JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

ON

BANBURY BOOSTER 876F

OXFORDSHIRE

SP 4536 3868 to SP 4522 3490

On behalf of

Thames Water Utilities Ltd

October 2005

REPORT FOR	Thames Water Utilities Ltd Engineering Division (PU002) Gainsborough House Manor Farm Road Reading RG2 0JN
PREPARED BY	Carmen Cuenca
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Long White Cloud Waterperry Road Holton Oxfordshire OX33 1PW Tel/Fax 01865 876637 Email: jmhs99@hotmail.com
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CONTENTS

Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the stripping of the easement for the construction of approximately 4 km of pipeline. An old ploughsoil was observed in most of the fields containing both medieval and post-medieval sherds of pottery.

An early Neolithic pit and a further pit dated to the late Neolithic were found close to a known Causewayed Enclosure. Struck flints show a further activity in the area in the early Neolithic, and late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age periods.

Trenching, prior to stripping, was carried out in an area of ridge and furrow where there appeared to be later earthworks. The later earthworks were found to be modern in date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The pipeline ran from the junction of Milton Road and the road to Coombe Hill (NGR SP 4522 3490) northwards to Salt Way, NW of Bodicote (NGR SP 4536 3868). The route of the new main was across arable land and pasture. The underlying geology was ironstone.

1.2 Planning Background

Thames Water Utilities Ltd laid approximately 4 km of pipe in Oxfordshire, SP 4522 3490 to SP 4536 3868. Due to the potential of the work to affect archaeological deposits an archaeological watching brief was maintained during the course of the groundworks.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposed pipeline was constructed in an area of archaeological potential. The pipeline passed *c.* 150m west of the cropmark site of a causewayed enclosure (SMR 16016) near Wykhan Farm (SP 4521 3830). Approximately 200m further eastwards is the cropmark site of a ?Bronze Age ring ditch (SMR 13471). Further southwards are the earthworks of a probable medieval castle (SMR 5425) noted on the 1882 Ordnance Survey map (SP 4533 3717). This is to the north-east of Upper Grove Mill (SP 4530 3717) and *c*. 180m east of the pipeline. Upper Grove Mill is a post-medieval watermill (SMR 124). To the east is the findspot (SP 4544 3714) of unspecified Roman remains found in 1852 (SMR 1767), which is approximately 200m east of the pipeline. To the south is a cropmark of an undated linear feature (SMR 11826) near Bloxham Grove Road. This is 100m east of the pipeline. The last feature known in the vicinity of the pipeline is the former railway station (Milton Halt) at Milton (SMR 12451 at SP 4530 3527).

Figure 1. Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

- In particular

    - to record any evidence of further prehistoric activity or settlement.
    - to record any use of the landscape in the Romano British and medieval periods

- The results of the investigations will be made public.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Thames Water Utilities Ltd and Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the stripping of the main compound to the south of the pipeline and the pipeline easement over the course of three weeks. The compound area was 47m x 47m and was stripped to a depth of 300-400mm to allow the laying of hardcore to provide a stable base for site equipment. Within the compound, the excavation of a pit for a tank pump to a depth of 3000mm was inspected. The *c*.20m wide easement was *c*. 4 km long, and was excavated to a general depth of 350- 400 mm.

A drainage trench, 0.3m wide and 1.4-1.5m deep, was dug along the side of the easement. Although it was not monitored possible archaeological remains would have been minimally damaged and probably not seen due to the narrow width of the trench.

The topsoil was removed first using 360º excavators fitted with a toothless bucket varying in width from 800mm to 1800mm. Within Fields 11-13 the eastern 12m of the easement were stripped using a 360º excavator while the western part was stripped using a bulldozer. In the area where the bulldozer was working the spoil heap was carefully scanned in order to recover any significant artefacts as well as the surface, despite the obvious difficulty to distinguish any potential archaeology due to the heavy tracking by plant prior to inspection. Although no features were seen in this area it was not possible to demonstrate the total absence of potential archaeological remains.

Prior to stripping in Field 7, three potential building platforms overlying ridge and furrow were identified. This area was evaluated prior to the contractors moving into

this field. Two trenches totalling 97.5m in length were excavated using a 360º excavator down to the natural geology and under direct archaeological control. Mike Hall (Thames Water's Archaeological Consultant) and Hugh Coddington (OCAS) agreed on the need for the earthworks to be investigated and decided on the locations of the trenches.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Natural geological deposits

The lowest recorded deposit comprised cemented cross-bedding banded ironstone seen at a depth of *c*.0.8m (05) in the pit for a tank excavated in Field 1 (F1). An outcrop of the ironstone (09) appeared on the top of the hill in F8, at a depth of c.0.35m and was covered by compact light yellow to mid orange clayey sand, slightly silty with less than 10% of chalk stone. The stones contained abundant marine fauna.

Elsewhere overlying the ironstone was a deposit of compact orange-brown clayey sand (22) with moderate small to medium sized ironstone. This natural deposit was *c.* 400mm thick (in the pit for a tank in F1) and was reached in almost every field or at least it was seen outcropping in the base of later deposits.

In the northernmost edge of F5 and near to the stream an alluvial deposit was present underlying the topsoil. The surface of the field indicated that this was infilling a former course of the meandering stream. The alluvium was firm mid cream-orange fine sand slightly clayey (07), at least 0.45m thick as the base was not reached.

4.2 The ploughsoils

A succession of two ploughsoils was recorded in almost all the fields. The earliest one consisted of loose to compact light yellowish orange fine to medium sand (04) with generally slightly silty clay (60% by content) and elsewhere with lenses of coarse clayey sand (40%) and small to medium angular pebbles and very occasional fragments of charcoal and flecks of burnt clay. It contained fragments of medieval and post-medieval pottery as well as tile and brick fragments (cbm), fragments of drain pipe and clay tobacco pipes, iron nails and natural flint. The deposit was *c*.0.1m thick and although the base was not reached in some places the natural subsoil (22) was outcropping, sufficient to be confident that there were no archaeological remains present.

The latest ploughsoil was the existing topsoil/ploughsoil and generally was loose dark brown to mid orange medium slightly clayey sand (06) with occasional small to medium angular pebbles. It was *c*.0.25m thick. In F1 it was slightly different, more reddish-brown and including 10% of silt in its composition (03). This topsoil/ploughsoil contained abundant post-medieval pottery, occasional fragments of CBM, natural flint, modern glass, and fragments of drain pipe.

Occasionally only the later ploughsoil was present. In F8 it comprised loose dark red clayey sand (08) with moderate amounts of 20th century pottery, and glass fragments that were not retained. In a flat area between F9 to F10 the topsoil was loose dark reddish brown clayey sand (slightly silty) (13) with outcropping lenses of small fragments of ironstone in orange sand (22). It contained very occasional coal and charcoal fragments. It was 0.2 to 0.3m thick and fragments of 19th-20th century pottery were found and not retained. A single ploughsoil was present in the northern half of F16.

Three field drains were observed within F18 and F19.

4.3 Field 7 - Ridge and furrow (Figure 2)

In F7 eight ridges and seven furrows orientated north/south and three platforms were observed. The ridges were generally *c.* 7-10m wide and the furrows 1.5 to 5m wide. They extended *c.*80-90m into the field from the north edge and exhibited a reverse S-shape. The platforms were semi-rounded with a diameter of 9 to 12m and were outlined by a covering of nettles and thistles. The ridge and furrow sloped southwards to a headland *c*.15-20m wide. Further south the slope increased in gradient towards the stream. From the easternmost ridge to the east edge of the field the slope increased as well and while no ridge and furrow was evident it may have been eroded by run off from a ditch.

Two trenches were excavated in the area in which the new water main would be placed (Fig.3). The northern trench cut through the west side of a ridge and was 79.5m long. The natural subsoil (25) was seen at a depth of *c*.390mm and here was compact clayey sand varying from greyish brown to mid-orange and containing medium to small ironstone (Fig. 4). Above the natural was a 180mm thick deposit (24); loose brown orange clayey sand slightly silty. It contained coal fragments and very occasional pebbles and 2 sherds of pottery dating from the late 15th to seventeenth century. The sherd of white earthenware must be intrusive. Overlying was the topsoil (23), here a loose mid brown sand slightly clayey *c.* 200mm thick.

The southern trench was placed through the headland. It was 18m long. Underlying 140mm of topsoil was the plough deposit (11) comprising loose orange-brown silty clay loam. The natural subsoil was found at a depth of 1m (Fig. 4).

Following the evaluation, the stripping of area the east part of the platform in the west side of the easement was monitored. Modern finds originated from this feature.

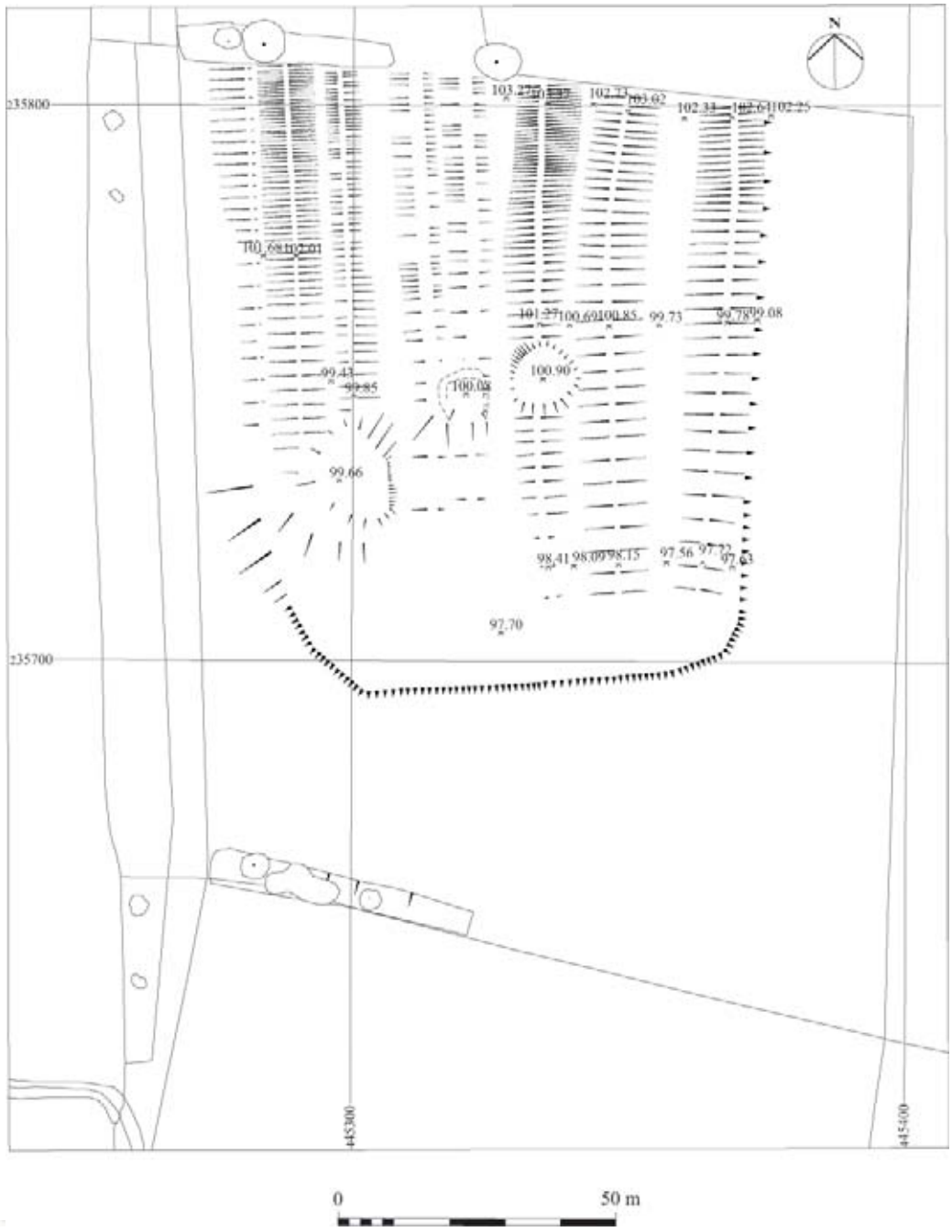

Figure 2. Plan of ridge and furrow and later earthworks in Field 7

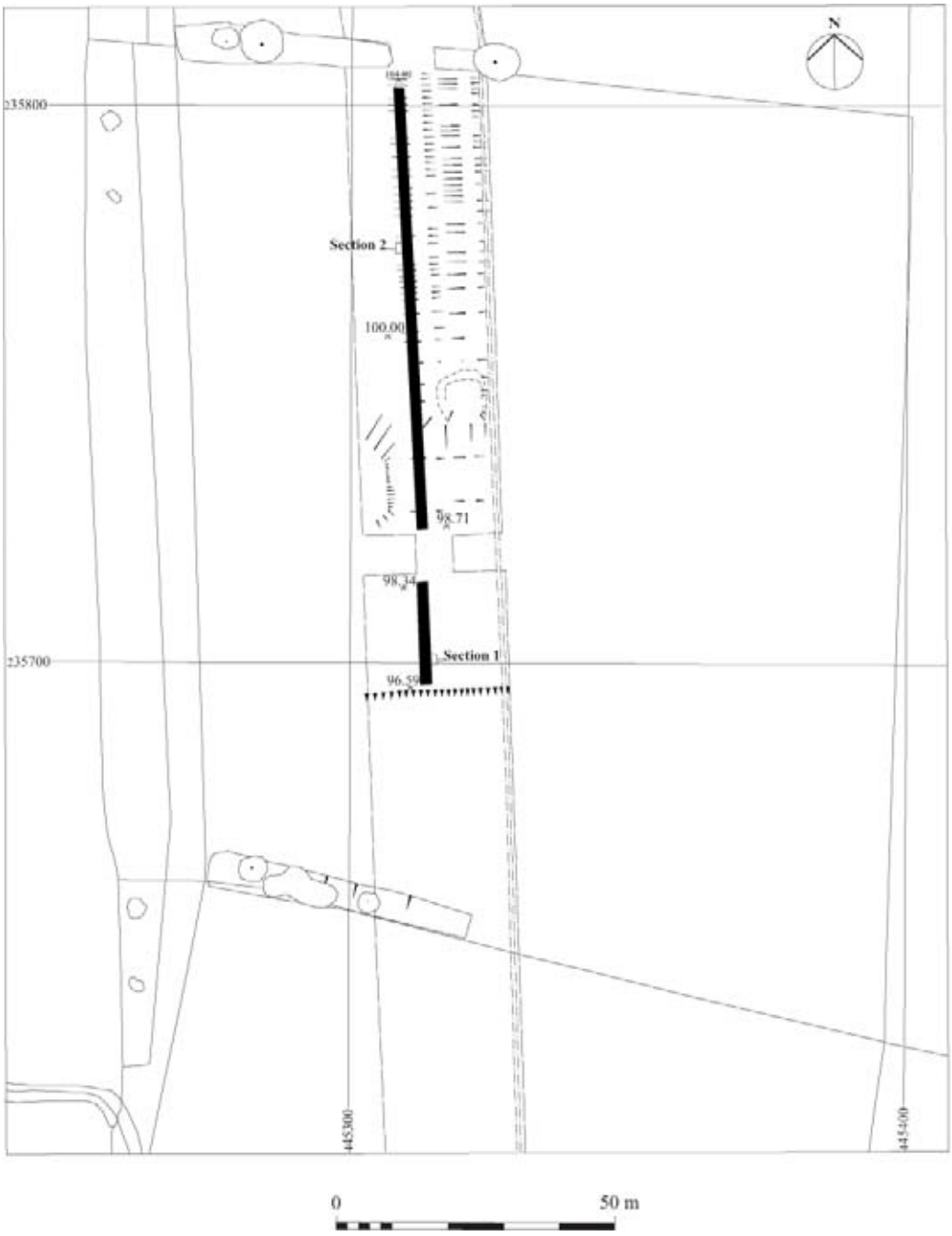

Figure 3. Plan showing evaluation trenches in Field 7

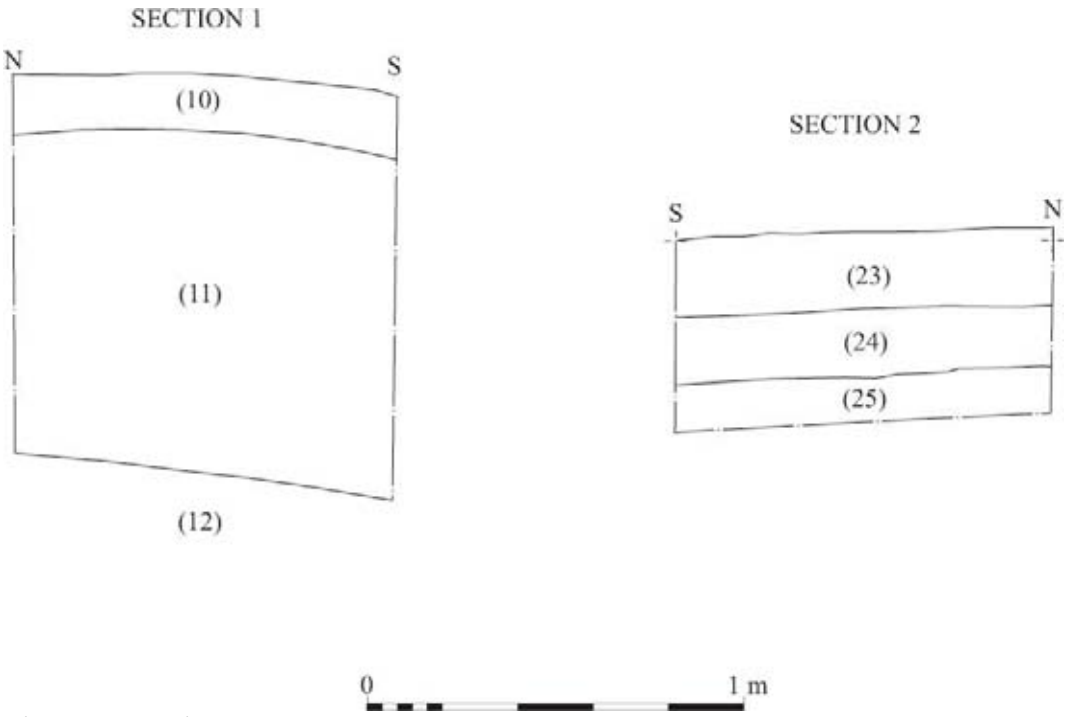

Figure 4. Sections

4.4 The prehistoric pits

Two truncated pits were found cut into the natural in F19 (Figure 5). The pits were located in a flat area to the west of the causewayed enclosure (see Figure 8). They were *c*.37m apart.

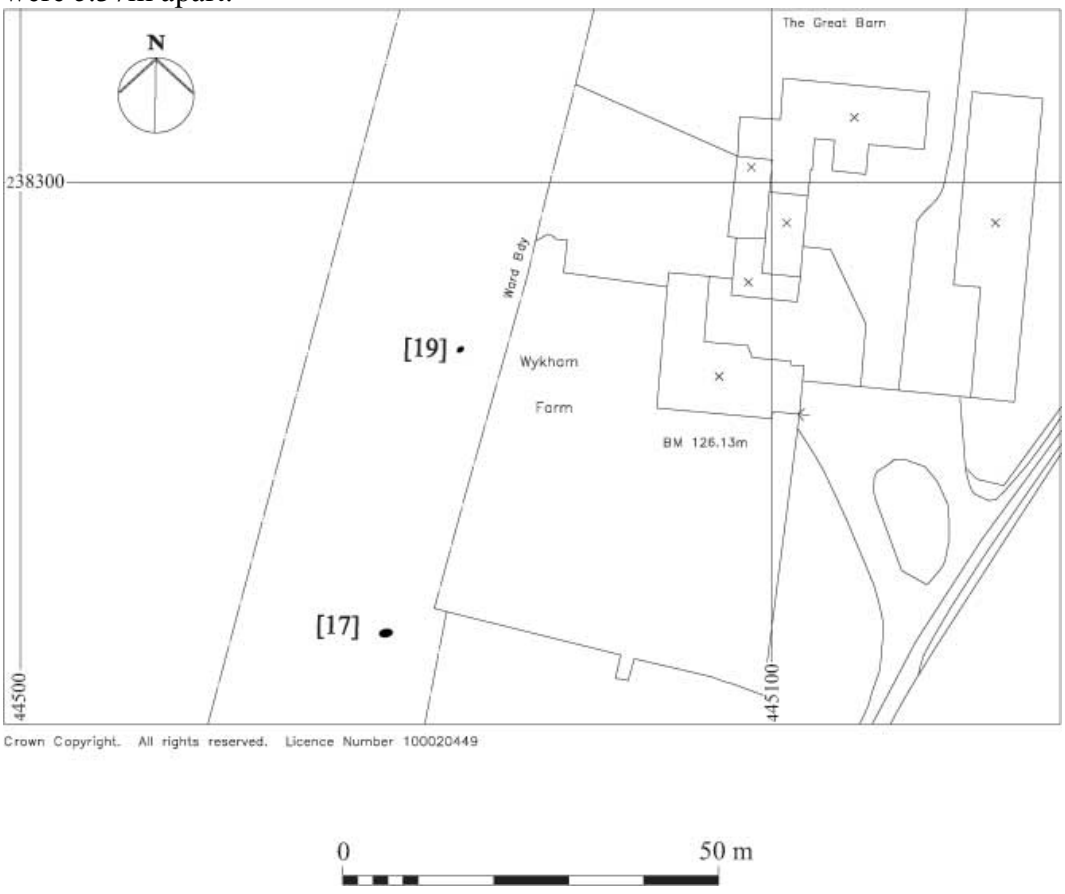

Figure 5. Location of Neolithic pits

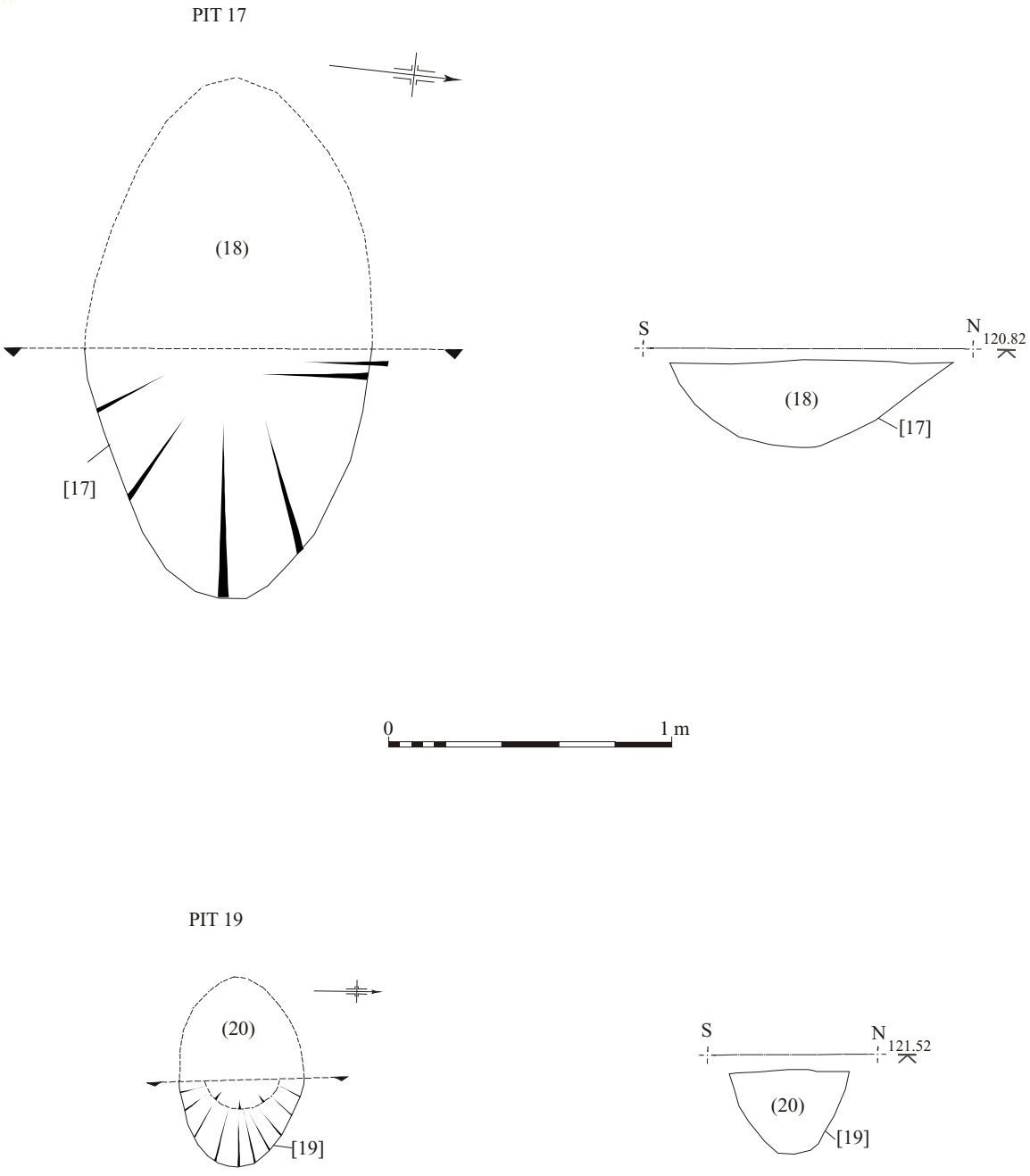

Figure 6. Plan and Sections of Neolithic Pits

Pit [17} was oval in shape, 1.8m x 1m and survived 0.3m deep. It had concave sides and a gradual break of slope to the base. It was filled by soft dark greyish brown clayey silty sand with occasional charcoals flecks (18). The pit contained frequent angular medium stones, small to medium fragments of early Neolithic pottery, and worked flint.

Pit [19] was sub-rounded in shape and smaller (0. 6m x 0.4m) than the other pit. The surviving depth was 0.28m and it had concave sides and base. It was filled by a single deposit (20) of loose greyish-dark brown to orange clayey silty sand containing burnt material (10%) and medium angular ironstone. The pit contained late Neolithic pottery

5 FINDS

5.1 Neolithic Pottery *by Frances Raymond*

Introduction
Two small assemblages of pottery, one deposited during the early Neolithic and the other of late Neolithic date, were recovered from two pits (contexts 17 and 19). Both groups are very fragmented with limited stylistic evidence and each includes the remains of two or three vessels. Most of the early Neolithic featured sherds are from a carinated bowl, while those from the later pit are Grooved Ware with Durrington Walls affinities.

Methodology
The pottery was analysed following the guidelines of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 1997). The recorded traits included fabric, form, decoration, surface treatment, colour, wall thickness, abrasion and sherd size. The material was quantified by context within these categories and the results entered on a database, which is available as part of the project archive.

The Early Neolithic Pottery
The earliest assemblage (from Context 17) is composed of 174 sherds, weighing 387 grams, made from a single shelly fabric. This is soft and coarse with an unevenly fired exterior and an un-oxidised core and interior. The surface colour of the sherds varies from reddish brown (5YR5/3) through various shades of brown (7.5YR4/2 and 6/4) to dark grey (10YR4/1). The shell no longer survives and is represented by very common voids with an uneven distribution (0.5 to 5.0 mm.). Moderate amounts of silt-sized to very fine angular quartz sand (<0.06 to 0.12 mm.) are also present.

The featured sherds are derived from a minimum of three vessels, but the body sherds cannot be distinguished since all are made from the same fabric and most are of a similar wall thickness (4 to 7 mm.). Some of the fractures indicate that at least one of the vessels is coil-built, while the interior surfaces of the sherds are well smoothed with wipe marks visible on some of the fragments. By contrast the exterior of all the sherds is more eroded.

The majority of featured fragments (18 sherds, weighing 71 grams) are from the rim, neck and shoulder of a carinated bowl (Figure 7, P1). A single closed rim sherd

(Figure 7, P2) and a weakly defined shoulder fragment (Figure 7, P3) mark the presence of two additional vessels.

The scarcity of rim and shoulder sherds indicates that the pottery was already broken prior to deposition, while its good condition points to rapid burial. A large number of small sherds were scattered throughout the pit fill (105 sherds, weighing 122 grams), while three distinct clusters of pottery in the excavated section had been placed so that they appeared to represent larger slabs. These proved to be highly fragmented when lifted, with the majority of sherds measuring one to four centimetres across. The fractures are clearly of some age suggesting that the fragmentation is at least partly the product of post-depositional attrition. All of the clusters were mainly composed of body sherds, with two including featured fragments from the carinated bowl (Figure 7, P1), and the third incorporating diagnostic pieces from all three vessels (Figure 7, P1 to P3).

Discussion

The profile of the carinated bowl with its simple everted rim (Figure 7, P1) is characteristic of the Grimston form attributed to the early Neolithic (Herne 1988, 15). These vessels tend to be finely made which is reflected in this case by the thin walls and carefully smoothed finish of the surviving surface, even if the fabric is somewhat coarse. Although refitting sherds linking the rim with the shoulder are missing, available fragments provide an indication of the length of the neck pointing to a typically low set and sharply defined carination. The presence of this vessel suggests a date during the first half of the fourth millennium cal. BC for the deposit (after Herne 1988).

Carinated bowls are relatively rare in south-east England (Herne 1988, 16-17) and the Oxfordshire area is no exception to this pattern. Similar vessels have been recovered from pre-long barrow contexts to the south-west of Banbury in the Cotswolds (Darvill 2004, 66). Further examples to the south in the Upper Thames Valley have been noted at Dorchester, Abingdon and Goring and possibly at Benson (Timby 2004), although the profiles of the published examples from the latter site are more typical of the middle Neolithic.

The rest of the pottery is less chronologically sensitive. The use of simple rims (Figure 7, P1 and P2) contrasts with the predominant vessel types of the middle Neolithic decorated styles, exemplified in Oxfordshire by the Abingdon ceramics (Avery 1982, 26-35). In the Cotswolds and surrounding areas this trait characterises the early Neolithic assemblages (Darvill 2004, 64-66), but is not necessarily restricted to these groups. There is no direct and simple equation between the absence of diagnostic middle Neolithic forms and an early origin. At Abingdon, for example, 20% of the rims are simple (Avery 1982, Table 3), while middle Neolithic vessels with weak shoulders similar to P3 (Avery 1982, 29) and closed forms reminiscent of P2 (Avery 1982, Figure 17, 32) are also represented.

In a similar manner, the lack of decoration is of little help in phasing the pottery. The proportion of decorated vessels within many middle Neolithic assemblages is relatively low (cf. Avery 1982, 29). Furthermore, much of the pottery of this period to the south-west of Banbury is plain (Darvil 2004, 167).

The vesicular shelly fabric used for all three vessels is similar to wares occurring on a number of earlier Neolithic sites in Oxfordshire and the surrounding areas. It is most probably of fossil origin, but since none of the calcareous inclusions survive this is difficult to demonstrate. Shelly wares are represented in north Oxfordshire at Rollright (Darvill 1988, 90) and are common in the Cotswolds (Darvill 1988, 92). In Buckinghamshire they account for over 50% of the Whiteleaf assemblage (Smith 1954, 224) and in south Oxfordshire at Abingdon 95% of the pottery is made from fabrics tempered with fossil shell (Avery 1982, 27; Williams 1982, 35, Group One). In the same general area wares of this type are also represented at Barrow Hills, Radley (Cleal 1999, 196) and Benson (Timby 2004, 145).

The Late Neolithic Pottery

The late Neolithic assemblage (from Context 19) consists of 36 sherds of Grooved Ware, weighing 57 grams, derived from at least two different vessels in contrasting grog tempered fabrics. Only one is represented by a rim sherd with deep diagonal impressions on the internal bevel (Figure 7, P4). The vessel has a closed tub-shaped profile and the exterior is decorated with a herringbone motif composed of a series of short line grooves. This is interrupted by a single deep oval impression which is probably a decorative device, although it is also possible that it might represent an eroded organic or calcareous inclusion. The interior is well smoothed and has clearly been wiped, while both surfaces are dark grey (10YR4/1). The fabric is soft, unoxidised and contains sparse quantities of fine grog (up to 1.0 mm.), moderate amounts of very fine to fine angular to rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.25 mm.) and rare mica (<0.06 mm.).

The rest of the pottery (35 sherds, weighing 52 grams) is made from a similar but slightly coarser ware. This is also soft and has an unevenly fired exterior and an un-oxidised core and interior. It is tempered with moderate quantities both of grog (up to 2.0 mm.) and rounded to angular quartz sand (0.1 to 0.5 mm.). Rare water worn flint (up to 4.0 mm.), glauconite (0.1 to 0.2 mm.) and mica (<0.06 mm.) are also present. The sherds are relatively thin-walled (6 to 8 mm.), small (1 to 4 cm. across) and exhibit signs of light to moderate abrasion. The exterior surface colour varies from red (2.5YR5/6) to dark brown (7.5YR4/3) and dark grey (10YR4/1). All of the sherds are featureless apart from three decorated wall fragments. The largest carries part of a pinched up cordon and two parallel grooves which seem to be set on a diagonal axis (Figure 7, P5), although the sherd is too small for this orientation to be certain. Traces of two additional grooves survive on the edge of the fragment. A second much smaller sherd is embellished with a single groove of a similar width parallel to the broken edge of a cordon (not illustrated). The other decorated fragment has a contrasting motif comprising six parallel grooves (Figure 7, P6), but again the orientation is unclear.

Discussion

A recent review of the radiocarbon chronology for Grooved Ware in southern Britain indicates that most of the reliable dates span the third millennium cal. BC, with a predicted range between 2900 and 2100 cal. BC (Garwood 1999, 152). At present there is little indication of any regional chronological variation (Garwood 1999, 152-154). The earliest dates tend to be from isolated pits or pit groups with a temporal range spanning the currency of Grooved Ware (Garwood 1999, 154-155). In the Upper Thames region all of the Grooved Ware is from contexts of this type (Barclay 1999, 20).

With this particular assemblage, limited information means that it is difficult to assign the pottery to a particular sub-group with any degree of certainty, although the evidence is weighted towards the Durrington Walls style. The closed mouth of one of the vessels (Figure 7, P4) is most reminiscent of forms with Durrington Walls affinities. The grooved herringbone motif occurs on Durrington Walls vessels, while incised herringbone is highly characteristic of the Woodlands sub-style (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 239). The widespread application of this decorative device is illustrated by a Durrington Walls vessel carrying a herringbone motif from Fyfield and Tubney (Barclay 1994, 22-23 and Figure 12, P1), and a similarly decorated Woodlands style rim from Pit 5 at Cassington (Case 1982, 124-125 and Figure 69, 5). The slashes on the rim bevel recall two unassigned Grooved Ware vessels from Barrow Hills, Radley (Cleal 1999, 200 and Figure 4.32, P34 and P36), and recur on a Woodlands style vessel from the same site (Cleal 1999, 198 and Figure 4.32, P38). Similar motifs also appear occasionally on vessel rims of the Durrington Walls sub-style (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 240).

Undecorated horizontal or angled cordons and bands of horizontal or angled grooving (Figure 7, P5 and P6) are common features of both the Clacton and Woodlands sub-styles (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 237 and 239), occurring for example at Sutton Courtney (Case 1982, 124-125 and Figure 69, 11 and 13; Leeds 1934, Plate 29). Unfortunately, in this instance (Figure 7, P5 and P6) the orientation of the sherds is uncertain and the motifs are very incomplete. The combination of ridges and grooves (eg. Figure 7, P5) is more typical of Durrington Walls vessels, but the cordons within this sub-style tend to be massive (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 240) which is not the case with P5.

The thin walls of both vessels and the slight raised ridges on two of the sherds (eg. Figure 7, P5) are most reminiscent of the Woodlands sub-style (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 238). Similar Woodlands/Clacton parallels are suggested by the small size of the assemblage (cf. Cleal 1999, 202; Garwood 1999, 159).

However, once again contradictory affinities with the Durrington Walls sub-style are suggested by the character of the fabrics. In the Upper Thames region grog tempered fabrics are used mostly for Durrington Walls vessels, while Clacton and Woodlands Grooved Ware is generally characterised by shelly fabrics (Barclay 1999, 12). Most of the Durrington Walls style pottery from Yarnton is grog tempered (Barclay 1999, 16) and this is also the case with the sherd from Fyfield and Tubney (Barclay 1994, 22-23 and Figure 12, P1). Similar traditions beyond the Upper Thames region are indicated by the use of grog tempered wares for the Durrington Walls assemblage from Stacey Bushes near Milton Keynes to the east of Banbury (Green and Sofranoff 1985, 25-26) and for the vessels belonging to this sub-style from Wasperton in Warwickshire to the north-west (Longworth and Cleal 1999, 197, 312).

PIT 17

PIT 19

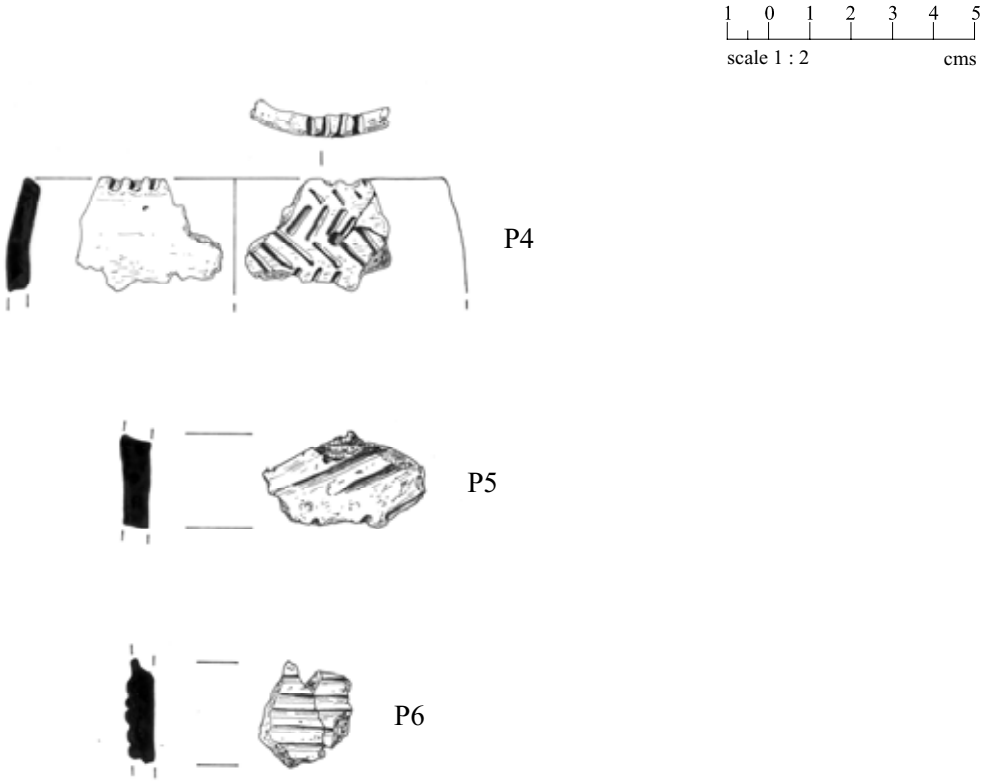

Figure 7. Neolithic pottery

5.2 Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 114 sherds with a total weight of 1,042g. It was all medieval or later, with the bulk of the material dating to the earlier post-medieval period. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 7 sherds, 55g.
OXAP: Brill/Boarstall 'Midland Purple' type, c. mid 15th - 16th century. 4 sherds, 94g.
OXCL: Cistercian ware, 1475-1700. 5 sherds, 27g.
OXST: Frechen Stoneware, AD1550 – 1700. 3 sherds, 42g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 24 sherds, 348g.
OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613 – 1800. 1 sherd, 9g.
OXRESWL: Polychrome Slipwares, 17th century. 1 sherd, 8g.
OXBEWSL: Staffordshire slip-trailed earthenwares, 1650-1800. 14 sherds, 73g.
OXFG: Staffordshire Manganese Glazed ware, L17th - 18th century. 23 sherds, 246g.
OXFM: Staffordshire White-glazed English Stoneware, 1730 – 1800. 10 sherds, 38g.
CRM: Creamware, mid 18th - early 19th C. 2 sherds, 2g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 20 sherds, 200g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per field by fabric type is shown in Table 1, complete with an estimated date range for the material. The range of fabrics is typical of sites in the area.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	OXAM		OXAP		OXCL		OXST		OXDR		OXREWSL		OXCE		OXBEWSL		OXFG		OXFM		CRM		WHEW		
Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date Range
Adj. Field 1 (02)																							3	27	19thC
Field 1 (03)									1	8							1	10							M16th - 18thC
Field 1 (04)																							1	8	19thC
Field 2 (04)									1	12													1	2	M16th - 18thC
Field 3 (04)	2	30			2	12	1	5	3	177	1	8							1	1			1	3	13th - 19thC
Field 4 (04)															1	2									M17th - 18thC
Field 5 (06)									1	2							1	3			2	2			M16th - 18thC
Field 5 (04)	1	3	1	10			1	26	3	29							5	54					3	27	13th - 19thC
Field 7-(23)																	1	4	1	1					L17th - 18thC
Field 7 (24)					2	11																	1	1	L15th - 19thC
Field 9 (13)																	1	33							L17th - 18thC
Field 13 ((04)	1	4							1	5							1	10	1	1			4	9	13th - 19thC
Field 14 (04)	2	14	3	84	1	4	1	11	13	104			1	9	13	71	12	116	7	35			5	15	13th - 19thC
Field-15 (04)																							1	8	19thC
Field 19 (04)	1	4							1	11							1	16							13th - 18thC
Total	7	55	4	94	5	27	3	42	24	348	1	8	1	9	14	73	23	246	10	38	2	2	20	100	

5.3 Flint *by Kate Cramp*

Introduction

A total of 29 struck flints were recovered during archaeological investigations at the Banbury Booster site in Oxfordshire (Table 1). The majority of these (19 pieces) came from a single feature, Pit 17. This assemblage can be dated to the early Neolithic on general technological grounds, although no closely datable tool types were recovered to confirm this.

A further ten flints were recovered in the course of easement stripping. This small and poorly preserved group contained a broken leaf-shaped arrowhead, which contributes to the early Neolithic evidence from the pit. A Levallois-style flake core and a backed knife provide evidence of activity during the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age period.

Table 1: The struck flint assemblage by type from fieldwalking and excavation at the Banbury Booster site (BOBB 05).

	Fieldwalking				Excavation	Total:
	Field 1	Field 5	Field 10	Field 15	Pit 17	
Flake	1	2	2	1	10	16
Blade				1	6	7
Bladelike flake					1	1
Chip					1	1
Core face/edge rejuvenation flake					1	1
Levallois core		1				1
Backed knife		1				1
Leaf -shaped arrowhead	1					1
Total:	2	4	2	2	19	29
No. and % of retouched pieces *:	1 (50%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (7.1%)
No. and % of burnt struck flints:	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.3%)	1
No. and % of broken struck flints:	2 (100%)	2 (50%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	4 (21.1%)	10

*Excluding chips.

Condition

The flintwork from the pit is in exceptionally fresh condition and has clearly been little disturbed since its original deposition. The flintwork from fieldwalking is in much more variable condition. Most pieces are rolled and damaged, while a small number have survived in relatively fresh condition. With the exception of one lightly corticated flake from Field 17, all the flints are uncorticated.

Raw material

The main raw material source represented by the assemblage seems to have been a good quality derived flint with a thin cortex and fine-grained, dark brown interior. These nodules may have come from nearby boulder clay deposits; local river gravels may also have provided nodules suitable for knapping purposes.

The assemblage

The flintwork from the site can be divided into two groups: the collection of *in situ* material from Pit 17 and the redeposited flintwork from fieldwalking. These assemblages are discussed separately below.

Pit 17
This pit, situated near the causewayed enclosure, contained a small but coherent assemblage of 19 struck flints (Table 1). The flintwork is in fresh, uncorticated condition and can be dated to the early Neolithic by its technological character and blade-based appearance. The pottery assemblage from the same feature has been dated to the early Neolithic, and is almost certainly in contemporary association with the flintwork.

The assemblage is dominated by flakes, most of which show careful preparation and removal. Blades and bladelike flakes are relatively numerous, represented by seven pieces together providing a little over one third of the debitage component. Most pieces display dorsal blade scars from previous blade removals. While the sample size is small, the quantity of blades suggests an early Neolithic date (e.g. Ford 1987). Most pieces display platform edge abrasion and, on the evidence of bulb morphology, the majority have been struck with a soft-hammer percussor (Onhuma and Bergman 1982). No retouched forms were identified in the assemblage, although heavy use-wear was macroscopically visible on the edges of several unretouched flakes and blades. A single flake has been heavily burnt.

Other flint
The assemblage from fieldwalking is in variable condition and has clearly been repeatedly disturbed as a result of recent ploughing activity. Diagnostic types include a broken leaf-shaped arrowhead from Field 1, which possibly relates to the earlier Neolithic activity at the site represented by the pit assemblage. This piece is relatively thick and, while too incomplete for classification, may have been ogival in form. A small, Levallois-style flake core (32 g) was recovered from Field 5; these core types have been associated with the production of blanks for transverse arrowheads (e.g. Green 1974, 84) and this piece may therefore date to the mid or late Neolithic. A backed knife, which probably belongs to the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age period, was recovered from the same field.

Discussion
The small assemblage of early Neolithic flintwork from Pit 17 is of particular significance given its proximity to the causewayed enclosure and its association with considerable quantities of early to middle Neolithic ceramics. The assemblage, although small, is in fresh condition and is probably *in situ*. While no retouched tools were recovered, the presence of several utilised edges perhaps reflects the various activities that were taking place on site during the construction and use of the nearby monument.

The small assemblage from fieldwalking shows that activity at the site continued, to some extent, into the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age; there are no demonstrably later Bronze Age pieces present, although it is not inconceivable that some of the undiagnostic flakes date to this period.

6 DISCUSSION

The two Neolithic pits lie to the south-west of the causewayed enclosure (Fig. 8) with the early Neolithic pit (17) being *c*. 85m outside of the circuit of the enclosing ditch. The pit and enclosure are presumed contemporary. The late Neolithic pit (*c*. 55m from

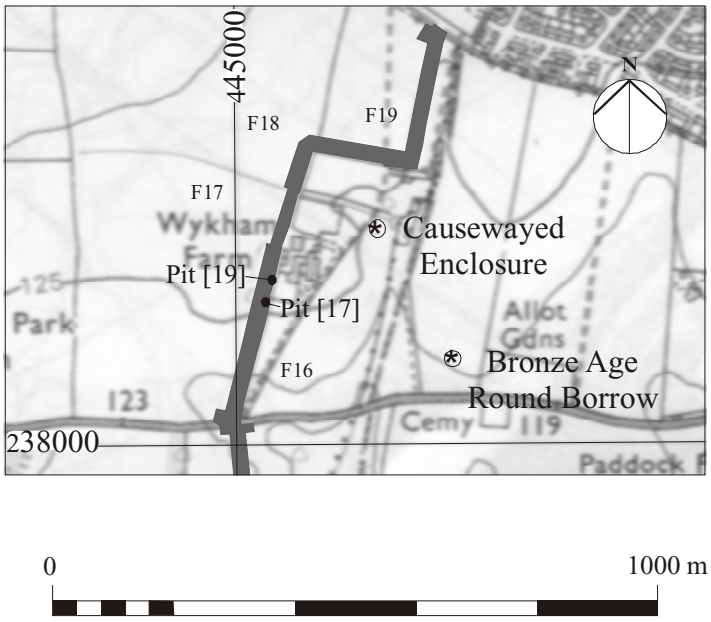

Figure 8. Location of Neolithic pits in relation to Causewayed Enclosure

the monument) indicates activity of this period in the area. Usually causewayed enclosures are not active in the later Neolithic.

A further early Neolithic artefact, a broken leaf-shaped arrowhead, is probably a casual loss; possibly breaking and being discarded during hunting. The four flints in Field 5 indicate activity in the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age period. Further late Neolithic/early Bronze Age activity occurred in Fields 10 and 15; however this may have been fleeting.

The methodology of the work prevented many artefacts being collected in order to date the ploughsoils. However the following observations can be made. Artefacts in ploughsoils generally derive from manuring of the fields as part of the cultivation process. Fields 3, 5, 13, 15 and 19 were being cultivated in the medieval period possibly from the 13th century onwards. The earliest pottery from Field 7 (containing extant ridge and furrow) is dated to the late 15th century. The pottery from Fields 1 and 2 dates no earlier than 1550, with pottery in Field 4 dating from the mid 17th century and from Field 9 no earlier than late 17th century. Only 19th century material was recovered from Field 15. It remains a possibility that these latter fields were cultivated earlier.

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