Archaeological Field Unit

Additional Evaluation Trenching on Land East of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Update

Mark Hinman and Andrew Hatton

2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 758

Commissioned by CPM Environmental Planning and Design on behalf of JJ Gallagher Ltd

Additional Evaluation Trenching on Land East of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire

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Report No. 758

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SUMMARY

Between the 27th September and 1st October 2004 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook the excavation of 13 trenches at Love's Farm, St. Neots. This was in addition to the 76 trenches excavated during the 2003 evaluation. The work was commissioned by CPM Environmental Planning and Design on behalf of JJ Gallagher Ltd in advance of residential development. This report should not be considered as a stand alone document and must be read in conjunction with the AFU Report No 700 'Land East of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire' (Hinman 2004).

The excavation of additional trenches within Fields 2,3,4 and 7 has added to the information recovered from the original evaluation. This work has further defined the presence of late pre-Roman Iron Age and Roman occupation in the south-western quadrant of the proposed development. Evidence of prehistoric activity on the site has been enhanced through the excavation of the additional trenches.

A series of features tentatively ascribed to the earlier prehistoric period were revealed within Fields 2 and 3. No additional archaeological features were revealed within the northernmost part of the site.

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TL 520100/260600

1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 27th September and 1st October 2004, the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook the excavation of 13 trenches at Love's Farm, St. Neots (TL 520100/260600) (fig.1). This was in addition to 76 trenches excavated during the 2003 evaluation (fig. 2). The positioning of the trenches was by agreement between Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office and Sally Randell of CPM Environmental Planning and Design. The work was commissioned by CPM on behalf of JJ Gallagher Ltd in advance of the construction of a residential development

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The geology of the site consists of Oxford Clay and Kellaway Beds overlain by Chalky Till of the Hanslope Association. River terrace gravels are present within the north-western corner of the site.

The southern limit of the site was located on roughly level low lying ground at 20m OD rising gently through the central portion of the area to a level plateaux at 40m OD to the north. The natural topography provides a relatively sheltered, well drained, south-facing location.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For the archaeological and historic background to the site and the surrounding area see Hinman 2004.

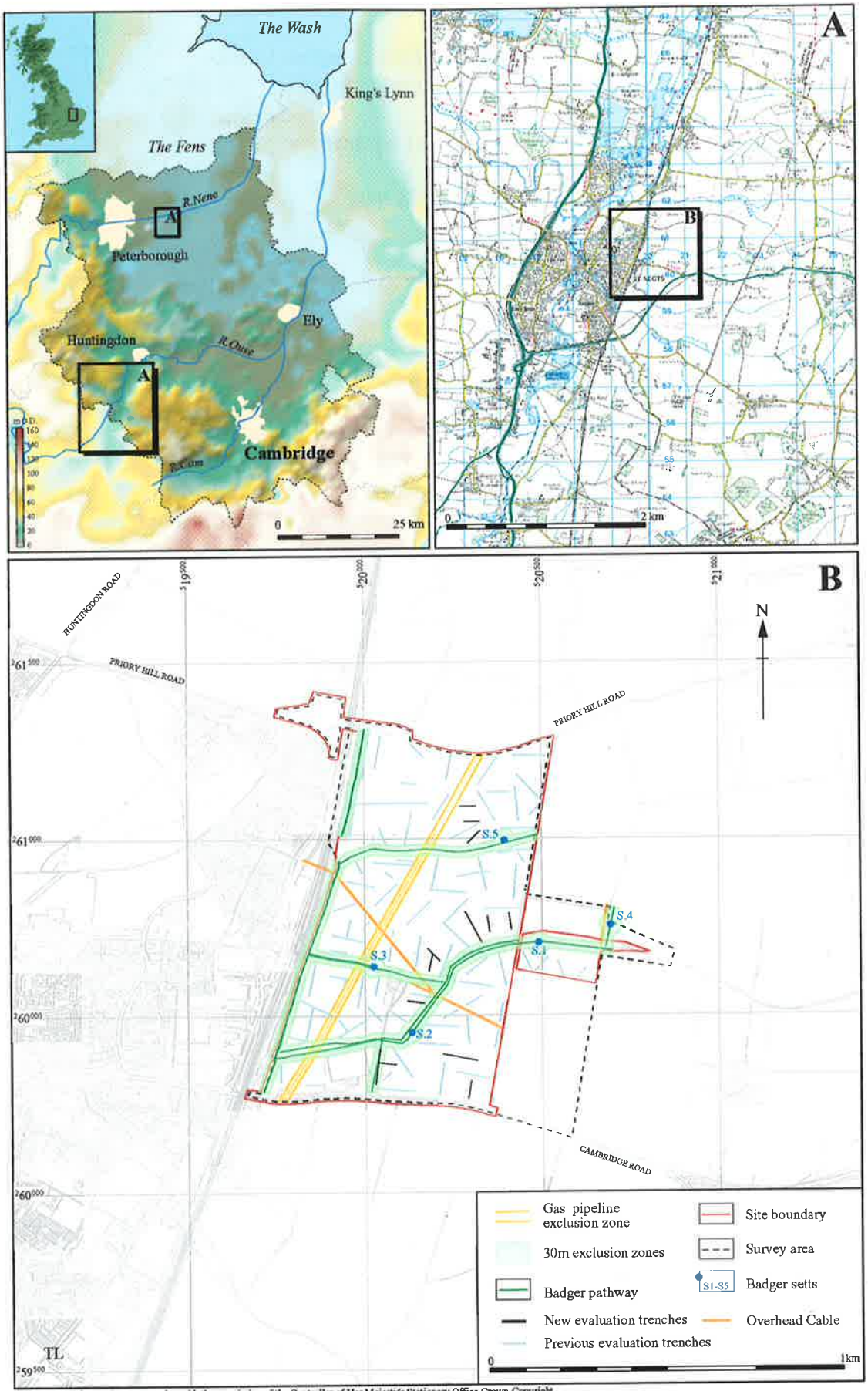

Figure 1 *Location of trenches.*

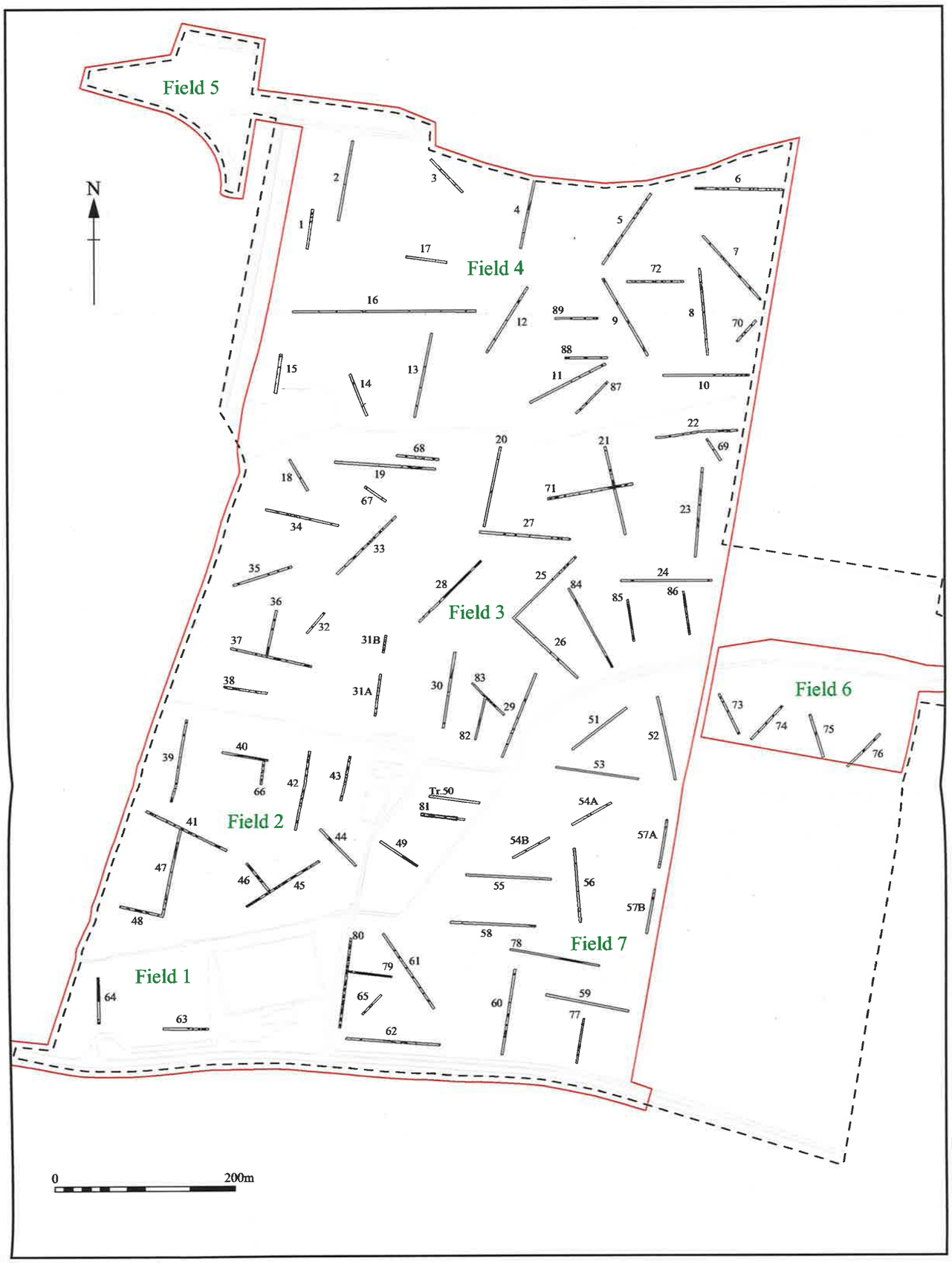

***Figure 2** Trench locations*

4 METHODOLOGY

An additional 13 trenches were excavated across the eastern side of the site within Fields 2, 3, 4 and 7. The positioning of the trenches was designed to enhance the detailed information gained through the first phase of the evaluation as well as to investigate areas of the site towards the valley bottom in order to determine the route of the palaeo-channel.

Trench locations were surveyed using a Leica TCR 705 Total Station Theodolite using n4ce and Leica Survey Office software. The individual trench plans showing feature locations were hand drawn, at a scale of 1:100 prior to incorporation with the surveying data. The trenches were cleaned by hand, planned and photographed, and the features recorded using the AFU's single context recording system. Targeted excavation of surviving deposits and features was conducted to characterise the nature and extent of the archaeological remains. The feature numbering sequence employed for each field during the first phase of the evaluation was continued during the second phase to ensure consistency.

Relative artefact densities across the area were examined through controlled scanning of the spoil heaps generated through trenching.

All site records and artefacts are currently held at the AFU headquarters in Fulbourn and stored under the site code STR LF 03/04 for the first phase of the evaluation and STR LOF O4 for the additional trenching.

5 RESULTS

The results of the fieldwork are listed below by ascending field number. As a result of the paucity of artefacts recovered from the features excavated it was not possible to group the findings by period. It was, however, possible to date features through association.

Field 2: Trench 81 (fig. 3)

Trench 81

Post hole 318 was sub-circular with concave sides, had a gradual break of slope and a sloping base, measuring 0.3m wide, 0.45 m long, and 0.15 m deep. Filled by 317, a dark grey silty clay with occasional flint.

Pit 319 was sub-circular with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a flat base, measuring 0.7m wide, 0.5 m long and 0.09 m deep. Filled by 320, a mid brownish grey silt with rare charcoal.

Pit 321 was oval with moderately steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a concave base,

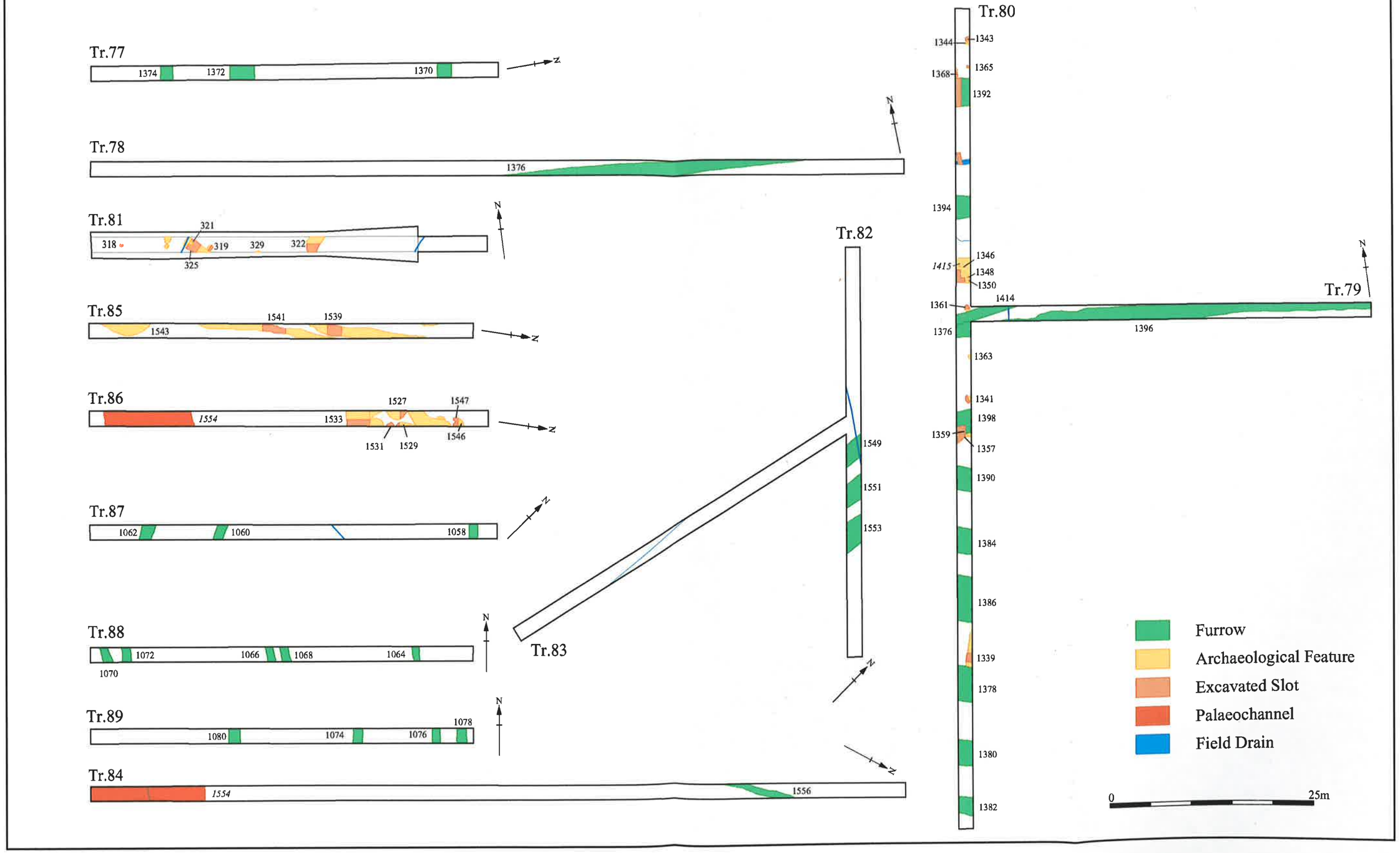

Figure 3 **Trench plans**

measuring 0.6m wide, 0.5 m long and 0.4 m deep. Filled by 326, a mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional flint fragments.

Palaeo-channel 322 was linear with gently sloping sides, had a gentle break of slope and a concave base, 0.14m wide, 0.9 m long, and 0.14 m deep. Filled by 323, a mid grey clay with frequent large flint.

Ditch 325 was linear with gently sloping sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 1.4m wide, 1.5 m long, and 0.3 m deep. Filled by 324, a light greyish brown silty clay with frequent flint fragments.

Pit 329 had gently sloping sides with a gradual break of slope and a flat base, 0.15m wide, 0.6 m long and 0.13m deep. Filled by 328, a dark grey silty clay with occasional small flint.

Trench 81 located in Field 2 was positioned in order to determine the course of the palaeo-channel identified during the 2003 evaluation in Trench 49 (Hinman 2004, 11).

Although evidence for the palaeo-channel was slight other undated features in the form of a single ditch, small pits and a posthole were identified cutting into the natural gravel. The significance of the posthole is not readily apparent due to the nature of the investigation. However, it is possible that the posthole may be part of a structure or fence-line. What this appears to prove is that activity was taking place along side the palaeo-channel, which was not readily apparent in Trenches 49 and 50.

Field 3: Trenches 82, 83, 84, 85 and 86 (fig. 3)

Trench 82

Furrow 1549. Filled by 1548.
Furrow 1551. Filled by 1550.
Furrow 1553. Filled by 1552.

Trench 83

No archaeology present.

Trench 84

Palaeo-channel 1554 was unexcavated but consisted of a mid brown sandy silt measuring 1.8m wide and 14m long.

Furrow 1556. Filled by 1555.

Trench 85

Ditch 1539 was linear with concave sides, had gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 1.25 m wide, 4.5 m long, and 0.38 m deep. Filled by 1538, a dark brown silty clay with occasional flint.

Ditch 1541 was linear with steep sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.8 m wide, 2.67 m long, and 0.31 m deep. Filled by 1540, mid orangeish brown silty clay with rounded chalk and angular flint pebbles. A single flint core was recovered from the fill.
Pit 1543. Filled by 1542. A single flint flake was recovered from the surface of the pit.

Trench 86

Natural 1532 were a compact mid orange brown silty clay with moderate concentrations of flint

Tree bowl 1527 was sub-circular with moderately steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and an irregular base, measuring 1.05m wide, 2.7 m long and 0.2m deep. Filled by 1526, mid greyish brown silty clay with a rare flint pebbles.

Palaeo-channel 1554 was unexcavated but consisted of a mid brown sandy silt measuring 1.8m wide and 14m long.

Pit 1529 was oval with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.3m wide, 0.4 m long and 0.4 m deep. Filled by 1528,a light greyish brown clayey silt.

Pit 1531 was oval with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.7m wide, 1 m long and 0.8 m deep. Filled by 1530, a light greyish brown clayey silt.

Ditch 1533 was linear with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and an unexcavated base, measuring 2.7m wide, 1.8 m long, and 0.6 m deep. Filled by: 1534, a mid greyish brown silt with moderate flint, rare bone, and rare flint tools; 1536, a light greyish brown silt with rare flint tools, and moderate flint. A single flint flake was recovered from the fill. Fill 1535 a mid brownish grey silt with rare bone; 1537, a mid brown silt with rare flint.

Pit 1546 was oval with moderately steep sides, had a gradual break of slope and a flat base, measuring 1.05m wide, 1.2 m long and 0.1 m deep. Filled by 1544, a greyish brown silty clay with rare flint.

Pit 1547 was oval with steep sides, had a gradual break of slope and a flat base, measuring 0.4m wide, 0.6 m long and 0.16 m deep. Filled by 1545, a greyish brown silty clay. A single burnt flint was recovered from the fill.

Trenches 82 and 83 were positioned in order to recover further information about the possible Roman field boundary ditch identified at the southern end of Trench 30 (Hinman 2004, 29). However, the ditch did not appear to continue into Trenches 82 and 83, suggesting that the feature stopped someway short of the new trenches or turned either north or south. No features of archaeological significance were present within these two trenches.

The remaining trenches excavated in Field 3 were 84, 85 and 86. Trench 84 contained evidence of a palaeo-channel at its southern end that may be associated with the channel identified in trenches 49 (Hinman 2004, 11), 81 and 86. The trench also contained a single post-medieval furrow. Trenches 85 and 86 contained possibly earlier prehistoric features in the form of ditches and pits as well as the palaeo-channel identified in Trench 84 all of which were covered by colluvium with an average depth of 0.42m.

The possible prehistoric features identified in Trenches 85 and 86 appear to have a degree of continuity with those features investigated in Trenches 10 (Field 4), 21, 22, 23, 24, 69 and 71, during the 2003 evaluation (Hinman 2004, 22-42). Interpreting the features was not possible due to the nature of the investigation. However, further work in this the area will have the potential to aid in the interpretation of the features encountered

Field 4: Trenches 87, 88 & 89 (fig. 3)

Trench 87
Furrow 1058. Filled by 1057.
Furrow 1060. Filled by 1059.
Furrow 1062. Filled by 1061.

Trench 88
Furrow 1064. Filled by 1063.
Furrow 1066. Filled by 1065.
Furrow 1068. Filled by 1067.
Furrow 1070. Filled by 1069.
Furrow 1072. Filled by 1071.

Trench 89
Furrow 1074. Filled by 1073.
Furrow 1076. Filled by 1075.
Furrow 1078. Filled by 1077.
Furrow 1080. Filled by 1079.

Trenches 87, 88 and 89 contain extensive evidence of post-medieval furrows, which accords well with similar remains recorded during the 2003 evaluation in Trenches 9, 11 and 12, as well as many of the other trenches excavated in Field 4 (Hinman 2004).

Field 7: Trenches 77, 78, 79 and 80 (fig. 3)

Trench 77
Furrow 1370. Filled by 1369.
Furrow 1372. Filled by 1371.
Furrow 1374. Filled by 1373.

Trench 78
Furrow 1376. Filled by 1375.

Trench 79
Furrow 1396. Filled by 1395.

Trench 80
Buried soil (?) 1415 had gently sloping sides, and was 3 m wide, 1.8 m long and 0.1 m deep.

Ditch 1339 was linear with steep sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.91m wide, 1.8 m long and 0.58 m deep. Filled by 1340, a mid greyish brown clay with frequent/moderate flint and rare bone.

Pit 1341 was sub-circular with gently sloping sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.5m wide, 1.1 m long and 0.07 m deep. Filled by 1342, mid greyish brown clay with frequent flint.

Pit 1343 was sub-circular with gently sloping sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, 0.5m wide, 0.85 m long, 0.13 m deep. Filled by 1344, a mid brownish black silty clay and 1345, a mid brownish red silty clay.

Posthole 1346 was circular with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and concave base, measuring 0.12m wide, 0.14 m long, and 0.08 m deep. Filled by 1347, a dark blackish brown clayey silt with moderate charcoal, and rare flint.

Posthole 1348 was circular with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.17m wide, 0.12 m long, and 0.09 m deep. Filled by 1349, a mid greyish brown clayey silt

Posthole 1350 was circular with steep sides, had a sharp break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.2m wide, 0.15 m long and 0.11 m deep. Filled by 1351, a mid greyish brown clayey silt.

Ditch 1357 was linear with gently sloping sides, a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.7m wide, 1.8 m long, and 0.2 m deep. Filled by 1356, a dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional flint. Two flint flakes were recovered from this fill.

Pit 1359 was circular with steep sides, a sharp break of slope, and had an irregular base, measuring 2m wide, 1 m long and 0.4 m deep. Filled by 1358, mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional flint fragments. A single burnt flint chip was recovered from this fill.

Pit 1361 was sub-circular with moderately steep sides, a gradual break of slope and an irregular base, measuring 0.4m wide, 0.67 m long, and 0.2 m deep. Filled by 1360, mid greyish brown silty clay with moderate flint pebbles.

Pit/ditch (?) 1363 was sub-circular with moderately steep sides, a gradual break of slope and a concave base, 0.4m wide, 0.6 m long, 0.15 m deep. Filled by 1362, a light yellowish brown silt with infrequent flint.

Pit 1365 was circular with moderately steep sides, had a gradual break of slope and a concave base, measuring 0.3m wide, 0.37 m long, and 0.1 m deep. Filled by 1364, a light yellowish brown silt.

Pit 1368 was sub-circular with gently sloping sides, had a gradual break of slope and an irregular base, measuring 0.31m wide, 1.63 m long, and 0.3 m deep. Filled by 1366, mid orangeish brown silty clay containing frequent large angular chalkstones and 1367, a light/mid brown silty clay with a moderate amount of coarse angular flint.

Furrow 1355. Filled by 1354.
Furrow 1378. Filled by 1377.
Furrow 1380. Filled by 1379.
Furrow 1382. Filled by 1381.
Furrow 1384. Filled by 1383.
Furrow 1386. Filled by 1385.
Furrow 1388. Filled by 1387.
Furrow 1390. Filled by 1389.
Furrow 1392. Filled by 1391.
Furrow 1394. Filled by 1393.
Furrow 1398. Filled by 1397.
Furrow 1414. Filled by 1399.

The location of Trench 80 within the south-western quadrant of Field 7 added to the evidence of Later Iron Age activity. Originally identified in Trenches 62 and 65, also located in Field 7, and Trenches 45 and 46 located in the south-east quadrant of Field 2 where evidence of Late Iron Age and Roman features were identified (Hinman 2004, 10-17 & 45-46).

The features identified in this trench include several pits a single ditch and three postholes. The significance of the posthole is not readily apparent due to the nature of the investigation. However, it is possible that the posthole may be part of a structure or fence-line. Evidence of iron working took the form of a large plano-convex smithing hearth bottom (Eley, Appendix 1). This was recovered from the fill of Pit **1359**, indicating that smithing activity was potentially occurring in the vicinity of Love's Farm. Trenches 77, 78 and 79 contained post-medieval furrows, which again reflects evidence from the 2003 evaluation (Hinman 2004)

6 CONCLUSIONS

Further trenching at Love's Farm has supplemented the information from the 2003 evaluation of intensive late pre-Roman Iron Age concentrated within the south-western quadrant of the proposed development. Evidence of activity (undated) was discovered in Trench 81, which was not present Trenches 49 an 50, excavated during the previous evaluation.

The extra trenching also identified prehistoric remains in the south-eastern corner of Field 3 located alongside a palaeo-channel, thus adding to the information gained from the 2003 evaluation of extensive late Neolthic/Bronze Age activity on the site. Further evidence of metal-working was also recovered during the 2004 evaluation from pit **1359** located in Trench 80 (see Appendix 1).

The additional trenches excavated in the northernmost half of the development area (Field4) revealed evidence of post-medieval furrows but no further evidence of the possible later prehistoric field system located towards the north-east corner of Field 4.

The environmental evidence recovered from the bulk samples was inconclusive in attempting to build a picture of the local environment during the time of the sites occupation (see Appendix 2).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank CPM and Sally Randell who commissioned the report on behalf of JJ Gallagher Ltd. Mark Hinman managed the project and Bob Hatton and Spencer Cooper directed the fieldwork. Talayna Fletcher and Rachel Clarke undertook the trench location survey. Crane Begg produced the illustrations and the environmental samples were processed by Steve Graham and examined by Rachel Fosberry. Finds processing was co-ordinated by Helen Fowler and Carole Fletcher. Thanks are also due to the field team who worked extremely hard to complete the fieldwork within a very short timespan.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

Reference

Hinman, M., 2004, Land East of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Field Unit, Report No. 700, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge.

Appendix 1: Metalworking Slag

By Tom Eley

A large plano-convex smithing hearth bottom (115mm by 90mm by 30mm) weighing 0.503kg was recovered from near the top of pit **1359**. A smithing hearth bottom is a waste product created during the iron smithing process, consisting of: slag; iron; hammerscale; flux(sand) charcoal and hearth lining fused together at the base of the smithing hearth. A depression on the flat surface indicates where the tuyere (nozzle for the bellows) was positioned to blow air, creating temperatures hot enough to smith iron. There is good potential for a smithy to be present within the vicinity of site STR LF04.

Appendix 2: Environmental Samples

By Rachel Fosberry

1. Introduction and methods

Previous evaluations at Love's Farm had indicated that there was reasonable potential for the recovery of macrobotanical remains from environmental samples taken from certain areas of the site. Spelt wheat and chaff had been recovered in substantial quantities and preservation was moderate to good.

Sample Number	Context Number	Cut Number	Trench Number	Feature type
1	317	318	81	Post hole
2	1356	1357	80	Ditch
3	1358	1359	80	Pit
4	1528	1529	86	Pit
5	320	319	81	Pit

Five samples were taken from three further evaluation trenches and submitted for an initial appraisal. Ten litres of each sample were processed by bucket flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence such as debitage or hammerscale that might be present.

The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification.

2. Results

The botanical remains in the present samples mainly consist of flecks of charcoal and a single charred wheat grain that was recovered from Sample 3 (1358). Sample 5 (320) did contain a Brassica seed. Modern contaminants in the form of rootlets are present in all the samples and a few uncharred seeds of *Trifolium* sp and *Lepidium Campestre* are present in Sample 2 (1356).

Sample 1 (317) had a highly magnetic residue due to naturally occurring ironstone. No other magnetic evidence was recovered from any of the samples.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The samples submitted had not been expected to be productive due to their location. The single wheat grain recovered from Sample 3 was somewhat abraded but was tentatively identified as a free-threshing wheat rather than the Spelt wheat that was identified in some of the samples from the earlier evaluation.

The Brassica seed recovered from Sample 5 may have been intrusive. The depth of the feature makes it unlikely, however such a small seed (1mm diameter) could have travelled down with the modern rootlets that were also recovered from this sample. These seeds are naturally black and it was uncertain whether it was charred or modern.

Samples 2 and 3 were both taken from Trench 80 which was situated at a right angle to the west end of Trench 62 which had been evaluated in 2003. Both trenches have a very similar fill however the samples taken from Trench 80 were unproductive compared to a sample taken from a pit (**1274**) in Trench 62 that contained a large amount of charcoal and burnt chaff. It was common in the later prehistoric period to burn chaff as fuel and it was often used as such in ovens and kilns. It is possible that industrial activities were taking part in this area of the site especially as a substantial smithing hearth bottom was recovered from Trench 80.

The lack of botanical remains recovered from these further evaluation trenches suggests that these features are not worth subjecting to detailed sampling.

Appendix 3: Finds quantification

By Helen Fowler

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg	Comments
1356	Slag		0.503	
1356	Bone	Bone	0.001	Less than 1g.
1356	Bone	Bone	0.134	
1356	Ceramic	Vessel	0.056	
1356	Flint		0.044	
1356	Bone	Bone	0.015	
1535	Bone	Bone	0.348	
1534	Bone	Bone	0.139	
1534	Flint		0.005	
1540	Bone	Bone	0.038	
1540	Flint		0.022	
1340	Bone	Bone	0.026	
99999	Bone	Bone	0.242	TR.80.
99999	Ceramic	Vessel	0.029	TR.80.
1536	Flint		0.003	
1538	Bone	Bone	0.122	
1528	Ceramic	Vessel	0.001	
1545	Flint		0.006	Burnt Flint
1358	Flint		0.001	Less than 1g.
1542	Flint		0.002	

Quantification table of finds from STR LOF04

Appndix 4 Lithic Analysis

By Barry Bishop

The flints recovered from Trenches 85 and 86 located in the south-eastern quadrant of Field 3 are all residual and date to the Late Mesolithic/early Neolithic periods.

Context	Quantity	Feature Type	Date	Description
1356	2	Ditch	LMeso/ENeo	Flint flakes
1358	1	Pit	ENeo	Flint chip
1534	2	Ditch	LMeso/ENeo	Flint flakes
1536	1	Ditch	LMeso/ENeo	Flint flakes
1540	1	Ditch	LMeso	Flint core
1542	1	Pit	LMeso/ENeo	Flint flakes
1545	1	Pit	LMeso/ENeo	burnt flint

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