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Howden House, Livingston: **Archaeological Test-Pit Evaluation**

Report No. 2083

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of archaeological test-pit evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in June 2012 at Howden House, Livingston, West Lothian (NGR: NT 05212 67663) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by EMA Architecture & Design on behalf of Planview Ltd.

A method statement was produced by CFA Archaeology Ltd for EMA Architecture and Design Ltd on behalf of Planview Ltd. It was based upon discussions with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) who approved the proposed strategy for archaeological test-pitting. The development is the subject of a current planning application (0403/LBC/06).

1.2 Background

Howden House was completed in about 1770, possibly for Thomas Farquharson of Howden. In 1834 the house was purchased by Henry Raeburn, son of artist Sir Henry Raeburn. It was later the property of the daughter of the noted local industrialist James Young, who lived here until her death in 1931, when the house was sold to Sir Adrian Baillie of Polkemmet. Howden House was purchased in 1946 by the Ministry of Agriculture, who used the estate to test new agricultural machinery. The 1960s saw the growth of Livingston New Town in the surrounding area, with the immediate grounds of the house becoming Howden Park. Howden House itself was bought by Livingston Development Corporation in 1966 for use as a community centre and meeting rooms. The property has since lain in a derelict state and is included in the Scottish Conservation Trust's *Buildings at Risk Register*. *Previous Work*

An historic building survey was carried out at Howden House by CFA Archaeology Ltd in March 2011 (Cressey, 2012). This study identified that the existing ground and first floors both had a wall in excess of 2.5m thick which was unusually large for an 18th century building and that they may represent the original re-used remains of an earlier 15th or 16th century tower as has been previously postulated by the RCHMAS. In order to identify whether any remains of an earlier structure survived within the footprint of the current house WoSAS recommended this programme of test pitting.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the watching brief were:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features or deposits within the proposed development area (specifically the remains of any early structural remains) through test-pit evaluation;
- To establish the vulnerability of any archaeological features to the proposed development;

• To propose mitigation measures where appropriate to avoid, reduce or offset any predicted negative impacts on the archaeological resource.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork. Recording of all elements followed established CFA methods.

2.2 Internal Test-Pit Evaluation

The method statement specified Four test-pits but in the end Five test-pits (1-5) were excavated by hand in Units 3, 4, 5 and 7 (Fig. 2). The method statement specified each of the test-pits were to measure 1.5m by 1.5m. However, due to certain constraints the test-pits varied in size. The dimensions of each test-pit are contained in Appendix 4. These targeted a number of locations within a variety of rooms in order to investigate the presence/absence of any earlier building remains.

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.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

Numbers in bold in the following text refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 1.

3.1 Internal Test-Pit Evaluation

Test-pit 1

A test-pit measuring 2.7m north to south by 1m wide (Fig. 3) and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.2m. The deposit within the test-pit consisted of mortar and rubble (001) which overlay natural bedrock (000). There was no evidence of any structural remains or ghost wall lines on the natural bedrock.

Test-pits 2 & 3

Two test-pits (Fig. 4) were excavated in Unit 4 where the remains of a wall (002) could be seen on the surface. This wall lay partially under the North – South orientated wall of the west wing of the existing house but was on a slightly different

alignment being more NNE –SSW orientated. It was considered possible that this wall may have represented the remains of an earlier structure beneath the footprint of the current house. The test pits were excavated against the wall to try and identify if any wall cut survived where stratified dateable material might be recovered from.

Test-pit 2 (Figs. 4 & 5) measured 2.5m east to west by 1.5m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.15m. The deposits within the test-pit consisted of mortar and rubble (001), overlying bedrock (000) and a deposit of what is interpreted as levelling material (003). This consisted of flat, sub-rectangular blocks of stone mixed with rubble and mortar overlying bedrock. At the western end of the test-pit Wall (002) was identified. The wall survived to a height of 0.3m and sat on limestone mortar foundations (004), which had been built directly onto the bedrock (000). The north-east end of the section of wall abutted a raised area of bedrock where it ran out.

Test-pit 3 (Figs. 4 & 6) measured 2.2m east to west by 1.1m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m. Rubble and mortar (001) overlay bedrock (000) and the wall (002) and its foundations (004) were also identified as being built directly on top of bedrock. Like Test-pit 2 no wall foundation trench was present.

Test-pit 4

Test Pit 4 (Figs. 7 & 8) measured 1.7m by 1.3m, and 0.7m deep. A mortar and rubble deposit (010) overlay bedrock (000) and filled a cut in to the bedrock (006) that took up the majority of the test-pit. The cut was 1.4m wide and 0.7m deep and aligned roughly SSE-NNW. A possible length of wall foundation (005) survived along the northern side of the cut and was built directly on to the bedrock. The remains were very vestigial 0.25m wide x 0.1m high and consisted of a limestone mortar/stone mix. There was no evidence of any further construction within the cut.

Test-pit 5

Test-pit 5 (Fig 9) measured 2.3m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum 0.2m (Fig. 9). A thin layer of mortar and rubble (012) overly bedrock (000). At the north-west corner of the test-pit the bedrock had been cut [007] for a glazed ceramic pipe and backfilled with mortar (008). There was no evidence of any structural remains or ghost wall lines on the natural bedrock.

4. CONCLUSION

Test-pit evaluation was carried out at Howden House in order to ascertain the presence/absence of an earlier building on the site. In Unit 4 (Test-pits 2 & 3) a wall aligned approximately NNE–SSW and underlying the North – South aligned wall of the Western Wing of the house was identified. It was built directly on to the bedrock and terminated within the same Unit. It was not possible to determine categorically whether this was an earlier wall or part of the foundations of the current wall of the house but its slight divergence in alignment from the current wall does suggest it could have been earlier, but by how much is not known.

A wide apparently linear cut in to the bedrock was identified in Unit 5 (Test-pit 4) which appeared to run on an approximately SSE-NNW alignment. Within this cut the vestigial traces of a stony mortar deposit were found along one edge. This was not a wall but may have been the mortar foundation for one. The alignment of this feature is intriguing as it would be almost right for a return wall based on the alignment of the wall in Unit 4. However, the identification of this feature as a possible wall foundation cut for an earlier structure such as is envisaged is difficult for a number of reasons:

- no other traces of potentially structural material (other than the thin band of stony mortar) were found in the cut;
- it makes no sense that a large wall would have been robbed so cleanly out of this cut;
- the obvious wall in Unit 4 was founded directly on the bedrock with no need for a foundation cut;
- If this was a wall foundation cut based on the alignment as observed in the Test-pit it should have appeared in Test-pit 5 which it did not.

It is more likely that the cut was not a foundation cut but a cut for some later feature associated with the current house like a pipe run as identified in Test-pit 5. Unit 5 did serve as a toilet so numerous soil and water connections would have been required as some point in time.

Whilst the wall in Unit 4 provides potential evidence of some sizeable earlier construction it is not conclusive. Also neither the cut in Test-pit 4 or the possible levelling deposit in Test-pit 2 can be definitely ascribed to an earlier phase of construction. It appears that most of the footprint of the building seems to lie directly over bedrock and the overlying deposits are in the main mixed rubble and mortar. No earlier floor layers or deposits that could be directly associated with a precursor to Howden House were found. No finds other than modern items were found.

Based on the results of the test-pit evaluation and the limited impact of the new construction on existing ground levels no further work is recommended. However, it is understood the Planning Authority as advised by WoSAS have the sole authority to decide on what if any further work will be required.

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 West Lothian and Monuments Record.

A summary statement of the results of this watching brief will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 4) and an online OASIS form will be completed.

5. **REFERENCES**

Cressey, M (2012) Howden House, Level 2 Historic Building Survey Report, CFA Report No. 2038.

APPENDIX 1: Context Register

Context	Fill of	Test-pit	Description
000			Bedrock
001		2 & 3	Mortar/rubble/demolition layer
002		2 & 3	N-S orientated mortar and stone wall
003		2 & 3	Levelling material
004		2 & 3	Mortar wall foundations built directly on bedrock
005		4	Foundations of wall - limestone mortar
006		4	Cut through bedrock
007		5	Cut for ceramic pipe into bedrock
008	007	5	Mortar fill of [007]
009	007	5	Ceramic drain pipe
010		4	mortar/rubble deposit
011		1	mortar/rubble deposit
012		5	mortar/rubble deposit

APPENDIX 2: Digital Photographic Register

Shot	Description	From
1-2	Wall [002] - General	S
3-4	Oblique of wall [002] - General	SE
5	Test-pit 2 - levelling material (003)	Е
6	Test-pit 2 - levelling material (003)	W
7	Test-pit 2 - levelling material (003)	NW
8-10	Test-pit 2 detail of levelling material (003)	E, W, W
11-12	Wall [002] sitting on mortar foundations (004) and bedrock (000)	Е
13-14	Wall [002] sitting on mortar foundations (004) and bedrock	Ν
15-16	Test-pit 4 - wall foundation [005] and cut [006] in bedrock	W
17-19	Test-pit 4 - with wall foundation [005] and cut [006] in bedrock	S
20-21	Test-pit 4 - Detail of cut through bedrock [006]	S
22-23	Test-pit 4 - Detail of possible wall foundations [005], profile of south facing	S
	elevation	
24-26	Test-pit 4 - Wall foundations [005] W-E	S
27-28	Test-pit 1 - bedrock (000)	Ν
29-30	Test-pit 1 - bedrock (000)	S
31	Test-pit 1 - bedrock (000)	NW
32-33	Test-pit 5 plan view	S
34-35	Test-pit 5 plan view	Ν
	Test-pit 5 - Detail of cut [007] into bedrock (000) with ceramic drain pipe	
36-37	(009)	NE
	Test-pit 5 - Detail of cut [007] into bedrock (000) with ceramic drain pipe	
38-39	(009)	SW

APPENDIX 3: Field Drawing Register

Number	Sheet	Description	Plan/Sec	Scale
1	1	Plan of Unit 4 with location of Test-pits 2 and 3	Р	1:20
2	1	North facing section of Test-pit 3	S	1:20
3	2	Plan of Unit 5 with location of Test-pit 4	Р	1:20
4	2	East facing profile of Test-pit 4.	S	1:20
5	2	East facing section of Test-pit 4.	S	1:20
6	3	Plan of Unit 7 with location of Test-pit 5	Р	1:20
7	4	Plan of Unit 3 with location of Test-pit 1	Р	1:20

APPENDIX 4: Dimensions of test-pits

Test-pit No	Dimensions
1	2.7m (n-s); 1m (e-w); 0.2m deep
2	2.5m (e-w); 1.5m (n-s); 0.15m deep.
3	2.2m (e-w); 1.1m (n-s); 0.25m deep
4	1.7m (n-s); 1.3m (e-w); 0.7m deep
5	2.3m (n-s); 1m (e-w); 0.2m deep

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Fig 3 - Test-pit 1

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Fig 5 - Test-pit 2



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Fig 9 - Test-pit 5

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