

# Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief Land to north of Upper Criggie Farm, Stonehaven, AB39 3XZ



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## SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was performed between February 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 by Dr Robert Lenfert on behalf of Cameron Archaeology. Site activity involved topsoil removal for a 400m access road and a rectangular footing approximately 40m x 30m in advance of a single wind turbine installation. Visual inspection and spot-troweling of the subsoil, in conjunction with an investigation of the surrounding spoil heap and localised field-walking, did not reveal any evidence of archaeological artefacts or features, despite the location of Newlands stone circle (the stones themselves were removed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) within 50m of the turbine base.

# 1 Background

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located on the N side of Upper Criggie Farm. It is centred on NGR NO 83399 83420, at 165-168m OD in the parish of Dunnottar.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Scott Begg, D&E Begg. An application APP/2014/4121 to Aberdeenshire Council for a 250KM wind turbine with associated infrastructure, track, hardstanding and electrical cabinet was passed on 13 May 2015 with archaeology condition (condition 1) for an archaeological watching brief during all groundbreaking and development work (Illus 2).
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016)



Illus 2 Site plan showing location of topsoil strip (*copyright SAC Consulting*)

## 2 Archaeological Background

2.1 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the proposed development. There are eight sites of archaeological and historical interest. The site of Newlands stone circle (NO88SW 8) is c50m E of the proposed turbine base. A stone circle was recorded (OSNB 1865, 6, 71) in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was removed by the tenant to use the stone for building. The proprietor marked the spot with trees, but they were removed in 1969 (RCAHMS 1982, 37). There appear to be trees on the site on the modern map (Illus 6).

2.2 An Early Bronze Age flat axe (Coles' type Ba; NO88SW 13) was found at Hillhead Of Auquhirie when the ground was being drained in 1850 (Ordnance Survey Name Book [ONB] 1864). (Palace of History 1911; Anderson and Black 1888, give the date of find as 1848.) It was donated to Montrose Museum by Mr Clark (Accession no 65). (Name Book 1864, 6, 37; Anderson and Black 1888, 403; Palace of History 1911, vol 2, 853; Coles 1971, 82). The axe is still in Montrose Museum, but there is no information regarding the date of the find.

2.3 940m to the SE at Briggs of Criggie is a dark, solid, circular cropmark identified by aerial photography (NO88SW 28; Greig 1996, 6).

9.4 990m to the SSE at Nether Criggie a cist was found in 1954 (NO88SW 6). On 30th August 1954, earth-moving operations revealed a cist set into a pit (1.7m deep) in a gravel hillock 480m E of Nether Criggie farmhouse. The cist, which measured 3ft by 1ft 6ins and 1ft 6ins deep, and was paved with small stones, was examined by members of the Geography and Anatomy Departments of Aberdeen University soon after its discovery. It contained the crouched inhumation of a young adult female and the fragmentary skeleton of a new-born child, accompanied by three Beakers (two N3(L), and one N/NR type); two flint scrapers and other stone objects found nearby probably came from the cist. The bones and finds are preserved in Aberdeen University Anthropological Museum, Marischal College, Aberdeen (Acc Nos: 233/25 and 19758-60) (Kirk and J MacKenzie 1958, 1-6; RCAHMS 1982, 18; Clarke 1970, vol 2, 518). The find spot, at NO 8377 8238, on a prominent quarried knoll, was indicated by the farmer at Nether Criggie, who was present when the cist was found.

2.3 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings in the area include Upper Criggie Farm (NO88SW 30), Newlands (NO88SW 31), Upper Toucks (NO88SW 38/ NO88SW 60), Hill of Seabeg (NO88SW 39).

2.4 A watching brief was maintained at Hillhead Of Auquhirie during the excavation of the access tracks and the base of one of three 2.3mW wind turbines (NO88SW 67). An Early Bronze Age flat axe (NO88SW 13) was found in 1850 in close proximity to the turbine base and the access track to it. No archaeological features or finds were evident on the present site (Murray, JC 2012, 17).

2.5 The track runs along a field boundary created between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordnance Survey map dates (Illus 3 and 4) and the turbine location is a ploughed field (Illus 6).

### **3 The Watching Brief**

Stripping of the topsoil commenced on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, 2016 with the clearing of a triangular area adjacent to the road which allowed lorries carrying stone for the roadway to safely turn in and reverse. A small portion of this initial work had to be performed with a bulldozer, as low-hanging overhead electrical cables prevented safe use of the 360 excavator. Once this hazard was cleared, work immediately resumed with the bladed ditching bucket. The subsoil consisted of a reddish-brown silty clay with the frequent inclusion of both angular and water-worn stones, in addition to discreet gritty-gravel deposits. The depth of the topsoil remained consistent and relatively shallow overall throughout the topsoil strip, averaging 0.25-0.30m in depth with the only exception to this being the eastern edge of the rectangular turbine base, where deposits reached 0.45m along the existing fenceline. No marked changes in subsoil occurred throughout the area in question.

No archaeological finds in the form of artefacts or features were identified. One sherd of undecorated white modern ceramic was identified with the area for the turbine base. Two suspected postholes were hand-excavated and summarily revealed as natural features, being stoneholes for water-worn cobbles removed by ploughing which were later infilled with the darker topsoil. Despite the presence of Newlands stone circle (NO88SW 8) some 50m east of the rectangular area for the turbine, no archaeological features were noted in this particular area as well.

## 4 Conclusions

Although the Written Scheme of Investigation highlighted the presence of several notable archaeological features and finds within a 1km radius such as a stone circle (Newlands), a bronze axehead, cist burial and hut circle (Cameron 2016), no traces of archaeological activity were noted. It is perhaps understandable that settlements or structures (particularly prehistoric ones) were not constructed in close proximity to Newlands stone circle situated some 50m east of the turbine platform, especially if prehistoric burials were known to have existed within the site. This is perhaps due to the stone circle being regarded as a sacred place in the local landscape – a place to be either revered or avoided for settlement. The stone circle was located in a relatively prominent location which would have been visible across the valley to the east (location of modern A90 route) and the coastline beyond, dependent upon on past levels of tree cover and vegetation. This paucity of close settlement to the stone circle is perhaps reinforced by the location of the circular cropmark at Briggs of Criggie, some 940m to the SE (NO88SW 28; Cameron 2016,3; Greig 1996, 6) which likely represents a hut circle, or remains of a prehistoric roundhouse, which currently exists as the closest known or suspected prehistoric settlement to the site.

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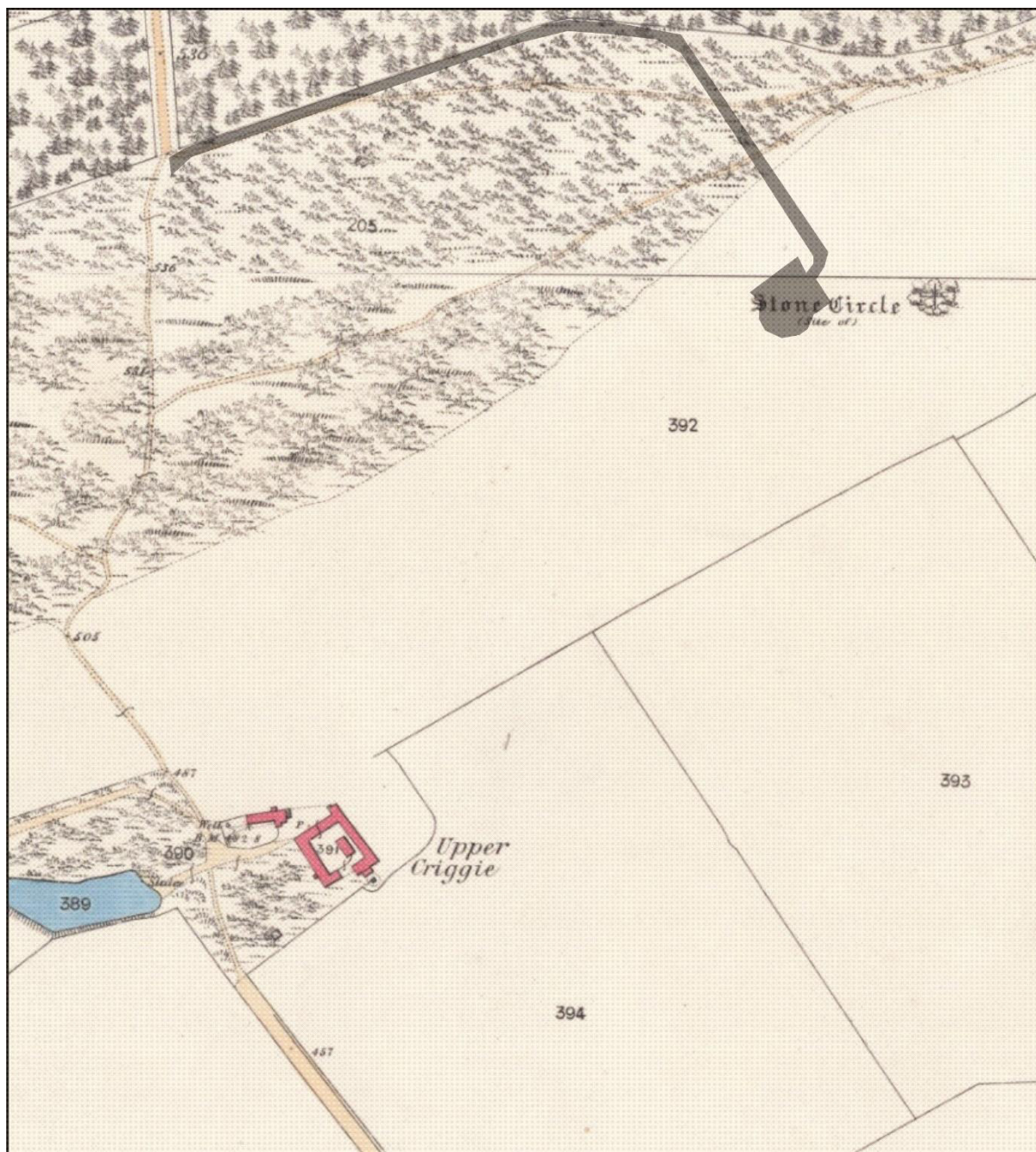
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## **6 Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Scott Begg for initiating this project and to Bruce Mann and Claire Herbert at Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for their advice during this work.

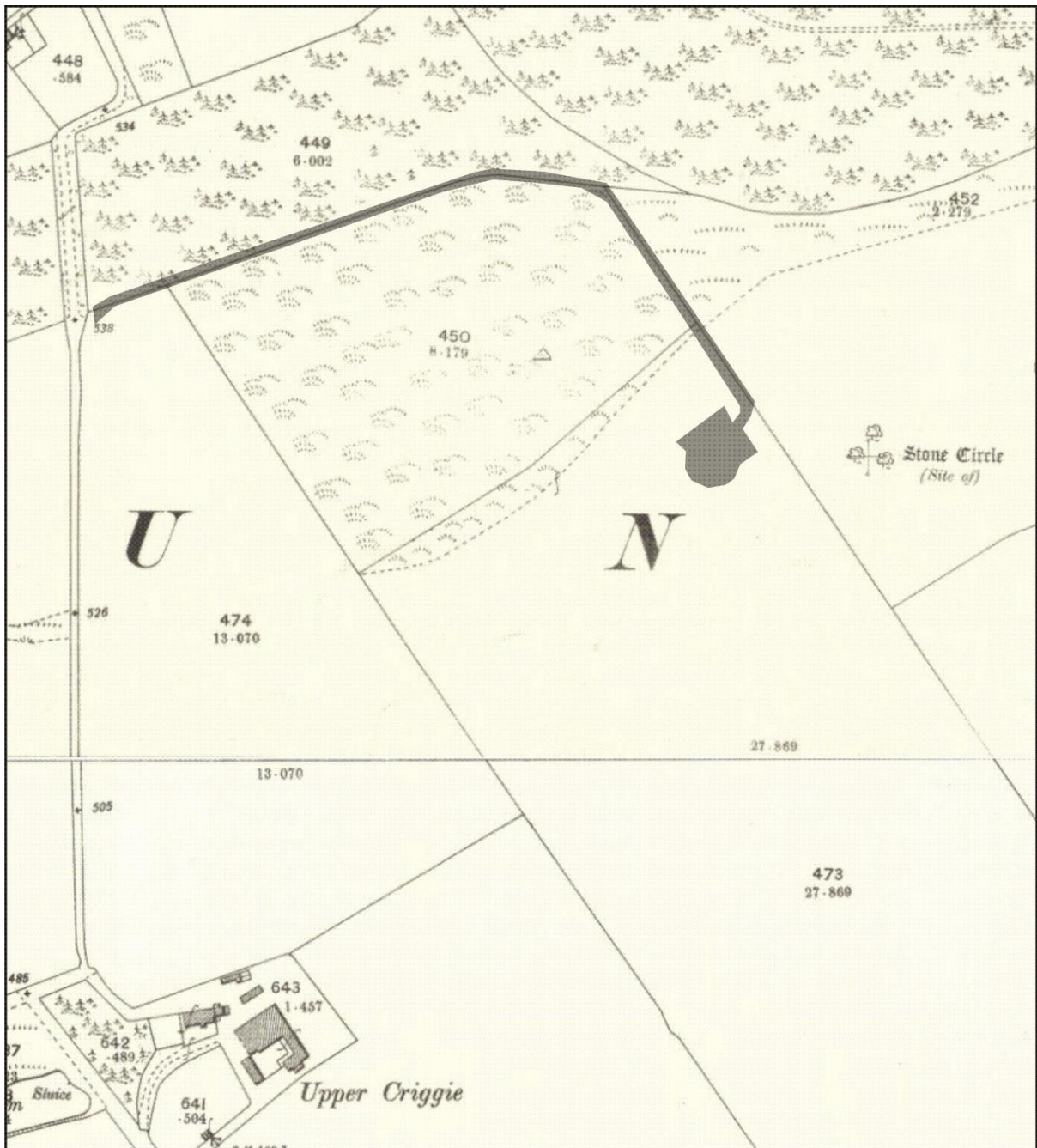
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## APPENDIX 1 MAPS



Illus 3 First Edition OS map showing site proposed wind turbine track and base (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Kincardine Sheet XVII.10 & 6 (Dunnottar) Survey date: 1865 Publication date: 1868





Illus 4 Second Edition OS map showing proposed wind turbine track and base (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Kincardineshire 020.03 & 7 (includes: Dunnottar) Publication date: 1903 Revised: 1901



Illus 5 1946 aerial photograph with proposed wind turbine track and base (copyright NCAP).  
Date: 08 May 1946 Date known Location: Hillhead of Auquhirie; Dunnottar; KINCARDINESHIRE;  
SCOTLAND Coordinates (lat, lon): 56.939975, -2.270038 UNI: NCAP-000-000-100-974



Illus 6 Modern map of Upper Criggie showing outline of proposed wind turbine development showing ploughed fields (copyright Google)

## APPENDIX 2 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
_DSC2336	NE	Area for access road prior to commencing soil strip
_DSC2339	N	Commencement of soil strip for access road and lorry turn-in area
_DSC2340	E	Access road to run along stony/grass strip
_DSC2341	N	Clearance stones banked up or filling former ditch. Stones were collected from various areas of farm and imported to current location.
_DSC2342	W	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2346	NE	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2348	NE	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2357	NW	4m strip cleared with bladed bucket incorporates room for buried electrics
_DSC2358	E	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2360	NW	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2364	NW	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2365	N	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2366	SW	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2367	E	Soil strip for access road in progress
_DSC2368	S	Section view of trench showing limited topsoil depth
_DSC2369	S	Section view of trench showing limited topsoil depth
_DSC2370	W	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2371	E	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2372	W	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2373	E	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2374	E	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2375	--	Slot cut for poles carrying safety bunting below second set of electric lines
_DSC2376	--	Slot cut for poles carrying safety bunting below second set of electric lines
_DSC2378	--	Slot cut for poles carrying safety bunting below second set of electric lines
_DSC2379	NNW	Completed soil strip in access road
_DSC2380	SSE	Soil strip in progress. Excavator is in area of turbine base
_DSC2382	SSE	Soil strip in progress. Excavator is in area of turbine base
_DSC2383	SSE	Soil strip for access road complete
_DSC2384	NNW	Soil strip for access road complete
_DSC2388	SE	Possible posthole I, pre-excavation (revealed as simple stonehole)
_DSC2389	SE	Possible posthole II, pre-excavation (revealed as simple stonehole)
_DSC2390	SE	Stonehole II post-excavation.

_DSC2391	SE	Detail shot of stonehole II section
_DSC2393	SE	Detail shot of stonehole I section
_DSC2394	SW	Soil strip for turbine base in progress
_DSC2396	SW	Soil strip for turbine base in progress
_DSC2398	NW	Soil strip for turbine base in progress
_DSC2399	N	Soil strip for turbine base in progress, access road to far right of frame
_DSC2401	NE	Section of soil strip showing topsoil depth
_DSC2402	NE	Section of soil strip showing topsoil depth
_DSC2403	W	Second half of turbine base area being stripped
_DSC2404	NW	Second half of turbine base area being stripped
_DSC2406	SW	Remaining soil strip for turbine base in progress
_DSC2408	S	Remaining soil strip for turbine base in progress
_DSC2409	E	Completed soil strip in area for turbine base
_DSC2410	SE	Completed soil strip in area for turbine base
_DSC2411	SE	Completed soil strip in area for turbine base
_DSC2417	SSE	Small cut to assist turning lorries added upon completion of soil strip
_DSC2419	SSE	Small cut to assist turning lorries added upon completion of soil strip



\_DSC2336 (4500x3000).jpg



\_DSC2339 (4500x3000).jpg



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\_DSC2342 (4500x3000).jpg



\_DSC2346 (4500x3000).jpg



\_DSC2348 (4500x3000).jpg



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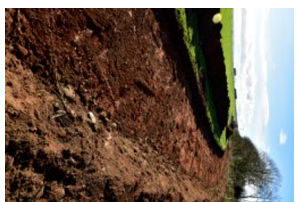
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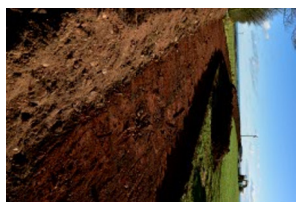
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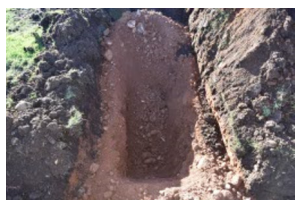
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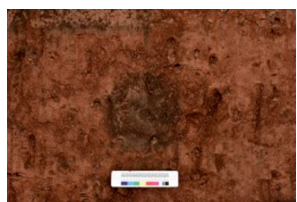
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