BLAIRS

ABERDEENSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

Carried out June-August 2013

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd

Report No: MAS 2013-19

by

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-Archaeological Evaluation -

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1. Background

1.1 A Planning Application (APP/2006/4973) was granted permission for the development of land on the estate and the former Catholic seminary at Blairs, Maryculter, Aberdeenshire, as a hotel, residential development and golf course.

1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances.

1.3 The conditions required that no development should take place before the implementation of a scheme of archaeological works. These included a Standing Building Survey and Historic Landscape Survey which were undertaken in 2012 (Murray & Murray 2012). The third element of the works was a 7% archaeological evaluation of those fields that are due to be developed for housing.

1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by Axiom Project Services Ltd on behalf of Hermiston Securities Ltd.

1.5 The evaluation was undertaken between 24th-27th June and 26th August - 13th September 2013.

2. The Site

2.1 The Blairs estate comprised 1000 acres stretching S from the S side of the river Dee to higher ground to the S at Craigingles Wood and Hill of Blairs. The present development only applies to the N part of the estate, between the Dee and the N edge of the Craigingles Wood. The S Deeside Road (B9077) runs through the N end of the property.

Parish: Maryculter

The evaluation lay on both the lower ground near the river Dee, to the N of the S Deeside Road and on the higher ground to the S of the road.

Illus 1 The site showing all evaluation trenches (red).. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404

3 Methodology

3.1 The cultivated topsoil was removed by a full slew excavator with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Any possible features were cleaned and excavated by hand.

3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper CX.

4. Historical Background

4.1 The historical background has been comprehensively published in the report of the Historic Landscape Survey (Murray & Murray 2012).

5 Results of the Evaluation

Sixty-seven evaluation trenches were excavated in total, twenty-four to the N of the road, between the road and the river, and forty-three to the S of the road.

Between S Deeside Road and River Dee (Trenches 1-24)

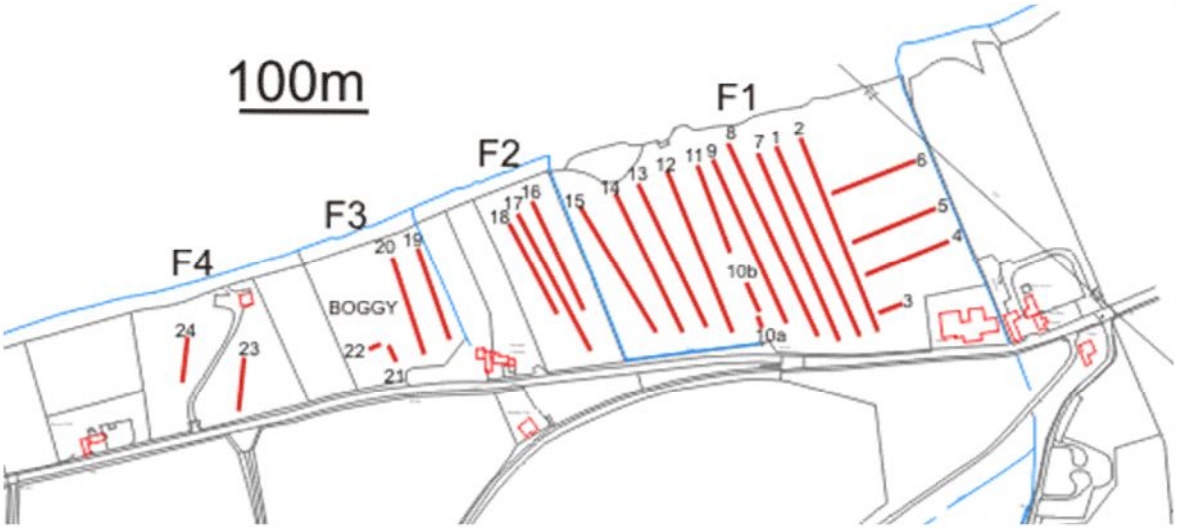
Field 1

Field 1 had been used for potatoes during the wet season of 2012 and as a result was badly poached in some areas. The field sloped gently up to the S away from the river. At the SW part of the field there was a ridge of sandy clay with small to medium stones in it extending from the top of the ridge and down the slope towards the river. At the base of this slope there were medium to large boulders. N of the boulders, between the base of the slope and the river, the natural was sand and silt. This suggests that at some stage the ridge was at the edge of the river, with the boulders marking the edge at that time, with the finer sand etc washed out.

Further E in the middle of the field there was a less pronounced ridge but the soil strip showed a gravel bank with silt and almost peaty patches behind the bank to the S, suggesting further changes in the river edge channels at this point.

In summary, the evidence suggested that much of this field was in an area where there had been continual active change in the river and it may have been intermittently waterlogged. Parts of the field still flood.

The only features recorded relate to drainage during the 19th and 20th centuries.



Illus 2 The area N of road showing all evaluation trenches. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404

Trench 1

GPS NNW end: 388213,801374 SSE end: 388277,801225

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 161m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm depth over much of trench. Up to 550mm in a silty E/W channel 40-60m from the N end of the trench. Peaty patches in hollow c 500mm deep at 47-71m from S end of trench. Natural generally comprised of sandy gravels.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
1	388252, 801279	Stone drain. N/S to junction with stone drain E/W

Trench 2

GPS NNW end:388232,801380 SSE end:388293,801228

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 163m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm at N end of trench over sandy natural gravel. From 60-80m from N end there was a band of boulders with a channel c 10m wide to the S of this where the topsoil was c 600mm deep.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
2	388259,801335	E/W stone drain in slight dip
3	388255,801327	E/W stone drain
4	388256,801324	E/W stone drain
5	388272,801286	E/W stone drain
6	388274,801281	SE/NW stone drain

Trench 3

GPS NE end: 388310,801251 SW end: 388291,801243

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 21m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over coarse sand with moderate quantity waterworn stones.

Features None

Trench 4

GPS NE end: SW end:

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 72m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm over coarse sand with water worn pebbles and some boulders.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
7	388317,801285	N/S stone drain
8	388332,801292	N/S stone drain

Trench 5

GPS NE end: SW end:

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 71m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm over coarse sand/gravel with water worn pebbles

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
9	388332,801318	N/S stone drain

Trench 6

GPS NE end:388321,801361 SW end: 388255,801334

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 71m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-500mm over coarse natural sand with medium to large waterworn stones. Far stonier than trenches 4 and 5.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
10	388307,801355	N/S stone drain (goes to trenches 4 and 5)

Trench 7

GPS NNW end: 388200,801369 SSE end: 388262,801222

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 158m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over most of trench. At the higher S end the natural is sandy gravel with abundant small-medium stones. At the break of slope the topsoil deepens to 400-500mm. As the slope levels down towards the river, the natural was sandier with shallower topsoil and many modern plough marks.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
11	388221,801318	E/W stone drain
12	388223,801309	E/W drain, turns at W to run S
13	388240,801270	Shallow hollow c 200mm deep at break of slope. Filled with nautural silt and stone but had small patch of wood charcoal c 500mm across on top of the silt. No evidence to suggest any antiquity.

Trench 8

GPS NNW end: 388176,801375 SSE end: 388246,801221

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 165m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: At higher S end topsoil 300-350mm on sandy gravel ridge. At teh base of the ridge 56-72m from the N end there was a band of stones and boulders with topsoil depths of 450-500mm in the dip at the break of slope. N of this, towards the river the natural was sandy with shallower topsoil and many modern plough marks.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
14	388327,801242	NE/SW drain

Trench 9

GPS NNW end: SSE end:

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 141m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350mm at top of ridge of sandy gravel but deepening to 450-500mm at the base of slope. Boulders and stones at base of slope.

Features None

Trench 10 A and 10B

10A: GPS NNW end:388198,801245 SSE end: 388201,801231

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 13.5m Width: 2.0m

10B: GPS NNW end:388189,801267 SSE end: 388201,801244

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 25.5m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil c. 350mm over natural where no pipe cut. Where the pipe was exposed there was c 1m redeposited topsoil.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
15	S end exposed at 388199,801238. N exposed at 388189,801268	Concrete pipe with lipped sections each c. 1mlong and 350mm in diameter. In cut trench along W side of trench 10A c 1m below surface. C 4m exposed. Probing showed this to be unsilted and dry. Appears to be a relict outflow drain from Blairs college. It runs near to the known line of a cast iron pipe (out of use) that was used to pump water from the Dee (at the pumping station on N side of field) up to the college.

Illus 3 Trench 10A, concrete pipe Context 15

Trench 11

GPS NNW end: 388151,801357 SSE end: 388177,801289

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 72m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm over sand and grey water deposited silt. Gravelly at river end.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
15	Between N end of trench and 388157,801343	W edge of the cut for concrete pipe (see trench 10) visible beside the section.

Trench 12

GPS NNW end:388128,801354 SSE end:388180,801223

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 135m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: At the higher N end there was c 350mm topsoil over natural sandy gravel with abundant waterworn stones and pebbles. At the base of slope between 66 and 93m from the S end there was a band of boulders, some very large. The N 40m levelled out towards the river with c 350mm topsoil over sand and grey water deposited silt with occasional small almost peaty patches in hollows.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
16	388147,801306	E/W drain at base of slope.

Trench 13

GPS NNW end:388106,801345 SSE end: 388161,801232

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 125m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil c. 300-350mm. At the top of the ridge at the S there was natural hard sandy clay with large-medium stones. At the base of the slope this levelled to finer sand and waterlaid silt but at the N end c20m of the trench there was a ridge of gravel – possibly at one stage the edge of the river with a pool behind.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
17	388157,801238	NW/SE stone drain
18	388123,801308	NW/SE stone drain
19	388120,801315	NW/SE drain

Trench 14

GPS NNW end: 388089,801337 SSE end: 388142,801228

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 121m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil c 350mm. S end sandy clay ridge sloping down to boulders at the foot of the slope between 67 and 96m from the S end. To the N of this to the river fine sand.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
20	388119,801273	E/W stone drain

Trench 15

GPS NNW end: 388061,801326 SSE end: 388122,801227

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 116m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm. The S 40m of the trench was on top of sandy clay ridge. This sloped down gradually towards the river but more large stones and boulders near the river for the N 20m of the trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
21	388066,801313	E/W stone drain
22	388078,801293	SE/NW stone drain
23	388088,801282	NE/SW stone drain
24	388093,801274	E/W stone drain
25	388102,801260	E/W stone drain
26	388112,801242	NE/SW drain

Field 2

Field 2 was in long, uncultivated and ungrazed grass at the time of the evaluation. It was similar to the W side of Field 1with a sandy clay ridge at the S end and stony slopes down towards the river. A gravelly shingle band at the N end may have been a former edge of the river bank. At the S end of trench 17the topsoil was very peaty and badly drained – very similar to Fields 3 and 4.

The only features recorded relate to drainage during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Trench 16

GPS NNW end:388024,801331 SSE end: 388065,801244

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 95m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm. Shingle bank at N 5m of the trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
27	388037,801304	E/W stone drain
28	388040,801297	Wide E/W stone drain
29	388047,801285	NE/SW stone drain
30	From 388066,801246 to 388052,801274	NE/SW stone drain
31	From 388031,801320 to 388034,801303	NE/SW stone drain

Trench 17

GPS NNW end: 388014,801321 SSE end: 388070,801214

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 120m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil at S end very peaty with 500mm depth. 350-400mm topsoil over the rest of trench. The S end is a clay ridge becoming more sandy gravel with some large boulders as the field slopes down to river.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
32	388028,801279	N/S drain
33	3888043,801267	Ne/SW stone drain
34	388050,801256	NE/SW stone drain
35	388065,812225	NE/SW stone drain

Trench 18

GPS NNW end: 388007,801314 SSE end: 388044,801241

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 81m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm. The upper S end of the trench was sandy clay ridge with more gravelly sand down the slope towards the river and a stony scatter at base of slope. Sandy natural at the N end beside the river.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
36	388034,801262	

Field 3

At the time of the evaluation this field was in long ungrazed vegetation. The S and W of Field 3 had thick deposits of boggy topsoil over impervious sticky clay. At the E end the slope down towards the river was sandier, more comparable to Fields 1 and 2.

Trench 19

GPS NNW end: 387937,801294 SSE end: 387962,801223

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 75m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm. The S end was part of the sandy ridge seen in Field 2. To the N this sloped down to grey silty gravel with much stone merging to clay.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
37	387956,801242	NE/SW drain
38	From 387954,801246 to 387951,801257	N/S stone drain
39	387952,801254	E/W stone drain linked to 38.

Trench 20

GPS NNW end: 387917,801287 SSE end: 387942,801212

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 79m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: At S end c 500mm very peaty topsoil over grey clay. To the N, down the slope to the river the natural was increasingly sandy with stones, then large stones and grey silt. At the N end there was 500-600mm fine grey waterlaid silt over clean sand.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
40	From S end of trench to 387940,801219	Clay drain merges to 41
41	387940,801219	NW/SE stone drain
42	387938,801228	NW/SE stone drain
43	387926,801265	E/W drain
44	387921,801278	E/W stone drain
45	387919,801283	E/W stone drain

Trench 21

GPS NNW end: 387914,801219 SSE end: 387921,801205

Orientation: NNW/SSE Length: 15m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Between 400 and 700mm of peaty topsoil over clay.

Features Clay drains not logged due to water ingress.

Illus 4 Trench 21 looking N with boggy topsoil

Trench 22

GPS E end: 387909,801220 W end: 387899,801216

Orientation: E/W Length: 10m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: 600mm peat over clay.

Features Two clay drains and 1 stone drain not logged due to water ingress.

Field 4

Field 4 was in long ungrazed vegetation at the time of the evaluation. A track runs down the centre of the field to the fishing hut beside the river. On either side of the track there are young trees. In addition a number of services associated with the fishing hut cut across both sides of the field, limiting the possible area for evaluation.
In both trenches the slope comprised sandy gravel with large boulders.

Trench 23

GPS N end: 387804,801210 S end: 387798,801168

Orientation: N/S Length: 43m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: 300-350mm topsoil over gritty sand and rocks.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
46	387801,801181	NW/SE stone drain

Trench 24

GPS N end: 387759,801226 S end: 387754,801190

Orientation: N/S Length: 35m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: 300mm topsoil over sandy gravel.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
47	From 387759,801219 to 387756,801205	NE/SW drain cut

North of the S Deeside Road (Trenches 25-67)

Illus 5 Trench 25 looking N across Dee valley

Illus 6 The area S of road showing all evaluation trenches. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404

Field 5

Field 5 was under grass used for grazing at the time of the evaluation. It is bounded by the drystone dykes of the agricultural Improvements of the end of the 18th century.
It sloped gently up from the N to the S.
There were some stony bands which might have been associated with pre-Improvement rig and furrow, but which were far from conclusive, they might equally have been more recent attempts to improve drainage. They comprised fractured angular stones which were not part of the natural. A single sherd of post-medieval, possibly 17th century redware found in the topsoil might relate to pre-Improvement agriculture.

Trench 25

GPS N end:397932,800922 S end: 387967,800687

Orientation: N/S Length: 235m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 400-470mm deep at N end, but only c 300mm over most of trench. Over much of the trench the natural was a gentle slope of boulder clay with varying amounts of small stones. Only at the break of slope, some 15m from the S end of the trench was there shallower outcropping of rock below some 250mm of topsoil.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
48	387936,800896	N/S drain
49	387943,800858	NE/SW stone drain
50	387943,800852	N/S drain
51	387944,800843	Stony band 4-5m wide across trench. Possible rig and furrow but not convincing.
52	387947,800827	Stony band 4-5m wide across trench. Possible rig and furrow but not convincing.
53	387947,800818	Stony band 6m wide across trench. Possible rig and furrow but not convincing.
54	387951,800794	Slight charcoal flecking in patch c400mm diameter and 20mm deep. No evidence of antiquity.
55	387951,800787	Charcoal in small cut 300 x 400mm, 130mm deep. No evidence of antiquity
56	387955,800776	NNE/SSW stone drain
57	387958,800747	NNE/SSW stone drain

Trench 26

GPS N end: 387910,800917 S end: 387940,800693

Orientation: N/S Length: 226m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
58	387912,800909	ENE/WSW stone drain
59	From 387916,800863 to 387920,800845	N/S stone drain
60	387922,800832	Stony band 6m wide across trench.
61	387923,800826	Stony band 6m wide across trench.
62	387924,800819	Stony band 4m wide across trench.
63	387924,800813	E/W drain
64	387930,800771	Stony band 6m wide across trench.
65	387933,800747	E/W 1m wide stone drain
66	387935,800736	Stony band 3m wide across trench.

Trench 27

GPS N end: 387884,800909 S end: 387921,800687

Orientation: N/S Length: 226m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
67	387889,800890	E/W stone drain
68	From 387898,800842 to 387900,800825	Stony scatter
69	387908,800701	Stony band 5m wide across trench.
70	387913,800745	Stony band 3-4m wide across trench.
71	387914,800738	Stony band 3m wide across trench.

Trench 28

GPS N end: 387849,800913 S end: 387886,800679

Orientation: N/S Length: 235m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Over much of the trench the topsoil was 300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. At the N it was deeper, being up to 500mm.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
72	387868,800810	Stony band 5m wide across trench.

Trench 29

GPS N end: 387829,800905 S end: 387870,800674

Orientation: N/S Length: 236m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-350mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Between features 74 and 75, below the break of slope, topsoil depth increased to 400mm.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
73	387828, 800900	ENW/WSW stone drain
74	387828, 800899	NW/SE stone drain cuts into 73.
75	387836,800861	WNW/ESE stone drain
76	387843,800823	E/W stone drain
77	From 387848,800805 to 387849,800790	NNE/SSW drain

Trench 30

GPS N end: 387823,800890 S end: 387846,800685

Orientation: N/S Length: 206m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
78	387827,800862	E/W stone drain
79	387828,800844	E/W stone drain
80	387829,800835	E/W stone drain
81	387830,800828	E/W stone drain
82	387840,800733	NW/SE drain
83	From No 82 to 387846,800685	N/S drain

Field 6

At the time of the evaluation this field was in grass and grazed. It was one of the Improvement fields of the late 18th century with original dykes and gateways surviving. It slopes gently up from N to S.

Trench 31

GPS N end:387755,800889 S end: 387783,800657

Orientation: N/S Length: 226m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. In the central part of the field there was a very rocky ridge.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
84	From 387767,800797to 387764,800802	SE/NW drain
85	387760, 800831	NE/SW drain

Trench 32

GPS N end: 387733,800883 S end: 387761,800652

Orientation: N/S Length: 232m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300mm at the N end where the clay was leached grey. At the base of the break of slope water was bubbling up. Rocky area at the base of the upper slope.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
86	387736,800861	E/W stone drain
87	From 387741,800832 to 387741,800821	N/S stone drain
88	From 387754,800724 to 387756,800701	N/S drain from stone sump

Trench 33

GPS N end: 387705,800884 S end: 387740,800646

Orientation: N/S Length: 240m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-300mm over yellow boulder clay with frequent boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Ridge at N end of trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
89	387717,800815	Stony drainage sump in hollow
90	387720,800800	E/W stone drain
91	From 387731,800720 to 387734,800706	Stony drainage infill

Trench 34

GPS N end: 387686,800878 S end: 387721,800645

Orientation: N/S Length: 236m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 280-300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Ridge near N end.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
92	387702,800779	E/W stone drain
93	From 387703,800778 to 387706,800746	N/S drain
94	387712,800711	Stony drainage infill

Trench 35

GPS N end: 387659,800877 S end: 387701,800644

Orientation: N/S Length: 236m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-300mm over yellow boulder clay. The N end slopes down to N with dip which has had waterlogging requiring drainage.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
95	From 387666,800845 to 387669,800821	NNE/SSW drain from central dip
96	387673,800799	Stony drainage infill
97	387679,800765	Stony drainage infill

98	387687,800721	Stony drainage infill
99	From 387698,800665 to 387701,800645	Drain

Trench 36

GPS N end: 387640,800863 S end: 387670,800706

Orientation: N/S Length: 160m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
100	387641,800844	E/W stone drain
101	387644,800833	E/W stone drain
102	From 387647, 800822 to 387650, 800807	NNE/SSW drain
103	From 387660, 800763 to 387663,800737	NNE/SSW drain
104	387665,800731	NW/SE drain

Field7

At the time of the evaluation this field was in grass and grazed. It was one of the Improvement fields of the late 18th century with original dykes and gateways surviving. It slopes gently up from N to S. A clay pipe down the centre of the field carried a culverted spring which flowed out into the centre of the N end of the field in a low area enclosed to E and W by higher ground. To the W this higher ground includes a large outcrop of rock. The lower area was mostly under water. In the N boundary dyke, there were the remains of the late 18th century cattle waterings. Two short trenches were dug on the drier parts of the low ground.

Illus 7 Field 7 rock outcrop

Trench 37

GPS E end: 387528,800868 W end: 387517,800867

Orientation: E/W Length: 10m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 500-550mm over leached grey gritty sandy clay with varying quantities of small stones.

Features None.

Trench 38

GPS N end: 387481,800840 S end: 387511,800610

Orientation: N/S Length: 232m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil at N end 300mm. 10 to 30m from N end of trench there was a dip with up to 600mm of sandy topsoil over dark peaty material which lay on the surface of grey leached clay in the base of a dip which extended into the low wet area in the N side of the field. Topsoil at S 400mm.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
105	387491,800764	E/W stone drain.

Trench 39

GPS E end: 387521,800837 W end: 387504,800833

Orientation: E/W Length: 17m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 400mm over waterlogged clay with stones and boulders.

Features None

Trench 40

GPS N end: 387514,800779 S end: 387538,800618

Orientation: N/S Length: 163m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over gritty clay with varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
106	From 387538,800618 to 387534,800631	N/S stone drain
107	387530,800668	NW/SE drain
108	387514,800776	NE/SW drain

Trench 41

GPS N end: 387549,800783 S end: 387573,800626

Orientation: N/S Length: 158m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over clay with varying quantities of small stones. Some stony bands across trench appear natural.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
109	From 387572,800628 to 387569,800644	Stony drainage infill

Trench 42

GPS N end: 387574,800818 S end: 387594,800632

Orientation: N/S Length: 188m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over clay with varying quantities of small stones. Some natural stony bands across trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
110	387593,800649	E/W drain

Trench 43

GPS NNE end: 387587,800864 SSW end: 387583,800842

Orientation: NNE/SSW Length: 23m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over hard clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features None

Trench 44

GPS N end: 387604,800758 S end: 387614,800638

Orientation: N/S Length: 120m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over clay with varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
111	387610,800685	E/W stone drain
112	387611,800674	E/W stone drain
113	387613,800663	N/S stone drain

Field 8

At the time of the evaluation this field was in grass and grazed. It was one of the Improvement fields of the late 18th century with original dykes and gateways surviving. It slopes gently up from N to S.

Only the N, lower part of the field was part of the evaluation.

Trench 45

GPS E end: 387809,800523 W end: 387662,800504

Orientation: E/W Length: 148m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 280-300mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional areas of boulders at W end and varying quantities of small stones.

Features None

Trench 46

GPS N end: 387796,800619 S end: 387801,800531

Orientation: N/S Length: 86m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
114	From 387796,800607 to 387798,800596	N/S drain along E edge of trench

Trench 47

GPS N end: 387776,800615 S end:387787,800528

Orientation: N/S Length: 88m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over stony clay with some area of boulders only covered by 100-200mm of topsoil.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
115	387781,800590	NE/SW stone drain

Trench 48

GPS N end: 387756,800601 S end: 387767,800524

Orientation: N/S Length: 77m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-350mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
116	387758,800594	E/W stone drain
117	387759,800585	E/W stone drain
118	387763,800559	c. 6m wide stony sump, drain 119 runs into this.
119	From 387765,800539 to No 118	NNE/SSW drain

Trench 49

GPS N end: 387730,800603 S end: 387739,800523

Orientation: N/S Length: 80m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
120	387732,800593	E/W DRAIN
121	From 387734,800588 to No 120	NW/SE drain
122	From 387740,800543 to 387740,800538	Stony sump
123	387741,800531	NW/SE stone drain

Trench 50

GPS N end: 387705,800595 S end: 387714,800516

Orientation: N/S Length: 78m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-300mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
124	From 387705,800591 to 387708,800580	NNW/SSE drain
125	387710,800557	Amporphous darker patch with very rare charcoal. 650 x 300mm. Very irregular. No evidence of antiquity.
126	387710,800551	E/W drain
127	387710,800547	E/W drain

Trench 51

GPS N end: 387686,800596 S end: 387691,800554

Orientation: N/S Length: 41m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 150-300mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Rocky near S end.

Features None.

Trench 52

GPS N end: 387666,800546 S end: 387671,800514

Orientation: N/S Length: 32m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-270mm over clay with frequent boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Only c 100mm topsoil over rocks in centre of trench.

Features None

Field 9

At the time of the evaluation this field was in grass and grazed. It was one of the Improvement fields of the late 18th century with original dykes and gateways surviving. It slopes gently up from N to S with an E/W ridge running across the field almost parallel with the cottages. S of this the ground is almost level, with a very gradual slope to the S boundary.

Marybrae Cottages which were built c 1960 to house married teachers from the college, lie in the centre of the E side of the field. An overhead power cable across the SE corner of the field and water and sewage pipes along the E side of the field restricted the area for evaluation.

Trench 53

GPS N end: 387845,800627 S end: 387873,800385

Orientation: N/S Length: 243m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over clay with frequent boulders and varying quantities of small stones. In some areas there was only 100mm of topsoil over boulders.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
128	387873,800389	E/W stone drain
129	387871,800397	NE/SW stone drain

Trench 54

GPS N end: 387864,800627 S end: 387894,800386

Orientation: N/S Length: 242m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-350mm over stony clay over most of trench. 400mm topsoil below the ridge.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
130	387893,800389	NE/SW stone drain, possibly in furrow of rig and furrow
131	387893,800396	NE/SW stone drain, possibly in furrow of rig and furrow
132	387892,800400	E/W furrow of rig and furrow 2.5m wide, 150mm into natural
133	387892,800405	E/W furrow of rig and furrow 2.5m wide, 150mm into natural
134	387891,800412	E/W furrow of rig and furrow 1.8m wide, 150mm into natural
135	387889,800427	E/W stone drain, possibly in furrow of rig and furrow
136	From 387878,800509 to 387868,800608	N/S drain

Trench 55

GPS N end:387887,800629 S end: 387914,800393

Orientation: N/S Length: 237m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-380mm over stony clay with varying quantities of small stones, especially at N end..

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
137	From 387914,800393 to 387906,800447	N/S drain
138	387910,800409	NE/SW stone drain, possibly in furrow of rig and furrow

139	387909,800416	E/W possible furrow of rig and furrow
140	387905,800447	NE/SW stone drain
141	From 387904,800451 to 387904,800463	NNE/SSW drain
142	387894,800551	E/W stone drain

Trench 56

GPS N end: 387925,800489 S end: 387931,800399

Orientation: N/S Length: 87m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-3500mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
143	387925,800478	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
144	387926,800471	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
145	387927,800463	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
146	387927,800455	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
147	387928,800439	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
148	387929,800431	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
149	387929,800419	Possible rig and furrow
150	387930,800414	E/W drain in furrow of rig and furrow
151	387930,800406	E/W drain in furrow of rig and furrow

Trench 57

GPS N end: 387961,800499 S end: 387962,800435

Orientation: N/S Length: 60m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-350mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
152	387959,800498	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
153	387959,800490	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
154	387960,800482	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system

155	387961,800465	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
156	387961,800450	NE/SW stone drain of herringbone system
157	387961,800444	Furrow of rig and furrow

Trench 58

GPS N end: 387912,800621 S end: 387917,800558

Orientation: N/S Length: 63m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Band of rock just below surface for much of the S end of trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
158	From 387913,800597 to 387910,800618	N/S drain.

Trench 59

GPS N end: 387929,800640 S end: 387942,800563

Orientation: N/S Length: 84m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-400mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders at S end and varying quantities of small stones throughout.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
159	From 387936,800600 to 387939,800570	NNE/SSW drain
160	387931,800632	E/W drain

Trench 60

GPS N end: 387949,800640 S end: 387962,800568

Orientation: N/S Length: 72 m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300mm over most of the trench above yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Stonier at N end of trench. At N side of ridge c 500mm topsoil to lower side of break of slope.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
161	From387955,800598 to 387956,800590	NE/SW drain
162	From 387958,800584 to 387961,800568	NNE/SSW drain

Field 10

At the time of the evaluation this field was in grass and grazed. It was one of the Improvement fields of the late 18th century with original dykes and gateways surviving. It slopes gently up from N to S. Much deeper topsoil in Trench 61 may be upcast from ditch beside W boundary.

Trench 61

GPS N end: 388020,800648 S end: 388046,800428

Orientation: N/S Length: 221m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 400-600mm over gritty wet clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones. Increasing number of large boulders at S end of trench.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
163	From 388022,800636 to 388046,800428	N/S drain along W section
164	388033,800542	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow

Trench 62

GPS N end: 388050,800648 S end: 388065,800434

Orientation: N/S Length: 215m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 350-400mm over yellow boulder clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
165	From 388060,800495 to	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow

	388055,800539	
166	From 388050,800636 to 388049,800644	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
167	388063,800436	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow. C. 1.1m wide and 100mm into natural
168	388061,800451	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
169	388060,800474	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
170	388059,800489	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
171	388054,800557	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
172	388053,800576	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
173	388051,800594	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow

Trench 63

GPS N end: 388075,800643 S end: 388090,800429

Orientation: N/S Length: 214m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 400-500mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Illus 8 Trench 63 drain

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
174	From 388090,800443 to 388085,800491	NNW/SSE drain
175	From 388078,800588 to 388073,800642	NNW/SSE drain
176	388077,800593	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
177	388077,800584	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
178	388080,800546	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
179	388081,800537	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
180	388082,800524	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
181	388084,800505	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow

Trench 64

GPS N end: 388101,800666 S end: 388117,800437

Orientation: N/S Length: 228m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 250-400mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Illus 9 Trench 64, Context 194. Furrow of rig and furrow (between vertical rods)

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
182	388115,800451	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
183	388113,800474	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
184	388112,800480	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
185	388112,800490	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
186	388111,800500	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
187	388110,800513	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
188	388109,800523	NE/SW furrow of rig and furrow
189	From 388115,800460 to 388108,800529	N/S drain. Cuts furrows 183 to 188.
190	388107,800557	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
191	388106,800564	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
192	388105,800571	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
193	388104,800582	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
194	388104,800590.	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow. Cut in natural is c3m wide, oblique to trench and 120mm into natural
195	388103,800600	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
196	388103,800608	NNE/SSW furrow of rig and furrow
197	From 388104,800608 to 388100,800649	N/S drain

Trench 65

GPS N end: 388123,800670 S end: 388139,800436

Orientation: N/S Length: 234m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-400mm over clay with frequent boulders and quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
198	388125,800641	NE/SW drain
199	From 388127,800616 to	NW/SE stone drain

	388130,800579	
200	388133,800513	NNE/SSW trend of rig and furrow with overlapping plough marks
201	From 388134,800507 to 388138,800469	N/S stone drain

Trench 66

GPS N end: 388145,800671 S end: 388160,800444

Orientation: N/S Length: 226m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 280-400mm over clay with occasional boulders and varying quantities of small stones.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment
202	388145,800658 to 388148,800630	NNW/SSE drain
203	From 388152,800555 to 388156,800519	NNW/SSE drain
204	388157,800491	NE/SW stone drain
205	388159,800463	NE/SW stone drain

Field 11

Field 11 is an area of football pitches which are still in use and to be retained as part of the development. Allotments are planned for the N end., As a result a trench was dug along the N boundary to avoid unnecessary disturbance.

Trench 67

GPS E end: 388074,800810 W end: 388010,800799

Orientation: E/W Length: 65m Width: 2.0m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil 300-450mm over stony yellow boulder clay. This was only trench where there was a clear division between subsoil and topsoil, probably because this field boundary has not been cultivated since the playing field was established c. 1900 and would not have been ploughed by modern deeper ploughs.

Features

Context No	GPS	Comment

206	388052	N/S drain
207	388044,800807	N/S drain
208	388038,800803	N/S drain
209	388030,800802	N/S drain N/S drain
210	388022,800800	
211	388017,800799 N/S drain	

6 The Finds

There were no finds apart from a single sherd of post medieval redware from topsoil in Trench 27 and small quantities of 20th century china and glass and a large number of golf balls. Not retained.

7 Discussion

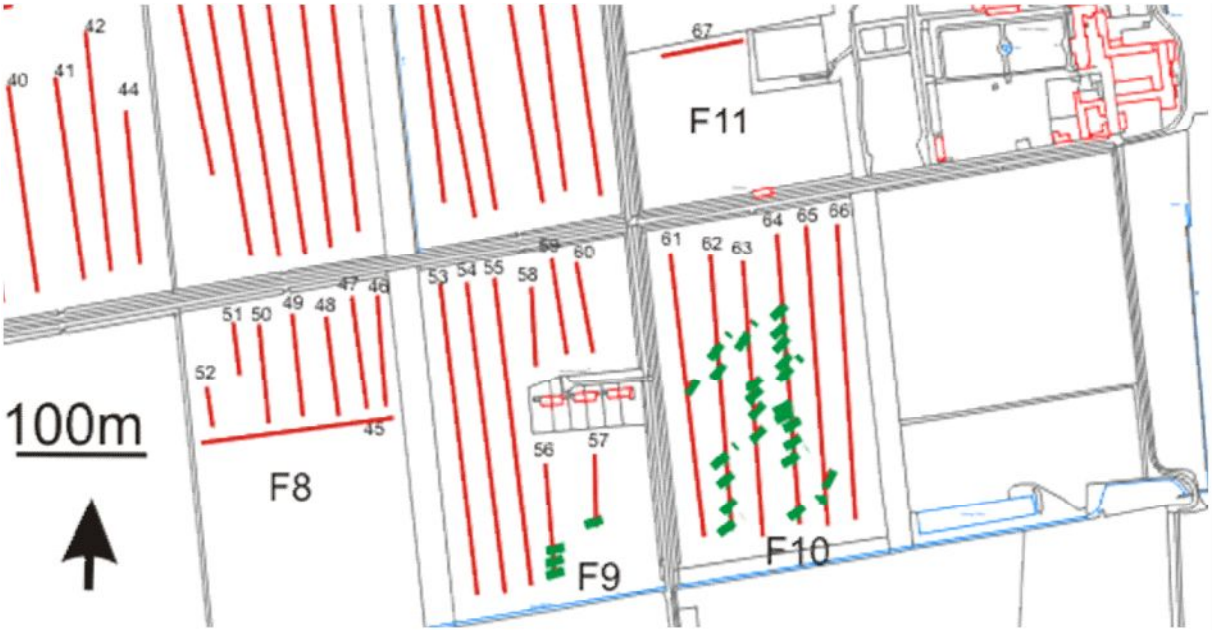
The evaluation covered two distinct zones. Fields 1-4, to the N of the road extended up to 120m S of the River Dee extending from c 10 to 20m OD. S of the road there was a band of ground some 250m wide which is not part of the area to be evaluated; part of this area has been quarried in the past. Fields 5- 11 lay to the S of this ground and sloped up to the S from c 50m OD to between 75 and 80m OD. This area lay between c 350 and 900m away from the River Dee.

The area N of the road has been in cultivation since at least 1830, as it is shown as 'cornland' on a map of that date (*Blairs Museum : T6589 BLRBM)* . On the lower ground there was clear evidence of the frequent changes in the river channel and frequent silting and flooding. This may be part of the reason for the lack of evidence for prehistoric activity – the area may have been waterlogged throughout much of the prehistoric period.

Possibly the most likely area for settlement might have been along the line of the road and the un-evaluated band to the S of the road, which would have formed the first dry ridge above the river.

The area of the evaluation to the S of the road has been intensively cultivated from at least the 18th century with a late 18th century map showing a number of small crofts on the lands of the Blairs estate (*Blairs Museum : T6270 BLRBM)***.** Traces of the rig and furrow associated with this activity were exposed and recorded in Fields 9 and

10 (Illus 9, 10). The recorded rig and furrow ran NE/SW at the top of the ridge and NNE/SSW lower on the ridge; this is not on the alignment of the present N/S field, but is on the alignment of the pre-Improvement fields shown on a late 18th century estate map (Illus11).



Illus 10 Detail of Fields F9 and F10, showing rig and furrow (dotted in green).

Illus 11 Detail of Fields 9 and 10 (red) and earlier pre-Improvement fields (black) on late 18th Century Estate map (Blairs Museum : T6270 BLRBM)

Impacts and Mitigations

8.1 Impacts There were no finds and no evidence of surviving archaeology.

8.2 Mitigations

(i) On the basis of the evaluation there is no perceived need for any further archaeological investigation.

(ii) The lack of surviving archaeology within the evaluation area 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.

References

Murray, H K & Murray, J C 2012 *Blairs, Aberdeenshire Part 1: Historic Landscape Survey. Part 2: Standing Building Survey of the College Buildings, Gardens and Recreation grounds and Part 3: Standing Building Survey of the Steading*. Grey Literature report MAS 2012-08.

Acknowledgements

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank all the Blairs Estate tenants who allowed access to their land during the site work.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record (on CD)

Digital frame number	Content
Blairs evaluation	
01-02	General views of Field 1, looking E
03-06	Trench 2 looking N
07-11	Trench 10A and concrete drain
12-16	Trench 1 looking W
17-22	Field 2. General looking S
23-25	Field 4 looking N to river
26-30	Field 3, looking N, boggy area
31-33	Trench 25 looking N
34-39	Trench 38 looking S
40	Trench 38 dip at N end
41	Field 7 rock outcrop
42-43	Field 7 culverted spring at N end
44-47	Trench 40 looking S
48-50	General views and backfilling
51-54	Trench 51 looking N
55-56	General views field 8
57-58	General views field 9
59-63	Trench 63. Drains
64-78	Views of Fields 8-10 looking N from higher ground to S
79-90	Trench 64 Details of rig and furrow
91-92	General view of trench 67 from S
93-98	Trench 67 looking W