



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**  
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Excavation on Land off Park Lane, Castle Donington, Leicestershire  
DE74 2UA

NGR: SK 435 268

**Roger Kipling**

With contributions from Lyndon Cooper, Nicholas J. Cooper & Rachel Small,



**ULAS Report No: 2020-180**  
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**Grid Ref:** SK 435 268

**Author:** Roger Kipling

**Client:** RPS Consulting Limited

**Planning Refs.** 09/01226/OUTM, 16/00301/FULM, 16/00321/VCUM

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## OASIS RECORD

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-414014		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Excavation on Land off Park Lane, Castle Donington, Leicestershire DE74 2UA SK 435 268		
	<b>Start/end dates</b>	11/03/2020, 16/06/2020		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	None		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Excavation		
	<b>Site Status</b>			
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Rough ground?		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	Pit alignment (Iron Age), ditch (Iron Age), post hole (Iron Age)		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	Adze Iron Age, saddle quern Iron Age, pottery Iron Age		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	09/01226/OUTM, 16/00301/FULM, 16/00321/VCUM			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>County</b>	Leicestershire		
	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Land off Park Lane, Castle Donington, Leicestershire DE74 2UA		
	<b>Study Area</b>	1.4 hectares		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 435 268		
	<b>Height OD</b>	66m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (Leicestershire County Council)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Vicki Score		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Roger Kipling		
<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	RPS Consulting Limited			
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	<b>Recipient</b>	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	X.A33.2020	X.A33.2020	X.A33.2020
	<b>Contents</b>	Human remains Pottery Animal bone	Photographs	Report/ Trench sheet, photo index.
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# **An Archaeological Excavation on Land off Park Lane, Castle Donington, Leicestershire DE74 2UA NGR: SK 435 268**

**Roger Kipling**

## **Summary**

*An archaeological excavation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in 2020 on land off Park Lane, Castle Donington, Leicestershire DE74 2UA (SK 435 268), prior to residential development.*

*Work followed earlier archaeological evaluations conducted on the site by ULAS in 2003 and by MOLA in 2014 and 2019. An open area excavation undertaken by ULAS on adjacent land in 2011 had produced further late prehistoric and Roman archaeological activity.*

*Area A, fronting Park Lane and located on the brow of a north-facing slope overlooking the River Trent, produced further evidence of an Early Iron Age pit alignment first observed in 2011. In the Early or Middle Iron Age the first of a series of probable boundary ditches was set out with two accompanying ditched enclosures set out along its length. Area B revealed the continuation of the ditches and a third attendant enclosure. Area C was opened in order to determine the existence of possible Anglo-Saxon occupation; the area was revealed to be archaeologically blank. Area D, located down the slope to the north, produced two pits of Iron Age date.*

*The archive for the work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A33.2020.*

## **Introduction**

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2019), this document forms the report for an archaeological excavation carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on land at Park Lane, Castle Donington Leicestershire (SK435 268) to address the archaeological requirements associated with residential development (Planning application ref 09/01226/OUTM; 16/00321/VCUM) as requested by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

### Site Location, Geology and Topography

The site is located on the western side of Castle Donington, Leicestershire, bounded to the south by Park Lane, to the east by residential development and to the west and north by the newly constructed Castle Donington western bypass. East Midlands airport lies to the south and the A50 to the north (

Figure 1). The site was open fields, but at the time of the evaluation the site was covered in scrub vegetation and had been used for storage and stockpiling by previous developments.

The development area covers approximately 8.9 hectares and is centred at National Grid reference SK 435 728 ( Figure 2).

The British Geological Survey shows the underlying geology to be Triassic Mudstone bedrock with a typical Permo-Triassic soil of the Bromsgrove Series characterised as well-drained reddish loam over soft sandstone.

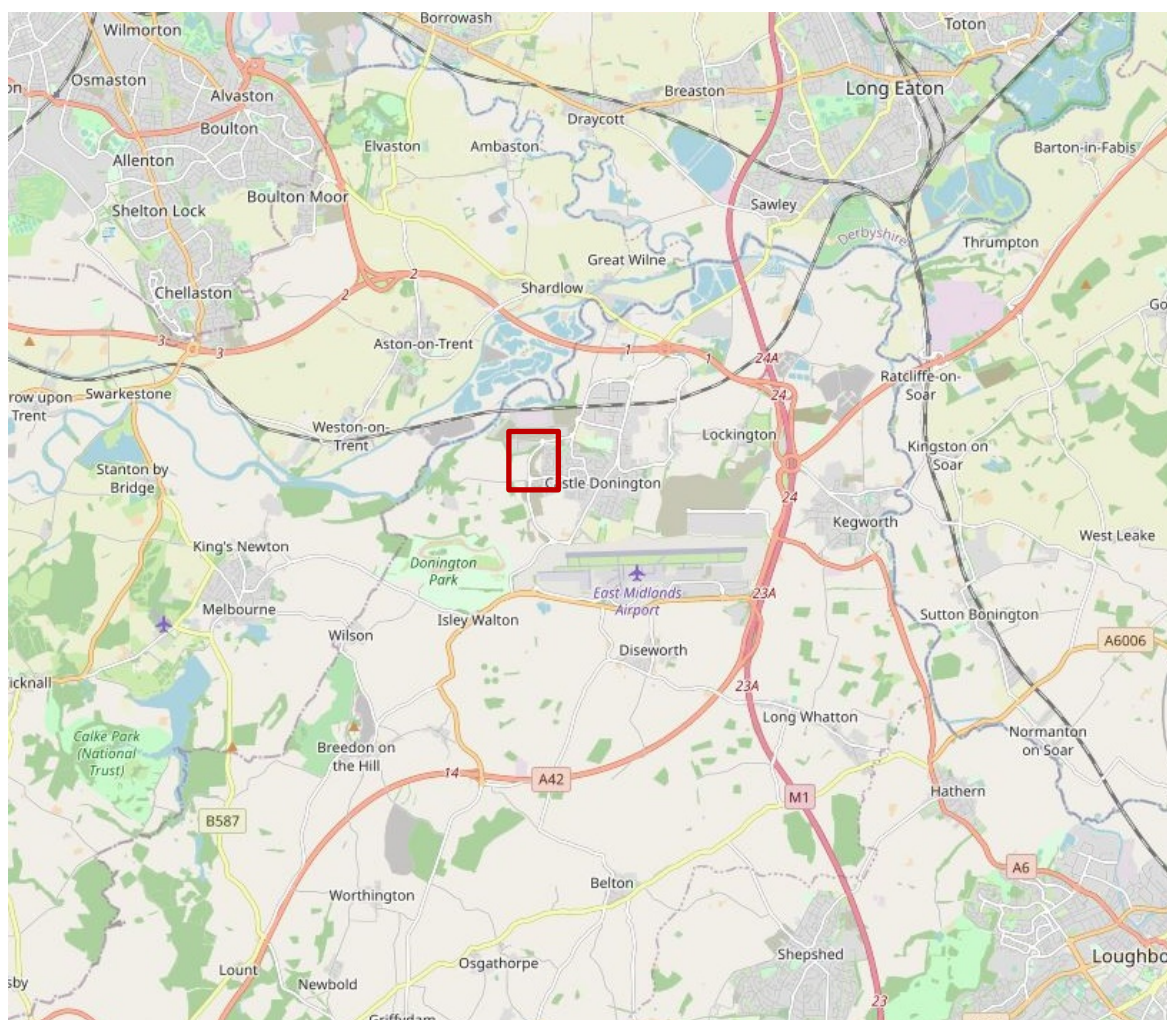


Figure 1: Location of Park Lane, Castle Donington within Leicestershire (© OpenStreetMap)



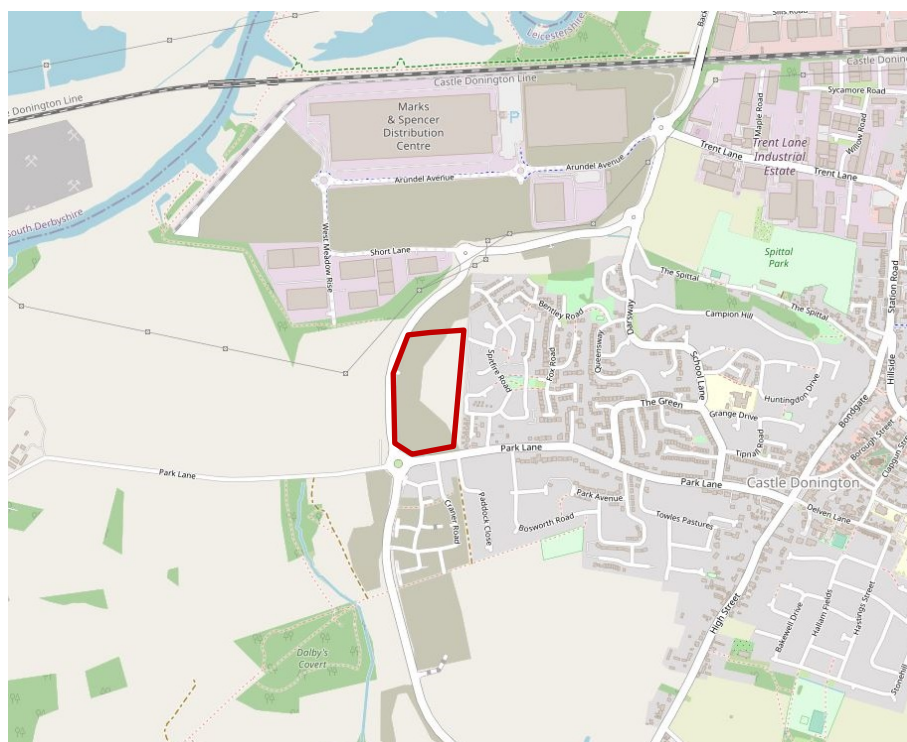


Figure 2: Area of development outlined in red (© OpenStreetMap)

### ***Historical and Archaeological Background***

Several phases of archaeological work have been undertaken in this area as part of the wider development. On the site itself geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation of the site was undertaken in 2003 (Stratascan 2003; Coward 2004). The geophysical survey of the area indicated areas of potential archaeological activity, and detailed magnetometry survey over part of the hilltop revealed linear anomalies of potential archaeological origin. The subsequent evaluations found Late Neolithic flintwork and early Bronze Age pottery from the northern part of the site in association with gullies, ditches, pits and post holes. There was also a range of Late Iron Age features (linear features pits and post-holes containing Iron Age pottery). Evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in the form of pits and linear features, a large quantity of pottery, and some iron slag, possibly indicating metalworking, was also revealed by the evaluation.

Trial trenching on adjacent land to the east in 2010 (Coward 2010) and a follow up excavation in 2011 (Kipling 2012), both undertaken by ULAS, identified prehistoric and Roman activity. Downslope to the north was a complex series of ditches with fragmentary traces of timber structure(s) probably represented a transitional Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement set within a wider field system. Fronting Park Lane to the south was an Early Bronze Age ring ditch, possibly a ceremonial or mortuary enclosure associated with a small linear cremation cemetery. A Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age pit alignment was also identified in this area and appeared to continue into the present development site.

Further archaeological evaluation conducted on the site in 2019 by MOLA revealed undated archaeological features on the eastern side of the site thought to relate to the activity identified on adjacent land in 2011. A single late Bronze Age - early Iron Age pit was located in the northern part of the development area (Poulus 2019).

## Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the programme of archaeological works was to record and advance understanding of the significance of the archaeological remains within the site before it was lost in the site's development.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were defined as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

## Research Objectives

The mitigation work is considered in light of the East Midlands Research Framework (Cooper ed. 2006) and strategy (Knight *et al.* 2012), along with targeting national research aims.

Initial archaeological evaluation work on the site in addition to previous archaeological investigation in the immediate and wider vicinity suggested that the site had the potential for archaeological deposits from the Bronze Age period onwards. The excavation therefore had the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

### 4.3 Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlements (c.1000 – 450BC)

1. Why are sites of this period comparatively rare in the archaeological record?
2. What can we deduce about the morphology, spatial extent and functions of settlements, and in particular the processes underlying the development in some areas of enclosed occupation or activity foci?

### 4.6 Field Systems and Major Linear Boundaries

1. Can we shed further light upon the development of field and boundary
2. What were the economic, social or political roles of the pit alignments and linear ditch systems that characterised many areas of the East Midlands?
3. What may we deduce from studies of linear boundaries with respect to changes in the agrarian landscape?

## Methodology

The work followed the methodological statement set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the project (Clark and Flitcroft 2017).

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2020) and adhere to their Code of Conduct (2019). The Site Accession Number (X.A33.2020) was used to identify all records and artefacts.

The project involved the supervised machine stripping of four excavation areas (Fig. 3, **A-D**). These areas were then expanded based on the results of the stripping.

Stripping of the excavation areas was conducted using a 360° machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. Stripping was supervised and controlled by the archaeological team to ensure that the archaeological horizon was exposed and sufficiently clean to identify any archaeological features present.

**Area A** was the most substantial of the four machined areas, measuring 1.4 ha fronting Park Lane. Excavation of this area was intended to trace the course of the Bronze Age pit alignment encountered by ULAS to the east in 2011 as well as Iron Age ditches observed in archaeological evaluation trenching on the present site by MOLA in 2014 and 2019. Consequently, Area A was extended west to the site boundary in order to expose the full extent of the pit alignment, and north towards Area B to define the extent of the Iron Age ditches and enclosures. **Area B** (4519m<sup>2</sup>) was located to look at features identified in trenches from 2003. **Area C** (1877m<sup>2</sup>) was opened in order to investigate possible Anglo-Saxon occupation encountered on adjacent land in 2011 but proved archaeologically blank with the exception of medieval plough furrows. **Area D** (286m<sup>2</sup>), located down the slope to the north, was opened in order to trace a Bronze Age or Iron Age pit found in a trench by MOLA in 2019. Both this and a second pit were revealed.

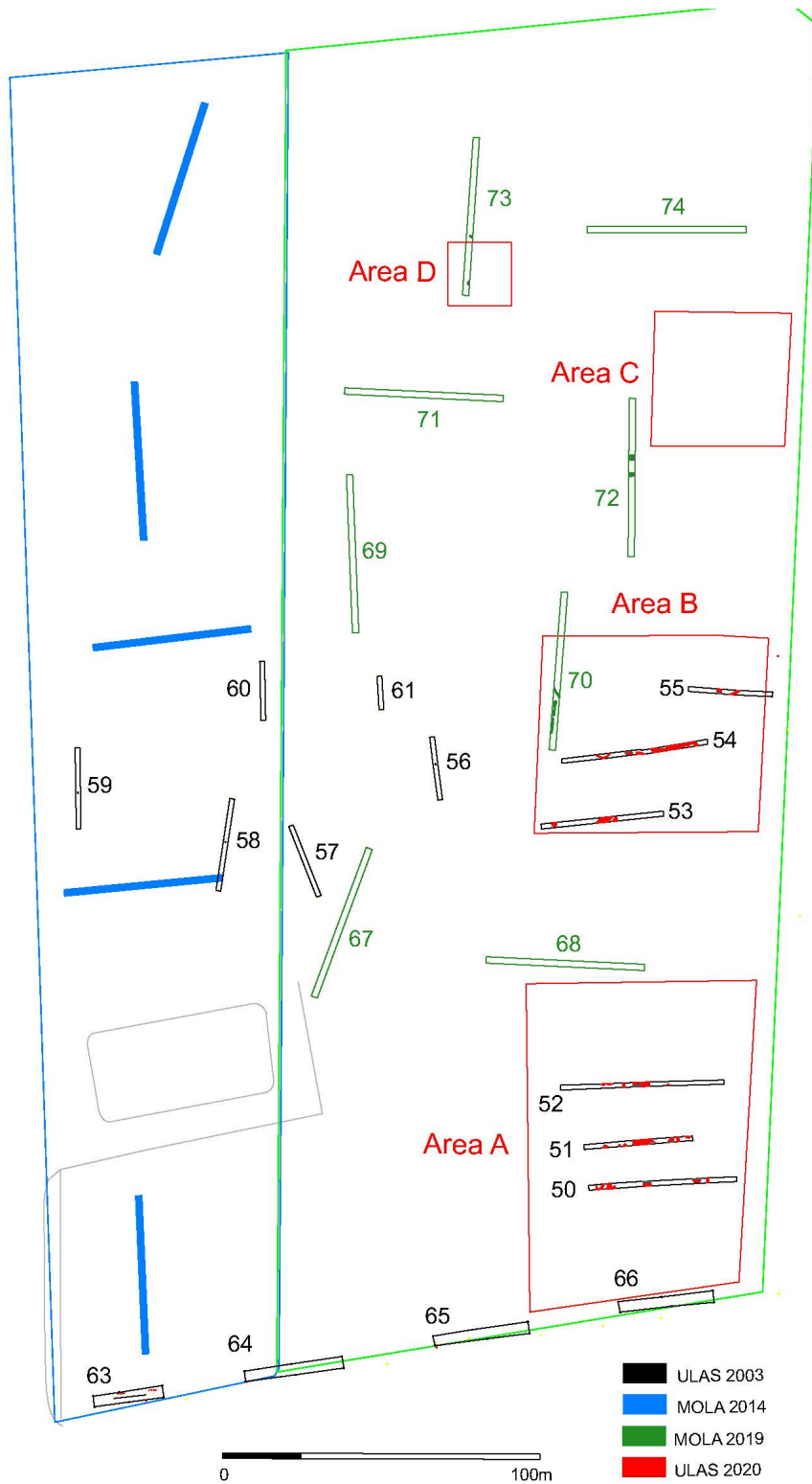


Figure 3: Trench plan showing features 2003-2019 and original proposed areas of excavation (red outline 2020).



Figure 4: Actual Excavated Areas A-D, 2020 (blue) and 2011 Areas (red)

## Results

### *Phase 1: Early Iron Age*

#### *Area A: Pit Alignment*

The earliest activity was represented by a pit alignment oriented east-west *c.* 50m north of the Park Lane frontage. It ran across the full width of the site for approximately 166m and presumably extended west beyond the site boundary. It appears to be the same pit boundary observed to the east in 2011 (Fig. 4). Thirty-four pits were identified of circular or sub-circular plan, varying from 0.76-1m in width and 0.08-0.45m deep and similar to the 22 pits recorded in 2011 (Table 1, Figs 5-8). Those at the eastern end of the alignment were regularly spaced 0.5m-1m apart, whilst the western half of the sequence was more discontinuous with greater gaps between pits.

The previously excavated eastern pits contained few finds, but nine sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered. Thirteen of the thirty-four pits from the 2020 excavations produced small quantities of Iron Age pottery, dating the pit alignment within the Iron Age period.



Figure 5: Pit [113] view west; 1m scale



Figure 6: Pit [166] view east; 1m scale

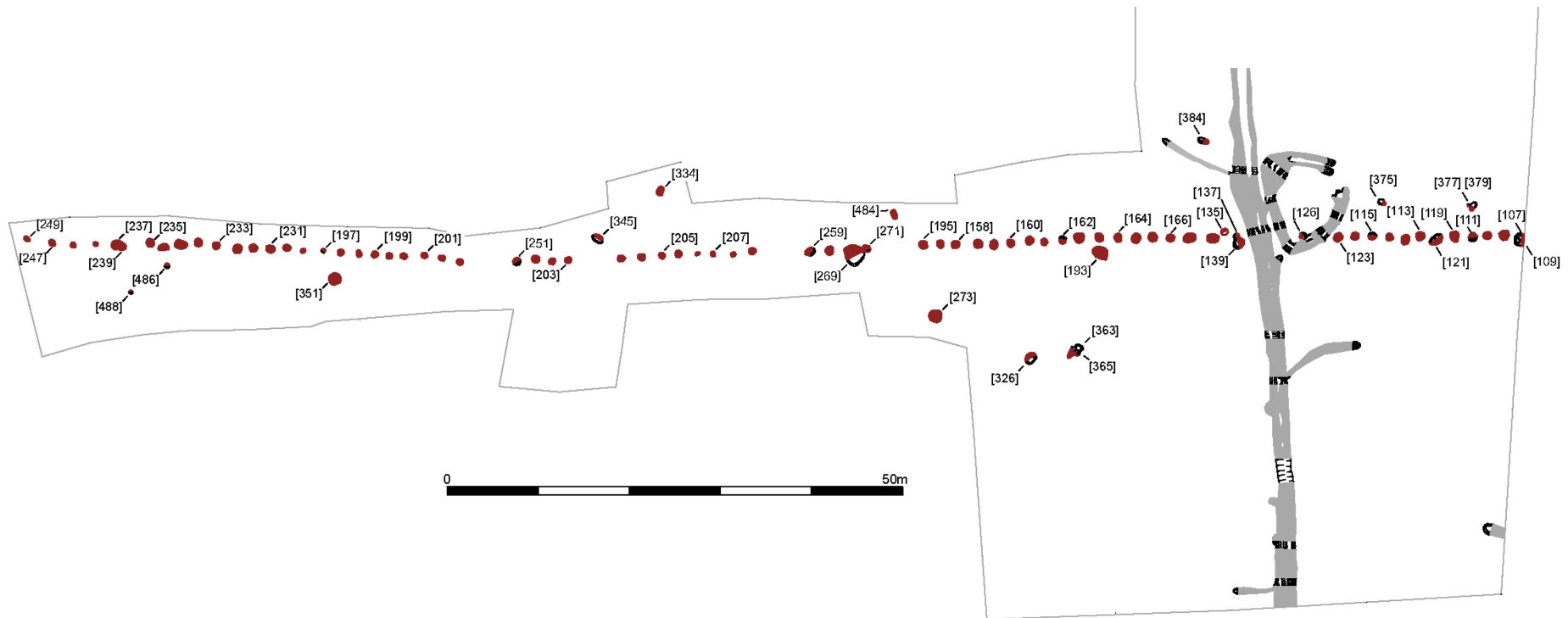


Figure 7: Detail of the pit alignment and associated features

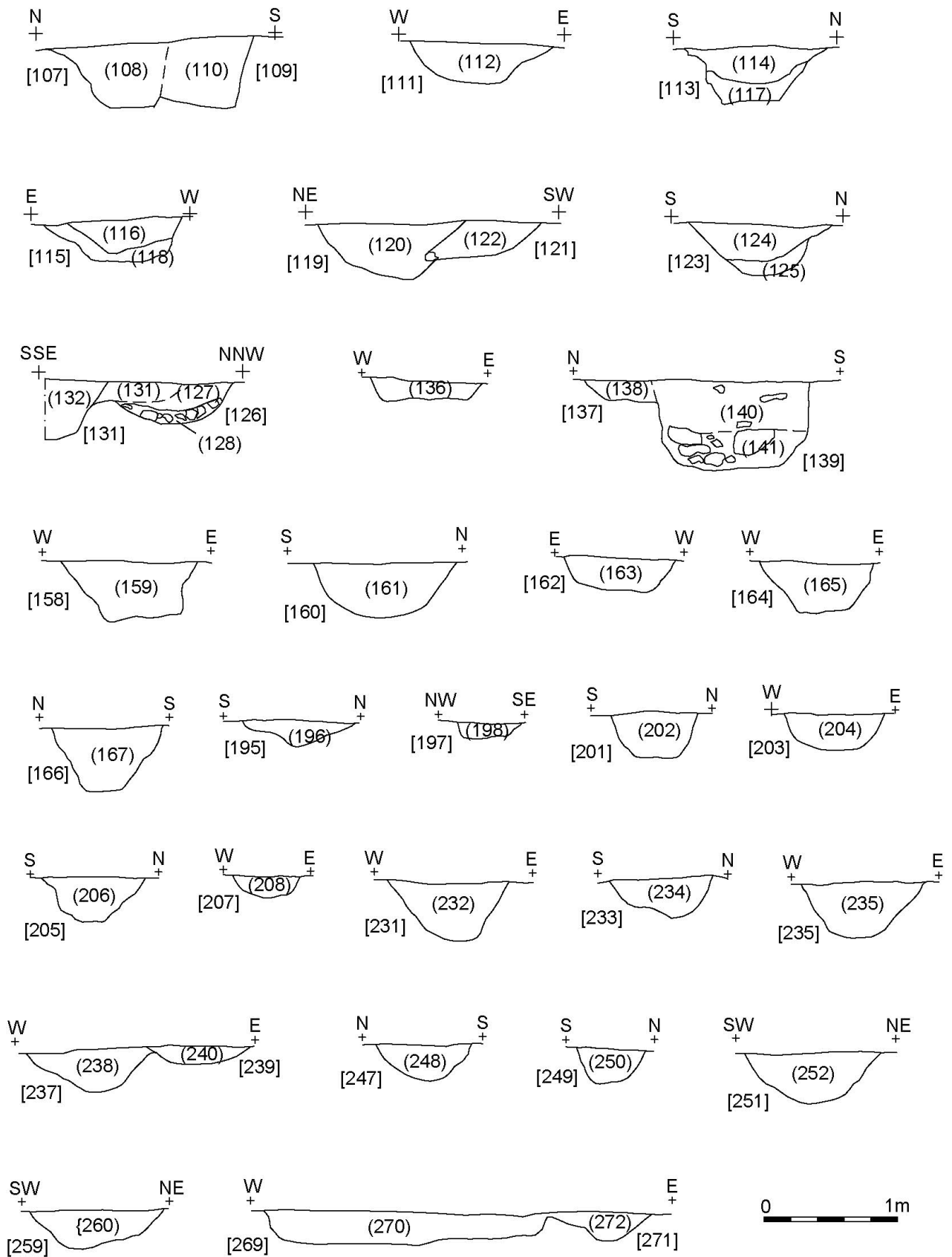


Figure 8: Pit alignment profiles



Table 1: Pit Alignment

Cut	Fill	Fill description	Profile descriptions	Dimensions (m)	Pottery? (sherd no.)
107	108	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-oval plan, steep sides, uneven flat base	0.90 x 0.60 x 0.45 deep	No
109	110	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Irregular plan, moderate sloping sides, flat base	1.40 x 0.80 x 0.45 deep	No
111	112	Mid orange brown sandy silt	Circular plan, moderate sloping concave sided, flat based	1.00 x 0.50 x 0.30 deep	No
113	114	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Circular plan, V shaped steep sided cut with flat base	1.00 x 0.50 x 0.40 deep	4 sherds IA
113	117	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Circular plan, V shaped steep sided cut with flat base	1.00 x 0.50 x 0.40 deep	No
115	116	Mid orange brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan moderate sloping sides, flat base	1.00 x 0.42 x 0.84 x 0.35 deep	No
115	118	White yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan moderate sloping sides, flat base	1.00 x 0.42 x 0.84 x 0.35 deep	No
119	120	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-oval plan, steep sloping concave sided, flat based	1.14 x 0.45 x 0.95 x 0.40m deep	No
121	122	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-oval plan, moderate sloping sided, flat based	0.80 x 0.45 x 1.05 x 0.26m deep	No
123	124	Mid yellow brown clay silt	Sub-circular moderate sloping sides, concave base	1.00 x 0.56 x 1.00 x 0.36 deep	No
126	127	Mid to dark yellow brown sandy silt	Circular plan, concave steep sided, concave base	0.84 x 0.40 x 0.84 x 0.30 deep	No
126	128	Light yellow sandy silt, 90% sandstone frags.	Circular plan, concave steep sided, concave base	0.84 x 0.40 x 0.84 x 0.30 deep	No
135	136	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Circular plan, steep sides and flat base	0.80 x 0.40 x 0.80 x 0.17 deep	No
137	138	Light orange brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan moderate sides and flat base	0.36 x 0.33 x 0.68 x 0.16 deep	No
139	140	Light grey brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan vertical sides and flat base	1.18 x 0.68 x 1.30 x 0.65 deep	3 sherds IA
139	141	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan vertical sides and flat base	1.18 x 0.68 x 1.30 x 0.65 deep	2 sherds IA
158	159	Mid yellow brown silt	Circular plan, steep sided and sloping base	0.96 x 0.48 x 0.92 x 0.42 deep	3 sherds IA
160	161	Mid yellow brown silt	Circular plan with step sides and concave base	0.85 x 0.45 x 0.90 x 0.40 deep	No
162	163	Mid yellow brown silt	Circular plan, steep sides, flat base	0.80 x 0.38 x 0.80 x 0.24m deep	1 sherd IA
164	165	Mid yellow brown silt	Circular plan, steep sided, flat base	0.80 x 0.50 x 0.90 x 0.35 deep	3 sherds IA
166	167	Mid yellow brown silt	Circular plan, steep sides, flat base	0.84 x 0.48 x 0.90 x 0.46 deep	No
195	196	Light yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, moderate sloping sides, v-shaped base	0.86 x 0.50 x 0.18 deep	No
197	198	Mid yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, steep sides, flat base	0.38 x 0.22 x 0.44 x 0.12 deep	No
199	200	Mid yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, shallow sloping sides, flat base	0.80 x 0.40 x 0.75 x 0.08 deep	2 sherds IA
201	202	Md to dark yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, steep sides, flat base	0.68 x 0.36 x 0.72 x 0.36 deep	1 sherd IA
203	204	Light yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, steep sides, concave base	0.76 x .4 x 0.7 x 0.26 deep	No
205	206	Light yellow brown silt	Sub-circular plan, v-shaped steep sides, flat base	0.76 x 0.38 x 0.68 x 0.36 deep	2 sherds EIA?

207	208	Light yellow brown silt	Sub-oval plan, steep sides, concave base	0.54 x 0.60 x 0.14 dep	No
231	232	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Subcircular plan, v-shaped steep sides, flat base	1.00 0.50 x 0.84 x 0.40 deep	No
233	234	Mid yellow brown fine sandy silt	Circular plan, steep concave sides, irregular base	0.76 0.48 x 0.82 0.30m deep	1 sherd IA
235	236	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan, v-shaped steep sides, flat base	0.90 x 0.50 x 0.98 x 0.40 deep	No
237	238	Dark yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan, v-shaped steep sides, flat base	0.90 x 0.60 x 1.10 x 0.35 deep	No
239	240	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular plan, concave shallow sides, flat base	0.70 x 0.46 x 0.82 x 0.17 deep	No
247	248	Light yellow brown fine sandy silt	Sub-circular cut, steep concave sides, concave base	0.70 x 0.40 x 0.76 x 0.24 deep	No
249	250	Very light yellow brown sandy silt	Oval plan, u-shaped steep sides, sloping base	0.50 x 0.38 x 0.76 x 0.26 deep	No
251	252	Mid yellow brown fine sandy silt	Circular plan, concave steep sides, concave base	1.00 x 0.45 x 0.85 x 0.40 deep	4 sherds IA
259	260	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular cut, steep sloping sides, sloping base	0.96 x 0.40 x 0.90 x 0.28 deep	6 sherds IA
271	272	Light yellow brown sandy silt	Sub-circular concave steep sides, concave base	0.80 x 0.38 x 0.90 x 0.22 deep	1 sherd IA

### Supplementary Pits along the Pit Alignment

[193] (194), [269] (269), [273] (274), (275), [326] (327), [334] (335), [345] (346), [351] (352), [375] (376), [377] (378), [379] (380), [384] (385), [484] (485), [486] (487), [488] (489).

A further fourteen truncated pits were identified along the course of the pit alignment, and are possibly contemporary but are not considered to be part of it.

Two sizeable pits were located adjacent to the southern side of the pit alignment. Pit [193] measured 1.70m x 1.36m x 0.14m deep with shallow sloping sides and an irregular base; its pale yellow brown sandy silt fill (194) contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery. Pit [269] measured 2.10m x 2.30m x 0.25m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. The sandy silt fill (269) contained seven Iron Age pottery sherds.

A third substantial pit [273] was located 7m to the south of the pit alignment. The feature (1.40m x 1.30m x 0.10m) contained fire cracked stone and a substantial assemblage of over two hundred sherds of Early or Middle Iron Age pottery from its yellow-brown silty fills (274 and 275).

A cluster of three heavily truncated pits [326], [363] & [365] was located south-east of [273]. Fill (327) of pit [326] (1.30m x 0.46m x 0.16m; Fig. 9) contained ceramic building material fragments and three pottery sherds of Iron Age date.

Five further pits, [334], [345], [351], [375] and [488] spread along the length of the pit alignment produced very small quantities of Iron Age pottery. The primary fill (353) of pit [351] produced saddle quern fragments and remains of hazelnut shells.

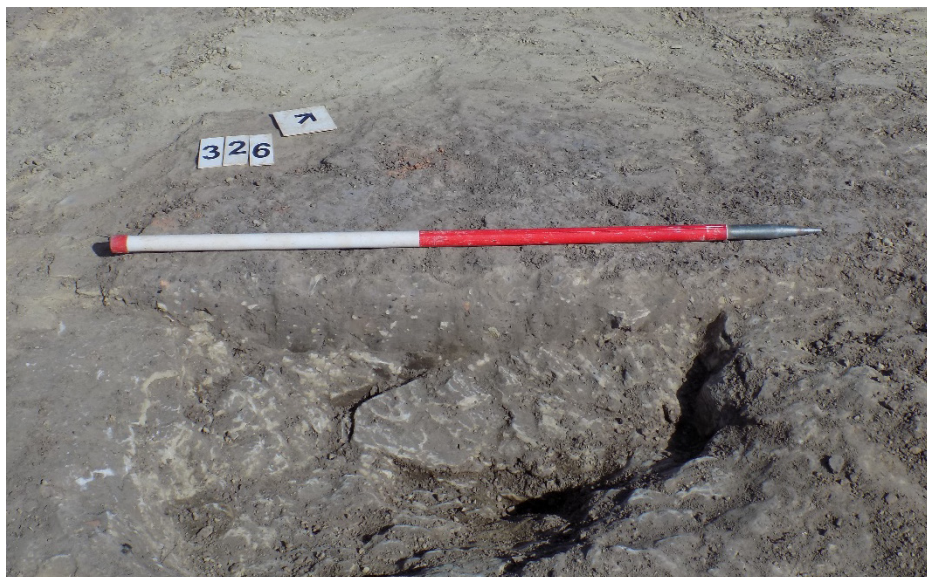


Figure 9: Pit [326], view north; 1m scale

### ***Phase 2: Early or Middle Iron Age***

During the Early or Middle Iron Age a series of boundary ditches were constructed extending north from the Park Lane frontage. These linear features were associated with small oval or sub-circular ditched enclosures, two of which (Enclosures 1 and 2) were located in Area A and one (Enclosure 3) in Area B.

#### *Area A: North-South Ditches*

A north-south ditch was cut running downslope from the Park Lane frontage and was subsequently recut several times. Hints of other ditch stubs running east-west were also identified. For convenience, the ditches will be discussed in two (northern and southern) groupings.

#### **Northern Ditches**

[253] (254), [255] (256), [257] (258), [261] (262), [263] (264), [265] (266), [267] (268), [328] (329), [330] (331), [332] (333), [337] (338), [339] (340), [341] (342), [343] (344), [391] (392), [396] (397), [398] (399)

**Ditch stubs** [367] (368), [386] (387), [396] (397)

At the north end, the ditches were heavily truncated and measured 0.40m-1.34m wide and 0.06m-0.31m deep with shallow sloping sides and concave bases (Figs 10-12). Three ditches [253] (254), [255] (256) and [330] (331) produced small quantities of Iron Age pottery from their orange brown sandy silt fills.

A number of short ditch stubs or branches running perpendicular along the principal ditch may have functioned as animal pens. [367] (368) ran for a 8.5m length and [396] for 4.6m length on a north-west to south-east alignment. Neither contained any dating evidence.

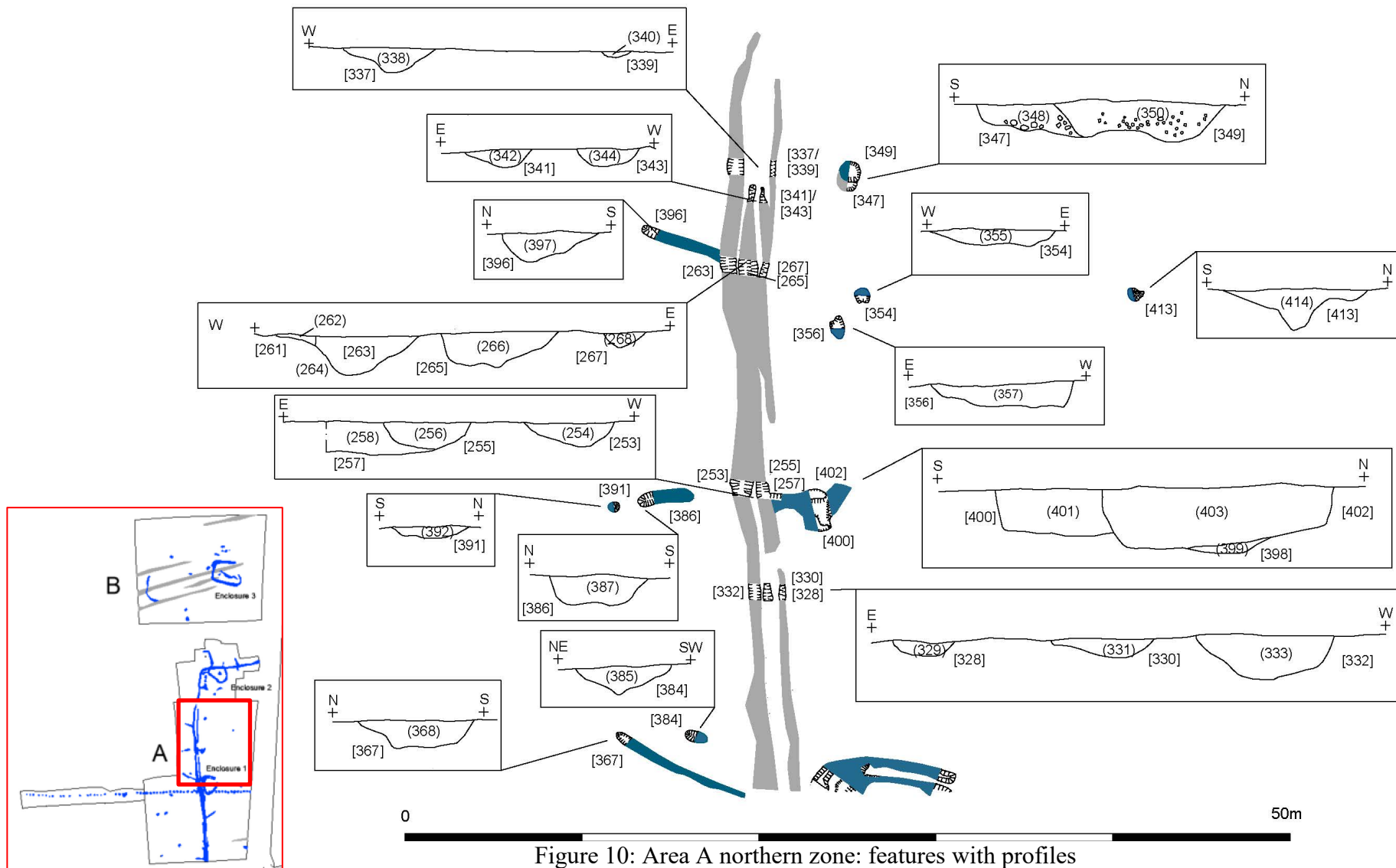


Figure 10: Area A northern zone: features with profiles



Figure 11: Northern zone ditches [261], [263], [265] and [267], view north; 1m scale



Figure 12: Northern zone ditches [328], [330] and [332], view south; 1m scale

### Post Holes

[347] (348), [354] (355), [356] (357), [367] (368), [384] (385), [391] (392), [413] (414)

### Pits

[349] (350), [400] (401), [402] (403)

The ditches were associated with several undated post holes and three small, shallow pits. Pit [349] (350) produced ten Early to Middle Iron Age pottery sherds, pit [400] (401) included two Iron Age pottery body sherds and pit [402] (403) two Iron Age pottery sherds.

### Southern Ditches

[209] (210), [211] (212), [213] (214), [215] (216), [217] (218), [219] (220), [221] (220), [223] (224), [225] (226), [227] (228), [229] (230), [241] (242), [245] (246), [450] (451), [452] (453),

**Ditch stub** [495] (496)

North-south ditches located in the southern sector of Area A were comparable in scale and form (0.32m-1.45m wide x 0.03m x 0.63m deep) to the north but formed longer, more coherent lengths, likely due to having suffered less erosion due to protection from a greater depth of overlying deposits (Figs 13 – 16). Dating evidence was minimal, but four ditch sections, namely [221] (222), [241] (242), [245] (246) and [450] (451) produced small quantities of Iron Age pottery.

As with the northern area there were two small gullies running off the principal ditches ([404] and [495]), that may have served as animal pens.



Figure 13: Southern zone ditches [450] and [452], view north; 1m scale

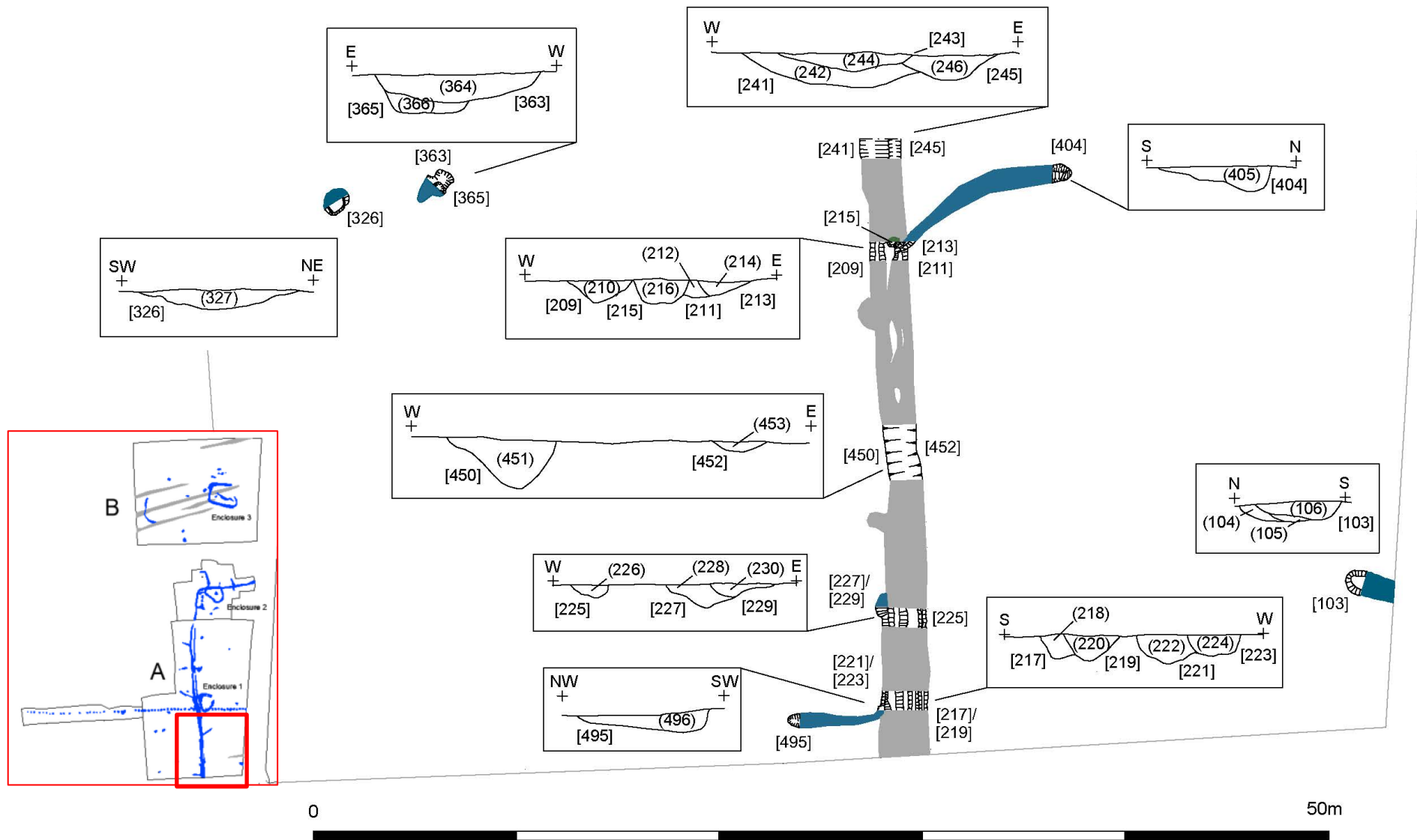


Figure 14: Area A southern zone: features with profiles

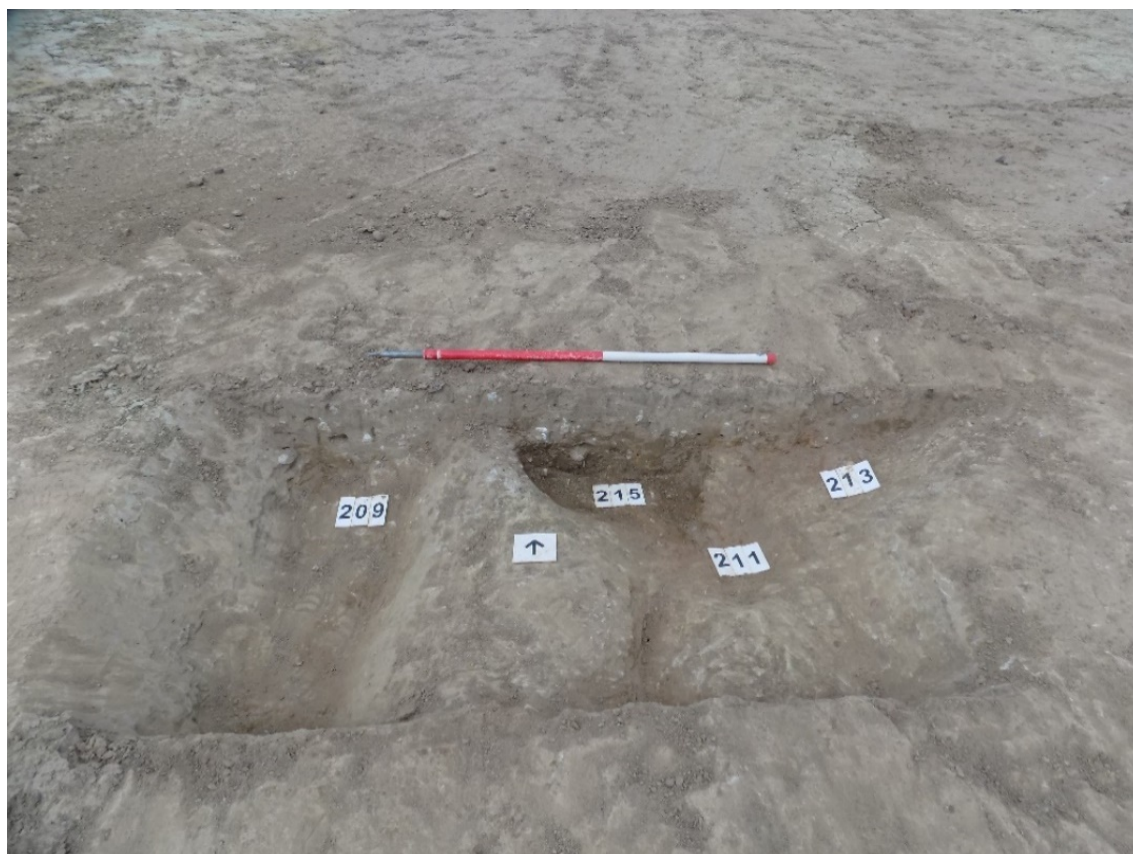


Figure 15: Ditches [209], [211], [213] and post hole [215], view north; 1m scale

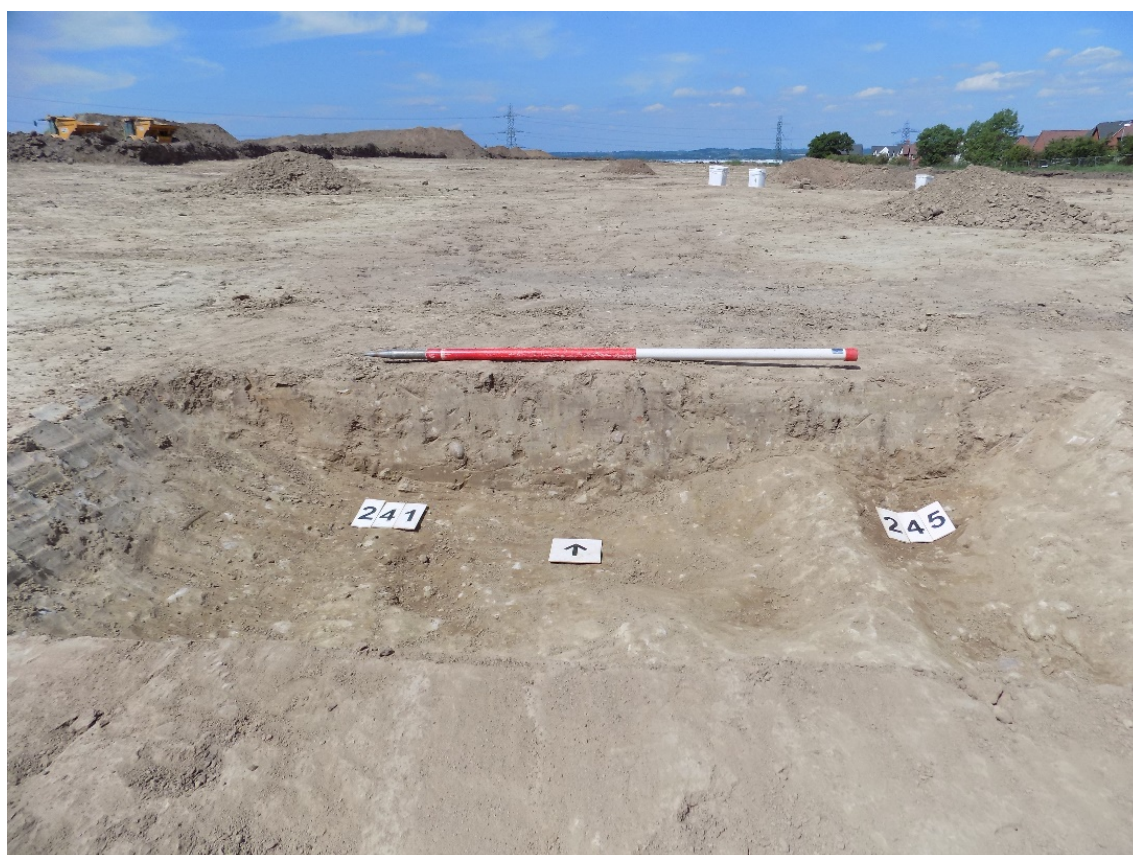


Figure 16: Ditches [241] and [245], view north; 1m scale



### *Area A: Enclosure 1*

*Ditches* [129](130), [131](132), [133](134), [150](151), [152](153), [154](155), [168](169), [170](171), [180](181), [183](184), [185](186), [187](188)

*Terminals*

[142] (143), [144] (145), [146] (147), [148] (149)

**Enclosure 1** consisted of a sub-circular area measuring 6m east-west and 8m north-south as defined by a single rock-cut ditch and flanked to the west by the north-south boundary ditches (Fig. 18). At some point the enclosure ditch had been recut on the same course and alignment.

The enclosure ditch measured 0.48m-1.45m wide and 0.18m and 0.45m deep with steep sides and a flat or concave base (Fig. 19). Stratigraphically the enclosure appears to have been set out subsequent to the cutting of the first of the north-south possible boundary ditches. However, the enclosure was linked to the north-south ditches at a single junction point on the western side where enclosure ditch [170] fed into the north-south boundary ditch [168], likely to aid drainage (Fig. 20). The enclosure interior was devoid of any features.

An entrance at the north-east corner was defined by ditch terminals [142]/[144] and [146]/[148] producing a 2m wide entrance with a single recut. Terminals [142] and [144] measured 0.78m and 0.65m wide x 0.25m 0.18m deep respectively and shared 45° sides and concave bases. Their dark brown sandy silt fills (143) and (145) produced no finds. Terminals [146] and [148] had comparable profiles and produced no finds. Whilst it was not possible to determine whether [142] or [144] formed part of the primary arrangement of the enclosure, [148] did appear to represent a secondary recut of [146], suggesting a reinstatement of the enclosure along its original course.

Three sandy silt fills (132) of [131], (133) of [134] and (169) of [168] contained small quantities of Iron Age pottery (Figs 21 and 22). A quern fragment came from fill (133) whilst ditch section [154] (155) produced an iron adze (Figs 23 - 24).



Figure 17: Machining of Enclosure 1: view south



Figure 18: Area A (south) including Enclosure 1

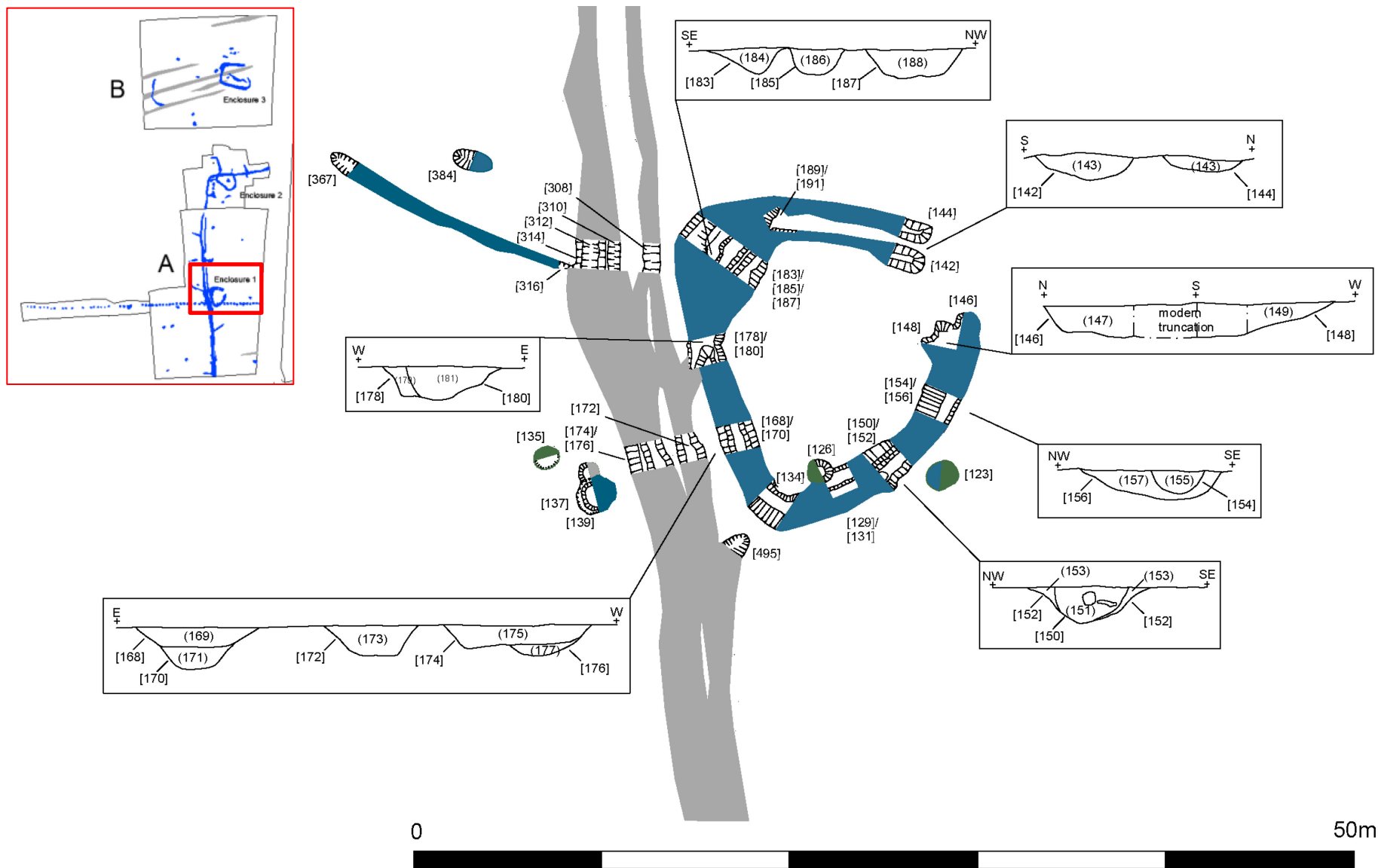




Figure 20: North-south boundary ditch [178] and enclosure ditch [180], view north; 1m scale



Figure 21: Enclosure 1 ditch [131] and pit [126]

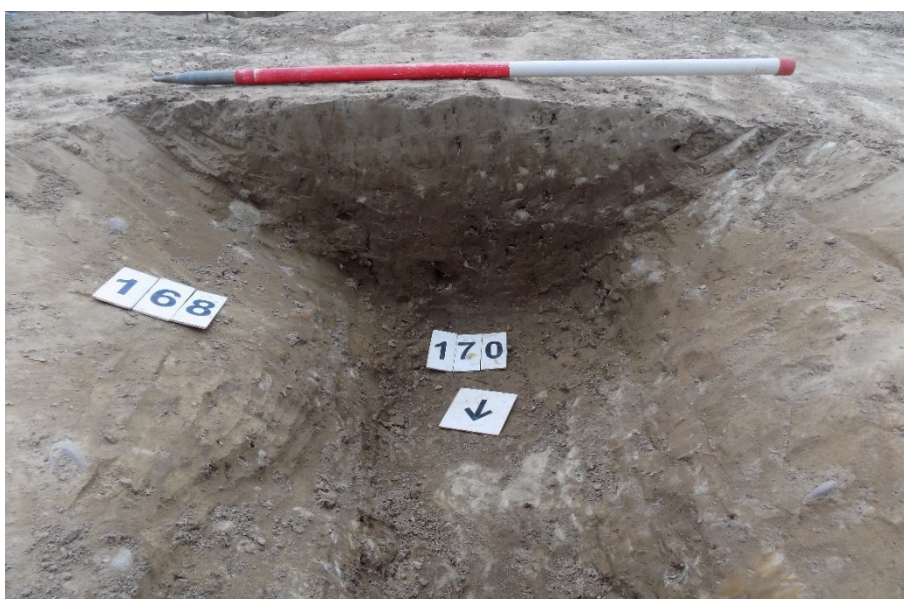


Figure 22: Enclosure 1 ditches [168] and [170] view south; 1m scale



Figure 23: Enclosure 1 ditches [154] and [156] view north; 1m scale



Figure 24: Iron adze recovered from Enclosure 1 ditch

*Post Pit [139] (140), (141)*

A substantial possible post pit [139] was located adjacent to the western side of the north-south Iron Age ditches opposite Enclosure 1 and could be associated with the enclosure (Fig. 19).

The substantial sub-circular feature (1.18m x 1.30m x 0.65m deep) had vertical sides and a flat base (Figs 25-26). The mid-reddish-brown sandy silt fill (141) contained large quantities of sandstone rubble, and possibly functioned as packing material for a substantial timber post. The secondary light greyish-brown sandy silt fill (140) likely represented post-abandonment silting. The feature cut one of the pit alignment pits [137].



Figure 25: Post pit [139] and pit [137], view east; 1m and 30cm scales

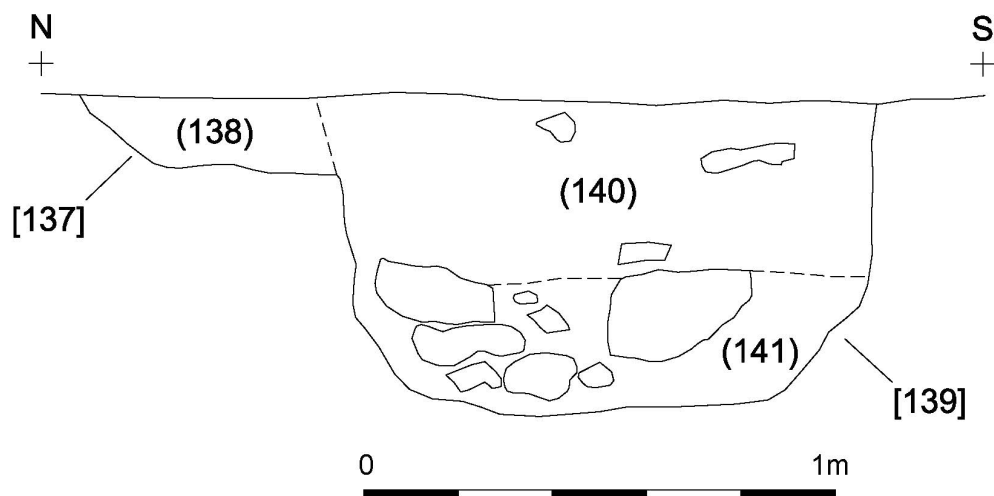


Figure 26: Pits [137] and [139] section

### *Area A: Enclosure 2*

**Enclosure 2** was located at the north end of Area A linked to the linear north-south ditches. It consisted of two or possibly three small pen-like individual elements and/or phases (Fig. 27 A-D) measuring 6.5m east-west, 8m north-south overall.

#### **Ditch (Element A)**

[388] (389), [426] (427), [428] (429), [434] (435), [436] (437), [438] (439), [440] (441), [446] (447), [448] (449), [456] (457), [459] (460), [477] (478), [481] (482), [499] (500), [501] (502)

Terminal [381] (382)

A substantial curving ditch ran northwards from the main north-south ditch [426], before turning eastwards and continuing to the edge of the excavation area. At the southern junction with ditch [426] it formed a corner running eastwards and ending in a butt end [381] (Figs 27-29). The ditch measured between 0.32m-1.40 wide and 0.15m-0.48 deep with steep sides and a flat base with a single recut (Figs 28, 30-32). It was unclear as to whether the ditch represents part of an enclosure (as perhaps suggested by the butt end) or else functioned as a boundary feature. Fill (389) from ditch [388] produced a single Iron Age pottery sherd.

#### **Pen (Element B)**

[464] (465), [471] (472), [474] (475), [492] (493)

A single gully (0.20m-0.70m wide x 0.36m-0.60m deep) was cut against the south side of the north-west corner of the ditch forming a small enclosure or pen measuring c.3.5m east-west x c.1.8m north-south (Fig. 28). It terminated with a butt end suggesting a possible entrance to the south and could be an animal pen or similar.

#### **Curving Enclosure (Element C)**

[430] (431), [432] (433), [454] (455), [461] (462), [466] (467), [468] (469)

Subsequent to this a curving ditch measuring c.9.3m east-west and c.7.6m north-south was set out, adjacent to the smaller pen (B) and linked to the east-west northern ditch. The defining ditch measured 0.65m-1.05m wide x 0.35m-0.38m deep with moderately sloping to steep sides and a flat or concave base (Figs 28 and 33). Again this could be an animal pen or stock enclosure.

#### **Associated Features (Element D)**

Pits [358] (359) (360), [371] (372), [373] (374), [415] (416) (417), [422] (423)

Gully [393] (394) (395)

Several sizeable but shallow circular and oval pits were geographically associated with these features (Fig. 28). In the centre of the curving enclosure was a centrally placed pit [415]. There was no dating evidence but the secondary fill (417) produced a well preserved spelt wheat glume base. Three other pits in the area similarly produced no dating evidence.

Pit [424] (423) produced two Iron Age pottery sherds. A shallow 3m long south-west to north-east aligned gully [393] located south of the enclosure produced eight Early to Middle Iron Age pottery body sherds from its fill (395).

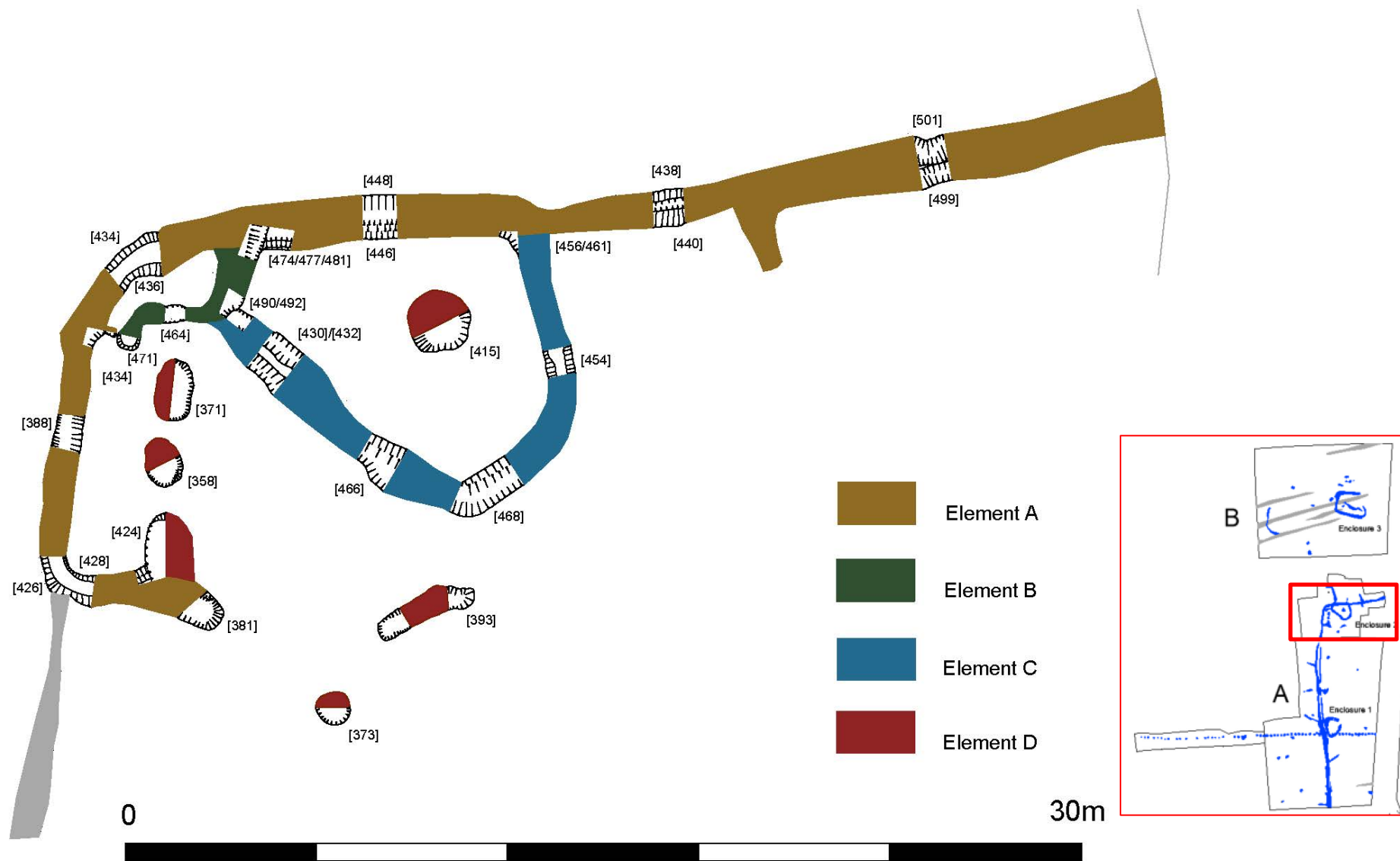


Figure 27: Enclosure 2 phase plan with detailing



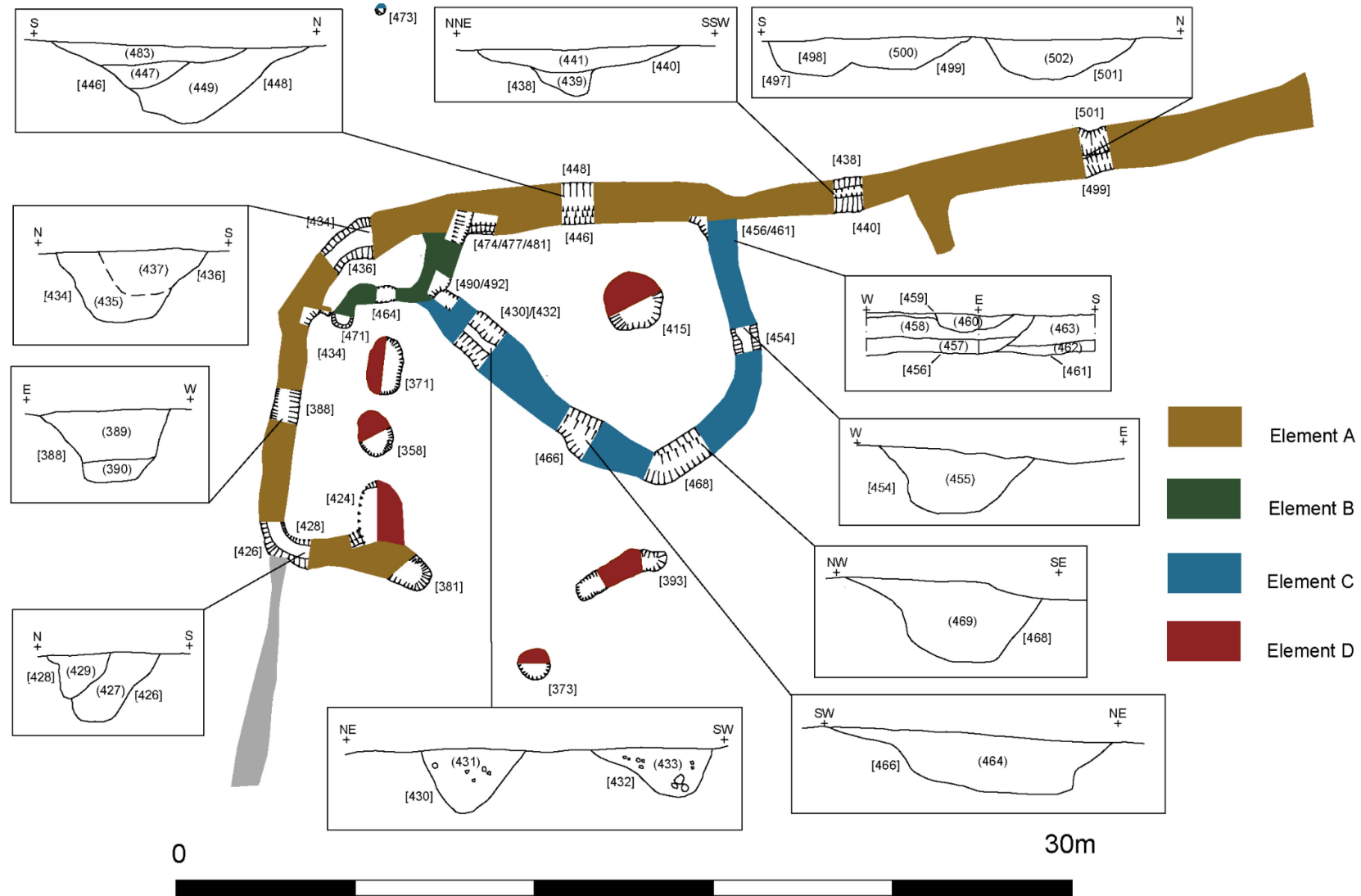


Figure 28: Enclosure 2 with profiles



Figure 29: Excavation of Enclosure 2 in progress; view northeast from south-west corner.



Figure 30: Enclosure ditches [446] and [448], view west; 1m scale



Figure 31: Enclosure ditches [434] and [436], view east; 1m scale



Figure 32: Enclosure ditches [426] and [428], view east; 1m scale



Figure 33: Enclosure ditch [468], view north; 1m scale

#### *Area B: Enclosure 3*

[276] (277), [278] (279), [280] (281), [282] (283), [284] (285), [286] (287) [288] (289), [294] (295), [300] (301), [306] (307), [318] (319), [320] (321), [409] (410)

Possible ditch recut [290] (291), [292] (293), [298] (299), [302] (303), [304] (305)  
?later pit [411]

**Enclosure 3** was a small, sub-rectangular feature located *c.* 50m north of **Enclosure 2**, set on a broad east-west alignment and measuring *c.* 1.5m east-west and *c.* 1.1m north-south (Figs 34-35). The enclosure was defined by a shallow rock-cut ditch measuring 0.45m-1.15m wide and 0.10-0.40m deep with irregularly sloping sides and an uneven base.

Two butt ends [276] and [320] formed a 6.6m wide entrance at the north-east corner. Although there were no obvious recuts, the enclosure appeared to have undergone a degree of remodelling or alteration, suggested by the presence of a secondary ditch running parallel with the southern side of the enclosure (Figs 34-37).

The northern terminal [276] (0.7m x 0.2-0.6m deep) was characterised by a steep-sided cut with a flat base falling markedly towards the butt end, suggesting its having functioned as a drain and/or a stock watering facility (Fig. 38). The single pale yellow brown sandy silt fill (277) included eleven rim sherds of Iron Age pottery and several fire-cracked pebbles. The rock-cut enclosure was crudely constructed, apparently formed of short, irregularly-sized lengths of ditch; this was particularly noticeable along its western side. Eleven sherds of Iron

Age pottery were found in [276] (277) (ditch terminal) and two sherds of Iron Age pottery [282] (283) on the western length of enclosure.

The south-west corner of the enclosure featured a 2.60m x 1.7m x 0.65m deep ditch stub or pit [411]. Although not dated, is distinctly different character from the rest of the ditch suggests either a crudely constructed intersection between the western and southern lengths of enclosure ditch or possibly a later addition (Fig. 39).

The enclosure interior was devoid of features with the exception of a single undated pit or post-hole [322] (Fig. 40).

Approximately 35m to the west of the enclosure was a heavily truncated, curving gully [324] (Fig. 34). This was 0.65m wide x 0.18m deep and contained no dating evidence. Several other peripheral pits [101], [361], [444] were also recorded as well as a post hole [442] which produced one sherd of Iron Age pottery.

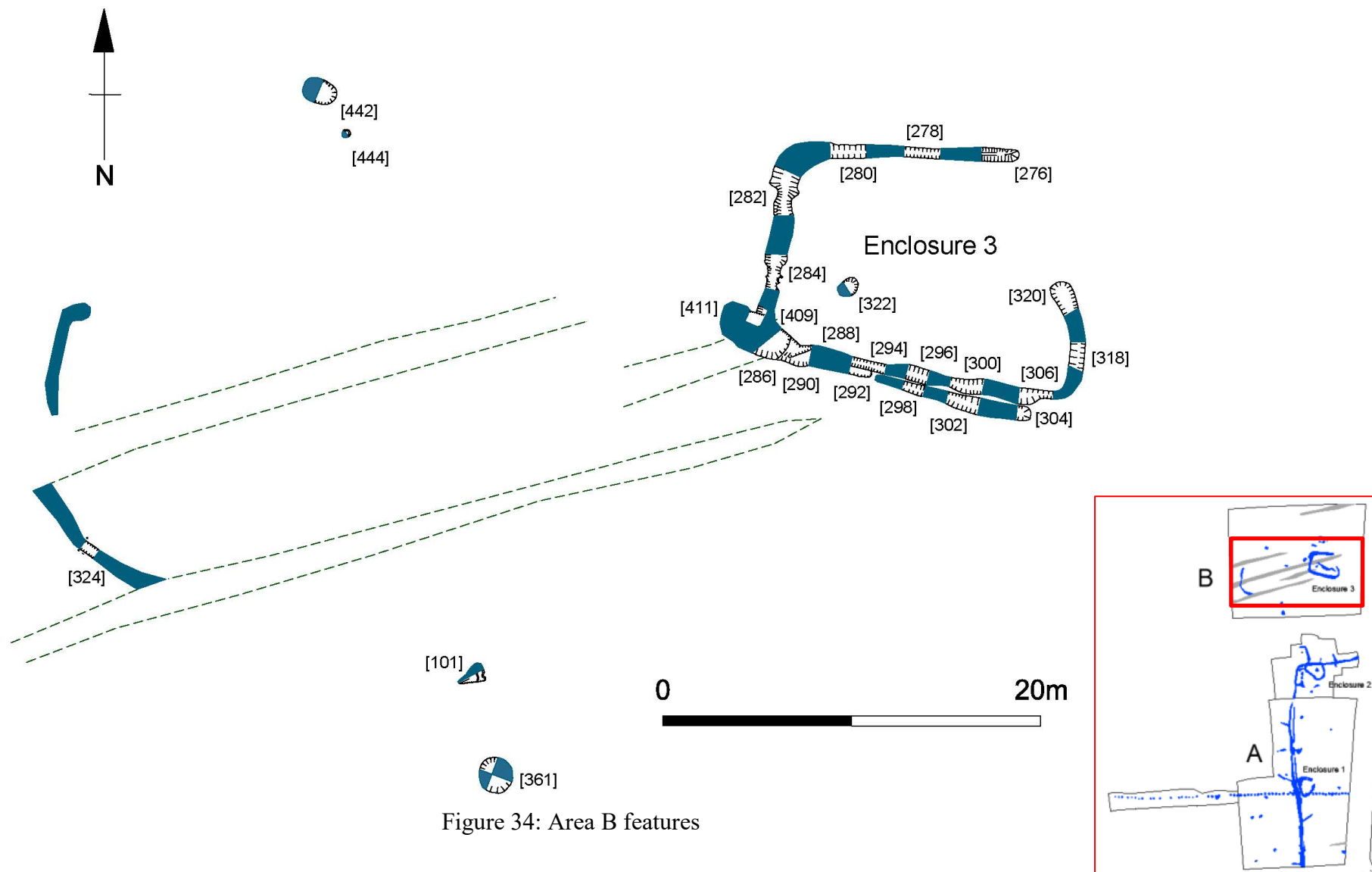


Figure 34: Area B features

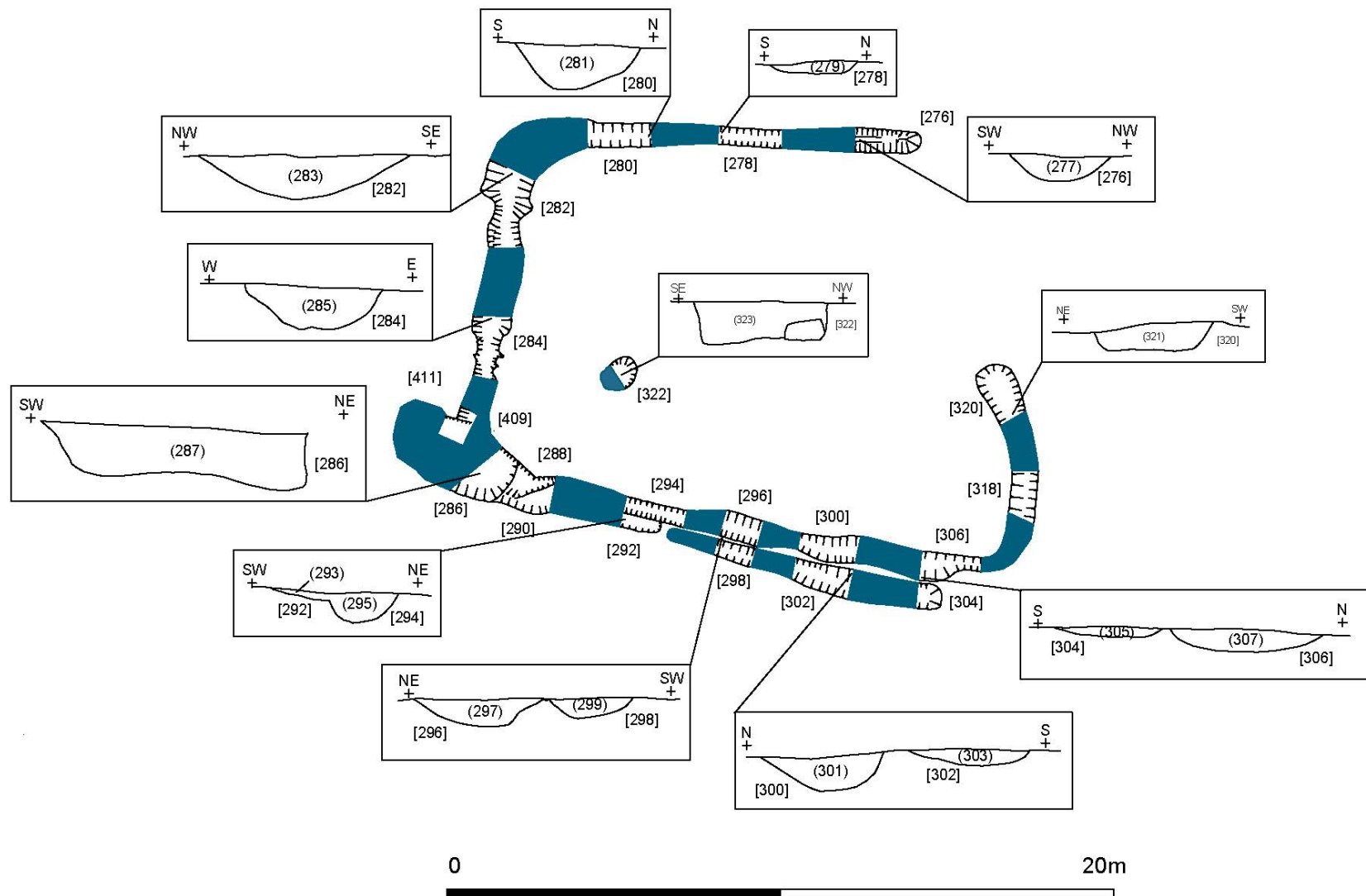


Figure 35: Enclosure 3 with ditch profiles



Figure 36: Enclosure ditches [296] and [298], view southeast; 1m scale



Figure 37: Enclosure ditches [300] and [302], view east; 1m scale





Figure 38: Enclosure ditch terminal [276], view west; 1m scale



Figure 39: Ditches junction [409] and [411], view northeast; 1m scale



Figure 40: Post hole [322], view southeast; 1m scale

### *Area C*

Area C was a square area located in the north-east corner of the site (Fig. 4) opened with the intention of ascertaining the presence of possible Anglo Saxon activity identified during excavations to the east in 2011. Machine stripping of the area revealed several east-west aligned medieval plough furrows but was otherwise archaeologically blank.

*Area D:**Pits*

[418] (419), [420] (421)

**Area D** was a small square area at the northern end of the development area located to target a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit identified in Trench 73 of the 2019 MOLA evaluation (MOLA 2019, 16 [73007]). The stripping identified both the original pit and a second larger pit to the north-east (Fig. 41).

**Pit [418] (419)**

Pit [418] was a circular feature measuring (0.90m x 0.95m x 1.35m deep) with steeply sloping sides and a flat base (Figure 42). The feature had been half excavated in 2019 and consequently in 2020 its remaining fill was removed in order to secure further dating. The single fill (419), was a mid orange-brown sandy-silt fill with rare charcoal flecking and sandstone inclusions and produced no finds (Fig. 42).

**Pit [420] (421)**

A second pit was identified 2.5m to the north-east (2m x 1.85m x 0.90m deep) with moderately sloping sides and a flat base (Fig. 43). Its single mid orange-brown sandy-silt fill (421) produced two body sherds of Iron Age pottery.

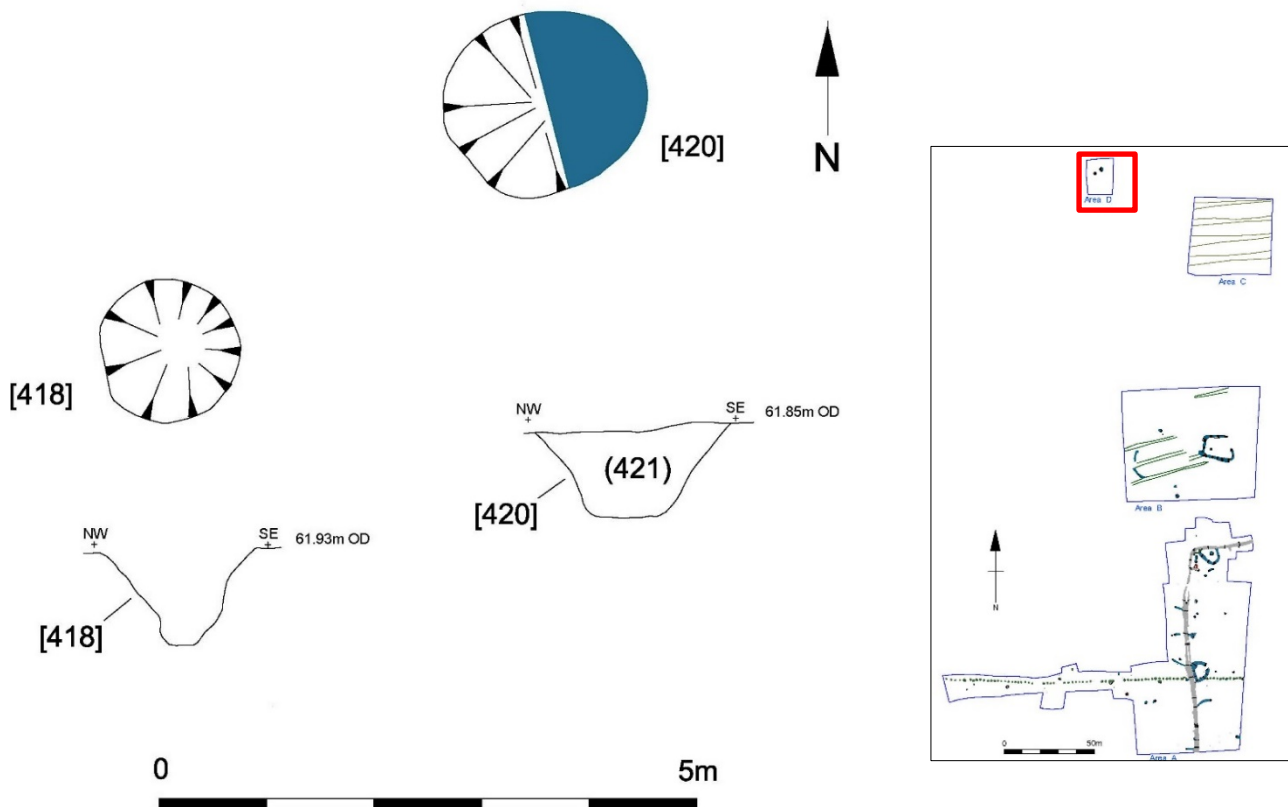


Figure 41: Area D features



Figure 42: Pit [418]; view southeast; 1m scale



Figure 43: Pit [420]; view east; 1m scale

## The Prehistoric Lithics

*Lynden Cooper*

The small assemblage of 16 pieces includes eight tools and eight pieces of debitage, all residual in later contexts. The raw material is yellow-brown or dark grey-brown semi-translucent flint with a buff or light brown, thin cortex. The material appears to be good quality, with few cryoclastic flaws. It could be choice material derived from local glacial tills.

The tools comprise a transverse arrowhead, three piercers, a retouched flake fragment, a possible scraper on a core, a retouched and/or utilised flake and a blade with proximal retouch overlain by wear. The arrowhead is a British oblique type, a form with a flouit in the middle and late Neolithic in date. As such it is atypical, in that it has a tip formed by the shape of the flake blank rather than being retouched to a point. One of the piercers made at the distal end of the blade blank, has minimal working but shows sign of wear. It has some technological stigmata suggesting soft stone percussion. The other two piercers are ad hoc forms on flakes. The retouched and/or utilised flake fragment is possibly the proximal end of a blade, with minimal flat retouch that probably served to rejuvenate the cutting edge.

The blade with a worn proximal end was made on an unusual blank, a plunging blade with a quadrilateral cross-section. The proximal end has minimal retouch overlain by use wear. It may have served as a piercer or *bec*, the latter term used as it appears to have been modified with a small longitudinal removal.

As with the transverse arrowhead the other tools and debitage could also be of Neolithic date.

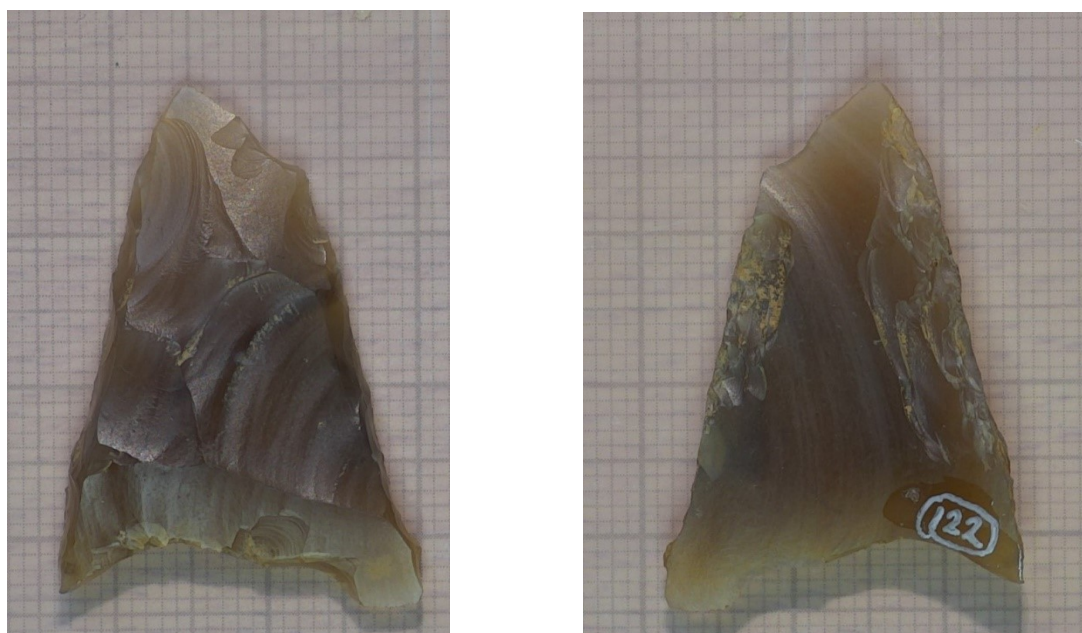


Figure 44: Transverse arrowhead of British oblique type

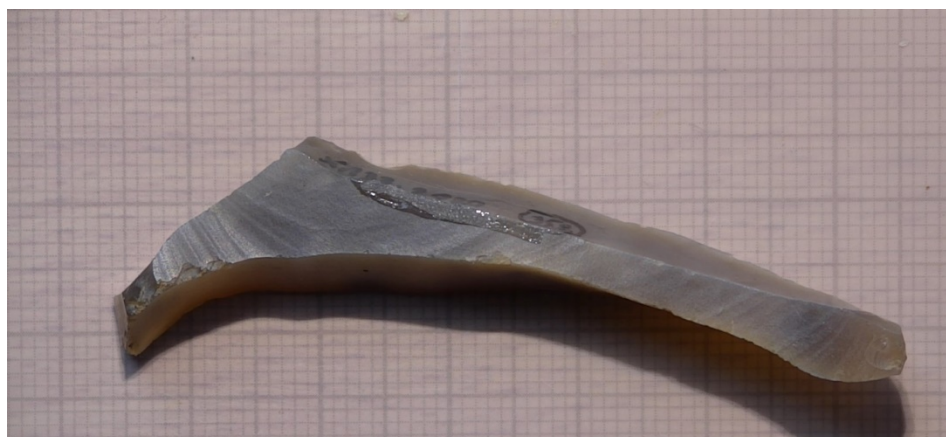


Figure 45: Retouched end of the blade. The ridges of the longitudinal removals are worn (reflecting light), the ventral longitudinal ridge shows crushing step fractures suggesting a rotary movement/gesture.

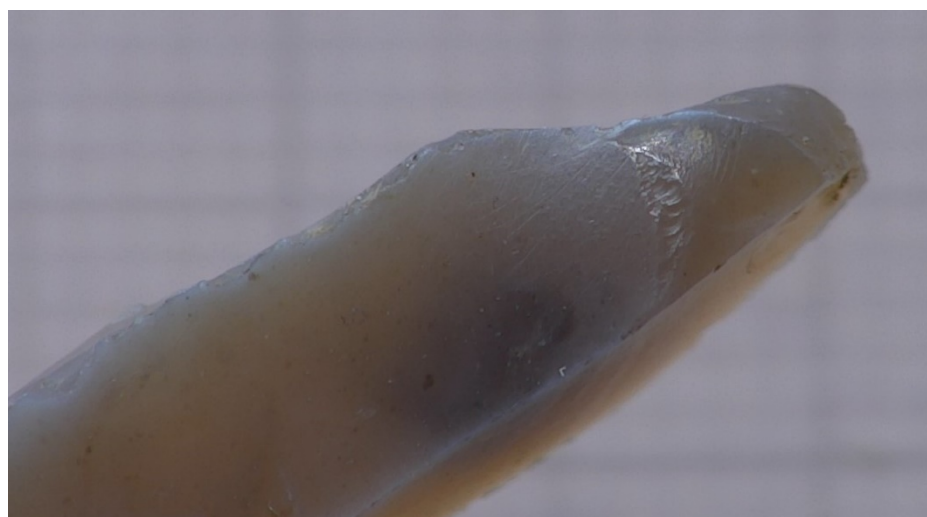


Figure 46: Plunging blade with retouched and worn end

Table 2: The prehistoric lithics

Context	Sieved fraction	Type	Comments
114	Sam 1	Flake 2ry	
122		Transverse arrowhead	British oblique type
140, SF5		Frag	Blade?
165		Piercer	
171	Sam 5	Flake 2ry	
206		Retouched? flake	Possibly small core on flake
333	Sam 10	Calcined Spall	
352		Blade with worn end	
376		Frag	
387		Piercer	On blade, soft hammer percussion
397		Scraper on core	
403		Piercer	Double
416		Flake 3ry	Faceted butt
419	Sam 17	Flake 2ry	
429		Frag	
451		Retouched/utilised fragment	Blade? NB soft stone percussion

## The Early Iron Age Pottery and Fired Clay

*Nicholas J. Cooper*

### Introduction

A total of 448 sherds of pottery weighing 2535g were recovered from 53 contexts during the excavations, of which 258 sherds derived from the fills of Pit [273] (274) (275) to the south of the pit alignment, but with smaller groups from thirteen of the pits in the alignment and several other pits also lying to the south of it. The assemblage is primarily hand collected but also includes sherds recovered during sorting of the coarse fractions (>4mm) from bulk soil samples, which tend to be smaller, but did sometimes provide ceramic evidence where none had been recovered by hand. The average sherd weight is therefore just 5.7g, and supports the contention that this is a very fragmentary assemblage, containing rims sherds from only 13 separate vessels, seven of which come from context (274). In many cases, contexts yielded one or two sherds, and consistently less than five, with around 40% of the assemblage (198 sherds / 960g) coming from a single context (274), and 60 more sherds (362g) coming from a single vessel in (275), both fills of Pit [273], a small pit south of the pit alignment. A small assemblage of fired clay was also recovered.

### Methodology

The pottery was analysed by form and fabric in accordance with national guidelines (Barclay *et al.* 2016), using the Leicestershire County Museums prehistoric pottery fabric series (Marsden 2011, 62, Table 1), and quantified by sherd count and weight (g).

### Analysis by form and decoration

The fragmentary nature of the assemblage makes it difficult to reconstruct vessel forms, but enough examples of decorated rims and body sherds survive to suggest parallels. The vessels from (274) include a shouldered jar with an undecorated flat rim (160mm diameter) and a suspension hole through the shoulder (Fig. 47). The form, with a high shoulder or carination, is similar to vessels from nearby Redhill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar of Early Iron Age date (Elsdon 1982), and Mam Tor, Derbyshire (Coombs and Thompson 1979).



Figure 47: Shouldered jar with suspension hole

Two vessels have thin, wide flat rims with obliquely incised lines across them (Fig. 48), and another has triangular notches towards the internal edge (Fig. 49), similar to examples from Epperstone, north east of Nottingham (Challis and Harding 1979, fig.9)) of Early to Middle Iron Age date.





Figure 48: Flat rim with oblique lines. Figure 49: Flat rim with triangular notches.

Two other vessels have rims with oblique slashing; one on the outside of an in-sloping rim which also has slashing on the shoulder (Figs. 50 and 51), paralleled by a Middle Iron Age vessel from Harborough Rocks, Derbyshire (Challis and Harding 1979, fig. 4).



Figure 50 (top) Figure 51 (bottom) Rim and shoulder from jar (not joining but from same vessel).

The other vessel has oblique slashes on the inside of a wide, flaring rim (Fig. 52), again, similar to those from Epperstone.



Figure 52: Jar with wide flaring rim with oblique slashed internally. Note large white quartz inclusion, characteristic of the local fabric (see below).

The lower fill of Pit [273] (275) contains the remains of a single vessel with lug handles and a thin, wide flaring rim, again resembling those large jars from Epperstone.

The only diagnostic sherds from the pit alignment is a fingertip decorated body from the girth of a vessel from (206) [205] (Fig. 53), similar to those from Redhill, Ratcliffe on Soar (Elsdon 1982) of Early Iron Age date.



Figure 53: Jar from Pit Alignment (206) [205] decorated with a row of fingernail impressions around the girth (one impression complete, on left, and one partial, on right). A more complete example of this vessel form which has its origins in the very Late Bronze Age (Knight 1984, 39, Group 1 Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age) was found at Empingham, Rutland (Cooper 2000, 67, fig.33.1).

Fill (489) from small pit [488], close to but not part of the pit alignment produced a lid-seated rim with external fingertip impressions (Fig. 54).

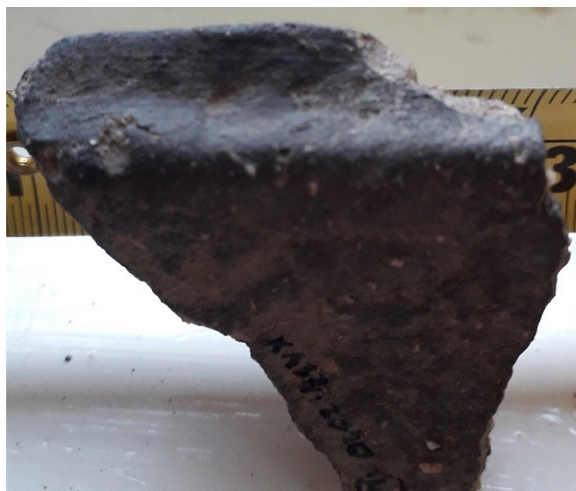


Figure 54: Jar with internal lid-seating from (489) [488].

One of the more complete vessel profiles (Fig. 55) is a small jar with a short upright rounded rim with a diameter of 120mm from (350) [349]. Other jars with upright rounded rims, of 140mm and 160mm diameter, came from (395) [393] and (277) respectively, and are broadly Early Iron Age in date.



Figure 55: Jar with slack shoulder and upright rounded rim from (350) [349]. Note mudstone inclusions protruding through surface.

### **Analysis by vessel fabric**

The opening materials employed during preparation of the potting clay fabrics are entirely mineral in origin, as would be expected in this part of the county (Table 3).

Table 3: quantified record of the Iron Age pottery by vessel fabric

Fabric	Code	Sherds	Weight	% sherds
White pebble quartz	Q5	415	2063	93
Pebble quartz/sand	Q4/5	10	102	2
Quartz sand	Q1	18	318	4
Granodiorite	R1	5	52	1
Total		448	2535	100

The predominant fabric (Q5), contributing 93%, is opened with large angular fragments of crushed white pebble quartz (1mm to 5mm) with few other inclusions, which is typical for this part of the Trent Valley, and known from a number of Iron Age assemblages in the vicinity such as Warren Farm, Lockington (Johnson 2011 ULAS report 2011/077) and East Midlands Gateway (Ian Rowlandson pers. comm.). A small number of sherds (2%) have been allocated to Fabric Q4/5, where there is a higher proportion of finer sand alongside the larger pebble quartz inclusions, and these probably represent a variant on the Q5 recipe. In one example, a jar from (350) [349], ferruginous mudstone is the other predominant content, but this may be naturally occurring in the clay, rather than being a deliberate inclusion (see Fig.9 above). The remainder of the assemblage is made up of vessels manufactured in the finer quartz sand fabric Q1 (4%) which is not precisely provenanced, and the granodiorite-tempered fabric R1 (1%), which derives from Mountsorrel in the Charnwood district (Knight *et al.* 2003) and is the predominant fabric at sites closer to Leicester, such as Manor Farm Humberstone (Marsden 2011, 64, Table 2).

### Fired Clay

A total of 16 fragments (229g) of fired clay, all from one larger fragment, came from (327) [326]. The fabric is grog-tempered and the presence of a wattle perforation, suggests it was once part of a wattle and daub structure, destroyed by fire. A further ten abraded fragments (87g) in a sandy fabric were recovered from the bulk sample of the same context. Additionally, three fragments (45g) in a sandy fabric, displaying a flat, finger-smoothed surface came from (362) [361].

### Discussion

Despite the poor condition of the pottery assemblage, it has been possible to assign a confident Early Iron Age date to the activity represented by the pit alignment and associated features, as evidenced by the diagnostic rim forms and decoration illustrated above.

Table 4: Record of Pottery by Context

Feature	Context	Cut	Fabric	Vessel Form	Part	Rim Type	Decor	Sherds	Weight	Diam	Dating	Tpq depos	Comment
Pit align	114	113	Q5	misc	body			4	7		IA		
Pit align	114	113	Q5	misc	body			3	3		IA		CF sample 1
Ditch	132	131	Q4/Q5	misc	body			2	24		IA		
Ditch	134	133	Q5	misc	body			3	16		IA		
Large pit	140	139	Q5	misc	body			3	14		IA		
Large pit	141	139	Q5	misc	body			2	10		IA		joining
Large pit	148	149	Q5	misc	body			4	1		IA		CF sample 3
Large pit	152	153	Q5	misc	body			1	1		IA		CF sample 4
Pit align	159	158	Q5	misc	body			2	5		IA		
Pit align	159	158	R1	misc	body			1	1		IA		
Pit align	163	162	Q5	misc	body			1	5		IA		
Pit align	165	164	Q5	misc	body			3	7		IA		
Encl. 1	169	168	Q5	misc	body			11	84		IA		
Pit	194	193	Q4/Q5	misc	body			1	3		IA		
Pit align	200	199	Q5	misc	body			2	9		IA		
Pit align	202	201	Q5	misc	body			1	15		IA		
Pit align	206	205	Q5	misc	body		fingernail	2	13		EIA?		joining
Ditch	222	221	R1	misc	body			1	4		IA		biotite
Pit align	234	233	Q5	misc	body			1	7		IA		
Ditch	242	241	Q5	misc	body			2	11		IA		
Ditch	242	241	Q1	misc	body			2	27		IA		joining
Ditch	244	243	Q5	misc	body			13	13		IA		CF sample 7
Ditch	246	245	Q5	misc	body			1	2		IA		
Ditch	252		Q5	misc	body			4	19		IA		
Ditch	254	253	Q5	misc	body			1	21		IA		
Ditch	256	255	Q5	misc	body			2	18		IA		

Pit align	260	259	Q5	misc	body			6	6		IA		
Large pit	270	269	Q5	misc	body			5	25		IA		
Large pit	270	269	Q1	misc	body			1	21		IA		
Large pit	270	269	R1	misc	base			1	42		IA		micaceous
Pit align	272	271	Q5	misc	body			1	3		IA		
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat	sus perf	7	63	160	E-MIA	tbd	Redhill
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	insloping	diagslash	4	30	200	E-MIA	tbd	Redhill
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat	diagslash	1	4	200	E-MIA	tbd	Redhill
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat		1	6	140	E-MIA	tbd	Redhill
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	body			112	738				above vessels
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat	diagslash	1	5		E-MIA		from sample 8 CF
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat	diagslash	1	2		E-MIA		from sample 8 CF
Large pit	274	273	Q5	jar	rim	uprightflat		1	1		E-MIA		from sample 8 CF
Large pit	274	273	Q5	misc	body			70	111		E-MIA		from sample 8 CF
Large pit	275	273	Q5	jar	rim	flaring flat	TBD	60	362	large	E-MIA	one vessel	lug handled
Encl. 3	277	276	Q5	jar	rim	uprightround		11	104	160	IA		joining
Encl. 3	287	286	Q5	misc	body			1	1		IA		CF sample 15
Encl. 3	311	310	Q4/5	misc	body			1	6		IA		
Encl. 3	321	320	Q5	misc	body		incised lines	1	6		IA		CF sample 14
Large pit	327	326	Q1	misc	body			3	58		IA		sandy
Large pit	327	326	Q1	misc	body			2	13		IA		CF sample 9
Ditch	331	330	Q5	misc	body			1	7		IA		
Ditch	333	332	Q5	misc	body			4	3		IA		CF sample 10
Large pit	335	334	Q5	misc	body			2	15		IA		
Pit	346	345	Q5	misc	body			1	10		IA		

Pi3	350	349	Q5	jar	rim	uprightround		10	163	120	E-MIA	tbd	joining
Pit	352	351	Q5	misc	body			1	4		IA		
Pit	352	351	Q1	misc	body			2	10		IA		joining
Pit	353	351	Q5	jar	rim	uprightround		1	4	100	IA		CF sample 12
Pit	353	351	Q5	misc	body			29	13		IA		CF sample 12
Pit	376	375	Q5	jar	base			4	38		IA		
Ditch	389	388	Q5	misc	body			1	2		IA		
Encl. 2	395	393	Q1	jar	rim	uprightround		8	189	140	E-MIA	tbd	joining
Pit	401	400	Q5	misc	body			2	8		IA		
Pit	403	402	Q5	misc	body			2	20		IA		
Pit	419	418	Q5	misc	body			2	2		IA		CF sample 17
Pit	421	420	Q5	misc	body			2	8		IA		
Pit	423	422	Q5	misc	body			2	3		IA		
Ditch	429	428	Q4/5	misc	body			3	31		IA		
Post-hole	443	442	Q4	misc	body		incised	1	6		IA		decoration?
Encl. 2	449	448	Q5	misc	body			1	2		IA		
Ditch	451	450	Q4	misc	body			2	32		IA		
Pit	489	488	Q5	jar	rim	lidseat	fingertip	1	13	180	E-MIA	tbd	
	1283	1282	R1	misc	body			2	5		IA		

## The Small Finds

*Nicholas J. Cooper*

A total of five objects were registered as small finds, including an iron adze head, two quern fragments, a struck prehistoric flint flake, and a fragment of glass. The photographs were taken by Georgina Clipstone.

### *Iron Adze*

Sf2 (155) [154] Iron. Adze head. A single bladed, socketed head. Shaft flares to a broad blade edge and is slightly downwardly sloped (Figs. 56-57). Length 170mm, width of blade edge 55mm



Figure 56: Iron Adze head showing sloped side profile



Figure 57: Adze head showing socket and flaring blade edge from below and above.



Iron adzes are unusual finds from sites of this date, given the value of the raw material but a close parallel with a down sloping blade comes from Danebury Iron Age hill fort in Hampshire (Cunliffe 1984, 351, 2.49, Phase 7) dating to the Late Iron Age.

### ***Querns***

Sf1 (134) [133] Possible fragment, of a quern in a fine grey sandstone, with one flat edge and one curving edge. Broken length 110mm.

Sf3 (353) [351] Fragment of saddle quern in a fine grey sandstone which has been utilised on both sides (Fig. 58). The dished ware pattern is narrower and deeper on one side than the other.

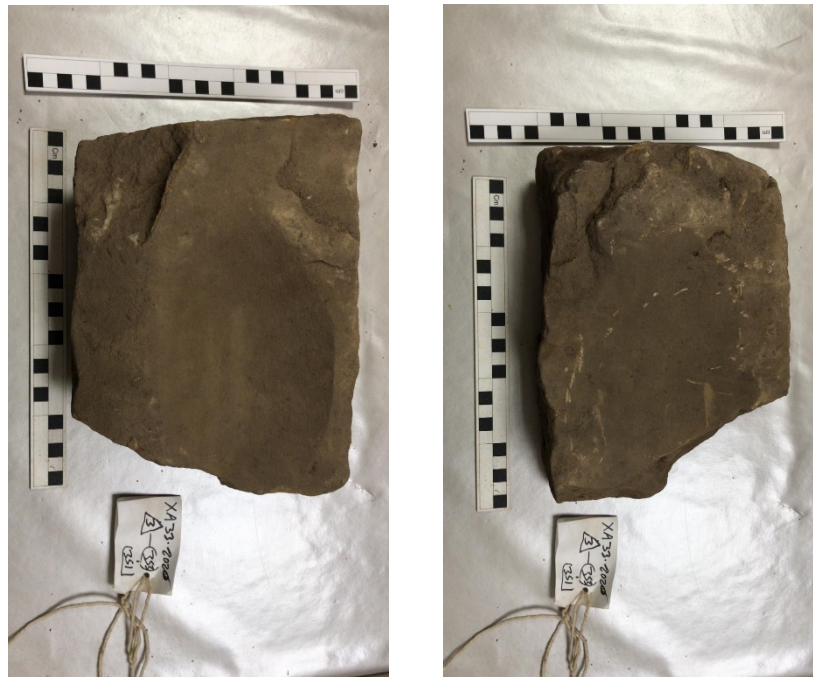


Figure 58: Saddle quern showing dished wear on both surfaces.

### ***Prehistoric flint***

Sf5 (140) [139] secondary flake of broad Neolithic to Bronze Age date. See Cooper, this report.

### ***Glass***

Sf4 (395) [393] Fragment of glass modern brown bottle glass dating to the late 19th or 20th century.

## The Plant Remains

*Rachel Small*

### Introduction

A total of 19 samples were taken during an open area excavation at Park Lane, Castle Donington. These samples were taken from the fills of enclosure ditches and pits dating to the Iron Age. This report presents the analysis of the charred plant remains recovered from these samples. Other finds recovered are discussed in their relevant specialist reports.

### Methodology

Samples were processed in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm sieve. The flotation fractions (flots) were left to air dry and then sorted for plant remains and other artefacts under an x10-40 stereo microscope. The heavy residues were also air dried and then passed through a 4mm sieve. The over 4mm fractions were sorted in their entirety for plant remains and artefacts whilst the under 4mm fractions were scanned. Names of plant remains follow Stace (2010) and all fragments were counted.

### Results

The majority of samples contained charred plant remains (17/19). However, this was in low quantities; the highest number of items was 22, which equated to 2.75 items per litre. Preservation of specimens was good but they tended to be fragmentary. Samples were generally a mixture of cereal grains, chaff and wild seeds.

Cereal grains were most commonly found and were present in twelve samples. It was possible to identify barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) and spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta* L.). Cereal chaff was present in seven samples; this was predominantly wheat glume bases but a straw culm node was also identified in sample 17 (419). A very well-preserved example of a spelt wheat glume base was present in sample 19 (417).

In sample 12 (353), which was taken from an Iron Age pit fill, fragments of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana* L.) and a legume cotyledon were also present. However, the latter could not be identified to genus and was recorded as *Vicia/Lathyrus/Pisum*.

Charred wild seeds were also present in eight of the samples and large grass seeds (Poaceae) were most numerous. Small numbers of sedge (*Carex* spp.), dock (*Rumex* spp.), scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum* L.) and clover (*Trifolium* sp.) were also identified. These seeds are typical of agriculture and wastelands and sedges are also indicative of wet areas (Stace 2010).

### Discussion

The plant remains present likely represent day-to-day background waste from processing cereal grains for consumption. The grains may have become burnt during parching (which renders the glumes brittle) or if food was spilled. The chaff and seeds, by-products of cereal processing, may have been utilised as tinder. Hearth sweepings may have been formally deposited in pits and ditches or blown around the site as ash entering open features. The low quantities found is fairly typical of sites dating to this period (Carruthers and Dowse 2019, 10).

Table 5: A record of the charred plant remains recovered from samples. Note, samples 8 (274) [273] (7 litres) and 14 (277) [276] (7 litres) were processed, however, did not contain any remains.

Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	15	16	17	18	19
<b>Context</b>	114	143	148	153	171	228	244	327	333	338	353	277	287	395	419	421	417
<b>Cut</b>	113	142	147	152	170	227	243	326	332	337	351	276	286	393	418	420	415
<b>Feature description</b>	Pit fill	Enclosure ditch terminus fill	Enclosure ditch terminus fill	Enclosure fill	Enclosure fill	N-S ditch fill	N-S ditch fill	Industrial	N-S ditch fill	N-S ditch fill	Pit fill	Enclosure ditch fill	Enclosure ditch fill	Ditch fill	Pit fill	Pit fill	Pit fill
<b>Grain</b>																	
<i>Triticum spelta</i> L. (spelt wheat)			8	1													
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (glume wheat)													2				1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L. (barley)			2														
Cereal		1	3		1	1	1	2			2			1	1	1	
<b>Chaff</b>																	
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (wheat) glume base				8	1					1		5					2
<i>Triticum spelta</i> L. (spelt wheat) glume base																	2
Culm node																1	
<b>Nuts/Legumes</b>																	
<i>Corylus avellana</i> L. (hazelnut shell)												2					
Vicia/Pisum/Lathyrus												1					
<b>Wild seeds</b>																	
Poaceae (grass) large	1		8	5	2							1					2
<i>Carex</i> sp. (sedge)				1													
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i> (L.) Sch. Bip				2													
<i>Rumex</i> sp. (dock)			1													1	
<i>Trifolium</i> sp. (clover)									1								
<b>Total</b>	1	1	22	17	4	1	1	2	1	1	6	5	2	1	3	4	5
<b>Litres</b>	8	9	8	9	9	9	9	8	9	8	8	8	5	2	5	5	9
<b>Items per litre</b>	0.13	0.11	2.75	1.89	0.44	0.11	0.11	0.25	0.11	0.13	0.75	0.63	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.80	0.56

## Discussion

The pottery recovered from the archaeological features at Park Lane Castle Donington excavation would appear to sit firmly within the Iron Age period. The excavation generally confirmed the findings of the evaluation work that western part of the site was archaeologically blank, with activity largely restricted to the eastern half of the area.

Despite the Neolithic and Bronze Age features identified to the east during the 2011 excavations no early prehistoric activity was identified on the site, although a scatter of residual lithics does hint at some activity in this area (Score and Kipling 2015, 45).

### *Pit Alignment (Early Iron Age)*

The pit alignment is probably the earliest feature and runs through the area of early prehistoric activity to the east into the excavation area. The eastern pit alignment recovered a few Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery sherds from the fills (the Bronze Age pottery is likely to be residual from the earlier features in this area) and a possible Iron Age ring gully may have been associated with it.

Pit alignments are generally acknowledged as representing a form of long-distance boundary systems and are generally late prehistoric features, with dates ranging between the Later Bronze Age through to the Middle Iron Age, and, as here, often characterised by uniformity of shape, size and spacing of the pits (Finn 2011, 105; Thomas 2008b, 144).

Pit alignments are relatively ubiquitous features of the later prehistoric landscape and examples are known across the Midlands (Willis 2006, 122, Thomas 2008b, 144). They are believed to be some of the earliest landscape boundaries of the first millennium BC although they are poorly dated as they are usually some distance from settlements. Cropmark evidence from the Trent Valley indicates that pit alignments were a widespread phenomenon and, in most cases, can be seen to have had close relationships with the development of field systems and networks of trackways (Whimster 1989; Boutwood 1998; Deegan 1999). In the Trent valley Iron Age pottery has been recovered from pit alignments at Besthorpe (Morris and Garton, 1998) and Barrow-upon-Trent (Knight and Southgate 2001). An excavated pit alignment at Willow Farm, Castle Donington, to the north-east of Park Lane, was possibly associated with Late Bronze Age settlement (Coward and Ripper 1998). A generally later date has been suggested for the introduction of pit alignments to the Trent Valley, with Knight and Howard (2004, 103) proposing a Late Iron Age origin. Indications from some sites, such as Moor Pool Close, Rampton where a pit alignment containing Romano-British sherds defined the eastern edge of a long lived Iron Age-Roman agglomerated settlement, show that these boundaries may have had a long life in this part of the Midlands (Knight 2000; Knight *et al.* 2004, 139).

The ceramic evidence from these excavations suggests an Early Iron Age date for the Castle Donington example, narrowing the broader Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date range proposed from excavation of the same alignment in 2011 on adjacent land to the east (Kipling 2014). The pit alignment appears to represent a new land subdivision along the head of the northern downslope rising up from the Trent and running broadly east-west along the contour in order to delineate between lowland and higher upslope. If the feature continued throughout the Iron Age it could also represent a division between upslope settlement and downslope agriculture, or vice versa.

Pit alignments often reference pre-existing Neolithic or Bronze Age monuments – for example, at Earl Shilton (Jarvis 2011) and the proximity to the cremation cemetery identified here in 2011 may not be coincidental (Score and Kipling 2015: 55).

### ***North-South Ditches and Enclosures (Early - Middle Iron Age)***

During the Early to Middle Iron Age the landscape appears to have been the subject of reorganisation involving the establishment of a ditched north-south division running downslope to the north. The relationship with the earlier features to the east is hard to determine, but the ditches could represent a western boundary while still respecting the earlier features. A series of smaller ditched ‘branch’ and stub offshoots along the ditch lengths hints at a possible arrangement of pens and stock enclosures. In tandem with this, sub-circular and rectangular enclosures with eastern entrances were set out on the eastern side. The 2011 excavation postulated that the ring gully in Area 1 close to the pit alignment belonged to the Iron Age activity to the west but the current excavations found no evidence for similar features and the lack of pottery and domestic waste is suggestive of this downslope area being given over to stock grazing with little suggestion of occupation activity.

It is possible that Enclosure 3 (Area B) represents a different phase not associated with the north-south boundary ditches or else a different function, but there is little evidence to determine their exact nature and function.

The absence of Roman artefacts or archaeology from the site confirms previous investigations on the site and it may be that any settlement associated with these enclosures was on the higher ground further north. It also points to a shift of activity over time to the north-east, where a Late Iron Age/early Roman farmstead and associated field system was excavated by ULAS in 2011 (Score and Kipling 2015, 46).

### **Conclusion**

Excavations at Park Lane Castle Donington in 2020 have added to understanding of the prehistoric landscape of this area with evidence of landscape organisation and land use from the Iron Age period onwards and serve to add to the growing corpus of evidence for later prehistoric activity both in the immediate locality of the site and in the wider area of the Trent Valley. The 2020 programme of excavation proved a useful adjunct to findings from the 2011 excavation, in terms of presenting further evidence of the Early Iron Age pit alignment. It also adds to the number of sites in the Trent Valley where early ritual and burial sites give way to later land division and farming activity and settlement with the pit alignment respecting (and perhaps defining) the northern extent of the Neolithic features and Bronze Age cremation cemetery with evidence for early-mid Iron Age field systems to the north shifting further north and east in the later Iron Age-Roman period.

### **Archive and Publication**

The archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A33.2020 and consists of the following:

1 unbound copy of this report (2020-180)  
1 unbound copy of the design specification  
10 context index sheets  
379 context record sheets  
1 drawing index sheet  
5 drawing record sheets  
12 permatrace drawing sheets  
1 small finds index sheet  
5 photo index sheets  
9 colour photo contact sheets  
1 environmental sample index sheet  
1 CD containing a copy of this report (2020-180) and 276 digital photographs  
7 finds checklists (boxed with appropriate finds and environmental material)

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

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