

# **REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE SURVEY AT BEAN'S HILL, WESTFIELD, MILLTIMBER, ABERDEEN**

**NGR NJ 8480 0340**



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# SUMMARY

In December 2009, a representative of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological landscape survey at Bean's Hill, Westfield, Milltimber, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 8480 0340). The site is located within an area that is rich in archaeological remains across a number of periods, the earliest of prehistoric origin. This was highlighted most recently by an archaeological survey (Cameron 2009) and Watching Brief (Peters 2009), which was concentrated on one of the fields adjacent to the landscape survey work area. The archaeological survey was undertaken in accordance with professional standards set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, following a request outlined by the client.

The landscape survey concentrated on seven fields, due to be planted with tree. Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, landscape survey only encountered five features. This is probably as a direct result of the choice of fields to avoid known archaeological remains. The five features encountered included two of natural geological origin and one of recent dumping of debris, which are of little archaeological interest and will not be adversely affected by the tree planting plans. The known hut circle (Feature 4; SMR Ref NJ80SW0351) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the area of the SAM has been marked out by canes during this current survey. The ditch and bank feature (Feature 3) should be avoided where possible by any developments in order to preserve it for the future.

No further archaeological work is required at this site, in relation to the present tree planting works. However, the whole area remains rich in archaeology of several periods and a watching brief may be required by an archaeologist if trees are to be planted near known archaeological features. It should be noted that the final decisions on such matters, and future development, rest with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

In addition to the survey for the tree planting, a linear north-south area on the route of the Western Peripheral Road was subjected to a rapid walkover survey (Figure 1, red shaded area). No features were recorded in this area but two patches of surviving rig and furrow close to the rapid walkover survey area may have an impact on any further works planned for this area.



## **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 Westfield Estate on-site staff for all their help and information.

The archaeological surveying 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 was approached regarding site management procedures at the Westfield Estate, Bean's Hill, Westfield, Milltimber, Aberdeen (centred on NGR NJ 8480 0340). Part of the development estate, has been subjected to a recent archaeological survey (Cameron 2009) and watching brief (Peters 2009) confirming that it is within an area rich in archaeological remains. As a result, it was agreed that areas within the estate identified for native woodland planting should be subjected to an archaeological landscape survey (a total of seven fields) with a further rapid walkover survey undertaken of a central area across a linear north-south aligned route, a scheme approved by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council. All stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following professional standards and accepted best practice.
- 1.1.2 This report comprises the results of the archaeological surveys undertaken in relation to future management of the Westfield Estate.
- 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 8480 0340 on the Westfield Estate, to the north of Milltimber, Aberdeen (Figure 1). The site lies in an area of rough ground near the summit of Bean's Hill, approximately 146m AOD.

### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.2.1 A large number of known archaeological features are known from the environs of the development site. These include circular earthworks, hut circles and cairns, as well as a Freedom Lands March stone in the vicinity. The fields identified for potential planting were chosen specifically due to their relative lack of known archaeological features, although one, Field 3, does contain the site of a scheduled hut circle (Feature 4; SMR Reference: NJ80SW0351). The rapid walkover survey area contained no known features.

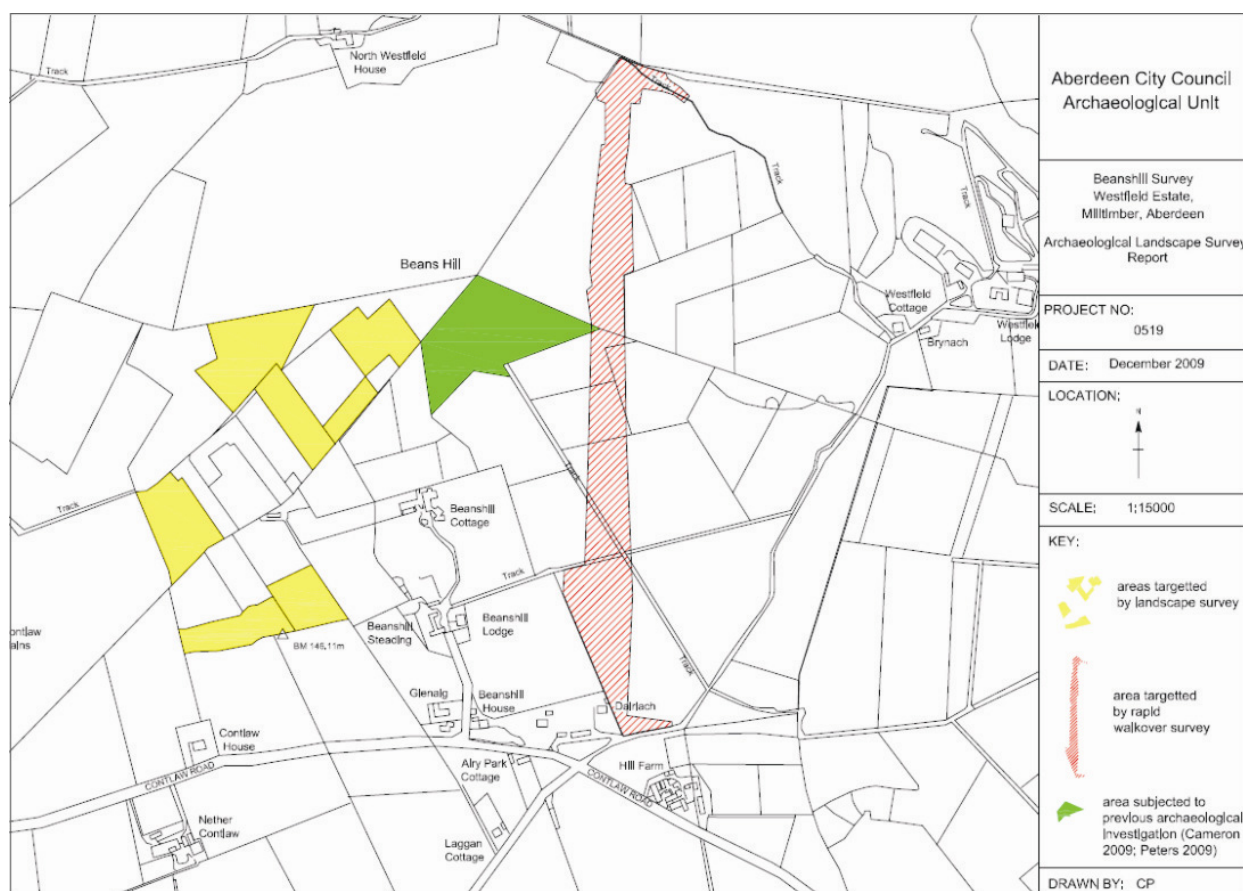


Figure 1 : Location of Areas Targetted by the Archaeological Surveys

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 THE LANDSCAPE SURVEY

- 3.1.1 The landscape survey was undertaken on land identified for native woodland planting, which was due to affect a total of seven fields (Figure 2). The aim of the landscape survey was to assess the fields for archaeological potential and locate and identify any upstanding archaeological features, so that they can be preserved through future management plans for the estate.

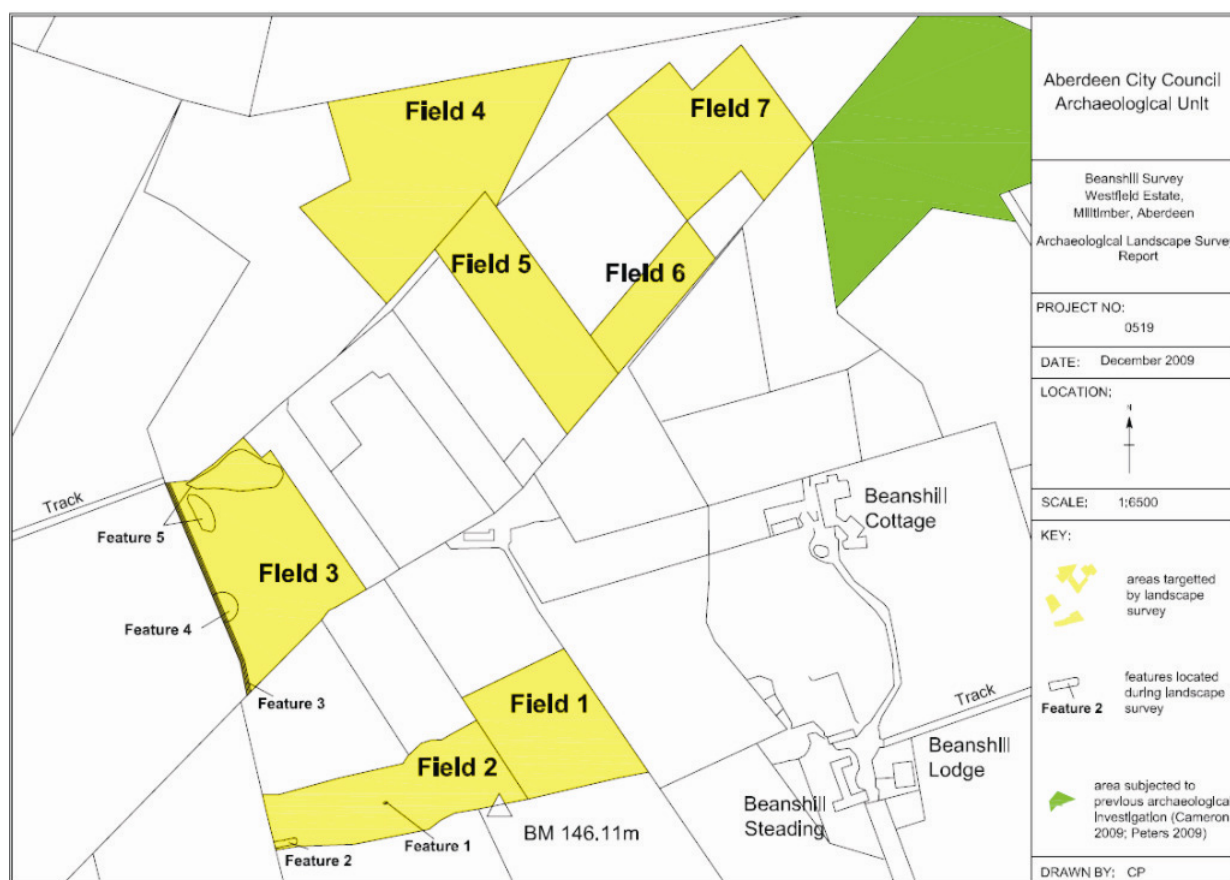


Figure 2 : Results of Landscape Survey

- 3.1.2 **Field 1:** Field 1 was located within the southern part of the landscape survey area and was a roughly rhombus shaped field, surrounded on all sides by dry stone dyke boundary walls (Figure 2). It contained scrubby long grasses, and the far western and eastern edges of the field were obscured by gorse. The field was on a slope, the south-western corner of which was the highest point. No previously known features were in existence within Field 1. The eastern dry stone wall was well-built, surviving up to seven courses in height and protected on both sides by post and wire fencing (Plate 1). The southernmost boundary wall was similar in construct and survived to a height of 1m, protected on the south side by a post and wire fence. The western and northern walls survived less well, with only the internal rounded loose stones surviving in places. The western wall was very low in places, and much

overgrown with gorse. The northern wall survived to a maximum height of 0.5m, was cut at the eastern end to make way for the post and wire fenceline protecting the eastern boundary wall, and was cut at the centre for vehicular access. No archaeological features were encountered within Field 1.



Plate 1: General view of Field 1 from north-east corner facing south-east

- 3.1.3 **Field 2:** Field 2 was located within the southern area of the landscape survey, adjacent to Field 1, on its western side (Figure 2). This was a long narrow field roughly aligned east to west and surrounded on all sides by dry stone dyke boundary walls. No previously known features were encountered within Field 2. Field 2 was the highest of the fields within the survey area, a benchmark located just to the south of the eastern boundary being marked at 146.11m AOD. The northernmost boundary wall was much tumbled, with loose stones on the southern side, at the eastern end, within the field. The western end was better preserved, surviving up to three courses in height, with nine trees lining the boundary. The western boundary wall was better preserved, four courses high and protected on the western side by a post and wire fence. The southern boundary was the best preserved, up to seven courses high, and the eastern was the same gorse-affected low loose rounded stone wall as the western boundary of the adjacent Field 1. The field consisted of long tufted grasses with gorse obscuring much of the north and eastern corner of the field. Two features were encountered within Field 2. The first was a rocky outcrop at the centre of the field, 6m east to west and 3m north to south (Feature 1; Plate 2). The northernmost edge was 1.2m above the ground level, with the southern edge radiating into the natural slope of the field. The second was a stone ridge platform or rocky outcrop at the brow of the hill in the south-western corner of Field 2 (Feature 2; Plate 3). It was 30m east to west and 8m north to south and was a maximum of 0.4m higher than the field level in this area. No further features were encountered within Field 2.





Plate 2: Feature 1 facing east



Plate 3: Feature 2 facing west

- 3.1.4 **Field 3:** Field 3 was located at the far western extent of the survey area (Figure 2). It has a known scheduled monument within it, at its western boundary, a probable late Bronze Age or Iron Age hut circle, with a scheduled area of a circle of 21m diameter. This was recorded as Feature 4, and an area of 21m radius from its central point was marked out with twenty canes so that this feature will not be adversely affected by tree planting schemes (Plate 4). A further 20m buffer zone should be maintained around the feature to preserve archaeological remains. The entry in the schedule of monuments describes it as “a low, grass covered penannular stony bank... the hut circle measures 8.5m diameter within a stony bank 3m in thickness and 0.4m in height” (The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 entry 11175, scheduled 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009). Two concentric circular mounds were observed during the survey, loosely matching this description. The western edge of the remains seem to have been cut by a north-west to south-east



aligned ditch and bank feature which ran the length of the field (Feature 3; Plate 5). This feature ran adjacent to the western dry stone wall boundary of Field 3, 2m to the east of it. The ditch was 2m in width and a maximum of 1.2m in depth. The bank was immediately to its east, similarly, 2m in width and a maximum of 0.7m in height. The true length of the feature was not ascertained; it could have extended north beyond the confines of Field 3, although did not extend southwards. The southern boundary of the field was marked by a dry stone wall, surviving up to six courses in height. The western boundary also survived well, up to four courses in height, with a post and wire fence running adjacent, to the west. The eastern boundary of Field 3 was not so well defined, consisting of sporadically placed rocks, two abreast forming the remains of a field boundary. This became more obscure in the northern area, where large stone dumps were observed (Feature 5; Plate 6) obscuring the northern and northern part of the eastern field boundaries, as well as any earlier features within the field in these areas. Metal was observed protruding from amongst the stone rubble in places, suggesting that these dumps were relatively recent, and their proximity to a track to the north might further imply material dumping from elsewhere.



Plate 4: Features 3 and 4 facing south-east



Plate 5: Feature 3 facing north-west



Plate 6: Feature 5 facing north-west

- 3.1.5 **Field 4:** Field 4 is not a discrete field but part of a larger area in the northern part of the area covered by the landscape survey (Figure 2). Field 5 lies immediately to the south. The area was highlighted as it lies between areas of rig and furrow, and there is no distinct boundary between this part of Field 4 and the area of rig and furrow to the east and west; a watching brief will be necessary if trees are to be planted near the east and west boundaries of this 'field'. The northern boundary is recognisable as a post and wire fenceline (Plate 7). The southern boundary is formed by a dry stone wall which forms the northern boundary of field 5. The south-western corner of this area contains a track, which leads from the north-west corner of Field 5, west, and then south-westwards. This south-western area of Field 4 should be avoided by tree planting activity to retain this track, and also to avoid stone and mound features, which could relate to adjacent areas and known features outside the area of Field 4, or may be within it. The lack of formal boundary makes this

difficult to ascertain and a watching brief will be necessary. The rest of Field 4 consists of rough grass with sporadic gorse bushes and boggy patches with well-worn sheep paths tracking across. A natural hill was observed at the northern boundary of the field. No archaeological features were encountered within Field 4.



Plate 7: General view of Field 4 facing west

- 3.1.6 **Field 5:** Field 5 was located at the centre of the area covered by the landscape survey (Figure 2). It is a narrow north-west south-east aligned rectangular field sloping down from its highest point in the south-western corner (Plate 8). The western boundary consists of a tumbled wire and post fence with thick gorse growth to the immediate west. A gap in the fenceline at the north-western corner of the field allows vehicular access to the adjoining track at this point. The southern boundary consists of a well-preserved seven to eight course high dry stone wall protected on both sides by post and wire fencing. Similarly, the northern boundary wall survives well, and is thick, up to 1.2m in thickness. The eastern boundary dry stone wall survives up to six or seven courses in height, although there is a gap halfway along, as well as a second in the far northern part, for vehicular access. The field itself contains long tufty grass, and no archaeological features were observed within Field 5.





Plate 8: General view of Field 5 facing north-west

- 3.1.7 **Field 6:** Field 6 is a small north-east to south-west aligned rectangular field, which is immediately adjacent to Field 5, to its east (Figure 2; Plate 9). The east, south and west boundaries of the field are well defined by dry stone walls, the east and west surviving up to five or six courses in height, and the southernmost, up to seven or eight courses with post and wire fencing either side. The northern boundary is more obscure, surviving merely as a very low tumbled stone wall consisting of the occasional grassy mound or overgrown stone. Planting should not extend to the north of this line though, as known features are present in the adjacent field. Similarly, the location of a known hut circle feature thought to perhaps extend into the eastern part of Field 6, was not encountered during the landscape survey, so it is probable that this actually survives in the adjacent field to the east, and again planting should not extend beyond the eastern boundary to protect this. Field 6 contained grass and evidence of occasional grazing. No archaeological features were encountered within Field 6.



Plate 9: General view of Field 6 facing south-west

- 3.1.8 **Field 7:** Field 7 was a roughly N-Shaped field and located at the eastern part of the survey area (Figure 2). The eastern boundary consisted of a dry stone wall with a rusted post and wire fence on top. The northern part of the eastern boundary was wider, and looser, with far more looser and more rounded stones on the eastern side where it was less well-built. The northern boundary consisted of a post and wire fence, and two railway sleepers were observed utilised as posts. at the northern dog leg, where the fenceline took a ninety degree northward turn, a tree and some large rocks were observed, which may have been the remains of a pre-existing more formal boundary. The western part of the northern boundary was less clear; the post and wire fence tumbled and trampled at its eastern end. The western boundary of Field 7 was formed by a well built dry stone wall, although after 37m, this was tumbled at the centre, before surviving well at the southern edge again (Plate 10). It had probably been broken through to provide access to adjacent fields. The eastern part of the southern boundary was a well-constructed dry stone wall of seven or eight courses in height, protected on both sides by a post and wire fence. Where it dog-legged at a ninety degree turn northwards though, the wall was a much more poorly preserved grass covered mound, and similarly, the western edge of the southern boundary was tumbled and survived less well. The field contained grass and no archaeological features. A gap in the south-eastern corner led through a gate to a wooded area where the survey and watching brief were previously undertaken (Cameron 2009; Peters 2009).



Plate 10: Western boundary of Field 7 facing north-west

- 3.1.9 **Summary:** the table below outlines the features encountered during the landscape survey of the seven fields described above. The locations of the features are shown in Figure 2.

Feature Number	Location	Description	Dimensions	Interpretation	Action Taken
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1	Field 2	Rocky Outcrop	6m length; 3m width; maximum 1.2m height	Natural geological feature	None
2	Field 2	Rocky Outcrop	30m length; 8m width; maximum 0.4m height	Natural geological feature	None
3	Field 3	Ditch and bank	Ditch: 2m width; 1.2m depth. Bank: 2m width; maximum 0.7m height	Agricultural feature	None
4	Field 3	Scheduled hut circle	Hut circle- 8.5m diameter within a stony bank	SMR reference NJ80SW0351	21m radius area marked out
5	Field 3	Stone dumps	Much of northern part of Field 3	Waste dumps	None

- 3.1.10 Features 1 and 2 are likely to represent natural geological features and as such, are of little concern. Feature 5 is probably the remains of modern dumping from elsewhere in the vicinity of unwanted stone and metal debris, and as such represents nothing of archaeological value, though may have a practical impact on planting in the area. Features 3 and 4 are of more concern. The 21m radial area marked out by the twenty canes during the survey must not be impacted upon during any part of future development, as it is a scheduled area, and therefore protected by Historic Scotland. Feature 3, although probably of 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural origin should probably be avoided by tree planting as far as possible, so that it can be preserved in its present state.

## 3.2 THE RAPID WALKOVER SURVEY

- 3.2.1 This rapid walkover survey was undertaken across a series of eight fields across a central area of the Westfield Estate (Figure 3; shaded yellow). The area was walked and assessed for archaeological upstanding features.
- 3.2.2 The northernmost part of the rapid walkover survey area consisted of rough scrubby grassland with sporadic boulder and boggy patches (Plate 11).



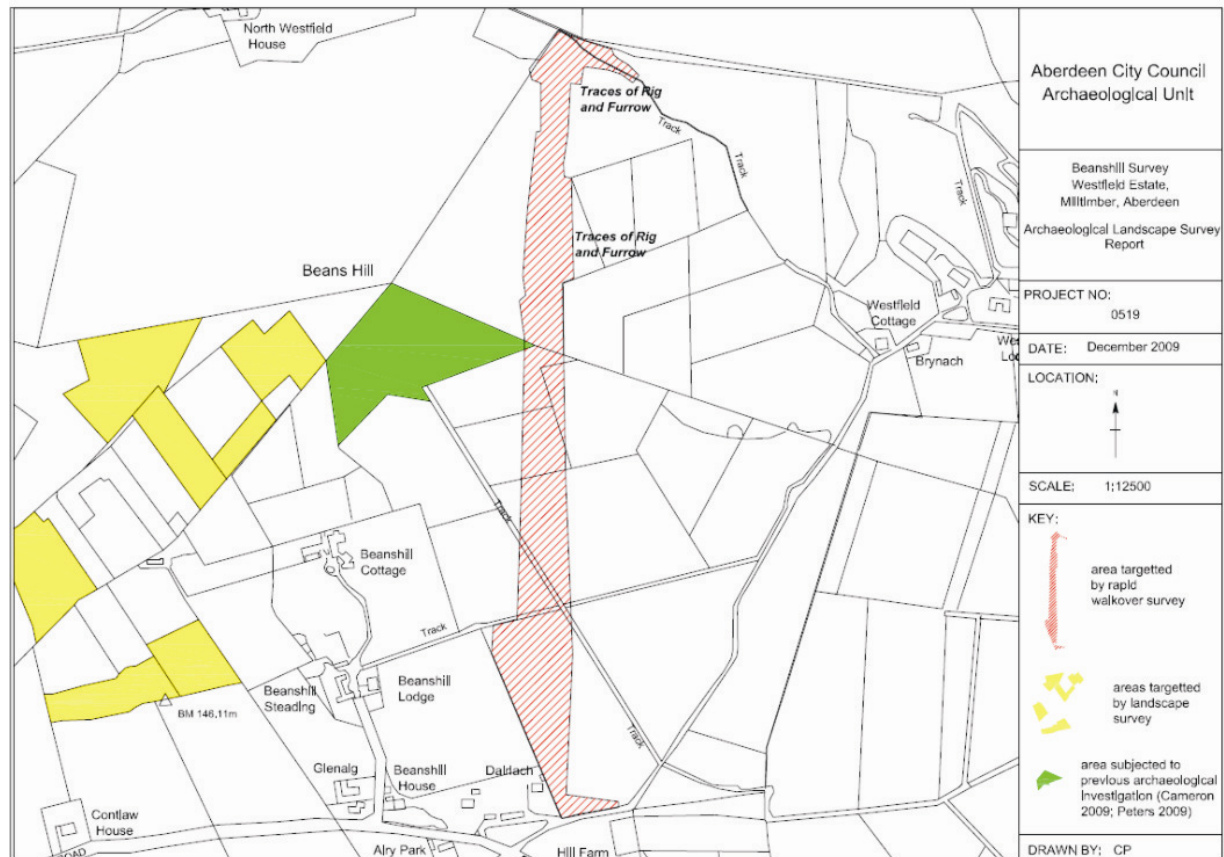


Figure 3 : Results of Rapid Walkover Survey



Plate 11: Northern part of rapid walkover area facing south

- 3.2.3 Several lines of pylons and telegraph poles were also observed running east-west at the northern edge, as well as a bridleway at the far northern boundary. Gorse bushes were also observed dotting the landscape. Just outside the area of the survey, potential rig and furrow was observed to the north-east of the pylon (Plate 12), and again beside the western boundary of an adjacent field to the east (Plate 13). Although neither area should be affected by developments

within the survey perimeters, it is useful to note archaeological features in such close proximity (Figure 3).



Plate 12: Rig and Furrow, facing south-west



Plate 13: Rig and Furrow, facing east

- 3.2.4 To the south of the rough grassland area, was a series of five enclosed fields, to the immediate east and south of the wooded area where the previous archaeological survey and watching brief occurred (Cameron 2009; Peters 2009) and to the east of the north-west to south-east aligned vehicular access track. These fields consisted of short grass fields without stones or gorse, and were well defined by well-constructed dry stone walls. The southernmost of these five fields was a rhombus shaped grass field with a stream and adjacent wall running along its southern boundary and the vehicular access track running along its western edge (Plate 14).





Plate 14: Grassed fields in central rapid walkover area, facing north

- 3.2.5 At this point, the walkover survey area continued southwards, to cross the access track into two fields to its west. Both showed recent signs of arable farm use, the southernmost with recent crop-growth evident (Plate 15). The southern extent of the rapid walkover survey area was evidenced by the main road associated with the Westfield Estate, between Hill Farm to the east and Beanshill House to the west. No archaeological features were encountered within the rapid walkover survey area.



Plate 15: Southern extent of rapid walkover survey area

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the landscape survey only encountered five features. This is probably as a direct result of the choice of fields to avoid known archaeological remains. The five features encountered included two of natural geological origin and one of recent dumping of debris, which are of little archaeological interest and will not be adversely affected by the tree planting plans. The known hut circle (Feature 4; SMR Ref NJ80SW0351) is scheduled, and the area marked out by canes must not be infringed upon. A further 20m buffer zone has been recommended by Historic Scotland (Martin Brann pers com) around the caned area. The ditch and bank feature (Feature 3) should be avoided where possible by any developments in order to preserve it for the future. A watching brief will be required if tree planting is to take place near the east and west boundaries of 'Field' 4.

A buffer zone of 10m should be maintained outwith the staked area around the Scheduled hut circle (Feature 4, Field 3).

- 4.1.2 The presence of two patches of surviving rig and furrow close to the rapid walkover survey area may have an impact on any further works planned for this area.

### 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.2.1 The ditch and bank feature (Feature 3) should be avoided where possible by any developments in order to preserve it for the future. A watching brief will be required if tree planting is to take place near the east and west boundaries of 'Field' 4.
- 4.2.2 A buffer zone of 20m must be maintained outwith the staked area around the Scheduled hut circle (Feature 4, Field 3).

Decisions on any future potential work within the area rests with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

## 5. REFERENCES

- Cameron, A. (2009) 'Report on archaeological survey, Westfield, Aberdeen'. Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit: Unpublished report.
- MCG (1992), Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections
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- UKIC (1990), Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage

## APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

