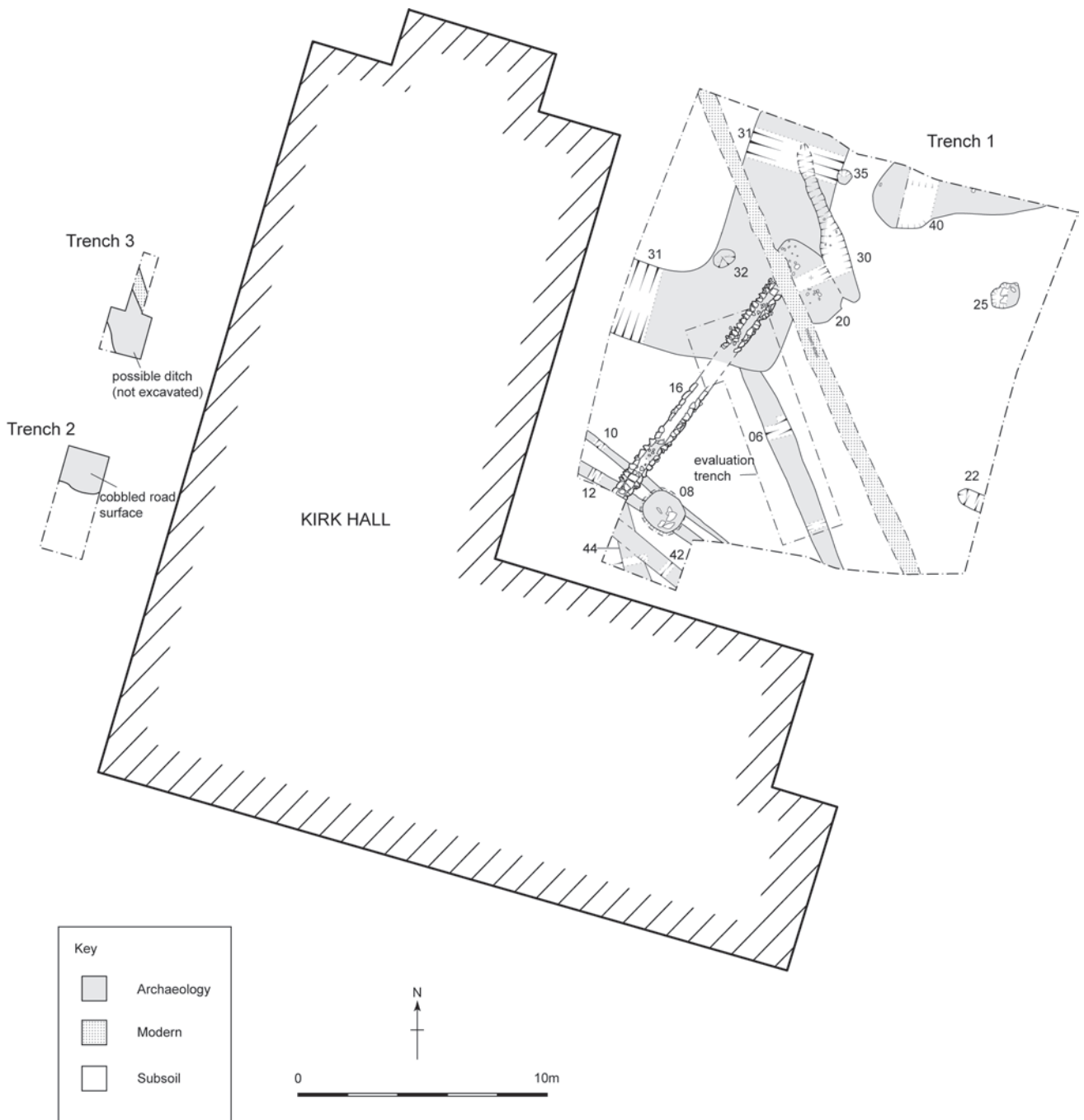


4 Results of the Excavation (illus 2)

4.1 Features pre-dating the fort defences

Two ditches – context 006 (the ditch identified in the evaluation) and context 044 – appear to represent an early phase of activity, pre-dating the defensive ditch (context 031) and the roadside ditches (contexts 010, 012 and 042). Ditch 006 was up to 1.0m wide and 0.3m deep. Its relationship to Ditch

031 could not be clearly discerned, but the fact that Ditch 006 was not observed to cut the later drain (context 016) rules out the possibility (suggested by its shared alignment with linear Feature 030 and the modern drain cutting across the site) that Ditch 006 might be stratigraphically late. It could not be seen continuing to the north-west beyond Ditch 031. Ditch 044 was parallel with Ditch 006



Illus 2 Cramond Kirk Hall: site plan

and had similar dimensions. It also appears to be an early feature, as it was cut by Ditch 042, the southernmost of the roadside ditches, and by Drain 016. It could be traced for less than 3m, and did not continue to the north-west of Drain 016.

These ditches are on a different alignment to the fort defences, and cut across the projected line of the road, suggesting that they are unrelated to the fort. However, a sherd of amphora was recovered from the fill of Ditch 006 during the evaluation, confirming a Roman, rather than prehistoric, date. The character of this early activity is unclear, given the small area available for investigation and the slight nature of the evidence.

4.2 The defensive ditch

Ditch 031 is interpreted as part of an outer line of defences around the fort, turning to the west where it flanks the road approaching the gateway, possibly looped together with the inner two ditches recorded in earlier excavations. It was up to 3.1m wide and at least 0.95m deep, with a fairly shallow profile; below this depth, groundwater flooding the feature made excavation impossible, and in neither of the two excavated sections was the ditch bottomed. The original shape of the ditch thus remains uncertain. The homogeneous silty fill and eroded profile observed in both sections indicate that the ditch had filled up largely due to natural silting processes, rather than deliberate backfilling.

Very little artefactual material was recovered from the ditch, but a Hadrianic/Antonine Greyware sherd from context 018 (the lower fill of the western section) and the absence of diagnostic material of third-century date, suggest that the ditch formed part of the original defences of the fort erected during the mid second century during the Antonine occupation of southern Scotland.

4.3 The road

A cobbled surface covered the northern half of evaluation Trench 2 to the west of the Kirk Hall. Although the surface was not investigated further, and no dating evidence was found, its location is consistent with the southern edge of the Roman road as projected east from the gate of the fort.

The road was not seen in the main excavation area to the east of the Kirk Hall. However, three parallel gullies – contexts 010, 012 and 042 – were found crossing the southern end of the area, on a slightly more south-easterly alignment to that of the *via principalis* within the fort. The southern gully (042) was the largest, being 0.6m wide and 0.4m deep, while Gullies 010 and 012 were slighter features 0.2m deep. The only dating evidence from any of these gullies was an amphora sherd from the fill of Gully 042.

The Roman road running east from the fort has

been recorded in two locations (Hoy 1990; Gooder 2000), which suggests that it changed direction at some point outside the fort, leading to the south-east rather than continuing the alignment of the *via principalis*. As the road does not appear within the excavation area to the east of the Kirk Hall, it must bend to the south-east before reaching this point. The three parallel gullies can perhaps be understood as roadside drainage ditches flanking the road, which would lie just beyond the southern limit of excavation. If this interpretation is correct, it would imply repeated re-cutting of the roadside ditches, and therefore perhaps an extended period of use for the road.

4.4 Later developments: disuse of the ditch and encroachment of the extramural settlement

The defensive Ditch 031 appears to have silted up naturally after it went out of use, although it is not possible to discount some deliberate backfilling. A low concentration of charred cereal grains from context 038 (the upper fill of the northern section through the ditch) suggest some sort of continuing occupation in the area at this time. A number of early third-century features cut across the filled-in ditch.

A stone-lined drain (context 016) was constructed, cutting across the upper fills of Ditch 031 and two of the roadside ditches (010 and 012). The edges were lined with irregular stone slabs, but only at the southern end of the feature was the base lined with stones. Amphora sherds were found on the base elsewhere, and may have been used as a lining. The drain was truncated at the north-east end by a modern drain and terminated in a pit (context 020). The drain was filled with a stony soil deposit (context 015), which contained large quantities of pottery, animal bone and metalwork of Severan (early third-century) date. These included objects too large to have been washed into a covered drain, confirming that it must have been an open feature at the time they were deposited. The size and character of the finds assemblage from this feature could suggest deliberate dumping of refuse. Pit 020, an oval flat-bottomed feature 3.5 × 1.6m wide and 0.4m deep, had a lower fill of brown clayey silt and a darker upper fill with very frequent subangular stones. This was interpreted by the excavators as a soakaway for the drain, but the upper fill contained medieval as well as Roman pottery; an assemblage of charred bread/club wheat from this deposit is also consistent with a medieval, rather than Roman, date. This does not disprove the original interpretation, as later disturbance or final backfilling of the pit may have taken place at a much later date.

A deep pit (context 008), 1.5m wide and more than 1.3m deep, is interpreted as a well. It was not bottomed but was capped and preserved in situ within the development. A wooden or other organic

lining, which has decayed, must be envisaged as no evidence of a stone lining was found. The largest and most closely datable finds assemblages from the excavation came from the top and lower fills of the well (contexts 007 and 026). The pottery from both deposits was Commodan or Severan, indicating that the filling of the feature post-dated the abandonment of the Antonine Wall at about AD 160.

An irregular linear feature (context 030) and a small pit (context 032) may be broadly contempo-

rory with the drain and the well, as they cut the upper fill of Ditch 031, and both contained Roman pottery. The function of these features is unclear. Three other small pits (contexts 022, 025 and 035) were undated; these are just as likely to be medieval as Roman because two broad pits (contexts 020 and 040) were found to contain medieval sherds as well as residual Roman material.