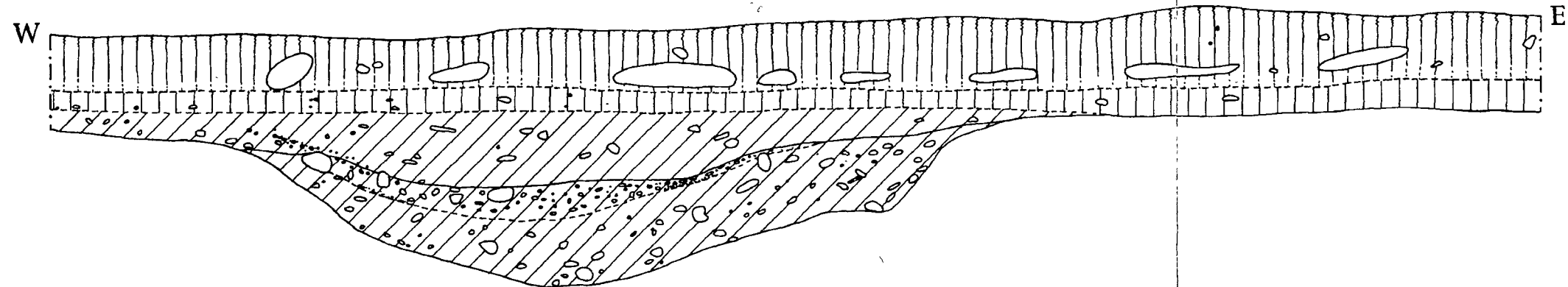
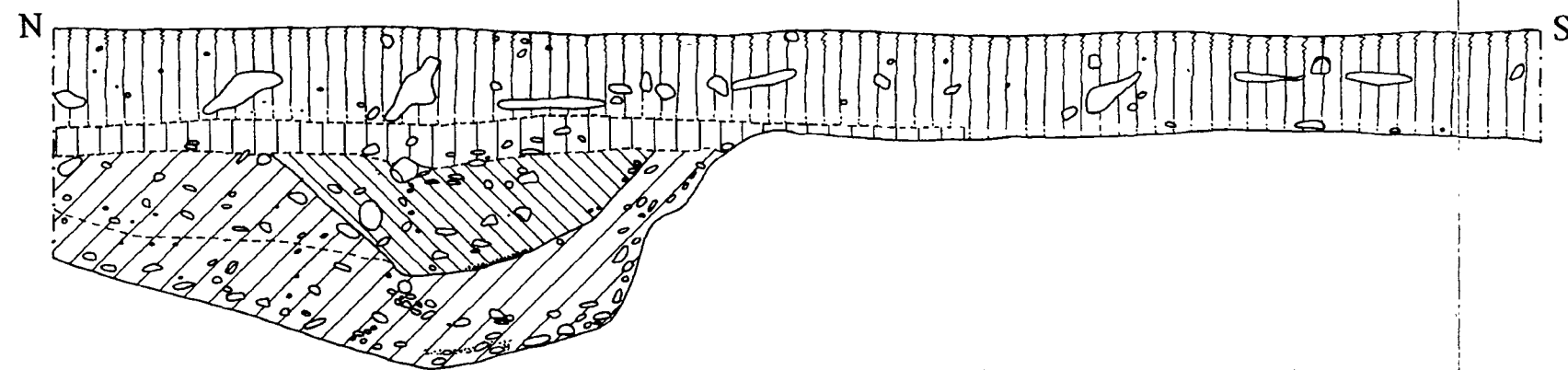


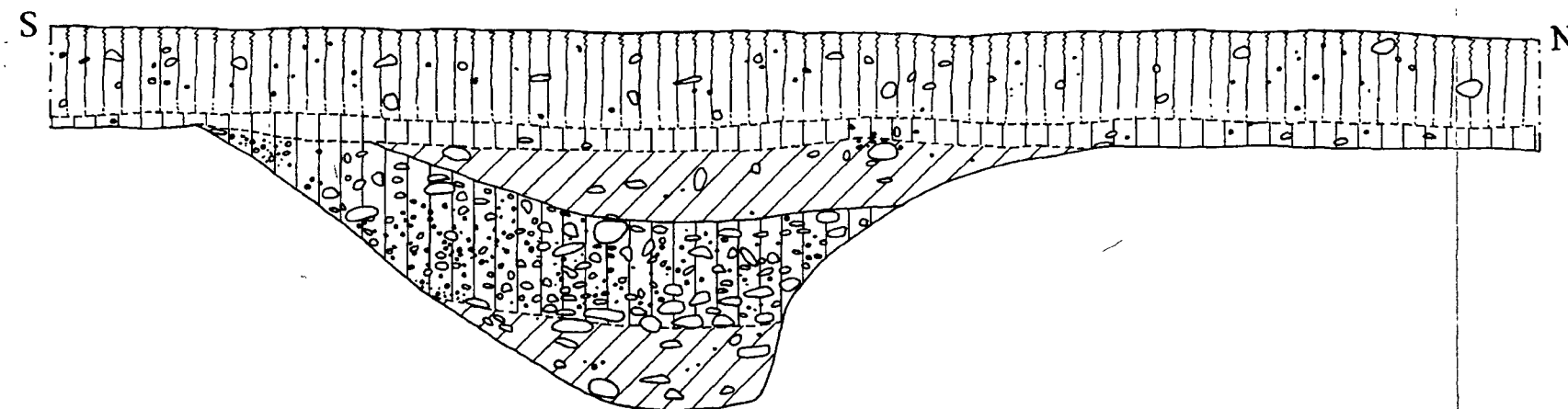
TRN.5A







TRN.5C



TRN.5D

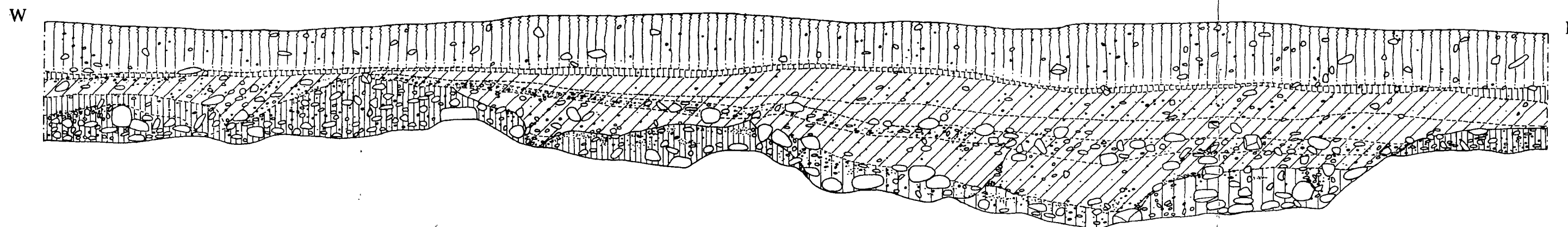


-  topsoil
-  sandy loam
-  loamy sand
-  silty loam

0 2m



NORTH SECTION



topsoil



sand



loamy sand

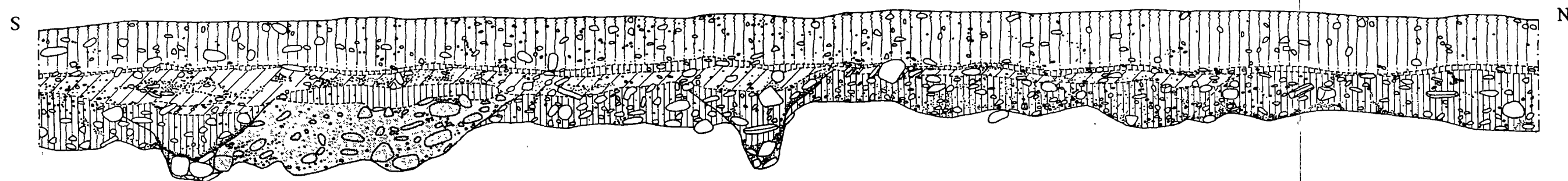


sandy loam



disturbance

WEST SECTION



0

2m



THORNBOROUGH SITE 3:
excavations at an ovate-shaped enclosure

INTRODUCTION

The fieldwork undertaken in 1995 had included geophysical prospection in the vicinity of a possible ovate-shaped enclosure to the north of Chapel Hill at SE 2945 / 7968 (*Interim Report 1995*). This potentially 'new' site had been identified from a Cambridge University aerial photograph of 1975 (BTY 030). It illustrates a cropmark enclosure approximately 19m by 16m in size with convex side ditches and a flattened terminal with rounded corners (**Figure 8**). The ditch was interrupted by two opposing causeways in the centre of each terminal. There were also what appeared to be breaks across the side ditches which suggest that the site was constructed as a series of discontinuous sections each of varying length. The layout of the enclosure was therefore similar to the ploughed-out long barrows or so-called 'long mortuary enclosures' which have been recorded elsewhere in lowland England and appear to exclusively date to the early Neolithic (Atkinson et al 1951; Buckley et al 1988; Loveday 1985; Loveday & Petchey 1982; Vatcher 1961). The possibility that the cropmark may indeed be a levelled Neolithic monument seems more likely as a result of its location near to the E. end of the Thornborough cursus. This close spatial association is typical of many long barrows or 'long mortuary enclosures'. The importance of this relationship is reiterated by the shared E-W. alignment of the enclosure with a small elongated feature and a ploughed-out round barrow which are sited immediately to the W. of the site. Their orientation is towards what appears to be the open terminal of the Thornborough cursus.

The location of part of the enclosure was identified by the geophysical survey undertaken in 1995. However, much of the site was obscured by a concentration of surface stone and a modern land drain. The aims of the excavations were to therefore locate the full extent of the enclosure while also providing information as to its chronology and its structural appearance. As a result, it was decided to excavate one evaluation trench across what was thought to be each of the ditched sides of the enclosure (**Figure 9**). These four trenches were sited along, and at right angles to, the main E-W. axis of the cropmark. The two trenches across the side ditches were 4m by 1m in size (*TRN.5C & D*), while the two across the terminals were both 5m by 1m (*TRN.5A & B*). Three 1m by 1m test-pits were also located on the same axis as the main excavation trenches in order to ascertain the existence of any features from within the central area of the enclosure.



Figure 8: Group of cropmark sites at Chapel Hill Farm.

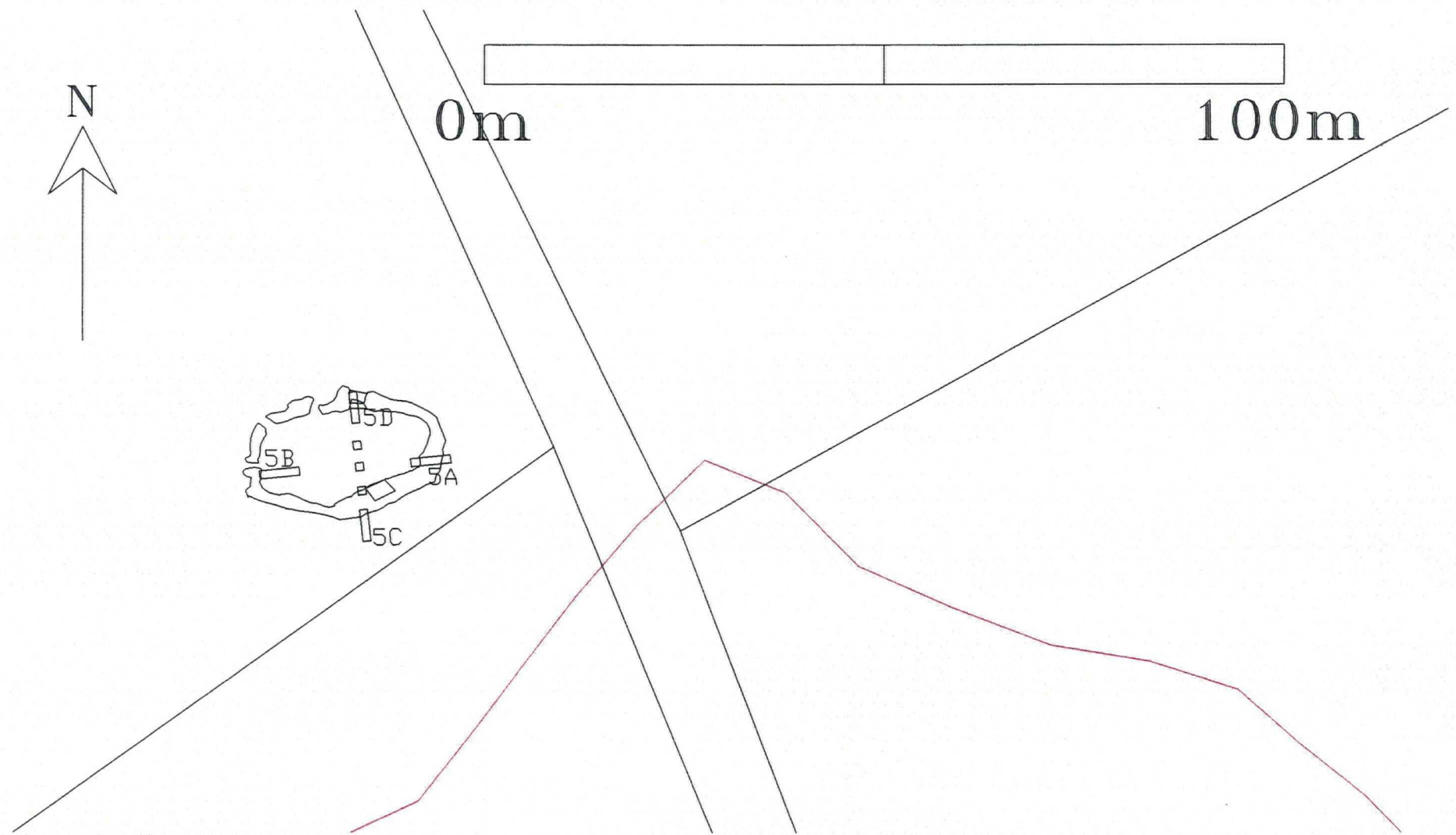
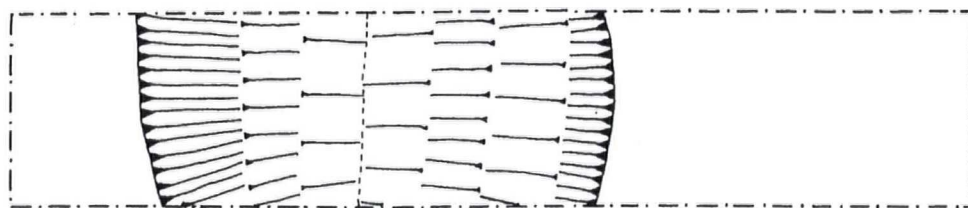


Figure 9: The Site 3 enclosure and the location of the 1996 excavation trenches.

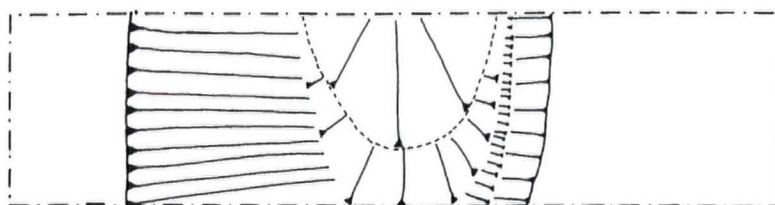
TRN.5A



TRN.5C



TRN.5D



0 2m

A horizontal scale bar with a black segment on the left and a white segment on the right, representing a distance of 2 meters.

Figure 10: Plans of the enclosure ditch at Site 3.

primary deposit. It is also indicated by the high proportion of stone in this fill when compared with the secondary deposit, as well as the size and alignment of this component.

The excavations have therefore produced important information about the structure of the enclosure. Unfortunately, the results were inconclusive in that they fail to provide a direct indication as to the date of the enclosure. The only find was a small flint flake. The morphology of the site and its spatial association with the Thornborough cursus does, however, suggest that an early Neolithic date is more than likely for the excavated features. Moreover, its appearance is strikingly similar to more fully investigated 'long mortuary enclosures' elsewhere in lowland England. The very absence of finds from *Site 3* may also support this assumption since other excavations of these monuments have similarly failed to produce much in the way of associated material culture. This is important for it may reflect a deliberate attempt to keep the location free of debris, and it should be noted that surface collection from the field in which the enclosure was located produced next to no flint. There is a further point of comparability between *Site 3* and other excavated enclosures of similar appearance. Evidence from the latter have indicated that these monuments were actually in use for a relatively short period of time. The ditch fills from *Site 3* certainly suggest the prompt backfilling and then recutting of the feature after an initial period of silting, and the soil micromorphology samples will no doubt provide more detail about this process. The short period of use at the site is reiterated by the apparent lack of charcoal and finds from the ditch fills.

Figure 11: Sections at Site 3 illustrating the enclosure ditch.

FUTURE FIELDWORK IN 1997

The proposed programme of fieldwork in 1997 will involve a continuation in the widespaced surface collection (**Figure 1**). The central plateau on which the three henge monuments are located has now been extensively fieldwalked, although it is proposed to undertake some further widespaced surface collection in the vicinity of the central and northern henge monuments. However, it is those areas which are more distant from the monument complex which will be the focus for the programme of widespaced fieldwalking in 1997. There remain extensive blocks of unwalked arable land across the steeply sloping ridge to the W. of the Thornborough complex. There has also been little fieldwalking across the undulating landscape, which includes low ridges of till deposit, to the SE. of the monument complex. Widespaced surface collection from these two topographically distinct parts of the study zone will enable a more extensive comparison of those areas in the immediate vicinity of the henge complex- which demonstrate a low level of prehistoric activity- with those more distant areas where settlement appears to have been concentrated (cf. *Interim Report 1995*). A part of the forthcoming season in 1997 will also be spent undertaking the first intensive fieldwalking, or total collection, from known concentrations of settlement. It is believed that this will provide considerable evidence about the character of settlement and further highlight the significant variations to be found across the study zone. Intensive fieldwalking will be undertaken across a part of the large later Neolithic / early Bronze Age scatter to the E. of the study zone, and the very much smaller but contemporary concentration to the SW. of the *Thornborough South* henge (**Figure 12**). In 1998 the programme of intensive fieldwalking will extend to the smaller and less dense concentrations to the N. and S. of the study zone. These appear to illustrate more specialized activity. It should be noted that the widespaced fieldwalking undertaken in 1997 may well highlight other profitable areas for intensive collection.

The proposed programme of fieldwork in 1997 will also involve additional excavations at the *Thornborough South* henge monument in order to provide further evidence as to its chronological and structural sequence. This work should be seen as complementing the above results and will be preceded by a complete contour survey of the monument. The excavations will focus on the inner ditch of the site. It has been noted that there are noticeable differences between the outer and inner ditch of the henge monument, with the former being not only narrower but also more irregular and segmentary in outline. This may suggest that *Thornborough South* was constructed during two distinct phases. It is believed that this season's fieldwork has certainly supported the possibility, and it remains to compare the evidence with the information that will result from the proposed excavation of the inner ditch. The intention is to open an area approximately 15m by 8m in size across the complete width of

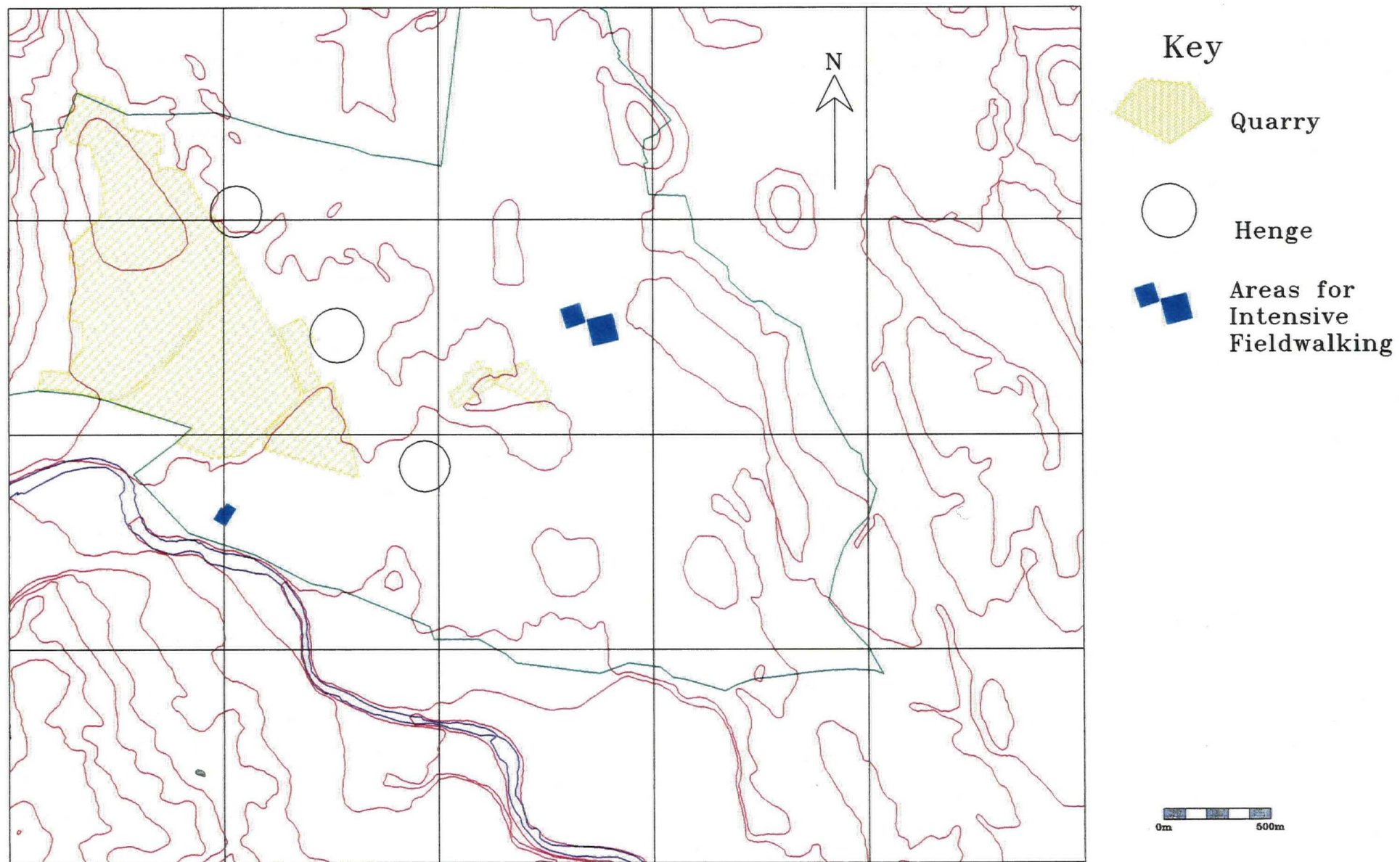


Figure 12: Areas for intensive fieldwalking in 1997-8

the ditch terminal on the NW. side of the monument (**Figure 4**). This trench would extend across part of the adjoining north entrance. The investigation of other henge monuments demonstrate the general importance which seems to have been attached to their entrances and flanking terminals. It is envisaged that the excavation of the inner ditch will produce material culture, stratigraphic evidence, and a series of radiocarbon determinations, which can then be compared with that from the outer ditch. This will generate a detailed appreciation of the chronology of the monument. It will also possibly provide pollen evidence as to the environmental setting of the complex.

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University of Newcastle

Acknowledgements. I would like to express my gratitude to the British Academy, the Prehistoric Society, the Society of Antiquaries, and the University of Reading for funding the 1996 season. Thanks must also go to Dr. Joshua Pollard and the team of students who undertook the fieldwork, and to Rachel Morse for preparing the illustrations at such short notice.

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Appendix 1: financial statement for 1996

Paid	Received
£3150.00 (accommodation)	£2500 (from British Academy)
£600.49 (food)	£2376 (from University of Reading)
£547.59 (petrol/travel costs)	£1000 (from Society of Antiquaries)
£381.25 (AMS. date)	£150 (from Prehistoric Society)
£253.18 (specialist reports)	
£225.00 (computer digitization)	
£205.62 (maps & aerial photographs)	
£192.96 (photography)	
£92.74 (miscellaneous)	
£72.25 (mobile telephone)	
£18.95 (boxes & bags)	
£5740.03 TOTAL PAID	£6026.00 TOTAL RECEIVED

£285.97 balance on 1st December 1996