Archaeological Excavations at Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire (SP 5445 9064)

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For Leicestershire County Council

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1. *Summary*

The watching brief and survey conducted by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) Dunton Bassett playing fields, Leicestershire identified the extant earthwork remains of the potential medieval village settlement. The plan had suggested that the earthworks affected by the groundworks for the playing fields were likely to be on the outskirts of the village possibly for agricultural and livestock usage. The excavations however produced evidence of much earlier activity. Flints including a possible Upper Palaeolithic burin suggest very early human activity in the area. The proximity of the site to water also appears to have attracted Neolithic settlement in the lower north-west area of the site with evidence for the possible location of a burnt mound, or at the very least cooking hearths during this period.

The flint recovered suggests that activity continued into the Bronze Age where the higher areas of the site (south-west) were utilised with a portion of what appears to be an enclosure ditch suggesting settlement. Although the evidence suggests that the main settlement area was on the higher ground to the south, a number of truncated small prehistoric pits and gullies were identified with pottery sherds suggesting a Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date.

Although a number of Roman pottery sherds were recovered suggesting some nearby activity, no specifically Roman features were identified on the site. Possibly the activity took place on the higher areas to the south where pottery might have washed downslope into this area.

The main earthworks lie to the south on the higher ground and include a number of flat areas that may be house platforms along with a hollow way and several other tracks. Those earthworks within the excavated area appear to be features on the outskirts of the main settlement; perhaps holding areas for animals with associated trackways and hollows as well as drainage ditches, with numerous recuts. Pottery from the gullies beneath the earthworks suggests a date from around c. 1100 for these features, while a 12th – 13th century date for the main earthworks in the excavated area is suggested although the presence of Late Saxon pottery in the upper earthwork layers might suggest slightly earlier origins.

Some of the features appear to be later in date, specifically a metalled bank and hollow trackway which appear to be in use during the mid 17th century, although there is no reason why this cannot represent the reuse of earlier features.

Although the area appears to have been little utilised since the medieval period, to the extent that the majority of earthworks are still visible, post-medieval brickwork was present in the northern layers of the site which had possibly been used as hardcore to fill in boggy areas.

2. Introduction

In April 2003 ULAS were commissioned to carry out a watching brief during groundworks for the provision of a tarmac playground and playing field for Dunton Bassett Primary School (SP 5445 9064; Planning Application No: 01/1599/3). Work on the development was halted once it was realised that the site contained earthworks, not previously recorded on the SMR. Eleven sherds of medieval pottery (weighing *c.* 90grams) gathered from the initial site stripping suggests that this could represent a settlement– possibly remains of the medieval village of Dunton Bassett.

In view of the fact that the development would destroy the earthworks and any below-ground archaeological remains, the planning archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services subsequently required works to cease and for a revised scheme of archaeological investigation to be implemented (LCCMS 2003). This took the form of an earthwork EDM survey (Priest & Jones 2003). Following an assessment of the earthworks and discussions with the developers regarding preservation of the earthworks a scheme of archaeological work was recommended including open area excavation of the site with preservation of some of the earthworks. This followed the Design Specification (ULAS 12/06/2003) approved by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services.

3. Site location, geology and topography

The development area lies behind Dunton Bassett Primary School, to the west of the village, Harborough, Leicestershire. To the north-east lies a manor house, and to the west of this a large pond with a spring and its stream (Fig. 1). Prior to development the land was being used as pasture.

The area to the south of the site is significantly higher than to the north with a flattish plateau at a height of approximately 99m OD. The land slopes to the west down to the stream and also to the wetter ground to the north. The lower area of the development site (north-west corner) lies at a height of approximately 93m OD. Streams lie to the north and west (with the northern stream issuing from a spring close by). There are several ponds in the area and Stemborough Mill is visible to the west.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain (Sheet 170) shows the underlying geology to consist of Boulder Clay with over and underlying sand and gravel. Excavations showed the south-east corner to be sand with the lower area of the site consisting of clay deposits.

Figure 1
Location plan with development area shaded. Area of excavation shown in black.

4. Historical and Archaeological Background

4. 1 Historical Background

The development area lies on the edge of the historic core of Dunton Bassett. A series of earthworks lie on a flat area of high ground to the west of the village including a Hollow Way and a number of potential house platforms. It is possible that these represent the remains of the medieval village of Dunton Bassett.

The village appears as Dunton in the 1086 Domesday Book (Morgan 1979). Nichols mentions the church of All Saints in the village commenting that much of *c.* 1300 survived the restoration of 1882 (Nicholls 1815, 147)). He also mentions a mud walled cottage at Little Lunnon. An archaeological watching brief at Manor Farmyard in 1998 recorded a 16th – 17th century cottage and associated buildings (Buckley, 1998).

The land was enclosed under an Enclosure Act of 1796 and by 1801 there were 407 people living there. The Enclosure Award shows that there are no buildings in the development area with just the pond visible with a number of small buildings and lots just to the east, in a similar arrangement to what is there today (Fig. 2).

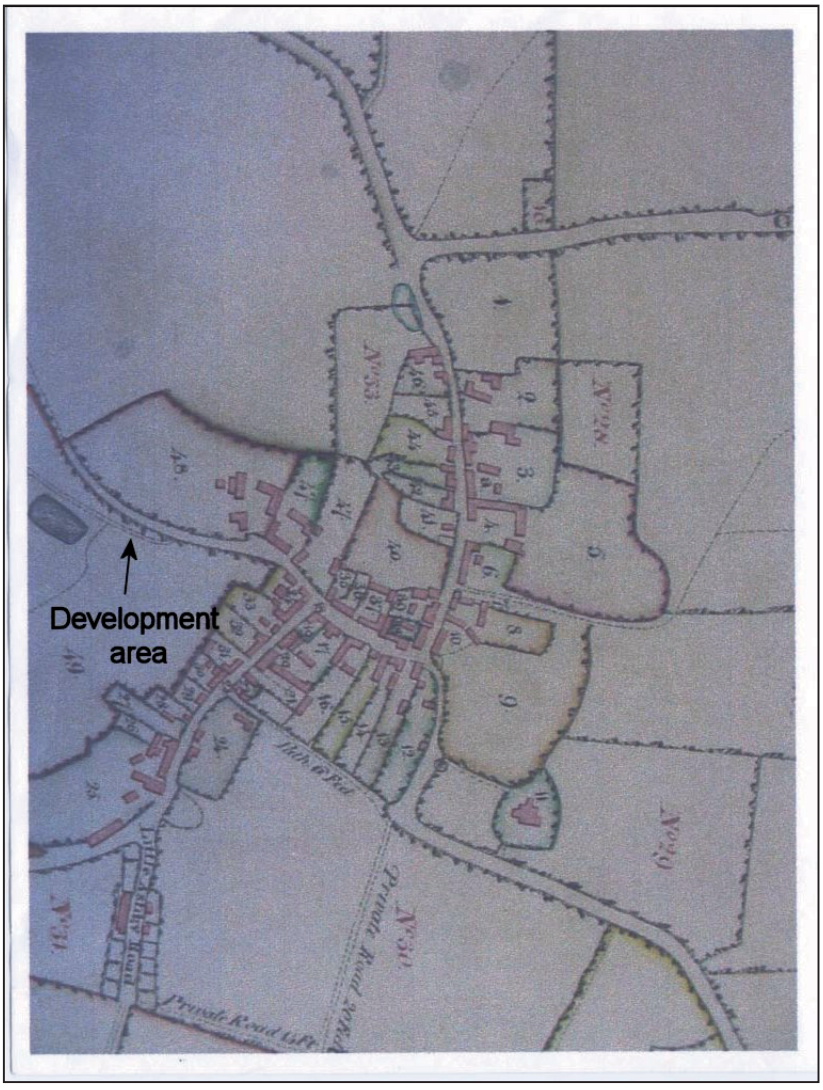

Figure 2

1796 Enclosure Map of Dunton Bassett. NTS.

The buildings of the Manor House (No 48) are shown although these are not named as such until the 1885 OS map (Fig. 3). Very little has changed by the time of the 1885 OS map. The development area remains open pasture with a sheepwash marked. The school is also marked on this map (Fig. 3).

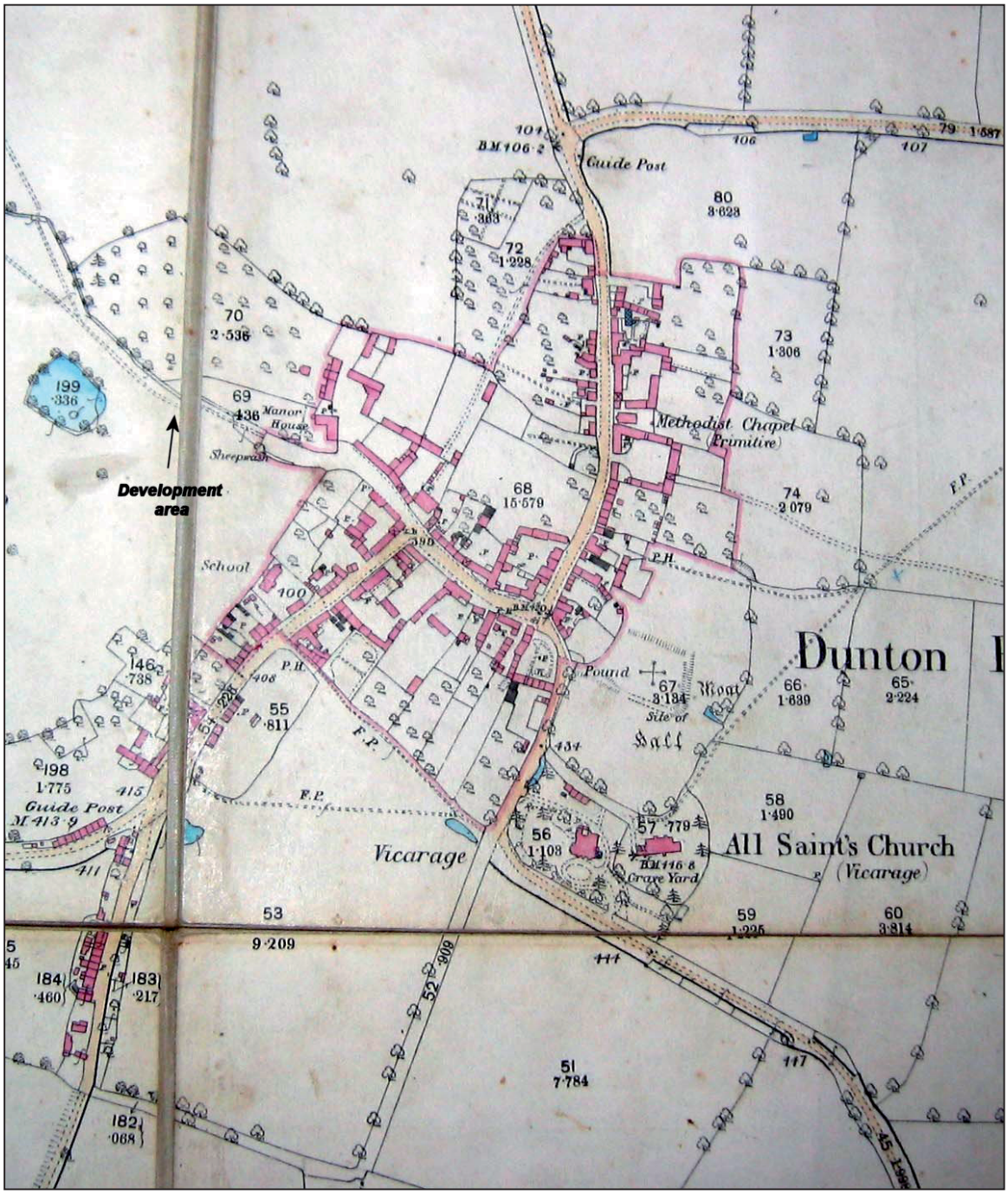

Figure 3 1885 Ordnance Survey map of the village. NTS.

4.2 Earthwork Survey

The earthwork survey was conducted in 2003. An EDM was used to plot the lines of earthworks within and surrounding the development area. This was then drawn by hand using hachures to get a detailed earthwork plot (Priest & Jones 2003). The recorded earthworks included those within and immediately to the south of the development area.

The site slopes significantly from south-east to north-west and the main earthworks appear to lie further south on the higher land along the western side of the village. There is a distinct hollow way running east to west and most of the likely areas for buildings are here. It seems likely that the development area represents the edge of the settlement site and comprises mainly banks and small trackways associated with agricultural and pastoral practices (Fig. 4).

Four sets of earthworks fell within the excavation area (outlined in red on Fig. 4). D appeared to be a flat platform, possibly a house platform although it is very slight and the majority of the other potential platforms are at a higher level to the south. The earthworks around E look very disturbed and probably represent dumping from the construction of the buildings along the eastern boundary. F is a possible small trackway and H is a large rounded bank running alongside a hollow that appears to be a trackway of some kind.

After consultation with the contractor, as much as possible of the earthworks to the north and west of the excavation were preserved within the scheme.

5. Aims and objectives

The aims of the fieldwork as specified in the Project Design (ULAS 03/722) were to:

- Accurately date and phase occupation within the site
- Locate and or identify specific activities taking place on or near the site
- Establish the form and function of medieval activity on the site.

It was also felt that the site has the potential to contribute towards the following research included within the English Heritage (1997) and East Midlands Archaeological Research Frameworks Agenda.

The evolution of Medieval Villages (Lewis 2001) Undeveloped village core areas are scarce and of vital importance in understanding the development of villages. Medieval evidence (11th – 15th centuries) may be significant in understanding the evolution of the village.

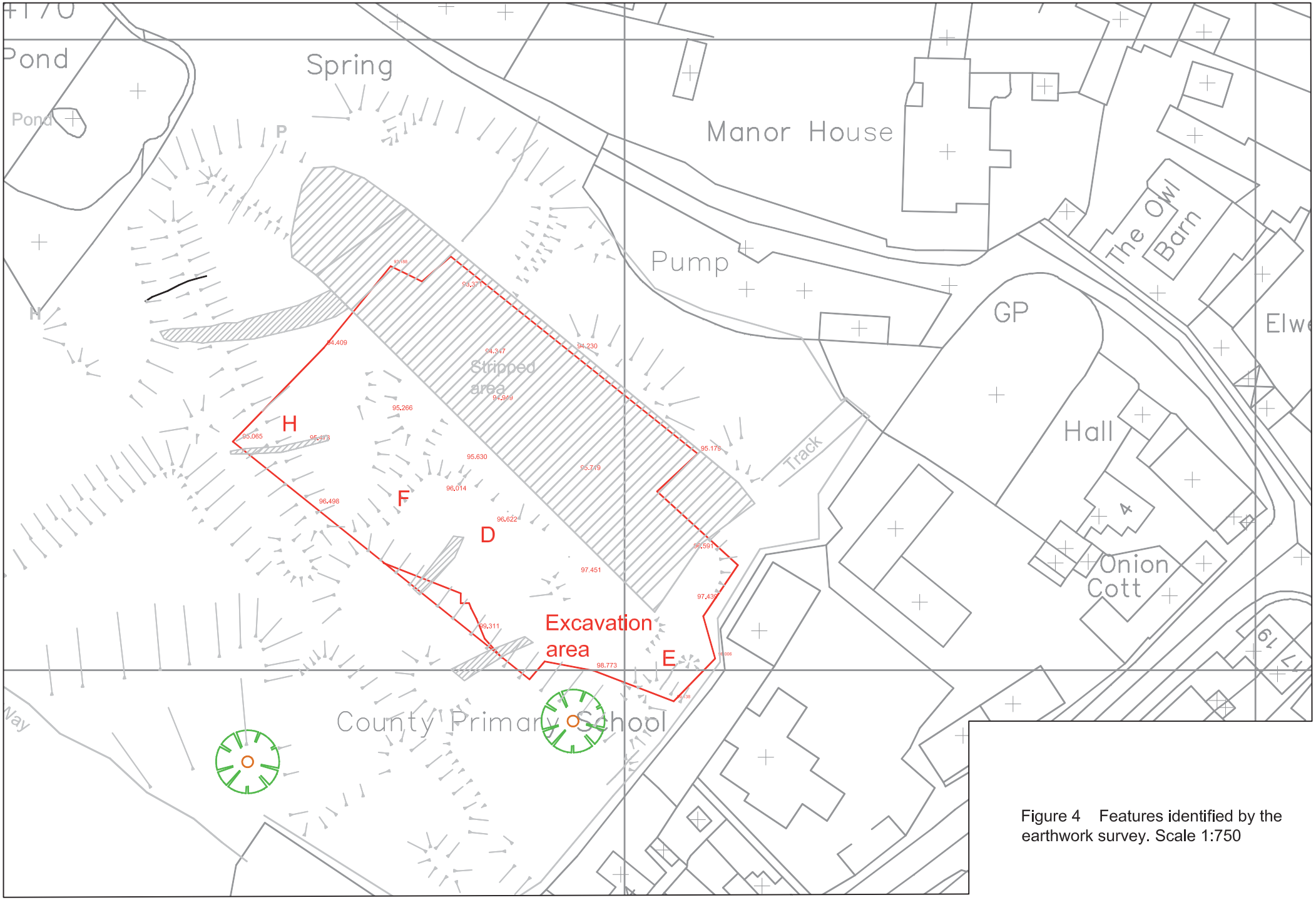

Figure 4 Features identified by the earthwork survey. Scale 1:750

4. Methodology

The site was excavated using a large 360^{o} Machine with a toothless ditching bucket. Earthwork deposits were removed in spits under archaeological supervision until the top of archaeological features were encountered. The archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and planned and samples of the recorded features were excavated and recorded by plans and sections at an appropriate scale and photographs. The site grid was tied into the National Grid using the EDM. A metal detector was used to scan the surface and the spoil for any metal finds.

5. Results

The initial topsoil strip revealed a series of build-up layers, all very similar and presumably used to create the banks and earthworks visible above ground (contexts 17/6). Once these layers had been stripped the features uncovered fell into several distinct categories. These included features associated with earthworks, modern features (disturbance and land drains), medieval features, later prehistoric features and Neolithic features (Fig. 5). Due to the sheer numbers of contexts, separate site matrices have been produced for the medieval and later features (Appendix I), later prehistoric features (Appendix II) and Neolithic features (Appendix III).

5.1 Earthworks, Modern and Medieval features

Along the south-east border in the vicinity of earthworks E (Fig. 4), the ground appears to be heavily disturbed and a number of modern cut features were noted (Fig. 5). There were also a number of modern land drains crossing the site (Fig. 5). The top of bank H, revealed a finely metalled surface along its length (24), suggesting that it might be some kind of trackway. Excavations through the width of the bank revealed a number of clay make-up layers. Pottery from the metalled surface included a sherd of iron-washed salt glazed stoneware (mid – late 18th century). The layers beneath the surface produced earlier pottery, but also four earthenware sherds suggesting that the construction of this feature was later than the mid 17th century (Appendix IV-VI).

Hollow F when stripped (Fig. 4) had a compacted clay layer beneath it (Fig. 5: (18)) that may have been a possible surface or alternatively may have been part of a drainage channel. Although a sherd of Roman greyware pottery was recovered from (18), four sherds of earthernware pottery and a further two sherds of earthernware from (95) below layer (18) suggest that like Bank H this may be a relatively recent trackway or at least that it has been used since the mid 17th century.

Excavation of two machine-dug trenches through this clay deposit revealed a number of narrow gullies all running in the same direction (north-west – south-east). These gullies (Fig. 6: (183) [184], (185) [186], (187) [188], (189) [190]) were narrow and shallow and appear to be drainage channels (Plate 1). Several land drains were noted following a similar alignment. Just east of (18) was a semi-circular deposit of darker clay, which appears to be alluvial infill of a natural hollow (Fig. 5, (19)). A number of other similar hollow infills were noted across the site.

Plate 1
Alluvial deposit (18) and drainage gullies beneath it.

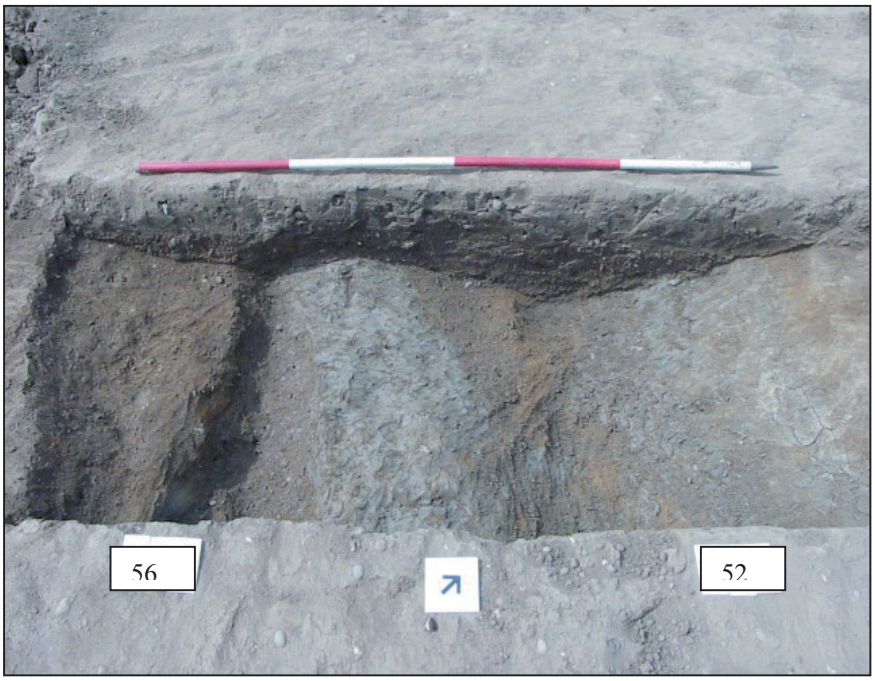

Plate 2
Medieval drainage gullies (55) [56] and (15) [52].

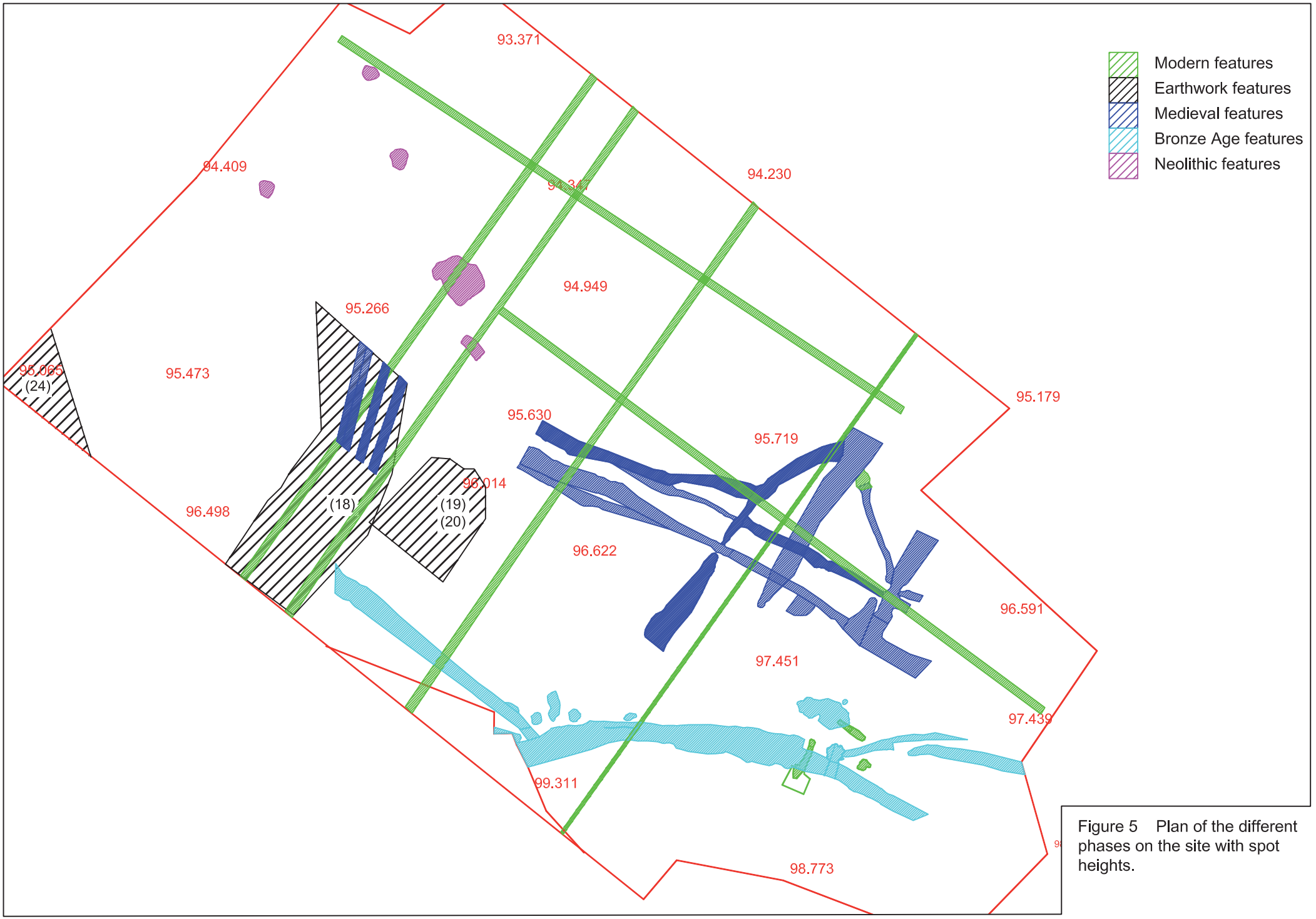

Figure 5 Plan of the different phases on the site with spot heights.

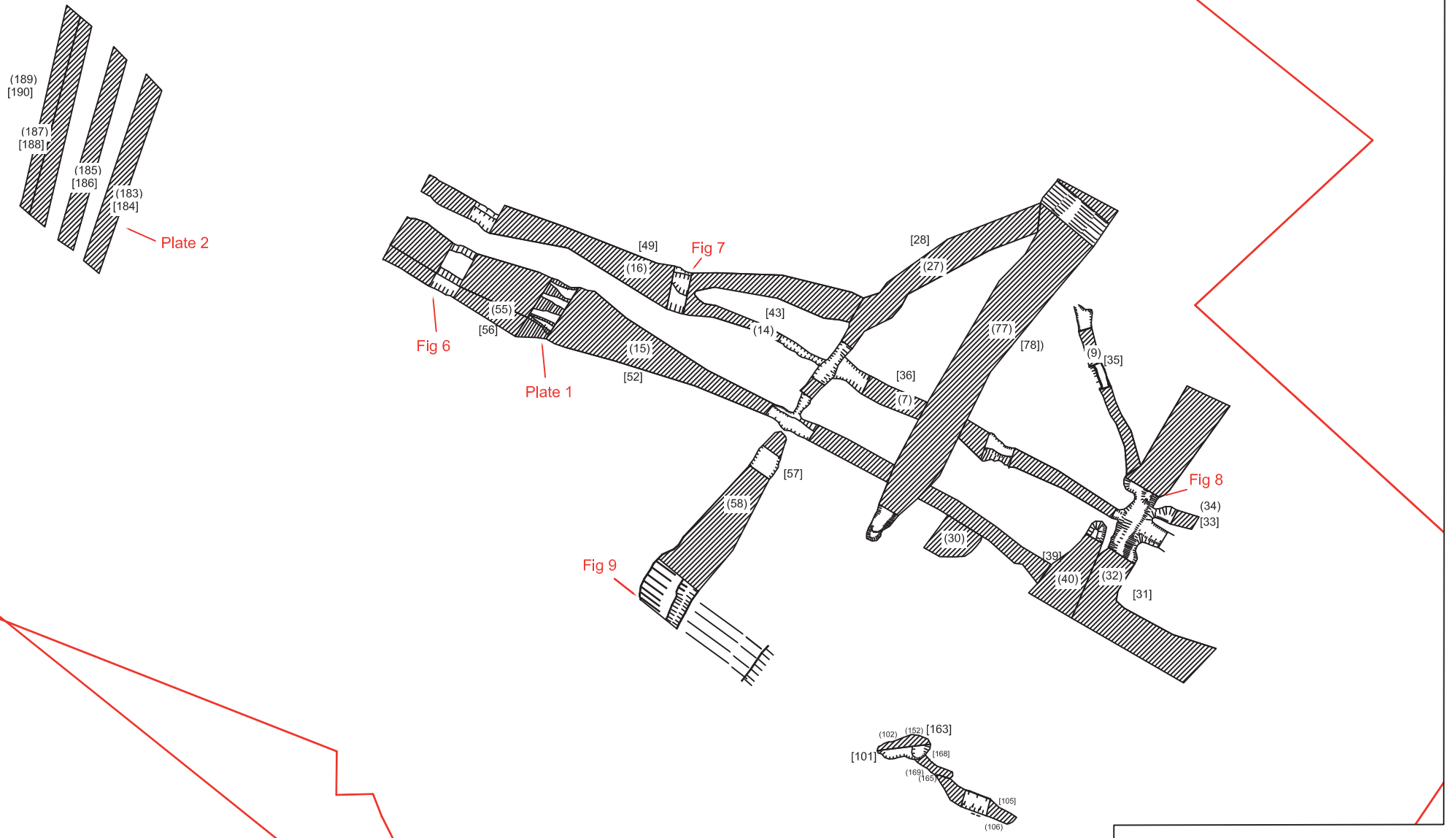

Figure 6 Plan of the medieval features beneath the earthworks. Scale 1:200

Beneath the earthwork build-up layers were a number of medieval gullies criss-crossing the site in the centre (Figs 5 & 6). All of the gullies contained very similar fills, comprising mainly mid – dark brown uniform silty sand with a few small rounded pebbles with some of the deeper ones had more clayey fills towards the base.

To the south-east was a short gully (Fig. 6: [105] (106)) culminating in a number of shallow intercutting pits/gullies [164] (165), [168] (169), [163] (152), [101] (102)). All of these were very shallow and their relationships hard to decipher.

There appeared to be two main gullies running north-west – south-east (Fig 6). Gully [52] (15) widens at the western end. At least one other gully was noted at this end (55) [56] and may in fact include a number of other gullies or recuts on the same alignment (Fig. 7, Plate 2). Gully [52] contained a small post-hole cut into the top of it [51] (50).

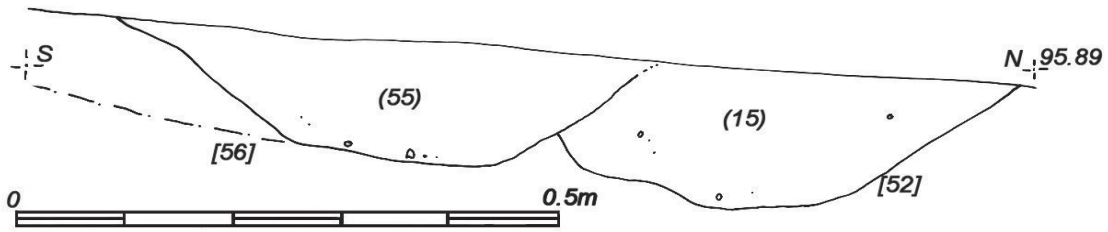

Figure 7 East facing section through gullies [56] and [52].

To the north of this lay a second gully [49] (16). This appears to curve northwards to join another feature and cuts through a smaller, narrower gully [43] (14) (Figs 6 & 8), which continues on to join gully [28] at right angles. Another linear feature (7) [36] continues eastwards on the other side of [28] which may in fact be the same gully as [43] (14) (Fig.6).

Cutting through these features are two larger ditches running north-east – south-west. Ditch [78] (77) was wider than most of the other gullies (*c.* 1.2m wide) with a butt end at its southern extent (Fig. 6). It narrows significantly to the south and becomes much shallower although this may be due to truncation as this end lies much higher on the slope. This features lay directly beneath a spread of dark brown silty sand (4), which may well have been formed by colluvial material infilling the top of this ditch.

This in turn cut through a second north-east – south-west ditch (Fig. 6: [28] (27)). Gully [28] appeared to end where it intersected with gully [52], with a second wider gully continuing on the other side running southwards (Figs 6 & 9: [58] (57)). Again this gully was significantly shallower and narrower to the south on the higher ground probably due to truncation (Fig. 9).

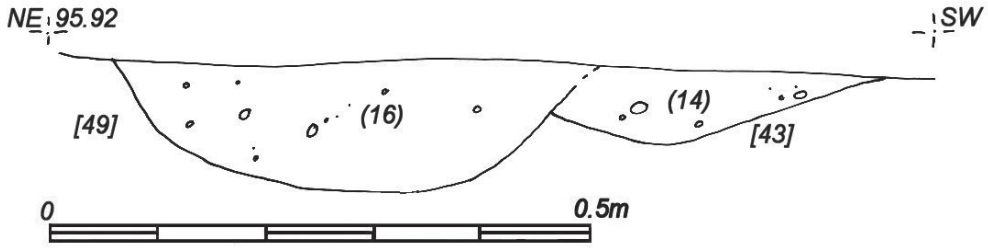

Figure 8 North-west facing section through gullies [49] and [43].

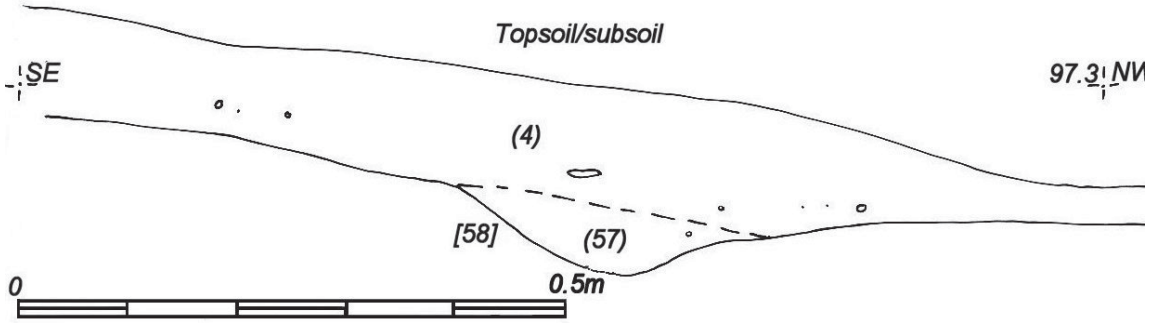

Figure 9 North-east facing section of gully [58] beneath colluvial spread (4).

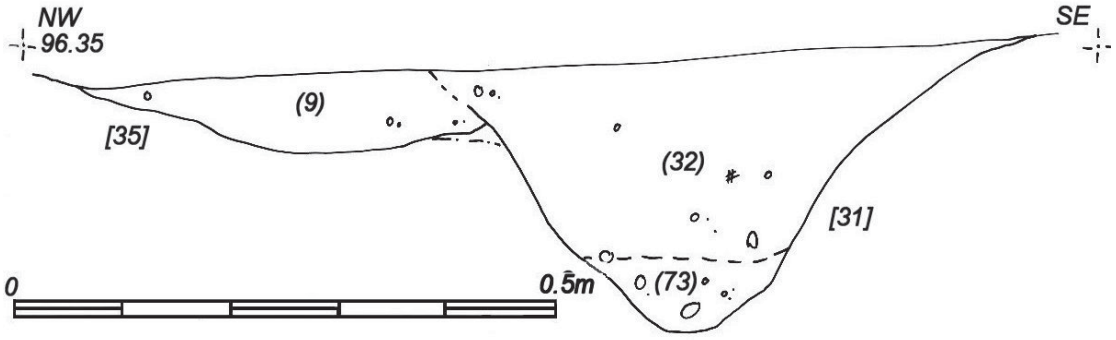

Figure 10 South-west facing section of ditch [31] and gully [35].

None of these gullies could be traced further to the north, but probably continue beneath the made ground layers visible at the finished depth of the excavation. To the west on the lower ground, the ditches may have been truncated away or simply may not have been visible in the multi-coloured clay alluvial deposits.

To the east lay another gully running north-east – south-west (Fig. 6: [31] (32)). Both gullies [36] and [52] ran into it at right angles but their relationships were uncertain. Gully [31] was cut through by an earlier butt-ended gully [39] (40), which had been truncated away to the south. It also cut through at least two other gullies including [33] (34) and [35] (9) and was deeper than the other features of this type with a rounded base and a clayey lower fill (Fig. 10: (73)). Gully [35] was somewhat different to the others having a flat bottomed base (Fig. 10) and being on a completely different alignment (north-west – south-east).

A small patch of metalling was discovered north of gully [52] - context (30). Only *c.* 1.5m of this feature remained with the rest being truncated. It may well represent a possible yard surface or trackway of some kind. Excavation showed a clay make-up deposit beneath it. The metalled surface appeared to have been cut through by gully [52] but the relationship is not entirely certain.

A number of flints were recovered from the earthwork make-up layers and the gullies (Appendix VII). These are assumed to be residual. The medieval deposits and features also produced a quantity of bone including the remains of cattle, sheep, pig and horse (Appendix VIII).

The earthwork make-up includes a number of sherds of Roman pottery (27 sherds) suggesting some activity in this area during the 1st – 2nd century. There are also fine Stamford and Lincolnshire wares, suggesting some early 12th century activity, 12th - early 13th century sherds (Potters Marsden, Coventry, Stanion Lyveden type wares) and later 13th – 14th century pottery types (Chilvers Cotton). Later activity from the 14th century and onwards activity is shown by Midland Purple wares (Appendix IV – VI).

There are a number of fragments of Roman pottery from the gullies including two sherds from [36], two sherds from [52], three sherds from gully [28], one sherd from gully [78] and one sherd from [92]. Although this shows that there was some Roman activity in the area, all of the features containing Roman pottery also contain medieval pottery and it appears that the Roman material is residual.

None of the gullies contain pottery from the Late Saxon period, although there are a number of sherds of Potters Marston and Stanion Lyveden type wares (25 sherds) dating from *c.* 1100. The only later pottery is a single sherd of Chilvers Coton ware from the top of gully [52], and 13 sherds of Chilvers Coton from gully [36] (dating from the mid 13th century). Gully [36] also contains four sherds of post-medieval material but as a land drain coincides with it for much of its length, this could be residual (Appendix IV – VI).

Samples were taken and analysed from the base of three of the gullies (Contexts (55), (15), (58)). The sample was dominated by cereals including wheat, wheat chaff, barley, oat, as well as a few legumes and arable weeds (Appendix IX). The sample is

typical of medieval sites and suggests waste from food preparation perhaps raked from hearths and accumulating in the ditches.

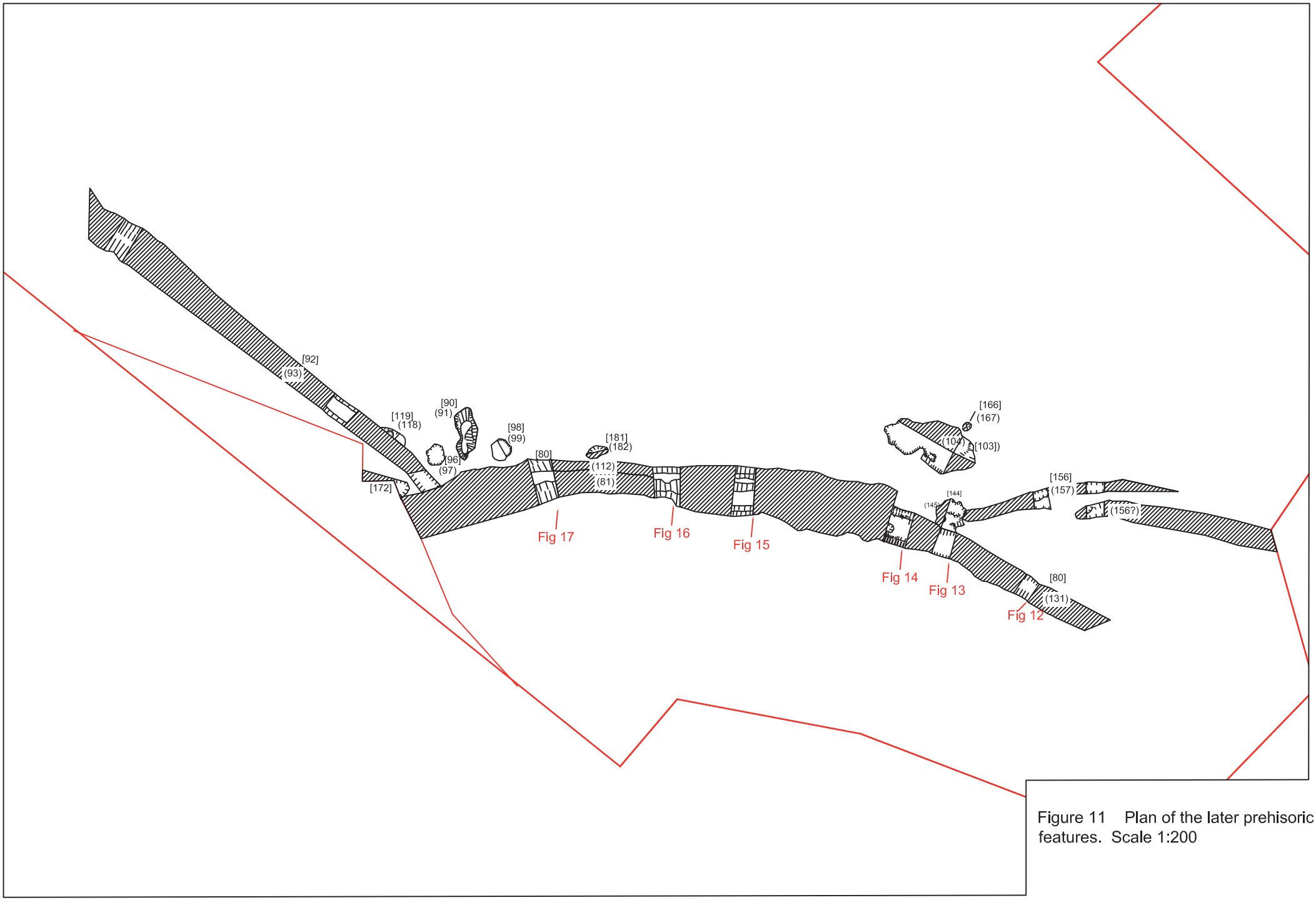

Figure 11 Plan of the later prehisoric features. Scale 1:200

5.2 Later Prehistoric features

The south-east corner of the area lay on higher ground than the rest of the site with sandier subsoil. A number of cut features were noted including what appeared to be the bases of several pits and gullies and a large curving ditch (Figs 5 and 11).

The ditch [80] curved to the south possibly enclosing the flat higher area of land to the south of the development area (Fig. 11, Plate 3). The ditch itself was very irregular in plan and several excavated sections through it produced differing profiles with numerous recuts as well as a number of other features on the same alignment (Fig. 11). A layer of orange-brown sand appeared in the top of the ditch on the eastern side (Figs 13 & 14: (133)). On occasions this spread out on either side of the ditch cut itself giving the appearance of a very irregular plan and may well be the truncated remains of the upper ditch fill spread out.

The eastern section of the ditch lay beneath the disturbed ground (25) and was more badly truncated than to the west. The excavation through this section of ditch revealed a fairly uniform sloping profile with a rounded base and an orangey-brown sandy fill (Fig. 12: (131)). The next excavated section of ditch to the west showed what appeared to be the same ditch but cutting through an earlier one (Fig. 13: [148]) with orange-brown sandy silt fills (192) (193).

The same profile was visible in the next excavated section to the west (Fig. 14), although here there appeared to be a much greater complexity of deposits within ditch [148], mainly comprising thin layers of fine silts and sands. The base of ditch [148] also appears to be wider at this point. There also appears to be to be a smaller shallow gully [146] with a greyer sandy fill (147) (132) cut into the top of the ditch.

At this point the ditch appears in plan to widen (Fig. 11). Excavations produced evidence for a shallow flat-bottomed gully (Fig. 14: [136]). This may be the same as gully [146] as the fills were very similar. However the earlier gully [148] has either vanished or been obliterated by the cut for the main ditch [80]. The fills for [80] at this point comprised a complex layering of silted deposits (Fig. 15), over a more uniform orange-brown sand deposit (142), suggesting that perhaps the upper levels may have been cleaned or recut at some point after the base had filled up.

The ditch then appears to narrow again and the next profile to the west shows a single ditch cut with a number of silty fills (Fig. 16), although again the mixed nature of the upper fills could represent cleaning/recutting. A very shallow gully does appear, but its relationship with the main ditch [80] is uncertain (Fig. 16: [154]). The excavated section to the far west is also fairly uniform and with orange brown silts and sands (Fig. 17). This is wider at the base and may include recuts and/or other features.

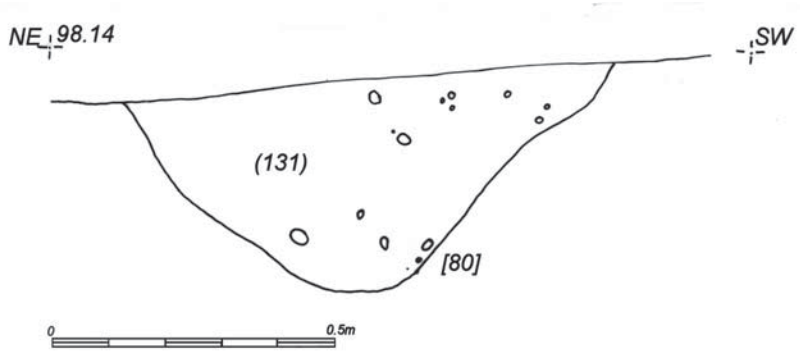

Figure 12 North-west facing section 1 through ditch [80] (reversed).

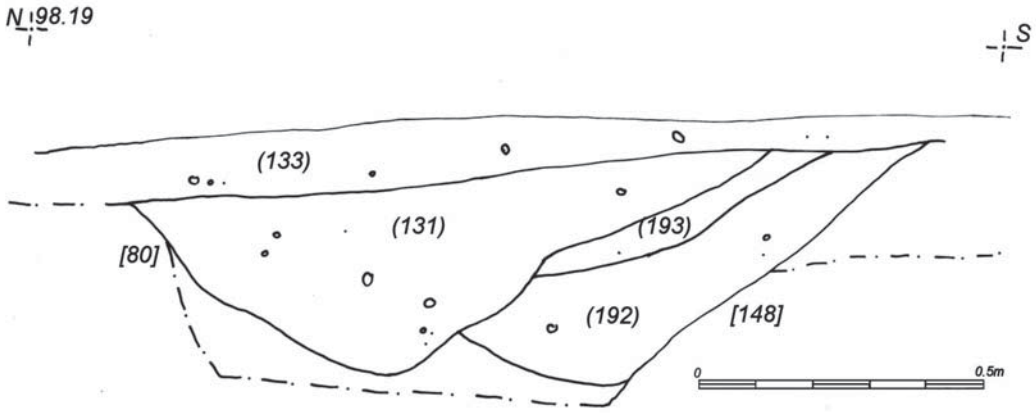

Figure 13 West facing section 2 through ditch [80] (reversed).

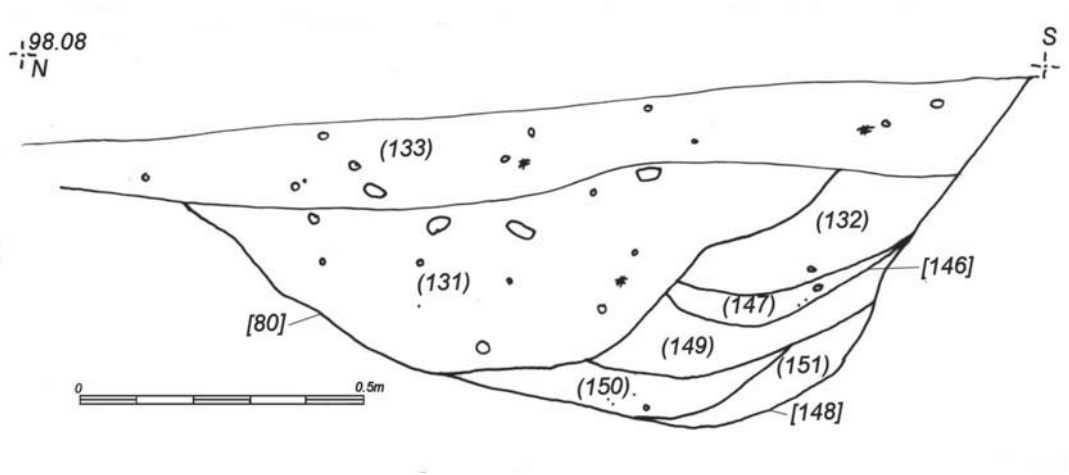

Figure 14 West facing section 3 through ditch [80] (reversed).

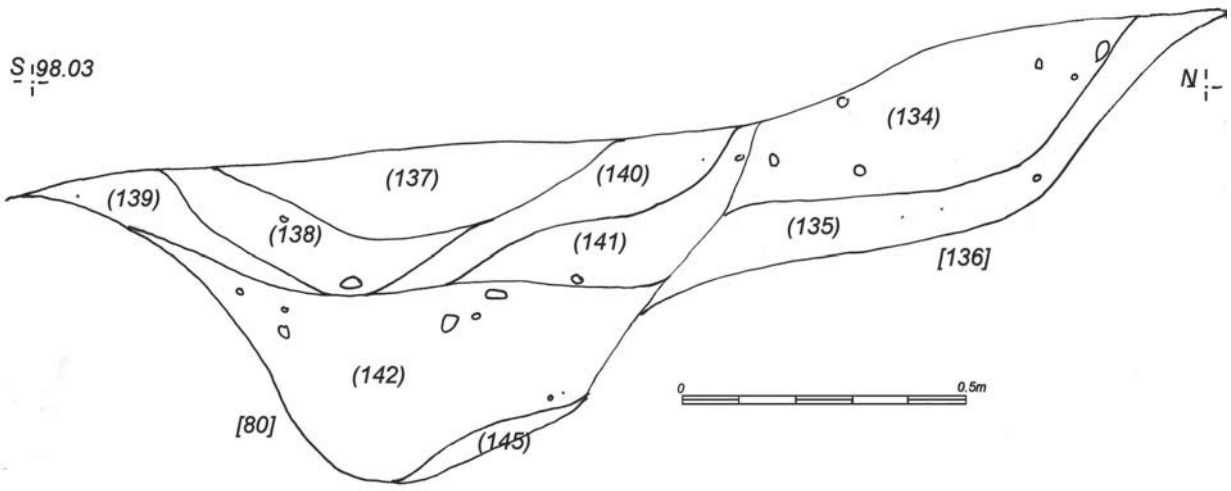

Figure 15 West facing section 4 through ditch [80] (reversed).

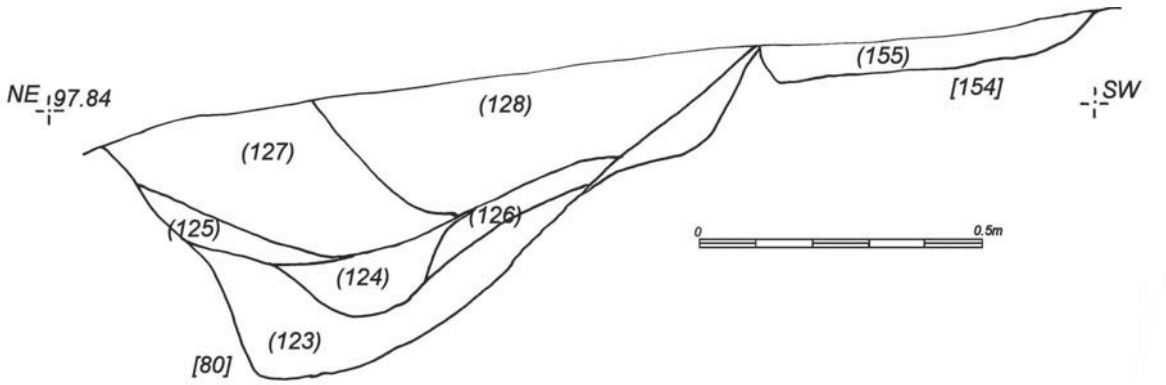

Figure 16 North-west facing section 5 though ditch [80].

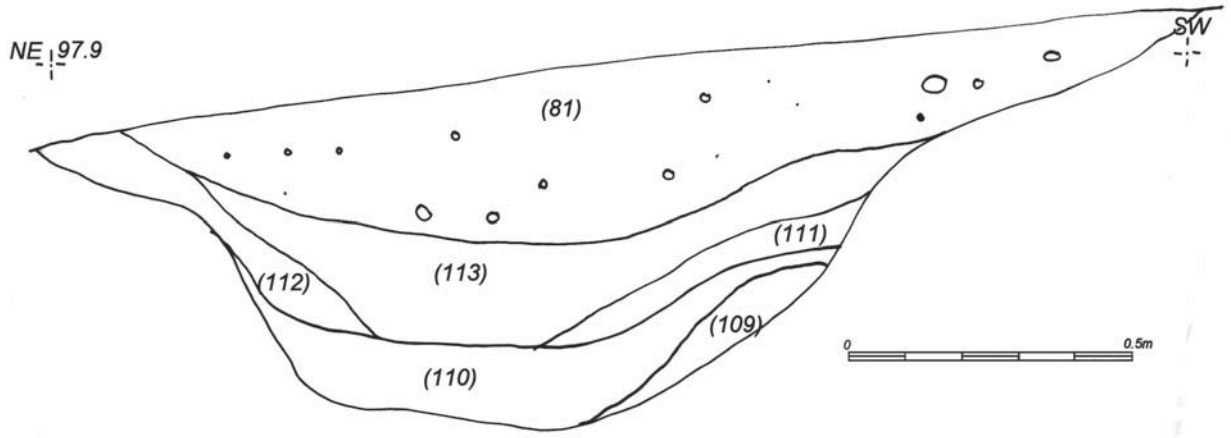

Figure 17 North-west facing section 6 though ditch [80] (reversed).

Plate 3 Enclosure ditch [80] looking west

Plate 4 Pit [103] and other associated features. Ditch [80] is to the right.

All of the other cut features in this area appeared to be outside (north of) the ditch [80]. These included a number of shallow gullies (Fig. 11). Gully [156] was only a maximum of 0.15m deep. This appears to be cut by another very shallow feature [144] *c.* 0.12m deep.

Another more substantial gully was recorded to the west (Fig. 11: [92]). This was approximately 0.25 – 0.3m deep and 0.9m wide cutting through another gully ([172]) and a pit ([119] (118)) as well as the enclosure ditch fills at this end ((178), (177), (176)). Just to the north of this were five irregular shaped shallow pits (Fig. 11: ([119] (118), [90] (91), [96] (97) [98] (99), [181] (182)). All of these comprised the same brown sand fill with irregular sides and bases often disturbed by animal/root action through the soft sand. To the north-east was a much larger but just as irregular and shallow pit [103] with a small post hole [166] next to it (Fig. 11, Plate 4).

Pit [90] produced 15 sherds of friable handmade pottery that may well be later prehistoric. A sherd of possibly Bronze Age pottery with a slight carination and possible applied cordon also came from one of the fills of the enclosure ditch. Two pieces of prehistoric pottery also came from the build-up overlying layers (Appendix IV).

A number of flints were recovered from the main ditch. These included 22 flakes, two flake cores, three patinated blades and three chips, a scraper and an arrowhead. The patinated flakes and blades are likely to be Mesolithic, while the arrowhead and the remaining flints are more likely to be Neolithic in date (Appendix VII). The pits also produced a number of flints including seven flakes, one blade, two bladelets, one bladelet core and a chip. Like the artefacts from the ditch these suggest a Mesolithic date. However, there is no reason to suspect that the enclosure ditch is this early. The pottery suggests a later prehistoric date, perhaps late Bronze Age, and the flint is likely to be residual.

Animal bone from the ditch and other associated features were fragmentary and appeared to be mainly cattle or cattle sized animals (Appendix VIII). Two samples were taken and analysed from the base of two features (Contexts (120) and (110). Both samples contained grains similar to those recovered from the medieval sites and probably represent contamination from later deposits (Appendix IX).

5.3 Late Neolithic pits and features

Along the lower north-west area of the site the geology changed with the subsoils becoming very clayey and alluvial. Theses layers were very mixed and there had obviously been numerous flooding episodes. Cut into these deposits were a number of features all similar containing dark clay fills with charcoal flecks and burnt stones (Figs 5 & 18).

Three of these features were rounded pits. Pits [79] (72) and [67] (11) both had sloping sides and flat bases (Figs. 18, 19, 20, Plate 5), with some of the burnt stones in pit [67] having been pushed into the clay base. Pit [59] (8) was slightly smaller and shallower. Most of the burnt and broken stones removed from the pits were relatively large in size (Plate 6).

Plate 5 Pit [79] being excavated.

Plate 6 Stones removed from Pit [67]

A fourth cut feature was recorded [54] (53) (Fig. 18). This was sub-rectangular in shape and very shallow (only 0.1m deep) with a land drain cutting through the centre. Like the pits it was filled with heat affected stones and dark silty clay with charcoal flecks in it (Fig. 21).

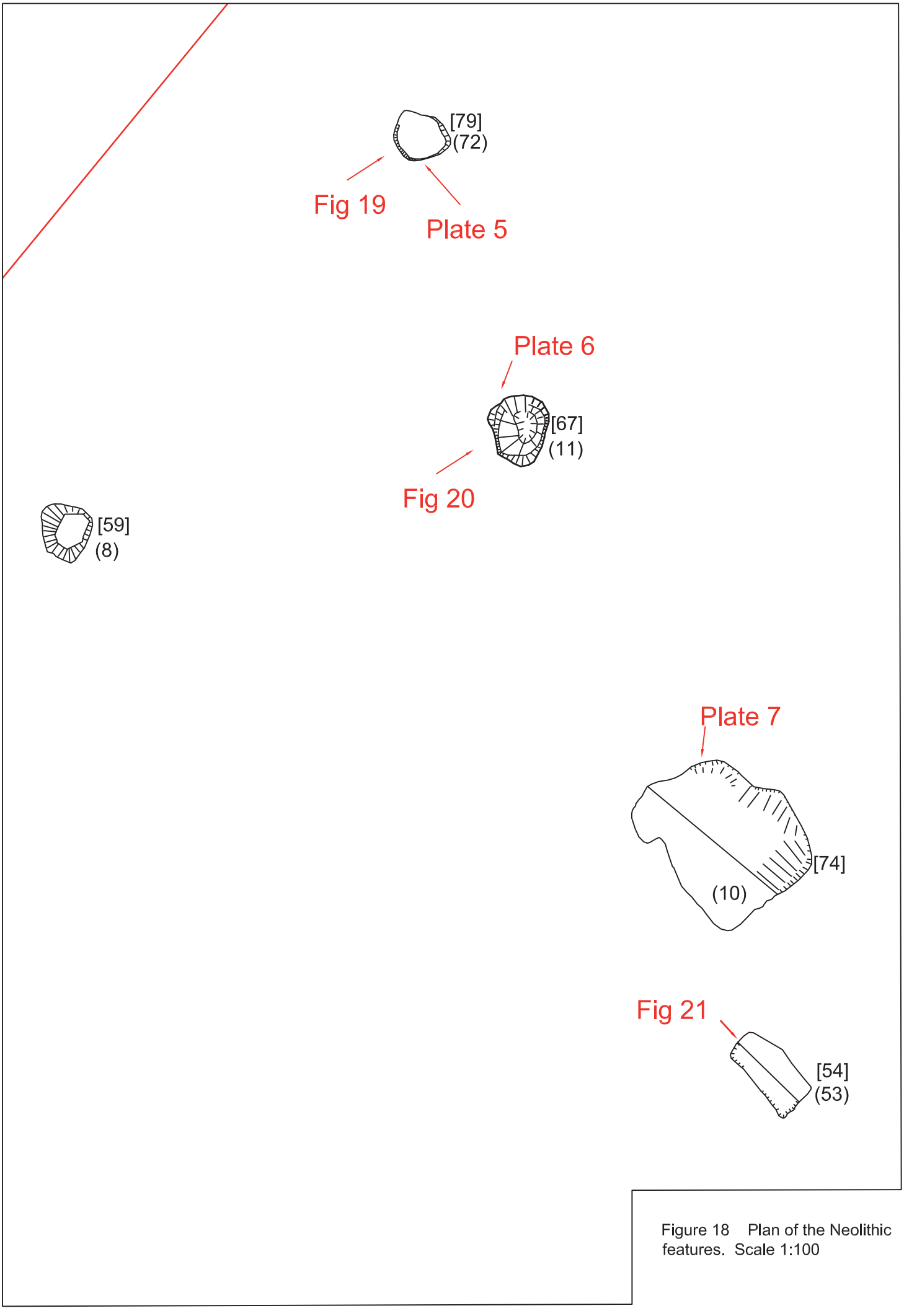

Figure 18 Plan of the Neolithic features. Scale 1:100

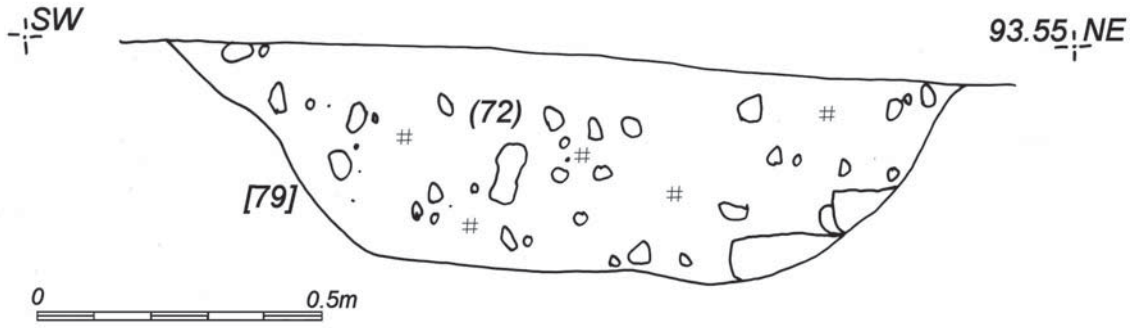

Figure 19 South-east facing section of pit [79].

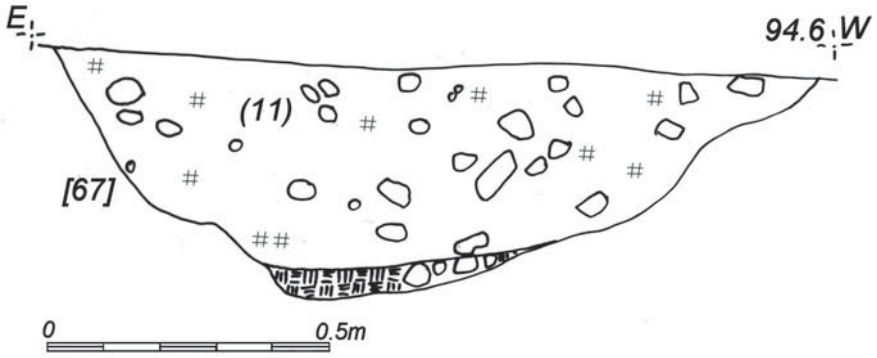

Figure 20 South facing section of pit [67].

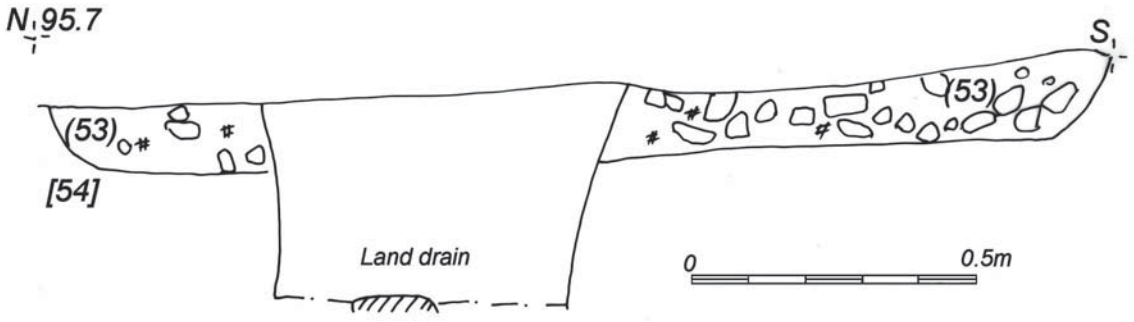

Figure 21 North facing section of Pit [54].

Between this square pit and the rounded pits was a large irregular feature containing a similar fill to the other pits including large quantities of heat affected stones (Fig. 18: [74] (10)). Attempted excavation of half of this anomaly showed that it was very shallow with the heat affected stones apparently pressed into the natural clay (Plate 7). Rather than being a pit cut into the subsoil this appears to be a spread of material that over time has become compressed into the clay, perhaps filling what may have been a natural hollow.

All of the features associated with this phase were relatively shallow and truncated.

Plate 7 Spread of charcoal rich soil and heat affected stones (10).

One of the pits ([79] (72)) produced two polished axe refits (i.e. both pieces fit together with each other) from the fill. This would suggest a possible late Neolithic date for these features. The number of other flints recovered from the pits are more likely to be of an earlier Mesolithic date and are likely to be residual (Appendix VII). Some bone fragments (mainly cattle bone) were also recovered from the pits (Appendix VIII).

A single sherd of Roman pottery was found in the top of pit (10) although this is likely to be residual due to the presence of a land drain cutting through the features (Appendix V).

Samples were taken from two of the pits (Contexts (72) and (11). As expected these both contained abundant charcoal and stones cracked from heating. However there were also cereal grains (wheat and barley) and a few weed seeds suggesting some kind of food perpetration although there was not enough of a sample to be more specific (Appendix IX).

6. Discussion

6.1 Early Prehistoric activity

The earliest activity on site is attested by the flint artefacts recovered. The earliest flint is a possibly hafted burin resembling some Upper Palaeolithic examples from elsewhere in the country (Appendix VII). If this is so it could indicate that the area was possibly being utilised as far back as 13,000bp.

The recovered flints also include a number of bladelets, cores, a *flanc de nucleus* and a number of patinated pieces that would indicate that the area was occupied during the Mesolithic period (approx. 10,000 – 4500 BC).

6.2 Neolithic Activity

The pits on the lower, north-western area of the site are suggested to be Later Neolithic in date based on the flint and the two Langdale axe fragment refits. The large amounts of burnt stone and charcoal within the features suggests that this may have be an area where cooking or other similar activity was being carried out (he fragmented burnt stone within the features indicate the heating of water using heated stones), and is comparable to other sites in the East Midlands characterised as 'Burnt Mounds' and considered to be of Late Neolisthic/Bronze Age date (Beamish and Ripper, 2000, Ripper 2004).

Burnt mounds are generally identified by a spread of heat affected stones, ash and charcoal and often lie close to a water source. Although some have argued that they may have been used to produce steam for sauna type lodges (Barfield & Hodder 1987), or for dyeing processes (A. Brown pers. comm.), some have been interpreted as cooking areas (Ripper 2004). Stones are collected in large numbers, heated in a fire then plunged into a cold water trough, producing boiling water and steam with which to cook/cure food. As stones are reused they shatter into smaller and smaller pieces and became unusable. At this point they would be dumped along with the debris from the hearths creating a spread of burnt material (the burnt mound). Attempts to cook a meal using similar techniques suggest that 450 lts of water could be boiled in 30 – 35 minutes and cook a leg of mutton in under 4 hours (O'Kelly 1954).

Features associated with them include hearths, and troughs (basins capable of holding water that are often clay or timber lined) as well as charcoal filled cooking pits (Ripper 1997a & b). At Dunton Bassett, the features containing the burnt stones lie close to a spring and associated stream as well as a pond (although it is not known whether the pond existed in prehistoric times). The environmental samples suggest that food preparation was taking place nearby although it was unable to distinguish between simple hearth remains or more extensive burnt mounds. However, the spread

of burnt stone found pressed into a clay hollow (Fig. 18, [74], Plate 7) could be interpreted as the remnants of a pile of burnt discarded stone and cooking waste and although no wood lined trough was found, the clay that the pits are cut into is strong enough to retain water (Plate 6).

The features at Dunton Bassett seem to contain many of the characteristics of a burnt mound site. It lies close to water, contains evidence for a possible trough (although not wood lined), hearths and the usage of stones to heat water along with evidence for a waste mound of charcoal and heat affected stones. The environmental samples suggest that food preparation was taking place nearby, however only a few fragments of animal bones, which could suggest a cooking/feasting function, were recovered from the pits - although if the bone waste had been tossed out with the burnt stone, they may have been truncated away.

6.3 Later prehistoric activity

The archaeological deposits on the higher ground to the south-west appear to form a coherent group of similar features. These included a continuous ditch curving around the higher area of the site. The fragments of pottery that were recovered from the ditch and the layers above it indicates a later prehistoric date from the Bronze Age through to the Iron Age. A fragment of pottery from the ditch was slightly carinated with a cordon suggesting possible parallels with other Bronze Age vessels (Appendix IV). It seems likely that this feature represents an enclosure ditch encompassing the higher area of ground to the south-west of the site probably of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date. There are no lithics consistent with this period; the majority of flints have a suggested Neolithic-Early Bronze Age date range and are likely to be residual artefacts.

There appears to have been some mixing of the upper deposits with a spread of orange-brown sandy material overlying the ditch in places (133). This may represent the remnants of a bank created by the excavated contents of the ditch. The subsoil here is very sandy and any material would have been quickly eroded away. Many of the ditch sections indicate some natural silting which may also be the eroded remains of a bank, although it appears that the ditch was cleaned and recut several times.

The pits outside the ditch all comprise a similar fill and appear to belong to the same phase as the enclosure ditch. These are mainly very shallow and irregular in plan and have probably been badly truncated leaving only the bases of features. Pit [90] produced 15 sherds of friable handmade pottery that may well be Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date (Appendix IV).

The animal bone from the ditch and other associated features tells us little. All of the bone was fragmentary and appeared to be mainly cattle or cattle sized animals probably representing waste deposits (Appendix VIII).

6.4 Roman activity

A number of Roman pottery sherds were recovered from the site (a total of 48 sherds). However, no specifically Roman features noted, all the Roman pottery coming from features or layers with medieval and later pottery suggesting it is probably likely to be

residual. However the presence of nearly 50 sherds of pottery indicates that there was some kind of domestic activity here, most likely during the mid – late first century/ second century. There may perhaps have been early Roman occupation on the upper slopes to the south and artefacts have been washed downslope and become incorporated into later features.

6.5 The Medieval Settlement

The earthworks within and in the vicinity of the site appear to represent medieval settlement of some kind, possibly the remnants of part of the ancient village of Dunton Bassett. The main area of the settlement however is likely to be to the south of the site where there is a well-defined hollow way and numerous flat areas that may be house platforms. Within the site itself the earthworks are less well defined and appear to be features on the outskirts of the main area, perhaps holding areas for animals and associated tracks and hollows. The proximity to water might also suggest a good location for animals.

Pottery from excavated sections suggest that some of the features – specifically a metalled bank/trackway and a hollow trackway (earthworks H & F) were used during the mid 17th century, although there is no reason why this cannot represent the reuse of an older feature. The gullies and small ditches identified as medieval features occupied the middle and lower clayey areas of the site and their form suggests that they may be associated with drainage - perhaps of a higher area. Certainly the numerous gullies appear to have been re-cut time and time again consistent with keeping drainage channels open. Their position on the lower ground might also suggest they were used to drain water from upslope to the stream/spring area. The modern land drains appear to follow a similar criss-cross alignment. There was no evidence for structures of any kind - only one small patch of metalling was recorded cut through by a number of gullies. This might well represent a yard surface or trackway.

Pottery from these deposits is therefore likely to have come from elsewhere – probably upslope within the main earthwork area. Most of the pottery appears to date from around *c.* 1100 with a few sherds of 13th century pottery (Appendix VI). This suggests that the channels were likely to have been open during the 12th – 13th centuries. This might indicate that the main settlement dates to around this time although Late Saxon pottery in the upper earthwork layers might suggest slightly earlier 11th century origins.

Cattle, sheep, pig and horse bone were all recovered from the medieval features, however the fragmentary nature of the bone make interpretation difficult. It seems most likely that it represents secondary deposits of domestic waste that have accumulated in the gullies from the higher main settlement area to the south (Appendix VIII). The environmental samples indicate an accumulation in the ditches/gullies of waste from food preparation. However the remains were of a fairly low density especially when compared to known settlement areas such as the charred remains recovered from Anstey village (Appendix IX), suggesting that the main settlement area lies further away.

6.6 Post-medieval

The area appears to have been utilised little since the medieval period, to the extent that the majority of earthworks are still visible as well-preserved upstanding features. Buildings are shown in the location of the Manor House on the 1795 enclosure map and they are named as 'Manor House' on the 1885 OS map.

There are also buildings along the eastern edge of the site on both maps and there are buildings still there today. Otherwise there is little within the development area itself.

There was significant quantity of post-medieval brickwork in the northern layers of the site. The local tenant farmer (Jim Freeston, who farmed it for the last 45 years until c.1998)) says that it's always been very boggy and that hardcore was continuously being tipped into it. It may be that this represents something similar from an earlier period (Wendy Warren pers comm.)

7. Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicester Heritage Section, Leicestershire County Council under the accession number A96.2003.

8. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted to a relevant local journal for publication in due course.

9. Acknowledgements

The work was carried out by Steve Jones, Vicki Priest, Sophie Clarke John Tate, Andy Coupe, Caroline Rann, Wilf Rolfe, Keith Johnson. Advice was given by Neil Finn. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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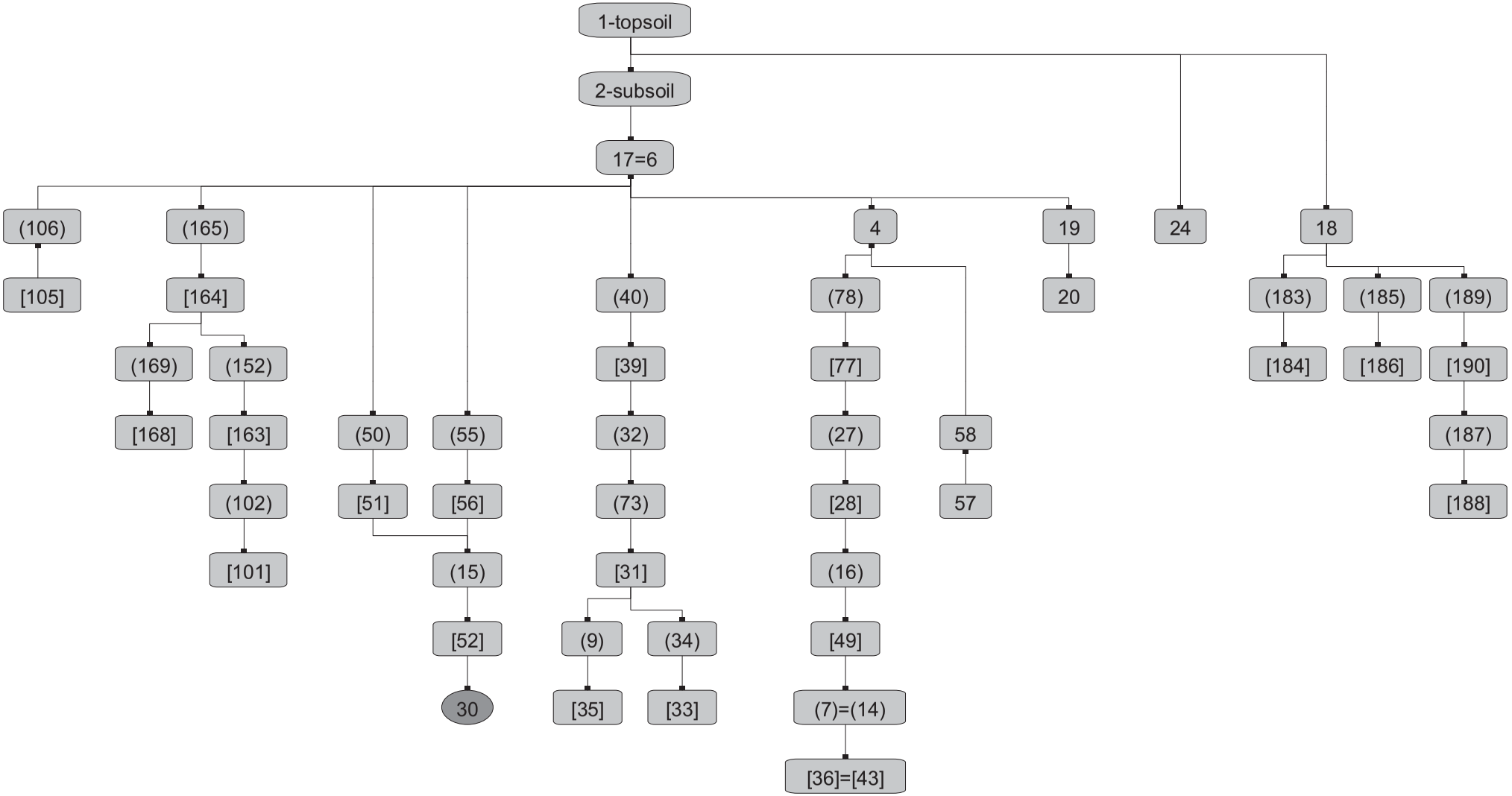
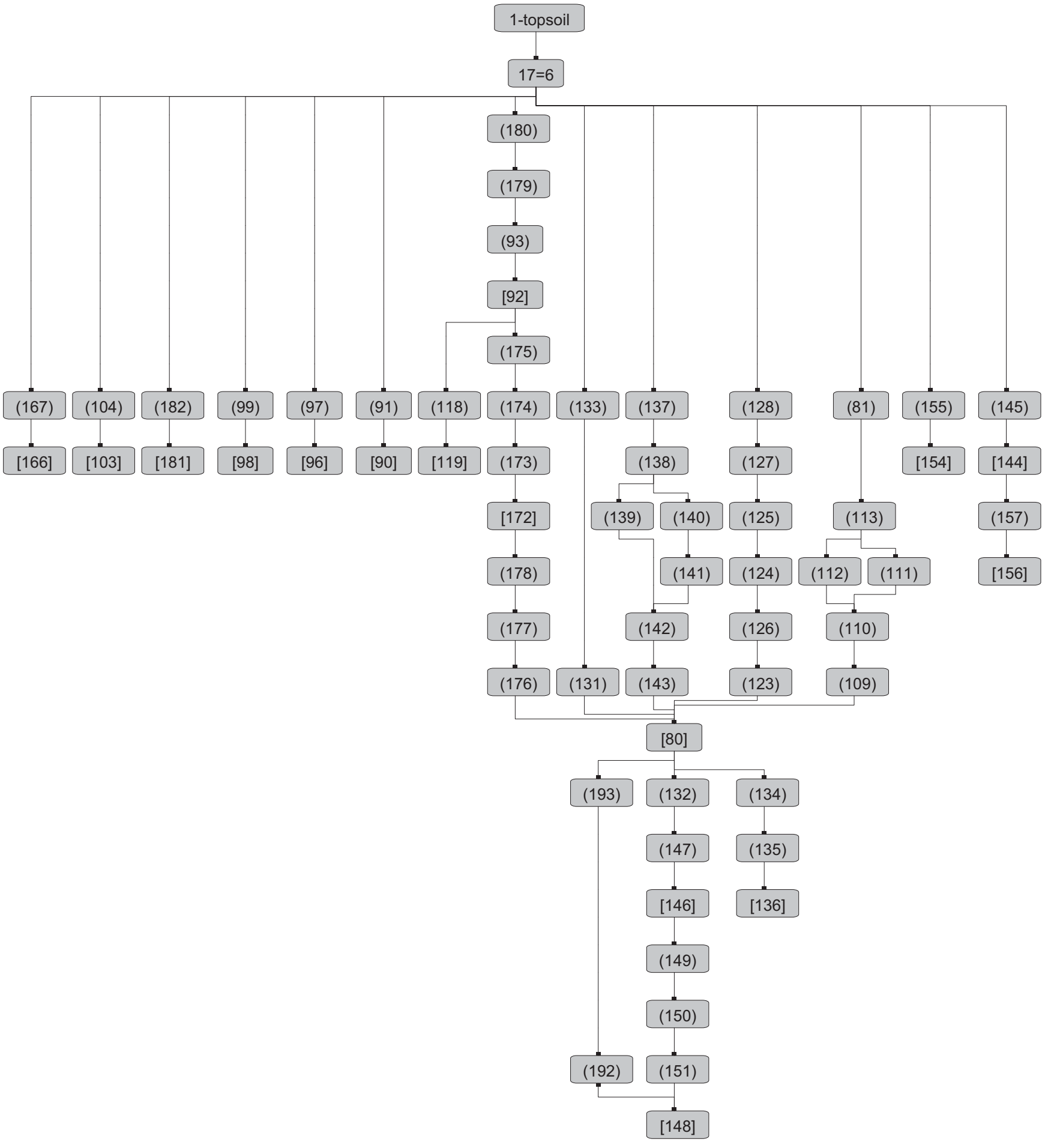
ULAS 03/722, 12/06/2003, Design Specification for Scheme of Archaeological Work: Proposed playing fields and hard play surface to the rear of Dunton Bassett Primary School, Leicestershire.

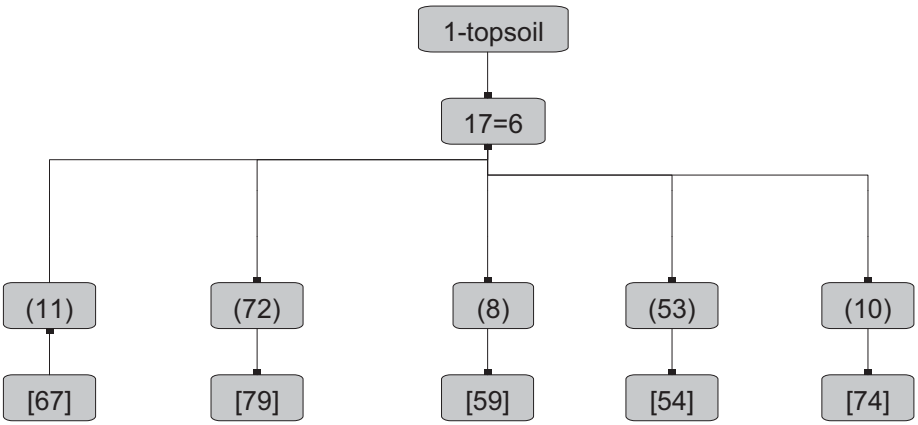
Appendix I: Site matrix for post-medieval/medieval features



Appendix II: Site matrix for later prehistoric features



Appendix III: SIte matrix for Neolithic features



Appendix IV - Prehistoric Pottery

Nicholas J. Cooper

A total of 18 diagnostically prehistoric sherds weighing 109g were retrieved. The material has been analysed by form and fabric using the Leicestershire County Museums prehistoric pottery fabric series (Marsden 1998 and 2000), with reference to the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group Guidelines (PCRG 1992), and quantified by sherd count and weight as listed below by context. The material is in poor condition with two of the sherds occurring residually in (4) and (60), one coming from the prehistoric enclosure ditch (175) and the remainder from an associated pit (91).

Context	fabric	sherds	weight	Date/comment
4 cleaning	R1	1	14	Handmade
60 0-20cm	R1	1	1	Handmade
91 10-15cm	S1	15	54	V friable handmade? Prehistoric?
175	R1	1	40	Slight carination and possible applied cordon
Total		**18**	**109**	

Fabric Analysis
Two fabrics are represented:
R1 (formerly RQ1) igneous rock inclusions (granodiorite)
Sparse to very common sub-angular igneous rock fragments (poorly sorted, most up to 5mm).
S1 Shell tempered
Moderate to very common well to poorly sorted fossil marine shell up to 8mm.

Three sherds belong to fabric R1 (formerly RQ1) (Marsden 1998 and 2000) characterised by the use of igneous rock fragments, from the Charnwood District of Leicestershire, as opening materials. However, use of this fabric spans the Bronze Age and Iron Age in the County, being used extensively in both Middle and Late Iron Age assemblages from Wanlip (Marsden 1998, 46) and Humberstone and Bronze Age material also from the latter site (Marsden 2000, 172). The thickness of the sherds (12mm) might support a Bronze Age date but more significantly the body sherd from (175) appears to be slightly carinated with remains on a cordon along the external angle. This might support attribution to Bronze Age vessels such as the cordoned urn, Deverel-Rimbury or plain pottery styles (Gibson 2002, figs. 49, 51 and 52). The lack of scored decoration would at least lower the likelihood of a middle or late Iron Age date. The remaining 15 sherds, all from one vessel are in a shell-tempered fabric, and whilst not as common as rock-tempering in this part of the county, this fabric is also recognised at both Wanlip and Humberstone, though more commonly in during the Iron Age.

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Appendix V: Roman Pottery

Nicholas J. Cooper

A total of 48 sherds of Roman pottery weighing 287g were retrieved. The assemblage has been identified by fabric and form according to the established county and national type series (Pollard 1994, Tomber and Dore 1998) and quantified by sherd count and weight as listed below by context. All of the material is in very poor condition, with the shell-tempered wares (CG) often being leached. All of the material appears to occur residually in medieval features, with no context assigned to a specifically Roman phase of occupation. However, examination of the sherds allows us to recognise that an early Roman phase of occupation did take place. The entire assemblage comprises utilitarian pottery vessels such as jars or cooking pots in very early Roman transitional sandy (SW), shell tempered (CG) and coarse grey (GW) wares with one sherd in a oxidised, orange fabric (OW). This range, combined with lack of distinctive fine or specialist wares or distinctive regional imports that would characterise a later assemblage, suggest that the occupation was during the mid to late first century or possibly the early second century at the latest.

Context	fabric	sherds	weight	Date/comment
3	SW	1	2	Thin body, ?wheelmade
4 cleaning	GW	3	78	Necked jar residual
6	SW	1	4	
6	GW	1	4	
6	GT	1	1	friable
7	OW	1	16	Grey core
7	SW	3	12	Variable granular sandy fabrics
10	CG	1	6	Jar base ? Roman
12	CG	1	1	leached
15	CG	1	8	Jar base same vessel as (10)
15 0-10 X52	CG	1	1	leached
18	GW	1	10	Necked jar
20	CG	2	6	Jar base joining
23 cleaning	CG	13	30	One vessel very friable plain rimmed bowl?
24 cleaning	CG	2	22	base
27 0-10 X52	GW	1	2	
27 10cm	CG	1	6	
28	GW	1	10	
77 0-15cm	GW	1	10	
77 0-15c	CG	1	1	leached
93 stripping	GW	1	14	
107 cut 108	GT/CG	2	1	

120	CG	2	2	
US	CG	2	10	Joining jar rim
US	SW	1	2	
US	GW	2	28	Med?
Total		**48**	**287**	

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APPENDIX VI: The medieval and later pottery and miscellaneous finds.

D. Sawday

The pottery, one hundred and fifty five sherds, weighing 2.097 kg, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999), (Table 1). Forty nine fragments of post medieval and modern ceramic building material, weighing 24.441 kg was also recovered.

Fabric/Ware	Sherd Nos.	%	Weight Grams	%	Av. Sherd Weight
Late Saxon					
ST2 – Fine Stamford ware	3		29		
ST1 – Very Fine Stamford ware	1		1		
LI – Lincoln/Lincolnshire Shelly ware	2		1		
Sub Total	**6**	**3.8**	**31**	**1.4**	**5.1**
Early Medieval					
PM – Potters Marston	84		843		
CO2 – Coventry A ware	1		4		
LY2 – Stanion Lyveden type ware 2	4		17		
LY – Stanion Lyveden type ware	11		63		
Sub Total	**100**	**64.5**	**927**	**44.2**	**9.2**
Medieval					
CC1	15		273		
CC2	5		86		
CC5	5		35		
NO3	1		12		
Sub Total	**26**	**16.7**	**406**	**19.3**	**15.6**
Late Medieval/Early Post Medieval					
MS8 – Medieval Sandy ware 8	2		12		
MP1	1		53		
MP2	1		17		
MP3	2		35		
MB – Midland Blackware	2		18		
MY – Midland Yellow ware	1		18		
Sub Total	**9**	**5.8**	**153**	**7.2**	**17.0**
Post Medieval					
EA2, EA6, EA7 – Earthenwares 2, 6, and 7	13		572		
SW3 – Iron Washed Salt Glazed Stoneware	1		8		
Sub Total	**14**	**9.0**	**580**	**27.6**	**41.4**
Totals	**155**	**99.8**	**2097**	**99.8**	

Table 1: The post Roman pottery totals by fabric sherd numbers and weight (grams)

The medieval pottery is generally very abraded, and the low average sherd weight of much of the material may suggest that it is not primary refuse from rubbish pits close to the medieval village, but rather represents secondary refuse, deposited in the medieval fields as manure from the settlement nearby. However, fragments of ceramic building material, such as bricks, flat roof tile and drains were also recovered, some of them apparently intrusive in contexts, 3, 6, 7, 12, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24 and 194. This evidence shows that there has been continuing post medieval or modern activity on the site which may have disturbed some of the earlier archaeological levels relating to the earthworks and metalled surfaces uncovered during the excavations, and also had an adverse impact on the sherd size and degree of abrasion now evident on the archaeological material. However, by looking at the varying proportions of the different pottery types present over time, it is possible to draw some conclusions as to the nature and date range of the different periods of activity on the site.

The Stamford ware and two tiny fragments of Lincoln/Lincolnshire Shelly wares recovered during the excavations are evidence of some, if only limited, post Roman activity in the area from at least the early twelfth if not the mid or later eleventh century. That activity was evidently at its most intense during the twelfth century and early thirteenth centuries, Potters Marston, Coventry and Stanion Lyveden type wares all date from *circa* 1100, and together form the largest group of pottery on the site, representing 64.5 and 44.2 percent, of the total, respectively, by sherds numbers and weight.

The later wares are less common but confirm that there was a continuing presence on the site from the second half of the thirteenth century. The Chilvers Coton and Nottingham wares date from the mid thirteenth and, or, fourteenth centuries, and together form the second largest group of pottery on the site, totalling 16.7 and 19.3 percent of the totals.

The Midland Purple wares date from the later fourteenth centuries, and the Midland Blackware and the Midland Yellow ware, from *circa* 1500 or 1550. This small assemblage makes up only 5.8 and 7.2 percent of the pottery totals. Another equally small group, the post medieval earthenwares, fabrics EA2, EA6 and EA7 all date from the mid seventeenth century if not later, although the latest pottery on the site is probably the sherd of Salt Glazed Stoneware, which dates from the mid to later eighteenth century.

Most pottery in medieval England was not widely traded, and hence, not surprisingly, the origins of the most common ware on the site, Potters Marston, lies only approximately ten kilometres to the west at the village from which the pottery derives its name. Of the other late Saxon and medieval wares represented here, Stamford was of major importance as a centre for the manufacture of pottery from the mid ninth to the early or mid thirteenth centuries, whilst kilns at Chilvers Coton a suburb of Nuneaton and Coventry in Warwickshire, and Nottingham, were also significant sources of medieval pottery.

Whilst the range of identifiable vessel forms is typically domestic in nature, jars, bowls and jugs are all present, the one unusual vessel form is a bowl in Potters Marston ware with a socket for a handle, the first vessel of this kind to have been identified in this ware by the author who has made a study of this pottery (Sawday 1991). Also of interest is Chilvers Coton fabric CC5. This rather coarse ware is not commonly found in Leicestershire, and only seems to have a very local distribution area close to the production centre, a fact confirmed by its presence here, less than sixteen kilometres from the kiln site.

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Site/Parish: Dunton Bassett, Leics. Accession No/ Doc Ref: XA96 2003 Material: Post Roman pottery & cbm Site Type: prehistoric & edge of shifted medieval village earthworks	Submitter: V. Price Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 23.08.05 Method of Recovery: excavation

Context	**Fabric/ware**	**Sherd nos.**	**Weight grams**	**Comments, and latest date**
POTTERY				
3 - top soil strip	ST1 – Very fine Stamford ware	1	1	
3	ST2 – Fine Stamford ware	1	2	Glazed
3	LI – Lincoln/Lincs Shelly ware	2	1	
3	PM – Potters Marston	6	106	Includes flared bowl with thumbed applied horizontal

				clay strip under rim, which is thickened internally & externally.
3	CO2 – Coventry A/B ware	1	4	
3	CC1 – Chilvers Coton ware 1	3	27	
3	MS8 – Medieval Sandy ware 8	1	5	14th-15th C
3	MP1 – Midland Purple ware 1	1	53	Jug neck, late 14th – 15th C+
4 - cleaning	ST2	2	27	Convex base, glazed ext.
4	PM	1	5	
4	MP3 – Midland Purple ware 3	2	35	Late 14th – 15th C+
5 - cleaning	PM	2	25	
5	CC5 – Chilvers Coton ware 5	1	3	c.1250-1299
6 - cleaning	PM	22	252	Upright jar rim, & very abraded jug fragments
6	LY2 – Stanion Lyveden type ware 2	1	4	
6	CC1 – Chilvers Coton ware 1	3	32	
6	CC5	3	25	c.1250-1299
7 - top soil strip	PM	16	112	Abraded, upright ext thickened jar rim
7	LY – Stanion Lyveden type ware	3	13	2 joining sherds small upright jar rim, & flared bowl with straight edged rim
7	CC1	8	206	Included jug rim & handle top – slashed at rim and down length of strap handle
7	CC2 – Chilvers Coton ware 2	4	78	Everted jar rim, base of jug strap handle with slashing
7	NO3 – Nottingham Glazed ware 3	1	12	
7	MY – Midland Yellow ware	1	18	? Fabric – possibly over fired
7	EA2 – Earthenware 2	2	55	? 17th – 18th C.
7	EA6 - Blackware	1	15	
10	LY	1	2	c.1100 - 1400
14 – (0-10)	PM	2	5	12th-13th C.
15 – (0-10 x 52)	LY2	1	1	
15 - cleaning	PM	4	48	Two joining sherds with applied thumbed clay strip, form uncertain..
15	LY	1	5	Convex base
15 (0-10 x 52)	CC5	1	7	c.1250-1299
16 – cleaning	PM	2	13	12th-13th C.
17	PM	2	85	Join, socketed bowl rim with indentation on rim top, flared body, a unique form in this fabric, ? 13th C.
18	PM	2	5	
18	LY	2	5	
18 (10 cm)	CC2	1	8	
18	EA7 - Slipware	4	296	Flared wheel thrown bowl with everted rim, slipped & glazed internally, abraded interior, mid 17th C.+.
20	PM	3	65	Fragment of small jar with

				slashing on upright externally thickened rim, 12th C.
22 - cleaning	PM	6	20	Simple rim from flared bowl
22	LY	1	3	
22	CC1	1	8	c1250 – 1300+
23	PM	2	37	
23	MP2	1	17	
23	EA7	4	18	Wheel thrown, mid 17th C.+.
24	PM	6	28	
24	LY2	1	3	
24	LY	1	25	
24	MB – Midland Blackware	2	18	Base of small cup
24	SW3 – Iron Washed Salt Glazed Stoneware	1	8	Mid to late 18th C.
27 – base of ditch (x 53)	PM	1	3	12th-13th C.
27	LY2	1	7	
32 (0-10 cm)	LY	1	7	c.1100-1400
58 – base (x 51)	PM	1	4	12th-13th C.
60 (0 – 20 cm)	PM	1	10	Everted jar rim, thickened ext & int
60 - surface	MS8 – Medieval Sandy ware 8	1	7	? 14th-15th C.
77 (23 – 35)	LY	1	3	c.1100-1400
93 [92] (0 – 15 cm)	PM	2	5	12th-13th C.
95	EA7	2	188	Same vessel as from context 18, mid 17th C. +
201 (43 cm)	PM	3	15	Small jar with upright flat topped rim, slashed ext neck, abraded, 12th C.
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL		**Frag. nos**	**Weight grams**	**Post Medieval/Modern**
3	EA - Earthenware	1	3	
6	EA	4	910	Brick
6	EA	1	258	Flat roof tile
6	EA	1	88	Drain pipe
7	EA	4	140	Includes brick
7	EA	3	232	Flat roof tile
12 (SP1 0-10)	EA	1	2	
16	EA	1	10	
18 (top)	EA	2	3	
22	EA	2	58	Brick
23	EA	10	313	Flat roof tile
23	EA	1	16	Drain pipe
24	EA	7	15	
24	EA	3	58	Flat roof tile
194	EA	1	13	Flat roof tile
194	EA	5	18	
U/S	EA	1	360	Post medieval/modern? nib tile

Appendix VII: LITHICS

Lynden Cooper

Some 144 pieces were recovered including 132 pieces of debitage and twelve tools. With the exception of two flakes from a polished axe (macroscopically akin to Group VI) the material was flint. This was mostly the semi-translucent flint available in local till deposits, though a few pieces were more varied. The assemblage is relatively modest and presented no significant stratigraphic grouping such that discussion will be limited to a typo-technological overview. The assemblage breakdown by context is given in the table below. It is believed that patination can be of chronological significance (Cooper 2004); patinated pieces are denoted with an asterisk in the table.

Possibly the earliest piece was a burin on a truncation (context 9) that resembled Upper Palaeolithic examples such as those from Gough's Cave (Jacobi 2004). Additional backing retouch on the right hand side suggests that the piece would have been hafted. Opposite the backing, below the burin facet, there are use-wear traces conventionally described as 'utilisation'.

A Mesolithic component of the assemblage is suggested by the bladelet technology; eleven bladelets, four cores and the *flanc de nucleus*. The other patinated pieces are probably also of Mesolithic date. None of the tools were diagnostic to the period.

Dignostic Neolithic tools include the polished axe fragments and a fine transverse arrowhead of British oblique type. The latter would be conventionally dated to the Late Neolithic. It seems likely that the much of the remaining material is of this date. The scrapers were of short end type, some approaching circular forms.

Although it is suggested that Late Bronze Age activity occurred at the site the lithics from these contexts show no typo-technological traits for that period and would be better placed within a Neolithic-Early Bronze Age range.

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Context	Flake	Flake core	Blade	Bladelet	Bladelet core	Shatter	Crested flake	Chip	Burin	Flanc de nucleus	Scraper	Retouched blade	Retouched flake	Axe frag	Arrowhead
1	4			1											
4	1		1	2											
6	2		1		1										
8							1								
9			1						1						
10				1											
11										1*					
12	2														
14	2							1							
15	2			1*											
16	3(1*)				1*	1		1							
22	4					1					1	1			
23	3	3		1								1			
25	3										1				
26	2(1*)							1							
27	1	1						1							
32								1					1		
60	1														
72		1		2										2	
77	3(1*)										1				
81	6(1*)	2	2*								1				1
91	2														
93			1*										1		
95															
97	1														
99	1							1							
102					1										
104	3		1	2											
106	1			1				1							
107	12		1*												
108								2							
127	2														
131	2							1							
144	6							1							
200		1													
us	17(3*)				1										
	86	**8**	**8**	**11**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**11**	**1**	**1**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**

Appendix VIII: The Animal Bone

Jennifer Browning

Introduction and Methods

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered during excavations at Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire. The site was located on the outskirts of the village on a north-facing slope with a pond at the bottom. Medieval earthworks existed on the site but were more prominent to the south of the area. Three main phases of activity of buried archaeology were revealed, the latest related to the medieval occupation, however, Bronze Age features and activity associated with a burnt mound were also identified.

The assemblage is generally quite poorly preserved, being fragmented with eroded surfaces, inhibiting the identification of fine butchery marks.

The bone was identified with reference to comparative modern and archaeological material held by the University of Leicester (School of Archaeology and Ancient History). A basic catalogue was produced, to record, where possible, species, anatomy, fusion and the presence of butchery, gnawing and burning. These data were entered in a *pro forma* spreadsheet, which will form part of the archive. It was not possible to separate the remains of sheep and goat in this assemblage therefore the term 'sheep' is used to mean sheep and/or goat.

Results

The assemblage comprises in the region of 270 fragments, however the vast majority of the assemblage consisted of very degraded and fragmented mammal bone, resulting in an identifiable assemblage of only 25 fragments.

Phase	horse	s/g	cattle	pig	red deer	c-size	sh-size	unident	Total
Neolithic			1			3			4
Bronze Age			4			11			15
Medieval	3	2	11	3		61	2	164	246
Post medieval						3		1	4
Modern					1				1
	3	*2*	*16*	*3*	*1*	*78*	*2*	*165*	

Table 1: Number of bone fragments assigned to species categories per phase.

Cattle, sheep, pig, horse and red deer were identified in the assemblage. Unfortunately much of the assemblage consisted of tiny shards of mammal bone not diagnostic enough to identify. More cattle bones were identified than any other species and when combined with the number of cattle-size fragments, these clearly dominate the assemblage. It is likely that this has been influenced by preservation factors; in poor soil conditions the larger bones are more likely to be preserved than those from smaller animals. The horse bones recovered from deposits (22 and 95) were all radii and comparatively well preserved.

Neolithic and Bronze Age

All of the bones from the Neolithic and Bronze Age deposits were attributable to cattle or cattle-size bones. They were also the most robust elements (teeth, mandible and humerus).

Medieval

The medieval deposits yielded the largest quantity of bone and the remains of cattle, sheep, pig and horse were recovered. Best represented for all species are the denser bone elements, which therefore tend to survive better, such as metapodials, teeth and mandibular fragments. Little ageing evidence was identified, however two unfused cattle bones were identified. These were the distal metatarsal and calcaneum which fuse by 3 and 3 ½ years respectively.

The horse bones, all radius elements, were rather less fragmented than the majority of bones from the site, which may indicate a different disposal or burial method. These were found in build-up and silting deposits and are unlikely to represent whole burials but rather stray elements which have not been subject to butchery or other destructive processes. The radius is a robust part of the anatomy, which survives better than some other parts of the skeleton.

Post-medieval and modern

None of the fragments from post-medieval contexts could be identified to species.

A fragment of red deer antler was recovered from the topsoil. This was shed rather than chopped from the skull and does not therefore provide evidence for hunting. A chop mark shows that it was utilised but it could easily have been collected from the forest floor. The context of the material, however, makes it impossible to date.

Conclusions

The small size and poor quality of the assemblage makes it difficult to interpret the assemblage. The poor preservation of the bones is probably due to soil conditions however examination for butchery marks and other modifications was inhibited by the degraded surface condition. Cattle bones clearly dominate the assemblage in all phases. This is probably primarily due to better bone survival but might also represent a genuine preference for beef.

It is likely that the medieval bones represent domestic waste. No distinctive bone groups that might indicate particular crafts or activities are apparent. However, the fact that the material was mostly recovered from drainage gully fills suggests that the bone may not be a primary deposit. It is likely that it became incorporated into the features along with other domestic rubbish. Gnawing on some of the bones indicates that they were left lying around for scavengers prior to deposition and this may also have contributed to the low numbers of identifiable bones in the assemblage.

Re	Context/Phase	Phase	feature	Frags	Species	Bone	Part/zone	%	P	D	Bu	Ch	Gn	Teeth	Condition	Meas	Notes
1	58 xs1 1-10cm	med	gully	1	pig	mandible	1	15						y	1		m1 & m2 in wear
2	58 xs1 1-10cm	med	gully	2	cattle	molar									4		fragments
3	58 xs1 1-10cm	med	gully	4	c-size	shaft frags									4		
4	58 xs1 1-10cm	med	gully	3	unident	shaft frags									4		
5	58 xs1 1-10cm	med	gully	20+	unident												bag of tiny fragments- nothing identifiable…
6	77 0-15cm	med	gully	1	c-size	humerus	distal shaft								4		fragment
7	77 0-15cm	med	gully	20	c-size	fragments											shaft fragments most small unidentifable
8	77 0-15cm	med	gully	100+	unident	shaft frags											mostly (prob) from c-size bones.
9	60	Modern		3	c-size	shaft frags											
10	32	med	ditch	1	cattle	humerus	cranio-distal shaft frag								2		
11	32	med	ditch	1	c-size	fragments											
12	32	med	ditch	6	unident	fragments											small mamm frgs
13	22	med	build-up	1	horse	radius	almost complete	95	f	f					2		in 2 frgs & with fresh break
14	15	med	gully	1	cattle	metac	distal missing		f				y		3		distal gnawed away
15	15	med	gully	1	cattle	metac	distal shaft frags										
16	15	med	gully	4	c-size	longbone	shaft frags										
17	4	med	spread	1	cattle	calcaneum	prox & part shaft		u								2-frags
18	4	med	spread	2	c-size	shaft frags											
19	27 0-20cm	med	gully	3	c-size	shaft frags											
20	77 xs2	med	boundary ditch?	20+	unident	fragments											
21	77 xs2	med	boundary ditch?	1	pig	incisor											lower broken
22	6	med	base of build up	1	pig	molar											loose
23	6	med	base of build up	1	sh/g	molar											loose
24	10	neo	burnt mound	3	c-size	shaft frags											
25	16	med	gully	2	sh-size	fragments											
26	1	modern	topsoil	1	red deer	antler	burr and part of pedicle					y					chopped. Smooth as though kicking around for a while.
27	72	neo	burnt mound	1	cattle	molar											upper. Several fragments
28	40 xs1	med	gully	1	unident	shaft frags					y						burnt white.
29	104 xs2 10cm	Late BA	animal dist?	1	cattle	molar											5 fragments of same tooth
30	95	med	infill/silting	1	horse	radius	prox & half shaft		f						3		right
31	95	med	infill/silting	1	horse	radius	prox & half shaft		f						4		left
32	95	med	infill/silting	10+	unident	fragments											tiny fragments
33	202	med	bank make-up	1	cattle	phalange 1											
34	91	Late BA	enclosure ditch	1	cattle	humerus	distal shaft			f			y				gnawed at distal end
35	194	med	base for metalled surface	1	cattle	metat	prox & part of shaft		f								
36	194	med	base for metalled surface	1	cattle	metac	distal & prt of shaft			f							
37	194	med	base for metalled surface	1	cattle	metat	distal & prt of shaft			u							surface badly flaked.

Re	Context/Phase	Phase	feature	Frags	Species	Bone	Part/zone	%	P	D	Bu	Ch	Gn	Teeth	Condition	Meas	Notes
38	194	med	base for metalled surface	1	c-size	mandible	fragment										
39	194	med	base for metalled surface	1	cattle	metat	prox fragment	f									
40	194	med	base for metalled surface	23	c-size	fragments											almost certainly metap fragments
41	91	Late BA	pit	1	c-size	humerus	shaft frags					y					appeared to have chopped shaft
42	93	med	gully	1	sh/g	tibia	shaft								4		badly split etc
43	194	med	base for metalled surface	4	unident	fragments											
44	81	Late BA	upper fill of irreg pit	1	cattle	premolar											
45	81	Late BA	upper fill of irreg pit	1	cattle	mandible	fragment								4		
46	81	Late BA	upper fill of irreg pit	3	c-size	fragments									4		highly minerlized and poor condition
47	81 xs1	Late BA	upper fill of irreg pit	7	c-size	shaft?humerus?											
48	28 xs3	med	gully	2	c-size	fragments											
49	3	pm	earthwork build up	3	c-size	vert fragments											
50	3	pm	earthwork build up	1	unident	fragment											
				123													

Appendix IX: Charred Plant remains

Angela Monckton

Introduction

During excavations carried out ULAS directed by Vicki Priest samples were taken for the recovery of charred plant remains which can give evidence of agriculture, diet and activities of people on the site in the past. The features sampled included two possibly Neolithic pits containing burnt stones and charcoal, probable Bronze Age features including a pit and a ditch, and three samples from medieval ditches.

Methods

Samples were processed by wet sieving in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm mesh sieve. The residues were air dried and the fraction over 4mm sorted for all finds which are included in the relevant sections of this report. The fraction of the residue below 4mm was reserved for sorting for smaller remains if required. The flotation fractions (flots) were carefully transferred to plastic boxes, air dried and submitted for examination. This work was carried out by Alex Beacock at ULAS.

The flots were examined with a x10 to x30 stereo microscope, and any plant remains were removed to glass specimen tubes and were identified by comparison with modern reference material. A proportion the residues below 4mm were also examined to determine if the plant remains had not been recovered by flotation, but only charcoal fragments and very occasional cereal grain fragments were seen. The plant remains were counted and listed (table 1), the botanical names follow Stace (1991), and are seeds in the broad sense unless described otherwise.

Results

Neolithic: samples 4 (72) and 5 (11)
The samples from the two pits contained abundant charcoal and burnt stones and both contained a few cereal grains with a few weed seeds. The cereals included wheat, also including some short wide grains as in the previous samples. Bread wheat type grains are known from the Neolithic period (Moffett et al 1989), emmer is also found, and barley is found from all periods from the Neolithic onwards. These cereal grains could therefore date from the Neolithic period. However small disparate groups of grains are unsuitable for radiocarbon dating as they can include intrusive grains (P. Murphy pers. com.) so it is not recommended that this is investigated further. The residue over 4mm consisted mainly of pebble fragments most of which were burnt as seen by reddening and blackening of the stones with most of them cracked by heating.

The Neolithic pits contained burnt stones and charcoal, probably as the remains from hearths buried in the pits. The cereal grain may suggest that this was a cooking fire but is too little evidence to suggest any activity with certainty or to suggest the date. The burnt stones could be from a hearth base, similar pits have been found to be of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age date. Some isolated Late Neolithic pits in the region contained abundant food remains of hazel nutshell and fruits such as at Syston (Jarvis 1998), and Castle Donington which also included glume wheat and barley with crab apples and hazel nutshell (Monckton 2004). Others in the region are like the pit here containing small numbers of cereal grains with charcoal; single cereal grains were recovered with charcoal from isolated prehistoric pits at

Catthorpe, and Oak Lodge Farm at Husbands Bosworth, the cereals represented being emmer and barley respectively, both found together with burnt stones (Monckton 1999). Like here the few grains from each pit is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about cultivation of the cereals. Plant remains tend to be at a low density in many Prehistoric deposits, probably because they represent the food product to be consumed rather than waste for disposal. Although cereals remains may be in small numbers, they are recognised as a usual part of the Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age economy, because they are found on many of the sites sampled (Moffett et al 1989).

Burnt stones and charcoal are found at the burnt mound sites which are close to water sources and are typified by abundant charcoal and burnt pebbles but sparse plant remains. Occasional nutshell and sloe stone fragments have been recovered from Late Neolithic burnt mounds at Watermead, Birstall and Willington, Derbyshire, with the addition of occasional cereal grains at Willow Farm, Castle Donington which is of Bronze Age date (Monckton 2004). These sites have many fire cracked pebbles suggesting that heating water was involved in the activity on site, the plant remains also suggest food preparation and consumption such as would occur on any site where people spent any time. It is uncertain whether the deposits from Dunton Bassett represent the remains from simple hearths or are the remains of more extensive burnt mounds.

Later prehistoric: samples 6 (120) and 7 (110)
Both samples contained charcoal with a moderate number of charred plant remains in sample 6 which was dominated by cereal grains with a few weed seeds. The cereal grains included wheat with short wide grains similar to those in the medieval samples, although all were abraded and it should be noted that spelt can produce short grains. Spelt and emmer are the typical cereals of this period and both are glume wheats which usually produce long narrow grains which were not found here. The group of remains found was very similar to those from the medieval samples and the spread of medieval material in the area may be the source of some of these remains. Sample 7 contained only a single broken cereal grain with the charcoal fragments.

Medieval ditches: samples 1 (55), 2 (15) and 3 (58)
The samples all contained cereal remains with a few charred seeds at a relatively low density of 1.3 to 1.8 items per litre of soil. The main cereal was wheat of a free-threshing type identified from the short broad grains typical of medieval samples. Occasional fragments of wheat chaff were found which probably represented bread wheat, but they were broken and abraded so could not be identified with certainty. Occasional barley and oat grains showed that these cereals were also cultivated and consumed. Legume fragments were also present representing peas or beans but were incomplete (table 1). Weed seeds were of arable weeds including brome grass, vetches as the most common weeds with occasional seeds of stinking mayweed, docks, sedge and wild radish as other weeds of the crops. These are all typical of medieval sites. The samples were dominated by cereal grains with a little chaff and few weed seeds suggesting waste from cereal cleaning and food preparation, raked from hearths and dumped or accumulated in the ditches. This differs from the higher density charred remains identified as agricultural waste from more abundant chaff and seeds such as in a ditch at Anstey village earthworks (Monckton 1998). Similar low density scatters of plant remains to those found here, which are thought to represent domestic waste, have been found associated with occupation such as on the house platforms at Anstey (Monckton 2002).

Conclusions

The possible Neolithic pits contain charcoal and cracked pebbles as remains of hearths with a few cereal grains of wheat and barley suggesting food preparation, although the possibility of intrusive later cereal remains included in the deposit cannot be excluded because of the proximity of the medieval site. The later prehistoric samples appear to contain only intrusive medieval plant remains. The medieval samples consist of a low density scatter of probably domestic waste from cereal cleaning and food preparation. Free-threshing wheat, possibly bread wheat, barley, and oats were consumed and were probably cultivated nearby. Peas or beans represented another crop cultivated, possibly as part of a crop rotation system, and also consumed on the site.

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Table 1. Charred plant remains from Dunton Bassett (xA96.2003).

Period	Med			BA		Neo		
Sample	1	2	3	6	7	4	5	
Context	55	15	58	120	110	72	11	
Feature type	D	D	D	Pit	Pit	Pit	Pit	
Cereal grains								
Triticum free-threshing grains	1	2	2	2	-	3	2	Wheat, free-threshing
Triticum spp. grains	2	-	4	7	-	-	2	Wheat
Hordeum vulgare L. grains	5	-	-	1	-	-	1	Barley
Avena sp. grains	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	Oat
Cereal grains	13	3	4	11	1	1	3	Cereal
Cereal/Poaceae grains	3	4	-	-	-	1	1	Cereal/Grass
Cereal chaff								
Triticum cf *aestivum* s.l. rachis	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	cf Bread wheat
Triticum free-threshing rachis	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	Wheat, free-threshing
Cultivated								
Vicia/Pisum	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	Bean/Pea
Wild plants								
Rumex sp	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	Docks
Raphanus raphanistrum L.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	Wild radish
Vicia sp.	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	Vetch
Vicia/Lathyrus	1	-	3	1	-	2	2	Vetch/tares
Medicago/Melilotus/Trifolium	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	Clover type
Anthemis cotula L.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	Stinking Mayweed
Asteraceae (small)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	Daisy family
Carex sp.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	Sedges
Bromus sp	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	Brome grass
Poaceae (large)	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	Grasses large
Tuber indet.	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	Tuber
Indeterminate seeds	-	-	1	-	-	3	1	Indet seeds
Uncharred seeds	4	8	56	4	-	6	-	Uncharred seeds
Total charred items	33	17	20	26	1	11	15	
Volume sample	18	13	14	18	14	12	17	litres
Flot volume	12	25	9	32	8	155	12	mls
items per litre of soil	1.8	1.3	1.4	1.4	0.1	0.9	0.9	

Key: Remains are seeds in the broad sense unless stated.