

Archaeological Watching Brief
Branny Burn Hydro Scheme
Glensk
ANGUS
EZ02



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
BRANNY BURN, GLENESK
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<i>1</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Details of Work</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Appendix 1</i>	<i>Context Register</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Appendix 2</i>	<i>Photographic Register</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Appendix 3</i>	<i>Drawing Register</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Appendix 4</i>	<i>Finds Register</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Appendix 5</i>	<i>Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry</i>	<i>9</i>

Illustration 1: Site location plan

Illustration 2: Sites and features

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ABSTRACT

Alder Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on the site of a new hydro-electric scheme at Branny Burn, Glenesk. The development area was a linear route alongside a tributary of the River North Esk, to the north of Auchronie Farm. The work (site code EZ02) was carried out 31st March – 4th July 2016.

Two previously unrecorded sites (106, 112) were noted during the watching brief. Both appeared to represent the remains of agricultural buildings or small dwellings of probable post-medieval or early modern date; both were of local significance, providing information on local settlement and land-use patterns. Mitigation measures included photographic recording and the erection of protective barriers to prevent damage to the remains during the present development works. Several dry watercourses were also noted. No other features of archaeological significance were encountered.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Highland Eco Design Ltd commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of a new hydro-electric scheme at Branny Burn, Glenesk. The proposed development area is a linear route alongside a tributary of the River North Esk, to the north of Auchronie Farm (centred on NGR NO 4487 8091). The work (site code EZ01) was undertaken during the period 31st March- 4th July 2016 in varying weather conditions. The requirement was to monitor all ground-breaking works. Special attention was to be paid to possible flint scatters.

The work was designed to satisfy the archaeological condition on development application reference 14/00562/FLL (designated by the Cairngorms National Park Authority as 2014/0206/DET).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this investigation was to establish the presence/absence, date, character and quality of any archaeological remains surviving within the development area.

1.3 Reporting

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this watching brief. Copies will be sent to the client, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (as the curators of the Angus Sites and Monuments Record).

1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues

This Watching Brief constitutes the archaeological work designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Jamie Wallace of Highland Eco Design for his assistance and guidance throughout this project. Highland Eco Design funded this Watching Brief.

2 Details of Work

2.1 The Site (Illus 1)

The development occupies an area to the north of Auchronie farm in Glen Esk, centred on NGR 4487 8091, ranging from c.285 – 375m OD, and is in the valley, sloping moderately steeply, formed by the Burn of Branny.

2.2 Archaeological Potential

While there were no previously recorded archaeological sites within the proposed development area, recent research elsewhere indicated that the area of the development maintained the potential for previously unrecorded archaeology to survive. In order to mitigate any unforeseen damage to such remains, the archaeological watching brief was

requested. Areas of similar topography have yielded below surface flint scatters indicating activity dating from prehistoric times. The NMRS database notes one site, NO48SW 17 (building(s), enclosure(s)), to the S of the development area, to the W of Auchronie farmhouse.

2.3 Archaeological Method

All excavations and site topsoiling were conducted under archaeological supervision and monitored in the form of a watching brief. Such groundbreaking works associated with the formation of a micro-hydroelectric turbine included foundations for the turbine house, pipe and cabling trenches, the formation of access tracks and the levelling of ground for site compounds. Wherever possible a smooth-edged ditching bucket was used.

2.4 Results of Investigations

The initial strip extended from NW of Auchronie farm, westwards towards the proposed location of the new turbine house on the E bank of the Branny Burn. This route followed an existing farm track, whose rough-metalled surface (102) had grassed over (turf and topsoil 101). The existing track surface was scraped to a depth of 0.10m below the starting level. To the north of the track, an earth bank was present from close to the junction with the main farm track running north from Auchronie. The bank (104), extended to the W/NW for 5.50m, being an average of 1.20m wide at the base and a maximum of 0.50m high, composed of mid-grey silt, cobbles and redeposited subsoil (103), all derived from the excavation of a drainage ditch (105) running parallel with the track for 16.20m before turning away northwards.

Site 106- building remains were noted at NGR NO 44853 80816 (S corner of track), immediately to W and N of a bend in the track on a roughly level area of ground. The remains (upstanding stones up to 0.30m in height above present ground surface and earthen bank representing a building footing) covered a sub-rectangular area measured 19.00m x 15.40m (N-S alignment). A single redware sherd (cream tin glaze) was recovered from metalling 102 to E of 106. It is possible that the remains are related to the site noted on the NMRS database as NO48SW 17 (building(s), enclosure(s)), which lies to the S of the remains noted during the present watching brief. However, the remains noted here do not appear to have been previously recorded.

20m NW of site 106, the metalling of the farm track petered out and gave way to a grass track crossing an expanse of heather-covered bog, with a layer of leached grey silt (107) now intervening between the topsoil and glacial subsoil, forming patchy lenses which replaced metalling 102. The subsoil, however, remained consistent, a mid-orange/brown sand/gravel mix with occasional boulders deposited as glacial till, some visible protruding on the ground surface.

At NGR NO 44657 80854, a relict watercourse (108) traversed the new track route on a NE-SW line, containing a fill of dark grey humic peat with frequent pebbles. No cut was apparent in the ground surface either side of the track, suggesting the watercourse was entirely silted up or its banks eroded away. 5m E of the area to be stripped for the turbine house, at NGR NO 44657 80898, a second watercourse (109) traversed the track on a N-S alignment. This feature, which extended as a visible linear depression to the north and south of the track, was noticeably straight-sided and up to 3.00m wide, up to 1.00m above the present ground surface; it clearly represented a man-made channel

which might possibly have been a mill lade connecting with site NO48SW 17 (building(s), enclosure(s)). The channel was less apparent to the south, where it was partially filled by mature trees. Banks were not present where the track crossed the channel, indicating it had been in-filled with the new route utilising an existing crossing. A fill of light-brown, humic silt with frequent bracken roots (110) was exposed within the stripped track, 0.10m below the previous ground surface and up to 0.15m thick. Within the area of the turbine house, a dark humic silt (111) filled a natural depression on the E bank of the Branny Burn.

Following the completion of stripping at the site of the turbine house, operations were switched to the planned intake upstream on the Branny Burn, with a new access track being cut across a steep bank to the south of the intended site. This descended into a narrow valley, the floor of which widened to form a boat-shaped hollow terminating at the N end in a rocky gorge, selected as the site of the pipeline intake.

Site 112- remains representing a single sub-rectangular building were noted at NGR NO 44695 82256 (SE corner, $\pm 6\text{m}$), aligned approximately E-W. The building survived as drystone wall footings standing up to 0.84m high along the W internal elevation, less along the remaining walls. The W elevation contained a stone fireplace constructed of a single slab lintel over two slab uprights, forming a box 0.36m high, 0.31m wide and 0.50m deep, located around the mid-point of the elevation. The building remains measured 2.60m N-S and 3.70m E-W. Occupying a roughly level plateau above and to the E of the Branny Burn, with undulating ground to N and S and a steep escarpment to the E, the site was cordoned off allowing 2m separation from the track being cut to the intake, located further N.

113- a number of quartz flakes and chips were exposed in topsoil around NGR NO 44712 82074, some of which were initially thought to be potential artefacts; however, upon closer inspection, it was found that similar quartz fragments and larger nodules of quartz were present across a wide area of the hillside, intermingled with general scree. It was concluded that all of these were geofacts.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

Two previously unrecorded sites (106, 112) were noted during the watching brief. Both appeared to represent the remains of agricultural buildings or small dwellings of probable post-medieval or early modern date; both were of local significance, providing information on local settlement and land-use patterns. Mitigation measures included photographic recording and the erection of protective barriers to prevent damage to the remains during the present development works.

3.1 Recommendations for Further Work

Alder Archaeology considers the terms of the watching brief to have been met and does not recommend any further work on this site in connection with the present development. However, the final decision ultimately rests with Claire Herbert, the Angus area Archaeologist.

Appendix 1 Context Register

No:	Description
101	Topsoil over existing track running WNW/NW from farm, thin (0.01-0.05m) brown silt
102	Rough metalling of track, gravel and occasional cobbles, immediately below topsoil 101, up to 5m wide, very similar to surface of main track to NE, probably recent, over subsoil
103	Undisturbed natural subsoil, orange/light-brown sand/gravel mix, c.0.10m below present ground surface under track
104	Bank present for 5.50m on NE side of track, 1.20m wide (average), 0.50m high (maximum), composed of piled mid-grey silt and redeposited 103 subsoil, cobbles from track construction
105	Ditch cut, 0.25m wide (average), 0.15m deep to top of silting (probably deeper), 16.20m long from junction with main track to bank 104, before turning northwards (uphill) away from track. Modern track drainage, bank 104 probably represents excavation of ditch
106	Building remains at NGR NO 44853 80816 (S corner of track), immediately to W of track. Definite remains (upstanding stones up to 0.30m in height above present ground surface and earth bank-building footing) covering sub-rectangular area 19.00m 15.40m (N-S alignment). Redware sherd (cream tin glaze) in metalling 102 to E of 106.
107	Leached light-grey soil intervening between topsoil 101 and natural 103 over track from 20m to NW of building 106, replacing metalling 102, forming patchy lenses c.0.05-0.10m thick
108	Relict watercourse traversing track E-W for 9.20m at NGR NO 44657 80854, 0.50m wide, 0.20m thick, scooped profile, fill of dark grey humic peat with frequent pebbles
109	Ditch (possible lade) traversing track at NGR NO 44657 80898 , to E of turbine house
110	Fill of 109, mid/dark brown humic silt, moderately compact, 0.20m thick, scooped profile
111	Silt in base of turbine house area, filling natural depression, very dark grey humic silt, 30% cobbles, boulders, frequent bracken roots
112	Shieling hut at NGR NO 44695 82256, 2.60m (n-S) x 3.70m (E-W), drystone wall footings in earth bank
113	Quartz chips and pebbles in topsoil, initially thought possible artefacts, but found to exist across most of hillside around NO 44712 82074- geofacts, quartz intermingled with general scree.
114	Hillwash in valley bottom, loose mid-brown silt mottled with dark grey silt and peat, lenses of yellow sand natural subsoil erupting, roots frequent (heather), c.10% boulders, cobbles, stone fragments
115	Scree fill (c.50% boulders and stone fragments in darke grey sand silt matrix, loose) of relict watercourse 116
116	Dry watercourse
117	Dry watercourse
118	Dry watercourse

119	Topsoil over track linking turbine house with intake track, waterlogged peat, moderately compact, generally homogeneous with occasional surface boulders, 0.10m- 0.50m thick
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Appendix 2 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001-2	Location shots, E-W track to N of Auchronie farm	E, W
003	Working/location shot, E-W track to N of Auchronie farm	E
004-5	Working shot, E-W track to N of Auchronie farm	S
006-8	Metalling 102	WNW
009-10	Bank 104	NW
011-12	Ditch 105	NW
013-14	Location shot, stripped track	W, E
015-16	Location shot, building remains 106 from hill to N of farm	NW
017-18	Working shot, stripping track to SE of 106	NW
019	Location shot, farm from track	SSE
020	Subsoil 103	NE
021-29	Location shots, building remains 106	NE, N, NW
030-32	Working/location shots, stripping to SE of 106	SE
033-37	Working/location shots, stripping to W of 106	W, WNW
038	Location shot, stripped track to SE of 106	E
039	Working shot, stripping to W of 106	W
040	Location shot, building 106 alongside stripped track	E
041	Working shot, stripping to W of 106	W
042	Location shot, building 106 alongside stripped track	N
043-44	Metalling 102, petering out to NW of 106	NW
045	Large boulder within subsoil 103	NW
046	Subsoil 103, to NW of 106	NW
047	Location shot, stripped track, to W of 106	E

048	Working shot, stripping track	W
049	Silt 107, to NW of 106	W
050	Location/working shot, stripped track, valley of Branny Burn behind to W	W
051-53	Relict watercourse 108	NW, SE
054	Ditch 109	N
055-56	Fill 110 of ditch 110, crossed by track	N
057-67	Working/location shots, stripping of base for turbine house	N, S, E, W
068-70	Location shots, building remains 106 behind temporary protective fencing	N, NE
071-74	Location shots, Branny Burn and turbine base	N, W, S
075-77	Location shots, Branny Burn	S
078-79	Location shots, intake area on Branny Burn	N, S
079-82	Location shot, Branny Burn towards Glenesk, access track to be stripped	S, SW
083-89	Working/location shots, stripped area of access	S, SE, N
90	Topsoil 110 (section)	E
91	Subsoil 111 in turbine house area	N
92-95	Working/location shots, stripped area	S, N
96-97	Location shot, intake (pre-construction)	N
98-100	Shieling hut 112	W, N
101-103	Location shots, shieling hut 112	NW, SW
104	Shieling hut 112, with posts for temporary fencing	W
105	Location shot, shieling 112, from hillside to S (stripped access track)	N
106	Working shot, stripping north end of bank above burn, access track	N
107	Quartz chips 113 (not anthropogenic)	S
108-109	Location shots, chips 113	SW
110-113	Working shots, stripping bank	SW
114-116	Location shots, bank	W, SW, NW
117-118	Quartz 113 in sheep path above track	N
119	Quartz in subsoil 111	N

120-122	Working shots, stripping bank below quartz scatters	W
123-134	Working/location shots, stripping bank	E, SE, S
135-141	Location shots, compound to S of intake	S, N
142	Working shot, machine moving into compound area	S
143-146	Location/working shot, stripping compound	N
147-151	Location/working shots, stripping track between intake compound and existing access track	SW, W, NW
152-155	Stripped track, hillwash 114	S, N
156-159	Scree fill 115 of relict watercourse 116	E, N
160	Line of watercourse 116	W
161-163	Working/location shots, machine by track	W, SW
164	Stripped track	SE
165	Location track, track	N
166	Working shot, stripping track	S
167	Relict watercourse 117	SE
168	Location shot, watercourse 117	NW
169-170	Relict watercourse 118	SE
171	Location shot, watercourse 118	SW
172-173	Location shot, turbine house base and Branny Burn	S
174-176	Working shots, stripping track from turbine house base	N
177	Stripped track	N
178-181	Working shots, stripping track from turbine house base	NE, N
182-183	Location shots, stripped track	S
184	Working shot, stripping track	N
185	Stripped track	S
186	Location/working shot, stripped track	N
187	Topsoil 119 (section)	E
188	Location shot, stripped shot	S
189	Working shot, stripping track	N

190-191	Location shot, previously stripped track to intake	N
192-193	Stripped track	N

Appendix 3 Drawing Register

<i>Sheet No.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Scale</i>
1	Site notes, including measured section drawing of bank 104	1:20
2	Site notes	-

Appendix 4 Finds Register

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material Type</i>	<i>Details</i>
102	Ceramic	Single sherd of red/orange pottery, cream glaze, post-medieval/early modern, in track close to site 106

Appendix 5 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Angus
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Branny Burn Hydro Scheme
PROJECT CODE:	EZ02
PARISH:	Lochlee
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	C Fyles
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Alder Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
RCAHMS NO(S):	-
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Shieling hut, dwelling (ruined)
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	Site centred on NO 4487 8091
START DATE	31 st March 2016
END DATE	4 th July 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	Alder Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on the site of a new hydro-electric scheme at Branny Burn, Glenesk. The development area was a linear route alongside a tributary of the River North Esk, to the north of Auchronie Farm; the requirement was to monitor all ground-breaking works. Special attention was to be paid to possible flint scatters. Two previously unrecorded sites (106, 112) were noted during the watching brief. Both appeared to represent the remains of agricultural buildings or small dwellings of probable post-medieval or early modern date; both were of local significance, providing information on local settlement and land-use patterns. Mitigation measures included photographic recording and the erection of protective barriers to prevent damage to the remains during the present development works. Several dry watercourses were also noted. No other features of archaeological significance were encountered.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Highland Eco Design Ltd
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	-
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX

ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	RCAHMS (intended)
EMAIL ADDRESS:	director@alderarchaeology.co.uk

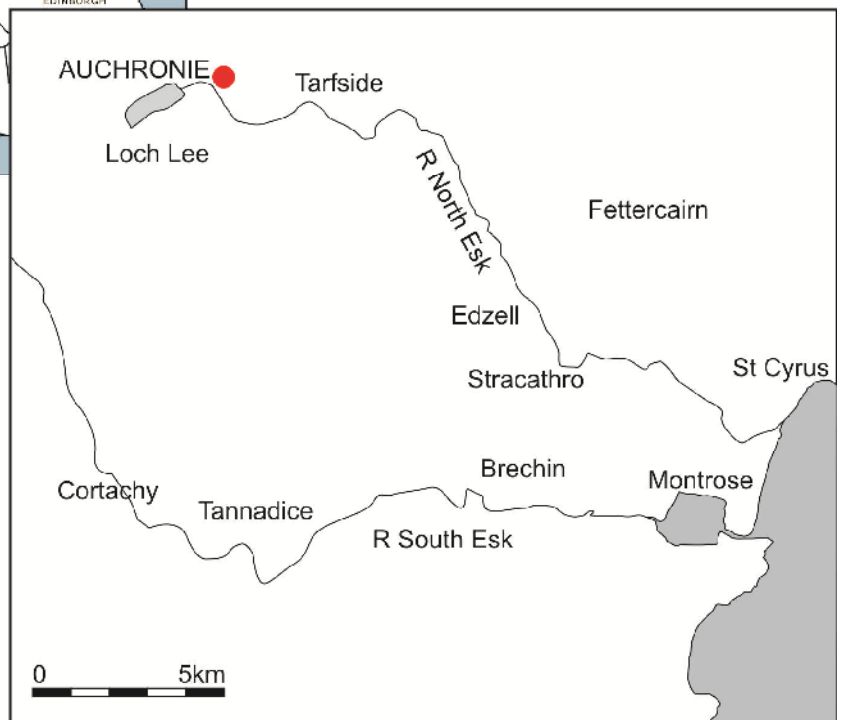
Illus 1



Archaeological Watching Brief

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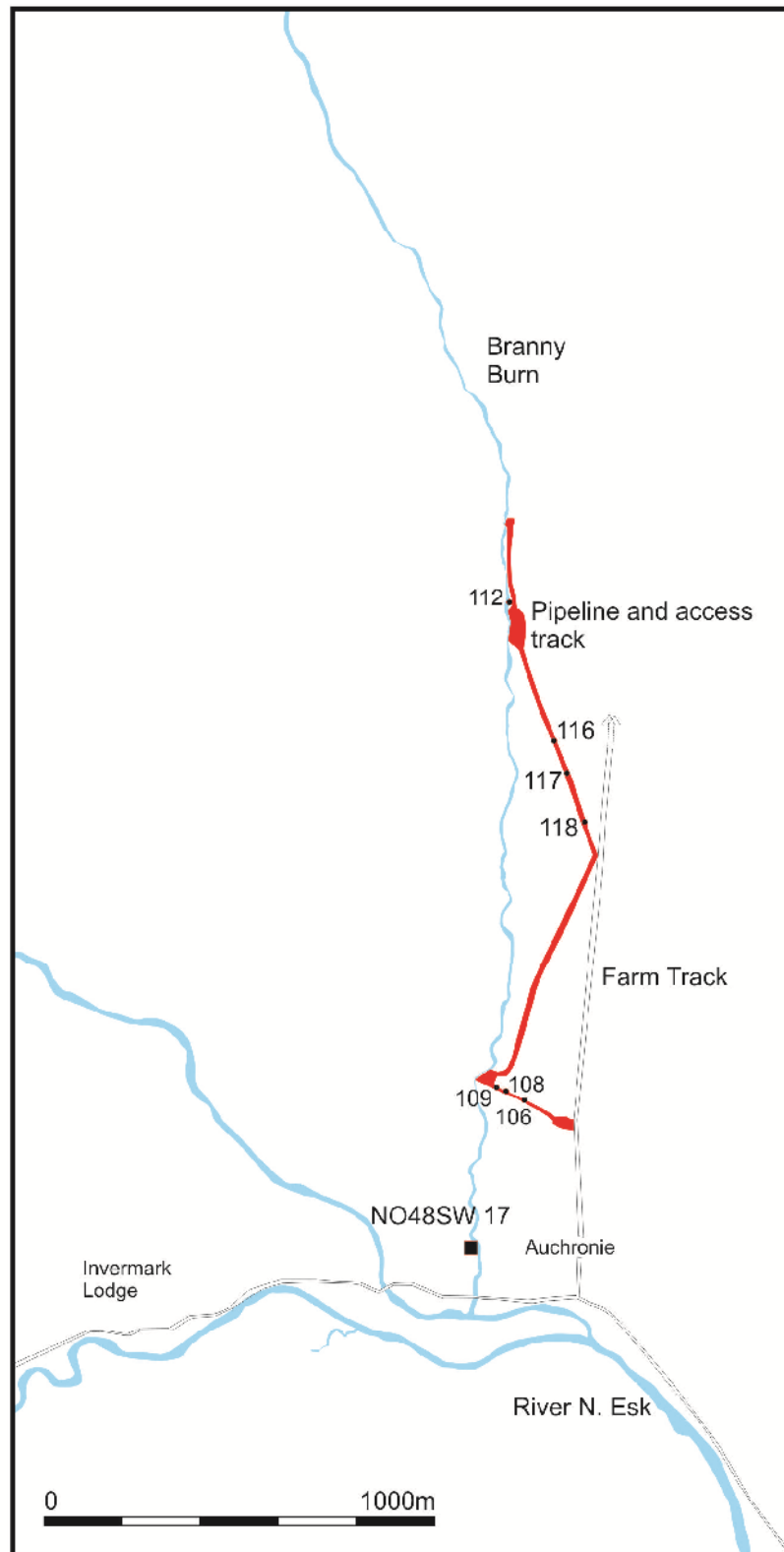
Site Location



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Illus 2 Branny Burn Watching Brief, sites and features



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