

**HAYES FARM,
CLYST HONITON,
NEAR EXETER, DEVON**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
PHASE 1 (1999)**

BY
ALISTAIR BARBER
FOR
HAYES QUARRY LTD



*Cotswold
Archaeological
Trust*

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GLOSSARY

ARCHAEOLOGY

For the purposes of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains, from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

BRONZE AGE

Chronological division of the prehistoric period, which sees the introduction of copper and eventual widespread adoption of bronze weapons, implements, jewellery etc. In Britain it is dated between *c.* 2300 BC-700 BC.

CONTEXT

The simplest level of excavated archaeological data, i.e. a context could be the cut of a ditch (shown as - [1]), or its fill (shown as (2)).

CROPMARK

A trace of a buried feature revealed by differential growth of crops, best seen from the air.

IRON AGE

The first period in which iron was the predominant metal. In Britain it is dated between *c.* 700 BC to the Roman conquest in AD 43.

MEDIEVAL

Taken here as the period from the Norman invasion in AD 1066 to approximately AD 1500.

MESOLITHIC

A chronological division within the post-Glacial prehistoric period in which hunter-gathering formed the basis of economy. Settlement patterns are not well understood but may have taken the form of intermittently occupied, perhaps seasonal, camping sites. The material culture is represented by a range of flint-work, particularly *microliths*, bone and antler work and organic materials. The period is dated between *c.* 10,000 BC and 3500 BC.

MICROLITHS

Very small worked flint flakes and blades, commonly used throughout the Mesolithic period.

NATURAL

Defined in archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, e.g. Lower Lias clay, river terrace gravels etc.

NEOLITHIC

A chronological division of the prehistoric period during which agriculture and domesticated animals are introduced to Britain. It is dated between *c.* 4500 BC - 2000 BC.

NGR

National Grid Reference; given from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL/PALAEO-ECONOMIC

The reconstruction of past environments and economy based upon evidence recovered from preserved botanical and entomological remains.

POT-BOILERS

Stones heated in a fire then dropped into water to heat it.

POT-SHERD

A fragment of a pottery vessel.

ROMANO-BRITISH

Term used to describe a fusion of indigenous late Iron Age traditions with Roman culture, often abbreviated as 'R-B.'

SETTLEMENT

An area of habitation, perhaps surrounded by associated closes, paddocks, approach ways and other features which together constitute a complex of earthworks or cropmarks distinct from fields.

SITE

Sites may be defined as 'windows' onto the archaeological resource, e.g. an excavation, aerial photograph, or an old map. Any of these may reveal certain archaeological features (pits, ditches, etc) which can be classed as components, but not monuments.

SUMMARY

Between June and August 1999 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) carried out a programme of excavation in advance of mineral extraction on land at Hayes Farm, Clyst Honiton, near Exeter, Devon.

The earliest recognisable activity within the site dates to the Earlier Neolithic (4000-3000 BC), and is represented by a cluster of pits and gullies which yielded pottery, worked flint and charcoal. The recovery of a typically Mesolithic (8500-4000 BC) component to the flint assemblage appears noteworthy, either suggesting that residual late Mesolithic activity was incorporated into Earlier Neolithic pits or, perhaps more significantly, the possible presence of a transitional site where earlier flint-working traditions were used alongside newer flint-working methodologies. Such assemblages are rarely found within a context datable by ceramics.

Middle Bronze Age (1500-1100 BC) occupation remains also have been identified across the site. Features recorded include a ditched linear boundary, an adjacent sub-circular enclosure with internal features and a linear arrangement of paired ditch segments. A spread of heat-crazed stone, found in association with a series of charcoal-rich pits, may represent debris from a domestic cooking site alongside a stream channel.

Limited evidence of post-Bronze-Age activity was encountered. A few sherds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery, recovered in association with pits and gullies, highlight limited activity of these periods in the site vicinity. No Anglo-Saxon or medieval occupation remains were present within the excavation area. Extensive post-medieval and modern activity was noted, however, in the form of agricultural boundaries, rubbish pits and quarry features.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Introduction*

1.1.1 Between June and August 1999 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) carried out an excavation on farmland at Hayes Farm, Clyst Honiton, near Exeter, Devon (NGR: SX 991943; Figs. 1 & 2).

1.1.2 Field evaluation previously undertaken by CAT had identified the presence of Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman activity within the proposed extraction area (Enright 1996). Since these multi-period remains would be entirely removed by proposed sand and gravel quarrying Hayes Quarry Ltd commissioned a programme of archaeological recording, in accordance with conditions attached to a planning consent granted by Devon County Council. The 1999 excavation examined only part of the overall extraction area and will be followed by further archaeological recording to be undertaken in advance of quarrying over successive years.

1.1.3 The progress and quality of fieldwork was monitored through regular site visits during the course of the excavation by Frances Griffith and Bill Horner of the Archaeology Service, Devon County Council.

1.1.4 This interim document is intended to summarise the results of the first phase of fieldwork undertaken in 1999, presenting an assessment of the evidence recovered

1.2 *Landuse, geology and topography*

1.2.1 The study area lies approximately 1km north-east of the village of Clyst Honiton, immediately adjacent to the A30 which separates the site from Exeter airport (Fig. 2). The overall extraction area encompasses parts of three

former arable fields (coded as fields A-C in the 1996 CAT evaluation report). The first phase of archaeological excavation in 1999 was focussed upon an arable field, C, immediately adjacent to the A30.

1.2.2 The underlying geology of the study area is mapped as Permian Dawlish Sandstone overlain by Quaternary and River Terrace Deposits (fourth terrace) of sand and gravel (Institute of Geological Sciences 1979). The overlying soils of the Bridgenorth series are well-drained and easily cultivated.

1.2.3 Hayes Farm lies in an area of relatively gentle relief, being situated on the broad river terrace of the Clyst valley. Across the southern half of the excavation area there is a relatively flat plateau at approximately 20m O.D. The terrain falls away more acutely towards the north-western edge of the site, at approximately 15m O.D, where a slight combe runs in a north-west direction into a tributary of the river Clyst.

1.3 *Archaeological background*

1.3.1 The development site lies in an area of considerable archaeological interest, as highlighted both by aerial photographic coverage and previous fieldwork.

1.3.2 In 1974 cropmarks indicative of archaeological features were identified immediately west of the excavation area, within field B. These cropmarks suggested the presence of three ring-ditches together with a square enclosure intersected by a curvilinear enclosure. A programme of fieldwalking and field excavation was commissioned by English Heritage due to the potential for mineral extraction within the area. The fieldwork confirmed the archaeological nature of these cropmarks and demonstrated activity and occupation of Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman and post-Roman date (Simpson, Griffith & Holbrook 1989).

1.3.3 In 1994 a second proposal for mineral extraction was suggested. To aid their planning application the developer commissioned further evaluation in the

form of geophysical survey and trial-trenching within fields nearest the A30, thereby leaving areas of known cropmarks unaffected. Based upon the results of a geophysical survey (Barker 1996) test-pitting and trial-trenching was undertaken by CAT within fields A-C in 1995/96 (Fig. 2). The evaluation identified activity of Earlier Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman date (Enright 1996). The results of this work formed the basis of an excavation programme undertaken in 1999 prior to extraction.

1.4 *Excavation aims*

1.4.1 A detailed project specification (CAT 1999) stated the following excavation objectives:

- i) to ensure that a full and detailed record of the site was compiled.
- ii) to elucidate the form, function and status of the activity on the site and to establish its chronology and phasing.
- iii) to provide data on the date and character of the site and to compile information which would form the basis of a fully detailed report for publication.
- iv) in particular, the nature of the activity would be integrated into the pattern of activity previously identified at the site.

1.5 *Excavation methodology*

1.5.1 Archaeological excavation was undertaken across the first area of gravel extraction, coincident with field C as coded within the preceding evaluation report (Enright 1996; Fig. 2). In addition a narrow service trench across field A was monitored by an archaeologist during its machine-excavation.

1.5.2 Two mechanical excavators, utilising toothless ditching buckets, were used to remove topsoil and subsoil under constant archaeological supervision. Machine excavation ceased when the first significant archaeological horizon was reached, consisting of the natural sand and gravel substrate into which surviving archaeological features had been cut. Areas were then cleaned by hand, planned and sampled in accordance with a preceding method statement (CAT 1999). All pits and postholes were half-sectioned and linear features as a minimum sampled by 40% of their length.

1.5.3 A full written, drawn and photographic record was made in accordance with CAT Technical Manual 1: *Site Recording Manual*. All artefacts were processed and analysed in accordance with CAT Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (1995). All environmental samples were taken in accordance with CAT Technical Manual 2: *The Taking of Samples for Palaeo-environmental and Palaeo-economic analysis from Archaeological Sites* (1994).

1.6 Post-excavation methodology

1.6.1 Following the completion of the excavation an ordered, indexed and internally consistent site archive was compiled in accordance with specifications presented in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) issued by English Heritage.

1.6.2 The site finds have been examined by a team of specialists. Rapid assessment of the pottery was undertaken by Henrietta Quinnell (external consultant), the worked flint by Graeme Walker (external consultant), the charred plant remains by Andrew Fairburn (external consultant) and other finds by Emma Harrison (CAT).

1.6.3 The survival and intelligibility of the site stratigraphy across the excavation area is assessed as moderate. Archaeological remains have survived only as

negative features cut into the natural sands and gravels, and excavation has revealed some puncturing of features by modern intrusions and, more widespread, the truncation of features by post-medieval and modern ploughing.

2. EXCAVATION RESULTS

2.1 *General*

2.1.1 Interpretation of a number of features has been constrained by their extensive truncation resulting from past ploughing of the site, with particularly severe truncation apparent across the central 'plateau' of the site where only some of the deeper features survived. Better preservation occurred on the north-facing slope.

2.1.2 Generic cut and fill numbers were assigned to linear ditch lengths for ease of description. Separate cut and fill numbers were then given to individual sections excavated through these features.

2.1.3 Phasing of the site has been hindered by the relatively sparse dating evidence recovered, by the widespread homogeneity of fills of all periods and by a general paucity of stratigraphic relationships. On the basis of a preliminary examination of stratigraphic relationships, orientation and dating evidence the site has been phased into the following provisional periods:-

Period 1	Earlier Neolithic (4000-3000 BC)
Period 2	Middle Bronze Age (1500-1100 BC)
Period 3	Iron Age (700 BC-AD 43)
Period 4	Romano-British (AD 43-410)
Period 5	Post-medieval and modern (AD 1500-present)

2.2 *Period 1: Earlier Neolithic (4000-3000 BC)*

- 2.2.1 A focus of Earlier Neolithic activity has been identified within the northern half of the site, comprising a cluster of shallow pits and linear features yielding worked flint and pottery assemblages. The generally dark grey-black charcoal-rich pebbly-silt nature of their fills suggested the possible burial of hearth-sweepings/domestic waste from adjacent settlement areas. Pit fills (1011), (1021), (1135), (1157) and (1491) and linear-feature fills (1487) and (1489) all yielded diagnostically Earlier Neolithic vein-quartz tempered fabrics. Earlier Neolithic pottery had been recovered in this area previously from pit [079] within trench 6 of the 1996 CAT evaluation.
- 2.2.2 Several larger circular and sub-circular pits of potential Earlier Neolithic date were also recorded from an area immediately above the northern slope, e.g. pits [1180], [1249], [1370] and [1396]. These features were subsequently cut across by period 2 (Middle Bronze Age) ditches [1166] and [1237].
- 2.2.3 A number of, currently undated, postholes and gullies or slots recorded in this area may also be Neolithic in date and conceivably represent the remains of structures. These features include postholes [1164], [1476] and [1484] and linear slots or gullies [1160], [1174], [1363], [1480], [1488], [1503], and [1507].
- 2.2.4 A shallow deposit of alluvium (1017) was recorded alongside the stream-course forming the northern boundary of the field. This deposit, consisting of interleaved grey-blue silt-clay lenses, yielded two prehistoric worked flint cores. Whilst close dating of the alluvium is likely to remain elusive, the horizon clearly predates the concentrated period 2 activity which overlay it (see below).

2.3 *Period 2: Middle Bronze Age (1500-1100 BC)*

- 2.3.1 Period 2 features included ditched boundaries, a semi-circular enclosure and debris from a possible cooking site, together alluding to either seasonal or year-round activity and/or occupation within the site.
- 2.3.2 A NW-SE aligned linear ditch [1029], running to a rounded terminal, was recorded crossing the southern part of the site. Part of ditch [1029] was subsequently recut, as [1413], both more deeply and wider, and there is evidence to suggest that an upcast bank lay along this recut section on its northern side. Ditch [1029] was also extended to the south-east by cut [1259]. Both the original ditch length [1029] and its extension [1259] contained Middle Bronze Age Trevisker-style pottery within their silted terminals. These pottery spreads may represent either simple dumps or the deliberate, structured, deposition of material.
- 2.3.3 Aerial photographic coverage suggests that ditch [1029] runs without deviation across the adjacent field B to the west. The ditch line, perhaps a major agricultural boundary, suggests that formal land demarcation existed in the locality during this period.
- 2.3.4 A curving, ditched, enclosure was constructed immediately adjacent to linear ditch [1029] on its north-eastern side. The enclosure was defined by ditch segments [1212] and [1379] with an intervening worn area, [1377], suggesting a causewayed entrance. No associated bank was discernible. Curving ditch segment [1379] did not continue far enough to the south-west to form a full D-shaped enclosure. Given that severe truncation has occurred in this area however it cannot be discounted that the enclosure may have been completed with a post- or stake-built fenceline across its south-western side, or that it may always have been open.
- 2.3.5 Trevisker-style Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from enclosure ditch fills (1209), (1268), (1282) and (1295) suggesting the enclosure was

broadly contemporary with ditch [1029]. The curving enclosure may allude to the possible former presence of one or more buildings within an agricultural landscape, or to the beginnings of stock management.

- 2.3.6 A number of severely-truncated internal features survived within the enclosure including a gully or slot [1318], a series of postholes [1077] (which yielded Trevisker-style pottery), [1291], [1293], [1314], [1316], [1323] and [1346] and one pit [1301]. No discernible pattern could be recognised to these surviving features, although the postholes may indicate the former presence of one or more domestic or agricultural structures/divisions within the enclosure.
- 2.3.7 Further, dispersed, features were recorded beyond the enclosure, including postholes [1086] and [1184]. Further north on the plateau an isolated N-S aligned linear ditch [1118] was noted running downslope. A sandy grey-grog sherd of probable Middle Bronze Age date was recovered from its fill (1122). The function of the ditch is unclear, although it might have had a drainage role.
- 2.3.8 The close proximity of contemporary Middle Bronze Age settlement is suggested by the identification, immediately below the northern slope, of a series of sub-circular pits [1414], [1447], [1469] and [1516] cut into earlier alluvial deposit (1017). These were recorded in association with charcoal lenses, which had accumulated over the alluvium, and with dumps of fire-cracked stone (possibly 'pot boilers') alongside a stream course at the northern end of the site. These remains may represent debris from a domestic cooking site.
- 2.3.9 Although no dateable pottery was recovered from these features, such spreads of burnt stone and charcoal are relatively common on Bronze Age occupation sites and such a date appears likely. A number of small pits and postholes further west along the slope yielded additional burnt stone and worked flint. Whilst it is difficult to recognise any pattern to the postholes identified, these might represent the remains of ephemeral post- or stake-built fence-lines,

windbreaks or other slight structures. A Middle Bronze Age date for all of the activity along the slope is conceivable.

- 2.3.10 The burnt stone-filled pits and charcoal lenses at the base of the slope subsequently were sealed by a silt horizon, thought to be of colluvial (hillwash) origin. One pot-herd of possible Iron Age date was recovered from the colluvium.
- 2.3.11 Running on the same orientation as ditch [1029], but located 110m to its north, were two long, parallel, ditches [1166] and [1385]. Both ditches ran to rounded terminals, each of which housed a single posthole. Fill (1172) of ditch [1385] yielded sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery. The silting ditch terminals were re-cut subsequently by ditch segments [1387] and [1237]. Fill (1241) of ditch [1387] contained sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery. Ditch section [1387] which cut the north-west terminal of [1166] also appeared to cut the south-west terminal of segment [1012].
- 2.3.12 To the north-west further ditch segments [1012], [1018] and [1140] may be contemporary with the original double-ditched line [1166] and [1385] or may indicate that the ditched boundary remained significant, being recut on the same alignment soon after their silting. Fills (1145), (1147) and (1151) of ditch segments [1012], [1018] and [1140] all yielded Middle Bronze Age pottery. A small deposit of river pebbles (1183) was also noted, set into a cut within silted ditch [1385].
- 2.3.13 Although ditch length [1385] was more substantial than ditch [1166] to the south, the two appear to have been contemporary (rather than reflecting a simple, shifting, boundary over time). This is suggested both by the even spacing between the two ditches and by their exactly paired terminals and posthole settings. Evidence from aerial photographs suggests the paired ditches form a single linear monument since a possible squared western terminal, linking both together, is visible on an aerial photograph of the adjacent field B to the west. The function of this narrow, linear, ?enclosure is uncertain.

2.3.14 Bronze Age pottery was also noted within pit [1327], ditch [1348] and ditch [1358]. Residual Bronze Age pottery was also recovered from a modern quarry-pit fill (1080).

2.4 *Period 3: Iron Age (700 BC-AD 43)*

2.4.1 Several Iron Age features and findspots were recorded, attesting to activity of this period within the site vicinity. Two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from fill (1341) of ditch [1340]. The fragments form part of a decorated shoulder of a South Western Decorated Vessel probably dating between the third to first centuries BC.

2.4.2 One unstratified rim fragment of ?Poole Harbour Durotrogian ware pottery of probable first century BC to first century AD date, was recovered also. An unstratified vessel fragment in a hard, sandy, fabric also may be of Iron Age date. Further Iron Age pottery was recovered from feature [066] in field A during the course of the preceding CAT evaluation (Enright 1996).

2.5 *Period 4: Romano-British (AD 43-410)*

2.5.1 No recognisable Romano-British activity was recorded during the first phase of excavations, despite the proximity of field A to a Roman enclosure previously examined in the adjacent field B to the west (Simpson, Griffith & Holbrook 1989). A small quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered previously however from a gully [074] within trench 6 in Field C.

2.6 *Period 5: Post-medieval and modern (AD 1500-present)*

2.6.1 Several post-medieval/early-modern field boundaries were identified. A single linear ditch [1022], which ran to a rounded terminal, and a double-

ditched boundary [1024] were both recorded on NW-SE alignments. Deep plough-scars were recorded, also highlighting repeated ploughing during the post-medieval period.

- 2.6.2 Other post-medieval and modern features included a possible agricultural enclosure/fold, denoted by ditch [1055], and pits [1072], [1074], [1079], [1102], [1109], [1113], [1126], [1253] and [1472]. These appear to represent localised extraction of sand and gravel.

3. THE ARTEFACTUAL AND ECOFACTUAL EVIDENCE

A wide range of artefacts were recovered during the course of the excavation. These finds have been cleaned, quantified and catalogued. The following section summarises the results of a preliminary report of the artefacts and ecofacts.

3.1 *The Pottery, by Henrietta Quinnell.*

- 3.1.1 Preliminary examination of the pottery assemblage has identified characteristically Earlier Neolithic vein-quartz and chert-tempered fabrics from contexts (1011), (1021), (1133), (1135), (1157) (1487), (1489) and (1491).

- 3.1.2 Middle Bronze Age fabrics have been identified also, with all formal and decorative features matched in the SW Trevisker group dating between the fifteenth and eleventh centuries BC (with a strong focus around the thirteenth-century BC). The general 'look' of the Hayes Farm material appears best matched with sites from Dartmoor and further west. The main fabric represented has soft grey volcanic rock inclusions whilst a small group of sandy fabrics contain distinctive sands, including white quartz (an appropriate

local source for which may be recent clays in the Clyst valley into which the Dawlish sandstone would have weathered).

- 3.1.3 Iron Age pottery includes a small fragment from a decorated shoulder of South Western Decorated Vessel, with a likely date range between the third and first centuries BC. An upright rim in ?Poole Harbour Durotrigian ware may be of first-century BC to first-century AD date.

3.2 *The Worked Flint, by Graeme Walker*

- 3.2.1 A very rapid scan of the worked flint assemblage has been carried out. Detailed assessment and numerical quantification will be carried out at a later date.
- 3.2.2 The worked flint assemblage largely appears to consist of waste flakes and blades, with a small number of cores and a few tools of limited range. The assemblage is predominantly of flint although a few chert pieces were noted.
- 3.2.3 There is a notable Mesolithic component to the assemblage. Numerous snapped and broken small blades (microliths), typical of late Mesolithic composite tool production, were recovered from Earlier Neolithic pit fills (1021) and (1135). A fragment of a broken polished flint axe is a distinct Neolithic form.
- 3.2.4 On first sight the assemblage is interesting either as residual late Mesolithic activity incorporated into Earlier Neolithic pits or, perhaps more significantly, as a possible transitional site where earlier flint-making traditions were being used alongside the introduction of new flint-working technologies. Given the generally fresh condition of the sealed assemblages it seems unlikely that the Mesolithic material is reworked. The range of material is suggestive of a temporary camp rather than a settled habitation however, which may accord less well with the possibility that bulky and heavy items such as pots were in use.

3.3 *Other Finds, by Emma Harrison*

3.3.1 In addition to recorded finds of pottery and worked flint a small quantity of animal bone, metalwork, clay pipe, coal, iron slag, stone, glass, tile and brick was recovered. This material has been cleaned and catalogued. The finds are largely of post-medieval and modern date but the metalwork assemblage includes several copper-alloy objects of Bronze Age date.

3.4 *The Charred Plant Remains, by Andrew Fairburn*

3.4.1 A total of 68 palaeo-environmental and palaeo-economic soil-samples, each of between 2 and 30 litres in volume, were processed upon completion of the first phase of fieldwork.

3.4.2 The highest concentrations of plant remains were recovered from pit fills with posthole, ditch and gully fills usually containing only sparse plant material. Large wood charcoal assemblages were preserved in several pits, including Earlier Neolithic pit fills (1021) and (1028), Middle Bronze Age pit fills (1517) and (1518) and an undated pit fill (1049). Non wood-charcoal plant remains were sparse and uniformly poorly preserved. Few taxa were present in seed and fruit assemblages, although hazelnut shells were preserved in small numbers in several samples as were the fruitstones of hawthorn. A single fragment of fruit flesh was present also, tentatively identified as apple. Cereals were represented only by grains, including wheat and barley but also were poorly preserved.

3.4.3 The assemblages from Hayes Farm are typical of British prehistoric assemblages, containing sparse seed and fruit remains in a poor state of preservation. The Neolithic samples contained a mixture of domestic and wild food species and fragments of tuberous plant structures together with seeds, fruits and nuts.

- 3.4.4 Analysis of the seed and fruit assemblages recovered so far provides only limited potential for detailed economic reconstruction. Many aspects of plant use, such as plant husbandry, require more diverse and abundant assemblages. Such information concerning the range of utilised wild and domestic taxa is, however, forthcoming mainly for the Neolithic period.
- 3.4.5 There was limited evidence for diachronic and spatial patterning. Assemblages containing more than one species of food plants were confined mainly to Neolithic units, containing all of the hazelnut and most of the fruit remains. Neolithic assemblages also contained wheat and barley whilst Bronze Age samples contained only barley. Tubers and parenchyma were spread throughout the deposits, although noticeable concentrations were recorded in several Neolithic features.
- 3.4.6 Spatial patterning was limited with concentrations in the ditches and gullies being sparse and most of the large assemblages being confined to pits, although pit fills varied even when in close proximity to suggest that features were used for different activities.
- 3.4.7 The charcoal assemblages were very sparse in ditches and contrasted strongly with those from pits, suggesting that they were not deliberately dumped but entered the ditches as a result of erosion from the topsoil. This may be consistent with the ditches lying at some distance from settlements and being part of land divisions. Plant remains from pit fills may be derived from *in-situ* burning activities associated with domestic activity and, in the Bronze Age, with specific episodes of cooking or burning. The Neolithic fills may have been deliberately buried during ceremonial or other socially important practice, a phenomenon seen widely over southern Britain and often including charcoal.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

General

- 4.1 The 1999 excavations at Hayes Farm have successfully mitigated the effects of the first phase of mineral quarrying and, taken together with the results of previous fieldwalking, evaluation and excavation (Simpson, Griffith and Holbrook 1989; Enright 1996), have highlighted activity and occupation above the Clyst valley spanning many millennia. Recorded artefacts and features of Mesolithic, Earlier and Later Neolithic, Early to Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano-British, early post-Roman and post-medieval/modern date are now identified from the site locality.

Mesolithic and Neolithic

- 4.2 The presence of traditional Mesolithic flint tools alongside later flint-working technologies, in association with datable Earlier Neolithic ceramics, is uncommon and, as such, a proper understanding of the transition from Mesolithic hunter-gathering to Neolithic farming has proved persistently elusive.
- 4.3 An assemblage of prehistoric worked flint previously recovered during fieldwalking of field B was largely undiagnostic but included a probable broken transverse arrowhead of Later Neolithic period (Simpson, Griffith & Holbrook). Indeed a Later Neolithic date was conceivable for a significant proportion of the flint assemblage, although a later date could not be entirely precluded since direct information about both Earlier and Later Bronze Age assemblages in Devon is extremely limited (Berridge 1989). No evidence of actual Later Neolithic settlement was found during the 1987 excavations and similarly no evidence of recognisably Later, as opposed to Earlier, Neolithic occupation was recovered during the 1999 excavation.

Bronze Age

- 4.4 Four ring-ditches, presumably representing the remains of ploughed-out Bronze Age funerary monuments (round barrows), are known from previous excavations in field B. It is conceivable that more ring-ditches may lie within the site vicinity, although none were encountered within Field C during the 1999 excavation.
- 4.5 The 1999 excavation within field C has identified no recognisable Early Bronze Age (2400-1500 BC) activity but has, however, recorded evidence of Middle Bronze Age (1500-1100 BC) occupation. Features recorded include a ditched linear boundary, an adjacent sub-circular enclosure with internal features and a linear arrangement of paired ditch segments. A spread of heat-crazed stone, found in association with a series of charcoal-rich pits, may represent debris from a domestic cooking site sited alongside a stream channel. Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from a number of contexts, including assemblages from the silted terminals of ditches.
- 4.6 It is noteworthy that fieldwork has recorded both domestic occupation and funerary monuments of Bronze Age date, and it will be an aim of subsequent phases of excavation to further elucidate whether there are, as the evidence may suggest, discrete landuse zones during this period.
- 4.7 The excavation of Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation remains at Hayes Farm should enhance our understanding of the utilisation and development of the local landscape during these periods.

Iron Age/Romano-British and early post-Roman

- 4.11 The 1996 CAT evaluation within field A and the first phase of excavation, within field C, has identified only limited evidence of Iron-Age and Romano-British activity.

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Fieldwork was supervised by Alistair Barber assisted by Mark Brett. This report was compiled by Alistair Barber with illustration by Peter Moore.

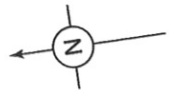


Fig. 1 All-feature excavation plan