

Erection of a New House Balormie, Lossiemouth Archaeological Controlled Topsoil Strip

AOC Project Number: 23666
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ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

Erection of a New House

Site adjacent to Balormie, Lossiemouth

Archaeological Controlled Topsoil Strip

Data Structure Report

On Behalf of:	Grant and Geoghegan for Mr Neil and Mrs Diane George
Planning Reference	16/00356/APP
National Grid Reference (NGR):	NJ 2150 6800 (centred)
AOC Project No:	23666
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This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Contents

	Page
Abstract	3
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Project Background	4
1.2 Site Location and Description	4
1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background	4
2 Methodology	5
2.1 Aims and Objectives	6
2.2 Controlled Topsoil Strip	7
3 Results	7
3.1 Controlled Topsoil Strip	6
4 Conclusion and Recommendations	8
5 References	11

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location map of the site

List of Plates

- Plate 1: Pre-excavation image of the site
- Plate 2: Context 003, possible vegetation clearance
- Plate 3: Black mottling in bright orange sand
- Plate 4: Black mottling within bright orange sand and context 003
- Plate 5: House footprint post-excavation, looking NW
- Plate 6: House footprint post-excavation, looking NNE
- Plate 7: Stripping in progress over the access footprint, looking W

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: List of Site Photographs
- Appendix 2: Context Register

Abstract

An archaeological controlled topsoil strip watching brief was carried out in advance of a new house build on land adjacent to Balormie, Lossiemouth in Moray on behalf of Grant and Geoghegan for Mr Neil and Mrs Diane George. The watching brief was required to determine if any archaeological remains survived within the development area.

Fieldwork was carried on 8th December 2016. The watching brief covered the entire house and access track footprint. No archaeological features were recorded. No further work is recommended.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

A programme of archaeological works was required by Grant and Geoghegan in association with planning application number 16/00356/APP for the erection of a new house and access road on a green field site located on land adjacent to Balormie, Lossiemouth, Moray. A watching brief was specified in keeping with policies outlined in *Scottish Planning Policy* (2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology* (2011) in order to record the extent and significance of any surviving archaeological remains. Planning conditions requiring archaeological works were recommended by Moray Council, who are advised on archaeological matters by the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The development site lies at NJ 2150 6800 (centred), on the east side of an unclassified road to the south of RAF Lossiemouth (**Figure 1**). The site is situated on level farmland that has been used previously as arable land and for pig herds (**Plate 1**).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The site is situated in the old civil parish of Drainie within a landscape of cropmark sites and 18th and 19th century farm buildings. It lies on the edge of a large area of cropmarks that include pits, a rectilinear enclosure, possible circular enclosure, rigs and field boundaries (Moray SMR NJ26NW0067).
- 1.3.2 To the immediate south of the site is Balormie Farmstead (NHRE No. NJ26NW 85). Further afield, to the west lies the site of an 18th century dovecot (Moray SMR NJ26NW0027), which was destroyed to below ground level in the early 1930s.
- 1.3.3 To the south there are further cropmarks described as ring-ditch roundhouses (Moray SMR NJ26NW0021), whilst to the northwest are cropmarks of pits, field boundaries, an enclosure and a ring-ditch (Moray SMR NJ26NW0066).
- 1.3.4 On Roy's Military Map of the Highlands (1747-52), *Ballormy* is depicted as a small township with a cultivated area to the northeast on the north side of *Loch Spinae*. Balormie farmhouse, and the development site, is shown on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile 1st edition (Elgin Sheet II.16 (Drainie)) map as sitting within arable farmland. This has not changed by the time of the 2nd edition map (Elginshire 002.16 (includes Drainie)).



Plate 1: Pre-excitation image of site

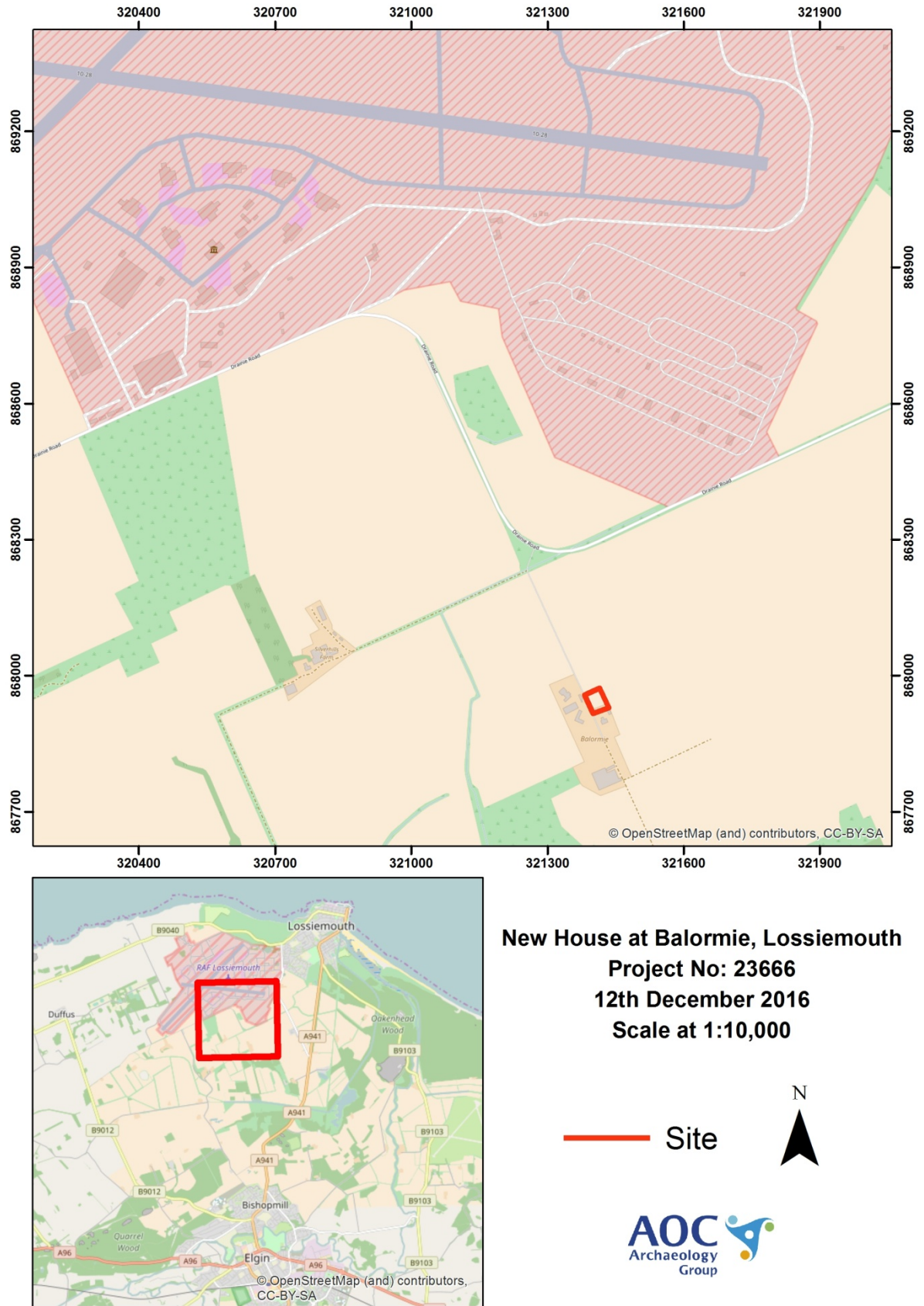


Figure 1: Location map of the site

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Aims and Objectives

The methodology for this project has been based upon a Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC Archaeology Group 2016) which was submitted to and approved by the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were:

- ❖ To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
- ❖ To remove by hand any overburden in order to expose archaeological deposits
- ❖ To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible
- ❖ To sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating
- ❖ To make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development
- ❖ To make recommendations for post-excavation work

2.2 Controlled Topsoil Strip

2.2.1 The controlled topsoil strip watching brief was conducted on 8th December 2016. The footing for the access road and house site, an area of approximately 260m², was stripped under the supervision of an archaeologist. Stripping was carried out by a mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.2m wide straight-edge bucket.

2.2.2 The trench was excavated in spits down to the natural subsoil and recorded to AOC's standard operating procedures.

3.0 Results

3.1 Controlled Topsoil Strip

3.1.1 The watching brief demonstrated a moderately deep plough horizon: 0.60m at the southern end of the development area descending slightly to 0.80 m at the northern end. The underlying subsoil comprised mainly mid to dark orange sand containing few stones. There were some patches of iron pan approximately midway in the trench. At the northwest corner of the trench, the sand became bright orange with black mottling and was extremely compact; this was in contrast to the northeast corner that was a pale greyish yellow and extremely spongy (**Plates 2, 3 and 7**).

3.1.2 There were no archaeological features recorded. A sub-circular dark patch (**Plate 4 and 6**) was recorded and excavated. It comprised dark brown to black sandy loam; two pieces of charcoal were observed. The half section removed showed that there was no definition to the edges of the deposit, although it extended to a depth of only 0.10m within the subsoil. It appeared as a scoop rather than a pit and it was interpreted as potentially related to vegetation burning/clearance. A mottled black deposit (**Plates 4 and 5**) was also noted at the northern end of the trench, however there was no charcoal evident and nothing to suggest it was of archaeological interest.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 4.1 Despite sitting within a wider landscape of archaeological activity as evidenced by the proliferation of cropmarks in the area, the site itself did not reveal any archaeological activity.
- 4.2 There are no recommendations for further work.



Plate 2: Context 003, possible vegetation clearance

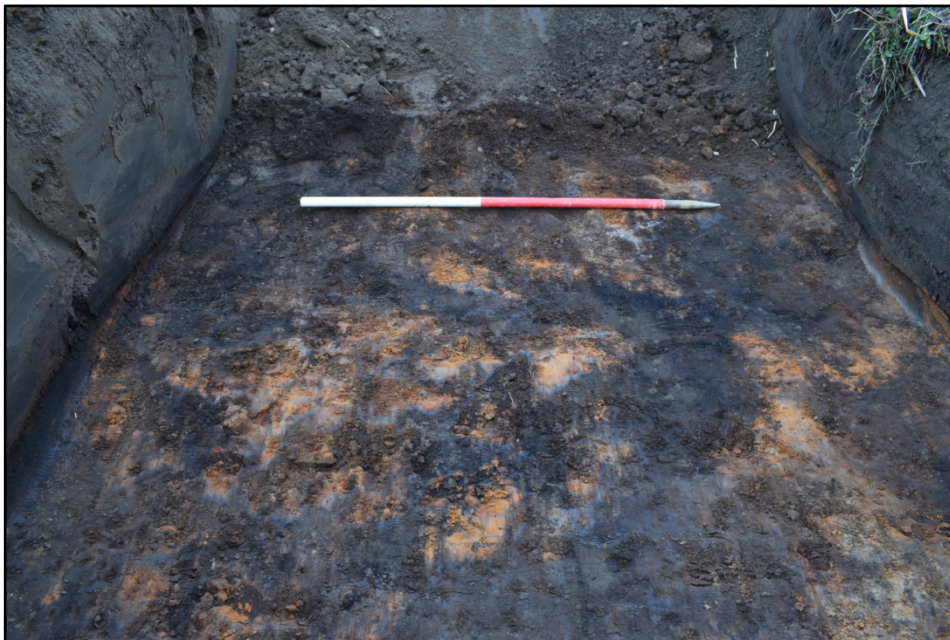


Plate 3: Black mottling in bright orange sand



Plate 4: Black mottling within bright orange sand and context 003



Plate 5: House footprint post-excavation, looking NW



Plate 6: House footprint post-excavation, looking NNE



Plate 7: Stripping in progress over the access footprint, looking W

5.0 References

AOC Archaeology Group 2016. *House Plot at Balormie, Lossiemouth, Moray Controlled Topsoil Strip: Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished client report.

Pastmap 2016. Accessed online on 12th December 2016 at: <http://pastmap.org.uk/>

National Library of Scotland. 2016. Accessed online on 12th December 2016 at: <http://maps.nls.uk>

Scottish Government 2014. *Scottish Planning Policy*.

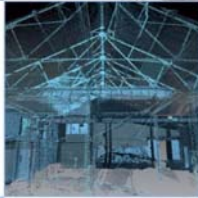
Scottish Government 2011. *Planning and Archaeology 2/2011*

Appendix 1: List of Site Photographs

Photo No.	Direction Facing	Context No.	Description	Initials	Date
1	S - SW		A panorama of the site prior to excavation	LF	08/12/2016
2	WSW	003	A small patch of burning at the trench edge on the W side	LF	08/12/2016
3	NNW		Irregular patches of possible burning	LF	08/12/2016
4	NNW		A wider shot showing both areas of possible burning	LF	08/12/2016
5	NW		Post-excavation shot of the house footprint	LF	08/12/2016
6	NNE		Post-excavation shot of the house footprint	LF	08/12/2016
7	W		Post-excavation shot of the access track	LF	08/12/2016

Appendix 2: Context Register

Context No.	Type	Description	Under	Over	Interpretation
001	Deposit	Mid brown loam approx. 0.60m deep at the south end of the trench and approx. 0.80m deep at the north end		002, 003	Topsoil
002	Deposit	Mid to dark orange sand with few small stones. Some patches of iron pan about mid way down the house trench. At the north end of the trench it becomes bright orange with some black mottling and is extremely compact. In contrast, to the east of this is a greyish yellow extremely spongy area.	001		Subsoil
003	Deposit	A sub-circular patch of dark brown to black sandy loam that continues under the trench edge. It is approx. 0.38m wide at its widest point and 0.28m from its edge to the trench edge. It could be seen to a height of 0.17m in the trench section with it spreading off to the south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.10m. There was no definition to its edges. Two pieces of charcoal were observed.	001	003	Possible vegetation clearance



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