

**Report of Archaeological Watching Brief
March – May 2004
Fortrose Area Water Mains
Replacement Project, Fortrose, Highland.**

Client: Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water

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Non-Technical Summary

Stuart Farrell and Charles Murray (Murray Archaeological Services) were commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd in March 2004 to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Fortrose and Rosemarkie as part of a water mains replacement project. This work followed on the recommendations made in a desktop and walkover survey conducted by Stuart Farrell.

Work in Fortrose revealed most of the areas of interest monitored to be heavily cut and disturbed by previous water mains and other existing services. Work in Fortrose did reveal a pit of unknown date. Monitoring of a small section in Rosemarkie again revealed area cut heavily by services but also one small pit.

No recommendations for further work have been made.

1. Introduction

This report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted for Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water by the authors for a series of replacement water mains at Fortrose and a small section in Rosemarkie. This work follows on recommendations made in a previous archaeological desktop and walkover survey work.

The site is located around the village of Fortrose and partly in the village of Rosemarkie, on the Black Isle, Highland.

The work was conducted between 25th March and May 25th 2004.

2. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr. R Sawicki, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Staff of A MacPhee Ltd for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

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Figure 1 - General Location 1:50,000
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3. Historical Background

The origins of Fortrose relate to the Cathedral of Ross that was removed from nearby Rosemarkie to Fortrose c1240, the church being the chief benefactor of the Earls of Ross. (Alston, 1999) James II united Fortrose with the village of Rosemarkie in 1445. Granted a share in the burgh of Rosemarkie in 1455 becoming a Royal burgh in its own right in 1590 and being annexed to Rosemarkie in 1592 (Gifford, 1992). An Act of Parliament by James VI ratified its right as a Royal burgh in 1661.

The origins of Rosemarkie date possibly back to the 6th century when a church dedicated to St. Moluag is supposed to be sited here, with a monastery of St. Boniface a century or two later. Cathedral of Ross was established here in 1125 by David I, later moving to Fortrose. Made a burgh of the Bishop's of Ross in the 13th century but was by 1590 considered part of Fortrose (Gifford, 1992) High Street flanked by 18th and 19th century buildings, with no indication of any earlier structures. (Beaton, 1992)

4. Objectives

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of a number of sections of water mains to record those features revealed by excavation work. This work follows on recommendations made in a previous archaeological desktop and walkover survey work. (Farrell, 2003)

This work is to include the following:

- Watching brief
- Report on results

5. Methodology

A monitoring was made of the removal of tar, topsoil and subsoil's to a depth of 1m for the trenches. A back-acting machine with a toothed bucket excavated the trenches with possible archaeological features being cleaned by hand. All trenches were c370mm wide.

Weather on the days of work (March 15th – May 25th 2004) was usually bright and clear.

6. Watching Brief Investigation

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with accepted professional archaeological standards as published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999). Over the construction period a suitably qualified archaeologist was on site to carry out observations and assessment of the area affected by the excavation works.

Results

A monitoring of the excavations revealed the following:

Church Street (Work conducted 25th- 29th March by C Murray)

The total length of the new water mains trench observed was c.106m long and varied slightly in depth from 1m to 1.2m. A top layer of tar c.100mm thick overlay a gravel and granite dust sub-surface c.200mm deep. This in turn overlay a light brown sandy and slightly silty natural. The trench ran the length of the N side of

the street and was much disturbed by services for water, sewerage and electricity supply [see photograph 1, below].

In an area, comparatively undisturbed, opposite the pathway between No's 4 and 6 Church Street, some large boulders were encountered. Further excavation by hand showed that, while these were not structural, they represented a significant anomaly in the otherwise sandy natural [see photograph 2, below].



Photograph 1: Looking SE



Photograph 2: Looking SE

Further to the NW, opposite the gateway to No.14 Church Street the trench cut through a layer or pit consisting almost entirely of shell mixed with some animal bone. The layer extended for c.1.2m and was c.200mm thick at its centre, tapering to c. 100mm at the sides. It was sealed by a black silty soil, which lay below the tarred pavement and sub-base [see Photograph 3, below]. Given the narrow confines of the trench, it was impossible to determine the extent of the feature or to tell if the shell and black sealing layer was a pit or more general spread. No pottery or other datable material was found in the shell layer.



Photograph 3: Looking S – scale 1m.

With the exception of the above, no other archaeological features or finds were evident in the Church Street trench.

Station Road (Work conducted 29th – 30th March by C Murray)

The trench observed in Station Road extended for c.79m and ran along the S side of the road; beginning at the NW end and running SE [see photographs 4 and 5, over]. The depth of the trench varied from 1m to 1.1m and was 370mm wide. The tarmac layer was c.120mm thick with a c.200mm sub-base of hard pink granite chips. At the NW end of the road, and extending SE for c.30m,

the sub-base overlay a homogeneous dark grey to black garden soil which produced fragments of 19th century pottery and some small pieces of clay tobacco pipe.



Photograph 4: NW end, looking E.



Photograph 5: SE end of road.

At a distance of c.27m NW of the junction of Station Road with High Street, the trench cut through a layer of black soil mixed with 19th century dump material containing glass, fragments of pottery and much shell. The layer was c.450mm thick underlay the road sub-base. Although much disturbed by drainage service pipes, the natural at this SE end of the road was soft yellow sand. No other archaeological features or finds were evident in Station Road.

Academy Street (Work conducted 31st March by C Murray, 5th April by S Farrell)

The section of trench observed in Academy Street began at its junction with Cathedral Square and continued NW for 92m towards the High Street. The trench was excavated along the N side of the street and passed along the western precincts of Fortrose Cathedral [see Photograph 6, below]. The entire length of the trench observed showed the levels to be very heavily disturbed by services such as power cables and sewerage pipes. At 0.9m below the road surface a 3" cast iron water supply pipe was found to run along the line of the trench for its entire length [see Photograph 7, below]



Photograph 6: Looking NW



Photograph 7: Looking NW

The cast-iron pipe was broken up and removed in order to achieve the required depth of c.1m in the trench. Clearly, all evidence of earlier levels was totally destroyed by this cast iron pipe and the other services, finds in the soil included concrete and brick. Only to the north end of this trench was the natural observed

at a depth of 1m. No archaeological features or finds were evident in Academy Street.

Rose Street (Work conducted 6th – 8th April by S Farrell)

The section of trench observed in Rose Street began at its junction with Academy Street and continued E for 88m towards the junction with Castle Street. The trench was excavated along the S side of the street. The tarmac layer was less than 100mm onto orange-brown sandy gravel natural, no indication of subsoil's under road especially at W end by Academy Street, cobbling by edges of houses may indicate that road levels have been dropped before tarmac road was constructed. Some dark soils at a depth of 0.4m were revealed to the front of no.10 but there was no indication of them being archaeological as no finds made or no deposits visible. Again heavily cut by existing services.

No archaeological features or finds were evident in Rose Street.

Union Street (Work conducted 8th – 20th April by S Farrell)

The section of trench observed in Union Street began at its junction with Rose Street and continued N for 83m towards the High Street. The trench was excavated along the E side of the street, crossing the road almost in the middle of the street to the W side. The entire length of the trench observed showed the levels to be very heavily disturbed by existing services such as power cables and sewerage pipes. At 0.9m below the road surface a 3" cast iron water supply pipe was found to run along the east line of the trench for the first 25m of its length. The cast-iron pipe was broken up and removed in order to achieve the required depth of c.1m in the trench. Clearly, all evidence of earlier levels was totally destroyed by this cast iron pipe and the other services. Dark soil containing flecks of charcoal was located 30m N from Rose Street at depth of 0.5m only find made was of a fragment of butchered bone of unknown date. At the N end of the road the sub-base overlay a homogeneous dark grey to black soil which produced fragments of 19th century white glazed pottery and some small pieces of animal bone and some crushed shells possibly the remnants of former road surface before being tarred.

No archaeological features or finds were evident in Rose Street.

High Street (Work conducted 20th – 22nd April by S Farrell)

The section of trench observed in the High Street began at its junction with Castle Street and continued E for 52m towards the junction with Balfour Crescent. The trench was excavated along the S side of the street with natural at a depth of 0.5m under dark brown subsoil to a depth of 0.35m under road. Close to the start of the trench some large rounded boulders were encountered, with some 19th century white glazed pottery above. Further excavation by hand showed that, while these were not structural as none were bounded by mortar or had any kind of masonry work, while these were not structural, they represented a significant anomaly in the otherwise sandy natural. Work to the E revealed only subsoil again cut partly by existing services.

No archaeological features or finds were evident in this section of the High Street.

Rosemarkie (Work conducted 19th – 25th May by S Farrell)
(Work from NH 73531/57527 to NH 73655/57730)

The section of trench in Rosemarkie was only limited to Courthill Road, which sits mostly above and behind the village, no other work in the village was carried out. Work started by the Old Schoolhouse and continued E for 128m towards the Plough Inn, at the junction with the Cromarty Road. The trench was excavated along the N side of the street and revealed natural at 0.6m with area again cut heavily by services.

One small feature was noted at NH 73558/57565 of a small pit 220mm below road surface to a depth of 290mm and 400mm wide of a dark grey black fill with specks of charcoal but no finds. Date unknown.

Photograph 8 : Detail of pit in section – scale 0.5m.



To the end of Courthill Road (towards the Plough Inn) area to west of village hall topsoil was to a depth of 1m whilst below hall road was directly onto natural of orange-brown sandy gravel with area again heavily cut by services. No indication of any features in road possibly due to the steepness of the slope.

Photograph 9 View up Courthill Road



Photograph 10 View down road.



7. Conclusions

Overall the work in Fortrose provided indication of very limited archaeological remains especially due to the extent of existing services which may have destroyed any archaeological deposits. In all the sections of trench monitored there was no indication of any distinctive deposits relating to the former occupation of the cathedral and village and there was no indication of any tunnels to the cathedral that are rumoured to exist.

The possible dark soils revealed in Rose Street and Union Street may be the remnants of 'garden soil' around the cathedral, though no dateable material was found to the small sections revealed.

Work in Rosemarkie was again limited due to only a small section of trench being excavated to the rear of the village. It is probable that any archaeological deposits lie closer to the High Street, though the find of the small pit atop the hill does indicate some previous use in this area to what it may have been is unknown.

Though limited it is hoped that this project of work is helpful to future investigations in the villages of Fortrose and Rosemarkie.

8. Recommendations

No recommendations with regard any further fieldwork for this project is to be proposed due to the limited number of features that were revealed, and that no further work is required.

9. Archive

The following is to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report
- A set of colour slides showing the progress of the work conducted.

10. Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

11. References

Alston, D (1999) *Ross and Cromarty: A Historical Guide*. Birlinn. Edinburgh.

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Farrell, S (2003) *Archaeological Desktop and Walkover Survey Fortrose Water Mains Project*. Unpublished report – copy held by Highland SMR.

Gifford, J (1992) *The Buildings of Scotland: The Highlands and Islands*. Penguin. Edinburgh.

IFA (1999) *By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists*. Reading.

Appendix 1 – Photographic Register

Slides 1 - 23 © C Murray.

Slides 24 - 51 © S Farrell.

- 1 – View of Church Street, SE end, Looking N.
- 2 – View of Church Street, Looking SE.
- 3 – As No. 2, above.
- 4 – Detail of No. 2, above.
- 5 – View of services damage at SE end of Church Street
- 6 – Detail of No. 5, above.
- 7 – View of Church Street, Looking NW at services damage in trench.
- 8 – View of Church Street, Looking SE at services damage in SE end of trench.
- 9 – Church Street, view of services damage in SE end of street.
- 10 – Church Street, view of boulders in trench, looking SE.
- 11 – Church Street, view of location of shell deposit looking N
- 12 – As No. 11, above, looking W.
- 13 – Church Street, detail of shell deposit.
- 14 – As No.13, above.
- 15 – Detail of No 13, above.
- 16 – View of Station Road, W end, looking S.
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- 18 – Detail of No.16, above.
- 19 – View of midden deposit, Station Road, looking S.
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- 23 – View of cast iron water pipe in Academy Street trench, looking NW.
- 24 – View of Fortrose Cathedral facing NE.
- 25 – View of Academy Street facing N.
- 26 – View of excavation in progress.
- 27 – View of trench in Academy Street facing N.
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- 29 – View of trench in Rose Street facing E.
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- 31 – View of Fortrose Chapter House.
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- 34 – View of trench in Rose Street facing W from junction with Castle Street.
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- 44 – View of trench in High Street facing E from junction with Castle Street.
- 45 – View of trench in Union Street facing S.
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- 47 – View of Courthill Road, Rosemarkie facing W.
- 48 – View of former smithy facing NW.
- 49 – View of trench at Rosemarkie (front of Crawmarkie) facing E.
- 50 – Detail of small pit in section in front of Crawmarkie.
- 51 – Detail of small pit in section in front of Crawmarkie – scale 0.5m.