

REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF SITE 'G', CLAYMORE AVENUE, ABERDEEN SCIENCE AND ENERGY PARK, ABERDEEN



Cat Peters
Contact: Alison Cameron (Project Manager)
Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit
Whitespace
60 Frederick Street
Aberdeen
AB24 5HY
Tel: (01224) 523654
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SUMMARY

In September 2008, a representative of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring on groundworks relating to a development at Site 'G', Claymore Avenue, Aberdeen Science and Energy Park, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 9545 1127). The site is located within an area of known archaeological potential, particularly in terms of agricultural land use. There was further potential for further as-yet unknown sites to survive in the area, as there has been little previous investigation in this area of Aberdeen. As a result, the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council outlined a programme of archaeological mitigation work to be undertaken in accordance with a planning condition attached to the development consent (Appendix 1).

The Watching Brief monitored the preparatory stages of redevelopment, including the removal of topsoil spoil bunds from the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the development site, a soil scrape of the site, the excavation of three pits for piling, the removal of the southern tree-lined field boundary and subsequent excavation of a linear trench along the southern boundary and the excavation of a test pit at the centre of the site.

Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. The site showed a high level of recent disturbance and made-up ground deposits were encountered.

In view of the lack of archaeological features discovered at this site, and the degree of recent disturbance of the ground, this report recommends that no further archaeological work is required at this site, in relation to the present development. However, it should be noted that the final decision on that matter rests with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit would like to thank the client for commissioning the project. In addition, further thanks are extended to the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council for all advice relating to the project, and to all construction workers on-site for all their help and information, particularly those of Morrison Construction and JKR Construction.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cat Peters. The project was managed by Alison Cameron, Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Aberdeen City Council has approved an application for the redevelopment of agricultural land known as Site 'G' on Claymore Avenue at Aberdeen Science and Energy Park. The development site, centred on NGR NJ 9545 1127, is within an area of archaeological potential and it was thought that deposits of archaeological significance might exist in the area of the associated groundworks. As a result, a condition of the planning permission was that the excavation of a test pit, due to be excavated prior to further groundworks on site, should be monitored by an archaeologist, adhering to a specification provided by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council (Stones 2008; Appendix 1). This scheme of works is in line with government advice as set out in the National Planning Policy Guideline No. 5, Archaeology and Planning. All stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IFA 2002).
- 1.1.2 This report comprises the results of the archaeological monitoring of the relevant groundworks associated with the development, as outlined in the specification.
- 1.1.3 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design, and with current UKIC (1990). The archive will be deposited within NMRS and a copy of the report given to the Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier O447.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 9545 1127 at the northern end of Claymore Avenue, Aberdeen Science and Energy Park, Aberdeen. The site was, until recently, open farmland, and at the time of the investigation, was rough ground.
- 2.1.2 The site was bounded on all sides by field boundaries, and to the east lay a Golf Course, and to the west, Claymore Avenue. Aberdeen Science and Energy Park extends to the south of the development site, and to the north lie open fields (Figure 1).

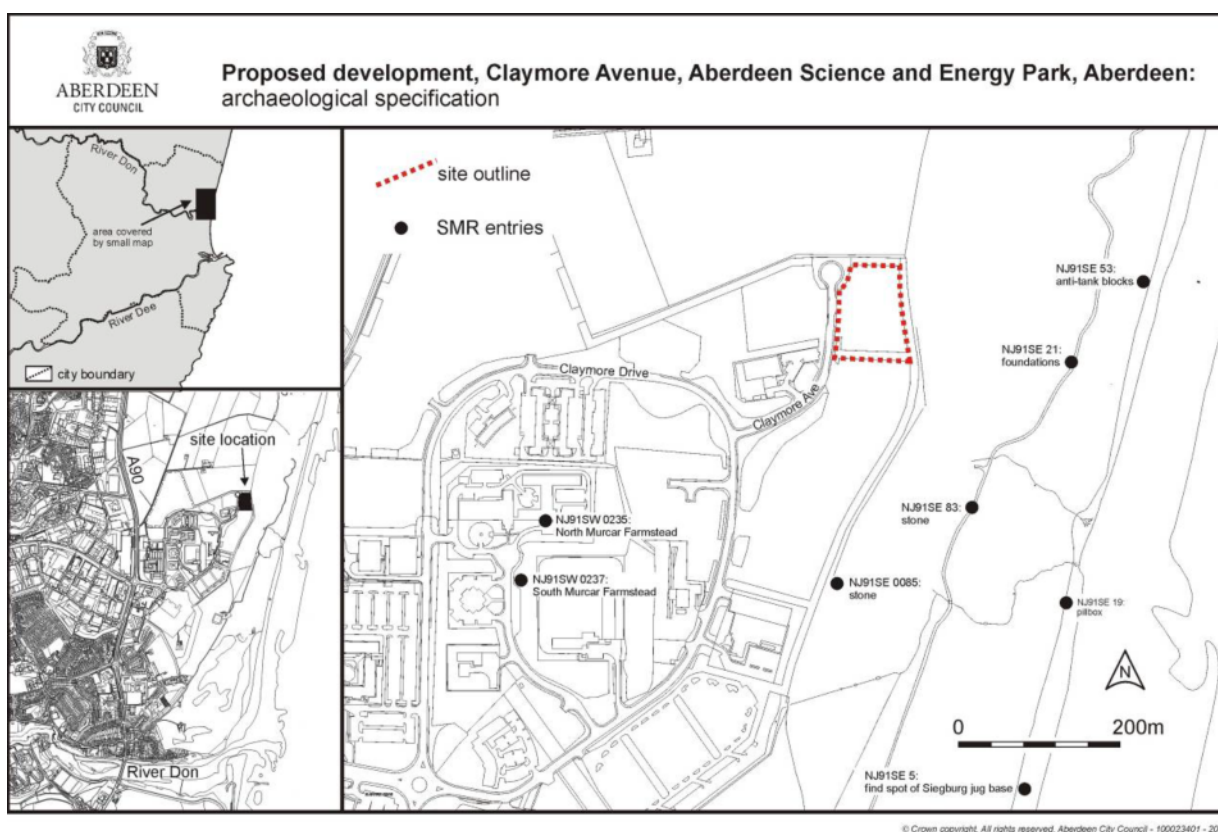


Figure 1: Detailed Location of Site (boundary shown in red)

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.2.1 The site has been used for agricultural purposes throughout the modern period, and stretching back in the post medieval period. Post Medieval farmsteads are known to the south and west of the development site, and boundary stones are known from the area. Closer to the coast, to the east, second world war defensive features are situated. Old Ordnance Survey

Mapping reveals little more than the field boundaries which still survive in the vicinity of the site and the farms themselves.

- 2.2.2 Little else is known from the area, perhaps the result of scarce archaeological investigations in the area. Thus the prehistoric and medieval potential of the area had yet to be tested. This is of particular importance as a nearby programme of archaeological evaluation (Kingfisher Business Park: Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit forthcoming) just to the north of the site, has located a large number of worked flint finds. Though these are yet to be studied in detail, their presence shows the high archaeological potential of this part of Aberdeen.

3. RESULTS

3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out between Monday 15th and Saturday 27th September 2008. The specification for works outlined that the test pit was the main concern, and that should no archaeological features be located during the excavation of the test pit, no further archaeological works would be necessary (Stones 2008; Appendix 1). However, the construction plans had since been changed, and the test pit was not the first excavation to be undertaken on the site. Due to this, all groundworks undertaken prior to the test pit, were monitored, in case archaeological deposits were disturbed beforehand.
- 3.1.2 The development's preparatory plans required the removal of topsoil spoil bunds from the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the development site, a soil scrape of the site, the excavation of three pits for piling, the removal of the southern tree-lined field boundary and subsequent excavation of a linear trench along the southern boundary and the excavation of a test pit at the centre of the site. The soil scrape occurred across the entirety of the site. The location of the other stages are depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Location of Groundworks Monitored during Watching Brief

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 **Removal of topsoil spoil bunds:** the spoil bunds consisted of a dark brown loose silty loam, consistent with a previous topsoil scrape of the site. The western bund included some large boulders, consistent with remains of a

dislodged field boundary wall. Although the bunds were scoured for archaeological finds, only golf balls were recorded from the topsoil bunds.



Plate 1: Removal of eastern bund, facing south

- 3.2.2 ***Soil scrape of the site:*** a skim of the site was undertaken by a mechanical digger using a toothless ditching bucket. The maximum depth reached was 0.05m which revealed a pale brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions, suggestive of recent made-up ground.



Plate 2: Soil scrape of site, facing south-east

- 3.2.3 ***The excavation of three pits for piling:*** three pits were excavated within the south-east corner of the development site, each measuring 1m by 1m, and each excavated to a depth of 1m. Within all was a pale brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions, similar to that revealed by the soil scrape.



Plate 3: Pit 3 under excavation, facing west

- 3.2.4 **Excavation of a linear trench along the southern boundary:** a trench was excavated across the southern extent of the site, measuring 8m in width and to a maximum depth of 1.6m. It revealed a mid orange-brown sandy silt of 0.7m depth in the northern section, and 0.3m in the southern section overlying a dark brown loose silty loam. An orange-brown clay was revealed at the base of the trench.



Plate 4: Trench under excavation, facing west

- 3.2.5 **Excavation of the test pit:** the test pit, located towards the centre of the site, measured 10m in length (north to south), and 7m in width (east to west) and was completed to a maximum depth of 1.8m. A pale brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions of 0.3m depth overlay a mid-brown loose sandy loam which included up to 30% stone content, up to 0.4m in diameter. This is suggestive of a strong element of made-up ground, the site showing evidence of previous

disturbance. The southern part of the site was the only part that seemed to have been largely spared this recent ground preparation.



Plate 5: West facing section of test pit



Plate 6: South facing section of test pit



Plate 7: East facing section of test pit



Plate 8: North facing section of test pit

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. The site showed a high level of recent disturbance and made-up ground deposits were encountered. The location of all groundworks monitored during the watching brief has been included within this report, and an archive has been kept for future reference.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.2.1 In view of the lack of archaeological features discovered at this site, and the degree of recent disturbance of the ground, this report recommends that no further archaeological work is required at this site, in relation to the present development. However, it should be noted that the final decision on that matter rests with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

5. REFERENCES

IFA (2002), *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

MCG (1992), *Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections*

Stones, J. (2008) 'Development at Claymore Avenue, Aberdeen Science and Energy Park, Aberdeen, Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief' *unpublished project design by Aberdeen City Council (reproduced as Appendix 1)*

UKIC (1990), *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*

APPENDIX 1: SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES CENTRAL AREA

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Development at Claymore Avenue, Aberdeen Science and Energy Park, Aberdeen

Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

This specification outlines the importance of this historic site and indicates the works which will be required to ensure that archaeological deposits are recorded and protected during development work.

1.0 Site Location and Description

The area of the site (NGR NJ 9545 1127) is shown on the enclosed map extract. It is at present open ground, over which some soil scraping has taken place in recent times.

2.0 Planning Background

The request for this watching brief is made in the context of National Planning Policy Guideline no 5, Archaeology and Planning, which states that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed. In paragraph 14, planning authorities are advised that they should ensure that archaeological factors are fully considered in both the development planning and development control processes. Paragraph 16 urges planning authorities to regard archaeological remains as a finite and often highly fragile resource vulnerable to needless or thoughtless damage or destruction. Paragraph 25 states that the implications of development proposals for ancient monuments and their settings should be considered at the outset of the development control process. It is appropriate for planning authorities to request, where appropriate, the prospective developer to arrange for archaeological fieldwork and ensure that relevant information on the cultural heritage is taken into account in any environmental assessment that may be necessary (paragraph 24).

3.0 Historical and Archaeological Background

This site lies near the edge of the developed area on the northern fringe of Aberdeen, to east of Ellon Road. Known archaeological sites in its vicinity mainly reflect its recent agricultural focus in the recorded presence of former farmsteads and boundary stones (see attached map). The apparent paucity of recorded historic sites may partly be the result of the almost complete lack of previous archaeological work in the area.

4.0 Requirement for Work – Watching Brief

Although it was open farmland relatively recently, the surface of this site has been altered in recent times: therefore the requirement for archaeological work is minimal. It is understood that a test pit 8.0 x 7.0m in dimension is to be excavated prior to construction commencing. An archaeologist must be present to watch the trial pit excavation and to record any features or finds which are revealed. If no

archaeological remains are discovered during the test pit work, then no further work will be required at this site.

5.0 Timetable

A timetable must be agreed for the various stages of work so that provision can be made for monitoring by the Keeper of Archaeology.

6.0 Staff Structure

A list of key project staff with qualifications and experience will be submitted by the contractor. The use of unwaged staff will not normally be acceptable.

7.0 Health and Safety /PLI

Such concerns and responsibilities are primarily a matter for the archaeological contractor who must submit evidence of conformity to the Health and Safety at Work Act and possession of public liability insurance to Aberdeen City Council.

8.0 Watching Brief

- 8.1 An appropriate machine must be used to minimise damage to underlying archaeological deposits
- 8.2 All machine work must be carried out under the direct supervision of an archaeologist acceptable to the planning authority and the Keeper of Archaeology.
- 8.3 All excavation, both by machine and by hand, must be undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits which appear to be worthy of preservation *in situ*.
- 8.4 Any human remains which are encountered must initially be left *in situ*. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper of Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

9.0 Recording Systems

These must be specified and should include the structure for site record.

10.0 Monitoring Arrangements

It is necessary for the planning authority to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the watching brief in order to ensure the proper execution of the specification and therefore conformity to the brief. Stages at which monitoring is appropriate will be agreed between the archaeological contractor and the Keeper of Archaeology. The possibility of random inspections should not be excluded.

11.0 Reporting Requirements

- 11.1 Provision must be made for:
- 11.2 Specialist examination of animal and human bone and of any preserved or organic material.

- 11.3 Specialist conservation and examination of artefacts found during the watching brief.
- 11.4 Preparation of plans, sections and finds drawings to publication standards.
- 11.5 The sorting and analysis of records and the production of a written report on the work, published in a manner appropriate to its scale.
- 11.6 The preparation of a catalogued archive and its deposition in the City Council's Sites and Monuments record and the National Monuments Record of Scotland within six months of the end of the watching brief.
- 11.7 Copies of the archaeological report should be sent to the Keeper of Archaeology, the applicant and the planning authority. A brief survey of results should be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, along with the appropriate fee. An OASIS report must also be provided.

12.0 Small finds

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia and reported by the archaeological contractor to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel (Dr Alan Saville, National Museums of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD) for disposal to an appropriate museum.

13.0 Timescale

The watching brief report must be produced within four weeks of the end of the field work.

14.0 Further Information

Additional information about the site, or this brief, can be obtained from the Keeper of Archaeology, Whitespace, 60 Frederick Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5HY Tel (01224) 523658.

15.0 Conclusion

The watching brief is to be carried out in compliance with this brief and in the context of NPPG 5. The selection of any contractor will be subject to approval of the Keeper of Archaeology. Work should be carried out in close liaison with the Keeper of Archaeology.

April 2008.