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ADEN RESTORATION & REDEVELOPMENT & ADEN ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECTS

**HLF PROJECT REF: PP-15-05717
HESAG PROJECT REF: HEAP17739253911**

ADEN ARCHAEOLOGY SUMMARY REPORT SITE 1 (NEOLITHIC STRUCTURE)

ADEN COUNTRY PARK, ABERDEENSHIRE AB42 8FQ

**SECOND SITE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG
24TH JUNE – 7TH JULY 2019**

**NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND (NLHF)
PARKS FOR PEOPLE PROGRAMME &
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND (HES) ARCHAEOLOGY GRANT**

**Compiled by
Neil Shirran – Project Co-ordinator**

Introduction

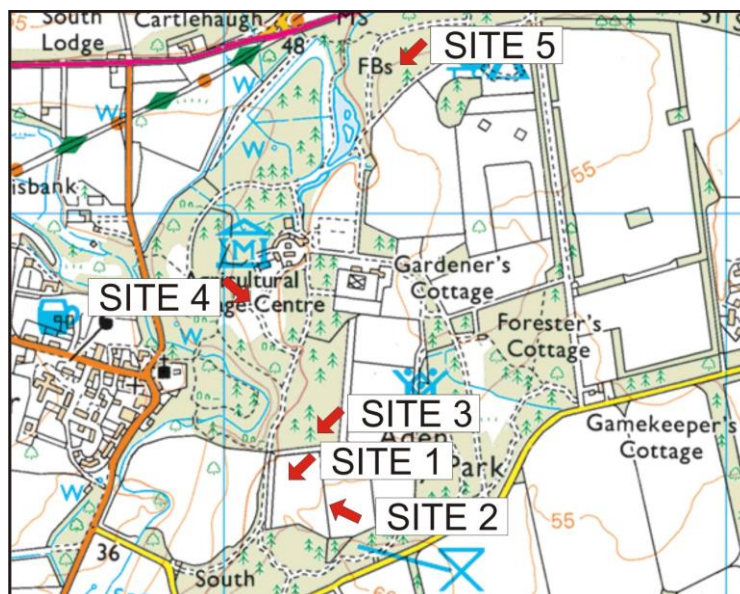
This report has been produced to provide a summary of the work and activities carried out as part of the second Bronze Age/Neolithic Structure (Site 1) archaeological excavation, as part of the Aden Country Park Restoration & Redevelopment and the associated Aden Archaeology Project. These projects have been made possible with funding support from the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Archaeological Grant, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Parks for People programme, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service and in-kind volunteer support from the Friends of Aden Country Park group and additional volunteers.

The archaeological dig at the Neolithic structure site was led by the experienced archaeologist Ali Cameron of Cameron Archaeology. Ali has led on numerous community-based archaeological excavations within Aden Country Park and as the commissioned archaeologist has extensive knowledge of Aden's historic environment.

Archaeological Investigations (24th June to 7th July 2019)

The archaeological site which we will focus on in this report is at the Neolithic Structure (Site 1) located at the following National Grid Reference point illustrated below, in the parish of Old Deer and at 40-55m OD.

Archaeological Site	National Grid Reference
Neolithic Structure (Site 1)	NJ 98136 47475



Aden Archaeology Project Site Locations (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2019)

Site 1 – Bronze Age/Neolithic Structure

Background to Research Aims

Following the geophysical survey by Rose Geophysical Consultants, this site was recently identified and was found accidentally whilst looking for the stone circle site (Site 2). Fieldwalking had revealed a large number of Early and Late Neolithic flints at this site. This is a recognised method of site identification and will be carried out in other parts of the park if further fields are ploughed. This site is very heavily ploughed and is at risk from future agriculture. The park uses this field for Tractor and ploughing days and this has affected the topsoil above the surviving features. Modern finds such as toggle from a jacket and silver foil were found at depths in the topsoil.

The three post-holes discovered during the excavation between 3rd and 10th June 2017 which suggest a rectangular building (certainly not a circular one) and this is therefore intriguing as the date for the organic material in the posthole is Late Bronze Age. There is a possibility that this structure is unique in this area and possibly Scotland and further excavation at this site is essential to determine the shape and size of the structure and to confirm the date. Training in traditional building methods could also be based on this structure.

An HES/NLHF/Aberdeenshire Council funded project excavation took place between 5 and the 15 November 2018. During this dig a trench 30m x 16m in size revealed at least 70 features; these have been categorised into definite pits/postholes, tree-throw pits, burrows and agricultural features, earthfast boulders and non-features, possibly representing a Neolithic structure. The topsoil was very shallow (0.2-0.25m) and as a result there was historical agricultural damage to the whole site. Furrows were recorded. All features were disturbed to some extent by ploughing, animal burrowing and/or root damage. Nearly all features were recorded and sampled, and the analysis of these samples will be essential to the identification and interpretation of the possible Neolithic site.

Aim 1 - Understand the site's chronological development

In the light of the excavation, research, and evaluation carried out by Cameron Archaeology (10. Aden (HLF Site 3) - Excavation (3 – 10 June 2017)) and geophysical survey by Rose Geophysical Consultants (7. Aden (HLF) - Geophysical Survey (20 – 25 March 2017)), this aim will be addressed with a programme of targeted trenches designed to both uncover the complete the possible Bronze Age, now thoughts to be a possible Neolithic structure, and 'ground-truth' the results of the previous excavation evaluation and geophysical survey. The purpose will be to identify and investigate any archaeological features encountered and obtain appropriate samples for archaeological and artefactual assessment.

Aim 2 – Understand the site's archaeological conditions

This aim will be achieved with an assessment of the samples as defined and recovered in Aim 1, using appropriate archaeological techniques to establish preservation and significance.

Aim 3 – Making recommendations, analysis, publication and interpretation

This aim will require all data from Aims 1 and 2 to be collated, with an integrated analysis of the archaeological resource at Aden Country Park, making recommendations to conserve, enhance, manage, maintain and interpret the historic significance of the site. Indeed, once post excavation has been complete at this, and the other archaeological sites, we will use the findings to help develop an historic environment timeline which will be used to develop interpretation on a new Aden Country Park website, microsite, smartphone app, signage, leaflet, interpretation centre, and heritage trail.

Prior to Second Site 1 Archaeological Dig

On completion of the first Site 1, possible Neolithic structure, archaeological excavation in 2018, an Aden Archaeology Just Giving page was set up to help fund the second dig at this nationally rare site. In total £470 was raised through the Just Giving site, along with £36.54 donations which added to the remaining Historic Environment Scotland (HES), National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) from the first Site 1 and Site 2 budget allocations, along with an additional £2,000 financial contribution from and the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, was enough to support the second Site 1 excavation between 24th June and 7th July 2019.



The image shows a screenshot of a Just Giving crowdfunding page. At the top left is the Just Giving logo and navigation links for 'Menu' and 'Start Fundraising'. At the top right are search, login, and sign up options. The main content area features a watercolor illustration of a Neolithic site with wooden posts and structures. To the right of the illustration is a purple circular progress indicator showing '47%' and '£470' raised, with the text 'raised of £1,000 target by 15 supporters'. Below this are three buttons: a purple 'Donate Now' button, a blue 'Share' button with a Facebook icon, and a white 'Copy' button with a link icon.

Just Giving page set up to support second Site 1 dig

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/archaeologyataden?utm_term=rDQB97BMY&fbclid=IwAR1W7mUzGLD_kV7njNy9rUnS81zLpKMXmLeOnp219Z7aNEpCmgtxDUPBUMc

Marketing & Promotion (Pre-Second Site 1 Archaeological Excavation)

In advance of the second archaeological excavation at the Site 1 Neolithic structure, a variety of techniques were adopted to help promote volunteering opportunities, crowd funding, and the two archaeological open days through social media, press releases, posters and fliers.

Examples of Social Media promotion:

Archaeology at Aden Country Park
13 May · 🌐

Thank you to everyone who came along to the Mansion House Dig and to all of our volunteers. The next archaeological dig at Aden is at the Neolithic site and will begin on the 24th of June. If you would like to donate to help fund this dig please visit our crowdfunding page. More information about the upcoming dig to follow.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/archaeologyataden>



JUSTGIVING.COM
Help raise £1000 to fund an archaeological dig and the activities and events surrounding it

Bruce Mann @diggermann17 · Jun 13

Another @HeritageFundSCO @HistEnvScot and @Aberdeenshire supported public open day coming up - 30th June - with chances to dig a Neolithic site or try your hands at ancient crafts. All at the wonderful @AdenCountryPark #Aberdeenshire #pubarch #ScotArchStrat

**Aden Country Park 2019
Neolithic Open Day 30 June**

Elaine Lindsay: Something Corny. Straw and organic rope making



Rebecca Hankinson Neolithic pottery making



Nadine Ralston




SAT, 6 JUL
Neolithic Open Day 6th of July
Aden Country Park · Peterhead

Open Day posters designed and distributed online and offline:

aden
country park

Dig in the Park
Neolithic Open Day



Saturday 6th July 2019 - 10am to 4pm
Aden Country Park


As part of the Neolithic dig at Aden Country Park we will be holding two open days. On 6th July James Dilley (Ancient Craft UK) will set up a Neolithic camp near the dig and will be doing demonstrations of: flintknapping, cooking, cordage, grain and axe grinding. Free event. All welcome.



HERITAGE FUND **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND** **Aberdeenshire COUNCIL** **A** **Friends of aden**
country park

DIG IN THE PARK
Aden Country Park 2019
Neolithic Open Day 30 June


Elaine Lindsay: Something Corny. Straw and organic rope making



Rebecca Hankinson Neolithic pottery making



Nadine Ralston
Fun with Neolithic Music




Aberdeenshire COUNCIL
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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

Friends of aden
country park

Heather Jennings
Traditional dyeing



HERITAGE FUND

Second Site 1 Archaeological Excavation (24 June to 7 July 2019)

Following on from the results of the 2017 and 2018 Site 1 archaeological excavations where two lines of post-hole, possibly representing entrances into an unroofed Neolithic enclosure were discovered, it was decided that further archaeological investigations were required to help identify and understand the site.

From 24 June to 7 July 2019, 51 volunteers (including archaeology students from University of the Aberdeen, UHI and Nottingham) further investigated this enclosure assisted by 241 schoolchildren and helpers as well as several families.

The 2019 excavation extended the 2018 trench in each direction 8m SW, 6m NW and SE and 10m NE (see Illustrations below). A trench 5.5m wide was excavated from the enclosure trench to the cup-marked stone and a trench excavated around this stone. A further 130 features were investigated including post-hole bases, tree throws, furrows, root and burrow holes, quarry pits and stone-holes.

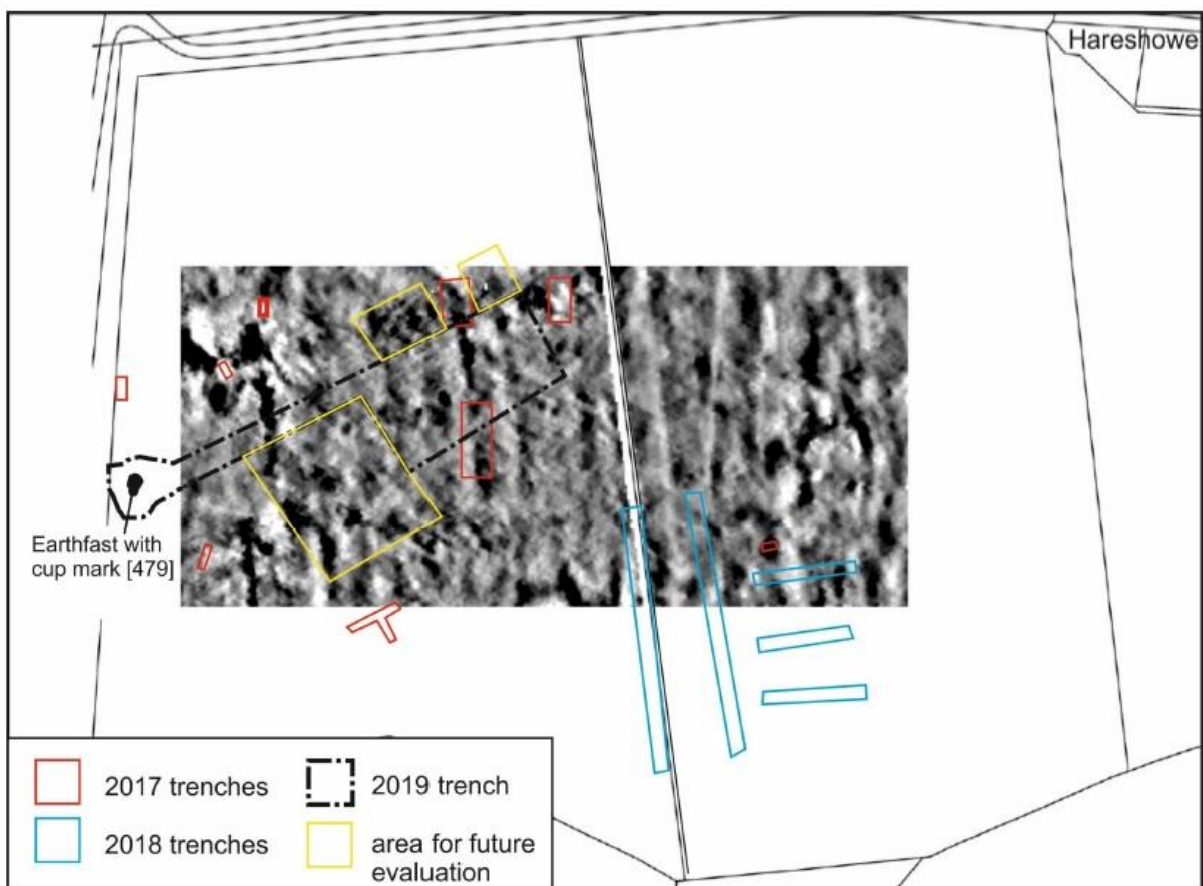


Illustration showing the 2017, 2018 and 2019 trenches

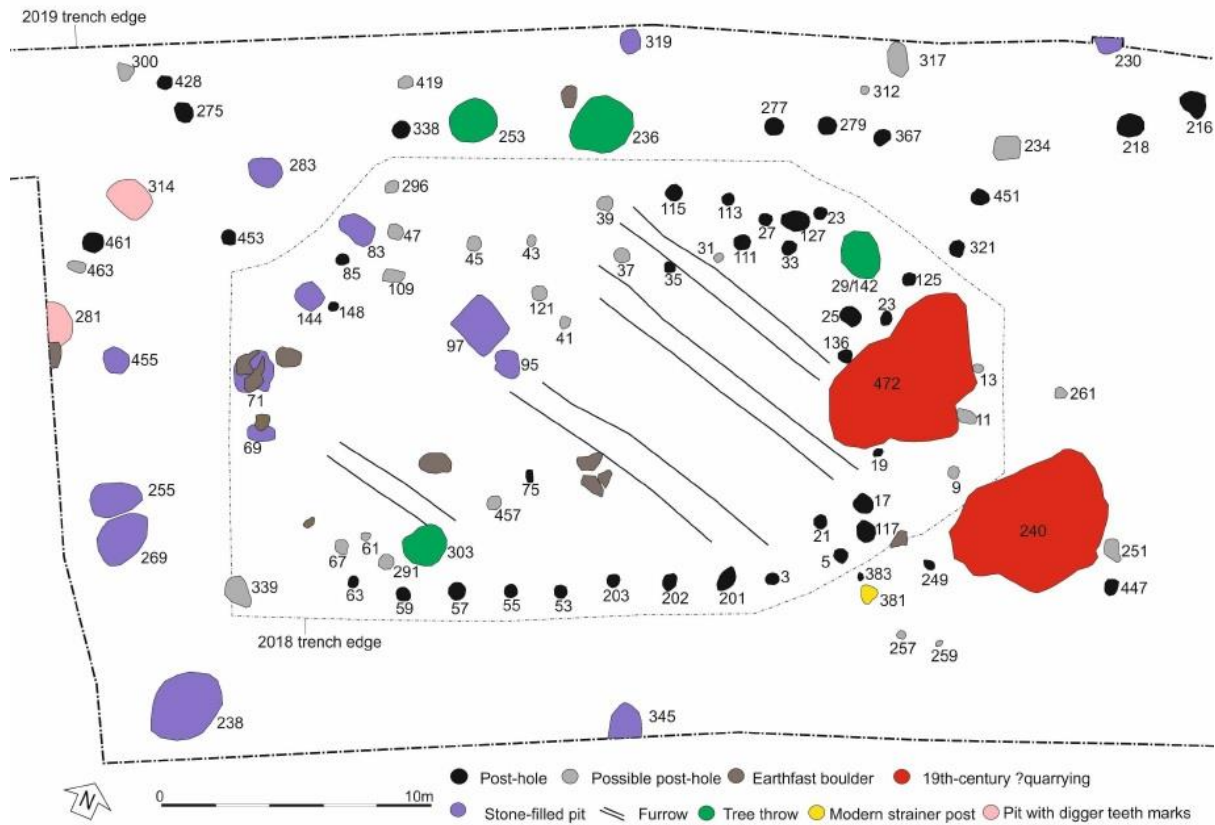


Illustration showing 2018 & 2019 trenches, post holes, boulders, furrows, pits, quarrying etc

Capturing the Second Site 1 Archaeological Excavation

For the purposes of this report, and for future evaluation and interpretation, we have included a range of images to help illustrate the lifespan and process undertaken at the Site 1 possible Neolithic structure in Aden Country Park.



Second dig machining starts at the possible Neolithic site



A large site opened. Lots of areas of interest



Experience digger driver Robbie Cadger busy at work



Volunteers getting stuck into clearing the site



Clearing of the site continues



Sieving the spoils and some early finds



Lovely day for a dig



Volunteers take a well earned break



Lots of new features being found



Cleaning site and planning post-holes



Post-holes beginning to be dug out and recorded



Digging into another feature



Hat day today, great weather for being onsite



Cleaning a stone filled pit



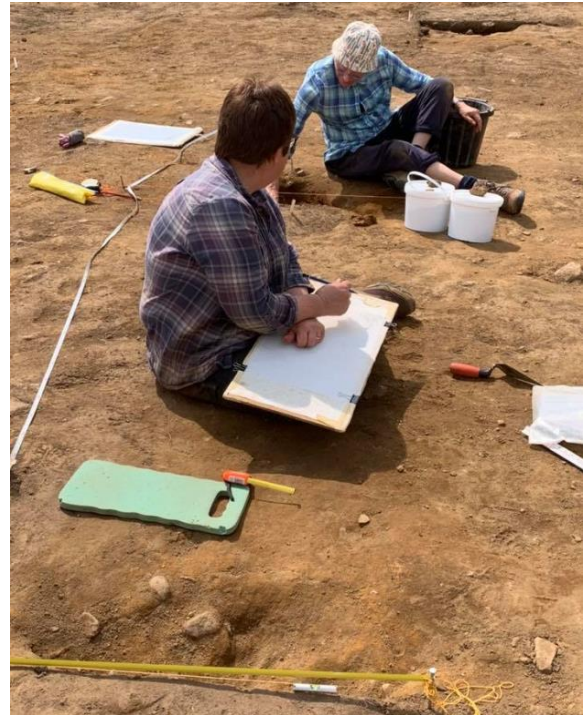
Digging into the features continues



Intreguing large feature being cleared by volunteers



Recording stone filled pit and post-holes



Plotting and recording post-holes



On a wet day, dumpy level training with the volunteers



Large earthfast boulder with various cut marks



Muddy flint and selection of finds



Volunteer working on possible quarry pit



Archaeologist Ali Cameron and archaeology student discuss stone filled pit

Schools Engagement

In all, 515 professional, skilled and unskilled people/volunteers took part in the two-week second Neolithic Site 1 archaeological excavation. This included five local schools: Strichen Primary School (20 pupils + 2 staff), Stuartfield Primary School (59 pupils + 4 staff), Arnage Primary School (41 pupils + 5 staff), Peterhead Central (5 pupils + 2 staff), Longside Primary School (23 pupils + 3 staff) along with home schooled children (27 pupils + 12 staff), totalling 203 people. A full volunteer statistics breakdown is provided later in this report.



Aberdeen Young Archaeologists' Club

During the dig, 11 children and 12 parents from the Aberdeen Young Archaeologists Club helped with a variety of dig duties on 30th June. Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed their experience and it is hoped these keen enthusiasts go on to study archaeology further.



Filming & Promotion

During the second Neolithic site dig the GoPro camera was set up in various locations in 'time lapse' mode where the resulting footage will help to illustrate to future visitors the process taken at the archaeological excavation.

Alongside the 'time lapse' footage, the Aberdeenshire Council Media Unit were also commissioned to capture additional footage in the form of interviews, and real time recording focusing on the volunteer and school involvement, along with the various activities at the two archaeological open days. Once edited it is planned that this footage will be used in the new interpretation centre, website, smartphone app, Aden Facebook page and Aden Archaeological Facebook page.



Some close-up footage of James Dilley putting traditional axe to work



Heather Jennings (volunteer) being interviewed by Paul Barron and Justine Tough



Paul Barron from the Media Unit interviewing James Dilley of Ancient Craft UK

Archaeology Open Days (30th of June and 6th of July 2019)

As part of the Neolithic dig two open day's were held on 30th June and 6th July. The first open day had demonstrations of pottery making, traditional dyeing, Neolithic music and site tours. The second open day included traditional rope making activities, and a Neolithic camp re-enactment by James Dilley and Sally-Ann of Ancient Craft UK. The Neolithic camp was very popular with visitors had activities including: fire lighting, and traditional cooking demonstrations. Both open days attracting hundreds of visitors and provided an opportunity to engage with the archaeological heritage of the site, see what had been found, as well as enjoying some of the Neolithic themed activities.



Neolithic re-enactment by James Dilley and Sally-Ann



Traditional rope making



Visitors trying out traditional dyeing techniques



Visitors enjoying an archaeological site tour



James Dille and Sally-Ann providing an insight into Neolithic life for visitors



Sally-Ann using traditional Neolithic cooking techniques



Archaeological dig ongoing with archaeological tours in full swing



Traditional rope making pulling a crowd



NLHF panel strategically placed to highlight the funding support

During the Dig - Marketing & Promotion

Throughout the second Neolithic site dig, social media (Twitter & Facebook) were both used to help promote and inform people about what was happening during the course of the archaeological dig. As shown below, archaeologist Ali Cameron, along with tweets by Aden Country Park, helped to showcase the volunteer and school's involvement, as well as simply spreading the word about what was being found during the fieldwork excavation.



Flint knapping Workshop

After the archaeological open day on 6th July had finished for the day, James Dilley provided a flint knapping workshop for the volunteers working on the dig. The volunteers really enjoyed this training opportunity and were very grateful to James for providing such an enjoyable workshop on how people from Neolithic times would have created an axe head.





James Dilley flint knapping demonstration



Volunteers keeping a keen eye on how it's done



Volunteer Steve makes a good start



Mary gets stuck into her flint, making sure to keep her loose on the tarpaulin



Volunteers enjoying the flint knapping workshop



Good job Steve!

Drone Photography

To help understand the layout, scale and dimensions of the site and the post-hole marks of the possible Neolithic structure, a drone was used as a recording mechanism. The car tyres shown in the photographs helps to illustrate the scale of the site.

A series of post-hole bases were excavated which have been heavily truncated by the plough. The main structure appears to be c 21m NE-SW and 14.5m SE-NW and most of the structure was uncovered in 2018. The 2019 dig allowed for a wider interpretation. The post-holes are mostly cut into a soft reddish brown sandy natural subsoil; the area surrounding the structure comprises a very compact natural subsoil, as shown below.



The drone photographs above show the trench with hard compact natural soil at the bottom left and top right, with the area of the structure in the centre; facing SE.

Conclusions

The 2019 excavation extended the 2018 trench in each direction 8m SW, 6m NW and SE and 10m NE. A trench 5.5m wide was excavated from the enclosure trench to the cup-marked stone and a trench excavated around this stone. A further 130 features were investigated including post-hole bases, tree throws, furrows, root and burrow holes, quarry pits and stone-holes.

The excavated site/structure is heavily ploughed and burrowed but the bases of features excavated suggest that it was a structure 14.5m wide and at least 21m long consisting of posts set in post-holes with several undetermined features at least four of which are tree-throw pits. It is possible that some of the other features may also represent the remains of smaller trees, but no others have been identified. Post-hole alignment to the W and N may represent entrances and further excavation in this area may clarify this.

It would appear that the possible Neolithic structure was not roofed; there is certainly no evidence of large post-pits which would be required to support large central timbers. It would appear to have been an unroofed enclosure consisting of small and medium posts and possibly also trees (living or dead/fallen) and possibly also earthfast boulders. The trees may have fallen prior to the construction but it does not appear that there were many trees in the area which required to be felled.

Following the results of the first 2018 excavation, a local artist, Jan Dunbar, was commissioned to visually interpret the post hole alignments and the sites possible use as a Neolithic mortuary enclosure. Although currently there is no evidence from within the structure, either structural or find related, due to the interior having been so badly affected by medieval and later agricultural activities, the resulting graphic provides a visual impression of what the site may have looked like.



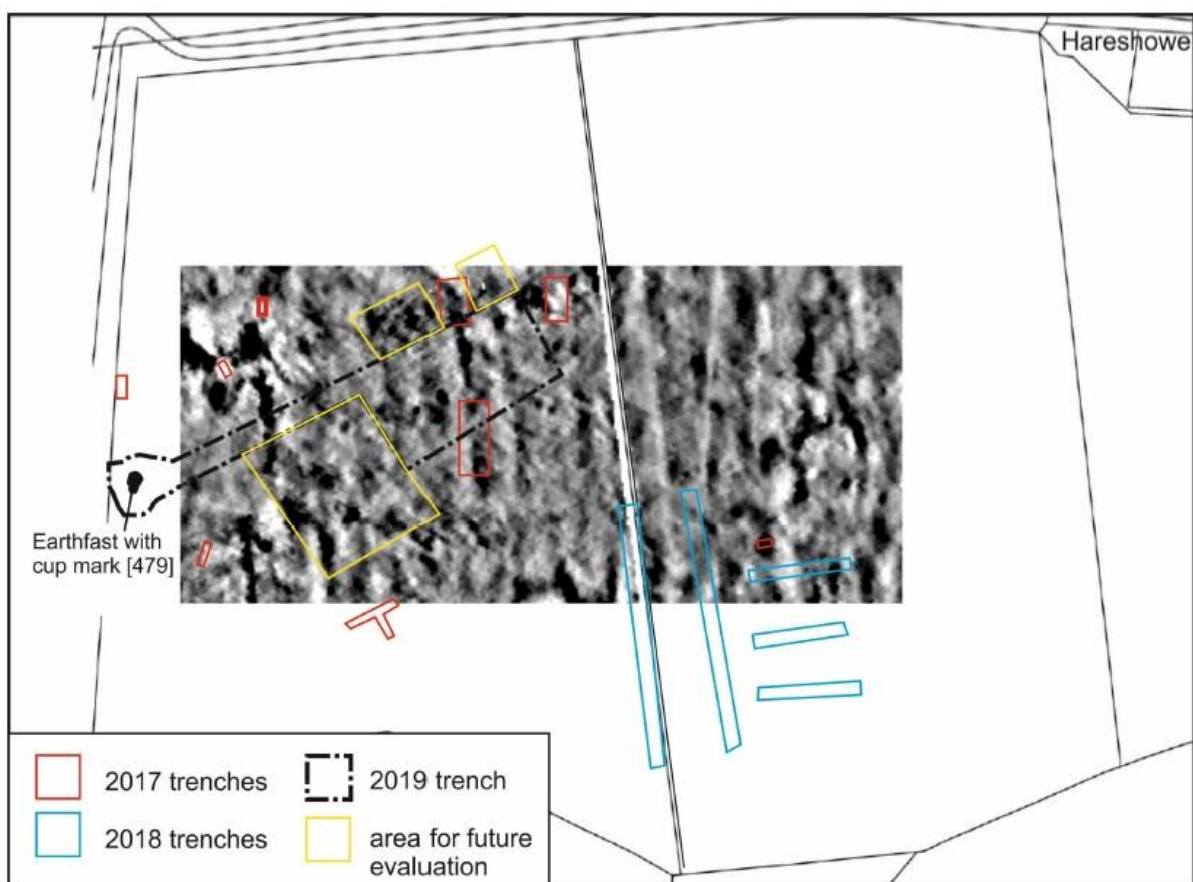
Artist impression of possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure by Jan Dunbar

Radiocarbon dating is required to determine dates for the structure and reporting on all the finds is required. There are two or three small sherds of possible prehistoric pottery, flints and possible quartz objects, and a possible fragment of saddle quern and post-excavation will be required to confirm this interpretation.

Recommendations

Following the completion of the 2019 excavation of the possible Neolithic structure it is recommended that:

- Further evaluation in three areas of the site (see Illustration below)
- Post-excavation analysis of samples to determine nature and date of features
- Further finds analysis



Volunteers

During the two-week Site 1 archaeological excavation, a wide range of people including University students from Aberdeen, UHI and Nottingham, professional archaeologists, local schools, Brownies, Young Archaeologists all volunteered during the dig. The detailed number and frequency of volunteers is detailed in the Volunteer Statistic tables attached below. It is also vitally important to note that the quality, amount and value of volunteer input is not to be understated. The second Site 1 archaeological dig would not have been possible without their time, effort and enthusiasm.



Volunteers take a well-earned break



Group photo of the Young Archaeologists



Getting hands on with the food



Volunteers find some shade beside the welfare unit



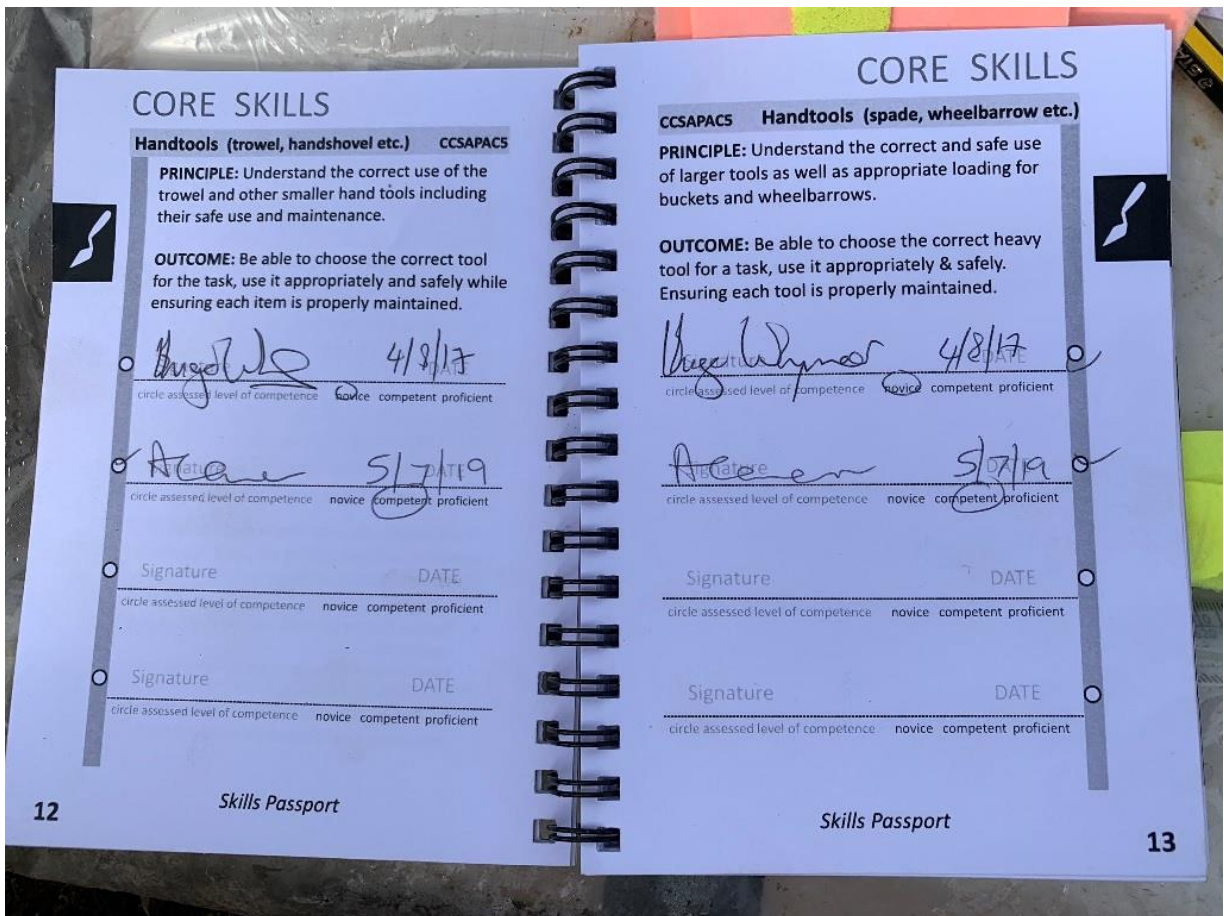
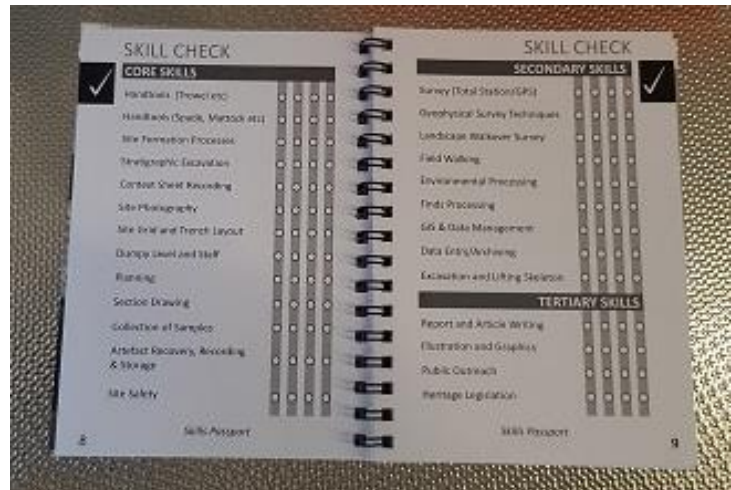
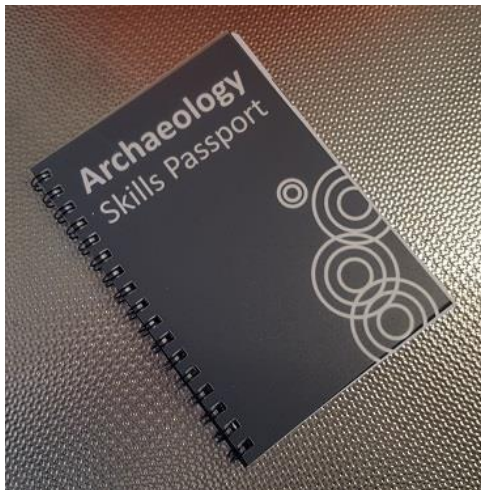
Volunteers clearing around the large earthen boulder



Volunteers digging into one of the many site features

Training & Skills - Passport

Archaeology Skills Passports purchased through the project were again provided to appropriate volunteers. The 'Skills Passport' scheme is a recognised model for tracking, logging and assessing archaeological training. The project archaeologist, Ali Cameron, acted as the assessors, taking the time to discuss with participants the skills that they need to work on and helping to determine their level of ability. Ultimately the scheme is meant to help participants increase their employment prospects, gaining archaeological skills, and using their experience as a stepping-stone towards professional accreditation.



An example of one of the Skills passports having been signed by Ali Cameron (archaeologist)

Volunteer Statistics

Children & Adults

During the two-week archaeological excavation, a range of people including University students from Aberdeen, UHI and Nottingham, professional archaeologists, and volunteers from Manchester, Elgin and the local area attended the dig. Details are as follows:

Date	21-Jun	24-Jun	25-Jun	26-Jun	27-Jun	28-Jun	29-Jun	30-Jun	02-Jul	03-Jul	04-Jul	05-Jul	06-Jul	07-Jul	TOTAL	£ based on £50/£150/£350
Prof	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	9	£3,150.00
skilled	2	6	9	9	9	8	7	7	12	9	9	9	9	6	111	£16,650.00
unskilled	0	0	8	6	11	8	15	31	10	12	12	9	26	6	154	£7,700.00
TOTAL	2	6	18	16	21	17	23	39	23	22	21	18	36	12	274	£27,500.00

Schools/Groups

In all, five schools, Brownies and Young Archaeologists attended the archaeological excavation. These included: Strichen: 20 pupils + 2 staff (25 June). Home schooled: 27 pupils + 12 staff (26 June). Stuartfield: 40 pupils + 4 staff + 19 pupils (28 June). Brownies: 12 girls + 3 adults (29 June). Young Archaeologists Club: 11 kids + 12 parents (30 June). Arnage: 41 pupils + 5 staff (2 July). Peterhead Central: 5 pupils + 2 staff (3 July). Longside: 23 pupils + 3 staff (3 July).

Date	21-Jun	24-Jun	25-Jun	26-Jun	27-Jun	28-Jun	29-Jun	30-Jun	02-Jul	03-Jul	04-Jul	05-Jul	06-Jul	07-Jul	TOTAL	£ based on £50/£150/£350
Prof	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	£ -
skilled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	£ -
unskilled	0	0	22	39	0	63	15	23	46	33	0	0	0	0	241	£12,050.00
TOTAL	0	0	22	39	0	63	15	23	46	33	0	0	0	0	241	£12,050.00

Combined Totals

When the two totals are combined into one table this helps to illustrate the amount of volunteer input over the ten-day archaeological digs:

Date	21-Jun	24-Jun	25-Jun	26-Jun	27-Jun	28-Jun	29-Jun	30-Jun	02-Jul	03-Jul	04-Jul	05-Jul	06-Jul	07-Jul	TOTAL	£ based on £50/£150/£350
Prof	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	9	£3,150.00
skilled	2	6	9	9	9	8	7	7	12	9	9	9	9	6	111	£16,650.00
unskilled	0	0	30	45	11	71	30	54	56	45	12	9	26	6	395	£19,750.00
TOTAL	2	6	40	55	21	80	38	62	69	55	21	18	36	12	515	£39,550.00

In total the value of the volunteer input was £39,550. Original estimates were £2,000. The actual volunteer input is £37,550 more than originally estimated.

Feedback

Schools, Participant, Volunteer & Training & Skills Surveys

During the archaeological investigations School, Participant, Volunteer, and Training and Skills surveys were distributed to the range of people who participated in archaeological dig. For those schools who couldn't complete the surveys on the day, the staff took away the surveys to complete in the classroom.

We have had a good response rate and the survey analysis has recently been completed by the Justine Tough, the Skills Development & Events Officer. An "2nd Neolithic Site Dig - Summary of Findings Report" has been developed and will be attached to the next Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Claim and National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Progress Report. This report will help support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of both the Aden Restoration & Redevelopment NLHF project, and the Aden HES Archaeology project.

Comments

During, and after the completion of the archaeological digs, we received a range of positive feedback from visitors, volunteers, teachers, pupils and children, some of their comments have been include below:

- *"The experience was enjoyable and interesting."*
- *"I learned how to remove slate and fill out the context sheet."*
- *"The training was very good, and I was offered lots of different opportunities throughout."*
- *"Good onsite facilities in an amazing park which integrates the farming process."*
- *"Creating plans and identifying different types of soil."*
- *"Learning how to dig properly and learning about the history of the local area."*
- *"I benefited from listening to other diggers comments and experiences."*
- *"The experience was fun and interesting."*
- *"I now have a better understanding of how to deal with features, photography and working alone."*
- *"It was a great opportunity to practice my skills"*
- *"The experience and training have made me a better person as I know I can work through challenges."*

Next Steps – Final 2019 Archaeological Excavation

We are currently in the process of developing the final 2019 archaeological excavation and associated activities/open days at Aden Country Park. The draft timetable for this next dig is as follows:

1. Tower House (Site 3)

31st Aug to 8th Sept. Open day: Sat 7th Sept.

Similar to the second Site 1 excavation at the Neolithic structure, we plan to get as many schools, volunteers and interest groups involved with the Site 3 Tower House dig. Contact with the local schools is well underway and already several schools have confirmed their interest in attending the next dig in August/September 2019.