

Tarth Siphon, Blyth Bridge Watching Brief Phase 2 Data Structure Report

On Behalf of:	Scottish Water
National Grid Reference (NGR):	NT 129 447 - NT 128 455 - NT 132 463
AOC Project No:	21793
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Abstract

This report presents the results of phase two of an archaeological watching brief on the groundbreaking works associated with upgrading the Talla Aquaduct at Blyth Bridge, Scottish Borders (NT 129 447 - NT 128 455 - NT 132 463).

Phase one of the project was carried out in 2011 and involved the excavation of 20 test pits which revealed no significant archaeological remains or artefacts. This second phase required the stripping of topsoil from a 20 m wide track over a distance of 3.5km for the construction of a way-leave. An archaeological watching brief was conducted on all ground breaking works associated with this project.

The area was mostly free of any significant archaeological features or artefacts producing only four unstratified finds of struck chert to the north of the project and a single isolated cut feature discovered to the south of the TARTH Burn. This feature was a probable stone lined charcoal making pit, partially revetted into the hill-slope.

Further post-excavation analyses may be required.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 An archaeological Watching Brief was required by Scottish Water during further ground breaking works ahead of the Tarth Siphon works, an upgrade of the Talla Aqueduct, along the western side of Blyth Bridge, Scottish Borders (NT 129 447 - NT 128 455 - NT 132 463) (Figure 1). The development area lies within the administrative area of Scottish Borders Council, who are advised on archaeological matters by Dr Christopher Bowles, Scottish Borders Council Archaeology Officer. The archaeological works are required and are in accordance with *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government 2010) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning & Archaeology* (Scottish Government 2011).

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The development area cuts across stretches of open farmland to the west of Blyth Bridge beginning at NT 129 447 and heading towards NT 128 455, and finishing at NT 132 463.

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 The development area lies within an area of open farmland, and a number of significant archaeological sites are noted in the area. To the west of the village of Kirkud the southern end of the new pipeline runs close to two important sites, firstly Castlecraig Temporary Roman Camp (NMRS No.NT14SW 46) whilst a little further to the north lies the Scheduled Ancient Monument, West Mains Enclosure (SAM No.3256). Further to the west lies another large probable prehistoric enclosure at Netherurd (NMRS No NT14SW 93). To the north of the pipeline where it passes Blyth Bank the route of the pipeline takes it within 250 m of Blyth Hill Camp, another Scheduled Ancient Monument, (SAM No.2990).

1.3.2 Given this density of prehistoric enclosures and the Roman temporary camp there was a possibility of discrete artefact finds as well as the possibility of *in situ* associated or contemporary features being disturbed by the ground investigation works.

1.3.3 AOC have previously monitored a series of test pits associated with the pipeline (AOC 2011). No significant archaeological remains were noted during these works.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of the archaeological Watching Brief were:

- i) to safeguard the archaeological resource that may be disturbed by the proposed ground breaking works associated with the pipeline;
- ii) to liaise with Scottish Borders Council and the client, in the event of significant archaeological features and/or small finds being unearthed, as to the most

appropriate response in safeguarding these features either by preservation *in situ*, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording.

- iii) to report on the results of the Watching Brief.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Groundbreaking work involved the excavation of a 20m wide trench to a depth of around 0.10 m - 0.5 m along the 3.5 km stretch of the development area. Work was carried out using a tracked 360 machine equipped with a 2.0 m wide smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All works were supervised by an experienced field archaeologist.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The monitoring of the ground-breaking works took place between 28th February and the 19th March 2014. The excavations were conducted in varied weather conditions, commonly with both sunny spells and rain showers. However, archaeological visibility was generally good. The data gathered is presented as a series of appendices:

- i) Appendix 1 contains the Photographic Register;
- ii) Appendix 2 contains the Context register;
- iii) Appendix 3 contains the Sample register;
- iv) Appendix 4 contains the Finds register;
- v) Appendix 5 contains the Drawings register;
- vi) Appendix 6 reproduces the '*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*' entry

4.2 The Watching Brief

- 4.2.1 The ground breaking works began on the north side of Tarth Burn and progressed northwards where around 0.3m of dark brown sandy humic topsoil was removed. This revealed a natural subsoil of red silt, clay and gravel. The natural subsoil was occasionally cut by animal burrows and stone or ceramic field drains (orientated from the Northeast to the Southwest). No archaeological features were revealed (plate1). Although no archaeological features were uncovered four pieces of struck chert including two flakes, a chunk and a bladelet were recovered as un-stratified surface finds.



Plate 1: Post excavation view of a section of trench to the north of the TARTH Burn

4.2.2 Further work to the south of the TARTH Burn revealed similar deposits of topsoil and subsoil and the discovery of a large shallow circular stone lined pit [004] (plate 2). The pit measured 1.5m in diameter and was partially revetted within the hill-slope. The pit was dry-stone lined with numerous, close fitting, unbounded, sub-angular sandstones [006-007] The pit cut [005] ranged from 0.10 m to 0.20 m in depth and was covered by a 0.10 m deposit of colluvial hill-wash (003). Within the pit the colluvium covered a 0.10 m deep deposit of organic silt [008] filled with substantial chunks of burnt tree branches and charcoal. Initial interpretation of the feature suggest the feature is a probable charcoal making pit, although this awaits further conformation of samples taken. No other significant deposits were found to the south of the TARTH Burn.



Plate 2: Fire Pit [004]

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The onsite works are now complete and despite the huge area monitored, little archaeological material was identified. However, the presence of unstratified prehistoric artefacts and the isolated pit demonstrate that the area was occupied in some form in prehistory. Although no more onsite works are required, Dr. Bowles may require further analysis of the finds and isolated feature.

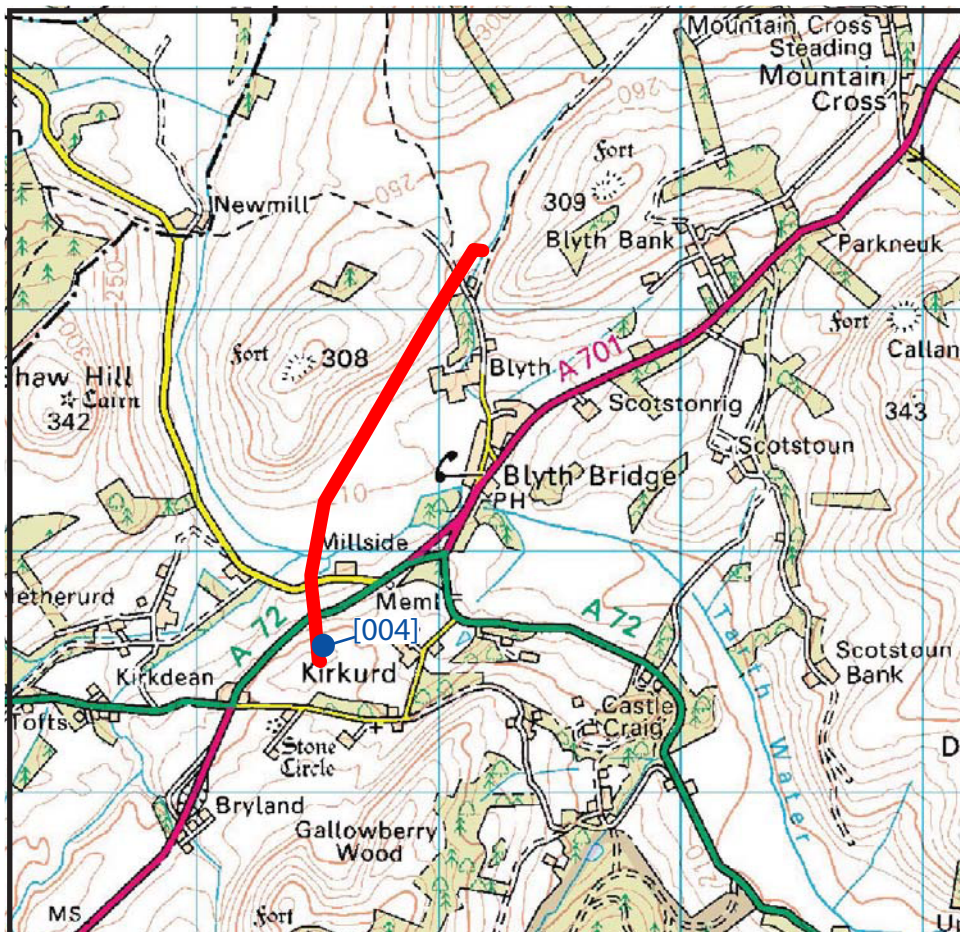
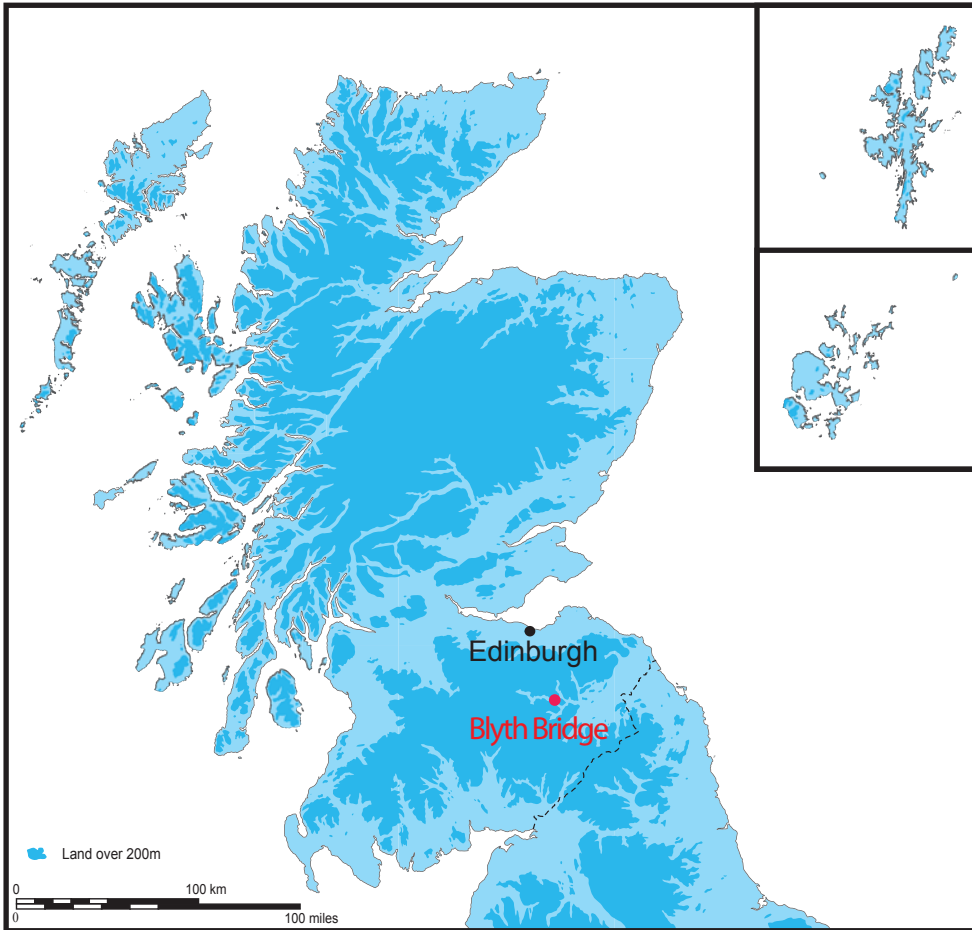
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Figure 1: Area of Monitored Topsoil Strip

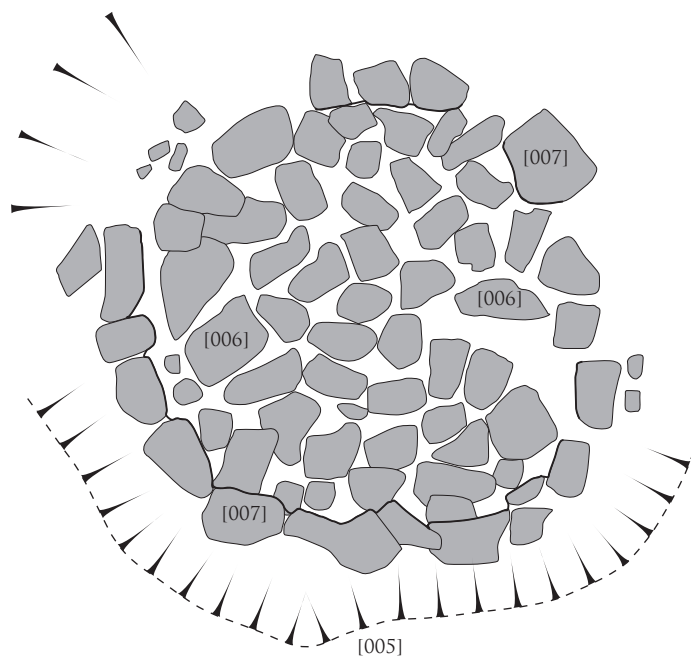


FIG 2: PLAN OF CHARCOAL PIT [004]



Tarth Siphon, Blyth Bridge: Watching Brief (Phase 2) Report

Section 2: Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Record

Digital Photography

Frame	Description	From
1	Registration shot	-
2	General shot of strip from S to NW	S
3	General shot of strip from S to NE	S
4	General shot of strip from E	E
5	Field drain	S
6	General post-excavation shots field 3	E
7	General post-excavation shots field 3	E
8	General post-excavation shots field 2/3	E
9	Working shot field 4	SW
10	Post ex shot of field 5	E
11	Working shot of field 5	W
12	Working shot of field 6	E
13	Working shot of top-soil stripping south of Tarth Water	
14-18	Charcoal making pit [004] post-excavation	S-E-N- W
19	Working shot of top-soil stripping close to Tarth Water	S

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context	Description
001	Topsoil of dark brown sand with roots and plant activity Topsoil.
002	Natural subsoil of red silty clay and gravel. Natural.
003	Colluvium of silty brown clay. Colluvium.
004	Dry stone bonded, rock lined fire pit. Diameter 1.50 m, 0.10 -0.20 m deep Composed of : Cut [005], Base[006], sides [007] and fill [008] Possibly prehistoric Structure
005	Cut for fire pit. Only visible on south side of feature. 1.50 m in diameter, 0.20 m deep. Cut into slope of hill. Cut of pit.
006	Base stones of fire pit [004]. 1.1m in diameter at base. Sub-angular rocks average size 0.15m x 0.17m, placed concentrically. Abuts side stones [007]. Structure
007	Side stones of fire pit [004]. Sub-angular rocks average size 0.20 m x 0.24 m. Abuts base stones [006] Structure
008	Medium grey/brown silty clay with pieces of charred branch and large chunks of charcoal. 0.10 m deep Fill of pit [006]

APPENDIX 3: Sample Register

Context	Volume
(008)	30 litres

APPENDIX 4: Finds Register

No.	Context	Description
1	u/s	Chert Flake
2	u/s	Chert Chunk
3	u/s	Chert Flake
4	u/s	Chert Blade

APPENDIX 5: Drawing Register

No.	Description	Scale
1	Plan of charcoal making pit [004]	1:10

APPENDIX 6: 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland' Report

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Scottish Borders Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME	Watching Brief (phase 2) Tarth Siphon, Blyth Bridge, Scottish Borders
PROJECT CODE:	AOC 21793
PARISH:	Newlands
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Rob Engl & Nicholas Johnstone
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S)	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NT 129 447 - NT 128 455 - NT 132 463
START DATE (this season)	28 th February 2014
END DATE (this season)	19 th March 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	Phase 1 trial pit watching 2011
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>This report presents the results of phase two of an archaeological watching brief on the groundbreaking works associated with upgrading the Talla Aquaduct at Blyth Bridge, Scottish Borders (NT 129 447 - NT 128 455 - NT 132 463).</p> <p>Phase one of the project was carried out in 2011 and involved the excavation of 20 test pits which revealed no significant archaeological remains or artefacts. This second phase required the stripping of topsoil from a 20m wide track over a distance of 3.5km for the construction of a way-leave. An archaeological watching brief was conducted on all ground breaking works associated with this project.</p> <p>The area was mostly free of any significant archaeological features or artefacts producing only four unstratified finds of struck chert to the north of the project and a single isolated cut feature discovered to the south of the Tarth Burn. This feature was a probable stone line charcoal making pit, partially revetted into the hill-slope</p>
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