



Forteviot Boundary Ditch Data Structure Report 2010

By Ewan Campbell



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Summary

A small trench was excavated through a ditch feature, visible on aerial photographs, which appears to form the northern boundary of the Pictish cemetery at Forteviot. The ditch proved to be around 2m wide, and cut to a depth of 0.8m into the subsoil. There were no finds, but a patch of charcoal-rich material was sampled and will provide material for radiocarbon dating. It is possible that a bank was originally present to the north of the ditch.

Introduction

As part of the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) project, a small trial trench was opened to the north of the prehistoric complex on 27th August 2010. This site (FC10.01), was situated over a linear feature identified on aerial photographs (Fig 1) at NGR NO 05331745. This feature, presumed to be a ditch, seemed to delimit the northern extent of the Pictish cemetery investigated in previous seasons (Poller 2007, Campbell & Gondek 2009). A previous trench to the east of the manse and north of the bowling green had revealed no trace of this feature (Campbell & Gondek 2008).

The ditch seems to continue the line of the Forgandenny to Forteviot road where takes a turn before entering Forteviot village. Immediately to the north of the present road is Forteviot farm and Miller's Acre, where Edward Balliol's army reputedly camped in 1332. In the same field as the ditch to the south there are many cropmarks, most of which belong to the Pictish cemetery and Iron Age enclosure excavated in previous years. On the aerial photographs, the ditch appears to run into the southern boundary of the village bowling green, but this is probably a coincidence, as there was no boundary marked here on any map before the reorganisation of the village in the 1920s.

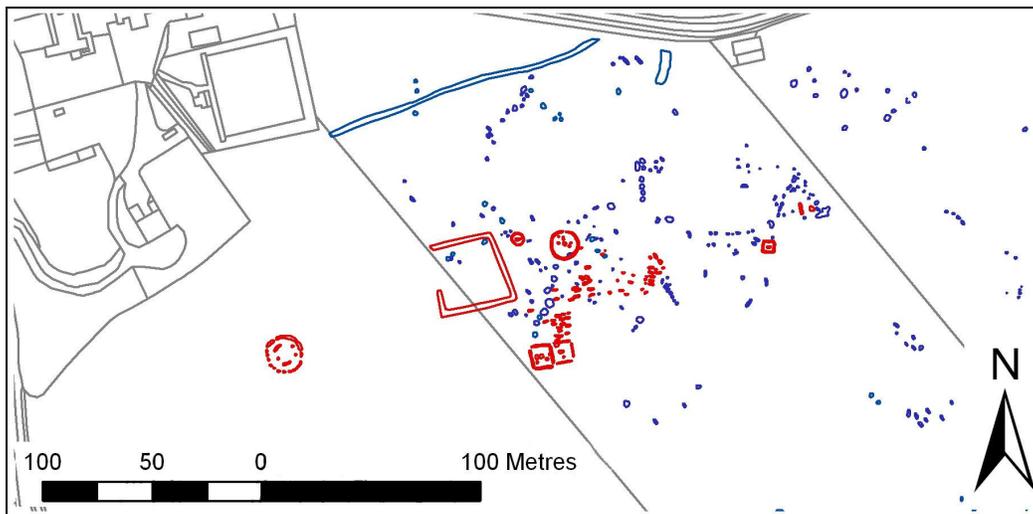


Figure 1 Aerial photograph transcription showing boundary ditch to north of Pictish cemetery and location of trench © Crown Copyright RCAHMS

Methodology

The trench, 30m east of the south-east corner of the bowling green boundary, was opened and excavated by machine, after hand excavation showed unexpectedly deep deposits in this area. The trench was approximately 7m long and 1.4m wide, and encountered the ditch at its southern end. The eastern section was cleaned, photographed and drawn before sampling of the ditch deposits.

Results

The ditch [9001] was identified in the northern part of the trench around a depth of 0.70m (Fig. 2). Its width was around 2.0m and was cut into the natural gravel to a depth of 0.80m, 1.40m below the modern ground surface. The profile was U-shaped. There appeared to be a step in the level of the natural gravel at this point, as the northern side is at a higher elevation than the southern.

Under 0.3m of dark brown modern ploughsoil (9000), there was a thick layer of silty brown loam 0.30-0.45m thick (9002) with coal flecks at the top. At the base of this was a layer charcoal-rich loam, with patches of burnt soil (9003), around 0.10m thick. This deposit extended over the southern part of the ditch for a distance of around 1.0m, and did not appear to have been burnt in situ, but may have been dumped in the ditch. It did not extend into the western section, so was probably a discrete patch in the silted-up ditch bottom. Underneath this deposit, was a sticky silty loam with more stones (9005), 0.50m thick, which had a diffuse band of greyer silt (9006), 0.08m thick, on the northern side of the ditch. At the base of the ditch was loose dirty gravel (9007) up to 0.15m thick. No finds were recovered from any of the contexts

FC10.01
Section of boundary ditch

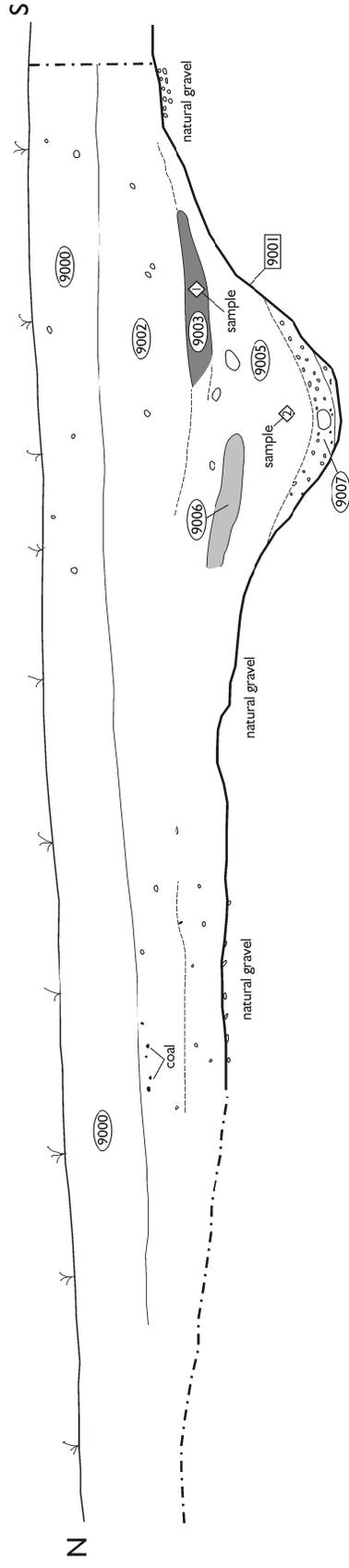


Figure 2 Section through ditch

Interpretation

Without dating evidence, it would be premature to discuss the function of the ditch. However, there are a few points which can be made. There seems to be a different history to the two sides of the ditch, reflected in the asymmetry of the depth of deposits (9002) on either side of it. It is possible that the ditch defined different agricultural regimes in the pre-modern period. It is possible that there could have been a bank to the north of the ditch. Although no trace remains, the silty layer 9006 is confined to the northern part of the ditch, where it might represent infill from an upstanding bank. The charcoal rich layer 9003 seems to represent activity when the ditch was almost completely silted up, surviving as a slight hollow. It is overlain by pre-modern ploughsoil, so presumably the activity in the ditch took place before the destruction of the upstanding banks and ditches of the prehistoric and later monuments, which seems to have taken place sometime after the 14th century (Campbell & Gondek 2009, 6).

Acknowledgements

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References

- Campbell, E & Gondek, M 2008 *Forteviot Village project 2007-8*. Glasgow
Campbell, E & Gondek, M 2009 *Forteviot Perthshire: Excavations of a Pictish cemetery and Iron age enclosure 2009*. Glasgow
Poller, T 2007 *Forteviot Perthshire: Excavation of a barrow and unenclosed grave cemetery 2007*. Glasgow

Appendices

i) Contexts

Context No.	Type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Interpretation
9000	F			0.3m	dark brown loam with scattered gravel pebbles	Modern ploughsoil
9001	C				shallow U-shaped cut in subsoil, filled with 9007, 9006, 9005, 9003	Ditch cut
9002	F			0.3-0.45m	silty brown loam with coal flecks in top part	Pre-modern cultivation soil
9003				0.1m	Charcoal-rich loam with patches of orange burnt soil mixed in. Not <i>in situ</i> burning.	Dump of burnt material in base of ditch
9004						

9005				0.5m	Sticky brown silty loam with occasional large cobbles and pebbles	Ditch silting
9006				0.08m	band of greyer silt	possible bank erosion into ditch
9007				0.15m	dirty orange loose gravel	primary infill of ditch

ii) Drawings

Drawing No.	Type	Scale	Description	Main Contexts	Initials	Date
1	section	1:10	East face of trial trench	9001	ENC	27/08/10

iii) Samples

Sample No.	Context	Feature Type	Material	size	Initial	Date
1	9003	layer	charcoal/loam	large	ENC	27/08/10
2	9005	layer	silt	large	ENC	27/08/10

iv) Photos

Digital

Digital Name/No.	Context	Details	Direction From	Initials	Date
10-1-01	all	Trench position	W	ENC	27/08/10
10-1-03	all	Trench position	S	enc	27/08/10
10-1-10	9001	East section	W	ENC	27/08/10
10-1-11	9001	East section	NW	ENC	27/08/10
10-1-12	all	Trench position near bowling green	E	ENC	27/08/10
10-1-13	9001	East section	W	ENC	27/08/10