
2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 *The Stoneyhill project*

Archaeological fieldwork at the Stoneyhill Landfill Site (*illus 1*) was carried out between July 2002 and May 2003. The project was commissioned and funded initially by Stoneyhill Waste Management (SWM) Ltd and latterly by SITA. It was overseen by Ian Shepherd of Aberdeenshire Council, Planning and Environment Services.

The project was initiated by a proposal for the expansion of an existing landfill site. A desk-based assessment and field survey of the proposed landfill extension (*Alexander 1999*) were carried out as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) produced for SWM by BMT Cordah (*SWM 2000*). This work covered a wider area than that ultimately included in the landfill, but the site numbering used in the EIA has been retained to ease cross-referencing.

Following planning consent, work took place within a field to the east of the existing landfill and in the landfill extension, principally to the north and west of the existing site. The works included a survey and evaluation, followed by excavation of identified sites, and finally a watching brief within selected parts of the site during groundbreaking works.

This report covers mainly the prehistoric remains identified during the fieldwork, although later clearance cairns are also briefly described. More detailed information on the post-medieval remains is available in an archive report (*Suddaby 2009*).

2.2 *Site location, topography and geology*

Stoneyhill (NGR: NK 078 409, *illus 1*), lies 7km to the south-west of Peterhead on undulating agricultural land between 50m and 75m above OD. The farm is bisected by the Laeca Burn, which flows in a generally southerly direction towards Hatton and then east (as the Water of Cruden) to the sea at Cruden Bay. Flanking the burn within Stoneyhill Farm, there are areas of peat and steeper slopes on which modern cultivation is not possible. Many of the upstanding archaeological sites were preserved in these areas.

The development site lay entirely within the area between the River Ugie and the Burn (Water) of Cruden. A granite quarry at Stoneyhill Farm was the location of the initial landfill site and further exposures of similar rock were present in the south

of the development site and under Cairn 7/17. Milne (*1892*) described the subsoil as containing much flint, and the local area, characterised by high proportions of quartzite and flint nodules, is now referred to as the Buchan Ridge Gravels (for a more detailed discussion of these gravel deposits, see *Kesel & Gemmell 1981*; *Bridgland et al 1997*; *Merritt et al 2000* and *Merritt et al 2003*).

The natural subsoil varies widely across the project area, with soft flint-rich clays and sandy clays containing granite cobbles and boulders dominating to the east of the Laeca Burn valley, with loose gravels, sandy gravels and sand on the valley floor and to the west. Flint cobbles and pebbles, rarely over 0.2m diameter, of widely varying colours and qualities, dominated the gravel deposits, with granite, quartzite and sandstone also present. A thick iron-pan had formed within areas not under the plough.

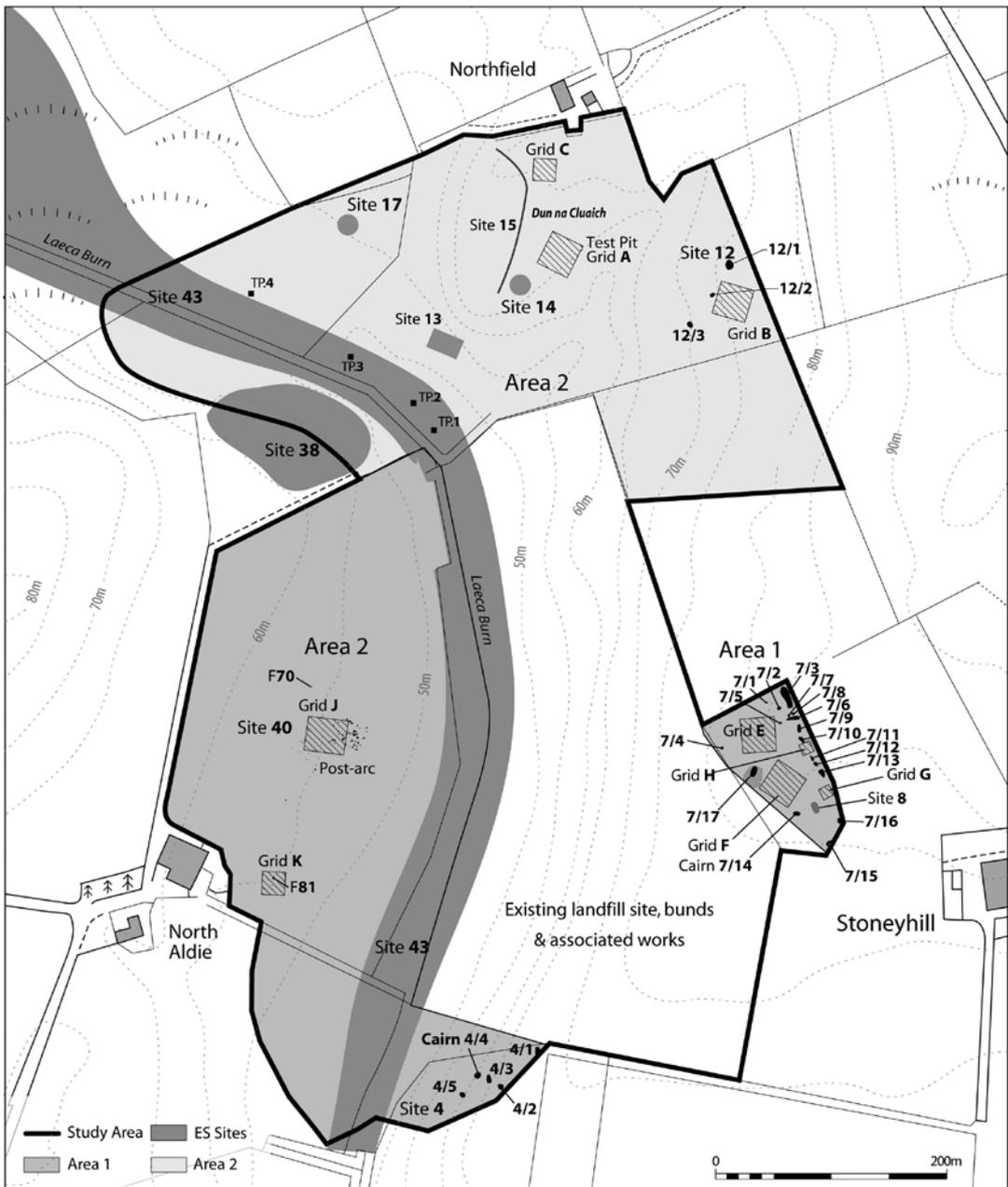
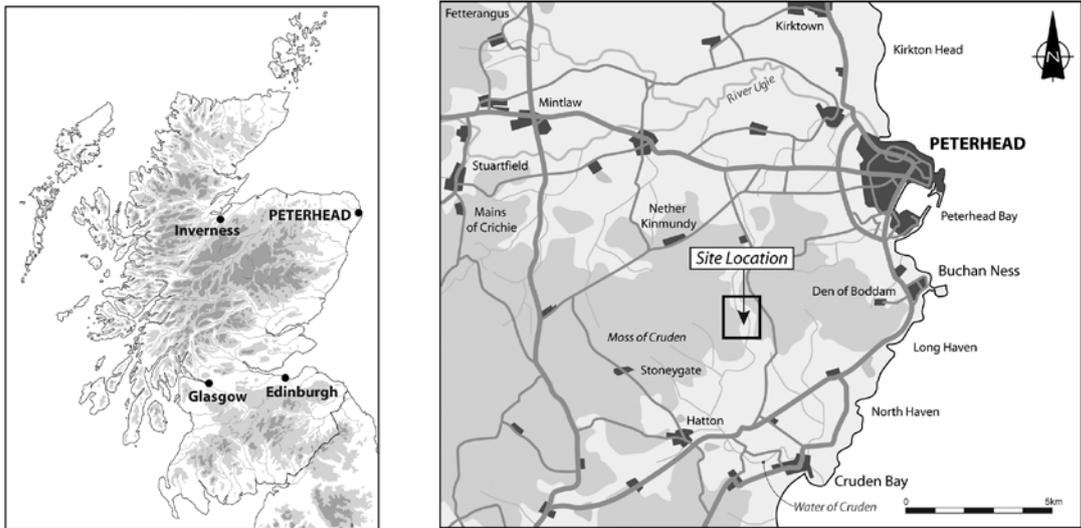
Kesel & Gemmell (1981, fig. 2) present a density map of the Buchan Ridge Gravels, and it clearly shows that the Stoneyhill area is near the most flint-rich parts of the Gravels. Although the project area may not be directly on top of in situ gravel deposits, it is certainly within the richest parts of the surrounding glacial/fluvioglacial deposits.

2.3 *Archaeological background*

The Peterhead area has a rich archaeological record, most notably in terms of upstanding field monuments and past artefact find-spots. Away from the coastal strip, little commercial development and hence archaeological work has taken place (*Philips & Bradley 2004*), although recent work on a gas pipeline near Peterhead (*Strachan & Dunwell 2003*) forms a notable exception.

Lithic-based research fieldwork has been conducted by Alan Saville and others (*Saville 1995*; *Bridgland et al 1997*) around the Den of Boddam, 4km to the south of Peterhead and 4km to the east of Stoneyhill (*illus 1*). This produced evidence for sub-surface mining of flint resources.

In 2002, a proposed windfarm to the west of the Laeca Burn, between Aldie Farm and Nether Kinmundy, led to an archaeological assessment and field survey (*Cressey 2002*). This identified twenty-eight archaeological sites ranging from prehistoric cairns to modern quarries, and included four flint scatters.



Illus 1 Location maps showing the Stoneyhill Landfill development boundary and area of the study