

**VILLAGE FARM
TARLAND
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Archaeological Evaluation

Carried out 10th -11th May 2017

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2017-02

by

H K Murray and J C Murray

H K Murray BA, PhD, MCIfA, FSA Scot

J C Murray BA, MCIfA, FSA Scot, FMA

Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN

Telephone: (01651) 806394 e-mail: cmurray@btinternet.com

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-Archaeological Evaluation -

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1. Background
 - 1.1 A Planning Application (APP/2011/4027) was granted permission for the development of 39 dwelling houses and associated infrastructure on a green field site on the NW fringes of the village of Tarland, 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 there should be a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council. This stipulated that no development should take place before the implementation of a 7 - 10% archaeological evaluation.
 - 1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances.
 - 1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the MacRobert Trust to undertake the work.
 - 1.4 The evaluation was undertaken on 10th and 11th May 2017.

2. The Site

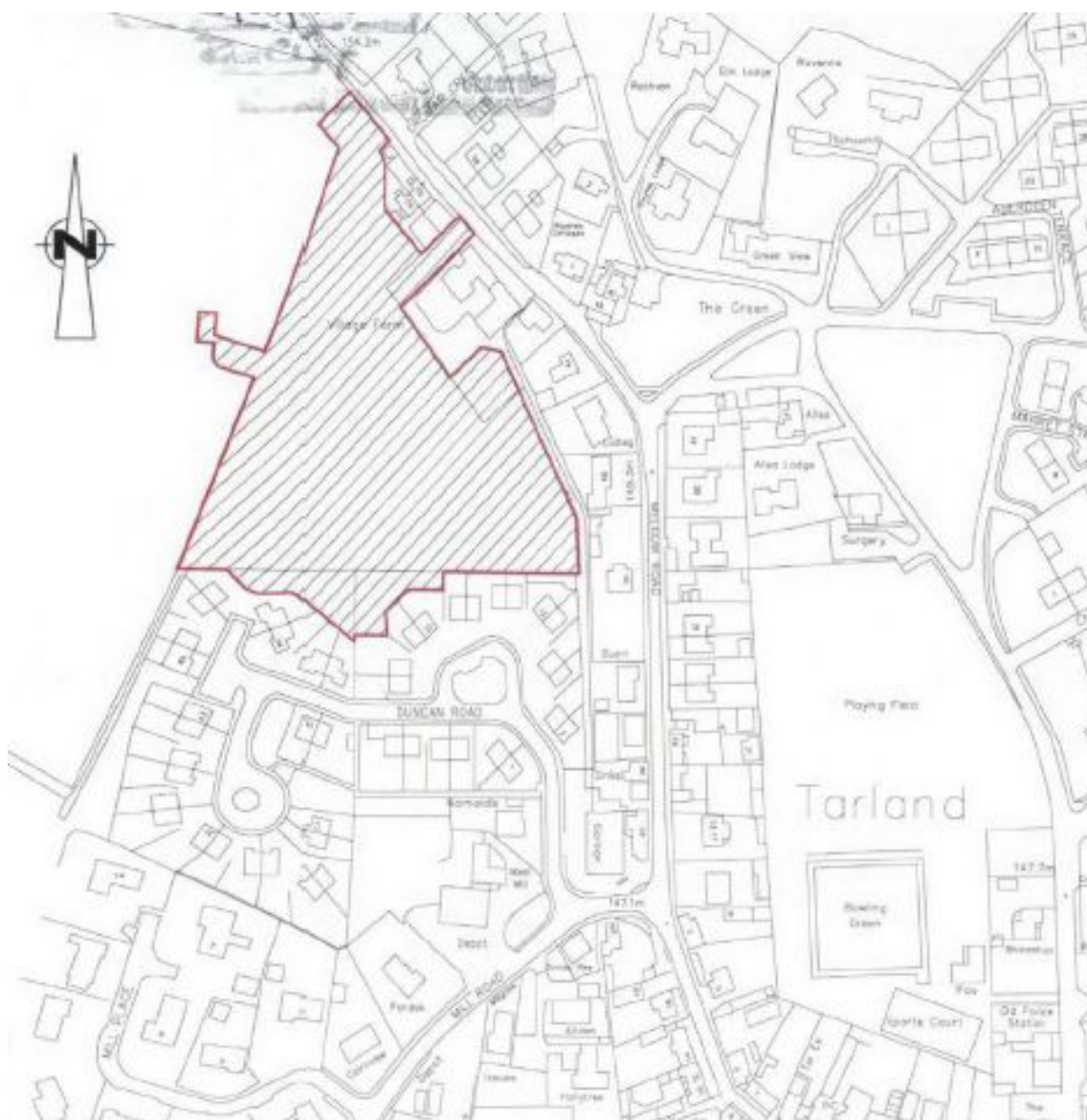
- 2.1 The evaluation area lay in a roughly triangular field on the NW fringe of the village of Tarland. The field, called 'Village Farm' had previously been part of the land of a small farm, the farmhouse and part of the steading now being beside a joiner's workshop and several cottar houses to the W (pers. comm. Alistair Anderson).

The total area was 4 acres (Illus 1).

Parish: Tarland

NGR (central) NJ 4786 0471

GPS 347866, 805708



Illus 1 Location of site. Courtesy of William Cowie Partnership

2.2 The field, which was in grass at the time of the evaluation, sloped gently down from S to N, from a roughly E-W ridge about 1/3rd of the distance from the S end of the field. The NE part of the field had growth of soft rush, suggesting it has been consistently wet.



Illus 2 General view of site looking NW

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The cultivated topsoil was removed by a full slew excavator with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Any possible features were cleaned and excavated by hand.
- 3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper 120 GPS and Glonass.

4. Desktop survey

4.1 Sites nearby

The site lies within a landscape that is rich in evidence of prehistoric settlement. On the higher ground to the SW at *Drummy Wood* there is extensive evidence of settlement

probably dating to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. Nearer to the Village Farm, on slightly higher ground to the NW at *Waulkmill*, a site originally thought to have been a stone circle has proved to have been a ritual focus throughout the Bronze Age.

Drummy Wood (Aberdeenshire SMR NJ40SE0015). Prehistoric hut circles and field systems. This extensive area of settlement probably dates from at least the later Bronze Age into the Iron Age.

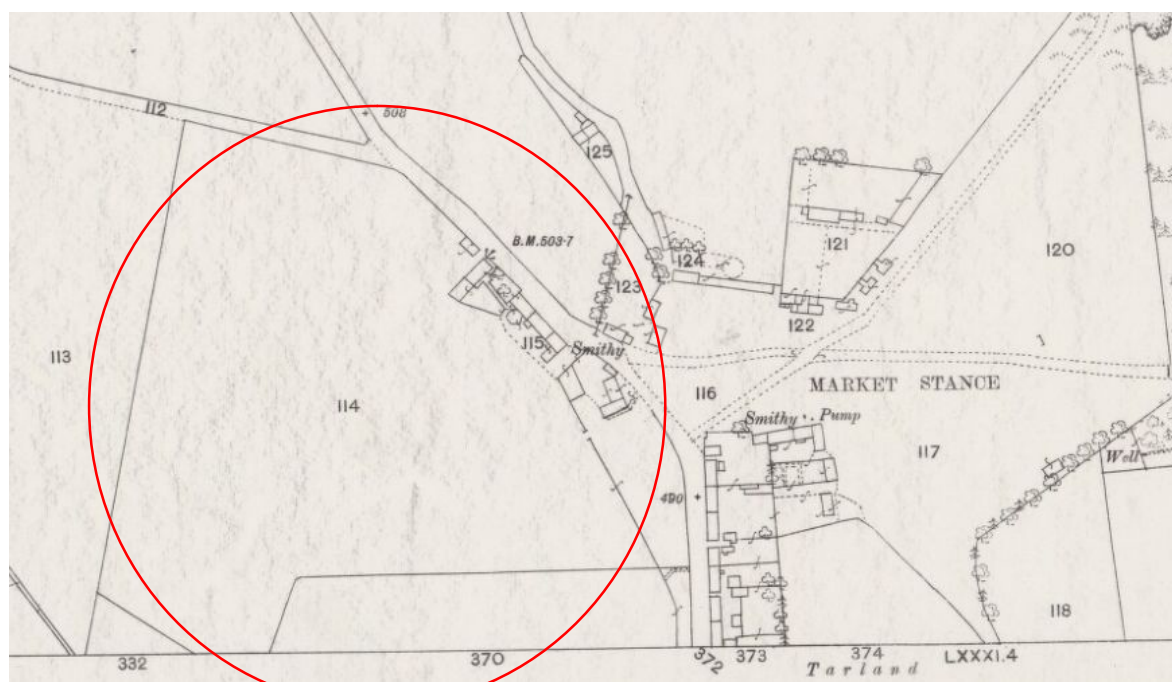
Waulkmill (Aberdeenshire SMR NJ40SE0004)Stone circle destroyed in 19th Century. Excavations by R Bradley in 2012 indicated this was probably the remnant of a circle of standing stones forming a kerb around a low cairn. This was dated to the Early Bronze Age with secondary use for cremations in the Late Bronze age. Neolithic pottery in a shallow pit indicated earlier use of the site. Two Roman graves were found beside the cairn.

4.2 Map evidence

1st Ordnance Survey Map.

Aberdeen sheet lxx.16 1868 (published 1870)

The site is shown as a single field with no additional features.

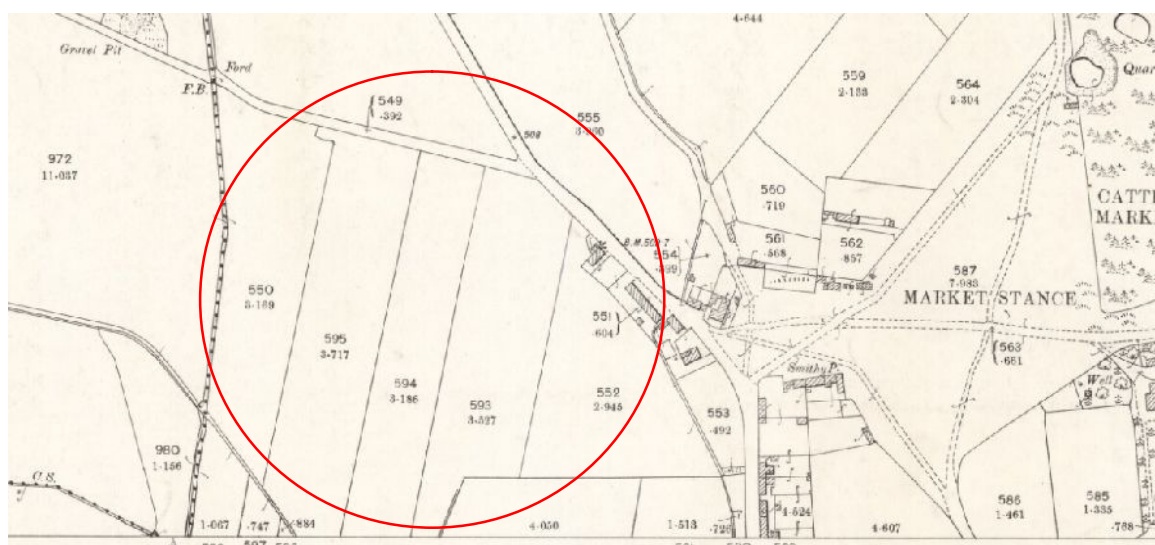


Illus 3 Aberdeen sheet lxx.16 1868 (published 1870). Site indicated by red circle.

2nd Ordnance Survey Map

Aberdeenshire 070.16 1900 (pub 1902).

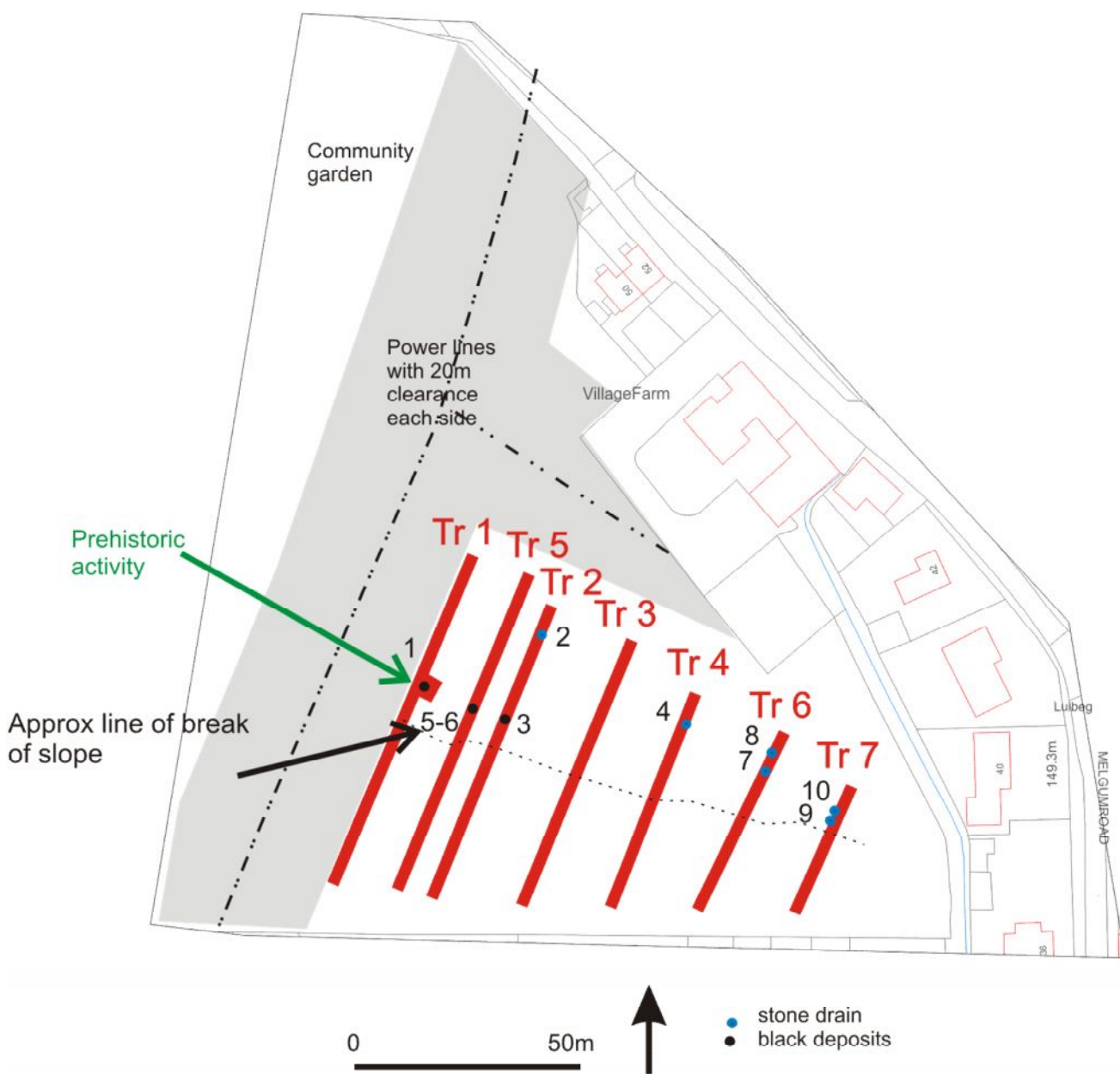
The field appears to have been divided into 5 smaller fields by a series of fences or dykes.



Illus 4 Aberdeenshire 070.16 1900 (published 1902). Site indicated by red circle.

5 Results of the Evaluation

Seven evaluation trenches were excavated in total (Illus 5). As two overhead electricity cables crossed parts of the site, it was not possible to machine within the exclusion corridors which were the regulation 20m on either side of the cable lines (grey shaded on Illus5)



Illus 5 Plan showing location of trenches (red). OS map reproduced Crown Copyright. Licence 100041040

Trench 1

GPS NE end: 347850, 804728 SW end: 347819, 804656

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 78 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 400mm at N end, 600-700mm at S end.

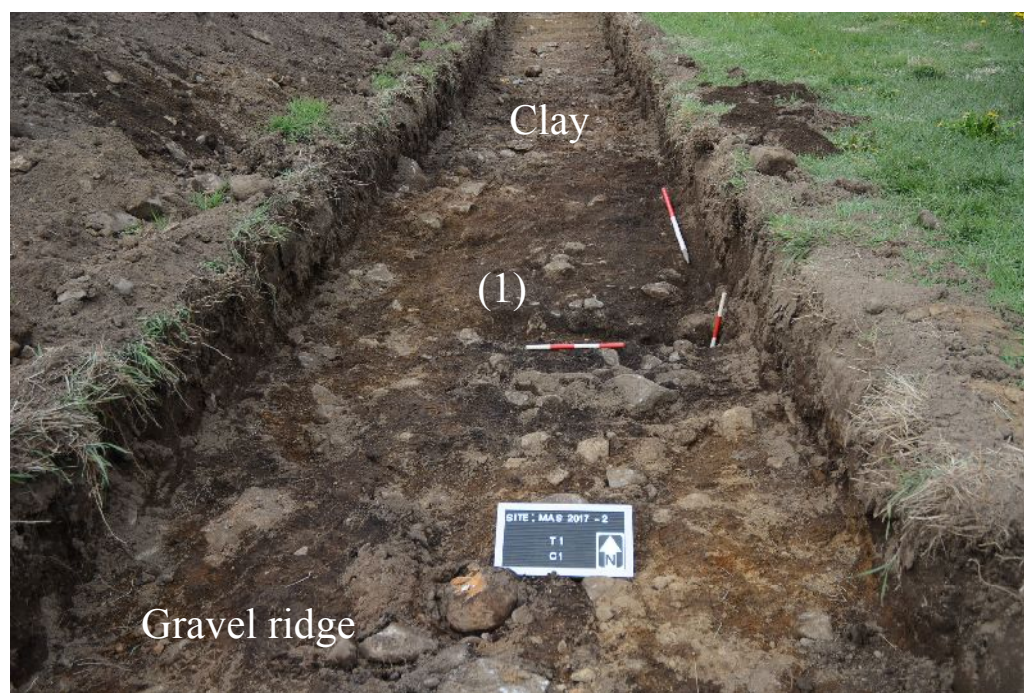
Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Features

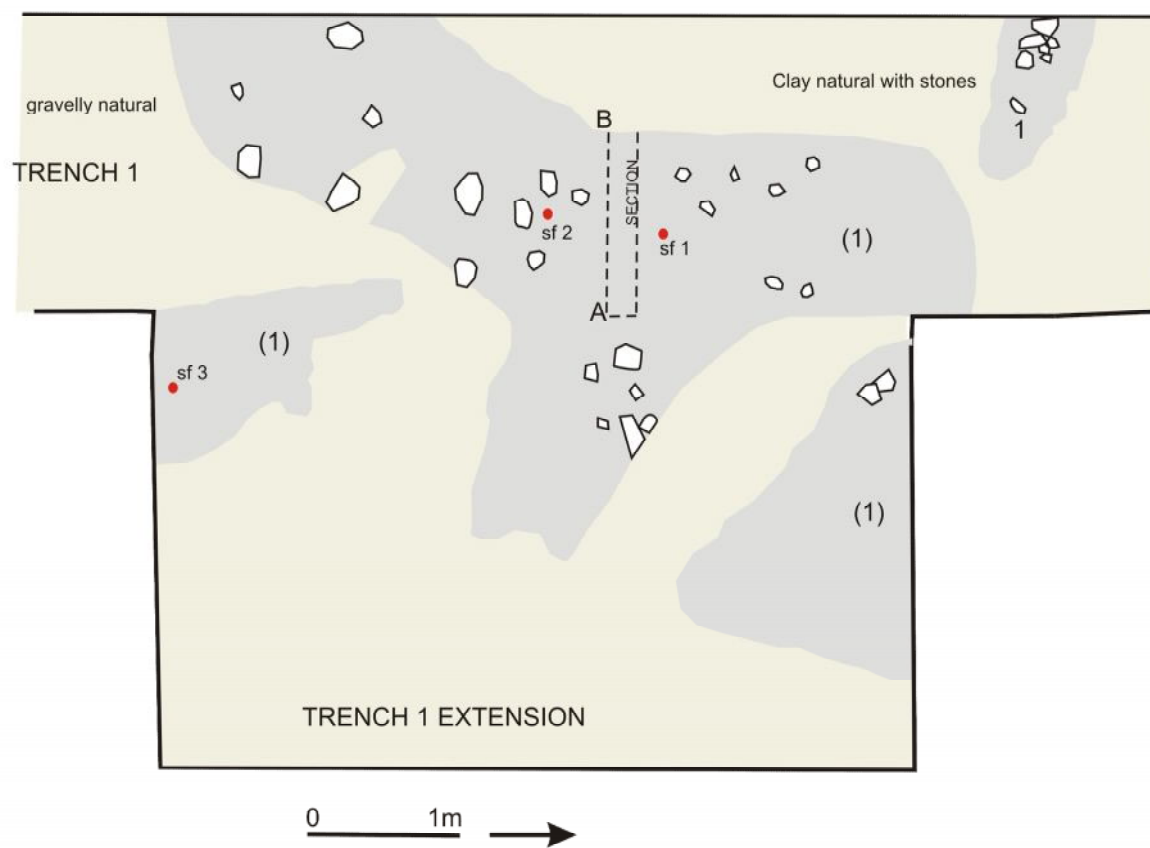
No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
1	347839	804700	Irregular patches of dark peaty soil	SF1-3 pottery and rare fragments of charcoal found on surface of this context.

Context 1 Context 1 comprised several irregular patches of dark peaty/silt lying directly on natural at the base of the ridge across the site where the natural merged from hard stoney gravels to compact stoney clay. The peat (1) lay between and over stones in the surface of the natural. Other stones on the surface of (1) were very loose and may have been a relatively modern attempt to fill a hollow/wet patch. The cross-section (Illus 9, 10) showed a maximum depth of 150mm thinning to less than 1mm. In many areas the peat was only a thin skim over the natural clay. A few (very rare) tiny fragments of charcoal were identified in context (1) in the vicinity of the pottery sf1 and sf2 but there was no evidence of a hearth or in situ firing.

Contexts 5-6 in Trench 5 and context 3 in Trench 2 were part of the same peaty accumulation at the edge of the clay; no artefacts and no charcoal was evident in either of these trenches.



Illus 6 Trench 1 looking N (before Trench 1 extension excavated). Context (1) shows as dark deposit at interface between gravel ridge and clay on lower slope



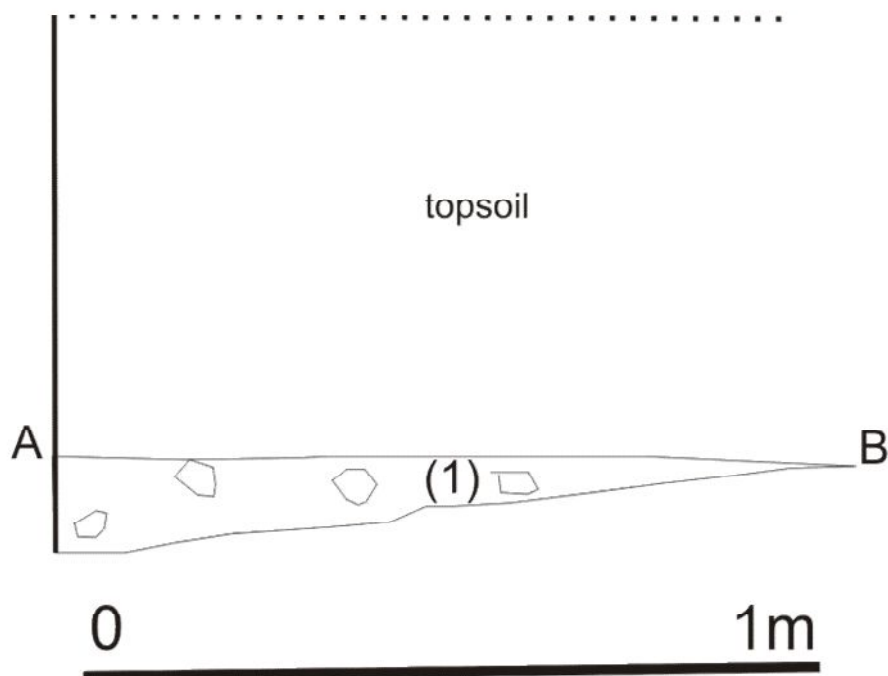
Illus 7 Detail plan of Trench 1 and Trench 1 extension with context (1)



Illus 8 Trench 1, with trench 1 extension, looking N. Context (1) shows grey/black



Illus 9 Cross-section A-B through context 1.



Illus 10 Trench 1. Section of context (1)

Trench 2

GPS NE end: 347867, 804717 SW end: 347840, 804652

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 70 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 500mm at N end, 400-700mm at S end, shallowing over ridge to 300mm.

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.



Illus 11 Trench 2 looking N down slope. Ranging rod on gravel ridge. Arrow indicates clay on lower slope.

Features

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
2	347865	804711	E/W stone drain	modern
3	347857	804693	Dark peaty patch on clay S of large boulder	Natural. No charcoal.

Trench 3

GPS NE end: 347885, 804710 SW end: 347860, 804651

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 64 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: N end 450mm, S end 500mm. 300mm on ridge.

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Several large boulders at interface between gravel and clay.

Features None

Trench 4

GPS NE end: 347899, 804698 SW end: 347880, 804650

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 52m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 400-450mm at N end, 550mm at S end.

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Several large boulders at interface between gravel and clay.

Features

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
4	347897	804691	Stone drain	modern

Trench 5

GPS NE end: 347862, 804724 SW end: 347833, 804655

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 75 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 350 – 500mm at N end, 600mm at S end. 350mm on ridge.

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Features

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
5	347850	804696	N end of peaty patch	Natural. No charcoal.
6	347849	804692	S end of peaty patch	Natural. No charcoal.

Trench 6

GPS NE end: 347918, 804690 SW end: 347898, 804650

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 45m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 350mm at N end, S end 500mm. 350mm over ridge

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Features

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
7	347914	804681	E/W stone drain	Modern

8	347916	804685 E/W stone drain	modern
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Illus 12 Trench 6 (wrongly numbered trench 7) looking N. Horizontal ranging rod lies on gravel ridge. Arrow indicates clay on lower slope

Trench 7

GPS NE end: 347933, 804677 SW end: 347920, 804649

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 31m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: N end 350mm, S end 500mm.

Stratigraphy: Topsoil over natural. At the higher S end the natural was a hard stoney gritty gravel, as the ground sloped down off this gravel ridge, the natural became clay.

Features

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Comment
9	347930	804672	E/W stone drain	Modern
10	347929	804668	E/W stone drain	modern

6 Finds

A total of six sherds of coarse pottery of probable later Bronze Age date were found in Trench 1 on the surface of context 1. The total scatter was over approximately 1 square metre. There were v rare charcoal flecks in context 1 in this area but insufficient for significant analysis, especially as the relationship of the charcoal to the pottery was not necessarily primary.

SF No	Identity	Context	Comment
1	4 body sherds	Trench 1, surface of context 1	Coarse . Late Bronze Age.
2	1 body sherd	Trench 1, surface of context 1	Coarse . Late Bronze Age.
3	1 bodysherd	Trench 1, surface of context 1	Coarse . Late Bronze Age.

7 Discussion

The underlying geology suggests that prior to drainage and cultivation, this ground sloped down from a fairly dry gravelly ridge at the S end, towards a lower area with clay natural, which appears to have been either boggy, or possibly very shallow/seasonal standing water. In Trenches 1, 2 and 5 (Contexts 1, 5-6, 3), patches of dark peaty/silt had accumulated in irregular hollows on the stoney clay just beyond the lower edge of the gravel ridge. In Trench 1 there was a small scatter of prehistoric pottery of probable late Bronze Age date on the surface of this peaty ground. Although there were a few (rare) specks of charcoal on the peaty surface near the pottery, there was no suggestion of there having been a hearth- nor any

evidence of in situ firing. Further excavation, both in an extension of Trench 1 and in an extra trench (Trench 5) between Trenches 1 and 2, showed no extension of this scatter of pottery and no further evidence of charcoal.

With the exception of modern stone drains no other anthropogenic features were observed on the site and there were no other artefacts.

In the context of the known prehistoric activity in the area around Tarland, the small scatter of pottery, which appears to be fragments of a single vessel, can probably most realistically be interpreted as the result of a small 'domestic accident' during one of the repeated transitory movements that take place around the periphery of any settlement- such as the gathering herbs or foodstuffs, or the collecting of firewood or other materials by the settled population- or indeed the short term occupation by people from the wider area who had foregathered for meeting or exchange. While of little apparent significance in itself, it does emphasise the possibility of some level of prehistoric activity almost anywhere around Tarland.

8 Impacts and Mitigations

8.1 Impacts There was a small area of low density prehistoric activity. Additional trenches excavated around it during the evaluation were negative, suggesting it was an isolated event.

8.2 Mitigations

- (i) On the basis of the evaluation there is no perceived need for any further archaeological investigation in the area.
- (ii) The paucity 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.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record

Digital frame number	Content
1-3	General view to NW
4	General view to W
5-7	Trench 1 looking N
8-10	Trench 1 Context 1
11-12	Trench 2 looking N
13-15	Trench 2, context 3
16	General view to NW . Trenches 1 & 2 (Tr 5 not yet excavated)
17-20	Trench 1, context 1
21-23	Trench 1, context 1, cross-section
24-28	Trench 6 (mis-numbered Tr 7) looking N
29-37	Trench 1 extension, context 1