



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the Past and Future Together

UHI Accommodation
Land at Former Abattoir, Dornoch

Archaeological Evaluation
Interim Report

Report No.	HAS160908
Site Code	DOR16
Client	O'Brien Construction
Planning Ref	16/00887/FUL
OS Grid Ref	279771 889536
Date/ revision	26/9/2016
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation of part of the former Dornoch abattoir site identified a significant number of features. It is recommended that the area containing the features be subject to an excavation.

Acknowledgements

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Location

The site lies at the junction of Shore Road and The Meadows, Dornoch, by the entrance to Dornoch Business Park.

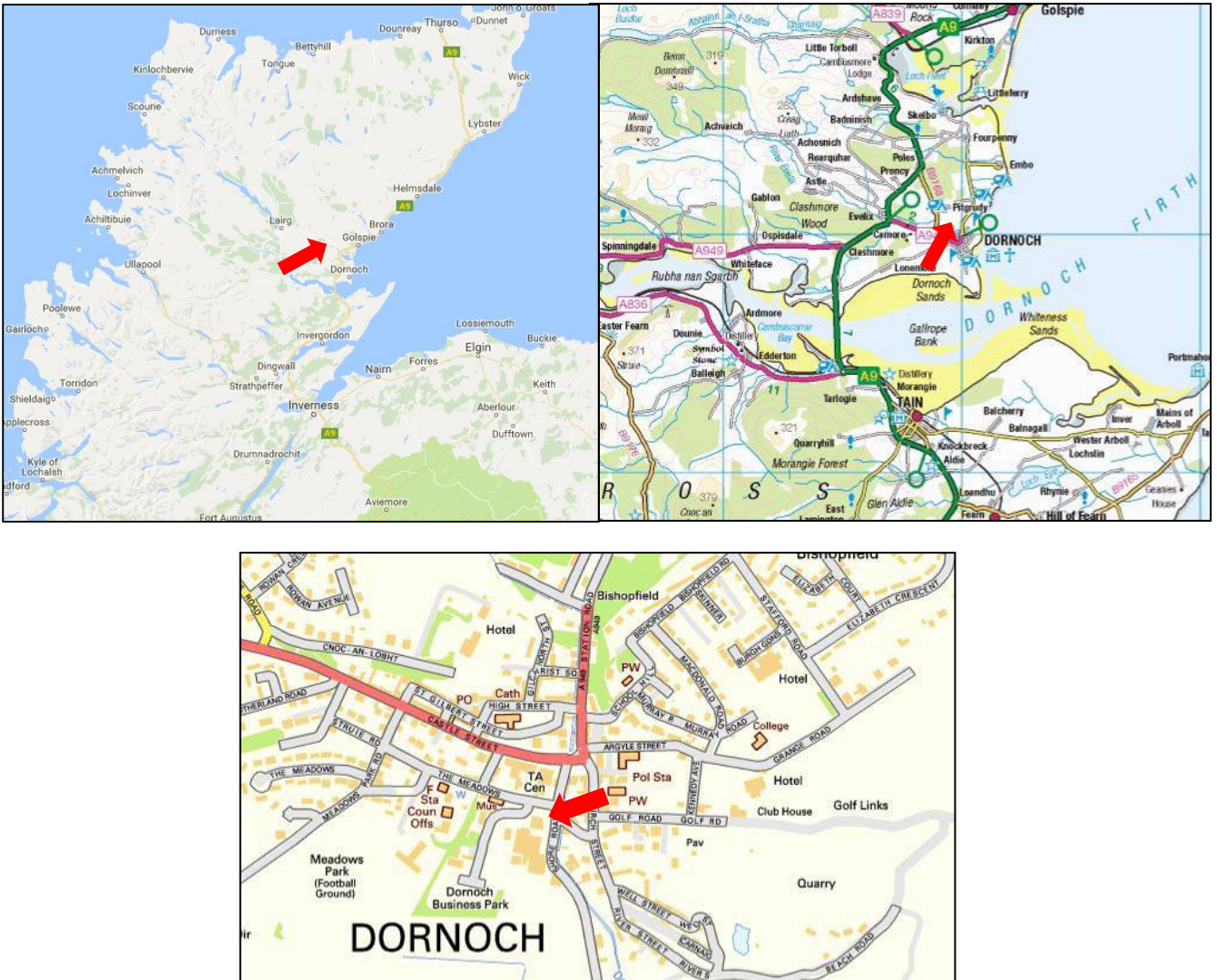


Figure 1 Project location (general)
From OS mapping, reproduced under Licence. Not to original scales

Legislation and Policy

The common principles underlying international conventions, national legislation and local authority planning policies are that cultural heritage assets should be identified in advance of development and safeguarded where practicable; if disturbance is unavoidable appropriate recording of features and

recovery of portable artefacts should take place. These have been set out in international and European Union agreements, and UK and Scottish legislation, as well as national and local planning policies¹.

Professional standards during the present project will be secured by adherence to the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

¹ A summary of relevant international, EU, UK and Scottish legislation and policies is available from the HAS office on request.

NOTES

ORIGINAL A3
 All levels and dimensions to be checked on site prior to construction / fabrication; report discrepancies immediately. Do not scale dimensions from this drawing. This drawing is copyright protected.

REVISION

A 19.02.16 Layout updated SG RK



SCALE

1:500

DATE

28.01.16

DRAWN

SG

CHECKED

RK

PROJECT

UHI Student Accommodation
 Dornoch

DRAWING

Site Masterplan

Threesixty Architecture

16-18 BANK STREET
 INVERNESS
 IV1 1QY
 T 01463 729229
 www.360architecture.com

DRAWING No.

15121IA(PL)101A

Figure 2 Site Layout

Background

This document sets out a proposed approach and is intended to form the basis of an agreement between all parties including the planning authority.

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER) shows a Franciscan Friary, MHG11790, located somewhere near the site, although the evidence for the friary's existence is at best scanty. The development site stands within the grounds of a former abattoir which, MHG46250, now demolished; the rubble from the demolition has been spread across the site.

Several investigations have been carried out on or near the site, the most important of which is EHG385 (see also EHG475), which identified and excavated the remains of iron working dating from the 9th to the 15th centuries, as well as several ditches and banks of similar date, and a structure. These all lay within a trench opened in the road immediately to the west, and some features may continue into the site. EHG681, a watching brief to the rear of the main abattoir building, found no archaeological remains.



Figure 3 First edition 25" OS map, surveyed 1872, Sutherland Sheet CXIII

The first edition OS 25" map (Sutherland Sheet CXIII) shows several structures and enclosures along the eastern and northern boundaries of the site.

In view of the proximity of the above sites the Historic Environment Team of Highland Council requested an archaeological evaluation ahead be conducted ahead of development.

The objectives were to:

- Examine and establish the nature and extent of any features of archaeological significance that might be affected by the proposed work, and to record these to professional standards, in line with current legislation and policy.
- 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 quickly and efficiently.

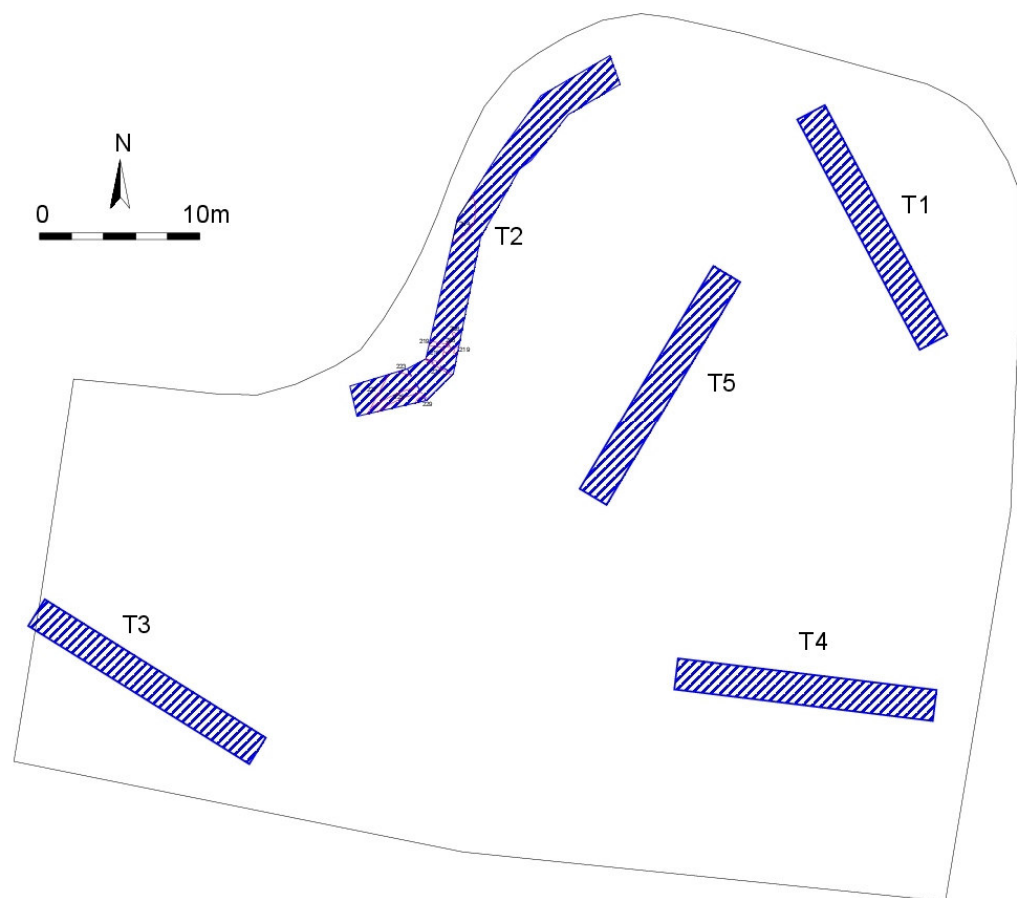


Figure 4 Trenches as dug. The locations differ from the proposed layout: T4 was relocated to avoid contaminated ground, T3 was realigned to investigate a slight depression, and T5 was relocated to ensure adequate coverage of the centre of the site

1. A desk-based assessment will be carried out to check for previously recorded sites and features. Sources to be consulted include but are not limited to the Highland Historic Environment Record; the National Monuments Record Scotland (NMRS); historic mapping available on the National Library of Scotland website; Statistical Accounts; OS Name Book.

2. A flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to clear rubble overburden from the trench locations to expose a sufficient area of topsoil allow excavation of the trenches, and the to strip topsoil down to the first soil change, which was then inspected by the archaeologist on site for signs of possible features or artefacts. The resulting surface cleaned by hand to clarify details.

3. Any features were excavated archaeologically according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' published standards, and a drawn and photographic record made. The camera locations and direction of all photographs taken were plotted on a site plan.

5. Palaeo-environmental sampling were taken from two contexts, **209** and **222**.

Results

The entire site was covered by crushed rubble from the demolished abattoir (direct observation by author during demolition), to a depth of between 0.3 and 0.6m. This was recorded as the uppermost layer in each trench; its uncompacted nature made stable sections difficult to achieve.

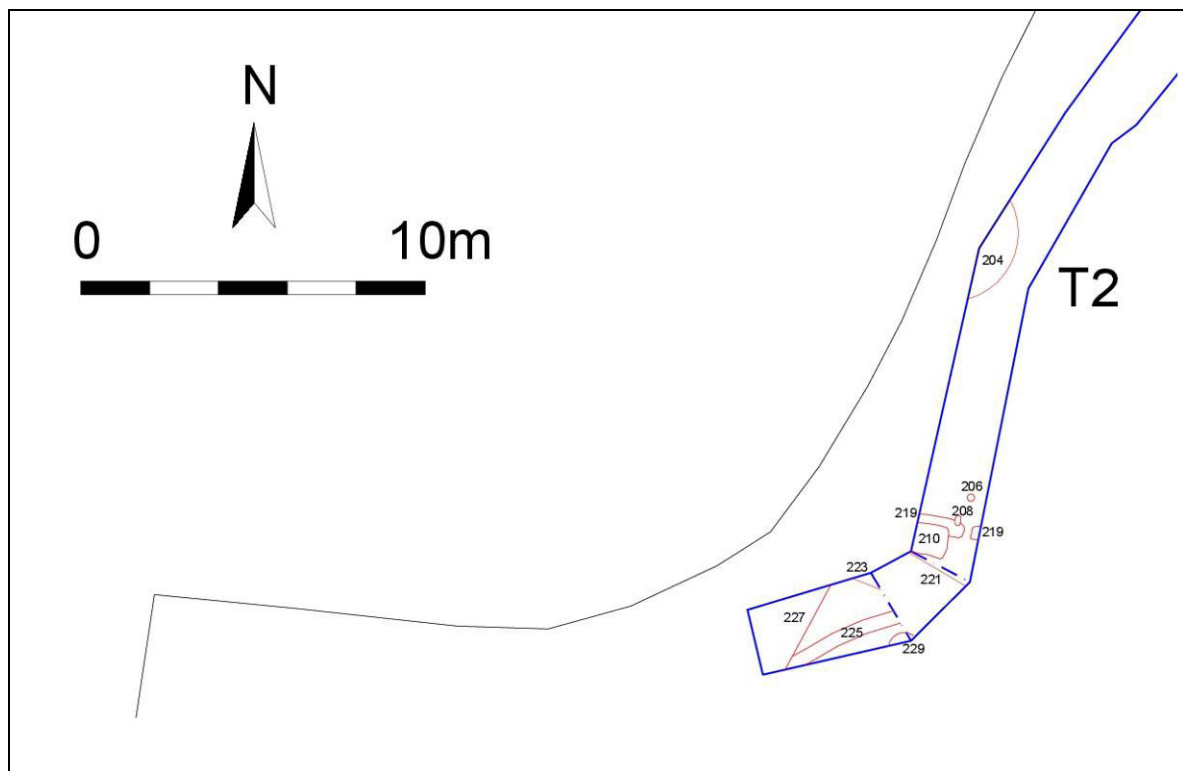


Figure 4 Location of features in T2

Trench 1 15.2 x 1.9m. Maximum depth 1.7m.

Rubble, **101**, to 0.75m in places, with concrete base intact in centre of trench. Above a loose sandy loam, **102**, with abundant stone and concrete; stonier at base, where its interface with the natural sand, **103**, was very sharp. A disturbed topsoil. Grooves in upper surface of **103** interpreted as made by toothed bucket.

In the NW end linear cut, **104**, was filled with redeposited material containing a foul water drain.

In the centre a spread of sandstone, **106**, including some roughly shaped blocks, appears to be all that remains of the buildings shown here on the 1st edition OS map.

Trench 2 23 x 1.9m. Maximum depth 1.1m.

Rubble, **201**, to 0.7m; at NE end this sat directly on disturbed natural sand, **202**, with machine marks at interface. The level to which the trench was excavated was increased at the southern end in order to expose several large features.

Towards the SW end a large feature, **221**, filled with a rather compact loam, **222**, with abundant cockle shells was cut into a remnant topsoil, **205**. This sealed a large feature, **223**, probably a pit, a linear feature, **225**, and a third feature of uncertain size and nature, **229**. All these features had similar, dark sandy loam fills; none were excavated

To the north the remnant topsoil, **205**, stopped short of a linear feature, **217**, which was cut by a small rectilinear posthole, **208**, and a larger rectilinear feature, **210**; the latter was backfilled with a mix, **211**, of sand redeposited natural sand and redeposited topsoil, indicating rapid, single-event filling.

A small round posthole, **206**, lay between these features and a large pit, **203**, which had been recut as **204**.

Only the smaller of these features were excavated, although pit **203/204** was quarter-sectioned. Due to excessive depth it was not possible to bottom this feature, but the lowest fill recorded, **215**, contained abundant comminuted charcoal.

Trench 3 15.2 x 1.9m. Maximum depth 0.8m.

Rubble, **301**, sat directly on natural sand, **302**; the interface between them was extensively scored with machine bucket marks.

Trench 4 14.8 x 1.9m. Maximum depth 2.1m. This trench ran from a low point near Shore Road, up a steep rise.

Rubble, **401**, up to 0.65m thick, lay over a 0.55m thick layer of loose sand and rubble, **402**, with modern inclusions. This in turn overlay a 0.35m thick buried topsoil, **403**, confined to the top of the rise. Natural sand, **404**, lay below.

Trench 5 15.2 x 1.9m. Maximum depth 2.7m.

Rubble, **501**, sat directly above natural sand, **502**, except at the NE end, where a complex of service runs lay between. These were probably associated with the building shown to the N on the 1st edition OS map.

Discussion

Much of the north and east of the site has been built over from at least the late C19th; the eastern part was redeveloped as the later abattoir building, now demolished, and ancillary structures were scattered over much of the rest of the site.

At some point during redevelopment or demolition extensive disturbance of the upper layers took place, but the area nearest the 1997 excavation remained relatively undisturbed, permitting the survival of two linear features at least one re-cut pit, and a variety of other features.

The proximity and similarity of these features to those found in 1997 means they have been interpreted as of the same date and nature, and are thus part of some of the earliest known archaeology in Dornoch.

Recommendations

It is recommended that an area around the exposed features in Trench 2 be subject to a formal excavation. The precise extent of the excavation area can only be determined once the overburden has been removed, so that removal should be part of the excavation process. The initial area is shown in figure 5.

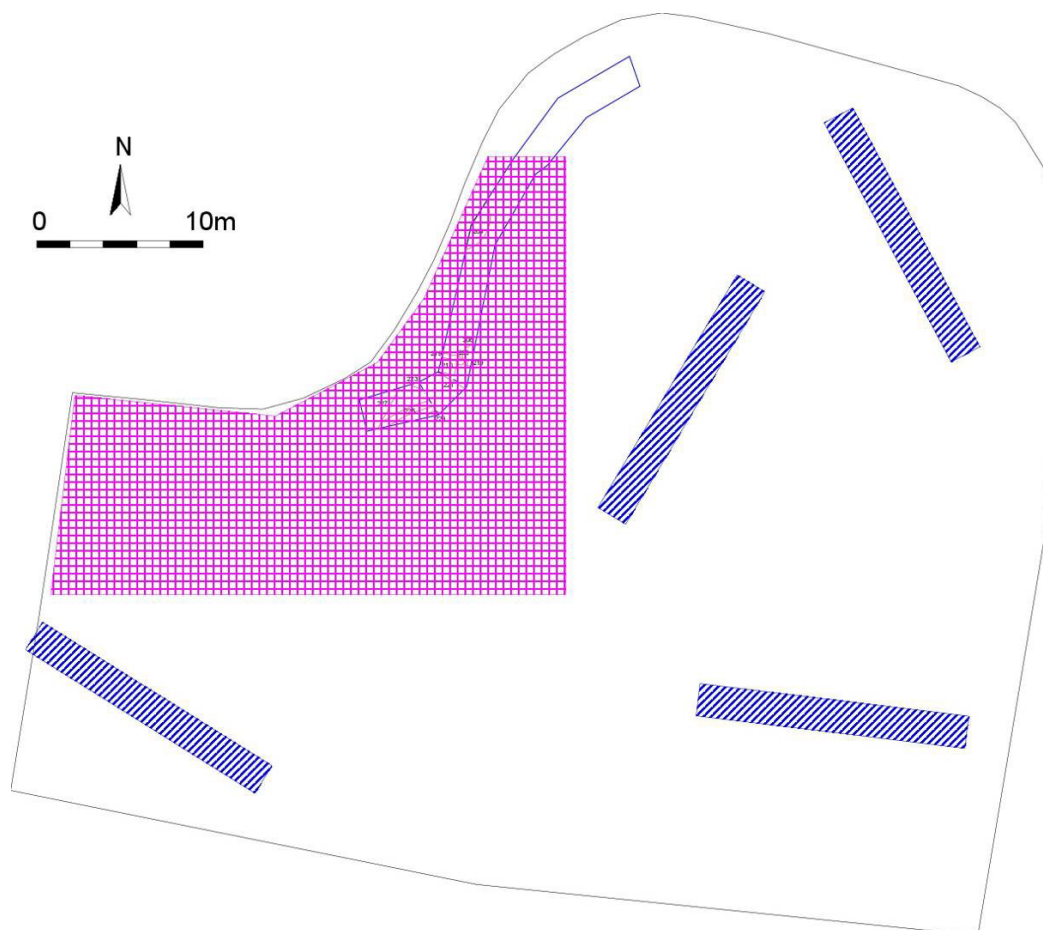


Figure 5 Proposed excavation area

Illustrations

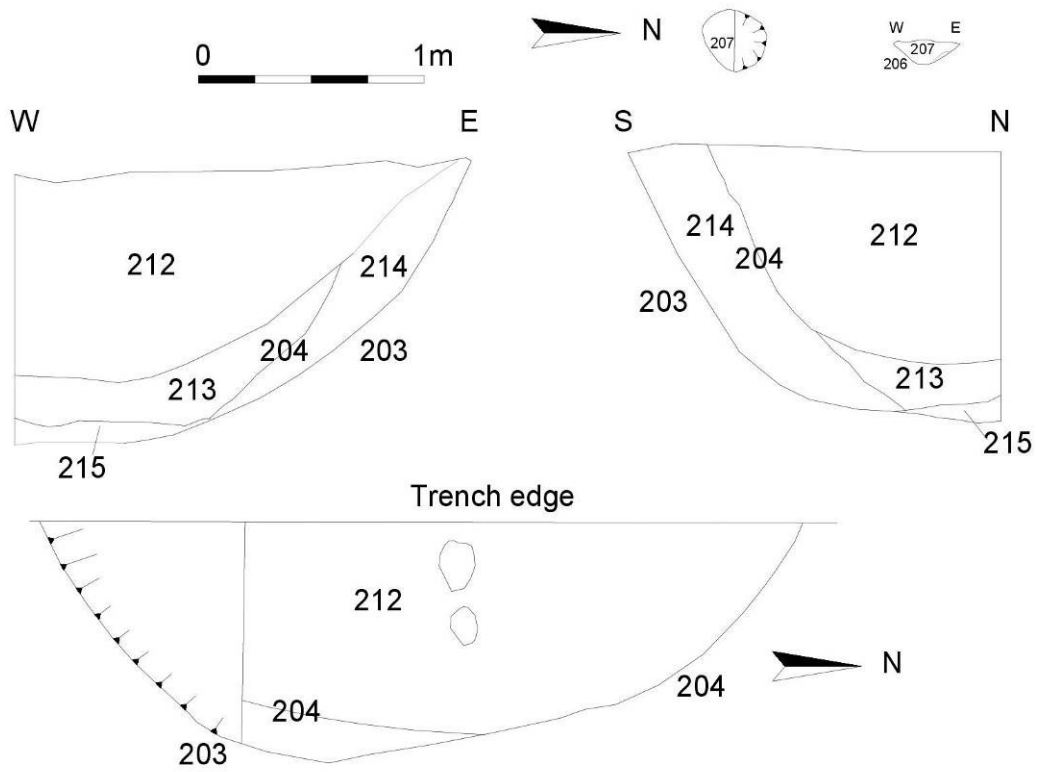


Figure 6 Plans and sections, features 203 and 206

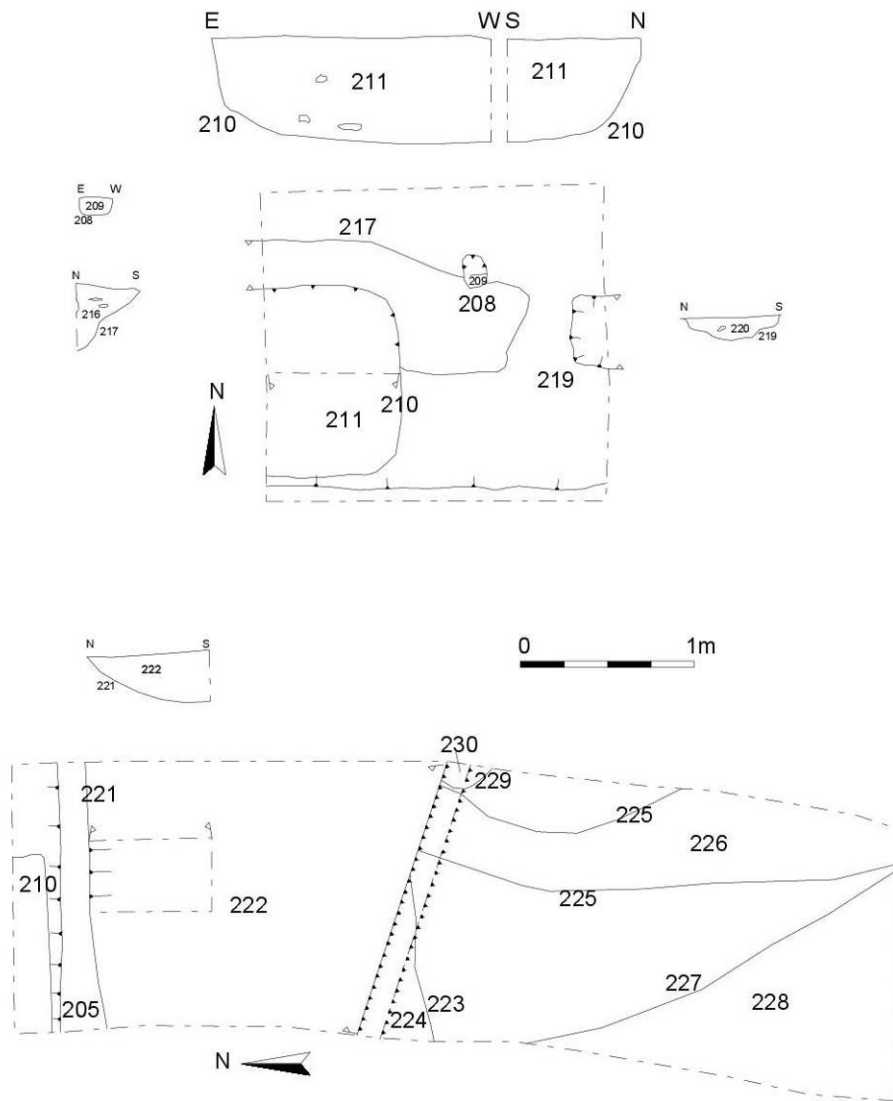


Figure 7 Plans and sections, features 208, 210, 217, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229