

Westwind, Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway: Archaeological Mitigation

Data Structure Report

by Louise Turner

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Rathmell
Archaeology Ltd

Quality Assurance

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Signed

Date

In keeping with the procedure of Rathmell Archaeology Limited this document and its findings have been reviewed and agreed by an appropriate colleague:

Checked

Date

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Introduction

1. A programme of archaeological works was required by Mr McCann, in respect to a proposed residential development at Westwind, Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway (NX 1528 5734). The archaeological works are designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the development area to the agreement of Dumfries & Galloway Council Archaeology Service and Dumfries & Galloway Council.
2. The development site is situated to the rear of Westwind, a domestic property located in the village of Dunragit, Dumfries and Galloway. It lies to the south of the Old Military Road, abutting the western edge of the site of the former creamery and its associated workers' cottages. It is bounded on the south edge by the extant railway line which runs from Glasgow to Stranraer, on the eastern edge by a metalled road, and on the western edge by a grass-covered track. In recent times, it was occupied by a car park and also tennis courts.
3. Dumfries and Galloway Council required an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken as a condition of the granted planning consent (10/P/1/0004). Dumfries and Galloway Council Archaeology Service who advise the planning authority on archaeological matters has provided guidance on the structure of archaeological works required on this site.
4. Rathmell Archaeology Limited were appointed by Mr McCann to undertake the development and implementation of an archaeological watching brief during all groundbreaking works at Westwings, Dunragit, as per the terms of the agreed Method Statement (Matthews 2010).
5. This Data Structure Report presents the findings of the archaeological mitigation carried out on the 20th May 2010; the mitigation consisted of archaeological monitoring of all groundbreaking works.

Archaeological and Historical Background

6. No archaeological features were known to exist within the development area. However, the site lies within an area which has revealed a range of archaeological remains, most of which are likely to date back to the later prehistoric period, and in particular, the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. The quality of these remains has been sufficiently high for them to be considered nationally significant and designated as Scheduled Monuments.
7. Three Scheduled Monuments lie in close proximity to the development area. These are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, administered by Historic Scotland. These include a series of enclosures and pit alignments, no longer surviving as upstanding remains but visible on aerial photographs, which are thought to represent the remains of a so-called 'ritual landscape' of the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. The stretch of ground now occupied by the field lying immediately to the west of development area has revealed a concentration of such features (now scheduled as SM No. 5852). Another similar concentration has been identified to the north-west of the development area at Drumflower Bridge (SM No. 5790).
8. These alignments and enclosures may have functioned as ceremonial routes and foci for ritual activities which drew together various communities throughout the wider area, and which in this particular instance may have focused upon the so-called 'motte' at Droughduil. While such features have long been assumed to be medieval in date, this interpretation is now being reassessed, with some academics suggesting that some artificial mounds may be of Neolithic origin, performing a similar role to that of the celebrated Silbury Hill in Wiltshire. Exploratory works by an excavation team from the University of Manchester between 1999-2002 aimed to test this hypothesis further, but the results proved inconclusive (see <http://www.orgs.man.ac.uk/research/dunragit/> for further information).

9. Further evidence of the importance of this area is offered by an unusually high concentration of finds of later prehistoric date. Two stone axeheads have been recorded as having been found in the vicinity (Canmore ID 61169 and 61171), along with a bronze dagger of early Bronze Age date (Canmore ID 61207). The axeheads are likely to represent special votive deposits of Neolithic date; the dagger may once have been associated with a Bronze Age burial, though it is also possible that once again it was deliberately discarded as a votive deposit. These finds of high status items reinforce once again how important the area was in the eyes of those who lived there during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods.
10. While the nature of the monumental remains changes in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, there is still ample evidence of human occupation in the area around modern Dunragit at this time. Recent excavations at Whitecrook, to the south-east of Dunragit, revealed evidence for a Late Bronze Age occupation site (Gordon 2009), and the area around Torrs Warren and Luce Sands has revealed a dense concentration of pottery and other finds which suggest it was a focus for activity throughout the Bronze and Iron Age periods.
11. Roman activity in the area is attested by a Roman Road and associated quarry pits, identified on aerial photographs (Canmore ID 78931). The fort named Round Dounan, a Scheduled Monument located to the north of the development area (SM No. 1995), may date to the period immediately following the collapse of the Roman government in Britain, i.e. the Early Christian or Early Medieval period, once known as the 'Dark Ages', though it is possible that this feature represents instead a motte (i.e. an earth and timber castle) of medieval date.
12. Throughout much of the medieval period, the area occupied by the modern village of Dunragit appears to have been part of the lands associated with nearby Glenluce Abbey, a Cistercian abbey founded in 1190. It lies in the parish on Glenluce, which in 1646 was subdivided into two: Old Luce and New Luce. Dunragit lies within the bounds of the former.
13. After the Reformation of 1560, the abbey lands were placed in the hands of a secular figure, the commendator, before being erected into a barony in the late 17th century (McDowall 1834-45. 69). Local families who were prominent in this post-medieval period included the Hays of Park and the Earls of Stair – by the early 19th century, marriage between these two households had resulted in the founding in a new cadet branch of the Stair family, the Dalrymple Hays, who had a considerable presence in the area.
14. Two dominant features of 18th century date include a branch of General Wade's military road, built in the mid 18th century as part of a wider network which improved communications throughout mainland Scotland in the wake of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 45, and Dunragit House, an 18th century country house which appears to encompass the remains of a much earlier structure, perhaps built to provide accommodation for the commendator of nearby Glenluce Abbey.
15. The village of Dunragit itself is, however, of more recent date. The New Statistical Account of 1834-43 describes the increasing importance of dairying throughout the parish of Old Luce (McDowall, 1834-45), but it was only with the founding of the Dunragit Creamery in 1882 that it was possible to exploit this resource on an industrial scale.
16. The village of Dunragit itself appears to pre-date the founding of the Creamery: the railway is shown as extant on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1849-50, with a station present, presumably intended for use by the residents of nearby Dunragit House. However, it may also have been instrumental in the founding of the dairy and the village in this particular location: a starch mill shown on the 1st edition map pre-dates the creamery, but also indicates that the area around Dunragit had already been selected as a focus for industrial development by the landowner.



Figure 1a: Roy's Military Map (1747-55) Showing Dunragit House and the Military Road

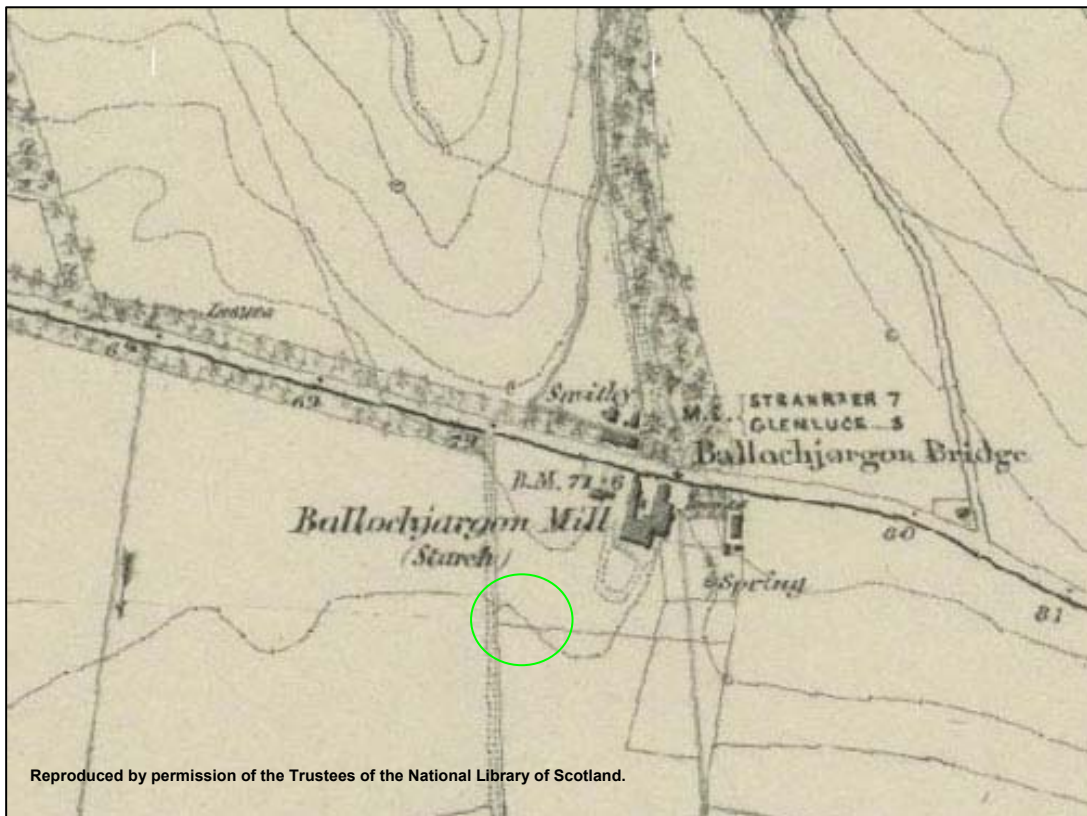


Figure 1b: Excerpt from 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1854-9

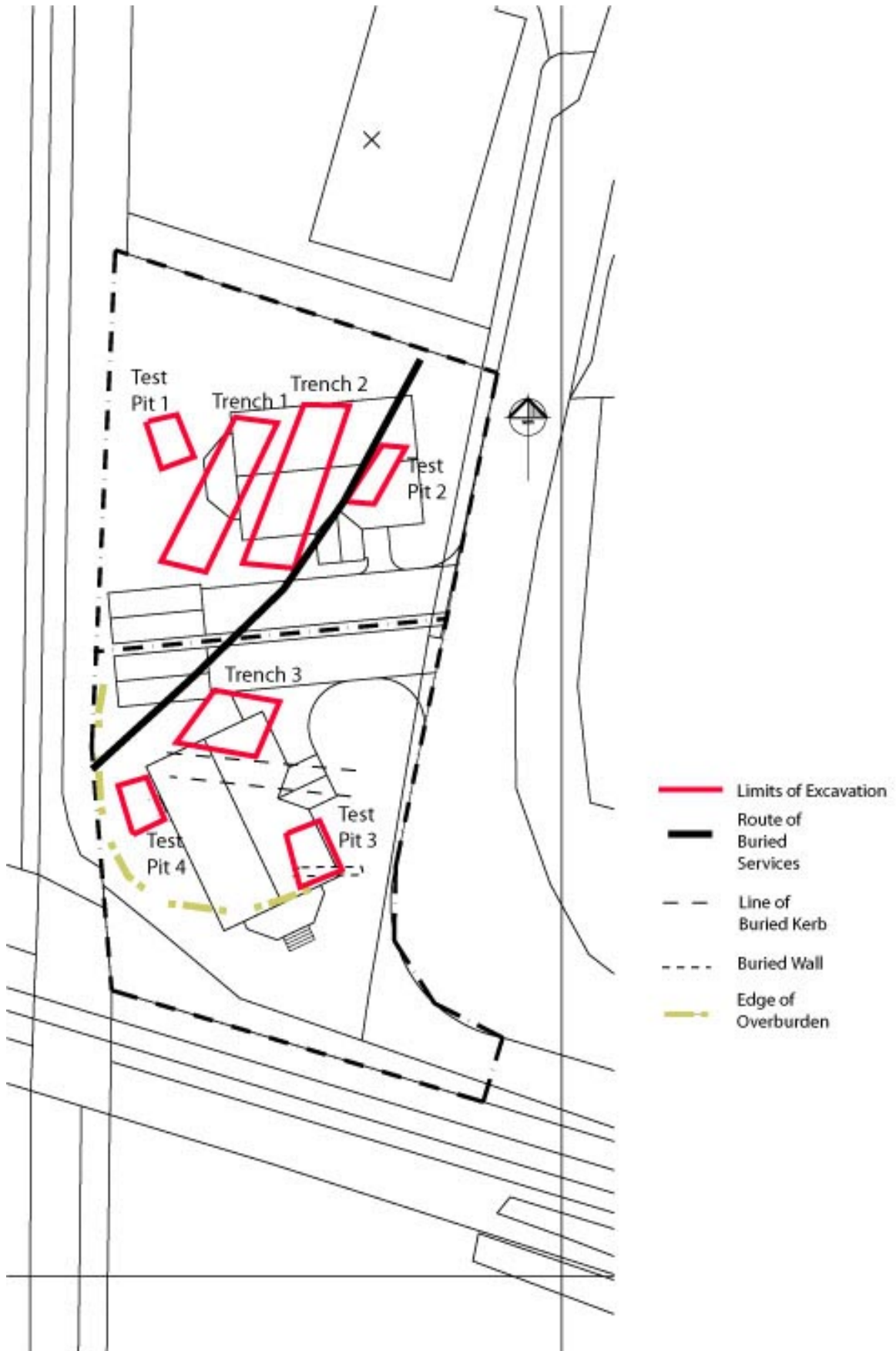


Figure 2: Location of excavation work and services

Project Works

17. The programme of works was carried out on the 20th May 2010 (Fig. 3a) in the form of archaeological monitoring of all ground breaking works as described in the Method Statement (Matthews 2010) and agreed with Dumfries and Galloway Council Archaeology Service.
18. It was initially agreed that the archaeological monitoring should involve all ground breaking works associated with the proposed development. The first task was to monitor the digging of test pits, and the stripping of overburden from over the footprints of the two house structures to subsoil level. In this manner, it was intended to establish the location and extent of any archaeological remains present.
19. It proved impossible to strip the entire area, due in part to the presence of buried services on site, and also the build-up of overburden at the south end of the site, where the subsoil was buried to a depth of 1.3m in places following landscaping works in recent times. However, a significant proportion of each house footprint was revealed, sufficient to characterise both the nature of the underlying subsoil and the history of land use on the site, particularly in recent times.
20. Any exposed features were investigated to determine their archaeological significance. The excavation works were limited in their extent due to the presence of buried services running over the site (Figure 2b). All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

Findings: Monitoring

21. Excavation works were undertaken using a JCB 3cx. The archaeological monitoring involved first of all the sinking of four test pits, one located in each corner of the site (Figure 3a). Each measured 1m x 2m in extent and were sunk to a depth of 2m, giving a detailed soil profile. The resulting observations obtained from these demonstrated that the north and south ends of the site were quite different in character.
22. The two northernmost test pits, Test Pits 1 and 2, revealed a broadly similar soil profile (Fig. 3b). Beneath a layer of Type 1 0.3m deep (001), there was a broad band of dark grey-brown silty clay (002), measuring between 0.5 and 0.6m deep. There was no topsoil surviving *in situ*, but the smell of decaying organic matter suggested that some fragments of topsoil or turf had survived beneath (001). Below this level, there was a much cleaner, red-brown silty clay (003) which represented the original, undisturbed subsoil. A field drain and a modern sewer pipe were encountered at an approximate depth of 2m in Test Pit 2, but no traces of any cuts could be seen in the section, perhaps indicating the modern date at which these works were carried out.
23. By contrast, the soil profile in the south-east corner (Test Pit 3) comprised a deep layer of overburden, characterised by a mixed red-brown/dark-brown sandy clay 1.2m deep (004). At a depth of approximately 1m, a brick wall (005) was revealed running E-W across the S end of Test Pit 3. Some traces of this wall were revealed on the surface, but over much of its extent it had been completely covered by overburden. The findings in Test Pit 4 were similar, though the wall was not encountered in this particular trench.
24. Informed by the findings of the test pits, additional areas within the footprints of the proposed house-footings were stripped of their Type 1 to the level of the subsoil. In Trenches 1 and 2, at the north end of the site, this revealed a similar dark grey-brown silty clay as (002). The colour was not, however, uniform, with frequent lenses of red-brown silty-clay evident. This layer was very compact, and had occasional flecks of coal present. Modern finds were found upon the surface, including modern glass and ceramic.
25. Trench 3 occupied the footprint of the more southerly proposed house structure. It was trapezoidal on plan, and measured 4 x 4 metres in extent. Here, the Type 1 directly overlay clean, very compact red-brown sandy clay subsoil, similar to (003).



Figure 3a: View of the Site prior to ground reduction



Figure 3b: Test Pit 1 – Soil Profile, E-Facing Section



Figure 4a: Test Pit 3 - E-Facing Section



Figure 4b: Trench 1 – Subsoil exposed

26. Trench 3 occupied the footprint of the more southerly proposed house structure. It was trapezoidal on plan, and measured 4 x 4 metres in extent. Here, the Type 1 directly overlay a clean, very compact red-brown sandy clay subsoil (006), similar to (003).
27. Several patches of discolouration were apparent upon the surface of (006), in particular an oval, shallow spread, 0.05m deep, of very compact, grey-brown silty clay (007). This was investigated, but no artefactual evidence was recovered which might date this deposit. It was similar in character to (001), and is likely to be recent in date (see Discussion below).

Discussion

28. The observations made during the monitoring works demonstrated clearly that the site had different characteristics in the north and the south areas, reflecting different processes in these respective areas, but both associated, nonetheless, with recent earthmoving activities.
29. In the north half of the site, i.e. those areas covered by Test Pits 1 and 2, and Trenches 1 and 2, the modern tennis court had been built upon a layer of Type 1 which measured 0.2 - 0.3m deep across the whole extent of the site (001). This was found to directly overlie very compact dark grey-brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of small stones and flecks of coal. Evidence from the test pits suggests that this layer reached a depth of between 0.5 and 0.6m across the entire extent of the north end. Finds of modern date were recovered from the surface, though none were identified in the sections of the test pits, and in some places lenses of red-brown silty clay could be identified, further indication that this layer was not homogenous in character.
30. The presence of this broad, variable layer which shared some characteristics with the natural subsoil, but differed markedly in colour, suggests that during the construction of the tennis court and car park, the area was left open following the removal of the topsoil. As a result, the exposed surface was subject to mixing and churning by the repeated movement of heavy plant across its extent, particularly in wet or damp conditions.
31. This situation was not repeated in the southern portion of the site, in particular Trench 3. Here, the layer of Type 1 (001) directly overlay a very clean, compact red-brown silty clay (006) which remained undisturbed over the full extent of the trench. At the south end of the trench, two parallel courses of concrete kerbstones were evident, running in a roughly east-west direction. These represented the remains of a former paved area, built in association with a car park which had once occupied the site.
32. Overlying this kerbed area, and extending south to a distance of between 0.5 and 1.5m from the southern boundary fence, was a covering of overburden which reached a depth of 1.2m in places. It partially buried the demolished remains of a brick wall which had once marked the southernmost limits of the car park. Test Pits 3 and 4 cut down through this overburden, revealing the remains of the wall at the south edge and the natural subsoil to the north. The overburden comprised a medium compact silty-sand which may represent the remains of topsoil displaced from elsewhere on the site, or – perhaps more likely – material imported from elsewhere in order to level the ground prior to the construction of the tennis court. Amongst this overburden was found a sherd of transfer-printed stoneware jar from the neighbouring Dunragit Creamery.
33. In both the northern and southern portions of the site, evidence was obtained of large scale earth-moving activities, which in the northern half had led to the large scale churning and disturbance of the subsoil, and which in the lower half had removed the topsoil down to the natural subsoil level. A comparison with the ground levels evident in the neighbouring access road gave further indication of large-scale landscaping works in recent times. Here, a drop of up to 0.5m was evident between the original ground surface, as evidenced by the line of the roadway, and the levelled area which had formed the car park/tennis court.



Figure 5a: Trench 3, Showing Natural, Undisturbed Subsoil



Figure 5b: Change in ground level between Development Area and adjacent road to East

Recommendations

34. The archaeological monitoring works comprised the monitoring of 4 test pits, followed by the localised stripping of overburden from the proposed house footprints. Excluded from the stripping exercise were those areas of the site already compromised through the installation of buried services.
35. The purpose of the archaeological works was to determine the nature, form and extent of the archaeological resource within those areas adversely impacted upon by the development according to the Method Statement (Matthews 2010).
36. No significant archaeology was observed within those areas adversely impacted upon by the development and indeed it was apparent that the site had already been compromised across its entire extent by earlier large-scale landscaping works which had altered ground levels and led to heavy disturbance of the subsoil, particularly in the northern half of the site.
37. While there are anticipated to be some additional minor impacts within the development area that are not within the area currently monitored. However, the absence of significant archaeology in the works to date and the scale of past disruption militate against survival of features on this site. On balance, we recommend that no further archaeological work should be carried out in relation to this development.
38. The appropriateness and acceptability of our recommendations rest with Dumfries & Galloway Council and their Archaeology Service.

Conclusion

39. A programme of archaeological works was carried out on behalf of Mr McCann, in respect to a proposed housing development at Westwind, Dunragit. The work entailed archaeological monitoring of the application area during the sinking of four test pits, and the stripping of overburden from the footprints of the two proposed house structures. The archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the development area.
40. No significant archaeological deposits were revealed and no anthropic material was recovered, other than that which indicated modern use of the site. As a result, no further works are recommended.

References

Ordnance Survey, 1854-59, *1st edition 1:10560 county series*

Matthews, A, 2010, *Westwind, Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway Archaeological Monitoring, Written Scheme of Investigation*, unpublished commercial report

Roy, 1747-55, *Military Survey of Scotland*

Appendix 1: Registers

Within this appendix are all registers pertaining to works on-site regardless of the process by which that information was gathered (e.g. evaluation or strip, map & sample).

Context Register

Context No.	Area/Trench	Type	Description	Interpretation
001	Site	Deposit	Grey whinstone chippings, varying in thickness between 0.2 and 0.3m.	Layer of levelling and bedding material underlying tennis courts and car park.
002	Test Pits 1 & 2; Trenches 1 & 2	Deposit	Very compact grey-brown silty clay, with occasional inclusions of angular small stones. Occasional flecks of coal present, with isolated finds of modern ceramic, plastic and glass. Found over the northern half of the site, reaching a depth of 0.5m over much of its extent.	Natural subsoil, subject to widespread disturbance and churning. This is likely to relate to the movement of heavy plant across the site during the construction of the car park and tennis courts.
003	Test Pits 1 & 2, Trenches 1 & 2	Deposit	Very compact red-brown silty clay, with occasional inclusions of angular small stones.	Natural subsoil, undisturbed.
004	Test Pits 3 & 4	Deposit	Red-brown silty sand, medium compaction, with few inclusions. Occasional finds of modern ceramic (not retained)	Overburden, lain as levelling material to infill remains of car park.
005	Test Pit 3	Structure	Line of red brick walling, located at S end. Remains upstanding to height of 2 courses in places.	Modern boundary wall.
006	Trench 3	Deposit	Red brown silty clay, very compact, with occasional inclusions of angular small stones.	Natural subsoil, undisturbed. May represent equivalent layer to 003.
007	Trench 3	Structure	Line of kerbstones, running roughly E-W	N edge of paved feature
008	Trench 3	Structure	Line of kerbstones, running roughly E-W	S edge of paved feature

Photographic Register

Image No.	Print		Slide		Digital	Description	From	Date
	Film No.	Neg. No.	Film No.	Neg. No.				
01	-	-	-	-	1	General View, Pre-excavation	NE	20/05/10
02	-	-	-	-	2	General View, Pre-excavation	NW	20/05/10
03	-	-	-	-	3	General View, Pre-excavation	SW	20/05/10
04	-	-	-	-	4	General View, Pre-Excavation	SE	20/05/10
05	-	-	-	-	5	Test Pit 1 – NNE-Facing Section	NNE	20/05/10
06	-	-	-	-	6	Test Pit 2 – NNE-Facing Section	NNE	20/05/10
07	-	-	-	-	7	Test Pit 3- S-Facing Section	S	20/05/10
08	-	-	-	-	8	Test Pit 3 – E-Facing Section	W	20/05/10
09	-	-	-	-	9	Test Pit 4 – S-Facing Section	S	20/05/10
10	-	-	-	-	10	Test Pit 4 – W-Facing Section	W	20/05/10
11	-	-	-	-	11	Trench 1, General View, Post-Excavation	NE	20/05/10
12	-	-	-	-	12	Trench 1, General View, Post-Excavation	SW	20/05/10
13	-	-	-	-	13	Trench 2, General View, Post-Excavation	NE	20/05/10
14	-	-	-	-	14	Trench 2, General View, Post-Excavation	SW	20/05/10
15	-	-	-	-	15	Trench 3, General View, Post-Excavation	W	20/05/10
16	-	-	-	-	16	Trench 3, General View, Post-Excavation	S	20/05/10
17	-	-	-	-	17	General View of Site, Post-Excavation	S	20/05/10
18	-	-	-	-	18	Sample Section – W-Facing, Trench 3	W	20/05/10
19	-	-	-	-	19	Sample Section – W-Facing, Trench 2	W	20/05/10
20	-	-	-	-	20	Differentiation in Ground Levels Between Development Area & Adjacent Roadway	W	20/05/10
21	-	-	-	-	21	As above, detail	W	20/05/10

Image No.	Print		Slide		Digital	Description	From	Date
	Film No.	Neg. No.	Film No.	Neg. No.				
22	-	-	-	-	22	View From Development Area into Scheduled Field to W	N	20/05/10
23	-	-	-	-	23	View looking S along W edge of Development Area	N	20/05/10
24	-	-	-	-	24	As above, Showing Line of Modern Brick Wall at W Edge of Site	N	20/05/10
25	-	-	-	-	25	View Along S Edge of Site, Showing Recent Buildup of Overburden Over Modern Wall	W	20/05/10
26	-	-	-	-	26	General View of Site, Post-Excavation	SE	20/05/10

Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Sheet No.	Area/ Trench	Drawing Type	Scale	Description	Drawn By	Date
1	1	Site	Plan	1:100	Site layout	CLT	20/05/10

Appendix 2: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Dumfries & Galloway
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Westwind, Dunragit
PROJECT CODE:	10030
PARISH:	Old Luce
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Louise Turner
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NX 152 573
START DATE (this season)	20 th May 2010
END DATE (this season)	20 th May 2010
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (may include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the site of a proposed housing development to the rear of an existing property in Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway. The site lay immediately adjacent to an extensive ritual landscape of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date at (Scheduled Monument). No features of archaeological interest were identified, on a site which had been heavily landscaped in the recent past.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Mr McCann
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Unit 8 Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6PU
E MAIL:	contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Report to Dumfries & Galloway Council and archive to National Monuments Record of Scotland.

Contact Details

41. Rathmell Archaeology can be contacted at our Registered Office or through the web:

Rathmell Archaeology Ltd	www.rathmell-arch.co.uk
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Ayrshire	f.: 01294 542849
KA13 6PU	e.: contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk

42. Dumfries and Galloway Archaeology Service can be contacted through the details noted below:

Dumfries and Galloway Archaeology Service	
Dumfries and Galloway Council	
Newall Terrace	t.: 01387 260154
Dumfries	f.: 01387 260149
DG1 1LW	e.: jane.brann@dumgal.gov.uk

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