

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

Eleven archaeological sites identified during the EIA work (*illus 1*, *Table 1*) were within the site boundary. These consisted of undated clearance and other cairns, post-medieval quarries, tracks and buildings, an alleged battle site between the Scots and the Danes dating from AD 1012–14, and a possible fort (determined by evaluation to be non-archaeological; *Suddaby 2009*). Many of these are shown on the Ordnance Survey (OS) Second Edition Map of 1901 (*illus 3*).

### 4.2 Area 1

#### 4.2.1 Area 1 sites

The Ordnance Survey First Edition 6-inch map (*1872*, *illus 2* inset) shows the sites of seven cairns (*Table 1*, Site 7) in uncultivated ground on either side of an unfenced trackway. The Second Edition (*1901*, *illus 3*) also shows the cairns, although it is unclear whether the area remained uncultivated. Still surviving along the north side of the area, a bank and ditch may be the same one shown marking the boundary with an improved field to the north in 1872 and 1901.

The 1999 field survey recorded ‘numerous spreads of stone’ (*Alexander 1999*, 23) and in 2002 an instrument survey recorded 16 stone cairns (Cairns 7/1–16). These lay within a roughly triangular area

measuring 150m north to south by around 60m east to west (*illus 1, 2*) which corresponds approximately with the uncultivated area on the First Edition OS map. Of the 16 recorded cairns, 14 contained large boulders and this, combined with their distribution around the edge of the field, the rectangular form of several and the appearance of natural subsoil adhering to the lichen-free stones suggested a recent origin. Six cairns (Cairns 7/1, 7/4, 7/5, 7/6, 7/8, 7/11, *illus 2*) were investigated by hand-excavated trenches. One trench, over Cairn 7/4, supported the surface indications that this site was of greater antiquity. A second, over Cairn 7/6, fortuitously located a lithic scatter within the underlying soil profile. Four grids of test-pits (*illus 2*, Grids E–H) recorded a scatter of over 150 lithic artefacts.

A sub-circular patch of gorse measuring around 15m in diameter contained an uneven centre, and stones were apparent below the surface; this site was excavated in February 2003 and identified as Cairn 7/17.

Three surface stone quarries collectively formed Site 8; these were filled with stones and agricultural rubbish. Seven machine-excavated trenches revealed two features, one containing corrugated iron and the other the skeleton of a cow in a recent pit that was visible as a surface vegetation change. None of these sites is discussed further.

Area 1 fieldwork revealed that the surface vegetation overlay thin silty-peat topsoil with a depth of up to 0.3m, above a bioturbated and heavily iron-

**Table 1 Baseline sites within the proposed development area (after *Alexander 1999*)**

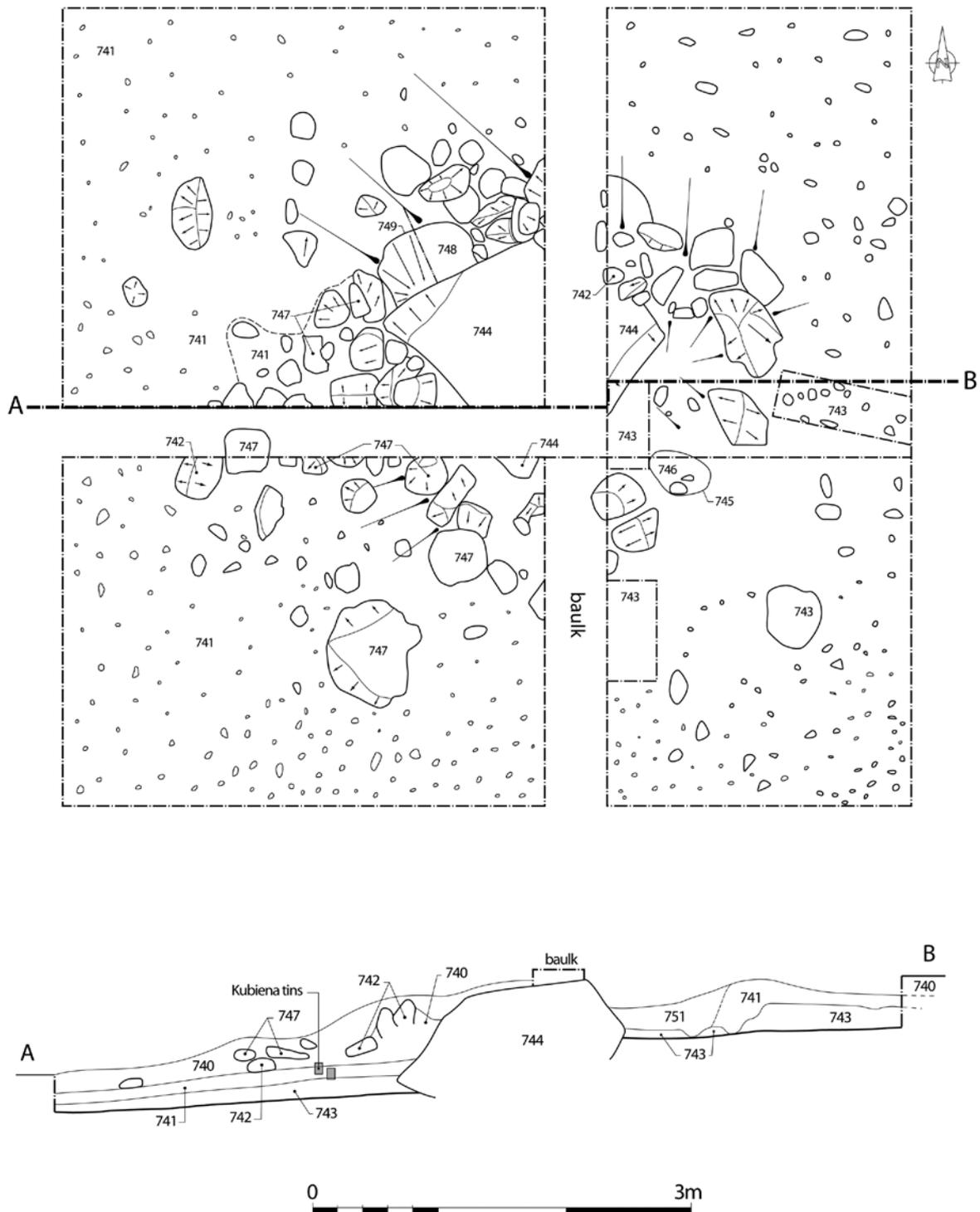
Site No.	Site Type	Source	NMRS/AC SMR refs	Mitigation
4	Clearance cairns	Field Survey	NK04SE0033	Evaluation
7	Cairns (sites of) & clearance cairns	1st & 2nd Ed OS maps; Field Survey	NK04SE 14/ NK04SE0010	Evaluation/Excavation
8	Quarry scoops	Field Survey	NK04SE0058	Evaluation
12	Clearance cairns	Field Survey	NK04SE0059	Evaluation
13	Structure	2nd Ed OS map; Field Survey	NK04SE0060	None (Site destroyed)
14	Kiln (possible)	Field Survey	NK04SE0061	None (Site destroyed)
15	Field Wall	Field Survey	NK04SE0062	Evaluation
17	Fort/Camp/Quarry	1st & 2nd Ed OS maps; Field Survey	NK04SE 12/ NK04SE 0042	Evaluation
38	Quarry	Aerial Photographs; Field Survey	NK04SE0069	None
40	Battle Site	1st & 2nd Ed OS maps	NK04SE 27/ NK04SE 0041	Metal detecting
43	Peat by Laeca Burn	Field Survey		Evaluation

panned 'B' horizon with a depth of around 0.1m. The subsoil was gritty orange boulder clay.

#### 4.2.2 Clearance Cairn 7/4

Cairn 7/4 was partially grassed over, with the stones being covered with turf, moss and lichen. It was located near the western side of the field, away from the concentration of modern cairns and close to

the trackway shown on the First Edition OS map. A square trench measuring around 36m<sup>2</sup> was opened, which included the whole of the cairn (illus 4). Below turf and peaty soil (740) was a second, more humified peat formation (741) which contained lithic artefacts and overlay an iron-panned probable 'B' horizon (743). The stones formed a cairn 4m in diameter and they had been dumped around a large natural boulder (744). There was no sign of any structure to these deposits. Disturbance in antiquity



*Illus 4 Clearance Cairn 7/4 plan and section*

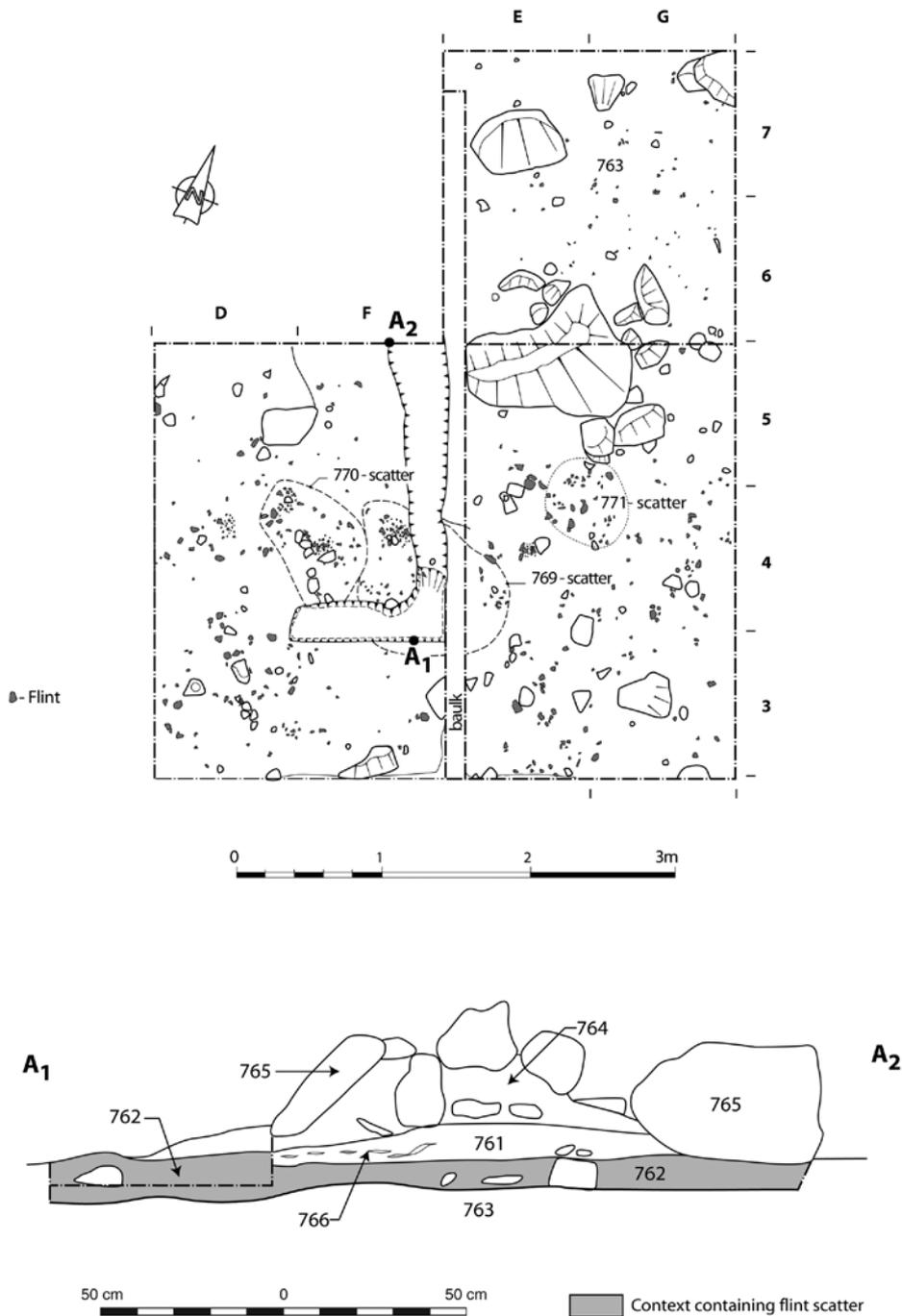
was evidenced by peat-filled stone-holes (746). Both the presence of loose stones in the topsoil (747), and a modern cut (748–9) against the central boulder may be the result of unrecorded antiquarian investigations. An in situ domestic assemblage of 35 lithic objects provides a *terminus post quem* date for the cairn of Late Bronze Age (Section 5.2.4).

#### 4.2.3 Lithic scatter under modern Cairn 7/6

A trench was hand-excavated to evaluate Cairn 7/6 (illus 5), which was rapidly established to be

modern. Once the cairn stones (765) and the underlying sterile peat (761) were removed, 593 worked lithic artefacts were recovered from within a darker, more humified basal peat deposit (762) with a thickness of 0.05m. These had the character of an in situ domestic assemblage, but with few diagnostic pieces the assemblage could only be broadly dated to the Bronze Age (Section 5.2.5).

Subsequent excavations (Trench 9) entailed the removal by machine of the remaining cairn and of sterile peat by hand from an area of 25m<sup>2</sup>. Once cleaned, three lithic scatters were identified (769, representing the initially discovered scatter, 770,



Illus 5 Plan and section of the lithic scatters in peat horizon 762 under modern Cairn 7/6

771). All were within peaty deposit 762 or on the interface between it and the iron-panned B horizon (763) below. The scatters were hand-exposed and bagged within the 1m<sup>2</sup> trench grid. No structural remains or features were identified. A radiocarbon date (GU-13907, [Table 12](#)) using humic acid extracted from a Kubiena tin sample of deposit 762 within the area of the lithic scatter gave a determination of 155±35 BP, at variance with the date of the lithic objects and presumably reflecting recent contamination from the cairn above.

#### 4.2.4 Burial Cairn 7/17

An area of gorse, approximating to the location of a cairn on the 1872 map, was removed by machine, revealing Cairn 7/17. Once cleaned, the remaining stones (7170) consisted of small and medium-sized cobbles, contrasting with the large stones and boulders of the modern cairns. The surviving cairn measured 8 × 4.5m and appeared to be generally oval, aligned NE–SW ([illus 6](#)). [Illus 7](#) shows representative sections.

The cairn was shallow, rarely over two stones (0.4m) deep and a maximum depth of 0.6m was recorded around large natural upstanding boulders (7173). There was no clear indication of a kerb and it was uncertain whether several of the earth-fast boulders were of natural origin. A gritty humic matrix (7171), containing 187 lithic items (including a leaf-shaped arrowhead) and a few pottery fragments, was recorded between the stones and this overlay a thin peaty deposit (7172). A possible ard mark (7175–6) was exposed to the south-west of the cairn.

Discrete deposits of lithic artefacts (7177) and Beaker pottery (7174) were recovered from the north-east and centre of the cairn respectively. This assemblage spans the Neolithic period and extends into the Early Bronze Age ([Sections 5.1.2 and 5.2.6–7](#)).

A large boulder (7170) was present near the south end of the cairn and, close by, two distinct deposits (7178, 7179) of AOC Beaker pottery sherds representing two vessels and a cache of 167 lithic artefacts (7183) were recovered. Although not initially apparent, further removal of stones led to the identification of an egg-shaped cut feature (7181) with a length of 1.7m, a width of 1.1m and a depth of 0.3m ([illus 7](#)) which was aligned NE to SW and had been cut into bedrock. The feature was filled with granite blocks around which were a matrix of gritty peat and stone chips (7182). Underlying these, the bedrock base was covered with a thin deposit of manganese-stained clay (7185). Protruding natural squarish stone faces were present on both long sides which mimicked the side slabs on a cist. No finds were recovered from the base of the pit, and it may be that the contents were redeposited into the body of the cairn next to the pit in antiquity. In the light of modern root action, no

radiocarbon dating was undertaken but the typological attributes of the flint assemblage place it in the Late Neolithic, while the Beaker pottery it was associated with conventionally dates to the end of the Late Neolithic, c 2500/2400 BC to 2200/2100 BC. The position of the pit, within an apparently ancient cairn, and the character of the artefacts it contained, are sufficient to allow the inference that a much-abused grave was present.

#### 4.2.5 Test-pitting

Four grids of test-pits (Grids E–H, [illus 2](#)) were laid out and excavated in spaces between the patches of gorse and broom. Grids E–F were 30 × 30m and, with a 5m spacing between the 0.5m<sup>2</sup> test-pits, 49 were excavated in each grid. Grids G and H were smaller, 10 × 10m and, with the same spacing, nine test-pits were in each.

Grids E and F produced 50 and 87 lithic artefacts respectively, but the low density of the artefacts and the lack of any features in the area suggests merely natural loss and discard. Grids G and H produced no significant numbers of finds, which may indicate a drop-off of activity away from Cairn 7/17.

### 4.3 Area 2: investigation of previously recorded sites

An initial lack of communication between the office of the developer and the landfill site contractors led to the loss of Sites 13 and 14 before they could be investigated. Aerial photographs indicated that gravel quarry Site 38 ([illus 1](#)) post-dated 1959 and no work was undertaken within it.

Sites 4 and 12 cairns were investigated. Excavations showed the cairns to be largely structureless concentrations of cobbles, and machine-dug trenches in the two areas revealed no archaeological features. None of the investigated cairns could be dated, but all may be interpreted as the product of stone clearance, quite possibly dumped a few at a time, as opposed to bulk tipping by trailer, and may derive from the nearby cultivated fields. A date in the 18th/19th-century may be suggested.

Lithic artefacts representing lost or discarded domestic material from the Late Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age ([Section 5.2.11](#)) were recovered from the soil profile in trenches at Site 4, and 118 lithic items dating mainly to the Late Neolithic ([Section 5.2.12](#)) were evenly distributed within Test-pit Grid B and the three hand-dug trenches at Site 12.

Sites 13–15 on Dun na Cluaich, and Site 17 at its foot, are presumed to be post-medieval and are discussed in the archive report ([Suddaby 2009](#)). Site 13 was a rectangular building, Site 14 was a possible kiln, Site 15 was a wall and Site 17 was a gravel quarry. Numerous lithic artefacts were recovered from the soil layers underlying and abutting Site 15.

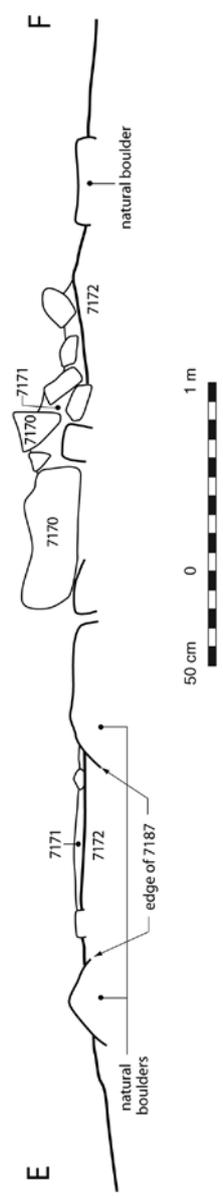
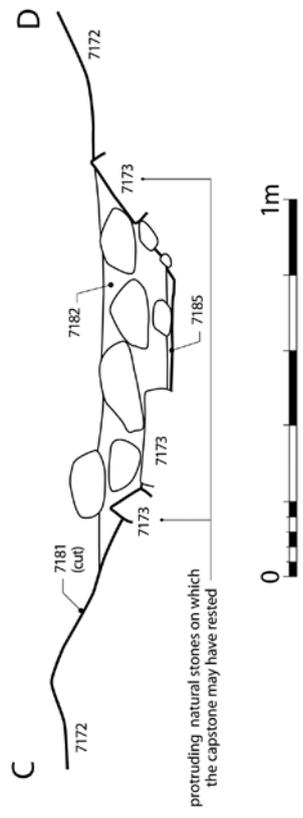
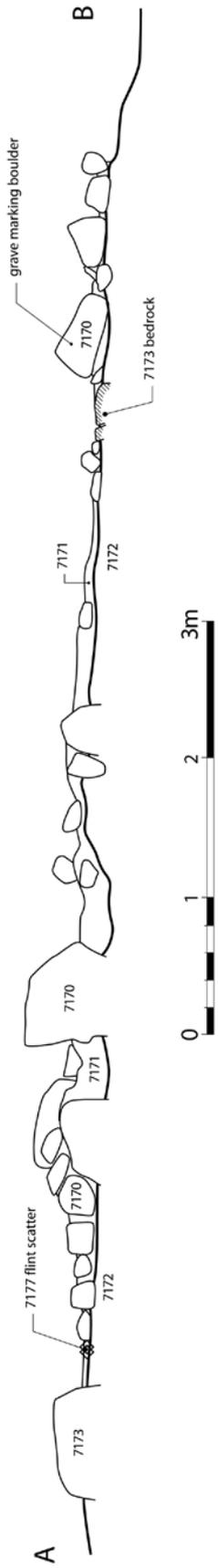
A battle between the Danes, led by Sueno and



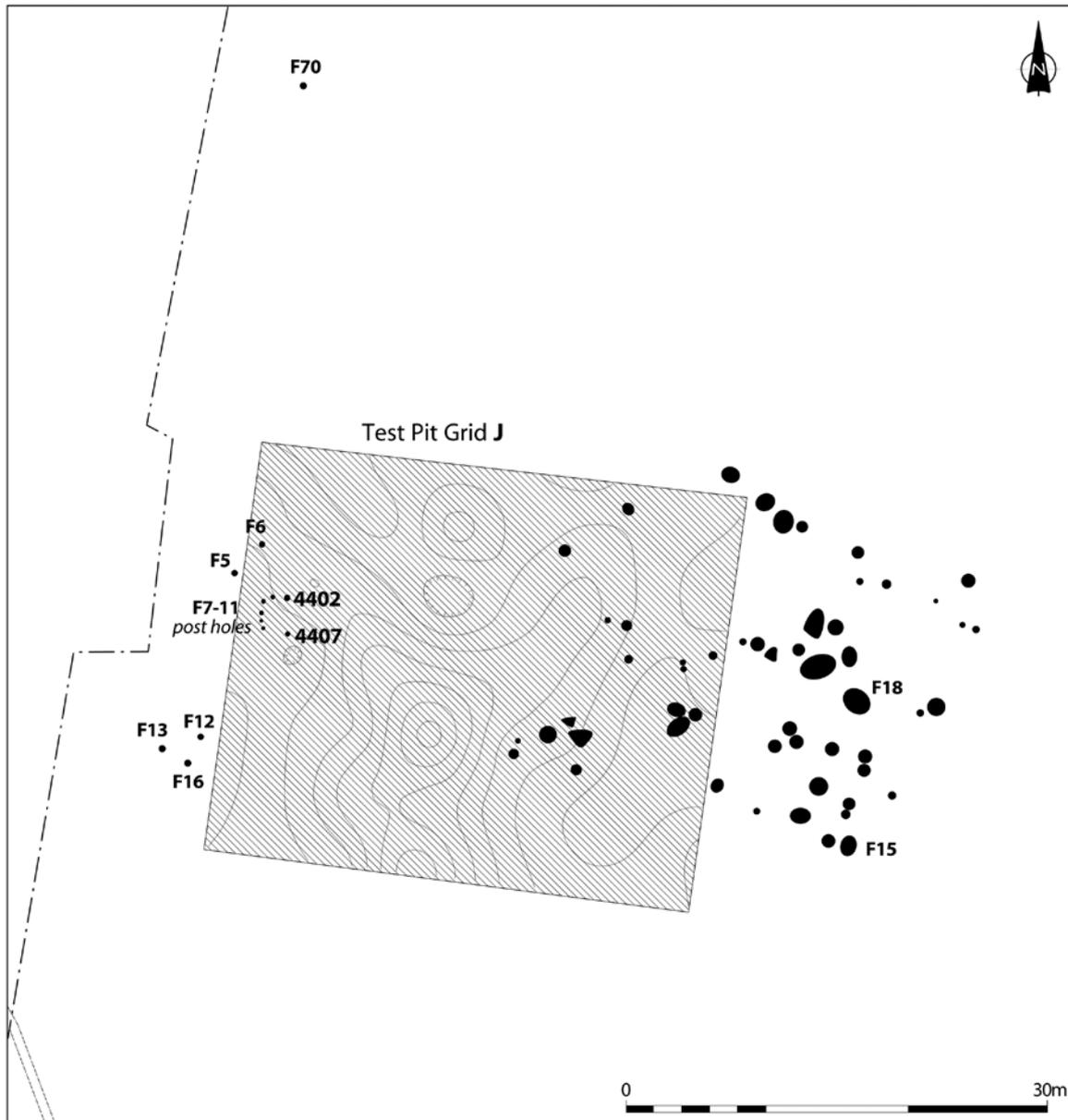
*Illus 6 Plan of Cairn 7117, with Pit 7181 shaded*

Canute, and the Scots, under Malcolm II, is alleged to have taken place in the field to the north-east of North Aldie Farm in AD 1012 or 1014. Part of the wider Battle of Cruden, the background to this is fully described by Alexander (1999, 37), who records references to plundering by Earl Sigurd

and others in Scotland at this time (Abercromby 1711; Anderson 1922, 529–30) but also their lack of geographical precision. John B Pratt, minister of Cruden Episcopal Church from 1825, recounts the history of Buchan and provides the main account of the battle (Pratt 1856, 32–42) which extended for



*Illus 7 Sections through the cairn body and through Pit 7181*



*Illus 8 Plan of the post-arc and other prehistoric features, including Pit F70, in the area. The distribution of lithic artefacts recovered from Test-pit Grid J is superimposed.*

4 miles inland from the sea and left a trail of relics half a mile wide. Nevertheless substantive evidence is lacking. The spoil heaps of the evaluation trial trenches in the field around Site 40 were metal-detected; only modern agricultural metalwork was recovered.

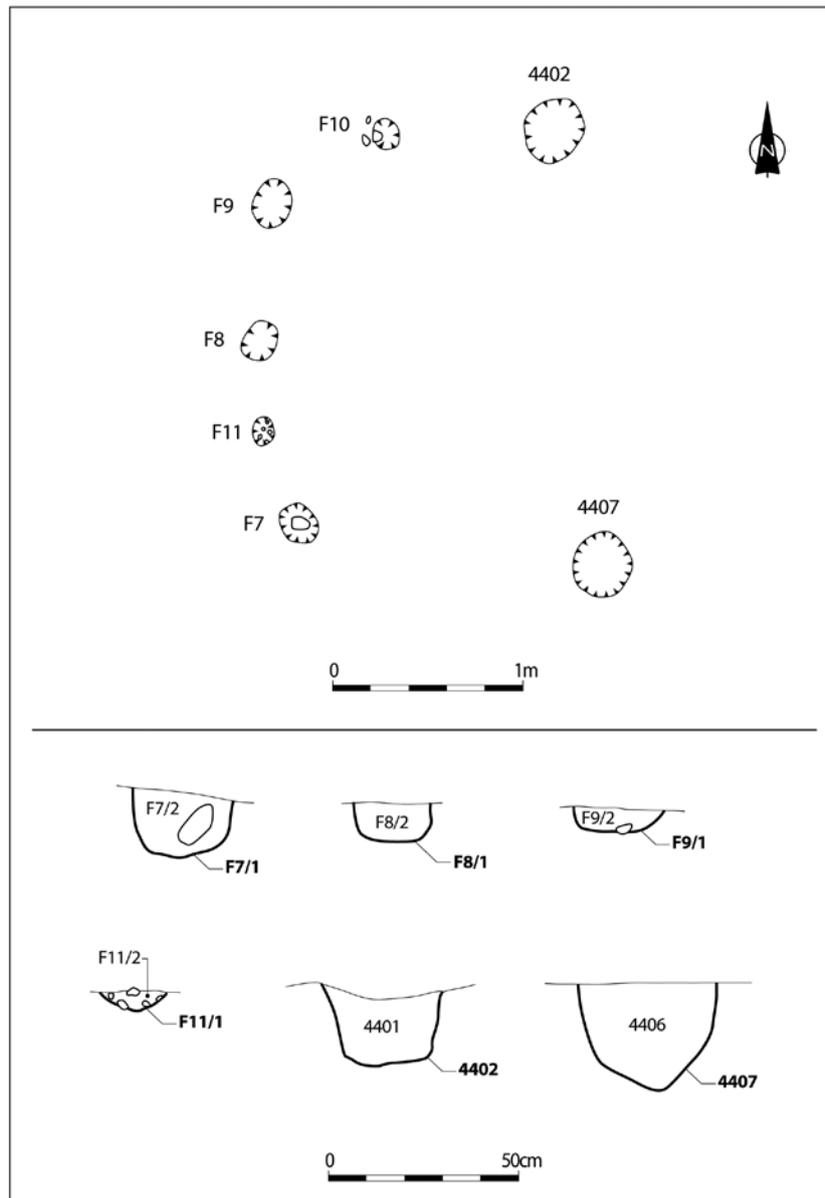
An extensive area of peat lay on flat ground to the east of the Laeca Burn (Site 43). The deepest peat (1.1m) in the north of the area was investigated by four machine-dug test-pits (TP1-4, [illus 1](#)) which revealed that the upper levels were penetrated by modern roots and field drains. Branchwood was preserved in the lower levels and the peat merged into the underlying waterlogged stained gravels. An evaluation trench across a now-disused trackway shown on the OS Second

Edition map ([1901, illus 3](#)) showed that 0.15m of peat had accumulated over the trackway, indicating ongoing peat formation.

#### 4.4 Area 2: investigation of newly discovered prehistoric sites

##### 4.4.1 Dun na Cluaich lithic scatter

Prior to recent quarrying, the topsoil had been removed by machine from an area of  $c 40 \times 40$ m and banded around the edge of the summit plateau. Although this process had destroyed Site 14 (above), repeated searching of these bands, most profitably after rain, led to the recovery of one of the most



*Illus 9 Post-arc F7–F11, 4402, 4407, plan and sections*

important lithic assemblages from Stoneyhill. This assemblage is interpreted as redeposited material dating to the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic (Section 5.2.13). The nearby Test-pit Grids A and C produced just 22 and 12 lithic objects respectively, confirming lithic material was concentrated on the summit.

#### 4.4.2 North Aldie Farm, pits, post-holes and lithic scatter

An evaluation trench across a slight, but prominent, elongated knoll in the centre of the field to the north-east of North Aldie (illus 1) revealed three plough-truncated features. One (4405) was 0.1m deep and contained no artefacts. Excavation of this feature had apparently been discontinued after encountering impenetrable natural subsoil. The other two (4402, 4407) were more substantial and

included pottery and lithic artefacts in their fills. The identification of substantial quantities of similar material on the spoil heaps led to a programme of test-pitting (Grid J, illus 8).

Sixty test-pits (Grid J) were excavated and 850 lithic artefacts were recovered. The test-pitting indicated that the lithic artefacts were distributed across a restricted area and there was an apparent lack of dispersal of the material. The centre of the lithic distribution (illus 8) did not coincide with the post-arc or other negative features in the area, but fell on the lip of the elongated knoll and on the slope to the east.

Following test-pitting, the topsoil was removed from an area measuring 65 × 25m by machine. Twelve plough-truncated features (including 4402, 4407) were revealed. These consisted of a U-shaped setting of seven features (F7–F11, 4402, 4407, illus 9–11), two pits or post-holes to the north-west (F5–



*Illus 10 The view from the post-arc, looking east towards Cairn 7/17 on the horizon*

6, [illus 9, 11](#)) and a group of three deeper assumed post-holes (F12, F13, F16, [illus 8, 11](#)), to the south-west. Below the knoll to the east, 54 features ([illus 8](#)) appeared to be stone extraction pits ([Suddaby 2009](#)).

Whilst none of the seven features forming the U-shaped setting contained either a post-pipe or in situ packing stones, all are assumed to be post-holes due to their vertical sides and generally fairly flat bases ([illus 9](#)). Some plough-truncation of the features is likely to have occurred, and originally they may have held substantial posts of around 0.2m diameter.

With its open end facing east across the valley directly towards Cairn 7/17 ([illus 11](#)), the post-setting was 2m in length and width. The post-holes at the terminals of the arc (4402, 4407) were the most substantial, being 0.3m in width and depth. Both contained compacted gravelly fills that included prehistoric pottery and charcoal. Thirty-six sherds equating to parts of ten vessels were recovered from the fill (4401) of 4402. The fill (4406) of feature 4407 only contained five sherds, all from the same vessel, but included two hammerstones. Fifty lithic items were also found in these features. The remainder were around 0.2m in width and 0.1–0.2m in depth, with single fills of compact sand, grit and angular gravel with charcoal. No further pottery was recovered from these features, but lithic artefacts were recovered. Whilst some of the pottery in 4402 and 4407 is abraded, the charcoal was not, and the contemporaneous nature of these fill elements must be questioned.

Located around 4m to the north-west, features F5 and F6 contained no depositional evidence with which to interpret their function. F5 was oval,

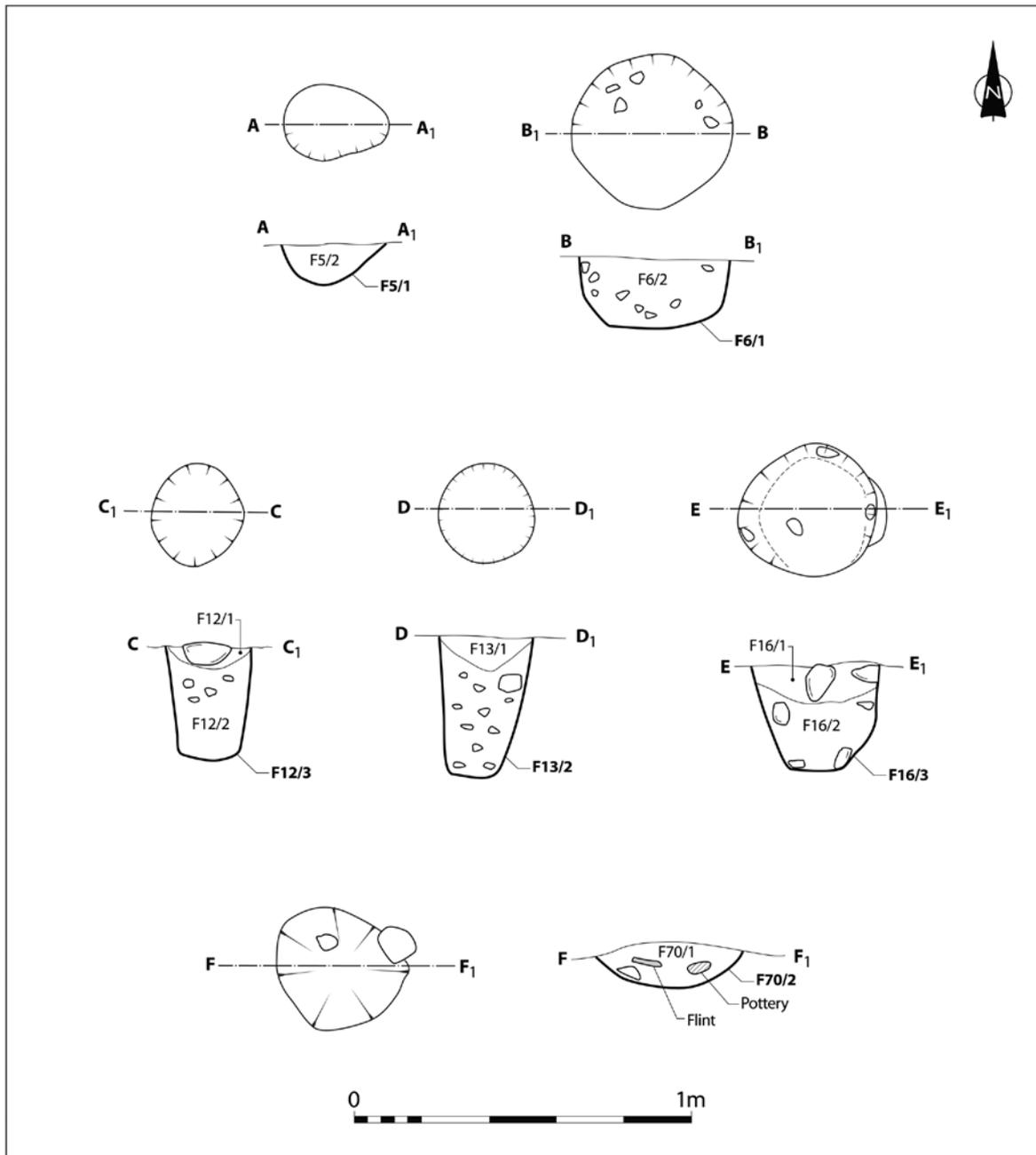
0.3 × 0.2m, with the sides sloping to a convex base at a depth of 0.1m. F6 was sub-circular, with a width of 0.45m and vertical sides over a flat base, 0.2m deep. The fills were similar in nature to those in the post-arc. Three lithic artefacts were recovered from F5 and four from F6.

Around 10m to the south-west of the post-setting, features F12, F13 and F16 ([illus 8, 11](#)) were more substantial. All were near-circular in plan and were cut through compact angular gravels. F12 and F13 were 0.3m wide and 0.3–0.4m deep with near-vertical sides. Both contained silty upper fills overlying more gravelly lower fills, both with charcoal. F16 was wider, at 0.4m, but was of a similar depth, with a flat base. It contained a similar sequence of fills to those in F12 and F13, but included coarse stone tools in the lower fill, perhaps re-used as packing stones. Lithic artefacts were recovered from all three features.

#### 4.4.3 North Aldie Farm: isolated features, Grid K and pit F81

A watching brief during the removal of topsoil in the remainder of the field resulted in the discovery and excavation of five additional, isolated features of archaeological interest (F70, F81–F83, F88). F70 and F81 contained prehistoric pottery, whereas the remainder produced lithic artefacts, charcoal (with hazelnut shell in F81 and F88) and, in the case of F88, fire-cracked stones.

F70 ([illus 8, 11](#)) was located 35m to the north of the post-arc in Grid J. It was sub-circular, 0.4m wide by 0.15m deep, with a concave profile. In addition to



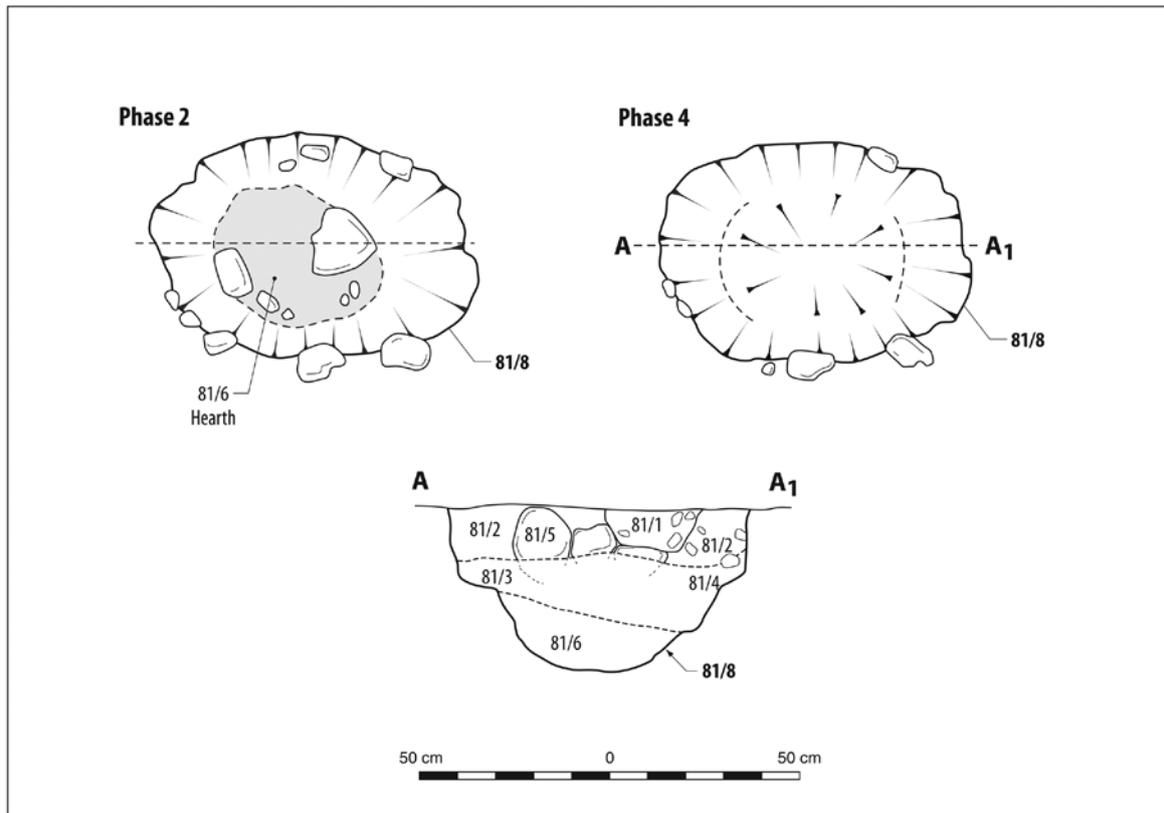
*Illus 11 Sections through possible post-holes F5–F6, F12–F13 and F16 adjacent to the post-arc and through pit F70 to the north*

five sherds of pottery, representing a single vessel, seventeen lithic artefacts were recovered from the sandy fill.

Some 150m to the south of this feature group, a grid of nine test-pits (Grid K) was speculatively located on a prominent knoll to the east of North Aldie Farm. Eighty-three lithic artefacts were recovered from this grid and adjacent evaluation trenches, an assemblage spanning the Early Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age (Section 5.2.15).

Pit F81 (illus 12) was oval, aligned NW to SE, and was 0.8m in length, 0.6m in width and 0.4m in depth. A deposit of black gritty silt and degraded

charcoal (81/6) was recorded in the base. Above this possible hearth debris were a number of stones (81/5) which appeared to have been placed into the centre of the pit and thereby separated the intermediate fill (81/3) to the north-west from fill 81/3 to the south-east. Deposits 81/3–4 consisted of dark brown gravelly silty sand and all three fills were overlain by the upper fill 81/2, a brown silty sand. A small pit (81/9) was later cut into the upper fill (81/2) and this was filled with a black silty sand which may also be hearth debris. The pit produced naked barley grains, lithic items, a hammerstone and sherds of Impressed Ware pottery.



*Illus 12 Section and plans of Pit F81*

Samples of barley were submitted for dating (Table 7) and produced a calibrated date range of 3370–3090 BC.

A boulder saddle quern, fashioned from a block of sandstone, was recovered from topsoil on the southern flank of the knoll (Section 5.3).