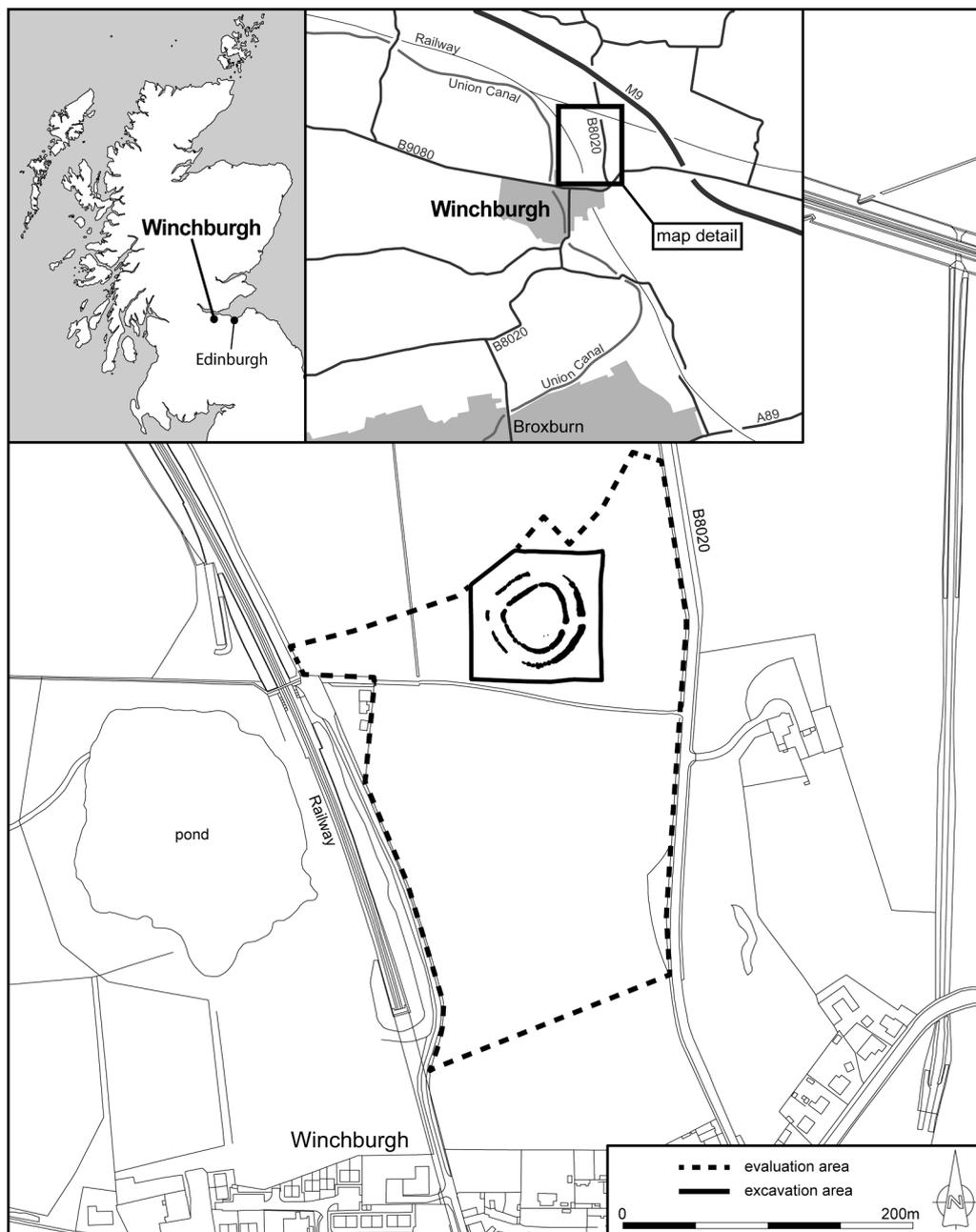


2. INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of a programme of archaeological field investigation and post-excavation work undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA), in advance of the construction of a housing development forming part of the Winchburgh Masterplan area. The site was situated approximately 0.5km north-east of Winchburgh, West Lothian and north-west of Niddry Mains House (NGR: NT 0909 7547) (Illus 1).

A double-ditched enclosure (NRHE Site No. NT07NE 127) was identified from aerial photography, the details of which were provided by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) (Illus 2). An evaluation was undertaken by CFA in April 2013 ahead of the housing development in order to confirm the presence of the enclosure (Glendinning 2013). Sixty-three trenches (8% of the total development area of 6.62ha) were excavated within the development area. Eleven trenches were positioned to investigate the



Illus 1 Location map. © CFA Archaeology Ltd



Illus 2 Aerial photograph showing enclosure. Taken from the north-east. © RCAHMS.
Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk

double-ditched enclosure. The investigation confirmed the presence, nature and extent of the ditches, leading on to a further programme of open area excavation between July and October 2013.

The project was funded by Winchburgh Developments Ltd (formerly Regenco Trading Ltd) and was overseen by WoSAS on behalf of West Lothian Council.

2.1 Location, topography and geology

The development site lies within a relatively well wooded, rolling agricultural landscape, with valleys and ridges running in an east/west direction. The site is bounded on the eastern side by the B8020 and by the main Glasgow–Edinburgh rail line on the western side. The enclosure occupied locally high ground (*c* 72m AOD) within a gently undulating arable landscape that generally sloped down from south to north. The British Geological Survey (BGS)

classifies the local geology as the Hopetoun Group of sedimentary rocks of the Carboniferous Period. Collectively this amounts to a wide suite of different lithologies including sandstones, mudstones and grey siltstones attributed to the so-called West Lothian Oil-Shale Formation. The superficial geology (drift deposits) includes Quaternary age lacustrine clay, silt and sand deposits.

2.2 Archaeological background

Most of the recorded archaeological sites within the vicinity of Winchburgh consist of post-medieval farmsteads and the remains of a highly industrialised landscape. However, there are a number of hillforts within a 10km radius of the site (Illus 3) which include Kaimes (Simpson et al 2004), Peace Knowe (NRHE Site No. NT07SW 7), Dalmahoy (NT16NW 1) and Craigie Hill (NT17NE 12). Kaimes is the only one which has been excavated

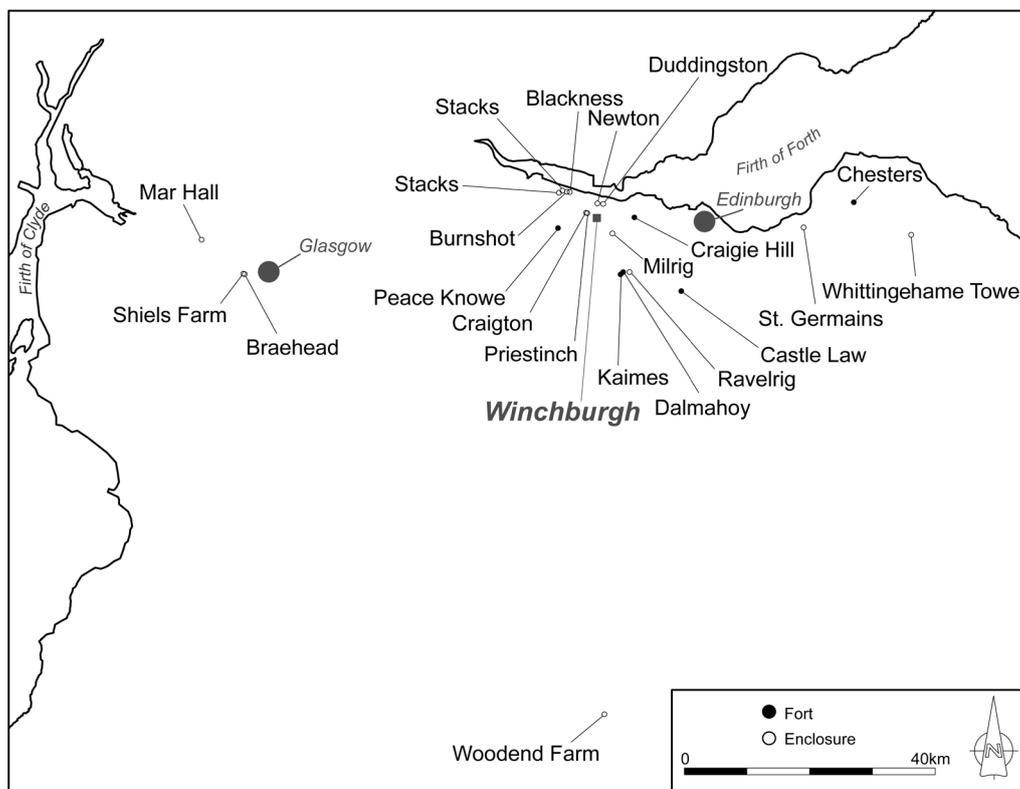
and radiocarbon dating of wood recovered from the core of Ramparts 1 and 2 provided a *terminus post quem* for their construction some time after 380 cal BC (Rampart 1) and 390 cal BC (Rampart 2), both at the 95.4% confidence level (Simpson et al 2004: 91). In addition to the known hillforts within the immediate vicinity, there are a number of circular enclosures, many of which have been discovered as a result of aerial reconnaissance. These include Blackness (NRHE Site No. NT07NW 54), Stacks (NT07NW 49, NT08SW 26 and NT08SW 25) and Burnshot (NT07NW 48). Examples at Stacks (NT08SW 49 and NT07NW 26) and Burnshot have ditches which enclose an internal area of approximately 0.07ha, 0.13ha and 0.16ha, respectively, roughly the same as the internal area of Winchburgh (0.16ha). However, none of these has been excavated, so their date and function are unknown. The Early Iron Age palisaded homestead at Ravelrig Quarry (Rennie 2013), dated to 600–400 BC at the 95.4% confidence level, is an excavated example nearby.

From the 12th century until the late 17th century, the area lay within the barony of Winchburgh (or

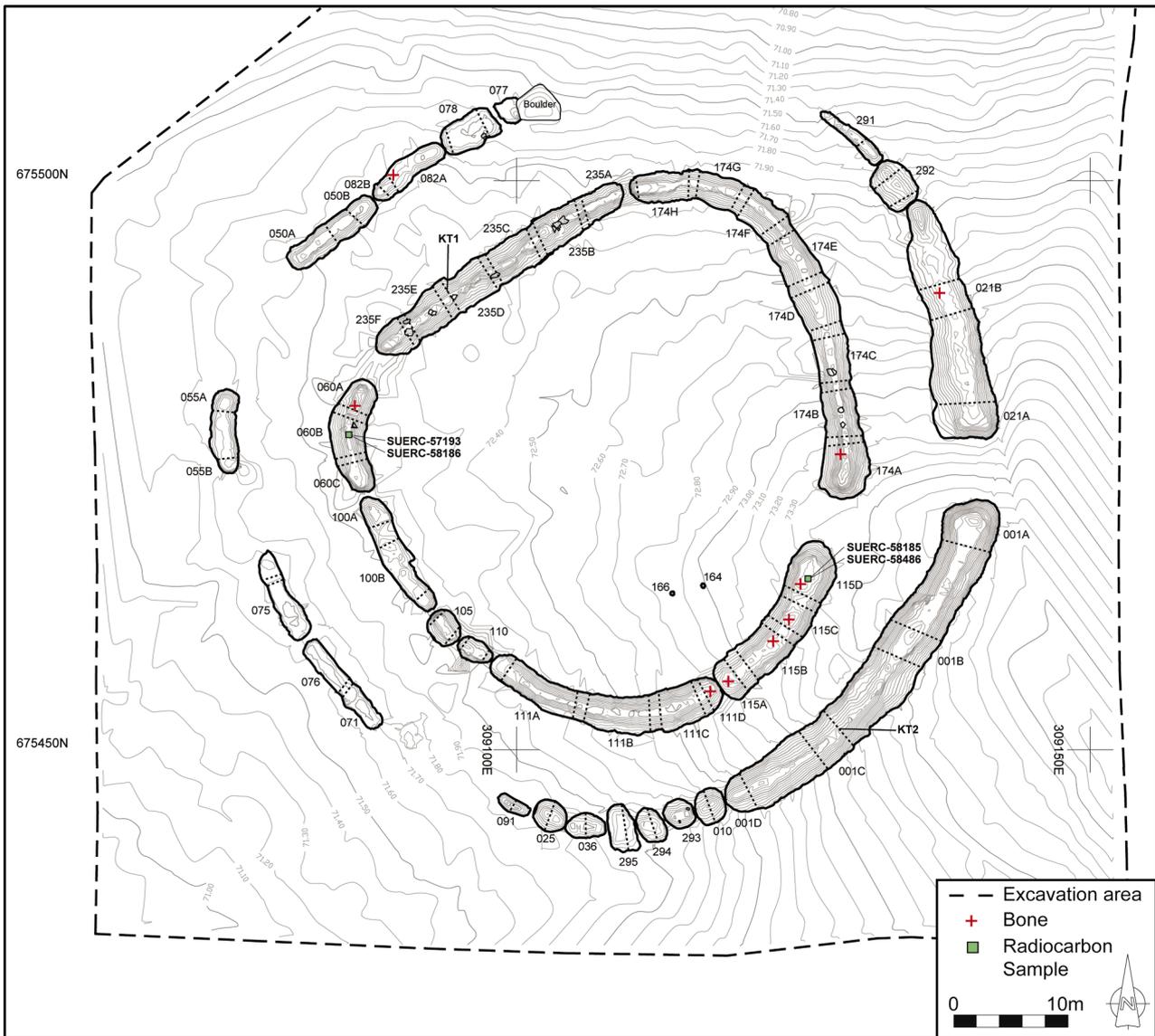
Niddry) with the family seat located at Niddry Castle. Roy’s Military Survey of Scotland (1747–55) records an open landscape of rig cultivation and fermtouns, such as Auldcathie. From the mid-18th century onwards the proprietors of the Hopetoun Estate considerably reorganised the nature of its farmlands and land tenure (Leslie 1759). This led to the replacement of the open rig cultivation and fermtoun landscape with one characterised by large farm steadings set within enclosed rectilinear fields. This improved farmland landscape remains a key characteristic of the present surroundings.

2.3 Methodology

The objectives of the project were to establish the nature, character, age and extent of the surviving remains and to preserve the site by record. A trench with an area of 0.77ha was excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth ditching bucket, and the trench was then cleaned by hand. The discontinuous ditches were excavated in 1–5m lengths or slots along their circuits, with each slot assigned an alphanumeric indicator. The



Illus 3 Map showing the sites mentioned in the text. © CFA Archaeology Ltd



Illus 4 Site plan with contours, showing the position of excavated slots. © CFA Archaeology Ltd

numerical code referred to the individual segments of the ditches and the alphabetical one designated the individual sections excavated within the larger segments of ditch (Illus 4). Initially, a strategy of 100% excavation was required by WoSAS but excavation was halted, in agreement with WoSAS, at 95% excavation. In addition, given the paucity of artefacts recovered from the upper fills, it was agreed

that the substantial baulks within the eastern lengths of the outer ditch could be removed by machine down to their primary fills.

Wherever possible, bulk soil samples were taken from deposits most likely to provide uncontaminated palaeoenvironmental evidence. Deposits such as sealed primary ditch fills were sampled. Soil profile samples were obtained using Kubiena tins.