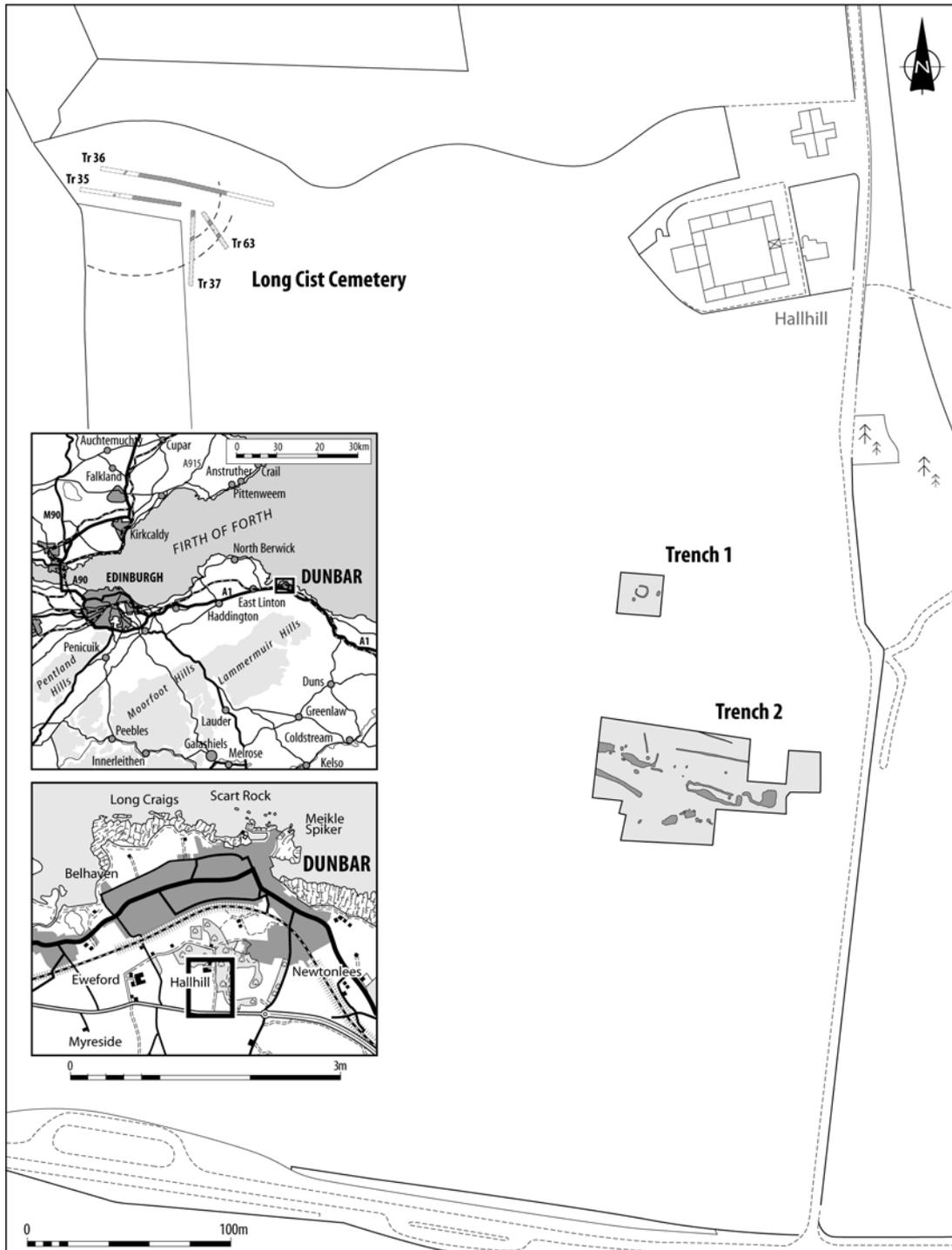


## 2 INTRODUCTION

An evaluation carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd at Hallhill Farm, Dunbar in May 2003 (Glendinning 2003) identified the remains of a rural medieval settlement and associated features, a sub-square enclosure and part of a long cist cemetery (illus 1).

Subsequently, an excavation was carried out during August and September 2003, in advance of housing construction by George Wimpey East Scotland Ltd. The results of this excavation form the subject of this report.



*Illus 1 Site location plan*

## 2.1 Site location, topography and geology

The development area lay on the southern fringes of Dunbar (NGR NT 674 775; [illus 1](#)), and was located in an arable field to the south of Hallhill Steading. The site occupied the top of a low ridge running east to west at c 25m OD and sloping down gradually to the north and east. Topsoil was from 0.5 to 1.2m in depth, and the subsoil varied from coarse stony gravel to fine-grained, dense sandy clay. The field had been extensively ploughed, and the archaeological remains had been significantly truncated or damaged as a result.

Hallhill was shown as Lochend Mains on the OS First Edition map of 1854, and the area was known as Lochend when John Adair published his survey of 1682. However, on Roy's map (1747–55) the area is designated 'Haughhill', and the name Hallhill appears on William Forrest's map of 1802 ([Forrest 1802](#)). On all of these maps the excavated area is shown as rough pasture or open land, even though rig and furrow predominates in the surrounding area on those maps which depict it. No historical research was undertaken as such work was beyond the remit of this project. However, the absence of any historical discussion here should not be taken to imply that there is no surviving documentary record relating to the site.

## 2.2 Archaeological background

The initial interest in this site arose from aerial photographs showing the remains of a possible circular or curvilinear double-ditched enclosure. The proximity of this enclosure to the proposed development area prompted a two-stage evaluation ([Glendinning 2003](#); [Curtis & Johnson 2005](#)) which identified a range of features.

The enclosure runs into the woods along the northern edge of the evaluation area. From the aerial photographs it appears to be double-ditched. Sections of its eastern side are clear but its western side is not visible, and therefore its true diameter is not known. The probable inner ditch of the enclosure was revealed in two trenches during the evaluation. The putative outer ditch of the enclosure was identified only in one trench. Both were c 1.6m wide, the inner surviving to 1.1m deep and the outer to only 0.5m.

A cemetery comprising 32 long-cist burials and several concentrations of articulated bones was discovered within the arc of the enclosure ditches. The cist burials were aligned north-east to south-west, and the articulated bones appeared to represent the remains of dug graves without cists. Cemeteries of this type date from the early Christian period (4th–8th centuries AD) and have been found elsewhere in the surrounding area, including to the east of Spott roundabout and on the site of Dunbar swimming pool (see [Rees 2002](#) for overview), as well as more recently in western Scotland (eg Ardrossan,

[Hatherley 2009](#)). The cists and burials were outside the application area and were preserved in situ. All excavated human remains were re-interred without study. The curvilinear double-ditched enclosure was only partially evaluated due to agricultural considerations and further speculation regarding its nature is not possible with the present evidence.

Within the proposed development area, a series of pits and linear gullies was discovered, concentrated mainly around the low ridge running east to west across the south-east of the site. These features contained significant quantities of animal bone, shell and medieval pottery. The remains of a square-form enclosure with two nearby pits were also revealed, although no datable finds were recovered. The results of the evaluation prompted excavations.

## 2.3 The excavation

The aim of the excavation was to investigate fully the two areas of archaeological interest identified within the proposed development area ([illus 1](#)) which could not be preserved in situ. Trench 1 ([illus 2](#)) comprised an area of 20m by 20m excavated around the sub-square enclosure and nearby pits, with the objective of ascertaining their dates and any meaningful patterns. Trench 2 comprised an area containing medieval gullies, ditches and pits. A total of c 4500m<sup>2</sup> was excavated to determine the extent and character of the features and reveal any other related archaeological remains. The extent of excavation was approved by East Lothian Council's heritage officer.

The topsoil was stripped under close archaeological scrutiny, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed bucket. All exposed archaeological remains were subsequently cleaned and excavated by hand and surveyed using industry-standard methods and equipment. Features were not 100% excavated, rather, the excavation was targeted to understand the characteristics and stratigraphic relationships of features. The site was recorded by context, with composite planning. Environmental sampling targeted sealed and discrete deposits, while rejecting deposits which were subject to contamination. Stratigraphically secure deposits were also extensively sampled for finds recovery.

The archaeological remains comprised mainly negative features cut into the subsoil, most with silty or sandy fills which were heavily bioturbated and often merged with the overlying ploughsoil. Few upstanding remains were revealed; overall there was a marked absence of occupation or post-abandonment deposits overlying the cut features. Ploughscores were visible in the subsoil surface over much of the site, particularly towards the west, where the topsoil was significantly thinner. This suggests a likelihood that any formerly stratified archaeological remains have been destroyed, leaving us with the fills of negative features cut into the natural subsoil.

Routine soil samples were taken from deposits during the excavation. However, the majority of the deposits were highly bioturbated and were considered of no use for palaeoenvironmental analysis or for the recovery of dating evidence (Glendinning 2004). Samples from F10 and F24 were taken for the recovery of marine shell and were processed for this purpose.

#### 2.4 *Archive*

The full project archive will be deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Finds disposal will be allocated through Treasure Trove procedures. Full specialist reports for all classes of material are provided within the site archive.