



Bringing the past to the present



**Clydesdale Project**

**Fieldwalking of forestry areas in  
Daer Valley 2010**  
Interim Report

by Tam Ward

## Abstract

Inspection of clear felled and newly ploughed forestry areas in the Daer Valley has produced evidence of the Mesolithic, Early Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, principally by lithic scatters for the former and burnt mounds/deposits and small cairns for the latter. Evidence in the form of Early Neolithic carinated bowl pottery, leaf arrow heads and pitchstone found in association with microliths and Mesolithic debitage, point to the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition

The Project continues therefore this report does not include excavation evidence.

# Introduction

## OS Map Landranger No 78. NGR: NS 950 130 – NS 960 001

The Daer Valley lies at the southern tip of South Lanarkshire and is at the heart of southern Scotland (Figs.1&2). The valley is approximately 12km long, on a north/south alignment and with the Daer Water running its entire length and which forms the longest tributary of the River Clyde (really the head water of the Clyde). The landscape is almost entirely unimproved grass land being at 280m OD at the northern end where the farm of Watermeetings is and where the Daer road joins the A702 trunk road and, to the south the ground rises to 668m OD at the summit of Gana Hill and the boundary with Dumfriesshire.



Fig.1

The areas under discussion here are the lower northern flank of Hitteril Hill (west of the reservoir) and which is clear felled ground, and the southern and eastern flanks of Coom Rig (north west of the reservoir). Other large expanses of clear felled forest between Pin Stane and Watermeetings Rig, and known as Watermeetings Forest, have still to be investigated (Plate 1).

In 1956 HRH The Queen inaugurated the Daer Reservoir which is 3km long by 1km wide and which supplies fresh water to the Central belt of Scotland. Since that time large areas adjacent and nearby to the reservoir have been planted with commercial forest; these are known as Hitteril and Watermeetings forests respectively. Apart from these two major developments the landscape has remained relatively unaltered having principally been used for sheep grazing. However, at the time of writing parts of a large scale wind farm are being installed in the valley.

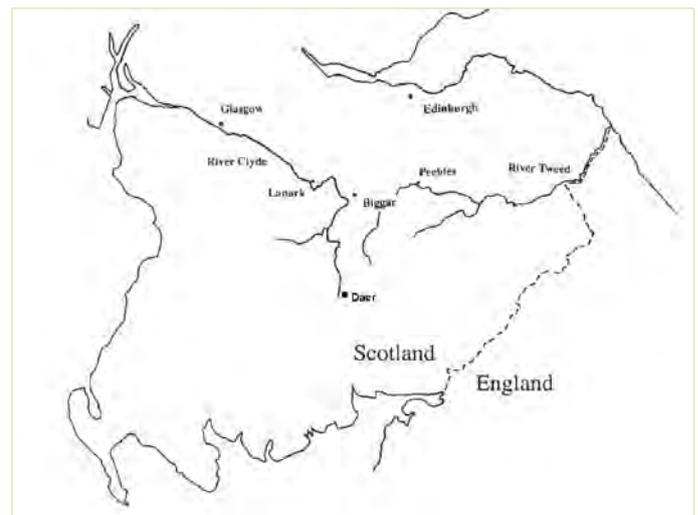
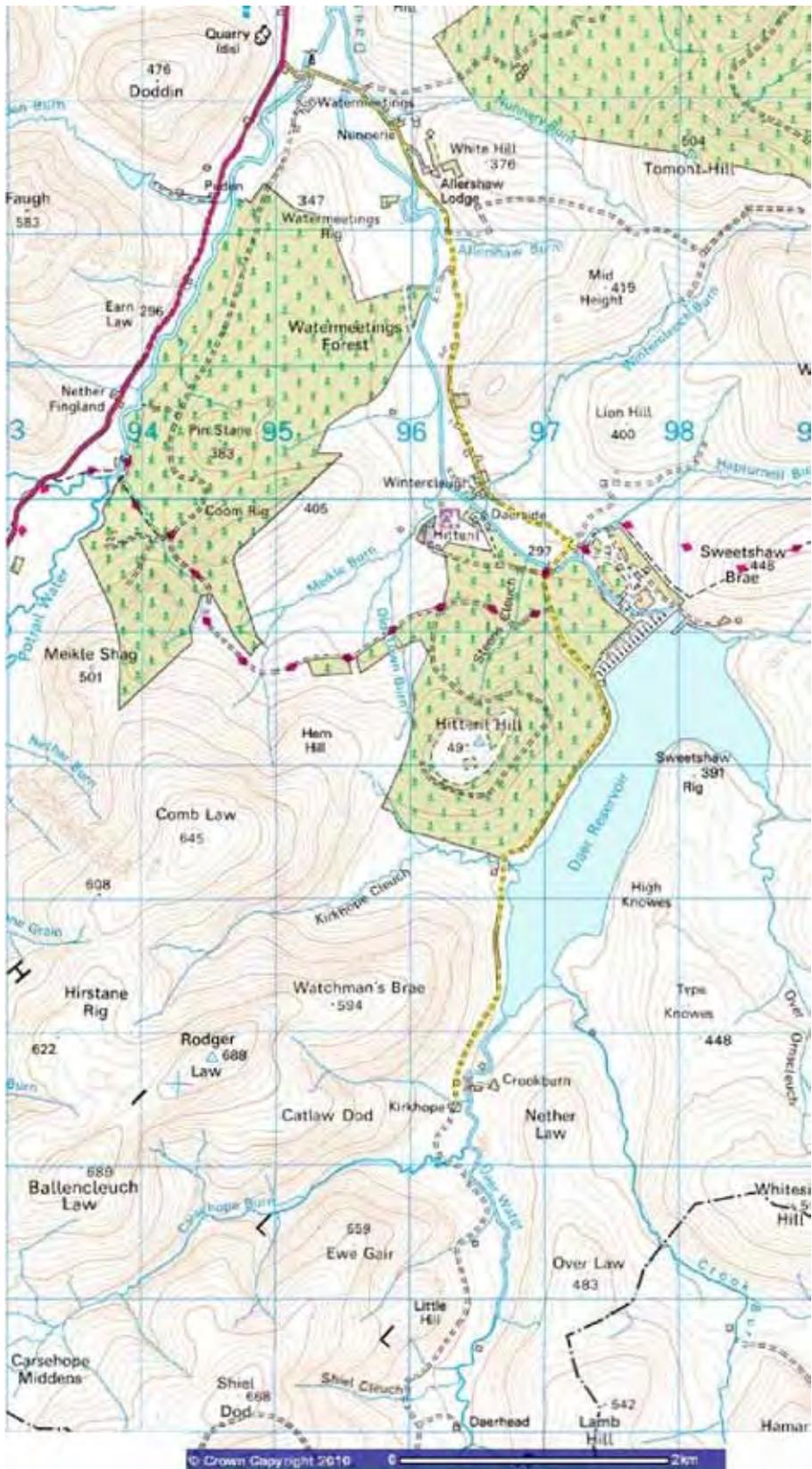


Fig.2



When the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG) first visited the valley for the purpose of survey work in 1990 (Ward, 1992), there were only two recorded archaeological sites, one being a former cairn supposed to be a burial but now untraceable (RCAHMS 1978), and the other the remains of Kirkhope Tower (or bastle house) (Ward 1998) and which lies below the waters of the reservoir.

Since the inaugural work by BAG and as a result of several programmes of survey and excavation work, the valley now has numerous sites dating from Mesolithic, Early Neolithic, Bronze Age and Post Medieval times (Ward, various).

The projects cover three aspects of the valley; the surviving unimproved grass lands, the internal area of the reservoir (during periods of low water level) and the forestry areas. This paper deals with the latter with the objective of explaining the circumstances under which archaeological sites may be discovered in both clear felled forestry and new planted areas.

Plate 1

# Rationale

Due to previous campaigns of work by BAG (Ward, various) it is now known that a great many archaeological sites in the Scottish Southern Uplands remain undetected because they have no surface indicators of their presence, this is especially true for areas covered in peat which has developed in the last 3000 years or so. Therefore pre historic sites of all periods can be found if circumstances allow. The experience of BAG has repeatedly shown that monitoring of forestry and arable ploughing, and opportunities taken to inspect the areas of reservoirs during periods of low water level, can and do offer extremely rewarding work.

Areas such as upland pasture which has never previously been disturbed by the plough can be especially rewarding as will be demonstrated by this report and a subsequent one which deals with the current excavation programme (Ward, forthcoming).

BAG conduct ongoing monitoring of a large landscape being the upper reaches of the Rivers Clyde and Tweed, and regularly re-visits locations where circumstances have altered, such as clear felling and re planting of forestry or new ploughed ground. Both of these

activities, each for forestry, have recently taken place in the Daer Valley and indeed there is currently a long term strategy by the forestry company for this to continue.

The Daer Valley Project is a long term project for the Group and dates back to 1990 when the first archaeological survey of the valley was done (Ward, 1992, *ibid*) and in which they hope eventually to write a comprehensive archaeological history of the 12km long valley, with the exception of only two previously recorded sites (see above), BAG have to date produced the entire archaeological data base of this locality. Although current work by Headland Archaeology on the Clyde Wind farm in Daer valley may result in sites and or finds being made under that development.

Consequently the hypothesis that many archaeological find spots and actual sites could be discovered within the current forestry operations has been proved.

This report deals with the particular circumstances of recently clear felled and newly ploughed forestry ground in the Daer Valley, a follow up report will deal with the resulting excavations which are currently taking place by BAG.



# Types of areas walked

There were two completely different types of areas in this project; one was clear felled forest which has mostly been re-planted, and the other was new ploughed ground for first time planting.

## Clear felled

The clear felled areas were the most difficult within which to operate, as tree trunks, new drains, deep borrow pits for providing saplings with rooting ground, and the brash or debris from the former trees all had to be walked over or between. Considerable care must be exercised in such an operation to avoid injury.

These areas, which were first planted in the 1960's and 70's, are also the least rewarding for archaeological searches. Upstanding monuments such as cairns and burnt mounds, although damaged, can be found. However, the formerly invisible or buried archaeology by and large remains just that. When newly re-planted, these areas give the appearance of considerable sub surface ground disturbance and this is true when new drains or roads are cut. However, the thousands of dumps of excavated ground and upon which the new trees are planted, are derived from only a relatively few pits, of perhaps only two or three square metres in area, or new drains. The only chance for new discoveries are therefore from the material disturbed from drains and the borrow pits and the vast majority of that is either peat from the surface or the underlying till, neither of which is artefact bearing.

Nevertheless, sites or find spots can be found although their ratio to the land area is extremely small.

A point worthy of mention is the observed fact that Sitka spruce trees have a matted root system which generally lies on the ground surface, sub surfaces are therefore not necessarily damaged by the roots to the extent one might expect, this fortunate condition of course means that archaeological deposits can survive remarkably well as was discovered in the area when two nearby Mesolithic sites were excavated and dated by the Group (Ward, 2004 & Ward, 2004). However, as stated above the damage caused by forestry machinery in harvesting and re planting does have a catastrophic effect on the landscape.

## New furrow ploughing

This method of tree cultivation in the area of this report is carried out as follows: A double sided plough is pulled down or along the ground causing a ridge of inverted vegetative material and in some cases old ground surface and/or till, to be deposited on each side of a new furrow which is 1m wide and circa 0.3m – 0.4m deep. The furrows are cut 3m apart and the base of a furrow is generally flat and the sides straight, although in some places the plough deviates from the line and irregular furrows and ridges are formed. The point of the plough digs a further 0.15m forming a central gully in the base of the furrow; often it is only this part of the plough which disturbs the ground below the peat.

Again, appearances are deceptive, as one sees large areas of disturbance; however the archaeological potential for discovery varies considerably depending on the stratigraphy of the ground, as is explained:

One scenario can mean the plough may simply cut through peat with no disturbance of the ground below whatsoever, on this project about half of the furrows seen are like this, therefore there is no potential for finding pre-historic material, and this is especially true for the lower lying areas where peat up to 1m in depth has accumulated, one may also assume that these more level areas are the most likely to have archaeological sites.

If there is no peat below the vegetation or it is relatively thin, then a lens of old ground surface and perhaps till will be turned over to form the ridges. However, more often than not, any soil which may be turned over is buried again, but now below the formerly underlying till. Once more, appearances are deceptive as the archaeological bearing stratum remains invisible, having been pulled out of the furrow and dumped inverted and now below the upcast till. Even when conditions of overturning the soil are good, a thin but complete crust of orange iron pan may cover it, again obscuring the evidence of finds or sites.

The furrows here are therefore mostly seen as peat, or as till, neither of which will produced the evidence being sought. The best place to find soil consistently lying as the make up of the ridges is on steep slopes where peat seldom grows, but these areas are generally devoid of archaeology excepting for chance or stray finds.

So it is that while large areas of land are disturbed in both scenarios; old and new forests, in reality only miniscule areas are exposed to provide the opportunity to discover sites or finds.

One may be forgiven for thinking 'what is the point then?', but as will be shown here the rewards are

substantive and demonstrate that these landscapes are only just being tapped for their archaeological story when they are investigated, a story however which is new to our understanding of both the landscape and the past human activity on it. The following results then should be considered as merely those available to us by 'looking through a keyhole'.

The steepest slopes, and furrows containing only peat were not inspected in the new ploughed area but all of the clear felled areas were checked.

The following images show the types of terrain discussed in this report.

## New ploughed ground



New road

**... these landscapes are only just being tapped for their archaeological story**



New drain



**Furrow and ridge with peat only**



**Furrow with peat stripped from OGS**



**Furrow with only central area showing OGS/till exposed below peat**



**Ridge not inverted**



**Furrow with OGS stripped out**



**Furrow with Till stripped out showing bedrock**



Ridge with OGS covered by till



Ridge with OGS covered by iron pan



Typical section with peat over podzol and iron pan below



Mesolithic site found in peat covered area



View showing large expanse of peat compared to exposed ground



Drain with peat only

# Clear Felled Forestry



New drain



New drain used as borrow pit for tree planting piles



New piles of till and OGS for trees



Borrow pit back filled with tree stumps



New tree planted in till over OGS



General view new ploughed and clear felled

# Discoveries (Figs. 3&4)

The new discoveries can be split into two main categories;

- 1) Object finds spots with or without archaeological deposits or features
- 2) Archaeological deposits and or features.

These two main categories may be sub divided as follows;

- 1) Find spots may be a single item of lithic or less commonly pottery  
 Find spots may be multiple items and of different materials  
 Find spots may include burnt stone and or charcoal

- 2) Deposits may be charcoal only, either as concentrations or as single fragments  
 Deposits may be burnt stone only

Deposits may be burnt stone only

Deposits may be charcoal and burnt stone (e.g. burnt mounds deposits and camp fire sites)

Features may be piles of stone e.g. small cairns

Features may be camp fires with burnt stone and charcoal

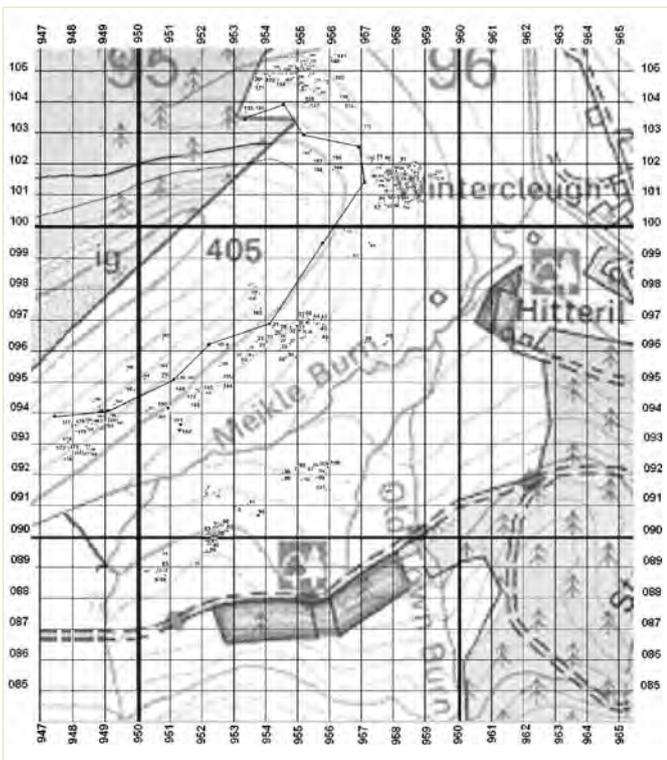


Fig. 3. All locations shown.

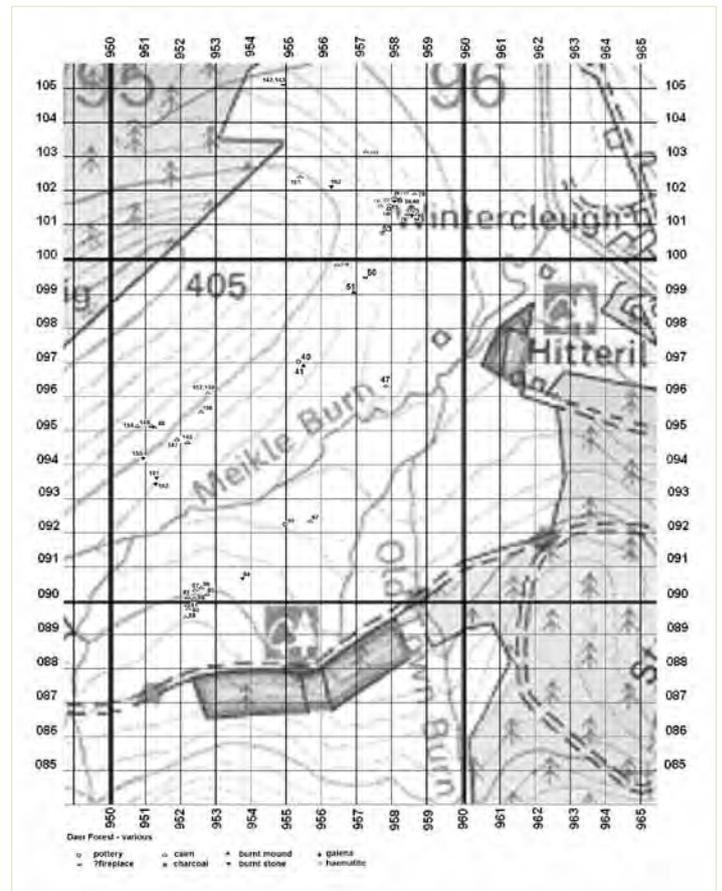


Fig. 4. Selective locations shown

## Finds and sites

Over two hundred find spots have been recorded in the new ploughed ground which is the southern and eastern facing slopes of Coom Rig. The following list is incomplete as the work continues.

### Daer Valley forestry sites and finds spots 2010

**Location Number** is the sequence of find spots

**Finds Number** is the sequence of 'object' find spots

**Site No** is the sequence of excavations, these numbers run on from the previous excavations in Daer Valley

Inspection of clear felled forest at Hitteril and new ploughed ground at Coom Rig has produced the following finds spots and features/sites:

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
1	1		Chert core + 2of chert	96907 09171
2	2		Flint flake	96873 09213
3	3		Chert core + 4of flakes	96899 09208
4	4		Quantity cannal + ordinary coal	96905 09307
5	5		Flint	95210 09130
6	6		Chert	95304 09096
7	7		Chert	95210 09151
8	8		Chert 7of +spall	95084 08874
9	9		Flint flake (end scraper?)	ditto
10	10		Chert retouched tip (micro?)	ditto
11	11		Chert 14of + spall	95342 09106
12	12		Chert	95054 08884
13	--		Burnt stone (from Burnt mound?)	ditto
14	--		Burnt deposit c2m diameter	95035 08891
15	Sample No 1		Charcoal sample	95236 09141
16	Sample No 2		Charcoal from fireplace?	95341 09603
17	Sample No 3		Charcoal from fireplace?	95522 09650
18	--		Cairn (to be dug)	95323 09594
19	--		Cairn	95360 09587
20	13		Chert 3of	95325 09565
21	14		Chert 3of	95369 09630
22	15		Chert 5of	95403 09628
23	16		Chert 1of	95414 09634
24	17		Chert 1of	95422 09678

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
25	18		Flint 1of	95446 09665
26	19		Chert 6of, Flint 1of	95446 09604
27	--		Fire?	95472 09624
28	20		18th C Bottle neck	95466 09690
			Chert 5of	circa ditto
29	--		Burnt mound	95460 09658
30	21		Chert 1of	95462 09583
31	--		Burnt mound	95461 09641
			C10m dia. Undeveloped	
32	22		Chert 1of	95477 09680
33	23		Chert 1of	95495 09682
34	24		Flint 1of	95495 09584
35	25		Chert 1of, flake	95507 09669
36	26		Chert 1of, flake	95513 09673
37	27		Chert 1of, scraper	95515 09710
38	28		Chert 4of	95529 09713
39	29		Chert 2of, flakes	95535 09704
40	30		Pot frags 3 of	ditto
41	--		Burnt mound?	95547 09694
42	31		Chert 2of, + charcoal	95572 09702
43	32		Chert 1of, flake + charcoal	95579 09689
44	33		Chert 1of	95558 09705
45	34		Chert 1of	95591 09636
46	35		Chert 1of	95792 09638
47	--		Cairn	95782 09631
48	--	Site No 91	Cairn	95122 09512
49	36		Chert 1of	95611 09726
50	--		Fire?	95721 09954
51	--		Burnt mound	95692 09907
52	37		Chert 1of	95750 10073
53	--		Charcoal patch, 1of 4m up	95773 10073
54	38		Chert 1of	95769 10079
55	39		Chert 1of	95789 10112
56	--		Cairn	95808 10180
57	40	Site No 96	Chert 1of + fireplace	95811 10120
58	41	Site No 92	Pot frags 6 of + cairn	95825 10175
59	42	"	Chert 1of	95827 10161
60	--	"	Cairn, burnt stone + charcoal	95827 10170
61	43	Site No 97	Flint 3of (1 core), Chert 2of + burnt stone	95828 10083
62	44		Chert 1of	95806 10092
63	45		Chert 2of	95816 10087
64	46		Chert 1of	95833 10062
65	--		Burnt stone c30m dia.+	95815 10086

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
			Charcoal	
66	47		Chert 1of	95835 10180
67	48		Chert 1of	95841 10125
68	--		Fireplace	95874 10117
69	49		Chert 1of	95844 10189
70	50		Chert 2of	95850 10211
71	51		Chert 1of	95851 10078
72	52		Flint 1of	95856 10185
73	53	Site No 95	Chert 11of, flint 2of, 1 tool?	95857 10083
74	54		Chert 1of	95873 10080
75	55		Galena	95857 10125
76	--		Cairn	95859 10131
77	56		Chert 4of	95881 10193
78	--	Site No 93	Cairn, 3 furrow	95867 10191
79	57		Chert, poss. cairn	95882 10131
80	58		Chert 2of	95887 10210
81	59		Chert 1of	95906 10221
82	60		Chert 1of	95167 08907
83	61		Chert 4of plus charcoal	95078 08900
84	--		Charcoal	95081 08958
85	--		Cairn?	95273 09023
86	--		Cairn?	95258 09040
87	--		Cairn?	95244 09032
88	--		Cairn?	95242 09002
89	--		Cairn?	95213 08955
90	--		Cairn?	95221 08978
91	--		Cairn?	95218 08995
93	--		Cairn?	95236 09014
94	--		Burnt stone	95372 09067
95	62		Pot frags 4 of	95497 09225
96	63		Chert 1 of	95451 09186
97	--		Cairn?	95566 09233
98	64		Chert 3of	95552 09204
99	65		Chert 2 of	95560 09192
100	66		Chert 1 of	95601 09230
101	67		Chert 2 of	95586 09152
102	--		Ring structure? at fold	95609 09183
103	68		Flint 3 of	95593 09223
104	--		Burnt rock	95591 09202
105	69		Chert 15 of,1 amorphous core	95616 10473
106	70		Chert 1 of	95783 10162
			Within spread of S7 + charcoal	
107	--		Cairn “ “ “	95791 10160
108	71		Chert 1 of “ “ “	95770 10155

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
109	72		Pot frag 1 of, + stone	95791 10155
110	--		Cairn?	95646 09991
111	--		Cairn?	95769 10157
112	73 Site No 88	Chert 18 of, flint 3of	95679 10386	
113	--		Haematite 2 of Cairn? tiny	95727 10313
114	74		Chert 1 of, burnt stone + Charcoal, c10 Dia.	95766 10145
115	75		Chert 1 of	95761 10198
116	76		Chert scraper 1 of	95776 10124
117	--		Cairn?	95809 10173
118	77		Chert 5 of, plus charcoal	95661 10404
119	78 Site No 86		Chert 74 of, 3 of red, 5 flint	95595 10461
			Flint microlith 1 of	" "
			Chert microlith 1 of	" "
			Chert end scraper	" "
			Flint end scraper	" "
			Flint round scraper	" "
120	79		Chert 12of	95386 10478
121	80		Flint end scraper	95372 10458
122	81		Chert 44of, Flint 3of C30 dia. Corner between	95412 10483
123	82		Chert 4of	95501 10454
124	83		Chert 4of	95505 10506
125	84		Chert 10of	95509 10519
126	85		Chert 4of, 1of core	95515 10446
127	86		Chert 9of	95516 10446
128	87		Chert 1of	95523 10398
129	88		Chert 5of	95528 10517
130	89		Chert 1of, + stones	95534 10484
131	90		Chert 1of, Flint 1of	95555 10463
132	91		Chert 6of, 1 of brown knife	95567 10424
133	92		Chert 12of	95337 10370
134	93		Chert 54of, 10 furrow	95439 10474
135	94		Chert 16 of 1 side scraper?	95501 10477
136	95		Chert 2 of	95518 10508
137	96		Chert chunk 1 of, road	95534 10387
138	97		Chert 15 of Flint 5 of Pitchstone grey 1 of	95535 10527
139	98		Chert 72 of Flint 5 of	95551 10435
140	99		Chert 33 of 1 of brown Flint 3 of	95606 10551
141	100	Site No 87	Chert 55 of Flint 1 of	95620 10554

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
142	--		Fire place?	95494 10512
143	--		Fire place?	95499 10513
144	101		Chert 1 of + burnt stone	95267 09481
145	--		Cairn	95218 09468
146	102		Chert 2 of	95188 09440
147	--		Cairn	95187 09474
148	103		Chert 2 of	95148 09469
149	--		Cairn	95121 09510
150	--		Burnt stone	95094 09419
151	--		Burnt stone	95131 09364
152	--		Burnt stone	95127 09345
153	104		Chert 16 of	Random
154	--		Cairn above new road	95070 09518
155	105		Chert 1 of	Above road
156	--		Cairn @ saved cairn	95256 09559
157	--		Cairn	95277 09610
158	--		Cairn	95277 09609
159	106		Chert 1 of	95338 10370
160	107		Chert 1 of	95382 09738
161	--		Cairn	95540 10239
162	--		Burnt stone c15m	95631 10208
163	108		Chert 1 of	95581 10200
164	109		Chert 1 of	95581 10174
165	110		Chert 1 of	95608 10215
166	111		Flint 1 of	95610 10182
167	112		Chert 207 of	95463 10495
168	113		Chert? 1 of	95463 10495
169	114		unidentified mineral	95463 10495
170	115		Pitchstone 4 of	95463 10495
171	116		Flint 10 of	95463 10495
172	117		Flint knife	95175 09465
173	118		Chert	94778 09297
174	--		Cairn	94770 09309
175	119		Flint flake	94788 09290
176	120		Chert 2 of	94795 09262
177	121		Chert	94797 09361
178	--		Cairn	94805 09343
179	122		Chert 3 of	94802 09362
180	123		Chert + burnt stone	94817 09281
181	124		Chert + pot frag	94827 09278
182	125		Chert 3 of Cannal coal Curved fragment	94837 09287
183	126		Chert	94838 09356
184	127		Chert 2 of, Flint 1 of	94841 09368

Location Number	Finds Number if appropriate	Excavation Site Number if appropriate	Type of find	NGR(All NS)
185	--		Burnt stone + stones	94845 09274
186	128		Chert 3 of	94849 09368
187	129		Chert 3 of, 1 of modified	94853 09370
188	--		Cairn?	94859 09439
189	130		Chert	94862 09365
190	131		Chert + Charcoal + Cairn?	94877 09418
191	132		Chert 2 of	94892 09358
192	133		Chert, edge damaged?	94897 09373
193	134		Chert	94909 09369
194	135		Chert + Charcoal	94927 09427
195	136		Chert, snapped point?	94910 09389
196	137		Chert 2 of	94932 09379
197	--		Burnt stone + Charcoal, Burnt mound?	94936 09378
198	--		Cairn group? Scatter?	94965 09540
199	--		Cairn group	94990 09476
200	--		Cairn + Charcoal	95069 09517
201	--		Fireplace + Charcoal	95025 09404
202	138		Chert 2 of	95054 09397
203	--		Cairns 2 of	95073 09631
204	--		Cairn	95096 09564
205	--	Site No 90	Cairn + Capstone?	95379 09790
206	139		Flint leaf arrow head	95486 10480
207	140		Pitchstone	95516 10450
208	141		Chert 3of	95513 10528
209	142		Chert c20of Pitchstone	95521 10521
210	143		Chert 16of (+brown)	95457 10509
211	144		Chert 6of	95445 10505
212	145		Chert 9of	95515 10520
213	146		Chert (brown)	95469 10498
214	147		Chert 2of	95476 10494
215	148		Chert 10of	95494 10496
216	--		Stone slab (1x0.75x0.15m)	95295 09516
217	--	Site 90/1	Fireplace	95366 09807
218	--	Site 90/2	Stone slab	95365 09783
219	149		Chert 1of	95928 10156
220	150		Chert scatter	95933 10166
221	151	Site No 94	Chert, flint, pitchstone, Mudstone, pottery	95930 10167
222	152		Flint 1 of	95776 10172
223	---	Site No 98	Burnt mound deposit	95628 10391
224	153	Site No 99	Chert, flint	95578 10535

# Discussion /conclusion

From the work already achieved within the Daer reservoir and the forestry areas, and where disturbed ground has been inspected and produced a wide range of finds and sites, it must become obvious that the neighbouring hill slopes along the rest of the valley must surely have an even greater number of sites, still awaiting discovery. If this can be accepted for a relatively small area and one tributary of the Upper Clyde, then the magnitude of sub surface and therefore unrecorded sites along the River Clyde and its major tributaries must be vast.

The latest major development in the area is the Wind Farm being built between Wandel and Daer, and where investigation of access roads and other infrastructure causing considerable ground disturbance may support the hypothesis above. At least this aspect of the modern land use and change is being professionally dealt with in terms of archaeological potential. One wonders why it is not the same for aspects such as forests and reservoirs.

The writer hopes that it will be readily evident from the above that an excellent opportunity exists to find new archaeological data in such circumstances. However it would appear that few, if any organisations are engaged in such work. It is certainly one of the least technical methods of finding sites and finds, and generally is a productive one. Such work should ideally be suited to amateur groups such as archaeological societies and would provide first class training for archaeology students. Using GPS it is now extremely simple to record locations.

The Southern Uplands of Scotland and many other areas of Scotland have huge areas of forestry being harvested and re planted every year, where these landscapes are not inspected for archaeological evidence, surely a lost opportunity occurs, and without doubt the next time it will present itself, the landscape will be made more difficult within which to operate and damage to sites and finds will be exacerbated.

It occurs to the writer that the lead organisations in Scottish archaeology should have some moral responsibility to ensure that such work is initiated, and to that effect an appeal is made here for it to be considered and acted upon. Without doubt, if such work could be organised on a national basis, by professional or amateur archaeologists (and preferably both) an enormous wealth of new data could be retrieved. The pre historic landscapes of Scotland will never be fully discovered and understood, however, what folly not to take advantage of available opportunities when they are presented to us, to further elaborate on the ancient land use and settlement of the country.

## Post script

A series of excavations are currently underway on several sites and these are producing large collections of lithic, pottery and dateable samples of charcoal. These will be subject to Interim reports published regularly on :

[www.biggarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.biggarchaeology.org.uk)

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