



NORTHLIGHT HERITAGE	Mearns Kirk
REPORT: 206	
PROJECT ID: 1288	Archaeological Watching Brief
DATA STRUCTURE REPORT	Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire

MAKING HERITAGE MATTER	NORTHLIGHT HERITAGE
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Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire

Planning ref.: 2017/0494/TP

NGR: NS 5422 5507

Data Structure Report

on behalf of

East Renfrewshire Council

Cover Plate: Working shot of topsoil removal

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Approved by:



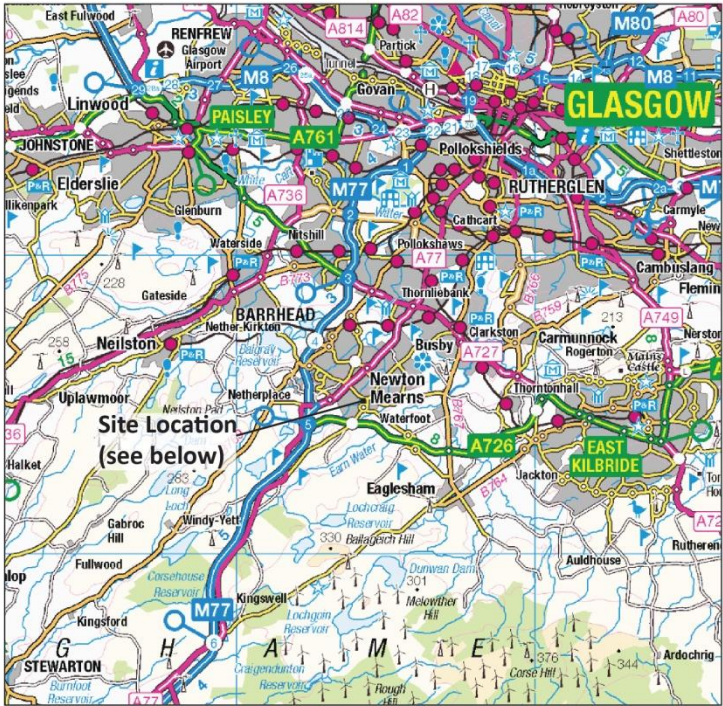
Date: 28/11/2017

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Map sources: OS OpenData™ Ordnance Survey data
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Figure 1: Site Location

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northlight Heritage, on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council, at Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns during the removal of topsoil and a small tree in relation to the construction of an earth embankment that would stabilise the northern boundary wall of the churchyard. The work was carried out on 30th and 31st October 2017. No significant archaeology was found to be present.

1. Introduction

1.1

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns conducted by Northlight Heritage on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council. The watching brief took place on the 30th and 31st October 2017 and involved archaeological monitoring during the removal of topsoil and a small tree prior to the construction of an earthen embankment that would stabilise the northern boundary wall of the churchyard.

2. Location, Geology and Topography

2.1

Mearns Kirk is located near to the junction of Mearns Road and Eaglesham Road at NGR NS 5422 5507 (Figure 1). The watching brief area was situated on the northern side of the churchyard boundary wall where the ground level was approximately 1.5 m to 2 m below that of the graveyard immediately south of the wall (see cover plate). The topography to the north and north-east of the boundary wall was fairly flat open grassland with light tree cover with the ground surface sloping up slightly against the northern churchyard wall.

2.2

The underlying bedrock consists of Eaglesham Lava Member with no recorded overlying superficial deposits (online British Geological Survey 1:50000 data).

3. Archaeological and Historical Context

3.1

A church at Mearns is first recorded as part of the diocese confirmed to Jocelin of Glasgow by the Pope in 1178 after which the church was granted to the Abbey at Paisley in 1186 by Helias of Perthie. Mearns Kirk website states that the church gifted to Paisley stood on the site of an earlier Celtic church of c. AD800 although the source of this information is unknown.

3.2

Roy's Military Survey of Scotland (1747-55) depicts a church on this site known as 'Kirk of Mearns'. The current Mearns Kirk building (HER 51529, NS55NW 104) is a category B listed building, possibly dating from the 16th century, which was extensively remodelled in 1813 and replaced the previous Anglo-Norman building. Renovations took place in 1932 where extensions were added to the northern, eastern and western sides. During the 1932 renovations a carved stone slab was uncovered inscribed with a circle headed cross and sword which has been interpreted as a Templar memorial of the thirteenth century.

4. Summary Objectives

The objectives of the watching brief were:

- establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may be encountered during ground breaking works;
- determine the character, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits encountered;
- excavate and record any significant archaeological features or sites encountered during the watching brief that could not be avoided to ensure preservation through record;
- to make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development.

5. Methodology

5.1

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the removal of topsoil to the north of the churchyard boundary wall and during the relocation of a small tree.

5.2

The topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator using a flat edged bucket under direct archaeological supervision. The trench ran the length of the northern boundary wall from the churchyard steps west to where the wall met the boundary to a private property. It was approximately 4 m in width throughout. A small tree was also relocated by hand from within the trench.

5.3

Archaeological features, deposits and finds were recorded by means of conventional *pro forma* sheets. Where appropriate scaled hand-drawn plans were made at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. High resolution digital images were also taken. By the close of the work the locations and dimensions of the trench were recorded in such a way as to tie it to the OS grid.

6. Results

6.1

The results of the watching brief are given below. In the following paragraphs numbers in round brackets indicate unique context numbers issued to deposits.

6.2

The topsoil (001) was removed to a depth of up to 0.3 m and consisted of dark reddish brown sandy silt with occasional irregular shaped stone inclusions 0.02 m to 0.10 m in size. Two sandstone blocks (SF1), each containing the remains of a single iron rail, were recovered from the topsoil (Plate 1). They were uncovered immediately beside the churchyard wall in the western end of the trench and measured approximately 0.3 m in width and 0.8 m in length. Although their precise origin is not known they most likely relate to former or current grave markers running along the top of the churchyard boundary wall.



Plate 1: Two sandstone blocks (SF1) found within the topsoil against the churchyard wall

6.3

Below the topsoil was a dark reddish brown sandy silt sub-soil (002) which lay up against the full length of the churchyard boundary wall and extended approximately 2.5 m from it (Plate 2). This sub-soil contained frequent irregular stone inclusions 0.05 m to 0.2m in size. It sloped gently away to the north from the boundary wall and appeared to represent a natural and gradual accumulation of material that had built up against the outside of the wall. Although (002) was not removed a series of eighteen sherds of pottery (SF2) were recovered from its surface. These sherds all appear to be 20th century in date and comprise primarily dinner plate fragments.



Plate 2: Deposit (002) lying against churchyard boundary wall

6.4

Running along the northern edge of the trench was a mid reddish brown sandy silt (003) with frequent irregular stone inclusions 0.05 m to 0.1 m in size. This deposit extended 1.5 m from the northern trench edge before disappearing beneath (002) and was interpreted as the natural subsoil.

6.5

A small tree was removed from the topsoil strip area which did not reveal any deposits other than those already noted above. The tree was replanted nearer the church hall. The hand excavation of a shallow hole at the tree's new position revealed a mixed and disturbed deposit containing no archaeology.

7. Discussion and Summary

7.1

The removal of topsoil (001) exposed a deposit (002) that had gathered against the northern face of the churchyard boundary wall and, although not excavated, this appeared to lie on top of the natural sub-soil (003).

7.2

Two sandstone blocks, presumably having fallen from or been discarded from the adjacent graveyard, were uncovered from the topsoil while a collection of 20th century pottery sherds were recovered from the surface of (002).

7.3

No significant archaeology was uncovered during the watching brief.

8. Recommendations

8.1

Given no archaeological remains were uncovered during the watching brief it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required in relation to the current phase of work at Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns unless additional ground disturbance is necessary.

8.2

Northlight Heritage would stress that these recommendations are intended for guidance only. Final decisions on the requirement for further mitigation rests with the planning authority.

9. List of Sources

British Geological Survey, 1:50000, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html> (accessed 09/11/2017).

Mearns Kirk website, <http://www.mearnskirk.church/> (accessed 09/11/2017).

10. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Tables/ Concordances

Table 1: Context Information

Context No.	Type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description / Interpretation
001	Deposit	-	-	0.3	dark reddish brown sandy silt with occasional irregular stone inclusions, 0.02-0.10m / Topsoil
002	Deposit	-	2.5	-	dark reddish brown sandy silt sub-soil with frequent irregular stone inclusions, 0.05-0.20m / built-up deposit against N face of churchyard wall
003	Deposit	-	1.5	-	mid reddish brown sandy silt (003) with frequent irregular stone inclusions, 0.05-0.10m / natural subsoil

Table 2: Digital Photographs

Photo No.	Context No.	Description	From (Compass)
1	n/a	Pre-ex	NW
2	n/a	Pre-ex	NE
3	n/a	Pre-ex	NE
4	n/a	Small Find 1 - sandstone blocks within topsoil	SE
5	n/a	Small Find 1 - sandstone blocks	-
6	n/a	Small Find 1 - sandstone blocks	-
7	001	Working shot of topsoil stripping	NW
8	001	Working shot of topsoil stripping	E
9	001	Working shot of tree removal	NE
10	001	Post-ex of tree removal	E
11	002, 003	Post-ex full trench	E
12	002, 003	Post-ex W end of trench	E
13	002, 003	Post-ex E end of trench	W
14	002, 003	Post-ex full trench	E

Table 3: Finds

Find No.	Context No.	No of pieces	Material	Description
1	001	2	stone	light yellow/grey sandstone blocks, 0.3x0.8m, with remains of one iron rail in each block
2	002	18	ceramic	18 sherds of 20th century pottery, primarily plate fragments

APPENDIX 2: Written Scheme of Investigation

Mearns Parish Church, Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire, G77 5BU.

Stabilisation of wall by constructing earth embankment.

Planning ref. 2017/0494/TP

Archaeological Works

Method Statement

Prepared by David Sneddon

1.0 Non-Technical Summary

This document sets out Northlight Heritage's Written Scheme of Investigation, on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council, for archaeological works relating to the construction of an earth embankment required in order to stabilise a wall forming the northern boundary of Mearns Parish Church, Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire.

This document establishes actions and products required to achieve Stage 1 of a potentially three-stage process, Stage 2 being any further work, including fieldwork arising from Stage 1, such as the development and implementation of a mitigation strategy to deal with any significant archaeology identified or recovered during Stage 1, and Stage 3 being the further analysis of any materials recovered during the field work in either or both Stages 1 and 2 and/or the preparation of a final report on all works constituting preservation by record for publication, as appropriate.

2.0 Site Location and Description

The work will be undertaken on a wall and gravestones running along the northern boundary of the current church and will be centred on approximately NGR NS 5422 5507. The ground to the south of the wall comprises the church grave yard while that immediately to the north consists of an open grass covered space with light tree cover. There is a height difference of c. 1.5 m between the higher graveyard side and the land to the north. A series of large grave slabs sit on top of the wall.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The current church is a category B listed building comprising an earlier, possibly 16th century, church which was entirely remodelled in 1813. This included the addition of a clock tower. A church is depicted here as 'Kirk of Mearns' on Roy's Military Survey of Scotland (1747-55) while the current church website notes that the first record of Mearns Kirk was in 1190 when the priest, Helia de Perthic, gifted the newly founded Anglo-Norman Church at Mearns to Paisley Abbey. It also notes that an earlier Celtic church existed here around AD 800 (Information from Historic Environment Scotland Listed Building data and West of Scotland Archaeology Service Historic Environment record).

4.0 Project Objectives

The project objectives are to:

- establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may be encountered during ground breaking works;
- determine the character, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits encountered;
- excavate and record any significant archaeological features or sites encountered during the watching brief that cannot be avoided to ensure preservation through record;
- make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 *Watching Brief*

The main stages of ground disturbance relating to the stabilisation of the wall will be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist. The watching brief will include the initial stages of tree re-location and removal of turf or topsoil on the northern side of the wall where an earth embankment will be placed against the re-pointed wall. Although unlikely to be required any parts of the wall that have to be removed and re-built will also be monitored to allow for examination of the exposed profile.

Given the relatively small scale of the proposed work it is anticipated that one archaeologist will be sufficient to monitor all works.

Topsoil will be removed by an excavator fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket to the first archaeological horizon or to the required construction level, whichever is encountered first. Trees to be re-located are expected to be removed by hand. Areas containing potential archaeology will be marked off to ensure no works occur within these areas until after they have been investigated.

Sufficient time will be allowed for the archaeologist conducting the watching brief to obtain an appropriate record of any identified archaeology prior to any further construction work taking place in that area. Any archaeological features encountered will be cleaned by hand to help determine the date of the deposits, their character and extent. Where limited archaeological remains are encountered during the watching brief features and deposits will be excavated and recorded by written description on pro forma recording sheets, by photograph and by measured drawing. Should negative cut features be encountered they will be 50% excavated in order to determine their significance, date and function. In the event that they are deemed to be important discoveries they will be fully excavated.

All archaeologically significant excavated feature fills and deposits will be sampled for artefactual and palaeo-environmental evidence. Where appropriate this will also include micromorphological sampling in order to address key issues relating to soil development at the site.

All archaeological finds will be dealt with by the on-site archaeologists. The general practice will be to bulk

recover artefacts by context which date from the nineteenth or twentieth century's. Should significant finds be encountered from earlier occupation phases of the site there may be the requirement for three-dimensionally recording prior to up-lifting. Finds which are of particular sensitivity or importance may require specialist conservation assessment.

Where particularly extensive, numerous or complex archaeological deposits or features are proven to be present the developer and the local authority will be informed and discussions, including a site meeting if deemed necessary and appropriate, will be held between all relevant parties to agree the most appropriate strategy. Where preservation *in situ* is not feasible this will generally comprise a need to develop a stage 2 mitigation strategy to excavate and record any significant archaeological features or sites to ensure preservation through record.

West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), acting on behalf of the planning authority, will be the final judge of significance in any case and may require full excavation of features to be destroyed by the proposals.

5.2 *Human Remains*

Should human remains be encountered, the local police, WoSAS and the developer will be notified immediately and thereafter prescribed procedure for their treatment will be followed, in accordance with legal requirements.

5.3 *Project Monitoring*

WoSAS and the developer will be notified immediately of any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and/or the development. In that event, all finds and features will be left *in situ* until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them.

An archaeological project manager will be appointed for all the works outlined above and the manager will be the first point of contact for any project-related liaison with WoSAS and the developer or the developer's agent for all formal logistical, administrative and financial aspects of the project.

It will be important to ensure that all formal communications, instructions and/or requests (including any proposed amendments to on-site strategies) are ultimately made in writing to the project manager, to ensure organisational, administrative and financial efficiency.

Any site visitors, including representatives of WoSAS will be required to conform to the health and safety regime in place during the fieldwork programme.

6.0 Reporting, Archive & Small Finds Arrangements

Following completion of the fieldwork, a report on the fieldwork will be prepared, outlining the main results and incorporating lists of all features, finds, samples, photographs and drawings. This report will be produced as an electronic report (and a desk-top published document where this is required). The report will also include recommendations for further mitigation measures appropriate to the remains encountered. Implementation of any recommendations offered would, however, only follow consultation with WoSAS.

The report will be prepared, in structural and textual content terms, to the standard of the traditional Data Structure Report (DSR) as defined by Historic Scotland, in their "Project Design, Implementation and Archiving" document (Historic Scotland Archaeological Procedure Paper 2, 1996). The report will provide "a structure or organisation to the primary records" of the fieldwork, forming "a basis for further work". It will be "essentially, an initial organisation on paper of the information retrieved from the site" and consist "of a narrative account of the contexts...discovered, including field interpretations and a set of lists. It is not intended for publication, but will itself be archived." A project archive will be prepared and made ready for submission within six months of the completion of all fieldwork or post-excavation work (as appropriate). The resultant site archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Records for Scotland.

A short report detailing the results will also be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* and to OASIS.

Copies of the DSR will be provided to WoSAS, the developer and to the National Monuments Record for Scotland. Further copies can be distributed to other recipients if requested and specified.

The results of the Stage 1 watching brief and DSR will inform the need for further (Stage 2) fieldwork or further (Stage 3) analysis of materials/generation of a report for publication. Where appropriate and on request any DSR produced as part of Stage 1 or Stage 2 mitigation will be followed the production of a costed Post-excavation Research Design (PERD) specifying any work deemed necessary in order to complete the project. Publication, where required, would normally be sought in a suitable academic journal. The post-excavation process is essential to bring a piece of archaeological work to completion.

The laws relating to Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia* in Scotland apply to all finds where the original owner cannot be identified. This includes all material recovered during archaeological fieldwork. Accordingly, all assemblages recovered from archaeological fieldwork are claimed automatically by the Crown and must be reported to the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel through its secretariat, the Treasure Trove Unit. In the event of the discovery of small finds during the evaluation or any subsequent stages of work, a filled-out copy of the form "Declaration of an Archaeological Assemblage from Fieldwork" and two copies of the pertinent Data Structure Report will be submitted to the Panel at the conclusion of the fieldwork. The Panel will then be responsible for recommending to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (QLTR) which museum should be allocated the finds.

All artefacts will be stored temporarily by Northlight until a decision has been made by the Panel regarding the museum which will be allocated the finds for permanent curation. All finds will be transferred to the appropriate museum within six months of completion of the fieldwork, if no post-excavation work is required, or at the end of the latest finishing post-excavation programme.

In the event that unallocated finds recovered from the evaluation or any later stages of work require to be removed from Scotland, for the purposes of post-excavation analysis, there is a legal requirement to obtain the consent of the QLTR, in the form of a loan agreement. Initially, an indication of intent would be registered with the Treasure Trove Secretariat at the National Museums of Scotland, after which formal consent would be applied for using the form "Application for authority to borrow unallocated Treasure Trove for research purposes". A consent form, signed by the QLTR and specifying conditions (such as the period during which finds may be held outside Scotland) would then be issued. Receipt of this signed consent form will be required before items may be removed from the country.

7.0 Timetable

The watching brief will be undertaken in late October 2017.

The DSR will be submitted within 4 weeks of completion of field work. If required any PERD will be submitted within 3 months of WoSAS agreement to the DSR and any final publication will be submitted within a year of WoSAS agreement to the PERD.

8.0 Staffing

Project Manager – David Sneddon

Project Director – TBC

9.0 Health and Safety

Prior to fieldwork commencing a risk assessment of the project will be undertaken. Northlight Heritage, as part of York Archaeological Trust, adheres to all standard Health and Safety regulations governing fieldwork projects.

Northlight Heritage also possess appropriate third party/public liability insurance cover, proof of which may be supplied upon request.

APPENDIX 3: DES

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	East Renfrewshire Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Archaeological Watching Brief, Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns
PROJECT CODE:	1288
PARISH:	Mearns
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Nicola Reid
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Northlight Heritage
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS55NW 104
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Church, graveyard
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 5422 5507
START DATE (this season)	30 th October 2017
END DATE (this season)	31 st October 2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council at Mearns Kirk, Newton Mearns during the removal of topsoil and a small tree relating to the construction of an earth embankment that would stabilise the northern boundary wall of the churchyard. The work was carried out on 30 th and 31 st October 2017. No significant archaeology was found to be present.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	n/a
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	East Renfrewshire Council
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Northlight Heritage, Studio 114, South Block, 64 Osborne Street, Glasgow G1 5QT .
EMAIL ADDRESS:	northlight@yorkat.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	National Monuments Record for Scotland (intended)