

Prehistoric Fen Edge Activity at the Sutton Gault Irrigation Reservoir Extension



Archaeological Evaluation Report



April 2010

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**Late Mesolithic, Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Fen Edge Activity at the
Sutton Gault Irrigation Reservoir Extension**

Archaeological Evaluation

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	6
1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	7
1.2 Geology and topography.....	7
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	7
1.4 Acknowledgements.....	8
2 Aims and Methodology.....	10
2.1 Aims.....	10
2.2 Methodology.....	10
3 Results.....	11
3.1 Introduction	11
3.2 The Buried Soil (Trenches 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 24, 25).....	11
3.3 The Sand Bar (Trenches 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20).....	12
3.4 The Alluvium (Trenches 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22).....	16
3.5 Topsoil Sampling.....	17
3.6 Finds Summary.....	18
3.7 Environmental Summary.....	18
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	19
4.2 Mesolithic Activity.....	19
4.3 The Neolithic and Bronze Age Landscape.....	19
4.4 Later Activity.....	21
4.5 Significance.....	21
4.6 Recommendations.....	22
Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory.....	23
Context Inventory.....	28
Appendix B. Finds Reports.....	34
B.1 Prehistoric Pottery.....	34
B.2 Lithic Report.....	35
B.3 Faunal Remains.....	37

Appendix C. Environmental Report.....	38
C.1 Environmental Remains.....	38
Statement of Research Potential.....	41
Further Work and Methods Statement	41
Appendix D. Bibliography	42
Appendix E. OASIS Report Form	44

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location map
Fig. 2 Trench locations
Fig. 3a - d Trench plans
Fig. 4 Selected sections

List of Plates

- Plate 1 View from sand bar (seen in trench) towards lower ground to the south west
Plate 2 Buried soil in Trench 2
Plate 3 Burnt deposit overlying peat and buried soil (in trench base), Trench 3
Plate 4 Pit **191**, Trench 8, from the north
Plate 5 Pit **176** from the west
Plate 6 Pit **143** from the west
Plate 7 Pit **43** from the south
Plate 8 Ring ditch **156** at south of Trench 17, facing north
Plate 9 Ditch **226** with peaty upper fill

Summary

Between the 7th and 21st of September 2009 OA East conducted an archaeological evaluation on land off Blaby's Drove, North Fen, Sutton Gault (TL 4045 8132) in advance of the proposed extension to an irrigation reservoir.

The site was located on a gravel island raised about 1.50m above surrounding fen. Twenty four trenches were opened. These were located in relation to known flint scatters and possible monuments identified from aerial photographic survey (Palmer and Cox 1996).

Archaeological remains were uncovered across the site with a concentration on a raised sand bar that ran along the south of the proposed development area. Features included Neolithic pits with associated ditches, four partial ring ditches and numerous pits of possible Early Bronze Age date and a pit dating to the Late Mesolithic.

A buried soil was identified below the 'lower' peat to the north west of the sand bar representing an old Neolithic and Bronze Age land surface. This soil contained evidence of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity.

To the north east of the sand bar the ground level dipped slightly and the presence of alluvium suggested that this was the location of a palaeochannel or an ancient marsh. These deposits contained flint working fragments suggesting seasonal occupation in a wet environment.

Burnt hazelnut shells indicate wild foods were utilised and that this site may have been seasonally occupied in the Late Neolithic. The cultivation of crops is indicated by the presence of cereal grains, ditches are evidence for livestock management and field systems. The Early Bronze Age saw the emergence of a more permanent settlement possibly linked to a funerary and ritual landscape.

The evidence found here shows that this site has potential to make a significant contribution to the study of the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age in the Fens.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted between the 7th and 22nd September by Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) at the proposed Sutton Gault irrigation reservoir extension.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; pre planning), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies in Sutton Gault, in the western part of Sutton parish, immediately to the north of Long North Fen Drove (figure 1). It is situated between -0.7m and 1.5m OD on 1st and 2nd terrace river gravels and sand that formed a small island 1.4km across within the prehistoric fen. This gravel overlies Jurassic clays. The gravel island is surrounded by peat deposits interleaved with fen clay (British Geological Survey 1980). The majority of the site lies on a raised sand bar within this island on which most of the features uncovered were located. The edge of this sand bar and the island is particularly noticeable to the south west where the ground drops away by almost 2m to the south (plate 1). To the north east of the sand bar the land falls slightly and alluvial deposits are present. These may have filled a palaeochannel or ancient marsh cutting across the island.
- 1.2.2 Hammond's Eau, believed to follow the line of a palaeochannel of the river Ouse, is located less than 0.5km to the south of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following is a summary taken from Webley and Hiller's forthcoming article in Proceedings of Cambridgeshire Archaeological Society (2009).
- 1.3.2 The North Fen terrace had probably become an island surrounded by the fen by the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age. A major palaeochannel of the River Ouse probably active during the Neolithic/Bronze Age lies 300–400m to the south of the island; its course is approximately followed by the post-medieval drainage work known as Hammond's Eau. Deposits of 'fen clay' to the south and west of the island represent brackish marsh conditions resulting from a marine incursion along the Ouse corridor

during the later Neolithic to early or middle Bronze Age. Freshwater fen lay to the east of the island.

- 1.3.3 Fieldwalking carried out as part of the Fenland Survey discovered several prehistoric sites on the North Fen gravel island (Hall 1996). Two Neolithic flint and pottery scatters were found, one lies within the subject site (SUT1) and may be early Neolithic in date. Soil marks representing round barrows, presumed to date to the early Bronze Age, were also found scattered across the island. Although none lies within the subject site, two are sited close by and a third lies only a few hundred metres to the north. Excavations have been carried out by the Sutton Conservation Society at the SUT7 round barrow, 150m to the north of the subject site. The barrow contained a primary cremation burial within an inverted Collared Urn, radiocarbon dated to 1870–1690 cal BC (3440±30 BP) (Connor 2009). Further fragments of Collared Urns and Food Vessels may derive from ploughed-out secondary burials. Evidence for prehistoric activity on the North Fen island was revealed in 1996 by an 18.8ha evaluation carried out by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (now OA East) immediately to the north of the subject site (Last 1997). A number of areas were identified as having archaeological potential: Trench 4 immediately to the north of the subject site contained several Neolithic flint artefacts, although no archaeological features were present. Trench 18, some 200m to the north contained shallow, irregular features that produced a few pieces of pottery and worked flint again suggested to be of Neolithic date. An area of archaeological potential was identified by aerial photographs to the south of this evaluation area and within the current subject site. This area contained crop marks that appeared to be a group of possible pits and ditches.
- 1.3.4 Excavations by Oxford Archaeology in 2004-5 (SUGAR04) revealed prehistoric activity directly to the north of the subject site (see Figure 2). The excavation covered an area of 0.5ha and was located approximately 30m north of trenches 9 and 10 in the current works. A buried soil horizon survived across most of the site, which produced pottery and large quantities of worked flint of later Neolithic/early Bronze Age date. Associated features included shallow pits and hollows and two large waterholes, one of which contained a timber-revetted platform securely dated to the early Bronze Age. The site was probably occupied discontinuously through the course of the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age. The occupation horizon was subsequently buried by an alluvial soil layer, representing abandonment of the site under conditions of increased wetness and flooding.
- 1.3.5 During the later Bronze Age or Iron Age, the North Fen island became uninhabitable due to rising water tables, and was engulfed by fen peat. No later prehistoric, Romano-British, Saxon or medieval sites are known on the island or in its near vicinity. Large-scale reclamation of this part of the Fens began in the mid 17th century with the construction of Hammond's Eau and the Old and New Bedford Rivers. Ordnance Survey maps from the late 19th century onwards show the site under agricultural use.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Richard Bull of Darlington Bull Ltd. who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor. I am grateful for specialist advice from Chris Faine, Rachel Fosberry and David Mullin. Richard Mortimer and Paul Spoerry provided advice and information on the archaeology of the Fens. Thanks also go to Tony Finlay for machining the trenches. Ross Lilley, John Diffey, Julian Newman, Steve Graham, Graeme Clarke, Adrian Woolner, Alex Hook and Rob Atkins provided excavation assistance. Lucy Offord co-

supervised the fieldwork, carried out archaeological and topographical survey and, along with Andrew Corrigan, produced the illustrations.

- 1.4.2 The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, who visited and monitored the works.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that an adequate sample of the area of the proposed irrigation reservoir should be investigated by linear trial trenching. A total of 24 trenches were opened (figure 2). Trenches were located to evaluate a representative sample of the whole area, in addition Trench 11 was located to test a flint scatter identified during fieldwalking for the Fen Survey (SUT1), and Trenches 14, 15 and 16 were located to test an area of cropmarks identified by aerial photographs (Last 1997).
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 360 excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out using Leica 1200 GPS system.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-formas*. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Environmental samples of 20 litres or more were taken from deposits that appeared to have potential for preservation of charred remains, macro-fossils and molluscs. Where deposits contained lithics samples of up to 40 litres were taken for flotation and sorting whilst any remaining excavated fill was sieved by hand on-site.
- 2.2.7 For every 50m of trenching, 40 litres of topsoil and 10 litres of subsoil (where present) were sieved by hand on-site using a 10mm mesh.
- 2.2.8 The area of the proposed reservoir extension was a green field site bounded to the north and south by modern bunds associated with the irrigation reservoir and quarry workings. Immediately prior to this evaluation the western part of the site had been ploughed and seeded with beans. The central and eastern parts of the site had not been ploughed and contained the remains of the previous crop. Some parts of the site had been used for the spreading of waste from the quarry's grader and other parts had been compacted by regular transit of heavy plant. This did not pose a problem to the machining.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Given the nature of the site and the deposits encountered the results will be presented based on their location within the site and relative to a natural sand bar located along the southern edge of the subject site (figure 2). The majority of features uncovered lay on this sand bar. The buried soil to the north west and the features associated with it formed a distinct archaeological area that is discussed separately. This is also true of the area to the north east of the sand bar which appeared to be the location of a large palaeochannel or marsh consisting of alluvium. A comprehensive listing of trench depths, descriptions and related context data can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 The Buried Soil (Trenches 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 24, 25)

3.2.1 To the west of the site and to the north of the sand bar an area of buried soil was uncovered. This extended throughout trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 24 and 25 as well as the northern half of Trench 4 (figure 2). It covered a total area of 100m north to south and 120m east to west. The soil was preserved below up to 0.14m of fen clays (alluvium) and 0.1m of peat. It was deepest and best preserved in Trench 2 where it survived to a depth of 0.4m perhaps due to a slight depression in the natural deposits below (plate 2). The buried soil was assigned context number 4 in Trench 1 and 2, 113 and 114 in Trench 3 and 222 and 223 in Trench 24 and 25. It was a mid blueish-grey soft silty sand with frequent charcoal and small stone inclusions.

3.2.2 One 1x1m sondage was dug through 114; two 1x1m sondages were dug through 223; and three 1x1m sondages were dug through 222 to investigate the character of the soil and density of finds within it. Each test pit was allocated a separate sample number. Lithics were recovered from 222 (20g) and 223(59g) whilst lithics (13g) and pottery (12g) were recovered from 114. The flints were mainly undiagnostic, those in Trenches 2 and 3 were associated with Beaker period (Late Neolithic\ Early Bronze Age) pottery. The artefacts retrieved from the buried soil sampling are summarised in Table 1 below. Environmental samples taken from these sondages contained a large amount of charcoal, untransformed seeds and some cereals. Charred hazelnut was also found in the buried soil in Trench 3.

Trench number	Context number	Sample numbers	Material	Count	Weight (g)	Description
3	114	44	Flint	1	2	Flakes
		47	Flint	4	11	Flakes
		-	Pottery	2	12	Beaker
24	222	71	Flint	1	6	Thumbnail scraper
		72	Flint	3	7	
		73	Flint	3	7	
25	223	74	Flint	13	39	Narrow blades & waste flakes
		75	Flint	13	20	

Table 1: Artefacts retrieved from buried soil sampling

- 3.2.3 Several features were uncovered associated with, and below the buried soil. In Trench 1 a pit (**16**) 0.7m wide and 0.15m deep was uncovered. It contained a light grey brown loose silty sand and no finds. To the south west of this, ditch **20** ran from east to west. It was 1.5m wide and 0.4m deep with a concave profile. It contained three sandy fills, the earliest of which contained a rim sherd of a Late Neolithic Peterborough ware vessel.
- 3.2.4 Trench 2 contained five features (**5, 7, 9, 12** and **13**) all sealed by the buried soil. These were irregular pits filled with material similar to that of the buried soil. Two of these features contained worked flint as well as pieces of burnt clay. These features may have been dug through the buried soil but since their fills were so similar their presence higher up was not visible.
- 3.2.5 Overlying the buried soil (114) at the western end of Trench 3 was a large amount of modern disturbance that may have been associated with peat cutting. The modern material appeared to have been deposited in a large cut, 16m wide, that truncated the peat. At the base of this pit, just above the buried soil, several isolated patches of burning were identified (124, 125, 110). These were initially thought to be related to the buried surface but closer inspection revealed that there were on or above the peat layer (plate 3).
- 3.2.6 Two pits were cut into the buried soil in Trench 4. Pit **24** at the northern end of the trench contained a light grey brown loose silty sand fill with no finds. Its upcast could clearly be seen in the baulk section, sealed beneath the peat (figure 4, section 9). Pit **26** was 0.99m wide and 0.12m deep and had been dug at the interface between the buried soil and the sand bar. It also contained a loose sandy fill and no finds.
- 3.2.7 Trench 5 contained no features and appeared to lie at the southern extent of the buried soil.

3.3 The Sand Bar (Trenches 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20)

- 3.3.1 The area defined as the sand bar extended from the southern half of Trench 4 in the west to the south eastern end of Trench 21 in the east (figure 2). The majority of features uncovered during the excavation were located along this natural feature. The features dug into the sand bar often had diffuse or uncertain edges and extents due to the nature of the material they were cut into. In certain areas this may also have led to leaching of the fills causing them to be pale stains in the natural material.

Ditches

- 3.3.2 There were ditches and similar linear features across the length of the sand bar. Three ditches were uncovered in Trench 6; all had particularly diffuse edges. Ditch **137** ran north to south across the trench and had a steep wide 'U' shaped profile. It was 1.8m wide and 0.25m deep. One metre to the west was ditch **139** which had a similar course and profile and was 1.2m wide and 0.3m deep. Both had a mid grey silty sand fill and contained no finds. Further west, ditch **141** was aligned north-west to south-east. It had steep sides and an irregular 'V' shaped profile. It was filled by a soft light greyish yellow silty sand which contained a Neolithic long end scraper and a flint flake.
- 3.3.3 In Trench 12, ditches **36** and **32** were both aligned south-west to north-east. **32** cut **36**. Both had gradually sloping concave profiles and were filled by a light grey brown silty sand containing no finds. These features may have been the base of drainage ditches, but remain undated.

3.3.4 Three ditches were identified in Trench 20 at the eastern end of the sand bar. Ditch **239** was 0.8m wide and 0.24m deep and was orientated west-north-west to east-south-east. Ditch **241** was narrower at 0.3m wide and only survived to a depth of 0.07m. At the far north of the trench ditch **243** ran from east to west and was 0.72m wide and 0.19m deep. **243** and **239** were filled by dark peaty deposits whilst **241** contained a mid greyish brown sandy silt. None of the ditches contained any finds. The peaty fills in the ditches only just below the topsoil may indicate a post-Medieval date; however given the lack of stratigraphy it cannot be said with certainty that this was not 'lower' peat.

Ring Ditches

3.3.5 Four segments of curvilinear ditches were uncovered on the sand bar. The furthest west was in Trench 9 and the furthest east was in Trench 20. None of the complete circuits were exposed and so identification as ring ditches is only tentative. Fills from these ditches were sampled for both dry sieving and flotation. All dry sieving took place on-site using hand-sieves.

3.3.6 Ditch **133** was 1.06m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.36m (figure 4, section 56). It curved from the eastern baulk of Trench 9 south west before terminating. It contained two secondary fills (146, 147) and a tertiary fill (132). All of the fills were mid or light grey-brown soft silty sands. Charred hazelnut shell, a single sherd of pottery and a flint knife dating to the Late Neolithic\ Early Bronze Age were recovered from the fill of this feature. This ditch was associated with two small pits. Since these pits may be linked to the function of the ring ditch they will be discussed here.

3.3.7 Pit or post hole **205** was 0.25m wide and 0.05m deep. It was located 0.75m from the terminal of **133** and may represent the location of a post or structure related to this ditch. Five metres to the south a small pit (**43**) had been dug: 0.48m wide and 0.25m deep. It contained three fills; a primary fill (42) was followed by a deposit of burnt material (41) including a large amount of animal bone (plate 7). This bone showed no signs of being deliberately placed and had been mixed in with the rest of the burnt material. This deposit was then covered by a firm light grey brown sandy silt (40). Its location in relation to the ring-ditch and the presence of burnt deposits may indicate this was a central hearth.

3.3.8 Another curvilinear ditch (**81**) was uncovered 104m to the east in Trench 11. This ditch was 0.92m wide and 0.2m deep. It curved north and west from the southern edge of the trench and appeared to terminate after 5m. It was filled by a light reddish grey soft silty sand and contained no finds.

3.3.9 Two hundred metres east-south-east another possible complete ring-ditch was identified at the southern end of Trench 17. About a fifth of the total circuit of this ditch was exposed in an extension to Trench 17. This extension proved as far as possible that this ditch was part of a complete well preserved ring ditch. Three slots were excavated in this ditch (**154**, **156** and **157**) totalling about seventy five percent of the total exposed circuit (plate 8). The ditch was up to 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep and contained two fills; a primary peaty fill 0.1m thick overlain by a dark reddish brown soft silty fill (figure 4, section 43). A single large core trimming flake was recovered from this ditch indicating a possible Early Bronze Age date. Environmental samples (49, 50, 51) revealed the remains of cereals as well as charred and un-charred seeds. If this ditch proves to be a complete ring ditch its internal diameter would be about 8m.

3.3.10 A fourth curvilinear ditch was uncovered in Trench 20, 91m east-south-east. This ditch (**237**) was 0.45m wide and 0.26m deep with a steep sided 'U' shaped profile. It

contained a mid grey brown friable sandy silt and no finds. Its course in plan was diffuse at best and so its interpretation as a (ring)ditch is speculative. This interpretation would be supported by the profile and fill of the ditch which were similar to those of ditch **154**.

Pits

- 3.3.11 The most frequently encountered feature type in the sand bar zone were pits. These varied in size and depth and few contained any finds. Those that did can be broadly dated to the Later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. Concentrations of pits were noted in Trench 8 and Trench 13.
- 3.3.12 Furthest to the west in Trench 6 three pits were identified. Pit **143** was 0.56m wide and 0.4m deep and contained a mid grey soft silty sand fill with no finds (plate 6). 15m to the east **135** was an oval pit 0.66m wide and 0.4m deep that truncated linear feature **137**. Neither feature contained any finds. At the eastern end of this trench pit **28** was a round feature with steep sides and a concave base that may have functioned as a post setting. It had a single grey silty fill that contained a large quantity of Neolithic flint and the largest single deposit of Neolithic pottery located on the site.
- 3.3.13 Seven pit-type features were identified in Trench 8. Three of these contained lithics. Pit **176** was located 36m from the eastern end of the trench (plate 5). It was 0.75m wide and 0.15m deep. To the west of the base of this pit two smaller stake hole type features had been dug (**178** and **180**). Each of these stakeholes had had a flint blade placed upright in the base. This may have been a deliberate act possibly signifying ritual deposition. The fills of these and the main pit were a mid yellow grey sand. The largest quantity of Early Bronze Age pottery found in the evaluation was recovered from the main fill (177) of this feature alongside worked flint dating to the Neolithic. This pit was particularly interesting due to the large amount of charred hazelnuts recovered from its fill along with charcoal and a cereal grain. This may indicate seasonal occupation of this area in the autumn.
- 3.3.14 Thirteen metres to the west large pit **182** was 4m wide and 0.92m deep (figure 4, section 51). This pit had very diffuse edges suggesting that it may have been natural in origin and later re-worked or just used for occasional deposition. Two pieces of worked flint were recovered from this feature. Further to the west two more irregular pits were uncovered. Pits **187** and **191** may also have been natural in origin and later reused. Their edges were also diffuse and they contained firm mid grey sandy fills. **187** was 2.25m wide and 0.47m deep with three fills (figure 4, section 52) whilst **191** was 1.9m wide and 0.33m deep with two fills (plate 4). Pit **187** contained nine flints including two narrow blades.
- 3.3.15 Pits **193** and **195** were located at the western end of the trench. They were shallow posthole type features that contained no finds. Pit **174** at the eastern end of the trench was also highly truncated. It was 1m wide and 0.16m deep and contained no finds. Its edges were very diffuse.
- 3.3.16 To the west of Trench 8 the next largest concentration of pits was in Trench 13. Only postholes **83**, **85** and **87** (Trench 11) lay between these two groups. These postholes were no larger than 0.35m wide and 0.1m deep and contained no finds, despite this, their presence is significant as they are likely to represent structures.
- 3.3.17 Trench 13 spanned the width of the sand bar which could be seen rising from the peat to the south and then descending again below the alluvium to the north. On the crests of this ridge two linear groups of inter-cutting pits were dug. The total number of

individual pits in each group was not possible to ascertain due to the sandy nature of the natural and the single homogeneous fills. Group **51** to the south was 5m wide and 0.28m deep. It was filled by a loose light grey sand and contained no finds. Eighteen metres to the north group **59** was 6.5m wide and 0.38m deep. It had a similar loose grey sandy fill and contained two undiagnostic flint flakes.

- 3.3.18 Three pits were located between these groups. Pits **53**, **55** and **57** were no greater than 0.9m wide and 0.17m deep and all contained light grey loose sandy fills with no finds. Pit **61** to the north of **59** has been interpreted as a natural feature i.e. tree bowl with no direct evidence of human use or alteration; however it is located on the boundary of the sand bar and the alluvium and so may have had some significance in the past.
- 3.3.19 Trench 15 contained a single pit and no other archaeological features. Pit **63** was irregular in plan due to the sandy nature of the material that it was cut into. It was 0.88m deep and 0.14m wide. It had a single mid blueish grey soft silty sand fill containing worked flint and calcined bone. The worked flint consisted of two narrow blades dating to the Late Mesolithic period, implying a Mesolithic date for the feature. Its location on the edge of the putative palaeochannel is interesting and other similar features may survive along the edge of this ancient water feature.
- 3.3.20 Three pits were dug on the sand bar at the southern end of Trench 17. Pit **216** was adjacent to the ring ditch (**156**) at the southern end of the trench. It was sub-rectangular and appeared to respect the ring ditch. The fills were dark and loose and more indicative of a later (modern) feature although no finds were recovered. To the north of this, on the boundary of the sand bar and the alluvium, pits **218** and **232** were dug. **218** was an irregular sub-oval pit 0.59m deep and 0.36m wide. It contained undiagnostic worked flint. **232** was a round pit 0.55m wide and 0.1m deep. It contained no finds. It is possible to speculate that the purpose of these pits may be similar to that of those on the crest of the sand bar in Trench 13. A single irregular pit to the south of Trench 20 was the only other pit feature located on the sand bar. Pit **235** contained no finds.

Palaeochannels

- 3.3.21 In addition to an extensive area of alluvium (see below) two smaller, possibly separate palaeochannels were observed in Trenches 11 and 13, both were sealed by a layer of peat. The channel in Trench 11 was in excess of 11.5m wide and 0.25m deep below 0.07m of peat. The channel in Trench 13 was 13m wide and 0.27m deep below 0.1m of peat. The fills of both channels were sampled on-site using a hand-sieve for lithics and other artefacts, but no finds were recovered.

Modern Features

- 3.3.22 A line of six sub-rectangular pits was uncovered towards the eastern end of Trench 6 on an east to west alignment. These were 2m long and 0.75m wide. Pit **145** was excavated and found to be 0.5m deep with near vertical sides and a flat base. No finds were recovered but based on analogy with features of similar type and form it seems likely that they were post-Medieval tree planting pits (e.g. High Street, Willingham; Fletcher 2008). These pits appeared to form a boundary and may have related to a farm building said to have been present in this field to the north of this trench (local information pers. comm.).
- 3.3.23 Several other modern ditches were identified across the site. These features tended to contain very loose silt fills including a large amount of organic matter but no finds. The

lack of consolidation in the very dark fills was indicative of a relatively recent, perhaps wind blown, filling episode. Ditch **46** in Trench 11 was 1.5m wide and 0.68m deep and ran north to south. An unnumbered boundary in Trench 19 was also on this alignment but was 2.5m wide. Further to the east in Trench 19 ditch **230** was aligned west-north-west to east-south-east and was 0.7m wide and 0.17m deep. Its position and orientation suggest that it may be related to ditches **163** and **161** in Trench 18. This may indicate that all were part of a modern field system.

- 3.3.24 Trenches 15, 16 and 22 contained large pits which had almost certainly functioned as quarries in order to extract gravel and sand. In Trench 16 this quarrying took the form of a number of large and small pits dug down in to a fine orange sandy natural. The largest of these pits was 20m wide and 0.85m deep, stopping at the gravel. This suggests that quarrying here was for sand rather than gravel. There were no finds from this pit but the loose dark nature of the fill which contained clay and gravel inclusions was indicative of a recent backfilling event. It is likely that these features are the same as a series of pits and ditches identified on aerial photographs in a previous evaluation (Last 1997). The gravel here contained a large amount of the underlying Jurassic clay.
- 3.3.25 The quarry pit in Trench 15 was 32m wide and up to 1m deep suggesting that sand and some gravel had been removed perhaps over a long period of time. Bucket tooth marks in the underlying natural were indicative of machine excavation.
- 3.3.26 Almost the entire length of Trench 22 was taken up by a single large pit. The pit was at least 45.5m across; its eastern extent was not identified. A sondage was excavated by machine to a depth of 2m. This revealed a large quantity of modern rubbish but did not reach the base of the pit.
- 3.3.27 Trench 23 appeared to be devoid of features. In retrospect the entire trench may have lain within the area of modern quarrying seen in trench 22 directly to the south. As the backfill within the pits was re-deposited sand it is very similar in appearance to the natural geology.

3.4 The Alluvium (Trenches 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22)

The Alluvium

- 3.4.1 To the north east of the sand bar the natural deposits encountered changed from sandy gravels to a mid grey brown sandy silt which fill an area of low ground that may have been a palaeochannel or palaeomarrow. Two sondages were dug into this material in Trench 19. A sondage at the western end of the trench uncovered a complex series of fills with gravel bands interleaved with silt (figure 4, section 36). The alluvium was a maximum of 0.6m deep where excavated. Undiagnostic worked flint was found in both the upper and lower layers (148 and 149). A second sondage 16m to the east produced no finds. Further work would be needed to establish a date and the exact nature of these deposits and how they relate to the prehistoric landscape.

Ditches

- 3.4.2 At the northern end of Trench 13 ditches **65** and **67** were uncovered below the upper fills of a localised palaeochannel. **65** was 1.7m wide and 0.16m deep and ran from north-west to south-east. It had a concave base with gradually sloping sides. **67** survived less well being only 0.1m deep and 1.3m wide. It ran from west-north-west to east-south-east. Both ditches contained dark grey soft sandy fills with high peaty/humic content. There were no finds in either. These ditches lay either side of pit **69** and may have been associated with its use.

- 3.4.3 A single ditch was identified in Trench 14: **90** lay half under the eastern baulk and ran for 8m from north to south. It had gradually sloping sides and an irregular base with a dark grey brown sandy silt fill. No finds were recovered. One hundred metres to the east three ditches were uncovered in Trench 18. At the southern end of the trench ditches **163** and **161** were 14m apart and ran on an east to west orientation. Both were 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep with steep sides and concave profiles. Their fills were dark grey brown friable sandy silts with peaty inclusions. No finds were recovered from either ditch but their similar characters suggests that they were part of the same phase of activity. Ditch **167** ran on a similar alignment 20m to the north. It had a concave profile with gradually sloping sides and contained a mid blue grey friable silty sand. It contained a narrow flint blade, maybe indicating activity out into this marshy area in the Late Neolithic\ Early Bronze Age.
- 3.4.4 To the far east of the site at the south-east of Trench 21 ditch **226** was cut into the alluvium. The ditch was 1.88m wide and 0.52m deep with a steep sided 'U' shaped profile. It was orientated north to south and contained three fills. A basal mid grey sandy silt which was up to 0.2m thick around the edge of the entire cut. This was overlain by a light grey sandy silt with gravel inclusions. These deposits were overlain by peat 0.24m thick (224) (plate 9). The leached out lower fills and the peaty upper fill are highly indicative of a Bronze Age date for this ditch given other taphonomic sequences known from the fens (e.g. Thorney; Pickstone and Mortimer 2009); however no finds were recovered.

Pits

- 3.4.5 To the north of Trench 13, lying between ditches **65** and **67** pit **69** was 4m wide and 0.36m deep. It was sealed by a layer of peat and sat in a dip in the natural that may represent a palaeochannel. It was sub-square in plan with an irregular concave profile. No finds were recovered from this feature, although its location sealed below peat suggests a prehistoric date.
- 3.4.6 Four pits were cut into this alluvial material in Trench 14. These were between 0.7 and 0.9m and up to 0.37m deep. None contained any finds. All were filled by a mid brown grey friable sandy silt and had irregular or diffuse edges.
- 3.4.7 Similar irregular and diffuse features were uncovered in the alluvium in Trench 18 and 20. These were up to 0.8m wide and 0.38m deep and contained no finds except for a single abraded Early Bronze Age sherd in **169**.

3.5 Topsoil Sampling

- 3.5.1 Hand sieving of 40 litres of topsoil and 10 litres of subsoil deposits from every 50m of trenching produced a total of fourteen worked flints (67g). Their distribution was broadly comparable to that of the features on site. Four pieces of worked flint were recovered from Trench 8 with another concentration around trenches 15, 16 and 17. Samples <40> and <90> in trenches 21 and 22 also produced lithics. The results are summarised in Table 2 below.
- 3.5.2 These results support the findings from previous field walking (Hall 1996) and the current evaluation.

Trench number	Sample number	Material	Count	Weight (g)
6	-	Flint	1	4

Trench number	Sample number	Material	Count	Weight (g)
8	86	Flint	1	1
	87	Flint	2	6
	-	Flint	1	3
15	60	Flint	1	3
16	27	Flint	1	1
17	100	Flint	2	19
	102	Flint	1	3
	-	Flint	1	9
21	90	Flint	1	14
22	40	Flint	2	4

Table 2: Artefacts retrieved from topsoil sieving

3.6 Finds Summary

- 3.6.1 A total of 109 lithic items were recovered by hand from the excavations at Sutton Gault. These included a high proportion of waste flakes, but small amounts of diagnostic flint were recovered from within feature fills. A further 530g of flint was recovered from environmental samples. The majority of the flint dated to the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age with two blades dating to the Late Mesolithic period.
- 3.6.2 A total of 12 sherds of prehistoric pottery weighing 79g were hand collected from seven contexts. A further 54g (35 sherds) of pottery was recovered in environmental samples from four contexts including two that had not produced any hand collected pottery. A single sherd was positively identified as Late Neolithic Peterborough ware and a further three sherds were identified as grog tempered Beaker. Six sherds may be Neolithic the remaining sherds were dated to the Early Bronze Age.

3.7 Environmental Summary

- 3.7.1 A total of one hundred and six bulk samples were taken from features within the evaluated area. The majority were dry-sieved on site using a 10mm mesh, thirty-three bulk-samples were subject to wet sieving and flotation. Sample sizes varied from 10 litres up to 40 litres. Preservation of charred plant material, excluding charcoal, was poor. Charcoal predominates and is present in all of the samples. Charred plant remains are rare. Cereal grains occur in five samples that were taken from the possible Bronze Age ring ditches **156** and **158**, from the buried soil, layer 223 and from fill 177 of pit **176**. The sample from pit **176** also contained a large amount of hazelnut shells. Small animal bones were remarkable by their absence.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Evaluation of the land of the proposed irrigation reservoir extension at Sutton Gault has revealed a prehistoric landscape with activity dating from the Late Mesolithic to the Early Bronze Age.
- 4.1.2 Feature density was highest to the west of the development area although archaeology was uncovered across the whole of the site. In the central and eastern zones of the site Trenches 13, 15 and the southern end of 17 were of particular interest. Archaeological features tended to be concentrated on the sand bar but there was also evidence of Bronze Age activity in the alluvial zone.

4.2 Mesolithic Activity

- 4.2.1 Evidence for Late Mesolithic activity was found in pit **63** (Trench 15), it was located on the top of the sand bar and may have been associated with a phase of inundation that cut off the gravel island from the mainland. From this point onwards the sand bar appears to have acted as a focus for activity in this area.

4.3 The Neolithic and Bronze Age Landscape

- 4.3.1 Activity datable to the Late Neolithic was uncovered to the west of the site. This took the form of a pit and a ditch on the sand bar in Trench 6 and a ditch in Trench 1 that may have been sealed by the buried soil. The digging of ditches represents an investment of time and energy and is usually taken to signify a change to a more settled lifestyle and possibly the beginnings of land ownership.
- 4.3.2 The buried soil itself was rich in finds including two sherds of pottery dating to the Late Neolithic\Early Bronze Age. In Trench 25 this buried soil was also found to contain cereal grains although there was no evidence for crop processing. The presence of cereal grains may imply a more permanent occupation of the area in the Later Neolithic\ Early Bronze Age. Burnt hazelnut shells found in the buried soil and in pit **176** (Trench 8) imply seasonal foraging for wild foods, and perhaps imply that occupation was also seasonal.
- 4.3.3 Pit digging and possibly the re-use of natural hollows appears to have been particularly common on the sand bar at this time. Twenty five pits were uncovered on the sand bar. One datable to the Neolithic by pottery and lithics; one containing Neolithic flint and Early Bronze Age pottery and three containing undiagnostic flint. The rest contained no finds. Pits from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods are not often found in such high concentrations. The fact that so many were present within the small sample area excavated suggests quite intensive activity on the Sand Bar at this time. The fact that it is possible to assert a continuity of this practice of pit digging from the Neolithic into the Bronze Age is particularly interesting and has implications for the study of this transitional period. The single pit with Bronze Age pottery uncovered on the alluvium indicates that there was still activity in the alluvial area at this time but on a much smaller scale than on the sand bar.
- 4.3.4 Lithics recovered from the alluvium appear to indicate that it was forming during a period of human activity on the site, although those lithics recovered were not identifiable to period.
- 4.3.5 During the early Bronze Age there is evidence for possibly more settled occupation although the four fragmentary ring-ditches identified may represent Early Bronze Age funerary monuments (round barrows). The ditch identified in Trench 17 would have had

an internal diameter of c.8m. The structure was certainly constructed prior to the formation of peat which was found in the base of the ditch, probably in the Early Bronze Age as suggested by the flint found within it. It has been asserted that ring ditches of this size tend to date to the Beaker period (Mullin pers. comm; Case 1986). The ditch terminal uncovered in Trench 9 also contained pottery dating to the Early Bronze Age. Those identified in Trenches 11 and 20 have been tentatively identified as ring ditches based on their form and proximity to those that are more securely identifiable. All of these features were located on the higher ground formed by the sand bar, possibly taking advantage of a dry environment in close proximity to water.

- 4.3.6 It is already well documented that the North Fen Island was the focus of funerary activity, several round barrows have been identified on aerial photographs and one has been excavated and proved to contain an individual cremated during the Early Bronze Age. All of the known barrows are located around the edges of the island. The ring ditches identified by this evaluation may or may not be similar funerary monuments but their presence raises important questions about the nature of occupation during this period; how it relates to the environment and how much of the island was given over to ritual or settlement activity as the environment changed. This increase in activity includes pit digging on the crest of the sand bar (Trench 15), and may be further evidence for settlement. This increase in activity made a mark on the landscape and may be a reaction to rising water levels making the gravel island more and more inaccessible and so making those areas of higher ground, like the sand bar, more visible in the landscape and thus of increasing importance to the communities inhabiting it (Barrett 1994, 128; Malim 2000, 17; Tilley 1994, 128).
- 4.3.7 The question of whether the activity identified can be interpreted as settlement or ritual should perhaps be addressed in relation to the finds recovered. Animal bones are particularly lacking from this evaluation. Only one feature, a small pit, contained any significant animal bones (cattle), however, this lack of bone evidence may be a result of the acidic soil conditions which are likely to promote rapid deterioration, rather than a true reflection of the evidence. Evidence for other foods such as hazelnuts and cereal grains have also been found in small quantities along with pottery, all of which could be indicative of a domestic as well as a ritual context.
- 4.3.8 It is also key to compare the results with those from the Oxford Archaeology excavation directly to the north, which offers a more conclusive insight, because of the open area nature of the project, into patterns of land use on North Fen Island (Webley and Hiller 2009). The buried soil found on the current site is likely to be a continuation of that found at SUGAR04 only a short distance to the east of Trenches 2, 24 and 25. There, the buried soil was preserved in four separate areas (1 – 4), the largest of which was approximately 25m in diameter, suggesting the area of buried soil on the current site is much more extensive (100m north to south and 120m east to west). An extensive sampling of the buried soil revealed predominantly later Neolithic/ early Bronze Age distributions of different tool types across the site, which suggested discrete episodes of activity focused on differing tasks. For example, the majority of flint scrapers, knives, piercers and flakes came from one zone, suggesting animal hide, bone and/or wood working was taking place. Serrated blades were found in two other zones, which may indicate plant harvesting or processing. The most significant feature at SUGAR04 was a waterhole with timber revetment, securely dated to the early Bronze Age. Pollen evidence from the waterhole suggested it was located in an area of pasture. Other features were a small number of hollows, pits and postholes, also of probable late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age date. In this respect the current site has a higher density

and range of contemporary features, including linear ditches, ring ditches and a greater density of pits.

- 4.3.9 The pattern of land use at SUGAR04 was interpreted as separate episodes of occupation through the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age, possibly with groups of people moving through the landscape on a seasonal basis, coming together and dispersing at different times of the year (Webley and Hiller 2009: 34). A similar interpretation can be offered for the current site, although as already mentioned, the presence of ring-ditches adds a possible ritual context to the site. Features such as ditches, post holes and scattered pits could be interpreted as evidence of more permanent settlement but should still be viewed in terms of the timespan in question, of several hundred years.

4.4 Later Activity

- 4.4.1 A line of tree-pits in the western area (Trench 6) may have formed a boundary or shelter belt. These are reminiscent of similar features uncovered at Willingham (Fletcher 2008), where they formed post-medieval property boundaries. Further to the north there is evidence for peat cutting and burning associated with pottery and glass of 19th or early 20th century date. Several peat filled ditches are also thought to be relatively recent in date and quarrying was noted in some areas along the southern edge of the site (Trenches 15, 16 and 22).

4.5 Significance

- 4.5.1 The evidence uncovered at Sutton Gault is regionally significant and has potential to contribute to the study of the long term development of a Fen Edge landscape from the Late Mesolithic to the Early Bronze Age.
- 4.5.2 Evidence for Late Mesolithic activity is significant given its relative scarcity nationally. At a regional level this site may provide a valuable comparison to other sites with evidence for Mesolithic activity in the area.
- 4.5.3 Evidence for late Neolithic settlement, whether semi-sedentary or entirely transient is relatively rare in East Anglia and the investigation of the change to a more settled landscape is highlighted as a current regional research aim (Medlycott and Brown 2008).
- 4.5.4 The site sequence with Late Neolithic deposits sealed below a Late Neolithic\Early Bronze Age buried soil gives the potential to identify phases of activity on this site. The regional research agenda highlights the transition from Neolithic to Bronze Age as an area for further research (Medlycott and Brown 2008). This site appears to have been seasonally occupied during the Neolithic possibly for small scale agricultural purposes (evidenced by ditched boundaries) before becoming a 'landscape of the dead' in the Early Bronze Age when up to four ring ditches were constructed. Deposits sealed beneath peat in these Early Bronze Age feature offer further opportunities for C14 dating to refine chronologies.
- 4.5.5 This site is also significant in terms of its environmental potential. It offers the opportunity to investigate a sealed and dated buried soil with well preserved charred and organic material within it. This is also true of the other features sealed by the Late Neolithic\Early Bronze Age 'lower' peat. The fact that cereals grains and charred hazelnut shells were found in several dated contexts adds greatly to this significance.

4.6 Recommendations

- 4.6.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1		
General description	Orientation	NE-SW
Below the top soil in this trench was a layer of fen clay 0.14m thick, overlying a lower peat deposit of 0.1m. This peat over lay a further 0.26m of buried soil. There were two features in this trench identified below the buried soil. One was a small pit the other two intercutting ditches containing prehistoric pottery. The natural was a mid green grey sandy gravel with marly lenses.	Topsoil (m)	0.42
	Subsoils (m)	0.5
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	95

Trench 2		
General description	Orientation	E-W
Topsoil in this trench capped 0.2m of clay and 0.1m of lower peat. This overlay a buried soil 0.4m deep. This trench contained 4 pits and a probable post hole. The natural was a mid green grey sandy gravel with marly lenses.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoils (m)	0.6
	Width (m)	20
	Length (m)	1.8

Trench 3		
General description	Orientation	E-W
The buried soil continued in this trench. The peat and fen clay were present throughout most of the trench although at the western end a large amount of truncation had occurred. This truncation was associated with episodes of burning and modern refuse directly above the buried soil. The buried soil in this trench contained Beaker period pottery. The natural was a mid green grey sandy gravel with marly lenses. An extension of 8.5m was made to south and 8m to the west at the western end of the trench to define the extent and character of the burnt deposits.	Topsoil (m)	0.44
	Subsoils (m)	0.3
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	108.5

Trench 4		
General description	Orientation	N-S
The natural varied in this trench from a mid green grey sandy gravel with marly lenses in the south to a sandy yellowish gravel in the north. This change corresponds with the rise of the land into the sand bar. There were two pits in this trench. Neither contained finds but both were sealed by the peat. The fen clay was 0.12m thick, the peat was a maximum of 0.08m thick and the buried soil (where present) was 0.15m thick.	Topsoil (m)	0.36
	Subsoils (m)	0.35
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	50

Trench 5		
General description	Orientation	E-W
There was no fen clay or peat preserved in this trench. The 0.22m of sandy subsoil may be an indication that the buried soil did extend this far. There were no other features in this trench. The natural was a mid green grey sandy gravel with marly lenses.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	0.22
	Width (m)	1.8

	Length (m)	13
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Trench 6		
General description	Orientation	E-W
This trench was located entirely on the sand bar. It contained 3 pits and 3 ditches. The features to the east contained Neolithic pottery and struck flints. A medieval tree-pit boundary was also uncovered.	Topsoil (m)	0.37
	Subsoil (m)	0.04
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	90

Trench 7		
General description	Orientation	-
This trench was not excavated due to the location of the modern bund.	Topsoil (m)	-
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	-
	Length (m)	-

Trench 8		
General description	Orientation	E-W
Located entirely on the sand bar, this trench contained 3 pits with Neolithic struck flint in them. There were a further 2 pits and 2 post holes that contained no finds. All features had very unclear edges. Several of the pits had irregular sides with sprawling fills that may be indicative of the reuse of a tree throw for artefact deposition.	Topsoil (m)	0.31
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	95

Trench 9		
General description	Orientation	NE-SW
To the east of Trench 8 on the sand and gravel island, this trench contained three features. A curvilinear ditch that may have formed part of a ring ditch contained worked flint and pottery. A pit with a thick charcoal/ash deposit as its basal fill contained bone; and a small post hole with no finds.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	30

Trench 10		
General description	Orientation	N-S
This trench contained no archaeological features. The natural was a mid orange brown sandy silt.	Topsoil (m)	0.27
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	13

Trench 11		
General description	Orientation	E-W
The natural in this trench consisted of a silt sand with gravel inclusions. It was located on the sand bar and was positioned in the	Topsoil (m)	0.24
	Subsoil (m)	-

vicinity of SUT1, a scatter of neolithic flints found during fieldwalking. It contained 5 features; 3 pits and 2 ditches. One of these ditches was a recently backfilled drainage ditch whilst the other may have been part of a ring ditch. At the western end of the trench a buried soil was preserved in a natural hollow or channel. This was covered by a layer of peat. The buried soil was hand sieved and contained no finds.	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	105

Trench 12		
General description	Orientation	N-S
This trench was located on the southern side of the sand bar where it sloped down into the fen. It contained 2 undated ditches. The southern end of the trench had been truncated by modern farm workings.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	19

Trench 13		
General description	Orientation	NE-SW
The entire width of the sand bar was exposed in this trench. At the southern end it dipped below a thick layer of peat and at the north it was overlain by alluvial deposits. The crest of the sand bar both to the north and south was marked by a light grey sandy deposit that appeared to fill areas of pitting in a linear arrangement. One of these deposits contained struck flints. There were 4 smaller pits or post holes associated with these pitting areas. To the north of the trench where the sand bar dipped down a palaeochannel (0.37m deep) was evidenced a build up of peat in the depression. Soil preserved below this layer was hand sieved but no finds were recovered. This channel over lay a large pit and 2 ditches on differing orientations.	Topsoil (m)	0.44
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	100

Trench 14		
General description	Orientation	N-S
Trench located to test features identified by aerial photographs. The natural deposit in this trench was the mid yellow grey sandy silt of the alluvium to the north of the sand bar. A ditch and 3 pits or hollows were identified although no finds were recovered.	Topsoil (m)	0.5
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	50

Trench 15		
General description	Orientation	E-W
Trench located to test features identified by aerial photographs. The western half of this trench was located on the sand bar whilst the eastern half was over the alluvium. The boundary between the two having been truncated by a large modern pit cutting down to the gravel. A pit containing Neolithic flint was located at the eastern end, cut into the sand.	Topsoil (m)	0.46
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	100

Trench 16		
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Trench 16		
General description	Orientation	N-S
Trench located to test features identified by aerial photographs. This trench was located entirely over a particularly fine yellow orange sand to the south of the sand bar. There no archaeological features uncovered. The trench consisted almost entirely of quarry pits ranging from 1m to 21m in width. No finds were recovered from these pits but their dark loose fills and mixed backfill deposits were indicative of relatively recent activity. When the base of these pits was located by machine sondage a natural of gravel with blue-grey clay intrusions was uncovered. Another trench was extended from this trench for 24m to establish to extent of the modern truncation.	Topsoil (m)	0.43
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	40

Trench 17		
General description	Orientation	NE-SW
The southern part of this trench was located over the sand bar whilst the central and northern segment was located over the alluvium. A ring ditch was located a few metres from the edge of the alluvium, on the sand bar. The trench was extended to clarify its shape and size. If it proves to have a complete circuit the internal diameter would be approximately 8m. A single piece of struck flint was recovered from this ditch although peat in the base of the ditch also indicates a probable early Bronze Age date. 5 pits were uncovered in this trench. None contained finds. Pit 216 abutted the ring ditch but its dark peaty fills and rectangular shape suggest a post-Medieval date. It was unclear whether the other features were man-made or natural deposits.	Topsoil (m)	0.44
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	112

Trench 18		
General description	Orientation	N-S
This trench was located entirely over alluvium. It contained 2 ditches and one pit with pottery and flint finds. This suggests that Neolithic/Bronze Age activity spread out into the alluvial zone.	Topsoil (m)	0.46
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	50

Trench 19		
General description	Orientation	E-W
The entire length of this trench fell over alluvium. There were two modern ditches with very loose organic fills and no finds. Two sondages were put into the alluvium. The western most produced undiagnostic worked flint. There were no finds from the other sondage. Material from these sondages was passed through a 5mm mesh on-site.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	100

Trench 20		
General description	Orientation	N-S
Three linear features were identified in this trench which was located on the sand bar. These were ditches and contained no finds. The slightly more consolidated nature of their fills suggests that they may	Topsoil (m)	0.53
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8

date to before the post-Medieval period.	Length (m)	40
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Trench 21		
General description	Orientation	NW-SE
This trench was located over the alluvium with some gravel lenses. A single ditch was uncovered in this trench. It had peat in its upper fill with a consolidated grey low fill suggesting that it may date to the Bronze Age.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	101

Trench 22		
General description	Orientation	WNW-ESE
No features were identified in this trench. Natural deposits where they were encountered were gravel suggesting that the alluvium did not extend to this area. Of the 67m of trench that were opened, 46m were truncated by a modern quarry pit that was not bottomed by machine sondage to 2m. Its eastern extent was not identified.	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	67

Trench 23		
General description	Orientation	N-S
No feature were uncovered in this trench. A layer of redeposited topsoil 0.66m thick was encountered below the modern topsoil. This was mixed with clay and gravel lenses suggesting a deliberate raising of this ground surface in recent times. The natural consisted of yellow brown silty gravel with occasional intrusions of blue-grey clay from below.	Topsoil (m)	0.36
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	30

Trench 24		
General description	Orientation	E-W
This trench was opened to investigate the character and finds preservation with in the buried soil to the north west of the sand bar. It was located between trenches 1 and 2. Soil was stripped by machine down to the buried soil below the peat and fen clays. Three 1x1m test pits were hand dug through the buried soil with the spoil hand-sieved on-site. Flint was recovered from this hand-sieving indicating human occupation on this soil in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	2
	Length (m)	3

Trench 25		
General description	Orientation	E-W
This trench was also opened to investigate the character and finds preservation with in the buried soil to the north west of the sand bar. It was located between trenches 1 and 2. Soil was stripped by machine down to the buried soil below the peat and fen clays. Two 1x1m test pits were hand dug through the buried soil with the spoil hand-sieved on-site. Flint was recovered from this hand-sieving indicating human occupation on this soil in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age	Topsoil (m)	0.4
	Subsoil (m)	-
	Width (m)	2
	Length (m)	3.5

Context Inventory

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Type	Width	Depth	Shape in Plan	Profile
1		2	layer	Top Soil		0.4		
2		2	layer	fen clay		0.1		
3		2	layer	peat		0.05		
4		1, 2	layer	buried soil		0.2		
5	5	2	cut	pit	1.7	0.3	irregular	u irregular
6	5	2	fill	pit	1.7	0.3		
7	7	2	cut	pit	1.1	0.35	irregular	u
8	7	2	layer	pit				
9	9	2	cut	post hole	0.25	0.3	circular	u
10	9	2	fill	post hole				
11	9	2	fill	post hole		0.2		
12	12	2	cut		1.9	0.15	irregular	u
13	13	2	cut	pit ?	1	0.25	circular	
14	16	1	fill	pit		0.09		
15	16	1	fill	pit		0.15		
16	16	1	cut	pit	0.65	0.15	circular	u
17	20	1	fill	ditch	1.05	0.22		
18	20	1	fill	ditch		1.05		
19	20	1	fill	ditch	1.05	0.04		
20	20	1	cut	ditch	1.5	0.4	linear	u
21	22	1	fill	ditch		0.16		
22	22	1	cut	ditch	0.5	0.16	linear	u
23	24	4	fill	pit	1	0.17		
24	24	4	cut	pit ?	1	0.17	sub circular	u
25	26	4	fill	pit		0.12		
26	26	4	cut	pit	0.8	0.12	sub circular	u
27	27	6	fill	pit	0.43	0.16		
28	28	6	cut	pit	0.43	0.16	sub circular	u
29	24	4	layer	pit	0.57	0.16		
30	31	3	fill	pit	1.3	0.45		
31	31	3	cut	pit	1.3	0.45	sub circular	
32	32	3	cut	ditch	0.3	0.06	linear	u
33	32	12	fill	ditch				
34	34	12	cut	ditch	0.38	0.1	linear	u
35	34	12	fill	ditch				
36	36	12	cut	ditch	0.5	0.06	linear	
37	37	12	fill	ditch				
38	38	12	cut	pit	1.2	0.08	square	u
39	38	12	fill	pit				
40	40	9	fill	pit		0.09		
41	43	9	fill	pit	0.45	0.03		

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Type	Width	Depth	Shape in Plan	Profile
42	43	9	fill	pit	0.48	0.13		
43	43	9	cut	pit	0.48	0.13	circular	u
44	45	9	cut	ring ditch		0.2		
45	45	9	cut	ring ditch	0.46	0.2	curvilinear	u
46	46	11	cut	ditch	1.5	0.68	linear	u
47	46	11	fill	ditch				
48	49	13	fill	pit	0.4	0.1		
49	49	13	cut	pit	0.4	0.1	circular	u
50	51	13	fill	natural		0.28		
51	51	13	cut	natural	5	0.28	sub-linear	irregular
52	53	13	fill	pit	0.7	0.1		
53	53	13	cut	pit	0.7	0.1	sub circular	
54	55	13	fill	pit	0.5	0.17		
55	55	13	cut	pit	0.5	0.17	sub circular	
56	57	13	fill	pit	0.85	0.14		
57	57	13	cut	pit	0.85	0.14	circular	
58	59	13	fill	natural				
59	59	13	cut	natural			sub linear	
60	60	13	fill	natural				
61	60	13	cut	natural	1.6	0.18	circular	
62	63	15	fill	pit		0.14		
63	63	15	cut	pit	0.88	0.14	sub circular	u
64	64	13	fill	ditch	1.7	0.16		
65	65	13	cut	ditch	1.7	0.16	linear	u
66	66	13	fill	ditch		0.1		
67	67	13	cut	pit	1.3	0.1	linear	u
68	69	13	fill	pit				
69	69	13	cut	pit	4	0.36	rectangular	u
70		13	layer			0.12		
71		13	layer	natural		0.12		
72	72	16	fill	pit		0.16		
73	73	16	cut	pit	1.85	0.16	sub circular	irregular
74	75	16	fill	pit		0.08		
75	75	16	cut	pit	1.2	0.08	sub circular	u
76	76	11	layer	natural		0.5		
77	77	11	layer	natural		0.82		
78	46	11	fill	ditch				
79	46	11	fill	ditch				
80	80	11	fill	ditch				
81	81	11	cut	ring ditch?	0.95	0.2	linear	u
82	81	11	fill	ring ditch?				
83	83	11	cut	post hole	0.25	0.07	sub-circular	u

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Shape in Plan</i>	<i>Profile</i>
84	83	11	cut	post hole	0.25	0.07		
85	85	11	cut	post hole	0.35	0.1	sub circular	u
86	86	11	fill	post hole		0.1		
87	87	11	cut	post hole	0.5	0.08	sub-circular	u
88	87	11	fill	post hole	0.15	0.08		
89	89	14	fill	ditch		0.16		
90	90	14	cut	ditch	0.57	0.16	linear	
91	92	14	fill	pit		0.37		
92	92	14	cut	pit/ditch	0.9	0.37	sub circular	u
93	93	14	fill	pit				
94	94	14	cut	pit	0.6	0.15	sub circular	u
95	95	14	fill	pit		0.23		
96	96	14	cut	pit	0.78	0.23	sub circular	u
97	97	14	fill	pit		0.29		
98	98	14	cut	pit	0.9	0.29	irregular	u
99	100	3	fill	pit		0.35		
100		3	layer	natural	0.55	0.1		
101		3	layer	natural		0.04		
102		3	layer	natural				
103		3	layer	natural				
104		3	layer	natural	3.5	0.08		
105		3	layer	natural	1.9	0.3		
106	107	3	fill	pit		0.46		
107	107	3	cut	pit	1.1	0.46	unseen	
108		3	layer	natural				
109		3	layer	natural	0.54	0.28		
110		3	layer	natural	8.5	0.08		
111		3	layer	natural	7.5	0.18		
112		3	layer	natural	0.1	0.08		
113		3	layer	buried soil	0.1	0.12		
114		3	layer	buried soil	0.1	0.12		
115		3	layer		1.7	0.1		
116		3	layer		0.6	0.6		
117		3	layer		1			
118		3	layer		1	0.4		
119	119	3	fill		2.3	0.15		
120	120	3	cut	plough cut	2.3	0.15	unseen	v
121	123	3	fill	pit	2.5	0.08		
122	123	3	fill	pit	2.6	0.2		
123	123	3	cut	pit	2.6	0.24	unseen	u
124	124	3	layer		0.5	0.14		
125		3	layer		3.2			

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Shape in Plan</i>	<i>Profile</i>
126		19	layer	natural	0.7	0.18		
127		19	layer	natural	0.34	0.16		
128		19	layer	natural	0.2			
129		19	layer	natural	0.46	0.24		
130		19	layer	natural	0.3	0.12		
131		19	layer	natural	1	0.66		
132	133	9	fill	ring ditch?				
133	133	9	cut	ring ditch?	1.06	0.39	curvilinear	
134	135	6	fill	pit				
135	135	6	cut	pit	0.66	0.4	sub-circular	v
136	136	6	fill	ditch	1.8	0.25		
137	137	6	cut	ditch	1.8	0.25	linear	u
138	139	6	fill	ditch	1.2	0.3		
139	139	6	cut	ditch	1.2	0.3	linear	u
140	141	6	fill	ditch	0.56	0.36		
141	141	6	cut	ditch	0.56	0.36	linear	v
142	143	6	fill	pit	0.56	0.4		
143	143	6	cut	pit	0.56	0.4	circular	u
144	145	6	fill	pit	0.75	0.5		
145	145	6	cut	pit	0.75	0.5	rectangular	u
146	133	9	fill	ditch	0.54	0.28		
147	133	9	fill	ditch	0.6	0.35		
148	131	19	layer	natural	1	0.16		
149	131	19	layer	natural	1	0.3		
150		19	layer	natural	0.34	0.32		
151		19	layer	natural	0.6	0.36		
152	131	19	layer	natural	0.5	0.18		
153	153	17	cut	ring ditch	7	0.4	circular	u
154	154	17	cut	ring ditch	0.6	0.2	curvilinear	u
155	153	17	fill	ring ditch				
156	156	17	cut	ring ditch	0.5	0.19	curvilinear	u
157	156	17	fill	ring ditch				
158	153	17	cut	ring ditch	0.5	0.19	curvilinear	u
159	159	17	fill	ring ditch				
160	161	18	fill	ditch	0.8	0.2		
161	161	18	cut	ditch	0.8	0.2	linear	
162	162	18	fill	ditch	0.9	0.24		
163	163	18	cut	ditch	0.9	0.24	linear	
164	165	18	fill	ditch	0.8	0.31		
165	165	18	cut	ditch	0.8	0.31	linear	
166	167	18	fill	ditch		0.28		
167	167	18	cut	ditch	0.7	0.28	linear	

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Type	Width	Depth	Shape in Plan	Profile
168	169	18	fill	pit		0.08		
169	169	18	cut	pit	0.64	0.08	sub circular	
170	170	8	cut	?	1.4	0.46	curvilinear	
171	170	8				0.3		
172	172	8	fill	?		0.12		
173	170	8	fill	?		0.14		
174	174	8	cut	pit	1	0.16	circular	u
175	174	8	fill	pit		0.16		
176	176	8	cut	pit	0.75	0.15	circular	u
177	176	8	fill	pit		0.15		
178	178	8	cut	pit/ph	0.08	0.06	circular	u
179	178	8	fill	pit		0.06		
180	180	8	cut	pit/ph	0.1	0.08	circular	u
181	180	8	fill	pit/ph		0.08		
182	182	8	cut	pit	4	0.92	sub-circular	ww
183	182	8	fill	pit	0.65	0.14		
184	184	8	fill	pit	0.98	0.22		
185	185	8	fill	pit	3.15	0.29		
186	182	8	fill	pit		0.2		
187	187	8	cut	pit	0.9	0.47	irregular	irregular
188	187	8	fill	pit		0.22		
189	189	8	fill	pit		0.45		
190	187	8	fill	pit		0.12		
191	191	8	cut	pit	0.7	0.33	irregular	irregular
192	191	8	fill	pit (?)	0.7	0.33		
193	193	8	cut	post hole ?	0.45	0.07	circular	u
194	193	8	fill	post hole		0.07		
195	195	8	cut	post hole	1.1	0.19	circular	u
196	195	8	fill	pit	1.1	0.19		
197	197	3	fill	pit	0.8	0.18		
198	198	3	cut	pit	0.8	0.18	?	u
199		19	layer	natural		0.33		
200		19	layer	natural		0.15		
201		19	layer	natural		0.35		
202		19	layer	natural		0.09		
203	203	19	cut	natural		0.5		
204	205	9	fill	post hole	0.25	0.05		
205	105	9	cut	post hole	0.25	0.05	circular	
206	182	8	fill	pit		0.27		
207	182	8	fill	pit	4	0.19		
208	182	8	fill	pit	4	0.24		
209	156	17	fill	ring ditch				

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Type	Width	Depth	Shape in Plan	Profile
210	156	17	fill	ring ditch				
211	158	17	fill	ditch				
212	212	17	cut	ditch	0.88	0.18		
213	212	17	fill	ditch				
214	214	17	cut	pit (?)/ post hole (?)	0.58	0.04	?	
215	214	17	fill	pit (?)/post hole (?)				
216	216	17	cut	pit	0.85	0.19	sub-rectangular	u
217	216	17	fill	pit		0.19		
218	218	17	cut	pit / post hole	0.36	0.58	sub circular	u
219	218	17	fill	pit				
220	220	17	cut	pit	0.49	0.18	sub circular	u
221	220	17	fill	pit		0.18		
222		24	layer	buried soil				
223		25	layer	buried soil				
224	226	21	fill	ditch		0.22		
225	226	21	fill	ditch		0.26		
226	226	21	cut	ditch	1.88	0.52	linear	u
227	226	21	fill	ditch	1.88	0.52		
228	228	17	cut	pit	0.56	0.25	sub-circular	u
229	228	17	fill	pit		0.25		
230	231	19	fill	ditch	0.77	0.17		
231	230	19	cut	ditch	0.77	0.17	linear	
232	232	17	cut	post hole	0.55	0.1	circular	u
233	233	17	fill	post hole		0.1		
234	235	20	fill	ditch		0.24		
235	235	20	cut	ditch	0.85	0.24	linear	u
236	237	20	fill	ring ditch?	0.45	0.26		
237	237	20	cut	ring ditch?	0.45	0.26	linear	u
238	239	20	fill	ditch		0.24		
239	239	20	cut	ditch	0.8	0.24	linear	u
240	241	20	fill	ditch		0.07		
241	241	20	cut	ditch			linear	u
242	242	20	fill	ditch		0.19		
243	243	20	cut	ditch			linear	u
244		10,11,17	layer	natural				

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Prehistoric Pottery

By David Mullin

A total of 12 sherds of prehistoric pottery weighing 79g were collected by hand from eight contexts during excavations at Sutton Gault. This material was rapidly assessed and is described in chronological order below. Another 54g (35 sherds) of pottery was recovered from samples from four contexts, the majority from context 177.

Context 27 (Trench 6) contained the largest amount of hand collected pottery: five sherds weighing 34g. Four of the sherds are in a finely crushed flint fabric, whilst the fifth is thicker walled and has a more sparse flint fabric. All five sherds are probably Neolithic in date, but lack of any feature sherds makes definite identification difficult. Worked flint of probable Neolithic date was also found in this feature.

A single sherd in a flint and grog tempered fabric weighing 4g was recovered from context 19 (Trench 1). This appears to be a rim of a Late Neolithic Peterborough Ware vessel, decorated with fingernail impressions.

A single sherd of a grog tempered Beaker weighing 4g was recovered from Context 4 and two further sherds of grog tempered Beaker weighing 11g were recovered from Context 114 (Trench 3). Both of these contexts are associated with the buried soil from which worked flint was also recovered. All three sherds are decorated with incised chevrons and lines.

Context 146 (Trench 9) contained a single, fairly rolled sherd weighing 5g in a sand and finely crushed flint fabric which is probably Early Bronze Age in date. Context 168 (Trench 18) contained a single sherd weighing 7g in a grog and rare flint fabric, which appears to have fingernail impressions on its outer surface. This is probably part of an Early Bronze Age urn, but further identification is hampered by the small size of the sherd. Context 177 (Trench 8) contained a single sherd weighing 5g in a grog and flint fabric which, again, may be part of an an Early Bronze Age urn, a further 26 sherds in a similar fabric were recovered from Sample 85.

The assemblage is small but contains chronologically diagnostic material and suggests that the site has the potential to produce a good assemblage of prehistoric pottery that would add significantly to study of pottery use and production in the Fens. Future work should include a sampling strategy for artefact retrieval.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Sherd count</i>	<i>Weight (kg)</i>
4	2	1	0.004
19	1	1	0.004
27	6	5	0.034
114	3	2	0.012
122	3	7	0.006
146	9	1	0.005
155	17	1	0.001

<i>Context</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Sherd count</i>	<i>Weight (kg)</i>
168	18	1	0.007
177	8	27	0.058
223	25	1	0.001

Table 3: Pottery assemblage table

B.2 Lithic Report

By David Mullin

A total of 109 lithic items were recovered by hand from the excavations at Sutton Gault. A further 530g of flint was recovered from environmental samples. These included a high proportion of waste flakes, but small amounts of diagnostic flint were recovered from within feature fills.

Methods

The flint was catalogued according to a broad debitage, core or tool type. Information about burning and breaks was recorded and where identifiable raw material type was also noted. Where possible dating was attempted.

Cores were classified according to the number and position of their platforms, following Clark (1960) and core maintenance pieces were classified to the following criteria. Core rejuvenation flakes are pieces representing the removal of the top or bottom of a core in order to improve the flaking angle of the platform. Core trimming flakes are flakes which remove a substantial part of a core in order to aid working by removing an imperfection in the core, a miss-hit or other impediment to flaking. The nature of any remnant flake scars on the dorsal surface of core trimming flakes was noted.

Flakes were classified following Saville (1990, 155), which allows an identification of the stage in the core reduction process to which the flake belongs. Terminations such as hinge fractures were noted. Chips are defined as pieces measuring less than 10mm by 10mm. Flakes having a proportions length to breadth ratio of greater than 2:1 were classified as blade-like, those with a greater length to breadth ratio being classified as blades. Mid-sections of blades with no bulb of percussion were classified as blade shatter (Andrefsky 1998, 81-3).

Retouched pieces were classified according to standard morphological descriptions (Bamford 1985, Healy 1988, Bradley 1999, Butler 2005).

No attempt was made at refitting or use-wear analysis.

Results

Raw materials

A variety of raw materials were exploited at the site but good quality chalk flint was the main raw material. Much of the flint was in fresh condition, suggesting that it had suffered minimal disturbance.

Technology and Dating

Fourteen worked flints were recovered from the topsoil (context 1).

Two narrow blades were recovered from context 62 (Trench 15). One of these has evidence of platform preparation and both are probably Late Mesolithic in date. Context 189 contained nine flints which also included narrow blades and further narrow blades were recovered from contexts 166 (Trench 18) and 181 (Trench 8).

A total of 11 worked flints were recovered from context 27 (Trench 6), where they occurred alongside probable Neolithic pottery. The flint included a core trimming flake, an end and side scraper and a number of blades, all of which would not be out of place within the earlier Neolithic. A total of 11 worked flints were recovered from context 177 (Trench 8). These included blades and blade shatter and are probably Neolithic in date. A Neolithic long end scraper was recovered from 140 (Trench 6), along with a small flint flake.

Context 4 (Trench 2) contained two worked flints, including a core trimming flake, which occurred alongside Beaker pottery. A total of seven flakes were recovered from 114 (Trench 3). None were diagnostic, but occurred alongside Beaker pottery. A small Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age retouched flint knife was recovered from ditch terminus 45 (context 44, Trench 9).

A large core trimming flake was recovered from 159 (Trench 17). This is not particularly diagnostic, but would not be out of place in the Early Bronze Age.

A total of 26 flakes were recovered from buried soil 223 (Trench 25). These included narrow blades alongside undiagnostic waste flakes in what appears to be a mixed assemblage. Seven flints were recovered from buried soil 222 (Trench 24), but none were diagnostic. A total of ten undiagnostic flakes were recovered from context 148 (Trench 19), the fill of palaeochannel 131. Four undiagnostic flakes were recovered from 128 (Trench 19), two from contexts 58 (Trench 13), 149 (Trench 19) and 186 (Trench 8) and one from 179 (Trench 8).

Context	Trench	All flint (count)	Hand collected flint (kg)	Flint from environmental samples (kg)
1	6,8,15 – 17,21,22	14		0.067
4	1, 2, 3	2	0.013	
27	6	33	0.041	0.010
44	9	1	0.002	
58	13	2	0.009	
62	15	3	0.004	0.001
114	3	5		0.013
128	19	4	0.007	
132	9	6		0.003
140	6	2	0.009	
147	9	1		0.001
148	19	10	0.014	
149	19	4	0.001	0.001
157	17	2		0.001
159	17	1	0.034	
166	18	1	0.002	
177	8	49	0.030	0.027

<i>Context</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>All flint (count)</i>	<i>Hand collected flint (kg)</i>	<i>Flint from environmental samples (kg)</i>
179	8	1	0.003	
181	8	1	0.003	
186	8	2	0.005	
189	8	9	0.009	
194	8	1		0.001
219	17	1		0.001
222	24	7		0.020
223	25	26		0.059

Table 4: Flint assemblage table

Discussion

The lithic material from Sutton spans the Mesolithic to Bronze Age in date, but is dominated by undiagnostic waste flakes. Nevertheless, the material adds chronological depth to the period of activity at the site and supports the dating of features suggested by the pottery. It is likely that this site would produce a very good lithics assemblage that would add significantly to current knowledge of the development and use of flint technologies in the Fens.

B.3 Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

- 4.6.1 Eight fragments of extremely degraded animal bone (most likely due to the acidic soil conditions) were recovered from context 41, a fill of pit **43** (Trench 9). All but 4 fragments were unidentifiable, with those that were consisting of proximal tibia and femur fragments from large mammals, most likely cattle. No small animal bones were present either hand-collected or from samples. The poor condition of the animal bones suggests that this site is unlikely to produce a good assemblage of faunal remains.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

C.1 Environmental Remains

By Rachel Fosberry

Introduction and Methods

A total of one hundred and six bulk samples were taken from features within the evaluated areas of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains, animal bones and artefacts and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

Results from environmental sampling of an adjacent site by Oxford Archaeology in 2004 and 2005 had shown that the presence of charred plant remains were extremely rare but preservation of plant remains in waterlogged deposits was good.

The majority of the samples were hand-sieved on site using a 10mm mesh, the remaining thirty-three bulk-samples were selected for wet-sieving and flotation. Sample sizes varied from 10 litres up to 40 litres. The total volume of each sample were processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, animal bones, dating evidence and any other artefactual or ecofactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts are noted on Table 5. Only one flot from each sample (i.e. 10 litres) was examined at this stage.

The remaining seventy-three bulk samples were hand-sieved on site for artefact retrieval.

Quantification

For the purpose of this initial assessment, items such as seeds, cereal grains and small animal bones have been scanned and recorded qualitatively according to the following categories

= 1-10, ## = 11-50, ### = 51+ specimens

Items that cannot be easily quantified such as charcoal have been scored for abundance

+ = rare, ++ = moderate, +++ = abundant

Results

Preservation

Preservation of plant remains was mixed. Charcoal is common in many of the samples in the form of wood charcoal and charred stems. Untransformed seeds are also common. Their form of preservation seems to have been through waterlogging until relatively recently when the deposits have become de-watered.

Plant Remains

Cereals: Charred cereal grains are extremely rare and are only present in five of the samples. The cereals have been tentatively identified as wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains, predominantly as single poorly-preserved specimens. No chaff elements occur.

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature Type	Sample Size (L)	Sample comments	Flot Volume (ml)	Cereals	Charred Seeds	untransformed Seeds	Charcoal <2mm	Charcoal > 2mm	Flot comments
50	157	156	ditch	20	poss BA ring ditch - no finds	120	#	#	###	++	++	charred stems and culm nodes, numerous uncharred seeds
51	159	158	ditch	20	poss BA ring ditch - no finds	110	#	#	##	++	++	charred stems and culm nodes, numerous uncharred seeds
85	177	176	pit	40	pit with charcoal and flint	30	#	#	#	+++	+++	charcoal rich, nutshell, single grain
95	223		layer	10	Buried soil	130	#		##	++	+++	charcoal rich – suitable for C14?, single grain
96	223		layer	10	Buried soil	100	#	#	#	+++	+++	charcoal rich, 3 x grains

Table 5: Samples containing cereal grains

Weed seeds: The majority of the samples contain moderate quantities of untransformed seeds including knotweed (*Polygonum* sp), dock (*Rumex* sp.), elder (*Sambucus* sp.), goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), cleavers (*Gallium* sp.), nettle (*Urtica* sp.), bramble (*Rubus* sp.), campion (*Silene* sp.) as well as unidentified seeds of the grass (Poaceae) and aster (Asteraceae) families.

Charred seeds are rare and are predominantly grass (Poaceae) seeds.

Charred hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragments occur in three of the samples:

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature Type
36	146	133	ditch
48	114		layer
85	177	176	pit

Six of the flotation samples contained what appeared to be charred stem fragments, some with culm nodes. All six samples are from features that have a high peat content in their fills. Samples 49, 50, 51 and 98 are all related and could possibly be Bronze Age in date however, Sample 28 is most definitely not Bronze Age and could be modern.

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature description	Trench No
28	47	46	A probably modern boundary ditch with very peaty fill	11
49	155	154	Upper fill from possible Bronze Age ring ditch (above peat layer)	17
50	157	156	Upper fill from possible Bronze Age ring ditch (above peat layer)	17
51	159	158	Upper fill from possible Bronze Age ring ditch (above peat layer)	17
98	217	216	peaty fill in pit next to ring ditch 156.	17

104	227	226	undated (maybe bronze age boundary ditch - layer below peat fill)	21
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Ecofacts and Artefacts

From the thirty-three flotation samples, animal bone was recovered from three of the residues. Pottery is present in four samples, burnt flint occurs in three samples and flint debitage in the form of flakes and microliths are found in eleven of the samples

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature Type	Residue Volume (ml)	Large animal bones	Pottery	Burnt flint	Flint debitage	Residue comments
11	27	28	pit	1800		##	#	###	rare charcoal
20	40	43	pit	900	##				some bone burnt
26	62	63	pit	4100	#			#	calcined bone
35	132	133	ditch	1400			#	#	calcined bone, rare charcoal
36	146	133	ditch	1100					nutshell, moderate charcoal
37	147	133	ditch	500				#	rare charcoal
49	155	154	ditch	1800		#			rare charcoal
50	157	156	ditch	2300				#	rare charcoal
69	219	218	pit	1800				#	
85	177	176	pit	4000	#	##	##	##	Approx 20g charred hazelnuts, calcined bone
92	222		layer	1200				#	
93	222		layer	1500				#	
95	223		layer	1000		#			rare charcoal
97	149	131	layer	1700				#	
54	197	198	pit	600				#	rare charcoal

Table 6: Ecofacts from flotation samples

Discussion

Preliminary observations suggest that preservation of charred plant material, excluding charcoal, is poor. This is consistent with the results obtained by OA South from the adjacent area (Webley and Hiller 2009).

Charcoal predominates and is present in all of the samples. This could suggest tree/shrub clearance by burning although some of the higher concentrations of charcoal are more likely to represent the remains of single or repeated fires. Some of the samples contain charcoal suitable for species identification and/or radiocarbon dating.

Charred plant remains are rare. Cereal grains occur in five samples that were taken from the possible Bronze Age ring ditches **156** and **158**, from the buried soil, layer 223 and from fill 177 of pit **176**. Although present in small quantities, these grains do indicate that cereals were being locally utilised, although probably not to any great extent.

Unidentified charred stems (some with culm nodes) were noted in the samples from the possible Bronze Age ring ditches and associated features. The fact that a similar assemblage was found in a comparatively modern sample suggests that the charred

stems are intrusive however, the ring ditch deposits were well sealed which poses a conundrum.

The majority of flint volumes are small although some samples produced more substantial volumes of up to 250ml. The majority of the samples contained rootlets and humic matter including peat. Untransformed seeds are common and were originally thought to be modern contaminants. This explanation would seem unlikely for the presence of untransformed seeds in the buried soils which were well sealed by clay deposits. The other explanation is that these seeds were preserved by waterlogging (preservation in anoxic conditions) and that relatively recent drainage of the area would have resulted in the de-watering of these deposits. Plants represented by untransformed seeds indicate grassland and shrub.

The most noteworthy sample is Sample number 85, pit **176**, context 177, which contains a reasonably large quantity of charred and fragmented hazelnut shells, a small quantity of animal bone and a moderate flint assemblage (including debitage and burnt flint). This pit is interesting because there were two stakeholes at the bottom with flint blades placed upright in them.

It is worth noting that the residue from Sample 49, fill 154, ditch **155** contains a single pot sherd. As this feature was previously undated (thought to be a Bronze Age ring ditch), the pottery recovered should be useful for dating.

Statement of Research Potential

Although only a limited quantity of carbonised seeds were recovered these are indicative of cereal processing and extensive sampling of features associated with settlement would provide evidence for both wild and cultivated foods utilised.

Wood charcoal predominates providing evidence of burning with the potential of carbon dating and/or species identification.

The presence of untransformed seeds (if proven to be contemporary) is particularly interesting and significant as they could offer the potential of extending knowledge of the local environment and would add substantially to a reconstruction of the landscape history.

Sampling of the buried soil has proved useful for the recovery of artefacts.

Further Work and Methods Statement

From the samples examined it appears that there is good potential for further archaeobotanical study. If further excavation is planned, sampling for environmental remains should target features with a high potential for preservation, such as charcoal rich deposits and deposits where waterlogging has occurred. Controlled sampling of the buried soils and alluvium should take place for artefact retrieval and soil micromorphology would enable clearer interpretation of the processes of deposition of the buried soil, alluvium and paleochannels.

APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-64658		
Project Name	Sutton Gault Irrigation reservoir extension		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	07-09-2009	Finish	22-09-2009
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	SUT GIR 09	Planning App. No.	pre planning
HER No.	ECB 3251	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Development Type	Farm Infrastructure

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ring Ditch	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700	Lithics	Neolithic -4k to -2k
Pits	Neolithic -4k to -2k	Lithics	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700
Biuried Soil	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700	Pottery	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	East Cambridgeshire	Sutton Gault Irrigation Reservoir Blaby's Drove North Fen Sutton Gault E. Cambs
Parish	Sutton	
HER	Cambridgeshire HER office	
Study Area	8.1 ha	National Grid Reference TL 4045 8132

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	CCC; CAPCA
Project Design Originator	Aileen Connor
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Supervisor	Gareth Rees

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC stores, Landbeach	CCC stores, Landbeach	CCC stores, Landbeach
SUT GIR 09	SUT GIR 09	SUT GIR 09

Archive Contents/Media






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Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey


Notes:

Drawing Conventions

Plans

Limit of Excavation	—————
Illustrated Section	————— S.14
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Modern Deposit	
Buried Soil	
Root Disturbance	
Cut Number	118

Sections

Limit of Excavation	- - - - -
Cut	—————
Cut-Conjectured	- - - - -
Deposit Horizon	—————
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	- - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation	- - - - -
Top Surface/Top of Natural	—————
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	118
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD X
Inclusions	

Convention Key

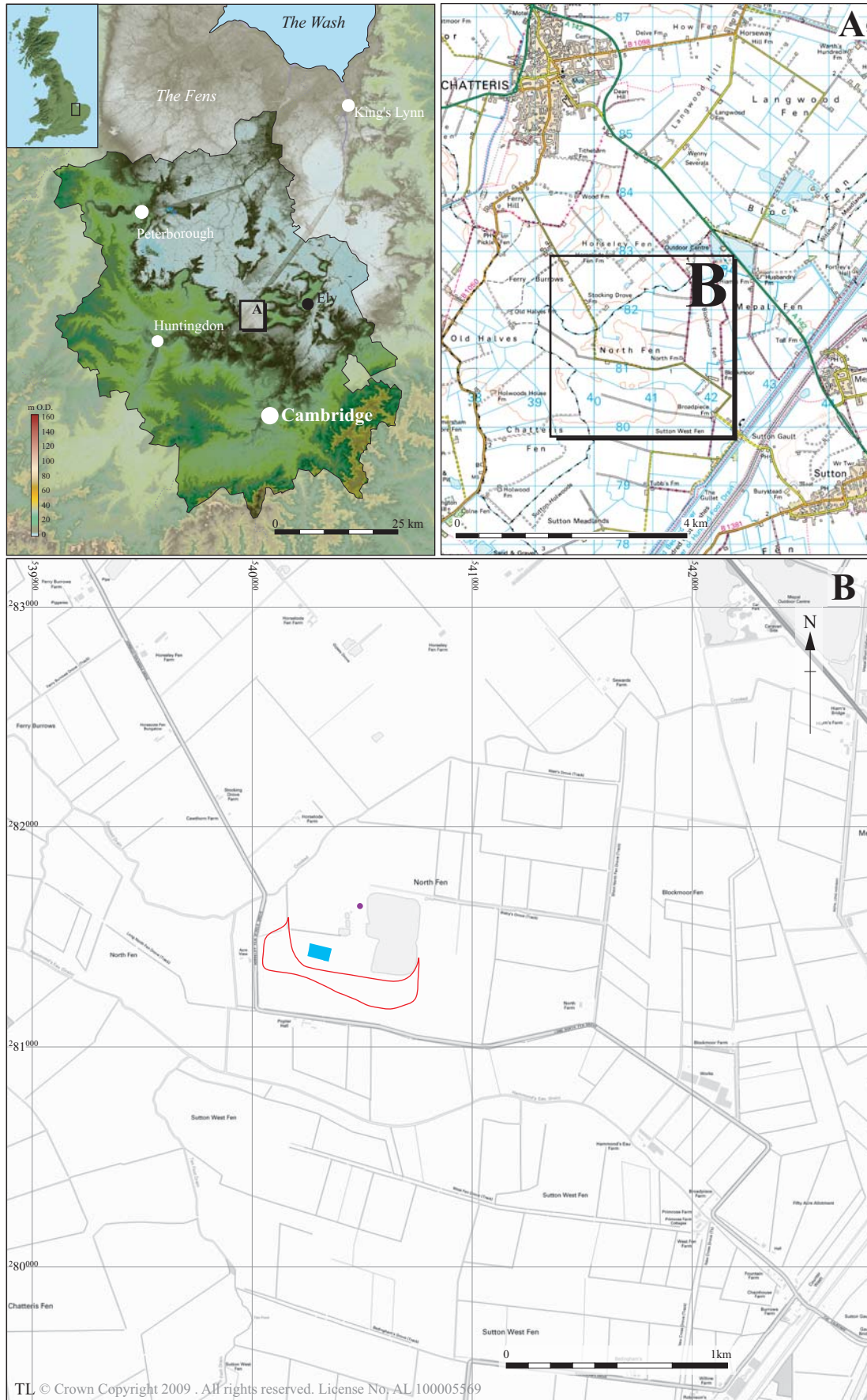


Figure 1: Location development area (outlined red), SUGAR04 excavation (blue) and SUT7 (purple)

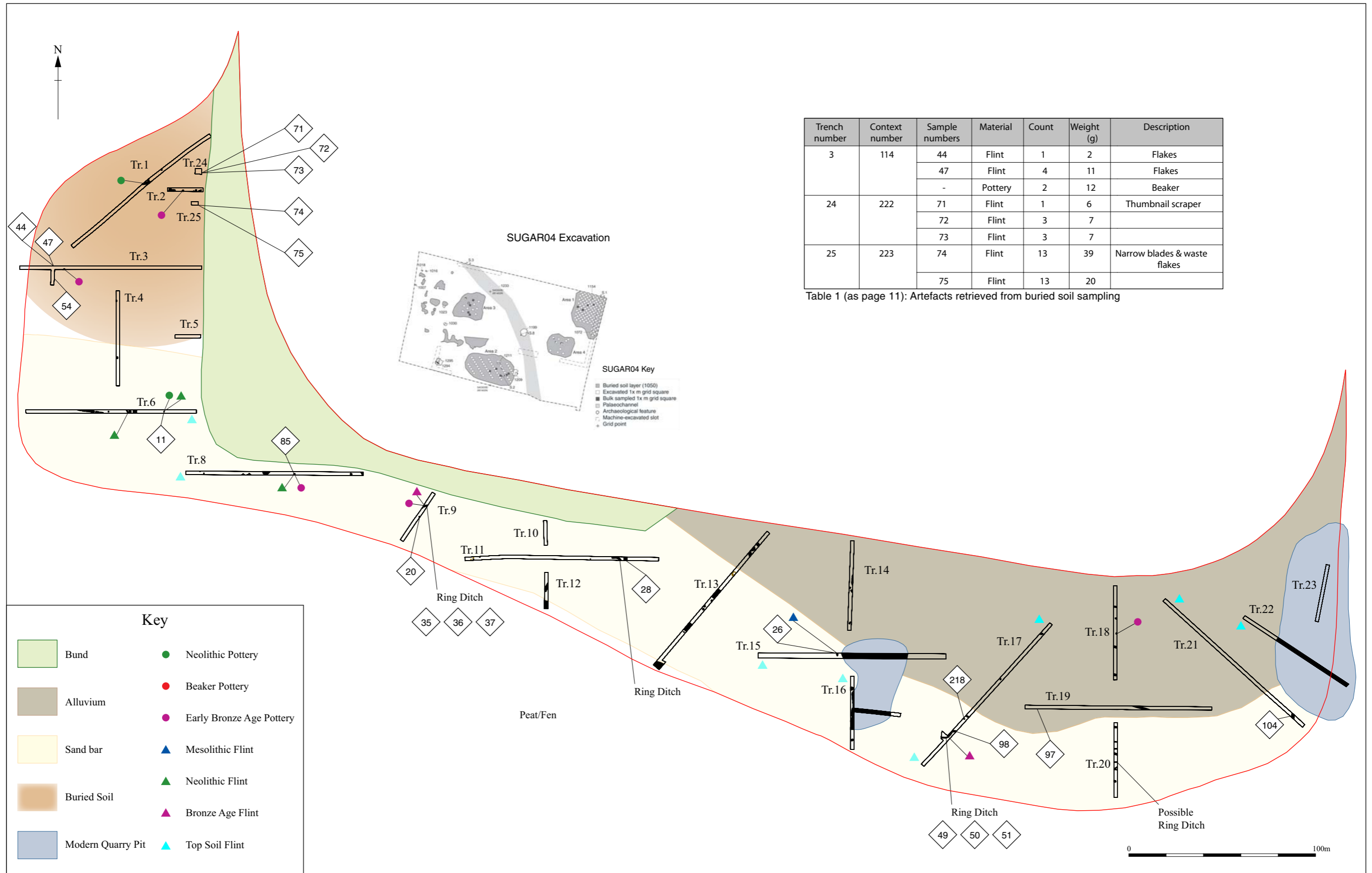


Figure 2: Trench location (1:2000)

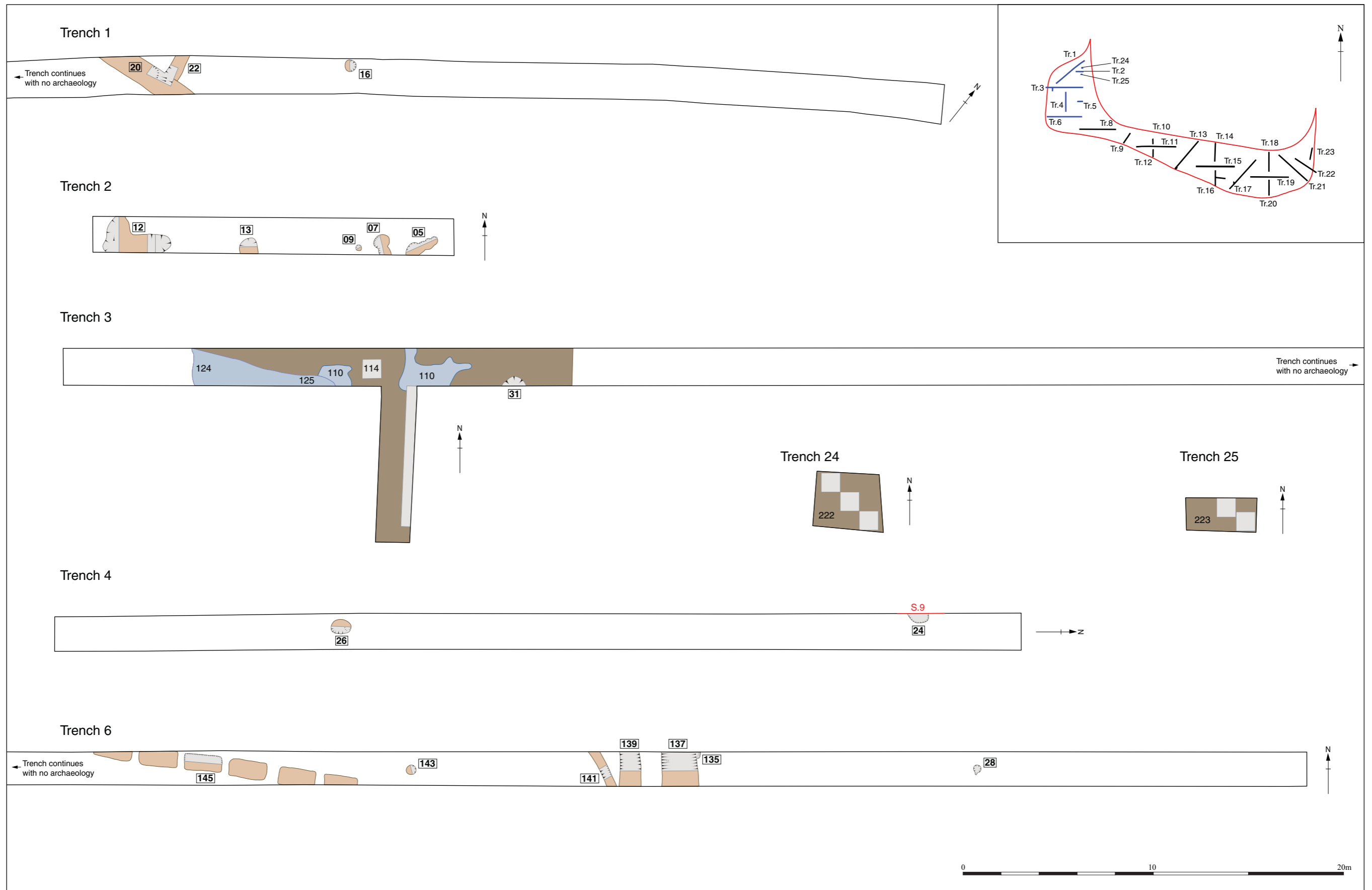


Figure 3a: Plans of trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 24 and 25 (at 1:200)

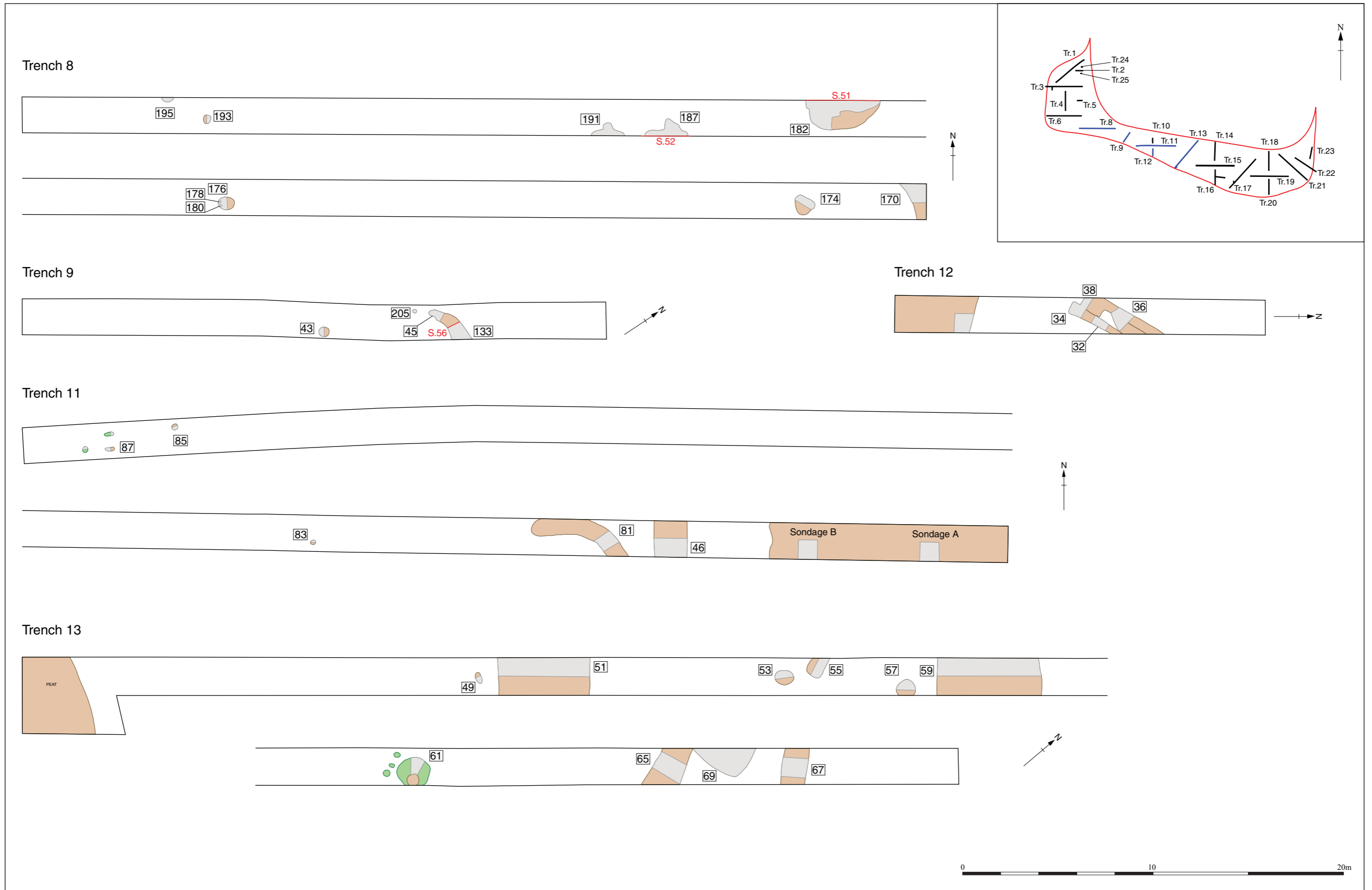


Figure 3b: Plans of trenches 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13 (at 1:200)

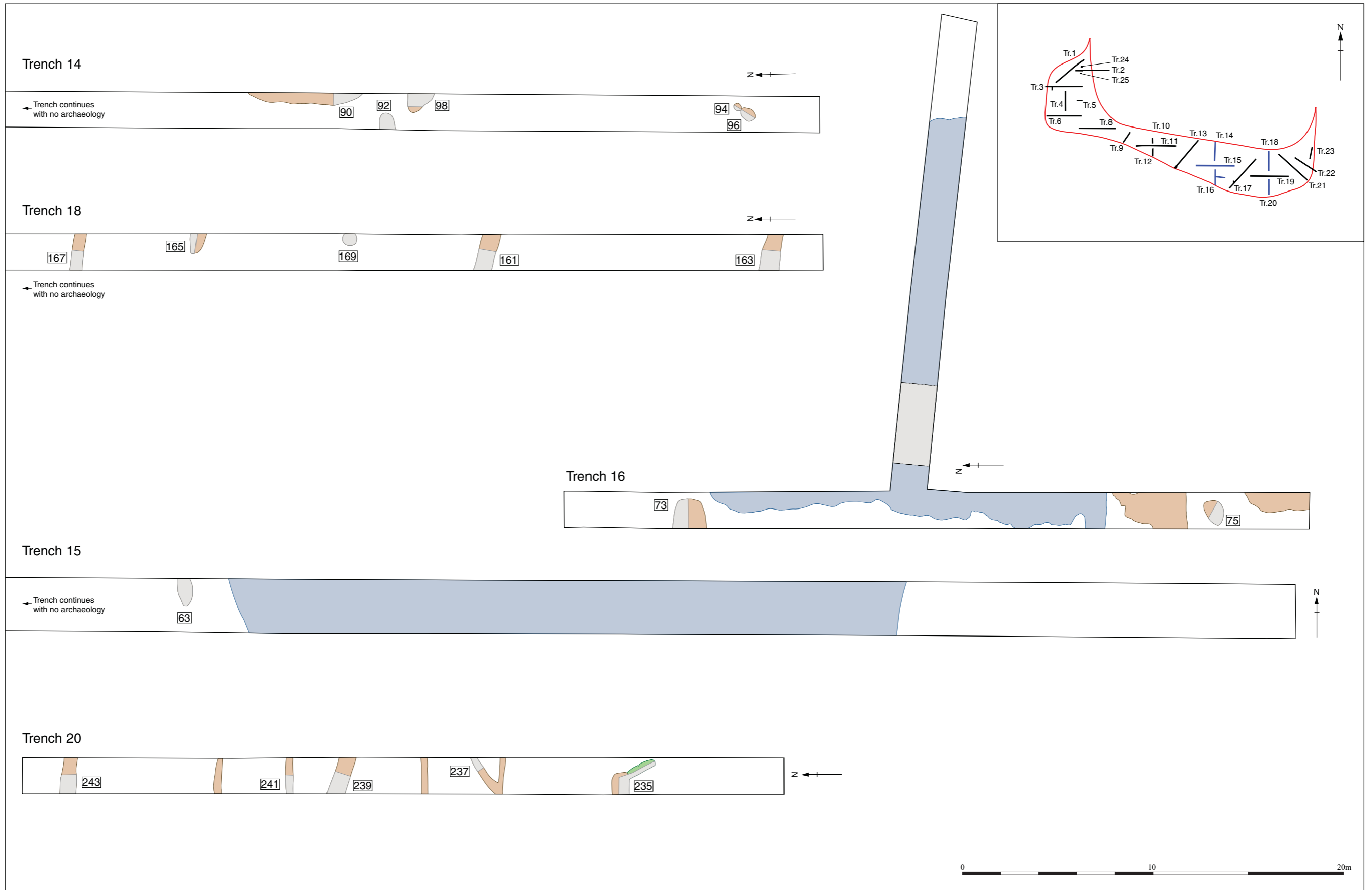


Figure 3c: Plans of trenches 14, 15, 16, 18 and 20 (at 1:200)

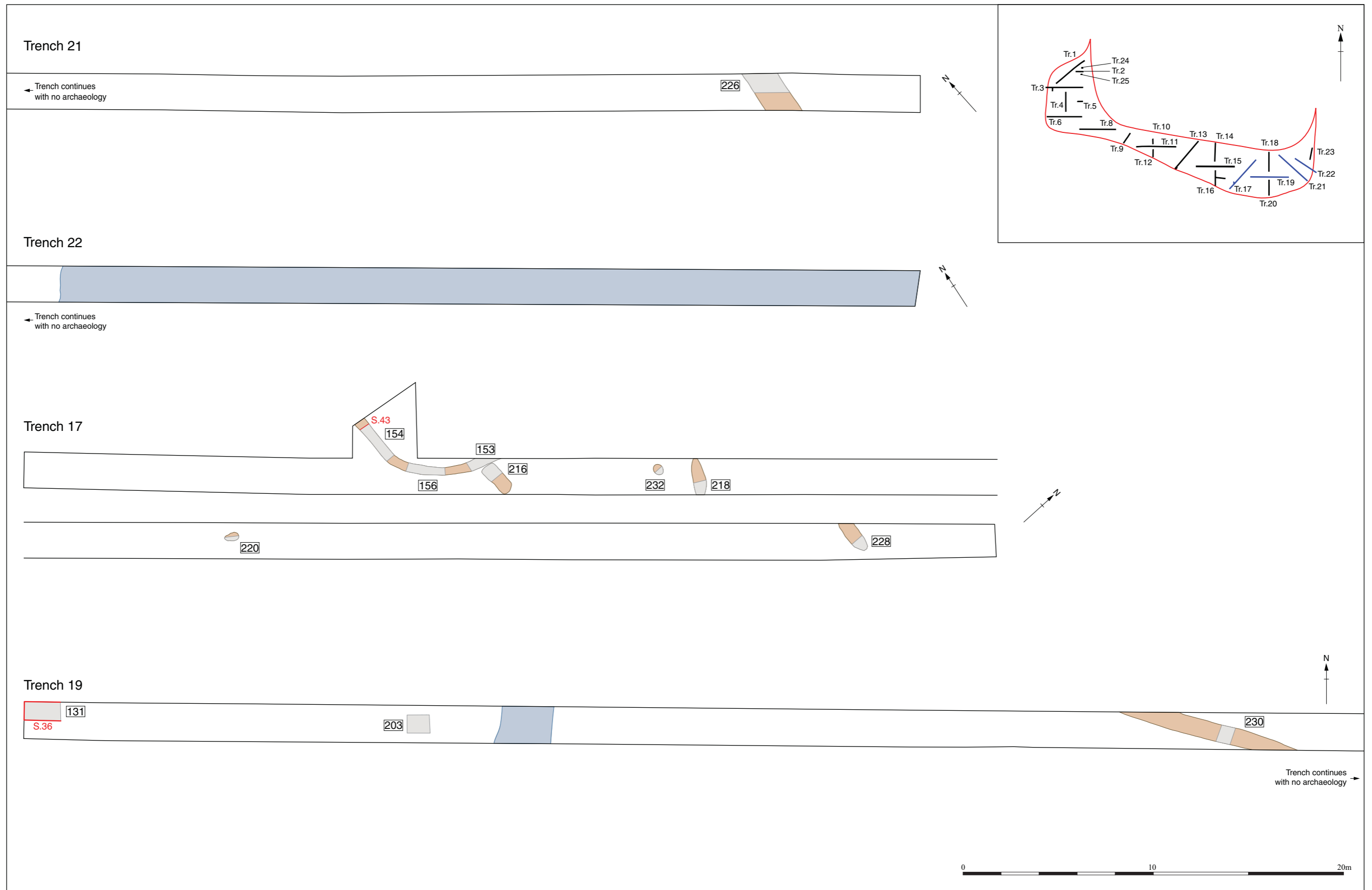


Figure 3d: Plans of trenches 17, 19, 21 and 22(at 1:200)

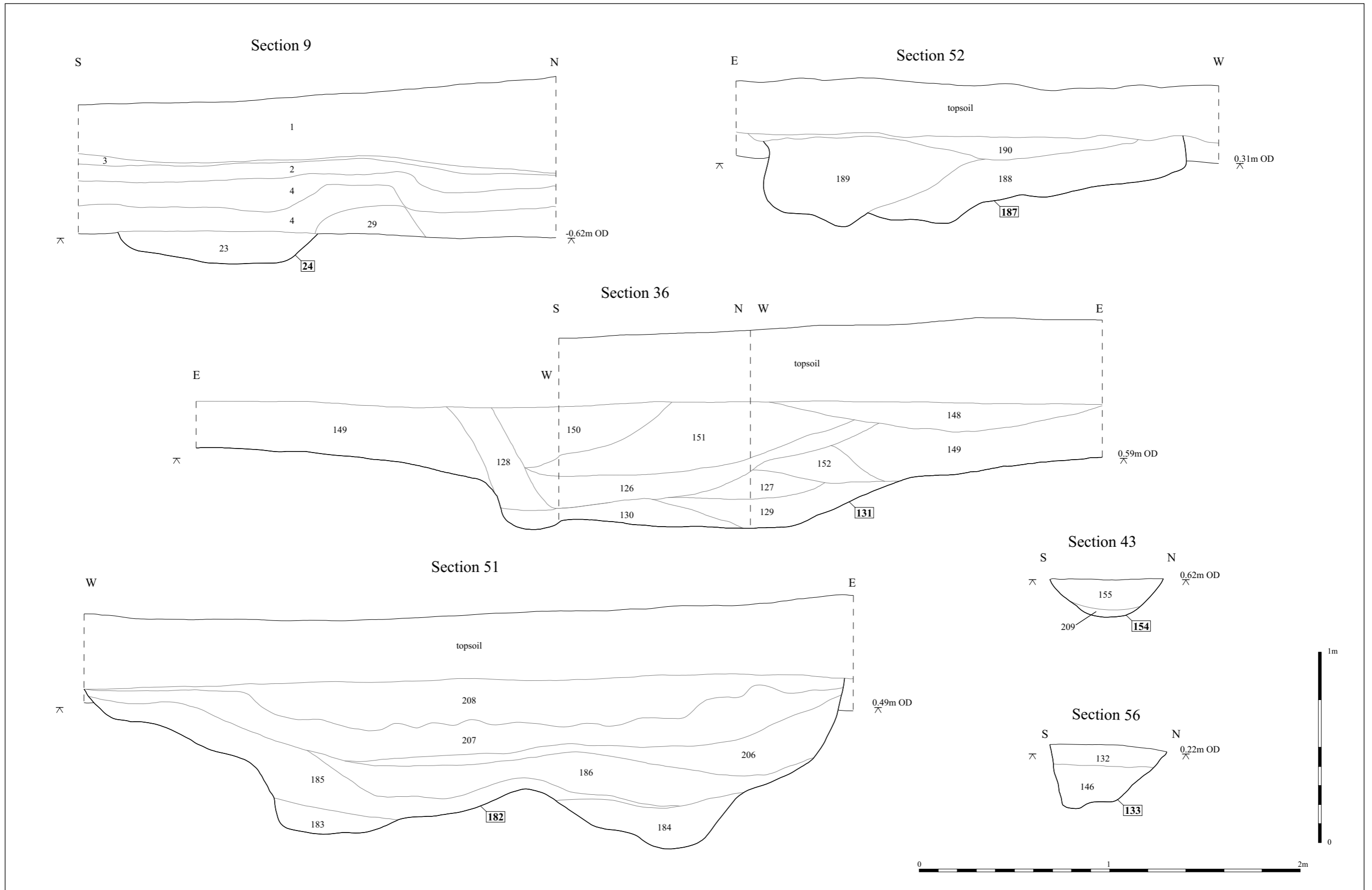


Figure 4: Selected sections



Plate 1: View from sand bar (seen in trench) towards lower ground to the south west



Plate 2: Buried soil in Trench 2



Plate 3: Burnt deposit overlying peat and buried soil (in trench base), Trench 3



Plate 4: Pit 191, Trench 8, from the north



Plate 5: Pit 176 from the west



Plate 6: Pit 143 from the west



Plate 7: Pit 43 from the south



Plate 8: Ring ditch 156 at south of Trench 17, facing north



Plate 9: Ditch 226 with peaty upper fill



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