

FETTERANGUS CEMETERY EXTENSION ABERDEENSHIRE



- Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation -
Carried out 23rd-24th November 2009
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2009-33B
by
H K and J C Murray

H K Murray BA, PhD, MIFA, FSA Scot
J C Murray BA, MIFA, FSA Scot, FMA
Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN
Telephone: (01651) 806394 e-mail: cmurray@btinternet.com

**CEMETERY EXTENSION
FETTERANGUS
ABERDEENSHIRE
-Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation-**

1. Background

- 1.1 When an extension of the cemetery at Fetterangus, Aberdeenshire, was proposed, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service determined that a small scale evaluation would be appropriate due to the proximity of the medieval church of St Fergus and a Pictish symbol stone.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 18th August 2009.
- 1.3 In the course of the evaluation a small number of medieval pottery sherds were found in the vicinity of what appeared to be a hearth or pit.
- 1.4 In consequence it was decided that further evaluation should be undertaken to establish if there was more extensive medieval activity and that the medieval features should be fully excavated.
- 1.5 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council to undertake this second phase of work; the field element of which was carried out on 23rd-24th November 2009. This report incorporates the results of both interventions.

2. Desk-top survey

- 2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore and Pastmap.

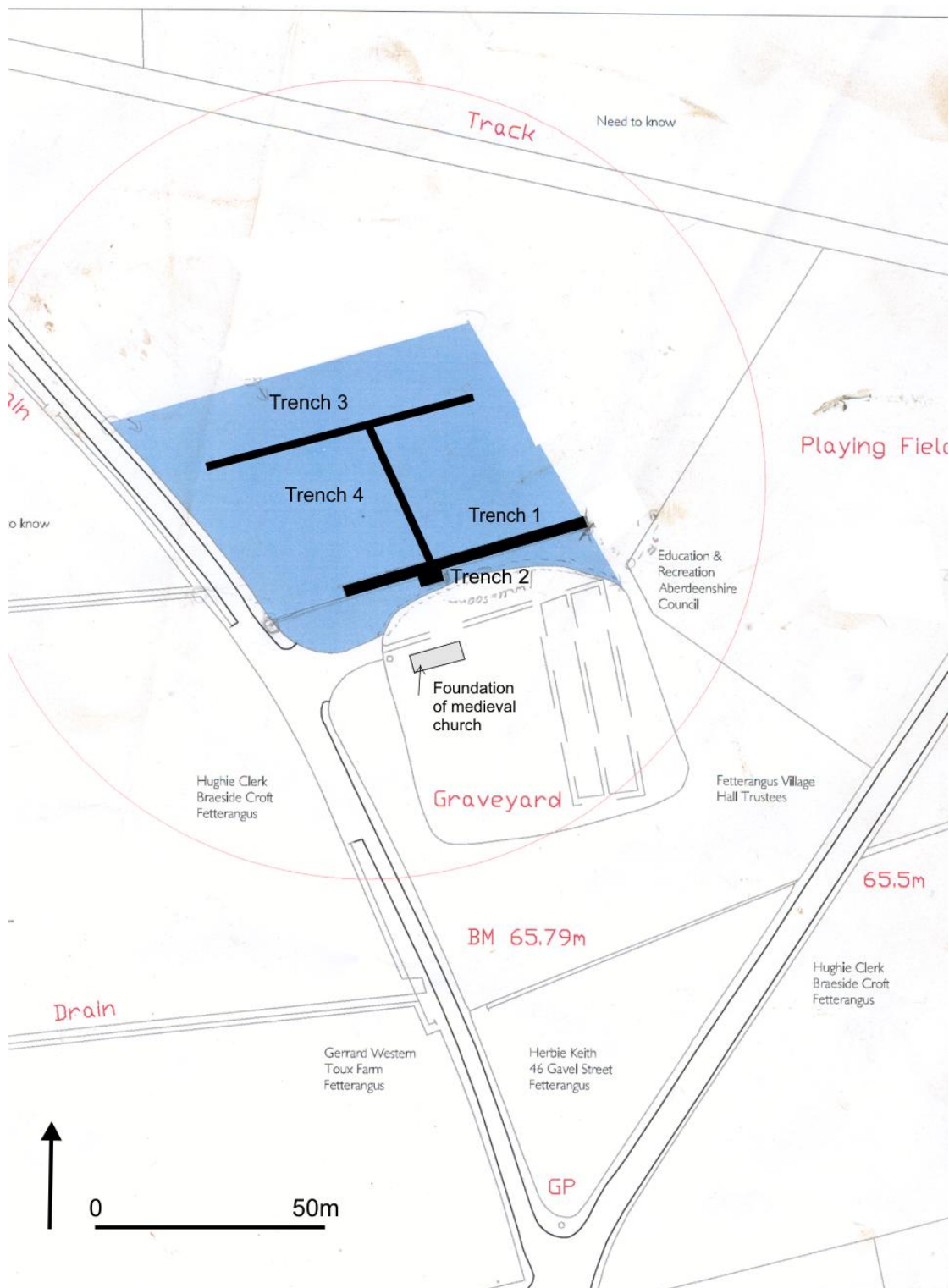
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- 2.2 The site is to the N of the existing graveyard in which lie the foundations of the medieval Fetterangus church of St Fergus (NMRS No: NJ95SE 4.0). The church was built c 1120 and recorded in the 13th century when it was granted to the monks of St Thomas of Arbroath. A very worn Pictish symbol stone (NMRS No: NJ95SE 4.1,) which appears to have been formerly in the churchyard, has subsequently been attached to the wall of the graveyard, beside the entrance. Although it is unclear if the symbol stone had originally been brought to the churchyard from elsewhere, it does suggest the possibility of settlement nearby in the late Iron Age/early historic period.
- Six flint arrowheads (NMRS No: NJ95SE 15) are recorded as found in 1859 and are shown on the 1st OS map of 1870 (pub 1874) in the field to the N of the graveyard - where the extension is proposed.
- 2.3 Fetterangus (*Fetterangous*) church is shown as a church symbol on Pont's map of Buchan of 1580s/90s and *Fettyrangus* is named and depicted by a dot on Blaeu Atlas (surveyed by Robert Gordon) *Aberdonia & Banfia* 1654.

3. The Site

- 3.1 The proposed site is located directly to the N of the wall of the present graveyard.
- NGR: NJ 981 505 (centre of site). Parish: Old Deer
- 3.2 The site is a fairly level field at present in grass and used for grazing. A stream runs along the S side of the field, to the S of the present graveyard.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 Two evaluation trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) were excavated in August. Two additional evaluation trenches (Trenches 3 and 4) were excavated in November. Topsoil was removed using a JCB with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket.



Illus 1 Location plan

5. The Results

In August an evaluation trench (Trench 1) had been excavated roughly parallel to the graveyard wall. Subsequently a second smaller trench (Trench 2) was excavated to identify the possible extent of features. In November Trench 3 was excavated parallel

to Trench 1 and c.40m to the W. Trench 4 extended approx N/S between Trenches 3 and 1. No further features were identified in Trenches 3 or 4. The area of Trenches 1 and 2 where features had been identified and covered with Teram in August were re-opened and the features fully excavated.

5.1 Evaluation trenches

Trench 3

GPS E end: NJ 98152 50608 E end: NJ 98096 50592

Length: 60m. Width: 1.5m

Depths of topsoil ranged between 260 and 350mm. The topsoil lay directly on gritty natural boulder clay. No features or finds were revealed.

Trench 4

Length: 35m Width: 1.5m

GPS N end: NJ 98134 50597 S end: NJ 98138 50571

Depth of topsoil 300mm. The topsoil lay directly on gritty natural boulder clay. No features or finds were revealed.

5.2 Excavation

The excavation included re-opening parts of Trenches 1 and 2, removing the section between them and extending several metres to S and W to check for any other associated features. It was not possible to extend to the E due to waterlogging of that part of the site and a sump was dug there to drain the area of the excavation.



Illus 2 The excavated area looking E. SF 6 lies to the LHS of the ranging rod

Contexts excavated or re-excavated in November are described below. (Contexts 1-5, 7-9 were not in the area re-excavated in November. They are not identified medieval features and are not further described here. Full details in the August report)

Three separate hearths/fire areas (F6, F11, F14) were identified GPS: NJ 98140 50569.

Feature 6

Total c 3m E-W, comprising a main area at W end c. 2m E-W and 1.30m N-S and a tapering E end c 1m long E-W (blue on plan illus 6). The maximum depth of the cut into natural was c.120mm but its original depth from the contemporary medieval ground surface may be estimated as nearer 300mm

This feature was partially revealed in August. It had been sealed by c.250mm of topsoil and by 13 (Brown clay/silt mix with some charcoal)

Feature 6 was an oval/key-hole shaped cut into natural with the remains of a circular stone setting 1m in diameter within the slightly deeper W end. The stones (6/4) were set on clean natural and the burnt/charcoal layer (6/3) slightly overlapped their inner edges and between but not below them. Other stones which lay randomly on the burnt layer were regarded as disturbed. A few stones which are not shaded on the plan were probably also disturbed. The main concentration of the burnt charcoal rich layer (6/3 pale blue on plan) lay within the circle of stones where it was up to 30mm deep, it extended E through the rake out area where it was generally thinner.

Between the outside of the circle of stones and the edge of the cut into natural there was a grey silt (16). This may be part of the same episode of silting (6/2 =15) that lay between the rake out from 6 and the secondary burning event feature 14.

Finds: 1 sherd medieval pottery (SF 21) lay in the top of 6/3 below one of the disturbed stones. Two sherds lay in 16 among the stones of 6/4 (SF 22, 23). A group of 10 sherds from the same jug (SF16) lay just outside stones 6/4 in 16.

Another sherd and an iron nail were found elsewhere in 16.

Most of the pottery was abraded and all appears to have been in contexts that post date the fire in Feature 6.



Illus 3 Feature 6 as exposed in August in S section of Trench 1



Illus 4 Feature 6 after full excavation in November, looking NW



Illus 5 Features 6, 11, and 14, looking NW

Feature 11

1.24m N-S x 700mm E-W.

This was a roughly oval shallow cut c. 30mm deep in natural. The basal fill 11/3 was a very thin skim of charcoal. This was covered by a random scatter of small stones (11/2) which were through and covered by a grey sandy silt (11/2).

When this was first exposed in August this appeared to be a possible extension of Feature 6 but it was in fact a separate feature. Although it was a very shallow cut in natural, its original depth from the contemporary medieval ground surface may be estimated as nearer 300mm. The stones, by analogy with Feature 6 may have been part of an upper kerb, pushed or slipped in after use. The silt (11/2) probably derived from erosion of the surrounding earth. It appears therefore to have been a hearth used possibly only once and left to fill in gradually.

Finds: SF 17 Medieval pottery. Slag (non-ferrous) in 11/1

Feature 14

2.1m E-W x 1.2m N-S at its maximum, tapering to the E. The depth ranged from 35-100mm This was an oval area of hard compact red ash, reddened sand, charcoal and a few flecks of what appeared to be unburnt clay.

When this was first exposed in August this was numbered 12 (in Trench 2) and 6/1 (in Trench 1) when it was thought to be part of Feature 6. On excavation it was clearly a

secondary phase of considerable burning that partially overlay Feature 6 in the E end of the hollow cut for Feature 6. It is shown red on the plan (Illus 6).

It was separated from the primary use of Feature 6 by a layer of grey/buff clean silt to a maximum depth of 40mm (context 15. This probably incorporates the layer numbered in August as 6/2 and described as clean redeposited sandy natural).

Originally this was thought to be rake out from Feature 6 and it does overlie part of the primary rake out but there was clear evidence of in-situ burning and the stratigraphy suggests this was a secondary burning event which took place after the accumulation of a layer of silting suggesting that at least some time had passed between the main use of Feature 6 and the re-use of the rake-out area on its E side as Feature 14.

Finds: 1 sherd medieval pottery (SF20). In August finds of medieval pottery SF 4-17 were found in 6/1 and 6/3 (see Feature 6) (most from E end/rake out)

Feature 10

This small pit, exposed in August could not be further excavated in November due to flooding. From the part excavated in August it would appear to have been a similar feature to 11.

Pit. N-S: 1m + E-W:1.4m +

Cut into natural in corner of Trench 2. Top of feature was sealed by 300mm topsoil.

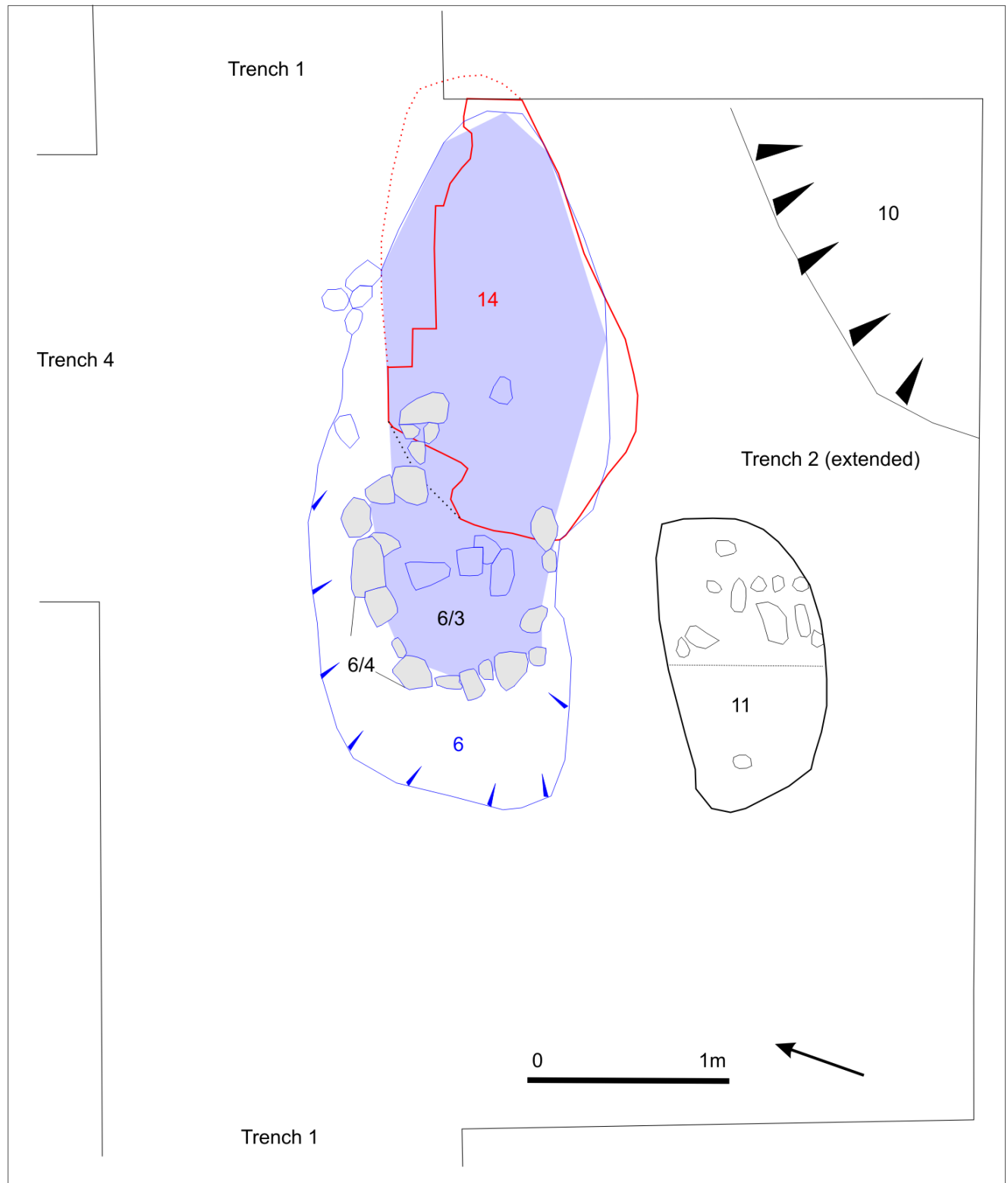
Depth as excavated in corner of trench 200mm from top of natural

10/1 grey silt

10/2 small stones tipping down into corner of trench in a grey silty matrix similar to 10/1

10/3 Patch of red burnt ash and charcoal within 10/1 over 10/2.

Finds: None



Illus 6 Plan of features

6. Finds

Prehistoric: The flint blade (SF3) found in August 2009 was in a topsoil context, unrelated to any excavated feature. It should be considered in reference to the 6 arrowheads found in this field in 1859 (present location of these is unknown). Together they suggest that there had been prehistoric activity or settlement nearby. No other prehistoric material was found in the further evaluation in November 2009.

Medieval: With the exception of two sherds (SF1, 2) which were found in August in topsoil or in the furrow of medieval/post-medieval rig and furrow, all the medieval pottery was from the group of related hearths. They are all from contexts which suggest they were rubbish thrown into the hearth pits after they were out of use.

The pottery includes at least 6-7 different vessels (5 rims, pipkin handle) including a pipkin, a cooking pot, jugs and several large dishes or bowls, one with a lug or handle. They can be dated within the range 13th-15th century. They represent domestic rubbish rather than kiln waste.

SF No	Context	Object
1	1	V. abraded handle sherd medieval pottery
2	4/1	Slightly abraded bodysherd medieval pottery from furrow
3	1	flint blade
4	6/1	rim cooking pot. Medieval
5	6/1	rim large bowl/dish, blackened internally. Medieval
6	6/1	jug rim. Medieval
7	6/1	pipkin handle. Medieval
8-15	6/1	bodysherds, mixture of abraded and fresh. 1 with traces external olive glaze. 1 dish sherd with traces internal glaze. Medieval
16	top natural N of 6	bodysherd traces ext glaze. Medieval
17	11/1	2 (joining) sherds of rim of large dish/bowl with part of lug/handle. 1 v small bodysherd. Medieval
18	1	3 sherds cream glazed redware. L19th/E 20 th Century.
19	6/1	1 very small sherd, redware. Very abraded. Medieval
20	14	base sherd, abraded redware. Medieval
21	6/3	1 bodysherd. Abraded redware. Medieval
22	16 by 6/4	1 bodysherd. Abraded redware. Medieval
23	16 by 6/4	1 rim large bowl, lid seated, redware (Joins SF5). Medieval
24	16	10 sherds including base and handle of same abraded redware jug. Traces of external olive green glaze. Medieval
25	16	1 handle sherd of redware jug, traces external olive green glaze, abraded. Medieval
26	16	Frag iron nail

7. Interpretation

- 7.1 *Prehistoric:* Flints found in the 19th century and the single flint found in August 2009 suggest some prehistoric activity in the area but no related features were found in any of the evaluation trenches.
- 7.2 *Medieval:* Features 6, 11, 14 were all the remains of hearths. They appear to have been dug a maximum of about 300mm from the medieval ground surface, only the base of the features where they were cut into natural surviving below the subsequent cultivation. The most elaborate of the hearths (6) had the remains of a stone kerb. All produced charcoal which included small branch wood. While Feature 6 could be the base of an enclosed oven, the other features appear to have been open hearths, simply slightly dug in to enclose the heat and protect from draughts. Feature 14 was clearly later than

Feature 6. The relationship of Features 11 and 10 to Feature 6 could not be assessed due to the paucity of horizontal stratigraphy; however the same silt (13) overlay both 6 and 11 suggesting they were almost contemporary. Each hearth seems to have been used for a limited time and then left open to silt up. The spread of the hearths, the silting and the lack of any other associated features or finds suggest these hearths were in the open air.

Ovens and hearths of this type and size could be related to a number of domestic activities- as bread ovens, brewing places and grain drying kilns. Similar features were also used in relation to metal working and to pottery production. However, there was no direct evidence (for example slag, burnt grain etc) in the charcoal layers to give an indication of function. The only fragment of non-ferrous slag/metalworking waste found was in the top fill of 11, in the silt that had accumulated after the hearth was used; it can not be used to assess function. The pottery appears to be domestic rubbish thrown into the top of the hearths, after they fell out of use – it does not represent kiln waste.

In summary this appears to have been a small group of open air hearths- dated to the medieval period by a scatter of abraded pottery sherds in the silt that accumulated in the open hearth pits. The overall lack of other evidence of medieval structures or finds in any of the other trenches makes any extensive settlement in this area unlikely. It is possible that the hearths were associated with the building or possibly repair of the church- or there may be some occupation on the far side of the churchyard (or even below the churchyard). It might be for example that there had been a priest's house near the church at some point.

- 7.3 *Medieval or post-medieval:* Three furrows of rig and furrow cultivation were identified in August 2009. Their relationship to the hearths was unclear but the medieval sherd in one of the furrows might suggest that they were later, having ploughed across a medieval feature. The suggestion of individual plough marks at the end of furrow 5 suggests that this rig and furrow may have been fairly short-lived.

8. Impacts and Mitigations

Impacts and Mitigations

None.

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue August 2009	
Digital frame no	Content
1-2	General looking E to Fetterangus
3-4	General looking S
5-6	General looking SE
7-8	General looking W
9-10	Trench 1, W end
11-15	Oven 6, looking S
16-18	Trench 2 looking E, 10 in top right, 11&12 in foreground
19-20	11,12
21-15	10
27-28	Looking W across Trenches 1 and 2, showing 6,10, 11,12.

Photographic catalogue November 2009	
Digital frame no	Content
1-3	General looking SE
4-5	Trench 3, looking E
6-7	General looking S
8-11	Trench 4, looking S
12-18	F6, F11, F14
19-20	F6, looking E
21-22	F14, looking E
23-24	General view looking E
25-26	F6, F11, F14
27-28	F6
29-30	F14
31-34	F14, F6, F11 looking SW
35-36	F6 looking SW
37-40	F14 looking SW
41-42	F6 looking SW
43-44	F14, F6, F11 looking NW
45-46	F11 section
47-54	F14 section
55-58	F11 section
59-61	Pottery SF 24 in situ N of F6
62-63	F14, F6, general view looking NW
64-78	F6