

**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF ON GROUNDWORKS ASSOCIATED WITH AN
EXPLOSIVES STORE AT HILLHEAD OF CLINTERTY,
BUCKSBURN, ABERDEEN
NGR NJ 8467 1059**



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SUMMARY

An application for the erection of an explosives store with associated access road, parking and turning area was submitted to the Local Planning Authority (Local Authority reference: A8/ 1805; application reference: 082114). A condition of its approval was for a programme of archaeological mitigation works, which was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Cameron 2009; Appendix 1). This recommended an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks relating to the development, approved by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council and in-line with National Planning Policy Guide line no. 5, Archaeology and Planning, Planning Advice Note 42, Scottish Planning Policy 23 and the Scottish Historic Environment Policies.

In October 2009, a representative of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook the programme of archaeological monitoring on groundworks relating to a development at Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen (NGR N J 8467 1059). The site is located within an area of known archaeological potential, particularly in terms of the location of a probable medieval farmstead 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. This meant that the archaeological potential of the site was high.

The watching brief monitored all groundworks undertaken during the redevelopment, including a soil scrape of the area for the explosive store buildings and surrounding mounds, and access track with parking and turning circle.

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 relating to quarrying and loose stone deposits in the northern part of the site and a topsoil of up to 0.5m thickness which lay directly on a mid orange sandy silt natural. One fragment of pottery was found, brown-glazed and of post-medieval date.

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 client, Simon 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 An application for the erection of an explosives store with associated access road, parking and turning area was submitted to the Local Planning Authority (Local Authority reference: A8/1805; application reference: 082114). A condition of its approval was for a programme of archaeological mitigation works, which was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Cameron 2009; Appendix 1). This recommended an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks relating to the development, approved by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council and in-line with National Planning Policy Guideline no. 5, Archaeology and Planning, Planning Advice Note 42, Scottish Planning Policy 23 and the Scottish Historic Environment Policies.
- 1.1.2 The affected area was situated to the west of the existing buildings associated with the Hillhead of Clinterty farmstead (Figure 1). 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.
- 1.1.3 This report comprises the results of the archaeological monitoring of the relevant groundworks associated with the development, as outlined in the specification.
- 1.1.4 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 west of the existing 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. Most importantly, Hillhead of Clinterty Hut Circle, Scheduled Ancient Monument number 12439 is deemed by Scottish Ministers to be of National Importance and therefore is protected by an exclusion zone. It represents Bronze Age or Iron Age occupation of the area, and lies just 50m to the south-east of the affected area. In addition, Site and Monument number NJ81SW133, a consumption dyke lies just to the west of the new development (Figure 1).
- 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.
- 2.2.3 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in April 2009 just 100m to the east of the present works by Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit (Project Code: 0466; Peters 2009) which revealed no archaeological deposits, though some evidence for previous disturbance was encountered.

3. RESULTS

3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out on Wednesday 7th October 2009. It monitored all groundworks undertaken as part of the development, including a soil scrape of the area for the explosives store building and associated mounds, access track with parking and turning circle, in accordance with the written scheme of investigation (Cameron 2009; Appendix 1).
- 3.1.2 The soil scrape occurred across the foot print of the buildings, turning circle and car parking area, covering an overall area of 718m², with an access route extending north-westwards, and then north-eastwards from this area for a distance of 70m and covering a width of 3m, to join an existing track. The location of all groundworks monitored during the watching brief are illustrated in Figure 1.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 **Soil scrape of storage buildings area:** the soil scrape was undertaken by an excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, removing up to 0.5m of material from the area due to house the explosives store and associated bunds. The excavations revealed a loose dark brown topsoil, which varied in depth between 0.4m and deeper, the true depth of which was not reached during the soil scrape. Beneath the topsoil, where the topsoil was shallower, a mid orange sandy natural was revealed (Plate 1). No archaeological features or finds were encountered.



Plate 1: Soil scrape of storage buildings area, facing north

- 3.2.2 **Levelling of storage buildings area:** the area due to house the explosives buildings and associated bunds, was then excavated in the southern half, to create a level area for building upon. Due to the natural undulating ground, this required a depth of up to 1.6m to be removed from the far southern edge, lessening as it reached the northern extent where no material was removed. This revealed a mid-orange sandy natural across the entirety of the area (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Levelling of storage buildings area, facing south

- 3.2.3 **Soil scrape of turning circle and car parking area:** a soil scrape was undertaken by an excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, removing up to 0.4m of material from the area due to accommodate the turning circle and car parking area to the immediate north of the storage buildings area (Figure 1). These works revealed a loose dark brown topsoil above a mid-orange sandy natural, where revealed (Plate 3). One sherd of post medieval pottery, a brown glazed fragment with part of a protruding handle attached, 3cm by 3.2cm and 0.3cm in thickness was recovered from the topsoil in this area (Appendix 2; Figure 1). No other archaeological deposits were encountered.



Plate 3: Soil scrape of turning circle and car parking area, facing north

- 3.2.4 **Preparation of access track:** a tract of ground, 3m in width and 70m in length, extending north-westwards from the north-western edge of the turning circle and car parking area was prepared in order to create an access track to the explosives store. This required a soils scrape in the southernmost half, followed by the reduction of a stone bank and creation of a gradual slope from the excess stone, to provide an accessible route from an existing access track to the north-east (Figure 1). The same loose dark brown topsoil above a mid-or range sandy natural, was encountered although in the northern half, lots of rock was uncovered close to where known 19th and 20th century quarrying operations had taken place (Plate 4). No archaeology was encountered along this route.



Plate 4: Preparation of access track, facing south

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The changes which brought about *enclosure* (dividing land into fields) were part of the process known as *Improvement*, and took place in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The crucial change involved mixing together the land used to grow food for animals and that used for other crops, such as grain, which raised the problem of keeping animals off the growing crops. Enclosing the areas with stone dykes, hedges or, latterly, fences so as to form small fields was the logical solution, and maps of Scotland produced by General Roy, in the 1750s, show this process in its early stages. By the publication of the Ordnance Survey maps between the 1840s and the 1880s, the process was nearing completion. With so much stony ground, and so many sources of quarried stone, stone dykes became the most widespread means of enclosing (Fenton, 1976; Cairns 1975). Occasionally, the land might be so stony that the material cleared from the fields could be built into a dyke of enormous width – a consumption dyke. This is exactly what has occurred in the area of the development, within an area of naturally occurring stone outcrops, particularly to the north which was quarried in the 19th and 20th centuries, shown by Ordnance Survey mapping. The discovery of the pottery sherd (Appendix 2), dating to the post-medieval period, neatly ties in to the agricultural improvements still visible as archaeological features in the vicinity.
- 4.1.2 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

Cairns, R. (1975) *Drystone Dyking*. Biggar

Cameron, A. (2009) 'A Written Scheme of Investigation for Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen' *unpublished report by Aberdeen City Council (reproduced as Appendix 1)*

Fenton, A. (1976) *Scottish Country Life*. Edinburgh

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

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

Peters, C. (2009) 'Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen, Archaeological Watching Brief' *unpublished report by Aberdeen City Council; Project 0466*

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

APPENDIX 1:

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) For Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen Site Code O515

National Grid Reference: NJ 8467 1059

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A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) For Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen Site Code O515

1 INTRODUCTION

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit have been contracted to by Simon MacKay, Hillhead of Clinterty, Bucksburn, Aberdeen.

This work is required by an Archaeology Condition on Aberdeen City Council Planning application numbers A8/1804 and A8/1805 for erection of an explosives store in the SW of the site, an area of 4100 square metres.

2 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. 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.

A previous watching brief was carried out at this site (site code O466); no archaeological features were uncovered during this work.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The aims of this WSI are to evaluate the extent and significance of and to minimize disturbance to archaeological deposits in the development area, and where deposits are disturbed to record remains *in situ*.
- 3.2 The purpose of this report is to determine the extent of the archaeological work required at this site.

4 METHOD STATEMENT

- 4.1 All excavation must be watched by an archaeologist approved by the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council. The archaeologist must be allowed time to record archaeological levels where they have been uncovered or are to be removed during the course of these works. If further work is required at the site beyond the scope of this WSI, documentation will be produced and agreed with Keeper of Archaeology, Judith Stones.
- 4.2 This archaeological work follows National Planning Policy Guideline no 5, Archaeology and Planning, Planning Advice Note 42, Scottish Planning Policy 23 and the Scottish Historic Environment Policies.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 Any human remains which are encountered will initially be left *in situ*. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council (who must be notified within 12 hours of their discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

4.5 Access and Safety

- 4.5.1 All relevant health and safety legislation, regulations and codes of conduct will be respected.
- 4.5.2 The client must provide any information about contamination and live services before the work commences.
- 4.5.3 Staff will wear steel toe-capped boots, hard hats and hi-viz vests at all times. They will carry CSCS cards and present these during site induction. A health and safety risk assessment will be made and will be made available to all staff and contractors.
- 4.5.4 The local authority archaeologist Judith Stones, Keeper, Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council will monitor the progress and effectiveness of the archaeological work at this site.

4.5 Recording Systems

- 4.5.1 An Aberdeen City Council fieldwork number (O515) has been allocated to this site. This number will appear on all site records and finds and all post-excavation material. Aberdeen City Council Recording systems will be used on this project.
- 4.5.2 A site location plan will be produced which will tie in to National Grid and will locate Ordnance Survey bench marks and temporary bench marks (TBMs) used on the site.
- 4.5.3 Plans of contexts will be produced at 1:20 (or other scale as appropriate) and sections of features at 1:10. All site drawings will be on polyester-based drawing film
- 4.5.4 The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of contexts will be calculated and recorded on plans, sections and level book.
- 4.5.5 For complex stratification, a Harris matrix will be prepared to record stratigraphic relationships.
- 4.5.6 A photographic record will consist of black and white and digital images for all main contexts as well as working shots in digital format only.

4.6 Treatment of finds and samples

- 4.6.1 Sampling strategies will depend on the perceived importance of the deposit or feature under excavation. Bulk samples for sieving will be taken as necessary. A selection of samples will be sent for analysis by specialist archaeological soil analysts.
- 4.6.2 Finds will be exposed, recorded, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in line with archaeological guidelines. All metalwork will be x-rayed and selected for conservation.
- 4.6.3 Organic samples will be collected or sampled and subjected to conservation, dendrochronology, carbon 14 sampling or other analytical technique as necessary.
- 4.6.4 Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit can confirm that arrangements are in place to carry out all necessary processing, conservation, specialist analysis and subsequent storage of finds and samples.
- 4.6.5 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.

4.7 Post-excavation and publication

- 4.7.1 A Data Structure Report will be prepared for the client within 4 weeks of the end of fieldwork.

4.7.2 At the end of the fieldwork a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) will be produced which will detail the costs for the post-excavation work.

4.7.3 This will include specialist analysis of finds and samples, conservation and all subsequent reports.

4.7.4 Publication will take place in a suitable journal.

4.8 Archive

4.8.1 Copies of the fieldwork report and PERD will be sent to the Keeper, Archaeology, the applicant and the Planning Authority.

4.8.2 A brief survey of results will be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, along with the appropriate fee.

4.8.3 An OASIS report will be completed for this site within 4 weeks of the end of fieldwork.

4.8.4 The site archive will be lodged with Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit and a copy to RCAHMS.

The material in the WSI is and remains the sole property of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit and is not for publication by third parties without prior consent. Whilst every effort has been

made to provide detailed and accurate information, Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit cannot be held responsible for inaccuracies or errors within the document.

APPENDIX 2: FIND

Find Number	Type Description	Dimensions	Date	Illustration Number
1 Pottery	Brown-glazed fragment with part of a handle	3cm by 3.2cm; 0.3cm thick	Post-Medieval	

APPENDIX 3: FIGURE

