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**BANFF FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL  
BANFF  
ABERDEENSHIRE  
-Archaeological Evaluation-**

**H K Murray and J C Murray**

**1. Background**

1.1 A Planning Application (Ref No APP/2009/2189) was submitted by Langstane Housing Association, and approved for the development of an area of housing on the site of the former primary school in Walker Avenue, Banff. An archaeological condition was applied to this application in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN 42), and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed. The condition required that a 7 – 10% archaeological evaluation of the area should be undertaken.

1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Bancom Construction on behalf of Langstane Housing Association to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18th February 2011.

**2. Desk-top survey**

2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore and Pastmap.

2.2 Immediately to the east along the eastern boundary of the site, lies Walker Avenue; on the 1<sup>st</sup> OS map of 1866 (published 1871. Banff Sheet IV.12 (Banff) this is called 'Head of Yards' and is a narrow lane running along the backs of the backland rigs behind the properties on the west side of High Street. This is part of the medieval burgh layout and the line of Walker Avenue therefore effectively marks the limit of the medieval town on this side. In the medieval period the site is likely to have been part of the burgh fields.

In 1989 the Centre for Field Archaeology excavated a site on the east side of Walker Avenue where medieval pottery, including late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century Scarborough ware was found. The east side of the road ( the other side from the present site) would have been within the backlands of the medieval burgh.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Roy's Military Map of 1747-55 shows a lane on the line of Walker Avenue and shows the present site as cultivated ground.

The 1<sup>st</sup> OS map of 1866 (published 1871) shows that by the 19<sup>th</sup> century the present site included 4, possibly 5 fields. Two small buildings are shown on the lane frontage (now Walker Avenue) around the area of the entry road into the school and of evaluation trench 1. A further small roofed building and a cluster of unroofed buildings lay on the same plot but further west where they would have been beneath the footprint of the school. Wood's Plan of Banff of 1823 also shows Walker Avenue as 'Head of the Yards' and has the word 'garden' on the central part of the present site. One of the small buildings shown at the school entry road was on the site in 1823. No other buildings are shown on the site in 1823.



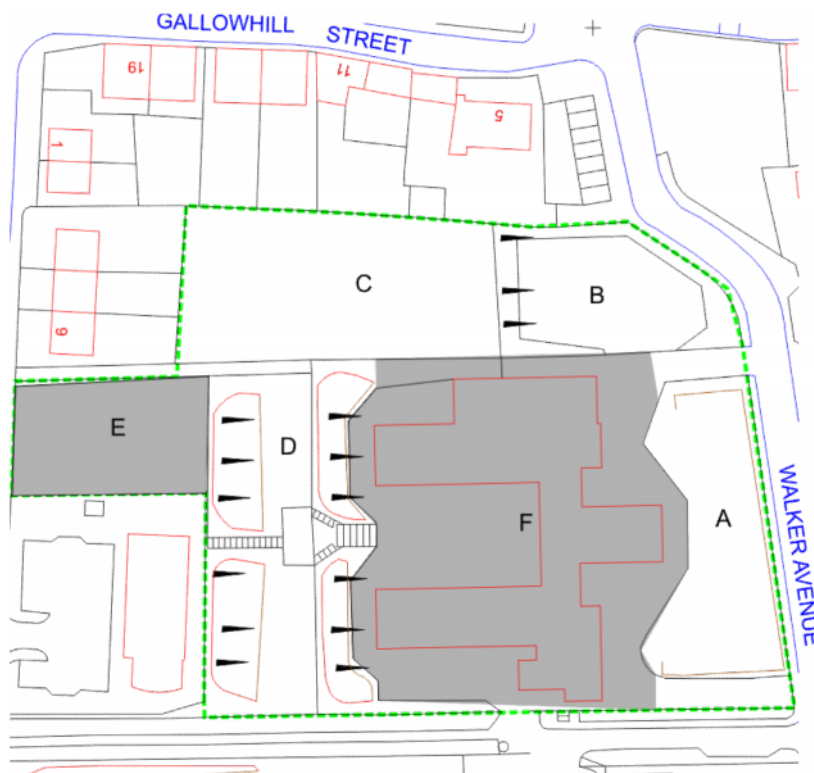
**Illus 1 Looking E across the site towards Walker Avenue. Photograph taken from terrace Area D, looking across Areas F and A.**

### 3. The Site

3.1 The development site is located to the west side of Walker Avenue, Banff and extends to just under 1 hectare.

NGR: NJ 6874 6392 (centre of site). Parish: Banff

3.2 The site can be divided into five areas (Illus 2). Although the site lies on what would have been a gentle east facing slope, it had been terraced when the former primary school was built and as a result there were steep changes of level between sections, with steep, revetted slopes. There was c 4m height of slope between Areas D and E, c 2m between Areas B and C and c 5-6m between Area F and D. The E ends of Area A and B were built up ground which sloped steeply down to the road. To create level areas for building, playing areas etc, the ground in each area had all been cut away at the uphill, W end and filled at the downhill E end. The central area (F) of the site below the footprint of the former school was cut into the original ground so that there was no possibility of archaeology surviving in this area. Area E was also not evaluated as it had a build up of c 4m at the E end which could be seen in the W face of Area D. Less than half the total site could therefore be evaluated.



Illus 2 Plan showing site areas and steep slopes (green= site outline. Grey shading shows areas where no evaluation was undertaken). (Ordnance Survey ©CrownCopyright 2011. Ref No 1007584)

#### 4. Methodology

- 4.1 Nine evaluation trenches were excavated (Illus 6). Topsoil was removed using a full slew machine with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket with the exception of trenches 1-3 where, due to the depth of deposits a 1.5m toothless bucket had to be used. A toothed bucket was used on the tar area in Trench 4.
- 4.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper CX.

#### 5. The evaluation trenches.

##### Trenches 1-3

Trenches 1-3 were in Area A, a grassy bank between the school and the road. This bank proved to be entirely made-up ground some 2m in depth above a buried soil.

##### Trench 1

Orientation: N/S

GPS N end: 368771,863941 S end: 368772,863938

Length: 5m Width: 1.5 m

Stratigraphy. There was c 2.10m of made-up ground (dirty sand with some topsoil through it) over c 300-400mm of buried topsoil above clean sandy natural.



Illus 3 Trench 1

### Trench 2

Orientation: E/W

GPS E end:368777,863903 W end: 368774,863903

Length: 4m Width:1.5 m

Stratigraphy. There was c 2.30m of made-up ground (dirty sand with some topsoil through it) over c 300-400mm of buried topsoil above clean sandy natural.

### Trench 3

Orientation: E/W

GPS E end:368765, 863901 W end: 368762, 863900

Length: 5m Width:1.5 m

Stratigraphy. There was c 2.0m of made-up ground ( dirty sand with some topsoil through it) over c 300mm of buried topsoil above clean sandy natural.

### Trench 4

Trench 4 was in Area B, a tarred playground, the E part of which was built up with up to 2.3m of made-up ground, while the W part was cut into the natural slope.

### Trench 4

Orientation: E/W

GPS E end:368761, 863957 W end: 368738, 863962

Length: 24m Width:1.5 m

Stratigraphy. There was tar and sub-base over natural at the cut away W end of the trench, with the natural sloping down quite steeply to the E end of the trench where there was c 2.3m of made-up ground, all appearing to be redeposited topsoil. No clear buried soil could be distinguished, so it would appear to have been totally cut away before the re-landscaping.

### Trenches 5 and 6

Trenches 5 and 6 were in Area C, a roughly level grassed area, the E end of which was c 2m above the level of Area B. The W end of this area had been cut away and the E end had been built up with redeposited topsoil and sandy/ topsoil mix.

### Trench 5

Orientation: E/W

GPS E end:368721, 863969 W end: 368701, 863971

Length: 20m Width: 2 m

Stratigraphy. At the W end there was a total depth of 400mm of redeposited topsoil over natural. The natural sloped steeply to the E where there was c 800mm of redeposited topsoil over c 1.3m of cleaner grey sand/topsoil mix, natural was 2.10m below the surface.



**Illus 4 Looking E along trench 5, showing make up of redeposited soil over natural slope.**

#### Trench 6

Orientation: E/W

GPS E end:368710, 863956 W end: 368684, 863955

Length: 23m Width: 2 m

Stratigraphy. At the W end there was a total depth of 250mm of redeposited topsoil over natural sand. The natural sloped steeply to the E where there was c 700mm redeposited topsoil over c550mm of cleaner grey sand/topsoil mix, natural was 1.25m below the surface.

#### Trenches 7-9

Trenches 7-9 lay along a grassy terrace c 5-6m above Area A and c 4m below Area E. The whole area had been cut away to form a level terrace. At the S end excavation

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was not taken to natural as there were foundations of walls which had bordered a path to the steps visible on plan.

#### Trench 7

Orientation: N/S

GPS N end:368697, 863946 S end: 368697, 863929

Length: 20m Width: 2 m

Stratigraphy: 150-250mm of redeposited topsoil lay over cut away natural sand. A stone wall foundation relating to a path crossed the N end of the trench.

#### Trench 8

Orientation: N/S

GPS N end: 368697, 863899 S end: 368698, 863894

Length: 5m Width: 2 m

Stratigraphy: c250mm of redeposited topsoil was removed. This revealed the foundations of walls which had bordered a path to the steps visible on plan. A cable (which proved to be dead) was also observed so the trench was abandoned.

#### Trench 9

Orientation: N/S

GPS N end: 368698, 863910 S end: 368698, 863904

Length: 8m Width: 2 m

Stratigraphy: c250mm of redeposited topsoil was removed. This revealed the foundations of walls which had bordered a path to the steps visible on plan so the trench was abandoned.

### **7. Interpretation**

Due to the terracing of the site when the former primary school was built there had been massive movements of soil around the site with redeposited soil of over 2m depth in some of the evaluation trenches. Where the original buried topsoil was observed (Trenches 1-3) and in places in the redeposited topsoils in Trench 3 and at the E end of Trench 4, there were small quantities of pottery and china- these included both modern material (19<sup>th</sup> C) and medieval (13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> C) pottery. It was all very small abraded pieces and is typical of material that has been in cultivated soil. It is almost

certainly derived from midden manuring and general dumping of rubbish in the ground directly outside the edge of the medieval (and 19<sup>th</sup> century) town.

There is nothing to suggest any use other than as agricultural ground but little of the original ground remains undisturbed. There was no evidence of the 19<sup>th</sup> C buildings shown on Wood's map and the 1<sup>st</sup> OS map in the vicinity of Trench 1.

## 8. Impacts and Mitigations

Impacts None

Mitigations None

This does not preclude the possibility of chance finds or archaeological discoveries outwith the evaluation trenches. Should such chance finds occur, then the Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council, or Murray Archaeological Services Ltd, must be informed immediately so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed by all parties concerned

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

| Photographic catalogue |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Digital frame no       | Content   |
| 1- 8                   | T1, looking S and SW                            |
| 9-12                   | T1, general view, looking S                     |
| 11-12                  | T2, looking W                                   |
| 13-15                  | T2, N section                                   |
| 16                     | T2, general view, looking S                     |
| 17-23                  | T4, looking W                                   |
| 24-26                  | T4, E end                                       |
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| 29                     | T4, general view, looking W                     |
| 30-35                  | T5, looking E                                   |
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| 39-40                  | T5, general view over Banff, looking E          |
| 41-49                  | T6, looking E and NE                            |
| 50-54                  | T7, looking S                                   |
| 55                     | T7, looking SE                                  |
| 56-57                  | T7, looking SW to Area E                        |
| 58-59                  | T7, looking W to Area E                         |
| 60-61                  | General view from Area D, to Area F, looking SE |
| 62-64                  | General view from Area D to Area F              |
| 65-66                  | View, looking N, to T7 and Area E on left       |

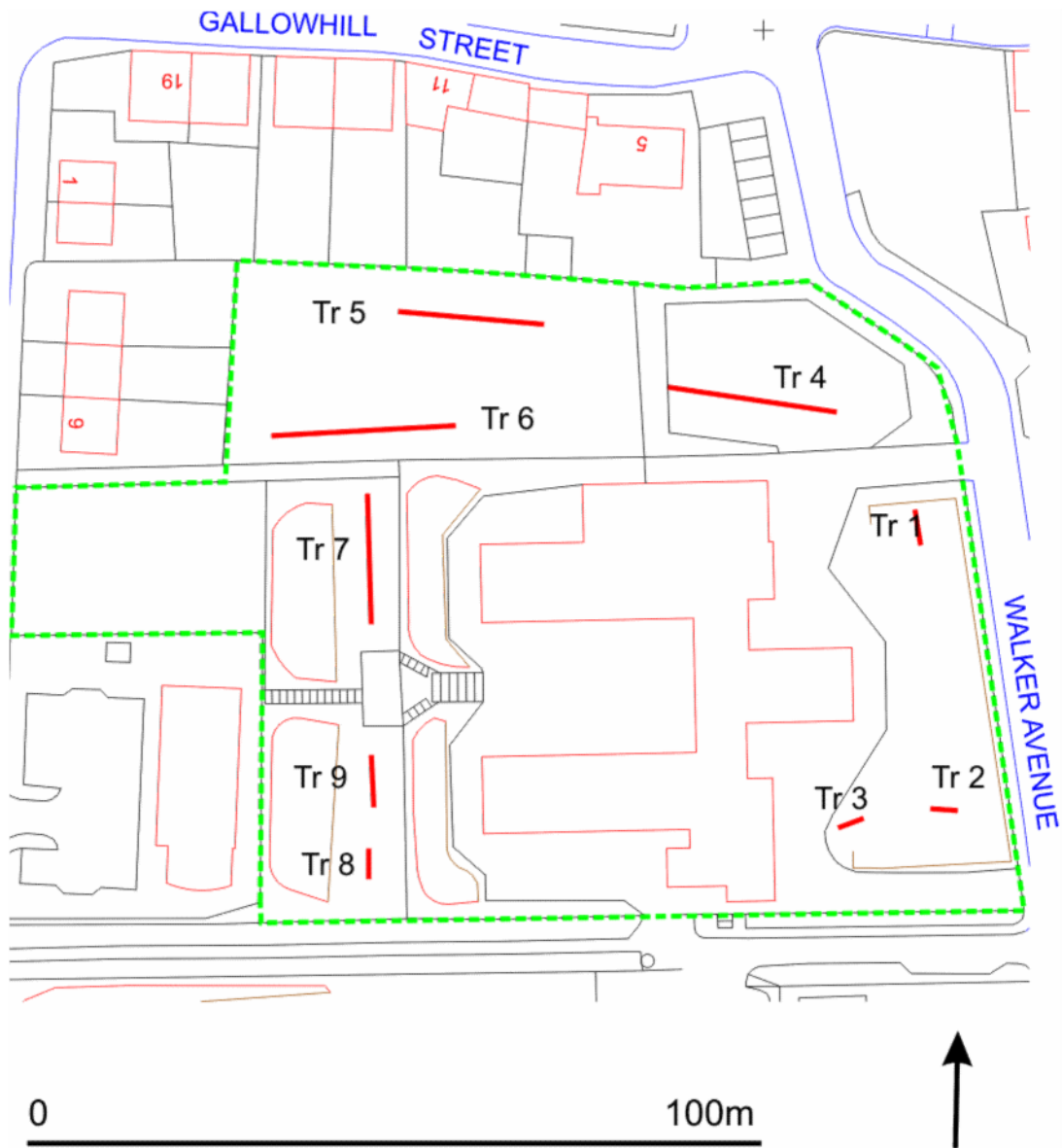


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|-------|---|
| 67-72 | General view from Area E to Area's D and F  |
| 73-74 | General View, looking NE, at Area's E and D |
| 75-77 | Area E, looking N and NW                    |
| 78-80 | T8, looking N                               |
| 81-85 | T9, looking N                               |



**Illus 5** Showing difference in level between Areas D and E with nearly 4m of made- up ground at E end of Area E.



Illus 6 Main plan showing evaluation trenches. Green line is site outline. (Ordnance Survey ©CrownCopyright 2011. Ref No 1007584)