

**WEST BALHALGARDY
INVERURIE
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Archaeological Watching Brief

Carried out 12th November 2014

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2014-43

by

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-Archaeological Watching Brief -

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1. Background

- 1.1 A Planning Application (Planning Ref: APP/2014/3210) for a new pig unit with underground slurry tank at West Balhalgardy, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire was granted planning permission.

An archaeological condition (Condition 1) was applied to this application in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP).

The condition required that:

The developer shall secure the implementation of an archaeological watching brief, to be carried out by an archaeological organisation acceptable to the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service on behalf of the Planning Authority, during any groundbreaking and development work.

- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by RCM & RD Maitland to carry out the work.
- 1.3 The watching brief was undertaken on 12th November 2014.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The site lies within the N group of existing farm buildings at West Balhalgardy, to the N of Inverurie and directly S of the B9001 Harlaw road (Illus 1, 3).

Parish: Chapel of Garioch

Map ref: NJ 7599 2393



Location Plan

Illus 1 Location plan from Aberdeenshire Council planning website

https://upa.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/online-applications/files/E95CBEF5544CB61F24AADE8C8EA5904F/pdf/APP_2014_3210-APPROVED_ELEVATIONS_SECTION_FLOOR_SITE_LOCATION_PLAN-6899253.pdf

2.2 Before the soil strip the ground was in grass with an informal track from a yard to the W. A trench c.900mm wide had been cut across the N side of the footprint of the proposed building to locate a water pipe and electrical cable. This was open at the time of the watching brief and no archaeology was visible in the sections. Topsoil in this area was c. 500mm deep above natural boulder clay (Illus 2).

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The topsoil was removed by a full slew JCB excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket. Any possible features were cleaned by hand.
- 3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper 120 GPS and Glonass.



Illus 2 View of pipe and cable trench along N edge of site, looking E

4. Desktop Survey: Archaeological and historical background

4.1 Map evidence

Roy's Military map 1747-55

Roy's map shows a small unenclosed settlement at Balhagerty (sic) surrounded by cultivated rig and furrow.

25"/mile OS map 1867 (pub. 1870) (Aberdeen sheet xlv.15 (Chapel of Garioch).

The site of the present development is shown as a large open field to the N of the West Balhagardy steading with a mill pond in the NW corner.

25"/mile OS map 1899 (pub. 1900) (Aberdeenshire sheet 045.15). There is no change to the field.

4.2 Background

Battle of Harlaw

Balhalgardy is within the area designated by Historic Scotland as associated with the Battle of Harlaw in 1411. The Battlefield Inventory boundary includes:

- Lands adjacent to and to the north of Harlaw. The probable location of MacDonald's camp.
- The hill slopes to the north of Inverurie. The direction of the advance of the Earl of Mar's army uphill from Inverurie.
- The Pley Fauld and adjacent lands. The former location of memorial cairns which has high potential to contain further burials.
- The terrain of the plateau and its slopes and the views out from the higher ground. This landscape feature is key to understanding the restricted nature of the battleground and the limited views from MacDonald's initial deployment of the advancing army.

<http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pls/htmldb/f?p=2500:15:0:::BATLEFIELD:harlaw>

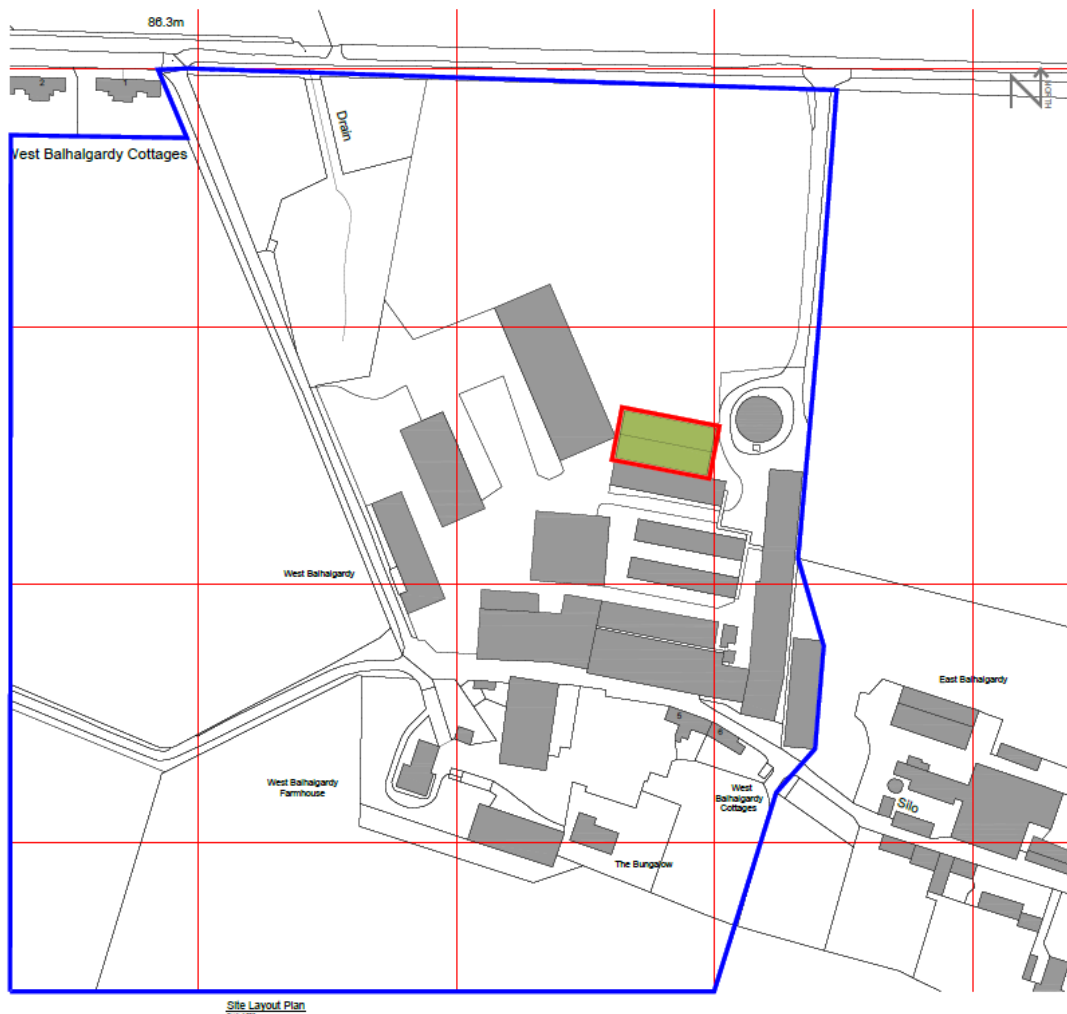
The main focus of the battle itself is thought to have been to the NW of Balhalgardy, between Harlaw House and the Pley Fauld but there are no contemporary accounts of the battle and Historic Scotland stresses that there is little certain knowledge about the movement of troops. The 19th-century finds of skeletons to the E of Harlaw House and the recorded sites of burial cairns associated with the battle all lie to the N and W of the present site but do not preclude the possibility of burials in the area. Historic Scotland indicates that, as accounts of the fighting refer to axes and spears but make little mention of archery, there is a fairly low likelihood of weapons being found. This is likely to be further decreased by the generally acidic nature of the soils in much of Aberdeenshire which reduces the survival of iron objects.

Historic Scotland stresses that the most likely finds might be small items of dress fittings or personal items lost during hand to hand fighting.

Prehistoric background

The area around Balhalgardy must also be seen within a context of considerable prehistoric settlement around the Rivers Don and Urie. While there are visible sites such as the Balhalgardy cup-marked stone thought to be the remnant of a stone circle (NMRS: NJ72SE 1 at NGR: NJ 7598 2431) or the palisaded enclosure/s to the W identified from aerial photographs (NMRS: NJ72SE 106 at NGR NJ 7515 2362), yet the intensive prehistoric settlement remains excavated as a result of housing developments to the E, on either side of the B9170 shows

the strong possibility of unknown prehistoric activity within the Balhalgardy area.



Illus 3 Location of site in relation to the existing Balhalgardy buildings (red grid is 100m) Courtesy of John Wink design.

5 Watching Brief

- 5.1 The footprint of the building is 36 x 18.5m. The N edge of the site footprint was not stripped in order to avoid damage to the open cable and pipe trench; however no archaeology was visible in the sides of the trench or in the small area to the N of it. Over the footprint of the remainder of the site there was a deposit of c.500mm topsoil, with an increased depth of < 800mm along the S side where topsoil removed from the footprint of an existing pig shed to the S had been banked up. This overlay yellow natural boulder clay.
- 5.2 No archaeological features or finds were evident.



Illus 4 View of soil strip looking W



Illus 5 View of soil strip looking E

References

Battle of Harlaw: Historic Scotland website

<http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pls/htmldb/f?p=2500:15:0::::BATTLEFIELD:harlaw>

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic records

(Supplied to Aberdeenshire SMR on CD)

Digital frame number	Content
Balhalgardy	
01-02	General views of site before soil strip, looking NW
03-05	View of soil strip looking E
06-08	View of soil strip looking S/SW
09-10	View of soil strip looking W
11	View of pipe and cable trench along N edge of site, looking E