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# A small Mesolithic site at Craighead Golf Course, Fife Ness, Fife

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## Introduction

In the summer of 1996 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a second 18-hole golf course at Craighead, Fife Ness. The archaeological work was carried out by *Headland Archaeology Ltd* on behalf of Crail Golfing Society working to a brief prepared by Fife Council Archaeological Services.

The work was scheduled to allow all areas stripped of topsoil to be examined for archaeological features. In total some 35ha were investigated. This large area contained only three sites of archaeological significance which were all examined by detailed archaeological excavation. The sites comprised a large pit and post-holes of late prehistoric date, a pit containing flint tools and Bronze Age pottery, and a small Mesolithic camp site, the subject of this paper. A report on the other two sites was submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Dalland 1996).

The camp site was discovered near the thirteenth green where topsoil stripping revealed a spread of discoloured soil and a pit. Associated with these features were carbonised hazelnut shells and a small lithic assemblage which, because of the presence of several microliths, indicated that the site might be Mesolithic.

## Location (Illus 1)

The site was situated at NGR NO 6365 0951 on the south side of Fife Ness some 300m south-west of Foreland Head, the north-eastern headland of Fife. It was located 8m back from the edge of the low sea cliffs on the lower parts of the late glacial raised beach at c 15m OD. The land rises gently inland from the site culminating in a small summit at 30m OD some 700m to the west.

## Structural evidence (Illus 2)

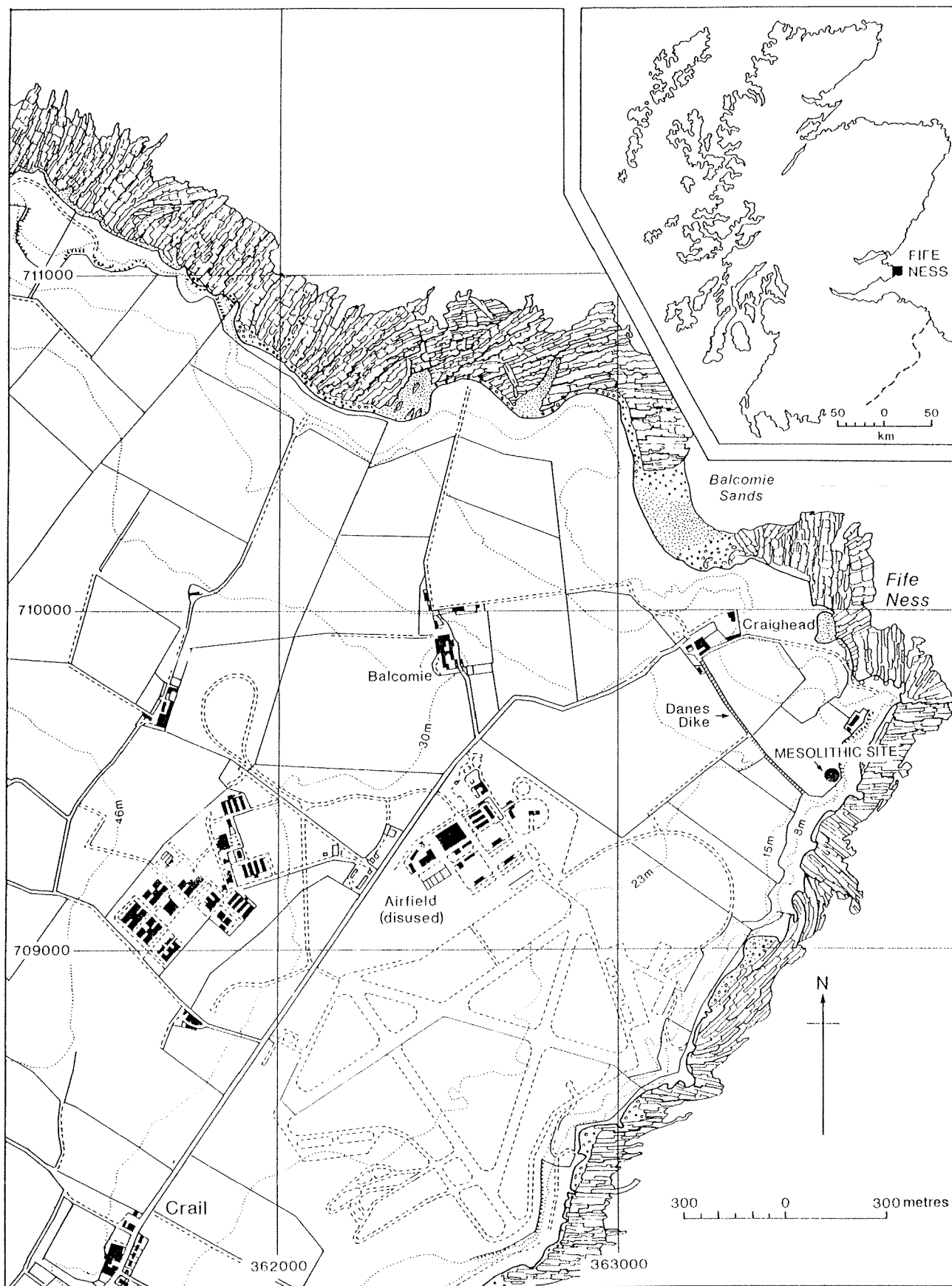
### Description

The site was discovered at the corner of a stripped

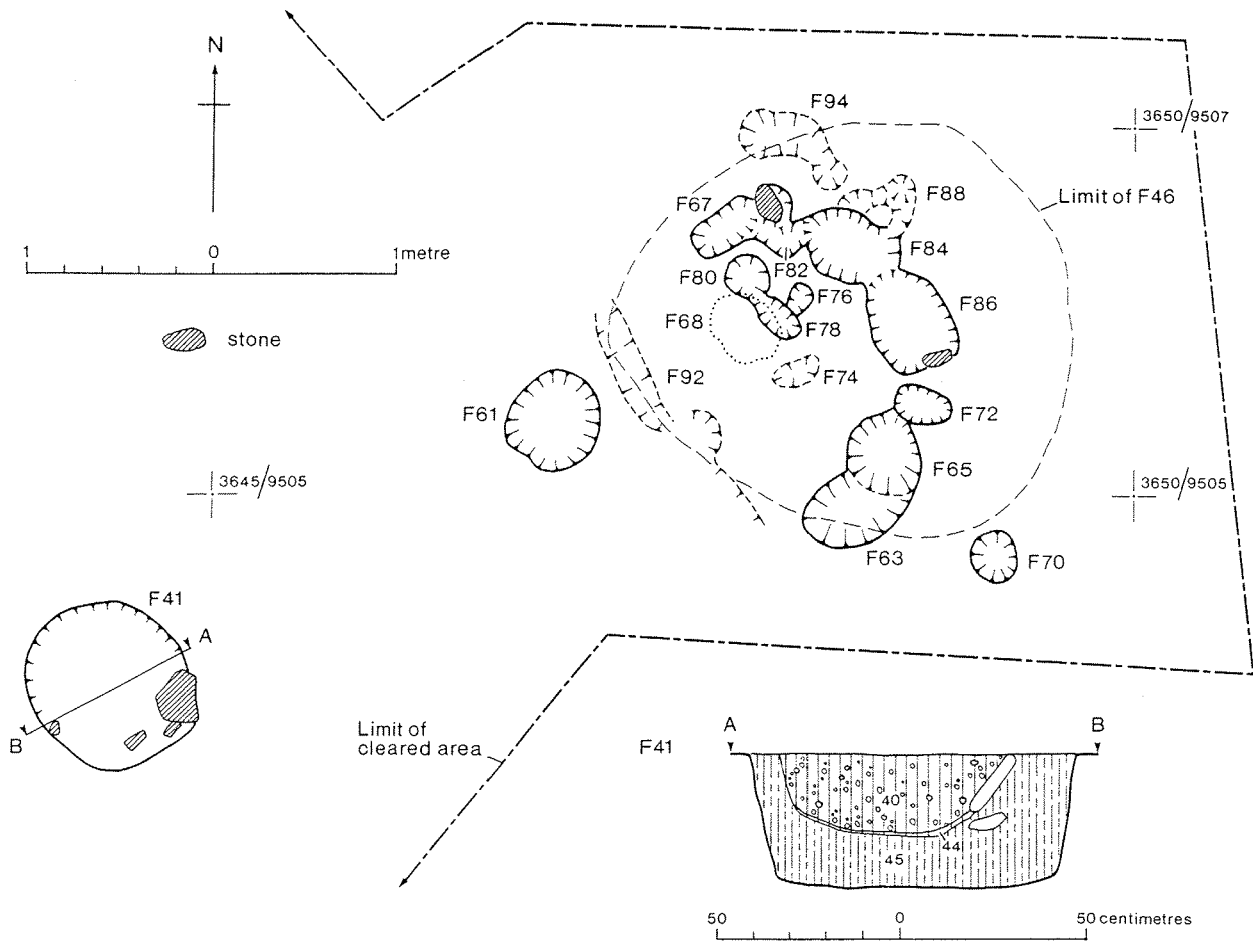
area. At first only pit F41 was exposed. It was oval (98cm by 90cm) with near vertical sides and a flat base. It was possible to identify three different fills in the pit, the upper and lower fills, F40 and F45, separated by a narrow band of brown sand, F44 (Illus 2 and 3). The fills contained hazelnut shells and pieces of worked flint. Amongst the flint were blades, cores and microliths.

During the investigation of pit F41, flint flakes and fragments of carbonised hazelnut shells were discovered some 4m to the north-east of the pit at the edge of the area stripped of topsoil. The topsoil had not been completely removed in this area and this allowed hand excavation of the lower part of the plough soil, revealing F46, a layer of dark brown loam, rich in flint material and hazelnut shell. Its upper surface had been disturbed by ploughing, but the layer was clearly confined to an oval area, 2.2m by 2.5m. It was up to 8cm thick in the middle, but thinner towards the edges. As this part of the site was just outside the area affected by the development, only a narrow buffer zone 0.5m to 1m wide was cleared in order to establish the full extent of the layer. Once F46 had been removed, a series of cut features were exposed. The most striking of these was a curving line of seven pits (F63, F65, F72, F86, F84, F82 and F67). These covered an arc of just under 180° of a circle 2m in diameter. The pits differed in shape and size, from 10cm to 28cm deep, and 20cm to 42cm wide. The deepest pits were in the middle and southern part of the arc: F72; F86; and F65. Opposite the curving line of pits was a single large cut (F61), some 50cm in diameter and 25cm deep (Illus 4).

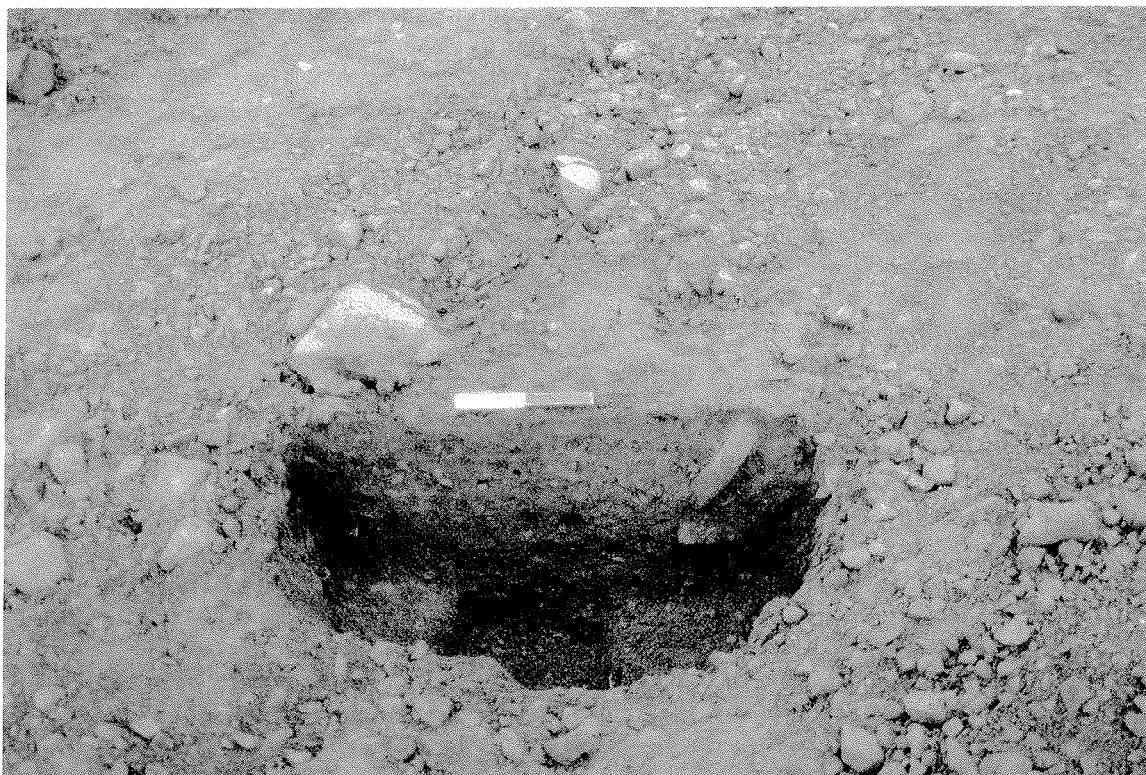
A few pits lay outside the arc: one (F70) outside and to the south-east of the arc; and two irregular shallow cuts (F88 and F94) to the north. Four shallow pits (F74, F76, F78 and F80) were located inside the northern part of the arc. These lay on the east side of a small oval area of reddish subsoil (F68), 40cm by 30cm. The red colour is likely to have been caused by heat and this feature may



Illus 1. Site location map.



Illus 2. The excavated features.



Illus 3. Section across Pit F41, from north-west.

