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PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT GREAT NORTH ROAD, LITTLE PAXTON



Cambridgeshire
County Council

PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT GREAT NORTH ROAD, LITTLE PAXTON

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1992

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Report no. 78

Flints from fieldwalking



cambridgeshire
archaeology

PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT, GREAT NORTH ROAD, LITTLE PAXTON

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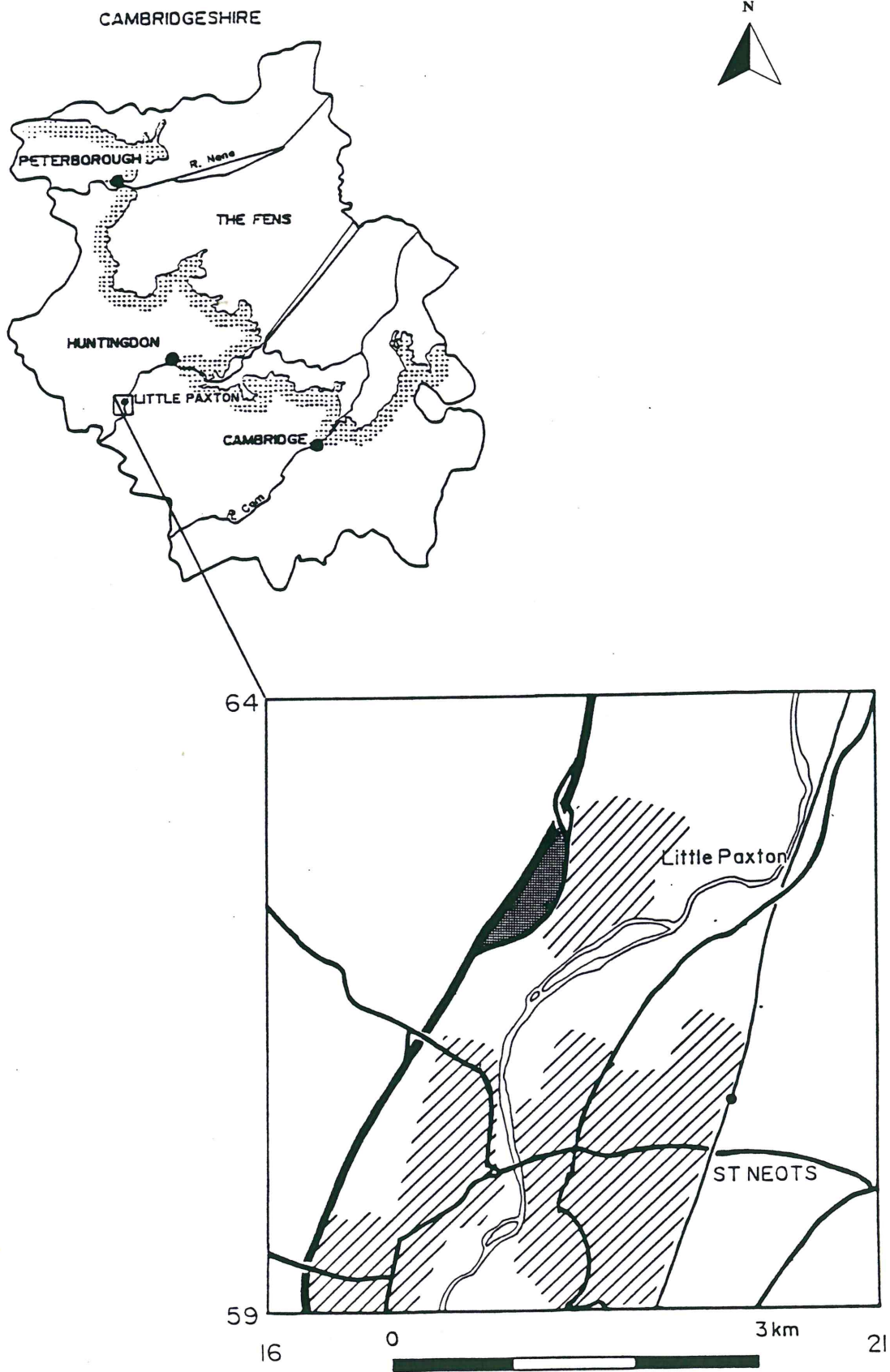


Figure 1: Site Location

Abstract

An archaeological assessment took place on area of approx. 10 ha. to the west of Little Paxton prior to the proposed development by Potton Investments Ltd. Work was carried out by Cambridgeshire Archaeology.

Results indicate Late Neolithic/Bronze Age activity. Property boundaries, drainage systems and possibly structural evidence were revealed to the north of the area. Analysis of flint derived from fieldwalking suggests flint tool production and treatment of skins taking place in this period within the assessment area.

The site archive and finds are deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeology Section.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation took place in an area of approx. 10 ha. to the west of the village of Little Paxton, between the Great North Road and the A1 [Fig. 1]. Work was carried out by Cambridgeshire Archaeology. The work was commissioned by D.H.Barford and Co. on behalf of Potton Investments Ltd. in advance of the development of the site for housing and light industry. The fieldwork took place between October 20th and December 2nd and was designed to assess the impact of the proposed development on any archaeological deposits within the area.

Underlying geology consists of 1/2nd terrace river gravels on the lower ground to the west, giving way to boulder clay on the higher ground further east, capped on the brow of the hill by 3rd terrace river gravels.

The evaluation was designed to identify the extent and nature of archaeological deposits threatened by construction proposals, and the significance of this threat with regard to their importance within the archaeological landscape.

Following the brief proposed by the County Archaeology Office, the area was fieldwalked and 5 trenches opened by machine. A limited geophysical survey and further trenching were carried out to trace the extension of features revealed in the initial machining.

Archaeological Background

The Parish of Little Paxton lies in the Great Ouse river valley. First terrace river gravels in this valley have a long history of human exploitation, from the Pleistocene to the present time. Cropmarks recorded by aerial survey have revealed prolific archaeological activity commensurate with an area that combined good communications along the route of the valley with easily cultivated soils.

An interpretation of the surrounding landscape can be attempted by applying a knowledge of the chronological changes in building styles, of land division, and of field size and layout to the evidence of cropmarks. However it must be borne in mind that later agricultural activity or habitation may mask the more important centres of early activity, with cropmarks only surviving on more marginal ground. Moreover, it is often difficult to interpret the sequence of superimposed cropmarks, or distinguish between cropmarks of natural origin, and the archaeological record. The occurrence of

cropmarks is also dependent on soil types. First terrace river gravels produce visible marks while the surrounding boulder clays and the river alluviums often do not. "Experience has proved that the quantity and quality of evidence represented on aerial photographs consistently under represents what is actually present in the soil" (French and Wait, 1988).

To produce a more accurate picture of early activity it is necessary to combine information from cropmarks with other forms of evidence: chance finds, excavation or observation during building work or quarrying, and documentary sources.

The earliest activity in the area is Palaeolithic and is indicated by several stray finds of flint tools concentrated to the south of Little Paxton near the River Great Ouse, probably a suitable fording point for the river. Evidence from the Neolithic and Bronze Age shows a much more widespread pattern of settlement. Extensive gravel quarrying to the east of Little Paxton has revealed 650 prehistoric features [Addyman, 1969], and numerous chance finds of Neolithic flints. Neolithic and Bronze Age flints found to the west of this area suggests further riverside activity beneath the modern village. A ring-ditch and enclosure, and the superimposed small enclosures represented by cropmarks suggest prolific activity to the south of the river.

Settlement in this period also made use of the higher ground away from the river. Gravel extraction to the north of Little Paxton produced Neolithic and Bronze Age material, possibly relating to nearby cropmarks. Further north, to the east of the village of Southoe, gravel quarrying revealed ditches, enclosures, pits and postholes, with pottery dated to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Cropmarks to the north and east suggest this settlement could be extensive.

To the north of the assessment area, on the third terrace gravels on the high ground to the west of the A1, complex cropmarks indicate multiphase settlement, but include recognised elements of the prehistoric landscape in the form of ring-ditches and a small enclosure. To the south of the area of assessment, between the old Great North road and the river, aerial photographs revealed more ring-ditches, irregular enclosures and a pit alignment. Within the area of assessment itself a scatter of flint scrapers and blades dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age were recovered, indicating activity within the area of the field. At the northern edge of the field, construction works for the A1 revealed several features associated with Neolithic pottery and flints. Rescue excavation took place of one of these features, which was interpreted as a 'D' shaped Neolithic house. (Rudd, 1968).

It appears that the Little Paxton area offered optimum conditions for settlement in this period with the potential to exploit both land and river resources, and close to a possible fording point of the Great Ouse.

Evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity is absent within the assessment zone, and sparse within the immediate area. However, Roman pottery had been found in pits during gravel quarrying at Diddington, to the north of Little Paxton, where a short section of a substantial Late Iron Age ditch was recently excavated (Alexander, 1992) These features may have lain on the periphery of settlement now lost beneath the modern village, although other evidence suggests the focus of settlement lay elsewhere. About a kilometre to the east of Little Paxton excavations (Greenfield, 1968) revealed late Iron Age occupation of a small farmstead followed by a re-occupation in the 1st century AD, continuing to the mid 4th. Further to the east, in the vicinity of a Bronze Age barrow, a series of pits and ditches show a continuity of occupation from the Iron Age to the Roman period, and several wells produced waterlogged material, including construction timbers dated to the early 3rd and early 4th centuries AD. Nearby on the Great Ouse there was evidence of a Roman quay, and another may have lain to the south of Little Paxton, across the river. Also across the river, linear ditches and large rectangular enclosures may represent a Roman field system overlying Prehistoric

activity on a multi-phase cropmark recorded just to the south of a probable Roman cemetery. Here 3 Roman cremation urns (one lying under a mound) were rescued from gravel quarrying. A "Barrow Close" is marked on the 1760 estate map of this area. This occupation evidence may represent the widening choice of settlement site as the introduction of the heavy plough put new lands under cultivation.

Saxon occupation in Little Paxton was found directly to the east of the village (Addyman, 1969). Features excavated included at least 2 enclosures, several wells and domestic refuse, including pot dated from the late 9th to the early 8th centuries. More features were observed, prior to destruction towards the north where burial urns and a skeleton were recovered. Main settlement at this time could have been focused on Great Paxton, where a Saxon Minster was established.

The medieval village of Little Paxton appears to have centred on the present day High Street where the church was in existence by the late 12th century. Its westward and northward limits are indicated by cropmarks of ridge and furrow. Medieval occupation could have masked any Saxon occupation in this area or it may indicate another shift in settlement. This move may have been prompted by flooding of the Great Ouse or the river altering course.

The shift may also have been the consequence of Post-Conquest changes in land ownership and enclosure. Cropmarks of structures and ridge and furrow show 2 other villages established at this time on previously sparsely populated land at Southoe and Boughton Farm. The area between Paxton Lane and the river, surviving until the late 20th century as Paxton Park, may represent the extent of the deer park known to be in existence before 1328 (Jamison, 1932). This deer park in the lands of the manor held by Robert le Moyne, may well have been established as manor hunting grounds at an earlier date, necessitating a shift of settlement to the north.

Methodology

A fieldwalking survey was carried out over the whole field. The area was divided into a series of transects 20m apart with a collection point every 20m. Results were plotted to show the changing density of retrieved archaeological material. [See Fig. 3]

5 trench locations were chosen to cover the areas of high archaeological potential, taking into account the topography of the field as well as the known centres of archaeological activity surrounding the assessment area. The distribution of artefacts retrieved from fieldwalking was patently affected by the downward movement of soil from the brow of the hill and did not contribute greatly to the choice of trench location.

The present tenant continued to farm the land and the trenching strategy had to include minimal damage to the recently sown winter crop. It was also necessary to avoid an electricity cable running along the western edge of the field.

5 trenches A, B, C, D, and E were dug by a JCB 820 mechanical excavator, using a 1.6m wide ditching bucket. the trenches were approximately 100m long and 1 buckets width wide except trenches C and D, which were widened at one end to double the width. [see Fig. 2]

The trenches were cleaned by hand, photographed and, where no archaeology was found, 2 sections per trench were drawn to record the underlying geology. All archaeological features were excavated and recorded using standard Cambridgeshire County Council methods.

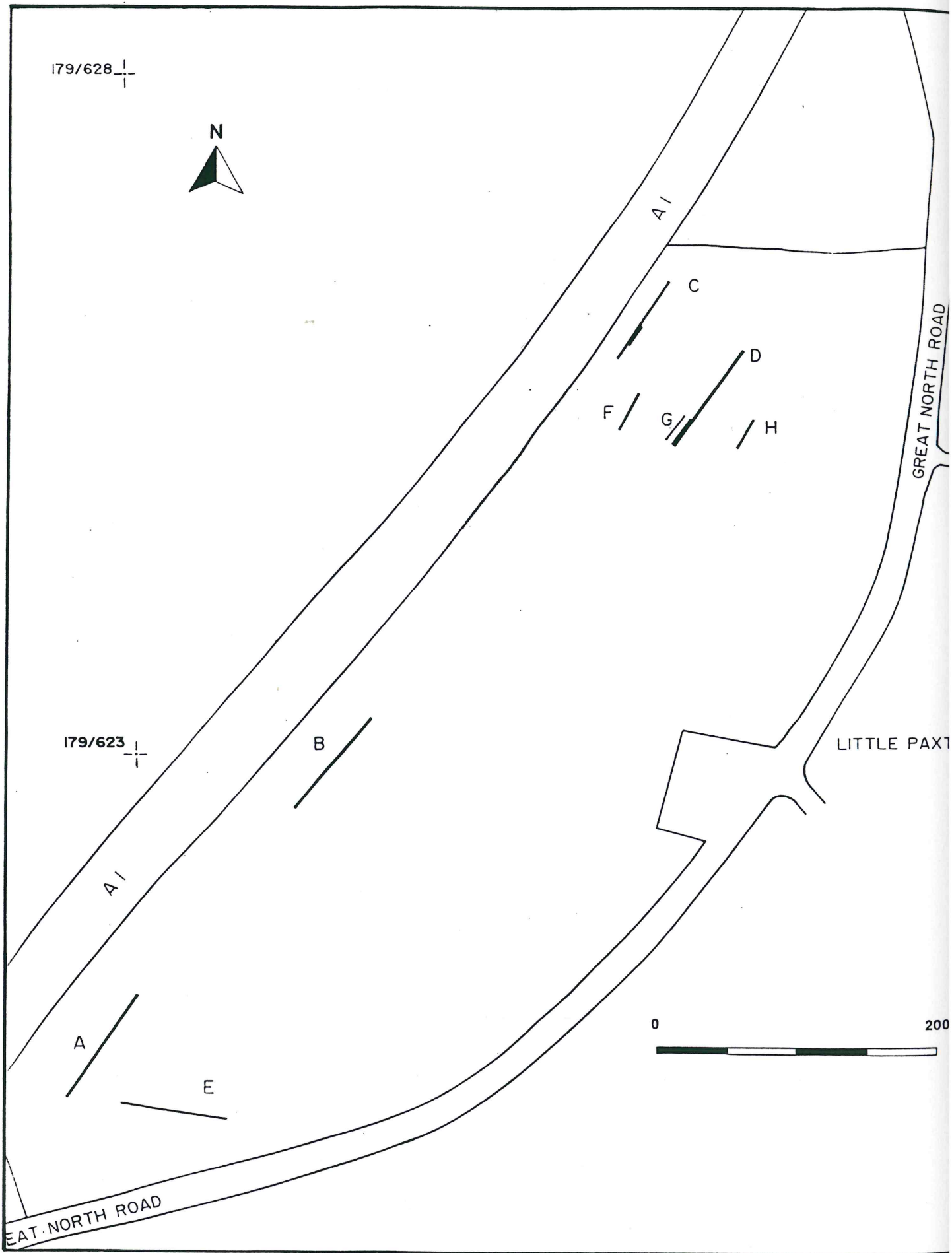


Figure 2: Location of Trenches

A geophysical survey was commissioned by Cambridgeshire Archaeology and carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit. The survey was designed to investigate the area surrounding trench D and between trenches D and C.

3 more trenches F, G and H were machined to trace the extent of the archaeological activity revealed in trenches C and D and the geophysical survey. All features revealed were planned but not excavated.

Results

Fieldwalking: A very light scatter of Roman and Medieval pottery was recovered, and a distribution of flints that appeared to reflect the slope of the field rather than any specific centres of prehistoric activity [*Fig.3, Appendix 1*].

Trench A

Length: 90m. Height of ploughsoil north: +24.39m, south: +22.26m O.D. Ploughsoil overlies thin discontinuous earlier ploughsoil which tapers out towards south end of the trench. This overlies a mid yellow/brown, silty, sandy clay. In northern section one possible furrow mark is visible, filled with this deposit and cutting into the natural deposits below. Natural deposits below this change from a mixed clay, sandy clay, and silty clay in the north, to coarse sandy clay and gravel to the south. No archaeological features observed.

Trench B

Length: 72m. Height of ploughsoil north: +26.74m, south: +27.51m O.D. Ploughsoil max. depth: 0.32m, overlies very mixed natural deposits of sandy clay with moderately frequent gravels and sandy gravels in the north, mixed gravels and gravelly clays to the south. No archaeological features observed.

Trench C

Length: 66m. Height of ploughsoil, north: +22.61m, south: +23.63m O.D, max. depth: 0.33m.

Cut [16], fills (41), (15). Truncated above by ploughing. Linear feature running SW-NE. Width: approximately 12m, depth: 0.50m. Gently sloping south edge, and a more steeply sloping edge to the north. Base undulates slightly, rising up in centre of feature to form a low plateau approx. 1.5m long.

Top fill (41); a mid brown silty clay with occasional flint pebbles increasing towards the bottom. Bottom fill (15), found on either side of rise in base; mid-brown sandy, clayey gravels, with patchy black and orange mineral concretions in places, containing moderately frequent bone, flint flakes, and burnt stone. Northern edge and centre of feature showed dark grey staining from root disturbance.

Cut [38], fill (37). Sub-circular feature extending into western edge of trench, filled with mid-grey/brown sandy, clay silt with occasional flecks of charcoal, some root disturbance.

[16] and [38] cut through a layer of orangey brown, slightly sandy, silty clay with occasional small flint pebbles.

24m to the south of [16] lay 2 channels, [14]: 4.50m wide, and [20]: 3.50m wide abutting each other and running SW-NE. [14] excavated to a depth of 0.50m, not bottomed. Both features filled with a dark grey/mid-brown mottled silty clay with a high organic content, both presumed natural.

Natural deposits of mid-yellowish brown sandy, silty clay underlie all deposits.

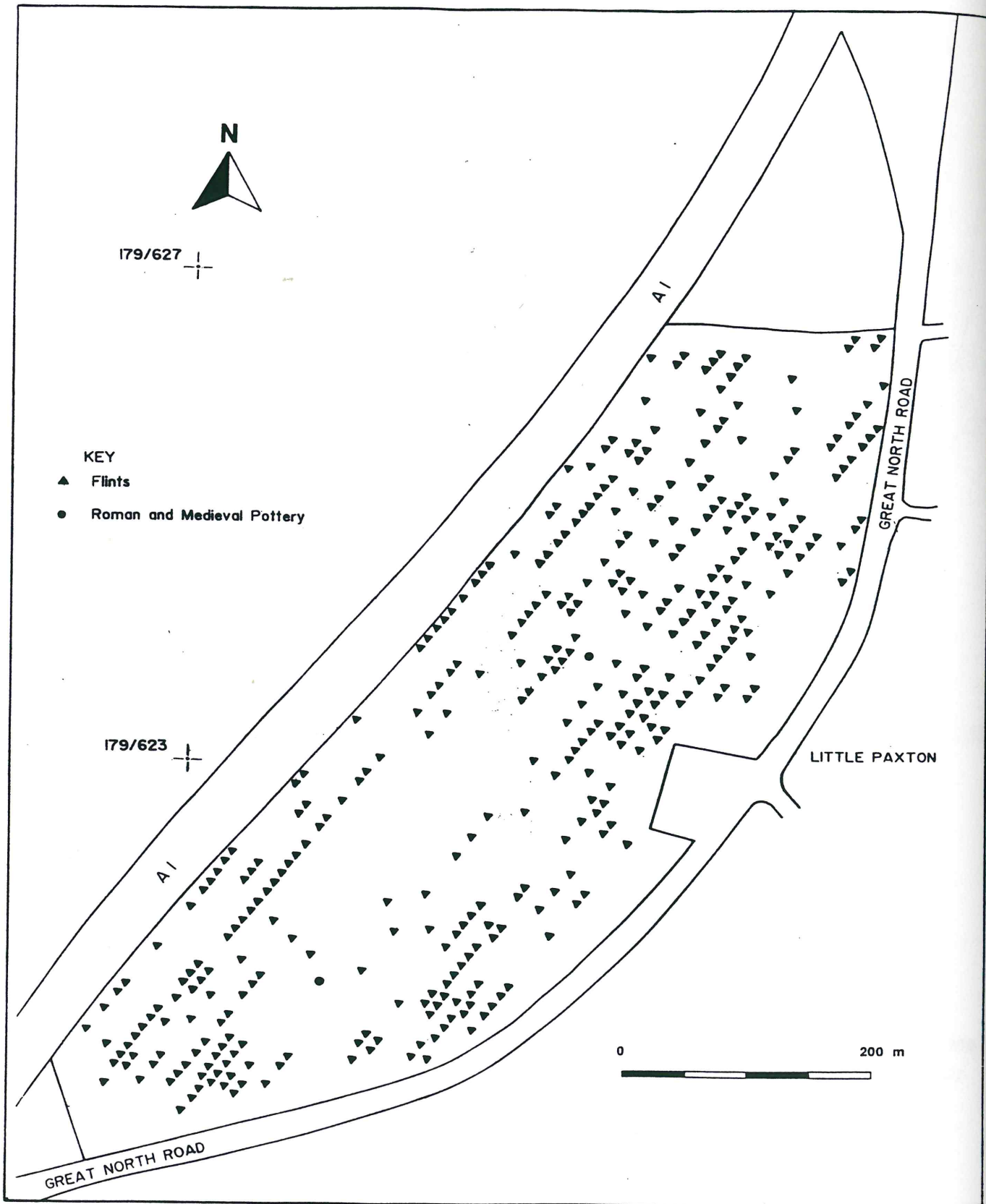


Figure 3: Results of Fieldwalking

Length: 84m. Height of ploughsoil: +22.27m O.D, max. depth: 0.25m. Ploughsoil overlies an earlier ploughed horizon containing rotting stubble. Below this, features [2], [4], [8],[10] and [18] are cut into a mid brown slightly silty clay, with occasional small flint pebbles.

Cut [2], Fill (1).Width: 0.50m, depth: 0.30m. Steep regular sides, sharp break of slope with a flat base. Runs E-W, extending beyond trench edges in both directions. Fill: mid-grey/ brown silty clay, containing 1 flint flake and 1 minute fragment of pottery.

Trench D [Fig. 4]

Length: 84m. Height of ploughsoil: +22.27m O.D, max. depth: 0.25m. Ploughsoil overlies an earlier ploughed horizon containing rotting stubble. Below this, features [2], [4], [8], [10] and [18] are cut into a mid brown slightly silty clay, with occasional small flint pebbles.

Cut [2], Fill (1).Width: 0.50m, depth: 0.30m. Steep regular sides, sharp break of slope with a flat base. Runs E-W, extending beyond trench edges in both directions. Fill: mid-grey/ brown silty clay, containing 1 flint flake and 1 minute fragment of pottery.

Cut [4], Fill (3).Width: 0.40m, depth: 0.05m. Concave sides, gradual break of slope, concave base. Runs SW-NE, extending beyond trench edges in both directions. Fill: mid-grey/ brown silty clay, containing 1 flint flake.

Cut [8], Fill (7).Width: 0.55m, depth: 0.18m. Steep regular sides, slightly concave. Flat base. Runs SW-NE, extending beyond trench edges in both directions. Cuts (9) i.e. the fill of [10]. Fill: dark, yellowish brown, sandy, silty clay, with occasional small stones and very occasional charcoal fragments.

Cut [10], Fill (9).Width: 0.67m, depth: 0.33m. Steep regular sides, sharp break at bottom of slope, base slopes slightly towards centre. Runs E-W, extending beyond trench edges in both directions. Fill: dark, yellowish brown, sandy, silty clay, with occasional small stones and charcoal fragments. Contained 2 flint flakes and 1 pottery fragment. Fill was very slightly darker than (7).Fill cut by [8].

Cut [18], Fill (17).Width: 0.40m, depth: 0.46m. Steep, irregular sides, sharp break at bottom of slope, irregular base. Runs SE-NW. Feature extends beyond edge of trench at east end and is cut at west end by [08]. Fill: mid brown ,silty clay with 40% very dark grey /brown almost black humic silty clay- the consequence of root action. Moderately disturbed by root action.

Natural deposits of orange brown clays and sandy gravels form the underlying deposits.

Trench E

Length: 76m. Height of ploughsoil west end: +22.09m O.D, east end: 21.69m O.D. Ploughsoil max. depth: 0.30m, covering natural clayey gravels and silty gravels. No archaeological features observed.

Trench F [Fig. 4]

Length: 29m. Height of ploughsoil north end: +22.91m O.D.Depth of ploughsoil unknown.

Cut [53], fill (52). Not excavated. Width: 0.75m. Runs E-W, extending beyond edges of excavation in both directions. In same alignment with [10] in trench D and [59] in trench G [see Fig.4]. Fill: dark brown, silty, clay, 1 small pottery fragment found during cleaning.

Cut [61], fill (60). Not excavated. Runs SW-NE on same alignment as [4] in trench D. Width: 0.25- 0.30m. Fill: mid brown silty clay.

Trench G [fig. 4]

Length: 18.20m. Height of ploughsoil: +22.26m O.D. Depth of ploughsoil unknown.

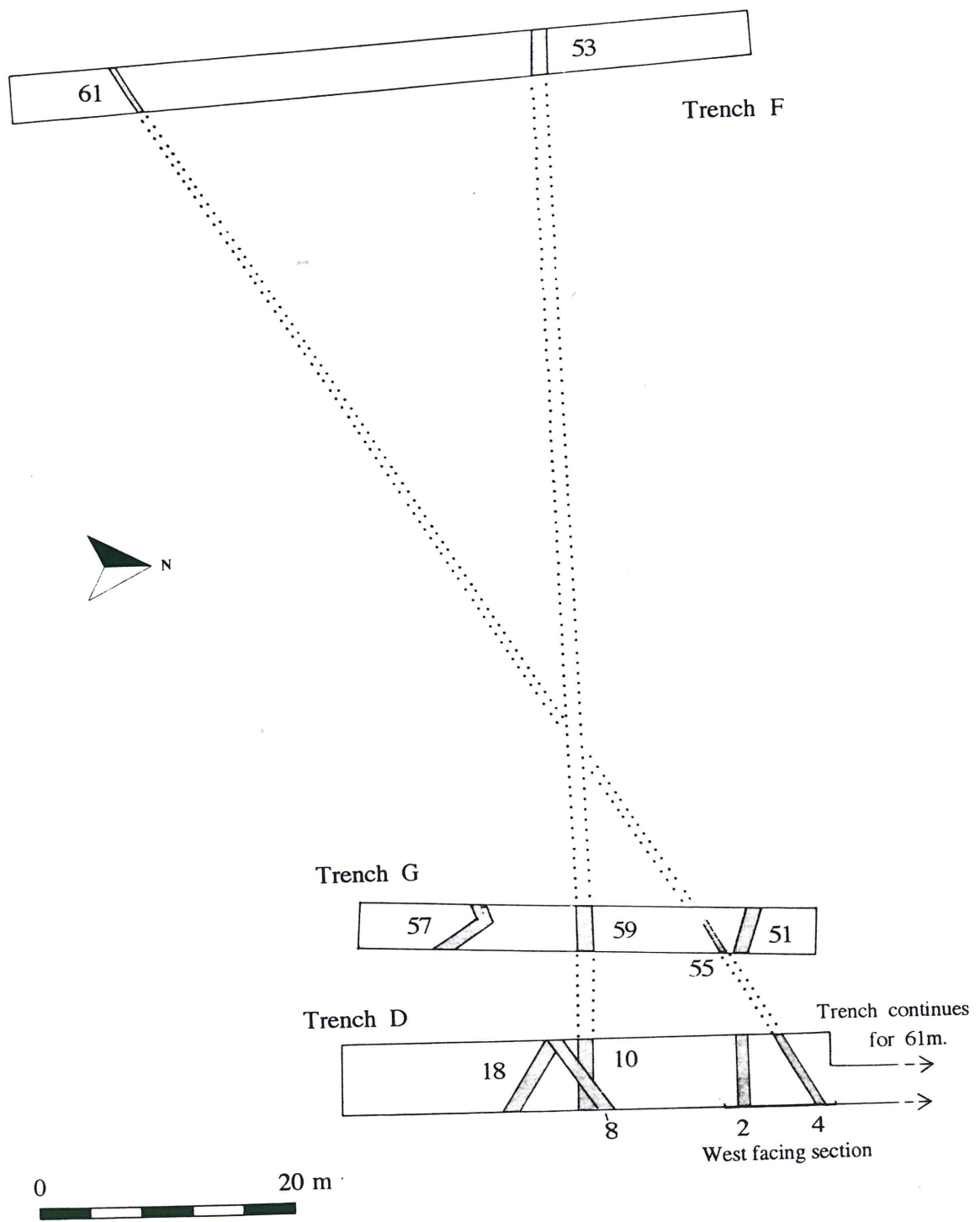







Figure 4: Linear Features, Trenches F, G and D
 [Dotted lines..... = Interpretive projections.]

KEY

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Clay |  | Clayey Sand |
|  | Silt |  | Charcoal flecks |
|  | Silty Clay | | |

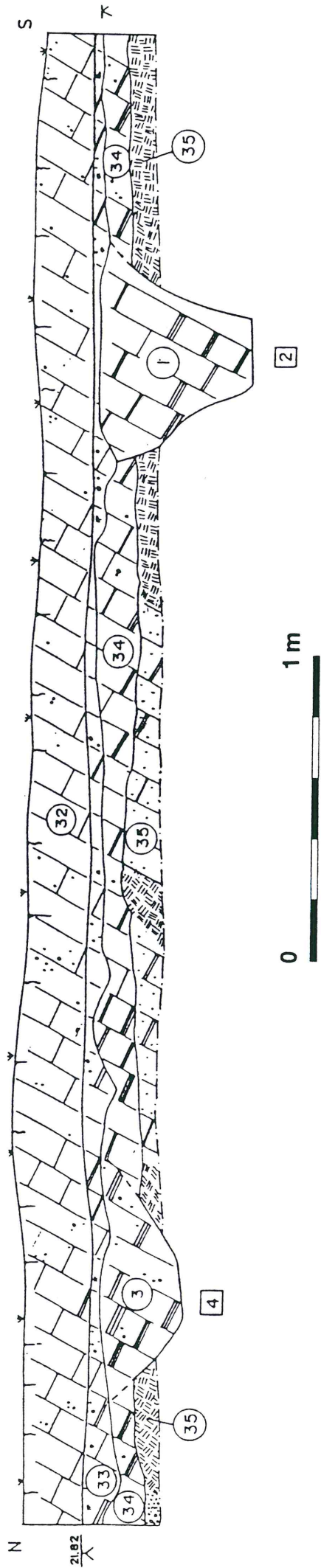


Figure 5: West Facing Section, Trench D

Cut [51], fill (50). Not excavated. [Badly damaged by machine; width and alignment both approximate]. Width: 0.35-0.50m. Runs E-W extending beyond edge of excavation in both directions. Roughly same alignment as [2]. Fill: mid grey/ brown silty clay, 1 fragment of pottery found during cleaning.

Cut [55], fill (54). Not excavated. [badly damaged by machine; width and alignment both approximate]. Width: 0.25-0.30m. Runs SW-NE, extending beyond edge of excavation in both directions.

Cut [57], fill (56). Not excavated. Width: 0.50m. Runs SW-NE for 0.60m before turning a right angle and running NW-SE, extends beyond trench edge in both directions. Fill: mid-brown clayey silt, 1 fragment of pottery found during cleaning.

Cut [59], fill [58]. Not excavated. Runs E-W, extending beyond the edges of trench in both directions. Fill: dark brown, silty clay. In same alignment with [10] in trench D and [53] in trench F.

Trench H

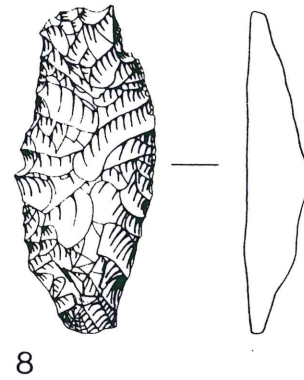
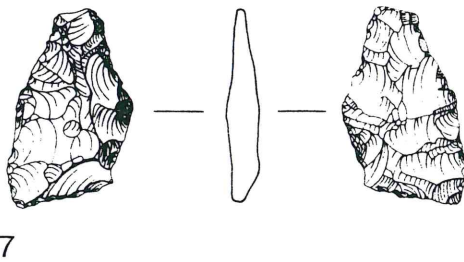
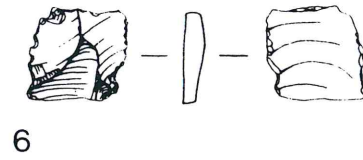
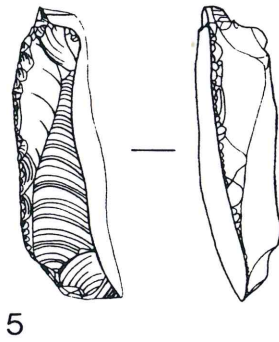
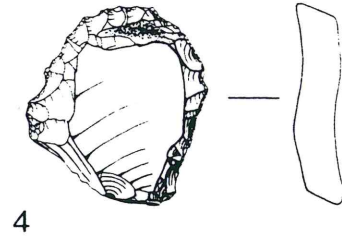
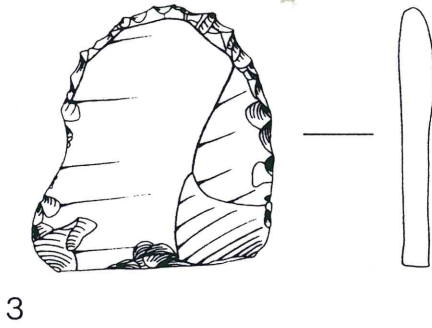
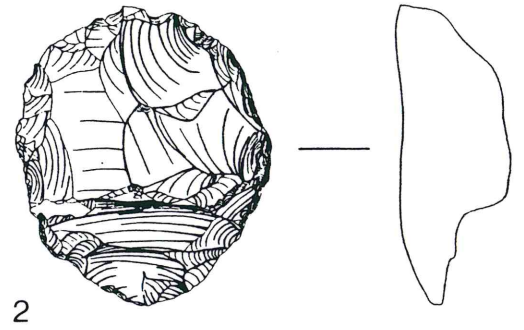
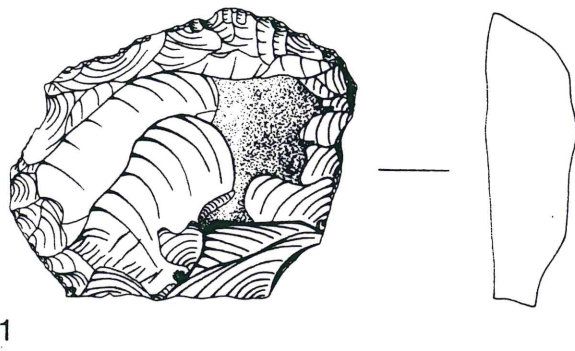
Length: 24m. Height of ploughsoil: 21.69m O.D. No archaeological features observed.

Discussion

Trenches A, B, C and D showed a layer of colluvium covering natural deposits of gravels and boulder clay, which may partly explain the absence of cropmarks in the field. The layer of colluvium was absent in trench E. No archaeology was found in trenches A, B and E, apart from vestigial traces of ridge and furrow in trench A. Trench H contained no features and suggests activity did not take place in this area.

Trenches C and D in the north of the area revealed archaeological deposits [fig. 4] which were further investigated by opening trenches F, G and H. 5 linear features were revealed in trench D, running on alignments varying from NE-SW to E-W. Features [10] and [18] were cut by [8], indicating at least 2 phases of activity. [10] appears to be in alignment with [59] and [53] in trenches G and F, and may be a field or property boundary. The shallow gully [4], which appears to continue in trenches G and F, [as [55] and [61]], follows the slope of the field and may have served for drainage. [8], [18], [2] and [51] could also be boundary ditches while [57] which turns at an angle of 90° could be a trench associated with a structure. The flint flakes and tiny pottery fragments found in features [2], [4], [10], [51], [53] and [57], suggests a late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age date, while the similarity of the fills of all the features indicates a contemporary date. Trench C contained a section of a large shallow feature [16] interpreted as a drainage channel. It lay to the north of two similarly aligned, natural channels formed by run-off from the brow of the hill, and appears to represent a rationalisation of the natural drainage process. The fill of channel [16] contained flints of the same age as those within the features in trenches D, F and G, and a moderate amount of animal bone - minimum 2 individuals: cow and sheep/goat.

It is apparent that a prehistoric settlement (Late Neolithic/Bronze Age) lies within the immediate area of trenches F, G and D possibly bounded to the north by the artificial drainage channel in trench C. The features recorded may represent ditches on the periphery of a habitation area or the survival of deeper cut features within the settlement itself; all associated occupation layers and ephemeral features may have been destroyed by ploughing. Analysis of the flint assemblage from fieldwalking indicates an area in which flint tool manufacture and the treatment of skins probably took place, activities normally confined to the outskirts, and downwind, from main occupation areas.



1-4: Scrapers 5: Burin Spall 6: Truncated Blade Segment 7-8: Arrowheads

Figure 6; Flint Artefacts from Fieldwalking

Recommendations

The evidence so far recovered does not seem to suggest the nature of the archaeology of the area would warrant preservation *in situ*, however it does indicate the possibility of the survival of remains with a high research potential, i.e. cut features of a prehistoric settlement. The evaluation sampled a very small percentage of the overall area, and considering the distribution of flints over almost all the field, there is the possibility that other centres of prehistoric activity may lie within areas not covered by the trenching.

Further archaeological work in areas threatened by construction requirements is recommended. **This should take the form of further trenching and survey, taking place prior to construction, and relating directly to a detailed plan of the proposed housing and light industrial development.** The results of this work could provide a framework for mitigating measures to protect the surviving archaeology from the impact of the proposed development.

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GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS

Anglo-Saxon. The period dating between the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410 and the Norman invasion of 1066. Within this period several ethnic groups from northern Europe vied for control of the British Isles, including the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, and Norwegians. The latter two groups are collectively known as the Vikings and became involved in British politics from the eighth century, later than the others. The Vikings were successful in occupying a large part of the north and Midlands of England, before providing a King (Cnut) for the whole of England. For most of this time England was divided up into several kingdoms until Saxon resistance to Viking incursions led to the unification of England under Aethelstan and Alfred.

Artefact. Any object made by people. Generally, this word is used for finds such as pottery, stone tools, or metal objects, but it can be used in a much wider context in that the landscape we have today is a product of human activity and is thus an artefact itself.

Bronze Age. Prehistoric period c. 2000 - 700 BC when bronze was used for many types of tools and weapons.

Cropmarks. Archaeological features below the ploughsoil can affect the growth of sensitive crops through moisture retention or loss. For example, the planting of cereal crops over buried ditches or pits will encourage rapid growth leading to tall, dark coloured plants, whereas walls and roads in the subsoil will lead to stunting and faster yellowing of the crop. These discrepancies in crop growth can be easily detected from the air, and by taking photographs the cropmark patterns can be plotted onto maps and given provisional interpretation.

Enclosure. An area defined by a continuous surrounding ditch. These may be enclosures around human settlements, fields, or paddocks for stock. Rectilinear enclosures have straight sides and corners, whilst curvilinear enclosures have rounded sides.

Field system. An area with ditches or banks that show a systematic pattern of enclosures, trackways, and features that can be seen to run parallel to one another, or lead off from one another to form an intelligible pattern.

Fieldwalking. Technique of archaeological survey. Walking over ploughed and weathered soil, an experienced observer can collect many ancient artefacts, and by plotting the distribution of such find spots on maps an idea of the use of the landscape can be built up for each period of the past.

Finds scatter. Finds are artefacts, or other objects associated with human activity, for example bones or fire-cracked flint. A finds scatter is a localised collection of such objects.

Geophysical Survey. Investigation of changes occurring in the magnetic and electrical characteristics of the soil, which can often be induced by human activity.

Iron Age. Prehistoric period c. 700 BC - AD 43 when iron was used extensively for tools and weapons. The period traditionally ends with the Roman invasions of AD 43 but in fact there was a considerable time of adjustment after this date when the Iron Age way of life continued with little change from Roman influence.

Medieval. Historic period that begins with William the Conqueror's invasion in 1066. Post-Medieval is generally considered to date from 1500.

Mesolithic. Prehistoric period c. 8300 - 3500 BC, transition between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, with the persistence of Palaeolithic hunting and gathering lifestyle. Flint industry is often distinguished by an abundance of microliths.

Neolithic. Prehistoric period c. 3500 - 2000 BC when farming and pottery were introduced. Stone tools of fine workmanship were produced and exchanged over long distances, but before the use of metals.

Palaeolithic. Prehistoric period beginning with the emergence of man and the manufacture of stone tools some 2 1/2 to 3 million years ago. The Palaeolithic lasted through the Pleistocene Ice Age until the retreat of the ice sheets in c.8300 BC.

Ridge and Furrow. Medieval cultivation techniques led to a phenomenon of corrugated fields. Strips of land were allotted to individuals and a furrow was left between one person's strip and the next, leading to a corrugated ridge and furrow effect. Ridge and furrow shows up as cropmarks on air photographs and more rarely as earthworks in pasture fields.

Ring-ditch. A continuous circular ditch which is all that remains of a ploughed out round barrow, or the drainage ditch (eavesdrip gully) that surrounded a round-house.

Roman. Historic period AD 43 - 410 when much of Britain was part of the Roman empire. The term Romano-British is now widely used to describe the people of this period, as few were Roman themselves, but they were a provincial manifestation of the empire developing in a unique way. AD 410 was the date the legions were withdrawn, but the Romano-British culture continued for some time into the 5th century in tandem with Anglo-Saxon migration.

SAM. Scheduled ancient monument.

SMV. Shrunken medieval village. For various reasons medieval settlements were sometimes abandoned or greatly reduced in size. Earthworks of the original village can often be seen around the modern village, showing the position of house platforms, crofts, lanes and ponds.

Soilmark. Archaeological remains often show in ploughed fields by reason of the different soil of which they consist. They can be visible at ground level but like cropmarks they are best seen from the air.

Scan Evaluation at Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire

Introduction

A scan survey was carried out by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit on the 13th November 1992. The work had been commissioned by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Unit as part of an evaluation of a field to the east of and adjacent to the village of Little Paxton (Fig 1).

The Survey

The survey area covered 1 hectare at the north end of the field where two evaluation trenches had been dug (trenches C and D). Scanning was carried out along transects set out at 5m intervals. In addition, a 20m x 20m grid was intensively surveyed at the southern end of Trench D where archaeological features had been exposed.

Results and Conclusions

The magnetic readings resulting from the scanning were generally weak, not exceeding +7 - +8 nT. The results of the intensively surveyed area around trench D are no more encouraging. As no intelligible patterning occurs in the plot, it is impossible to determine whether the magnetic anomalies present denote authentic archaeological features or whether they are the results of localised magnetic areas naturally occurring within the gravel and/or the overlying soil (Fig 1). Larger areas of intensive magnetic surveying would be required in order to determine the significance of these magnetic anomalies.

P Masters, BA HND PIFA, Northamptonshire County Council
Archaeology Unit Contracts Section, 19th November 1992.

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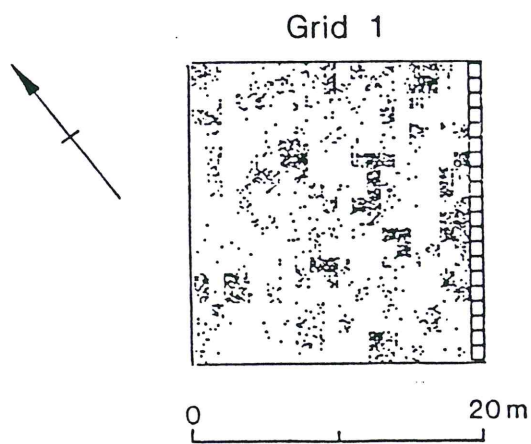
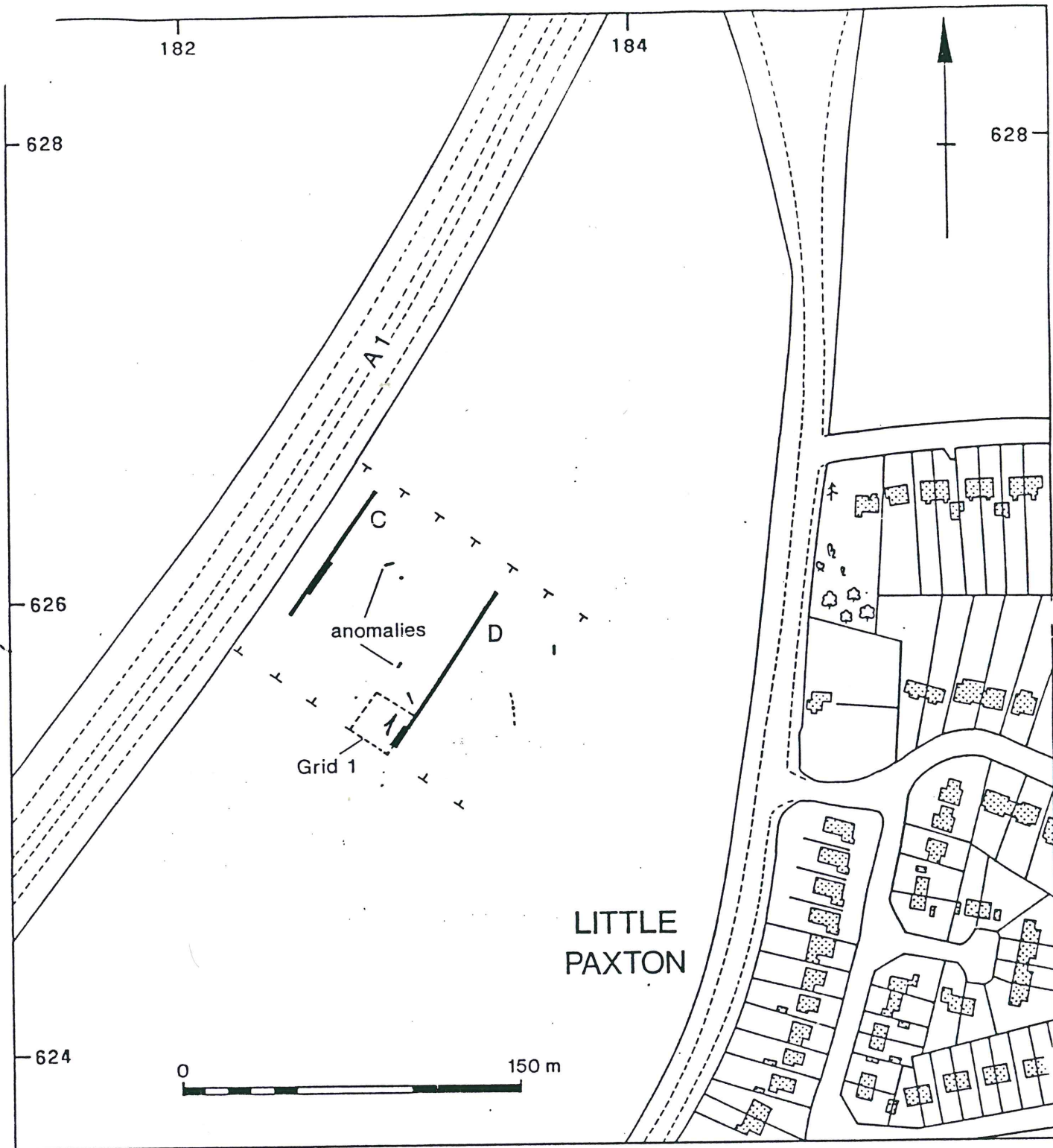


Fig 1

Appendix 3

Great North Road, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire : Soil Assessment

C.A.I.French MIFA
(6/11/1992)

1. Introduction

An inspection of the open trial trenches was made by the writer on November 4, 1992. The area of land for the proposed development is situated on an area of first/second terrace gravels which rise southwestwards to a knoll of third terrace gravels associated with an outcrop of boulder clay. It is an area of poor cropmark visibility.

2. Observations

In general, the terrace subsoil is very mixed, and comprises silts, sands and gravels with numerous ice-wedge cracks in evidence. On this is developed a thin (<40 cm), sandy/silt loam soil which acts as the present day ploughsoil. The ploughsoil becomes a very thin (<20 cm), silty (clay) loam on the knoll. There is no buried soil surviving.

The base of the slope/upper part of the second terrace skirting the boulder clay/third terrace knoll is marked by thin (<15 cm) accumulations of silt loam hillwash or colluvial material. This colluvial deposit is visible in Trenches A and C as a yellowish brown, homogeneous silt loam which lenses out downslope.

Although few archaeological features were evident in the assessment trenches, those that were present are well defined (ie. in Trench D). Tree-throw holes and root lines, as well as ice-wedge cracks were very common features in the top of the subsoil.

Trench C contained two large, wide and apparently linear features running southwest to northeast. The southern feature [14] contained a variety of discontinuous fills, including one ice-wedge crack within the feature infills. This confirms that this is a geological feature, perhaps a relict stream channel of the late glacial period.

The second feature [16] contained a uniform, homogeneous, brown silt loam, which is similar in texture and colour to the fill of the other linear archaeological features in Trench D. This may well be a large boundary/drainage ditch, or perhaps a rationalised stream channel, which runs across and down the slope at a 45 degrees, mirroring the route and alignment of the pre-existing geological feature. Obviously without the excavation of this feature it is hard to be any more positive than this.

Appendix 3

In Trenches A and D, there were slight indications of the presence of ploughed-out ridge and furrow system aligned east-west.

3. Potential for the preservation of environmental evidence

There was no buried soil surviving in the assessment trenches. Nonetheless, feature definition is excellent and there could be many more features remaining undiscovered, especially under the thin colluvial deposit which appears to fringe the base of the knoll. There is no indication of the potential preservation of organic remains in the archaeological features, although the deep linear feature observed in Trench C has possibilities.

APPENDIX 1. LITTLE PAXTON FLINT REPORT.

Dr T.E.G. Reynolds.

1.0 Summary.

The assemblage comprises 369 pieces found by fieldwalking, as casual finds and by excavation. Plough damage is surprisingly rare and so flint-bearing deposits are probably only recently disturbed. Technology was hard-hammer based with flakes being preferred to blades. Principal tool types are various round and end scrapers, with occasional burins and arrowheads. A typological date for these would be late Neolithic/early Bronze Age.

2.0 Introduction.

This report is based on lithics recovered from an evaluation by Cambridgeshire Archaeology supervised by Mary Alexander. The assemblage has three components; fieldwalking finds (n=334), chance surface finds (n=8) and excavated finds (n=17).

The assemblage comprises 369 pieces of which 353 (95.66%) are flakes, while 4 cores (1.08%) also occur. A total of 34 tools were recovered of which 61.8% were end or round scrapers on flakes, 8.8% were truncated flakes or blades, 8.8% were burins and 8.8% were arrowheads. The overall assemblage composition is presented in table 1, below.

3.0 Technology.

The assemblage is predominantly flake-based with a small but well-made blade and bladelet component which make up less than a fifth of the blanks and waste. The low frequency of primary flakes, combined with the small number (and size) of cores recovered argues for roughing-out knapping taking place beyond the sampled area. This fact may be supported by the mean scar count of the cores (n=6). The four cores recovered would therefore only account for 7% of the flake component!

Core scar counts are not necessarily good indicators of intensive reduction, but the cores are smaller than most flakes, and primary flakes are rare, all this does argue for knapping taking place elsewhere.

Platform types suggest direct hard-hammer percussion was the main method of flaking, no lipped platforms were observed indicating that typical soft-hammer use was rare or absent. The number of crushed platforms is that expected from hard-hammer use on gravel-derived flint, and the lack of prepared platforms and regular blanks suggests no specific techniques were employed to produce given blank forms. The frequency of blades amongst the blanks (16%) does not suggest these were the product of deliberate blade technique, rather, they seem to be incidental products of a generalised hard-hammer knapping system.

4.0 Edge Condition and Raw Materials.

The condition of the cortex (in this case, cobble external surface) on primary and secondary flakes indicates river cobbles were the main raw material source with no use

of fresh chalk flint. On the basis on colour and patination conditions, at least three different types of flint raw material were used: A honey coloured, a blue-black coloured and a grey coloured flint. A light brown flint also occurs but is rare. All the flint types patination trends towards white, with blue-white and cream-white as intermediates for the blue-black flint and honey coloured (and brown) flint respectively. The proportions of each raw material type were not studied as it is assumed they are likely to reflect the approximate availability of each type in the river gravel locally. No superior qualities are obvious in any of the flint types which would produce preferential selection.

The field has a long history of arable use and so the frequency of plough damage is surprisingly low. This would suggest that the artefact bearing strata are only recently disturbed by ploughing. The condition of the edges varies from fresh (and recently plough-struck) to patinated, waxy and worn. Some edges and arretes are abraded although none could be described as rolled. The general condition of the assemblage suggests pieces have not been subject to transport over great distance or in water.

5.0 Distribution.

The distribution of finds over the field surface will be patterned by gradient and by the direction of ploughing. So materials will tend to accumulate at field edges and towards the bottom of gradients. The relative concentration of scrapers (n=8) in the first three southerly sections of the field, plus a burin, means that more than a quarter of all tools occur at that end of the ploughing axis while a further 2 scrapers and a core occur in the three most northern sections of the field. A further quarter of the tools occur at the upper edge of the field pushed aside by ploughing. So the distribution of a total of 53% of the tool and core assemblage can be accounted for in terms of post-depositional disturbance. The remaining distribution of materials is best described as a background of residual finds from disturbed subsurface features. Certainly no claims for different activity areas can be substantiated on this evidence.

6.0 Typology and Dating.

The assemblage can, because of post-depositional disturbance and limited sampling contribute only a limited amount of information. Most informative is the typology, which gives evidence for dating the underlying archaeology. The similarity in typology, technology and general condition between the surface finds and those from the excavated trenches permits a generalisation for dating purposes but the possibility of admixture should be considered.

The scrapers comprise the largest artefact class (n=21) and range from chunky examples (Fig. 6, No.s 1 & 2) to those on thinner and regular flakes (Fig. 6, No.s 3 & 4). All may be broadly classified as round endscrapers, although some are made on truncated or broken flakes. There is no use of blades for this artefact class.

The next largest artefact class are the 'utilised' and diverse group of irregularly edge-nibbled and retouched flakes (n=4). These include pieces which probably functioned as knives and whittling tools.

There are three fragmentary arrowheads, all appear to be invasively flaked, unbarbed examples, worked bifacially (Fig. 6, No.s 7 & 8). As a group they are not particularly distinctive beyond the general late Neolithic/early Bronze Age dating which they suggest. Their damage on them does not easily fall into the assemblage of characteristics resulting from impact fractures and is more likely to be the result of accidents of manufacture and post-depositional processes.

The burins are all singly-struck flakes and number two examples, both surface finds. However, one interesting piece from the excavation is a burin spall which shows the refreshing of a scraper edge (Fig. 6, No. 5). The piece retains the scraper's retouched

edge on one face and removes that edge. This rejuvenation technique is rare and only retrieval of the resultant piece could confirm the continuing use of the refreshed edge.

The truncations (n=3) occur on both flake and blade blanks (Fig. 6, No.6). They probably reflect a functional category related to the scraper group.

7.0 Conclusions.

The lithic assemblage is relatively tool-rich, and plough-damage is quite rare. This suggests that artefact bearing strata are only recently being disturbed and that an area of prehistoric activity is close by. The finds from this assessment are generally less plough-damaged and of greater size variation than the collections kept in the Noris Museum at St Ives which were collected from the first and second Great Ouse terraces. The assessment has also produced a clearly identifiable set of artefact types including a particularly well-made and consistent series of scrapers. All this argues for the presence within, or close to the assessment area, of a relatively intensive prehistoric activity area, probably on the edge of a settlement. This would be an important archaeological find and requires further elaboration.

Table 1. Assemblage Composition.

Total number of pieces (Surface): 369

Natural pieces 24

Shatter 11

Informative component=334

Cores:	4 (1.2% of 334)
Tools:	30 (8.98%)
Flakes:	279 (84.55%)
Blades/lets	45 (13.64%)
Blade-flakes	6 (1.82%)

Whole pieces: 213 (64.55%)

Broken pieces 117 (35.45%)

Tools:	Scrapers	19 (63.33%)
	Diverse	4 (13.33%)
	Arrowheads	3 (10%)
	Burins	2 (6.7%)
	Truncations	2 (6.7%)

Platform types:

Cortical	37 (16.16%)
Plain	144 (62.88%)
Dihedral	7 (3.06%)
Prepared	7 (3.06%)
Crushed	34 (14.85%)

Flake Types:

Primary	8 (2.42%)
Secondary	143 (43.33%)
Tertiary	179 (54.24%)

Chance Finds:

- 1 Scraper
- 3 Tertiary flakes
- 2 Secondary flakes
- 1 Blade fragment
- 1 Bashed lump

Excavated Assemblage:

Total 17 pieces

Tools:

- 1 Scraper
- 1 Truncated Flake
- 1 Burin Spall

Flakes:

- Primary 0
- Secondary 7
- Tertiary 9

Broken Flakes=37.5%
Whole Flakes=62.5%
Shatter=1 piece