

Mr John Wood  
Archaeology Unit,  
Planning and Development Service,  
Council Offices,  
Glenurquhart Road,  
Inverness  
IV3 5NX

Our ref: Project: 3236  
1/2/02

Dear Mr Wood

Please find enclosed three copies of the George Wilson Road, Auldearn data structure report.  
I have as requested forwarded a copy to Norman Newton at the Libraries Support Unit.  
Should you have any queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Hunter Blair'.

Alan Hunter Blair

CR  
JW

✓ JW 5/2/02

**On behalf of:** The Henderson Group  
3 Balmakeith Industrial Estate  
Forres road  
Nairn

**AOC Archaeology Project No:** 3236

**NGR:** NH 922 550

**Prepared by:** Alan Hunter Blair

**Illustration:** Alan Hunter Blair

**Timing:** January 2002

**Enquiries to:** AOC Archaeology  
Edgefield Industrial Estate  
Edgefield Road  
Loanhead  
Midlothian  
EH20 9SY

*Tel.* 0131 440 3593  
*Fax.* 0131 440 3422  
*Email.* [admin@aocscot.co.uk](mailto:admin@aocscot.co.uk)

## 1 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological assessment on the site of a proposed housing development recorded a limited number of features dispersed across the western half of the study area. These included a large curvilinear pit, two small industrial pits, a small charcoal filled pit and rig and furrow cultivation remnants. A number of anomalies were also recorded by geophysical survey of cropmarks across the eastern side of the site, but no trace of these could be identified in the field by excavation.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 An archaeological assessment at George Wilson Road was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Ltd in advance of a proposed housing development by The Henderson Group. The assessment was carried out to a Project Brief supplied by Mr. John Wood, Senior Archaeologist to the Planning and Development Service, Highland Council.

### 2.2 Site description and location

- 2.2.1 The development area site overlooks a recent housing development immediately to the south of George Wilson Road, Auldearn, Nairn and comprises two undulating arable fields (centred NGR: NH 922 550), one fallow, the other currently under pasture. The total area of the site is 9 ha, of which approximately 4500 m<sup>2</sup> was assessed by trial trench evaluation.

## 3 METHODS

- 3.1 Prior to undertaking excavation, a preliminary inspection of the site was carried out by walk over survey in order to establish the presence and location of any up-standing remains. A geophysical survey comprising gradiometer scanning was undertaken by GSB Prospection (Geophysical Survey Report 2001/121) to investigate cropmark sites noted in aerial photographs and to locate any other archaeological features within the development area.
- 3.2 Subsequent trial trench excavation was conducted over a 5% sample of the total development area. Most of the trenches were targeted over anomalies recorded by the geophysical survey, such as the large curvilinear pit recorded in Trenches 5 and 6, while others were randomly located in order to sample all parts of the assessment area.

3.3 All trenches were machine-excavated to drift (0.35 m-1.7 m deep) under archaeological supervision. Within the trenches (trench summary in Appendix 1), archaeological features were recorded photographically (colour print and slide film, Appendix 2) and were drawn in plan and section at scales of 1:20 or 1:10, as appropriate (Appendix 3). A full description of all excavated contexts is presented in Appendix 2. Samples from excavated features were retained for possible characterisation of their macroscopic inclusions and for characterisation of soil type (Appendix 5). The extent of the assessment trenches and the locations of all individual features were recorded by instrument survey using a total station. Appendix 6 contains a copy of the *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* entry.

#### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

4.1 No confirmed archaeological sites were known to exist within the development area prior to the assessment. Nonetheless, several types of evidence suggested that the site presented a high archaeological potential.

4.2 Cropmarks identifiable on vertical aerial photographs have been recorded in the *Local Sites and Monuments Record*. These suggest the presence of a possible souterrain and early field systems.

4.3 The assessment area lies on land surrounded by archaeological features. Standing stones and cairns are situated a short distance to the east. In Auldearn the earthworks of a medieval motte are located at the north-western edge of the village. The Battle of Auldearn took place in 1645 on land to the south-west of the village.

#### 5. RESULTS

5.1 The evaluation was carried out between 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2002 in clement weather conditions. A number of features were recorded within the field located in the western half of the development area (Figure 1). Patches of rig and furrow cultivation remnants (Figure 6) were visible in all the trenches in this part of the assessment area. These were removed by machine during topsoil stripping to check for earlier activity on the site, although a sample excavation of these remains was carried out in Trench 2. Two small industrial pits were recorded in Trench 4 (Figure 4), and a large curvilinear pit (Figures 2 and 5) and a small charcoal rich pit (Figure 3) were excavated in Trench 5. Modern ploughmarks had visibly cut natural sand and gravel along areas where shallow topsoil was encountered. No archaeological features were seen in the field occupying the eastern half of the development area.

## 5.2 Rig and furrow cultivation remnants

5.2.1 Rig and furrow cultivation was represented in the assessment area by linear geophysical anomalies. Trial trenching revealed furrow remnants in the form of shallow, broad, sandy loam fills (see [201], Figure 6) circa 1.5 m wide and up to 0.15 m deep. They were visible in Trenches 1-12 and were aligned northwest to southeast across the site. Where they were recorded in series, they occurred at intervals which corresponded to a ridge-width of around 3-4 m. These rig furrows evidently formed part of an open field agricultural regime, although the lack of datable material recovered during excavation makes it difficult to tell when this was established. However, the rig and furrow remnants recorded here are likely to belong to the narrow rig group, common around highland townships towards the end of the eighteenth century (Halliday 2001,10). It is certain this, as well as modern ploughing, has levelled, or at least modified, any evidence of earlier settlement.

## 5.3 Industrial pits (Trench 4)

5.3.1 Two small, slag-filled sub-circular pits, [401] and [402], set 0.5 m apart and each measuring 0.42 m in diameter by 0.20 m and 0.12 m deep respectively were recorded in Trench 4 (Figure 4). The pits contained an upper fill of black, loose silty sand with frequent inclusions of slag [404] and [407] overlying heat affected clay [403] and [406] lining the sides of each pit. Two bands of heat affected natural sand [405] and [408] were found immediately surrounding the pits. Two factors combine to suggest that the pits were in use for a single event of short duration:

- a) the slag rich fills consisted principally of large fragments and did not appear to have been disturbed by emptying, maintenance or re-use;
- b) there was no evidence of collapse or weathering in the sides of the cut.

5.3.2 Given the high concentration of slag within the fills of the pits it can be assumed they are associated with some type of industrial activity on the site. Trench 4 was expanded at this point to extend over an additional 54 m<sup>2</sup> but no further remains were found.

## 5.4 Curvilinear pit (Trenches 5 and 6)

5.4.1 A large curvilinear pit [601] measuring 17 m long by 4 m wide by 1.4 m deep was recorded in Trenches 5 and 6 (Figures 2 and 5). This feature coincided with the position of a geophysical anomaly tentatively ascribed as being a possible souterrain. The feature contained three fills of loamy gravel and sands [603], [604] and [605] which overlay a basal fill of black, silty, organic rich sand [602]

0.05 m-0.10 m in depth. The presence of the organic layer at the base of the pit suggests that it remained open for some time before in-filling occurred. Excavation of these fills has produced no obvious evidence in the form of domestic debris, artefacts or industrial material to indicate the function or period of the pit. Despite its proximity, the absence of industrial material suggests that this pit is unrelated to the two small pits recorded in Trench 4.

## **5.5 Charcoal filled pit (Trench 5)**

- 5.5.1 A small, sub-circular, charcoal filled pit [502] (Figure 3) was recorded in Trench 5. The pit contained a shallow fill of dark brown sand with frequent small rounded cobbles and charcoal. This may represent the remains of a plough-truncated hearth. The trench was subsequently extended over an area of circa 50 m<sup>2</sup> around the pit but no further features were observed.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 A limited number of features were recorded across the western part of the development area during the assessment. With the exception of the rig and furrow remnants no period was determined for the features excavated during the evaluation. The sub-circular pits ([401] & [402]) obviously denote some form of small scale industrial processing. The function of pit [601] is unknown other than it apparently required the pit to be left open for a period of time.
- 6.2 No archaeological features were found in any of the trenches located across the eastern part of the site corresponding to anomalies recorded by geophysical survey.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 In general, the features were neither extensive, nor well preserved nor was any great antiquity immediately apparent. The isolated character of the features was established by the excavation of supplementary or expanded trenches at a number of points, which all proved unrewarding.
- 7.2 The evaluation has shown the development area to possess minimal archaeological potential. It is unlikely that further fieldwork will add to the data set elucidated above and therefore this report is considered an adequate archive of the archaeological record in this land parcel. No further fieldwork is therefore recommended.

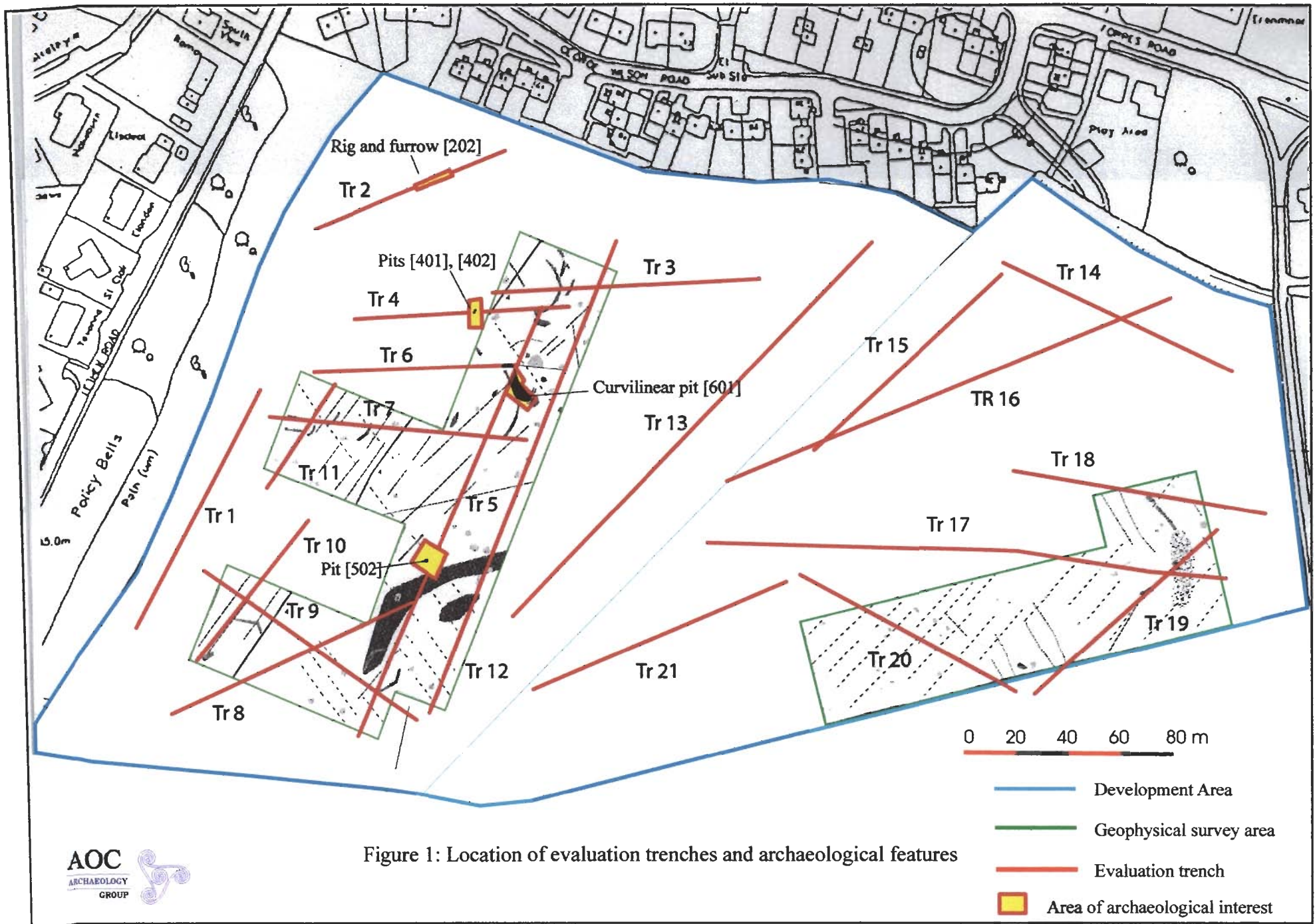


Figure 1: Location of evaluation trenches and archaeological features

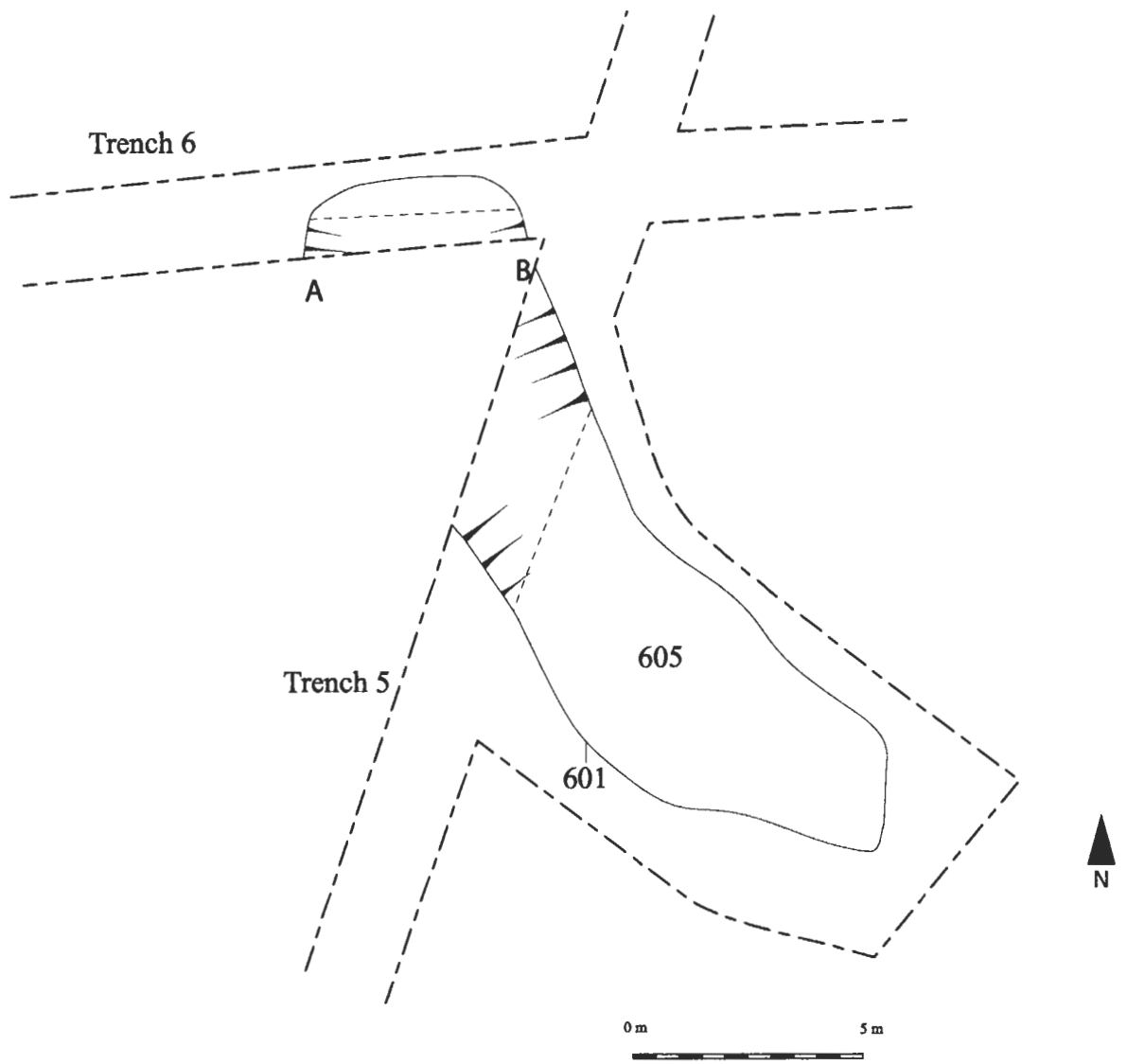
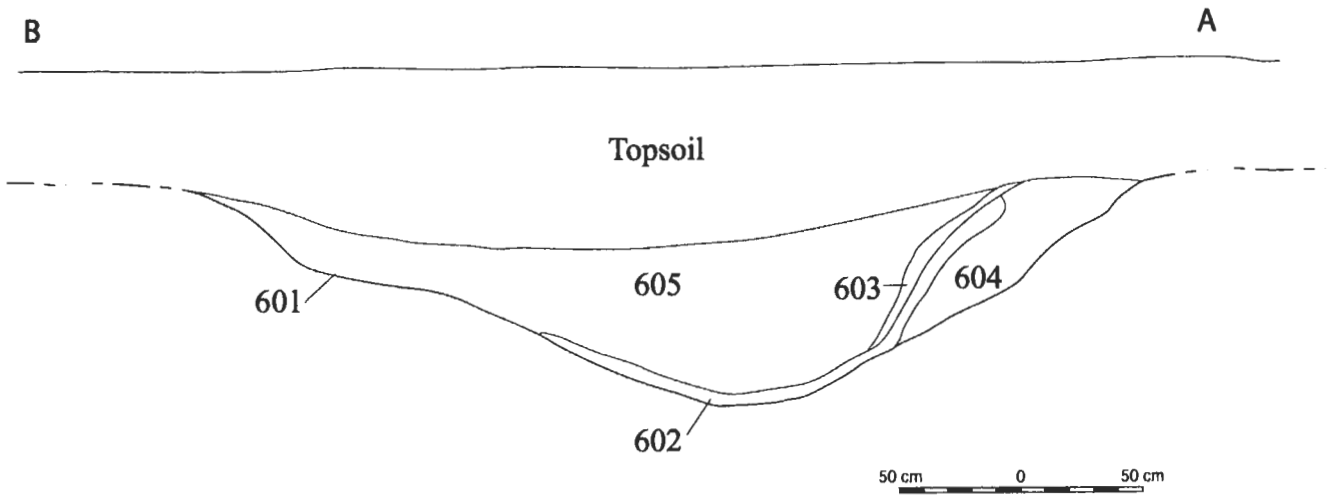
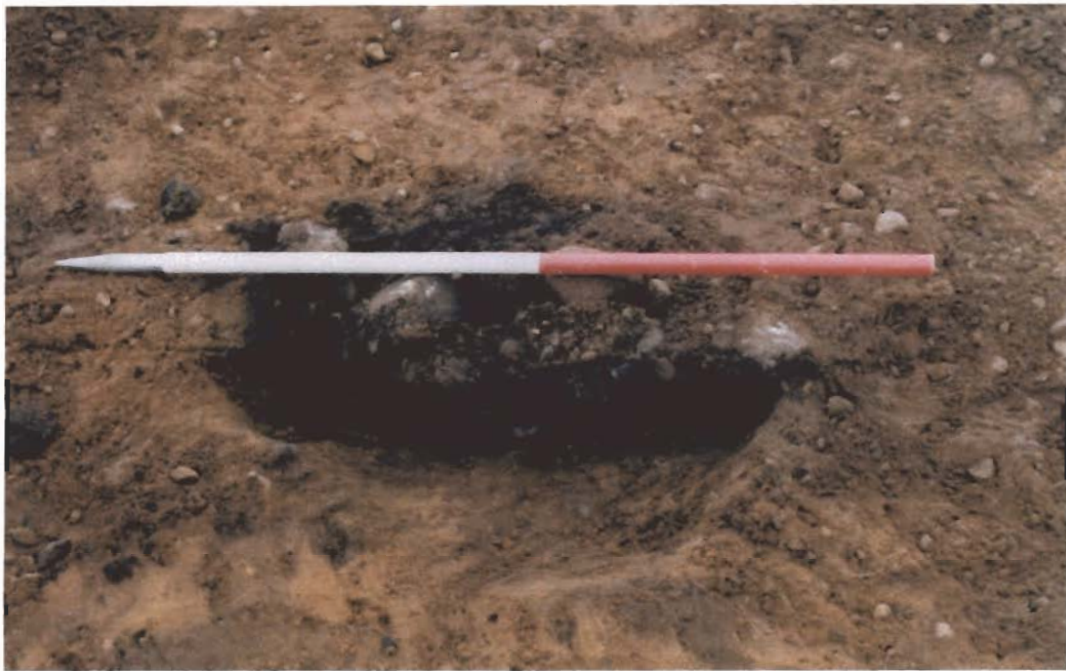
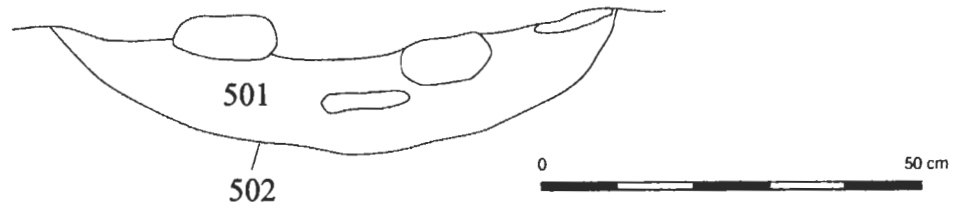


Figure 2: North-facing section and plan of curvilinear pit [601]





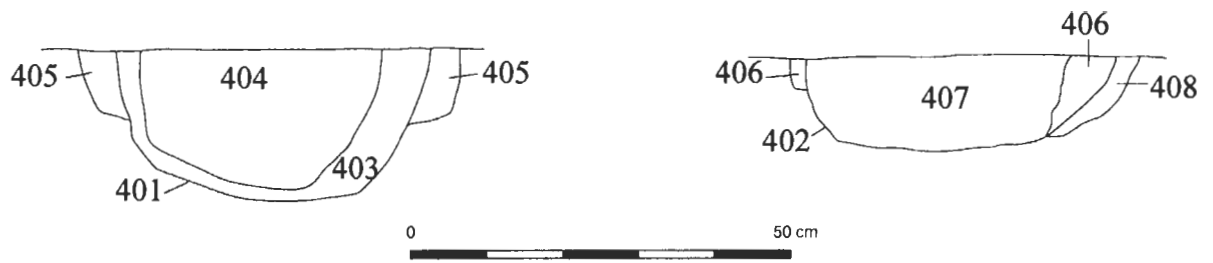


Figure 4: East-facing section through pits [401] and [402] trench 4







Figure 6: Rig and furrow remnants [202] trench 2 and general shot of site from the south-east

GEORGE WILSON ROAD, AULDEARN: DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GSB Prospection, 2001 *Geophysical Survey Report 2001/121*.

Halliday, S. 2001 Rig and Furrow in Scotland. In Barber, J. (ed) *Guidelines for the Preservation of Areas of Rig and Furrow in Scotland*. Scottish Trust for Archaeological Research .

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

<i>No.</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Extensions</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Features</i>
1	North to south	100 m x 1.9 m	None	0.5 m-0.75 m	Rig and furrow
2	South-west to north-east	83 m x 2 m	None	0.5 m-1.25 m	Rig and furrow
3	East to west	100 m x 1.9 m	None	0.35 m-1.2 m	Rig and furrow
4	East to west	78 m x 2 m	46 m <sup>2</sup>	0.35 m-1.5 m	Rig and furrow, Two small industrial pits [401] and [402]
5	North to south	170 m x 2 m	63 m <sup>2</sup> 75 m <sup>2</sup>	0.35 m-0.85 m	Rig and furrow, pits 502 and 601
6	East to west	92 m x 2 m	None	0.35 m-0.40 m	Rig and furrow, pit 601
7	East to west	95 m x 2 m	None	0.3 m-0.7 m	Rig and furrow
8	North-east to south-west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.5 m-1.2 m	Rig and furrow
9	East to west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.5 m-0.75 m	Rig and furrow
10	North to south	68 m x 2 m	None	0.6 m-1.1 m	Rig and furrow
11	North to south	40 m x 2 m	None	0.6 m-0.7 m	Rig and furrow
12	North to south	195 m x 2 m	None	0.35 m-1.1 m	Rig and furrow
13	North to south	200 m x 2 m	None	0.4 m-1.1 m	None
14	East to west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.3 m-0.8 m	None
15	North to south	100 m x 2 m	None	0.8 m-1.2 m	None

GEORGE WILSON ROAD, AULDEARN: DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

16	North-east to southwest	200 m x 2 m	None	0.5 m-1.6 m	None
17	East to west	200 m x 2 m	None	0.35 m-1.4 m	None
18	East to west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.5 m-1.1 m	None
19	North-east to south-west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.45 m-1.1 m	None
20	East to west	100 m x 2 m	None	0.2 m-1.3 m	None
21	North-east to south-west	100 m x 2 m	None	1.1 m-1.7 m	None

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT REGISTER

<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Trench</i>
201	Deposit: A mid-brown soft silty sand, with occasional inclusions of small sub-rounded stones. Shallow fills aligned north-west to south-east intermittently traverse the western half of the site at intervals of circa 1.5 m. Measured 2 m wide, by 0.1 m deep, excavated over a distance of 2 m. Interpreted as broad rig furrow remnant.	2
202	Cut: Furrow cut, a broad shallow linear cut, measured 2 m wide, 0.1 m deep.	2
401	Pit cut: A small, circular pit with steep straight sides that descended into a slightly rounded base. Measured 0.42 m in diameter, 0.2 m deep.	4
403	Deposit: A greyish yellow sandy clay heat affected and found lining the side of cut 401. Measured 0.06 m around the edges of the pit and 0.02 m at the base of the pit.	4
404	Deposit: A black, loose, silty sand containing frequent inclusions of slag. Measured 0.3 m diameter, 0.18 m deep. Interpreted as fill of pit [401].	4
405	A band of heat reddened natural sand, circumscribing pit [401]. Measured 0.04 m wide.	4
402	Pit cut: A small, sub-circular pit with steep slightly sloping sides that descended into a slightly rounded base. 0.42 m diameter and 0.12 m deep.	4
406	Deposit: A greyish-yellow sandy clay, heat affected, and found lining the side of cut [402]. Measured 0.08 m wide around the edges of the pit, although here no evidence was found of this at the base of the pit.	4
407	Deposit: A black, loose, silty sand containing frequent inclusions of slag. Interpreted as fill of pit [402]. Measured 0.28 m diameter, 0.12 m deep.	4
408	A band of heat reddened natural sand, circumscribing pit [402]. Measured 0.06 m wide.	4
501	Deposit: A dark brown silty sand with frequent lumps of charcoal,	5

GEORGE WILSON ROAD, AULDEARN: DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

	rounded cobbles <0.1 m and small rounded stones. Interpreted as base of hearth filling cut [502].	
502	Pit cut: Sub-circular in plan with shallow sloping sides that break gently to form a wide slightly rounded base. Measured 0.72 m diameter, 0.17 m deep.	5
503	As 601	5/6
601	Curvilinear pit cut: A large curvilinear kidney shaped pit in plan, with moderately sloping sides which break gently to form a narrow rounded base in profile. Measured 3.6 m wide, 1.4 m deep (from surface) and 17 m in length.	5/6
602	Deposit: A soft, black, silty sand with moderate inclusions of small rounded pebbles and a high content of organic material. Measured 0.05 m-0.1 m deep. Interpreted as basal fill of pit [601].	5/6
603	Deposit: A lens of soft yellow sand with occasional inclusions of small sub-rounded cobbles and small stones. Measured 0.1 m deep. Interpreted as possible slumping part filling pit [601].	5/6
604	Deposit: A dark brown sand with moderate inclusions of small rounded pebbles. Measured 0.15 m-0.2 m deep. Interpreted as layer filling pit [601].	5/6
605	Deposit: A mid-brown sand with moderate inclusions of rounded and sub-rounded stones and cobbles. Measured 0.5 m deep. Interpreted as fill of pit [601].	5/6

APPENDIX 3: DRAWING REGISTER

<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Scale</i>
1	South-facing section through rig and furrow [202] trench 2	1:20
2	East-facing section through pit [401] in Trench 4	1:10
3	East-facing section through pit [402] in Trench 4	1:10
4	East-facing section through pit [502] in Trench 5	1:10
5	Plan of half sectioned pit [502] in Trench 5	1:10
6	North-facing section through pit cut 601 Trench 6	1:20
7	Pre-ex plan of pit [401] in Trench 4	1:10
8	Pre-ex plan of pit [402] in Trench 4	1:10

APPENDIX 4: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>From</i>
1	Registration	
2-3	General site location	S
4-5	Pre-ex of pit [401]	S
6-7	Pre-ex of pit [402]	S
8-9	Modern service trench in Trench 2	SW
10-11	Rig and furrow [202]	SW

GEORGE WILSON ROAD, AULDEARN: DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

12-13	Rig and furrow [202]	S
14-15	Modern plough marks, Trench 3	W
16-17	General Trench 3	E
18-19	General Trench 2	SW
20-21	General trench 1	S
22-23	East facing section through pit [401]	E
24-25	East facing section through pit [402]	E
26-27	East facing section through pit [502]	E
28-29	Northern terminus of curvilinear pit [601]	S
30-31	Northern terminus of curvilinear pit [601]	N
32-33	East facing section through curvilinear pit [601]	E
34-35	East facing section through curvilinear pit [601]	SW
36-37	Eastern terminus of curvilinear pit 601] in progress	E
38-41	Eastern terminus of curvilinear pit [601]	E
42-43	East facing section through curvilinear pit [601]	SE
44-45	Half sectioned pits [401] and [402]	E
46	Location of pits [401] and [402]	SW
47	General Trench 6	E
48	General Trench 13	S
49	General Trench 12	S
50-51	General shot of western half of site	S
52-53	General shot of section Trench 16	E
54	General Trench 16	SW
55-56	General eastern side of development area	N
57	General Trench 15	SW
58-59	General site eastern half of development area	SW
60	General Trench 18	E
61	General Trench 19	NW
62	Eastern half of development area	SE
63	General Trench 20	SE
64	Trench 21 working shot	NE

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE REGISTER

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Trench</i>
404	Pit fill	4
403	Pit fill	4
407	Pit fill	4
406	Pit fill	4
501	Pit fill	5
602	Pit fill	6
603	Pit fill	6
604	Pit fill	6
605	Pit fill	6



GEORGE WILSON ROAD, AULDEARN: DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

APPENDIX 6: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Highland
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	George Wilson Road, Auldearn.
<b>PARISH:</b>	Auldearn
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	A. Hunter Blair
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	AOC Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Archaeological evaluation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	None
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Rig & furrow; small industrial processing pits; alleged souterrain
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NH 922 550
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	January 2002
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	January 2002
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	Geophysical survey
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation to investigate an alleged souterrain on the site of a 9 ha proposed housing development recorded a limited number of features dispersed over the western half of the study area. These included a large curvilinear pit, (the alleged souterrain), two small industrial pits, a small charcoal filled pit and rig and furrow cultivation remnants. A number of anomalies were also recorded by geophysical survey of cropmarks across the eastern side of the site but no trace of these could be identified in the field by excavation.
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	AOC 3236
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	The Henderson Group, Nairn
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Edgefield road Industrial estate, Edgefield Road, Loanhead, Midlothian, EH20 9SY
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	National Monuments Record of Scotland