

# Grimstone Reservoir, Dorchester, Dorset

## An Archaeological Field Evaluation



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Grimstone Reservoir, Dorchester, Dorset

# An Archaeological Field Evaluation

for

## West Dorset District Council

by



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## Contents

Non-technical summary.....	ii
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Definition and objectives of a Field Evaluation .....	1
3. Site Location, Topography and Geology.....	2
4. Archaeological and historical background .....	2
5. Methodology.....	2
6. Results.....	5
7. The Finds.....	13
8. Discussion .....	17
9. Conclusions .....	18
10. Archive .....	18
11. COAS Acknowledgements.....	19
12. Bibliography .....	19

## Illustrations

Figure 1: Site setting showing relevant archaeological landscape.....	3
Figure 2: Trench plans over interpretation of gradiometer survey .....	4
Figure 3: Trenches 1 and 2, plans and sections .....	6
Figure 4: Trenches 3 and 4, plans and sections .....	7
Figure 5: Trench 5, plans and sections .....	8

## Plates

Plate 1. Trench 1 (from ESE).....	9
Plate 2. Post hole [107] (from ESE) .....	9
Plate 3. Post hole [109] (from WNW) .....	9
Plate 4. Ditch [102] (from NNE).....	9
Plate 5. Trench 2 (from SSE) .....	10
Plate 6. Pit [204] during recovery of large pot (from SW) .....	10
Plate 7. Pit [204] after full section removed (from SE) .....	10
Plate 8. Trench 3 (from SW).....	11
Plate 10. Trench 4 (from N) .....	11
Plate 9. Pit [303]: Half-circular stones <i>in situ</i> (from NW).....	11
Plate 11. Curvilinear ditch [407] and recut [404] (from W).....	11
Plate 12. Post hole [408] and pit [416] (from W).....	12
Plate 13. Trench 5 (from SSE).....	12
Plate 14. Ditch terminus [502] (from SSE) .....	12
Plate 15. Trench 5: south end before excavation (from NNW).....	12
Plate 16. Pit [507] (from WSW) .....	12

Plate 17. Ceramic phase 2 (CP): JB and PA rim types .....	15
Plate 18. CP 2: Jar type JB3.1 .....	15
Plate 19. CP 2: Bowl type BA2.2, traces of haematite coat .....	15
Plate 20. CP 2: Bowl types BA1.1, traces of haematite coat .....	15
Plate 21. CP 3: Jar type JB1.3 .....	15
Plate 21. CP 3: Jar type JC2.3 .....	15
Plate 21. Earlier Neolithic notched blade .....	15
Plate 22. Selection from the Iron Age flint group.....	15
Plate 23. Notch in the side of a chalk half disc.....	16
Plate 24. Notch in the side of a chalk half disc.....	16

## Appendices

Appendix 1. Information from Dorset Historic Environment Record.....	20
Appendix 2. Context descriptions .....	21
Appendix 3. Finds summary .....	24

## Non-Technical Summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Field Evaluation at Grimstone reservoir, Dorchester, Dorset, (centred on NGR SY 64594 95307) over 8 days between 15<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The investigation was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water Services Ltd.*

*The evaluation was requested by Wessex Water Services Ltd on the advice of Mr Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) in order to determine the most appropriate location for an extension of Grimstone reservoir.*

*The archaeological work confirmed that anomalies identified by geophysical survey on three sides of the reservoir reflected the underlying archaeology. The orientation of the anomalies strongly suggests that the scheduled field system north of the reservoir was merely part of a larger system which included fields identified from air photographs to its south. The current evaluation and one by Wessex Archaeology in 2008 strongly support English Heritage's interpretation that the system dates to the Iron Age. More specifically, the finds suggest that it was in active use from at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC/AD.*

*The evaluation by COAS has retrieved fragments from vessels dated to the earlier part of this range which would be of significant value to Iron Age research in the region as they are from a period which remains poorly understood. Ideally carbon dating should be applied if suitable material is found in soil samples retained from the evaluation. In any event the pottery ought to be made available to researchers through publication in a journal.*

*A small group of flints found with the pottery appears to have been worked at around this date. This represents a very late use of flint which, although not unexpected, is usually difficult to demonstrate because it is mixed with earlier material. Photographs of five large half discs of chalk have been sent to stone specialists.*

*Combined with the geophysical survey the evaluation has shown that in whichever direction the reservoir is extended important archaeology will be encountered and that mitigation strategies will need to be employed.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Field Evaluation at Grimstone Reservoir, near Dorchester, Dorset, (centred on NGR SY 64610 95300) (hereafter referred to as the Site) over 8 days between 15<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The investigation was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water Services Ltd.
- 1.2 The evaluation was requested by Wessex Water Services Ltd on the advice of Mr Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) in order plan mitigation of the extension of the reservoir on the Site. Mr Wallis carried out a monitoring visit on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011.
- 1.3 Prior to the commencement of the evaluation, COAS submitted a strategy document for the archaeological works to Mr Wallis and West Dorset District Council (*Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation: B0241 Grimstone, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9NP* (COAS June 2011)).
- 1.4 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1), General Policy and Principles, 1997, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) and the Local Development Framework Policy on Archaeology. The recommendation also conforms to County Structure and Local Plans.
- 1.5 This report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological setting of the site, and presents the results of the evaluation.

## 2. Definition and objectives of a Field Evaluation

- 2.1 An Archaeological Field Evaluation is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (formerly the Institute of Field Archaeologists) as:

*“a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features., structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.” (IfA 1994 rev. 2008).*

- 2.2 The purpose of a Field Evaluation is also defined by the IfA as:

*“...to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merits in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:*

- *the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource;*
- *the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat to the archaeological resource; and*
- *the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research (IfA 1994 rev. 2008).*

### 3. Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 3.1 The Site (centred on NGR SY 64593 95307) is situated 6km north west of Dorchester, Dorset (**Figure 1**). It lies on generally level land at a height of ca. 165m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and is in the north part of an arable field immediately south of Grimstone Reservoir. According to the British Geological Survey (2001), the underlying geology comprises Seaford Chalk formation underlying surface deposits of Clay-with-Flints Formation of clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological survey 2011). The soil drains moderately well.

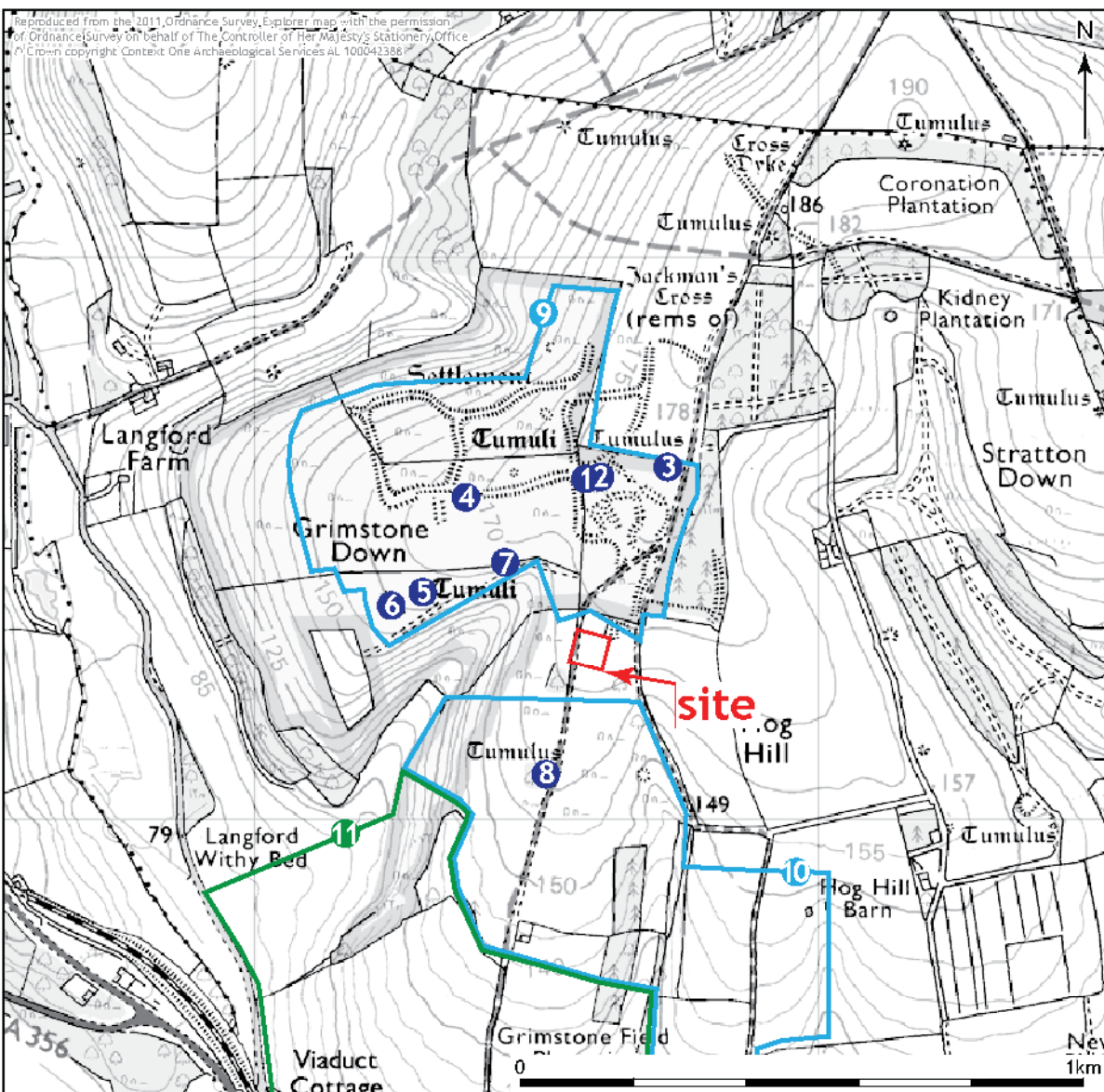
### 4. Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 The relevant archaeological background within the environs of the Site has been drawn principally from secondary sources. This comprises records held by Dorset County Council as part of the County Historic Environment Record (HER). The principal items and areas of interest are located on **Figure 1** and summarised below (**Appendix 1**) alongside their corresponding HER number and **Figure 1** identification number.
- 4.2 This shows that the Site lies in between two area rich crop marks and earthworks which have been recorded from the air. Individual and clusters of barrows are within between 220m and 350m to the north and south (**Appendix 1**, MDO 11908115 A-H) and the northernmost features of an extensive Iron Age or Romano-British field system are only 100m to the south, overlapping with a Medieval field system further to the south and south west (SMR 21693).
- 4.3 To the north of the reservoir and reaching along its east side to within 40m of the Site is a very well preserved Iron Age field system. A gradiometer survey in contiguous blocks around the west, south and east sides of the reservoir suggest that the tracks and enclosures to the north may have once formed a larger system with those from the south (Wessex Archaeology 2008a). Subsequent evaluation of the land east of the reservoir produced a preponderance of earlier Iron Age pottery as well as Middle, Late Iron Age and Romano British material within a comparatively modest assemblage (Wessex Archaeology 2008b, 5-7) from pits, post holes and ditches. It was suggested that two discrete farm units might have existed in this area of the field system, serviced by tracks some of which are still in use.

### 5. Methodology

- 5.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* published by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) in 1994 (revised 2008). COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* issued by the IfA in 1985 (revised 2008), and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990, revised 2008), at all times during the course of the investigation. Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 5.2 The Senior Archaeologist at Dorset County Council (DCC) was kept fully informed of the fieldwork schedule.
- 5.3 An evaluation consisting of five machine excavated trenches was undertaken. Each trench measured 20m x 1.6m (**Figure 2**). The locations of the trenches were determined by the results of the geophysical survey and in consultation with the Senior Archaeologist (Dorset County Council).





- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. SMR No. 11808015A part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow | 7. SMR No. 11808015G part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow |
| 2. SMR No. 11808015B part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow | 8. SMR No. 11808015H part of Scheduled Monument DO420 Bowl Barrow |
| 3. SMR No. 11808015C part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow | 9. SMR No. 1108011 part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Field System  |
| 4. SMR No. 11808015D part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow | 10. SMR No. 21609 Field System                                    |
| 5. SMR No. 11808015E part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow | 11. SMR No. 21603 Strip Field System                              |
| 6. SMR No. 11808015F part of Scheduled Monument DO422 Bowl Barrow |   |



- Bronze Age
- Iron Age
- Medieval

PROJECT TITLE

Grimstone, Dorchester, Dorset

FIGURE TITLE

Site setting showing the known archaeological landscape

SCALE

as shown

PROJECT CODE

C1/EVA/11/GRD

FIGURE NO.

1

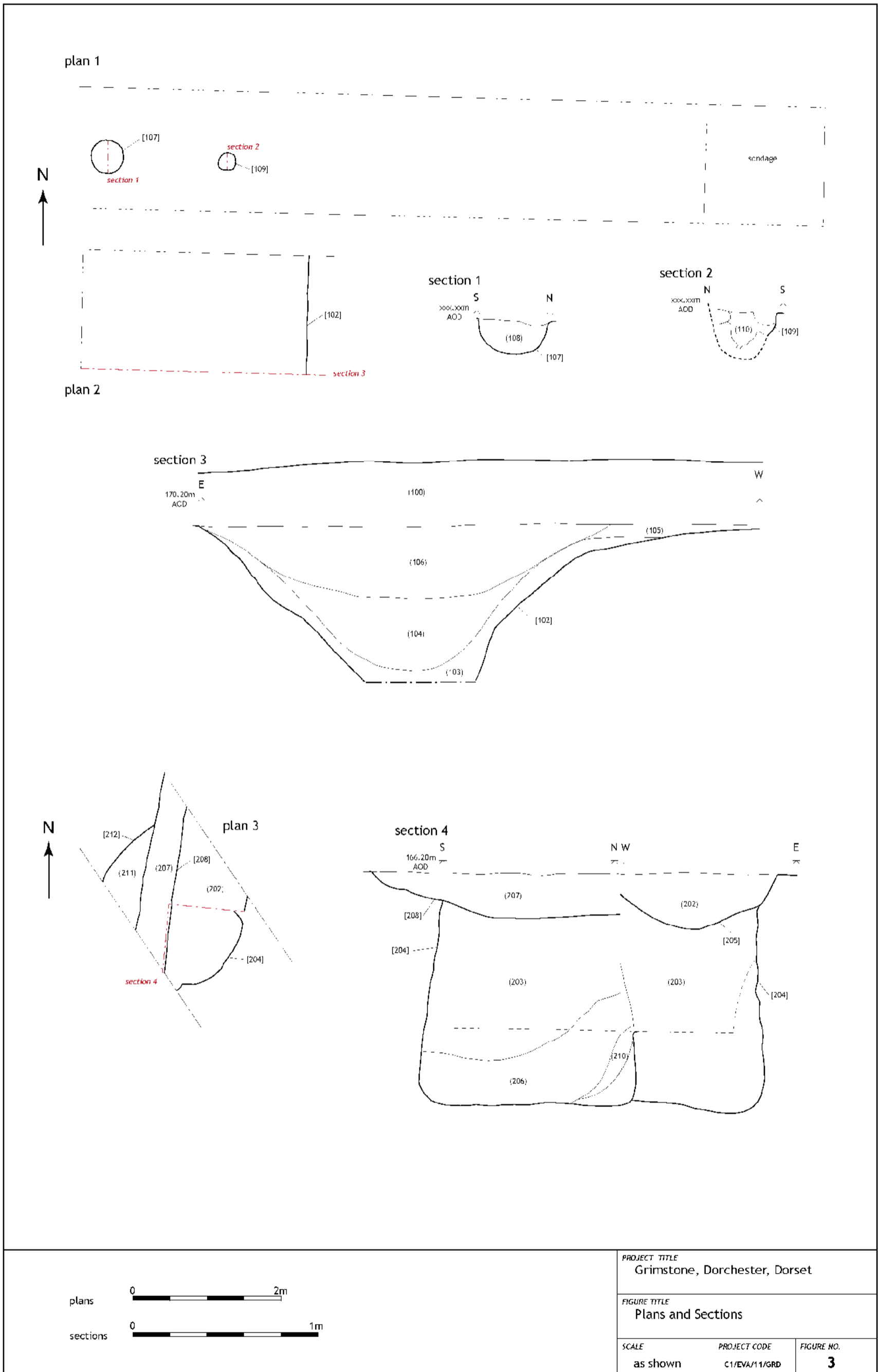


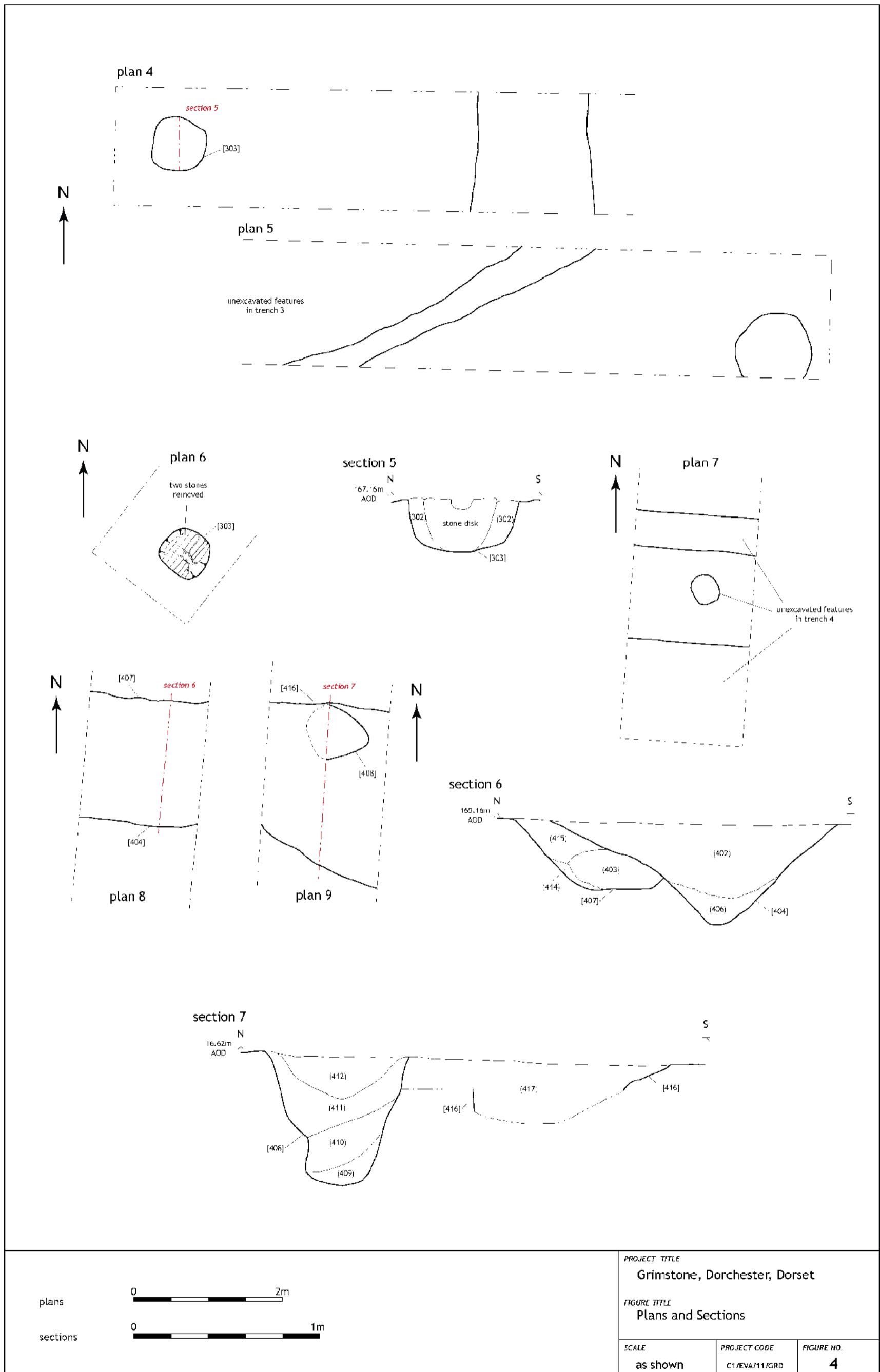


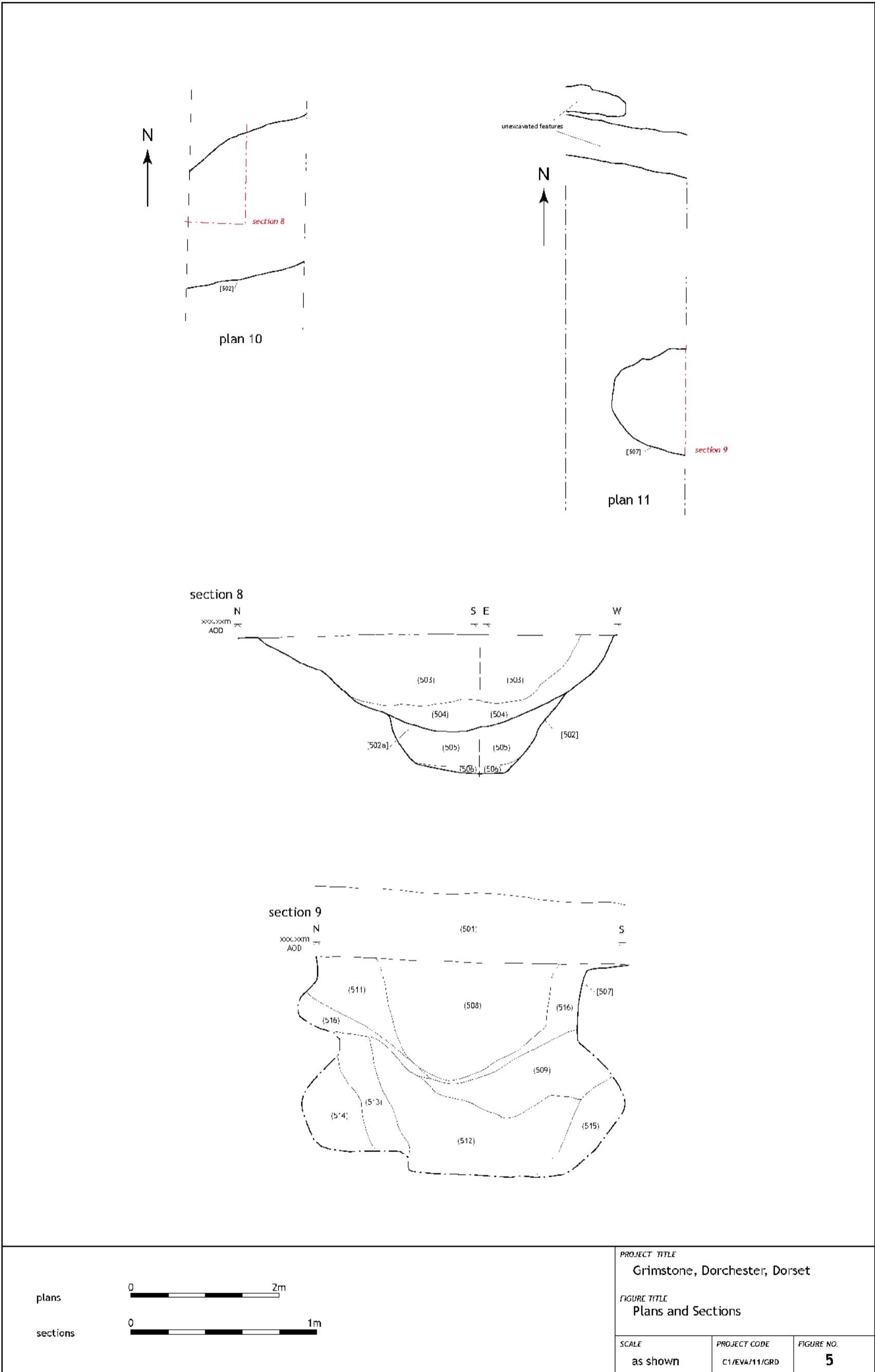
- 5.4 A tracked 360 degree or JCB type machine equipped with a 1.6m wide toothless (grading) bucket was used to remove topsoil/overburden under the supervision of COAS archaeological staff. Machine excavation continued until either archaeological features or natural geology was encountered.
- 5.5 After machine excavation had been completed all faces of the trenches were examined and, where necessary, cleaned using hand tools. One long face of each trench was cleaned by hand to allow an understanding of the site stratigraphy and for the identification of archaeological features.
- 5.6 Manual excavation commenced when archaeological features had been identified. In line with guidelines it was intended that each context should be excavated in a manner which produced at least one representative cross-section. As a minimum:
- small discrete features were to be fully excavated;
  - larger discrete features were to be half-sectioned (i.e. 50% excavated); and
  - long linear features were to be sample excavated along their length - with investigative excavations distributed along the exposed length of any such feature.
- 5.7 In the event the number of contexts encountered exceeded that anticipated by the geophysical survey and precluded the investigation of every context seen on the surface.
- 5.8 The full depth of archaeological deposits was assessed. This did not entail full excavation to natural stratigraphy in several instances as it became clear that complex and deep stratigraphy would be encountered.
- 5.9 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using standard COAS pro-forma context recording sheets.
- 5.10 Artefacts collected from archaeological features/deposits were bagged using a combination of site code and context numbers. All finds from the Site were retained for processing in preparation for further analysis and archiving. Specialist reports of the artefact assemblage were compiled using both descriptive and tabular formats (**Section 7, Appendix 3**). Soil sample retention and recovery of palaeoenvironmental materials was confined to dateable and undisturbed 'primary' deposits of visually demonstrable palaeoenvironmental potential, a method defined in *English Heritage: Environmental Archaeology Guidelines 2002*. Discussions as to the disposal of any artefactual material will be held with the Curator of Archaeology at Dorset County Museum.
- 5.11 All trenches remained open throughout the course of the archaeological evaluation and on completion, were backfilled by a contractor appointed by West Dorset District Council.

## 6. Results

- 6.1 The weather varied from bright to overcast with occasional heavy rain. The field was under a crop of linseed at the time of the evaluation, removed in the area covered by the Site.
- 6.2 The deposits and features encountered during fieldwork are listed and described below. In the text, context numbers for cuts appear in square brackets, e.g. [104]; layer and fill numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (102). Where a feature is discussed, it is referenced with its cut and associated fill numbers. A tabulated description of individual contexts is given in **Appendix 2**.









### Soil Sequence and Geology

- 6.3 Under the crop was a topsoil of varying dark reddish, greyish brown hues with frequent inclusions of subangular flint nodules ((100), (200), (300), (400), (500)), varying from 0.2m to .25m thick, overlay a dark reddish brown subsoil including gritty to medium subangular chalk nodules ((201), (301), (401), (501)) of between 0.15m and 0.01m thick, excepting in Trench 1, where the topsoil lay directly over natural (101). The subsoil ((201), (301), (401)) comprised a red brown, generally firm, silty clay including frequent subangular flints. No cut features could be shown to cut the subsoil whereas it was noted as sealing the upper fills of several Iron Age features. It overlay a natural of compacted red clay including frequent angular flints and occasional chalk fragments.



Plate 1. Trench 1 (from ESE)



Plate 2. Post hole [107] (from ESE)



Plate 3. Post hole [109] (from WNW)



Plate 4. Ditch [102] (from NNE)



### Trench 1

- 6.4 Trench 1 was the northernmost 20m by 1.6m trench, having a north north west to south south east orientation (**Plate 1**). It was the only trench which did not target anomalies identified by geophysical survey. Around 25-30cm of topsoil was removed directly on natural. Cleaning of the surface revealed two small post holes, [107] and [109] (**Figure 3**, plans 1 and 2; section 3; **Plates 2 and 3**) and a substantial ditch, [102] (**Figure 3**, plans 1 and 2; section 3; **Plate 4**). A sondage excavated at the west end revealed undifferentiated natural. As the features were discrete and were not identified during analysis of the magnetometry results they could neither be phased within the trench nor within the Site.

### Trench 2

- 6.5 Trench 2 was a 20m by 1.6m north north west to south south east orientated trench close to the centre of the area under investigation (**Plate 5**). It was designed to target what appeared to be the west terminus of a curvilinear positive magnetic anomaly at its south end. Around 25-30cm of topsoil was removed directly onto natural. Cleaning of the surface revealed the anomaly which, at first, appeared as a pit. Excavation of a quadrant (**Plate 6**), later extended to a half section (**Plate 7**), revealed a substantial beehive-profiled pit cut by a ditch. It was determined that the terminal ditch, [208], had been recut, [205]. Both cut the pit, [204] (**Figure 3**, section 4). A second pit outline [212] was identified in plan (**Figure 3**, plan 3) and, although it did not fall within the excavated area, it is reasonable to assume that since a continuation of its arc would have intersected with [204] it must have been entirely destroyed by the latter within the excavated half section.



Plate 5. Trench 2 (from SSE)



Plate 6. Pit [204] during recovery of large pot (from SW)



Plate 7. Pit [204] after full section removed (from SE)



### Trench 3

- 6.6 Trench 3 was a 20m by 1.6m south west to north east orientated trench west of the centre of the area under investigation (**Plate 8**). It was designed to target a moderately strong linear anomaly at its south west end and a roughly oval anomaly at its north east end. These and other features were identified when the surface had been cleaned after the removal of around 25-30cm of topsoil (300) by machine and of a subsoil (301). It was decided to prioritise the pit, [303] which, on slightly damaging exposure by the machine, was found to be a small half oval cut (**Figure 4**, plan 6, section 5) including five hemispherical discs with concentric central hemispherical perforations. They were pitched upright and set tightly side to side with the curved edges downwards (**Plate 9**). The other features were not excavated (**Figure 4**, plan 5).



Plate 8. Trench 3 (from SW)



Plate 10. Trench 4 (from N)



Plate 9. Pit [303]: Half-circular stones *in situ* (from NW)



Plate 11. Curvilinear ditch [407] and recut [404] (from W)



#### Trench 4

- 6.7 Trench 4 was a 20m by 1.6m south south west to north north east orientated trench in the south east of the area under investigation (**Plate 10**). It was designed to target an oval magnetic anomaly to its north and the corresponding south arc of the curvilinear explored in Trench 2. The latter was identified as a truncated V-profiled ditch [407] recut by a deeper full V-profiled ditch (**Figure 4**, plan 8, section 6; **Plate 11**).



Plate 12. Post hole [408] and pit [416] (from W)



Plate 14. Ditch terminus [502] (from SSE)



Plate 13. Trench 5 (from SSE)



Plate 15. Trench 5: south end before excavation (from NNW)



Plate 16. Pit [507] (from WSW)

- 6.8 The fill (417) of the pit to the north, [416], was cut by a substantial post hole, [408], from which the post appeared to have been withdrawn before it was backfilled with a series of deliberate deposits. There were voids in the lowest deposit, (409), which was sealed by soils including iron slag, (410). Pottery was found in both lower fills, as well as in (411) (**Figure 4**, plan 9, section 7; **Plate 12**). The upper fill (412) of [408] was sealed by the subsoil, (401), but the relationship between the latter and the upper fill (402) of [404] could not be determined. By analogy with the upper fills of the curvilinear ditch sections in Trench 2 the subsoil ought to be later.

#### **Trench 5**

- 6.9 Trench 5 was a 20m by 1.6m south east to north west orientated trench in the south east of the area under investigation (**Plate 13**). Its north west end targeted the east terminal of the south arc of the north curvilinear anomaly explored in Trench 2 and the wider arc of a curvilinear towards the south east end. A quadrant confirmed the presence of a ditch terminal. The interrupted line of the cut [502] implied the recutting of a lower fill, between contexts (504) and (505) (**Figure 5**, plan 10 section 8; **Plate 14**).
- 6.10 After cleaning, the south curvilinear appeared in plan (**Plate 15**) to intersect another feature [507]. On excavation this proved to be a substantial pit with rapid fills and some steep boundaries between contexts (508) and (511)/(510), (512) and (513) and (513) and (514), implying episodes of recutting followed shortly by further deliberate deposits (**Figure 5**, plan 11, section 9; **Plate 16**).

## **7. The Finds**

- 7.1 With the exception of charcoal and tuff stone, the finds recovered from the evaluation were washed and, where necessary, will be marked with an accession number issued by Dorset County Museum. The finds were separated into artefact types and recorded by context number, quantity and weight in grams. The finds are discussed below and are presented separately in a summary table (**Appendix 3**). A request will be made to the site owner to transfer the title of all finds to the above Museum.

#### **Pottery**

- 7.2 An entirely prehistoric pottery assemblage was recovered during the course of the evaluation, comprising 877 sherds (17393g). The condition included a few poor sherds but the majority were in excellent, unabraded, condition. The material was scanned and the quality allowed a fairly straightforward identification of four phases within the assemblage. Little allowance has been made for residuality so, without doubt, the two later phase groups will include material from the earlier. The mean sherd weight is 19.83g but this does not reflect sharp variations in the character of the assemblage which will be shown below. The form descriptions are derived from codes first used at Hengistbury Head and subsequently for Maiden Castle (Brown 1991), Danebury Environs Programme (Brown 2000) and Cadbury Castle (Woodward 2000).
- 7.3 Phase 1: There were four sherds (6g; mean sherd weight 1.5g) of pre-Iron Age material, characterised by grog and/or coarse quartz fabrics. All were very abraded and may be regarded as residual. No features can be shown to be of this phase.



- 7.4 Phase 2: The group was dominated by 381 (13696g; mean sherd weight 35.95g) Early Iron Age sherds, mostly from pit [204] contexts, (203) and (206). Typically the fabrics included small to medium quartz grains, crushed flint and, rarely, shell, mainly well fired. Vessel forms included ovate saucepan pots (PA1; **Plate 17**); high shouldered vessels (JB2; **Plate 17**); and ovate jars with girths diameters exceeding those of slight, high-shoulders and upright or slightly flared necks leading to simple, outwardly expanded, rims (JB3.1; **Plate 18**). Several vessels included fingertip decoration on the shoulder, similar to that employed on high-shouldered, straight sided jars (JB1.3) typical of Early Iron Age sites in southern Britain (e.g. Gingell and Morris 2000; Woodward 2000). The assemblage also included characteristic fine but undecorated carinated bowls, including bipartite bead rim forms, similar to those found at Potterne (Bowl Type 1; classified as BA1.11 in Tabor *in prep*) and tripartite forms with out-flaring rims (BA2.2; Brown 2000, fig. 3.29; **Plate 19**). Several bowl sherds retained traces of a bright red coat, possibly of haematite (**Plate 20**).
- 7.5 The best available dating for a group with these elements is that from Danebury, Hampshire. There, JB1 vessels were assigned a range from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, whilst BA2.2, JB2 and JB3 forms were considered to be current from the late 5<sup>th</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Brown 2000, 86). This was true for PA1 pots, although at Cadbury Castle they were considered to have a much earlier inception and remained in currency throughout most of the Iron Age. The retention of stylistic affinities with earlier forms suggests a date range within the late 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.
- 7.6 Phase 3: The group of 303 sherds (2566g; mean sherd weight 8.47g) are of similar fabrics to those of Phase 2 and retain several vessel forms (PA1, JB3.1; **Plate 21**) and fingertip decoration. Sherds with earlier stylistic elements were generally from the middle and lower fills of pit [507] (contexts below (508)), from a large post hole [408] and from the earlier phase of the curvilinear ditch (cuts [208], [407] and [502]). Significant new forms include rounded, proto-bead rim jars (JC2.3; **Plate 22**) and a straight-sided saucepan pot type with a sharply incised horizontal line below a flattened rim (PB1).
- 7.7 At Danebury the two latter forms are thought to have been in currency from the later fourth century to the mid first century BC but some of the earlier types are represented by large sherds in fresh condition and should not be regarded as residual, hence a date early within the range would be preferred here, possibly 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC.
- 7.8 Phase 4: The group of 189 sherds (1035g; mean sherd weight 5.48g) is dominated by quartz/sand fabrics, occasionally including chalk grits, as well as fully recognisable BB1. The introduction of high shouldered bead rim jars (JC3) and a very distinctive broad, flattened, bead rim, globular jar (JC4.1) is associated with the latter. Fragments of a countersunk lug might come from either vessel type. The sherds derive from the fills of the recut curvilinear ditch (fill (503); cuts [404], [205]) and another ditch in Trench 1 [102].
- 7.9 This group includes elements typical of well known assemblages from the later 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.
- Animal bone**
- 7.10 A total of 151 bone fragments (959g) were recovered. A superficial scan shows the presence of sheep (limb bones and teeth) and a small amount of human bone within the assemblage. The largest group (89 fragments, 768gm) is from the Phase 2 pit, [204].



Plate 17. Ceramic phase 2 (CP): JB and PA rim types



Plate 18. CP 2: Jar type JB3.1



Plate 19. CP 2: Bowl type BA2.2, traces of haematite coat



Plate 20. CP 2: Bowl types BA1.1, traces of haematite coat



Plate 21. CP 3: Jar type JB1.3



Plate 21. CP 3: Jar type JC2.3



Plate 21. Earlier Neolithic notched blade



Plate 22. Selection from the Iron Age flint group





Plate 23. Notch in the side of a chalk half disc



Plate 24. Notch in the side of a chalk half disc

### Flint

- 7.11 A total of 24 pieces (1374g) of struck flint were recovered. An Early Neolithic double notched blade from the upper fill of ditch [102] is plainly residual (**Plate 21**), as may be flakes and a nodule from the later phases of the curvilinear ditch (contexts (104), (106) and (402)). However, several of them are denticulated and crudely struck and may have been utilised during the Iron Age. Significantly, there is some coherence in the working of similar, very fresh looking, material from pit [204], which also produced denticulates, including a knife (**Plate 22**, left), large long flakes and a very large hammerstone from a group for the pit of 14 pieces (1049g). This may reasonably be regarded as a genuine Earlier Iron Age group, contemporary with the associated Phase 2 pottery.

### Worked stone and mortar

- 7.12 Most of the stone recovered from the Site was without diagnostic potential. A fragment of whetstone was recovered from pit [204] (context (203) which also produced a lump of slag) but the most striking and most perplexing stones were the perforated chalk half discs with concentric central perforations from pit [303] (Plates 9 and 23). They are of variable thickness but of very similar diameters. One is noted to have a 1.5cm diameter notch on its side (Plate 14). Photographs of the stones have been sent to an appropriate specialist.

### Environmental Assessment

- 7.13 Soil samples were collected from contexts (203) and (206) but no other contexts. The samples have been retained but will only be processed subject to discussions with Wessex Water Services Ltd and the Dorset County Archaeologist.

### Overall assessment of the finds

- 7.14 The pottery has enabled a good understanding of the Site chronology. The late 6th to 4th century groups from pits [507] and, especially, [204] should be regarded as of regional significance because the excellent quality material (large sherds in very good condition) is from a time frame which remains of considerable research interest and rarity, when compared with the later Middle and Late Iron Age. It is commensurate with broad descriptions provided by Wessex Archaeology (2008b, 5) of material found in the contiguous area immediately north east of the Site.

- 7.15 The small group of flints from pit [204] is of such a distinct character that it seems very likely to be contemporary with the pottery. Whilst earlier Prehistoric worked flint is fairly well understood and classified, material from the Iron Age has suffered neglect. In part this is because it is not easy to distinguish the Iron Age flint from residual material. In this instance there is a clear lack of any types which are diagnostically Middle Bronze Age or earlier. Should carbonised grain or twig be recovered from the associated soil samples there would be an excellent opportunity to date a very tight, discrete, assemblage which fills the gap between similarly discrete assemblages for which carbon dating assays gave 7th and 3rd century dates from Poyntington, Dorset and South Cadbury, Somerset (Tabor, in prep).
- 7.16 On a Site which should be noted for its clarity the chalk half-discs are an enigma. They resemble rotary quern stones but the soft material precludes such an interpretation. Whilst it is tempting to think of them mounted, roller-fashion, on an axle the chalk would quickly have worn and fractured when moved. If their setting in a purpose-dug pit reflects their use we may assume that they were not intended to move, in which case a shaft through the perforations might have been used as a weighted pivot. Might they have formed part of loom?
- 7.17 The bone assemblage is not large enough to offer a statistically sustainable analysis of animal husbandry and on the Site, but it would be desirable to at least list the material by species. The small amount of human material so far noted is no more than might be expected as part of the typical background scatter on many Iron Age sites.

## 8. Discussion

- 8.1 The Site lies within a landscape rich in recorded prehistoric and Medieval remains, of which several Bronze Age barrows and a field system, the latter considered to be Iron Age, are scheduled monuments. Due to time constraints and a higher yield of archaeological features than anticipated by the magnetometer survey it was not possible to sample all the contexts encountered in the five trenches but none of the excavated deposits are likely to be contemporary with the barrows.
- 8.2 On the other hand, the orientation of features revealed by the gradiometer survey (Wessex Archaeology 2008a) and subsequent evaluation by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 2008b), strongly suggest that features investigated by COAS were part of the northern field system, and that it formed a larger, infilled, co-axial system with the fields to the south, both served by an intermittently surviving north to south track around 2km in length. After years of cultivation, the central part of the system only survives as cut features below the topsoil.
- 8.3 The earliest identifiable activity is represented by the cutting of pit [212] by pit [204]. The digging of another pit, [507], appears to be a little later and there is evidence that it was deliberately filled then recut and refilled on more than one occasion, judging by the steep boundaries between some contexts. Later Middle Iron Age activity includes the digging of opposing north and south curvilinear ditches which together encircle an area with an internal diameter of around 8m. There are opposing gaps on the west and east sides with a distance of around 4m between their terminals. On their own, they would not have formed an enclosure and it seems unlikely that they would have been associated with a roundhouse. In the centre a shallow pit with diffuse boundaries was cut by a single pit or substantial posthole. A single post in this location might have had totemic significance. The deliberate filling of the pit/posthole and more gradual infilling of the recut curvilinear ditches appear to be the latest events on the Site, occurring during the later 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or the first century AD.

- 8.4 The earlier Iron Age ceramic assemblage is of excellent quality. Although the number of vessels represented may not exceed a dozen, the large, sharp-edged, sherds will allow reconstruction of several full profiles from rim to base of types with very distinctive characteristics, apparently blending characteristics of better understood material from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC found elsewhere. Time has not allowed comparison with material found at nearby Poundbury hillfort (Richardson 1940) but this would be desirable. It is of interest to note that whilst Grimstone's later Iron Age pottery is analogous to that recovered from Maiden Castle the earlier material has no parallels there (Brown 1991). Sherds from Cadbury Castle (Woodward 2000), Danebury and Houghton Down (Brown 2000) are more closely comparable, the latter supported by carbon dating.
- 8.5 Of the other finds, the bone assemblage is too small to be of great value on its own. On the other hand, although also a small group, the flints from the earlier Iron Age contexts provide a rare opportunity to analyse and present a discrete assemblage from that period. Finally, the half-discoidal, perforated chalk blocks remain enigmatic and parallels should be sought in the literature, especially as they were in a group apparently in a fit for purpose context.

## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The evaluation has shown continuity of activity from around the 5<sup>th</sup> century to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC/AD in several, readily identifiable, phases. The field system to the north has been protected by schedule. However, as subsurface deposits appear to survive well on all sides of the reservoir and are clearly part of the system, any expansion of the reservoir ought to be preceded by full excavation of features which will or might be destroyed by it.
- 9.2 When combined with the geophysical evidence there are strong reasons to believe that the scheduled field system in the north of the reservoir formed part of a greater whole with the one to the south, identified from air photographs. The full system would have extended for nearly 2km along a roughly north to south track which, in places, continues to serve modern farms.
- 9.3 Regardless of decisions affecting those areas, the pottery assemblage from pits on the present Site should be fully analysed and published in an appropriate journal as they are of potentially regional importance. Allowance will need to be made for time to reconstruct the vessels and to draw them, as well as for preparing a publication. Maximum advantage to research will be gained if absolute dating can be obtained for associated material. Soil samples have been retained and these should be processed to ascertain the presence of suitable material (ideally, spiciated cereal grains or twigs).
- 9.4 The flint assemblage should also be made available to researchers as it appears to include an identifiable Iron Age component. Ideally, the assemblages would be integrated with that recovered by Wessex Archaeology and any produced by further archaeological investigations prior to the extension of the reservoir.

## 10. Archive

- 10.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 138 digital images in .jpg format, drawn plans and sections on stable drawing film and the written paper record - including context sheets, and various registers. The archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 2001) / *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991). Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with Dorset County Museum within 12 months following the submission of this report.

10.2 Copies of the Field Evaluation report will be deposited with:

**Ms Kathryn Pollard**  
Environmental Services  
Wessex Water Services Ltd  
Claverton Down Road  
Bath  
Somerset  
BA2 7WW

**Historic Environment Service**  
Environmental Services Directorate  
County Hall  
Colliton Park  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1XJ

## 11. COAS Acknowledgements

11.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Kathryn Hollard of Wessex Water Services Ltd for liaising with Context One staff during the. Mr Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) visited the Site and has provided curatorial advice. C. G. Crook and Sons carried out mechanical excavation of the trenches.

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#### Appendix 1. Information from Dorset Historic Environment Record

HER No. & Figure 1 ref.	Description	NGR	Distance /Direction from Site
<b>Bronze Age (2300BC - 700BC)</b>			
SMR 11808 015A 1	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Recorded by L. V. Grinsell as 'Stratton 4'. One of larger group of 8 bowl barrows on Grimstone Down. 50' in diameter and 5' high. It has been disturbed in the middle (RCHM). Condition assessed as 'Good' in 1984.	SY 6459 9561	Ca. 300m N
SMR 11808 015B 2	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Survival assessed as 'Some' in 1952.	SY 6461 9561	Ca. 300m N
SMR 11808 015C 3	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Survival assessed as 'Some' in 1952.	SY 6473 9563	Ca. 350m NNE
SMR 11808 015D 4	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Recorded by L. V. Grinsell as 'Stratton 3'. 45' in diameter, 5' high. Condition assessed as 'Good' in 1984.	SY 6438 9558	Ca. 360m NW
SMR 11808 015E 5	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Recorded by L. V. Grinsell as 'Stratton 2'. 35' in diameter and 2.5' high. Condition assessed as 'Very Good' in 1984.	SY 6430 9540	Ca. 320m WNW
SMR 11808 F015F 6	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Recorded by L. V. Grinsell as 'Stratton 1'. 22' in diameter and 2.5' high. Condition assessed as 'Good' in 1984.	SY 6425 9538	Ca. 350m W
SMR 11808 015G 7	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (part of Scheduled monument DO422). Survival assessed as 'Some' in 1952.	SY 6445 9545	Ca. 220m NW
SMR	<b>Bowl Barrow</b> (Scheduled monument DO420). Recorded by L. V.	SY 6452	Ca. 230m S



11808 015H 8	Grinsell as 'Stratton 6'. 52' in diameter, 5' high. Survival assessed as 'Most' in 1952.	9508	
<b>Iron Age (800BC - AD42)</b>			
SMR 1108011 9	<b>Field System</b> (Scheduled monument DO422). Grimston Down village settlement including four round barrows (formerly DO423). Condition assessed as 'Very Good' in 1984.	SY 646 956	Ca. 40m to 600m N to NW
<b>Iron Age/Roman (800BC - AD450)</b>			
SMR 21609 10	<b>Field System</b> . Fragments of a banked field system, probable Iron Age/Romano-British origin, visible as low earthworks and cropmarks on air photographs. Estimated area of 755m by 928m	SY 64646 94747	Ca. 100m to 1000m SSE to SSW
<b>Medieval (AD1066 - AD1547)</b>			
SMR 21603 11	<b>Strip Field System</b> . System with strip lynchets and ridge & furrow visible as earthworks and cropmarks on air photographs. Estimated area of 1013m by 1022m. 'Well-preserved'.		Ca. 490m to 960m S to SW

## Appendix 2. Context descriptions

Context	Type	Description	Width	Depth	Relationships	Interpretation
(100)	Layer	Very dark reddish brown, compacted, silty clay including up to 30% gritty to medium subrounded to angular flint nodules		0.25m to 0.30m	Over (106)	Topsoil
(101)	Layer	Red, compacted, clay including up to 40% gritty to medium subrounded to angular flint nodules			Under (100), cut by [102]	Natural
[102]	Cut	Roughly V-shaped cut	3.0m	1.2m+	Filled by (106), (104), (103); cuts (101).	Ditch cut
(103)	Fill	Yellowish reddish brown clay including up to 50% broken flint nodules		0.8m	Under (104) and (105). Fill of [102]	Lower ditch
(104)	Fill	Reddish brown, cemented, clay including up to 35% flint nodules		0.6m	Under (106); over (103); fill of [102]	Middle ditch fill or lower recut fill
(105)	Layer	Reddish brown, compacted, silty clay		0.1m	Butted by (106); over (103); upper fill of [102]	Upper ditch silt
(106)	Fill	Dark grey, compacted, silty clay including up to 20% flint nodules	2.4m	0.4m	Under (100); over (104); abuts (105); fill of [102]	Fill of ditch recut
[107]	Cut	Roughly hemispherical cut	0.35m	0.2m	Filled by (108); cuts (101)	Post hole cut
(108)	Fill	Dark yellow brown, firm, silty clay including up to 50% gravelly flint nodules	0.35m	0.2m	Under (100); fill of (107)	Post hole fill
[109]	Cut	Roughly hemispherical cut	0.3m	0.2m	Filled by (110); cuts (101)	Small posthole cut
(110)	Fill	Dark yellow brown, firm, silty clay including up to 60% flint nodules	0.3m	0.2m	Under (100); fill of (109)	Post hole fill
(200)	Layer	Dark grey, soft, clay including frequent angular flint (<0.2m) and occasional rounded chalk fragments (<0.05m)		0.2m	Over (201)	Topsoil
(201)	Layer	Dark, reddish brown, friable, silty clay including frequent angular flints		0.1m	Under (200); over (207) and (202); 209	Subsoil
(202)	Fill	Grey, friable, silty clay including frequent angular flint (<0.2m) and occasional rounded chalk fragments (<0.05m)	0.85m	0.3m	Under (201); fill of [205]; over (203)	Fill of curvilinear ditch
(203)	Fill	Very dark brown, compacted, silty clay including frequent angular flints (<0.3m)	1.5m	0.73m	Under (207) and (202); cut by (205); over (206)	Middle pit fill
[204]	Cut	Truncated cone-shaped cut	1.1m	1.0m	Filled by (203), (206), (210); cuts (209)	Pit cut
[205]	Cut	Splayed U-shaped cut	0.85m	0.3m	Filled by (202); cuts (203) and ?(208)	Curvilinear ditch cut



(206)	Fill	Very dark brown, compacted, clay including upto 50% angular flint and chalk fragments (<0.2m)	1.10m	0.3m	Under (203); over (210); fill of [204]	Lower pit fill
[207]	Fill	Grey, friable silty clay	1.3m	0.25m	Under (201); over (206); unclear (202)	Fill of curvilinear ditch
[208]	Cut	Broad, shallow curvilinear cut.	1.3m	0.25m	Filled by (207); cuts (203)	Curvilinear ditch cut
(209)	Layer	Red, compacted, clay including frequent angular flint (<0.3m) and occasional rounded chalk (0.05m) fragments			Under 201; cut by [204], [205], [208]	Natural
(210)	Fill	Brownish yellow clay	0.3m	0.4m	Under (206; fill of [204]	Lower pit fill, edge collapse
(211)	Fill	Grey (Unexcavated)			Under (201); fill of [212]	
[212]	Cut				Filled by (211); cuts (209)	
(300)	Layer			0.25m	Over (301)	Topsoil
(301)	Layer				Under (301); over (302)	Subsoil
(302)	Fill	Reddish brown, firm, clay including frequent angular flint fragments (<0.03m) and large semicircular stones with central semicircular perforation	0.6m	0.27m	Under (301);	Pit fill
[303]	Cut	Half oval cut	0.6m	0.27m	Filled by (302); cuts (304)	Cut of pit
(304)	Layer	Red, compacted, clay including frequent angular flint (<0.3m) and occasional rounded chalk (0.05m) fragments			Cut by [303]	Natural
(400)	Layer	Very dark grey, firm, silty clay including frequent angular flints (<0.3m)		0.2m	Over (401)	Topsoil
(401)	Layer	Reddish brown, firm, silty clay including frequent angular flints (<0.2m)		0.1m	Under (400); unclear (402)	Subsoil
(402)	Fill	Very dark greyish brown, firm, silty clay including frequent angular flints (0.05m)			Unclear (401); over (406); abuts (415)	Upper ditch fill
(403)	Fill	Grey clay including occasional angular flint (<0.05m)	0.44m	0.2m	Cut by [404]; under (415); abuts(414); fill of [407]	Lower ditch fill
[404]	Cut	V-profiled curvilinear cut	1.65m	0.55m	Filled by (402), (406); cuts (415), (403), (405)	Recut of curvilinear ditch
(405)	Layer	Red clay including frequent angular fractured flint (0.2m)			Under (401); cut by [404], [407], [408], [416]	Natural
(406)	Fill	Strong brown, firm, silty clay including frequent angular flint (<0.2m)	0.3m	0.3m	Under (402); fill of [404]	Primary ditch fill
[407]	Cut	Splayed U-profiled curvilinear cut	0.5m	0.3m	Filled by (415), (403), (414); cut by [404]; cuts (405)	Curvilinear ditch cut
[408]	Cut	Truncated conical cut	0.8	0.7m	Filled by (412), (411), (410), (409); cuts (417)	Cut of post hole
(409)	Fill	Dark brown grey, blocky, friable, silty clay with many voids	0.35m	0.15m	Under (410); fill of [408]	Rapid basal fill of post hole
(410)	Fill	Dark yellowish brown, firm, silty clay including frequent flint grits, occasional small subrounded gritty pebbles and lump of iron slag	0.3m	0.25m	Under (411); over (409); fill of [408]	Lower middle weathering fill of posthole
(411)	Fill	Dark, yellowish brown, soft, silty clay including frequent gritty and occasional larger flints	0.3m	0.4m	Under (412); over (410); fill of [408]	Slow upper middle fill of post hole
(412)	Fill	Yellowish brown, soft, silty clay including frequent medium sized angular flint pebbles			Under (401); over (411); fill of [408]	Slow upper fill of post
(414)	Fill	Reddish brown, firm, clay with silt including moderate angular flint with chalk flecks			Under (415); butted by (403); fill of ([407]	Moderate primary silt
(415)	Fill	Reddish brown, firm, clay with silt including moderate angular flint with			Cut by [404]; over (403); fill of [407]	Slow upper ditch fill

		chalk flecks				
[416]	Cut	Shallow subcircular cut	2.2m	0.65m	Cut by [408]; filled by 417; cuts (405)	Broad, shallow pit cut
(417)	Fill	Yellowish brown, soft, clay including frequent small angular flint pebbles			Cut by [408]; fill of [416]	Slow single pit fill
(500)	Layer					Topsoil
(501)	Layer					
(502)	Cut	Truncated V-profiled curvilinear cut	2.1m	0.75m	Filled by (503), (504), (505), (506); ? cut by [507]; cuts (501)	Curvilinear ditch terminus
(503)	Fill	Darkish greyish brown, firm, silty clay including frequent small and medium angular flints	0.55m	0.52m	Under (500); over (504); fill of [502]	Slow upper ditch fill
(504)	Fill	Very dark grey, firm, silty clay including frequent medium angular flint fragments and burnt stone	0.45m	0.15m	Under (503); over (505); fill of [502]	Slow upper middle ditch fill
(505)	Fill	Dark reddish brown, firm, clay including occasional medium subrounded flints and chalk and tufa flecks	0.3m	0.2m	Under (504); over (506); fill of [502]	Slow lower middle ditch fill
(506)	Fill	Dark reddish brown, firm, clay including moderate chalk fragments			Under (505); fill of [502]	Primary ditch silt
[507]	Cut	Conical, under cut			Filled by (508), (511), (510), (516), (509), (512), (515), (513), (514); cuts [502]	Pit cut
(508)	Fill	Very dark brown, soft, silty clay including frequent angular and rounded flint pebbles, charcoal and chalk flecks. Some voids			Under (511); abuts (511), (510); fill of [507]	Rapid upper pit fill (fill of recut?)
(509)	Fill	Dark brown, soft, silty clay including frequent charcoal and chalk flecks and occasional flint nodules			Under (510), (516); over (512), (515); fill of [507]	Rapid middle pit fill
(510)	Fill	Darkish, reddish brown, firm, clay including frequent chalk flecks and occasional charcoal flecks and subangular flints			Butted by (508); probably equivalent of (511); over (509), (516); fill of [507]	Moderate upper pit fill
(511)	Fill	Darkish, reddish brown, firm, clay including frequent chalk flecks and occasional charcoal flecks and subangular flints and burnt tufa			Butted by (508); probably equivalent of (510); over (516); fill of [507]	Moderate upper pit fill
(512)	Fill	Strong brown, soft, clay including frequent large and medium subrounded and subangular flints and charcoal flecks. Not fully excavated			Under (509); abuts (513), (515); fill of [507]	Rapid lower pit fill
(513)	Fill	Dark brown, firm, silty clay including frequent chalk flecks and large flint pebbles and charcoal flecks			Under (516); butted by (512); abuts (514); fill of [507]	Possible pit side collapse material
(514)	Fill	Dark brown, soft, clay including frequent gritty chalk and flint flecks and nodules and charcoal flecks			Butted by (513); fill of [507]	Lower pit side fill within under cut
(515)	Fill	Dark brown, firm, clay including frequent chalk grits and flint flecks and nodules and charcoal flecks and a lump. Not fully excavated			Under (509), butted by (512); fill of [507]	Lower pit side fill within under cut
(516)	Fill	Dark brown soft silty clay lens including frequent chalk grits and flecks and charcoal flecks			Under (511); butted by (508), (510); over (509), (512), (513)	Moderate upper middle pit lens, probable rainwash

### Appendix 3. Finds summary

Cont	Pre IA pottery		E-MIA pottery		M-LIA pottery		LIA pottery		Bone		Flint		Other stone		Slag		Charcoal	
	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
103									7	27								
104							63	307	9	24	2	9	5	534				
106							22	118	8	86	6	62	1	28			4	6
202	1	1					17	133	3	7								
203			282	11052					74	567	12	1045	13	930	1	76	3	<5
205													2	1412				
206			85	2561					15	201	2	4						
302	1	1											5	63000				
402					38	238					2	254						
403					12	33			8	4								
409	1	3																
410															1	178		
411					32	181												
503							87	477										
504	1	1			6	91							4	135				
505					13	28							1	7				
506					1	5												
507																		
508					22	193												
509			14	83	12	114			4	10								
510					52	339												
511					61	563												
512					9	61			12	26			1	306				
513					45	720			1	1								
515									10	6							4	17
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>13696</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>2566</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>1035</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1374</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>66352</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>&lt;26</b>