NH75NE0002

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
11 JUL 2000

PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
GK		
DL		

Dorothy

This was the only report I could find regarding the excavation at Cromal Mount. It doesn't provide much more than is in the DES report.

Allan.

WITH COMPLIMENTS

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Dr Maclean
A good clear report. Please return after any necessary
carework action.
P Dal
24.10.89

Mr Johnson, 19
To Note.
J Bell
19/10/89

CROMAL MOUNT, ARDERSIER (Grid ref NH 7822 5556)

Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Assessment, 29-30 September 1989.

Summary

Cromal Mount, Ardersier, a probable motte, was surveyed and three trenches cut to assess the quantity and nature of any archaeological deposits. No archaeological features were found and it is concluded that the present appearance of the site is largely the product of sand quarrying. The remains of a bank on the summit of the mound indicate activity pre-dating the quarrying but of otherwise unknown date or purpose. The identification of the site as a motte cannot be confirmed.

Introduction

Cromal Mount is described as a probable motte on its O.S. record card (Antiquity No. NH75 NE2). It is the highest point (45m OD) of the Ardersier Moraine, a ridge of glacial till and fluvio-glacial sediments overlooking the Moray Firth.

The monument consists of a mound c. 5m high with a level summit c. 30 x 25m, surrounded by a 1m high bank on its north and west sides. To the south of the mound, c. 15m from its base, is a 1.5m high straight bank c. 80m in length with a stone faced dyke, 1m high running along the top of it. This bank is connected to the mound at its west end. The area between the mound and the bank was levelled recently with a well defined edge to the east of the mound where the ground falls away to a gully running down the side of the moraine ridge.

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Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out over 2 days with the assistance of Joan Carter and Jill Harden (Inverness Museum). It involved two pieces of work, a survey and excavation:-

1. Survey

The site was partially surveyed and levelled using an EDM at a scale of 1:200. Dense, tall gorse made a complete survey impossible but the main elements of the site were plotted. The survey was not located on the national grid or related to Ordnance Datum.

2. Excavation

Three trenches were excavated by JCB using either a 3 ft toothed bucket or a 5 ft toothless. These were selected to examine the nature and stratigraphy of the various features in the area affected by the planning application. They are located on the site plan:

Trench 1: Section of apparent bank linking the main bank to the mound.

Trench 2: Section of main bank and stone dyke.

Trench 3: Section of mound and adjacent levelled area.

Results

Trench 1: Excavation revealed a sequence of undisturbed fluvioglacial sands and silts dipping to the west. The extreme west end of the trench is disturbed by at least three water pipes running from a water tank on the top of the mound. The east end exposed part of a large 1.5m deep pit whose edge matched that of the bank visible on the surface. The pit fills consisted of sterile layers and bases of sand and silt off the pit walls overlain by dark (humic) sand which was covered by up to 0.7m of recent levelling (Earth, boulders, wood, plastic, wire).

Trench 2: This trench was cut into the long bank up to the base of the stone dyke. The dyke was poorly preserved at this point but still stood c. 1.2m high. It overlay an undisturbed sequence of horizontally bedded fluvioglacial sands, 2m depth was revealed in the south face of the trench beneath the dyke.

Trench 3: This 16m long trench revealed cross bedded fluvioglacial sands close to the surface along its entire length. The west end on the mound slope was disturbed by tree roots to a depth of 0.5m. At the east end there was almost no recent levelling fill with undisturbed sand to within 0.1m of the surface.

Conclusions

The evidence from all three trenches confirms that the present appearance of the site, with well defined mound and bank is the result of quarrying for sand at some time in the past. The main bank was created by the sand pit being limited to the area north of a pre-existing dyke which ran along the south edge of a natural gently sloping mound. The dyke is part of a boundary which continues eastwards on the other side of the road. If levels are compared on either side of the dyke at Trench 2, the base of the dyke is only 0.8m above the level of the field to the south but 1.8m above the current surface to the north in the presumed sand pit. If the line from the base of the dyke to the modern mound summit is assumed to be the former mound profile, then taking into account the depth of the cut revealed in Trench 1, up to 5m of sand has been removed. Local tradition links this quarrying to the construction of Fort George and at least some quarrying had occurred before the publication of the New Statistical Account (see Volume 14, 470-471) in 1845. Recent

levelling up has obscured the detail of the floor of the pit which appears to have been deeper at the west end.

The bank on the summit of the mound is certainly man-made and the fact that it is only present on the undisturbed north and west sides implies that it extended around the edge of the larger original mound. This would have been an irregular shaped enclosure perhaps as large as 50 x 30m internally. There is no evidence for the date of the bank and in view of the doubt over the original appearance of the site, its identification as a probable motte should be reviewed.

S P CARTER
5 October 1989

Cromal Mo
Ardersier
Scale 1:200 –
Levels in metres above
Surveyed 29/4/84 by S

Steep slope to sea level

NOT SURVEYED

Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 3

Water Tank

Level summit of mound

Approximate limit of proposed house plots (from 1:1,000 plo

NOT SURVEYED

GRID NORTH