

**Watching Brief, Site South of Park Place, Newtonhill,
AB39 3RZ**

Data Structure Report (DSR)

Site Code CA340

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Application APP/2018/1213



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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 26th and 27th February and 9 March 2020 at Site South of Park Place, Newtonhill, AB39 3RZ. The site was heavily overgrown with gorse scrub. Overhead cables run along the south side of the site. The watching brief revealed the foundations of a wall, possibly the remains of a croft depicted on the 1st edition OS map.

The watching brief is now complete and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current planning application.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located on the south side of Newtonhill; the Aberdeen-Dundee railway line forms the E edge of the site which is south of Windyedge Court, E of Cairnhill Drive and N of Mains of Monduff. It is centred on NGR NO 9070 9285, at 70-80m OD in the parish of Fetteresso.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Barratt North Scotland. An application to Aberdeenshire Council APP/2018/1213 for erection of 123 houses and 8 flats was approved on appeal. A watching brief was required in the area occupied by a small cottage on the 1st Edition OS map.
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Historic Environment Scotland's Policy Statement (HESPS) which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2020)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

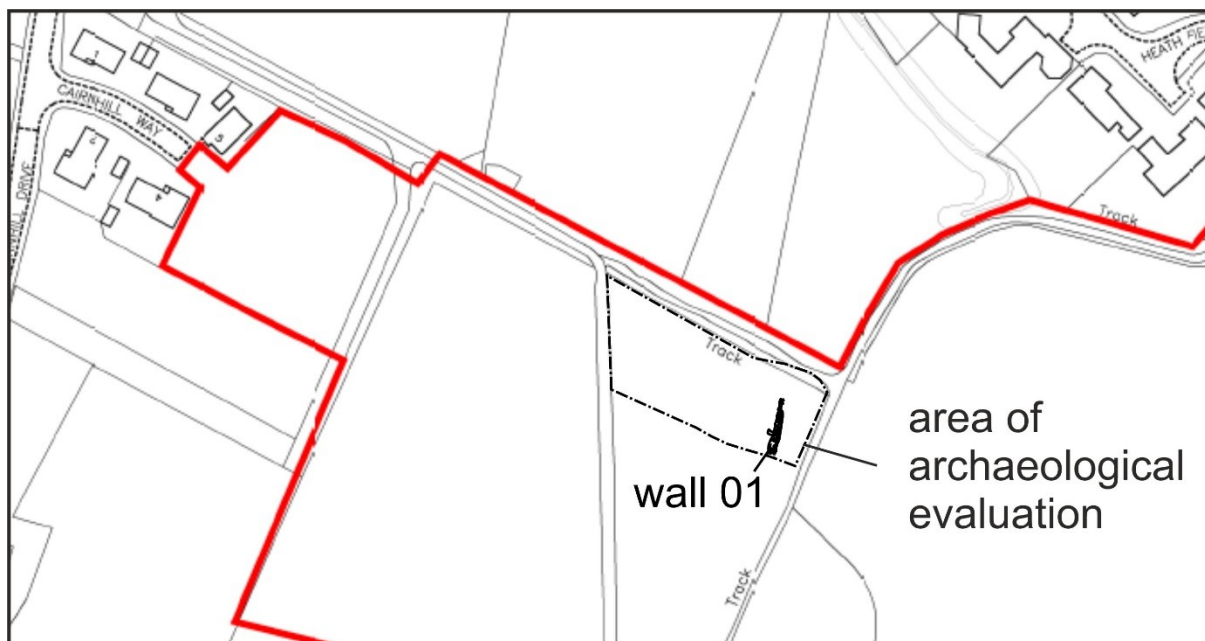
- 2.1 There are no Scheduled Monuments within 1km of the proposed development.
- 2.2 There is one known site with the boundary of the proposed development. Site of a now destroyed croft (HER NO99SW0023) which is shown only on the 1st edition OS map. It is depicted as a disused rectangular building with an attached sub-triangular enclosure. The low denuded remains of a largely turf wall, with a corner angle, could be seen amongst the gorse cover. This may suggest the building predates the 19th century if the wall ties in with the structure shown on the 1st Edition OS map.
- 2.3 Newtonhill (formerly Skateraw (HER NO99SW0004) Haven; late 19thC to early 20thC. A natural harbour, with concrete pier and a number of railed slipways. There is a railway station (HER NO99SW0027) Railway station, depicted on OS 1st and 2nd edition maps. The 1st edition shows only the station building, the 2nd edition also depicts signal box, signal posts and footbridge. The station closed to passengers in June 1956; the signal box (CN5) remains in use. There is a former smokehouse (HES NO99SW 30; Geddes 2001, 20), cottages (HES NO99SW 31, 32), former Mil opf Elsie (HES NO99SW 12) a watermill, now derelict.
- 2.4 Just to the W of the proposed development is Chapelton of Elsie (HER NO89SE0092). A programme of archaeological evaluation was carried out by AOC Archaeology on Stage 1 of a large scale mixed use development. Evaluation carried out in August 2013 on infrastructure works (Stage 1A) identified limited archaeological remains. A total of 28 trenches were excavated, but only a single feature revealed - a stone filled pit which contained no artefacts to indicate a date. Remains of rig and furrow cultivation were identified in some trenches. Two unstratified lithics were recovered, one a burnt flint chunk, the other a flint split nodule; both of prehistoric date but which cannot be dated more closely. Evaluation of the Stage 1B (residential works), comprising 35 trenches, identified only two, inter-cutting, stone filled pits. Two unstratified lithics were recovered including a well-made end scraper of Neolithic date. The area had suffered extensive plough scarring (Engl 2014, 23).
- 2.5 The village of Muchalls (HES NO99SW 17) lies to the S of the proposed development. There is a former railway station (NO99SW 27), railway viaduct (NO99SW 9), hotel/inn (HES NO99SW 28) and Stranathro farmstead (HER NO99SW0025) a farmstead, in use, depicted on the 2nd edition OS map of 1888 as an L-plan building open to the S with a small square building to the N. Today, the L-plan building has been extended at its N corner and from its S face but the small building to the N is not shown. Photographic surveys of the buildings were undertaken in 2010 and 2011 prior to the proposed conversion of the steading into a dwellinghouse.
- 2.6 On a rocky outcrop E of Muchalls is Katiefinnie (HER NO99SW0008) a conical rocky hillock detached from the main cliff; renowned as having been the residence of a notorious witch called Katie Finnie.
- 2.7 There are farmsteads Newtonhill Farm (HES NO99SW 29), Nether Mains of Muchalls (HES NO99SW 26), Nether Cairnhill (HER NO89SE0073) a farmstead, depicted on the 1st edition OS map as 3 rectangular buildings in an L-plan, another building to the W, 2 more to the N and a dam to the NW. On the 2nd edition, the 3 buildings have been conjoined to form a single L-plan steading with a small building in the courtyard; a farmhouse has been added to the S while one of the buildings to the N has been removed. The steading survives but has been enlarged and the building in the courtyard removed; the dam has been infilled and the building to the N removed.

Windyedge (HER NO89SE0072) is a Farm town or hamlet, depicted on the 1st edition OS map as a group of 11 buildings, consisting of 2 small farmsteads at the E and W edges of the settlement plus several cottages. On the 2nd edition map, only 10 of the buildings are shown with one now labelled 'Smithy' and one labelled 'Cairnhill School'. The farmsteads, smithy and school buildings survive along with 2 of the cottages. To the W of the proposed development is post-medieval St Ternan's Church (NO89SE 59) constricted 1831 and enlarged 1865, parsonage (HES NO89SE 60) and neighbouring Muchalls Cottage (NO89SE 57).

- 2.8 The early maps show that the area is boggy marginal land and farmland and the First Edition OS map shows a small building at the N of the site (Illus 8) and the Second Edition the building is gone but the area is still mainly marginal upland ground as it is on the 1973 aerial photograph.

3 WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was carried out on 26th and 27th February and 9 March 2020. Gorse scrub measuring over 2 m in height was initially removed with a BMS-F 125 Forestry Mulcher attachment mounted on a 20 tonne DX225 LC machine. Soil was then machined with a 2m flat blade bucket. The risk of arcing from the overhead cables prevented complete removal of the gorse scrub on the first visit but a fixed reach machine was used on 9 March to remove soil under the power lines.

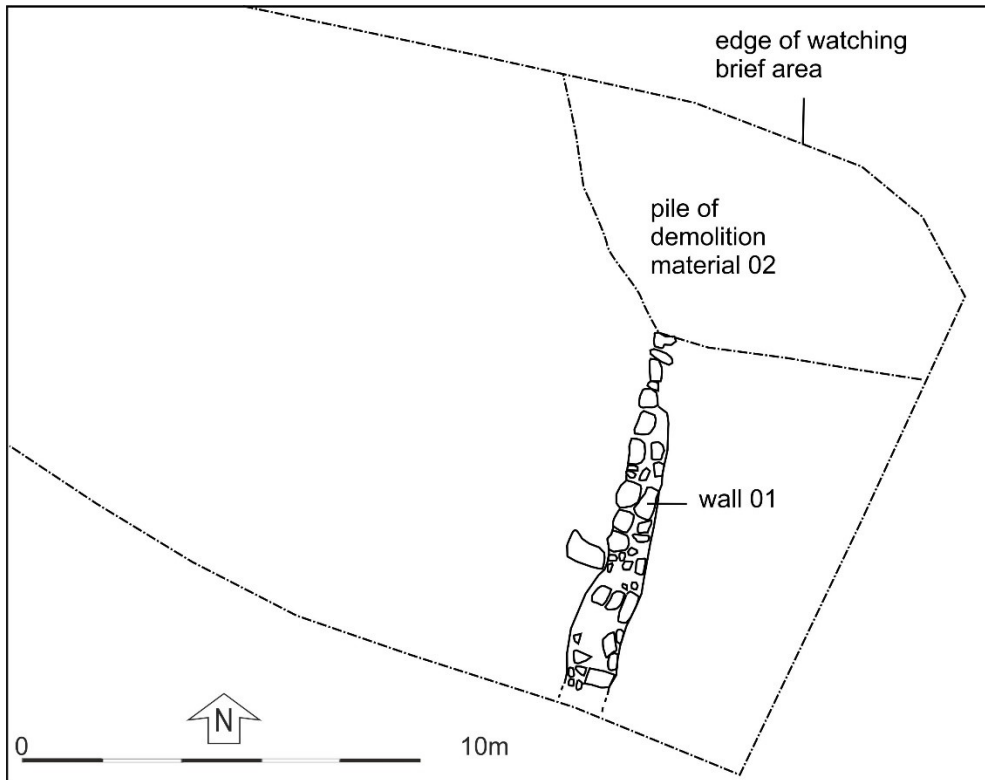


Illus 2 Plan of the watching brief area and wall 01

Removal of 0.2m – 0.30m of topsoil at the W end of the site showed it to be mixed with hardcore. It is most likely the site was affected by construction or repair of the adjacent farm track.

The S half of the site under the overhead cables was stripped on 9 March 2020 and it was a mix of gorse roots amongst large earthfast boulders; no evidence of any structure was identified.

The NE corner of the site was occupied by a large mound of demolition rubble comprising field stones, few shaped stones, bricks, modern tile, plastic and ferrous vehicle parts (Illus 3, 4). No foundations were discernible beneath this rubble. It is unclear whether this material was the remains of the croft house depicted on the 1st edition OS map (Illus 8).



Illus 3 Plan of wall 01



Illus 4 Wall foundation on first exposure with rubble pile (back left and centre)

A low turf covered bank with a NE - SW axis led away from the rubble pile. Removal of the turf revealed foundations of a drystone wall (Illus 3-5) comprising larger boulders interspersed with smaller field stones which could be the remains of the croft house depicted

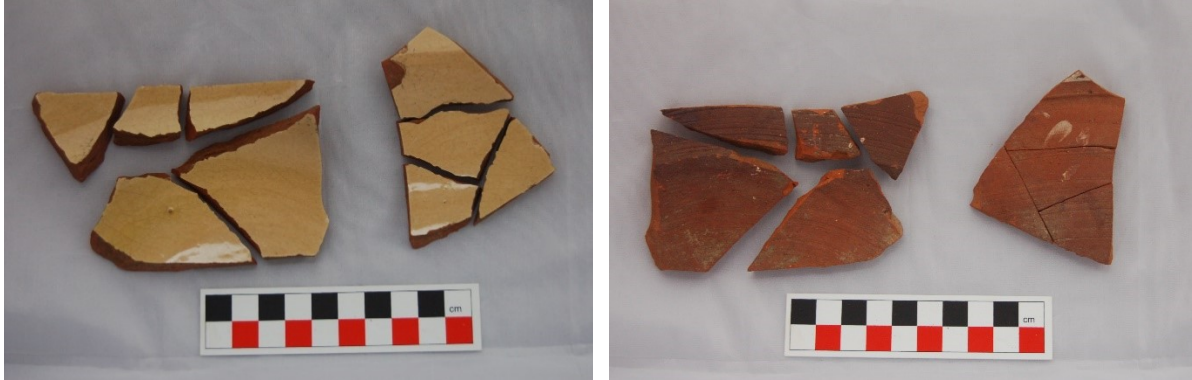
on the 1st edition OS map (Illus 8) and previously described as a turf wall in the HER (NO99SW0023).

The wall showed signs of collapse: the base was spread where pressure from above appeared to have caused stones to slip outwards and there was a significant amount of tumbled stone present in the surrounding topsoil. It was not possible to determine if the wall continued under the rubble pile to the N.



Illus 5 Wall with rubble heap (foreground) unexcavated portion visible as turf covered bank running into gorse scrub

Sherds of pottery, window glass, bottle glass and a clay marble were recovered from the topsoil in the immediate vicinity of the wall (Illus 6 & 7). The pottery was similar to that found in association with 19th century crofts on Bennachie (Taylor, 2015) with a mix earthenware and finer ceramics. However, it must be borne in mind that whilst it is likely that the Newtonhill collection originated from the croft, elements may have been transported to the site at a later date.



Illus 6 Refitted sherds of red earthenware dish with yellow glaze



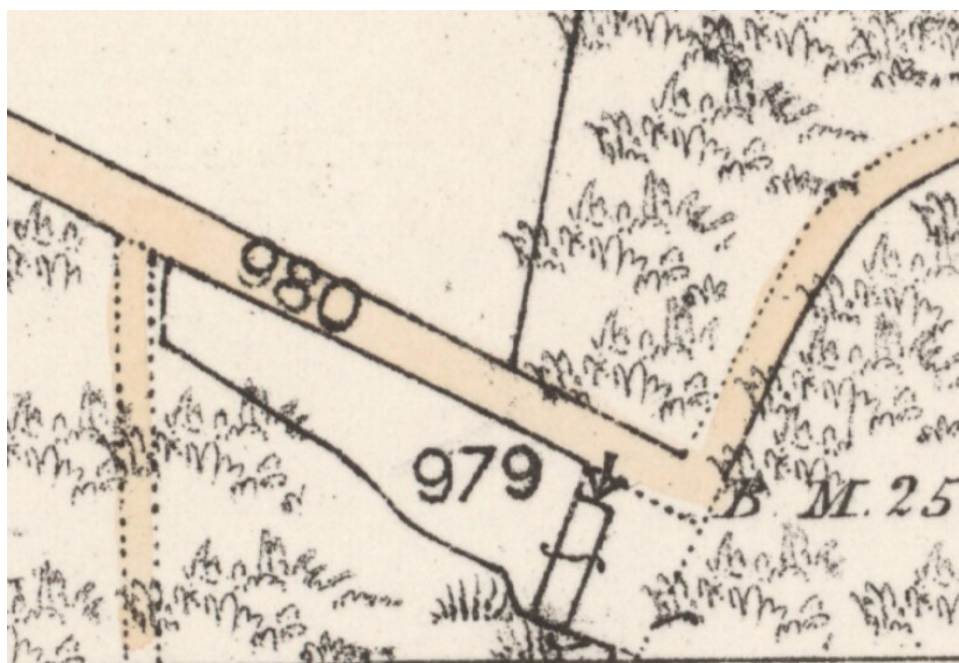
Illus 7 Miscellaneous small finds

4 CONCLUSIONS

The foundations of a drystone wall located to the E of the watching brief area are probably the remains of a croft depicted on the 1st Edition OS map. This may be the structure reported to be a turf wall in the HER (HER NO99SW0023), but there is insufficient evidence to corroborate the use of turf in its construction at this time.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Barry Mitchell, Barratt Homes for initiating this project and to Claire Herbert and Bruce Mann of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for Aberdeenshire, Angus, Moray and Aberdeen City Councils. Thanks also to Tom Peters, Construction Manager, JKR for his assistance during this project and machine operators Sandy Elrick and Davy.



Illus 8 First Edition OS map showing rectangular building one wall of which was found during the watching brief (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Kincardine Sheet VIII.13 (with inset VIII.14) (Fetteresso)/ Kincardine Sheet XIII.1 (Combined) Survey date: 1865 Publication date: 1868

6 REFERENCES

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Geddes, J. 2001 *Deeside and the Mearns: an illustrated architectural guide*, *Illustrated architectural guide series*. Edinburgh.

Taylor, S. 2015 *Pottery finds from the Colony site: some initial observations* in Shepherd, C. (ed) *Bennachie and the Garioch: Society and Ecology in the History of North-East Scotland*. Bennachie Landscapes Series 3. Bailies of Bennachie. Inverurie.

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context Number	Description
01	Base of drystone / turf wall
02	Demolition rubble / debris

APPENDIX 2 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph ID	Direction facing	Comments
DSC_5759		Site board
DSC_5760	E	Site before scrub clearance
DSC_5761	W	Boulder concealed in scrub
DSC_5762	W	Boulder concealed in scrub
DSC_5763	S	Modern camp area
DSC_5764	NE	Wall 01 with rubble heap 02 to NE
DSC_5765	NE	Wall 01 exposed by machine
DSC_5766	NNE	Wall 01 exposed by machine
DSC_5767	SW	Wall 01 exposed by machine
DSC_5768	NE	N end of W facing section of wall 01
DSC_5769	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5770	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5771	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5772	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5773	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5774	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5775	NE	W facing section wall 01
DSC_5776	NW	S end of E facing section wall 01
DSC_5777	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5778	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5779	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5780	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5781	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5782	NW	E facing section wall 01
DSC_5783	NW	N end of E facing section wall 01
DSC_5784	SW	Wall 01
DSC_5785		Red ware bowl sherds
DSC_5786		Red ware bowl sherds
DSC_5787		Red ware bowl sherds
DSC_5788		Red ware bowl sherds
DSC_5789		Mixed small finds
DSC_5790		Mixed small finds
9349	SE	Watching brief area under power cables
9350	NW	Watching brief area under power cables



DSC_5759



DSC_5760



DSC_5761



DSC_5762



DSC_5763



DSC_5764



DSC_5765



DSC_5766



DSC_5767



DSC_5768



DSC_5769



DSC_5770



DSC_5771



DSC_5772



DSC_5773



DSC_5774



DSC_5775



DSC_5776



DSC_5777



DSC_5778



IMG_9349



IMG_9350



DSC_5779



DSC_5780



DSC_5781



DSC_5782



DSC_5783



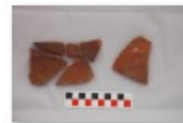
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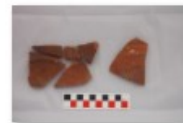
DSC_5785



DSC_5786



DSC_5787



DSC_5788



DSC_5789



DSC_5790