Excavations at Kildonnan, Eigg 2012

John Hunter

Contents

Introduction

This project was carried out during June and July 2012 in an attempt to identify the traditional site of the early Christian monastery on Eigg reputedly founded by the monk St. Donnan in the early part of the 7th century AD. It was also intended to provide a deeper insight into the nature and continuity of worship and burial in that area, and to present a small sample of the island's archaeology through time. Work undertaken was non-invasive (geophysics) and invasive (excavation) and followed from survey previously conducted in 2008.

Acknowledgements

It takes a great many people to set up, fund, organise and write up an excavation. The work here was only made possible by the efforts of the Eigg Historical Society with generous support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Particular thanks for helping to set up and run the project are due to Camille Dressler and Peter and Susanna Wade-Martins – they helped arrange the funding and acted as supporters and trouble-shooters throughout. The effective management of the site was enabled through the professional skills of Mark Charles, Lis Charles, Cecily Cropper and Candice Hatherley who undertook the supervision. The majority of the fieldwork was enthusiastically carried out by students from Glasgow University and Cranfield University; they also acted as local ambassadors in a variety of helpful ways. The pottery report was kindly produced in record time by Ann MacSween. We are also grateful to the many volunteers and interested persons who turned up, from the island and elsewhere, in order to support the venture – not least the local school children who spent a happy time learning what archaeology was all about. All of us working on the site would like to thank the numerous people on Eigg who tolerated us working in a sensitive part of the island, with a particular thanks to those who helped with accommodation, transport, IT issues, lecture facilities and in the welcome if unexpected provision of cake.

This primary archive material from the excavation together with a full collection of annotated photographs is held in the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of Scotland, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX where it can be consulted by arrangement. Subject to appropriate arrangements, some of the finds together with copies of the photographs will be held on the island.

EXCAVATION SUMMARY

The area under investigation had clearly been subject to intense activity over time, not only through burials, but also through robbing, re-use of materials, runrig, and ploughing. The depth down to hard bedrock varied considerably; in places it was less than 0.2m entailing considerable mixing and disturbance of existing archaeological deposits, especially by post-medieval burials. As a result many of the archaeological features are likely to have been lost; those which had survived had done so on the basis of lower bedrock depth in certain places, and through the substantial nature of some of the larger earthfast stones. Most archaeological features had been decimated, or had simply not survived, and the finds (on the basis of pottery at least) were mixed.

One of the two main purposes of the excavations was to locate evidence for the monastic community associated with St Donnan (died *c*. 617) and although this could not be said to have been fully achieved, there was ample evidence to demonstrate the presence of later Iron Age activity on the site, arguably contemporary with Donnan. This was partly on the basis of working cobbled surfaces, burnt daub and sets of post-holes associated with coarse post-broch pottery (notably Site B, Trenches 7 and 8), and partly on the discovery of a ditch and timber enclosure. Pottery in the west is notoriously difficult to date in view of its conservatism, but the occurrence of rim forms argued to lie from *c*. 250 AD (see Pottery Appendix) provide a useful *terminus post quem* for types that may have persisted for centuries. Further excavation in this largely vacant area between the Catholic and Protestant graves would almost certainly produce more evidence of occupation work in this period as well as earlier activity, but the evidence would inevitably be fragmentary due to the shallow soils and later cultivation. The ditched enclosure was elliptical in shape and lay directly below the same oval outline of a 19th century burial ground at the south of the site which clearly respected it (Site C). The ditch had silted and had been recut. The ditch phase is undated at present and would usefully benefit from future excavation focused towards this end. Nevertheless, there is a strong argument, based on the spatial correlation between the two enclosures, to suggest continuity of place and religious association. Moreover, the shape of the early ditch broadly conforms to the *vallum* or cashel system of delineation characteristic of Celtic monasticism and likely to have been followed by Donnan. These ecclesiastical boundaries were normally of stone (Church Island) or of earth (Iona) – a ditch would have provided a similar method of symbolic demarcation in the absence of other materials.

The second aim of the work was to assess the continuity of worship and to test the richness of the archaeology. Here the results were more tangible. Ecclesiastical sites traditionally develop within a common area, by utilisation of existing buildings, superimposition, or an adjacent new-build – a 'special place' which often stretches further back in time than Christianity itself. Kildonnan provided outstanding evidence for this with the remains of a Neolithic cairn located between the oval burial ground and the standing chapel (Trench 8). This was located on the highest ground; it probably represents original activity on the site and is testimony to the subsequent importance of place. The cairn was both robbed and disturbed, although there was some evidence for secondary activity; it may also have exhibited kerb stones, although there was no evidence for overall shape or for a chamber. Pottery found within its construction is of the Beacharra type, characteristic of cairns of the Clyde group (although somewhat of an

outlier), dated according to current views around the middle of the 4th millennium BC.

Other than the interpretation of the pottery, there is little to link the vast period of time between the Neolithic and the advent of Christianity, but the excavations were essentially 'keyhole' and, like most archaeology, inevitably raise more questions than they answer. Interestingly, continuity from the later Iron Age onwards is evident not only from the standing 14th century cross shaft located in the centre of the site and the later standing roofless chapel, but also by a general smattering of medieval and post-medieval pottery from the excavations, and by the two Viking burials nearby. Moreover, the excavations around the chapel (Site A) identified earlier stone-built structural remains lying below, and projecting from under the chapel itself. Once again this indicates the extent of structural continuity in the area as a whole. Exactly what this walling represents will be difficult to establish in view of the concentration of burials.

Perhaps more perplexing, however, are the remains of a substantial building of unknown size, constructed of mortared foundations and lying within the oval burial ground to the south (Site C Trench 5). Foundations of this magnitude represent a structure of significance, and arguably in this location, a chapel or other ecclesiastical building. The fact that this should lie within the confines of the burial ground (i.e. pre-19th century) and within the area of the earlier ditched enclosure speaks volumes for both continuity of place and the building's importance. It had been drastically damaged by later burials and its nature and function remain open to interpretation. That said, it lay at right angles to, and may have joined, a substantial linear feature lying to the south beyond the burial ground identified on the geophysical survey. Further excavation work in this area would be fundamental to its proper understanding, and might be tied in with additional work on the ditched enclosure (above). The building's position implies social stature and, if not a church, is a monument of a type of and magnitude more normally associated with a laird's dwelling of even a castle.

Overall, the excavations have presented a dynamic new insight into the history of activity on Eigg and, without doubt, Kildonnan was (and is) a 'special place'. In its history some events are archaeologically more visible than others: the evidence pertaining to St Donnan sits within the shadows, but this is just one part of a tangible tradition of burial and worship reaching back over five millennia.

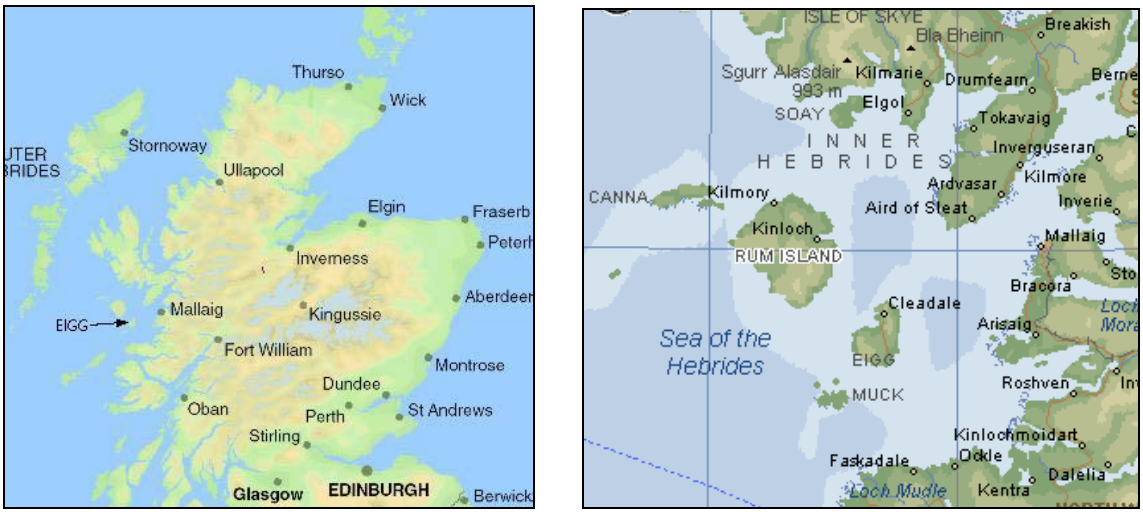

Figure 1. General location of island

Physical background

Eigg and its neighbours Canna, Muck and Rum constitute the Small Isles lying off the west coast of mainland Scotland (Figure 1). Eigg is the second largest of the group and consists predominantly of Lewisian Gneiss interspersed by long ridges of hard igneous pitchstone rocks, most noticeably *An Sgurr* (the 'notch') which dominates the island landscape (Emeleus 1997, 105). The east side of the island is also home to a number of geological erratics. Much of the island today is covered by open peat moorland, with bogs in many places; grasses and shrubs form the majority of the vegetation, although there are modern tree plantations and relict wild woodland, some of which is deciduous. There are also areas of machair where relative sea level declines have left flat fertile areas along the coastline.

Although Eigg lies within the Gulf Stream and is comparatively warmer than most locations of this latitude, it receives much rainfall and experiences the harsh weather carried by the prevailing westerly winds, particularly in winter. Despite the cold temperatures compared to those in the more southerly Scottish lowlands, cereal crops have traditionally been grown and processed in the area (eg Pennant 1774, 279) no doubt aided by the warmer Gulf Stream autumns.

The Statistical Accounts show that, up until the middle of the 19th century, the people of Eigg had been farmers, rearing cattle, producing potatoes and oats, and harvesting kelp from the sea (OSA, 273; NSA, 146). However, the forceful removal of families in the early to mid-19th century to make way for sheep had a major effect not only on the population of such a small island, but also on the landscape itself. By the time of the Second World War, the island was effectively a recreational and sporting estate under various ownerships, ultimately being the subject of a community 'buyout' in 1997. Land use on the island today is of a mixed economy, but is predominantly pasture for cattle and sheep. Today, the division of the island into fields for grazing takes up approximately 17% of the total.

Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological sites and monuments of Eigg have been comprehensively recorded by the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Scotland and published in broadsheet form (RCAHMS 2003; see also MacPherson 1878; Dressler 1998; Wade-Martins 2004). These monuments include an extensive range of habitation/burial sites and portable antiquities ranging from prehistory to post-medieval times, many discovered by farmers and antiquarians. There is, however, no evidence for the presence of Mesolithic communities known to have been active on the neighbouring island of Rum (Wickham-Jones 1990, 46). That apart, Eigg appears to have been occupied continually up to the present day, albeit sparsely following the highland clearances that occurred in the mid-19th century.

Donnan's activities with which this project is concerned, belong to the later Iron Age (Pictish period) which witnessed the consolidation of Dal Riata and Pictland, the two major kingdoms in northern Scotland, a development intricately linked to the progress of early Christianity in the region. At around 600 AD Eigg (recorded initially as *Egea Insula* by Anderson (1922, I, 65)) was geographically peripheral to both kingdoms but arguably lay along a line of maritime communication between the southern Hebrides and Skye (MacDonald 1974, 57). The island is host to a small number of possible forts or duns (RCAHMS 2003), but little which might reflect a centre of political power. According to sources the island became the adopted home of Donnan, an early Christian missionary who reputedly fell foul of a local Pictish leader and was martyred around AD 617 along with his followers (sources compiled by Anderson 1922, I, 142-5). Donnan was a monk of unknown background, but was similar in his monastic operations to that of Columba on Iona, although the two are said to have been geographically independent (Smyth 1984, 109). Morphologically therefore, any monastic establishment at this time on Eigg is likely to have conformed to the Celtic layout, consisting of *vallum* (boundary bank), central chapel and burial ground, and ancillary buildings appropriate to the size of the community concerned. However, McDonald takes the view that the important geographical position of the island, the absence of any genealogy of Donnan, and the general paucity of dedications to his successors may indicate that the community was eremitic (typically a small hermitage) rather than cenobitic (normally a larger religious community) (1974, 60) and, therefore, that no *vallum* might have been present.. This may have significant implications for structural arrangement, although in either case timber may have been the dominant building material. The nature of the high (and hard) bedrock geology in the area of investigation here provides some difficulty for securing post-supported construction, not to mention its archaeological visibility (below).

Donnan's religious efforts on Eigg were not his first. He had founded religious settlements already in northern Pictland, and Smyth is of the opinion that he was perhaps trying to convert the populations on and around Eigg before other Irish monks attempted the same (1984, 107-108). The nature of his demise (and subsequent martyrdom) on Eigg is unclear. According to tradition the local chieftain, the Queen of Moidart, took a dislike to his operations and ordered her subjects to kill both him and his followers (Anderson 1922, I, 143). A more apocryphal account tells that when they refused, she sent her own

group of female warriors to carry out the order, and all of the monastic inhabitants were beheaded and burned (Dressler 1998, 6-7). Traditions and local tales of magic wells and sites associated with Donnan have been recorded by Martin (1703, 276-7), but it is difficult either to assess their veracity or attribute them to modern landscape features. The monastery appears to have flourished and was to remain active when the monastery at Iona was becoming obsolete. By that time, however, the establishment is likely to have been 'Romanised' and the Celtic church condemned as being heretical; this too may have had implications for the structure and configuration of any monastic layout. Later, and in common with monastic foundations elsewhere in the vicinity, the island was probably plundered by the Norse in the 8th or 9th centuries. Evidence for Norse contact may be interpreted from reputed Viking graves discovered in the vicinity during the 19th century, one containing a sword (since lost) recorded as lying to the east of the chapel (MacPherson 1876). A more enduring testimony lies among the placenames some two thirds of which are fully or partly Scandinavian. Later, Eigg fell under the control of the Lordship of the Isles before finally being ceded to the Scottish crown in 1476.

The site of Donnan's monastery is traditionally associated with the area around a ruined chapel and burial ground north of the current farm of Kildonnan (Figures 2 -5) although there is also another potential location on a headland to the south of the farm (see below). The chapel is situated on a hillock, which itself is a platform in the slope from the top of the hill *Bealach Clith* down to the promontory of *Rubha na Crannaig*. To the west of the site the land drops steeply away down to a stream, and the site of a modern (but disused) mill. Directly to the north of the chapel is a small wooded area, whilst to the east are fields currently under pasture. To the south the land slopes gently down to the modern farm of Kildonnan overlooking the harbour.

The chapel itself currently stands as a roofless shell of rubble construction measuring some 15.5 by 0.9m and is arguably of 16th century date in its surviving form. Its character and history have been discussed in detail elsewhere (NMRS inventory NM48NE 19.00; RCAHMS 1928, 220; Miers 2008, 146). It contained a number of early grave markers and cross slabs (Fisher 2001, 92-4) most of which (including part of a Pictish symbol stone), are now preserved elsewhere locally or in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. A 14th century cross shaft has been re-erected on a high point located to the south of the chapel, but its original find spot is unknown. The graveyard is still in regular use; according to datable headstones, burials began in and around the 16th century chapel and spread progressively outwards during the 20th century. Following the adoption of Protestantism by many islanders, a separate part of the burial ground was established in the south. A plan of the graves was made available to the project. The area between the two sects appears to be free of all known graves and headstones and exhibits visible evidence of runrig type land use running approximately north/south.

Figure 2. Eigg. Kildonnan lies at the south-east.

The exact whereabouts of the supposed monastic settlement has never been discovered. MacDonald has analysed the immediate topography of the chapel area and has ascribed surface undulations as being the results of natural features as opposed to any vestiges of a deliberately created *vallum* (1974). His trial investigations too failed to find any structural traces (*ibid*, 60-61) and the exact location of his excavations unfortunately appears not to be recorded. Sometimes early monastic establishments were further demarked using sculpture, and there is some support here with the field names *Crois Bheag* and *Crois Mhòr* to the west and east of the burial ground respectively.

There is also a tradition that a cist to the north-west of the chapel was the burial place of Donnan but the ambiguous evidence for this, first identified by Martin from local sources (1703, 238), has been thoroughly analysed by MacDonald and need not be discussed further here. The earliest 19th century Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Figure 3) depicts the supposed location of this cist as well as the ruined chapel (described as 'burial ground'), and also a curiously positioned oval-shaped 'grave yard' a short distance to the south.

The later 1888 edition (Figure 4) depicts the same, but additionally shows a formal boundary separating the two places of burial. This boundary leaves a strange angular piece of land lying to the south; the position of the boundary was clearly important and it may recognise some pre-existing division involving the ecclesiastical area. The edges of the burial ground are more formalised on the modern landscape (Figures 5 and 6) where the 'grave yard' to the south, although still separate, is depicted inside a complete enclosure.

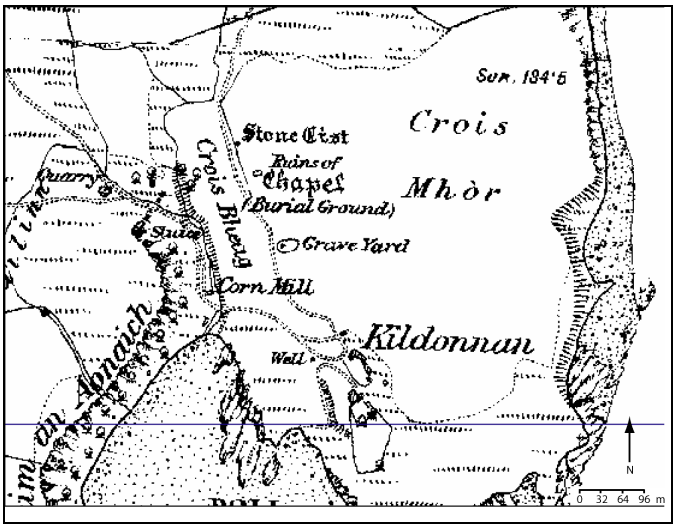

Figure 3. Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:10560) of 1849.

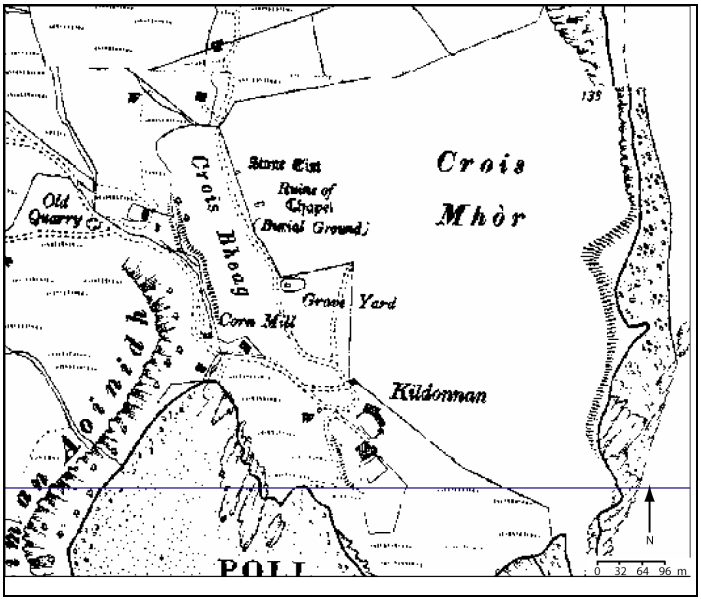

Figure 4. Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:10560) of 1888.

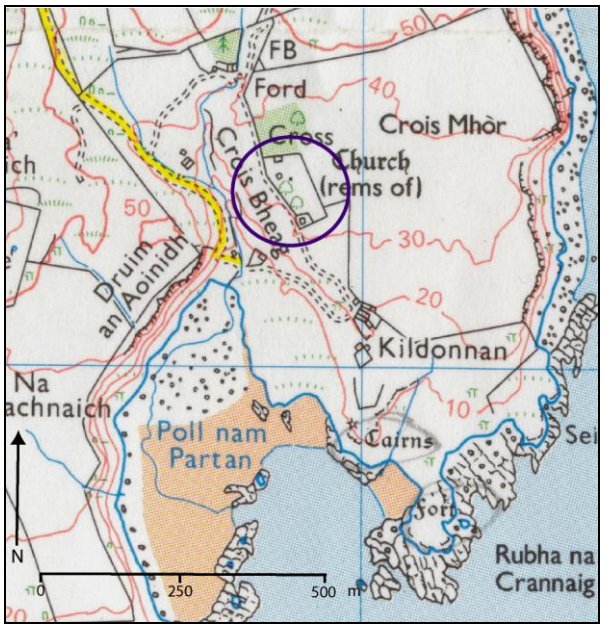

Figure 5. Modern Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:25,000) showing the chapel area and additional formalised boundary.

Figure 6. Aerial view of the chapel and burial ground from the west (courtesy of RCAHMS).

The overall burial ground itself is relatively flat, although it drops sharply to the south adjacent to the walled grave yard which looks down over the farm at Kildonnan. A number of graves are surrounded by metal fences, some over 1m in height; these presented some difficulties in survey, exacerbated by barbed wire fence lines, stone walls and boggy ground. The graveyard is bounded topographically by a slight embankment to the west, further defined by a drystone wall and a trackway, but to the east there is no topographic definition and the boundary is represented by a modern wire fence. The burial ground itself is currently fenced in a manner which allows grazing for sheep, but not for cattle.

2008 Survey

In 2008 a limited geophysical and topographical survey took place in the main area of the burial ground (Hunter *et al*. 2008) in order (a) to ascertain the likely location of any buried remains and (b) to assess the effects of the local geology. Two methods of survey were undertaken: shallow sub-surface geophysical survey using electrical resistance measurements, and topographic survey using a Total Station system (combined electronic distance measurer and theodolite) which allowed the geophysics data to be correlated with surface expressions. Both were co-ordinated within a series of conjoined 20 x 20m grids; the combined results are reproduced in Figure 7.

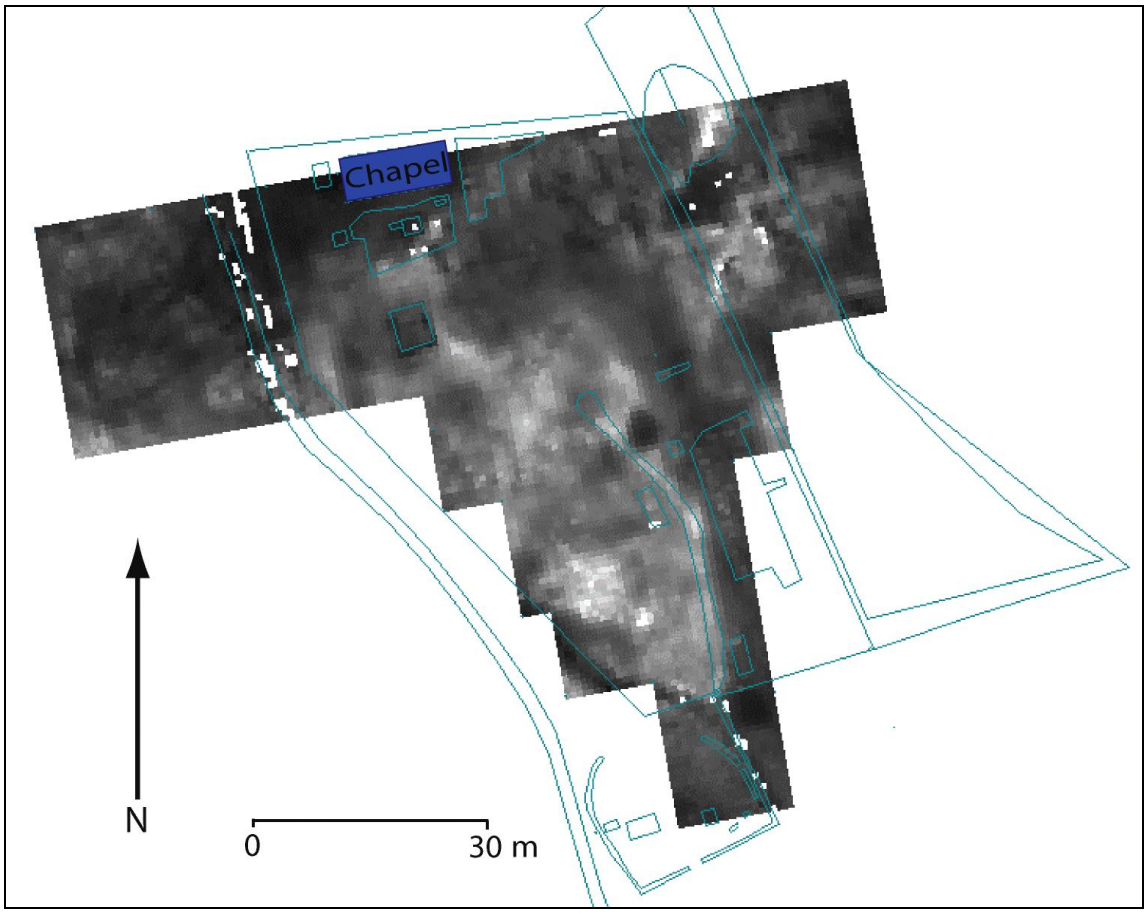

Figure 7. Plan showing the resistance data overlain by the EDM data for comparison.

The low resistance (darker) anomalies seen in the north-west may be a result of natural hydrological processes. Equally, they may be related to anthropogenic water or drainage systems the remains of which can be seen alongside the trackway. Several more defined rectangular areas of low resistance can be equated to those of visible graves, particularly those in the central, northern part of the survey. Subsequent test pits in 2012 demonstrated that these areas, together with the large low resistance arc to the east, represented natural deeper deposits between bedrock outcrops and had been utilised to provide reasonable depth for burial purposes. The higher resistance (lighter) anomalies appear mostly to represent bedrock outcropping and concur with the visible field wall to the west, the enclosed grave yard walling to the south, and the edge of the curving natural escarpment to the east. There was a concern that any evidence for a monastic community in the central area between the Catholic and Protestant graves might be eroded unrecorded by subsequent graves. The EDM survey shows a curved feature in the eastern part of the enclosed grave yard; this presumably corresponds to the oval shaped walling recorded on the early OS maps (Figures 3 and 4 above) and is of some significance, not least in view of similarly shaped enclosures on many early Christian sites.

2012 Excavations

Work took place in June and July 2012 in order to follow up the 2008 survey by both targeted excavation and by some additional geophysics. The site was divided into three zones for working purposes (A, B and C; Figure 8). **Site A** was focused on the standing chapel based on a hypothesis that many ecclesiastical (Christian) buildings utilised the same, or similar structural footprints during their evolution, and that foundation remains might still be visible projecting from outwith the foundations of the standing chapel. The presence of modern graves limited this investigation to the north and west ends of the building. **Site B** was designed to investigate the main central area of the site lying on the high ground between the Catholic graves to the north and the Protestant graves to the south. This was initially carried out by deploying a line of 1 x 1m test pits to assess bedrock heights and deposits; it was later extended by the machine stripping of four wide trenches. **Site C** lay to the south of the site in order to investigate the character and dating of the oval enclosure. This was carried out by keyhole excavations and also by additional geophysical survey (resistivity).

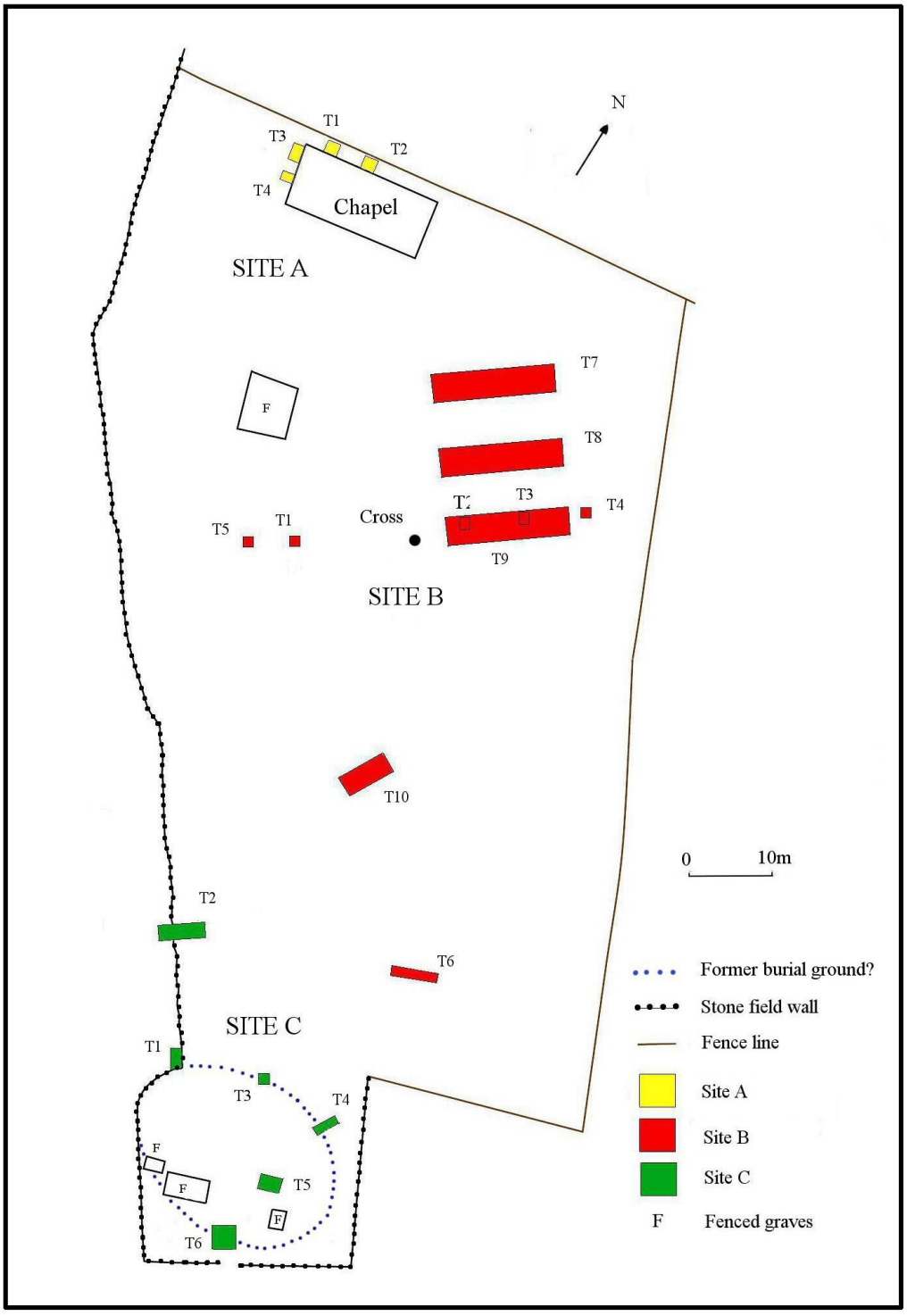

Figure 8. Overall plan of site.

Site A

Summary

Four small trenches were excavated, two at the north of the chapel (Trenches 1 and 2), and two at the west (Trenches 3 and 4) (Figure 8). Trenches 1 and 2 demonstrated that the standing wall at the north had been constructed on a composite stone foundation flush with the wall itself, although in Trench 2 a slight wall casement was evident just below ground level. Both areas had been intensively disturbed by burials, although the chapel foundation trench was still partially visible. The foundation depth was at least 0.5m deep but was not bottomed. Trenches 3 and 4 also contained evidence of a rubble foundation (Figure 9) and a slight casement running at an angle away from the standing wall to the south-west, although it is not clear how this related to the standing wall itself, possibly being a later addition during renovation. However, Trench 3 also contained remains of substantial stone walling projecting from below the west wall of the church. It was *c.* 0.6m wide and was aligned approximately north-west/south-east (Figure 10). It clearly represents part of a substantial structure pre-dating the standing chapel, but is of unknown date. It appears to have been unmortared.

All four trenches demonstrated evidence for a later 19th century or early 20th century renovation phase of the chapel; they also showed evidence of an earlier shelly mortar layer, possibly belonging to the original construction, which is particularly visible and complete in Trenches 3 and 4. This shelly layer seems to be associated with the external surface outside the earliest wall structures found beneath the current chapel. Any internal surface that might have been present has been destroyed by later renovation phases that may be contemporary with the 16th century build or soon after.

Later features that are contemporary with or post-date the current chapel include two formal burials aligned east/west on the north and west sides as well as probably even later child burials. The child burials appear to respect the early structure but the formal burials do not, particularly one on the west side which has clearly cut through and removed the stones of the early wall and therefore destroyed critical relationships. The latest events are the laying down of a loose gravel layer all around the church perimeter and the formation of a turf layer.

The only datable material is late 19th or early 20th century glass and ceramic coming from the renovation phase of that period.

Figure 9. Rubble foundations and slight angled casement in Trench 3 from the east.

Figure 10. Earlier wall projecting from below the west wall of the standing chapel.

Site A: data structure (numbers in bold appear on section Figure 14)

Trench 1 (1 x 1.5m)
Trench 1 contained a series of mixed upper later deposits (**003, 004, 005**(=011), **007, 008**) containing late 19th/early 20th century glass and probably associated with renovations to the standing chapel during that period. These overlay deposits (**013,** 016) probably contemporary with the 16th century chapel, that had

been cut through by two later features, the earliest of which was the remains of a grave containing an articulated burial (**006**; fill **009**) aligned east/west and the latter being a probable pit that contained fragmented and disarticulated human bone. The pit itself contained two fills, the upper (**002**) containing shell and a lower fill (**012**). A feature had cut the south edge of the grave and also the north edge of the chapel foundation trench and fill (**015**). The foundation trench also contained an upper fill (017) visible beneath the first main course of stone of the north wall and overlying the lower fill (**015**). Natural soil was a clean red stony clay (**010**) at a depth of approximately 0.3m below the ground surface into which all features (foundation trench, burial pit and formal grave) had been cut. The east-facing section is shown in Figure 11 and the west-facing, showing the extent of local disturbance in Figure 14.

Trench 2 (1 x 1.5m)
Trench 2 contained a similar but less complex series of mixed upper later deposits (201, 202, 203) down to a depth of 0.3m that are butted up against the first course of the standing north wall and produced late 19th or earlier 20th century glass and granite pebbles as in Trench 1. A deeper layer (204) may be contemporary with the 16th century structure, containing fragments of both animal and human bone and fragments of corroded iron. They had been cut through by a later feature with two fills (204) and (205) that continues under the east baulk and contained a disarticulated human skeleton; this appears to have been cut from beneath (202), has cut through the north wall foundation trench and butts up against the north wall itself. Regarding the foundation trench for the north wall, there is a cut particularly visible in the west-facing section containing a single fill (208) that relates to the current north wall. However, a second change in soil (210) visible in the west-facing section may indicate a wider foundation cut potentially for an earlier structure. There was no other significant evidence for this apart from the lowest course of stones that stood out from the current wall, possibly a casement, for about 0.2m although these sit comfortably within foundation trench (Figure 12). All features have been cut through a natural loose sandy red soil (206) at a depth of approximately 0.45m below ground surface.

Trench 3 (1.5 x 2.0m)
The earliest phase within this trench is evidenced by structural walling with associated soil matrix (313). This is the remains of a substantial wall aligned north-west/south-east which appears to continue beneath the west wall of the current chapel (Figure 10). The presence of a large, flat but irregularly shaped stone on the western side of the trench suggests the wall also continues westwards. On the north side of the trench two stones beneath the current wall are seen to begin to align away from the current wall face. These are on the north side of the assumed structure. On its south side, however, the equivalent stones at the same level are smaller and more irregular, but are seen to protrude more significantly from the western chapel wall. These form the top course of an insubstantial feature that runs parallel with the west wall and seemingly up to 0.1m west of it at the southern end. The stones sit within a soil matrix (315) and are overlain by a more loamy soil (314), which in turn is overlain by a mortar skim (302) that butts up to and runs parallel with the western chapel wall. This flimsy structure is seen to butt up against the earlier wall (317) on the south side. It has the appearance of a casement, or slight plinth; it is not integrated into the chapel foundations and may be secondary.

The earlier wall is cut by a formal grave aligned east/west containing fills (303) and (309). The grave in turn is cut by two smaller features, one shallow concave feature containing fills (309) and (311), and a deeper circular stone-packed feature with a friable mortar fill (304) that may be a feature associated with the burial. The burial is seen to cut through a red brown soil (306) beneath (301) and a cleaner more red clay soil associated with the wall structure. It also cuts through the shelly layer that is present on the west side of structure. The grave has robbed out the stones from the north/south wall seen in Trench 4 that would most likely have joined up with wall in Trench 3.

Trench 4 (1.5 x 1.0m)
The earliest phase within this trench is evidenced by the structure with associated soil matrix (409). This is the remains of a wall aligned north/south, running approximately 0.3m west of the current chapel wall and parallel with it (Figure 13). The two large stones with flat and relatively level upper surfaces form the upper remaining course of this wall but the eastern side has been robbed and/or suffered collapse revealing stepped stones leading downwards towards the current chapel wall. This has resulted in a V-shaped gap

that has then been filled in and levelled off. The first part of this series of works appears to have involved the re-construction of a foundation, forming the flimsy and superficial 'structure' that is parallel to and almost abutting the current west wall. This sits within cut (408) and soil matrix (404) but is only one course deep. Following this, the gap was filled in with packing and levelling deposits (403) and (405) and then finished off with a mortar skim (402).

On the western side and slightly overlying the two upper stones is a very shelly deposit (410) associated with the structure and which is also seen in Trench 3 associated with the flat level stone on the west side of the trench. Two small child graves (one caught on section, (fill 407)) are seen cutting through this deposit from beneath the upper late 19th or early 20th century levelling layers. Figure 13 also illustrates the exposure of extensive rubble presumably brought about by the collapse/robbing of the earlier structure visible in Trench 3.

Figure 11. Site A Trench 1 east-facing section

Figure 12. Site A Trench 2 showing casement

Figure 13. Site A Trench 4 showing foundation/walling lines

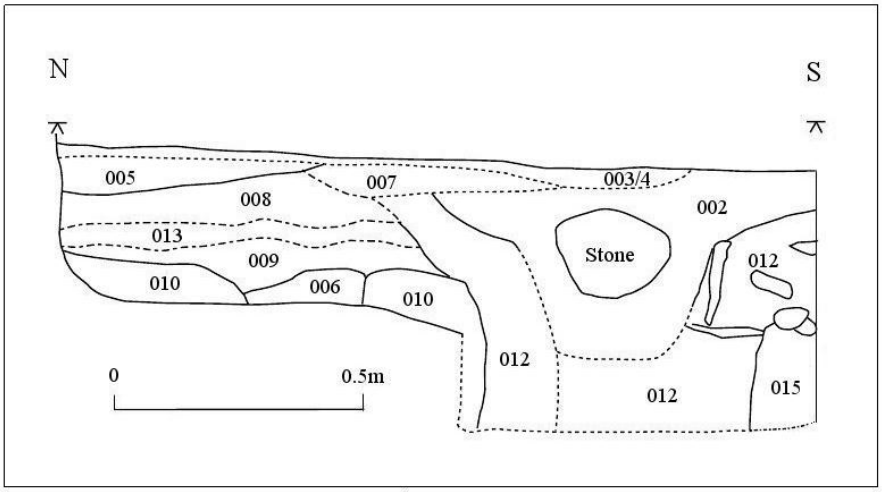

Figure 14. Site A Trench 1 west-facing section showing extent of disturbed ground. The trench butts up against the north wall of the standing chapel at the south.

Site B

Summary

Five test pits (Trenches 1-5), one hand-cut trench (Trench 6; Figure 15) and four machine trenches (Trenches 7 – 10; Figures 16 – 20) were cut across this central part of the site in order to ascertain the archaeological significance of the area, and to test the geophysical survey of 2008 by excavation. The location of the trenches is shown on Figure 8. The test pitting was aligned across the widest part of the site encapsulating both high and low resistance areas, as well as a mound to the west. The three main machine trenches (each 15 x 3m, Trenches 7 - 9) were positioned to sample the main plateau between the two burial areas, a further machine trench (6 x 2.5m, Trench 10) was located on a lower plateau further south, and the a hand-cut trench (6 x 1m) was positioned in order to clarify whether a topographically visible bank was a natural or anthropogenic feature. The test pits demonstrated that bedrock typically lay 0.3 to 0.4m below the current ground surface although this was slightly deeper to the east, as suggested by the geophysics. The substrate was rock, superimposed by gravel and a thin band of topsoil. It was virtually impossible to dig into and would have presented significant constraints on any constructional method requiring excavated foundations, including postholes.

These trenches have provided evidence of a multi-phased site containing burials and settlement activity dating from prehistoric to late post-medieval periods. The earliest structure, a robbed out burial cairn in Trench 8, cut into a pit, was possibly a much larger structure than the excavated evidence has provided (Figures 17 – 19). Associated pottery is of the Beacharra type, associated with Neolithic cairns of the Clyde group (Henshall 1972, 344-6) and suggest a date in the first half of the 4th millennium BC (Sheridan pers. comm.). The cairn had collapsed over shell midden, had been heavily robbed and subsequently ploughed out; it was unevidenced in both Trenches 7 and 8 lying 3m away

on either side. It was probably dismantled and disturbed in the medieval period, as evidenced by the pottery. The reduced cairn was probably still a feature in the landscape during the medieval period, a possible curbed surface respecting its burial and boundary. A standing stone in Trench 9 could be evidence of a ring of stones that may have surrounded it; a possible cist in Trench 7 provides further evidence of widespread prehistoric activity.

The next phase of activity is more difficult to define. The line of stones and surfaces in Trench 8 together with construction gullies (?timber slots), posthole and patches of burnt daub could be evidence of a single phase or more. Together with the surfaces and postholes from Trench 7 (Figure 16), they contained Iron Age pottery, demonstrably post-broch, which may be commensurate with activity in the later Iron Age (Pictish) period, arguably contemporary with the lifetime of Donnan. The surfaces and postholes in Trench 7 appear to form working surfaces together with evidence for a timber structure. The latest phase, a late post-medieval wall foundation trench is much easier to define.

Figure 15. Site B Trench 6 from the north-east showing natural banking.

.

Figure 16. Site B Trench 7 from the south-east.

Figure 17. Site B Trench 8 cairn 802 from the south-west.

Figure 18. Site B Trench 8 cairn elements 802 (left) and 807 (right) from the north-east.

Figure 19. Shell midden spread from the south-west.

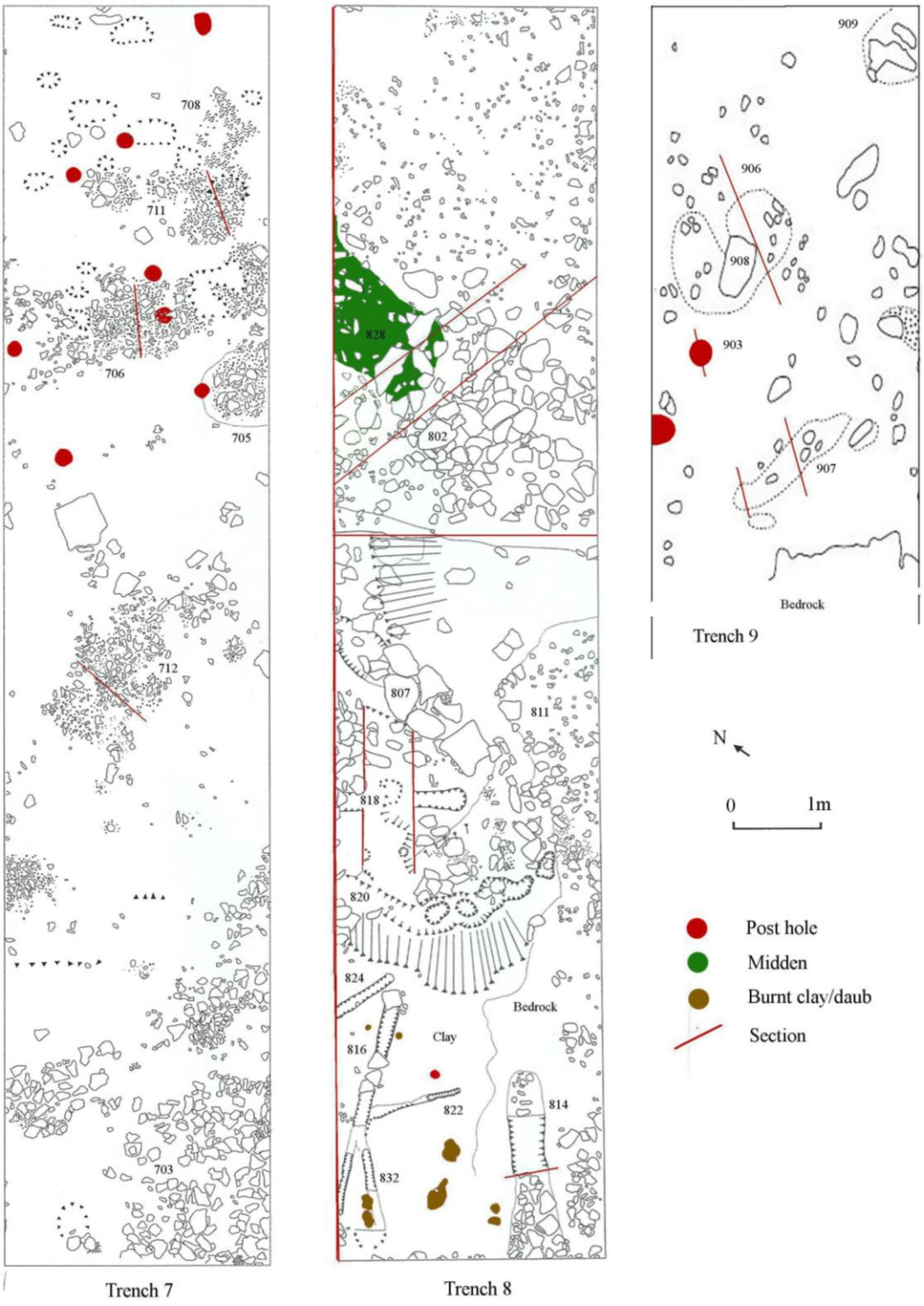

Figure 20. Site B composite plans of Trenches 7, 8 and 9 (distance between them not to scale).

Site B: data structure (numbers in bold appear on plan, Figure 20)

Trench 1 (1 x 1m)
Test pit 1 was excavated to the natural bedrock (102) which was encountered at depths of between 0.40 to 0.45m. This was overlain by light brown sandy-clay subsoil that was sealed by mid-brown topsoil (100) with turf. Two fragments of glass were extracted from the topsoil. No archaeological features were revealed.

Trench 2 (1 x 1m)
Test pit 2 was excavated to the natural bedrock (203) which was reached at depths of between 0.26 to 0.30m. Cut into the bedrock, a gully (201), probably naturally formed, ran north-west/south-east across the trench base. Gully 201 measured between 0.5 to 0.10m wide and had a varying depth of between 0.5 to 0.8m. It was a filled by dark brown stony silty sand (202) and produced a sherd of coarse pottery. Gully 201 was sealed by turf-topped topsoil consisting of mid-brown silty-clay. No archaeological features were revealed.

Trench 3 (1 x 1m)
Test pit 3 was excavated to the natural bedrock (303) which was encountered at a depth of 0.30m. This was overlain by light brown stony sandy-clay subsoil (302) measuring 0.05m that was, in turn, beneath a layer (301) of darker light brown stoney sandy clay 0.10m in depth. These two layers were sealed by turf-topped topsoil (300) 0.15cm in depth. Finds of pottery, flint, bone, charcoal and glass were recovered from subsoils 301 and 302. No archaeological features were revealed.

Trench 4 (1 x 1m)
Test pit 4 was excavated to the natural bedrock (402) which was revealed at a depth 0.20m. Bedrock 402 was overlain by 0.20m of mid-brown stony sandy-clay turf-topped topsoil. Finds of pottery, charcoal and ferrous metal were recovered. No archaeological features were revealed.

Trench 5 (1 x 1m)
Test pit 5 was excavated to a depth of 0.40m within a putative man-made mound but did reach bedrock. Sterile subsoil (501) of mid-brown sandy clay containing stones, ranging in size from 0.05 to 0.25m in diameter, was reached at a depth of 0.15m and was sealed by turf-topped topsoil (500) of mid-brown silty clay. Charcoal fragments were recovered from topsoil 500.

Trench 6 (6m x 1m; Figure 15)
Trench 6 was positioned to investigate a curving bank to the south of Area B that appeared to form a boundary. However, brief trowelling through 0.15cm of turf-topped topsoil (600) revealed natural bedrock (601) and therefore it was concluded that the feature was geological.

Trench 7 (15m x 3m; Figures 16 and 20)
Trench 7 was positioned to investigate any archaeological features that might be located within an area close to the chapel but outside the burial ground. The natural subsoil (707), an orange-brown bedrock, was reached at depths of between 0.25 to 0.38m and was overlain by orange-brown sandy subsoil (708) to a depth of up to 0.05m. All features and layers either cut this layer or lay above it. In the west of the trench lay an area of apparent of rubble stone collapse (**703**) 2.10 x 1.60m (Figure 21). The size of the stones suggested a collapsed small cairn rather than a more major structural feature. Time constraints meant that this could only be defined.

In the east of the trench, two spreads of small stones compacted into the natural subsoil (708) suggestive of a fragmented cobbled surface were revealed. Surface (**706**), on a north-west/south-east alignment, lying to the north of the trench, was 1.70m long, up to 1.00m wide and 0.05m in depth (Figure 22). Surface **(711**) lay to the south-east of **706** and had an irregular circular shape 0.50m wide with a depth of 0.08m. A further surface (**712**) lay to the centre of the trench and measured 1.25m in length, was 0.85m wide and had a depth of 0.08m. Eight postholes, all but one measuring *c.* 0.15m in diameter, with dark brown silty clay fills and of differing depths were located around the surface areas. All appeared to be contemporary and a number of

post-hole configurations can be interpreted.

To the south-west of surface (**706**) remains of a possible small cist (**705**) was located. This was constructed of compacted larger stones covering a shallow pit (710) with a dark brown silty clay fill (709). It measured 0.50m long, 0.40m wide and had a depth of 0.10m. Although the areas were very disturbed by ploughing, the few pottery sherds recovered were identified as medieval or earlier.

All features and layers were overlain by a mid-brown sandy silty clay subsoil layer 0.05m in depth (701) in the east of the trench, and by a dark brown silty clay subsoil between 0.09m-0.30m deep (702) in the west. Both were sealed by dark brown silty clay topsoil (700) to a depth of 0.15m.

Trench 8 (15m x 3m; Figures 17 – 20)
Trench 8 was positioned some 3m to the south of Trench 7 (Figure 8). The natural subsoil (804), orange-brown bedrock, was reached at depths of between 0.30m and 0.45m across the whole area, and was overlain by orange-brown sandy subsoil (830) to a depth of up to 0.25m. All features and layers either cut this layer or lay above it.

Phase 1
Within the centre of the trench, a pit (809) was either cut (or a geological anomaly utilised) to house a burial cairn (**802**). The size of the pit was difficult to ascertain but may have been substantial given that the eastern side of the trench begins to slope acutely away to the east. The cist had been sited in the pit. A natural bank of subsoil (830) to the north of the trench was cut to form a linear pit with curved ends (806), it was aligned north-east/south-west and measured 2.20m long, had a width of 0.55m and a depth of 0.22m. The pit was filled (805) by mid-brown silty clay to a depth of 0.22m containing burnt bone, and sherds of decorated Neolithic pottery of the Beacharra type. Other fragments of this type were found elsewhere on the site in mixed deposits. The pit was covered by a number of large boulders constituting a likely cist (**807**), the largest was a rough square in form and had a width and height of 0.55m (for section see Figure 23).

To the west of the cist a layer (819) of compact grey-brown clay lay above subsoil (830) to a depth of 0.12m, covering an area of 1.80m x 1.55m. This layer was cut by a north-south aligned regular bowl-shaped linear gully (**818)** measuring 1.45m in length, 0.25m in width and 0.13m in depth. A section into layer (819) revealed circular and irregular shaped grey areas within subsoil (830) that may have represented stone settings. Time constraints meant that no excavation of these possible features was possible.

Further to the west of the cist at the base of pit cut (809) a curving arc of irregular shaped stone settings (820) were impressed into subsoil (830). They were aligned north-west/south-east running across the trench for some 3m. The settings measured up to 0.25m in width and had a depth of up to 0.10m.

Phase 2
At the western end of the trench, on its northern side, a series of linear gullies and a posthole had been dug into subsoil (830) (Figure 24). Gully (**816)**, aligned broadly east/west, was 2.60m in length, 0.15m wide, 0.10m deep and had a fill of mid-brown silty clay (815). Gully (**822**), aligned north/south, also had a fill of mid-brown silty clay (821). It ran for 0.90m in length, was 0.10m wide and had a depth of 0.04m. Gully (**824**), also with a fill of mid-brown silty clay (823), was aligned north-west/south-east, measured 0.80m in length, 0.12m in width and had a depth of 0.06m. An adjacent posthole aligned broadly east/west, was 1.0m in length, 0.10m wide, 0.08m in depth and also had a fill of mid-brown silty clay (831). Patches of burnt material interpreted as daub appeared to lie in association with these gullies.

Within the cairn cut (809), to the east of the gullies and over stone settings (820) ran a line of mainly large stones and boulders, up to 0.45m in width, possibly forming a dry stone construction or cairn collapse (812). The stone line ran the width of the trench on a broad north-west/south-east alignment. Further to the east and south of the cist burial a surface (**811**) of small stones was uncovered at a depth of 0.30m. This irregular shaped surface appeared to have a curb of larger stones and measured 3.65m in length, 1.35m at its widest point and 0.08m in depth.

To the east of the cist a large circular mound of large boulders and stones 4.00m in diameter along the length of the trench was interpreted as the collapse of the cairn when uncovered (**802**). It was sectioned to reveal a midden (**828**). The midden, a dark brown silty clay layer, was 0.35m in depth and contained a lens of shell and animal bone inclusions throughout. It sealed a mid-brown clay layer (829) that lay over bedrock (804). Destruction of the cairn and re-use of the site caused many of the deposits to be mixed and contaminated. Few secure pottery contexts were identified and the pottery types ranged (apart from the Neolithic) within the Iron Age and medieval periods.

Phase 3
To the west of the trench a likely foundation trench **(814)** was located cutting bedrock 804. It was aligned east/west, had a fill (813) of a dark brown silty clay containing small to medium sized stones. The trench measured 2.50 by 0.42m and had a depth of 0.13m. A large ferrous (?)coffin nail was found within the fill. All features and layers were overlain a mid-brown sandy silty clay subsoil layer (801) between 0.12m and 020m thick that was sealed by dark brown silty clay topsoil (800) to a depth of 0.18m.

Trench 9 (15m x 3m; Figure 20)
Trench 9 lay approximately 3m to the south of Trench 8 (Figure 8). The natural subsoil (912), an orange-brown bedrock, was reached at depths between 0.15m in the west of the trench and 0.25m in the east, and was overlain by orange-brown sandy subsoil (911) to a depth of up to 0.05m. All features and layers either cut this layer or lay above it; they all appeared to be concentrated to the east of the trench probably due to the height of bedrock within the western area.

In the south-east corner of the trench an apparent pit (**909**) was excavated that had a fill of dark brown silty clay. Although the fill produced a sherd of Iron Age pottery the feature was interpreted as being natural.
To the west of pit (909) a curving gully (**907**) was identified containing a dark brown silty clay fill (904). This too proved to be natural. To the north-east of gully (**907**) a posthole (**903**) was located with a dark brown silty clay fill (902). It measured 0.15m in diameter and had a depth of 0.10m.

To the east of posthole (**903**) a large boulder **(908)** set within a pit (**906**) was investigated. The boulder measured 0.50m in height and 0.40m in width. The pit had an irregular shape and a dark brown silty clay fill (905). After excavation it was concluded that the pit was a natural feature within the bedrock, however, it was inconclusive whether the boulder was an erratic or had been placed within the pit.

Features and layers were overlain a mid-brown sandy silty clay subsoil layer (901) that was between 0.09 to 0.30m deep. This was sealed by dark brown silty clay topsoil (900) to a depth of 0.12m.

Trench 10 (6 x 2mm)
Trench 10 was positioned to investigate any archaeological features that may be located within a small plateau of land north of Trench 6.

The natural subsoil (1003), an orange-brown bedrock, was reached at depths of between 0.30m and 0.45m, and was overlain by orange-brown sandy subsoil (1002) to a depth of up to 0.10m. All features and layers either cut this layer or lay above it. Excavation revealed little other than an area of burning, possibly burnt daub, within the north-west area of the trench within subsoil (1002). This was overlain by a mid-brown sandy silty clay subsoil layer (1001) between 0.15m-0.33m thick that was sealed by dark brown silty clay topsoil (1000) to a depth of 0.18m.

Figure 21. Site B Trench 7showing rubble area 703 from the north.

Figure 22. Site B Trench 7 showing surfaced area 706 from the east.

Figure 23. Site B Trench 8 showing section through cairn 802.

Figure 24. Site B Trench 8 showing gullies and post hole at west end.

Site C

Summary

Six hand cut trenches were located in Site C (Figure 8). Four of these (Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 6) were positioned in order to examine and investigate a putative sub-circular enclosure. This was partially evident topographically and clearly marked on the 19th century OS maps as a grave yard (Figures 3 and 4 above). It had been subsumed and 'squared off' with the construction of a field wall in the 19th century, although part of the curvature still survived at the north-west. Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 6 all demonstrated the presence of such an enclosure, but in varying degrees of survival. There was very little structural evidence visible on the ground surface, and much stonework had either been robbed to form the present field wall or had been decimated by dense 19th century burial activity. It was also clear from three of the trenches that the enclosure wall had been laid out to respect an earlier ditched enclosure on the same alignment. There was also evidence of post-holes associated with this ditch suggesting that it may have originally been surmounted on the inside by a timber or wattle fence, although the date of this is unknown.

A geophysical survey (resistivity) was also conducted around the enclosure area (Figure 25). The responses were badly distorted by burials, but it was possible to interpret parts of the sub-circular enclosure. However, the structural remains encountered in Trench 5 (below) were not apparent. Curiously, the data suggested the presence of a linear feature, presumably a wall aligned east/west, lying immediately to the south of the enclosure.

Trench 1 was specifically located to examine the butted junction of the modern field wall against the sub-circular enclosure. The section (Figure 26) shows that the lower part of the sub-circular enclosure had cut through the filling of the ditch; it also seemed likely that the upper courses of the enclosure were a later re-build, but before the creation of the field wall. Trench 6 was positioned in order to determine the existence of the enclosure wall in an area where it was not visible on the present ground surface. This demonstrated the partial survival of the walling (Figure 27), and also indicated the likely presence of a later, wide, compacted rubble surface possible indicating an entrance surface which had been constructed after the primary enclosure walling had collapsed. This was in the same place as the present entrance and suggested consistency of use over time.

Trench 5 was positioned to examine a linear stone feature inside the enclosure. It provided an unusual dimension to the interpretation of the site, in revealing a substantial walled, but undated structure. Modern graves prevented this from being excavated other than at key-hole level but it was possible to expose mortared rubble footings approximately 1m wide lying at a depth of some 0.7m below the present ground surface. The structure, of unknown size, but was presumably an earlier chapel or building of status within the enclosure, now heavily robbed and destroyed by burials (Figure 28).

Trench 2 was located through the present (dilapidated) field wall to assess it structure and antiquity, and also to investigate whether banking lying roughly parallel to the east of the field wall was a natural feature or was of built origin. Both issues were quickly resolved (Figure 29): the wall was shown to have no significant foundations or antecedent, and the banking transpired to be a natural linear rock outcrop.

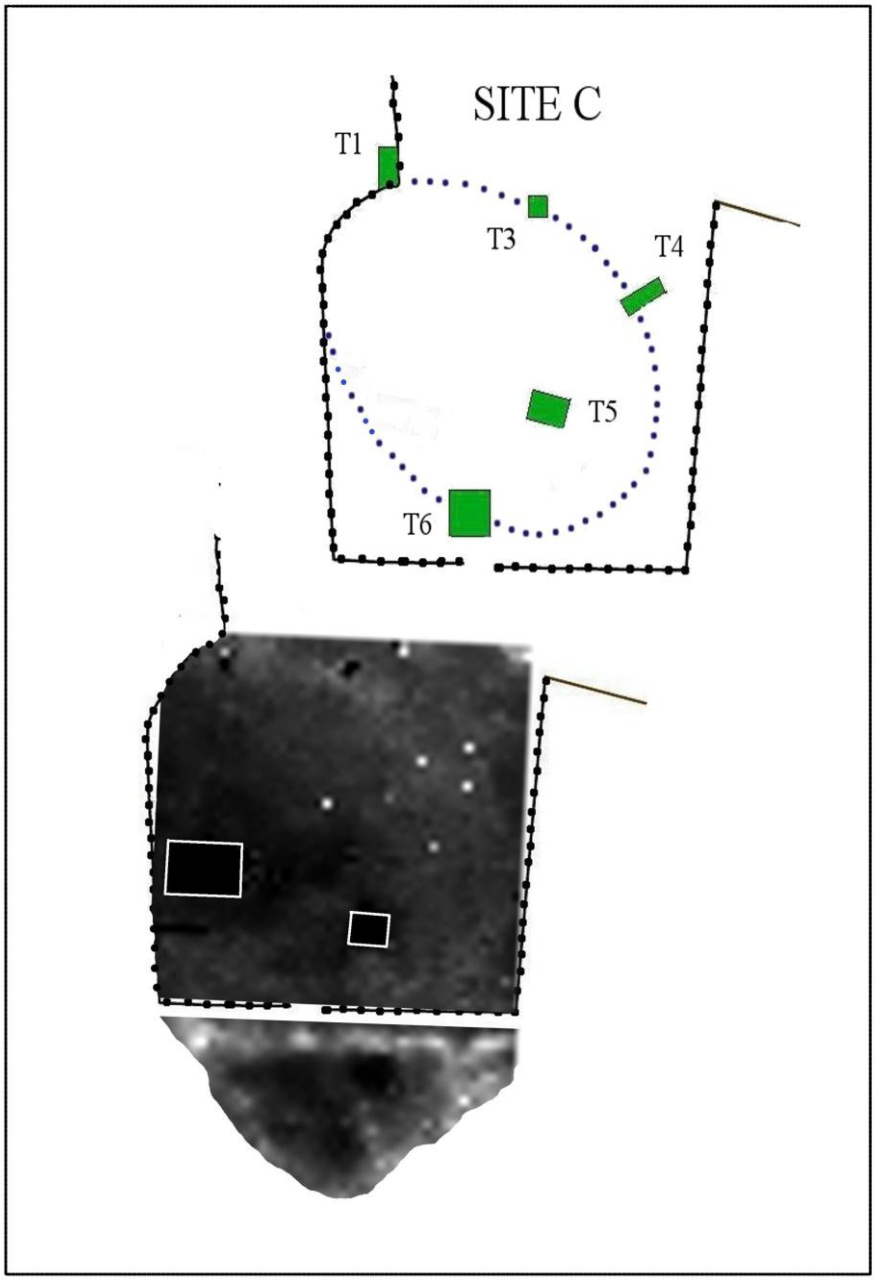

Figure 25. Site C. Geophysical survey (resistivity) of burial ground area. Darker areas represent features of lower resistance (ditches etc.); lighter areas represent areas of higher resistance (walls etc.).

Figure 26. Site C Trench 1 showing wall joint, ditch and post-hole from the north-west.

Figure 27. Site C Trench 6 showing surviving courses of boundary wall to right.

Figure 28. Site C Trench 5 showing mortared foundations (right) below collapsed field wall.

Figure 29. Site C Trench 1 showing base of field wall and exposed natural rock outcrop to east.

Site C: data structure (numbers in bold appear on sections Figures 33 and 34)

Trench 1 (1.6 x 1m)
The earliest layer encountered at 0.40m below the surface was a light orange brown clay silt (**103**) with charcoal flecks included. This was cut by a ditch (**107**), *c*. 0.7m wide by 0.15m deep, running north-east/south-west and naturally silted up with a mid brown clay silt (**106**) with charcoal inclusions with medium clarification with layer (**103**). Also cutting layer (**103**) and adjacent to (**107**) on the eastern side was a post-hole **(112),** 0.22m wide by 0.23m deep (Figure 30; section see Figure 33). It was filled by a dark black clay silt (**111**), but partly disturbed by animal activity. Overlying 103 and 106 was a layer of dark brown clay silt (**113**), 0.26m thick. Cutting (**113, 107**, and **112**) was a ditch re-cut (**105**), 0.80m wide by 0.37m deep, filled by a dark black brown clay silt (**104**). Overlying layer (**103**) and following the same alignment as ditch (**107**) was the foundations of a curving stone wall, with two phases, consisting of 2 courses of mixed sized dark grey stones with smaller flattish stones used as the primary levelling foundation layer. Overlying (**104**) and (**113**) was a dark brown clay silt (**102**), with small stones included, 0.05m thick, which acted as a levelling layer for a stone boundary wall (**108**) consisting of 4-5 courses of mixed irregular shaped sized grey white stones. This boundary wall is probably contemporary with the second phase of the curving wall (**110**) that is visible above ground level. Overlying all layers but not the walls was a mid brown sandy clay silt subsoil layer (101) 0.04m thick. Sealing the trench was a dark brown sandy clay silt topsoil layer (100), 0.15m thick mixed with collapsed stones.

Trench 2 (3.5 x 1.5m)
This was positioned to test the boundary wall foundation on the southern part of site, running north-west/south-east, and also to test a potential archaeological bank made visible by changes in the vegetation. The natural bedrock outcrop and natural yellow brown stony sand (204) was reached at varying depths below ground (*c*. 0.05-0.15m), and the bank was shown to be the result of natural bedrock outcropping. Overlying this in the most southern part of the trench was a dark brown clay silt (203) 0.12m thick on which the boundary wall foundations (202) were placed. The foundations consisted of large grey stones of irregular shape and mixed sizes, typically *c*. 0.3 x 0.4 x 0.4m, which were packed with smaller stones. Overlying the natural in the rest of the trench was a mid brown sandy clay silt subsoil layer (201) 0.05m thick. Sealing the trench was a mid brown clayey silt topsoil layer (200) 0.10m thick.

Trench 3 (1.5 x 1.0m)
This was positioned to investigate the presence of an oval-shaped enclosure depicted on the 19th century OS maps. The natural subsoil, a light orange brown sandy clay silt, and bedrock (304) was reached at 0.7m below ground level. It was cut by a vertical-sided ditch (306) running north-east/south-west and at least 1.0m wide (only one side was encountered during the excavation) by 0.5m deep. At the base of the ditch was a post-hole (309**)**, 0.3m wide and 0.1m deep which was filled by a dark black clay silt (308). Not much of the post-hole survived and it was overlaid by an arc of stones (310) aligned south-west/north, 0.6m long by 0.2m wide by and 0.17m deep consisting of four mixed sized stones within the base of the ditch (306). The ditch itself (306) had become naturally silted with a light brown clay silt (305) 0.5m thick which also overlaid (310). A secondary fill (307) of dark brown clay silt 0.35m thick, overlaid the primary ditch fill (305). Both ditch fills were cut by a re-cut ditch (303) 0.80m wide by 0.35m thick and filled by a dark brown clay silt (302). Overlying this was the severely robbed remnants of a stone wall (311), 0.60m wide by 0.21m tall. Partly overlying this and overlying (302, 305 and 307) was a mid-brown clay silt subsoil layer (301) 0.04m thick. Sealing the trench was a dark brown clay silt turfed topsoil layer (300) 0.08m thick.

Trench 4 (3.0 x 1.0m)
This was positioned to investigate a curving stone wall partly visible above ground, thought to be the oval shaped enclosure visible on the 19th century OS maps. The natural light orange brown sandy clay (405) was encountered at 0.3m below ground level. It was thought to have been cut by a foundation trench (403) 1.32m wide to carry a curving stone wall (404) consisting of mixed sized stones typically *c*. 0.9m wide. The foundation trench (403) was not excavated at the time, much of it had been disturbed by animal and root activity. It appeared to have been backfilled by a dark black brown clay silt (402). Overlying this was a mid brown clay silt subsoil layer (401) 0.25m thick. Sealing the trench was a dark brown clay silt turfed

and bracken topsoil layer (400) 0.1m thick.

Trench 5 (2.3m x 0.5m)
This was positioned to investigate a line of stones visible above ground within the area of the sub-circular burial ground. Natural substrates were not encountered during the excavation of the trench. Located at 0.80m below ground was a line of foundation boulders (**512**) 1.0m wide and at least 0.4m deep (not fully excavated) orientated north/south-east (Figure 31; for section see Figure 34). Overlying this was a stone and mortar wall (**509**) partially cut by a burial (511) and backfilled by a mid brown clay silt (510). The wall (**509**) was partly overlaid by a loose stone and mortar layer mixed with dark brown silt clay (**508**) 0.3m thick. Cutting this layer were two burials (505) and (507). Grave (505) was backfilled by a mid brown clay silt (504) and grave (507) was backfilled by a mid brown clay silt (506). Overlying the graves and layer (508) was bank of stone rubble mixed with a dark brown clay silt (**503)**, 0.6m thick. Partially overlying this in the eastern part of the trench was a dark brown clay silt layer (**502**) 0.4m thick. Overlying this and (**503**) was a mid brown clay silt subsoil layer (**501)** 0.05m thick. The trench was sealed by a dark brown clay silt turfed topsoil layer (**500**) 0.1m thick.

Trench 6 (3.0 x 3.0m)
This was positioned at the south side of the graveyard to investigate the alignment of the sub-circular enclosure wall, ditch and associated post-holes already evident in Trenches 1 and 3. Natural light brown silt and bedrock (617) was encountered 1.1m below ground level, partly cut by a burial (614) 0.46m wide by 0.51m. Also cutting the natural and to the west of the grave was a vertical sided, U-shaped ditch (611) 0.65m wide and 0.65m deep, aligned north-east/south-west. This was filled by a light brown clay silt (610) 0.65m thick.

Cutting the ditch (611), fill (610) and the natural (617) was a steep-sided foundation trench (612) 0.55m wide by 0.45m deep. Within the foundation trench a curvilinear stone wall (607) two courses wide was constructed using mixed-sized stones, typically *c*. 0.5 x 0.25 x 0.15m. Much of the stone wall has collapsed and been robbed, and only one course had survived. Once the wall was constructed it was partially backfilled by a light brown clay sand silt (606) 0.45m thick and severely disturbed by animal activity. Overlying the natural in the eastern section of the trench was a mid brown clay silt (605) with charcoal inclusions. Overlying the grave (614, 613) and part of the ditch (611, 610) was an area of stones (609) 1.5m by 1.0m and 0.15m thick consisting of mixed-sized stones. This was overlain by a mid brown clay silt (604) with charcoal inclusions 0.25m thick. Located in the north-west corner of the trench was a further area of stones (608) 1.1m by 1.1m and 0.10m thick, possibly representing wall collapse. Overlying layer (604) was a narrow layer of dark brown sandy clay silt (603) 0.05m thick used as levelling for a layer of stones (602) 0.18m thick occupying all of the trench and possibly representing a surface (Figure 32). Overlying layer (604) was a mid brown sandy clay silt subsoil layer (601). Sealing the trench was a dark brown clay silt turfed topsoil layer **(600)** 0.15m thick.

Figure 30. Site C Trench 1. Detail of ditch and post-hole.

Figure 31. Site C Trench 5 showing rubble below mortared foundations.

Figure 32. Site C Trench 6 showing compacted rubble surface at the south of the burial ground.

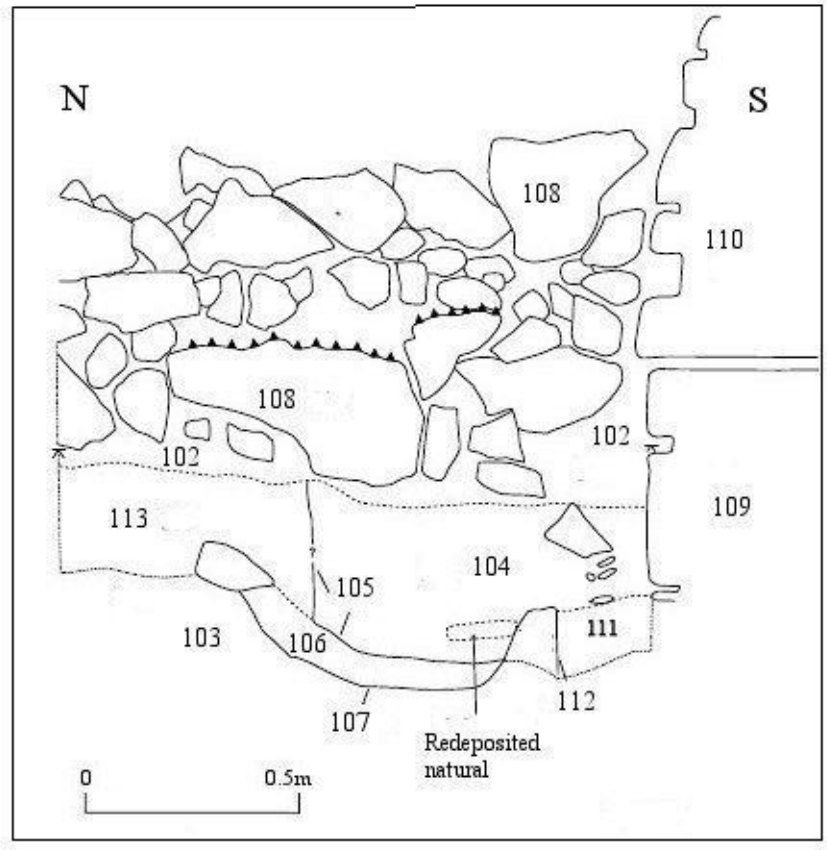

Figure 33. Site C Trench 1 west-facing section showing butt joint of field wall (left) against graveyard boundary wall (right) and ditch.

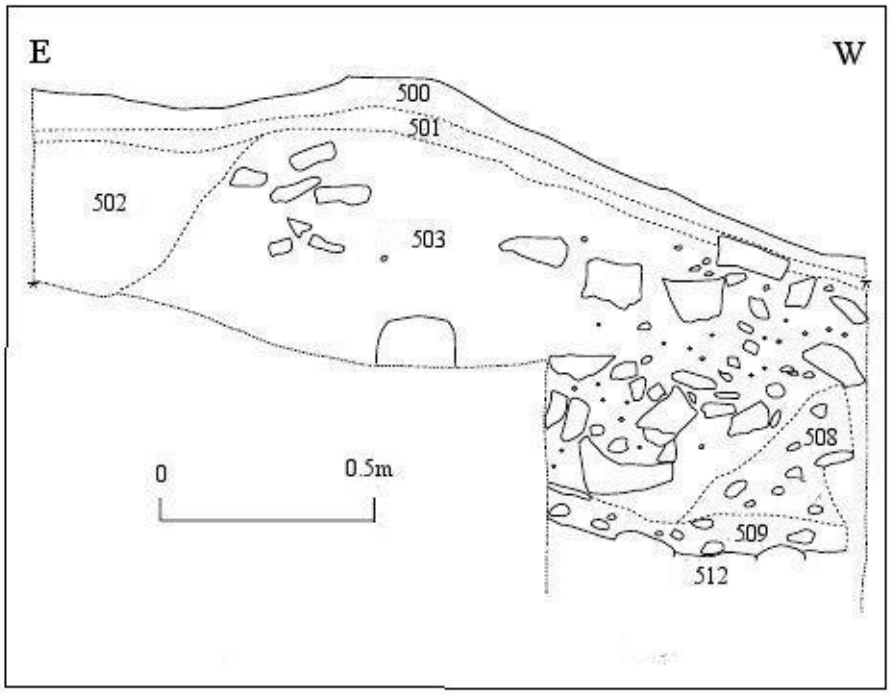

Figure 34. Site C Trench 5 showing north-facing section through collapsed field wall and earlier structural remains.

POTTERY REPORT

Ann MacSween

A pottery assemblage of 134 sherds of coarse pottery and 11 sherds of medieval pottery was recovered from the 2012 excavations on Eigg. The assemblage can be divided broadly into three main components – Neolithic, Iron Age and Medieval. The reuse of the site over time has resulted in many of the contexts producing a mixed assemblage.

Neolithic
A body sherd with a pronounced carination (V37), decorated above the carination with circular impressions, was recovered from context 606, the backfill of the ditch, pre-burial ground. The sherd is probably from a Neolithic round-based bipartite vessel. Sherds from a second round-based bowl with a 'closed' profile, decorated above the shoulder with small round stabs (V36), was recovered from context 805, the pit-fill of cairn 802.

V36 is probably from a bowl of the type known as a Beacharra bowl. These vessels are named after a vessel found during the excavation of a Clyde Group long cairn at Beacharra in Kintyre, Argyll (summary of the excavation results in Henshall (1972, 344-46 and illus on p302, ARG27.3). Other finds from the West Coast of Scotland include a bowl from the chambered tomb of Clachaig in Arran which has an inturned collar above a sharp carination and is decorated above and below the carination with incised lines and impressions. It was again recovered during the excavation of the chamber of a possible Neolithic long cairn of the Clyde group (summary of the excavation results in Henshall (1972, 390-391 and illus on p305, ARN16.I).

Sheridan (1995, 11) who summarized the dating for Beacharra bowls and related forms of bowls in France and Ireland concluded that the idea spread from north-west France to south-west Scotland and then to Ulster, then Leinster and Munster, between 4100-3350 cal BC (see also Sheridan 1995, 10, fig 2.3).

The profile of body sherd V37 also indicates a round-based bipartite bowl of Neolithic date though possibly a collared bowl with a straighter upper portion rather than a closed bowl.

Iron Age
Most of the assemblage comprises undecorated, well-fired sherds made from sandy clays and finished with a wet-hand smoothing. Where profiles could be determined some are from medium-walled vessels with a flaring rim – V33 – a plain rim from context 301 (layer associated with 19th century chapel restoration); V74 – a flat rim from context 801 (fill of cairn construction); V96 – a flat rim, V97 – a plain rim, and V98 – a flat rim from context 803 (pit fill of cairn 802).

One rim with more of an everted profile and a plain lip (V97) was recovered from context 803, the fill of cairn 802. This profile of the rim form is more characteristic of the middle

Iron Age, as is the combing on the interior of a body sherd from the same context.

One of the most detailed sequences for Iron Age pottery from the west coast is that from the site of Cnip wheelhouse on Lewis (Armit 2006) and the pottery from that site along with published sequences including those from Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree (Mackie 1974), the wheelhouses of Sollas, North Uist (Campbell 1991), and the complex Atlantic roundhouses at Dun Vulan, South Uist (Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999), has been used to construct an overall relative sequence for the area (see MacSween 2006).

From the available information, the flaring rims date from around 200-250AD from dating of the Cnip sequence (Armit 2006, 102) a date which concurs with Mackie's proposed date of AD 200 for the emergence of this type of rim in other parts of the Hebrides (MacKie 1974).

Medieval
Eleven sherds of identifiable medieval pottery were recovered from contexts 701 – silty overburden (three glazed sherds); 801 – fill of the cairn construction (two glazed sherds); 802 – cairn - (one glazed sherd), 803 – pit fill of cairn (one glazed sherd plus two unglazed sherds); and 812 – fill of cairn 807 (two glazed sherds).

In addition to these sherds it is possible that some of the pottery identified as Iron Age dates to the medieval period or later. As has been noted previously, medieval and later handthrown pottery from the Hebrides is difficult to characterise (Lane and Cowie 1997). The fabrics appear to change little from the later Iron Age through to the early twentieth century when handmade pottery was still being made on the domestic hearth (Cheape 1988). The possibility of a medieval date for 'undiagnostic' pottery from Hebridean sites such as Eigg must therefore remain a possibility (MacSween 2002) until a more detailed sequence for Hebridean pottery is established (Campbell 2002).

Summary of pottery by context

202 Mixed late deposits around chapel construction
One body sherd. Sandy clay.

301 Mixed make up layer associated with 19th chapel restoration
One flaring rim sherd (V33) with a plain lip from a necked vessel. Sandy clay.

603 Levelling layer over early burial ground
Body sherd from a Neolithic carinated vessel (V36) decorated above the carination with circular impressions. Sandy clay.

606 Back fill of ditch pre-burial ground
Decorated body sherd, from a carinated vessel, sandy fabric, broken in two.

701 Silty overburden
6 sherds (one broken in two). Three of the sherds (V7-9) are from medieval vessels, the

others are from handthrown vessels, with sandy fabrics which could be medieval but could be earlier.

702 Silty overburden
5 sherds from 5 vessels. All sandy or fine sandy clay some with c10% small quartz which could be natural to the clay. Two (V20 and V21) are from the necks of the vessel, one is from a rounded base (V18).

705 Small cist
9 sherds (one broken in two). All are handthrown, in sandy or fine sandy fabrics. One (V12) is possibly medieval. One (V40) has a slight shoulder and is possibly from a round-based bowl. Another has a possible cordon around its neck, decorated with vertical incisions.

706 Working cobbled surface
One small body sherd, sandy fabric.

801 Fill of cairn (802) construction
9 body sherds and a rim sherd (V74) from 10 vessels. The rim sherd is from a necked vessel with a flaring rim with a flat lip. The fabrics are sandy clay. In addition to the coarse pottery are two sherds of medieval pottery.

802 Cairn
36 body sherds, 1 fragment and one small rim sherd (V65) from 23 vessels. Most are sandy fabrics with no rock inclusions. 10% of small rock fragments were noted in 4 vessels (V42, V45, V48, V52) and organics in 3 vessels (V59, V60, V64). Most of the sherds were slightly abraded. One sherd is green-glazed medieval pottery. One of the sherds (V61) had combing on the interior surface.

803 Pit fill of cairn 802
44 sherds from 27 vessels. Three are medieval sherds (one glazed). Three of the vessels (all necked vessels) are represented by rims – two flaring rims with flat lips (V96 and V98) and one which is more everted with a plain lip (V97). Scraping to thin the vessel walls was noted on three vessels - V77, V87, V94 and combing was noted on the interior of one sherd (V86). Apart from one vessel (V88) which has organic temper, the vessels were either untempered sandy clay or had a small amount of larger fragments which could have been natural to the clay. The majority of the sherds were abraded.

805 Pit fill of cairn 802
Eight body sherds from one vessel, a Neolithic round-based, shouldered vessel decorated above the shoulder with round impressions. The fabric is sandy clay.

808 Mixed subsoils
One sherd from the flat part of a base with grass marks on the exterior.

810 Mixed subsoils
One sherd, from either the rounded base or shoulder of a vessel. Sandy clay with 10%

rock fragments. Interior combed.

811 Surface post-cairn 802
Five sherds, sandy fabrics, from five vessels. One has a small amount of larger fragments (V99). Three are from necked vessels. One (V4) has a perforation in the break of the sherd, just below the neck.

812 Fill of adjacent cairn 807
7 sherds body sherds from seven vessels. 2 are medieval – green-glazed. All sandy or fine sandy clay some with c10% small quartz which could be natural to the clay. One (V29) is from the base of a vessel. Another sherd (V30) has very thin walls (3mm).

828 Midden below cairn 802
One body sherd, sandy fabric, exterior sooted.

1001 Silty seal over burnt daub
3 body sherds from 3 vessels (one broken in two). All are fine sandy clay.

Bibliography

Anderson, A., O. 1922. *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500 to 1286* (Vol I). Edinburgh: Boyd.

Armit, I. 2006. *'Anatomy of an Iron Age Roundhouse'*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Campbell, E. 1991. 'Excavations of a wheelhouse and other Iron Age structures at Sollas, North Uist, by RJC Atkinson in 1957', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 121, 117-73.

Campbell, E. 2002. 'The Western Isles pottery sequence', in Ballin Smith, B. and Banks, I. (eds.), *In the Shadow of the Brochs*, Stroud (Tempus Publishing), 139-144.

Cheape, H. 1988. 'Food and liquid containers in the Hebrides: a window on the Iron Age', in Fenton, A. and Myrdal, J. (eds), *Food and drink and travelling accessories: essays in honour of Gosta Berg*, Edinburgh: ohn Donald/National Museums of Scotland/Skansen and Nordiska Museet, 6-27.

Dressler, C. 1998. *Eigg: the Story of an Island.* Edinburgh: Polygon.

Emeleus, C., H. 1997. *Geology of Rum and the Adjacent Islands* London: HMSO.

Fisher, I. 2001. *Early Medieval Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands*. Edinburgh: RCAHMS and Society of Antiquities of Scotland.

Henshall, A., S. 1972. *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland: Volume 2*. Edinburgh: EUP.

Hunter, J., R., Colls, K. and Collins, P. 2008. *Locating the Monastery of St. Donnan on Eigg*. Birmingham Archaeology, internal report, University of Birmingham.

Lane, A. and Cowie, T. 1997. 'Archaeological collections from sandhill sites in the Isle of Coll, Agyll and Bute', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 127, 467-511.

MacDonald, A. 1974. 'Two Major Early Monasteries of Scottish Dalriata: Lismore and Eigg', *Scottish Archaeological Forum* 5, 47-69.

MacKie, E., W. 1974. *Dun Mor Vaul Vaul. An Iron Age Broch on Tiree*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press.

MacSween, A. 2002. 'Dun Beag and the role of pottery in interpretations of the Hebridean Iron Age', in Ballin Smith, B. and Banks, I. (eds.), *In the Shadow of the Brochs*, Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 145-52.

MacPherson, N. 1878. 'Notes on the Antiquities from the Island of Eigg', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* Vol.12.

MacSween, A. 2006. 'Pottery' in Armit, I., *Anatomy of an Iron Age Roundhouse*, Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 88-131.

Martin, M. 1703. *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*. London: Andrew Bell.

Miers, M. 2008. *The Western Seaboard: an illustrated architectural guide*. Rutland Press.

NSA (= New Statistical Account). 1834 - 45. *The New Statistical Account.* XIV. Parish of Small Isles, Edinburgh.

OSA (= Old Statistical Account) 1791-99. Sir John Sinclair (ed). *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. XVIII Parish of Small Isles, Edinburgh.

Parker Pearson, M. and Sharples, N. 1999. *Between Land and Sea: Excavations at Dun Vulan, South Uist,* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Pennant, T. 1774. *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772*. Chester.

RCAHMS (= The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) 1928. *Ninth Report with Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles.* Edinburgh.

RCAHMS (= The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) 2003. *Eigg, The Archaeology of a Hebridean Landscape. RCAHMS Broadsheet 12.*

Sheridan, A. 1995.'Irish Neolithic pottery: the story in 1995', in Kinnes, I. and Varndell, G. (eds.) *'Unbaked Urns of Rudely Shape': Essays on British and Irish Pottery*, Oxford: Oxbow Monograph 55, 3-21.

Wade-Martins, S. 2004. *Eigg – An Island Landscape*. 4th edition. Countryside Publishing/P.W-M Heritage Management.

Wickham-Jones, C., R. 1990. *Rhum: Mesolith and later sites at Kinloch. Excavations 1984-86*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Monograph Series 7.