

Constablewood Estate, Largs: Archaeological Evaluation

Data Structure Report

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issued 15th October 2007



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1 Overview

- 1.1 This Data Structure Report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on behalf of Mr and Mrs Scott K Farquhar in respect of the construction of a dwelling house and stable block (Planning application no. 07/00441/PP), to be erected at Constablewood Estate, Largs, Ayrshire. The archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the development area.
- 1.2 The area concerned is on land adjacent to a minor road within Constablewood Estate near Largs, North Ayrshire (NGR: NS 219 642) and extends to roughly 0.15ha. It is located near Brisbane Glen Road; running northeast from the town of Largs. The area immediately surrounding the site currently consists of managed woodland, with agricultural ground to the southwest.
- 1.3 North Ayrshire Council has instructed that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken as a requirement of the issued planning consent. The West of Scotland Archaeology Service who advise North Ayrshire Council on archaeological matters will provide guidance on the structure of archaeological mitigation required on this site during development works.
- 1.4 Rathmell Archaeology Limited has been appointed by Mr and Mrs Scott K Farquhar to undertake the development and implementation of archaeological mitigation works during the development at Constablewood Estate, Largs.

2 Historical Background

- 2.1 The available cartographic sources show the development ground to have been agricultural ground prior to the construction of the surrounding settlement. Roy's Military Map (Figure 1b) shows the existence of Constable Farm and its associated field systems; however, these stop short of the burn which is a tributary of Noddsdale Water. We can infer from this that there were no structures on the site in the late 18th century and that the area was most likely grazing land associated with Constable Farm. The existing road to the northwest of the site and the field-system still evident was in existence on the first edition 1857 Ordnance Survey map (Ordnance Survey 1:10560).
- 2.2 The development area is immediately adjacent to the site of a possible farmstead: West Grassyards (NMRS No. NS26SW 22). The site of the farmstead was intensively walked in 1995 (Bickers 1995b). An extensive area of rig and furrow was found here with associated field clearance, taking the form of piles of stones gathered at the edges. A piece of dressed stone was discovered and given to the museum at Largs.
- 2.3 The development area does not appear to lie on the immediate fabric of the farmstead, but lies south of the burn that runs NW-SE into Noddsdale Water, a river running south along Brisbane Glen road. However, there is a possibility that outworks, middens, ancillary structures and other comparable material related to the farmstead still survive as buried archaeology in this area.
- 2.4 Noddsdale (or Brisbane Glen, as it is marked on the OS Explorer series map) runs from Largs on the Clyde Coast, north-north east into Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. Brisbane Glen is named after Thomas Brisbane who also gave his name to the city and river of Brisbane, Australia. Thomas was a keen astronomer who built his own observatory near Largs and established another near Sydney while he was Governor General of New South Wales.

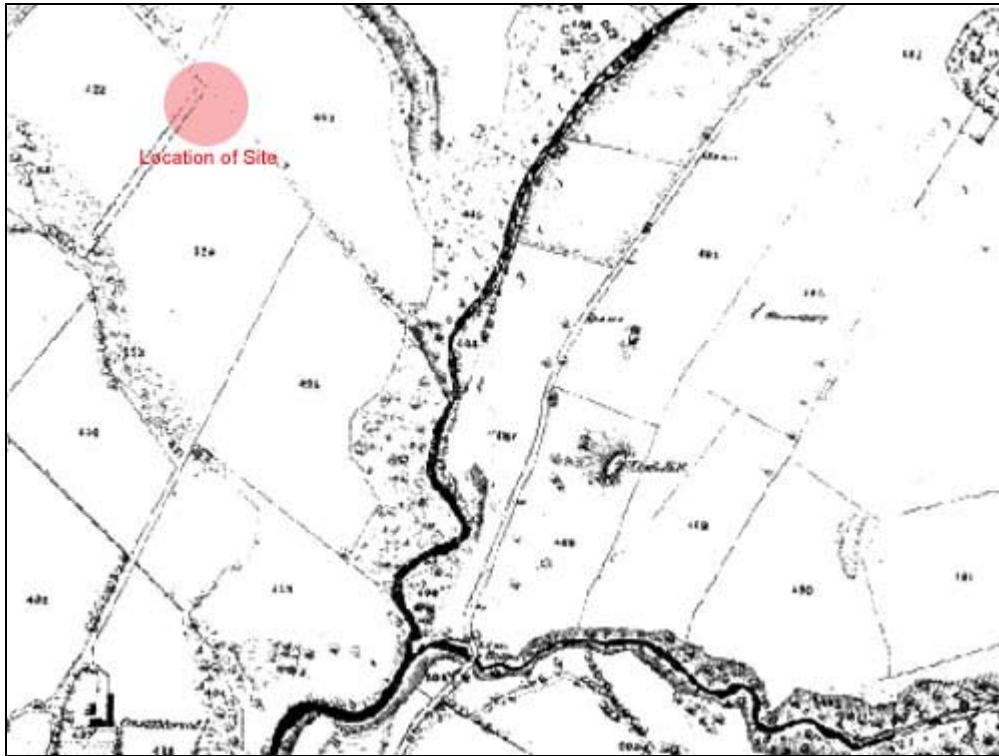


Figure 1a: Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1879



Figure 1b: Roy's Military Map – Showing Constable Farm



Figure 2a: Site seen from the west



Figure 2b: Trench 1

- 2.5 According to the Historic Land-use Map (HLMAP) the earliest use of the land was as rough grazing. In the 18th and 19th centuries rectilinear fields define the extents of small farms around the area. In the 20th century the woodland spreads along roadways and across disused agricultural land as part of greater estates.

3 Project Works

- 3.1 The archaeological evaluation took place on the 5th of October 2007. The works included stripping of 104.5 linear meters of trench (these trenches were 1.2m wide, giving 125.4m² basal dimensions). This exceeded the target evaluation scale (8% of the 0.15ha development area). Slight adjustments had to be made to the trench layout described in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Sludden 2007) in order to work round existing fence lines and a large fallen tree (Figure 3). In this instance the greatest change was the repositioning of Trench 3.
- 3.2 All trenches were reduced to the level of natural subsoil and any potential archaeological features investigated. All features impacted by the ground reduction appeared to be of relatively modern or natural origin, and throughout the course of the investigation no artefacts were recovered.
- 3.3 All works complied with WoSAS Standard Conditions, the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

4 Findings

- 4.1 In compliance with the Written Scheme of Investigation all trenches were reduced to the level of natural subsoil. Where the trenches were closer to the road and in less well drained parts of the site there had been a build up of peat deposits which sometimes reached depths of over a metre. Where the site was well drained the subsoil was less than 0.5m below the surface.
- 4.2 Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 9 all contained modern tile field drains. Obviously these represent attempts at modern agricultural improvements to the fields either for grazing or crops. The abundance of reeds throughout the site and in the field beyond suggests the area may exhibit problems with drainage despite its relatively elevated position. This is supported by the standing water observed throughout the surrounding wooded areas.
- 4.3 The subsoil varied in nature across the site but showed no signs of disturbance. Most of the roots, associated with either trees or reeds, were shallow and made little impact on the subsoil. For the most part the subsoil was a yellow brown, silty-sand with high gravel content. However, there were bands of clay running across the site which was picked up in several trenches. This variety in the subsoil may account for some of the isolated problems with drainage.
- 4.4 A single rubble drain was observed in Trench 4 and left undisturbed after an initial investigation due to the apparent danger of flooding. No features of historic or archaeological significance were found anywhere on the site and no finds were recovered. There were no signs of earlier agricultural techniques such as rig and furrow and the only negative features observed in the subsoil were modern drains.

5 Discussion

- 5.1 No archaeologically significant features were observed anywhere on the site. It appears from the examination of cartographic evidence that the site has remained as arable land throughout recorded history. It seems likely therefore that the use of the site has remained consistent or that subsequent land use has completely obscured any traces of archaeological features. However, the lack of disturbance to the subsoil suggests that the site has consistently remained unoccupied.

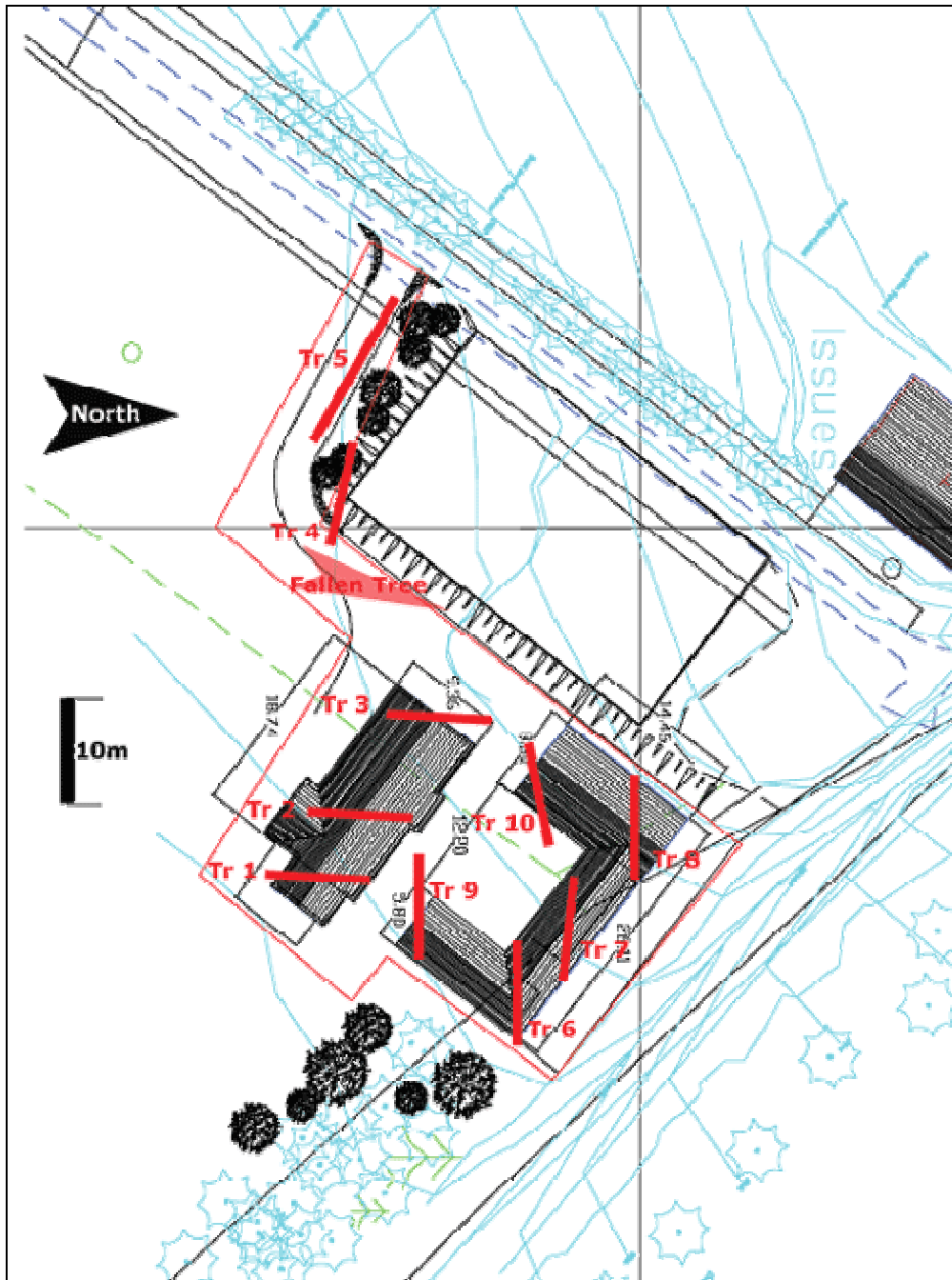


Figure 3: Trench layout.



Figure 4a: Trench 10



Figure 4b: View from site towards Largs

- 5.2 The site is on the edge of a field boundary which appears to have remained consistent over according to cartographic evidence from the First Ordnance Survey. Examination of the site and the immediately surrounding area indicated the removal of a large number of trees. If the site had remained lightly wooded for a long period of time this may explain why no traces of earlier forms of agriculture survive anywhere on the site.
- 5.3 From the complete lack of archaeological evidence recovered from the evaluation trenches we are forced to conclude that the site has remained unoccupied and uncultivated despite the known existence of areas of rig and furrow in the vicinity.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The archaeological evaluation failed to identify any significant archaeological features or artefacts within the development area. Consequently, we recommend that no further archaeological works are appropriate.
- 6.2 The appropriateness and acceptability of our recommendations rest with North Ayrshire Council and the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, their advisors. Confirmation that the above recommendations are acceptable should be received from these bodies prior to the implementation of any development works whose appropriateness may rely on these recommendations.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried on the 5th October 2007 on behalf of Mr and Mrs Scott K Farquhar in respect of the construction of a dwelling house and stable block (Planning application no. 07/00441/PP), to be erected at Constablewood Estate, Largs, Ayrshire. These archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the development area.
- 7.2 The evaluation identified no significant archaeological remains, although extensive evidence of field drainage was exposed. On balance we have illustrated that this development will not adversely impact on any archaeological remains and we recommend that no further archaeological works are appropriate.

8 References

8.1 *Bibliographic References*

Bickers	1995b	Discovery Excav Scot, 1995, 73
SODev	1994	<i>National Planning Policy Guideline 5, Archaeology and planning</i> , Scottish Office Development Department.
SOEnd	1994	<i>Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology</i> , Scottish Office Environmental Department.

8.2 *Cartographic References*

Roy, William	1747 – 55	Roy's Military Maps
Ordnance Survey	1857	<i>First Edition, Ordnance Survey</i>
Ordnance Survey	1879	<i>Second Edition, Ordnance Survey</i>

Appendix 1: Trench Details

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

Trench 1

Orientation:	Southwest to northeast
Size:	1.5m by 10m (15m ²)
Depth to subsoil:	300mm to 700
Subsoil character	Subsoil is the natural (003)
Modern features:	Tile field drain
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Trench 2

Orientation:	Southwest to northeast
Size:	1.5m by 10.2m (15.3m ²)
Topsoil depth:	400mm to 600mm
Subsoil character:	Subsoil is the natural (003)
Modern features:	Tile field drain
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Trench 3

Orientation:	Southwest to northeast
Size:	1.5m by 10.5m (15.75m ²)
Topsoil depth	600mm to 800mm
Subsoil character:	Subsoil is the natural (003) with a band of (004)
Modern features:	Tile field drain
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Trench 4

Orientation:	Northwest to southeast
Size:	1.5m by 9m (13.5m ²)
Topsoil depth	400mm to 600mm
Subsoil character:	Subsoil is mostly (005) with patches of (004)
Modern features:	Rubble drain
Significant features:	None

Artefacts: None.

Trench 5

Orientation: North to south
Size: 1.5m by 15m (22.5m²)
Topsoil depth 500mm to 600mm
Subsoil character: Subsoil is half (003) and half (005)
Modern features: Road ditch
Significant features: None
Artefacts: None

Trench 6

Orientation: Northwest to southeast
Size: 1.5m by 10m (1.5m²)
Topsoil depth 600mm to 1000mm
Subsoil character: Subsoil is mostly (005) with a band of (004)
Modern features: None
Significant features: None
Artefacts: None

Trench 7

Orientation: Northwest to southeast
Size: 1.5m by 10.6m (15.9m²)
Topsoil depth 500mm to 900mm
Subsoil character: Subsoil is mostly (003) with a band of (005)
Modern features: None
Significant features: None
Artefacts: None

Trench 8

Orientation: Northwest to southeast
Size: 1.5m by 10m (15m²)
Topsoil depth 1000mm to 1200mm
Subsoil character: Subsoil is mostly (003) with a band of (005)
Modern features: None
Significant features: None
Artefacts: None

Trench 9

Orientation:	Northwest to southeast
Size:	1.5m by 10m (15m ²)
Topsoil depth	400mm to 700mm
Subsoil character:	Subsoil is mostly (003) with a band of (004) and a band of (005)
Modern features:	Tile field drain
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Trench 10

Orientation:	Northwest to southeast
Size:	1.5m by 9.5m (14.25m ²)
Topsoil depth	400mm to 700mm
Subsoil character:	Subsoil is half (005) and half (003)
Modern features:	None
Significant features:	None
Artefacts:	None

Appendix 2: Record summaries

Context Summaries

No.	Interpretation	Description
001	Topsoil	Mid to light brown, very humic sandy silt. Abundant roots from grass, trees and reeds. No inclusions.
002	(b-horizon) Peat	Mid to dark brown, very humic, compact peat build-up. No inclusions.
003	Subsoil	Mottled light, yellow brown, silty sand. Gravel and small stones. Some small patches of clay.
004	Subsoil	Mid to light grey clay. Very slightly silty clay. No inclusions. Very compact.
005	Subsoil	Light pink and redish sandy silt. Some small stones. No inclusions.

Drawing Register

Sheet	No.	Title	Scale	Date	Author
1	001	Trench Plans	1:100	5/10/07	AM

Photographic record

Image no.	Description	From	Date
1	Looking S from road to site	N	5/10/07
2	View to Largs	E	5/10/07
3	View to Largs	E	5/10/07
4	View to Largs	E	5/10/07
5	Trench 1	SW	5/10/07
6	Trench 1	SW	5/10/07
7	General site	S	5/10/07
8	General site	S	5/10/07
9	Fallen tree	S	5/10/07
10	Fallen tree	SW	5/10/07
11	Trench 2	SW	5/10/07
12	Trench 2	SW	5/10/07
13	General site	W	5/10/07
14	General site	W	5/10/07
15	Arty tree	S	5/10/07
16	Trench 3	SW	5/10/07
17	Trench 3	SW	5/10/07
18	Trench 9	NW	5/10/07
19	Trench 9	NW	5/10/07
20	Largs	E	5/10/07
21	Trench 10	SE	5/10/07
22	Trench 10	SE	5/10/07
23	General site	SW	5/10/07
24	General site	SW	5/10/07
25	Trench 6	SW	5/10/07
26	Trench 6	SW	5/10/07
27	Trench 7	SW	5/10/07
28	Trench 7	SW	5/10/07
29	Trench 8	SW	5/10/07
30	Trench 8	SW	5/10/07
31	Trench 4	N	5/10/07
32	Trench 4	N	5/10/07
33	Trench 5	N	5/10/07
34	Trench 5	N	5/10/07
35	General site	NW	5/10/07

Appendix 3: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	North Ayrshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Constablewood Estate
PARISH:	Largs
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Alan Matthews
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	NS26SW 22
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NS219642
START DATE (this season)	5 th October 2007
END DATE (this season)	5 th October 2007
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (may include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was carried out in respect of the construction of a dwelling house and stable block to be erected at Constablewood Estate, Largs, Ayrshire. The archaeological evaluation failed to identify any significant archaeological features or artefacts within the development area.
PROJECT CODE:	07066
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Mr and Mrs Scott K Farquhar
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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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