

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT HILLHEAD OF CLINTERTY, BUCKSBURN, ABERDEEN

NGR NJ 8467 1059



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SUMMARY

In April 2009, a representative of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring on groundworks relating to a development at Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 8467 1059). The site is located within an area of known archaeological potential, particularly in terms of the location of a probable medieval fermtoun in the immediate vicinity. In addition, known sites also occur in the area, in the form of quarries, enclosures, stony mounds, a consumption dyke and a standing stone, further anticipating the archaeological potential of the site. 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 all groundworks undertaken regarding the redevelopment, including a soil scrape of the area for the storage building and access track with parking and the excavation of 10 pits for upright posts to support the building.

Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. The site showed some level of recent disturbance, and a topsoil of up to 0.5m thickness which lay directly on a light brown-orange sandy silt natural.

In view of the lack of archaeological features discovered at this site, this report recommends that no further archaeological work is required in relation to the present development. Any future development may require further work. All final decisions on such matters rest with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit would like to thank the clients, Mr and Mrs Mackay 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.

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 erection of a new workshop building with accompanying access track and parking spaces to the south of the existing buildings associated with the Hillhead of Clinterty farmstead. The development site, centred on NGR NJ 8467 1059, 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 all excavation works undertaken during the redevelopment schedule should be monitored by an archaeologist, adhering to a specification provided by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council (Stones 2009; 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 at Aberdeen City Council in the first instance, and a copy of the report given to Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 8467 1059 to the south side of the A96 road between Aberdeen and Inverness, to the west of Bucksburn to the west of Aberdeen. The site consisted of rough agricultural ground, to the south of the farmstead buildings.
- 2.1.2 The site was bounded on all sides by field boundaries. To the south and east lay Elrick Hill Country Park, to the west, a quarry, and to the north the A979 road with Tyrebagger Woods beyond (Figure 1).

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.2.1 The site has been used for agricultural purposes throughout the modern period, and stretching back into the post medieval period. The general area is rich in archaeological and historical remains, including quarries, enclosures, stony mounds, a consumption dyke and a standing stone, all of which survive within in close proximity to the site.
- 2.2.2 Furthermore, it is known that the lands of Clinterty made up part of the Barony of Stoneywood, which was from the 14th century in the hands of a branch of the Fraser family of Philorth. By the 16th and 17th centuries these lands had been divided into a number of fermtouns, the characteristic form of Scottish medieval rural settlement. These included Little Clinterty and Meikle Clinterty, as well as a mill which served these lands. It is likely that Hillhead of Clinterty is either a direct descendant of a medieval fermtoun or is built within the area previously occupied by this general group of medieval and later fermtouns. As such, there remains a strong possibility that sub-surface archaeological features, particularly of the medieval period, may be encountered during the excavations undertaken during the development of the site.

3. RESULTS

3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out on Saturday 18th April 2009. It monitored all groundworks undertaken as part of the development, including a soil scrape of the area for the storage building and access track with parking and the excavation of 10 pits for upright posts to support the building, in accordance with the specification (Stones 2009; Appendix 1).
- 3.1.2 The soil scrape occurred across the footprint of the workshop building and car parking area, covering an overall area of 38m by 12m, with an access route on an approximate northern alignment from this rectangular area, itself a rectangular area of 3.5m by 20m. 10 pits for upright posts were also excavated within the building footprint. The location of all groundworks monitored during the watching brief are illustrated in Figure 2.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 **Soil Scrape:** the soil scrape was undertaken by an excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, removing up to 0.3m of material from the area due to house the workshop building, the car parking area and the access route. The excavations revealed a loose dark brown topsoil, the depth of which was not reached during the soil scrape. In the westernmost area, more stones and modern debris was observed within the topsoil, including slate, concrete blocks and the metal part of a shovel, indicating use of the area as a dump. No archaeological features or finds were encountered.



Plate 1: Soil Scrape of workshop footprint area, facing west



Plate 2: Soil Scrape of workshop footprint area, facing east



Plate 3: Soil Scrape of car parking area and access route, facing north

3.2.2 **Excavation of Pits:** a total of 10 square pits were excavated for foundation pads, all of them measuring between 1m and 1.5m square, were excavated within the footprint of the workshop building, at the easternmost area

affected by the development. All of the pits were excavated to a depth of between 0.6m and 1.0m (Table 1).

Pit No.	Location	Dimensions	Depth of Topsoil	Finds
1	Northern elevation	1m by 1m, depth 0.6m	0.4m	None
2	Southern elevation	1m by 1m, depth 0.75m	0.4m	None
3	Northern elevation	1m by 1m, depth 0.6m	0.35m	None
4	Northern elevation	1m by 1m, depth 0.6m	0.35m	None
5	Northern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.32m	None
6	Northern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.35m	None
7	Southern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.38m	None
8	Southern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.4m	None
9	Southern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.4m	None
10	Southern elevation	1.4m by 1.4m, depth 1m	0.4m	None

Table 1: Outlining the results of the pit excavations

3.2.3 Each pit revealed a depth of between 0.32m and 0.4m of loose dark brown soil which overlay a pale orange-brown sandy silt (Plates 4-7). This is consistent with a topsoil directly overlying the natural.



Plate 4: Pit 1 facing north



Plate 5: Pit 4 facing west



Plate 6: Pit 7 facing west



Plate 7: Pit 9 facing west

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 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, 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 decisions on such matters rest 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. (2009) 'Development at Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, 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 Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, 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 NJ84671059) is shown on the enclosed map extract. The development involves the construction of a new workshop and access road to south of existing farm buildings.

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 western boundary of modern Aberdeen, south of the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness Road and adjacent to Elrick Country Park (see map). It lies within a general area which is rich in archaeological and historical remains, which appear to range in date between prehistory and the 19th century.

The lands of Clinterty were part of the Barony of Stoneywood, which was from the 14th century in the hands of a branch of the Fraser family of Philorth. By the 16th and 17th centuries the lands were clearly prosperous and had been divided into a number of fermtouns, the characteristic form of Scottish medieval rural settlement. These included Little Clinterty and Meikle Clinterty, as well as a mill serving these lands. It is likely that Hillhead of Clinterty is either a direct descendant of a medieval fermtoun or is built within the area previously occupied by this general group of medieval and later fermtouns.

4.0 Requirement for Work – Watching Brief

Groundworks associated with construction of the proposed building at this site, and the access road, must be watched by an archaeologist approved by the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council. The archaeologist must record any features or finds that are revealed during these operations. It is understood that an initial topsoil scrape will take place. That must be watched by the archaeologist. If the Keeper of Archaeology is then satisfied that no archaeological deposits will be affected by subsequent groundworks, such as the digging of foundation pads and service trenches, then there will be no need for any further observation or investigation by the archaeologist.

5.0 Timetable

A timetable must be agreed 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

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.
- 11.7 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.
- 11.8 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 (Nicholas Holmes, 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

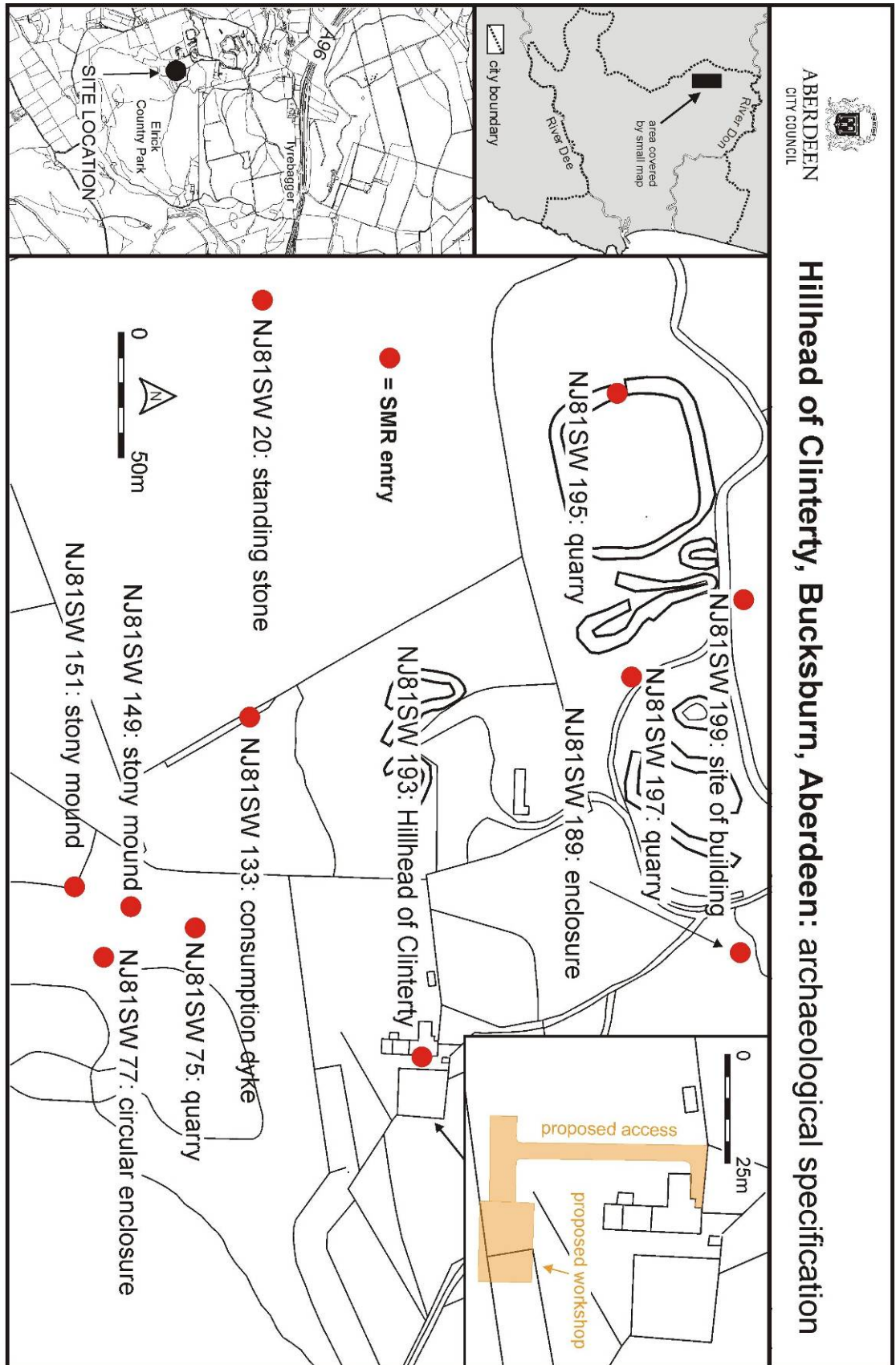
Additional information about the site, or this brief, can be obtained from the Keeper of Archaeology, Whitespace, 60 Frederick Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5HY Tel (01224) 523658.

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.

March 2009.

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES





1. Pit preparation



2. Pit 1



3. Pit 1



4. Pit 1



5. Pit 2



6. Pit 2



7. Pit 3



8. Pit 3



9. Pit 4



10. Pit 4



11. Pit 5



12. Pit 5



13. Pit 6



14. Pit 6



15. Pit 6



16. Pit 7



17. Pit 7



18. Pit 8



19. Pit 8



20. Pit 9



21. Pit 9



22. Pit 10



23. Pit 10



24. Pit 10



25. General shot of pits post-excavation



IMGP1669



IMGP1670



IMGP1671



IMGP1672



IMGP1673



IMGP1674



IMGP1675



IMGP1676



IMGP1677



IMGP1678



IMGP1679



IMGP1680



IMGP1681



IMGP1682



IMGP1683



IMGP1684



IMGP1685



IMGP1686