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Results of an Archaeological Evaluation at Wester Inshes (Phase 1), Inverness

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Client: Tulloch Homes Ltd

Date: May 2002

Contents

Summary

Headland Archaeology was commissioned in April 2002 by Tulloch Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Wester Inshes, Inverness (NGR: NH 2690 8437) in advance of a proposed housing development (Phase 1). A specification for the work was agreed between Highland Council Archaeology Unit and Headland Archaeology. A preliminary walkover of the site was followed by a series of machine cut trial-trenches, which investigated 5% of the proposed 8.9 ha housing development. A total of 13 trenches were excavated across the site, resulting in two archaeological features being identified and recorded. Further work will be required later in the year, as access to one field was restricted due to a hay crop. No further archaeological work is recommended for this phase of the development other than completing the evaluation of the hay field. Further evaluation will be required as subsequent phases of the development come on steam.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the results of a walkover survey and field evaluation of a proposed development at Wester Inshes, Inverness, Highland. This evaluation focussed on Phase 1 of a three-phase housing development. Headland Archaeology were commissioned by Tulloch Homes Ltd to undertake the work in response to a negative suspensive condition placed on the development by the Highland Council Planning Authority. A specification for the work was agreed between Highland Council Archaeology Unit and Headland Archaeology.

The work was carried out between 22nd and 25th April 2002.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (Figure 1)

The site is located to the south of Inverness at Wester Inshes (NGR: NH 2690 8437) and comprises portions of four fields, currently under pasture, measuring approximately 8.9 ha in area. The field lies on a gentle north-west facing slope at *c.* 50 – 65 m OD.

The underlying geology is sand and gravel with pockets of colluvial material in depressions in the gravel.

Prior to this evaluation no archaeological work had been carried out on the site. A desk-based assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed development concluded that there was potential for archaeologically significant deposits and features to survive within the development area. Based on work carried out in the immediate area, archaeological features were likely to be in the form of isolated prehistoric pits, possibly Neolithic, and post-medieval linear features.

3. OBJECIVES

The objectives of this evaluation were:

- To establish the limits of archaeological features within the proposed development area
- To determine the nature, date, condition and significance of any archaeological sites and features within this area
- To determine the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource
- To propose appropriate mitigation measures to address the impact of the development

4. DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

This part of Inverness has been subject to several developments in recent years as the construction of the Southern Distributor road has opened up the area to housing and commercial developments. The archaeological implications of several of these developments had been undertaken by Headland and these surveys were revisited and updated.

Sources

During the desk-based assessment a number of sources of archaeological information were consulted including:

- National Monuments Record of Scotland
- National Air Photograph Collection (RCAHMS)
- National Map Library of Scotland
- Highland Council Sites & Monuments Record of Scotland
- Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Table 1: Gazetteer of Sites & Monuments

Ref No	NGR	Description
NH64SE 1	NH 6823 4470	King Duncan's Well
NH64SE 2	NH 683 445	King Duncan's Grave
NH64SE 31	NH 696 442	House; Tower
NH64SE 32.00	NH 695 437	Inshes House
NH64SE 32.01	NH 695 436	Dovecot
NH64SE 38	NH 683 430	Timber Hall; Enclosure
NH64SE 39	NH 680 432	Enclosure
NH64SE 40	NH 683 435	Pit-Alignments
NH64SE 66	NH 678 432	Ard Marks
NH64SE 67	NH 673 427	Pits
NH64SE 73	NH 690 446	Watching Brief
NH64SE 74	NH 689 448	Watching Brief
NH64SE 231	NH 685 440	Pits
NH64SE 240	NH 694 442	Enclosure
NH64SE 246	NH 697 441	Pits
'Northern Constabulary HQ'	NH 686 443	Pits

Cartographic Evidence

No features could be identified on early maps.

Archaeological Background

This area of Inverness has undergone much development in recent years and archaeological works have been carried out, where required, as part of each development in line with government policy (NPPG 5 & PAN 42, Scottish Office 1994). Sites where archaeological remains have been discovered and which lie closest to the proposed Wester Inshes development provide a rough guide to the presence/absence, nature and extent of any possible archaeological remains that may exist within the area under study.

Dellfield, Inshes 1998-9

A geophysical survey followed by extensive trial-trenching was carried out in advance of the development of the Inshes Retail Park in 1998. The results of the geophysical survey were inconclusive. Trial-trenching, however, located a number of pits of unknown date in the southernmost part of the site. A watching brief was subsequently carried out over a period of 9 months and several more pits and a ditch were uncovered but similarly none produced any datable material.

Northern Constabulary New Headquarters 1997

A watching brief was undertaken to monitor top-soil stripping during construction. Two features of interest were uncovered; a flint cobble and a pit containing Neolithic pottery. The latter was an important find with an assemblage comprising 9 sherds of Grooved Ware (3200 BC – 2000 BC), some flint flakes and burnt cobbles. The isolated nature of this find is fairly typical of the period and a similar group of pits was recently found at Castlehill.

Southern Distributor Road 1990

In advance of the proposed Southern Distributor Road, a desk-based assessment, walkover survey of the route and trial excavation were carried out in late 1990. A number of cropmark sites and features were subsequently investigated. Of particular relevance was a pit alignment at Hilton and possible timber halls or enclosures at Glendruith. The pit alignment is now thought to be of relatively recent date and the possible timber halls/enclosures could not be located.

Southern Distributor Road 2001

A watching brief 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. In total, 128 archaeological features were identified. The majority of these features 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 50 m OD terrace; the lower ground at close to 40 m OD contained few archaeological remains.

Dell of Inshes 2001

A geophysical evaluation and watching brief were carried out on the site of a proposed housing development. The geophysical survey identified a number of linear anomalies. A series of trenches were placed to investigate a sample of these, with further trenches being placed randomly across the remainder of the field. The anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were found to be the result of changes in the natural subsoil. Two undated linear features, possibly part of a ditched enclosure, were identified in one trench and this area was then targeted by the subsequent watching brief. The watching brief exposed the features in plan and found that they were likely to be boundary or drainage features. One ditch fill produced finds of post-medieval date.

Summary

On present evidence at least, the nature of the archaeology in this part of Inverness is characterised as isolated groups of prehistoric pits and linear features probably relating to past agricultural activity. These types of features can be difficult to locate and rarely produce any artefacts. As such they can be difficult to date unless suitable material such as charcoal or burnt organic material survives. Recent archaeological work has, however, been confined to the slightly lower ground; the site proposed for development lies slightly higher up the slope and, therefore, a different pattern of archaeological remains may exist as this area may have proved more attractive to early settlers.

In summary, there is a potential risk for archaeological remains to survive within the proposed development area and which would be at risk of disturbance. On present evidence, however, that risk is considered low. A programme of evaluation would rapidly establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and date of any archaeological remains should they survive.

5. WALKOVER SURVEY

The site at Wester Inshes was subjected to a walkover survey prior to the commencement of trial trenching. The entire area of the Phase 1 development was studied for upstanding features and topographical anomalies. Surface finds were also collected resulting in two fragments of possibly worked stone and a variety of modern (20^{th} century) pottery sherds. No features of interest were noted. The site displays a uniform slope, with little or no natural undulation beyond a narrow water course running northwards along south western boundary in a shallow ditch.

6. TRIAL TRENCHING (Figure 2)

The trial trenching was undertaken using a CAT 360° 17 ton excavator, fitted with a 2 m wide toothless ditching bucket. As there were no topographic anomalies to target, a

'random' layout of trenching was adopted, attempting to best cover the available ground. A small proportion of the site was unavailable for evaluation. Part of the road access had been topsoil stripped in advance of this evaluation. A hay crop had also been planted on land due to be evaluated. This field will be evaluated in September when the hay has been crpooed.

The area being developed (Phase 1) measured some 8.9 ha. A 5% evaluation sample was agreed with Highland Archaeology Service as curators which equated to 4450 sq m. All trenches were 2 m in width, giving a total sampled area of 3040 sq m for this work, excluding the hay field (Field 4). In all trenches a unique context number was allocated to the topsoil (ploughsoil), the soil/subsoil interface and the subsoil. The other contexts recorded will be referred to individually within each trench description.

Trench 1 (Figures 3 and 5)
Length: 220 m
Average depth: 0.5 m
Orientation: ESE/WNW
Trench 1 ran parallel to the north eastern boundary fence for the length of Field 1. It produced one feature, a small posthole [022, 023] with packing stones, cut into the natural gravel at a depth of 0.7 m. The fill [022] produced no finds. The trench was extended out in proximity to the posthole, but no other features were present within a 5 m radius. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 2
Length: 106 m
Average depth: 0.5 m
Orientation: NE/SW
Trench 2 ran parallel to the field boundary to the north west of the site (Field 1). It contained a deposit of colluvial material towards the western end [006] at a depth of 0.5 m. No features were identified within Trench 2. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 3
Length: 216 m
Average depth: 0.5 m
Orientation: E/W
Trench 3 ran diagonally across the centre of Field 1 and crossed two modern services. The first was a broad linear cut filled with pea gravel and builders sand [015] which was sealed by the plough soil (0.4 m deep), the second was a cast iron water pipe at a depth of 0.7 m. No features of archaeological significance were identified in the trench. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 4
Length: 112 m
Average depth: 0.45 m
Orientation: SW/NE
Trench 4 traversed the east end of Field 1 and crossed the same two services as Trench 3. No features of archaeological significance were identified in the trench. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 5
Length: 48 m
Average depth: 0.45 m
Orientation: SW/NE
Trench 5 was positioned to more closely investigate the south western corner of Field 1, where the first major development was due to begin. The trench encountered [015] again, but contained no features of archaeological significance. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 6
Length: 156 m
Average depth: 0.5 m
Orientation: SE/NW
Trench 6 contained no features of archaeological significance. A large volume of modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil, with an apparent concentration towards the north western end. Trench 6 ran closely parallel to the narrow burn and ditch down the south west side of Field 1, which may be a factor in the concentration.

Trench 7
Length: 124 m
Average depth: 0.5 m
Orientation: E/W
Trench 7 ran parallel to Trench 3, diagonally across Field 1. Trench 7 encountered [015] but no features of archaeological significance were identified within it. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 8 (Figure 3 and 5)
Length: 122 m
Average depth: 0.6 m
Orientation: SW/NE
Trench 8 ran parallel to the north western field boundary of Field 2. At its north eastern end, it crossed a rubble filled field drain [030] and a charcoal rich deposit [027]. The trench was extended around the charcoal deposit. A natural layer of sub angular alluvial cobbles [028] was identified, cut by a sub-circular pit, filled with the charcoal rich deposit. The feature was recorded, sectioned and sampled. It produced no finds, but large fragments of charcoal were recovered. A 30 l environmental bulk sample was also taken for analysis. The feature occurred at a depth of 0.7 m and was stratigraphically below the interface level, cut into natural sand in a pocket of colluvial material. Modern pottery and glass was also gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 9
Length: 84 m
Average depth: 0.45 m
Orientation: N/S
Trench 9 ran parallel to the newly erected boundary fence across the second field. The subsoil was much more rocky then elsewhere, with large rounded boulders up to 0.5 m in diameter at regular intervals and bedrock encountered at a depth of only 0.4

m in places. No features of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 9. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 10
Length: 68
Average depth: 0.45 – 1.10 m
Orientation: NE/SW
Trench 10 ran along the boundary formed to the south east of Field 2. It had a very deep topsoil and interface layer [033, 034] with subsoil at a depth of up to 1.1 m. No features of archaeological significance were identified. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 11
Length: 102
Average depth: 0.7 m (0.9 m max)
Orientation: S/N
Trench 11 ran diagonally across the centre of the second field. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 12
Length: 48 m
Average depth: 0.55 m
Orientation: ESE/WNW
Trench 12 was excavated the other side of the boundary fence from Trench 1, in order to ascertain if the posthole from Trench 1 was part of a complex extending towards the north. Trench 12 was boxed out for a distance of 10 m at a width of 5 m near the feature. No features of archaeological significance were identified within Trench 12. Modern pottery and glass was gathered from the excavated plough soil.

Trench 13
Length: 114 m
Orientation: S/N
Trench 13 was excavated along the line of the proposed access road from the south. The ground had previously been topsoil stripped by Tulloch Roads, but a scrape was given to the surface, which facilitated an archaeological assessment of the subsoil. No features of archaeological significance were identified. The remaining site sections near the southern area showed very deep topsoil, up to 1 m to the surface of the interface layer – unusual for an elevated location where erosion would be expected, not deposition.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the evaluation are consistent with general expectations for the presence/survival of archaeological remains in this area with two isolated features of uncertain date and origin. Finds were recovered from virtually very trench during the evaluation and were all of nineteenth century or early twentieth century date. The only exception was a small fragment of a very weathered stone which may possibly have been worked. The soil samples produced no artefacts, and due to the isolated nature of the feature, AMS dating of the charcoal from the pit fill is not

recommended. The occurrence of these two features demonstrates the presence of archaeological remains at Wester Inshes, whilst the lack of other features over an extensive evaluation area demonstrates their low density and low potential for further work

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the isolation of the features identified in the evaluation and the relative lack of archaeologically significant deposits throughout the evaluation area, no further work is considered necessary in the areas investigated at Wester Inshes Phase 1. Further work is however required to complete the evaluation of Field 4 (hay field), and subsequent phases of the development.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fieldwork was carried out by Jonathan Millar, Stewart Buchanan and Mhairi Hastie, and managed by Russel Coleman. The illustrations were drawn by Laura Speed. Highland Council Archaeological Unit provided a curatorial role.

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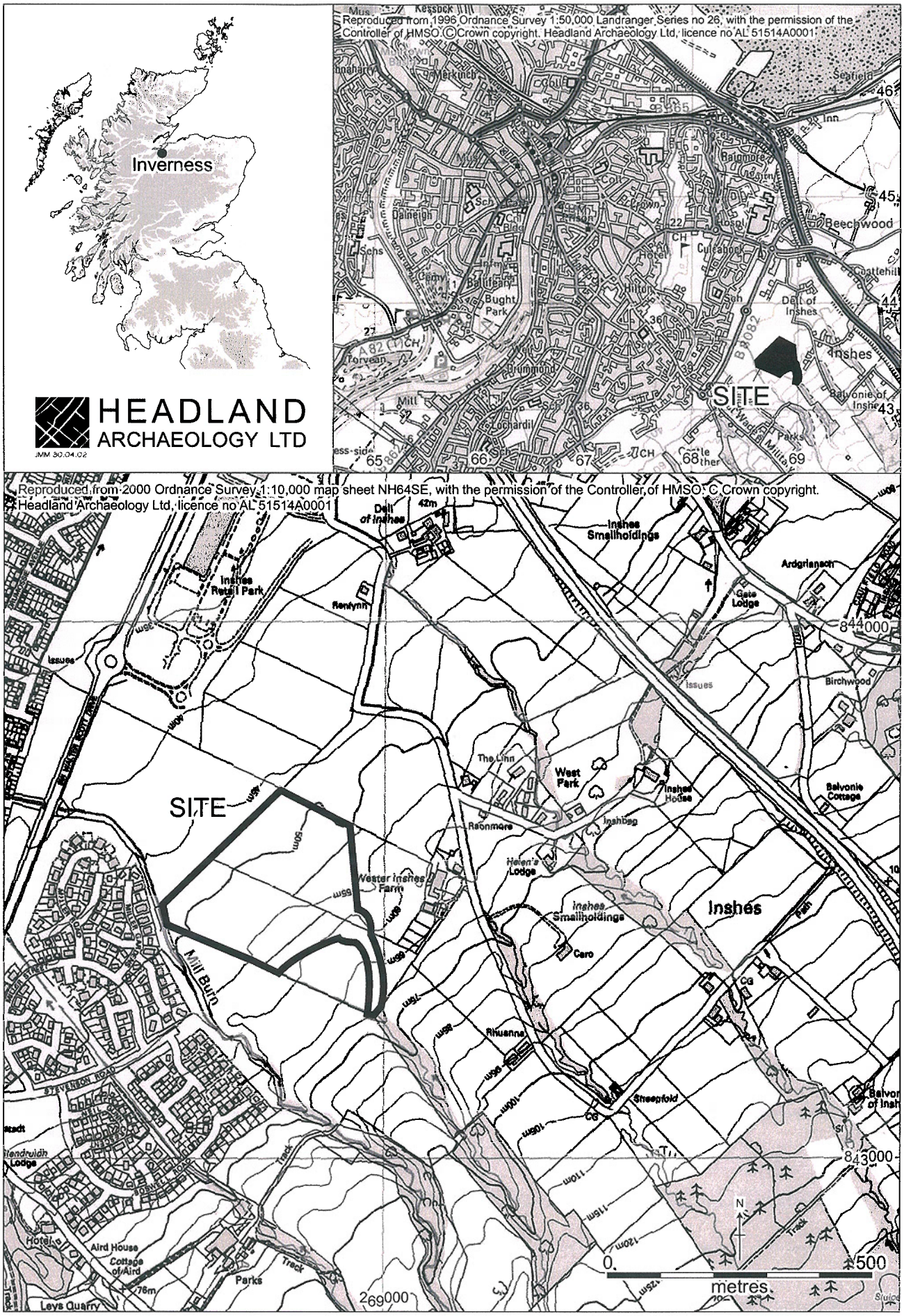

Figure 1. Wester Inshes, Inverness: Site location

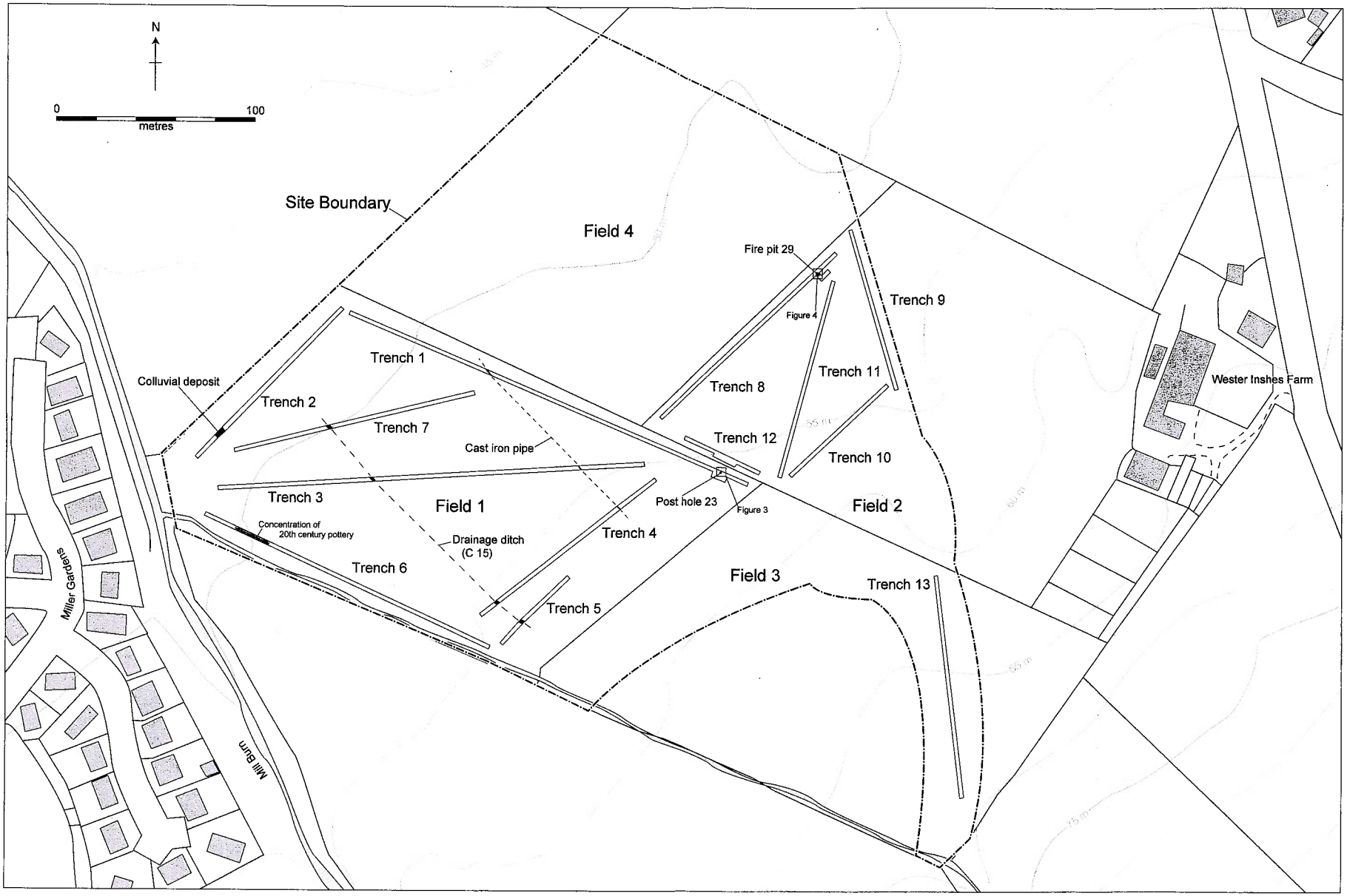

Figure 2. Wester Inshes, Inverness: Trench and feature location

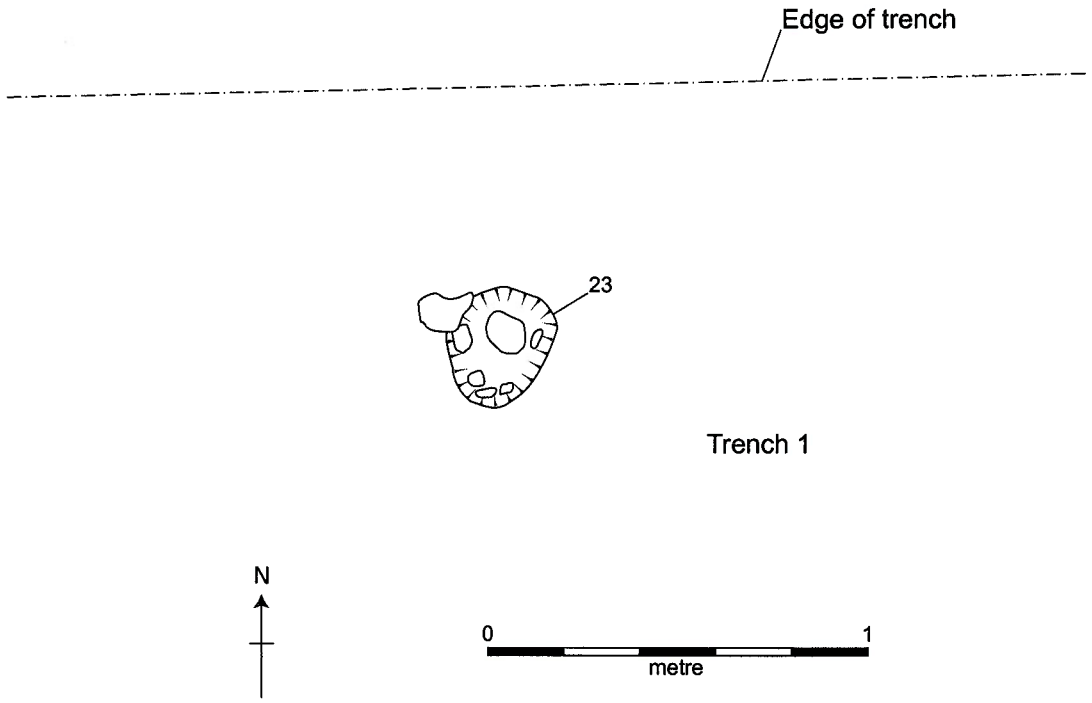

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Figure 3. Wester Inshes, Inverness: Post Hole [22/23] (see Trench 1, Figure 2)

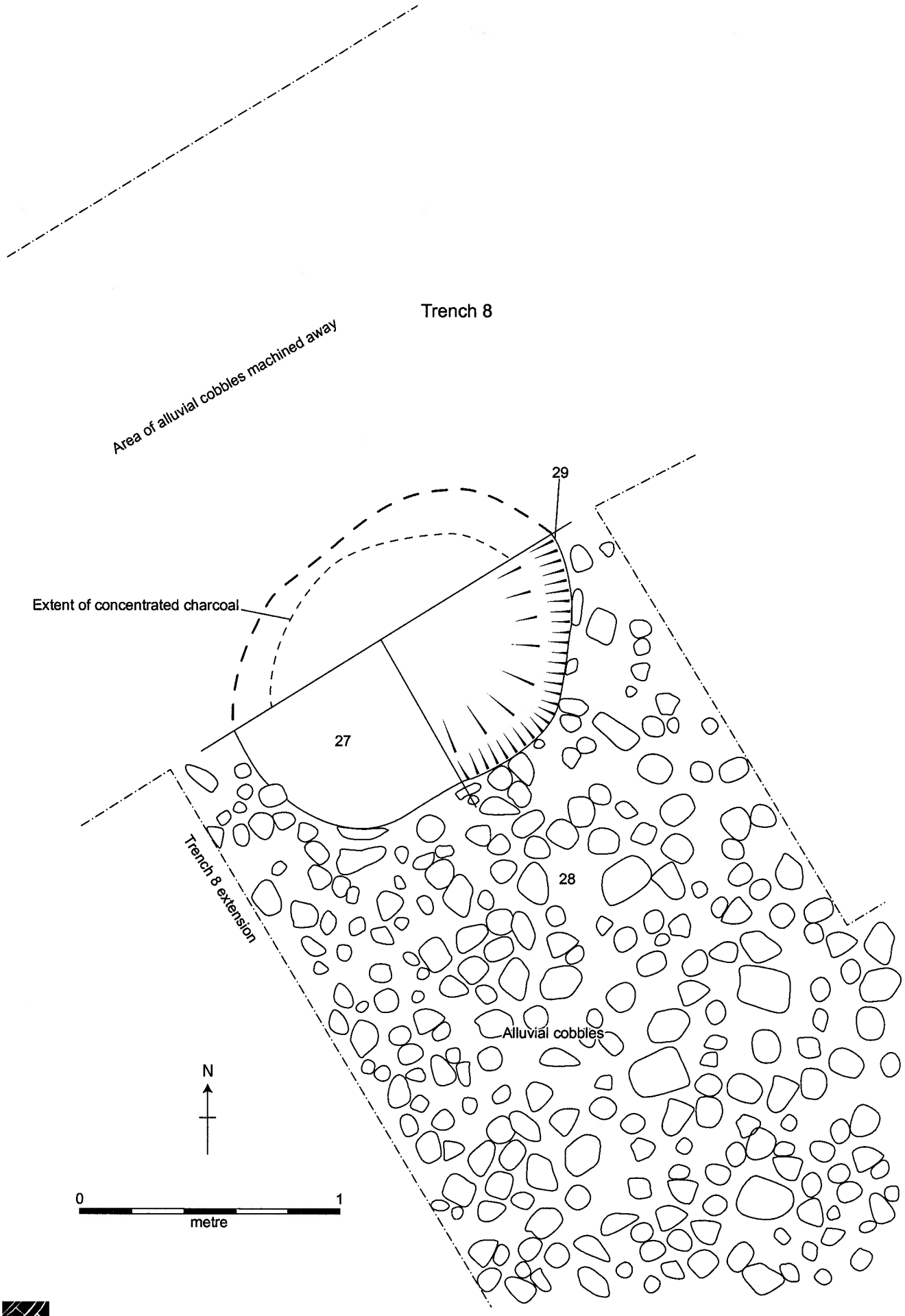

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Figure 4. Wester Inshes, Inverness: Plan of fire pit [27/29] (see Trench 8, Figure 2)

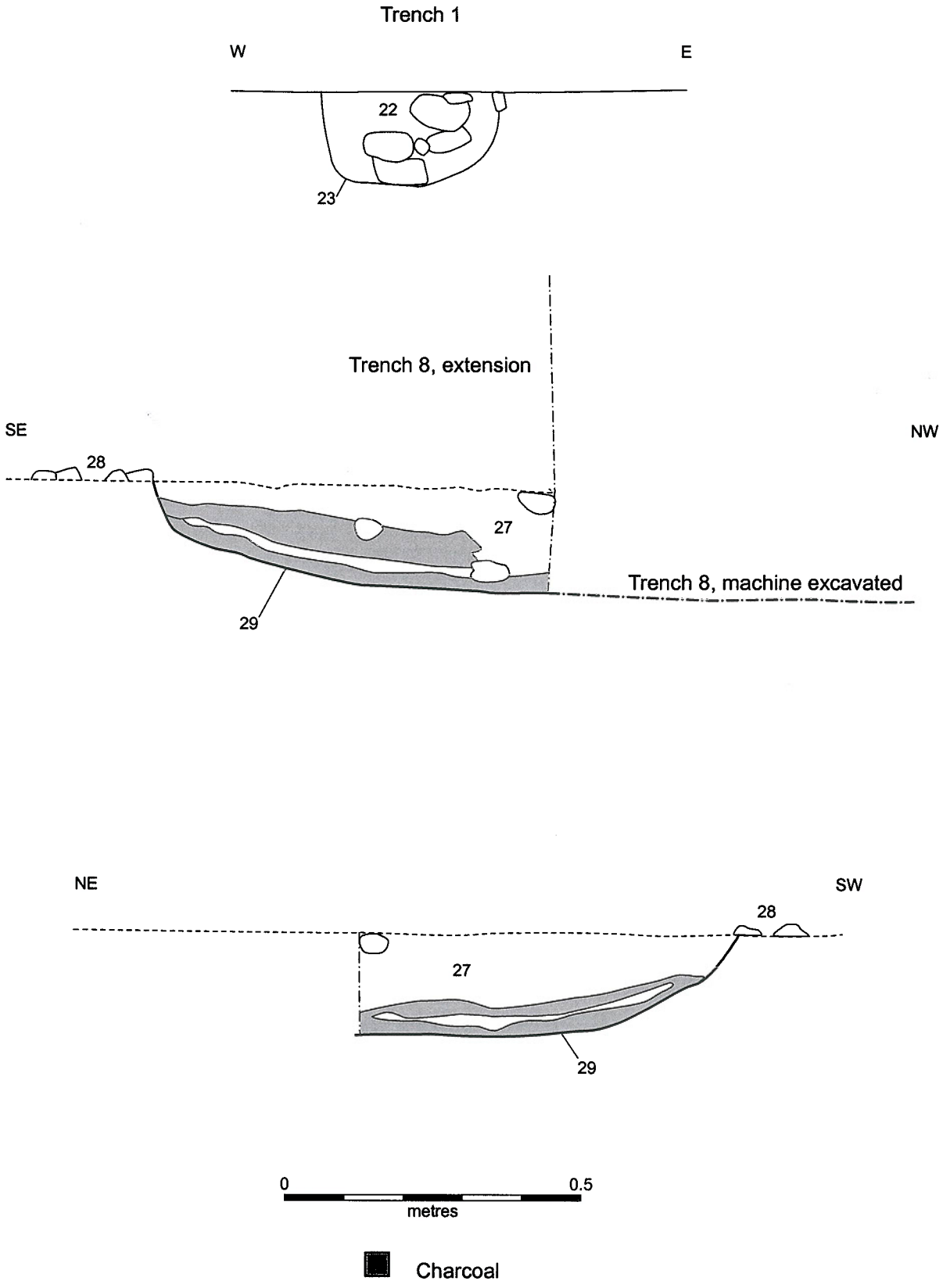

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Figure 5. Wester Inshes, Inverness: Sections of features

APPENDIX 1. SITE REGISTERS

Context Register

Context No	Trench	Description
1	1	Topsoil
2	1	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
3	1	Subsoil
4	2	Topsoil
5	2	Subsoil
6	2	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
7	2	Subsoil
8	3	Topsoil
9	3	Subsoil
10	4	Topsoil
11	4	Subsoil
12	5	Topsoil
13	5	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
14	5	Subsoil
15	3,4,5,7	Modern linear feature, probable service pipe
16	6	Topsoil
17	6	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
18	6	Subsoil
19	7	Topsoil
20	7	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
21	7	Subsoil
22	1	Fill of post hole [23]
23	1	Cut of post hole
24	8	Topsoil
25	8	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
26	8	Subsoil
27	8	Charcoal rich fill of pit
28	8	Stone cobbles layer
29	8	Cut for pit
30	8	Stone drain
31	9	Topsoil
32	9	Subsoil
33	10	Topsoil
34	10	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
35	10	Subsoil
36	11	Topsoil
37	11	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
38	11	Subsoil
39	12	Topsoil
40	12	Old plough soil horizon, interface with subsoil
41	12	Subsoil
42	13	Subsoil

Photographic Registers

Film #1

Shot No.	Direction Facing	Description
1	-	Site, film and van record shot
2	-	Site, film and van record shot
3	NW	View of trenches 1-3, general shot
4	N	General view of evaluation area (the two foreground fields)
5	N	Area of Tulloch disturbance and spoil heaps on evaluation area
6	SE	Pre-exc of possible linear feature Tr 2
7	SE	Section showing colluvial deposit (thought to be linear feature)
8	NE	Pre-exc of post hole [22/23] Tr 1
9	SW	NE facing section through [22] Tr 1
10	SW	NE facing section through [22] Tr 1
11	NW	General site view
12	NW	General site view
13	SW	Post-exc of [23] Tr 1
14	SW	Post-exc of [23] Tr 1
15	N	Trench 1, general shot
16	E	Trench 1, sondages section
17	S	Trench 1, general shot
18	W	Trench 2, general shot
19	N	Trench 2, sondages section
20	SE	Trench 3, general shot
21	SW	Trench 3, sondages section
22	NW	Trench 3, general shot
23	W	Trench 4, general shot
24	S	Trench 4, sondages section
25	W	Trench 5, general shot
26	N	Trench 6, general shot
27	W	Trench 6, sondages section
28	NE	Trench 7, sondages section
29	NW	Trench 7, general shot
30	E	Trench 8, general shot
31	E	Working general shot, Mhairi in [27] Stewart machining Tr 11
32	SE	Working general shot, Mhairi in [27] Stewart machining Tr 11
33	NE	Trench 9, general shot
34	W	Trench 10, general shot
35	NE	Trench 11, general shot
36	NNW	Working shot, machine watching Trench 12, from survey spot
37	NW	Working shot, machine watching Trench 12, from survey spot

Film #2

Shot No.	Direction Facing	Description
1	NW	View of excavation of Tr 12
2	NNE	View of excavation area, Mhairi in Tr 8, excavating fire pit
3	NE	Site (Trenches 9, 10 and (8))
4	N	Site (Trenches 8, 11 and 10)
5	P	All of site, panoramic series of shots panning East to West
6	A	All of site, panoramic series of shots panning East to West
7	N R	All of site, panoramic series of shots panning East to West
8	O A	All of site, panoramic series of shots panning East to West
9	- M	All of site, panoramic series of shots panning East to West
10	A	General view
11	-	Record shot
12	N	Trench 12, general
13	-	NW facing Colour slide, SE facing CP – cobbles and pit, Tr 8
14	SE	Cobbles and fire pit [27/29] Tr 8
15	SE	Cobbles and fire pit [27/29] Tr 8
16	NE	Cobbles and fire pit [27/29] Tr 8
17	S	Trench 13, general
18	N	Trench 13, general
19	NW	General site view, after trenching
20	SW	Shadow voided photo of [27] section through cut [29]
21	SE	As above, better exposure – bad sunlight angle
22	E	Working shot of [27/29]

Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Type	Description
1	Section	Post hole [22/23] Trench 1
2	Plan	Post hole [22/23] Trench 1
3	Plan	Fire pit [27/29] and cobbles [28]
4	Section	NE facing section of pit [27/29]
5	Section	NW facing section of pit [27/29]

Sample Register

Sample No.	Context	Description
1	22	Fill of posthole [23]. 1 tub (10 l)
2	27	Fill of fire pit [29]. 3 tubs (30 l), 1 dry bag with charcoal chunks, for potential C14 dating.

APPENDIX 3

Assessment of Samples from Wester Inshes (Phase 1), Inverness

Jo Dawson

METHOD

Bulk soil samples were taken from an isolated pit and post hole, 30 litres and 10 litres respectively. These were subjected to a system of flotation in a Siraf style flotation tank. The floating debris (flot) was collected in a 250 μm sieve and, once dry, scanned using a binocular microscope. Any material remaining in the flotation tank (retent) was wet sieved through a 1 mm mesh and air-dried. This was then sorted by eye and any material of archaeological significance removed.

Results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fill of the post hole (022) was archaeologically sterile. The pit fill contained abundant charcoal but in view of it being an isolated feature this is of little interpretative value. Both features sampled were isolated and of unknown date.

Table 1: Composition of Retents

Context Number	Sample Number	Context Description	Wood Charcoal	
			Qty	AMS
22	1	Fill of post hole		
27	2	Fill of pit	++++	*

Table 2: Composition of Flots

Context Number	Sample Number	Context Description	Charcoal QTY
22	1	Fill of post hole	+
27	2	Fill of pit	++++

+ = rare, ++ = occasional, +++ = common and ++++ = abundant

* = sufficient material for AMS dating