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Northern Archaeological Associates

A69 HALTWHISTLE BYPASS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF

A69 HALTWHISTLE CONSTRUCTION JV

NAA 97/11
February 1997

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A69 HALTWHISTLE BYPASS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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SUMMARY

In June 1996 a watching brief was conducted over a 0.9km section of the route of the A69 Haltwhistle Bypass between NY 700631 and NY 709633, from Bellister Castle westwards towards the embankment of the disused Haltwhistle - Alston Railway line, through which the Bypass is taken.

The A69 Haltwhistle Bypass, which is 3.5km long, forms part of the first tranche of the GovernmentsPrivate Finance Initiative. A contract was let in January 1996 to Road Link (A69) Ltd, to build the Bypass, together with the maintenance of the A69, from Newcastle to Carlisle. The Bypass is being constructed by the "A69 Haltwhistle Construction Joint Venture", as a sub-contractor to Road Link (A69) Ltd. The archaeological work was undetaken on behalf of the Joint Venture by Northern Archaeological Associates.

South of the River South Tyne the bypass route traversed the edge of a late pre-glacial alluvial terrace and areas of more recent alluvium, deposited in the last 10,000 years, to the north. Although it was considered that the more recent alluvium might conceal waterlogged archaeological sites and features of some significance, the terrace was thought not to have been similarly affected and sites of archaeological interest were likely to be confined to the surface in that area. It was on the northern edge of the terrace that the remains of a previously unsuspected Iron Age/Romano-British period site were discovered.

Approximately 600m north-east of Bellister Castle the removal of topsoil revealed an arc of stones forming part of a circular feature some 8.8m in diameter. Hand cleaning of the feature revealed a small concentration of charcoal and burnt bone at its centre and a small pit cutting the northern edge of the arc of stones. The find was initially thought to represent the truncated remains of a barrow with a central cremation, however, on investigation the stone arc proved to form part of the construction trench of a timber-built round house.

Subsequent detailed excavation revealed evidence for the walls of two, timber-built, round houses. The construction trenches survived only as short vestigial arcs between 0.15 - 0.30m deep, filled with packing stones. These would originally have contained contiguous vertical timbers. Associated with the trenches were post holes and an area of cobbling representing part of a porch and a possible yard surface. A shallow pit occupying an approximately central position within one of the round houses contained charcoal and burnt bone from a cremation. The pit contained no evidence of in-situ burning and cannot therefore be interpreted as a hearth. Later analysis of the charcoal and burnt bone identified the presence of human skull fragments, teeth and long bones belonging to an adult. The charcoal comprised fragments of oak, alder and sloe together with two charred barley grains. Two sherds of abraded, but almost certainly Roman, pottery were also recovered in association with the bone and charcoal.

The excavated features probably represent the remains of an Iron Age or Romano-British period site located on a gravel terrace above the River South Tyne. No evidence was identified in the road corridor to the east or west of the roundhouse structures of either a palisade trench or an enclosure ditch, suggesting that the site may have been unenclosed. The majority of Iron-Age/Romano-British settlement sites which have been identified to date are enclosed either by a palisade or ditch, the latter making them particularly recognisable cropmark features.

Cremations and inhumations are not unknown on other Iron Age - Romano-British sites, but normally these are located away from the areas of occupation, either in other parts of the enclosure or in field ditches.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The construction of the A69 Haltwhistle Bypass did not impact upon any known archaeological remains, however, due to the presence of alluvial deposits and numerous palaeochannels in the section of the road corridor south of the River South Tyne it was deemed necessary to undertake a watching brief during the site excavations in this area. An archaeological watching brief commissioned by the A69 Haltwhistle Construction Joint Venture (CJV) in accordance with Annex 14 to Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Agreement has been completed. The watching brief was undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates (NAA) on behalf of the CJV.

This report presents the results of that watching brief and the investigation of a group of archaeological features identified in O.S. Field 6035 at chainage 2030.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The route of the A69 Haltwhistle Bypass runs between NY 690638 and NY 720640, passing to the south of Haltwhistle and to the north of Bellister Castle (Fig. 1). An archaeological inspection was undertaken during site works between chainages 1300 - 2600 to record the archaeological resource during development. To this end a watching brief was conducted over a 0.9km section of the route between NY 700631 and NY 709633, from near Bellister Castle westwards towards the embankment of the disused Haltwhistle - Alston Railway line between 19 - 26 June 1996. All of the fields crossed by this section of the bypass corridor were under pasture at the time the watching brief was undertaken.

South of the river the bypass route traverses the edge of a late Pleistocene alluvial terrace and areas of Holocene age alluvium (deposited in the last 10,000 years) to the north. Although it was considered that the Holocene alluvium might conceal waterlogged archaeological sites and features of some significance, the late Pleistocene terrace was thought not to have been significantly alluviated during the Holocene and that sites of archaeological interest were likely to be confined to the surface in that area. It was on the northern edge of the late Pleistocene terrace that the remains of a previously unsuspected round-house of the Romano-British period were discovered.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The watching brief aimed to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within an area of the proposed road corridor and to determine the extent, condition, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Topsoil, areas of possible buried plough-horizon, and colluvial deposits were removed from the area of the watching brief under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. With the exception of a *c.*2m strip at each side, the whole width of the corridor was stripped from the top of the slight escarpment near the centre of O.S. Field 8135 (from chainage 2250) westwards across O.S. Fields 6035 and 4228 (Fig. 2). To the west of this the road rises up on an embankment, and only a *c.*2m wide trench was stripped across O.S. Fields 2323 and 0010, again under archaeological supervision, in order to observe the subsoils for engineering purposes. An additional *c.*2m wide trench was also monitored crossing part of O.S.Field 0029 adjacent to the River South Tyne.

The resulting surface was then investigated to evaluate the presence/absence of potential archaeological features and a full written, illustrative and photographic record was made of any features subsequently identified in accordance with the NAA standard method (Tavener, N. ed. 1994). Archaeological features observed during the stripping were hand-cleaned and appropriate sections hand-excavated. The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Code of Practice.

5.0 PALAEOCHANNEL TRENCH RESULTS

A trench was excavated by machine running westwards for *c.*20m eastwards from the base of the escarpment within OS Field 8135. As a result of the unstable nature of the deposits encountered, the presence of several large and active field drains, and extremely wet weather, very little standing section could be accurately recorded within this trench, although a record was made of the sequence of deposits within the palaeochannel to a depth of 2.5m, and samples recovered from peat deposits encountered.

A turf horizon 0.08m thick overlay a loose, dark brown mixed peat and clay topsoil extending to a depth of 0.20m. Below this, to a depth of 0.33m, was a firm blueish grey silty clay, above a band of fairly loose coarse grey sand. Between 0.46m and 0.75m below ground level was a complex sequence of layers of firm clays and sands. Below this, from 0.75m to 0.90m, was a mixed soft clay and peat. A thick deposit of running sand below this extended to a depth of 2.00m, above a second layer of peat. Below 2.5m further running sand was encountered and the trench could not be excavated further. Soil samples were recovered from deposits at depths of *c.*0.4m, 0.75m, 0.9m and 2.5m, the latter two being processed and analysed. These produced watterlogged evidence for plant species characteristic of herb-rich sedge/fen meadows. The potential for pollen analysis was considered to be low due to the presence of coarse sand in the samples. (A full analysis is contained in a specialist report in appendix 2)

No archaeological artefacts or deposits were identified within this trench.

6.0 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

The results of the watching brief are presented below under the Ordnance Survey (OS) Field numbers across which the road corridor ran, in order from west to east (Fig. 2). Context numbers are given in square brackets eg [108].

6.1 OS Field 0029

Topsoil was removed from a strip *c*.2m wide running along the corridor near its northern side across this field. Most of the length of this strip was occupied by a palaeochannel of the River South Tyne filled with silts and clays. No peat deposits or archaeological features were identified.

6.2 OS Field 0010

A *c*.2m wide trench was stripped across this field near the centre of the road corridor. A palaeochannel of the River South Tyne, infilled with clays and silts, extended from the western side of the field for *c*.60m. The east of this the field rose up onto a slight gravel terrace. A test pit excavated by machine into the palaeochannel to a depth of *c*.2m did not uncover any peat deposits. However, after drainage had been inserted along the northern side of the new road corridor, peat was observed on the resulting spoil heap at chainage 1520.

No archaeological deposits were identified in this field.

6.3 OS Field 2323 (Features 1, 3, 7 and 11)

A trench *c*.2m wide was stripped of topsoil and colluvium across this field, along the centre of the road corridor. The subsoil consisted of mixed light and mid brown sands and light grey clayey sand [28], *c*.0.5m thick above river-laid gravels. The subsoil was below a *c*.0.2m thick layer of a fairly compact, mid to dark brown slightly silty sand [27] interpreted as an old plough horizon. Above this was a friable, dark brown silty sand topsoil and turf [26] which was generally *c*.0.15m thick.

Four archaeological features were observed within this field. A subrectangular pit [1] was located 3.5m from, and parallel to, the western field boundary. It measured 1.6m by 0.6m and survived to a depth of 0.55m (1.15m from ground surface). It was filled with a dark brown silty sand [2] with moderate medium sized stones towards the top and occasional smaller pebbles towards the base. A sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from this feature, which, from its form and location, was interpreted as a possible sheep burial. The absence of bone within the pit can be explained by the general acidity of the soils in this locality.

Three parallel features were observed crossing the trench from northeast to southwest (Fig. 3). A stone-lined field drain [3] was located 25.5m from the western field boundary. It had roughly coursed side walls constructed of unshaped cobbles and was capped with a single line of unshaped slabs measuring up to 0.5m long and 0.13m thick. Overall the drain was up to 0.5m wide and 0.3m high, and was observed for a length of 2.8m. The interior of the drain, 0.18m wide, was filled with a compact, dark brown sandy clay [5] up to 0.15m thick. It was constructed within a linear construction trench [4] which cut plough horizon [27] and measured *c*.0.7m wide and 0.6m deep with a flat-based 'u'-profile. The backfill [6] of the construction trench consisted of cobbles around and over the drain, within a matrix of compact, friable, dark brown silty sand, which also filled the upper part of the cut and was sealed by topsoil [26]. No dating evidence was recovered for this feature.

A second stone-built field drain [7] was located 3m to the east of drain [3]. It had roughly coursed side walls constructed of unshaped subangular cobbles measuring up to 0.4m, and was capped with a single line of re-used stone roofing slates of a variety of sizes and forms. Three examples of these were retained. Overall the drain measured 0.6m wide and 0.25m high, and was observed for a length of 3.3m. It had internal dimensions of 0.23m wide by 0.22m thick, and was filled with a compact, dark brown sandy clay [9] which was oxidised red towards the base. The drain was within a linear construction trench [8] which was only observed where it cut into the top of natural subsoil [28]. The trench, which had 'v'-shaped profile, had a width of 1.1m and a depth of 0.5m. It was backfilled with rounded cobbles in a matrix of fairly compact dark brown silty sand [10]. Again, no dating evidence for this feature was recovered, although the presence of the stone roofing slates suggested a late medieval or post-medieval date.

A third parallel linear cut [11] was located 3m to the east of drain [7]. It was 0.8m wide and 0.35m deep with a flat-based 'u'-shaped profile, and was observed for a length of 3m. It was cut from the top of subsoil [28]. Its fill [12] consisted of two distinct deposits. Around the base and sides of the cut was a mixed dark greyish brown silty sand and dark brown clayey sand, whilst towards the centre and top of the deposit was a friable mixed black silt and orange-brown sand. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature, which possibly represented a third, 'robbed-out', field-drain.

6.4 OS Field 4228

The full width of the corridor was stripped of topsoil in this field under archaeological supervision. A similar sequence of ploughsoil, a buried plough horizon and alluvial subsoil to that seen in OS Field 2323 was recorded.

No archaeological features were observed within this field.

6.5 OS Field 6035

The full width of the corridor was stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision within this field. The soil and subsoil sequence was similar to that observed within OS Fields 2323 and 4228.

A group of features noted during topsoil stripping and subsequently subjected to further excavation are described below in section 7.0.

An additional curvilinear feature [15] was observed *c.*30m from the eastern side of the field, running eastwards and then southeastwards from a rounded western terminal. It was *c.*3.2m wide, cut 0.3m into subsoil, and extended for more than 9m. The eastern end was obscured beneath a spoil heap. It had a shallow, flat-based 'u'-shaped profile, and had a fill [16] of a dark reddish brown silt above a dark grey humic sandy silt containing recognisable straw fragments. This feature was considered by the field archaeologist to be recent in origin, although no dateable finds were recovered.

6.6 OS Field 8135

The corridor within the western half of this field ran along the top of the gravel terrace, then ran down a short escarpment to a palaeochannel of the River South Tyne occupying the eastern half of the field. A trench was excavated into the palaeochannel and the sequence of deposits recorded as described in section 5.0 above. On top of the gravel terrace the topsoil was a very dark brown silty sand, up to 0.15m thick, generally directly overlying undifferentiated rounded gravels in a matrix of very slightly silty dark yellowish brown sand of mixed grain size.

The western field boundary consisted of a very slight hedgebank surmounted by a modern fence. Several trees surviving from the former hedge were noted to the north of the road corridor. An infilled ditch [22] was observed at the western side of this boundary, of which it was probably a part. It was not excavated. It was c.2m wide and was filled with a dark greyish brown sandy silt [23] containing frequent gravel. A shotgun cartridge observed within this deposit suggested that it had been infilled fairly recently.

A second, parallel, ditch [24] was located 4.5m to the east of the western field boundary. It was 1.75m wide, c.0.35m deep and had a flat-based 'u'-profile. It was observed for a length of 5m at the southern side of the corridor, being obscured to the north by a spoil heap. It was filled with a friable, dark brown silty sand [25] containing moderate small and medium sized rounded gravel. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature, which, from its location, alignment and the more leached state of its fill, probably represented an earlier phase of the western field boundary.

7.0 EXCAVATION RESULTS

Near the centre of the corridor within O.S. Field 6035 at chainage 2030, machine stripping revealed an arc of stones forming the south-eastern half of a sub-circle 8.8m in diameter (Fig. 4 & Plate 1). Hand cleaning of the feature revealed a small concentration of charcoal and burnt bone at its centre (Plate 2) and a north to south aligned subrectangular pit cutting the northern edge of the arc of the stones. The find was initially thought likely to represent the truncated remains of a barrow with a central cremation. Subsequent excavation confirmed that the calcined bone was part of a human cremation, however, the surrounding arc of stones proved to be part of a narrow wall trench for a round house.

The primary feature identified within feature group [21] was a narrow trench [20] which formed the southeastern half of a circle measuring 8.8m in diameter (Plate 3). The trench could be traced for *c.*14m and was packed with stones measuring between 0.2m to 0.7m in diameter, in a friable dark brown silty sand matrix [19]. In places the flatter stones were set on edge against the sides of the cut (Plate 4), while elsewhere it was completely filled with rounded cobbles. The feature measured *c.*0.4m wide and *c.*0.3m deep with a 'u'-shaped profile (Fig. 5, section D) and was interpreted as the construction trench for the wall of a timber-built round house. In some areas it was very difficult to define the edge of the wall-trench, particularly within transect [33] (see below) where the stones within fill [19] were visible, but the sides of the cut containing them could not clearly be identified in either plan or section. On the northeastern side, the line of the trench was only identifiable due to differential drying, the fill of the trench remaining damp longer than the surrounding subsoil after rain. No finds were recovered from this feature. A bulk soil sample was taken for palaeoenvironmental analysis (see appendix 2), although this produced only small flakes of wood charcoal.

An area of cobbles representing a possible internal surface [36] extended *c.*1m southwards from the southern side of wall-trench [20] and joined a second area of cobbles which appeared to represent an external surface running from east to west for a distance of *c.*5m. The layers of cobbles were *c.*0.1m thick and consisted of rounded stones measuring up to 150mm in a matrix of fairly loose dark brown silty sand. At the junction of this layer with trench [20] a number of large flat stones were removed during topsoil stripping, and may have represented a threshold or further area of paving. At the western side of the cobbling, immediately adjacent to the external side of trench [20], was an oval posthole [34]. It measured 0.70m from north to south by 0.45m east to west, and survived to a depth of 0.18m with a flat-based 'u'-shaped profile (Fig. 5, section E). It was filled with a fairly compact, dark brown silty sand [35] containing *c.*30% rounded stones forming a post-packing suggesting a post-pipe against the eastern side of the posthole. Cobbled surface [36] may have butted to these packing stones, although the relationship had been rather disturbed during stripping. This posthole could have been part of a porch structure associated with the entrance implied by cobbled surface [36], although no corresponding posthole could be identified.

In the centre of the area defined by trench [20] was a large, shallow, subcircular hollow [18] measuring *c.*2.8m by 2.6m. It survived to a depth of 0.15m and had a rather irregular profile and base (Fig. 5, section A). It was surrounded by a band of red, sandy subsoil *c.*0.5m wide. It was filled with a friable, dark yellowish brown sandy silt [17/29], with moderate lenses of olive grey sandy silt, probably ash, concentrated around the edges and base, and moderate small rounded stones. Iron panning was noted in patches at the margins. There was a concentration of charcoal and calcined bone towards the centre of the deposit (Plate 2). No burnt stones were noted, but three fragments of completely abraded Samian pottery in an orange-red fabric were recovered. A bulk soil sample was taken to recover the calcined bone and for palaeoenvironmental analysis of any charcoal. Subsequent analysis of the bone confirmed that it belonged to a human adult and the feature has therefore been interpreted as the truncated remains of a cremation.

Between cremation pit [18] and trench [20] to the south was another curved trench [40]. It ran for a length of 4.1m and was generally 0.4m wide, increasing to 0.6m at each end to form rounded pit-like terminals (Plate 3). It was 0.15m deep with a 'u'-shaped profile, and was filled with a fairly compact, dark brown silty sand [39] containing moderate large rounded stones measuring up to 0.25m (Fig. 5, section C). No stratigraphic relationship survived between this feature and any other part of group [21], but it is interpreted as a construction trench for an earlier, timber-built, round house. I

Traces of a subrectangular pit [13], orientated from north to south were identified north of trench [20]. It measured *c.*1.5m long, 0.6m wide, and survived to a depth of 0.25m, with a 'u'-shaped profile (Fig. 5, section B). Its margins were very indistinct. It was filled with a very clean dark brown silty sand [14]. No finds were recovered from this feature, and its date and function were not determined.

An isolated posthole [37] was located *c.*2m to the southeast of trench [20]. The posthole was subcircular in plan, measuring 0.7m by 0.6m, and survived to a depth of 0.4m (Fig. 5, section F). Its fill [38] consisted of *c.*60% large packing stones in a matrix of dark yellowish brown silty sand. A probable postpipe *c.*0.10m was located against the northeastern side of the cut.

Two transects were excavated outwards from near the centre of the trench towards the north and east. Transect [30] extended northwards from the northern edge of the burnt sand surrounding hollow [18] for a distance of 3.8m. It was excavated to a width of 1m. No archaeological features were identified. It revealed the the upper northwestern side of a palaeochannel [31] running from southwest to northeast beneath feature group [21]. This was gently sloping and was observed to a depth of 0.6m. The palaeochannel could be seen to have an overall width of *c.*10m. In the area of transect [30] it had a fill [32] consisting of compact dark brown silty clay above friable dark brown sandy silt. Both layers contained small coal fragments. The second transect excavated ([33]), extending from the eastern edge of the burnt sand around

hearth [18] eastwards for 3.4m, revealed a similar sequence of palaeochannel fills above coarse sands. It was excavated to a depth of 0.9m and the base of the palaeochannel was not reached.

8.0 DISCUSSION

The investigation of the palaeochannel immediately west of the Haltwhistle to Alston railway line identified several peat layers which produced evidence for a monocot (sedge/grass) peat development typical of more alluvial soils and high water tables. The samples taken were found to have such a coarse sand matrix that any pollen preserved would be of questionable validity. The watching brief did *not* identify additional pockets of peat in other areas which might have provided a sequence of material suitable for pollen analysis.

The majority of the features identified and investigated during the watching brief proved to relate pits and drains which were post-medieval in date. However, in OS field 6035 a small group of features were identified which represented the remains of two Iron Age or Romano-British period round houses. Although no direct phasing or dating evidence was recovered, the intersecting alignment of the wall trenches implies that there were two phases of construction. A shallow hollow or pit at the centre of one of the round houses was found to contain the partial remains of a human cremation.

The wall trenches for the round houses survived only as short vestigial arcs between 0.15 - 0.30m deep, filled with packing stones. These would originally have contained contiguous vertical timbers. Associated with the trenches were post holes and an area of cobbling representing part of a porch and a possible yard surface. The shallow pit containing the cremation occupied an approximately central position within one of the round houses, although its contemporaneity could not be demonstrated stratigraphically. The pit contained no evidence of in-situ burning and later analysis of the charcoal and burnt bone identified the presence of human skull fragments, teeth and long bones belonging to an adult. The charcoal comprised fragments of oak, alder and sloe, together with two charred barley grains, and fragments of the relatively short-lived species have been sent for radiocarbon dating. Three sherds of badly abraded Roman pottery (Samian) were also recovered in association with the bone and charcoal.

The site was located on a gravel terrace above the River South Tyne at 115m AOD. No evidence was identified in the road corridor to the east or west of the round house structures of either a palisade trench or an enclosure ditch, which typically enclose such sites, suggesting that it may have been unenclosed. The majority of Iron-Age/Romano-British settlement sites which have been identified are enclosed by a ditch, making them particularly recognisable features on aerial photographs. Several such sites are recorded in the Haltwhistle area at Milking Gap and on Broomhouse Common (NAR NO: NY 76 SW 17). Evidence of unenclosed 'hut-cluster' type sites has previously been found in adjacent upland areas, however, the excavated examples have

produced a broad range of dating evidence from the 2nd millenium B.C. (Houseledge, Northumberland) to the later pre-Roman Iron Age (Percy Rigg, Kildale). At Roxby there was evidence of occupation huts within the enclosure and additional storage or working sheds built outside. In West Yorkshire, recent excavation of enclosure sites has demonstrated that huts can occur outside the enclosure rather than within it. Nevertheless, in south Northumberland, the exact status of unenclosed sites in the overall settlement pattern remains a matter of conjecture.

The size and form of the timber-built round house at Haltwhistle is directly comparable to those excavated, for example, by Jobey I. & G. (1988) at Gowanburn River Camp in North Tynedale. The trenches of the houses there also survived only as vestigial arcs. House 3 in particular exhibited evidence of internal paving, postholes associated with a doorway and a burnt central area marking the position of former hearth. No parallels have been found to date for the location of a cremation in this type of domestic context.

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Illustrations: R. Simpson

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APPENDIX 1 - HUMAN CREMATION

by Dr Joy Langston

A small concentration of calcined bone was identified in the upper part of the fill of pit 18 and recovered as a bulk sample for analysis. The sample was a mixture of stones/sand particles and small fragments of calcined bone (regular buff-cream/brown grey colour: there are no black charred or blue grey fragments).

Methodology

The cremation remains were washed through a fine *c*.1mm seive. Larger particles of the washed-through material (predominantly grains of sand and very small fragments of bone) were held on a gauze mesh (*c*.0.5mm) and both fractions dried. The material from the seive was then passed through stacking seives of 10mm, 5mm and 2mm and bone fragments separated from the stone in each fraction. The three bone samples collected were then weighed:-

Retained by 2mm	19.8g
Retained by 5mm	87.0g
Retained by 10mm	42.9g

Although, as stated earlier, it was noted that very small fragments of bone were retained with the sand on the fine gauze it was found impracticable to try to separate these, and as their weight would have been negligible and no additional information gained by their inclusion, they were not included in the analysis. The total weight of the cremated bone is therefore 149.7g. This is a very low value - for example, the average weight of the cremated remains recovered at Spong was 812.4g. The probable explanation for this would be that not all of the cremated bone was preserved in the burial at Haltwhistle due to selection of particular bones/parts from the site of the burning (pyre).

Results

There were only 45 fragments retained in the larger fraction (10mm seive): the largest, a fragment of long bone shaft, measured only 27mm x 15mm. The generally small size of the fragments meant that whilst it was possible to note peices from long bones of larger diameter (femur, humerus, tibia) and smaller diameter (radius ulna, fibula) it was impossible to positively identify fragments from a particular bone. The only *positive* identifications in the larger size fractions were five skull fragments (weight 6.1g).

In the second fraction, (retained by the 5mm seive), the only positively identified fragments were the distal end of a phalanx (of unknown position in either hand or foot: weight 1.2g) and six tooth root fragments (weight 4.5g). There were no identifiable fragments among those retained in the 2mm seive.

The lack of identifiable bone and the small fragment size suggests that the bone may have been deliberately broken after burning prior to being buried. There is no obvious replication of any bone parts and it is assumed that the

fragments represent the remains of a single individual. It is accepted that the small fragment size makes it difficult to be absolutely certain about this (due to recognition/identification problems), but the low weight and volume of the remains strongly indicate that they are from one person, as multiple cremated remains are generally heavier and of greater volume.

Conclusions

Only one individual is likely to be represented by the calcined bone. The identifiable fragments comprise: skull, phalanx, teeth roots (upper pre-molar, probable canine and three others - no crowns have survived). The recognisable fragments comprise: long bone shaft (larger and smaller diameter but none positively identifiable due to small overall size). As the teeth remains are from the permanent dentition, the age at death is adult. The bone structure and cortical development is also of an adult. Sex, however, is unknown. There are no diagnostic bones or parts surviving.

The *weight* and *volume* of these cremated remains is *low* suggesting that not all of the burnt remains were collected for burial. In addition the *size* of the fragments is *small* indicating probable deliberate breakage of cremated remains before burial. This causes obvious problems in positive identification of bone, and also means that information has been lost (i.e. more definite estimation of age at death, sex and pathology).

APPENDIX 2 - ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

by J.P. Huntley

Introduction

Bulk samples of selected material from four contexts, [17, 19 106 and 108], were taken and supplied to the laboratory for assessment of their potential to provide palaeoenvironmental information.

Methodology

The bulk samples were manually floated and both flot and residue retained upon 500μ mesh. After drying residues were scanned for artefactual material and the flots for biological material.

Results

A sample was recovered from peat layer 108 in palaeochannel 100, at a depth of 2.0 -2.5m below ground level and 16 litres were processed. The flots contained predominantly monocot stems and leaves (sedges/grasses) with occasional fragments of glassy charcoal and coal. The remaining mineral component was heavily encrusted by an ochreous material characteristic, in appearance, of mineral/coal workings in the area. Occasional fly puparia were recorded as well as moderate number of fragments of insect. One caddis fly case was present. Seeds were all preserved through "waterlogging" with many trigonous sedge (*Carex* trigonous) nutlets. Examples of lenticular sedges (*Carex* lenticular), buttercups (*Ranunculus repens* and *Ranunculus bulbosus/acris*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and Isolepis setacea were recorded giving the general impression of deposition in a wet fen, sedge meadow. These are typical communities on somewhat mineral sub-strates and high water tables thus developing a peat. One charred oat (*Avena*) grain was present. There is, therefore, minimal evidence of human activity in this deposit and, likewise, no evidence for a date.

A sample recovered from peat layer 106 in palaeochannel 100, at 0.9m below ground level, which produced about 2 litres of fine monocot peat (16 litres processed) - stems and root sheaths again with some bryophyte fragments. These were from *Acrocladium cuspidatum*, a plant typical of wet fen meadow situations. No seeds were seen but low concentrations are expected in such peat material.

Context 19 (8.4 litres processed), from a semi-circular trench related to a round house, produced a flot consisting of a wad of fine modern rootlets with a small amount of flaky charcoal. This was largely from just under the bark and included bark in many cases. Occasional fragments of coal were present. No seeds at all were seen. The residue consisted of mineral material and a few fragments of charcoal.

Context 17 (19 litres processed) produced a moderate sized flot of predominantly charcoal. Oak, alder and sloe (*Prunus cf. spinosa*) were all

present but no attempt was made to determine proportions. Other species may have been present. The residue contained large numbers of tiny fragments of human bone. Two charred barley grains were present in the flot but were badly preserved. No other seeds were seen. Although the charcoal was from trunk/branch material rather than twigs it would be appropriate for dating given that the species, with the exception of the oak, are relatively short-lived trees.

Discussion

The palaeochannel deposits produced evidence for a monocot (sedge/grass) peat development with taxa characteristic of herb-rich sedge-fen meadows. These are typical of more alluvial/mineral soils and high water tables thus the peat forms through poor rates of decay of the vegetation. There is minimal evidence for this being a waterlain peat since no aquatic taxa were recorded. The samples contained a coarse sand matrix and the angular nature of the sand would suggest a high proportion of degraded and broken pollen grains from simple physical movement. It is not considered that it would be worthwhile to carry out palynological investigation of this material.

The two samples from the archaeological features produced two charred barley grains and numerous fragments of calcined human bone. Datable charcoal was recovered from the pit containing the bone but, from the palaeoenvironmental point of view, dating is unnecessary and no further analysis is required.

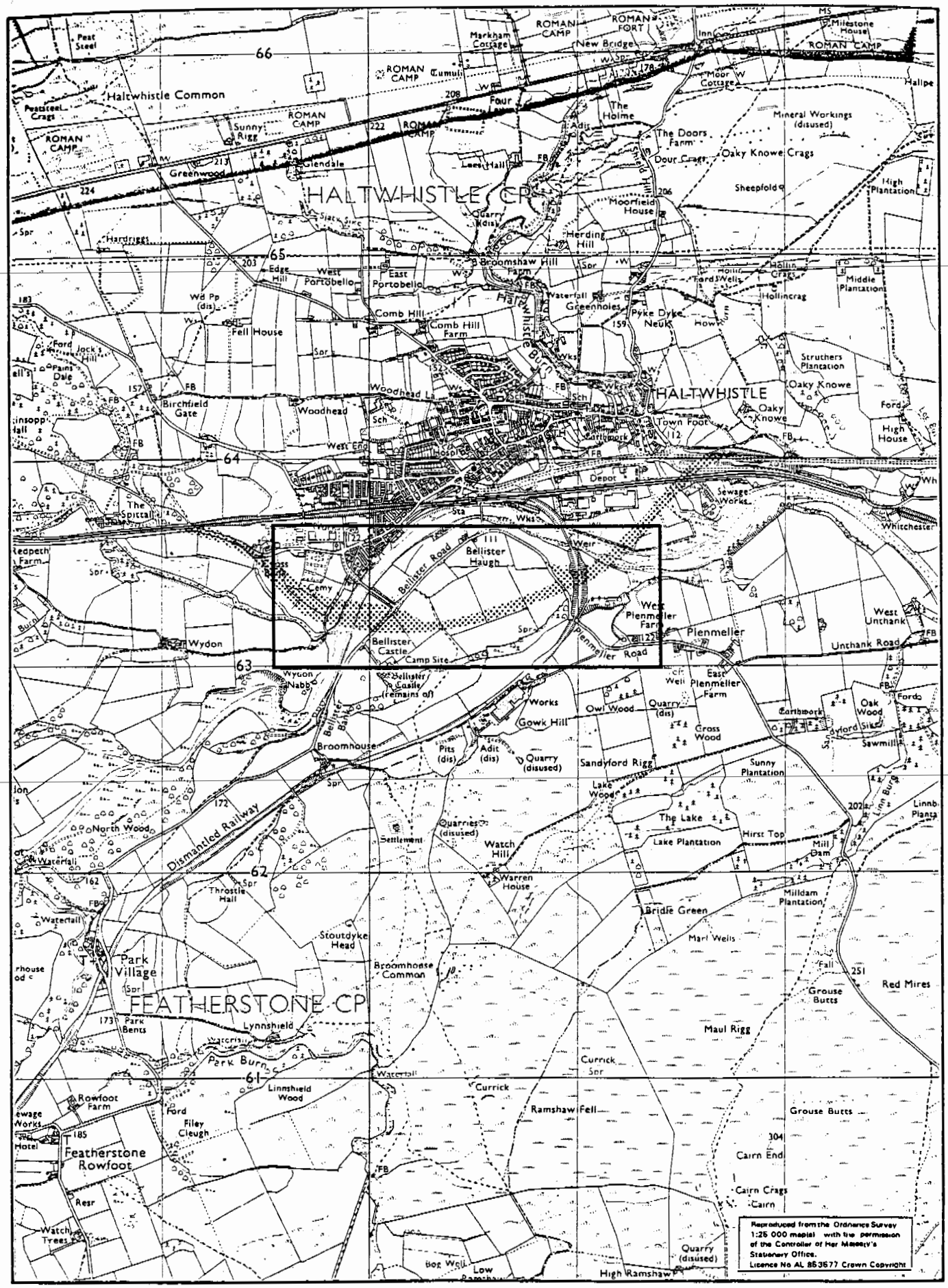


Fig. 1 Road corridor location (tone)

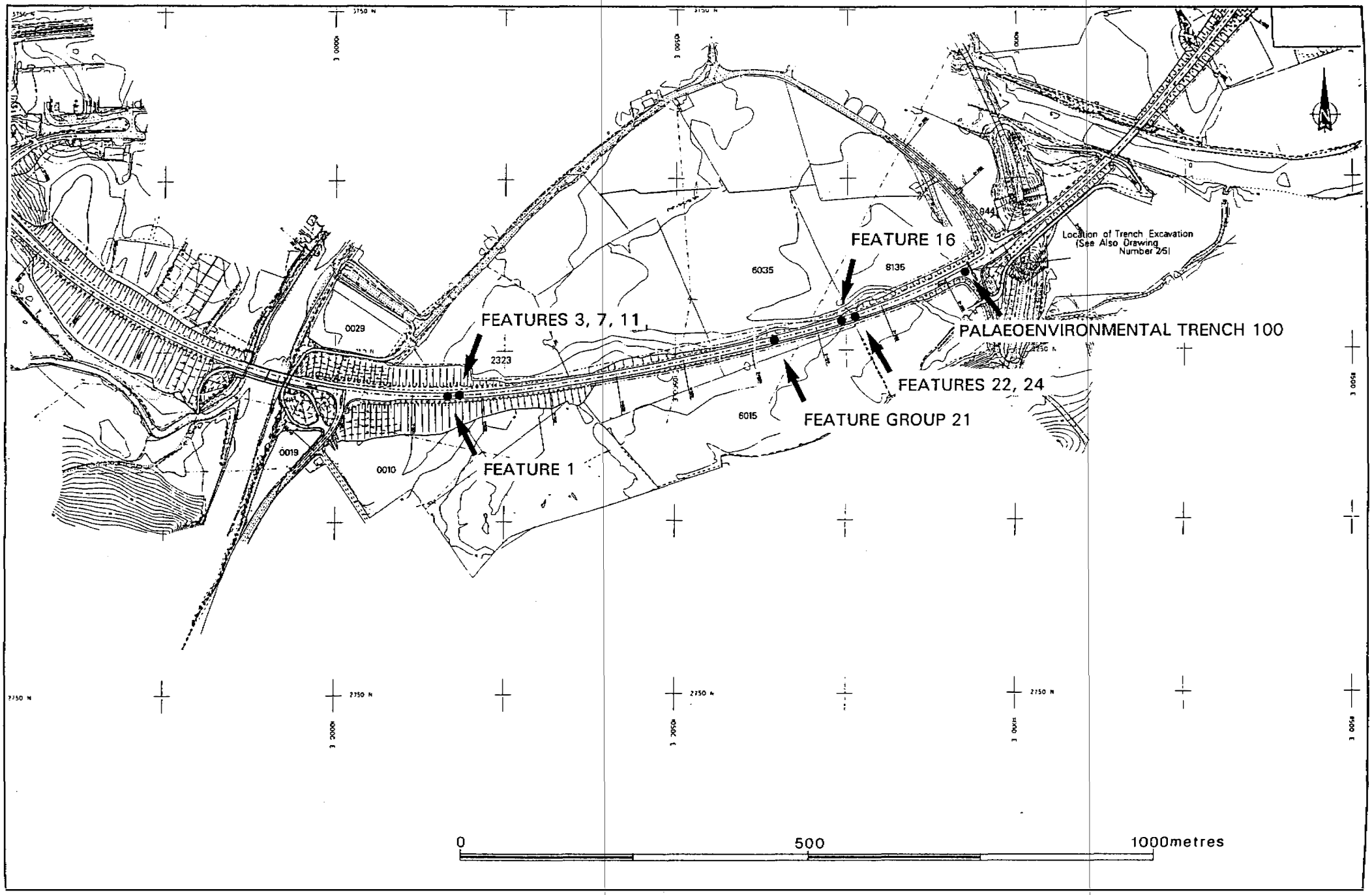


Fig. 2 Plan of bypass under construction with location of archaeological features

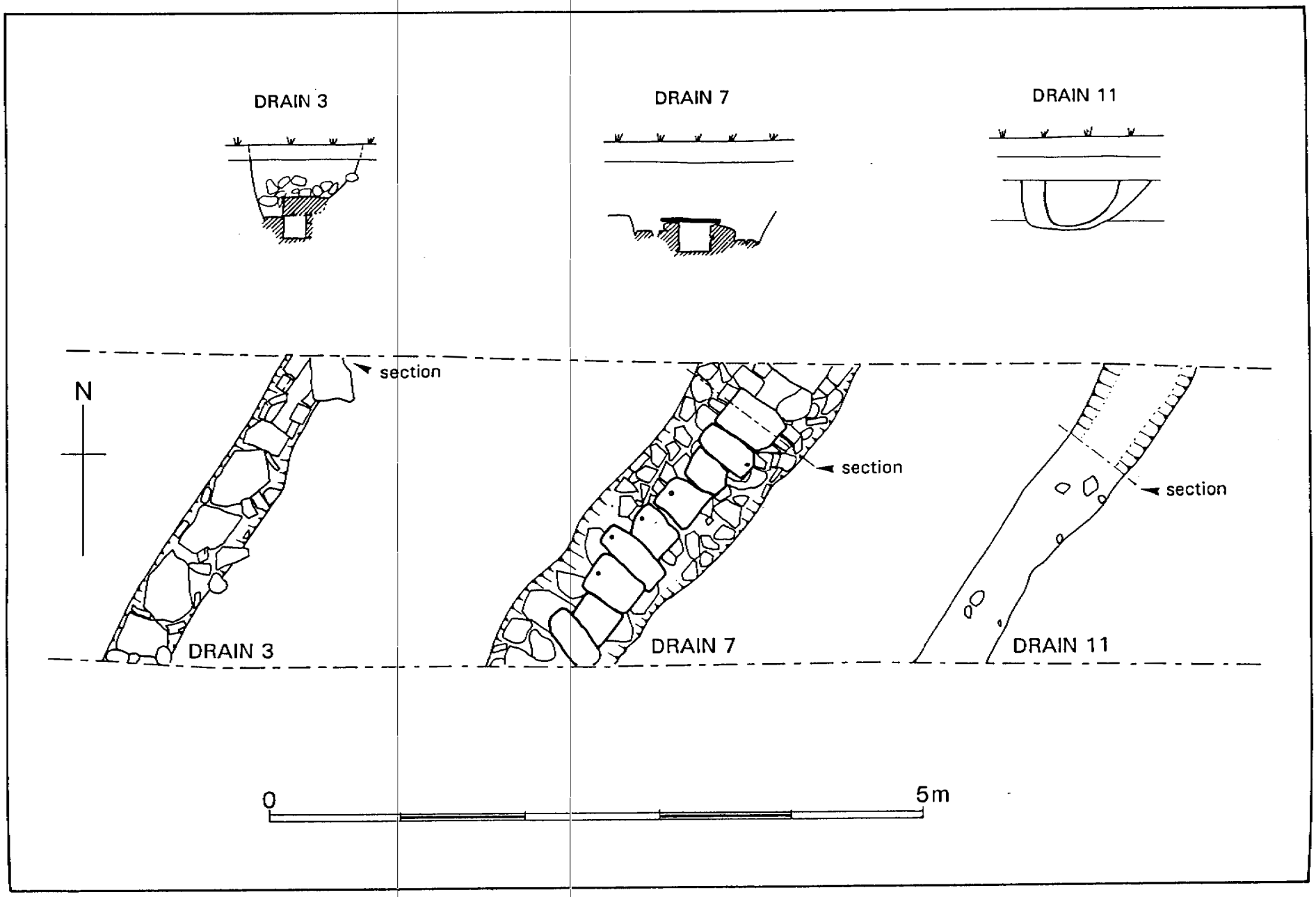


Fig 3 OS Field 2323 Features 3, 7 and 11 (field drains)

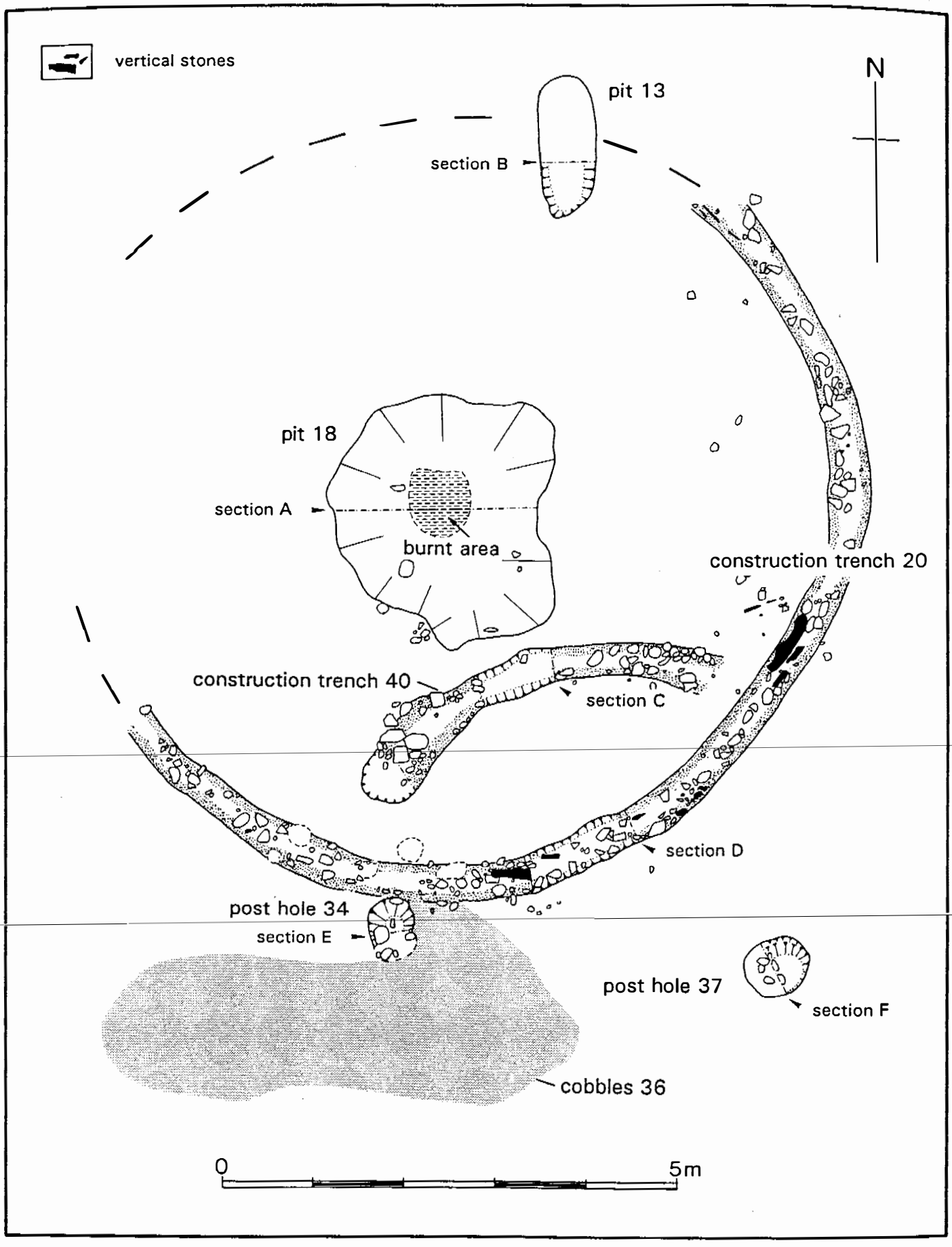


Fig. 4 OS Field 6035. Feature Group 21

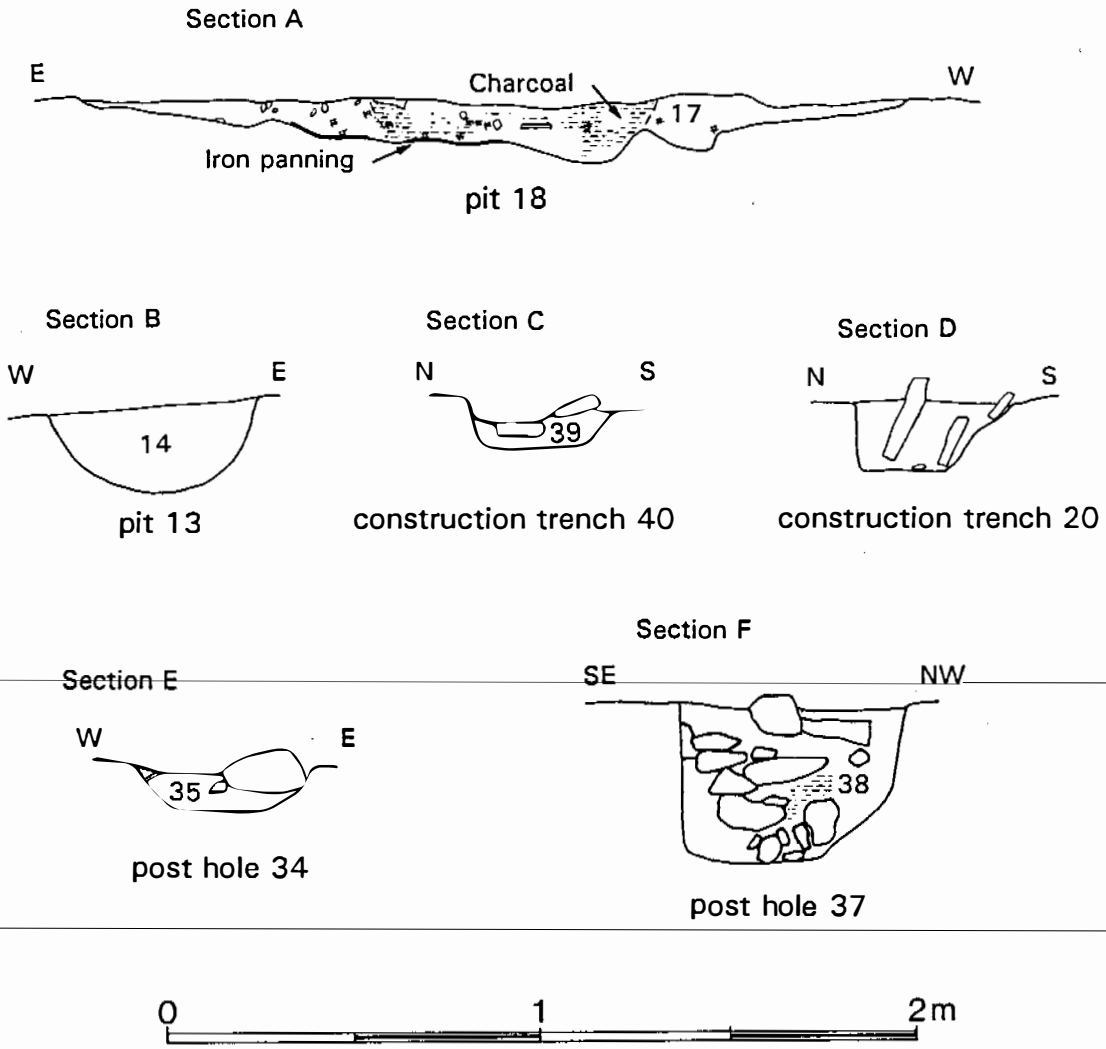


Fig. 5 Feature Group 21 sections

Plate 1: Overall view of round house (feature group 21)

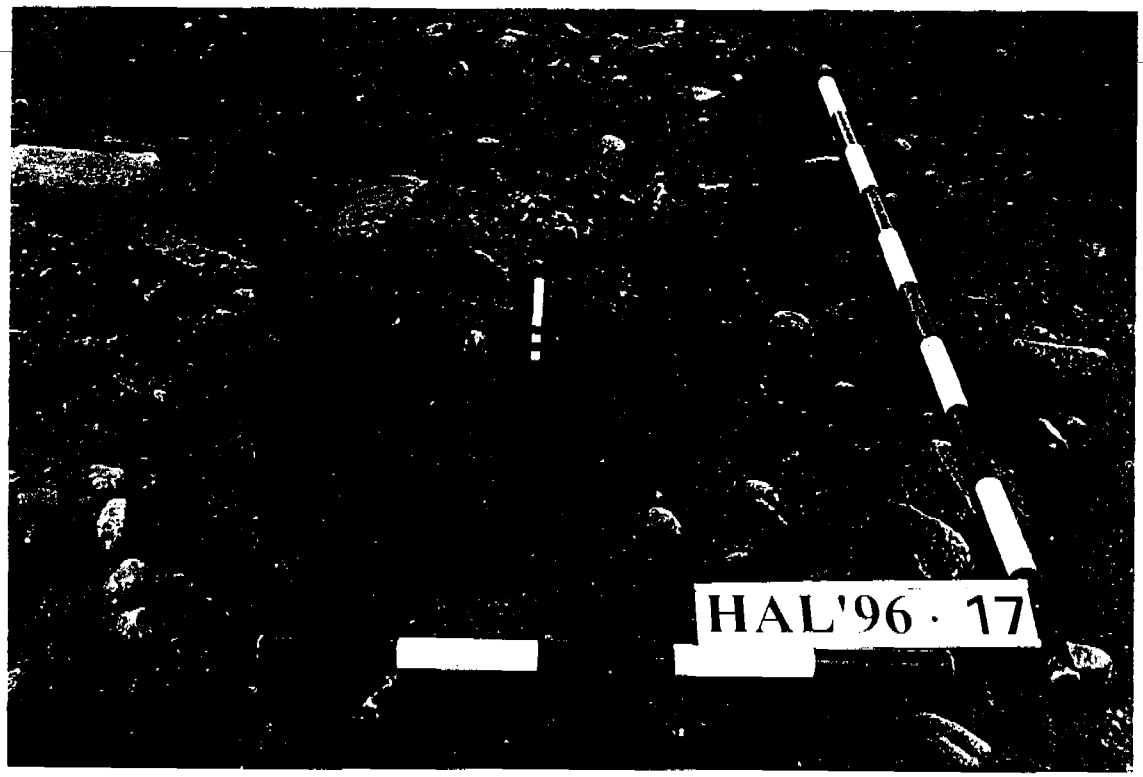


Plate 2: Detail of pit containing cremated human bone (half-sectioned)

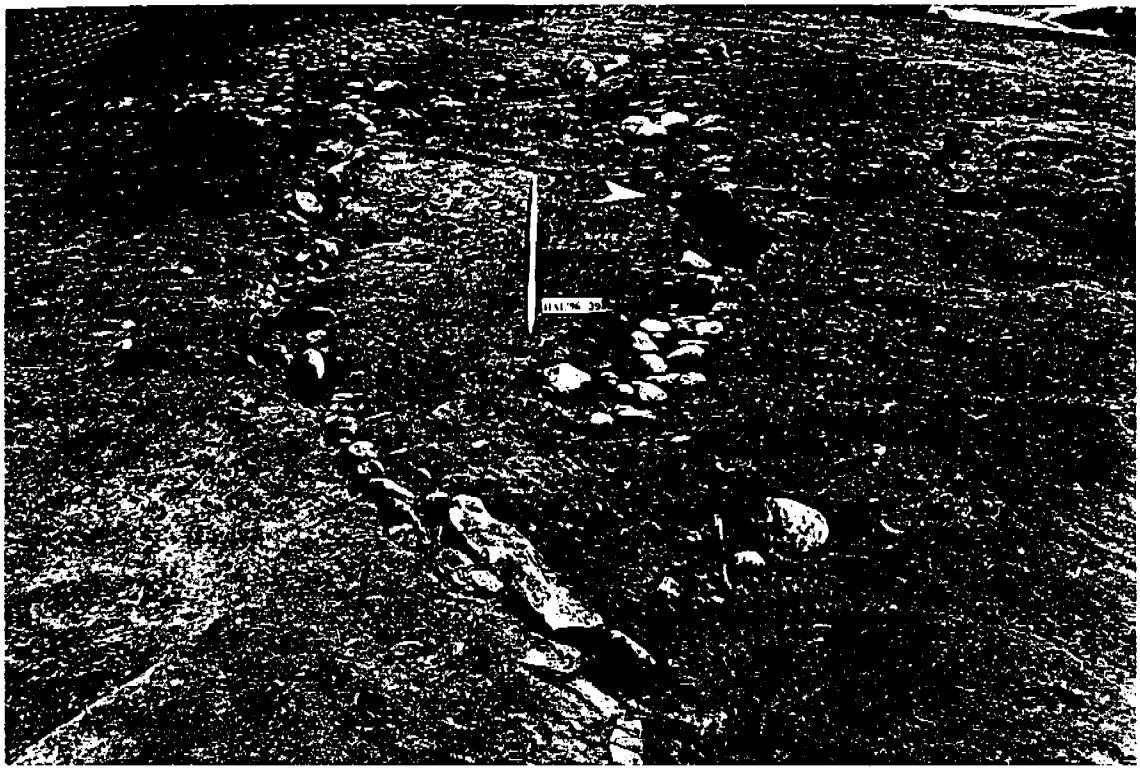


Plate 3: Detail of wall trenches 20 (left) and 40 (right)

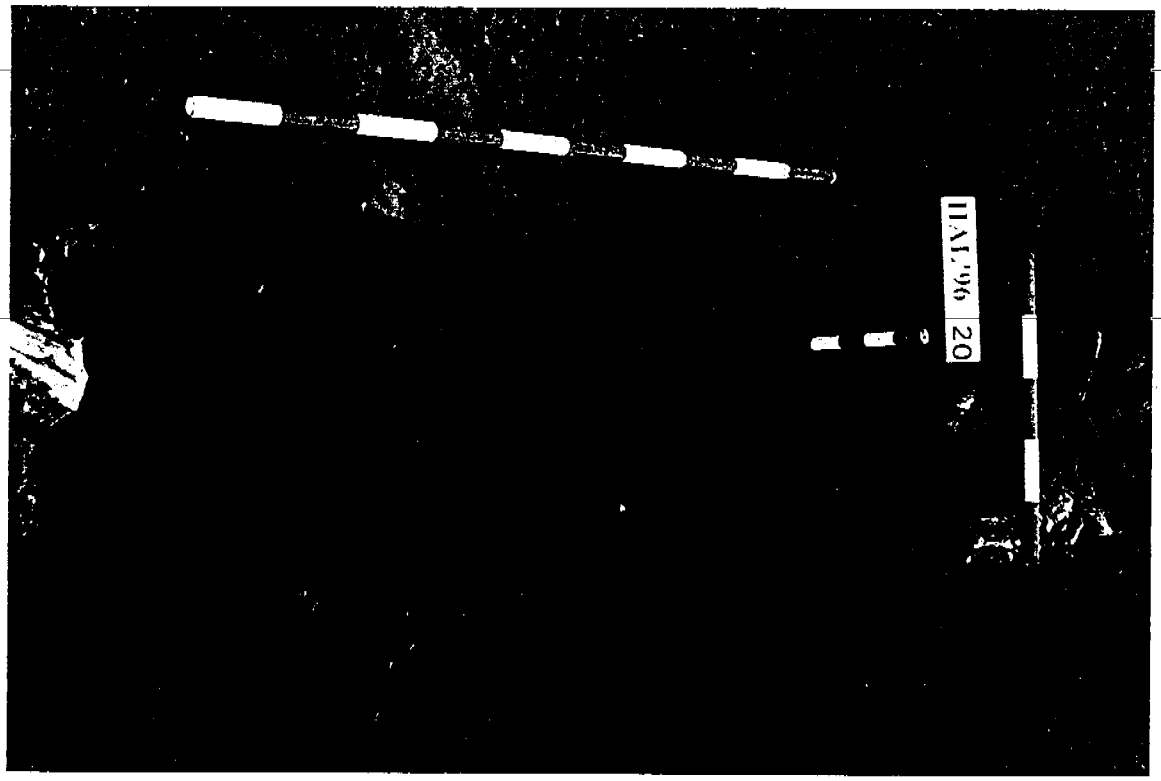


Plate 4: Section view of wall trench 20

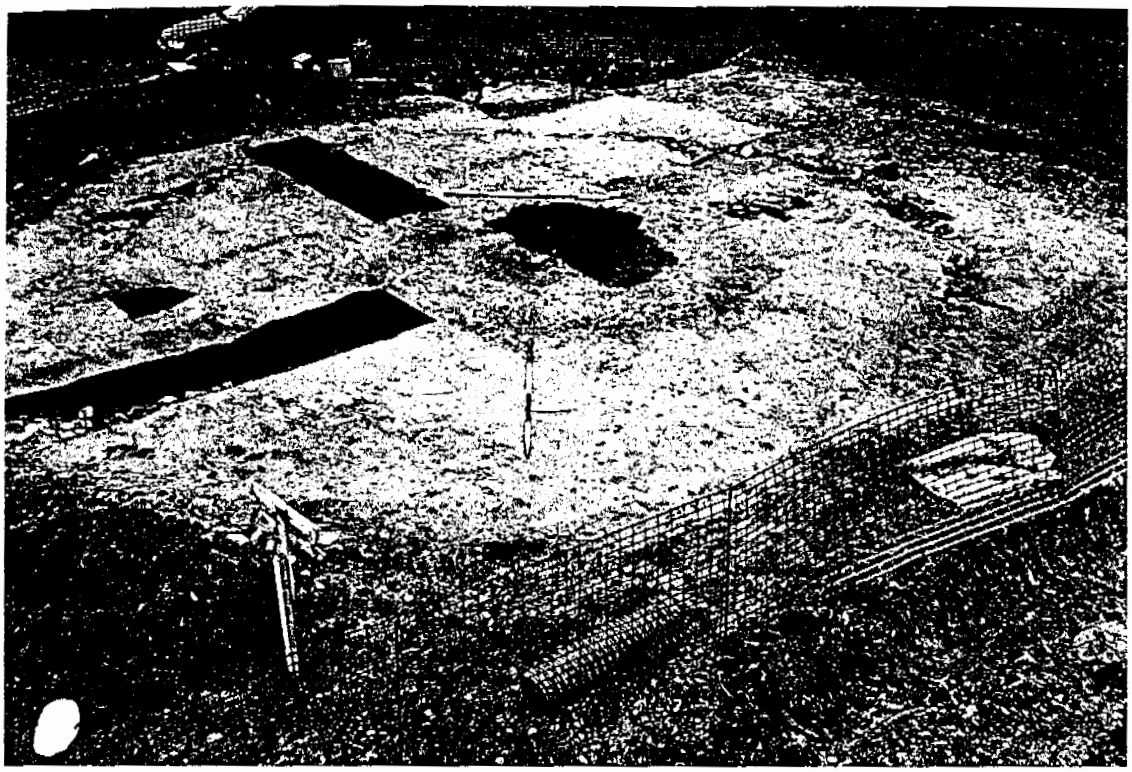
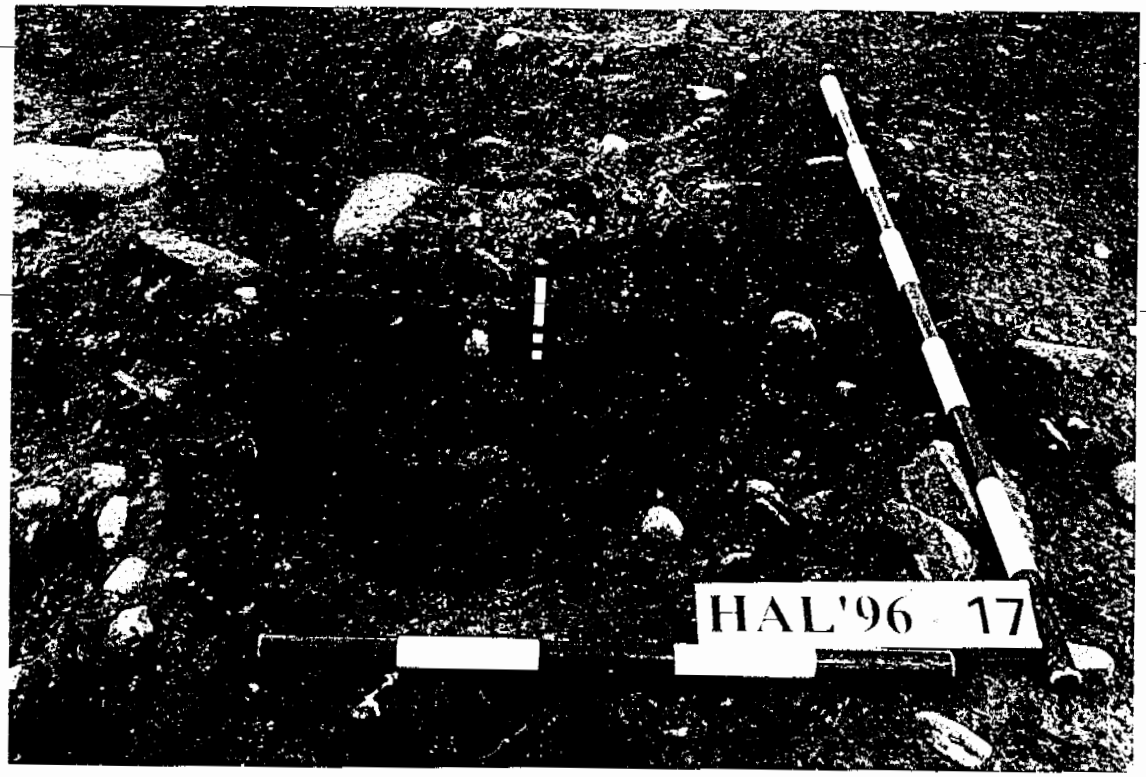


Plate 1: Overall view of round house (feature group 21)



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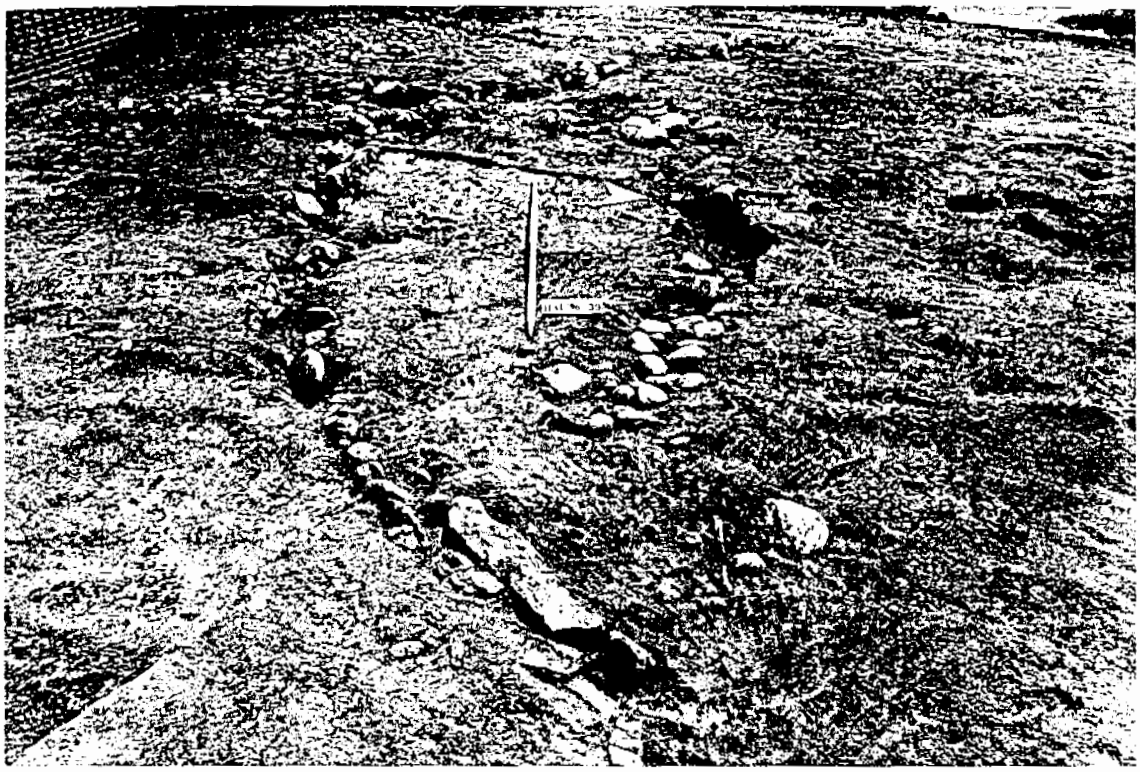

Plate 3: Detail of wall trenches 20 (left) and 40 (right)

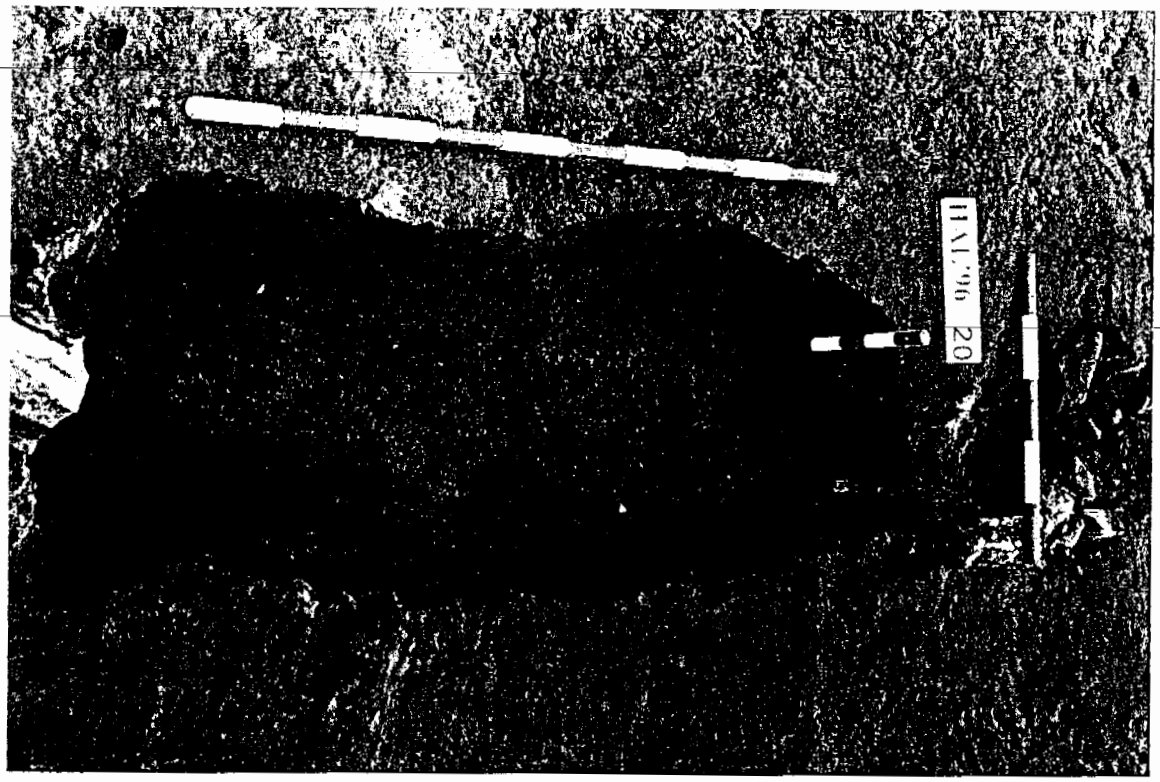

Plate 4: Section view of wall trench 20