

Chapter 2: Junction 8 Southbound

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SITE LOCATION

The Junction 8 Southbound (Junction 8S) site was centred at NGR TL 094 079, east of both Hemel Hempstead and the M1 (see Fig. 1.2). The excavation area lay to the north of what was then the Junction 8 slip road and occupied an area of approximately 4.1ha. The local geology comprises clay-with-flints, overlying Upper Chalk (see Fig. 1.3), and the area has a relatively flat topography, with a maximum height of 136m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

SUMMARY (Fig. 2.1)

Activity at Junction 8S can be divided into five broad phases. Flint tools and flint-working debris, mostly dating from the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods, were recovered from the fills of pits and tree-throw holes across the site, suggesting that people were moving through the area and possibly using it for short-term occupation in these periods. Most of this material came from pits dating to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, but some came from features which were otherwise without finds and could therefore be related to Neolithic/early Bronze Age occupation. Late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pits and postholes, some of which formed two distinct clusters in the northern half of the site, indicate settlement during this period. Following the cessation of this activity, the site appears to have been unoccupied until the early Roman period, when two ditches, probably defining a sub-rectangular enclosure extending beyond the limit of excavation, were established in the north-eastern corner of the site. Two large quarry pits, cutting the enclosure ditch and dated to the late 1st-2nd centuries AD, were probably contemporary with a third quarry pit in the south-western corner of the site. A single pit containing middle-late Roman pottery lay in the south-eastern corner of the site, suggesting some level of activity on, or near, the site in this period. Following the end of the Roman period, there is no evidence of activity until the establishment of field boundary ditches in the 19th or early 20th centuries.

NEOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE ACTIVITY (Fig. 2.2)

Summary

The evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age activity suggests flint working and possibly temporary

occupation. Flint tools and working debris from this period were scattered widely over the site, but were mostly residual in later pits and ditches. However, a pit (5081), lying in the south-western part of the site contained cremated animal bone, possibly a token deposit, which produced a late Neolithic radiocarbon date. A second pit (5064), lying in the far south-western corner of the site produced six flint flakes and may also have been of Neolithic or early Bronze Age date. In addition, four pits (5088, 5096, 5172 and 5226) contained burnt unworked flint, but no other finds, and could therefore date to this period.

Late Neolithic pit 5081 (Figs 2.2-3)

Pit 5081 was an isolated feature lying in the southern central part of the site. The pit was sub-circular in plan, with a flattish base and steeply sloping sides. It measured 0.79m in diameter by 0.1m in depth and was filled with a single deposit of clay silt, with frequent inclusions of charcoal flecks, burnt clay and flint. The pit contained a small quantity of burnt animal bone, which could not be identified to species. This material produced a radiocarbon determination (NZA-32714) of 3800-3640 cal BC (95.4% confidence; or 3760-3650 cal BC, 68.2% confidence). In addition, the pit produced pottery and worked flint.

Possible Neolithic and early Bronze Age pits

Pit 5064 (Figs 2.2 and 2.4)

Pit 5064 was sub-circular in plan, measured 0.74m in diameter by 0.54m in depth, and had a U-shaped profile. The pit contained two fills of silty clay, with occasional inclusions of natural flint, and produced six worked flint flakes.

Pits 5088, 5096, 5172 and 5226 (Figs 2.2-4)

The pits were sub-circular, or oval, in plan and averaged 0.95m in diameter by 0.12m in depth. In profile they were bowl- or saucer-shaped and their fills comprised single deposits of clay silt, containing moderate to frequent sub-angular flint. Pits 5088, 5096 and 5172 each produced a single fragment of burnt flint, which in the case of pit 5088 was possibly worked. Pit 5226 produced 12 fragments of burnt unworked flint.

LATE BRONZE AGE-EARLY IRON AGE ACTIVITY (Fig. 2.5)

Summary

Late Bronze Age-early Iron Age activity was largely restricted to two concentrations of pits; pit group 7785 located in the north-western corner of the site, close to the north-western limit of excavation, and pit group 7786 located in the central-eastern part of the site, close to the north-eastern limit of excavation. In addition, isolated pits of this date were scattered across the site. These included

pits 5094 and 5173 in the southern part of the site and pits 5006 and 5009 in the north-eastern part of the site, close to the limit of excavation. A tree-throw hole (5203) in the central southern part of the site also produced late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery. Two four-post structures (5034 and 5189) lay close to the south-eastern limit of excavation. The site also produced two late Bronze Age/early Iron Age unurned and unaccompanied cremation burials (5066 and 5244), one in the south-western corner of the site close to the limit of excavation and the other in the northern-central part of the site.



Fig. 2.1 Junction 8S, plan of all features

Pit group 7785 (Fig. 2.6)

Pit group 7785 comprised a concentration of ten pits (5234, 5236, 5246, 5441, 5446, 5448, 5459, 5461, 5465 and 5474) including a number of inter-cutting features, although some (5234, 5236, 5246 and 5474) were part of a dispersed linear scatter orientated NE-SW. The pits were largely sub-circular or oval in plan, with bowl- or saucer-shaped profiles, and averaged 0.71m in diameter by 0.25m in depth. They were filled with sequences of silty clays, or clay silts, which contained moderate inclusions of sub-angular flint and charcoal flecks. The pit fills

produced 78 sherds of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery, weighing 445g, in flint- and sand-tempered fabrics, along with 30 worked flints and 32 burnt unworked flints.

Pit group 7786 (Fig. 2.7)

A second concentration of eight pits (5021, 5023, 5055, 5106, 5422, 5424, 5426 and 5428) and two tree-throw holes (5345 and 5433) lay in the central part of the site, close to the eastern limit of excavation. This was a more dispersed group, with no inter-cutting features, which formed a linear scatter, aligned NE-



Fig. 2.2 Junction 8S, plan of Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity

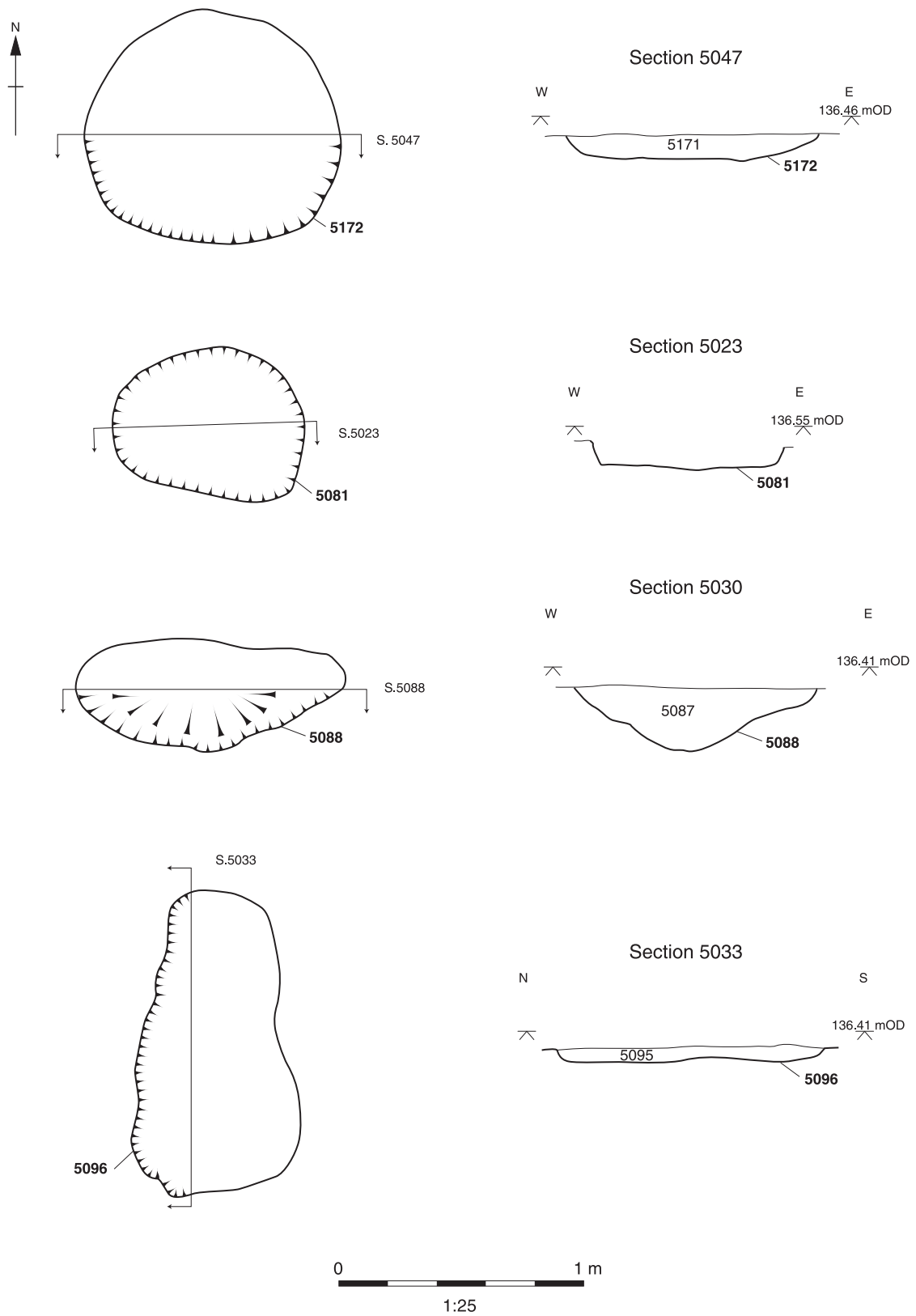


Fig. 2.3 Junction 8S, detail plans and sections of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age pits

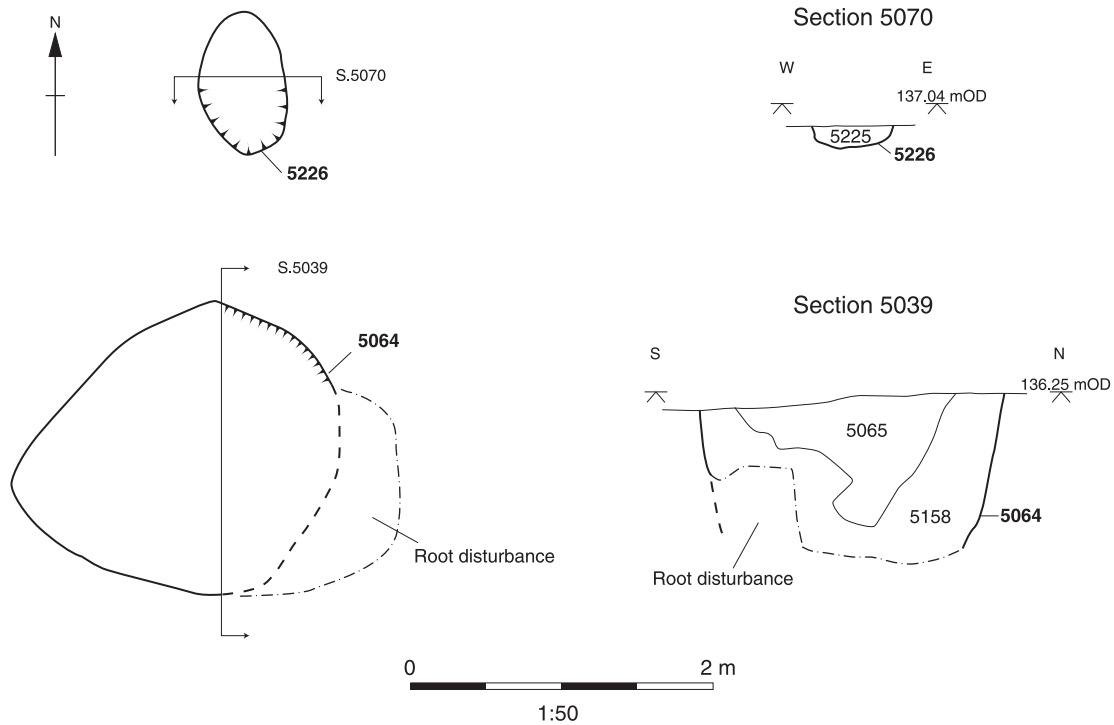


Fig. 2.4 Junction 8S, detail plans and sections of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age pits

SW. These pits were largely oval or sub-circular in plan, with bowl-shaped profiles, and averaged 1.32m in diameter by 0.23m in depth. The pits all contained single fills, mostly comprising silty clays and clay silts, with occasional inclusions of sub-angular flint gravel and charcoal flecks. The pit fills produced 338 sherds of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery, weighing 924g, and three fragments of burnt unworked flint.

A short (3.9m) length of gully (5450) aligned almost east-west was associated with this pit cluster. It was 0.74m wide and 0.24m deep, and was bowl-shaped in profile, having a concave base and steeply sloping sides. The single fill comprised a clay silt with frequent flint fragments, but it contained no finds.

Pits 5094 and 5173, and tree-throw hole 5203 (Fig. 2.5)

Pits 5094 and 5173 were located 2.77m apart in the central-southern part of the site. Pit 5094, the more westerly of the two, was sub-circular in plan, with a concave profile and was 0.68m in diameter and 0.11m deep. The pit contained a single fill of clay silt. Pit 5173 was also sub-circular in plan and had a flat base, with vertical sides. It measured 0.7m in diameter by 0.29m in depth and contained two fills of clay silt, with occasional inclusions of flint fragments and charcoal flecks. The pits produced three sherds of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age

pottery, along with a single fragment of burnt unworked flint from pit 5173.

Tree-throw hole 5203, which lay *c* 28m north of pits 5094 and 5173, was irregular in plan and profile, measuring 3.9m in length by 1.25m in width and 0.56m in depth. The feature contained three fills of silty clay with occasional fragments of flint and charcoal. The fills produced two sherds of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery, weighing 4g, along with two flint flakes and one burnt unworked flint.

Pits 5006 and 5009 (Fig. 2.5)

Pits 5006 and 5009 were situated at the north-eastern limit of the excavation. Pit 5006 was sub-circular in plan and had a flat base, with steeply sloping sides. The pit measured 1.4m in diameter by 0.45m in depth and contained two fills of clay silt, with occasional inclusions of flint fragments. Pit 5009 cut pit 5006 and was sub-circular in plan, and irregular in profile. It was 0.95m in diameter and 0.53m deep and contained three fills of silty clay, with occasional inclusions of flint fragments and occasional charcoal flecks. Pit 5006 produced a single flint blade and a single sherd of late Bronze Age pottery, while pit 5009 contained no finds.

Post-built structures 5034 and 5189 (Figs 2.8-9)

Structure 5034, which lay in the south-eastern corner of the excavation, comprised five postholes

(5035, 5037, 5041, 5042 and 5044) forming a square measuring 4 x 4m, with a single posthole in the centre. The postholes were all sub-circular, measured 0.53m in diameter by 0.12m in depth on average, and had shallow bowl-shaped profiles, suggesting that they had been truncated. Structure 5189 lay in the southern-central part of the excavation, measured 5.5 x 4.5m and was less regular in plan than structure 5504, although it also consisted of five postholes (5190, 5192, 5194, 5196 and 5198), suggesting a sub-rectangular plan with one post in

the centre. The postholes were again sub-circular in plan, with irregular rather than bowl-shaped profiles. They measured 0.43m in diameter by 0.19m in depth on average and contained fills of sandy clay, with frequent inclusions of flint fragments and charcoal flecks. Structure 5034 produced a single unidentified fragment of fired clay, while structure 5189 produced five sherds of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery, weighing 20g, a flint flake and a fragment of burnt unworked flint.

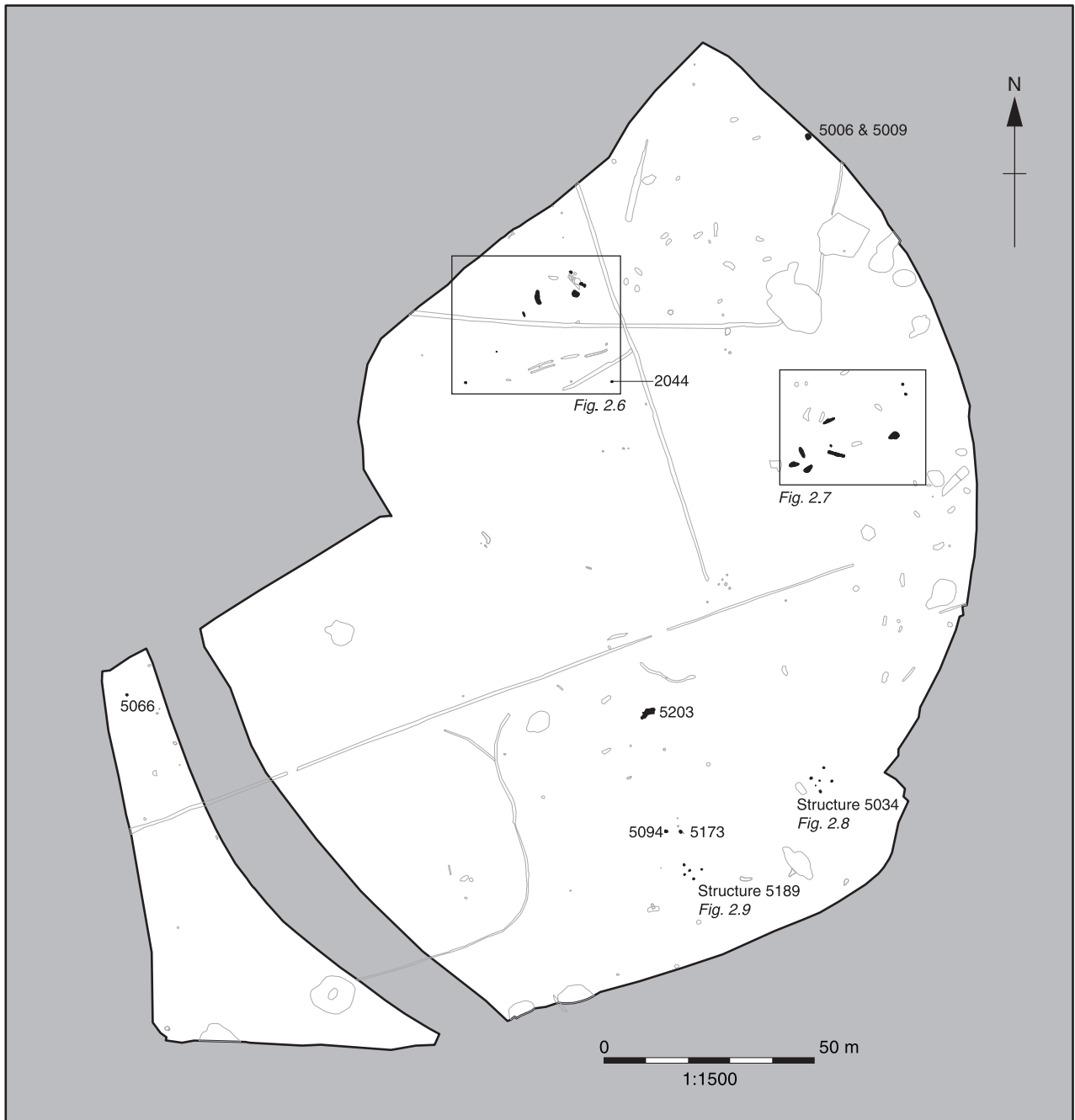
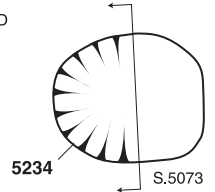
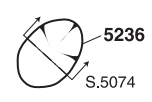
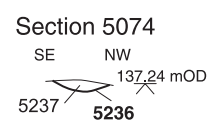
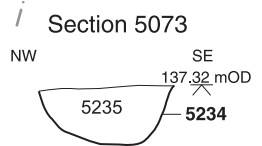
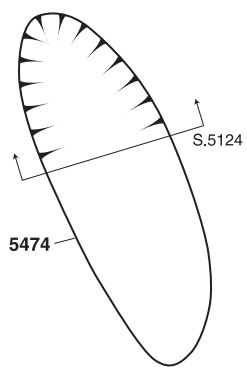
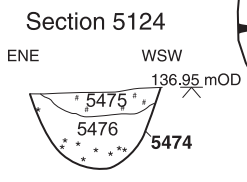
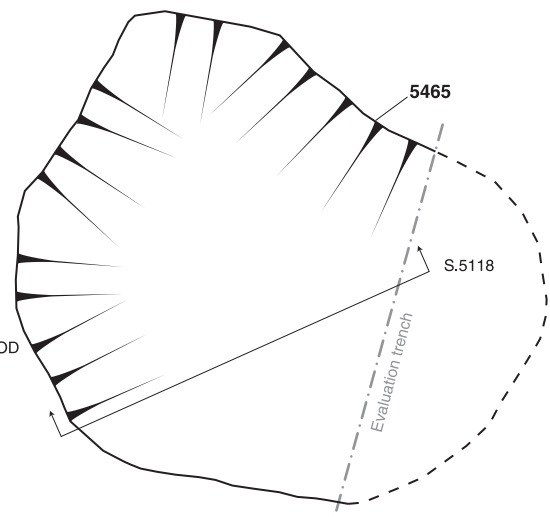
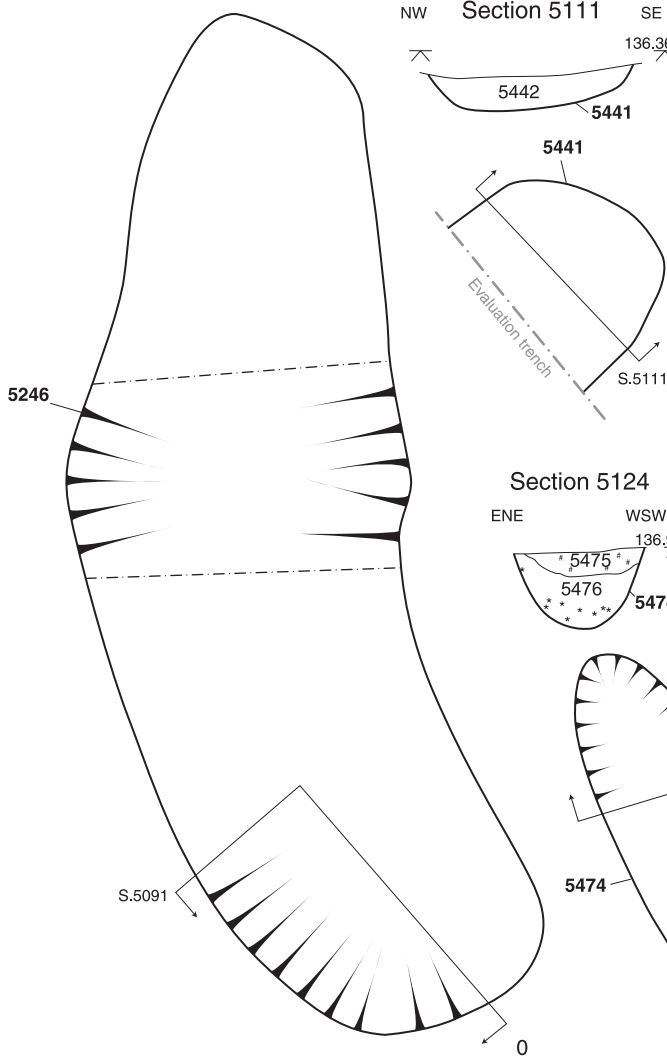
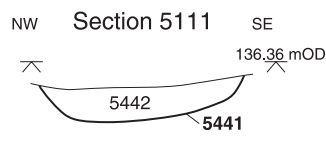
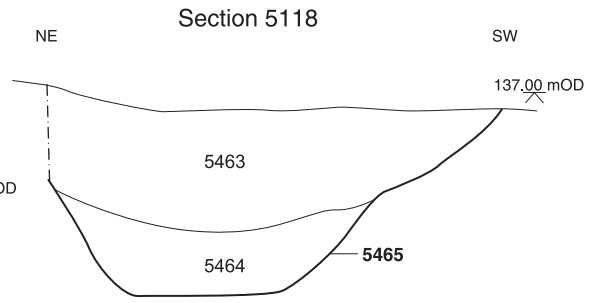
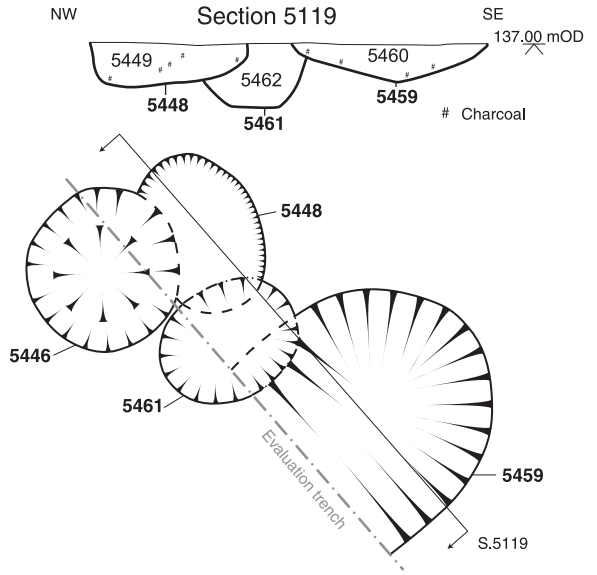
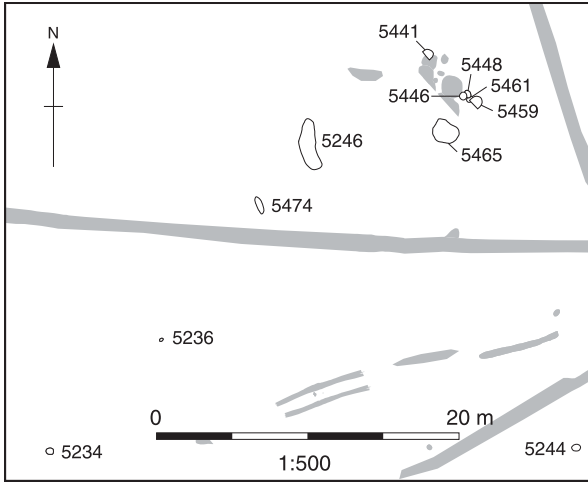


Fig. 2.5 Junction 8S, late Bronze Age-early Iron Age activity

Fig. 2.6 (facing page) Junction 8S, detail plan and sections of pit group 7785



Cremation burials 5066 and 5244 (Figs. 2.5 and 2.10)

Two unurned, unaccompanied cremation burials (5066 and 5244) of late Bronze Age date were contained in sub-circular pits averaging 0.57m in diameter. The cremated bone from these deposits

produced radiocarbon determinations (NZA-32713 and NZA-32715) of 1370-1090 cal BC (95.4% confidence; or 1260-1130 cal BC, 68.2% confidence) and 1130-900 cal BC (95.4% confidence; or 1050-920 cal BC, 68.2% confidence) respectively. No finds were recovered from the fills of either pit.

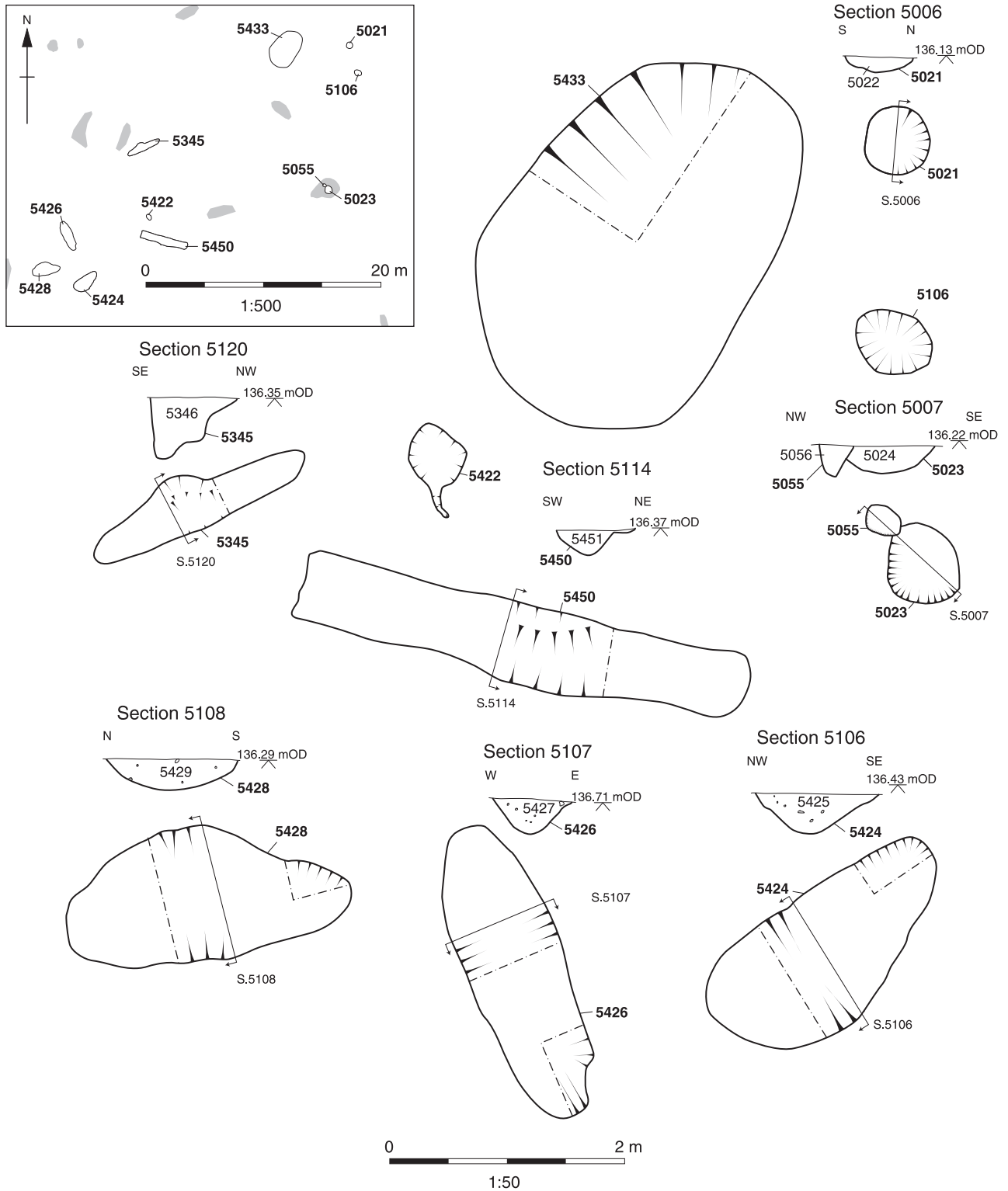


Fig. 2.7 Junction 8S, detail plan and sections of pit group 7786 and gully 5450

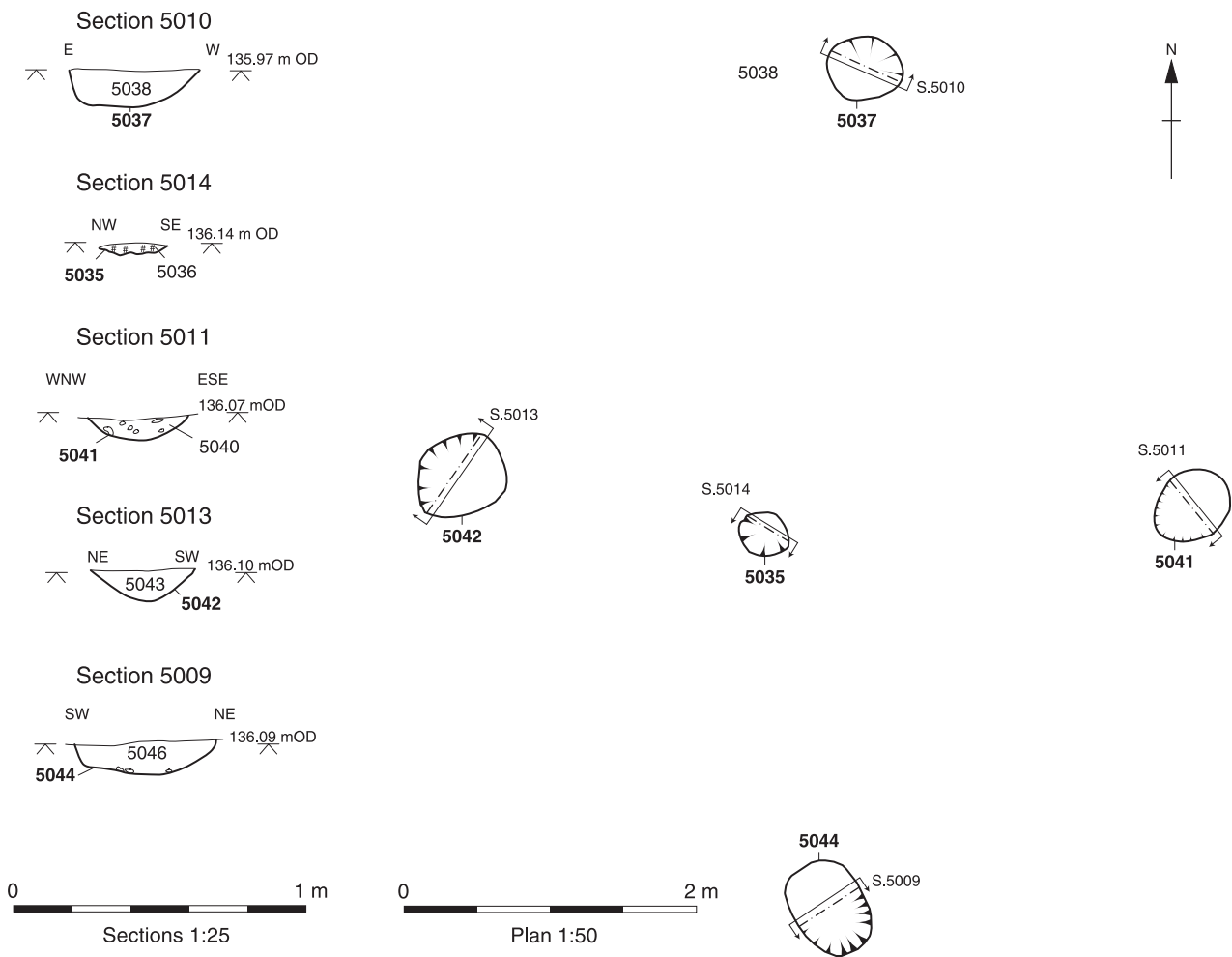


Fig. 2.8 Junction 8S, detail plan and sections of structure 5034

EARLY-MIDDLE ROMAN ACTIVITY (Fig. 2.11)

Summary

During the mid-late 1st century AD part of a substantial rectilinear enclosure (5500) was established in the north-eastern corner of the site. Within the space defined by the enclosure was a NE-SW-orientated linear ditch (5501). However, there was no evidence for occupation or any other kind of Roman activity within the enclosure, a fact that may be due to heavy post-Roman truncation of the soils in this area. Pottery from the fills of enclosure ditches 5500 and 5501 dates from the late Iron Age-early Roman period, suggesting that these features may have gone out of use by the late 1st century AD; however, the assemblages are small and abraded and could therefore be residual. Other probable early-middle Roman features included quarry pit 5155, situated in the south-western corner of the site, and quarry pit 5025, which cut enclosure ditch 5500 in the north-eastern corner of the site. Both quarry pits

produced early-middle Roman pottery. Also probably dating to the early Roman period, on the basis of its similarity in size and shape, was quarry pit 5265, situated 20m south-west of quarry pit 5025, which also cut enclosure ditch 5500.

Enclosure 5500 (Fig. 2.11)

Enclosure 5500 was defined by a rectilinear boundary ditch, which was orientated east-west and returned to the NNE at its eastern end, running beyond the limit of excavation at both ends. The distance from the east/west-aligned boundary to the northern limit of excavation was approximately 40m and from the north-western limit of excavation to the NNE return approximately 95m. It is clear that this boundary ditch formed part of a much larger enclosure running beyond the limits of excavation to the north and west. The ditch was c 0.5m wide on average but in places was up to 1m across, and it varied in depth from approximately 0.1m at its western end to

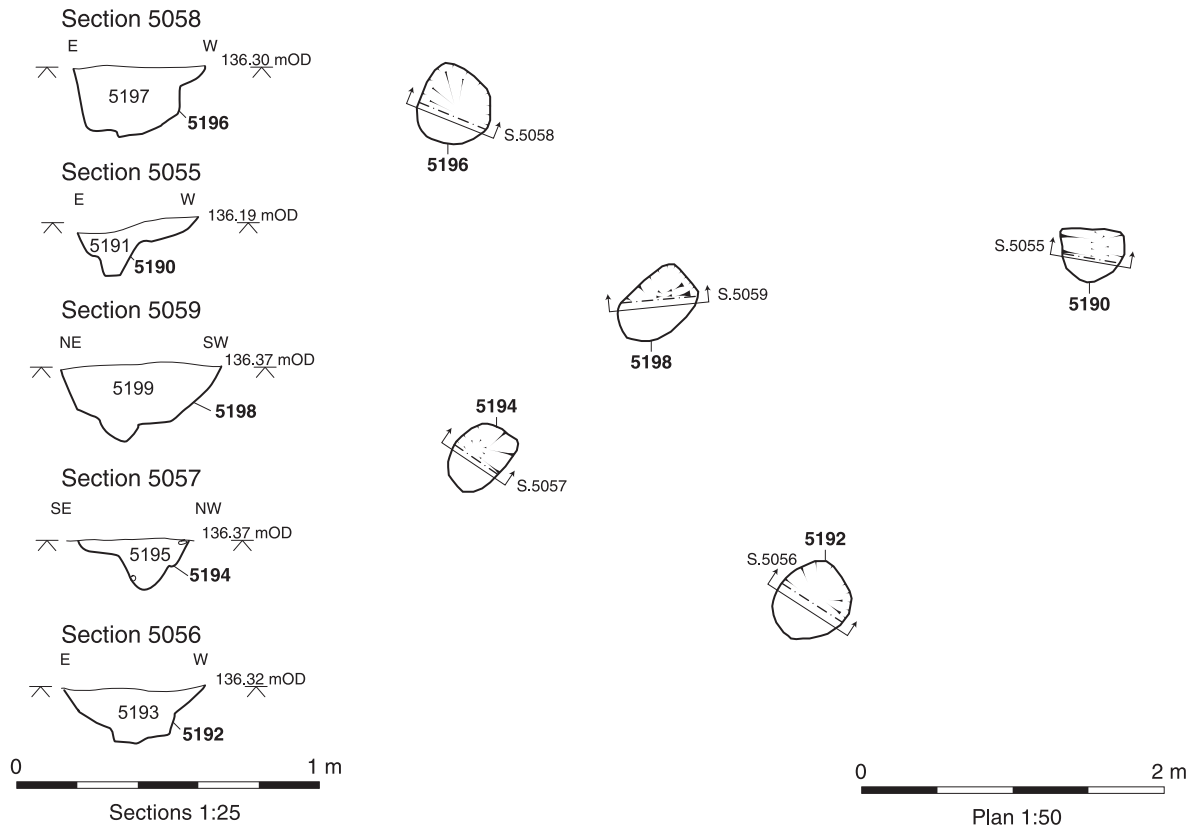


Fig. 2.9 Junction 8S, detail plan and sections of structure 5189

0.28m at its north-eastern end. Similarly, the ditch profile varied from bowl-shaped at the western end to V-shaped at the north-eastern end. No recuts were visible. The single ditch fill comprised clay silt, with frequent inclusions of flint fragments and occasional charcoal flecks. Finds from this fill were scarce, comprising six sherds (14g) of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery and two sherds (7g) of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery, along with four flint flakes and four fragments of burnt unworked flint.

Ditch 5501 (Fig. 2.11)

Within the enclosure, ditch 5501 was aligned NNE-SSW, almost exactly parallel to the eastern side of the enclosure but 46m west of it. At its south-western end the ditch had a rounded terminus some 19m north of the southern side of the enclosure. North of this point it survived for a length of 20m, at which point it apparently petered out, probably as a result of truncation. The maximum width of ditch 5501 was 1.6m and its maximum depth was only 0.13m, giving a very shallow profile with gently sloping sides. The ditch fills comprised silty clay with occasional inclusions of flint fragments and occasional charcoal flecks. The upper fill produced five sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery, weighing just 9g.

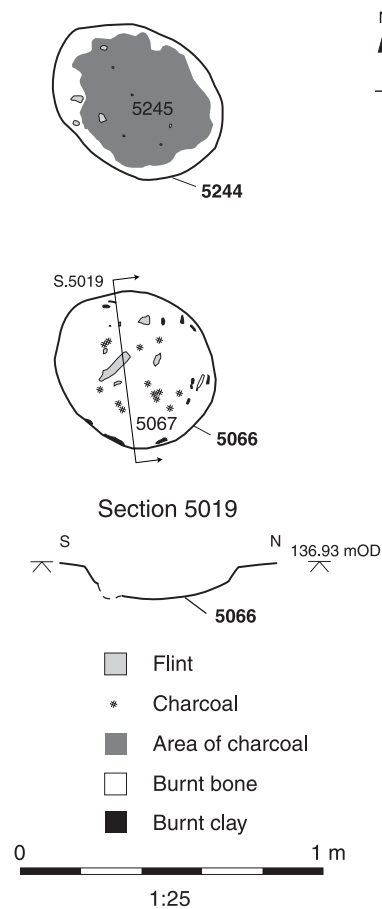


Fig. 2.10 Junction 8S, detail plans of cremation burials 5066 and 5244, and profile of cremation burial 5066

Quarry pits 5025, 5265 and 5155 (Figs 2.11-12)

Quarry pit 5025 was irregular in plan, with a concave base and steeply sloping convex sides. The pit measured *c* 10m across by 2.1m in depth and contained three fills of silty clay, with occasional inclusions of flint fragments. The upper fill produced 50 sherds of early Roman pottery, weighing 151g, along with 90 fragments of brick and tile, weighing 567g, 16 worked flints and 43 fragments of burnt unworked flint.

Quarry pit 5265 was irregular in plan and

measured 17m NW-SE by 10.8m NE-SW. The pit had a concave base and steeply sloping concave sides and was up to 1.8m deep. It contained three fills, all consisting of silty clay, with occasional flint inclusions and charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered from these fills.

Quarry pit 5155 was 6m long, 5.5m wide and 1.3m deep. In profile the pit was irregular and it contained a single fill of clay silt, with occasional inclusions of flint gravel. The fill produced a single tiny fragment of a south Spanish amphora, weighing 1g, and five fragments of animal bone, weighing 5g.



Fig. 2.11 Junction 8S, Roman activity

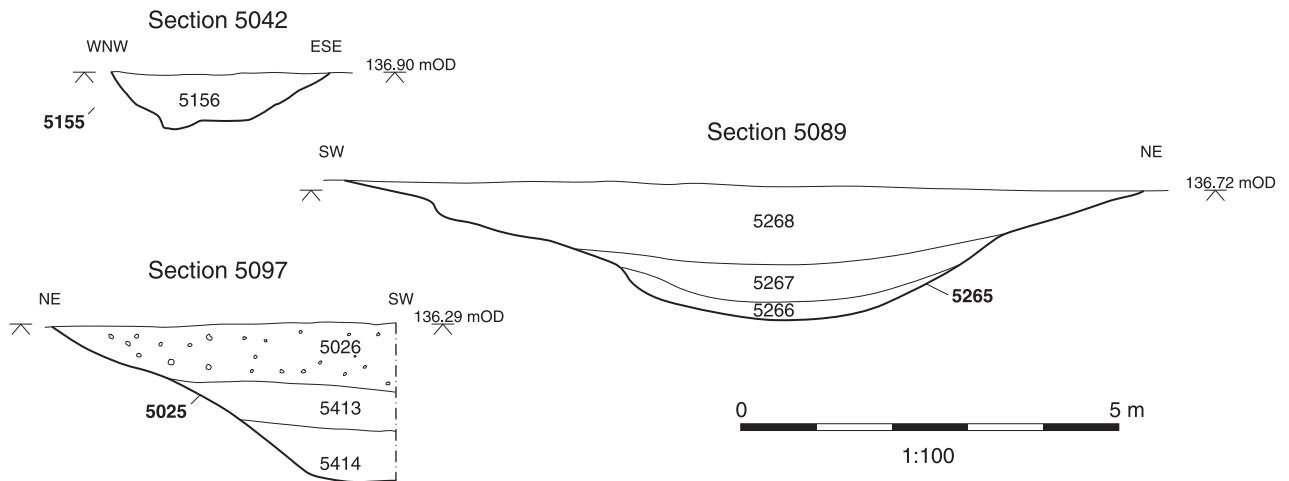


Fig. 2.12 Junction 8S, sections of quarry pits 5025, 5265 and 5155

MIDDLE-LATE ROMAN ACTIVITY (Fig. 2.11)

Pits 5269 and 5270 (Fig. 2.13)

Only two pits (5269 and 5270) situated in the south-eastern corner of the site, close to the edge of excavation, were potentially of middle-late Roman date. Pit 5269 was irregular in plan and measured 1.5m in length by 0.96m in width and was 0.66m deep. The fills comprised silty clay with frequent flint inclusions and produced two sherds (15g) of late Roman pottery, along with seven sherds (12g) of late Bronze Age-early Iron Age pottery and a single flint flake. Pit 5269 was cut by pit 5270, which also had a single fill of silty clay and produced a single fragment of Roman tile.

POST-MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY (Fig. 2.14)

Post-medieval activity comprised two linear field boundary ditches (5502 and 5503) dating to the 19th and early 20th centuries. Ditch 5502 was aligned SW-NE and ran across the centre of the site at a right angle to ditch 5503, which was orientated NW-SE and ran across the northern part of the site.

A quarry pit (5057), measuring 5.1 x 3.2 x 0.75m, was dated to this period by ceramic building material recovered from its single fill. It is also possible that some of the other large quarry pits, assigned to the Roman period on the basis of limited artefactual evidence, were of this much later period, with the associated finds being redeposited.

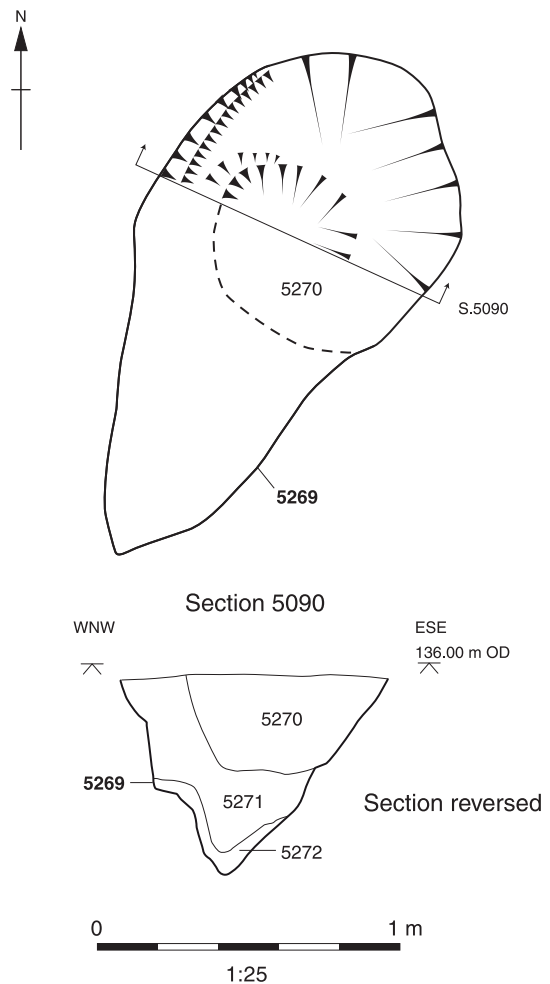


Fig. 2.13 Junction 8S, detail plan and section of pit 5269

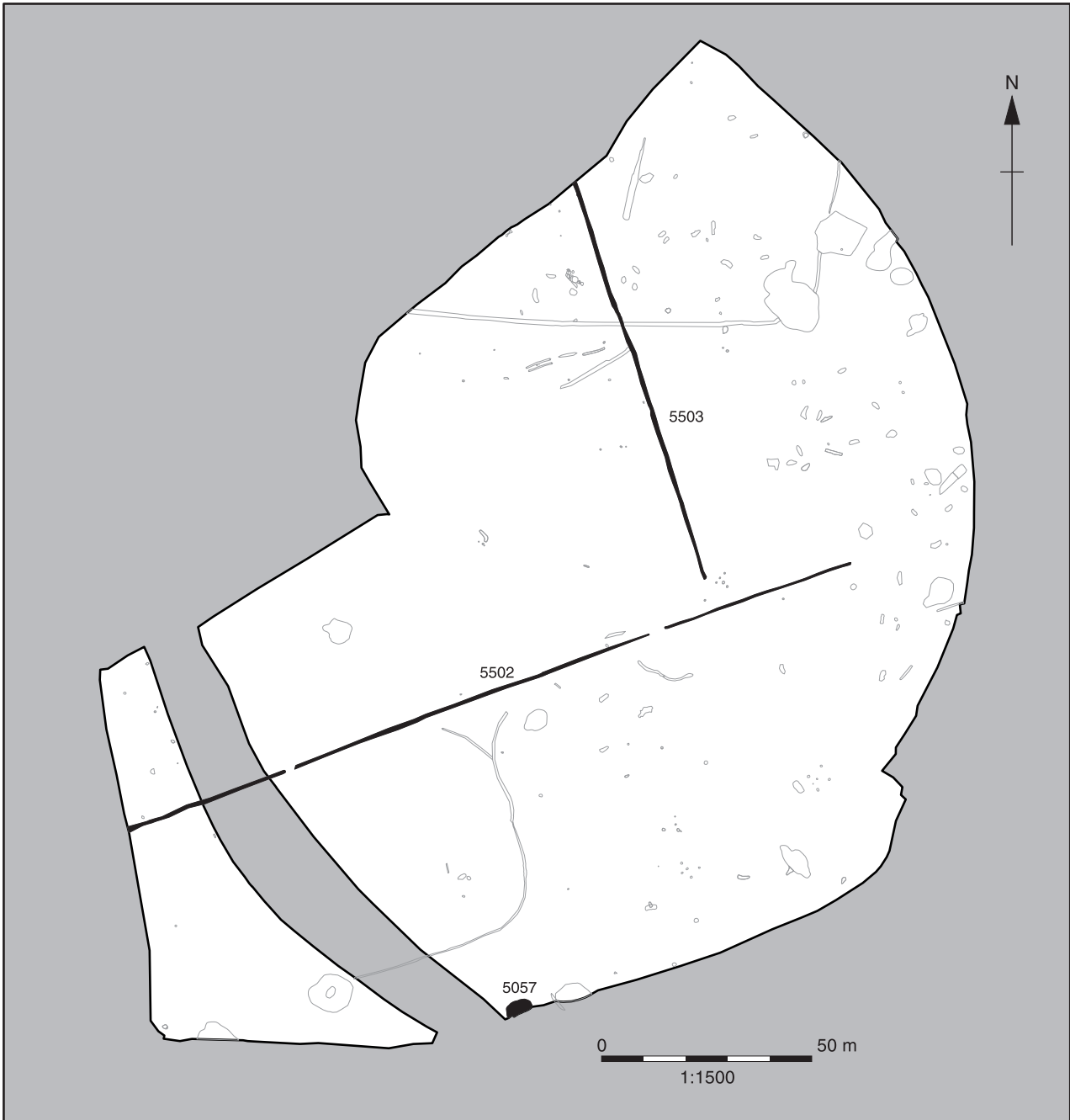


Fig. 2.14 Junction 8S, post-medieval activity

