Eskdalemuir Forestry Bypass Road: Archaeological Evaluation

Data Structure Report

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1 Overview

1.1 This Data Structure Report presents the findings of archaeological investigative works required by Tilhill Forestry Ltd in respect of the proposed development of a forestry by-pass road on land at Holm Farm, Eskdalemuir, Dumfries & Galloway (NGR ref: NY 2412 9737 - Area A and NY 2396 9761 - Area B). The archaeological works, carried out on the 7th June 2007, were designed to inform any necessary mitigation of impact on the archaeological remains within the development area. The land is currently moorland rough pasture

2 Project Works

2.1 The programme of works by Dumfries & Galloway Archaeology Service, commenced with a desk-based assessment of possible archaeological impacts, followed by an on-site assessment by the Council Archaeologist, Jane Brann, to determine locations for evaluation.

2.2 Following the on-site assessment, an evaluation through machine cut trenches in two areas was determined as the appropriate outcome (Figure 1).

2.3 The majority of exposed features in Area A within the trench were investigated and evaluated to determine archaeological significance. Area B was exposed, but no intrusive work took place within the trench. 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.

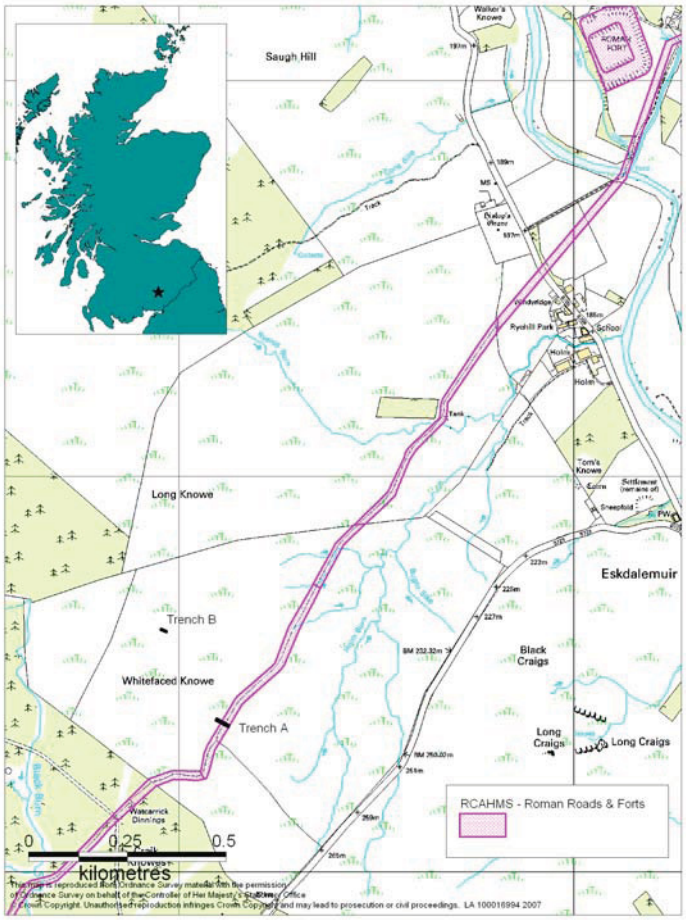


Fig.1 Site Location

3 Findings: Desktop study

3.1 Statutory protected sites

3.1.1 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). The development site however, does include a feature, the course of a Roman road, part of which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (AMH 3834, DG8740, NMRS NY29NW17) immediately to the west of the landholding.

3.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.2.1 Area A is situated on the predicted line of the Roman road (MDG8740; NMRS NY29NW17) running between Torwood and Raeburnfoot. Although the route of this section of the road is not obviously visible on the ground it was tentatively identified by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland through a combination of fieldwork and examination of aerial photographs, and was included in a GIS transcription layer provided by them to Dumfries and Galloway Council's archaeology section in January 2007 (Figure 1).

3.2.2 The line of the road to the west, where it is scheduled, and passes through forestry planting, is described variously along its length as a "terrace 6m wide", a "grassy strip" and a "slight hollow way".

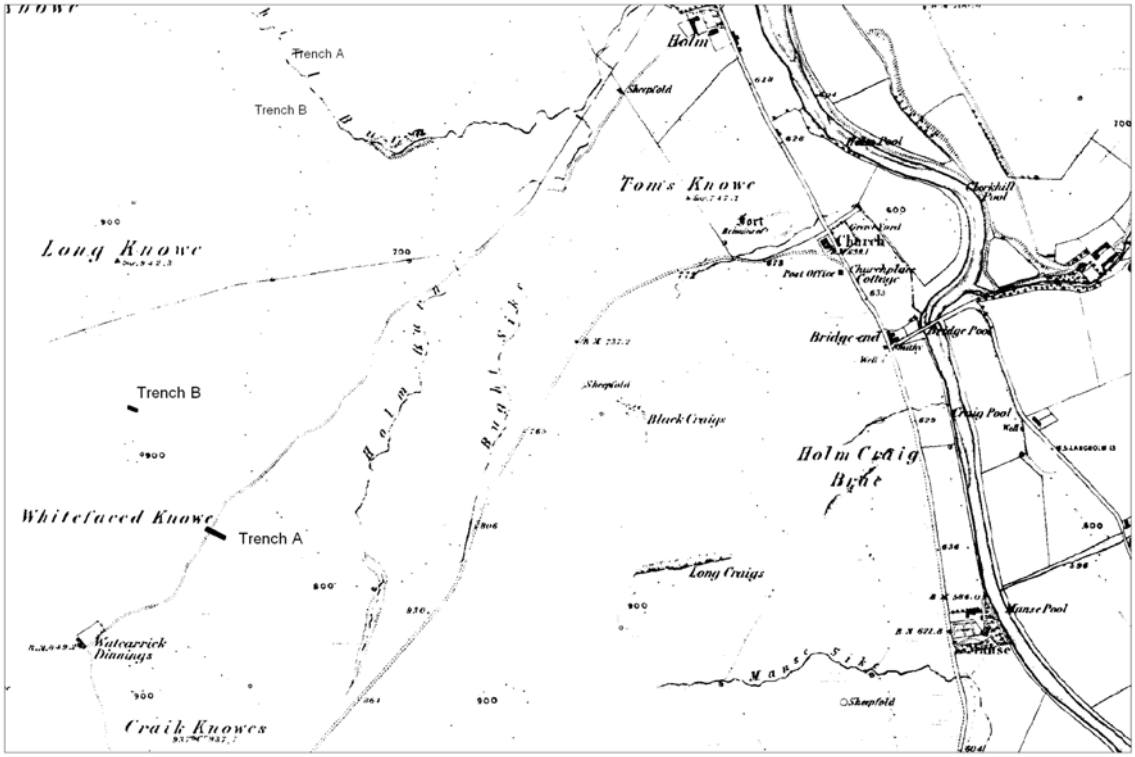
3.2.3 In 1975 the Ordnance Survey described the section of the road which passes through the development zone as "mutilated by a series of small burns and land drains".

3.2.3 Examination of the first edition Ordnance Survey map shows that a track existed on the same course in the mid 19th century (Figure 2), leading from the steading of 'Watcarrick Dinnings' north-eastwards down to the farm of Holm. A second track leads south from the steading to the road.

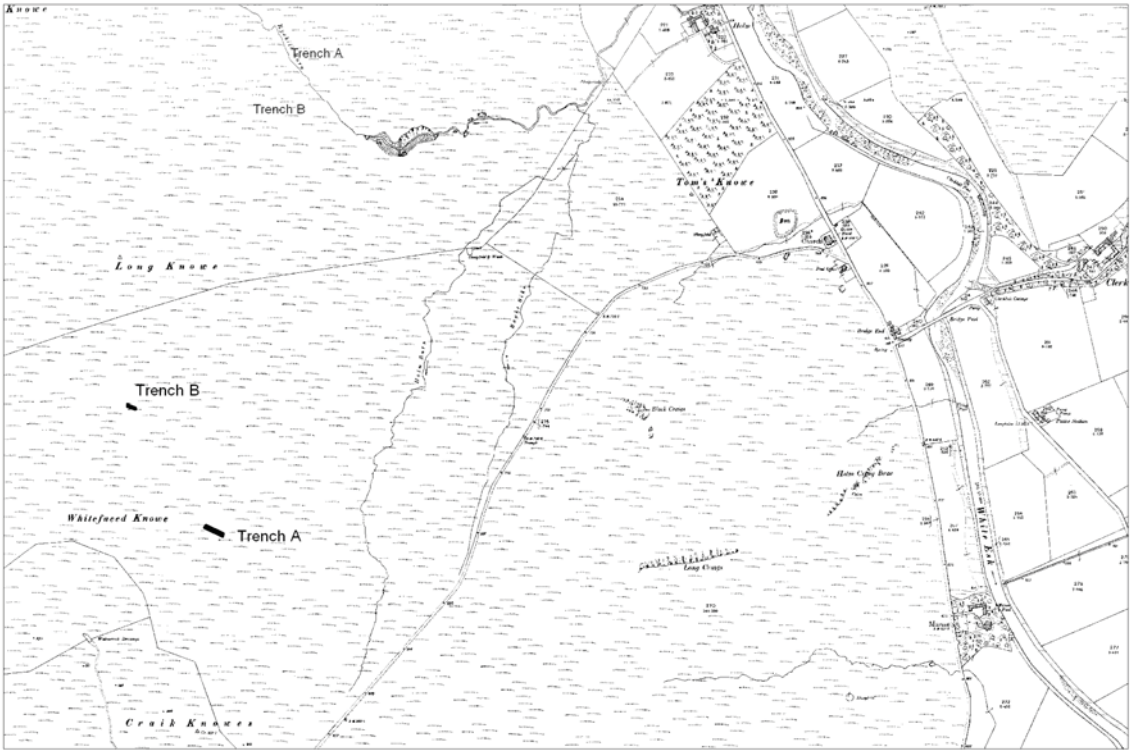
3.2.4 By the time of the revised edition of 1896 (Figure 3) the track from Watcarrick Dinnings to Holm is no longer depicted, though the one leading southwards from the steading is still shown as in use.

3.2.4 The site visit in 2007 indicated that the predicted line of the road lay along the bottom of a gully draining from SW to NE, with a small burn/drain along its eastern edge. Trench A was cut at the point where the line of the proposed forestry road cut across the gully and the predicted line of the Roman road (Figure 4).

3.2.5 Area B is a long ridge (Figure 5), narrow, with steep sides and a rounded terminus at its south-western end, rising sharply from the surrounding peat. It stands around 3.5m above the surrounding ground, and its base spreads between 11m and 20m. There is clear evidence of peat-cutting on both sides of the ridge. It is uncertain whether this is a natural ridge – accentuated by the peat-cutting on either side - or a man-made construct, perhaps similar to the Tom's Knowe bank barrow 1100m to the ENE (MDG11172; NMRS NY29NE75).



First edition Ordnance Survey map (1861) showing location of excavated trenches



Revised edition Ordnance Survey map (1896) showing location of excavated trenches

Figs 2 & 3 Historic maps

Fig 4. Trench A: Gully, looking ESE

Fig.5 Trench B: View of ridge looking N

4 Findings: Evaluation trench Area A

4.1 Both vertical sides of the trench within Area A exhibited a common stratigraphic sequence with a mid brown fine silted peaty topsoil [101] up to 460mm deep, overlaying a reddish brown stony subsoil [102] on either side of the bottom of the gulley (Figure 6).

4.2 At the base of the gulley was a distinctive compacted layer of grey, small to medium-sized angular stones [103] in a fine greyish clayey matrix, whose upper surface sloped downwards towards the sides of the gulley in a definite camber. Excavation showed this feature to be up to 420mm thick and composed of a series of interleaved layers of the grey stone and lenses of a much more red-brown stony deposit akin to the natural subsoil (Fig.7).

4.3 The north-western edge of the stony deposit was defined by a cut [104] filled with a fine grey-brown clayey silt [105], which lay below the topsoil and cut through the subsoil [102] into the orange-brown stony natural at the base of the trench [108] (Figs 6 & 8).

4.4 The south-eastern edge of the stony deposit was also defined by a cut [106], of similar size and profile to that on the north-west. This cut was filled with a much browner silty deposit, with a number of medium-sized angular stones [107]. There was a possible re-cut [109], at a slightly steeper angle, and the presence of flowing water in the lower part of the fill indicated that this feature still functioned as a drain. These ‘cuts’ may relate to natural fluvial activity rather than anthropic causes.

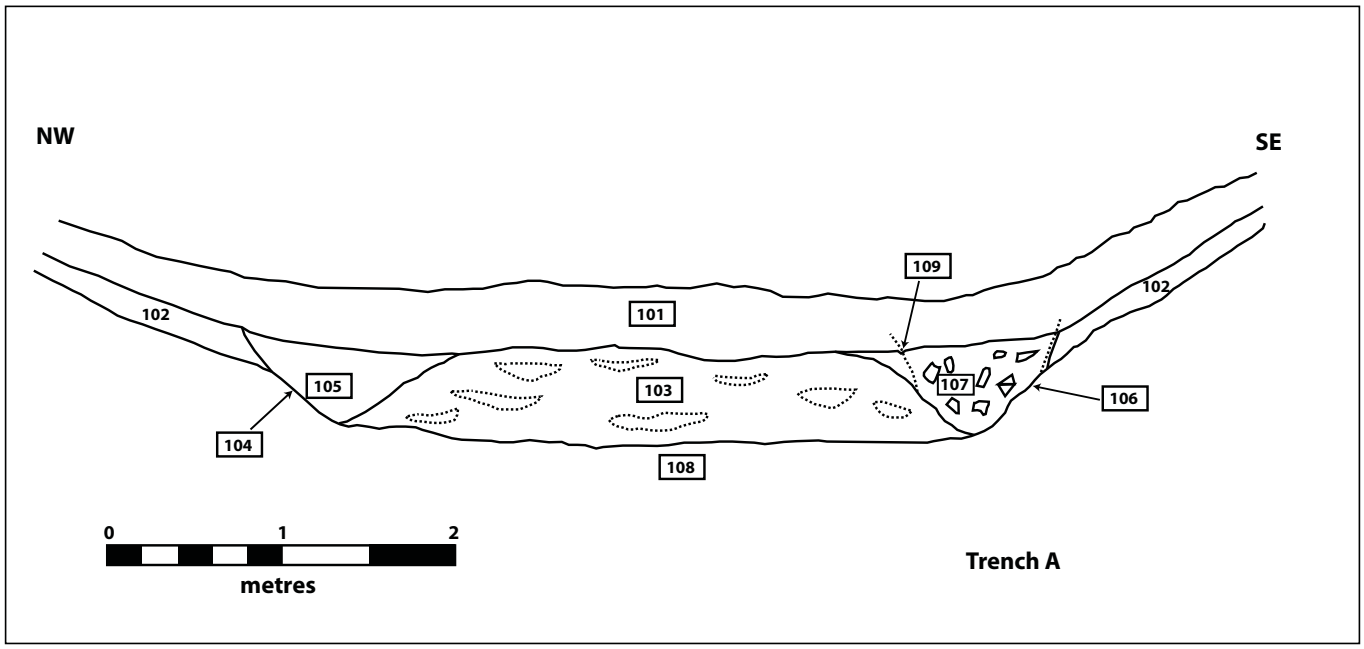


Fig.6. North-eastern section of Trench A

Fig.7. Compacted stone layer 103

Fig.8. Silt-filled cut 104 + 105 on NW of track

5 Findings: Evaluation trench Area B

5.1 A single trench, 11m long, was cut on the south-eastern face of the ridge, to remove the topsoil and expose the underlying features (see Figure 9).

5.2 The topsoil [201], a mid-brown soil with small angular stones, was only 100mm deep at the top of the mound, increasing to 230mm at the foot of the slope.

5.3 At the north-western end of the trench, on the top of the ridge and extending 2.4 metres to the south-east, there was a very stony deposit, comprising small to medium angular stones in a mid grey-brown soil matrix [202]. This appeared to lie above ridges of fractured bedrock – though whether these were in situ or deposited was not ascertained.

5.4 Further down the slope was a similarly composed stony deposit [203], but in a much more orange-brown soil matrix, extending for a further 2.3 metres.

5.5 Further to the south-east, on the lower part of the slope, was a very compact stony deposit [204] with a grey, clayey soil matrix, and beyond this on the lowest extent of the slope, a slightly looser stony deposit in a mid to light brown soil matrix [206]. At the foot of the slope this layer was partly overlain by a dark-brown peaty layer [205] which lay below the topsoil.

5.6 At the south-eastern end of the trench the peat [205] was up to 0.8m deep, and overlay a blue-grey clay deposit [207].

Fig.9. Trench B, looking up from the base

6 Discussion

6.1 The features revealed in Trench A would appear to indicate a cambered track, with a drainage gullies, whether man-made or naturally enhanced, on either side. The lenses of different coloured stone within the track might simply be part of the construction technique, or could indicate patching and repairs during the use of the feature.

6.2 The continued use of the drain on the south-eastern side of the road is corroborated by the indication of at least one possible re-cut.

6.3 The evaluation within Area B was aimed at resolving the character of the ridge identified during the initial site visit. Although a number of discrete layers were seen below the topsoil, it was not possible to determine whether the ones which formed the ridge were natural or anthropic in origin.

7 Recommendations

7.1 The features revealed in Trench A appear to be the remains of a cambered track, with a drainage ditch on either side. A section through these features has been fully recorded.

Given that the proposed forestry road will cross the gully at this point, consideration should be given as to whether a mitigation strategy should involve further excavation, if this section of road is to be destroyed. Alternatively the road construction could involve build-up in the gulley to preserve the remains below the new road.

7.2 The ridge to the NNW lies mostly outwith the corridor for the road. There is a possibility that the road will cut through the base of the slope at the north-eastern terminus of the feature, which is more widely spread than the southern terminal. It is highly unlikely that this will affect any archaeological deposits, and no further mitigation is suggested for this area.

8 Conclusion

8.1 A programme of archaeological investigative works was undertaken in respect the proposed development of a forestry by-pass road on land at Holm Farm, Eskdalemuir, Dumfries & Galloway (NGR ref: NY 2412 9737 - Area A and NY 2396 9761 - Area B).). An evaluation was carried out on the 7th June 2007. The evaluation comprised two machine-cut trenches.

8.2 Trench A revealed a sequence of deposits indicating the presence of a trackflanked by two ditches. No dating evidence was recovered, and whilst it does lie on the route of the 19th century track shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, it is also the predicted course of the Roman road from Torwood to Raeburnfoot.

8.3 Trench B revealed that the ridge comprised a number of bands of stony deposits, overlain by peat at its lowest extent. It was not possible to determine whether the ridge was a natural phenomenon or man-made.

9 References

9.1 Documentary

SODev 1994 *National Planning Policy Guideline 5, Archaeology and planning*, Scottish Office Development Department.
SOEnv 1994 *Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology*, Scottish Office Environmental Department.

9.2 Cartographic

1862 Ordnance Survey Dumfriesshire, first edition map 1:10560 (6" series"
1898 Ordnance Survey Dumfriesshire, first (revised) edition map 1:2500 (25" series)
2006 RCAHMS Roman Roads in Dumfries and Galloway GIS overlay

Appendix 1: Trench Details

A standardised set of data relating to the evaluation trenches:

Trench 1 (Area A)

Orientation: West North West to East South East
Size: 7.30m by 1.2m.
Topsoil depth: 240mm to 460mm.
Subsoil character: Reddish brown matrix with small to medium angular stones[102].
Modern features: None
Significant features: Road [103] with drainage ditches [104 & 106]
Artefacts: None.

Trench 2 (Area B)

Orientation: West North West to East South East
Size: 9.5m by 1.2m (25.76m^2).
Topsoil depth: 100mm to 230mm.
Subsoil character: Small to medium angular stones in a mid grey-brown soil matrix [202]. Small to medium angular stones in a orangey-brown soil matrix [203]. A very compact stony deposit with a grey, clayey soil matrix [204], and downhill a slightly looser stony deposit in a mid to light brown soil matrix [206]. At the foot of the slope a dark-brown peaty layer [205].
Modern features: None.
Significant features: None.
Artefacts: None.

Appendix 2: Record Summaries

Context Summaries

No.	**Trench**	**Interpretation**	**Description**
101	A	Topsoil	Mid brown fine silted peaty deposit
102	A	Subsoil	Reddish brown stony subsoil
103	A	Road	Compacted layer of grey, small to medium-sized angular stones in a fine greyish clayey matrix
104	A	Cut for ditch	U-sectioned cut
105	A	Fill of 104	Fine grey-brown clayey silt
106	A	Cut for ditch	U-sectioned cut

107	A	Fill of 106	Brown silty matrix, with a number of medium-sized angular stones
108	A	Natural bedrock	Orange-brown stone
109	A	Possible re-cut	U-sectioned cut
201	B	Topsoil	Mid-brown peaty soil
202	B	Subsoil / deposit	Small to medium angular stones in a mid grey-brown soil matrix
203	B	Subsoil / deposit	Small to medium angular stones in a mid orange-brown soil matrix
204	B	Subsoil / deposit	Very compact stony deposit with a grey, clayey soil matrix,
205	B	Peat	Dark-brown peaty layer
206	B	Subsoil / deposit	Stony deposit in a mid to light brown soil matrix
207	B	Natural	Blue-grey clay

Drawing Register

Sheet No.	Title	Scale	Date	Author
1 001	Post-ex section of trench A	1:40	23/06/07	AN

Photographic Register

Image	Description	Date
DSCF0049	General of Trench A looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0050	General of Trench A looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0051	General of Trench A during machining looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0052	General of Trench A during machining looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0053	Trench A: 'Road' [103] during excavation, looking NNW	07/06/05
DSCF0054	Trench A: 'Road' [103], close up, looking NNW	07/06/05
DSCF0055	Trench A full width of road and ditches looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0056	Trench A: SE end of 'Road' [103] looking NNW	07/06/05
DSCF0057	Trench A close up of lenses in 'road' looking E	07/06/05
DSCF0058	Trench A Silt-filled cut [104 + 105] looking NNW	07/06/05
DSCF0059	Trench A SE end of 'road', cut 106 on right, looking NE	07/06/05
DSCF0060	Trench A SE end of 'road', cut 106 on right, looking NE	07/06/05
DSCF0061	Trench A NE section 'road', looking NE	07/06/05
DSCF0062	Trench B peat cuttings to SE of ridge looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0063	General view of ridge looking N	07/06/05
DSCF0066	General view of ridge looking N	07/06/05
DSCF0068	General view of Trench B during machining looking SE	07/06/05
DSCF0069	Trench B, top of ridge, showing stony layer 202, looking SSW	07/06/05
DSCF0070	Trench B, showing stony layer 203, looking SSW	07/06/05
DSCF0071	Trench B, showing compact stony layer 202, looking SSW	07/06/05
DSCF0072	Trench B, stony layer 206, and overlying peat 205, looking SSW	07/06/05
DSCF0073	Trench B, peat 205, and clay 207, looking SSW	07/06/05
DSCF0074	General view of Trench B after excavation, looking WNW	07/06/05
DSCF0075	General view of Trench B after excavation, looking WNW	07/06/05
DSCF0076	General view of Trench B after excavation, looking WNW	07/06/05

DSCF0077 General view of Trench B after excavation, looking WNW 07/06/05

Appendix 3: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY: Dumfries & Galloway

PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: Eskdalemuir Forestry By-Pass Road

PARISH: Eskdalemuir

NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR: Andrew Nicholson

NAME OF ORGANISATION: Dumfries and Galloway Council

TYPE(S) OF PROJECT: Evaluation

NMRS NO(S): NY29NW 17 (D&G SMR MDG8740)

SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): Trackway (?); Roman Road (?)

SIGNIFICANT FINDS: None

NGR (2 letters, 6 figures) NY 241 973 (Area A) and NY 239 976 (Area B)

START DATE (this season) 7th June 2007

END DATE (this season) 7th June 2007

PREVIOUS WORK (incl. *DES* ref.) None

PROPOSED FUTURE WORK: None

MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (may include information from other fields)
A programme of archaeological investigative works was undertaken in respect the proposed development of a forestry by-pass road on land at Holm Farm, Eskdalemuir, Dumfries & Galloway (NGR ref: NY 2412 9737 - Area A and NY 2396 9761 - Area B).). An evaluation was carried out on the 7th June 2007. The evaluation comprised two machine-cut trenches.
Trench A revealed a sequence of deposits indicating the presence of a track flanked by two ditches. No dating evidence was recovered, and whilst it does lie on the on the predicted course of the Roman road from Torwood to Raeburnfoot, it is also on the line of the 19th century track shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map.
Trench B revealed that a ridge 200m to the NNW comprised a number of bands of stony deposits, overlain by peat at its lowest extent. It was not possible to determine whether the ridge was a natural phenomenon or man-made.

PROJECT CODE: EDG130

SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY: Tihill Forestry

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ARCHIVE LOCATION: (intended/deposited)

Report to Dumfries and Galloway Archaeology Service and archive to National Monuments Record of Scotland.

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