

# HERITAGE NETWORK



## **LAND AT BROMHAM ROAD Biddenham, Beds.**

HN475

*Archaeological Assessment*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Land off  
**BROMHAM ROAD**  
Biddenham, Beds.

HN475

Stage 2: Excavation and Watching Brief

*Archaeological Assessment Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Bewick Homes Ltd*

by

Chris Turner, BSc

Report no. 284

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## Contents

	Summary .....	Page i
Section 1	Introduction.....	Page 1
Section 2	General Background .....	Page 2
Section 3	Assessment.....	Page 4
Section 4	Further Research.....	Page 12
Section 5	Bibliography.....	Page 16
Section 6	Illustrations.....	following Page 16

*The cover photo shows a view of the site looking south-west during machining*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Geoff Saunders, David Kaye, Karin Semmelmann and Mark Winter under the supervision of Chris Turner. The environmental assessment was undertaken by Jill Hooper and the report text and illustrations were prepared by Chris Turner. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Ray Kane, Bewick Homes Ltd; Lesley-Ann Mather, Heritage and Environment Section, BCC; and Anna Slowikowski, Albion Archaeology, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land off Bromham Road, Biddenham. Bedfordshire.		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Mid. Beds.
<b>Village/town:</b>	Biddenham	<b>Parish:</b>	Biddenham
<b>Planning reference:</b>	2004/121/FUL	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 0230 5050
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Bewick Homes Ltd. 40 Mill Street, Bedford. MK40 3HD		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New development	<b>Present land use:</b>	Scrubland
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.6893m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.942m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN475	<b>Other reference:</b>	N/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Excavation & w/b	<b>Curating Museum:</b>	Bedford Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	18/08/2004	<b>Finish of work</b>	09/09/2004
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	N/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Prehistoric
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	Archaeological Evaluation Report, Heritage Network Report no.234		

### Synopsis:

A previous archaeological evaluation on the site, carried out by the Heritage Network, demonstrated the survival of a low density of features dating to the prehistoric period. These were located at the eastern end, in Plots 6 and 7 of the new development.

Two further phases of archaeological work were undertaken as part of the mitigation strategy. The first phase consisted of an open area archaeological excavation of the building footprints for Plots 6 and 7. This revealed two features, including a Late Bronze/Early Iron Age butt ended ditch, aligned broadly northwest-southeast, which ran across the middle of the site. A natural silty hollow, which extended eastwards and southwards beyond the limits of the site, was also investigated in the south eastern corner of the excavation trench. It contained six unurned cremations and a scatter of cremated bone. Although no artefacts were recovered to date the cremations, they have been assigned to the late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age on the basis of their relationship with the butt-ended ditch

The second phase consisted of the monitoring of the excavation of the footings trenches for the garage in Plot 5. No archaeological features or deposits were identified in this area.

On the basis of these findings it is suggested that the present site lies on the periphery of prehistoric activity identified to the north.

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This assessment report has been prepared on behalf of Bewick Homes Ltd, as part of a programme of archaeological mitigation for a development site on land off Bromham Road, Biddenham, Beds. The planning permission for the development, controlled by the Bedford Borough Council (BBC), was granted subject to a standard condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning. The scope of the required investigation was set out in a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Excavation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*, dated 14 June 2004, prepared by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority. The two phases of defined work, consisting of an archaeological excavation and a watching brief, followed the provisions set out in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design*, dated July 2004.

**1.2** The site lies on the north side of the A428 Bedford to Northampton Road, on the northern edge of the village, centred on NGR TL 0227 5050 (Figure 1). It forms one of a series of plots bordering the road, and is currently under scrub vegetation. The development involves the construction of seven detached dwellings with garages, together with associated access, landscaping and services. The existing landscaping on the road frontage is to be retained.

**1.3** The site lies outside the core of the village, but the village lies in a documented archaeological landscape, which includes cropmarks and other occupation evidence. Recent archaeological fieldwork immediately to the north has demonstrated evidence for a Romano-British settlement and other, more isolated, prehistoric activity. It was considered that there was a high probability that such remains would extend into the present development area.

**1.4** The evaluation identified a prehistoric ditch, orientated southeast – northwest, in Trench 4, which lay in the rear garden of Plot 6. In addition, a silty deposit containing prehistoric pottery was recognised in Trench 5, in the southeastern corner of Plot 7.

**1.5** On the basis of the evaluation report (Heritage Network report no.234) the CAO allowed the development of the four western plots (Plots 1 - 4) to proceed, but required further investigation on the remaining three plots. This consisted of a watching brief on the garage footings trenches in Plot 5, and an open area excavation, centred on the house footprints in Plots 6 and 7.

**1.6** The aim of the present programme of archaeological works has been to preserve by record any archaeological remains which were liable to be threatened by the development, in accordance with current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown & Glazebrook 2000).

**1.7** The present report presents and reviews the scope of the data recovered, and assesses its quality, character and significance. In accordance with the requirements set out in English Heritage's document, *Management of Archaeological Projects* (MAP2, 1991), this is intended to allow the planning authority to consider its potential, and the nature of any future programme of analysis, leading to publication.

## 2. General Background

### *SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

**2.1** The site is situated on relatively level ground around the 40m contour, surrounded on three sides by the River Great Ouse. It is currently covered by scrub vegetation with light woodland to the site frontage and a covering of wood chippings in the middle of the site from recent tree clearance.

**2.2** The underlying geology of the area consists of terrace deposits of sand and gravel.

### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND*

**2.3** The site is located within a documented archaeological landscape with features and finds from the Palaeolithic period onwards recorded in the vicinity on the county Historic Environment Record (HER).

**2.4** Four groups of cropmarks have been recorded on aerial photographs to the north of the present site, and these have been investigated archaeologically as part of development proposals for that area. The fieldwork identified features of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Romano-British date.

**2.5** No known structures have been recorded on the present site and cartographic evidence from 1887-88 shows that it formed part of a larger field system, which existed to the north of Bromham Road.

### *METHODOLOGY*

#### *General*

**2.6** All work was carried out in accordance with the Heritage Network's approved Project Design, and in consultation with the CAO.

**2.7** The overburden was removed, under close archaeological supervision, using a 360-degree tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Machine excavation ceased once the archaeological horizon had been established. Spoil was scanned for unstratified artefacts.

**2.8** The location and outline of all defined archaeological contexts were recorded in relation to established fixed points using a Total Station Theodolite, and the data introduced into CAD software.

**2.9** All identified archaeological features and deposits were cleaned by hand, and sampled as appropriate according to their accessibility. Written, drawn and photographic records were completed as appropriate.

### *Post-Excavation*

**2.10** Following current professional practice, the post-excavation stage of the present project has been divided between Archive and Assessment, and Post-Excavation Analysis and Publication.

### *Archive*

**2.11** The site archive, comprising of the excavation records and materials recovered, have been quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. A Harris Matrix has been compiled, together with an overall site summary, and a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

**2.12** The archive is being prepared, in accordance with UKIC guidelines, for deposition with Bedford Museum.

### *Artefacts*

**2.13** Where appropriate, bulk finds such as pottery and ceramic building material have been carefully washed in clean water to remove the soil, and quantified. All pottery has been marked with the site code and context number.

### *Ecofacts*

**2.14** All the cremation burials were separated by hand under magnification, to recover bone and charcoal from the matrix. The matrix has been retained for further study, if required.

**2.15** Five bulk samples were taken from dated contexts, and these were processed by flotation. The residues were sorted for environmental and artefactual evidence, and the flot was scanned using a binocular microscope.

### 3. Assessment

#### ARCHIVE QUANTIFICATION

##### Documentary Archive

**3.1** The documentary archive incorporates the written, drawn and photographic records from the fieldwork on the present site. The various elements of the documentary archive are quantified in Table 1, below:

Record Type			Items
Contexts: Phase 1			5
Contexts: Phase 2			25
Cremation Records: Phase 2			6
Trench record sheets: Phase 1			5
Level record sheets: Phase 1			1
Level record sheets: Phase 2			1
Site survey sheets: Phase 2			5
Environmental sample record: Phase 2			4
Field Drawings: Phase 1	A2 sheets	1	1
	Sketches	0	0
Field Drawings: Phase 2	A2	2	8
	A4	1	
	Sketches	5	
Photographs: Phase 1	Colour Transparencies		10
	Monochrome negatives		14
Photographs: Phase 2	Colour Transparencies		13
	Monochrome negatives		39

##### Material Archive

**3.2** The material archive normally incorporates artefacts, faunal remains and environmental samples collected during the project, including both stratified and unstratified material. The material archive for the present project is limited to the following:

Type	Items	Weight (g)
Pottery: Phase 1	5	20g
Pottery: Phase 2	46	36g
Daub: Phase 1	1	4g
Worked flint: Phase 2	1	3g
Cu alloy: Phase 2	1	5g
Slag: Phase 2	1	5g
Cremation samples	6	85650g
Cremated bone: Phase 2	-	635g
Charcoal: Phase 2	-	2140g
Bulk Soil Samples	5	192 litres

**RECORDED DATA****Stratigraphy**

**3.3** The stratigraphy was broadly similar across the site. It consisted of:

- topsoil of dark grey (10 YR 3/1) sandy silt, measuring between 0.20 and 0.40m in depth;
- a subsoil of reddish brown (2.5 YR 3/4) sandy silty gravels, measuring between 0.10 and 0.30m in depth;
- undisturbed natural of yellow reddish brown (7.5 YR 6/6) sandy terrace gravels, with frequent glacial striations and numerous tree boles, encountered at 0.45-0.55m below the existing surface.

**Watching Brief**

**3.4** The evaluation demonstrated that the area of the house footprint in Plot 5 was clear of archaeological features and deposits. However, the area of the garage block, to the north of the house, was located close to the prehistoric ditch, cut [401], observed in Trench 4 (Figure 2). On this basis, the excavation of the footings trenches for the garage block in Plot 5 were monitored. The building footprint measured 6.5m square, with the footing trenches measuring 0.60-0.50m wide and approximately 1.10m deep (Figure 4).

**3.5** No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this area.

**Excavation Area**

**3.6** An area, centred on the building footprints and front gardens of Plots 6 and 7, was stripped of topsoil (Figures 2 & 3). This measured approximately 30m square and was designed to investigate the potential for the survival of prehistoric features, such as those identified during the evaluation in Trenches 4 and 5.

**3.7** In total 31 archaeological contexts were investigated and recorded, relating to 6 cremations, a ditch, a natural hollow and a tree bole:

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
01	Cut	Section across ditch group [30]. Steep concave sides, flatish base. Contains fill (02).	Length of section: 1.15m Width: 1.53m Depth: 0.50m
02	Fill	Friable, yellowish brown (7.5YR 4/2), silty clay with frequent gravel and moderate small sub rounded stones. Fill of [01].	Length of section: 1.15m Width: 1.53m Depth: 0.50m
03	Cut	Section across terminal of ditch group [30]. Steep concave sides, flatish base. Contains fill (04).	Length of section: 1.20m Width: 1.59m Depth: 0.47m



Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
04	Fill	Firm, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6), silty sand with frequent gravel and moderate small sub rounded stones. Fill of [03].	Length of section: 1.20m Width: 1.59m Depth: 0.47m
05	Cut	Section across terminal of ditch group [30].Steep concave sides, flatish base. Contains fills (06) and (07).	Length of section: 2.70m Width: 1.46m Depth: 0.46m
06	Fill	Friable, greyish brown (10YR 6/2) sandy silt with occasional sub angular and rounded flints. Secondary fill of [05]	Length of section: 2.70m Width: 1.46m Depth: 0.23m
07	Fill	Firm, yellowish greyish brown (10YR 7/2) sandy silt with frequent sub angular and rounded flints. Primary fill of [05]	Length of section: 2.70m Width: 0.90m Depth: 0.23m
08	Cut	Sub-circular, irregular concave sides and base. Disturbed natural gravel on the north side. Tree bole contains fill (09).	Length: 1.02m Width: 1.00m Depth: 0.30m
09	Fill	Loose, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6), sandy silt with moderate gravel and root disturbance. Fill of [08].	Length: 1.02m Width: 1.00m Depth: 0.30m
10	Cut	Sub-circular U-shaped cut, with steep sides for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (11) and cremation (12)	Length: 0.45m Width: 0.35m Depth: 0.21m
11	Fill	Loose, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) sandy silt. Secondary fill of cremation [10].	Length: 0.45m Width: 0.35m Depth: 0.21m
12	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [10]	Length: 0.45m Width: 0.35m Depth: 0.21m
13	Cut	Sub-circular cut, with shallow sides, irregular flat base. Natural hollow contains (14)	Length: 7m + Width: 7m + Depth: 0.24m
14	Fill	Friable, grey brown (10YR 4/2) sandy silt, occasional small sub angular flints. Fill of [13]	Length: 7m + Width: 7m + Depth: 0.24m
15	Cut	Sub-circular U-shaped cut, with concave sides for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (16) and cremation (17)	Length: 0.30m Width: 0.25m Depth: 0.08m
16	Fill	Loose, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) sandy silt. Secondary fill of cremation [15].	Length: 0.30m Width: 0.25m Depth: 0.08m
17	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [15]	Length: 0.30m Width: 0.25m Depth: 0.08m
18	Cut	Sub-circular U-shaped cut, with steep sides for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (19) and cremation (20)	Length: 0.62m Width: 0.43m Depth: 0.43m
19	Fill	Loose, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/1) sandy silt, with occasional small sub angular flints. Secondary fill of cremation [18].	Length: 0.62m Width: 0.43m Depth: 0.43m
20	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [18]	Length: 0.62m Width: 0.43m Depth: 0.43m

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
21	Cut	Circular U-shaped cut, with steep sides for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (22) and cremation (23)	Diameter: 0.26m Depth: 0.13m
22	Fill	Loose, very dark greyish brown (10YR 2/1) sandy silt, with occasional small flints. Secondary fill of cremation [21].	Diameter: 0.26m Depth: 0.13m
23	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [21]	Diameter: 0.26m Depth: 0.13m
24	Cut	Sub-circular U-shaped cut, with steep sides to the north, shallow to the south, for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (25) and cremation (26)	Length: 0.36m Width: 0.30m Depth: 0.18m
25	Fill	Loose, very dark greyish brown (10YR 2/1) sandy silt, with occasional small flints. Secondary fill of cremation [24].	Length: 0.36m Width: 0.30m Depth: 0.18m
26	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [24]	Length: 0.36m Width: 0.30m Depth: 0.18m
27	Cut	Sub-circular U-shaped cut, with steep sides for cremation. Cut into natural hollow [13]. Contains fill (28) and cremation (29)	Length: 0.40m Width: 0.40m Depth: 0.10m
28	Fill	Compact, greyish brown (10YR 3/4) sandy silt, with occasional small flints. Secondary fill of cremation [27].	Length: 0.40m Width: 0.40m Depth: 0.10m
29	Cremation	Unurned calcified bone and charcoal. Primary fill of [27]	Length: 0.40m Width: 0.40m Depth: 0.10m
30	Group	Ditch group orientated NW-SE of cuts [01], [03], [05]	Length: 16.67m Width: 1.62m Depth: 0.46m
31	Group	Cremation group of cuts [10], [15], [18], [21], [24], [27]	-

## ARTEFACT AND ECOFACT ASSEMBLAGES

### Concordance of finds

Context	Feature	Pottery		Flint		Cu Alloy		Slag		Comments
		Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	
U/s	-	<5	1	-	-	-	-	5	1	
06	Upper fill of ditch [5]	20	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	
07	Primary fill of ditch [5]	10	13	<5	1	-	-	-	-	
14	Fill of hollow [13]	<5	1	-	-	5	1	-	-	
<b>Total</b>		36	46	3	1	5	1	5	1	

**3.8** Despite the size of the investigated ditch and hollow, very few artefacts were recovered from the excavation. This may simply reflect the low density of activity in the vicinity, or be attributed, in part, to the unfavourable conditions for artefact preservation on the site.

### *Pottery*

**3.9** The assemblage consisted of 46 undiagnostic sherds, weighing only 36g. The condition of these fragments was generally poor and abraded.

**3.10** All the material recovered was paralleled with the Bedford pottery fabric type series. This identified all the sherds as fabric RF16A, a shell-tempered ware, dating to the Late Bronze/ Early Iron Age. Due to the soil conditions, most of the shell-tempering had leached out, leaving voids in the matrix.

**3.11** The bulk of the assemblage was recovered from context (6), the upper fill of ditch [5]. The small size of the assemblage, coupled with the lack of unstratified material, suggests that this is not an occupation site, and that the present site lay on the periphery of any intensive activity.

### *Recommendations*

**3.12** Due to the undiagnostic nature of the fragments, and their poor condition, no further work on this material is recommended.

### *Slag*

**3.13** A small fragment of vitrified material, was recovered during machining. It measured 24 x 22 x 14mm. This material does not appear to be the product of metalworking or pottery production.

### *Recommendations*

**3.14** Due to the undiagnostic nature of the fragment, and its unstratified context, no further work is recommended.

### *Flint*

**3.15** A single flint flake, of possible Late Bronze/ Early Iron Age date, was recovered from context (7) the primary fill of ditch [5]. The flake measured 17 x 13mm, and had clearly broken prior to deposition. There is no evidence of re-touch along the edges of the flake.

### *Recommendations*

**3.16** Due to the small size of this assemblage, no further work is recommended on this object.

### *Copper alloy*

**3.17** A single copper alloy fragment was recovered, in association with a small spread of cremated bone, from context (14), the fill of the natural hollow [13]. This fragment consisted of a plain flat strip, measuring 28 x 19 x 2mm. Its weight, compared to its size, suggest that lead may be part of the alloy.

*Recommendations*

**3.18** Although this artefact was associated cremated bone, its fragmentary nature may mean further analysis has limited potential. No further work is recommended.

*Cremated Bone*

**3.19** All cremations were 100% excavated, with the total contents collected for later sorting. At the post-excavation stage they were separated into bone, charcoal or fill.

Feature	Cut number	Total Fill		Charcoal Wt. (g)	Cremated Bone		Fragment Size (mm)
		Fill	Wt. (g)		Context	Wt.(g)	
Cremation	10	11	1390	490	12	530	1 – 92
Hollow	13	14	-	20	-	55	1 – 37
Cremation	15	16	4175	40	17	20	1 – 19
Cremation	18	19	49600	1200	20	10	<1 – 14
Cremation	21	22	5905	285	23	0	0
Cremation	24	25	9905	95	26	10	<1 – 3
Cremation	27	28	14675	10	29	10	<1 – 5
Total	-	-	85650	2140	-	635	-

**3.20** Three contexts contained substantial amounts of bone, [10], [13] and [15]. The recognisable elements consisted of skull and long bone fragments.

**3.21** Although the majority of the calcined bone was deposited in sub-circular cuts, a small amount, weighing 55g, was recovered from the silts of the natural hollow. All of this material was collected from an area measuring approximately 1m<sup>2</sup>, located against the eastern baulk (Figure \*). It appears to have been scattered across the hollow, rather than to have been deposited within a separate cut. A copper alloy fragment was associated with these remains.

**3.22** Pieces of charcoal, larger than 2mm in length or diameter, were removed from the fills by hand during the post-excavation processing.

Feature	Context Cut	Fill		Charcoal %	Cremated Bone %
		Context	Total Wt. (g)		
Cremation	10	11	2410	20.3	22
Cremation	15	16	4235	0.9	0.5
Cremation	18	19	50810	2.4	0.02
Cremation	21	22	6190	4.6	0
Cremation	24	25	10010	0.9	0.1
Cremation	27	28	14695	0.07	0.07

**3.23** The cremated bone was white and fully oxidised, consistent with a pyre heat of over 600o C.

**3.24** The percentage of cremated bone, compared to the total fill of the feature, is low, with context (11) as an exception. The variation in bone content suggests that retrieval of remains from the pyre site was poor, with the recovered charcoal outweighing the calcined bone. One apparent cremation burial, cut [21], contained no bone, but a significant amount of charcoal. It is possible either that very little of the individual remained for collection, or that this feature may have been intended as a memorial.

### *Recommendations*

**3.25** The collected charcoal has potential for providing a time frame for the cremations using C14 dating techniques. In addition, identification of species would indicate the type of fuel used for the cremation process and provide information on the environment in the area at this time.

**3.26** On this basis, further research on this assemblage is recommended, comprising the submission of a sample of the charcoal from each cremation to an appropriate laboratory for C14 dating. It is also recommended that the entire assemblage is submitted to a specialist for species identification.

**3.27** The small number of individuals present in the calcined bone assemblage make any attempt to derive demographic data meaningless. However, these individuals have the potential to contribute to a wider study of the demography of this region in the later prehistoric period. On this basis, no further work is recommended at this stage.

### *Environmental Samples*

*by Jill Hooper*

**3.28** Five environmental samples were collected, totalling 192 litres. Of these, 75% came from excavated sections across ditch group [30]. Although the geology present on the site was not likely to provide ideal conditions for the preservation of environmental material, a large sample was taken from the ditch in order to improve the potential retrieval of any surviving elements.

### *Methodology*

**3.29** Soil conditions at the site limited the potential for survival of organic remains to charred plant material. Five 10 litre samples were submitted for assessment, taken from the two ditches (samples 1 - 4) and the sub circular hollow (sample 5).

**3.30** Soil conditions at the site limited the potential for survival of organic remains to charred plant material. Five 10 litre samples were taken from ditches (4 samples) and a sub circular hollow (1 sample).

**3.31** The samples were processed by flotation, using a 0.25mm and 1mm mesh for recovery of the flots and residues. The residues were sorted for environmental and artefactual evidence and the flots scanned using binocular microscopy.

Sample	Context	Feature	Size (litres)
1	06	Secondary fill of ditch [05]	36
2	07	Primary fill of ditch [05]	36
3	04	Fill of ditch [03]	36
4	02	Fill of ditch [01]	36
5	14	Fill of hollow [13]	48

**3.32** The flots contained charcoal, most of which appears to be wood. The grains/seeds appear to be boraginaceae, chenopodiaceae and modern polygonum, all plants of disturbed ground. A single seed of barley was recovered from sample 5. The residues contained modern roots and flecks of wood charcoal. No other organic material was evident.

**3.33** Artefactually, sample < 3 > contained the proximal end of a flint blade, approximately 1cm in length, and one fist-sized piece of very red mudstone. The colour was possibly due either to heat or mineral staining. All samples contained magnetic geological particles, 1 - 2mm in size. Their presence may also be due to heat or mineral content.

### *Recommendations*

**3.34** None of the samples contained faunal evidence. Floral evidence was restricted to modern roots, small flecks of wood charcoal, a single barley grain and grains/seeds of plants found on disturbed ground. This indicates that the assemblages from these samples have very limited potential to throw further light on the local environment during the Bronze Age.

**3.35** On the basis of the assessment results no further detailed work is recommended on the samples.

## 4. Further Research

### RESEARCH AIMS

**4.1** The research design for the present project, which was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design for Archaeological Excavation*, dated July 2004, considered that further investigation of the site had the potential to contribute to the following research topics:

- the development of farming;
- the development and integration of monuments, fields and settlements;
- the Neolithic to Bronze Age transition.

**4.2** In order to address these topics, the aims of the excavation were:

- to establish the nature and layout of the site;
- to establish the date range of the site;
- to recover evidence which demonstrates the site's economic and social status.

**4.3** The assessment of the results of the fieldwork demonstrates that the information collected is adequate to meet the defined aims. The results can be summarised as follows.

- The site lies within a known archaeological landscape. Aerial photographs and previous archaeological investigations to the north of Bromham Road had revealed evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity within 250m to the northeast (Foundations Archaeology, 2002).
- The archaeological features recorded during both stages of fieldwork were all located in the eastern half of the development site, suggesting that the cluster of cropmarks recorded on aerial photographs to the northeast, may extend into this area. However, the low density of features observed may indicate a reduction in the level of activity towards the southwest.
- The pottery evidence indicates that the earliest activity on the site dates to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age. Sherds dating to this period were collected from the primary fill of ditch [401] during the evaluation phase (Saunders, 2004). It appears that activity on the site continued into the late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age period, as sherds of this date were recovered from ditch [30].
- Two linear features were recorded on the site. These may have formed part of a series of linears which demarcated the landscape to the northeast during the Bronze Age. Linear feature [30] was comparatively short, with intermittent gaps, suggesting that it may represent part of the western boundary of a droveway, or track, between fields. The apparent difference in date between linear [401] and [30], combined with the

distance of over 6m between the two features, may indicate evidence for continuity of alignment of boundaries within the landscape.

- No evidence for structures was observed. This, combined with the abraded and undiagnostic condition of the pottery sherds and the lack of animal bone fragments, suggests that the present site was probably located in fields at a distance from the settlement.
- Six unurned cremations, group [31], were investigated during the present project. These were all buried in small sub-circular pits, cut into the silty fill of a natural hollow [13]. The amount of cremated bone present varied widely between the burials, suggesting that these were representative deposits of individuals, rather than the careful collection and burying of all cremated bone from the site of the pyre.
- A scatter of cremated bone was also recovered from the silts of the natural hollow. These remains were not deposited in a cut feature, and may spread beyond the limits of the site, into the land to the east. Associated with this scatter was a small undecorated fragment of copper alloy, possibly part of a grave gift. The discovery of the scattered cremated bone may indicate a change in practice, suggesting that this natural hollow was associated with the burial of cremated remains over a period time.
- Although all the bones recovered displayed deformation and colour change associated with exposure to high temperatures, there was no evidence for the location of the pyre on the site.
- No evidence for later Roman or medieval activity was recorded during the present project, suggesting that at those periods the site lay in the fields surrounding the settlement. Post-medieval cartographic evidence shows that it formed part of a larger field system which existed to the north of Bromham Road.
- The confinement of the archaeological features and deposits to the eastern end of the site, and the extension of the silty hollow, which contains cremations, beyond the limits of the site, indicate that the potential for archaeological remains surviving in the adjacent field to the east is high.
- The low density of the archaeological features, the absence of archaeological remains over plots 1 -5, and the nature of the recovered artefacts suggests that the site lies to the southwest of the core of the prehistoric activity, identified in aerial photographs to the northeast. The evidence from the present site indicates the survival of important features relating to the division of the land and funerary practices, but no direct evidence of occupation on the site.

***UPDATED RESEARCH DESIGN***



**4.4** The data collected from the present site has provided further information concerning the use of land outside the settlement between the late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age and the late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age. The various classes of data collected have been assessed in line with the regional research framework (Glazebrook, 1997; Brown and Glazebrook, 2000).

**4.5** It is considered that the small assemblage of cremated human remains from the site may have the potential to contribute to a wider study of the demography of the region in the later prehistoric period. However, in the context of the present project, no further research has been recommended and it is proposed to publish the material as it stands.

**4.6** The artefact assemblages recovered from the present site, including pottery, are all extremely small. Their abraded and undiagnostic nature means that they have very little potential to contribute to the identified research designs. On this basis no further research has been recommended and it is proposed to publish this material as it stands.

**4.7** It is considered that the charcoal collected from the six cremation burials has the potential to provide evidence for their date. It also has the potential to provide information on the local environment in the Bronze Age. Further research on this material, including species identification and C14 dating, is proposed prior to publication.

## **PUBLICATION**

**4.8** It is proposed to publish the present site as a short article in Bedfordshire Archaeology.

## **Provisional Synopsis**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Introduction	Project background	500	1
	Site location, geology and topography	250	0.5
Narrative and discussion	Prehistoric features and deposits	500	1
Artefacts	By type	250	0.5
Human remains	Cremations	250	0.5
Ecofacts	By type	250	0.5
Bibliography		250	0.5
<b>Total words:</b>		2250	4.5
Line drawings	Plans		1
	Sections		0.5
Tables	Artefact x 1		0.5
	Human remains x 2		0.5
	Ecofact x 1		0.5
<b>Total Pages:</b>			7.5

## **ARCHIVE**

**4.9** The documentary and material archive is currently held by The Heritage Network Ltd at its premises at 11 Furnston Court, Icknield Way, Letchworth, Herts.

**4.10** In its final form the archive will conform to UKIC guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage. All post-excavation documentation will be filed, ordered, and indexed as part of the research archive.

**4.11** The documentary and material archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum, Castle Street, Bedford.

***TASK LIST TO PUBLICATION AND ARCHIVE DEPOSITION***

<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Undertaken by</b>	<b>Days</b>
1	C14 dating of charcoal	SUERC	-
2	Identification of wood species	Damian Goodburn, UCL	-
3	Additional background research	Helen Ashworth, Heritage Network	1
4	Compile publication text	Helen Ashworth, Heritage Network	5
5	Prepare illustrations	Geoff Saunders, Heritage Network	3
6	Editing	David Hillelson, Heritage Network	3
7	Submission to Bedfordshire Archaeology	David Hillelson, Heritage Network	1
8	Final archive	Helen Ashworth, Heritage Network	3
9	Archive deposition	Helen Ashworth, Heritage Network	0.5

## 5. Bibliography

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- Beamish, H, 1998 *Land North of Biddenham, Bedford: an Archaeological Assessment*. CPM
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- Hillelson, D, 2004 *Land off Bromham Road, Biddenham, Beds*. Project Design: Archaeological Excavation. Heritage Network.
- Mather, L-A, 2004 *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Excavation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Land Off Bromham Road, Biddenham, Bedfordshire*. Bedfordshire County Council.
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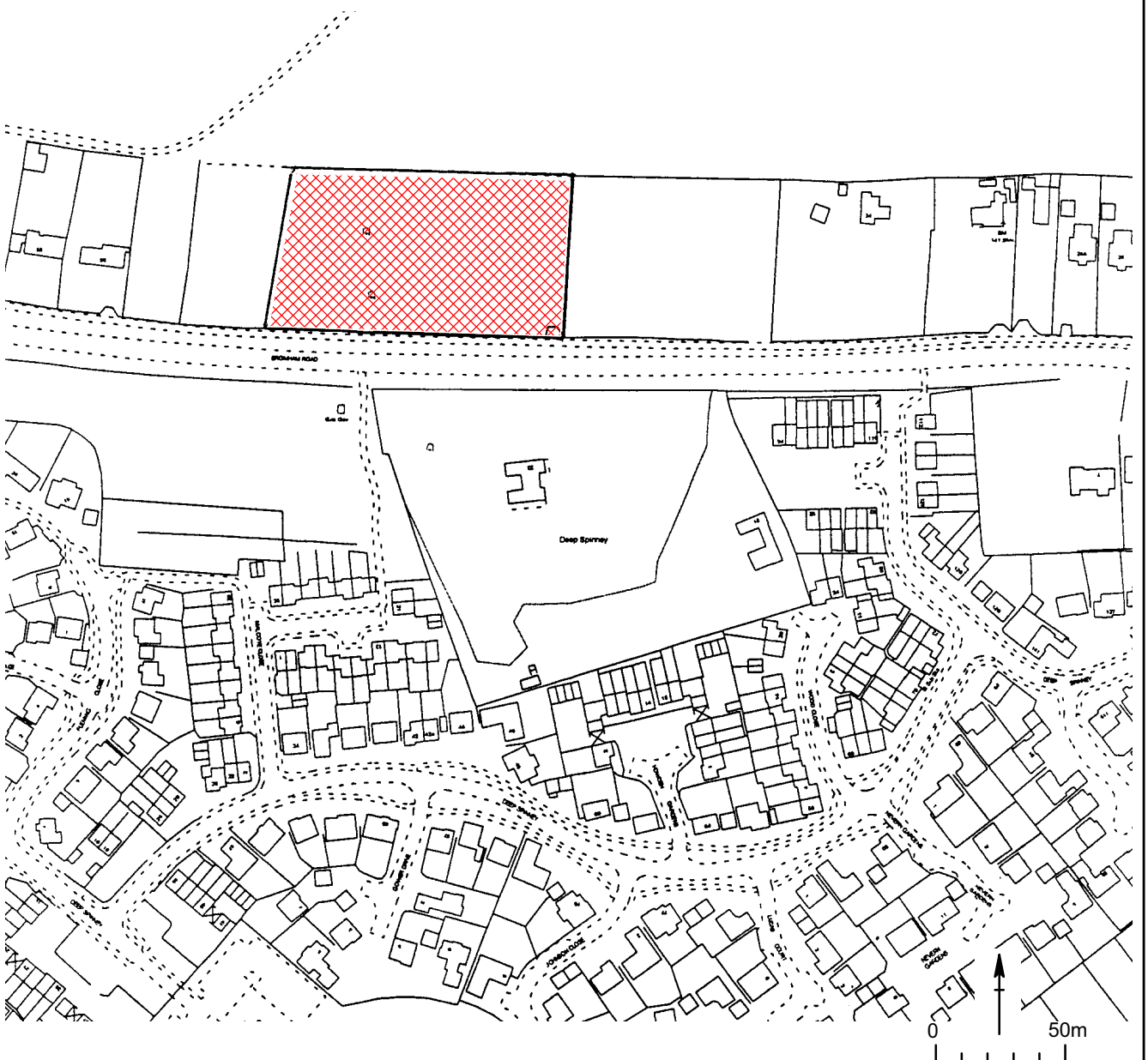
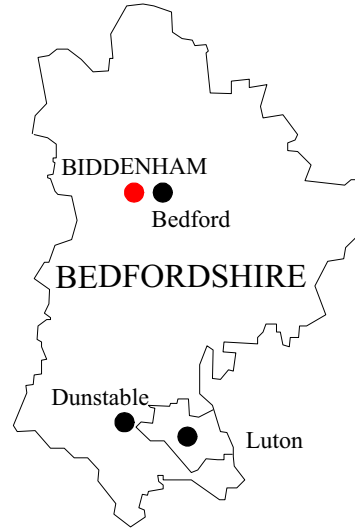
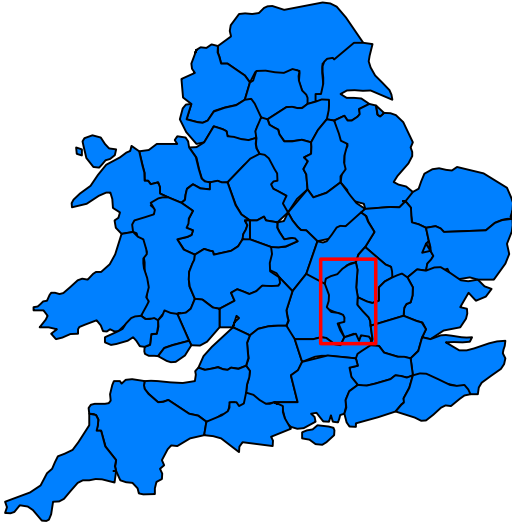
## 6. Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Site Plan
Figure 3 .....	Excavation Plan
Figure 4 .....	Watching Brief
Figure 5 .....	Excavated Sections
Figure 6 .....	Excavated Sections

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Land off Bromham Rd, Biddenham

HN475

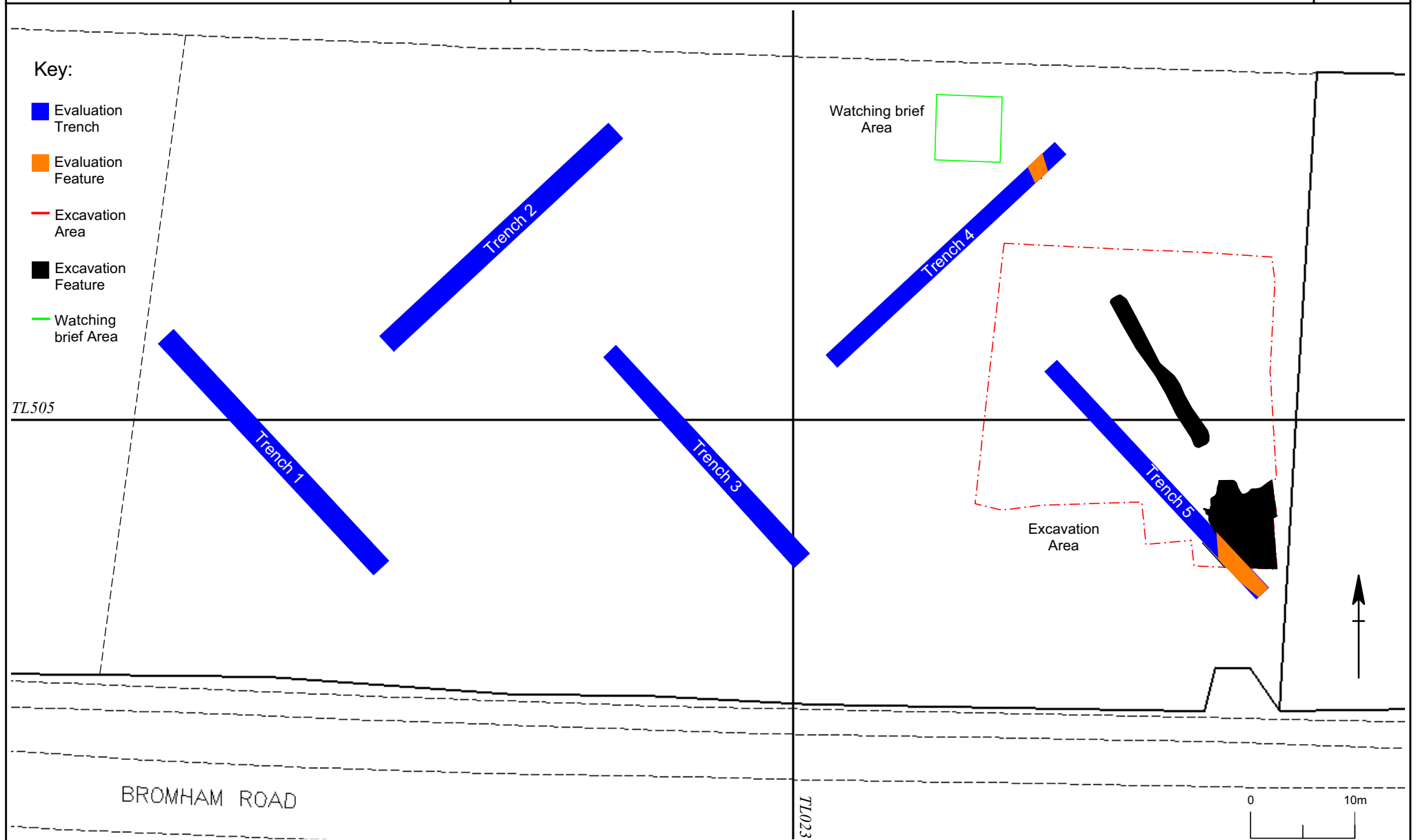


Site Location

Scale 1:2500

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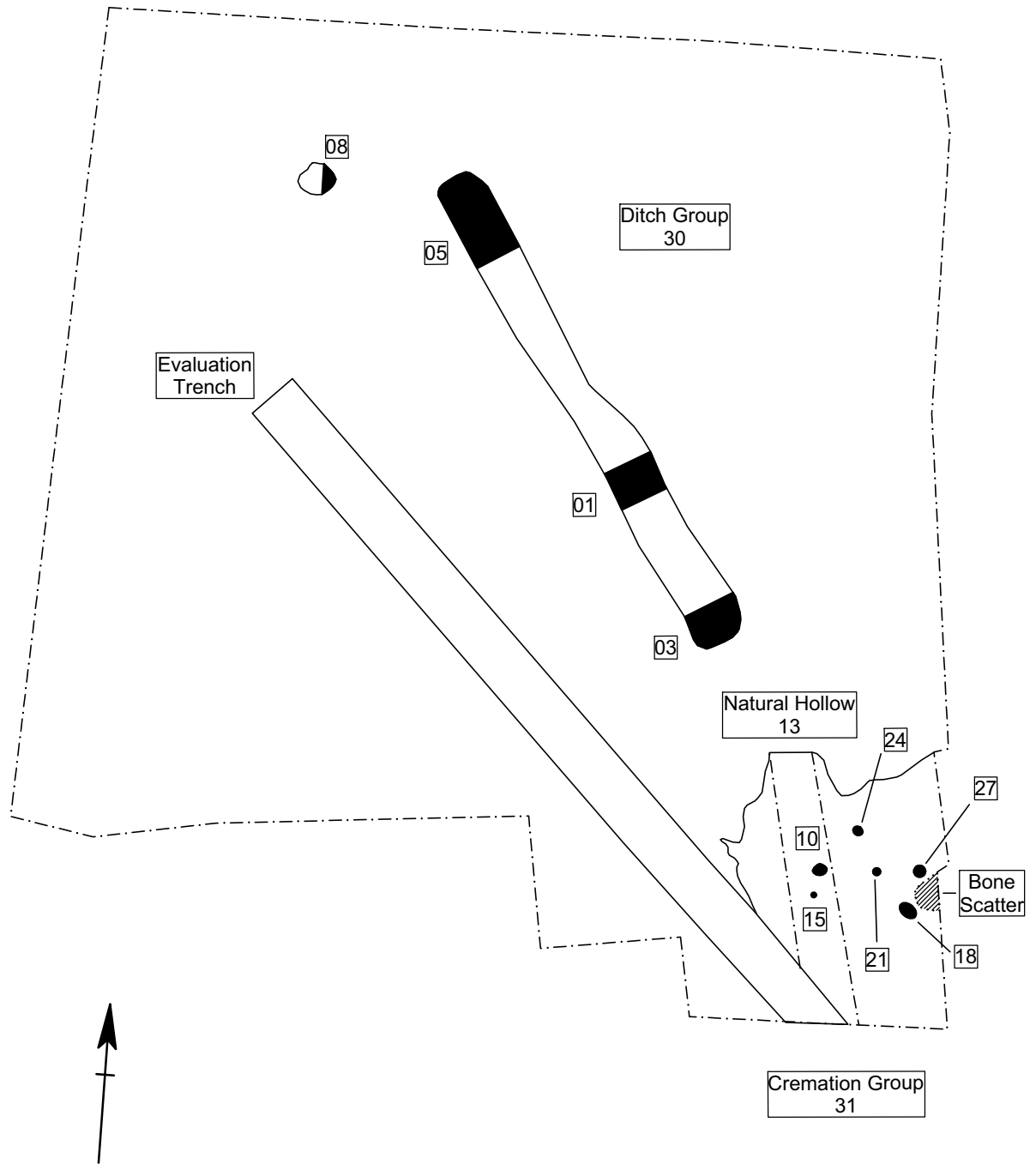
Figure 1



Site Plan

Scale 1:500

Figure 2

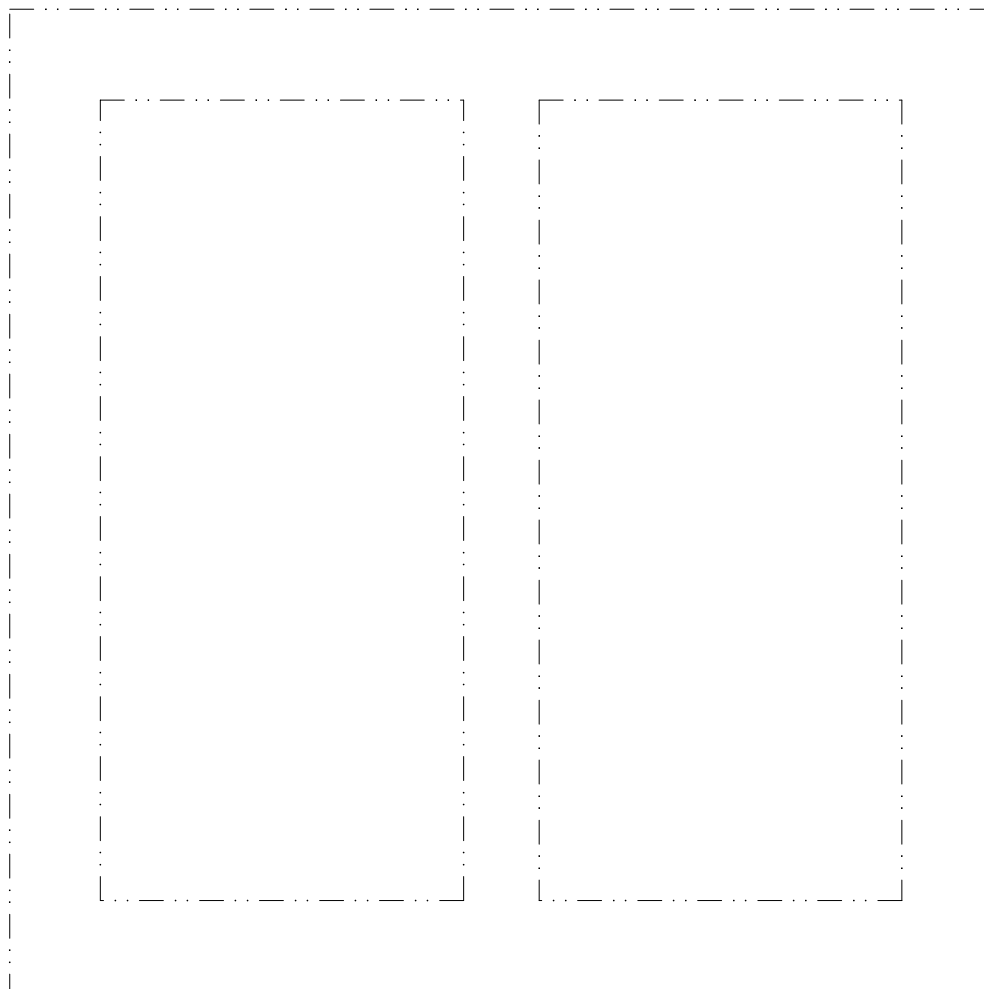


Excavation Plan

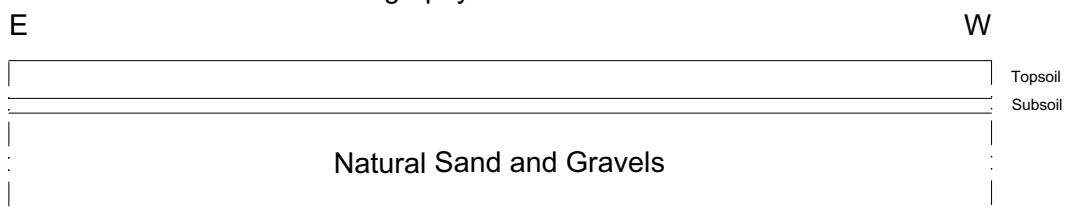
Scale 1:200

Figure 3

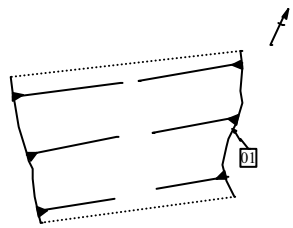
Plan of garage footings.



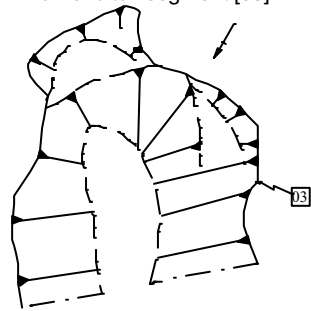
Stratigraphy of southern baulk



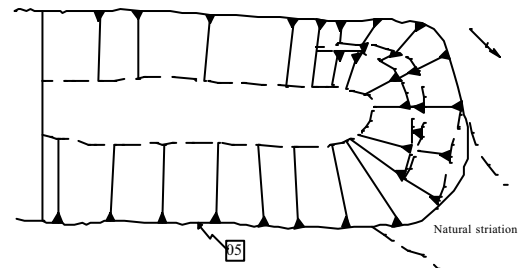
Plan of ditch segment [01]



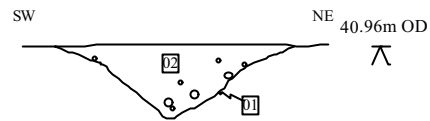
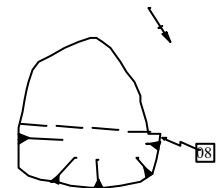
Plan of ditch segment [03]



Plan of ditch segment [05]



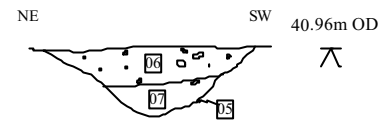
Plan of tree bole [08]



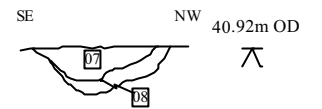
Ditch section [01]



Ditch section [03]

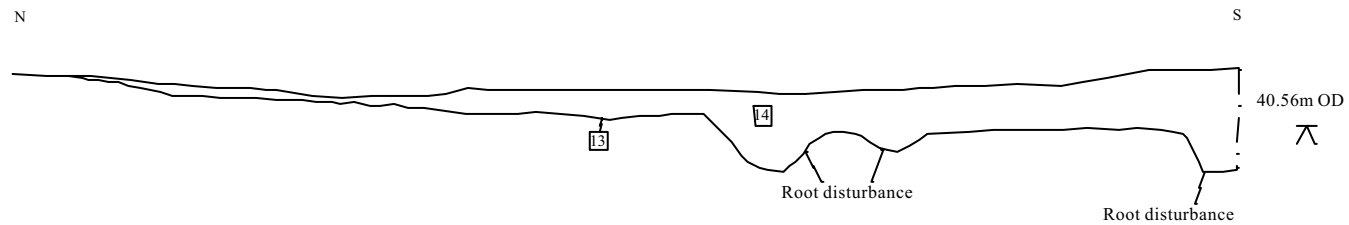


Ditch section [05]



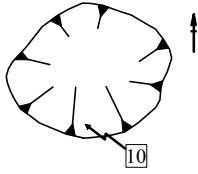
Tree bole section [08]

Section of natural hollow [13]

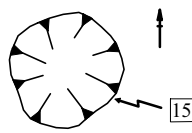




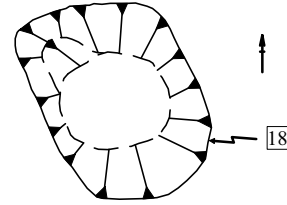
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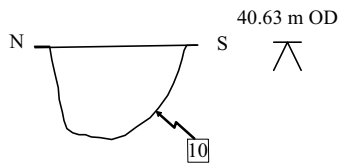
Plan of cremation



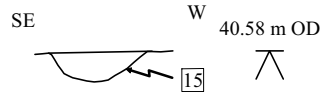
Plan of cremation



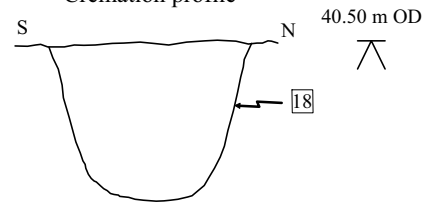
Cremation profile



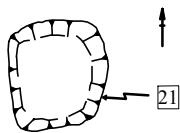
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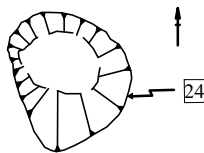
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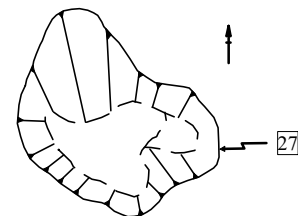
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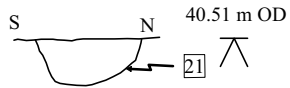
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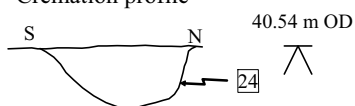
Plan of cremation



Cremation profile



Cremation profile



Cremation profile

