



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

## **Proposed housing development at Dalmore, Alness**



## **Site Evaluation (2005)**

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## Proposed Housing Development at Dalmore, Alness: Site Evaluation

### Site Evaluation (2005)

<b>Report No.</b>	HAS110705
<b>Client</b>	Bracewell Stirling Architects, for Albyn Housing Association
<b>Planning Ref</b>	03/00500/OUTRC
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<b>Author</b>	John Wood

### Summary

*Three fields, in total about 25 acres, proposed for housing development were evaluated by trial trenching for possible archaeological evidence in 2005. 37 large trenches were opened, to provide a sample of over 10% of the whole. The entire area formed part of RAF Alness during the Second World War, and had clearly been disturbed by military activity as well as subsequent site clearance. A scatter of fragmentary artefacts from that period was noted within the topsoil. Beneath this, site clearance had been thorough and the subsoil comprised clean, natural mixed periglacial sands and gravels with some areas of rounded stones.*

*A number of possible features were investigated that proved to be the result of tree roots and animal burrowing, but three areas require further investigation. One of these (Trench 35), though very disturbed, contained a large number of early Bronze Age ritual pottery sherds.*

*Apart from targeted fieldwork to clarify these three areas, no further archaeological fieldwork is proposed.*

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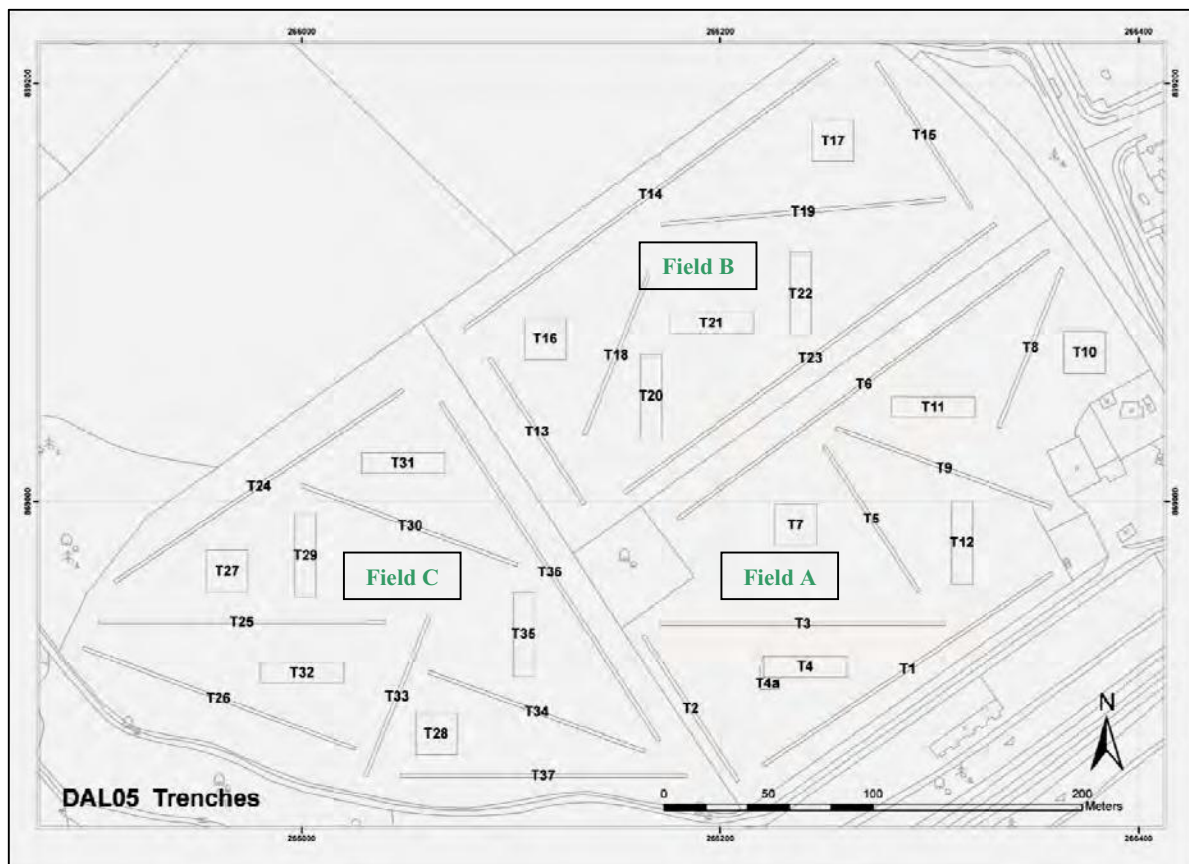


Figure 1 Dalmore site and trial trenches

## Introduction

A programme of archaeological work was carried out in 2005 by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd on behalf of Alex Ross Contractors, Alness, Ross-shire, to fulfil a planning condition (Highland Council Reference 03/00500/OUTRC). This consisted of archaeological mitigation and recording to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features revealed or affected by the intended development. Fieldwork was undertaken between October and December 2005.

The site consists of three large fields at Dalmore Farm, Alness, covering a total of approximately 11.5 hectares, which have been allocated for housing development. 37 trial trenches were opened to provide an overall site sample of over 10% (see Figure 1 above). An interim report was produced in 2006<sup>1</sup> and a report was made to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland for the same year.<sup>2</sup>

## Aims and objectives

An archaeological desk-based assessment and field evaluation were requested by the Highland Council as a planning condition in this case because, on the basis of previous discoveries nearby, there was considered to be potential for significant archaeological features or artefacts to be affected by the development of this site.

The aim of the programme was to minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising.

The objective was to determine as far as possible the nature, extent and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with current legislation and national and Highland Council plans and policies.

## Legislation and Policy Framework

The current planning and policy framework includes the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*<sup>3</sup>, and the Scottish Government's *Scottish Planning Policy* (SPP), issued in February 2010, which consolidates and supersedes the previous SPP and NPPG series. The fundamental principles underpinning the above policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)<sup>4</sup> and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, J 2006 *Dalmore Interim Report*, Highland Archaeology Services Report No HAS 060302, Cromarty

<sup>2</sup> Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 2006

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandstructureplan.htm>

<sup>4</sup> [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

## Location

The development site consists of three fields lying between Alness and Dalmore Distillery, formerly part of the policies of Dalmore House. They centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 662 688.



Figure 2 Site Location

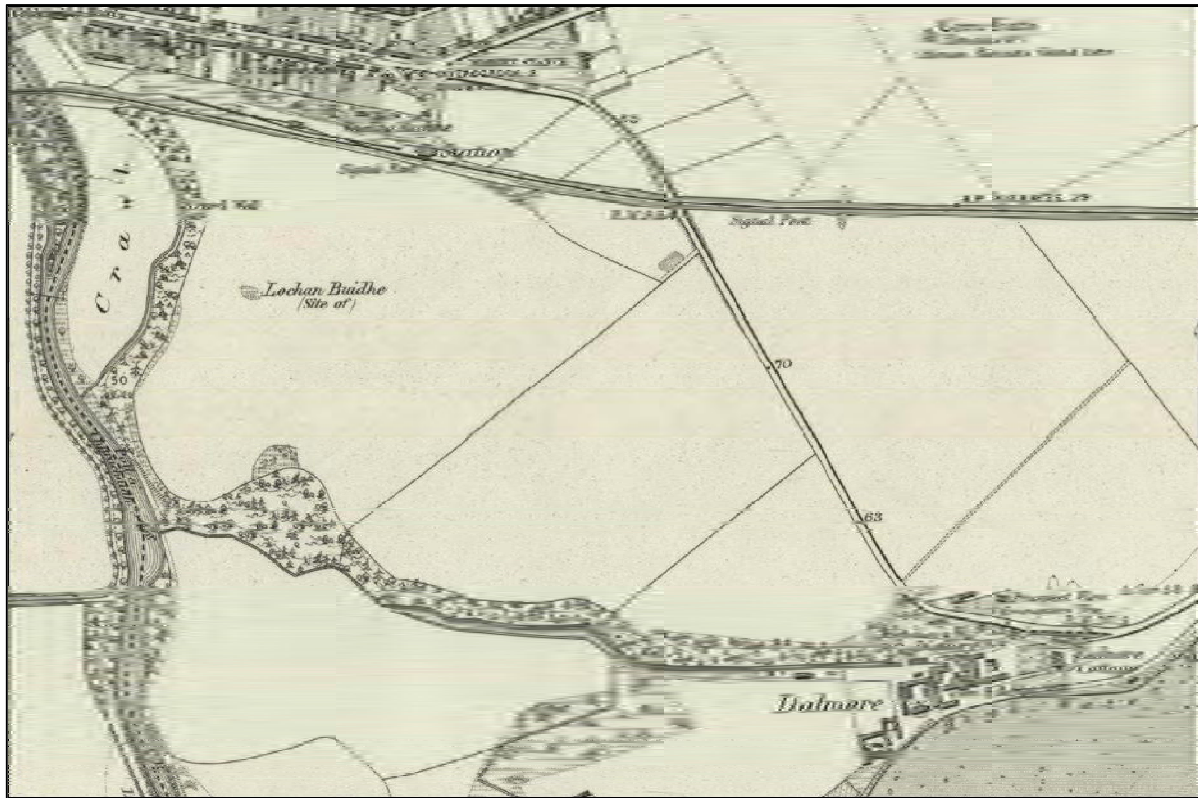


Figure 3 Extract from 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS 6 inch map: Ross-shire & Cromartyshire (Mainland), Sheet LXV, surveyed 1874-5  
(Not reproduced to scale)

## Archaeological background

A desk-based assessment was carried out ahead of the trial trenching in 2005. This has been re-checked and updated for this report. Previously recorded features are summarised in Table 1 below.

The first edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch to 1 mile (1:10560) map surveyed in 1874-5 shows the site as open, but improved, farmland (Figure 3). In 1878, a railway branch line was built to serve Dalmore Distillery. This ran along the west side of the road. During construction, a group of eight Bronze Age cist burials and a number of artefacts, including a complete Early Bronze Age cremation urn, were found close to Dalmore Farm, apparently at the railhead. The urn is now in Inverness Museum. A second group of burials found during construction, '200 yards along the line' was probably located close to the present junction of the Alness to Dalmore with the A9 Alness Bypass. However resistivity survey and trial excavation during construction of the present A9 and sliproad in 1985 did not produce any positive results<sup>6</sup>.

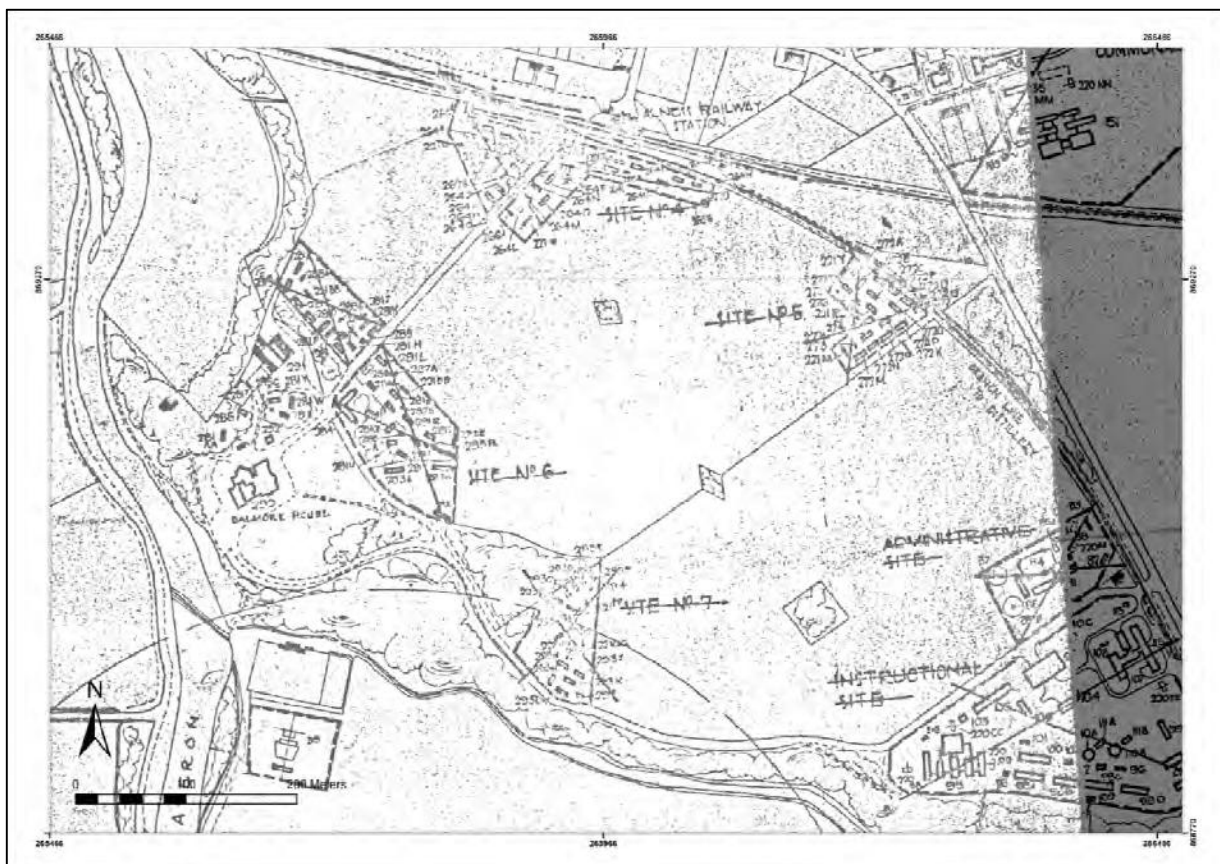
Dalmore House was built in 1895 for the proprietor of Dalmore Distillery and these fields became part of its policies. The present woodlands may largely date from this period. In 1935 it was extensively rebuilt after a fire. In 1948 it was bought by the Church of Scotland and converted into a retirement home.

<sup>6</sup> HHER: MHG6311; MHG45270-1

In 1941 the entire area was taken over by the RAF, initially as part of RAF Invergordon, being re-named RAF Alness two years later. In the First World War, the warehouses at the Dalmore Distillery had been commandeered as munitions stores and seaplanes ('flying boats') had been operated from Alness from 1924 onwards. In 1945, RAF Alness was used to train pilots within the coastal command.

A huge number of buildings were constructed between 1941 and 1943. Within the present site at its west end lay Site No.7, which consisted of 12 barrack blocks for sergeants and ORs, three latrines and a picket post.

Around Dalmore Lodge was the administrative area, with the station offices, operations block, tactical library, meteorological compound offices and latrines for RAF and WAAF; as well as a 'Speech Broadcasting Building' and a pigeon loft.



**Figure 4 Extract from RAF plan of 1941-5**

*(From map sheets kindly supplied by Mr P Agate; modern OS National Grid superimposed)*





**Plate 1** RAF building 105, from N

South of the drive to Dalmore House was the instructional area. Most of this has been removed by the construction of the present A9 in the 1980s but one training building (Building 105) is still visible close to the drive (Plate 1).

It is clear that there was a major clean-up operation here in 1946-8, and apart from some unstratified building materials and a few artefacts including electrical connectors and pottery very little now remains in these fields, although it is understood that more evidence survives around the Distillery. (Plate 2)

With agricultural improvement in the 19<sup>th</sup> c., followed by landscaping at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and RAF activity and the clear-up in the 1940s, it is no surprise to have found that the whole area had been extensively disturbed.



**Plate 2** Unstratified finds from Trench 12, close to the 1941-5 RAF Alness Administrative Site

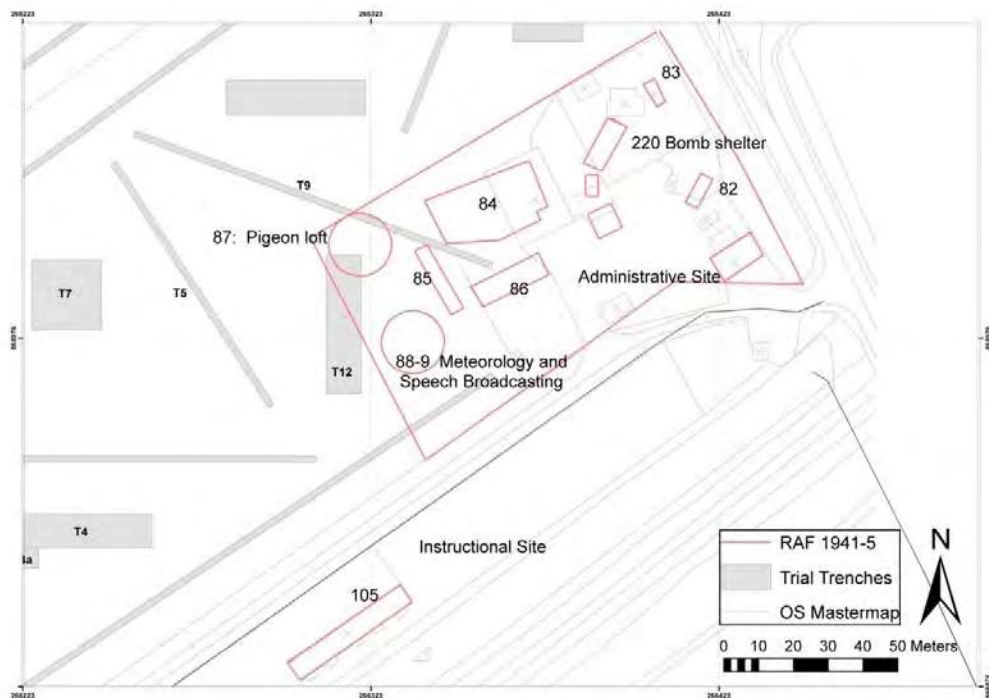
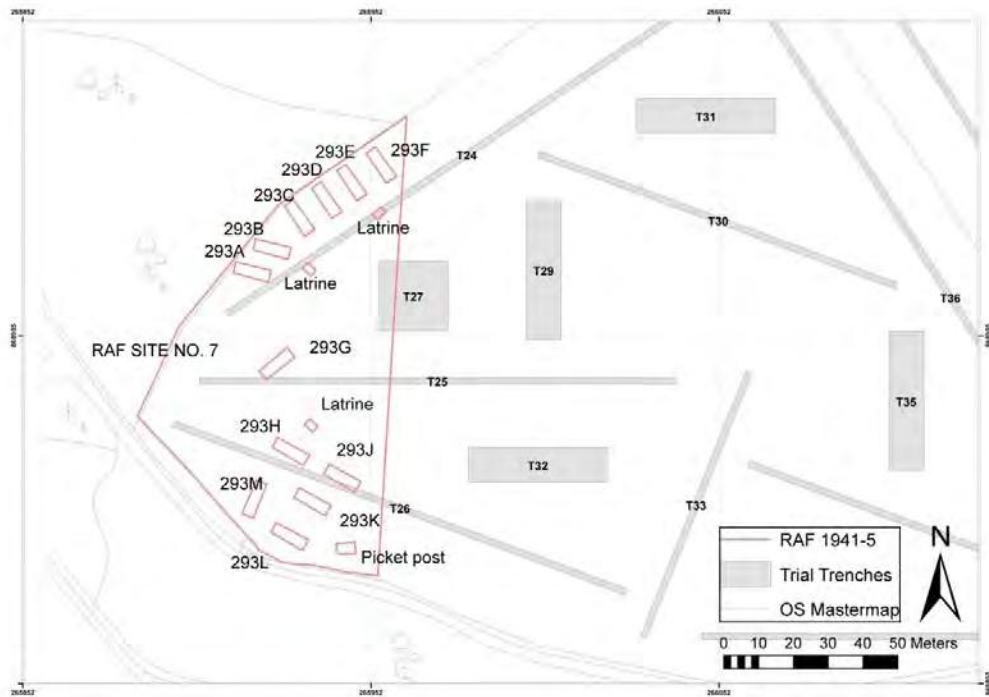


Figure 5 RAF 1941-5 features overlaid on modern OS mapping and Trench plan

## Programme

### ***Desk Based Assessment***

The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record for Scotland as well as the Historic Scotland Scheduled Monument details were checked. Historic Ordnance Survey and other maps were checked online. There are not known to be any private archives relating to this site. Following the initial desk assessment an initial walk-over and risk assessment was carried out, followed by a programme of trial trenching to establish the nature and extent of any buried archaeology.

### ***Trial trenching evaluation***

Three fields were investigated:

- Field A            3.74 hectares   12 Trenches
- Field B            3.57 hectares   11 Trenches
- Field C            4.18 hectares   14 Trenches

37 trial trenches were excavated in November and December 2005 to provide a sample of over 10% of the development area using two back-acting mechanical excavators, each fitted with a straight-edged ditching bucket. Trenches were then selectively hand-cleaned using hoes and / or trowels as appropriate to clarify any archaeological features. (The trench layout is shown in Figure 1 above).

21 linear trenches were 1.82m wide, which represents the width of the excavator machine ditching buckets used. These trenches were of various lengths (see below).

6 area trenches of 10m x 40m and 10 extra large areas of 20m x 20m were also opened. One of the 10m x 40m trenches (Trench 4) was further extended at its western end to investigate possible features. Although the dimensions of the area trenches had been agreed with the Highland Council's archaeologists before work started, in practice they proved extremely difficult to manage with the excavating machinery available and required double-handling using an extra digger and dumper truck. This added significantly to the project timetable and overall costs, and as a result much smaller trenches have been exclusively used on all subsequent projects.

All photography was digital. Copies (JPEGs) are included on the CDROM accompanying this report. The camera location and direction of each photograph taken has been plotted on the site plan. No human remains were encountered. Palaeo-environmental sampling was not undertaken.

## Results

Three trenches produced possible archaeological features; further work will be necessary in these areas to clarify and fully record the nature and extent of these. In particular, Trench 35 in Field C contained a disturbed area containing possible pits and fragments of black, Early Bronze Age ritual pottery. No other trenches produced significant archaeological results.

The subsoil throughout comprised mixed, orange-brown periglacial sands, gravels and pebbles. All coordinates are in GB (OS) National Grid

## ***Field A***

### **Trench 1**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266289 N868919, oriented WSW - ENE, 1.8m wide and 167m long with a nominal area of 300 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.3-0.5m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 2**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266185 N868901, oriented NW - SE, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 3**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266241 N868941, oriented W - E, 1.8m wide and 138m long with a nominal area of 250 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.5-0.7m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



**Plate 3 Trench 4 extension (4a) from N showing features investigated**

## **Trench 4**

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266239 N868922, oriented W - E, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m.

This contained a group of negative features initially thought to be pits, and an extension of 65 sq m. was opened at the western end of this trench to clarify this (Trench 4a). However, on investigation these features were all found to be the result of the action of root systems and burrowing animals in the sandy subsoil: in fact active burrowing by rabbits continued during the excavation. None of these features were found to be archaeological and no further work is proposed here.

## **Trench 5**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266247 N868919, oriented NNW - SSE, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 6**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266268 N869055, oriented SW - NE, 1.8m wide and 220m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 7**

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E266236 N868986, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 8**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266347 N869073, oriented NNE - SSW, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 9**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266296 N869019, oriented WNW - ESE, 1.8m wide and 110m long with a nominal area of 200 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, but unstratified artefacts were noted in the topsoil, apparently derived from the use of the site by the RAF between 1941 and 1945.

## **Trench 10**

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E266376 N869073, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



Plate 4 Trench 11 from N showing pit circle (F11-1 to 11-11)

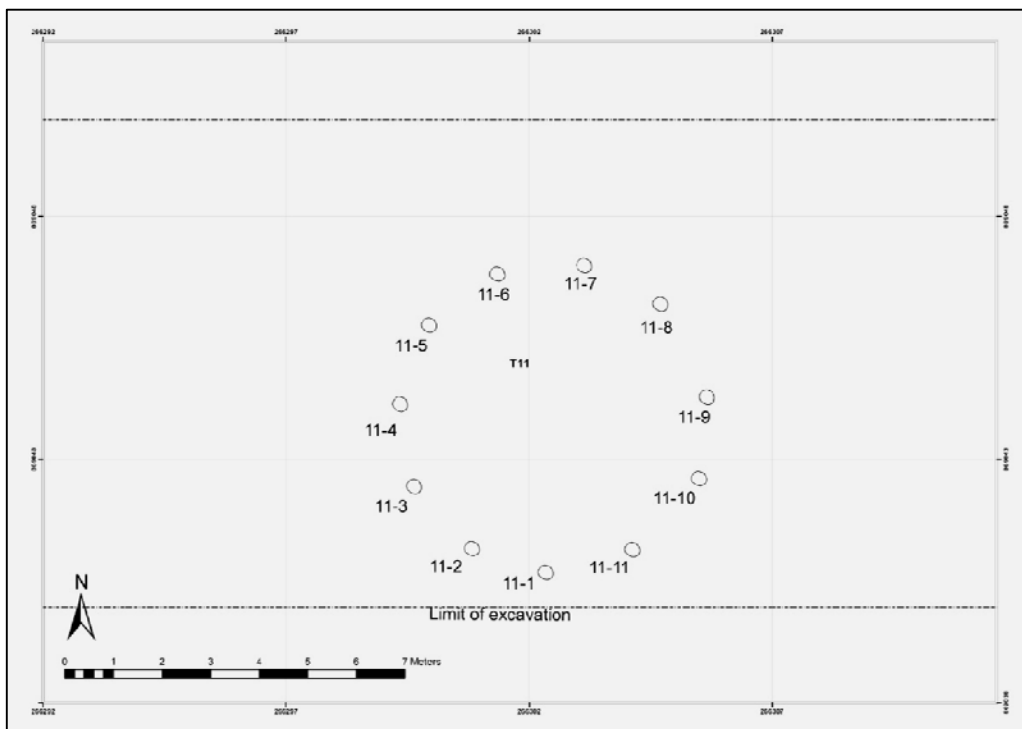


Figure 6 Features 11-1 to 11-11

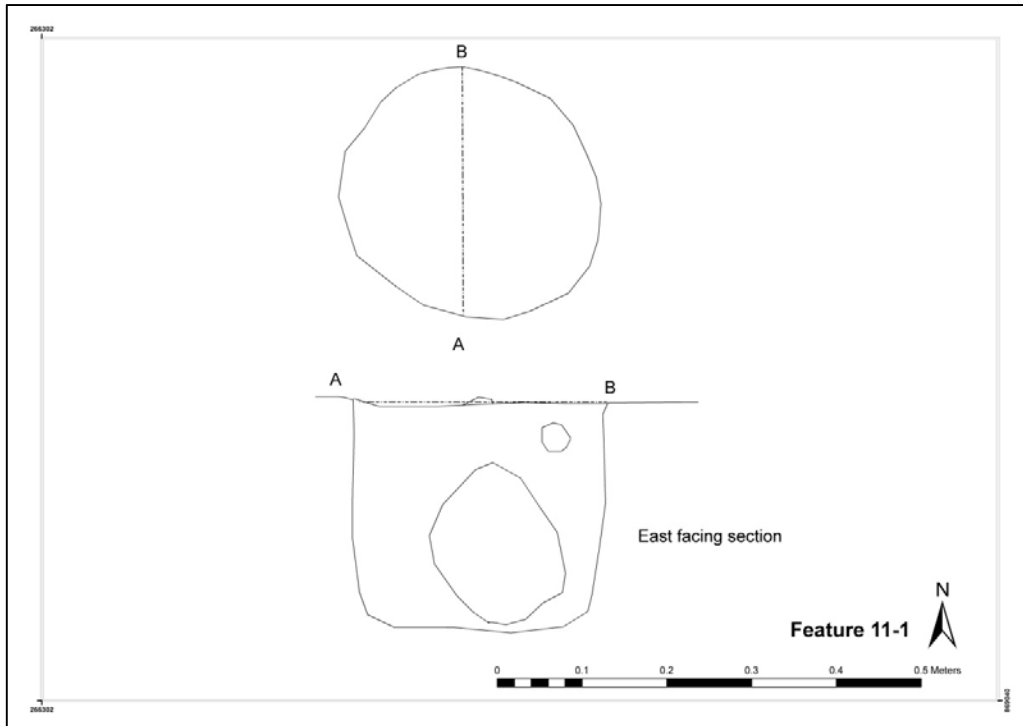


Figure 7 Feature 11-1, plan and section



Plate 5 Feature 11-1, half section, from E

## **Trench 11**

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266299 N869045, oriented W - E, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m.

Among a large number of root and animal disturbances there was an apparent circle approx 7.5m in diameter comprising 11 regularly spaced post or stakeholes, each about 35cm in diameter and 30cm deep. Each pit was half-sectioned, with sections aligned N-S and the eastern half removed. They were all similar in shape and size, and there was no dating evidence or sign of post-pipes. This feature as a whole was undated: it could be related to the use of the site in the 1940s by the RAF, but also could represent a prehistoric round-house. Although no drip-line was noted, this could simply be because of later erosion (see Plate 4). Further work will be undertaken to better clarify and record the nature and extent of these features.

## **Trench 12**

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266315 N868978, oriented N - S, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, but unstratified artefacts were noted in the topsoil, apparently derived from the use of the site by the RAF between 1941 and 1945.

## ***Field B***

## **Trench 13**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266112 N869032, oriented NW - SE, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 14**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266172 N869151, oriented ENE - WSW, 1.8m wide and 220m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 15**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266298 N869173, oriented NW - SE, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Trench 16**

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E266118 N869075, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



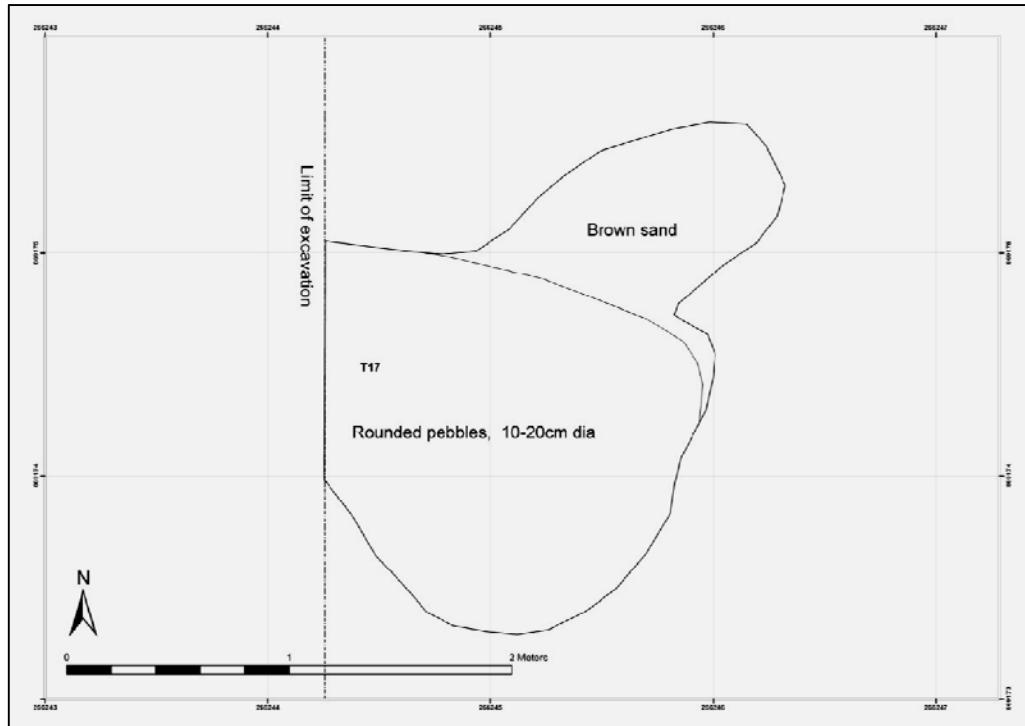


Figure 8 Sketch plan of Feature 17-1



Plate 6 Feature 17-1: stone-filled hollow, apparently field clearance.

## Trench 17

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E266254 N869169, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m.

This contained an area of stones with some evidence of burning, which was cut by the trench's western edge. There was no dating evidence. This could represent field clearance with some gorse burning, but it was not possible to excavate this within the time available. It is therefore proposed to reopen and extend this trench to clarify the nature and extent of this feature.

## Trench 18

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266149 N869067, oriented NNE - SSW, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## Trench 19

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266299 N869132, oriented WSW - ENE, 1.8m wide and 137m long with a nominal area of 250 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



Plate 7 Trench 20: stone area in SW corner

## Trench 20

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266168 N869046, oriented N - S, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, but an area of sub-angular pebbles of 10-25cm diameter in the SW corner (see Plate 7) was investigated. This may represent field clearance into a hollow, perhaps during 19<sup>th</sup> c. agricultural improvement or landscaping, but it did not have clear limits and the stones appeared to continue under the surface of the subsoil so this seems more likely to be a stony lens of periglacial origin. No further work is proposed here.

## Trench 21

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266212 N869082, oriented W - E, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## Trench 22

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266238 N869098, oriented N - S, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## Trench 23

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266226 N869057, oriented WSW - ENE, 1.8m wide and 220m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



Plate 8 Brick from Trench 24, probably from 1940s RAF use

## ***Field C***

### **Trench 24**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E265971 N869002, oriented ENE - WSW, 1.8m wide and 166m long with a nominal area of 300 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, although there was some unstratified evidence of 1940s RAF occupation within the topsoil at the western end, including building materials (Plate 8).

### **Trench 25**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E265957 N868941, oriented W - E, 1.8m wide and 137m long with a nominal area of 250 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, although there was fragmentary evidence within the topsoil of 1940s RAF occupation at the western end.

### **Trench 26**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E265961 N868904, oriented WNW - ESE, 1.8m wide and 139m long with a nominal area of 250 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench, although there was fragmentary evidence within the topsoil of 1940s RAF occupation at the western end.

### **Trench 27**

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E265968 N868962, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 28**

An area (square) trench centred at (approx.) E266066 N868885, oriented W - E, 20m wide and 20m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 29**

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266003 N868971, oriented N - S, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 30**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266049 N868989, oriented WNW - ESE, 1.8m wide and 110m long with a nominal area of 200 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### Trench 31

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266055 N869015, oriented W - E, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### Trench 32

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266011 N868916, oriented W - E, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### Trench 33

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266041 N868895, oriented SSW - NNE, 1.8m wide and 83.5m long with a nominal area of 150 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### Trench 34

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266134 N868890, oriented WNW - ESE, 1.8m wide and 109.5m long with a nominal area of 200 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.



Plate 9 Trench 35 under excavation, from NW

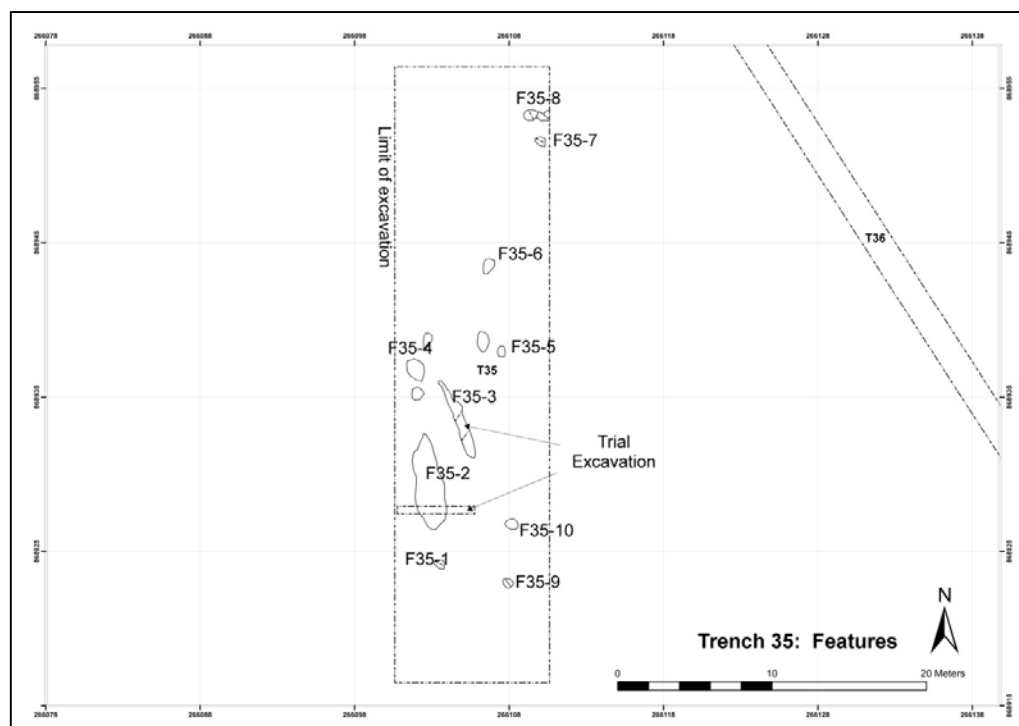


Figure 9 Trench 35: Features

## Trench 35

An area trench centred at (approx.) E266106 N868933, oriented N - S, 10m wide and 40m long with a nominal area of 400 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. (See Plate 9). This was a very disturbed, apparently formerly wooded area with much evidence of burrowing animals and root action, containing 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> c. ceramics. However within this there were also pits and fragments of Early Bronze Age ritual pottery. Unfortunately it did not prove possible in the site conditions a few days before Christmas, with low light levels and bad weather, to clarify these features satisfactorily. Further work is required here to establish the full nature, extent and significance of the archaeology. This will be the subject of a project design at the appropriate time.

### *Features in Trench 35*

#### **35-1 Pit**

Subcircular pit, approximately 65 x 70 cm x 23 cm deep, containing blackened, apparently burnt sand / clay (See Figure 10 and Plate 10 below).

#### **35-2 Hollow**

A natural hollow containing angular stones 10-15cm across.

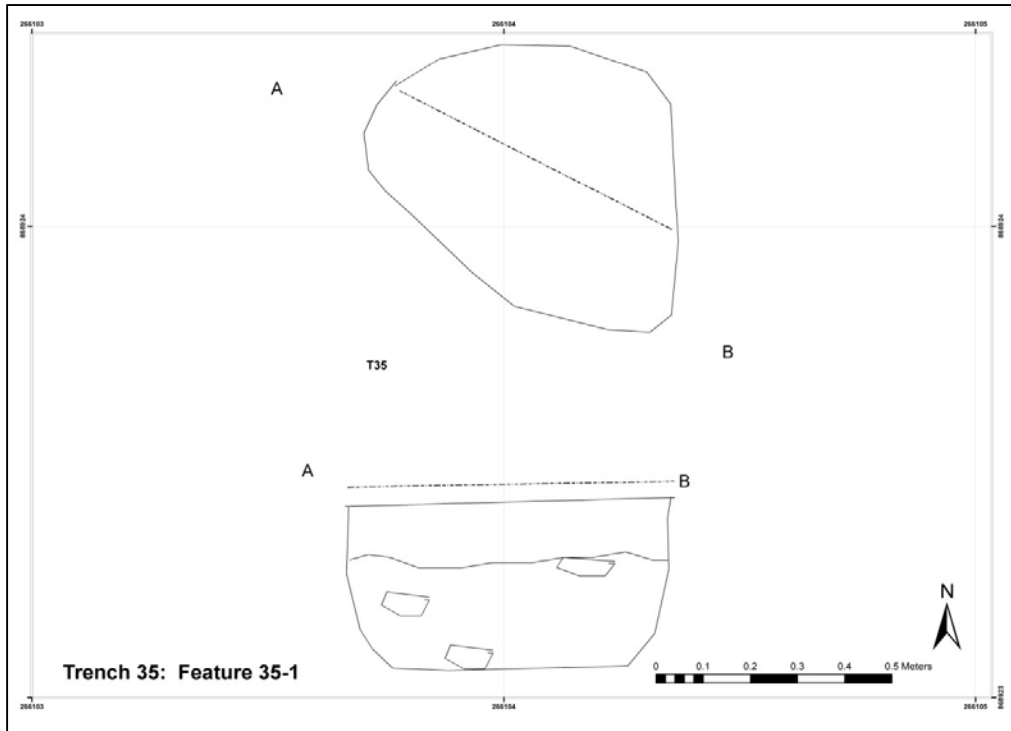


Figure 10 Feature 35-1



Plate 10 Feature 35-1

**35-3 Linear feature**

A shallow, dish-shaped hollow, approximately 6m long x 25 cm wide x 7 cm deep. Investigated, but there were no diagnostic characteristics: probably natural.

**35-4 (a-c) 3 Blackened areas**

Three blackened areas, less than 2cm deep.

**35-5 (a-b) 2 Blackened areas**

Two blackened areas, less than 2cm deep. No diagnostic characteristics.

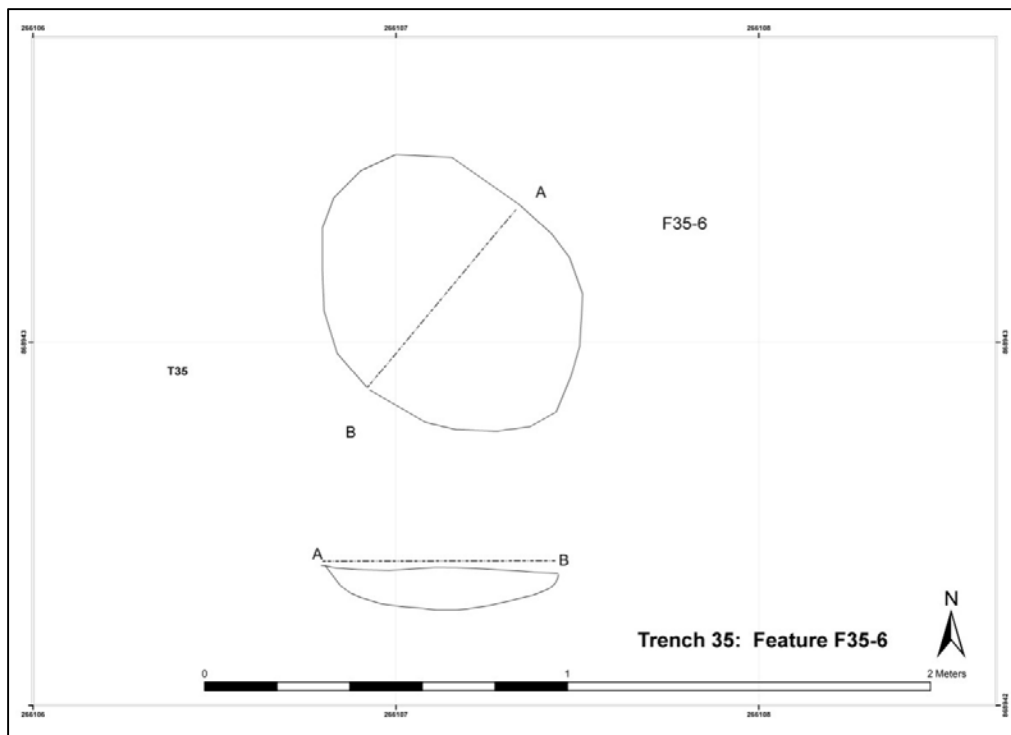


Figure 11 Feature 35-6

**35-6 Hollow**

A dark area within the subsoil, investigated and found to be 64cm x 87cm x 13cm deep. No diagnostic features.

**35-7 Pit**

An ill-defined pit, with much evidence of root action, containing large stones inside and outside. Probably a tree hole.



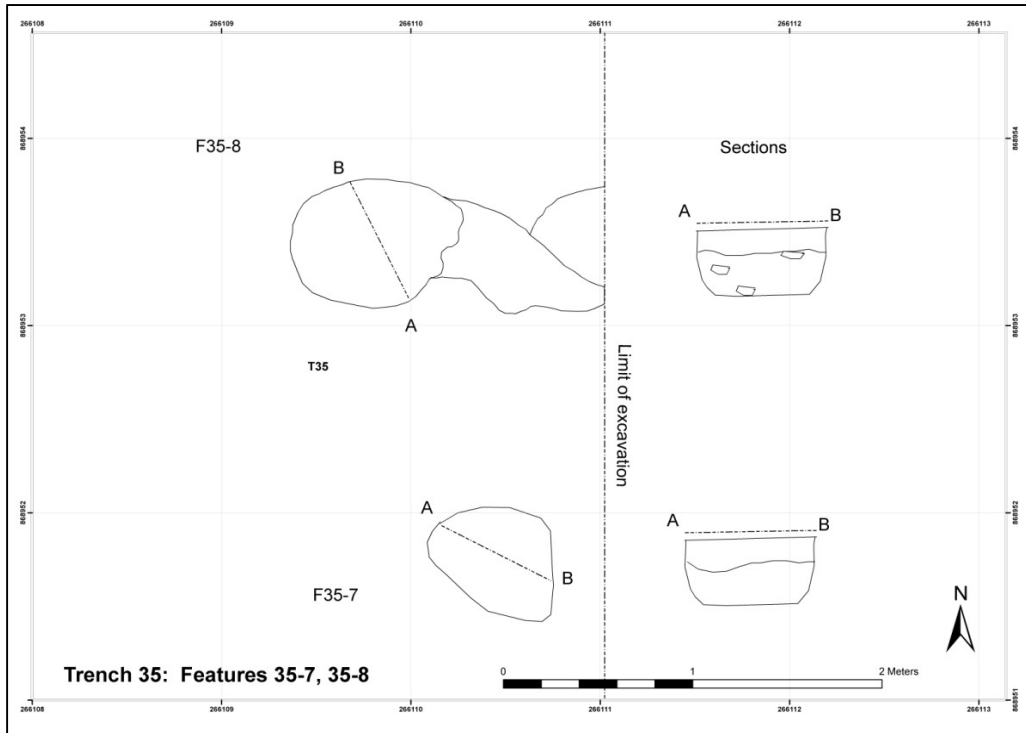


Figure 12 Features 35-7, 35-8

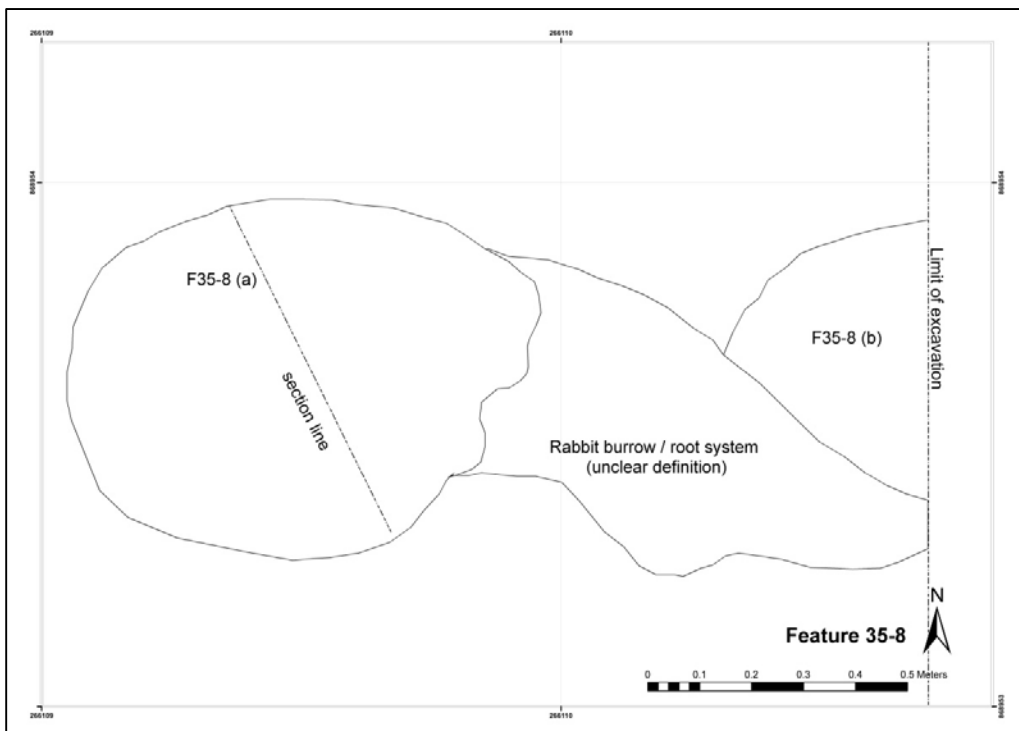


Figure 13 Features 35-8 a + b

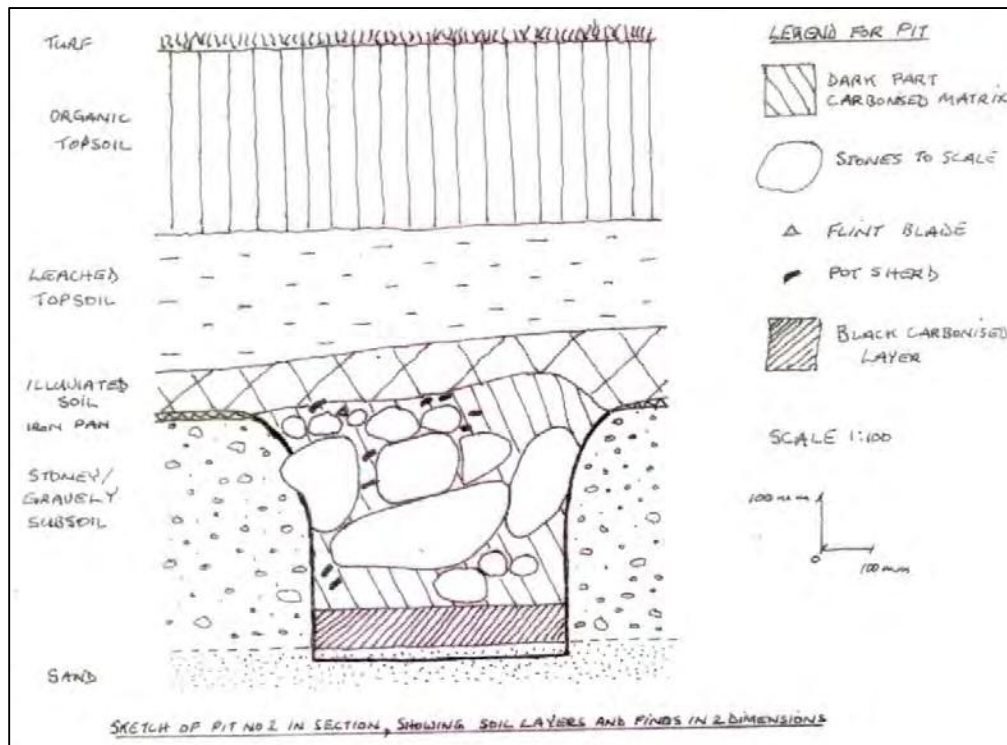


Figure 14 West facing section (along trench edge) through feature 35-8 b



Plate 11 Feature 35-8 a: E facing section



**Plate 12** Features 35-8 a (left), sectioned and b (right) unexcavated showing root / burrow disturbance

**35-8a Pit; root and animal disturbance**

Vertical sided pit, very disturbed by roots and rabbit burrow. EBA pottery. Subcircular pit, approximately 65 x 70 cm x 33 cm deep, containing blackened, apparently burnt sand / clay.

**35-8b Pit; root and animal disturbance**

Vertical sided subcircular pit, very disturbed by roots and rabbit burrow, and cut by edge of excavation trench. EBA pottery. Subcircular pit, approximately 65 x 30 cm (within trench) x 35 cm deep, containing rounded pebbles c. 15 – 20c across and a layer of black, carbonised sand / clay.

**35-9 Post-pit**

Black organic material indicative of decayed post 10cm across, leaning to N; Post-pit undated but possibly post-medieval fence post; but containing EBA pottery in upper fill, possibly re-deposited. Subcircular pit, approximately 87 x 70 cm x 35 cm deep, containing blackened, apparently burnt sand / clay (see Plate 13 and Figure 15).

**35-10 Hollow**

A dark area within the subsoil. Apparently natural.



Plate 13 Feature 35-9: Section

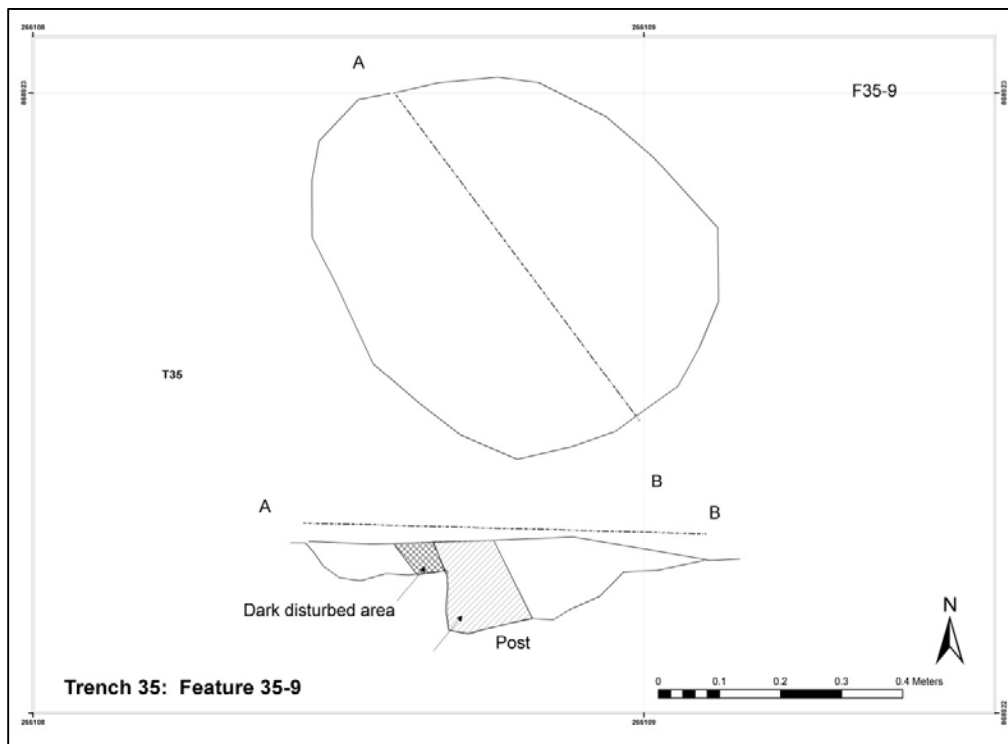


Figure 15 Feature 35-9

### **Trench 36**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266130 N868948, oriented NNW - SSE, 1.8m wide and 193m long with a nominal area of 350 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

### **Trench 37**

A linear trench centred at (approx.) E266147 N868868, oriented N - S, 1.8m wide and 137.5m long with a nominal area of 250 sq. m. Average trench depth was 0.4-0.6m. No archaeology was recorded in this trench.

## **Finds**

All the artefacts recovered apart from those in Trench 35 were apparently of 20<sup>th</sup> date and appear to relate to the wartime use of the site. In Trench 35, 151 sherds of Early Bronze Age ritual pottery were recovered but some of these from within the topsoil, and none were from secure contexts owing to severe disturbance from rabbit burrowing and root action. A high proportion of rims was noted, suggesting they had originally been placed upside down in pits.

This pottery was examined by Beverley Ballin Smith of GUARD and most sherds were identified as Early Bronze Age. There may be at least three different collared urns, to judge by the decoration. There is a significant portion of one vessel; another, with piercing and fingernail decoration is very unusual, and a third has vertical finger dimple decoration. There is also an isolated sherd with stab and drag decoration. The pits were all ill-defined and apparently disturbed by former root action. There may be at least three different collared urns, to judge by the decoration. There is a significant portion of one vessel; another, with piercing and fingernail decoration is very unusual, and a third has vertical finger dimple decoration. There is also an isolated sherd with stab and drag decoration. A full discussion of the ceramics and any other finds will be included with the final report.

Further analysis is required of this material including additional excavation to better establish its context and establish whether further features and artefacts lie outwith the excavated trench area (See Plate 14 below).

No other trenches produced prehistoric artefacts.



Plate 14 Early Bronze Age ritual pottery from Trench 35

## Conclusions

In Field A, Trench 4 contained features which were investigated a trench extension was opened to clarify these. However they were then seen to result from the action of root systems and burrowing animals rather than archaeological activity, and none of them produced any dating evidence. No further work is

proposed here. Trench 11 in the same field contained a large number of pits, including an apparent circle approximately 9m in diameter of regularly spaced pits. A further, limited investigation is proposed to clarify details and if possible date, and to establish whether any associated features exist nearby.

In Field B, Trench 17 contained an area of stones sitting in a slight hollow and cut by the trench's western edge. This probably represents field clearance but could not be excavated at the time Trench 35 in the third field contained a large number of pits, some of which contained fragments of black hand-made pottery (see above). This was the area of most potential significance and further excavation will be necessary here to clarify the details and establish the extent of any pit group.

## Recommendations

1. There are no areas which (in our view) would warrant preservation in situ with no further ground disturbance.
2. 34 trenches contained no archaeologically significant features. No further action is proposed for these, and we recommend that archaeological clearance should be given for these areas.
3. Clarification is needed of the features noted in Trenches 11, 17 and 35. These trenches will be re-opened and extended as necessary to ensure that the full nature and extent of these features has been recorded.
4. A specialist report is required on the Early Bronze Age pottery once its archaeological context has been better established.
5. The archaeological interest appears to be localised and the site as a whole has evidently been much disturbed, not least by wartime activity. Therefore, once excavation of the three areas mentioned has been completed, a general watching brief on site stripping is not recommended in this case as we feel it is unlikely to be cost-effective.

## Appendix: Tables

**Table 1 Previously recorded features**

HHER no.	Site	Details
MHG8318	Medieval Hospital	A possible medieval hospital site has been suggested in the Obsdale area, but there is no hard evidence to support this. The grid reference given (NH 66000 69000) plots within the project area but is only accurate to 1km.
MHG6311, 45270-1	BA Cemetery, under railway, Dalmore	<p>(Area: NH 665 689) A Bronze Age burial ground was discovered in 1878 during construction of the branch railway from Alness station to Dalmore Distillery (NH 666 6870) and reported in the <i>Ross-shire Journal</i> in 1878 and the <i>Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland</i> in 1881.</p> <p>At least eight cremations and apparently lay immediately above the distillery, outside the present site boundary, and was said to be contained within a stone wall, the base of which could be traced along 3 sides. A second, presumably related, group lay at a distance of 200 yards along the line of the railway, possibly where the former line runs along the eastern side of the present site. It consisted of:-</p> <p>A, Two short cists with crouched burials and, in each case, a slightly decorated inverted urn which, since one contained charcoal, were presumably cinerary.</p> <p>B, A cist, 3' 4" x 1'6" x 1'8", containing fragments of bone.</p> <p>C, A cist of small stones enclosing a 'rough urn' and fragments of burnt bone and charcoal.</p> <p>D, Burnt bones, laid on a bed of sand, with no protecting stones.</p> <p>E, Three small 'rude cists', formed of stones but destitute of human or other remains.'</p> <p>A group of broken, calcined bones overlay the two short cists by several feet, implying that latter were much earlier. There was a suggestion that other graves may be nearby but as yet undiscovered.</p> <p>In 1985 a resistivity survey ahead of work on the A9 Alness bypass produced several anomalies, but trial excavation only produced 4 small pits with no artefacts or datable material recovered. (Reed, D 1985 <i>Discovery and Excavation In Scotland 1985</i>, 22)</p>
MHG17924	Prehistoric occupation, Dalmore Farm	<p>In an area centred NH666 690, to the north-east of the distillery and outside the present site, a probable Iron Age settlement was found in 1993 during archaeological supervision of the topsoil strip for the Dingwall-Invergordon British Gas pipeline.</p> <p>The features included post holes from a probable roundhouse, a circular building 8m in diameter with posts c. 100 mm in diameter, two grain storage pits with c. 5 kg of carbonised grain as well as another possible building and an area of iron working represented by hammer scale.</p>
MHG32210	Mill lade	A Mill lade centred on NH 6605 688162 has been noted on the 1st edition OS map, running along the southern edge of the Dalmore House parkland. It lies close to, but outside the present site boundary. It is not recorded on the National Monuments Record (see Figure 3).
(No HHER no.)	Railway	Branch line to serve Dalmore Distillery, constructed 1878, removed in 1960s. The former route runs along the eastern boundary of the site. It is now a footpath.
(No HHER no.)	RAF Station	RAF Alness covered the entire area between Alness and the sea.



Table 2 Trenches

Trench No	Field	Centred (E)	Centred (N)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Area (sq m)	Depth (m)	Features
1	A	266297	868924	1.8	167	300	0.3-0.5	No Features
2	A	266185	868901	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
3	A	266241	868941	1.8	138	250	0.5-0.7	No Features
4	A	266239	868922	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
11a	A	266223	868913	5.8	8.8	65	0.4-0.6	No Features
5	A	266247	868919	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
6	A	266268	869055	1.8	220	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
7	A	266236	868986	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
8	A	266347	869073	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
9	A	266296	869019	1.8	110	200	0.4-0.6	No Features
10	A	266376	869073	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
11	A	266299	869045	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	11-1 – 11.11 Postholes in a circle
12	A	266315	868978	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
13	B	266112	869032	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
14	B	266172	869151	1.8	220	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
15	B	266298	869173	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
16	B	266118	869075	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
17	B	266254	869169	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	17-1: stone heap
18	B	266149	869067	1.8	83.5	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
19	B	266299	869132	1.8	137	250	0.4-0.6	No Features
20	B	266168	869046	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
21	B	266212	869082	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
22	B	266238	869098	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
23	B	266226	869057	1.8	220	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
24	C	265971	869002	1.8	166	300	0.4-0.6	No Features
25	C	265957	868941	1.8	137	250	0.4-0.6	No Features
26	C	265961	868904	1.8	139	250	0.4-0.6	No Features
27	C	265968	868962	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
28	C	266066	868885	20	20	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
29	C	266003	868971	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
30	C	266049	868989	1.8	110	200	0.4-0.6	No Features
31	C	266055	869015	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
32	C	266011	868916	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	No Features
33	C	266041	868895	1.8	83	150	0.4-0.6	No Features
34	C	266134	868890	1.8	109.5	200	0.4-0.6	No Features
35	C	266106	868933	10	40	400	0.4-0.6	35-1 – 35.10: burnet areas, pits, and disturbance
36	C	266130	868948	1.8	193	350	0.4-0.6	No Features
37	C	266147	868868	1.8	137.5	250	0.4-0.6	No Features

**Table 3 Archaeological Features**

Feature No	Trench	Type	Width (cm)	Length (cm)	Depth (cm)	Contexts	Notes
11-1	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	17, 18	Undated. Part of circle
11-2	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	19, 20	Undated. Part of circle
11-3	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	21, 22	Undated. Part of circle
11-4	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	23, 24	Undated. Part of circle
11-5	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	25, 26	Undated. Part of circle
11-6	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	27, 28	Undated. Part of circle
11-7	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	29, 30	Undated. Part of circle
11-8	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	31, 32	Undated. Part of circle
11-9	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	33, 34	Undated. Part of circle
11-10	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	35, 36	Undated. Part of circle
11-11	11	Post-hole	35	35	30	37, 38	Undated. Part of circle
17-1	17	Stone heap within hollow	200	107	(not clear)	-	Not excavated
35-1	35	Pit	65	70	23	2,3	Feature cont. black burnt material
35-2	35	Hollow			10	4	Natural hollow containing angular stones 10-15cm
35-3	35	Linear feature	25		7	5	Natural dish-shaped hollow
35-4 (a-c)	35	3 Blackened areas			<2	-	Unclear feature
35-5 (a-b)	35	2 Blackened areas			<2	-	Unclear feature
35-6	35	Hollow	64	87	13	6	Natural hollow
35-7	35	Pit	65	70	23	7,8	Ill-defined pit containing large stones inside and outside. Disturbed by root action.
35-8 a	35	Pit; root and animal disturbance	66	76	33	9,10,11	Vertical sided pit, very disturbed by roots and rabbit burrow. EBA pottery.
35-8 b	35	Disturbed pit in section	66	c.30 within trench	35	15, 16,11	Vertical sided pit, very disturbed by roots and rabbit burrow. EBA pottery.
35-9	35	Post-pit	87	70		12,13	Black organic material indicative of decayed post 10cm across, leaning to N. Pit cont. EBA pottery in upper fill.
35-10	35	Hollow	50		<2	14	Not sectioned

**Table 4 Archaeological Contexts**

Context No	Type	Feature	above	below	equal	uncertain	Notes
1	Deposit	-	all	-			Topsoil
2	Cut	35-1	99	3			
3	Fill	35-1	2	1			
4	Deposit	35-2	99	1			
5	Deposit	35-3	99	1			
6	Deposit	35-6	99	1			
7	Cut	35-7	99	8			
8	Fill	35-7	7	1			
9	cut	35-8 a	99	10			
10	Fill	35-8 a	9	1		11	Animal and root disturbance
11	Deposit	35-8 a	99	1		10	Animal and root disturbance
12	Cut	35-9	99	13			
13	Fill	35-9	12	1			
14	Deposit	35-10	99	1			
15	cut	35-8 b	99	16		11	Animal and root disturbance
16	Fill	35-8 b	15	1		10	Animal and root disturbance
17	Cut	11- 1	99	18			
18	Fill	11- 1	17	1			
19	Cut	11- 2	99	20			
20	Fill	11- 2	19	1			
21	Cut	11- 3	99	22			
22	Fill	11- 3	21	1			
23	Cut	11- 4	99	24			
24	Fill	11- 4	23	1			
25	Cut	11- 5	99	26			
26	Fill	11- 5	25	1			
27	Cut	11- 6	99	28			
28	Fill	11- 6	27	1			
29	Cut	11- 7	99	30			
30	Fill	11- 7	29	1			
31	Cut	11- 8	99	32			
32	Fill	11- 8	31	1			
33	Cut	11- 9	99	34			
34	Fill	11- 9	33	1			
35	Cut	11- 10	99	36			
36	Fill	11- 10	35	1			
37	Cut	11- 11	99	38			
38	Fill	11- 11	37	1			
99	Deposit	-	-	all			Natural subsoil