HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011

Blackhill Roman Camps: Damage Assessment, June 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90338

SITE: Blackhill Roman Camps, near Braco, Perthshire.

N.G.R.: Centred c. NN 840 108

DESCRIPTION: Assessment of the level of damage to the Roman marching camps after twenty trees were felled by the wind. The craters were examined, measured and their locations plotted.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90338-2011-02

CONTENTS:

KIRKDALE ARCHAEOLOGY

4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF.

JULY 2011

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a field visit to inspect the craters left by twenty wind felled trees on the site of the Blackhill Roman camps near Braco. The positions of the craters were recorded and some basic dimensions were taken. The fallen trees were all Silver Birch. It was noted that part of the reason for such widespread damage was the shallow topsoil, which made it difficult for the trees to establish deep root growth.

The silver birch were part of a plantation, possibly forming a windbreak, skirting the road to the E and also possibly forming a visual or aural barrier. The site also contained some large fir trees that were unaffected by the storms. The proximity of the trees to each other meant that there was a domino effect in places, where one tree fell and caused three or four others to follow. Some of the craters left by the fallen trees were fully exposed, while others were only partially opened due to the still intact roots.

The site is comprised of two superimposed Roman Camps of the early 3rd century AD. The remains of the E side of the smaller camp are visible as a rampart and ditch running diagonally up the E side of the site near the current gate. It terminates before it hits the revetment to the road, this likely being one of the two gateways that would have served the E side of the camp. The W earthwork of the larger camp bisects the site to the W. Most of the damage was therefore limited to what would have been the internal portions of both camps. Crater 20 however was close to the rampart of the smaller camp, within the paddock to the E of the house around which the site sits.

The work was carried out on the 28th June 2011.

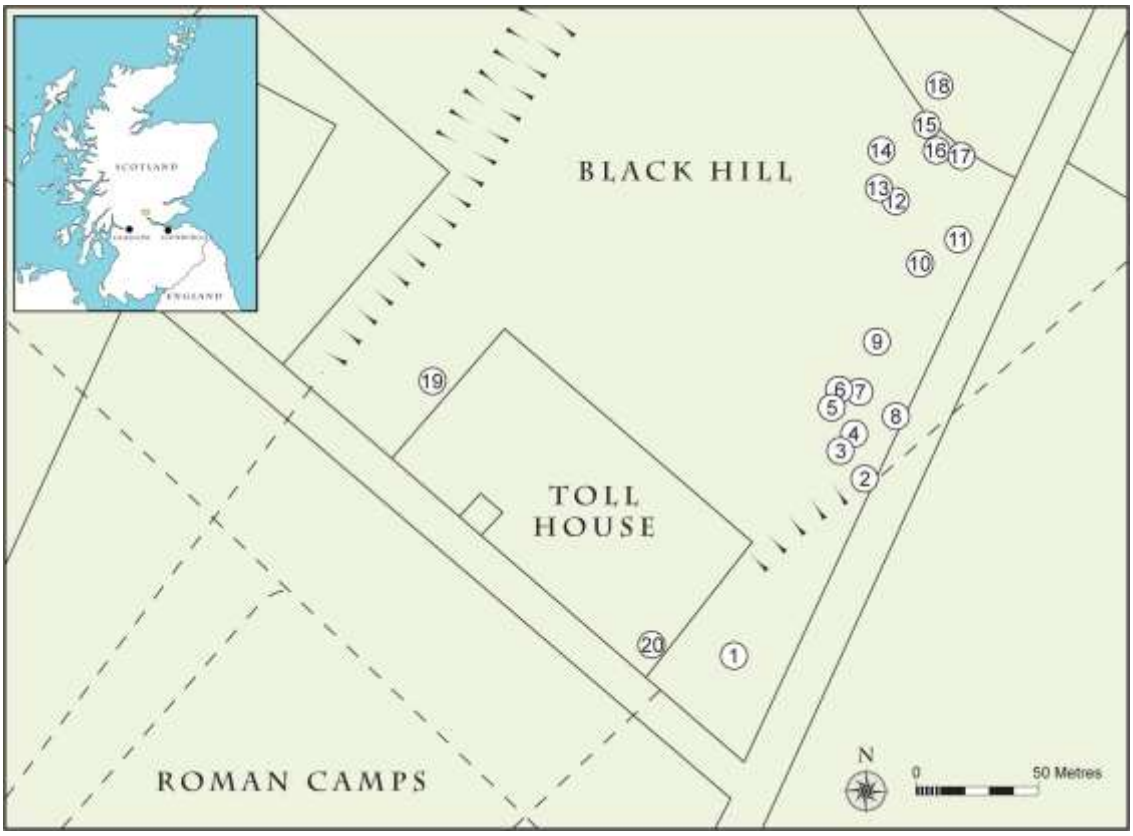

Figure 1: Approximate locations of the felled trees.

DESCRIPTION

Each crater was given a number, and can be located on Figure 1. Craters 1 - 18 are situated on the E portion of the inverted U-shaped fenced enclosure. Crater 19 is in the same enclosure but this time to the W of the house. Crater 20 sits inside the walled paddock to the E of the house.

CRATER 1

Dimensions: 5m NW/SE x 3m SW/NE x up to 0.8m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to large (<35cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 2

Dimensions: 1.5m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.25m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 3

Dimensions: 1.25m NW/SE x 1.75m SW/NE x up to 0.4m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 4

Dimensions: 2.2m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.6m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 5

Dimensions: 3m NW/SE x 2.5m SW/NE x up to 0.6m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to large (<30cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 6

Dimensions: 3m NW/SE x 2m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) sub-rounded pebbles. Crater was partially obscured as the tree from Crater 5 was over-lying it.

CRATER 7

Dimensions: 3m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.6m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 8

Dimensions: 2.5m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 9

Dimensions: 4m NW/SE x 2m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to large (<30cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 10

Dimensions: 3.5m NW/SE x 3m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to large (<30cm) sub-rounded pebbles and occasional pieces of sub-angular schist (<30cm).

CRATER 11

Dimensions: 3m NW/SE x 0.5m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles and occasional pieces of sub-angular schist (<15cm).

CRATER 12

Dimensions: 2.5m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 13

Dimensions: 3.5m NW/SE x 2m SW/NE x up to 0.7m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles and occasional pieces of sub-angular schist (<25cm).

CRATER 14

Dimensions: 3.5m NW/SE x 2m SW/NE x up to 0.6m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 15

Dimensions: 1.8m NW/SE x 1m SW/NE x up to 0.3m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 16

Dimensions: 1.25m NW/SE x 0.8m SW/NE x up to 0.4m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 17

Dimensions: 1m NW/SE x 0.6m SW/NE x up to 0.3m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CRATER 18

Dimensions: 3.5m NW/SE x 2.5m SW/NE x up to 0.6m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25-30cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to large (<30cm) sub-rounded pebbles, overlying bedrock, which was cropping out centrally.

CRATER 19

Dimensions: 4m NW/SE x 2m SW/NE x up to 0.7m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles and occasional pieces of sub-angular schist (<25cm).

CRATER 20

Dimensions: 3m NW/SE x 1.5m SW/NE x up to 0.5m deep

Profile consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil 20-25cm deep, over an orangey-brown silty clay subsoil full of small (<5cm) to medium (<15cm) sub-rounded pebbles.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the damage caused was quite considerable (some of the trees would have stood over 10m tall) no archaeological remains were apparent during this cursory examination. That said, the identification of features and/or artefacts would have required detailed cleaning and rationalisation of the craters.

The removal of the trees will entail the widening of the craters. In some cases this will (at least) double the dimensions ascribed to the craters (see above). The craters themselves are full of loose deposits which again could be hiding features and/or artefacts. It would therefore be prudent to carry out some form of cleaning upon removal of the trees, in order to clarify the impact upon any surviving archaeological deposits.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Craters 1 - 20.	NTS

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Looking NE at rampart and ditch.	SW	28/6/2011
2	Looking NE at rampart and ditch.	SW	28/6/2011
3	Crater 1.	SW	28/6/2011
4	Crater 1.	S	28/6/2011
5	Crater 1.	SE	28/6/2011
6	Crater 1.	S	28/6/2011
7	Crater 1, tree and roots.	W	28/6/2011
8	Crater 2.	SW	28/6/2011
9	Crater 2.	SW	28/6/2011
10	General shot of fallen trees.	SE	28/6/2011
11	Crater 3.	SW	28/6/2011
12	Crater 3.	SW	28/6/2011
13	Crater 4.	SW	28/6/2011
14	Crater 4.	SW	28/6/2011
15	Crater 5.	SW	28/6/2011
16	Crater 5.	SW	28/6/2011
17	Crater 5.	NW	28/6/2011
18	Crater 6.	S	28/6/2011
19	Crater 7.	SW	28/6/2011
20	Crater 7.	SW	28/6/2011
21	Crater 8.	SW	28/6/2011
22	Crater 8.	S	28/6/2011
23	Crater 8 and fallen trees.	SE	28/6/2011
24	Crater 9.	SW	28/6/2011
25	Crater 9.	SW	28/6/2011
26	Crater 10.	SW	28/6/2011
27	Crater 10.	SW	28/6/2011
28	Crater 11.	SW	28/6/2011
29	Crater 11.	S	28/6/2011
30	Crater 12.	SW	28/6/2011
31	Crater 12.	SW	28/6/2011
32	Crater 13.	S	28/6/2011
33	Crater 13.	SW	28/6/2011
34	Crater 14.	SW	28/6/2011
35	Crater 14.	SW	28/6/2011
36	Crater 15.	SW	28/6/2011
37	Crater 15.	SW	28/6/2011

No.	Description	From	Date
38	Crater 16.	SW	28/6/2011
39	Crater 16.	SW	28/6/2011
40	Crater 17.	SW	28/6/2011
41	Crater 17.	SW	28/6/2011
42	Crater 18.	SW	28/6/2011
43	Crater 18.	SW	28/6/2011
44	Crater 18 , bedrock.	SW	28/6/2011
45	General shot of fallen trees.	NW	28/6/2011
46	General shot of fallen trees.	NW	28/6/2011
47	General shot of fallen trees.	N	28/6/2011
48	Close-up of typical fallen tree.	SW	28/6/2011
49	General shot of fallen trees.	NW	28/6/2011
50	General shot of fallen trees.	NW	28/6/2011
51	General shot of fallen trees.	N	28/6/2011
52	General shot of fallen trees.	NW	28/6/2011
53	Crater 19.	SW	28/6/2011
54	Crater 19.	NW	28/6/2011
55	Crater 19.	SW	28/6/2011
56	General shot of Crater 19.	NW	28/6/2011
57	Camp rampart with Crater 1 in background.	NW	28/6/2011
58	Crater 20.	SE	28/6/2011
59	Crater 20.	S	28/6/2011
60	Crater 20.	S	28/6/2011