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THE SPINNEY SHERBURN IN ELMET

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND EXCAVATION

by Brian Antoni

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*Cover illustration:
The Spinney, Sherburn in Elmet*

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List of Abbreviations

YAT	York Archaeological Trust
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ABSTRACT

Between 27th February 2002 and 17th February 2003 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological excavation and watching brief during the construction of house plots at The Spinney, Sherburn in Elmet, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 49533350).

Six areas of the site corresponding to the new house plots were examined and in one (Area 4) a dense pattern of cut features was found. The sequence probably began with a ditch on a north-west / south-east alignment which was subsequently cut at a c. 45° angle by another ditch on a north-east / south-west alignment. At its south-west end the line of the second ditch was continued by a series of cut features, probably post-holes.

The alignment of the first ditch appears to have been re-stated by a row of three large pits about 1.60m in diameter and 0.60m deep intended to support large posts. Together with another similar pit to the north-east, they may have represented the latest event in this period of activity on the site. Dating the features described above rests on a radiocarbon date of c. 2870 – 2570 BC taken on burnt grain from one of the post pits. Although the area of excavation at The Spinney was insufficient to make a great deal of sense of these pits and features described above, they clearly represent an important addition to knowledge of the prehistoric period locally.

In Area 4 the alignment of the earliest Neolithic ditch and the post-pits may have survived somehow to be restated by a large Iron Age ditch dated by pottery to c. 500 – 400 BC. It would appear to be earlier than another in Area 6 which offers a fixed point in the later prehistory of The Spinney in the form of a radiocarbon date of 380 - 160 BC on a fragment of animal bone from the backfilling. This may be the earliest element in an episode of land division (also recorded in other areas) dated to the Iron Age – Romano-British period which employed ditches on both a north – south and east- west axis. A cobbled surface was laid down over the backfilled ditch in Area 4 which was probably Romano-British.

Post-Roman occupation at The Spinney began in the late 12th – early 13th century when the site probably corresponded to a burgage plot laid out as part of a town developed by the Archbishop of York. The western end of the plot was not included in excavation, but discoveries elsewhere on the site corresponded to what one would expect in such a plot. Traces of subsidiary structures, such as barns or stores, were found and at the rear of the property (Area 9) there were pits for cess and refuse. Environmental data, including plant and insect remains in the fill of a ditch in Area 9 suggest a damp and weed-choked environment with livestock kept nearby.

Later in the medieval period, probably in the 14th century, a large pit was dug at the rear of the site in which were found copious de-seeded flax stems. This suggests that the process of flax retting took place nearby.

There was little evidence for later medieval or post-medieval activity. In Area 9, however, a pair of pits containing wooden barrels and a stone-lined tank were found which probably date to the 18th century. Their function is difficult to determine, although the dyeing or fulling of cloth are possibilities.

The modern period at The Spinney was represented by bedding pits for the market garden which had occupied the site until recently and eight dog burials.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 27th February 2002 and 17th February 2003 York Archaeological Trust (YAT), undertook an archaeological excavation and watching brief during the construction of several house plots at The Spinney, Sherburn in Elmet, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 49533350, Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Barratt, York in compliance with a planning condition imposed by Selby District Council at the instigation of the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council.

2. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The small market town of Sherburn in Elmet lies c.9km to the south of Tadcaster, North Yorkshire. The Spinney is located on Low Street, the road south to South Milford, some 200m to the south of the market place where the north-south road represented by Finkle Hill and Low Street meets an east-west road represented by Kirkgate and Moor Lane. The Spinney occupies c. 0.55ha at the rear of what may once have been a large elongated plot of land on the east side of Low Street near what was probable southern limit of the medieval town.

In geological and topographical terms Sherburn in Elmet is situated on the gentle east facing slope of a north – south aligned ridge of Upper Magnesian Limestone. The Spinney site itself lies near the base of the slope, on the boundary of the limestone ridge to the west, and the Upper Permian Marls of the Vale of York to the east (Geological Survey 1957).

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological work at The Spinney described in this document was undertaken because it was thought likely to throw light on the history of Sherburn in Elmet from the prehistoric to the post-medieval period, but in particular on the origins and development of the medieval town. Evidence for Sherburn in Elmet in the principal archaeological and historical periods is summarised below.

Prehistoric

There is little evidence for activity or settlement in the immediate Sherburn area, probably because archaeological fieldwork has been very limited. However, aerial photographs in the SMR (SMR 09399) and in the YAT collection (SE43 – AJC 077/4-5, AJC 079/5-7, PVA 2762001-2, 3762003-4) of land near Prospect Farm to the south of the town show crop marks indicative of field systems which may be prehistoric. At a distance of c.8km south of Sherburn in Elmet, at Ledston and Ledsham, and at a similar distance to the west at Micklefield cropmarks showing enclosures and pits also suggest prehistoric settlement in the area (Riley 1976; 1977).

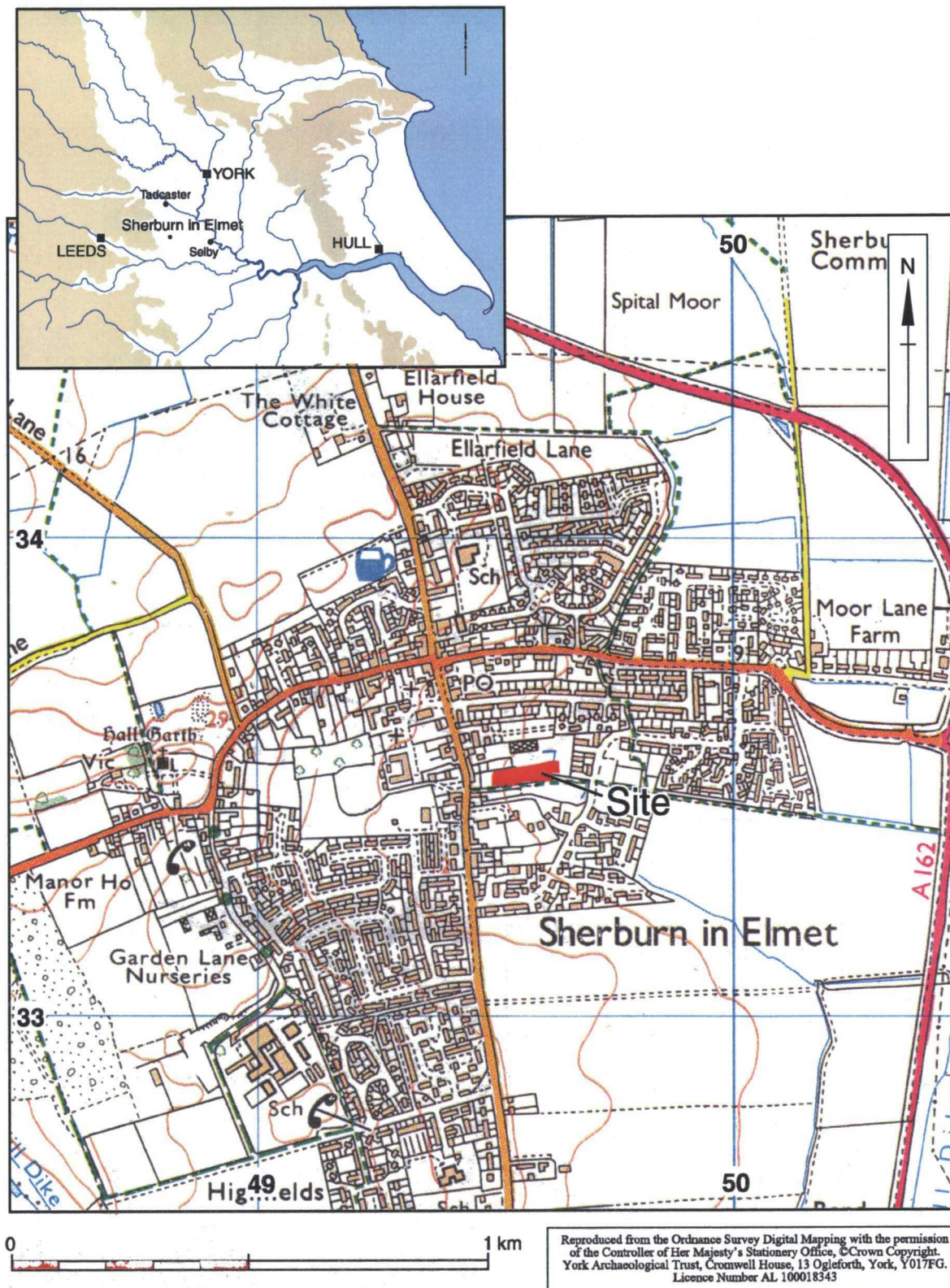


Fig.1: Site location

The nearest prehistoric monument of any importance is the late Neolithic Ferrybridge henge c.9km to the south of Sherburn on the west bank of the river Aire (Harding and Lee 1987, 318-9). This ceremonial complex also includes two post-set penannular circles, each surrounding a central post-hole, 15.6-16.1m in diameter and 28m apart which have been excavated, but produced no dating evidence (Gibson 1994, 191-209). In addition, four ring ditches are known from crop marks up to 187m away to the west. One has been excavated and shown to enclose an inhumation grave with a flint and dagger association (Riley 1988, 12-15). A short distance away, at Ferry Fryston Greenwell's Barrow 161 (SE474245) had a primary burial with an accompanying beaker, and a later burial a Collared Urn cremation (Greenwell 1877, 371-4; Pacitto 1969). Adjacent to this a second barrow was excavated by Pacitto (1969). A late Bronze Age hoard of Welby type socketed axes and a barbed spearhead was found at Ferrybridge (now in Wakefield Museum).

Dated to the late Iron Age are the Aberford dykes located about 6km north-west of Sherburn in Elmet (Wheelhouse and Burgess 2001).

Roman

The Aberford dykes may have been constructed as a defence against the advancing Roman army and they lie across the line of a major Roman road, known as 'Roman Ridge' in the area of Garforth and Aberford, which runs north from Castleford (*Lagentium*) to Newton Kyme. Sherburn in Elmet lies c. 6km to the east of this road. Recent work on the line of the road at a cropmark site at Parlington Hollins, south of Aberford and close to the line of the road has revealed evidence for a sequence of Roman settlement (Holbrey and Burgess 2001). In Sherburn in Elmet itself a series of linear boundary ditches, and evidence for settlement and activity relating to the Iron Age - Romano British periods was recorded during excavations on a site on Low Street, south of The Spinney and beyond the southern limits of the present day village (MAP 1998a; 1998b). In addition, two Roman plaster burials in gritstone sarcophagi were found in 1996 during a small scale housing development some 130m to the south of the church at Garden Lane (MAP 1996).

Post - Roman

The kingdom of Elmet appears to have been the most enduring of Yorkshire's post-Roman British territories which emerged between the 5th and the 7th centuries AD (Loveluck 2003). Attempts to define the extent of Elmet by means of place-names, including that of Sherburn in Elmet, have been made, but archaeologically little is known of its character or history (Faull 1981; Long 1993, 118). Eventually Elmet was extinguished in early 7th century by King Edwin of Northumbria and was absorbed into the kingdom of Northumbria.

Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian

Little is known of the Sherburn in Elmet area in the Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian periods. The place name Sherburn is thought to be Old English, '*scir*' meaning clear, bright or gleaming and '*burna*', a stream or burn. Street names of Norse character such as

Finkle Hill and Kirkgate, suggest a settlement existing in the pre-Conquest period. A place of some importance is, however, suggested by the discovery of a gold ring of Queen Aethelswith near Sherburn and there is a tradition that King Athelstan (924-41) built a palace at Sherburn in the early 10th century. The site of the palace is thought to have been Hall Garth (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) to the north of All Saints church, where there is a complex of earthworks. A wealthy church, a precursor to All Saints of which the earliest part is 12th century, is suggested by an inventory on the fly leaf at the end of a manuscript of the Gospels dated to c.900 which refers to four hand bells and six hanging bells (Wheater 1882, 9). In c. 938 an estate at Sherburn was granted to the Archbishop of York and became the centre of a large ecclesiastical holding (Tyler 1978).

The Sherburn Charter, in the 14th century *Registrum Magnum Album* in York Minster, records a grant of twenty hides at Sherburn made in 963 by King Edgar to a nobleman, the venerable Aeslac (Long 1993, 120). The *Registrum* is compiled from earlier documents that were not fully understood and so is not necessarily reliable, although various physical features are mentioned such as streams, tracks and bridges, and the brook mentioned must be the Mill Dike which now forms the parish boundary between Sherburn and South Milford.

Medieval

The Manor of Sherburn in Elmet is recorded in the Domesday Survey of AD 1086 as a property of the Archbishop of York extending over 96 carucates, i.e. it was of considerable size and probably included a number of outlying settlements. A motte at Castle Hill 4km east of Sherburn may date to the Conquest period.

A moated manor house belonging to the Archbishop of York was located at Rest Park 5km to the east of the town, but excavations found no remains earlier than the 14th century and so it is difficult to relate to documentary references suggesting its existence in the early 13th century (Le Patourel 1973). By this time, however, Cawood had evidently become the Archbishop's principal country seat. The latest pottery from the excavations at Rest Park, which perhaps became an intermittently used hunting lodge, was of 15th – 16th century date.

Another medieval establishment immediately to the north of Rest Park was a hospital dedicated to Mary Magdalen, founded before 1261.

By the early 13th century Sherburn in Elmet had the character of small town, probably sponsored by the Archbishop of York with a view to capturing trade on the main road from Tadcaster to Doncaster. In 1223 a weekly market was granted to Sherburn and in 1228 the Archbishop granted a charter of liberties to the burgesses of the town whereby the burgages were to have plots c.18.3m wide by 24.4m long (60ft x 80ft). Inspection of the plan of Sherburn suggests some regularity in the plot layout on Finkle Street, Low Street and Kirkgate, but there has been no archaeological evidence hitherto for when this was created. The fortunes of the town may have been reduced by the Archbishop's preference for Cawood and further growth was limited. In the 1379 Lay Subsidy 58 families and 21 single people are referred to from which Wheater (1882, 36) estimated a population of c.300 people.

The 1770 Enclosure Map and the first edition OS map of 1852 for Sherburn in Elmet suggest that The Spinney site occupied all, except a small part on the street frontage, of what was originally an elongated plot c.170m long x 40m wide aligned east – west, facing Low Street. This plot may be of medieval origin and probably lay at the extreme southern end of the 13th century town defined by what is now a path running along the southern boundary. There is no regular plot layout south of this path.

Post-Medieval

In 1546 the manor of Sherburn was acquired by the crown from Archbishop Holgate. It was later purchased from the crown by the Hungates of Saxton and remained in their hands until it was given to Arthur, Earl of Anglesey in 1662 (Wheater 1882, 44). On the death of Richard, Earl of Anglesey in 1761 the manor reverted to the Hungates, through an heiress of whose family it passed to the Gascoignes of Parlington.

In 1770 the Enclosure Act for Sherburn was passed by Parliament (Leeds City Archives: Acc/1249). The plan shows that the plot now The Spinney was owned by a Mr Pulleyne and appears to show a house on the frontage. The 1850 first edition OS map shows buildings on the frontage lying in an area divided off from the rest of the plot as is shown on subsequent OS maps. Two other north-south divisions of the plot are shown on the latest 1:2500 OS map, the westernmost has an irregular dog-legged form and the second runs straight from one side of the plot to the other.

4 METHODOLOGY

The approach to the project was determined initially by the results of an evaluation by MAP (2000), although when it became apparent that the archaeological remains were more extensive than this had indicated, a new strategy involving more than a simple watching brief on construction was adopted. The location of all the excavated areas (Fig. 2), was dictated by the positions of the house plots within the area under development. Initially the programme of archaeological works was to be conducted as a watching brief and remained so for Areas 5 – 8. Hand excavation was required in Areas 4 and 9 due to the type of foundation used: a concrete raft, instead of the trenched foundations used elsewhere. A raft foundation was necessary to meet the specifications set by the National House Building Council and came into force to prevent root damage to the foundations, due to the presence of several large trees close to these particular areas. This entailed the removal of all materials, including all the archaeological features and the natural clay to a depth of c.1.60m BGL (metres Below Ground Level).

Area 4 was, after the removal of modern deposits, fully hand-excavated; Area 9, however, was only partially excavated due to the extremely soft, waterlogged nature of the underlying strata. This was caused by a combination of factors such as the adverse weather conditions, the location of this particular house plot (at the base of a gentle

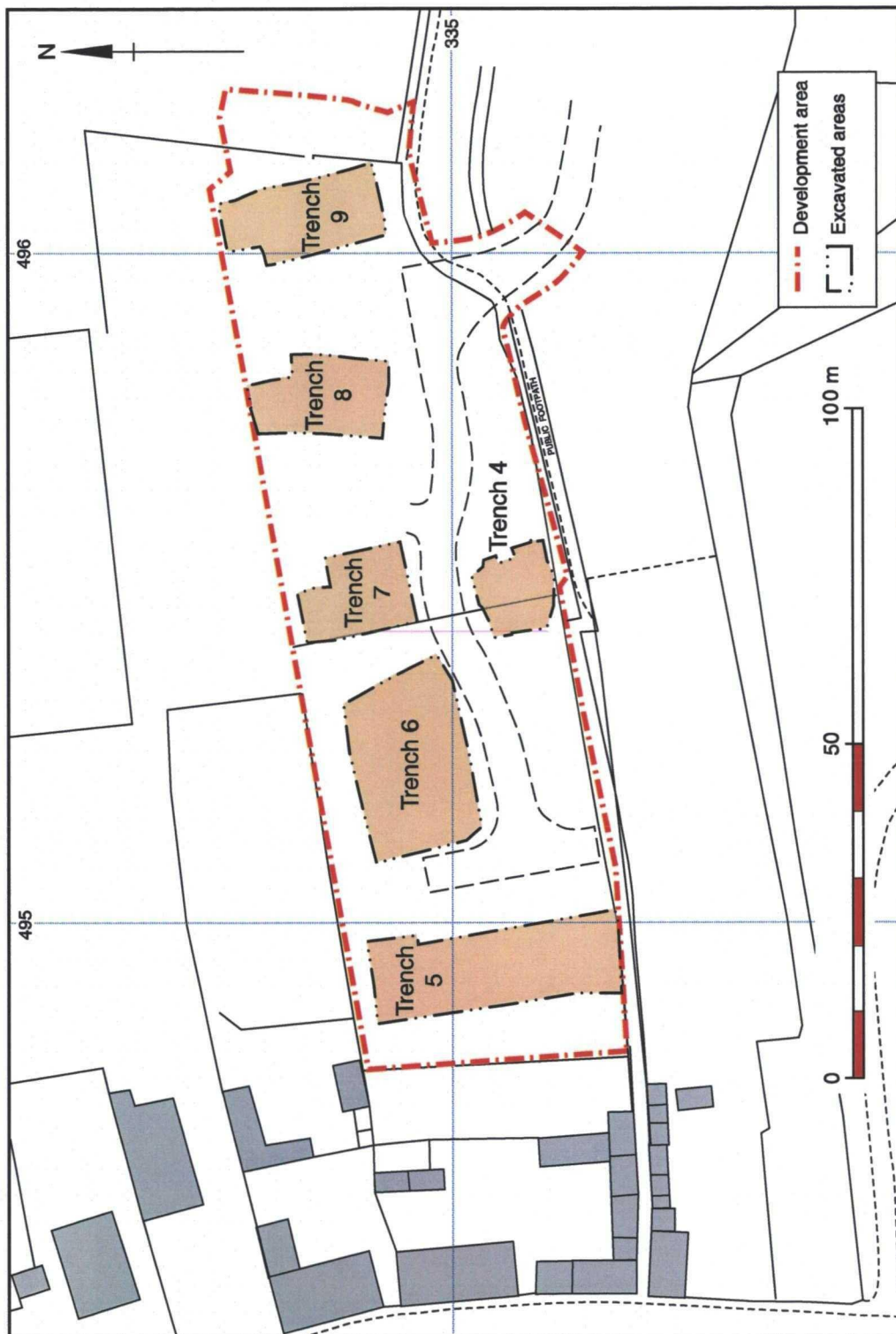


Fig. 2: Trench location plan

slope), the truncation of several 'live' heavily silted ceramic land drains and a localised high water table.

Areas 5 to 8 (Fig. 2), employed a strip foundation and were observed and recorded by means of an archaeological watching brief. The strip foundation was much less destructive than the foundation type used in Areas 4 and 9, and entailed the removal of the topsoil to a level whereby the underlying strata were 'clean' and free of vegetation. This resulted in large areas where the depth of the foundations failed to penetrate an extensive subsoil deposit which concealed the majority of the archaeological features. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were cleaned and recorded in situ before the excavation of the foundation trenches commenced. When the excavation of the strip trenches was completed the archaeological features observed in the resultant sections were also cleaned and recorded. The observed features and deposits have been grouped and discussed on a period by period basis in the following text.

All of the ground-works were carried out by a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. Archaeological deposits and features were recorded as drawn plans at a scale of 1:20, sections at a scale of 1:10, and described using pro-forma context recording sheets. A series of 35mm colour print, slide and digital photographs was taken.

The artefacts and site records are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust prior to deposition with the Yorkshire Museum under their accession code YORYM: 2002.448

5. THE EXCAVATION

AREA 4

(House plots 18 - 19)

5.1 Introduction

Area 4 measured c. 13.4m (north -south) x 12m and was machine-excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m BGL or c. 8.66m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). The archaeological features in Area 4 were initially investigated by means of slots cut through them and contexts were numbered separately in each section. When it was ascertained that a deep, rafted foundation and total hand excavation was necessary, these deposits and features (where observed to be continuous between the slots) were equated to each other and are shown below as follows 4001 = 4010 = 4013.

5.2 Natural

Natural subsoil (4012) was observed at 9.8m AOD and consisted of mixed plastic to stiff, grey tinged light orange brown clays and silt clays, up to 0.7m thick. Beneath these silt clays was a coarse gravel of water-rounded creamy yellow limestone pebbles in a matrix of intermixed patches and / or lenses of a fine to coarse grained mid yellow orange sand with very occasional small to medium angular limestone fragments, very soft decayed sandstone flecks and occasional manganese flecks. The majority of the contexts described below were cut into the top of natural subsoil at, unless otherwise stated, c. 9.8m AOD

Neolithic (c. 4000 – 2500 BC)

Contexts in 5.3 – 5.7, largely cut features in the northern half of the trench are thought to be Neolithic as they are taken to either pre-date or be contemporary with the large late Neolithic or early Bronze Age post-pits described in 5.8 below, one of which is dated by radiocarbon c.2870 – 2570 BC. There were no undated and presumed prehistoric features which are stratigraphically later than the post-pits and so these pits have been placed at the end of the Neolithic sequence.

5.3 Features Cut Into Natural – the Earliest Neolithic Phase

Two ditches are thought to be amongst the earliest features on the site as they cut natural and pre-date all other features. A number of other undated features also cut natural and are included in this phase. There were also features cutting natural which are thought to be later than this phase as they appear belong to groups of features some of whose members are stratigraphically later than those described below.

5.3.1 Ditches cut into natural (Fig. 3)

Ditch Cut 4095 (Fig. 4, Section B; Pl. 1).

Ditch 4095 extended beyond both the east and west limits of excavation, was in excess of 13m in length and aligned north-west / south-east. The north-east and south-west sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat uneven base. Due to being heavily truncated elsewhere, 4095 was only fully excavated in the north-west corner of Area 4 where it proved to be 1.46m wide and up to 0.5m in depth.

The primary fill of 4095 was a compact, mid- to dark yellow brown sandy silt clay with inclusions of moderate small to medium pebbles, occasional small angular limestone flecks and charcoal flecks (4094 = 4108). Fill 4094 was, on the whole, homogenous in nature and lacking in the thin silt / sand lenses often associated with the gradual accumulation of material in the base of a drainage and / or boundary ditch.

Context 4094 (= 4108) was sealed by 4106 which was restricted to the extreme north-west extent of the cut. Context 4106 was a compact, orange brown mottled, dark brown

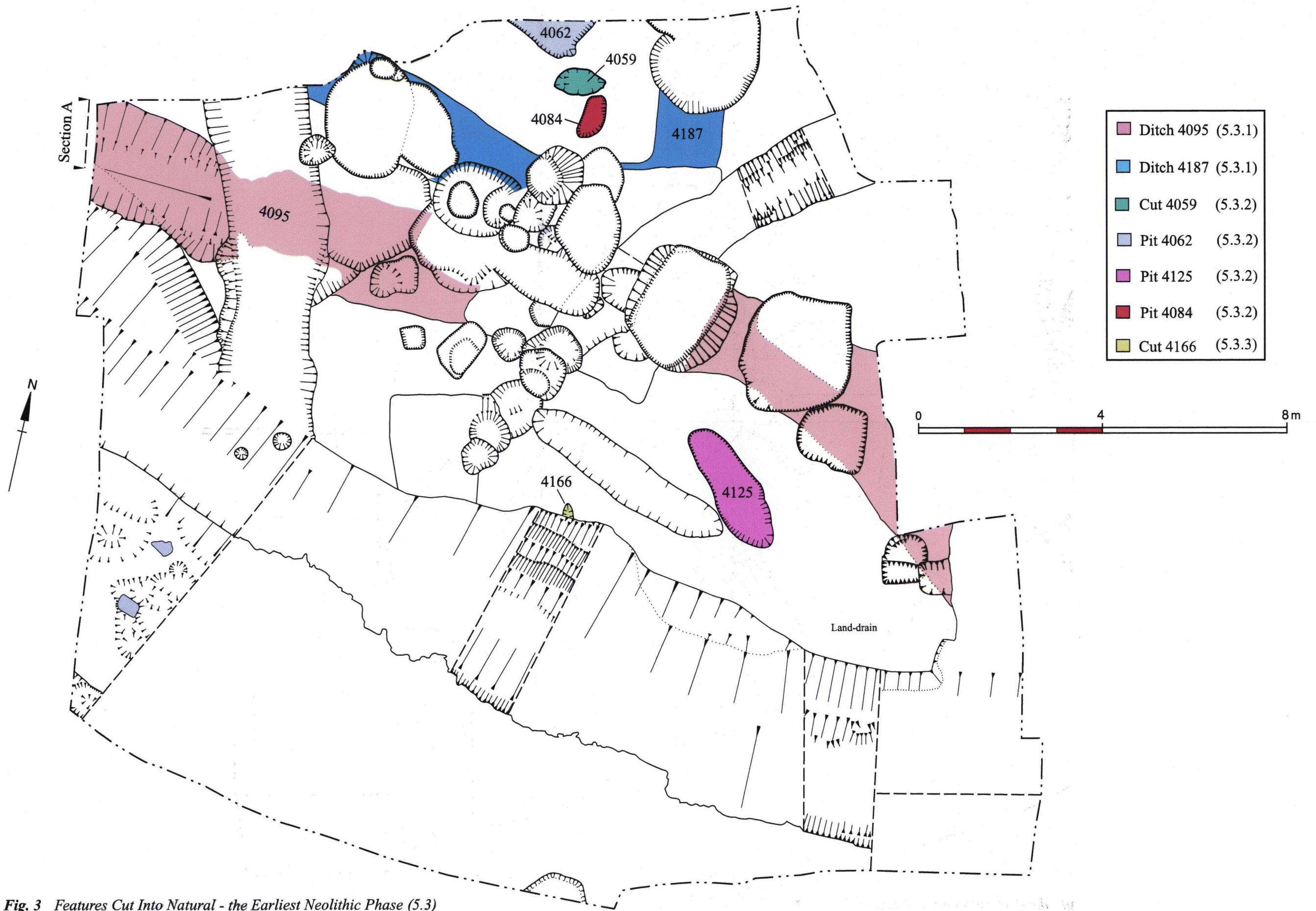


Fig. 3 Features Cut Into Natural - the Earliest Neolithic Phase (5.3)

silty clay with frequent limestone flecks, small limestone pebbles, moderate 'pea' grit and occasional charcoal flecks, up to 0.37m thick. The noticeable absence of slumped material down the sides of the ditch suggested that, if a drainage and / or boundary ditch, it was kept scrupulously clean before being backfilled in one concerted effort.

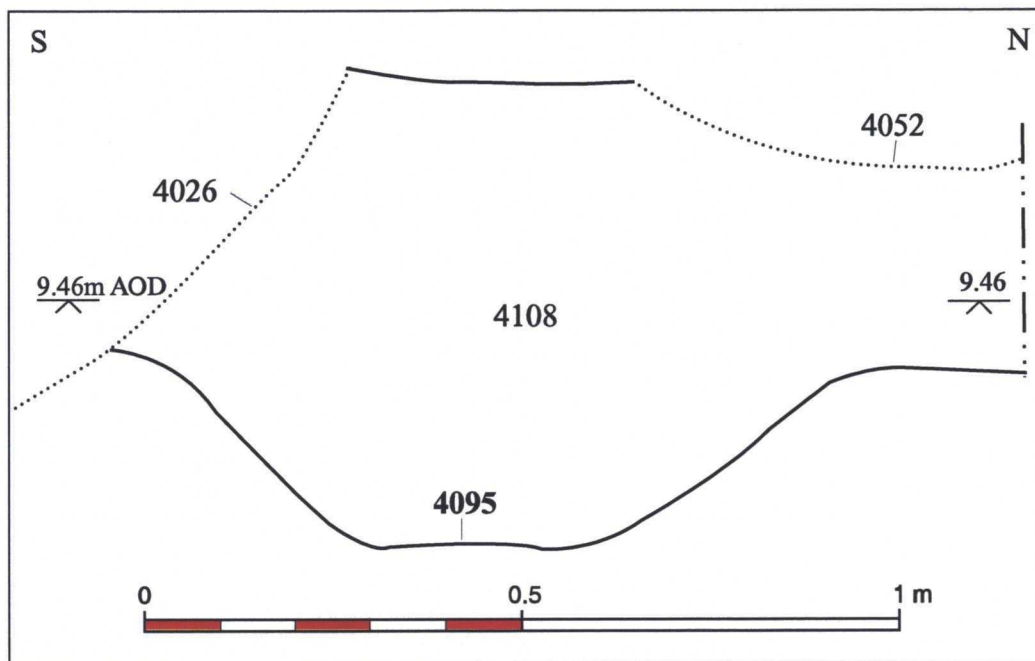


Fig. 4: Section A, east facing, Ditch 4095 (5.3.1)

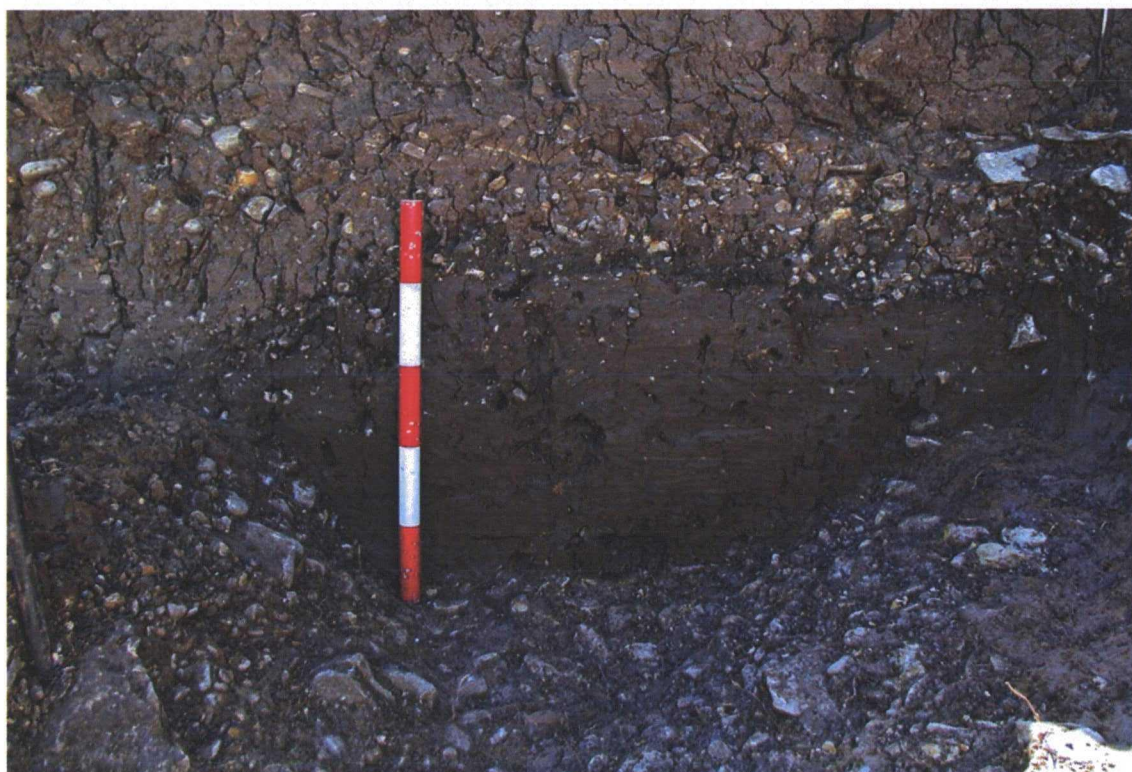


Plate 1: Ditch cut 4111, looking west (0.5m scale)

Deposit 4143

Deposit 4143 consisted of several patches of re-deposited natural, a compact, mid-brown, slightly sandy clay with moderate small pebbles and occasional limestone flecks, up to 0.8m wide, which extended over a distance of 3.8m along the northern edge of Ditch 4095 (= 4111). This deposit may have formed the upper fill of 4095 or was a deposit which had been cut by 4095.

Ditch Cut 4187

Cut 4187, located c. 1m from the north-east corner of Area 4, was not excavated, but appeared to be an L-shaped ditch, 1.1m wide. On its longest axis it was aligned east - west and ran for a distance of 5m before turning, at its eastern end, to run for 2.6m towards the north. Its fill was a stiff, light yellowish brown sand silt clay with occasional small to medium angular limestone fragments (4181).

5.3.2 Other features cut into natural – on north side of Area 4 (Fig. 3)

Pit Cut 4062

Cut 4062 was located 2.8m west of the north – eastern corner of Area 4 and extended beyond the northern limit of excavation. The cut was probably rectilinear in plan and aligned north-west / south-east. It was 0.33m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall very steeply to a flat base. The 0.08m thick basal fill (4061) was a friable, dark greyish brown slightly clay loam with moderate charcoal flecks and occasional small limestone fragments. It was sealed by 4060 which was a 0.25m thick deposit of compact, mid-brown, slightly loamy clay with occasional light red burnt clay patches, small limestone fragments and charcoal flecks. The burnt inclusions observed in 4060 and 4061 suggested that the cut had been excavated, or subsequently used, for the disposal of burnt waste.

Pit / Post-hole Cut 4059

Cut 4059 immediately south of 4062 was oval in plan and aligned east - west. It was a 0.7m long, 0.36m wide and 0.18m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface, to fall gently or steeply, to a flat base. Its backfill, a firm mid-brown slightly loamy clay with frequent flecks to small fragments of limestone and occasional charcoal flecks (4058) produced three scraps of unidentifiable pottery.

Pit / Post-hole Cut 4084

Cut 4084 was located 0.7m to the south of Pit 4062. It was rectilinear in plan, aligned north - south, and was 0.6m long, 0.3m wide and up to 0.14m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface before falling vertically (with the exception of the southern edge which fell gently) to an uneven base. Its backfill was a compact, orange brown clay mottled, dark brown to black clay with frequent charcoal flecks and occasional flecks to small limestone fragments (4082). This deposit had similarities with the fill of Pit 4062 (see above) which suggested that the features were functionally related.

5.3.3. Other features cut into natural – on south side of Area 4

Pit Cut 4125

Cut 4125 was located 5.7m to the north-west of the south-east corner of the excavated area. It was oval in plan, aligned north-west / south-east, and measured 1.84m long, 0.68m wide and 0.39m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. Its backfill was a compact, mixed, mid-brownish grey slightly sandy clay with occasional small limestone fragments (4124).

Post-hole Cut 4166

Cut 4166 was near the centre of Area 4 and was cut by the northern edge of clearance cut 4109 (5.9.3). It was a small north – south aligned post-hole, oval in plan, which was 0.32m long, 0.21m wide and 0.05m deep. Its backfill consisted of a compact whitish grey sand with moderate limestone flecks (4165).

5.4 First Group of Features Cut into the Earliest Neolithic Phase

Described below are a group of features which cut one or both of the ditches in 5.3.

5.4.1 Features north of the centre of Area 4 (Fig. 5)

Cut 4132

Cut 4132 was of an indeterminate shape in plan, due to being badly truncated to the north, west and east, and had only survived as a feature 0.64m long and 0.21m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall gently to a flat base. Its backfill, a compact plastic mixed blue grey and orange silty clay with occasional orange blue sand patches, small limestone fragments and charcoal flecks (4121) bore similarities with the fill (4140) of Cut 4141 (below) and suggested that these features were contemporary in date.

Post-hole 4176

Post-hole 4176 was located 0.5m to the north-west of 4152. It was aligned east-west, rectangular in plan, and 0.64m long, 0.48m wide and up to 0.33m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a 0.2m wide, flat step, before continuing to fall vertically, for a further 0.14m, to a flat base. The backfill, a compact, mid greyish brown, sandy slightly loamy clay with occasional charcoal flecks (4175) also had inclusions of moderate flecks to small fragments of limestone, concentrated in a depression within the base of the cut, which were either a collapsed packing or, more likely, a deliberately formed post pad.

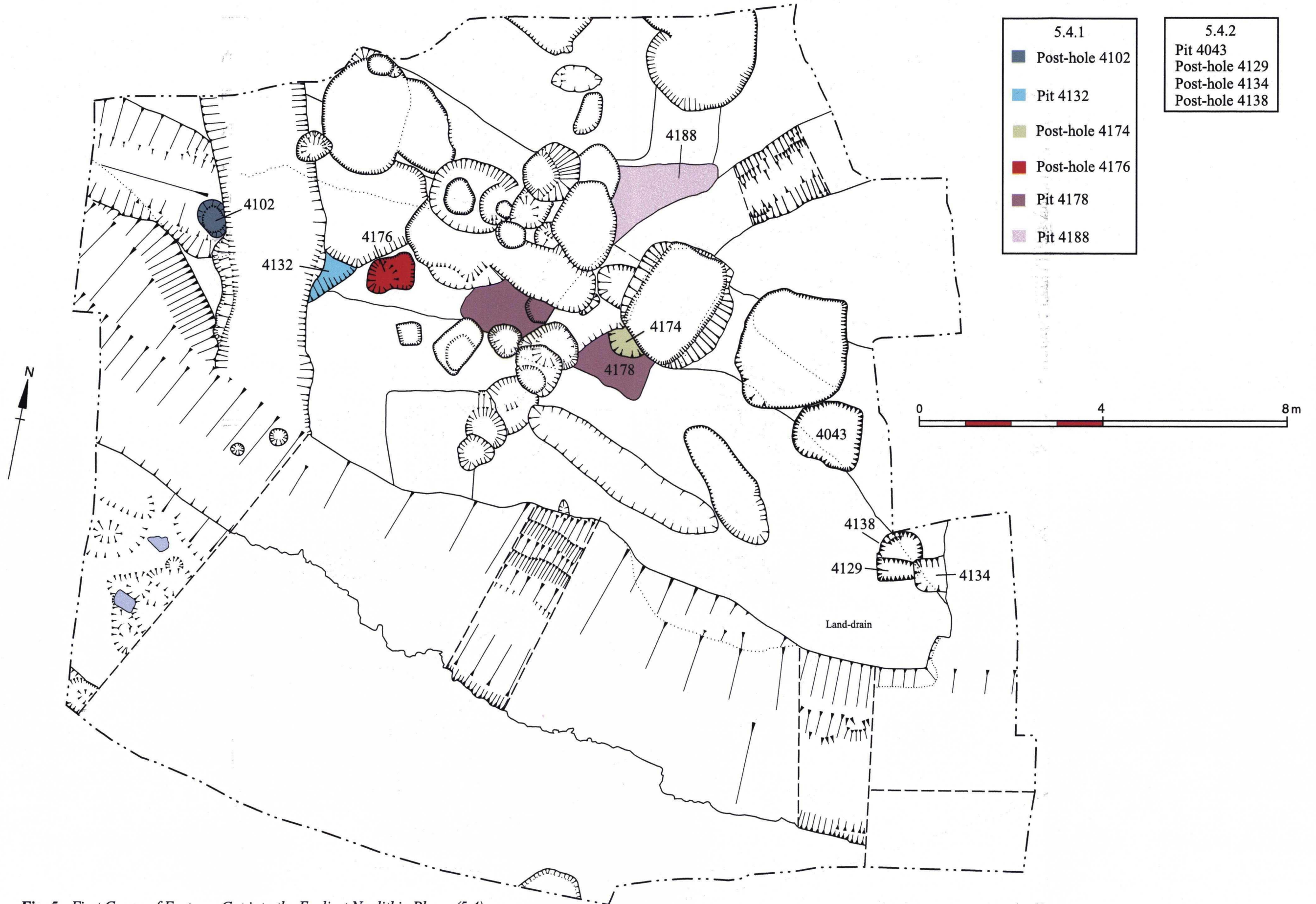


Fig. 5 First Group of Features Cut into the Earliest Neolithic Phase (5.4)

Pit Cut 4178

Pit 4178 was located near the centre of Area 4 and was rectilinear in plan, aligned north west / south east, 2.72m in length, and was originally in excess of 0.6m wide, but had most of its fill removed by later features. The feature was unexcavated, but its fill was a compact mixed, mid brownish grey sandy clay with occasional limestone flecks (4177)

Post-hole Cut 4174

Post-hole 4174 had been cut in to the top of the fill (4177) of Pit 4178. It had survived as the southern quadrant of a probable post hole that originally would have been oval in plan, measured some 0.54m west north west, over 0.4m north – south, and up to 0.29m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, almost vertically, to a flat base. Its backfill was a compact, mid-brown slightly loamy sandy clay with occasional small patches of mid orange sand and small limestone fragments (4173)

Pit Cut 4188

Pit 4188 was cut at the point where Ditch 4187 turned at 90° and it would have originally been much larger except for the fact that later features had, with the exception of the north-east corner, removed the majority of it. It was, however, possible to ascertain that 4188 had been rectangular in plan, was aligned east - west and had been some 1.46m in length and up to 1m wide. Fill 4182 remained unexcavated, it was a stiff, light to mid grey brown sandy clay with occasional small pebbles and very occasional charcoal flecks.

Post-hole 4102

Cut 4102 was located in the north west corner of the excavated area and had cut the fill (4108) of Ditch 4095. Cut 4102 was rectilinear in plan, aligned north north-west / south south east, and was 1m in length, 0.68m wide and 0.35m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall gently, then vertically, to a flat base. Its backfill was a compact, orange yellow mottled, mid to dark grey brown silt clay with occasional small limestone fragments (4091)

5.4.2 Features in the south-east corner of Area 4 (Fig 5)

A cluster of three inter-cutting post holes (4129, 4134, 4138) and a pit (4043) were observed in the south east corner of Area 4 which had cut the fill (4094) of Ditch 4095

Post-hole Cut 4138

The earliest post-hole of the group was 4138. It was sub circular in plan, 0.8m long, 0.38m wide and 0.27m deep with much of its south side removed by tree root damage. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. The backfill was a mixed, compact mid brown and grey slightly loamy clay with occasional small limestone fragments and charcoal flecks (4137)

Post-hole Cut 4134

4138 was cut, to the south east by 4134. It proved to be rectilinear in plan, aligned east west and measured c 0.42m north - south, c 0.4m east west and up to 0.3m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. Its backfill, a compact, mixed, mid brown and yellow clay with occasional grey clay lenses (4133).

Post-hole Cut 4129

4134 was cut by 4129 which was rectilinear in plan, aligned east west, and measured 0.54m long, up to 0.32m wide and 0.33m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. The backfill was a compact, mixed mid and dark brown sandy clay (4128) which was sealed by Deposit 4010 (5.12).

Pit Cut 4043

Cut 4043 was located immediately to the south-east of Post pit 4041 (5.8) and 1m to the north west of Post hole 4129. Cut 4043 was rectilinear in plan, aligned east west, and measured 0.94m long, 0.9m wide and up to 0.36m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall steeply / vertically to a gently rounded, uneven base. Its backfill was a stiff, orange mottled, mid-grey brown slightly sandy silt clay with frequent decayed limestone flecks, occasional charcoal flecks and small to large limestone fragments (4042).

5.5 Second Group of Features Cut Into the Earliest Neolithic Phase (Fig. 6)

Described below are four features either cut into Ditch 4095 and into 4178 and 4188 (see 5.4.1), or into natural which are on a roughly east west alignment and thought to be associated with one another.

Post-hole 4152

A probable post hole (4152) was located cut into natural immediately south of Ditch 4095. It was square in plan, aligned east west, had sides 0.3m long and was 0.28m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall steeply, almost vertically, to a flat base. The backfill was a compact, light to mid brown loamy clay with occasional limestone flecks (4151).

Post-hole 4098

Cut 4098 was located 0.76m to the east of 4152. It was rectilinear in plan, aligned north east / south west, and was 0.72m long, 0.46m wide and up to 0.32m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically, for 0.09m, to a flat base. The south west corner of the base contained a vertical sided depression, 0.48m long, 0.34m wide and 0.23m deep. This depression was partially filled with a disturbed post-pad of large limestone fragments in a matrix of a mixed, stiff, orange brown and black sandy clay with occasional small decayed limestone fragments and charcoal flecks (4097), up to 0.14m thick.

Above 4097 was a 0.18m thick, mixed deposit of a stiff, mid-brown / black / orange slightly sandy clay with moderate small to medium decayed limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks (4096) which was used to backfill the void remaining after the rotting or removal of the post that the cut had originally contained. The limestone fragments within 4096 were most likely the remains of a collapsed post packing. A small sherd of 13th century pottery was recovered from the surface of 4096 but is thought intrusive.

Post-hole Cut 4167

Cut 4167 was located 0.08m to the east of 4098. It was oval in plan and 0.44m long, 0.44m wide, and up to 0.26m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. The backfill was a compact, pale grey marbled, orange yellow sandy clay with moderate decayed limestone flecks, occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks (4163).

Post-hole Cut 4141

Cut 4141 was located 0.20m to the north east of 4167 and had much of its northern edge and fill removed by later activity. Cut 4141 appeared to have been oval in plan and was 0.44m long, 0.34m wide and up to 0.2m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically to a flat base. Its backfill was a compact mid grey and orange sandy clay with occasional flecks to small limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks (4140).

5.6 Ditch Cut 4035 and Associated Post-hole Alignment (Fig 6)

Described below a ditch running north east /south west with a series of probable post holes continuing the alignment to the south west.

5.6.1 Ditch Cut 4035 (Fig 6, Fig 7, Section A)

Cuts 4174 and 4188 (5.4.1) were cut by a ditch (4035) which emerged from the eastern limit of Area 4 at a point some 1.6m south of the north east corner before continuing for a distance of 4.6m towards the south west, where a rounded shallow terminus was formed.

Ditch 4035 proved to be 1m wide and 0.7m deep with sides that broke gently from the surface to fall steeply and irregularly to a base gently rounded in profile. The primary fill of 4035 consisted of an up to 0.2m thick mixed deposit, probably water lam, of a compact, plastic mid orange brown slightly silty clay with occasional small patches of light orange brown clay and blue grey sand silt (4038). This decreased in thickness, to 0.11m, as the centre of the ditch base was approached. Directly above this was further build-up deposit consisting of a 0.03m thick, compact, light creamy grey sand silt (4037) also probably water lam, perhaps in a single episode of flooding.



Fig. 6 Second Group of Features Cut into the Earliest Neolithic Phase (5.5 and 5.6)

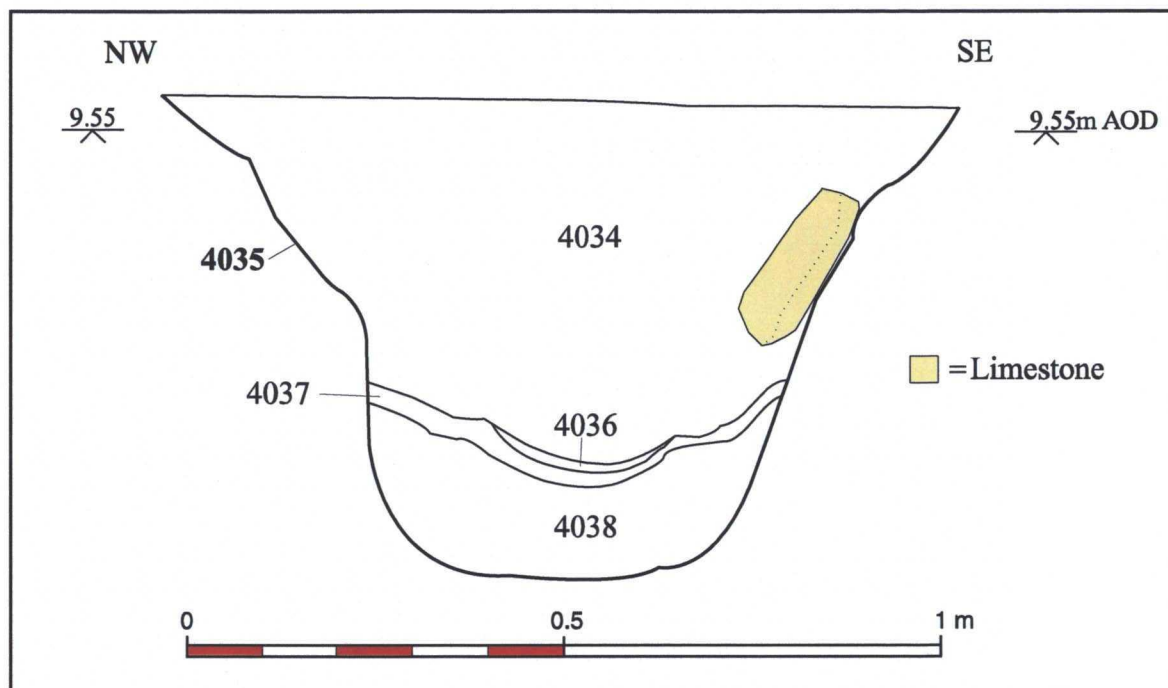


Fig. 7: Section B, south-west facing, Ditch 4035 (5.6.1)

Deposit 4037 was sealed by a further 0.02m thick build-up deposit of a plastic mid-blue silt clay with moderate charcoal flecks (4036), which represented a further accumulation of water lain silts. Above this was an up to 0.47m thick deposit of a compact, plastic, mid-orange brown silt clay with patches of clean mid-orange clay sand silt and a mid-blue grey clay sand silt with occasional flecks to small limestone fragments, occasional large limestone fragments, charcoal flecks and a small burnt clay fragment (4034). Deposit 4034 was used to backfill / level the ditch at the end of its use.

5.6.2 Post-hole Alignment Extending Ditch 4035 (Fig. 6; Pl. 2)

Post-hole cut 4150 was the first of a series of five intercutting post-holes which had effectively extended the alignment of ditch cut 4035 by approximately 2.34m towards the south-west. This alignment may have extended further towards the south-west but had been completely removed by later activity.

Post-hole 4150

Cut 4150 was cut into the rounded south-west terminal of Ditch 4035. It was rectilinear in plan, and measured 0.66m north-west / south-east, 0.72m north-east / south-west and was 0.33m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall steeply, almost vertically to a gently rounded base. Its backfill, a compact, stiff, yellow marbled pale grey brown clay with moderate decayed limestone flecks, small limestone fragments and charcoal flecks (4149) was truncated to the south by Cut 4142.



Plate 2: Post alignment extending Ditch 4035 (0.2 and 0.5m scales)

Post-hole 4142

Cut 4142 was located immediately to the south-west of and was cut into 4150 (above). It was sub-circular in plan and had survived as a feature measuring 0.64m north - south, 0.62m east - west and up to 0.27m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically / steeply in a series of irregular steps, to a gently rounded base. Within the base were two distinct sub-circular depressions; the deepest of these was located against the base of the south-western edge of the cut and was up to 0.4m diameter and 0.04m deep. The other was located against the base of the north-eastern edge and was only 0.03m in depth and up to 0.3m diameter. The backfill of 4142 was a compact, yellow marbled, mid- brownish grey gritty, silt clay with moderate small to large limestone fragments, occasional small to medium pebbles and charcoal flecks (4131). The limestone inclusions in 4131 were all found in the central and northern parts of the cut and appeared to have been a collapsed post - packing.

Post-hole 4156

Cut 4156 was the southernmost of this series of post-holes. It was cut into the natural subsoil (4012) and was itself cut by a modern tree extraction pit to the west. Originally 4156 was probably sub-rectangular in plan, measured 0.5m north-east / south-west, 0.4m north-west / south-east and was 0.29m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a rounded base. The backfill (4155) was a compact, stiff pale yellow brown

sandy clay, with moderate flecks to small fragments of decayed limestone, occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks.

Post-hole 4119

4156 was cut to the north by Cut 4119, a post-hole roughly key-hole shaped in plan which measured c. 0.8m north / south, 0.54m east / west and up to 0.33m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a gently rounded base. The backfill (4118) was a compact grey brown mottled pale yellow brown silt sand clay with occasional large limestone fragments and small pebbles.

Post-hole 4116

Cuts 4119 and 4142 were cut by 4116, a post-hole situated between them and the latest in the this group of post-holes. Cut 4116 was oval in plan and measured c. 0.94m north-east / south-west, 0.72m north-west / south-east and was up to 0.34m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a gently rounded base. The backfill was a compact, grey mottled, pale yellowish brown sandy clay with occasional small patches of charcoal rich pale grey silt clay, medium to large limestone fragments (some burnt), small to medium pebbles, small limestone fragments and flecks of decayed limestone (4112).

Fill 4112 also produced burnt grain, as did the fill of Post-pit 4041 (5.8 below), which may indicate that they were contemporary. This hypothesis is further reinforced by the fact that some of the limestone fragments used to form the upper course of the post-pad (4093), lining the base of 4041 were similarly heat reddened.

There was a marked variation in the type and form of the inclusions within the matrix of Fill 4112 that was not seen in the fills of Cuts 4119, 4142, 4150 and 4156. This suggested that Cut 4116 may not have functioned as a post-hole, but was, instead, a small pit used for the disposal of burnt material. However, 4116 did not appear to have been excavated for a task involving in-situ burning, such as a fire pit, as any evidence for this type of activity, e.g. the reddening and/or scorching of the sides and base of the cut, was absent.

5.6.3 Features Cut into the Fill of Ditch 4035

Post-hole Cut 4162

Cut 4162 was located 0.40m to the north-east of 4150 (5.6.2) and had been almost completely removed by a later cut (4107). The surviving eastern edge of 4162 suggested that it had originally been rectangular in plan and aligned north-east / south-west. It was 0.34m in length, and, up to the point where truncation occurred, 0.14m wide and 0.14m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, to an uneven base. The backfill was a compact, mixed, mid grey / brown loamy clay with occasional small limestone fragments (4161).

Post-hole Cut 4157

Cut 4157 was located barely 0.02m to the north-east of 4162 and the eastern half had been removed by Cut 4147 (see 5.8). The cut had been aligned east - west and was probably rectilinear in plan. What remained was 0.56m long, 0.42m wide and 0.35m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. The backfill was a compact mid-brown loamy clay with moderate chips to small fragments of limestone and charcoal flecks (4154).

5.7 Features in the North Central Part of Area 4

This group encompasses a complex of several phases of inter-cutting post-holes etc in the northern part of Area 4 which post-date the ditches in 5.3 but may in some cases be contemporary with features in 5.4-5.6.

5.7.1 First Phase of Features in North Central Part of Area 4 (Fig. 8)

Cuts 4169 and 4171

Post-hole 4171 was located c. 5.2m south-east of the north-western corner of the excavated area and had been truncated on its eastern edge by later features. Cut 4171 was originally oval in plan, was probably aligned east - west, and was up to 1m long, 0.98m wide and 0.34m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. The base of the cut contained a shallow oval depression located towards its western edge.

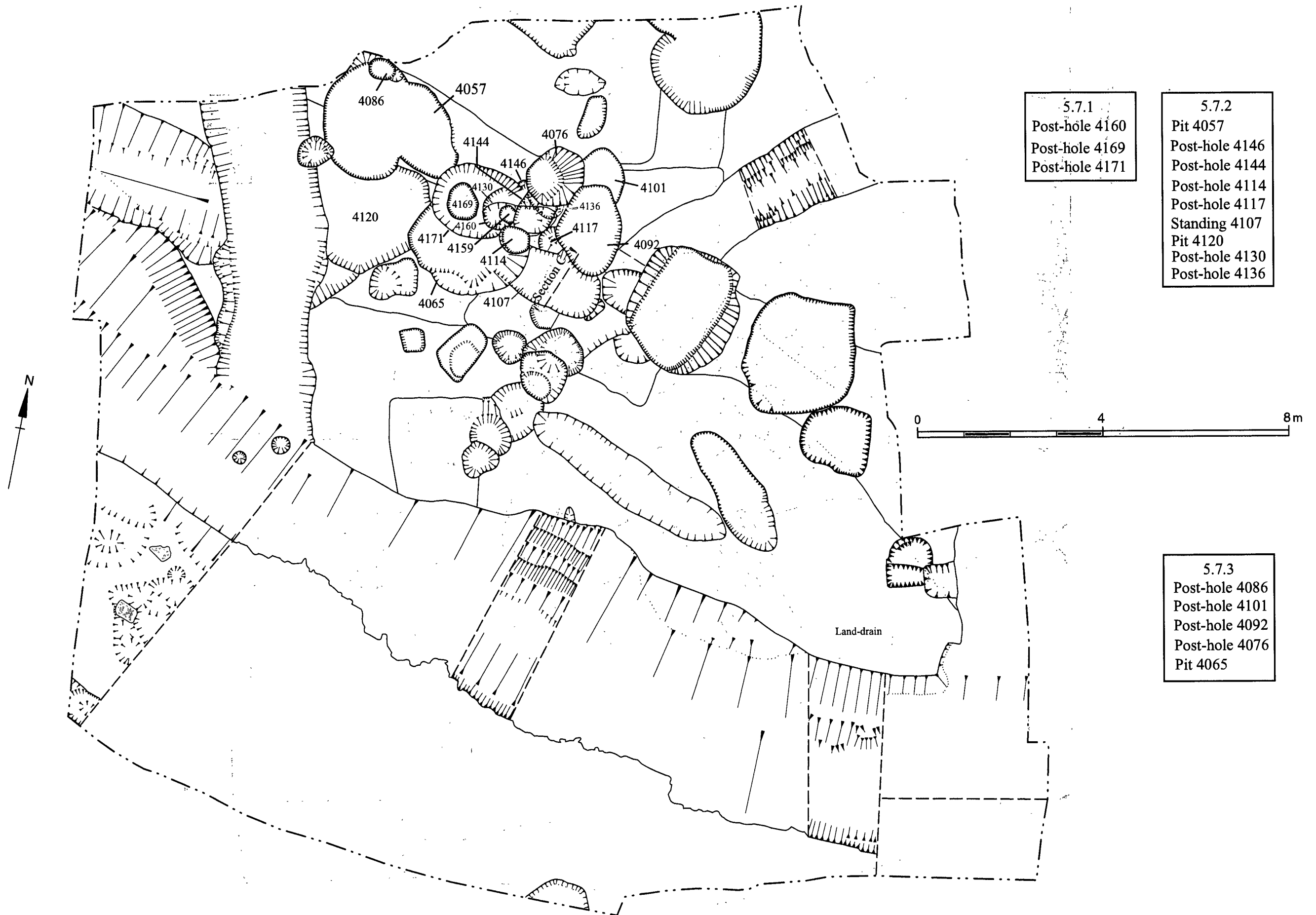
The basal fill of 4171 was a 0.15m thick deposit of a friable, mid-grey silty clay with occasional limestone pebbles (4170) which was truncated by Cut 4169. This cut was oval in plan and had sides that broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically to a stepped base with a slight depression against its western edge. Cut 4169 proved to be the result of the extraction of a post originally placed within Cut 4171. Cut 4169 and the depression in the base of 4171 suggested that the post had been c. 0.4m in diameter.

The backfill of 4169, a friable, light brown sandy silty clay with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks (4168) did not produce any material indicative of the in-situ rotting of a substantial timber and it is therefore inferred that the post was removed in antiquity.

Context 4168 was sealed by a 0.19m thick compact, dark grey brown sand silt clay with occasional limestone pebbles and charcoal flecks (4164), which had been used to fully backfill and level post-hole cut 4171 after the removal of the post.

Post-hole Cut 4160

Post-hole 4171 was truncated on its east side by Cut 4160 which was itself cut away on its eastern side by Cuts 4144 and 4146 (5.7.3). Cut 4160 appeared to have been circular in plan, up to 0.6m in diameter and 0.27m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, almost vertically, to a flat base with a centrally placed depression. This proved to be a post-pipe void (4159) which was 0.14m deep and had sides that broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a rounded pointed base. The backfill of this feature consisted of a compact, dark brown sand silt clay with occasional limestone



5.7.1
 Post-hole 4160
 Post-hole 4169
 Post-hole 4171

5.7.2
 Pit 4057
 Post-hole 4146
 Post-hole 4144
 Post-hole 4114
 Post-hole 4117
 Standing 4107
 Pit 4120
 Post-hole 4130
 Post-hole 4136

5.7.3
 Post-hole 4086
 Post-hole 4101
 Post-hole 4092
 Post-hole 4076
 Pit 4065

Fig. 8 Features in the North Central Part of Area 4.

pebbles and charcoal flecks (4158). The dark brown colouration of this deposit may be attributable to the rotted down remains of the base of the post; the size of the void suggested a timber of circa 0.2m diameter.

Context 4158 was sealed by the upper fill of 4160. This consisted of a 0.13m thick, compact, light greyish yellow brown mottled, dark brown sand silt clay with moderate small to medium pebbles, occasional large pebbles and flecks to small fragments of charcoal (4153). The relatively high proportion of pebbles in 4153 was, as seen elsewhere, most likely the signature of a collapsed and / or disturbed post-packing.

Deposit 4148

The removal of the above ground element of the post and the backfilling of post-hole cut 4160 signified the termination of the earliest phase of posts. This was proven by the fact that the upper fill of cut 4160 (4153), and the surrounding area were sealed beneath levelling deposit 4148, a 0.08m thick friable, light to dark brown slightly sandy silt clay, with occasional limestone pebbles and charcoal flecks. This extended for approximately 1.4m north-east / south-west, and up to 1.26m north-west / south-east and would have originally been even more extensive but, with the exception of its northernmost extent, it had been heavily truncated on all sides. Of the later features described below, Cuts 4057 and 4146 were stratigraphically later than 4148.

5.7.2 *Second Phase of Features in North Central Part of Area 4* (Fig. 8)

Post-pit Cut 4057

Cut 4057 was located 4.4m east of the north-west corner of the excavated area and was immediately to the north-west of Post-hole 4171. It proved to be a north-north-west / east-south-east aligned post-pit, oval in plan, some 1.3m long, 0.8m wide and 0.49m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall vertically / steeply to a flat base. Its back-fill, a mixed deposit of a compact mid-yellow brown silty clay interspersed with crumbly light to mid grey silty clay (4056), and moderate small to large limestone fragments (some burnt), occasional small burnt clay fragments and limestone pebbles, was cut to the north-west by Post-pit 4054.

Post-hole Cut 4146

Post-hole Cut 4146 was located immediately to the north-east of Post-hole 4160 and was cut into the east side of levelling deposit 4148. It was heavily truncated, but had been sub-circular in plan, c. 0.6m in diameter and 0.4m deep. The sides fell vertically to a gently rounded bowl - shaped base.

Its backfill was a compact, mid-brown sand silt clay with occasional small to medium pebbles and charcoal flecks (4145). No post-pipe was recorded but, as all the charcoal was concentrated towards the base of 4146, it is quite possible that this material was the remains of a very badly decayed or burnt timber post.

Post-hole Cut 4144

Context 4145 was cut by Post-hole 4144 which was oval in plan, aligned north-east / south-west and c.0.5m long, 0.48m wide and 0.34m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a slight step, before continuing to form a rounded uneven base. The backfill of 4144 was a compact, mid-grey brown sand silt clay with occasional small limestone pebbles, limestone flecks and charcoal flecks (4139).

Post-hole cut 4136

The fill of 4144 was cut by Post-hole 4136 which appeared to have been oval in plan, was aligned north-west / south-east, and was 0.48m long and 0.29m deep. Cut 4136 was only 0.08m wide as the majority of the north-east side had been removed by later activity. Its backfill (4135), was a compact, light to mid-greyish brown, sand silt clay with occasional limestone pebbles and charcoal flecks.

Post-hole cut 4130

Post-hole 4136 was truncated by Cut 4130 which itself had most of its southern and south-western edges removed by later activity. Originally 4130 had been oval in plan, aligned east - west c. 0.98m long, over 0.4m wide and 0.14m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base.

The basal fill of 4130 consisted of a 0.1m thick, compact, light grey mottled, mid orange brown sand silt clay (4127). This was sealed by a 0.04m thick upper fill of a compact, light yellow brown mottled, mid brown, sand silt clay with occasional limestone pebbles (4126).

Post-hole Cuts 4114 and 4117

The upper fill of 4130 (4126), was cut by Post-hole 4114 to the south and, to the south-east, by Post-hole 4117. Post-hole 4114 was oval in plan, aligned north-east / south-west, and was 0.44m in diameter and 0.55m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically to a flat base. Its backfill was a firm, mid-grey brown silt clay with a single large pebble, occasional small pebbles and flecks to small fragments of charcoal (4113).

Cut 4117 had been cut away on the north, east and south sides by later intrusions. It would originally have been sub-circular in plan, c.1.0m in diameter and up to 0.28m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, to an uneven base which fell gently towards the north. Cut 4117 contained a backfill of a compact light brown mottled, light greyish tinged, dark brown silt clay with occasional small limestone pebbles (4115).

Feature 4107 (Fig. 9, Section C)

4114 and 4117 were cut by 4107 which had originally been oval in plan, aligned north-west / south-east and was 1.5m long, up to 0.8m wide and 0.34m deep. The sides broke gently from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. Directly above this was a 0.22m thick

primary fill consisting of a highly compacted, mid brownish grey silt clay with very occasional burnt clay flecks, occasional limestone and charcoal flecks (4104). This was sealed by a 0.12m thick deposit (4103) which formed the matrix into which frequent small pebbles and, to a lesser degree, small limestone fragments had been rammed to form a stable surface for a ground level standing or post-pad. Cut 4107 was truncated to the north-west by 4065 and to the north-east, by 4092 (see below 5.7.4).

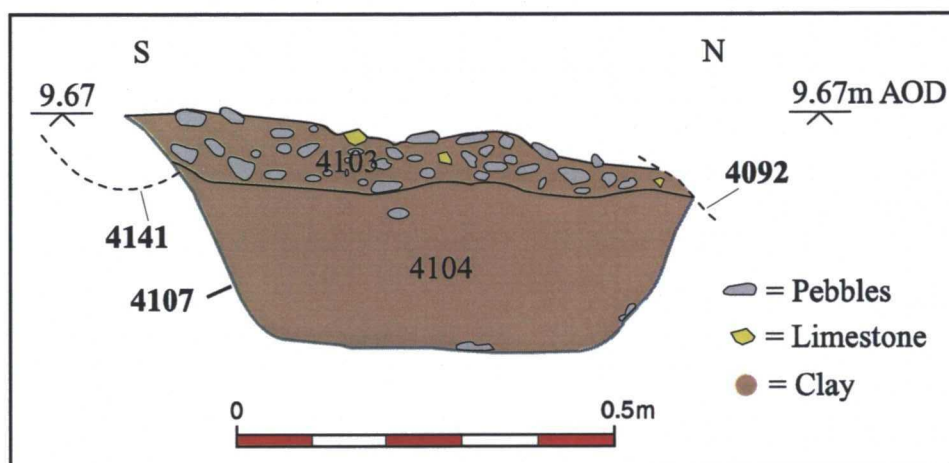


Fig. 9: Section C, East facing section of Standing 4107 (5.7.2)

Pit Cut 4120

The majority of Cut 4132 and its fill (5.5) were removed by Cut 4120, a feature irregular in plan, which was some 1.8m in diameter, and up to 0.22m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat irregular base. Both the shape of the Cut and its backfill, a stiff, mixed grey and orange silty clay (4105), with abundant roots / rootlets suggested that 4120 was a tree extraction pit rather than a deliberately formed feature.

The backfilling of Cuts 4107 and 4120 preceded a third phase of post-hole digging. This was differentiated from the preceding phases by the use of large limestone fragments as post-packing.

5.7.3 Third Phase of Features in North Central Part of Area 4 (Fig. 8)

Post-hole 4086

Post-hole cut 4086 was stratigraphically above Ditch 4187 (see 5.3). It was oval in plan, aligned east - west, and was 0.38m long, 0.28m wide and 0.26m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically to a flat base. A shallow, post impression, 0.26m in diameter, was located against the eastern edge of the base. The fill of 4086 was a plastic, grey tinged, light to mid brown silty clay with occasional medium to large limestone fragments (up to 0.44m x 0.15m), small pebbles and charcoal flecks (4085). The large limestone fragments within in 4085 were concentrated around the central area of the cut and were most likely the remnants of a collapsed post packing. The feature was subsequently truncated by Post-pit 4054 (5.8).

Post-hole 4101

Post-hole 4101 was located 1.2m north-east of 4107 (5.7.3). It was oval in plan, aligned north-south and was up to 0.7m long, 0.54m wide and 0.5m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically to a flat base. The base of the cut contained a collapsed post-packing existing as a 0.13m thick jumble of medium to large limestone fragments tightly packed in a matrix of mid grey clay silt with occasional small limestone fragments (4100; Pl. 3). Directly above this was a 0.37m thick deposit (4099) of a compact, grey tinged, mid orange brown silt clay with occasional charcoal, burnt clay and limestone flecks that was used to backfill and level 4101 after the post was removed.



Plate 3: Collapsed packing/post pad 4100, looking NE (0.2m scale)

Post-hole Cut 4092

Cuts 4107 (5.7.3) and 4101 were truncated by Cut 4092. This was oval in plan, aligned north - south and was up to 1.2m long, 0.9m wide and 0.48m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat base. Directly above this was a post-packing of jumbled, large limestone fragments in a matrix of a plastic, light greyish brown clay silt with occasional limestone flecks and frequent charcoal flecks (4088; Pls 4-5). This was located around the internal edge of the cut and, when a horizontal fragment of collapsed packing was removed at surface level, a 0.3m deep post-pipe void of approximately 0.3m diameter was revealed. The collapsed fragment of limestone had effectively sealed the void beneath and subsequently prevented the ingress of silt after the post was deliberately removed.



Plate 4: *Post packing 4088 looking East, capping stone beneath
0.2m scale. (0.2 and 0.5m scales)*



Plate 5: *Post packing 4088 showing post void after removal of capstone
(0.2 and 0.5m scales)*
Post-hole Cut 4076

The upper fill of 4092 (4087), was cut on its north-west by Post-hole 4076. This was sub-circular in plan, 0.8m in diameter and 0.77m deep with sides that broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, vertical in the west, to a flat base. Directly above this was a 0.32m thick post-pipe fill (4078), consisting of a very compact, orange clay spotted, mid grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. This was sealed by a 0.45m thick backfill / levelling deposit of compact, orange flecked, mid grey brown slightly silty clay with frequent limestone and charcoal flecks, occasional medium limestone fragments and occasional orange red burnt clay flecks (4075). The size of the post-pipe suggested that a post 0.33m in diameter had originally stood in Cut 4076; this was subsequently removed in antiquity.

Pit Cut 4065

Cut 4065 was stratigraphically above Contexts 4103 and 4105 (5.5.3) and was located immediately to the west of 4107 (5.7.3). It proved to be a shallow pit oval in plan, aligned north-west / south-east, c.1.54m long, 1.2m wide and up to 0.33m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply or vertically (north-west side) to a flat uneven base.

The back-fill of 4065 consisted of a compact, grey tinged, mid brown sand silt clay with moderate medium to large limestone fragments, occasional limestone pebbles, charcoal and burnt clay / daub flecks (4064). It produced a Late Mesolithic flint core rejuvenation flake (sf37). Cut 4065 may in view of the large amount of stone and pebbles in fill 4064 have been a post-pit for which this material was packing.

5.8 Post-pit Alignment (Fig. 10)

Described below are four large pits which are thought to have originally held posts. They are thought to be contemporary because of their stratigraphic position in that they are not cut by any other features and their similarity of form and size. In addition, 4041, 4054 and 4147 are on a linear north-west / south-east alignment following and cut into that of Ditch 4095 (5.3). Furthermore 4041 and 4147 produced burnt cereal grains whilst 4039 and 4054 also produced burnt material. The pits are dated to the Late Neolithic or early Bronze Age because a sample of burnt cereal grain from 4041 gave a radiocarbon date of c. 2870 – 2570 BC.

Post-pit 4041

Post-pit 4041 was located 0.4m to the west of the eastern limit of excavation. It was rectilinear in plan aligned north - south and was 1.62m north - south, 1.5m east - west and up to 0.67m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply or vertically to a flat irregular base.

On the base was a substantial, 0.26m thick, post-pad of thin, horizontally laid, irregular shaped Magnesian Limestone slabs (4093; Fig. 11, Section D; Pls 6-7), bonded with a soft, plastic mid brown clay. The bonding material contained moderate amounts of

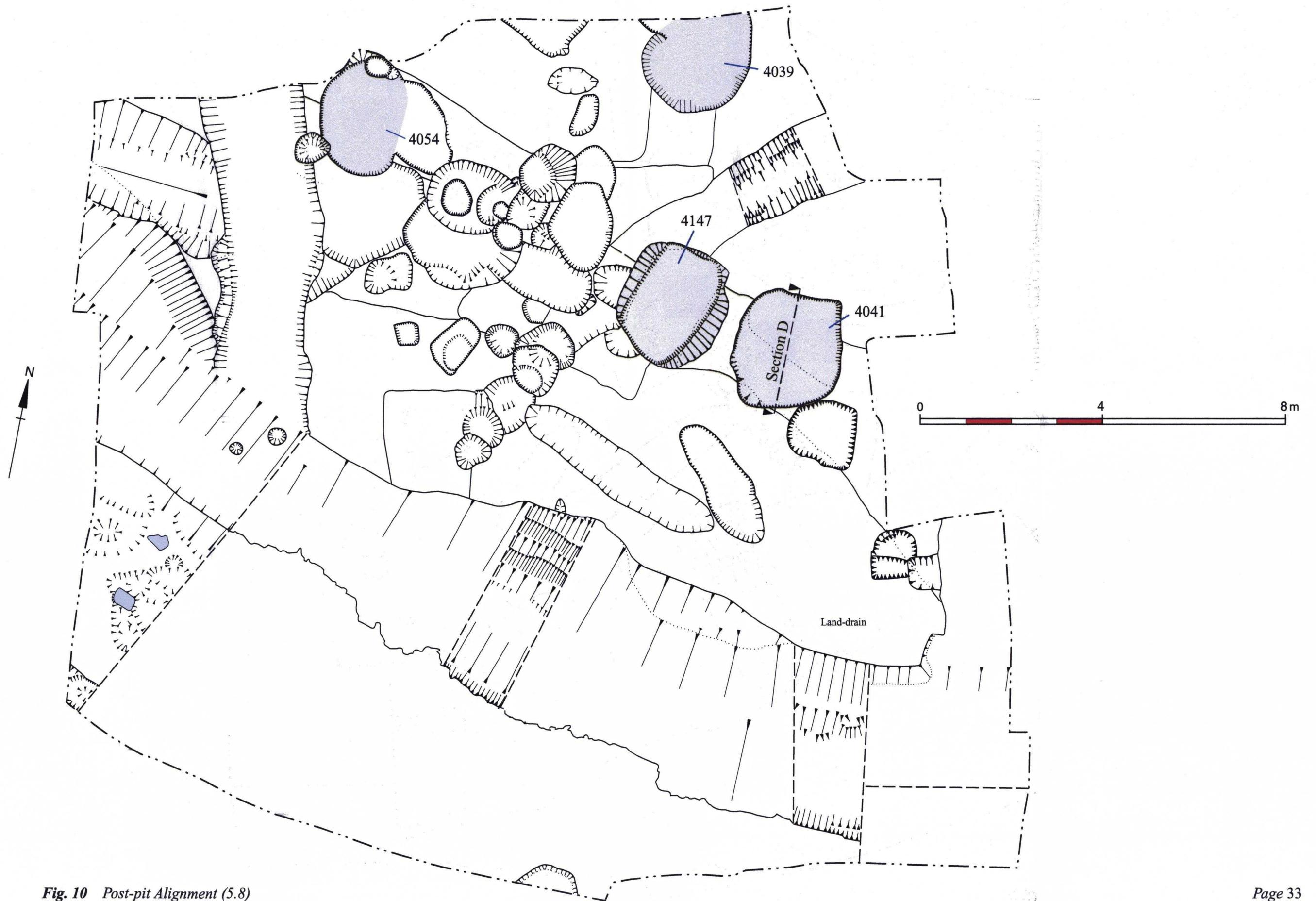


Fig. 10 Post-pit Alignment (5.8)



Plate 6: Post pad 4093, looking West (0.2m scale)



Plate 7: East facing section (D), post pit 4041(0.2m scale)

charred cereal grains and occasional small pebbles. Post-pad 4093 was, in turn, sealed by a 0.41m thick levelling / backfill deposit (4040) of jumbled, small to large limestone fragments (45%), in a matrix of a stiff, pale grey brown sand spotted, grey mottled, pale orange yellow silt clay. This contained occasional clay flecks, 'pot boilers', burnt clay flecks, flecks to small limestone fragments and, both singly and in concentrated patches, charred cereal grains. The majority of the stone fragments within 4040 was concentrated towards the northern side of the cut (where they were in direct contact with post-pad 4093), and are thought to be the remnants of a collapsed post packing. This suggests that the post originally held in the cut 4041 had either rotted or, more likely, had been removed in antiquity.

Deposit 4040 produced a fragment of a Late Mesolithic flint tool, in the form of thin triangular splinter (sf38), and two sherds of abraded Roman pottery from the very top of it where a slump hollow may have been formed by the subsidence and compaction of the underlying fills. A sample of the burnt cereal grain was submitted for C14 dating (4040, sample 06). This returned a 2 Sigma calibrated result of 95% probability which provided a date of Cal 4820 - 4520 BP or 2870 - 2570 BC.

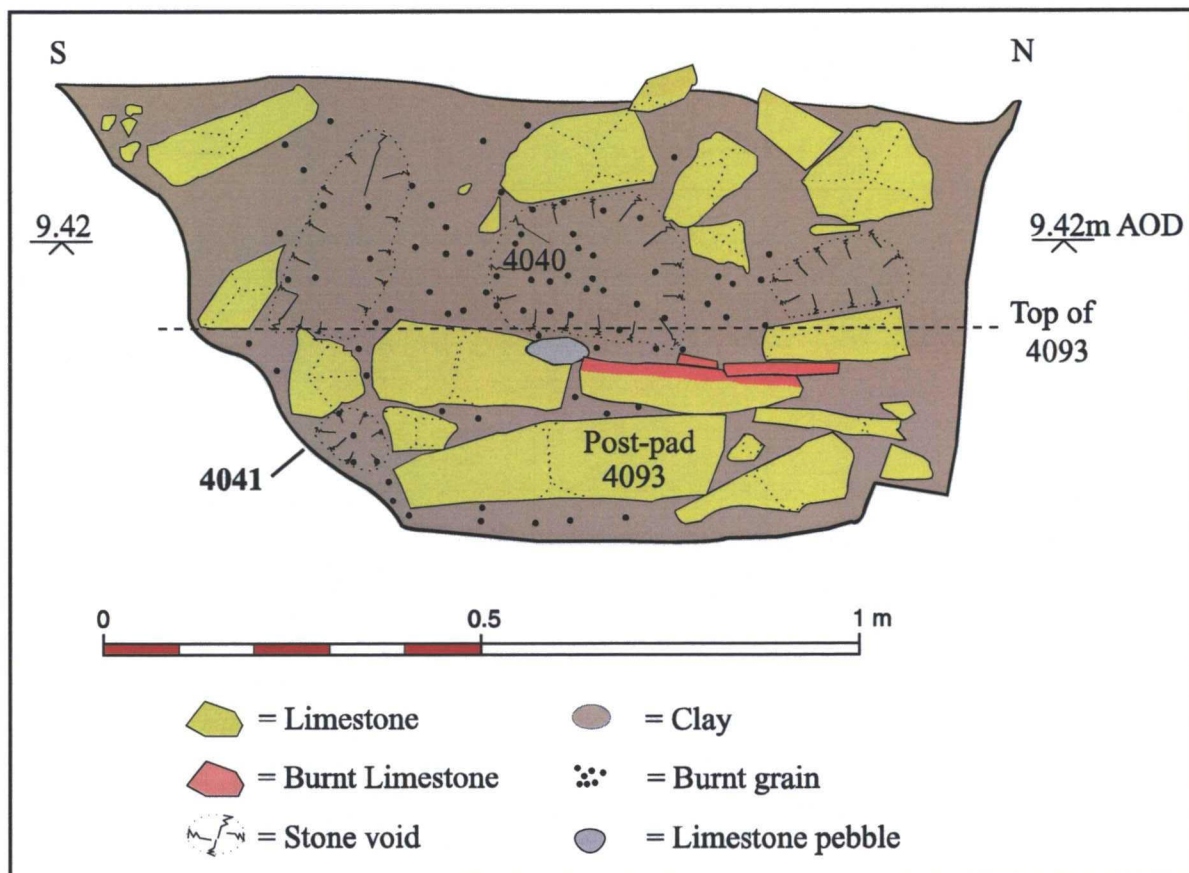


Fig. 11: Section D, east facing section of Post-pit 4041 (5.8)

Post-pit 4147

Post-pit 4147 was located 0.24m to the north-west of Post-pit 4041. It was rectilinear in plan, aligned north-east / south-west and was some 1.62m long, 1.42m wide and up to

0.65m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall gently, on the eastern and western sides, before falling vertically and vertically to an uneven base. A 0.9m wide and 0.02m deep oval depression in the base was observed against the north-east side. Directly above this was an up 0.24m thick basal fill of a plastic, moist, pale orange yellow marbled, pale grey brown silty clay (4123). This contained occasional medium to large limestone fragments, small limestone fragments, small to large pebbles, small patches of yellow brown sand, charcoal flecks and charred cereal grains. Context 4123 was sealed by a 0.41m thick upper fill of a compact, mid orange brown clay (4122), with moderate small to medium grey and orange limestone pebbles and occasional small patches of charcoal.

Post-pit 4054

Post-pit 4054 was located on the northern edge of Area 4 and had truncated the north-west edge of Pit cut 4057 (5.7.3) and also Cuts 4086 and 4120.

Post-pit 4054 was oval in plan, aligned north-south, and was 1.7m long, 1.2m wide and 0.61m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat irregular base. The back-fill of 4054 was similar to 4056, the fill of Pit 4057 (5.7.3), and was a compact, mid- brown to grey brown, fine-grained sand silt clay with occasional large limestone fragments, small burnt clay fragments and charcoal flecks (4049). The limestone fragments were all jumbled and crowded against the eastern side of the cut and are thought to be a collapsed post packing.

The surface of natural subsoil (4012), on the north-east side of Cut 4054 was heat reddened. This may indicate that, prior to deposition in the pit, burnt materials were heated close by or had been of a sufficient temperature to scorch the upper edge and, in some places, the sides of the cut when deposited within the pit.

Post-pit 4039

Post-pit 4039 was cut into the top of Ditch 4187 and was located 1.8m to the north of Post-pit 4147. It appeared to have been oval in plan, was aligned north / south, and was 1.48m wide, 0.46m deep and was exposed for a distance of 1.38m before continuing beyond the northern limit of excavation. The sides broke sharply from the surface to fall vertically in the east, steeply elsewhere, to a flat uneven base. The base of the pit contained a 0.18m thick post-pad of large Magnesian Limestone fragments, some burnt, bonded with a plastic, yellow brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks (4033). This was barely sealed by very thin deposit of a compact, mid yellow brown fine grained sand silt clay with occasional small limestone fragments (4066). Deposit 4066 was sealed by 4032, 0.04m thick, which consisted of a plastic, mixed, mid-brown to yellow brown clay silt, with occasional small limestone fragments and charcoal flecks. This was, in turn sealed by a 0.03m thick backfill deposit (4031) of a compact, mixed, mid brown and yellowish brown clay silt with occasional small patches of grey brown silt and small concentrations of charcoal flecks. Directly above this was a deposit of stiff, yellow brown silt clay (4030) that was used to back-fill and level Cut 4039 after the post was removed.

Early To Middle Iron Age (Fig. 12)

5.9 Ditch, Cut and Surface in Southern Part of Area 4

A group of features in the southern part of the site dated by pottery in the fill of Ditch 4026 to the early – middle Iron Age

5.9.1 Ditch Cut 4026 (Figs 13-14; Sections E-F; Pl. 8)

A substantial ditch (4026) was located in the southern part of Area 4 and was hand-excavated in three segments. It extended for c. 14.6m before continuing beyond the east and west limits of excavation. It was aligned roughly north-east / south-west before turning a little towards the north-west c.2-2.5m from the western limit of excavation. At the eastern limit of excavation there was an abrupt change in direction at almost 90° to run towards the north. Whether this represented the south-east corner of a presumably square / rectangular enclosure or a 'T' junction with a contemporary north - south ditch was uncertain as only 0.9m of the inner or west edge of the return was observed, the rest lying outside the area of excavation. Almost all of the southern side of Ditch 4026 had been removed by later truncation and survived as a 0.21m to 0.56m deep, steep to vertical step leading to a rounded or imperceptible bottom edge. The majority of the northern side had survived to a full maximum depth of 1.15m which implied that, at surface level, Cut 4026 originally had a width of approximately 2.77m – 3m rather than the 2.35m observed during excavation. The northern side broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply, in a series of irregular shallow steps, to a 1 – 1.85m wide flattish base which tended to become narrower towards the north- west.



Plate 8: *West-facing section (E), Ditch 4026 (0.5 and 0.2m scales)*

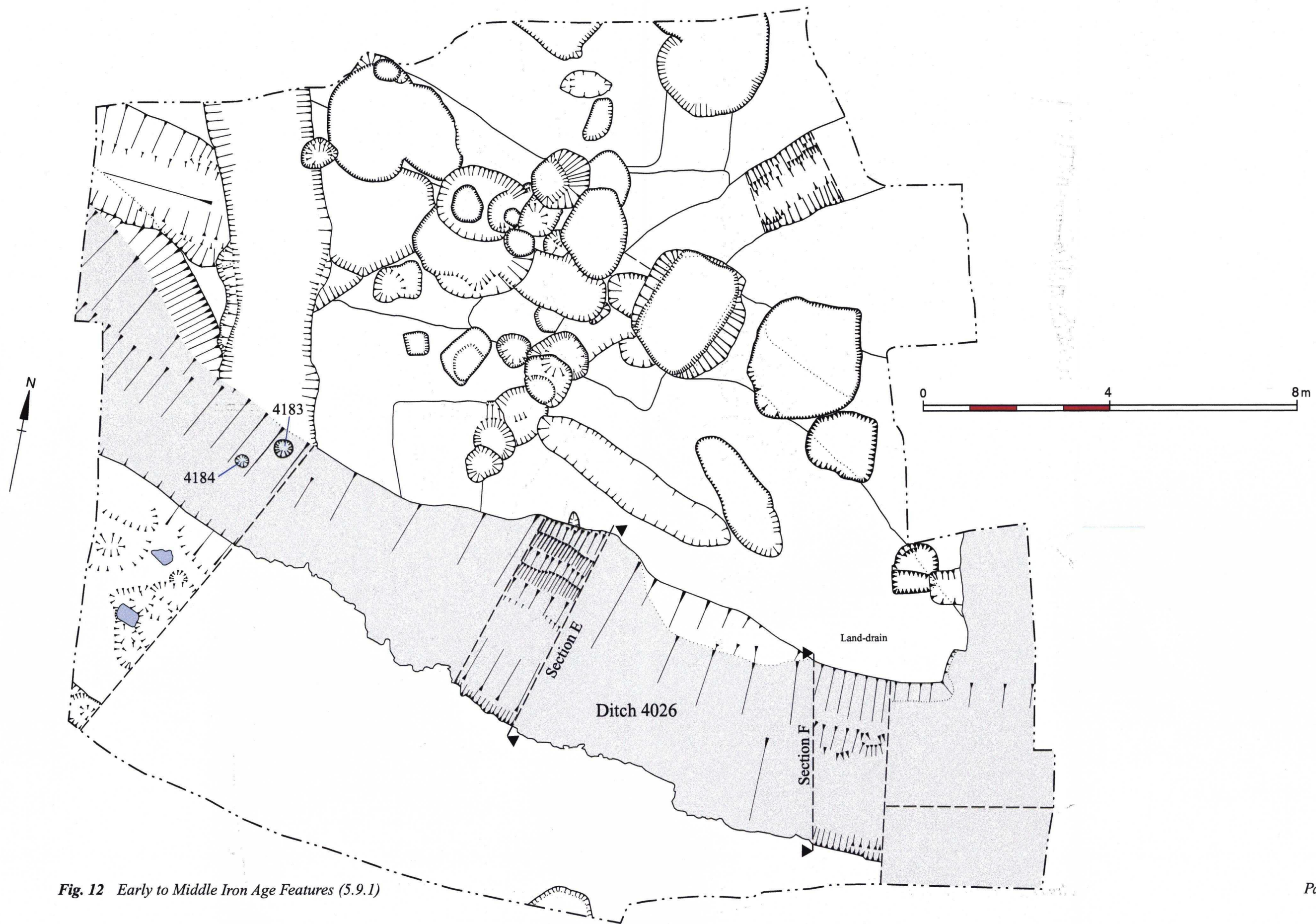


Fig. 12 Early to Middle Iron Age Features (5.9.1)

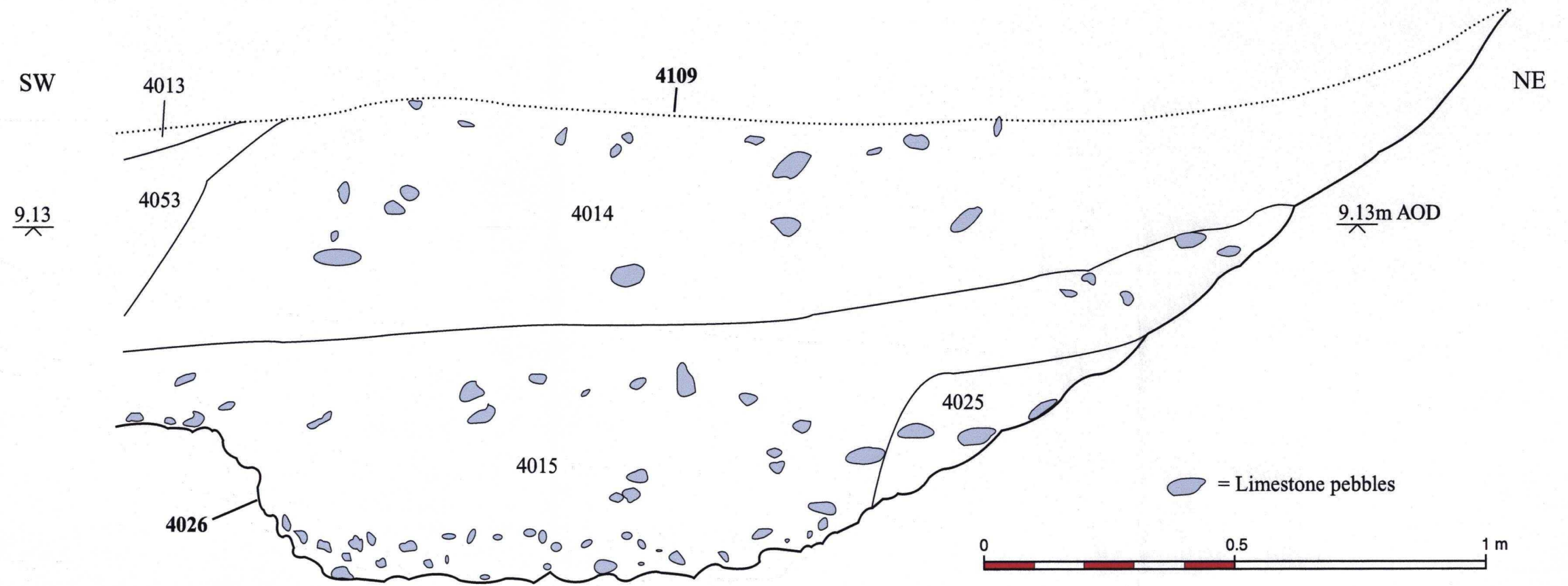


Fig. 13 Section E, North-east facing, Cut 4026 (5.9.2)

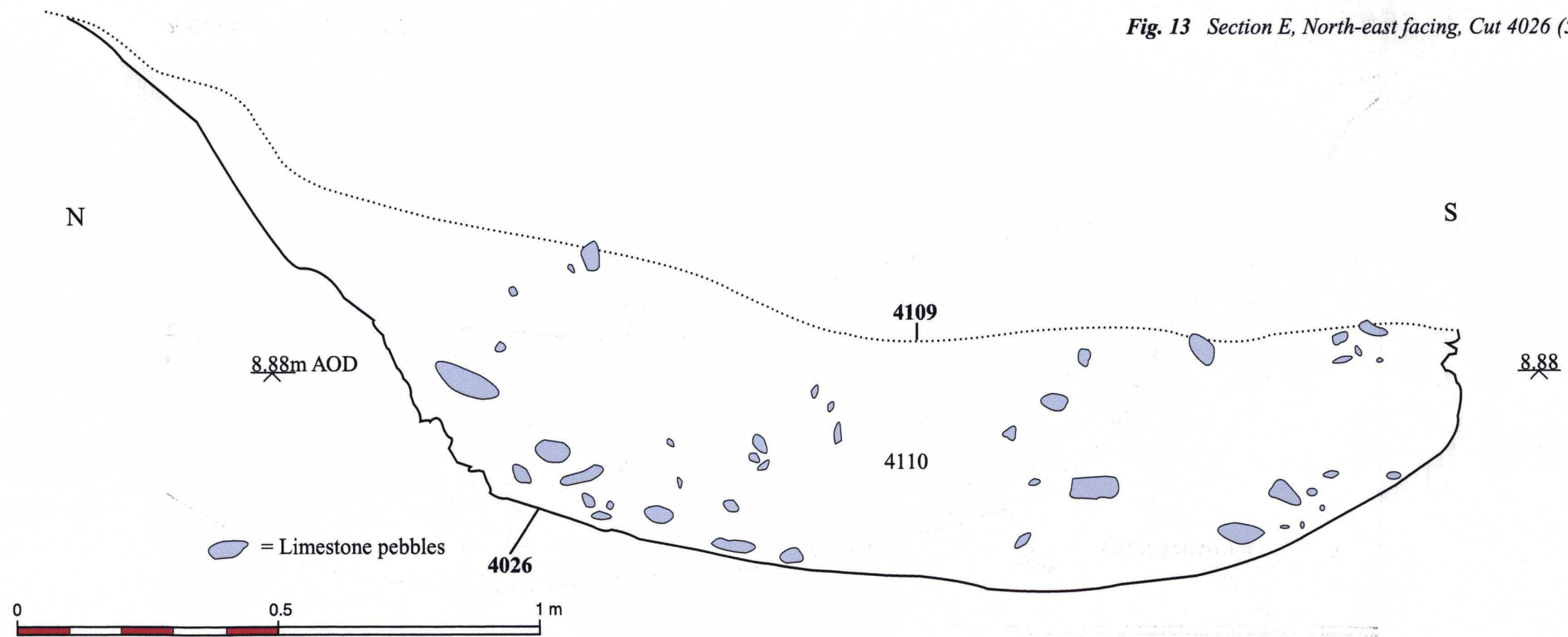


Fig. 14 Section F, West facing, Cut 4026 (5.9.2)

Post-holes 4183–4

Post-holes 4183 and 4184 were located on the northern side of Ditch 4026, c 2m from the western limit of excavation. The easternmost (4183), located 0.12m below the top of the northern edge of the ditch, was oval in plan, up to 0.24m in diameter, and had sides that broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a flat irregular base. The northern side of 4183 survived to a depth of 0.2m whereas the lower southern side was only 0.02m deep (Originally Cut 4183 would have been approximately 0.34m below the top of the northern edge of Cut 4026, the area in which both post-holes were located had had the upper elements of Cut 4026 reduced by a much later north – south intrusion)

Cut 4184 was located 0.4m to the south-west of 4183. It was sub-circular in plan, 0.16m in diameter with sides that broke sharply from the surface to fall steeply to a gently rounded base. The northern side survived to a depth of 0.1m whereas the southern side was a mere 0.02m deep.

Both 4183 and 4184 contained the same fill as Ditch 4026 (4110 = 4015)

5.9.2 Backfilling of Ditch 4026

The earliest deposit observed in 4026 was a sterile, plastic yellow silt clay (4025) which was attributable to a slumped or 'ram washed' natural subsoil adhering to the base of the northern side of the ditch. Directly above this was an up to 0.5m thick backfill deposit of plastic, mid grey clay silt with frequent medium limestone fragments, moderate small to large pebbles, occasional 'twiggy' wood fragments and charcoal flecks (4110 = 4015). This produced four sherds from a single fragment of coarse, hand-made pottery dated to the Middle Iron Age (500 – 400 BC), as well as a Later Mesolithic flint core rejuvenation flake. As the base of 4026 was approached, 4110, gradually merged into a very similar but 80% gravel rich deposit which was formed by the mineral elements of the overlying ditch fill(s) leaching down and staining the natural gravels forming the base of the ditch.

Roman Period (c 71 – 400)

5.10 Clearance Cut, Surface Make-up 4172, and Ditch 4074

5.10.1 Clearance Cut 4109 (Fig 15)

The backfilling of Ditch 4026 was followed by the excavation of a substantial cut (4109) which followed the northern edge of Ditch 4026 and had removed the majority of the southern side and fill of the ditch, as well as natural subsoil (4012) down to 0.83m BGL or 8.82 AOD. Clearance cut 4109 was aligned north west / south east and extended for a distance of 18m, to continue beyond the southern, eastern and western limits of excavation. It was 5m wide at surface level (top of natural), before narrowing to 3.6m wide at base level. The northern edge of 4109 broke gently from the surface before falling steeply to a flat base.

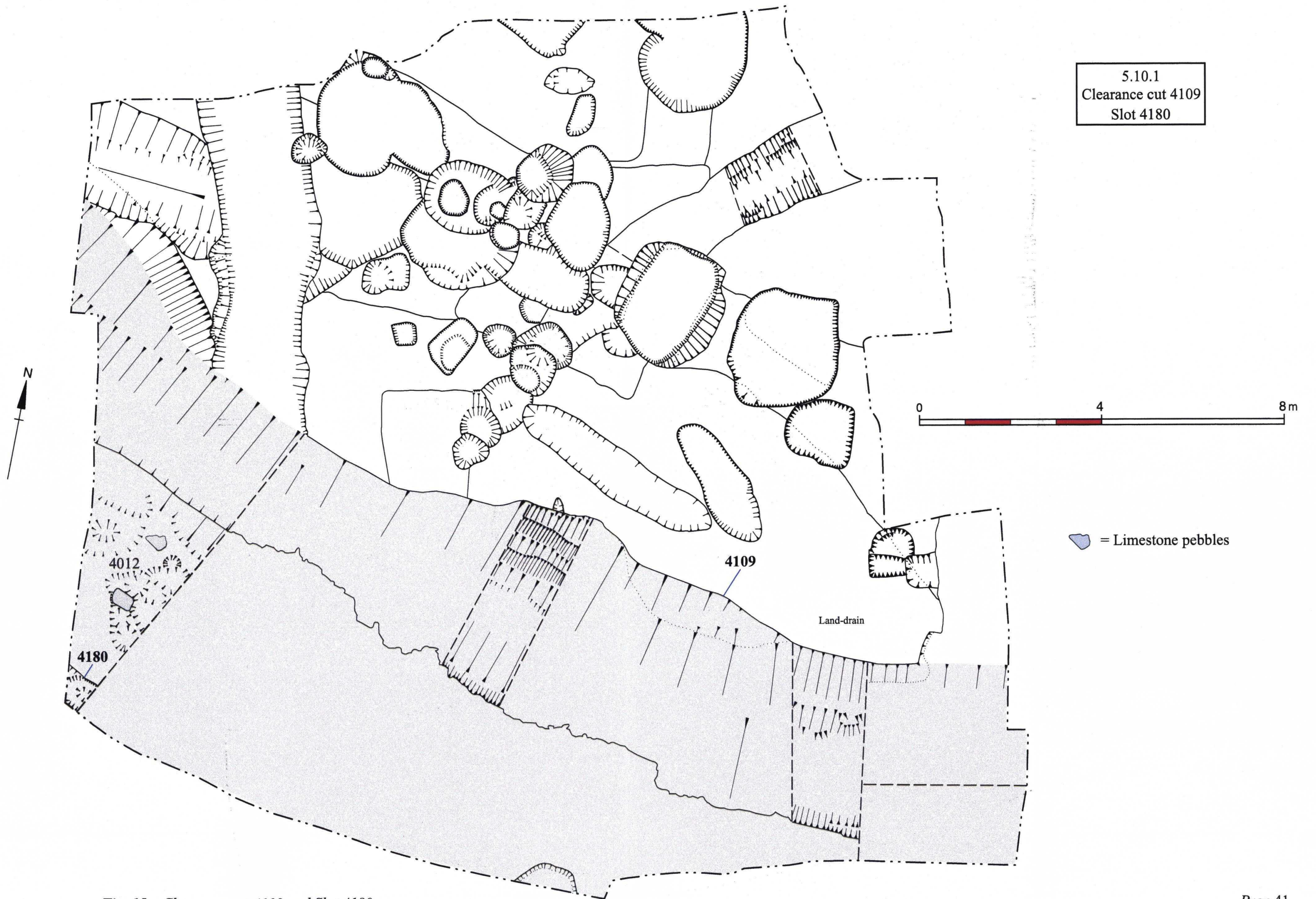


Fig. 15 Clearance cut 4109 and Slot 4180