

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Thornhill Road,
Elgin:**

Data Structure Report

For: Springfield Properties PLC
Pentland House
Grampian Road
Elgin
Moray
IV30 1XJ

National Grid Reference (NGR): NGR: NJ 2230 6099

AOC Archaeology Project No: 20718

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1 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group at Thornhill, Elgin, Morayshire. The work was commissioned by Springfield Properties PLC in respect to a proposed housing development. The evaluation works were designed to satisfy the requirements of the local planning authority, as advised by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (ACAS), and are in accordance with the principles inherent in NPPG 5 (SOEnd 1994) and PAN 42 (SOEnd 1994a).
- 1.2 The objective of the archaeological works was to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development area. The work was carried out during September 2007 and was conducted according to the terms of a *Written Scheme of Investigation* which was agreed by Mrs Moira Greig of ACAS, and approved by the planning authority. The 10% sample evaluation consisted of twenty trenches totalling 3,830 m².
- 1.3 The evaluation revealed a series of isolated pits and two parallel linear ditches. No other features or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified. While the pits were dealt with during the evaluation phase of works, the linear features were excavated during a subsequent excavation which took place immediately after the completion of the earlier works.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Planning background

- 2.1.1 Planning consent is being sought by Springfield Properties PLC for a housing development at the site of Thornhill, Elgin, Moray. This programme of works was designed to satisfy fully the requirements of the local planning authority.

2.2 Location

- 2.2.1 The proposed development area lies to the immediate south of Elgin. It is bounded by agricultural fields to the east, south and west (centred at NGR: NJ 2230 6099). The site has long been under agricultural use and appears to have undergone little previous development. It slopes gradually from north to south and is characterised by low undulations. The natural subsoil comprised a yellow/orange sand and gravel. The location and extent of the site are shown in Figure 1.

2.3 Archaeological background and geology

- 2.3.1 The solid geology of Elgin consists of Old Red Sandstone which underlies a drift deposit of glacial sand and gravel overlain by alluvium (Macaulay Institute 1978). Permo-Triassic sandstone, together with some Jurassic rocks, crop out near Elgin. The soils are generally imperfectly or poorly drained with

loamy and sandy textures (Futty & Towers 1982). The site lies on the southern edge of the fertile Moray coastal plain.

- 2.3.2 The majority of recorded prehistoric remains within the immediate area are cropmarks on the eastern and southern periphery of New Elgin, recorded during aerial reconnaissance.
- 2.3.3 The proposed development area contains one site of archaeological interest of possible prehistoric origin (*SMR: NJ26SW 0130*), apparent on oblique aerial photographs. The visible elements of this site appear to comprise:
- i)* a ring-ditch roundhouse;
 - ii)* pits;
 - iii)* linear marks of indeterminate origin;
 - iv)* field boundaries.
- 2.3.4 The cropmarks continue beyond the proposed development area, with a greater concentration of cropmarks towards the south and south-west. This cropmark complex has not been previously investigated so it is not possible to clarify with confidence whether the separate visible elements formed part of a contemporary landscape or, perhaps more likely given their form, whether they were a palimpsest of past activity.
- 2.3.5 Two further cropmark sites are situated within a 200 m radius of the development area. Pits, linear cropmarks, field boundaries and a ring-ditch (*NMRS: NJ26SW 129*) with a possible souterrain lie to the west. To the east are further rectilinear and linear cropmarks (*SMR: NJ26SW 0150*), some of which probably represent old field boundaries. There are also at least three or four ring-ditches visible and two different areas of rig & furrow, along with other indeterminate cropmarks.
- 2.3.6 The development area lies almost 2 km beyond the boundaries of the medieval Burgh of Elgin. Cartographic regression has shown that the development area has been part of an established agricultural landscape for many centuries. The farm south-west of the site at Glassgreen is marked on Pont (*c.1580*), Blaeu (1654), Dorrett (1750), Arrowsmith (1807) and Thomson (1820). These maps are an inadequate scale to provide any indication of the use of the proposed development area during these centuries, but its proximity to the farm at Glassgreen would suggest that it was part of the wider farming landscape.
- 2.3.7 The First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map (1874) clearly shows the farm at Glassgreen. The proposed development area is unoccupied with the exception of a band of trees which runs along the eastern boundary of the site. The Second Edition OS map (1906) similarly shows the proposed development area to be unoccupied.
- 2.3.8 OS maps from 1959 show the tank immediately north-east of the proposed development area. Maps from 1971 show the band of trees to have been removed from the east of the site. There are no changes visible on recent OS (1978, 1984 & 2007).

2.3.9 Previous archaeological investigation undertaken on land immediately west of the proposed development area (*SMR NJ26SW0155*) revealed six parallel linear features that appear to be the remnants of rig and furrow agriculture (Dunbar 2001). This style of arable agriculture is found across Scotland in the latest phases of recorded sequences and can be seen as a manifestation of improvement (Barber 2001). The remains of a quarry and associated quarry pits were also reported. No other features of archaeological significance were encountered during these investigations (Dunbar 2001).

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were:

- i) to determine the character, extent, condition, quality, date and significance of any archaeological remains within the defined subject area;
- ii) should significant archaeological deposits be discovered, to prepare a mitigation strategy compliant with NPPG 5 and PAN 42.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Twenty trenches (Figure 1) were excavated covering a basal area of 3,830 m², representing a 10% sample of the development area. A 30 m by 40 m exposure was excavated around a linear feature identified in the south-east corner of the site.

4.2 The trial trenching aimed to establish the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features present. The trenches were of varying lengths and set on varying orientations (Figure 1). Weather conditions during the evaluation varied between heavy showers and dry fine weather.

4.3 Stripping of the overburden was by means of a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket approximately 2.0 m wide. Excavation was undertaken in shallow units/spits until the first significant archaeological horizon or natural subsoil was reached. Where necessary trial trenches were extended around specific archaeological features to determine their extent. All machine excavation was supervised by an experienced field archaeologist.

4.4 All trial trenching was undertaken according to AOC Archaeology Group's standard operating procedures. All significant archaeological features were cleaned and fully defined. These were then investigated in order to determine their character, function, nature, date and significance.

4.5 An adequate proportion of each feature selected for investigation was excavated, sampled and recorded to determine the character, function, nature, date and significance of the features sampled.

4.6 The trenches were backfilled on completion of the evaluation.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken between 10th and 13th September 2007. Twenty trenches, approximately 2.0 m wide were machine excavated (Figure 1).

5.2 A secondary phase of works comprising the excavation of features identified during the evaluation was completed between 13th and 17th September 2007. An area 30 m by 40 m was excavated around the features to identify their full extent.

5.3 The following should be read together with the various data gathered from the evaluation presented in Appendices 1- 6 and Figures 1-2.

5.4 The topsoil across the site varied in depth from 0.20-0.40 m depending on the topography of the field, and was found to overlie a combination of yellow and orange gravel and sand. No field drains were identified across the entire field, probably due to the free-draining nature of the gravels and sands.

5.5 The evaluation revealed a series of isolated features scattered across the development area: [801], [803], [901], [1001], [1003], [1005], [1201] and [1203]. An area, typically measuring 10 m by 10 m was excavated around each of these features. Only on one occasion (Features [1001], [1003] & [1005]) was an association or local juxtaposition with any further feature(s) identified. The features varied in size between 0.5 m and 2.0 m in length. Only two of these features were excavated ([1001] and [1201]), both comprising circular plans, with shallow sides running in to a flat base. Neither produced any artefacts.

5.6 Features [1001], [1003] and [1005] were found in close proximity to each other, between 1.0 m and 3.0 m apart. The features varied greatly in size between 0.50 m and 1.75 m in length. No other features were identified in the immediate area and despite their close proximity to each other it is not certain that the features are associated with each other.

5.7 A fragment of a ditch [2001] with an identified return was recorded in Trench 20, in the south-east corner of the development area. The feature measured 12 m in length (north-west to south-east) by 3 m (north-east to south-west) (Figures 2 and 3) and was filled with a mixture of topsoil and subsoil [2002]. An area 25 m by 25 m was exposed around the feature with a shallow post-hole [2003] and a parallel ditch [2005] consequently unearthed. Ditch [2005] was shallow in depth and irregular in profile and petered out over its northern part. Unfortunately the area of excavation was constrained to the east and south by both an overhead cable and the development boundary, so only fragments of the two ditches were recorded.



Figure 3: Detail of Ditch [2001], pre-excavation

- 5.8 The interpretation of the features is not unproblematic as they were only partially exposed; however some suggestions appear plausible. The right-angled ditch, in isolation, is reminiscent of the rectilinear enclosures common to Moray (Gregory 2001). Despite their relative common occurrence very few have been dated although they probably date to the later prehistoric period. Alternatively, the site has some similarities to the rectilinear homestead enclosures identified in Dumfries and Galloway (Cowley 2000) and may also date to the prehistoric period. However, neither analogy adequately explains the occurrence of the parallel ditch [2005] identified to the immediate east. Ditch [2205] (Figure 4) was filled with a matrix of almost exactly the same character as the underlying natural subsoil and may be best explained as the remnants of pre-improvement agriculture, as recorded at Kintore, Aberdeenshire (Lindsey Dunbar pers. comm.).



Figure 4: Detail of east facing section through Ditch [2005]

5.9 The trenches located in the western part of the field over the cropmark anomalies revealed no archaeological features. It seems likely that any features which may once have been present have been eradicated by ploughing.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 A series of isolated pits and two parallel ditches were recorded during the evaluation of the proposed development area. A selection of pits were investigated, however overall they possessed neither coherent structural distribution nor, in the main, close juxtaposition. Their excavation produced no artefacts.

6.2 The linear ditches were excavated during a secondary phase of works and produced no artefacts. While possible origins have been suggested for these features, it is felt due to the obvious limitations and constraints of the archaeological works that these interpretations must remain inconclusive. Nevertheless due to the sterile nature of the deposits it is felt that any further work would not add significantly to the dataset.

6.3 No other features or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified and it is therefore concluded that any underlying features, as suggested by cropmark anomalies recorded by aerial photographic reconnaissance, have been removed by plough activity. No further works are recommended.

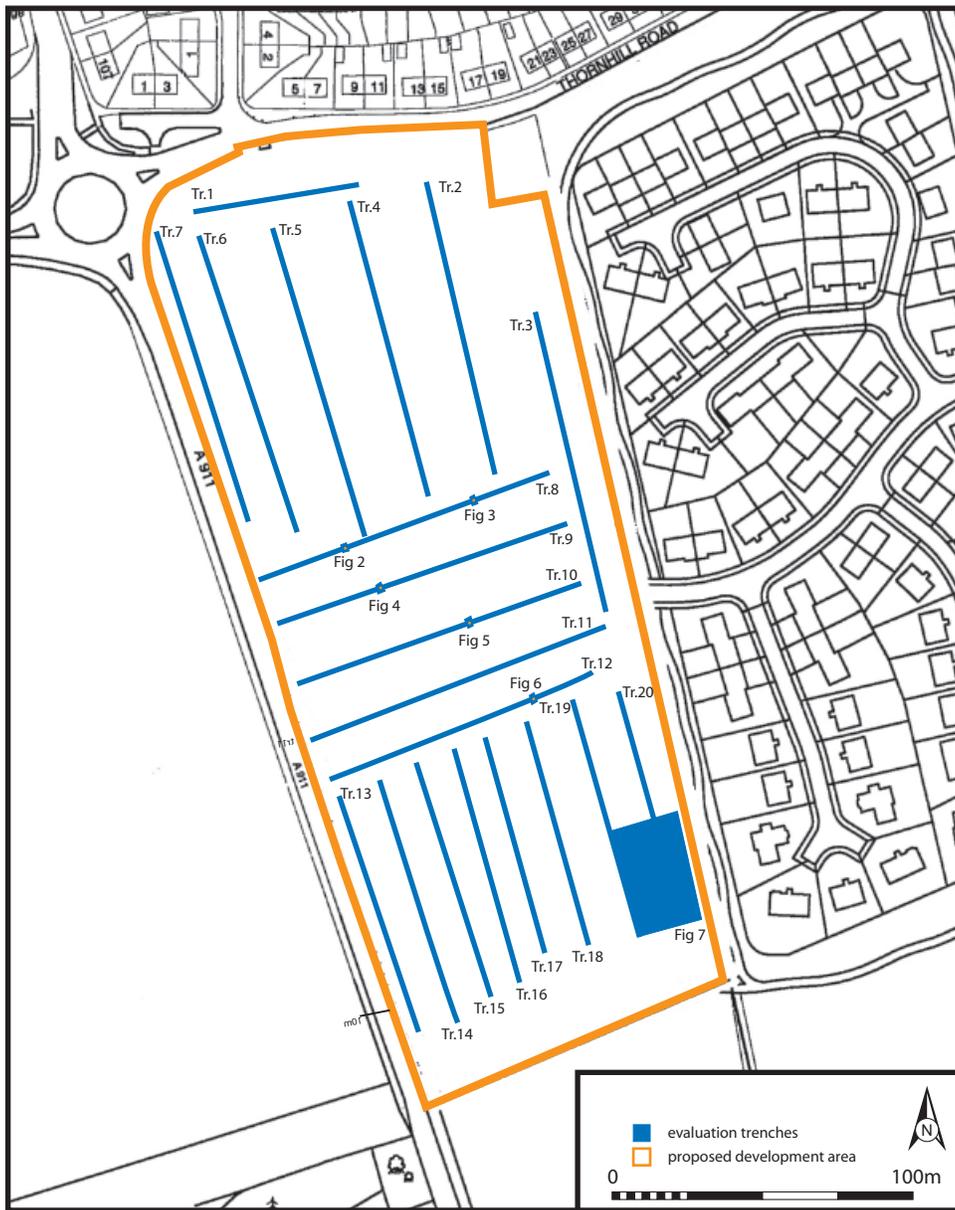
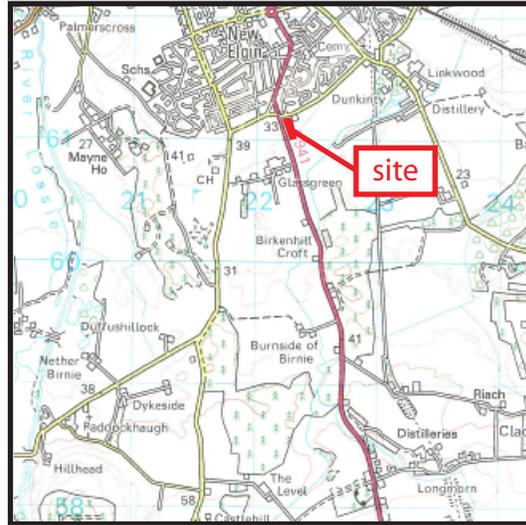
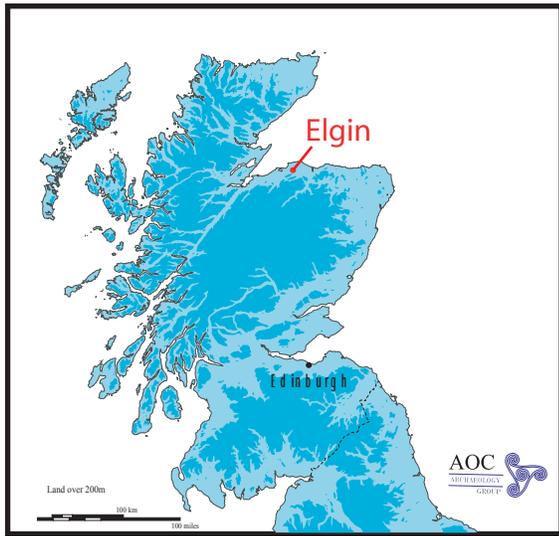


Figure 1: Proposed site location and location of evaluation trenches

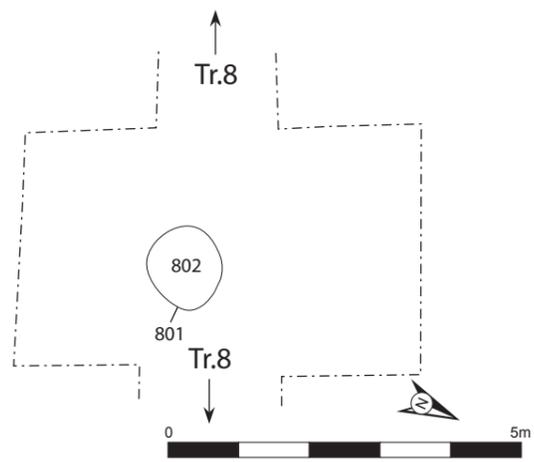


Figure 2: Plan of feature found in Tr.8

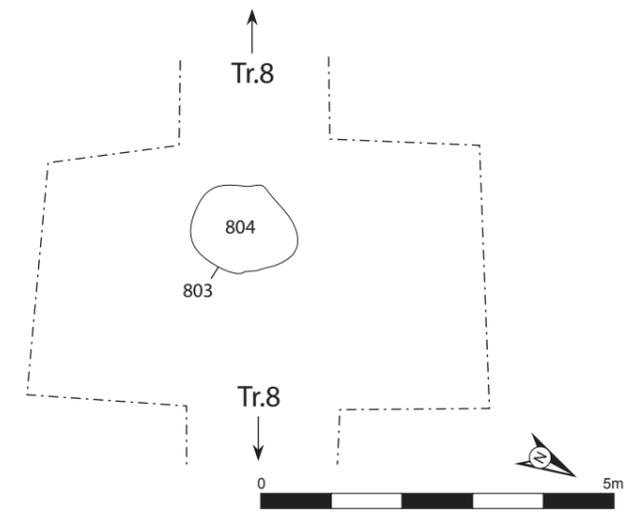


Figure 3: Plan of feature found in Tr.8

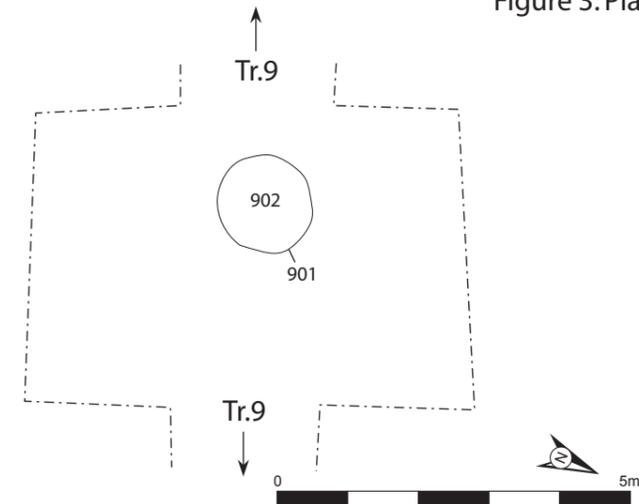


Figure 4: Plan of feature found in Tr.9

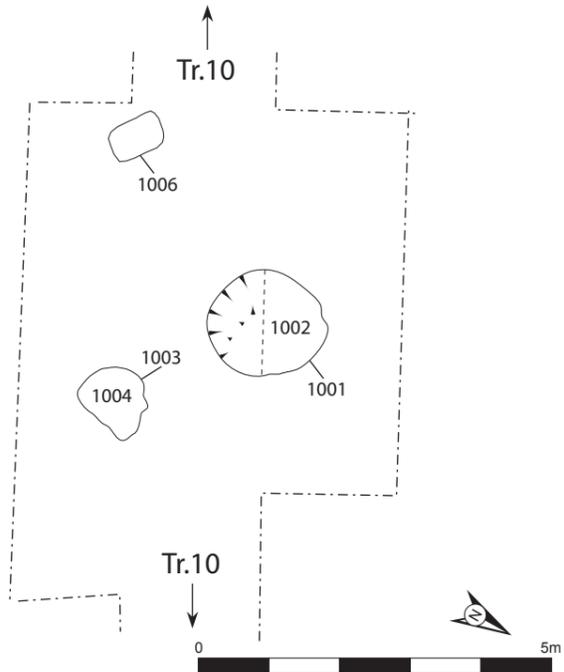


Figure 5: Plan of feature found in Tr.10

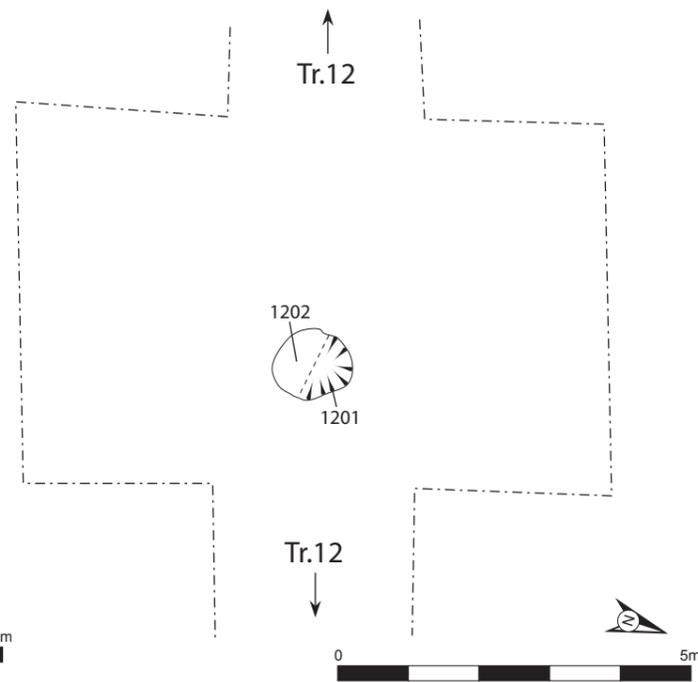


Figure 6: Plan of feature found in Tr.12

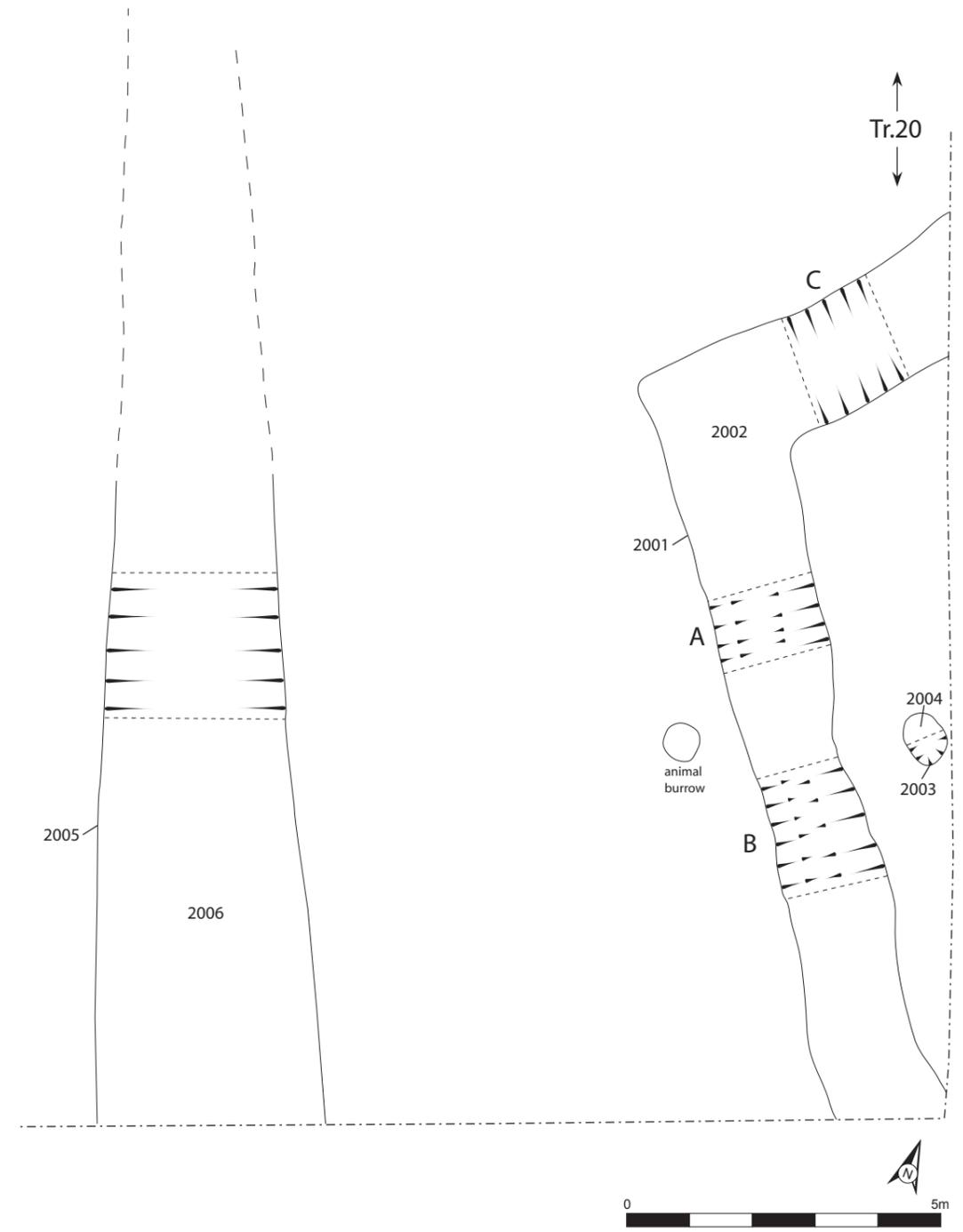


Figure 7: Plan of feature found in Tr.20

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Ordnance Survey 1971 NJ26SW 1:10000

Ordnance Survey 1978 NJ26SW 1:10000

Ordnance Survey 1984 NJ26SW 1:10000

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Pont, T 1580 *Map of Scotland*

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APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

<i>Dimensions</i>	60 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	120 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	East to west
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.40 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.50 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	None
<i>Subsoil</i>	Yellow/orange sand and gravel
<i>Finds</i>	None

Trench 2

<i>Dimensions</i>	100 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	200 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	North to south
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.30-0.40 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.50 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	None
<i>Subsoil</i>	Yellow/orange sand and gravel
<i>Finds</i>	None

Trench 3

<i>Dimensions</i>	100 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	200 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	North to south
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.25-0.30 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	None
<i>Subsoil</i>	Yellow/orange sand and gravel
<i>Finds</i>	None

Trench 4

<i>Dimensions</i>	100 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	200 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	North-west to south-east
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.40 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.50 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	None
<i>Subsoil</i>	Yellow/orange sand and gravel
<i>Finds</i>	None

Trench 5

<i>Dimensions</i>	100 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	220 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	North to south
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.40 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.40 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	None
<i>Subsoil</i>	Yellow/orange sand
<i>Finds</i>	None

Trench 6

<i>Dimensions</i>	100 m by 2 m
<i>Total Area</i>	200 m ²
<i>Orientation</i>	North to south
<i>Depth of Topsoil</i>	0.40 m
<i>Depth of excavation</i>	0.50 m
<i>Significant Features</i>	Yellow/orange sand and gravel
<i>Subsoil</i>	None

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Finds None

Trench 7

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.20-0.30 m
Depth of excavation 0.40-0.50 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand
Finds None

Trench 8

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.30 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features Large unexcavated pit [801], filled by [802], measuring 2 m by 2.10 m. A second unexcavated pit [803], filled by [804], measuring 1.50 by 1.50 m.
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 9

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation East to west
Depth of Topsoil 0.30 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features Unexcavated pit [901], filled by [902], measuring 1.40 m by 1.40 m.
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 10

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation East to west
Depth of Topsoil 0.35 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features Isolated pit [1001]
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 11

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation East to west
Depth of Topsoil 0.30 m
Depth of excavation 0.35 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 12

Dimensions 100 m by 2 m
Total Area 200 m²
Orientation East to west
Depth of Topsoil 0.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features One isolated pits, [1201].

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Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel.
Finds None

Trench 13

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.200.50 m
Depth of excavation 0.30-0.70 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 14

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 1700 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.30.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.40-0.50 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 15

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.30-0.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.40-0.50 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 16

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.20.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.25-0.45m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 17

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.20-0.30 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand and gravel
Finds None

Trench 18

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.30-0.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.50 m
Significant Features None

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Subsoil None
Finds None

Trench 19

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.35 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features None
Subsoil Yellow/orange sand
Finds None

Trench 20

Dimensions 85 m by 2 m
Total Area 170 m²
Orientation North to south
Depth of Topsoil 0.40 m
Depth of excavation 0.40 m
Significant Features Two parallel linear cuts [2001] and [2005] and a pit [2003].
Subsoil None
Finds None

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Evaluation Black & White Print and Colour Slide 1

Frame	Detail	From
1-2	Registration	
3-4	North facing section through pit [1201]	N
5-6	South facing section through pit [1001]	S
7-8	Pre-excavation shot of pit [801]	E
9-10	Pre-excavation shot of pit [901]	N
11-14	Pre-excavation shots of enclosure [2001]	Var

Evaluation Black & White Print and Colour Slide 2

Frame	Detail	From
1-2	Registration	
3-4	East facing section through ditch [2001]	E
5-6	South facing section ditch [2001]	S
7-8	West facing section through ditch [2001]	W
9-10	South facing section through pit [2003]	S
11-12	General shot of Trench 19	S
13-14	General shot of Trench 17	S
15-16	General shot of Trench 15	S
17-18	General shot of Trench 13	S
19-20	General shot of Trench 12	W
21-22	General shot of Trench 10	W
23-24	General shot of Trench 7	S
25-26	General shot of Trench 4	S
27-28	North facing section through ditch [2005]	N
29-30	Post-excavation shot of ditch [2005]	S

APPENDIX 3: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

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No.	Type	Description
001	Topsoil	Topsoil across the site comprising between 0.20 - 0.50 m of black sandy silt.
002	Subsoil	Natural subsoil identified across the site comprising yellow/orange sand, and in places gravel. All the negative features are cut in to this.
801	Cut	Cut of isolated pit, circular in shape, measuring 2.0 m by 2.10 m. Filled by [802]. Unexcavated.
802	Fill	Dark brown silty fill of [801]. Unexcavated.
803	Cut	Cut of isolated pit, circular in shape, measuring 1.50 m by 1.50 m. Filled by [804]. Unexcavated.
804	Fill	Dark brown/black silty fill of [803]. Unexcavated.
901	Cut	Cut of isolated pit, circular in shape, measuring 1.40 m by 1.40 m. Filled by [902]. Unexcavated.
902	Fill	Dark brown/black fill of pit [901]. Unexcavated.
1001	Cut	Cut of pit, circular in plan, irregular in profile with a shallow eastern side and deeper western side. Measuring 1.45 m by 1.50 m by 0.15 m in depth. Filled by [1002]. Associated with [1003] and [1005].
1002	Fill	Fill of pit [1001], comprising a black/grey sand with large inclusions of charcoal throughout.
1003	Cut	Cut of pit, circular in plan, measuring 1.0 m by 1.0 m. Filled by [1004]. Unexcavated.
1004	Fill	Dark grey/black silty fill of pit [1003]. Unexcavated.
1005	Cut	Cut of pit, oval in plan, measuring 0.60 m by 0.40 m. Filled by [1006]. Unexcavated.
1006	Fill	Dark grey/black silty fill of pit [1005]. Unexcavated.
1201	Cut	Cut of pit, circular in shape, U-shaped in profile with a flattish base. Measuring 1.10 m by 1.10 m by 0.18 m in depth. Filled by [1202].
1202	Fill	Fill of pit [1201], comprising a grey/black sandy fill with occasional charcoal and stone inclusions.
2001	Cut	Cut of possible rectilinear enclosure, 21 m in length between 1.5 - 2.0 m wide and up to 0.30 in depth. Only the north-west corner of the possible enclosure was identified. Irregular in profile. Filled by [2002]. Possibly associated with pit [2003] and linear cut [2005].
2002	Fill	Fill of cut [2001] comprising a mixed yellow sand, medium sized stones and topsoil, with a large amount of root content.
2003	Cut	Cut of pit/post-hole, round in plan, with shallow sides running in to a flat base. Measuring 0.45 m by 0.40 m by up to 0.20 m in depth.
2004	Fill	Fill of cut [2003], comprising a light orange/brown silt with no other inclusions. Root action evident.
2005	Cut	Cut of linear feature, up to 17 m in length by between 0.3 - 2.0 m in width and up to 0.10 m in depth. Filled by [2006].
2006	Fill	Fill of cut [2005], comprising a mixture of gravel and silt.

APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE REGISTER

Context No.	Area	Type of Sample	No. of Bags
1002	Tr. 10	SBS	1
1202	Tr. 12	SBS	1
2002 a	Tr. 20	SBS	1
2002 c	Tr. 20	SBS	1
2004	Tr. 20	SBS	1

APPENDIX 5: DRAWING REGISTER

Drawing	Area	Feature	Description	Scale
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No.		No.		
1	Tr. 8	801	Plan of pit [801]	1:50
2	Tr. 8	803	Plan of pit [803]	1:50
3	Tr. 9	901	Plan of pit [901]	1:50
4	Tr. 10	1001	Plan of features [1001], [1003] and [1005]	1:50
5	Tr. 20	2001	Plan of linear feature [2001]	1:50
6	Tr. 20	2001	South-facing section through cut [2001]	1:10
7	Tr. 20	2001	North-facing section through cut [2001]	1:10
8	Tr. 20	2001	North-facing section through cut [2001] section b	1:10
9	Tr. 20	2001	North-facing section through cut [2005]	1:10
10	Tr. 12	1201	Plan of pit [1201]	1:50
11	Tr. 20	2003	South-facing section through pit [2003]	1:10
12	Tr. 20	2003	Plan of pit [2003]	1:50
13	Tr. 20	2001	West-facing section through cut [2001] section c	1:10
14	Tr. 20	2005	Plan of linear cut 2005	1:50

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APPENDIX 6: DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND ENTRY

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Moray Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Thornhill Road, Elgin
PROJECT CODE:	20718
PARISH:	Elgin
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Cook, Martin
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPES(S) OF PROJECTS:	Evaluation and excavation
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Cropmarks-pits and roundhouses
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR:	NJ 2230 6099
START DATE:	10/09/2007
END DATE:	17/09/2007
PREVIOUS WORK:	None
MAIN DESCRIPTION:	<p>A programme of archaeological works was required by Springfield Properties Ltd over a greenfield development on the south side of Elgin, Moray. AOC Archaeology were commissioned to undertake a 10% archaeological evaluation. The evaluation consisting of twenty trenches totalling 3830 m2 was conducted between 10th and 13th September 2007. The evaluation identified a series of isolated pits and two parallel linear ditches. A second phase of works comprising the excavation of the ditches was completed between 13th and 17th September 2007. No dateable material was recovered from the features and they are thought to relate to pre-improvement farming. The evaluation uncovered no other features or artefacts of archaeological significance.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING	Springfield Properties Ltd
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ARCHIVE LOCATION:	NMRS