

**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief,
Woodlands of Durris,
Banchory, Aberdeenshire, AB31 6BH
Site Code CA246-2015**



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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on July 9th and 10th, and on July 27th, 2015 at Woodlands of Durris, Banchory, AB31 6BH on behalf of Kirkwood Homes Ltd during the creation of drainage and SUDS construction.

Based upon the Written Scheme of Investigation or WSI (Cameron 2015), it was agreed the site was subject to a watching brief during topsoil stripping to investigate the potential for archaeological remains or features.

This work took the form of machine excavator trenching with a toothless bucket in conjunction with hand-excavation for closer inspection of potential archaeological deposits.

Beyond several modern white ceramic sherds, two stone field drains and a ceramic tile drain, no archaeological finds or features were noted and it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current development.

1 INTRODUCTION

The site is located at Woodlands of Durris on the south side of the B road. It is at NO 78848 95661, in the parish of Durris and at 85-90m OD. An application was submitted to Aberdeenshire Council (APP/2015/1241) for formation of drainage and SUDS on 23 April 2015 and is pending decision. Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service require a watching brief during the soil strip.

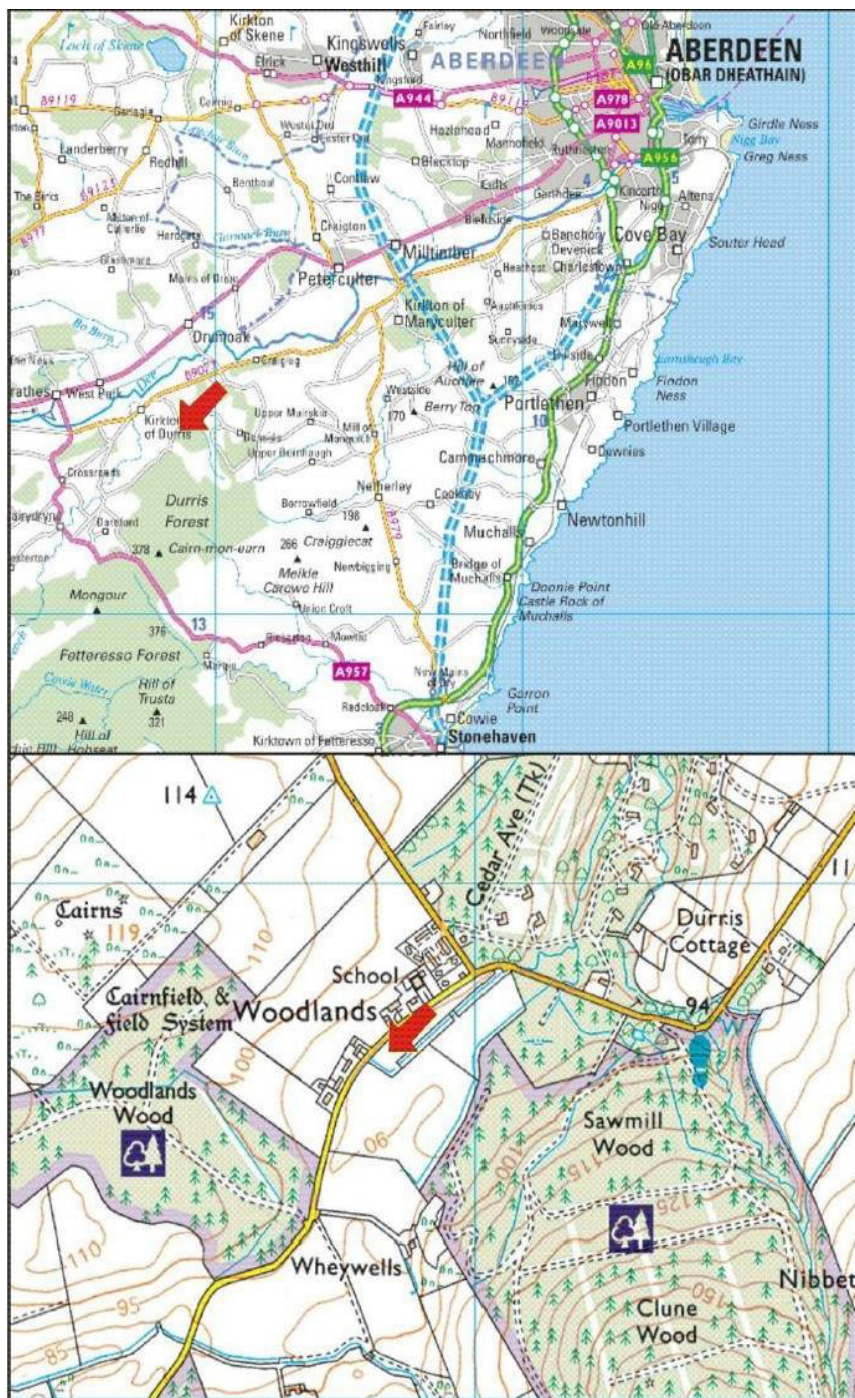


Illustration 1: Location of Woodlands of Durris site near Banchory. (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the proposed development. 0.5km NW is Upper Balfour cairns, house and field system (NO 79 NE 28). The monument comprises the remains of a prehistoric circular house and a field system, comprising at least 200 field clearance cairns and field banks; there are also two burial cairns and a ring cairn. The hut circle measures 9.5m in diameter. It is situated in an area of rough pasture on a low ridge 540m SW of Upper Balfour farmhouse, there is a field-system and cairnfield containing at least three burial cairns (a ring-cairn (NO79NE 30), a kerb cairn (NO79NE 33), cairns (NO79NE 31 and 32) a hut circle and a rectilinear enclosure. The hut-circle (NO 7795 9580) measures 9.5m in diameter within a stony bank which around the S half is up to 0.4m high and spread to a thickness of 1.5m but elsewhere is reduced to little more than a scatter of stones; the entrance may have been on the E. The rectilinear enclosure (NO 7814 9581) measures 33.2m in length over all and tapers from 8.3m in breadth at the WSW end to 7.3m about 11.5m from the ENE end; at this point it contracts to 6m in breadth for the rest of its length. The sides are defined by low banks, along which boulders are set, and the ENE end, which is well-preserved, is rounded. The ruinous state of the enclosure suggests that it is of considerable antiquity and it may even be the remains of a building of prehistoric date. On the crest of the ridge there are about 200 cairns spread over about 9ha, and a scatter of cairns along the SE edge of Kirkton Wood suggest that they once extended at least 150m further to the W; the cairns vary from 2m to 7m in diameter and are up to 0.7m in height. Amongst them are five major banks, which appear to have been part of a system of large enclosures on the crest of the ridge. The cairns noted on a moor at Upper Balfour in 1913 probably refer to this site (RCAHMS 1984). A copper alloy axehead (NO79NE 21) was found c.1863 on the moor at Upper Balfour, is in the possession of Mr John Mann (Aberdeen J Notes and Queries 1913, 113).

2.2 The second SAM is a cairn 0.8km SE at Clune Wood (NO79NE 17). The monument is a cairn situated on a gentle NW-facing slope, immediately adjacent to a forest road, 150m WNW of the scheduled recumbent stone circle and ring cairn which also lie in the wood. The cairn measures 20m NW to SE by 16m transversely, and ranges in height from 1.8m on the NW to 0.5m on the SE. The upper part of the cairn has suffered some disturbance but the underlying burial deposits will survive. The area to be scheduled measures 40m in diameter, centred on the mound as marked in red on the attached map, the area of the present forest road lying within the area being specifically excluded. The monument is of national importance as a cairn beneath which will lie at least one Bronze Age burial, and a contemporary land surface, which may preserve evidence of land use in the area. It has the potential to enhance considerably our understanding of burial and ceremonial practices. It is of particular importance because of the survival nearby of a well preserved recumbent stone circle and ring cairn, which probably represent different aspects of prehistoric burial and ceremonial practice (RCAHMS 1984, 294-309).

2.3 The third SAM is a recumbent stone circle 0.95km SE Clune Wood (NO79SE 2). The monument comprises a recumbent stone circle of prehistoric date, enclosing a cairn. It is situated on the summit of the hill within Clune Wood. The cairn measures about 14.5m in diameter by up to 1m in height, but has been extensively dug into. The recumbent (2.8m by 0.7m and 1.2m in height) and its flankers (that on the E measuring 1.4m high; that on the W 1.6m) are on the S, set on both the perimeter of the cairn and the line of the circle. The latter is roughly oval, measuring 16.5m from E to W by 13.8m transversely and comprises six stones in addition to the recumbent and flankers. Stone settings of this type are characteristic of the Neolithic. Immediately to the east of the stone circle lies a ring cairn 8m in diameter. A portion of the inner stone kerb remains in situ (Welfare 2011).



Illustration 2: Area of SUDS Development (*Image copyright Kirkwood Homes Ltd.*)

89) (Shepherd, C 2011, 16-17). At least two possible circular enclosures are visible on a vertical aerial photograph taken in 1977 at Woodlands (NO79NE0092).

2.4 There is one known site within the development area (NO79NE0092) and several in the vicinity (Appendix 1). Immediately SW of the proposed development is Woodlands Wood which has an area of rig and furrow (NO79NE 91) and a dyke (NO79NE

2.5 19th-century farmsteads in the area include Whey hills (NO79NE 58), Woodlands (NO79NE 59).

2.6 A saw-pit is located at Sawmill Wood (NO79NE 88) as well as a lade, mill dam and sluice (NO79NE 92, 92.1, 92.3, 92.3; Shepherd 2011, 16-17). A linear feature is recorded in Cluny Wood (NO79NE 87; *ibid*).

2.7 Woodlands of Durris does not appear on any early maps of the area. Historic maps show a watercourse running SW-NE through the proposed development area (Illus 4, 5). Aerial photos (NCAP online) reveal nothing archaeological in the area.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was carried out on July 9th and 10th using an 8 ton excavator with a 1.5m wide toothless bucket. Works resumed on July 27th using a 20 ton excavator with 1.8m wide toothless bucket to complete the soil strip (Illustration 2). The topsoil deposits were overall a consistent 35cm in depth throughout the site, measuring approximately 50m by 30m at their maximum dimensions. The topsoil overlays a dark gray silty subsoil with stone inclusions alongside yellow-brown sandy-silt inclusions. Two stone-filled field drains were noted running approximately north-south, with a second larger drain with a slight curvature running approximately northeast-southwest. A clay drain tile was also noted running northeast-southeast as well. Several small modern sherds of white ceramic were noted. No other archaeological material or features were visible.



Illustration 3: View of SUDS area looking NE near completion of soil strip on 27 July.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

No further archaeological work appears to be required during this current development. The final decision on the archaeological requirements at this site remains with Claire Herbert, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks goes to Alison Cameron for producing and providing the WSI. Thanks also goes to Claire Herbert of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, and Colin Mair and Jake Florence of Kirkwood Homes Ltd.

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DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_0001	Watching brief, track	W
DSC_0002	Watching brief, track	W
DSC_0003	Watching brief, track	S
DSC_0004	Watching brief, track	N
DSC_0005	Watching brief, track	SW
DSC_0006	Watching brief, track	SW
DSC_0007	Watching brief, track	W
DSC_0008	Watching brief, track	W
DSC_0009	Watching brief, track	SW
DSC_0011	Watching brief, track	S
DSC_0012	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0013	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0014	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0015	Watching brief, track	NE
DSC_0016	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0017	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0018	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0019	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0020	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0021	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0022	Watching brief, track	SE
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DSC_0024	Watching brief, track	E
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DSC_0027	Watching brief, track	N
DSC_0028	Watching brief, track	NW
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DSC_0031	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0032	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0033	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0034	Watching brief, track	SE
DSC_0035	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0036	Watching brief, track	E
DSC_0037	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0038	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0039	Watching brief, SUDS	NE

DSC_0040	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0041	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0042	Watching brief, SUDS	N
DSC_0043	Watching brief, SUDS	N
DSC_0044	Watching brief, SUDS	n/d
DSC_0045	Watching brief, SUDS	NW
DSC_9950	soil strip track	E
DSC_9951	soil strip track	SW
DSC_9952	soil strip track	S
DSC_9953	soil strip track	SW
DSC_9954	soil strip track	SE
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DSC_9956	soil strip track	SE
DSC_9957	soil strip track	SE
DSC_9958	soil strip track	S
DSC_9959	soil strip track	N
DSC_9960	soil strip track	N
DSC_9961	soil strip track	NE
DSC_9963	soil strip track	SE
DSC_9964	soil strip track	SE
DSC_9965	soil strip track	NW
DSC_9966	soil strip track	S
DSC_9967	soil strip track	S
DSC_9968	Local residents	SW
DSC_9969	soil strip track	SE
DSC_9994	soil strip track	SW
DSC_9997	soil strip track	SW
DSC_9998	soil strip track	NW
DSC_9999	soil strip track	NE
DSC_0523	Watching brief, SUDS	SE
DSC_0524	Watching brief, SUDS	E
DSC_0525	Watching brief, SUDS	SE
DSC_0526	Watching brief, SUDS	SE
DSC_0527	Watching brief, SUDS	E
DSC_0528	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0529	Watching brief, SUDS	SE
DSC_0530	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0532	Watching brief, SUDS	NE
DSC_0533	Watching brief, SUDS	SW
DSC_0534	Watching brief, SUDS	S
DSC_0535	Watching brief, SUDS	S
DSC_0536	Watching brief, SUDS	SSE
DSC_0537	Watching brief, SUDS	SE



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DSC_0002.jpg



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DSC_0020.jpg



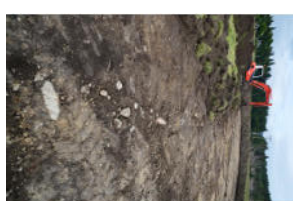
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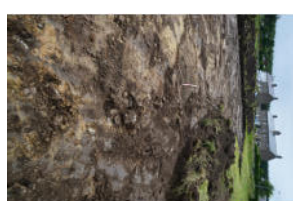
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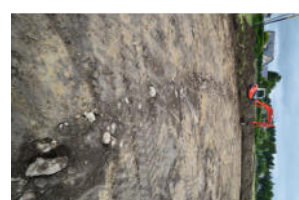
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DSC_0028.jpg



DSC_0029.jpg



DSC_0030.jpg



DSC_0031.jpg



DSC_0032.jpg



DSC_0033.jpg



DSC_0034.jpg



DSC_0036.jpg



DSC_0037.jpg



DSC_0038.jpg



DSC_0039.jpg



DSC_0040.jpg



DSC_0041.jpg



DSC_0042.jpg



DSC_0043.jpg



DSC_0044.jpg



DSC_0045.jpg



DSC_0046.jpg



DSC_0523 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0524 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0525 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0526 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0527 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0528 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0529 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0530 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0532 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0533 (4000x2660).jpg



DSC_0534 (4000x2660).jpg



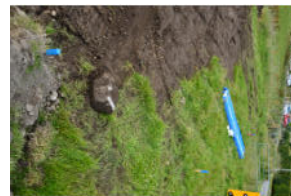
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DSC_0538 (2660x4000).jpg



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DSC_9951.jpg



DSC_9952.jpg



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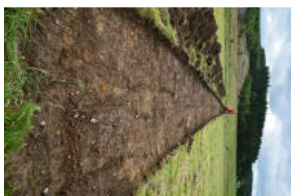
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