



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## House site at land 80m west of Cullaird Farm Cottage, Scaniport Trial Trenching Evaluation



HC Planning Reference	<b>12/02138/FUL</b>
National Grid Reference	<b>NH 63646 40255 (centred)</b>
Site Code	<b>CFM13</b>
RoCAS Report	<b>2013-18/CFM13</b>
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**Acknowledgements**

Fieldwork was conducted by Lynn Fraser. We would like to thank Angus MacLaren for commissioning the work. Mapping is reproduced by permission of Landmark Information Group under RoCAS licence LIG1044. Aerial imagery and other background mapping are reproduced under ESRI licensing and provided by the World Imagery layer. This is an unpublished report.

## ***Summary***

*This report summarises the results of an archaeological trial trenching evaluation for a house site on land located 80m west of Cullaird Farm Cottage, Scaniport. The trial trenching arose as a requirement of the Highland Council Planning Department prior to development of the site. Three possible features were recorded during the trial trenching evaluation, which were interpreted as a modern plough mark, stone hole and an inconclusive deposit of charcoal rich material. No further work is recommended as a result of this evaluation.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 General information**

An archaeological trial trenching evaluation was conducted by Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services (RoCAS) on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in advance of the development of a new house site at land 80m west of Cullaird Farm Cottage, Scaniport. The work was commissioned by A. MacLaren in order to fulfil a planning condition requirement for the development.

The trial trenching requirement arose due to the site lying in a field within which a number of buried features have been identified as crop-marks by aerial photography. This type of crop-mark is usually indicative of prehistoric settlement activity and it is considered likely that any such settlement may have extended into the area of this development. The purpose of the trial trenching was to identify the presence or absence of any archaeologically significant remains on the site prior to its development<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.2 Aims and objectives**

1.2.1 Trial trenching aims to identify the location, character, extent, quality and preservation of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by development. The results inform a strategy for the safeguarding where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified<sup>2</sup>. The aim was to evaluate the likely impact of the development on any identified archaeological remains to aid the planning authority's decision making process. The *Scottish Planning Policy 2010* and PAN2/2011 describe how archaeology should be managed when considering planning decisions and determining conditions for developments that have an impact on the historic environment<sup>3</sup>.

1.2.2 The specific objectives were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
- To remove by hand any overburden in order to expose the archaeological deposits
- To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible

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<sup>1</sup> Highland Council HET, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Highland Council 2012

<sup>3</sup> The Scottish Government, 2010 and 2011

- To sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating
- To make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development
- To make recommendations for post-excavation work

## **2.0 Site Location**

- 2.1 The development site is centred at approximately Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 63646 40255 at Cullaird Farm, Scaniport (Figure 1). The proposed site is located 80m west of Cullaird Farm Cottage on a terrace within an arable field at approximately 50m OD.
- 2.2 The site is located on the east side of the B862, which runs between Inverness and Dores and is approximately 4 miles southwest of Inverness. The underlying geology is Inverness Sandstone with superficial glaciofluvial deposits of gravel, sand and silt<sup>4</sup>.

## **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 3.1 Cullaird Farm lies to the north and northwest of a prehistoric hinterland rich in hut circles, field systems and chambered cairns.
- 3.2 On the site itself aerial photography has revealed a large circular enclosure, which is generally associated with prehistoric settlement. Aerial photography has also revealed a variety of enclosures at Scaniport to the southwest of the site.
- 3.3 A stone circle lies to the north-northeast of the site beyond Cullaird Wood.

## **4.0 Methodology**

### **4.1 Desk-based assessment**

- 4.1.1 A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the evaluation in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation. The purpose of the desk-based assessment was to understand the historical context of the site and assist in the formulation of a strategy for the archaeological fieldwork<sup>5</sup>.
- 4.1.2 The drawings of the area, as supplied by the client, were checked in detail against the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Map, the Highland Council's Historic Environment Record (HHER), the National Monuments Record of Scotland, the Highland Council Archives and Historic Scotland's records of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. Online aerial photographs were checked at the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Edinburgh on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The map collections of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) were studied online on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Other literary sources were also consulted.

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<sup>4</sup> BGS, 2013

<sup>5</sup> IfA, 2012(a)



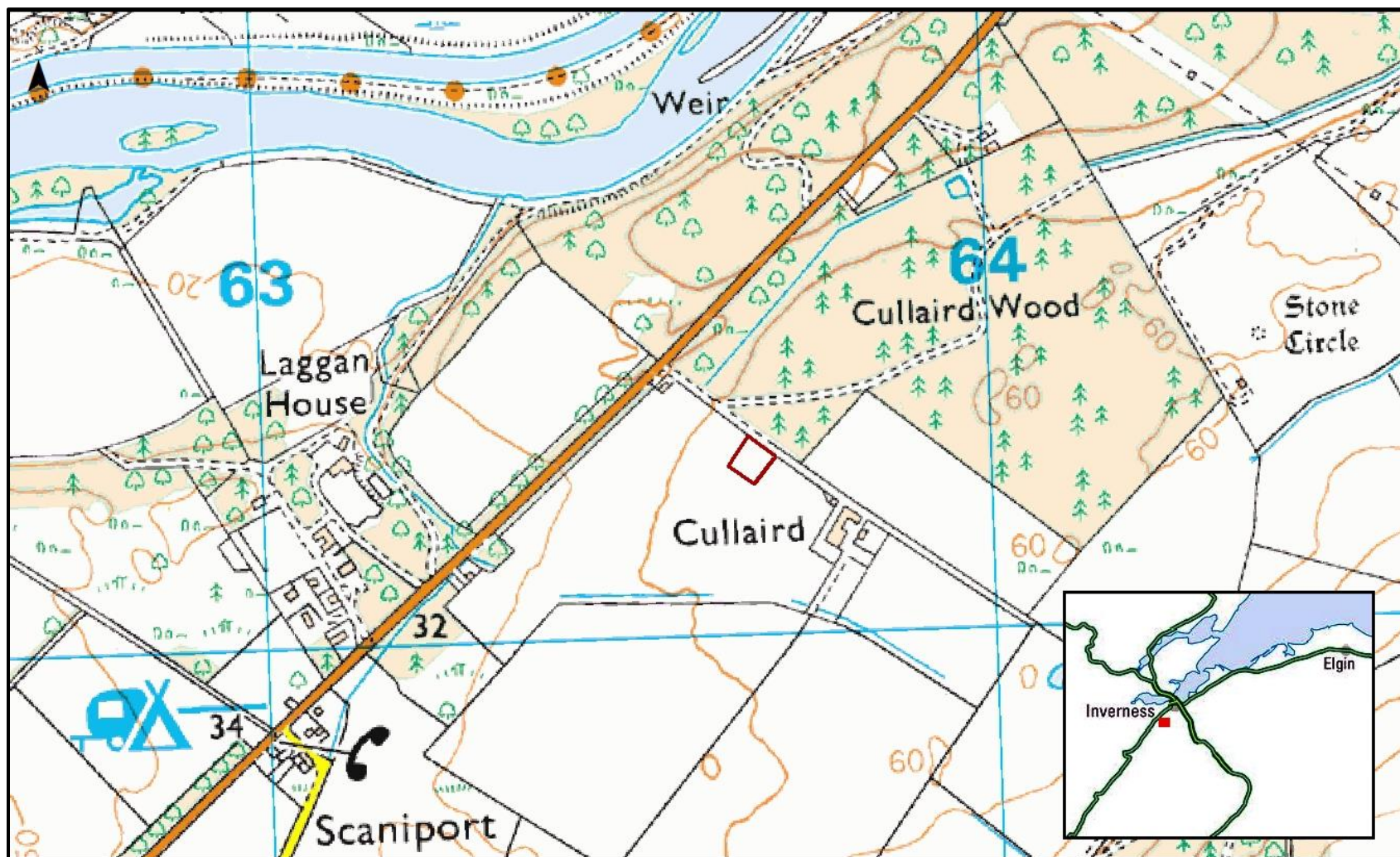


Figure 1: Site location

## **4.2 Initial site visit**

- 4.2.1 In order to inform the preparation of this report and positioning of the trial trenches, a site visit was made on 18 February 2013. At this time, the site comprised part of a stubble field. The house plot sits on a terrace within the field, which rises from northwest to southeast, and is bounded on the northeast by a post and wire fence.
- 4.2.2 During the site visit there were no potential archaeological features noted on the ground, although evidence of test-pitting was noted.

## **4.3 Trial trenching**

- 4.3.1 Eight trenches totalling 145m<sup>2</sup>, 7% of the total site area (2,023m<sup>2</sup>), were excavated (Table 1) across the proposed house site (Figures 2 and 3).
- 4.3.2 Topsoil and modern deposits were removed by an earth-moving machine equipped with a flat-bladed ditching bucket to reveal the subsoil surface. This activity was conducted under constant archaeological supervision.

All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with *Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Code of Conduct*<sup>6</sup>.

## **4.4 On-site recording**

- 4.4.1 All on-site recording was carried out according to standard IfA procedures<sup>7</sup>, using written records and sketch drawings where necessary.
- 4.4.2 Trench positions and all archaeological features were plotted using ArcPad GIS software and GPS with sub-metre accuracy on a handheld Windows Mobile-based computer.

## **4.5 Photography**

The proposed development site was recorded using high resolution digital photography prior to the start of works and throughout the trial trenching evaluation. An Index of Photographs is included in this report.

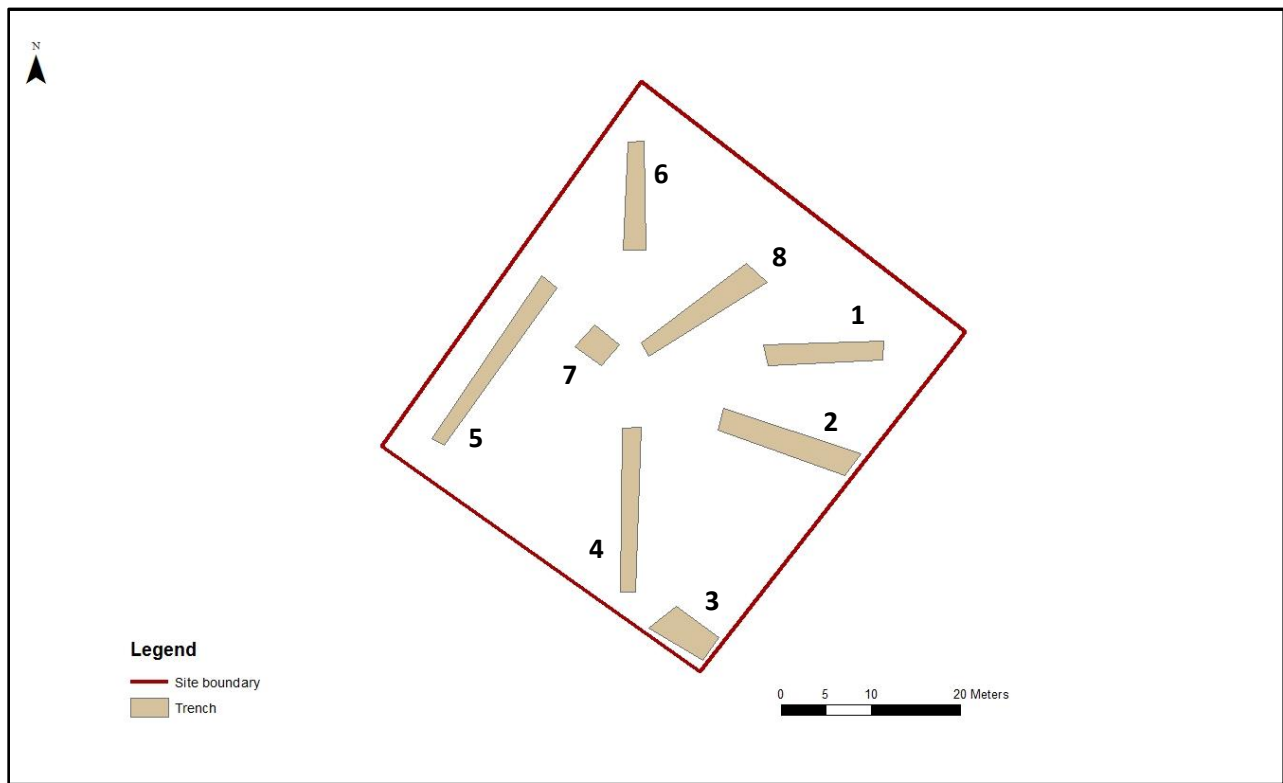
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<sup>6</sup> IfA, 2012(b)

<sup>7</sup> IfA, 2008

**Table 1: List of Trenches**

Trench	Alignment	Dimensions (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Depth (m)	Features
1	E-W	13 x 1.25	16.25	0.25 - 0.38	1
2	WNW-ESE	16 x 1.25	20	0.25 - 0.40	-
3	NW-SE	3 x 6	18	0.30 - 0.37	2, 3
4	N-S	18 x 1.25	22.5	0.27	-
5	NNE-SSW	21 x 1.25	26.25	0.27	-
6	E-W	12 x 1.25	15	0.27	-
7	NW-SE	3 x 3	9	0.27	-
8	NE-SW	15 x 1.25	18.75	0.27	-



**Figure 2: Trench plan**



## 5.0 Results

### 5.1 Desk-based assessment

#### 5.1.1 Historical mapping

Historical maps were consulted at the National Library of Scotland online<sup>8</sup>.

5.1.1.1 The early maps such as Blaeu's Atlas of Scotland 1654, Herman Moll's map of 1745 and John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland 1832 do not depict the study area in sufficient detail to note particular features.

#### 5.1.1.2 1st Edition OS 25-inch to the mile – Inverness Mainland Sheet XI.16, surveyed 1868, published 1881

This depicts the development site as farmland with the area being divided into two fields.

#### 5.1.1.3 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS 25-inch to the mile – Inverness-shire Mainland Sheet 011.16, surveyed 1903, published 1904

The only change shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map is the separate fields have been amalgamated into one large field.

#### 5.1.2 Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER)

The Highland Historic Environment Record was consulted online<sup>9</sup> and the following sites or events were recorded within the landscape surrounding the development area:

**MHG3218                      Enclosure                                              NH 63600 40200**

Air photography has revealed a circular enclosure approximately 14m in diameter lying about 180m WNW of Cullaird Farm. There appears to be an additional arc to the circle on the SW, which could be part of a larger enclosure.

**MHG36081                      Palisaded Enclosure                                              NH 63420 39940**

Scaniport Wood. No description.

**MHG3239                      Circular Enclosure                                              NH 63300 39900**

Air photography has revealed a variety of crop marks in the field immediately SE of Scaniport Wood. A circular enclosure about 14m in diameter lies about 250m E of Scaniport. Within it is a pit about 6m in diameter.

**MHG39889                      Pit Circle                                              NH 63300 39900**

Air photography has revealed a variety of crop marks in the field immediately SE of Scaniport Wood. A circular enclosure about 14m in diameter lies about 250m E of Scaniport. Within it is a pit about 6m in diameter.

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<sup>8</sup> NLS, 2013

<sup>9</sup> Highland HER, 2013

**MHG35284**                      **Enclosure**                                              **NH 63320 40350**  
The cropmarks of an irregularly shaped possible enclosure have been revealed by aerial photography 250m W of Cullaird Cottage.

**MHG3752**                      **Find spot**                                              **NH 63410 40410**  
A fragment of a Pictish symbol stone was found during the course of ploughing in 1955. It bears what may have been a mirror and comb, a horse-shoe and rectangle and Z-rod.

**MHG47842**                      **Pit**                                              **NH 6433 4034**  
A watching brief in 2003 at a house development adjacent to Torbreck stone circle uncovered several small pits, one of which contained possible Late Neolithic pottery and a flint scraper.

**MHG3756**                      **Stone Circle**                                              **NH 64370 40370**  
A stone circle of nine almost evenly spaced monoliths with an overall diameter of 7.8m at Torbreck.

**EHG1027**                      **Archaeological Evaluation**                                              **NH 64321 40386**  
Excavation of pits discovered during a trial trenching evaluation uncovered 15 lithics and Late Neolithic pottery.

### **5.1.3 Other sources**

In March 2012, a prehistoric burial cist was discovered during landscape works following the construction of a new access track in Cullaird Wood to the northeast of Cullaird Farm and northwest of Torbreck stone circle. The cist contained an inhumation of a probable adult with an associated Plain Urn vessel and six lithic fragments<sup>10</sup>.

## **5.2 Trial trenching evaluation**

Three features were identified during the evaluation, one of which was of possible archaeological interest. These were located in Trenches 1 and 3. All other trenches were sterile of archaeology.

### **5.2.1 Weather conditions**

The archaeological trial trenching evaluation was conducted during a cold day with intermittent wintery showers.

### **5.2.2 Features**

Three potential features were uncovered in Trenches 1 and 3; full details can be found in Appendix 1. Trench 1 contained a linear feature (Feature 1), which had the appearance of a modern plough mark. This was confirmed upon sectioning (Plate 1).

Trench 2 contained Features 2 and 3 (Plate 2). Feature 2 presented as an oval pit, but upon excavation was found to be shallow and filled with topsoil containing a small piece of modern

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<sup>10</sup> Kilpatrick 2012

pottery. This was interpreted as a hole created by a stone being pulled out of the subsoil during ploughing.

Feature 3 was a narrow black arc, which looked to continue out of the trench. However, upon cleaning back by trowel it was discovered that it petered out before reaching the edge of the trench. It contained two small concentrations of charcoal rich soil with a piece of possible slag-like material lying on the surface. It was noted that there were several pieces of this material lying on the surface of the field, which, given that the field is regularly ploughed, could have come from another location entirely. The 'cut' containing the black fill showed no signs of an anthropological cut and was irregular in shape with an undulating base, which was approximately 5cm at its deepest point; like the stone hole, it could possibly have been formed during ploughing operations. A conclusive interpretation of the feature was not possible.

### 5.2.3 Finds

The only finds recovered were modern pottery, glass and plastic along with a section of clay pipe stem and an old marble.



**Plate 1:** Feature 1, Trench 1, which was confirmed as a modern plough mark upon sectioning.





**Plate 2:** Features 2 (to the rear) and 3 (in the foreground), Trench 3. Feature 2 was interpreted as a stone hole and Feature 3 was an inconclusive groove.



**Plate 3:** New access track

### **5.3 New Access Track**

A new access track, a requirement of Highland Council Roads Department, to the rear of Cullaird Farm Cottage linking the B862 to the existing farm track had been constructed prior to the trial trenching evaluation (Figure 3). Stripping of the topsoil for the access road was not conducted under archaeological supervision.

### **6.0 Discussion**

Despite the development site's proximity to known archaeological sites, it did not produce any conclusive archaeological features, although there were hints of possible anthropogenic activity in the presence of charcoal and possible slag-type material. The reason for this could simply be the prolonged agricultural use of the field and the action of the plough or lack of activity in that particular area.

### **7.0 Recommendations**

Based on the results of the trial trenching evaluation alone further mitigation is not recommended. However, the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HET) may wish to give consideration to the results of the watching brief near Torbreck stone circle. The final decision as to further archaeological evaluation at the site rests with HET.





Figure 3: Location of the site, trenches and new road<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Reproduced under ESRI licensing



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**APPENDIX 1: Index of Photographs**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Direction Facing</b>	<b>Feature No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Taken By</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	S - SW	-	Panoramic view of the site prior to the evaluation	LF	18/02/2013
2	E	-	View of the site prior to the evaluation	LF	18/02/2013
3	W	1	Trench 1 showing the modern plough mark	LF	12/03/2013
4	E	-	Trench 1 showing the modern plough mark at the E end	LF	12/03/2013
5	ESE	-	Trench 2 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
6	NW	2, 3	Trench 3 showing Features 2 and 3 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
7	NW	2,3	Trench 3 showing Features 2 and 3 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
8	NNE	2,3	Features 2 and 3	LF	12/03/2013
9	N	-	Trench 4 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
10	NNE		Trench 5 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
11	E	-	Trench 6 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
12	N	-	Trench 7 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
13	NE	-	Trench 8 post-stripping	LF	12/03/2013
14	E	1	Post-sectioning the plough mark	LF	12/03/2013
15	E	1	Post-sectioning the plough mark	LF	12/03/2013
16	W	2, 3	Post-cleaning and pre-sectioning	LF	12/03/2013
17	SSW	2, 3	Post-cleaning and pre-sectioning	LF	12/03/2013
18	NW	2	Pre-ex	LF	12/03/2013
19	NW	3	Pre-ex	LF	12/03/2013
20	E	2, 3	Pre-ex	LF	12/03/2013
21	SW	2	SE facing section	LF	12/03/2013
22	SSW	2	SE facing section	LF	12/03/2013
23	S	3	Post-sectioning	LF	12/03/2013
24	S	3	Post-sectioning	LF	12/03/2013
25	NW	-	New access road	LF	15/03/2013
26	SW	-	New access road	LF	15/03/2013

**APPENDIX 2: Index of Features**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Contexts</b>	<b>Finds</b>	<b>Plans</b>	<b>Description and Notes</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	003, 004	-	-	Linear feature measuring 1.45m x 0.20m and running into the N edge of the trench. Post-sectioning it measured 0.03m deep and was filled with topsoil (001). A piece of modern was contained within the fill. Interpreted as a modern plough mark.	LF	12/03/2013
2	005, 006	-	-	An oval pit 0.34m x 0.25m aligned NW-SE. Post-sectioning it measured 0.05m deep and was filled with topsoil (001). A piece of modern pottery was contained within the fill. Interpreted as a stone hole created by pulling a large stone from the subsoil during ploughing.	LF	12/03/2013
3	007, 008	002	-	A narrow curving linear feature with two concentrations of charcoal rich fill measuring 2.06m x 0.14m and aligned generally NW-SE. There was no visible cut and upon sectioning presented as a groove in the subsoil, which had been filled with a mix of topsoil and a charcoal rich deposit in places. A piece of slag? was found on the top of the feature, but was also present on the ground surface in the vicinity and may have been dragged from elsewhere by the plough. Interpretation is inconclusive.	LF	12/03/2013

**APPENDIX 3: Index of Contexts**

No.	Type	Description	Fill of	Filled by	Under	Over	Feature	Finds	Samples	Plans-Sections	Interpretation
001	Deposit	Dark brown loam	-	-	-		-	001	-	-	Topsoil
002	Deposit	Light orange/yellow/beige sand with <5% stones, which range in size from gravel to medium boulders	-	-	001	-	-	-	-	-	Subsoil
003	Fill	Dark brown loam	004	-	001	004	1	-	-	-	Fill of plough mark (same as (001) topsoil)
004	Cut	Shallow linear cut 1.45m (continuing) x 0.20m	-	003	003	002	1	-	-	-	Modern plough mark
005	Fill	Dark brown loam	006	-	001	006	2	-	-	-	Fill of stone hole (same as (001) topsoil)
006	Cut	Oval pit 0.34m x 0.25m	-	005	005	002	2	-	-	-	Stone hole
007	Deposit	Charcoal rich black deposit	008	-	001	008	3	002	-	-	Fill of linear feature
008	Cut	Narrow arcing feature with an undulating base	-	007	007	002	3	-	-	-	Interpreted as a natural groove in the subsoil or created by ploughing

**APPENDIX 4: Index of Finds**

<b>Find Number</b>	<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Feature Number</b>	<b>Description and Notes</b>	<b>Approx. Dating</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
001	001	Mixed	-	Topsoil finds of pottery, plastic, clay pipe stem and a marble	Post-med/modern	LF	12/03/2013
002	007	Slag?	3	1 piece of light, vitrified material - slag?	Unknown	LF	12/03/2013