

**56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill, North Ayrshire:
Archaeological Evaluation**

Data Structure Report

by Thomas Rees

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Rathmell

Archaeology Ltd

Quality Assurance

This report covers works which have been undertaken in keeping with the issued brief as modified by the agreed programme of works. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance of Rathmell Archaeology Limited on the preparation of reports. All works reported on within this document have been undertaken in keeping with the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct.

Signed Date

In keeping with the procedure of Rathmell Archaeology Limited this document and its findings have been reviewed and agreed by an appropriate colleague:

Checked Date

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1 Overview

- 1.1 This Data Structure Report presents the findings of archaeological investigative works required by Morven Developments Ltd in respect of a proposed dwelling house (Planning application no. N/06/0764/PP) at 56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill, North Ayrshire (centred on NGR ref: NS 2028 4714). The archaeological works, carried out on the 3rd April 2007, were designed to inform any necessary mitigation of impact on the archaeological remains within the development area.
- 1.2 The findings presented below inform on the character of any archaeologically significant features within the proposed development area. These investigative works were sufficient to inform on any archaeological hazard and allow the development of any necessary subsequent mitigation. The character of such further stages of work will need to be agreed with West of Scotland Archaeology Service.
- 1.3 Rathmell Archaeology Ltd was appointed by required by Morven Developments Ltd to act with regard to the archaeological condition. Mr. Paul Robins of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), who advises North Ayrshire Council on archaeological matters, provided guidance on the character of archaeological investigations required on this site.
- 1.4 *Site layout*
- 1.4.1 The area concerned is currently garden ground on land adjacent to The Fort, Seamill, North Ayrshire (NGR: NS 2028 4714) and extends to roughly 0.07ha. It incorporates two garages (conjoined), driveways, patios, lawns, flower beds and a former wooded belt.
- 1.4.2 The eastern upslope portion of the proposed house lies under the existing garage and the road surface to the front (south). The upslope parking bay will lie within current lawn and flowerbed garden which has clearly been terraced in association with the late nineteenth century house. The western downslope portion is currently sloped lawn, bounded by rhododendron bushes to the south and the stumps of cleared sycamore trees and bushes to the north. The ground to the north of the proposed site, edging the drop to the Kilbride Burn has traditionally been used as a vegetable / fruit plot.
- 1.4.3 While material culture of antiquity has been recovered by the owners over the past 20 years from Seamill Fort (Mr & Mrs Skelton *pers comm.*) only late nineteenth and twentieth century material has been exposed within the lower, laid out gardens (ie including the proposed development area). The potential for generating discoveries includes numerous flower beds and the digging out of the lower slope pitching down from the Seamill Fort to form a pond and sun patio (see Figures 2 and 3d).

2 Project Works

- 2.1 The programme of works commenced with an archaeological evaluation through a combination of machine cut trenches and hand excavated pits. The available area of the site was much less than anticipated prior to the commencement of works with its core already lost to garages and with numerous services crossing the eastern portion of the area. In addition the garden area in the north was enclosed by an extant wall which could not be breached at this time.
- 2.2 Consequently the trench layout adopted was to cut two substantial trenches downslope of the garages (measuring some 52.8m² in total). In addition three test pits were cut: one by machine to the front of the garages through the road surface; and two by hand in the garden upslope of the garages. This adaptation was designed to maximise the coverage of the evaluation while recognising the access difficulties and scale of modern disturbance.
- 2.3 These works were undertaken in keeping with the submitted Written Scheme of Investigation, with the exception of items specified above; the on-site works taking place on the 3rd April 2007.

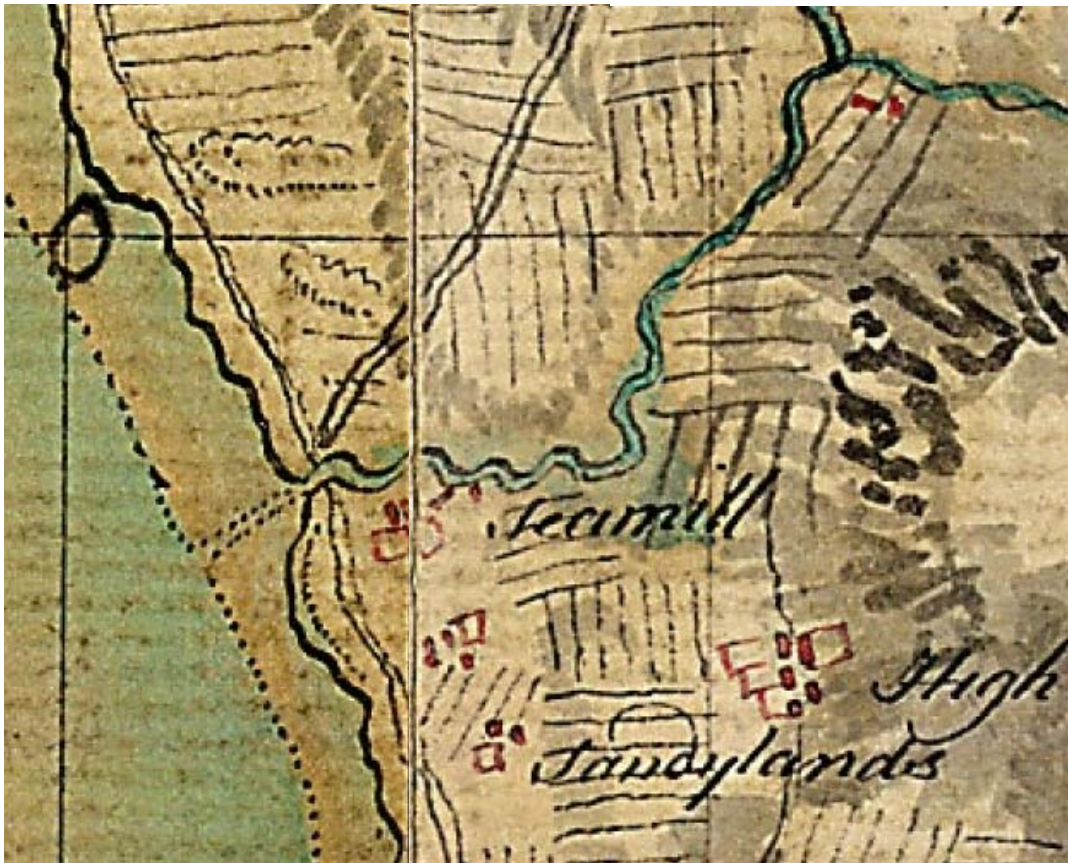


Figure 1a: Roy's Military Survey (1747-55)

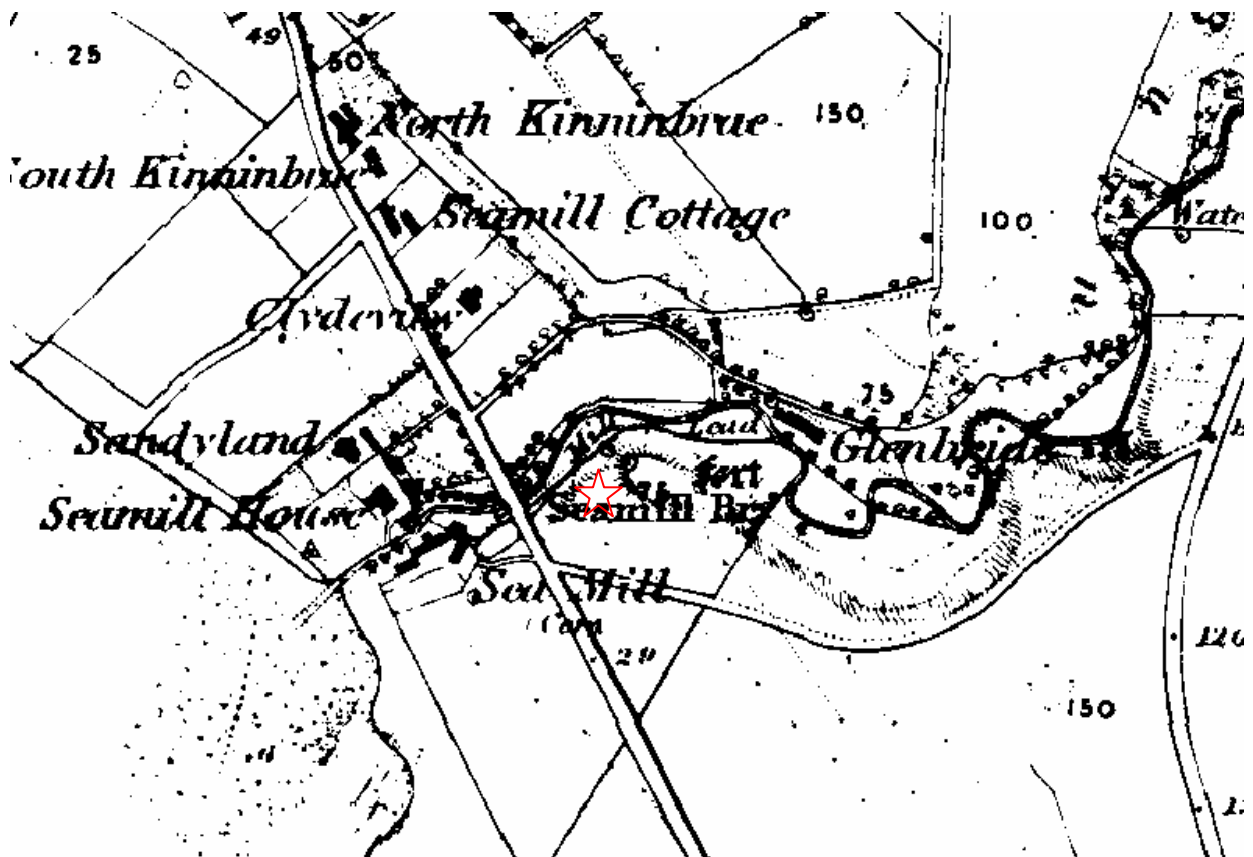


Figure 1b - 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1858

- 2.4 The majority of exposed features were investigated and evaluated to determine archaeological significance. All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

3 Findings: Desktop study

- 3.1 The desktop study did not identify the presence within the study area of any sites protected for their archaeological or historical merit under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 or buildings protected under the Town and Country Planning Act 1997 (Historic Scotland 1998).
- 3.2 Nor were any sites identified that have the potential to contain the burial of human skeletal material, and hence raise the difficulties of the crime of violation of sepulchre (the common law crime of unlawful interference with human remains).
- 3.3 The development area is immediately southwest of the known site of a later prehistoric to early historic fort (WoSASPIN 5574). A sequence of similar small forts, including Seamill, are referred to in the New Statistical Account (1843-5, vol 5, pg 257).
- 3.4 The fort at Seamill occupies a tongue of land projecting from the end of the south bank of the ravine of Kilbride Burn. Christison, in 1893, notes only a massive rampart, 8ft above the interior, cutting off the narrow neck by which it is approached. However, when excavated in May 1880 ramparts were noted following the oval summit of the mound, enclosing an area measuring 90ft by 60ft:

On the side looking to the sea there were two walls, an outer and an inner, about 5 or 6 feet thick, and only a few yards apart, which coalesced into one at the north-western apex" (Munro 1882, 61)

- 3.5 Extensive material culture was recovered from the site during the 1880s excavation, suggesting an original use of the fort in later prehistory with a continuation or re-use of the site during the 4th to 7th centuries AD.
- 3.6 The Seamill fort is now mainly covered by a lawn which continues to the natural slopes on the N, S and SW sides. The remains of the fort comprise a rampart and ditch on the SE, with the rampart continuing for 16m along the NE side, where it is 1m wide and 1.4m high. It has been cut into by the lawn, exposing a stony construction. On the SE, the rampart is 3m wide, rising 3m above the lawn, and 4m above the ditch, which is about 13m wide and 3m deep. In recent years the current owners, through the use of the interior of the fort, exposed a number of items of material culture, identified by Mr Crispin Flower (WoSAS) as spindle whorls.
- 3.7 The earliest source of sound cartographical evidence that illustrates a basic level of detail of the area concerned dates to the eighteenth century with the pre-Ordnance Survey map by Roy (1747-1755) (Figure 1a). This is followed by the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map (1858 Figure 1b) that illustrates accurate detail of the area concerned.
- 3.8 Roy's map of the area (Figure 1a) shows a settlement at Seamill formed of some four structures and two enclosures. The structures are adjacent to the Kilbride Burn, below the site, while the enclosures may be on the higher ground that includes the development site. The northeastern enclosure appears oval and may be the fort.
- 3.9 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1858) (Figure 1b) illustrates that there has been significant development in the area, predominantly with the establishment of a more extensive road network and an expansion of Seamill. In regards to the development area the site is blank hillside, with a bluff shown to the northwest and the fort depicted to the northeast. Subsequently, in the late nineteenth century, a substantial mansion was built on the site. This construction saw the landscaping of the slopes below Seamill Fort.

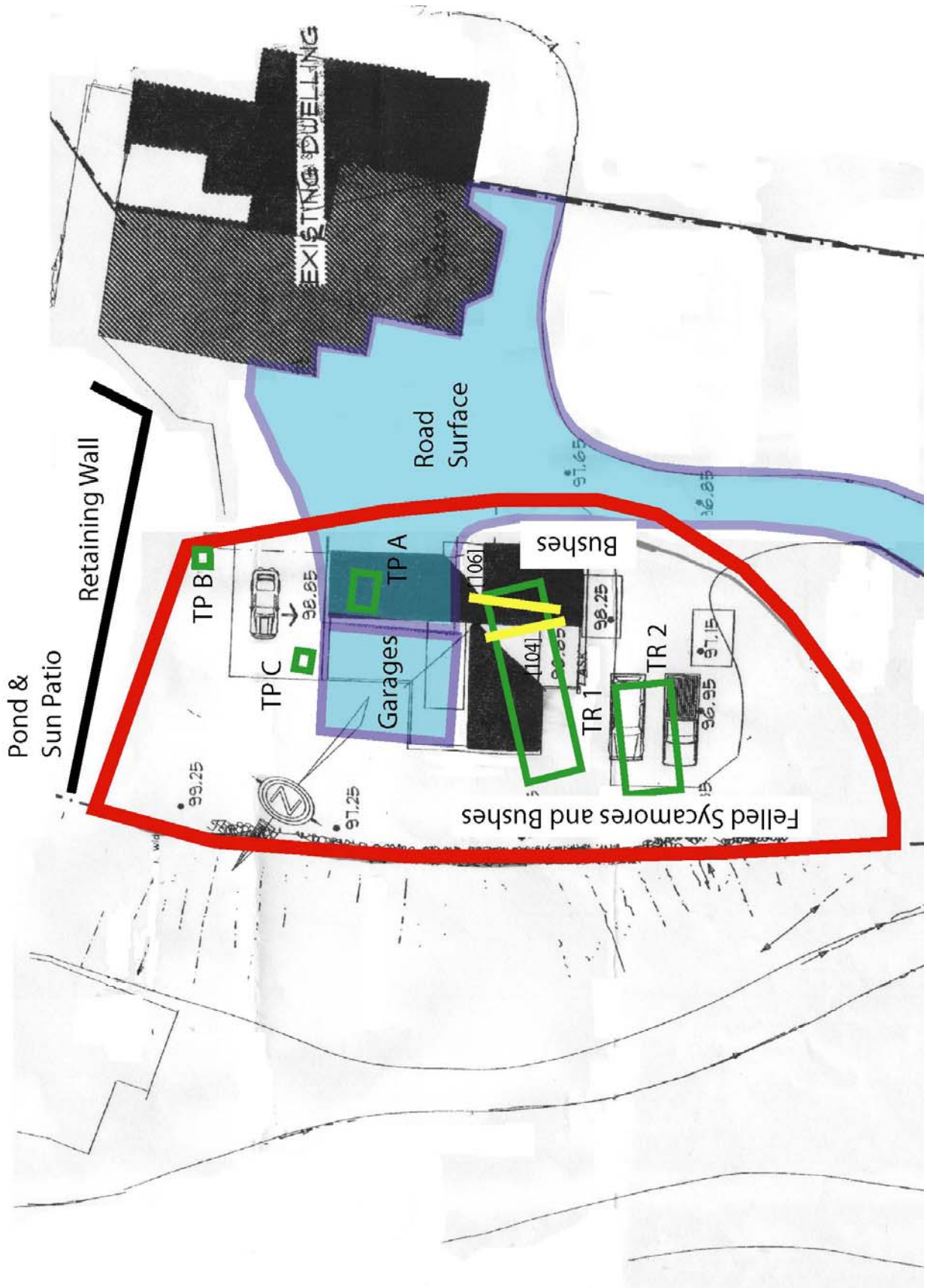


Figure 2: Site Layout with trenches and test pits marked in green; features in yellow and main modern disturbances in purple/blue.



Figure 3a: Garages from SW, upslope



Figure 3b: Test Pit A



Figure 3c: Garages from south



Figure 3d: Pond & Sun Patio

4 Findings: Evaluation trenches

- 4.1 All trenches and test pits exhibited a fairly common stratigraphic sequence with mid brown friable sand topsoil with occasional small-medium stones reaching an average depth of 360mm, overlying an orange coarse sand, which contained stone inclusions in the northern portions of the site.
- 4.2 A geotechnical test pit excavated in the base of an evaluation trench showed this sand to be overlying degraded red sandstone, which became progressively robust with depth.
- 4.3 Within Trench 1 a linear feature [104] was identified, aligned north-northeast to south-southwest exposed for 3.2m length at +8m (ie the southern end of the trench). The feature was 650mm broad and up to 200mm deep with a shallow, scooped cross section. The fill of the feature [105] was mid brown sand with occasional small sub-rounded stones which was highly comparable to the overlying topsoil [101]. There were no artefacts or ecofacts noted within this linear feature. To the immediate south of this feature was a black plastic water pipe [106].
- 4.4 All other trenches were entirely blank of any potentially significant feature; there was only one field drain noted which ran the length of Trench 1 within the topsoil.

5 Discussion

- 5.1 The development area does not lie on the fabric of the fort, as has been recorded through the 1880s excavations accounted by Munro. The scale of subsequent disturbance through the construction of the main house, the landscaping of grounds and the forming of roadways and garages suggest that should such early material have been present this would have been noted and accounted.
- 5.2 Certainly for the last 20+ years the current owners have not recovered any significant material culture from working this ground, although they have previously found material within Seamill Fort and reported this to West of Scotland Archaeology Service.
- 5.3 In advance of the evaluation the main hazard was assessed to be from the potential for the presence of outworks, middens, ancillary structures and other comparable material related to the occupation of the fort. No significant material culture was recovered and only a single, gully or shallow ditch was exposed by the evaluation. The latter was shallow with a topsoil comparable fill with no identifiable anthropic material in its fill; this is not reasonably significant archaeology given the likelihood that it relates to either agricultural or horticultural use of the ground.
- 5.4 The 1880s excavations at Seamill Fort (Munro 1882) recovered volumes of material culture including ecofactual material. The scale of recovery suggests that should comparable activity extend into the development area then the presence of material culture should be expected and used as an indicator. No such material culture was recovered during the evaluation, nor any significant supporting features.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The archaeological works failed to identify any significant archaeological features or artefacts within the study area. The development area has also been substantially compromised by the construction of the garage and associated drives as well as landscaping associated with the use of the ground as gardens. Consequently, we recommend that no further archaeological works are appropriate with regard to the construction of the residential property.
- 6.2 The appropriateness and acceptability of our recommendations rest with West of Scotland Archaeology Service and North Ayrshire Council. Confirmation that the above recommendations are acceptable should be confirmed with these bodies.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 A programme of archaeological investigative works was undertaken in respect of the proposed development on land at 56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill, Ayrshire (centred on NGR ref: NS 2028 4714). An evaluation was carried out on the 3rd April 2007. The evaluation comprised of two trenches and three test pits located within the development area.
- 7.2 A representative sample, as agreed with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, of all of the uncovered features with archaeological potential was investigated. All trenches and test pits exhibited a fairly common stratigraphic sequence with mid brown friable sand topsoil with occasional small-medium stones with an average depth of 360mm, overlying an orange coarse sand, which contained stone inclusions in the northern portions of the site.
- 7.3 No significant archaeological features were identified during the course of the archaeological evaluation.



Figure 4: Panorama from the west of the summit of Seamill Fort



Figure 5a: Trench 1 from E



Figure 5b: Trench 2 from E



Figure 5c: Test Pit B (C in rear of shot)



Figure 5d: Linear Feature [104]

8 References

8.1 *Documentary*

Christison, D	1893	'The prehistoric forts of Ayrshire', Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 27, 1892-3, 397.
Oughterson, Rev. A	1791-99	Old Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-99. Ayrshire, Parish of West Kilbride, Vol.12. University of Glasgow and Edinburgh, 404.
Munro, R	1882	'Notice of excavations made on an ancient "fort" at Seamill, Ayrshire', Archaeol Hist Collect Ayr Wigton, 3, 1882, 59-65.
Findlay, Rev. T	1834-45	New Statistical Account of Scotland, 1834-45. Ayrshire, Parish of West Kilbride, Vol.5. University of Glasgow and Edinburgh, 243.
Rees, T	2007	56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill, Archaeological Mitigation. <i>Unpublished Commercial Written Scheme of Investigation</i> .
SODev	1994	<i>National Planning Policy Guideline 5, Archaeology and planning</i> , Scottish Office Development Department.
SOEnv	1994	<i>Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology</i> , Scottish Office Environmental Department.

8.2 *Cartographic*

1745-55	Roy Military map	Military Map of Ayrshire Sheets 03/2b and 03/2c
1858	Ordnance Survey	Ayrshire, 1 st edition map 1:10560

Appendix 1: Trench Details

Within this appendix a standardised set of data pertaining to the evaluation trenches is presented.

All measurement distances quoted along the trench measure based on the quoted orientation of the trench.

Trench 1

Orientation:	Northwest to Southeast
Size:	10.5m by 3.2m (33.6m ²)
Topsoil depth:	320mm to 360mm
Subsoil character	Orange coarse sand, loose, with common subrounded to subangular medium to large stones [102] in the northern 2.8m of the trench varied to orange coarse sand [103] in the south.
Modern features:	Water Pipe [106]
Significant features:	Linear Gully [104]
Artefacts:	None

Trench 2

Orientation:	Northwest to Southeast
Size:	6m by 3.2m (19.2m ²)
Topsoil depth:	440mm to 600mm
Subsoil character	Pinky orange fine sand [202].
Modern features:	None
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Test Pit A (Machine)

Orientation:	Northeast to Southwest
Size:	2m by 1.1m
Overburden:	250mm
Topsoil depth:	250mm
Subsoil character	Orange coarse sand [303].
Modern features:	None
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Test Pit B (Hand)

Orientation:	N/A
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Size: 0.5m by 0.5m
 Topsoil depth: 420mm to 550mm
 Subsoil character Orange coarse sand [402].
 Modern features: None
 Significant features: None
 Artefacts: None

Test Pit C (Hand)

Orientation: N/A
 Size: 0.5m by 0.5m
 Topsoil depth: 400mm
 Subsoil character Orange coarse sand, loose, with common subrounded to subangular small to medium stones [502].
 Modern features: None
 Significant features: None
 Artefacts: None

Appendix 2: Record Summaries

Context Summaries

No.	Trench	Interpretation	Description
101	1	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silty/sand, friable with occasional small to medium sized rounded stones throughout. Between 320mm and 360mm in depth.
102	1	Subsoil	Orange coarse sand, loose, with common subrounded to subangular medium to large stones.
103	1	Subsoil	Orange coarse sand.
104	1	Linear Feature	Linear feature aligned north-north-east to south-south-west exposed for 3.2m length at +8m. The feature is 650mm broad and upto 200mm deep with a shallow, scooped cross section.
105	1	Fill of [104]	Mid brown sand with occasional small sub-rounded stones.
106	1	Water Pipe	Black plastic water pipe aligned north-east to south-west resting on upper surface of subsoil at +9m to + 10.3m.

201	2	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silty/sand, friable with occasional small to medium sized rounded stones throughout. Between 440mm and 600mm in depth; in northwestern 1.8m of trench a marked concentration of medium stones.
202	2	Subsoil	Pinky orange fine sand.
301	TP A	Road Makeup	Hardcore comprising stone, brick, glazed brick and gravel to a depth of 250mm.
302	TP A	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silty/sand, friable with occasional small to medium sized rounded stones throughout. 250mm in depth.
303	TP A	Subsoil	Orange coarse sand.
401	TP B	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silty/sand, friable with occasional small to medium sized rounded stones throughout. Between 320mm and 360mm in depth.
402	TP B	Subsoil	Orange coarse sand.
501	TP C	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silty/sand, friable with occasional small to medium sized rounded stones throughout. Between 320mm and 360mm in depth.
502	TP C	Subsoil	Orange coarse sand, loose, with common subrounded to subangular small to medium stones.

Drawing Register

Sheet	No.	Title	Scale	Date	Author
1	001	Post-ex plan of trench 1	1:100	03/04/07	TR
1	002	Post-ex plan of trench 2	1:100	03/04/07	TR
2	003	Post-ex plan of test pit A	1:100	03/04/07	TR
2	004	Post-ex plan of test pit B	1:100	03/04/07	TR
2	005	Post-ex plan of test pit C	1:100	03/04/07	TR

Appendix 3: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	North Ayrshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill
PARISH:	West Kilbride
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Thomas Rees
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NS 202 471
START DATE (this season)	3 rd April 2007
END DATE (this season)	3 rd April 2007
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (may include information from other fields)	<p>A programme of archaeological investigative works was undertaken in respect of the proposed development on land at 56a Ardrossan Road, Seamill, Ayrshire (centred on NGR ref: NS 5281 3181). An evaluation was carried out on the 3rd April 2007. The evaluation comprised of two trenches and three test pits located within the development area.</p> <p>A representative sample, as agreed with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, of all of the uncovered features with archaeological potential was investigated. All trenches and test pits exhibited a fairly common stratigraphic sequence with mid brown friable sand topsoil with occasional small-medium stones with an average depth of 400mm, overlying an orange coarse sand, which contained stone inclusions in the northern portions of the site.</p> <p>No significant archaeological features were identified during the course of the archaeological evaluation.</p>
PROJECT CODE:	07022
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Morvern Developments Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	10 Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6PU
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Report to West of Scotland Archaeology Service and archive to National Monuments Record of Scotland.

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