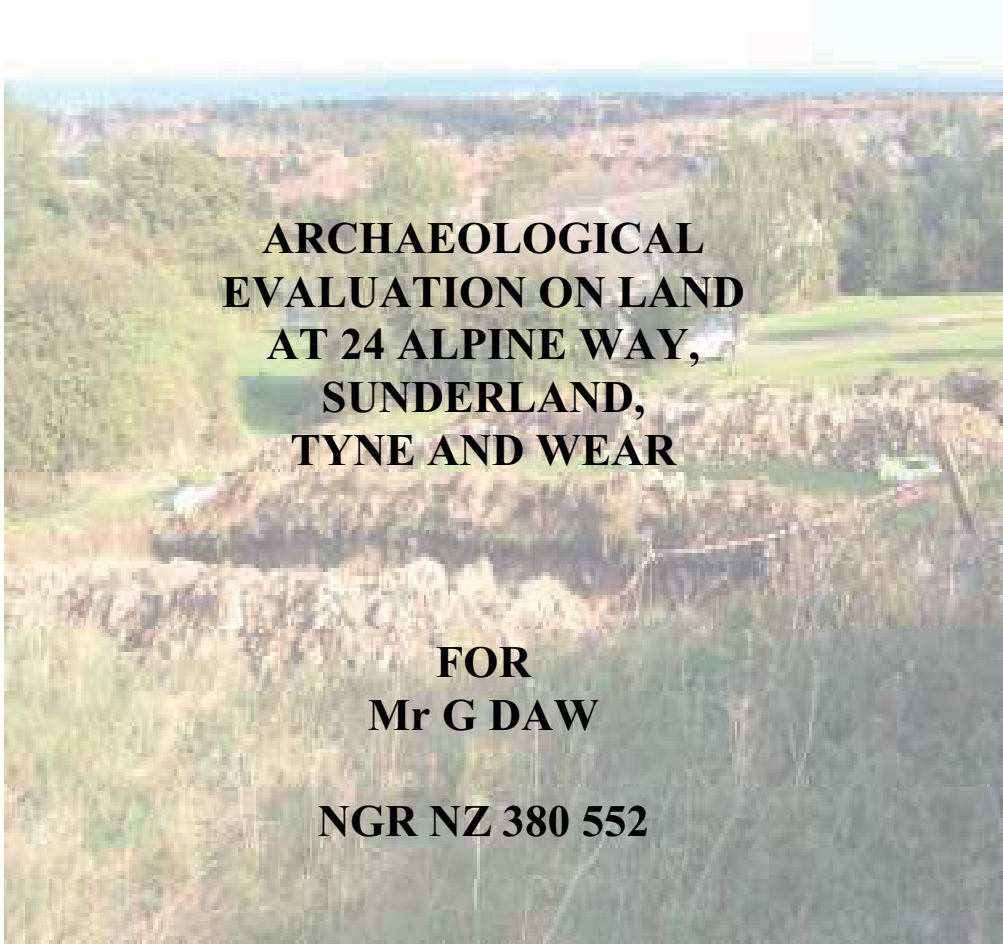

NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Client Report No. CP/558/07



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION ON LAND
AT 24 ALPINE WAY,
SUNDERLAND,
TYNE AND WEAR**

**FOR
Mr G DAW**

NGR NZ 380 552

Nicola Gaskell, BA (Hons)
North Pennines Archaeology Ltd
Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre
Nenthead
Alston
Cumbria CA9 3PD
Tel: (01434) 382045
Fax: (01434) 382294
Email: info@nparchaeology.co.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2007, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological field evaluation on land at 24 Alpine Way, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear (NGR NZ 380 552). The site is situated in the present garden of 24 Alpine Way, built approximately 30 years ago, and is towards the south-western extent of the City of Sunderland. The work was commissioned by Garry Daw, the land owner, in order to fulfil an archaeological brief issued by Jennifer Morrison, Tyne and Wear Archaeology Officer. The subsequent archaeological evaluation consisted of the excavation of three trenches, and was required as part of a planning application submitted by the landowner for the construction of a single residential building. It was felt by the Tyne and Wear Archaeology Officer that any development works have the potential to directly impinge on any remaining features of a prehistoric nature that have been previously located by a geophysical survey undertaken on the land by Archaeological Services Durham University in 2001 (Still 2001), that accompanied an earlier desk-based study of the area completed in 2000 by Geoquest Associates (Newton and Noel 2000), which appeared to show a double ditch arrangement encircling the uppermost part of Humbledon Hill. The construction of a reservoir in 1873 on the top of Humbledon Hill destroyed a Bronze Age barrow, leading to the modern day assessments of the hill as a whole.

The objectives of Trenches 1 and 2 was to locate the presence of any archaeological features and to ascertain their character, nature, function, date depth and degree of survival. The trenches were strategically positioned over certain anomalies revealed by the geophysical survey of 2001; namely two ditch type features and other isolated 'spots'. These two trenches also relate to part of the development footprint of the proposed building. Trench 3 was located along the alignment of the proposed new driveway for the building, but this trench did not correspond to any known or suspected features (Figure 1).

The results of the evaluation revealed apparently well-preserved deposits of archaeological interest relating to the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. Within Trench 1 four features were investigated and recorded, the most northerly (and lowest down the hill slope) being a 3m wide and up to 1m deep ditch containing Iron Age pottery, a flint piece and animal bone, some of which was burnt. South of this, and upslope, was a stone bank, constructed out of limestone, which is the local substrate, measuring up to 0.80m in height. Further south was a narrower ditch, running in a WNW-ESE direction through the trench. This too contained animal bone and Late Bronze Age pottery. The most southerly feature in Trench 1 was a semi-circular, stone filled feature, possibly being a ring cairn burial monument. From this a flint nodule was recovered, that had been struck, proving the constructed nature of the feature. This feature extended under the southeastern trench edge, so its full diameter was not ascertained.

Within Trench 2 two features were evaluated, the most northern feature appeared to be a continuation of the ditch seen in Trench 1 and from this feature a piece of Iron Age pottery was recovered and what appeared to be a flint blade tip. The stone bank seen in Trench 1 also continued into Trench 2, although this had no associated features or artefacts with it. Within Trench 3 no features of archaeological interest were recorded; the trench was not positioned over any putative features highlighted in the 2001 geophysical survey by ASUD and so proved to be a 'control' trench, highlighting the natural stratigraphy of the area.

Layers and features of archaeological interest were found in two of the three trenches, in a good state of preservation. The date range returned for the sherds of pottery recovered was worthy of note, extending from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age, exceeding expectations. The

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

variability of these pieces helps to plot the evolution and continued usage of the site in the later prehistoric period. The present scheme of works has proved sufficient to be able to date the layers and to explain the features satisfactorily. The proliferation of other sites used in a similar manner to Humbleton Hill within a 10km radius mean that this site is part of a wider network across the region and so should not be viewed in isolation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr Garry Daw for commissioning the project, and for his assistance throughout the fieldwork.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to Jennifer Morrison, Tyne and Wear Archaeology Officer for her help during this project.

The evaluation was undertaken by Joseph Jackson and Claire Mason, Site Assistants, and Martin Sowerby, Project Supervisor. Day to day running of the project was the responsibility of Nicola Gaskell, Project Supervisor. The report was written by Nicola Gaskell, who also produced the drawings. The initial flint finds work was undertaken in-house by the author, the animal bone and environmental samples were analysed by Patricia Shaw, NPA Environmental Supervisor and the prehistoric ceramic was analysed by Carol Allen, independent pottery expert. The project was managed by Matt Town, Senior Project Officer for NPA Ltd, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In October 2007, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological field evaluation on land at 24 Alpine Way, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear (NGR NZ 380 552) (Figure 1). The plot of land is currently in use as a private garden, covered by a lawn. It is adjacent to and immediately north of a disused reservoir on the summit of Humbledon Hill on the southwestern outskirts of the City of Sunderland. The work was commissioned by Garry Daw, the land owner in order to fulfil an archaeological brief issued by Jennifer Morrison, Archaeology Officer to the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team in response to a planning application by Mr Daw to construct a private residence.
- 1.1.2 The field evaluation comprised the excavation of three linear trial trenches in order to provide a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals. The principal objective of this evaluation was to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed.
- 1.1.3 This report sets out the results of the work in the form of a short document outlining the findings, followed by a statement of the archaeological potential of the area, an assessment of the impact of the proposed development, and recommendations for further work.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Garry Daw for an archaeological field evaluation on land at 24 Alpine Way, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, (Town 2007). This design was in accordance with a brief prepared by Jennifer Morrison, Archaeology Officer for the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team. (Morrison 2007).
- 2.1.2 Following acceptance of the project design, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 2.2.1 The field evaluation consisted of the excavation of three trial trenches in order to produce a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals. The size of the trial trenches was defined by the requirement that 100m² of the total area planned for development should be evaluated and their locations were determined by the findings produced in a previous desk-based assessment that covered the area (Newton and Noel 2000) and a follow-up geophysical survey of 2001 (Still 2001) which highlighted many potential archaeological features within the development footprint. In summary, the main objectives of the evaluation were:
- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they are observed;
 - to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
 - to recover artefactual material, especially where useful for dating purposes;
 - to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3 SITE SPECIFIC AIMS

- 2.3.1 The main site-specific aim of the evaluation was defined as follows:
- *'if there is a prehistoric site here it would be of national importance and would certainly be worthy of preservation in-situ (reference PPG16 and UDP Policy B12) if it is well preserved and may also be worthy of Scheduling'* (Morrison 2007).

- 2.3.2 A total of three trenches, two measuring 20m x 2m at base, and one trench measuring 10m x 2m at base were excavated to record the presence or absence of archaeological features and to characterise the nature and significance of any recorded features. The trench was excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, to the natural substrate. The trench was then manually cleaned where possible and any putative archaeological features investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the Excavation manual (Giecco 2001).
- 2.3.3 Photography was undertaken using Canon EOS 100 and EOS 300V Single Lens Reflex (SLR) cameras. A photographic record was made using digital photography, 200 ISO Black and White Print and Colour Slide film.
- 2.3.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (IFA 2002).

2.4 ARCHIVE

- 2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design, and in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (1991). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository and a copy of the report given to the County Historic Environment Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA 07 HHS-A.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Sunderland is situated on the north-eastern coast of England just to the south-east of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The site under investigation covers approximately 480m², and lies entirely in the garden of number 24 Alpine Way. The plot is delimited on the south-western side by the retaining wall of a late 19th century reservoir and on all other sides by those areas of garden not purchased for the purposes of the proposed development. The name of Humbleton, the hill on which the development is proposed, has its origins in Old English, being a combination of *Hamel* and *Dun*. Written as Hameldun in 1170, it basically means crooked or scarred hill (Mills 1991); although what aspect of the hill caused it to be called 'scarred' remains unknown (Geoquest 2000).
- 3.1.2 The first mention of Humbleton was in the book '*A History of Sunderland*' by WC Mitchell in 1919. In it he writes; '*the first prehistoric grave of which we have any record was discovered on Humbleton Hill on 7th September 1750*', although there is no indication from where this information arose nor does he credit any source (*op cit*).
- 3.1.3 Much of our knowledge of Humbleton Hill comes from the records of various archaeologists and antiquarians who have been involved with the previous finds in the locality. Some is from local records about the new sewerage and water systems being built in the area. An article in the Sunderland Times in May 1873 stated: '*The summit of Humbleton Hill has been chosen as the site of a high level reservoir..and in the course of the needful excavations for the works several very interesting remains were discovered. The bones of two skeletons were dug up 10 feet from the surface. They are supposed to be of Anglo-Saxon origin. Two urns have been found which were in an inverted position and filled with bones broken into fragments the largest of which does not exceed six inches in length. These urns are supposed to be of ancient British origin, belonging to the Brigantes. The bones have been subject to fire but the urns are apparently only sun-dried and though of graceful outline are but rudely ornamented by a knife or sharp fingernail*' (*op cit*).
- 3.1.4 Various burials from the Neolithic and Bronze Age have been noted in localities around Humbleton Hill. In 1814 burial urns were found on Tunstall Hill, approximately 1.5km to the east of Humbleton. They were classified as 'ancient British' by the Reverend Doctor William Greenwell. In 1876 on Steeple Hill, less than 3km to the south of Humbleton, a cist burial was discovered. The cist was four feet by two and a half feet and contained a contracted burial and food vessels. Also associated with the burial were the burnt bones of a child and the skeleton of a woman. At Copt Hill in Houghton-le-Spring, less than 5km to the southwest of Humbleton Hill a multi period discovery was made. In 1877 burials ranging from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age and up to the Anglo Saxon period were uncovered. Finds included a cist and associated burials, bones, both burnt and un-burnt and a cinerary urn. A further site at Hastings Hill, 2.5km to the southwest of Humbleton and excavated in 1911 held a barrow with numerous urns, skeletons (human and animal), cist burials, flint implements and an antler pick among many other artefacts (*op cit*).

- 3.1.5 Although many of these finds were made on other hills than Humbledon it should be noted that the height and panoramic views to and from them are in many ways similar to the situation on Humbledon Hill. In fact, it is a little higher than many of the other hills and this may have given it, in funerary rituals of the prehistoric period, even greater importance. It is known that many of the burials on other hills are associated with barrows or mounds in evidence (*op cit*).
- 3.1.6 In general the land use history of Humbledon Hill seems to have been little changed over many years. In the Neolithic and Bronze Age, when populations were relatively small it was easier to use low lying land of high productivity than to attempt to cultivate high land. Humbledon Hill, along with other hills in the locality, can be assumed from the burials discovered on it to have had some ritual purpose. As time passed and burial customs changed this use was forgotten and it became fallow land. The succeeding lack of agricultural activity on it in the following centuries (the hill itself may have been surplus to agrarian requirements and used for rough grazing) may have helped to preserve the archaeology on the site (*op cit*).
- 3.1.7 The word barrow means a mound of earth or stones erected over the bones of one or more human beings. The term *cairn* is used for barrows composed entirely of stones. The terms *ring-barrow* and *ring-cairn* are used for a type of monument recently identified mainly in Scotland and Wales with a few in the highland parts of England, comprising a circle of earth or stones enclosing a flat open area containing interments. They are easily confused with barrows robbed for building and other materials, and in some instances they may be barrows which were never completed (Grinsell 1979).
- 3.1.8 The mortuary behaviour of the Bronze Age in the northeast is also characterised by a diversity of monumental remains, particular within cairns. Prehistoric cairns were especially susceptible to damage by early antiquarians. While some workers at least documented which cairns and barrows they investigated, many more have been entered without any record. Simple stone cairns are recorded in a variety of shapes, including round, sub-circular and pear shaped. While many stone cairns are undoubtedly related to field clearance, a significant number appear to have been used for burial (Petts and Gerrard 2006).
- 3.1.9 A number of ring cairns are known from the northeast although these are not all particularly common. There are several clusters including one on Barningham Moor, another in the northern edge of the Cheviots, and a few between the Coquet and the A68. Ring cairns can be difficult to recognise and they may be mistaken for hut circles, stone circles and robbed out stone cairns (Frodsham 1995).
- 3.1.10 A recently excavated site at the Vaux Brewery, Sunderland, less than 2km to the northeast of Humbledon Hill revealed significant archaeological remains within an enclosure overlooking the River Wear including pits, postholes, ditches and ploughmarks, many containing pottery, worked flint and biological material. The length of activity at the site extended from the Mesolithic to the Late Bronze Age / early Iron Age (Allen and Glover 2004).
- 3.1.11 In the northeast of England the strong round barrow tradition of the early third millennium continued after 2500BC, but with a tendency for single, rather than multiple inhumations (Darvill 1987).

3.2 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 3.2.1 The previous works undertaken on the site include a desk-based assessment carried out by Geoquest Associates in 2000 (Newton and Noel 2000), which concluded that any development on Humbleton Hill would likely impact upon undiscovered archaeology, expected to be of a Neolithic or Bronze Age date. A geophysical survey undertaken by Archaeological Services University of Durham in 2001 (Still 2001) highlighted the archaeological potential of Humbleton Hill by showing evidence of the previously undetected features that still existed under the present ground surface, mostly in the form of a double-ditched enclosure encircling the top of the hill and isolated areas of further discreet features, possibly pits or burial cairns. In light of these discoveries an archaeological evaluation on the western side of the hill was attempted in July 2006 by Tyne and Wear Museums, funded by a different developer, however, this was cut short by being asked by the landowner to leave before the evaluation had concluded (Morrison 2007). Two sherds of pottery were recovered from the trenches and looked prehistoric in date but they were removed by the landowner and therefore not subject to specialist analysis (*ibid*).

4. EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The machine stripping of the trenches down to the natural substrate, which were subsequently cleaned by hand, permitted an examination of the archaeological remains within the site. The trench location is depicted in Figure 1; plans of Trenches 1 and 2 are depicted in Figures 4 and 5 respectively and drawn sections are on Figure 3 (Appendix 2).

4.2 TRENCH 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 was 20m long by 2m wide and was orientated in a north-northeast, south-southwest direction (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4; Plates 8). The trench was positioned to locate features highlighted in the geophysical survey of 2001. The maximum excavated depth of the trench was 0.70m to the base with a further 0.70m to the bottom of features encountered. In total four features of archaeological interest were investigated.

4.2.2 The natural substrate **(113)** consisted of moderately well compacted pale creamy limestone that was in the process of degrading. The pieces of limestone varied in size from small to large, and all were angular or sub-angular in shape. Cutting into this natural layer were three features of archaeological interest. The most northerly within the trench was ditch **[108]** (Plate 19) which measured up to 2.90m in width and up to 0.80m in depth (also seen in Trench 2). Within the ditch was four separate fills, distinguishable during the excavation of the feature and seen in the resulting section. The primary fill was **(114)**, firmly compacted dark brown sandy-silt clay that contained occasional small sized stone inclusions. The observed extent of this layer was that it reached up to 0.35m in width and 0.10m in thickness. No datable artefacts were recovered from this layer. The secondary fill in this ditch was **(107)** firmly compacted orangey-brown sandy clay that carried inclusions of up to 50% which were large pieces of limestone. From this layer an amount of animal bone was retrieved and a piece of flint, indications of human activity in the vicinity of the hilltop when the ditch was actually open. The maximum width of this layer was observed in the trench section and was 2.38m its maximum thickness was 0.64m. The tertiary deposit in ditch **[108]** was **(106)** orangey-brown coarse sandy clay that was well compacted and had up to 50% medium sized stone inclusions. The layer did not extend across the entire width of the ditch it appeared as though it had been tipped in or accumulated from the higher, southern side of the ditch, not reaching the northern side of the feature. The final fill within the ditch was **(105)** firmly compacted dark reddish brown sandy silt that had frequent inclusions of medium sized stones and reached a maximum thickness of 0.25m. This layer did extend across the width of the trench and over-spilled slightly on the lower, northern side of the feature, this layer contained a piece of prehistoric pottery within it.

4.2.3 The next feature along the trench, approximately 5m to the southwest of ditch **[108]** was **(112)**, a stone built bank (Plate 12) that also occurred in Trench 2, measuring up to 2.20m in width and up to 0.90m in height. The main component of the bank was pieces

of limestone that varied in size from small to large, one of the biggest being 1m in diameter. These were held in place by either the addition or gradual accumulation of degraded topsoil. Within and around the bank there was no clear evidence of either a turf revetment or postholes for a palisade.

- 4.2.4 Approximately 4m to the southwest of **(112)** lay another northwest-southeast aligned ditch **[104]** (Plates 11 and 16). This feature was smaller than **[108]** being only 0.53m in width with a maximum depth of also 0.53m. The ditch contained two fills; the secondary and uppermost fill **(102)** was firmly compacted dark-brown sandy silt that contained occasional medium sized limestone pieces and measured across the width of the ditch and was up to 0.38m thick. From within this context several pieces of animal bone and a piece of prehistoric pottery, possibly Late Bronze Age in origin, were recovered. This overlaid the primary deposit **(103)** which comprised firm light brown sandy clay that had frequent inclusions of large limestone pieces it had a maximum thickness of 0.15m and a width of up to 0.40m as the ditch narrowed slightly towards its base.
- 4.2.5 The most southerly feature recorded within Trench 1 **[111]** (Plates 14 and 15) had ephemeral edges once excavation of it had begun. It was observed on the base of the trench as roughly semi-circular, and extending under the northwest facing section. The visible dimensions of it were 2.40m in width and up to 0.30m in depth. The sides of the cut were almost vertical and the base was very uneven, due to it being straight onto the natural limestone substrate. The uppermost deposit discernable within **[111]** was **(110)**, largely comprising large pieces of limestone rocks with light orangey-brown firmly compacted clay in-between. These stones were piled above the level of the cut within the ground and reached a maximum thickness or height of approximately 0.60m; they extended across the width of the feature. Below **(110)** and forming the primary deposit was **(109)**, firmly compacted light orangey-brown sandy clay that again carried approximately 70% limestone inclusions although these pieces were noticeably smaller than those placed above, they were more restricted in their spread, being only 1.90m across and not reaching the edges of the feature, they were more confined to the middle area. This layer, however, did return a worked flint nodule, an indication of human involvement in the placing of these stones.
- 4.2.6 All of these features were overlaid by **(101)**, the subsoil layer that comprised loosely compacted reddish brown sandy silt that contained up to 20% small sized stone inclusions, all of which were the degrading limestone. At its maximum it measured up to 0.20m in thickness. The final layer was the topsoil or garden layer that constituted loosely compacted dark grey sandy silt that had only occasional inclusions and reached a maximum thickness of 0.25m. It was a well maintained turf layer that made up the garden lawn from this layer a 19th century clay pipe stem was recovered.

4.3 TRENCH 2

- 4.3.1 Trench 2 measured 20m in length and 2m in width and was orientated in a north-northeast, south-southwest direction (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 5; Plate 9). The trench was positioned to locate features highlighted in the geophysical survey of 2001. The maximum excavated depth of the trench was 0.80m outside of any features with an

increased maximum depth to 1.20m within the slot excavated through ditch [205]. Within Trench 2 two features of archaeological interest were recorded.

- 4.3.2 The most northerly feature in the trench was ditch [205] (Plate 18), seemingly on the same alignment as [108] in Trench 1. Its dimensions were recorded as 2.60m in width and 0.80m in depth. It contained three distinct fills, the uppermost being (203) moderately compacted mid greyish-brown silty sand that carried 50-70% small to medium sized sub-rounded and rounded stones that was entirely contained within the cut and had a maximum thickness of 0.65m. Within (203) were a small flint flake, Iron Age prehistoric pottery and animal bone, some of which was burnt. This overlaid both (207) and (204), with (207) being present on the northerly side of the ditch and also partially overlying (204). The secondary fill of (207) was compacted light to mid-brown sandy silt with up to 90% small to large sized stone inclusions and reached up to 0.45m in thickness. It appeared to have slumped or been tipped in from the northern side of the ditch and as such did not extend across the entire width of the feature. The primary fill in the ditch was (204) well compacted light brown sandy silt with approximately 60% very small to small sized stone inclusions, mostly rounded. The maximum depth of this layer was 0.18m.
- 4.3.3 Six metres to the south of the ditch was stone bank (202) (Plate 13), appearing wider and less high than in Trench 1. Its maximum width was measured at 3.05m and its maximum height was 0.40m. The construction of the bank utilised both small and very large boulders of limestone. Due to the natural breaking patterns of the limestone (along planes where different layers were formed) some of the larger stones used in the bank may have been deliberately extracted for the purpose of building. Some of the larger stones were up to 1m in diameter. Again, as in Trench 1, no associated features were noted with the bank, there was no obvious ditch or postholes for a palisade.
- 4.3.4 Both features were overlaid by the subsoil layer (201) that was in evidence across the entire trench. It comprised moderately compacted mid to dark grey silty sand that had 90% stone inclusions varying from small to large in size and from rounded to sub-angular. The subsoil reached a maximum depth of 0.50m and was in turn overlaid by the topsoil (200) that was loosely compacted black silty sand with no more than 30% very small to small sized rounded stone inclusions and a maximum depth of 0.10m that remained consistent throughout the trench. From (200) several pieces of post-medieval pottery and three pieces of clay pipe stem were retrieved.

4.4 TRENCH 3

- 4.4.1 Trench 3 (Figure 1 and Plate 10) measured 10m in length and 2m in width and was orientated in a northwest-southeast direction. The natural substrate (302) was encountered at a depth of only 0.40m and consisted of brecciated limestone, pale creamy white in colour with angular edges where it had broken down into the subsoil layer. The subsoil (301) that overlaid (302) comprised a 90-10% mix of degraded limestone pieces that were all angular or sub-angular and varied in size from small to medium, but were well sorted with the smallest at the top of the layer and the largest at the bottom and dark grey sandy silt that was loosely compacted. It was at its maximum

up to 0.40m thick when observed in the trench section. The uppermost layer in the trench was the topsoil (**300**), the garden turf layer that measured approximately 0.20m thick in the section and comprised very dark grey coarse sandy silt that carried a minimal amount of small angular stone inclusions. Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or layers or datable artefacts, the topsoil was devoid of even late 19th/ early 20th century material, probably because of its intense cultivation as a lawned garden.

5. FINDS

5.1 FINDS

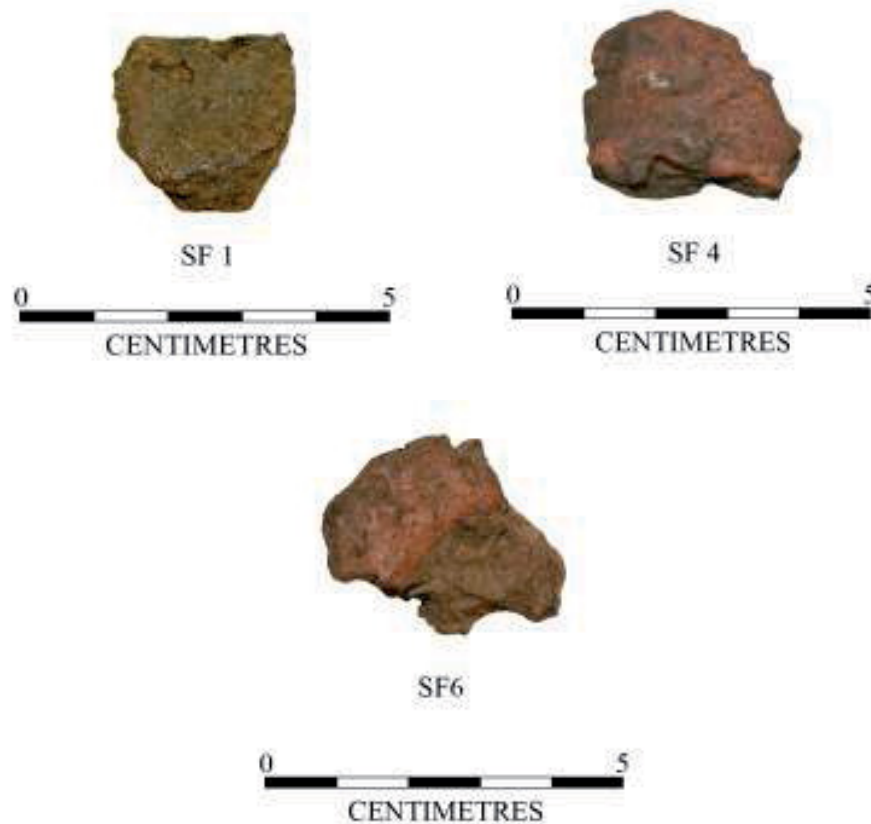
5.1.1 Several contexts returned datable artefacts from two of the three trenches, including pieces of ceramic and flint as well as animal bone. The finds assemblage was cleaned and quantified. The ceramics (pottery and clay) were sent to Dr Carol Allen for independent analysis, whilst the animal bone was assessed by Patricia Shaw and the flint was assessed by the author.

Small Finds No.	Context	Material/Description	Date
1	102	Bronze Age/ Neolithic Pottery	Bronze Age/ Neolithic
2	107	Flint Piece	Bronze Age
3	109	Flint Piece	Bronze Age
4	105	Bronze Age Pottery	Bronze Age
5	203	Flint Blade Tip	Bronze Age
6	203	Bronze Age pottery	Bronze Age

Table 1: Small Finds List

5.1.2 **Pottery:** three sherds of pottery (Plates 1, 2 and 3) and one piece of fired clay were found on the site which are of prehistoric date. The sherds and clay piece came from ditches found on the site. The sherds from contexts **(105) (SF4)** and **(203) (SF5)** have a red burnished finish on the exterior and buff/brown interior and core. The sherds are moderately abraded and well-fired. These sherds came from prehistoric hand-made vessels and are undecorated, and it therefore difficult to be certain of the type. However, the piece from context **(203)** came from the same context as the triangular loom-weight fragment (see below) which is likely to be of Iron Age date, and the sherd is therefore likely also to be Iron Age. The sherd from context **(105)** which is very similar could be of the same date. The colour suggests that these are less likely to be Bronze Age, but without decoration it is difficult to be certain of dating, or to place the material in a specific part of the Iron Age.

5.1.3 The sherd from context **(102) (SF1)** has no decoration and has a simple inturning rounded rim, and is dark brown/black in colour. It is difficult to precisely identify a small undecorated sherd with no associations. However, the sherd is slightly abraded and the profile indicates that this came from a small cup. The bowl-shaped profile suggests that the sherd is likely to be of Bronze Age date, possibly late Bronze Age, approximately around 1000 BC. However, small cups are known in the earlier Bronze Age (see Plates 1, 2 and 3).



Plates 1, 2 and 3: The sherds of prehistoric pottery recovered from the evaluation

- 5.1.4 **Fired Clay:** the clay fragment from context (203) (Plate 4) appears to be the corner of a triangular fired clay loom-weight which has probably broken at the perforation which crosses the corner. The piece is orange/brown in colour, contains some fine quartz pieces as tempering material and weighs 55g. It is broken and slightly abraded. Similar weights are known from a number of sites, for example Dragonby (Elsdon and Barford 1996), and dated to the Iron Age although exact dating within this period is unclear.



Plate 4: Partial Iron Age clay loom-weight

Context	No of sherds	Weight g	Part of pot	Fabric
(102) – 1	1	5	rounded rim	dense fine quartz
(105) - 4	1	10	body sherd	sparse fine quartz & ?grog
(203) – 6	1	8	body sherd	fine quartz & ?grog

Table 2: Ceramic Finds List

- 5.1.5 **Animal Bone:** only very small amounts of bone were recovered by hand during the excavation on the site with some fragments in the retent from context (102). The bone came from Trench 1, contexts (102) and (107) and Trench 2, context (203). Some of the bone was fragmentary but the surface was quite clean and well preserved. The remains are recorded in Table 3 below. None of the bone is present in sufficient quantity to form an assemblage worthy of further study but comment as to its origins can be made.
- 5.1.6 **Context (102)** from context (102) several fragments of bone were recovered. Only 2 were recovered by hand during the excavation but another 14 were recovered from the retent after flotation. Of the 2 that were recovered by hand one was a cattle phalange. The other was unidentifiable but had a slightly burnt appearance.
- 5.1.7 Of the 14 fragments recovered from the retent only one was positively identifiable to element. This was a rib fragment that showed evidence of butchery as it had been neatly cut at right angles at both ends. The rib is small and may either be from a small mammal or that of a juvenile larger mammal but it is not possible to identify it to species. It also had a shiny appearance and dark colouration that may indicate the early stages of heat metamorphosis.
- 5.1.8 Another 10 fragments had the same dark colouration, although not the shiny appearance. None of these fragments were identifiable to element or species as they were too small. Another 2 fragments were heavily calcined (burnt) as they were white. They were also unidentifiable to element or species due to their size. The other 2 fragments had not undergone any chemical changes. One was a tooth fragment that could not be identified to species, as it was too small. The other fragment could not be identified to element or species either.
- 5.1.9 **Context (107)** the 2 sheep bone elements recovered from context (107) were a rib fragment and an almost complete horn core. The horn core was tentatively identified as goat due to its shape. The rib had been cut lengthwise, probably to extract the marrow. The horn core showed signs of butchery and could have been smoothed judging by the appearance of the outer surface. The butchery marks were at the base where it would have been chopped to sever it from the skull for removal of the sheath.
- 5.1.10 From this context cattle bones occurred as the proximal end of a scapula with another scapula fragment present and the distal end of a femur. The fragments of scapula did not show signs of butchery they just appeared degraded. The distal end of the femur however had been butchered to sever the last quarter of the bone, probably for marrow extraction.
- 5.1.11 All the bone from this context had a 'bleached' appearance. The matrix it was deposited in or some kind of chemical processing such as tanning or other similar

industrial action could have caused this. Apart from the horn core it cannot be said whether the bone assemblage from this context could have been associated with the tanning process as it is too fragmentary.

- 5.1.12 **Context (203)** all the bone material from this context was hand recovered. Several fragments were associated with a fragment of burnt clay that was sent for analysis. Again there were 4 fragments with a bleached appearance that may have been the result of some chemical processing. None of these 4 was large enough to be assigned to element or species.
- 5.1.13 All the other 7 bone fragments were recovered in association with a piece of burnt clay. One complete sheep/goat tooth and most of the distal end of a sheep femur was recovered that showed no signs of butchery or burning. Another 2 fragments, one a partial cattle metacarpus and the other unidentified, bear some charring. This is not the type of burning that produces calcinated bone, more the type that indicates these 2 pieces of bone have been too close to the fire but not actually in it. It is more likely they have been scorched by flames rather than calcined.
- 5.1.14 The other 2 unidentified fragnts have been butchered and split lengthways, as well as across the bone. This material has been partially burned in anaerobic conditions and shows the early signs of calcining. This is determined by the colour of the bone matrix.
- 5.1.15 The limited size of this assemblage along with its fragmentary nature proves it to be unworthy of further study. Nothing else informative can be said of these remains.

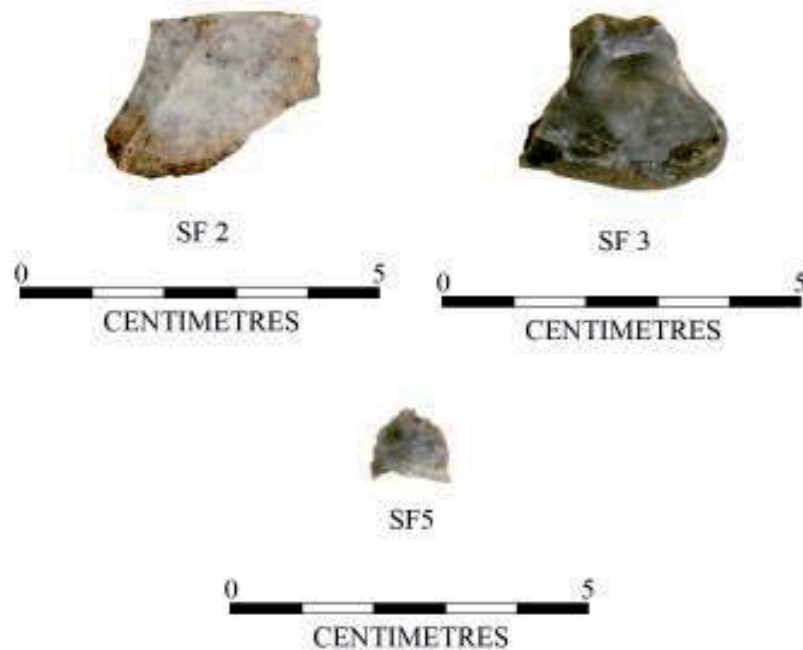
CONTEXT NUMBER	NUMBER OF FRAGMENTS	SHEEP/GOAT	TYPE	LARGE MAMMAL	TYPE	CATTLE	TYPE	UNIDENTIFIED
102	16	0	-	0	-	1	F	16
107	41	2	HC, R	0	-	3	Mi	36
203	12	1	Fe	0	-	2	T, M	8

Table 3: Vertebrate remains recovered. **Key to bones recovered:** R = rib, J = jaw, T = tooth, F = foot, HC = horncore, S = scapula, Fe = femur, M = metacarpus, Mi = mixed

- 5.1.16 **Flint:** three lithic objects (Plates 5, 6 and 7) were recovered from the evaluation. The piece that is likely to be a broken tool from context **(107) (SF5)** measured 10mm in length, with the proximal end tapering to a point only 2mm in width and the broken (not quite distal) end measuring 11mm in width. The maximum thickness reached throughout the piece was 4mm. The piece was opaque and mid blue-grey in colour. The dorsal face showed that several other pieces had been removed from this one, creating two facets, one either side of a ridge which ran lengthways along the piece to the proximal end. The ventral face carried only a couple of ripple marks, that radiate away from the point of percussion, but as the piece is so small it is difficult to determine where that was other than somewhere beyond the breaking point. The working edge of the piece was somewhat chipped although the size and shape of it is

indicative of being part of a longer blade cutting tool or possibly the tip of a crude arrowhead.

- 5.1.17 The two remaining flint pieces appeared to be small waste items, both largely covered in cortex material (the one from context (107) was beige in colour, the one from context (109) was dark grey). The piece from (107) (SF2) had a light blue grey interior and had been struck deliberately up to four times, one facet of the piece showing both a bulb of percussion and a cone of percussion (itself having been struck from a larger piece before another flake was removed from it). The greatest length of the piece was 34mm, the greatest width was 21mm and the maximum thickness was 10mm. The larger piece from context (109) (SF3) appears to have come from a flint cobble and may have been accidentally broken on one end and deliberately struck at the other as there are seemingly ripple marks from a direct percussive strike. It is thought to have worked due to the context it was found in (ditch fill), if these breaks had occurred naturally then the piece may never have been utilised by humans, it would be too small and awkward to work further. Its maximum length was 30mm, the maximum width was 28mm and the average thickness was 12mm. The exterior cortex was dark grey, as was the flint inside.
- 5.1.18 The origins of all three pieces of flint are possibly from pebbles or cobbles recovered from the coastline, only a few miles away.



Plates 5, 6 and 7: Flint pieces recovered from the evaluation

- 5.1.19 **Miscellaneous Datable Artefacts:** a total of 4 sherds of post-medieval pottery, 3 clay tobacco pipe stems and 1 brick fragment were recovered from Trench 2 (200) and a further 1 clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered from Trench 1 (100). The pottery assemblage consisted of 3 sherds of blue and white transfer printed ware and 1 brown

earthenware vase stem all of which have been dated to the 19th to 20th century. The clay tobacco pipe stems are all of similar date and are plain with no markings except one, which is highly decorated with an elaborate relief design, incorporating zig-zags and stylised flowers all along the stem. The brick fragment was too small to identify with any detail so a generic date of 19th to 20th century has been applied.

Context	Trench	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
100	1	Clay Pipe Stems	1	0.001	Post-Medieval
200	2	Clay Pipe Stems	3	0.007	Post-Medieval
200	2	Pottery	4	0.042	Post-Medieval
200	2	Brick Fragment	1	0.002	Post-Medieval

Table 4: Bulk Finds List

6. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION – THE ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

- 6.1.1 During the evaluation only 4 contexts were considered for environmental sampling. Each sample was recovered from stratified deposits. The first 3 samples were taken from Trench 1. Sample 1 was taken from the fill of a rectilinear feature. Sample 2 was recovered from the fill of a ditch. Sample 3 was removed from another ditch. Sample 4 was taken from Trench 2 and is the secondary fill of a ditch.
- 6.1.2 All the whole earth samples were selected for processing in order to assess their environmental potential. This will help provide further information as to the depositional processes involved in their formation. The methodology employed required that the whole earth sample be broken down and split into their various different components. This was achieved by a combination of water washing and flotation. The recovered remains can then be assessed for content.
- 6.1.3 Flotation separates the organic, floating fraction of the sample from the heavier mineral, artefact and waterlogged material content. Heavy soil and sediment content measuring less than 1mm falls through the retentive mesh to settle on the bottom of the tank. Flotation produces a ‘flot’ and a ‘residue’ or ‘retent’ for examination, whilst the heavier sediment retained in the tank is discarded. The method relies purely on the variation in density of the recovered material to separate it from the soil matrix, allowing for the recovery of ecofacts and artefacts from the whole earth sample.
- 6.1.4 The retent, like the residue from wet sieving, will contain any larger items of bone, or artefacts. The flot or floating fraction will generally contain organic material such as plant matter, fine bones, cloth, leather and insect remains. A rapid scan at this stage will allow further recommendations to be made as to the potential for further study by entomologists or palaeobotanists, with a view to retrieving vital economic information from the samples. Favourable preservation conditions can lead to the retrieval of organic remains that may produce a valuable suite of information in respect of the depositional environment of the material, which may include anthropogenic activity, seasonality and climate and elements of the economy. The details and contents of the samples are listed below in Tables 5 and 6.

SAMPLE NUMBER	CONTEXT NUMBER	SAMPLE SIZE (litres)	FLOT SIZE (cm ³)	RETENT SIZE (cm ³)
1	109	10	20	2500
2	102	10	30	1000
3	106	10	7	1500
4	203	10	20	1200

Table 5: Details of samples and contexts

DETAILS			RETENT FRACTION								LIGHT FRACTION											
Context	Sample number	Context type	Pottery	Charcoal	Snails	Burnt bone	Bone	Gravel	Stones	Insects	Charcoal	Root material	Charred grain	Charred oats	<i>Galium</i> sp.	<i>Poaceae</i> species	<i>Ranunculus</i> species	<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	Small mammal bone	Snail shells	Coal	Vegetative plant
109	1	F	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
102	2	F	1	1	0	2	1	1	3	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
106	3	F	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
203	4	F	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0

Table 6: Contents of flot and retent residues from samples. **Key to tables:** F = fill. Contents assessed by scale of richness 0 to 3. 0 = not present, 1 = present, 2 = common, 3 = abundant. Charred grain done as actual count.

- 6.1.5 **SAMPLE 1 (CONTEXT 109, TRENCH 1)** - This sample was the secondary fill of a ditch, a mid greyish brown silty sand. Indications were that it had naturally silted up rather than being backfilled. A flint piece was recovered from this context.
- 6.1.6 The retent was made up of magnesian limestone stones with a small amount of gravel. The flot contained mostly modern root material and some woody plant parts. The small snail shells, if identified, would be a good indicator as to the environmental conditions of the matrix from which they were recovered. There was a small amount of coal present as well. A single small charred oat was recovered from the flot. Other seeds present were *Poaceae* species.
- 6.1.7 **SAMPLE 2 (CONTEXT 102, TRENCH 1)** - This sample was from a firm dark brown sandy loam and was the upper fill of linear ditch [104]. Most of the retent matrix was stones of varying sizes with some gravel and a small amount of charcoal. A fragment of prehistoric pottery was also recovered from the retent.
- 6.1.8 The flot was mainly modern root material with a fragment of small mammal bone, some small snail shells and a small amount of coal. Seeds present were from *Galium* species and *Poaceae* (grasses) of indeterminate species. Both these types of plant have wide ranging ecological niches.
- 6.1.9 **SAMPLE 3 (CONTEXT 106, TRENCH 1)** - This sample was from the middle fill of ditch [108]. The matrix was a light orangey brown sandy soil. Most of the residue recovered was magnesian limestone with inclusions of small snail shells. The flot consisted mainly of root material. There were also small fragments of charcoal and some small snail shells. The only seed present was one of the *Ranunculus* species.
- 6.1.10 **SAMPLE 4 (CONTEXT 203, TRENCH 2)** - Sample 4, the secondary fill of a ditch, was a compacted mid greyish brown silty sand. Again the retent was mainly magnesian limestone with inclusions of small snail shells. The flot contained mostly modern root material again with small snail shells. As well as a small amount of charcoal, two

charred grains were present in the flint. There was also a seed from the *Chenopodium* species.

6.2 DISCUSSION

- 6.2.1 Sample 1 (**109**) appears to have silted up naturally, indicating that the charred oat and the flint fragment had been redeposited within the matrix, upheld by the presence of the coal fragments. There was no evidence of this feature being deliberately backfilled.
- 6.2.2 Sample 2 (**102**) contained a small fragment of prehistoric pottery in the retent and some was hand recovered during the excavation. However there were no plant remains that may indicate this feature was deliberately backfilled, the only seeds present being uncharred material, probably modern in origin as they displayed no evidence of mineralisation. The small mammal bone was probably redeposited.
- 6.2.3 Sample 3 (**106**), the middle fill of a ditch, only exhibited small fragments of charcoal and some small snail shells, as well as one seed of the *Ranunculus* species. Depending on the species, there is quite a wide diversity of ecological niches from which a seed of *Ranunculus* sp. could have come. Some are aquatic, some from wet areas and others, such as the ordinary buttercup, come from wide ranging niches.
- 6.2.4 The charred grain recovered from Sample 4, context (**203**), consisted of 2 grains. Both had been heated to a very high temperature and were quite incomplete. One of the grains though, judging by the shape and twisted nature of it, is tentatively identified as 6-row barley. Whether it was hulled or not cannot be determined as the outside surface was very abraded and not complete. A definite identification cannot be given however without the presence of chaff. The other grain is too fragmentary to be identified.

6.3 CONCLUSION

- 6.3.1 The information retrieved was limited and confirms prehistoric activity on or near the site. Further investigation by means of excavation and subsequent dating of suitable material as well as by typology is not thought necessary due to the limited information retrieved from the site. It is recommended no further work be done on this material.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 7.1.1 None of the features or layers encountered during the course of the evaluation were unexpected for a site of this type, a supposed prehistoric hill top enclosure, given the evidence from previous works conducted on Humbledon Hill, most notably the geophysical survey by Archaeological Services University of Durham (ASUD) in 2001 (Still 2001). This evaluation, however, allowed a more thorough assessment of the remains below the ground surface than the earlier attempt made by Tyne and Wear Museums in 2006, which came to a premature end. The concentration of features and the good state of survival of the two ditches that may form part of the enclosing boundary have helped to create a clearer picture of the development on Humbledon Hill in the prehistoric period. With good dating evidence in the form of diagnostic pieces of pottery from within the secure sealed contexts of the features, a date range from the later Bronze Age into the Iron Age period (covering approximately 800 years) has been ascertained. Further investigations on the hilltop, may help to establish for just how long the hill was used as a 'ritual' or mortuary centre. The semi-circular feature [111] recorded in Trench 1 had no clear interpretation, although its size shape and form of construction (stone mound) may indicate further burials (like the cremations disturbed during the construction of the reservoir), as this feature produced a worked flint nodule that could have conceivably been a deliberate deposit within the construction of the mound. Although no evidence of human bone or cremation vessel was recovered, the fact that the feature extended beyond the limit of the trench prohibited further excavation and does not preclude the possibility of more artefacts being present within it.
- 7.1.2 The projected alignment of ditch [104] from Trench 1 towards Trench 2 showed that it was likely that the ditch ran under the stone bank (202), it was certainly not visible on the base of the trench either side of the bank and was more narrow than the broad expanse of bank material. From this ditch the later Bronze Age piece of pottery was recovered, while the larger ditch that was present in both Trenches 1 and 2 produced the pieces of Iron Age pottery. This could mean that the stone bank and wide ditch are later additions to the enclosure, a differing method of approaching the 'ritualistic' aspect of such a prominent hilltop. The flint pieces recovered from both the large ditch (107) and (203) and sub-circular feature (109) are not so easily datable, two of them being knapped off nodules and the blade tip piece from (203) being so small in size.
- 7.1.3 The evaluation in the garden of 24 Alpine Way, Sunderland has proven the continued survival of several features that remain in a good state of preservation. The recovery of datable artefacts and eco-facts (the animal bone), from these features show the definite presence of human activity over an extended period of time, with the typologies of the datable artefacts relating to the later Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to assume that more features may be present in the immediate vicinity of the three trenches and in a similarly well preserved state. Humbledon Hill as a prehistoric site has many parallels within a ten kilometre radius such as Steeple Hill,

Tunstall Hill and Copt Hill and so should not be considered as an anomalous location but within a broader northeast wide later prehistoric tradition of hilltop ritual sites.

- 7.1.4 Any future development on this site can only proceed with suitable mitigation of this important prehistoric monument, to be agreed by Newcastle City Council

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context Number	Trench	Category	Interpretation
100	1	Layer	Topsoil
101	1	Layer	Subsoil
102	1	Fill	Fill of [104]
103	1	Fill	Fill of [104]
104	1	Cut	Narrow Linear Ditch
105	1	Fill	Fill of [108]
106	1	Fill	Fill of [108]
107	1	Fill	Fill of [108]
108	1	Cut	NE-SW Aligned Ditch
109	1	Fill	Fill of [111]
110	1	Fill	Fill of [111]
111	1	Cut	Semi-Circular Feature
112	1	Deposit	Stone Built Bank
113	1	Layer	Natural Substrate
114	1	Fill	Primary Fill of [108]
200	2	Layer	Topsoil
201	2	Layer	Subsoil
202	2	Deposit	Stone Built Bank
203	2	Fill	Upper Fill of [205]
204	2	Fill	Fill of [205]
205	2	Cut	NE-SW Aligned Ditch
206	2	Layer	Natural Substrate
207	2	Fill	Fill of [205]
300	3	Layer	Topsoil
301	3	Layer	Subsoil
302	3	Layer	Natural Substrate

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

APPENDIX 3: PLATES



Plate 8: View of Trench 1 after machining looking southwest.



Plate 9: View of Trench 2 after machining looking northeast.



Plate 10: View of Trench 3 after machining looking northwest



Plate 11: Ditch [104] before excavation looking northeast



Plate 12: Bank (112) looking northeast



Plate 13: Bank feature (202) in Trench 2
looking northeast



Plate 14: Feature [111] in Trench 1 looking southeast



Plate 15: Feature [111] in Trench 1 pre-excitation looking northeast



Plate 16: Ditch [104] post-excitation looking northeast



Plate 17: Trench 2 post-excavation looking southwest



Plate 18: Ditch [205] post-excavation looking southwest



Plate 19: Ditch [108] in Trench 1 under excavation, southeast facing section is visible.