

Archaeological Evaluation

Penfillan, Dalginross, Perth and Kinross



Site looking North East



24th April 2012

Introduction

This programme of archaeological works was carried out for Mrs Catherine Hendry to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development, as noted by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust in the memorandum to Planning Application 12/00313/FLL, dated 7th March 2012. It was undertaken by the author on Wednesday 18th April (site code PEN01); weather conditions were occasionally sunny with very heavy showers of rain and hail.

Archaeological Background (Illus 1 to 5)

The Roman fort at Dalginross has been known since the 18th century and has been identified as one of the 'glen-blocking' or Highland Line forts in use in the late first century AD however the complexity of the remains identified from aerial survey and the collection of Roman coins found in and around the site suggest that the fort was re-occupied during the Antonine and Severan periods of campaign and occupation.

Aerial photographic survey has revealed two phases of construction with what has been interpreted as two forts (an inner and outer) superimposed on top of each other (Illus 3). An alternative suggestion is that the outer defences form an annexe around the inner fort. The development site is considered to be archaeologically sensitive as it straddles the outer defences.

A nationally significant monument, the majority of the fort is protected as a Scheduled Monument (SM1612). In 1961 a trench was excavated at Penfillan by Anne Robertson in advance of the planting of an orchard, this trench was placed across the line of the outer enclosure and a V-shaped ditch was recorded (4.88m wide, 1.22m deep) (Illus 4 and 5). Anne Robertson also recorded a 3m wide stretch of gravel which she interpreted as the intervallum road (Robertson 1963-64, 196-198). No other internal features were uncovered. It is worth noting that the internal features of the inner fort show up clearly on aerial photographs providing evidence for interior buildings and roads however few features have been revealed within the outer fort. This may be due to cropmark formation or it may suggest a real dearth of archaeological features within the area enclosed by the outer ditch.

Site Evaluation (Illus 6)

Five trenches were opened across the planned footprint of the new house and its associated drainage works. Four of these were located in positions that crossed the projected line of the cropmark of the outer Roman 'fort' ditch; the fifth was located in the interior of the monument.

Trench 1 (Illus 7)

This trench was aligned North West to South East and was 19.5m long by 1.8m wide. At its Northern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.30m below a grey silty clay and stones. At its Southern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.60m below a grey silty clay and stones. The edges of the Roman ditch line were located at 11m and 6.7m North of its Southern end. The ditch was filled with a grey brown silty clay and stones with occasional charcoal and burnt clay. No other features were located.

Trench 2 (Illus 8)

This trench was aligned South West to North East and was 19.5m long by 1.8m wide. At its Western end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.30m below a grey silty clay and stones. At its Eastern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.40m below a grey silty clay and stones. No archaeological deposits or features were located.

Trench 3 (Illus 9)

This trench was aligned North West to South East and was 19.5m long by 1.8m wide. At its Northern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.40m below a grey silty clay and stones. At its Southern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.40m below a grey silty clay and stones. The edges of the Roman ditch line were located at 10.9m and 5.2m North of its Southern end. The ditch was filled with a grey brown silty clay and stones with occasional charcoal. No other features were located.

Trench 4 (Illus 10)

This trench was aligned North West to South East and was 21.5m long by 1.8m wide. At its Northern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.17m below a loose gravel surface. At its Southern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.40m below a loose gravel surface. The edges of the Roman ditch line were located at 7.6m and 2.3m North of its Southern end. The ditch was filled with a grey brown silty clay and stones with occasional charcoal. A single sherd from the basal angle of a Terra Sigillata vessel was recovered from the top of the ditch fill (see note below). No other features were located.

Trench 5 (Illus 11)

This trench was aligned North to South and was 18m long by 1.8m wide. At its Northern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.17m below a loose gravel surface. At its Southern end natural orange brown gravel lay 0.50m below a loose gravel surface. The top edge of the Roman ditch was located at 11.5m North of its Southern end. The ditch was filled with a light grey brown silty clay and stones. Its Southern edge had been damaged by an electrical service trench. No other features were located.

Sherd of Terra Sigillita pottery (Illus 12 and 13)

A sherd from the basal angle and footring of a Terra Sigillita vessel was recovered from the top fill of the outer 'fort' ditch in Trench 3. This sherd has a visible thin internal and external brown slip and its fabric contains frequent white limestone and occasional black ironstone inclusions. It would appear to be of 2nd Century AD date and may be a product of the Lezoux production site in Central Gaul (<http://potsherd.net/atlas/Ware/CGTS>).

Conclusions

Four of the evaluation trenches picked up the line of the Roman 'ditch', the fifth located no archaeological deposits or features. It was noted that the top of the ditch line lies very close to modern ground level. There was no sign of any other archaeological features within the interior of the outer 'fort'. The single sherd of Terra Sigillita from the ditch in Trench 3 would appear to be of Antonine date and seems to back up Dr David Wooliscroft's argument for an Antonine date for one of the two forts at Dalginross

(http://www.theromangaskproject.org.uk/Pages/Introduction/Dalginross_release.html).

Recommendations

This evaluation has confirmed that the Roman ditch line does survive running through the proposed development site on a line close to that predicted following the previous excavation work in 1961 (see Illus 4). Depending on the proposed foundation design for the new house further archaeological work on site may be necessary as parts of the proposed foot print of the new building will certainly clip the ditch line in at least four places, the final decision on the need for further work however rests with Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust.

References

Robertson, A S 1964 'Miscellanea Romano- Caledonica', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 97 (1963-64), 180-201.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank James Wilson the machine driver for his help with this evaluation.

Illustration List

Illus 1 Site Location (red circle) (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

Illus 2 Location of site on General Roys map of 1747-1755 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illus 3 Aerial photograph looking North West showing site (indicated by red arrow) and cropmarks of Roman forts

Illus 4 Published location of trench by A Robertson in 1961 (©PSAS Vol 97 1963-64, 196)

Illus 5 Published North East facing section of A Robertson's trench of 1961 (©PSAS Vol 97 1963-64, 197)

Illus 6 Trench locations and line of Roman ditch (in red) showing footprint of proposed new house, trench by Annie Robertson in 1961 shown in grey with her excavated ditch section in yellow. Sherd of Terra Sigillita comes from top of ditch fill in Trench 3. The Southern edge of the ditch line in Trench 5 is damaged by the service trench for electrical cable.

Illus 7 Trench 1 looking North West, red lines indicate ditch edges.

Illus 8 Trench 2 looking South West

Illus 9 Trench 3 looking South East red lines indicate ditch edges

Illus 10 Trench 4 looking North West, red lines indicate ditch edges

Illus 11 Trench 5 looking North North West, red lines indicate ditch edges, brick foundations of previous house are visible in background.

Illus 12 Interior and exterior surface of Terra Sigillita sherd from Trench 3

Illus 13 X20 microscopic view of Terra Sigillita fabric showing frequent white limestone inclusions and occasional black iron ore

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

| | |
|--|---|
| LOCAL AUTHORITY: | Perth and Kinross |
| PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: | Penfillan, Dalginross |
| PROJECT CODE: | PEN01 |
| PARISH: | Comrie |
| NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S): | Derek Hall |
| NAME OF ORGANISATION: | Derek Hall, archaeologist and ceramic specialist |
| TYPE(S) OF PROJECT: | Archaeological Evaluation |
| NMRS NO(S): | NN72SE2 |
| SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): | Roman fort |
| SIGNIFICANT FINDS: | None |
| NGR (2 letters, 6 figures) | NN 7732 2104 |
| START DATE | 18th April 2012 |
| END DATE | 18th April 2012 |
| PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.) | None |
| MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields) | Five trial trenches representing a 5% sample of the site for a proposed new house and its associated drainage were opened by mechanical excavator. The line of the ditch of the outer Roman 'fort' was located in four of the trenches, the fifth which was located in the interior of the monument located no deposits or features. A single sherd of 2nd Century AD Central Gaulish Terra Sigillata was recovered from the top of the ditch fill in Trench 3 of the evaluation. |
| PROPOSED FUTURE WORK: | None |
| SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY: | Catherine Hendry |
| CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS | N/A |
| ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR: | 34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP |
| ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended) | NMRS |
| EMAIL ADDRESS: | Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk |



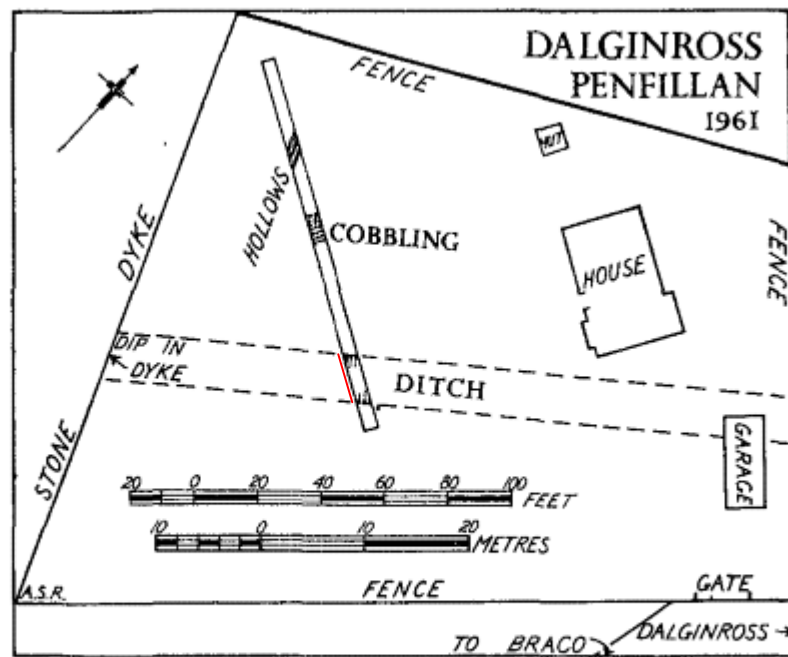
Illus 1 Site Location (red circle) (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)



Illus 2 Location of site on General Roys map of 1747-1755 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)



Illus 3 Aerial photograph looking North West showing site (indicated by red arrow) and cropmarks of Roman forts (©RCAHMS)



Illus 4 Published location of trench by A Robertson in 1961 (PSAS Vol 97 1963-64), red line indicates drawn section (see Illus 5)

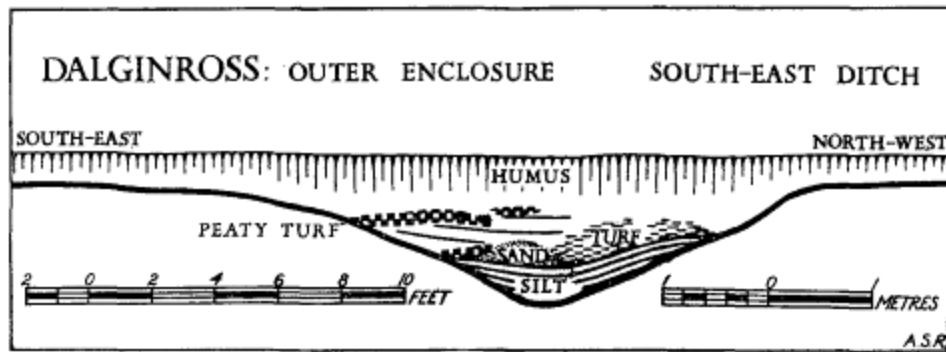
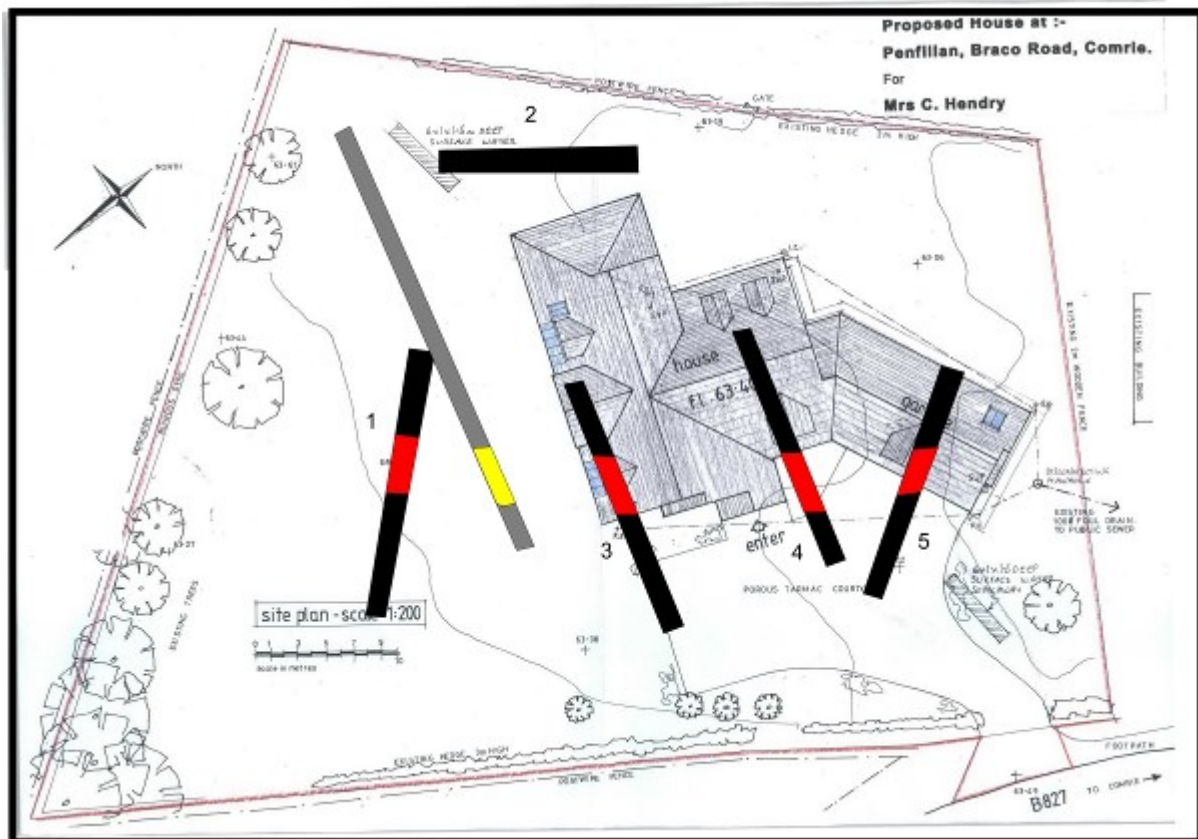


FIG. 8

Illus 5 Published North East facing section of A Robertson's trench of 1961 (PSAS Vol 97 1963-64)



Illus 6 Trench locations and line of Roman ditch (in red) showing footprint of proposed new house, trench by Anne Robertson in 1961 shown in grey with her excavated ditch section in yellow. Sherd of Terra Sigillita comes from top of ditch fill in Trench 3. The Southern edge of the ditch line in Trench 5 is damaged by the service trench for an electrical cable.



Illus 7 Trench 1 looking North West, red arrows indicate line of ditch.



Illus 8 Trench 2 looking South West, topsoil above natural gravel no archaeological features present.



Illus 9 Trench 3 looking South East red arrows indicate course of ditch line



Illus 10 Trench 4 looking North West, red lines arrows indicate course of ditch line.



Illus 11 Trench 5 looking North North West, red arrows indicate line of top edge of ditch, black arrows indicate line of electricity cable trench.



Illus 12 Interior and exterior surface of Terra Sigillita sherd from Trench 3, lower image shows part of foot ring on base of vessel.



Illus 13 X20 microscopic view of Terra Sigillita fabric showing frequent white limestone inclusions and occasional black iron ore