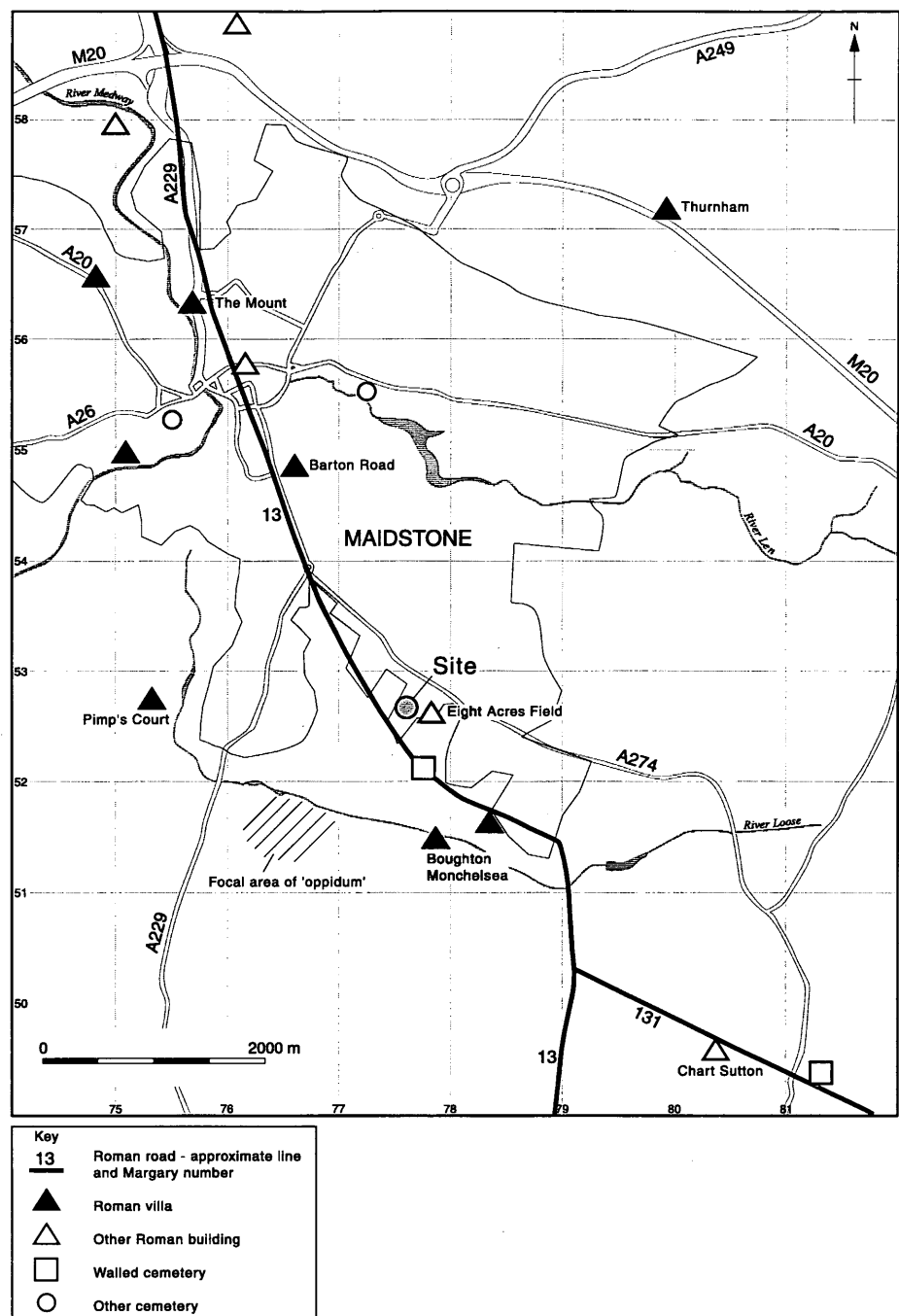


Figure 2: Location of Queen Elizabeth Square in relation to principal Roman sites in the Maidstone area



of the present site revealed a low density of archaeological features and a small quantity of late Iron Age and Roman material, but there was no indication of the structure implied by the 19th century account. The finds from KARU Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 5) suggested settlement in the immediate vicinity but it remains unclear whether this related in any way to the site identified in the 19th century.

The excavation

Methodology

Topsoil and subsoil were removed by machine under close archaeological supervision. All subsequent investigation was undertaken by hand. After the removal of topsoil, the site was cleaned and planned at a scale of 1:50. Discrete cut features were half-sectioned as necessary to record their character and relationships, and to recover artefactual and ecofactual evidence which might contribute toward the dating and/or the interpretation of activity at the site.

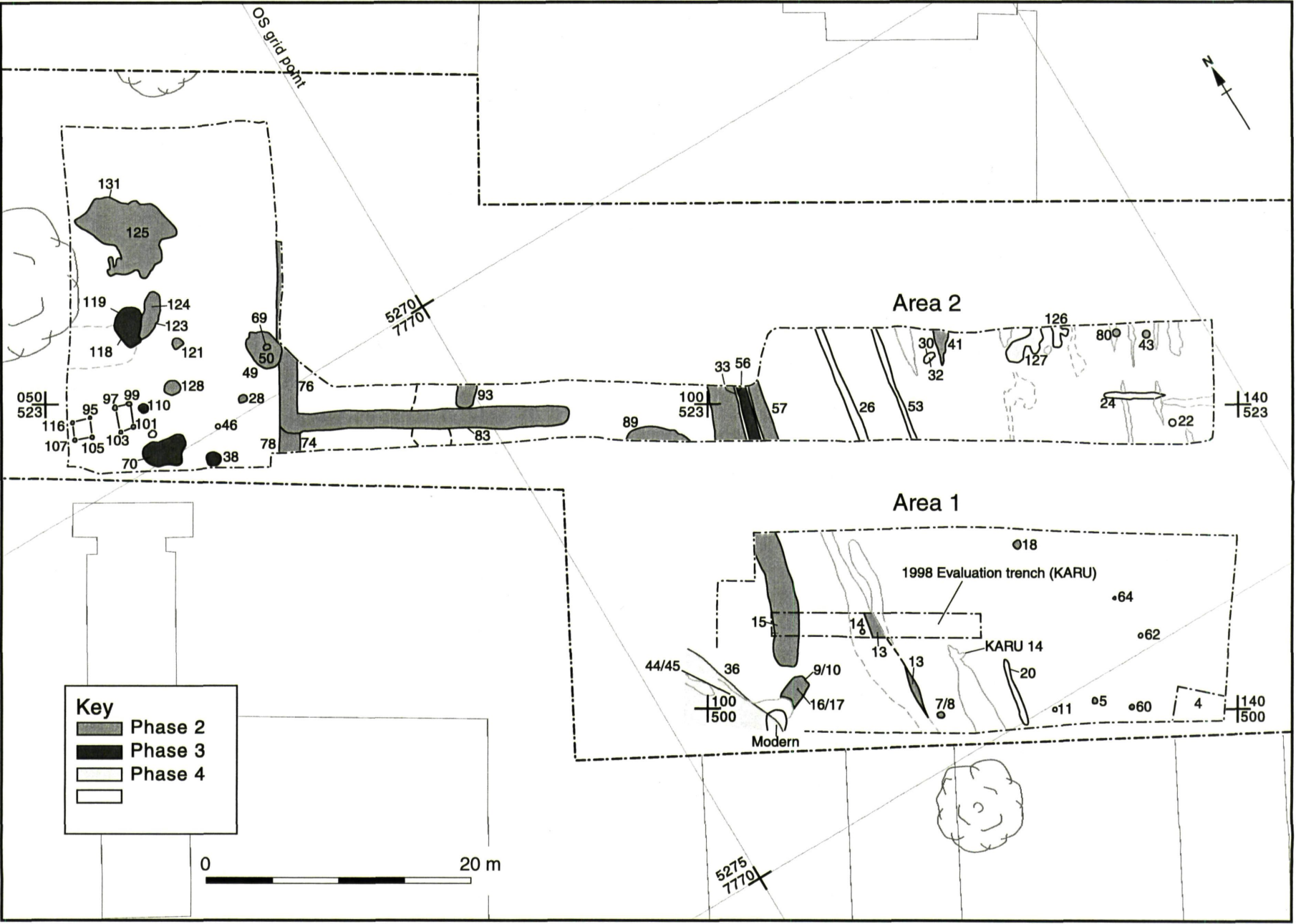


Figure 3: General plan of excavated area showing site, OS grids and phases of main features

This report presents the results of a programme of post-excavation analysis directed by the recommendations made in an assessment (OAU 2001). Artefact and environmental evidence is presented only as necessary and relevant to the interpretation of the site. Full catalogues of the stratigraphic and finds data may be found within the archive, which will be deposited in Maidstone Museum under the accession number MNEMG 1999.15.

Archaeology

The archaeological succession is described in order of deposition, from the earliest to the most recent. For purposes of this description, data from Areas 1 and 2 are discussed together.

Phase 1

An early phase of activity was postulated on the basis of the presence of Mesolithic and Neolithic flintwork found residually in a number of later features. There were no deposits or features that could be assigned to this phase unless layer 35, which was cut by a number of Phase 2 features (see below) but produced a significant quantity of pottery and flintwork, is seen as a fossil ground surface or subsoil.

Phase 2 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Although a small number of features were dated to the early Iron Age, it seems that most activity was of later date, concentrated in the mid-late Iron Age. During this phase the study area fell easily into three discrete zones of activity, although it must be noted that this division is in part a result of the layout of the excavation trenches. For the purposes of this account the zones are described as western, central, and eastern. The western zone was characterised by a dense distribution of pits and postholes which lay at the western end of excavation Area 2 (Figs 3 and 4), to the west of ditch 78. The central zone comprised the central part of Area 2 and the western part of Area 1 (Figs 3 and 5), characterised by intercepting ditches, perhaps a rectilinear field system. This was bounded to the west by ditch 78, and to the east possibly by ditch 33 (Fig. 7). The eastern zone comprised the eastern parts of both excavated areas. This provided only sparse evidence of activity, principally in the form of isolated postholes.

The western zone (Fig. 4)

Unequivocal structural evidence was limited to two groups of four postholes, presumably representing four-post structures typical of Iron Age occupation (Plate 1). They lay close together in the south-western corner of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 4).

The westernmost was represented by postholes 95 and 105 (Fig. 6), 107 and 116, which were of similar size, each around 0.2 m in diameter, ranging between 0.03 m and 0.08 m in surviving depth. Their fills, 96, 106, 108, and 117 respectively, were also similar grey-brown silty clays. Together they defined an almost square structure c 1.5 m x 1.6 m.

Approximately 2.5 m to the east, a second four-post structure was represented by postholes 97, 99, 101, and 103 (Fig. 6). These varied somewhat in size; 97 and 103 were 0.2 m in diameter, whilst 99 and 101 were larger, at 0.4 m and 0.36 m respectively. Their fills (98, 100, 102, and 104) were again all grey-brown silty clays. Together they indicated a rectangular structure c 1.5 m x 2.2 m. A single small fragment of Roman pottery from posthole 97 (fill 98) and a nail from posthole 101 (fill 102) raised doubt as to whether the structure may be regarded as Iron Age, and it should perhaps be assigned to Phase 3.

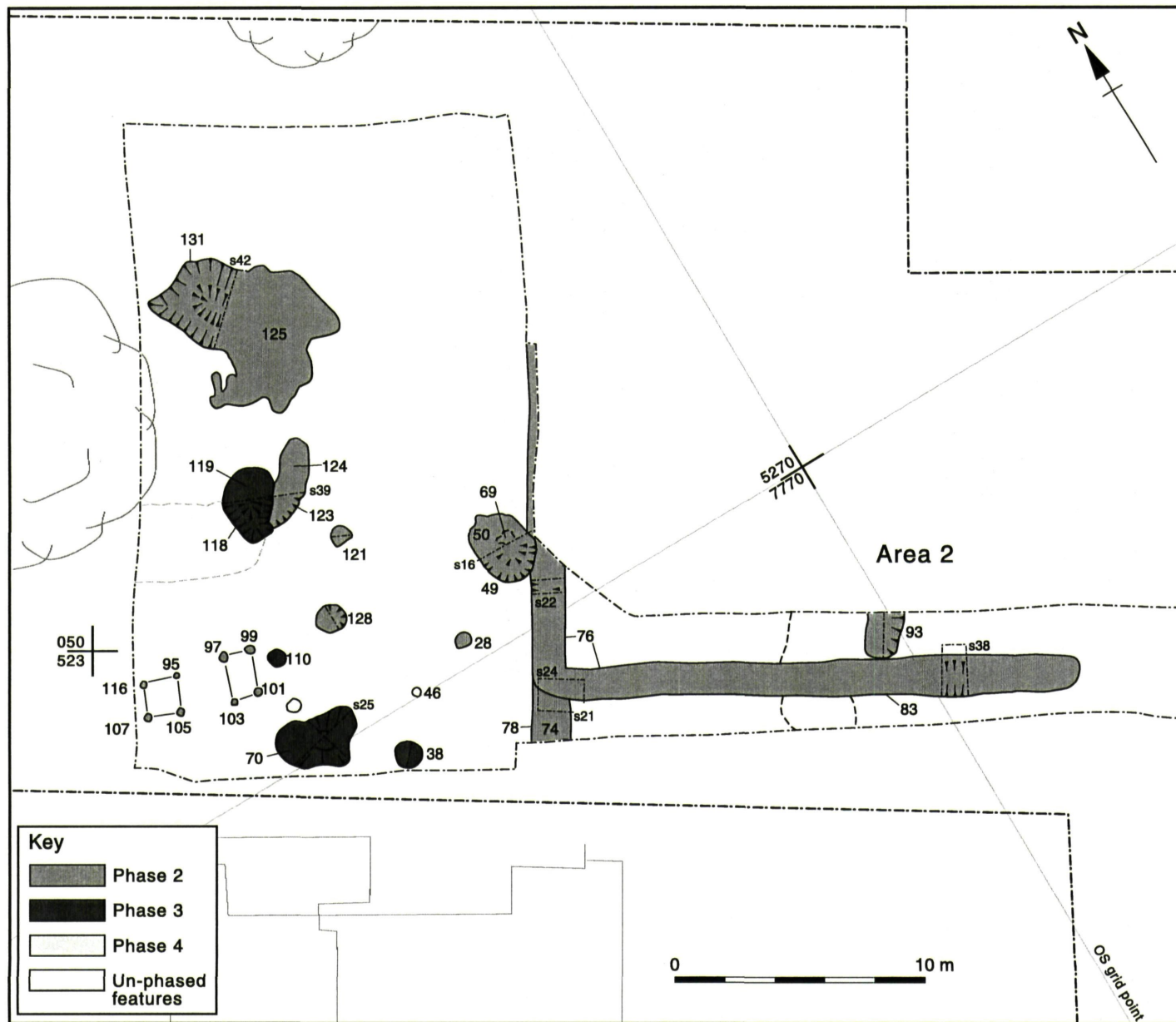


Figure 4: Detailed plan of western half of excavated area

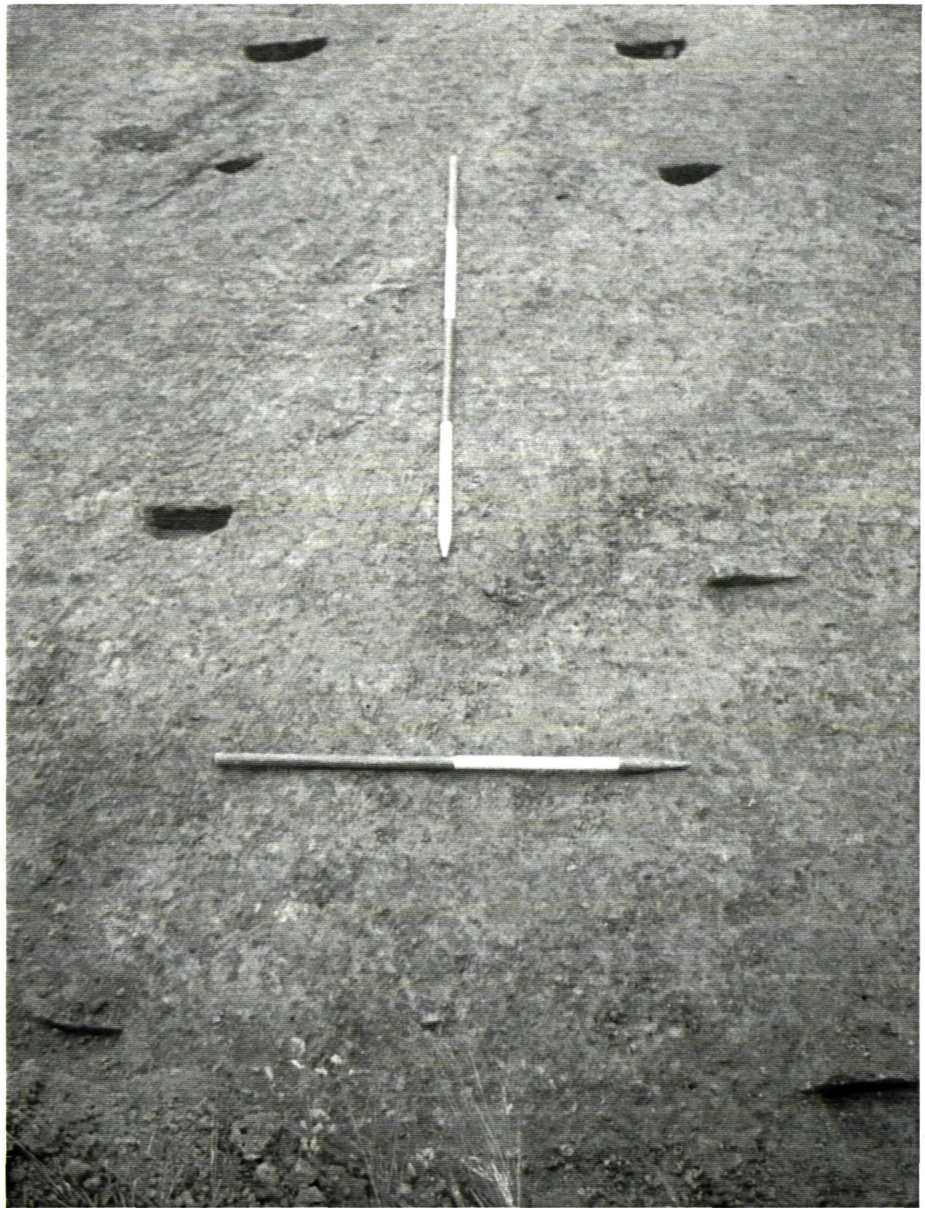


Plate 1: Area 2: Phase 2 four-post structures looking east-south-east. Scales in half metre units

Pit 49 (Fig. 6) lay immediately west of ditch 78 and may have cut it (Fig. 4), implying that it was created late in the phase. It was a substantial, if shallow, oval pit, 3-4 m long and 1.3 m wide, but only 0.18 m deep. The primary fill (73) was an irregular layer of silty charcoal containing evidence for the burning of cereal processing waste, apparently dumped, as the soil below showed no signs of burning. This was overlain by fill 50, a friable grey-brown clay with flecks of charcoal, which produced a small amount of late Iron Age pottery. Set into the top of this fill, burnt clay (69) incorporated a patch of mid-late Iron Age pot sherds (68) in a pink clay matrix, which together formed a hearth approximately 0.6 m across. Whether pit 49 (Fig. 6) was dug simply to provide a foundation for the hearth, or indicated a larger and earlier structure is unclear. A single isolated posthole (28) lay 2.5 m to the west of the hearth (Fig. 4); although 0.6 m in diameter, it was only 0.15 m deep. The fill (29) was a grey-brown clay flecked with charcoal which produced pottery comparable to that from other features assigned to Phase 2.

Pit 128 lay 3 m to the north-east of the four-post structures (Fig. 4). Approximately 0.8 m in diameter, it was up to 0.3 m deep. The single fill, grey-brown silty clay 129, produced charcoal, small fragments of burnt and vitrified clay and late Iron Age pottery. Further north, pit 121 was slightly smaller, but

similar except that the fill (122) incorporated a number of relatively large Ragstone pieces and hammerscale, implying secondary iron-working in the vicinity.

To the north, feature 131 was a large, steep-sided, sub-rectangular pit which was 2.1 m long and 1.1 m deep (Fig. 6). The primary fill (133) was a grey-brown silty clay c 0.1 m thick, which produced no finds. Above it, fill 132 was a friable orange-brown loamy clay, 0.8 m thick, with a small amount of early and late Iron Age pottery. Above this, fill 125 was similar, again producing a small amount of pottery of mid-late Iron Age date. Fill 125 was ill-defined and covered an area greater than that of the pit, perhaps indicating a spread of occupation debris tipped into and then overflowing a disused storage pit. Feature 123, a shallow and ill-defined gully 0.75 m wide and c 3 m long, lay to the south-west of pit 131. Although undated, it was cut by Phase 3 pit 118 (Fig. 7).

The central zone (Fig. 4)

The western zone appeared to be bounded to the east by ditch 78, later recut as ditch 74 (Fig. 6). Only the lower part of ditch 78, running north-east to south-west, survived. Ditch 78 cut into natural clay 3, was 0.5 m wide and 0.12 m deep, and its upper part was removed by recut 74. The single surviving fill (79) produced mid-late Iron Age pottery. Ditch 78 appears to have been recut on exactly the same line, thus being replaced by ditch 74 which was 2 m wide and 1 m deep, presumably giving some indication of the original dimensions of ditch 78. Primary fill 115, a thin layer of orange-brown silty clay, might indicate that it was open for some time allowing some collapse of the ditch walls before fill 114, a thick layer of grey-brown silty clay, accumulated. It was not clear whether this fill was a deliberate dump, but it appeared capped by a thin layer of orange-brown silty clay (113) which formed the final fill of this ditch. Elsewhere these fills were excavated as a single unit (75).

A second substantial ditch (76/83) running eastward at right-angles from the line of ditch 74 (Figs 6 and 7) for more than 20 m, was a later addition, clearly cutting the fills of ditch 74. It was approximately 1.4 m wide and 0.5 m deep, and its fill (77) was similar to fill 75. Where it was sampled toward the eastern terminal, there appeared to be a more complex sequence of fills, offering some evidence of a recut. Here primary fill 85 was a friable greyish brown silty clay containing a significant amount of early-mid Iron Age pottery, probably indicating contemporaneity with fill 79 of ditch 78. Above it, fill 120 was an orange-brown loamy clay which occupied a restricted area toward the middle of the section and did not entirely seal fill 85. Fill 84 sealed both of the preceding deposits, and its much shallower angle of deposition might indicate a recut or hiatus in deposition. Fill 84 was a greyish brown clay loam, containing an unusual quantity of stone (c 20%). Pottery from this fill was also of early-mid Iron Age date, either suggesting that any recutting of the ditch followed relatively swiftly or that the pottery was residual, deriving from fills of the first ditch.

Toward the eastern end of ditch 76/83 (Figs 6 and 7), ditch terminal 93 appeared to abut its northern edge. Ill-defined and irregular in plan, it was up to c 1.5 m across but only 0.16 m deep. Fill 94 was a grey-brown silty clay containing late Iron Age pottery.

A large but poorly understood feature (89) lay c 4 m to the east of ditch 76/83. It appeared to be a large pit (only a shallow chord was excavated) in excess of 1.2 m long and 0.9 m wide and up to 0.8 m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. The presence of a clay lining (112) possibly suggests that it was utilised for storage. The principal fill (90), a grey-brown silty clay, contained charcoal, struck flint, bone, and late Iron Age pottery. The combination of these items

suggests that fill 89 may have been a rubbish disposal, presumably dumped when the storage pit went out of use. Above it, fill 91 was a patch of yellow-brown silty clay. Further east was evidence of a fossil ground surface. Although not extensively investigated and recorded only in section, layer 35 was an orange-brown clay similar to the natural clay subsoil, but substantial numbers of finds, including flint and mid-late Iron Age pottery suggest that it began accumulating relatively early in the stratigraphic sequence.

Layer 35 was cut by ditch 33 (also seen in KARU Trench 6 as ditch 15; see Figs 3, 5 and 7), a substantial feature 2.4 m wide, 1.1 m deep, and in excess of 22 m long. While not strictly parallel to ditch 74 (Figs 6 and 7) to the west, they were in broad alignment, with ditch 33 running almost due north-south until its southern end curved slightly to the west. As in ditch 76/83, stratigraphic evidence suggests a recut or hiatus in deposition between the second and third fills. Primary fill 67 was a greyish orange silty clay which filled only the eastern part of the observed section. Its nature and location suggests that it was a natural slumping rather than a deliberate dump, implying that the ditch was open for some time before any deliberate deposition took place. It was in part overlain by fill 55, a greyish-brown silty clay with occasional stones c 0.4 m deep. Both fill 67 and fill 55 were subsequently overlain by grey-brown silty clay (66) and by fill 34, a grey-brown silty clay which produced late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery (including one sherd of a Dressel 20 amphora, perhaps a pre-Roman import) alongside presumably residual struck flints.

Just to the south of the southern terminus of ditch 33 lay feature 9, a somewhat amorphous feature c 1.14 m long and a maximum of 0.35 m deep with shallow, sloping sides and an uneven base. This was interpreted either as an ill-defined pit or one element of a segmented ditch system, perhaps associated in some way with ditch 33. A small stakehole (16, fill 17) was noted in the base of this feature and was thus contemporary or earlier in origin. It was 0.12 m in diameter and 0.18 m deep; its fill (17, a stiff red-brown clay) was sealed by fill 10 which itself produced mid-late Iron Age pottery.

Some 1.5 m further east, ditch 57 (probably the same as KARU Trench 6 ditch 13) again cut layer 35. Approximately 1.1 m wide and 0.5 m deep, it was filled by greyish orange silty clay (58).

The eastern zone (Fig. 5)

There were few Iron Age features in this zone, suggesting that it lay outside the main focus of activity during Phase 2. It was here, however, that the features producing exclusively early Iron Age pottery were located, and thus activity in this zone probably predated any other on the site.

There was a small group of linear features in the northern part of the eastern zone, most likely plough marks (41). Their fills appeared to be associated with a discrete deposit of early Iron Age pottery (43), probably representing a single jar. Nearby, the fill of an isolated posthole (80; fill 81) also incorporated a discrete deposit of contemporary pottery (82) which might provide a link between the two features.

Pit or posthole 7 (fills 13, 8) lay immediately east of ditch 57 at the southwestern edge of the excavated area. Round and steep-sided, it was 0.5 m in diameter and 0.29 m deep. The primary fill (13) was a friable brown-grey silty clay with occasional stones (up to 14 mm) and sparse flecks of charcoal. Above fill 13, fill 8 was up to 0.1 m deep, darker in colour but equally stony and contained occasional flecks of reddish clay.

Two small postholes (5, 60) lay to the east of ditch 57, toward the southern extremity of the study area. Although isolated from most features dated to this phase, they seemed to form a related pair. The former (5, fill 6) was circular,

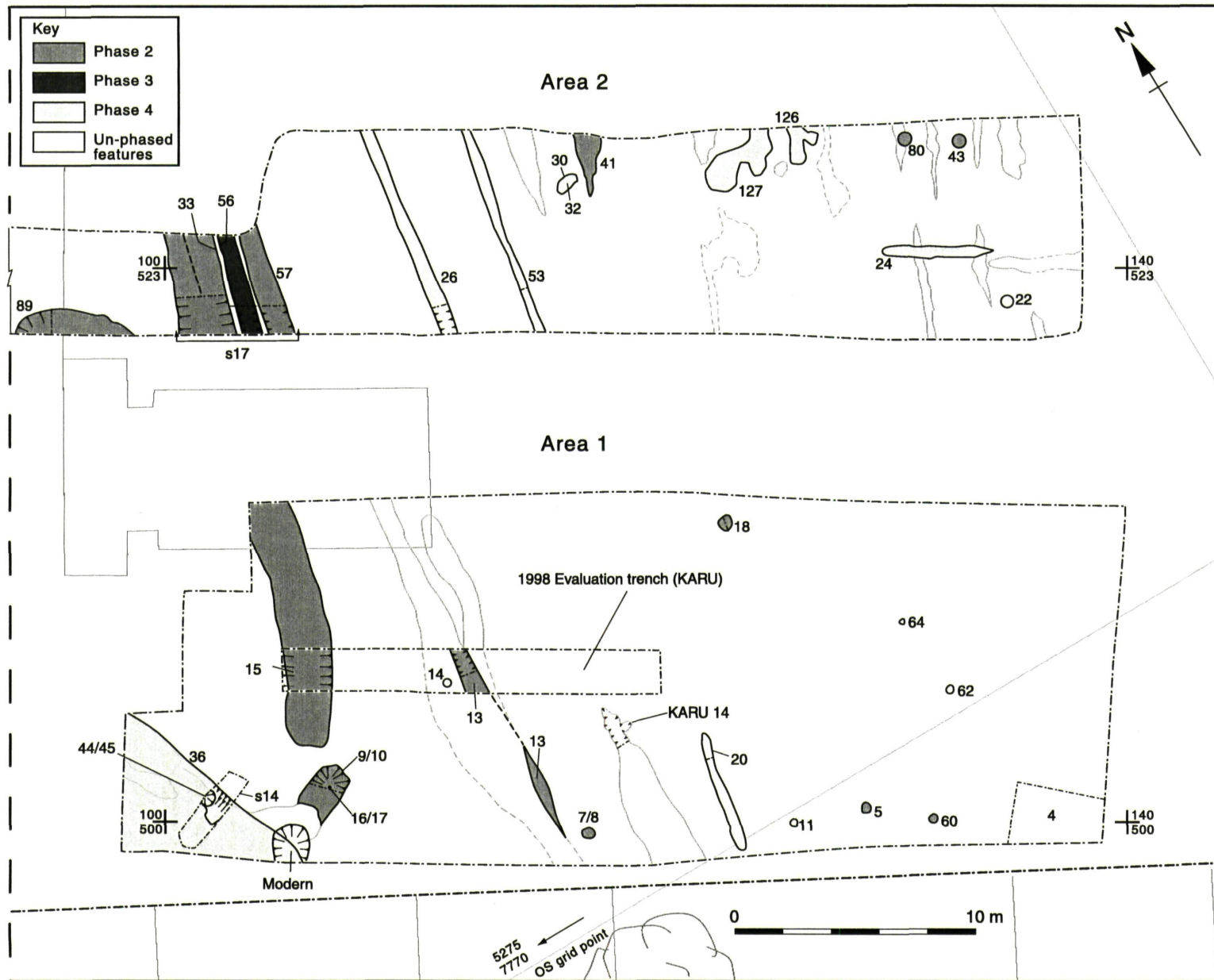


Figure 5: Detailed plan of eastern half of excavated area

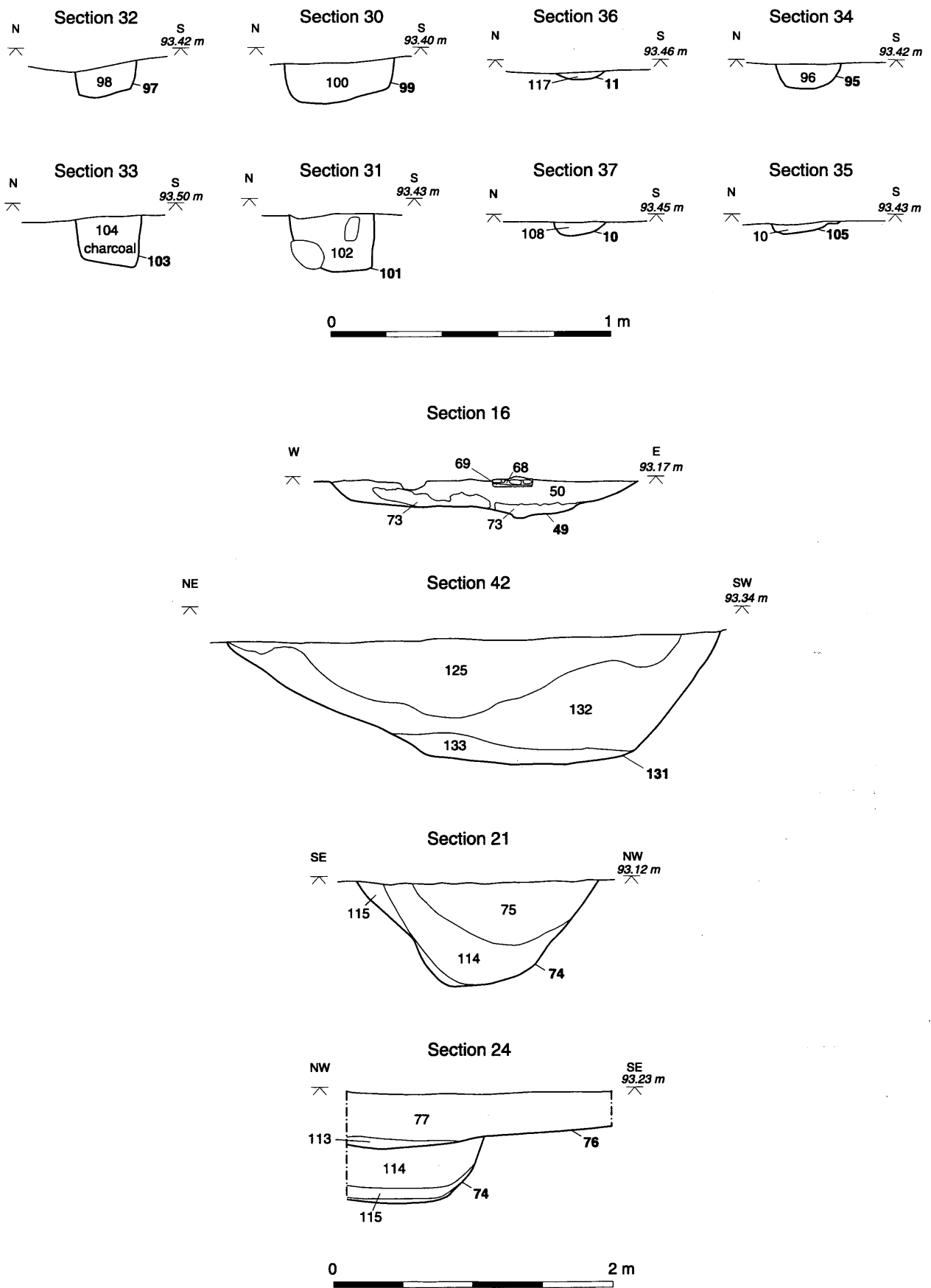


Figure 6: Feature sections including the four-post structures and pits from Phase 2

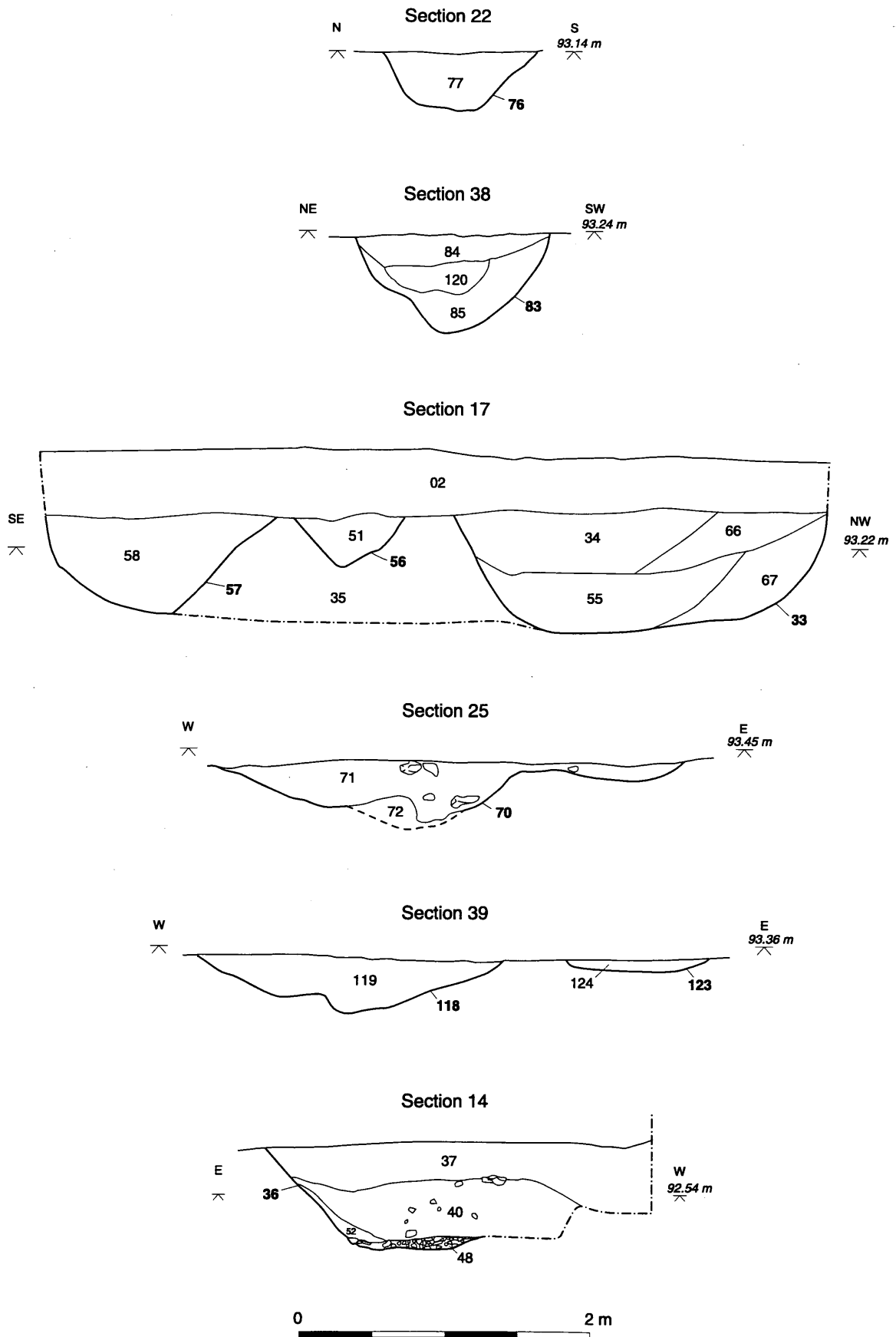


Figure 7: Phase 2 ditch sections (Sections 22, 38 and 17), Phase 3 pit sections (Sections 25 and 39) and the Phase 4 trackway (Section 14)

0.4 m in diameter and c 0.3 m deep, filled by a stony reddish-brown clay loam incorporating fragments of burnt clay (including daub), cinder and burnt flint. Carbonised peas, beans and grain from the fill gave a clear indication of agricultural activity. The latter (60, fill 59) was 0.32 m in diameter and shallower at 0.2 m deep. It was filled by mid light brown silty clay containing charcoal and burnt clay. The pottery recovered from fill 59 was broadly dated to the Iron Age.

Pit 18 (fill 19) lay at the northern edge of Area 1 (Figs 3 and 5). It was a shallow rounded pit 0.13 m deep. The fill (19) was a blackish-brown silty clay loam with small stones, flecks of charcoal, and red (possibly burnt) clay. Environmental samples from this context contained a large number of carbonised peas (*Pisum sativum*) (Robinson, pers. comm.) thought to represent a locally grown crop as well as smaller quantities of spelt, emmer, barley and oats.

Phase 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Dating evidence for Phase 3 points to a period of Romanised activity presumably following on from, but not much different to, that of the preceding Iron Age. In general, the available dating evidence suggests that the site fell into disuse in or by the early 2nd century AD, although occasional fragments of later Roman ceramic wares imply continued activity in the wider vicinity. The few features which were assigned to this phase were concentrated in the north-western part of the excavated area. This was also where activity was concentrated during Phase 2. In particular, ditch 56 may be seen as an insubstantial replacement for ditch 33 (Fig. 7). There was no discernible pattern in the surviving evidence for this phase, except that all pits apart from pit 56 contained charcoal.

Pit 70 (Fig. 7) was the largest feature associated with this phase; somewhat irregular in plan, it was in excess of 3 m in diameter, but only 0.46 m deep. The principal fill (71), was a dark grey-black silty loam which overlay a thin but much lighter layer (72) thought to represent natural agencies mixing fill 71 with the much lighter natural subsoil deposits beneath. Pottery from the fills suggested an early 2nd century date. Almost due north, pit 118 (Fig. 7) was a similar large, shallow feature, 2 m across and 0.46 m deep at its deepest. The single fill, grey to yellow-brown clay loam flecked with charcoal (119), produced mid 1st century pottery; hammerscale from this deposit implies blacksmithing nearby. There is reason to believe that both of these features were later disturbed by agricultural activity, perhaps spreading the upper part of their fills beyond the original cut.

Slightly to the east of pit 70, pit 38 was sub-rectangular, 1.1 m x 0.98 m, and c 0.4 m deep. The single fill (39) was a firm grey-brown silty clay incorporating flecks of charcoal. Flintwork from the fill was presumably residual, as there was also a significant amount of mid-late 1st century pottery recovered. Small fragments of burnt clay and carbonised grain (spelt and oats) might suggest the deposition of domestic rubbish within the pit. To the north-west of pit 70 and close to one of the four-post structures (Plate 1) defined in Phase 2 lay a considerably smaller pit (109). It was 0.7 m in diameter and 0.36 m deep with a fill (110) flecked with charcoal. Pit 109 produced pottery dated to the early 2nd century.

Evidence for Roman activity was bounded to the east by ditch 56, 1.6 m to the east of but on the same alignment as Phase 2 ditch 33 (Fig. 7). Like ditch 33, ditch 56 cut layer 35. It was 0.62 m wide and 0.33 m deep, continuing beyond the confines of Area 2 (Figs 3, 4 and 5) but not visible in Area 1. The fill (51) was a greyish orange silty clay containing Roman pottery.

Phase 4 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Evidence for late activity was almost entirely restricted to the eastern part of both excavated areas. Only one modern feature was noted elsewhere; pit 93 (Phase 2) was cut by a concreted post foundation. To the east, evidence points to late agricultural or horticultural disturbance, with no evidence for medieval activity at the site.

To the south in Area 1 (Figs 3 and 5), postholes 11 (fill 12) (Fig. 6), 62 (fill 61) and 64 (fill 63) were of similar size and depth (c 0.28 m in diameter), most likely representative of modern fence lines. Similarly, ditches 14 (fill 15) and 20 (fill 21), both of which produced modern pottery and clay pipe suggesting a 19th century origin, were interpreted as agricultural trenches or hedge lines. Further to the north in Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), ditches 26 and 53 lay on a similar alignment and may represent the continuation of ditches 14 and 20 after a significant gap. Ditch 24, which ran perpendicular to the majority of other linear features on the site, was also recent in origin and presumably a land boundary.

To the north in Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), pit 22 (fill 23) was modern, producing a range of late ironwork. Pit 30 was a shallow oval feature, 0.7 m east-west, by a maximum of 0.4 m north-south. The partial skeleton of an immature sheep (32) less than one year old was disposed of within the pit and was overlain by a friable grey-brown silty clay (31). The complete non-survival of animal bone from earlier features suggests that this pit was of recent date.

At the extreme western edge of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 4), a large cut feature (36, Fig. 7) was interpreted as a possible sunken trackway. The primary fill (48) was a hard-packed, dense layer of cobbles in a compact greyish red-brown clay matrix, which produced an iron nail. Although it was not traced across the extent of the section investigated, layer 48 was tentatively identified as a road or trackway surface. It was overlain on its north-eastern edge by fill 52, a relatively thin (maximum 0.1 m) layer of grey clay loam which probably accumulated when the track fell into disuse. Both fill 52 and fill 48 were completely sealed by fill 40, a thick (0.4 m) hard-packed layer of reddish brown silty clay containing abundant charcoal, slag, and bone. This was interpreted as deliberate backfill. Fill 40 was cut by a single large circular posthole (44, fill 45), 1.1 m in diameter, and 0.9 m deep. Both fill 40 and posthole fill 45 were sealed by fill 37, a dark greyish brown clay loam producing a mixed range of finds, including residual Iron Age pottery, flint and 18th century glass. This was partly overlain by a dump of angular Ragstone blocks (130) representative of a modern disturbance directly below layer 2.

Deposits 126 and 127, toward the eastern end of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), were both soft brown silty clays restricted in area and irregular in form; both were associated with recent disturbance and were determined to be modern.

Artefactual evidence

Flint

by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark

Introduction

In total, the site produced 18 struck flints and four pieces of burnt unworked flint (Table 1). The raw material is generally a good quality grey-brown gravel-derived flint. Its condition is generally fresh, although several pieces exhibit post-depositional edge damage. None of the flint derived from features dated earlier than the Iron Age and therefore represent disturbance and subsequent re-deposition.

Methodology

The flint assemblage was catalogued according to broad artefact/debitage type. The general condition was noted and dating was attempted where