

**A7 Auchenvirock**  
***Results of Topsoil Strip Monitoring.***

## 1 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 The results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on the 'A7 Auchenrivock' road upgrade project are presented in this document. The work was commissioned by Historic Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Executive Development Department: Trunk Roads Design and Construction Division. The scope and extent of the archaeological works required by the Scottish Executive Development Department was assessed and specified by Historic Scotland (Contract reference: HS/C/ROADS/3523). The work was in accord with NPPG 5 (SOEnd 1994) and PAN 42 (SOEnd 1994a), in order to determine the nature, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 1.2 The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), of the road corridor comprised a 3.2 km section of the A7 trunk road extending from the Middleholm bend at the northern end (NGR: NY 3724 8210) to the local road at Hagg Old School at the southern end (NGR: NY 3754 7949). The CPO encompasses land belonging to the Buccleuch Estates and areas of pasture currently being farmed by two tenant farmers. The joint CPO covers 45.26 hectares, comprising 13.42 hectares grassland for pasture and silage and 18.42 hectares woodland, mostly modern conifer plantation. The location and extent of the proposed development areas is highlighted in Figures 1, 2 and 3.
- 1.3 Prior to any on site work commencing an *Environmental Statement* was compiled by Transport Scotland (Transport Scotland 2006). AOC Archaeology completed a walkover survey of the area and updated the *Environmental Statement* (AOC 2007). Three known archaeological or cultural heritage remains were found to exist within the CPO, while the existence of remains within the surrounding area suggested the possibility of encountering similar or associated as yet unknown remains.
- 1.4 An archaeological evaluation was then completed over the proposed development, comprising the excavation of a 10% sample of the total development area. The area excavated amounted to 13,420 m<sup>2</sup> of trenching.
- 1.5 Due to the steep gradient and tree coverage in the northern part of the Dean Bank Plantation and the areas immediately around the Docken Back, the Irvine Burn and the Ashy Syke, trenching could not be completed in these areas. As an alternative, the four areas were mapped and test-pitted to provide information that will condition and target the topsoil monitoring in these areas (Figure 3). In total 200 test-pits were excavated.
- 1.6 Although a single site of possible cultural interest was recorded, generally neither significant archaeological features nor artefactual material were identified (Cook 2007). However, in AOC's experience of large scale evaluations small to medium sized features such as cists, single unenclosed roundhouses and other small structures can be missed (eg Kintore; Cook & Dunbar forthcoming). In order to mitigate this risk a programme of Topsoil Strip Monitoring was recommended. The majority of the proposed

development area had been greatly disturbed by both the planting and the removal processes associated with the conifer plantation, thus it was recommended that no further works were necessary in these areas. Despite Areas A, B, C and D (Figures 2 and 3) being unavailable for evaluation it was also recommended that no further works were required as the ground was so disturbed. However, it was recommended that the area to the west of Area B be Topsoil Monitored in order to further investigate the nature and extent of an alignment of stones [002] identified in Trenches 5, 6, 7 and 8 (Cook 2007). This report presents the results of this Topsoil Strip Monitoring.

## **2.1 Archaeological Background**

- 2.1.1 Three recorded sites of cultural importance were recorded during the in the *Environmental Statement* (AOC 2007) which will be affected by the scheme.
- 2.1.2 The Old Irvine Road (NMRS: NY38SE 6) runs between Langholm and Annan and survives as a farm track. Although the road survives intact to the west of the CPO, only a terrace of up to 7 m in width survives within it.
- 2.1.3 The Roman Road (NMRS: NY 38SE89) has not been confirmed on site, but is through to have linked the Roman fort at Netherby, Cumbria to the fort at Broomholm.
- 2.1.4 The Auchenrivock Tower (NMRS: NY 38SE 6) consists of the fragmentary remains of a fortified house dating from the 16/17<sup>th</sup> century. The remains form part of the garden wall of the northern Auchenrivock Cottages.
- 2.1.5 An archaeological evaluation was then completed over the proposed development, comprising the excavation of a 10 % sample of the total development area. The area excavated amounted to 13,420 m<sup>2</sup> of trenching. Due to the steep gradient and tree coverage in the northern part of the Dean Bank Plantation and the areas immediately around the Docken Back, the Irvine Burn and the Ashy Syke trenching could not be completed in these areas. As an alternative, the four areas were mapped and test-pitted to provide information that will condition and target the topsoil monitoring in these areas (Figure 3). In total 200 test-pits were excavated.
- 2.1.6 The archaeological evaluation identified one site of possible significance. A very rough alignment of stones [002] measuring approximately 3 m in width by up to 0.40 m in depth was identified running on a basic east-west alignment within Trenches 5, 6, 7 and 8 (Cook 2007). The features comprised a mixture of different sized and shaped stones directly overlying the subsoil, with no obvious parent cut being identified. The feature was severely disturbed by the former presence of the conifer plantation, and its subsequent removal. Although no dating evidence was identified the feature runs to the east of the Old Irvine Road and it may represent part of the same structure. Alternatively the feature may represent the remains of a collapsed wall.

## 2.2. RESULTS

- 2.2.1 The Topsoil Strip Monitoring was carried out between Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> and Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. In total, an area of the proposed road corridor measuring approximately 160 m north to south by 40 m east to west was monitored (Figure 3). The area was stripped using a bulldozer.
- 2.2.2 The topsoil across the site varied in depth between 0.30 m and 0.80 m depending on the natural topography and the former presence of forestry. The topsoil directly overlay the natural subsoil which was composed of yellow sands and clays. In several areas the subsoil had been greatly disturbed by the former forestry plantation.
- 2.2.3 The loose topsoil was inspected for artefacts, specifically flint. No significant artefacts were identified and very little modern white ceramic was observed. No field drains were encountered reflecting the nature of the underlying free draining sands.
- 2.2.4 The monitoring failed to identify any further elements of the stone alignment recorded during the evaluation (Cook 2007). Nor did the monitoring identify other significant archaeological features, deposits or artefactual material.

## 3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The programme of Topsoil Strip Monitoring identified neither significant archaeological features nor small finds. The failure to identify any part of the stone alignment recorded during the evaluation phase was probably due to the nature of the stripping, which removed all of the topsoil and the initial 0.10 m of subsoil.
- 3.2 No further works are considered necessary.

## 4. REFERENCES:

AOC Archaeology Group, 2007 *An Addendum to the Existing Cultural Heritage Desk-Based Assessment of the A7 Trunk Road, Auchenrivock* unpublished client report

Cook, M. & Dunbar, L. Forthcoming '*Excavations at Forest Road, Kintore*' STAR Monograph

Cook, M 2007 *A7 Auchenrivock Results*. Unpublished client report.

SODD 1999 *National Planning Policy Guideline NPPG18. Planning and the Historic Environment*, The Scottish Office Development Department.

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SOEnD 1994a *Archaeology - the Planning Process and Scheduled Monument Procedures. Planning Advice Note PAN42*, The Scottish Office Environment Department.

Transport Scotland 2006 *A7 Auchenrivock Improvement Scheme, Environmental Statement*, April 2006, Transport Scotland