FERNEYHILL TOLL, KELSO, SCOTTISH BORDERS

Evaluation

for Scottish Borders Council

February 2011

HEADLAND ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

REGISTERED ORGANISATION IFA

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Project Manager	Simon Stronach
Author	Paul Masser
Fieldwork	Paul Masser & Emma Searle
Graphics	Anna Sztromwasser
Specialists	Sarah-Jane Haston, environmental
Approved by	Simon Stronach, Project manager

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Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd

13 Jane Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5HE
T 0131 467 7705 • **F** 0131 467 7706 • **E** office@headlandarchaeology.com
www.headlandarchaeology.com

North East *Edinburgh* | ***North West*** *Glasgow* | ***Midlands & West*** *Hereford* | ***South & East*** *Leighton Buzzard* | ***Ireland*** *Cork, Galway & Dublin*

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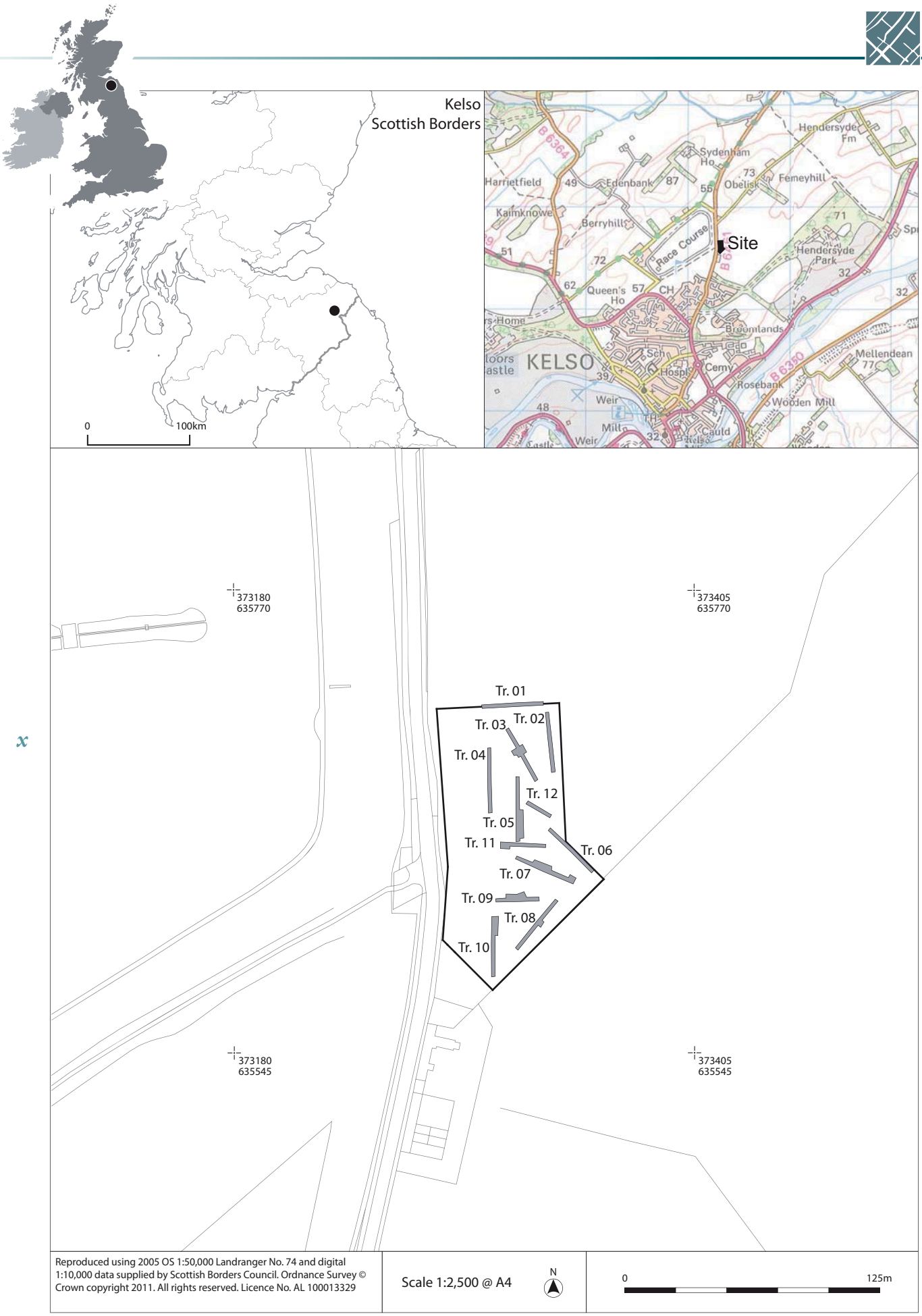
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work was funded by Scottish Borders Council and was monitored by Chris Bowles, the Scottish Borders Council Archaeology Officer.

The evaluation was carried out with the assistance of Emma Searle. The Project Manager was Simon Stronach.



Illus 1

Site location

FERNEYHILL TOLL, KELSO, SCOTTISH BORDERS

Evaluation

A trial trench evaluation was carried out by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd on the site of a proposed cemetery, close to the supposed site of the medieval hospital of St Leonard at Ednam. A programme of geophysical survey and test-pitting, previously carried out by GUARD, had identified two possible buildings and a linear cobbled surface in an area to the east of the current evaluation, and closer to the probable site of the hospital. The trial trenches covered a low-lying area close to the road. The features identified include a ditch 6m wide, possibly a catchwater drain, and a number of smaller ditches and stone-packed drains, all of which are probably post-medieval. No evidence relating to the medieval hospital was found.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

Scottish Borders Council proposes to locate a cemetery on land adjacent to the B6461 road, north of Kelso, at National Grid Reference NT 7331 3565 (site centre, Illus 1). The current development proposal covers an area of 0.82ha as shown in Illus 1. The site of a medieval hospital lies close by, and for this reason the Scottish Borders Archaeology Service has required a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of the development.

The evaluation comprised machine excavation of 12 valuation trenches and was carried out on 17–19 January 2011. The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (*Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation: Land south of Ferneyhill Toll, Kelso*, dated December 2010), in response to a brief issued by Scottish Borders Council (*Specification for archaeological evaluation: land south of Fernyhill Toll, Kelso*).

At present, the evaluation area forms part of a large arable field, bounded partially by a high stone wall to the south-east, and by a hedge beside the B6461 to the west.

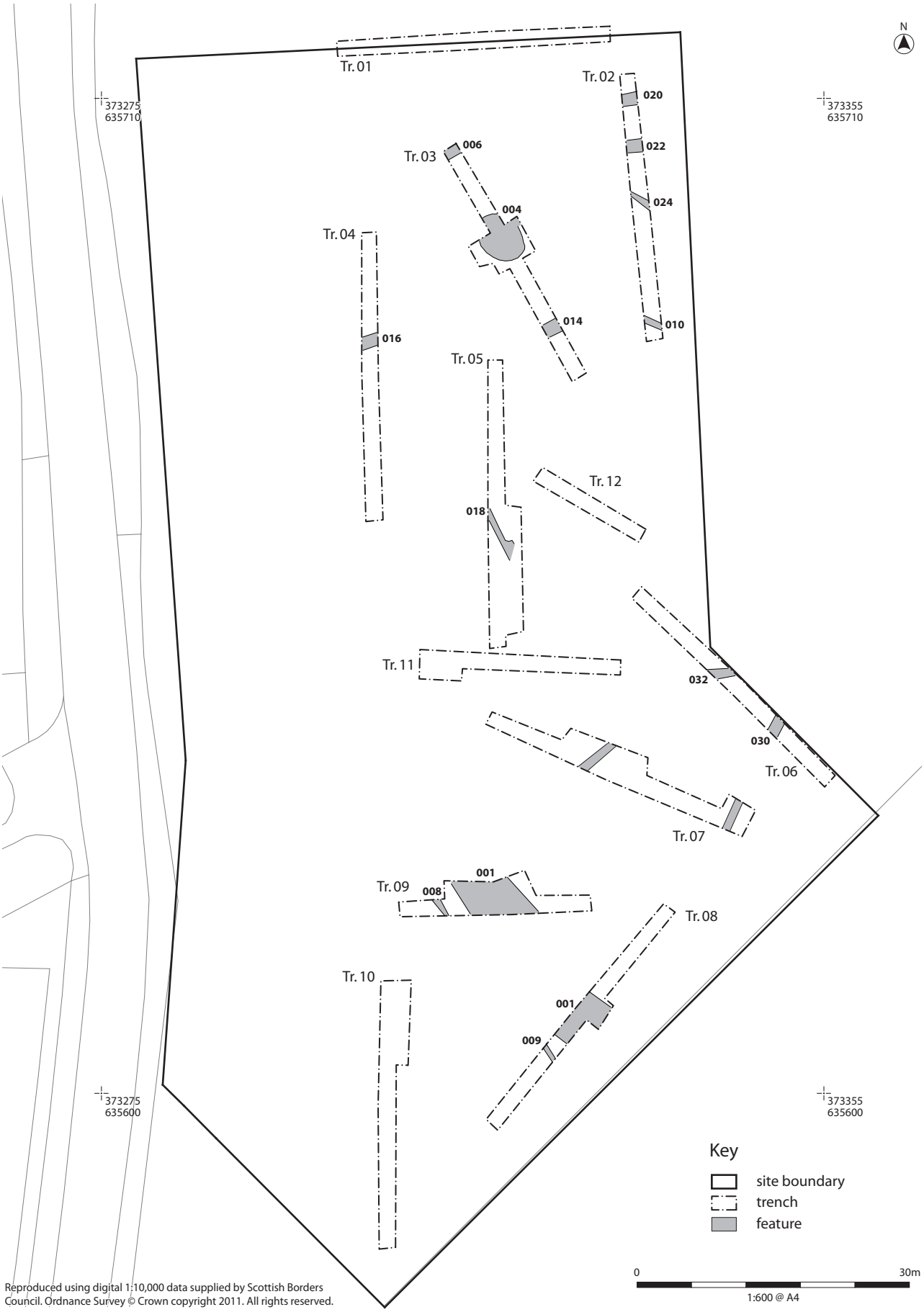
1.2 Archaeological background

Historical records indicate that a hospital dedicated to St Leonard was founded at Ednam in the 12th century. A farm marked on Blaeu's map of 1654 as 'Ednam Spittell' and on Roy's military survey (1747–55) as 'Spittle' is thought to have been built on the same site. Its location is recorded as NT 7343 3578 (NMRS site no. NT73NW 11, SBC HER 3070006). This places the hospital and later farm on higher ground approximately 100m to the north-east of the proposed development area. However, no remains of the hospital (or of the later farm) survive above ground and its exact location is therefore uncertain.

A previous phase of evaluation at Ferneyhill Toll comprised a desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and excavation of test pits (Rennie 2010). The geophysical survey, which employed both resistivity and gradiometry, covered two areas: a 100 x 90m block just to the north-east of the current evaluation area; and a 180 x 10m strip along the west side of the site, adjacent to the road. Four 1m^2 test pits were excavated by hand, targeting the features identified by the geophysical survey. A linear high resistance feature aligned north/south across the middle of the eastern survey area was revealed in one test pit as a possible cobbled surface. This was cut by a low-resistance feature aligned NE/SW that was interpreted as a ditch. Two possible structures were identified by the geophysical survey along the south-east edge of the eastern survey area. A test pit excavated over one of these possible structures revealed a number of cut features which contained late medieval and modern pottery sherds.

2. AIMS AND METHODS

The current development proposal for a site covering 0.82ha excludes the features identified by the geophysical survey and test pit excavation previously carried out by GUARD. The trenches covered a total area of 574m^2,



2

Illus 2
Site plan

Illus 3
View of site pre-excavation, looking north-east (towards probable site of the medieval hospital)

representing a 7% sample of the development area. Some modifications to the indicative trench plan submitted with the WSI were made to avoid working within 15–20m of a gas pipeline running along the west side of the site, as per Scottish Gas Network's requirements. Following excavation of the ten 30m trenches specified in the indicative trench plan, additional trenches (11 & 12) were excavated, and existing trenches extended, to investigate features of potential archaeological interest more fully.

The trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator with a 1.5m flat-bladed ditching bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision, to remove topsoil to the depth of natural subsoil or any deposits of archaeological interest. The mechanical excavator was also used to excavate slots through two very large features of uncertain significance, where excavation by hand was deemed impracticable. All other features were investigated by hand. All potential features were noted on pro forma trench record sheets and cleaned by hand, and a representative selection investigated further by digging sections across them by hand.

All features were assigned unique context numbers and recorded on pro forma context sheets. Context descriptions are included in Appendix. A survey of the site was carried out using a Total Station EDM linked to an on-site computer running AutoCAD LT and TheoLT surveying software. The outlines of all trenches, features and excavated sections were recorded. No additional hand-drawn plans or sections were produced. Photographs were taken using colour slide and black and white print film and a digital camera: a photo catalogue is included in Appendix.

Finds were retrieved from excavated features, but have not been formally assessed since they were all clearly of 18th–20th century date, and will be discarded.

One sample was taken for environmental analysis. A sample assessment is included in this report.

3. RESULTS (ILLUS 2)

The subsoil in all trenches consisted of glacial till deposits of very variable composition, mainly sandy silt but with patches of sand and coarse gravel, overlain by a uniform depth of ploughsoil, approximately 0.3m thick.

A substantial ditch [001], 6m wide, was seen in Trenches 8 and 9: a machine-dug section was excavated through it in Trench 9, but was abandoned at a depth of 1.5m without reaching the bottom. The ditch runs towards the lowest part of the field, just to the north of Trench 9, where there was a considerable depth of standing water at the time of the evaluation, and in both trenches the area surrounding the ditch started to fill up with groundwater as soon as it was exposed. It may therefore have had some function relating to drainage. Severe flooding prevented more detailed examination of this feature, and it contained no finds to indicate its date. A sample taken from its fill was found to contain nothing of interest.

Two ditches [030] and [032] were investigated in Trench 6, both of which had similar dimensions and fills. The fill of [032] contained sherds of 18th–20th century white-glazed ceramic, and these features are

Illus 4
Stone-filled drain [014], facing east

Illus 5
Stone-filled drain [018], facing south-east

therefore considered to be modern drainage ditches and/or land boundaries. Since they are aligned with the slope, running towards the large ditch [001], a drainage function seems plausible. Two linear features noted in Trench 7 seem likely to be the continuations of these ditches.

A number of other much smaller ditches were excavated elsewhere: [008] and [009] (probably the same feature) in Trenches 9 and 8; and [010] and [024] in Trench 2. They all contained unleached deposits very similar to the overlying topsoil, which suggests a relatively recent date. A single sherd of 19th/20th century earthenware was recovered from ditch [010]. Ditch [008]/[009] runs parallel with the substantial ditch [001] and is therefore likely to be contemporary and related to it.

Features [020], [022], [006], [014], [016] and [018] were all quite similar, consisting of shallow trenches up to 1.5m wide and generally 0.2–0.4m deep, filled with large stones. The possibility that these features represent wall foundations was considered and rejected, since in all cases the stones appeared to have been dumped in an entirely haphazard way, with frequent voids and no facing or other indications of deliberate construction. They are more likely to be drains, filled with stones cleared off the surface of the field, and their general downslope orientation (with the possible exception of [018]) would be consistent with this. Fragments of 19th/20th century bottle glass were recovered from the fills of [006] and [018].

An oval pit [004], some 5m wide and a metre deep, was revealed in Trench 3, and investigated with a machine-excavated sondage. The lower part of this pit was filled with large stones, while the upper fill appears to represent natural silting. The only finds were a sherd of glazed earthenware and a fragment of clay pipe stem, both clearly post-medieval, found while cleaning the surface of the feature.

4. PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

Sarah-Jane Haston

4.1 Introduction

One sample was taken from a large ditch discovered during the trial trench evaluation at Ferneyhill Toll, Kelso. The sample was processed for the recovery of small finds and palaeoenvironmental remains that would provide any dating evidence for the fill of the ditch from which the sample was taken.

Illus 6
Pit [004], facing south-east

4.2 Method

Samples were processed in laboratory conditions using a standard floatation method (*cf.* Kenward *et al.*, 1980). All plant macrofossil samples were analysed using a stereo-microscope at magnifications of x10 and up to x100 where necessary to aid identification. Identifications were confirmed using modern reference material and seed atlases including Cappers *et al.* (2006).

4.3 Results

The only environmental remains recovered from this sample consisted of traces of charcoal and the occasional modern root/weed seeds. None of the individual charcoal fragments were large enough to provide sufficient material for radiocarbon dating. No other finds were recovered from the processed sample.

4.4 Conclusion

The origin of the low concentration of carbonised material probably derives from reworked background material from the surrounding soils. No evidence was recovered that would provide a date for the infilling of the ditch. No further work is recommended.

5. DISCUSSION

Most, if not all of the features seen in the evaluation appear to relate to post-medieval drainage. The site occupies a low-lying position at the foot of the slope, and has poor natural drainage. It is worth noting that the area that is today covered by the racecourse is named 'Berry Moss' on the First Edition six inch Ordnance Survey map (Roxburghshire Sheet VI, surveyed 1859), and is shown as a mire on Roy's Military Survey (1747–55). The substantial ditch [01] may have served as a catchwater drain on the edge of this mire, dug to channel water away from the adjacent farmland. There is no reason to think that any of these drainage works date from the time of the medieval hospital, and they are more likely to relate to the farmstead 'Spittle' that succeeded it. No medieval finds were recovered from any of the features investigated, the only finds being of 18th–20th century date; and the lack of medieval finds from the topsoil suggests moreover that the land was not manured, and hence not intensively cultivated, in the medieval period. While only some features contained modern finds, the remainder are similar enough in character that they too are considered most likely to be modern.

6. REFERENCES

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7. APPENDIX

7.1 Site registers

Context register

Context no.	***Trench***	***Description***
001	9	Linear cut 6m wide, oriented NW/SE. Investigated with machine-cut slot at NE edge of feature, but base was not reached at 1.5m and detailed recording not possible due to flooding. Contains deposit [002]. Feature also seen in Trench 8 to SE.
002	9	Fill of [001]: red-brown sandy clay silt.
003	n/a	Void.
004	3	Oval cut 5.5 x 4.5m wide, 1m deep, with moderately sloping sides and flat base. Contains deposit [005].
005	3	Fill of [004]: mid greyish-brown sandy silt, fairly clean, sterile deposit with no obvious inclusions.
006	3	Linear cut at least 1m wide, aligned NE/SW, exposed at north end of trench. Partially excavated but abandoned due to flooding before base was reached: at least 0.2m deep with vertical sides. Contains [007].
007	3	Fill of [006] consisting entirely of rounded/subangular stones up to 0.15m in size, dumped in without any discernible structure, with frequent voids. Also contains sherds of 19th/20th century bottle glass.
008	9	Linear cut aligned NW/SE, 0.3m wide, 0.1m deep, with moderately sloping sides and rounded base. Contains [012].
009	8	Linear cut aligned NW/SE, 0.3m wide, 0.1m deep, with moderately sloping sides and rounded base. Contains [013].
010	2	Linear cut aligned NW/SE, 0.35m wide, 0.2m deep, with moderately sloping sides and rounded base. Contains [011].
011	2	Fill of [010]. Mid brown sandy silt.
012	9	Fill of [008]. Mid brown sandy silt.
013	8	Fill of [009]. Mid brown sandy silt.
014	3	Linear cut aligned NE/SW, 1.5m wide, not excavated. Contains [015].
015	3	Fill of [014], consisting of rounded/subangular stones up to 0.25m in size, dumped in the cut apparently at random, with a soil matrix of mid brown sandy silt and frequent voids.
016	4	Linear cut aligned NE/SW, 1m wide, unexcavated. Contains deposit [017].
017	4	Fill of [016], consisting of rounded stones up to 0.2m in size, dumped randomly in the cut, with a soil matrix of mid grey-brown sandy silt and frequent voids.
018	5	Linear cut aligned NW/SE, 0.6m wide, 0.4m deep, with vertical sides. Appears to terminate to SE, where it runs into a more general spread of large stones. Contains [019].
019	5	Fill of [018], consisting of stones up to 0.3m in size, dumped apparently randomly into ditch.
020	2	Linear cut aligned E/W, 1m wide, 0.2m deep, with moderately sloping sides and flat base. Contains [021].
021	2	Fill of [020], consisting of rounded/subangular stones up to 0.2m in size, randomly dumped in cut.
022	2	Linear cut aligned E/W, 1m wide, not excavated. Contains [023].
023	2	Fill of [022]: gravel.
024	2	Linear cut aligned NW/SE, 0.6m wide, 0.6m wide, 0.15m deep, moderately sloping sides and flat base. Contains [025].
025	2	Fill of [024]: mid brown sandy silt.
026	10	Patch of reddish-yellow sand – variation in natural subsoil.
027	n/a	Void.
028	10	Patch of reddish-yellow sand – variation in natural subsoil.
029	n/a	Void.

Context no.	***Trench***	***Description***
030	6	Linear cut aligned NNE/SSW, 1m wide, 0.5m deep, with steeply sloping sides and flat base. Contains [031].
031	6	Fill of [030]: mid brown sandy silt with frequent small/medium stones (up to 0.15m in size).
032	6	Linear cut aligned NE/SW, 1m wide, at least 0.1m deep but not bottomed. Contains [033].
033	6	Fill of [032]: mid brown sandy silt with moderate small stones. Contains sherds of 19th/20thc ceramic.

Photo register

Photo no.	***Colour slide***	***B&W print***	***Digital***	***Direction facing***	***Description***
001	–	–	1001	SE	Fence at site entrance
002	–	–	1002	NE	Fence at site entrance
003	–	–	1003	W	Fence at site entrance
004	–	–	1004	N	General view of site – pre-excavation
005	–	–	1005	NE	General view of site – pre-excavation
006	–	–	1006	N	Location of gas leak
007	1/35	2/35	1007	W	Trench 1
008	1/34	2/34	1008–9	SW	Pit [004]
009	1/33	2/33	1010	SE	Pit [004]
010	1/32	2/32	1011	N	Stone-filled ditch [020]
011	1/31	2/31	1012–3	N	Trench 2
012	1/30	2/30	1014	NW	Ditch [001] machine-cut section
013	1/29	2/29	1015	W	Ditch [008]
014	1/28	2/28	1016	NE	Ditch [010]
015	1/27	2/27	1017	N	Ditch [024]
016	1/26	2/26	1018	S	Unidentified feature in Trench 2
017	1/25	2/25	1019	W	Trench 1
018	1/24	2/24	1020	S	Trench 2
019	1/23	2/23	1021	SE	Trench 3
020	1/22	2/22	1022	S	Trench 4
021	1/20	2/21	1023	S	Trench 5
022	1/19	2/20	1024	SE	Trench 6
023	1/18	2/19	1025	E	Trench 7
024	1/17	2/18	1026	SW	Trench 8
025	1/16	2/17	1027	E	Trench 9
026	1/21	–	1028	S	Trench 10
027	1/14	2/15	1029	NE	Ditch [009]
028	1/13	2/14	1030	E	Stone-filled ditch [020]
029	1/13	2/13	1031	E	Stone-filled drain [006]
030	1/11	2/12	1032	NE	Pit [004]
031	1/10	2/11	1033	E	Stone-filled drain [014]
032	1/9	2/10	1034	E	Stone-filled drain [016]

Photo no.	Colour slide	B&W print	Digital	Direction facing	Description
033	1/8	2/9	1035	SE	Drain [018]
034	1/7	2/8	1036	E	Stone-filled ditch [020]
035	1/6	2/7	1037	NE	Ditch [024]
036	1/5	2/6	1038	NE	Ditch [010]
037	1/4	2/5	1039	E	Sandy patch [026]
038	1/3	2/4	1040	E	Ditch [030]
039	1/2	2/3	1041	E	Ditch [032]
040	1/1	2/1	1042	E	Sandy patch [028]

Sample register

Sample no.	Context no.	Description
001	002	Fill of ditch [001]

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd

13 Jane Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5HE
T 0131 467 7705 • **F** 0131 467 7706 • **E** office@headlandarchaeology.com
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