



**Earl Grey's bathing pool  
Howick foreshore**

County of Northumberland

April 2018



**Howick Foreshore  
Northumberland  
NE66 3LB**

NGR: NU 26198 17458

OASIS reference: **xxx**

CITiZAN region: North

Report on a CITiZAN site survey

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## Summary

This report presents the results of a survey and training session carried out by CITIZAN, (the Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network, hereafter Citizan), at Howick in Northumberland on the East Coast. The foreshore here is owned by the Crown Estate and in a designated SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).

As part of the England wide Citizan programme to survey inter-tidal archaeological features at risk, or threatened by coastal erosion and tidal scour, a baseline survey was carried out on the site between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016 and the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The first of these surveys was conducted as a training event with two volunteers; during this survey the rock-cut pool, Citizan Feature 81840 was recorded. As part of this training event a guided walk and an interactive app recording session was undertaken along the Howick foreshore between the Bathing House and Sugar Sands. The second training session was conducted as part of the filming for an episode of “Britain at Low Tide” (Season 1, Episode 1). During this training session Citizan staff and volunteers, along with staff from the Mola field team recorded the rock-cut bathing pool to the south of the Bathing House (Citizan Feature 81843) and an assemblage of metal hooks and rock-cut post holes associated with the pool (Citizan Feature 81844). In March 2018 a monitoring to the area was conducted by Citizan staff, during which the pool (Citizan Feature 81842) to the north of the Bathing House was recorded.

During the two training events several other features were recorded on the foreshore, these included the remnants of a submerged forest (Citizan Feature 81892), the timber legs of a possible crane (Citizan Feature 81904) and the remains of the Tadorne (Citizan Feature 37905), a French trawler wrecked in 1928. Further information on these features can be found on Citizan’s web-mounted, interactive map (<https://citizan.org.uk/interactive-coastal-map/>).

# Acknowledgements

The work of Citizan would not be possible without the support of our volunteers, sponsors and project partners.

Citzan would like to thank: Angus Stephenson and Matthew Chaddock and all the volunteers who helped record the features at the site, including additional CITIZAN Staff. As well as Natural England for supplying us with SSSI permission to undertake the work.

Citzan is funded by a generous grant of £1.4 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with match funding from the Crown Estate and National Trust and additional support from Historic England. Citzan is hosted by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology); our regional teams are based with MOLA in London and with our partners the Council for British Archaeology in York and Nautical Archaeology Society in Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

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An archaeological survey was carried out by Citizan at Howick, Northumberland, NE66 ('the site') as part of two training sessions on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016 and during a monitoring visit on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018. During the first training event a rock-cut pool was recorded; this pool is situated at National Grid Reference (NGR) NU 26124 16939, approximately 500m south of the holiday cottage known as the Bathing House. The second survey recorded a rock-cut pool and an assemblage of metal hooks and rock-cut post holes associated with the pool, located at NGR NU 26198 17459, directly below the Bathing House. The third survey recorded a further rock-cut pool and the steps accessing it, located 0.03km north-east of the Bathing House at NGR NU 26173 17535.

During the two training events several other features were recorded on the foreshore, these included the remnants of a submerged forest (Citizan Feature 81892), the timber legs of a possible crane (Citizan Feature 81904), a sandstone quarry (Citizan Feature 82741) and a narrow landing point (Citizan Feature 82104). Particular attention was paid to the remains of the Tadorne (Citizan Feature 37905), a French trawler wrecked in 1928. The location of the wreck of the British submarine G11 (Citizan Feature 81839) was also identified and recorded.

A Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment (RCZA) was previously prepared by Historic England which covers the area of the site (Burn 2010). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology and a detailed archaeological and historical background for the area.

The landowner of the site is the Crown Estate. The site is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest under the Northumberland SSSI. The Bathing House is Grade II Listed (LB number 1041801), as are the wall surrounding the Bathing House and the steps to the east of the building (LB number 1153943). The 'coach house' immediately to the west of the Bathing House is also Grade II Listed (LB number 1371201).

Initial site reconnaissance was carried out at the site by the Citizan team on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 with a subsequent visit on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016. A method statement was subsequently prepared by Citizan taking into account health and safety issues, tidal windows, staffing and methodologies. This document is the report on the survey work carried out to record the three rock-cut pools.

## 1.2 Research frameworks

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All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the North East Regional Framework for the Historic Environment (Petts 2006) and the national Maritime and Marine Historical Environmental Research Framework (Ransley and Sturt 2013).

### National framework

Within the National Maritime Archaeological Research Agenda for England the current survey falls under purview of Chapter 8 'Early Modern and Industrial, c1650-1850 and helps answer one of the key research questions established in section 8.2.4.

- How did changes during this period affect people's perception and use of the maritime landscape? Can we identify effects at local, regional or national scale?

## Regional frameworks

While the survey work conducted by Citizan does not easily fit within the Regional Framework, Citizan argue that the swimming pools of Earl Grey are a planned landscape with similarities to more formally recognised planned landscapes such as parks, gardens and cemeteries. As a result the survey work conducted by Citizan moves towards fulfilling recommendation L15.

- L15 The existing Register of Historic Parks and Gardens should be supplemented by a ‘local list’ of sites of regional, rather than national, importance.

Furthermore the Regional Research Agenda’s chapter for Research Strategy recommends:

- MG31. Local fieldwork contractors should be encouraged to explore the use of the internet for publication of their fieldwork. English Heritage might provide a financial contribution to an initial pilot project. Agreement should be reached about hosting and long-term survival of online publications.
- MG33. Professional training in basic archaeological techniques should be provided for local societies, including field-walking, excavation recording, surveying, documentary research, finds identification and analysis, and publication.

The survey was carried out within the terms of one or more of the Citizan themes and research priorities developed for the project.

- a) Coastal settlement and industries
- b) Coastal erosion

## 1.3 Aims and objectives

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The following research aims and objectives were established:

- To enhance the archaeological record for the landscape of pools at Howick
- To establish whether these features are at risk of erosion or damage
- To provide training for archaeological volunteers

## 1.4 Scope of the survey

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A Citizan survey is not the same as full excavation. It is designed to locate and identify significant archaeological features currently exposed on the coast or foreshore and highlights those that are under threat from erosive forces. These surveys provide a baseline dataset so that their condition can be effectively monitored in the future.

To this end Citizan has developed a smartphone app to enable its volunteers to quickly and effectively record archaeological remains. Citizan has also established a standardised system of survey, monitoring and web-based recording across England. This system is fully compatible with that used in Scotland by Scotland’s Coastal Heritage at Risk Project (SCHARP).

## 2 Background research

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the RCZA for this section of coastline (Burn 2010). A brief resume is provided here:

### 2.1 Topography

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The topography of the Howick coastline consists of sharply raising, low cliffs interspersed with narrow sandy bays. The Bathing House sits on a limestone spur some 10m OD above the rock-cut bathing pools.

The overlying superficial geology of the cliff tops along the Howick coast consist of unsorted Devesian till, while the superficial geology of bay consist of windblown sand. The underlying bedrock geology consists of mudstone, sandstone and limestone of the Stainmore Formation (British Geological Survey).

### 2.2 Archaeology and documentary evidence

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Howick Hall is the ancestral home of the Grey family, the current building was constructed for Sir Henry Grey, the First Earl Grey in 1782, the building was remodelled for his nephew, Charles the Second Earl Grey in 1807. The Second Earl Grey and his wife, Mary, had fifteen children and also cared for the child Grey had with the Duchess of Devonshire. The Greys educated their children at home and in the mid-19th century created a series of bathing pools on the foreshore at Howick for the use of the family.

In the 1840's Earl Grey requisitioned an extant house on low cliffs overlooking the bay known as Rumbling Kern. The building was converted into what became known as the Bathing House (a Grade II Listed Building – LB 1041801; PRN N14250. See Fig 3) and the Greys installed a caretaker on the ground floor. The building is described in Pevsner as being “superbly sited on the rocky coast east of Howick village. An 18th century cottage remodelled in c1840 for the Grey family, with Tudor windows and tall moulded terracotta chimney pots. The salt wind has eaten deep into the sandstone dressings” (Pevsner *et al* 2002, 352).

At the same time the house was converted a small coach house was constructed landward of the Bathing House to store a buggy or trap (Grade II Listed Building – LB 1371201; PRN N14250. See Fig 4) and a set of sheltered steps constructed to run through the property’s boundary wall and onto the cliffside (Grade II Listed Building – LB 1153943; PRN N14239. See Fig 5). A pair of bathing pools were cut into the bedrock of the foreshore, possibly at the same time of the construction of the coach house and steps. The first pool (Pool 1) is located to the north of the bluff that the Bathing House stands on and is accessed directly from the grounds of the house. The second pool (Pool 2) is located to the south of the bluff and can be accessed by scrambling down the low cliff from the Bathing House or from the beach adjacent to Rumbling Kern.

A third rock-cut pool was cut approximately 500m south of the Bathing House on the southern edge of the bay known as Howick Haven. Pool 3 was located a short distance from the Greys boathouse, which was used to store a small boat to enable transfer to larger vessels anchored off shore (Northumberland Federation of Women’s Institutes 1994).



## 3 Survey methodology

### 3.1 Training methodology

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The survey was conducted as part of a 2-day Citizen training session and one-day workshop.

A full, 2-day CITiZAN training session consists of a half-day classroom session that includes briefings on site background, appropriate archaeological methodology, health and safety on the foreshore and legislation and organisations responsible for operations in the intertidal zone such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and the Receiver of Wrecks, in conjunction with a day's fieldwork; along with visits to the wider foreshore around the feature of interest. One-day training workshops consist of a shorter classroom session concentrating on a narrower field of interest, followed by a half-day of on-site practical work. Recording events are short fieldwork sessions designed to target specific archaeological fieldwork objectives, such as recording a newly exposed area of a previously recorded feature or monitor the effects of coastal erosion on a feature.

On completion of a full training session volunteers qualify for a CITiZAN Archaeology Skills Passport in which to record learnt skills.

All Citizen events which include some level of public participation (full training sessions, training workshops, recording events and outreach events) will contain a 'toolbox talk' or on-site health and safety brief prior to the beginning of any event in order to highlight specific concerns.

### 3.2 Field methodology

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Intrusive archaeological methods will not be used during Citizen training and outreach events, with the exception of surface cleaning to reveal obscured archaeological detail (to a maximum depth of 80mm). Wooden features will not be cleaned with metal tools, where necessary they will be cleaned with soft brushes, sponges or the direct application of low pressure water as appropriate.

Targeted environmental sampling will occasionally be conducted during Citizen training and outreach events. Where environmental sampling is to be used a detailed methodology will be included in.

Areas/features were cleaned by hand and surveyed by the Citizen volunteer team, supervised by a member of CITiZAN staff.

All features were located using a hand held Garmin eTrex 10 with an accuracy of plus or minus 3m.

### 3.3 Recording methodology

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A written and drawn record of appropriate features was carried out using Citizen proformas and the Citizen app. Hand written notes were taken in the field to record the findings of on-site analysis of features during monitoring visits, workshops and training seasons as necessary. These were notes on the fabric, form, function and evidence of past changes to features. All hand written notes will be included in the material to be archived.

All appropriate features were photographed using suitable high end digital, medium and large format cameras. The photographic record illustrates all significant phases, structures, important stratigraphic and structural relationships, and individual items of interest. All site photographs, except 'working shots', will include a photographic scale of appropriate size.

All photographs are taken using digital cameras; MOLA does not use colour or black and white film.

Appropriate features were planned at a scale of 1:50, 1:20 or 1:10 as applicable, sections and elevations were drawn at a scale of 1:10 where necessary.

The drawn site records, the completed CAD drawings presented in the report and the use of existing survey drawings will conform to the conventions and procedures laid out in Museum of London Archaeology's Archaeological Site Manual (MOLAS 1994).

Other digital illustration programs, beside CAD, may be used where appropriate in the production of report drawings. All drawings used to illustrate the report will conform to the conventions and procedures laid out in Museum of London Archaeology's Archaeological Site Manual (MOLAS 1994).

Where appropriate, features will be recorded using the Citizan app. Sites recorded using the app will be moderated by Citizan staff and uploaded to Citizan's webhosted interactive map.

### 3.4 Recovery and ownership of finds

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Citzan is focused on recording and monitoring structures, landscapes and archaeological features and will not systematically collect finds. However in certain circumstances finds of specific and unique intrinsic interest may be recovered. These finds will in general fall under the terms of the Treasure Act 1996.

In the event of 'Treasure' being recovered during a Citizan training or outreach event the artefacts in question will be reported to the local coroner and surrendered to the regional Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer.

## 4 Results

For feature locations see *Fig 21*.

For a plan of Pool 3 see *Fig 2*.

### 4.1 Pool 1

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Pool 1 (see *Fig 7*) was a sub-rectangular pool cut into the bedrock at the base of narrow crevice to the northwest of the Bathing House. It was located against the side of a vertical sandstone cliff, with a height of 10m. The pool was accessed directly from the grounds of the Bathing House by several flights of steps, with access from the surrounding foreshore extremely difficult. As a result the pool was highly secluded, not being visible from the surrounding foreshore until the viewer is immediately adjacent to the pool and was not overlooked by the clifftop path.

Pool 1 measured 4.00m by 3.10m in size and had an extant depth of 1.20m. The pool was partially filled with beach rubble and collapsed slabs of sandstone cliff, so it was not possible to establish the full depth of the pool. At low tide the pool contained 0.50m of standing water. The pool was connected to the open sea by a narrow channel that entered the pool in the northeastern corner, on average the channel measured 0.50m by 0.50m (see *Fig 8*).

The pool was reached by two short flights of steps and a series of single steps cut into the bedrock (see *Fig 6*) between them. The lower flight of seven steps, that provides immediate access to the pool, measured 2.50m in length, 1.20m in width and fell a vertical height of 1.00m. The average depth of each step was 0.15m. The upper flight of steps was located on private property, and it was not possible to survey them. Connecting these flights of stone built steps were a series of individual steps cut directly into the bedrock, the biggest of which measure 0.35m by 0.40m, with a depth of 0.02m.

### 4.2 Pool 2

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The second pool (see *Fig 9*) was cut into the sloping bedrock of the foreshore to the south of the Bathing House and was overlooked by the clifftop path and the upper room of the Bathing House, the pool was also visible from the sandy bay to the south of the pool.

Pool 2 measured 6.20m by 5.00m in size and had an extant depth of approximately 2.00m. At low tide the pool contained approximately 1.20m of standing water. The northern, western and eastern sides of the pool were all sharply cut, with pronounced straight edges and rounded corners, whereas the southern edge of the pool appeared to have been uncut and seemed to follow the natural slope of the bedrock. A square cut channel joined the southeastern corner of the pool to a shallow, sloping natural crevice which in turn opened into the sea. The channel measured 0.50m in width and approximately 0.50m in depth. Running along the western edge of the pool, below the standing water was a narrow ledge, which appeared to have been cut flat and slightly deepened for a distance of 1.00m. It is possible that this feature functioned as a bench or seat within the pool. On the upper surface of the bedrock, directly adjacent to this area of deepening where three small, rock-cut sockets separated by a distance of 1.54m. Although somewhat eroded each socket appeared to have been rectangular in shape and measured c0.09m by 0.10m in size. Each socket had been filled by a greyish-white metal, which had the appearance of melted and re-hardened lead, contained within this greyish-white substance were the remnants of square-shafted iron objects. Each of these iron objects measured approximately 15mm by 60mm. It is possible that these sockets represented the remains of an iron stepladder to enable safe access to the pool.

The bedrock to the west of Pool 2 appeared to have been reduced in height by approximately 0.05m to create a flat, though still sloped, platform that measured approximately 5.5m by 6m. Cut into this platform were seven square sockets (see Fig 12) arranged in pairs, to form a triangle. A short distance to the east of this arrangement was a circular socket (see Fig 11), positioned so it was on the centre line of the triangle of square sockets. Each of the square-cut postholes had rounded corners and measured 0.07m by 0.09m and had depth of 0.07m. Arranged around the perimeter of the platform were 29 square-hafted iron hooks (see Fig 10). These hooks measured 0.07m in height with a head that measured 0.04m in width, the haft of each hook measured 0.03m by 0.03m. The hooks had been sunk into small, square cut sockets and secured in place with a greyish-white metal. It is thought that these sockets and hooks secured a tent or canopy over the platform to provide the bathers with some protection from the elements.

A short distance to the north of the pool a sandstone bluff reached a height of approximately 4.5m above the platform and the pool. Cut into the bluff, approximately 1m above the height of the pool was a short bench (see Fig 13). The bench's set measured 1.60m in length and 0.37m in depth and had a seat height of 0.30m. The bench had a well-faced backrest which measures 1.60m in length and 0.40m in height. In front of the bench the bluff had been levelled to create a small platform that measured 1.36m by 1.78m.

### 4.3 Pool 3

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Approximately 500m to the south of Pool 2 a third large feature had been cut into the bedrock on the southern edge of the bay known as Howick Haven. Pool 3 (see Fig 14) was a sub-rectangular feature the northern side of which measured 4.50m in length, the eastern side of the feature measured 3.80m in length and the southern edge of the feature measured 3.32m in length. The western side of the pool measured 4.10m in length, 3.00m from the northern end of the pool a broad set of steps had been cut into the bedrock leading from the foreshore into the rock-cut feature. The flight of steps measured 1.10m by 1.40m in size and consisted of four steps of differing widths. The first step measured 0.39m in width, the third step measured 0.20m in width and the second and fourth steps measured 0.10m in width. On the northern side of the feature the pool had a depth of 0.50m, while the rest of the feature had a depth of 0.70m.

The bedrock in this area of the foreshore sloped naturally towards the north, in the northeastern corner of the feature this natural slope had been enhanced by a rock-cut gully. This gully had a width of 4.00m and a depth of 0.20m and sloped towards the sea at an angle of approximately 30 degrees.

All three pools are underwater at high tide.

### 4.4 Training results

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The training event conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July was attended by two adult volunteers, neither of whom were local to the site. The training event conducted on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July was attended by a single adult volunteer and two under-16 year old volunteers, all of whom were local to this area of Northumberland. (See Figs 15 and 16.)

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 General discussion of the survey

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It has been suggested that these three features may have originally been quarries cut for the recovery of limestone, which were later repurposed as bathing pools. However, the author would argue that the small size of the features and their irregular shape argue against this.

Attitudes towards public bathing in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were more reserved than today; with public bathing being a very private experience, male and female bathing often occurred on separate beaches. This attitude may be represented in the locations of Pool 1 and Pool 2. Pool 1 seems to have been positioned so that it was obscured from the view of people passing along the clifftop pathway. The access to the pool was also screened from view, with the stairs leading to the pool flanked by tall walls so as to provide a discrete route down to the foreshore for bathers. Pool 2 is significantly more visible from the surrounding landscape and overlooked by the Bathing House, suggesting that privacy was less of an issue for the users of this pool. Furthermore, Pool 2 was provided with more amenities than Pool 1 with the facilities for the erection of a portable shelter and seating surrounding the pool. Therefore, it is suggested that Pool 1 may have been intended for the use of Earl Grey and his wife, while Pool 2 may have been intended for the use of their children.

While Pool 3 is similar in form to the first two pools being cut into the limestone bedrock with a set of rock-cut steps leading into it for access, it is located approximately 500m south of the Bathing House and Pools 1 and 2 and may not be directly related to them. It has been suggested that Pool 3 is a fish hully or bratt hole similar to those located at Cresswell (Citizan feature: 81925) or Beadnell (Porteous 2013, 48). However, these features all have narrow lips cut around the edge of the features to enable lids to be fitted to prevent the escape of the catch within. Pool 3 does not have this feature, so seems unlikely to be a hully or bratt hole. The stairs giving access to the feature also seem to argue against this and perhaps suggests that it is a bathing pool.

### 5.2 Answering original research aims

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- To enhance the archaeological record for the landscape of pools at Howick

The structures associated with the Bathing House are recorded on Historic England's List and Northumberland's HER (see Section 2.2) no previous records existed for the three pools and the associated features. An archaeological record has now been produced and will be lodged with the Regional Historic Environment Record.

- To establish whether these features are at risk of erosion or damage

While Pools 2 and 3 do not appear to be at immediate risk of erosion the steps providing access from the Bathing House grounds to Pool 1 have begun to erode. Pool 1 is also starting to be filled by large slabs of sandstone that appear to have collapsed from the cliff above the pool.

- To provide training for archaeological volunteers

Local archaeological volunteers were trained during the event run on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

## 5.3 Further work

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It is suggested that a detailed survey of the steps leading to Pool 1, the pool itself and the access channel to the sea is conducted using a DGPS in order to create a full record of this landscape before it is lost by coastal erosion.

## 6 Dissemination

The results of the survey will be made publicly available on the Citizan website: <http://www.citizen.org.uk/>. The feature data will be uploaded to the Citizan interactive database, to allow ease of future long-term monitoring of the site via the Citizan online interactive map and smart phone app and to permit inclusion of the data in any future academic researches into coastal and intertidal archaeology. This can be found at <http://www.citizen.org.uk/interactive-coastal-map/>.

Records created by this survey will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) where it will make up a part of the archive of all data and materials created by Citizan. It will be deposited with appropriate local repositories via the ADS.

A short note on the results of the survey will be submitted to the appropriate journals to be included in annual county and period fieldwork round-ups.

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Figure 1

Location of probable bathing pools, Howick foreshore  
 OS Open Data. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2014)

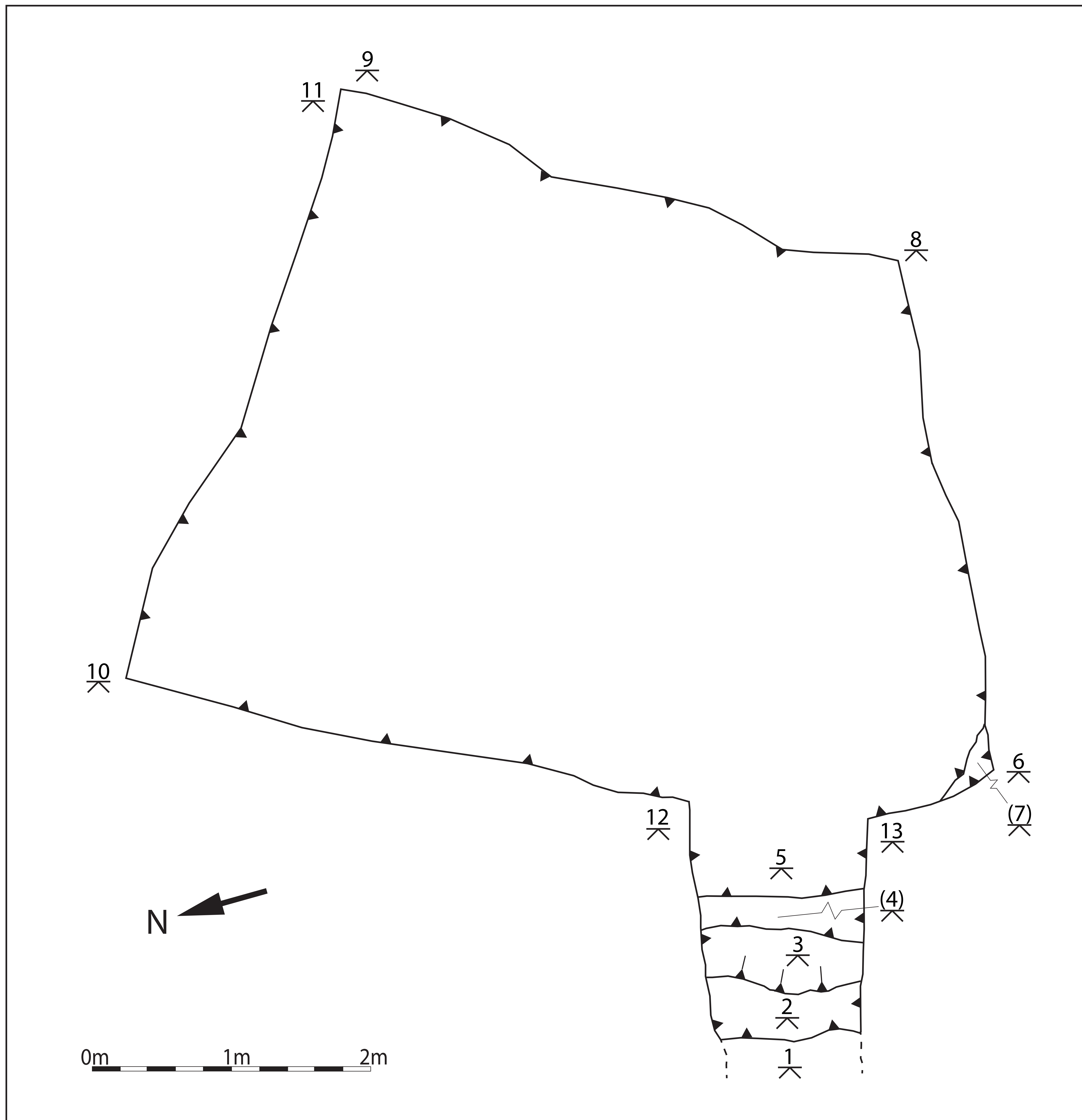


Fig. 2  
Plan of pool 3



Fig 3: The Bathing House, view to the Northeast



*Fig 4: The Listed outbuilding, possibly a 'coach house', view to the west*



*Fig 5: The Listed wall and steps leading to Pool 1, view to the east*



*Fig 6: One of the rock-cut steps on the foreshore leading to Pool 1*



*Fig 7: Pool 1 showing steps leading down from the Bathing House on the left, view to the west*



*Fig 8: Access channel from Pool 1 to the sea, view to the east*



*Fig 9: Pool 2 (centre ground), view to the south*



*Fig 10: An iron hook forming part of the portable shelter*



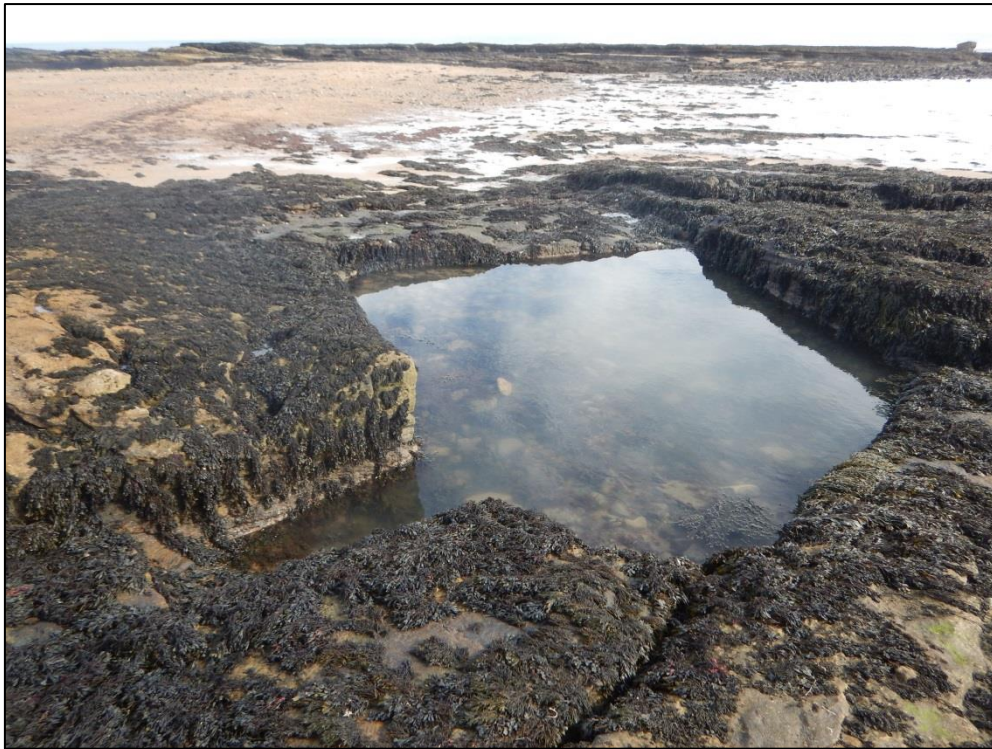
*Fig 11: Circular rock-cut posthole, forming part of the portable shelter*



*Fig 12: Four of the square, rock-cut postholes, forming part of the portable shelter*



*Fig 13: The rock-cut bench, view to the south*



*Fig 14: Pool 3, view to the northeast*





*Fig 15: Citizen volunteers and staff recording Pool 3*



*Fig 16: Recording Pool 1, view to the southwest. Taken from the pool level*