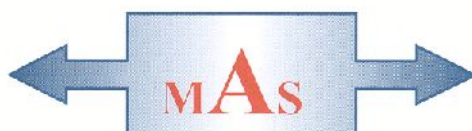


**NORTH WOODS
MINTLAW
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Archaeological Evaluation
Carried out October 14th-15th 2013
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2013-28
by
H K Murray and J C Murray

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-Archaeological Evaluation -

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1. Background

1.1 A Planning Application (APP/2012/4136) was granted permission for the erection of houses on a green field site called North Woods to the W side of North Road, Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire.

An archaeological condition was applied to this application in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP).

The condition required that no development should take place before the implementation of a 7-10% archaeological evaluation.

1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Colaren Properties Ltd to undertake the work.

1.3 The evaluation was undertaken on 14th – 15th October 2013.

2. The Site

2.1 The site lies to the N side of Mintlaw village to the W side of the A952 to Fraserburgh.

Parish: Longside. Map ref: 399787, 848913

2.2 The site was partly in stubble and partly in winter sown barley at the time of the evaluation. The ground was on a gentle slope from the S end at c 45m OD up to a ridge at 54-55m OD at the N end of the site.

- 2.3 A gas main was known to run across the site although its exact line was not indicated.



Illus 1 General view of Trench 2 looking N

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The cultivated topsoil was removed by a full slew excavator with a 2.1m wide toothless ditching bucket. Any possible features were cleaned and excavated by hand.
- 3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper CX.

4. Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 Mintlaw is a designed settlement dating from the early 19th century, being developed after the Aberdeen to Fraserburgh turnpike was built in 1800-1820. The 25th 1st OS map of 1870 shows the area of the site enclosed and in cultivation (Aberdeen sheet xxii.1 1870, published 1872). The field boundaries are unchanged in 1899 (Aberdeenshire 022.01 1899, published 1902).

4.2 No previous archaeology is known from the site but it lies within a landscape of late prehistoric activity as exemplified by the Recumbent Stone Circles at Loudon Wood and Aikey Brae. Two stone axes were found at Mintlaw [exact findspot not recorded] in the 19th century (NMRS NK04NW2). In the early medieval period there was an Early Christian monastery at Old Deer and an Early Christian church and Pictish symbol stone at Fetterangus.

5 Results of the Evaluation

Seven evaluation trenches were excavated in total (Illus 2). All the trenches were aligned N/S up the slope of the landscape.

Trench 1

GPS N end: 399872,848602 S end: 399899,848487

Orientation: N/S Length: 118m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Over most of the trench there was c 300-350mm topsoil over gritty clay natural. The topsoil was peaty in the low ground.

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
1	399897,848491	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
2	399894,848508	E/W drain cut. W: 500mm
3	399892,848517	E/W cut W: 2.5m. Depth to top of pipe: 800mm. Culverted stream in clay pipe 180mm diam = Trench 2 context 6

Trench 2

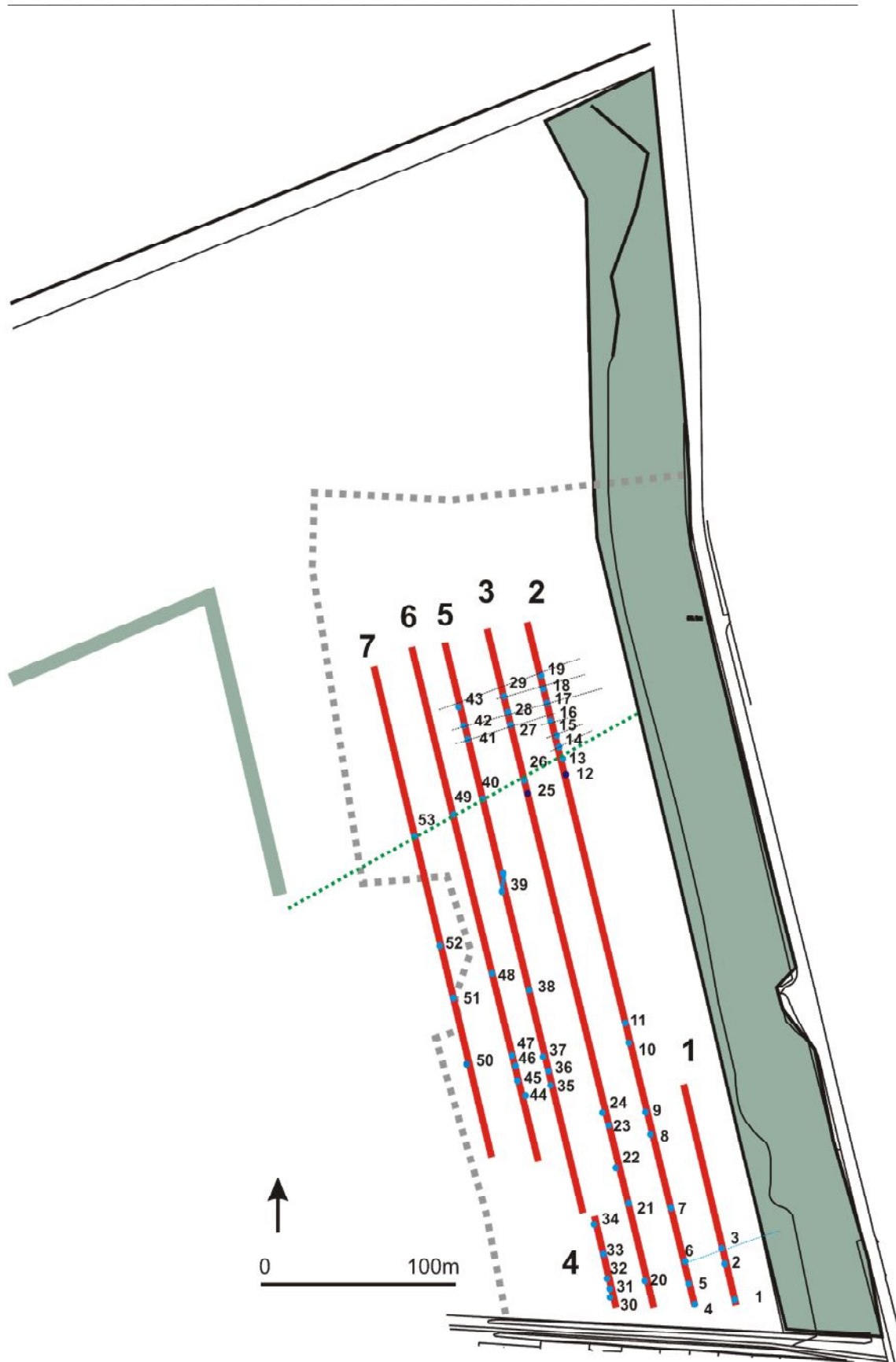
GPS N end: 399792,848839 S end: 399878,848486

Orientation: N/S Length: 364m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Over most of the trench there was c 280-300mm topsoil over gritty clay natural. It was deeper, up to 400mm, over the N area between features 13-19, preserving rig and furrow. The topsoil in the lower ground to S end of site was peaty.

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
4	399876,848487	Test pit?
5	399873,848500	E/W drain. Black peaty fill. W: 500mm
6	399872,848508	E/W cut W: 2.5m. Depth to top of pipe: 800mm. Culverted stream in clay pipe 180mm diam = Trench 1 context 3
7	399864,848538	ESE/WNW cut. W: 600mm
8	399855,848576	E/W stone drain. W: 350mm
9	399852,848587	E/W stone drain. W: 350mm
10	399844,848623	NE/SW cut. Peaty fill. W: 700mm
11	399842,848633	E/W cut. Fill dry grey sandy soil. W:800mm
12	399809,848761	NNE/SSW cut and disturbance to top of natural. W: 3.7m. Possibly gas line?
13	399809,848766	Ditch/old field boundary. W: 1m.
14	399807,848771	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1m. Grey stony soil.
15	399805,848780	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1.5m. Grey stony soil
16	399803,848709	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 2m. Grey stony soil
17	399801,848798	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 2m. Grey stony soil
18	399799,848805	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1.5m. Grey stony soil
19	399797,848812	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 2m. Grey stony soil



Illus 2 Site plan showing trenches (red). Contexts blue dots. Old field boundary (13, 26, 40, 49, 53) shown as dotted green line. Rig and furrow shown as grey lines. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404

Trench 3

GPS N end: 399771,848837 S end: 399856,848486

Orientation: N/S Length: 361m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Over most of the trench there was c 280-300mm topsoil over gritty clay natural. Over the N end, between contexts 26-29, topsoil depths of c 400mm preserved the rig and furrow. The topsoil in the low ground area at the S end was peaty.

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
20	399852,848501	E/W drain cut. Peaty fill. W: 1.5m
21	399843,848540	E/W stone drain. W: 350mm
22	399838,848559	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
23	399833,848580	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
24	399831,848588	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
25	399792,848750	NNE/SSW cut and disturbance to top of natural. W: 3.0m. Possibly gas line?
26	399791,848757	Ditch/old field boundary. W: 1.2m.
27	399781,848793	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1m. Grey stony soil
28	399783,848787	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1m. Grey stony soil
29	399780,848801	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 900mm. Grey stony soil

Trench 4

GPS N end: 399826,848534 S end: 399838,848485

Orientation: N/S Length: 50m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: There was 300-350mm topsoil over gritty clay natural. Topsoil in this low, ill drained area was peaty.

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
30	399836,848493	Test pit?
31	399836,848495	E/W cut. Fill peat & redeposited natural. W:1.5m
32	399834,848501	Irregular disturbed area extends c 2.5m Modern.
33	399830,848516	E/W drain cut. W:400mm
34	399825,848531	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm

Trench 5

GPS N end: 399749,848829 S end: 399820,848534

Orientation: N/S Length: 303m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Over most of the trench there was c 280-300mm topsoil over gritty clay natural.

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
35	399805,848602	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
36	399803,848609	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
37	399800,848617	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
38	399792,848650	NW/SE cut. Peaty fill. W: 600mm
39	From 399799,848710 to 399778,848705	NE/SW cut . Fill redeposited natural. W: 600- 700mm. Sides vertical/machine cut. Not sectioned.
40	399769,848748	Ditch/old field boundary. W: 1.1m.
41	399761,848780	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1m. Grey stony soil
42	399759,848786	Vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 1m. Grey stony soil
43	399757,848796	Possible vestigial furrow of rig and furrow. W: 500mm. Grey stony soil

Trench 6

GPS N end: 399732,848827 S end: 399797,848560

Orientation: N/S Length: 273m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Over most of the trench there was c 280-300mm topsoil over gritty clay natural. Topsoil depths were c 350mm on the ridge N of the old field boundary (49).

Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
44	399789,848597	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
45	399788,848604	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
46	399785,848611	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
47	399784,848618	E/W stone drain. W: 300mm
48	399773,848659	? Test pit
49	399754,848740	Ditch/old field boundary. W: 1.1m. Depth: 400mm. Ground to S 120mm higher.

Ditch/old field boundary 49 was sectioned in this trench. Two flint flakes SF 2 and SF3 were found in the backfill above a 20th C glass bottle and a sherd of white china.

A flint end scraper (SF 1) was found in a modern plough groove in the top of natural some 40m S along the trench.



Illus 3 Old field boundary (49) looking at E section. Tags show context of flint flakes SF 2 & 3 above bottle (at base of vertical ranging rod).

Trench 7

GPS N end: 399713,848817 S end: 399773,848563

Orientation: N/S Length: 261m Width: 2.1m

Stratigraphy: Topsoil was 300-350mm over natural gritty clay.

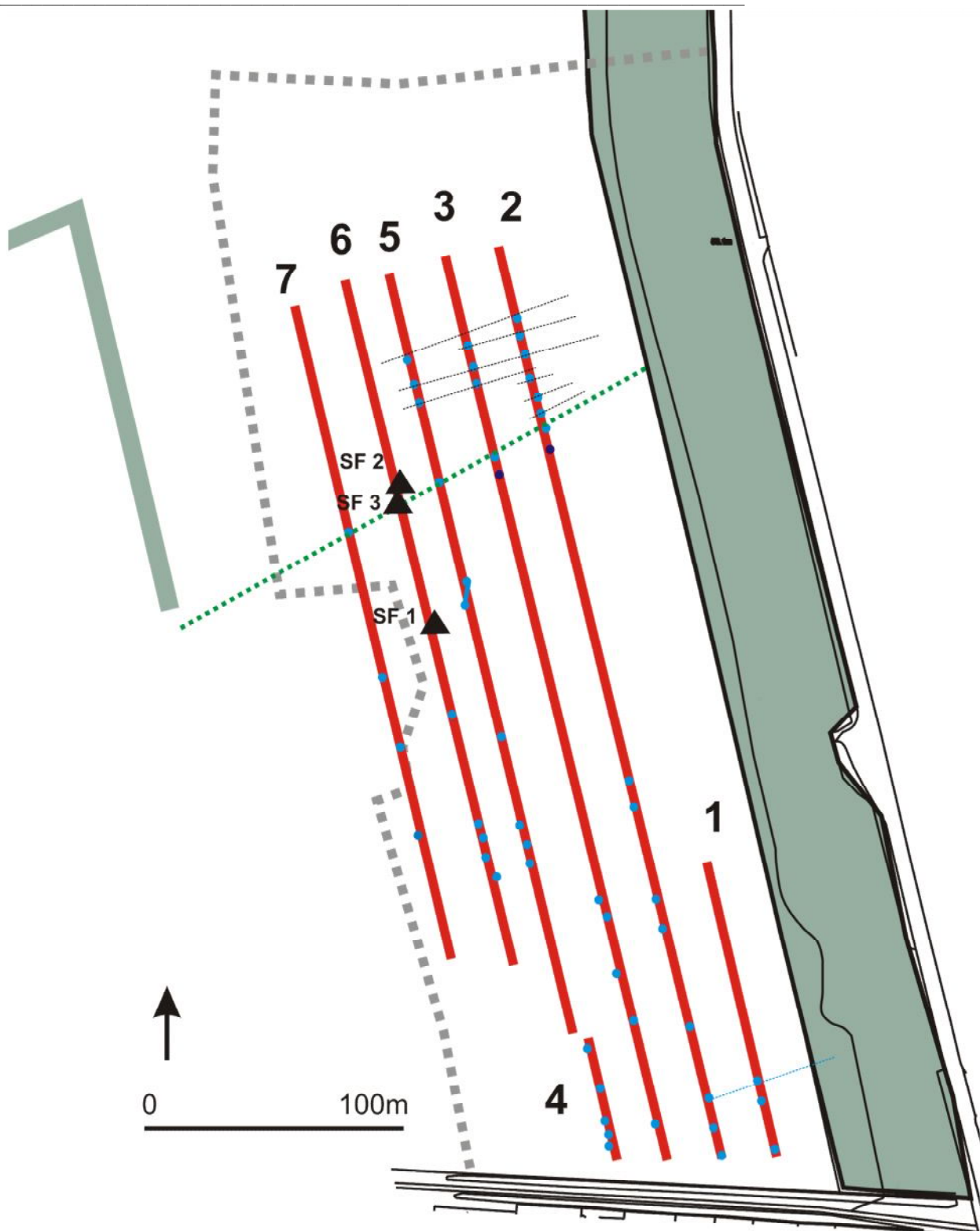
Features:

Context No	GPS	Comment
50	399761,848612	Machine cut c 2-3m across burying charcoal and many nails etc. Bonfire/ rubbish burning. Modern. ? Bonfire night.
51	399753,848647	E/W cut. W: 300mm
52	399747,848673	NW/SE cut. W: 700mm
53	399733,848731	Ditch/old field boundary. W: 1.1m.

5 The Finds

A flint scraper and two flint flakes were found. All were in residual contexts (Illus 4).

- SF 1 Flint end scraper. L49mm. W:35mm. Th:6mm. 399765,848693. In modern plough groove in top of natural at the top of the ridge (Illus 5).
- SF 2 Flint flake. In backfill of old field boundary ditch (49) above a 20th C glass bottle. 399761,848612. (Illus 6).
- SF 3 Flint flake. In backfill of old field boundary ditch (49) above a 20th C glass bottle. 399761,848612 (Illus 6).



Illus 4 Black triangles indicate find spots of flints. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404



Illus 5 SF 1



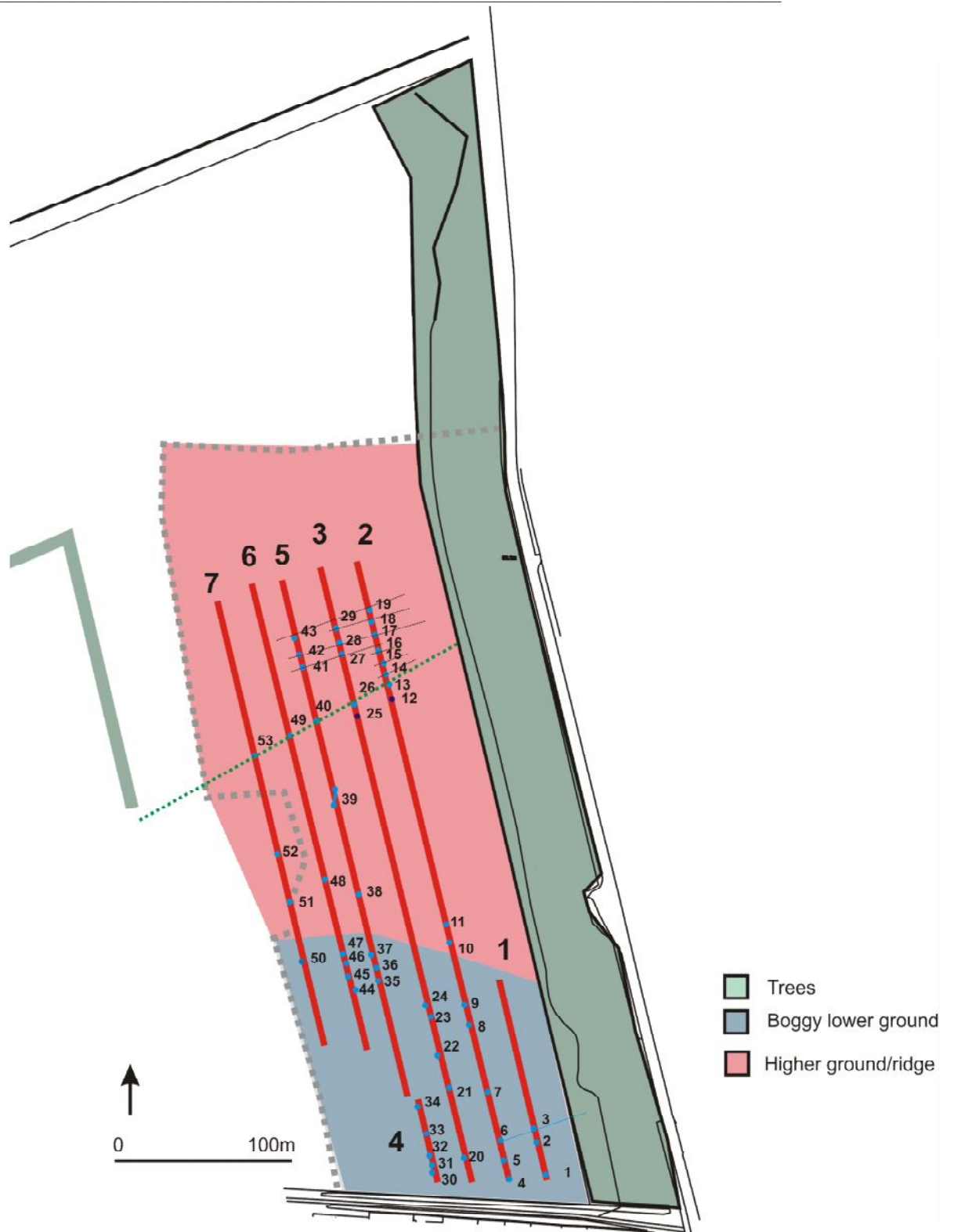
Illus 6 SF 2 & 3

6 Discussion

The site has been under cultivation for many years and modern plough marks are visible in most areas well into the top of natural. Up the ridge at the N end of the site, slightly deeper soils across Trenches 2, 3, and to a lesser extent Trench 5, have allowed the preservation of vestiges of the furrows of rig and furrow cultivation. This is likely to date to pre-Improvement agriculture up to c 1800.

A former field boundary (13, 26, 40, 49, 53) can be seen across Trenches 2,3,5,6 and 7. It is in alignment with a strainer post at the S end of a boundary line of beech trees to the W and with a strainer post at the edge of the woods to the E. This field boundary can be seen on the OS 1:25" maps of 1870 and 1899 and the OS 1:25000 map of 1957. The removal of the boundary is probably of recent date.

The S end of the site appears to have been boggy ground with constant efforts to improve the drainage, from 19th C stone filled hand-dug drains to modern machine cuts. The deep clay pipe in contexts 3 and 6 leads from/to an open ditch within the woodland to E.



Illus 7 Site showing boggy area to S. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2013. License No 1000410404

Three flints show some evidence of prehistoric activity on the site. However there was no evidence of any residual pits or other features in the top of natural and it is probable that the prehistoric activity was marginal to settlement off the site. This might include activities such as hunting, herding livestock or wood gathering. Nevertheless, it does emphasise the existence of prehistoric activity in the Mintlaw area.



Illus 8 Arrow indicates position of flint scraper SF1 on ridge.

7 Impacts and Mitigations

Impacts The development poses no significant impact to the archaeological heritage. The very small finds assemblage and the lack of any early features within the evaluation trenches suggest that there was no settled prehistoric activity on the site.

Mitigations

1. The lack of surviving archaeology within the evaluation area does not preclude the possibility of chance finds or archaeological discoveries outwith the evaluation trenches. Should such chance finds occur, then the Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council, or Murray Archaeological Services Ltd, must be informed immediately so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed by all parties concerned.

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic records

(Supplied to Aberdeenshire SMR on CD)

Digital frame number	Content
North Woods Mintlaw	
1-3	Trench 2 looking N
4-6	Trench 2. Rig and furrow at N end
7-9	General views looking S
10-12	Trench 2 looking S
13-16	Trench 6. Section of old field boundary ditch (49) looking E tags indicate context of flint flakes above bottle
17-18	Trench 6. Context (49) looking N
19-20	Trench 6. Context (49) looking S
21-22	Trench 6. Context (49) in foreground looking S. Ranging rod indicates position of flint SF1.
23-26	Trench 6. Context of SF 1 on ridge, looking N
27-30	SF 2 & 3
31-33	SF 1