

Archaeological Watching Brief
on the construction of a new wind farm
at St John's Hill, Kinneff, Aberdeenshire



Estate boundary stone in field boundary in Watching Brief Area 3 looking North



13th November 2012

Introduction (Illus 1)

This archaeological watching brief was carried out on the construction of new access tracks, crane pads and turbine bases in three areas of the proposed new wind farm as defined by Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service. It was undertaken by the author on 10th, 28th September, 10th, 11th, 15th October and 5th November 2012 (Site Code STJ01) weather conditions were generally dry and bright.

Archaeological Background (Illus 2)

The site chosen to build the wind farm at St John's Hill near Roadside of Kinneff contains the sites of at least three cairns which are presumed to be of Prehistoric (Bronze Age) date. None of these monuments are still visible and it seemed likely that associated Prehistoric activity may survive in their vicinity. The cairn on St John's Knap was still visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map and was described by the Ordnance Survey in 1967 as 'A turf-covered cairn of earth and stones, 24.0m in diameter and 2.0m high, with traces of quarrying in the N side' (OS Name Book 13, 34-35). The RCAHMS report that 'It was trenched about 1773, revealing a cist and what was probably a cremation' (RCAHMS 1982, 13 No 67).

Watching Brief

Area 1 (Illus 3-7)

The cutting of a new access track between Wind Turbines 1 and 2 running East alongside the Southern edge of a forestry plantation on Water Hill was monitored due to the presence of burial cairns at a similar topographic position to the South. At the Southern end of this track 0.40m of a grey brown sandy clay was revealed overlying a deposit of orange red clay and broken sandstone (natural). A similar deposit was exposed on the hill top and through the forestry at depths of 0.30m and 0.25m. Where the monitoring ceased at the western end of this track there was a 0.30m deep deposit of turf and black topsoil over lying a natural deposit of orange red clay and stones. Nothing of archaeological interest was located.

Area 2 (Illus 8-12)

The construction of the crane pad and turbine base for Wind Turbine 6 was monitored as was the short stretch of new access track until it met the existing farm track which was to be reused as part of the development. At the Eastern end of the crane pad 0.33m of black brown sandy clay was exposed overlying a red brown gravel and yellow brown clay (natural), at its Western end 0.31m of black brown sandy clay was exposed above natural. In the area of the turbine base 0.30m of black brown sandy clay was exposed overlying natural. A depth of 0.36m of black brown sandy clay was revealed along the new section of access track overlying natural. Nothing of archaeological interest was located.

Area 3 (Illus 13-32)

Access track for Turbines 8 and 9 (Illus 13-15)

The construction of a new access track for Wind Turbines 8 and 9 was monitored from the hilltop to the South East of St John's Knap to where it met the stone field boundary that runs from East to West. 0.40m of black silty clay was exposed overlying a brown sandy gravel and abundant broken stone, cutting this soil was the line of a former field boundary which was visible as a 1m wide linear cut filled with loose rounded stones and a grey black silty clay. Where the track ran parallel to a former quarry the black silty clay was only 0.10m deep, a backfilled section of the quarry was also visible at this point and was cut through by the field boundary. Where the track met the field boundary the deposit of black silty clay was 0.20m deep. Nothing of archaeological interest was located.

Crane Pad for Turbine 8 (Illus 16, 17)

The new cut for the crane pad located 0.30m dark black brown sandy clay above orange brown sandy gravel and stones (natural). A subrectangular cut feature (1.05m by 2.32m) was visible in this area that had twine or string in its backfill (machine dug test pit?). No features of archaeological interest were located.

Base for Turbine 8 (Illus 16)

The area of the new Turbine base located 0.35m of black brown silty clay above orange brown gravel and stone. No features of archaeological interest were located.

Access Track for Turbine 8 (Illus 19-24)

The cutting of the new access track located 0.40m black brown silty clay overlying an orange brown gravel and clay, the silty clay deposit was 0.30m deep at the South end of its junction with the field boundary wall and 0.15m deep at the North end. Soil stripping for the wider turning area for this track exposed an intact short cist under 0.30m of black brown silty clay. From discussions with Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service it was agreed to cover the cist with geotextile and cut another version of this track to the East.

Replacement Access Track for Turbine 8 (Illus 25-29)

The cutting of this track located 0.30m of plough soil above orange brown sandy clay and gravel. No other cists or archaeological features were encountered. A stone was identified in the field boundary wall to the North with the letters 'C', 'S' and 'H' carved into its Southern, Eastern and Western faces, its North face is blank and it has a number '14' on the top.

Turbine 9 base and crane pad (Illus 30, 31)

The stripping of the crane pad for wind turbine 9 exposed 0.33m of grey black silty clay above orange brown gravel and stone (natural). No archaeological deposits or features were located. The

stripping of the area of the turbine base exposed 0.37m of grey black silty clay above orange brown gravel and stone (Natural). No archaeological deposits or features were located.

Access track for Turbine 7 (Illus 32-34)

This new access track followed the course of an existing farm road and located 0.32m of a grey black silty clay above orange brown gravel and stone (Natural). As the track progressed West dumps of broken stone (former metallurgy?) were exposed below 0.30m of a grey black silty clay. No archaeological deposits or features were located along its entire length including the section that ran past the location of the short cist described previously.

Conclusions

The monitoring of the three specified areas of this wind farm only located two items of archaeological interest in close proximity to St John's Knap in Area 3. A presumed Prehistoric short cist was exposed below 0.30m of ploughsoil during the cutting of an access track for wind turbine 8. Following discussions with the local authority archaeological service this cist was covered with geotextile and reburied, a new access track was cut to the East which did not locate anything further of archaeological interest. The stone field boundary to the North of the cist contained a single Estate boundary stone marked with the letters 'H', 'S' and 'C' on three of its faces and the number '14' on top. This stone is liable to date to the 19th century and is of a type commonly found in Scotland (pers comm John Sherriff, RCAHMS). This stone will be removed carefully and set to one side when this section of wall is partially demolished at a junction of two access tracks. Generally across the site ploughsoil was rarely any deeper than 0.35m, in Area 3 there was good evidence for plough damage in the natural ground surface (Illus 19 and 25).

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Rhys Westcott of Graeme Brown Construction and Gavin and Dan the on-site engineers for their help and interest in the watching brief. The mechanical excavator drivers Trevor and Ian are also thanked. He would also like to thank John Sherriff of RCAHMS for his useful information regarding Estate boundary markers.

References

Cartographic Sources (<http://www.nls.uk/maps>)

Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch 1st edition, Scotland, 1843-1882

Books

Ordnance Survey (Name Book) Object Name Books of the Ordnance Survey (6 inch and 1/2500 scale)
Book No.13, 34-35

RCAHMS 1982 The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The archaeological sites and monuments of South Kincardine, Kincardine and Deeside District, Grampian Region, The archaeological sites and monuments of Scotland series no 15 Edinburgh, 13, No.67

Illustration List

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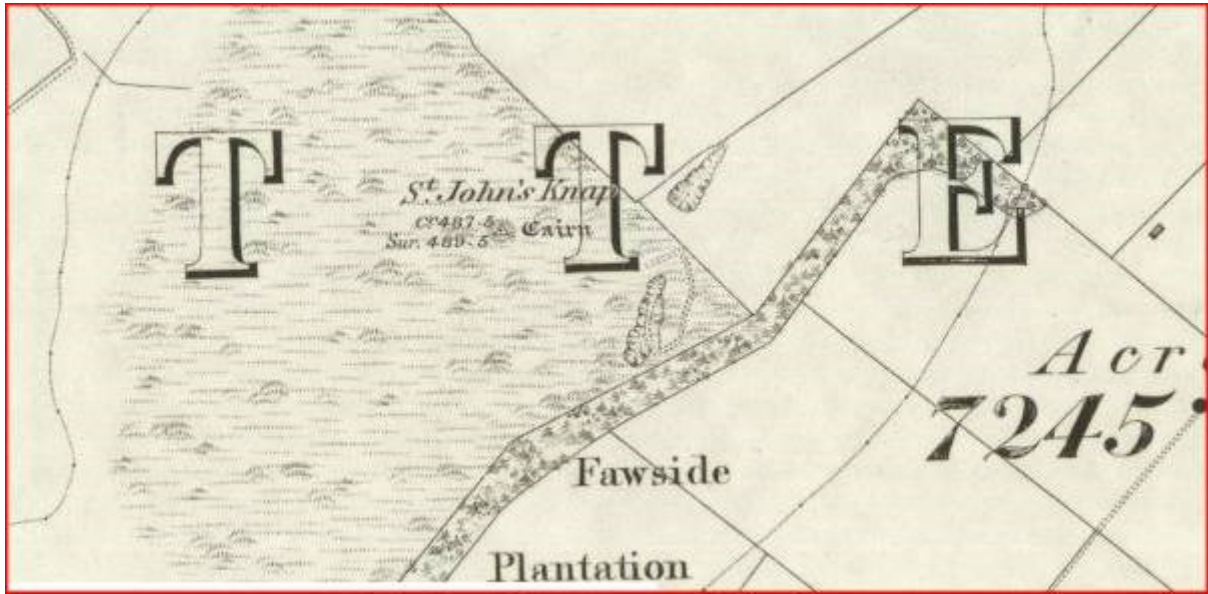
Illus 34 Access track to turbine 7 showing previous road metalling on natural ground surface looking North West

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

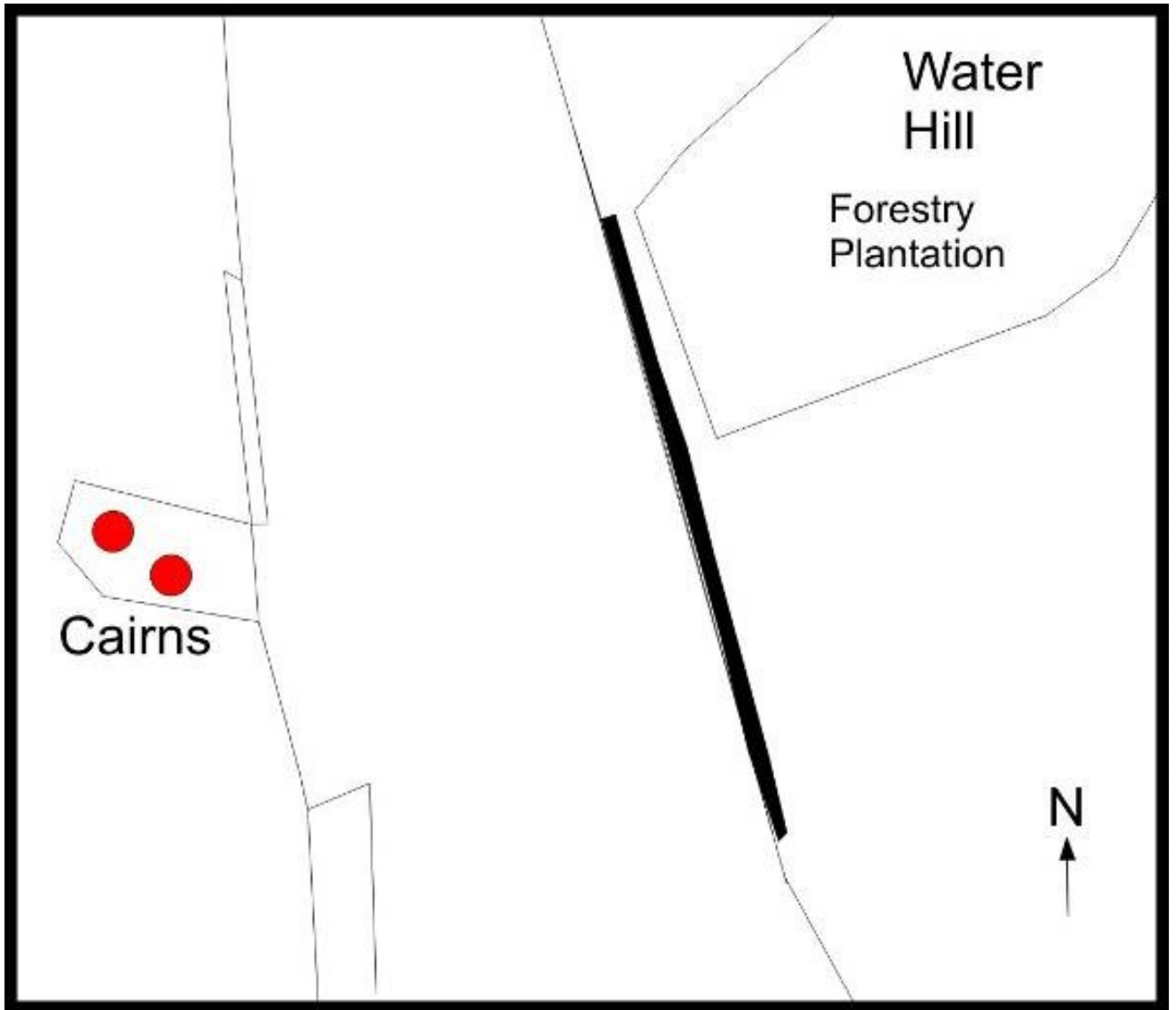
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Aberdeenshire Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Archaeological watching brief on three specified areas of a wind farm at St John's Hill, Kinneff
PROJECT CODE:	STJ01
PARISH:	Catterline
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Derek Hall
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Derek Hall, archaeologist and ceramic specialist
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NO87NW 15 cairn
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	St John's Hill wind farm, Roadside of Kinneff
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	Short cist, Estate boundary stone
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NO 83208 76981 (centre point of development area)
START DATE	10th September 2012
END DATE	5th November 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was undertaken on the cutting of new access tracks, crane pads and turbine bases in three areas as defined by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. An intact short cist burial was located to the North East of St John's Knap and was covered with geotextile and reburied, an Estate boundary stone was identified in the field wall that ran past the site of the short cist. Nothing else of archaeological interest was identified in any of the other areas.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Green Cat Renewables Ltd
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	N/A
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	NMRS
EMAIL ADDRESS:	Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk



Illus 1 St Johns Hill windfarm showing three areas identified for archaeological watching briefs (course of tracks for Turbine 8 different to original plan) Scale 1:20,000



Illus 2 cairn on St John's Knap as marked on 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862 (© Trustees National Library of Scotland)



Illus 3 Monitored access track to wind turbine 3 in Watching Brief Area 1 Scale 1:2500



Illus 4 Access track to wind turbine 3 being excavated looking North West showing natural ground surface visible below ploughsoil



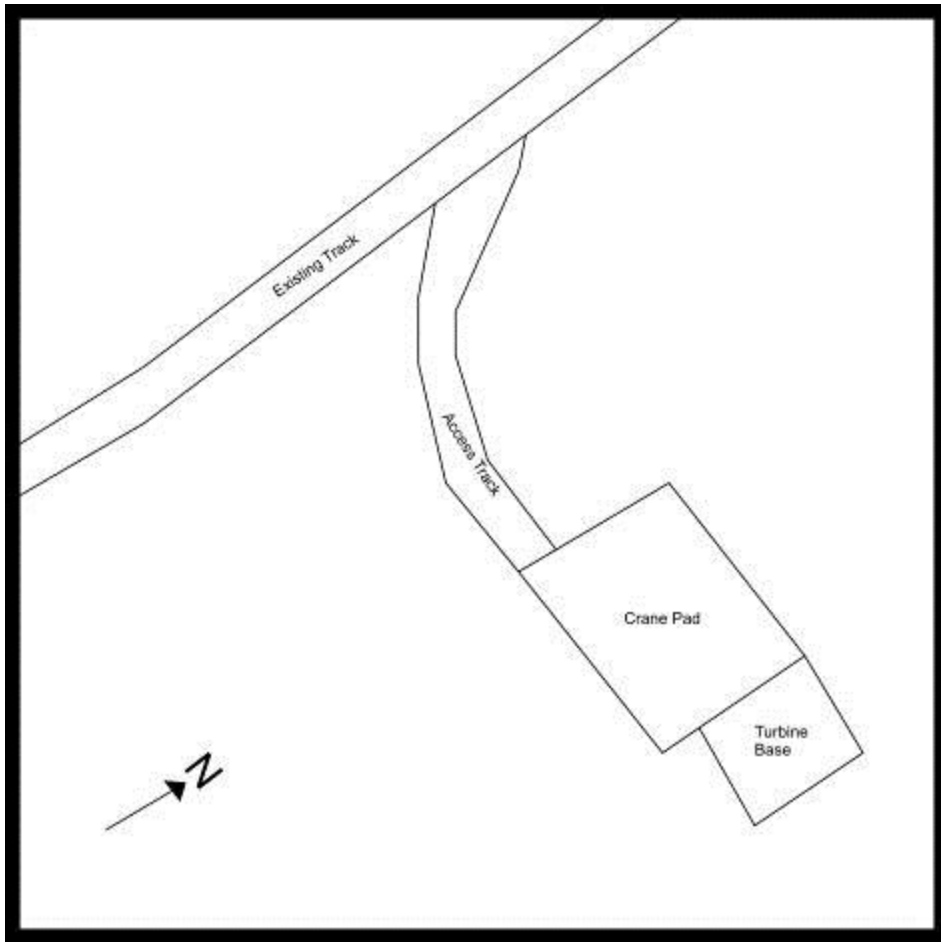
Illus 5 Access track to wind turbine 3 stripped to top of hill looking South East



Illus 6 Access track to wind turbine 3 stripped adjacent to forestry plantation looking South East



Illus 7 Final stretch of stripped access track to wind turbine 3 looking South East



Illus 8 Areas newly stripped for turbine base, crane pad and access track to Wind turbine 6 in archaeological watching brief area 2 Scale 1:900



Illus 9 Area stripped for crane pad for wind turbine 6 showing natural ground surface visible below plough soil looking North West



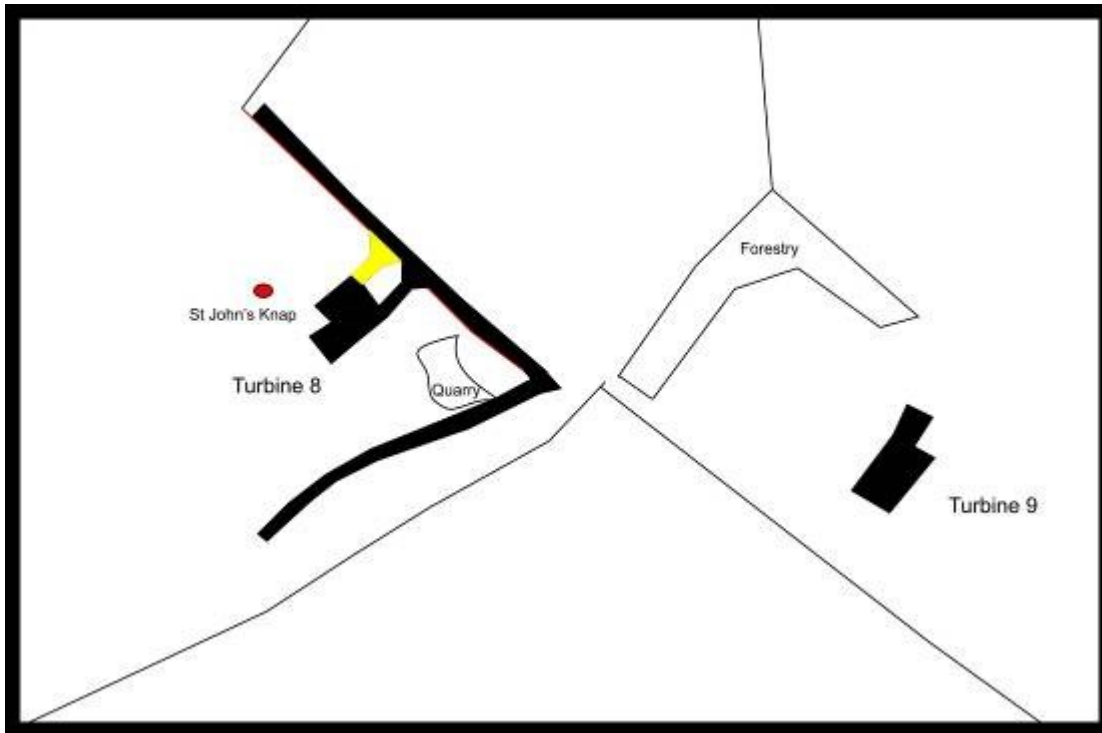
Illus 10 Base for wind turbine 6 stripped showing natural ground surface looking North



Illus 11 Access track for wind turbine 6 showing natural ground surface looking North West



Illus 12 stripped access track for wind turbine 6 at junction with existing farm track showing natural ground surface looking South West



Illus 13 Location of monitored access tracks, turbine bases and crane pads for wind turbines 8 and 9 in Watching Brief Area 3. Yellow area indicates access track where cist was located. Scale 1:6000



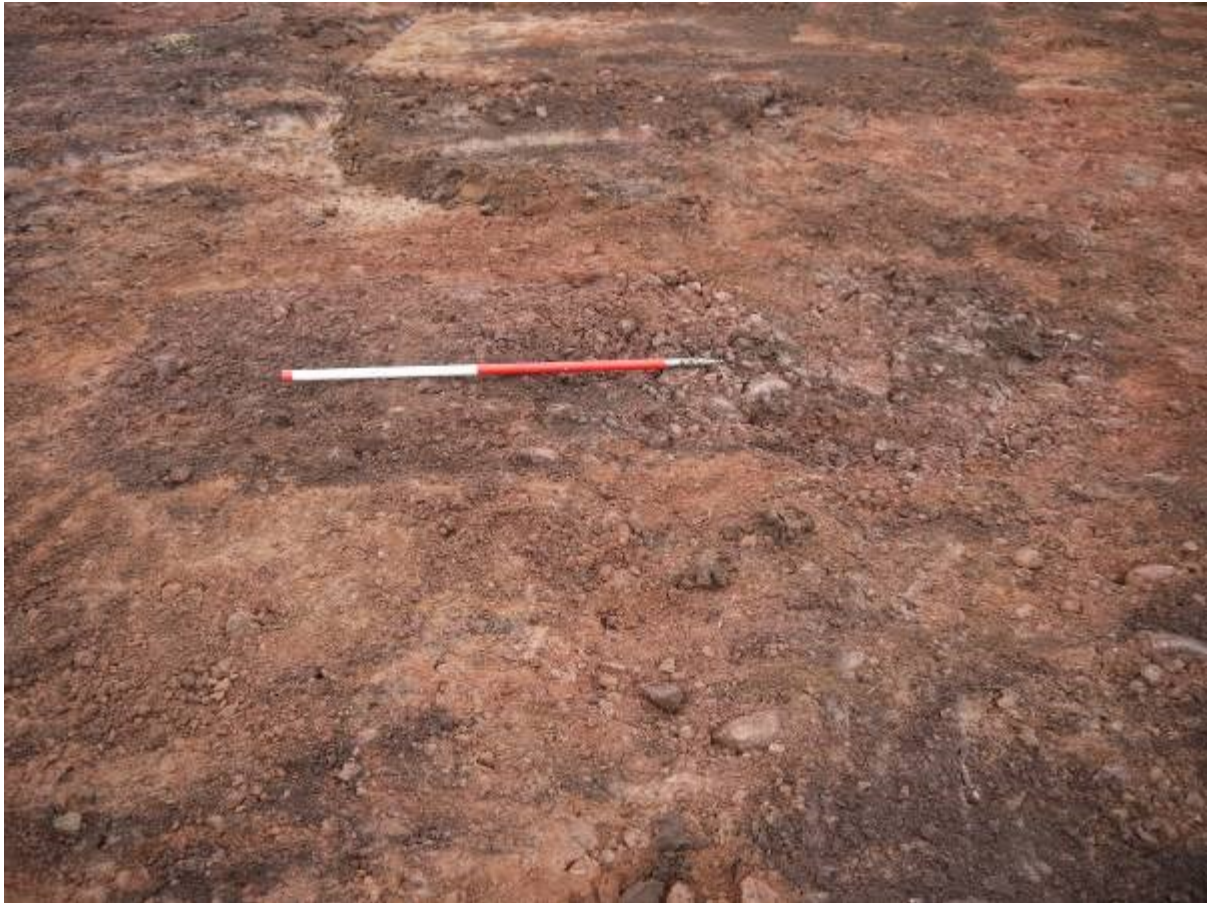
Illus 14 Stripped access track to wind turbines 8 and 9 showing former field boundary visible as linear black stain looking South West



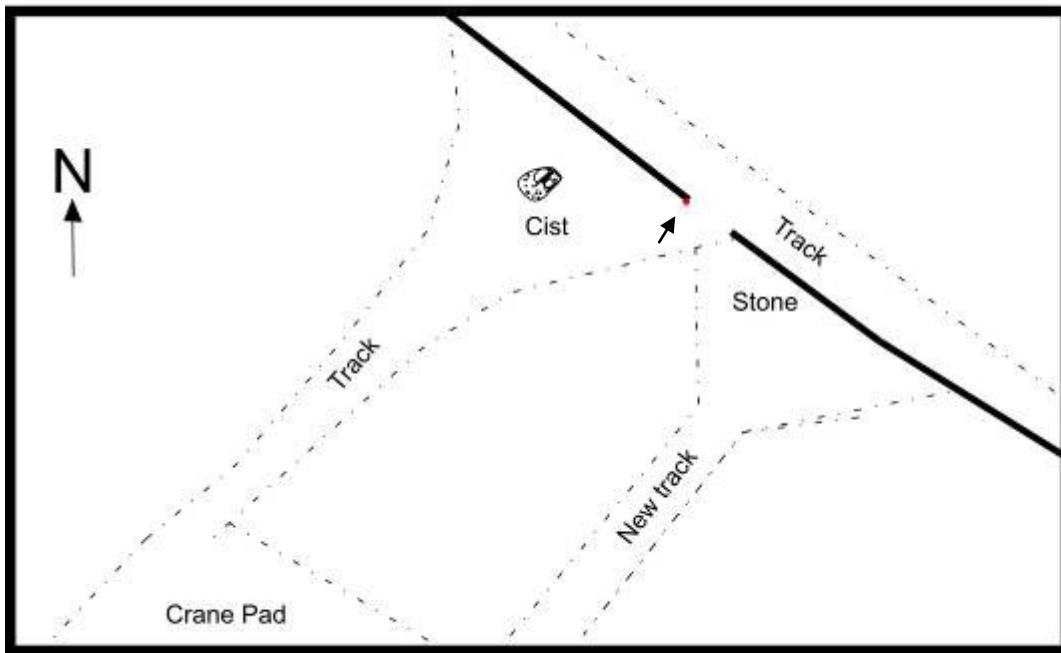
Illus 15 Detail of mixed stone and soil fill of field boundary line looking North West



Illus 16 Stripped crane pad for turbine 8 showing natural ground surface looking South



Illus 17 Backfilled cut in crane pad 8 with string/twine in its fill looking East



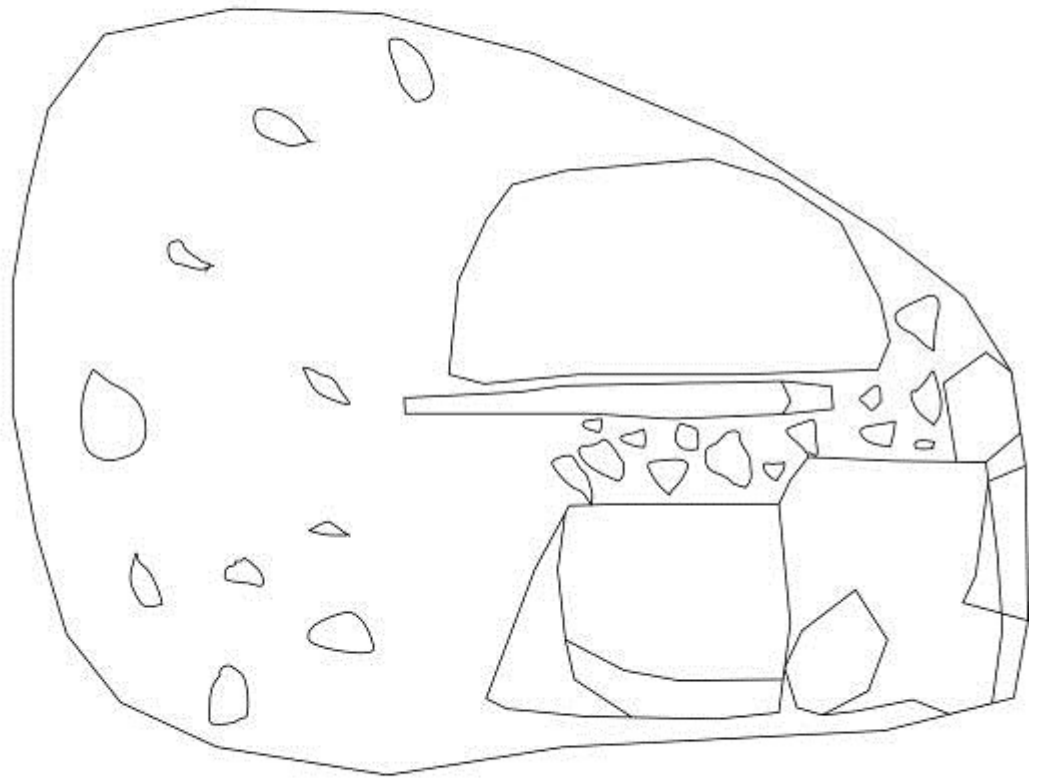
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Illus 19 Access track for turbine 8 showing natural ground surface and heavy plough scarring looking North



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Illus 21 Intact short cist as exposed during machine strip Scale 1:20



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Illus 24 General view of short cist (location marked by ranging rod) and location of Estate boundary stone (marked with red arrow) looking North East



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Illus 26 South face of Estate boundary stone looking North



Illus 27 East face of Estate boundary stone looking West



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Illus 33 Access track to turbine 7 showing natural ground surface looking North West



Illus 34 Access track to turbine 7 showing previous road metalling on natural ground surface looking North West