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Eddington
Phase II Excavations
Interim Report No 3
Heene Bay

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Canterbury Archaeological Trust.
November 2000.

Eddington, Herne Bay, Phase II excavations, Interim Report

Archaeological Excavation

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Summary

The Canterbury Archaeological Trust conducted large-scale excavations at Eddington, Herne Bay, on behalf of Ward Homes, ahead of extensive housing development, and landscaping.

The excavation programme consisted of a number of phases of investigation. This report is concerned mainly with discoveries made in regions 3 and 4 comprising 3.7 hectares of the development site. Archaeological remains dating primarily from the Late Bronze Age/Romano-British periods (100 B.C.-A.D. 450) were discovered.

Shallow pits and scoops perhaps dating from the Early Bronze Age (2000 B.C.-1500 B.C.) may represent the earliest occupation in this part of the site. Few of these features produced dating evidence, and the function of these features is poorly understood. Remains dating from the Late Bronze Age/Romano-British periods were identified, though most of the features can probably be placed in the Late Iron Age/Romano-British periods (100 B.C.-450 A.D.).

- early iron age?

The Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age features consisted of shallow pits a curvilinear ditch and a ringditch containing occasional fragments of pottery. These appear to be the remains of enclosures and related refuse pits. Evidence for domestic structures of this period was not located. The late Iron Age/Roman-British periods consisted of frequent pits, pit complexes, post-holes, linear/curvilinear ditches and cremations. These appear to be the remains of rectangular and curvilinear enclosures with other boundary ditches, domestic refuse pits and a cemetery area.

Activity in the post Romano-British periods is represented by an Early Anglo Saxon enclosure discovered in earlier phases of investigations and is restricted to region 1. Post-medieval activity has been observed in the form of large modern features of unknown function and the plough-soil horizon.

**Interim Report
Canterbury Archaeological Trust
Planning Application Reference: CA/98/HBA**

Eddington Farm South: Phase 2 Excavations: Regions 3 & 4.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location

- 1.1.1 Between 1st May and 1st September 2000 Canterbury Archaeological Trust, (C.A.T.) carried out investigations marking the final stages of excavation at Eddington, Herne Bay. This work was commissioned by Ward Homes Construction (Medway) ahead of a proposed housing development of 190 houses.
- 1.1.2 The site is located on land immediately south of the Thanet Way, Eddington, Herne Bay (TR 1720 7605: Figure1). Regions 3 & 4 are located in the south and south-west of the proposed development site. The area covered in regions 3 and 4 is 3.7 hectares, approximately 25% of the proposed development area.
- 1.1.3 The archaeological investigations on regions 3 & 4 are located on the higher ground predominantly to the south-west of the previous excavations carried out by C.A.T on the development site.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the north-eastern fringes of a broad belt of London Clay. This is a marine deposit laid down some 50 million years ago in the Eocene forming a lower division of the Tertiary Period (Institute of Geological Sciences sheet 273). The solid geology (London Clay) is in places capped by localised superficial deposits of gravel and first stage brickearth deposited in the later Pleistocene, during the Quaternary Period.
- 1.2.2 The natural London Clay on site is a light to chocolate brown weathered stiff heavy clay. Discrete amorphous pockets of rounded and angular flint in a coarse sand and silty clay matrix overlie and occasionally are intermixed with the clay. This is notably present in regions 3 & 4, but absent from regions 1 & 2. This deposit may be part of the brickearth formation, but was indistinguishable from the London Clay. This is noted in geological surveys undertaken in the local area (Holmes 1981).
- 1.2.3 Less than a kilometre from the coast, Eddington lies on undulating agricultural land, a general trend of the North Downs dip slope in the North Kent coast.

- 1.2.4 A slight crest of high ground traverses region 3 with ground gently sloping away from the crest trending north-east towards the line of the water course, Plenty Brook and also sloping gently to the south-west.

1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 The development covering some 12.9 hectares was subject to an intensive field evaluation by C.A.T between August and September 1998 (Figure 2). Results of the evaluation revealed archaeological activity from the Bronze Age to the Anglo-Saxon periods throughout the development site (Houliston 1998).
- 1.3.2 Four areas of archaeological activity were identified and marked out for further investigation (Figure 3).
- 1.3.3 Large scale removal of topsoil in targeted areas based on the density of archaeological features located during the evaluation was undertaken. Approximate quantification and extent of archaeological activity on the site was mapped (Figure 4).
- 1.3.4 Between August and October 1999 phase 1 excavations (centred on region 2) revealed predominantly Late Bronze Age activity consisting of enclosure ditches, refuse pits and a small number of post-holes superimposed over a landscape peppered with earlier aceramic amorphous features. Although, typically void of cultural material one of these features, surprisingly yielded a Late Neolithic polished flint axe (Plate 1). One of the Late Bronze Age ditches yielded a conical ceramic loom weight (Jarman and Shand 2000).
- 1.3.5 Phase 2 excavations conducted during a persistent wet winter between November 1999 and January 2000 centred on region 1. Much of the Late Bronze Age activity discovered in region 2 continued through into region 1. Overlying the Bronze Age features, were the partial remains of a Romano-British field system and enclosure ditch which in turn was overlain by an Early Anglo-Saxon enclosure (Jarman and Shand 2000).

1.4 Previous discoveries

- 1.4.1 Previous discoveries are limited to a 2.5 km radius of Eddington.
- 1.4.2 To the north-east (c.0.5km), at Underdown Lane, Eddington, evidence for activity in the Late Bronze Age to the Romano British periods was recorded during excavations carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit. Most of the features were placed in the Late Iron Age/Early Romano British periods. Traces of field boundary ditches, probably forming part of an extensive agricultural field system were seen, but no traces of domestic structures were recorded (Murray 2000).
- 1.4.3 Approximately 2.5km to the east, evaluation trenching at Willow Farm, Broomfield, conducted by C.A.T. also revealed evidence for activity spanning

the Late Bronze Age to the Romano-British periods. Here, a small Late Bronze Age enclosure centred on a gravel platform was located. Activity in the Romano-British period is represented by some form of industrial activity and associated refuse pits. No clear evidence supporting settlement in this period was observed (Gollop 1999).

- 1.4.4 Archaeological survey during ditch cutting approximately 30m to the north of the present excavations north of the A299 Thanet Way, south of Herne Bay Railway Station revealed activity in the Late Bronze Age. These were mainly curvilinear ditches aligned roughly north-south (Macpherson-Grant 1991).
- 1.4.5 Evidence of further archaeological activity during the Late Bronze Age and Romano-British periods was observed approximately 50m west of the present excavations. These were discovered while archaeological monitoring prior to the building of new classrooms at Hene Bay, high school (Crank 2000).

2 Fieldwork

2.1 Regions 3 and 4

- 2.1.1 The recently completed excavations (regions 3 & 4) form part of the phase 2 investigations, and centred on the higher ground to the south and west of the earlier programme of works covering an area of approximately 3.7 hectares. Excavation took place in the summer between May and August 2000. A small plot of land belonging to Whitehall Cottage immediately to the east of this area was also evaluated by C.A.T in tandem with the main excavations as part of Ward Homes development. Details of the results of the evaluation are given in a separate report (Jarman 2000) and will be discussed briefly in the body of this report.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The initial strip and map plan employed to guide excavation of this area proved extremely useful as a tool for navigating around site and pinpointing areas of interest. A system of boxed sample excavations using a system deployed in earlier investigations were employed for regions 3 and 4. Boxes were located to sample areas where groupings of features and areas where feature groupings were less dense. The large number of features initially recorded in regions 3 and 4 required a flexible sampling strategy in order to adapt to the unfolding nature of the site during excavation.
- 2.2.2 As a consequence of the site being left open for an extended period, a thick blanket of weeds had taken hold over the site concealing the archaeological features. In order to examine the boxed areas a 360⁰ tracked machine was employed to clear the thick vegetative cover and silting from weathering. The spoil generated was stockpiled adjacent to the cleaned areas. The machine

work was undertaken in three separate stages in order that the amount of exposed archaeology was kept to a minimum.

- 2.2.3 Features were identified and initially highlighted using spray paint to aid visibility and surface planning in the event of wet weather. Feature types recorded were identified as linear/curvilinear ditches, pits, pit clusters, post-holes and large dark soil stains and cremations.
- 2.2.4 The development of a clear and comprehensive surface plan of the features in the boxes was initiated to further enhance the earlier strip and map survey. All features recorded in the boxed areas were located on a 1:50 scale drawn site plan which can be overlaid on the previous mapping survey conducted by electronic distance measurer (E.D.M).
- 2.2.5 A number of linear and curvilinear ditches and other large soil stains were sectioned by machine at some intersections with other features to reduce time taken by labour intensive hand digging. Single pits and post-holes were half-sectioned or if deemed necessary fully excavated by hand. Inter-cutting groups of features were half-sectioned to gain their stratigraphic relationships. All cremation burials were fully excavated by hand.
- 2.2.6 Hand drawn site plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50, detailed plans at an appropriate scale, and elevations at 1:10. All were drawn on polyester based film. A full black and white and 35mm colour transparency photographic record of all phases of the site has been maintained.

3 Summary of Results

3.1 Site summary

- 3.1.1 Regions 3 and 4 form part of a large multi-period archaeological landscape sharing some of the discoveries made in regions 1 and 2. Though spatially distant from regions 1 and 2, regions 3 and 4 should not be thought of as a separate site. Discussion here will concentrate on regions 3 and 4. An overview of the region forms the concluding part of this report.
- 3.1.2 The density of features located in regions 3 and 4 was far greater than elsewhere on the site, with many inter-cutting pits post-holes and ditches forming an intricate pattern.
- 3.1.3 The identification and dating of features presented in this report is based on features with obvious stratigraphic relationships defined during excavation and spot dates at this stage.

Prehistoric: Early Bronze Age (c. 2000-1500 B.C.)

3.1.4 Evidence of Early Bronze Age activity is not well represented in regions 3 and 4 and may not exist at all. A limited number of features displayed characteristics similar to features seen in earlier investigations. The lighter grey silt/clay backfill sets them apart from the multitude of other features many of which have considerably darker fills. These features were mainly located in the north-east of region 4 (Figure 6).

Prehistoric: Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (c. 1000-750 B.C.)

3.1.5 A small number of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age features providing datable material were located in the northern area of region 4 (Figure 7). Shallow pits [4068,4130 and 4275] dating from this period were truncated by later activity. Only one pit [4014] remained undisturbed. Part of a curvilinear ditch [4106] initially thought to be a track-way was located trending east-west, this was also severely cut away by episodes of ditch cutting in later periods. Similar features were observed in archaeological evaluation in work connected with the construction of new school buildings at Herne Bay High School, (Crank 2000).

Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British (c. 75/50 B.C. - A.D 250)

3.1.6 The majority of features excavated that have produced datable material fall into this period, and have produced sizable ceramic assemblages. Features have been classed as pits, post-holes, curvilinear ditches and cremations. These features are spread over a wide area of the site and form complex inter-cutting relationships with features belonging to other periods. Features are too numerous to mention here, so only features forming boundaries, structures or of significant interest will be discussed at this stage.

3.1.7 Crossing regions 3 and 4 south of the modern track, and set on a slight crest was part of a rectangular enclosure measuring some 40m x 30m. The enclosure ditches were shallow, generally no more than 0.35m in depth and 0.5m in width. Sample slots were excavated through some of the enclosure ditches [4987 and 4877]. Three entrances were situated in the north-west, north-east and the south-east segmented ditches. The south-western side of the enclosure was poorly preserved. It is not impossible that an entrance may have existed on this side. A small linear feature [4945 replaced by feature 4943] occupied the north-east entrance space effectively blocking it. Situated in the interior of the enclosure, (not centrally but more to the north-east), were two adjacent pits [4760 and 4749]. Pit 4760 measured 2-3m across and was 1.4m in depth.

3.1.8 The pit contained a very large sandstone block deliberately shaped into a half disk placed vertically against the side of the pit (Plate 2). A small pit located nearby yielded a complete decorated samian bowl and another small complete vessel. These were the only two features located within the enclosure.

3.1.9 Situated a short distance to the rectangular enclosure was the fragmentary remains of a second enclosure (Figure 8). Only ditches forming part of the south-east and south ditches of the enclosure survived. This was probably a consequence of their shallow nature and the high number of inter-cutting

features truncating the ditches. The northern side of the enclosure may underlie the present road. If this is the case the dimensions of the enclosure is similar to the one to the south. The surviving ditches [4820, 4827, 4947 and 4949] appear to take the form of an enclosure with multiple entrances.

- 3.1.10 Further short lengths of ditch located a short distance to the north possibly represent third ditched enclosure. The north-east, south-east and south-west enclosure ditches survive; the north-west ditch extends under an existing housing development a little to the north-west. Ditches 4045, 4077, 4083, 4282 and 4357 form the north-east circuit. These were inter-cutting and at this stage it is uncertain whether the complex pattern represents an attempt to form a continuous length of ditch or a process of blocking off entrances. Two entrances were discernible. Despite disturbance by later features and the presence of a modern trench the ditch depicting the south-eastern side of the enclosure [4148 and 4331] was segmented in form and included perhaps many entrances. The south-west circuit comprised two inter-cutting ditch segments [4606 and 4764] giving way to a line of post-holes [4669, 4859, 4861, 4863 and 4865]. This arrangement may indicate the position of a main gate.
- 3.1.11 Located to the south-west of the southernmost enclosure was a group of three cremation burials [3044, 3134 and 3189]. Cremation 3044 contained a cremation urn (3135) two pots (3042 and 3048) a samian dish (3046) and the remains of a pair of hob nail boots (3050: plates 3a & b). Feature [3134] contained a cremation urn (3131) which had been placed in a wooden casket indicated by the stain of rotted wood. Outside the casket was a complete flagon (3129 Plate 4). The third cremation [3189] contained a single vessel (3188) in fragmentary condition.
- 3.1.12 Numerous features were located within and outside the two northern-most enclosures. Many of these features have produced varying quantities of pottery animal bones and fragments of quern stones for grinding cereals. At this stage it is unclear whether some of these features relate to domestic activities within or outside the enclosures or if they pre-or post date the enclosures.

Late Romano-British (c. A.D. 250-400/50)

- 3.1.13 Much of the evidence for Late Romano-British occupation of the site is located in the south-western part of the sampled area in region 4 (Figure 7). Here a complex system of ditches [3071, 3109 and 3154] aligned north-west/south-east were identified. Many of the ditches appeared to follow the line of earlier boundaries. The later ditches were in turn cut by two parallel ditches [3152 and 3564] aligned north-east/south-west set approximately 12m apart. A large shallow oval feature [3220] 7m x 5m and 0.4m deep may also be of later Roman date since the feature cut the complex pattern of ditches but is cut by the latter parallel ditches. Taken together the ditches appear to form a complex pattern of enclosures and fields.
- 3.1.14 A complex of curvilinear ditches [3013, 4994 and 4996], were recorded across the site, most aligned north-east/south-west. These ditches apparently merge south of the ring ditch cutting through earlier Romano-British features before

following different alignments (Figure 8). Two further curvilinear ditches [3361 and 3461] appear to form the sides of a causeway. Together these ditches form an intricate pattern of enclosure/boundary ditches.

- 3.1.15 The number and complexity of features in regions 3 and 4 meant it was impossible to sample excavate every feature. A surface collection of material was carried out where individual features could be easily identified. It is hoped this will give a rough date range and enable some of these features to be placed in context.
- 3.1.16 Two large parallel curving ditches in region 4 [4620 and 4582] aligned north-east/south west may mark the main boundaries of the Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement.

4 Summary Report

Phase I Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (c 3000-2000 B.C.)

- 4.1.1 The earliest phase of occupation is characterised by groups of inter-cutting shallow pits and short lengths of curvilinear features. Mostly the features provided no finds and therefore dating as earliest features is based solely on stratigraphic links. Similar features located in regions 1 and 2 have been tentatively dated to the Early Bronze Age.

Phase II Early Bronze Age (c 2000-1500 B.C.)

- 4.1.2 This phase of activity, though present in regions 1 and 2, was not recognised in regions 3 and 4.

Phase III Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (c 1000-750 B.C.)

- 4.1.3 A small number of features recorded here, represents activity in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. A large curvilinear ditch [4106] and a ring ditch [4972] are perhaps indicative Late Bronze Age activity on higher ground, away from the denser pattern of occupation on the lower slope to the north and north-east. A number of features only represented in plan and not excavated may also be placed in this period. These include a large ring ditch [4972] with an internal diameter of 25m located south and slightly to the east of the modern track. The features yielded no datable surface finds. The interior of the ring ditch appeared to be void of features with the exception of a small number of irregular shaped features aligned on the inner curve of the ditch; these contained no datable surface finds. In the area surrounding the ring ditch, the site was peppered with features. A number of curvilinear ditches perhaps belonging to later periods, all appear to respect the position of the ring ditch in the landscape. This feature could be of Late Iron Age or Early Romano-British

date the lighter coloured soils defining the features and the absence of cultural material would seem to indicate an earlier prehistoric origin.

Phase IV Soil erosion period of abandonment

4.1.4 The natural London Clay underlying modern topsoil in regions 3 and 4 was dotted with pockets of naturally occurring angular and rounded flint. This is in sharp contrast to the lower slopes, which are relatively free of flinty material and also have a slightly higher silt content. A deposit of colluvium (hill wash) recorded in region 1 was notably absent from the excavations in regions 3 and 4. It would seem plausible that extensive land management, tree felling, clearing of bushes, shrubbery and agricultural practices caused soil to be washed down from the higher ground in the Late Bronze Age, leaving behind the heavier flinty clay (Staines 1991). This may account for the sharp interface between topsoil and natural here in regions 3 and 4 and the graded boundary between topsoil and the silty clay on the lower ground.

Phase V Late Iron Age/Romano- British (c75/50 B.C.-A.D.450.)

4.1.5 Three sub-rectangular enclosures identified in regions 3 and 4 have been dated to the Late Iron Age/Early Romano- British periods. The enclosures survived to differing degrees and varied slightly in form but were generally rectangular and of approximately equal dimensions. The enclosures were located on a narrow crest of land curving south-west to north-west around a small flat elevated plateau to the west currently under suburban housing. A number of naturally occurring ancient springs are known to exist here. The land slopes away from the crest to the south, south-west, north and north-east more predominantly to the north-east. The function of these enclosures is unclear, but they may have been used to define areas of pastoral or paddocks for the penning of stock. It is possible that the enclosures may have been used for a ritual or religious activities connected with the springs.

4.1.6 Three Romano-British burials located during the excavation clearly indicate the presence of a long stay of activity. The area where the cremations were located was void of other features. Linear ditches to the east, west and north of this area may perhaps be indicative of boundaries of a settlement. The cremation cemetery may lie immediately outside the area of habitation, thus conforming to Roman law.

4.1.7 Late Roman activity including modifications and changes to existing patterns of boundaries is clearly apparent. Large sweeping lengths of curvilinear ditches were found to cut across the line of earlier enclosures. Other ditches were found to cut across the line of curvilinear ditches all pointing to continuity of land use, but a changing pattern of use.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1.1 Excavations in regions 3 and 4 have brought to a close large scale investigations at Eddington and have significantly added to our understanding of the local environment in the past. The recent excavations together with the earlier discoveries in regions 1 and 2 have provided substantial evidence of a complex archaeological landscape, which is both extensive and long-lived.
- 5.1.2 The local geology, dominated by unforgiving heavy clays and poor draining soils, has traditionally been thought to be unproductive, and consequently scarcely occupied through history. Excavations at Eddington and a wider context set against the north Kent coast are dispelling this traditional view that this heavy subsoil was only suitable for the growing of trees. Clearance of primeval woodland and forest may have been complete in the Neolithic period, with settlement activity beginning in the Early-Middle Bronze Age. This settlement activity may have included not only industrial aspects of settlement but expansive field systems for agrarian and pastoral purposes. There can also be the likelihood that the marine resource was also exploited to supplement the local diet.
- 5.1.3 The presence of springs nearby would have been an invaluable source of fresh water, perhaps also serving as a social and religious focus that would have made the Eddington site an important location throughout the prehistoric and later periods. Natural springs on London Clay are not common though small streams issuing from spring lines on higher sandy/gravel ground some distance away are known
- 5.1.4 The discovery, of a Late Neolithic polished stone axe (Plate 1) during the phase 1 excavations is both a significant and important find. Polished stone axes are thought to be prestige items usually reserved for ceremonial functions. Further analysis of the axe may reveal that the stone type is of a non local origin suggestive of trade links in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods.
- 5.1.5 Seasonal occupation of the site during Late Bronze Age may explain the frequent re-cutting of the enclosure ditches. That occupation did take place is clearly indicated by industrial debris and domestic waste including the discovery of a near complete ceramic loom weight (Plate1) and significant quantities of pottery and fragments of ceramic spindle-whorls and fragments of copper alloy slag.
- 5.1.6 A period of abandonment of the lower slopes of Eddington appears to have occurred in the Early- Middle Iron Age followed. Occupation resumes in the Late Iron Age or Romano-British periods with the laying out of an agricultural field systems on the slopes and the lower ground in the north-eastern parts of the site. On the curving crest of high ground the presence of a number of rectangular enclosures to the south west and a cemetery area further to the south indicates a regular pattern of settlement. Changes occurred over this period with the setting out of large curvilinear ditches, perhaps new enclosures,

replacing the former arrangements. Agrarian occupation/settlement in the Late Iron Age/Romano-British periods is attested likely, although ritual practices associated with the springs cannot be discounted.

- 5.1.7 The site has only one clear boundary limiting the extent of occupation in the south-east in region 4. Watching briefs north of the Thanet Way in 1991 revealed further evidence for occupation in the Late Bronze Age (Macpherson-Grant 1991). Prolific numbers of features are also located in the southern and western extremities of the higher ground, suggesting a continuation of the archaeological landscape in these directions including the Romano-British cemetery.
- 5.1.8 A double ditched enclosure, belonging to the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period (A.D 550/600-700) located on the lower slopes is both a significant and rare discovery in the Kentish landscape. This clearly adds to the lengthy occupation of the site at Eddington and its significance as a place of settlement.
- 5.1.8 The opportunity to examine such a large tract of landscape is rare; indeed rarer still to see such a density of features forming a complex and changing landscape. With the funding and support of Ward Homes, these excavations have provided an important window through which we have been able to view a multi-period occupational site providing some rare and interesting discoveries. Further detailed analysis during the post-excavation stages of this project, will almost certainly reveal new directions and refined interpretations of the Eddington story.

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Fig 1: Site location plan

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Fig 2: Evaluation trench location plan
Scale 1:2000



Fig 3: Location of regions and areas referred to in text.

Scale 1:2000



Fig 4: Strip and map plan
Scale 1:2000



Fig 5: Overall excavation plan of Regions 1-4, showing preliminary phasing
Scale 1:2000

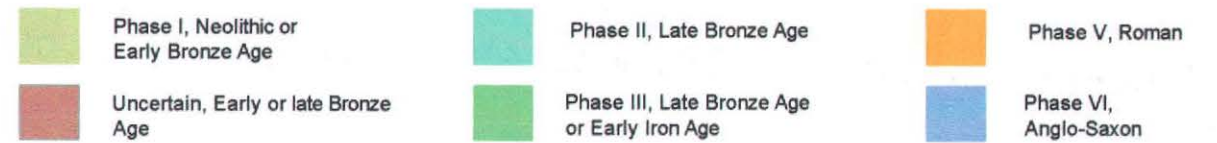




Fig 6: Phase I, possible Early Bronze Age features (shown by olive-green hatching)
Scale 1:500



Fig 7: Phase III, Late Bronze Age (shown by green hatching)
Scale 1:500



Fig 8: Phase V, Late Iron Age and Roman (shown by orange hatching)
 Scale 1:1000

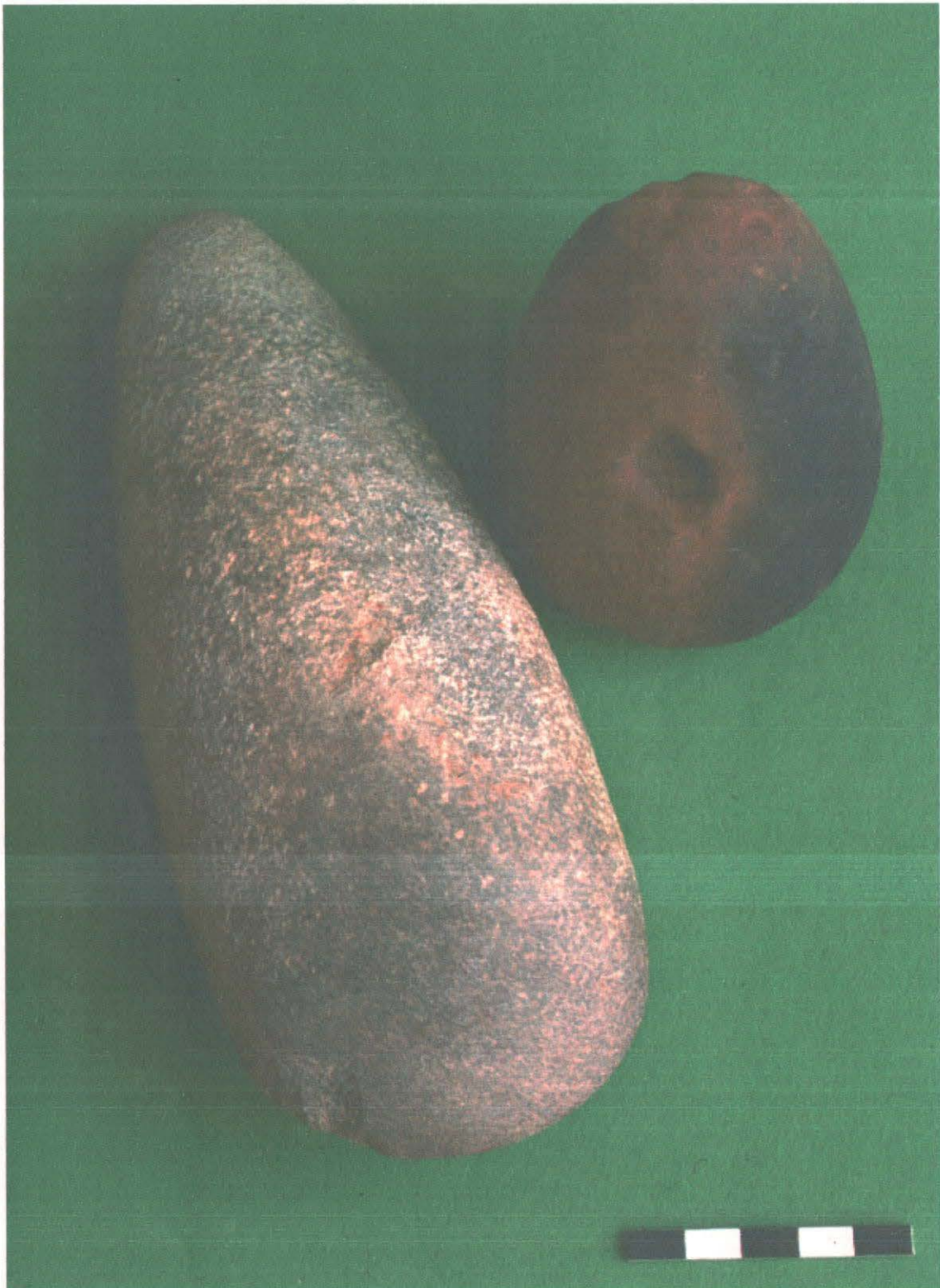


Plate 1: Polished Late Neolithic flint axe and Late Bronze Age conical pottery loom weight.
Scale 5 cms.



Plate 2a: Cut 4760 during excavation to reveal large sandstone slab. *with the* in situ ?



Plate 2b: Sandstone slab after excavation.
Scale 1 m.



Plate 3a: Samian dish and accompanying vessel within cremation burial cut 3044.



Plate 3b: Hob nails marking the position of a pair of boots placed with cremation burial cut 3044.



Plate 4: Excavation of flagon 3129 accompanying cremation burial 3134.