

Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route: Ground Investigation Southern Leg

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

23rd May 2008

Document control sheet

Client: Transport Scotland
Project: AWPR: Ground Investigation, Southern leg
Title: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Job No: B1033200
Report No:

	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
ORIGINAL	NAME Alisdair Curtis	NAME Alastair Rees	NAME Pete Fasham
DATE 23/5/08	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE

REVISION	NAME Alisdair Curtis	NAME Alastair Rees	NAME
DATE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE

REVISION	NAME	NAME	NAME
DATE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE

REVISION	NAME	NAME	NAME
DATE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE

This report, and information or advice which it contains, is provided by Jacobs UK Limited solely for internal use and reliance by its Client in performance of Jacobs UK Limited's duties and liabilities under its contract with the Client. Any advice, opinions, or recommendations within this report should be read and relied upon only in the context of the report as a whole. The advice and opinions in this report are based upon the information made available to Jacobs UK Limited at the date of this report and on current UK standards, codes, technology and construction practices as at the date of this report. Following final delivery of this report to the Client, Jacobs UK Limited will have no further obligations or duty to advise the Client on any matters, including development affecting the information or advice provided in this report. This report has been prepared by Jacobs UK Limited in their professional capacity as Consulting Engineers. The contents of the report do not, in any way, purport to include any manner of legal advice or opinion. This report is prepared in accordance with the terms and conditions of Jacobs UK Limited's contract with the Client. Regard should be had to those terms and conditions when considering and/or placing any reliance on this report. Should the Client wish to release this report to a Third Party for that party's reliance, Jacobs UK Limited may, at its discretion, agree to such release provided that:

- Jacobs UK Limited's written agreement is obtained prior to such release, and
- By release of the report to the Third Party, that Third Party does not acquire any rights, contractual or otherwise, whatsoever against Jacobs UK Limited, and Jacobs UK Limited accordingly assume no duties, liabilities or obligations to that Third Party, and
- Jacobs UK Limited accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage incurred by the Client or for any conflict of Jacobs UK Limited's interests arising out of the Client's release of this report to the Third Party.

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Summary

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Geology and topography

2 Historical Background

[2.1 General background](#)

2.2 Pre-Historic Period (10,000BC - AD43)

2.3 The Late Iron Age to Early Historic Period (AD43 - AD500)

2.4 Early Historic to Medieval Period (AD500 - 1700)

3 Aims and Methodology

3.1 Aims

3.2 Methodology

4 Results

4.1 General

5 Summary and Conclusion

[5.1 Overall Interpretation](#)

6 Bibliography and References

Appendix A - Trial Pit inventory

Appendix B - Photographic Plates

Appendix C - Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

List of Plates

Plate 1 Trial Pit 130

Plate 2 Trial Pit 125

Plate 3 Trial Pit 187

Plate 4 Trial Pit 177

1 Introduction

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd was commissioned by Transport Scotland to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring during the excavation of 57 ground investigation (GI) trial pits during the months of April and May 2008 (excluding fifteen cancelled pits). The trial pits were distributed along the route of the southern leg of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR). The southern leg runs from NGR: NO 8642 0875, heading south to NGR: NO 8680 9844, and then eastwards to NGR: NO 9357 0075.
- 1.1.2 No archaeological remains or deposits were identified during this phase of works. The work was undertaken by Jacobs UK.

1.2 Introduction

- 1.2.1 The work undertaken forms part of the initial stages of ground investigation (GI) used to provide detailed information on the underlying drift and solid geology as it relates to the route of the AWPR. Historic Scotland advised that archaeological monitoring was required in relation with the GI due to the archaeological potential of the area and to gain information on the underlying topsoil depth and geology.

1.3 Geology and topography

- 1.3.1 The geology of the area around Aberdeen consists of metamorphic schists and glacial deposits consisting of sands and gravels. The topography of the area gently undulates across the entire area, sloping down towards the coastline.

2 Historical Background

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The baseline information available at this stage is dominated by post-medieval landscape and built heritage features. The number of known archaeological sites of earlier date is unusually low for such a relatively large study area. However, despite the relative lack of previous archaeological investigation, there is sufficient archaeological evidence to show that the surrounding area was occupied from at least the early Neolithic period onwards. It is therefore highly likely that there has been human activity in the study area since earliest times and it is considered likely that additional archaeological remains relating to the prehistoric, early Historic and Medieval periods that could not be identified by the desk-top and walkover surveys are present in the study area.

2.2 Prehistoric Period (10,000BC – AD 43)

- 2.2.1 Prehistoric human activity in this area during the Mesolithic (8000-4000 BC) is attested by the flint scatter identified in a ploughed field close to Maryculter Bridge. During this period bands of hunter-gatherers would have been attracted to the resource rich environs of the river Dee and may have exploited seasonal salmon runs. The Neolithic (4000-2500 BC) and Bronze Age (2500-800 BC) periods are represented by religious monuments, such as the previously recorded though no longer extant stone circles at Milltimber Farm and Cloghill House, and funerary monuments such as the Cloghill Longcairn. Stone artefacts dating to these periods include a barbed and tanged arrowhead found close to the site of the stone circle at Milltimber Farm and a polished stone axe at Fairley House. It is thought that as well as being used as utilitarian objects in the clearance of woodland for pasture and arable fields, stone axes were also used for ceremonial purposes and were traded over long distances. It is also possible that the cropmarks identified to the North of Maryculter Bridge and Beans Hill are also of prehistoric date.
- 2.2.2 Few sites of Later Prehistoric (the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age) date occur in the area. Outside the study area the most visible sites dating to this period are the enclosed settlements, including vitrified forts such as Tap O'Noth or massively defended sites like the Barmekin of Echt. It is likely that unenclosed settlements also occur, although such sites are much less visible.

2.3 The Late Iron Age to Early Historic Period (AD43 – 500)

- 2.3.1 Evidence for Roman activity in northeast Scotland is provided by the remains of temporary marching camps, related to the campaigns of AD84 and the third century, and casual finds of artefacts. The battle of Mons Grapius, as recorded by Tacitus is thought to have taken place in this area in AD 84.
- 2.3.2 In addition to defended sites such as the fortress at Burghead, in the Post-Roman period the main source of evidence for the presence of the Picts in north-eastern Scotland are the symbol stones, which are freestanding slabs decorated with incised animals and objects. An example of these carved

stones can be seen at the Chapel of St. Fergus, Dyce, and features an incised beast and decorative Z-rod.

2.4 Early Historic to Medieval Period (AD500 – 1700)

- 2.4.1 Sites dating to the Medieval period (500-1700 AD) are also poorly represented. It is thought that the Medieval settlement pattern was dispersed; the population lived in a network of much smaller, scattered settlements known as 'fermtouns', of which there may be several in any given parish. Families would be joint tenants farming in a traditional system known as 'runrig', under which the land immediately around the settlement was cultivated in open fields divided into long, narrow ridged strips ('rig and furrow'). Any amenities which may be present in a parish, such as castles, churches or mills, could stand isolated or at one of the fermtouns which then became known as 'castletoun', 'kirktoun' or 'milltoun' and survive in the placename record. For much of the medieval period, the land around Aberdeen in the study area probably formed part of such a system.

2.5 The Post Medieval Period (AD1700 – 1900)

- 2.5.1 The agricultural and economic improvements of the 18th and 19th centuries have their origins in the 17th century. Improving leases were granted to selected tenants. Under these leases the runrig system of cultivation was dismantled replaced with longer, more varied crop rotations in large, enclosed fields. Activities such as the enclosure of the land, the quarrying and burning of lime for use as a fertilizer and the planting of trees all resulted in lasting changes to the landscape.
- 2.5.2 Perhaps the single most common and impressive monuments dating from this time are the consumption dykes; the result of the removal of large amounts of stone from agricultural land, gathered together to form thick stone walls which are closely associated with the age of agricultural improvement. The construction of these features continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although not a feature unique to the northeast of Scotland, they are a landscape feature which is uncommon elsewhere and highly characteristic of this region. These features are widespread within the study area: an outstanding example is Kingswells Consumption Dyke SAM which is located outside the study area. Other small features associated with agriculture include piles of stone cleared from the field, known as clearance cairns.
- 2.5.3 Also at this time, improvements were occurring in the transport infrastructure to improve movement of people and resources around the country. Turnpike roads were established to link the main towns, and examples of architecture associated with these routes can be seen in the sites like the Parkhill Tollhouse. The transportation boom led to the establishment of a number of canals around Aberdeen, such as the Aberdeenshire (or Ladies Jointure) Canal (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) which was established by charter, opened in 1805, and closed in 1854 following its purchase by the Great North of Scotland Railway (Pearson 1986). This was a symptom of radical change, as the railways dominated the nineteenth century transport system, making the canal network obsolete. Following the closure of the canal, the railway company used much of its route to construct a new railway line inland from Aberdeen (Graham 1968; Pearson 1986).

2.6 The 20th Century

- 2.6.1 The landscape has been modified with improvements in communications (road and rail) networks, the creation or expansion of nucleated settlement, and later the creation of larger fields for pasture, improvement of upland pasture through drainage and enclosure and forestry plantations.

3 Aims and Methodology

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were:

- To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- To place them in the context of the archaeological background as outlined above.
- To collect any information/recover any artefacts.
- To consider them within the context of the prehistoric activity within the landscape.
- To consider them within the context of the archaeological activity within the landscape.

3.2 Methodology

3.1.2 The programme of works agreed with Historic Scotland comprised of a watching brief on all geotechnical trial pits in relation to the southern leg of the AWPR. The location of each trial pit had been pre-determined and located using a hand held GPS. Occasionally due to the presence of overhead power lines (OHP) trial pits were re-located, a safe distance from the hazard and as close to the stipulated spot as possible.

3.1.3 All works were undertaken using a JCB 3CX back-actor fitted with a toothed 0.6m ditching bucket. On average, the trial pits measured 0.6m wide by 4m long and up to a maximum depth of 4.5m. All excavation work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. Any potential archaeological features were investigated. However, no archaeological features were observed during the on-site works and no archaeological material was recovered.

3.1.4 Throughout the study area the test pits exhibited a fairly common stratigraphical sequence with varying depths of topsoil measuring from 0.18m to 0.77m in depth. In the majority of trial pits the topsoil was removed revealing the underlying natural subsoil (glacial deposits).

3.1.5 All works were conducted in accordance with the mitigation proposals outlined in the Cultural Heritage section of the Jacobs Environmental Statement (Dempsey, J. 2007) and the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

4 Results

4.1 General

The work was undertaken over three weeks and comprised the excavation of 61 trial pits. One of which a soakaway (139), was located adjacent to the main trench and excavated to a depth of 1m. Fifteen were not excavated due to access problems (**103, 123, 174,182, 184,186,188 and 190-197**). Trial pit (**107**) was abandoned due to silting of a nearby watercourse.

- 4.1.1 No archaeological remains or deposits were encountered within the trial pits across the entire area.
- 4.1.2 Within the grounds of Kingcausie House one trial pit (trial pit **199**) revealed buried topsoil, interpreted as slope-wash due to the trial pits' location at the base of a slope.

5 Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Overall Interpretation

- 7.1.1 No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified during the course of archaeological monitoring of 61 geotechnical trial pits excavated in relation to the proposed construction of the southern leg of the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.
- 7.1.2 Although there was no evidence of buried archaeological deposits or features within the evaluated area, the presence of buried archaeological deposits or features within the study area cannot be fully discounted. However it is concluded that as the majority of the land is agricultural, with shallow topsoil overlying natural, agricultural practice has probably resulted in the truncation of archaeological deposits and features.

6 Bibliography and References

Bibliographic References

Dempsey, J.	2007	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route Environmental Statement – 2007 Addendum
SOEnd	1994	National Planning Policy Guideline 5, Archaeology and Planning. Scottish Office Environmental Department.
SOEnd	1994a	Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology and Planning. Scottish Office Environmental Department.

Appendix A – Trial Pit Inventory

Trench No.	Top Soil Depth (m)	Subsoil Depth (m)	Trench dimensions (m)	NGR	Comments
100	0.45m	Natural	0.6m x 3m x 1.45m	388199.949 798607.027	No archaeology
101	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.85m	388151.651 798600.319	No archaeology
102	0.31m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.7m	388140.179 798564.402	No archaeology
103					Trial Pit cancelled
104	0.3m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.9m	388085.810 798590.717	No archaeology
105	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4.5m x 2.1m	388004.143 798591.988	No archaeology
106	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.9m	388021.499 798518.667	No archaeology
107				387992.075 798570.369	Trial Pit abandoned
108	0.24m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.3m	387970.355 798516.499	No archaeology
109	0.36m	Natural	0.6m x 3.5m x 3.79m	387937.257 798578.817	No archaeology
110	0.3m	Natural	0.6m x 5.5m x 3.3m	387887.127 798557.839	No archaeology
111	0.3m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.8m	387852.206 798560.384	No archaeology
112	0.31m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.11m	387828.716 798590.487	No archaeology
113	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 4.5m	387812.816 798520.181	No archaeology
114	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 5m x 1.5m	387757.929 798558.079	No archaeology
115	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 3.5m x 2.8m	387719.729 798523.001	No archaeology
116	0.29m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.5m	387718.345 798586.585	No archaeology
117	0.34m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.5m	387670.778 798593.615	No archaeology
118	0.35m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.8m	387653.261 798654.767	No archaeology
119	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 3.5m x 1.4m	387602.683 798531.618	No archaeology
120	0.35m	Natural	0.6m x 5m x 1.6m	387591.472 798591.557	No archaeology
121	0.37m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.1m	387583.775 798654.853	No archaeology
122	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.5m	387547.642 798501.536	No archaeology
123					Trial Pit cancelled
124	0.74	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 4.6m	387603.874 798745.349	No archaeology

125	0.21m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3m	387570.952 798699.259	No archaeology
126	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2m	387517.359 798443.830	No archaeology
127	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.7m	387510.081 798394.057	No archaeology
128	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.6m	387510.202 798597.819	No archaeology
129	0.24m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 0.5m	387511.860 798647.192	No archaeology
130	0.24m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 0.9m	387490.833 798568.041	No archaeology
131	0.2m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.3m	387472.708 798608.573	No archaeology
132	0.37m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.1m	387451.512 398581.894	No archaeology
133	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.1m	387460.101 798648.361	No archaeology
134	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 3m x 2.3m	387432.757 798604.490	No archaeology
135	0.24m	Natural	0.6m x 3.3m x 2.4m	387385.774 798551.993	No archaeology
136	0.29m	Natural	0.6m x 3.5m x 2.1m	387405.503 798627.739	No archaeology
137	0.29m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.1m	387360.142 798601.516	No archaeology
138	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.4m	387289.482 798592.705	No archaeology
139	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.1m	387288.537 798547.627	139 and soakaway no archaeology
140	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.2m	387263.352 798624.591	No archaeology
141	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 4.3m x 2.2m	387244.248 798482.959	No archaeology
142	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2m	387213.649 798572.045	No archaeology
143	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.4m	387171.454 798611.324	No archaeology
143-1	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.7m	387205.157 798543.348	No archaeology
145	0.26m	Natural	0.6m x 4.2m x 2.6m	387128.278 798627.913	No archaeology
174					Trial Pit cancelled
176	0.77m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.7m	386417.638 799443.231	No archaeology
177	0.31m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 0.86m	386482.219 799494.276	No archaeology
178	0.28m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 0.9m	386462.667 799488.532	No archaeology
179	0.28m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 2.8m	386373.411 799538.563	No archaeology
180	0.29m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.2m	386354.788 799570.574	No archaeology
181	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 4.3m	386322.223 799633.788	No archaeology
182					Trial Pit cancelled
183	0.32m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.4m	386296.158 799664.045	No archaeology

184					Trial Pit cancelled
185	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.5m	386227.427 799739.387	No archaeology
186					Trial Pit cancelled
187	0.31m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.8m	386182.011 799816.510	No archaeology
188					Trial Pit cancelled
189	0.27m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 1.1m	386160.962 799874.326	No archaeology
190					Trial Pit cancelled
191					Trial Pit cancelled
192					Trial Pit cancelled
193					Trial Pit cancelled
194					Trial Pit cancelled
195					Trial Pit cancelled
196					Trial Pit cancelled
197					Trial Pit cancelled
198	0.25m	Natural	0.6m x 4m x 3.8m	386048.635 800192.506	No archaeology
199	0.18m	0.2m	0.6m x 4m x 3.6m	386069.096 800230.079	No archaeology

Appendix B – Photographic Plates



Plate 1: Trial Pit 130



Plate 2: Trial Pit 125



Plate 3: Trial Pit 187



Plate 4: Trial Pit 177

Appendix C – Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (Southern Leg)
PARISH:	Maryculter
NAME OF CONTRIBUTORS:	Alisdair Curtis
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Jacobs UK
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR	NO 8642 0875 to NO 9357 0075
START DATE	23 rd April 2008
END DATE	15 th May 2008
PREVIOUS WORK	Unknown
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	Archaeological monitoring
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:	An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of 61 geotechnical trial pits along the line of the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. No archaeological remains or deposits were noted.
PROJECT CODE:	AWPR
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Transport Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Jacobs UK, 95 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7HX
E MAIL:	alisdair.curtis @jacobs.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Report to Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeological unit and archive to the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS).