

Stockbriggs (Yonderton) Curling Pond



Field Archaeology for All
Arc-eòlas do na h-uile

Stockbriggs (Yonderton) Curling Pond

NS79353 36788

Following an approach from D. Bruce McCowan, a reconnaissance visit was made in June 2025 to coincide with D. Bruce McGowan's visit from Canada. An ACFA team returned in March 2026.

The visit in June 2025 was assisted by Dave Browning, D. Bruce McCowan, Lindsay Scotland of Scottish Curling, and detectorists Jim McNeish and Tony Small. The ACFA team were Susan Hunter, Christine McDiarmid, Hugh McDiarmid, Shona MacLean, Ian Marshall, Janie Munro, Ailsa Smith and Edward Smith.

The ACFA team in March 2026 were Janie Munro, Paul Ryan, Ailsa Smith, Edward Smith and Ross Wood.

Cartography

An estate map, *Plan of the Estate of Stockbriggs, Parish of Lesmahagow, County of Lanarkshire, 1825*, shows a three-sided landscape feature east of Yonderton farm that may represent the site of the pond. The 1st edition OS map 1857 Lanarkshire XXXI.15 (Lesmahagow) clearly shows a pond, but by the 2nd edition OS map 1896 Lanarkshire XXXI.15 the site is shown as a boggy area.



Detail from Plan of Stockbridge Estate, 1825, highlighting possible site



Detail from OS map 1857 Lanarkshire XXXI.15 showing pond



Detail from OS map 1896 Lanarkshire XXXI.15 showing boggy area

June 2025

The site was found to be overwhelmed by vegetation and detailed survey was impossible. As per the maps and Lidar image the site is defined by a substantial retaining bank (circa 0.75m high spreading up to 3m wide) at its east end, a field boundary and trees to the north, a lower bank to the south, and a very slight change in ground level to the west. The area around the site is grass-covered with groups of trees, and the site of the pond itself is very wet, boggy and contains quantities of reeds and long grass, and a deep layer of silt. There is no significant body of water.



View over site looking east

A walk-over survey was conducted, and the metal detectorists surveyed the margins of the site and amongst the trees.

Casual finds on the margins and among the trees included a possible broken hammer stone, a metal tethering ring and chain, and collections of stones and bricks. There was no evidence of a curling stone store or other hut.

A small number of auger samples were taken. Although this was hampered by the vegetation, we did determine that there was evidence of a clay layer inside the area of the pond. One sample taken to the west outside of the boggy area did not contain clay.



Auger sample of blue/grey clay



Remnant of north field dyke looking east



Large stone in east bank, possible evidence of rudimentary drain



Casual find, possible hammer stone showing wear

March 2026

A second visit was made in early March 2026. Although the vegetation had died back the vast amount of wet, rotting, dead, long grass still largely obscured details of the site. The return visit was made in bright, sunny but cold conditions, and it was noted that small areas of standing water were iced over indicating that the position lent itself to freezing over.

It was agreed that the conditions noted above meant that a drawn survey would not reveal anything not already visible on the Lidar image of the site. A series of auger samples were taken to assess the existence and extent of a clay layer. The main concentration of clay samples lay in an area approximately 25m east/west x 40m north/south.

Edward Smith's report appended to this paper.



Looking towards east bank, March 2026

Conclusion

Unfortunately, it was not possible to find any evidence that might help date the construction of the pond and there were no signs of any structure associated with the pond, or curling related artefacts. A sluice or drain of some kind to regulate the water could not be determined although there is a roughly put-together collection of large stones south of the centre of the east bank that may have operated as a rudimentary drain. As Ed notes in his report, further exploration of this would require a great deal of effort.

There is no evidence of a burn or spring feeding the pond and the retained water seems to be formed by water naturally draining from the sloping ground to the west. The east bank retains the water that formed the pond but whether it was constructed with the formation of a curling pond in mind is unknown. The ground east of the bank is improved, now mostly under trees but shown as arable on 1st and 2nd edition OS maps, and it may be that the bank was constructed to protect the arable land from water run-off, and that the subsequent formation of a pond

suitable for curling was a happy consequence. There is evidence of a blue/grey clay layer immediately under the deep layer of silt and rotting vegetation, which is suggestive of deliberate lining of the area to hold water but nothing we found could date this activity.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dave Browning, Jim McNeish, Lindsay Scotland, Tony Small and special thanks to D. Bruce McCowan for his generous financial support and for bringing this site to our attention.



Antique curling stones used as loom weights, Kilbarchan Weavers' Cottage. Sadly, no such examples were found during this survey

Janie C Munro FSAScot Sept 2026



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CURLING POND

ACFA Visit on 8th March 2026

Introduction

ACFA visited the Curling Pond near Yonderton on 8 March 2026 to investigate the distribution of clay across the bed of the pond. It is thought that a compacted layer of imported clay may have been used to create an impermeable barrier to prevent water from draining into the substrata.



ACFA sampling the muddy bed of the curling pond. A thick layer of vegetation covers the site making it difficult to identify any archaeological features in the area.

Introduction

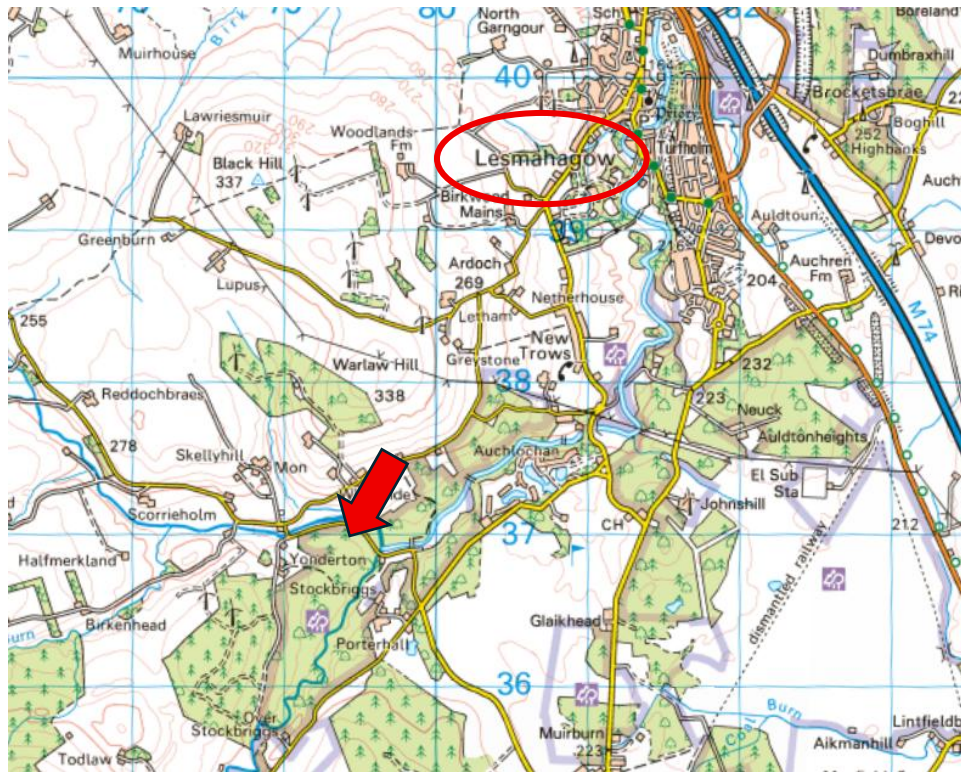
There is the site of a probable curling pond at Yonderton near Lesmahagow. Typically, these ponds held a layer of water / ice which was a few inches deep and their success relied on an impermeable base which, in rural areas, was often a layer of clay.

The purpose of the visit by ACFA on the 8th March 2026 was to take samples of soil at a depth of about 1m to check for the presence of clay. This was done at several locations distributed across the pond.

Location



The town of Lesmahagow is about 40 km southeast of Glasgow.



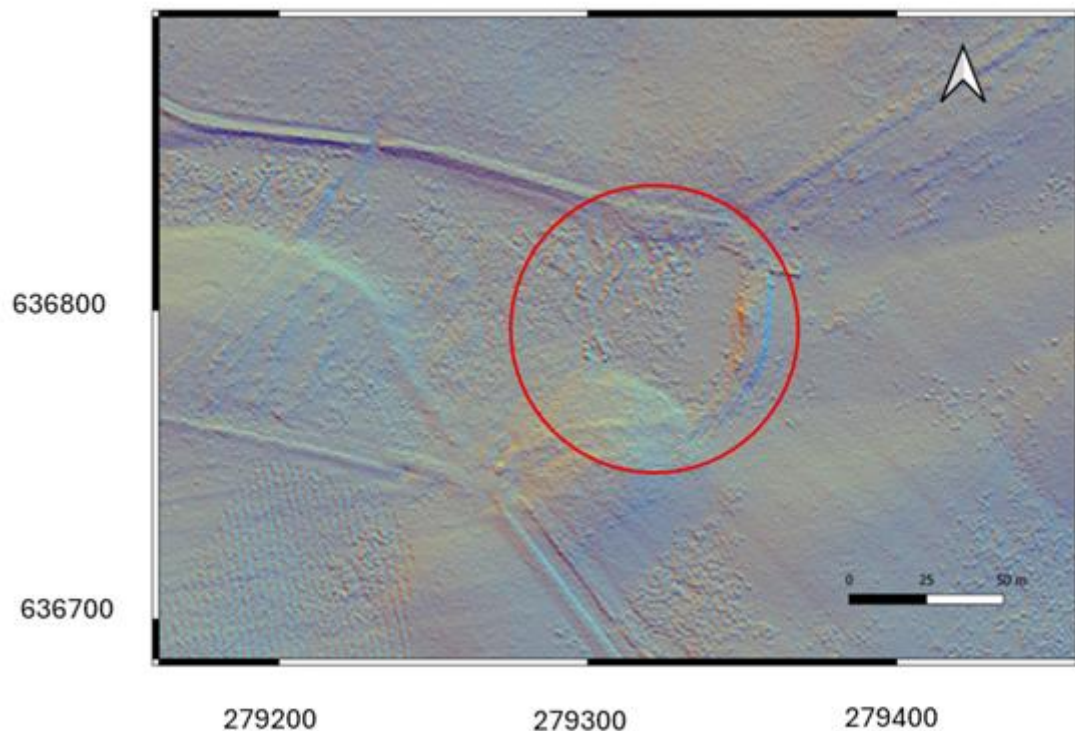
Yonderton is about 3 km southwest of Lesmahagow.



The red dot is the location of the Curling Pond near Yonderton.

LiDAR Image

This LiDAR image shows the Curling Pond at approximately
Easting 279325 and Northing 636800



This LiDAR image of the curling pond shows the artificial, curved bank which formed the pond by holding back the water which flows gently downhill from left to right.

Today the pond is muddy, with pools of water. The site is covered by a thick layer of vegetation so LiDAR may not have penetrated to the soil level. Although LiDAR sees the ground level in the wooded area, in the southern part of the image, it may not have reached the ground level under the thick vegetation. Because of this, the exact shape of the bank may not be visible in the LiDAR image; in particular the right-hand side of the bank looks smooth, but the left side seems rough.

Also, the thick vegetation covered any potential archaeological structures. There may be a couple of piles of stone on the middle of the bank and also a drain at its southern end, but it would take a significant amount of work to clear these sites and get a decent record of any structures.

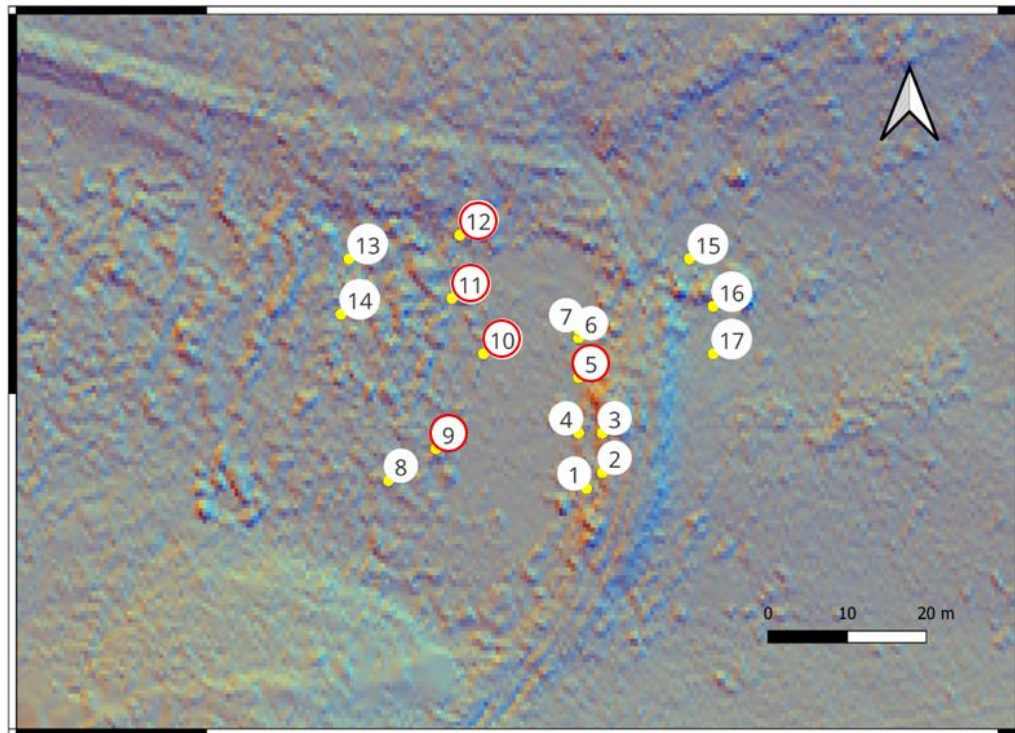
Project Objectives and methodology

The aim of the visit was to obtain some information on the distribution of clay across the floor of the curling pond. To this end, a hand-held augur was used to obtain samples of the soil at a depth of about 1m at sites across the bed of the curling pond. High accuracy for the location of these sample points was not thought necessary at this stage. To this end, the locations were measured using a hand-help gps device together with aerial photographs of the sampling in progress, obtained using a drone. The aerial photographs were georeferenced in QGIS together with the LiDAR image to help locate the sites where the samples were taken.



Overhead view of the “Samplers” at work, showing the nature of the ground.

Location of Sample Points



Red circles = Gray clay samples.

Results

Sample No.	Easting	Northing	Soil Type
1	279348	636788	Clay
2	279350	636790	Clay
3	279350	636795	Soil
4	279347	636795	Mud
5	279347	636802	Gray clay
6	279347	636807	Soil
7	279347	636808	Clay silt
8	279323	636789	Silt
9	279329	636793	Gray clay
10	279335	636805	Gray clay
11	279331	636812	Gray clay
12	279332	636820	Gray clay
13	279318	636817	Vegetation
14	279317	636810	Silt
15	279361	636817	Soil
16	279364	636811	Clay soil
17	279364	636805	Clay soil

The results show clay is present over most of the site but that some of the clay was probably part of the natural makeup of the local soil. Some of the sites contained a very distinctive light coloured clay which is labelled "Grey clay" above. This clay was probably the type which was brought in to waterproof the pond. These sites were located towards the centre of the area at samples 5 and 9 – 12.

Sites 15, 16 and 17 were outside the area of the pond designed to collect water. They did not contain any "Gray clay."