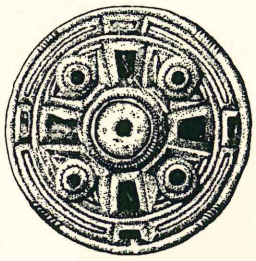

Archaeological Field Unit

Gog Magog Golf Course Extension
An Archaeological Assessment

K. Welsh

1993

Cambridgeshire Archaeology

Report No. 83

Commissioned By Gog Magog Golf Club

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Cover Logo: Garnet Brooch from Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery.

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Abstract

In May, 1993, Cambridgeshire Archaeology undertook an archaeological assessment of an area of land to the north-east of Wandlebury camp and adjacent to the Roman road, Worsted Street. Eleven trenches were opened with a mechanical excavator. A small pit containing several struck flint flakes, probably dating from the late mesolithic or early neolithic period, was excavated, as well as an undated linear feature, possibly a trackway, running parallel to the Roman road.

Introduction

From 5th to 14th May, 1993, an archaeological assessment was carried out on a field, centred on TL 500/538, on behalf of the Gog Magog Golf Club who plan to extend the present golf course (*Figure 1*). The assessment concentrated on those areas in which the Golf Club wish to excavate bunkers since, over much of the site, the sub-soil will suffer little or no disturbance.

Although only a few surface finds had previously been made in the area of the assessment, it was felt that the site held significant archaeological potential as it is situated only about 250m north-east of Wandlebury hill-fort with its north-eastern boundary formed by Worsted Street, a Roman road (also called *Via Devana*). The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) also showed a single, linear crop mark which subsequently proved to be of natural origin.

Topography and Geology

The field, lying in the Gog Magog hills, has quite pronounced topography (*Figure 2* shows contours at 5m intervals), with a high point of about 70m, generally sloping down towards the north-east, to a height of about 45m alongside the Roman road. A central valley runs from south-west to north-east.

The underlying geology consists of Middle Chalk, although this is capped by glacial gravel in the north-west corner and there is some chalky marl along the north-eastern limit of the site.

Background

The Gog Magog Hills are an area rich in prehistory. To the south-west, many surface finds of neolithic flint tools and flakes have been made (*Figure 1*, **1, 2** and **3**). A series of cropmarks (**4**) may be of neolithic date, perhaps representing a causewayed enclosure with attendant tracks as well as a barrow. Several struck flint flakes have also been retrieved from the area. Within the assessment area, field-walking by the Cambridge Archaeological Field Group has produced two polished flint axes and a number of other flint tools (**5**).A number of round barrows in the area are likely to date from the Bronze Age. Two of these, Wormwood Hill (**6**) and Copley Hill (**7**), are probably natural features that, nonetheless, may well have been used for burials. Two barrows, now destroyed, are known to have existed on the present golf course (**8**) with a third just to the south-east (**9**).

The most obvious feature of the area is Wandlebury itself (**10**). This is an early Iron-Age hillfort, circular in plan, with a triple bank and ditch (multivallate) system. The earliest fortification of the site, perhaps during the 3rd century BC, was the construction of the surviving double bank and ditch. An inner bank and ditch existed until the 18th century when the area was landscaped for the house built for Lord Godolphin. Excavations during 1955-1956 (Hartley, 1957) seem to show that after an initial period

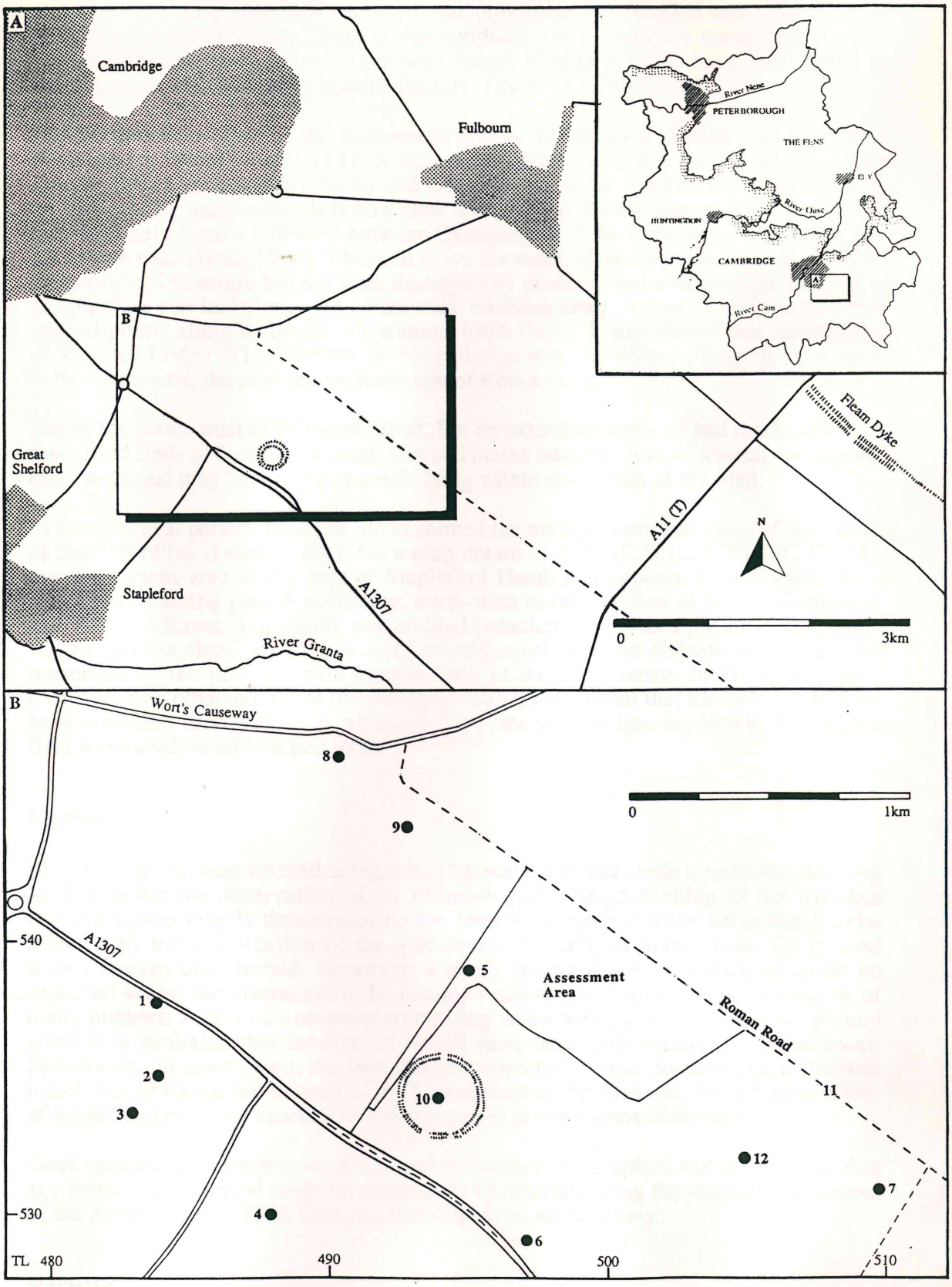

Figure 1. Location Map and sites mentioned in the text.

of occupation, evidenced by a large number of pits and post-holes, the fort was abandoned for a considerable period of time only being re-occupied, and refortified, in the early 1st century AD. There is also evidence for occupation during the Roman period, although no structures have been found. Human remains have been found at various times within and just outside the fort (Taylor and Denton, 1977).

The north-eastern limit of the assessment area is formed by a Roman road known as Worsted (or Wool) Street (**11**). It was once thought that it formed part of a road running from Colchester to Chester and was given the name Via Devana by Dr. Mason, an 18th century antiquarian. It is now clear that this was not the case and Worsted Street may well have been a link road between Cambridge and the Roman predecessor of the A11 trunk road (Wait, 1991). The road exists for much of its length as a green lane and so its original structure has not been destroyed by modern road construction. In 1959, a gas pipeline was laid along part of the road, enabling cross-sections to be excavated at several points along its length (Dewhurst, 1963-1964). It was shown that, north-west of Worsted Lodge (TL 528/519), its construction was undoubtedly Roman. However, to the south-east, the road shows little sign of Roman origin.

Just to the south-west of Worsted Street, lies an extensive series of soil marks (**12**) and associated finds of Roman material. The soil marks take the form of several rectangular enclosures and may be the site of a villa lying within easy reach of the road.

In the medieval period, Worsted Street formed the north-eastern boundary of the parish of Stapleford (as it does today). On a map drawn in 1740 (C.U.L., EDR. CC 12334), the assessment area forms part of Stapleford Heath and appears to be crossed by a coach road running past Wandlebury, north-west to the junction of Wort's Causeway and Worsted Street. The Heath was divided (whether there was a physical division at that time is not clear) into two parts of exactly equal area, the division apparently still preserved by the present south-eastern limit of the golf course. In 1812, an Act of enclosure was obtained. From the enclosure map it is apparent that the field boundaries have remained the same since, although for a few years following World War II, the field was sub-divided into paddocks.

Method

Eleven trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator, with a toothless ditching bucket, under the observation of an archaeologist. The positioning of the trenches (*Figure 2*) was largely determined by the need to investigate those areas likely to be affected by the construction of the golf course. Clearly, in many areas, the ground would remain undisturbed. However, a much greater degree disturbance could be expected where the greens are to be located since this will involve the excavation of many bunkers. A second important controlling factor was the position of level ground since it is probable that settlement would have been concentrated in these areas. Fortunately, in most cases, the two factors coincided. It was decided that a 10x10m trench would be opened in each of the four corners of the field and that a further 300m of single bucket-width trenches would be opened in other areas of the site.

Once opened, the trenches were cleaned by hand, photographed and planned, so that any features so revealed could be excavated and recorded using the standard techniques of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire Archaeology.

Results

In each trench, the plough soil was completely removed using the mechanical excavator. There proved to be a depth of about 0.25m of plough soil over the field. In

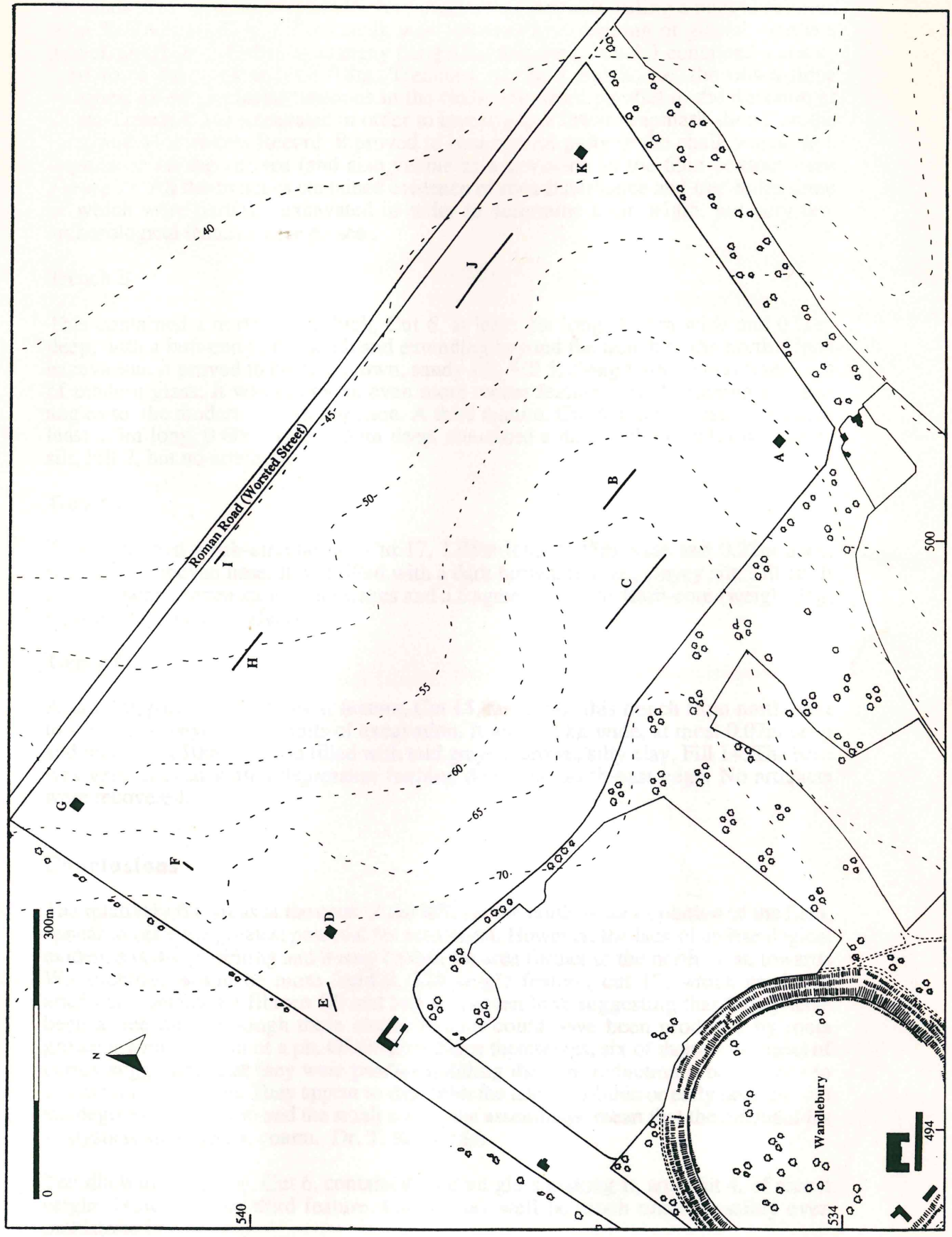

Figure 2. Trench locations.

Trenches A, B, C, F, G, H, J and K this was underlain by chalk although, in Trench B the chalk was partially overlain by very clean sand, probably filling a natural solution hole. In Trenches D and E the chalk was obscured by a capping of glacial sand and gravel, and Trench E displayed many periglacial features. Trench I contained a chalky marl to a depth of at least 0.8m. Trenches G, H, J and K, i.e. the down-slope trenches, all show glacial striations in the chalk orientated parallel to the direction of slope. Trench F was excavated in order to investigate a linear cropmark shown on the Sites and Monuments Record. It proved to be a natural gully in the chalk visible as a depression on the surface (and also visible as a deviation in the 65m contour - see *Figure 2*). All the trenches contained evidence of root disturbance and tree-holes some of which were partially excavated in order to determine their origin, but very few archaeological features were present.

Trench B

This contained a north-south ditch, Cut 6, at least 2m long, 1.05m wide and 0.20m deep, with a butt-end to the south and extending beyond the trench to the north. Upon excavation, it proved to contain brown, sandy silt, Fill 5, along with several fragments of modern glass. It was cut by an even more recent feature, Cut 4, running at right-angles to the modern plough direction. A third feature, Cut 8, a sub-rectangular pit, at least 1.3m long, 0.60m wide, 0.55m deep, contained a dark, yellowish brown, sandy silt, Fill 7, but no artefacts.

Trench C

This contained a sub-circular pit, Cut 17, 1.08m long, 0.45m wide and 0.22m deep, with a very uneven base. It was filled with a dark brown, fibrous, clayey silt, Fill 16. It also contained seven struck flint flakes and a fragment of cattle horn-core (weight 25g, representing one individual).

Trench G

A straight, parallel-sided, linear feature, Cut 15, ran across this trench from north-west to south-east beyond the limits of excavation. It was 1.80m wide, at most 0.07m deep and more than 10m long and filled with mid greyish brown, silty clay, Fill 14. The base was very uneven with a depression running down the north-east edge. No artefacts were recovered.

Conclusions

The relatively flat areas at the crest of the hill, i.e. the north-western portion of the field, appear to offer the greatest potential for settlement. However, the lack of archaeological evidence is disappointing and it may be that the area further to the north-west, towards Wandlebury, would be more fruitful. The single feature, cut 17, which produced artefacts, contained a fibrous fill and had an uneven base suggesting that it may have been a tree-hole although these characteristics could have been produced by roots growing within the fill of a pit. Of the flint flakes themselves, six of them show areas of cortex suggesting that they were produced during the core-reduction process prior to actual tool production. They appear to date from the late mesolithic or early neolithic but the degree of patination and the small size of the assemblage mean that the potential for analysis is small (pers. comm. Dr. T. Reynolds).

The ditch in Trench B, Cut 6, contained modern glass making it, and Cut 4, of recent origin. However, the third feature, Cut 8, may well be much older, possibly even prehistoric in date.

The linear feature in Trench G runs parallel to the Roman road and about 40m to the north-west of it. It may represent a short-lived alternative route possibly as a result of the road being temporarily blocked. However, since it is also parallel to the direction of modern ploughing, it may have a very recent origin. Unfortunately, it produced no dating evidence and has been severely truncated by ploughing.

Recommendations

Although only a small percentage of the assessment area was investigated, the trenching was specifically targeted at the proposed greens. Due to the small number of archaeological features, it is not considered necessary to undertake any further excavation in these areas. However, where significant areas are to landscaped (for example, the construction of bunkers, or terracing in the central valley), it would be important to have an archaeologist present to monitor the work and, if necessary, to carry out further recording.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

List of Contexts

Context	Description	Nature	Above	Below
1	Surface finds	-	-	-
2	Ploughsoil	Sandy silty clay, mid brown	-	3, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16
3	Fill of [4]	Silty sandy clay, mid brown	2	4
4	Modern cut	-	3	5
5	Fill of [6]	Sandy silt, dark yellowish brown	4	6
6	Modern cut	-	5	18
7	Fill of pit [8]	Sandy silt, dark yellowish brown	2	8
8	Cut of pit	-	7	18
9	Fill of [10]	Sandy silt, dark yellowish brown	2	10
10	Root hole	-	9	18
11	Periglacial feature	-	12	13
12	Fill of [11]	Sandy silt, reddish brown	2	11
13	Natural, Trench E	Glacial sand/gravel	13	-
14	Fill of [15]	Silty clay, mid greyish brown	2	15
15	?Trackway	-	14	19
16	Fill of [17]	Clayey silt, dark brown	2	17
17	?Tree-hole/pit	-	16	20
18	Natural, Trench B	Chalk/sand	6, 8, 10	-
19	Natural, Trench G	Chalk	15	-
20	Natural, Trench C	Chalk	17	-

Glossary of Archaeological Terms

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 growth of cereal crops over buried ditches or pits will encourage rapid growth leading to tall, dark coloured plants, whereas walls and roads 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.

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

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.

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: The period from the end of the Last Ice Age at 10,000 BP until the start of the Neolithic period at c. 3500. The life style of the people was a continuation of hunting and gathering, no polished stone tools or pottery are associated with it in England.

Natural: The local subsoil that is unaltered, in nature and location, by human activity.

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.

Posthole: A hole dug to receive a post. They can also result from driving posts into the ground. The latter, however, do not have distinct fills such as packing and a post pipe. A post pipe is the fill of a posthole which formed in the place of a removed post.

Post-Medieval: This period is generally considered to date from 1500, and is not used for dates after about 1800.

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.

Round barrow: A Bronze Age burial mound formed by heaping up earth over a central burial. They have several forms, including numbers of encircling ditches and can have many burials in them. The first burial is known as the primary burial, subsequent ones are referred to as secondary burials. It has been suggested that these burial mounds are a way of marking tribal territories, and tney are often placed in prominent locations. They can occur in clusters known as 'barrow cemetries'.

Sites and Monuments Record (SMR): A computer and paper database maintained by the County Archaeology Office of all known historic sites and individual findspots. This system can be applied in response to any query concerning the hertiage of the county, e.g.the archaeology of a piece of land can be ascertained in response to a planning application and the archaeological requirement if needed can then be stated by the County Archaeologist.