Archaeological Services
University of Durham

The Traprain Law Environs Project, East Lothian, Scotland: Phase 2

Evaluation at Knowes (TKN03) Data Structure Report

on behalf of
Historic Scotland
Dickinson College
University of Durham

ASUD Report 1045
February 2004

Archaeological Services
University of Durham
South Road
Durham DH1 3LE
Tel: 0191 334 1121
Fax: 0191 334 1126
archaeological.services@durham.ac.uk
www.durham.ac.uk/archaeologicalservices

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Contents

1. Summary

The project

1.1 This report presents the results of a second stage of evaluation of a cropmark site at Knowes, East Lothian, in 2003. The evaluation formed part of Phase 2 of the wider Traprain Law Environs Project.

1.2 The aims of this evaluation were to investigate a trilobate feature detected by both aerial and geophysical survey to the north of the rectilinear enclosure previously sampled.

1.3 The works were generously funded by Historic Scotland

Results

1.4 An area measuring 8m by 8m was machine-stripped of ploughsoil to reveal features previously detected by geophysical survey. Three inter-cutting pits, a small stone spread and a probable palaeochannel were hand-excavated.

1.5 Iron Age tradition pottery was recovered from fill deposits within two of the pits. Environmental samples were taken from twelve contexts and assessed; some contained charred cereal remains and other macrofossils and merit further analysis. The function of the pits remains uncertain but it is likely they were excavated for the extraction of the natural sand and gravel deposits.

Recommendations

1.6 These pits near the enclosure at Knowes contain well-preserved archaeological deposits but are unlikely to be the subject of further excavation as part of this project. Further analysis of selected environmental samples is recommended.

2. Project background

The Traprain Law Environs Project

2.1 The overarching aim of the Traprain Law Environs Project (TLEP) is to investigate aspects of the archaeological landscape around the fortified hilltop site of Traprain Law in order to permit the analysis of economy and society during the 1st millennia BC and AD. The first phase of the project involved the geophysical investigation of 30 cropmark sites within the vicinity of Traprain Law, comprising 2 multi-vallate, 12 rectilinear and 13 curvilinear enclosures, as well as 2 ring ditches and 1 possible building cropmark (Hale *et al*. 2001; 2003). Phase 2 of the project, comprising a programme of excavation of a sample of these sites, began in 2002. The evaluation at Knowes formed a part of this phase. The TLEP is directed by Professor Colin Haselgrove (University of Durham) and Professor Leon Fitts (Dickinson College).

2.2 Intrusive investigations undertaken to date as part of the Phase 2 works comprise evaluations at the Standingstone, Whittingehame Tower, Knowes, East Bearford and Foster Law enclosures (ASUD 2003a/b/c/d & 2004a) and open-area excavations at Whittingehame Tower and Standingstone (ASUD 2003b & 2004b).

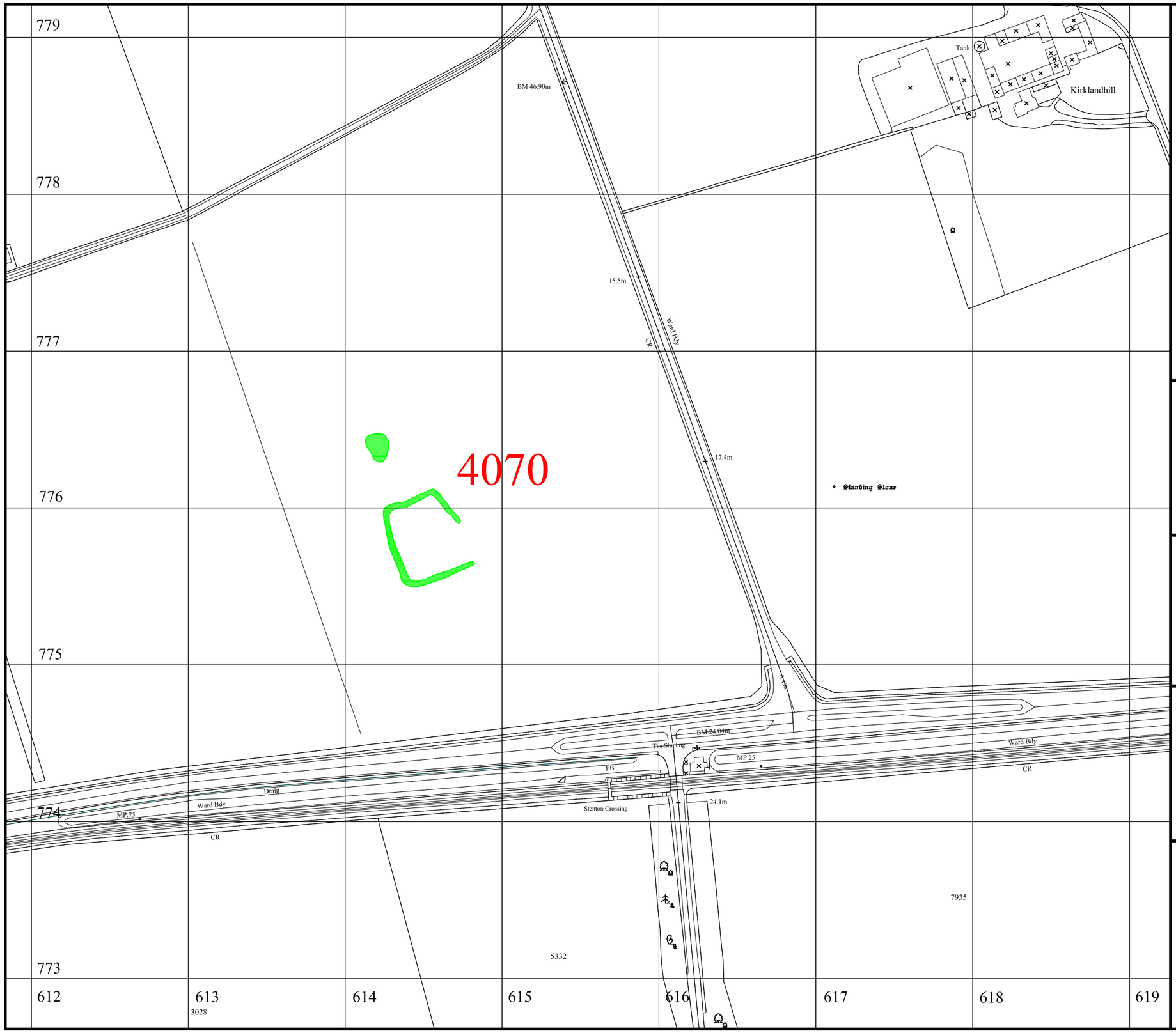
Site description and status

2.3 The enclosure at Knowes, of presumed Iron Age date, is one of a number of such enclosure sites near Traprain Law, none of which had been excavated prior to this project. It is a typical example of the rectilinear enclosure type in this area.

2.4 The enclosure occupies a level terrace of late-glacial sand and gravel immediately north of the existing A1(T), *c*.2km due east of East Linton, at an elevation of *c*.20m AOD (Figure 1). The underlying solid geology comprises Calciferous Sandstone Measures of the Carboniferous era.

2.5 During the last fifty years the site has been recorded on numerous aerial photographs by various bodies, including the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Figure 2 shows a rectified aerial photograph and interpretation of the site, supplied courtesy of RCAHMS.

2.6 The first phase of investigation undertaken as part of this project was a geomagnetic survey (Figure 3), which confirmed the location of the rectilinear enclosure, of maximum dimensions 55m by 55m (Hale et al. 2003; 2004). In addition to the main enclosure ditch, the geophysical survey identified a number of internal and external features, perhaps indicating more than one phase of activity at the site. Initial evaluation at the Knowes site sampled the main enclosure ditch and established the presence of stratified organic-rich fill deposits containing well-preserved cereals and other plant macrofossils, however, no artefacts were recovered (ASUD 2003c). The current, second, stage of evaluation was undertaken 30m north of the enclosure, and sampled a geophysical anomaly previously interpreted as a substantial pit.



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Knowes evaluation 2003

Figure 1

Location of the Knowes site

on behalf of
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0 100m

scale 1:2500 - for A3 plot

Knowes site principal features

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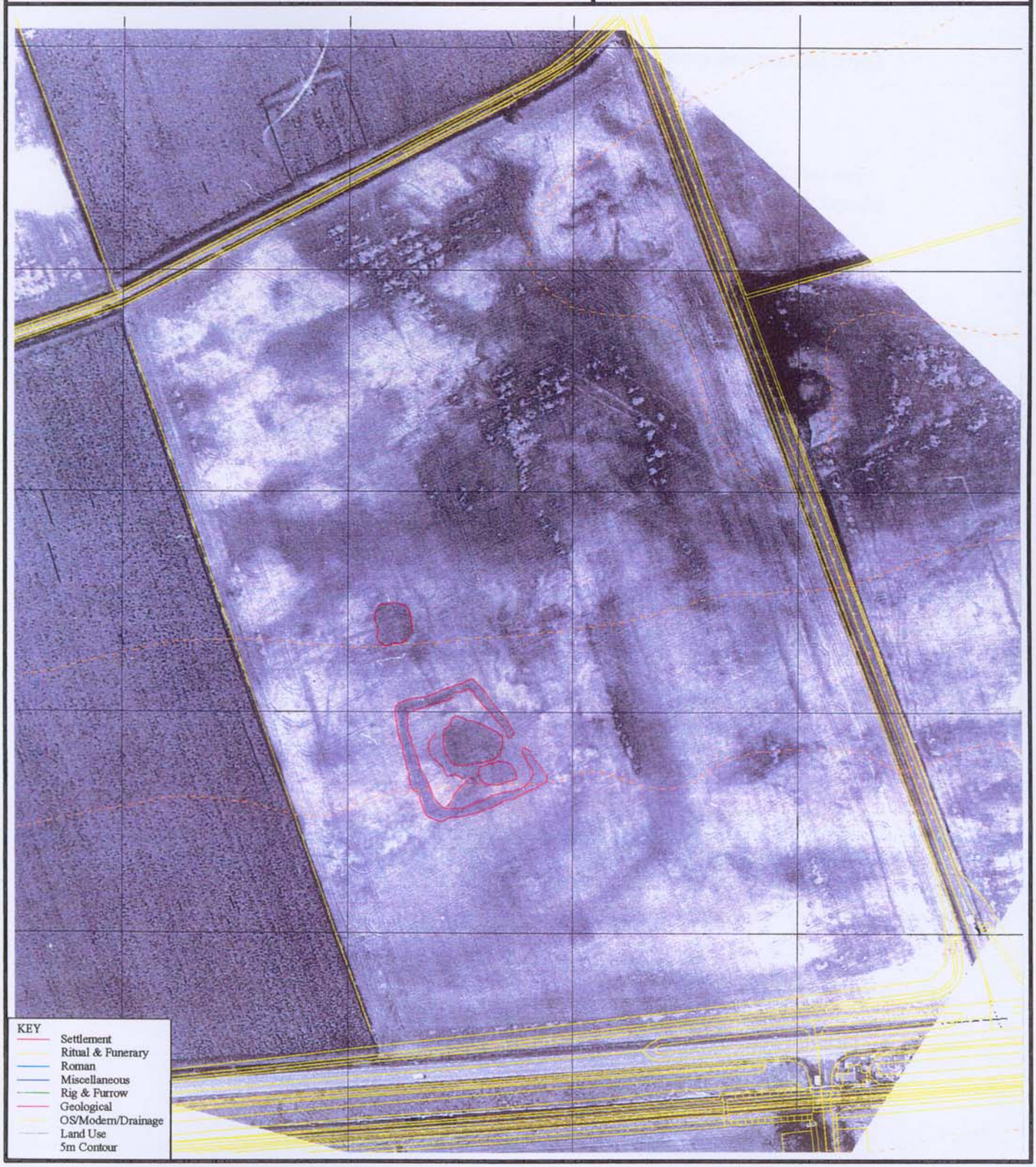
Traprain Law Environs Project Phase 2
Knowes evaluation 2003

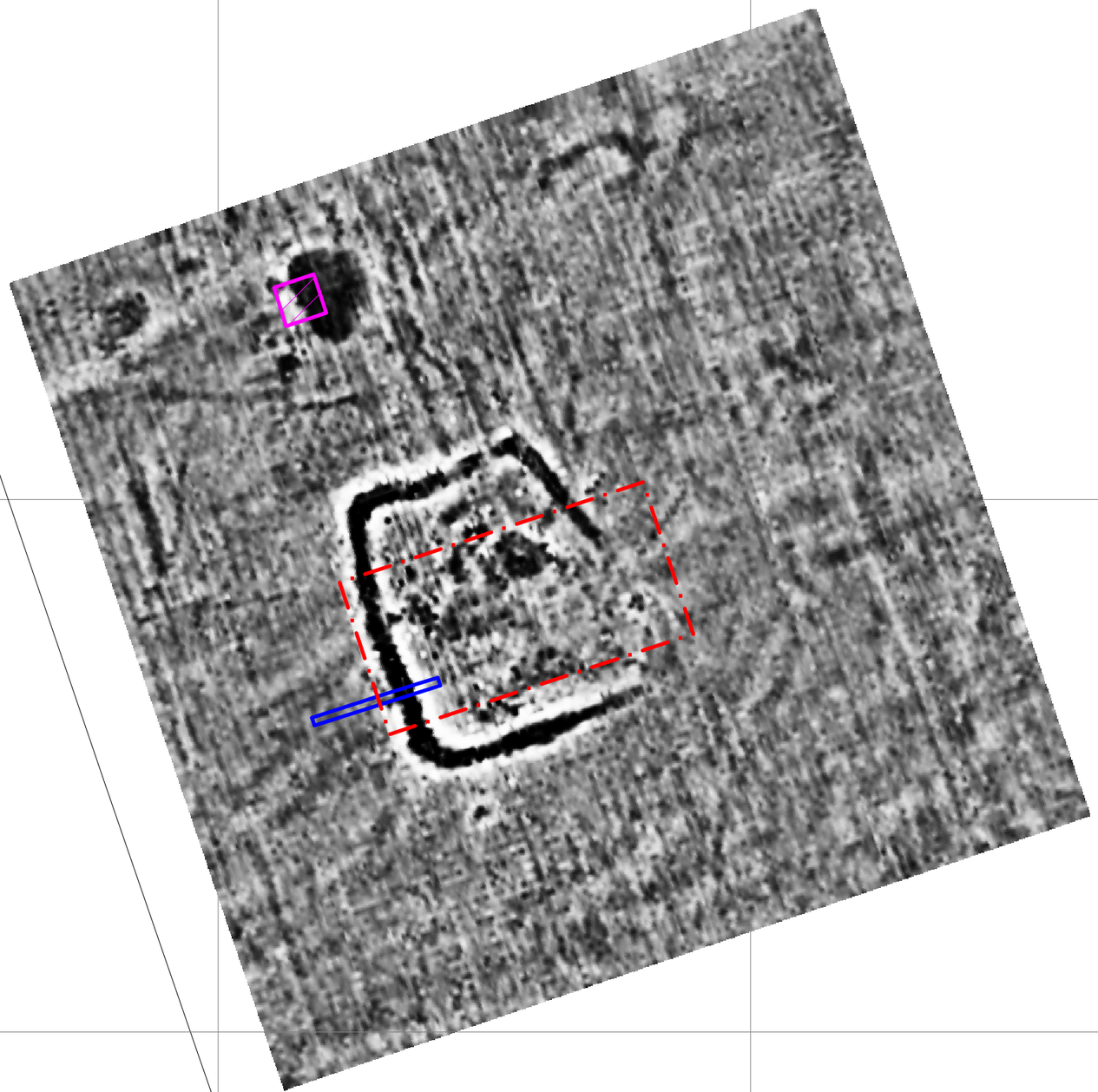
Figure 2
Rectified aerial photograph

Computer plot from aerial photographs.
Use only with caution.

John Sinclair House
16 Bernard Terrace
Edinburgh EH8 9NX

Plot origin **361300 677400**
AP Neg. No. **EL4557**
Mapsheet **NT67NW**
Site **Knowes**
Region **Lothian**
District **East**
Scale **1:2500**
Date **14.6.02**
SGS PTO **K.H.J. Macleod**





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The Traprain Law Environs Project Phase 2

Knowes evaluation 2003

Figure 3

Location of trenches and geophysical survey results

on behalf of
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0 50m

scale 1:1000 for A3 plot

evaluation trench 2002

excavation trench 2003

proposed excavation area 2004

2.7 The pit is located at NGR: NT 6142 7764, at *c*.16m AOD, and was detected as a large, trilobate, positive magnetic anomaly measuring 18m by 14m.

2.8 The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 4070) and is recorded on the NMRS as number NT 67 NW 019.

Objectives

2.9 The overarching academic aim for the TLEP excavations is as follows:

To investigate the changing character of smaller settlement types in the region during the 1st millennia BC and AD, thus contributing to wider research on:

- the development of society and economy in southern Scotland during the Iron Age
- the Roman impact in the northern frontier region and the indigenous responses
- the extent to which cropmark and geomagnetic evidence is representative of surviving remains in an area of highly variable geology

2.10 The specific objectives for the 2003 evaluation at Knowes were:

- to confirm the existence of the trilobate feature apparent on aerial photographs and geophysical survey
- to obtain information about subsoil conditions and preservation
- to sample the deposits to ascertain their character and sequence
- to retrieve material culture and environmental remains which could provide information about the date and nature of the activities represented and enable these to be compared to the main enclosure
- to assess the potential for larger scale excavation in 2004
- to assist with the future management of the monument

Dates

2.11 The evaluation was conducted between 9th and 26th September 2003. This report was prepared between October 2003 and January 2004.

Personnel

2.12 Fieldwork was conducted by Janet Beveridge (Supervisor), Peter Carne, Aaron Goode, Duncan Hale, Sarah Phillips and James Roberts. This report was prepared by Janet Beveridge, Matt Claydon and Duncan Hale, with illustrations by Linda Bosveld, David Graham and Martin Railton. Specialist assessments were conducted by Pam Lowther (ceramics) and Jacqui Huntley and Charlotte O'Brien (plant macrofossils). The Project Manager was Duncan Hale.

Acknowledgements

2.13 Funding for the project was generously provided by Historic Scotland, with help in kind from the University of Durham. We are very grateful to The Childrens Trust and their tenant farmer Mr Peter Cochran for permission to

excavate, and to Olwyn Owen and Patrick Ashmore (Historic Scotland), Bridget Simpson (East Lothian Council) and staff at RCAHMS for advice and assistance with the project.

Archive

2.14 The site code is TKN03, for Traprain Knowes 2003. On completion of the overall project, the archive will be deposited with Historic Scotland for transfer to the Finds Disposal Panel and the National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS).

3. The evaluation

Standards

3.1 The evaluation and reporting has been conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised 2001) and in accordance with Scheduled Monument Consent granted by Historic Scotland (dated 21st August 2003) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Excavation methods

3.2 A single trench measuring 8m by 8m was excavated across the western part of the feature 30m north of the enclosure (Figure 3). The ploughsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless, ditching blade under strict archaeological supervision. All further work was carried out by hand.

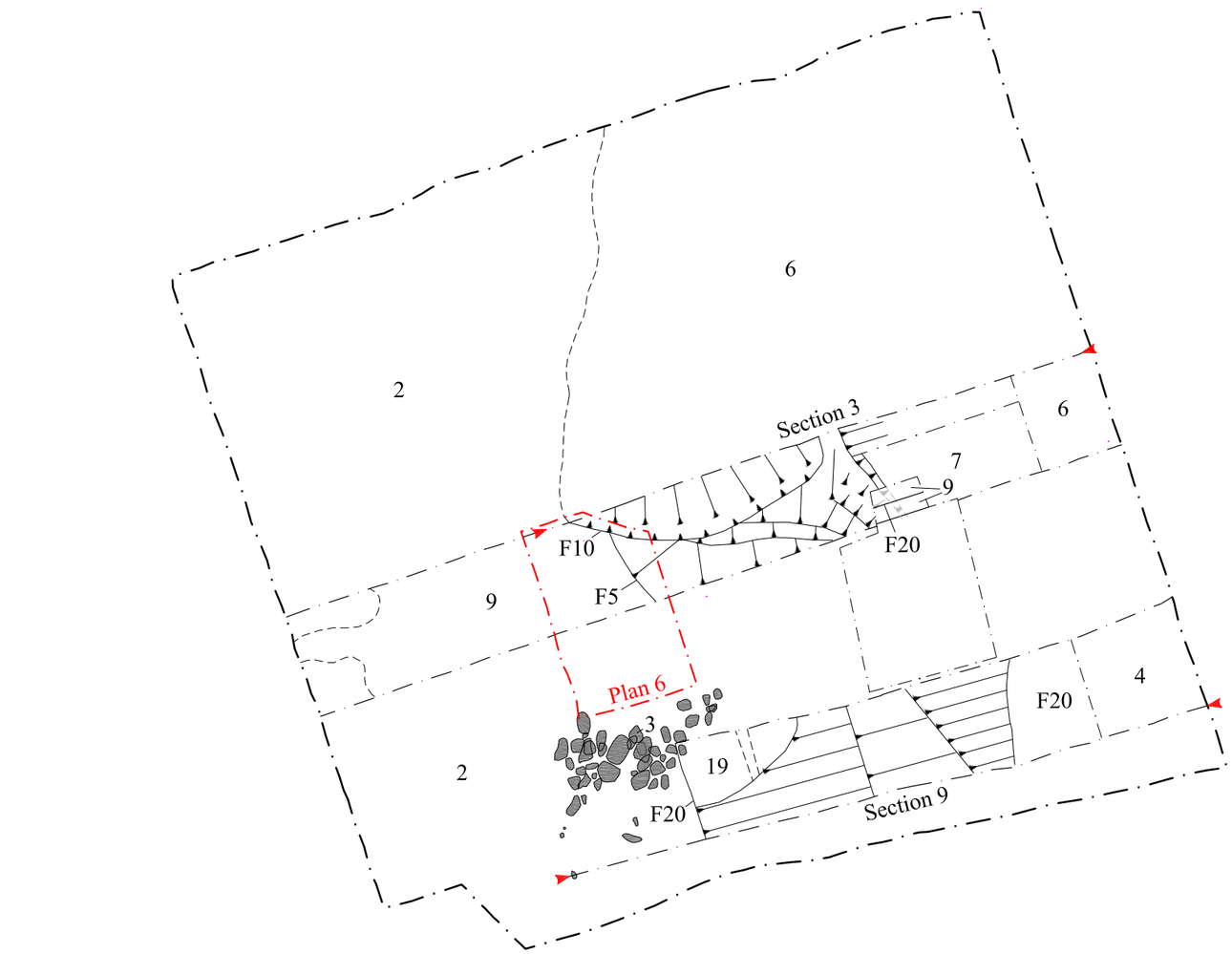
3.3 The excavation was recorded using the ASUD Iconic Formation Process Recording System. All excavated areas were cleaned and the sections drawn at 1:10; trench plans were drawn at 1:20. Photography was by colour transparency and monochrome 35mm stills. Environmental samples were taken from suitable contexts.

3.4 On completion of the excavation, the trench was backfilled, compacted and reinstated as agricultural land.

4. Excavated features

4.1 The natural subsoil deposits at the site comprise late-glacial sands and gravels [02], [16=26], [17], [19] and [09], which are overlain by modern ploughsoil. Immediately beneath the ploughsoil [01] was a mid-yellow/brown silty sand [02]. Since no features were apparent in this deposit to account for the geophysical anomalies, two 1m wide trenches were excavated on an east-west alignment through the sand (Figure 4). Pit features were encountered in each trench. Two sondages were then excavated between the two trenches in order to establish how the pits were related stratigraphically.

4.2 Two pits [F05 & F10] were identified in the northern trench, Trench 1; both cut through natural sand and gravel deposits. Pit [F05] had a maximum depth of 1.38m, with a gradual slope at the top becoming sharp midway along its length (Figure 5). The lowest fill comprised a deposit of mid-red/brown sandy



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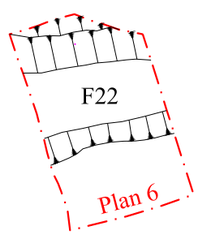

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Knowes evaluation 2003

Figure 4

Plan of trench

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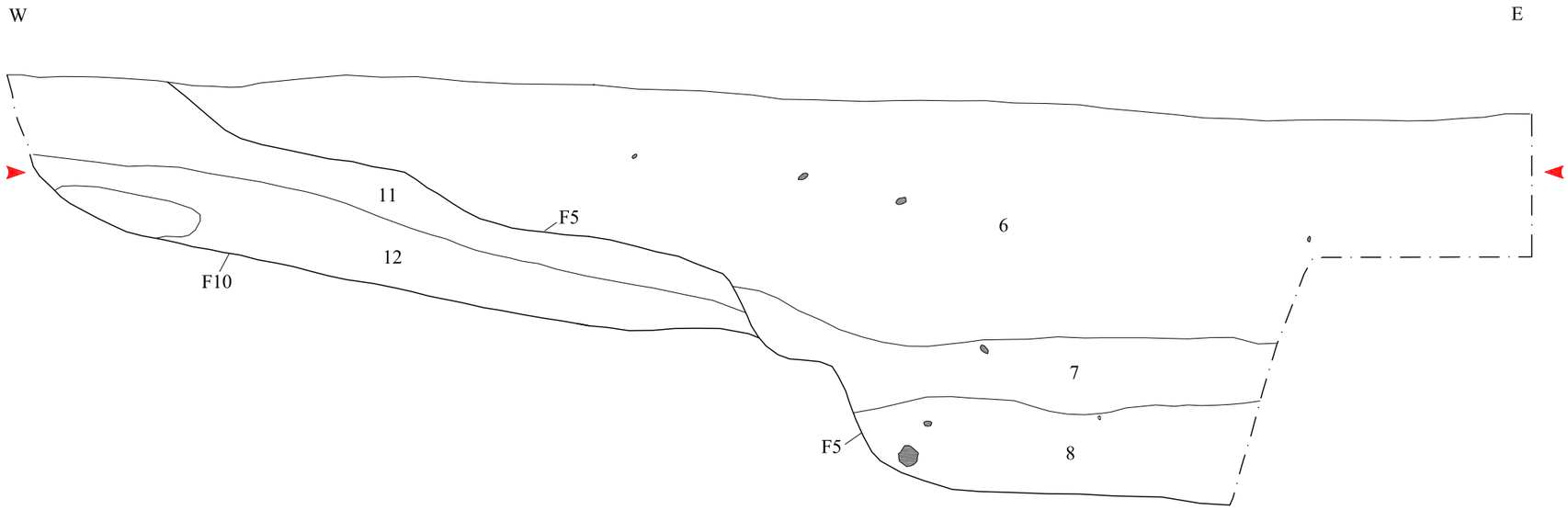
0 2m

scale 1:50 - for A3 plot

stone

Section 3



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Knowes evaluation 2003

Figure 5

Section 3

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0 1m

scale 1:20 - for A3 plot

stone

silt of maximum depth 0.37m, with 1% small sub-angular stones [08]. A large rim sherd of Iron Age tradition pottery, Cool type II, was recovered from this deposit. This was overlain by a mid-dark brown sandy silt with 1% small sub-rounded stones [07]. The majority of the pit was subsequently filled with a mid-brown sandy silt with 1% small sub-rounded stones [06]. Five very small fragments of coarse, probable Iron Age, pottery were recovered from this deposit.

4.3 Beneath the western part of pit [F05] were the truncated remains of an earlier pit cut [F10], which was filled with a pale grey sand [12] covered by a light red/brown silty sand [11]. No finds were recovered from this feature.

4.4 A linear feature [F22] was identified in the western part of the excavation, aligned broadly east-west and cut by both pits. At the base of this feature was a deposit of mid-dark brown sand with occasional (5%) gravel and lenses of light brown silt [25]. This was overlain by a mid-yellow/brown sand with 15% gravel [24]. The uppermost fill was a silty sand with up to 20% gravel inclusions [23]. These fill deposits are very similar to the surrounding natural sand and gravel deposits. The feature is interpreted as a naturally infilled palaeochannel.

4.5 One pit cut was recorded in Trench 2 [F20] with a maximum depth of 0.93m (Figure 6). The sides were irregular with sloping steps which cut through the natural sand and gravel deposits ([17] & [19]) and a layer of charcoal [18], apparently deposited naturally. The earliest deposit in the pit was a lens of sand and charcoal [15], which was overlain by a light orange/brown sand with occasional gravel [21]. Stratigraphically above this, and covering part of the base of the pit, was a compacted light orange/brown silty sand with occasional flecks of charcoal [14]. Above [14], and covering part of the base of the pit was [13], orange/brown silty sand with occasional gravel. In the north-facing section this was overlain by a mid-orange/brown sandy silt layer [27]. The majority of the pit was subsequently filled with a mid-yellow/brown silty sand with occasional small cobbles [04]. Two conjoining (modern break) body sherds of coarse, presumed Iron Age, pottery were recovered from this deposit.

4.5 A sondage excavated between pits [F05] and [F20] established that while the fills were broadly similar, [F20] cut [F05]; [F05] was therefore the earlier of the two.

4.6 Immediately to the west of these pits was a stone feature [F03], comprising a spread of large cobbles overlying sand [17]. The maximum dimensions of this layer were 1.60m east-west by 0.60m north-south.

5. The finds

Pottery

5.1 All the finds from the evaluation were ceramic; these are listed and described in Appendix 2.

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0 1m

scale 1:20 - for A3 plot

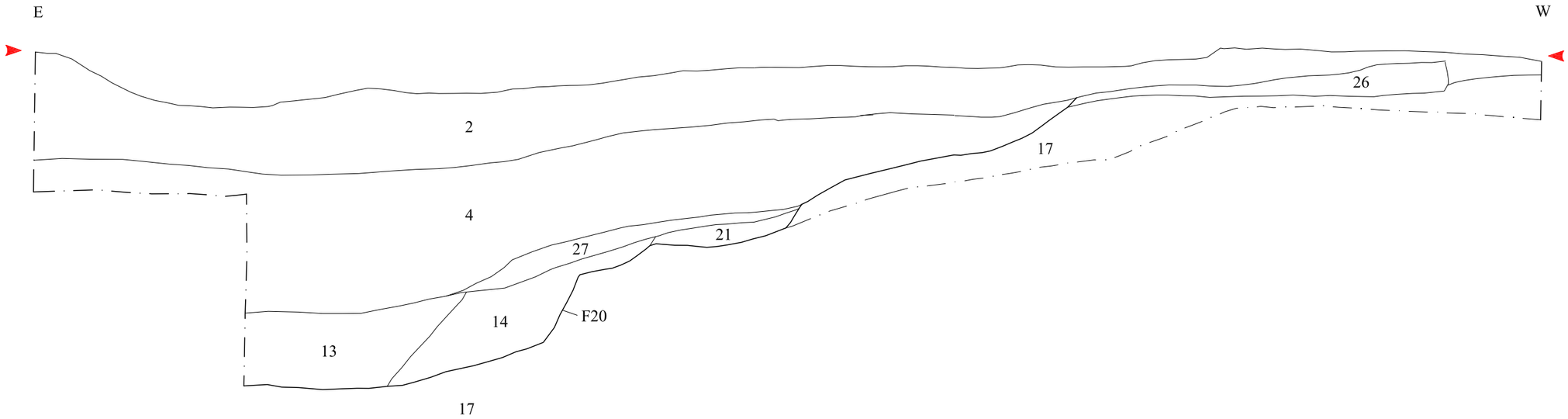
The Traprain Law Environs Project
Phase 2

Knowes evaluation 2003

Figure 6

Section 9

Section 9



5.2 The lowest fill [08] of pit [F05] contained a large rim sherd of Iron Age tradition pottery, Cool type II, with carbonised residues on both internal and external surfaces. The other sherds recovered were also all of coarse pottery, from stratigraphically later contexts in pit [F05] and pit [F20].

6. The environmental evidence

Methods statement

6.1 Twelve contexts at the site were sampled for assessment of their potential to provide environmental, economic, dating and other evidence. 5 litre sub-samples of sediment from each context were manually processed in the laboratory with both flot and residue retained upon 500µm mesh. The flots were scanned under a stereomicroscope at magnifications of up to x50, notes made of the matrix components and any seeds or identifiable plant remains sorted and identified by comparison with modern reference material held in the Department of Archaeology, University of Durham. Sorted seeds were stored in a separate bag within the flot bag. All of the flots were completed unless otherwise stated. The sediment was essentially free-draining and thus any seeds contemporary with the use of the site would be expected to have been preserved through charring. Non-charred seeds are assumed to be modern.

Results

6.2 Assessment results are shown in the table below.
(nfa = no further action on any remaining unprocessed material)

context	notes	action
04	Upper fill of pit F20. Dark brown sandy sediment. Moderate flot of very silty abraded charcoal and coal. Nonetheless a few seeds. Indet. cereal 2, hulled *Hordeum* 3, *Polygonum convolvulus* 1, and 2 apparently charred *Veronica chamedrys* seeds but they look rather fresh otherwise and may be modern contaminants.	Process the rest
06	Upper fill of pit F05. Dark brown sandy sediment. Small flot and very very silty abraded charcoal. Quite a lot of *Calluna* stem too. Hulled *Hordeum* 6, *Hordeum* undiff 2, emmer spikelet fork 1, spelt glume base 1, *Plantago lanceolata* 1.	Process the rest
07	Middle fill of pit F05. Dark brown sandy sediment. Small flot and another of the abraded silty charcoal type. Plenty of seeds though – cereal indet. 1, cf *Triticum* 1, *Polyg conv* 1, *Sieglingia* 7, <4 Gram 2, *Carex* trig 10, Polyg l/p 1, *Carex* lent 1, *Pteridium* frond frag 1, emmer spikelet fork 1, emmer glume base 3, spelt glume base 5, spelt spikelet fork 1, wheat glume 1.	Process the rest
08	Lower fill of pit F05. Small flot of mineral concreted material – could be charcoal underneath but not that obvious. A few *Calluna* twigs and they are not concreted. *Hordeum* undiff 1, Cereal undiff 2.	nfa
11	Lower fill of pit F10. Small flot of silty and cindery charcoal and coal. Lots of modern non-charred *Veronica chamedrys*. Moderate amounts of *Calluna* wood. No seeds.	nfa
12	Upper fill of pit F10. Large flot – 6-700ml partially burnt coal and glassy coalified charcoal. Indistinguishable from 15.	nfa

	c.100ml examined.	
13	Fill in pit F20. Small, mineral-concreted material with more or less no charcoal. No seeds.	nfa
14	Fill in pit F20. Moderate flot of concretions of mineral and burnt soil, part burnt coal and possibly even some tarry charcoal. No seeds.	nfa
15	Lowest fill in pit F20. Dark brown sandy sediment. Only 4.5 litres available and all processed. Large flot – 6-700ml of partially burnt coal, coal and coalified charcoal. Little "good" charcoal. Mostly quite small pieces – probably all <4mm. Somewhat abraded. Approx 50ml examined. No seeds.	nfa
18	Charcoal layer. Another large flot of partially burnt and coalified charcoal. *c*.50ml examined. No seeds.	nfa
21	Fill in pit F20. Moderate flot of partially burnt coal, some charcoal – rather like the big flots. No seeds.	nfa
27	Fill in pit F20. Small flot of burnt soil and mineral material. Practically no obvious charcoal. Small fragments in fine fraction. Heavy mineral concretions. *Plantago lanceolata* – half (not picked out).	nfa

Discussion

6.3 In essence three pits and one layer were sampled. The flots fell into two broad categories: those essentially containing coal, often partially burnt, and glassy charcoal, and those essentially of wood and *Calluna* charcoal either heavily mineral encrusted or very silty. In most cases the charcoal was wood charcoal although one flot contained quantities of material with the appearance of burnt soil. There was no strong evidence for the use of peat as a fuel. Thus it could be acceptable to use *Calluna* wood as a dating material, if essential, as it seems more likely to reflect use of contemporary heather as, for example, roofing or bedding material. The moderate amounts of mineral material contained within the flots is due to vigorous flotation but that was necessary in order to retrieve the somewhat more dense than normal mineral-encrusted charcoal. The two categories of flot also seem to relate to different pits although the lowest fill deposit [08] in F05, with otherwise moderately rich material, was very poor in plant remains. It may be that this sample simply reflects inwash or erosion of material from the sides of the pit and not a deliberate fill. One fill [04] of F20 contained a few fragments of cereals and weeds otherwise it seems to have contained burnt coal debris and little else.

6.4 Charred plant remains were scarce and only sufficiently common in three contexts ([04], [06] and [07]) for further work to be cost effective. Preservation of the seeds was generally not good although cereal chaff fragments did survive in two of the three rich samples. Both emmer and spelt chaff were recorded and therefore the samples are likely to be able to contribute to the debate about wheat husbandry in the later prehistoric period in south-east Scotland. There might well be some differential preservation due to the adverse burial environments although this cannot be tested; it should, however, be borne in mind during further work.

Recommendations

6.5 Contexts [04], [06] and [07] merit for further work, including the processing of the remainder of each sample. Given the highly silty nature of some of the charcoal it would be worth experimenting with the use of ultrasound to try to clean the flots or even the seeds themselves. For contexts [06] and [07] it is not even certain whether all of the fragments have been removed from the material sampled so far and these flots should be re-checked after ultrasonic treatment.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The evaluation was primarily undertaken in order to investigate the trilobate feature apparent on aerial photographs and geophysical survey to the north of the rectilinear enclosure. Excavation has confirmed that the feature comprises a complex of inter-cutting pits, containing Iron Age tradition pottery, and which are therefore likely to be broadly contemporary with the enclosure.

7.2 The earliest feature excavated comprised a probable palaeochannel, which was cut by pit [F10], which in turn was cut by pit [F05], which was then cut by pit [F20]. The function of the pits remains uncertain, though it is considered likely that they were excavated for the extraction of sand and gravel. A small area of cobbles, perhaps part of a deliberate surface, was also recorded immediately west of the pits. These features were all overlain by a silty sand [02], presumed to be redeposited from slightly higher ground to the south.

7.3 An open-area excavation on the main enclosure is planned for June/July 2004. The excavation will measure 60m by 30m and will be undertaken across the central part of the enclosure (see Figure 3).

8. References

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Appendix 1: Context register

Summary list of contexts. The • symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of finds of the following types: P pottery, B bone, M metals, F flint, S slag, O other materials.

Context	Description	P	B	M	F	S	O
[01]	Ploughsoil						
[02]	Silty sand deposit						
[F03]	Stone feature						
[04]	Upper fill of pit F20	•					
[F05]	Pit cut						
[06]	Upper fill of pit F05	•					
[07]	Middle fill of pit F05						
[08]	Lower fill of pit F05	•					
[09]	Gravel deposit						
[F10]	Pit cut						
[11]	Lower fill of pit F10						
[12]	Upper fill of pit F10						
[13]	Fill in pit F20						
[14]	Fill in pit F20						
[15]	Earliest fill in pit F20						
[16]	Sand deposit						
[17]	Sand deposit						
[18]	Charcoal deposit						
[19]	Gravelly sand deposit						
[F20]	Pit cut						
[21]	Fill in pit F20						
[F22]	Palaeochannel						
[23]	Upper fill of F22						
[24]	Middle fill of F22						
[25]	Lower fill of F22						
[26]	Sand deposit						
[27]	Fill in pit F20						

Appendix 2: Finds register

Context	Small find number	Material	Description
[4]	1	Ceramic	2 conjoining (modern break) body sherds coarse pottery. Oxidised orange int surf and margins; reduced core; reduced ext surface. Sandstone frags and burnt-out organic temper. 14g
[6]	2	Ceramic	5 chips coarse pottery. Igneous rock and quartz temper. 4g.
[8]	3	Ceramic	Large rim sherd coarse pottery, Cool type II. Largely reduced surfaces & core, with int & ext carbonized residues. Igneous rock temper. 82g.

Appendix 3: Sample register

Context	Sample No.	No. of bags
[04]	105	2
[06]	100	2
[07]	101	2
[08]	102	2
[11]	104	2
[12]	103	2
[13]	106	2
[14]	110	2
[15]	107	1
[18]	109	2
[21]	108	2
[27]	111	2

Appendix 4: Plans and sections register

No.	Scale	Description
1	1:20	Pre-ex plan of trench
2	1:20	Plan of sample trenches through pits
3	1:10	South-facing section through [F05] and [F10]
4	1:10	North-facing section through [F05]
5	1:10	West-facing section through [F22]
6	1:20	Plan of stone deposit [F03]and sondages
7	1:10	East-facing section through [F22]
8	1:10	South-facing section through [F20]
9	1:!0	North-facing section through [F20]

Appendix 5: Photographic register

Colour slide: film 1

Frame no.	Context/plan/section	Looking N S E W
1-2	General area shot	W
3-4	Stone feature [F03]	N
5-6	Slot through feature	W
16-18	Trench through pit [F05]	W
19-21	North-facing section	NE
22-25	South-facing section	SW
26-27	Cut [F05]	W
28-30	Trench through pits [F05], [F10]	W
31-33	South-facing section [F10]	NE
34-35	Trench through pit	W
36-37	Trench through pit	E
39	Section through pit	N

Colour slide: film 2

Frame no.	Context/plan/section	Looking N S E W
1-2	Section through pit	N
3-4	Stone feature [F03]	N

5-7	Section through palaeochannel	E
8-10	Section through palaeochannel	W

B/W: film 1

Frame no.	Context/plan/section	Looking N S E W
20-21	General area shot	W
22-23	Stone feature [F03]	N
24-25	Slot through feature	W
35-36	Trench through pit [F05]	W

B/W: film 2

Frame no.	Context/plan/section	Looking N S E W
1-3	South-facing section through pit [F05]	SW
4-6	South-facing section through pit [F05]	NW
7-8	Pit cut [F05]	N
9-11	Trench through pits [F05], [F10]	W
12-14	South facing section [F10]	NE
15-16	Trench through pit [F20]	W
17-18	Trench through pit [F20]	E
19-20	Section through pit [F20]	N
21-22	Stone feature [F03]	N
23-25	Section through ditch/palaeochannel [F22]	E
26-28	Section through ditch/palaeochannel [F22]	W

Appendix 6: Stratigraphic matrix