

Survey and Trenching Near Auldton Motte, Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway



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Site Location



Summary

This report was created to publish the results of an archaeological evaluation of land east of the town of Moffat in Dumfries and Galloway. The investigation took the form of partial geophysical survey of land immediately to the south of Auldton Motte followed up by a more intensive machine trenching survey covering the whole site by percentage.

Although it was initially hoped that structures associated with the monument or from earlier settlement along the nearby Crosslaw Burn may be discovered by geophysical survey none were in fact revealed.

Despite this disappointing outcome which was confirmed by the later machine trenching program, a great deal of pottery and other artefacts were recovered. The results of the post excavation analysis of these finds which are interesting from both an archaeological and social history perspective are discussed within this report.

Burn watercourse to the west of the proposed development area (Fig 1). A similar pattern of habitation along the Crosslaw Burn which intersects the proposed development was therefore believed to be a distinct possibility.

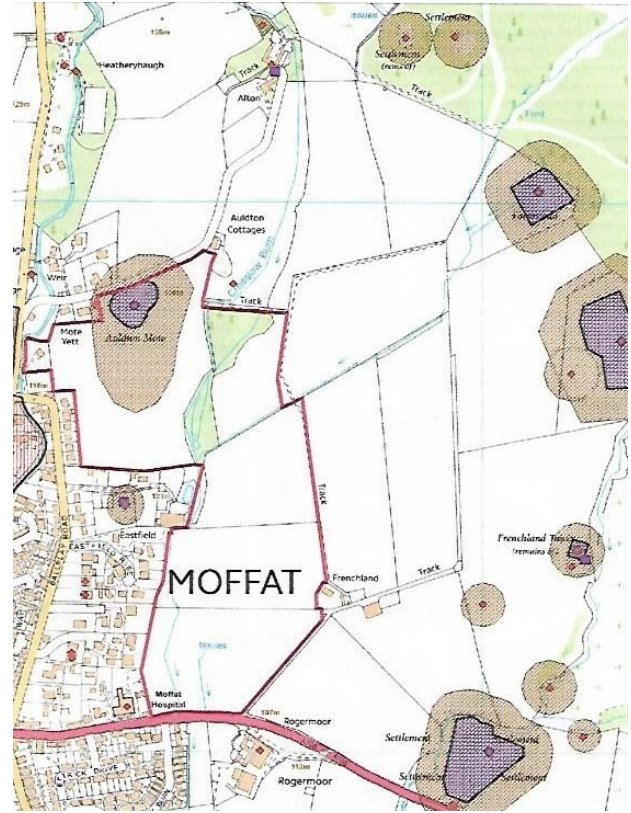


Fig1 Scheduled monuments

Introduction

The investigation was initiated as part of a planning application (Ref: 180967/MCE) and was deemed necessary because of the site's location, part of which is adjacent to the scheduled ancient monument of Auldton Motte. (HER ref: MDG255; HES ref:SM684). Although no other archaeological features had been recorded within the site boundaries, it was felt that the number of other known sites of varying periods which feature in the nearby landscape made evidence of settlement more likely and therefore worthy of investigation. Particularly of note was the series of sites which follow the course of the Frenchland

Historical Background

The scheduled ancient monument of Auldton Motte is thought to have been constructed by Robert de Brus (1070-1141) soon after being awarded the title of 1st Lord of Annadale in 1124. The lands which came with the title were added to those already held in Yorkshire and were given as reward for service and loyalty to King Henry I. It is not known whether De Brus ever visited the Auldton site and he is buried at Gisborough priory in Yorkshire of which he was a benefactor.



Fig2 **Auldton Motte**

Very little archaeological investigation has been carried out on the monument itself other than a poorly executed antiquarian dig, for which no data exists. The monument is officially listed as a medieval motte and bailey castle with medieval ridge and furrow (Canmore site 48331). Despite its condition and continuing deterioration caused by the undermining by a resident population of badgers, the monument remains enigmatic in the landscape and a rare example of its type.

Evaluation Strategy

In accordance with the written statement of evaluation, it was agreed that an area covering not less than 8% of the whole of the proposed development site would be opened to evaluation trenching. A pattern of trenches was designed which allowed a good chance of revealing any previously unknown archaeology while avoiding existing sub surface water and electricity services.

The proposed development site was subdivided into 5 separate fields with fields 1-4 being trenched first to allow simultaneous investigation through geophysical survey of the area in field 5 identified as potentially the most sensitive, immediately south of the scheduled monument. All trenches were set out exactly as the plan (Fig3) indicates using a Leica TS15 total station in order to quickly map in 3 dimensions and apply coordinates to any subsoil features discovered in-situ.

Trenches were dug under archaeologist supervision by a 360 excavator with 2m bucket and it was calculated that the agreed 8% of excavated area would therefore amount to 9000m² of trenches. Beginning on 8th April 2019, fields 2,3 and 4 were the first to be excavated at the request of the landowner in order to most quickly return those fields to useable pasture.

The area in field 5 indicated by the red box in Fig3 was designated as being the area most likely to yield features relating to the medieval castle or any associated settlement and so this area was subject to a complete magnetometry survey.

The results of the magnetometry were to be used to inform a more targeted resistivity survey of any areas which indicated structures or other forms of human activity and it was hoped that the combination of data supplied by both of these surveys would then provide more precisely coordinated areas for trenches rather than the random pattern used on the rest of the site.

Field and trench positions

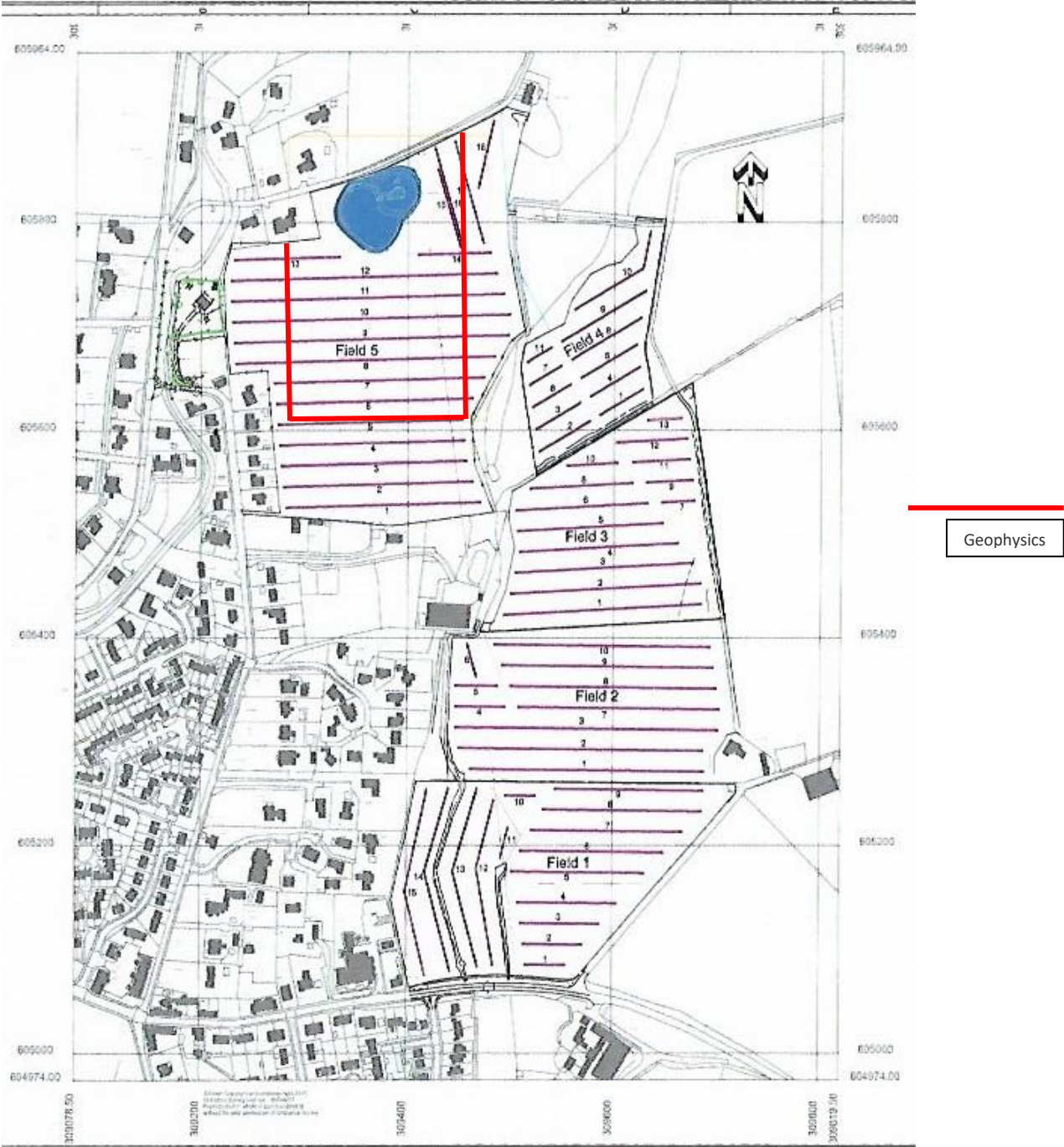


Fig3

Reproduced from ordnance survey Land-Line.Plus data with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's stationary office. Crown Copyright 2019

Geophysics

The full geophysics report is available via the **Online Access** to the **Index of archaeological Investigations** project (OASIS)
 OASIS ID number is: - archaeol3-350594.
 Geophysical surveys were carried out by Richie Willis and Laura Watson of Durham University Archaeological Services between 15th-16th April 2019. Approximately 4ha was subject to magnetometry survey using an array of towed fluxgate gradiometers. Disappointingly, no man-made structures were visible through the initial analysis, though a series of natural former water courses can be clearly seen in the south-western area in Fig 4



Fig4

Although no obvious man-made features seemed to be indicated by the magnetometry it was decided to test the results by targeting the three most interesting areas and carrying out limited resistivity surveys at these points. The points chosen for resistivity were the apparent right-angled turn of the water course in the south-western corner and two areas of possible curved features on the eastern side of the scheduled monument: -see Figs 4 and 5. A total area of around 0.5ha was surveyed using resistivity divided into three 20m grids.

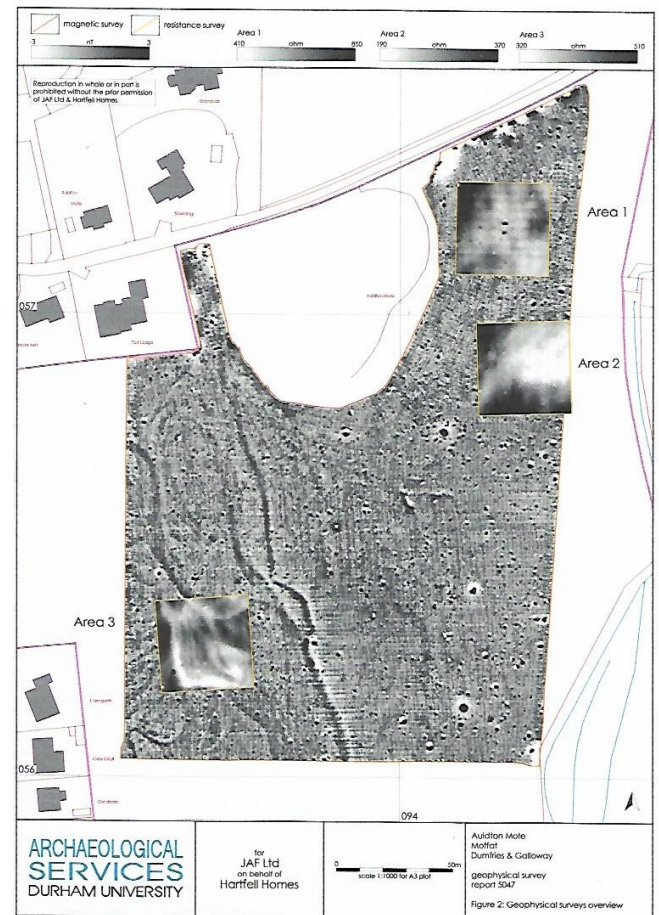


Fig5

The placement of the three resistivity survey squares appears to confirm the fact that no man-made structures exist within the ground stratigraphy of the area outlined around the scheduled monument. Small individual magnetic anomalies can be seen across the site, but these seem to relate to fired debris or ferrous objects which lie within the topsoil. Some land drains and elements of former ploughing regimes were indicated through analysis of the data and these can be seen in Fig 6.

The results of the geophysical surveys strongly indicated a complete lack of any structures associated with Auldton Motte or possible dwellings or features of different periods. The planned use of geophysics data to inform the placement of trenches therefore became unnecessary, although it was judged that the more random continuation of trenching should continue across field 5.



Fig6

Trenching

The evaluation trenches were set out in the exact configuration shown in Fig3. The completed work covered an area in excess of 9000m² and some trenches were altered from an original plan when the true courses of existing underground services were determined. The fields were dug in the order of 2,3,4 and 1, with field 5 being left until last to allow geophysics to be carried out. Work commenced on 9th April 2019 and finished on 1st May 2019. All trenches were pegged out to national grid coordinates and set by Leica TS15 total station. Actions of the excavator were monitored closely and halted when finds were uncovered to allow recovery.

All trenches were dug to the natural subsoil level and although no archaeological features were uncovered, a great number of artefacts were found within the topsoil level consisting mainly of pottery. Artefacts were bagged and labelled for post excavation analysis and assigned the context of Field and trench number. After each trench excavation the spoil heap was rechecked for artefacts and a trench photograph taken. See Fig 7



Fig7

Post Excavation

The main aim of the post excavation work was to determine the date range and variety of material recovered from across the site. Comparison of activity in different areas evidenced by density of deposition was also investigated. A major consideration of the findings was that all artefacts were recovered from within the topsoil and with no other stratification. The recovered artefacts had therefore been subject to movement over time through plough activity.

Table 1 shows the number of finds by type recovered from all 5 fields

Artefact Type	Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 4	Field 5
Pottery	224	188	98	46	439
Glass	49	40	19	1	53
Metal	1	-	1	-	1
Marbles	1	2	-	-	1
Doll	1	1	-	-	-
Clay Pipe	1	-	-	-	7

Table1

Table 2 shows clearly the spread of deposition of the two main artefact types.

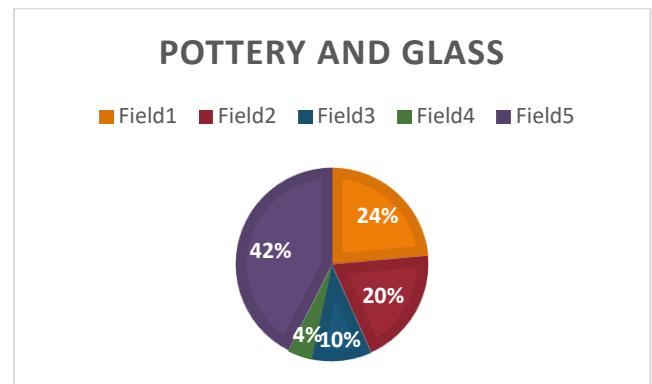


Table2

When compared with the field and trench map in Fig3, the pattern of deposition shows a strong correlation with the proximity of housing. Along with the domestic nature of the artefacts recovered, this pattern seems to show conclusively that the residents of the nearby houses have long used the closest fields to dump their rubbish. It was noted during the trenching that ash and partly burned coal was also common in the topsoil leading to the conclusion that the waste from stoves and hearth fires was also often buried or thrown onto the fields. The marked decline in percentage of finds in fields 3 and 4 are easily explained by the sparsity of dwellings bordering those fields.

The pattern of deposition with proximity of housing is mirrored when the artefacts, by trench from one field are examined.

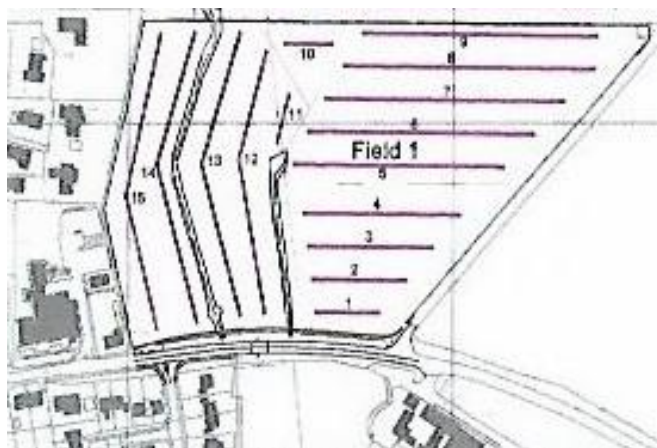


Fig8

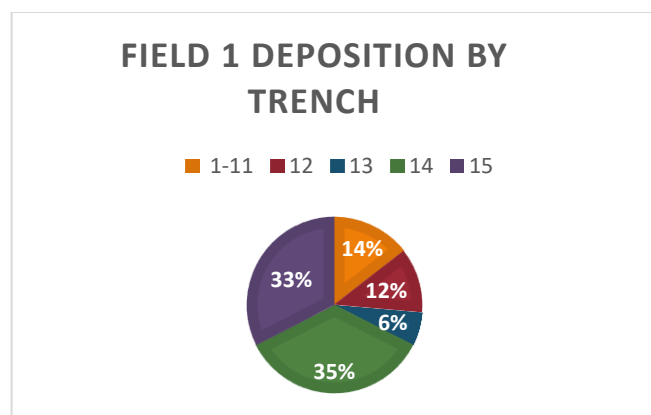


Table3

Table 3 clearly shows that the western part of field 1 which is the closest to the houses of Moffat holds the vast majority of artefacts within that field (86%). Those trenches on the eastern half (1-12) yielded comparatively few artefacts (14%) and two of them (Trenches 2 and 10) held no finds at all.

The greatest number of finds were recovered from field 5 at 42% of the site total (see tables 1+2). Of the total number of glass and pottery artefacts in this field, 148 of the 492 in total were located in a rubbish pit at the far eastern end of trench 5. It should be noted that the position of this rubbish pit matches the position of the magnetic anomaly at the bottom right hand corner of the magnetometry survey images (Figs 5 and 6).

It is believed that this particular concentration of domestic rubbish has remained in place, rather than being spread by ploughing, because of its location at the edge of the field and close to the fence in front of the Crosslaw Burn.

It appears that the majority of artefacts recovered from the site are the results of rubbish dumping from the nearby houses. Most of the finds indicate dates of between the mid 1800's and the early part of the 20th Century and some offering even more specific dating evidence.

The small fragment (see Fig9) recovered from Field2/Trench1 shows an image of Queen Mary with partial lettering in a scroll beneath. This particular image and the lettering come from a mug commemorating the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary on June 22nd 1911. The mug would have been similar to that in Fig10 which is a complete example.



Fig9 Sherd from coronation mug



Fig10 Coronation mug of 1911

Although date of manufacture can be pinpointed, we have no way of knowing when this mug was broken and thrown away as is proved by the example above which is still intact today (not from site).

As well as a great deal of Victorian and later artefacts, a few examples of much earlier pottery were found on site, but as in the previous example, they may have existed intact for very many years before being broken and discarded. Figures 11 to 13 are items of pottery recovered from earlier dates.



Fig11 German Stoneware 1450→

The sherd above (Fig11) was found in the topsoil layer of Field 1/Trench13. It is of a stoneware type made in Germany from 1450 onwards but copied in London from 1670 (Laing 2014).

One sherd of Scottish white Gritty Ware (Fig12) was recovered from the topsoil of Field2/Trench3.

This type of pottery was first seen in the 12thC but continued on into the late 15thC (Jones, Will, Haggarty and Hall 2006).



Fig12 Scottish White Gritty Ware

The rural setting of Moffat and its reliance on farming and agriculture are echoed in some of the pottery finds, such as (Fig13) the piece of north midlands yellow ware from a large pancheon (17th-20thC) which would have been used for cooling milk and transporting butter (Laing2014).



Fig13 Midlands Yellow Ware

Other Artefacts

Besides the pottery, there were among the other finds, some fascinating elements of social history. In fields 1 and 5 were several pieces of clay pipe (see Fig14). Three of the five stem pieces are of the Burns Cutty type which was popular from about 1850 and two of these have portions of stamp intact. One of these is labelled R GORDON and the other bears a Glasgow makers stamp which was the largest centre of pipe making in Scotland in the 19thC. The three bowl pieces are all of post 1840 types.



Fig14 Clay Pipe Fragments

Children's toys also feature in the assemblage in the form of fired clay marbles (see Fig15). Four fired clay marbles were found on site spread between fields 1,2 and 5. On first glance they have the appearance of musket balls but are only a fraction of the weight at 3x12g and 1x8g. They date from between 1850-1900 (Portable Antiquities Scheme).



Fig15 Fired Clay Marbles

Two small china clay dolls were found on site in Field1/Trench14 and in Field 2/Trench8. These were forms of a popular Victorian toy known as a Frozen Charlotte. Manufactured mainly in Germany 1850-1900, they were popular in Britain and the USA (Portable Antiquities Scheme). (see Fig 16)



Fig16 Frozen Charlotte Dolls

Glass

162 pieces of glass were recovered from the trenches covering all elements of domestic use. The majority of fragments were from bottles but drinking vessels, window glass and decorative bowls were also represented. Fig17 shows the range of glass recovered from one trench (F1/T14).



Fig17 Typical Glass Assemblage

Metalwork

Only 3 metal items were recovered from the entire site (see Fig18). Two of these seem to be heavily corroded square headed nails with the one from F1/T15 being 40mm long but the one from F5/T15 being 115mm long and 11mm wide and obviously made to be used in a far larger construction. The metalwork from F3/T3 (centre of image) is most likely to be a piece broken off from an item of farm machinery.



Fig18 Metal Assemblage

Discussion

It is a reasonable expectation that an archaeological investigation in close proximity to a medieval motte and bailey castle would deliver some results in terms of features and artefacts which relate to that monument. Despite detailed geophysics in two forms and a comprehensive trenching strategy it appears that there are no medieval or earlier features present on this site. The density pattern of deposition of artefacts mirrors proximity to housing surrounding the site. This strongly suggests that the site has been used as a rubbish dump by residents for as long as those houses have been occupied. Apart from a few older fragments of pottery the assemblage contains all the elements of domestic life of the 19th and early 20th Centuries which would be discarded at end of use. It is impossible to say whether the fragments of earlier pottery were deposited close to the time of fabrication or after spending a long period of time as family heirlooms.

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