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Hints Quarry, Staffordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief
2008

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Hints Quarry, Staffordshire.

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By

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Plate 1 North facing section of [2003]

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief and salvage recording was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology at Hints Quarry, Staffordshire (NGR SK 1650 0400) in April 2008. The fieldwork was commissioned by Tarmac PLC in fulfillment of a planning condition imposed by Staffordshire County Council.

Previous watching briefs carried out by Birmingham Archaeology have revealed several features from multiple periods. In 2005 a small isolated pit containing heat shattered stone and fragments of pottery dated to the Romano-British period was excavated and in 2006 a small Middle Bronze Age cremation (SUERC-12529: 1540-1410 cal. BC) and several pits dating from the mid Bronze Age to the early Iron Age (Moscrop 2005: Krawiec, Edwards & Brickley 2006). During the course of this watching brief several more pit features were identified and excavated with only two yielding pottery dating to the Early Bronze Age.

Hints Quarry, Staffordshire: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2008.

1 INTRODUCTION

In April 2008 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological Watching brief at Hints Quarry, Staffordshire (hereafter referred to as the site, Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Tarmac Plc and took place during topsoil and subsoil stripping to the south east of the 2006 watching brief area (Fig.2).

This report outlines the results of the watching brief which was prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA 1999).

The assessment conformed to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2008) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The site is located immediately north of the village of Hints which lies to the west of the town of Tamworth and is centred on NGR SK 1650 0400 (Fig. 1).

The solid geology of the area consists of Hopwas Breccia at Hints Hill, Mercia Mudstone to the east and Kidderminster and Bromsgrove sandstones to the west. The drift geology is sands and gravels. The site lies on the crest of a hill which slopes gently to the south, with Bucks Head Farm to the northeast. Prior to extraction it was given over to arable cultivation.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the project was to assess the survival and potential significance of any archaeology within the study area.

More specific aims were to:

- Record any features that may relate to the middle Bronze Age activity on the site
- To investigate the potential for the continuation of features associated with the Romano-British activity on the site

4 METHODOLOGY

The topsoil was removed using a 360 degree mechanical excavator, equipped with a 2m ditching bucket, working under archaeological supervision. The exposed subsoil was then inspected for any archaeological features. Any features, or possible features were hand-cleaned, hand-excavated and recorded. Recording of archaeological features was by means of pre-printed pro-formas, supplemented by plans and sections, and digital, monochrome and colour slide photography. These records, along with the finds, comprise the site archive, which will be deposited with Stoke on Trent Museum, subject to approval from the landowner.

5 RESULTS

Several small pit like features were identified to the east of the area investigated in 2006 (Fig.3). To the north of the area stripped were two small pits **[2001/2003]**. The pit **[2001]** was small, 1.00m in diameter, and sub-circular and was infilled with a 0.24m thick deposit of mid brown silt sand **[2002]** from which a small piece of burnt bone was recovered (Fig.4, S1). The second pit **[2003]** was located to the south west of **[2001]** and was 0.60m in diameter and this was also infilled with a mid brown silt sand **[2004]** from which several sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered (Fig.4, S2, Plate 1).



To the south east of these features were a two pits **[2009-11]** which contained no datable artefacts (Fig.4, S3). It is likely that these are probably natural geological features which is reflected in the irregularity of the profile (Fig.4, S3).

A small amount of bone was recovered from a shallow pit feature **[2013]** and to the west of this a shallower pit **[2015]** yielded two sherds of Bronze Age pottery (Fig.4, S4 & 5). Pit **[2013]** was 0.71m in length and was filled by a dark brown grey silt sand 0.12m thick **[2014]**. Pit **[2015]** was 1.10m in length and was filled by a mid grey brown silt sand 0.14m thick **[2016]**. To the north of these features a slightly deeper pit was excavated **[2017]** which was filled by a grey brown silt sand with charcoal flecks 0.26m thick **[2018]** (Fig.4, S6). However, no finds were recovered from this feature.

6 POTTERY BY EMILY EDWARDS

The pottery sherds (4, 61 g) recovered from contexts **[2004]** and **[2016]** are difficult to date but can be placed either within the Neolithic or Bronze Age; they comprise thick walls, lightly oxidised external surfaces and have been manufactured from limestone and grog tempered fabrics. Three of the sherds are plain body sherds lacking in diagnostic features. The two sherds from feature **[2016]** refit and decoration is present on the face of the thicker of the two, in the form of a pinched area of clay, framed by a pair of finger tip impressions. They also appear to be manufactured from a grog and limestone fabric. These two characteristics may be suggestive of early or middle Bronze Age urn but the size of the fragments precludes confident identification.

Table1: Table giving quantifications for pottery

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Comment
2004	2003	2	31	Fabric common small to medium fragments of limestone
2016	2015	2	30	Fabric regular amounts of medium to large fragments of limestone. Decoration apparent, in form of finger tipping.
	Total:	4	61	

7 DISCUSSION

The features recorded in the 2008 season of the watching brief appear to be a continuation of the activity recorded in 2006. The site is characterised by a series of small shallow pits infilled with relatively sterile material containing occasional fragments of prehistoric pottery. This relatively small scale activity may indicate a nearby settlement of which the features recorded here are on the periphery of. Although the pottery can only be tentatively ascribed as Early Bronze Age it is likely that it is of this date. Further quarrying may yet reveal more extensive prehistoric remains. The results of the 2008 and the 2006 watching brief will be published in the Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Tarmac. Thanks are due to Grahame Fyles for his co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Steve Dean, who monitored the project on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. The watching brief was undertaken by Tom Burt and the survey by Kristina Krawiec. Kristina Krawiec produced the written report which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by Sam Paul who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

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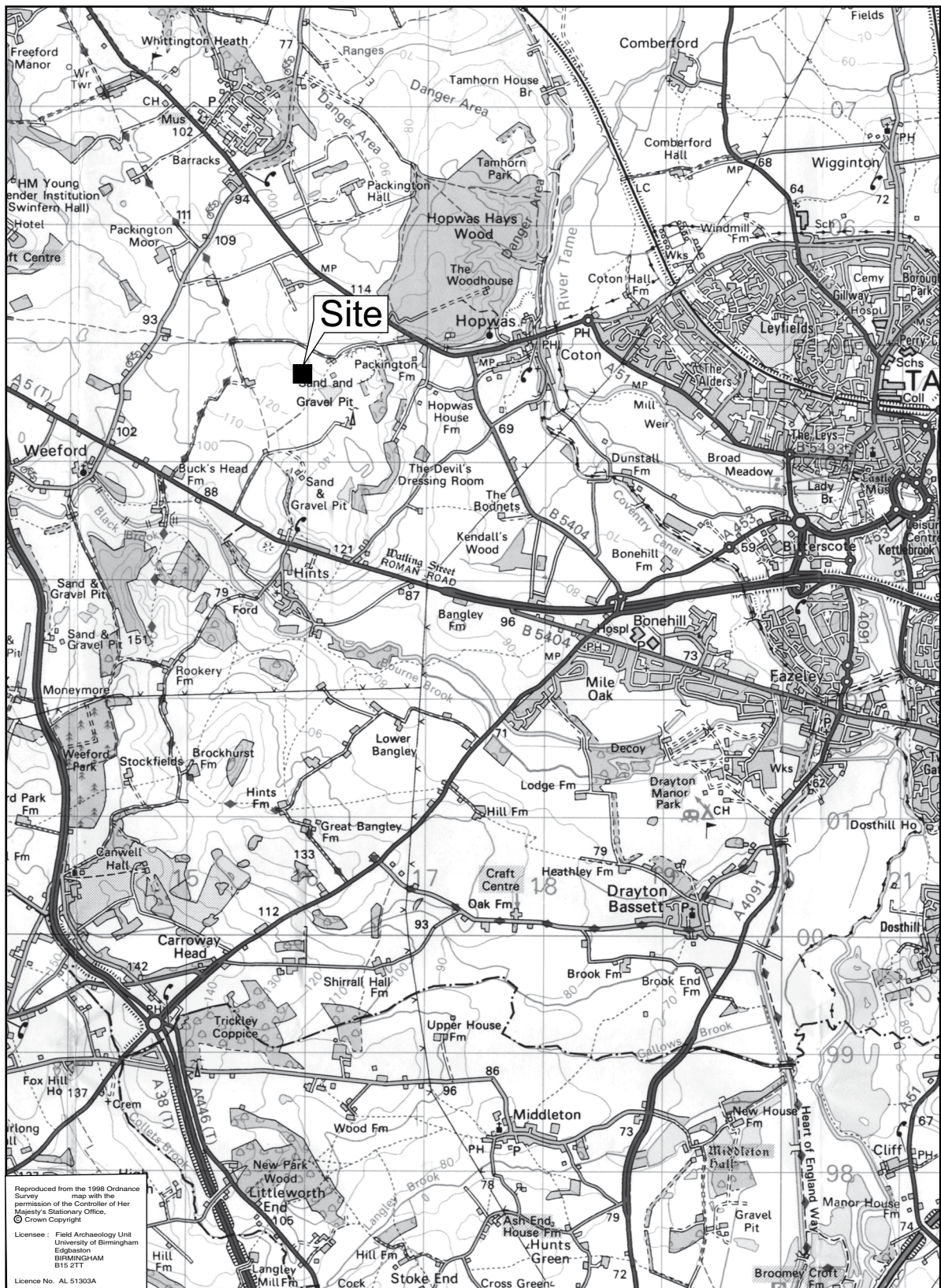


Fig.1

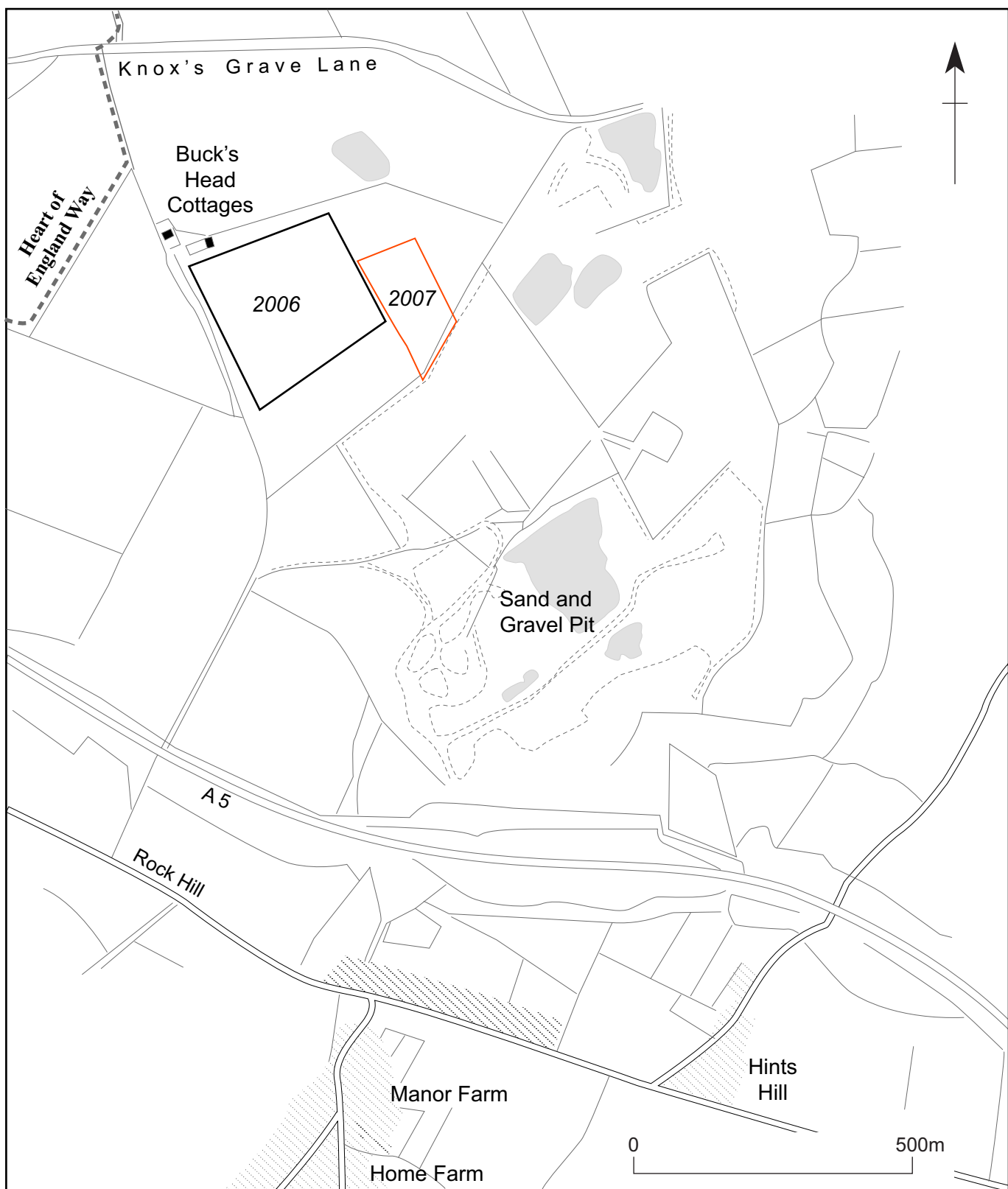


Fig.2

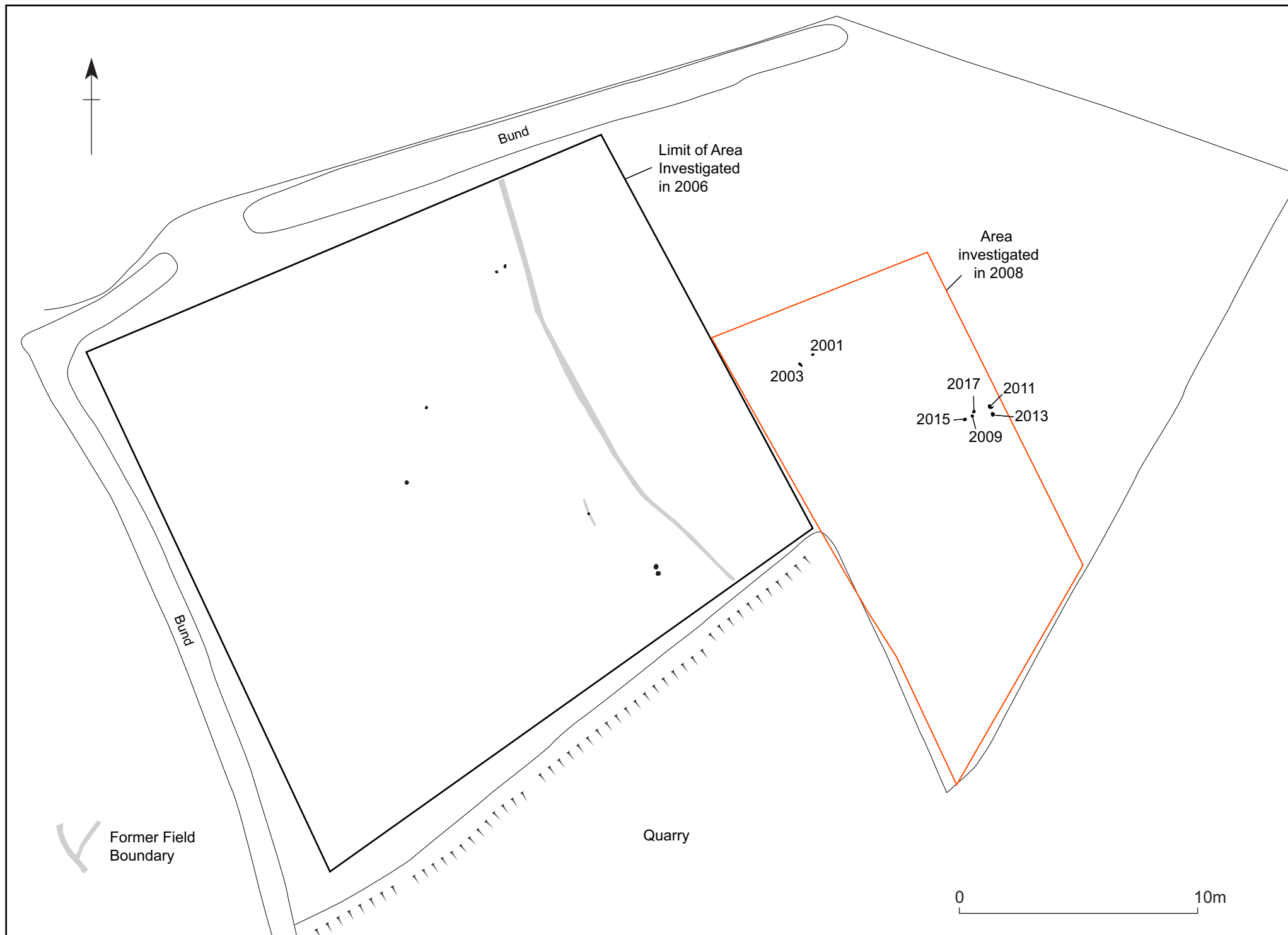


Fig.3

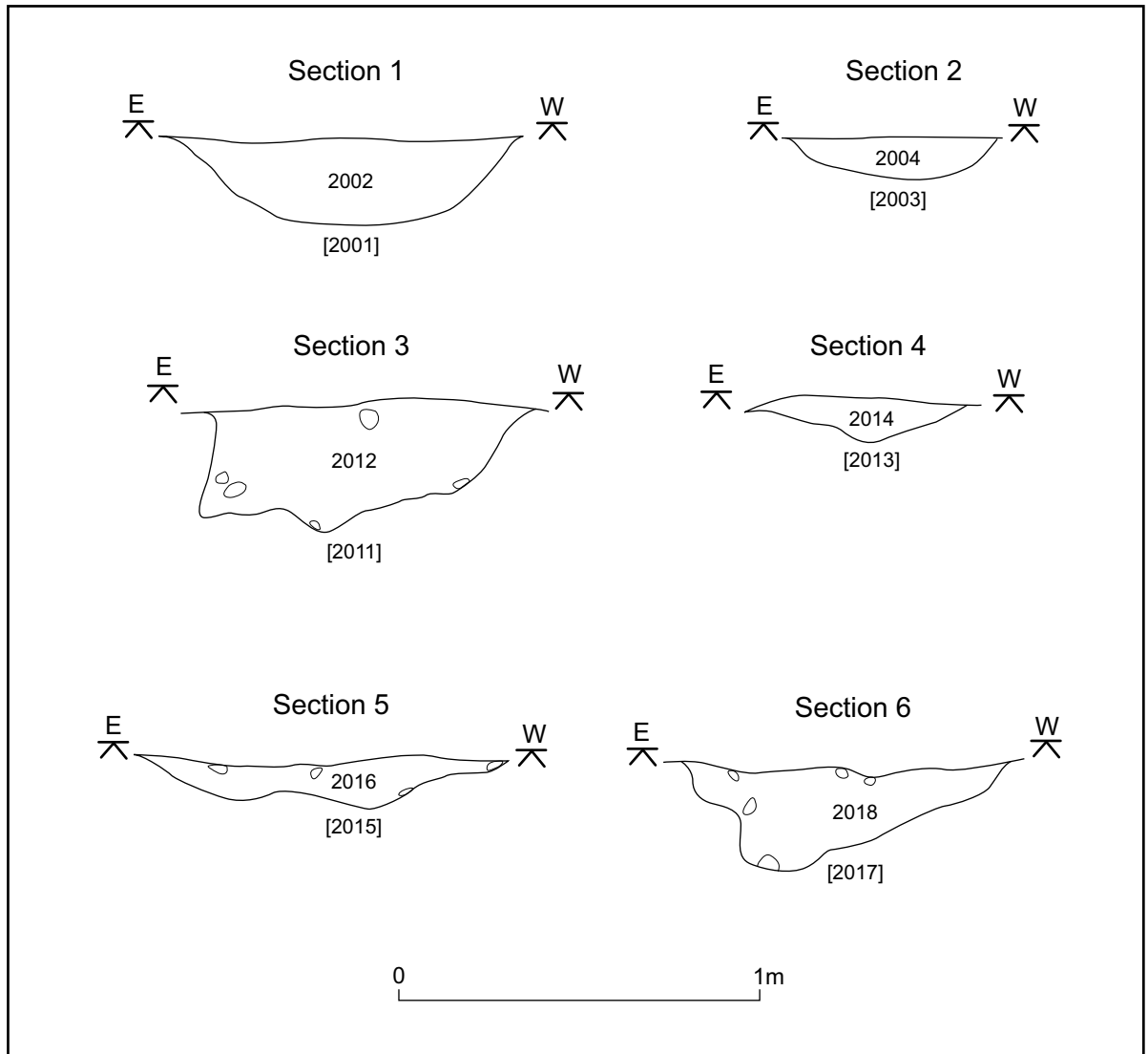


Fig.4