

**CA315 Essich Road: Land 85m SE of  
Drumdevan Lodge Inverness, IV2 6AH**

**Archaeological evaluation and watching brief report**



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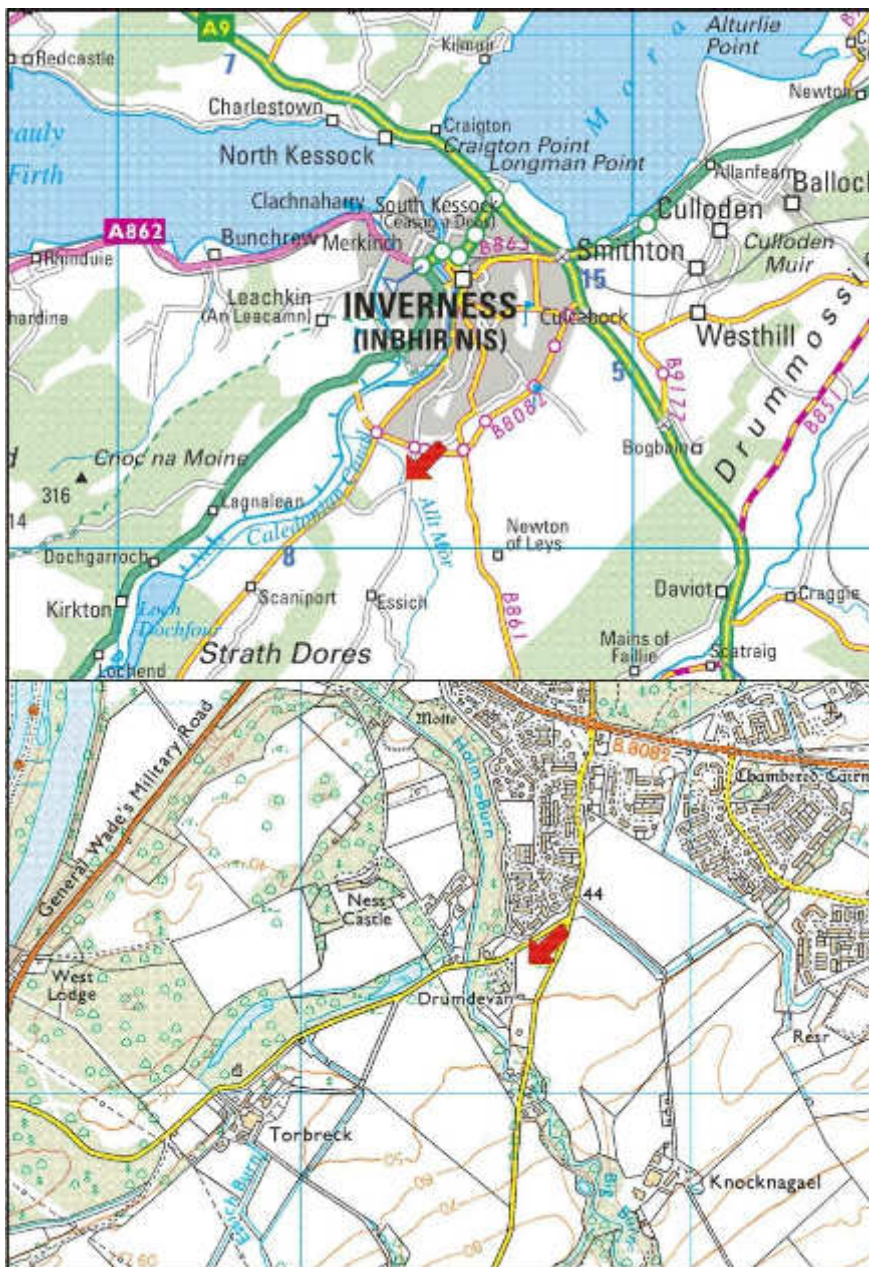
## **SUMMARY**

A 7% archaeological evaluation was carried out between December 19<sup>th</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, on a c.1.6 hectare parcel of land located on the south side of Inverness. Evidence of heavily truncated ridge and furrow agriculture was evident, while one heavily truncated pit base yielded charcoal fragments which were radiocarbon dated to the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition (4173-3987 cal BC). A 100% watching brief was carried out from 19-25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and three further features were recorded, the bases of two post-holes and the base of a pit or hearth filled with charcoal. One post-hole base contained a Late Neolithic flint blade but insufficient dating material was recovered from either posthole to produce a radiocarbon date. The charcoal and burnt bone recovered from the hearth produced a radiocarbon date of the Late Neolithic period (charcoal 2821-2631 calBC; bone 2906-2859 calBC).

Although these features do not allow for much interpretation due to their fragmentary condition and contents, activity at the site included hearths in use on the site in the Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic period as well as the later Neolithic and this adds to the sites of this period known from the rich surrounding area.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1 and 2) is located on the south side of Inverness at the junction of Essich Road and Torbreck Road. It is centred on NGR NH 65603 41349, at 40-50m OD in the parish of Inverness and Bona.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Colin Mair, Kirkwood Homes. An application 16/03765 has been made to Highland Council. A 7% evaluation was carried out based on the Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation (Highland Council 11 October 2016) followed by 100% watching brief.
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Historic Environment Scotland's Policy Statement (HESPS) which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017).



Illus 2 Site plan of proposed development (copyright Kirkwood Homes).

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 There is one Scheduled Monument within 1km of the proposed development. Holme Mains motte (HER MHG3784/NMRS NH64SE29) is 610m NNW of the proposed development and is situated on the edge of an escarpment, 150m SE of Holm Mains, are the mutilated remains of a motte. A deep ditch 8.0m wide can be traced round the east and south sides of it. On the north, mound and ditch have been erased by cultivation. The west side of the mound has been considerably destroyed by erosion, but there seems to have been a short terrace before the drop to the burn on the NW side. The motte is 5.0m high above the ditch on the south and east - reducing to 1.2m on the west above the terrace. There is a rampart on the counterscarp of the ditch. The mutilated top of the motte measures 14.0m N-S and there is a slight earth-covered wall, or rampart, 0.2m high on edge of the east side of the summit. Despite some damage to the motte itself, and the possible loss of the ditch on the northern and western sides, this motte is a well-preserved example of its type. Much of the profile of the motte and a section of the ditch and upcast rampart survive in a clearly visible state, though it is uncertain if what appears to have been a quadrangular bailey to the N was created as such or has been a consequence of modern agricultural activity (HER online). Mottes, together with their associated features of ditches and ramparts, represent the earthwork substructures of a type of fortified lordly dwelling that became common across the British Isles from perhaps as early as the later eleventh century, and that archaeologists now think to have been still under construction in some parts of Scotland into the fourteenth century. When occupied, they would probably have been largely invisible beneath the timber residential towers and palisades that they supported. One of their advantages was their rapid and relatively cheap construction and that they were particularly attractive in areas that were being colonised or subdued. It is possible that they built this motte

at one of those periods when royal control was being more firmly established over the periodically disruptive province of Moray, and perhaps after David I's suppression of the rising of Malcolm MacHeth and Oengus of Moray in 1130. It may have been constructed to provide a residence and fortifiable base by one of the landholders introduced into the area by the crown in order to establish more effective centralised control (HES website online).

2.2 There are no known sites within the boundary of the proposed development but there are 73 other sites of archaeological and historical interest on the Highland Council HER within 1km of the development boundary (see Appendix 1). 50m to the N of the proposed development two Early Bronze Age short cists (EHG1396) and several outlying undated features were discovered unexpectedly on a construction site at Holm Mains Farm, and were subsequently excavated by Headland Archaeology in May 2003. The larger of the two cists contained a male individual placed in a crouched position. Accompanying this burial were two barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, ten other lithic tools and fragments of a finely decorated Beaker pot. The second cist was in a much poorer state of preservation, but contained an adult male accompanied by a single Beaker pot. Near the cists were several pits and ditches. However, these produced no artefacts to aid with dating and there was nothing to link these discoveries to the two cists (Headland Archaeology 2007).

2.3 On the opposite side of Essich Road was the find spot of a symbol stone, The Boar Stone which is a roughly shaped slab. At the top is incised the mirror-case symbol and below the figure of a wild boar. The round part of the mirror case is ornamented with a circle and a central dot and the boar has spiral curves on the body. It was Transferred in March 1991 to foyer of Highland Regional Council Chambers, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness (NH64SE 64). Excavation was undertaken around stone prior to its removal to its new protected location (supra). Work was limited to small Guardianship area, and was further reduced by immense disturbance caused by fence foundations. Guardianship gravel overlay a layer of blackened cobbles which dipped below stone itself. Both were rich in glass and pottery fragments of recent date. And probably derived from local pastime of hurling bottles at stone from passing cars. Beneath this was natural gravel subsoil, and it was clear that stone was not on its original site. Two finds of interest, both unstratified were noted, a small, unretouched and undiagnostic flint flake and a broken glass bead of recent date. Neither relate to the symbol stone (Highland Regional Council, 1994, 33). A watching brief took place in March 2010 during the excavation of a passing place being formed over this findspot. An area of cobbles was identified and photographed. Fraser, L et al 2010, 9).

2.4 In the field on the E of the proposed development a watching brief in 2010 by GUARD along the proposed line of the Inverness Flood Relief scheme south of Inverness at Slackbuie following previous evaluation and excavation phases produced evidence of prehistoric occupation. The work covered a linear route from Essich Road (NH 656 414) to Culduthel Road (NH 668 414) in the west and an area of land at Slackbuie in the east. In Area A a total of 8 features were exposed and excavated. Several pits contained charcoal flecks, small burnt bone fragments, hazelnut shell fragments and in one, fragments of prehistoric pottery (Kilpatrick 2010). Post-excavation work, including the obtaining of radiocarbon dates and environmental sample analysis has further refined the dating of the features found in Area A of the watching brief. One of the pits, 003, returned a radiocarbon date of 3640-3500 cal BC (early Neolithic) from charcoal. This pit contained eleven fragments of pottery from two or three different vessels, thirty-one lithic artefact fragments, including one from a leaf-shaped arrowhead and a number of small burnt animal bone fragments from sheep/goat or roe deer. Charcoal was derived from

alder, hazel, willow, oak and birch. Other pits were undated but contained similar fills and finds assemblages (Kilpatrick 2012).

2.5 In the field to the N of the proposed development, an archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of a proposed residential development. The evaluation involved a geophysical survey covering roughly 50% of the area, carried out by GeoQuest Associates, followed by trial trenching of a 2% sample of the site. While the geophysical survey suggested the existence of various features of interest, including possible stone trackways, survival was dictated by location within the cist and how well the bones were sheltered by the capstones. They included part of the skull, vertebrae, part of both femurs and the lower arms. These bones were well preserved, suggesting that the rest of the skeleton had been dissolved by water infiltrating the cist. There was no deliberately made floor and the body had been placed on the natural sandy gravel till at the base of the cist. No artefacts were present. Immediately to the E of the cist were two features, an irregularly shaped burnt spread and a small scoop containing charcoal and 1.378kg of burnt human bone. A pit containing metalworking debris was also found (Murray 2008, 107-8).

2.6 On the E side of Essich Gardens A cist was found at NH 6593 4168 at the edge of a gravel pit by Mr R Milne on 20 October 1970. (MHG3779; R Milne, curator, Inverness Museum) It was c. 0.5m below the ground surface and consisted of four side slabs and a covering slab, measuring 1.1m NNE-SSW by 0.8m transversely, and was 0.6m deep. It contained a crouched inhumation, the skeleton being laid on its left side with the head to the NNE. There were no artefacts. Mr Milne took photographs which were sent to the NMAS with a report on the cist, which is still in situ (RCAHMS 1979, 14; Wood 2006, 94).

2.7 400 m E of the proposed development an evaluation in 2009 by GUARD along the proposed line of the Inverness Flood Relief scheme south of Inverness at Slackbuie produced sparse evidence of possibly later prehistoric occupation. The work covered a linear route from Essich Road (NH 656 414) to Culduthel Road (NH 668 414) in the west and an area of land at Slackbuie in the east. A total of 40 trenches were opened, two of which revealed deposits of an archaeological nature. In trench 7 a possible old topsoil deposit covered by hillwash was identified. Following the evaluation an area around trench 7 was subsequently opened up by GUARD for excavation. In this area, designated Trench 2, several postholes and pits mostly cut into the subsoil along the edge of an old, and dry, watercourse were exposed and excavated. In addition, small spreads of charcoal and small pits interpreted as hearths were also found. Two large pits (2099 and 2015) contained charcoal-rich material suggesting in-situ burning though not at great temperature as there was no evidence for scorching on the subsoil. In addition, a number of plough-marks were also found below the old topsoil. The features remained undated due to the lack of finds but a later prehistoric date was inferred. A single fragment of probable late Bronze Age to early Iron Age pottery together with worked flint fragments were found (Kilpatrick 2009). The findings of the evaluation and excavation phases were also included and discussed in a subsequent report on a watching brief also carried out by GUARD in 2010 (Kilpatrick 2010). Post-excavation work, including the obtaining of radiocarbon dates and environmental sample analysis has further refined the dating of the features found in the excavation area Trench 2. The largest of the pits, 2099, returned a radio-carbon date of 2490-2220 cal BC (late neolithic) while willow and hazel charcoal from a linear feature produced a date of 3250-3100 cal BC (early neolithic). The latter may have represented the remains of a wattle structure, possibly a windbreak rather than something more substantial. Environmental finds generally included cereal grains, hazelnut shells and

hazel and alder charcoal. The ploughmarks may have been contemporary with the putative wattle panelling (Kilpatrick 2012).

2.8 East of this excavation (MHG49950) a watching brief during a topsoil strip and subsequent excavation were carried out by Headland Archaeology and Alba Archaeology between June 2005 and February 2006 on a development site for Tulloch Homes at Culduthel, designated 'Phase 5'. This revealed multi-period use of the site from the prehistoric through to the 2nd century AD. The more important element of the site was the Iron Age occupation. A slightly oval enclosure (see MHG32413) located first in the earlier evaluation measured 52m by 41m with a southwest-facing entrance. The enclosure had one phase, and while the interior contained a number of truncated pits and postholes no obvious buildings, other than a four-post structure, could be identified. The main settlement activity was to the north-west and northeast of the enclosure. The area to the northeast contained a large cobbled work area from which abundant metalworking debris was recovered. The northwest area contained a total of 19 buildings, 16 of which were roundhouses. Six were situated on flat ground at the top of a small rise; one contained an iron-smelting furnace and was clearly a workshop, another was a substantial roundhouse, some 18m in diameter. At the base of the small rise were a further 11 roundhouses, a stone-built workshop and what has been tentatively interpreted as a Bronze Age ring-ditch house. One roundhouse was extremely large, 19.5 m in diameter, and was situated in an area of deep hillwash. This had been exceptionally well preserved along with an area of industrial deposits with a deep stratigraphic sequence relating to the production of iron, copper alloys, glass (with fragments interpreted as the remains of a Roman vessel) and enamel. A total of 9 iron-smelting furnaces were found in this area, with the last firing in situ. All but one were in a roundhouse. The range of buildings and their good preservation was considered unusual (Murray 2007).

2.9 Also at Culduthel at Oldtown of Leys (HER MHG32413) an oval-shaped palisaded enclosure with a possible ring-ditch within the interior. A putative entrance may be seen either to the west or north-east. There are possible cremation pits within. (NMRS 2004) In May 2005, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Headland Archaeology on Phase 5 of a proposed housing development at Culduthel Mains Farm. The main objective was to locate and investigate a palisaded enclosure that was visible as a cropmark. The evaluation confirmed the location of the enclosure and uncovered a variety of features that proved some settlement activity was present inside the enclosure and across the whole evaluated area (Murray 2005). A full topsoil strip was carried out by Headland Archaeology and Alba Archaeology in 2005 which uncovered the remains of a substantial Iron Age settlement and industrial centre to the northeast and northwest of the enclosure. The oval enclosure itself measured 51m x 42m and had a 1.75m wide entrance that faced southwest. Preservation was good and it survived to a depth of up to 0.8m. Packing stones were abundant throughout with two tiers of edge-set slabs forming packing at the terminals. Internal features consisted of a few truncated pits and postholes. A 'four-poster' was the only obvious structure. It was not clear whether the internal features were contemporary with the enclosure and while their location may have implied this, it could also have been an accident of preservation and many features could have been lost through plough truncation (Murray 2007).

2.10 A Later Iron Age metal-working site at Culduthel (HER MHG56080) Evidence for occupation related to metal working in the Late Iron Age and/or pictish period was exposed and recorded at Culduthel, Inverness, during an evaluation in 2005 and excavation in 2007 by Headland Archaeology. The remains, a metallised surface, a few pits containing metalworking debris and some slag present in the upper fills of an



infilled palaeochannel on the east side of the site, were relatively small scale and not in workshops. The metallised surface lay isolated on the west side of the site but may have been associated with industrial activity outside the excavation boundary. A sample from an upper deposit of this feature returned a radio-carbon date of AD570-655. Eleven iron objects and a copper alloy nail-headed pin were recovered from this deposit. The vitrified remains from the site indicate that both smelting and smithing of iron was taking place in the vicinity, however there was no evidence for in situ iron working. The most significant deposit of diagnostic material was recovered from pit 036; its upper fill was dated to AD 770-990 (Jones 2005; Murray 2008, 2010).

2.11 600m NE of the proposed development is a ring cairn (MHG3787) Clava-type cairn, Culduthel: 'The cairn has been placed on a small natural rise. It is now at the edge of a patch of thin woodland. It has been so completely robbed that only a few stones of the peristalith remain in situ and a few more stones lie where they have fallen outwards from their original positions. The stones are considerable rounded boulders set on end, four of them contiguous. They vary in height from 1 foot 9 inches to 4 feet, the tallest being in the middle of the existing setting. There can be little doubt that they represent part of the south arc of a cairn kerb though they are not arranged on a true circle. On the OS 6" map of 1871 the site is marked as an almost complete circle lacking only part of the west side' (Low 1929, 217-24; Henshall 1963, 372). An evaluation was undertaken SW of this cairn site in May 2004 prior to housing development. A ring-cairn (NH64SE 26) assumed to be of the Clava type lies immediately NE of the site. Thirteen trenches (2000m<sup>2</sup>) were stripped, equivalent to 5% of the development area. Only one archaeological feature was uncovered, at the southern end of the site. This was a pit, circular in plan and filled with a charcoal-rich deposit. It was apparently isolated and no datable finds were recovered from the fill (Hastie 2004, 74).

2.12 North of the proposed development A watching brief (NMRS NH64SE 261) in April and May 2001 within agricultural land on the SE outskirts of Inverness during the topsoil removal phase of the construction of the Southern Distributor Road led to the recording of a total of 128 archaeological features. The majority were fire-pits or cooking pits containing heated stones, charcoal and occasionally, in situ structural stonework forming a windbreak. Artefacts were few but variations in the morphology, stratigraphy and location (in terms of subsoil) of these pits would suggest that they could be assigned to both recent and prehistoric times. In addition, a partial and truncated ring-ditch was recorded, as was a stretch of palisade trench containing both pottery and flint. Modern features including borrow-pits and agricultural burials were also found. Topsoil depth varied considerably over the route, with some features being severely truncated and others well preserved. The majority of the features were found on the 50m OD terrace; the lower ground at close to 40m OD contained few archaeological remains (Suddaby 2001, 57).

2.13 At Holm Mains Farm (MHG52928) two linear features were investigated during archaeological excavations in 2001. Previous trial trenching had indicated that the features may form part of an enclosure of prehistoric or medieval date. However area excavation demonstrated that the northernmost ditch clearly cut the more substantial southernmost ditch. The earlier of the two ditches was wider and deeper with a steep sided U to V shaped profile. No artefacts were recovered from the ditch fill. The later ditch was shallow and flat bottomed. A large piece of relatively modern animal bone was recovered from the surface of the fill and this does not therefore provide a secure date for the feature itself. Palaeoenvironmental analysis of the ditch fills proved negative with nothing to suggest the presence of settlement in the vicinity. Other excavated features included a further undated linear feature, and two rubble-filled pits which are thought to be quarry pits which were infilled during the

agricultural improvements of the late 18th/early 19th century. During the earlier evaluation five undated postholes had also been identified. The archaeological potential of the site was felt to be low and no further work was recommended (Headland Archaeology 2001).

2.14 Knocknagael Substation (NMRS NH64SE 575) A watching brief was carried out in 2011 during groundwork associated with a new cable for an electricity substation. Various features were identified, mostly field drains or plough scores on the same orientation, but also a stone-lined hearth and some pits (McKeggie 2014, 105).

2.15 SE of Torbreck is a probable roundhouse and associated features (HER MHG51486) An archaeological watching brief in September 2008 by Alba Archaeology identified a total of 39 archaeological features, comprising pits and postholes in two distinct groups. There were no stratigraphic relationships and all the features had a single fill. The first group, comprising 22 features, could possibly include small structures such as "four posters" which are thought to have been used for storing grain. The second group of 17 features included a circle of post holes with two additional internal postholes and one pit. These features are interpreted as a probable roundhouse. Some of the postholes contained the remains of post packing and post pads. A single piece of worked flint was found in this area. A number of pottery sherds were found in association with some of the features but these have not been dated (Garry 2008).

2.16 Close to 2.17 at Fountainhead (HER MHG35431) oblique aerial photography (RCAHMSAP 1995) has revealed two cropmarks, about 40m apart, in a field 650m SW of Knocknagael farmsteading. Both are shown as arcs of ditch and measures about 110m and 80m across. It is impossible to determine the origin of these marks from aerial photography alone, although they do appear to be geological.

2.17 Wade's Military Road (HER MHG17894) runs to the W of the proposed development.

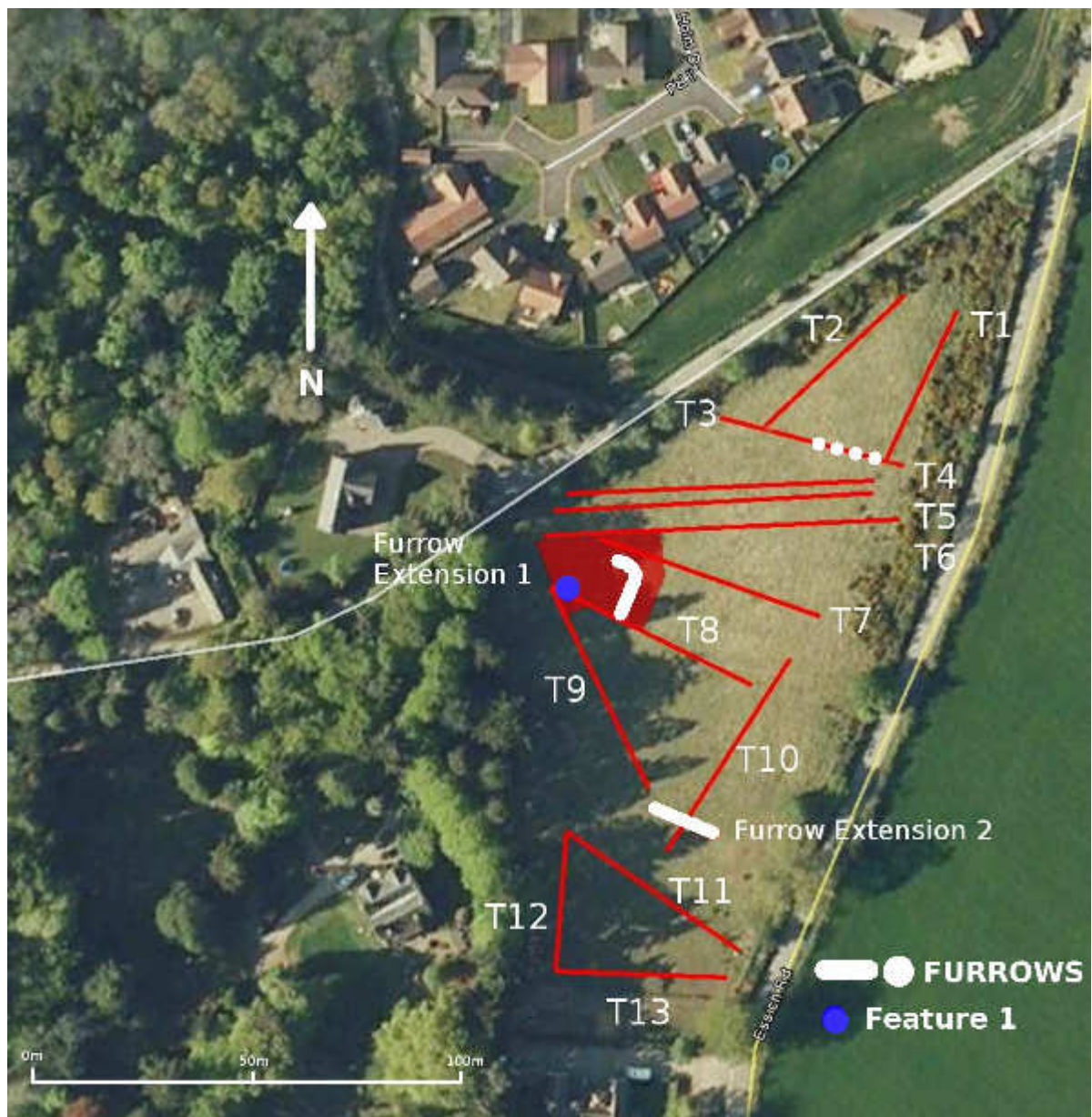
2.18 Ness Castle, Listed Category B is an 1830s villa formerly called Darchoville (HER MHG15778). Circa 1830. Large single storey villa over raised basement, with some later attic fenestration in N elevation.

2.19 On the SW side of the proposed development is Drumdevan House (HER MHG15721) is an earlier 19th century, 2-storey, 3-bay house with outer bowed bays fronting late 18th century house of similar size forming double pile dwelling. Harled with self-coloured painted ashlar margins. Centre door masked by circa 1900 conservatory porch; tripartites in ground and 1st floors of bowed bays, which terminate in bowed piended slated roofs. Ground floor canted bay in E gable; 2- and 4-pane glazing; coped end stacks; slate roofs (HES website online). It is Listed Category C.

2.20 Torbreck appears on the early maps of the area (Illus 4-7) and no features of interest appear in the area of the proposed development. The First and Second OS maps (Illus 8,9) and 1995 aerial photograph (Illus 10) show the land was agricultural land and there are no features of interest evident within the proposed development.

### 3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Evaluation trenching was carried out using a 20-ton excavator between December 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. As the site extends to some 1.6Ha, a 7% evaluation thus required approximately 1120m<sup>2</sup> of topsoil removal, which equated to c.625 linear metres of trenching with a 1.8m bladed bucket. In total, amongst 13 evaluation trenches, 679 linear metres of trenching was completed, equating to approximately 7.63% site coverage. An additional 561m<sup>2</sup> was later excavated employing two box trenches to investigate and verify several heavily truncated furrows, one of which (Furrow 1) had a pronounced curvature at the northern terminus, which at first strongly suggested a ring ditch (*please see* 'Furrow Extensions 1 & 2' in Illus 2 for locations).



Illus 3 GPS locations of CA315 Essich Road evaluation trenches 1-13, and box trenches labelled 'Furrow Extension 1 & 2'. (Image c. Digital Globe 2017).

Trench No.	Approximate dimensions	Comments
1	32m x 1.8m.	No finds or features noted.
2	40m x 1.8m.	No finds or features noted.
3	45m x 1.8m.	Traces of four heavily truncated furrows running approximately N – S at >10cm in depth.
4	70m x 1.8m	No finds or features noted.
5	75m x 1.8m	No finds or features noted.
6	85m x 1.8m	Contained portions of Irregular Furrow 1 (Furrow Extension 1).
7	54m x 1.8m	Contained portions of Irregular Furrow 1 (Furrow Extension 1).
8	52m x 1.8m	Location of pit (F1) near intersection with T9, western edge.
9	52m x 1.8m	Location of pit (F1) near intersection with T8, western edge.
10	53m x 1.8m	Furrow extension 2 in southern portion of trench
11	49m x 1.8m	No finds or features noted.
12	32m x 1.8m	No finds or features noted.
13	40m x 1.8m	No finds or features noted.
Furrow Extension 1	30m x 17m max extent (irregular)	Contains F1 and extends across western areas of T6-T9. NOTE: Overall 10m buffer reduced to 3m on NW edge due to limitations imposed by tree fencing.
Furrow Extension 2	17m x 3m	Rectangular trench to characterise nature of small linear furrow. No finds or features noted.

A combination of linear and subsequent investigative box trenching produced a soil strip totalling 1783m<sup>2</sup> or 11.14% of the development area, once all possible features were investigated. All trenches were closely inspected; any potential archaeological features were then hand-excavated and recorded. As mentioned above, two furrows which extended beyond the original trench dimensions were opened to fully reveal their nature. Normally, archaeological traces of rig and furrow cultivation methods are not closely investigated, but given the irregular nature of furrow 1 which contained a sharp curvature that initially suggested a possible ring ditch, and furrow 2 in Trench 10 which was neatly cut and unusually small in section (0.25m wide by 0.20m max depth), additional topsoil removal was necessary to conclusively identify these two features.

In addition, the base of a heavily truncated pit (F1) containing moderate charcoal fragments and in-situ burning was excavated within the box trench for Furrow Extension 1. A five litre soil samples was obtained after the feature was excavated and recorded. It should be noted that a substantial tree protection buffer zone extending out to 15m from the property boundary only allowed 3m of clearing along the NW edge of pit F1; additional archaeological features may well lie here given the previous finds at Holm Mains Farm (Headland Archaeology 2007).

This feature was dated to the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition period 4173 (81.5%) 3987 cal BC.



Illus 4 Irregular furrow located between Trenches 5 and 9 along western edge of site which initially was a suspect ring ditch. Later investigation revealed an 18m linear extension away from the right of the frame.



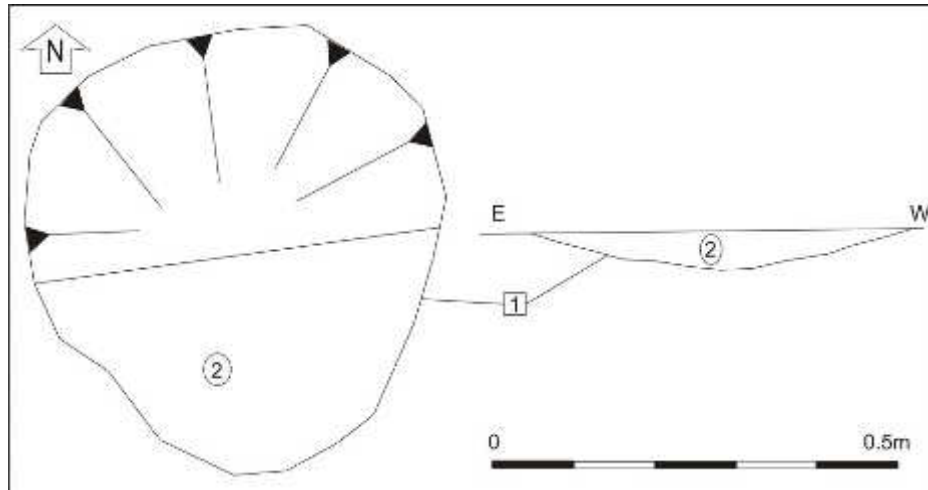
Illus 5 Section through irregular furrow.



Illus 6 Shallow furrow located in Trench 10.



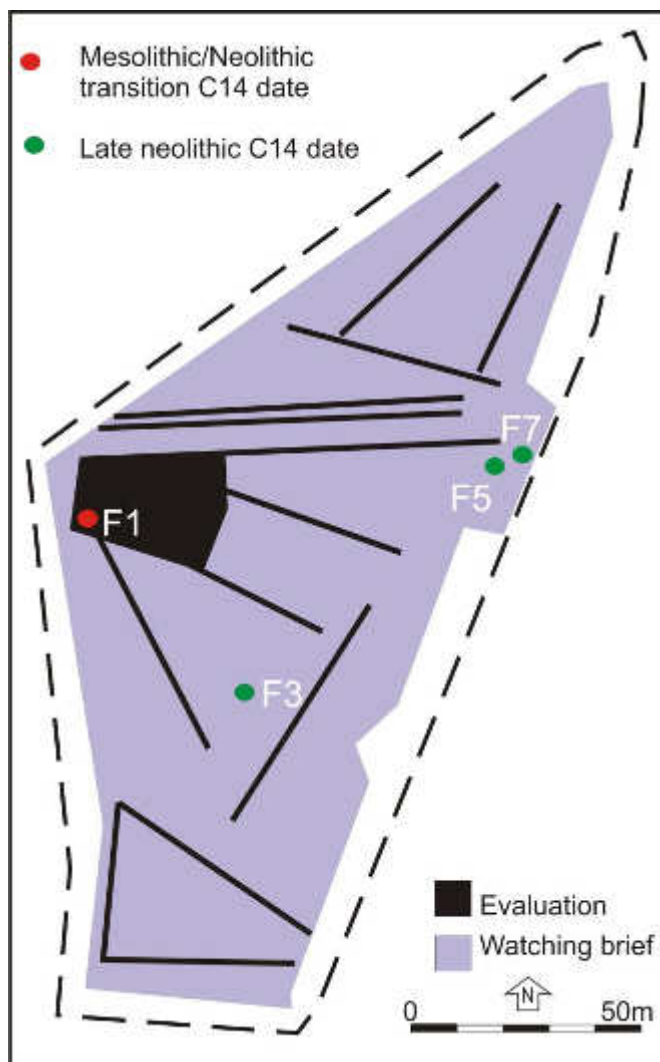
Illus 7 Heavily truncated pit or post-hole base (F1) located at junction of Trenches 8 and 9, western edge. NH 65570 41346



Illus 8 Plan and section of F1

#### 4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was maintained from 19-25th January 2017. Three further features were identified, recorded and excavated, F3, F5 and F7 (Illus 9).

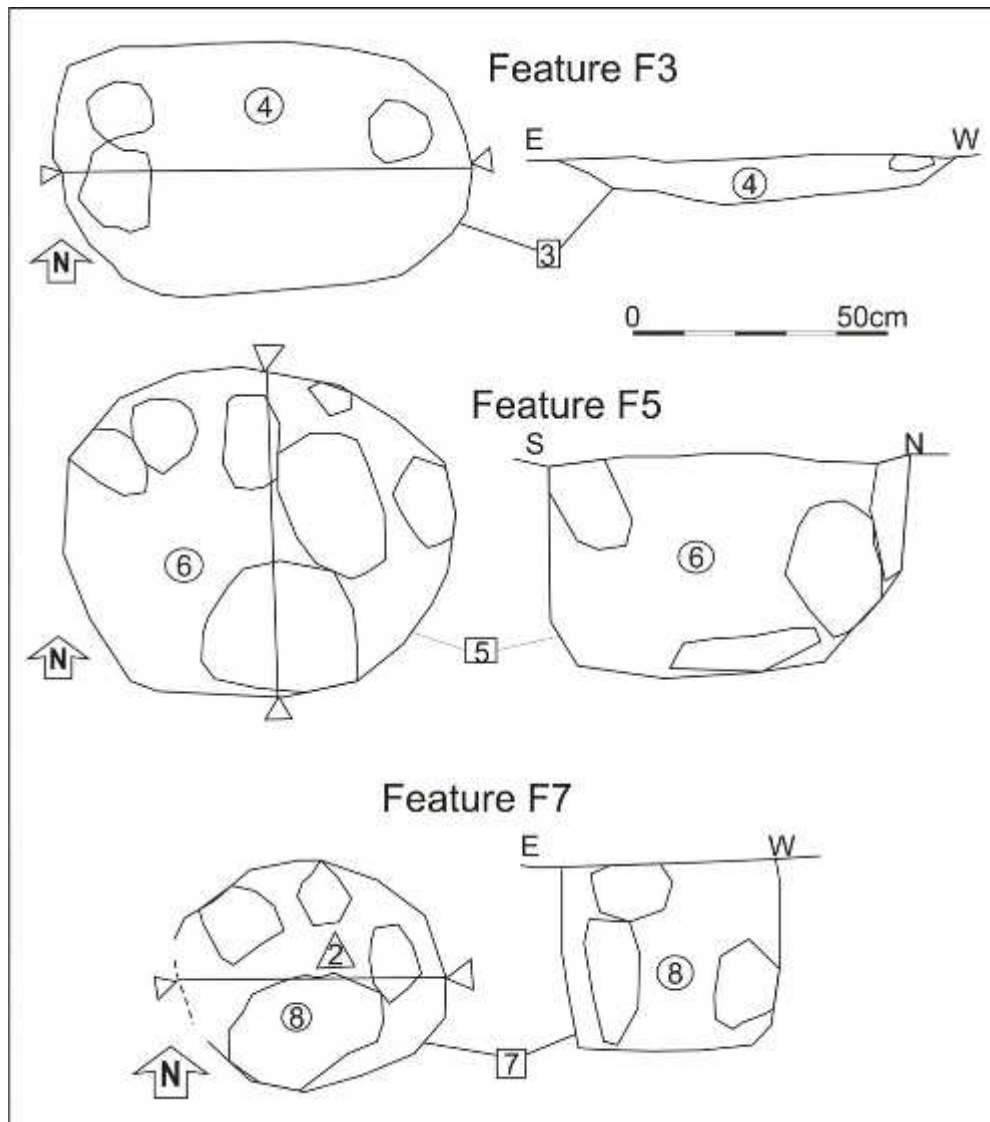


Illus 9 Plan showing evaluation and watching brief areas and main features excavated (based on *c. Digital Globe 2017*).

F3 (NH 65601 41309) was the base of a pit or hearth 82 x 50 x 9cm in size; there were three stones in the base of the feature which was fill with charcoal; no finds were recovered from the 100% hand excavation. Charcoal from the feature was dated to the Late Neolithic Period 2821 (76.7%) 2631 calBC and burnt bone to 2906 (57.8%) 2859 calBC. There is also modern contamination within this pit (see Table 1 below) due to agricultural activities and burrowing.

F5 (NH 65656 41354) was the base of a post-hole 70 x 60 x 40cm. The fill was medium grey sandy clay loam with very sparse charcoal and medium rounded packing stones but there was no enough material to allow a radiocarbon date from the sample.

F7 (NH 65660 41355) was the base of a post-hole. The fill was medium grey sandy clay loam with very sparse charcoal and medium rounded packing stones but there was no enough material to allow a radiocarbon date from the sample. One flint blade (SF2) was recovered from the fill and it has been dated to the later Neolithic (see below). F5 and F7 were 3.2m apart (centre to centre).



Illus 10 Plans and sections F3, F5, F7



## 5 ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY AND FINDS

**Julie Franklin, Julie Lochrie, Angela Walker, Headland Archaeology**

### **Introduction**

Four bulk sediment samples, ranging in size from five to 25 litres, were recovered. Samples were from post-holes, a hearth and a pit. The aims of the assessment were to assess the presence, preservation and abundance of any environmental remains and to determine the potential of the material in indicating the character and significance of the deposit.

### **Methodology**

Bulk samples were subjected to flotation and wet sieving in a Siraf-style flotation machine. The floating debris (the flot) was collected in a 250µm sieve and once dry, scanned using a binocular microscope. Any material remaining in the flotation tank (retent) was wet-sieved through a 1mm mesh and air-dried. All samples were scanned using a stereomicroscope at magnifications of x10 and up to x100. Identifications, where provided, were confirmed using modern reference material and seed atlases including Cappers *et al* (2006) and Zohary *et al* (2012) nomenclature for wild taxa follows Stace (1997). Faunal remains were examined or under low magnification and, as far as possible, identified to species and skeletal element, using modern reference material and with reference to Schmid (1972) and Hillson (1992).

### **Results**

Results of the assessment are presented in the tables of retents and flots results below. Material suitable for AMS (Accelerated Mass Spectrometry) radiocarbon dating is shown in the tables. The majority of samples had varying proportions of modern roots

#### ***Wood charcoal***

Rectilinear oak charcoal was recovered from all four sampled features. The fragments were insufficient for AMS dating.

#### ***Other charred plant remains***

Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nutshell fragments were present in all sampled features though only one feature, post-hole [F5], produced a quantity sufficient for AMS dating. Two 'weed seeds' were recovered from two features: a single seed of bedstraws (*Galium* sp.) from pit [F1]; and a single seed of violets (*Viola* sp.) from hearth [F3]. A small number of indeterminate tubers, indeterminate tree buds and possible catkins were recovered from hearth [F3]. This material is sufficient for AMS dating.

#### ***Burnt bone***

A small assemblage of highly fragmented indeterminate burnt mammal bone was recovered from three features: hearth [F3], from which the majority of the assemblage derived; and post-holes [F5] and [F7]. Three fragments of bone from hearth [F3] were tentatively identified as long bone fragments from an indeterminate small/medium sized mammal. The rest of the bone assemblage did not exhibit any key diagnostic features or countable elements and it was not possible to identify any species type. The paucity of remains precludes any further analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

The finds and environmental assemblage offers little insight into site chronology or economy. The pottery and lithics suggest a broadly prehistoric date for post-holes

[F5] and [F7]. The charred hazel nutshell fragments in hearth [F3] suggests that wild food was collected and consumed. The presence of catkins and tree buds in the hearth may indicate species collected for fuel in addition to oak. The small burnt bone assemblage did not offer any information relating to site economy. It was not possible to identify any species type or skeletal element from the assemblage. The paucity of remains precludes any further analysis.

## FINDS CATALOGUE

Context	Feature	Quantity	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot Date
4	Hearth [F3]	1	<1g	Pottery (Mod)	whiteware	small fragment	18th C - present
4	Hearth [F3]	4	<1g	Industrial Waste	slag	small vitrified frags	-
6	Post-hole [F5]	10	<1g	Lithics	debitage	flint chips, one burnt	PH
6	Post-hole [F5]	1	<1g	Industrial Waste	slag	small vitrified frag	-
8	Post-hole [F7]	2	<1g	Lithics	debitage	flint chips, one burnt	PH
8	Post-hole [F7]	2	1	Pottery(PH)	courseware	small sherd and a frag	PH

Table 1 Finds from samples

## ENVIRONMENTAL TABLES

Context	Sample	Feature	Sample Vol (l)	Ceramic		Stone	Industrial Waste	Burnt mammal bone		Hazel nutshell		Charcoal		Sufficient for AMS?	Comments
				Pottery				Lithics	Other	Qty	Wgt (g)	Qty	Wgt (g)		
102	1	Pit [F1]	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	<0.1	+++	15	N	rectilinear oak charcoal
4	2	Hearth [F3]	15	+	-	+	++++	30.2	+	<0.1	++++	20	Y	rectilinear oak charcoal fragments, indeterminate small/medium sized mammal bone; 377 fragments, Worm egg capsules	
6	3	Post-hole [F5]	10	-	++	+	+	0.1	++	0.2	+++	17	N	rectilinear oak charcoal, indet burnt mammal bone; 1 fragment	
8	4	Post-hole [F7]	25	+	++	-	+	0.1	+	<0.1	+++	15	N	indeterminate burnt mammal bone fragment; not retained	

Key: + = rare (0-5), ++ = occasional (6-15), +++ = common (15-50) and ++++ = abundant (>50), **NB** charcoal over 10mm is sufficient for identification and AMS dating

Table 2 Retent sample results

Context	Sample	Feature	Total flot Vol (ml)	Weed seed	Other Charred plant remains	Charcoal		sufficient for AMS?	Comments
						Qty	Max size (mm)		
102	1	Pit [F1]	30	+	-	++++	10	N	rectilinear oak charcoal, weeds; bedstraws, uncharred root fragments, fungal sclerotia ++
4	2	Hearth [F3]	100	-	++	++++	20	Y	indet tubers ++, indet tree bud +, indet ?catkins +, rectilinear oak charcoal, uncharred root fragments +, fungal sclerotia++++
6	3	Post-hole [F5]	30	-	-	+++	10	N	rectilinear oak charcoal, uncharred root fragments +++++, fungal sclerotia ++
8	4	Post-hole [F7]	200	-	-	++++	15	N	rectilinear charcoal fragments, uncharred root fragments +++, uncharred wood +++, worm egg capsules +++, fungal sclerotia +++

Table 3 Flot sample result

## 6 The Lithics

Torben Bjarke Ballin

### INTRODUCTION

Late 2016, Cameron Archaeology carried out a 7% evaluation and watching brief of a c. 1.6ha parcel of land located on the south side of Inverness, at the junction of Essich Road and Torbreck Road; the site was centred on NGR: NH 65603 41349, at 40-50m above OD (Lenfert & Cameron 2017).

Evidence of heavily truncated ridge and furrow agriculture was evident, while one heavily truncated pit or post-hole base yielded charcoal fragments and was sampled and recorded. A 100% watching brief was carried out from 19-25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and three further features were recorded: the bases of two post-holes and the base of a pit or hearth filled with charcoal. One post-hole base contained a flint blade, whereas two other flint artefacts are uncontexted.

The purpose of this brief report is to characterize the lithic artefacts in general terms. From this characterization, it is sought to date and discuss the finds. The evaluation of the lithic material is based upon a detailed catalogue (see below) of the lithic finds from Essich Road, and in the present report the artefacts are referred to by their original SF number.

### KEY DEFINITIONS

The definitions of the main lithic categories are as follows:

*Chips*: All flakes and indeterminate pieces the greatest dimension (GD) of which is  $\leq 10\text{mm}$ .

*Flakes*: All lithic artefacts with one identifiable ventral (positive or convex) surface,  $GD > 10$  mm and  $L < 2W$  ( $L$  = length;  $W$  = width).

*Indeterminate pieces*: Lithic artefacts which cannot be unequivocally identified as either flakes or cores. Generally the problem of identification is due to irregular breaks, frost-shattering or fire-crazing. *Chunks* are larger indeterminate pieces, and in, for example, the case of quartz, the problem of identification usually originates from a piece flaking along natural planes of weakness rather than flaking in the usual conchoidal way.

*Blades and microblades*: Flakes where  $L \geq 2W$ . In the case of blades  $W > 8$  mm, in the case of microblades  $W \leq 8$  mm.

*Cores*: Artefacts with only dorsal (negative or concave) surfaces – if three or more flakes have been detached, the piece is a core, if fewer than three flakes have been detached, the piece is a split or flaked pebble.

*Tools*: Artefacts with secondary retouch (modification).

## CATALOGUE

- 1 SF 1 *Piercer* on robust tertiary hard percussion flake (34 x 22 x 9mm); fine-grained, light-grey flint; probably Yorkshire flint. The piece has fine faceting of its platform remnant instead of traditional trimming of its dorsal face immediately below the platform-edge. This defines the piece as a Levallois-like flake.

A strong piercer tip, curving slightly to the right, was formed at the distal end of the tool blank by merging two lateral retouches. The outermost part of the tip has broken-off, but the tip displays obvious abrasion from use as a piercer. In addition, the right lateral side, proximal end, displays fine, flat chipping from the expedient use as a knife. Unstratified.

- 2 SF 2 *Piece with edge-retouch* on elegant tertiary hard percussion blade (49 x 19 x 7mm); fine-grained, mottled, light-grey flint; Yorkshire flint. The piece has fine faceting of its platform remnant instead of traditional trimming of its dorsal face immediately below the platform-edge. This defines the piece as a Levallois-like blade (Illus 11).

One centimetre of fine retouch at the proximal end, left lateral side, may be hafting retouch. Fine, flat chipping along the left lateral side suggests use as a knife. Discrete *gloss* along the right lateral side, suggests that the piece may have been used for the cutting/sickling of vegetable matter, which cut be cereal, grass, reeds, etc. One of the two dorsal arrises displays modification in the form of light rubbing/abrasion. Feature 007, Context 008 (base of posthole).

- 3 SF 3 is a secondary hard percussion flake (14 x 19 x 5); fine-grained, discoloured flint. Unstratified.



Illus 11 Flint blade from F7

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In total, three flint artefacts were recovered in connection with the evaluation and watching brief. They include one flake (SF 3), one piercer (SF 1), and one blade with edge-retouch (SF 2). SF 1 and SF 3 are unstratified, whereas SF 2 was retrieved from the base of a robust posthole. All blanks were manufactured by the application of hard percussion, and SF 1 and SF 2 are both Levallois-like blanks.

Although it can be difficult to distinguish safely between some Scottish Late Upper Palaeolithic (LUP) blanks and some later Neolithic (MN/LN) blanks, there is little doubt that this small assemblage dates to the later Neolithic. The examination of the Hamburgian assemblage from Howburn, South Lanarkshire (Ballin *et al.* 2010; forthcoming) showed that the blanks were predominantly based on grey Yorkshire or Doggerland flint, and particularly the blades displayed finely faceted platform remnants (occasionally with a small *en eperon* spur). Many Scottish MN/LN flakes and blanks are also based on Yorkshire flint, and finely faceted platform remnants testify to the application of the sophisticated Levallois-like technique (Ballin 2011a; 2011b; Suddaby & Ballin 2010).

In the present case, a date in the MN/LN is suggested by:

- The use of hard percussion for the production of blades (the norm in the MN/LN), instead of soft percussion (the norm in the Hamburgian);
- Abrasion of high points; many implements from the Scottish MN/LN displays abrasion or polish of edges and corners (Ballin 2011b);
- Discrete gloss along the right lateral side suggests exploitation of vegetable matter which would be expected in an agricultural economy, where gloss would be more unusual on implements made by mobile people living on the Scottish early post-glacial tundra; and

- The recovery of SF 2 from the base of a posthole which may have supported a robust structural post; the LUP hunter-gatherers of the tundra are more likely to have lived in light tepee-like structures (see for example Holm 1991, Fig. 8).

This assemblage may be numerically small, but with other assemblages recovered recently by Cameron Archaeology it adds to our growing knowledge on the lithic technological approaches applied by north-east Scotland's later Neolithic settlers. These sites include, *inter alia*, Wester Clerkhill at Peterhead, from which numerous Levallois-like cores and blanks were recovered (Ballin 2016b), and Aden Country Park near Mintlaw, which also yielded Levallois-like material (Ballin 2016a).

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

A 7% archaeological evaluation was carried out between December 19<sup>th</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, on a c.1.6 hectare parcel of land located on the south side of Inverness. Evidence of heavily truncated ridge and furrow agriculture was evident, while one heavily truncated pit base yielded charcoal fragments which were radiocarbon dated to the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition (4173-3987 cal BC). A 100% watching brief was carried out from 19-25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and three further features were recorded, the bases of two post-holes and the base of a pit or hearth filled with charcoal. One post-hole base contained a Late Neolithic flint blade but insufficient dating material was recovered from either posthole to produce a radiocarbon date. The charcoal and burnt bone recovered from the hearth produced two radiocarbon dates of the Late Neolithic period (charcoal 2821-2631 calBC; bone 2906-2859 calBC).

Although these features do not allow for much interpretation due to their fragmentary condition and contents, activity at the site included hearths in use on the site in the Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic period as well as the later Neolithic and this adds to the sites of this period known from the rich surrounding area.

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## APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context	Description	Date
F1 101	Cut of pit F1. Shallow cut of truncated pit, measuring 50cm E-W x 12cm max depth. Uncertain cut along south-eastern portion of pit. Heavily truncated. NH 65570 41346	5264+- 29 4173 (81.5%) 3987 cal BC
102	Fill of Pit F1. Fill of Cut 101 (Pit) consisting of a mid- to dark-grey sandy silt with heavy gritty-gravel inclusions. Concentrated charcoal along northern perimeter of feature. 1 5L soil sample was taken <001>	
F3	Shallow round bottomed ?hearth. 82 x 50 x 9cm. NH 65601 41309	
4	Fill of F3 charcoal and flat stones	Charcoal 2821 (76.7%) 2631 calBC Bone 2906 (57.8% 2859 calBC

F5	Cut of post-hole 70 x 60 x 40cm. NH 65656 41354	
6	Fill of F5. Grey clay loam topsoil with upright stone packing	
F7	Cut of post-hole 35x35x40cm. NH 65660 41355	
8	Fill of F7. Grey clay loam topsoil with upright stone packing	8

## APPENDIX 2 SAMPLES

Sample no	Description	Date
1	Pit fill charcoal	5264+- 29 4173 (81.5%) 3987 cal BC
2	Pit fill charcoal	Charcoal 2821 (76.7%) 2631 calBC Bone 2906 (57.8%) 2859 calBC
3	Post hole fill, grey clay sandy loam	No dating material
4	Post hole fill, grey clay sandy loam	No dating material

Context	Description	Date
F1 101	Cut of pit F1. Shallow cut of truncated pit, measuring 50cm E-W x 12cm max depth. Uncertain cut along south-eastern portion of pit. Heavily truncated. NH 65570 41346	5264+- 29 4173 (81.5%) 3987 cal BC
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4	Fill of F3 charcoal and flat stones	Charcoal 2821 (76.7%) 2631 calBC Bone 2906 (57.8%) 2859 calBC
F5	Cut of post-hole 70 x 60 x 40cm. NH 65656 41354	
6	Fill of F5. Grey clay loam topsoil with upright stone packing	
F7	Cut of post-hole 35x35x40cm. NH 65660 41355	

## APPENDIX 3 FINDS

SF number	Description	Context
1	flint	u/s
2	Flint blade	8 (F7)
3	flint	u/s

## APPENDIX 4 PHOTOGRAPHS

### Evaluation

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
DSC_9512	S	Soil strip in Trench 1 underway
DSC_9514	N	Trench 1 completed
DSC_9516	SW	Soil strip in Trench 2 underway
DSC_9518	W	Soil strip in Trench 2 completed
DSC_9519	W	Soil strip in Trench 3 completed
DSC_9521	E	Junction of completed trenches T2 and T3
DSC_9522	E	Junction of completed trenches T1 and T3
DSC_9524	W	Trench 5 completed (portrait view)
DSC_9525	W	Trench 5 completed (landscape view)
DSC_9526	N	General view towards T1-3 from E terminus of T5
DSC_9527	NW	General view towards T1-3 from E terminus of T5
DSC_9528	W	General view towards T1-3 from E terminus with T5 in left of frame
DSC_9549	W	Trench 6 with heavy morning frost
DSC_9552	SW	Trench 10 with heavy morning frost
DSC_9554	SW	Trench 10 with heavy morning frost
DSC_9555	W	Trench 6 with heavy morning frost
DSC_9558	S	Base of truncated furrow in Trench 10
DSC_9560	E	Section of excavated furrow in Trench 10 prior to extension
DSC_9561	E	Section of excavated furrow in Trench 10 prior to extension
DSC_9562	W	Section of excavated furrow in Trench 10 prior to extension
DSC_9565	NE	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 6 and 7.
DSC_9585	E	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 6 and 7.
DSC_9589	N	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 6 and 7.
DSC_9601	N	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 6 and 7.
DSC_9602	NNW	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 6 and 7.
DSC_9603	NW	Irregular base of heavily truncated furrow in Furrow Extension 2, at junction of trenches 8 and 9.
DSC_9606	W	Trench 7 completed with Furrow Extension 1 underway to reveal extent of deposit (irregular furrow)
DSC_9608	S	General view of Trench 10 with eastern end of Trench 8 in right of frame.
DSC_9613	NW	Furrow extension 1 underway at junction of T6 and T7.
DSC_9617	SW	Pre-excavation shot of Feature 1 in Trench 8 - Furrow Extension 1. Note charcoal staining along foreground area of pit.
DSC_9618	S	Feature 1 in relation to site – general photo.
DSC_9619	SE	Feature 1 as located beyond intersection of T5 and T7 during early phase of box extension.
DSC_9632	W	Irregular furrow visible as dark stain during opening of Furrow Extension 1.
DSC_9634	S	Irregular furrow visible as dark stain during opening of Furrow Extension 1.
DSC_9640	S	Section within Furrow 1 to ascertain nature of deposit

DSC_9641	S	Detail view of section through Furrow 1
DSC_9642	S	Detail view of section through Furrow 1
DSC_9666	E	Machine section through Furrow 1 after council permission to investigate lower strata for other potential underlying features.
DSC_9668	NE	Second machine section through Furrow 1 – underway.
DSC_9669	N	View of machine section through Furrow 1 in progress
DSC_9673	NE	Second machine section through Furrow 1 - completed.
DSC_9678	NE	Second machine section through Furrow 1 - completed.
DSC_9680	W	Pin flags marking locations of additional traces of furrow in Trench 3.

### Watching brief 19-25 January 2017

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_5388-9	F1 post-ex photos	S
DSC_5390-1	F1 post-ex photos	N
DSC_5392-3	F1 post-ex photos	S
DSC_5394-5	F1 post-ex photos	N
DSC_5396-420	Watching brief, clearing areas for bunds Eval Tr 10 area including modern plough scars	
DSC_5422	F3 pre ex	S
DSC_5423	F3 pre ex	W
DSC_5424-5	F3 pre ex	N
DSC_5426-7	F3 half sectioned	S
DSC_5428-9	F3 half sectioned	N
DSC_5430-2	F3 half sectioned	S
DSC_5433-5	F3 three stones in base - hearth?	S
DSC_5436	F3 three stones in base - hearth?	N
DSC_5437	F3 three stones in base - hearth?	W
DSC_5438-41	F3 stone in base	S
DSC_5442	F3 post ex	W
DSC_5443	F3 post ex	S
DSC_5444	F3 post ex	N
DSC_5445-6	Soil and stone bank along E side of site cleared to create new entranceway	E
DSC_5447-59	Clearing in centre of site E end eval trench Tr 3	
DSC_5460	Soil and stone bank along E side of site cleared to create new entranceway	
DSC_5461-2	Clearing new entrance	
DSC_5463	F7 (left) F5 (right) pre excavation	E
DSC_5464	F5 (left) F7 (right) pre excavation	NW
DSC_5465	F7 pre exc	SW
DSC_5466	F7 pre exc	S
DSC_5467	F5 pre ex	S
DSC_5468-9	F5 pre ex	NW
DSC_5470-1	F5	W

DSC_5472-9	Clearing in centre of site E end eval trench Tr 3	
DSC_5480-1	Packing stones in post-hole base F5	S
DSC_5482-3	F5 post ex	S
DSC_5484-5	F5 post ex	N
DSC_5486	F5 post ex	E
DSC_5487-8	F7 half section through rabbit burrow	N
DSC_5489-91	F7 half section through rabbit burrow	E
DSC_5492-5510	Soil strip around W end Tr 4/5	
DSC_5511-15	Soil strip E end Tr 4/5	
DSC_5516-9	F7 half exc post hole	S
DSC_5520-22	F7 half exc post hole showing gorse/broom roots growing into feature and animal borrow (right)	SE
DSC_5523	F7 post ex	S
DSC_5524-5	F7 post ex	W
DSC_5526	F7 post ex	N
DSC_5527	F7 post ex	E
DSC_5528-42	Soil strip SW of new entrance and E end Tr 7 including dump of modern cinders containing metal and plastic	
DSC_5543-53	Clearing soil and stone bank on edge of road; not a stone dyke but mostly soil accumulation	
DSC_5554-72	Soil strip NE corner of site W of eval Tr 1	
1	View of plough scars to NE corner of site facing NE.	
2	View of tree-bole facing NE.	
3	View of tree-bole facing NE.	
4	View of plough scars to NW corner of site facing SE.	
5	View of site upon excavation facing S.	
6	View of site upon excavation facing N.	
7	View of centre of site facing S.	
8	View of W side of site facing S.	
9	View of W side of site facing N.	
10	View of W side of site facing S.	
11	View of centre of site facing N.	
12	View of plough scars to centre of site facing NE.	
13	View of centre of site facing N.	
14	View of site upon excavation facing S.	
15	View of site upon excavation facing E.	
16	View of site upon excavation facing SW.	
17	View of centre of site upon excavation facing E.	
18	View of centre of site upon excavation facing NE – plough scars.	
19	View of site upon excavation facing N.	
31	View of centre of site facing W.	
21	View of site upon excavation facing NE.	



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