

**Archaeological Works
on the Thanet Way
Sections 2-4
1995**

ASSESSMENT

Excavations on Sites 7, 8 and 11
Thanet Way Archaeological Works 1995
Assessment

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1. General background

A field survey to identify possible sites of archaeological significance was undertaken by Canterbury Archaeological Trust in advance of the Thanet Way improvement scheme. This work, commissioned by the Department of Heritage Conservation, Kent County Council, focused on the future route of the new 'off-line' section of the upgraded Thanet Way (A299).

Little or no previous formal archaeological work had taken place on this land, most of which is in an area known as the Bogshole Levels. These levels extend in an east-west aligned strip beneath the wooded area of the Blean to the south and above the densely populated coastal plain to the north.

The survey identified fourteen sites of possible archaeological significance. Test-trenching reduced this number to three (7, 8 and 11). Formal excavation on these sites commenced on 2nd May 1995 and was completed on 17th May 1995.

2. Site 7

Site 7 was a hilltop location to the south of South Street, the west of Radfall Road and east of Convict's Wood. It was identified by the exposure, during ploughing, of an extensive concentration of scorched flints interpreted as pot boilers. Subsequent test-trenching exposed a single cut feature which contained pot sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date.

The site lies over heavily reworked London Clay at an altitude of approximately O.D. 35.5 m. and occupies a fine vantage point overlooking the Bogshole Levels to the north.

The excavated area was a square of approximately 3600² m. (60 x 60 m.) lying between TR 613058.19/164540.93, TR 613107.29/164572.61, TR 613089.22/164489.50 and TR 613141.29/164523.17.

2.1 Archaeological summary

An extensive concentration of rubbish pits, consolidation layers and possible post-holes with traces of two hearths and a ditch was located in the north and west of the site. These features were interpreted as the remains of a hilltop settlement, probably part of a farmstead. The presence of substantial quantities of pot sherds and daub supported this view.

Following drawing of a preliminary site plan it was postulated that the remains of a circular hut (diameter approximately 9 m.) surrounded by rubbish pits was represented. However, the severe truncation of features made such an identification problematic.

The settlement was dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (c. 850/750-600 B.C.) on the basis of abundant ceramic evidence.

A smaller concentration of pits situated in the south of the site was predominantly of the same period, but two features yielding only pre-conquest Belgic pottery suggested the existence of a Late Iron Age site to the south of the excavated area.

Several fragments of iron slag and some coke-like material were recovered from the settlement remains together with a substantial quantity of ferruginous nodules which do not occur naturally within Upper London Clay. These may have been imported from the nearby coastal plain as raw material for ironworking.

Diagnostic animal bone and charcoal were also recovered from sealed contexts. Most of this material derived from a single pit (290) which also contained the sherds of an apparently deliberately buried complete vessel. Cow, horse and sheep were represented in the bone assemblage, providing clear evidence that the settlement's economy was based in part on stock-breeding.

Apart from the 'Belgic' sherds all the ceramics recovered from the site were of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age type equivalent to Highstead Period 2. This material is known from many East Kent sites, principal examples being Highstead, Northdown, Monkton Farm and Castle Street, Canterbury (see 2.3 below). Fort Harmorard, Eure, in northern France provides a close continental parallel.

Although often occurring in association with evidence for bronze-working this ceramic type has not previously been found with contemporary evidence for iron-working. The definition of the Highstead Period 2 ceramics as a Bronze Age/Iron Age transition type rests on its occasional occurrence alongside rusticated wares of known Early Iron Age provenance.

The discovery of this pottery with associated iron slag and carbon-datable material is therefore of some importance as it

potentially provides a chronological link between an early (possibly the earliest known) example of iron-working in East Kent and developments in the local ceramic tradition. This in turn could be correlated with evidence from environmental samples relating to the settlement's agricultural economy thus providing information regarding land use at that time.

2.2 The archaeology

2.2.1 The factual data

Following the removal by machine of topsoil and subsoil (combined depth 20-30 cm.) a provisional plan of all features exposed was made. These totalled 109 of which 95 were gravel consolidation spreads, rubbish pits or post-pits, eleven possible post-holes, two hearths and one a ditch (see Fig. 1).

A group of 53 features, including hearths and possible post-holes, was concentrated in the central north area of the site. This was interpreted as the remains of a hilltop settlement, probably a farmstead, of which only the southern part had been exposed. The possible post-holes were clustered in a rough circle (diameter approximately 9 m.) surrounded by rubbish pits and may have represented the remains of a hut (see Fig. 1).

A smaller group of 21 features was concentrated in the central south area. No possible post-holes were apparent.

64 features (a sample of 59 per cent) were excavated and recorded in plan and section at scales of 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. Excavation revealed that most of these features were very shallow (mean depth 15 cm.), probably the combined result of plough action and colluvial erosion. Despite this, a substantial quantity (8.445 kg.) of diagnostic ceramic material was recovered (see 2.3 below).

The ceramic material fell into two distinct categories. One, well represented, derived principally from the feature concentration to the north. A large quantity, including the sherds of a possibly complete vessel, was also recovered from an intercutting pit complex (150, 311, 288, 313, 290) situated 24 m. to the south. This first category was of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age type cognate with the Highstead Period 2 type (see 2.3 below). Such pottery is thought to have been manufactured between c. 850-600 B.C.

The second category was represented by a small assemblage (61 pieces) derived exclusively from two features (207 and 209) in the southern feature concentration. This material is of pre-Roman Belgic type (c. 100 B.C. to c. A.D. 50).

A large linear feature (152), probably a ditch, was identified in the extreme west of the site. This was apparently of north-south alignment although only part of its eastern edge was exposed. Partial excavation produced a small quantity (10 pieces) of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery suggesting the linear feature was contemporary with the hilltop settlement.

A large fragment of iron slag recovered from the primary fill of this feature provided possible evidence for iron-working inside and contemporary with the settlement. This was reinforced by the recovery of further small quantities of iron slag and coke-like material along with Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery from other features. A total of eight pieces of iron slag weighing 66 g. was recovered from the settlement remains.

Substantial quantities of ferruginous nodules were also recovered from the settlement remains. These do not occur naturally in this area and were not observed on Sites 8 and 10. It is possible that these nodules provided raw material for iron-working and were transported from the coastal plain, where they are common. It is in this context that the chief archaeological interest of the site lies. Although a number of sites producing Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery equivalent to Highstead Period 2 type are known in East Kent, none have previously provided evidence for iron working. Associated evidence of bronze working, however, is well represented. (see Macpherson-Grant 1991, 39-41, 48)

In the south-west of the site a large quantity of burnt material suitable for radiocarbon dating was recovered from a 70 cm. deep pit (290) which also contained animal bones and fragments of an apparently complete vessel of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age type. This pit cut another (313) which also appeared to have contained a complete vessel, approximately a third of which survived in the cut-away pit.

The large size of these pots relative to the size of the pits suggested that they may have been deliberately buried. This interpretation was reinforced by the presence of an apparently deliberately laid even band of clean clay (304) sealing pit 290.

A substantial quantity of very small flint fragments was recovered from another intercutting pit complex (138/256) 13 m. to the north. These fragments comprised approximately 50 per cent of the bottom fill (280) of a small hole (281) underlying a pit containing Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery. The size of the flint fragments (10-50 mm.) was identical to the flints used for tempering the great majority of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age sherds found on the site, suggesting that pots were manufactured in the settlement.

Many large fragments of daub were recovered from a small pit (146). These provided strong evidence for a building on the site. They had been subject to intense heat prior to deposition.

A small quantity of pot sherds of Belgic type recovered from two features (207 and 209) in the extreme south of the site provided evidence for Late Iron Age occupation. It is likely that any formal remains associated with this occupation lie to the south of the excavated area.

2.2.2 The stratigraphic potential

The site had suffered severe truncation as a result of plough action and colluvial erosion. This meant that most features exposed were very shallow and no intact horizontal stratification survived. As a consequence it was impossible to establish any relationship between non-intercutting features and the relationship between intercutting features was often problematic.

2.3 The prehistoric pottery

2.3.1 The factual data

Two periods of occupation were identified on the site on the basis of the associated ceramics; a dominant Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (LBA/EIA) component and a minor 'Belgic' element.

The principal Late Bronze/Early Iron Age transition element was represented by contexts containing generally small and (less frequently) medium-sized sherds. There was a marked absence of large sherds. A key feature of the overall LBA/EIA assemblage was its heavily abraded or fragmentary nature with most contexts producing a fairly high proportion of weathered sherds often with severe unifacial/bifacial damage. There were

very few rims or bases in the total assemblage. Only one context (289) produced most of a single abraded but reconstructible fineware bowl. The mixture of numerous weathered sherds and smaller quantities of fresh sherds may indicate a single phase of long term occupation.

Despite the generally poor condition of this assemblage there was sufficient diagnostic material to equate the bulk of the assemblage with Highstead Periods 1-2, i.e. from c. 900 or 850/750-600 B.C.

This initial dating was supported by the similarities of the assemblage with others known to have been manufactured during the LBA/EIA period. These similarities are: a typical combination of firing trends and sherd weathering patterns, the thin-walled nature of most vessels (particularly for sherds representing large-diameter coarseware storage-jars), some bases with an additional skin of profuse flint grits and the presence of perforated slabs and other examples of possible domestic/light industrial-type ceramics (from Contexts 63, 149, 253, 269 and 289).

A total of six perforated ceramic slabs and a fragment of a perforated and footed item were recovered from sealed contexts. This type of perforated slab or plaque (thought to be for domestic or light industrial use) is a recognised but uncommon component of earlier first millennium B.C. assemblages in south-east Britain. The present group represents only the fifth such find in East Kent.

In addition a substantial quantity of calcined flint grits was recovered from a small post-hole-like feature (281) underlying LBA/EIA Pit 138. The grits, which lay in a pocket at the bottom of feature 281, had been crushed to a relatively consistent fine grade (10-50 mm. average). This temper grade is consistent with those employed in the production of LBA/EIA fineware cups, bowls and large jars.

More unexpected and, to date, completely atypical of other contemporary regional assemblages, was the apparent presence of iron slag in association with the LBA/EIA pottery. The overall sherd data suggested recovery from shallow plough-reduced features. However the integrity of the relevant contexts has been verified and there is no reason to suspect contamination from the later and spatially separate 'Belgic' phase of activity.

Potential samples of iron slag were recovered from Contexts 87, 250, 253, 261, 269, 271, and 289. Although most of these contexts contained potsherds of generally low diagnostic potential, unambiguous conjunctions with highly diagnostic ceramic slabs and LBA/EIA coarsewares were established in Contexts 253, 269 and 289. This supplied strong evidence for on-site iron working during the life of the prehistoric settlement.

2.3.2 Quantity and location of the material

The excavation produced a total of 1284 prehistoric sherds (7.510 kg.) in addition to 28 pieces of perforated pottery slabs/ceramic 'kitchen' or light industrial furniture (0.935 kg.).

The combined total of the prehistoric pottery and non-container sherds was 1312 (8.445 kg). Excluding the 'Belgic' material these were subdivided into: 1212 LBA/EIA transition and 28 LBA/EIA perforated pottery slabs.

The material is currently held in storage at Canterbury Archaeological Trust premises.

2.3.3 Statement of potential

In terms of vessel ceramics the contents of this assemblage adds nothing new to the recognised formal range within existing regional LBA/EIA assemblages. However the recovery from the site of fragments of the little understood LBA/EIA perforated ceramic slabs presents an opportunity to undertake a brief comparative study of these and other examples, the results to be incorporated in the report recommended below (see 3.4).

In terms of comparative studies, the marked similarity between the South Street ceramics and those recovered from five other sites on the levels lying north of the Blean is potentially of great archaeological significance. The South Street site, the nearby Radfall Corner site (see 3 below) and sites at Chislet, Beltinge, Eddington Farm and Eddington Tank (Macpherson- Grant 1992, 40-1; 1994 and forthcoming) point towards an extensive settlement of the area during the LBA/EIA period. This substantially increases the archaeological importance of the area in regard to environmental and demographic changes at that time. It is especially significant in view of the poor evidence for any other extensive settlement on these levels before the Late Iron Age. The possible contribution of ceramic

studies to this subject should be outlined in the recommended report.

2.4 The Late Iron Age/'Belgic' pottery

2.4.1 The factual data

A small 'Belgic' assemblage (72 sherds) was derived from contexts 42, 149, 192, 202, 206, 208, 265 and 283. The material comprised only 'Belgic' grog-tempered products. Context 208 produced the only relatively large 'Belgic' group with a number of comb-finished bead-rim and one or two other coarse ware jar forms. The remaining material is represented by small worn sherds (mostly one or two sherds per context) possibly intrusive into LBA/EIA contexts. However, as the above features form a localised group it is perhaps more probable that the LBA/EIA sherds are residual within a group of Late Iron Age features.

There were no associated 'Belgic'/Early Roman types or other intrusive elements within the Late Iron Age assemblage. This, coupled with the overall appearance of the assemblage, suggests that the material pre-dates c. A.D. 75 and probably represents pre-Conquest activity of the first half of the first century.

2.4.2 The quantity and location of the material

A total of 72 'Belgic' sherds was recovered from nine sealed contexts. These are at present held in storage by Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

2.4.3 Statement of potential

The small number of exposed Late Iron Age features and the generally poor condition of the potsherds within them limits the archaeological potential of this material. However it should be noted that their presence indicates pre-Roman Late Iron Age activity in the immediate vicinity of the site. This factor should be taken into account in the event of any further civil engineering work in the area.

2.5 The bone

2.5.1 The factual data

One hundred and thirty-two fragments of animal bone, weighing just over 1 kg. were retrieved from fourteen separate Iron Age

contexts, a number of which are associated with feature 290. The bone consists largely of small fragments from the long bones and mandibles of the major domesticates. It is generally in poor condition and survives in small pieces, with few readily identifiable skeletal elements. There is evidence of the presence of sheep, cow and horse, the latter being represented by several teeth and a fractured metacarpus, which is one of the few bones which can be measured for comparative purposes. The evidence for cattle is limited to small sections of midshafts, a condyle from a metapodial and a few teeth.

2.5.2 Statement of potential

The sample is small and represents the fortuitous survival of material in generally adverse conditions. A small amount of metrical analysis should be undertaken within the wider framework of the ABMAP database of faunal remains from southern England. No further work should be undertaken.

2.6 The iron slag samples

2.6.1 The factual data

Eight fragments of iron slag weighing a total of 66g. were recovered from sealed contexts in association with Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age potsherds. This material is currently held in storage by Canterbury Archaeological Trust. For further discussion of the iron slag see 2.2.1, paragraphs 7 and 8 and 2.3.1, paragraph 5.

2.6.2 Statement of potential

Although the sample is small its occurrence in association with the pottery type discussed above (see 2.3) indicates a possible Early Iron Age date of deposition. Specialist confirmation of the sample's identity as a product of iron working may provide evidence for significantly early, if not the earliest production of iron in the region and possibly nationally. The material is therefore of considerable importance.

2.7 The environmental sample

One sample weighing approximately 50 kg. was taken from the fill (context 289) of pit 290. The fill contained animal bones and fragments of a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age vessel which

may have been deliberately buried. Many of the pot sherds and bone fragments had already been removed from the sample.

The sample consisted of firm yellow-brown clay with occasional small patches and stains of fine charcoal. A 5 kg. subsample was soaked overnight in a hydrogen peroxide solution to break down the clay matrix and then sieved to 500 microns, with any floating material also being retained to 500 microns (the washover).

The washover was small and consisted of small pieces of charcoal (<5 mm.), many fragments of charred cereal chaff and a few charred cereal grains and seeds. A beetle elytron and modern root fibres were also present.

The bulk of the residue consisted of small pieces of daub or burnt clay (mostly <5 mm.), with a few pieces of flint and animal bone, several potsherds, and many small fragments of burnt flint (<5 mm.).

It is recommended that the remainder of the sample is processed as described above to recover charred plant remains. These remains are associated with pottery dating to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition period and their identification will provide data on crop husbandry in the region during the time the site was occupied.

2.8 The carbon sample

The sample comprised charcoal particles and fragments recovered from the fill (289) of pit 290. This fill also contained the sherds of an apparently complete, deliberately buried pot and a number of animal bones. The sample is at present held in cold storage at Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

2.9 Recommendations

In order for the limited but nevertheless significant potential of the site to be realized it is recommended that:

- 1) A bone sample of sufficient size and the carbon sample from pit 290 should undergo radiocarbon dating.
- 2) The environmental sample from pit 290 should be processed for plant macrofossils relating to LBA/EIA agricultural practice.
- 3) The iron slag fragments should receive specialist authentication.
- 4) The bone samples should undergo metrical analysis as recommended in the statement of potential for this material.
- 5) Illustrations of the fineware bowl from pit 290 should be prepared to publication standard.
- 6) A report presenting and analysing the results of 2.9.1, 2.9.2, 2.9.3 and 2.9.4. and incorporating the results of the ceramic studies discussed above (see 2.4.3) should be compiled with appropriate illustrations. If the evidence for iron working is proved to be significantly early the report should be submitted for publication in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society. If this proves not to be the case publication in the Canterbury Archaeological Trust Annual Report and *Archaeologica Cantiana* is recommended.

3. Site 8

Site 8 is located approximately 50 m. north-east of Radfall Corner and approximately 100 m. south-east of the intersection of South Street and Chestfield Road. It was identified by the exposure by plough of a moderate quantity of burnt flints and a small number of purposively struck flints.

Subsequent test-trenching exposed part of a buried hollow way with an apparently deliberately laid gravel base. A substantial quantity of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pot sherds was recovered from the reworked London Clay overlying this gravel.

The site lies on the lower west facing slope of Shrub Hill between altitudes on 22.50 m. to the north-west and O.D. 24.00 to the south-east.

The excavated area was a square of approximately 900²m. (30 m. x 30 m.) lying between TR 613347.876/164791.855, TR 613396.463/ 164812.687, TR 613395.708/164770.267 and TR 613417.295/ 164791.099.

3.1 Archaeological summary

This excavation exposed an early example of a trackway which had apparently been deliberately surfaced with gravel. The trackway was of two phases, the later of which bore clear wear marks consistent with cartwheel ruts or similar. Adjacent to the north was a roughly circular cluster of post-holes containing Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pot sherds, interpreted as the remains of a circular hut approximately 8 m. in diameter.

A substantial spread of burnt daub, scorched flints (probably potboilers), charcoal and pot sherds covered the trackway in the area adjacent to the post-hole cluster. This was probably domestic rubbish mixed with demolition debris from the circular hut. Its position and stratigraphic relationship suggested that the trackway and hut were contemporary. They were dated ceramically to c. 1000-600 B.C.

3.2 The archaeology

3.2.1 The factual data

Following the removal by machine of topsoil and subsoil (combined depth 15-25 cm.) a provisional plan of all features exposed was compiled. These totalled 26 of which 22 were post-holes, two hollow ways, one a small pit and one a spread of daub within a hollow way. All excavated features were recorded in plan and section at scales of 1:20 and 1:10 respectively.

Excavation revealed that severe truncation had taken place on this site (the mean depth of the 19 excavated features was approximately 15 cm.). This was probably a result of plough action. Interestingly there was no evidence of colluvial downwash on this low lying site. This suggests that Shrub Hill, the top of which is still partly wooded, was probably

not cleared and tilled in antiquity, activities which usually initiate downwash.

A forked linear feature (27 and 43) cutting across the site on a south-east alignment was exposed. It was between 1.75 m. and 2.6 m. wide and 8 cm. to 15 cm. deep. A 2-5 m. thick spread of gravel (57) extended along the entire length of this feature which was interpreted as prehistoric trackway leading to the higher ground of the Blean. This gravel spread represents a very early example of deliberate consolidation and perhaps suggests the trackway was an important route.

In the central west area of the site the trackway divided into two, one section (27) curving away gradually to the north-west, the other (43) maintaining a south-east alignment.

Wear marks in the gravel spread where the two sections joined indicated that the curved section along with the north-west continuation comprised the original line of the trackway (see Fig. 2). These wear marks were consistent with cartwheel ruts or similar, taking the form of two grooves, each running along the inside edge of the trackway. An axle width of approximately 1.75 m. was suggested.

A cluster of 15 post-holes (see Fig. 2) was exposed 2-5 m. north of the trackway which described a rough circle (diameter approximately 8 m.). This was interpreted as the remains of a prehistoric hut dated by associated ceramic material to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (1000-600 B.C.)

An 8 cm. thick spread of scorched daub (54) overlay the wear marks described above in the vicinity of the post-hole cluster. This deposit contained large quantities of charcoal and scorched flints, probably potboilers, as well as pot sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (Highstead Period 2) type. It is possible that this material derived from the nearby hut and if so it was probably demolition debris mixed with domestic rubbish. This would suggest that the trackway was contemporary with the hut.

3.2.2 The stratigraphic potential

In view of the severe degree of truncation, the high percentage (73 per cent) of features excavated and the relative confidence with which those features can be identified, the limited but significant stratigraphic potential of this site can be said to have been realised during the present work.

3.3 The prehistoric pottery

3.3.1 The factual data

The ceramics sherds from this small site were recovered from only ten contexts of which two (42 and 56) produced substantial assemblages. The material was largely represented by small and heavily abraded material, the bulk consisting of bodysherds. Only one badly preserved coarseware rim was recovered. The latter, and the associated fabric characteristics are similar to the LBA/EIA assemblage from South Street although the material was of slightly coarser appearance and may be typologically closer to Late Bronze Age Deverel-Rimbury-type assemblages. However there was insufficient evidence to sustain an authoritative claim for this earlier date and a general early first millennium B.C. bracket (c. 1000-600 B.C.) is therefore suggested.

3.3.2 The quantity and location of the material

204 potsherds weighing 1.906 kg. were recovered and are currently held by Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

3.3.3 Statement of potential

As for Site 8 vessel ceramics (see 2.4.3).

3.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that a brief report outlining the results described should be prepared for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust annual report. It is further recommended that this should be submitted for publication to *Achaeologica Cantiana*
4. Site 11.

Site 11 (NGR TR 16336610) is situated on the levels below the Blean to the south and above the coastal plain to the north. It is approximately 2km inland of the north Kent coast with Greenhill on the outskirts of Herne Bay clearly visible to the south. The site lies approximately 380m to the west of Plenty Brook near the highest point of a slight rise (O.D 16 - 17m) in the essentially flat land of the levels. The top soil is heavy plough-turned clay loam (depth 25-40cm) overlying London Clay and is very poorly drained in its natural state. It is thought to have been first cultivated in modern times during the Second World War.

The site's archaeological significance was first indicated by surface finds of Belgic and Roman ceramics during initial field walking. The material was scattered over an area of about 70m on the southern side of Owl's Hatch Road. (Parfitt and Allen 1990,11). Evaluation trenching undertaken in 1991 supplied further stratigraphic and ceramic evidence for a Romano-British settlement on the site.

4.1 Archaeological summary

Two rectilinear areas were machine stripped 50m apart to the depth of natural clay or significant archaeological deposits (0.25m-0.40m). The stripped areas were located on the line of the proposed carriageway south of and parallel to Owl's Hatch Road. The west area was 2700²m and measured 90m north-south and 30m east-west. The east area was a north-south aligned square of approximately 30²m (5.5m x 5.5m). 276 Romano-British ceramic fragments and a small number of medieval and post-Medieval potsherds were recovered from the soil removed during stripping.

The excavation revealed a concentration of 62 features in the west area of which 48 (78%) were excavated in half section. These included 38 probable rubbish pits, two hearth pits, a possible quarry hole, six possible post holes, two ditches and a gully. The excavated features were drawn in section and plan at scales of 1:10 and 1:20 respectively. A large quantity of Early Romano-British ceramic sherds (approximately 1850) and 8 probably pre-Roman Late Iron Age sherds were recovered from associated sealed deposits.

A total of three features (possibly hearth pits) exposed in the east area contained no dateable material. However in view of their proximity to the western feature concentration and the site's apparently single period of occupation they were assumed to be of Romano-British date.

Specialist examination of the ceramics suggested the settlement had its origins early in the Romano-British period and was occupied for approximately two hundred and fifty years (c.50/100 A.D.-c.300 A.D.)

In view of the site's rural and probably isolated position on infertile and ill-drained land it appeared that part of a relatively poor agricultural settlement was represented. Evidence for agriculture was provided by several quern stone fragments recovered from associated sealed deposits. No flint cobbling, substantial ditches or building debris in the form of brick or mortar fragments was exposed although a very small

quantity of tile was present. This evidence was consistent with a small un-enclosed farmstead, the construction being principally of timber. The increased concentration of features in the north of the stripped area probably indicated that the main body of the settlement was situated north of Owl's Hatch Road.

All features were shallow (maximum depth 0.40m), probably as a result of modern plough attrition. The site was intersected by five apparently recent land-drains showing at least three separate drainage systems to have been installed in this area.

4.2 The archaeology.

Part of a roughly east-west aligned gully (87) was exposed for a distance of 7 metres from its eastern terminal in the west area. It was approximately 0.20m. deep with steeply sloping sides and slightly rounded base. Its fill was a light grey-brown clay containing oyster shells, some small fragments of Mayen lava-stone quern and 57 sherds of late first to second century pot- sherds.

Two intercutting ditches (59/85 and 83) were exposed near the central part of the west area. They were discontinuous with both ends of each terminating within the area of excavation. The earliest, ditch 59/85, was straight cut and 11.70m long with rounded terminals. It varied between 1.10m. to 2.10m. in width and 0.26m. to 0.36m. in depth, had sloping sides and a slightly rounded base. Its fill was a series of grey and brown clay deposits containing occasional carbon specks and a large quantity of late first to second century Romano-British potsherds. Occasional pieces of animal bone, oyster shell, Roman tile and part of a bronze pin were also present.

Ditch 83 appeared to represent a subsequent replacement or re-cut of ditch 59/85. It was curved in plan with a total length of 9.3m. From its rounded east terminal the ditch ran down the southern side of the earlier feature and then curved to the north-west, cutting its predecessor and ending in a rounded terminal.

The width and depth of ditch 83 varied between 1.25m to 2.15m. and 0.37m. to 0.47m respectively. It had sloping sides and a rounded base with a fill consisting of slightly carbon-specked grey-brown clay. It contained 270 late first to early second centuries pot-sherds including a substantial fragment from a large storage jar with a heavy rolled rim and the base of Samian vessel.

The potsherd-rich fills of both ditches suggested a habitation lay close by but their function was not determined. Their limited length appeared to preclude a use for drainage and they did not appear to delimit any particular group of features. It is possible they were used to retain rain water. However, as the original ditch was replaced in virtually the same position by the other it was clear that, whatever their function, they met a long-standing requirement.

Several excavated pits were of considerable size; two (81,114) being more than 3m long. The shape and fills of these features were generally consistent with rubbish pits although a shallow but extensive pit (112) located on the north side of the western area appeared to be an exception. This pit was not fully exposed (perhaps half lay outside the excavated area) but it appeared to be oval or circular in plan measuring a minimum of 4.50m. east-west and 2.40m north-south. It was between 0.34m. and 0.40m. deep with sloping sides and had an undulating base. Its fill was grey-brown clay containing occasional small carbon fragments and large quantities (269 pieces) of late first to second century potsherds. It also contained a corroded and illegible coin, possibly of similar date, and two fragments of Roman tile.

The purpose of pit 112 was not certain but its undulating base may indicate it resulted from small-scale clay quarrying. Its relative shallowness argued against a use as a dew-pond or water-hole. It was cut on its eastern side by pit 61, the carbon-rich fill of which contained approximately 200 second century pot-sherds.

Six small sub-circular features (39, 47, 89, 101, 103 and 119) had the appearance of truncated post holes. These were not thought to have formed part of a building as they were widely dispersed across the area. Features 39, 103 and 119 were east-west aligned and feature 103 was directly north of feature 101. However, in the absence of any other evidence this rectilinear arrangement was not considered to be significant.

The possible post-holes ranged from 0.20m. to 0.59m. in diameter and from 0.04m. to 0.11m. in depth and were filled with grey and brown clays. Feature 103 contained a large lump of sandstone, perhaps a quern fragment re-used as post packing. 39, 89 and 101 produced late second to third century Romano-British ceramics, the bulk deriving from 101.

Two pits (41 and 45) on the east side of the west area contained dense carbon and ash deposits and had scorched bases. Pit 41 was a regular oval 20cm deep measuring 1.5m north-south and 1.2m east-west. Pit 45 was an irregular oval, 0.14m, deep measuring 0.7m north-south and 1.2m east-west. Both were interpreted as either sunken hearths or cinder pits in which hot ashes were disposed. In the absence of associated evidence for iron or bronze working a mainly domestic source for this material was thought probable. Both pits contained occasional undiagnostic Romano-British potsherds and pit 41 contained 70 fragments of red-scorched daub, perhaps the result of fire damage to one of the settlement buildings.

The three pits (11, 13, 15) located in the east area also contained dense carbon deposits suggesting a similar function as the above. They were of roughly similar size, pit 11 measuring 0.9m x 0.9m, depth 19cm and pit 13 measuring 0.92m x 0.6m, depth 15cm. Pit 15 was only partly excavated but measured 0.95m north-south with a depth of 15cm. As no trace of burning was noted in their bases they may have been used for the disposal of cold ashes.

The bulk of the remaining excavated features consisted of shallow pits concentrated within the central part of the western area. They varied in shape and size, the majority being oval or sub-circular, the longest axis of each ranging from 0.80m. to 3.88m. with a maximum depth of 0.40m. Most were filled with grey and brown clays, often with small carbon fragments and some (e.g. pit 61) contained denser deposits of carbon. Small quantities of Romano-British potsherds were recovered from many of their fills. It appeared unlikely that plough attrition was so severe in this area as to cause massive truncation and so their relative shallowness argued for a use as rubbish rather than storage pits. It is possible that some of the larger pits (81 and 114) were quarry holes for small-scale clay extraction.

4.2.2 The stratigraphic potential

The plough attrition evident on the site coupled with the stratigraphic isolation of most of the features limited the interpretive potential of the site. However the remains of an Early/Mid Romano-British rural settlement centred directly north of Owl's Hatch Road was clearly indicated. Therefore the need for further archaeological work in advance of any further civil engineering or building works in that area has been demonstrated.

4.3 The Late Iron Age, Belgic and Romano-British pottery.

4.3.1. The factual data

1,864 ceramic sherds (11.638kg) were recovered from the stripped top soil and underlying sealed deposits. Most were small and in very poor condition due to chemical erosion and weathering. Many had lost their original surface making identification of fabrics extremely difficult. In particular much of the black-burnished and Samian wares retained no trace of their characteristic slip or burnishing, rendering accurate assessment of differential wear-patterns virtually impossible. It should be noted that varying degrees of wear often reflects the durability of the sherds' fabric rather than their differing life-histories.

Reliable close dating of individual features was not possible because of their stratigraphic isolation and their small fineware content (fineware being the more precisely datable pottery type). Where intercutting did take place (e.g 60/109,123/84) the associated ceramics suggested that a distinct time gap separated the two features.

With the exception of 8 flint-tempered sherds of probable Iron Age date (see discussion, below), most of the pottery dated to the Flavian-Antonine period (A.D 68 to A.D 192) with smaller quantities dating to the late second to third centuries. Very few sherds dated exclusively to the mid-third century or later. This material, all from ditch 123, consisted of part of a black-burnished ware type 1 dish and several sherds of Late Romano-British grog-tempered ware.

The above evidence suggested that a settlement was first established on the site either just before or early in the Romano-British period, the most likely date being in the late first or early second century. The settlement appears to have endured until the mid-third or shortly thereafter. Although the later material from ditch 123 cannot be dated with absolute confidence (see below), it is likely that all settlement activity ceased by the end of the third century.

The Late Iron Age and Belgic pottery.

8 flint-tempered sherds of possible Iron Age date were recovered from contexts 20, 54, 84, 96 and 113. It is not thought this represents sufficient evidence to indicate extensive pre-Roman occupation on the site. No characteristically pre-conquest grog-tempered coarsewares were

identified. Several sherds of possible pre-Roman type recovered from ditch 123 may equally have been of early-mid fourth century date as was suggested by their association with third century ceramics. However their worn condition and small size also argued for a residual status and therefore for the earlier date in this context. A single sherd of 'Belgic' sandyware was the only pot recovered from pit 62. This material is common in pre-Roman contexts in Canterbury and may point towards an immediately pre-invasion origin for the settlement.

The Romano-British pottery.

A small number of sherds dating to the second half of the first or the late first/early second centuries was recovered. These consisted of:

A shallow, oxidised, Upchurch-type platter sherd of Monaghan class 7 (Monaghan 1982), dating from the second half of the first to the early second century (from feature 58).

1 sherd of Samian ware, probably representing a Flavian Dragendort 18 dish (from feature 54).

3 or 4 sherds of probably Flavian Samian (from feature 84).

1 sherd of probably Flavian Samian (from feature 109).

1 sherd of possible Belgic sandyware. Possibly Claudio-Neronian; perhaps Flavian (from feature 82) .

A significant quantity of characteristically post-conquest grog-tempered ware was recovered from the site. The range of forms was limited to jar-types, occasionally comb-decorated, in a soft fabric usually oxidised to shades of pink, orange and buff. It is thought the manufacture of these wares continued into the early second century.

The bulk of the pottery recovered appeared to be of late first and second century date. In addition to the grog-tempered wares discussed above, substantial quantities of other similarly dated ceramic types were present.

Flavian-Antonine Canterbury grey and pink-buff sandywares were recovered from numerous contexts as were smaller amounts of Hadrianic or later black-burnished wares. All the sherds of the latter were from simple-rimmed plain and grooved flanged-rimmed 'dog-dishes' and roll-rim pie-dishes. In many cases

these proved difficult to identify due to chemical erosion and weathering. Similarly, as changes in the surface decoration of black-burnished ware indicate the difference between second and early third century forms, exact dating was not possible. Poor surface preservation also made overall quantification difficult and many sherds identified as being of black-burnished ware were identified on the basis of form rather than fabric.

Small quantities of imported finewares were also identified. Fragments of central Gaulish Samian of second century date were recovered from context 20 and possibly (poor surface preservation made this problematic) from contexts 58, 60, 109, 117 and 123. Samian of all types constituted less than 1% of the site assemblage, which compares with a figure of approximately 5% encountered on most Romano-British urban sites including Canterbury (de la Bedoyere 1989). Central Gaulish 'Rhenish' colour-coated ware was recovered from contexts 20 and 58. The latter probably dates to the second half of the second century. North Gaul/Colchester colour-coated ware was recovered from feature 86. A single fragment of a south Spanish Dressel 20 amphora was recovered from pit 80. These vessels date to the first to third centuries.

Relatively little pottery was distinguished by either fabric or form as being of late second to third century date. Small quantities of grog-tempered Native Coarse Ware and hard-fired sandywares of this period were noted in contexts 20, 50, 74, 58, 60, 88, 100, 104, 109 and 123. These wares are thought to be of generally late second or third century date of manufacture in the East Kent area (Monaghan 1982). Bead-and-flange dishes of black-burnished ware types 1 and 2 dating to the mid-third century or later were noted in contexts 50, 60 and 74. Ditch 58 yielded similar sherds of Native Coarse Ware as well as fragments of a short-necked Central Gaulish 'Rhenish' colour-coated beaker, a North Gaulish pentice beaker and a hammer-head-rim mortarium, again all of late second/third century date. The pottery from pit 60 consisted of a relatively high proportion of Native Coarse Ware, 2 bead-and-flange sandyware rims (probably black-burnished ware or similar) and a fragment of an Oxford 'parchment' mortarium. The rims and the Oxford ware probably dated to *circa* 240+ A.D.

Miscellaneous reduced and oxidised sandywares recovered from many features could not be reliably identified or dated by form or fabric. However as they comprised a very small

proportion of the site assemblage their presence did not affect the proposed ceramics-based chronology.

Initial analysis suggests that, with the exception of the few coarseware sherds present in ditch 123, none of the pottery post-dated the mid-third century. Apart from a single sherd of Oxford mortarium from pit 60, no late Roman-British or imported finewares were identified. However, as discussed above in regard to the Native Coarse Wares, several rims of bead-and-flange black-burnished ware types 1 and 2 were recovered from pits 50, 60 and 74.

In suggesting the termination date for the settlement the fragments of a single black-burnished dish and 4 or 5 sherds of Roman grog-tempered ware are of crucial importance. Approximately 60% of the dish survived. It was a flanged-rimmed 'dog-dish' of Gillam type G329 (Gillam 1970) exhibiting tooled curvilinear decoration on the exterior of the wall and base. Although this form was current from *circa* 190-340 A.D., black-burnished ware type 1 was relatively rare in East Kent during the early part of that period. On balance a late third or early fourth century is probably indicated suggesting a similar date for the end of the settlement.

4.3.2 Quantity and location of the material

The Site 11 ceramic assemblage consists of 1,860 sherds. These are at present held in storage at the offices of Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

4.3.3 Statement of potential

In view of the generally poor condition of most of the ceramic assemblage its potential is low and has for the most part been realised by the present work. The small quantity of better preserved and more diagnostic material described above is of limited but significant value in the context of comparative local Romano-British studies.

The assemblage as a whole gives some indication of the socio-economic status of the settlement. This is unusual in that the majority of Romano-British sites produce relatively homogenous ceramic assemblages. The low incidence of Samian ware (1% as against approximately 5% for Romano-British urban sites in general) suggests that a relatively poor settlement is represented (de la Bedoyere 1989,92).

4.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that a brief report summarising the above results be prepared for publication in the Canterbury Archaeological Trust Annual Report.

Tim Allen with contributions from Kieth Parfitt, Dr E.P. Allison, Nigel Macpherson-Grant, Ian Riddler and Andrew Savage.
November 1995.

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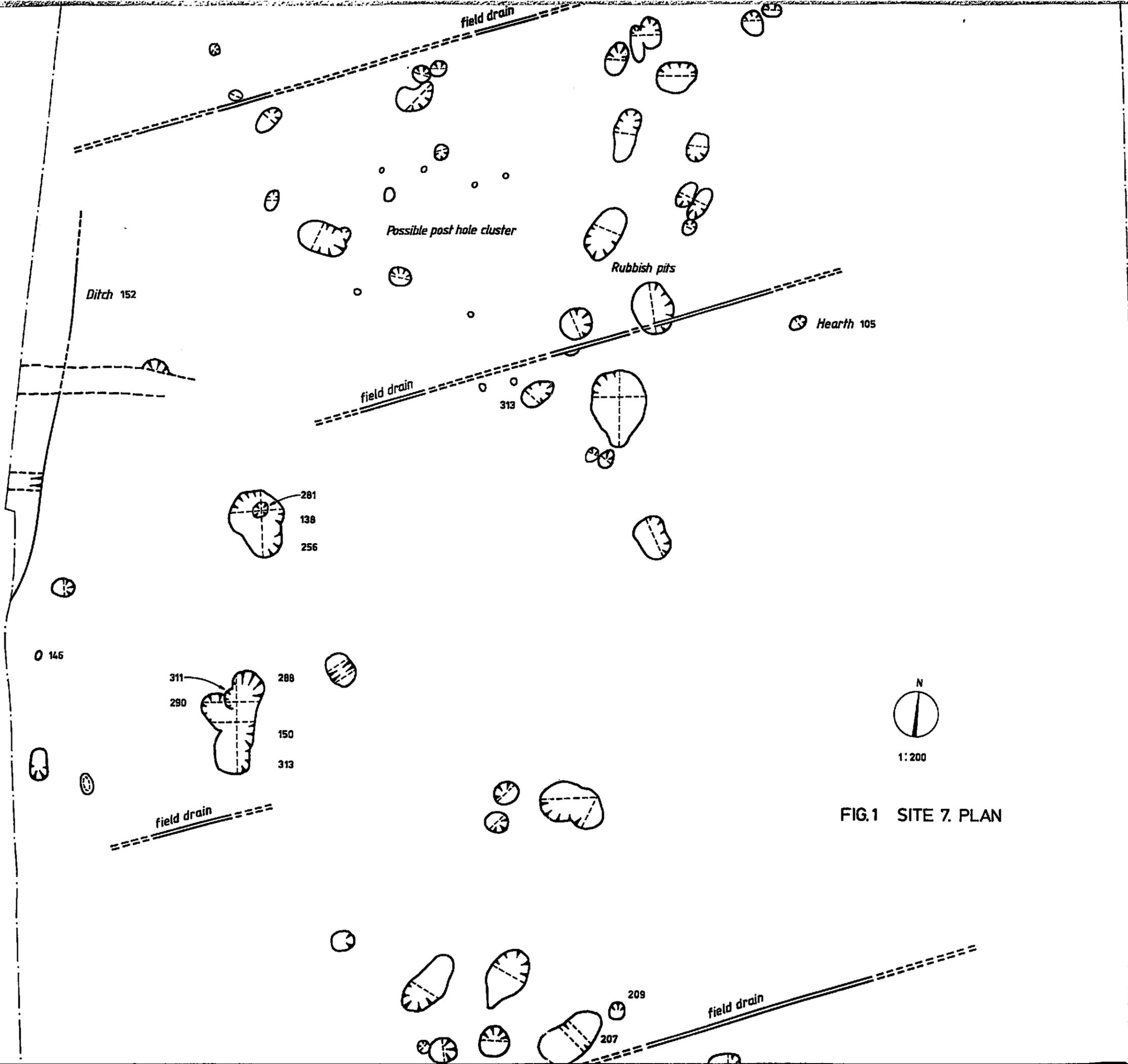


FIG.1 SITE 7. PLAN

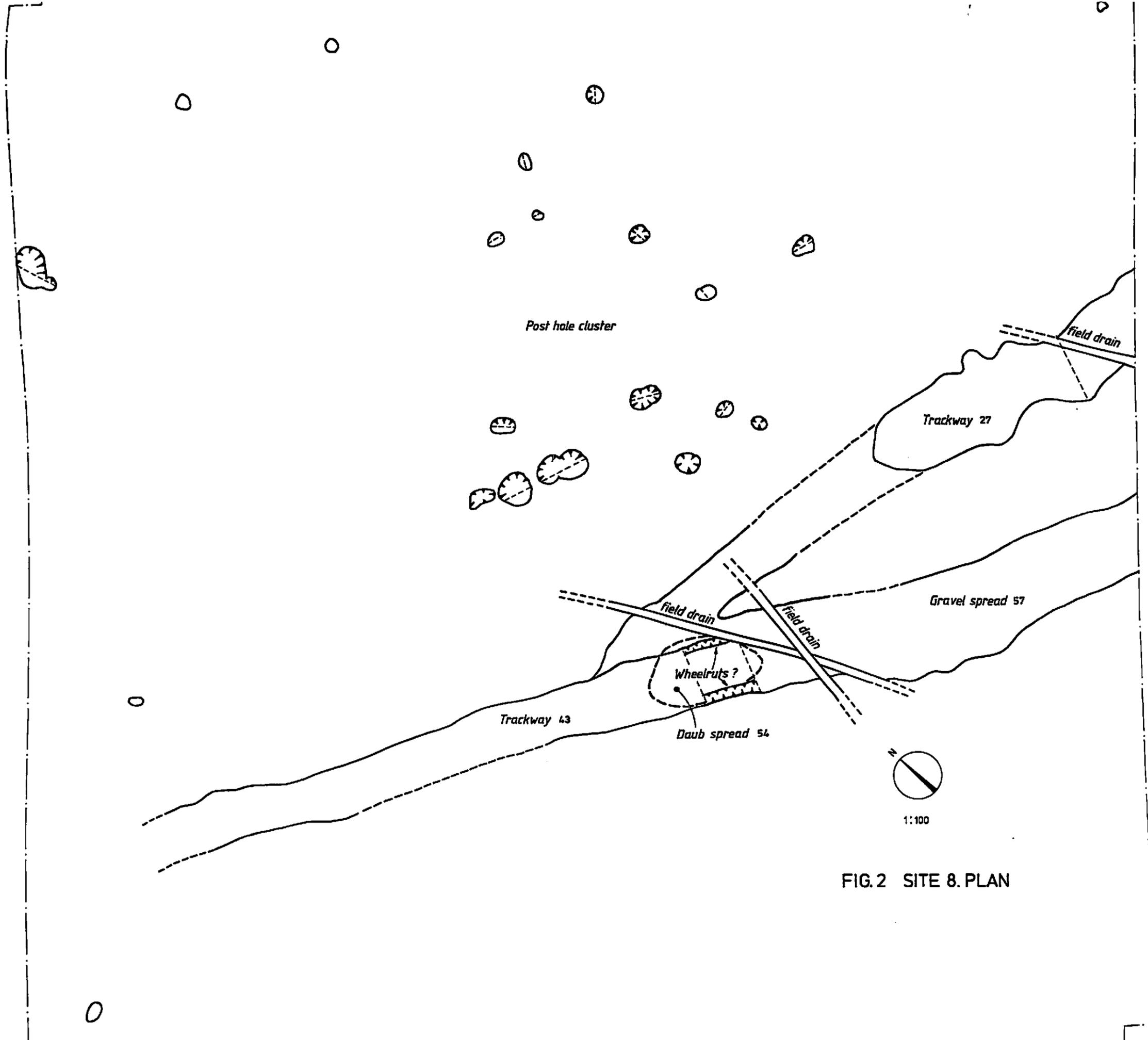


FIG. 2 SITE 8. PLAN

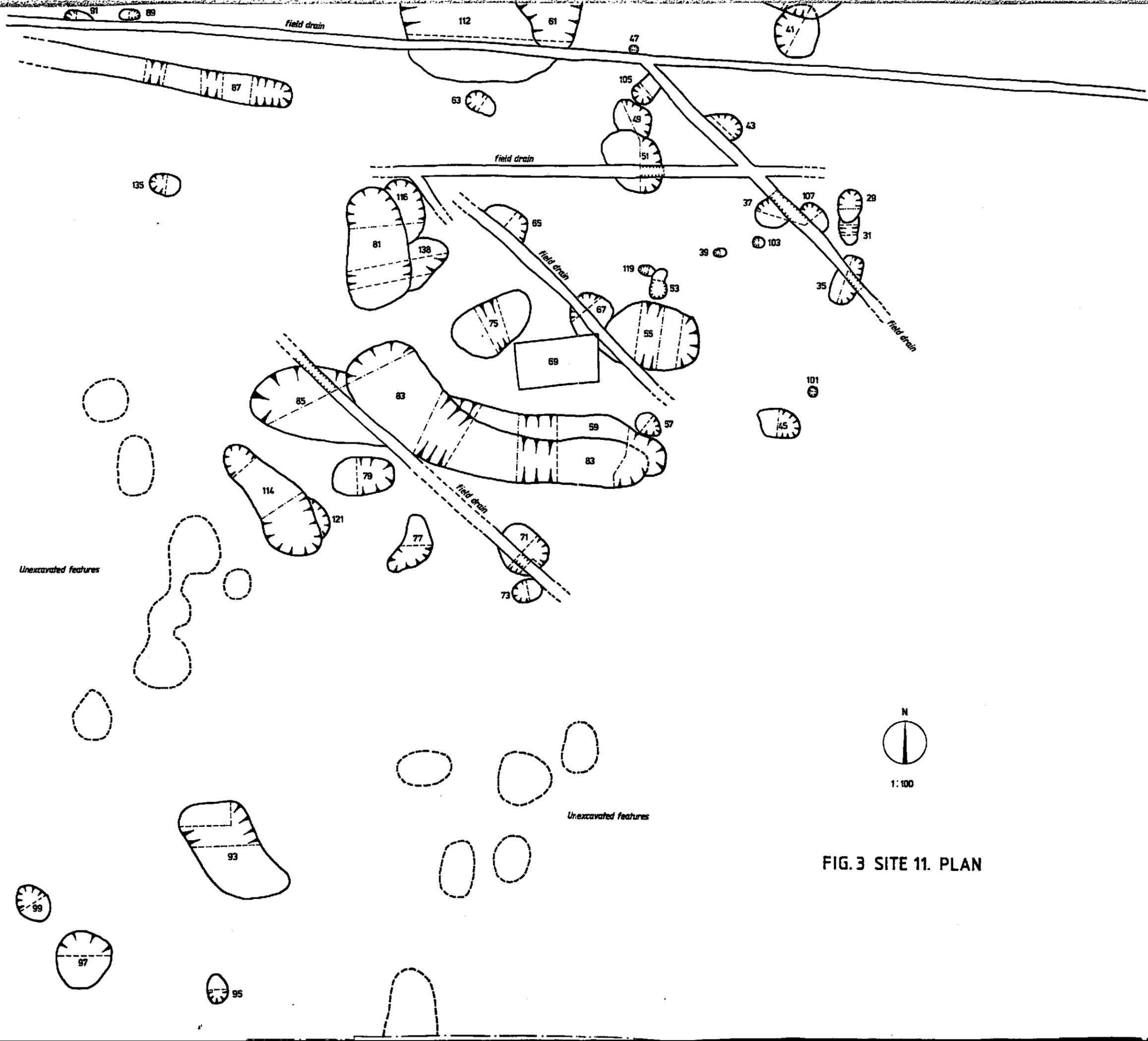


FIG. 3 SITE 11. PLAN

7. Costs

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Site 7		
Accelerated radiocarbon dating.	N/A	£350
Ceramics illustration	(2 days)	£190.46
Processing for plant macrofossils	(1 ¹ / ₂ days)	£126.25
Report on plant macrofossils	(2 days) (subject to confirmation)	£250.00
Authentication of slag iron samples.	N/A	No charge
Metrical analysis of the bone	(4 hours)	£42.08
Report on metrical analysis of bone	(4 hours)	£42.08
Report preparation	(6 days)	£505.02
Editing	(1 day)	£125.00
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>£714.18</u>
Site 8		
Report preparation	(6 hours)	£63.13
Editing	(2 hours)	£31.25
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>£94.38</u>
Site 11		
As for Site 8	<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>£94.38</u>
	Administration	£225.73
	<u>Total</u>	<u>£1128.67</u>