

**KINTORE EAST
ACCESS ROAD
ABERDEENSHIRE**



**Archaeological Evaluation
and
Excavation**

Carried out April-May 2017
by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2017-06

by

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-Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation -

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1. Background

- 1.1 An application for planning permission (APP/2013/3830) was approved for a residential development comprising 600 dwelling houses, neighbourhood centre, landscaping, open space and associated infrastructure on a green field site at Tofthills and Brae Head Farms, on land to the east of Kintore, 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% archaeological evaluation.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken over the main development area in 2016 (Murray & Murray 2016). In May 2017 an evaluation was undertaken on the line of the proposed access road to the development. One area of archaeological interest was observed and a small excavation was undertaken directly following the 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 Kintore East Consortium to undertake the work.
- 1.4 The evaluation was undertaken 24th-25th April 2017. The excavation took place on 17th-18th May 2017.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The evaluation area lay along the proposed road line along a ridge around the base of Tuach Hill, above the E bank of the Tuach Burn.

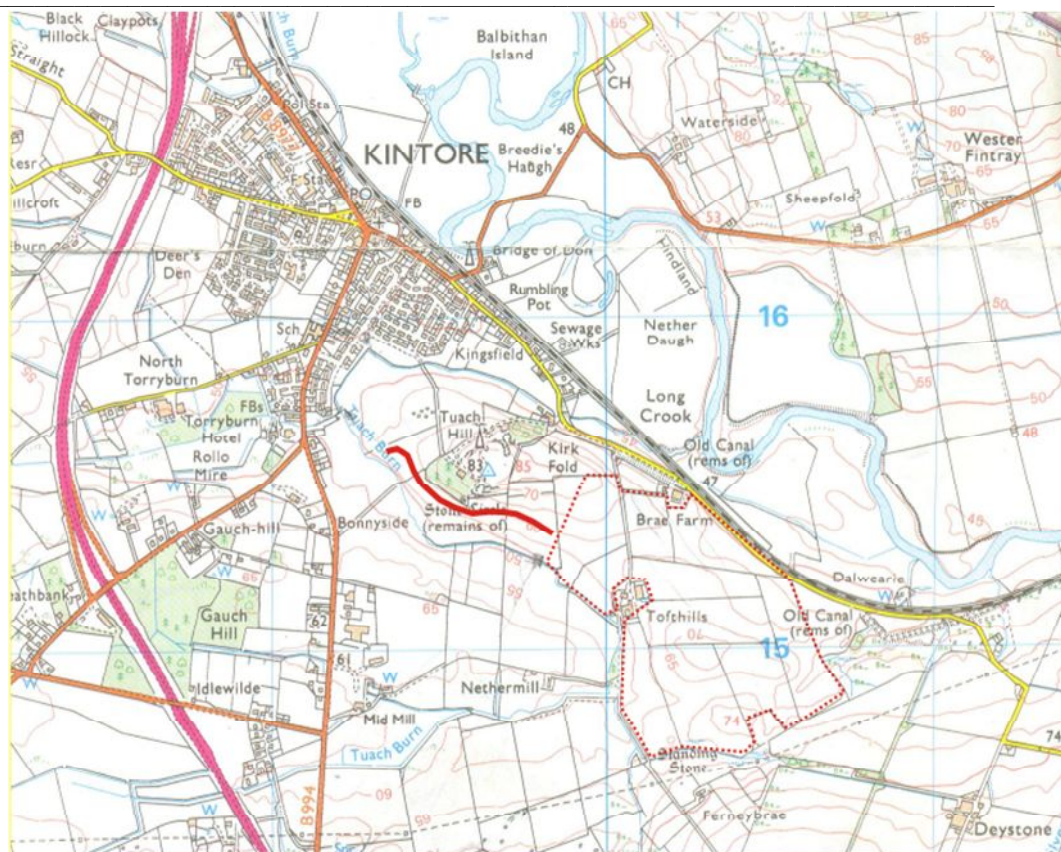
The total length of the road was approx 600m. The area assessed was approx 20m wide to allow for the road width and the construction disturbance on either side. Trenches were placed across and on either side of the road line.

Parish: Kintore

NGR W end: 379342, 815580 E end: 379854, 815334



Illus 1 View NW across the Tuach Burn towards Tuach Hill, showing evaluation trenches



Illus 2 Location of site.. Road line indicated by red line (development outline in dotted red). © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved License No.100049810

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The cultivated topsoil was removed by a mechanical 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 Map evidence

Roy's Military map 1747-55

Roy shows the area as a mixture of rough and cultivated ground.



Illus 3 Roy's Military Map 1747-55. www.nls.ac.uk

1st Ordnance Survey Map. 1865 (published 1869)

Aberdeen sheets lxxv.1 and lxxv.5

The field boundaries shown in 1865 remain to date. The stone circle is marked but no significant features are shown on the line of the present site.



Illus 4 Extracts from OS maps Aberdeen sheet lxxv.1 and lxxv.5 1865 (published 1869) www.nls.ac.uk

Ordnance survey 1899 (published 1900)

Aberdeenshire sheets 065.01 and 065.05

By 1899 there were no significant changes.



Illus 5 OS map of 1899 (pub 1900) www.nls.ac.uk

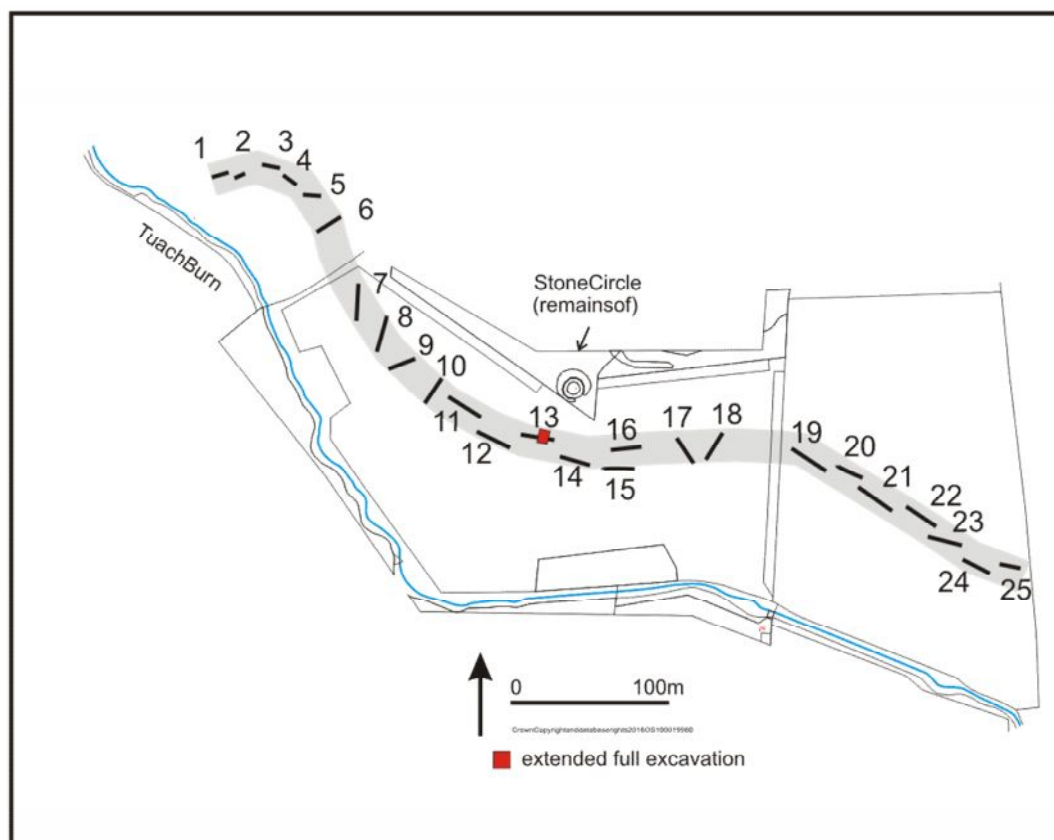
4 Results of the Evaluation

Twenty-five evaluation trenches were excavated in total (Illus 6) along and crossing an approx 20m wide band centred on the road line- allowing for the inevitable construction disturbance on either side of the road itself.

The location

The road line runs along a NW/SE ridge at around 60m OD on the E side of the Tuach Burn on the lower W slopes of Tuach Hill.

It lies within an area of significant prehistoric activity. Directly N of the middle part of the road are the remains of a small henge and stone circle, recently excavated by Richard Bradley and Amanda Clarke (2011). To the S across the Tuach Burn is the Neolithic long cairn at Midmill (NJ71NE 31). Directly across the burn, on the Midmill Primary School site, there was evidence of a Neolithic structure (Murray & Murray 2015). To the E and SE prehistoric and later activity was recorded on the Midmill Industrial Estate (Murray & Murray 2013). Considerable prehistoric settlement and ritual activity has also been excavated further to the W (Cook & Dunbar 2008).



Illus 6 Layout of trenches and excavated area. OS map reproduced Crown Copyright. License 100019980)



Illus 7 Trenches 13- 18 looking N across Tuach Burn, showing road line in landscape

Trench 1

GPS NE end: 379352, 815585 SW end: 379342, 815582

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 11m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-350mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None



Illus 8 Trench 1 looking E, sand natural

Trench 2

GPS NE end: 379363, 815585 SW end: 379355, 815581

Orientation:NE/SW Length: 8 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-350mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None

Trench 3

GPS E end: 379385, 815588 W end: 379373, 815591

Orientation:E/W Length: 12.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None

Trench 4

GPS NW end: 379386,815584 SE end: 379396, 815577

Orientation:NW/SE Length: 12m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-310mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None

Trench 5

GPS E end: 379411, 815570 W end: 379399, 815571

Orientation:E/W Length: 12m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None

Trench 6

GPS NE end: 379424, 815557 SW end: 379407, 815547

Orientation:NE/SW Length: 19m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 400-450mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Flecks of charcoal on surface of natural

Features: None

Finds: Pottery SF1. Single sherd undiagnostic prehistoric pottery on natural.

Trench 7

GPS N end: 379434, 815515 S end: 379433, 815491

Orientation: N/S Length: 25m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-400mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Some plough marks.

Features: Small areas of charcoal could be of any date.

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Associated finds	Comment
Tr 7/1	379433	815510	Charcoal (dust) rich patch 150mm diam, 10mm deep		No evidence date
Tr 7/2	379433	815510	Charcoal (dust) rich patch 200 x 100mm, 20-30mm deep.		No evidence date

Trench 8

GPS NNE end: 379452, 815494 SSW end: 379445, 815471

Orientation: NNE/SSW Length: 24m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 280-300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural, modern plough marks

Features:

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Associated finds	Comment
Tr 8,3	379451	815491	Grey stained patch with rare charcoal (dust) 1.6 x 1m. 10-20mm max depth	SF 2 SF 3	

Finds: Flints SF2 & 3 on top of natural in context Tr8, 3.

Trench 9

GPS NE end: 379470, 815467 SW end: 379453, 815461

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 19m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Modern plough marks and some rabbit disturbance.

Features: None

Trench 10

GPS NE end: 379487, 815455 SW end: 379475, 815439

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 20m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Modern plough marks.

Features: None

Trench 11

GPS NW end: 379491, 815443 SE end: 379512, 815431

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 24.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Modern plough marks and some rabbit disturbance.

Features: None

Trench 12

GPS NW end: 379509, 815421 SE end: 379530, 815411

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 23.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 280-300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Modern plough marks.

Features: None

Trench 13

GPS E end: 379558, 815461 W end: 379536, 815419

Orientation: E/W Length: 23m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 250mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural. Modern plough marks

Features:

No	Easting	Northing	Feature	Associated finds	Comment
4	379550	815417	Two possible arcs of charcoal rich material.	SF 4- SF 7	Fully excavated when trench extended: See below

Finds: SF 4-7 Early Neolithic pottery

This trench was extended and the extended area fully excavated. The features uncovered during the evaluation are discussed in the excavation report below.



Illus 9 Trench 13. Context 4 as exposed in evaluation

Trench 14

GPS NW end:379580, 815400 SE end: 379561, 815430

Orientation:NW/SE Length: 19.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural:350-400mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to more gravelly/stoney natural

Features: None

Trench 15

GPS E end:379609, 815398 W end: 379588, 815397

Orientation:E/W Length: 21m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 500mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to gravelly/stoney natural

Features: None

Trench 16

GPS E end: 379613, 815412 W end: 379512, 815409

Orientation: E/W Length: 21 m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 250-280mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to gravelly/stoney natural. Rare charcoal flecks. Stone drag holes (modern).

Features: None

Trench 17

GPS NW end: 379635, 815418 SE end: 379645, 815401

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 20m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 280-300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to rocky natural

Features: None

Trench 18

GPS NE end: 379664, 815420 SW end: 379653, 815403

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 21m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-400mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to stoney natural

Features: None



Illus 10 Trenches 19-22 looking N across burn, showing road line in landscape

Trench 19

GPS NW end: 379706, 815411 SE end: 379729, 815397

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 26.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-400mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural with some boulders. Modern plough marks.

Features: None

Trench 20

GPS NW end: 379736, 815401 SE end: 379752, 815392

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 18m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 200-250mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to compact sandy clay natural with some boulders. Modern plough marks.

Features: None

Trench 21

GPS NW end: 379749, 815387 SE end: 379771, 815371

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 27m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-600mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to very bouldery natural below change of slope

Features: None



Illus 11 Trenches 21-25 looking E. Boulders in natural

Trench 22

GPS NW end: 379779, 815374 SE end: 379798, 815362

Orientation: NW/SE Length: 23m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to boulders in gravelly/gritty sand natural

Features: None

Trench 23

GPS E end: 379815, 815350 W end: 379798, 815355

Orientation: E/W Length: 29m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 400-600mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to gritty sand and boulders natural

Features: None

Trench 24

GPS SE end: 379833, 815331 NW end: 379815, 815341

Orientation: NE/SW Length: 29.5m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-400mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural- down slope from Trench 23

Features: None

Trench 25

GPS E end: 379852, 815335 W end: 379838, 815338

Orientation: E/W Length: 14m Width: 2.0m

Depth above natural: 300-350mm

Stratigraphy: Topsoil to sand natural

Features: None

5 The Excavation

As the evaluation in Trench 13 yielded Early Neolithic pottery associated with charcoal rich soils, it was agreed that full excavation should be undertaken of these possible features and a larger area 6 x 8m was stripped and fully excavated.



Illus 12 Evaluation trench 13 in relation to stone circle (arrow)

Summary

The area had been considerably ploughed out with topsoil depths on the slope of only 230-250mm. To some extent the survival of any archaeology is surprising and may be in part due to the plough ‘jumping’ on the boulders around the S end of the site.

There were two N/S almost linear features (contexts (4), (6/2) and context (10)) with charcoal (dust)-rich fills and associated with Early Neolithic pottery (SF4-7, 17 and flints SF 18-19). The width between these features was c 2m (2.3m to centres) and there was a total length of c4m, if contexts 4 and 6/2 are interpreted as parts of the same feature. The W ‘band’ appeared to be between 500 and 700mm wide and in section up to 100mm deep in a wide shallow hollow. The E ‘band’ was between 450 and 800mm wide on the surface and up to 200mm deep in a more convincing U-shaped cut.

These were cut by a number of later features filled either with topsoil - or in the case of 6/1 and 3 with topsoil mixed with redeposited fills from (4) and (10). Finds from (6/1) and (3) are considered likely to have derived from (4), (6/2) and (10).

The later features appear to consist of a number of cultivation and stone clearance events (2, 9, 13, 5, probably 3) with a probable burrow complex (6/1, 11, 12, possibly 7).

Soil samples were taken from charcoal rich layer 6/2 but in light of the very disturbed nature of the context no further action is advised.



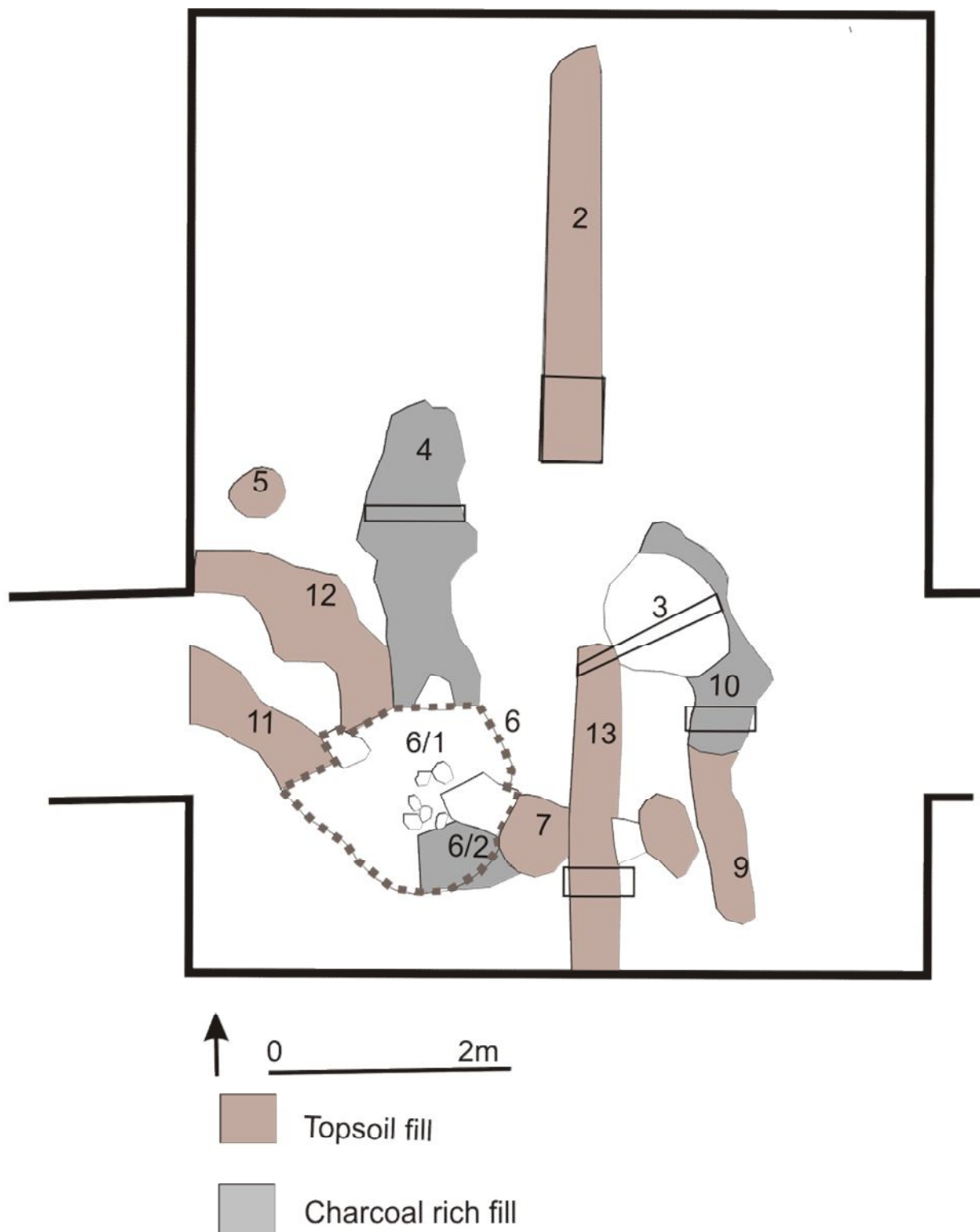
Illus 13 Excavated area looking N



Illus 14 Context 6/1 (sectioned) with context 7 to RHS. Context 4 (dark) in background



Illus 15 Context 6/1 (section) with 6/2 (dark in RHS foreground), context 4 (dark in centre background) and burrows 11, 12 in LHS



Illus 16 Plan with contexts

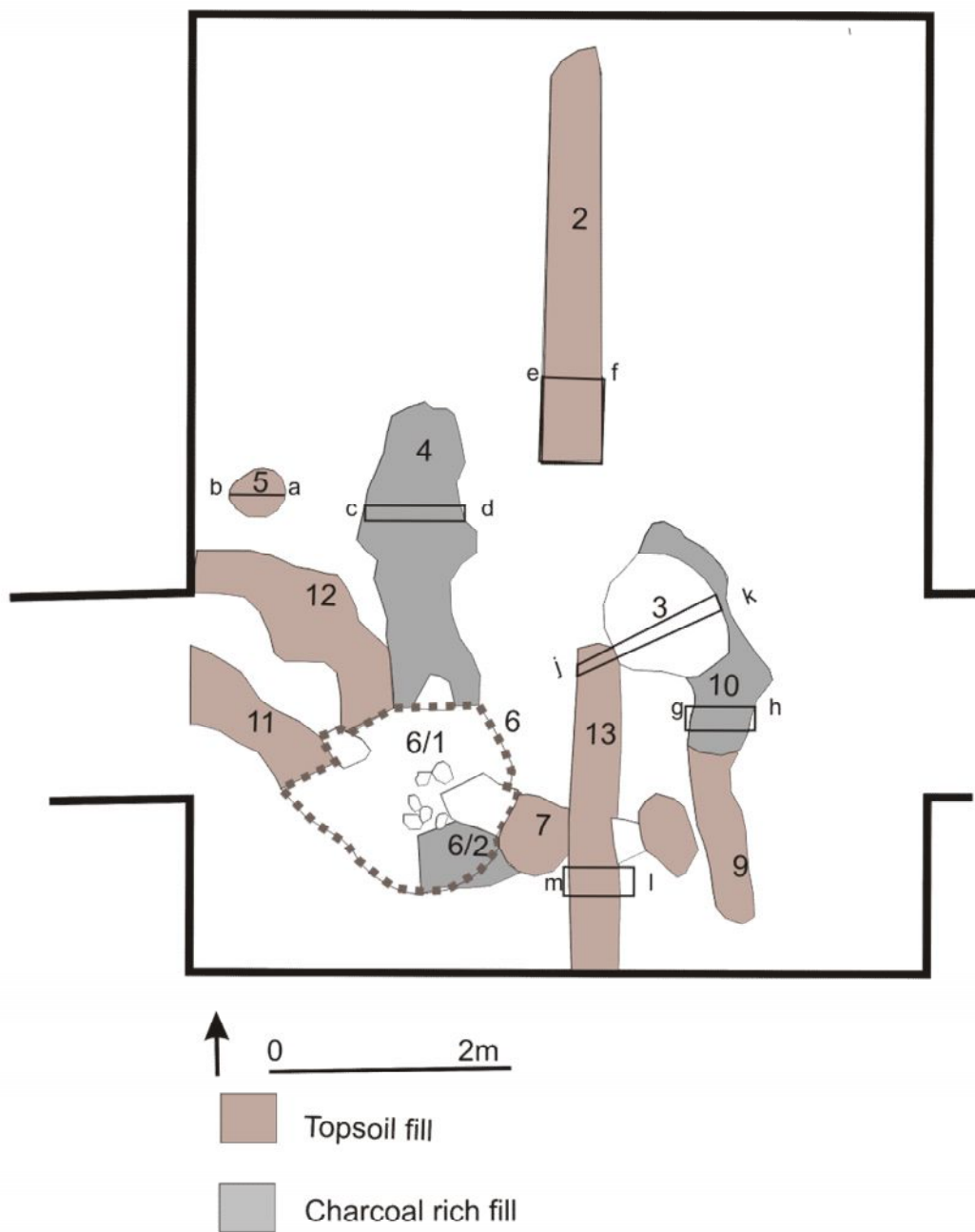
Trench 13 and extended excavation contexts

Context no	Context description	Associated finds	Interpretation
1	Topsoil. Max depths 230-250mm		Topsoil
2	N/S linear. Up to 600mm wide on surface of natural, narrowing to 320mm, max depth 220mm at box section. Merges to topsoil at N end	8, 12	Cultivation
2/1	Hard grey gritty topsoil fill		
3	Cut/hollow c. 550 x 700mm. max depth at section c 100mm. Cut (10) and (8/13)		Stone hole?
3/1	Fill of 3. Topsoil mixed with charcoal rich fill from (10) which it cut through.	SF 13 (probably disturbed from (10))	
4	Charcoal rich spread. N/S linear, at least 2.5m long (N/S) possibly 4m if 6/2 is same layer. Width:500-700mm. Depth at section 100mm, with grey leaching into sand to 180mm. Cut by 6/1	SF 4, 5, 6, 7	possible hollow/worn area rather than a cut
4/1	Dark grey/black		

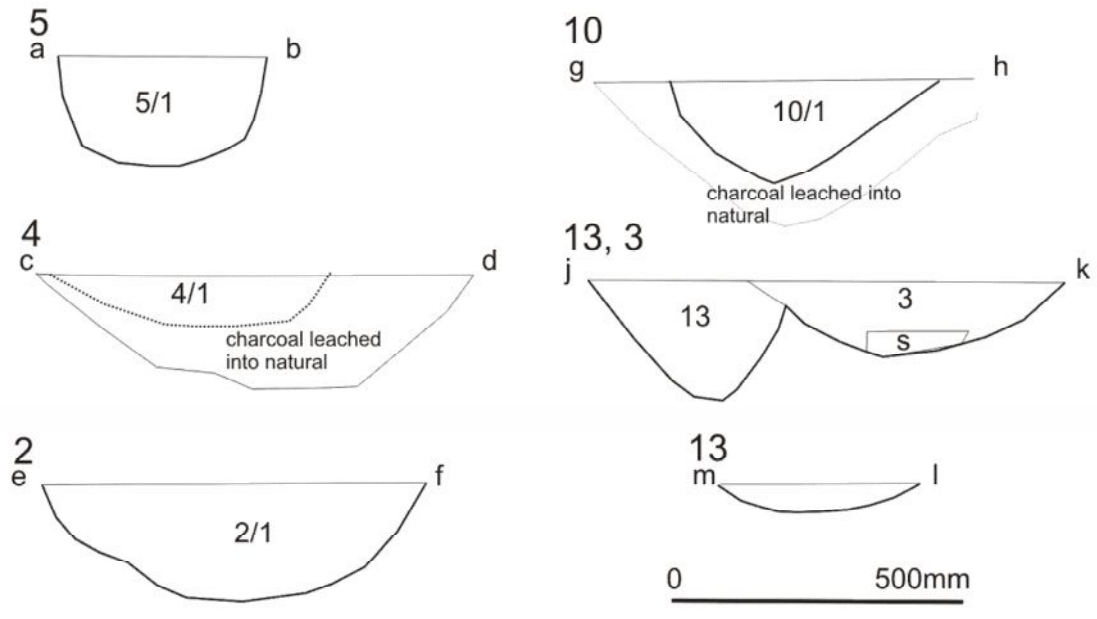
	sandy with charcoal dust and some fragments		
5	Hollow 380mm diam. Max depth 200mm.		Stone hole?
5/1	Topsoil fill of 5		
6	Very irregular hollow c. 1.5m across. Extends down the face of large natural boulders in natural. Cut through (4) and (6/2). Cut by (7). May merge to (11) and (12)		Could be stone removal hole but in association with (11) and (12) this is more likely to have been a burrow
6/1	Mid brown topsoil with occasional lenses of charcoal rich, probably redeposited from (4) and (6/2)	SF9-11, 14-17	Finds in 6/1 are likely to have been churned up from (4) and (6/2).
6/2	Dark grey/black sandy with charcoal dust and some fragments. Band c 700mm wide. Cut by (6/1)	SF 18-19	= (4)
7	Hollow c 600mm diam. Cut by (6/1) and (13).		Stone hole or possibly another exit hole from burrow?
7/1	Topsoil fill of 7		

8	= 13 N end		
9	N/S linear cut 300-350mm wide. Depth 20mm. Merges to topsoil at N end over 10.		Cultivation
9/1	Topsoil fill of 9		
10	Roughly N/S spread of charcoal rich soil up to 2m (N/S) by max 800mm E/W. Section at S end showed 450mm wide, U-shaped cut or groove, max 200mm deep but to N thinned out much shallower and no obvious cut.		
10/1	Black charcoal rich (dust, few fragments), staining from charcoal leached into sand below		
11	NW/SE irregular cut 300-400mm wide. Depth at section 160mm, deepening to 400mm at SE end where it merges to 6/1		Burrow?
11/1	Topsoil, with some		

	of charcoal redeposited and mixed in at SE end		
12	NW/SE irregular cut 300-800mm wide. Merges to 6/1 at SE end		Burrow?
12/1	Topsoil fill of 12		
13	N/S linear cut 300-400mm wide. Box section showed max depth 70mm into natural		Cultivation
13/1	Topsoil fill of 13		



Illus 17 Location of drawn sections



Illus 18 Cross sections



Illus 19 Context 5



Illus 20 Context 4



Illus 21 Context 2

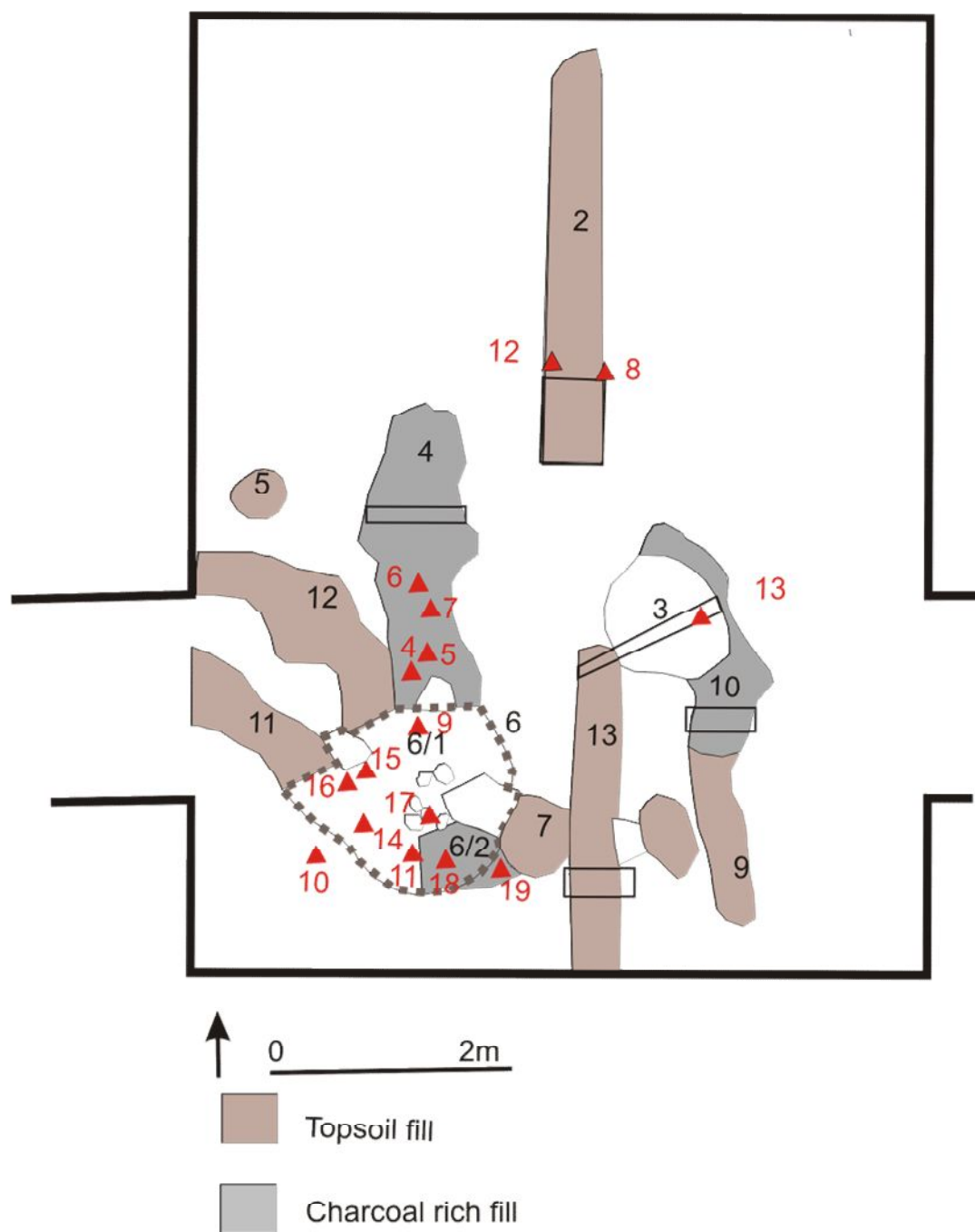


Illus 22 Context 10



Illus 23 Context 13 (8) on LHS and context 3 on RHS

6 The Finds



Illus 24 Plan of excavated area with small finds

Catalogue of finds

No	Type	Location	Trench	Context	Detail
1	Pottery.	379413,815552	6	Top of	Small bodysherd.

				natural	Coarse fabric.
2	Flint	379451,815491	8	Tr 8/3	Flake
3	Flint	379451,815491	8	Tr 8/3	Flake
4	Pottery	On plan	13	4	Rimsherd. Finger fluting. Early Neolithic carinated
5	Pottery	On plan	13	4	Small bodysherd. As SF4
6	Pottery	On plan	13	4	Bodysherd, As SF4
7	Pottery	On plan	13	4	Rim fragment
8	Flint	On plan	13	2/1	Small flake
9	Flint	On plan	13	6/1	Part of pebble with cortex
10	Flint	On plan	13	6/1	Flake
11	Pottery	On plan	13	6/1	2 fragments
12	Flint	On plan	13	2/1	Flake
13	Pottery	On plan	13	3	3 fragments
14	Flint	On plan	13	6/1	Flake
15	Pottery	On plan	13	6/1	Bodysherd
16	Pottery	On plan	13	6/1	Bodysherd, abraded. Faint linear decoration. Possibly Bronze Age
17	Pottery	On plan	13	6/1	Small frag bodysherd. Neolithic?
18	Flint	On plan	13	6/2	Flake with cortex. Burnt
19	Flint	On plan	13	6/2	Flake with cortex. Burnt

7 Discussion

This small group of very truncated features is difficult to interpret with any certainty. The site lay directly S of and down slope (illus 12) from the assumed entrance to the Tuach Hill stone circle and henge (Bradley & Clarke 2011, 2011a), and in a direct line between that monument and the Midmill long cairn. In this context it was important to consider if it had been any sort of outlying feature related to the Tuach Hill monument, although the Early Neolithic pottery would indicate that it was earlier than the Tuach Hill site.

There is no reference to outliers in the accounts of the 19th -century excavation (discussed in Bradley and Clarke 2011, 2-3) and air photographs have not indicated crop marks of any potential outlying features. It was discussed during the excavation as to whether feature 6/1 could have been a socket for a removed standing stone. Unlike many of the holes where monoliths had been removed on the stone circle site there were no granite flakes from the breaking up of a stone and the shallow irregular nature of feature 6 makes this unconvincing as a socket for a standing stone. While it may have resulted from the cultivation-related removal of a natural boulder, the burrows to the W suggest that it could have been simply the result of rabbit activity- or rabbit activity following such cultivation-related removal of a natural stone. In summary, given the lack of any convincing evidence, and the date differential, it is considered unlikely that the present site had any monumental relationship with the Tuach Hill stone circle.

It can more easily be seen in the context of small, possibly domestic clusters of Early Neolithic features such as the possible structure, which was dated to 3700-3500BC, recorded directly across the burn on the Midmill Primary School site (Murray & Murray 2015) or similar groups of features at Forrest Road (Feature ST07: Cook and Dunbar, 2008, 67-8) and at Deer's Den, Kintore (dated 3800-3650 cal BC: Alexander 2000, 17). The very disturbed nature of the present site makes any detailed interpretation impossible. The lack of hearths or floor levels and the fairly small assemblage of artefacts suggest that the evidence is not sufficiently robust to describe this as a 'house' or 'building'. It can however be seen as proof of domestic activity- albeit of possibly transient duration.

As such, its location on the lower slopes above the Tuach Burn around 60-65m OD fits with similar plough truncated evidence of Neolithic activity – for example at Midmill (summarised in Murray & Murray 2013, 70-71), on the Midmill Primary School site

(Murray & Murray 2015) or on the E Kintore evaluation (Murray & Murray 2016a). Individually many of these sites have been badly damaged by cultivation- cumulatively they may begin to demonstrate patterns of possible land-use or settlement in the Neolithic.

8 Impacts and Mitigations

8.1 Impacts The road will destroy any surviving archaeology. However the full excavation of the area beside Trench 13 has examined and recorded the only area of significant archaeology indicated during the evaluation.

8.2 Mitigations The presence 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 must be informed immediately so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed by all parties concerned.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the landowners Bruce Armstrong and Malcolm Allan for access to the site.

Thanks are also due to Moyra Simon for her help throughout the excavation.

References

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Roy. Military Map of 1747-55 on line at <http://www.nls.uk/maps>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record

Digital frame number	Content
Kintore 2017 access road	
1-3	Evaluation trench 1
4	Tr 1-6 looking E
5	Tr 1-6 looking S
6	Tr 1-6 looking E
7	Tr 7-8 looking E
8-9	Tr 7-12 looking E
10-11	Tr 7-13 looking E
12-13	Tr 13 looking N to stone circle
14	Tr 13 looking E
15	Tr 13 looking SW
16	Tr 13 looking S. Context 4
17	Tr 13 looking SE context 4
18-19	Tr 22-19 looking W
20-21	Tr 21-25 looking E
22	Tr 23-25 looking SE
23	Tr 19-20 looking S
24	Tr 19 looking W
25	Tr 19-23 looking NW

26	Tr 13-17 looking N across Tuach Burn
27	Tr 19-22 looking N across Tuach Burn
Excavation	
28-29	General view looking S
30	General view looking N with stone circle in background
31	Looking S. Contexts 4 and 10 show dark
32	Looking S. Context 4
33-35	Looking N. Contexts 4, 10
36	General, excavation
37-39	Context 2
40-41	Context 5
42-44	6/1 section
45-46	Context 7, 6 in background
47	Contexts 4, 6, 7 looking N
48-49	Contexts 4, 6, 7 looking W
50-54	General looking N
55	Contexts 6, 7 looking N
56-58	Contexts 8 (13) & 3 looking N
59-62	Contexts 6/1, 6/2 dark in foreground, 4 dark in background, looking N
63-65	Context 4 looking N
66-70	Context 10