

**LAND ADJOINING
SWANTON MORLEY AIRFIELD,
BEETLEY & HOE
NORFOLK**

Archaeological Investigation



HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Report No. 1161

**LAND ADJOINING SWANTON MORLEY
AIRFIELD, BEETLEY & HOE
NORFOLK**

Archaeological Investigation

Site Code:

NGR: TF 9946 1881

Parish: Hoe

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LAND ADJOINING SWANTON MORLEY AIRFIELD, BEETLEY & HOE, NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

During July and August 2002, Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust carried out a programme of archaeological investigation on land adjoining Swanton Morley Airfield, Norfolk (NGR: TF 9946 1881). Research and previous evaluation of the site indicated that it was in an area of significant archaeological potential, especially for the Saxon period.

Evidence of a 5th-6th century cremation cemetery on part of the site had already been revealed by a previous evaluation (Trimble 2002) and it was anticipated that a programme of archaeological monitoring, recording and excavation undertaken during topsoil stripping would reveal further evidence of occupation and funerary use.

No further evidence of the Saxon cremation cemetery was recorded. Two isolated pits of late Bronze Age/Iron Age date were present, and the fieldwork also revealed evidence of Romano-British field systems/enclosures, previously identified by the evaluation. Five pits and a post hole containing Roman pottery, and two large well-preserved kilns, also Roman, were recorded. The latter were planned but not excavated. A large part of the eastern area of the site had clearly been subject to previous significant ground disturbance, almost certainly during the construction of Swanton Morley Airfield during WWII.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 During July and August 2002 Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (HAT) carried out an archaeological investigation on land adjoining Swanton Morley Airfield, Norfolk (NGR: TF 9946 1881, Figs. 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by Stephen M Daw on behalf of Barker Bros. Aggregates Ltd in advance of proposed mineral extraction on the site. The works were undertaken as part of a planning requirement by the local planning authority (based on advice from Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA)).

1.2 The archaeological excavation and monitoring and recording were conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by NLA (dated 02/07/02) and a specification compiled by HAT (dated 08/07/02). The work complied with the NLA *County Standards for Fieldwork in Norfolk* (1998), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (revised 1999) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 1999).

1.3 The principal aims of the investigation were to determine the location and extent of the Saxon cremation cemetery revealed in the earlier evaluation of the site (NAU 2002) (as set out in the brief, Sections 1-3), and to record any further archaeological features in advance of gravel extraction.

1.4 In addition, the principal aims of the monitoring and recording were to recover as much information as possible on the origins, date, development, phasing, spatial organisation, character, function, status, and the nature of social, economic and industrial activities on the site.

1.5 Research issues include the characterisation of the post-Roman occupation of the immediate area, and specifically to establish any further evidence of early Saxon burial activity or occupation on the site. Earlier activity was also of interest, in particular Roman or later prehistoric activity, with relation to a concentration of ring ditches, a Roman road, bridge and fort and a large Roman settlement in the area.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION, TOPOGRAPHY, SOILS AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site comprises an area of farmland, encompassing an overall area of some 11.6ha, located to the west of Swanton Morley Airfield, Norfolk. It comprises part of the more extensive Roostinghills quarry that lies to the west, and is accessed from the main quarry entrance on the B1110. A trackway associated with the perimeter of the airfield bounds the site to the north, east and south. The land to the west of the site is in arable use. The disused Dereham-North Elmham railway line runs some 200m to the west of the site, parallel with Hoe Road.

2.2 The village of North Elmham lies approximately 2km to the north north west, with the village of Beetley c.2km to the south west. The small hamlet of Hoe lies some 1.5km to the south of the site. The site lies on a gentle incline, rising from c.35m AOD in the north west of the site to c.44m AOD in the south eastern part.

2.3 The drift geology of the area comprises chalky till and glaciofluvial drift, on the terrace above the valley of the river Nar to the west. This is characterised by the Burlingham 1 association of deep loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, associated with some deep well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within part of Norfolk that has a long history of occupation, landscape exploitation and funerary activity.

3.1 To the north, west and south of the site lithics have been found dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods (SMR 1063, 30709, 1066). Lithics and Bronze Age pottery were also recovered from pits just to the south of the site.

3.2 Prehistoric activity in the wider area is represented by a concentration of ring ditches, many likely former round barrows now levelled by long-term ploughing.

3.3 To the west of the site two prehistoric features have been identified. A burnt Bronze Age mound and pot boiler have been identified by Hoe Road (SMR 2799) and what appears to be part of the Fen Causeway has been recorded running roughly east-west from the Beetley area (SMR 2796). Probably a routeway with prehistoric origins, the road ran from Yarmouth and linked the eastern coast to the Fen waterways, running to the area of contemporary industry (pottery production and iron working) around Peterborough (Salway, 1993).

3.4 Evidence of early prehistoric activity has been found at Spong Hill, some 1km to the west north west of the current site, dating to the Mesolithic and early Bronze Age. Late Iron Age and Roman enclosures and field boundaries, and an early Roman kiln were also excavated on the former site.

3.5 A likely late Iron Age/ Early Roman field system was identified during the initial evaluation of the current site (NAU 2002), orientated generally north west-south east. This may be associated with the field boundaries identified at Spong Hill.

3.6 To the north east is a large Roman settlement and a Roman road running to the north of the site. The local inhabitants may have been exploiting the field systems in and around the site. Roman coins have also been found north north east of the site (SMR 25938).

3.7 Saxon activity in the area is well-known. A nationally-important early Saxon settlement and cremation cemetery was been excavated at Spong Hill. Approximately 2,300 cremations and 57 inhumations were excavated (dating to the 5th and 6th centuries – McKinley, 1994), as well as two ring ditches. The cremation urns were finely made and may have been purpose made for burial, and the cemetery perhaps served a large territory of central Norfolk, rather than a single settlement site (Wade, in Glazebrook, 1997, 49). The settlement at Spong Hill is represented by a small number of *grubenhauser* and timber halls.

3.8 To the north east of the site an early/middle Saxon settlement has been partially excavated at Billingsford, with evidence of iron smelting taking place on the site (Wade, in Glazebrook, 1997, 49).

3.9 Evaluation of the current site has also revealed the presence of a Saxon cremation cemetery, which was partially excavated (NAU 2002). Six cremation urns and their contents were recovered in a single trench in the south east of the site. Curvilinear ditches in the proximity may also represent ring ditches or barrows associated with funerary activity. A feature representing the vestiges of a possible timber sill-beam structure was also partially excavated in the trench, though was undated.

3.10 The area was clearly very important in the later Saxon period. North Elmham, north north west of the assessment site, was a Saxon bishopric until the 11th century, although it was abandoned for a century in the mid-ninth century during the Danish

occupancy. The Saxon Cathedral, the seat of the Bishops of East Anglia, now survives as ruins. It is not clear when the area became important ecclesiastically, although a copper-alloy hanging censor found on the site was dated to the mid-ninth century. This date fits with a mid/late Saxon inhumation cemetery associated with the cathedral. Settlement of the site is first represented by middle Saxon buildings, boundary ditches and two timber-lined wells. In 1075 the first Norman Bishop of Elmham moved to Thetford, and later his successor moved to the Cathedral in Norwich. The Saxon Cathedral was converted into a double-moated castle in the fourteenth century.

3.11 Not far from Elmham, some 1km to the north of the site, Worthing church has been assessed and dated to the late Saxon period (with a surviving tower and door of this period) with later additions (SMR 2829).

3.12 Mediaeval evidence from the area is sparse with the exception of moated manorial sites at Beetley, Spong Hill, Hoe and Worthing (SMR 2811, 2785). The site itself lay in the agricultural hinterland of the villages of Hoe, Beetley and Worthing, and few finds other than fragment of mediaeval brick from the Roostinghall Quarry (SMR 11851) and late Saxon/mediaeval pottery sherds from fields to the south of Worthing (SMR 1063). No significant mediaeval features were recorded during the trial trench evaluation of the site (NAU 2002).

3.13 Little in the way of post-mediaeval activity is known in the immediate vicinity of the site, other than the reference to an old road on Bryant's 1826 map (SMR 2920) to the north west of the site and the 19th century construction of the Wymondham-Wells railway (SMR 13588).

3.14 Swanton Morley airfield was constructed in 1940, now the largest surviving grass airfield of WWII date in the country (SMR 2830). A number of pillboxes, spigot mortar bases and other concrete fortifications survive in the immediate area (eg SMR 25493, 31421). One of the pillboxes was recorded as part of the first phase of archaeological works on the current site (NAU 2002).

3.15 The development site itself appears to have undergone little change since the mediaeval period at least, until the construction of the WWII airfield and ancillary features. The creation of the airfield, perimeter and fortifications to the immediate east of the site likely caused a certain degree of truncation. The Saxon urns recorded during the evaluation showed some evidence of truncation by plough-damage, though this may have been due to more recent deep ploughing of the site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were excavated mechanically under close archaeological supervision, thereafter all further excavation was undertaken by hand (Fig.2). All deposits were cleaned by hand, recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. In addition, the excavated spoil and excavation was scanned with a metal detector.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS BY PHASE

5.1 Late Bronze Age/Iron Age Figs.3 & 6

On the western side of the site a single pit contained late Bronze Age/Iron Age pottery. Pit 1022 was a large, relatively shallow, subcircular with steep concave sides giving way to an irregular base (length 1.36m, width 1.60m, depth 0.26m). Its upper fill was a dark brown silty sand (1023), and the basal fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1024). L1023 contained a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery vessel (1430g).

5.2 Iron Age Figs.3 & 6

Also on the western side of the site, but at some distance from Pit 1022, F1007 was a subcircular pit which contained Iron Age pottery (length 1.05m; width 0.70m; depth 0.33m). It had steep sides which gave way to a rounded base. Its upper fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1008) which contained an almost complete Iron Age pottery vessel (361g). The basal fill was a mid orange/brown silty sand (1009). It contained sherds derived from the same vessel (613g) and struck flint (10g).

5.3 Roman Figs.3 - 9

The majority of the dated archaeological features were Roman, and there were located predominantly on the northern and western sides of the site. The pottery reports indicates a 4th century, probably late 4th, date for the Roman features.

A series of field ditches/enclosures, aligned at right angles, were recorded: 1016, 1027, 1033 and 1060. These ditches consistently contained late Roman pottery within their fills.

Ditch 1016 had gently sloping sides which gave way to a flat base (width 1.80m; depth 0.40m). It was traced for a distance of 25m +. Its fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1017) which contained 3rd- 4th century Roman pottery (30g), and a quern stone fragment (165g). Ditch 1027 had gently sloping sides and a V-shaped base (width 1.90m; depth 0.40m). It was traced for a distance of 25m +. Its fill was a brown/grey silty sand (1028), and it contained Roman pottery (17g). It cut Ditch

1016. Ditch 1033 had steep sides which gave way to a flattish base (width 0.94m; depth 0.37m). It was traced for a distance of 25m +. Its fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1034), and it contained 3rd – 4th century Roman pottery (67g) and struck flint (7g). Ditch 1060 had steep sides and a V-shaped base (width 1.60m; depth 0.45m). It was traced for a distance of 10m +. Its fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1061), and it contained 4th century Roman pottery (788g), tile (186g), and animal bone (251g).

Ditches 1012, 1014 and 1018 are undated, but share a similar alignment to the field/enclosure ditches, and occupied the same general area of the site.

Ditch 1012 had fairly steep sides and a wide flat base (width 1.85m, depth 0.38m). Its fill was a mid orange brown silty sand (1013) which contained no finds. Ditch 1014 had long sloping sides and a flat base (width 2.05m, depth 0.34m). Its fill was a dark brown sandy silt (1015) which contained no finds. Ditch 1018 had gently sloping sides which gave way to a concave base (width 1.80m, depth 0.35m). Its fill was a mid orange brown silty sand (1019) which contained no finds.

Ditches 1003 and 1109 form what might be interpreted as a second field system, on a slightly different alignment.

Ditch 1003 had fairly steep sides and a wide concave base (width 1.95m, depth 0.48m). Its fill was a mid orange brown silty sand (1004) which contained Roman pottery (673 g), slag (3019g) and struck (12g) and burnt (134g) flint. Ditch 1109 had steep sides and a V-shaped base (width 1.80m, depth 0.38m). Its fill was a grey brown silty sand (1110) which contained 3rd – 4th century Roman pottery (8g).

Ditch 1111 is undated. It was parallel to Ditch 1109, and cut by Ditch 1003. It was steep sided and had a flattish base (width 1.09m, depth 0.23m). Its fill was a mid grey brown silty sand (1112) which contained no finds.

Ditch 1070 is also undated. It cut late Roman ditch 1160. Its alignment was very much at odds with the other recorded ditches. It had steep sides and an irregular base (width 1.70m, depth 0.50m). Its fill was an orange brown silty sand (1071) which contained no finds.

Miscellaneous features, frequently undated, and comprising smaller ditches (1054, 1056), gullies (1039, 1047) pits (1010, 1037, 1058, 1020, 1025, 1041, 1049, 1107, 1117, 1119/1121, 1125, 1128), and post holes (1123) were recorded in the vicinity of the field ditches/enclosures. The distribution of features with Roman pottery clearly errs to the northern and western areas of the site.

| Feature | Type | Dimensions | Fill | Finds |
|----------------|-------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| F1054 L1055 | Ditch | L 1.60m; W 1.45m; D 0.25m | Dark brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1056 L1057 | " | L 10m+; W 0.40m; D 0.18m | Dark brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1039 L1040 | Gully | L 1.05m; W 0.53m; D 0.25m | Dark brown silty sand | None |
| F1047 L1048 | " | L 10m+; W 1.40m; D 0.30m | Mid brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1010 L1011 | Pit | L 1.67 m; W 0.45 m; D 0.23m | Light brown silty sand | 4 th pot (115g), daub (26g), stone quern fragments (788g), struck (13g) and burnt (50g) flint. |
| F1037 L1038 | " | L 1.32m; W 0.74m; D 0.29m | Dark brown silty sand | Roman pottery (11g) |
| F1058 L1059 | " | L 0.68m; W 0.62m; D 0.20m | Dark grey silty sand | None |
| F1107 L1108 | " | L 2.00m; W 1.19m; D 0.34m | Mid brown/grey silty sand | 4 th Roman pottery (423g) & animal bone (32g) |
| F1119 L1120 | " | L 3.00m; W 1.67m; D 0.56m | Yellow brown silty sand | None |
| F1020 L1021 | " | L 0.40 m; W 0.32m; D 0.25m | Dark brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1041 L1042 | " | L 1.60m; W 1.25m; D 0.17m | Dark brown silty sand | None |
| F1049 L1053 | " | L 2.30m; W 2.40m; D 0.90m | Orange/grey silty sand | None |
| F1058 L1059 | " | L 0.68m; W 0.62m; D 0.20m | Dark grey silty sand | None |
| F1117 L1118 | " | L 2.40m; W 1.78m; D 0.38m | Dark grey/brown silty sand | Roman pottery (17g) and burnt flint (19g) |
| F1125 L1126 | " | L 1.40m; W 2.43 m; D 0.37m | Dark brown silty sand | 4 th Roman pottery (3g) burnt flint (240g). |
| F1128 L1129 | " | L 0.85m W 0.88 m; D 0.38m | Dark brown silty sand | No finds |
| F1123 L1124 | PH | L 0.60m; W 0.49m; D 0.27m | Dark grey/brown silty sand | Roman pottery 129g |

The principal features relating to this phase are two kilns, 1103 and 1130 (Figs. 8 – 9). These features were recorded in plan but not excavated within the current programme of investigation, consequently their description is limited. Kiln 1130 is circular in plan with a southern extension. It is clay lined, L1131, and contained Roman pottery (72g) and slag (12g). Kiln 1103 is an oval kiln with a baked clay lining (L1006), and has a U-shaped strip of baked clay in the centre.

Iron Age or Saxon Figs.3 & 6

F1043 was a subcircular pit with gently sloping sides which gave way to a V-shaped base (length 2.30m; width 0.75m; depth 0.20m). Its fill was a dark brown/grey silty sand (1044) which contained late Iron Age or Saxon pottery (55g)

Modern, WWII Fig.3

Modern disturbance was apparent during the topsoil stripping on the eastern side of the site, and this disturbance was evidently associated with the construction of the airfield. A pill box was recorded on this side of the site.

Features 1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, located close by the Roman kilns, were a group of modern pits

Undated Features Fig.3 - 7

The archaeological features containing Roman pottery were recorded on the northern and western sides of the site. Undated features were recorded in the area adjacent to the urned Saxon cremations.

The features are largely undated pits.

Pits F1062, F1064, F1066, and F1068 were prominent because they were large and shallow.

Ditch 1085 L1086 contained a modern animal burial (5147g)

| Feature | Type | Dimensions | Fill | Finds |
|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| F1035 L1036 | Ditch | W 0.24 D 0.19m | Dark brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1080 L1081 | " | L 20m+; W 145m; D 1.05m | Orange brown clayey sand | None |
| F1085 L1086 | " | L 10m+m; W 2.10m; D 0.60m | Light brown silty sand | Animal bone (5147g) |
| F1095 L1096 | " | L 5m+; W 1.70m; D 0.38m | Dark brown silty sand | None |
| F1029 L1030 | Pit | L 0.45m; W 0.45m; D 0.40m | Mid brown/grey silty sand | None |
| F1062 L1063 | " | L 2.20m; W 1.80m; D 0.60m | Light brown silty sand | None |
| F1064 L1065 | " | L 2m; W 1.70m; D 0.5m | Mid grey brown silty sand | None |
| F1066 L1067 | " | L 3.5 m; W 4m; D 0.35m | Mid grey brown silty sand | None |
| F1072 L1073 | " | L 0.73m; W 0.57 m; D 0.22m | Dark brown stoney sand | None |
| F1074 L1075 | " | L0.50m; W 0.32 m; D 0.20m | Dark brown silty sand | None |

| | | | | |
|----------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| F1076 L1077 | " | L1.20m; W 0.76m; D 0.43m | Dark brown silty sand | None |
| F1082 L1083 | " | L1.20m; W 1.30m D 0.50m | Mid grey brown silty sand | None |
| F1087 L1088 | " | L 1.00m; W 0.90m; D 0.45m | Light brown silty sand | None |
| F1089 L1090 | " | L0.90m; W 0.70m; D 0.42m | Orange brown silty sand | None |
| F1091 L1092 | " | L1.09m; W 0.90m; D 0.20m | Light brown silty sand | None |
| F1093 L1094 | " | L 0.60m; W 0.60m D 0.40m | Dark brown silty sand | None |

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not thought that any factors hindered the identification of archaeological features or finds during the evaluation or monitoring and recording.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Two isolated pits dating to the late Bronze Age/Iron Age were recorded. Each contained a substantially complete pottery vessel. To the west of the site two prehistoric features have been previously identified. A burnt Bronze Age mound and pot boiler have been identified by Hoe Road (SMR 2799) and what appears to be part of the Fen Causeway has been recorded running roughly east-west from the Beetley area (SMR 2796). The latter is probably a routeway with prehistoric origins.

7.2 The fieldwork also revealed evidence of Romano-British field systems/enclosures, previously identified during the evaluation (NAU 2002), orientated generally NW/SE. This may be associated with the field boundaries identified at Spong Hill. Five pits and a post hole containing Roman pottery, and two large well-preserved kilns, also Roman, were recorded. To the north east is a large Roman settlement and a Roman road running to the north of the site. Roman coins have also been found north north east of the site (SMR 25938).

7.3 No further evidence of the Saxon cremation cemetery was recorded.

7.4 The cremation cemetery was located on the plateau of a low hill, with the land sloping down to the north, south and west. The topography mimics that on the opposite side of the valley, where the Spong Hill cemetery is situated. Both sites lay c.500m from the Black Water. This is a classic location for a Saxon cemetery, which are located on prominent ground and near to rivers and streams. Hill (1980) has argued that Spong Hill, due to its size, may have served several communities in the region or formed a focal point for the neighborhood, whereas the smaller cemeteries probably served a local community or individual settlement. It may be that the cemetery identified on site was serving a local community, whereas Spong Hill absorbed those dying in the wider community. If this was the case, it is not clear

whether the Spong Hill was used as well as this cemetery or whether they were serving different groups of people. The relationship between the cemetery and the one at Spong Hill is unclear. They could have been mutually exclusive, the Swanton Morley site serving a local community and Spong Hill serving those from a wider area.

7.5 The focus in the area seems to have changed in the middle Saxon period, with the early Saxon cemetery being abandoned and the growth of a settlement with associated church and cemetery in North Elmham.

7.6 A large part of the eastern area of the site had clearly been subject to previous significant ground disturbance, almost certainly during the construction of Swanton Morley Airfield during WWII.

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Concordance of finds by feature

| Feature | Context | Segment | Description | Spnt Date | Pottery | Building material | Animal Bone | Struck flint | Other |
|---------|---------|---------|------------------|---|---------|------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--|
| U/S | | | | Early – Middle Iron Age and 4 th C AD | 847g | | | 12g | Slag – 1 lump, 2568g (post-Roman) Burnt flint, 134g |
| 1003 | 1004 | | Ditch fill | Roman | 55g | | | | |
| 1003 | 1004 | E | Ditch fill | Mid – Late 2 nd – 4 th C AD | 509g | | | | |
| 1003 | 1004 | G | Ditch fill | Roman | 20g | Pit lining/kiln furniture, 420g | | | |
| 1003 | 1004 | H | Ditch fill | 2 nd – 4 th C AD | 81g | Pit lining/kiln furniture, 31g | | | |
| 1003 | 1004 | J | Ditch fill | Roman | 8g | | | | |
| 1007 | 1008 | | Upper pit fill | Iron Age (Early – Middle) | 361g | | | | |
| 1007 | 1009 | | Lower pit fill | Iron Age (Early – Middle) | 613g | | | 10g | |
| 1010 | 1011 | | Pit fill | 4 th C AD | 115g | Daub, 26g | | 13g | Stone quern fragments, 788g Burnt flint, 50g |
| 1016 | 1017 | | Ditch fill | 3 rd – 4 th C AD | 30g | | | | Quern stone fragment, 165g |
| 1022 | 1023 | | Pit fill | Late Bronze – Early Iron Age | 1430g | | | | |
| 1027 | 1028 | A | Ditch fill | Roman | 9g | | | | |
| 1027 | 1028 | B | Ditch fill | Roman | 8g | | | | |
| 1033 | 1034 | | Ditch fill | 3 rd – 4 th C AD | 67g | | | 7g | |
| 1037 | 1038 | | Pit fill | Roman | 11g | | | | |
| 1043 | 1044 | | Pit fill | Late Iron Age or Saxon | 55g | | | | |
| 1060 | 1061 | | Ditch fill | 4 th C AD | 788g | Tile, 186g | 251g | | |
| 1085 | 1086 | | Ditch fill | Modern | | | 5147g | | |
| 1107 | 1108 | | Pit fill | 4 th C AD | 423g | | 32g | | |
| 1109 | 1110 | A | Ditch/gully fill | 3 rd – 4 th C AD | 8g | | | | |
| 1117 | 1118 | | Pit fill | Roman | 17g | | | | Burnt flint, 19g |
| 1123 | 1124 | | Post hole fill | 4 th C AD | 129g | | | | |
| 1125 | 1126 | | Lower pit fill | 4 th C AD | 3g | | | | |
| 1125 | 1127 | | Upper pit fill | | | | | | Burnt? Flint, 240g |
| 1130 | 1132 | | Pit/kiln fill | c. 2 nd C AD | 72g | | | | Slag, 12g |

Prehistoric and Roman Pottery

by A. R. Fawcett BA MA

Introduction

A total of 493 sherds, weighing 5596g, were recovered during the archaeological investigation at Beetley Quarry, Norfolk. Much of the ceramic assemblage is well-preserved with some reconstructable vessels present. This indicates that a significant quantity of the pottery was in a primary context. The pottery is indicative of activity on the site during the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods.

Prehistoric

Two pits, 1007 and 1022, contained prehistoric pottery. The earliest assemblage is from 1022. Here, over 102 hand-made joining sherds from the same vessel are present. The fabric inclusion comprises common ill-sorted flint, and virtually the whole body displays a mixture of thumbed and stabbed decoration. About 30 - 40% of the rim survives, and it has fingernail decoration. The form probably dates from the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age.

Pit 1007 contained another virtually complete urn. The fabric is again hand-made, and the inclusions comprise ill-sorted quartz sand with both sparse grog and flint. Decoration is present only on the body, and it consists of stabbing and thumbing. The vessel dates from the early to middle Iron Age.

Prehistoric sherds are present within the unstratified assemblage. They are all from the same vessel and the sherds are much better preserved compared to the Roman material. Again stabbed decoration is present. The fabric is silty and contains sparse grog.

Roman

This period accounts for the larger part of the assemblage. The condition of the pottery and the quantity of pottery from each context are variable. The largest assemblages are from ditches 1003, 1060 and pit 1107.

Nearly all of the pottery is 4th century AD, potentially the latter half of that century. Those fabrics which can be immediately sourced, are Nene Valley colour coats, Oxford red/brown slipped ware (as well as white ware mortaria sherds from the same industry), Hadham oxidised ware and both Nar Valley and Wattisfield reduced fabrics. The largest percentage of identifiable fabrics are late Romano-British shell tempered wares. Jars with a variety of undercut rims (often with rilled decoration) are the only

form type, typical of the Harrold style (Brown 1994). However, one source for these examples is likely to be the Lakenheath area. The best types are found in ditch 1060 L1061, Pit 1107 L1108 and Post Hole 1123 L1124.

The remainder of the assemblage is made up of unsourced oxidised and reduced wares. Undoubtedly full use was made of the known local/regional kilns such as Brampton, Hevingham and North Elmham. Few sherds are decorated. Rilling, Icenian rustication and rouletting are the only other recorded designs.

Evidence for earlier Roman activity is not readily apparent. Where earlier dates occur, they are often based upon long-lived coarseware fabrics and forms. Indicative of the later dates is the complete absence of samian ware.

The overall form assemblage is limited. Jars completely dominate, with just one dish example (from the Nene Valley), a flanged bowl and mortaria body sherds (from Oxford) being present.

The identified kiln(s) on the site contained 14 sherds of pottery, all of which are abraded and small (average sherd weight of just 5g). Two rim sherds are noted in an indistinguishable grey ware. Both appear to be dated from the 2nd century AD+. There is no evidence of either vitrified fabrics, wasters or 'seconds'.

Despite the rural location of the site it had links with many of the large late rural Roman nucleated industries. No doubt this was helped by its close proximity to the road which runs from Peterborough in the west to Brampton in the east, and the small fort at Swanton Morley.

Other

One feature (Pit 1043) contained seven joining sherds (in good condition) which are from a hand-made vessel. It has a burnished surface. The diagnostic sherds present indicate an urn with an upright, and then slightly splayed rim. The fabric consists of sand and organics. The vessel may be Iron Age or Saxon.

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BURNT AND STRUCK FLINT

Tom McDonald MIFA

The burnt flint shows no evidence of having been struck

Four struck flint were found. The material is not homogeneous, and no statistical analysis is possible. Two pieces are lightly retouched, but no diagnostic tools are present.

Catalogue

U/S

Tertiary flake. Grey/brown flint. Abraded. Retouched

1009

Secondary flake. Grey flint. Burnt. No retouch

1011

A flake. Grey cherty flint. Not patinated and not retouched.

1034

Tertiary, parallel-sided, blade. Grey flint, soapy feel. No patinated. Retouched

Animal Bones, Beetley Quarry, Norfolk (37159HZE)

By Rhodri Gardner Phd

Introduction

Only three contexts at Beetley Quarry produced animal bones with a total weight of 5430g. The majority (5147g) was recovered from a single context (1086) which contained no other finds and is therefore undated. The remaining two contexts, (1061) and (1108), date to the 4th century AD. The bones were recorded according to the method of Davis (1992).

Results

Given the small amount of bone that they produced, the material from contexts (1061) and (1108) has been amalgamated. The undated context (1086) is considered separately.

Late Roman

Contexts (1061) and (1108) produced just 283g of bone, amounting to 35 fragments. Of these only three could be identified to species. The material from both contexts was in poor condition, with a modal fragment size of 25-50mm. In terms of chemical degradation and weathering they score '5' on the scale of Behrensmeyer (1978) - the worst score possible, describing extensive flaking, cracking and splitting. The identified bones are:

- * A cattle (*Bos taurus*) second molar. This was too poorly preserved to enable the wear stage to be assessed.
- * The badly damaged distal end of a cattle femur. The epiphysis was fused, indicating that the animal had reached at least 3 1/2 - 4 years of age by the time of slaughter.
- * A horse (*Equus caballus*) first molar. This was again too poorly preserved to enable any measurement.

Undated

Context (1086) produced some 5147g of animal bone. This assemblage was unusual in that it contained only the postcranial bones of young pigs. No individual teeth, skull or mandible fragments were present. Almost all bones had unfused epiphyses (both proximal and distal). The number of unfused scapulae, innominate bones, proximal radii and distal humeri suggests that most of the animals were killed in their first year (Bull & Payne 1982).

It was notable that two distinct groups of animals (on the basis of their size) were present. However, due to the unfused nature of the majority of specimens few measurements could be taken in order to compare the animals with reference specimens. The only early fusing bone that presented opportunities for measurement was the humerus. This distal end of this bone fuses at c 1 year and a small sample of individual specimens from each of the two groups of animals could be measured.

These were measured in two dimensions: HTC (the diameter of the distal trochlea at its narrowest point) and BT (the medio-lateral width of the distal articular surface). The mean of the two sample's values was then compared with the modern Turkish boar specimens of Payne & Bull (1988) using Simpson et al's (1960) log ratio method.

Mean measurement (mm) HTC BT 'Large' group (n=5) 24.23 6.2 'Small' group (n=3) 16.93 1.2 Reference value 22.53 5 Log ratio value 'Large' group 0.0316 330.0146 41 'Small' group -0.1243 -0.0499 1 Table 1. Humeri measurement of pig bones from (1086).

This clearly demonstrates that two significantly different types of animals are represented by this assemblage. The 'large' animals are rather larger than the modern boar reference specimens and would be highly unusual in a Late Iron Age or Roman context. The 'small' group on the other hand is considerably smaller. Animals of such widely divergent size are not frequently encountered on archaeological sites of Late Iron Age or Roman date. It is unlikely that such extreme variation could be explained by sexual dimorphism in an archaeological pig population.

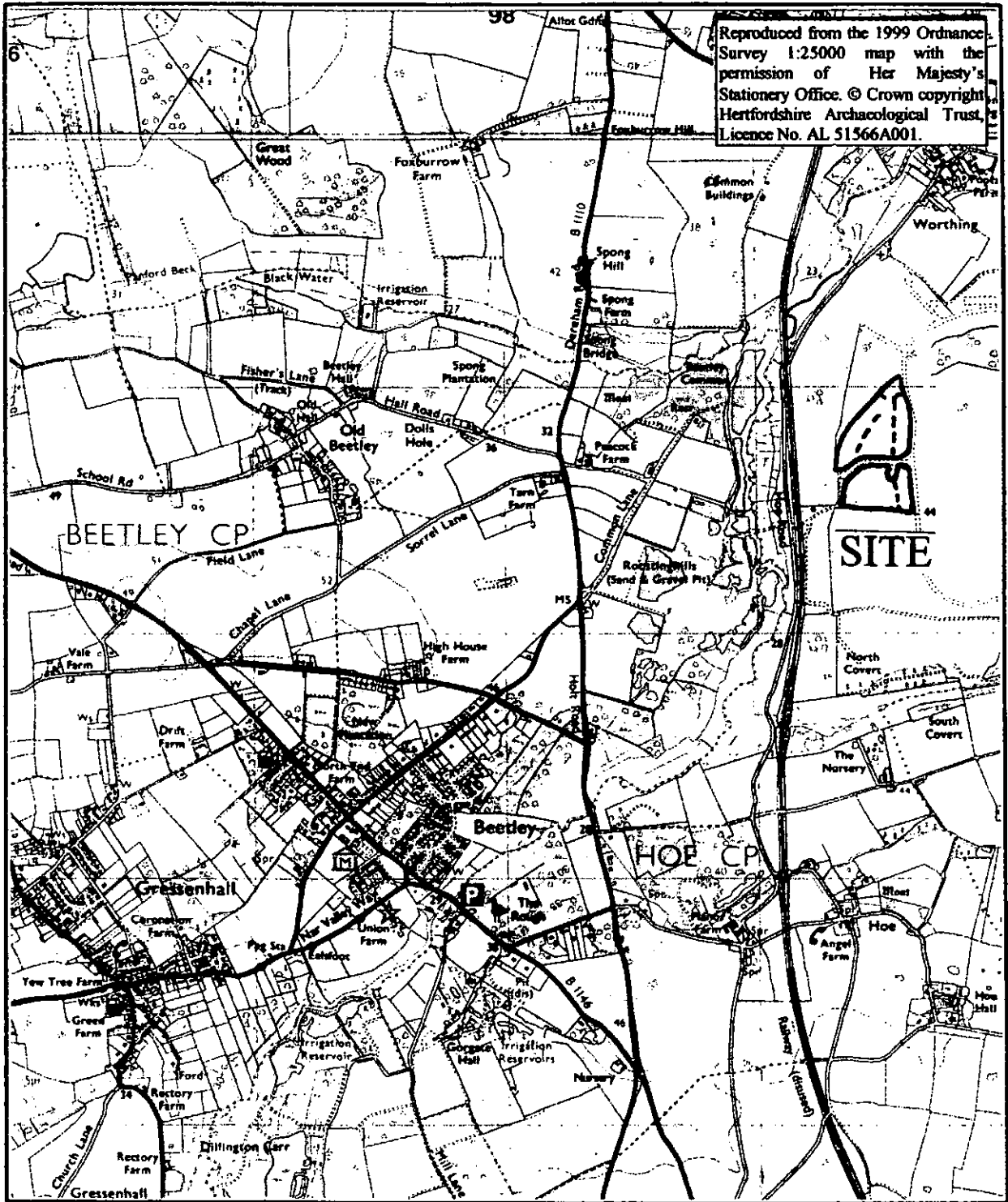
The only plausible explanation is that two distinct breeds are present. Pig breeds in Britain did not begin to diverge to such an extent as seen in this case until the end of the 18th century when animals were imported from the Far East (Epstein & Bichard 1984). Consequently, the animals from (1086) are almost certainly modern.

Discussion

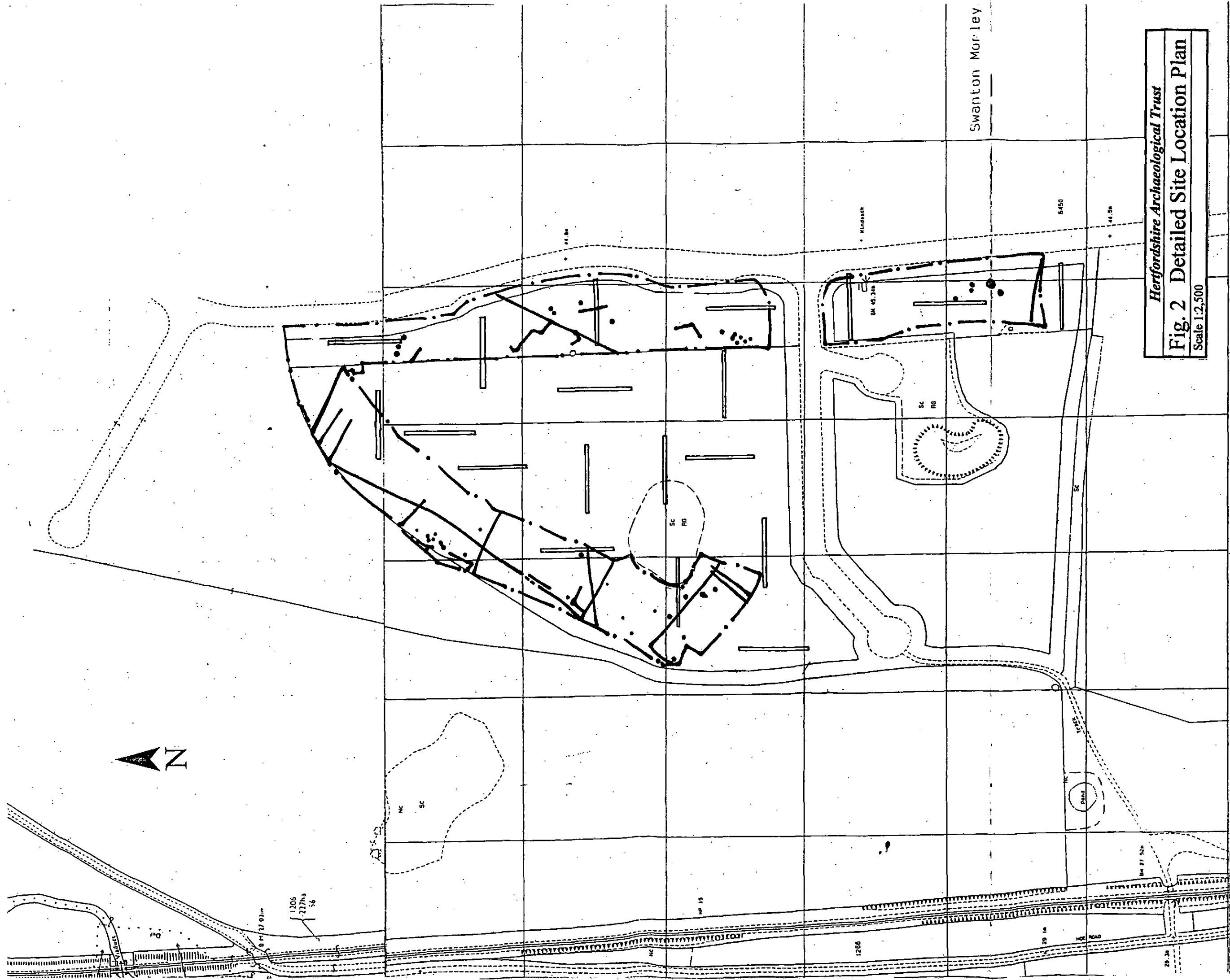
The only archaeological animal remains recovered from Beetley Quarry come from two 4th-century contexts. Cattle and horses were present but the sample is so small and poorly preserved that nothing can be said about either waste disposal patterns or husbandry practices on the site during the Late Roman period.

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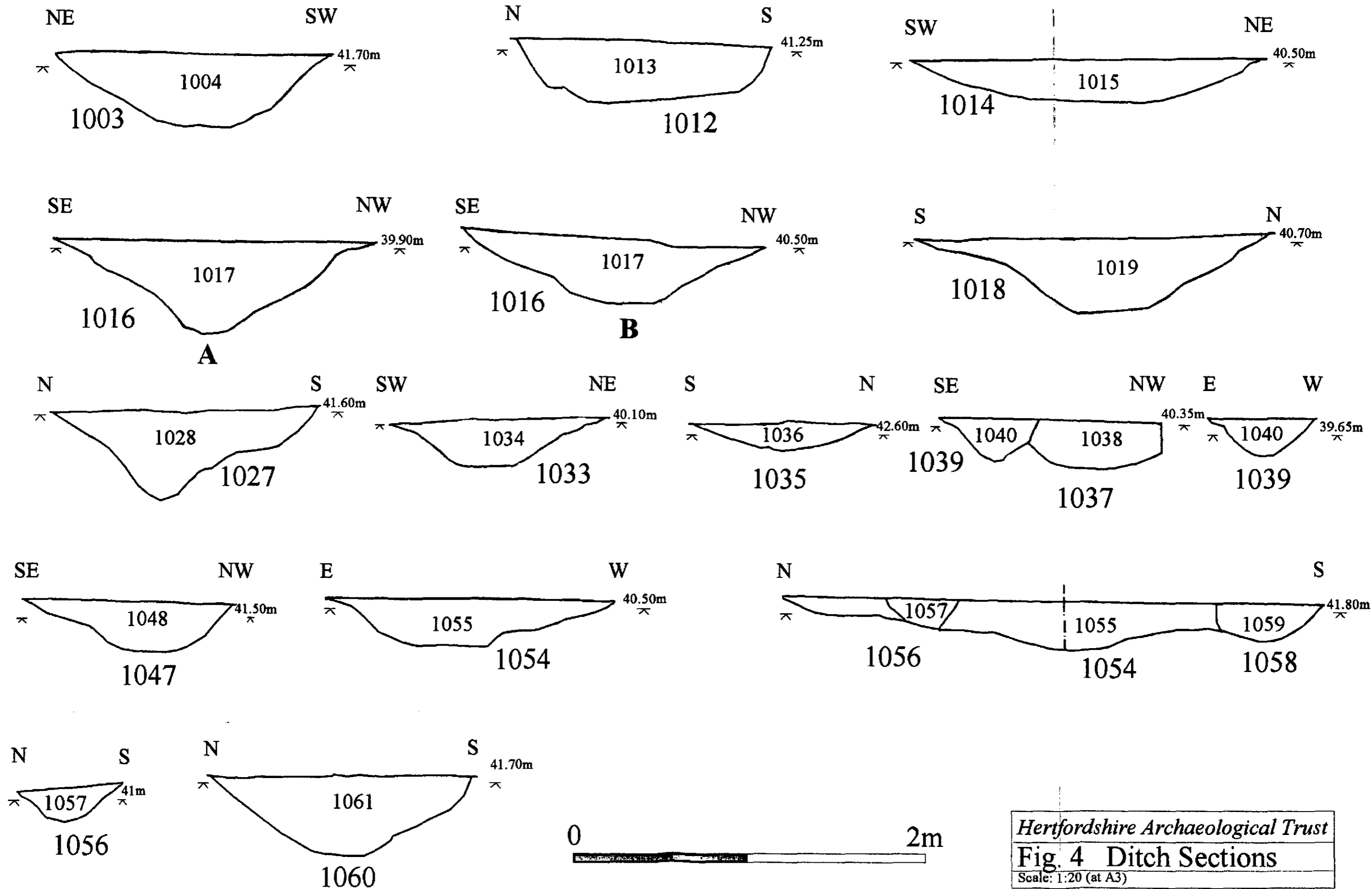


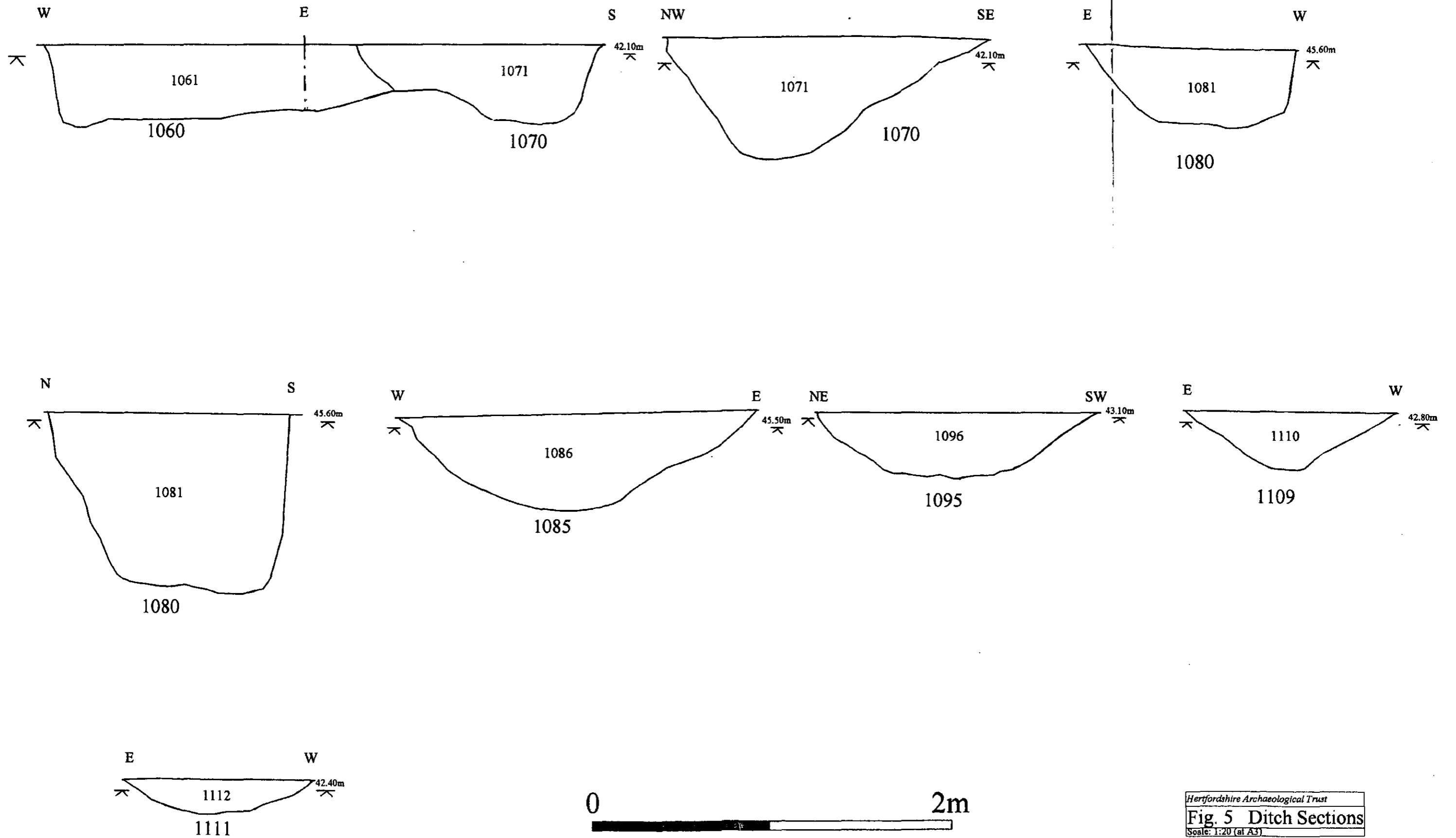
Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust
Fig. 1 Site Location Plan
 Scale: 1: 25,000



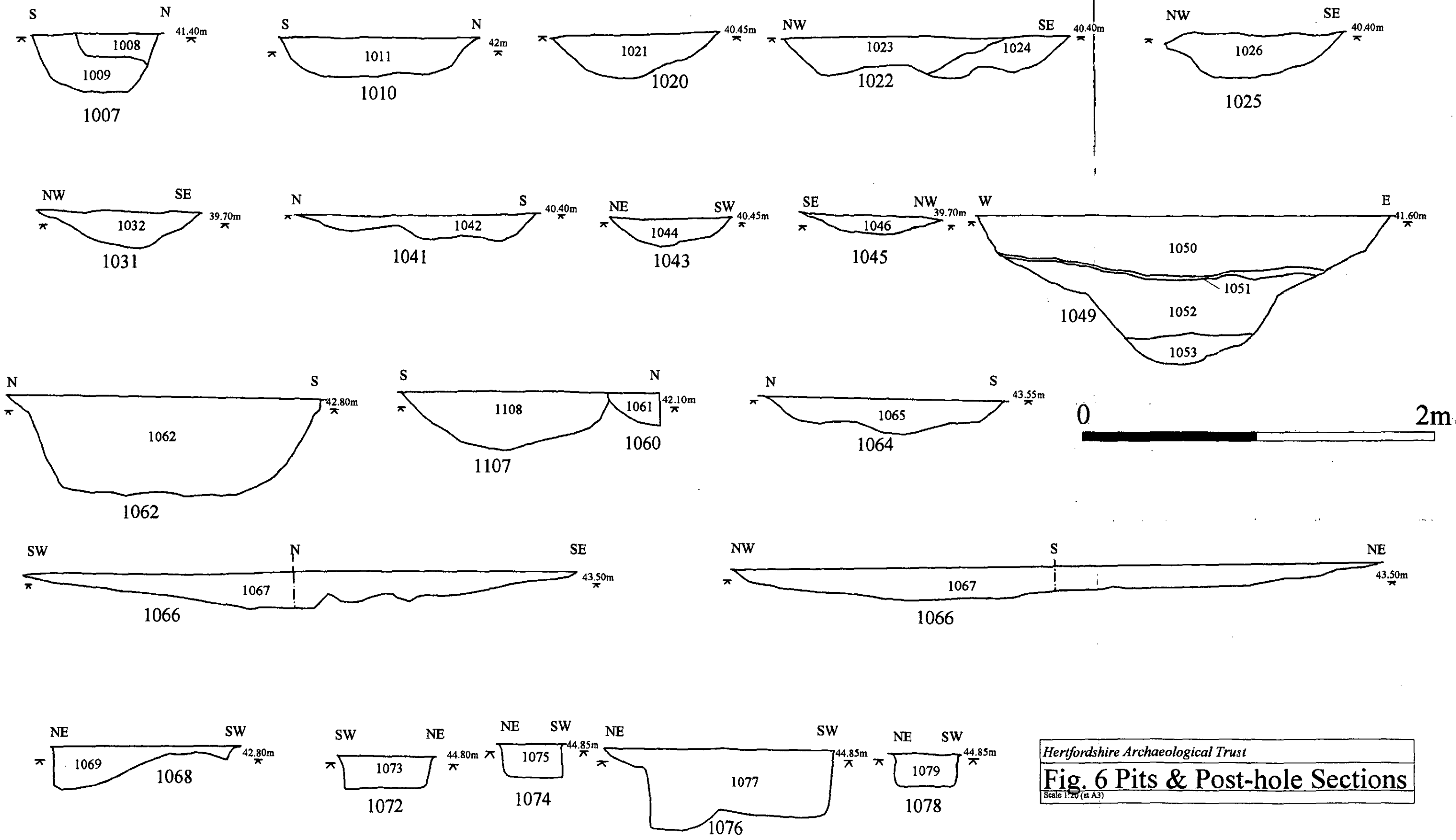
Swanton Morley

Herfordshire Archaeological Trust
 Fig. 2 Detailed Site Location Plan
 Scale 1:2,500

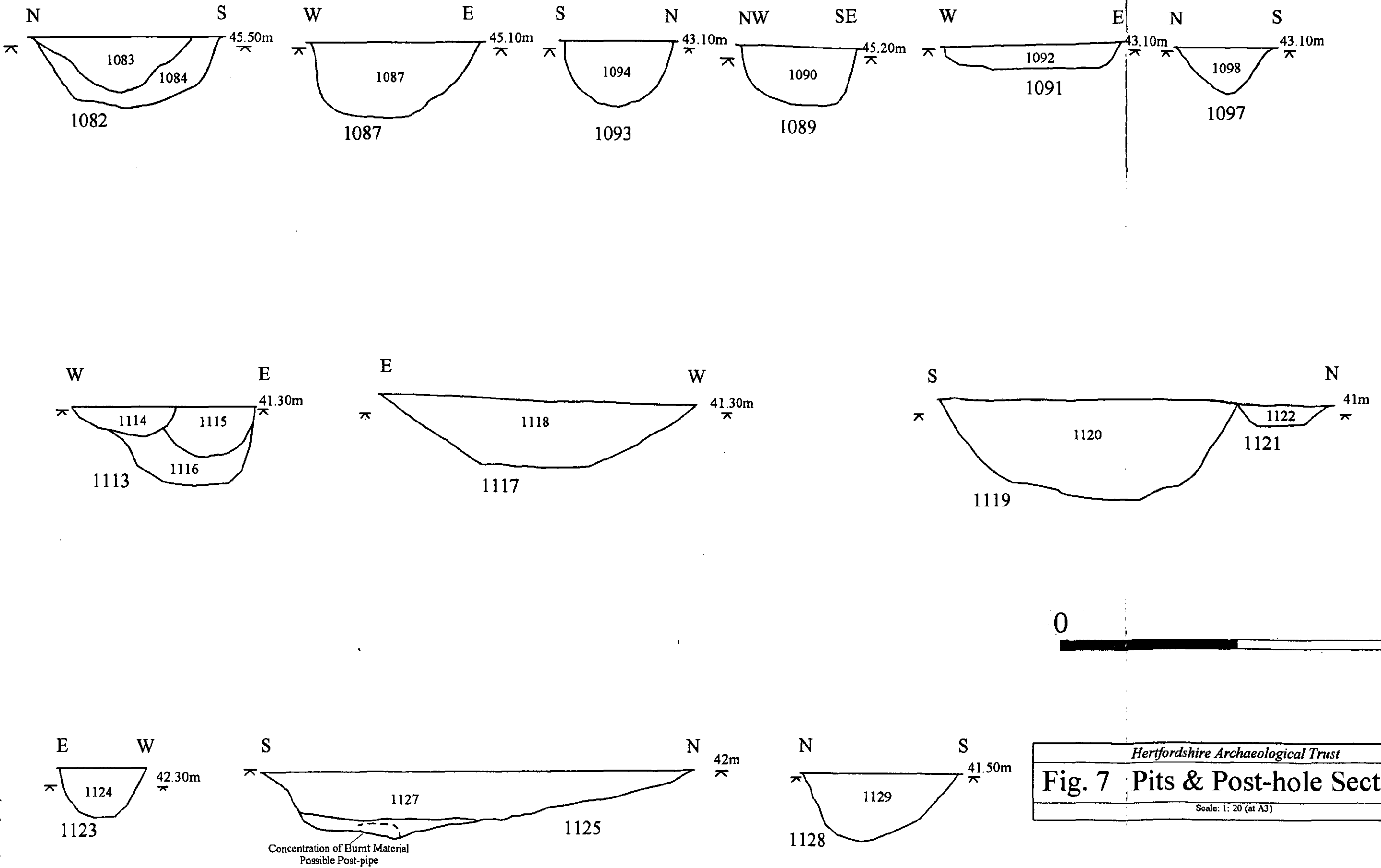




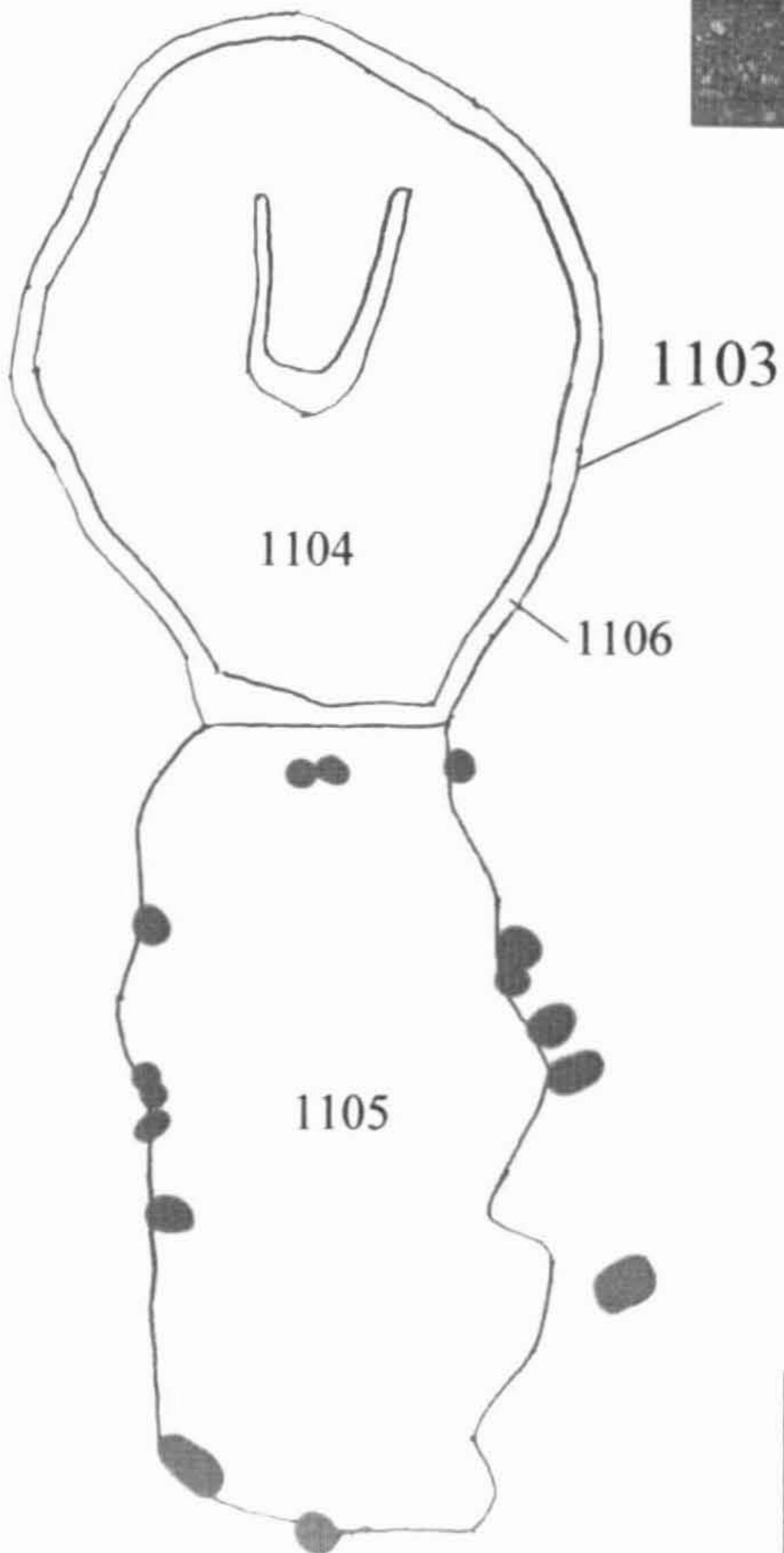
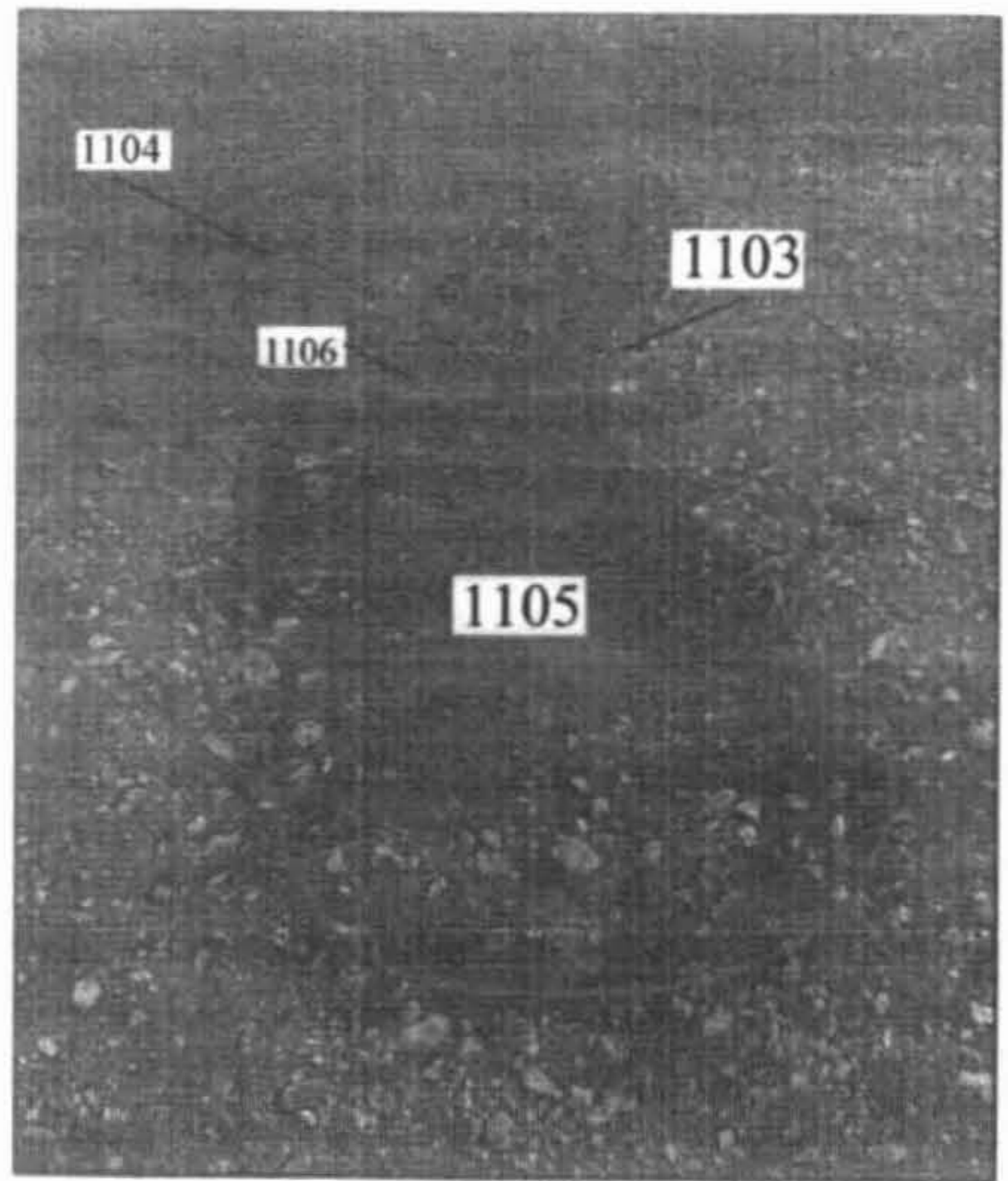
Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust
Fig. 5 Ditch Sections
 Scale: 1:20 (at A3)



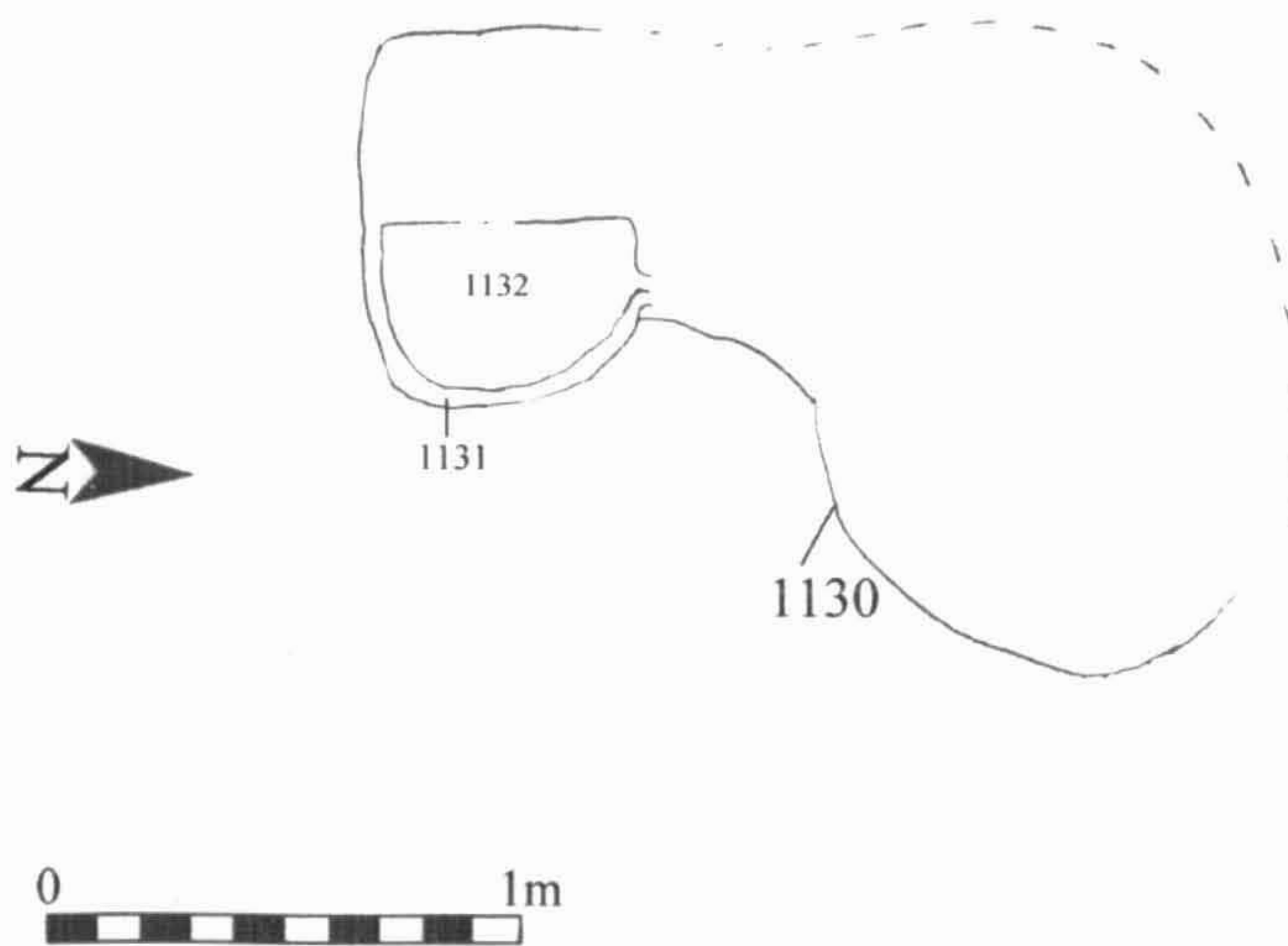
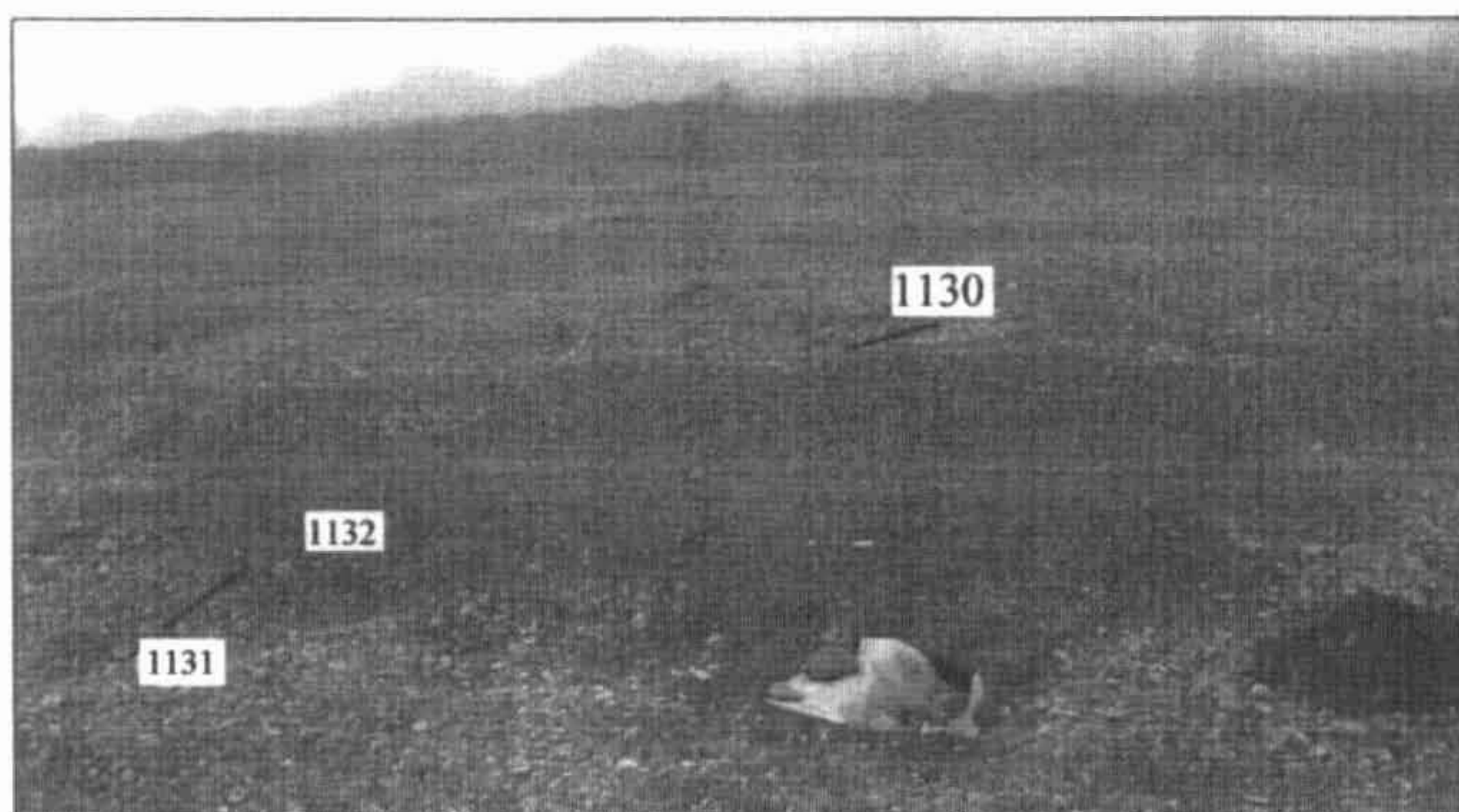
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Fig. 6 Pits & Post-hole Sections
 Scale 1:20 (at A3)



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Fig. 7 Pits & Post-hole Sections
 Scale: 1: 20 (at A3)



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Fig. 8 Plan & Photograph of
Kiln 1-1103
Scale: Plan at 1:20 at A4



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| <i>Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust</i> |
| Fig. 9 Plan & Photograph of Kiln 2-1130 |
| Scale: Plan at 1:20 at A4 |