

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Geophysical Survey



Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty Lot 4 - Fastlink **Invasive Archaeological Investigations**

Mitigation Excavation

AWPR/B-T/FL/003A

Report No. 3187

















CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

The Old Engine House Eskmills Business Park Musselburgh East Lothian EH21 7PQ

Tel: 0131 273 4380 email: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk web: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Author	Magnus Kirby MA AIfA
Illustrator	Tamlin Barton MA
Editor	Melanie Johnson MA PhD FSA Scot MIfA
Employer	Aberdeen City Council
Consultant	Jacobs UK Ltd
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Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty Lot 4 – Fastlink Invasive Archaeological Investigations

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

As part of a programme of mitigation investigations along the Fastlink section of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty, a strip and map investigation was completed near Hill of Muchalls, site AWPR/B-T/FL/003A. Four small features were excavated and are interpreted as stone-holes.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of a programme of strip, map and excavate undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in April and May 2014 at trench AWPR/B-T/FL/003A (abbreviated to FL/003A in this report) for the Fastlink section (Lot 4) of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty (AWPR/B-T).
- 1.1.2 Trench FL/003A was located approximately 5.4km north of Stonehaven and just to the west of Hill of Muchalls (NGR NO 8692 9084; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.3 The employer for this project was Aberdeen City Council and overall responsibility for its delivery lies with the AWPR/B-T Managing Agent. Jacobs UK Ltd was appointed as the Consultants, CFA Archaeology Ltd was the Contractor for this part of the programme of works, and the curator was Historic Scotland.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty is being developed by Transport Scotland in partnership with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils. These two projects were individually identified as proposed transport interventions within the Modern Transport System (www.aberdeencity_gov.uk/transport_streets/roads_pavements/transport_projects/roa_wrp_mts.asp) and developed separately through the statutory process. In November 2010 the Scottish Government confirmed its intention to procure both projects under a single Non Profit Distributing contract.
- 1.2.2 The two major improvements to the trunk-road network are close to each other and together will provide significant benefits to the north-east of Scotland by reducing journey times and cutting congestion within Aberdeen City. They comprise four sections: a Northern Leg from North Kingswells to Blackdog; a Southern Leg from Charleston to North Kingswells; a Fastlink from Stonehaven to Cleanhill Junction; and the Balmedie to Tipperty improvements. The work undertaken during the construction of these four sections will consist of 34.6km of wholly new dual carriageway around the outskirts of Aberdeen along with an 11.5km Fastlink running from the A90 at Stonehaven and joining the AWPR/B-T near to Maryculter. An additional 9km of new dual carriageway will also be constructed during the Balmedie to Tipperty part of the project along with 3km of on-line improvements.

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 Previous archaeological work was undertaken in 2012 and consisted of a programme of non-invasive archaeological investigations comprising a desk-based assessment, topographic surveys, photographic surveys, palaeoenvironmental assessment, geophysical surveys, field walking, metal detecting and building recording. These were carried out in areas with suitable

- ground conditions within the Land Made Available (LMA) for the AWPR/B-T project. The general aim of these archaeological investigations was to identify the extent and character of known and unknown archaeological remains in order to enable a programme of further archaeological evaluation and mitigation to be designed.
- 1.3.2 Chapter 43 (Part D: Fastlink) of the Environmental Statement (ES) (Jacobs 2007) undertaken for the project identified 43 cultural heritage sites within a study area extending c.250m either side of the centreline of the road alignment. Sites of potential early prehistoric date included Cantlayhills Cairn (Site 28) and Kempstone Hill Complex (Site 491).
- 1.3.3 Cantlayhills Cairn is located approximately 1.2km south-east of site FL/003A and consists of a large cairn surrounded by a number of smaller clearance cairns. The Kempstone Hill Complex consists of a field system, two cairns and a standing stone which probably date to the Bronze Age.
- 1.3.4 Later prehistoric sites within the vicinity were similarly few in number. A leaf-shaped Bronze Age sword was discovered during drainage work on the Moss of Cowie. A small field system containing two hut-circles is located 1.4km south-west of site FL/003A on the northern and western flanks of White Hill (Site 25).
- 1.3.5 The majority of sites within close proximity to site FL/003A relate to the 18th/19th century agricultural improvements and consist of farmsteads, clearance cairns, consumption dykes and field systems. These improvements saw the creation of larger enclosed fields that dominate the landscape surrounding site FL/003A.
- 1.3.6 Topographic surveys were carried out in November 2012 (Headland Archaeology 2012c) at Howieshill Farmstead (Site 32), Burnhead Cairns (Site 121) and Crossley Cairn (Site 506). A further survey should have been carried out in relation to the Scottish North Eastern Railway (Site 257), but this was postponed due to health and safety reasons.
- 1.3.7 The geophysical survey carried out in December 2012 (Headland Archaeology 2012a) identified several anomalies, notably those in close proximity to the former village of Cowie (Site 490). Thirty-five trenches excavated as part of the invasive archaeological investigations were positioned to target these anomalies.
- 1.3.8 A palaeoenvironmental survey carried out in October 2012 (Headland Archaeology 2012b) identified areas of peat within Red Moss Wetland (Site 67) and Backburn Moss Wetland (Site 119). The earlier find of a Late Bronze Age sword reportedly from the base of the peats at Red Moss indicates peat formation in this area may be relatively late, beginning in the Late Bronze Age. However, the initial estimate for peat formation in Aberdeenshire is 10,600–9800 cal BP (Tipping 2007) possibly suggesting that the depth at which the sword was recovered was not accurately recorded. This early date for peat formation was supported by palaeoenvironmental sampling and

- analysis carried out by CFA at Backburn Moss Wetland as part of this programme of works. The report on this has been produced under separate cover (Cressey and McCulloch 2013).
- 1.3.9 A programme of intrusive trial trenching was undertaken by CFA in 2013 within Lot 4 (Fastlink) of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (Kirby 2014). Crossley Cairn lay within the road corridor and was excavated as part of this programme of works.
- 1.3.10 Four sites were revealed by the trial trenching, including: two areas of pits and linear features (trenches FL0034 and FL0242); a possible alignment of shallow pits (trench FL0381); and a stone spread or surface (trench FL0328) which was situated on the site of a farmstead annotated 'Broomhill' on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1868). A sherd of prehistoric pottery was recovered from one of the areas of pits and linear features, but lithics from the other area of pits and linear features proved undiagnostic, and there was no secure dating evidence from the pit alignment.
- 1.3.11 Following the trial trenching, nine sites were identified for further mitigation works. These consisted of four sites identified during trial trenching (FL/001, FL/003B, FL/004, FL/005), two cairns identified as upstanding features (FL/002, FL/006), and an additional three areas identified by Jacobs following the trial trenching programme (FL/003A, FL/007, FL/008).
- 1.3.12 It was agreed with the Consultant, and with the approval of Historic Scotland, that the mitigation measures relating to the two cairns, one located at Fishermyre and the other located near Stranog Hill, would take the form of a topographic survey, followed by hand excavation. The results of the topographic surveys of FL/002 and FL/006 are covered in separate reports (See Mitchell 2014a and 2014b).
- 1.3.13 It was agreed with the Consultant, and with the approval of Historic Scotland, that the mitigation measures relating to the other sites identified during and following trial trenching should take the form of a strip and record, with hand excavation of any features revealed subject to further agreement. These are reported under separate cover.
- 1.3.14 The areas which required further mitigation work are summarised below.

Mitigation site ref	Trench Number	Description
AWPR/B-T/FL/001	FL0034/FL0034a	Pit and curvilinear feature
AWPR/B-T/FL/002	N/A	Cairn (near Fishermyre NO 870
		903)
AWPR/B-T/FL/003A	N/A	Historical map evidence for earlier
		settlement
AWPR/B-T/FL/003B	FL0328	Stone surface (Broomhill Farm)
AWPR/B-T/FL/004	FL0242/FL0242a	Pit/linear feature. Prehistoric
		pottery
AWPR/B-T/FL/005	FL0381	Pit alignment
AWPR/B-T/FL/006	N/A	Cairn (near Stranog Hill NO 870
		969)

AWPR/B-T/FL/007	N/A	Historical map evidence for earlier
		settlement
AWPR/B-T/FL/008	N/A	Historical map evidence for earlier
		settlement

Sites requiring further mitigation

1.3.15 This report covers the mitigation for trench FL/003A, as agreed with the Consultant. This consisted of strip and map followed by hand excavation of the features.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the Specification (Schedule 1) contained within ITT Vol.2 (Aberdeen City Council 2013) which set out the framework for the methodologies/requirements of this programme of mitigation excavation
- 2.1.2 CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork.
- 2.1.3 A terrestrial photographic condition survey was undertaken prior to and immediately after the investigation. All equipment and footwear was cleaned and disinfected prior to entry on to any areas of land. An Ecological Clerk of Works conducted walkover surveys prior to any work commencing and consulted regularly to ensure that any ecological matters were dealt with promptly and correctly.

2.2 Surveying

- 2.2.1 The trench location was provided by the Consultant, as shown on Fig. 1. The location was accurately surveyed as excavated and tied in with the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Datum using a GPS with a survey grade accuracy of ± 10 mm.
- 2.2.2 Precision topographic mapping was achieved through the use of GNSS/GPS systems. The survey achieved real-time GNSS/GPS positioning accurate to 0.01m horizontal and 0.03m vertical, through the use of a Trimble R6 GNSS system with a TSC3 controller running Trimble Access surveying software. This equipment provides centimetre-accurate RTK corrections using the Trimble VRS Now RTK GNSS service to plot/stake-out features etc within Access.
- 2.2.3 Data collection and survey control was integrated with the overall plans for the invasive investigations.
- 2.2.4 Survey data was exported from Trimble Access on the TSC3 controller to dxf format, retaining individual point feature codes and associated attributes, and processed in AutoCAD 2013. Model space in CAD was in metres at 1:1 and standard CFA layers and feature codes were used.

2.3 Mechanical Excavation

2.3.1 All topsoil/subsoil was stripped from the agreed area by a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. All groundbreaking operations were undertaken under the direct and continuous supervision and control of the Contractor. Mechanical excavation ceased either at the first archaeological horizon or at a level of the natural geological deposits where it could be demonstrated that no archaeological horizon existed.

- 2.3.2 Immediately after the removal of the topsoil and any other overburden, the whole area was hand cleaned and inspected for archaeological features. The suspected features then received further cleaning and were assigned feature numbers. A list of the features was then presented to the Consultant along with a plan showing their respective positions within the trench. After further consultation with the Consultant, all of the features were partially excavated in order to determine the character, condition, quality and date of any archaeological features. The cleaning extended for 10m beyond any archaeological feature.
- 2.3.3 An overall plan of all visible features was prepared by instrument survey and, where appropriate, hand planning. The plan also showed any areas of visible damage or destruction of the archaeology caused by recent activity e.g. service trenches, quarry pits etc. The survey data and any hand-drawn plans were accurately tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Datum.
- 2.3.4 Following the completion of the topsoil stripping, a composite drawing showing information from the instrument survey and the hand planning was prepared and submitted to the Consultant. Features on the drawing were annotated with a preliminary archaeological interpretation. The drawing was submitted to the Consultant with detailed costings and programme for undertaking excavation of features present, and for a post-excavation assessment and preparation of a post-excavation assessment report. Following agreement with the Consultant, the mitigation excavations were then undertaken as described in Section 2.4.
- 2.3.5 Topsoil and subsoil were segregated into separate spoil heaps on either side of the trench. Spoil from the excavation of any archaeological features was stored on the subsoil side. All backfilling was undertaken following inspection by, and with the prior agreement of, the Consultant. The material was backfilled in reverse order of removal in a series of layers no more than 250mm thick, each layer compacted as appropriate by the mechanical excavator prior to placement of the next layer.

2.4 Hand Excavation and Recording

- 2.4.1 As outlined in the ITT, hand excavation was undertaken of all the archaeological features as follows:
 - 50% of each pit or post-hole (half-sections or two quarter-sections as appropriate). Where necessary to obtain dating evidence or sufficient material for soil samples, such features were then fully excavated.
- 2.4.2 All excavated contexts were fully recorded by detailed written context records giving details of location, composition, shape, dimensions, relationships, finds, samples, cross-references to other elements of the record and other relevant contexts. At least one plan and at least one section were drawn at an appropriate scale. Photographic records in digital form were taken of all trenches and archaeological features using a camera with a minimum

resolution of ten megapixels. Feature locations were surveyed using a GPS with a survey survey-grade accuracy of ± 10 m (horizontal)/ ± 30 mm (vertical). All artefacts were recovered from site for specialist examination and analysis. All soil from the excavation of archaeological features was metal detected.

2.5 On-site Palaeoenvironmental Sampling Strategy

2.5.1 Samples comprising at least 40 litres per context or 100% of smaller contexts were taken from the recovery of small plant remains, small bones and finds. The soil samples were processed during fieldwork to allow a continuous reassessment and refinement of sampling strategies.

2.6 Archiving

- 2.6.1 The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, plans and reports, will be deposited at the RCAHMS and will conform to current guidelines in MoRPHE (English Heritage 2006). The deposition of paper and digital archives with RCAHMS will comply with their current requirements (RCAHMS 1996a, 1996b) and with the Archaeological Archives Forum (Brown 2007), ADS guidelines for digital archives (Richards and Robinson 2001), and the IfA's 'Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials' (IfA 2013).
- 2.6.2 A summary statement of the results of this survey will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* once all archaeological works are completed (Appendix 5). An *OASIS Scotland* entry will be completed.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 2.
- 3.1.2 A summary of the excavated features is contained in Appendix 4 and the locations of the features are shown on Fig. 2.
- 3.1.3 The deposits throughout the site predominantly consisted of between 0.3m and 0.5m of dark brown/black sandy silt topsoil (001). The natural substrate consisted of free-draining, red/brown sandy gravels (000).

3.2 Features

- 3.2.1 Sub-circular pit (002) measured a maximum of 0.4m in diameter and survived to a maximum depth of 0.05m. The pit contained a single fill of dark brown/black sandy silt (003), which was identical to the topsoil (001).
- 3.2.2 Sub-circular pit (004) measured a maximum of 0.2m in diameter and survived to a maximum depth of 0.1m (Fig. 3). The pit contained a single fill of dark brown/black sandy silt (005), which was identical to the topsoil (001).
- 3.2.3 Oval pit (006) measured 0.4m by 0.3m in plan and survived to a maximum depth of 0.1m. The pit contained a single fill of dark brown/black sandy silt (007), which was identical to the topsoil (001).
- 3.2.4 Sub-circular pit (008) measured a maximum of 0.25m in diameter and survived to a depth of 0.08m (Fig. 4). The pit contained a single fill of dark brown/black sandy silt (009), which was identical to the topsoil (001).
- 3.2.5 All four features were interpreted as stone-holes resulting from the extraction of stones from the natural, either deliberately for agricultural improvement of the land or through ploughing, with the resulting feature then filling with topsoil. This interpretation is based on the uneven base and overall shape of the features and the similarity of the fills to the topsoil (001).
- 3.2.6 No artefacts were recovered from any of the features, and no soil samples were retained.

4. ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

- 4.1 Four small features were excavated in trench FL/003A. They were irregular in shape and their single homogenous fills consisted of material indistinguishable from topsoil. These features are interpreted as negative features left behind following the removal of a stone embedded within the natural substrate, due to the irregular shape of the feature and the similarity of the fills to the topsoil. In three of the features, one side of the pit was visibly shallower than the opposite side, leading to the interpretation that the pit had been formed by a stone being dragged out from the natural substrate through ploughing activities. The natural substrate was stony and larger stones embedded into the natural were observed throughout the trench.
- 4.2 The removal of larger stones from the natural substrate could either reflect stones being dragged out through ploughing activities or the deliberate removal of stones from agricultural land to improve it; some of these stones may have been gathered to provide building materials for the consumption dykes and field boundaries recorded in the area.
- 4.3 Therefore, there is no archaeological value in undertaking any further work or reporting in relation to site FL/003A.
- 4.4 The overall results of this programme of works indicate that the landscape through which the Fastlink route will pass has been intensively utilised during the post-medieval period with a large number of features relating to post improvement agriculture. These largely consisted of field drains (ceramic and rubble), other linear drainage features, rig-and-furrow cultivation, stone extraction, and areas of clearance stones. While areas of possible prehistoric activity have been identified, the scarcity of prehistoric remains is perhaps a reflection on the level of post-improvement activity which has taken place along the route.
- 4.5 The majority of the post-medieval and modern sites recorded along the route are related to 18th/19th century agricultural improvements and consist of farmsteads, clearance cairns, consumption dykes and field systems. These improvements saw the creation of the larger enclosed fields that dominate the agricultural landscape within the road corridor. Seven farmsteads (Sites 32, 42, 45, 47, 87, 94 and 97) were identified within the study area as well as three consumption dykes (Sites 505, 508 and 510) (Jacobs 2007). Other known post-medieval agricultural features include four groups of clearance cairns (Sites 121, 506, 507 and 524), and the Redmoss Relict Field Boundary (Site 509), probably marking the edge of the moss (*ibid.*). The sample excavation of Crossley Clearance Cairn (Kirby 2014) suggests that this feature is also likely to date to this period.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The mitigation excavation of trench FL/003A near Hill of Muchalls identified four small features which, based on their size, shape and fill type, were all interpreted as stone-holes.
- 5.2 The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the Aberdeenshire Council Sites and Monuments Record.
- 5.3 A summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (See Appendix 5) and the investigation will be reported through *OASIS Scotland*.
- 5.4 No further work or reporting is required in relation to site FL/003A.

5. REFERENCES

Aberdeen City Council 2013, Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty. Competition for Invasive Archaeological Investigations Contract. Lot 4 – Fastlink. Volume 2. Tender Document. March 2013.

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English Heritage 2007 Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes. A Guide to Good Recording Practice.

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Ordnance Survey 1868 Kincardine Sheet XII.7 (Fetteresso)

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Tipping, R 2007 Chapter 4: Environmental History' in *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) In the Shadow of Bennachie. A Field Archaeology of Donside, Aberdeenshire.* The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Edinburgh 25-44.

APPENDIX 1: Context Register

Context	Fill of	Description
000		Natural
001		Topsoil
002		Cut of stonehole
003	002	Fill of 002
004		Cut of stonehole
005	004	Fill of 004
006		Cut of stonehole
007	006	Fill of 006
008		Cut of stonehole
009	008	Fill of 008

APPENDIX 2: Digital Photograph Register

Strip & Map

Photo No.	Contexts/description	Taken From	Conditions
001	F301	W	Bright
002	F302	N	Bright
003	F303	N	Bright
004	F304	N	Bright
005 - 008	General shots of Plot 003a post-cleaning E - W	N	Bright

Mitigation Excavations

Photo	Contexts/description	Taken from	Conditions
No.			
001	General post-ex shot of pit/stonehole 002	W	Bright
002	General post-ex shot of pit/stonehole 004	NW	Bright
003	General post-ex shot of pit/stonehole 006	N	Bright
004	General post-ex shot of pit/stonehole 008	ENE	Bright

APPENDIX 3: Field Drawing Register

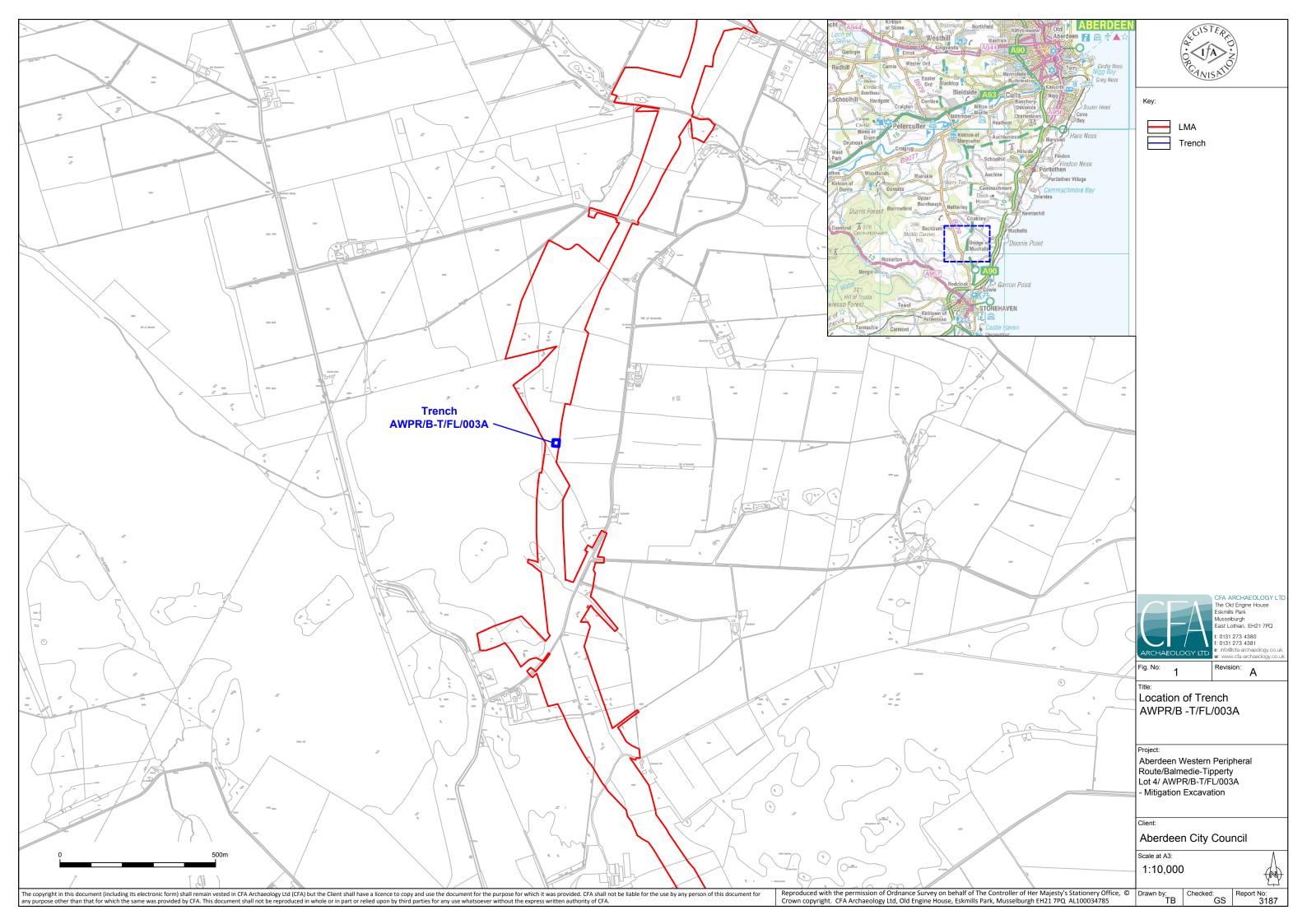
Drawing	Sheet	Description/contexts	Section/plan	Scale
No.	No.			
1	1	Post-ex plan of pit 002	Plan	1:10
2	1	W-facing section of pit 002	Section	1:10
3	1	Post-ex plan of pit 004	Plan	1:10
4	1	NW-facing section of pit 004	Section	1:10
5	1	Post-ex plan of pit 006	Plan	1:10
6	1	N-facing section of pit 006	Section	1:10
7	1	Post-ex plan of pit 008	Plan	1:10
8	1	ENE-facing section of pit 008	Section	1:10

APPENDIX 4: Summary of Excavation Results

Context	Description	Dimension	Fills/Deposit
002	Sub-circular pit	0.4m diameter; 0.05m deep	(003) dark brown/black sandy silt
004	Sub-circular pit	0.20m diameter; 0.10m deep	(005) dark brown/black sandy silt
006	Oval pit	0.40m length; 0.30m width;	(007) dark brown/black sandy silt
		0.10m deep	
008	Sub-circular pit	0.25m diameter; 0.08m deep	(009) dark brown/black sandy silt

APPENDIX 5: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

I O C I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	.1. 1.
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Aberdeenshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty, Lot 4 – Fastlink, Invasive Archaeological Investigations
PROJECT CODE:	FAST
PARISH:	Fetteresso
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Magnus Kirby
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Strip and map, and mitigation excavation
NMRS NO(S):	N/A
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NO 87244 87498
START DATE (this season)	May 2014
END DATE (this season)	May 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	N/A
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: As part of a programme of mitigation investigations a Fastlink section of Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Fastlink section	
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	N/A
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	N/A
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Aberdeen City Council
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR: CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Park Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	cfa@cfa-arcaheology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
	Aberdeenshire Council Sites & Monuments Record



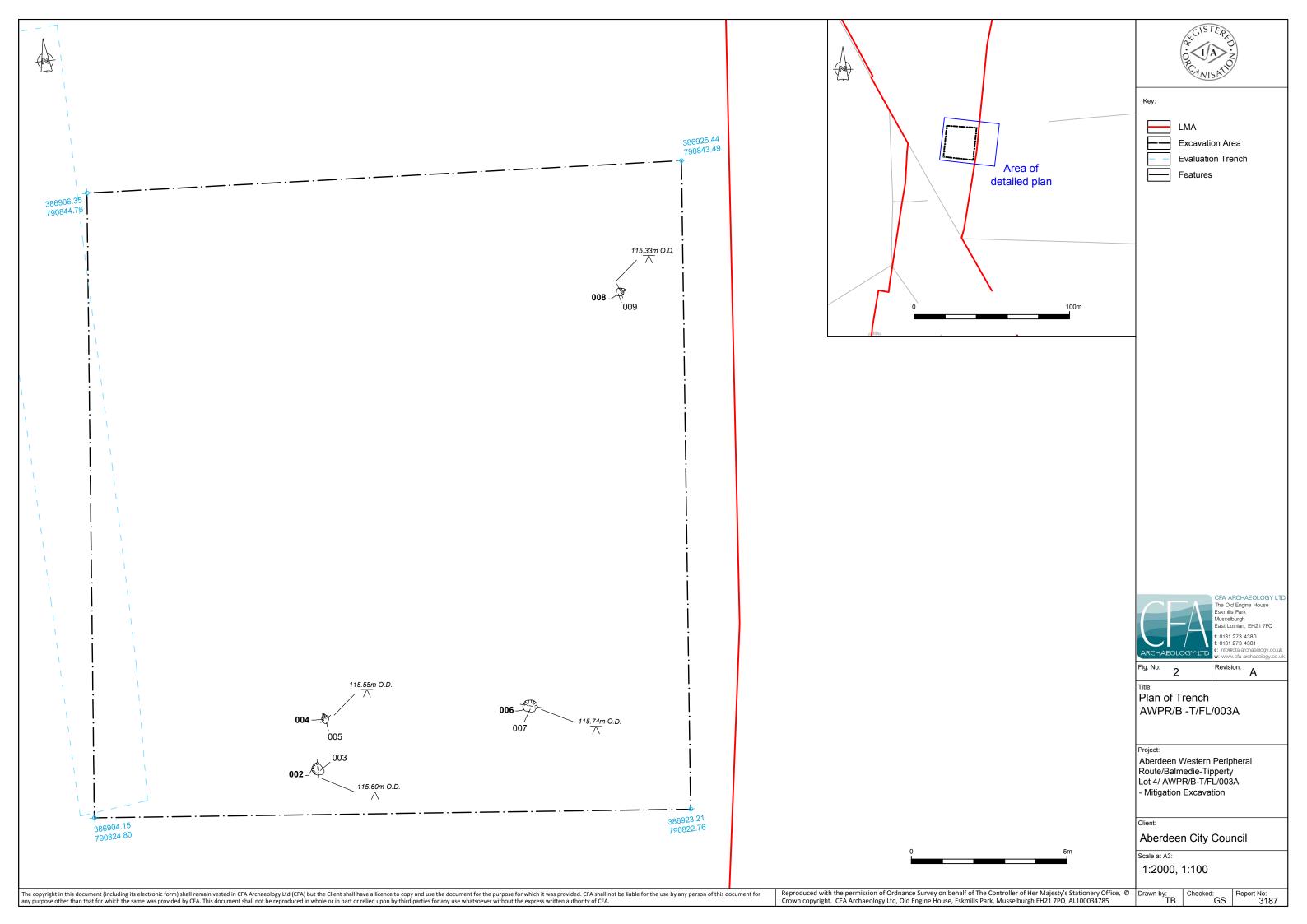




Fig. 3 - General post-excavation shot of stone-hole 004



Fig. 4 - General post-excavation shot of stone-hole 008



CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD Old Engine House Eskmills Park Musselburgh East Lothian, EH21 7PQ

0131 273 4380 0131 273 4381

Title: Selected photos

Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty Lot 4/ AWPR/B-T/FL/003A - Mitigation Excavation

Fig. 3-4 Client:

Report: 3187 Drawn: TB CKD: GS Date: 18/11/14

Aberdeen City Council

Scale:

