

## Heughhead, Aboyne, AB34 5JE Data structure report (DSR)



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**Date: 16 October 2017**

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## SUMMARY

On the weekend of 30 September – 1 October 2017, Cameron Archaeology and Neil Ackerman from Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service led a group from Mesolithic Deeside including 18 adults and 16 children in the excavation of three trenches at the find spot of Mesolithic flints. Over 100 people visited the site, mostly cycling and walking along the Deeside Line. A structure was uncovered consisting of four post-hole bases. An ephemeral stone alignment was also found well as nearly 169 flints including those found by Doug Riach which have now been combined with the flints from the excavation.

## 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located west of Aboyne on the south side of the A93 adjacent to the Deeside Way. It is centred on NGR NO50195 98803, at 145-150m OD in the parish of Aboyne and Glentanar.
- 1.2 Flints were found in an area of land at Heughhead by the late farmer and Doug Riach retrieved the flints, researched them, brought them to the attention of Mesolithic Deeside and led a trip to the site where the potential of the site was recognised. The area is on a terrace above the river Dee on the north of the river above a flood terrace.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017)

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is on a terrace above the river Dee. Flints were found by the late Evan Duncan and identified as prehistoric tools by Doug Riach. They have subsequently been identified as late Mesolithic or early Neolithic (Caroline Wickham-Jones pers comm). The location of the finds were identified by Mr Duncan and a visit to the site by volunteers from the Mesolithic Deeside group resulted in a discussion with Bruce Mann about possible trenches to determine the nature of the find-spot.
- 2.2 These flints are recorded on Canmore As NO59NW 36 but are incorrectly located. The correct location has been reported to both HES and Aberdeenshire Council HER.



Illus 2 The flints from Heughhead collected by Doug Riach (now SF143-169)



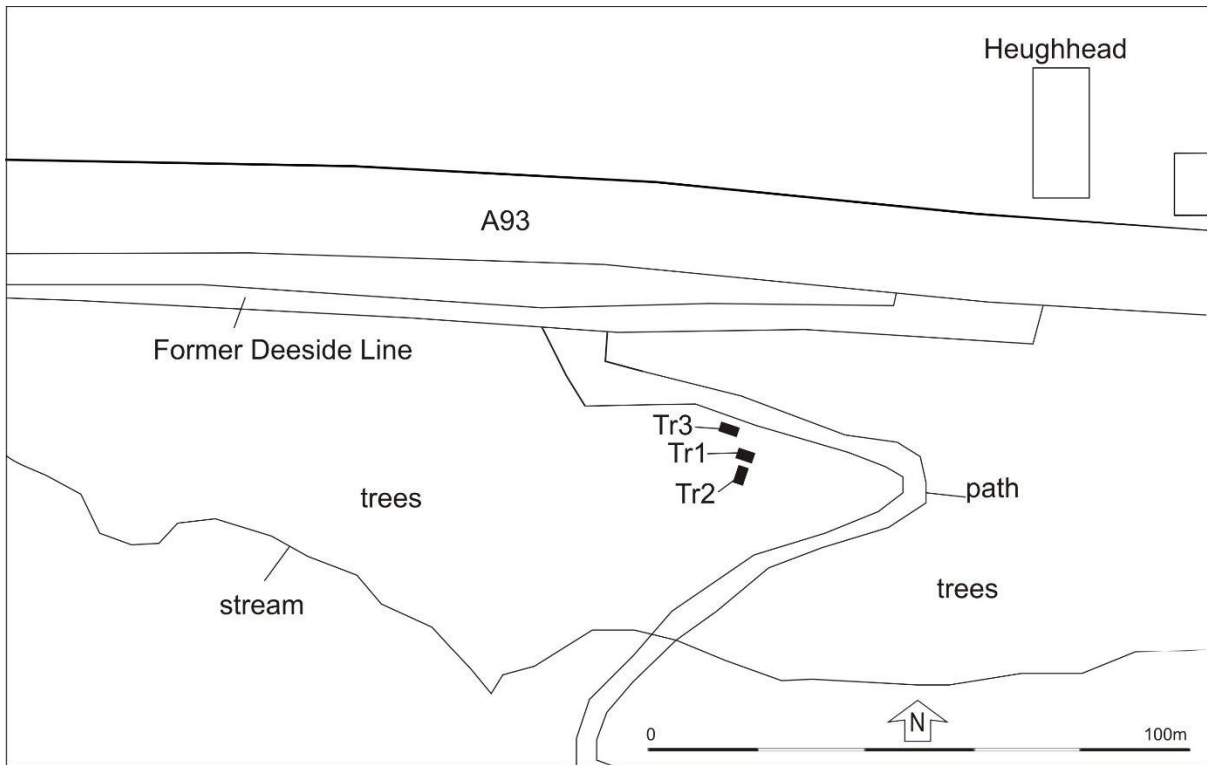
Illus 3 The location of the platform in the snow (copyright Doug Riach)



Illus 4 Mesolithic Deeside visit to the site showing the platform above the river Dee

### **3 THE EXCAVATION**

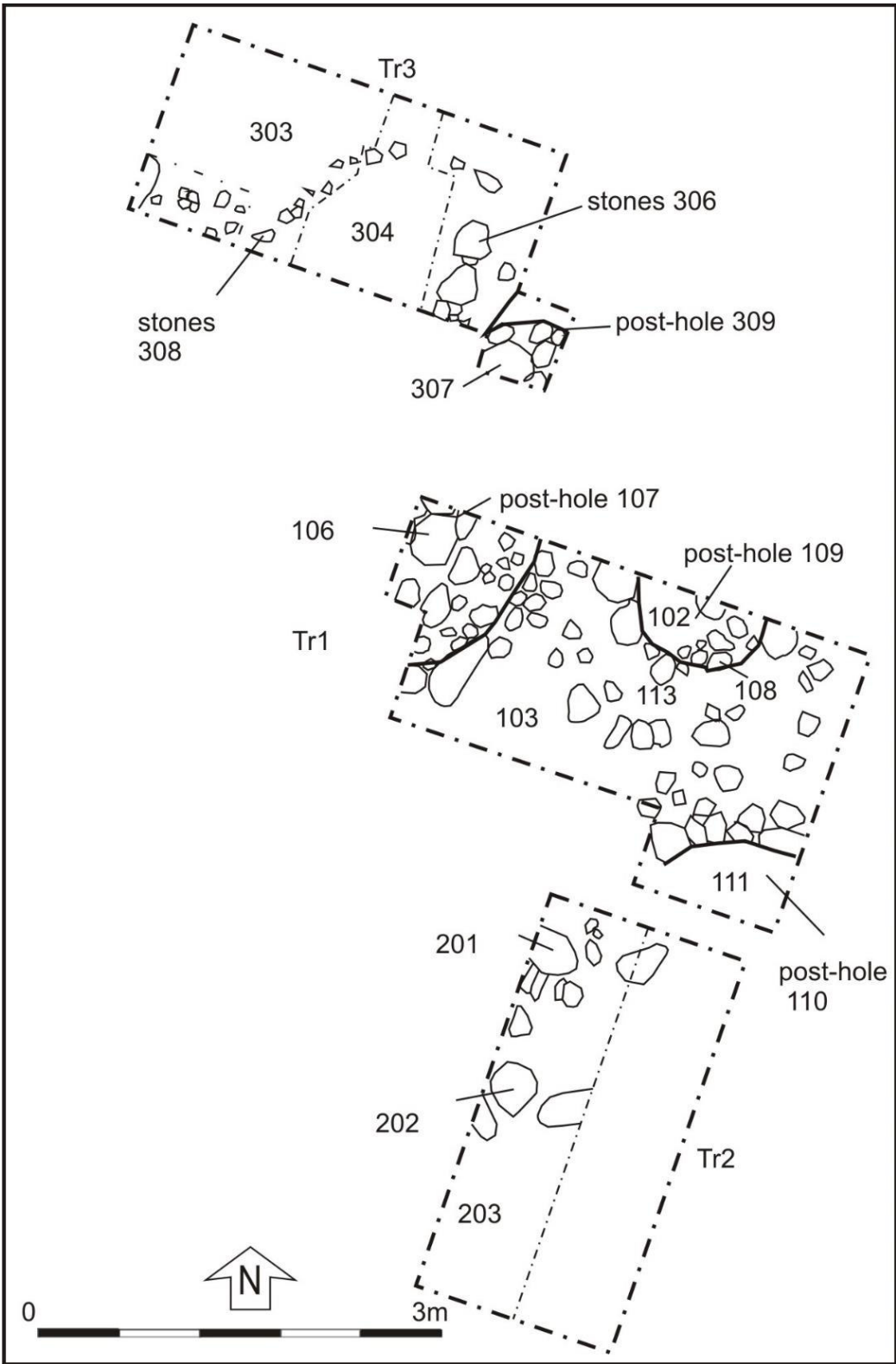
On the weekend of 30 September – 1 October 2017, Cameron Archaeology and Neil Ackerman from Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service led a group from Mesolithic Deeside including 18 adults and 16 children under 16 years of age in the excavation of three trenches. Over 100 people visited the site (which is relatively inaccessible), mostly cycling and walking along the Deeside Line.



Illus 5 Trench location

**Trench 1**

Trench 1 was 3 x 1.5m in size (Illus 6). Stonework was encountered immediately below the turf (113) which appeared to form a very rough surface. Two stone-lined post-hole bases were excavated (107 and 110). These were only partially excavated; 107 produced a possible sample from a circular area of loam c 0.35m diameter (108) which has been sent for dating. A further possible post-hole 109 was stone-lined and a maximum of 0.7m diameter.



Illus 6 Trench plan with main features



Illus 7 Trench 1 starting to uncover stones 113



Illus 8 Trench 1 post-hole base 109; facing SSW





Illus 9 Trench 1 black loam 108 possibly the remains of a post; facing ESE

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 3 x 1.5m in size (Illus 6). Only the W half was partially excavated down to a layer of stones (201, 202) which appeared to have been set in the clay loam below. These stones appeared to be laid flat slightly down slope from Trench 1 and may be the remains of a roughly laid surface.



Illus 10 Trench 2 stones 201 and 202; facing WNW

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 3 x 1.5m in size (Illus 6). The upper layers of the trench contained numerous small burnt flints. Under the topsoil was a setting of stones (306, 308) in a roughly circular arrangement; it was very ephemeral and only one stone deep. There was some charcoal in the centre of this feature but the current author suspected that this was within roots and it was not considered a secure context for sending for dating. Small flints were also found within this possible feature. A small extension to the SE of the trench revealed another stone-lined post-hole (309).



Illus 11 Trench 3 post-hole base 309; facing NNE



Illus 12 Trench 3 stones 308 (left) and 306 (right); facing NNE

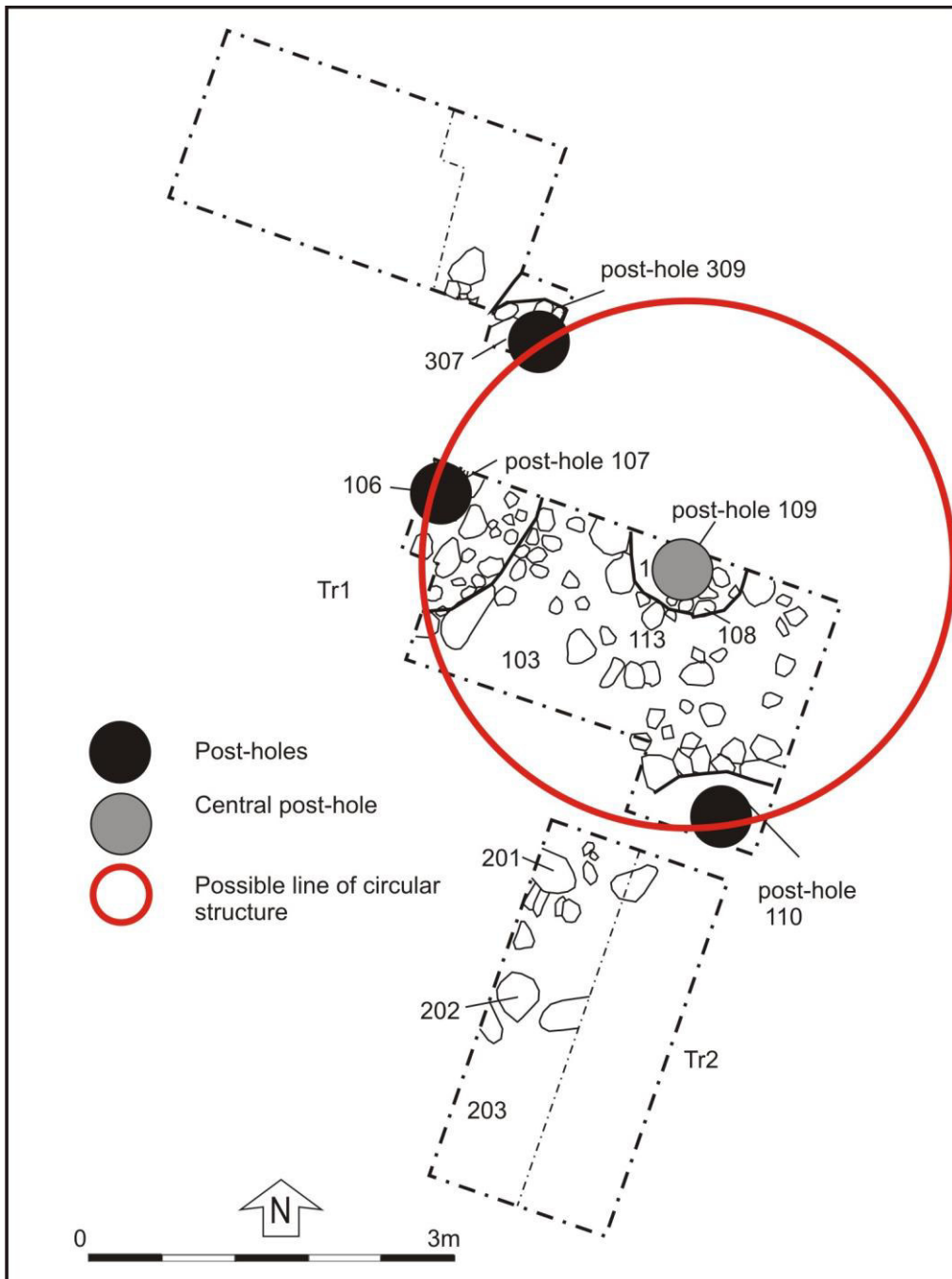
## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The four post-hole bases suggest a prehistoric structure, possibly circular in nature. There was virtually no charcoal anywhere on the site apart from trench 3 which appeared to be modern contamination. The stones within Trench 1 (113) may be the remains of a rough surface within the structure. Flints were found between the stones. The three main post-holes form a circle 6.6m diameter (Illus 14) with the shallower post-hole 109 being for an internal, central post. There was no evidence of burning within this structure.

The flints will be reported on by Ann Clarke and the sample sent to SUERC will hopefully produce a date. The structure is in an area where cows are grazed and the structure goes under the track down to the river but there are no other threats to it.



Illus 13 Nature detectives working with Rosemary Feilden to excavate tiny burnt flints in Trench 3 (photo courtesy Jill Birch)



Illus 14 Possible layout with three large post-holes (309, 107, 110) and central shallower post-hole 109)

## 5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Doug Riach for bring the site to the attention of the group and leading a trip to the site, to members of Mesolithic Deeside and Neil Ackerman for working hard on the dig and to Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for funding the excavation and for his advice during this work.

## APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context no	Trench	Description
100	1	Heavy grey clay loam topsoil
101	1	Medium grey clayey loam top fill of post-hole 107
102	1	Grey clayey loam top fill post-hole 109
103	1	Small stones and sand
104	1	Stones in grey loam at E end of trench
105	1	Top fill of post-hole 110
106	1	Dark brown loam – remains of post in 107?
107	1	Round post-hole base with stone packing
108	1	Stone packing in post-hole 109
109	1	Round post-hole base with stone packing
110	1	Round post-hole base with stone packing
111	1	Gravel in base of post-hole 110
112	1	Large and medium stones in post-hole 107
113	1	Small and medium stones under turf 100; possible remains of surface
200	2	Heavy grey clay loam topsoil
201	2	Large stones set in grey clay loam – surface?
202	2	Large stones set in grey clay loam – surface?
203	2	Dark grey loam
300	3	Medium grey sandy loam topsoil
301	3	Sandy loam under 300
302	3	?
303	3	Dark grey sandy loam on N side of trench
304	3	Dark grey sandy loam on S side of trench 'within' stones 306/308
305	3	Dark grey sandy loam top fill of post-hole 309
306	3	Large stone setting
307	3	Loam in base of post-hole 309
308	3	Small stone setting
309	3	Post-hole in SE corner of trench
310	3	Stones in grey sandy loam

## APPENDIX 2 SAMPLES

Sample no	Context no	Trench	Description
1	106	1	Possible remains of post in 107
2	304	3	Charcoal from 304 – burnt root?
3	307	3	Possible remains of post in 309

## APPENDIX 3 FINDS

SF no	Context	Details
1	100	flint
2	200	flint
3	100	flint

4	100	flint
5	100	flint
6	200	flint
7	100	flint
8	200	flint
9	200	flint
10	101	flint
11	101	flint
12	300	flint
13	104	flint
14	103	flint
15	103	flint
16	300	flint
17	104	flint
18	300	flint
19	300	flint
20	300	flint
21	300	flint
22	300	flint
23	104	flint
24	201	flint
25	300	flint
26	300	flint
27	300	flint
28	300	flint
29	300	Black pottery rim
30	300	flint
31	300	flint
32	102	flint
33	300	flint
34	202	flint
35	101	flint
36	300	flint
37	300	flint
38	300	flint
39	300	flint
40	102	flint
41	300	flint
42	300	flint
43	300	flint
44	300	flint
45	300	flint
46	300	flint
47	105	flint
48	300	flint
49	300	flint
50	102	flint
51	300	flint
52	105	flint
53	105	flint

54	101	flint
55	101	flint
56	105	flint
57	300	flint
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104	304	flint
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131	303	flint
132	303	flint
133	304	flint
134	304	flint
135	307	flint
136	307	flint
137	304	flint
138	304	flint
139	304	flint
140	304	flint
141	304	flint
142	304	flint
Doug Riach flints		
143	-	flint
144	-	flint
145	-	flint
146	-	flint
147	-	flint
148	-	flint
149	-	flint
150	-	flint
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160	-	flint
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163	-	flint
164	-	flint
165	-	flint
166	-	flint
167	-	flint
168	-	flint
169	-	flint

#### APPENDIX 4 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_2780-6	Tr 1 defurging	
DSC_2787-91	Tr 1 first clean	SE/ESE
DSC_2792-3	Tr 1 first clean	NNE
DSC_2794-5	Tr 1 first clean	WNW
DSC_2796	Tr 1 first clean	SSW
DSC_2797-804	Tr 1 removing 100	
DSC_2805	Tr 2 first clean	WNW
DSC_2806-7	Tr 2 first clean	NNE
DSC_2808-9	The team working in the sun with young volunteers	
DSC_2810	Tr 2 first clean	NNE
DSC_2811	Post-hole 109 top fill removed	NNE
DSC_2812-3	Post-hole 109 top fill removed (right)	WNW
DSC_2814-5	Post-hole 110 (left)	WNW
DSC_2816-17	Post-hole 110	NNE
DSC_2818-20	Post-hole 109 top fill removed	SSW
DSC_2821	Post-hole 109 top fill removed	NNE
DSC_2822	Post-hole 109 top fill removed	SSW
DSC_2823	Post-hole 110 (top)	SSW
DSC_2824-5	Post-hole 110 top fill removed revealing stone packing	NNE
DSC_2826	Post-hole 110 top fill removed revealing stone packing	N
DSC_2827	103 small stones	NNE
DSC_2828	Post-hole 107 (left)	ESE
DSC_2829	Post-hole 107 (bottom)	SSW

DSC_2830-36	Team excavating including Diane lying down to get to her post-hole 109	
DSC_2837-9	Post-hole 107 trench extended	ESE
DSC_2840	Post-hole 107 trench extended	SSW
DSC_2842-4	Post-hole 110 trench extended	WNW
DSC_2845	Post-hole 110 trench extended flint in fill	NNE
DSC_2846-7	Post-hole 110 trench extended	NNE
DSC_2848-51	Volunteers working	
DSC_2852-4	Tr 2	NNE
DSC_2855	Tr 2	WNW
DSC_2856	Doug with post-hole 110	E
DSC_2857	Tr 2	SSW
DSC_2858	Diane excavating post-hole 109	
DSC_2859-60	Post-hole discussion with visitors	
DSC_2861-2	Box section through 103, possible feature underneath and large stones ion natural sand	NNE
DSC_2863-5	Tr 3 stones 308 (left) and 306 (right)	NNE
DSC_2866	Tr 3 stones 308 (centre) and 306 (top)	ESE
DSC_2867-8	Tr 3 stones 308 (centre) and 306 (top)	SE
DSC_2869	Tr 1 110	ESE
DSC_2870-1	Tr 1 110	NNE
DSC_2872	Box section through 103, possible feature underneath and large stones ion natural sand	NNE
DSC_2873	Post-hole 109 section with stones 108 (right) removed	SSW
DSC_2874-5	Post-hole 109 section with stones 108 (right) removed	NNE
DSC_2876-7	Doug with post-hole 110	SSW/S
DSC_2878-9	Sheila removing 103	W
DSC_2880-82	The team digging	
DSC_2883	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	NNE
DSC_2884-6	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	SSW
DSC_2887-8	Tr 1 completed	WNW
DSC_2889-90	Tr 1 completed	ESE
DSC_2891	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	WNW
DSC_2892	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	SSW
DSC_2893-4	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	NNE
DSC_2895	Tr 3 extended post-hole 309	WNW
DSC_2896-7	Tr 3 volunteers	
DSC_2898	Tr 3 sondage through 304	SSW
DSC_2899-900	Tr 3 sondage through 304, Rob in post-hole 309	ESE
DSC_2901	Tr 3 sondage through 304	NNE
DSC_2902-5	post-hole 309	NNE
DSC_2906-7	post-hole 309	SSW
DSC_2908	backfilling	
IMG_7151-7264	Working shots	
IMG_7265-9	Rosemary using local puddle	
IMG_7270-7332	Working shots	



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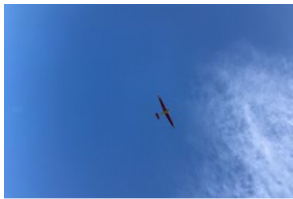
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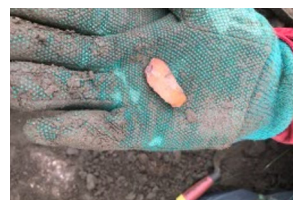
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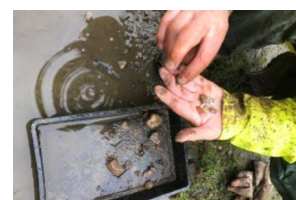
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IMG\_7326.JPG



IMG\_7327.JPG



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IMG\_7330.JPG



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