



THE UNIVERSITY
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**An Archaeological
Excavation at High Farm,
Halton Holegate,
Lincolnshire**

**Post-Excavation Assessment and
Research Design**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Institute of Field
Archaeologists

EVENT ELI 6682

SOURCE SLI 10702
SLI 10703

PRN 46665 PREHISTORIC
PRN 4666 EARLY MEDIEVAL

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Project No. 811

November 2001

**An Archaeological Excavation at High Farm, Halton Hologate, Lincolnshire:
A Post-Excavation Assessment and Research Design**

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LCNCC.2001.173

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An Archaeological Excavation at High Farm, Halton Hologate, Lincolnshire

Post-Excavation Assessment and Research Design

1.0 Summary

An archaeological excavation at High Farm, Halton Hologate, Lincolnshire (NGR TF 41310 65650) was commissioned by Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in July and August 2001, ahead of the construction of a temporary drill site. A desk-based assessment and evaluation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) (2000). A geophysical survey revealed faint traces of possible ring ditches and numerous discrete anomalies. Trial trenching further identified late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity in the area in the form of pits and a curving ditch. The archaeology identified in the excavation was characterised mainly by discrete features. Those that contained datable artefacts were shown to be early to middle Saxon in date. Earlier activity on the site was suggested only by the recovery of humanly struck flint from unstratified contexts. There was some evidence of farming in the medieval period in the form of plough furrows.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Background to the project (Figures 1 and 2)

This report outlines the results of open area excavation and test pitting at High Farm, Halton Hologate, Lincolnshire (centred on TF 41310 65650), hereinafter referred to as the site. The work was commissioned by Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd (planning ref. (E)572/-/00/CM/CEW), and was undertaken in July and August 2001. The site is situated c. 600m to the north-west of the village core, in an area of cultivated agricultural land. The application site covers approximately 3500m².

The area excavation followed evaluation of the site, conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), which included a desk-based assessment (November 2000) and evaluation (February 2001). A geophysical survey revealed faint traces of possible ring ditches, strong anomalies in the northeast corner of the field on raised ground and numerous discrete anomalies. Trial trenching revealed pits and a linear feature dated to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age period. Fieldwalking undertaken by T. and H. Godfrey in the 1970s produced a Lower Palaeolithic bifacial handaxe and a scatter of microlithic flints characteristic of Later Mesolithic technologies. On the basis of the information obtained from the evaluation, the area targeted for open area excavation was reduced and relocated in order to avoid the potential ring ditches and barrows previously identified.

2.2 Aims

The general objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were to define the survival, nature, extent and significance of archaeological deposits, so that appropriate archaeological sampling and recording in advance of development took place.

The expectations were that low-level Mesolithic activity might be reflected in lithic scatters within the ploughzone horizon, while, more substantially, lithics and pottery of the Neolithic-Bronze Age would also be present in the ploughzone and in truncated pits and other features of these periods.

The specific objectives were, therefore, to:

- identify any structural evidence, principally in the form of pits.
- explore any finds patterning or evidence of structured deposition.
- identify and characterise the finds content of the ploughzone horizon.

2.3 Method

Following on from the methodology adopted for the evaluation work, a number of 1m by 1m test pits, six in total, was dug on the same grid pattern, with sieving of soil as previously. Over the rest of the site ploughsoil and any overburden were removed by a 360° excavator under direct archaeological supervision. At this stage a base plan of the whole site was produced.

The machined horizon was cleaned further, as appropriate, which defined the archaeological features and deposits present at their uppermost horizons. Excavation by hand comprised 100% of all discrete archaeological features, and 20% of all linear archaeological features. Fifty percent of excavated feature fills were sieved as a control for artefact recovery.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20, 1:50 and 1:100), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), monochrome and colour print, and colour slide photography. It is intended to deposit the paper and finds archive with the City and County Museum, Lincoln (Acc. No. 2001.173).

3.0 Results

3.1 Summary of excavation results (Figure 3, Plate 1)

The following results are presented under period headings, based on preliminary spot dating of the pottery and flint artefacts.

Phase 1	Prehistoric (Neolithic and Bronze Age)
Phase 2	Early to middle Saxon (7th – 9th century)
Phase 3	Medieval (12th – 15th century)
Phase 4	Post-medieval and Modern

3.11 Phase 1 Prehistoric

No securely dated prehistoric features were identified during the excavation. The only flints present in potentially prehistoric features were undateable waste flakes. A large assemblage of humanly worked flint, however, was recovered from unstratified topsoil and subsoil contexts.

3.12 Phase 2 Early to middle Saxon (7th – 9th century) (Plate 1)

This period was characterised by a series of discrete features (pits and postholes) all containing the same range of pottery fabrics. All these features ranged in depth from 0.1m to 0.5m, indicating severe truncation by later activity. Three large shallow pits were located near the northern corner of the site (F404, F410 and F425). Three post holes (F426, F427 and F458) were identified below the fill of pit F410, suggesting a possible structure. Four smaller pits were also identified in this area (F402, F411, F429, F432). To the south of F410 was another large shallow pit (F428). The fill of this pit (4033) contained c.300 sherds of pottery. Anglo-Saxon loom weights, fired clay and slag were also recovered from this feature. Below the fill of F428, two postholes were identified (F456 and F457). An irregular feature (F455) was located directly to the west of F428. Another pit of this period (F444) was located towards the eastern corner of the site. Comparative research may help reveal whether some or all of these large, shallow features are the heavily truncated remains of grubenhäuser.

3.13 Phase 3 Medieval (12th – 15th century)

Two linear features aligned north – south were dated to the medieval period (F431 and F436). A third linear of a similar width and alignment (F459) was located in the area between them but produced no dating evidence. All these features had very irregular bases and are likely to represent plough furrows.

3.14 Phase 4 Post-medieval and Modern

Features dating to this period included two linear ditches (F407 and F408), aligned north-south, and an east-west aligned feature (F423). North-south and east-west aligned land drains were also identified in the area.

3.15 Unphased

Some features cannot be securely dated. Further study of the stratigraphic record, however, may clarify stratigraphic relationships, and perhaps facilitate the phasing of presently undated small pits and postholes on the basis of their morphology. Several features have been identified as tree boles or changes in the natural and these will be excluded from the final analysis of the site.

3.2 Discussion

The site as a whole was mainly characterised by discrete features (pits and postholes). The results of excavation can be placed into three separate phases of archaeological activity based on the date of the pottery and lithics recovered. Activity in the area during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods is alluded to by the assemblage of flint artefacts recovered from the topsoil. No archaeological features were securely dated to this period. Activity in the early to middle Saxon period is represented by a series of discrete features scattered across the site. A large amount of pottery was recovered from these features, as well as other artefacts, possibly suggesting settlement activity in the area. Activity in the medieval period is represented by possible plough furrows which would indicate farming at this time. Two parallel ditches, on a similar alignment to the track that provides the border of the field, were found to be modern in date, and may represent a previous field boundary. A single, irregular pit/disturbance was also found to contain post-medieval pottery.

4.0 Assessment

4.1 The Paper Archive

Table 1 Paper Archive Quantification

MATERIAL	QUANTITY
Context record sheets	63
Feature record sheets	59
Plans and section drawings	41
Colour slides	91
Colour prints	28
Black and white prints	81
Survey information (sheets)	2
Database	•
Assemblage summaries	47

4.2 Stratigraphic Data

As described above, the features and deposits on site have been dated principally through ceramic spot dating. Presently undated features may be phased through further analysis and definition of the stratigraphic sequence and their morphology. This will contribute to the research aims laid out in Section 2.2 and revised in Section 5.0 below.

4.3 Artefactual Data

Table 2 Finds Quantification

Material	Quantity
Roman Pottery	7
Saxon Pottery	402
Medieval Pottery	82
Post-Medieval Pottery	60
Total Pottery	551
Brick/Tile	55
Fired Clay	12
Clay Pipe	5
Iron Nails	2
Other Iron	3
Slag	13
Bottle Glass	4
Window Glass	6
Flint	552
Animal bone (g)	3186

4.3.1 The Pottery by *Stephanie Ratkai*

Methodology

All the pottery was examined macroscopically and each pottery group was spot dated. At this stage no detailed fabric analysis of the early-middle Saxon pottery was undertaken, although a small sample of sherds was examined under x 20 magnification to confirm the perceived range of fabrics.

Results

The largest group of pottery came from (4033) F428 which contained c. 300 sherds. Of these seven were Roman, comprising four base sherds (one Nene Valley or possibly Swanspool, one fine oxidised ware, a gritty ?reduced ware and a late Iron Age/early Roman transitional grog tempered ware) and two fine oxidised body sherds and one sandy reduced ware body sherd. All of these sherds were heavily abraded, possibly deriving from ploughsoil, although there were hardly any other Roman sherds found within topsoil, subsoil or unstratified pottery and none from within other feature fills.

A number of different early-middle Saxon fabrics was present in 4033. These could be broadly divided into sand tempered, sand and calcareous tempered, sand and organics, chaff tempered, calcareous tempered, ironstone tempered and grano-diorite tempered. The sand and calcareous and sand and organic tempered wares were the most frequent. Some of the sand tempered wares appear to have been derived from the Lower Greensand.

The pottery was composed primarily of body sherds, often burnished. Thirty-five rim sherds were present, comprising 11 bowls, one globular jar with upright rim, two carinated jars, two everted rim jars, one large storage jar, two bowl/jars with a vestigial upright rim and 15 small rim fragments (eight jars, two bowl/jars, two bowls and one unidentifiable). Base sherds were very poorly represented.

Eighteen sherds were decorated, the majority with incised horizontal lines. Two sherds had stamped decoration and two sherds were decorated with multiple line incised pendant triangles. Other decoration consisted of a small pierced lug, a deep circular impression and one example of "rustication". The rustication consisted of a roughened surface studded with small grits.

The pottery was fairly equally divided between completely reduced vessels and vessels with an oxidised external surface. At least a third of the sherds were thick-walled and may have come from larger storage vessels. There was very little joining material within the group.

The remaining early-middle Saxon features contained just under 100 sherds. These were made up of the same range of fabrics noted in 4033, with the addition of five flint tempered sherds from F444, F402, F432 and F429. In F402, F429 and F444 the only pottery present was flint tempered. Further decorated sherds were found in (4007) F407 and (4016) F411.

In total there were c 400 sherds (45 rim sherds) from early-middle Saxon features. Of these four sherds had stamped decoration. Two more stamped sherds came from the topsoil (4000), but in general there was little early-middle Saxon pottery from 4000, 4001 or from the test pits and the number of sherds recovered was less than 20.

The remaining test pits, along with the topsoil and unstratified material, contained a mix of medieval and post-medieval pottery. Halton Hologate is close to the medieval pottery producing centres at Toynton All Saints and Bolingbroke and most of the medieval material seemed to be local in character, as one would expect. The post-medieval pottery was dominated by glazed red earthenwares of the type common in East Anglia, along with some imported Rhenish stonewares. The medieval and post-medieval pottery was heavily abraded and was typical of material recovered from ploughsoil.

Research design

The early-middle Saxon pottery consisted in the main of large unabraded sherds. Just over ten per cent of the assemblage was made up of rim sherds, providing a good diagnostic basis for form and function analysis. The data is enhanced by the presence of several decorated or stamped sherds.

To date, despite the Fenland Surveys, there is little detailed published work on early-middle Saxon pottery assemblages in Lincolnshire. The most detailed work so far has been on pottery from Flixborough, north of Scunthorpe, where both thin section and chemical analysis were undertaken on the early-middle Saxon pottery by Dr A. Vince. Quarrington, south-east of Sleaford, a better site for comparison with Halton Hologate, is as yet unpublished, but an extensive archive, including a pottery report, fabric type series and vessel form series, is in existence and is available for consultation (pers. comm. Jane Young). It is advised that the stamped vessels are sent for identification and comparison with material held in the Archive of Anglo-Saxon Pottery Stamps.

All the early-middle Saxon pottery should be examined under x20 magnification and divided into fabric groups. The pottery should be quantified by sherd count and weight, minimum number of rims and rim percentage (*eves*). Further details of vessel form, decoration, burnishing, wear and sooting should be noted. All the data should be entered onto a database.

The final report should contain fabric descriptions, petrological details if these can be obtained and fabric/form details. The resulting data should be compared with Quarrington.

It is not recommended that further work be undertaken on the medieval and post-medieval pottery.

[The author wishes to thank Jenny Glazebrook, Tom Lane and Jane Young for their help with information for this report.]

4.3.2 The Flint by Lynne Bevan

Summary

A total of 529 items of humanly worked flint was recovered, comprising: 17 scrapers, five blades, 16 retouched flakes, 25 cores, 25 rough chunks and 441 unretouched flakes. The vast majority of this material was derived from topsoil and subsoil contexts and most of the remainder of the flint came from demonstrably post-prehistoric features.

Raw Material

The raw material used was of variable quality, ranging from translucent beige and brown to light, medium and dark grey in colour. There was a high incidence of opaque white re-cortication and, when present, remnant cortex was thin and compacted and characteristic of pebble flint from a secondary source, probably local river gravels. Most of the tools and waste was in a fresh condition, despite the largely unstratified nature of their recovery.

Discussion

Unfortunately the assemblage is virtually devoid of closely datable artefacts, with the exception of a few blades and blade cores which probably date to the earlier Neolithic. However, the majority of the cores have been used to produce broad flakes, a type of reductive technology more typical of Bronze Age industries. Although the assemblage is quite sizeable and contains a number of retouched tools, including scrapers which are generally considered to be indicative of occupation *foci* (Schofield 1987), none of the scrapers originated from features of known prehistoric date. The only flints present in potentially prehistoric features were updateable waste flakes.

While the majority of the unstratified material (especially that collected from spoil heaps and subsoil) was originally deposited on the site, the paucity of contextual information precludes the detailed reconstruction of the past human activity that produced it. For this reason it is proposed that the assemblage is treated as a fieldwalking assemblage for the purpose of analysis and report writing. Tool classes can be discussed, using illustrated examples of the principal types, in order to gain an impression of the assemblage, for comparison with other assemblages on a local and regional level. Moreover, some impression of general dating can be achieved by the analysis of length:breadth indices of all complete flakes according to whether the assemblage was dominated by blade-like flakes associated with Late Mesolithic-Early Neolithic industries or broader flakes associated with Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age industries (Pitts 1978). The presence of irregular struck chunks might also indicate a later Bronze Age date for some of the assemblage, in keeping with the coarse flake cores mentioned previously.

4.3.3 Small Finds by Lynne Bevan

Loomweights and Other Fired Clay

Fragments from two Anglo-Saxon loomweights were found. Two non-joining fragments from the same loomweight came from F428 (4033), a potential sunken floored building from which a large quantity of Anglo-Saxon pottery was also recovered (see pottery report). A small fragment from a second loomweight, found on

the spoilheap among removed topsoil, appears to have been contemporary with the first loomweight. A fragment of compacted fired clay with a flat base, also recovered from F428 (4033), might have been part of another loomweight or debris from loomweight manufacture, but the fragment is too badly degraded for closer identification. Four other small fragments of fired clay were recovered, two of which came from F423 (4028) and the others from the spoilheap.

The loomweight fragments will require full cataloguing, illustration and the compilation of a short report. The possible loomweight fragment will require cataloguing only and no further action is recommended on the fired clay fragments beyond a summary listing by context.

Glass Beads

Two small glass beads were found, both of a similarly ovoid shape. An opaque blue-green bead came from F423 (4028) and an opaque yellow bead from topsoil in Test Pit 7. It is probable that both beads are of Anglo-Saxon date, in common with the two loomweights and the majority of pottery from the site, and, as such, they will require full cataloguing, illustration and the compilation of a short report.

Slag

Approximately 1188 grams of slag were recovered in the form of several large lumps and small fragments. The largest amount, which included a fragment of tap slag, came from the Anglo-Saxon feature F428 (646 grams). Two other features which also contained Anglo-Saxon pottery (F404 and F411) yielded 266 grams and 245 grams respectively. The slag from F404 also included a fragment of tap slag similar to that from F428. A lump weighing 31 grams was recovered from topsoil.

The slag will require further analysis, especially in view of its unusual occurrence in Anglo-Saxon features.

Animal Bone

A total of 3072 grams of animal bone was recovered, the vast majority of which, 2947 grams, originated from an Anglo-Saxon feature (4033). Of interest in the collection was a large mineralised vertebra (4033).

The bone was poorly preserved and badly fragmented, and no further analysis of this material is recommended.

Metal Finds

A flat fragment of copper alloy was found which might have originated from a vessel (TP5, topsoil). Iron finds comprised a curved strip (4011), an 'S'-shaped object which was probably part of a tool, and three nails (F410/4014 x 1, unstratified x 2).

Clay Pipe

An ornate decorated bowl from a clay pipe of probable late 18th century date (C15) and four clay pipe stem fragments were found (TP7 x 2, TP8/unstratified x 1, TP9 x 1).

Brick and Tile

A total of 30 fragments of tile weighing, c. 500 grams and 25 fragments of brick weighing c. 600 grams, the majority of which was unstratified, was recovered.

Nineteen fragments of brick came from F428 (4035). While it is not unusual for Roman brick and tile to be found in Anglo Saxon contexts, having been curated there by the occupants (Williams 1993), the small size of the fragments recovered from F428 precluded chronological identification.

Glass

Glass finds comprised small fragments from vessels and bottles of relatively modern appearance. A fragment of brown bottle glass and a fragment of window glass came from F407 (4011). Ten vessel glass fragments and one fragment of window glass came from Test Pits 4,5,6,7 and 9, the majority from the topsoil, either singly or in small groups of two to four.

4.3.4 The charred plant remains by Marina Ciaraldi

A full soil sampling programme was conducted on the site, but only two soil samples, F410/4014 and F428/4033, were selected for assessment following the spot dating of finds. The two soil samples are here assessed in order to establish:

- the preservation of organic remains, particularly plant macroremains
- the potential of the plant assemblage in understanding the site economy and its surrounding palaeoenvironment

Method

The two samples were taken from two large pits (F410 and F428) and were dated to the Saxon period by the associated pottery. The sediment consisted of a brown, loose, sandy soil, which was darker in the case of sample F421/4033. Although both samples were of thirty litres, only ten litres of sediment were processed for the purpose of this assessment. The samples were floated manually and the flots were recovered on 0.5mm mesh. They were then dried in the oven at 40⁰ degrees, before being scanned under a low power stereomicroscope. The residue was recovered on a 1mm mesh and quickly sorted by eye.

Results

Apart from a few modern seeds of *Atriplex* sp. and timothy (*Phleum pratense* L.), the two samples contained almost exclusively well-preserved, charred grains of six-row barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L). Sample F410/4014 also contained a seed of vetch/tare (*Vicia/Lathyrus*) and a glume base of emmer/spelt (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*). The presence of barley on archaeological sites is often interpreted as evidence of fodder or beer production. However, the barley grains from Halton Hologate did not appear to be germinated or spoilt, suggesting that they might have been used for human consumption. Some badly damaged fragments of bones and a few flints were also recovered from the residue of sample F410/4014.

The charred plant remains, though well-preserved, include only a very limited number of species. This, in combination with the truncated nature of the archaeological features, does not allow a secure interpretation of the plant assemblage. It is therefore recommended that no future analysis of the two samples should be undertaken. As for the remaining unprocessed samples, it is suggested that they are not processed due to

the unclear definition of their archaeological contexts. It is suggested, however, to include the results of this preliminary analysis in the final site report.

5.0 Updated project design

It is possible to restate, enhance and refocus the research aims as being to:

- complete the characterisation of the site dating and function for the principal periods represented.
- examine the pottery and compare the assemblage to that from Quarrington.
- analyse the functional composition of the vessels.
- analyse the sources of supply of the pottery.
- further study the flint assemblage and compare with local and regional assemblages.
- further study a small group of other finds.
- contribute to the understanding of prehistoric settlement in the region.
- contribute to the understanding of Saxon settlement in the region.

6.0 Archive Contents and Publication Synopsis

Introduction by Eleanor Ramsey
500 words 1 Figure

Aims and Methods by Eleanor Ramsey
300 words

The Site and its Context by Eleanor Ramsey
300 words

Description of Results by Eleanor Ramsey
1000 words 3 Figures, 2 Plates

Pottery by Stephanie Ratkai
1500 words 1 Figure

Flint and Small Finds by Lynne Bevan
1000 words 1 Figure

Slag by J. G. McDonnell
300 words

Discussion and Conclusions by Eleanor Ramsey
1000 words

Bibliography

TOTAL 5900 words, 6 figures, 2 plates

Publication will take the form of an article entitled Excavation at High Farm, Halton Hologate, Lincolnshire, that will summarise the recent work. The article will be submitted to Lincolnshire History and Archaeology.

7.0 Task List

The task numbers below give the names of individuals responsible for the completion of the task, and the number of days allocated.

	Person	Days
Overall project management	IF	0.25
Integrate archives/check phasing	ER	0.5
Phasing database	ER	0.5
Figure roughs for the site narrative	ER	0.5
Draught figures for the site narrative-plans	MB	2
Preparation of first draft of introduction and results	ER	2
Pottery report		
Analysis and report writing	SR	13
Illustration of pottery	ND	3
Flint and small finds report		
Analysis and report writing	LB	8
Illustration of flint and small finds	MB	3
Slag report		
Analysis and report writing	GM	
Editing/corrections to specialist reports	ER	0.5
Preparation of first draft of discussion	ER	2
Editing of first draft (BUFAU)	IF	0.25
Corrections to first draft	ER	1
Corrections to illustrations	MB	1
Final proof reading	IF	0.25
Final corrections to text/illustrations	ER	0.5
Submission of text	IF	0.25
Preparation of excavation and research archives	ER	0.5
Deposition of archive	KM	0.25

8.0 Acknowledgements

The project was sponsored by Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd. Thanks are due to John Price of Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd for commissioning the work. Thanks are also due to Steve Bushell, managing director, and Chris Cox, site consultant, of Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd, and Jim Bonnor, Senior Built Environmental Officer, who monitored the project

for Lincolnshire County Council. Work on site was carried out by E. Ramsey with K. Bain, L. Bevan, L. Griffin, R. Krakowicz and S. Radford. Specialists to whom thanks are due are L. Bevan, M. Ciaraldi and S. Ratkai. E. Ramsey produced the written report, which was illustrated by M. Breedon and N. Dodds, and edited by I. Ferris who monitored the project for BUFAU.

9.0 References

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Figure 1

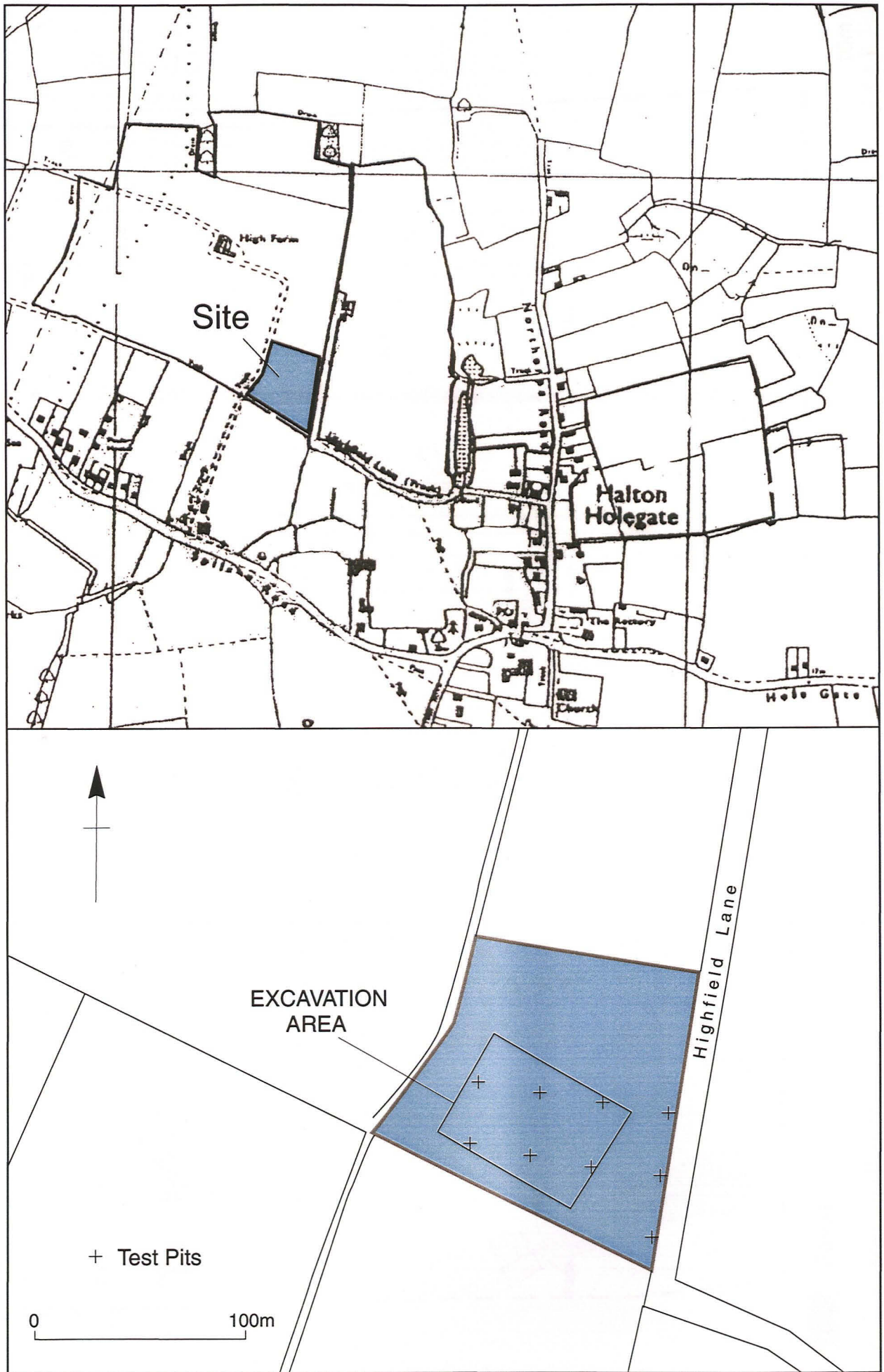


Figure 2

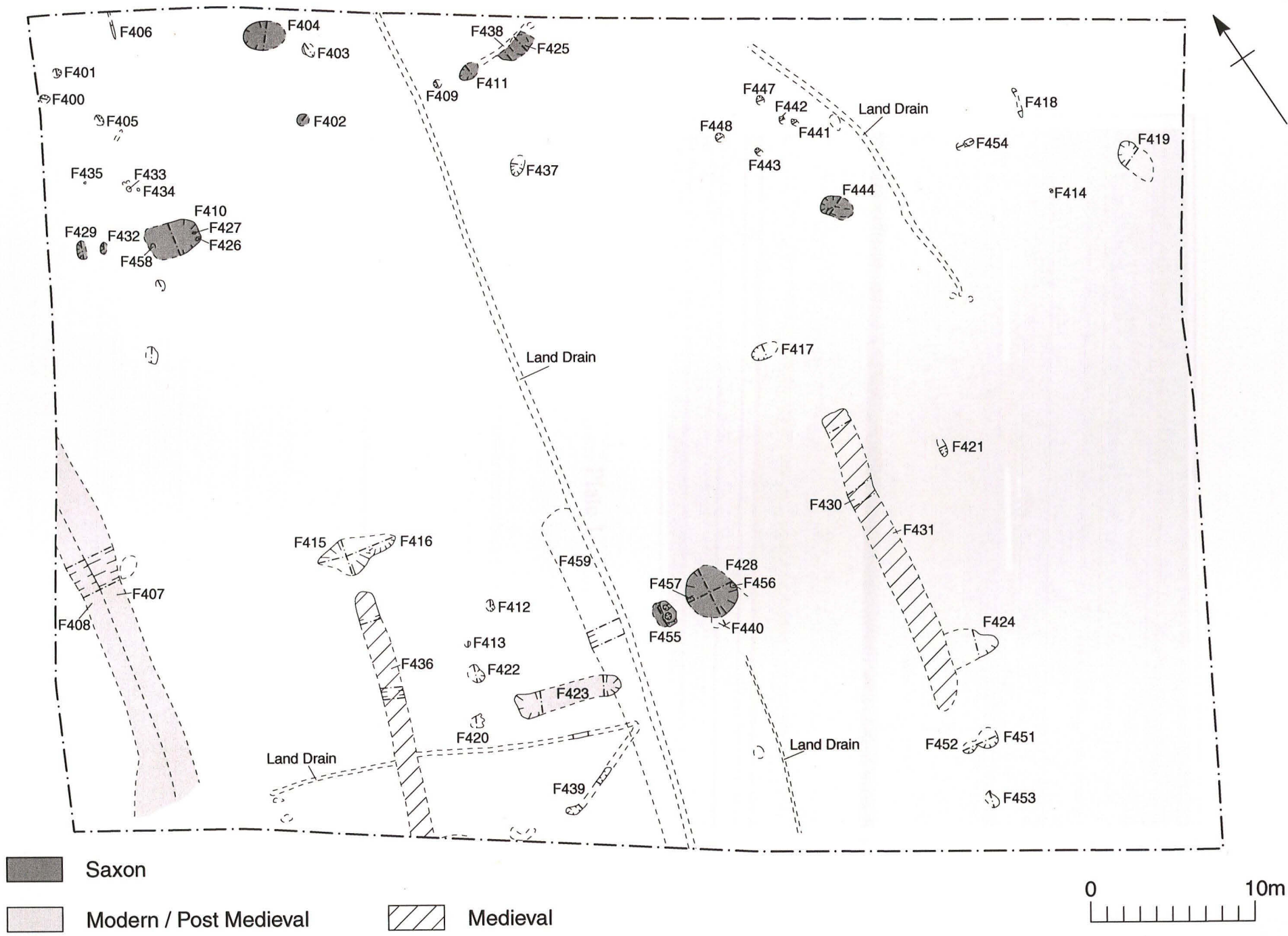


Figure 3



Plate 1