

Discovery Properties Ltd and Vale of the White Horse District Council

Abingdon Multiplex, Abingdon Oxon

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

SU4780 9654



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

October 1997

Discovery Properties Ltd

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## SUMMARY

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at the land to the south of Tesco at the junction of the A34 and the A415 on behalf of Discovery Properties Ltd and the Vale of the White Horse District Council. The evaluation revealed several archaeological features including a probable Neolithic (3800-2500 BC) long barrow, situated to the west of the site and two Bronze Age ring-ditches, likely to be the remains of round barrows, situated to the north-east of the site. The evaluation confirms the cropmarks evidence shown on aerial photographs taken in 1993. A Bronze Age water hole and two linear features of similar date were also revealed at the north-west end of the development area. Two incomplete vessels of Beaker pottery and charred plant remains were discovered to the south of the ring-ditches. Long barrows are rare in the Thames Valley region although there is an important group around Abingdon, the nearest being at Drayton less than 2 km away. This long barrow is one of the earliest monuments around Abingdon. The ring-ditches are more common and there are a further 11 within a 2 km radius of the development area.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

In October 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a pre-planning field evaluation at the land south of Tesco in Abingdon on behalf of Discovery Properties Ltd and The Vale of the White Horse District Council, in respect of a planning application for the development of a multiplex cinema. A brief was prepared by the County Archaeologist as the area was considered to be of considerable archaeological potential. A Written Scheme of Investigation including a detailed trench plan based on the location of cropmarks seen in aerial photographs was produced by the OAU and agreed by the County Archaeologist.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

The development site is situated to the west of Abingdon at the junction of the A34 and the A415 and is c. 2.5 hectares in extent (Fig. 1). The site lies to the north of the river Ock and east of Abingdon Common and is bounded by the Spendlove Brook to the south and east and a Tesco superstore to the north. The geology is first terrace drift deposits of gravel, silt and sand. The site lies at a height of 54 m OD in a flat field which is presently over-grown pasture. The east part of the site had previously been allotments. An overhead power cable extends north-south within the site running parallel to the A34. The area to the north of the site was developed as recently as the late 1980s though no archaeological work was carried out.

### 1.3 Archaeological background

The site lies in an area which has proved to be rich in archaeological remains. Two ring-ditches, a probable long barrow and several other linear and discrete features are known from cropmarks within the area of the site (Fig. 2). These were recorded on aerial photographs held by the RCHME at Swindon (ref. SU 4796) and from the Abingdon Archaeological and Historical society. Two further ring-ditches and a possible henge are also visible as cropmarks immediately to the south-west of the site (Fig. 1)

The cropmarks of the long barrow are visible on the photograph as a pair of east-west orientated linear flanking ditches, a rectilinear revetment trench and the bedding trench for the east-facing façade and is very similar in appearance to the well-known Drayton long barrow (Benson and Miles 1974, Wilson 1982). Unlike the long barrows at Drayton and a possible example at Drayton St. Leonard which are associated with cursus monuments the Abingdon Common barrow is relatively isolated from other Neolithic monuments. The Abingdon Common long barrow is on the edge of a Neolithic landscape focused along the River Thames. The Drayton site has a cursus, long barrow and several Neolithic pits whilst the monument complex at Barrow Hills, Radley contains a causewayed enclosure, an oval barrow, a long barrow and a small cemetery (Bradley, Chambers and Halpin 1984, Barclay and Halpin forthcoming). Both sites provide extensive evidence of Neolithic occupation. A pit containing Grooved Ware (Balkwill 1978) was discovered in 1972 during the construction of the bypass indicating possible domestic or ritual activity in the area. Three late Neolithic and twelve Bronze Age sherds of pottery were recovered at Abingdon Vineyard (OAU 1993) to the north-east of the site. Cropmarks of a possible cursus and later ring-ditches lie 1 km to the east of the site by Caldecott Road, Abingdon.

Activity around Abingdon continued into the Bronze Age and the importance of the site for burial is clearly shown by the number of round barrows in the vicinity as the sites at Ashville, Merton and Radley demonstrate (Parrington 1978, Bradley, Chambers and Halpin 1984). There are 20 round barrows at Radley which form an 800 m 'avenue' of monuments aligned on the Neolithic causewayed enclosure (Barclay and Halpin forthcoming). Traces of Bronze Age settlement have also been found at Wyndyke Furlong (Mark Roberts pers. comm.).

Later activity in Abingdon can be seen in extensive and intensive Iron Age settlement which was superseded by Late Iron Age and Roman fields north-east of the site at Ashville Trading Estate (Parrington 1978), the old MG works (Halpin 1985) and at Wyndyke Furlong. Abingdon town centre overlies a late Iron Age *oppidum* or defended settlement. The defensive bank and ditch of the settlement were slighted and a Roman villa was built on the east edge of the settlement. Roman material has also been found under Abingdon school to the west of the defences (T G Allen pers. comm.). Saxon settlement and a cemetery are also known in the area.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

The evaluation was carried out to determine the nature of the cropmarks and so to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains and if present their extent, nature, character, quality and date. The ecofactual and environmental potential of deposits and features was also to be established.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation was based upon a 2 % sample of the development area and consisted of 10 trenches (Trenches 3-12) measuring 30 m long and 2 m wide and 3 shorter trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 13) (Fig 2).

Trenches 1 and 2 were machined across the possible long barrow. Particular care was taken to retain any buried soils (where present). The trenches were intended to investigate the two possible quarry ditches and the façade trench. An overhead power line rendered machining at the rear of the monument unsafe. Minimal hand excavation was carried out.

Trenches 3 and 4 were designed to determine the nature of a possible palaeochannel visible on the air photographs and a group of irregular cropmarks.

Trenches 8 and 9 were designed to determine the depth and nature of the ring-ditches. The central area where burials are to be expected was deliberately avoided at this stage. Excavation elsewhere has shown the south-east side of ring ditches are more likely to provide artefacts for dating purposes as was the case at Barrow Hills, Radley (Barclay and Halpin forthcoming).

Trench 7 was designed to determine whether a cremation cemetery lies between the ring-ditches and the long barrow.

Trenches 5 and 6 were placed to sample several large discrete cropmarks aligned north-south and a cluster of smaller features north of the long barrow.

Trenches 10, 11, 12 and 13 were placed to test blank areas on the aerial photographs.

The overburden was removed by a mechanical 360° excavator under close archaeological supervision.

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scale of 1:20. In the featureless trenches soil profiles were drawn, also at a scale of 1:20. All features and trenches were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3.3 Finds

Any finds encountered from features were retained for identification and dating purposes. Finds from modern deposits were noted but not kept.

### 3.4 Environmental data

Sampling of waterlogged and primary fills of all the ditches was carried out. Excavation of the possible mound remains was not carried out due to the limitations of the excavation agreed by the County Archaeologist, so no buried land surface was revealed within the interior of the long barrow.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The general soil type was silt. The underlying natural geology was gravel and sand.

### 4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The archaeological features were concentrated to the north-east and to the west of the site. An archaeological horizon represented by a truncated subsoil was recorded across the site though it varied in thickness and had been ploughed away in some places. The overlying deposits consisted of an old ploughsoil which was in turn overlain by the present topsoil. Ridge and furrow was also present across the site, though this was not evident before excavation.

### 4.3 Presentation of Results

The following describes the location of the trenches and the features and deposits encountered in them. Unique numbers were given to each context. These contexts are described in chronological order with the earliest contexts first.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### 5.1.1 *Trenches 1, 2 and 13 (The long barrow)*

Trenches 1, 2 and 13 were located over the east part of the cropmark of the possible long barrow (Fig. 3). Trench 1 was orientated north-west -south-east across the south quarry ditch. Trench 2 extended north-east from the north-west end of trench 1 intending to expose the north quarry ditch and the palisade trench. Trench 13 was added later, extending north from the north-west end of trench 1, across the north quarry ditch. The natural gravel (10) was encountered 0.4 m below the ground surface at the east end of trench 1 and at the north of ends of trenches 2 and 13. A layer of orange-brown silt (12) overlay the gravel. This deposit became gradually sandier towards the centre of the barrow and may represent the slightly disturbed remains of the barrow mound (14) but limitations of excavation agreed with the County Archaeologist meant this was not confirmed. The south edge of the remaining mound was clear but the north edge was difficult to identify due to the similarity between the old soil horizon and the remains of the mound. Two ditches (6 and 8) cut through the orange silt. Ditch 6 was orientated east-west and was 3.2 m wide and 0.6 m deep sloping gradually down from the north-east where the ditch terminated. The ditch was filled by a dark reddish-brown clayey silt (11). This was overlain by a second fill deposit of mottled reddish brown and blue grey silt (7) which contained a single small sherd of Peterborough Ware, worked flint and both human and animal bone. Ditch 8 was also orientated east-west and was 3.5 m wide and 0.57 m deep with shallow sides and a flat base. This ditch was filled by a thin deposit of grey brown silt with gravel (13) which was in turn overlain by the secondary fill dark orange-brown silt (9) containing two small sherds of Peterborough Ware, flint and both animal and human bone. A poorly sorted reddish-brown old plough soil (5), which thinned towards the middle of the barrow overlay the ditches. A 1.15 m-wide ditch (4) with a dark brown silt loam fill (3) containing modern pottery and CBM cut the old plough soil and extended north-west - south-east to the north of the



barrow. A thin (0.14 m max.) layer of dark grey brown silt loam overlay the modern ditch and was in turn overlain by the modern topsoil.

#### *5.1.2 Trench 3*

Trench 3 was located over the cropmark a possible old palaeochannel. The trench was aligned north-east - south-west and contained no archaeology. The natural gravel (307) was present 0.8 m below the ground surface and was overlain by an orange silt (306). A poorly sorted layer of reddish brown silt containing gravel and manganese flecks (303) which formed the old plough soil, overlay 306. A 5 m-wide channel (305) filled by a very light brown silt lay towards the south-east end of the trench and appeared to be recently backfilled. The channel was probably dug to redirect the existing stream during the construction of the A34. The topsoil sealed the trench.

#### *5.1.3 Trenches 4, 7, 11 and 12*

Trenches 4, 7, 11 and 12 were all located to sample blank areas of the aerial photographs. Trenches 4 and 12 were approximately orientated east-west and trenches 7 and 11 north-east - south-west. No archaeological features were encountered. The natural gravel which appeared to undulate (most visibly in trenches 4 and 11), was overlain by orange-brown silt and was in turn overlain by an old plough soil. A thin layer of silt and snails, again visible in trenches 4 and 11, overlay the old plough soil sitting in hollows approximately 8 m apart. A modern ditch was encountered at the east end of trench 12. The topsoil sealed all these trenches.

#### *5.1.4 Trench 5*

Trench 5 was roughly east-west orientated and located over a sub-rectangular cropmark at the east end and some less definable cropmarks to the west. Natural gravel (517) was located 0.65 m below the ground surface and was overlain by an orange-brown silt (511). A 1.7 m-deep circular feature containing 8 fills cut through the silt at the east end of the trench. The feature was probably a water hole (see section , Fig. 5) and was 3.8 m in diameter. The primary fill was a dark grey waterlogged clay (509) containing a sherd of middle Bronze Age pottery. The feature flooded during excavation. The remaining fills were clays and silts (508-502) which produced middle Bronze Age, late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery, flint, burnt stone and a saddle quern. An area of burnt clay (514) was encountered towards the centre of the trench. The deposit appeared to sit in a shallow cut (515) but this may have been the extent of the burning. Natural features were encountered at the west end of the trench. A layer of silt ploughsoil (502) sealed the features and was overlain by a sandy loam topsoil.

#### *5.1.5 Trench 6*

Trench 6 (Fig. 4) was north-south orientated and located over a large irregular cropmark. Natural gravel was reached at a depth of 0.65 m below the ground surface. A layer of orange brown silt (608) overlay the natural. Two features (604 and 607) were cut from this level. A shallow gully orientated north-south extended south from the north end of the trench for 13 m. The gully was filled by a single orange-brown silt deposit which produced no finds. The second feature (607) was also orientated north-south and was 1.7 m wide and 0.75 m deep. The primary fill (606) produced bone and was partially removed when the feature was re-cut (610). The fill of the re-cut feature

produced bone, a single sherd of middle Bronze Age pottery, burnt stone and flint. An old ploughsoil sealed the features and this was overlain by the modern topsoil.

#### *5.1.6 Trench 8 (Ring-ditch 1)*

Trench 8 (Fig. 4) was orientated north-east - south-west and located across the south-east corner of the southern ring-ditch cropmark. Natural gravel was reached at 0.6 m below the present ground surface. A layer of orange brown silt (82) overlay the natural. A ring-ditch (ring-ditch 1) cut this deposit at both the north-east and the south-west ends of the trench. Only the segment of the ring-ditch at the south-west end of the trench was excavated (141). The ditch was 2.3 m wide, 0.62 m deep and continued into both the baulk sections. The ditch was filled by 4 deposits (142-145) only the latest of which provided a single sherd of Beaker pottery, bone and flint. A layer of reddish brown silt (83) overlay 82 in-between the two exposed segments of ring-ditch and may be the remains of the central burial mound. A burnt deposit (89), later shown not to be a cremation, was encountered towards the middle of the mound deposit. These features were sealed by an old ploughsoil (81) which was cut by two features (84 and 86). A shallow ditch (86) filled with silt and small molluscs is probably the remains of the bottom of a ploughed out furrow. A very shallow (0.06 m) linear feature (84) filled with modern topsoil extends south across the centre of the trench. Patches of burning within the feature probably relate to allotment activity. Topsoil sealed the trench.

#### *5.1.7 Trench 9 (Ring-ditch 2)*

Trench 9 (Fig. 5) was orientated north-east -south-west and located across the south-east section of the northern ring-ditch cropmark. The natural gravel was exposed at 0.6 m below the present ground surface. An orange-brown silt (906) overlay the natural. Two segments of a ring-ditch (ring-ditch 2) were encountered at either end of the trench. Only the south-west segment was excavated. The ditch (905) was 2.5 m wide and 1 m deep and was filled by three silt and clay deposits (902-904) which produced bone and flint artefacts. The ditches were sealed by an old ploughsoil which was overlain by topsoil.

#### *5.1.8 Trench 10*

Trench 10 (Fig. 5) was orientated north-south and located in one of the blank areas of the aerial photographs. Natural was exposed 0.7 m below the present ground surface and was overlain by orange brown silt (108). 100 sherds of at least two Beaker vessels lay within the upper part of this deposit approximately 11 m from the north end of the trench. The vessels were incomplete and were probably damaged by the ploughing of the overlying deposit (102). Charred acorn was found with the vessels and is a very unusual find (see Appendix 3). A sandy loam topsoil sealed the trench.

### 5.2 Finds

#### *5.2.1 Pottery*

A total assemblage of 121 sherds were recovered from the evaluation (see appendix 2). No pottery contemporary with the Neolithic long barrow was found. Peterborough Ware was retrieved from the quarry ditches but this probably relates to secondary ritual activity. Sherds of Beaker pottery were found but relate to domestic activity rather than the ritual activity associated with the round

barrows. Middle and late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery was discovered in the fills of the waterhole, probably deposited during backfilling.

### 5.2.2 *Animal Bone*

A total of 190 fragments was recovered of which 11.6% were identified to species and anatomical part. Ribs and vertebrates were not identified and therefore bias the overall results. The predominant species of identified bones was cow, although caprine and possibly roe deer was also seen. There was some evidence of horse. The bones had a poor to reasonable surface condition which prevented identification of cut marks.

### 5.2.3 *Human Bone*

Two incomplete human bones were recovered from the quarry ditches of the long barrow. The larger of the two bones was associated with cattle bones, a flint flake and two small sherds of Peterborough Ware. A virtually complete though fragmented adult left femur was recovered from the fill of the north quarry ditch of the long barrow. The proximal end of the bone was missing. A small mid shaft fragment of a second probable adult femur was recovered from the fill of the south barrow ditch.

### 5.2.4 *Worked Flint*

A small assemblage of 15 pieces of worked flint and eight pieces of unworked flint was recovered from the evaluation (see appendix 4). This makes the assemblage difficult to date. A single blade was recovered from the larger linear feature in Trench 6 and is possibly Mesolithic in date. Four flakes were recovered from the long barrow ditches. A single end-and-side scraper which may be early Bronze Age in date was recovered from the upper fill of ring-ditch 1 and a flake from ring-ditch 2.

### 5.2.5 *Worked Stone*

A large broken fragment (weight 4.5 kg) from a saddle quern (sf16 context 506) was recovered from the waterhole in Trench 5. Made from the local Corallian Limestone.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The sample size was sufficient to determine the extent and type of deposits on the site. All the larger features indicated by the cropmarks were encountered and the trenches were large enough to determine their nature and character.

### 6.2 Overall interpretation

#### 6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

The gravel natural was overlain by a truncated early Holocene subsoil through which the majority of the features were cut. This deposit was very similar to the fill of the features making

identification of the features at this level very difficult. This horizon was not consistent throughout the site. This differential preservation was probably caused by ploughing and the creation of the ridge and furrow.

The existence of the long barrow indicated by cropmarks on the aerial photographs was confirmed by the field evaluation. The presence of human bone as well as the animal bone, the worked flint and the sherds of Peterborough Ware in the two quarry ditches suggest that the features are part of a long barrow, a feature of other similar long barrow sites. No façade trench was encountered suggesting that only the eastern end of the barrow was exposed by the trenches. The deposit found between the quarry ditches may be the remains of the central burial mound but this was not confirmed due to the limits set on the excavation.

Two ring-ditches were located in Trenches 8 and 9. None of these features were closely dated though the Beaker vessels recovered just to the south of the ring-ditches indicate some domestic activity. The discovery of charred acorns with the two Beaker vessels in Trench 10 is very unusual (see appendix 3), and may suggest ritual activity. The waterhole and the plant remains extracted from the waterlogged deposits within it suggest a wooded scrubland landscape, with the presence of clean grain indicating that processing of farmed produce was carried out elsewhere (see appendix 3).

### *6.2.2 Significance*

The discovery of the Abingdon Common long barrow is of exceptional significance. Long barrows are usually a feature of upland areas like the Cotswolds and the Berkshire Downs (Kinnes 1992) and are located on chalk. Only two other possible long barrows have been discovered on the Thames gravels (Drayton and Drayton St. Leonard) making this discovery of national not just regional importance. The relative isolation of the long barrow is also significant and contrasts with the Neolithic monument complexes at the nearby sites of Drayton and Radley. The Abingdon Common Barrow is the oldest monument discovered in Abingdon and the presence of the round barrows indicates that the monument became the focus for later ritual activity.

### *6.2.3 Impact of development*

All the archaeological features and deposits appear less than 0.5 m below the surface. The pair of ring-ditches lie under the proposed position of restaurant 2 and the east car park area. The long barrow lies under the proposed position of the south-west corner of the car park. The features in Trench 6 will be under the proposed multiplex cinema. All these features would be affected by any intrusive development work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
01 (2 and 13)								
	01	layer		0.3	topsoil			
	02	layer		0.14	ploughsoil			
	03	layer		0.14	fill of modern ditch	tile		mod
	04	ditch	1.15		modern ditch			
	05	layer		0.2	old ploughsoil			
	06	ditch	3.2	0.6	south quarry ditch of long barrow			
	07	fill		0.24	upper fill of 06	bone (26 frags include cow astagulus, metatarsal, proximal humerus, radius, tibia and tooth), pot (Peterborough Ware)	1	Neolithic
	08	ditch	3.5	0.57	north quarry ditch of long barrow			
	09	fill		0.56	upper fill of 08	pot (Peterborough Ware) bone (37 frags incl. cow radius, ulna and distal tibia)	2	Neolithic
	10	layer			natural			
	11	fill		0.38	primary fill of 06			
	12	layer		0.1+	Ancient soil horizon			
	13	fill		0.1	primary fill of 08			
	14	layer		0.1	possible remains of mound			
03								
	301	layer		0.4	topsoil			

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
	302	layer		0.15	redeposited topsoil			
	303	layer		0.35	old ploughsoil			
	304	fill		0.7	backfill deposit within redirected channel cut			
	305	cut	5	0.7	redirected channel cut			
	306	layer		0.2	old ground surface			
	307	layer			natural			
04								
	401	layer		0.3	topsoil			
	402	layer		0.2	old ploughsoil			
	403	layer		0.2	old ground surface			
	404	layer			natural			
	405	layer		0.05	silt with snails			
05								
	500	layer		0.24	topsoil			
	501	layer		0.34	old ploughsoil			
	502	fill		0.7	upper fill of water hole	pot (MBA/EIA)	2 2	MBA EIA
	503	fill		0.08	fill of water hole	pot  bone flint	2 1 2 1	MBA LBA EIA
	504	fill		0.22	fill of water hole	pot	1	MBA
	505	fill		0.11	fill of water hole			
	506	fill		0.5	fill of water hole	pot flint bone (13 frags include horse metacarpal, cow tooth, bird, roe deer mandible)	1 1	Neolithic
	507	fill		0.1	fill of water hole	pot	1	MBA
	508	fill		0.38	fill of water hole	pot	2	MBA

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Findings	No.	Date
	509	fill		0.2+	lower fill of water hole	pot	1	MBA
	510	cut	3.8	1.7	water hole			
	511	layer		0.16	old ground surface			
	512	fill		0.2	fill of natural hollow			
	513	cut	0.7	0.2	natural hollow			
	514	fill		0.1	area of burning			
	515	cut	0.4	0.1	cut for burnt area			
	516	layer			natural clay			
	517	layer			natural gravel			
06								
	601	layer		0.35	topsoil			
	602	layer		0.4	old ploughsoil			
	603	fill		0.2	fill of gully			
	604	cut	0.4	0.2	gully			
	605	fill		0.5	fill of re-cut linear feature	pot bone (include cow tooth) flint	1 1	MBA
	606	fill		0.4	fill of 607	bone		
	607	cut	1.7	0.75	linear feature			
	608	layer		0.3	old ground surface			
	609	layer			natural gravel			
	610	cut	1.7	0.5	re-cut of linear feature 607			
07								
	701	layer		0.35	topsoil			
	702	layer		0.2	old ploughsoil			
	703	layer		0.25	old ground surface			
	704	layer			natural			
08								
	80	layer		0.28	topsoil			
	81	layer		0.18	ploughsoil			
	82	layer		0.08	old ground surface			
	83	layer		0.24	mound deposit?			



Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
	84	cut	0.68	0.06	base of furrow?			
	85	fill		0.06	silt filling furrow			
	86	cut	1.3	0.16	base of furrow			
	87	fill		0.16	silt in furrow			
	88	cut	0.4	0.16	cremation pit			
	89	fill		0.16	cremation			
	140	layer			natural			
	141	cut	2.3	0.62	ring-ditch			
	142	fill		0.3	upper fill of ring-ditch	pot bone (7 frags) flint	1 1 6	MBA Med
	143	fill		0.1	fill of ring-ditch			
	144	fill		0.2	fill of ring-ditch			
	145	fill		0.1	primary fill of ring-ditch			
09								
	900	layer		0.34	topsoil			
	901	layer		0.1	old ploughsoil			
	902	fill		0.7	upper fill of ring-ditch	bone (24 frags, mostly cow) flint	1	
	903	fill		0.36	fill of ring-ditch	bone (14 frags cow and caprine)		
	904	fill		0.10	primary fill of ring-ditch			
	905	cut	2.5	1	ring-ditch			
	906	layer		0.25	old ground surface			
	907	layer			natural gravel			
	908	fill			upper fill of unexcavated segment of ring-ditch			
10								
	10i	layer		0.25	topsoil			
	102	layer		0.2	old ploughsoil			

Trench	Ctxt	Type	width (m)	thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
	103	layer			natural silt			
	104	?cut	0.55	0.14	beaker pot			
	105	fill		0.14	deposit containing two broken beaker vessels	pot flint	100 1	
	106	cut	0.4	0.25	?old land drain			
	107	fill		0.25	fill of 106			
	108	layer		0.3	old ground surface			
	109	layer			natural			
11								
	110	layer		0.35	topsoil			
	111	layer		0.2	old ploughsoil			
	112	layer		0.2	old ground surface			
	113	layer			natural			
	114	fill		0.08	silt filling old furrow			
	115	cut	2.5	0.08	old furrow			
	116	fill		0.12	silt filling old furrow			
	117	cut	2	0.12	old furrow			
	118	fill		0.1	silt filling old furrow			
	119	cut	1.4	0.1	old furrow			
12								
	121	layer		0.3	topsoil			
	122	layer		0.17	old ploughsoil			
	123	layer		0.23	old ground surface			
	124	layer			natural			
	125	fill			fill of modern ditch			
	126	cut			modern ditch			

## Appendix 2 Prehistoric Pottery Assessment by AJ Barclay

### *Introduction*

The evaluation produced approximately 120 sherds of prehistoric pottery. The assemblage is made up of a wide range of material that includes Peterborough Ware, Beaker, middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery. Significantly no early Neolithic pottery was recovered from the vicinity of the long barrow. In general most of the prehistoric material consisted of relatively small body sherds with the notable exception of a fragmentary Domestic Beaker.

### *Method*

A rapid assessment and quantification (number of sherds) of the evaluated assemblage was undertaken (see table 1). No detailed record was made of fabrics during the assessment, although fabric group (eg. flint tempered) was used as a broad chronological indicator. The incidence of featured and/or decorated sherds was noted.

### *Quantification*

Table 1 gives a numerical breakdown of the assemblage by context.

### *Fabrics*

The assemblage characteristically contained few featured sherds and in certain cases broad dates have been assigned through analysis of the fabrics. In the absence of featured sherds, Neolithic and later Bronze Age/Iron Age flint fabrics can be virtually indistinguishable. Neolithic fabrics tend to have a more flaky laminated texture and the flint temper is often more angular, sparse in density and ill-sorted in contrast to later material. Middle and late Bronze Age flint fabrics are indistinguishable (especially coarse wares), although finer walled body sherds are more likely to be later. In the case of shell-tempered fabrics it can be virtually impossible to separate out plain body sherds of either Neolithic, middle Bronze Age or early Iron Age date from one another. Tentatively it is suggested that certain criteria can be considered and this includes firing, surface treatment and sherd thickness. In contrast late Neolithic/early Bronze Age grog-tempered fabrics are, in general, relatively diagnostic.

### *Peterborough Ware*

A total of four Peterborough Ware sherds were recovered from contexts 7, 9 and 506. The largest sherd in a principally flint tempered fabric is from either a decorated Ebbsfleet or Mortlake Ware bowl. Unfortunately this sherd came from the probable ?Bronze Age waterhole and must be considered residual. The remaining sherds are from the ditches of the long barrow. A single very worn sherd manufactured from a grog and sand tempered fabric and with only one surface remaining was recovered from context 7. This sherd is more likely to belong to this ceramic tradition than anything else. Of the two sherds recovered from context 9, one is in a fabric that contains flint/quartzite, sand and grog that is almost certainly Peterborough Ware, while the other is in a fabric that contains iron oolites as well as grog. The latter is decorated with ?vertical incised lines and could be from the collar of a bowl belonging to the Fengate Ware substyle. The fabric with iron oolite inclusions is most unusual, although a small number of albeit much later Iron Age sherds in oolitic fabrics have been recorded from the general Oxford area. The relatively high abundance of oolites in the sherd from this site indicate that the clay source was probably very close to the parent deposit of ironstone, which in this case is likely to be located in north Oxfordshire and at a distance of at least some 20 km. The fabric then is non-local and indicates some form of regional exchange.

### *Beaker Pottery*

A total of 101 Beaker sherds were recovered from contexts 105 and 142. Context 105 contains 100 sherds of Beaker pottery representing at least two vessels. Most of the sherds come from part of a Domestic Beaker, the side of which was found in a complete but crushed state within a shallow feature. The Domestic Beaker is typically thick-walled and manufactured from a coarse grog-tempered fabric. The rim is embellished with a row of applied bosses, while the body is covered with deep finger-tip impressions. The use of applied bosses is atypical and without regional parallel. The remaining sherds are from the rim and body of a much finer Beaker that had been decorated with horizontal rows of end-to-end finger-nail impressions. A decorated Beaker base sherd was found in the upper fill, 142, of one of the ring ditches and is probably residual.

### *Middle Bronze Age*

Nine sherds were recovered from the fills (502-4, 507-9) within a waterhole, while a further sherd came from context 605. The sherds from the waterhole include only plain and relatively thick-walled body sherds in shell-tempered fabrics. Other factors indicating a possible middle Bronze Age date include the complete oxidised firing of some sherds and the wiped lumpy surfaces of others. In the absence of featured sherds the argument for their dating to this period must remain tenuous. Further sherds in shell-tempered fabrics and from the same feature, albeit the upper fills, are described below as probably early Iron Age. In contrast the sherd from context 605 is in a calcined flint-tempered fabric that is almost certainly of this date.

### *Late Bronze Age*

A single sherd of this date was recovered from context 503. This sherd is in a fine quartzite fabric and probably comes from a fineware bowl or jar.

### *Early Iron Age*

Four sherds of probable early Iron Age pottery were recovered from contexts 502 and 503. These sherds are from the upper fill of the waterhole and include at least two sherds from relatively thin-walled vessels.

### *Medieval*

A single medieval rim sherd was recovered from context 142.

### *Potential and discussion*

The evaluation produced a small and important collection of prehistoric pottery. Although no pottery contemporary with the early Neolithic long barrow was found a small amount of Peterborough Ware was recovered from its ditch fills. This material is unlikely to be contemporary with the monument's primary use and is more likely to be the result of secondary ritual activity (cf. Kinnes 1992, 111). In the evaluation no pottery contemporary with the early Bronze Age barrows was found, although the recovery of Beaker sherds from one of the ring ditches and from a pit indicates a phase of domestic activity.

The later Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery was concentrated around the waterhole and probably relates to its use and subsequent backfilling. It is not uncommon to find later prehistoric pottery in earlier waterholes. At Eight Acre Field, Radley, early Iron Age material (including placed deposits of a bowl and an animal skull) was deposited in a Bronze Age waterhole, perhaps in a ritual act associated with its possible blocking (Mudd 1995, 58).

## Bibliography

Kinnes, I, 1992 Non-megalithic long barrows and allied structures in the British Neolithic, Brit Mus Occas Pap 52, London

Mudd, A, 1995 The excavation of a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age site at Eight Acre Field, Radley, Oxoniensia 60, 21-66

*Table 1:*

Context	Peterborough Ware	Beaker	Middle Bronze Age	Late Bronze Age	Early Iron Age	Medieval	Total
7	1						1
9	2						2
105		100					100
142		1					1
142						1	1
502			2		2		4
503			2	1	2		5
504			1				1
506	1						1
507			1				1
508			2				2
509			1				1
605			1				1
Total	4	101	10	1	4	1	121

## Appendix 3 Evaluation of Charred and Waterlogged Plant Remains

### *Introduction*

Four samples, taken from pits and the long barrow ditch fill, were assessed for charred plant remains. A further three samples were taken for the assessment of waterlogged plant material, one from the long barrow, one from the base fill of one of the barrow ditches, and one from a water-hole. The purpose of the assessment was to characterise the deposits and assess the quality of preservation of the material and the potential for further sampling. Samples were of 10 to 50 litres in volume.

### *Methods*

Samples were processed for the extraction of charred plant remains using bulk water separation. Flots from the charred remains samples were collected onto a 250µm mesh and allowed to air dry. Dried flots were then sorted under a binocular microscope at magnification of x10 to x25. Plant remains were extracted and provisional identifications were made.

Sub-samples of 200g were processed for the extraction of waterlogged remains. Samples were collected onto a 200µm mesh and kept wet while scanned under a microscope. Any plant remains and insect fragments noted were provisionally identified and estimates of abundance were made.

### *Results*

One sample contained useful quantities of well preserved charred plant remains. The sample was taken from the fill of a pit containing fragments of Beaker pottery. Cereal grains were quite common. *Hordeum* sp. (barley) was the most frequently identified species. Hulled *Triticum* sp. (wheat) was also present including one grain identified as *Triticum* cf. *dicoccum* (emmer wheat). Further cereal grains were not sufficiently preserved to enable identification. No chaff was recovered and only two weed seeds which suggests clean fully processed grain. Barley and emmer wheat are the principle cereals found in late Neolithic and early Bronze Age assemblages. Three fragments of *Corylus avellana* (hazel) nut shell were present, common within Neolithic and Early Bronze Age samples.

A very unusual find, however, is a number of charred cotyledons of *Quercus* sp (oak). Acorns are not generally found charred in British archaeological contexts as the native varieties are inedible, although Mediterranean species can be eaten. The find of charred acorns in association with clean grain and a Beaker pot may be suggestive of a ritual deposit.

Identifiable waterlogged plant remains were absent from the long barrow and round barrow ditch samples, and were confined to the water-hole fill (context 509). Seeds of *Urtica dioica* (stinging nettle) and *U. urens* (small nettle) were the most commonly identified species, both of which are characteristic of a range of disturbed habitats and woody or grassy places. The stones of *Crataegus* sp. (hawthorn) and *Prunus spinosa* (sloe) are suggestive of scrub or woody undergrowth. The remaining species which were occasionally present, such as *Atriplex* sp. (orache) and *Stellaria media* (chickweed), are common arable or ruderal weeds. The preservation of the plant remains was good. Occasional poorly preserved fragments of coleoptera were noted including two dung beetles (*Geotrupes* sp. and *Onthophagus* sp.) and a water beetle (*Helophorus* sp.).

Terrestrial and fresh-water snails were absent from all of the flots, and were not observed in any of the residues.

### *Implications and Potential*

The samples suggest that snails are not preserved at the site. Generally charred remains are limited and the potential for sampling on a large scale is limited. The deposit found in association with the Beaker pottery does, however, suggest there is some potential for very interesting ritual or special deposits. Waterlogged remains are unlikely to be recovered in the barrows, but there is potential for further sampling of the water-hole. The potential for the recovery of useful insect remains is limited.

**Table 2: The Charred Plant Remains**

	Sample	1	4	5	12
	Context	105	143	89	9
	Volume (litres)	50	10	20	50
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>dicoccum</i>	emmer wheat, grain	1	-	-	-
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	hulled wheat, grain	10	-	-	-
<i>Hordeum</i> sp.	barley grain	30	-	-	-
Cerealia indet	grain	35	-	1	-
Weeds		2	-	5	-
<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	hazel, nut shell frags.	3	-	-	-
<i>Quercus</i> sp.	oak, cotyledons	20	-	-	-

quantities are approximate

**Table 3: The Waterlogged Plant Remains**

	Sample	3
	Context	509
	Volume	200g.
<i>Stellaria media</i> agg.	chickweed	+
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.	orache	+
<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.	sloe	+
<i>Crataegus</i> sp.	hawthorn	++
<i>Urtica urens</i> L.	small nettle	++
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	stinging nettle	++
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> agg.	knotgrass	+
<i>Fallopia convolvulus</i> (L.) A. Löve	black bindweed	+

+ = 1-10; ++ = 10+

#### Appendix 4 Flint assessment by Philippa Bradley

##### *Introduction*

Fifteen pieces of worked flint and eight pieces of burnt unworked flint and quartzite pebbles were recovered from the evaluation. The material was briefly scanned and recorded using the standard OAU recording system. The flint is fairly good quality material, being mostly black to dark brown in colour with a white or buff cortex. Cortication was generally light. All stages of the reduction sequence seem to be present except for small chips (pieces less than 10 mm). This may simply reflect the type of deposits sampled or the activities taking place on site.

##### *Technology and dating*

Only a single retouched piece was recovered, a relatively undiagnostic end and side scraper from the upper fill of one of the ring ditches (context 142). The small size of the collection also hampers the dating of the material. The material consists of flakes, a blade-like flake, a piece of irregular waste, a possible core rejuvenation flake and a blade. The blade may be Mesolithic as it has been truncated and may be a failed attempt at producing a blank for a microlith. Three broken flakes were recovered from the long barrow ditches, one from the primary fill, one from the mound and one from the upper fill of the ditch. Little more can be said of these pieces, except

that one is soft-hammer struck. The scraper is neatly retouched on a thin blank and may be early Bronze Age in date.

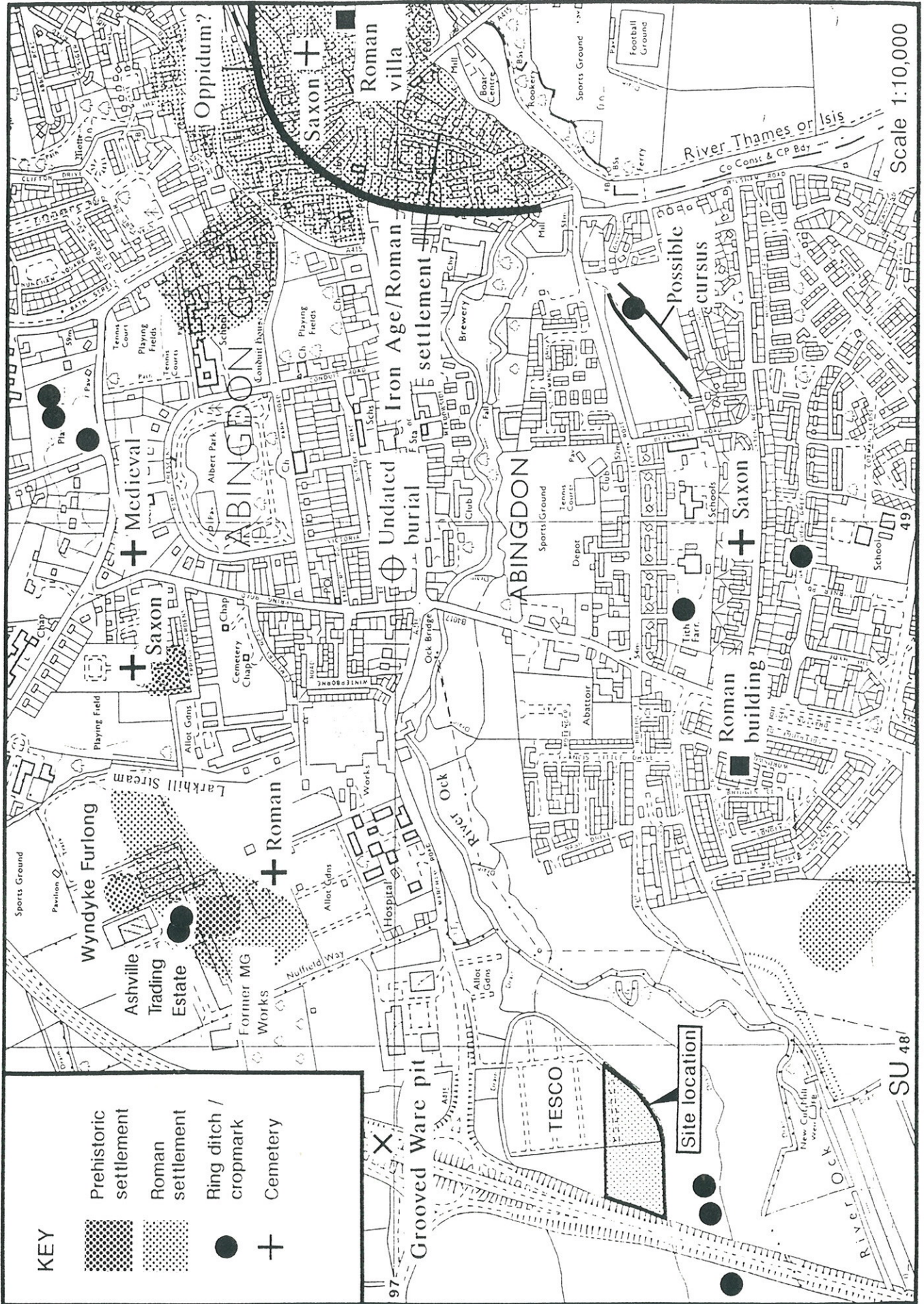
**Table 4: Summary of flint by context**

Context	Category	Comment
7	2 flakes	
9	2 flakes, 2 burnt unworked flints and 3 burnt quartzite pebbles	One flake is burnt
105	2 flakes, 1 blade-like flake, 1 burnt unworked flint	Blade-like flake has used edges
142	1 flake, 1 blade-like flake, 1 piece irregular waste, 1 burnt unworked flint	
503	1 flake, 1 core rejuvenation flake	
605	1 blade, 1 burnt unworked flint	Blade seems to have been snapped and may have been intended as a blank for a microlith
902	1 flake	used edges

*Discussion*

This small group of material is quite difficult to date. However, it would appear to include a small Mesolithic and/or possibly earlier Neolithic element. The only retouched piece may be of early Bronze Age date.



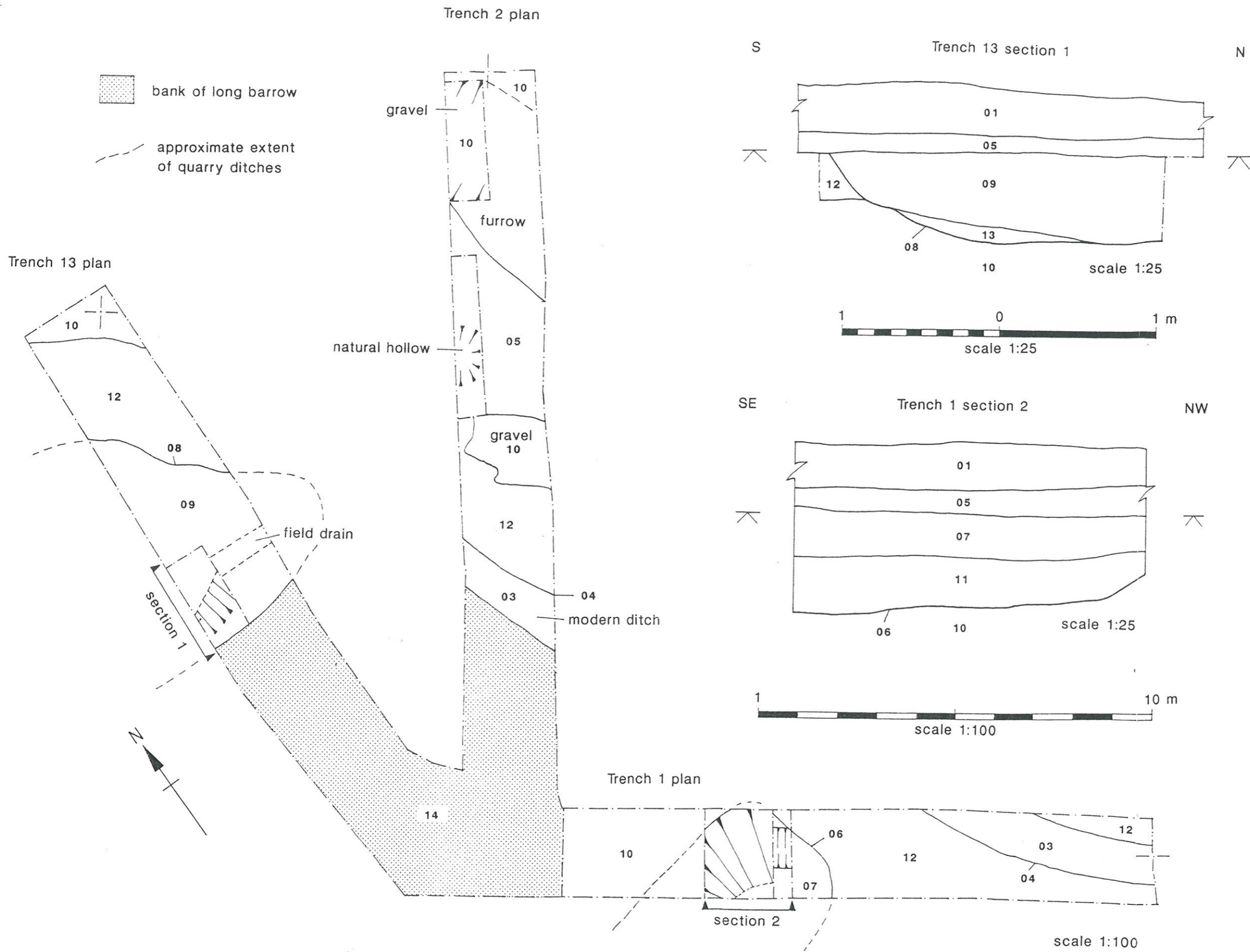


Site location map

Figure 1



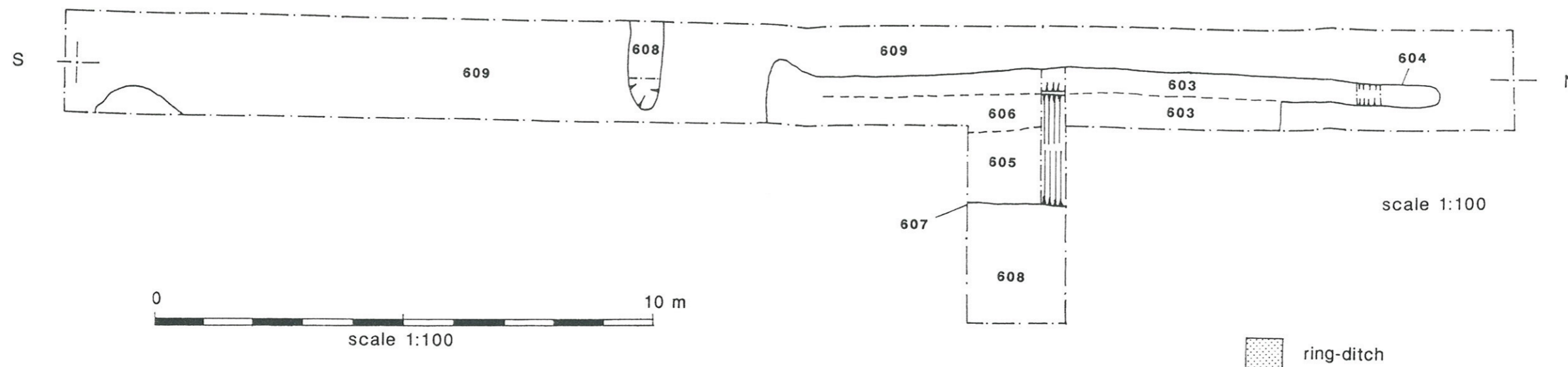
Figure 2: Location of trenches (numbered 1 to 13) and archaeological features plotted from aerial photographs.



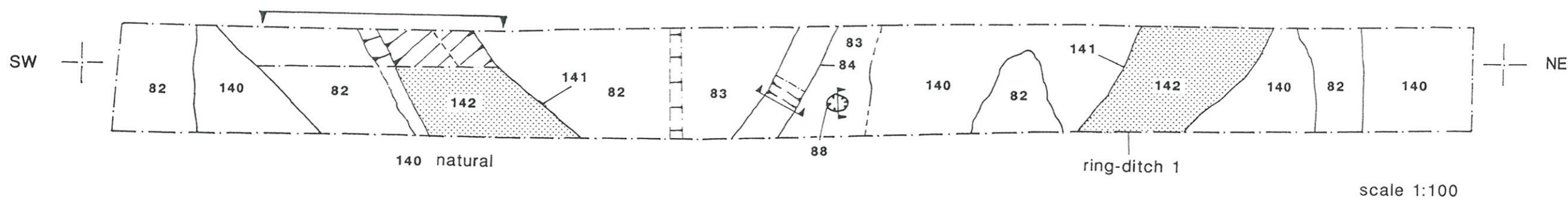
Trenches 1, 2 and 13 plans and sections

Figure 3

Trench 6 plan



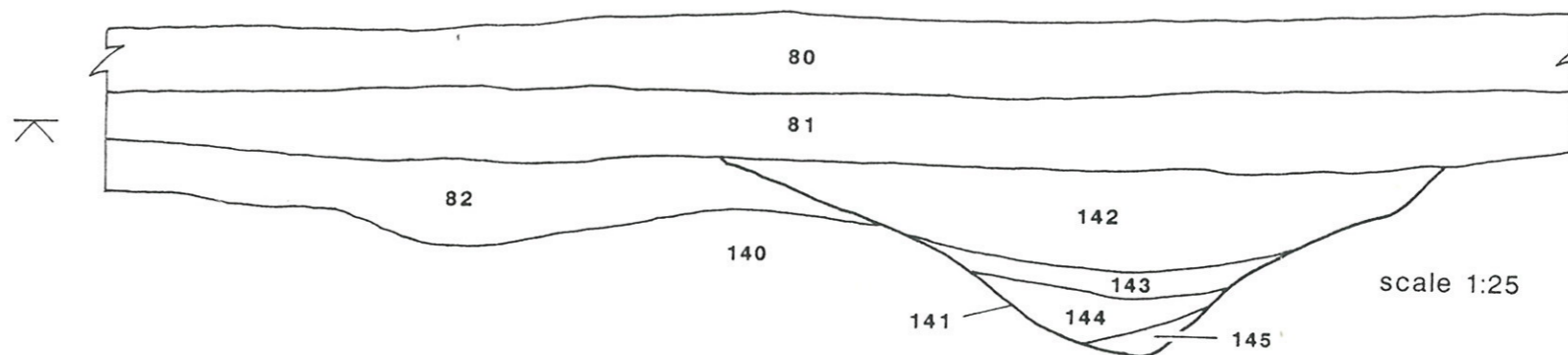
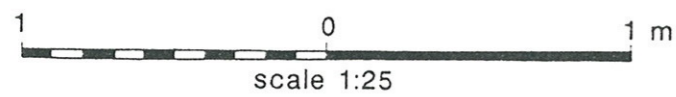
Trench 8 plan



SW

Trench 8 section

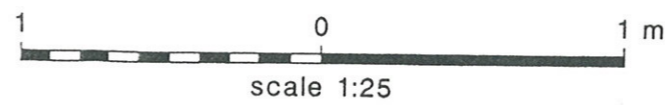
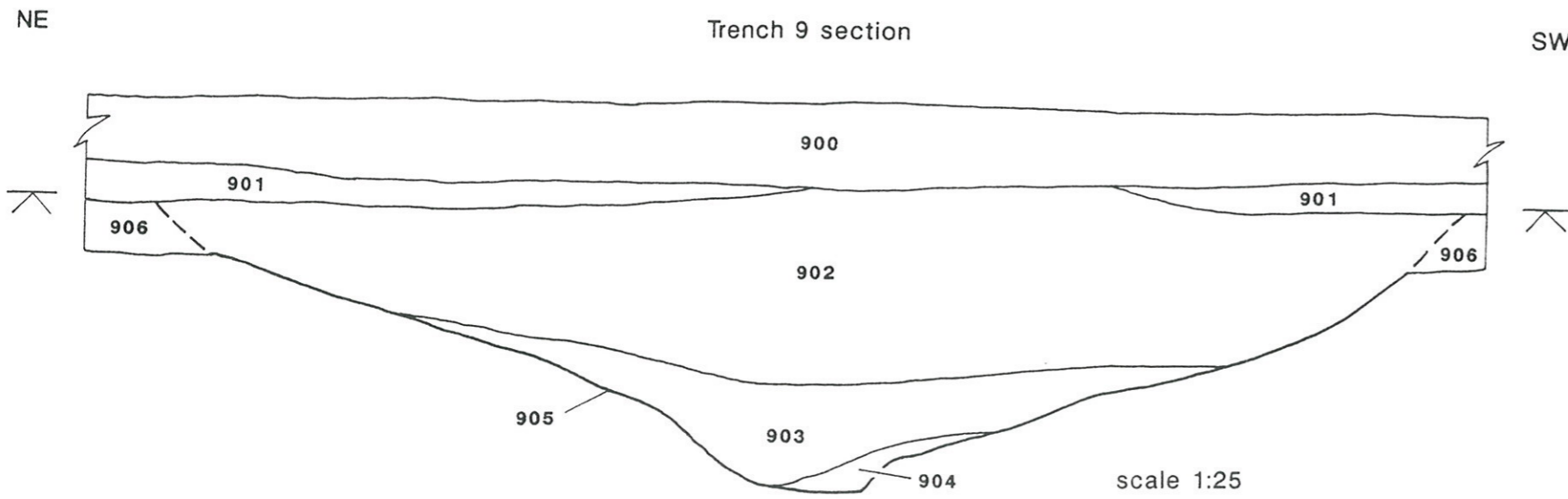
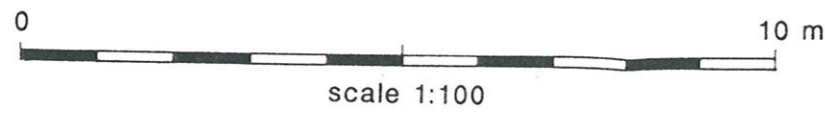
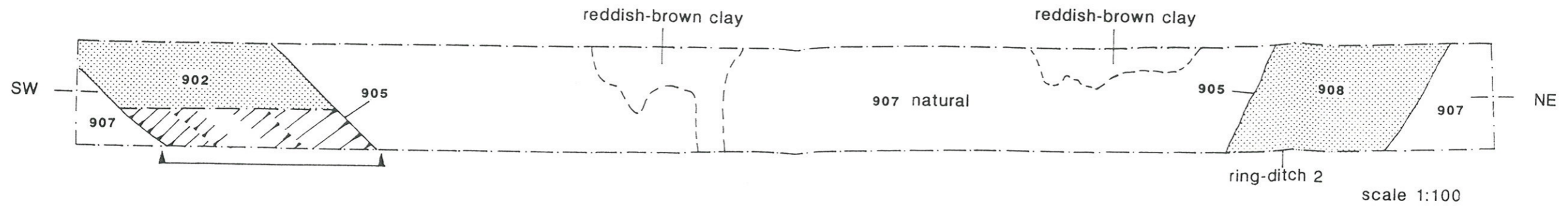
NE



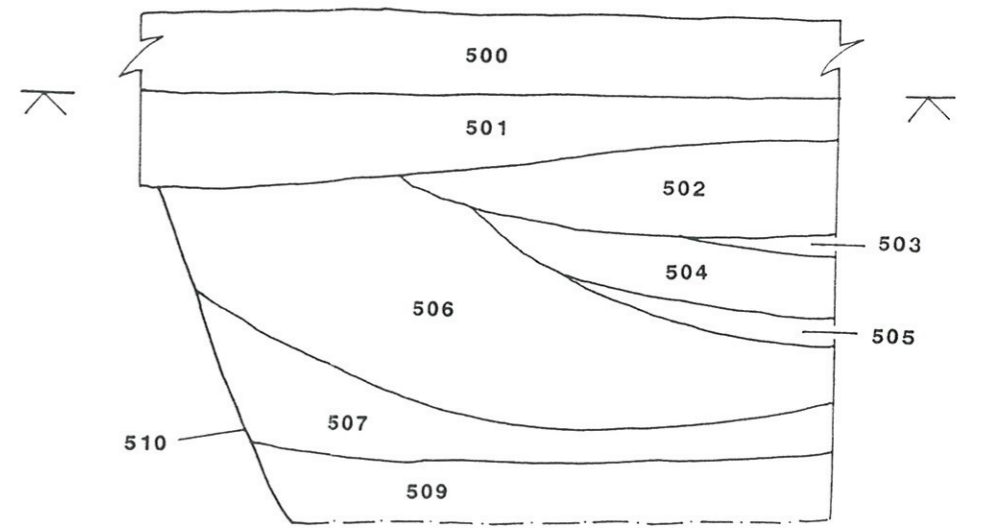
Trenches 6 and 8 plans and section

Figure 4

Trench 9 plan



Trench 5 section



scale 1:25

Trench 10 plan



scale 1:100

Trenches 5, 9 and 10 plans and sections

Figure 5



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