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**Gills Farm
Thixendale
North Yorkshire
SE 8503 5935**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Thixendale,
North Yorkshire
SE 8503 5935**

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Non-technical Summary

This report concerns a Watching Brief that was carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd on ground-works at Gill's Farm, Thixendale, North Yorkshire in January and February 2007. The ground-works were associated with the construction of a new grain store.

No archaeological features were present, but a small number of worked flint objects, including a fine barbed and tanged arrowhead, were recovered from the topsoil.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an Archaeological Watching Brief that was carried out on the ground-works associated with the construction of a new grain store at land immediately to the east of Gill's Farm, Thixendale, North Yorkshire (SE 8503 5935, Figs. 1 and 2, Plate 1).
- 1.2 The ground-works had the potential to affect archaeological remains; accordingly, Ryedale District Council, on the advice of the Heritage and Environment Section of North Yorkshire County Council, placed a condition on the development for an Archaeological Watching Brief to be carried out (Planning ref. 06/00975/MFU). MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd was engaged to undertake the

archaeological work, which took place over eleven days in January and February 2007.

- 1.3 All works were funded by the developer, Mr A Wilkinson.
- 1.4 All maps within this report are reproduced under licence from the Ordnance Survey with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright licence no. AL 50453A.
- 1.5 The MAP site code was 03-01-07.

2. Topography and Geology

- 2.1 The site lies immediately east of Gill's Farm, which is situated on the eastern side of the unclassified road leading from Thixendale village southwards to the A166 York to Bridlington Road. Prior to the commencement of the development, the area was occupied by trees that formed part of the shelter-belt for Gill's Farm.
- 2.2 Gill's Farm lies on a relatively level part of the chalk plateau of the Yorkshire Wolds that is flanked by two deeply-incised dry valleys, Thixen Dale to the west and Brubber Dale to the east. The site lies at an elevation of approximately 210m AOD.
- 2.3 The soils are of the Andover Association, described as thin brown rendzinas over chalk bedrock (King and Bradley 1987).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 Although Gill's Farm is situated away from areas of known prehistoric settlement (understandable given its elevated and exposed location) the remains of a number

of Bronze Age round barrows associated with prehistoric burial lie close by. The cropmarks of the ring-ditches associated with these barrows are depicted on the RCHM(E) map of archaeological sites on the Yorkshire Wolds (Map 3 - Stoertz, 1997).

- 3.2 No fewer than fourteen round barrows comprise the Riggs Group of monuments, which are spread over a distance of 3 km along the ridge on which Gill's Farm lies. The barrows were examined by J R Mortimer (and others) in the 1850s and 1860s. The closest of these to Gill's Farm is Mortimer's No. 33, described as being "situated in a grass paddock adjoining the front and southern side of Gill's Farm-house" (Mortimer, 1905, 175). At the time of Mortimer's excavation (June 1865) the barrow was c. 27m in diameter (including a 3m wide ditch) and 0.5m high. Human bones, Bronze Age pottery and flint implements were found (*ibid.*).
- 3.3 The medieval settlement of Thixendale, and its pre-conquest forerunner, lay c. 2 km north-west of Gill's Farm. Thixendale means "*Sigsten's valley*" (Smith, 1937, 133).
- 3.4 Gill's Farm was in existence by the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1850-54). The name is believed to refer to the steep valleys, or gills, on either side of the farm.

4. **Methods**

- 4.1 The initial ground-works consisted of the mechanical stripping of topsoil from an area covering approximately 60m x 40m (Plate 2). Following the topsoil strip the foundations were excavated, and these consisted of 42 stanchion holes that varied in size from 1.50m x 2.00m to 2.00m x 4.00m. The stanchion holes (Plates 3 and 4), along with two soak-away pits, were excavated by a rear-acting mechanical excavator. All ground-works took place under archaeological supervision. The

service trenches were for the most part laid within the hardcore for the new buildings' floors.

5. Results

5.1 Natural deposits consisted of severely frost-fractured chalk bedrock that in places had a thin covering of reddish brown clay. Topsoil was limited to a c. 0.30m deep layer of clay loam.

5.2 No archaeological features were present. The only disturbances in the natural chalk were tree-pits of recent origin relating to the former shelter belt.

5.3 A barbed and tanged flint arrowhead (Plate 5), an edge-retouched flake, and two waste flakes, all consistent with a Bronze Age date, were recovered from the topsoil. The arrowhead was made from till-derived flint, and had all-over invasive bifacial retouching; one barb was broken. The topsoil also contained mid-late 19th debris such as pottery and glass bottle fragments, along with a cairngorm (or 'smokey topaz') semi-precious stone cut in 18th/19th style.

6. Conclusion

6.1 No features of archaeological importance were revealed during the Watching Brief. The flint implements were essentially unstratified and indicative of a background of Bronze Age activity, which is to be anticipated given the presence of round barrows in the area surrounding the site. The 19th century finds presumably represent disposal of domestic rubbish from the farmstead.

7. **Bibliography**

- | | | |
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8. **Project Staffing Details**

Fieldwork: Mark Stephens and Paula Ware

Text: Mark Stephens

Editorial: Nigel Cavanagh

Figures: Dave Knight

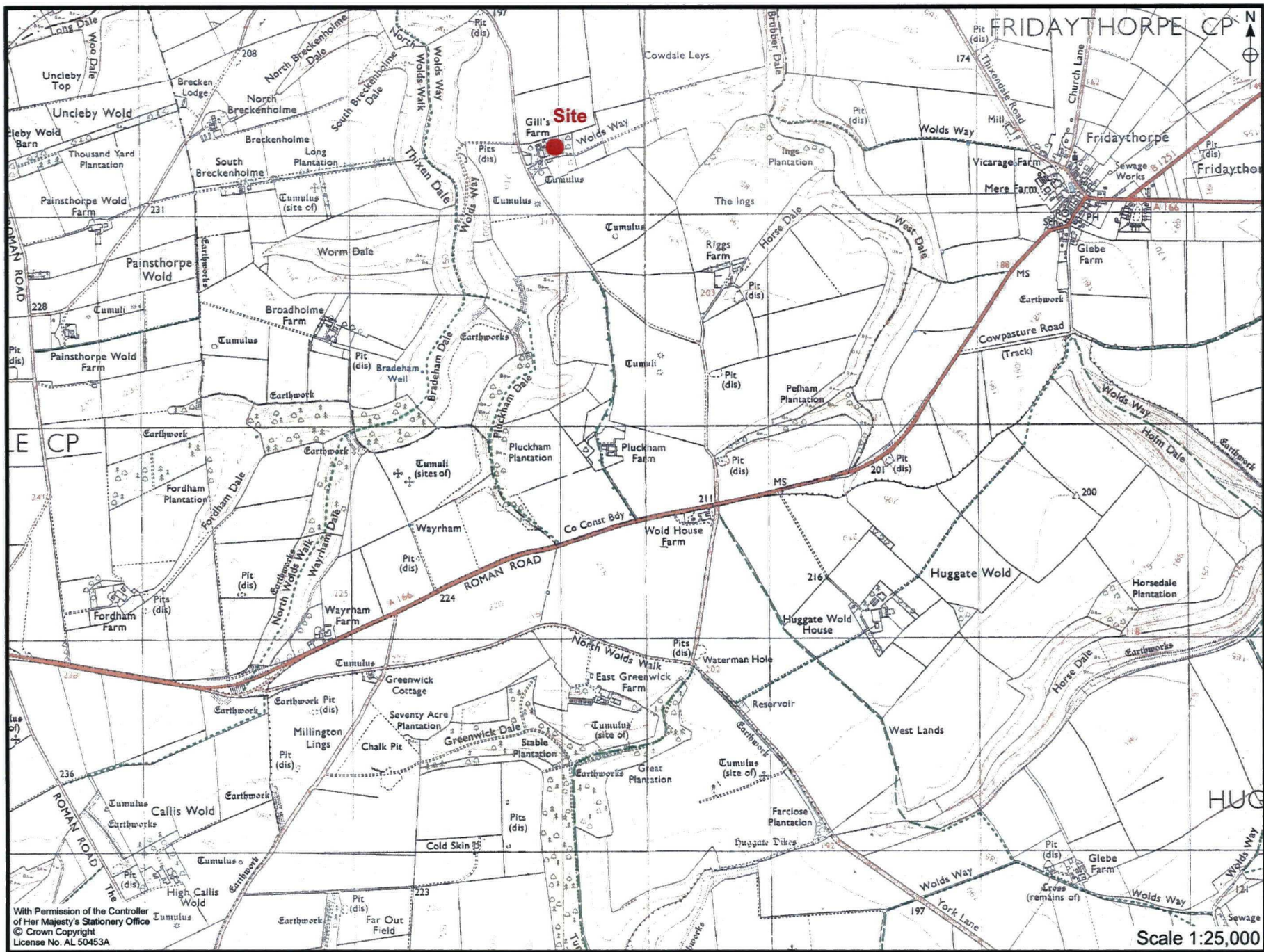


Figure 1. Site Location

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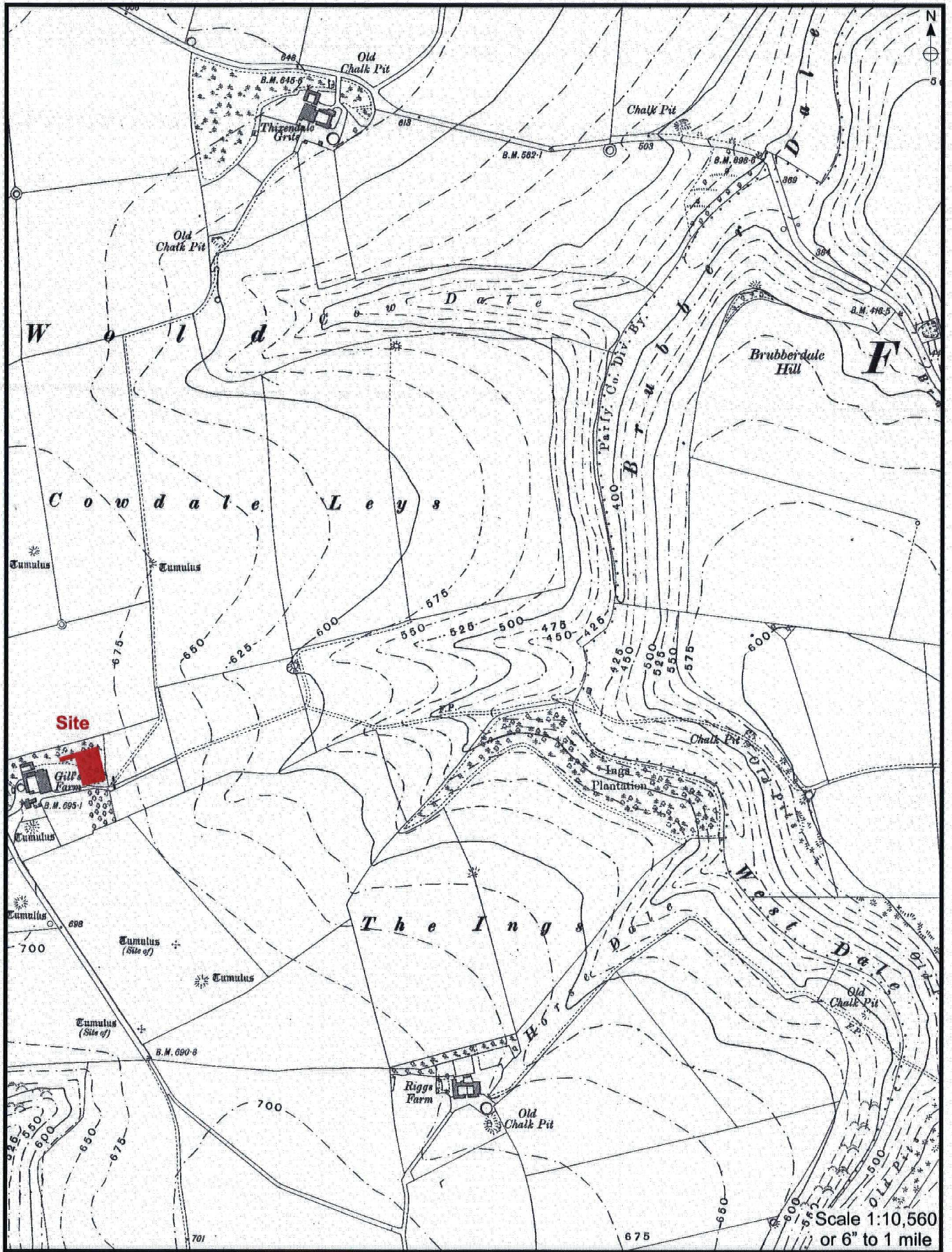


Figure 2. Extract from the 1912 Edition Ordnance Survey Map



Plate 1. Pre-Excavation View of Site. Facing North East



Plate 2. Site Strip. Facing South

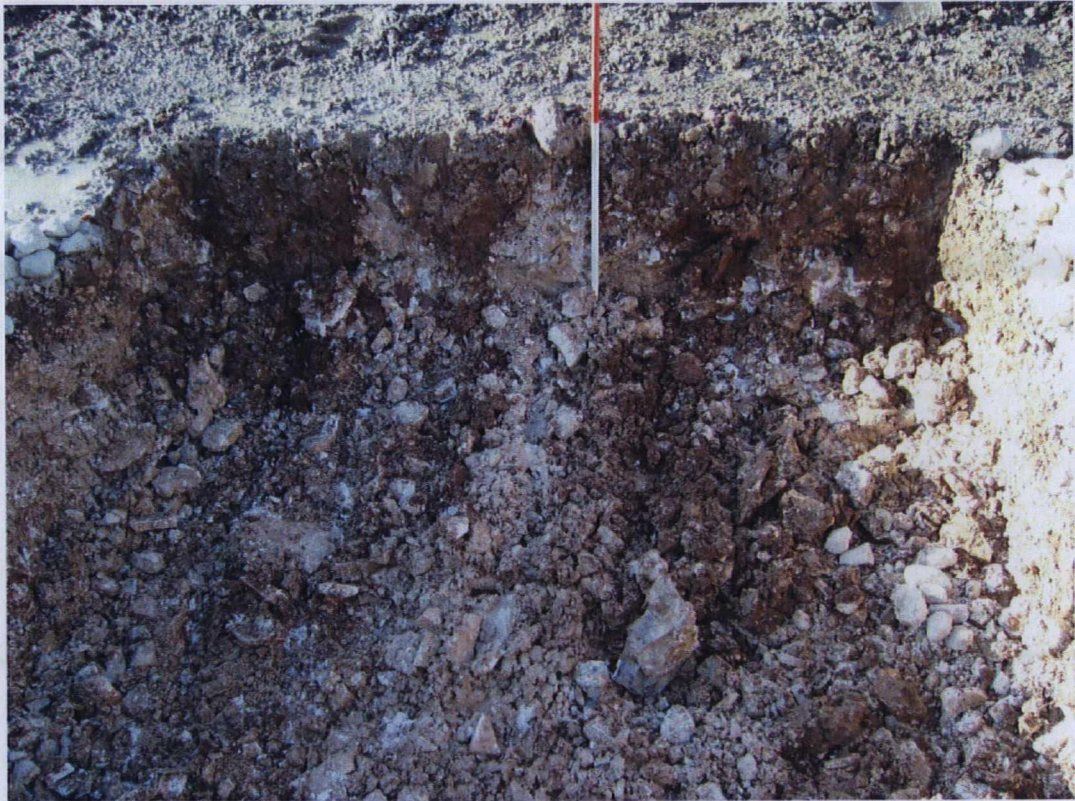


Plate 3. Stanchion Pit. Facing South



Plate 4. Stanchion Pits. Facing North

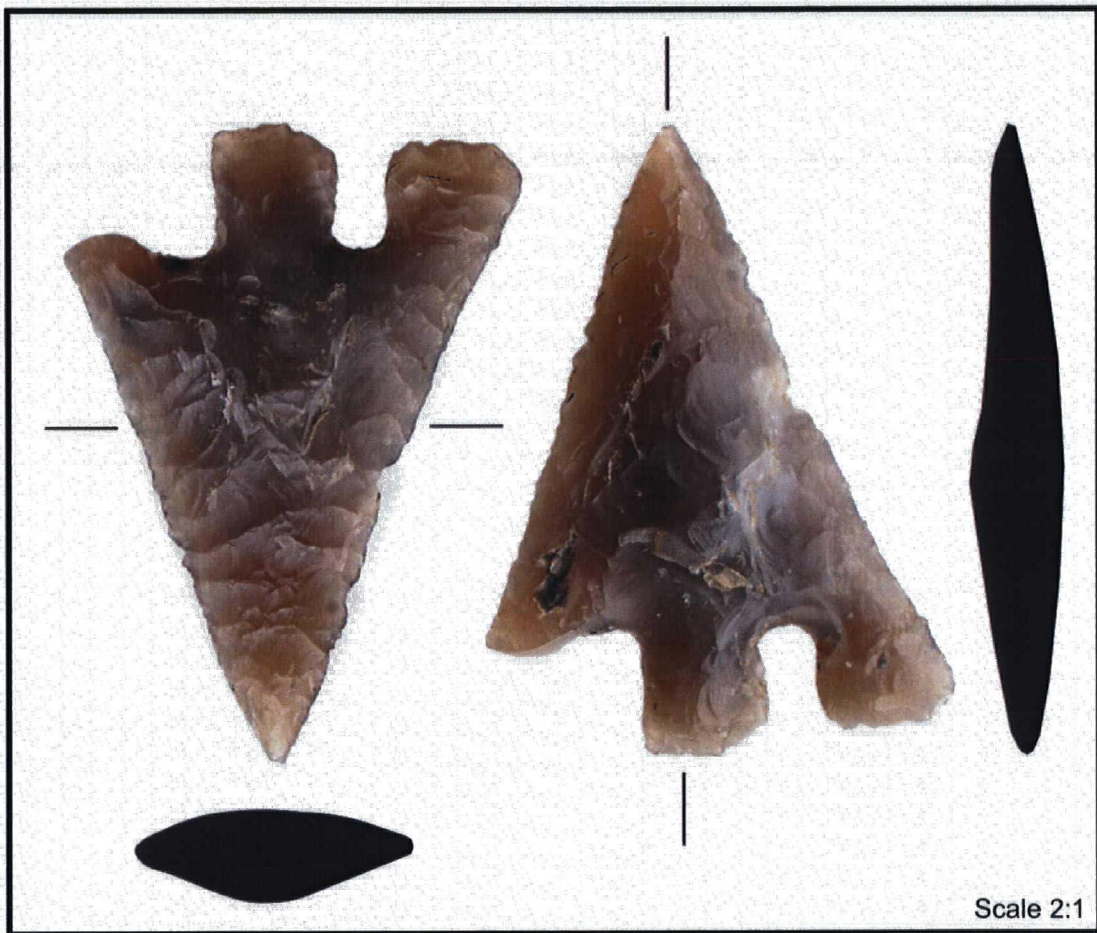


Plate 5. Barbed and Tanged Arrowhead