

Wessex
Archaeology



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SALISBURY PLAIN TRAINING AREA
TRACKS 28, 43A & 54D
Archaeological evaluation

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WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY
September 1995

Report No. W9404

Prepared for:
The Defence Land Service
Durrington
SALISBURY
Wiltshire.

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SPTA TRACKS 28, 43A & 54D

Archaeological evaluation

SUMMARY

Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by the Defence Land Service (DLS) to evaluate the archaeological potential of three lengths of earthen track within the Salisbury Plain Training Area prior to application, by the DLS, for planning permission for upgrading to all weather stone-based routes. The three lengths of track cross areas of archaeological potential identified by the County Archaeological Service and the SPTA Liaison Group. One (Track 54D) crosses a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Scheduled Monument (SM).

The work at Track 28 north of Larkhill, encompassing 700m between SU 0940 4710 / SU 0865 4715, revealed a single posthole and a pair of deeply incised linear features interpreted here as cart tracks. Although no archaeological features were revealed in 350m of Track 43A, between SU 01760 48700 / SU 01420 48770 north of Tilshead, adjacent lengths of the adjoining Track 54D revealed a wide range of archaeological features. A total of 1450m of track was investigated in two separate lengths between SU 0130 4854 / SU 0170 4868 and SU 0010 4817 / SU 0105 4849, revealing twenty features of which 17 were definitely archaeological, encompassing postholes, Bronze Age pits, gulleys, a major north-south bank and ditch of Bronze age date, and a possible cremation-related feature. The features were in three groups, each focused around breaks-of-slope. In addition, upstanding low ridges visible in the natural chalk were observed, corresponding approximately to the remains of prehistoric field systems visible on aerial photographs.

This report concludes that the evaluated lengths of track all have a demonstrated archaeological potential, that of Track 54D being of particular significance.

SPTA TRACKS 28, 43A & 54D
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work was commissioned and co-ordinated by the Durrington Office of the Defence Land Service, and would not have been possible without the assistance and co-operation of Jane Hallett, Arthur Kendrew and their staff.

The fieldwork was carried out by Julie Lovell, David Murdie and Michael Heaton. Post excavation processing and the preparation of this report were carried out by Lorraine Mephram, Sarah Wyles, David Murdie and Michael Heaton with the figures prepared by Julian Cross. The project was managed by Ian Barnes and monitored for the Archaeology Service of the Wiltshire County Museums and Library Service by Duncan Coe.

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Archaeological evaluation

1 INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Project background

The Defence Land Service (DLS), acting on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, intends to upgrade selected lengths of earthen tracks across the Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) to stone-based 'all-weather' routes. The work requires the removal of existing soil cover and the cutting of cambers into the underlying chalk prior to covering with rolled limestone chippings.

The combined extent of this latest programme of works brings it within the remit of European Environmental Impact legislation requiring assessment and evaluation of such schemes (Coe pers comm). In order to ensure that the environmental impact of all works within the SPTA are assessed prior to commencement, and that mitigatory measures are included into work programmes, the DLS has commissioned Wessex Archaeology to carry out the field evaluation of selected lengths of track prior to submission of planning application to Salisbury District Council.

1.2 The sites, and their topographic and geological setting.

The SPTA encompasses approximately 440 square miles of dissected Upper Chalk plateau in south-western Wiltshire. It is bounded by the steep scarp slopes overlooking the settlements of Warminster, Westbury, Market Lavington and Upavon on the west and north; by the valley of the River Bourne and the settlements of Tidworth and Ludgershall to the east; and to the south by the settlements of Bulford, Chitterne and Heytesbury overlooking the valleys of the River Avon and its tributary the Wylve.

The terrain is dominated by Downland grassland with intermittent conifer and mixed deciduous plantations, dissected by dry valley and winterbourne tributaries of the rivers Wylve and Avon. With the exemption of those areas specifically set aside for military training, large areas remain in mixed agricultural use.

Track 28 runs WSW-ENE to the north of Larkhill; Tracks 43A and 54D, also roughly WSW-ENE, are situated 7km to the west, adjacent to the present Salisbury to Devizes road north-west of the village of Tilshead, at the east end of a chalk spur overlooking the valley of the River Till (Figure 1).

The 700m evaluated section of Track 28 runs between a mixed plantation immediately west of Blackball Firs at SU 0940 4710 to the old Salisbury to Devizes post road at SU 0865 4715 (Figure 1, inset B). The 350m section

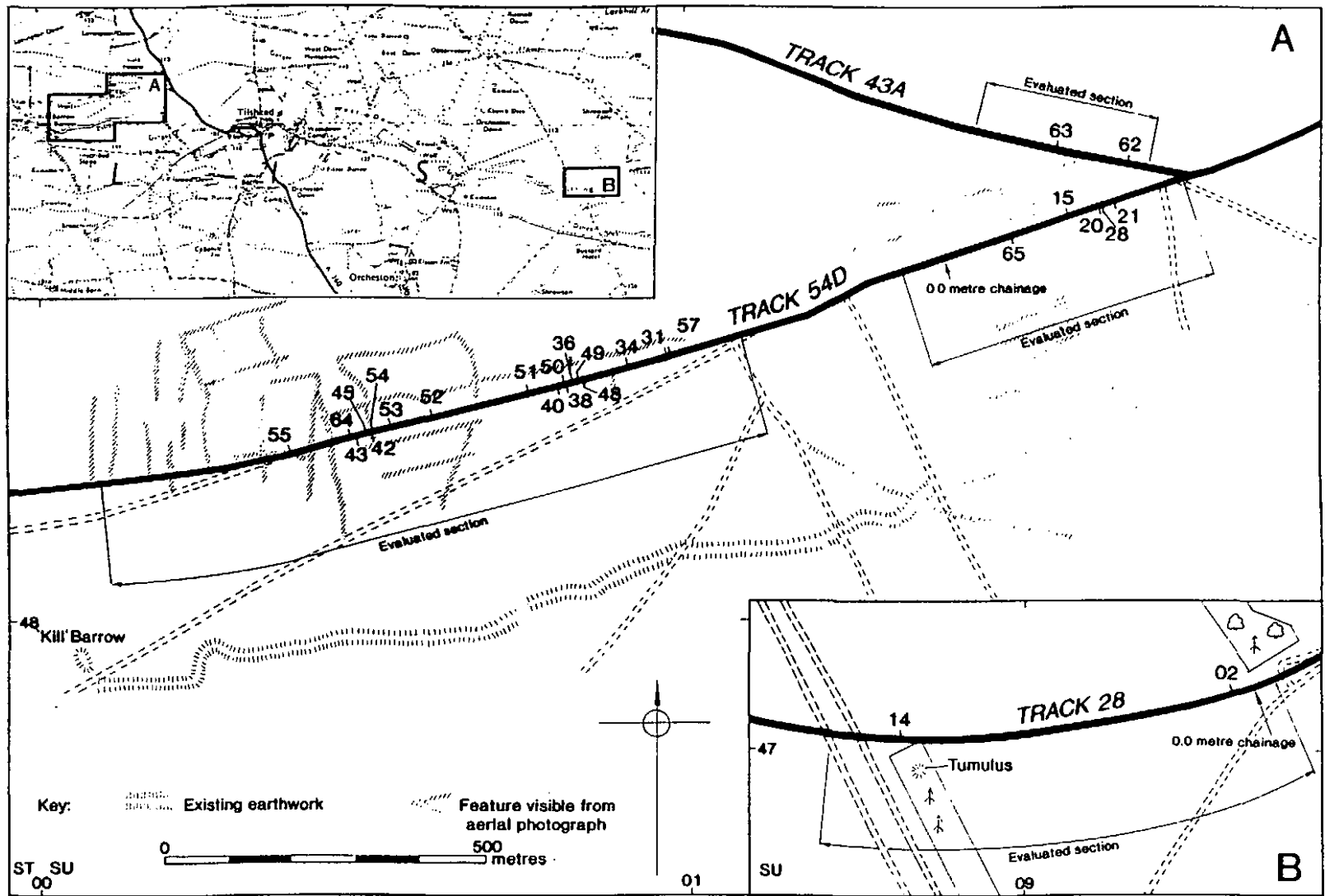


Fig.1

of Track 43 runs between the junction with Track 54D at SU 01760 48700 to the bottom of a dry valley at SU 01420 48770 (Figure 1, inset A). Track 54D was investigated in two sections designated /E and /W : a 450 m length from the junction with 43A at SU 01760 48700 to the eastern fringe of 'The Firs' plantation at SU 0130 4854; and a 1000m length between the western fringe of 'The Firs' plantation at SU 0105 4849 to the north-west fringe of Chapperton Down adjacent to the Scheduled field systems and linear earthworks at 'Kill Barrow' long barrow at SU 0010 4817 (Figure 1, inset A).

1.3 Archaeological setting

Partly because of the protection from agricultural erosion afforded by the Army's tenure, and partly because of the SPTA's central position within the prehistorically and historically rich area of Wessex, Salisbury Plain is noted for the wide range and density of archaeological sites encompassed within it, particularly of Roman and earlier date. Recent and forthcoming works by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) on Salisbury Plain have identified an hitherto unrecorded wealth of visible earthwork sites (WAM, 1994; RCHM(E) forthcoming, a and b.)

Within the immediate area of relevant length of Track 28, a Bronze Age burial mound (or *tumulus*) is known at SU 0887 4693, and the old Salisbury to Devizes post road that forms the western end of the work follows the putative line of a north-south Roman Road across Salisbury Plain.

Tracks 43A and 54D lie within an area of considerable archaeological survival, recognised by the statutory protection of the 'Kill barrow' field systems as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The known archaeological sites within the immediate vicinity of the relevant sections of the two tracks include the Neolithic long barrows at ST 9962 4805 and SU 0001 4788 ('Kill Barrow') (Figure 1, inset A) and the major east-west linear ditch and bank earthwork that flanks the southern slopes of the chalk spur, linking the two long barrows at its western end (Figure 1, inset A). The eastern end of this earthwork has not been identified on aerial photographs and is not recorded cartographically. The top of the spur is occupied by an extensive 'Celtic' field system of rectangular plots demarcated by a network of low-relief ditch and banks not visible clearly on the ground. The field system (SMR number 628) is a Scheduled Monument.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Wiltshire County Council Brief

The County Archaeological Service provided a Brief, outlining the scope of the works and the methods to be employed. That document is available in archive and information contained within it is not repeated here, other than in summary. It identified, by Ordnance Survey grid co-ordinate, the track sections in question, and stipulated, *inter alia*, that each be cleared of 'explosive ordnance devices (EOD's) by the DLS and evaluated by a single axial trench excavated by a 360° tracked excavator equipped with a flat bottomed toothless bucket 1.8m wide under constant archaeological supervision. Within each trench, all archaeological deposits were to be recorded in plan, with a limited sample excavated in order to elucidate their date, character, extent and condition, with all works to be conducted in accordance with the requirements of 'Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire' (WCC 1995).

2.2 Site procedures

The outer edges of a 10m wide, EOD-cleared corridor were marked on the ground by DLS marker pegs and walked by DLS and Wessex Archaeology personnel prior to work commencing. Trench positions were set-out by taped measurements and compass back-bearings from landscape features relative to 1:10,000 scale OS based maps provided by the DLS.

Chainage pegs at 50m intervals were established as trenching proceeded: from east to west at Track 28, from east to west at track 43A, from west to east at Track 54D/E, and from east to west at Track 54D/W. Cartographic ambiguities resulted in a shortfall of trench length at tracks 28 and 54D/E. In these cases, additional lengths of trench were opened at the east and west ends respectively, and recorded with negative chainage values working backwards from the point of trench origin. Trench origins are shown on Figure 1.

The base of each trench was planned at 1:50 or 1:100 and photographed in 50m lengths to record the nature and extent of all archaeological and natural deposits. The nature and extent of all archaeological deposits were recorded in detail, and a limited number of each deposit type excavated in sample slots to investigate depth, context type and artefactual/palaeoenvironmental content. All artefacts were retained, and soil samples for the retrieval of palaeoenvironmental materials were retained from four reliably dated contexts that appeared on visual inspection to contain suitable materials. Relative ground levels for each trench were established at 50m intervals or at specific feature positions, and tied into approximate levels OD by traverse from the intersections of OS contours with fixed landscape features. Levels recorded on site drawings, therefore, are not absolute.

Following the approval of the CAO, trenches were backfilled with excavated material and made good.

2.3 Off-site procedures

All materials were processed, catalogued and curated in accordance with Wessex Archaeology 'Guidelines', and Wiltshire County Council 'Standards'. Soil samples were processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5mm mesh and the residues fractionated into 5.6mm, 2mm, 1mm and 0.5mm fractions and dried. The coarse fractions (<5.6mm) were sorted, weighed and discarded. The flots were scanned under a x10-x30 stereobinocular microscope and presence of charred remains and terrestrial molluscs quantified by Sarah F Wyles (Appendix 3)

All written, drawn and photographic records were checked, cross-referenced and compiled into fully indexed archive. The archive is presently stored at Wessex Archaeology's offices at Old Sarum under the archive code **W9404**, but will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

The following report summarises the range of deposits revealed during site work, by trench, with detailed descriptions of each archaeological feature provided in catalogue form in Appendix 1. Trench and feature positions are shown on Figure 1, and detailed plans and sections of two features are presented on Figure 2. Artefact and palaeoenvironmental assemblages have been scanned and are described in text passages by suitably qualified specialists, and summarised in Appendices 2 and 3.

Detailed original records are available in archive.

3 RESULTS

3.1 TRACK 28

3.1.1 Recorded deposits Two archaeological features were revealed; a single posthole (02) at ch. 46m, and a pair of parallel, shallow 'V'-profiled linear features (group 14) at ch. 546m; both sealed by a deeply rutted silty clay loam topsoil and turfline, and cutting into an extensively soliflucted chalk natural with frequent tree throw-holes and patches of flinty-clay. Neither feature contained datable artefacts. The parallel linear features in group 14 both displayed a pronounced flat-bottomed slot along their bases into which crushed flint pebbles had become pressed, filled with a mixed chalky loam. They were exactly 2m apart, and are interpreted here as cart ruts (Figure 2, Plate 1).

3.1.2 Artefacts Six pieces of worked flint, all undiagnostic waste flakes; one piece of burnt, unworked flint; and nine sherds of pottery, all in a coarse, flint-tempered fabric, probably of Late Bronze Age date were recovered from the base of the topsoil at chainage 450m-500m (context 9).

3.1.3 Palaeoenvironmental materials No palaeoenvironmental materials were recovered from Track 28.

3.2 TRACK 43A

3.2.1 Recorded deposits No archaeological features were revealed at Track 43A. The overburden varied from coarse, compacted stone at the junction with Track 54D/E, to heavily compacted and desiccated topsoil, giving way to less compacted, but still deeply rutted, silty clay loam topsoil with increased distance from the east end of the track. Two modern features were revealed; a machine-cut service trench (63) running SW-NE across the track at ch. 82m, and a short linear slot (62) filled with loose humic topsoil at ch. 198m, interpreted as being of military origin. Both were sealed by overburden, and were cut into a intermittently soliflucted chalk natural with frequent tree throw-holes.

3.2.2 Artefacts No artefacts were recovered from Track 43A

3.2.3 Palaeoenvironmental materials No palaeoenvironmental materials were recovered from Track 43A

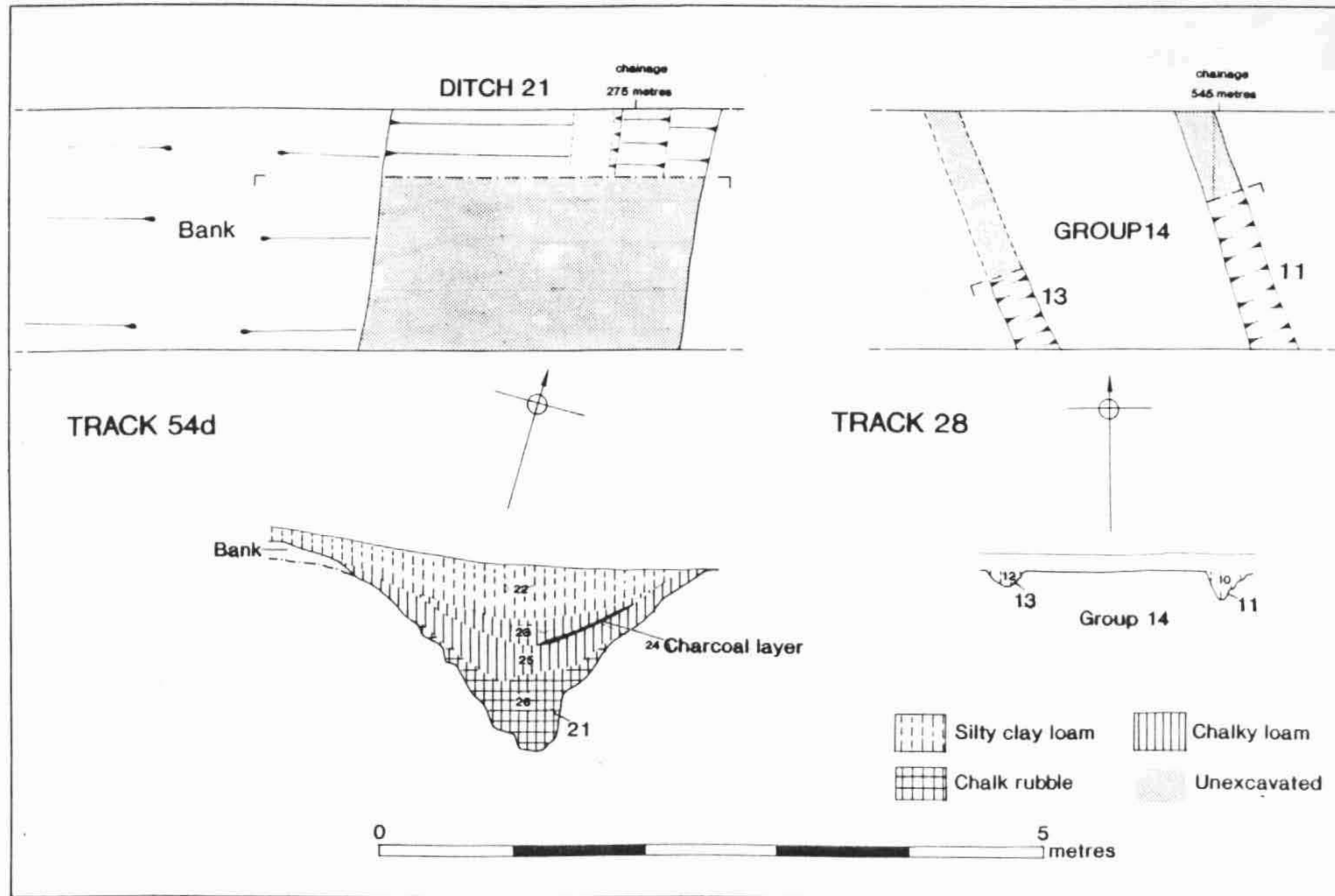


Fig.2



Plate 1: Track 28; Group 14

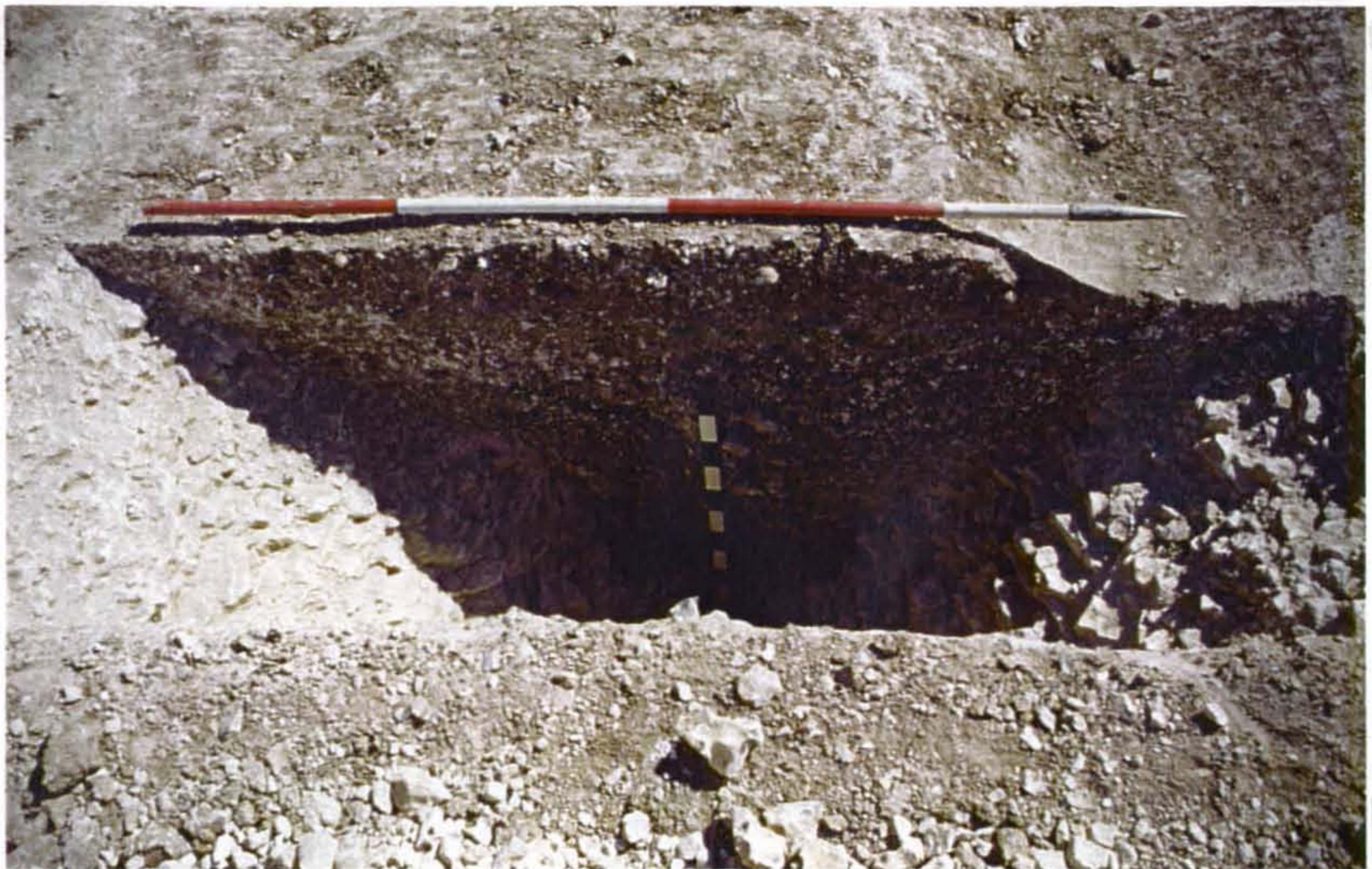


Plate 2: Track 54D/E; Ditch 21

3.3 TRACK 54D

3.3.1 Recorded deposits A wide range of archaeological features were revealed at Track 54D; including a broad 'V'-shaped ditch (21) and a small amorphous pit (15) in the eastern section of the work; and in the western section of the work, ten small circular pits (57, 31, 34, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, and 42), three narrow gullies (38, 50 and 40), three postholes (36, 64, and 55), a possible cremation pyre site (43) and an amorphous chalk-filled hollow (45). In addition, a number of features of probable modern date were revealed. These latter are described in Appendix 1 at the end of this report. All features were sealed by overburden varying from highly compacted and rutted desiccated topsoil at the eastern end of the track, to a less compacted though still deeply rutted silty clay loam topsoil and turfline towards the western end of the work. The natural base was a hard white chalk rock, with solifluction and tree-throw features prevalent only in the most westerly 300m, with a series of low, poorly-defined ridges running north-south across the trench at 30m - 50m intervals.

Linear features. A single, broad 'V'-shaped ditch 21, almost 1.4m deep and 1.8m wide containing primary, secondary and tertiary fills from which Bronze Age pottery, worked flint and animal bone were recovered, was revealed at ch. 275m, oriented SSE-NNW (Figure 2, Plate 2). The chalk natural on its western (upslope) side displayed a pronounced ridge 2m wide, running parallel to 21 of natural chalk on its western side. The secondary fills of the ditch included a dark, charcoal-rich lens (24), sieved samples of which produced burnt bone. The feature did not extend into the adjacent trench at Track 43A. Three gullies (38, 50 and 40) were revealed in the western section of Track 54D, all within 15m of each other at ch. 253m -267m. Features 38 and 40 were investigated; both displayed well-defined flat-bottomed profiles less than 0.10m deep, filled with very loose, dark humic loams, from which only burnt-flint was recovered.

Pits and hollows. One poorly-defined pit was revealed in the eastern section of Track 54D, feature 15 at chainage 217m. It displayed an irregular 'V'-shaped profile with poorly-defined edges in plan and section, filled almost entirely with partially concreted chalky silt beneath a thin pocket of very dark-brown silty clay loam (16) restricted to the centre of the feature's profile, from which worked flint was recovered. Three of the ten small circular pits revealed in the western section of Track 54D were investigated: 31, 34, and 42. All displayed well-defined flat-bottomed or rounded profiles less than 0.20m deep filled with yellowish brown chalky loams, from which a wide variety of artefact types was recovered; including quartzite hammer stones, sandstone rubbers and possible saddle quern fragments, worked and burn flint, pottery and animal bone. Pit 31, in particular, contained *in situ* the base of a complete pottery vessel filled with large highly calcined flint nodules. The soil fill (29) of this feature was retained in its entirety for palaeoenvironmental processing. A large amorphous hollow was revealed towards the western end of Track 54D, at ch. 585m: feature 43. Although only partially revealed

by the trench, it appeared to comprise an elliptical depression of at least 3m length joined by shallow irregular slots to single postholes situated approximately 0.5m from its south-west and south-east margins (Plates 3-4). All were filled with an 'ashy' 10yr 5/2 greyish brown silt loam comprised principally of small fragments of burnt chalk and heavily calcined flint, and with Romano-British pottery visible on the surface. because an unknown proportion of the feature lay outside the trench boundaries, it was, with the agreement of the CAO, left undisturbed and protected from vehicle passage.

Amorphous hollows A poorly-defined hollow, feature **45** extending across the width of the trench at ch. 561m, was investigated. The feature displayed an irregular elongated plan approximately 1.5m wide and shallow sloping profile, less than 0.2m deep at its centre, filled with a dark brown, very chalky silty clay-loam. A similar feature, **59**, revealed towards the western end of Track 54D at ch. 933m proved, on investigation to be similar in profile and plan, and filled with a compacted greyish brown chalky loam. The westernmost feature, **60**, comprised a deep pocket of chalk-free, dark yellowish brown silty clay-loam infilling the junction of three-four large periglacial stripes at ch. 971m. Although of irregular steep 'V'- shaped profile (and therefore probably of natural origin) the fill **61** contained fragments of burnt flint, burnt chalk and worked flint.

Postholes. Three well-defined postholes were revealed, all in the western section of Track 54D, of which one was investigated. Feature **36** at ch. 258m proved to be square in plan and profile and less than 0.10m deep, and filled with a loose, very dark humic loam. The remaining two postholes were both of well-defined circular plan and filled with yellowish brown chalky loams with fragments of burnt flint visible on the surface.

Linear chalk ridges A series of low relief, poorly-defined, chalk ridges were observed running - primarily - across the trench. It is likely that similar features aligned close to the trench would have evaded observation. They displayed no more than 0.1m-0.2m total relief, varied in width from 2m -5m, and were at 30m - 50m centres. There were no buried or lynchet soils associated with them.

3.3.2 Artefacts Total quantities of artefacts recovered from Track 54D are given in Appendix 2. Note that these totals do not include artefacts retrieved from environmental samples.

Worked and Burnt Flint

The small group of worked flint, recovered mainly from Pit **15** and Ditch **21**, comprises technically undiagnostic core-trimming and core-shaping debris, utilising local sources of chalk flint. There are no tools. The material is in relatively fresh condition. A general date range of Neolithic to Bronze Age may be suggested. In addition, burnt, unworked flint was recovered in small quantities, with a sizeable group from Pit **31** (a further 372g of burnt flint, not



Plate 3: Track 54D/W; Group 43



Plate 4: Track 54D/W; Group 43

included in Appendix 2, was retrieved from an environmental sample taken from the pit).

Clay Pipe

A single piece of undiagnostic clay pipe, a plain stem fragment, was recovered from the fill of feature 28.

Pottery

Pottery was recovered from five features. Sherds from Ditch 21, Pit 31, Pit 34 and Pit 42 are all in similar coarse, flint-tempered fabrics. There is no closely diagnostic material, and all sherds appear to derive from plainware vessels of uncertain form, probably of Late Bronze Age date. The large group of sherds from Pit 31 derives from a single vessel (a further 112g of pottery, from the same vessel, was recovered from an environmental sample taken from the pit, not included in Appendix 2). The two sherds collected from the surface of the feature 43 are in a black sandy coarseware fabric of Romano-British date.

Burnt and Worked Stone

Three pieces of stone were recovered from Pit 42, comprising one quartzite and one sandstone pebble, both utilised as rubbers, and one larger fragment of sandstone which could possibly derive from a quernstone. In addition, a single piece of burnt, unworked chalk came from a topsoil pocket within feature 60 in association with both worked and burnt flint.

3.3.3 Palaeoenvironmental materials

Plant Remains

Flots from samples of Ditch 21 were small (average size being 60ml) with generally little rooty material. Sparse quantities of grain and burnt weed seeds were observed in some of the samples but no chaff was present. Sample 1001 (layer 24) produced proportionately the largest quantities of charcoal consistent with its visual characteristics. Sample 1003, from Pit 31 produced a similarly sized flot, but 60% of this was rooty material. It contained large quantities of charcoal, very small quantities of burnt bone and all <5mm, sparse quantities of grain and burnt weed seeds but no chaff.

Terrestrial molluscs

Mollusc shells were present in all samples, but in relatively small numbers. Sample 1003 from Pit 31 produced shells indicative of an open environment, whilst the sediment sequence through Ditch 21 reflects the change in environment with the assemblages becoming dominated by the open-country species as the ditch becomes shallower. The shade-loving species at the base of the ditch should be seen as reflecting that particular microclimate, rather than adjacent woodland.

Animal Bone

A total of 64 fragments of animal bone, all leg and shoulder parts of larger mammal, were recovered from the secondary fills **23** and **25** of Ditch 21, including one pierced femur (Object 2002). The material is in very good condition but bears no signs of butchery.

Burnt bone

Very small quantities of burnt bone were recovered from the 5.6mm fraction of samples taken from layer **22** of ditch **21**, and the fill **29** of pit **31**. In each case the total weigh less than 1g and are therefore too small to identify with any precision.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Likely extent and significance of archaeological remains

4.1.1 Track 28

The single posthole 02 at the east end of the evaluated track should, on the basis of the work at Dunch Hill, be assumed to be a component of a structure. Roundhouses of Bronze Age and Iron Age date commonly have postholes at approximately 2m centres: as a trench 1.8m wide could, therefore, pass easily through such a structure without encountering any components of it, the statistical significance of a the single posthole revealed by this method is heightened. Roundhouses have been found to occur in small groups, often accompanied by such domestic features as storage pits, craft working areas and hearths, any or all of which should be anticipated here within the first 100m of track chainage.

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Features 11 and 13, the components of Group 14 are easier to extrapolate, but more difficult to assign significance to. They will undoubtedly extend the full width of the proposed working areas, and for some distance beyond, but without firm dating, their significance is ambiguous. They are assumed to be cart ruts on the basis of their parallel alignment and profile; deep ruts into solid chalk such as these, with crushed flint pebbles compressed firmly in the base, are the result of repeated passage over some time, and are less likely to be the result of short-lived use such as gun carriage training. They are close to the postulated line of the Salisbury to Devizes Roman road, but are not associated with the metalling or roadside ditches distinctive of Roman roads. It is possible that group 14 represent a lower class of Roman road, or a later precursor to the adjacent post road to which they are parallel. Neither have been used for tyred vehicles and is likely, therefore, to have fallen into disuse before the early years of this century. Similarly, its close proximity to the wider and more robust Salisbury-Devizes post road with which it is unlikely to have been contemporaneous, suggest that it was superseded by it. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that group 14 represents a medieval or post-medieval track.

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The Bronze Age pottery and worked flint from context 9, are less easy to assess. Agricultural erosion of archaeological deposits can disperse artefacts over relatively wide areas without any trace of the originating features surviving. However, given the generally low intensity of agricultural attrition across the SPTA, and the immediate proximity of a known burial mound (Figure 1), it could be assumed that these artefacts are derived from archaeological features immediately outside (upslope) of the evaluation trench at chainage 450m-500m, possibly associated with the burial mound.

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4.1.2 Track 43A

No archaeological deposits were revealed at Track 43A. However, given the proximity of the trench to the major ditch and bank revealed at Track 54D, the apparent absence of similar features at Track 43A is of some significance,

and is discussed below in Section 4.2.3. Given the likelihood that the ditch 21 identified at Track 54D deviates or terminates within the vicinity of the junction of Tracks 43A and 54D, and that the evaluation trench has examined **only** the central 1.8m of a proposed 10m wide route, the eastern 100m of track 43A must still be considered to be archaeological sensitive.

4.1.3 Track 54D

Linear features. The broad 'V'-shaped ditch 21 revealed at the eastern end of Track 54D appears to be accompanied by a vestigial earthwork bank on its western side. The feature contains Bronze Age materials in its secondary and tertiary fills, and terrestrial molluscs and charred plant remains in all sampled fills. Its situation is topographically similar to that occupied by the extant ditch and bank earthwork to the south of Track 54D which, if extrapolated east beyond its presently recorded limit SE of 'The Firs' plantation, would continue towards feature 21. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that feature 21 is the eastward continuation of that earthwork, and that it is Bronze Age in construction. Ditch 21 was not revealed in the evaluation trench at Track 43A, less than 60m to the north, so it must either terminate or deviate south of Track 43A. The animal bone, burnt bone, charcoal and pottery fragments in the secondary and tertiary fills of Ditch 21 are rather more than would be expected in an isolated landscape feature such as a linear earthwork. The artefactual deposits suggest the proximity of other features not otherwise revealed in the trench, such as the pits revealed in the western sections of Track 54D (see above 4.1.3), or perhaps barrow(s). The ditch, being steeply 'V'-shaped, is unlikely to be a component of barrow itself. Although not rich in plant remains or terrestrial molluscs, sieving of samples of the ditch fills has demonstrated the potential for environmental history contained within them. The eastern 100m-150m of chainage of the evaluated section of Track 54D encompass significant archaeological deposits. The gullies 38, 50 and 40, almost certainly extend across the full width of the proposed route. Their significance is less easy to assess. Both the investigated examples contained loose dark fills usually indicative of a recent origin and are co-aligned with recent wheel ruts running across Track 54D at this point. However, their correspondence with wheel ruts crossing Track 54D may be entirely coincidental as all other definite wheel ruts encountered were far less well-defined and shallower at chalk level even though quite pronounced on the surface. Also, at 7m centres, these features are too far apart to be wheel or cart ruts. It seems more likely, therefore, that they are *bona fide* archaeological features, though of uncertain date. Their flat bottomed profiles are not typical of field system ditches, and their dark humic fills are more characteristic of recent, rather than earlier, features. However, as feature 38 produced only non-modern finds, an archaeological component to these features cannot be excluded.

Pits and hollows The excavated examples of the small circular pits (31, 42 etc.) are of Bronze Age date. The *in situ* pottery vessel, large heavily calcined flint nodules and fragments of burnt bone contained within Pit 31 suggest that it may be a cremation-related feature; not necessarily containing

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a 301

the cremated remains itself but possibly a token burial of materials incorporated in the cremation rite. It indicates the presence, nearby, of funerary activity of that type and date, and the soils within it contain terrestrial molluscs indicative of open grassland, and charred plant remains. Feature 42 containing Bronze Age pottery in addition to a quartzite hammer stone or pounder, a sandstone rubber and a possible saddle quern fragment, indicates the wide variety of artefacts likely to be contained by the remaining uninvestigated examples. The likely extent of the prehistoric pits is more difficult to assess, partly because their function is incompletely understood and partly because excavations in this part of Wiltshire have, historically, concentrated on major monument groups. However, recent observations during pipe-laying operations on the southern fringe of the SPTA at Durrington (Wessex Archaeology 1991), evaluations at King Barrow Ridge (Wessex Archaeology 1992) and excavations on the chalk downs elsewhere, for instance Dorchester in Dorset, have revealed Neolithic and bronze age 'ritual' pits in isolation and in clusters around the peripheries of settlement and monument landscapes. And although linear pit alignments are known from the chalk downlands (Green 1994) and further afield in Fife, for example, the possibility that the individuals revealed in this linear trench are part of an isolated linear group is remote. It should be assumed, therefore, that the Bronze Age pits revealed here are part of more extensive groups, and even the spatial clustering around breaks-of-slope should be taken as more apparent than real. Feature 43 extends beyond the northern edge of the evaluation trench, and therefore occupies an unknown area of the proposed route at this point. Its estimated boundaries are presently marked by concrete 'dragon's teeth'. Visual observation of the surface indicated a high pyrogenic content within a grey ashy fill largely composed of burnt powdery chalk. It is assumed here to be a cremation-related feature, based largely on ethnological parallels (McKinley 1994), experimental works conducted recently in Gloucestershire (Marshall and McKinley forthcoming) and France (Lambot *et al* 1994) and excavations further afield at Westhampnett, Sussex (Fitzpatrick 1994). From these, cremation pyre sites are anticipated in the form of sub-square or elliptical depressions with adjoining 'flues' flanked by post settings, all filled with pyrogenic materials in a variety of states of reduction and oxygenation. The lowest levels of the depressions would not be expected to contain human remains. Feature 43 accords with this broad categorisation and, although not excavated, had Romano-British pottery visible in its surface layers. The possibility that Feature 43 might represent a cremation pyre site unaccompanied by a barrow is of great significance, even if the Romano-British surface pottery is representative of the whole deposit. Pyre sites, by their very nature, have not survived agricultural attrition and have evaded archaeological detection to date. Though late Iron Age and Romano-British pyre sites are known from further afield (McKinley forthcoming; Fitzpatrick *ibid*) and features containing dumps of pyre material have recently been excavated at Maddington Farm, 5.5km south-east of Track 54D (McKinley and Heaton, in press), for Wiltshire no post-prehistoric examples are published, and though spreads of burnt material have been recorded from the centres of bronze age round barrows in Wiltshire (Grinsell 1936; Green and Rollo-Smith 1984), their designation is unsecure. Pyre sites, potentially,

contain considerable data pertaining to the technical and ritual aspects of the process of cremation.

Postholes With the exception of feature 36 which appears to be spade-cut, the postholes remain undated. The remaining examples were visually different - being round in plan and with yellowish brown chalky loam fills - and are assumed here to be non-modern in date. On the basis of recent work at Dunch Hill (Wessex Archaeology forthcoming), they should be assumed to represent structures. Similar isolated postholes revealed during evaluation works at Dunch Hill Plantation near Tidworth (Wessex Archaeology 1994) were subsequently seen during larger scale excavations to be components of circular roundhouses of bronze age date. Postholes were revealed in the western half of Track 54D/W, from chainage 597m, close to the summit of the chalk spur, suggesting that settlement areas associated with the postholes are situated on the brow of the hill.

Linear chalk ridges The low relief chalk ridges observed running north-south across the central lengths of the trench are at positions and intervals compatible with field divisions plotted by the RCHM(E) (Figure 1, inset A) photographs. It is possible, therefore, that these poorly-defined 'features' are the remains of the 'Celtic' fields that form the core of the Scheduled area.

Amorphous hollows Given the clarity of the majority of the features revealed along Track 54D, especially those dated artefactually, it seems probable that the amorphous hollows 45, 59 and 60 are natural periglacial or solution features. The existence of cultural materials within feature 60 does not necessarily contradict this interpretation; the subsidence hollows that can form in the top of larger periglacial features form protected areas in which topsoil artefacts can become trapped.

4.2 Demonstrated archaeological presence

TRACK 28

Feature No.	Type	Dating	Chainage
2	posthole	undated	46m
9	topsoil pocket	Pottery: residual Bronze Age	450m-550m
14	cart tracks	Typological: medieval or post- medieval	546m

TRACK 43A

Feature No.	Type	Dating	Chainage
None			

TRACK 54D/E

Feature No.	Type	Dating	Chainage
15	pit/hollow	Flint: prehistoric; Neolithic/Bronze Age	217m ¹⁰⁶ Su04NW153
21	ditch and bank	Pottery: Bronze Age	275m

TRACK 54/W

Feature No.	Type	Dating	Chainage
57	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	89m
31	pit	Pottery: Bronze Age	96m
34	pit	Pottery: Bronze Age	154m
48	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	228m
49	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	231m
38	gully	Soils: probably modern	253m
50	gully	Soils: probably modern	260m
40	gully	Soils: probably modern	267m
51	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	317m
52	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	461m
53	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	536m
54	pit	Typological: Bronze Age	552m

42	pit	Pottery: Bronze Age	558m
43	pit/pyre site	Pottery: Romano-British	585m
64	posthole	Undated: probably Romano-British or prehistoric	597m
55	posthole	Undated: probably Romano-British or prehistoric	692m

4.3 Likely archaeological impact of road construction

4.3.1 *Track 28*

Groundworks integral to the construction of a stone, 'all-weather' route will disturb or destroy the deposits identified in Section 3.1, and isolate any other deposits associated with them. Although the cart track **14** is a linear feature that undoubtedly extends for some distance beyond the proposed works, the posthole **02** is a discrete feature, possibly relating to a structure that may be entirely contained within, and thereby destroyed by, the proposed route. There is nothing to suggest that minor re-locating of the proposed route will mitigate this impact.

4.3.2 *Track 43A*

Although no archaeological features have been identified in the 1.8m wide trench at track 43A, groundworks integral to the construction of a stone, 'all-weather' route may disturb or destroy lengths of ditch **21**, which is assumed to deviate or terminate close to Track 43A. Re-location of the proposed route away from Track 54D, i.e. to the north, would lessen the likely impact of construction.

4.3.3 *Track 54D*

Groundworks integral to the construction of a stone, 'all-weather' route will disturb or destroy the deposits identified in Section 3.3, and isolate any other deposits or structures associated with them. Minor re-location of the proposed route will not mitigate this impact.

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Appendix 1: Catalogue trench descriptions

Track 28		Length 700m	Co-ords: SU 0940 4710 SU 0865 4715
Context No.	Description	Chainage E-W	
	Overburden: 10yr 4/6 dark yellowish brown silty clay loam, varying in depth between 0.20m and 0.40m, supporting a well established turfline. Deep wheel ruts, but not cutting into chalk base.	entire trench	
02	Feature. Well-defined sub-circular posthole with vertical sides and a flat base, 0.40m diam. x 0.09m deep, filled with 10yr 4/6 dark yellowish brown silty clay loam 01 .	46m	
09	Layer. Thin smear of remnant topsoil within subsidence hollows in top of a group of periglacial features.	450m-500m	
14	Group. Pair of parallel cart-ruts 11 and 13 aligned NNE-SSW 2m apart. Each displayed a well-defined 'V' profile 0.30m wide at top x 0.13m - 0.20m deep, with distinct flat base containing crushed flint pebbles compressed into chalk, filled with compact and well mixed 10yr 5/6 yellowish brown silty clay loam 10 and 12	546m	
	Natural: Soliflucted chalk with extensive patches of flinty clay, periglacial stripes oriented NW-SE, and common tree throw-holes.	entire trench.	

Track 43A		Length 350m	Co-ords: SU 01760 48700 SU 01420 48770
Context No.	Description	Chainage E-W	
	Overburden. Compacted 400mm stone at SE end for approx. 50m adjacent to junction with Track 54D, giving way to compacted and deeply rutted silty clay loam, varying in max. depth between 0.20m - 0.40m. Wheel ruts cut into chalk base by upto 0.20m in places.	entire trench	
62	Feature. Linear slot aligned parallel to track, 2m long x 0.20m wide, cutting into tree throw-hole. Filled with loose, dark greyish brown loam containing modern debris. Not excavated.	82m	
63	Feature. Linear, machine-cut slot running across full width of trench, >1.8m long x 0.20m wide, filled predominantly with compacted chalk with a narrow fillet of loose topsoil adhering to edges. Modern feature, not excavated.	198m	
	Natural: Soliflucted chalk with extensive patches of flinty clay, periglacial stripes oriented NNW-SSE, and common tree throw-holes.	entire trench	

W9404 SPTA Tracks 28, 43A and 54D: Appendix 1

Track 54D/E		Length 450m	Co-ords: SU 0130 4854 SU 0170 4868
Context No.	Description	Chainage W-E	
	Overburden. Compacted and deeply rutted silty clay loam with common modern debris included. wheel ruts cut into chalk base by upto 0.10m in places.	entire trench	
21	Feature. Broad linear ditch running across full width of trench, well-defined 'V' profile >1.8m long x 2.6m wide x 1.4m deep. Filled with primary fills 26, secondary fills 25, 24 and 23, and tertiary fill 22. Animal bone, worked flint and pottery recovered from tertiary and upper secondary fills, and bulk soil samples retained from all three. Bank of raised natural chalk approx. 2m wide observed on western (upslope) margin of ditch.	275m	
28	Feature. Short, sub-rectangular slot aligned SW-NE in centre of trench cutting tree throw-hole, well-defined flat bottomed vertical sides profile 1.5m long x 0.5m wide x 0.2m deep filled with compacted silty clay loam 27, with common large angular chalk inclusions distributed evenly throughout profile. Modern feature.	268m	
20	Feature. Short, sub-rectangular slot aligned SW-NE in centre of trench, well-defined flat bottomed vertical sides profile 1.12m long x 0.5m wide x 0.2m deep filled with compacted silty clay loam 19, with common large angular chalk inclusions distributed evenly throughout profile. Modern feature.	255m	
15	Feature. Small, amorphous and poorly-defined pit against north edge of trench, approx. 0.9m diam. x 0.25m deep 'V'-shaped profile. Upper fill 16 of dark brown silty clay loam restricted to central 0.5m of pit surface area contained worked flint, above lower chalky fills 17 and 18.	217m	
65	Feature. Linear, machine-cut slot running across full width of trench, >1.8m long x 0.20m wide, filled predominantly with compacted chalk with a narrow fillet of loose topsoil adhering to edges. Modern feature, not excavated.	126m	
	Natural. Bedrock chalk with occasional periglacial stripes aligned WSW-ENE, and occasional tree throw-holes.		

W9404 SPTA Tracks 28, 43A and 54D: Appendix 1

Track 54D/W		Length 1000m	Co-ords: SU 0010 4817 SU 0105 4849
Context No.	Description	Chainage E-W	
	Overburden. Deeply rutted and compacted silty clay loam with much modern debris included. Wheel ruts cut into chalk base by upto 0.10m in places.		
57	Feature. Well-defined circular pit 0.5m in diameter, filled with 10yr 4/6 dark yellowish brown silty clay loam with burnt flint and pieces of iron pyrites visible on surface. Not excavated.	89m	
31	Feature. Well-defined circular pit 0.4m in diameter x 0.16m deep containing the base of a pottery vessel 30, sealed beneath 10yr 3/3 dark brown silty clay loam 29 containing frequent fragments of pottery, charcoal and burnt flint, and resting on 10yr 3/2 very dark greyish brown charcoal-flecked silty clay 32.	96m	
34	Feature. Well-defined sub-circular pit 0.6m in diameter x 0.17m deep, filled with 10yr 3/3 brown silty clay loam 33 containing pottery, worked flint and sandstone.	154m	
48	Feature. Well-defined round pit under north edge of trench, 0.8m in diameter, filled with 10yr 4/6 dark yellowish brown silty clay loam. Not excavated.	228m	
49	Feature. Well-defined round pit under south edge of trench, 1.3m in diameter, filled with 10yr 4/6 dark yellowish brown silty clay loam. Not excavated.	231m	
38	Feature. Well-defined narrow, flat bottomed gully running SW-NE across full width of trench, 0.36m wide x 0.05m deep x >1.8m wide, filled with 10yr 3/2 very dark brown silty clay 37 containing burnt flint	253m	
36	Feature. Well-defined, square-cut posthole 0.23m x 0.30m x 0.10m deep, filled with 10yr 3/1 very dark grey chalk-free silt loam 35. Modern, spade-cut, feature.	258m	
50	Feature. Poorly-defined gully running SW-NE across full width of trench, 0.25m wide filled with very chalky 10yr 6/3 pale brown silty loam. Position and orientation correspond to wheel ruts visible either side of trench. Not excavated.	260m	
40	Feature. Well-defined narrow, flat bottomed gully running SW-NE across full width of trench, 0.38m wide x 0.10m deep x >1.8m wide, filled with loose, 10yr 3/1 very dark grey, humic silty clay loam 39	267m	
51	Feature. Well-defined small pit under north edge of trench, c. 0.7m diameter, filled with 10yr 4/4 yellowish brown chalky silt loam. Not excavated.	317m	
52	Feature. Well-defined circular pit 0.6m in diameter in centre of trench, filled with 10yr 4.4 yellowish brown chalky silt loam. Not excavated.	461m	
53	Feature. Well-defined circular pit 0.5m in diameter in centre of trench, filled with 10yr 4/4 yellowish brown chalky silt loam. Not excavated.	536m	
54	Feature. Well-defined sub-circular pit 0.8m in diameter in centre of trench, filled with 10yr 4/4 yellowish brown chalky silt loam. Not excavated.	552m	
42	Feature. Well-defined circular pit 0.65m in diameter x 0.14m deep in centre of trench, filled with 10yr 4/3 brown, chalky silty clay loam 41 containing pottery, worked flint, sandstone and quartzite objects.	558m	

W9404 SPTA Tracks 28, 43A and 54D: Appendix 1

45	Feature. Poorly-defined irregular depression running approx. NW-SE across full width of trench . 1.5m wide x 0.16m deep, filled with 10yr 3/3 dark brown, very chalky silty clay loam 44 .	561m
43	Group. Composite feature under north edge of trench and only partially visible. Comprises, apparently, a large sub-circular pit > 3m in diameter filled with a distinct 'ashy' 10yr 5/2 greyish brown silty loam containing frequent small fragments of burnt chalk, burnt flint and with (Neolithic) pottery visible on surface; flanked by at least to postholes or subsidiary features approximately 0.5m from the edge of the pit, linked to the pit by narrow depressions. Not excavated.	585m
64	Feature. Well-defined posthole in centre of trench, 0.15m in diameter filled with 10yr 5/2 pale greyish brown silt loam. Not excavated.	597m
55	Feature. Well-defined posthole in centre of trench, 0.2m in diameter filled with 10yr 4/4 dark yellowish brown silt loam. Not excavated.	692m
47	Layer. Thin smear of remnant topsoil infilling top of large periglacial feature.	725m
59	Feature: amorphous hollow extending across full width of trench, c 1.5m wide x 0.2m deep, filled with greyish brown, very chalky silty clay loam.	933m
60	Layer. Pocket of remnant topsoil infilling junction of 3-4 large periglacial features.	971m
	Natural. Chalk bedrock with intermittent solifluction, occasional tree throw-holes and variations in chalk hardness. Solifluction features and tree holes more prevalent on lower slopes, with upper areas appearing scoured. Intermittent N-S ridges at 20m-40m centres visible across the upslope length of the trench, from ch. 220m-670m..	entire trench

Appendix 2: Catalogue of all artefacts recovered

Context	Feature	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	Burnt Stone	Clay Pipe	Worked Flint	Pottery	Stone
Unstrat.	-		2/270				1/6	
<i>TRACK 28</i>								
9			1/35			6/132	9/51	
<i>TRACK 54D</i>								
16	Pit 15					6/84		
22	Ditch 21		2/54			5/110		
23	Ditch 21	21/350	1/53			6/174	9/49	
25	Ditch 21	43/622				2/57	6/85	
27	Slot 28				1/3			
29	Pit 31		33/1720				2/6	
30	Pit 31						346/1181	
33	Pit 34					1/13	2/8	
37	Gully 38		4/50					
41	Pit 42						7/61	3/2800
-	Pit/posthole complex 43						2/8	
46	Pit 47		2/9					
61	Solution hole 60		9/72	1/12		2/4		
Unstrat			2/270				1/6	
TOTAL		64/972	54/2263	1/12	1/3	28/574	382/1455	3/2800

Appendix 3: Catalogue of palaeoenvironmental materials

Charred Plant Remains

Feature	Context	Sample	Flot						Other	Residue
			flot size ml	Grain	Chaff	Weed seeds unburnt	burnt	Charcoal >5.6mm		
Ditch 21	26	1000	10 0.5	-	-	c	-	-	mollusc	-
	24	1001	10 0	C	-	-	-	A	mollusc	-
	22	1002	15 30	C	-	c	C	B	mollusc smb (C)	-
Pit 31	29	1003	60 35	C	-	b	C	A	mollusc	-

KEY: A** = exceptional, A* = 30+ items, A = ≥10 items, B = 9 - 5 items, C = < 5 items, (H) = hazelnuts, smb = small mammal bones

NOTE: flot given as total in ml and total or rooty material in

Terrestrial Molluscs

Sample	1000	1001	1002	1003
Context/feature	26/21	24/21	22/21	29/31
Open country species				
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	-	-	A	C
<i>Vertigo</i> spp.	C	C	A	C
<i>Helicella itala</i>	C	C	A	C
<i>Vallonia</i> spp.	A	A	A	A
Catholic species				
<i>Trichia hispida</i>	C	C	B	C
<i>Cochlicopa</i> spp.	C	B	C	-
<i>Cepaea</i> spp	C	-	-	-
Shade-loving species				
<i>Carychium</i>	A	A	-	-
<i>Discus rotundatus</i>	C	A	C	-
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i>	-	-	C	-
<i>Oxychilus</i>	C	-	-	-
<i>Aegopinella</i>	A	B	C	-
<i>Nesovitrea</i>	C	C	-	-
<i>Vitrea</i>	A	B	-	-
<i>Vitrina</i>	C	C	-	-
<i>Ena</i>	-	C	-	-
Burrowing species				
<i>Cecilioides acicula</i>	C	C	C	C
Approx. totals	50	50	75	15



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