

LIDL, Porton Road,
Boscombe Down,
Amesbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Excavation

Wessex Archaeology

Report ref. 48522

September 2000

**LIDL, PORTON ROAD, BOSCOMBE DOWN,
AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

prepared on behalf of
**Lidl UK GmbH
Regional Distribution Centre
Locking Castle Business Park
West Wick
Weston-super-Mare
BS24 7TG**

by
**Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
SP4 6EB**

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AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE
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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lidl UK GmbH to undertake an archaeological excavation on the site proposed for a new retail store and associated car park between Porton Road and Butterfield Drive, Boscombe Down, Amesbury, Wiltshire (SU 1678 4130).

The site was stripped in 1993 during the development of neighbouring land and very small sample excavations carried out. Features identified at this stage included a ditch and two Beaker pits and a series of ditches probably of Roman date as well as a large ditch that may represent a Bronze Age territorial boundary (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996).

No further evidence for Later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age activity was discovered and it is probable that a pair of ditches tentatively assigned a Beaker date (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 10) in fact belong to the Roman period. Another section was excavated through the large Bronze Age ditch. No clear dating evidence was recovered but an assessment of the molluscs indicates that it lay within an open country environment.

During the Roman period, the site lay outside the main area of Late Roman settlement known on Boscombe Down but was part of the area farmed by this community. Part of the site was occupied by a small ditched enclosure that formed part of an extensive system of "Celtic fields". The other ditches are also likely to be of Romano-British date, but did not form part of this regular enclosure system, perhaps indicating differences in chronology and/or function (i.e. they may have been property boundaries or used for stock control rather than defining arable or garden plots).

Sc145E 753
805

Acknowledgements

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Rachael Seager Smith assisted by Hayley Clark, Talla Hopper, Olivia Merritt, Dennis Price, Stephen Webster and Simon Skitrell undertook the fieldwork. Hayley Clark and Michael J. Allen undertook the environmental analysis and SE James prepared the illustrations. Nick Wells examined the coins. Rachael Seager Smith and A.P. Fitzpatrick who also managed the project prepared this report.

**LIDL, PORTON ROAD, BOSCOMBE DOWN,
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project background

1.1.1. Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lidl UK GmbH to undertake an archaeological excavation on the site proposed for a new retail store and associated car park between Porton Road and Butterfield Drive, Boscombe Down, Amesbury, Wiltshire (centered on SU 1678 4130).

1.1.2. The site lies within an *Area of Special Archaeological Significance* defined by the Salisbury District Local Plan. In 1993 the topsoil was removed during the development of neighbouring land and very small sample excavations were carried out within the proposed development area. This work identified two Beaker pits and a series of ditches including part of a square enclosure, probably of Roman date as well as a large ditch that may represent a Bronze Age territorial boundary (Figure 2; Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996).

1.1.3. The County Archaeological Officer identified the need for further archaeological excavation in this area under the terms of *Planning Policy and Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16).

1.1.4. The archaeological brief provided by the County Archaeological Officer (ref.: HCP/MJU/00SC001) required the investigation and recording to an appropriate standard of the previously uncovered features in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Planning Authority.

1.1.5. To ensure compatibility with previous archaeological investigations in the area (Figure 1), the project specification for the works associated with the Land South-East of Amesbury development (Wessex Archaeology 1996) was followed. The excavation was carried out between the 10th and 18th August 2000.

1.2. Location, topography and geology

1.2.1. The site is located on the eastern side of Amesbury, between two areas of recent residential development on Boscombe Down. A church and community centre lie to the south, within the area investigated in 1993.

1.2.2. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and more or less flat, lying between 107 m and 108 m above Ordnance Datum. The geology of the area consists of Upper Chalk of the Cretaceous period (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1:50,000 Drift Series sheet 298).

- 1.2.3. Since 1993 the site has been neglected and had become overgrown with weeds and small shrubs. Prior to this, the area was used for arable agriculture.

1.3. Archaeological background

- 1.3.1. The site is located in a rich and well-documented archaeological landscape and numerous archaeological investigations have already been carried out nearby (Figure 1). Upstanding and ploughed-out Bronze Age barrows, extensive prehistoric field systems, Iron Age settlements and two late Roman cemeteries as well as individual features and finds dating from the Neolithic to Medieval periods have all been identified within the vicinity.
- 1.3.2. Immediately to the west of the site, archaeological investigations in advance of the ongoing residential development on the Butterfield Down estate and on the south side of Boscombe Road have identified activity of Neolithic and Bronze Age date as well as an extensive, unenclosed Roman settlement (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996; Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation).

2. METHODS

2.1. The excavations

- 2.1.1. A wheeled mechanical excavator using a flat grading bucket removed the vegetation and weathering deposits that had built up across the site. The machining was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision.
- 2.1.2. Careful machining had cleared the site to an archaeologically acceptable standard so manual cleaning was targeted around features of known archaeological significance during the course of excavation.
- 2.1.3. Sections were excavated across all linear features to examine their date and function. The excavated segments were positioned to examine the intersections and overlaps between features to ascertain their stratigraphic relationships but also at points away from these intersections where there is less risk of finds having been introduced by or from the intersecting features.
- 2.1.4. The discrete features were half-sectioned with 50% of the feature being excavated.
- 2.1.5. All the archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex archaeology's standard *pro forma* recording system. Measured plans of the archaeological features were prepared at scales of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and section drawings were done at similar scales. A detailed photographic record consists of both monochrome negative and colour transparencies in 35 mm format.
- 2.1.6. A column of 13 samples was taken through the fills of the large, Bronze Age ditch for assessment of the land snails. Details of the techniques used to process these can be found in Section 5. No deposits containing significant

quantities of charred plant remains and charcoal were encountered so bulk soil samples were not taken.

2.2. The survey

- 2.2.1. The survey was undertaken from fixed points within the recent development on the Butterfield Down estate and height information was brought in from the local benchmarks.
- 2.2.2. The edges of the excavation and all the exposed features including modern services and areas of recent damage and disturbance were surveyed using a Topcon GTS 210 Total Station. The locations of the excavated segments through the known archaeological features were also recorded.
- 2.2.3. The resulting data file was processed to produce a co-ordinate point file and then converted to drawing exchange format (DXF) for viewing in AutoCAD. Codes attached to the measured data in the field were used to define the DXF entities as points, stations and lines.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. The summary of results presented here address the principal aims of the excavations, to clarify the relationships and dating sequence of the linear features and to investigate the nature of the amorphous features. Full details can be found in the archive. All the archaeological deposits identified were contained within features cut into the natural Chalk.

3.2. Beaker pits

- 3.2.1. Although two Beaker pits were recorded in 1993 (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 10; Figure 2, features 2 and 6), no further evidence for activity of this type or date was brought to light by the excavations.

3.3. The large ditch

- 3.3.1. This ditch forms part of a large linear feature (Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record no. 745), probably of Bronze Age date, which is visible as a cropmark on air photographs and, in places, as an extant earthwork for c. 5.5 km (Bradley, Entwistle and Raymond 1994, fig. 22).
- 3.3.2. In this area, the ditch varied from 3.4 m to 4.15 m wide and from 1.35 m to 1.45 m deep with a V-shaped profile with a vertically-sided, flat-based slot at the bottom. Segment 125 had a more symmetrical profile than that of segment 21 investigated in 1993 (Figure 3).
- 3.3.3. The sequence of fills in the two segments was broadly comparable and the ditch appears to have filled up naturally over a considerable period of time. Deposits of compact chalky silt extended up the ditch sides, and the layers gradually became darker in colour and loamier from the bottom of the

sequence upwards. No evidence for a bank was encountered and none of the many tonnes of chalk rubble that would have been excavated in the creation of the ditch itself were present in its fills.

- 3.3.4. Two Late Roman coins were found in the uppermost fill (context 126) and fragments of animal bone, burnt and worked flint and Romano-British pottery were found throughout the profile although no finds were recovered from the lower fills of segment 21. The pottery at least from the basal fill is intrusive.

Sul4SE341
350
upper chalk

3.4. The smaller ditches

- 3.4.1. A smaller ditch running parallel to and on approximately the same alignment as the large Bronze Age ditch was up to 1.9 m wide at the surface. One segment excavated in 2000 clearly showed that the ditch had been recut (Figure 3; 100 and 101), as had been suspected in 1993 (Figure 3; 18, context 22), although the precise relationship between the ditches was not discernible within the fill sequence. One sherd of coarse Beaker pottery was found in the basal fill in 1993, and the feature was tentatively assigned a prehistoric date, possibly linked with the Beaker pits (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 10). The three undiagnostic flint flakes and three small sherds of Romano-British pottery, all from context 103 (Figure 3) suggest that a Romano-British date may be more likely.

Sul4SE867

- 3.4.2. Unfortunately the relationship between these ditches and a ditch forming part of a rectilinear enclosure c. 45 m wide could not be established because the fills were too similar. The enclosure ditch varied from 0.75 m to 0.94 m wide at the surface and was up to 0.35 m deep, with an irregular, wide U-shaped profile and a slightly concave base. There is some evidence in the form of a shallow, flat based feature (117) on the western side of the northwest corner of the enclosure to suggest that damage or some realignment of the ditch may have taken place here although no relationships were apparent from the fill sequence. The ditch could be seen to cross the upper fills of the large ditch and pottery found in segments 15, 119 and 123 suggest a Romano-British date.

- 3.4.3. A third linear (ditch 134) located to the west of the other ditches, terminated within the excavation area, and although predominantly on a similar alignment to the other ditches, it curved to the north at its northern end. It was approximately 1.2 m wide and up to 0.66 m deep with steeply sloping sides and a concave base. No datable artefacts were recovered from segment 107 but the Romano-British date suggested for the terminal (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, 19) would still seem appropriate.

3.5. The amorphous features

- 3.5.1. Feature 108 was found to be a subrectangular hollow, approximately 5.5 m long, 4.75 m wide and 0.30 m deep with gently sloping sides and a flat base. Artefacts recovered from its single homogeneous fill included a copper alloy coin and a considerable quantity of Late Roman pottery (Table 1). Similar features investigated within the Butterfield Down settlement (Rawlings and

Fitzpatrick 1996, 15; Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation) have been considered to be “working” or “quarry” hollows although at least one, also containing Late Roman pottery (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996, fig. 10), may represent a cellared- or sunken-floored building.

3.5.2. All the features located on the south-east side of the Bronze Age ditch had suffered considerable truncation since 1993. The largest of the linears (115) survived only to a depth of 0.06 m and the smaller one had been completely destroyed. The amorphous features were found to be tree-throw holes of indeterminate date.

3.6. Areas of modern disturbance

3.6.1. The *brief* also required the recording of any areas of recent damage or disturbance to the known archaeological features. Three main areas of damage were identified. These comprised:

- a layer of highly compacted, redeposited chalk in the south-western corner, overlying ditch terminal 26 and part of the enclosure ditch to the south of segment 123
- a modern service trench, c. 0.3 m wide crossing the whole site (Figure 2)
- areas of redeposited chalk, scalplings, gravel and other modern building materials in the area of the intersections between the enclosure and the south-west to north-east aligned ditches. At least some of this material had been used to fill the 1993 excavations but the rest probably represents the remains of stockpiles.

4. THE FINDS

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. All the artefacts have been washed, marked and quantified by material type using both the number and weight of pieces for each context. The finds were then rapidly scanned to establish the nature and date range of the assemblage; this information is summarised below and in Table 1.

4.2. The metalwork

4.2.1. The metalwork assemblage consisted of three copper alloy coins and five handmade iron nails, all of Romano-British date, from the upper fills of the large ditch and Feature 108.

4.2.2. The three coins are all *antoninani* of later 3rd century AD date. The coin from Feature 108 is a copy of a coin type issued in commemoration of the reign of Claudius II, and can be dated to AD 268-270. One of the coins from the upper fill of ditch 125 was struck between AD 260 and 268 at the Rome mint during the sole reign of the Emperor Gallienus but the other was too corroded to be more closely identified.

4.3. Worked flint

- 4.3.1. The flint assemblage mainly consists of patinated waste flakes with frequent secondary edge damage. Only one tool, a small scraper from Feature 108, was recognised. None of the groups were large enough to be chronologically distinctive and all this material is probably residual in the contexts in which it was found.

4.4. Pottery

- 4.4.1. The pottery was predominantly of late Romano-British date (late 3rd to 4th century AD) and was of similar character to that found elsewhere on Boscombe Down (Millard 1996, 27-34; Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation). Sandy grey coarsewares, from a variety of sources probably including the New Forest, north Wiltshire and the Alice Holt/Farnham area on the Hampshire/Surrey border, dominated the assemblage of utilitarian, "kitchen" vessels. Smaller but still significant proportions of Black Burnished wares from the Wareham/Poole Harbour region of Dorset were also recognised. Higher quality wares for use at table were represented by colour-coated ware beakers and possibly flagons made in the New Forest (Fulford 1975) and red-slipped ware bowls from the Oxfordshire industry (Young 1977).

4.5. Animal bone

- 4.5.1. The small collection of animal bone recovered was all highly fragmented and in a poor, severely weathered and degraded condition. High proportions of teeth survive. The species represented include the normal domesticates, cattle, horses, sheep, goats and pigs.

4.6. Other finds

- 4.6.1. One piece of Roman vessel glass was found in the upper fill of the Bronze Age ditch and very small quantities of fired clay, ceramic building material and oyster shell were also recovered (Table 1). All are probably of Roman date.

5. THE PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. A column of 13 samples was taken through the large Bronze Age ditch (segment 125) for the assessment of land snails.

5.2. Methods

- 5.2.1. The samples of 1000g were processed following standard methods (Evans 1972), and the flots only were examined under a x10 – x30 stereobinocular microscope to facilitate the quasi quantification of the species/taxa present. This method of assessment provides information about shell preservation and species representation but there is some inherent bias, firstly because many

shells will not float and will therefore only be present in the unextracted residues which are not examined at this stage. Secondly, the shells recorded in the flot are those less likely to break (i.e. larger robust species and very small species). Nevertheless the method provides a useful indication of assemblage composition, levels of shell preservation and, with sequences of samples, change through time can also be detected.

- 5.2.2. The mollusc assemblage from ditch 125 was then compared with that recovered from a similar ditch located approximately 900 m to the south-east (Wyles in Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation, ditch 758), to determine whether the ditches shared same environmental system and land-use history.

5.3. Results

- 5.3.1. The snail assemblages from ditch 125 were dominated by typical open country species (Table 2). The same species were also present in ditch 758 but fluctuations in frequency used to define mollusc sub-zones were not apparent in ditch 125. Consistent, moderately high numbers of shells were present throughout the sequence in ditch 125, compared with low shell numbers in the basal, primary fills and high numbers in the upper fills shown in ditch 758. These differences may indicate variation within the open country land-use (i.e. long pasture, short-grazed grassland, arable, grazed banks etc.) in the vicinity of the ditches but full analysis in combination with the statistical examination of the species diversity indices would be needed to prove this.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Comparisons

- 6.1.1. These excavations provided an opportunity to further the understanding of the Later Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in the area and to increase our knowledge of the features on the eastern edge of the known Roman settlement on Boscombe Down.
- 6.1.2. The large ditch almost certainly formed part of the much larger network of ditches, known as the Earl's Farm Down complex, which, together with others across Salisbury Plain, probably represent a major system of territorial divisions and the organisation of the landscape. Although no clear dating evidence was recovered from either of the excavated sections, the Earl's Farm Down complex is thought to begin within the later Bronze Age (Bradley, Entwistle and Raymond 1994, 122). The ditch seems to have been allowed to silt up naturally and evidence from the molluscs suggests that it lay in an open country environment.
- 6.1.3. During the Roman period, the site lay outside the area of dense occupation on Boscombe Down but was part of the area farmed by this community. At least part of the site was occupied by a small ditched enclosure that probably formed part of the extensive system of "Celtic fields" known in the area

(Bradley, Entwistle and Raymond 1994, fig. 22: Wessex Archaeology 1993, ref. 36872.1, fig. 2). The westernmost ditch is also likely to be of Romano-British date but does not appear to be part of a regular enclosure. The activities associated with Feature 108 remain uncertain although the Late Roman pottery and coin from this feature suggest that it was contemporary with the main settlement on Boscombe Down.

- 6.1.4. The chronology of the intercutting linears remains unproven but a Beaker date now seems unlikely. Although several discrete features of later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date have been identified on Boscombe Down, no other ditches belonging to this period are known (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996; Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation). The alignment and positioning of these ditches suggest that they could be associated with the later Bronze Age linear itself. On Breach Hill near Tilshead another element of the Wessex Linear Ditch system used a larger and smaller ditch, probably to define both sides of a bank created from the excavated spoil (Wessex Archaeology 1999, ref. 39418b). However, at the southern end of the site at least, these features are probably too close to define a bank and it may be more appropriate to see them as part of the "Celtic field" system. Other broadly comparable Romano-British ditches at New Covert showed that the smaller ditch was the earliest (Seager Smith and Fitzpatrick in preparation).

7. PROJECT ARCHIVE

7.1. Storage

- 7.1.1. The project records have been compiled to form an indexed and internally cross-referenced archive that is currently stored at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the project code 48522. The archive will be deposited with The Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, 65 The Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2EN in due course.

8. REFERENCES

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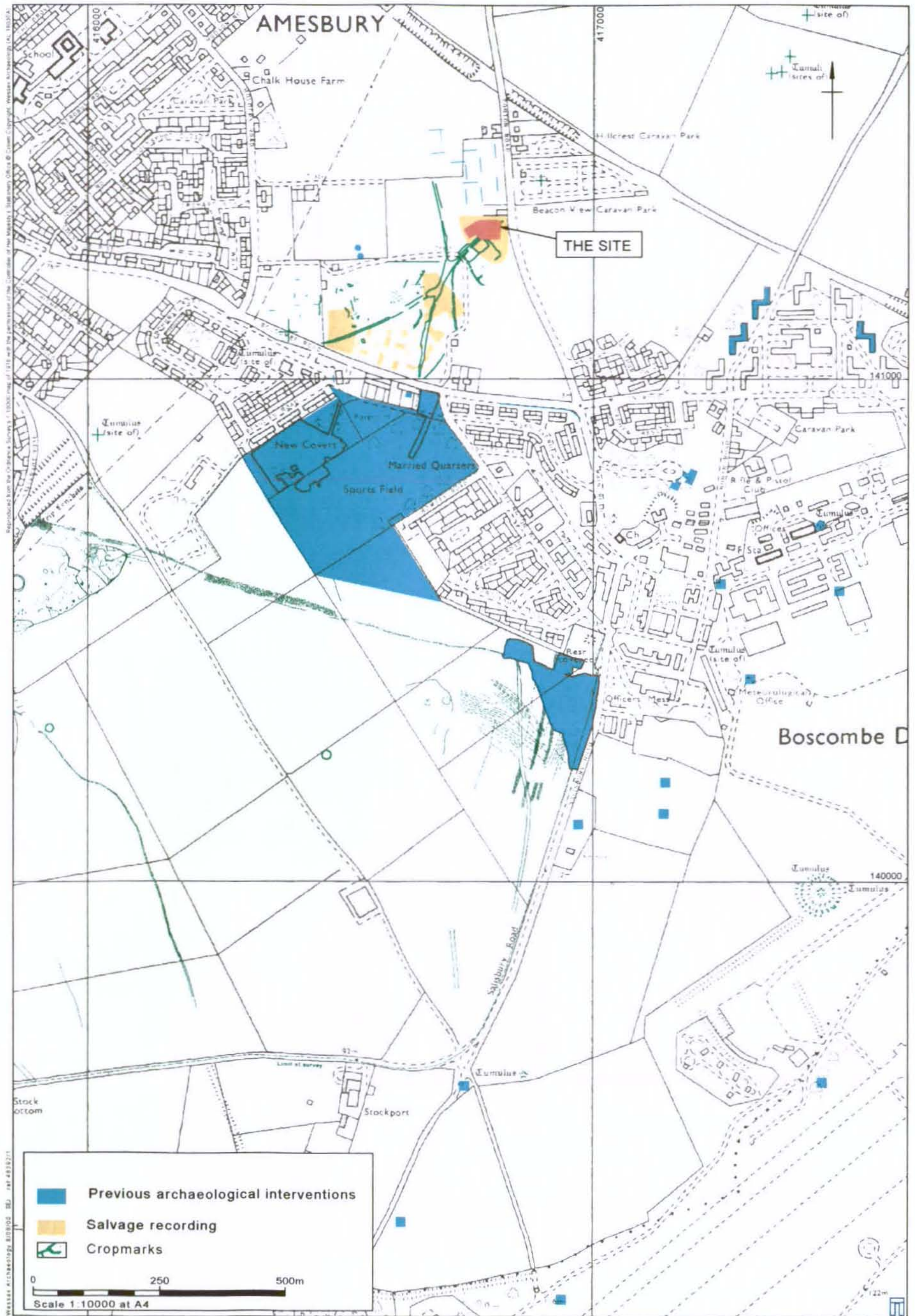
Table 1: Total quantities of artefacts recovered by material type and context (weight in grammes)

Feature	Context	Animal bone		Worked flint		Pottery		Other materials
		No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	
Ditch segment:								
100/101	103			3	19	3	7	
107	105			9	77			
"	106	6	2					
112	113	1	2	1	6	6	36	
119	120					1	7	
123	124			2	10	2	10	1 piece, 1g, burnt flint
125	126			3	3			2 cu alloy coins 1 iron nail 1 piece, 36g, burnt flint
"	127	67	214	9	60	12	74	1 piece, 1g, fired clay 1 piece, 2g, glass
"	128	7	23	4	9	4	49	
"	130	44	132	4	39	8	76	2 pieces, 13g, CBM 1 piece, 131g, burnt flint
Feature 108	109	13	78	9	54	132	1339	1 cu alloy coin 4 iron nails 2 pieces, 1g, shell
Total		138	451	44	277	168	1598	

Table 2: Assessment of mollusc species/taxa from ditch segment 125

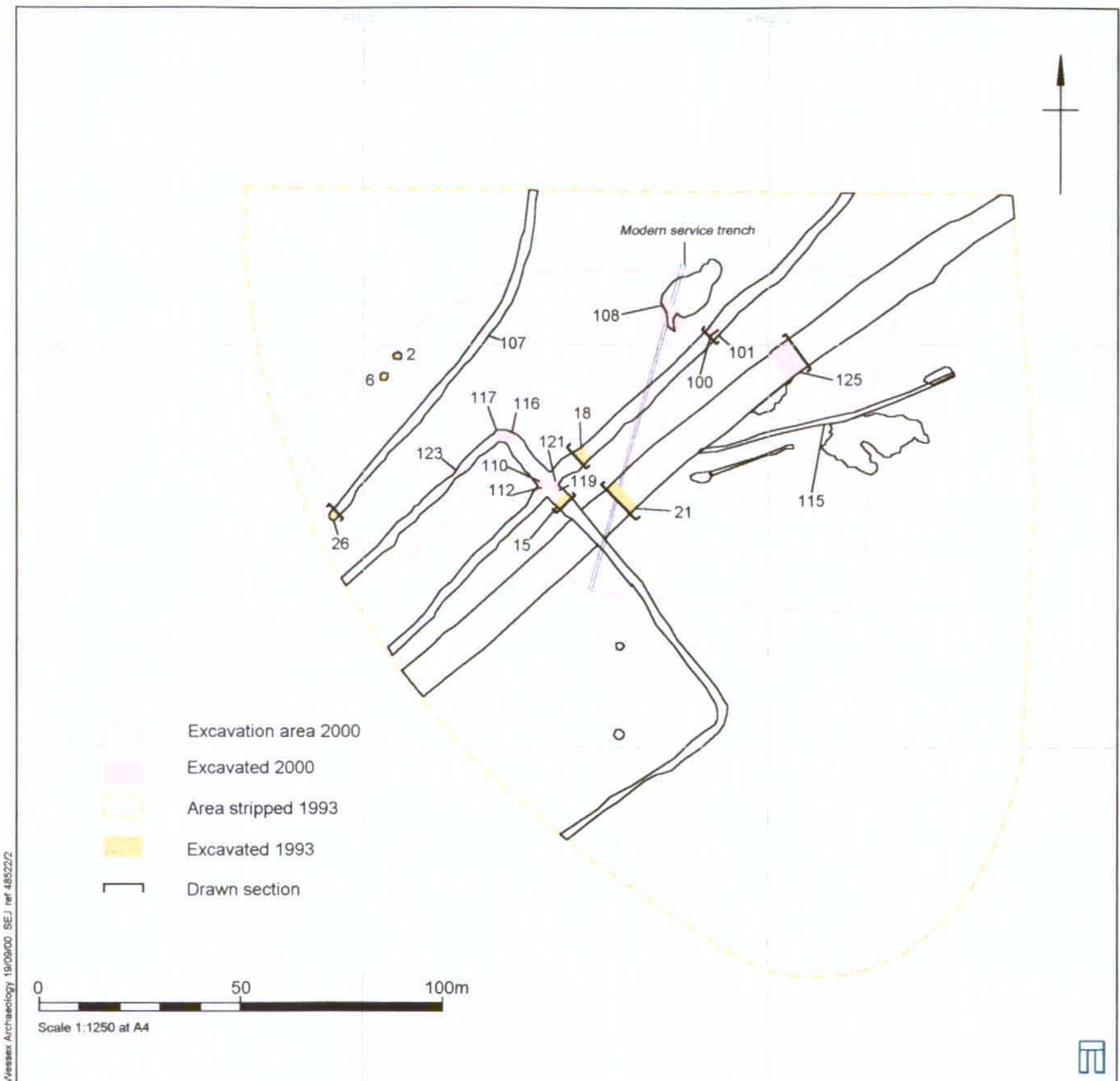
SAMPLE	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
CONTEXT	130	130	129	129	128	127	127	127	127	127	126	126	126
DEPTH (cm)	125- 133	115- 125	105- 115	95- 105	80-90	70-80	60-70	50-60	40-50	30-40	20-30	10-20	0-10
VOLUME	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Open country species													
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
<i>Vertigo</i> spp.	-	C	C	-	-	C	C	C	A	A	A	A	C
<i>Helicella itala</i>	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	A	B	C
<i>Vallonia</i> spp.	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Catholic species													
<i>Trichia hispida</i>	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	A	B	C
<i>Cochlicopa</i> spp.	C	-	-	-	C	C	C	-	C	C	B	C	C
Shade-loving species													
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i>	A	C	B	B	C	B	C	-	-	-	B	-	C
Burrowing species													
<i>Cecilioides acicula</i>	-	C	-	C	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Approx totals	100	75	100	80	100	100	100	50	75	100	100	100	100

KEY: A = ≥10 items, B = 9 - 5 items, C = < 5 items, (+) = present



Site location showing previous archaeological interventions

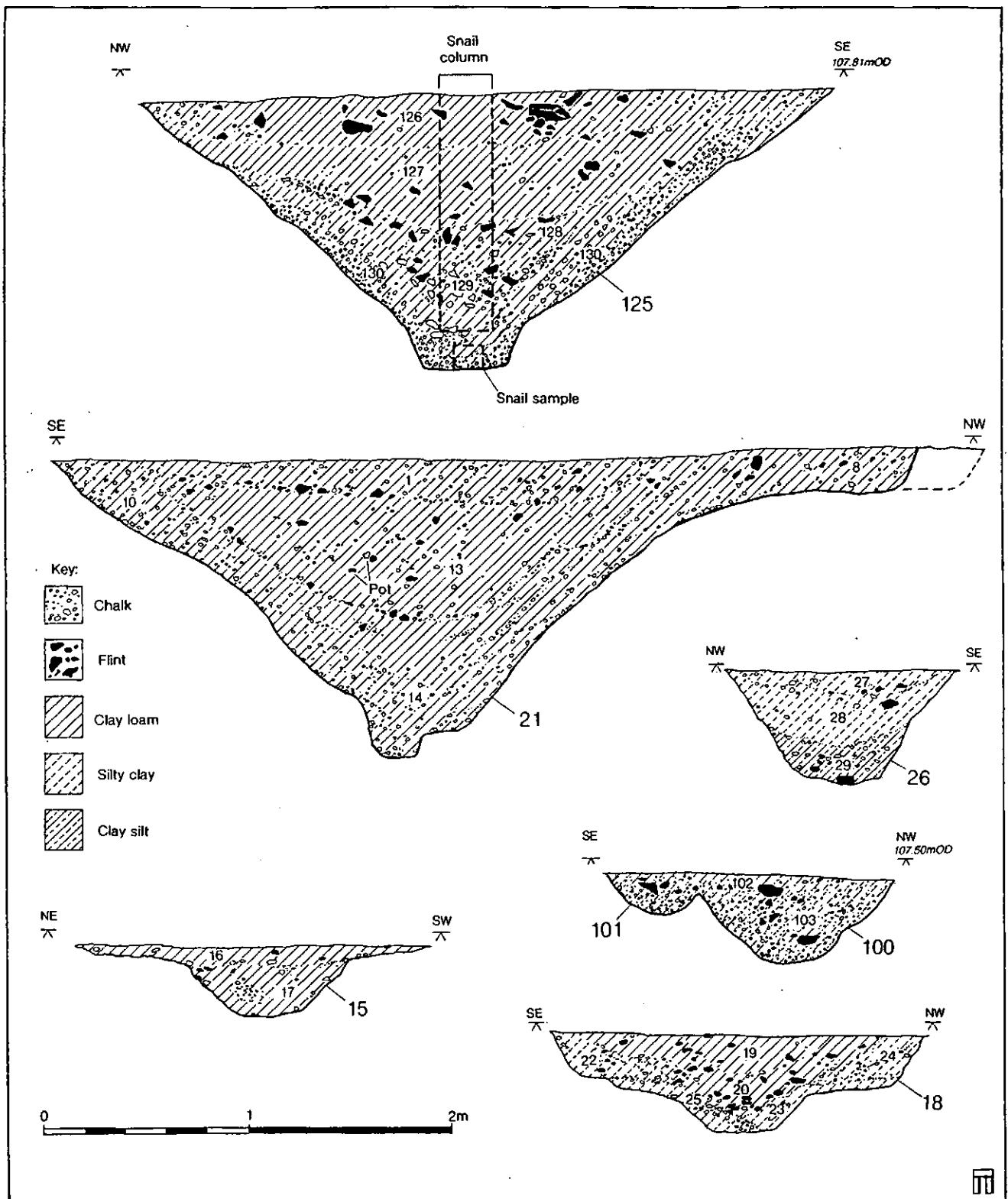
Figure 1



Wessex Archaeology 19/09/00 SEJ ref 48522/2

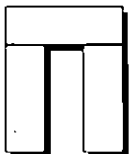
Excavation plan showing all features.

Figure 2



Selected sections through the ditches.

Figure 3



THE TRUST FOR WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.
Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: (01722) 326867 Fax: (01722) 337562 E-mail: wessexarch@dial.pipex.com
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