

LAND AT THE FORMER ROYAL NAVY STORAGE DEPOT (RNSD) LOWER SITE, TOPSHAM ROAD, EXETER

(NGR SX 9529 8985)

Pre-publication Report

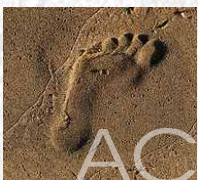
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archaeology

A BRONZE AGE RING DITCH AND LATER IRON AGE SETTLEMENT AT THE FORMER ROYAL NAVY STORES DEPOT LOWER SITE, TOPSHAM ROAD, EXETER

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Archaeological excavation was carried out at the former Royal Navy Storage Depot (RNSD) Lower Site, Topsham Road, Exeter by AC archaeology in 2012. Despite considerable truncation of the archaeological deposits due to ploughing and modern construction archaeological features were recorded. Notably a Bronze Age ring ditch, three Later Iron Age roundhouses and some associated postholes were found. Also present across the site were field boundaries of prehistoric to post-medieval date.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavation was carried out by AC archaeology between August and October 2012, in advance of residential development at the former Royal Navy Storage Depot (RNSD) Lower Site, Topsham Road, Exeter (SX 9529 8985; see Fig. 1). The site lies adjacent to the Exeter Golf and Country Club on the north side of Topsham Road at a height of around 20m aOD. The underlying geology is Permian Breccia of the Heavitree Breccia Formation overlaid by Quaternary river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2016). The site covered an area of approximately 15 ha, and within this were three areas (Areas 1-3) of excavation and trenches totalling approximately 1.3 ha.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site formed part of the Royal Naval Stores Depot (RNSD) constructed during World War II for use by the Americans prior to and after D-Day. After the war the depot was used by the Royal Navy, and into the 21st century several of the wartime and later buildings remained standing; all of these were demolished prior to the works reported here.

The triangle of land formed by the confluence of the Exe and Clyst rivers has proved in recent years to have been the focus of later prehistoric settlement and funerary activity.

Archaeological work at and adjacent to the former upper part of the depot uncovered an Early Neolithic pit alignment, a tree-throw and pit containing Grooved Ware pottery, as well as elements of a Bronze Age field system (Pearce *et al.* 2011; Farnell and Fairclough forthcoming). Adjacent to the upper site, to the north of Old Rydon Lane a Bronze Age enclosure and further evidence of a field system established in the Bronze Age was uncovered (Gilbert 2012; Pears and Rainbird forthcoming). Immediately to the east of the site several prehistoric sites have been identified, including settlement enclosures, possible funerary monuments and field boundaries (Gilbert 2008). The present site was the subject of archaeological evaluation, which identified field systems and other features, considered at the time to be possibly of prehistoric and/or Roman date (Gilbert 2007). As a result of the evaluation a further programme of archaeological investigation was requested as a requirement of planning permission by Exeter City Council.

RESULTS

Introduction

Three areas were selected for excavation based on the results of the previous trench evaluation, these are designated Areas 1-3. Area 2 was in two parts, with in addition separate trenches opened to further test the distribution of archaeological features (see Fig. 1). All topsoil, subsoil and modern overburden was removed by mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the supervision of the site archaeologist. This material was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or to the level of natural where only cut features were present. All works were conducted under the direct supervision of the site archaeologist.

The severe truncation suffered by the prehistoric features on the site meant that the potential for palaeoenvironmental analyses and the collection of secure material for chronometric dating was not possible.

Area 1 (Fig 2)

Area 1 measured approximately 60 by 45 m and was located in the south of the development area. All of the features identified formed part of a pattern of fields, hedgerow plantings and plough scars of post-medieval date. Plough scar F109 contained five sherds of pottery of Middle Bronze Age date which must be residual in this context.

Area 2

Area 2 was located in the north-east of the development zone and was divided into two parts by a fence line. The north-west part was roughly triangular in shape and covered an area of approximately 2000 sq. m and the area to the south-east was sub-rectangular in shape and covered an area of approximately 1000 sq. m, with two trenches (2 and 4) added to the north and south of this area. Several linear and pit features, a ring gully and postholes were revealed (Fig. 3). Overlying deposits largely consisted of modern made ground upon which a thin topsoil had developed.

Field system

Ditches F2045, F2148, F2149, F2150 and F2151 provide a pattern consistent with a field system of small regular square or sub-square fields, oriented approximately north-east to south-west and north-west to south-east. The ditches had no consistent profile and measurements ranged from 0.6 m to 1.15 m wide by 0.2 m to 0.3 m deep (Figs 4, 5 and 6). No chronological relationships could be defined for the separate elements of the field pattern, due to later features destroying the critical junctions. These were probably extant during the Iron Age, but may be earlier, as the few finds were all of Bronze Age pottery. Ditch F2150, although following the grid pattern post-dates Iron Age ring gully F2071 (see below), which it cuts, but shows that the fields are maintained once F2071 goes out of use. More recent than the field system is a large pit (F2066) which cuts ditches F2150 and F2151 and confuses the relationship between these ditches, but the excavator thought that the balance of evidence indicated that F2150 cut F2151. Pit F2066 measured 2.2 m in diameter and was 1.04 m deep with steep sides and a rounded to flat base (Fig. 11d). The date and purpose of this pit is unknown, but iron slag from a secondary fill (context 2073) shows that metal working activities were conducted in the near vicinity, and the pit appears to be contemporary with smaller pit F2051 to the west, which was sub-oval in shape and measured 0.9 m long by 0.6 m wide by 0.19 m deep, and had a charcoal-rich fill (2050). Sherds of Bronze Age pottery in the upper fill (2077) of pit F2066 must be residual and may have been disturbed from ditch F2151. Within the north-west excavation area a single isolated pit (F2005) was revealed measuring 0.85 m in diameter by 0.14 m deep with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 11c). It contained two naturally accumulated fills (2003-4) with no finds to indicate its date or function.

Roundhouse F2071 (Figs 7-10)

A ring gully F2071 with a diameter of 13 m, along with associated post and stake holes, is consistent with a drip gully for a roundhouse with structural elements relating to roof supports and a porch. The whole feature had been truncated with an indication that this has occurred more heavily in the north-west where the drip gully is shallower and where no posthole-like features were observed (sections Figs 7-8). The southernmost terminal cuts an irregular shallow pit F2112 (Fig. 7a). A large gap in the south-east of the drip gully marks the location of an entrance with the collection of postholes (F2090, F2092, F2135 and F2137) consistent with the position of a porch structure (Figs 9a-b). Of these postholes, only F2090 survived to any significant size measuring 0.32 m in diameter by 0.26 m deep with steep sloping sides and a rounded base. This posthole appears to have replaced a post in posthole F2092 which was 0.5 m in diameter. An arc of six postholes (F2125, F2123, F2085, F2139, F2143 and F2145) ranging in diameter from 0.13 m to 0.32 m by 0.14 m to 0.23 m deep (Figs 9c-h) defined an inner post ring with an extrapolated diameter of approximately 8 m. The inner ring was off-centre to the south and west in relation to the drip gully, with neither of the more centrally placed features (F2064 and F2126) marking the absolute centre of either the inner post ring or the drip gully. Pit F2064 measured 0.64 m in diameter by 0.18 m deep and had evidence of burning, perhaps indicating that it may have ended life as a fire pit (Fig. 9i). F2126 was the base of a possible posthole 0.35m in diameter and 0.15m deep with a stony fill (2127) (Fig. 9j). To the east of the centre of the ring gully was a cluster of three very shallow and poorly defined possible posthole bases (F2118, F2120 and F2147) (Figs 9k-m); these may mark the limit of the outer wall on this side, although this is highly speculative. The fill of the drip gully (Fig. 10) contained two small pieces of burnt clay and sherds of pottery of Later Iron Age date with the residue from one of these providing a radiocarbon date of SUERC-66350 2146 ± 29 BP calibrating to 355-291 BC (25.5%), 232-90 BC (68.7%) and 72-61 BC (1.2%). To the east of roundhouse F2071 was a small pit or posthole base F2102 (Fig. 11b).

Area 3

Area 3 was located in the north-west of the development zone and consisted of two parts, one measuring approximately 180 m by 40 m and a trench (Trench 1) to the north-east measuring approximately 30 m by 14 m (Fig. 12). Several linear features, postholes and pits were revealed. Of particular note were the truncated remains of a ring ditch (F3040) and the

pennanular drip gullies for two roundhouses (F3106 and F3143) which formed an arc north to south (Fig. 13).

Field boundaries

The shallow gully features represent field boundaries of different dates (Figs 14a-k and 15a-f). The most recent, as it contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery and 28 pieces of animal bone, is F3219 and as it runs parallel with F3212 these may be contemporary. F3219 cuts F3210 which in turn cuts F3209, making the latter the earliest of these boundaries. The orientation of F3210 and F3209 at right-angles to one another suggests contemporaneity between these two and possibly F3211, but not enough of this feature was revealed in the excavation to be sure of its orientation. Ditch F3210 contained two iron nails of late post-medieval date. All of the features appear heavily truncated and the petering out of the gullies and the apparently fragmentary nature of others (F3220, F3217, and F3218) serve to warn that the complete pattern of boundaries has been lost. Shallow gullies F3217 and F3218 are plough scars. A pit F3005 and a stakehole F3065 are positioned in the corners created by the intersections of the field boundaries and may be associated with them.

The gullies revealed in Area 3, Trench 1 (F3213, F3214, F3215 and F3216) appeared to form a coherent pattern of the south-west corner of a probable field, with a gap for a gateway and a parallel ditch forming a trackway on its west side. Only prehistoric finds were recovered from the ditch fills, but these are probably residual in these contexts as the boundaries share the orientation of F3212 and F3219, so they too are probably post-medieval in date.

Two isolated postholes (F3098 and F3175) and a pit (F3177) were undated. Posthole F3098 measured 0.25 m in diameter by 0.22 m deep (Fig. 15f). Posthole F3175 measured 0.23 m in diameter by 0.13 m deep (Fig. 15g). Pit F3177 measured 1.12 m in diameter by 0.20 m deep (Fig. 15h).

Ring ditch F3040

Ring ditch F3040 is formed by a ditch which measured up to 0.46 m wide by 0.2 m deep with an irregular profile and up to three naturally accumulated fills containing no finds (Figs 16a-k and 17). It formed a complete circle with a diameter of 8 m and had no internal features. On its west side the ring ditch cut a small gully (F3220) which measured 0.57 m wide by 0.09 m

deep (Figs 14i-j). Its fill contained a single sherd of Middle Bronze Age pottery and worked flint of a similar date.

Roundhouse F3143

Ring gully F3143 was defined by a ditch measuring up to 0.6 m wide by 0.29 m deep (Figs 18a-j) and measured 12 m in diameter (Fig. 20). It is consistent with a drip gully which would have accommodated a roundhouse. The bases of four postholes (F3045, F3043, F3061 and F3055) may indicate the position of an internal ring of posts. The two northern post ring postholes (F3043 and F3045) measured 0.49 m and 0.50 m in diameter, but only survived to a depth of 0.09 m (Figs 19a-b). In contrast, posthole F3055 was 0.31 m in diameter but had a surviving depth of 0.28 m (Fig. 19c) and posthole F3061 had a diameter of 0.2 m and a depth of 0.14 m (Fig. 19d). The ring gully has a gap for an entrance facing east. The ring gully contained 14 sherds of pottery dated to the Late Iron Age and two sherds of pottery dated to the late post-medieval period which must be intrusive in this context and a result of the later ploughing which is evident on the site.

Roundhouse F3106

Roundhouse F3143 must have replaced its neighbour to the north (F3106) whose ring gully it cuts (Figs 18a-b). Ring gully F3106 had a maximum width of 0.55 m by 0.28 m deep with a diameter of c. 11 m and was consistent with a drip gully accommodating a roundhouse (Figs 21a-j and 22). A gap for an entrance facing to the south-east was marked by a pair of postholes (F3042 and F3060) c. 2m apart. The largest posthole (F3042) was oval in plan and measured 0.55 m long by 0.36 m wide by 0.11 m deep (Fig. 19e), and is the best candidate for a door jamb post with its more northerly pair missing. Its fill (3041) contained a sherd of Middle/Late Iron Age pottery. Posthole F3060 measured 0.25 m in diameter by 0.15 m deep (Fig. 19f). The ring gully had a single fill from which one sherd of Middle Bronze Age pottery, seven sherds of Middle/Late Iron Age pottery and worked flint was recovered.

THE FINDS

Prehistoric pottery by Henrietta Quinnell *with petrographic comment* by Roger Taylor

The pottery consists of 50 sherds/318 g, of which 21 sherds/111 g of Middle Bronze Age date and 29 sherds/207 g from the Later Iron Age.

Table 1: Details of the Middle Bronze pottery.

Context	Description	Sherds/weight grams	Lithics present
108	Fill gully F109	5/16	
2042	Fill ditch F2151	1/4	3
2077	Fill pit F2066	1/37 Rim, flat-topped, external expansion	
3011	Fill gully F3213	1/24	2
3029	Fill gully F3220	1/4	1
3091	Fill gully F3210	11/19	6 including 3 cores
3105	Fill ring gully 3106	1/7 Everted rim, slight external expansion (residual – see below)	
Total		21/111	

Middle Bronze Age (Table 1)

This small assemblage is all in a generally similar fabric of which the common inclusions, up to 3 mm and occasionally up to 5 mm, are of basalt and related material. The fabric is similar to that of Middle Bronze Age vessels found at Old Rydon Lane (Raymond 2012), and also to Fabric 6 of a similar date from Sites 1, 5, 7 and 8 in the Digby area of Exeter (Quinnell and Farnell 2016). The source of the potting materials is similar to that of the Middle Iron Age Peacock (1969) Group 6, but the inclusions are much coarser. The rim from (2077) is similar to P1 from Old Rydon Lane (Quinnell in Pears and Rainbird forthcoming) and that from (3105) to P2 from the same site (Raymond 2012), and both are also paralleled by vessels from Digby. Parts of an undecorated Trevisker vessel with cordons and lugs were found in a field ditch in previous work on the Royal Naval Storage Depot site (Quinnell 2011). Undecorated vessels appear to be a regular occurrence in the Middle Bronze Age in the Exeter area. The simple expanded rims are a regular occurrence in the Trevisker ceramic style in Cornwall and in Devon (Quinnell 2012) although Raymond (2102) argues for a Deverel-Rimbury influence on the pottery of the Exeter area.

Later Iron Age (Table 2)

Fabrics

Permian breccia fabric (2071) *Quartz* – transparent colourless angular to sub-rounded grains, 0.05-1.3 mm; *feldspar* – common soft altered angular to sub-angular grains and some less altered translucent colourless cleaved grains, 0.05-1.5 mm; *rock fragments* – grey and buff tabular sub angular slate fragments, 1.2-1.8 mm, brown weathered sub-rounded volcanic fragment, 2.2 mm, grey fine grained sandstone sub-angular fragments, 1.2 and 1.5 mm; *mica* – biotite, a scatter of very dark brown contorted cleavage flakes with abraded edges, 0.05-0.5 mm; *matrix*– clay with some fine sand/silt less than 0.05mm. *Comment.* A granite-derived fabric with tempering sand and clay derived from local Permian breccias.

Table 2: Details of prehistoric pottery.

Context	Details	Permian breccia	Ludwell Valley	SE Dorset BB1	Totals
2071	Ring gully	1/17			1/17
2094	Fill ring gully F2071	3/13			3/13
2101	Fill ring gully F2071	1/16			1/16
101	Subsoil			1/8	1/8
3041	Fill pit F3041		1/1		1/1
3106	Ring gully F3106		4/13	1/4	5/17
3112	Fill ring gully F3106			2/7	2/7
3120	Fill ring gully F3143	1/1		11/46	12/47
3171	Fill ring gully F3143			1/24	1/24
-	Fill ring gully F3143			2/57*	2/57
Totals		6/47	5/14	18/146	29/207

* includes sherd of probable copy/variant

Ludwell Valley fabric defined by Taylor in Quinnell and Farnell (2016) and broadly equivalent to Peacock’s (1969) Group 5 fabric, derives from the Ludwell Valley in Exeter.

SE Dorset BB1 variant (3143) *Quartz* – translucent colourless to opaque white and a few opaque grey and brownish, angular to sub-rounded grains, 0.1-1 mm, rarely 1.5 mm. *Comment.* Temper concentration and type is typically SE Dorset BB1 but the burnishing marks and partially oxidised state are unusual for typical Roman black burnished ware and it is possibly an imitation.

Comment

The only fabric in the small assemblage from ring gully F2071 is Permian breccia derived. Residue on a sherd from (2101) from this feature provided SUERC-66350 2146 +/- 29 BP calibrating to 355-291 BC (25.5%), 232-90 BC (68.7%) and 72-61 BC (1.2%). This suggests that the feature was in use in the 2nd, or possibly the 3rd, century cal BC and means that the sherds would belong to the Middle Iron Age South Western Decorated ware in use in the area at that time. The sherds are consistent in character with this ceramic style. The closest Middle Iron Age settlement to Exeter to have been published is the Blackhorse enclosure a few kilometres to the east (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999), while the open settlement with four/five ring gully houses at Clyst Heath, Digby, 1.5 kilometres to the north is ready for publication (Quinnell and Farnell 2016). A single ring gully house was found on the site beneath Exeter Crown Courts (Quinnell in prep). Recent archaeological work around the east side of Exeter has located Middle Iron Age activity at Exeter Crematorium (AC archaeology) 2.5 km to the north-west and at Tithebarn Green (Cotswold Archaeology) four km north, and also on a number of sites such as Newcourt Drive (Farnell and Fairclough in prep.) where activity may be either or both Middle and Late Iron Ages.

The small assemblage from ring gully F3106 was of both Ludwell Valley and SE Dorset BB1 fabrics. Joining rim sherds in Ludwell Valley fabric are of a form used in both Middle Iron Age South Western Decorated vessels, broadly 3rd and 2nd centuries cal BC, and also in the subsequent Late Iron Age Plain ware during the 1st centuries BC/AD in the Exeter area (Quinnell 2017). However there are also a few sherds of SE Dorset BB1 or Poole Harbour Durotrigian fabric. Occasional sherds of this are found on Middle Iron Age sites in the area, at the Blackhorse enclosure a little to the east of Exeter (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, Table 52) and at the open settlement at Clyst Heath, Digby (Quinnell and Farnell 2017). Sherds of this fabric may be related to Late Iron Age activity at the St Loye's enclosure located between Exeter and Topsham and it is likely that this imported fabric in general was more common in the Late than in the Middle Iron Age (Quinnell forthcoming). The ceramics do not allow F3106 to be closely dated, but the Late Iron Age is probable.

Except for a tiny Permian breccia sherd, ring gully F3143 contains only material likely to have been imported from Dorset. Most of this provides no formal or surface treatment which indicates whether it dates before or after the advent of Rome. However the Durotrigian variant, a large jar sherd, has a noticeable heavy burnish which appears more likely to be Late

Iron Age than Roman. Provisionally F3143 may belong to the Late Iron Age, possibly still current after the arrival of Rome. Ring gullies F3106 and F3143 may belong to the last century of the Iron Age or to the beginning of the period of Roman influence. If settlement here continued long after the arrival of Rome a greater range of fabrics and indeed a greater quantity of pottery might be expected.

Worked flint by Henrietta Quinnell

The 14 lithic pieces in contexts with Middle Bronze Age pottery has been indicated in Table 1. The other nineteen are scattered fairly evenly across the site. The assemblage is analysed as a single unit in Table 3.

Table 3: Lithics.

	Flint	Chert	Notes
Cores	3	1	1 core, single platform, some bladelet removals. 2 multiplatform. Chert core rough start on cobble
Core preparation and trimming	8		
Flakes	6	1	2 flakes small from soft hammer retouch
Flakes, broken	1*1*1 1*	1	
Flakes, retouched		1	
Flakes, broken, retouched	2		
Bladelets		1	1 has microdenticulation
Blades, broken	1		
Blades, retouched	1		
Tools	1* 1* 1		1 broken knife, 1 side & end scraper, 1 abandoned bifacially worked piece,
Totals	28	5	
Items with * display edge damage/usewear			

Of the 33 pieces, five are chert and the remainder flint, weighing in total 484 g. Fourteen of the flint pieces including two multiplatform cores have nodular chalk cortex, somewhat waterworn, suggesting derivation from East Devon clay with residual flint. The chert is

Greensand and the cortex indicates a cobble source. The presence of cores and a large number of nodular pieces indicates flint working on or near the site. The assemblage generally appears fresh but this may be due to almost all of it coming from features, rather than topsoil/subsoil contexts.

There is a small component reflecting blade/bladelet technology current in the Mesolithic: this includes a microdenticulate bladelet.

The remainder is a flake assemblage, mainly using cores without prepared platforms. Both the broken knife and the side/end scraper are Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age types: whether these continue to be made during the Middle Bronze Age is uncertain. The two small soft hammer flakes indicate careful retouch which would not be appropriate in the Middle Bronze Age or later. However the presence of two multiplatform flint cores and one chert core in (3091) might suggest a Middle Bronze Age date within F3210. The assemblage as a whole is multi-period, with most of the material probably from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. This dating is matched by those from the nine Digby, Exeter, sites (Bayer 2016) and also by the small group from previous work at the Royal Navy Stores site (Pearce *et al.* 2011, 41).

Other prehistoric finds by Charlotte Coles

Two small pieces of fired clay were recovered from the fill of the ring gully F2071. These are very small and abraded. A single piece of stone retrieved from the fill of ring gully F3106 was possibly worked, the stone is a mudstone in the shape of a triangle with one very smooth side and one rough side. It measures 12 cm x 9.5 cm x 2 cm. The use of this stone is unknown. A small piece of a burnt sandstone pebble was retrieved from the fill of ring gully F3143. Five pieces of iron slag were recovered from fill 2063 of pit F2066 may be of Iron Age date, but the pit is undated, no tap slags are present.

Other finds by Charlotte Coles

The only other find of note is a 16th/17th century copper alloy coin retrieved as a surface find, this is abraded and a clear design cannot be identified. The metal is very thin at just less than 1 mm thick and has a diameter of 28 mm. It is likely to be a *Jeton* type token rather than a coin for currency. The remaining finds are post-medieval/modern or not closely datable and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Other finds by context (weight in grams)

Context	Context description	Post-medieval pottery		CBM		Clay tobacco pipe		Iron		Animal bone		Glass	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
<i>Area 1</i>													
106	Lower fill of pit F107			1	225								
108	Fill of plough scar F109	2	9										
126	Fill of ditch F177	1	2										
138	Fill of ditch F177	2	1			1	1					4	12
146	Fill of gully F178	1	2										
<i>Area 3</i>													
3027	Fill of gully F3219	1	25							28	193		
3089	Fill of gully F3210							2	22				
-	Fill of ring gully F3143	2	5										
Total		9	44	1	225	1	1	2	22	28	193	4	12

DISCUSSION

Middle Bronze Age

The worked flint found across the site indicates activity in the locality pre-dating the surviving features, largely Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. A small gully (F3220) in Area 3 was cut by ring ditch F3040. This gully contained pottery and worked flint, but its purpose is unknown. It does not continue east to within ring gully F3040 and this perhaps indicates that it was a visible feature at the time of the digging of the ring gully for barrow material. Ring ditch F3040 also contained Middle Bronze Age pottery and worked flint in its fill and is probably also Bronze Age in date. A ring ditch of this type is usually regarded as the remains of a ploughed out barrow, although with a diameter of 8 m it is small by local standards; these can be very large, e.g. at Cowick Lane, Exeter with an internal diameter of 19.7 m (Caine and Valentin 2011) and Area A at Hayes Farm, Clyst Honiton with up to 28 m internal diameter (Simpson *et al.* 1989) to rather modest in size with one Markham Lane, Alphington 12 m in diameter with two cremations in the ditch (Jarvis 1976), the excavated pair in Areas B and C at Hayes Farm having internal dimensions of 9.5 m and 10.5 m respectively (Simpson *et al.* 1989). These examples, along with several other ring ditches along with settlement evidence located in the Digby area (Quinnell and Farnell 2016) and further settlement activity in the Old Rydon Lane area (Gilbert 2012; Pears and Rainbird forthcoming) and at the site of the Upper RNSD (Pearce

et al. 2011), illustrates varied and considerable Bronze Age activity on this side of the Exe Valley with the confluence of the Clyst.

In Area 2, the rectilinear field system may have been established in the Bronze Age and this possibility is discussed further below.

Later Iron Age

Roundhouses F2071, F3106 and F3143 are Middle Iron Age, Late Iron Age or, less likely, Romano-British in date. The dating is based on the ceramics and the single radiocarbon date and may be glossed as Later Iron Age. The penannular ring gullies are presumed to be the eaves drip gullies for the roundhouses as they do not have the appearance of wall slots. Their diameters measure between 11 m and 13 m indicating houses of smaller dimensions within these. These compare well with other Iron Age roundhouses in Devon. At St Loye's, only 1.9 km to the north-west, a roundhouse of 9 m in diameter was estimated from a partially surviving ring gully. This was within a ditched enclosure of two phases, both of Later Iron Age date, but with the most recent surviving to be demolished by the Roman military in about AD 55 (Salvatore *et al.* forthcoming). A settlement consisting of at least three roundhouses, dated to the 3rd-1st centuries BC, was excavated at Clyst Heath Primary School 1.5 km to the north (Best 2009; Quinnell and Farnell 2016). At Twinyeo, Chudleigh Knighton, roundhouses that originally were unenclosed, but enclosed later in the Iron Age, had four examples of eaves gullies measuring between 11.8 m and 17 m (Farnell 2015). The smallest example from these small lowland settlements is 6 m in diameter at the Crown Courts site in Southernhay, Exeter (Stead 2004). In form, the Lower RNSD roundhouses are similar to those from East Devon recorded along the A30 at Languard Lane, Long Range and Blackhorse (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999); these differ from the well-preserved roundhouse excavated at Middle Burrow Farm in North Devon, where the gully was identified as a foundation trench and the entrance in this example was approximately south facing (Gillard *et al.* 2012), but elsewhere the broadly south-east facing entrances are typical. The exact form of the entrances at Lower RNSD remains unclear due to the significant truncation suffered by the features.

The rectilinear field system in Area 2 may have been established in the Bronze Age as only pottery of that date came from it and the orientation matches that of other Bronze Age fields in the area (A. Pye, pers. comm.). However, ditch F2150 is later than roundhouse F2071 which it cuts, and indicates that the pattern of fields was probably long-lived and continued

in use through the period of Iron Age settlement and was extant when the modification, by further sub-division, shown by ditch F2150, was made.

Post-medieval

Field boundary ditch F3219 was the only feature that could be matched to historic mapping in Area 3 and follows the line of a boundary present on the Topsham tithe map of the 1840s and is still present on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889. Archaeological evidence showed that this was the most recent linear feature in Area 3 and it was argued above that the remaining ditches were field boundary features of post-medieval date. There remains the possibility however that some of these are of much earlier date, but dating evidence was not forthcoming. In Area 1, the field boundary ditches are exclusively post-medieval in date with the parallel ditches F176 and F177 marking the line of a hedgebank that features on the Topsham tithe map; this has been removed by the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889.

In conclusion, the archaeological works at Lower RNSD have revealed the remains of Middle Bronze Age activity, in particular a ring ditch of probable funerary purpose, which fits a pattern of significant Bronze Age activity in the area, of which this forms the southerly extent. After a hiatus, activity continued in the Later Iron Age with a settlement of roundhouses. The pair in Area 3 are most probably successive buildings and that in Area 2 may or may not be part of the same settlement; significant truncation due to later use of the site has reduced the ability to establish relationships across the development area and has probably also removed settlement features such as hearths or four-post structures that are typical of settlements of this date. There was no indication that the settlement was enclosed. The majority of the remainder of dated features related to the post-medieval agricultural landscape.

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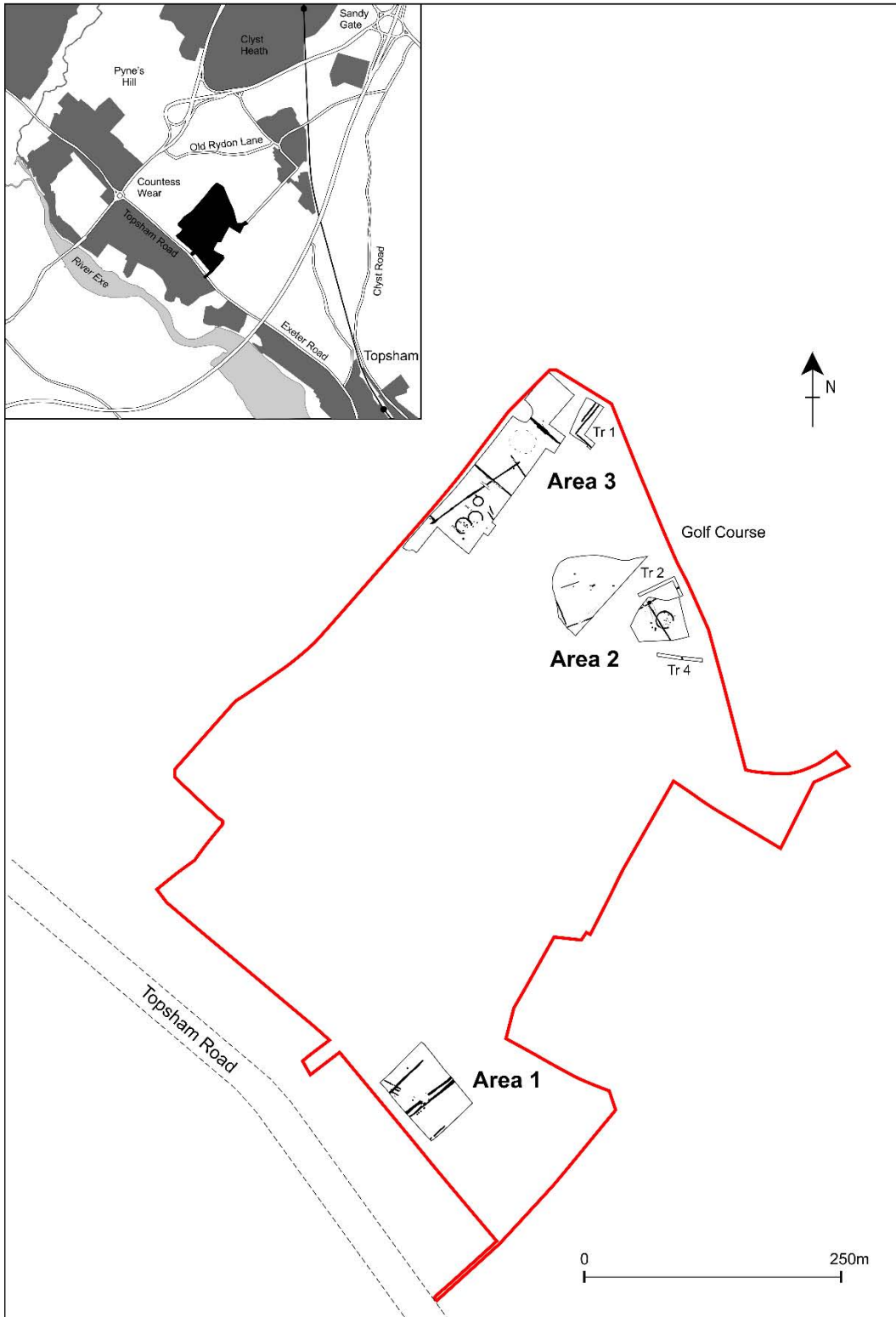


Fig. 1: Location of site and location of excavation areas

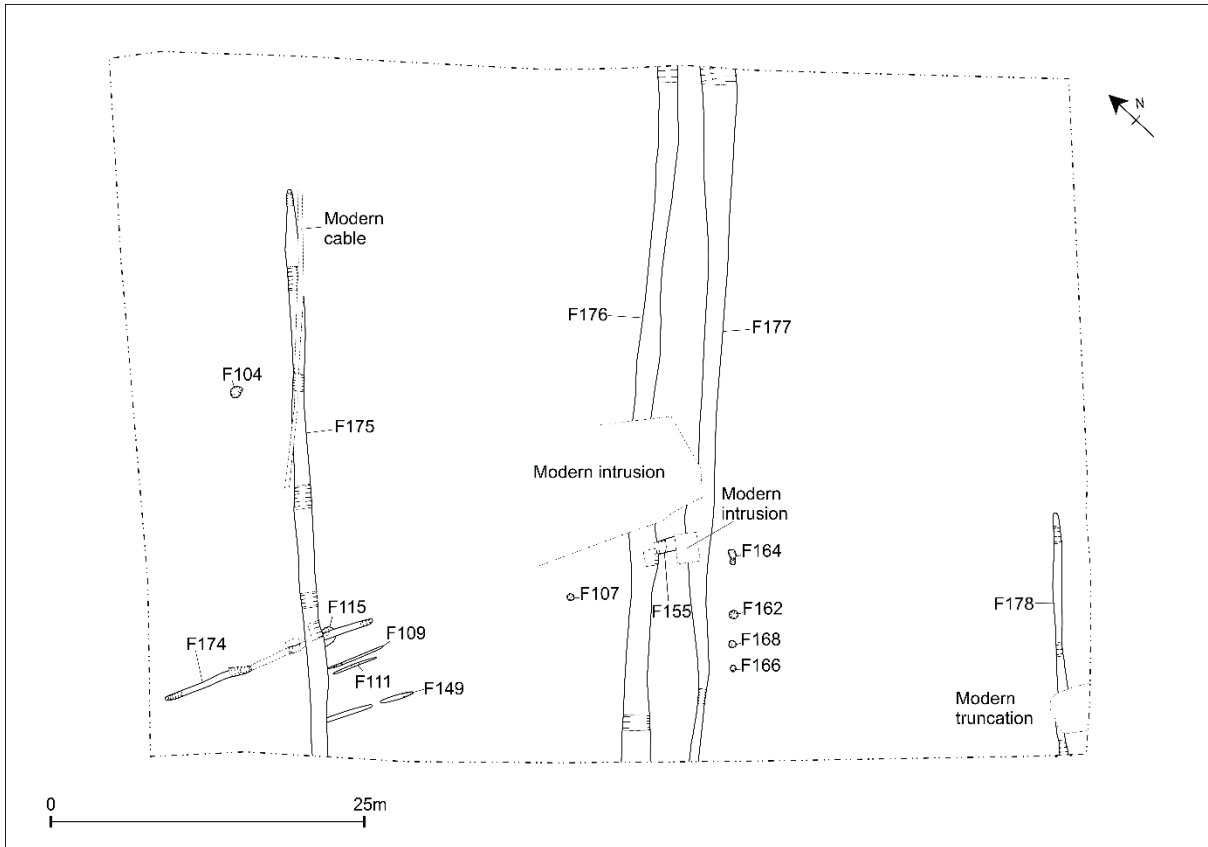


Fig. 2: Plan of post-medieval features in Area 1

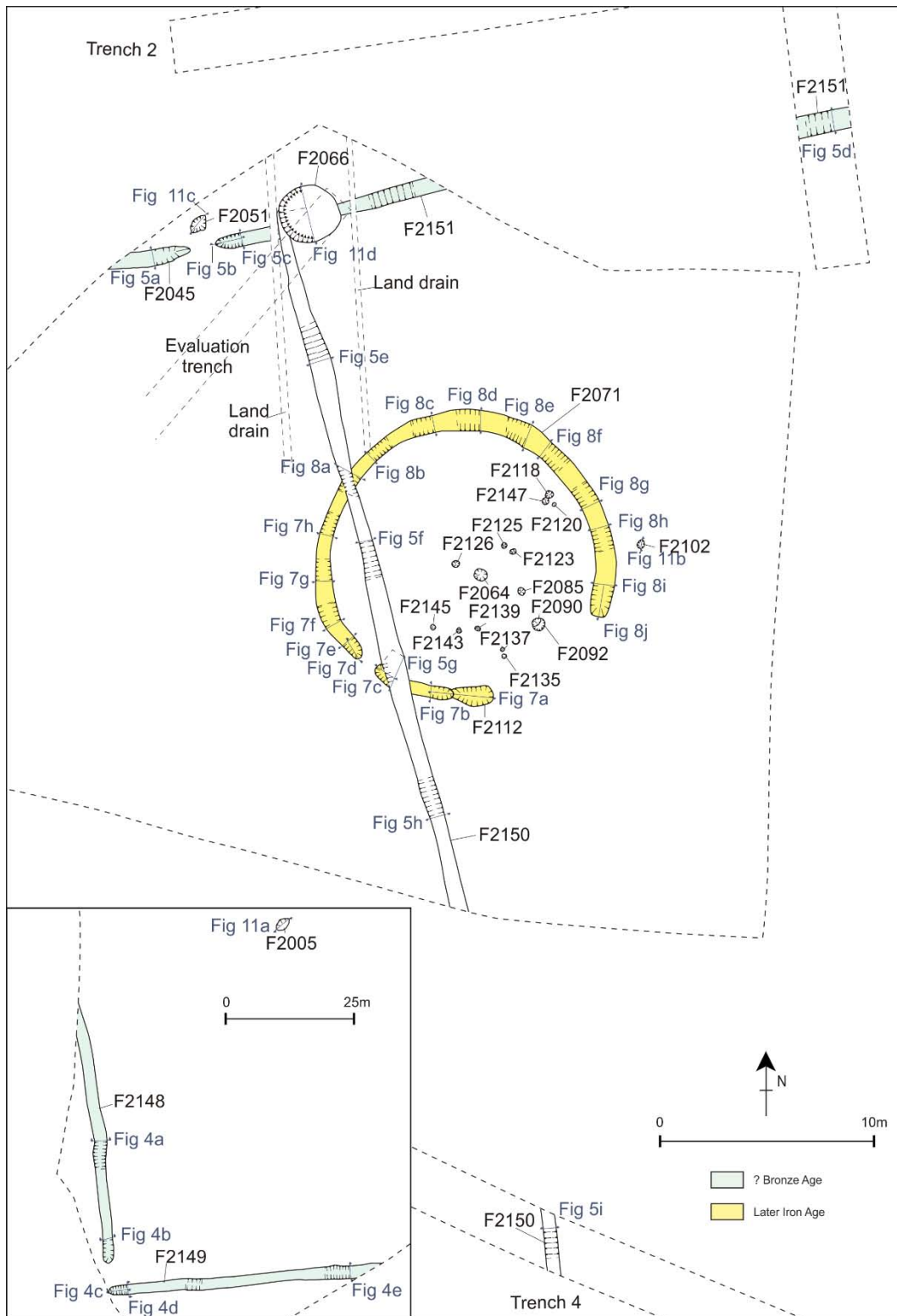


Fig. 3: Plan of Area 2, south part and trenches (with north part as inset)

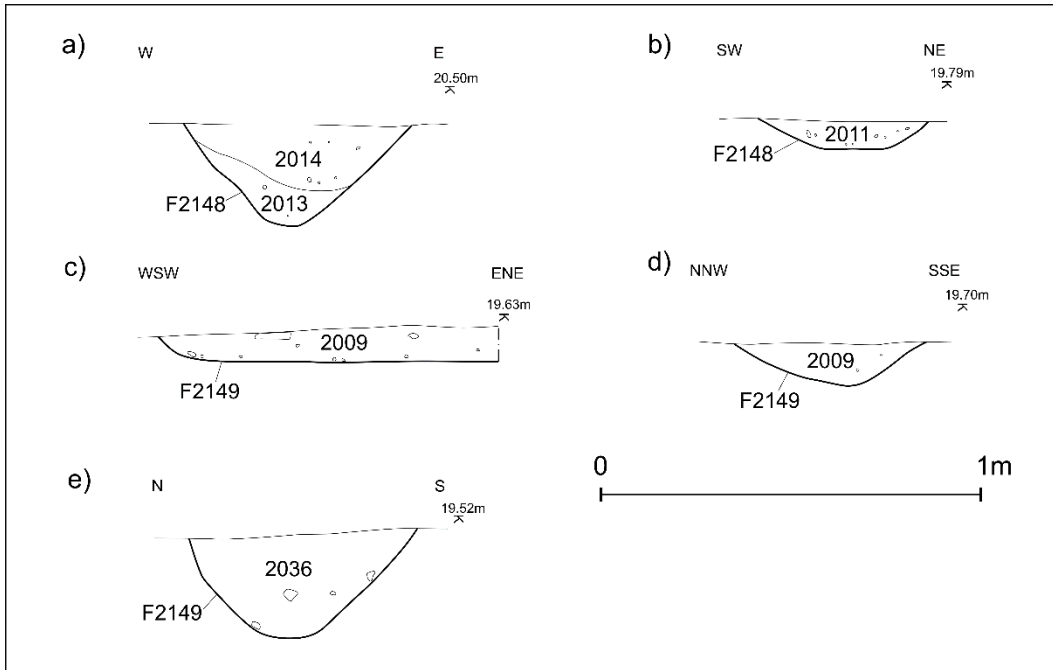


Fig. 4: Sections of boundary ditches F2148 and F2149 in Area 2

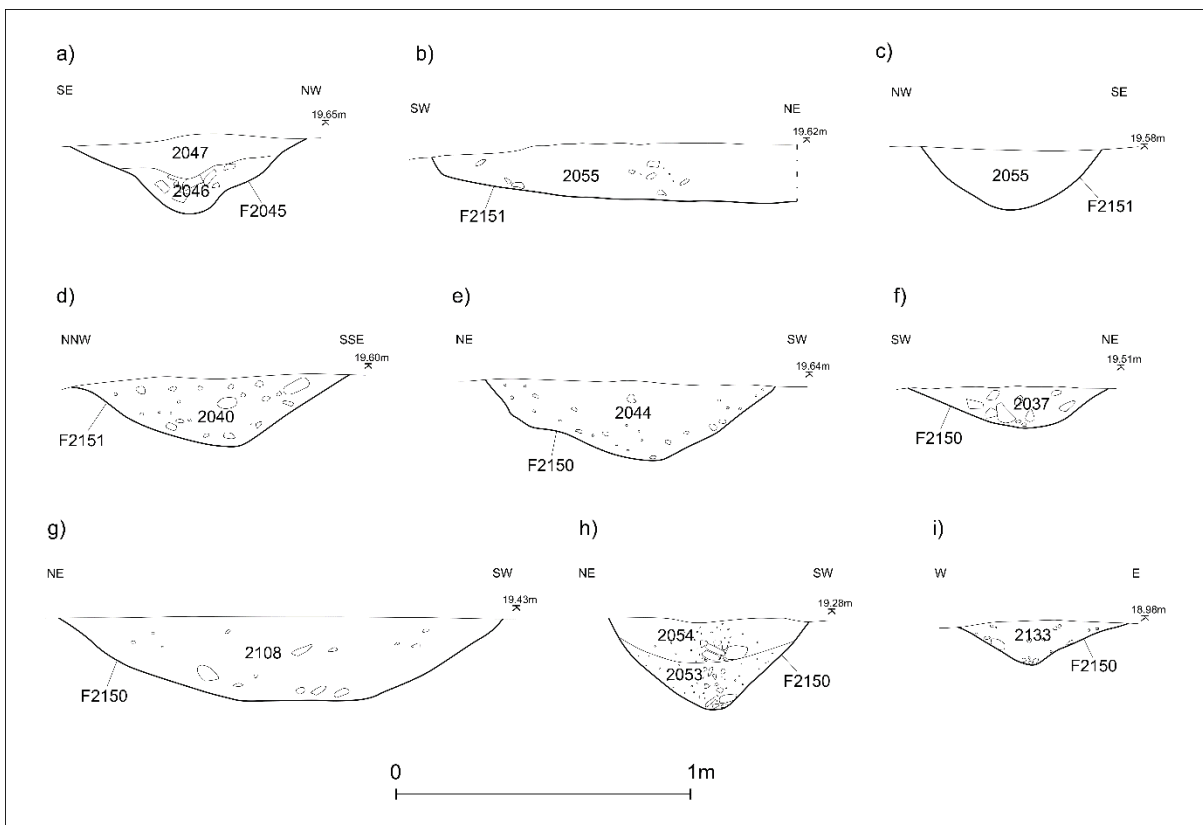


Fig. 5: Sections of boundary ditches F2150 and F2151 in Area 2



Fig. 6: Northeast facing section of ditch F2151 in Area 2 (scale 0.5m) Photo: AC archaeology

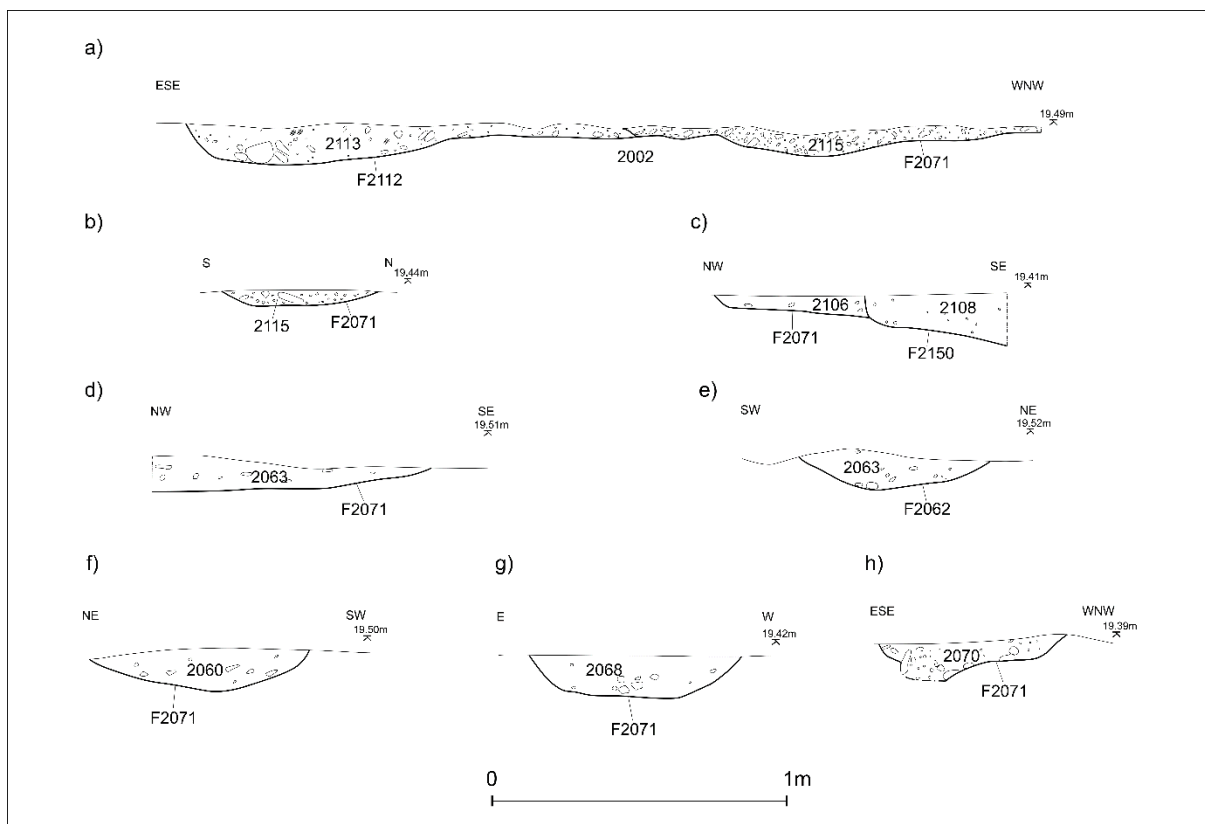


Fig. 7: Sections of roundhouse F2071 in Area 2

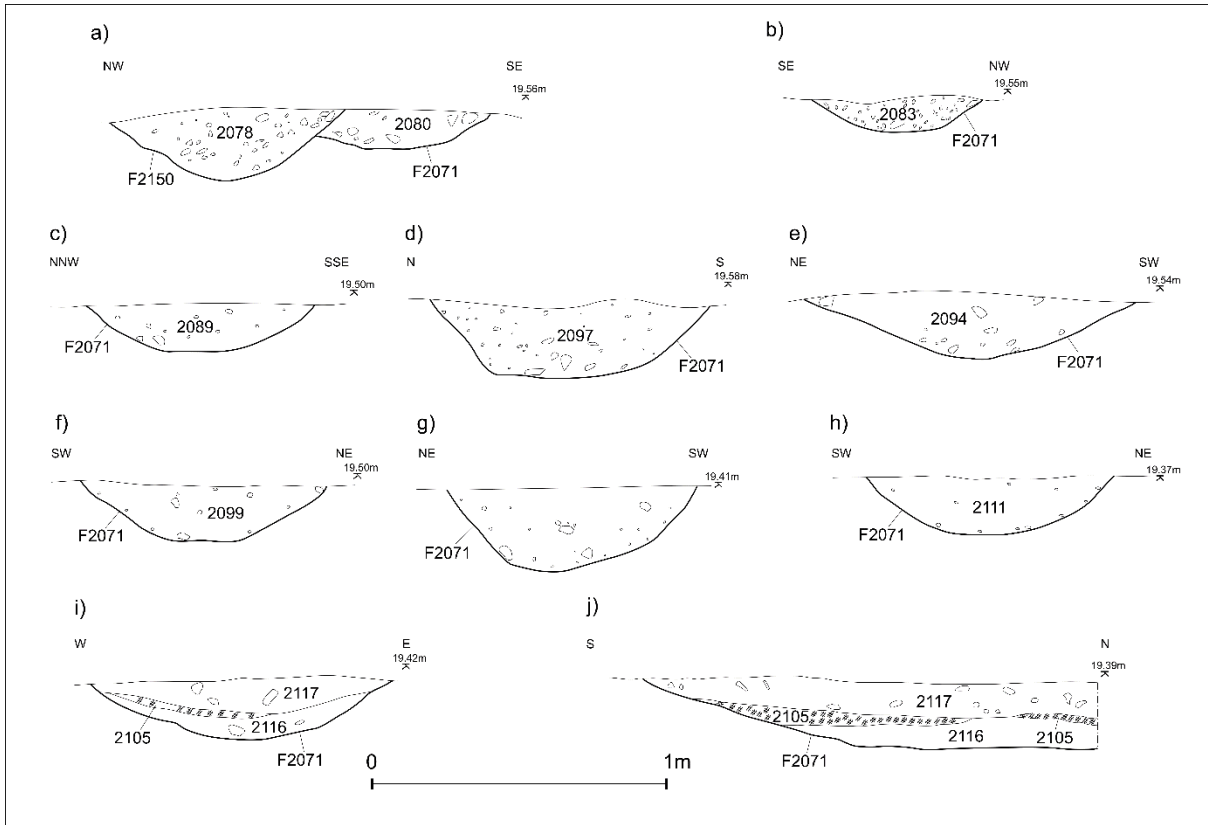


Fig. 8: Sections of roundhouse F2071 in Area 2, continued

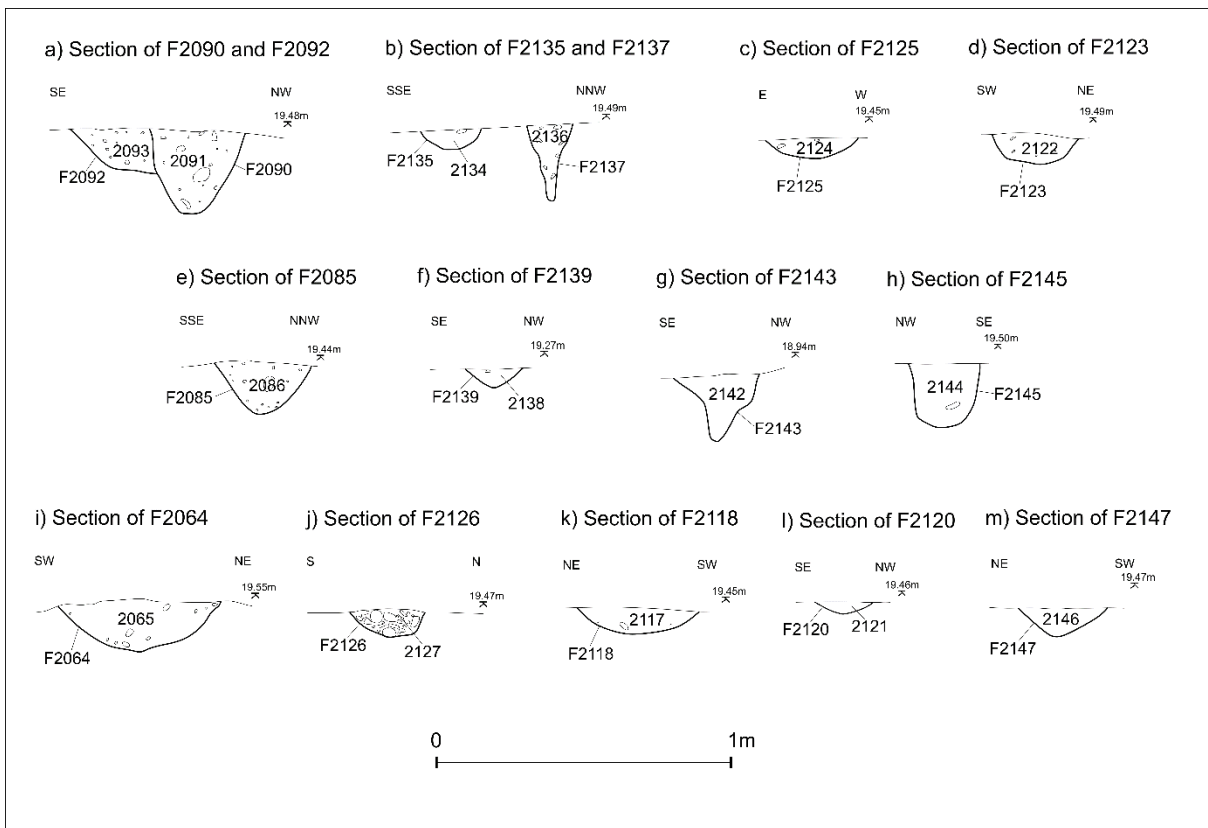


Fig. 9: Sections of features within roundhouse F2071 in Area 2



Fig. 10: Roundhouse F2071 in Area 2, looking north-west (scale 2m) Photo: AC archaeology

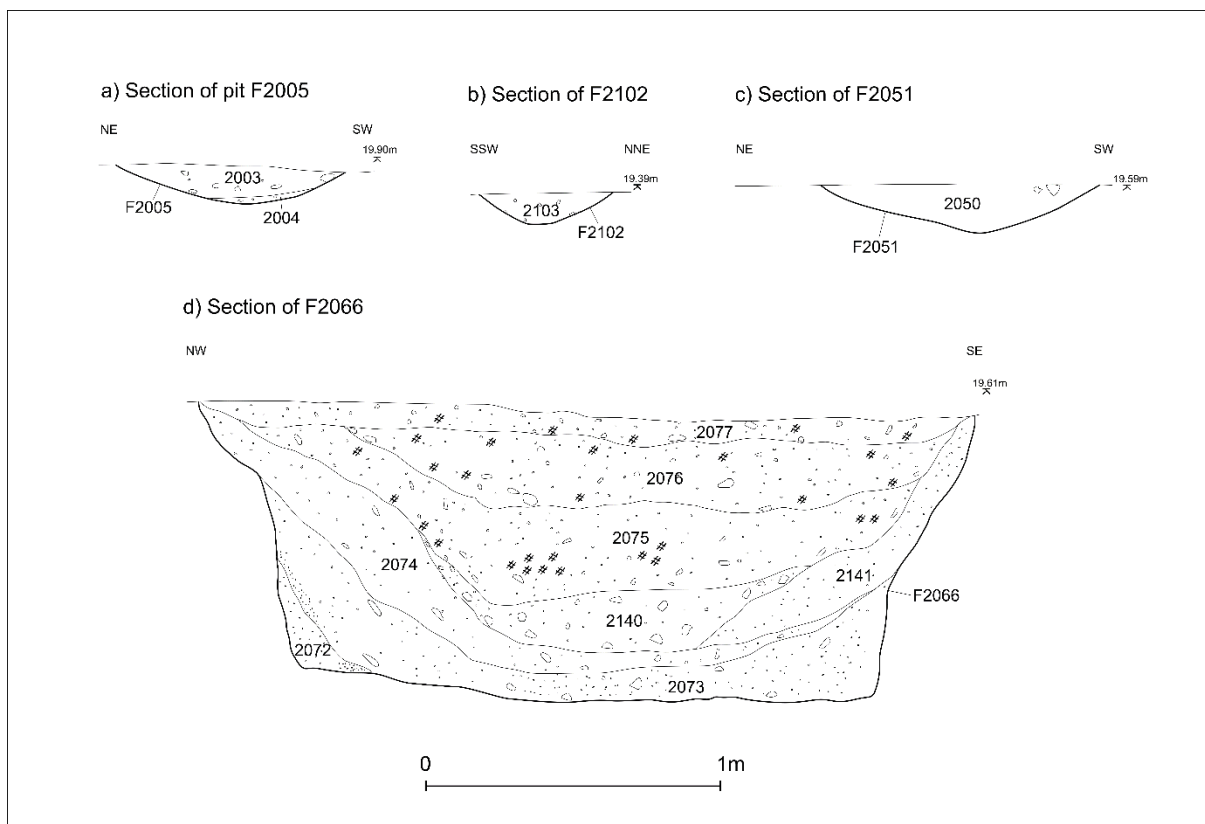


Fig. 11: Sections of pits in Area 2 located external to ring gully F2071

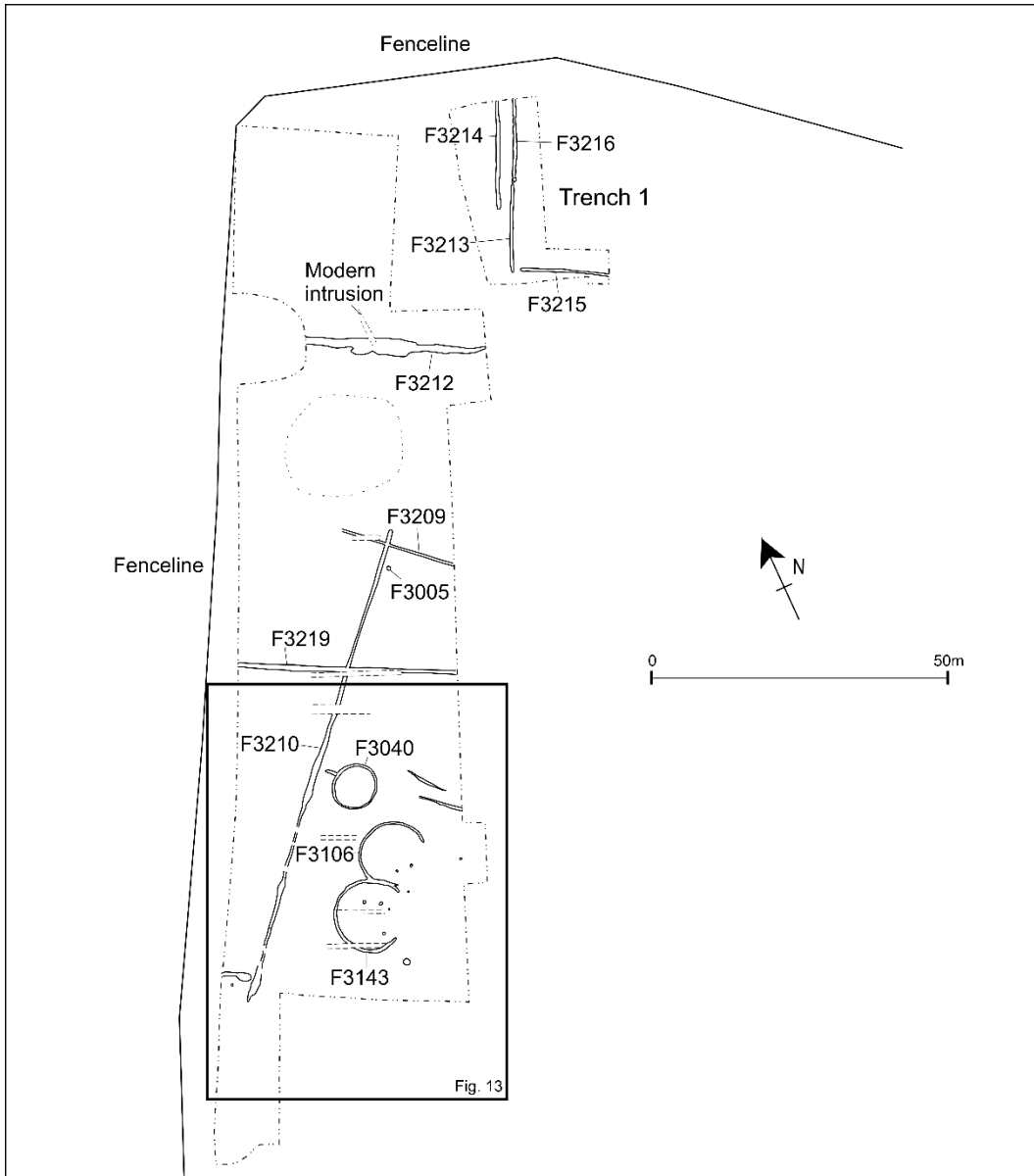


Fig. 12: Plan of Area 3

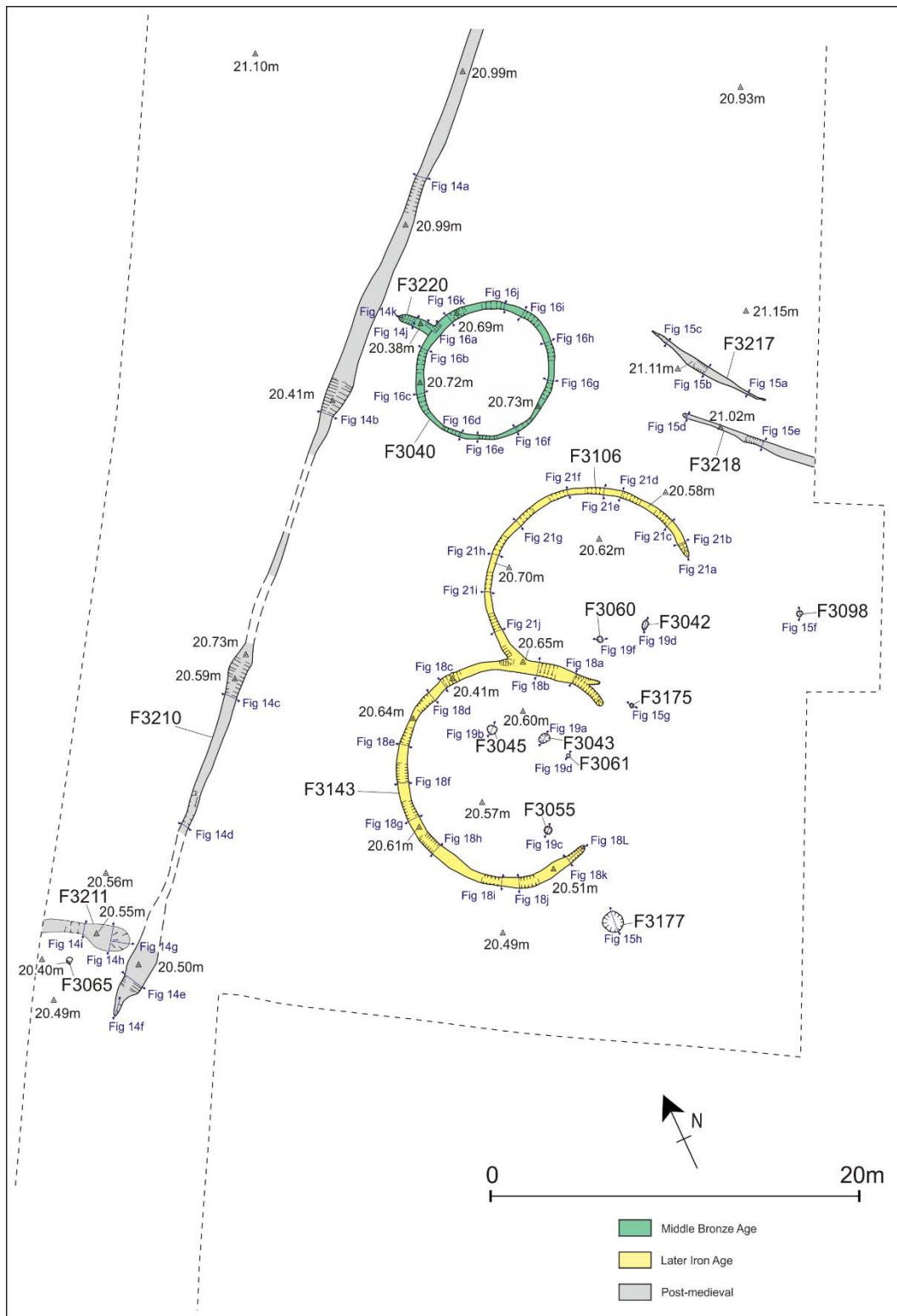


Fig. 13: Detail of features in Area 3

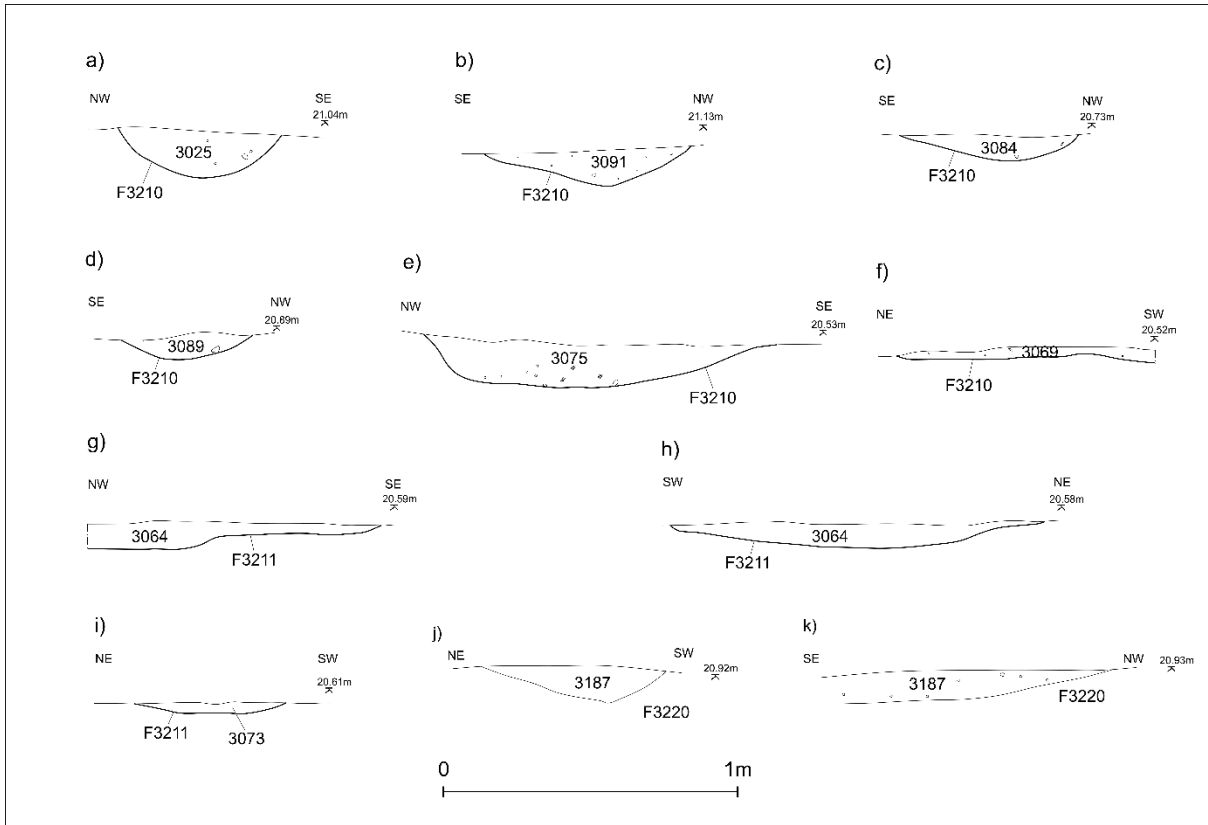


Fig. 14: Sections of gullies F3210, F3211 and F3220 in Area 3

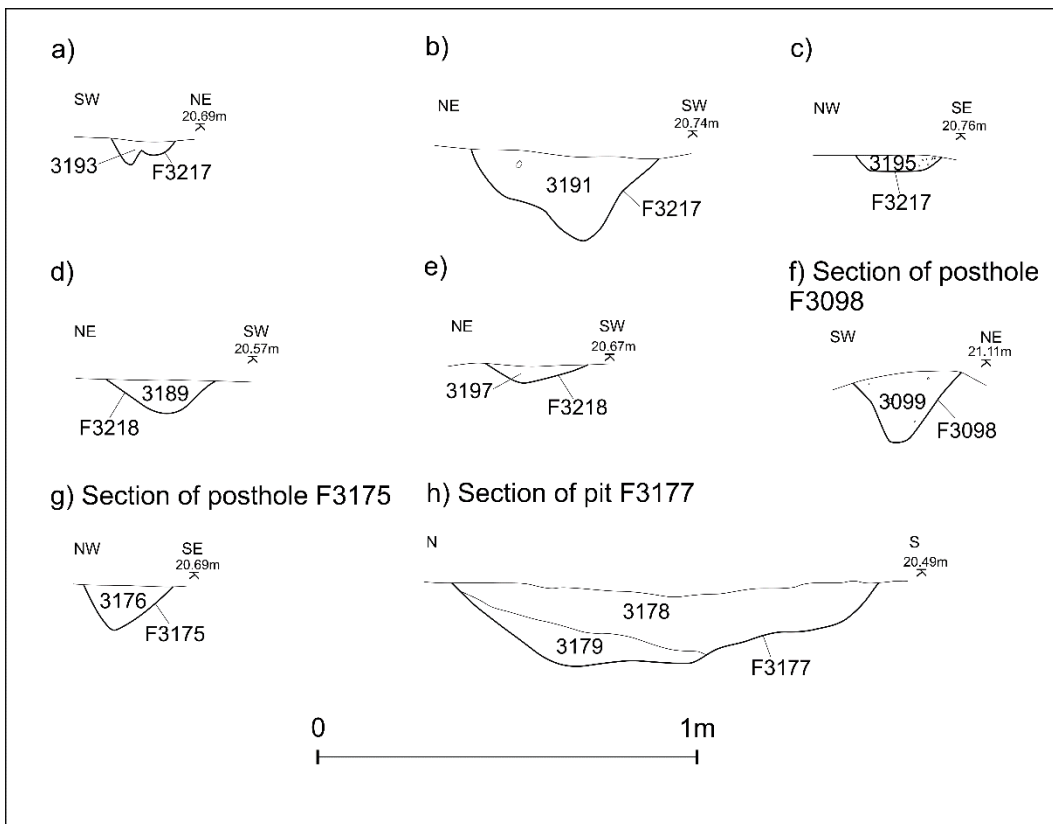


Fig. 15: Sections of gullies F3217 and F3218 and isolated pits and postholes F3098, F3175 and F3177 in Area 3

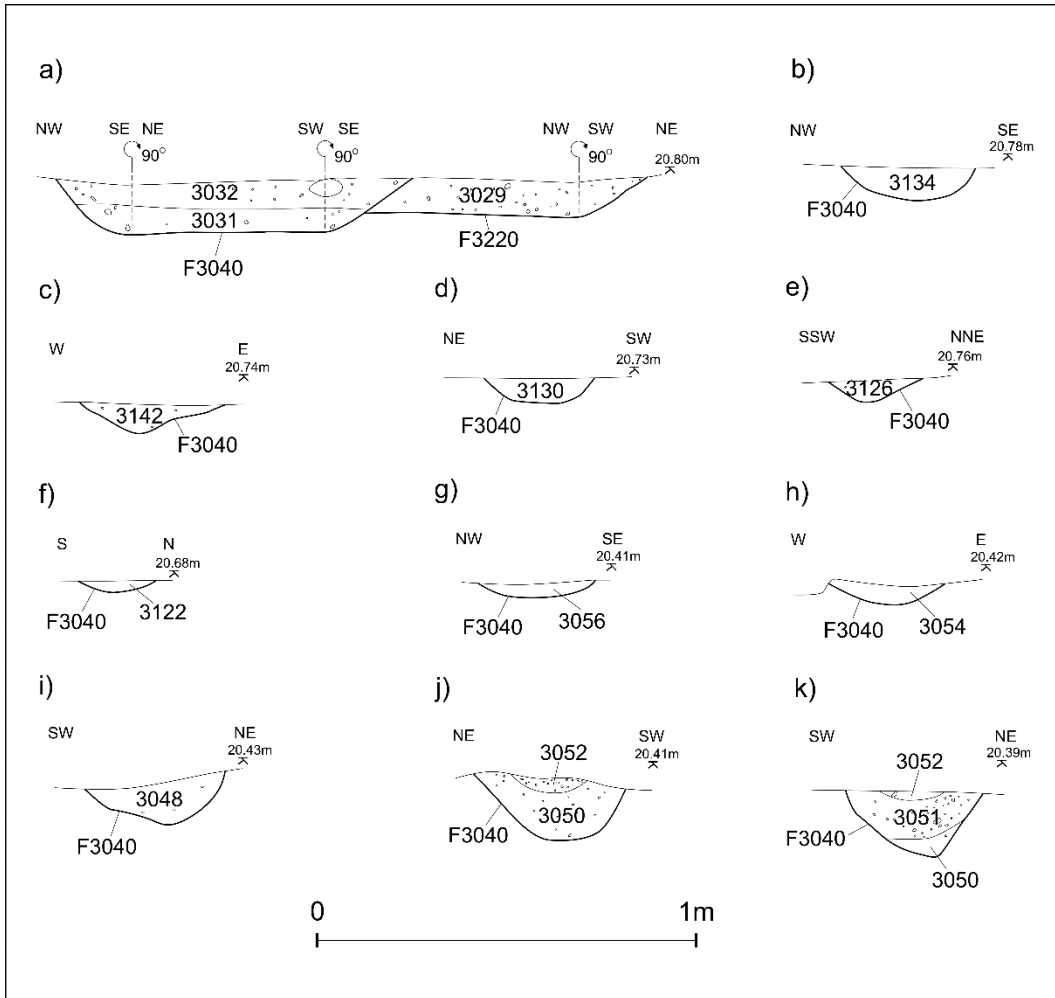


Fig. 16: Sections of ring ditch F3040 in Area 3



Fig. 17: Ring ditch F3040, in Area 3, looking north-east (scale 2m) Photo: AC archaeology

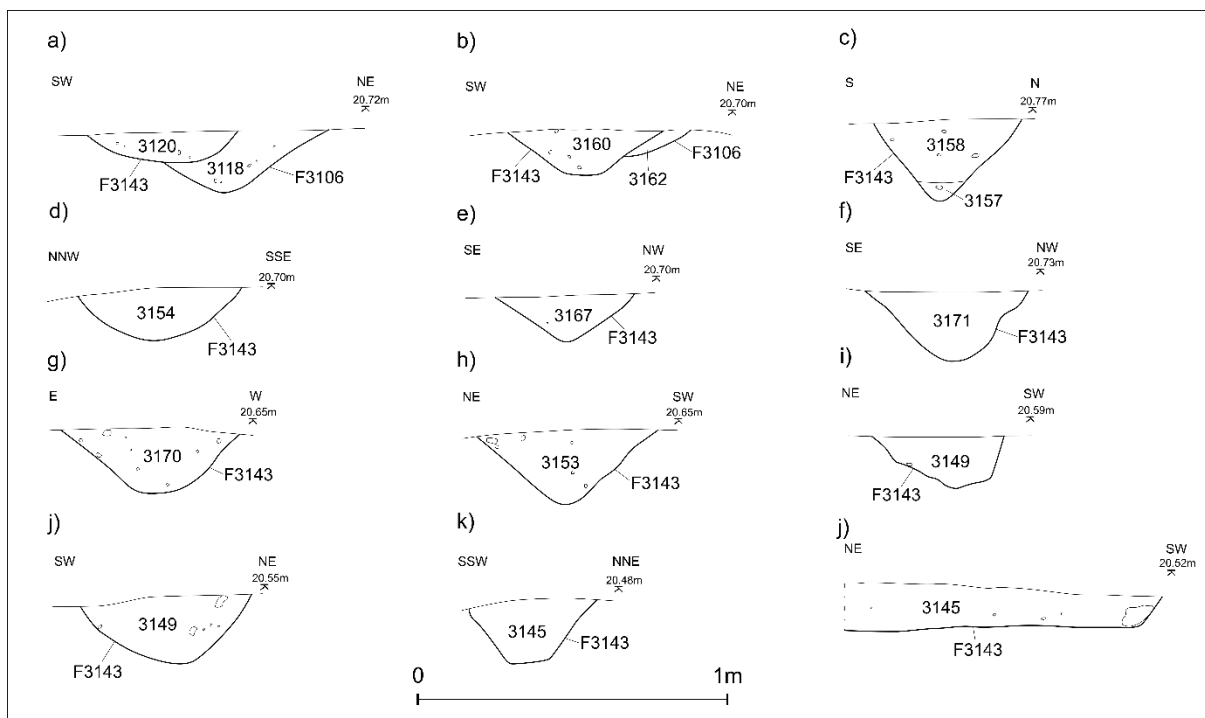


Fig 18: a-b, sections showing the relationship between roundhouses F3106 and F3143; c-i, sections of roundhouse F3143 in Area 3

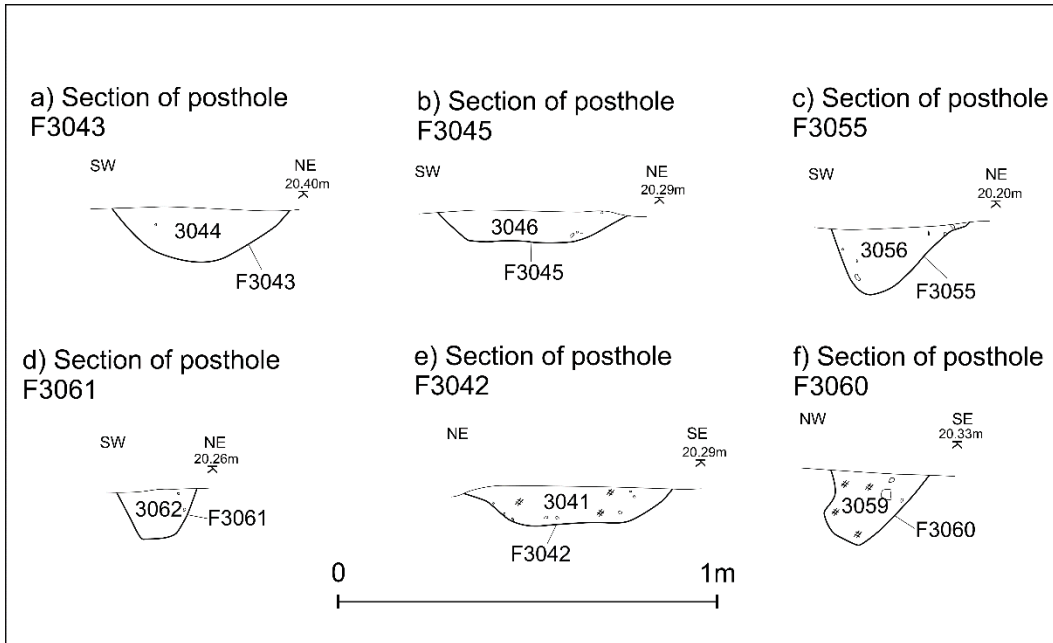


Fig 19: a-d, sections of postholes in association with roundhouse F3143; e-f, sections of postholes associated with roundhouse F3106 in Area 3

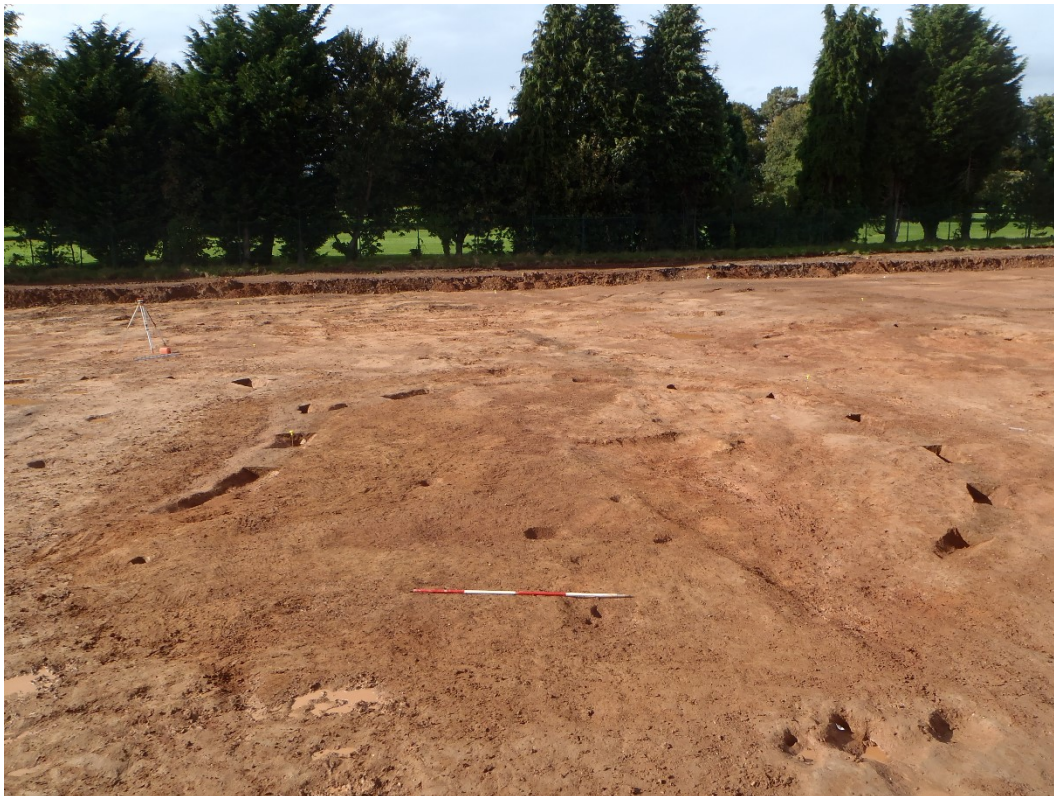


Fig. 20: Roundhouse F3143, in Area 3, looking north-east (scale 2m) Photo: AC archaeology

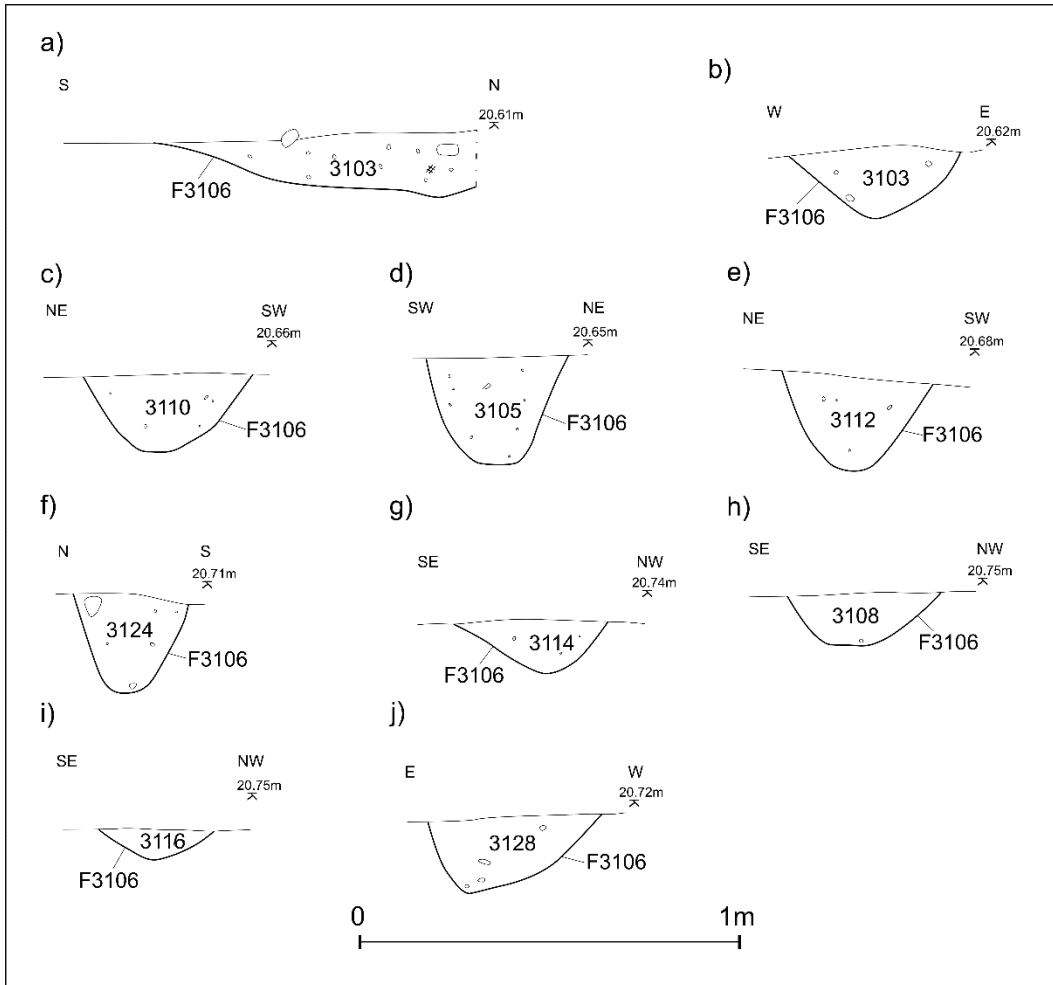


Fig. 21: Sections of roundhouse F3106 in Area 3



Fig. 22: Roundhouse F3106, in Area 3, looking north-west (scale 2m) Photo: AC archaeology

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