

CFA Archaeology Ltd

archaeological consultants

Advice on Archaeology & Planning

Environmental Impact Assessment

Intpretation, Design & Display

Finds/ Environmental Analysis

Field Evaluation & Excavation

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Geophysical Survey

**The Smugglers Cave
Aberlady Bay
Aberlady, East Lothian**

**Archaeological Evaluation
Report No. 1616**

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

The Old Engine House
Eskmills Business Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian
EH21 7PQ

Tel: 0131 273 4380
Fax: 0131 273 4381
email: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
web: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Author	Cara Jones BA
Illustrator	Leeanne Whitelaw BSc MAAIS
Editor	Tim Neighbour BSc FSA Scot MIFA
Commissioned by	Aberlady Conservation Society
Date issued	March 2009
Version	FINAL
OASIS Reference	
Grid Ref	NT 44983 80283

This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd standard operating procedures.

**The Smugglers Cave
Aberlady Bay
Aberlady, East Lothian**

**Archaeological Evaluation
Report No. 1616**

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Methodology	5
3.	Archaeological Results	6
4.	Discussion	9
5.	Conclusion	11
6.	References	12

APPENDICES

1.	Context Register	13
2.	Photographic Register	13
3.	Drawings Register	14
4.	Finds catalogue	14

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1	The Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition depicting the cave's location and the limestone quarry
Fig. 2	The 1940 map presented to the Aberlady Conservation Society
Fig. 3	Wall 005 protruding from cliff edge, reputed to be the location of the smugglers cave
Fig. 4	Slot 1 – post excavation shot
Fig. 5	Slot 2 – post excavation shot showing walls 005 and 006. The photo also shows the animal burrow
Fig. 6	Slot 2 – showing wall 006
Fig. 7	Slot 2 showing 005
Fig. 8	Location map
Fig. 9a-b	Trench plan and Northeast-facing section showing slots 1 and 2
Fig. 10 a-b	Sections of trench, slot 1 and slot 2

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

In March 2009 CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) and volunteers from the Aberlady Conservation Society completed an archaeological excavation of the mouth of a cave that was reputed to have been used by smugglers. The cave (NGR: NT 44983 80283; Figure 8) is situated within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) No. 5759, comprising the remains of a possible Iron Age coastal fort, now within Kilspindie Golf Course.

The work was commissioned by Aberlady Conservation Society and forms part of a wider project, *Aberlady Bay: Heritage, Pilgrimage and Archaeology*, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Lothian Council and other bodies including the local Community Council. The project also has the support of the National Museum of Scotland and the British Library.

1.2 Background

The “Smugglers’ Cave” (NMRS No: NT48SE 34) is known as such by some of the older population of Aberlady through legends of smuggling taking place in the locality. However, the exact location of the cave was not known beyond its general situation along the Kilspindie coast. These smuggling days are depicted in a historical novel, based in the village, by James Pringle Reid– *The Skipper’s Daughters* – and his historical guide to the village includes lines of verse relating to local smugglers and their activities.

In 2006, the Aberlady Conservation Society was presented with a map of the internal layout of the cave as it was in 1890 (Figure 1). Shortly afterwards, the Society was presented with a copy of a letter dated December 1940 from the cartographer, Thomas Murray, to the then Earl of Wemyss describing the internal condition of the cave. The details contained in these documents and the identification of the location of a cave in the Ordnance Survey First Edition Map of 1854 Map (Figure 2) enabled the site of the entrance to be located. A stone and sand mortar wall emerging from the cliff face (Figure 3) matches the description of the structure as described in the historical novel and the layout map and letter by Thomas Young.

Due to the Scheduled nature of the site, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was sought from and granted by Historic Scotland. The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the terms of reference of the Written Scheme of Investigation that was submitted with the SMC application.

No previous, invasive archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place at this location prior to this evaluation. The fieldwork took place on the 19th and 20th March 2009 and was carried by CFA Archaeology Ltd, together with volunteers from Aberlady Conservation Society.



Figure 3: Wall 005 protruding from cliff edge, thought to be the location of the smugglers cave

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this project were;

- To investigate the suspected entrance of the smugglers cave through small scale hand excavation;
- To characterise the construction of the cave entrance and the deposits within it, recover dating evidence and relate the evidence to the documentary sources;
- To produce a report on the findings.

2. METHOLDOLGY

2.1 General

The work was carried out within the relevant Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and Guidance. Recording of all elements was done within established CFA methodology.

2.2 Excavation

A trench measuring c.5m by 2m (Figure 9a) was stripped of turf and topsoil at the location of the stone and mortared wall, previously identified by Aberlady Conservation Society. In the absence of information on the current integrity of the cave structure and concerns about potential damage to the Scheduled area and to the golf course, this small scale excavation was restricted to the mouth of the cave.

The excavation commenced with the removal and storage of turf, followed by the removal of overburden and scrub by hand excavation. All spoil was stored in crane sacks, in order for the spoil to be reinstated within the excavated area following the completion of the excavation. All excavation was carried out by hand. All exposed layers were numbered and planned. Excavation was restricted to the removal of deposits within the entrance to the cave sufficient to expose and characterise the sides and base of the cave. All artefacts and faunal remains were retained for analysis.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, 35mm and digital photography and by completing standard CFA record forms. The trench position was recorded using GPS survey equipment, accurate to within 0.5m.

All trenches were back-filled with excavated material on completion of excavation and the turf was then relayed. Aberlady Conservation Society will sow grass seed on the trench location to further minimise possible land slip.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 Excavation

General

Context numbers are given in bold and parenthesis in the following text; full context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

Three World War Two tank defence blocks are positioned on the top of the cliff (Figure 9a). Turf and topsoil (**001**) was removed from an area of c.10m². Two slots (Slots 1 and 2) were excavated to explore key features that were exposed during the removal of the topsoil and turf (Figures 9a-b). The topsoil (**001**), which had a depth of between 0.5m and 0.6m overlay mid brown sandy loam (**002**) (Figure 9a-b).

Slot 1

Slot1(Figure 9a-b, 10a) revealed a natural rock and shale outcrop beneath a dark brown sandy loam (**008**), which in turn underlay the mid-brown sandy loam (**002**). No features of anthropogenic origin were revealed in this slot (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Slot 1 – post excavation shot

Slot 2

Slot 2 (Figure 9a-b, 10b) was excavated to further expose the mortared stone wall **(005)** that could be seen in the cliff face pre-excavation (Figure 3). Natural yellow marine sand **(004)** was exposed at the base of the slot. This was overlain by a mid brown sand layer **(003)**. Two walls **(005** and **006)**, which were founded on this layer **(003)**, and form a passage 0.5m wide, which leads into the cliff face. The walls appear to have been constructed as revetments, to ensure that debris from the bedrock sides of the passage could not fall into the passage (Figures 5, 6 and 7). The space between the walls was filled by a deposit of mid brown sandy loam **(002)**, which also covered and sealed the tops of the walls.

The northernmost part of the easternmost wall **(005)** was mortared **(010)**, but the buried portion of the wall was of dry stone construction. A dark yellow sand deposit **(009)** behind the easternmost wall **(005)** was probably placed during the construction of the wall to fill voids between the rear of the wall and the natural bedrock.

A probable animal burrow leading into the cliff face (Figure 5) was revealed against the face of **(005)**. The cavity formed by the animal burrow showed the wall **(005)** continuing into the section and cliff face.



Figure 5: Slot 2 – post excavation shot showing walls 005 and 006. The photo also shows an animal burrow.



Figure 6: Slot 2 – showing wall 006



Figure 7: Slot 2 showing the outer lichen covered mortared (010) stone wall (005), with the inner drystone wall (005) to the right of the ranging rod

3.2 Finds

Sue Anderson

Finds were recovered from three contexts and are listed in Appendix 4. In total, there were eleven sherds of pottery (138g), one fragment of ceramic building material (24g), a clay tobacco pipe fragment (4g), two glass bottle fragments (227g), a copper alloy object (4g) and four pieces of animal bone (89g).

Nine sherds of pottery were collected from topsoil (**001**) and comprised four fragments of plain glazed whiteware, two transfer-printed wares (one of which was hand-enamelled), two sherds of brown-glazed redware and a fragment of slipped redware bowl rim. These are of 19th-century date. Pottery from context (**002**) consisted of a large creamware body sherd and a fragment of slipware bowl rim, both probably 18th-century in date.

Other ceramic finds comprised a small piece of red pantile from (**002**) and a burnt fragment of fluted bowl and stem of a clay pipe from (**003**). The latter was probably of late 18th/early 19th-century date.

Two glass bottle necks, both handmade and with roughly formed string ring rims, were found in (**001**) and (**002**). These are typical of 'onion-shaped' green wine bottles of the mid 18th to early 19th centuries.

A copper alloy stud, comprising a broad flat disc head and short wire pin, was found in (**001**). These were typically used to decorate furniture or leather straps and belts in the 18th-19th centuries.

The bone fragments were all in good condition and likely to be contemporary with the other finds. A small fragment of a large mammal (cow/horse) long bone came from (001), a large mammal rib fragment was found in (003), and a fragment of large mammal ?mandible and a medium mammal (sheep-sized) rib were collected from (002).

4. DISCUSSION

The excavations in the entrance to the cave revealed a narrow passage, the walls (005 and 006) of which appear to have been constructed as revetments, possibly to help prevent debris from the sides of the passage entering the passage. The excavation also revealed the continuation and composition of the bedrock forming the coastline. Further excavation of the cave entrance was restricted by health and safety concerns about the position of three World War II concrete defence blocks located above the section and the terms of the SMC granted for the work.

Whilst no lintels were found during the excavation, the scale of the excavation was insufficient to say anything about the presence or absence of lintels along the route of the passage further inland.

The excavation highlighted the degree of land disturbance that has occurred in the immediate area. Large deposits of overburden (002), covering the natural bedrock, the two walls and filling the passage between the walls were identified. Kilspindie Golf Club was established in 1867 and it is possible that the overburden (002) accumulated as a consequence of landscaping associated with its development or that of the previous golf course or agricultural processes, although it is equally likely that it was formed during the installation of the World War II defence blocks.

The majority of the finds were recovered from topsoil and overburden (001 and 002). Dating of the finds indicates that these layers must have been deposited no earlier than the early 19th century. A fragment of late 18th or early 19th century smoking pipe was recovered from a possible relict surface level (003), upon which the walls (005 and 006) were built.

The location of the passage corresponds with the map that accompanied a letter dated December 1940 (Figure 1), although the entrance is somewhat narrower than that depicted on that map. It is unlikely that a natural cave would be present at this location (Boutland & Young, *pers comm*), indicating that the passage is more likely to be an artificially constructed feature.

There are several possible explanations for the presence of a stone revetted passage at this location:

- the passage could be contemporary with the scheduled Iron Age fort. The surviving ditches of the fort appear to be half of a perfect circle, indicating that half of the fort has eroded since its construction. If this supposition is correct, the

location of the passage would have been near the centre of the fort. It is possible, therefore, that the passage is the remains of a souterrain or other subterranean structure associated with the fort that has been adapted for other uses in later centuries, including a concealment for smuggling known to have taken place;

- the Ordnance Survey First Edition of 1854 (Figure 2) depicts a limestone quarry to the immediate east of the cave. Greenwood's map of 1844 depicts a rectangular building, also in close proximity to the cave and identified as a windmill on Forrest's 1802 map. The close proximity of the quarry and the windmill raises the possibility that the passage may be a feature associated with the operation of the windmill;
- the structure might possibly have been associated with the substantial stone quarrying activity known to have been carried out in this location.

Further archaeological investigation would be needed to more fully characterise the passage and to help identify its original and subsequent purposes. Further historical research will be carried out by Aberlady Conservation Society.

A summary statement of the results of this archaeological work will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 5 and an entry will be submitted in the OASIS database.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This excavation could not have gone ahead without the cooperation and understanding extended by Kilspindie Golf Club and Wemyss & March Estate.

Many thanks are also due to Ivan Young and Alison Boutland of Grampian Speleology Group who assisted in the evaluation while also lending a hand shifting a considerable amount of soil! Andy Neustein of Aberlady Conservation Society also helped in the necessary backfilling. Without their help the work would not have gone so smoothly.

Ian Malcolm, Project Manager for the local community heritage project, *Aberlady Bay: Heritage, Pilgrimage and Archaeology*, of which this excavation forms part, contributed to the content of this report.

7. REFERENCES

Forrest, W 1802 Map of *Haddingtonshire*
Greenwood, C, Fowler, W and Sharp T 1844 Map of *East Lothian*
Ordnance Survey First Edition 1854 *Haddingtonshire* sheet 4 six inch to one mile
Utzi, E 2008 *The smugglers cave, Aberlady, East Lothian, Ground Penetrating Radar Survey* unpublished CFA report, no 1545.

Appendix 1: Context Register

Context no	Slot	Feature	Dimensions	Description
001		Topsoil	Depth of deposit c. 0.5m to 0.6m	Mid to dark brown sandy loam
002	2 (continues out of trench)	Overburden	Depth of deposit c.1.5m (continues out of trench)	Mid brown sand with sub angular stones and mortar flecks
003	2	Possible relict surface layer	0.2m deep (continues out of trench)	Dark brown sand with coal fleck inclusions. Wall (005) and (006) have been built over (003)
004	2	Natural marine sand	Unknown due to limit of excavation	Yellow sand with small rounded pebbles and grits
005	2	Wall	0.4m wide, 1.5m high, (length unknown as continues out of trench)	Coursed sandstone wall, partially mortared (first 0.75m inward), partially of dry stone construction
006	2	Wall	0.7m high (length and width unknown as continues out of trench)	Small dry stone wall running parallel to (005)
007	Not used			
008	1	Deposit	Depth of deposit 0.4/0.5m (continues out of trench)	Dark brown sand, overlaying rock outcrop and natural shale deposit
009	2	Deposit	Unknown due to limit of excavation	Light brown to dark yellow sand acting as possible packing material behind wall (005)
010	2	Mortar bonding	c.0.75m in length, 0.4m wide and 1.5m high	Mortar bonding associated with the first 0.75m of wall (005)

Appendix 2: Photographic Register

35mm slide no.	Digital image no.	Description	From	Conditions
	1-4	Pre-excavation shots of cave	N and NE	Bright but feature in shadow
	5	Pre-excavation shots of cave	E	Bright but feature in shadow
	6-7	Working shot of area West of wall – detailing void emerging	N	Bright
1-4	8-9	Slot 1 – post-excavation shot	N	Bright
5-8	10-11	Slot – post excavation shot	N	Shadow
9-10	12-13	Un mortared wall (006) and soil profile above	E	Shadow
11	14	Plan view of shot 2	S	Shadow
12 – 13	16 – 17	Wall (005)	NW	Shadow
14-15	18	General shot showing (003) running under (005)	NW	Shadow
	19-20	General shot of trench showing trench backfilled	E,	Bright into shadow
	21-22	General shot of trench showing trench backfilled	N	Bright into shadow

35mm slide no.	Digital image no.	Description	From	Conditions
	23-24	General shot of trench showing trench backfilled	NNW	Bright into shadow
	25	Close up of general shot showing trench backfilled	NNW	Bright into shadow

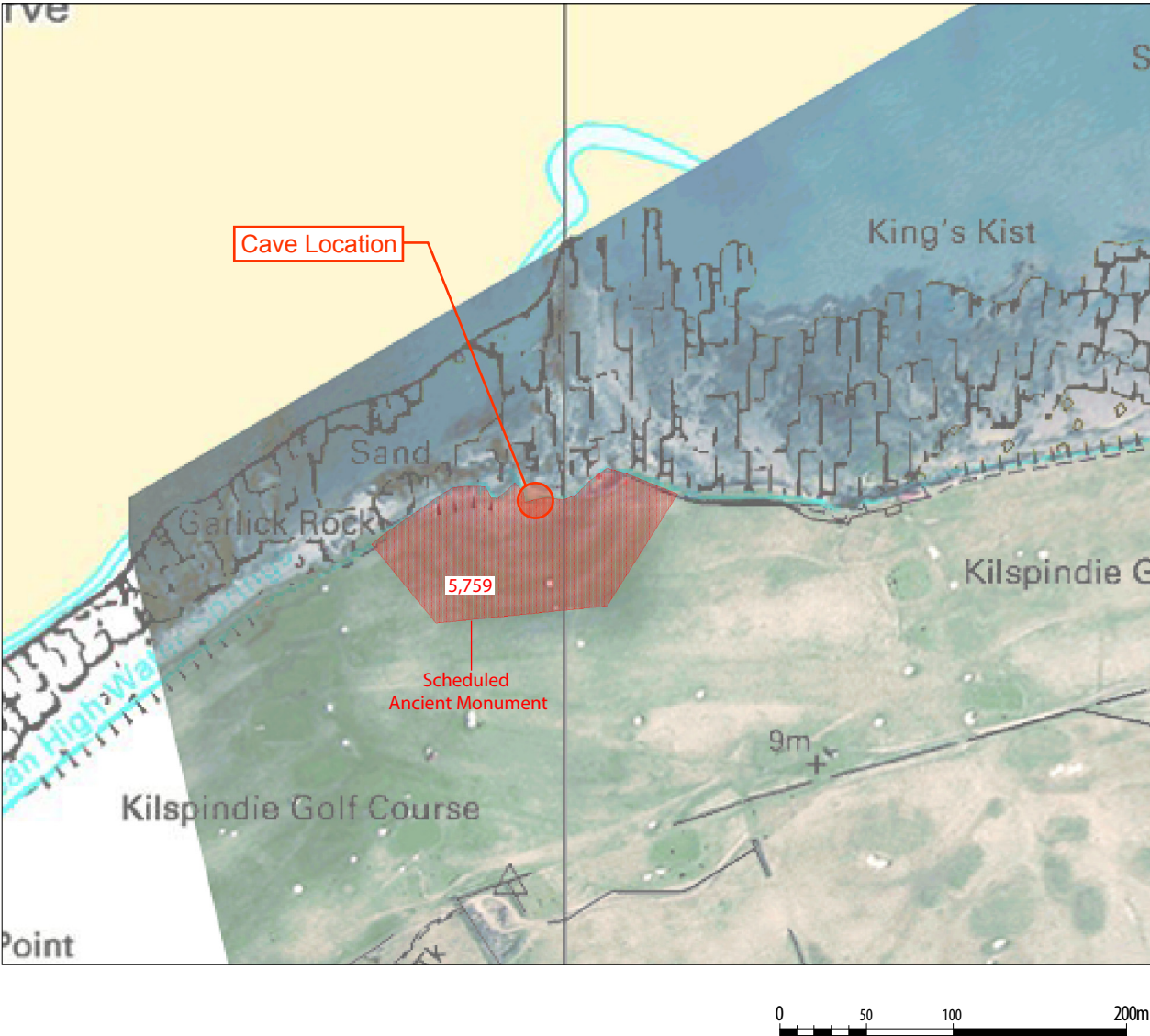
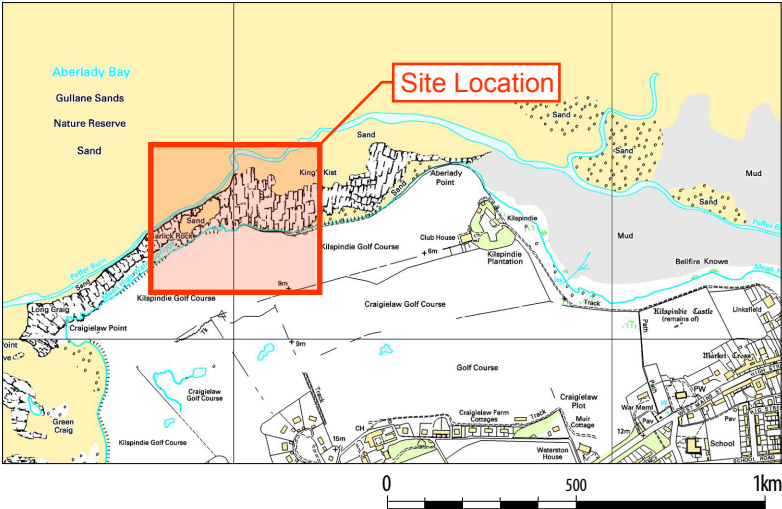
Appendix 3: Drawing Register

Drawing no	Sheet no	Description	Plan/Section/Profile	Scale
1	1	Trench plan showing 001-002, 004 – 009, 010	P	1:20
2	2	Trench section detailing slots 1 and 2, showing 001 – 009	S	1:20
3	2	Profile of Slot 1	Pr	1:20
4	2	South-east facing section of slot 2 showing 002, 003, 004 and 006	S	1:20

Appendix 4: Finds Register

Context	find type	No	Wt	Description	Date
001	pot	6	43	REFW, 4 plain, 2 transfer-print	19th c.
001	pot	2	42	LGRE, BG int	18th/19th c.
001	pot	1	33	LSRW bowl rim	18th/19th c.
001	glass	1	98	green bottle neck, string ring	M.18th-E.19th c.
001	Ae	1	4	flat disc stud with short pin	pmed
001	bone	1	20	large mammal lb frag	
002	pot	1	11	REFW creamware	18th c.
002	pot	1	9	LSRW bowl rim, partial slip	18th/19th c.
002	CBM	1	24	pantile	pmed
003	clay pipe	1	4	frag of stem & fluted bowl	L.18/E.19th c.
003	bone	1	28	large mammal rib frag	
002	glass	1	129	green bottle neck, string ring	M.18th-E.19th c.
002	bone	2	41	large mammal ?mandible, medium mammal rib	

Key: REFW – refined factory-made whitewares; LGRE – late glazed redwares; LSRW – late slipped redwares.



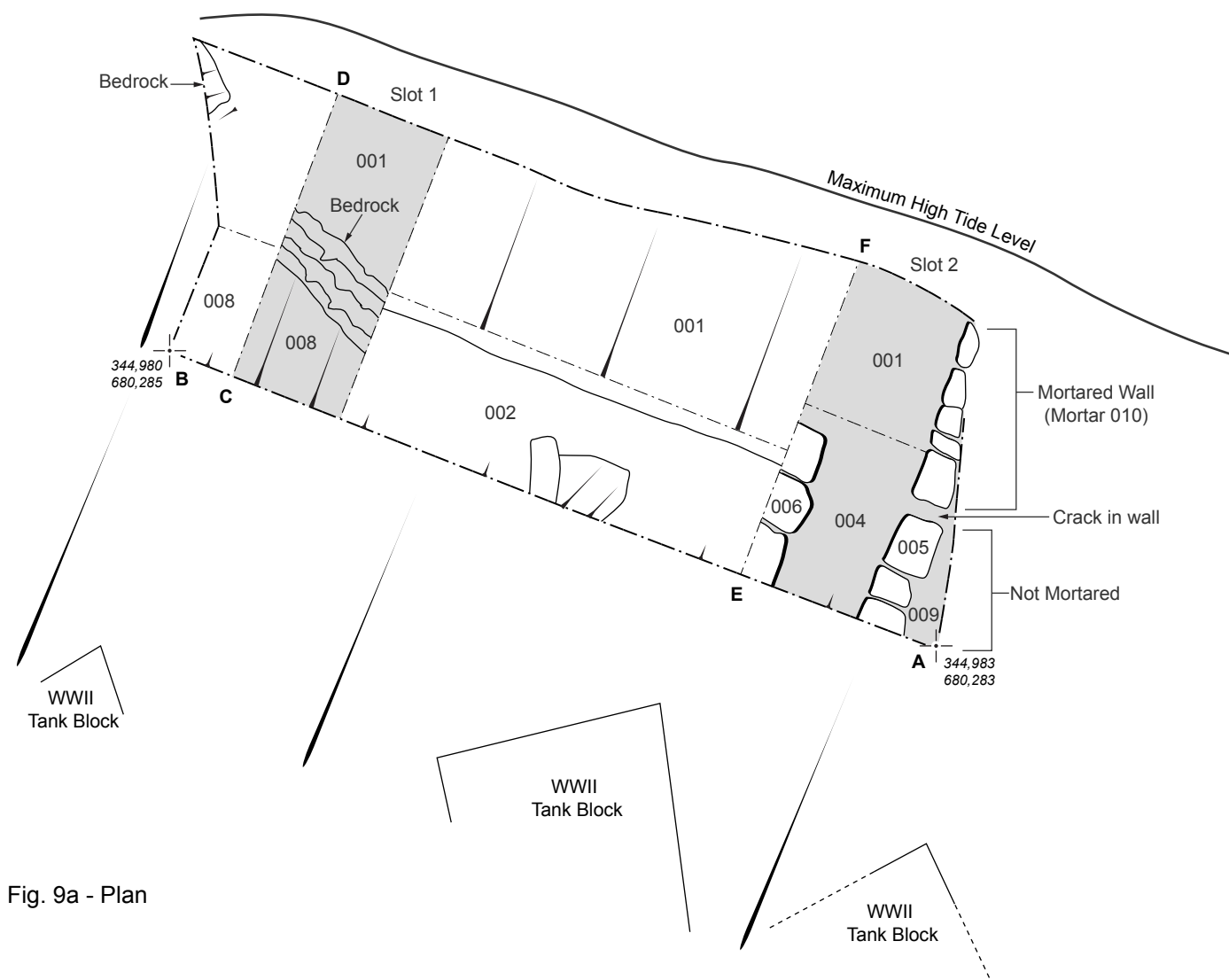


Fig. 9a - Plan



Fig.9b - Northeast-facing section showing Slot 1 & 2

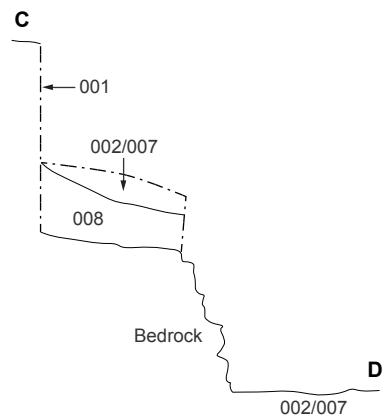


Fig.10a - Southeast-facing section of Slot 1

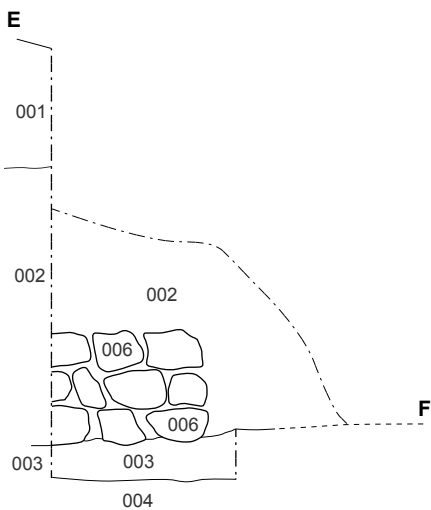


Fig.10b - Southeast-facing section of Slot 2

Key:
- - - - - Limit of excavation

Scale: 50 cm 0 1 m

Fig. No: 10a-b Revision: A Client: Aberlady Conservation Society (ACS)
Title:
Project: Aberlady Heritage Project

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
The Old Engine House
Eskmills Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
t: 0131 273 4380
f: 0131 273 4381
e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Drawn by: LW Page No: 16