

# Archaeological evaluation, Newhouse, Crocketford, Dumfries and Galloway

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March 2016

## Data Structure Report



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Services

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# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, NEWHOUSE, CROCKETFORD, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

**NGR: NX 8298 7288**

**DGC HER: MDG24051**

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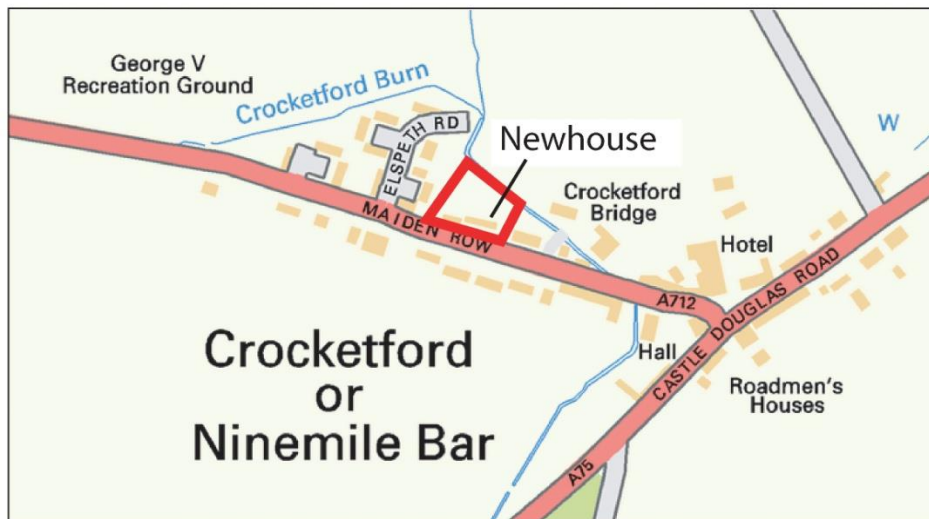
## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Dumfries and Galloway Council archaeologist requested a pre-determination archaeological evaluation in advance of a planning application at Newhouse, Crocketford. Newhouse was built in 1806 by the Buchanites, a small religious sect. The evaluation was designed to locate and assess the degree of survival of a graveyard at the back of the property where members of the sect had been buried between 1808 and 1846.

1.2 CCM Homes engaged John Pickin Archaeology and Heritage to undertake the evaluation.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Buchanites were a small religious sect led by the charismatic Elspeth Buchan. Established in Irvine in 1783, they believed they could achieve immortality and transcend to heaven without the need for death. Elspeth Buchan, also known as Luckie Buchan, Mother Buchan and Friend Mother saw herself as a prophet and visionary and later in life claimed to be a physical reincarnation of the Holy Ghost. The group was banished from Irvine and settled in Nithsdale. After Elspeth Buchan's death at Closeburn in 1791, the sect split and one group emigrated to America. The remaining members moved to Larghill, Kirkpatrick Durham and established a small, prosperous community. In 1806 they purchased five acres of land at Crocketford and built Newhouse; the twelve remaining members of the sect moved there from Larghill in 1808. Elspeth Buchan's mummified body had been retained by the group and at Newhouse it was hidden in a small room at the front of the building in anticipation of her promised resurrection. The Buchanites had a small graveyard in the back garden at Newhouse and when Andrew Innes, the last member of the sect, died in 1846, the body of Mother Buchan was buried beneath his coffin.



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Fig. 1. Site location

2.2 Joseph Train, local antiquary and friend of the last Buchanite Andrew Innes, described the graveyard in 1846:

When the Buchanites formed their garden at Crocketford, they laid off a small plot of ground immediately behind the house, and sowed it with grass, seemingly for a small bleaching-green; but, on the death of one of their number, the survivors declared that this was to be their place of rest. Some of the neighbours wished to persuade them to take a burying-place in the parish churchyard, but their answer was, " No ; we have kept ourselves separate from the rest of the world during our life, and our wish is to remain so when dead. The property is our own, and we have mutually agreed to have our dust deposited in that spot." A labourer was got to dig the grave, and a large company, male and female, was invited to attend ; the corpse was interred in the usual form, and the whole company partook of a plentiful refreshment ; but

all the while none of those concerned showed any symptoms of grief, nor wore any of the usual badges of mourning. This has since continued to be the place of their interment, and there are at length twelve of them laid there. The small piece of ground has lately been enclosed by a stone-and-lime wall, of about three feet in height. (Train 1846: 193)

2.3 In 1896 Malcolm Harper was shown 'a small plot of ground in the garden immediately behind their (the Buchanite's) dwelling-house in the village. We visited the spot, and fourteen graves were pointed out to us by an old woman who occupied the house ...' (Harper 1896: 301).

2.4 The most detailed description is provided by John Cameron, author of 'The Buchanite Delusion', who visited Newhouse in the early 1900s:

Entering the gate (of Newhouse), the visitor has the small barn and stable on his left hand, and the courtyard in front of the house to the right. The only peculiarity is, that one would expect a window above the door, where there is none ... A wing has been built on the eastern gable, which originally had no existence. But facing the gate from the road there is a wicket leading to a garden of considerable size behind. Passing through, we reached the back of the house, where a small square plot of ground is seen enclosed by a six-foot wall clad and crowned with ivy. Entering this by the passage which has been left next the house, we stood in the burial-ground of the Buchanites, where ... Mother Buchan herself at last found a resting place. Returning, we passed round the outside of this scene of buried hopes and delusions to the other side and observed that the eastern wall of the tiny cemetery was part of a small wing which stood at the back of the house. The channelling was still visible where its lower roof joined the main wall. (Cameron 1904: 138-9)

2.4 These three descriptions are of value in confirming that the graveyard was 'small' and 'square' and built against a 'small wing' at the back of the house although there is a discrepancy in wall heights (Train: three-feet high; Cameron: six-feet) . Interestingly Harper was shown fourteen graves but Train says there were only twelve. Train is likely to be correct as only twelve members of the sect are known to have lived at Crocketford.

2.5 The First Edition six-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey map of 1854 (surveyed 1850-51) shows a small central extension at the north side of the house which is attached to the south-west corner of a rectangular enclosure (Fig. 2); no grave yard is marked. This central extension may be Cameron's 'small wing.' By the time of the Second Edition twenty-five inch map of 1894 (Fig. 3) an extension had been erected at the east end of the main house and the 'small wing' removed. The long rectangular garden enclosure is still depicted but a small square enclosure has now been added at its south-west corner; again, no grave yard is marked.



Fig.2. First Edition OS six-inch map 1854 (Kirkcudbrighshire sheet 26)

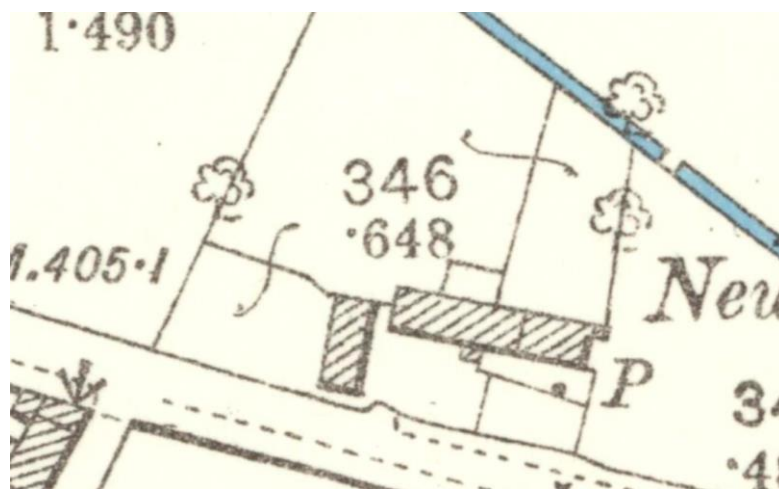


Fig.3. Second Edition OS twenty five-inch map 1894 (Kirkcubrightshire 028.11)

2.5 The small enclosure on the Second Edition map fits Cameron's description of the 'small square plot of ground' and is most likely the site of the walled graveyard. It is unusual for the Ordnance Survey not to mark a graveyard and its exclusion cannot be explained. It is unlikely that the OS surveyors were unaware of its existence, especially as Harper was shown the graveyard by the owner of Newhouse only two years after the Second Edition map was printed. The First Edition map also presents problems. Train, writing in 1846, says the 'the small piece of ground ( the graveyard ) has lately been enclosed by a stone-and-lime wall'. If this is the square enclosure shown on the 1894 OS map why was it not marked on the 1854 map?

2.6 The Dumfries and Galloway HER records the discovery of human bones and coffin handles in the mid 1970s by the then owner of the house. A drainage trench had been dug from the north-west side of the house (from a 'temporary bathroom in the west living room') to connect with the septic tank piping and disturbed what was described as a 'very shallow' grave. The grave was photographed - copies with D + G HER – and the bones reinterred. The owner also said he had 'heard a story from the previous owner that human remains had been found when the original bathroom extension had been built (1929?).' The existing central extension is likely to be the 'original bathroom extension' and so the 1970s discovery must have been west of this structure.

### 3 PROJECT WORKS

3.1 The evaluation was carried out on 30 March 2016. Three trenches were dug with a JCB excavator using a 1.6m toothless bucket. The trenches were positioned to locate any surviving burials at the back of Newhouse and to examine whether the enclosure shown on the Second Edition OS map was the graveyard. Underground services – power, BT, drainage and fuel – restricted the final length and position of the trenches (Fig. 5).

3.2 The top soil was removed to expose the subsoil and/or bedrock. Potential archaeological features were recorded but not excavated.



Fig.4. Pre-excavation view of the rear of Newhouse from the north-east showing the central extension.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Trench 1 (Figs. 6-10)

4.1.1 Trench 1, 8.25m x 1.6m, was positioned between the north-west corner of the house's central back extension and the north-west corner of the west patio. The south face of the trench followed the external line of the patio. It was anticipated that the east end of the trench might coincide with the west wall of the putative burial enclosure shown on the Second Edition OS map.

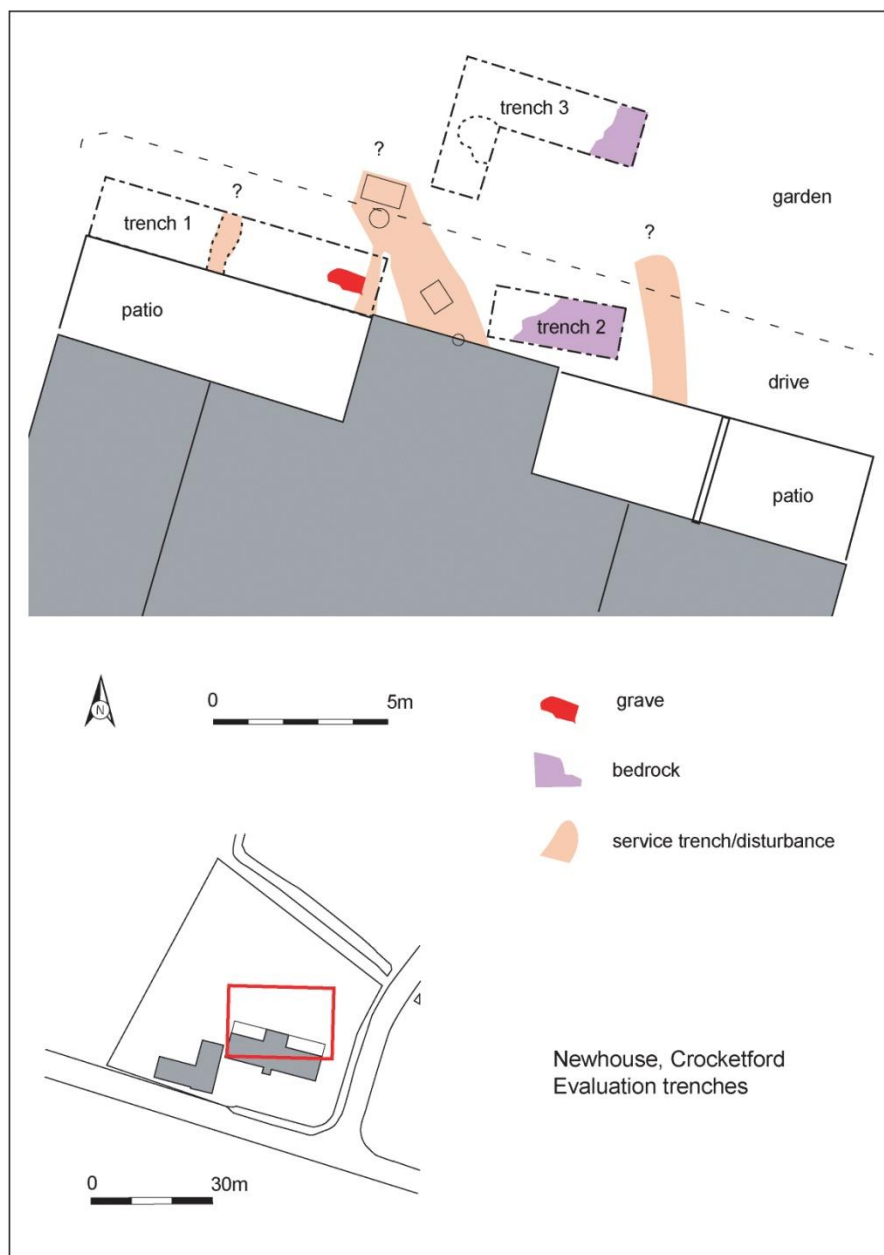


Fig 5. Location of trenches.



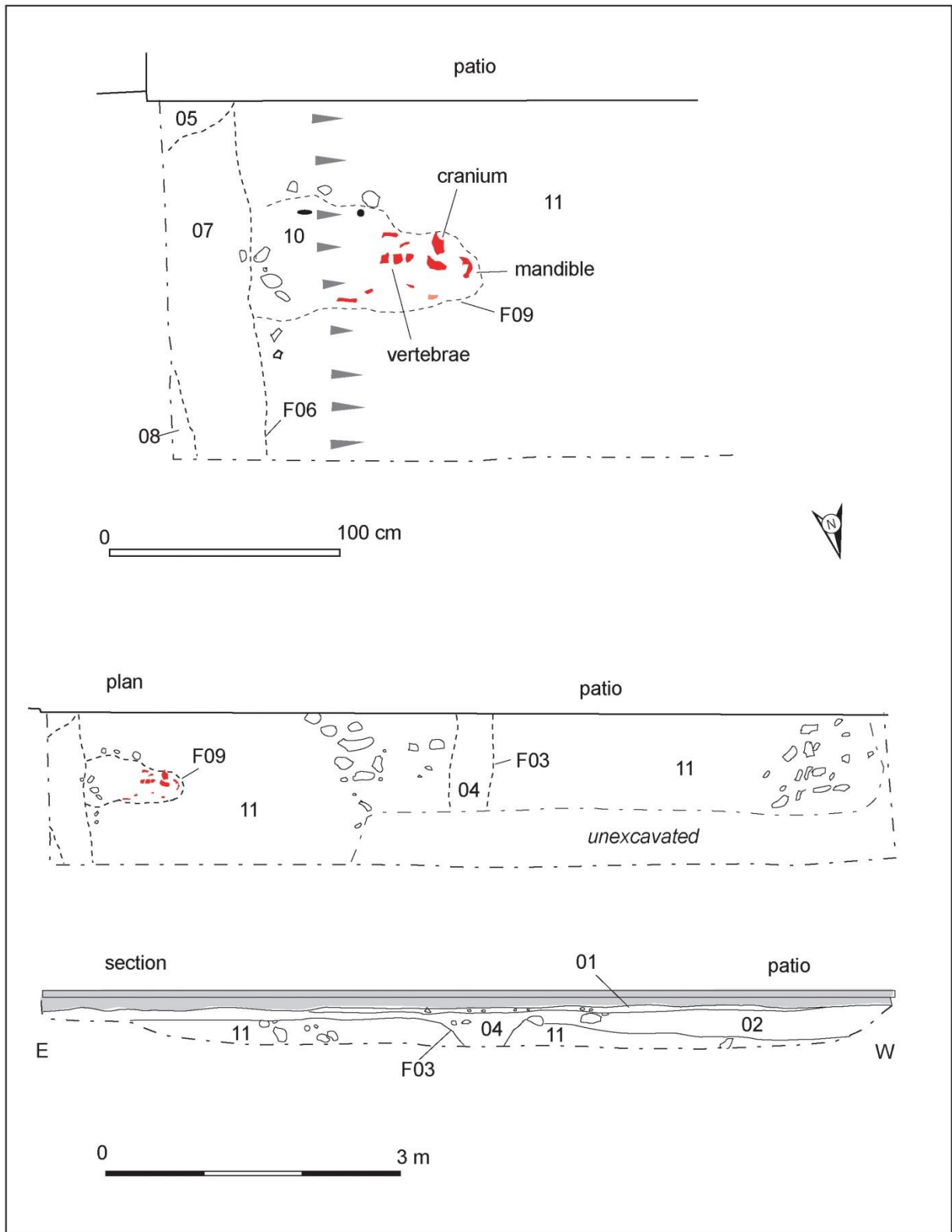


Fig.6. Trench 1 – trench plan, section and detail of grave F09.

4.1.2 A thin deposit of gravel and small pebbles in black soil (01) overlay a layer of black soil with occasional large water rolled stones (02) which was 0.12m deep at the east end of the trench and 0.30m deep at the west. This layer rested on a natural clay and gravel sub-soil (011) which sloped gently to the west. To the east the sub-soil was a grey clay with gravel and towards the centre of the trench was more stoney. Further west the sub-soil was an orange clay with gravel which became more stoney towards the west end of the trench. These changes in colour and composition probably reflect differential weathering of the natural bedrock and overlying glacial sands and gravels. Three small fragments of bone – possibly human – lay on the surface 11 east of pipe trench F03; their context was not clear and they may have derived from 02 and been disturbed during the excavation of the pipe trench. A human humerus was recovered from the spoil tip; it came from the east end of the trench in the general area of the grave but its original context is unknown.

4.1.3 In the central section of the excavation trench a pipe trench containing the remains of a salt-glazed drain or sewer pipe (F03) had been cut through layer 02 and into the surface of natural deposit 11. It could not be ascertained if this pipe trench also cut 01 but it was overlain to the south by the slabs of the concrete west patio.

4.1.4 At the east end of the trench a service trench (F06) had been cut into the surface of 011. It was associated to the north-west with an area of concrete (05). Both F06 and 05 relate to a system of relatively modern drains running from the house's back extension to a group of inspection hatches in the garden.

4.1.5 Service trench F06 truncated the east end of a grave (F09) dug into the surface of 11 and sealed to the west by layer 02. The grave was aligned approximately north-west - south-east with surviving dimensions of 1.10m x 0.50m and had a fill of back soil (10) with occasional pieces of orange clay. The grave contained an *in situ* extended inhumation with the head at the west end and fragmentary remains survived of the skull and mandible as well as pieces of rib and vertebrae. The grave was remarkably shallow with the top of the grave cut only 0.18m beneath the surface of the drive and the inhumation itself was at a depth of 0.30m. A single corroded iron nail (?) and a fragment of wood, both close to the south side of the grave, may be the remains of a timber coffin.

4.1.6 No evidence was found for the enclosure wall shown on the Second Edition OS map.

4.1.7 After recording, the grave and surrounding area were backfilled. The humerus recovered from the spoil tip (4.1.2 above) was placed on the surface of grave fill 10.



Fig. 7. Trench 1 from east.



Fig. 8. Trench 1 from west.



Fig. 9. Grave 009, skull to west (right)



Fig. 10. Grave 009 from west.

## 4.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 11-12)

4.2.1 Trench 2, 3.7x 1.6m, was located close to the north-east corner of the central extension; the ground to the east and west had been disturbed by service trenches. It was hoped that this trench might coincide with the east side of the putative burial enclosure.

4.2.2 Beneath a thin gravel associated with the modern drive was a 0.25 m black top soil (019). To the west the top soil sealed a natural deposit of grey clay with gravel lenses and occasional small stones (020) and to the east it rested directly on a flat outcrop of thin, vertically bedded shale bedrock.

4.2.3 There were no archaeological features in Trench 2

### 4.3 Trench 3 (Figs. 11 + 13)

4.3.1 Trench 3 was an L-shaped excavation positioned some 4m north of the central excavation. The trench was designed to locate the northern extent of any burials and to intersect one of the garden walls shown on the nineteenth century OS maps.

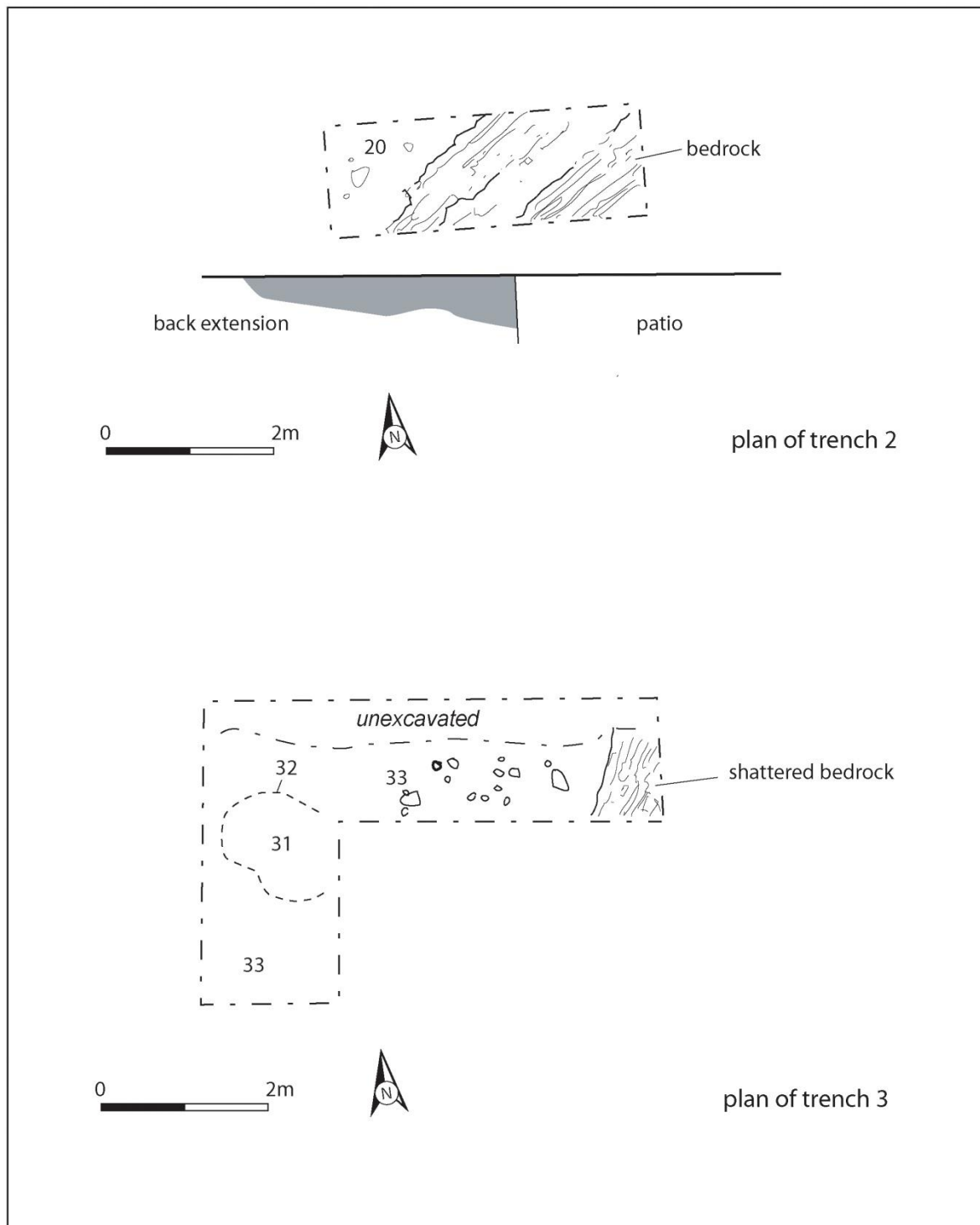


Fig. 11. Plans of trenches 2 and 3.





Fig. 12. Trench 2 from west.



Fig. 13. Trench 3 from south.

4.3.2 A top soil deposit (30) between 0.25m and 0.35m deep, overlay a natural sub-soil deposit of orange and grey clay (33) with angular stones which to the east abutted against an outcrop of shattered shale bedrock.

4.3.3 Cut into the surface of 033 was an irregular oval feature (F32- maximum exposed dimensions 1.10m x 1.20m) containing a fill of black soil with patches of orange clay and root fragments (31). Partial excavation of the west edge showed this to be a shallow, scooped feature, perhaps a tree-throw or even a natural hollow. There was nothing to identify this feature as another grave.

## 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The discovery of a shallow grave at the east end of Trench 1 indicates that human burial(s) survive at Newhouse. The location of this burial places it within the square enclosure shown on the Second Edition OS map and it is probable that this enclosure was the graveyard plot mentioned by Harper, Cameron and Train. No traces of the enclosure were found during the evaluation and it has to be assumed that it had shallow foundations and has been completely removed.

5.2 The grave located in Trench 1 was truncated at its east end by a service trench and ground inspection indicates that much of the ground in front of the central extension has been disturbed by drains and associated services which will have destroyed a substantial part of the graveyard. Additional damage will have occurred when the central extension was built although the degree of disturbance will depend on the size of the foundation trenches and the extent of any internal ground works.

5.3 Figure 14 shows the building and enclosure depicted on the 1894 map overlain on the modern ground plan. This indicates that undisturbed burials may survive under the patio immediately west of the central extension and also within the central extension itself. These areas should be considered archaeologically sensitive in relation to any future developments. On the evidence of the grave found

in the 1970s and the one located in Trench 1 it can be assumed that any other surviving burials will be exceptionally shallow.

5.4 Trench 2 was archaeologically sterile and the occurrence here of a bedrock outcrop means it is unlikely that this area was used for burials. Trench 3 also has a bedrock outcrop at its eastern end. No evidence was found in Trench 3 for the long garden enclosure shown on the First and Second edition OS maps and it must be assumed that this feature has been completely removed.



Fig.14. Newhouse graveyard showing probable archaeological survival and disturbance.

## 6 REFERENCES

Cameron, J. 1904. *History of the Buchanite Delusion 1783-1846*. Dumfries: R G Mann.

Harper, M'L. 1896. *Rambles in Galloway*. Dalbeattie.

Train, J. 1846. *The Buchanites: from First to Last*. Edinburgh.

## 7 APPENDIX 1 - Record Summaries

### Trench 1

Context/feature	Description
01	Small stones/gravel in black soil matrix. Probably modern drive surfacing. Overlies 02 and probably F03/04.
02	Black soil with occasional stones. A mixed garden and top soil; 0.12m deep at E and increasing to 0.30m deep at W. Overlain by 01, cut by F03, and seals F09 and 11. Relationship with 05 and F06 unclear.
F03	Cut for pipe trench. Filled by 04, cuts 11.
04	Black grey soil with frags of salt-glazed drain. Fill of F03.
05	Cement surface. Associated with modern drain F06.
F06	Cut for modern drain trench. Filled by 07, cuts 08, F09 and 11.
07	Compact dark grey soil. Fill of F06.
08	Grey clay, cut by F06. Possible natural – continuation of 11.
F09	Grave cut, 1.10m x 0.50m. Sealed by 02, cut by F06, cuts 11.
10	Black soil with patches of orange grey clay around extended human burial; fill of grave F09. Sealed by 02 and truncated to E by F06.
11	Natural mineral soil. Interleaved lenses of gravel with orange and grey clay and zones of angular stone. Surface with 02 noticeably stoney.

### Trench 2

Context/feature	Description
019	Black soil, up to 0.25m deep, with gravel top (remnant of drive surface?).
021	Grey clay with gravel lenses, probably natural mineral soil and comparable with 08 and 11 in Trench 1 and 33 in Trench 3. Sealed by 19 and abuts bedrock.
bedrock	Outcrop of vertically bedded grey shales. Sealed by 019.

### Trench 3

Context/feature	Description
30	Black loam/top soil. Increases in depth to N and has maximum depth of 0.35m. Seals 31, F32, 33 and bedrock.
31	Black soil with orange clay patches and occ. Roots. Fill of F32
F32	Cut for irregular, pit-like feature (tree-throw?). Small excavation at W edge suggests shallow sloping cut. Sealed by 30, filled by 31 and cuts 33.
33	Grey-orange clay with angular stone lenses. Natural mineral soil, comparable with 11 in Trench 1 and 20 in Trench 2. Cut by F32 and abuts shattered bedrock.
bedrock	Outcrop of shattered, vertically bedded shale. Sealed by 30 and abuts 33.

### 9 APPENDIX 2 – Site Photographs (digital images in site archive)

No	Description	From	Date
NH 1	Pre-excavation view of back (N face) of Newhouse	N	30.03.2016
NH 2	Front of Newhouse	SE	“
NH 3	Pre-excavation view of area evaluated in Trenches 1 and 2	E	“
NH 4	Trench 1	E	“
NH 5	Trench 1 - grave F09. Head to W (right of image)		“
NH 6	Trench 1 – N facing section with pipe trench F03	N	“
NH 7	Trench 1 – grave F09 in front of scale.	W	“
NH 8	Trench 1 – grave F09 cut by trench F06	W	“
NH 9	Trench 1 – grave F09	N	“
NH 10	Trench 2	W	“
NH 11	Trench 2	E	“
NH 12	Trench 3 – showing F32	N	“
NH 13	Trench 3 – showing F32	S	“
NH 14	Trench 3 – N facing section, shattered bedrock to E (left)	N	“



## 10 APPENDIX 3 – Entry for Discovery & Excavation in Scotland 2016

Local authority: Dumfries and Galloway

Parish: Urr

Site name: Newhouse, Crocketford

Name of contributor: John Pickin

Type of project: evaluation

Name of organisation:

NGR: NX 8298 7288

Report: A pre-determination evaluation was undertaken to locate a burial ground associated with members of the Buccanite sect who lived and were buried at Newhouse between 1808 and 1846. Three trenches were excavated and one, close to the north-west side of the house, exposed a shallow grave which had been truncated to the south by a service trench. The grave lay within the area of a small square enclosure shown on the Second Edition OS map. It is likely that much of the graveyard was destroyed by the construction of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century extension at the rear of Newhouse.

Location of report: DGC HER; RCAHMS

Funder: CCM Homes

Contact details of organisation: High Weirston House, Leswalt, Stranraer DG9 0RQ