

Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray: Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report

AOC Project 23467
6th June 2016



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray: Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report

On Behalf of: Grissan Portside Ltd.

National Grid Reference (NGR): NJ 38930 63324

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This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in relation to the construction of an Aerobic Digestion Plant at Port Gordon Malting, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray (NGR: NJ 38930 63324).

The evaluation required an initial 7-10% trenching sample of the proposed 1.0 hectare development area. The area is situated on the south facing slope of a low rise and is currently used as open agricultural land. The total trenching undertaken amounted to 700 linear metres.

Two shallow linear ditches were recorded within several trenches. These were aligned south-west to north-east across the development area. It is likely that the features are the truncated remains of boundary ditches.

No further on site works are required. This will be decided by Ms Claire Herbert of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service who advises Aberdeenshire Council on archaeological matters.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Grissan Portside Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation in association with their planning application (Ref no 16/00353/App) for the erection of an Anaerobic Digestion Plant situated immediately to the west of the existing Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray (NGR: NJ 38930 63324).

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in order to satisfy the requirements of the local planning authority, Moray Council, who are advised on archaeological matters by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (ACAS). The works were conducted according to the terms of a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (AOC 2016) approved by ACAS on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council and in accordance with the principles set out in *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government 2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning & Archaeology* (Scottish Government 2011).

1.1.3 The evaluation revealed two shallow linear ditch features which crossed the development area and were aligned south-west to north-east. It is likely that the ditches are the truncated remains of former field boundaries and are possibly prehistoric in date.

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The site is centred on NGR: NJ 38930 63324 and extends to one hectare, with an altitude of between 29m AOD and 30m AOD. It is currently open pasture land, bordered by the Portgordon Maltings to the east, an arable field to the south and a field under pasture to the north and west (Figure 1).

1.3 Development Background

1.3.1 The need for and scope of archaeological works has been determined by Moray Council who are advised on archaeological matters by Claire Herbert, the Archaeological Advisor to The Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (ACAS) under a Service Level Agreement (Planning Ref: APP/16/00353). A recommended negative suspensive planning condition stated that archaeological works' *should take the form of archaeological trial trenching evaluation of 7-10% of the total proposed development site to be monitored by a suitable qualified archaeological contractor, the results of which will be used to inform whether further mitigation is required*

1.4 Archaeological Background (summarised from Environmental Assessment prepared by Mott Macdonald 2016)

1.4.1 Context

1.4.1.1 The proposed development site is located in open pasture within a wider landscape dominated by agriculture with a mixture of arable and pastoral use. Portgordon Maltings is located east of the proposed development site. The small town of Portgordon lies approximately 655m north of the proposed development area and Core Burn runs to the south on a north west south east alignment.

1.4.2 Prehistoric Evidence (-AD 43)

1.4.2.1 The site is partially located within an area of prehistoric cropmarks. These cropmarks are interpreted in the Moray SMR as pits, ring ditches, and linear ditches. The Moray SMR entry concludes that the cropmarks are a probable indicator of an unenclosed settlement (Moray SMR). These cropmarks are part of a series of cropmarks which have been identified within the wider area which include ring ditches, rectilinear enclosures, pits and linear cropmarks including two areas of probable Iron Age activity approximately 900m west of the AD Scheme site comprising sub-rectilinear enclosures, with entrances and internal features, ring ditches and two souterrains.

1.4.2.2 Cowiemuir stone circle the remains of a prehistoric burial cairn which may have been surrounded by a stone circle is located approximately 1.7km west of the site.

1.4.3 Roman and Early Historic Evidence (AD 43 – AD 1100)

1.4.3.1 There is no known Roman evidence within the site. The Roman Camp Gate a possible Roman marching camp is located approximately 3.3km south west of the site. If this is indeed a Roman camp it would likely date to the campaign of 84AD.

1.4.4 Medieval Evidence (AD1100 - AD 1560)

1.4.4.1 No Medieval remains or artefacts are recorded within the site. The Mains of Tannachy is located 410m north west of the site. Although the current farmstead is of post medieval date the farm is suspected to be the location of the medieval manor of Tannachy. It is likely the site formed part of the land farmed from the mains.

1.4.5 Post-medieval and Modern Evidence (AD 1560-)

1.4.5.1 Historic maps dating from the 16th century onwards provide no evidence to suggest that the site has ever undergone any development. It is considered likely that the area has been used for either pasture or arable production since the medieval period.

1.4.5.2 During the post-medieval period the site was part of the lands of Tannachy in the parish of Rathven Banffshire belonging to George Steuart, Esq. Tannachy House was built immediately south of the site in the mid-18th century. The house included two groups of buildings and formal gardens separated by Core Burn although Ordnance Survey maps from the 19th and 20th century show that the grounds never extended into the site.

1.4.5.3 Portgordon, the closest village to the site, was created by the 4th Duke of Gordon in 1797 after years of discord between Gordon and Dunbar over fishing rights in nearby Buckie. The village was founded as a small fishing community but later became central to the export of grain and the import of salt and coal.

1.4.6 Aerial Photographic Evidence

1.4.6.1 Aerial photographs of the site and the surrounding area held by the Moray SMR reveal crop-marks within fields currently used for agriculture. An area of these crop-marks (SMR Ref. NJ36SE0031), identified by Moray SMR, extend to within the site. After originally discovering a ring ditch in the field further features were identified in July 2010. These included pits, additional ring ditches, and linear crop-marks. The Moray SMR entry concludes that the crop-marks are a probable indicator of an unenclosed prehistoric settlement (Moray SMR).

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were:

- i) to determine and assess the character, extent, condition, quality, date and significance of any buried archaeological remains within the proposed development area;
- ii) to advise and implement an appropriate form of mitigation, such as excavation, post-excavation analyses and publication given the infeasibility of preserving the archaeological material *in situ*, should significant archaeological remains be encountered.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The evaluation was undertaken by a single tracked excavator equipped with 2.2 m wide ditching bucket. Excavation was undertaken until natural was reached. Twelve trenches were excavated and all were 50 m in length. All machine excavation was supervised by an experienced field archaeologist and according to AOC Archaeology Group's standard operating procedures, and as per the methodology within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (AOC 2016).



Plate 1: Development area from north-west

4 RESULTS

- 4.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 2nd – 3rd June 2016. Weather conditions were settled and fine and good archaeological visibility was present throughout. A total of 700 linear metres was achieved.



Plate 2: Linear Ditch feature [101] from east



Plate 3: Linear ditch feature [203] from east

- 4.2 The evaluation trenches revealed an improved plough-soil of light, friable sandy loam. This contained occasional shards of 19th century glass and ceramics. The top-soil ranged from 0.30 m to 0.60 m metres in depth. The top-soil immediately overlay a colluvial deposit of red/brown silt. This ranged from 0.05 m to 0.20 m in depth. The drift geology consisted of free draining sands with occasional patches of gravel clay. Extensive bioturbation of the natural was observed in the form of numerous animal burrows, tree throws and root activity. It is likely that the area had been previously covered by scrub or light woodland prior to coming under cultivation. Intensive modern plough scarring was evident in the majority of the excavated trenches.
- 4.3 A linear ditch feature [101-701] was revealed in Trenches 1-7. This feature was aligned south-west to north-east across the development area. The ditch ranged from 0.75 m to 0.90 m in width, with a depth of 0.20 m and had gently sloping sides and a rounded base. The ditch feature was filled by a deposit of relatively loose, dark brown, sandy silt. This appeared to be sterile and no small finds were recovered during excavation. A smaller linear ditch feature set on the same alignment was recorded within Trenches 2, 3 & 4. This feature was set 2.5 m to the north of ditch [101-107] and is the probable re-cutting of the same boundary line. As with the previous feature the linear ditch had a shallow rounded profile and was filled by a sterile deposit of dark brown sandy silt. The ditch ranged from 0.55 m to 0.65 m wide, with a depth of 0.20 m. It appeared that both of the linear features were overlaid by the colluvial deposit.
- 4.4 It is probable that the linear ditches represent boundary features, possibly associated with the surrounding crop-marks shown to exist within the wider area. As no diagnostic material was recovered from the features they are undated, so could relate to any period.
- 4.5 No other archaeologically significant features or materials were observed during the evaluation.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 With the exception of the two linear ditch features the evaluation revealed no archaeologically significant features or remains.
- 5.2 Given the findings produced by the evaluation further archaeological works in the form of a short programme of post-excavation may be required. The main aim of the post excavation analysis would be to obtain a general date for the excavated features. This will be decided by Ms Claire Herbert of Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service (ACAS) who advises Moray Council on archaeological matters.

6 REFERENCES

AOC Archaeology 2016, *Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray: Archaeological Evaluation Written Scheme of Investigation* Unpublished AOC project design

Mott MacDonald 2016, *Portgordon Malting Anaerobic Digestion Scheme Environmental Assessment - Historic Environment* Unpublished Environmental Assessment

Scottish Government 2014 *Scottish Planning Policy*, 2014

Scottish Government 2011 *Planning And Archaeology 2/2011*

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Section 2: Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Trench Descriptions

Trench 1

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30-0.40 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	N/A
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40-0.50 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Linear ditch at 45m aligned NE-SW
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 2

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.40-0.60 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.15 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.50-0.80 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Two linear ditches at 38.5m & 42m aligned NE-SW
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 3

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.35-0.45 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.15 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.50-0.60 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Two linear ditches aligned NE-SW and NW-SE
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 4

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30-0.50 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10-0.20 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.50-0.60 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Two parallel linear ditches aligned ENE-WSW
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 5

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30-0.50 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.20 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.50-0.70 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Linear ditch aligned NE-SW

<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 6

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.40-0.55 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.15-0.20 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.60-0.70 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Linear ditch aligned NE-SW
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 7

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30-0.50 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10-0.20 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40-0.65 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Linear ditch aligned E-W
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Orange sands heavily bioturbated with numerous animal burrows
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 8

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	E to W
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.25-0.30 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.05-0.10 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.30-0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	N/A
<i>Other Features</i>	Numerous modern plough scars
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Yellow to orange sands with frequent roots and bioturbation
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 9

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	E to W
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	N/A
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Yellow to orange sands with frequent roots and bioturbation
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 10

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	NE to SW
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10-0.15 m

<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40-0.45 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Two site investigation pits
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Yellow to orange sands with frequent roots and bioturbation
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 11

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	N to S
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	N/A
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Yellow to orange sands with frequent roots and bioturbation
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

Trench 12

<i>Dimensions</i>	50 m by 2.2 m
<i>Excavated Orientation</i>	E to W
<i>Top-soil</i>	0.30 m
<i>Old Plough soil</i>	0.10 m
<i>Depth of Excavation</i>	0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	N/A
<i>Other Features</i>	N/A
<i>Natural Subsoil</i>	Yellow to orange sands with frequent roots and bioturbation
<i>Finds</i>	N/A

APPENDIX 2: Photographic Register

Digital Photographs

Frame	Description	From
1	Registration shot	-
2-3	Pre ex shots	VAR
4	Post ex shot of Trench 1	S
5	W Facing section of Trench 1	W
6	E Facing section of slot through linear ditch [101]	E
7	Post ex shot of Trench 2	S
8-12	E Facing section of slot through linear ditch [201]	E
13-16	E Facing section of slot through linear ditch [203]	E
17-18	General shots of linears [201] and [203]	S
19-20	Post ex shot of Trench 3	S
21	General shots of linears [301] and [303]	S
22-23	Post ex shot of Trench 4	S
24	General shots of linears [401] and [402]	S
25	Post ex shot of Trench 5	S
26	General shots of linear [501]	S
27-28	Post ex shot of Trench 6	S
29-30	General shots of linear [601]	S
31	Post ex shot of Trench 7	S
32	General shots of linear [701]	S
33-34	Post ex shot of Trench 8	W
35	Post ex shot of Trench 9	W
36	Post ex shot of Trench 10	SW
37	Post ex shot of Trench 11	W
38	Post ex shot of Trench 12	SW

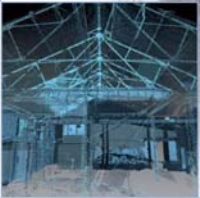
APPENDIX 3: Context Record

Context	Description	Trench
[101]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on SE-SW alignment. Measured 2.47m x 0.9m x 0.20m. Uneven gradual steep sides meeting at a flat base	1
(102)	Ditch Fill. Moderate loose compact grey/brown silty sand with very infrequent stone inclusions	1
[201]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on NE-SW alignment, Measured 2.1m x 0.75m x 0.13m. Sharp top break of slope with near vertical sides meeting at a flat base.	2
(202)	Ditch Fill. Similar to [102] but slightly greyer in colour.	2
[203]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch. Measured 2.2m x 0.65m x 0.20m	2
(204)	Ditch Fill. Mixed black silt and brown sandy silt with very infrequent small stones	2

[301]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on NE-SW alignment. Measured 1.9m x0.9m	3
(302)	Ditch Fill – same as [202].	3
[303]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch. Measured 2.2m x 0.55m	3
(304)	Ditch Fill. Mixed black silt and brown sandy silt with very infrequent small stones	3
[401]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on ENE – WSW alignment. Measured 2m x1.5 m	4
(402)	Ditch Fill. Mid brown sandy silt	4
[403]	Ditch Cut. Linear on ENE – WSW alignment. Measured 2.2m x 0.55m	4
(404)	Ditch Fill. Mid brown sandy silt	4
[501]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on NE-SW alignment. Measured 2m x 0.6m	5
(502)	Ditch Fill. Mid brown sandy silt -same as [102]	5
[601]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on ENE-WSW alignment. Measured 1.9m x 0.95m.	6
(602)	Ditch Fill. Same as [102] with black friable upper fill on surface	6
[701]	Ditch Cut. Linear ditch on E-W alignment. Measured 1.8m x 0.7m	7
(702)	Ditch Fill. Same as [102].	7

APPENDIX 4: 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland' Report

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Moray Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME	Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray
PROJECT CODE:	AOC 23476
PARISH:	Rathven
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Rob Engl
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Evaluation
NRHE NO(S)	N/A
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	'Linear ditch features'
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NJ 38930 63324
START DATE (this season)	2 nd June 2016
END DATE (this season)	3 rd June 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in relation to an application to erect an Anaerobic Digestion Plant at Portgordon Maltings, Portgordon, Buckie, Moray (NJ 38930 63324).</p> <p>The evaluation required an initial 7-10% trenching sample of the proposed 1.0 hectare development area. The area is situated on the south facing slope of a low rise and is currently used as open agricultural land. The total trenching undertaken amounted to 700 linear metres.</p> <p>Trenching revealed a heavily bioturbated drift geology of yellow to orange sands. Numerous plough scars and shallow tree throws were identified. A deposit of red/brown colluvial silt occurred across the site. This ranged from 0.10 m to 0.30 m in depth. The development area was overlain by an improved plough-soil of organic sandy clay loam. No interface was observed between the topsoil and the subsoil</p> <p>Two shallow linear ditches were recorded within several trenches. These were aligned south-west to north-east across the development area. It is likely that the features are the truncated remains of boundary ditches of possible prehistoric date.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	---
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Grissan Portside Ltd.
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Edgefield Road Industrial Estate, Loanhead, Midlothian, EH20 9SY
EMAIL ADDRESS:	admin@aocarchaeology.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NRHE



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