

Archaeological Evaluation and Further Observations at the Rugby and Daventry Crematorium, 2013



understanding heritage matters

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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Rugby and Daventry Crematorium

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out on behalf of WSP Environmental acting on behalf of Daventry District Council at the site of a new crematorium on land of Ashlawn Road, Hillmorton, Rugby. The evaluation was entirely negative but the succeeding watching brief recorded demolition remains associated with a former farm and traces of the former ridge and furrow field system. No significant archaeological deposits were exposed, although two sherds of Roman greyware of 2nd or 3rd century date and, more importantly, an Early Bronze Age flint arrowhead (c 2500-1800 BC) were recovered from the ploughsoil. Despite significant archaeological deposits having been discovered in earlier phases of the project, this work seems to suggest that survival across the site is fragmentary and discrete. The barbed and tanged arrowhead is a rare find in the region though it need only imply an episode of hunting rather than intensive activity such as settlement.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Rugby Borough Council for the development of a crematorium at land off Ashlawn Road, Hillmorton, Rugby. The site of the development has been the subject of a protracted programme of archaeological study including a desk-based survey, fieldwalking, evaluation and a watching brief.

1.2 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological field evaluation on part of the proposed cemetery site and this was followed by a limited programme of observation during topsoil removal for access roads. Both aspects were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist Anna Stocks in her capacity as archaeological advisor to Rugby Borough Council.

1.3 This report represents the results of the evaluation and the succeeding watching brief in the area outline in Fig 2 which was undertaken in April and May 2013. The archive will be deposited with Rugby Borough Council under Site Code RH13.

2 Location

2.3 The site lies on the southern side of the Hillmorton Road and the underlying geology is Middle and Lower Lias (British Geological Survey 1984).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The archaeological background of the site has been assessed and quantified in a series of reports.

- A desk based assessment by WSP Environmental Ltd (Cleggett 2011)
- A fieldwalking survey by the University of Leicester (Thomas 2011)
- A geophysical survey by West Yorkshire Archaeological Service (Webb 2011)
- An evaluation by Oxford Archaeology East (Rees 2012)
- A watching brief by Archaeology Warwickshire (Palmer and Gethin 2013)

3.2 In summary, the previous work has established that low-level or transient earlier prehistoric activity in the area evidenced by a broad flint scatter, developed by the middle Iron Age into settlement, evidenced by at least one round house, with a reasonable chance that additional Iron Age activity and a Roman period settlement exists on the site.

3.3 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record reveals that a noteworthy assemblage of Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint has been recorded in the vicinity (MWA 10007), but little else of significance.

4 Aims and Methods

Evaluation

4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if any significant archaeological remains were present in the two areas shown on Fig 1; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the Hillmorton area.

4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

Watching Brief

4.4 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains that could be disturbed by the stripping of topsoil within the area defined on Fig 2, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.5 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.6 The objective of the work was to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction phase of the development. The watching brief was to consist of the observation of site stripping and any other necessary subsurface disturbance.

4.7 All archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire Procedures Manual (revised 2011) and to the appropriate Standard and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists.

5 Evaluation

5.1 A total of seven archaeological trenches were excavated using a tracked excavator with a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were all excavated down to geological natural deposits, which varied somewhat in character across the site.

Trench 1

5.2 The geological natural was small to medium gravel in a brownish-yellow clayey sand matrix with occasional patches of grey clay (101). It was overlaid by between 0.30m and 0.4m of greyish-brown clay loam topsoil (100). No significant archaeological finds or deposits were recorded in this trench.

Trench 2

5.3 Geological natural was brownish-yellow clayey sand and gravel (201). It was overlaid by between 0.16m and 0.33m of greyish-brown clay loam topsoil (200). No significant archaeological finds or deposits were recorded in this trench.

Trench 3

5.4 Geological natural was brownish-yellow sand and gravel (302). It was overlain by between 0.16m and 0.33m of brownish-yellow clay loam (301) representing a former ploughsoil. This was overlaid by 0.28m and 0.32m of greyish-brown clay loam topsoil (300).

Trench 4

5.5 The geological natural (401) consisted of bands of grey and dark grey clay along with patches of brownish-yellow sand and gravel. It was overlaid by between 0.26m and 0.30m of greyish-brown clay loam topsoil (400).

Trench 5

5.6 The geological natural (501) was grey clay and brownish-yellow sand and gravel. It was overlaid by between 0.24m and 0.35m of greyish-brown clay loam topsoil (500).

Trench 6

5.7 The geological natural (601) was grey clay with a patch of brownish-yellow sand and gravel at the south end. It was overlaid by between 0.24m and 0.30m of greyish brown clay loam topsoil (600).

Trench 7

5.8 The geological natural (701) was grey clay and brownish-yellow sand and gravel. It was overlaid by between 0.25m and 0.30m of greyish brown clay loam topsoil (700).

6 Watching Brief

6.1 The watching brief was carried out during the stripping of access roads across a considerable part of the proposed cemetery site and included small areas of stripping around bunds created close by the site of the former farm (Fig 1).

6.2 Areas stripped alongside existing bunds revealed no significant archaeological deposits, although there was sporadic evidence for the demolition of the farm buildings that existed on the site until at least the 1970s (former landowner, pers. comm.). The evidence included occasional brick and concrete debris and some dumps of 19th or early 20th century pottery and glass. During the stripping of an entrance trackway a large sub circular feature was revealed and partially excavated by machine. This feature contained late 19th century pottery and pond-like silts. This interpretation accords with the 1887 Ordnance survey map which shows a pond at this location.

6.3 The stripping for the swale and the trackways around the new cemetery was fully observed. The soil was removed down to the top of geological deposits which varied in depth between 0.35m and 0.65m below the current ground surface. The remains of ploughed out ridge and furrow was occasionally visible (Fig 12). However, no additional significant archaeological features were found despite those identified in the earliest evaluation (Rees 2012) and the later soil stripping (Palmer and Gethin 2012).

6.4 Only a very few finds were recovered and these consisted of two abraded sherds of Roman greyware of probable 2nd or 3rd century date and a single early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (Appendix C).

7 General Discussion

7.1 The evaluation successfully demonstrated that significant archaeological deposits were highly unlikely to survive in the area examined.

7.2 The absence of significant deposits in the areas mitigated by the watching brief suggest that extensive archaeological remains are unlikely to survive on this part of the cemetery site, although the possibility that significant isolated deposits survive cannot be discounted.

7.3 The Bronze Age arrowhead, despite being nonpareil, does not necessarily give any indication of Bronze Age settlement on the site itself. It more likely shows that Bronze Age people were hunting in the area.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank John Robinson and latterly Jim Hunter of WSP Environment and Energy for commissioning the work, with particular thanks to Project Engineer Rob Saunders, and Anna Stocks. Work on site was carried out by Bryn Gethin, Rob Jones and Mark Charles.

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Appendix A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
101	Brownish yellow clay and gravel	Geological natural
200	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
201	Brownish yellow clay and gravel	Geological natural
300	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
301	Brownish grey clay loam	Old ploughsoil
302	Brownish yellow clay and gravel	Geological natural
400	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
401	Mix of clays and gravel	Geological natural
500	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
501	Clays and sand and gravel	Geological natural
600	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
601	Clays and sand and gravel	Geological natural
700	Greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil
701	Clays and sand and gravel	Geological natural
800	Topsoil from swale and tracks	Topsoil
801	Old ploughsoil/swale and tracks	Old ploughsoil

Appendix B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
800	Pottery	2	Roman 2nd-3rd century
800	Flint	1	Arrowhead, Early Bronze Age

Appendix C

Flint Arrowhead

A single barbed and tanged arrowhead (Fig 3) in brown, flaw-free flint was found on the surface of the field adjacent to one of the new road on the south-east edge of the site. The arrowhead is 41mm long from the tip of the point to the end of the tang and is a maximum width of 21mm across the barbs. The piece is bifacially worked to a maximum of 5mm thick.

The arrowhead belongs to the form categorized as type Sutton c (Green 1980). This type has been found in association with Beaker pottery and is believed to date to the early Bronze Age (2500-1800 BC). The edges of the arrowhead are serrated, which has sometimes been noted on others of this type.

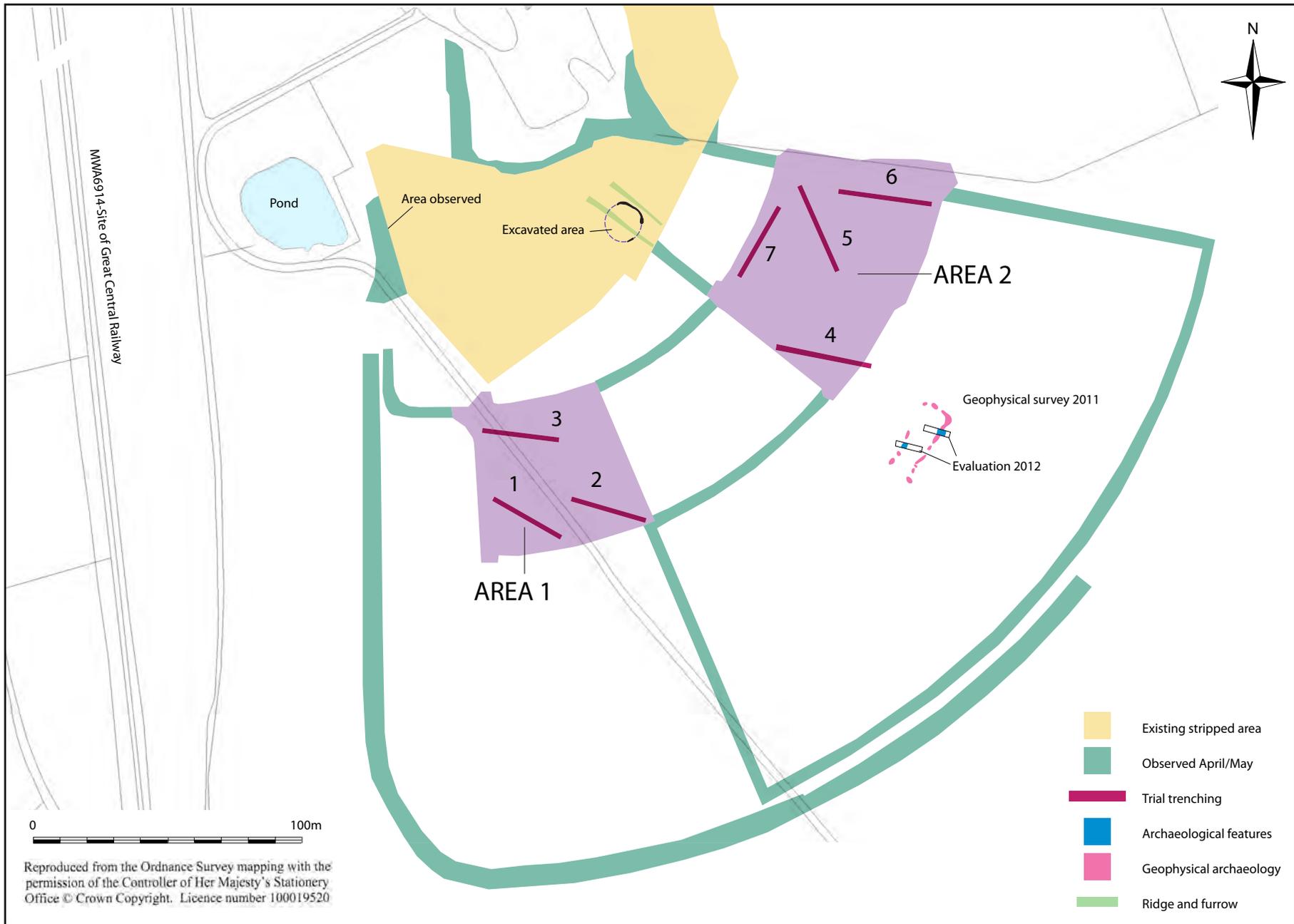


Fig 1: Site location showing areas observed

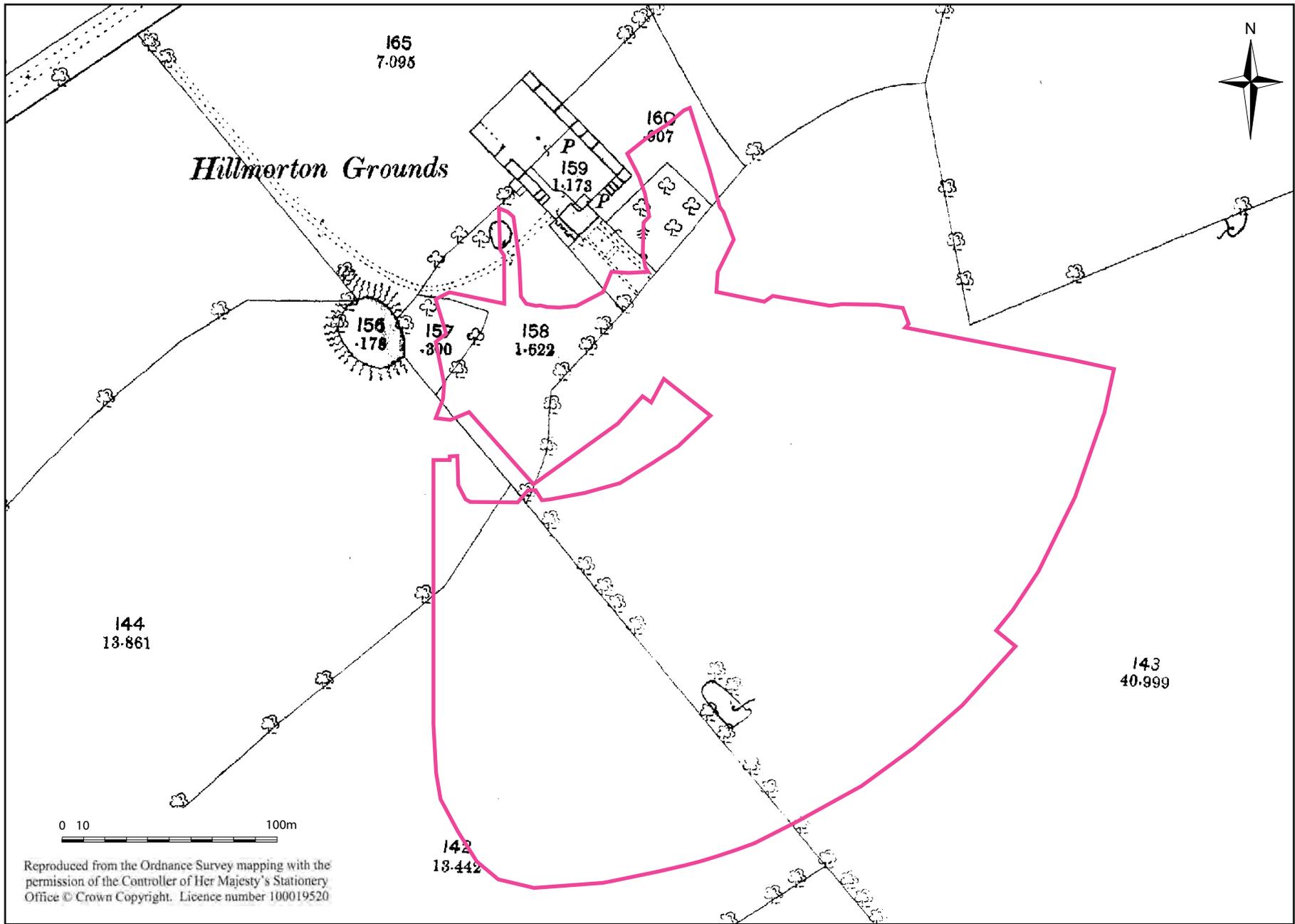


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 showing edge of site

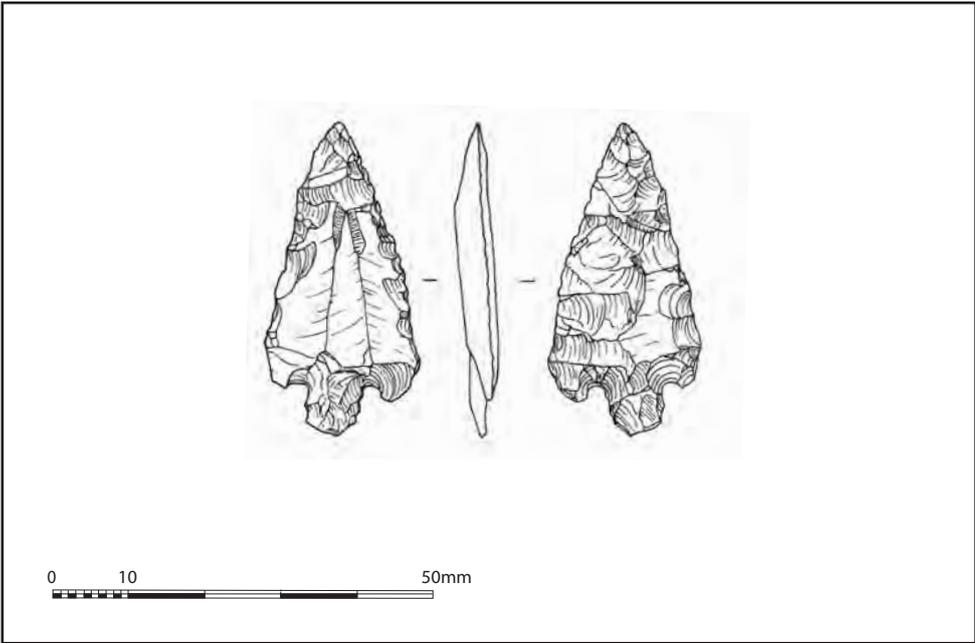


Fig 3: Bronze Age flint arrowhead



Fig 4: Trench 1



Fig 5: Trench 2



Fig 6: Trench 3



Fig 7: Trench 4



Fig 8: Trench 5



Fig 9: Trench 6



Fig 10: Trench 7



Fig 11: Demolition rubble from the former farm visible after soil stripping



Fig 12: Furrows visible cutting across the line of the trackway