

CHISLET (KE)

**Highstead Farm II - III
Chislet, Kent**

Archaeological Assessment

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
December 1989**

CHISLET : HIGHSTEAD FARM II - III

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

At the start of December 1989 the second and third phases of an assessment were carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on behalf of Brett Gravel Ltd in advance of gravel extraction. The area assessed lay immediately north and north-west of Highstead Farm, and ran to the north of Ovenden House Farm, in the parish of Chislet, Kent.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies on the crest of the south facing slope of the 100ft gravel terrace, south of the Thanet way and 2 miles south east of Herne Bay. The gravel terrace lies between the Blean Forest to the west and the now silted up Wantsam channel to the east. The Roman road from Canterbury to Reculver forms the west edge of the assessment area.

The Canterbury Archaeological Trust excavated an area of Highstead Village in 1975-6 where they found Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic remains with an Iron-Age hill fort and settlement overlain by Roman field ditches and a possible Anglo-Saxon building. The first phase of the assessment of the area in June 1989 did not locate any major archaeological deposits (OAU 1989). However, the high level of archaeological remains to the south east of the village indicate a high level of settlement activity in the area. An archaeological assessment was deemed necessary to see if this activity had spread north and west of the present village.

SOIL TYPES

The modern ploughsoil was between 0.25m and 0.30m thick. It overlay a yellow very sandy silt loam which had areas of very hard-packed gravel, the top 0.05 - 0.10m of this layer had been disturbed by modern ploughing. The natural gravel was very sandy with a high silt content and was red-brown in colour, with areas of iron and manganese staining.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The strategy was based on a 2% sample of the area for extraction. The sample consisted of thirty-five 30m long and 1.7m wide machine dug trenches arranged in a grid pattern which were supplemented by six smaller trenches.

The ploughsoil and subsoil were machined off except in trenches where features cut into the subsoil

All potential features in the trenches were hand excavated .

FINDS

The finds were very sparse considering the presence of a multi-period site so close to the proposed development area. One piece of medieval tile was recovered from Trench 31 while the gully in Trench 44 contained a dozen small fragments of tile and two flints. The ploughsoil of Trench 29 produced four flints.

In all ten flints were found: two scrapers, two cores, a large tool for an unspecified purpose, and five flakes. They were all very crude, having been struck by repeated blows (on one core) from a large stone hammer. This technique indicates a Late Bronze Age to possibly Early Iron Age date. The largest group of flints was four; three flakes and a core from Trench 29.

ARCHAEOLOGY

There was a difference between the eastern (lighter) and western (darker) parts of the assessment area noted from the aerial photographs, but no significant difference was observed during the assessment.

Field drains were observed in Trenches 41, 50, and 56.

There were three areas of archaeological interest.

Recent gravel quarrying

Trenches 59, 68 and 69 were dug through a rise in the field close to Ovenden House Farm. They appeared to confirm redeposited gravel, corresponding to a depression immediately to the south in the farm paddocks. The farmer commented that he could remember small pits dug for gravel in that area. No artifacts were recovered from the trenches. The gravelly mound probably represents recently disturbed and deposited gravel.

Medieval Enclosures (Fig.3)

Trench 42 contained an area of small gullies, orientated on an East-West and North-South alignment. They were between 0.70m and 1.00m wide and survived from a depth of 0.40m from the modern surface to 0.60m. Trenches excavated to the north and south failed to locate further traces of these features.

Nearby in Trenches 44 and 61 a single gully, 1.00m wide and surviving from 0.20m to 0.44m from the modern surface was aligned north-south. It did not appear to extend south beyond Trench 44 and presumably continued northwards out of the assessment area.

The fill of these features was a red-brown silty sand loam with differing percentages of gravel from 3% to 80%. The gully in Trench 44 contained medieval tile and the features as a whole are probably medieval enclosures which have mostly been destroyed by modern ploughing.

Prehistoric Activity (Fig.4)

Trenches 31 and 65 contained one small gully which ran WNW - ESE. Trenches 31, 65 and 29 each contained a round shallow pit/scoop containing lenses of charcoal or charcoal flecks. These pit/scoops were all very similar. They were 1.00m across and varied in depth from 0.08 to 0.40m deep. They were overlaid by 0.30m of ploughsoil and subsoil. The gully was 0.06 - 0.14 deep. The fill of the gully was a similar to those in Trenches 41 and 61 and the pit/scoops had yellow silt loam fills. The pit/scoops in Trenches 31 and 65 contained charcoal flecks at about 1%, the pit in Trench 29 contained a charcoal lens.

The presence (although undated) of a close group of round pits containing charcoal over an area 100m N-S by 50m, E-W coupled with the close proximity of 4 flints to the pit in Trench 29 suggests an area of prehistoric activity. The presence of charcoal in the pits suggests a domestic nature. The pit/scoop in Trench 65 cuts the gully, indicating that this gully dates from before the pits and could also be of prehistoric origin.

SUMMARY

The proposed extraction area subject to this phase of the assessment contained a small area of probable medieval gullies in the east and a group of pits of probable prehistoric date. The LBA/EIA flints from the area suggest a possible date for these features. There was not as much evidence for manuring of fields in the medieval period as from the first phase of assessment.

Some field drains were found but no drainage pipes as reported in the discovery of the roman bee-hive quern (NAR TR26 NW26).

FINDS

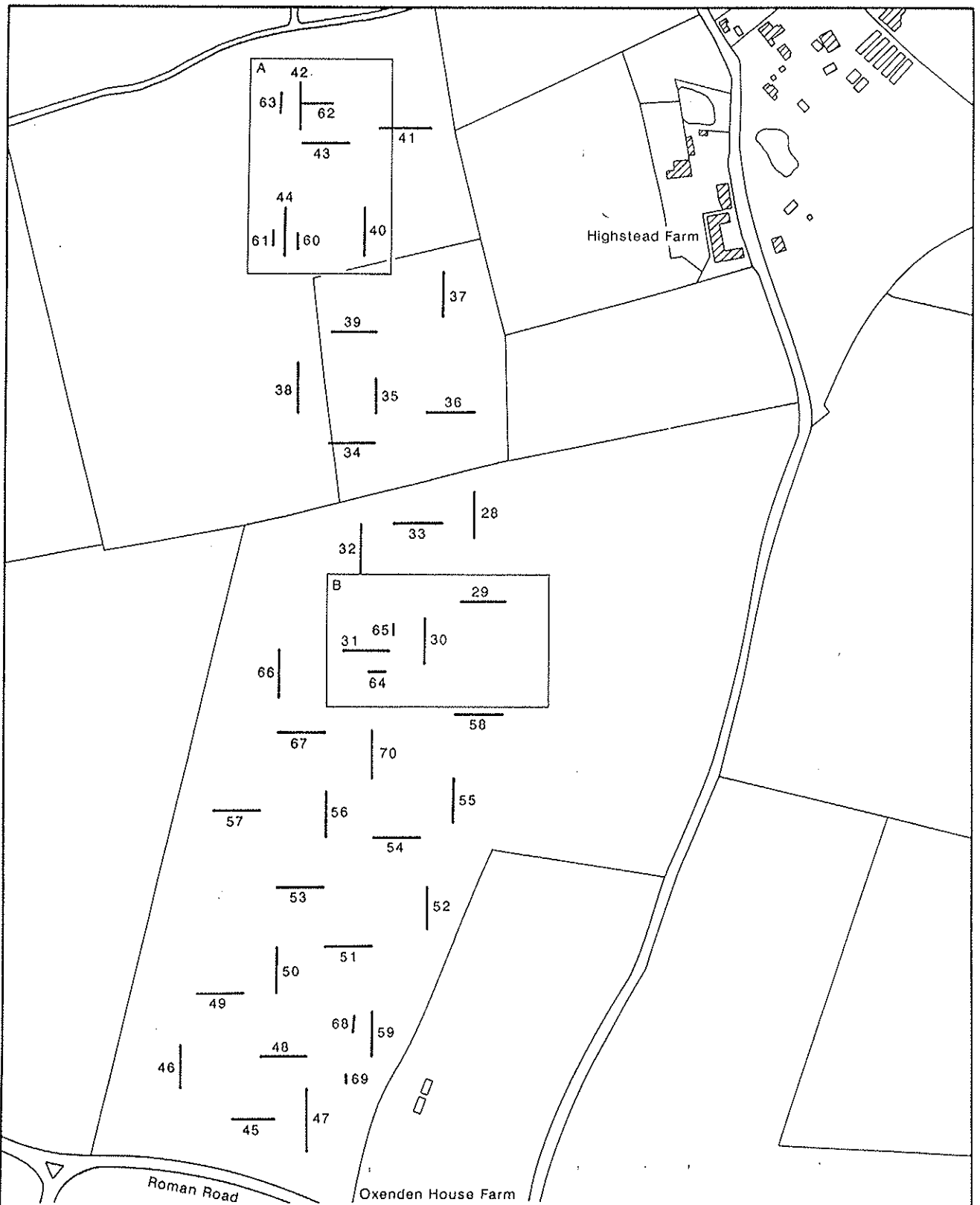
Trench	Ctx	Finds	Remarks
28	1	Flint	
29	1	4 flints	from ploughsoil
31	1	tile	
37	1	Flint	
44	4/A/1	2 flints 12 tiles	from ditch top
55	2	Flint	

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December 1989



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Fig. 1

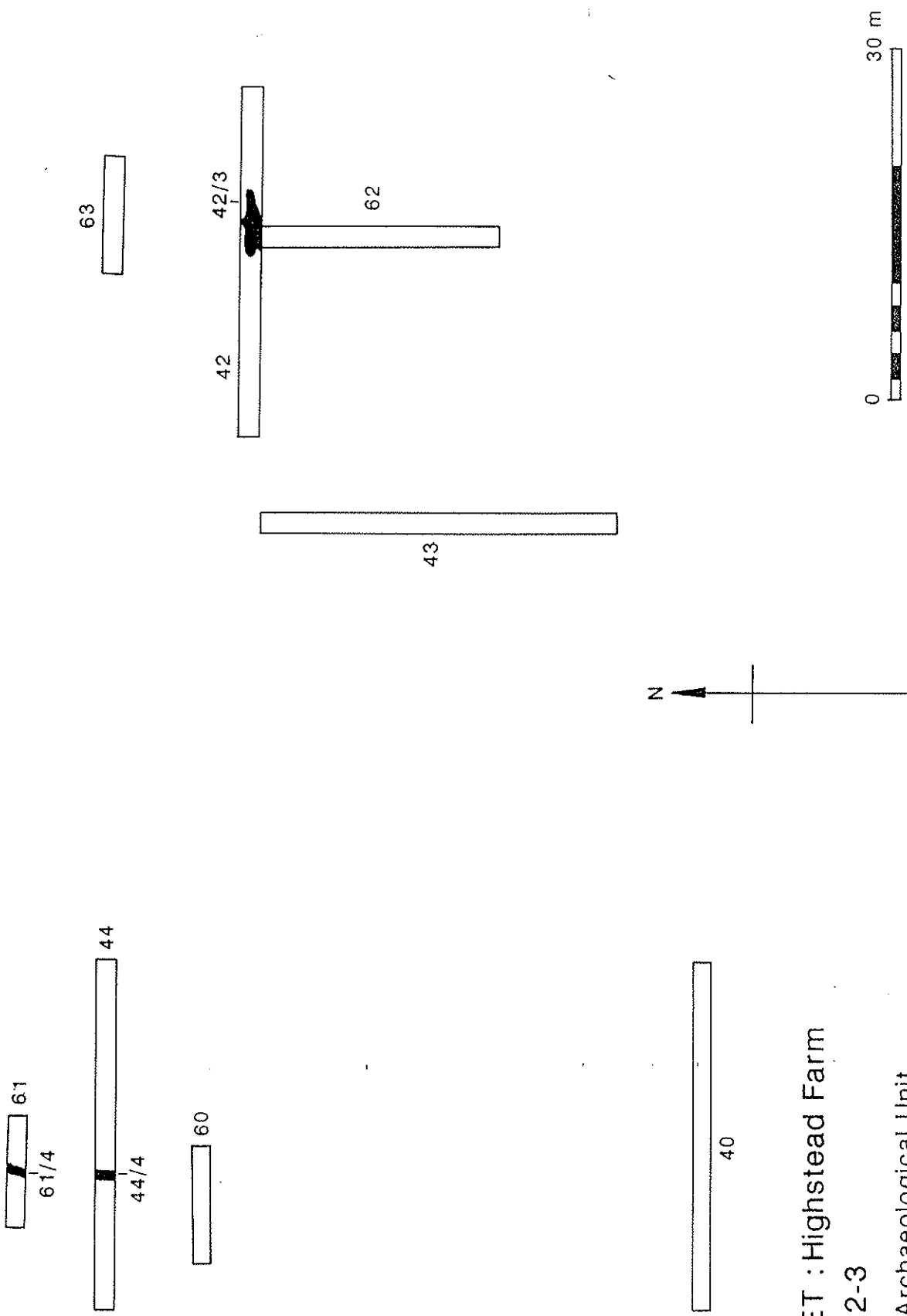


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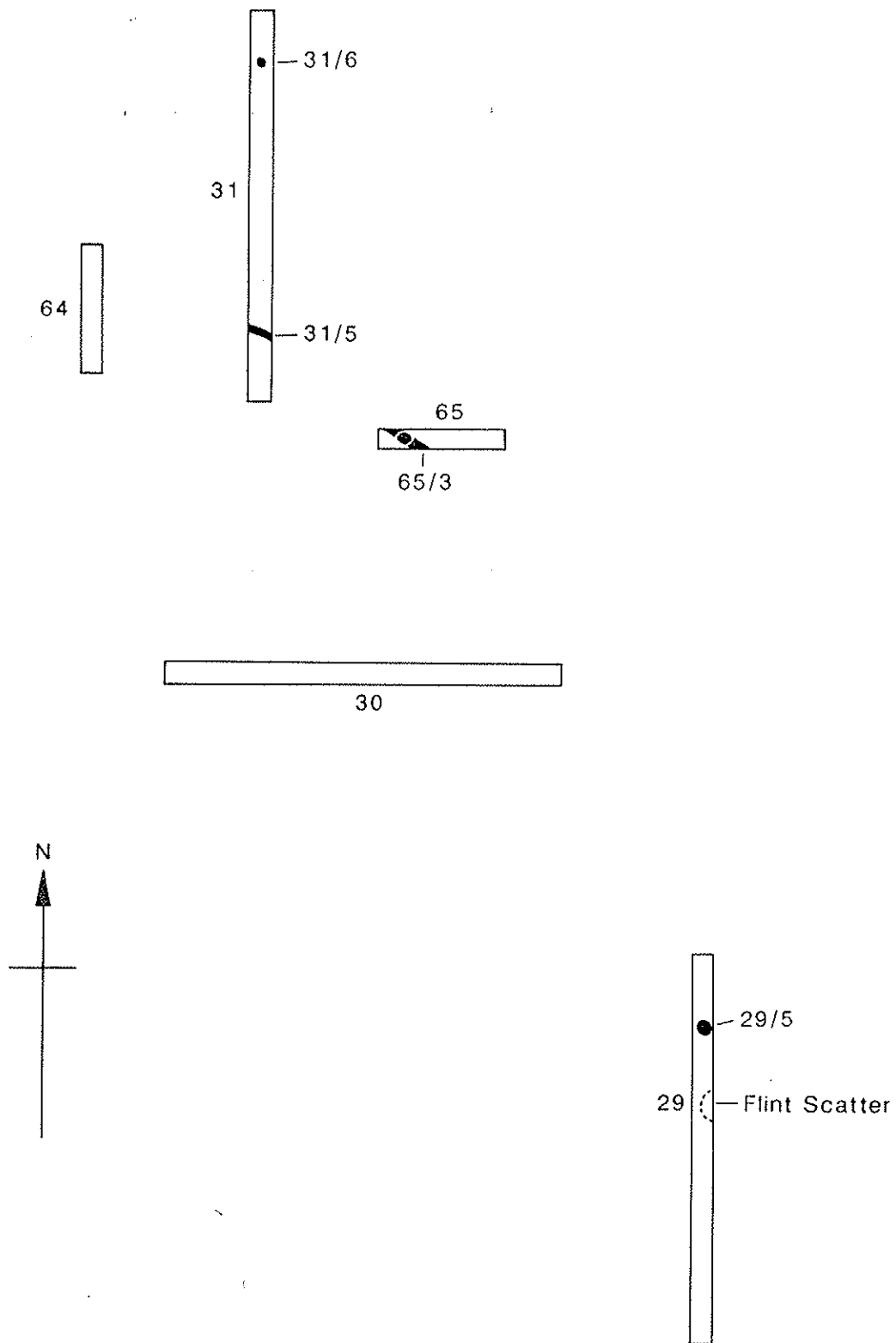
Fig.2

A



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Fig.3



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Fig.4