

SVM07

Date: October 2007

Client: FM Developments

Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

Clionadh McGarry

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (SVM07)

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Client | FM Developments |
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| Text | Clionadh McGarry |
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| Evaluation | Clionadh McGarry Laura Scott |
| Schedule | |
| Fieldwork | September 2007 |
| Report | October 2007 |
| Grid Reference | NO 6850 6580 |

Summary

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by FM Developments to conduct an archaeological evaluation at a proposed housing development at Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire. Prehistoric activity north of the proposed development is suspected because of aerial photography. Given that this activity took place within 500m of the proposed development and that Marykirk is known to have been in existence by the middle ages the potential for archaeological remains was seen as high. A brief for an initial phase of evaluation was obtained from Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (who advise the planning authority). The evaluation sought to confirm the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits or features within the development area and provide information on the character, extent, date and quality of those remains. To this end, ten trial trenches were placed at random across the site, giving good coverage to accessible areas, and representing 10% of the proposed development. The excavation revealed deep plough soils above natural sandy gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered during the works.

(SVM07) RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT SOUTHERN VIEW, MARYKIRK

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1. INTRODUCTION (Figure 1)

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by FM Developments to undertake an Archaeological Evaluation in advance of a proposed housing development at Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire. The archaeological work was required to fulfil a condition placed on planning consent. A Brief for the work was prepared for the applicant by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service and a subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Headland Archaeology had been agreed. The evaluation was in advance of Phases I and II of the original development proposal. This report presents the results of an initial desk-based assessment and intrusive site evaluation, which sampled 10% of the undisturbed part of the development area or c.620m of linear trench. The fieldwork was undertaken on September 26th and 27th 2007.

The site of the proposed development occupies an area approximately 150m north of the North Esk River on the rolling coastal plain. Most of the site comprised arable fields, whilst the southeastern quarter was occupied by a modern private house and garden, a farmsteading and a chicken shed. The area between the steading and the chicken shed was to an extent covered by concrete hard standing at the time of the investigation. The southern extent of the site is bounded by the B 974 while the A 937 defines the eastern side. The western extent is demarcated by the B 974 and an adjacent property. North of the site is a continuation of the same arable field. This area, not included in this phase, has produced aerial photographs showing cropmarks that look like prehistoric ring-ditches and pits, possibly representing an unenclosed settlement.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives were:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified, to be agreed with Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Unit
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the proposed development project

3. METHOD

Evaluation

Trial trenches were excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision. The total development area comprising house plots and access roads measures approximately 12175m². About a quarter of the area of the proposed development was deemed to be inaccessible due to extant buildings, hard standing and overhead power lines which required a 9.0m exclusion zone on either side, leaving c. 8500m² accessible. The Aberdeenshire Archaeologist was made aware of the constricting on-site factors by the Project Manager via a telephone conversation. On arrival the north-eastern extent of the evaluation area was indicated on the ground by a member of FM Construction as the point at which there was a crop change in the field. The northern extent of the evaluation was then taken as a straight line across the field to the western field-boundary, taking a small area immediately north of the proposed SUDS pond. In total, 630 linear metres were trenched. All trenches were 1.90m wide.

Archaeological features in the trenches were recorded using the Headland Archaeology Ltd standard recording method. Colour transparencies and colour print photographs were taken. An overall site plan was recorded and tied into the National Grid using an EDM and penmap software. All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record sheets.

4. RESULTS

The following presents a summary of the results of the evaluation.

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

Aerial photographs were obtained from RCAHMS showing cropmarks, which may represent a prehistoric unenclosed settlement. These were photo-rectified by Headland Archaeology onto the OS map. The cropmarks occurred in the part of the field corresponding to Phase III of the planning proposal. This area was not being developed at this stage and therefore would not be subject to an invasive evaluation at present.

| Nat Grid Ref: | Site Type: | Description: | Source: |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NO 685 658 | Crop marks | Ring-ditches (possible); cropmarks. Unknown date, probably Prehistoric. | NMRS: NO66NE 57 SMR: NO66NE0033 Photographs: KC/1312, KC/13: B16288, B16290 |

Maps dating back to the mid eighteenth century suggest that this land has been open, arable fields for at least the last 250 years (Roy, 1747 – 1755. Taylor and Skinner, 1776).

EVALUATION

Full trench descriptions are provided in Appendix 1, a summary is provided here.

A total of ten trenches were excavated within the accessible area of excavation (Figure 2). The trenching revealed a deep layer of loam, forming a plough soil (1) covering the whole area. This in turn overlay a lighter sandy loam (2). Six north – south orientated furrows (4), 0.30 – 0.40m wide, cut into the underlying geological sediments (4) (“the natural”) were recorded in Trench 1. An unmarked modern service trench, probably carrying a sewage pipe, was encountered in Trenches 6, 8 and 9. Both the top and sub-soils appeared clean of artefacts associated with manuring. The natural encountered throughout was noted as light – mid reddish brown sandy gravel, interspersed by occasional patches of rounded gravel. A number of small – medium sized tree throws and tree bowls were visible in the natural. No archaeologically significant features or finds were identified.

5. DISCUSSION

The evaluation failed to identify any remains of archaeological significance. The soils associated with agriculture were very deep across the area of evaluation, reaching a depth of 0.75m at the southern extent of the site where the field abuts the B974. (There was a slight topographic hollow in the northwestern area of evaluation where the top and sub-soils reached a maximum depth of 1.0m in the eastern end of trench 7.) As the landscape slopes gently toward the North Esk River some 200m further south the plough soil has been eroding down-slope and accumulating against the southern field boundary, presumably for centuries. This depth of plough soil would have protected any archaeological features cut into the underlying strata had any been present. This means the absence of evidence for past activity is unlikely to be due to plough truncation.

At present at Southern View, the B974 demarcates the extent of arable land with the land south of the road given over to pasture. Recently, the evaluation area, as well as the fields to the north, have been ploughed east – west, but the layout of the field, the topography and especially the accumulation of soil along the southern field boundary suggest that this area was traditionally ploughed north – south. A large concentration of sub-rounded large cobble to boulder-sized stones was encountered within the plough soil about 0.30m below the present ground surface along the southern field boundary. The unstructured nature of the deposit led to it being interpreted as the remains of clearance cairns. The landowner who remembered them in this field from his youth in the 1950's confirmed this. These were locally known as *stane gaitherin's*. The depth of plough soil above the stones suggests a lot of erosion in the last 50 years (Plate 3).

The plough soil overlay a reddish-brown sandy loam, which is probably an older, inactive plough soil. This filled the truncated furrows observed in Trench 1. No other furrows were encountered during the evaluation, so it may just be that flat ploughing, i.e. not reusing the same furrow annually, was practiced in this area. The natural is a light – mid reddish brown sandy gravel, interspersed by occasional patches of rounded gravel. A number of small – medium sized tree throws and tree bowls were encountered in the natural. They were investigated to confirm their nature. They formed no obvious pattern. None produced any finds. Overall the plough soil and the sandy loam beneath (the older plough soil) were remarkably devoid of artefacts, especially the household debris usually associated with manuring. This is surprising given that the field is adjacent to the village of Marykirk and its long history of cultivation as suggested by map evidence.

7. REFERENCES

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1747 – 1755 | Roy Military Survey of Scotland |
| 1776 | Taylor & Skinner's 'Survey and maps of the roads of North Britain or Scotland', Plate 53 |
| 2007 | Ordnance Survey, 1:2500, Sheet NO 6865 |

APPENDIX 1: Registers**Trench Register** (All trenches are 1.90m wide)

| Trench No. | Description | Length (m) | Av. Topsoil/subsoil Depth (m) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Oriented E-W. Topsoil (1) overlay a sub-soil (2), which overlay the natural sediments (3). Several furrows were encountered in the trench running NE – SW from 15.0m from the E-end. A ceramic field drain was encountered running N-S 43.80m from the E-end. The natural become stonier 68m from the E-end. | 100 | 0.65 |
| 2 | Orientated N-S. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. There was a marked concentration of sub-rounded cobbles – boulders in the top and sub-soils. These were random and are the remains of clearance cairns, still collected within living memory. This trench contained several small tree bowls. | 62 | 0.75 |
| 3 | Orientated NE-SW. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 13.50 | 0.89 |
| 4 | Orientated NW-SE. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 22 | 0.60 |
| 5 | Oriented NE-SW. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 22 | 0.70 |
| 6 | Oriented E-W. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. NW-SE service cut was observed 19.10m from the E-end of the trench. A narrow slot was excavated to reveal the pipe to the landowner who was unaware of its existence. (It was a heavy-duty black PVC pipe. A well-fused joint was visible making it very likely that this is a sewage pipe.) No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 26.10 | 0.75 |
| 7 | Oriented NW- E. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 16 | 0.90 |
| 8 | Orientated E-W. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. The NW–SE service cut was encountered 1.02m from the E-end of the trench. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 19 | 0.50 |
| 9 | Orientated N,NE-W,SW. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. The same service cut as was visible | 25.20 | 0.70 |

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|
| | in Trenches 6 and 8 at c. 5m from the SW-end of the trench. One substantial tree bowl was visible in the natural. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | | |
| 10 | Orientated E-W. Stratigraphy as in Trench 1. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered. | 10 | 0.65 |

Context Register

| Context N ^o | Trench N ^o | Description |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | All | Topsoil: Dark brown, loose loam containing frequent roots. This deposit seemed very clean, no artefacts associated with manuring were encountered. Thickness: 0.05 – 0.44m, tending to be deeper to the south, i e down-slope. The current, active plough soil. This has probably very recently formed since it overlies the remains of the clearance cairns stone the along the southern site boundary, representing developments such as heavy ploughing machinery and modern fertilising techniques. It overlies (2) throughout. |
| 2 | All | Sub-soil: Mid reddish brown, moderately compact, loamy sand. Occasional small, sub-angular quartz inclusions. The area adjacent to the southern field boundary contained a noticeable concentration of sub-rounded, large cobbles – boulders (remains of clearance cairns). Depth: 0.07 – 0.94m, tending to be deeper toward the South of the site. Clear and smooth interface with the natural. Most likely an older inactive plough soil, especially as this soil fills the furrows in Trench 1. As (1), there seems to be a general lack of finds associated with manuring. |
| 3 | All | Natural sediments: Light – mid reddish brown sandy gravel, interspersed by occasional patches of rounded gravel. |
| 4 | 1 | Furrows: Six parallel, linear furrows, aligned NE – SW. These were generally 0.30 – 0.40m wide and were 0.60 – 1.0m apart. They were filled by (2). They were faint and truncated by later agricultural activity. They were grouped together in the NE top third of Trench 1. The remains of pre-mechanised ploughing. Possibly they survived here because this part of the trench is slightly higher and the slope is slightly steeper than the rest of the site, so the plough cut deeper into the natural. |

Photograph Register

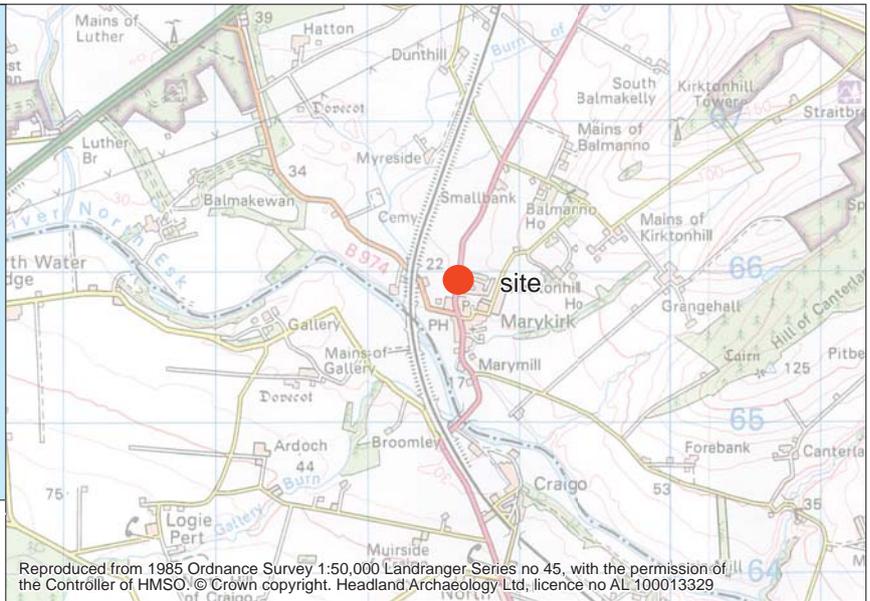
Film 1

| Shot | Print | Slide | Direction facing | Description |
|------|-------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1 | - | - | N/A | ID Shot. |
| 2 | - | - | NE | General shot of farm building |
| 3 | - | - | NE | General site shot showing overhead cables |
| 4 | - | - | N | General working shot |

| | | | | |
|----|---|---|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 | - | - | E | Trench 1: Ceramic field drain |
| 6 | - | - | E | Trench 1: Furrow, 24m from E-end of trench |
| 7 | - | - | S | Trench 1: N-facing section through furrow, 24m from E-end of trench |
| 8 | - | - | N | Trench 1: Furrow, 15m from E-end of trench |
| 9 | - | - | E | Trench 1: W-facing section of trench |
| 10 | - | - | NW | Trench 2: Clearance stones |
| 11 | - | - | E | Trench 2: E-facing section, 22m from the S-end |
| 12 | - | - | S | Trench 2: Tree throw |
| 13 | - | - | E | Trench 2: Tree throw |
| 14 | - | - | N | Trench 2: General shot |
| 15 | - | - | S | Trench 2: N-facing trench section |
| 16 | - | - | S | Trench 2: N-facing section through tree throw pit |
| 17 | - | - | E | Trench 2: General shot of tree throw pit |
| 18 | - | - | N | Trench 2: Tree throw pits |
| 19 | - | - | S | Trench 2: General shot |
| 20 | - | - | NE | Trench 3: General shot |
| 21 | - | - | SW | Trench 3: General shot |
| 22 | - | - | NW | Trench 4: General shot |
| 23 | - | - | SE | Trench 4: General shot |
| 24 | - | - | NE | Trench 5: General shot |
| 25 | - | - | SW | Trench 5: General shot |
| 26 | - | - | W | Trench 6: General shot |
| 27 | - | - | W | Trench 6: General shot of linear service cut |
| 28 | - | - | N | Trench 6: Service cut |
| 29 | - | - | N | Trench 6: S-facing section showing service cut |
| 30 | - | - | SE | Trench 7: General shot |
| 31 | - | - | NW | Trench 7: General shot |
| 32 | - | - | E | Trench 8: General shot |
| 33 | - | - | N | Trench 8: Service cut at E-end of trench |
| 34 | - | - | N, NE | Trench 9: General shot, service cut in foreground |
| 35 | - | - | S, SW | Trench 9: General shot |
| 36 | - | - | NE | Trench 1: General shot |

Film 2

| Shot | Print | Slide | Direction facing | Description |
|------|-------|-------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | - | - | N/A | ID Shot. |
| 2 | - | - | E | Trench 10: General shot |
| 3 | - | - | W | Trench 10: E-facing section |
| 4 | - | - | W | Trench 10: General shot |
| 5 | - | - | SE | Trench 9: Tree bowl |
| 6 | - | - | S | Trench 6: PVC pipe in service cut |



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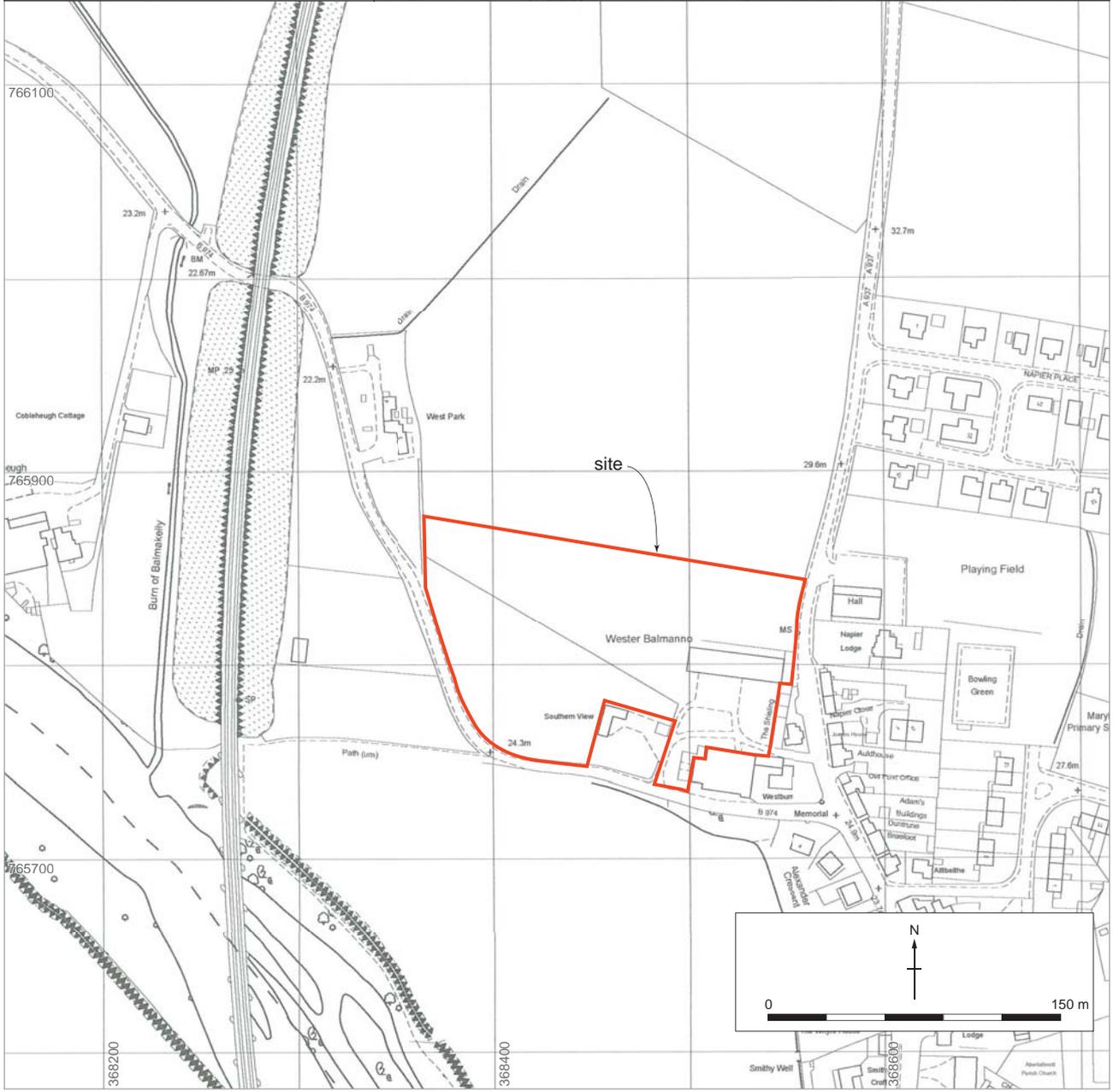


Figure 1: SVM07, Southern View, Marykirk - Site Location.

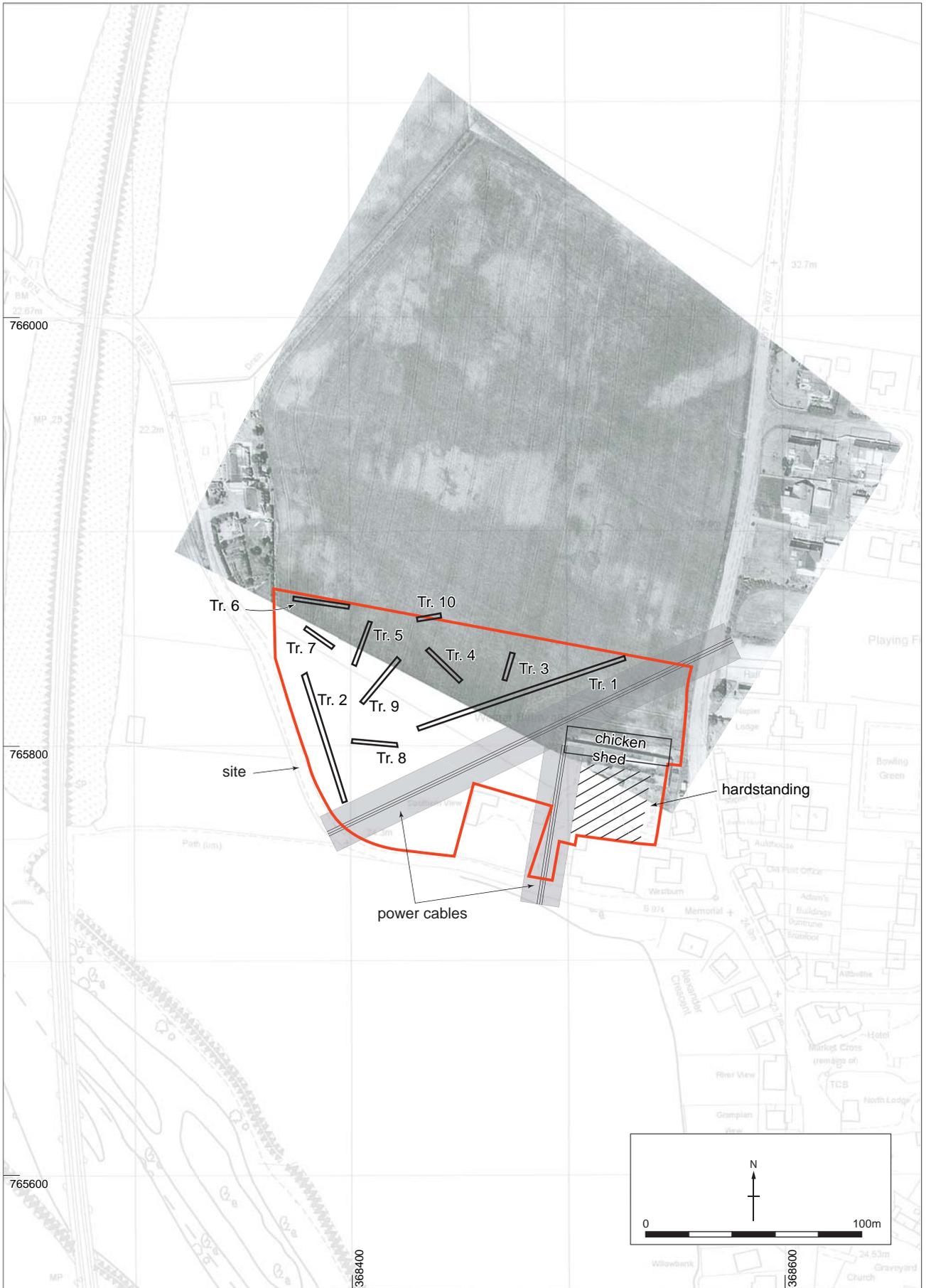


Figure 2: SVM07, Southern View, Marykirk - Trial trenches in relation to rectified aerial photograph.

Plates



Plate 1. SE-facing general shot. Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire.



Plate 2. Trench 1 general shot. Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire



Plate 3. Trench 2, representative stratigraphy. Southern View, Marykirk, Aberdeenshire.