

Archaeological Watching Brief

Upper Haddo, Aberdeenshire



House site (where yellow machine is sitting) and new shed site (in front of existing shed) from the south



19th May 2014

Introduction

This archaeological monitoring of the site strip for a new shed (site A) and a house (site B) was carried out for Mr Stewart Wight to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development, as noted by Aberdeenshire Council's archaeological service in the condition attached to Planning Application APP/2007/2807, dated 8th August 2007. This work was carried out by the author on Monday 5th May and Tuesday 6th May 2014 (site code HAD01). Weather conditions were bright and sunny.

Archaeological Background (Illus 1)

A Desk Based Archaeological Assessment by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd indicated that the proposed development lay in the vicinity of Prehistoric burial monuments (including a Scheduled Monument known as Erskine's Knap (5168)) and other features of probable Prehistoric date (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd 2012). The Desk Based Assessment recommended the need for monitoring of the site strip by an archaeologist.

Site monitoring of strip for new shed (Site A) (Illus 2 and 3)

An area measuring 44m by 17m was stripped to the top of natural broken red sandstone, clay and gravel. A layer of brown silty clay (former ploughsoil) varied in depth from 0.42m to 0.52m across the northern end of the strip, the further south the machine travelled the shallower this deposit got until it was consistently 0.05m deep across the southern limit of the new buildings footprint. Close to the northern limit of excavation three groups of features were exposed cut into the natural subsoil.

Cut Features Group 1 (Illus 4 to 7 and 10)

A U-shaped cut feature (100 and 102) lay below the former ploughsoil and extended into the northern section of the trench and was associated with a short linear feature (105) to the SW and enclosed a subcircular cut feature (106). The section of the U shaped feature on its western side (100) survived to a width of 2.5m and was filled with a grey brown silty clay with occasional stones and charcoal flecks (101). The northern side of this feature ran into the northern trench section and on its eastern side (102) survived to a width of 1m and was filled with a grey brown silty clay with occasional stone and charcoal (103). The remains of a coarse undecorated pottery vessel was revealed sitting on the base of this feature and was retrieved for analysis (Illus 7) , a charcoal sample for potential C14 dating (S2) was also taken.

The short linear feature (104) ran for a distance of 1.2m and was filled with a grey brown silty clay with occasional stone and charcoal (105). The subcircular feature (106) enclosed by 100 and 102 had a diameter of 0.65m and was filled with grey brown silty clay and abundant stone (107).

Interpretation

The U-shaped cut feature and its associated short linear feature appear to represent the remains of a structure with a diameter of 7m E to W. It seems likely that this plough damaged ring ditch is the remains of a round house of Prehistoric date rather than a ploughed out burial mound as there were no signs of any burials or cremated bone. If this is the case that means that feature 106 may represent either an internal hearth or a central posthole to support a roof. It is worth noting that there was little obvious sign of burning in this feature.

Cut features Group 2 (Illus 8 and 11)

To the E of the Group 1 features lay three cut features (108, 110 and 112) that were also cut into the natural subsoil. Feature 108 has a diameter of 0.55m and is filled with a grey brown silty clay and stones (109), Feature 110 is more amorphous and has a maximum diameter of 1.3m E to W and 3.75m N to S and is filled with grey brown silty clay and occasional charcoal (111). A charcoal sample for potential dating (S3) was taken from 111. Feature 112 is subcircular with a diameter of 1.6m and is filled with grey brown silty clay and stone (113).

Interpretation

These features would appear to represent a group of pits aligned N to S, presumably contemporary with the Group 1 cut features.

Cut Features Group 3 (Illus 9 and 11)

To the E of the Group 2 features lay a sizeable amorphous feature cut into the natural subsoil (114). This measures 7m from N to S and has a maximum width of 3.45m at its widest point. It is filled with grey brown silty clay and charcoal (115) and produced a single sherd of coarse pottery.

Interpretation

Without being excavated it is hard to define what this feature represents although to this author a further group of pits seems the most likely interpretation. A charcoal sample (S3) for potential C14 dating was taken. The single sherd of pottery would appear to be of Prehistoric date (see below).

Site Monitoring of strip for new house (Site B) (Illus 2, Illus 12 to 14)

Three adjoining areas measuring 24m by 10m, 10m by 10m and 5m by 10m were stripped to the top of natural broken red sandstone, clay and gravel. A layer of brown silty clay (former ploughsoil) varied in depth from 0.48m on the new access road to 0.36m at the southern end of the house footprint and 0.50m at the northern end of the house footprint. The only feature exposed (202) was cut into the natural and measured 0.38m by 0.62m, and was filled with a charcoal rich grey brown silty clay (203). A charcoal sample was taken from this fill (S4).

Interpretation

The single cut feature in this area could be of any date and did not produce any finds; the remainder of the house plot was covered in plough soil directly overlying natural subsoil.

Coarse Pottery (Illustration 15)

17 sherds of coarse pottery, apparently from the same vessel, were retrieved from 103 the fill of the ring ditch located at Site A. These pieces are in a fabric that has a heavily reduced, black core and internal surface and a light brown external surface. They come from a single undecorated pottery vessel with a flat base and are of an early Prehistoric date, probably Bronze Age (pers comm. Dr Anne MacSween). A single sherd in a similar fabric was also found in context 115, the fill of part of the amorphous Group 3 features.

Discussion and Recommendations

The monitoring of the soil strip for a new shed located a small group of cut features of probable Prehistoric date. From discussions with the developer it has been agreed that these will be sealed with geotextile and buried under the hardcore foundation for the new shed, aside from the removal of the pottery from 103 which would have been crushed and the samples taken for potential C14 dating this group of features was not excavated. The monitoring of the soil strip for the new house located a single small undated feature which was recorded and planned; a charcoal sample was taken from this feature (S4).

Following the recording of the exposed archaeological cut features and the retrieval of pottery and potential C14 dating samples there would not seem to be any need for any further archaeological work as part of these two developments, however the final decision on the need for any further work rests with Aberdeenshire Council's archaeological service.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Stewart Wight for his interest in this monitoring exercise and the machine and dumper drivers Sean, Alan and Dave. He would also like to thank Dr Anne MacSween for her views on the sherds of coarse pottery.

References

Highland Archaeology Services 2012 'Haddo, Laurencekirk Desk Based Assessment'

Appendix 1

Context List

Cut Feature Group 1

100 U shaped cut feature (Western side)

101 Grey brown silty clay with occasional stones and charcoal flecks (fill of 100)

102 U shaped cut feature (Eastern side)

103 Grey brown silty clay with occasional stone and charcoal (fill of 102)

104 Short narrow linear feature

105 Grey brown silty clay with occasional stone and charcoal (fill of 104)

106 Subcircular cut feature

107 Brown silty clay and abundant stone (fill of 106)

Cut Feature Group 2

108 Cut feature

109 Grey brown silty clay and stones (fill of 108)

110 Cut Feature

111 Brown silty clay and occasional charcoal (fill of 110)

112 Cut feature

113 Grey brown silty clay and stone (fill of 112)

Cut Feature Group 3

114 Cut feature

115 Grey brown silty clay and charcoal (fill of 114)

Site B

200 Ploughsoil

201 Natural subsoil

202 Cut feature

203 Charcoal rich grey brown silty clay (fill of 202)

Appendix 2

C14 sample list (all charcoal samples)

Sample 1 Context 115 Site A

Sample 2 Context 103 Site A

Sample 3 Context 111 Site A

Sample 4 Context 203 Site B

Appendix 3

Finds List

Context 103 (Site A) 17 sherds of coarse friable undecorated pottery

Context 115 (Site A) 1 sherd of coarse friable undecorated pottery

Illustration List

Illustration 1 Site Locations (top red dot Site A, lower one Site B) (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

Illustration 2 Site locations showing position of recorded archaeological features in Site A, red arrow indicates location of small feature in Area B. Scale 1:100

Illustration 3 Site A completely stripped of ploughsoil looking North East

Illustration 4 Cut Feature Group 1 (ring ditch) looking North North East

Illustration 5 Detail view of linear feature 104 in Cut Feature Group 1 looking North

Illustration 6 Sub-circular cut feature 107 in Cut Feature Group 1 (ring ditch) Looking South

Illustration 7 Coarse pottery in situ in cut feature 101 in Cut Feature Group 1 looking South West

Illustration 8 Cut Feature Group 2 looking South East

Illustration 9 Cut Feature Group 3 looking South East

Illustration 10 Plan of Cut Feature Group 1 (Ring ditch and associated features) Scale 1:50

Illustration 11 Plan of Cut Feature Groups 2 and 3 (pits) Scale 1:100

Illustration 12 Site B (house) southern side of plot and access road completely stripped of ploughsoil

Illustration 13 Site B charcoal filled feature (202) looking South

Illustration 14 Site B (house and access road) completely stripped of ploughsoil looking North

Illustration 15 Exterior and interior view of basal angle of coarse undecorated pottery from context 103 at Site A

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

| | |
|--|--|
| LOCAL AUTHORITY: | Aberdeenshire Council |
| PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: | New house and shed Upper Haddo, Laurencekirk |
| PROJECT CODE: | HAD01 |
| PARISH: | Laurencekirk |
| 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): | N/A |
| SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): | N/A |
| SIGNIFICANT FINDS: | Prehistoric (Bronze Age) pottery |
| NGR (2 letters, 6 figures) | NO 743 732 |
| START DATE | 5 th May 2014 |
| END DATE | 6 th May 2014 |
| PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.) | None |
| MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields) | Monitoring of the site strip for a new storage shed located a possible ring ditch and two groups of pits cut into the natural subsoil. The fill of the ring ditch produced the base of a coarse undecorated pottery vessel of Bronze Age date. |
| PROPOSED FUTURE WORK: | None |
| SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY: | Stewart Wight |
| 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 |

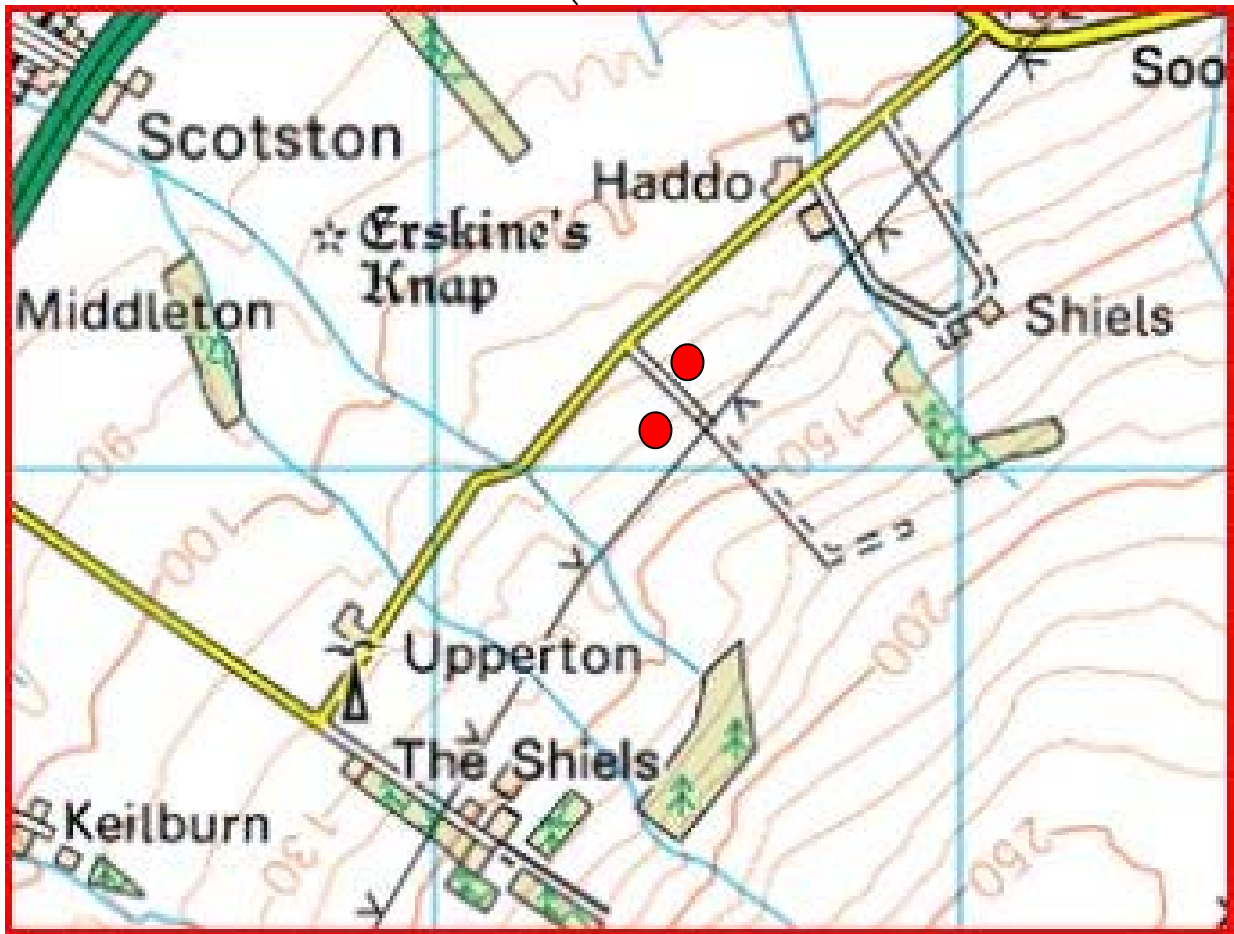


Illustration 1 Site Locations (top red dot Site A, lower one Site B) (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

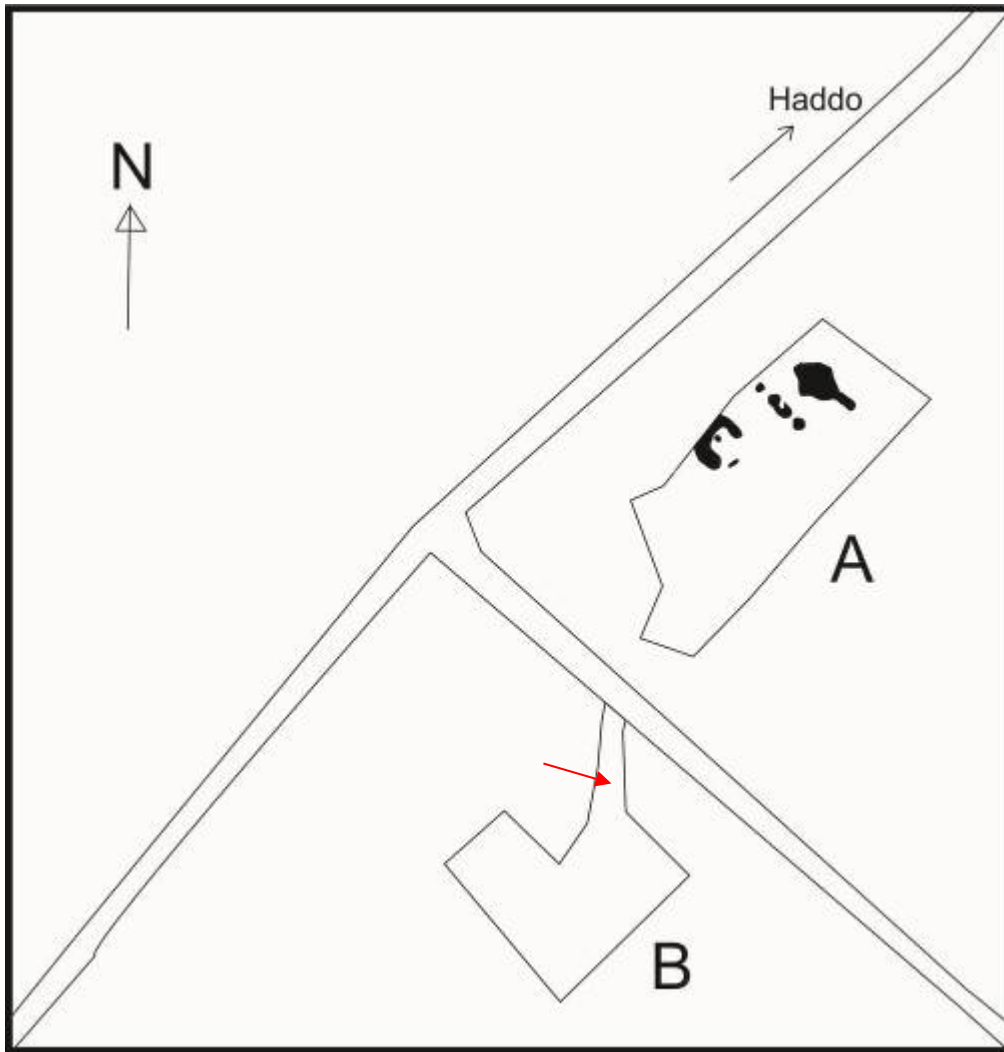


Illustration 2 Site locations showing position of recorded archaeological features in Site A, red arrow indicates location of small feature in Area B. Scale 1:1000



Illustration 3 Site A completely stripped of ploughsoil looking North East



Illustration 4 Cut Feature Group 1 (ring ditch) looking North North East



Illustration 5 Detail view of linear feature 104 in Cut Feature Group 1 looking North



Illustration 6 Sub-circular cut feature 107 in Cut Feature Group 1 (ring ditch) Looking South



Illustration 7 Coarse pottery in situ in cut feature 101 in Cut Feature Group 1 looking South West



Illustration 8 Cut Feature Group 2 looking South East



Illustration 9 Cut Feature Group 3 looking South East

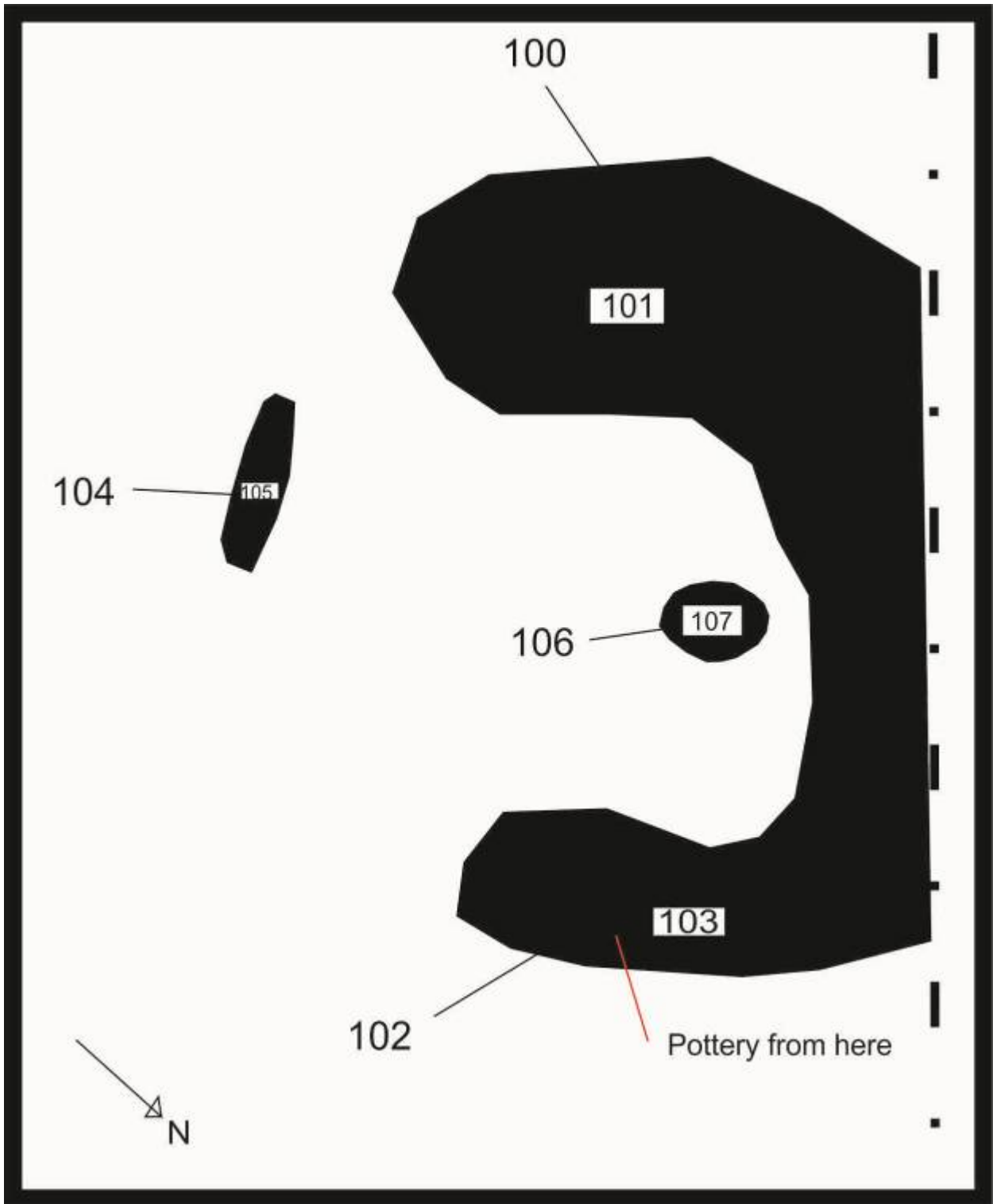


Illustration 10 Plan of Cut Feature Group 1 (Ring ditch and associated features) Scale 1:50

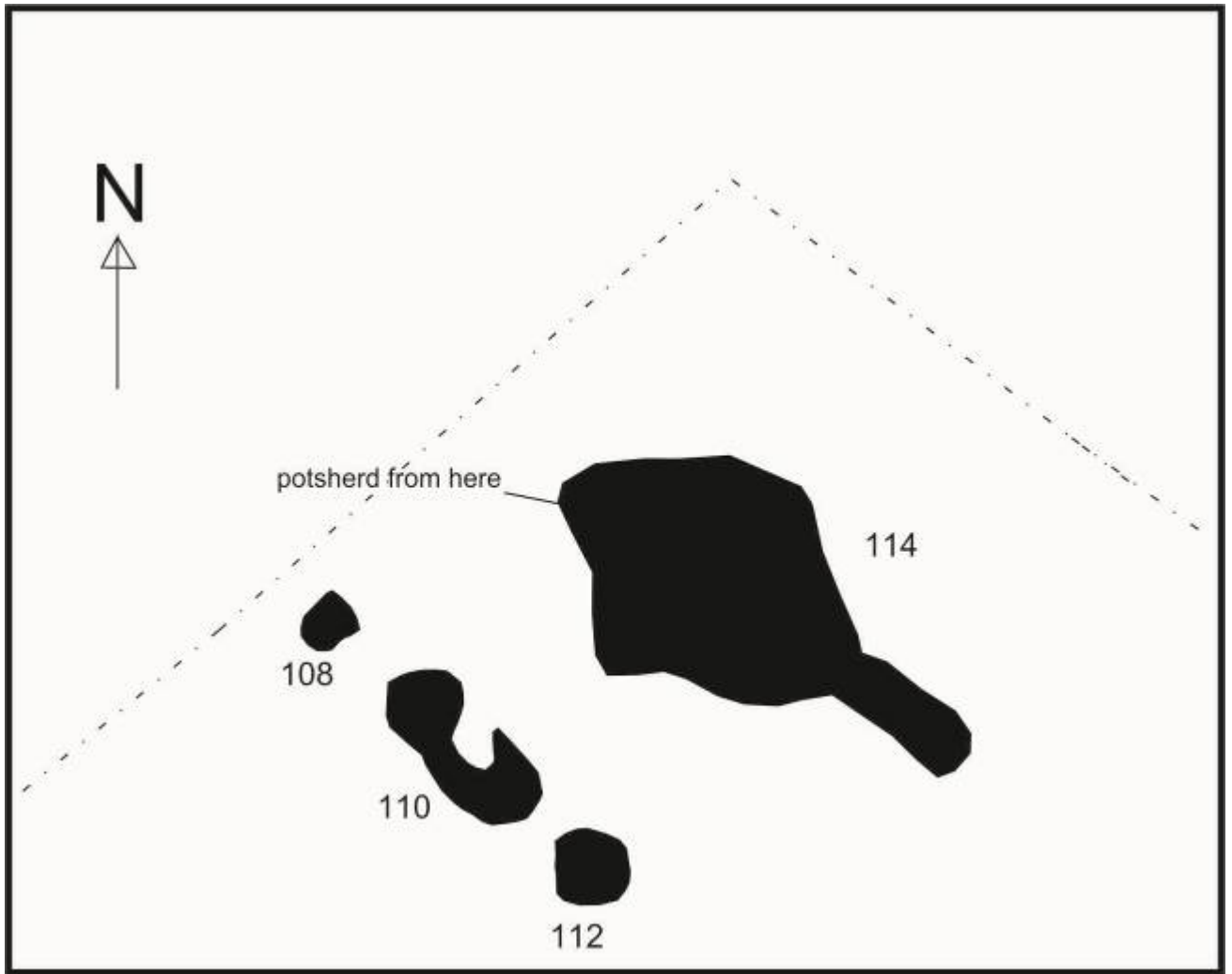


Illustration 11 Plan of Cut Feature Groups 2 and 3 (pits) Scale 1:100



Illustration 12 Site B (house) southern side of plot and access road completely stripped of ploughsoil



Illustration 13 Site B charcoal filled feature (202) looking South



Illustration 14 Site B (house and access road) completely stripped of ploughsoil looking North



Illustration 15 Exterior and interior view of basal angle of coarse undecorated pottery from context 103 at Site A