



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at
Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4
Shropham, Norfolk
August - November 2011



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Event No ENF127901



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS Report form

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4, Shropham, Norfolk, August - November 2011
Short description	Between August and November 2011, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4, Shropham, Norfolk. The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd, acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, and was carried out prior to gravel extraction. Two prehistoric pits were uncovered in the southern area (Area 1), one containing Beaker pottery sherds typical of the early Bronze Age. Three undated pits, and a boundary feature containing a Neolithic or Bronze Age flint fabricator, were found in the northern area (Area 2). The findings were consistent with the earlier works undertaken on and in the vicinity of the site where a prehistoric landscape was recorded.
Project type	Watching brief
Site status	None
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Doyle 2008), geophysical survey (Hadrell 2008), field walking and metal detecting survey (Adams and Brogan 2009), Trial trench evaluation (Carlyle 2011), Archaeological watching briefs (Hogen <i>et al</i> 2007; Barlow 2009; Barlow and Smith 2008; Wolfram-Murray 2011)
Current land use	Arable
Future work	Unknown
Monument type/period	Possible Neolithic/Bronze Age field boundary, Bronze Age and undated pits
Significant finds	Beaker pottery, Neolithic/Bronze Age flint fabricator
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Norfolk
Site address	Rocklands Road, Shropham
OS Easting & Northing	TL 98450 94560
Area	0.90ha
Height	40m above Ordnance Datum
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)
Project brief originator	Ken Hamilton, Norfolk County Council
Project Design originator	Adam Yates (NA)
Director/Supervisors	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray and Jim Brown (NA)
Project Managers	Adam Yates (NA), Tom Rees (Rathmell Archaeology Ltd)
Sponsor or funding body	Rathmell Archaeology Ltd
PROJECT DATE	
Start date	9th August 2011
End date	13th December 2011
ARCHIVES	
Archive location: Norfolk Museums	Accession number: ENF127901
Archive contents	Pottery, flint; site records and related documents; digital photographs, digital report copies
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
Title	An archaeological watching brief at Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4, Shropham, Norfolk, August - November 2011
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Back Cover: Area 1 after stripping, looking west

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
SHROPHAM QUARRY, HONEYPOTS EXTENSION, PHASE 4
SHROPHAM, NORFOLK
AUGUST- NOVEMBER 2011**

Abstract

Between August and November 2011, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4, Shropham, Norfolk. The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd, acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, and was carried out prior to gravel extraction. Two prehistoric pits were uncovered in the southern area (Area 1), one containing Beaker pottery sherds typical of the early Bronze Age. Three undated pits and a boundary feature containing a Neolithic or Bronze Age flint fabricator, were found in the northern area (Area 2). The findings were consistent with the earlier works undertaken on and in the vicinity of the site where a prehistoric landscape was recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

Between August and November 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Shropham Quarry, Honey Pots extension Phase 4, Shropham, Norfolk (NGR: TL 98450 94560; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd (RA), acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, in support of consented extraction (Planning ref. PP/C/3/2010/3016). This report synthesises the results of the works undertaken in August 2011 (Wolframm-Murray 2011) and in November 2011.

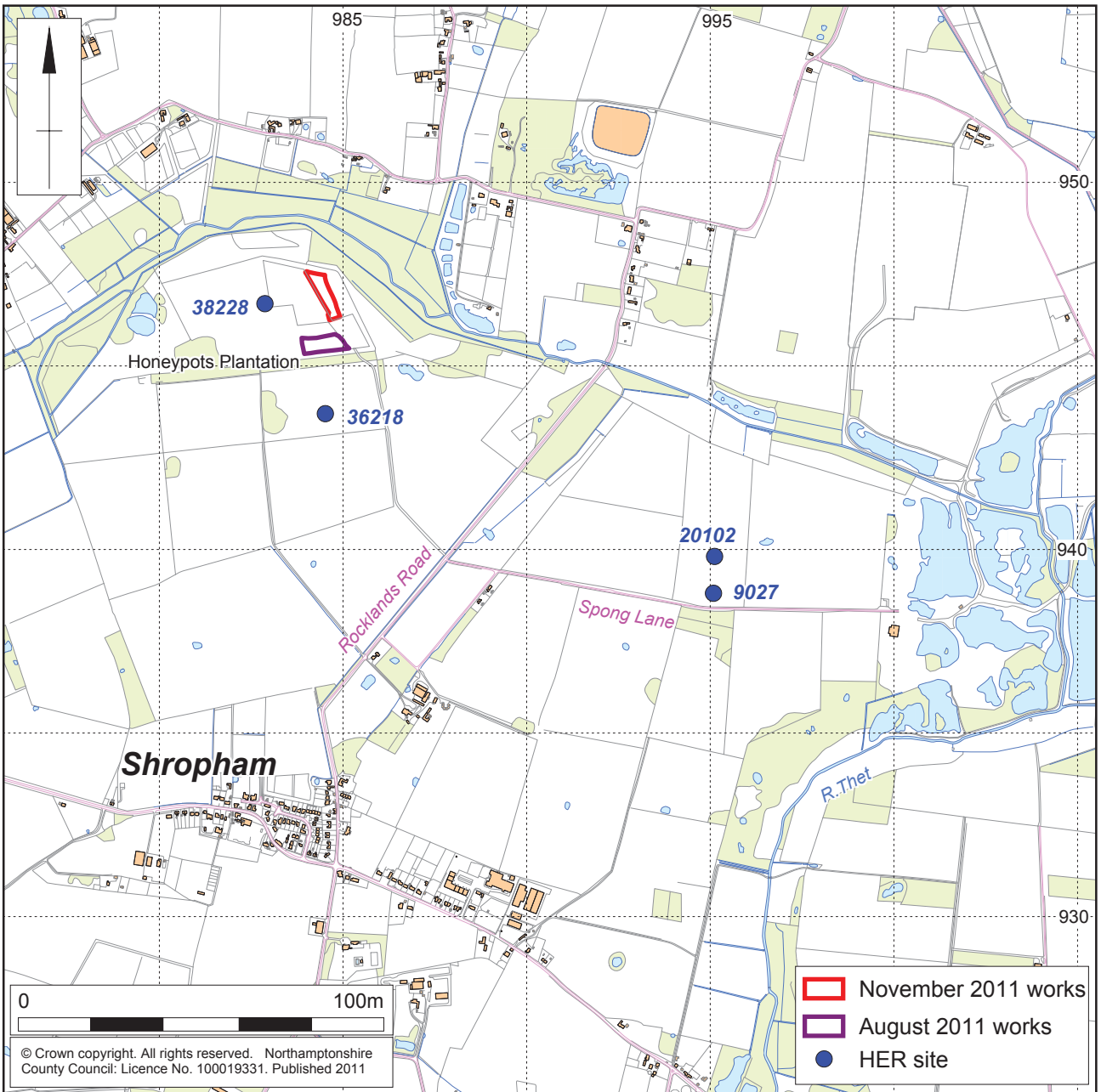
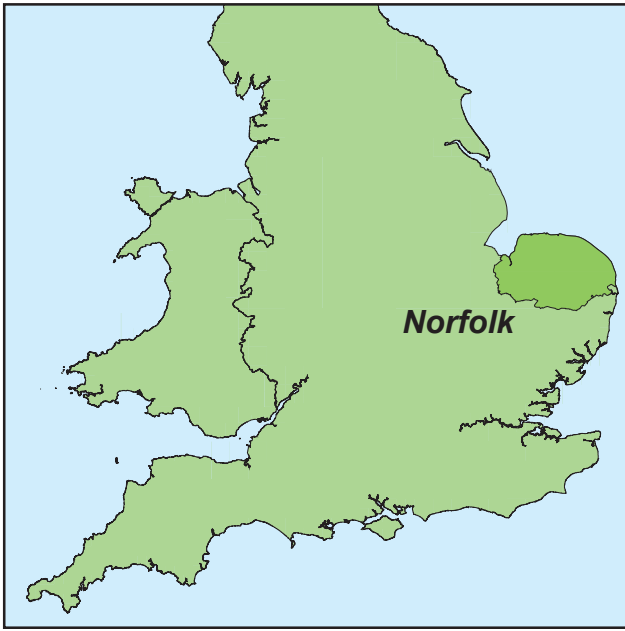
The work was undertaken in accordance with the brief issued by the Historic Environment Service of Norfolk County Council (Gurney 2006) and the Written Scheme of Investigation compiled by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011). The Norfolk Historic Environment numbers for the project are ENF127055 and ENF127901.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The Honey Pots Extension, Phase 4, at Shropham Quarry is situated 1km to the north of the village of Shropham in Norfolk. The watching brief encompassed two areas totalling 0.90ha; Area 1 was conducted in August 2011 and encompassed 0.45ha, whilst Area 2 was investigated in November 2011, which was also 0.45ha in extent (Figs 1-2). The areas were bound on all sides by previous and active quarry workings. The ground level slopes east to west from c 41m above Ordnance Datum to c34m above Ordnance Datum.

The underlying bedrock belongs to the Upper Cretaceous White Chalk Subgroup, locally overlain by sands and gravels infilling glacial outwash channels that were cut by the meltwaters of the East Anglian ice-sheets (BGS 1961). The soils belong to the Worlington Soil Association, which comprise deep well drained sandy soils, in places acidic with sub-surface pan (LAT 1983).



Scale 1:17,500

Site location and Historic Environment Record (HER) sites Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site is situated immediately adjacent to the extensive prehistoric ceremonial, funerary and domestic complex at Honeypots Plantation (Fig 1), which was excavated by Norfolk Archaeology Unit in 2001-3 (HER36218; NAU 2005) and by Archaeological Solutions Ltd in 2006-7 (HER38228; Hogan *et al* 2007). This site, which is of national archaeological importance, dates from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Sherds of Neolithic pottery (HER9027) and a Neolithic/Bronze Age flint knife (HER20102) were recovered as surface finds. The remains of an overlying Roman agricultural system were also investigated.

Previous archaeological works undertaken as part of the current scheme of evaluation comprise: a desk-based assessment (Doyle 2008); a geophysical survey (Hadrell 2008); and a fieldwalking and metal detecting survey (Adams and Brogan 2009).

The geophysical survey identified the remains of a complex of enclosures and a possible driveway, interpreted as a prehistoric settlement, and a number of possible archaeological features. Fieldwalking and metal detecting identified two concentrations of burnt and struck flint, one in each area, which correspond with possible rectilinear enclosures identified by the geophysical survey. A trial trench evaluation to the south-east revealed an unenclosed Iron Age settlement, three successive enclosures of late Iron Age to early Roman settlement and a driveway (Carlyle 2011).

3 METHODOLOGY

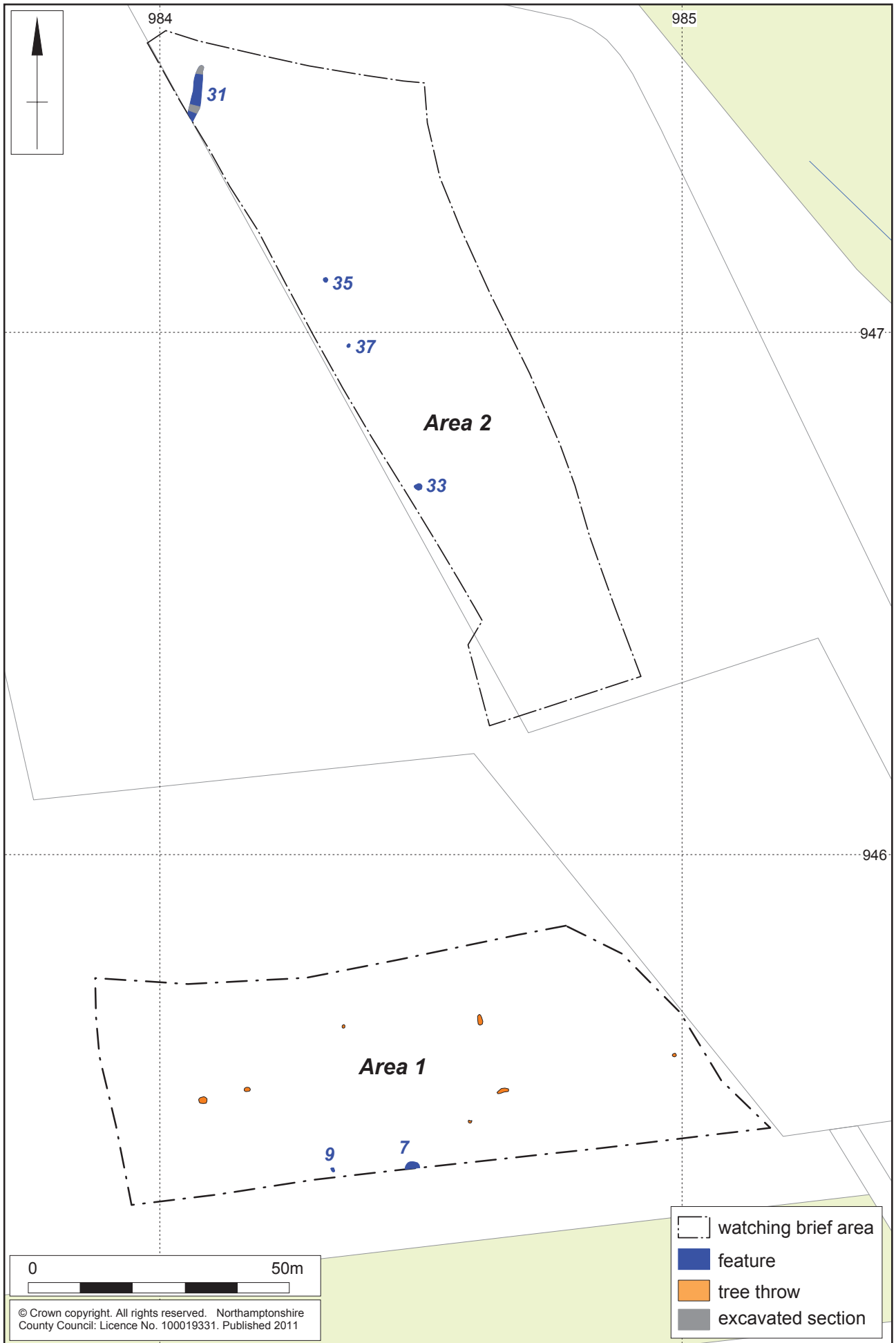
Removal of topsoil and subsoil was undertaken under the direction of an archaeologist using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Excavation proceeded to the archaeological horizon or, where this was absent, the natural substrate.

All significant features were plotted by a survey grade GPS Leica System 1200, to a tolerance of +/-0.05m related to the Ordnance Survey national grid and Ordnance Datum.

All potentially significant features were investigated by hand to determine their date and character and the exposed portions of each were fully excavated. Recording followed standard NA procedures (NA 2006). All archaeological features were given a unique context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Finds were collected from the individual deposits and appropriately packed and stored in stable conditions, by context.

A photographic record was made on 35mm monochrome and colour film, with supporting digital photographs. The field data has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

All works were carried out according to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008) and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2002).



Scale 1:1,000

Archaeological features Fig 2

4 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The area of the watching brief revealed two early Bronze Age pits along the southern edge of Area 1 (Fig 2). These are likely to be related to the pits recorded during the previous work undertaken on the surrounding areas (Barlow and Smith 2008; Barlow 2009). A further three undated pits and the terminal of a boundary feature was recorded along the western edge of Area 2.

4.1 General stratigraphy

The natural gravel and sand comprised light yellow and orange-brown silty sand or sandy gravel. The mid red-brown silty sand subsoil had frequent small to large rounded and angular flint fragments. The subsoil was mostly present in the southern half of the area and the topsoil which overlaid it was dark brownish-grey sandy loam with a moderate amount of natural pebble flint. Four pieces of worked flint were recovered as surface finds from the topsoil.

4.2 Area 1

Pit 7

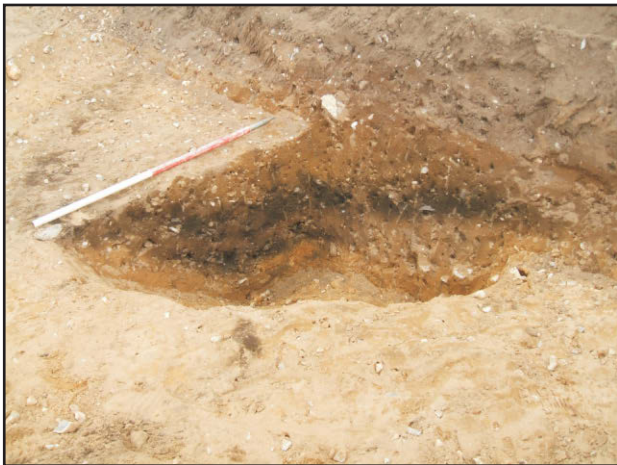
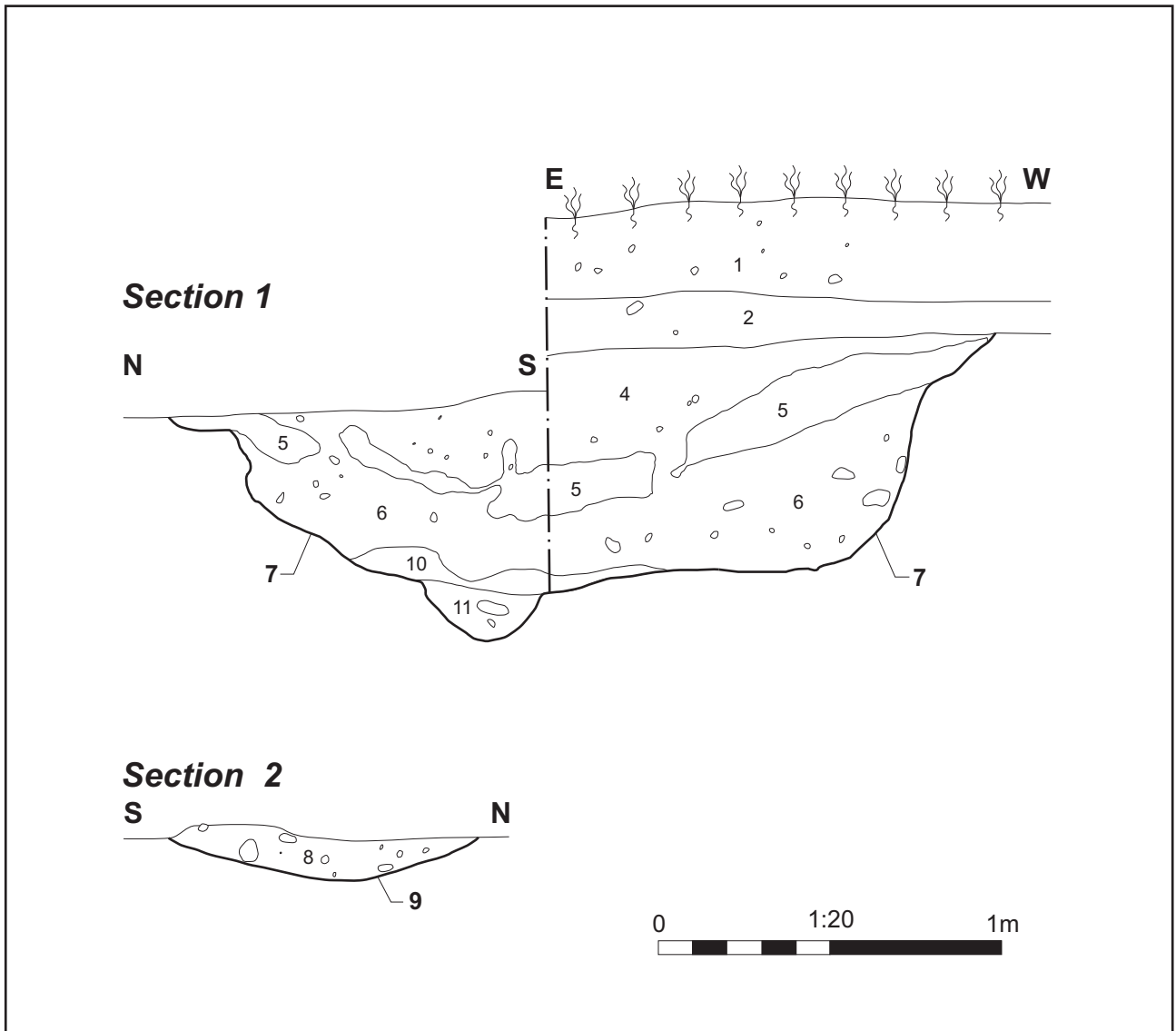
The larger pit, 7, was only partially exposed under the baulk on the southern edge of the site (Fig 3). It measured 2.90m in diameter and was 0.76m deep with steep sides and an uneven base (Fig 3, section 1). The fills comprised two episodes of deposition and three of silting or slumping. Friable light grey-brown silty sand fill (11) was probably initial slumping, overlain by darker brown-grey silty sand with occasional charcoal fragments (10), perhaps a deliberately dump. This was overlain by friable mid brown-grey silty sand silting (6), and a second dump of burnt material (5) containing friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional charcoal fragments. Fills 5 and 10 merged at the edges of the pit and became indistinguishable. The uppermost fill was of friable light grey-brown silty sand (4). Beaker pottery, dating to the early Bronze Age, was recovered mainly from the edges of the pit, within fill 5, which was visible as an irregular edged black ring on the surface (Fig 7).

Pit 9

A sub-rectangular pit, 9, c13m to the west of pit 7, was 0.90m long, 0.49m wide and 0.20m deep with gently sloping sides and a concave base (Fig 2). The fill was dark brown-grey silty sand (8) with frequent small to large rounded to angular flint nodules and fragments (Fig 3, section 2). A small amount of pottery recovered from this feature may be of similar date to the sherds from pit 7.

Further features

In addition to the two pits, seven tree throws were examined (Fig 2). They were of varying sizes and irregularly-shaped, with fills of a light to mid grey-brown silty sand. No finds were recovered.



Pit 7, looking south-east



Pit 9, looking west

4.3 Area 2

Pit 33

A sub-circular pit, 33, was 1.20m long, 1.28m wide and 0.16m deep with. It had steep sides that sloped gently into a flattish base (Figs 2 & 4). The fill was soft mid-greyish-brown silty sand (32) with occasional pebble flint and few charcoal flecks.



Pit 33, looking north-east Fig 4

Pit 35

A circular pit, 35, lay c29m to the north of pit 33. It was 0.90m in diameter and 0.32m deep with steep, curving sides and a flat base. The fill was soft mid orange-brown and yellow patchy silty sand (34) with moderate pebble flint.

Pit 37

An oval-shaped pit, 37, c12m to the north of pit 33, aligned north-east to south-west, was 0.74m long by 0.57m wide by 0.22m deep (Figs 2 & 5). It had gentle rounded sides and a rounded base, filled with soft dark black silty clay (36) that contained infrequent burnt stones and charcoal staining.

Boundary feature 31

A boundary feature, aligned south-west to north-east, 2.10m wide by 0.23m deep had an uneven profile suggestive of root action (Figs 2 & 6). The fill was soft mottled dark orange-brown and light yellow sand (30) containing moderate flint pebbles, with darker greyish sandy silt filling roots hollows. An unfinished flint fabricator of late Neolithic and Bronze Age date was recovered from the upper fill. The feature could be the base of a former hedgerow.



Pit 37, looking south-west Fig 5



Boundary feature 31, looking north-east Fig 6

5 FINDS

5.1 The worked flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray and Andy Chapman

Five pieces of worked flint were recovered from the excavations, four of which were residual surface finds. The assemblage comprises four flakes, one of which was broken. The condition of the assemblage is good and the flint shows very little post-depositional edge damage in the form of occasional nicks.

The raw material is of good quality, mid-grey and greyish-brown coloured vitreous flint. Cortex on two flakes is light and mid-brown with a generally smooth, rolled and weathered surface. The raw material is likely to have been from local gravel deposits. The worked flint flakes are not directly dateable but the technological characteristics suggest a broadly Neolithic to early Bronze Age date.

The upper fill of boundary feature 31 (Area 2) produced a single piece of worked flint (SF10). The piece is a ridged rod, 67mm long, up to 19mm wide, and 14mm thick, with both ends rounded. It appears to be an unfinished and unused example of a fabricator, a tool type that dates to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age.

The finds may be broadly contemporary with pits 7 and 9 (Area 1) where Beaker pottery of the early Bronze was excavated.

5.2 The Bronze Age pottery by Andy Chapman

A small quantity of Beaker pottery dating to the early Bronze Age was recovered from pits 7 and 9 (Area 1).

The fill (5) of pit 7 produced a total of 17 sherds, weighing 93g, coming from at least five vessels, each represented by between one and six sherds (Fig 7). This group, which is fully catalogued below, includes three thin-walled Beakers, varying from light brown to orange-brown in colour and decorated with multiple closely-spaced horizontal lines of impressed cord decoration, interspersed with narrow zones of incised or cord impressed herring bone or lattice motifs (Fig 7, a-c). There is too little surviving to reconstruct the decorative schemes, but they appear to derive from middle-period Beakers (Gibson 1997, 99-100). The group also includes sherds from a thick-walled rusticated Beaker, decorated with bold fingertip and fingernail impressions (Fig 7, d). The fabrics of these vessels all contain varying amounts of angular flint and often small pellets of grog.

The fill (8) of pit 9 produced a small group of three sherds and some crumbs, weighing 7g, from a plain vessel with a light brown surface and a grey core and inner surface. The colouration is similar to the material from pit 7 but the fabric does not contain any evident flint inclusions, leaving a Beaker attribution possible but uncertain.

Catalogue of pottery from the fill 5 of pit 7

Two sherds, 4-6mm thick, in a fabric containing fine angular flint and small pellets of grog, with a grey-black core and light orange-brown surfaces. One sherd has probably come from near the base, and the surface is eroded. The other sherd has multiple parallel lines of comb-impressed decoration flanking a narrow zone of crudely incised diagonal lattice (Fig 7, a).

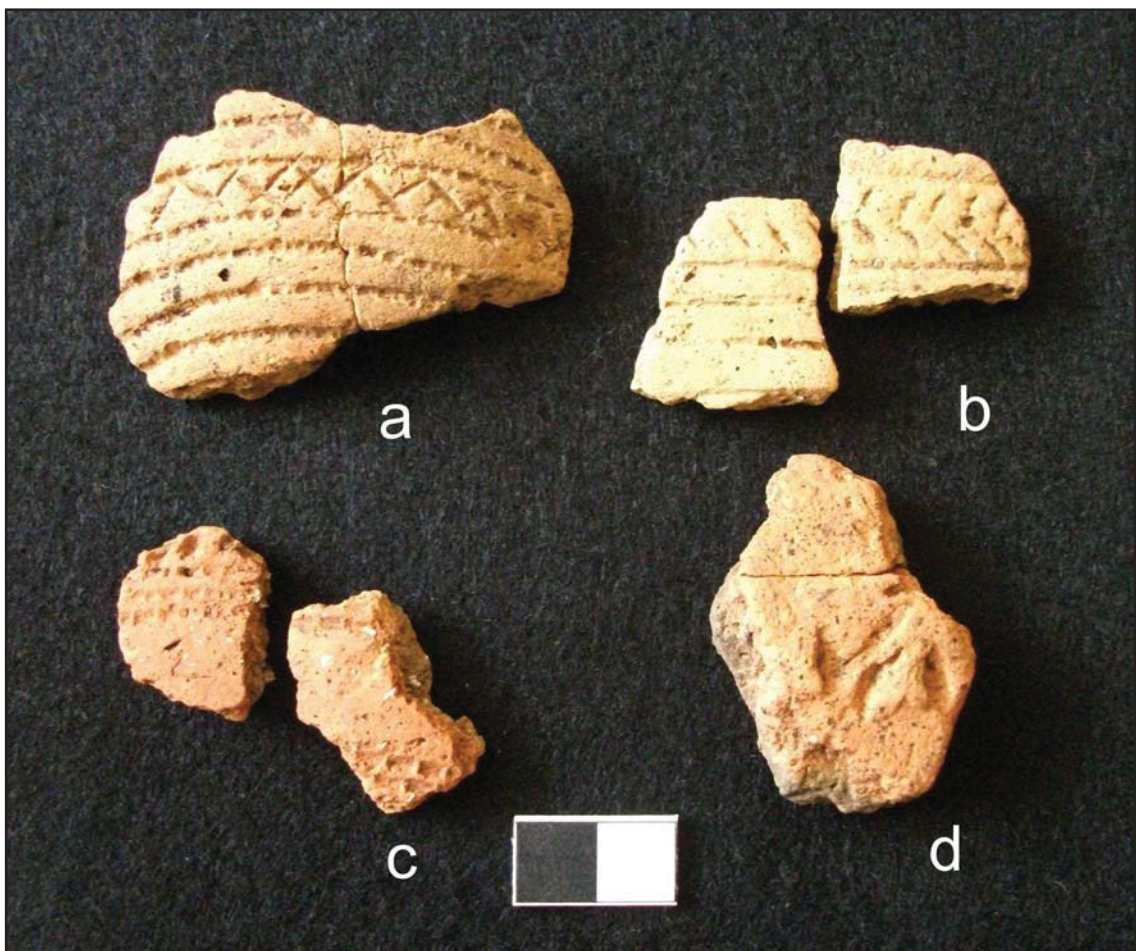
Six small sherds, 6mm thick, in a fabric containing sparse and very fine flint, light brown throughout. There are multiple parallel lines of comb-impressed decoration and a narrow zone of comb-impressed herring bone decoration (Fig 7, b).

Two sherds, 5-6mm thick, in a fabric containing fine angular flint, with a brown core and orange-brown surfaces. There are parallel lines of comb-impressed decoration and between blank zones and a remnant of a zone with diagonal incised decoration (Fig 7, c).

Three sherds, 10-11mm thick, in a fabric containing fine angular flint and sparse grog, with a grey core and orange-brown surfaces. A row of incised fingertip decoration survives, comprising alternating vertical fingertip impressions and oblique fingernail impressions (Fig 7, d).

A plain sherd, 11mm thick, in a fabric containing sparse angular flint and grog, with a red-brown core, a light grey inner surface and a pale brown external surface.

Three small sherds, in a fabric with a grey core and brown surfaces may from another Beaker



Beaker pottery from pit 7; a-c) comb-decorated Beakers, d) rusticated Beaker (Scale 20mm) Fig 7

6 DISCUSSION

Two early Bronze Age pits were uncovered along the southern edge of Area 1 and three undated pits were recorded in Area 2. A possible prehistoric field boundary was also investigated in the north-western corner of Area 2.

The larger eastern pit, 7, in Area 1 showed two deposition episodes between periods of silting. This suggested that this pit was open over a period of time and used on two occasions to deposit burnt material, the latter of which included Beaker pottery sherds. The smaller pit, 9, revealed a single deposition episode of burnt material and pottery, possibly also Beaker pottery.

The identification of the pits is consistent with the archaeological features uncovered during previous watching briefs on earlier extraction phases (Hogan *et al* 2007; Barlow and Smith 2008; Barlow 2009). These included a number of pits, many dating to the early Bronze Age, which contained deposits of burnt material.

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