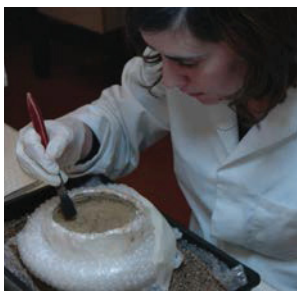


GUARD ARCHAEOLOGY



Ardrossan Cemetery, North Ayrshire Data Structure Report Project 3600

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Ardrossan Cemetery, North Ayrshire

Data Structure Report

On behalf of: North Ayrshire Council

NGR: NS 23959 42882


Project Number: 3600

Report by: Maureen C. Kilpatrick

Illustrations: Fiona Jackson

Project Manager: John Atkinson

Approved by:



Date:

04/12/2012

*This document has been prepared in accordance
with GUARD Archaeology Limited standard operating procedures.*

GUARD Archaeology Limited
52 Elderpark Workspace
100 Elderpark Street
Glasgow
G51 3TR

Tel: 0141 445 8800

Fax: 0141 445 3222

email: info@guard-archaeology.co.uk



www.guard-archaeology.co.uk

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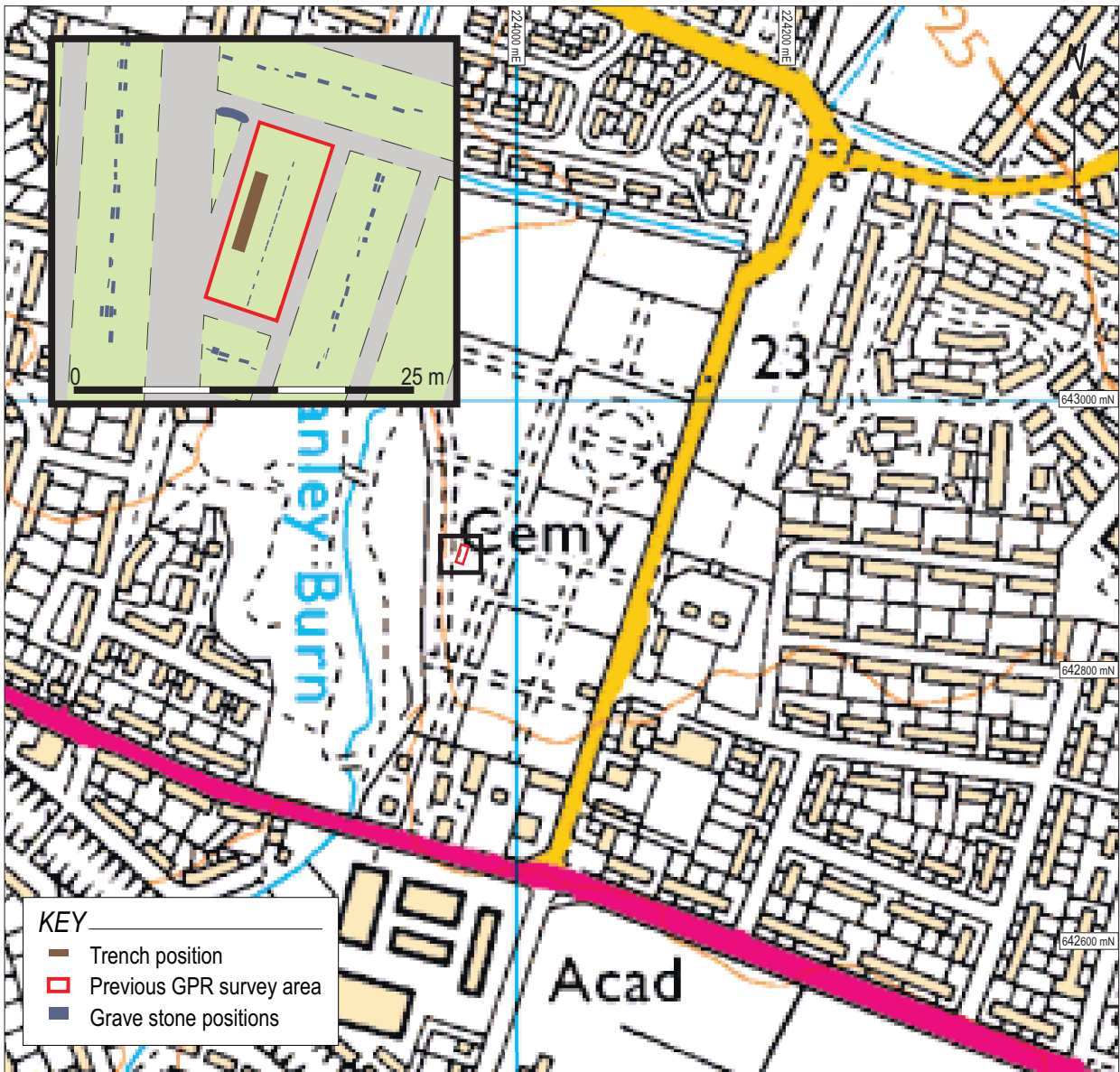


Figure 1:
Site location.

Executive Summary

- 1.1 An archaeological investigation was carried out by GUARD Archaeology Limited, on behalf of North Ayrshire Council, in an area of ground within Ardrossan Cemetery identified as the possible location for an unmarked grave associated with the sinking of HMS Dasher in 1943. The trial trench evaluation focused on a small area of ground within the western area of the Cemetery that already contained known burials from HMS Dasher and several other World War II graves including those from the RAF. During the work no features associated with a possible mass grave deposit were observed within the soil profiles whose structure was reminiscent of those relating to the areas previous use as agricultural land. The work was undertaken between the 22nd and 26th October 2012.

Introduction

- 2.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological investigation undertaken by GUARD Archaeology, on behalf of North Ayrshire Council on an area of ground within Ardrossan Cemetery identified as the possible location of a mass grave associated with the sinking of HMS Dasher. One trench was excavated over the possible burial location and measured in total six square metres. No features or finds associated with a possible grave site were observed during investigative work.

Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 3.1 The possible unmarked burial site lies within Ardrossan Cemetery, which is located within the town of Ardrossan, North Ayrshire (NGR NS 23959 42882).
- 3.2 The area of ground under investigation is located in the western area of Ardrossan Cemetery in a roughly rectangular plot of ground which is completely surrounded by burial lairs and associated access paths in all directions (Figure 1). It measures approximately 18 m by 5 m with its longest side orientated north/south. It is flat and covered by short, well tended grass and bounded by a low metal kerb. In the eastern and southern areas of this plot are located the known graves of servicemen from both the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Merchant Navy who died during World War II. This also includes 11 graves associated with those individuals who died during the sinking of HMS Dasher. The HMS Dasher graves are located within the eastern area only and orientated east/west. There are no recorded burials within the western half of this ground which is under the stewardship of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
- 3.3 The underlying drift geology consists of Quarternary Period raised marine deposits, while the solid geology consists of Devonian Period Kelly Burn Sandstone formation (British Geological Survey 1:50,000, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

Archaeological Background

- 4.1 On the 27 March 1943 HMS Dasher, an Avenger-class escort carrier with a complement of 550 men, suffered an unexplained internal explosion and sank in the Firth of Clyde with the loss 328 men. Some of the dead were buried in marked graves in Ardrossan Cemetery, however a large number of the crew have no known burial ground. The tragedy is commemorated by memorials in Brodick and Adrossan.
- 4.2 Since the tragedy there has been speculation about the final resting place of the majority of the crew. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the missing sailors may have been buried in an unmarked mass grave within Ardrossan Cemetery. In 2010 Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) were commissioned to conduct a ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) of a particular location within the cemetery where witnesses think one of these graves may be located.

- 4.3 The results of the 2010 investigation indicated that a disparity in burial activity was present on the western side of the last row of gravestones as opposed to the regular patterns witnessed on the eastern side. This disparity was interpreted as potentially being related to a different form of burial activity with regular graves evident on the eastern side and some other form of sub-surface activity on the western side. The author of the 2010 report indicated that ground truthing (archaeological evaluation) would need to be conducted to confirm the nature of the western signal. Consequently, the purpose of the current project was to investigate this area and to provide any evidence on the form of burial practice evident there
- 4.4 Until its construction in 1854, the land occupied and surrounded by Ardrossan Cemetery was used as farm land. This is depicted on both Roy's Military Survey Map of 1745-55 and Thomson's Atlas of Scotland (1832). The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1860 (www.nls.uk/collections/maps) depicts the new cemetery as a small, square plot of land next to the present Sorbie Road and surrounded by agricultural fields. Following this date the cemetery began to expand, initially in a southerly direction along Sorbie Road and then by the beginning of the twentieth century into the western and finally the northern areas.

Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological work were to provide evidence for the presence or absence of a war grave within a specific location in Ardrossan Cemetery. The specific aims and objectives of the project were to:
- establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains associated with the possible location of a mass grave associated with HMS Dasher;
 - determine the character, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits encountered;
 - record any sub-surface features encountered and backfill the trench to reinstate with materials excavated from it.

Methodology

- 6.1 The strategy employed during the evaluation consisted of the following:
- Prior to works commencing heras fencing and internal screens were erected around the proposed excavation trench and locked by chain and padlock (in the evening) to restrict access to the excavation area;
 - A single 6 m long by 1 m broad trench was surveyed, using a Sub-centimetre DGPS (R100) Smart Rover, into position over the archaeological anomaly identified during the GPR survey of the site in 2010 (Banks 2010);
 - The single trench was oriented north to south and was scanned for services using a CAT and Genny prior to excavation;
 - Excavation was conducted by a team of two archaeologists by hand and commenced with de-turfing of the trench, followed by the removal of topsoil down to the interface with the natural subsoil or the first archaeological horizon;
 - All material removed from the trench was stored on plastic by type separately, so that reinstatement could be conducted to the best standard;
 - Any archaeological features encountered were to be cleaned by hand to determine the character of the deposits and their extent. Such features were to be recorded by written description on pro forma recording sheets, by photograph and by measured drawing;

- In the event that in situ human bone was encountered, its location was to be recorded and all excavation terminated and the trench backfilled immediately;
- If archaeological finds were encountered they were to be dealt with by the on-site archaeological team. The general practice was to bulk recover all artefacts by context, which were recovered from the topsoil. Should finds be encountered from the surface of archaeological features they were to be three-dimensionally recorded prior to up-lifting;
- No excavation of archaeological features was to be conducted during this phase of investigation;
- The position of any features within the trench bottom was to be surveyed using a sub-centimetre DGPS. This information was to inform any mitigation strategies for managing this area of the graveyard;
- The trench was covered by heavy metal plates at the close of work each evening to restrict access over night to the work area. These plates were removed each morning so that work could continue.

Re-Instatement Methodology

- 6.2 Re-instatement of the trench was conducted utilising the materials that were previously excavated with the aim of returning the site to as near the pre-excavation condition as possible.
- 6.3 On completion of the archaeological evaluation any subsoil was reintroduced into the trench in layers of 150 mm depth and each layer was compacted before the next layer was laid and covered by topsoil. Once the topsoil had been compacted down the turf was re-laid proud of the surrounding sod. Any remnant topsoil was to be disposed of in a designated area and all plastic sheeting removed from the site.
- 6.4 If it was deemed necessary (eg to cover bald or broken turf areas) grass seeds were to be spread over the affected areas to ensure total coverage of turf.
- 6.5 Weather conditions for the investigation were good with dry, sunny weather.

Results

- 7.1 The trench measured six metres in length and one metre in width and was located within the western area of the site where no known burials were recorded (Plate 1). The turf was removed using a de-turfing spade and revealed a reddish-brown silt sand (001) that contained inclusions of gravel and sub-rounded pebble sized stones and numerous plant roots from the grass turf. It measured 100 mm in depth. Below was found a topsoil deposit (002) consisting of a loosely compacted orange-brown sand silt with inclusions of sub-rounded pebble sized stones. It measured 310 mm in depth. Finds recovered from both the turf and topsoil deposits included fragments of clay pipe stem and bowl, body sherds from nineteenth century AD pottery and a body sherd and handle fragment from fifteenth to sixteenth century AD jugs (Bob Will *pers comm*). Below the topsoil was found an orange/brown silt sand deposit (003), which measured 110 mm in depth and contained inclusions of sub-rounded pebbles. This was similar in consistency to the topsoil deposit although was slightly more sandy in texture. Below was found a mottled reddish/orange/brown coarse silt sand deposit (004), which measured 120 mm in depth. It contained inclusions of sub-rounded pebbles and several cobble sized stones and represented an intermediate deposit found immediately above the natural subsoil (Plate 2). Below was found the natural subsoil deposit (005), which consisted of a burnt brown orange sand with inclusions of occasional sub-rounded pebbles and gravel spreads (Plate 3). No finds were located in deposits 003, 004 or 005 (Plate 4).

Discussion

- 8.1 During the evaluation trenching no deposits or features pertaining to a mass burial or other archaeological features were encountered. The subsoil deposit (005) appeared undisturbed as did the overlying deposits (001-004) with no cut or truncation observable. The finds located within deposits 001 and 002 were consistent with those artefacts usually recovered in agricultural fields and deposited with fertilizer or other waste products. Two fragments of Scottish post-medieval reduced ware pottery sherds (Bob Will *pers comm*) were also recovered from the topsoil deposit 002 suggesting activity within the locale during this period.

Recommendations

- 9.1 The evaluation work, although limited, revealed no evidence for a mass burial within the area of ground to the immediate west of the known HMS Dasher burials within Ardrossan Cemetery. It is therefore recommended that no further work is required at this locale

Acknowledgements

- 10.1 GUARD Archaeology would like to thank Ms Fiona Brown of North Ayrshire Council and the ground staff at Ardrossan Cemetery for their help and assistance on site. Also John and Noreen Steele for their kindness and information regarding HMS Dasher. Technical support was from Aileen Maule and John Kiely. A survey of the trench location was conducted by Fiona Jackson. The illustrations were produced by Fiona Jackson. The report was desk top published by Gillian McSwan. The project was managed for GUARD by John Atkinson.

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Data Structure Report**

Section 2: Appendices



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Appendices

Appendix A: Bibliography

Banks, I 2010 Ardrossan Cemetery GPR Survey (Unpublished GUARD report 12035)

British Geological Survey, Geology Maps <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html> (accessed 29th October 2012)

National Library Of Scotland Maps <http://maps.nls.uk/> (accessed 31/10/12)

West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) Sites and Monuments Record. Available from <http://www.wosas.net/wosas> (accessed 31/10/12)

Appendix B: Photographs



Plate 1: Pre-excavation showing trench location.



Plate 2: West facing section of deposits 001 – 005.



Plate 3: Natural subsoil deposit 005.



Plate 4: Re-instated trench.

Appendix C: Discovery And Excavation Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	North Ayrshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Ardrossan Cemetery
PROJECT CODE:	3600
PARISH:	Ardrossan
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Maureen C. Kilpatrick
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Guard Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Public cemetery
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NS 23959 42882
START DATE (this season)	22nd October 2012
END DATE (this season)	26th October 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was carried out by GUARD Archaeology Limited, on behalf of North Ayrshire Council, in an area of ground within Ardrossan Cemetery identified as the possible location for a mass grave associated with the sinking of HMS Dasher in 1943. The trial trench evaluation focused on a small area of ground within the western area of the Cemetery that already contained known burials from HMS Dasher and several other World War II graves including those from the RAF. During the work no features associated with a possible mass grave deposit were observed within the soil profiles whose structure was reminiscent of those relating to the areas previous use as agricultural land.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	North Ayrshire Council
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	--
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	52 Elderpark Workspace, 100 Elderpark Street, Glasgow G51 3TR
EMAIL ADDRESS:	maureen.kilpatrick@guard-archaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	NMRS and WoSAS SMR

GUARD Archaeology Limited
52 Elderpark Workspace
100 Elderpark Street
Glasgow
G51 3TR

Tel: 0141 445 8800

Fax: 0141 445 3222

email: info@guard-archaeology.co.uk



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