Project Code: BSP07
Client: Amec on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council
Date: August 2007

Biggar High School, South Lanarkshire: Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report

Clionadh McGarry

HEADLAND ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (BSP07)

Client	Amec on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council
National Grid Reference	NT 304200 637400 (site centred)
Project Manager	Mark Roberts
Text	Clionadh McGarry
Illustrations	Linn Breslin
Evaluation	Dan Atkinson Clionadh McGarry
Schedule	
Fieldwork	April 2007
Report	April 2007

Summary

This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation on the site of the proposed new school buildings to replace the existing Biggar High School, South Lanarkshire. Fifteen trenches were excavated across the existing playing fields, totalling 372 linear metres of trenching. No features of archaeological significance were encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by WSP Environmental for Amec on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of a building a new school to replace the existing Biggar High School on the current playing fields located south of the existing complex adjacent to Biggar Burn. This report presents the results of this field evaluation. The program of works was conducted in accordance with a WSI agreed with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS). The fieldwork was undertaken between the 2nd and 4th April 2007.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (Figure 1)

The replacement school site is aligned at roughly right angles to and 120m south of Biggar High Street. The site investigated is on the level flood plain northeast of Biggar Burn and is currently used as playing fields. The ground is gently undulating and does not appear to have been significantly landscaped.

3. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the field evaluation was to determine the presences or absence, quality, nature, extent and character of any buried archaeological remains. The results will be used to allow the local authority to make an informed decision regarding any further mitigation works.

4. METHOD

Desk Based Assessment

As a part of an Environmental Statement a desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken. This included the examination of all historic maps and records held in the NMRS. The results of this work were used to inform the fieldwork. A systematic search of all readily available and relevant documentary sources was undertaken using the following sources:

- Sites and Monuments Record at West of Scotland Archaeology Service
- Archaeological records held in the National Monuments Record of Scotland
- Published maps held in the National Library of Scotland
- Information on Listed Buildings/Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Relevant published sources

Trial trenching

A series of trial trenches were excavated in the area of the proposed development. These aimed to cover approximately 5% of the development site (total area approximately 670 m²), amounting to 372 linear metres of trenching. These evaluated the depth, age and character of any surviving archaeological deposits. Trench stratigraphy was cleaned by hand and fully recorded. All recording used pro-forma record sheets, drawings were at standard scales (sections 1:10 and plans 1:100), photography used colour print and slide film. No archaeological features were uncovered.

A 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the trenches. All excavation was conducted under direct archaeological supervision. The locations of the trenches were tied into the national Grid using a Leica TCRA 805 total station.

5. RESULTS (Figure 1)

Trial trenching

Appendix 1 gives full descriptions of all trenches excavated and each context recorded.

Fifteen trenches were excavated and no features of archaeological significance were identified.

Trenches 1 and 10 exposed what seems to be the highest/driest post-glacial area of the site. With only topsoil and sub-soils overlying a very dry natural of either silty clay or silty gravel. Trenches 11 and 15 also belong to this dry area, although a band of compact greyish yellow silty clay suggests a past flood event. Trench 15 was relatively deep compared to the other "dry" trenches and the silty sand strata above the glacial till may suggest that this was an area of water, such as a large palaeo-channel (possibly connected with the channel identified in Trench 2 & 4), pond or loch, adjacent to the higher area in the south-east of the site.

Trenches 2, 4, 5 and 9 were located within a boggy area running north-east to south-west towards Biggar Burn. In Trenches 2 and 4 the peat was clearly cut by a palaeochannel. The peat deposits were deepest in the northern part of this boggy corridor. The peat layer in Trench 9 was heavily banded with fine bluish grey sandy silt. In all instances the peat deposit was overlain by a silt or silty sand indicating a large flood event or perhaps open standing water in the past.

The north-east corner of the site was also particularly boggy as Trenches 6 and 7 revealed the deepest peat deposits (0.55m). The adjacent land immediately north-west of the fence was still clearly waterlogged, the modern flexi-pipe field drains running North to South through Trench 6 seemed unable to much improve the situation. The peat layer peters out very suddenly toward the southern end of Trench 7. This area too shows a succession of hill-wash and flood events.

Trenches 8, 12, 13, 14, the south-east end of Trench 7 and the north-east end of Trench 3 seem to suggest another dry ridge running northeast to southwest across the site, although this may be slightly misleading as Trench 8 may have only been machined as far as a substantial hillwash deposit as peat was encountered in the test pit excavated due North of the trench.

6. CONCLUSIONS

No archaeologically significant deposits were encountered during the works. Overall the trenches revealed a post-glacial landscape of gravel till ridges or islets running broadly north-east to south-west toward the present Biggar Burn. The south-east area of the site was noticeably the driest and was probably the highest in the post-glacial landscape. The lower lying areas between the ridges probably contained open water as the till was frequently covered by fine silt. Thereafter there was a period of peat development above the glacial tills noticed throughout lower lying areas of the site. The deeper accumulations of peat seem concentrated around the north of the site, for example Trenches 7 (0.55m) and 9 (not bottomed). In the southern low-lying areas the peat layer is seldom deeper than 0.30m. The

peat deposits were cut by palaeo-channels, which appear to have silted up naturally. The infilling of the channels may relate to the alteration of the local drainage system through stream capture, with the Clyde capturing streams from the catchment of the Tweed. Another possible process of that might render old channels redundant would be the alteration of the local drainage system during agricultural improvement: the local waterways appear on the Ordnance Survey map to have been re-routed and canalised. The site seems to have remained fairly wet until the present day, the stratigraphy suggesting episodes of hill-wash deposits probably occasioned by activity further up slope to the north of the site, and periodic flooding. Although the site is located just over a hundred metres from Biggar High Street this area was waterlogged, marginal land, once occupied by areas of standing water, possibly a pond or loch. There is some evidence based on the rubble and ceramic field drains and occasional modern pottery sherds encountered in the topsoil and subsoils that the area may have been drained and improved for agriculture from the late 18th or early 19th century.

7. REFERENCES

Scottish National Library – Map Library

1745 Roy map: Sheet 6/4

1773 Ross *A map of the Shire of Lanark*

1864 1st ed Ordnance Survey: *Lanarkshire* XXXIV (Surveyed 1858-9)

1899 2nd ed Ordnance Survey: *Lanarkshire* XXXIV SW (revised 1896)

APPENDIX 1: SITE REGISTERS

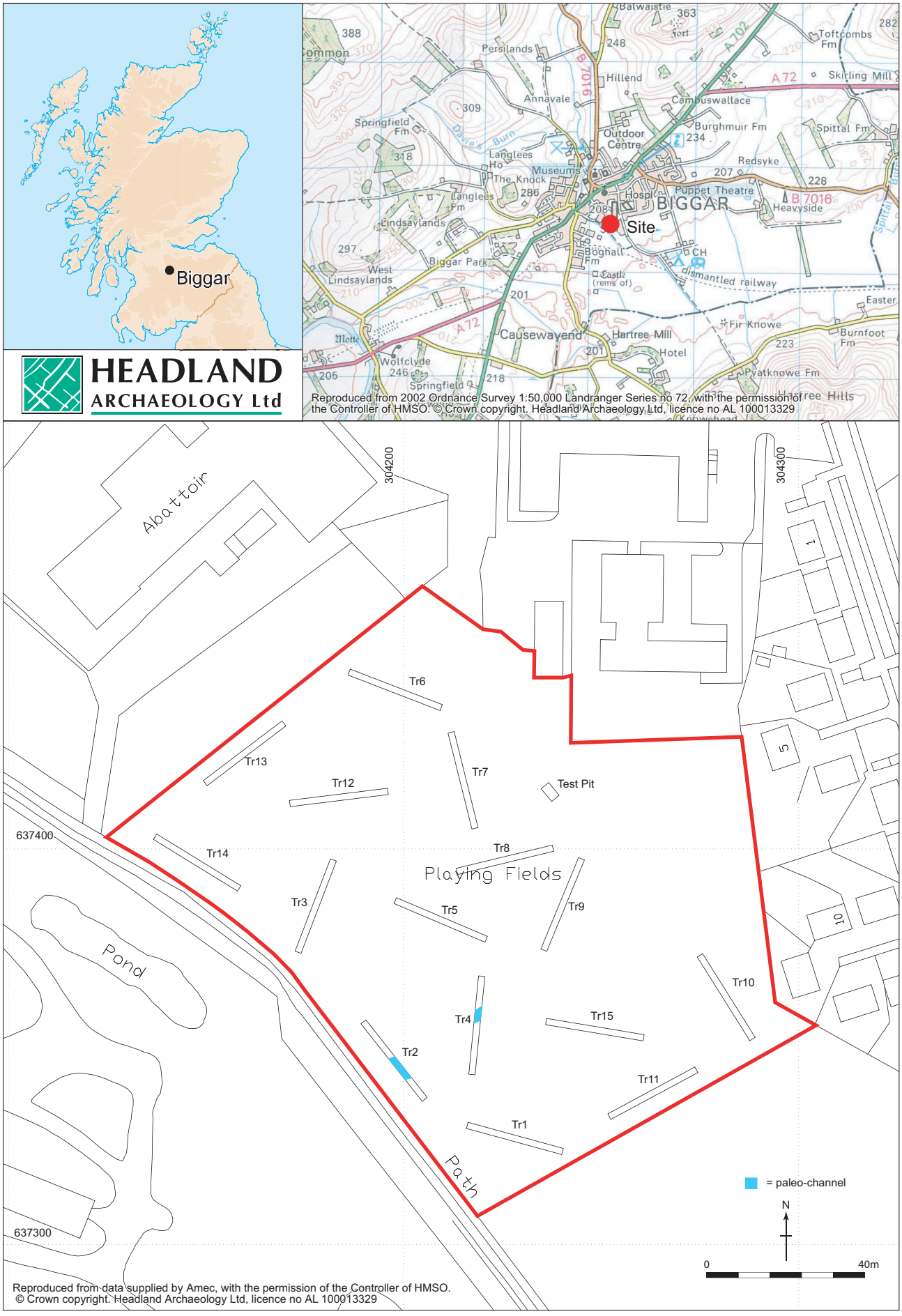
1.1 Trench Register

Trench No.	Orientation	Dimensions (M)	Description
1	W,NW- E,SE	25 X 1.8 X 0.45	Contained modern top and sub-soils overlying natural deposits.
2	NW- SE	25 X 1.8 X 1.30	Contained top and subsoils overlying an alluvial deposit, which sealed a peat deposit cut by a palaeochannel. The peat could have accumulated on a possible lakebed or pond.
3	N,NE- S,SW	25 X 1.8 X 1.0	Contained hillwash and alluvial deposits beneath the top and subsoils. There was a (max. 0.25m) peat horizon under the alluvial deposit in the N, NE end of the trench. There was a cut of a possible palaeochannel E – W in the S, SW end of the trench.
4	N-S	25 X 1.8 X 1.10	As Tr. 2. Contained a probable palaeochannel cutting the peat deposit and two ceramic field drains, one of which was of ″horse-shoe″ type (early 19th century).
5	SE- NW	25 X 1.8 X 1.0	Statigraphy as Tr. 2 (although no palaeochannel). The natural till was cut by 4 ceramic field drains.
6	NW-SE	25X 1.8 X 1.13	As Tr.2. Top soil cut by several modern flexi-pipe drains.
7	N-S	25 X 1.8 X 1.23	As Tr. 2. The peat deposit extends c. 15 metres from North to South in section and is characterised by rapidly petering out.
8	NE-SW	25 X 1.8 X 0.95	Topsoil and subsoil overlying gravely, silty sand.
9	NE-SW	25 X 1.8 X 1.20	Contained top and subsoils overlying alluvial and hillwash deposits. A marked ridge in the glacial till was revealed. Below these peat had accumulated in the low area NE of this natural rise. The till was cut by a substantial rubble drain which contained a sherd of willow-ware.
10	N,NW-S,SE	25 X 1.8 X 0.50	Contained topsoil and subsoil overlying glacial till.
11	NE-SW	25 X 1.8 X 1.25	Contained top and subsoils overlying alluvial deposits. The natural was exposed as a glacial till. Two ceramic field drains were cut into the till.
12	NE – SE	25 x 1.8 x 0.50	Contained topsoil and a silty sand with peat lenses above glacial till.
13	NE- SW	25 x 1.80 x 0.70	Contained topsoil overlying an alluvial deposit above glacial till.
14	SE – NW	25 x 1.80 x 1.20	As Tr. 2. Cut by two N-S rubble drains.
15	W,NW-E ,SE	25 x 1.80 x 1.42	Contained top and subsoils overlying alluvial deposits above the natural glacial till.

1.2 Photographic Register

Colour Slide & Colour Print

Shot No.	Direction Facing	Description
1		ID Shot
2	W, NW	Trench 1 – General shot
3	NW	Trench 2 - General shot
4	SW	Trench 2 - Section
5	N, NE	Trench 3 – General shot
6	W	Trench 4 - General shot
7	NW	Trench 5 – General shot
8	SE	Trench 6 - General shot
9	N	Trench 6 - Section
10	S	Trench 7 - General shot
11	NE	Trench 8 – General shot
12	SW	Trench 9 - General shot
13	N, NW	Trench 10 – General shot
14	SW	Trench 11 - General shot
15	NE	Trench 11 – General shot
16	SW	Trench 12 - General shot
17	NE	Trench 13 - General shot
18	SE	Trench 14 – General shot
19	W, NW	Trench 15 - General shot
20	E, SE	Trench 15 – General shot



BSP06 : Figure 1 - Site and trench location