BAMBURGH RESEARCH PROJECT

LOW FARNHAM FARM, SHARPERTON, NORTHUMBERAND:

REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Compiled for Holystone Estates by The Bamburgh Research Project: Commercial Projects Section

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Contents:

SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the archaeological monitoring programme undertaken by the Bamburgh Research Project on behalf of Holystone Estates, between August 14th and 29th 2012 at Low Farnham Farm, Sharperton, Northumberland. The site was monitored on a strip and record basis until archaeology was encountered and the excavation contingency invoked. Archaeological features revealed by the site stripping primarily included a north west to south east aligned linear distribution of elliptical pits, a substantial gully aligned east to west and a further gully aligned north west to south east. Several larger pits were revealed in the north east of the site that were filled with domestic cooking waste comprising large sandstone boulders, some of which may have been heated, and concentrations of charcoal. Traces of ridge and furrow were also detected.

Pottery recovered from the features was determined to be of 13th to 14th century date and included examples of Curfews, a style rarely found or recognised in the region. Palaeo-environmental results indicate a peripheral domestic and farming background to the site. The focus of medieval activity was west of the excavated area, yet significant peripheral activity in terms of land management and domestic waste burial did occur in the development area.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.01 This report has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project for Holystone Estates and sets out the results of the archaeological monitoring undertaken between August 14th and 29th 2012 during the groundworks associated with the construction of two new stock buildings on land at Low Farnham Farm, Sharperton, Northumberland. The work was undertaken in line with a Written Schedule of Investigation compiled by the Bamburgh Research Project in August 2012 in response to a brief issued by the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team. Planning reference numbers are: 12/01473/FUL and 12/01475/FUL and the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team numbers are: A22/2: 14445 and A22/2: 14446. The Oasis reference number is: bamburgh1-151490.

2.0 THE SITE

2.1 Location

2.1.1 The development site lies within a field on the immediate north side of the farm at Low Farnham, which lies 8 km west of the Rothbury and 2km to the south-east of the small settlement of Sharperton, (NGR NT 9715 0245) (Figures 1 and 2).

2.2 Archaeological Background

2.2.1 Low Farnham is the site of a deserted medieval village, recorded from the 14th century to the 17th century. It is believed to lie in the fields to the west of the present farm buildings, where the earthworks of a small leaf shaped village set within ridge and furrow can be seen. Further ridge and furrow earthworks are present within fields to the east of the current farm. Farnham Tower is recorded as a border hold in the survey of 1414 and survived up to 1546 when it was recorded as burnt (Long 1967). It is believed to lie to the west of the proposed development, within earthworks, where traces of a foundation have been recorded.

2.2.2 Flint artefacts and a Bronze Age cist burial have been recovered from fields around the farm. The wider landscape reveals the presence of substantial prehistoric activity through the recovery of flint artefacts of Neolithic date and the presence of Bronze Age cairns and barrows, the site of five barrows lying less than 2km to the west.

2.3 Impact of the development

2.3.1 The development will comprise the construction of two new stock buildings, a handling building and a sucker cow building. Both buildings are rectangular and will measure 48.8m by 34.32m and require foundations c. 1m below ground level. Drains will surround the two buildings and connect to those of the present farm (Figure 2).

2.3.2 The proposed scheme of works would indicate potential to impact on undisturbed archaeological material, should it be present beneath the site.

2.3.3 The location of the development close to a known deserted medieval village and a defended tower as well as potential prehistoric features indicates a clear prospect that the development could impact on preserved archaeological material.

2.3.4 Following site stripping, significant features of archaeological interest were revealed, primarily medieval in date and likely relating to land divisions and activities peripheral to the main settlement during that period. These features were excavated and recorded archaeologically prior to the progression of the development.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 In the light of the potential for the construction works to impact upon preserved archaeological remains a strip and record monitoring policy was adopted. Once features of archaeological interest were revealed, the County Archaeologist was informed and consent was given to invoke the excavation provision. Features were excavated archaeologically and recorded as detailed below.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Strip and record prior to construction

4.1.1 Prior to the commencement of construction activity on site a suitably experienced archaeologist, familiar with the archaeological background to the site, will supervise the topsoil stripping of the development area to a depth which will reveal the presence of absence of archaeological remains. Subsequent to the topsoil stripping any items of archaeological interest will be subject to excavation and recording as specified below prior. All work will be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and should follow the IFA Standards for Watching Briefs. This watching brief will conform to the following methodology.

4.1.2 A contingency of up to 30 person days of investigation can be invoked following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist, the client and the monitoring archaeologist.

4.2 General standards

4.2.1 All archaeological features identified during the monitoring will be recorded and sample excavated according to their type and form. Up to 100% of all discrete features, 10% of linear features of a non-uniform fill and 5% of those with a uniform fill.

4.2.2 A 40 litre bulk palaeoenvironmental sample will be taken from all features recognised as suitable for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.

4.2.3 Secure contexts will be sampled for dating where appropriate, whether on site or as sub samples of bulk samples. Any concentrations of charcoal or other carbonised material recovered on site will usually be retained.

4.2.4 Pottery and Animal Bone will be collected as bulk samples whilst significant artefacts will be three-dimensionally recorded prior to processing. All finds will be recorded and processed according to the BRP system and submitted for post-excavation assessment. Finds recovery and storage strategies will be in accordance with published guidelines (English Heritage 1995 and IFA Guidelines for Finds Work). Should artefacts of gold or silver covered by the 1996 Treasure Act be recovered, appropriate procedures will be followed.

4.2.5 In the event of Human burials being revealed they will be left *in situ* and treated in an appropriate manner. After consultation with the County Archaeological Officer, if excavation is required, work will comply with the relevant home Office regulations.

4.2.6 Any archaeological features encountered will be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded:

1. A photographic record will be taken using black and white print, colour slide film at 35mm format. In addition a digital photographic record will be compiled.

2. A written description of features will be recorded using the BRP *pro forma* context recording system.

3. All features will be drawn at an appropriate scale using pre-printed permatrace. Plans will normally be drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10.

4.2.7 All archaeological features and horizons will be accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels will be tied in to Ordnance Datum.

4.2.8 Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive within 6 month of the completion of the post-excavation report.

5.0 MONITORING

5.0.1 Access was made available at all reasonable times to the archaeological representatives of the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team to inspect the excavation site.

5.0.2 Access to the site was on the basis of prior notification and subject to any relevant health and safety considerations.

6.0 RESULTS

6.0.1 The large area of the development site was stripped by mechanical digger under archaeological supervision following the strip and record monitoring strategy as defined in the Written Schedule of Investigation. The southern part of the site revealed few features of archaeological interest, but preserved plough furrows of likely medieval date, the remains of ridge and furrow, were recorded. The northern half of the area, and in particular the north-eastern corner, produced numerous features of archaeological interest from approximately 60 metres north of existing barn structures. In addition to further plough furrows, the features comprised large pits containing burned stones and charcoal, long gullies and a line of similar pits cut into subsoil along a north west to south east alignment that extended across the stripped area in the north east corner of the site. Many of the features produced pottery of medieval date and representative palaeo-environmental samples were taken from features across the site.

6.1 Area A (Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5)

6.1.1 Area A is the designation of the stripped site, located immediately north of existing farm buildings. The area was machine stripped, removing a mid greyish brown clay silt topsoil, context 1000, to a depth of up to 0.8m. The topsoil depth varied between 0.4m in the east to 0.8m at the site's western extent. The subsoil, context 1075, was encountered directly beneath the topsoil across the site and comprised a yellowish brown mix of silty clay and bands of sand. It was into this deposit that all of the archaeological features were cut, and in only a small number of instances was it possible to determine further stratigraphic relationships between features. The entire far western edge of the stripped area was very quickly waterlogged and unworkable. The archaeological features fall into several distinct types listed below.

6.1.2 Plough Furrows were evident across the site, aligned broadly east to west and surviving better in some places than others. Initially, some of these features were partially excavated to determine their extent and form. Of the excavated furrows, context 1012 is typical, comprising a narrow concave linear cut of varying but generally shallow depth that was aligned north east to south west.

6.1.3 The second type of feature can be defined as long linear gullies that were broadly aligned south east to north west. Two of these features were identified in the investigation area. Context 1004 was located approximately in the

central part of the site at approximately 60m from the existing barn buildings. It extended across most of the site, and may have had an eastern terminus approx. 3m west of the eastern edge of the stripped area, it's western extent was unable to be determined due to adverse site conditions, but probably extended beyond the excavation area. In profile, the gully was clearly defined with steep sides angled at approximately 45 degrees leading to a flattish but concave base. The feature was filled by context 1003, a deposit comprising a light brownish grey clay silt with occasional sandstone pebbles and light charcoal flecks and lumps throughout. Some sherds of medieval style pottery were recovered from this fill. (Appendix 2). 1003 was cut by a small feature context 1010, but this is more likely to be a plough rut than a small pit. The second gully, context 1063, [Plate 1], was located at the northern end of the exposed area and it also ran south east to north west, extending beyond the limits of excavation. In profile, this gully was concave with steep sides leading to a narrow concave base. This feature was filled by context 1062, a mid-greyish brown sandy silt, that contained charcoal flecks and some burned stones as well as pottery of medieval date. These two similar gullies may have served as land divisions.

6.1.4 The most numerous feature type was a series of elliptical pits set in a line aligned north west to south east and separated by broadly similar gaps of between two and three metres [Figure 3]. Moving from the south east to the north west these features comprised contexts, 1032, 1036, 1040, 1006, 1008, a large gap (approximately 10m) then the line continues with context 1048, 1046, 1044, 1002, 1018, then there is a larger gap (again, approximately 10m) before the line continues to the north west with pits 1053, 1055, 1057, (here there is a smaller gap, approximately 8m, and the gully 1063 cuts through) 1059, and 1061.

6.1.5 These pits all had a similar profile with steep sides cut into subsoil and flattish slightly concave bases. Some of these features produced medieval style pottery and small amounts of charcoal, and included occasional large boulders in their fills. A typical example is context 1044. [Plate 2.] In plan it was rectangular with rounded ends, and in section it proved to have steep sides angled at 45-60 degrees, with a shallow concave base. It was filled by context 1043, a mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and a mixture of occasional sandstone pebbles and moderately sized granite boulders typically measuring between 0.1m x 0.12m x 0.17m.

6.1.6 Some of the pits had more than one fill, as in pit 1006, [Plate 3] which was filled by a grey clay silt, context 1005, which overlay a dense grey clay with granite boulders, context 1075, which in turn overlay a grey friable sand, context 1076, on it's north west side. These multiple fills under 1005 are likely to represent natural silting processes rather than deliberate backfilling events.

6.1.7 The final feature type recorded was a series of apparently rounded pits that had been filled with large amounts of boulders both of sandstone and granite, many of which were burned. The fills also contained considerable quantities of charcoal and typically contained medieval pottery sherds. The largest feature was originally thought to be one pit, but excavation revealed that it

comprised two adjacent features filled by similar material, one cutting the other. The earliest of these pits was context 1014, [Plate 4] a rounded rectangle in plan, aligned south east to north west. In profile it proved to have steep shallow sides of approximately 25 degrees and a very flat wide undulating base. The fill, context 1013, comprised a mid to dark brownish grey clay silt containing frequent large sandstone and granite boulders ranging in size between 0.25m x 0.14m x 0.12m to 0.1m x 0.05m x 0.02m, some of which had evidently been burned. Frequent charcoal flecks, lumps and charred twigs were found throughout the fill, as were comparatively large amounts of medieval style pottery. Burned animal bone was also recovered, but in very small quantity. This fill, context 1013, was probably cut by the pit immediately to the south, context 1030. In section, [Fig.] the cut is not easy to see as the fills are both identical, but it was visible during the excavation and cleaning of the features. In all other respects this feature is also very similar to pit 1014, with similar steep shallow sides and an undulating flat base. The fill, context 1051, [Plate 4], was initially almost indistinguishable from fill 1013, as it contained similar frequent boulders and pebbles of sandstone and granite, often burned, with rich deposits of charcoal and medieval pottery and further rare examples of burnt animal bone. Both pits are likely to have had a domestic refuse function that would not be inconsistent with dumped cook fire waste. Further similar pits were discovered to the north, contexts, 1042, 1069, and 1071, and several metres to the south contexts 1016 and 1026 [Plate 5] were similar dual pit features full of burned stones.

6.1.8 Individual features that do not fit the patterns detailed above, include a series of possible stake or root holes, group context 1072, [Plate 6], cut through context 1068, the fill of pit 1069. A further feature that does not fit into other patterns is a small pit, context 1067, [Plate 7], that is cut into the fill, context 1060, of one of the main elliptical pits, context 1061.

7.0 FINDS

7.0.1 Very few finds were recovered from the site, except for pottery. The assemblage included a small number of 18th and 19th century pottery sherds from the topsoil, a corroded metal object likely to be a nail from pit fill 1041, cinder fragments from context 1019, the fill of a furrow, context 1020, and a worked flint from a furrow, context 1027. A small amount of charred and uncharred animal bone was recovered from adjacent pit fills 1013 and 1051. Ceramic building material/ daub fragments were recovered from pit fill 1068, and fired clay was present in pit fill 1051. The animal bone and fired clay adds to the interpretation of the fills of 1051 and 1013 as domestic hearth waste and clearance.

7.02 Medieval pottery of broadly 13th to 14th century date was recovered from several features, contexts 1001, 1003, 1013, 1017, 1019, 1033, 1035, 1039, 1041, 1062, 1066, 1068, and 1070. Sherds occurred in ones or twos except in two pits, 1013 and 1062. Of all the features containing pottery, one or both of two types [type 4 - light firing wares with low iron content (buff, white, pink) and type 6 - sandy, grey-cored, wares] are always present. (Appendix 2).

7.0.3 The pottery indicates that all of the site features were broadly representative of a relatively short period of use during the middle ages. Some features may have been contemporaneous, but probably not all of them, as the spatial distribution and feature variation may indicate variable land use over this period. The majority of features included one or the other of two main types of medieval pottery, which is consistent with this interpretation of broad contemporaneity.

8.0 PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

(Dr Carrie Drew, Archaeological Services, the University of Durham)

8.0.1 Charred plant remains occurred in seven of the eight bulk samples examined for palaeoenvironmental remains. These comprise of typical medieval or post-medieval domestic waste assemblages with charred grain including barley, cf. bread wheat, rye and oats, as well as low numbers of charred weed seeds. Hazelnut shell fragments were also recovered from four of the contexts, providing evidence for the utilisation of wild food resources.

8.0.2 Charcoal taxa present included oak, hazel, alder and birch. (Appendix 3).

8.0.3 The palaeo-environmental evidence is consistent with medieval farming and domestic food processing activity. The presence of charred cereal grains indicates cultivated crops, and hazelnut shells suggest a diet supplemented by gathered foods such as nuts and fruit. Pit fill 1015, one of the double pits full of charcoal and burned stones, contained charcoal attributed to oak fragments. This is consistent with the interpretation of the pit fill as domestic cooking waste. Waterlogged deposits are present to the west of the excavation area, and the presence of sedges and other weeds may indicate that this was also marginal boggy ground during the medieval occupation of the site.

9.0 DISCUSSION

9.01 The site is located to the east of what may be the centre of medieval activity in the form of a deserted medieval village and tower that is still partially standing. The fields all around the excavation area show signs of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. There is also an area of marginal boggy ground between the former village and tower and the excavation area. It is likely the features revealed in the excavation area represent several phases of peripheral domestic and farming activity occurring during the 13th to 14th centuries. The area is also known to be a focus for prehistoric activity and settlement, but no features of a pre-medieval date were determined. However, one flint tool was recovered from the site but it was within a medieval or later furrow.

9.02 The distribution of the line of elliptical pits, contexts 1032, 1036, 1040, 1006, 1008, 1048, 1046, 1044, 1002, 1018, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, and 1061, their physical similarity in plan and profile, and the similarity of their fills could suggest contemporaneity of these features. There are gaps in the distribution that seem deliberate, suggesting perhaps that these features represent boundary

definition, stock control or access restriction. There are no discernible post -holes, but these pits could still support a fence, hedge or other insubstantial structure. Further work would be necessary to define the extent of this distribution and to determine if the alignment changed at any point. The pits, 1050 and 1069 might indicate the line turning towards the north east at the south eastern limit of excavation.

9.03 The larger pits full of boulders and burned material, contexts 1016, 1026, 1030, 1014, 1042, 1069, and 1071 might be contemporaneous with one another as they seem to have similar fills of domestic waste, but they may not necessarily be exactly contemporary with the line of smaller elliptical pits, certainly pits 1026 and 1016 are far to the south.

9.04 The gullies 1004, and 1063 may also indicate different periods of activity, and may represent a further phase of land boundary, defining an area between these two ditches. Both gullies ran south east to north west, but 1063 was the most extensive and substantial feature on site. 1063 bisects the line of pits, through the most northerly gap. Because it does not directly cut or appear to be cut by a pit, the relationship cannot be firmly established except to suggest that it was possibly not exactly contemporary with the pit line.

9.05 Of the features that produced pottery, only two produced significant quantities, pits 1013 and 1062. The pottery from features was all dated to between the 13th and 14th centuries, but was not distinguished to the degree that individual features could be put into a datable sequence.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

10.0.1 The nearby medieval village is known from historical sources (Long, 1967) to have been in use between the 14th and 17th centuries, and Farnham tower is known to have survived from its first record in 1414 until it was burnt in 1546. The site of the present excavation area located to the east of the main village, has produced evidence of land division and the management of domestic cooking waste relating to activity that occurred primarily between the 13th and 14th centuries.

10.0.2 Although the site was not the focus of the main settlement, the present excavations have revealed hitherto unknown activity on the periphery of the medieval village, probably during its early use.

10.0.3 It is possible that the land divisions represented by the long line of elliptical pits are far more extensive or part of a wider pattern that could be revealed in future excavations or through geophysical survey.

10.0.4 The rarity of some of the pottery types recovered from the site, including those known as curfews, would make archaeological monitoring of future groundworks desirable, in the event that further features and a greater assemblage could be recovered.

Text: Gerard Twomey.
Illustrations: Graeme Young
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Published and unpublished sources

BRP	Finds Manual, 2000
BRP	Health and Safety Document
English Heritage	*Management of Archaeological Projects 2*, 1991.
English Heritage	*A strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds*. Ancient Monuments Laboratory, 1995.
IFA 2010	Code of Conduct
IFA 2008	Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs
Long, B.	Castles of Northumberland. Newcastle 1967.

APPENDIX I

Context list

Trench 1

1000 Topsoil
1001 Fill of 1002 – mid greyish brown sandy silt, freq. charcoal and occ. Med. Pottery
1002 Cut of large elliptical pit filled by 1001
1003 Fill of 1004 – light brownish grey clay silt
1004 Cut of south east to north west aligned gully extending parallel to the line of pits on the southern side. Cut by furrow 1028 and cut through furrow 1025
1005 Fill of pit 1006 – light brownish grey silty sand
1006 Cut of elliptical pit between 1008 and 1040
1007 Fill of elliptical pit 1008 – light brownish grey silty sand
1008 Cut of elliptical pit immediately north west of pit 1006
1009 Fill of 1010
1010 Cut of small post hole immediately south of 1004
1011 Fill of 1012 – light to mid greyish brown sandy silt
1012 Cut of plough furrow
1013 Fill of 1014. Mid to dark brownish grey clay silt with frequent charcoal, burned sandstone boulders and medieval pottery. Very similar/ Same as 1051.
1014 Cut of pit. Immediately adjacent to pit 1030 on it's western edge.
1015 Fill of 1016 – mid brownish grey clay silt, charcoal, medieval pottery, burnt stones.
1016 Cut of pit to the south of main feature group. Cut by 1026 on northern edge.
1017 Fill of 1018 - mid to dark brownish grey clay silt, charcoal, boulders medieval pot.
1018 Cut of large pit at the end of a line of elliptical pits. North west of 1002. Pit line continues after a large gap with 1053 to the north west.
1019 Fill of gully 1020 - light greyish brown sandy silt..
1020 Cut of linear gully, most likely a survival of a furrow. South of pit 1022.
1021 Fill of pit 1022. Light greyish brown sandy silt. Charcoal.
1022 Cut of pit. North of furrow 1020 in southern part of excavation area.
1023 Deposit of burnt silty sand in far south of excavation area. Probably modern.
1024 Fill of furrow 1025 – mid yellowish brown sandy silt. Cut by 1004.
1025 Cut of furrow.
1026 Cut of pit that is cut into 1015 on its northern edge. Filled by 1029.
1027 Fill of 1028 – Mid yellowish brown sandy silt.
1028 Cut of long linear feature, probably a furrow, cuts 1004 at it's north west end.
1029 Fill of pit 1026. Mid to dark brownish grey clay silt. Charcoal, sandstone boulders.
1030 Cut of pit immediately adjacent on south edge of pit 1014. Filled by 1051.
1031 Fill of 1032
1032 Cut of pit south west of 1030. And south of pit 1050.
1033 Fill of 1034.
1034 Cut of elliptical pit west of 1018
1035 Fill of 1036
1036 Cut of pit immediately south of pit 1030, part of main linear pit distribution
1037 Fill of 1038
1038 Cut of probable furrow, east to west aligned, in western half of the site.
1039 Fill of 1040
1040 Cut of pit south east of 1006 and north west of 1036, part of main linear pit distribution
1041 Fill of 1042
1042 Cut of pit north east of 1014 and immediately adjacent to the west of 1069
1043 Fill of 1043
1044 Cut of pit, north of 1046 and south of 1002, part of main linear pit distribution
1045 Fill of 1046
1046 Cut of pit north west of 1048 and south of 1044, part of main linear pit distribution
1047 Fill of 1048
1048 Cut of pit south of 1046, part of the main linear pit distribution and adjacent to a larger gap to the south before the next pit 1008
1049 Fill of 1050
1050 Cut of pit south east of 1014 and north of 1032

1051 Fill of 1030, Mid to dark brownish grey clay silt with frequent charcoal, burned sandstone boulders and medieval pottery. Very similar/ Same as 1013
1052 Fill of 1053
1053 Cut of pit north east of 1018 after a long gap, part of the main linear pit distribution
1054 Fill of pit 1055
1055 Cut of pit north of 1053 and south of 1057, part of main linear pit distribution
1056 Fill of pit 1057
1057 Cut of pit north west of 1055 and south of gully 1063, part of main linear pit distribution
1058 Fill of 1059
1059 Cut of pit north of gully 1063 and south of pit 1061, part of main linear pit distribution
1060 Fill of pit 1061, cut by pit 1067. Mid greyish brown sandy silt. Frequent charcoal.
1061 Cut of pit north west of 1059, part of main linear pit distribution
1062 Fill of extensive east west linear gully 1063. Sandy silt, mid greyish brown with occasional medieval pottery and charcoal concentrations. Extends across the entire exposed area
1063 Cut of long east west aligned linear gully south of pit 1059 and north of pit 1057
1064 Fill of 1065
1065 Cut of probable furrow surviving in west part of the site, not dissimilar to 1038 further south
1066 Fill of small pit, dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent charcoal
1067 Cut of small pit, cut into 1060 (the fill of a larger pit) at the north eastern extent of the site
1068 Fill of pit 1069
1069 Cut of pit, adjacent to the east of pit 1042. Mid grey silty sand
1070 Fill of pit 1071, mid greyish brown sandy silt with frequent large stones and boulders, charcoal.
1071 Cut of pit north of 1069 on eastern edge of excavation
1072 Group of possible stake-holes (or root complex) cut into 1068, the fill of pit 1069. These features are not individually contexted.
1073 Fill of 1074
1074 Cut of pit adjacent to the north of pit 1016
1075 Subsoil

APPENDIX 2
Low Farnham Farm: Pottery

Summary
A small assemblage of 80 sherds of pottery weighing 1232 grams was recovered from 14 contexts. However, apart from the topsoil [1000] and two other contexts [1013 and 1062] sherds only occurred in ones and twos. The majority of the pottery was medieval in date, broadly 13th-14th century but a few later, 18th/19th century, sherds were recovered from the topsoil.

Types of pottery present (see catalogue for further details)

The largest fabric group present were the light firing wares (FG4). Over half of these were pink, or pink with buff margins/surfaces. There were variations in inclusions and texture; two jar rims were of the same form, upright slightly clubbed with groove around upper surface, but one was sandier than the other. Coarser still, and with irregular opaque white inclusions, was a very crudely thrown jug rim. There was also a thin walled base with thumbing. Amongst the buff and white firing sherds were a rim and large glazed strap handle in [1013] in a fairly coarse sandy fabric. The rim is from an open vessel, i.e. like a bowl, but sooting and internal grey discolouration suggest that this is a curfew. Such vessels have a large handle on the top and although there is no direct connection these two items probably belong together. A fragment with internal sooting in [1001] may be a fragment of the same, or a similar vessel.

The next largest fabric group was FG6. These are sandy fabrics with grey cores. Margins and surfaces vary from buff to more orange or red depending on the amount of iron in the clay. The largest sherd 'family' was eight sherds from [1062] of a sooted jar with horizontal rim. There was one sherd similar to an early green glazed type found on Tyneside. A few sherds were of reduced green glazed wares possibly of later 13th/14th century date (FG7). One more unusual vessel was represented by a jar rim with handle in a bright red very sandy fabric from [1013].

Fabric Group (FG)	count	weight
3 - gritty wares	1	9
4 - light firing wares with low iron content (buff, white, pink)	30	702
5 - oxidized iron rich wares	2	80
6 - sandy, grey-cored, wares	18	204
7 - green glazed wares, most are reduced	8	111
10 - general medieval (small, abraded, unidentified)	15	70
32 - 18th/19th c. redwares	4	47
33 - 18th/19th century glazed white earthenware (wglwe)	1	3
50 – undateable	1	6

Table: Summary of the Assemblage

Discussion and Conclusion
There are some interesting elements within this assemblage: the group of relatively distinctive 'pink' sherds, the sandy red jar rim and the curfew(s). Curfews are rare in the region, or, at least, have rarely been found and identified as such. The source of the material is not known and there is as yet no directly comparable assemblage. The group is too small to have any potential for analysis, but it does have a certain amount of future potential as a contribution to a better understanding of the production and distribution of pottery in these upland areas of Northumberland. This awaits more extensive research and excavation!

Notes to go with the catalogue

The 'names' in the catalogue are basically abbreviated descriptions. The abbreviations used

in names and elsewhere should be fairly obvious but here are a few.

b	as e.g. in bgrey = buff
exp	expanded
ext	external, exterior
gl	glazed
int	internal, interior
m/s	margins/surfaces
ox	oxidized (eg. red or orange as opposed to grey)
p	as e.g. in pbuff = pink
rg	reduced green glazed
spl	splashed (glaze)
ves	vessel

I use an ID record number (automatically generated) in the database. I have included this in the print out so it is clear which record is being cross-referred to.

Context	FGN	fabric	count	weight	*ID*	form sherds	comments
1000	4	pink	1	6	*41*		Pink throughout
1000	4	buff	3	14	*40*	r b	Exp jug rim
1000	7	rg	1	4	*42*		
1000	10	med	9	39	*44*		Misc small and/or abraded
1000	32	blgre	1	18	*38*	h	Strap handle ?jug.
1000	32	lgresl	3	29	*37*		One has lost its gl.
1000	33	wglwe	1	3	*39*		
1000	50	ox?	1	6	*43*		Chip ?date
1001	4	pink	1	12	*23*		Abraded and sooted.
1001	4	buff sandy	1	34	*22*		Sooted int. Looks like another bit of curfew.
1003	4	whitew	1	16	*30*	r	Everted jar rim, off-white fabric with slightly darker surface in parts.
1003	6	oxir	1	10	*31*		Dark grey core, orange margins/surfaces
1013	3	brown sandy	1	9	*13*	r	Small bit of exp rim. Poss early
1013	4	buff sandy	2	277	*1*	r h	Prob same ves. Rim is everted bowl type with some sooting and greyish int surface. Unglazed. The handle is part of a broad strap with some ridging and green brown gl on upper surface.
1013	4	op buff	1	45	*10*	b	Thin walled base with one thumbed imp. May be same type as pink buff though this is more light orange brown. Small spots brown gl ext.
1013	4	pink	1	10	*14*		Sooted, with light greyish buff core - but not like other pink buff.
1013	4	pink	1	15	*8*	r	Upright slightly clubbed jar rim with groove around upper surface. Light pinkish brown with darker surfaces. Small patch orange brown gl int.
1013	4	pbuff sandy	2	40	*9*		Sandier than ID5. Thin walled hard, sooted ext. Small sh has greyish surfaces.
1013	4	pbuff	4	24	*5*		Pink core with buff m/s. One has greenish brown dark gl with imp ?of twisted cord
1013	4	buff	3	58	*4*		One is sooted and one has green gl with applied strip stained brown
1013	4	bw?	2	21	*3*		
1013	5	red sandy	1	49	*2*	r+h	Horiz rim with strap handle springing from top. One or two spots gl. very sandy bright red-brown fabric with some reduction in core of handle.
1013	6	eg3?	1	10	*11*		Buff with mid-grey core. Pale green gl with signs of iron staining.
1013	6	oxir	2	30	*12*	b	Misc - grey cores
1013	7	rg sandy	4	48	*7*		Mid grey with olive green gl. Three sh have red-brown int s. and are prob same ves.
1013	7	ox ggl	1	36	*6*		Mid grey core with oxidised m/s and spl of green gl.
1013	10	med	6	31	*15*		Misc.
1017	4	pbuff	1	3	*32*		Buff ext m, pink int with buff surface. Light olive green gl.
1017	6	bgrey	1	8	*33*		Mid to light grey core and int
1019	6	sandy ir	1	6	*27*		Ox ext.
1033	6	ox	1	3	*28*		Sooted ext.

Context	FGN	fabric	count	weight	*ID*	form sherds	comments
		sandy					
1035	6	bgrey	1	14	*34*	r	Thickened flat top rim.
1039	4	pink	1	2	*36*		Sooted
1041	4	buff ggl	1	17	*25*		
1041	5	sandy hard	1	31	*26*		Mid grey hard sandy fabric with purplish ext surface with spots/patches thin gl.
1062	4	pink	1	36	*18*	r	Crudely thrown jug rim. Fabric as ID8 but coarser - has irregular opaque white inclusions - at least some of which are clay pellets .
1062	4	pink bw	1	39	*17*	b	
1062	6	pgrey	1	11	*19*		
1062	6	bgrey	8	95	*16*	r b	Wide horizontal rim with grooved outer edge. Sooted. Light buff-brown with grey core.
1062	7	rg	1	7	*35*		Sandy mid grey with ox int, sl brown speckled gl.
1066	4	pink	1	32	*20*	r	Similar to rim in 1013. This has slightly sandier feel.
1066	7	rg	1	16	*21*		Pitted gl, int surface light brown.
1068	4	buff	1	16	*24*		Thin fragment with glazed, zone and spl, surface - from base.
1070	4	pbuff sandy	1	2	*29*		Similar to ID5 but seems grittier

APPENDIX 3

Low Farnham Farm
Sharperton
Northumberland

palaeoenvironmental assessment

report 3052
December 2012

Durham University

Contents

1. Summary

The project

1.1 This report presents the results of palaeoenvironmental assessment of eight bulk samples taken during archaeological works at Low Farnham Farm, Sharperton, Northumberland.

1.2 The works were commissioned by Bamburgh Research Project, and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

1.3 Charred plant remains occurred in seven of the eight bulk samples examined for palaeoenvironmental remains. These comprise of typical medieval or post-medieval domestic waste assemblages with charred grain including barley, cf. bread wheat, rye and oats, as well as low numbers of charred weed seeds. Hazel nutshell fragments were also recovered from four of the contexts, providing evidence for the utilisation of wild food resources.

1.4 Charcoal taxa present included oak, hazel, alder and birch. Small fragments of animal bone were noted in four of the contexts and fragments of pot were recovered from two of the contexts. Coal/coal shale was also present in low amounts in several of the fills.

Recommendations

1.5 No further palaeoenvironmental work is recommended for the samples as the plant macrofossil assemblages were scanned in their entirety and no further information would be provided during an analysis. If additional work is undertaken at the site, the results of this assessment should be added to any further environmental data produced.

1.6 The flots should be retained as part of the physical archive of the site. The residues were discarded following examination.

2. Project background

Location and background

2.1 Archaeological works were conducted by Bamburgh Research Project at Low Farnham Farm, Sharperton, Northumberland. This report presents the results of palaeoenvironmental assessment of eight bulk samples of medieval origin comprising seven pit fills and a gully fill.

Objective

2.2 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the palaeoenvironmental potential of the samples, establish the presence of suitable radiocarbon dating material, and provide the client with appropriate recommendations.

Dates

2.3 Samples were received by Archaeological Services on 19th September 2012. Assessment and report preparation was conducted between 2nd October and 3rd December 2012.

Personnel

2.4 Assessment and report preparation was conducted by Dr Carrie Drew. Sample processing was carried out by Carrie Drew and Lorne Elliott.

Archive

2.5 The site code is **LFN12**, for **L**ow **F**arnham **N**orthumberland 20**12**. The flots and finds are currently held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University awaiting collection. The charred plant remains will be retained at Archaeological Services Durham University.

3. Methods

3.1 The bulk samples were manually floated and sieved through a 500μm mesh. The residues were examined for shells, fruitstones, nutshells, charcoal, small bones, pottery sherds, flint and industrial residues, and were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were examined at up to x60 magnification for charred and waterlogged botanical remains using a Leica MZ6 stereomicroscope. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997). Habitat classifications follow Preston *et al.* (2002).

3.2 Where possible, charcoal fragments were identified, in order to identify material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The transverse, radial and tangential sections were examined at up to x600 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Schweingruber (1990) and Hather (2000), and modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.

4. Results

4.1 All of the samples produced some evidence of burning, with the flots and residues including varying amounts of charcoal. Taxa observed from a scan of the charcoal included oak, hazel, alder and birch. Context (1015) comprised a large amount of charcoal which appears to consist predominantly of small fragments of oak. Small pieces of animal bone were noted in four of the contexts and fragments of pot were recovered from contexts (1013) and (1039). A small amount of burnt stones and CBM/daub were present in context (1068) and fired clay was noted in context (1051). Coal/coal shale was also present in low amounts in several of the contexts. All of the contexts except (1068) contained low numbers of uncharred seeds. These included arable weeds such as fumitories and sun spurge, and ruderals such as redshank, dead-

nettles and common nettles. The non-waterlogged nature of the features suggests these are modern intrusive material, which is highlighted by the presence of modern spruce needles in contexts (1052), (1060) and (1062). Context (1013) had an organic-rich content, however the limited quantities of uncharred seeds or vegetative material present indicates this feature was not waterlogged.

4.2 Charred plant remains occurred in all except context (1060). The cereal grain assemblage includes barley (1015, 1062), wheat (1013, 1039, 1051, 1062, 1068), rye (1013) and oats (1013, 1039, 1051, 1062, 1068). Hazel nutshell fragments were recovered from contexts (1013), (1015), (1051) and (1062).

4.3 A limited number of charred weed seeds were also recorded. Damp ground indicators such as sedges and spike-rushes were present in contexts (1013), (1051), (1062) and (1068). Other charred weed seeds included the arable weed wild radish in contexts (1013) and (1062) and the ruderal redshank from context (1068). Members of the pea and grass families, docks and vetches were also recorded in several of the samples.

4.4 A small number of hand-recovered finds were also examined. These comprised a corroded metal object, which is probably a nail, from context (1041), a small number of cinder fragments from context (1019), a worked flint and a stone fossil fragment from context (1027) and a small amount of animal bone from context (1013). The animal bone consisted of three indeterminate calcined bone fragments and a burnt shaft fragment, undiagnostic to element or species.

4.5 Material suitable for radiocarbon dating is available for six of the eight contexts (1015, 1051, 1013, 1039, 1062, 1068). The results are presented in Appendix 1.

5. Discussion

5.1 The presence of charred cereal remains, alongside other waste material such as bone and pottery, indicate that the samples comprise background levels of domestic waste. Although the variability of wheat grain morphology prevents the identification of wheat grains to species with certainty, a number of the wheat grains in contexts (1013), (1039), (1051), (1062) and (1068) had the characteristic compact shape associated with *Triticum aestivo-compactum* (bread wheat). Bread wheat was widely cultivated from the medieval period onwards.

5.2 The large size of many of the oat grains suggests that they are likely to be the cultivated variety (*Avena sativa*). However, a fragment of diagnostic floret base also indicates that wild oat (*Avena fatua*) is present in the cereal assemblage. It is probable that wild oats were present as a weed of the cultivated oat crop. The presence of oats, barley, rye and cf. bread wheat is a typical assemblage of the medieval and post-medieval periods in northern England (Greig 1991; Huntley & Stallibrass 1995; Hall & Huntley 2007).

5.3 The presence of charred hazel nutshell in contexts (1013), (1015), (1051) and (1062) is likely to reflect the use of gathered wild foods, which was common during the medieval and post-medieval periods (Greig 1991; Hall & Huntley 2007). Nuts were used to supplement the diet during these periods, suggesting that a variety of wild fruits may have been exploited.

5.4 The few charred weed seeds present may have grown amongst the cereal crops, or may have occupied waste disturbed ground at the site. The presence of a number of damp-ground indicators such as sedges and spike-rushes suggests damp or wet ground in the vicinity or that peat was brought to the site for use as fuel.

5.5 The small numbers of charred heather twigs from contexts (1039), (1060) and (1062) may reflect the use of heather for fodder, fuel, bedding or thatch, which are all traditional uses (Gale & Cutler 2000; Fenton 1978) or they may be a modern intrusion as a product of heather burning in more recent times.

6. Recommendations

6.1 No further palaeoenvironmental work is recommended for the samples as the plant macrofossil assemblages were scanned in their entirety and no further information would be provided during an analysis. If additional work is undertaken at the site, the results of this assessment should be added to any further environmental data produced.

6.2 The flots should be retained as part of the physical archive of the site. The residues were discarded following examination.

7. Sources

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Appendix 1: Data from palaeoenvironmental assessment

Sample	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Context	**1015**	**1051**	**1013**	**1039**	**1060**	**1052**	**1068**	**1062**
Feature	**pit**	**pit**	**pit**	**pit**	**pit**	**pit**	**pit**	**gully**
Material available for radiocarbon dating	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Volume processed (l)	28	9.5	30	23	19	18	20	18
Volume of flot (ml)	1150	110	750	230	60	90	675	155
Residue contents								
Bone (calcined) indet. frags	-	++	+	+	-	-	-	-
Burnt stones	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
CBM / Daub	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Charcoal	+	+++	+	+	+	-	+	-
Fired clay	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pot (number of fragments)	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-
Flot matrix								
Bone (unburnt) indet. frags	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(+)
Charcoal	++++	++	++	++	+	(+)	++	+
Clinker / cinder	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Coal / coal shale	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
Earthworm egg case	+	+	+	-	+	-	(+)	-
Fuel waste	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Heather twigs (charred)		-	-	-	++	+	-	-	+
Insect / beetle		+	-	(+)	+	-	-	+	(+)
Roots (modern)		(+)	++	+	++	++	+	+	++
Shell (freshwater / terrestrial)		-	-	-	-	(+)	-	-	-
Straw / chaff (modern)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uncharred seeds		(+)	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Uncharred vegetative material		-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Charred remains (total count)									
(a) *Raphanus raphanistrum* (Wild Radish)	seed	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
(a) *Raphanus raphanistrum* (Wild Radish)	pod	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
(c) *Avena* sp (Oat species)	grain	-	7	16	8	-	-	12	11
(c) *Avena fatua* (Wild-oat)	grain in floret base	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
(c) Cerealia indeterminate	awn fragment	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
(c) Cerealia indeterminate	grain	-	12	26	8	-	-	6	90
(c) *Hordeum* sp (Barley species)	grain	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	15
(c) *Secale cereale* (Rye)	grain	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
(c) *Triticum* cf *aestivum* (cf. Bread Wheat)	grain	-	1	2	2	-	-	3	14
(c) *Triticum* sp (Wheat species)	grain	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
(r) *Persicaria maculosa* (Redshank)	nutlet	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
(t) *Corylus avellana* (Hazel)	nutshell frag.	2	4	27	-	-	-	-	14
(w) *Carex* sp (Sedges)	biconvex nutlet	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
(w) *Carex* sp (Sedges)	trigonous nutlet	-	3	2	-	-	-	3	-
(w) *Eleocharis* sp (Spike-rushes)	nutlet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
(x) Fabaceae undiff. (Pea family)	seed	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
(x) Poaceae undiff. <1mm (Grass family)	caryopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
(x) Poaceae undiff. >1mm (Grass family)	caryopsis	-	1	5	-	-	1	-	-
(x) *Rumex* sp (Docks)	nutlet	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-
(x) *Vicia* sp (Vetches)	seed	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2

[a-arable; c-cultivated; r-ruderal; t-tree/shrub; w-wet/damp ground; x-wide niche.
(+): trace; +: rare; ++: occasional; +++: common; ++++: abundant]

Plate 1: (Above) pre-excavation.
(Below) West facing profile of gully 1063

Plate 2: (Above) pre-excavation
(Below) East facing profile of pit 1044

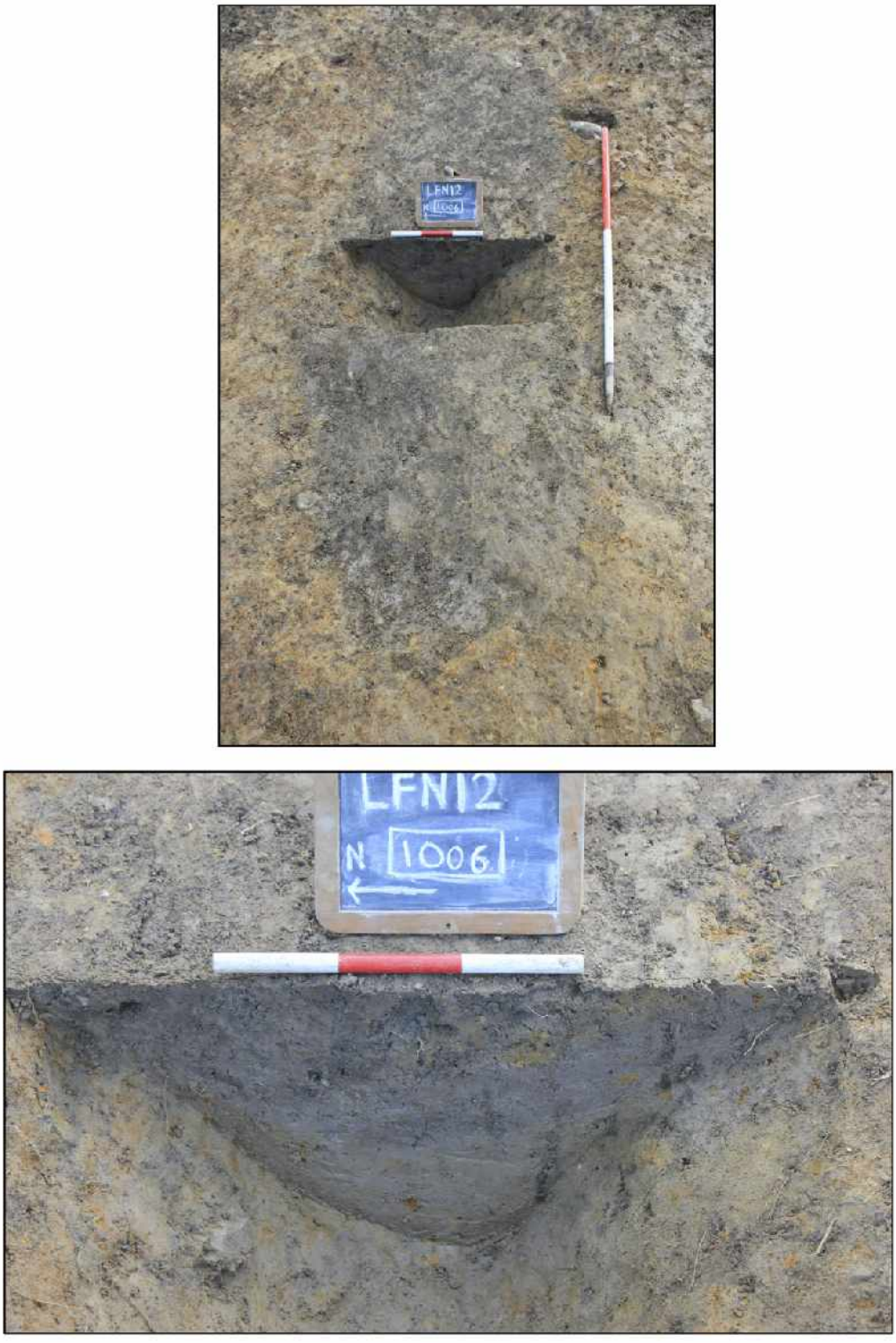

Plate 3: West facing profile of pit 1006

Plate 4:
(Above) pits 1030 and 1014 looking west
(Below)East facing profile of pit 1030, showing fill 1051 (left) and pit 1014, showing fill 1013 (right)

Plate 5:
(Above) Pits 1026 and 1016, looking east
(Below) West facing profile of pit 1016

Plate 6:
(Above) Pit fill 1068 showing possible stake-holes cut through fill
(Below) West facing profile of pit 1069 and stake-holes 1072

Plate 7: South facing profile of pit 1067, cut into the fill 1060 of pit 1061

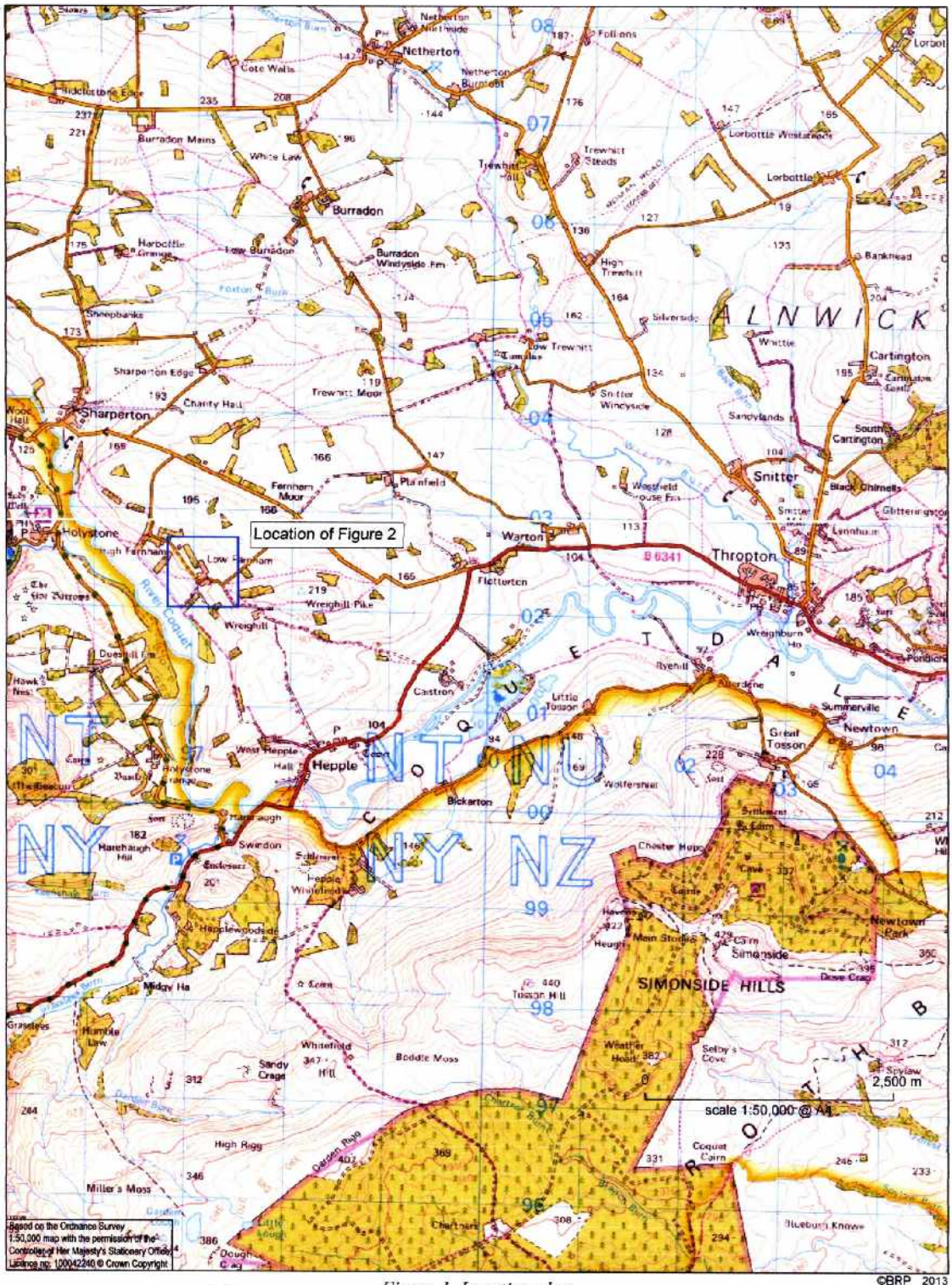

Figure 1 Location plan

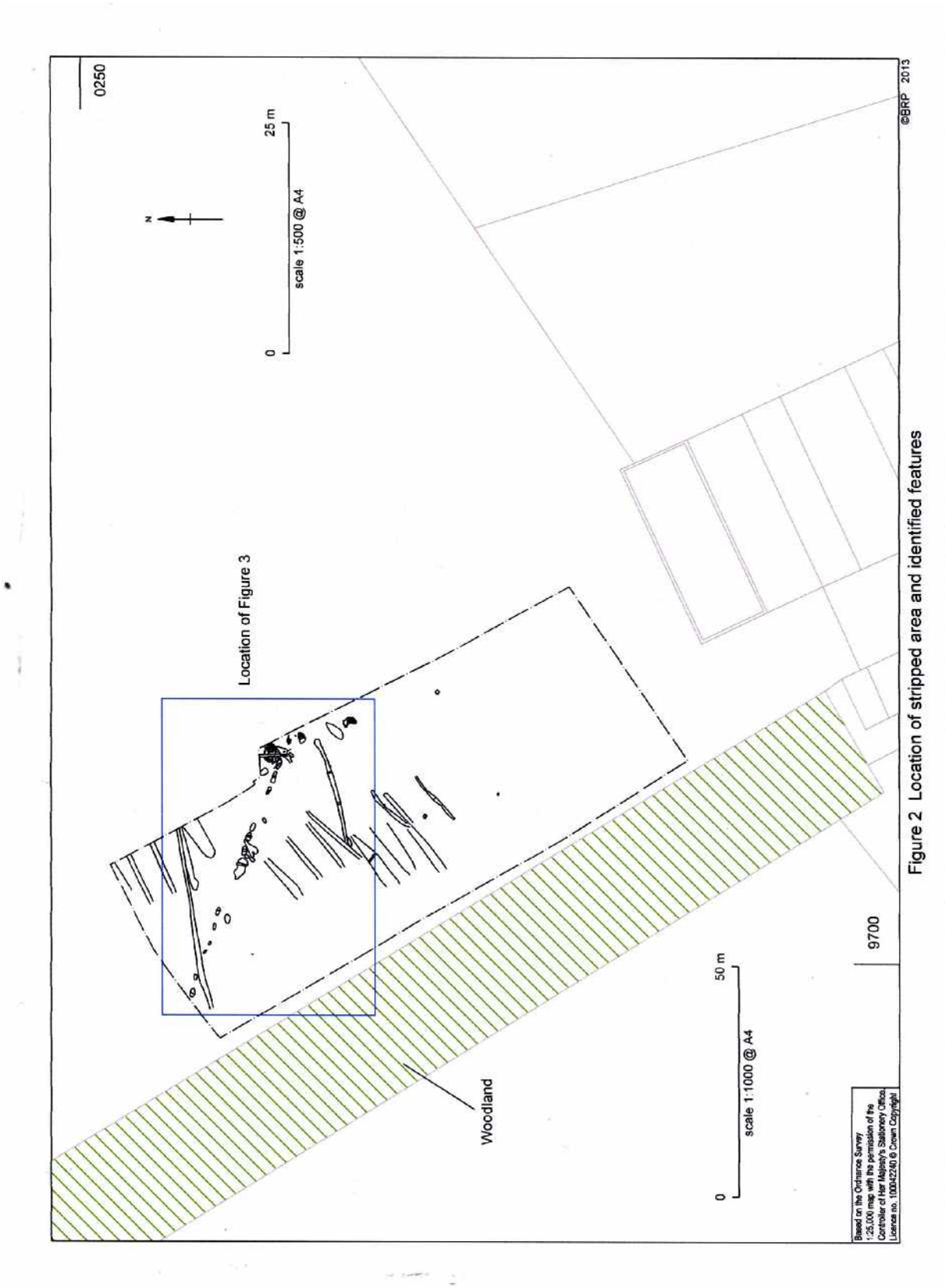

Figure 2 Location of stripped area and identified features

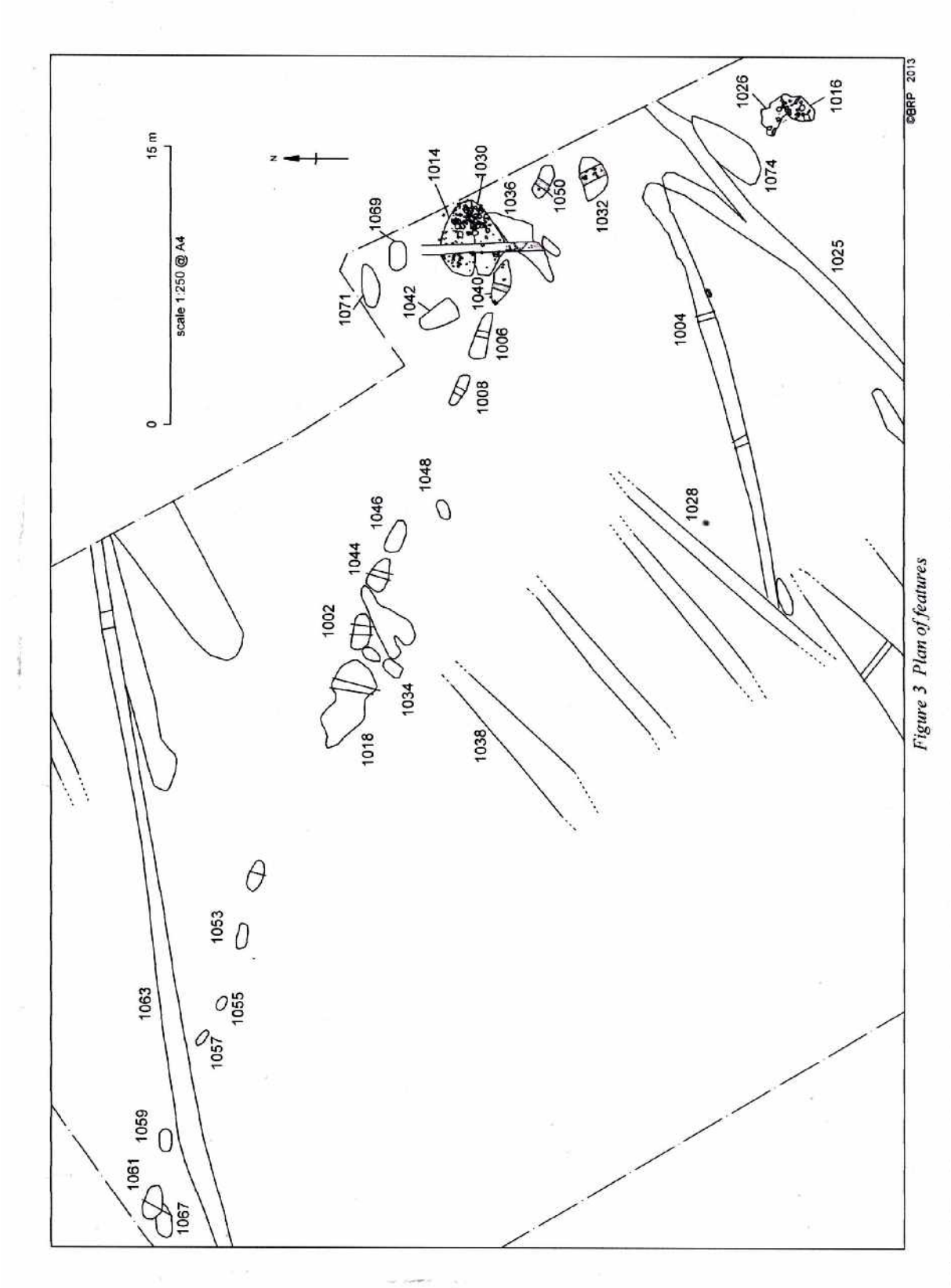

Figure 3 Plan of features

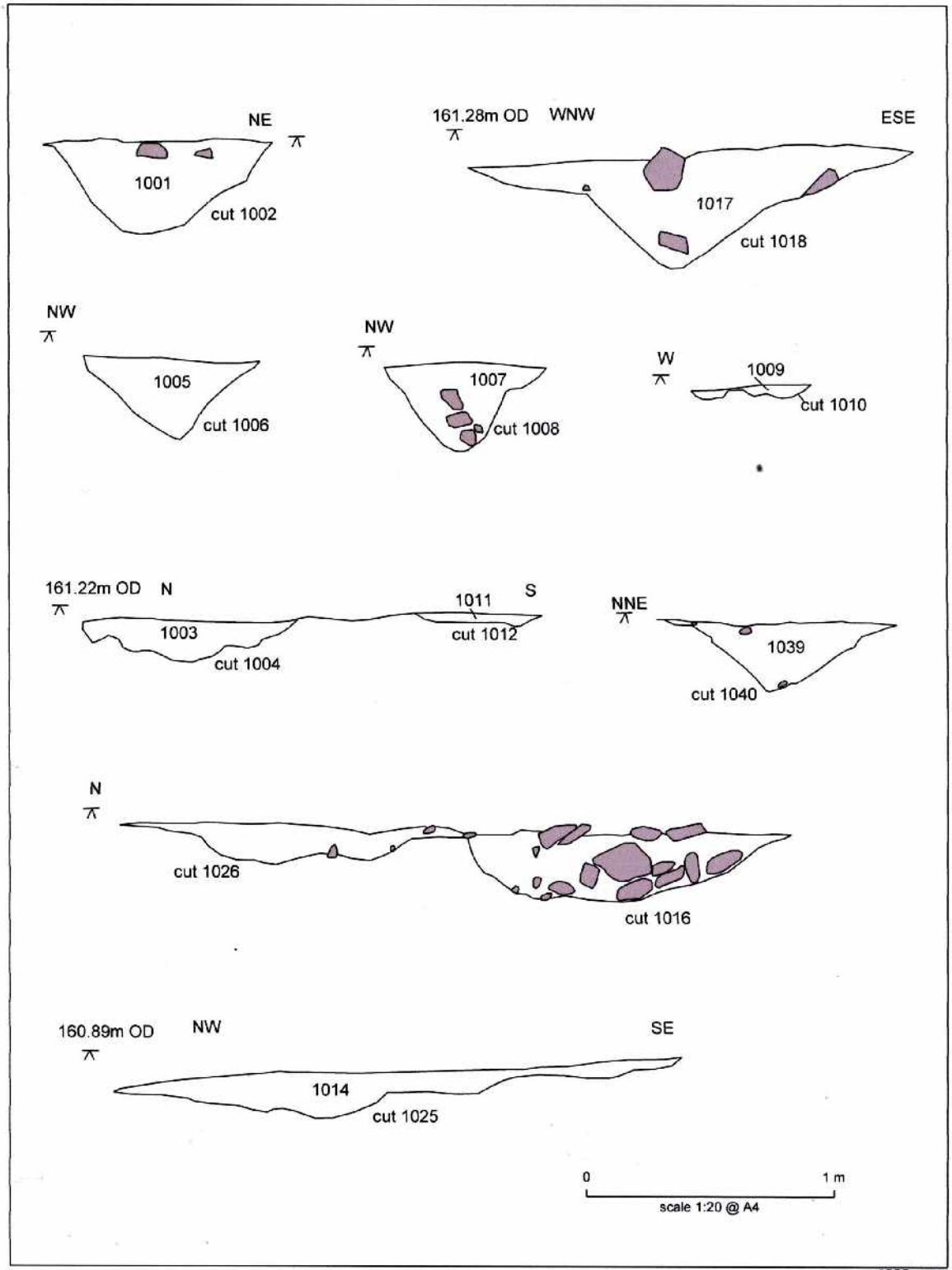

Figure 4 Sections: 1

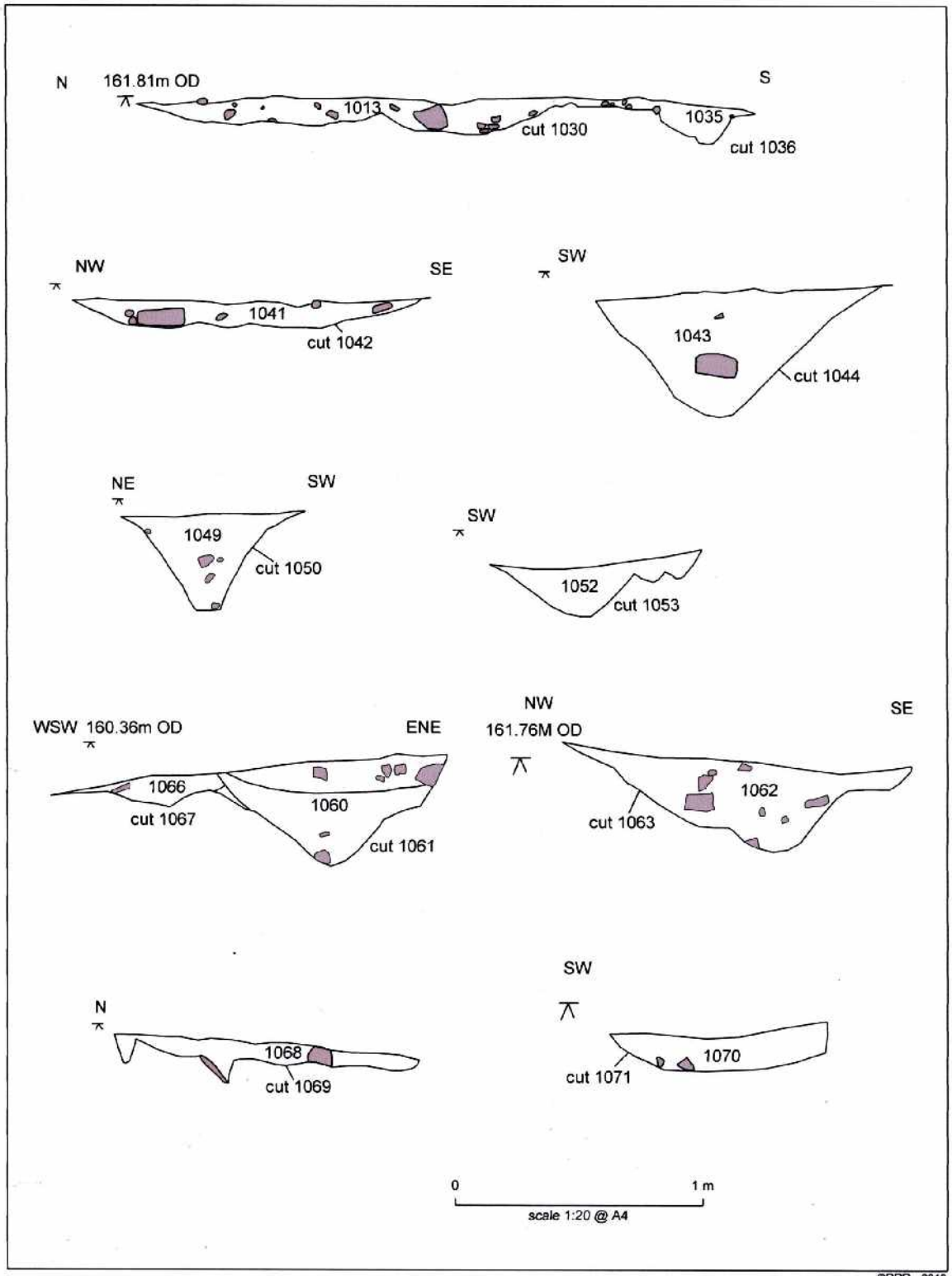

Figure 5 Sections:2