

**Stevenson Institute, Largs, North Ayrshire:  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Data Structure Report

by Peter Klemen

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**Rathmell**

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Archaeology Ltd

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## Introduction

1. This Data Structure Report has been prepared for North Ayrshire Council in respect to the removal of foundations during the demolition of the Stevenson Institute, Lade Street, Largs (NGR 20281 59484). The demolition works were undertaken by Burnfield Demolition. The archaeological works were designed to monitor the removal of the foundations. Any significant archaeology recorded would be left *in situ* and used to inform subsequent development.
2. The Data Structure Report is structured to meet the advice of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service who recommended to the planning authority that archaeological issues should be addressed. Rathmell Archaeology Limited was appointed by North Ayrshire Council to undertake the development and implementation of archaeological works during the development.
3. This Data Structure Report provides the detail of the works for the mitigation pertaining to all ground breaking works and hence the direct physical impact on buried sediments. As the present development was to level-up the site to a common surface the only substantive task was monitoring the removal of the foundations of former structures that had existed within the area of the Stevenson Institute.

## Archaeological and Historical Background

4. Located on Lade Street and built in 1842 by money from T.M Brisbane, the Stevenson Institute (formally the Brisbane Academy) was closed in 1893 as a school and purchased by Dr Croseus Stevenson for use as a social, literary and recreational centre. Since a fire in 2009 the building has lain abandoned. On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1858 a ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of the Academy by Sir Thomas Brisbane took place. Mr Campbell Douglas, the architect of the building, deposited in the foundation stone a bottle containing coins of the present reign, a number of newspapers of the day, a list of the subscribers of the erection of the academy, and a document written on parchment.
5. Comparing the 1<sup>st</sup> Ordnance Survey map (Figure 1a), depicting the original Brisbane Academy, and the 1909 revised map (Figure 1b), after the change of use, the Stevenson Institute has grown and extended substantially to the south. With the open area to the west being used for modern brick and pre-fabricated structures.
6. To the west of Lade Street and to the south of the site lies the monument known as Skelmorlie Aisle and Largs Old Churchyard (WOSAS pin 43015, NMRS NS25NW13.1). This area comprises a burial ground containing the remains of the medieval parish church of Largs, in particular the aisle added to the N side of the church in 1636. The burial ground also contains another small burial aisle dated 1634 and a probable burial cist of unknown date and unlikely to be in its original location.
7. To the west of the Stevenson Institute a tumulus is recorded on both Ordnance Survey maps (see Figures 1a and 1b). The mound measures some 75ft by 27ft and is 15ft high. Partly excavated in 1873 by Dr J S Phene who recorded the presence of human bone, some of which was partly and some wholly calcined, burnt clay, oak charcoal, bright green flakes, supposed to be of copper or bronze, probably 'remnants of armour'. Human teeth were also found. Dr Phene was convinced that this was the burial place of the Norsemen killed during the Battle of Largs in 1263. Its situation, near the old Largs parish church, is consistent with the account given in the Norse saga that the dead were interred at the church. The local tradition is that the mound, which is called the Gallowhill, was used for executions, and it is more than likely that it was so used in later centuries.
8. To the north of Lade Street on Nelson Street there is evidence for prehistoric activity recorded in the urban centre of Largs. During excavations by Robert Munro (1911) a large circular stone-lined cist measuring 1.35m by 0.75m and 0.6m deep containing seven cinerary (cremation) urns, with cremated human remains were discovered. The stone-lined cist and seven cinerary urns formed the primary focus with another five 'satellite' urns and a stone mace-head all placed in the vicinity. Four of the 'satellite' urns

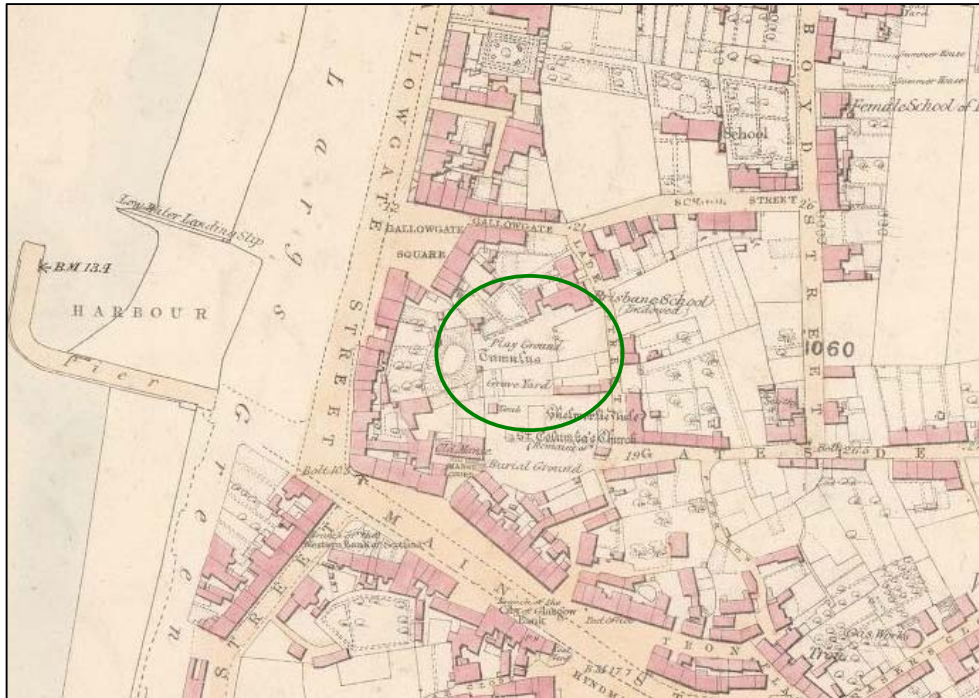


Figure 1a: 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey (Surveyed 1855)

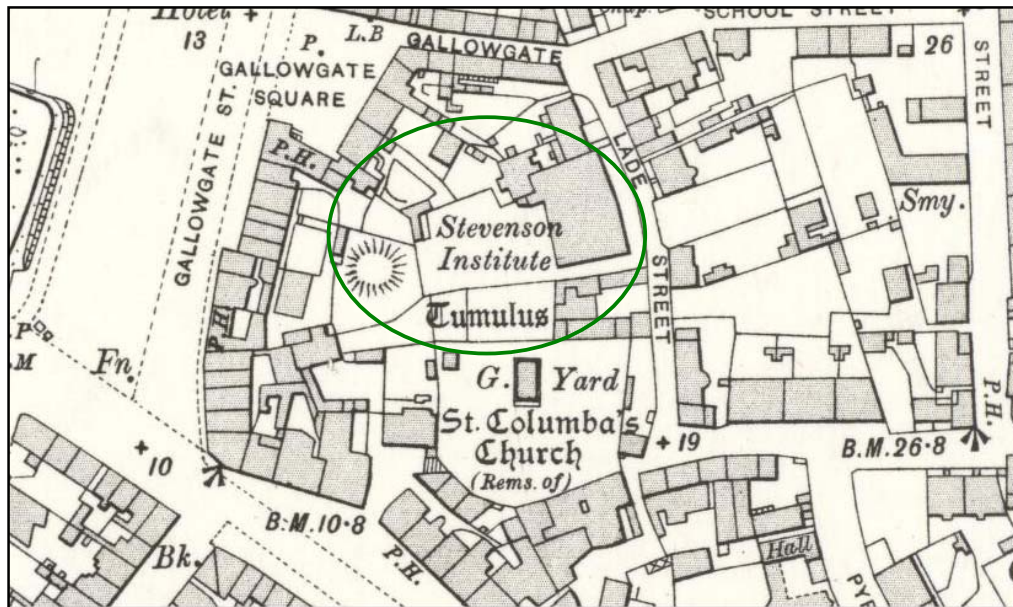


Figure 1b: 1909 revised Ordnance Survey (Published 1910)

were also associated with cremated human remains (Turner forthcoming).

9. Further contextualising of the recorded prehistoric remains from Largs demonstrates how this area was a focus for prehistoric activity during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (Turner forthcoming). The majority of the known prehistoric monuments are recorded to the south of Gogo water and characterised by a Neolithic long cairn (Canmore No. NS25NW1), a Bronze Age Beaker burial, a standing stone associated with Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age activity, and a number of round cairns, Munro suggests possibly six (Munro 1911, Turner forthcoming). There is also the deliberate deposition of artefacts such as flanged axeheads of Middle Bronze Age. With the area to the north of Gogo water also a focus for prehistoric activity, as demonstrated by the cremation cemetery and a further round cairn, these structural features form a monumental Landscape which is commonly recognised as representative of the Late Neolithic and Early to Middle Bronze Ages.

## Project Works

10. Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the removal of the foundations undertaken on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The programme of works was carried out over two phases to allow the removal of demolition material. All structures that were located within the area of the Stevenson institute had been demolished prior to arrival (Figure 2a) only the southern and northern gable ends remained standing. All of the Stevenson Institute had been taken down by hand and the southern gable represented the final phase of demolition (see Figure 2b). The northern gable forms a large portion of the wall adjoining the Age Concern building and therefore is to be retained.
11. All works were conducted and undertaken according to the terms of the Method Statement (Klemen 2012) and complied with West of Scotland Archaeology Service's Standard Conditions, the Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

## Findings

12. The first phase of works was carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and comprised of monitoring the removal of foundations in the south-west of the site (Figure 2a and Figure 6 green area). The structure formally in this area had been a pre-fabricated building with a brick base and wooden body. There were no footings dug for the brick foundations and they sit directly on top of the natural sand and gravel (002) deposits forming a floating foundation. A smaller brick structure also had foundations removed. This was located to the north-west and approximately 4m from the pre-fabricated structure (Figure 3a and Figure 6 grey area). This had a much more substantial concrete foundation (003) where the bricks had been fixed into it. The base had been excavated 600mm into the topsoil (001) and sat directly on top of the natural (002).
13. During monitoring the plant used for the works, a CAT 325D, tracked over and cracked a large sandstone slab. On removal of the sandstone slab it was discovered that it had been capping a well. There was no record of the well on any ordnance survey maps or records relating to the site in general. It is substantially constructed with rounded stones mortared together forming a 900mm diameter and 4.5m deep shaft. On the east side there is a lead pipe which enters the well and heads down to the bottom. This is presumed to have been used to carry the water out of the well (Figure 3b).
14. Due to the large amount of material from demolition, the second phase of monitoring was carried out after removal of the demolition debris. The second phase of monitoring was carried on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and comprised of monitoring the removal of foundations associated with the Stevenson Institute. The foundations associated with the northern gable end were left in situ as they will form the wall that adjoins the Age Concern building.
15. The foundations removed from the southern gable end were constructed of brick, stone and cemented together (see Figure 4a). These foundations, along the southern edge, had been cut into (001) to a depth of 600mm and sat on top of (002) (see Figure 4b). The

removal of foundations that formed the base of a rectangular structure were at a shallow depth and sat directly on top of (002). During monitoring across the foundations removed were recorded to have been shallow and sat directly on top of the natural (002).

## Discussion

16. During both phases of monitoring no significant archaeological deposits or features were recorded. The only feature of note was the well that was uncovered in the course of the works. Given its construction and presence of a lead pipe on its eastern side it would appear to have possibly been in use during the nineteenth century and most likely constructed at that time. The fact that it has been capped with a sandstone slab probably explains why the well is not to be found on any mapping as it would have been hidden from view during the surveyor's visits. The lack of any significant archaeology is most likely due the site having been heavily disturbed due to the construction of a number of modern structures within the grounds of the Stevenson Institute. The only anthropic material recorded was related to modern use in the form of modern brown glazed ceramic service pipes, lead pipes, white glazed ceramics and modern debris in the form metal, glass and plastic piping

## Recommendations

17. The archaeological mitigation works revealed no significant archaeological features or artefacts within the development area and as such no further works are recommended as a direct consequence of these phases of monitoring.
18. The appropriateness and acceptability of our recommendations rest with North Ayrshire Council and their advisors, The West of Scotland Archaeology Service.

## Conclusion

19. A programme of archaeological monitoring was carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012 on behalf of North Ayrshire Council in respect to the removal of foundations during the demolition of the Stevenson Institute, Lade Street, Largs (NGR 20281 59484). The demolition works were undertaken by Burnfield Demolition.
20. No significant archaeological deposits were revealed, the only anthropic material was recovered is associated with nineteenth and twentieth century material ranging from ceramics, drainage, glass and metal. No new deposits of significance were discovered during the course of these works.



Figure 2a: Post excavation photo over the area of Stevenson Institute. The foreground represents the area of the first phase of works



Figure 2b: Southern Gable end of the Stevenson Institute





Figure 3a: Showing the concrete base (003) before removal



Figure 3b: The well discovered during demolition and part of the sandstone cap to the top of the photo



Figure 4a: Remains of foundation from the western wall of the Stevenson Institute



Figure 4b: Showing the depth of the foundations removed along the southern edge



Figure 5: Demonstrating the shallow depth of the foundations sitting directly on to (002) and forming the rectangular structure.

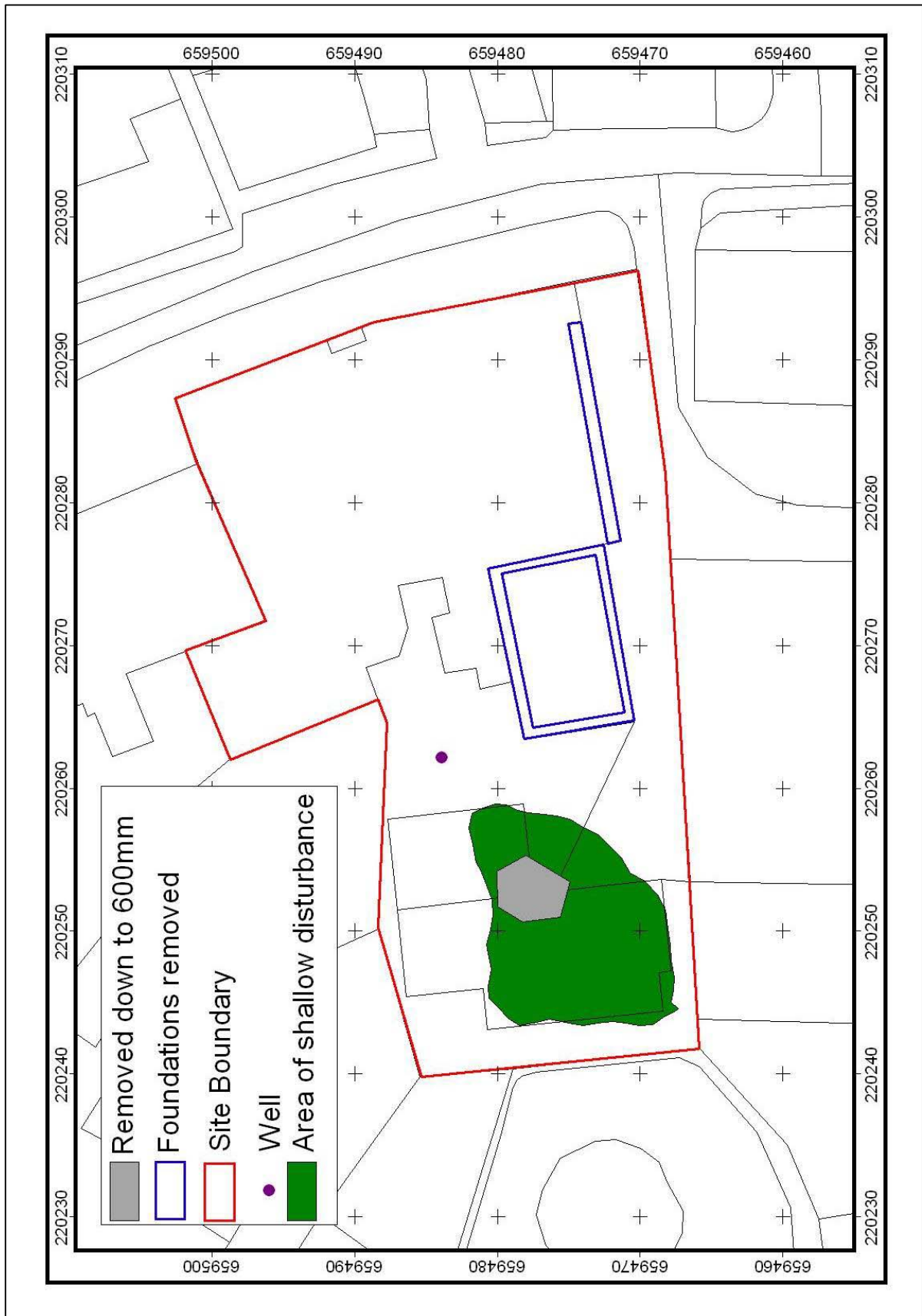


Figure 6: Plan showing the areas of removed foundations and shallow disturbance

## References

### *Cartographic*

1855	Ordnance Survey	Ordnance Survey 1st Edition
1910	Ordnance Survey	Ordnance Survey Revised ca 1909

### *Documentary*

Klemen, P., 2012, *Stevenson Institute, Largs, North Ayrshire: Archaeological Mitigation Method Statement*. unpublished commercial report by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd for NAC

Munro, R., 1910, 'On a Bronze Age Cemetery and other Antiquities at Largs, Ayrshire', in *Archaeologia* 62 240-250

Rees, T. & Turner, L., (Eds). Forthcoming. *Excavations by Rathmell Archaeology across Central and Southern Scotland- A compendium 2003-2009*. BAR

## Appendix 1: Registers

Within this appendix are all registers pertaining to works on-site during the archaeological mitigation.

### *Photographic Register*

Image No.	Print		Slide		Digital	Description	From	Date
	Film No.	Neg. No.	Film No.	Neg. No.				
01	-	-	-	-	1	Shot over site	W	08/03/12
02	-	-	-	-	2	Pre-ex shot over area of founds grubbing	NE	08/03/12
03	-	-	-	-	3	Shot of lower course of brick wall	W	08/03/12
04	-	-	-	-	4	Founds to be removed	N	08/03/12
05	-	-	-	-	5	Showing where some founds have come out and the shallow depth of the founds	NE	08/03/12
06	-	-	-	-	6	Small stone out-house on 'w' edge of site	SE	08/03/12
07	-	-	-	-	7	Plant in operation	S	08/03/12
08	-	-	-	-	8	Plant in operation and showing the shallow depth of the topsoil coming down onto natural	S	08/03/12
09	-	-	-	-	9	Showing the removed brick founds	S	08/03/12
10	-	-	-	-	10	Exposed area of brick wall foundations (900mx 1.5m)	N	08/03/12
11	-	-	-	-	11	Concrete base and brick foundations of a brick structure	W	08/03/12
12	-	-	-	-	12	Shot removing the concrete base and brick foundations	W	08/03/12
13	-	-	-	-	13	Concrete base removed and topsoil exposed underneath	W	08/03/12
14	-	-	-	-	14	View down into the interior of the well demonstrating stone lining	S	08/03/12
15	-	-	-	-	15	As above	S	08/03/12

Image No.	Print		Slide		Digital	Description	From	Date
	Film No.	Neg. No.	Film No.	Neg. No.				
16	-	-	-	-	16	Close up shot of the stone lining and interior of well	S	08/03/12
17	-	-	-	-	17	Removed material from the area of the brick structure	E	08/03/12
18	-	-	-	-	18	Post-ex of grubbed out area	SW	08/03/12
19	-	-	-	-	19	Post-ex over grubbed out area	NE	08/03/12
20	-1	-1	-	-	20	Looking down into the well with scale	W	08/03/12
21					21	S end remains of Institute and cleared area	NE	13/03/12
22					22	Second area for founds grubbing	S	13/03/12
23					23	N end remains of Institute	SW	13/03/12
24					24	Founds grubbed out	NE	13/03/12
25					25	N gable end (founds on right of photo)	W	13/03/12
26					26	N gable end showing where founds have been removed and sitting on the natural	S	13/03/12
27					27	As above	W	13/03/12
28					28	S gable end founds in foreground of photo aligned E-W	W	13/03/12
29					29	W wall of institute N-S aligned with grubbed out founds in mid & background, foreground founds still in situ	S	13/03/12
30					30	Showing substantial found of institute	W	13/03/12
31					31	Area where removed on S wall	W	13/03/12
32					32	Depth of footing for founds (approx 600mm)	NW	13/03/12
33					33	Showing depth and construction of founds on S wall north gable	NW	13/03/12
34					34	Post-ex shot over second phase of grubbing	SE	13/03/12

*Context Register*

<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Area/ Trench</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
001	Whole site	Deposit	Loose, black grey soil	Topsoil with modern material
002	Whole site	Deposit	Loose, orange brown, sand & gravel, sub-angular stones	Natural, fore-shore deposits
003	Small area located in area of shallow disturbance	Deposit	Grey/white concrete	Modern concrete forming base for a structure



## Appendix 2: Discovery &amp; Excavation in Scotland

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	North Ayrshire
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Stevenson Institute
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	RA12014
<b>PARISH:</b>	Largs
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Peter Klemen
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NA
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	NA
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NS 20281 59484
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2012
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (may include information from other fields)	<p>A programme of archaeological works were carried out on appointment by North Ayrshire Council in respect to the removal of foundations during the demolition of the Stevenson Institute, Lade Street, Largs (NGR 20281 59484). The demolition works were undertaken by Burnfield Demolition.</p> <p>The archaeological works were designed to monitor the removal of the foundations. No significant archaeological deposits were revealed, the only anthropic material was recovered is associated with nineteenth and twentieth century material ranging from ceramics, drainage, glass and metal. No new deposits of significance were discovered during the course of these works.</p>
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	None
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Burnfield Demolition
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Unit 8 Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6PU
<b>E MAIL ADDRESS:</b>	contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Report to West of Scotland Archaeology Service and archive to RCAHMS Collections

## Contact Details

21. Rathmell Archaeology can be contacted at our Registered Office or through the web:
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|---------------------------|--|
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