

Archaeological Watching Brief
Muthill Old Church
Muthill
CRIEFF
MQ01



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
MUTHILL OLD CHURCH,
MUTHILL**

MQ01

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Illustration 1: Site location plan

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ABSTRACT

Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust commissioned Alder Archaeology Ltd to carry out a watching brief in advance of the installation of Caithness slabs under the gate swings at Muthill Old Church. Muthill Old Church and graveyard is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore consent for this work has been granted by Historic Scotland. The archaeological conditions of this consent specify that a watching brief be carried out on any groundworks.

The watching brief (Alder site code MQ01) took place on 23rd July 2013. A series of earlier surfaces for the entranceway were identified though the majority of these were modern. The earliest phase represented a cobbled surface that pre-dated the construction of the archway. No finds were uncovered to aid in dating of this feature. The groundworks for the slab installation have been completed and no further work will be carried out as part of this project.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust commissioned Alder Archaeology Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks for the laying of new Caithness slabs in the entrance to Muthill Old church. The development occupies an area of approximately 3.2m² below the gate swings of the B-listed archway that forms the entrance into the churchyard. The area is part of the Scheduled Monument, Muthill, church and tower (Index No M90225) centred on NGR NN 86793 17060. The work (Alder site code MQ01) was carried out on the 23rd of July 2013 in reasonable weather conditions.

As a Scheduled Ancient Monument Muthill Church comes under the jurisdiction of Historic Scotland. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) has been granted for this development and this report is designed to satisfy the archaeological conditions attached to this consent (Case ID: 201205490).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the watching brief was to identify and record the presence, date, character and quality of any archaeological remains that may be revealed during the groundworks required within the development area.

1.3 Reporting

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this watching brief. Copies will be sent to the client, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and Historic Scotland.

1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues

The watching brief and this report are designed to satisfy the archaeological conditions placed on the scheduled monument consent for the development at Muthill Church.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Billy Trail and his team, who carried out the work, for their assistance during this project. Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust funded this watching brief.

2 Details of Work

2.1 The Site (Illus 1)

The development site is located in the centre of Muthill. The arched gateway, which is approximately 2.4m wide, is located to the south of Muthill Old Church and forms the main entrance into the churchyard. Normally, there are two oak gates hanging in this entrance but the existing gates, which have been replaced as part of this contract, were removed prior to the watching brief to provide better access during the works.

The area of excavation required for the installation of the Caithness slabs extended for a distance of approximately 1.5m inside the churchyard as measured from the threshold.

An excavation to a depth of approximately 0.15m was required to allow for the installation of the new slabs.

2.2 Archaeological Potential

Muthill old church comprises the remains of an early 15th century parish church with an aisled nave and chancel, and its surrounding graveyard. A 12th century tower is embedded in the W end of the nave. The tower is one of a small related group in central Scotland, including Dunning, Dunblane, Markinch and St Andrews.

The development was carried out over the burial ground boundary and any excavation in this location was considered likely to uncover archaeological remains associated with the early church as well as human remains relating to burials within the churchyard.

2.3 Archaeological Method

The watching brief monitored all excavations required for the development. All relevant deposits were given context numbers, cleaned, investigated and recorded. Images were taken with a Nikon D50 digital camera.

2.4 Results of Investigations

The area to be excavated under the gate swing measured approximately 2.4m by 1.5m.



The area prior to the start of work, looking N.

A layer of tar covered by small gravel and fine dust (01) forms the surface material in the entrance way and under this is a compacted base for the tar formed of gravel and fragments of crushed rock (02). Immediately below the base is a thicker layer of makeup comprising bands of red/ brown clay mixed with darker soil (03). This

material contains small and medium stones but no larger pieces or architectural fragments.



The cobbled surface (04) and sill stones (05), looking S

Below the makeup a partially surviving cobbled surface was identified (04). This deposit was identified at the formation level of the excavations (maximum depth 0.2m below modern ground surface) and as such has not been disturbed by the present development. The surface was formed of small rounded pebbles, perhaps sourced from river gravel, rather than larger stone sets. The surface has been disturbed in the area of the threshold and around the foundations for the gateway. Immediately inside the entrance four buried red sandstone sills (05) were identified. These stones are heavily worn and smoothed in places indicating heavy foot traffic over a number of years. The poor condition of the stone can also probably be explained by its exposure to the elements in the gateway. These previous threshold stones respect the dimensions of the current entranceway suggesting that the opening has been of a similar size for many years.

Immediately inside the threshold a square stone (06), originally approximately 0.25m by 0.25m, but now split into two pieces, was discovered abutting the sill stones. The small square shaped hole in the centre of the stone marks the position of a sliding drop bolt from a previous two-leafed gate arrangement.

3 Interpretation

At the base of the current excavations, and below the layers of makeup, an area of cobbles was uncovered which represents the earliest feature identified by this watching brief. The cobbled surface is located below the ground level marked by the sandstone sills and is cut away by these features and also disturbed by the foundations for the arched gateway. This suggests that the cobbled surface pre-dates the arched gateway and associated structures. This surface represents an early entranceway into the

churchyard, though the lack of artefacts discovered in the work have prevented any attempt at dating.

The ground was then raised to a point slightly below (approx 0.05- 0.07m) the present level as marked by the top of the sandstone sills. During this phase the entranceway was approximately the same width as at present to judge by the placement of the sill stones. During this phase the entrance was also closed off by a two-gate arrangement, one of which was held in place by a sliding drop bolt. The sandstone sills are heavily worn and eroded testifying to heavy foot traffic into the churchyard over many years. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (Ordnance Survey, 1866) shows two buildings, one marked as a public house, to the east of the entrance. The archway is not marked on the early OS map indicating that it, and the sandstone sills uncovered in this watching brief, post-dates 1863 which is the survey date for the first edition. The boundary wall at the south edge of the graveyard post-dates the demolition of the two buildings, however the arch was most probably constructed when the buildings in the east were still standing.

The presence of buildings immediately to the east of the entrance seems likely to have disturbed or completely removed any traces of the outer part of the graveyard in this location. This perhaps explains the lack of fragmentary human remains that are often uncovered when similar projects are carried out within graveyards.

In recent years the ground has been further built up and a tarred surface laid. The tarred surface is the most recent attempt at surfacing the entranceway area.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1** This work has revealed several phases of activity in the entrance to the churchyard. The majority of these are modern with the exception of the cobbled surface uncovered at the base of the groundworks.

4.2 Recommendations for Further Work

The groundworks for the development are now concluded and therefore no further monitoring is required.

5 Bibliography

Ordnance Survey 1866, Perth and Clackmannan Sheet CVII.7 (Muckart), surveyed 1863.

Appendix 1 Context Register

<i>No:</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	Deposit, modern surface materials comprising a layer of tar approx 0.05m thick covered by a thin layer of gravel and soil. The modern surface of the entranceway.
02	Deposit, heavily compacted fragments of stone and gravel forming a base for the tar. Approx 0.05m thick
03	Deposit, mixed layer of red/ brown clay and darker soil makeup material. Contains small and medium stone fragments. Approx 0.1m thick.
04	Cobbled surface, survives at the base of the present excavations at approx 0.2m below the modern ground surface. Comprised of small rounded pebbles and cobbles. Cut through by foundations for archway (07) and sandstone sills (05).
05	Sill stones, four old red sandstone sills uncovered approx 0.07m below present day ground surface. Not visible from the modern surface. Heavily worn and weathered stone. These stones appear to respect the approximate size of current entrance.
06	Drop bolt stone, square stone of side approx 0.25m now split into two. Butts up against the sill stones (05). Small square hole carved into the top to take a sliding drop bolt from a two leaf gate arrangement.
07	Deposit, foundation deposits for the archway. Visible at both E and W sides of the arch. Truncates the earlier cobbled surface (05)
08	Paving slabs, forming the modern pavement outside the site.

Appendix 2 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001-002	The entranceway prior to work commencing	N
003-004	The entranceway prior to work commencing	S
005	Work taking place in the archway.	NW
006-007	Work taking place in the archway.	N
008-010	The cobbled surface (05) at the base of the excavations	S
011	The cobbled surface (05) at the base of the excavations	E
012-013	West facing section of the excavation. Showing makeup material (03)	E
014-015	The cobbled surface and N edge of excavation.	N
016-018	The sills stones after they had been cut to correct level to allow installation of	S

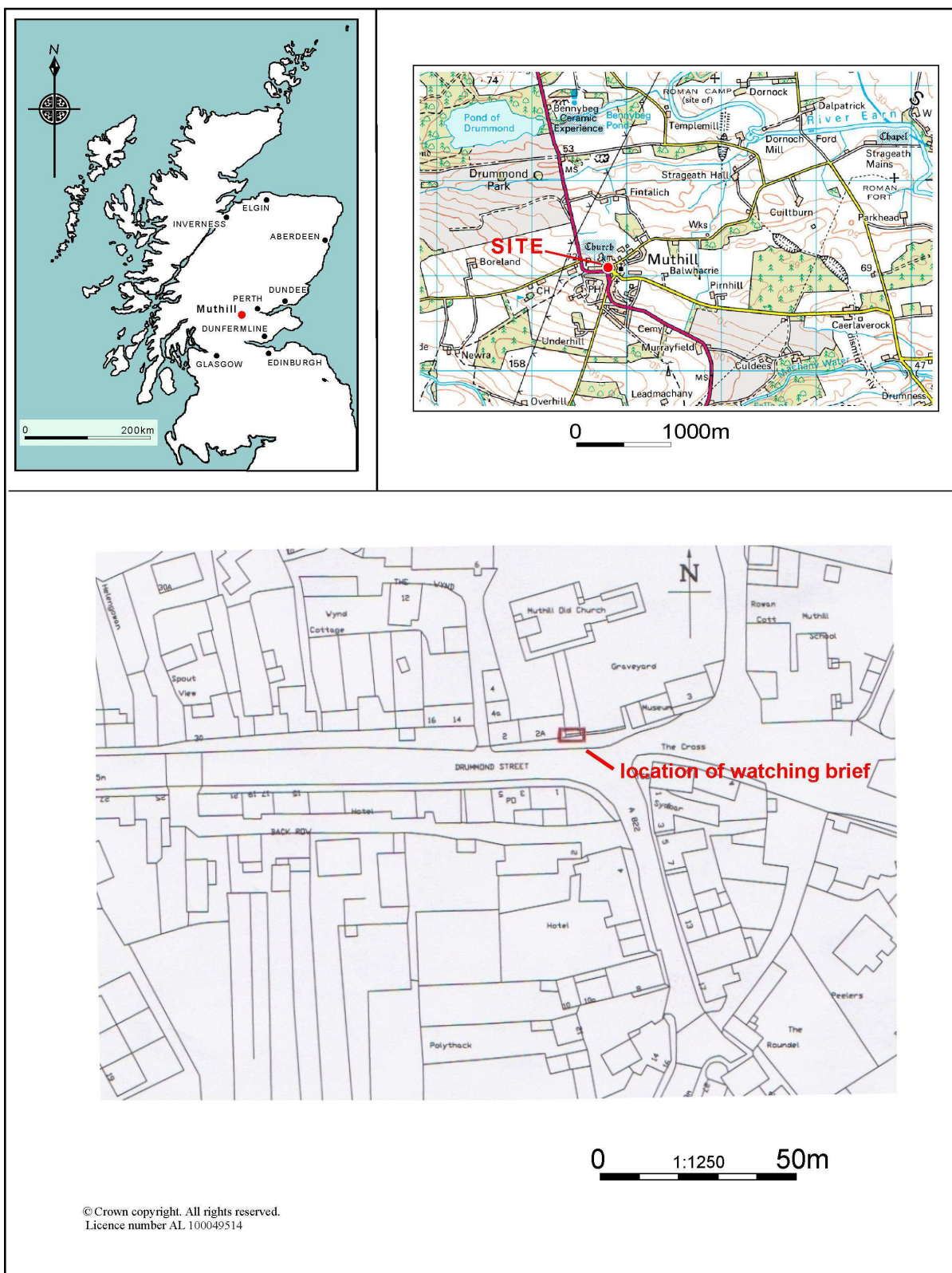
	Caithness slabs.	
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Appendix 3 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth and Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Muthill Old Church, Archaeological Watching Brief on entranceway improvements
PROJECT CODE:	MQ01
PARISH:	Crieff
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Graeme Brown
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Alder Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
RCAHMS NO(S):	NN81NE 3.1
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Archway
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	-
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	Site centred on NN 86793 17060
START DATE	23 rd July 2013
END DATE	23 rd July 2013
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	-
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was carried out in advance of the installation of Caithness slabs under the gate swings at Muthill Old Church (SAM M90225). This work was necessary in order to satisfy the conditions attached to the scheduled monument consent. A series of earlier surfaces for the entranceway were identified though the majority of these were modern. The earliest phase identified represented a cobbled surface that pre-dated the construction of the archway. No finds were uncovered to aid in dating of this feature. The groundworks for the slab installation have completed and no further work will be carried out as part of this project.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	N/A
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	-
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	RCAHMS (intended)
EMAIL ADDRESS:	director@alderarchaeology.co.uk

Illus 1

Site Location Plan



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