

Northern Picts: Rhynie Environs

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INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Northern Picts is a broad and ambitious project facilitating the investigation of a wide range of sites dating to the first millennium AD that aim to shed new light on big picture questions such as the processes of state formation in Scotland in the late- and post-Roman period. The Rhynie Environs Archaeology Project (REAP) is a key case study within the Northern Picts project and is a collaborative project between the Universities of Aberdeen, Chester and Glasgow and the local community artist collective Rhynie Woman. Work at the Craw Stane complex at Rhynie since 2011 has identified a major power centre of the Northern Picts at Rhynie with unique evidence for large-scale metalwork production, Mediterranean and Continental imports and rare traces of Pictish architecture and settlement evidence in Mainland Scotland. Over the period 2017-19 the Rhynie project aims to contextualize the key evidence uncovered at the excavations at the Craw Stane, Barflat within the wider landscape setting of the upper Strathbogie valley through excavation and dating of three further fortified sites and wider landscape survey.

Previous work at Barflat, Rhynie has set in context a unique collection of Class I Pictish symbol stones found around and within the village. Previous investigations have focused on the area immediately around the Craw Stane, which still stands in or near its original location revealing a fortified complex of the 4th-6th centuries AD. Work closer to the village has also revealed a contemporary cemetery. However, to date there is little evidence to suggest how the Craw Stane complex and cemetery sat within the wider Strathbogie landscape. There are two small defended sites at Cairnmore and Wheedlemont and the spectacular fort at Tap O'Noth within a 5 km radius of the Craw Stane. With the exception of very limited work at Cairnmore there has been no detailed archaeological investigation of these sites. Evaluation by Murray Cook as part of the Strathdon hillforts project established that Cairnmore had at least one 5th-6th century phase of activity at a small enclosure complex on a hillslope location that overlooks Rhynie. However, the chronology for the site rests on only two radiocarbon dates and nothing is known of what the ramparts at the site enclosed – was this a domestic settlement contemporary with the high status enclosures at the Craw Stane? Morphologically, Wheedlemont is similar to the site at Cairnmore and a very limited number of investigated sites in Aberdeenshire that have been dated to the Pictish period. Nonetheless,

morphology alone cannot be used as a definitive guide to dating or function and no previous work has been carried out at this site. Tap O'Noth is an oblong fort that has been broadly (though insecurely) dated to the earlier Iron Age at sites such as Dunnideer, Aberdeenshire. However, it is a type of fort that was re-used in the Pictish period at sites such as Craig Phadrig, Inverness-shire. The possibilities for reconstructing the long-term development of the Strathbogie landscape as a key study in the processes of state formation from the Iron Age- early medieval period is very strong in the Rhynie environs. Through further work within the Rhynie landscape we can begin to address the formation of the early kingdoms of Pictland, a process that was central to the creation of the medieval state of Scotland.

This document sets out proposals for excavations at Cairnmore, Wheedlemont and Tap O'Noth in the season 2017-18 and to complete the investigation of a unique assemblage of metalworking production uncovered in 2016-17 at the Craw Stane complex.

Early Pictish metalworking evidence at Rhynie (Figure 3)

Our chronologies for the development of Insular art of the early medieval period are very insecure, relying on art history in most cases rather than absolute dating. This is particularly true for the 3rd-6th centuries AD where sites across Scotland are particularly difficult to identify. In 2016 a section of the outer ditch dug within Trench 1 at the Craw Stane complex at Rhynie identified a rich assemblage of metalworking evidence from smelting to production of the final objects. Metalworking evidence is known from across the site including spectacular finished objects such as the Rhynie axe pin or other dress accessories. Other areas with moulds have been identified on site. The Trench 1 assemblage is thus not exceptional in terms of finds, but the range of evidence is. It includes crucible stands, ingot moulds, dozens of crucible sherds and moulds for hand pins and other high status objects – the Trench 1 assemblage appears to be the product of a discrete dump of metalworking material from a workshop or similar context. The assemblage provides the first well contextualized and potentially best dated metalworking production assemblage in the whole of Britain – a snapshot in time of a Pictish metalworkers workshop(s).

In 2016 the sondages through this area of the outer ditch was left unfinished due to the unexpected complexity of deposits and density of finds. Thus there are significant opportunities for completing the excavation of this sondage to provide additional stratigraphic dating for the metalwork assemblage and to test a wider area around to explain the presence of this metalworking dump in this particular location – was it cleaned out from a metalworking workshop? Can we find metalworking furnaces or a workshop to explain this particular dump? Was the assemblage dumped

in one event as part of the closure of the wider complex or is it residue from repeated episodes of metalworking? Completion of the 2016 sondage and investigation of a small area around will provide the first full evidence for early medieval metalworking in the whole of Pictland, a very detailed stratigraphic analysis that will allowed accurate chronologies to be built, and a unique snapshot of metalwork production in post-Roman Britain.

Cairnmore, Wheedlemont and Tap O'Noth

The three forts at Cairnmore, Wheedlemont and Tap O'Noth represent a distinct concentration of enclosed sites in this area of western Aberdeenshire. At royal sites in Ireland there is clear evidence for settlement agglomeration in the vicinity of royal centres. A landscape approach to the wider context of the Craw Stane complex will provide the first opportunity to address the nature of settlement hierarchies within Pictland and will provide a key case study in the longer-term development of the landscape of Scotland from the Iron Age to early medieval period. The project will involve investigation of three enclosed sites at Cairnmore, Wheedlemont and Tap O'Noth. Cairnmore (NMRS 17723) is a small fort that overlooks Rhynie village, southeast of the Craw Stane complex. The fort is enclosed by three ramparts and encloses an area around 50 by 40 m. Work by Murray Cook at Cairnmore was evaluative in nature and tested the nature of the ramparts with very limited work in the interior. Radiocarbon dates of the 5th-6th centuries AD were obtained from the evaluation. Wheedlemont (also known as Cnoc Cailliche; NMRS 17215) is a simpler enclosure with a single rampart and ditch surrounding a low hilltop to the west of the Craw Stane complex. The rampart encloses an area around 50 x 30 m. Wheedlemont was grouped morphologically by the 2007 RCAHMS survey with the Craw Stane enclosure and Maiden Castle, near Bennachie, both of which have been shown to have 5th-6th century AD Pictish phases, but no work has been carried out at this site. Tap O'Noth is the second highest hillfort in Scotland, lying at a height of 563 m OD, and is located on a hill that overlooks Rhynie to the northwest. The fort comprises an oval vitrified enclosure summit that encloses an area 85 x 30 m and a stone wall further down the hill that encloses an area of some 16.4 hectares. Both forts are unexplored archaeologically. Hundreds of house platforms and/or quarries are contained within the lower rampart of Tap O'Noth.

NATURE OF THE PROPOSED WORK

The proposed archaeological works outlined below, aim to provide one small trench at the Craw Stane complex to complete the investigation of the metalworking dump uncovered in 2016 and a wider programme of work to more fully characterize the wider landscape context of the Craw Stane enclosures at Rhynie. This will involve evaluation at two scheduled sites (Wheedlemont and Tap

O'Noth) and larger-scale investigation of the unscheduled site at Cairnmore. The project aims to address a number of key research questions:

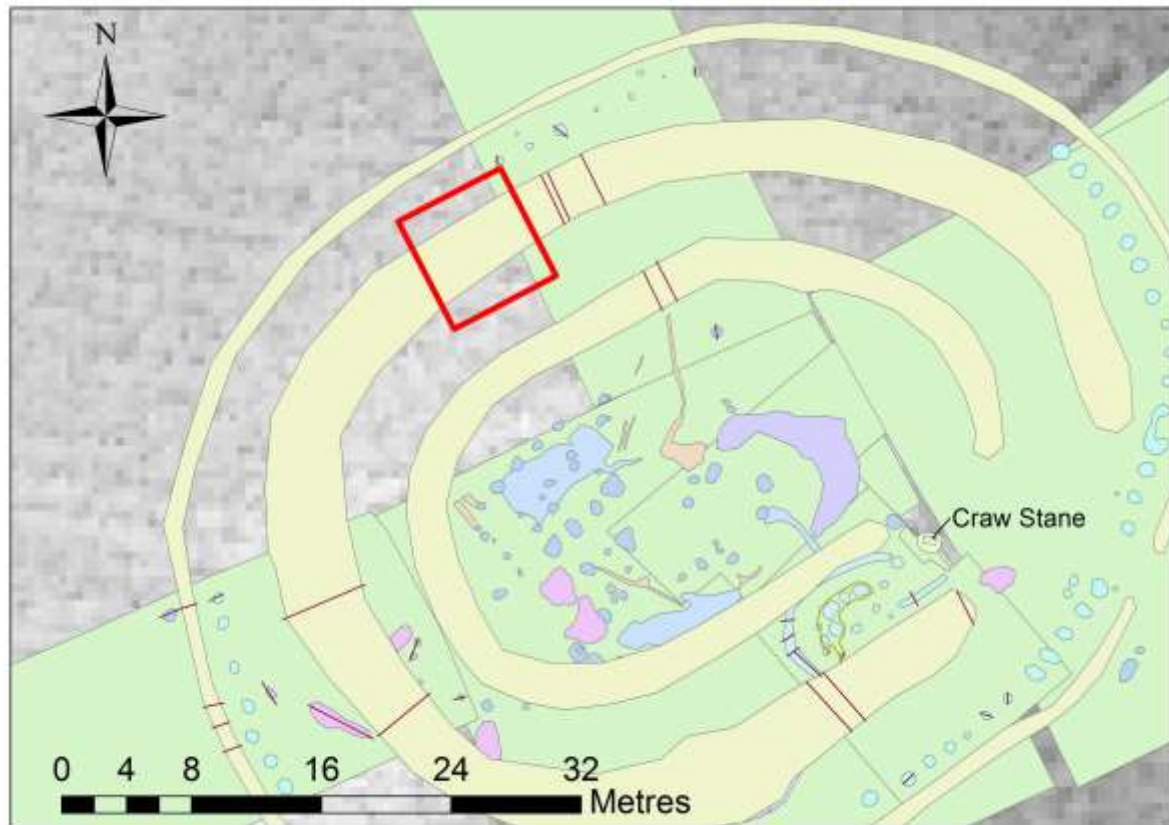
- How was metalwork production at the Craw Stane complex organized? Can we identify any structures that explain the discrete dump(s) of metalwork production evidence that was revealed in this part of Trench 1 during the 2016 excavation?
- Was the enclosure complex at the Craw Stane part of a larger landscape of power that encompassed the upper Strathbogie region?
- Did the Rhynie landscape resemble royal landscapes in early medieval Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England that were polyfocal in nature with contemporary sites existing within a complex settlement hierarchy?
- How did the landscape of Strathbogie develop from the Iron Age to early medieval period? Is there evidence of continuity or was the Pictish central place at Rhynie built to reference an earlier Iron Age regional centre as a means of symbolically legitimizing new forms of rulership?
- Was metalworking production restricted to the Rhynie complex or was it a practice found at other sites in the wider landscape?
- What can the Strathbogie evidence tell us about wider processes of state formation in early Scotland?
- How did the Craw Stane complex relate chronologically and functionally to sites such as Tap O'Noth, Wheedlemont and Cairnmore forts? Did focus at the Craw Stane complex in the 4th-6th centuries AD shift focus to Tap O'Noth as might be suggested from the dating evidence from sites such as Craig Phadrig? Or did the elite focus on this wider landscape end in the 6th century AD and move to other locations within Northern Pictland?
- How can this series of sites help tell us illuminate the crucial narrative surrounding state formation in early Scotland?

PROPOSED WORK AND RATIONALE

Craw Stane Enclosures (SM69; new SMC application needed; Canmore 17199, 281408). 2016 Trench 1 reopening/extension

From 2011-16 the Craw Stane complex was evaluated through a programme of strip, map and record. Through this approach the archaeology of the complex has been characterized for the first time revealing a complex and rich picture of a high status Pictish centre of northern Pictland. The strip and map exercise left over 90% of the archaeological deposits in situ. No further large-scale

work at the complex is proposed, the evaluation having addressed all research questions that were put forward in the research designs developed for each season of exaction. However, one targeted trench is proposed to address a particular assemblage of artefacts that were revealed during the 2016 season.



Location of the Rhynie 2017 trench

One area of the outer ditch sampled in Trench 1 produced an unprecedented assemblage of metalworking evidence of the character not previously seen in Pictland and exceptionally rare within early medieval sites across Britain and Ireland – a detailed assemblage of metalwork production from furnace linings to tuyère fragments to crucibles to moulds with objects of a character previously not known from Pictland. The evidence will allow the stages of metalwork production carried out in an early medieval centre of production to be analysed in a manner not previously possible. Dating the assemblage will also illuminate the very poor object chronologies we have across Britain and Ireland in this time period with the dating of key Insular artefact objects very insecurely resolved at present. The ditch section was not completed in 2016, but further excavation will allow us to much more accurately record the stratigraphy of the metalworking assemblage and to more fully contextualize its discovery. In 2017 we propose to re-open a small area of Trench 1 and to go slightly beyond the limits of the 2016 trench to assess the limits of the assemblage and to

identify any possible structures or production evidence that may explain the dump of material in this area of the trench. The trench will be c. 8 x 8 m and will cover the sections that were partially excavated in 2016 and an area to the southeast to test the extent of the metalworking dump and an area on the inside edge of the outer ditch to test for the presence/absence of structures that may explain the metalworking deposits found in this sector of the outer ditch.

Research questions specific to Trench 1 re-opening/extension:

1. What was the extent of the metalworking dump(s) identified in the 2016 season? Was this a discrete episode of dumping or was there repeated episodes?
2. What can we tell about the sequences of metalwork production and specialisation of technologies at this Pictish centre of production?
3. What is the dating of key early medieval object types such as hand-pins, brooches, etc? The combination of site stratigraphy and Bayesian modelling of dates can produce our first secure chronologies for this key period in the history of Scotland
4. What kind of objects and metals were being worked at the complex?
5. What does the metalworking evidence tell us about the function of the Craw Stane complex?
6. Were there any structures, e.g. metalworking workshops or furnaces located on the interior side of the outer enclosure that may explain the distinctive dump(s) of metalworking evidence in this area?

Wheedlemont (SM11681; SMC application in process; Canmore 17215) and Cairnmore (not scheduled; Canmore 17723)

One major lacuna for Pictland and early medieval Scotland more generally is the difficulty in tracing settlement hierarchies which make questions of state formation difficult to address. In Aberdeenshire, for example, apart from major fortified sites such as Rhynie, Cullykhan and Dunnicaer, the settlement evidence consists of isolated and highly truncated features (Ralston 2004). Hence our understanding of the wider settlement patterns of Northeast Scotland in the early medieval period is very poor. Excavations by Murray Cook as part of the Strathdon Hillforts project uncovered a handful of other sites such as more modest enclosed sites at Maiden Castle, Bennachie and Cairnmore, Rhynie (Cook 2011). This has led to the suggestion that one important class of Pictish settlement site may be small ringfort-type enclosures of the type occasionally dated to the early medieval period elsewhere in Scotland (Noble et al. 2013: 1150). However, the number of sites investigated remains frustratingly small and insufficient to draw wider conclusions and our

knowledge of what the ramparts of these sites actually enclosed is almost totally absent with no detailed investigation of site interiors. In the Rhynie environs two of these smaller enclosures exist at Wheedlemont and Rhynie. In order to address the nature, chronology and social dynamics of the smaller enclosed sites excavation of these two sites is proposed and application has been made to test a small number of sites outside of the Rhynie area to address more regional questions of settlement hierarchy and site dating. At Wheedlemont evaluative trenches will be excavated to assess site chronology. At Cairnmore we propose to open a more significant proportion of the interior of the unscheduled site. Murray Cook's work has produced outline dating, but little in the way of exploring site function/status, etc.

Wheedlemont

Three trenches are proposed and SMC is in process for this site (Figure 1). The trenches will comprise one at the entranceway (c.3 x 5 m), one in the interior (5 x 5 m) and one across the ramparts and ditch (6 x 2 m). These trenches would provide a basic chronology for the enclosure system through obtaining samples for dating, will verify the entranceway and will test the interior for structural evidence. The position of these trenches would be partly determined by the results of resistivity survey.

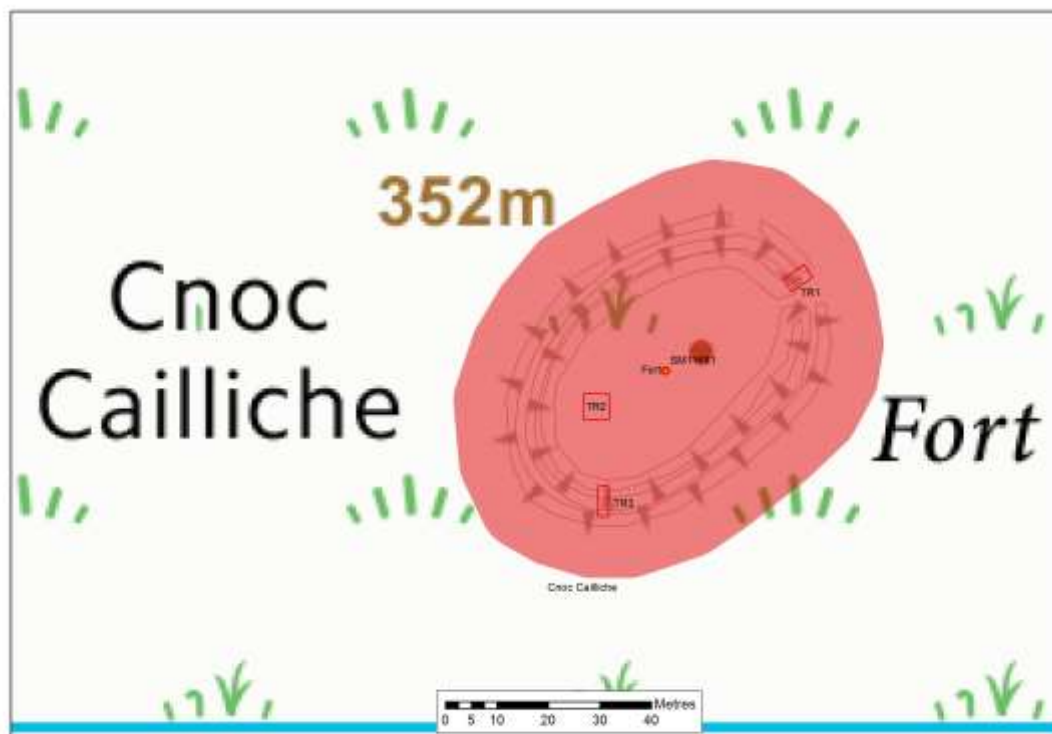


Figure 1 Location of trenches at Wheedlemont



Figure 2: Aerial photograph of the fort at Cairnmore © HES/Ian B M Ralston Aberdeen Archaeological Surveys

At Cairnmore (Fig.2) a large trench (c.20 by 20 m) targeting the enclosure interior will be excavated to provide the first larger-scale attempt to characterize the function of these smaller enclosed sites of Northeast Scotland. The trench will be placed according to ground conditions and will aim to uncover any ground plans of buildings within the enclosure and map activity zones within the enclosure boundaries.

Research questions specific to work at Cairnmore and Wheedlemont

1. What are the date of these small enclosed sites in Aberdeenshire and how does the chronology fit with the Craw Stane complex and wider regional and national patterns?
2. How might these sites fit within the settlement hierarchy of the Iron Age or early medieval periods in the Rhynie landscape?
3. What was the character of their outer 'defences'?
4. Did the defences enclose roundhouses or other settlement forms within?
5. Can we tell anything about the occupants or status of these sites from the material and architectural evidence? Were these settlements occupied year round? Were they 'normal' settlements focused around the ceremonial/gathering place at the Craw Stane?

6. Was metalworking carried out at these enclosed sites or was it focused at the Craw Stane complex?
7. Are these morphologically similar sites a coherent set of contemporary sites that can help elucidate enclosure typologies and dating at a wider national level?
8. How does the morphology of these sites relate to Rhynie? Do they help fill the major settlement lacunas of first millennium AD Scotland or do they flesh out our picture of later prehistoric enclosure forms? Do they help us reconstruct the networks and hierarchies of settlement present in Aberdeenshire in the first millennium AD? How did the Craw Stane complex fit within the wider landscape – was it an isolated site or part of a distinct contemporary settlement concentration?

Tap O'Noth (SM63; Canmore 17169)

Any view of the Craw Stane and site of the Craw Stane complex will tend to focus on the view to the northeast that shows Tap O'Noth fort looming in the distance. Tap O'Noth is one of the most dramatic forts in Scotland, but we know very little about the site with no excavation having been carried out previously. Like the Anglo-Saxon royal centre at Yeavering, the Rhynie complex lies within the shadow of what may have been an earlier Iron Age central place, but it is also entirely possible that Tap O'Noth was also (re)occupied in the Pictish period as occurred at the very similar oblong fort at Craig Phadrig, Inverness-shire where fragments of E-ware and metalworking moulds suggest high-status occupation in the 7th century. It is possible that the high-status focus present at the Craw Stane from the 4th-6th centuries AD shifted to Tap O'Noth in the 7th century.

Due to the scale of Tap O'Noth trenching will only ever be evaluative in nature and the project proposes a staged investigation of Tap O'Noth with testing of deposits in 2017 setting the foundation for further investigation in 2018-19. Recently commissioned LIDAR survey (in collaboration with Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service and Forestry Commission Scotland) in combination with existing RCAHMS surveys provide a firm basis for limited investigation of Tap O'Noth (Fig 3 and 4). Our research questions will centre on reoccupation of the fort and providing a broad chronology for its development. Field investigation will be scheduled over three years and will include:

- Evaluation of the oblong fort interior including sample excavation of a series of banks and ditches that the RCAHMS interpreted as a fort older than the oblong fort (though note the Lidar survey suggests different features are present). This will be carried out in Year 1 to evaluate the complexity of the site, site logistics and basic chronology of interior features

- In Year 2 excavation of an area of the oblong fort vitrified rampart large enough to expose the wall faces to examine the construction of the wall and revealing the wall base to allow sampling of the ground surface below for dating. Investigation of evidence for the construction of a palisade or rebuilding the upper parts of the rampart as occurred at Craig Phadrig in the Pictish period. Further evaluation of the interior leading on from the results of Year 1. The investigation of the interior in Year 2 will include palaeoenvironmental survey of deposits from one of the wells to provide environmental evidence for the use of the fort
- In Year 3 focus will shift to the lower fort and house platforms/quarries. A section through the lower stone rampart that encloses 16.4 hectares will be excavated to characterize construction and obtain dating evidence. Excavation of one or two of the house platforms/quarries to establish function and obtain dating evidence will also be carried out

The trenching strategy would involve a staged approach with each season able to produce standalone results. This can be summarised as follows:

Year 1: evaluation trench in fort interior to test the depth/complexity of deposits, Lidar results and pilot the site logistics of getting a team to and from the summit. Basic chronology obtained

Year 2: excavation of targeted interior areas and a section to expose the oblong fort rampart, wall faces and any evidence of refortification

Year 3: excavation of features of lower fort and house platforms/quarries



Figure 3 LIDAR image of Tap O'Noth hillfort showing potential later enclosure within the fort (upper image).

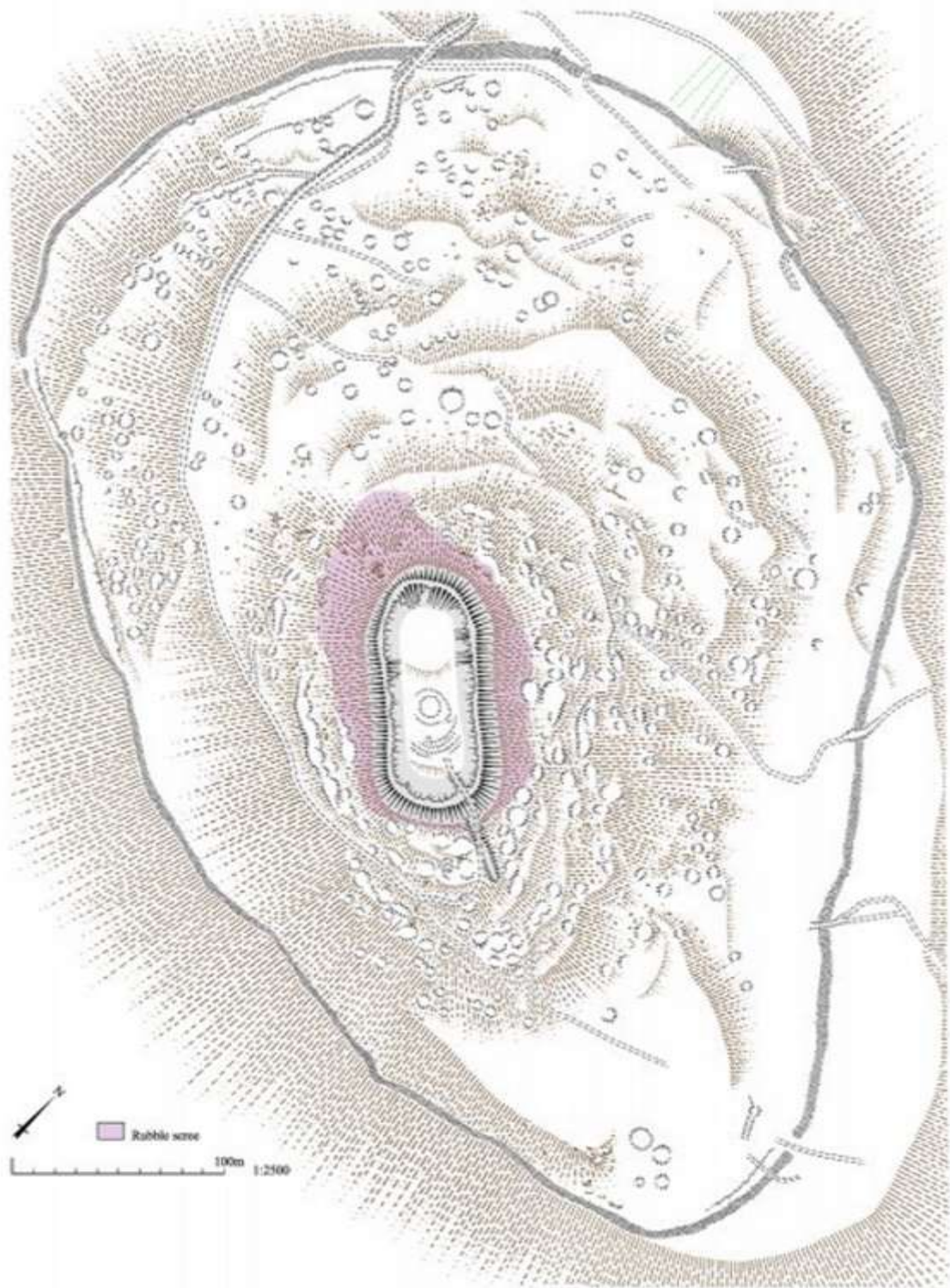


Figure 4 RCHAMS survey of Tap O'Noth © Historic Environment Scotland

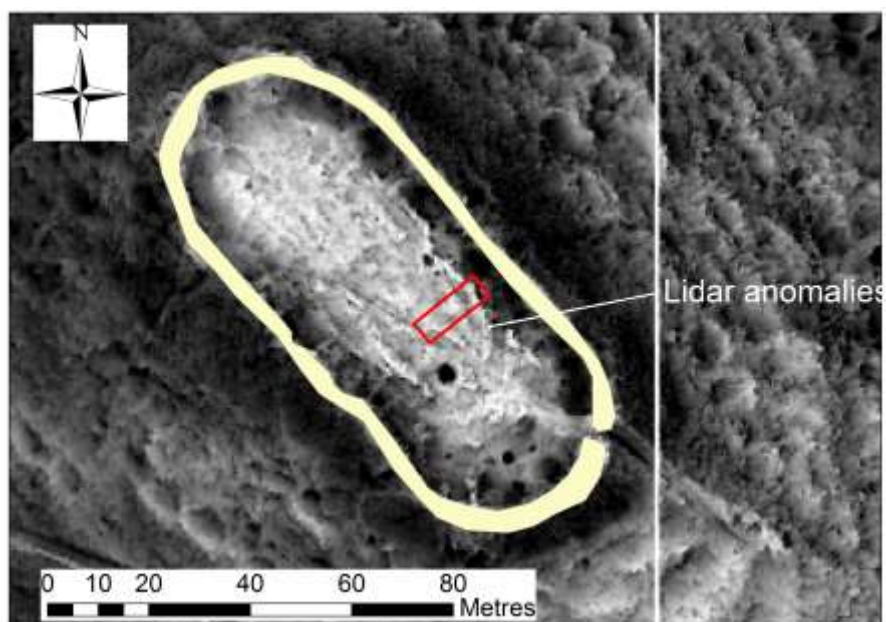


Figure 5 Year 1 evaluation trench

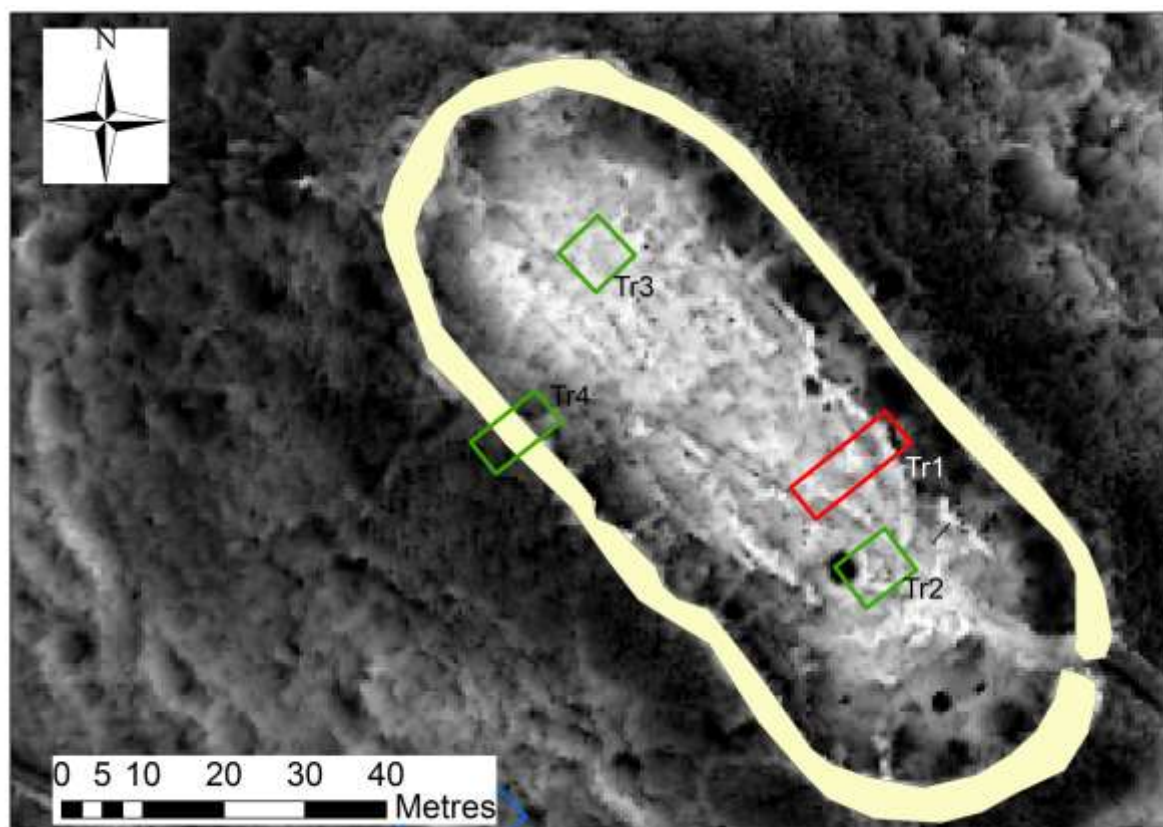


Figure 6 Tap O'Noth – possible trenching strategy in Year 2 (trenches marked in green).

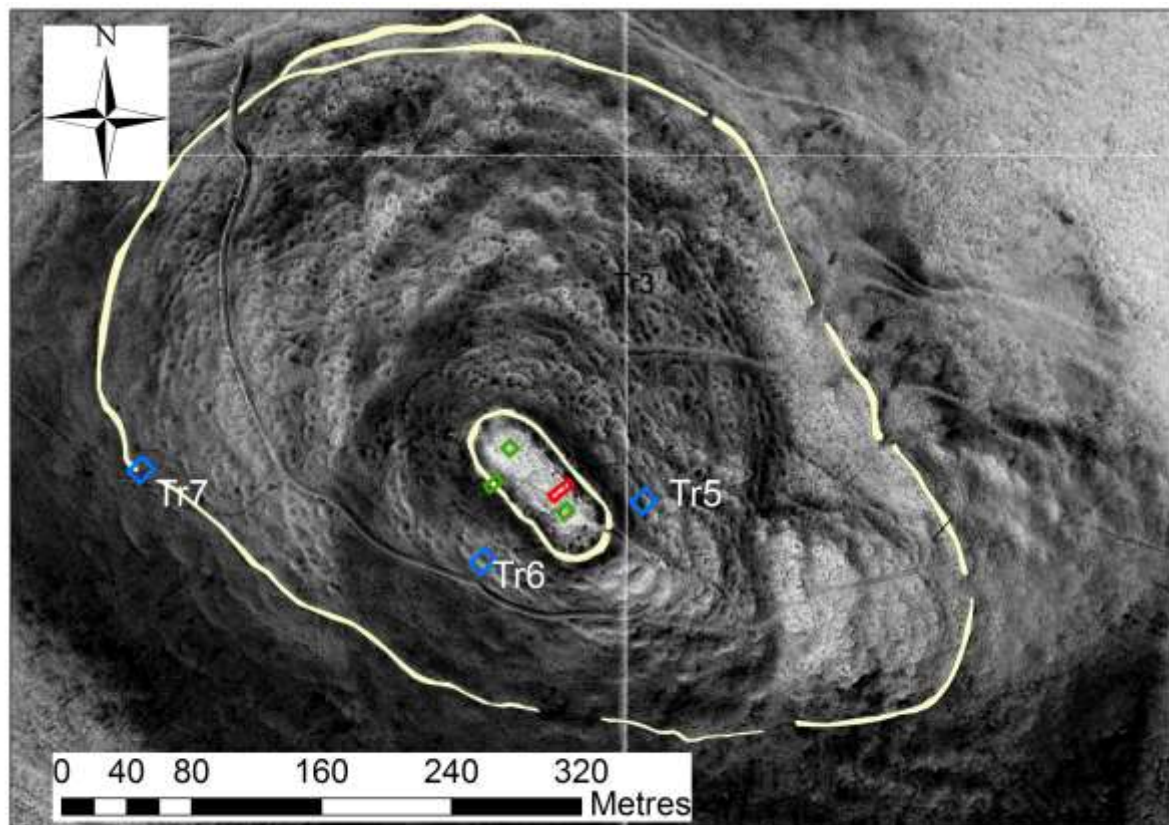


Figure 7 Tap O'Noth – trenches in Year 3

In Year 1 of the investigations at Tap O'Noth (Fig.5) a single trench will be dug. It will be a maximum of 15 x 5 m in size to allow stepping in view of the depths of deposits that may be encountered. The trench will abut the inner face of the vitrified oblong fort rampart and will extend into the interior to characterise the anomalies identified by RCHAMS survey and Lidar survey. These anomalies may relate to an earlier/later fortification of the summit or to interior features. The strategy will involve the removal of upper deposits of rubble, recording in detail to map the later history of collapse and any indications of later re-use. This will expose the underlying archaeology which will be mapped using dGPS, hand-drawing and photography. Select sondages will then be dug to establish the depth of in situ archaeology, retrieve samples for dating and provide an outline sequence for the fort interior occupation. If possible we will expose the inner wall face of the vitrified fort and attempt to obtain dating samples from under the wall. The majority of the archaeology will be left in situ and fully reinstated at the end of the excavation.

In Year 2 we will proceed based on the results of Year 1, but in outline the objectives would include more fully characterizing and investigating the rampart of the vitrified fort and characterizing spatially the interior. Two trenches (2 and 3, Fig.6), max c.10 by 10 m each (again to allow stepping, safe access and features to be exposed in plan) will target interior areas including the well and will

build on the results of Year 1 to characterize the nature of interior structures/deposits. A similar strategy will be involved to Year 1 with large enough trenches dug to allow stepping, removal of rubble, exposing of in situ archaeology and selective sondages to retrieve dating material and to characterize any structures/deposits revealed. Trench 2 will aim to expose the well and a core will be obtained from the well with the aim of retrieving environmental evidence for fort use and landscape. Trench 4 will target an area of the rampart where there is good potential for revealing both interior and exterior wall faces and the top of the wall to test for refortification of the type recently identified at Craig Phadrig, Inverness-shire. Once again the majority of the archaeology will be left in situ and fully reinstated at the end of the excavation.

In Year 3 three trenches are proposed (Fig.7). Trench 7 (max 10 by 10 m) will target the lower rampart and one of the entrances to expose the architecture of the rampart and any entrance features, retrieve dating samples and characterize the entrance arrangements of this 16.4 hectares fort. Two hut platforms/quarries will be selected for evaluative excavation – trenches 5 and 6 (max 10 x 10 m) will expose the platforms, remove rubble and a number of sondages will be dug to characterize and date these features.

Research questions specific to Tap O'Noth

Year 1:

1. What is the level of survival on the hilltop? How complex are the deposits? What are the challenges of excavating a site of this kind? How can site logistics be organized to provide effective working?
2. What kind of structural deposits does the oblong fort enclose?
3. What is the chronology of interior deposits in the area targeted?
4. Is there any evidence for occupation contemporary with the Pictish complex at Rhynie?
5. Does evidence relating to Iron Age settlement survive?
6. Can we expose the inner wall face of the vitrified fort and obtain dating samples?
7. Do the features mapped by the RCAHMS survey/Lidar survey relate to a fort earlier than the oblong fort or something else?

Year 2:

1. What was the scale and character of the defences of the oblong fort?
2. When was it built and how long did it endure before being vitrified?
3. What was the process that led to the vitrification of the fort?
4. Is there any evidence for re-fortification after the oblong fort was destroyed?

5. Was there (re)occupation of the fort in the Pictish period? If so how did the character/chronology of that occupation compare to the Craw Stane complex at that at the smaller enclosed sites in the upper Strathbogie landscape?
6. Is there any evidence for zoning of settlement or activities within the fort interior?
7. How did the character of settlement/use change through time?
8. Do the wells preserve palaeoenvironmental evidence for the character of use of the fort or the wider environment? What impacts did the settlement and construction have on the environment? Is there any evidence for the economy of the fort? Was settlement year round?

Year 3:

1. When was the lower fort constructed? Is it contemporary with the oblong fort or part of an earlier construction phase?
2. What was the character of the entranceways – were these designed for humans and animals to access the site? Were they defended in any way?
3. How the enclosure chronology relate to the house platforms/quarries?
4. How can we interpret the hundreds of scoops on the hillside interpreted as house platforms/quarries? What were their function?

General:

- Was Tap O'Noth a centre of metalwork production in the Late Bronze Age-Iron Age and/or Pictish period?
- How does the development of this hilltop complex relate to the creation of the high status enclosure complex at Rhynie?
- Was Tap O'Noth a central place in the Iron Age? Is there continuity of high status occupation from the Iron Age to early medieval periods?
- Can the evidence from Tap O'Noth contribute to the big picture narratives surrounding the processes of state formation in early Scotland?

Public engagement and the Rhynie project

Public engagement has lain at the heart of Northern Picts since it began. The project has a strong social media presence with almost 3000 facebook followers and a strong commitment to engaging with a wide audience through exhibitions, media, events, talks and art projects. Each year since 2012

the project has put on exhibitions at the Tarbat Discovery Centre with over 3000 people seeing the displays each year. In 2015 an exhibition at King's Museum on the university campus was also seen by over 3000 people. The project has also appeared twice on BBC4's Digging for Britain with the last show attracting over 1 million viewers. Rhynie and the wider project has also appeared on STV News, BBC Reporting Scotland; BBC Radio and most of the major print media (Over 50 individual articles including in the Daily Mail, Daily Record, The Herald, Press & Journal, The Scotsman, The Times, BBC News online, Leopard, Scots Magazine). Over 40 public talks have also been delivered to local societies. A variety of academic and popular publications have also been produced (two Antiquity articles; Current Archaeology article; Peer-reviewed book chapters). We also work with small museums such as the Tarbat Discovery Centre to boost audiences for Pictish archaeology, producing booklets, a new visitor film and website for the centre.

At Rhynie a particularly successful element of the Northern Picts public engagement strategy has been working with the artist collective Rhynie Woman. Rhynie Woman is a group that aims to enhance the Rhynie community through raising awareness for landscape and heritage, helping shape the area as an attractive place for local residents and visitors alike. Their work engages with audiences beyond those solely interested in archaeology through running pop-up exhibitions, coffee shops and organizing events such as foraging walks that engage with the archaeology but also the wider landscape and community. In 2016 Rhynie Woman helped organize tours of the archaeology and a pop-up coffee shop and barter box acted as a visitor hub within the village to help disseminate the findings and progress of the excavations.

In 2017 Rhynie Woman would like to develop three walks around Rhynie's key heritage sites to bring the past to life during the excavations. The walks would comprise: 1. Tap o' Noth hillfort – hill walk with good footpath: During the excavations signage and route-markers will be laid out to encourage visitors to visit our hill and once they have reached the top they can visit the excavations and towards the end of the season there will be an evening torch-light 'procession' up the hill carrying a Rhynie Man light installation to allow connections between the Pictish complex at the Craw Stane and the wider landscape to be made in creative ways. During the procession the other sites undergoing excavation will also be lit up allowing the archaeology of the wider landscape to be highlighted from the hilltop. The procession will be followed by a celebration in the village with displays of finds from the dig and food and music 2. Rhynie Square (4 symbol stones) to Rhynie Cemetery (3 symbol stones) to the Craw Stane and excavation site – easy, accessible: During the excavation we will run walks to the site that will visit the stones in the churchyard before proceeding to the dig location at the Craw Stane. We will also accompany the school on another day bringing

the school-children on to site for some hands-on activities. 3. Hedgerow Foraging walk Rhynie to Wheedlemont hillfort – easy, accessible. During the excavations at Wheedlemont we will run a foraging walk that will culminate with a visit to the excavations. Each of the walks will be a community and public event. For each event Rhynie woman will create food from local produce to be shared at the end of each walk. We will use our pop-up tent to host these events in the landscape. Rhynie's community (450 people) will benefit from the cultural offer as well as visitors to the area. We will put up posters, advertise through our social media and let people know well in advance by word of mouth. We will also help organize a community talk at the end of the dig.

JUSTIFICATION FOR PROPOSED WORK

1. The project will help deepen the impact and public benefit of archaeology within and beyond Scotland by:
 - Improved communication between university, community and commercial archaeology through partnership working between the university sector within Scotland (and beyond), AOC Archaeology and community groups
 - Explore alternative ways of presenting archaeology to the community and wider public through the work of Rhynie Woman
2. The project will enhance understanding by:
 - Investigating a crucial part of Scotland's story by helping understand how the early state-like societies of Scotland were formed – a topic of wide European interest and relevance and one where there has been only limited studies to date
 - Help understand iconic, but poorly understood heritage resources such as the Pictish Class I stones of northeast Scotland through contextual fieldwork and the construction of a landscape context for the important group of stones at Rhynie
 - Communicating complex knowledge of the regarding the Picts and the beginning of Scotland for a wide audience in a publically accessible way through the project social media streams and through the work of Rhynie Woman
3. The project will ensure that the evidence for the past is cared for by society and managed sustainably by:
 - Providing a case study in how the wider landscape setting for the Craw Stane complex is essential for understanding individual scheduled monuments

- Providing a rich context for monuments such as the Pictish Class I stones from Rhynie that have tended to be treated in isolation and rarely set within their local, regional and national context and rarely interpreted in relation to their landscape setting
 - Developing a sense of place and pride in the local heritage through the work of Rhynie Woman and the results of the excavations
4. The project will enable and encourage greater engagement with our past by:
- Providing alternative ways through the work of Rhynie Woman for a greater and more diverse audience to engage with their surroundings promoting a sense of pride in the landscapes of Scotland and opportunities for creative learning
 - Contribute through learning packs to the Curriculum for Excellence in the Rhynie area and beyond, building on a strong schools engagement with the field dimensions of the project and providing ways for schools to engage with the results of the project on a long-term basis
 - Delivering a collection of material artefacts, site details and landscape investigation that will can provide rich opportunities for museum displays of the future on the formation of the early kingdoms of the Picts, metalworking and lifeways of the past societies of Scotland.
 - Encouraging the use of project data in other sectors such as creative sector through out work with Rhynie Woman
 - Provide events and longer-term resources for schools to teach children about the Picts and the role of archaeology in unlocking knowledge about past societies
5. The project will provide opportunities for innovation and skills by:
- Providing University of Aberdeen and other university students with key training opportunities in investigation and stewardship of the historic environment
 - Creating opportunities for non-specialists, community members and schools groups to acquire skills in reading the landscape
6. The project and the wider Northern Picts project will address many of the key future research areas and issues identified in SCARF (<http://www.scottishheritagehub.com>). This includes investigating the formation of early medieval polities and centres of royal power

and consumption; addressing the rise and fall of these centres; and uncovering settlement hierarchies of the Iron Age and first millennium AD.

7. The project will provide key training opportunities for university students and researchers and will work with local communities to explore ways of promoting more general involvement, training and education in the archaeology of northeast Scotland.
8. Community participation and coproduction has been at the heart of the Rhynie project since 2012. The work has led to the formation of a local artistic collective Rhynie Woman who will actively participate in project promoting the heritage at a local and national level (see above)

OUTPUTS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

This project will provide:

- Academic and research outputs in the form of journal articles, reports and research opportunities for academic staff and students through providing dissertation topics, hands on training in field archaeology, surveying and post-excavation.
- Training opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students, community volunteers and school groups from the Rhynie and wider area.
- Popular outputs in the form of a daily blog on the Northern Picts facebook page (with almost 3000 members) and REAP blog (<http://reaparch.blogspot.co.uk/>), wider media impacts and press opportunities for HES and project partners.
- This research will feed into the Northern Picts project which will lead to an open access monograph and a more popular volume on the archaeology of the Northern Picts
- Project results will be displayed in exhibitions held in Rhynie itself, at the Tarbat Discovery Centre and University of Aberdeen. Long-term the artefacts from Rhynie will go to Treasure Trove and can provide the best contextualized and dated assemblage of Pictish artefacts and associated archaeology known.
- An interim report after each year of work will be completed and sent to relevant bodies (Historic Environment Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Services, DES) and the archive will remain at the University of Aberdeen until complete of the study where it will be housed with a relevant body
- In due course the ADS will be consulted for guidance on digital archiving and the hosting of the digital archive and an education pack for local schools

References

Gondek, M. and Noble, G. 2010. Together as one: the landscape of the symbol stones at Rhynie, Aberdeenshire. S.Driscoll, J.Geddes & M.Hall (eds) *Pictish Progress*: 95-110. Leiden: Brill.

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Noble, G., Gondek, M., Campbell, E. & Cook, M. 2013. 'Between prehistory and history: the archaeological detection of social change among the Picts'. *Antiquity*, vol 87, no. 338: 1136-1150.

REAP blog. www.reaparch.blogspot.co.uk

Scottish Archaeological Research Framework - www.scottishheritagehub.com

Appendix 1 Methodologies, sampling and resources

Each trench will be machine stripped or deturfed by hand under careful supervision. At the Craw Stane the stripping will remove only the topsoil, revealing the subsoil below into which the features have been dug. All excavation once trenches are opened will be done by hand. At Tap O'Noth and Wheedlemont all deturfing will be done by hand with turfs reinstated at the end of the excavation.

Previous work at Rhynie has suggested the topsoil produces little information and is largely archaeologically sterile. Metal detecting and fieldwalking were conducted prior to excavation in 2013 and 2015 with only modern finds reported and limited sampling of topsoil in 2011-12 produced similar results. Permission is sought here for metal detecting of the each excavation trench prior to topsoil stripping to recover any metal artefacts that may survive in the topsoil. The directors of the excavations have over 10 years experience of topsoil stripping and have access to experienced machine drivers for this purpose.

With the trenches at Tap O'Noth and Wheedlemont the topsoil and upper rubble layers will be removed by hand allowing close supervision of the upper deposits within the two forts. Cathy

MacIver and other experienced excavators will be in charge and have extensive experience of excavating large hillforts through the SERF project and commercial work.

In addition:

- During the excavations a soil specialist (Dr Karen Milek) will advise on geoarchaeological approaches and ways to maximize information retrieval from the excavated deposits and soils
- At the Craw Stane we will sample the exposed topsoil profiles exposed in the section edges and process samples for comparison with excavated material and will submit for geoarchaeological analysis
- Specialist advice on any artefacts retrieved will be available from Dr Ewan Campbell, the leading Iron Age and early medieval artefact specialist in Scotland
- Specialist advice on botanics and charcoals will be sought from Dr Susan Ramsay who has analysed the botanics from Rhynie from 2011 onwards
- Specialist advice on animal and human bones recovered will be available from Dr Kate Britton, University of Aberdeen
- Any complex archaeological deposits where post-excavation budgets are not sufficient to deal with, will be left in situ and not excavated
- During the excavations all archaeological features will be carefully cleaned and recorded (hand and digitally planned at 1:20 and photographed).
- All excavated contexts will be dry sieved (weather permitting) and environmental samples (for soil flotation and micromorphology) taken. Environmental sampling will follow English Heritage guidance (Campbell, G, Moffett, L and Straker, V 2011). All samples will be processed and reported on by environmental specialists from the University of Aberdeen and commissioned as needed.

Reinstatement plans and post-excavation site management strategy

At the Craw Stane all excavated material will be reinstated by machine following procedures followed in 2011-15. The trench will be reseeded with grass and monitored until fully re-established. At the hillforts any excavated features will be filled in by hand and the turf re-instated.

Team and implementation of research design

The project team involves two site directors Gordon Noble and Meggen Gondek who have both over ten years of experience of running large-scale field projects. Experienced site directors and

supervisors will be on site at all times to monitor the progress of the excavations. We will maintain a ratio of 1:3 experienced to non-experienced diggers and will employ additional site assistants from a leading professional archaeology company, AOC archaeology. Volunteers and archaeology students from the University of Aberdeen will work on site under close supervision. The site directors will supervise all excavation work and will be assisted by the research assistant for the Northern Picts project Oskar Sveinbjarnarson in addition to the specialists from AOC Archaeology. Post-excavation analysis will benefit from the facilities and expertise available in-house at the University of Aberdeen. The research design has been formulated with over five years of experience of working at Rhynie and will be achievable in the time-scale set.

Resources to carry out works

The project is funded through a Historic Environment Scotland Archaeology grant for 2017-18 and through University of Aberdeen funding streams organized through the Northern Picts project. A full budget was set out in the research design submitted to HES during the 2017-18 grants programme bidding cycle.

Publication

To date there has been three major journal articles on the project and three book chapters and each year detailed Data Structure Reports are produced on the fieldwork. The final outcome will be a project monograph.

Post-excavation and sampling strategy

The post-excavation programme for Rhynie is up-to-date, with over 60 radiocarbon dates already obtained for the project, all finds conserved and analysed by Dr Ewan Campbell and select objects drawn for publication. The 2017-18 budget includes funds for object analysis, botanics and conservation support from HES.

Artefacts

Based on previous work the artefact assemblage at the Craw Stane is likely to comprise moulds and production evidence that will require some level of conservation. Procedures will follow those of the 2016 season and advice will be sought from AOC Archaeology for any unusual items/materials recovered. Artefacts from previous seasons has included metalwork and imported pottery, glass and other material. As in previous years the finds will be collected, cleaned and conserved where needed and will be analysed by specialists. Analysis of the artefacts to date has concentrated on establishing

the provenance of the imported objects to the site which are very rare in a Pictish context and on the very rare production evidence that Rhynie has produced. Artefact analysis from the 2017 season will address the current research questions focusing on the evidence for craft production and organisation.

No excavation has ever been carried out at Tap O'Noth or Wheedlemont. Iron Age pottery has been recorded from Wheedlemont and beads are held within Marischal Museum from Tap O'Noth. However, other excavations on forts of this type such as Craig Phadrig and Castle Law, Forgandenny have produced no artefacts or very limited assemblages, therefore it is likely that similarly low levels of material culture will be present at Tap O'Noth. Nonetheless, artefact retrieval methods, initial storage and conservation procedures will follow those established at Rhynie 2011-16 and if large numbers of artefacts are encountered the project aims and objectives will be revisited and approaches fully discussed with HES.

Faunal material

Animal bones are occasionally preserved at Rhynie although only in very rare circumstances. The 2017 trench is in an area that has seen limited to no faunal recovery. All animal bones are currently being assessed by Ingrid Mainland, Orkney College, UHI. Her analysis will focus on assessing the composition of the assemblage and comparing it to other early medieval assemblages from Pictland and other contemporary sites across Britain and Ireland. The faunal preservation circumstances at Tap O'Noth are unknown and likely to be limited given previous excavations of hillforts of this type, but again if large amounts are encountered the project aims and objectives will be re-assessed and excavation will only proceed after consultation with HES.

Soil samples

During the excavation of all sites soil samples will be taken from a select number of features using standardised methodologies. This will consist of 5 litres of soil being sampled from features where possible (though note some contexts will be smaller than this). Samples will be double bagged and labelled. Samples will be floated using bucket sieving which allows for more controlled recovery of charcoal. 1mm and 500 µm mesh will be used to capture the charcoal and botanics. The flots and retents will be sorted and carbonised plant remains assessed by a botanist for their potential for radiocarbon dating and botanical analysis. The soil sieving will be undertaken by students under the supervision of the project manager.

Radiocarbon dating

Over 60 dates are already available for the Craw Stane complex, but the 2017 season will concentrate on retrieving dating material that will answer the outstanding research questions outlined above. Previous dating has been supported by Historic Environment Scotland's radiocarbon dating programme. Derek Hamilton of SUERC has advised on sample selection throughout and will model the dates using OxVal c4.2 and standard Bayesian modelling approaches. The 2017 work at Tap O'Noth will aim to produce an outline chronology for the vitrified fort and interior deposits. Procedures will follow those established at Rhynie and analysis will proceed in consultation with Derek Hamilton and SUERC.

Reporting

We will notify HES of the timescale of each excavation in advance of each phase of works, giving at least 2 weeks notice. We will provide a DSR of the excavations within 3 months of completion of the fieldwork. For Tap O'Noth we will provide a revised project design in advance of each season of excavation, submitted to HES for agreement in advance and at least 3 months prior to beginning fieldwork.