

Northamptonshire Archaeology

A Summary of the Archaeological Watching Brief

at Layham Quarry, Hadleigh

Suffolk

1999-2006



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Report 07/23

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A SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT LAYHAM QUARRY
HADLEIGH, SUFFOLK
1999-2006

Planning Consent Number: B/98/0334

Site: Layham Quarry, Hadleigh, Suffolk

NGR: TM 0103 3944

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was maintained by Northamptonshire Archaeology and CgMs Consulting, formerly John Samuels Archaeological Consultants during the topsoil and subsoil strip in advance of gravel extraction at Layham Quarry, Hadleigh, Suffolk. The watching brief demonstrated that the landscape has been utilised from the Neolithic to the present day. The Neolithic period is represented by a single serrated blade from a later ditch. The earliest feature is a single Beaker period pit. There is more intensive activity in the Late Bronze Age, with a scatter of pits containing pottery and loomweights. Located within the northern part of the site are a series of ditches forming parts of a field system attributed to the Romano-British period. This landscape is then overlaid by ditches forming part of the post-medieval field system, much of which appears to have been backfilled in the modern era, with the introduction of large scale farming methods.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Planning Consent (B/98/0334) has been granted by Suffolk County Council for an extension at Layham Quarry (NGR: TM 0103 3944, Fig 1). As a condition of the permission an archaeological watching brief was required following a brief issued by Edward Martin, Suffolk County Council, Archaeological Services Conservation Team (Martin 1999). A specification was prepared by CgMs Consulting (formerly John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 296/99/003)).

The watching brief was undertaken initially by CgMs Consulting field team Phases 1 to 3 (1999-2003). After that team was disbanded, Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the fieldwork for Phase 4 and the eastern area (2003-2006), still under the management of CgMs Consulting.

CgMs Consulting requested Northamptonshire Archaeology write this summary report of the findings to date. It is not intended as an assessment or a final report on the results of the fieldwork. Upon the completion of fieldwork, final reporting will be undertaken.

1.2 Topography and geology

The quarry extension area (c9.5 ha) is located in the southern part of Layham parish, extending into the northern part of Shelley parish. The central part of the site is located on a spur of glacial sand and gravel (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>) at c56m AOD gently sloping eastwards to c54m AOD.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based archaeological assessment of the site was undertaken by CgMs Consulting in November 1997 (JSAC/296/97/001). This report concluded that there were no known archaeological sites within 1km of the proposed quarry extension area (JSAC 1997). An earlier brief for archaeological evaluation from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (SCCASCT) suggested that from place name evidence (Popes Green Farm and Popes Green Lane) there might have been a medieval settlement within the area (Martin 1998).

In March 1999 a fieldwalking survey was carried out by CgMs Consulting on the area of the proposed quarry extension (JSAC259/99/002). Only ten finds were recovered during the survey, including a single flint scraper and post-medieval pottery, the rest of the finds being ceramic tile.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief as outlined in the brief from SCCASCT (Martin 1999) were:

...to enable the identification and evaluation of potentially, significant archaeological features or deposits

...to identify, excavate and record features and deposits of lesser archaeological significance.

The academic objectives were to be centred upon the high potential for the site to produce evidence for settlement and funerary activities from prehistoric through to medieval times

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

A watching brief was maintained between 1999 and 2006 during the topsoil and subsoil strips in advance of the quarrying (Fig 2). This has demonstrated that the landscape was utilised from at least the Bronze Age up to the present day.

3.1 Early Bronze Age pit

A single pit (69) (Figs 2 and 3) can be dated to the early Bronze Age by the presence of a small assemblage of Beaker pottery. The pit was oval in plan with shallow sloping sides.

3.2 Late Bronze Age pits

A further fifteen pits, (9, 10, 13, 23, 27, 37, 55, 87, 89, 98, 100, 108, 209, 219 and 225), were present. They appeared to form small clusters with one in the south-western corner of the Phase 1 area, consisting of five pits, and one in the eastern part of the same area, comprising three pits. In the north-western part of the Phase 2 area there was another possible cluster of nine pits. These pits produced small assemblages of pottery that are all in the same fabric types, indicating that the pits are all closely contemporary. The decorative style and the presence of the cylindrical loomweights suggest that they can be dated to the late Bronze Age.

The excavated pits varied from *c*0.3m to *c*1.4m in diameter and were *c*0.02m to *c*0.4m deep. They have probably all been truncated by later ploughing.

A single ditch [1004] in the eastern extension area contained within its upper fill Bronze Age pottery.

Within the eastern part of the Phase 2 extension area there was an undated pit thought by the excavator to be a possible cremation [122], from which eight fragments of burnt bone were recovered.

3.3 Post-medieval field boundaries

The latest activity on the site comprised a number of post-medieval ditches which appear on the 1839 Tithe map (JSAC 1997 map 2). Finds from these features indicate that they were backfilled relatively recently, perhaps consolidating the agricultural landscape into a smaller number of larger fields.

3.4 Undated features

Within the north-western and north-eastern part of the Phase 3 quarry extension area, there were a series of undated shallow ditches. These formed small field enclosures thought by the excavator to be of Romano-British date, although no finds were recovered. The north-western group consisted of a pair of parallel ditches aligned north-east to south-west, with a small enclosure c10m by c9m joining the southern ditch. Immediately to the south-east of this there was a further group of undated ditches and pits also thought by the excavator to be of Romano-British date. The eastern group consisted of three north-south aligned ditches with a single east-west ditch dividing the area into four possible rectilinear enclosures.

There were two undated ditches in the eastern part of the Phase 1 quarry extension area, two in the Phase 4 area and two in the northern part of the eastern extension area. Scattered across the extension area were a number of undated pits.

4 THE FINDS

4.1 The flint Andy Chapman

A total of 39 pieces of flint was recovered.

Neolithic flint

From the stratified assemblage there is only a single piece that can be assigned a specific date. From ditch [144] there is a thin blade, 34mm long by 24mm wide, which had been struck from a well-prepared blade core in an orange-brown vitreous flint. The piece has been utilised, and along one edge there are possible worn-down remnants of former serrations. Such serrated blades are characteristic of earlier Neolithic flint assemblages.

The Beaker pit [69]

The five flints from the pit that produced the small assemblage of Beaker pottery are a mixed group. There is a chunk of burnt flint and a burnt flake. There is a small fresh flake, in a grey vitreous flint with a light brown cortex, and there are two flakes with patinated surfaces. None of the pieces has been retouched or utilised.

Late Bronze Age pits

Pit [98] contained the largest single group of flints (nine) as well as late Bronze Age pottery. Two pieces are burnt. The other seven pieces are all mottled light to dark-grey granular flint, some with white cortex surviving. All of the flints are of fresh appearance, and none have been

retouched or utilised. They comprise a series of waste flakes, varying from 20-60mm in length, and of irregular forms. One of the larger flakes has come from a core with two opposed platforms. It is suggested that this group is all debitage from the working of a single core, although there are no joins, and they were probably deposited soon after they were struck.

The remainder of the stratified flint, a further seven pieces, were recovered as single items in pits, many of which also produced pottery of late Bronze Age date. These comprise miscellaneous flakes, although in three instances, pits [91], [209] and [213], the flakes have the same fresh appearance as those from pit [98].

Unstratified material

There are 17 pieces that are unstratified. These largely comprise assorted flakes, some of which are patinated, rolled and edge damaged. However, the group does include one piece with miscellaneous retouch on one edge, a discoidal scraper, 36mm in diameter, and a damaged and rolled piece that appears to have been a hollowed end-scraper.

4.2 The prehistoric pottery Andy Chapman

A total of 3.93kg of prehistoric pottery, approximately 299 sherds, was recovered from some 23 contexts (Appendix 1). The pottery has been weighed and counted, and an overview of the fabrics and forms present is provided below in two major chronological groups.

Early Bronze Age, Beaker pottery

There is a group of nine small Beaker body sherds from the fill of pit [69]. The variable colour and condition of the sherds suggest that they come from at least three separate vessels. The best-preserved sherd is 5mm thick, and the fabric contains sparse small pieces of flint, with a few measuring 1-2mm, and sparse small pellets of red to brown grog. The decoration is comb impressed and includes a narrow band, 9mm wide, with lined borders flanking a ladder motif. Below this there is part of a broader zone that probably comprised triangular panels infilled with horizontal lines of comb decoration. The other sherds are either plain or have faint remnants of comb-impressed decoration too incomplete to interpret.

As all of the sherds come from a single pit, this appears to be a single isolated feature.

Late Bronze Age pottery

This group accounts for the majority of the assemblage and comes from pits quite widely scattered across the area investigated. The fabric of the coarse ware vessels in particular is quite distinctive and consistent across the groups from separate pits, leaving little doubt that the material is closely contemporary in date. The finer vessels show a slightly wider diversity in surface treatment, vessel forms and decoration. The majority of the material comprises plain body sherds offering few clues to date. However, the association with cylindrical loomweights and the combination of thick-walled storage jars and finer vessels decorated by fingernail and fingertip impressions indicates that the material may be assigned to the Post Deverul-Rimbury tradition, probably dating to the late Bronze Age, although an overlap into the early Iron Age is not impossible.

On the basis of scanning the material, the fabrics and forms can be divided into two distinct groups:

- 1) Thick-walled vessels, up to 12mm thick, which contain dense large inclusions of angular flint, with individual fragments measuring up to 5mm, which often erupt from the vessel surface. These typically have a grey core and inner surface, and an oxidised external surface, light brown to bright orange-brown in colour, although some are oxidised to a bright orange throughout. These vessels are poorly finished, sometimes displaying shallow, grooved finger-marks on the external surface. A few heavily-gritted sherds are thinner-walled, at 6mm thick, perhaps suggesting that there are some smaller vessels in the coarse fabric.
- 2) Thin-walled vessels, up to 6mm thick, which contain sparse small inclusions of crushed flint, with individual pieces measuring no more than 1-2mm, and typically less. These vessels are typically well finished, with well-smoothed internal and external surfaces. They have grey cores and internal surfaces, and the external surfaces are also most often grey, although some vessels have brown or mottled grey-brown external surfaces. A few sherds contain larger flint inclusions, but still have well-smoothed surfaces.

The greater part of the assemblage comprises plain body sherds, and only a few vessels provide diagnostic features. The fill (99) of pit [98], contained a small primary assemblage that contained much of the rim from a large open jar (rim diameter 350mm), with an everted rim with an internal bevel decorated with closely-spaced fingernail impressions (Plate 1). This vessel was thinner-walled than most of the coarseware, at 5-8mm thick, but was poorly finished with an uneven surface that contains horizontal finger-mark striations. From the same group there is also a smaller bowl, which is undecorated and has a simple rounded rim. Vessels from two separate pits have stabbed decoration on the necks, while another has deep finger-tip

impressions on the neck.

A few contexts produced coarseware vessels containing sparse inclusions of flint, which are quite different in appearance from the bulk of the assemblage. This material possesses few diagnostic features, but the presence of a T-shaped rim and a sherd with a lightly scored surface might suggest that these particular contexts are of early to middle Iron Age date. Two of the pits, [10] and [13], producing this material lay close together in the southern part of the site.

4.3 Other ceramic finds

Loomweights

Parts of three cylindrical fired-clay loomweights which are characteristic of the Bronze Age, were recovered (Plate 2).

Just over half of a loomweight came from the fill (28) of pit [27], within a pit group at the southern end of the site. The fabric contains sparse large pieces of angular flint, measuring up to 12mm. The core is brown and the smoothed external surfaces are patchy, varying from red to brown and grey-black. The cylinder stands 80mm high and is 110mm in diameter. The longitudinal perforation is 20mm in diameter. The surviving portion weighs 0.94kg and when complete it would have weighed c1.5-1.6kg.

The fill (88) of [87], contained fragments from two fired-clay weights; both in similar fabrics to the weight from pit [27]. There are fragments from a cylindrical weight that was c120mm in diameter, with a longitudinal perforation 20mm in diameter, the height cannot be estimated. There is also a half of a small cylindrical weight, 80mm long by 60mm in diameter, which had a transverse perforation 25mm from the slightly narrower end. The surviving half weighs 253g, and the full weight would have been c500g.

Spindle whorl

The fill (99) of feature [98], which produced a primary pottery group, also contained half of a ceramic spindle whorl (Plate 2). The fabric contains sparse small pieces of flint, and the curvature of the spindle whorl indicates that it was fashioned from a re-used body sherd, 6mm thick, from a vessel in the finer of the pottery fabrics, black on one face and orange on the other. It is 45mm in diameter, and the central perforation, 5.5mm in diameter, has been drilled from both sides so that it is countersunk on both faces.

4.4 Quern Andy Chapman

Part of a single quern was recovered, but no context data is recorded. This comprises part of the circumference, 25%, of an upper stone, 250mm in diameter and 35mm thick, in lava, probably imported from the Eiffel region of Germany. The grinding surface displays slightly oblique radial grooves, and is only lightly worn. There are vertical tool marks around the edge and the top of the stone is roughly flat with dimpled tool marks. It is probably of Roman date, but lava querns were also being imported through much of the Saxon and medieval periods.

5 ANIMAL BONE Karen Deighton

Two fragments of badly abraded large mammal bone (e.g. horse/cow size) were recovered from ditch 25.

A single fragment of badly abraded large mammal long bone shaft was recovered from Context 110.

Seven fragments of calcined bone were recovered from pit 122. Three fragments appear to form part of the vault of a skull. Unfortunately none of the fragments are diagnostic and consequently species cannot be determined. Furthermore it is impossible to state if the bone resulted from a cremation or is the result of refuse disposal.

6 CONCLUSION

The watching brief was successful in demonstrating that the landscape had been utilised from the Neolithic to the present day. The Neolithic period is represented by a single serrated blade from a later ditch. The earliest feature is a single Beaker period pit. There is more intensive activity in the late Bronze Age, with a scatter of pits containing pottery and loomweights. The consistency of form and fabrics suggest that this activity was short lived. It would be desirable to date this episode more precisely by radiocarbon dating. The prehistoric activity is located within the central part of the quarry on land that was slightly higher than its surroundings.

Located within the northern part of the site were a series of ditches forming parts of a field system attributed to the Romano-British period by the excavator, although there is no direct dating evidence.

This landscape is then overlaid by ditches forming what essentially is the post-medieval field

system, much of which appears to have been backfilled in the modern era, with the introduction of large scale farming methods.

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APPENDIX 1

Quantification of prehistoric pottery

Year Context/feature	Sherd count	Weight (g)	Comments
2000 (3)/ Pit [4]	Coarse 14 Fine 11	361	Mixed coarse and fine ware sherds. All plain body sherds, none diagnostic
2000 (9)/ Pit [10]	28	291	Finer fabric, T-shaped rim and plain body. Coarser ware, plain body sherds and base fragment. Dark fabrics, less flint, may be Iron Age
2000 (13)/ Pit [14]	11	73	1 body sherd possible scored ware. Similar to (9), may be Iron Age
2000 (23)/ Pit [24]	1	5	Plain body, few inclusions. Iron Age?
2000 (27)/ Pit [28]	Coarse 16	296	Plain body sherds, fragment of base. Concave neck with deep finger-tip impressions. (Cylindrical loomweight)
2000 (37)/ Pit [38]	Coarse 1	42	Coarse fabric but thin-walled, 6mm. Upright rounded rim with shallow finger-tip impressions below rim (illustrate)
2000 (55)/ Pit [56]	Coarse 6 Fine 2	52	Plain body sherds
2000 (69)/ Pit [70]	8	25	Beaker sherds. Probably from more than one vessel
2001 (88)/ Pit [87]	Coarse 3	22	Coarse, everted rim stabbed decoration on neck (similar to (109)). (Cylindrical loomweight)
2001 (90)/ Pit [89]	4	30	Plain body sherds. Iron Age?
2001 (92)/ Pit [91]	Coarse 28	6	Plain body and base sherds, c 175mm diam.
2001 (99)/ Pit [98]	Coarse c54	962	Rim of jar with everted rim with internal bevel decorated with fingernail impressions. Bowl with rounded rim. Shouldered bowl. (all three to be illustrated)
2001 (109)/ Pit [108]	Coarse 20 Fine 1	603	Plain body and base sherds, 110mm diameter. Everted rim with stabbed decoration on neck and Simple rounded rim (Similar to (88)). Fine (almost burnished), plain rounded rim
2001 (208)/ Pit [207]	Coarse 16		Plain body sherds
2002 (202)/ Pit [201]	Coarse 1	40	Plain body sherd
2002 (204)/ Pit [203]	Fine 1	6	Plain body sherd
2002 (209)/ Pit [210]	Coarse 3	11	Plain body sherds
2002 (211)/ Pit [212]	Coarse 9	22	Coarse, plain body sherds
2002 (213)/ Pit [214]	Coarse 17 Fine 4	182	Plain body sherds. Fine ware rim (upright, rounded)
2002 (219)/ Pit [220]	Coarse 8	41	Plain body sherds
2002 (225)/ Pit [226]	Coarse 9	77	Coarse, plain body sherds (orange throughout)
2006 (1008)/ Ditch[1004]	Fine 3	27	Black, burnished, plain body sherds
(1009)/ ditch [1004]	Coarse 20	164	Plain body sherds (orange extn'l, brown intrn'l)
TOTAL	299	3768	

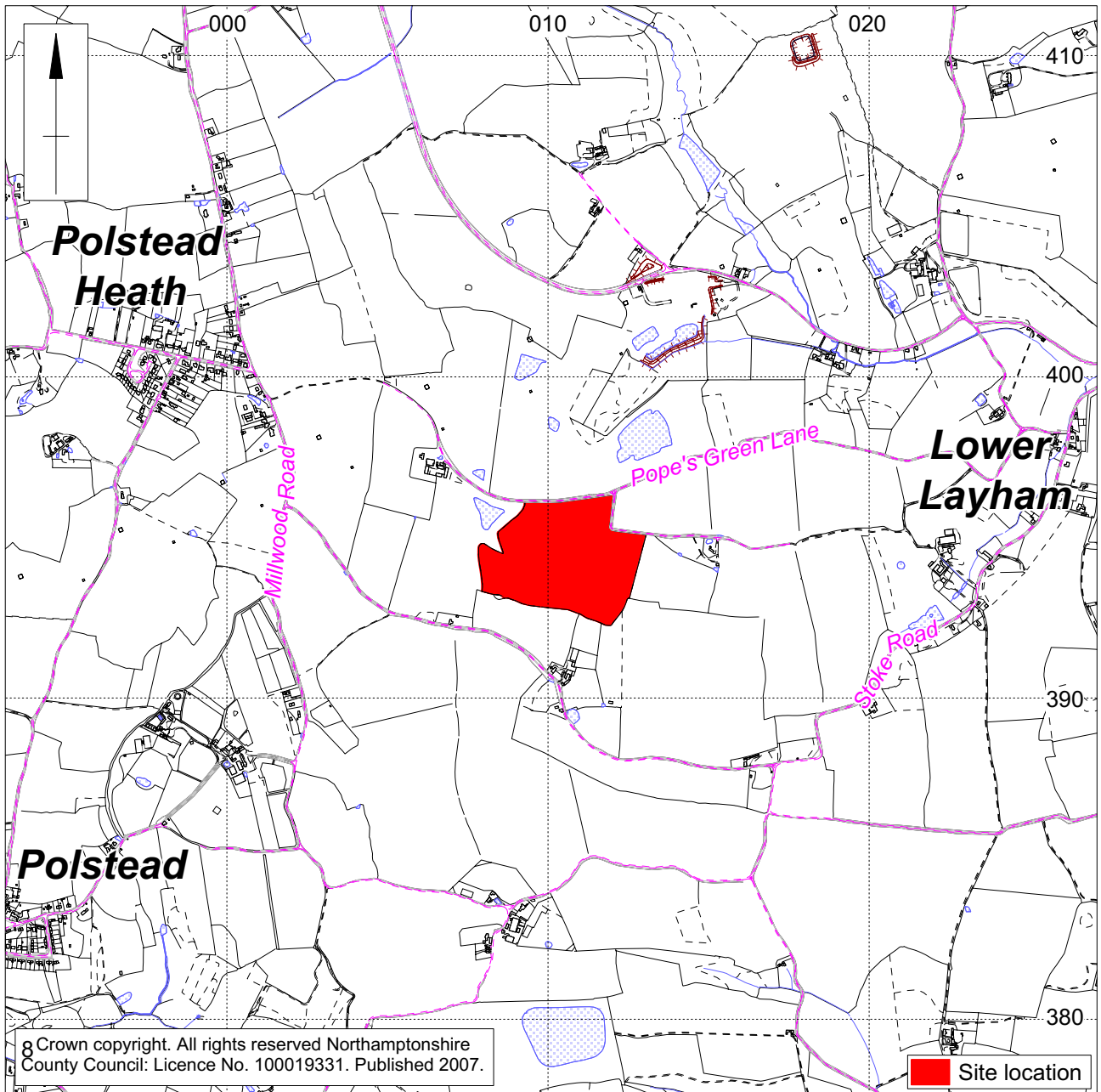
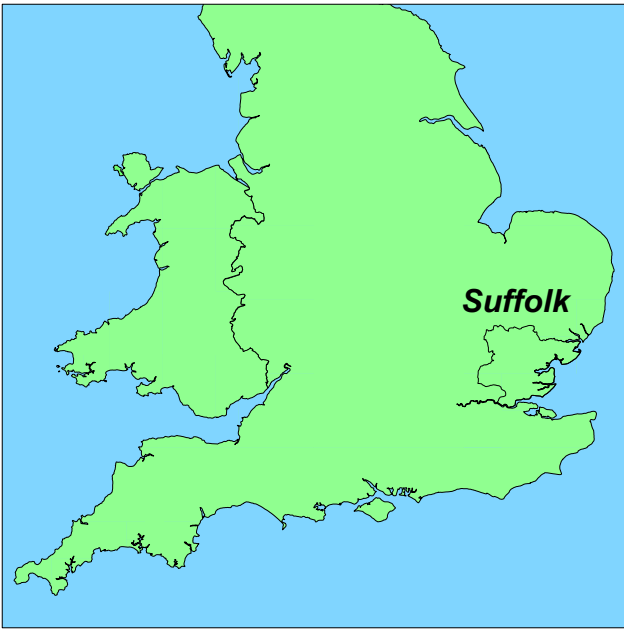
PLATES



Plate 1: Late Bronze Age pottery; large jar with finger-nail decorated rim, from pit (99)

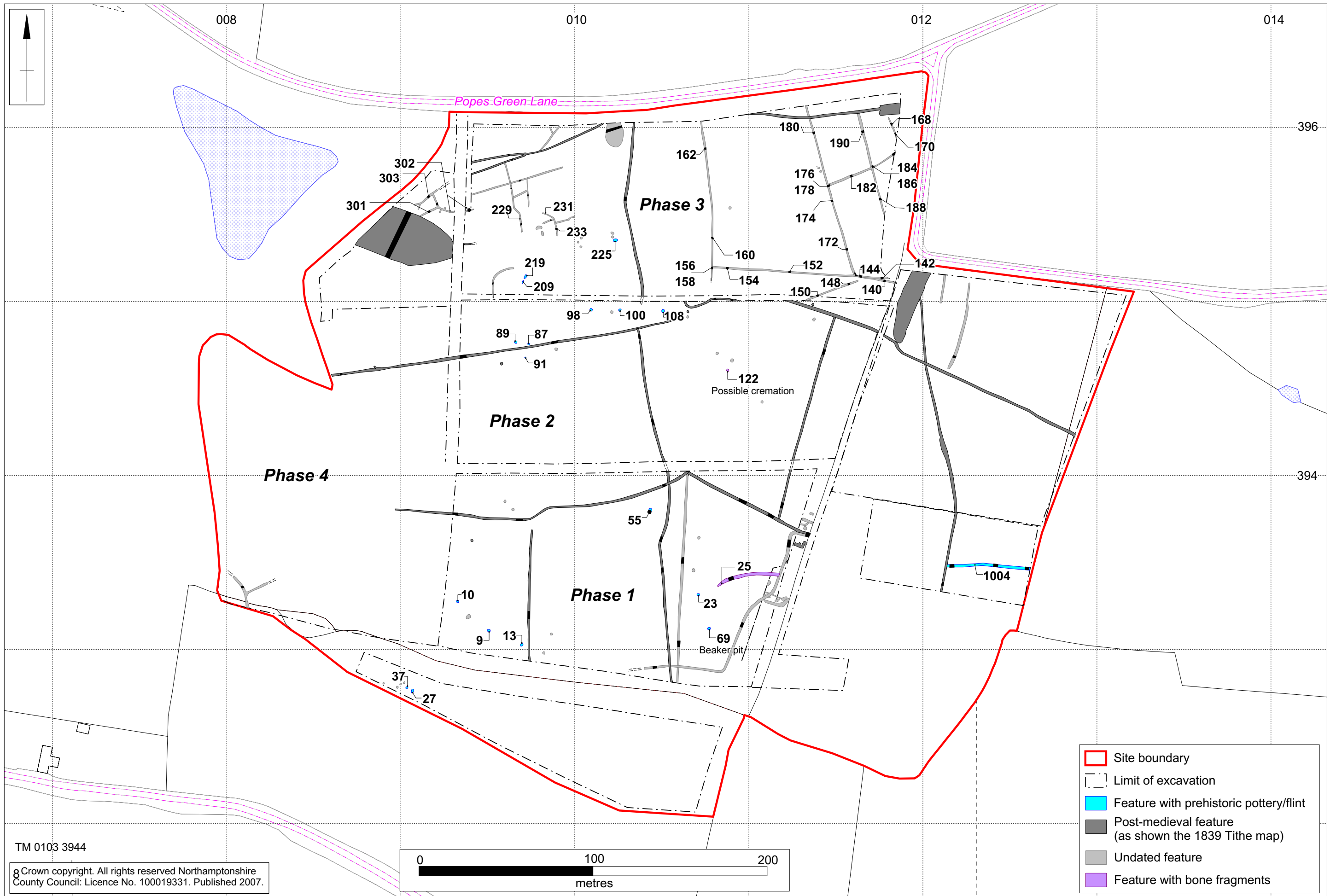


Plate 2: Cylindrical fired-clay loomweights from pit [28] (left), and context (88) (right), and spindle whorl fashioned from pottery sherd, from pit (99)



Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

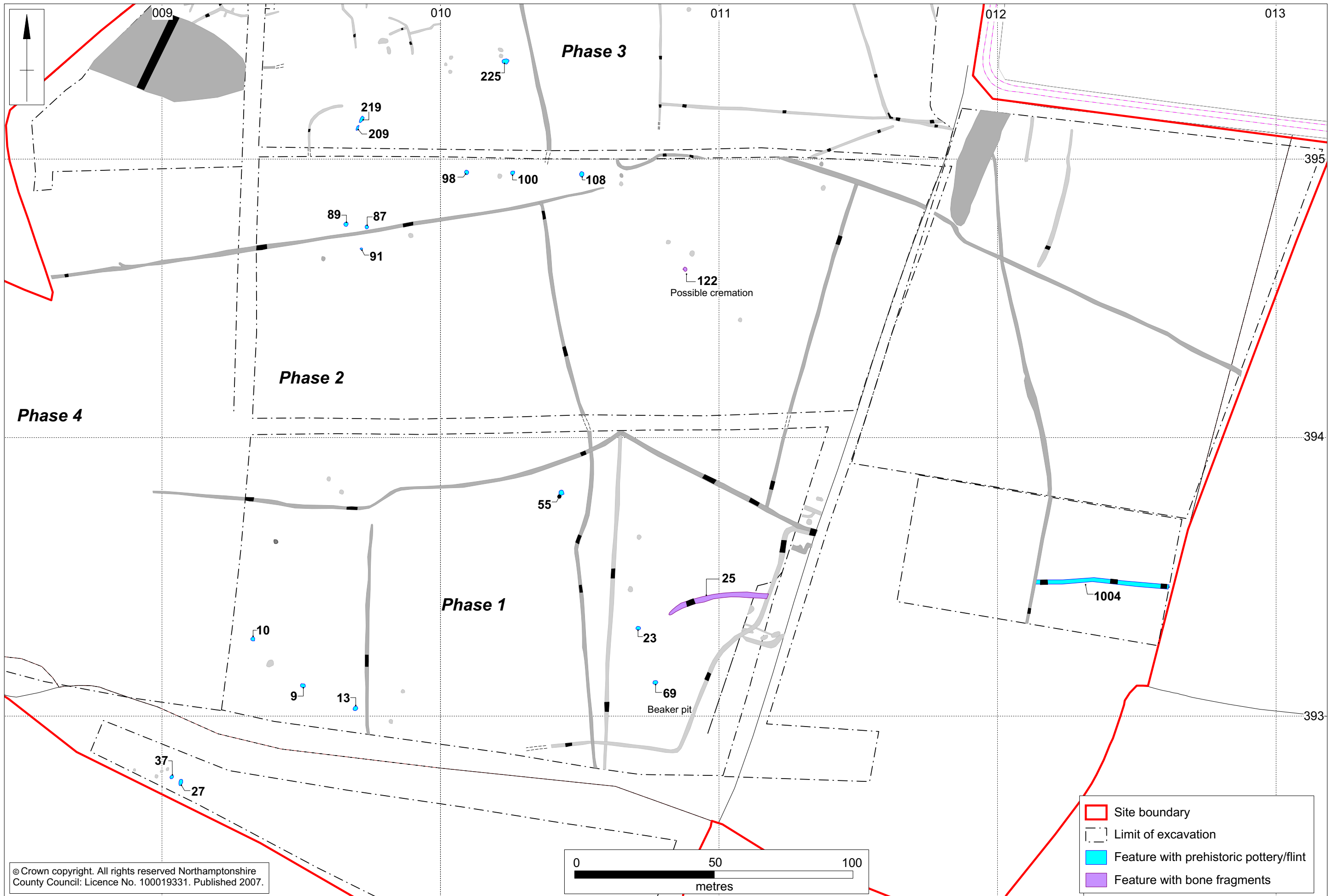


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Scale 1:2000

General site plan Fig 2



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Scale 1:1250

Prehistoric features Fig 3