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Greenburn OCCS River Nith Diversionary Works, Dalricket, New Cumnock, East Ayrshire Archaeological Watching Brief and Evaluation

Report No. 1931

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief and evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in July 2011 at the Braehead Farm Extension to the Greenburn Opencast Coal Site, near New Cumnock, East Ayrshire (NGR: NS 56524 13001) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Kier Construction Ltd (Mining Division).

The work was required during topsoil removal for diversionary works on the river Nith at Dalricket, where a new river channel and floodplain was being constructed. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) dated 10 June 2011 was produced by CFA on behalf of Kier Construction Ltd (Mining Division). This WSI was designed to meet the requirements of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS).

Initially the WSI was for a watching brief on the diversion works but following consultation with WoSAS it was agreed that the watching brief would be curtailed and that a programme of trial trenching would replace this where the diversion route crossed an area of raised bog.

1.2 Background

Planning consent (Ref No. 10/0491/PP) has been granted for the recovery of coal using surface mining techniques at Braehead Farm, near New Cumnock. The planning consent was subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological mitigation.

A cultural heritage study undertaken by CFA for the Environmental Statement (ES) identified twenty cultural heritage sites within the proposed development area. The majority of these relate to post-medieval agricultural activity. None of these sites were affected during this programme of works.

Previous evaluation works have taken place within the Braehead Farm Extension area on the Haul Road and Detention Ponds (BD2 & BD3) (Kirby 2011). No features or deposits of archaeological importance were discovered.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the wider programme of works were to enable infrastructure development in advance of developing the rest of the site by;

- Carrying out phased trial trenching evaluations within defined areas.
- Undertaking a watching brief during the excavation of watercourse realignment and flood plain creation works on the River Nith.
- Producing report(s) outlining the results of the work and any further work that is required to mitigate the effects of the development.

The more specific objectives of this phase of work were:

- Undertaking a watching brief during the excavation of watercourse realignment and flood plain creation works on the River.
- To establish the vulnerability of any extant archaeological remains or deposits to the proposed development.
- To propose further mitigation measures as appropriate.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance as appropriate.

Topsoil and modern overburden were removed by a tracked 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All groundbreaking work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. Any further excavation required to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation was carried out by hand.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

The stratification of all excavated areas was recorded whether or not significant archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench positions were surveyed using industry standard electronic surveying equipment and all trenches were backfilled.

2.2 Watching Brief (Figs. 1 & 2)

The watching brief monitored an area measuring c.300m by 60m, located at the east end of the watercourse diversion and indicated on Fig 1 as a hatched area.

2.3 Evaluation (Figs. 1, 3, 4 & 5)

A total of eleven trenches were excavated amounting to slightly over 5% (1080m²) of remainder of the area. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified and a summary of the trenches excavated is contained in Appendix 2.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 General

Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which are contained in Appendix 1.

3.2 Watching Brief

The watching brief area was a low-lying floodplain. Topsoil (001) was dark peaty soil varying from 0.2 to 0.4m thick. Peat (002) up to 0.2m thick was present beneath the topsoil towards the west of the watching brief area. Natural (000) comprised light greyish-brown sandy clay with occasional sub-rounded stones and seams of sandy gravel. Clay drains were present, spaced regularly at 3.5m intervals. No archaeological remains or deposits were identified.

3.3 Trial Trenches

The trial trenching was carried out in the central and south-west part of the diversion route within the proposed floodplain corridor. This area was a raised bog surfaced with rough grass, reeds and other vegetation up to 1m high. Topsoil (001) varied from 0.2m to 0.3m deep and peat (002) up to 1.5m deep was encountered. Natural subsoil comprised light greyish-brown sandy clay in the lower lying areas, and stiff grey boulder clay with occasional sub-rounded stones to 0.3m diameter within the area of deeper peat. Occasional clay drains were revealed. No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified.

Full descriptions of the trial trenches are contained in Appendix 2.

4. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological watching brief and evaluation was carried out at Greenburn Opencast Coal Extraction Site, Dalricket, near New Cumnock in advance of groundworks for the diversion of the river Nith. This work represents part of a wider programme of works designed to mitigate the effects of the extraction site on the cultural heritage features within the area. The watching brief and trial trenching did not identify any features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance.

CFA does not recommend any further archaeological work in relation to the area covered by trial trenching evaluation in this report. However, the final decision on any mitigation measures lies with WoSAS.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the WoSAS Sites and Monuments Record.

On completion of the mitigation works laid down within the WSI, a summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

5. **REFERENCES**

Kirby, M, 2011 Greenburn OCCS Braehead Farm Extension New Cumnock, East Ayrshire Archaeological Evaluation, Unpublished CFA Technical Report 1927

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Context Register

| Context No. | Description |
|-------------|---|
| | Natural subsoil: light greyish-brown sandy clay and grey boulder clay with occasional |
| 000 | sub-rounded stones to 0.3m diameter. |
| 001 | Topsoil (mid grey-brown silt) |
| 002 | Peat |

Appendix 2: Trial Trench Register

| Trench | Dimensions | Topsoil depth | Peat depth | Features |
|--------|------------|---------------|------------|-------------|
| No. | (m) | (m) | (m) | |
| 1 | 50 x 2 | 0.2-0.3 | 0.3-1.5 | N/A |
| 2 | 50 x 2 | 0.2 | 1.5 | N/A |
| 3 | 50 x 2 | 0.2-0.25 | 0.4-1.5 | Clay drains |
| 4 | 50 x 2 | 0.25 | 0-1.5 | N/A |
| 5 | 50 x 2 | 0.2-0.25 | 0-1.5 | N/A |
| 6 | 50 x 2 | 0.25 | 0.1-1.3 | N/A |
| 7 | 50 x 2 | 0.3 | 0-0.3 | Clay drains |
| 8 | 50 x 2 | 0.3 | 0 | Clay drains |
| 9 | 50 x 2 | 0.3 | 0 | Clay drains |
| 10 | 50 x 2 | 0.25-0.3 | 0.2-1.2 | N/A |
| 11 | 40 X 2 | 0.3 | 0.2-0.9 | N/A |

Appendix 3: Photographic Register

| Shot | Description | From | Conditions |
|-------|--|---------|------------|
| 1-4 | General shots of watching brief area | Various | Overcast |
| 5 | Trench 1, general shot | Ν | Overcast |
| 6 | Trench 2, general shot | NE | |
| 7 | Trench 3, general shot, collapsed trench | Е | Overcast |
| 8 | Trench 4, general shot | NE | Overcast |
| 9 | Trench 5, peat profile | | Overcast |
| 10 | Trench 7, general shot | | Overcast |
| 11 | Trench 8, general shot | | Overcast |
| 12 | Trench 9, general shot | | Overcast |
| 13 | Trench 10, general shot | SW | Overcast |
| 14-16 | Trench 11, working shots | S | Overcast |



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Fig. 2 - General view of watching brief area



Fig. 3 - Trench 3



Fig. 4 - Peat profile in Trench 5



Fig. 5 - Trench 9

| Key: | Fig. No: 2-5 | Revision: A | Client: Kier Mining Ltd | | CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD The Old Engine House |
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