

AMSL/02



# A78, MAIN STREET, LARGS, NORTH AYRSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

commissioned by Scotland TranServ

January 2017



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project info

**HA JOB NO.** AMSL/02  
**NGR** NS 20506 59204 (start);  
NS 20211 59399 (end)  
**PARISH** Largs  
**LOCAL AUTHORITY** North Ayrshire  
**OASIS REF.** Headland1-260353

project team

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

During major resurfacing works along the A78 at Largs, an archaeological watching brief on ground breaking works was required in accordance with Section 6 of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 10. This report presents the findings of the archaeological watching brief.

The programme was undertaken on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th of October 2016 and involved archaeological monitoring of groundworks. The watching brief identified five archaeological features in areas where the surface materials were removed to a deep enough level to expose such elements. The archaeological features comprised a cobbled surface; the possible base of a market cross; an old kerb line; stones from a possible pedestrian walkway; and a patch of lime. The ground works did not penetrate through sub base material, used as road foundations, in the majority of the works scheme and therefore did not impact upon any potentially buried archaeological remains in these areas.

# CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	1
3	SITE DESCRIPTION	1
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
5	METHODOLOGY	2
6	RESULTS	2
7	DISCUSSION	3
8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	3
9	APPENDICES	4
	APPENDIX 1 REGISTERS	4
	APPENDIX 2 DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND ENTRY	5

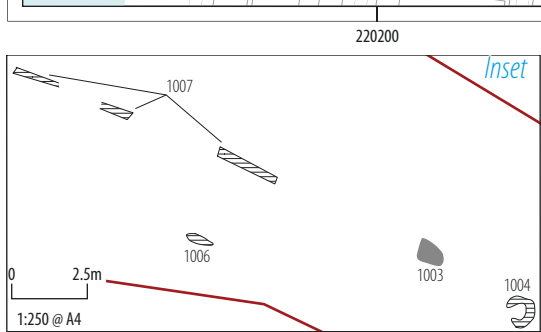
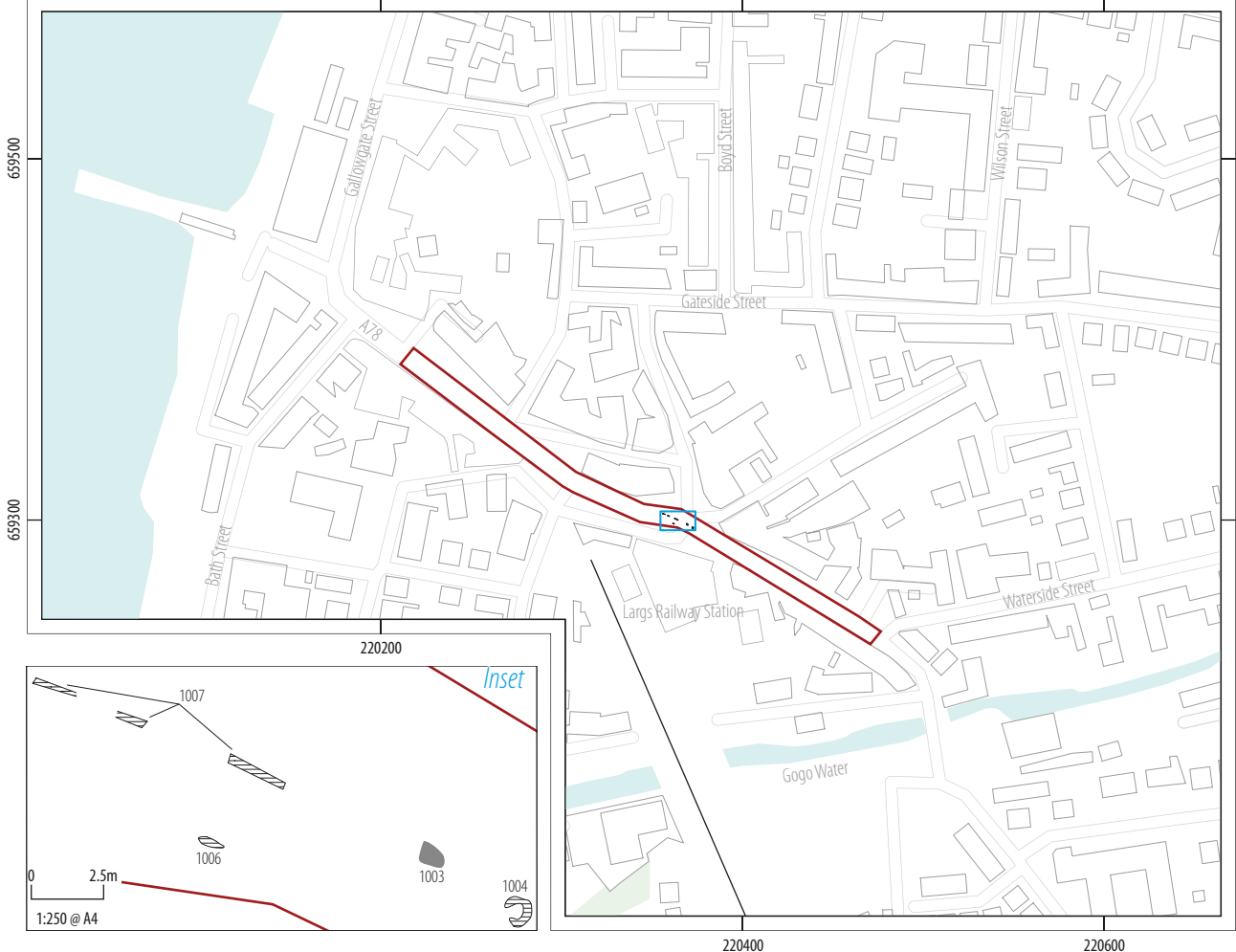
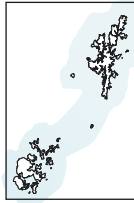
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>ILLUS 1</b> SITE LOCATION	VIII
<b>ILLUS 2</b> SE FACING VIEW OF DISTURBED COBBLES (1005)	2
<b>ILLUS 3</b> NE FACING SECTION IN DEEPENED AREA OF SUB-BASE (1002) SHOWING LEVELING LAYER BELOW COBBLED SURFACE (1005)	2
<b>ILLUS 4</b> N FACING VIEW OF FLAT RING OF STONES (1004) AS POSSIBLE FOUNDATION FOR MARKET CROSS	2
<b>ILLUS 5</b> NE TO SW RUNNING KERB OR GUTTER (1007) OF PREVIOUS ROAD LAYOUT	2
<b>ILLUS 6</b> NORTH FACING VIEW OF LIME DEPOSIT (1003)	2

AMSL/02  
land at west of Waterside Street  
A78 Main Street  
Largs

0 200km  
1:10,000,000 @ A4

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0 80m  
1:4,000 @ A4

- KEY
- development boundary
  - deposits
  - stone surface

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

### 1 INTRODUCTION

A programme of major resurfacing works along the A78 is being undertaken by TranServ (the client). This includes resurfacing along the A78 (Main Street) at Largs. TranServ were advised by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), of the potential for buried sub surface remains along the line of the existing road.

The client commissioned Headland Archaeology to agree a programme of works in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 10, Section 6 and encapsulated in a written scheme of investigation (WSI) (Headland Archaeology 2016b). This report presents the results of the works, undertaken as an archaeological watching brief.

### 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The watching brief aimed to provide further information regarding the archaeological resources which may be present within the scheme of works and to enable appropriate decisions to be reached regarding subsequent planning submissions. The objective of the watching brief was to mitigate any adverse impacts on archaeological material which may be present.

### 3 SITE DESCRIPTION

The scheme is located on the A78, Largs, North Ayrshire. The National Grid reference for the start of the scheme is NS 20506 59204 and the end is NS 20211 59399. The road is one of the main thoroughfares of the town and is the main access to the ferry terminal at the west.

The length of road subject to investigation measured 357m (NW-SE). This area was to be stripped of the upper layer of tarmac and a binder course to reveal the sub base.

At the time of the fieldwork, the affected road was completely closed to public vehicles with diversions set in place to allow access to surrounding roads.

The site lies approximately 5m AOD and is underlain by superficial geology of raised marine deposits of Flandrian age. These overlie sedimentary bedrock formed in the Devonian period (NERC 2016).

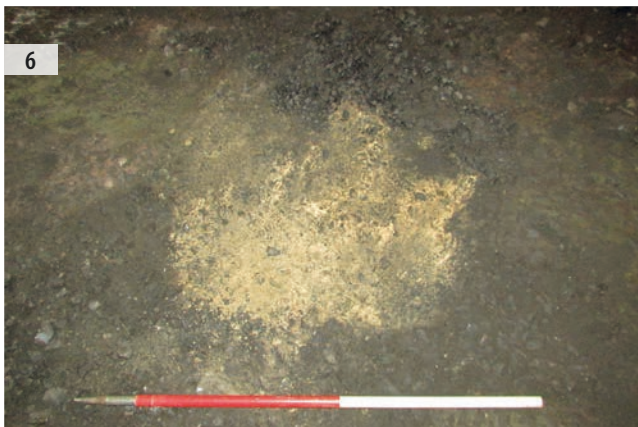
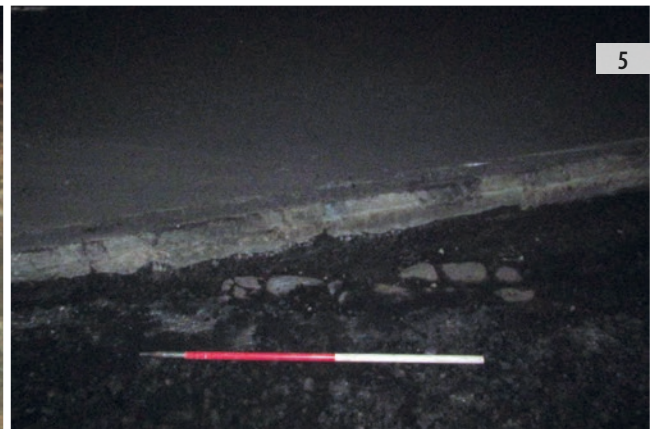
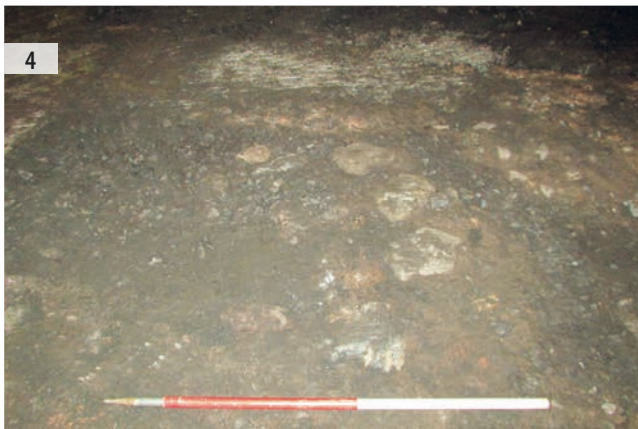
### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in the centre of Largs, which has been identified as an archaeologically sensitive area by WoSAS.

Previous archaeological watching briefs have taken place adjacent to the study area, north of the main road and did not encounter pre-modern activity.

In 2011, an archaeological investigation of two areas within the vicinity of the present scheme, revealed archaeological material (Amey 2011). Area 1 contained artefacts such as ceramics and glass (17th – 19th century) and shellfish debris. This material was associated with the post medieval and modern townscape of the area. A number of small flints were also located within Area 1, with the majority classified as debitage. Several were assessed as possible microliths, which would have been inserted into wood or bone to form tools. These microliths are a possible indication of the presence of Mesolithic hunter gatherers in the area, however, it is possible that the flints were imported from sand located at the coast. Area 2 revealed a cobbles surface, probably of 19th century date. A compact stony layer below the cobbles contained 13th and 14th century pottery and slag.

In August 2016, Headland Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief to mitigate any adverse impacts on archaeological material. This was carried out as during initial site investigation works into the quality of the road foundation, prior to any major ground breaking works. No significant archaeological material was identified during this phase of works (Headland Archaeology 2016a).



**ILLUS 2** SE facing view of disturbed cobbles (1005)    **ILLUS 3** NE facing section in deepened area of sub-base (1002) showing leveling layer below cobbled surface (1005)    **ILLUS 4** N facing view of flat ring of stones (1004) as possible foundation for market cross    **ILLUS 5** NE to SW running kerb or gutter (1007) of previous road layout    **ILLUS 6** North facing view of lime deposit (1003)

## 5 METHODOLOGY

Once the affected area of road was closed to non-construction traffic, the uppermost layer of road surface course (1001) was removed using mechanical planing machines. This revealed the binder course (1001) to the northern and southern area of the road, visible at a depth of approximately 100mm to 150mm. Patches of sub base (1002) were visible in large patches across the site, with the majority present in the vicinity of the roundabout, linking Main Street with Aitken Street and Fraser Street. Deeper excavation of the sub base was undertaken in three areas. This was required to remove areas of soft material which would then be filled with gravel and compacted prior to resurfacing.

An archaeologist was present during these ground breaking works to record any archaeology which may be present. Archaeological material which was identified was recorded on a Trimble DGPS,

attributed a context number and recorded using standard archaeological pro forma record sheets. All photographs were taken using a digital camera.

## 6 RESULTS

Removal of the surface and binder courses to the required depth, revealed patches of sub base (1002) across the site. Within this context, five features of archaeological interest were identified.

Patches of a possible cobbled surface (1005) were present across the extent of the site, but were mainly concentrated in the area of the roundabout. These measured approximately 1m<sup>2</sup> and were visible in areas where sub base had been removed or scraped away.

The cobbles were relatively small at approximately 50mm by 50mm and were roughly square in shape (Illus 2). In the areas where the excavation had deepened through the sub base, a levelling layer of silty sand (1009) was identified underlying the cobbles (Illus 3). The cobbles did not appear to be in situ and would have provided a relatively rudimentary surface when in use.

A flat ring of sub angular stones (1004) measuring 0.9m in diameter was identified in the roundabout area, which connects Main Street to Frazer Street at the north-east and Aitken Street at the north (Illus 4). The western section of the ring was covered by the sub base. Due to the location and form of this feature, it has been assessed as a possible base of a market cross.

To the north-west of the roundabout, a linear feature, comprised of two rows of parallel cobbles (1007), was identified running north-west to south-east over a distance of 10m, and interrupted by a modern traffic island (Illus 5). The alignment of this feature followed the existing pedestrian walkway to the west of the roundabout, and would have connected to the walkway at the south-east had it continued. This suggests that the feature was an old kerb line or gutter for the main street, prior to the layout of the road being altered to accommodate the roundabout linking Aitken Street and Frazer Street.

An area of flat stones (1006) was exposed approximately 5m to the south of (1007), close to the southern kerb. This underlay the sub surface and was visible for 1m in length. It is possible that this was a previous pedestrian surface.

Finally, a small patch of lime (1003) measuring 0.8m<sup>2</sup> was present 2.5m to the north-west of (1004). This substance may have been from a spillage prior to the modern road surface being laid, or may have been mixed into the foundation for the road (Illus 6).

## 7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief identified features on Main Street which are typical of market towns, as Largs once was (Ordnance Survey 1857; Bartholemew 1887). From the 1857 Ordnance Survey, the area known as Hyndman's Green has been described as 'formerly the Market Place', and is located in the area where the concentration of the archaeology was identified. As a result, it is feasible that feature (1004) was in fact the base of a previous market cross, which was out of use by 1855. This would imply that the cross was of medieval or post-medieval in date. This map also shows two dashed lines within Main Street, which may indicate the kerb line. The northern line on this map is aligned with the kerb or gutter (1007) identified in the watching brief, which confirms that it was still in use in the mid-19th century, and is likely to be post-medieval in date. Furthermore, the cobbled surface (1005) is typical of road surfaces through the medieval period and into the twentieth century, and was likely still in use at the time of the 1857 Ordnance Survey.

As large portions of the site retained a layer of sub base and binder course, it is possible that other archaeological features remain below these deposits. The archaeological features recorded are typical of medieval and post medieval market towns, and are of low significance to the archaeological record.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amey UK plc 2011 *A78 Largs Town Centre Archaeological Investigations* [unpublished document] Amey UK plc
- Bartholemew, J 1887 *Gazetteer of the British Isles* [online map] available from <https://maps.nls.uk>
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) 2016 *British Geological Survey* [online] accessed 7 November 2016 from [www.bgs.ac.uk/](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/)
- Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd 2016a *A78, Main Street, Largs, North Ayrshire, Archaeological Watching Brief* [unpublished document] Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (AMSL/01)
- Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd 2016b *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief, A78, Main Street, Largs* [unpublished document] Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (AMSL/02)
- Ordnance Survey 1857 *Ayr Sheet III.12 (Largs)* 1 mile: 25,344 inches, (surveyed 1855) [online map] available from <https://maps.nls.uk>

## 9 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 REGISTERS

#### Appendix 1.1 Context register

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
1000	Surface course: visible road surface
1001	Binder course: bonded material below surface course
1002	Sub-base: foundation material of road surface
1003	Patch of lime
1004	Ring of flat stones located in the centre of the junction of Main Street, Frazer Street and Aitken Street. Potentially foundation for market cross
1005	Cobbles: present in patches across entire area. Not present in setts
1006	Flat stones: possible old road or pedestrian surface
1007	Squared cobbles: probable old kerb line
1008	Levelling layer beneath cobbled surface (1005)
1009	Foundation layer beneath levelling layer (1008)

#### Appendix 1.2 Photo register

PHOTO	DIRECTION	DESCRIPTION
01	NE	Removal of top 100mm of tarmac
02	NE	Removal of top 100mm of tarmac
03	W	Removal of top 100mm of tarmac
04	NE	Machines in action
05	N	Planing area at roundabout
06	N	Patch of lime (1003) in junction area
07	N	Patch of lime (1003) in junction area
08	N	Patch of lime (1003) in junction area
09	N	Flat stones (1004) laid in circle - possible base of market cross
10	N	Flat stones (1004) laid in circle - possible base of market cross
11	S	Cobbled surface (1005) within junction area
12	S	Cobbled surface (1005) within junction area
13	W	Old kerb line cobbles (1007)
14	W	Old kerb line cobbles (1007)
15	N	Old kerb line cobbles (1007)
16	W	Old kerb line cobbles (1007)
17	E	Machines at junction
18	E	Machines at junction

PHOTO	DIRECTION	DESCRIPTION
19	S	Shot of working area at train station
20	NW	Shot of working area looking north-west
21	NW	Shot of south-west side of street being reduced
22	NW	Shot of north-east side of street being reduced
23	SE	Shot of work area from north-west limit of excavation
24	SE	Mid-ex shot of test pit at north-west of site
25	SW	North-east facing section of north-west test pit
26	SE	Post-ex shot of test pit at north-west of site
27	NW	Post-ex shot of test pit at north-west of site
28	NW	Shot of cobbles (1005) on north-east side of road at Greggs
29	S	Shot of excavated area on north-east side of road at Thomas Cook
30	N	Shot of excavated area on north-east side of road at Thomas Cook
31	S	Shot of excavated area on north-east side of road at Thomas Cook
32	NE	View of Pit 1
33	E	View of Pit 2
34	S	View of Pit 3
35	N	Cobbles in compacted gravel - not in situ (south of Pit 3)
36	S	Working shot
37	SW	Working shot
38	SE	View of disturbed cobbles at Pit 3
39	NE	View north-east of roundabout area
40	N	View north of roundabout area
41	NW	View north-west of roundabout area
42	S	View south of roundabout area

## APPENDIX 2 DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND ENTRY

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	North Ayrshire Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	A78, Main Street, Largs
PROJECT CODE:	AMSL16-02
PARISH:	Largs
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Suzanne McGalliard
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	n/a
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	urban
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	none
NGR	NS 20506 59204 – NS 20211 59399
START DATE (THIS SEASON)	7th October 2016
END DATE (THIS SEASON)	8th October 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (INCL. DES REF.)	An archaeological watching brief (16th August) undertaken by Headland Archaeology during a phase of initial site investigation works. This comprised of the excavation of five test pits and 16 cores along the proposed development.
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (MAY INCLUDE INFORMATION FROM OTHER FIELDS)	An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the 7th and 8th of October 2016 by Headland Archaeology in order to mitigate any adverse impacts on archaeological material discovered during major resurfacing works of the A78. Five archaeological features were identified and recorded during the fieldwork: a cobbled surface; a possible base of a market cross; a previous kerb or gutter; a flat stone surface possibly from an old pedestrian walkway; and a patch of lime. The majority of the features were identified in or close to the centre of the development, where the modern roundabout links Main Street with Aitken Street and Frazer Street. This was the main area where the sub surface had been reached and removed in places to reveal underlying features. A large proportion of the development area was not excavated to a deep enough level to breach the sub surface or binder course, therefore, archaeology below these deposits was not identified or impacted by this phase of works.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
ARCHIVE LOCATION (INTENDED/DEPOSITED)	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Scotland Transerv
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	n/a
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