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Crossgates Farm, Area A
Archaeological Excavations, October 1990
Consultant Services
M A P (Malton)

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Contents

Figure List

Introduction

Excavation Methods

Excavation Results

Discussion & Conclusions

Bibliography

Acknowledgements

Appendix 1 - Finds Catalogue

Figure List

- Fig 1 - Site Plan
- Fig. 2 - Plan, SW Area
- Fig. 3 - Sections, SW Area
- Fig. 4 - Plan, NW Area
- Fig. 5 - Sections, NW Area
- Fig. 6 - Plan, Pit cuts 232 & 244
- Fig. 7 - Sections, Put cuts 232 & 244
- Fig. 8 - Plan, NE Area
- Fig. 9 - Sections, NE Area
- Fig. 10 - Plan, Hearth/oven 242
- Fig 11 - Sections, Hearth/oven 242
- Fig. 12 - Plan, SE Area
- Fig 13 - Sections, SE Area
- Fig. 14 - Sections, SE Area

Crossgates Farm, Seamer, Area A

Introduction

This report concerns the latest of a series of excavations carried out at Crossgates Farm, Seamer, North Yorkshire (TA: 032 838), prior to housing development by Persimmon Homes (Yorkshire) Ltd. Three areas of geophysical anomalies had been the subject of sample excavations by E.R.A.R.C. (Finney & Stephens [1989], Finney [1989a]; Finney [1989b]). The purpose of the 1990 excavation was to excavate and record additional anomalies at Area A before their destruction.

Observation during topsoil stripping, and excavation took place over four weeks in October, 1990. All work was kindly funded by Persimmon Homes (Yorkshire) Ltd.

Excavation Methods

An area approximately 140m square was machine-stripped to the level at which the features occurred. A large proportion of this area was cleaned by hand to further define those features indicated by the geophysical survey, as well as reveal additional examples noted during machining.

The site was divided into a grid of 10m squares projected from that used in the previous excavations. All relevant plans and sections were drawn. A photographic record was taken in colour transparency and monochrome. Recording was by the Continuous Context system.

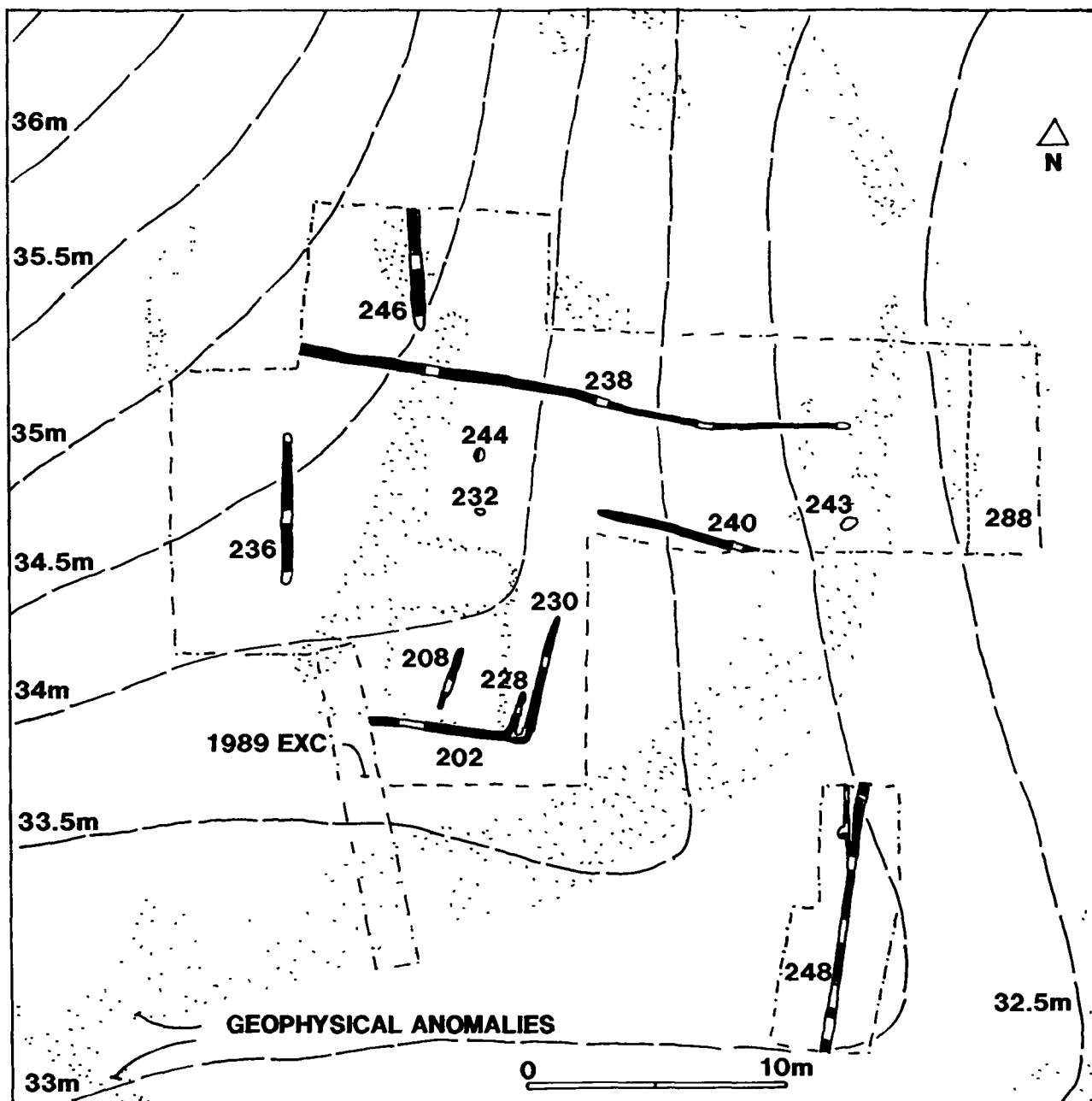


FIG.1 SITE PLAN

Excavation Results

The main area of the site contained a number of gullies on slightly varying N-S or E-W alignments. Two pits and a hearth or oven were also excavated.

With the exception of some of the features excavated, the geophysical anomalies (Fig 1) were of natural origin. In particular the anomalies at the north east of the site related to the junction between the sandy gravels forming the general sub-soil and a large expanse of cobbly, very dark grey silty clay (288).

Gully Cut 202 (Figs 1, 2 & 3)

This feature existed as a gully running on an ENE-WSW alignment. The profile was shallow U-shaped, the depth 0.18m and width 0.55m. The gully was filled with a dark yellowish-brown, sandy, silty loam (203) which contained no finds. 203 was indistinguishable from the fills of cuts 228 and 230, which merged with 202.

Gully 202 returned at 90 degrees to run northwards as 230 (see below), and continued to the west out of the excavated area.

Gully Cut 228 (Figs. 1 & 2)

Gully cut 228 ran on a roughly N-S alignment for a distance of 4m before merging with cut 202 (above). The profile was that of a shallow U, the depth being 0.04m and the width 0.40m. The fill (229) was a dark yellowish-brown, sandy, silty loam. There were no finds.

Gully Cut 230 (Figs 1, 2 & 3)

This feature was the return of Gully Cut 202. 230 ran northwards on a NNE-WSW alignment for 10.60m from the junction with 202, before butting out. The dished profile had a depth of 0.11m. The maximum width was 0.58m. A dark yellowish-brown, sandy, silty loam (231) comprised the fill. There were no finds.

Gully Cut 208 (Figs 1 & 2)

Gully Cut 208 was situated c 5m west of 228, and ran roughly parallel to it. A shallow (0.02m deep) feature of dished profile, the southern end of 208 butted out 1m north of 202 and ran 5m before butting out to the north. The fill, 209, was a dark yellowish-brown, sandy, silty loam, from which no finds were recovered.

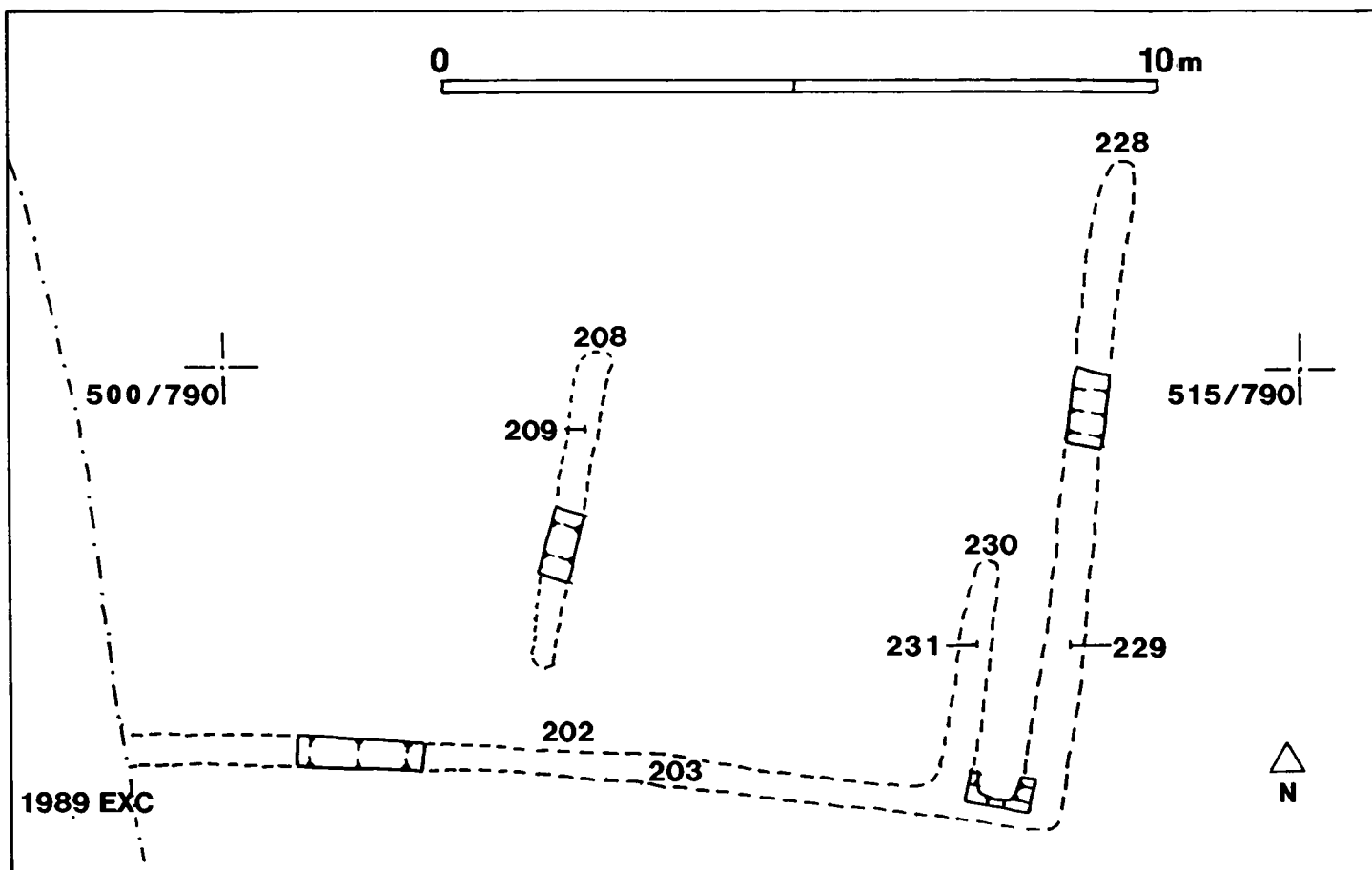


FIG.2 PLAN SW AREA

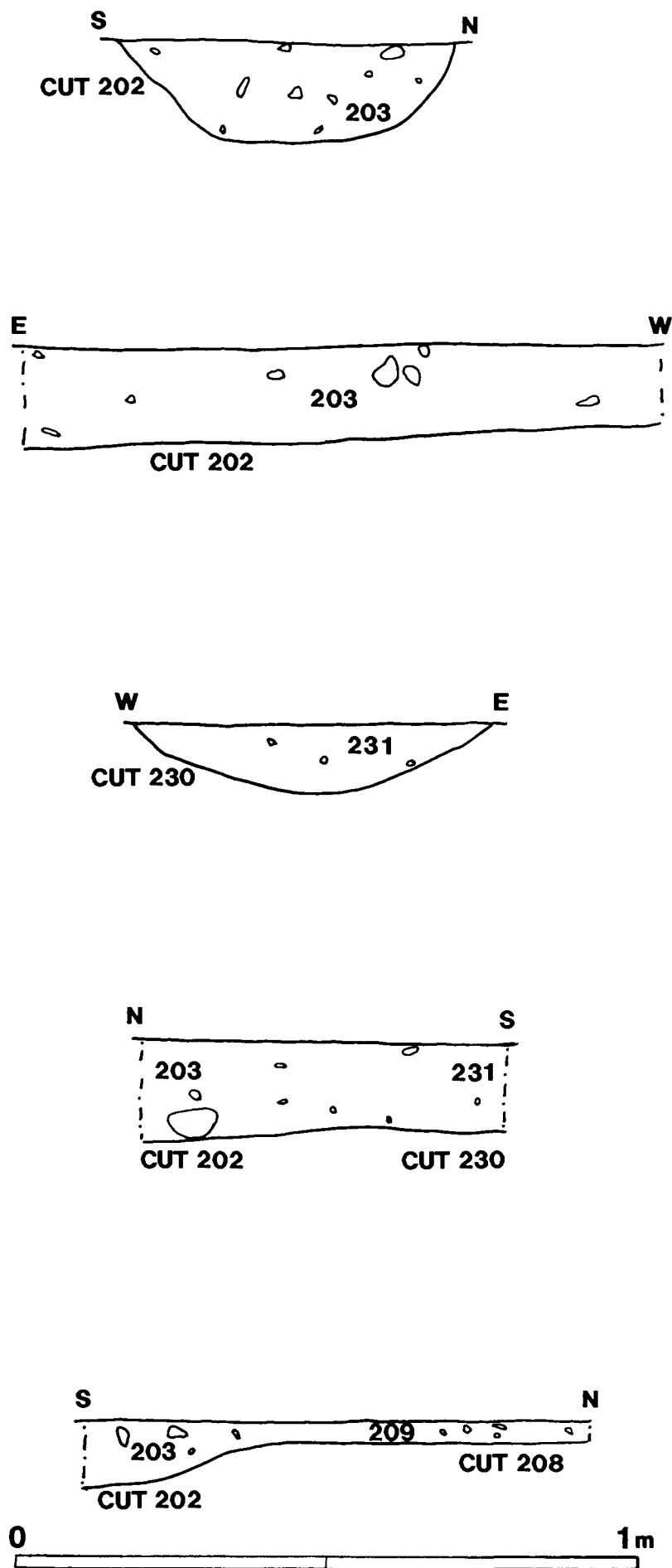


FIG.3 SECTIONS SW AREA

Gully Cut 238 (Figs. 1, 4 & 8)

Gully Cut 238 ran across the northern area of the site from the western baulk of the excavation, and butted out at a point c 8m west of natural layer 288. The alignment was ENE-WSW and the length c.45m. The gully was excavated in four segments, 278, 284, 286 and 289, which were somewhat variable in form.

Gully Cut Seg. 278 (Figs. 4 & 9) was the westernmost of those excavated. The profile was U-shaped, giving a depth of 0.18m. The width was 0.46m. The gully seg. was filled by 279, a dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam.

Gully Cut Seg. 284 (Figs. 8 & 9) was situated c 15m east of seg. cut 278. The width was 0.40m and the depth 0.13m with a broad-U profile. The fill (285) consisted of a dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam which yielded no finds.

Gully Cut Seg. 289 (Figs. 8 & 9) was situated 8m east of segment cut 284. The segment had a flat-based V profile, a depth of 0.28m and a width of 0.90m. A dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam (290) constituted the fill.

Gully cut 238 butted out at the eastern end as Gully Cut Seg. 286 (Figs. 8 & 9). The profile was a broad U-shape, with a depth of 0.12m and a width of 0.50m. The seg. was filled by 287, a dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam, from which came a flint tool (Appendix 1).

Gully Cut 240 (Figs. 1 & 8)

This gully ran on a somewhat sinuous ENE-WNW alignment, roughly parallel to, and c 7m south of, 238. The gully butted out to the west and continued eastwards after having been defined for 12.5m of its length. One segment, 291, was excavated.

Gully Cut Seg. 291 (Figs. 8 & 9) had a variable, broad-U profile, a depth of 0.12m and a maximum width of 0.90m. The fill, 292, was a dark greyish-brown, slightly plastic, sandy, silty loam.

Gully Cut 236 (Figs. 1, 4 & 5)

This gully ran for 12.5m on a N-S alignment at the west of the site, butting out at both ends. The northern end was situated c.6m south of ENE-WNW gully 238. The gully was excavated in three segments, 270, 272 and 302.

Gully Seg. Cut 270 (Figs. 4 & 5) was excavated at the centre of 236. The profile was a rounded-V, with a maximum depth of 0.37m. The maximum width was 1.20m. The fill consisted of a dark greyish-brown, silty, sandy loam (271), which contained bone frags. and a Medieval potsherd (Appendix 1).

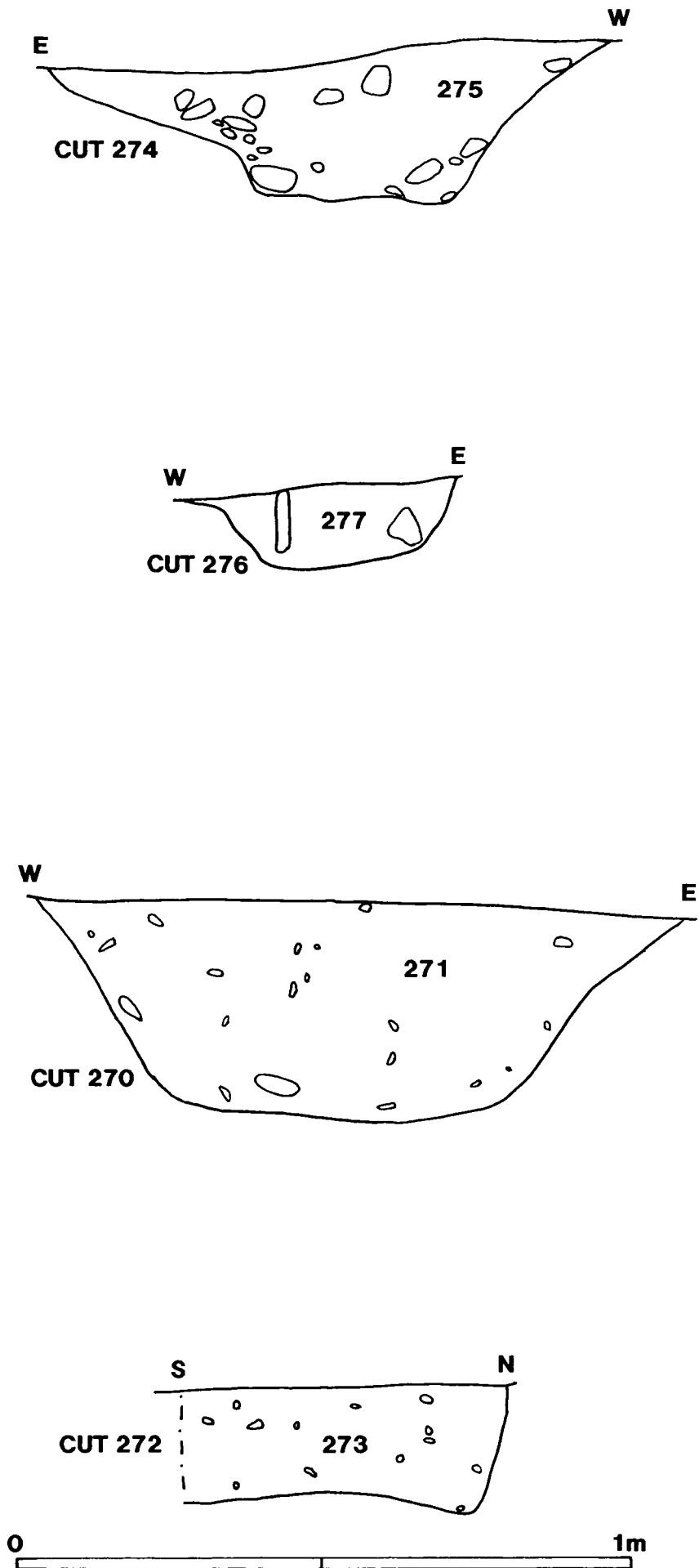


FIG.5 SECTIONS NW AREA

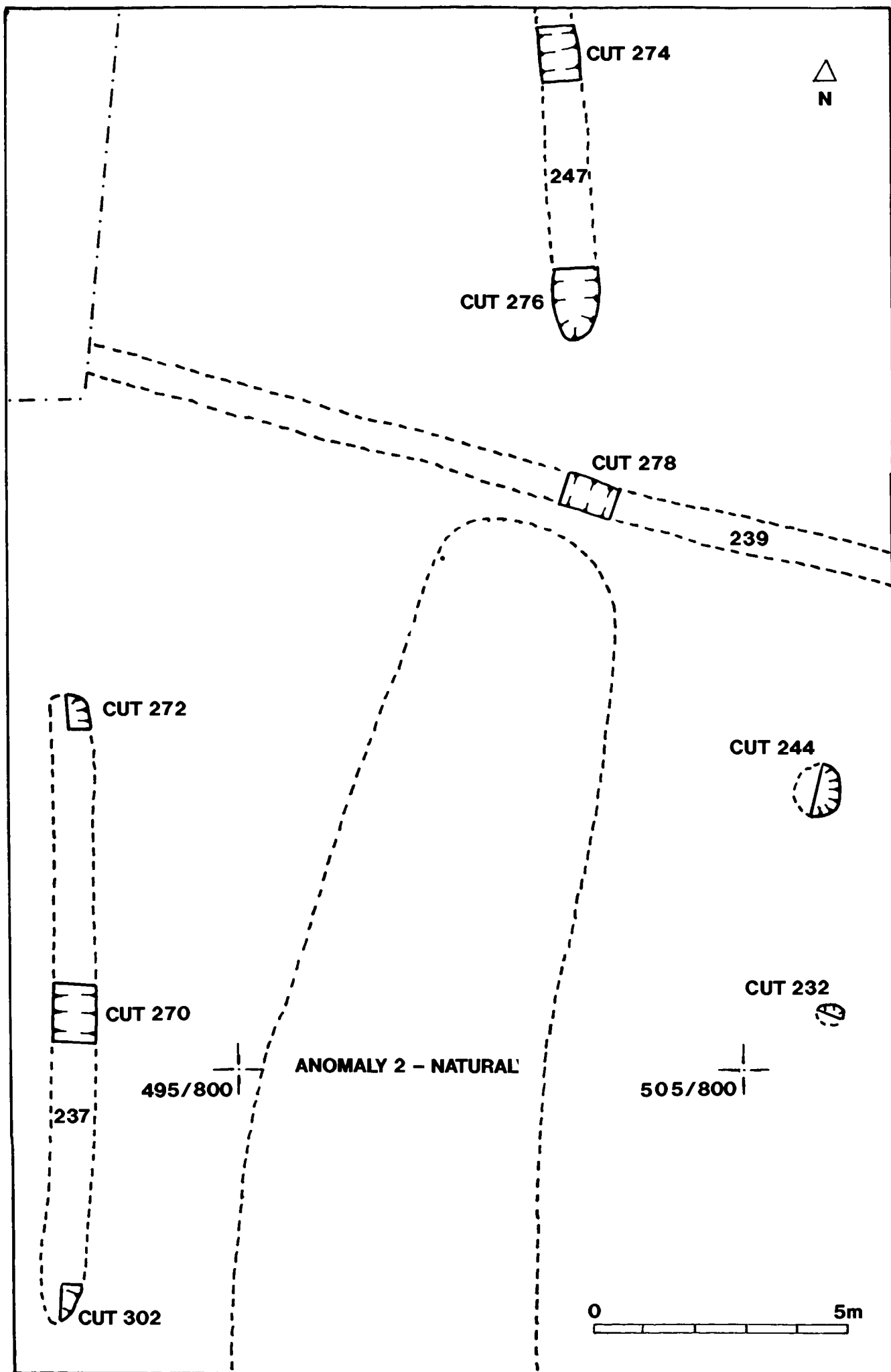
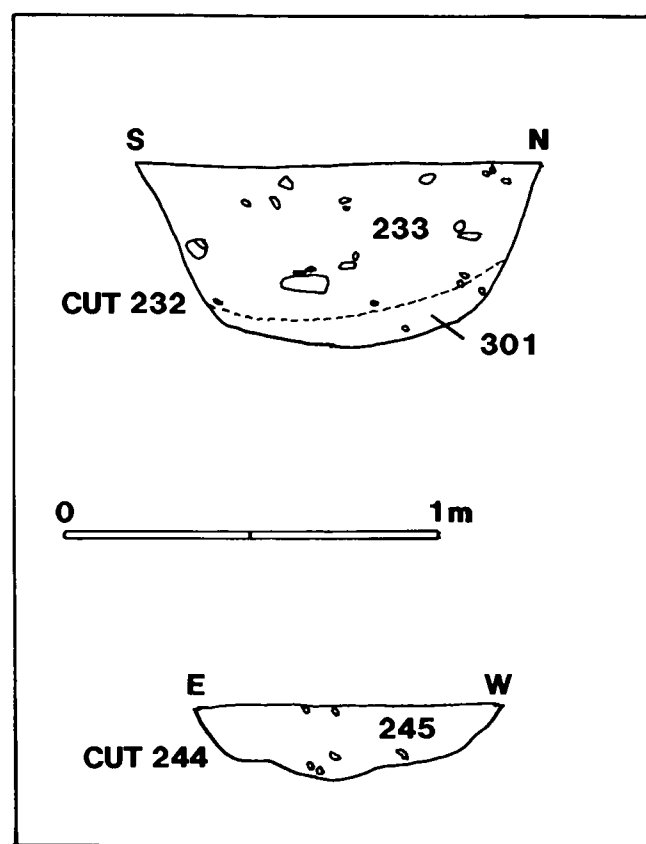
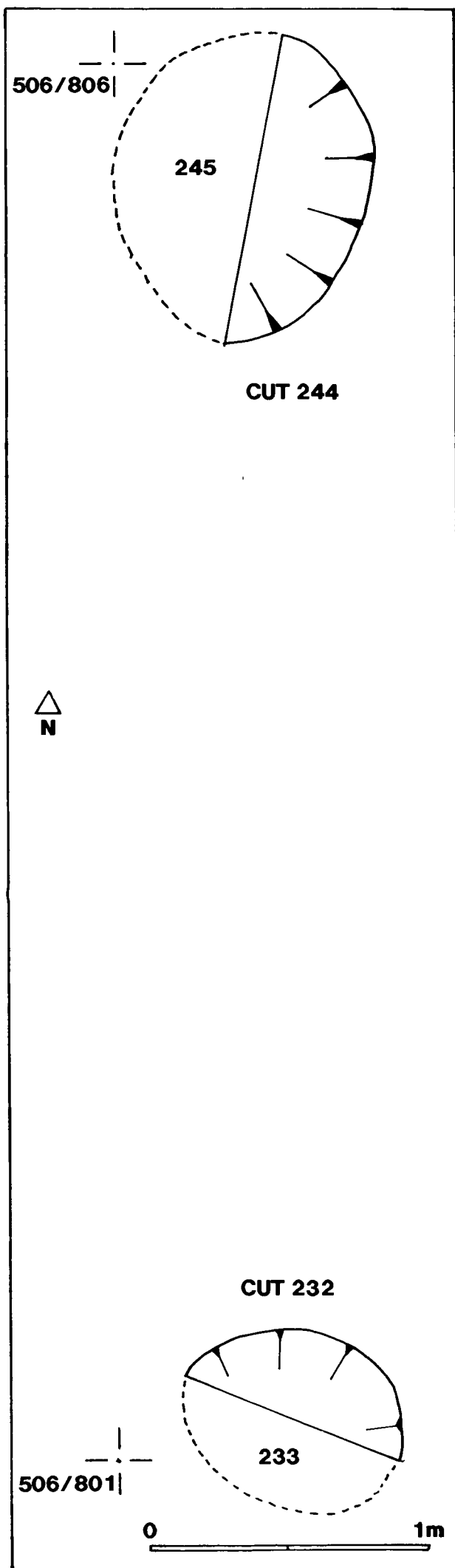


FIG.4 PLAN NW AREA



**FIG.7 SECTIONS PIT CUTS
232 & 244**

FIG.6 PLAN PIT CUTS 232 & 244

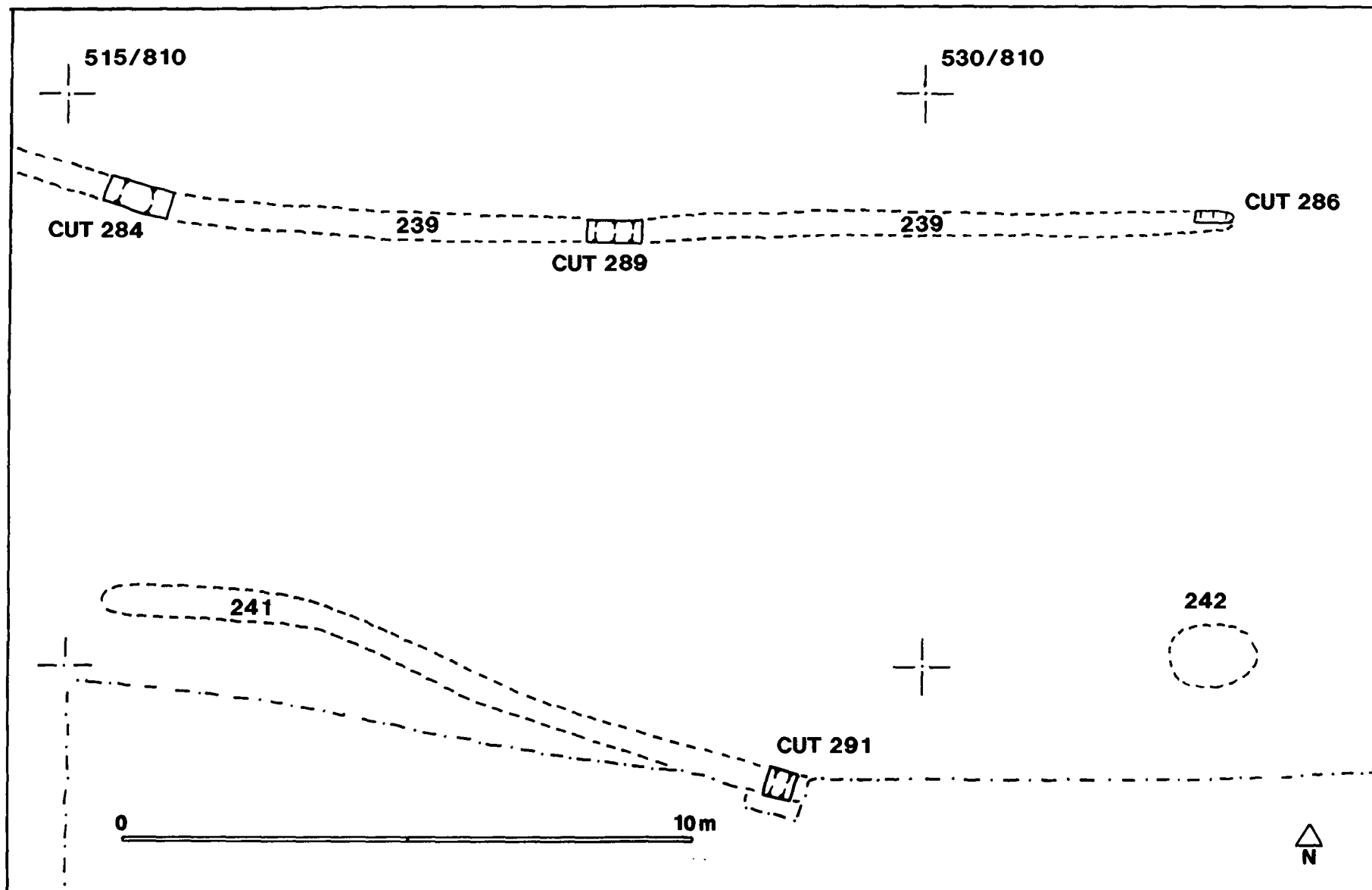


FIG.8 PLAN NE AREA

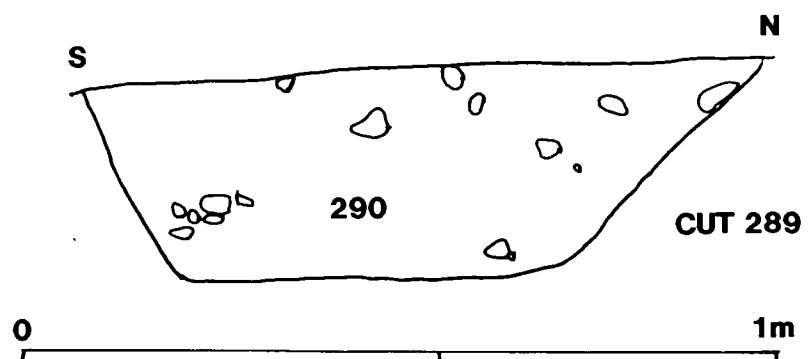
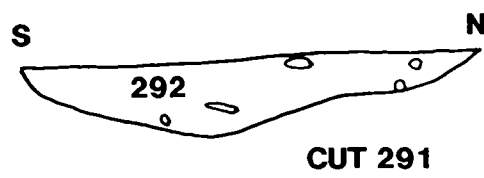
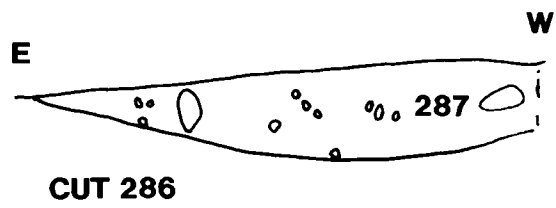
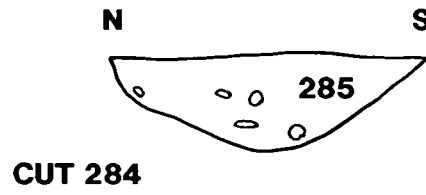
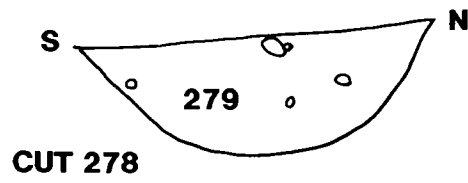


Fig. 9 Sections NE Area

Segment Cut 272 (Figs. 4 & 5) was situated at the northern butt end of 236. The width was 0.90m. The profile was U-shaped with a depth of 0.20m. 273, the fill, was a dark greyish-brown, silty, sandy loam, which contained no finds.

The southern butt end of 236 was excavated as Gully Cut Seg. 302 (Fig. 4). The segment had a width of 0.80m, and a depth of 0.05m, with a broad-U profile. The dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam (303) that constituted the fill contained no finds.

Gully Cut 246 (Figs. 1, 4 & 5)

Gully Cut 246 ran on a N-S alignment at the north of the site. The gully butted out at its southern end c.3m north of ENE-WSW gully 238, and extended out of the excavated area 12m to the north. Two segments, 274 and 276 were excavated.

Gully Cut Seg. 274 (Figs. 4 & 5) had a flat-based-V profile, a maximum depth of 0.24m and a width of 0.85m. The fill, 275, was a slightly friable dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam. There were no finds.

The southern butt-end of 246 was excavated as Segment Cut 276 (Figs 4 & 5). This Segment Cut had a broad-U profile, with a depth of 0.14m and a width of 0.37m. The fill, 277, consisted of a dark greyish-brown, silty, sandy loam, which contained no finds.

Pit Cut 232 (Figs. 1, 6 & 7)

Pit Cut 232 was sub-circular in plan and had a diameter of c.0.85m. The profile was bowl-shaped and the depth 0.20m. The pit was situated c 3.5m south of Pit Cut 244. The fill, 233, was a dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam with heavy charcoal flecking; there were no finds.

Pit Cut 244 (Figs 1, 6 & 7)

This pit was situated 4m south of Gully Cut 238. The plan was oval, the dimensions being 1.10m N-S and 0.90m E-W. The pit had a U-shaped profile and a depth of 0.48m. There were two fills. The upper fill, 245, consisted of a dark greyish-brown, slightly plastic, sandy, silty loam, which contained Medieval potsherds (Appendix 1). The lower fill, 301, was a dark greyish-brown, plastic, silty loam, with no finds.

Hearth/Oven Cut 242 (Figs. 1, 10 & 11)

This cut was that of a hearth or oven, and was situated between ENE-WNW gullies 238 and 240 towards the east of the site. The feature consisted of an oval dished hollow on a NE-SW alignment. The dimensions were 1.8 x 1.25m, with a maximum depth of 0.15m.

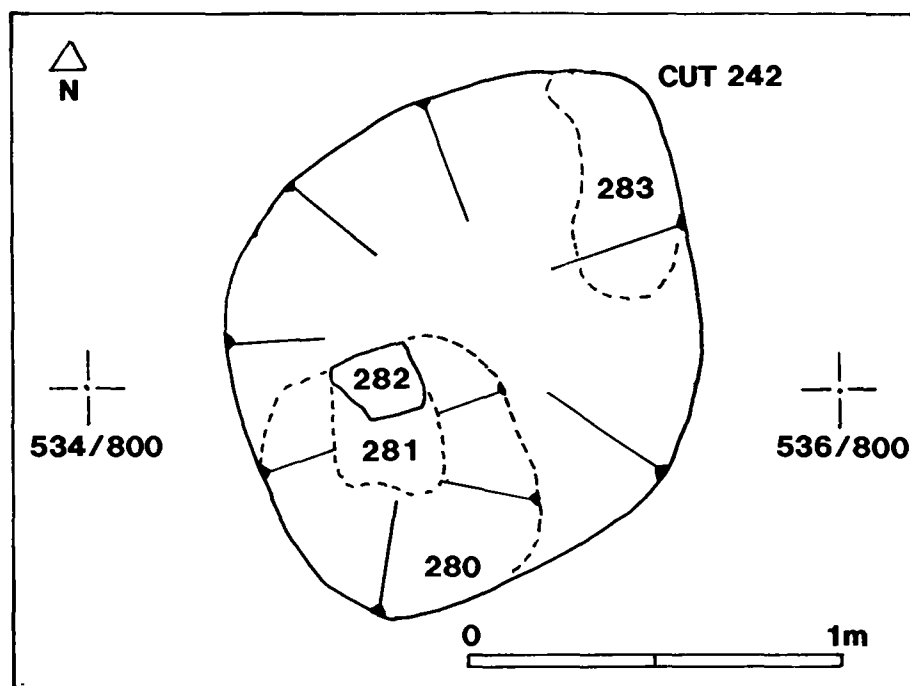


FIG.10 PLAN HEARTH/OVEN 242

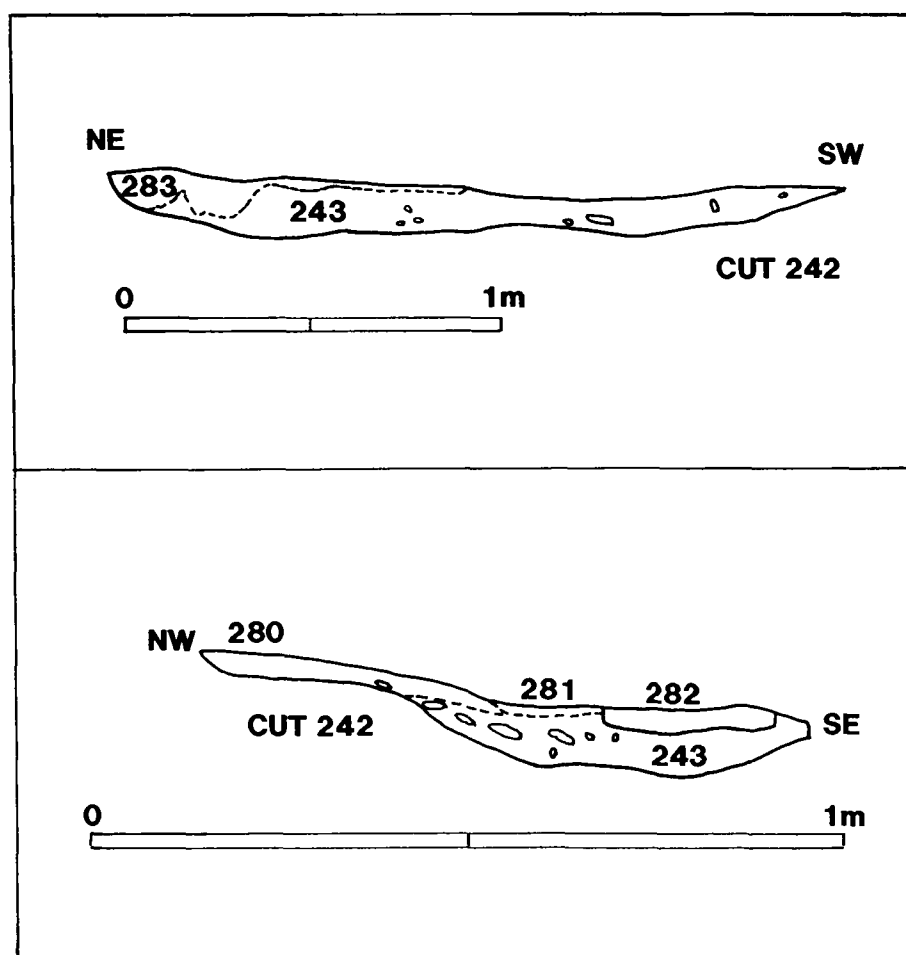


FIG.11 SECTIONS HEARTH/OVEN 242

A structural arrangement occurred at the south-west end of the feature, consisting of a sub-circular layer of highly plastic, light greyish-yellow clay (280), 0.70m in diameter and 0.03m deep. A patch of this clay (281) had been baked to a very dark grey, friable consistency, and adjoined 282, a single rectangular block of fire-reddened sandstone, 0.25 x 0.20 x 0.03m. A reddish-brown, friable, sandy loam (243) overlay these elements, and formed the main fill of the feature. 243 contained a crumb of daub, a small rim-sherd and a coarse flint flake (Appendix 1). An amorphous patch of charcoal (283), 0.6 x 0.25m and 0.08m deep, was situated at the north-east end of the feature.

A further area containing features was defined 30m to the south-east of the main area. Three intercutting gullies and a pit were identified.

Gully Cut 248 (Figs 1, 12, 13 & 14)

A 20m length of this gully was defined. The alignment was NNE-SSW. The gully was excavated in three segments, 250, 252, 293 and 297, which showed somewhat variable profiles.

Gully Cut Seg. 250 (Figs. 12 & 13) had a flat-based U profile, a maximum depth of 0.14m and a maximum width of 0.50m. The fill (251) was a plastic, dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam, which contained bone fragments.

Gully Cut Seg. 293 (Figs 12 & 13) was of U-shaped profile, with a maximum width of 0.80m and a maximum depth of 0.28m. The fill, 253, was similar to 251 above, and contained bone fragments.

Gully Seg. Cut 297 (Figs. 12 & 13) was present as a very shallow cut, the bulk of the fill (293) having been removed by the later Gully Seg. 268. The surviving width was 0.3m and the depth 0.08m. The fill, 298, was a dark greyish-brown, plastic, sandy loam that yielded no finds.

Gully Cut 299 (Figs. 12 & 13)

This gully was a broad recut of 248, on the same alignment as 248. 299 followed the course of 248 before butting out 9m to the south, at which point it was cut by later gully 258. 299 was excavated in two segs., 266 and 268.

Gully Cut Seg. 266 (Figs. 12 & 14) had a broad-U profile, a depth of 0.20m and a width of 0.70m. This segment presumably removed all traces of earlier gully 248. The fill (267) was a dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam, which contained animal bone and marine shell frags. (Appendix 1). 266 was cut by later gully 253.

Gully Cut Seg. 268 (Figs. 12 & 13) had a broad-U profile, giving a depth of 0.25m and a width of 1.20m. The segment cut away most of an earlier Gully Seg., 297. The fill, 269, was a dark yellowish-brown,

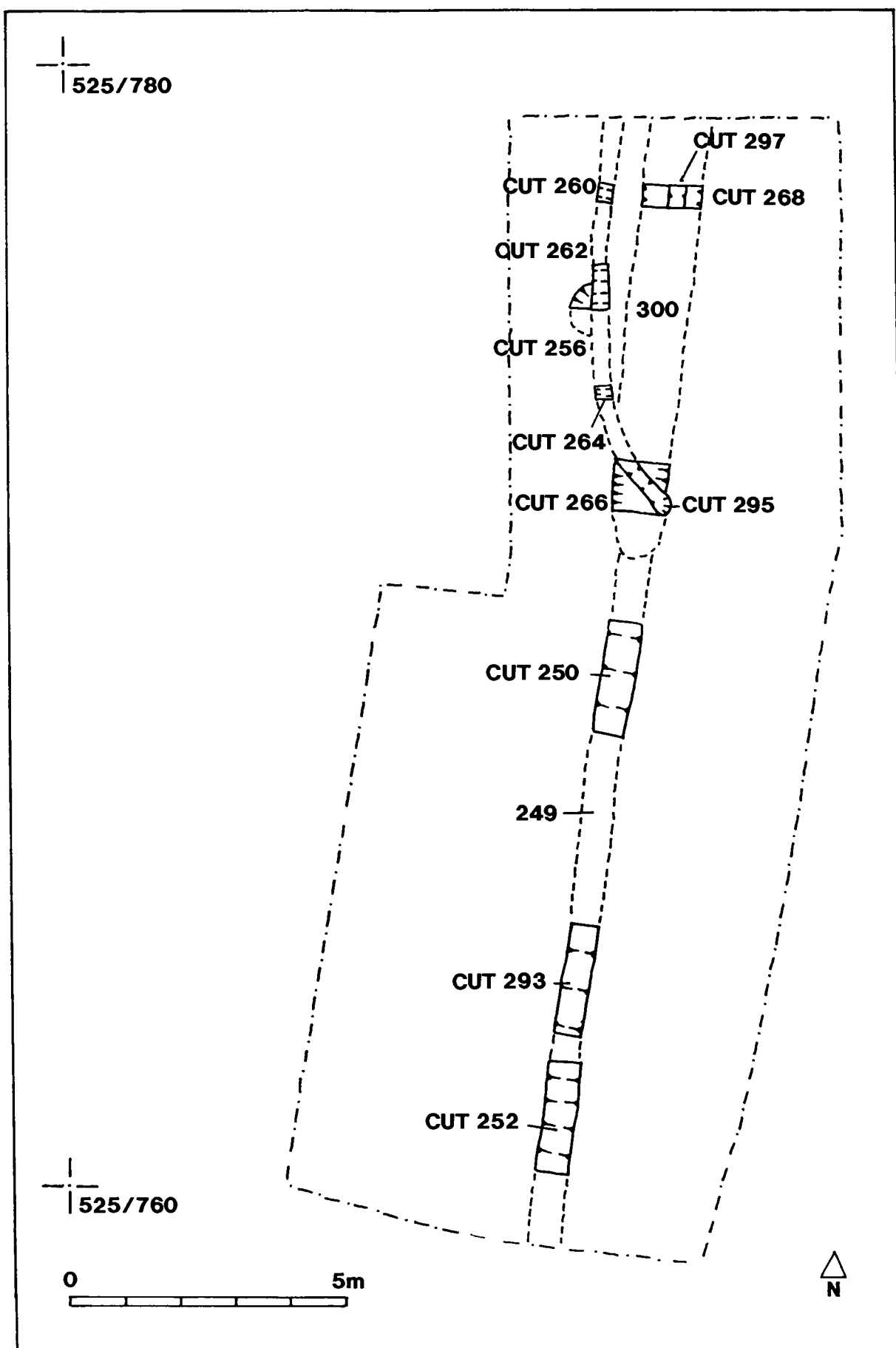


FIG.12 PLAN SE AREA

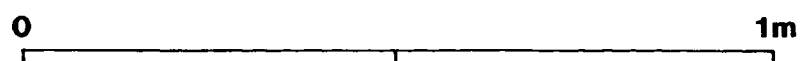
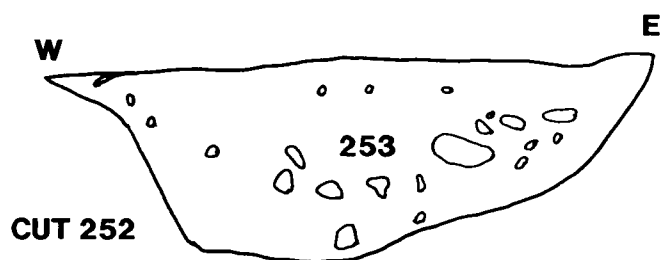
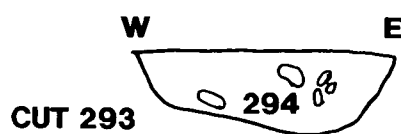
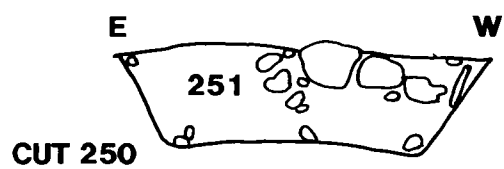
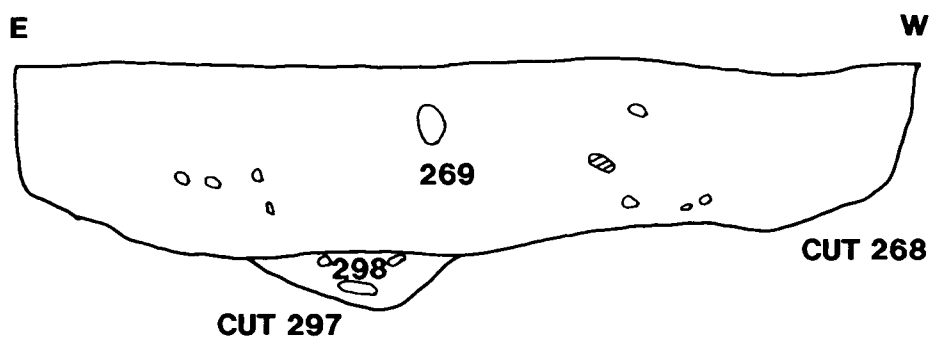


FIG.13 SECTIONS SE AREA

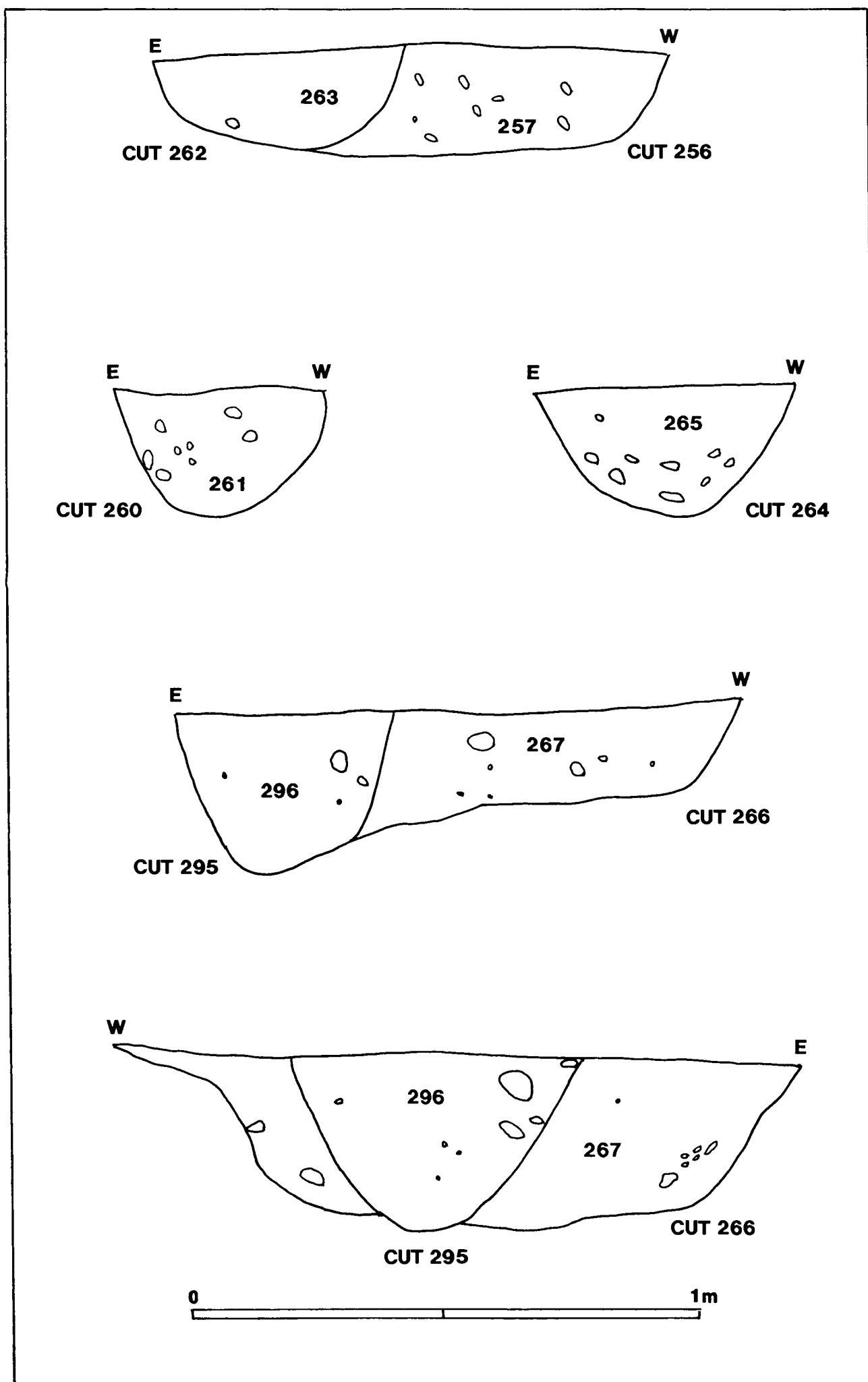


FIG.14 SECTIONS SE AREA

slightly friable, silty, sandy loam, which contained animal bone and daub frags. (Appendix 1).

Gully Cut 258 (Figs. 12 & 14)

Gully Cut 258 ran parallel to 248/299 before curving south-eastwards to cut into the southern end of Gully Cut 299. The gully was also later than a pit, cut 257, situated on the western side. 258 was excavated in four segments, 260, 262, 264 and 295.

Gully Cut Seg. 260 (Figs. 12 & 14) was of rounded-V profile, with a width of 0.55m and a depth of 0.25m. The fill (261) was a dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam, with finds consisting of animal bone frags. (Appendix 1).

Gully Cut Seg. 262 (Figs. 12 & 14) had a broad-U profile, giving a depth of 0.20m and a width of 0.50m. 263, the fill, consisted of a dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam. Segment 262 cut through the fill of an earlier pit, 257, on the western side.

Gully Cut Seg. 264 (Figs. 12 & 14) was of rounded-V profile and 0.50m wide. The depth was 0.30m. The fill, 265, was similar to 261 and 263 above, being a dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam. 265 contained animal bone frags.

Gully Cut Seg. 295 (Figs. 12 & 14) was excavated at the southern butt-end of 258. The segment cut across the fill, 267, of an earlier gully, on a NW-SE alignment, before butting out c.0.20m east of the eastern edge of 266. 295 was of rounded-V profile, with a depth of 0.31m and a width of 0.50m. The fill, 296, was a dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam with no finds within.

Pit Cut 256 (Figs. 12 & 14)

This Pit Cut was sub-circular in plan, having a diameter of 0.70m. The profile was a broad-U shape and the depth 0.25m. The fill, 257, comprised an almost gravel-free, dark yellowish-brown, silty, sandy loam, which contained no finds.

Discussion and Conclusions

The interpretation of the excavation suffers from the lack of evidence concerning the physical relationships between the features, excluding the south-eastern area. The general paucity of finds, while suggesting that the excavation was situated away from any major domestic activity, means that there is also a lack of dating evidence. However, an analysis of the manner in which the gullies and pits are aligned and distributed (of horizontal rather than vertical stratigraphy) provides some indication of the site's history and development.

The gullies can be separated into two groups, based on the alignments relative to grid north.

The first group consists of those features aligned at between 10-15 degrees east of Grid North, or at c.90 degrees to that figure ie Gully Cuts 202, 208, 228, 230, 238, 240, 248, 253 and 299. These gullies were also generally shallow, less than 0.20m.

It is likely that this first group of gullies represents an enclosure or field, with 202 and 230 respectively the southern and eastern boundaries. The northern boundary would be formed by 238. The eastward continuation of 238 formed the northern limit of a putative trackway, with 240 as the southern limit. The gap between 230 and 240 might be explained by later agricultural damage to these shallow features. Gullies 208 and 228 might represent plough-marks within the field.

Across the east of the site, gully 250, and the recuts 258 and 299, may have formed the eastern boundary of the assumed field system. The recutting implies some form of longevity and importance for this boundary. It is notable that the the recuts of 250 did not extend along the full length of the original gully, both 258 and 299 butting out at approximately the same point. This possibly reflects a contraction in size of the field system.

The ground immediately to the east is low-lying and was almost certainly water-logged until relatively recently. The land to the east of 250 may therefore have been utilised as rough grazing, with access via a trackway, and separated by gullies (perhaps with hedges?) from the arable land to the west.

The dating of this first arrangement of gullies is partly based on the flint tool from seg fill 286 (Appendix 1). This Bronze Age tool provides a date during or after which the fields were established. No Romano-British or Medieval finds were made, and this negative evidence might suggest a pre-Roman date. It is noteworthy that this group of fields was on a similar alignment to the fields and boundaries excavated at Area B in 1989 (Finney; 1989b). The enclosures at Area B were of later Iron Age date, and a similar date seems reasonable at Area A.

The second group of gullies consisted of Gully Cuts 236 and 246. These were aligned either close to, or on, Grid North, and were wider

and deeper than the gullies discussed above. Both 236 and 246 respected the ENE-WNW gully 238, butting out some distance from 238. This indicates that 236 and 246 were dug at a later date, with 238 as a still existing boundary. A segment of the fill of 236 (271) contained a large sherd of Medieval pottery which provides a probable date for the second group of gullies

The remaining features to be discussed almost certainly post-date the first phase of gullies. The two Pit Cuts, 232 and 244 would appear to be contemporary with gullies 236 and 246. 245, the fill of 244, contained three sherds of gritty Medieval pottery very similar to that from 271, and of ?13th century date.

The hearth or oven 242 is parallel in size, if not quite in form, to Anglian features excavated at the settlement site c 700m to the south-east (Rutter and Duke, 1958). The setting of clay, 280/281, and sandstone, 282, in 242 suggests that some sort of industrial activity (? casting of metal, but no slag was present) was carried out. The charcoal, 283, probably represents debris from the fire used in such a process. The only dateable find from the hearth/oven, a small, plain rim sherd (Appendix 1) could be either Anglian or Prehistoric in date. Further dating for 242 is suggested by the fact that if 289 and 291 formed the limits of a trackway, then the hearth/oven cannot be of the same phase (it would form an obstruction), and is probably later in date

To sum up, the first phase of activity on Area A appears to have been the setting out of a field or fields, possibly served by a trackway or driveway approaching from the south-east. The complex was on the same alignment as enclosures excavated at Area B. This implies that a substantial area of enclosures was laid out at one and the same time, forming part of the Iron Age landscape, elements of which were visible in Medieval times when further ditches of an agricultural purpose were dug

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Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1 - Finds Catalogue

L = length, W = width, T = thickness

- 201 - Flake of pale greyish-brown flint, cortex remnant at bulb. No secondary working. L: 1.5cm, W: 1.4cm, T: 0.3cm.
- 232 - Charcoal sample.
- 243 - Small, plain, flat-topped rim sherd, in a dark grey vesicular fabric with no visible inclusions.
Crumb of yellowish-red sandy daub.
Waste flake in grey/white mottled flint, coarse percussion scar.
L: 4.5cm, W: 2.5cm, T: 2.0cm.
- 245 - 3 body sherds, all in a hard, sandy, micaceous fabric with small grit inclusions. Pale yellowish-red interior surfaces, yellowish-brown sooted exterior, bluish-grey core.
Frag. of daub in a hard dark grey, sandy fabric.
Bone frags.
Charcoal sample.
- 251 - Bone frags.
- 253 - Bone frags., from long bone of ?cow
- 261 - 3 eroded bone frags
- 265 - 1 fragmentary ?sheep vertebra.
- 267 - 1 ?sheep vertebra frag
Frag. of mandible and teeth of young male pig.
Winkle shell frag.
Limpet shell frag.
- 269 - Long bone frags.
Cow tooth frags.
2 daub frags., in a soft, friable, yellowish-red fabric.
- 271 - Large shoulder sherd in a hard, sandy, micaceous fabric, with small grit inclusions. Yellowish-brown exterior, dark bluish-grey core.
Amorphous daub frag in a hard, sandy, dark grey fabric
Fragmentary cow tooth
- 285 - Fragile, eroded bone frags.
- 287 - ?Knife blade in brownish-/pale-grey mottled flint Both sides of one edge retouched to form cutting edge L: 3.0cm, W: 1.3cm, T: 0.3cm
- 290 - Fragile bone frags., ?sheep mandible.