trench 12: 11.0m north/south
- Trench 13: 14.0m north/south
- Trench 14: 15.5m north/south
- Trench 15: 21.5m north/south

The overall area excavated was 600m², 9% of the site.

The site was covered with grass and other relatively low vegetation below which was topsoil of dark brown, sandy loam, varying in depth from 0.2m to 0.5m. The only artefacts retrieved from the topsoil were a few small sherds of late 19th-/20th-century white china. In each trench the topsoil overlay sand which lies beneath Montrose and its hinterland. However, apart from stretches of Trenches 1 and 13 where it consisted of undisturbed, pale yellow beach deposits, it was clear that the sand had been heavily disturbed. It varied in consistency and colour from pale yellow to dark brown and included lenses of clayey materials and buried topsoil.

There appeared to be a large feature (resembling a ditch but with ill-defined edges) cutting north/south across Trench 4, midway along its length. Trench 5 was opened adjacent to it to determine whether this feature continued northwards. However, it proved to be simply the result of the disturbance of sands and other materials which spread over a wide area.

A few trenches, notably Trenches 8, 9 and 10, were abandoned at an early stage when it became obvious that they contained only disturbed deposits. Indeed, it soon became clear that the north half of the site was unlikely to yield anything of interest. Unfortunately, the same proved true in the south half of the area when the focus of the investigation turned there.

In several trenches large test pits were cut into these sandy materials to assess their depths and character. In so doing, very modern artefacts including lumps and spreads of degraded tarmac, binding straps, polythene sheeting and plastic twine were retrieved at depths of 1m and more. Clearly, the large-scale ground disturbance which spread over most of the development area was a recent event although it is not known how, why or when it happened.

In the small areas where undisturbed sand was exposed, no features of archaeological significance were found.

CONCLUSIONS

From the results of the evaluation, it appears that the entire area of proposed development had been subject to large-scale ground disturbance in recent times. Oral testimony indicated that debris similar to that retrieved during this investigation has been unearthed in the area to the immediate north-east of the site although the circumstances of that discovery are not clear. These fields had supported fruit growing in recent years and, although setting up and dismantling such a venture might have caused some ground disturbance, it seems unlikely that it would have resulted in such a depth of activity.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographic archive forms part of the digital archive of the project.

- 1-3 The site fully excavated, viewed from the north
- 4-5 The site fully excavated, viewed from the south
- 6 The site fully excavated, viewed from the south-east
- 7 Trench 7 viewed from the east
- 8 Trench 7 viewed from the west
- 9 Trench 2 viewed from the north
- 10 Trench 2 viewed from the south
- 11 Trench 1 viewed from the north
- 12 Trench 1 viewed from the south
- 13 Trench 14 viewed from the south
- 14 Trench 14 viewed from the north
- 15 Trench 15 viewed from the north
- 16 Trench 15 viewed from the south
- 17 Trench 3 viewed from the east
- 18 Trench 3 viewed from the west
- 19 Trench 4 viewed from the east
- 20 Trenches 4 and 5 viewed from the east
- 21 Trench 5 viewed from the east
- 22 Trench 5 viewed from the west
- 23-24 Trench 4 viewed from the west
- 25 Trench 10 viewed from the south
- 26 Trench 10 viewed from the north
- 27 Trench 9 viewed from the west
- 28 Trench 9 viewed from the east
- 29 Trench 8 viewed from the west
- 30 Trench 8 viewed from the east
- 31 Trench 6 viewed from the north
- 32 Trench 6 viewed from the south
- 33 Trench 13 viewed from the south
- 34 Trench 13 viewed from the north
- 35 Trench 12 viewed from the north
- 36 Trench 12 viewed from the south
- 37 Trench 11 viewed from the south
- 38 Trench 11 viewed from the north.