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- Archaeological Evaluation -

Carried out 25th-26th October 2010

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd

Report No: MAS 2010-20

by

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1. Background

1.1 Proposals for the development by the Kilbride Group of a site on land at Inverurie Paper (UK) Ltd, Aberdeenshire was subject to a planning condition which required a 7- 10% archaeological evaluation to be carried out as this is on the edge of an area of considerable known prehistoric activity.

1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of current planning legislation (PAN 42 para 34, SPP 23, SHEP) which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological fieldwork to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances

1.3 Murray Archaeological Services were commissioned by the developer, the Kilbride Group, to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out between 25th and 26th October 2010.

2. The site

2.1 The site is situated on the E side of the A96 some 2 miles S of Inverurie, between the E side of the former (now disused) road line and the Inverurie Paper mills works.

NGR: 3779, 8187 (centre) Parish: Inverurie

2.2 At the time of the evaluation the area was under grass. On the W side of the site an area c 15-16m wide of rough weeds and disturbed ground marked the line of a high pressure gas mains. According to the gas company this also extends along the S limit of the site. Overhead electricity cable cross the S end of the site.

2.3 The ground slopes down from W to E towards the river but the E edge of the slope has been cut back for construction of part of the paper mills works. It appears that this would have formed a fairly prominent gravel ridge above the W side of the river Don. Within the area of the site on the E side there is a pronounced gully which appears to be a palaeochannel draining towards the Don.

3. Methodology

3.1 The evaluation trenches were excavated using a full slew mechanical digger with a 1.9m wide toothless bucket. Where features were exposed, further cleaning was carried out by hand.

4. The Field Evaluation

5.1 Summary:

A total of 7 evaluation trenches were excavated. Four trenches (1-4) were excavated parallel with the W side of the site, leaving an 8m clearance from the E side of the gas corridor. Two trenches (5 & 6) were on the higher ground flanking the palaeochannel and one (7) was on level ground to the S of the electricity cables towards the S of the site.

Evidence for the survival of prehistoric activity was found in the S end of trench 2 and in the W end of trench 6.

Illus 1 General view looking E towards the paper mill, Trench 2 in foreground

Trench 1

GPS N end: 377828.9, 818804.1

S end: 377951.8, 818625.8

Length: 217m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: NW/SE

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand and gravel natural

Depth of topsoil above natural: 300-350mm

Features: (Illus 9)

F1: Patch of burning 750 x 750 x 50mm deep on top of natural. No evidence of date. Possibly modern agricultural activity.

F2: Engineer's test pit

F4: Palaeochannel

Finds: None

Trench 2

GPS N end: 377838.8, 818810.3

S end: 377964.8, 818628.0

Length: 220m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: NW/SE

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand and gravel natural and over denuded features

Depth of topsoil above natural: 300-350mm

Illus 2 Trench 2 looking N, feature 6 in foreground, features 8, 10 and 15 behind. Red tags mark finds

Features:

F3: Palaeochannel (Illus 9)

F5: post-hole. (Illus 11)

Dimensions: 200mm, *Depth*: 130mm . Sectioned

Fill: dark, charcoal rich. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: SF1

F6: Pit ? (Illus 3, 11)

Dimensions: 0.9m x 1.7m (into section), *Depth*: not excavated

Fill: fine grey silt with patches of charcoal. Only sealed by c 320mm topsoil

Finds: 3, 5, 6

Illus 3 Trench 2, feature 6, looking E

F7: Pit/base of pit? (Illus 4,11)

Dimensions: 1.2m x 1.5+m (into section), *Depth*: 95mm in small cross section

Fill: 7/1: grey, pebbly with v little charcoal. In trench section c30mm of 7/2: lighter, yellower with some charcoal lay above 7/1 and below c 320mm topsoil.

Finds: SF4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Illus 4 Trench 2, feature 7, looking E

F8: Pit/ base of pit? (Illus 11)

Dimensions: 1.35m x 1.00m+ (into section), *Depth*: not excavated. Two drag lines/or animal burrows- SF 13 appears possibly dragged by one of these.

Fill: grey quite pebbly silt. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: SF2

F10: ard marks (illus 11)

Dimensions: 60-100mm wide mm and extend for c 6m. *Depth*: not excavated

Fill: dark, silty. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: None

F14: Pit/spread. (Illus 11)

Dimensions: 1.6m x 1.9+m (into section), *Depth*: not excavated

Fill: Grey silty, some charcoal. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: None

F15: post-hole/small pit. (Illus 11)

Dimensions: 500 x 260+mm (into section), *Depth*: not excavated

Fill: dark, charcoal rich. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: None

Trench 3

GPS N end: 377853.2, 818818.5

S end: 377975.6, 818640.9

Length: 216m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: NW/SE

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand and gravel natural

Depth of topsoil above natural: 250-380mm

Features:

F9: Palaeochannel (Illus 9)

Finds: None

Trench 4 (4a and 4b)

A short stretch was left unexcavated beside a soil inspection vent

GPS N end: 377868.7, 818827.3

S end: 377977.5, 818667.8

Length: 4a: 109m; 4b:74m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: NW/SE

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand and gravel natural

Depth of topsoil above natural: 300mm, deepening to 400-500 near line of palaeochannel

Features:

F11: Palaeochannel (Illus 9)

Finds: None

Trench 5

GPS N end: 377973.4, 818763.9

S end: 377956.4, 818724.8

Length: 42m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: N/S

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand natural. Much rabbit activity especially at N end.

Depth of topsoil above natural: 250-300mm

Features: None

Finds: None

Trench 6

GPS E end: 377938.1, 818806.6

W end: 377882.5, 818828.0

Length: 60m. Width 1.9m

Orientation: E/W

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand and gravel natural and denuded features

Depth of topsoil above natural: 300-350mm

Illus 5 Trench 6 looking S. Feature 12 in foreground, features 16-18 in background. Trench cut by test pit F13

Illus 6 Trench 6 detail of W end. Prehistoric features shaded grey. Finds shown by blue dots. Section of F12

Features:

F12: Small pit. (Illus 5-8)

Dimensions: 450 x 650mm *Depth*: 190mm

Fill: 12/1: Dirty grey sand

12/2: charcoal rich, possible burnt grain (100% sampled)

12/3: fine grey sandy silt

Pottery sat in 12/2 and on top of 12/3. Flint in 12/2. Three small stones were set around edge of pottery on W side, another stone had been placed directly on top of pottery, possibly deliberately crushing it. All stones were of distinct red colour with mica flecks and were possibly deliberately chosen (Illus 8).

Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil

Finds: SF 14: 20+ sherds pottery - rims suggest at least two pots represented, SF 16-20 flints

Illus 7 Trench 6, feature 12 E side sectioned, pottery in section

Illus 8 Trench 6, feature 12, W side partly excavated showing stones around and on pottery SF14

F13: Modern test pit

F16: possibly post hole but could be stone hole or burrow. (Illus 6)
Dimensions: 320 x 450mm *Depth*: not excavated
Fill: greyer silt/topsoil fill. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil
Finds: None

F17: post-hole/small pit. (Illus 6)
Dimensions: 460 x 300+mm (into section), *Depth*: 130mm
Fill: soft dark silt with charcoal. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil
Finds: SF23 pottery, SF 21-22 burnt flint

F18: Spread. (Illus 6)
Dimensions: 500 +mm (into section), *Depth*: 60mm
Fill: Charcoal. Only sealed by c 300mm topsoil
Finds: None

Trench 7
GPS E end: 378008.1, 818619.0
W end: 377982.1, 818623.8
Length: 27m. Width 1.9m
Orientation: E/W
Stratigraphy: Topsoil over sand natural.
Depth of topsoil above natural: 320mm at W end deepening to 400mm at E end
Features: None
Finds: None

5. Results

Prehistoric features

Two areas of surviving evidence of prehistoric activity were identified during the evaluation. The pottery and flints are of prehistoric date, with most possibly dating to the later Bronze Age or Iron Age but some slightly finer sherds may be earlier prehistoric.

There is no evidence of cremated bone and nothing to suggest that these are related to burial rather than domestic activities. However, the carefully structured deposition of the pottery in Tr 6, feature 12 does appear to have a ritual element.

The larger features in Tr 2 may be the base of very truncated pits but could also be the remains of shallow floor deposits or even deposits in ring ditches associated with roundhouses. A wider area excavated around these features and further plotting of finds distribution may resolve this.

The importance of these albeit truncated remains lies in their location on the gravel ridge above the river Don, less than a mile from the Bronze Age henge , stone circle and avenue at Broomend of Crichie. Equally Iron Age activity in the area is well attested from Crichie Hill and from the excavated roundhouse at Thainstone Business centre, both on the other side of the A96 just on the hillside above the present site.

6. Impacts and Mitigations

6.1 Two areas of prehistoric activity have been identified in trenches 2 and 6. Both have surviving, albeit truncated, features associated with prehistoric pottery and flint artefacts.

6.2 It is recommended that small open area excavations should take place centered on each of the identified areas of prehistoric activity (Illus 10).

- Area 1 centered on trench 2 features should be c 35 x 15m (the prehistoric activity survived for c 35m along Tr 2) (centered on NGR: 377951, 818643)

- Area 2 centered on trench 6 features should be c 10 x 10m (the prehistoric activity survived for c 4m in Tr 6) (centred on NGR:377894, 818825)

6.3 Although no archaeological features were evident in the evaluation trenches other than those listed above, this does not preclude the possibility of chance finds or discoveries outwith the area of the evaluation trenches.

Should such chance finds occur, then the Archaeological Service, Aberdeenshire Council, or Murray Archaeological Services Ltd, must be informed so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed.

6.4 Following the results of the evaluation the following work will need to be done:

- Specialist examination of pottery and flint
- Environmental assessment of samples from pits

In the event of the two recommended areas being excavated, this work can be incorporated in the post-excavation work of those areas.

Appendix 1: List of Small Finds

SF No	Material	Trench	Context
1	2 bodysherds + frag. Coarse fabric	2	5
2	2 frags coarse fabric	2	8
3	2 body sherds + frag. Coarse fabric	2	6
4	bodysherd coarse fabric	2	7
5	frag	2	6
6	body sherd + rim, everted. Finer fabric	2	6
7	bodysherd. Finer fabric cf sf6	2	7
8	rim upright neck with inturned rim, 2 applied pellets on external surface. Coarse fabric	2	7
9	bodysherd, coarse fabric	2	7
10	2 bodysherds, coarse fabric	2	7
11	body sherd, coarse fabric	2	7
12	body sherd, coarse fabric	2	7
13	rim sherd, flat top. Coarse fabric reduced black core, pink external surface	2	on natural
14	20+ bodysherds, v coarse fabric reduced black core and interior, pink external surface; rim flat top, thick; rim finer with internal bevel	6	12/2

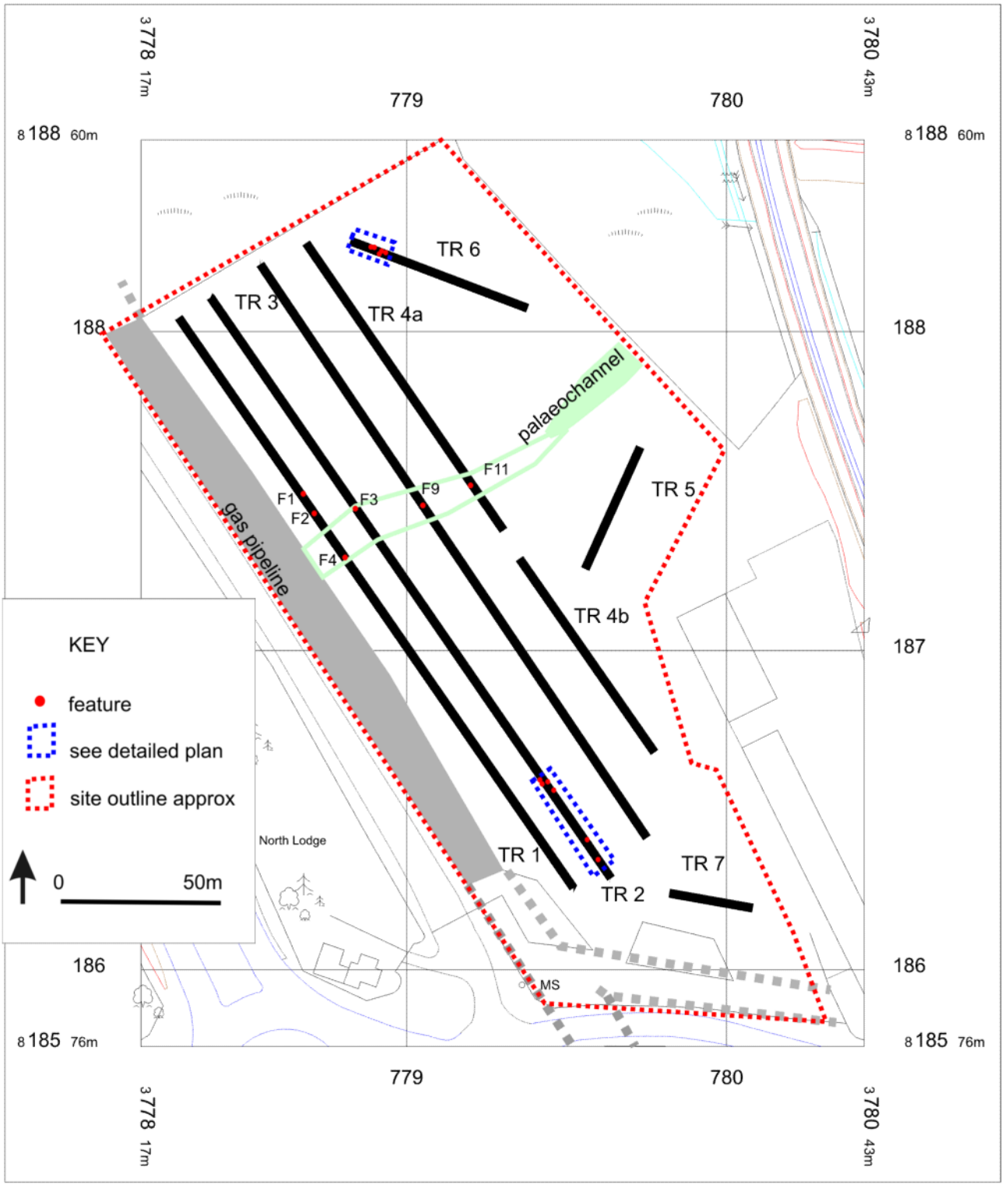
15	flint flake	2	on natural
16	flint flake	6	12/2
17-20	flint chips	6	12/2
21-22	burnt flint chips	6	17
23	3 bodysherds coarse thick fabric reduced black core and interior, pink external surface; rim flat, v slightly inturned	6	17

Appendix 2:Catalogue of photographs

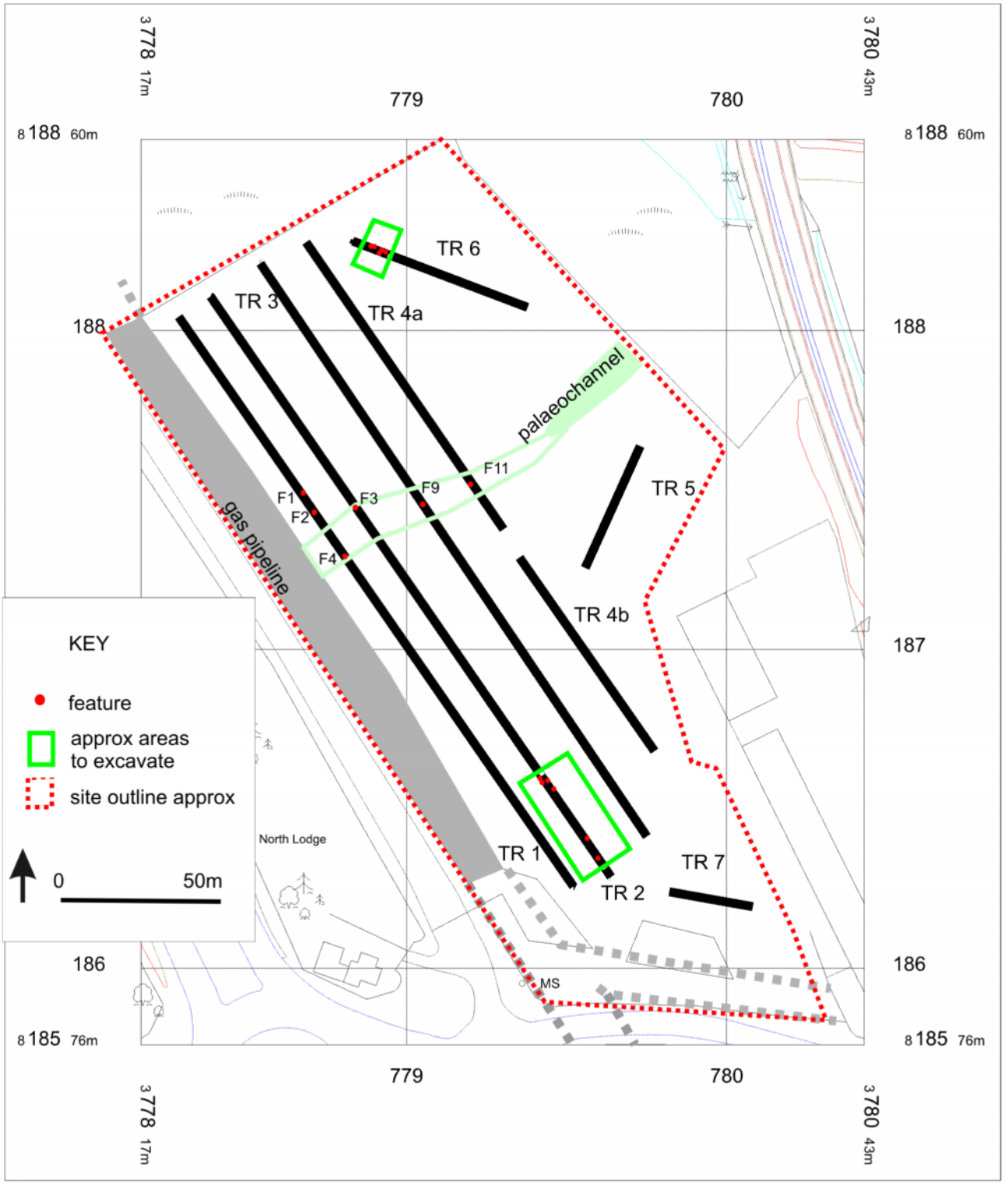
Catalogue of digital photographs (supplied on CD to NMRS and Aberdeenshire SMR)

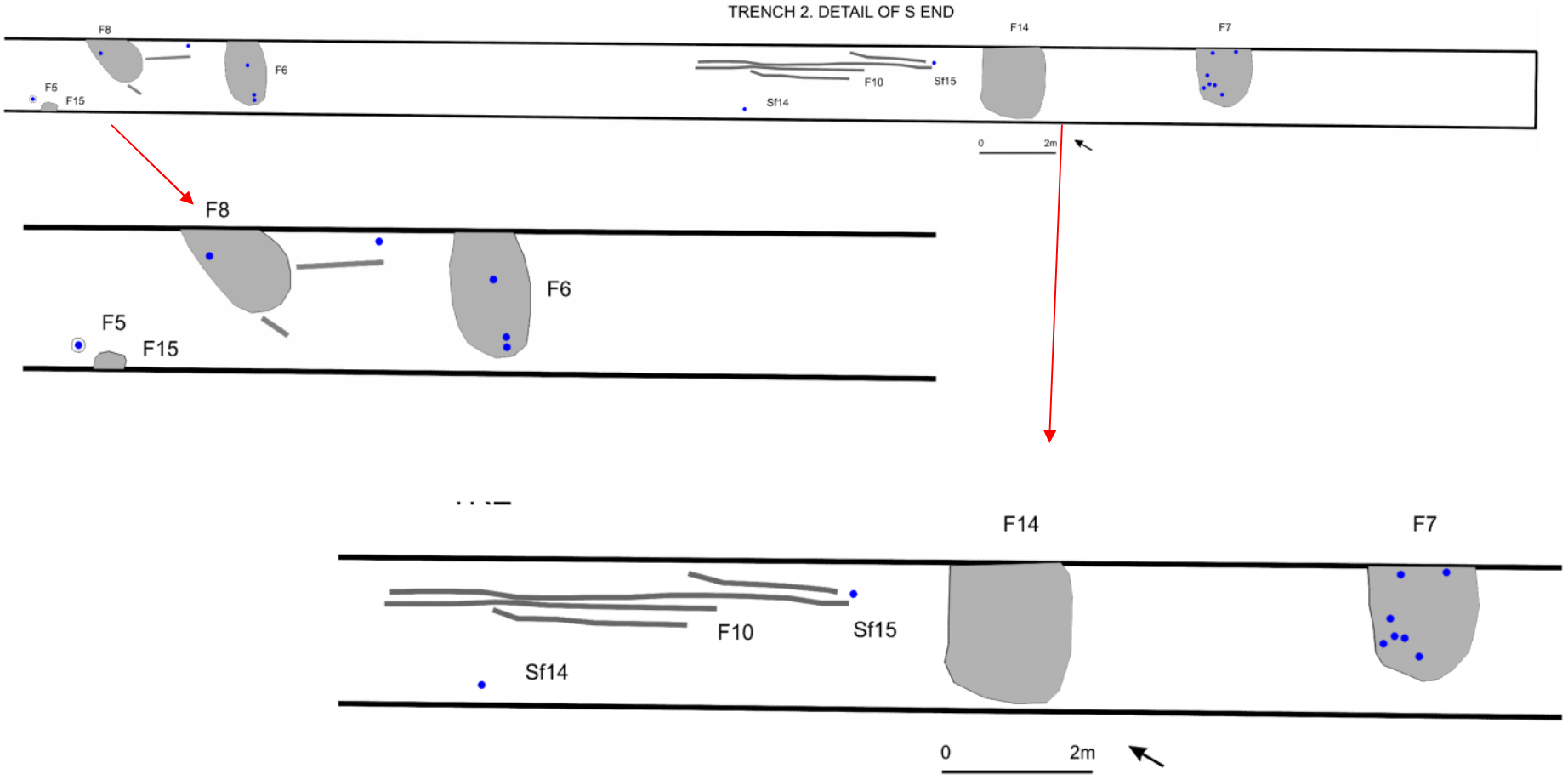
Digital number	Content
1-2	S end Tr 2 looking N. Feature F7 in foreground
3-5	Tr 2, Feature F7 (red tags show finds)
6	Tr 2, Feature F7 in foreground, F6 to background
7-9	Tr 2, F7 looking E
10	Tr 2, rabbit disturbance S of F7
11-13	Tr 2, Feature F6 looking E
14	Tr 2, F6 foreground, F8, F10, F15 in background
15-16	general view looking N
17	general view looking NE. machine at Tr 6
18	general view looking E. Tr 2 in foreground
19	general view looking N
20	general view looking NE
21	general view looking N
22-25	Tr 6, Feature F12 E side partly excavated

26-27	Tr 6, F12 looking S to test pit (F13) and features F16-F18
28-29	Tr 6, F12, E half fully excavated
30-33	Tr 6 looking SE
34-39	Tr 6, F12. W side partly excavated showing stones set around and over crushed pottery



Illus 9 Main plan of trenches



Illus 10 Plan of evaluation with suggested areas to excavate marked in green

Illus 11 Trench 2 detail of S end. Prehistoric features shaded grey. Finds shown by blue dots.. Features shown at larger scale below.