



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

**AT**

**SHARPRIDGE FARM, ROCKLEY, MARLBOROUGH**

**SU 141 747**

*On behalf of*

*Barbury Castle Estate*

**OCTOBER 2007**

**REPORT FOR** Barbury Castle Estate  
The Estate Office  
Sharpridge Farm  
Rockley  
Marlborough  
Wiltshire  
SN8 1RS

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**FIELDWORK** 5<sup>th</sup> February – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted an excavation of the area between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 this was followed by a watching brief during ground reduction of the area. The site is situated within a Bronze Age landscape between two known field systems, and surrounded by find-spots of material from this period.*

*Although the area was heavily disturbed by recent agriculture, the site produced five hut circles, two rectangular structures and fence lines of postholes. The only dating evidence from the site would suggest a Bronze Age date for the activity. This may represent one of the short-lived habitation sites during this period in the area or be part of a larger settlement associated with the monuments around it.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located in north-eastern Wiltshire in the Kennet District, in the northern part of the parish of Preshute. The development area lies on Sharpridge Farm within the Barbury Castle Estate on Preshute Down, where it is centred on National Grid Reference SU 141 747.

The application site is situated on the northern-western fringes of the Marlborough Downs close to the escarpments overlooking Swindon to the north and the upper reaches of the Kennet Valley to the west. This part of the downland landscape is characterised by a series of south-east facing coombes divided by steep ridges. The development area lies towards the head of one of these dry valleys at a height of approximately 199 metres above Ordnance Datum (AOD). This coombe continues to the south-east as Dean Bottom, falling gradually downwards to the River Og between Ogbourne Maizey and Marlborough at 130 metres AOD. On all other sides the land rises steeply from the existing dairy buildings to between 250 and 270 metres AOD on Sharpridge to the north-east, Wick Down to the south-west and Hackpen Hill and the Ridgeway to the north-west.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

A planning application for the erection of a proposed owner/manager dwelling, isolated boxes, office and associated garaging at Sharpridge Farm has been submitted. Due to the archaeological potential of the area an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site has been carried out. This has been followed with an archaeological evaluation. Due to the result of this investigation a condition was placed for further archaeological work. This was in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

A desk-based assessment of the site has been carried out (JMHS 2005). This concluded that the site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area with a high potential for archaeological remains.



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Figure 1. Site Location

Aerial photographs and old maps show part of an extensive prehistoric field system extending across the site. Earthworks and some sarsen clearance cairns are shown on a 1938 aerial photograph. A dewpond is also visible along with a small and somewhat faint area of subtle earthworks immediately to the west of the dewpond. However these are now outside the area of proposed impact. An aerial photograph of 1973 shows two curvilinear crop marks. It was considered possible that a Bronze Age settlement lies in the vicinity of the application area (JMHS 2005).

Smaller concentrations of Beaker pottery and contemporary artefacts are recorded on the downs, including a group on Preshute Down and in Dean Bottom. It has been suggested that these may well represent a series of scattered settlements occupied for short periods of time (Cleal 1992.).

Dean Bottom, some 730 metres to the south-east of the application site, is the only site in the close vicinity to be excavated that should any evidence for Beaker activity. One of the 1977 trenches revealed three features attributed to the Beaker period. The most substantial was a pit containing pottery, worked flint and bone fragments, with a maximum diameter of 1.2 metres and a depth of some 0.7 metres (Gingell 1992). Beaker fragments and a few pieces of bone were also found in a shallow scoop, while a small post-hole was tentatively attributed to the same phase (*ibid.*). The evidence from this site points to a settlement established in recently cleared woodland and occupied for a short time, perhaps of no more than a few months duration (Cleal 1992).

The other finds in the area of Beaker pottery fragments collected from ground disturbances, including some sherds from the application site. These are part of a scatter of contemporary pottery extending some 175 to 250 metres from the proposed development in a south-westerly and north-westerly direction. A second scatter of Beaker sherds is recorded between 400 and 800 metres to the east of the site (JMHS 2005).

The area includes several sites and finds which could be contemporary with the Beaker pottery, or could equally have an origin later in the Bronze Age. These include four round barrows, the typical funerary monuments of the period, which are positioned on the upper hill slopes overlooking the coombe. The closest to the application site is a bell barrow, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM12213) and is located on the ridge some 400 metres to the north-east of the proposed development. The other three round barrows were noted by John Aubrey in the late seventeenth century, but have not been identified since. The available information indicates a location approximately 650 metres to the south-west of the application site.

Other Bronze Age finds of uncertain phasing within the period include two barbed and tanged arrowheads: one found 100 metres to the south-west of the dairy buildings; and the other from a position just 50 metres to the south of the application site. Two bronze axes have also been recovered from the Study Area in Dean Bottom, 750 metres to the east of the application site; and on Hackpen Hill, 850 metres to the west.

By the middle Bronze Age the character of settlement on the Marlborough Downs, and indeed more widely across southern England, had changed considerably. For the first time in prehistory permanent occupation sites were established, generally on the

scale of small farmsteads. These were often surrounded or partly enclosed by a bank and ditch, and were set within a layout of small fields and associated tracks.

On the Marlborough Downs most of these enclosures and field systems are located in the coombe bottoms and on the lower, gentler valley slopes (Gingell 1992). The landscape appears to have been densely settled, with some of the farmsteads only 500 metres apart, each associated with a block of fields some 20 hectares in extent (*ibid.*). Before the Study Area was ploughed in the 1950's, the earthworks and rows of cleared sarsen boulders along field edges survived intact and the earliest aerial photographs convey a stunning impression of a fossilised and well-preserved ancient landscape. Indeed it has been claimed that the area provides the best evidence in north Wessex for the character and economy of upland Bronze Age settlement (Gingell 1992).

There are two excavated enclosed settlements within the Study Area, both near the upper margins of blocks of fields, accessed by tracks leading from the higher downs to the south (Gingell 1992). The closest is the Preshute Down enclosure, some 330 metres to the south-east of the application site. The work was limited to small trenches including a section across the ditch, which produced middle Bronze Age pottery (Piggott 1942). More recently it has been suggested that the site may have been re-used during the medieval period as a sheep enclosure (Brown 2005), but the evidence for this is entirely circumstantial.

Excavations at the second enclosure in Dean Bottom, 730 metres to the south-east of the proposed development, indicate a contemporary origin (Gingell 1992; Meyrick 1973). Here the occupied area was defined by a bank and discontinuous ditch surrounding five to seven artificial terraces, one of which was excavated in 1979 (Gingell 1992). This was about 10 metres across and had been cut to a depth of between 0.5 and 0.85 metres. Large sarsen blocks formed a possible stone building foundation associated with cobbled surfaces and occupation debris (*ibid.*). A neonatal calf burial was found below the sarsen blocks, while the final phase of use may have been connected with the manufacture of sarsen quern stones (*ibid.*).

Two other enclosures that may define contemporary settlements are recorded within the area. One of these is only 75 metres to the north-west of the dairy buildings, on the eastern edge of a block of fields which are partly scheduled (AM540). The other is of uncertain date, but might conceivably be contemporary, although an origin as a medieval sheep enclosure has also been suggested (Brown 2005). The site is located on the southern side of Wick Down in Wick Bottom, approximately one kilometre to the south-east of the proposed development.

There has been little investigation of the field systems, which extend across much of the Study Area. Their close association with the Bronze Age enclosures strongly suggests that many are of this date. This is strengthened by the recovery of middle to late Bronze Age pottery from the bell barrow and another find-spot within one of the scheduled field systems (AM539), 400 metres to the north-east and east of the application site. However, the occurrence of Iron Age and Roman pottery in some of the fields raises the likelihood that others represent later phases of cultivation.

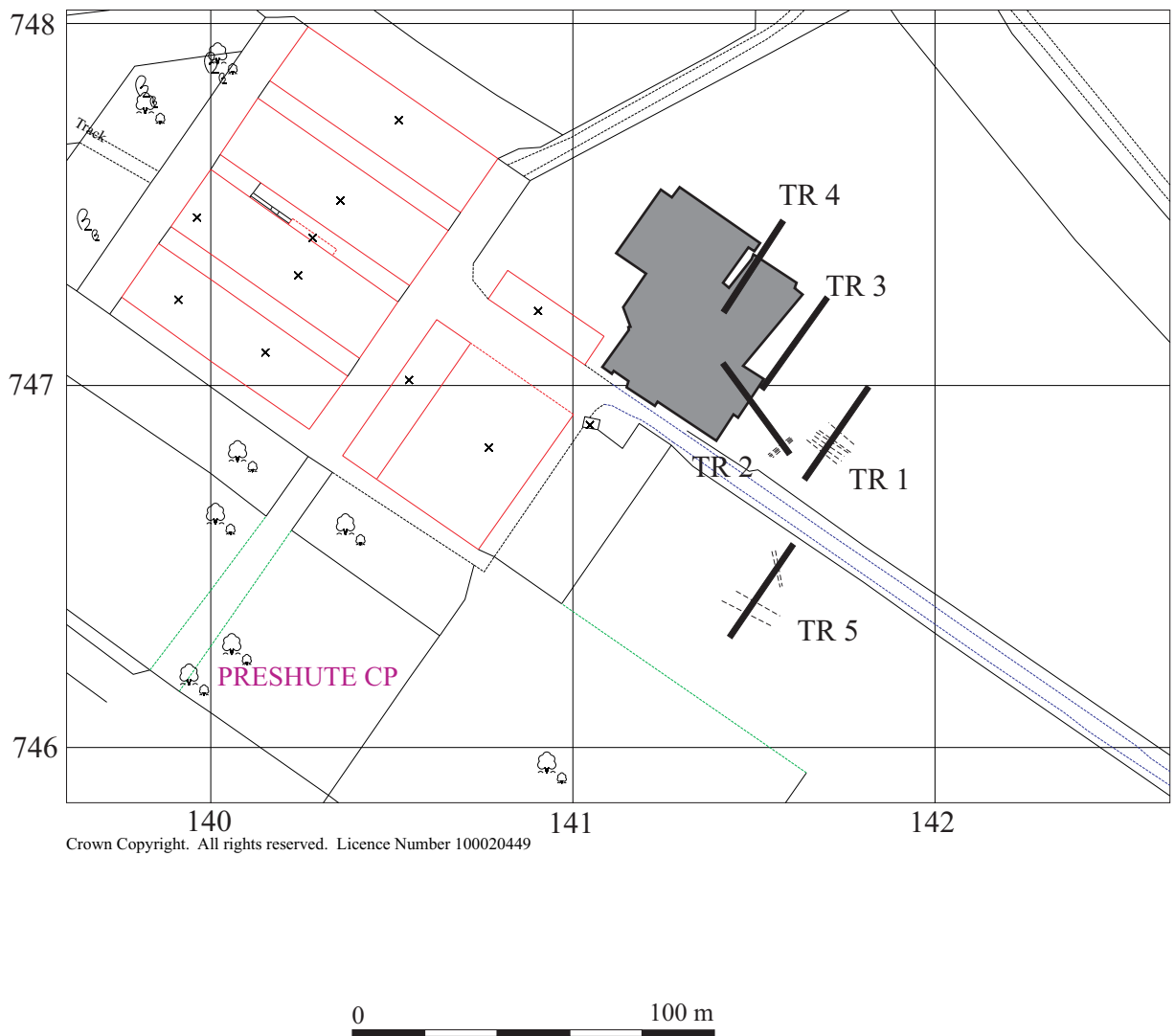


Figure 2. Detailed Location Map



An evaluation of the area carried out in 2006 (JMHS) recorded several linear ditches, curved gullies, postholes and a large pit. Although finds were scarce some Bronze Age flint work was recovered. It was considered possible that these features may be part of a wider settlement.

Although a sherd of Roman pottery has been located immediately adjacent to the site the potential for a settlement of this date is considered to be very low (JMHS 2005). Part of the field systems could be of Iron Age or Roman date.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To establish whether there is any prehistoric settlement within the application area.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

It was agreed with Wiltshire County Archaeological Service that a strip & record excavation should be implemented as a follow up to an evaluation carried out in 2006 (JMHS 2006). A scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Wiltshire County Archaeology Service and the applicant, on brief was issued. The work was carried out by JMHS and was to involve the excavation of the total area of the foot -print of the proposed building.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The footprints of the proposed house, stables and garage were striped to reveal the natural chalk. All areas were excavated by a 5 ton 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

The work was monitored by Sue Farr of Wiltshire County Archaeology Service on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007. It was agreed during this visit that due to the plough damage of the area and the poor survivability of the features that a watching brief should be

implemented instead of continuing the strip and record excavation. The central area of the house, most of the area of the garage and a 5m strip in the area of the stables was excavated at the time of this decision.

The remaining areas were stripped piecemeal using a 7 ton 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The final area stripped far exceeded the initial proposed footprints. Limited hand cleaning of the resultant surfaces was conducted after each section was stripped. An experienced archaeologist was on site during all ground disturbance work.

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.

## 4 RESULTS (*Figure 3*)

### 4.1 Excavation 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.

The natural in across the site was middle chalk (3). Modern plough marks were observed scarring this natural chalk at a depth of over 0.5m below modern ground surface. Lying directly over this was a layer of degraded chalk and brown-grey loam (33). Above this was a grey-brown silty loam with large quantities of small chalk fragments (2) that was between 0.15m and 0.2m thick. This layer also contained some sarsen chunks, some as large as 0.2m. The uppermost layer across the site was a grey-brown silty loam with small chalk fragments (1) that varied in depth from 0.1m to 0.12m.

### Circular Post-Built Structures (*Figures 3 & 4*)

Postholes associated with five possible circular or oval Post Built Structures were recorded.

#### PBS 1

This structure consisted of eight postholes, in a roughly circular arrangement. It was approximately 5.7m in diameter.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
57	0.15	0.14	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
58	0.15	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
59	0.16	0.15	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
60	0.15	0.14	Brown clay loam with small sarsen fragments
61	0.19	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
66	0.18	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
67	0.16	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
68	0.18	0.19	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks



Figure 3. Site Plan

PBS 2

This structure consisted of at least four postholes, in an oval arrangement. It was approximately 7m wide. Posthole [76] may have formed part of entranceway.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
69	0.13	0.14	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
70	0.15	0.2	Brown clay loam with small sarsen fragments
76	0.11	0.1	Orange-brown clay loam
77	0.1	0.11	Orange-brown clay loam
78	0.13	0.11	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments

PBS 3

The area where PBS 3 was situated was heavily disturbed by later activity and only four postholes were recognised. It is circular in plan and 6m in diameter.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
79	0.1	0.13	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
80	0.09	0.11	Brown-grey clay loam with charcoal flecks
81	0.17	0.15	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
82	0.15	0.15	Brown-grey clay loam with charcoal flecks

PBS 4

This structure consisted of at least four postholes, in a circular arrangement. It was 6m in diameter.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
8	0.25	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
10	0.2	0.13	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
11	0.16	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
26	0.25	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments

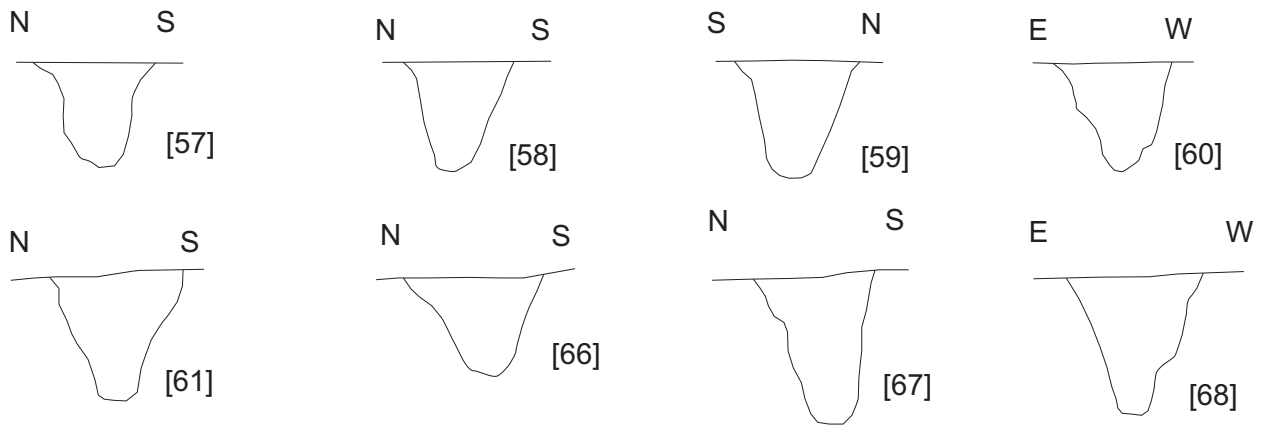
This structure may be associated with pit [31].

PBS 5

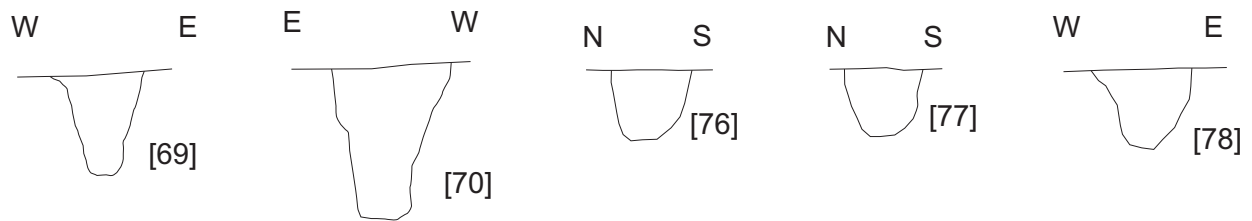
An arc of three postholes was recorded as PBS 5; it appeared to be part of a circular arrangement of 6m diameter.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
4	0.25	0.13	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
5	0.2	0.17	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
17	0.12	0.12	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments

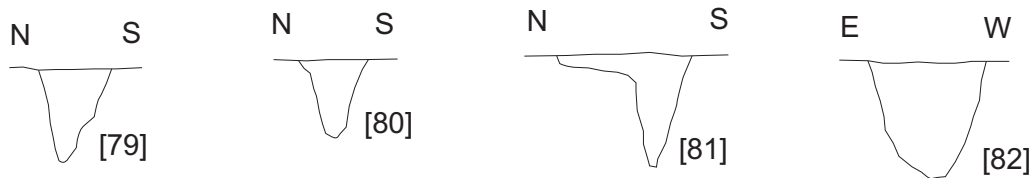
PBS 1



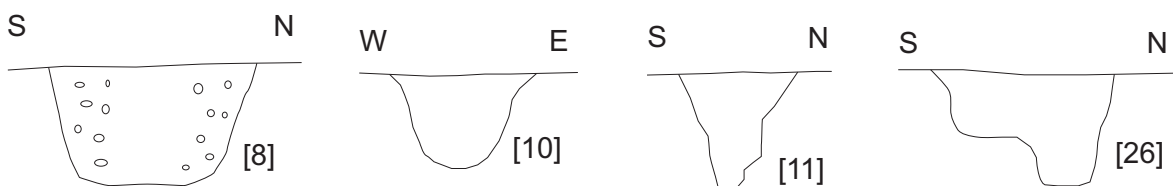
PBS 2



PBS 3



PBS 4



PBS 5

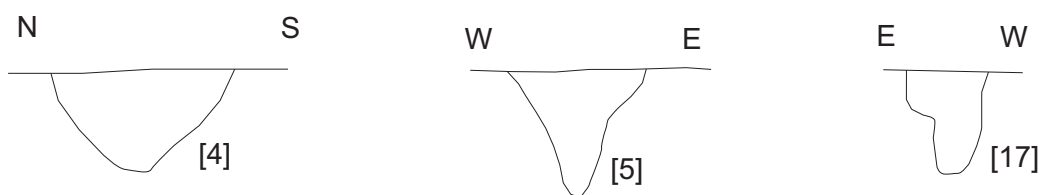


Figure 4. Profiles of the Circular PBS Postholes

**Rectangular Post-Built Structures** (*Figures 3 & 5*)

Two possible rectangular structures were located.

**PBS 6**

The first consisted of four large postholes. It is speculated that a fifth or perhaps even a sixth lie just outside the excavation area to the east. The reason for this speculation is that a number of structures with similar arrangements of postholes have been found in the area (Gingell 1992). These are roughly square with a central posthole or pit. A position for the speculated fifth posthole was given by placing it the same distance from the central pit as posthole [27].

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
23	1.1 x 0.7	0.11	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
24	1.2 x 0.9	0.25	Yellow-brown silty clay with chalk fragments
27	0.4 x 0.25	0.14	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
47	0.65	0.14	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

**PBS 7**

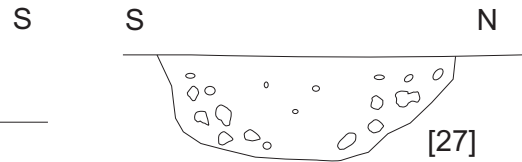
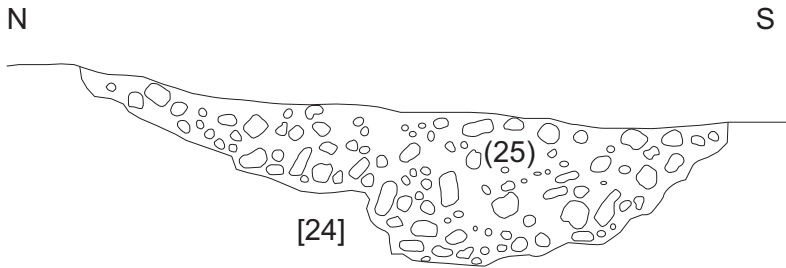
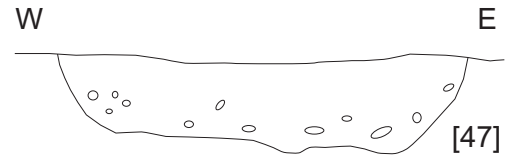
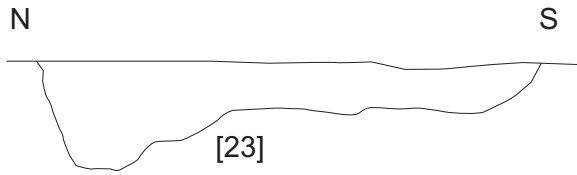
The second consisted of four postholes, two of which were quite large. Three other features may also have been associated with this structure. These were initially thought to be tree bowls, due to their large irregular size. However in hindsight, it is possible that these were misinterpreted and are in fact large postholes. This area had been affected by very heavy ploughing, that had cut into these features making excavation difficult.

The resultant structure would have been rectangular and measured 6m long by 4m wide.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
87	0.12	0.08	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
88	1.2 x 0.5	n/a	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
89	0.5 x 0.3	0.15+	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
92	1.5	n/a	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

The pits that were originally interpreted as tree bowls measured between 1m and 1.4m wide. These were not fully excavated due to time constraints.

PBS 6



PBS 7



FENCE LINE 1

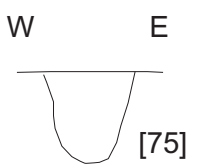
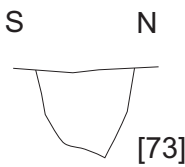
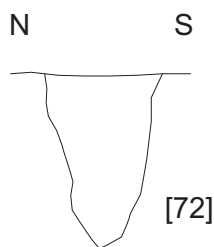
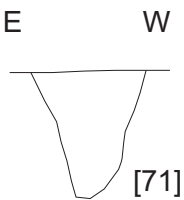
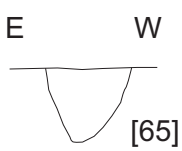
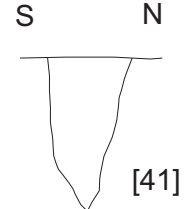
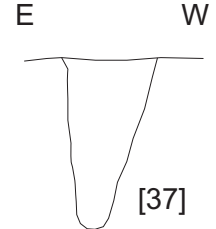
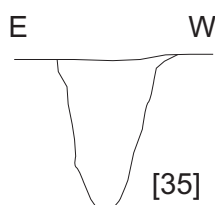
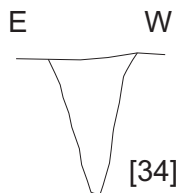


Figure 5. Profile of Postholes from PBS 6, 7 and Fence Line 1

**Fence Lines** (*Figures 3, 5 & 6*)

Also located were postholes associated with three sections of fences. The first section appeared to be a L-shape in the south of the site. It consisted of 11 postholes, with a corner post [71] and five postholes running NE to SW and another five aligned NW to SE.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
34	0.1	0.18	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
35	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
36	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
37	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
41	0.15	0.22	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
65	0.11	0.1	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
71	0.16	0.17	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
72	0.16	0.23	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
73	0.13	0.11	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
74	0.17	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
75	0.12	0.12	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments

A second section aligned NE to SW consisted of six postholes.

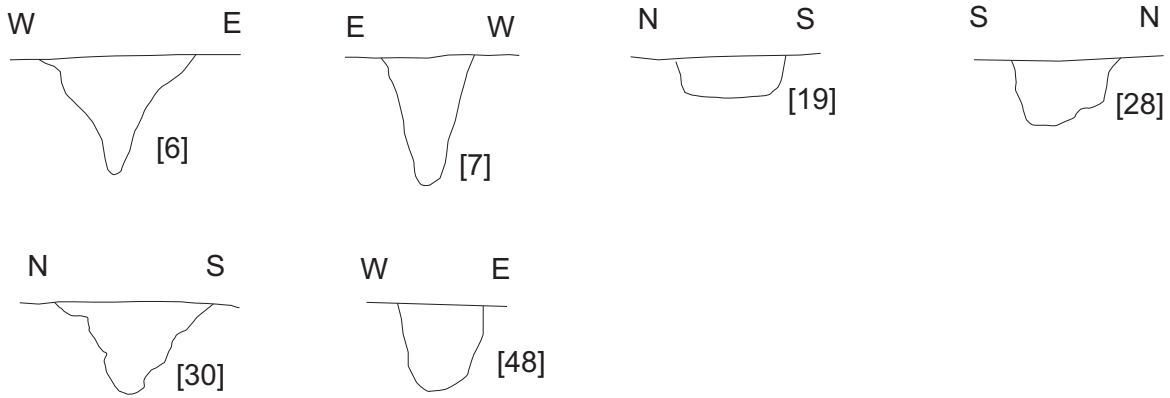
Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
6	0.18	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
7	0.12	0.18	Grey silty clay
19	0.15	0.05	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
28	0.15	0.09	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
30	0.18	0.13	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
48	0.1	0.11	Brown clay loam

A smaller third section, of three postholes was also recorded. It was also aligned NE to SW some 4m west of the last described.

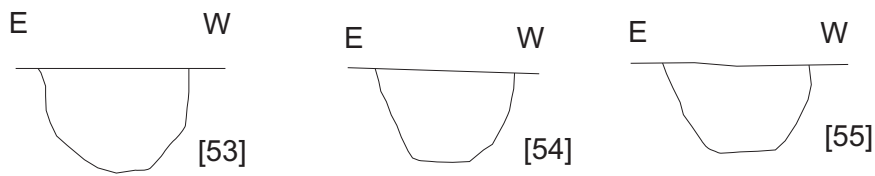
Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
53	0.2	0.14	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
54	0.15	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
55	0.2	0.12	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks



FENCE LINE 2



FENCE LINE 3



PITS

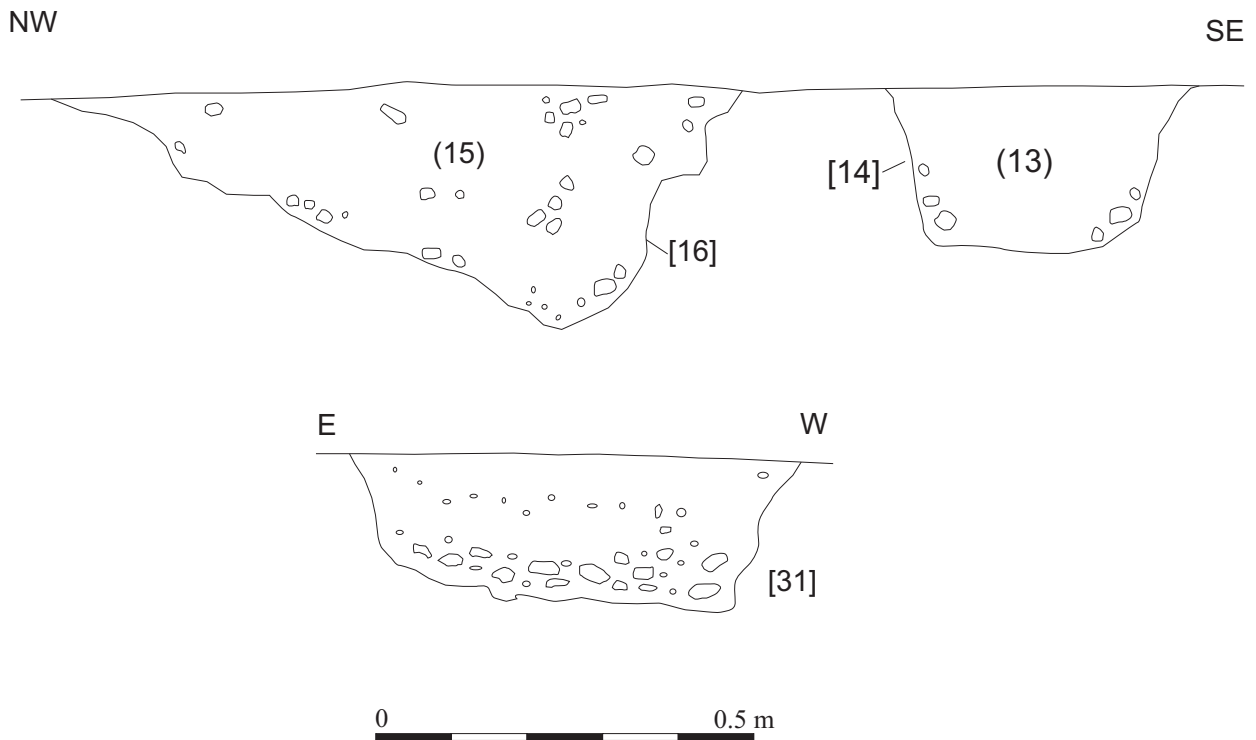


Figure 6. Profiles of Fence Line Postholes and Pits

**Pits** (*Figures 3, 6 & 7*)

A series of fourteen pits were recorded across the site, the majority of which were undated.

Pit [14] was 2.5m long and was 0.42m wide with steep sides 0.2m deep. It was filled with a grey-brown clay loam (13) with small chalk fragments.

Pit [16] was “D-shaped” in plan with the straight edge parallel to Pit [14]. Its western edge was not as steep as the eastern edge that was closest to [14]. It was filled with a dark brown clay loam (15) with chalk fragments.

It is possible that both [14] and [16] represent a tree throw.

Pit [22] was a very ephemeral feature probably heavily truncated by ploughing. It was circular measuring 0.6m in diameter and was 0.08m deep. It contained a dark brown silty loam with chalk fragments. It is possible that this is associated with plant action. Its profile was not drawn.

Pit [31] was roughly circular measuring 1.2m in diameter, with near vertical sides and a flat base. It was 0.2m deep and filled with a dark brown clay loam with some chalk fragments, burnt sarsen and a single flint flake that showed signs of thermal fractures. This pit is likely to be associated with PBS 4, possibly as an internal hearth.

Pit [32] appeared roughly circular, it was bowl shaped and 1.2m wide with an inner deeper area 0.8m in diameter. Its maximum depth was 0.2m and was filled with brown clay loam with chalk fragments and a single flint flake.

Pit [38] was sub-circular in plan measuring roughly 0.35m in diameter. It was 0.15m deep and filled with a dark brown silty clay with chalk fragments.

Pit [39] was circular and 0.4m in diameter, 0.2m deep with a U-shaped profile. It contained a dark brown silty clay with chalk fragments.

Pit [42] appeared circular in plan measuring 0.65m in diameter. It was 0.15m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile and filled with a brown clay loam with some chalk fragments, burnt sarsen and flint pieces that showed signs of thermal fractures.

Pit [44] was circular and approximately 1m in diameter. It was 0.15m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile and filled with a dark brown clay loam with some chalk fragments,

Pit [51] was sub-circular roughly 0.67m wide, 0.16m deep and filled with a dark brown clay loam with some chalk fragments. It was modern in date containing some plastic sheeting and some metal objects.

Pit [63] appeared irregular in plan and was approximately 1.2m wide and 0.2m deep. It was filled a brown clay with some chalk fragments. It is possible that this was a tree bowl although the natural chalk was quite fractured and “blocky” in this area.

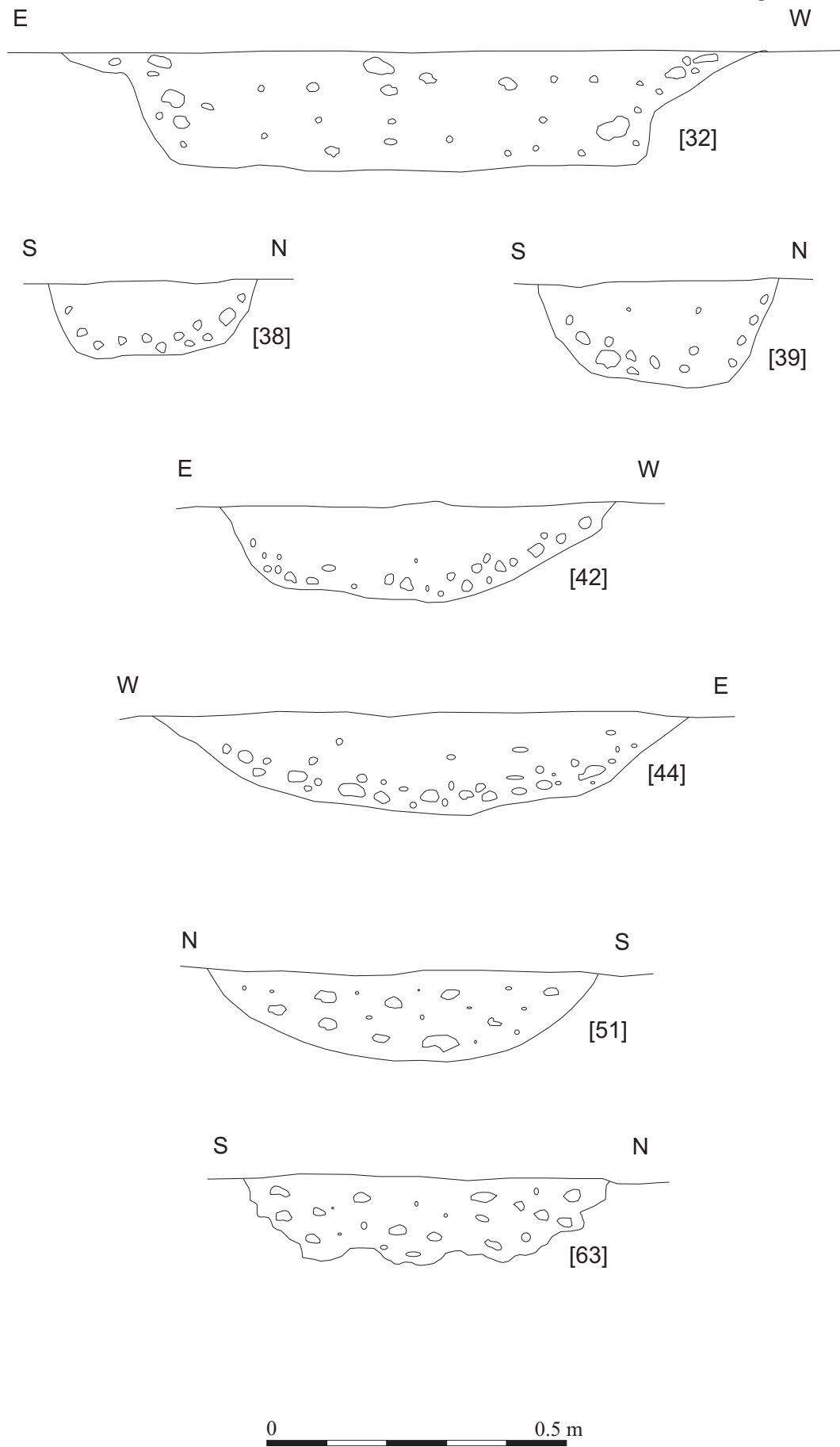


Figure 7. Sections of Pits

Pit [64] was circular in plan and 1.5m in diameter. It was filled brown silty clay. It had been cut through by services and was not excavated as part of the watching brief.

Pit [90] only appeared partially within the watching brief area. It was 4m long and filled with an orange-brown silty clay, it was not excavated.

Pit [91] was also only partially seen. It was roughly circular approximately 2m wide and filled with a dark brown clay loam with some chalk fragments. It was not excavated.

Also revealed during the excavation of this area was the Pit [4/05] that had originally been recorded during the evaluation of 2006 in Trench 4 (JMHS). It was 2m in diameter and 0.5m deep. The sides were irregular as was the base, which was deeper towards the north. The primary fill of the feature was chalk rubble within a grey silty matrix (4/07), which was up to 0.3m thick in places. Above this was a layer of brown-grey silty loam (4/06), which also contained a single flint flake. It was up to 0.3m thick in places. The uppermost surviving fill was more compact chalk rubble with a brown silt matrix (4/08) this was up to 0.1m thick.

#### **Un-associated postholes** (*Figures 3 & 8*)

During the course of the excavation and watching brief a further 19 postholes were excavated that could not be associated with any structure.

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
9	0.2	0.24	Grey silty clay with chalk fragments
12	0.15	0.16	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
18	0.15	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
20	0.15	0.1	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
21	0.1	0.2	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
29	0.2	0.25	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
40	0.18	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
43	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
45	0.15	0.22	Brown clay loam
46	0.13	0.16	Brown clay loam
49	0.17	0.16	Brown clay loam
50	0.13	0.21	Brown clay loam
52	0.2	0.22	Brown clay loam
56	0.12	0.32	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
62	0.2	0.22	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
83	0.13	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
84	0.2	0.12	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
85	0.2	0.17	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
86	0.22	0.15	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

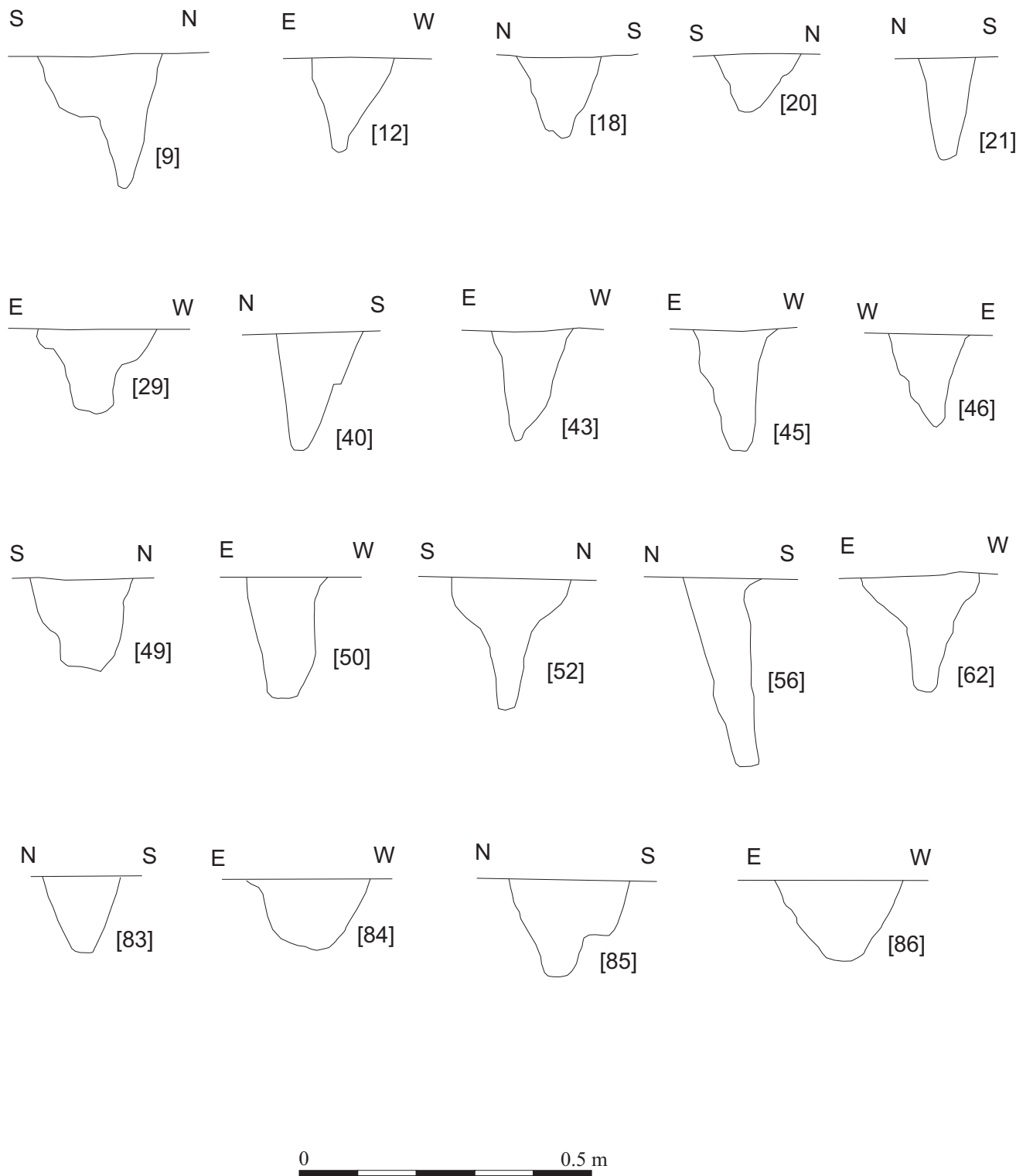


Figure 8. Un-Associated Posthole Profiles

The area where the excavated spoil was to be dumped was also monitored after a topsoil strip, however the depth of ground reduction was not sufficient to expose the natural chalk (see figure 1).

## **4.2 Reliability of Techniques**

The area had been subject to heavy ploughing in the recent past. The scars of this ploughing were evident to a depth of over 0.5m from present ground level. This truncated all archaeological features seen and may well have completely destroyed any that were not so deep.

This plough damage made identifying features quite difficult, indeed plough scars may well have hidden smaller postholes beneath them. Some features were heavily damaged by this ploughing, thus making excavation and interpretation difficult.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Flint**

A primary flake and a secondary flake were recovered from the topsoil (1) during the machine stripping. A secondary flake and a possible utilised flake were recovered from the sub-soil (2).

A single secondary flake was recovered from Pit [27]. A single flake that showed signs of thermal fractures was recovered from Pit [31]. A single secondary flake was recorded from Pit [32]. A single secondary flake was also recorded from Posthole [88].

All had a pale grey-white patina and all were hard hammer struck and typical of debitage from the region of a Bronze Age date.

Only two flint objects were recovered from the earlier evaluation. A single secondary flint flake was recovered from context (2/01) and another from (4/06). Both were hard hammer struck and typical of debitage from the region of a Bronze Age date (JMHS 2006).

It would be expected that high concentrations of flint would likely occur on site, but this was not the case. This can be explained by several factors. Middle Chalk is flint free; some small weathered nodules were noticed with the upper contexts. Many of these flints showing signs of plough damage. While the occasional object showed signs of thermal fractures. Ploughing would have caused significant post-depositional dispersal. Mechanical stripping of large areas is also not conducive to artefact collection.

However counter arguments postulate that occupation areas would be kept free of such material and it would only be associated with working areas and rubbish pits. Ethnographic evidence also points to this being true.

## 5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The site sits between two known Bronze Age field systems, one to the east the other to the west. There are also scatters of Bronze Age pottery within 150m to the north and west; and 500m to the south (Swanton 1987, Gingell 1992).

The ditches recorded during the recent evaluation (JMHS 2006) may well relate to a continuation of these field systems into this area. This evaluation recorded heavy plough damage in the area and this was seen to be widespread during the watching brief. It is interesting that these ditches do not continue into the area of the excavation. This may well indicate that they are field boundary related. Middle Bronze Age settlement across southern Britain is characterised by small farmsteads set within a layout of surrounding fields.

Five circular post-built structures were recorded. These are of similar dimensions to Bronze Age houses excavated in the region, such as at Bishops Cannings Down (Gingell 1992) and Green Park (Brossler *et al* 2004). Those at Bishops Cannings Down were distinctly oval similar to those seen here, however the enlarged doorway postholes were not present. These enlarged postholes are not present on the houses from Green Park however.

The houses from Bishops Cannings Down had porch structures, but not all at Green Park were so enhanced. Only PBS 2 showed the possibility of having a porch like structure.

The recent evaluation (JMHS 2006) concluded that it was possible that the small ditch [3/07] and post-hole [3/05] formed part of another house, as it has similarities to house A at Bishops Cannings Down that displayed curved or irregular ditches at its entrance.

Two rectangular post-built structures were also recorded. The first (PBS 6) was relatively square with a central pit. A direct parallel for this are the structures excavated at Burderop Down. These have a similar layout and are of a similar size (Gingell 1992).

The second rectangular structure may consist of seven postholes with four larger one at the corners with smaller one in between. A rectangular structure with six or more postholes is recorded at Bishops Cannings Down (Gingell 1992).

Three fence lines were recorded, their placement appears interesting in that they mark boundaries of habitation from area with considerably less activity. Although not recorded on other nearby sites, fences would appear to be present at Green Park.

Some features were thought to be tree-throw bowls. However, it is possible that an earlier pit or posthole fill could have provided an ideal growing environment for a young sapling. Indeed this has been recorded on other sites in the Wessex region, including Green Park (Brossler *et al* 2004)

The evidence from Dean Bottom, some 730 metres to the south-east, points to a settlement established in recently cleared woodland (Cleal 1992). It is possible that some of the tree throws located indicate a similar clearance.

Bronze Age settlements are often surrounded or partly enclosed by a bank and ditch. It is possible that the settlement here was one of those unenclosed, or that any enclosure ditch was outside the area of excavation.

The external ditch maybe represented by ditches [2/06] and [2/08]. The disturbed area to the north of the ditches could be the remains of an internal bank. These appear to be a 90° to the ditches located in Trench 1 that were interpreted as part of the field system know in the area.

The scatter of Bronze Age pottery 150m or so to the north of the site might even mark the midden area for the settlement.

Both natural and split sarsen was scattered throughout the upper plough soils. This seemed more concentrated towards the south and east of the site, its presence has been considered important on nearby sites such as Rockley Down and Dean Bottom (Gingell 1992) where it was used as metalling for occupation surfaces.

Approximately 100m to the north a series of sarsen clearance cairns have been recorded (Gingell 1992). These appear to be related to the topography of the area and seem situated at the lowest points in the valley between Pereshute Down and the escarpment leading to Barbury Down. It has been presumed that these are of Bronze Age date but some could be later and the result of deep ploughing in the area forcing larger stones downhill where they were collected and piled away from the fields. Indeed some could represent the destruction of Bronze Age metalled surfaces.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The Desk Based Assessment (JMHS 2005) concluded that middle to late Bronze Age or Iron Age settlement may have extended into the area. The subsequent evaluation (JMHS 2006) recorded numerous sub-soil features within all trenches, with at least some probably of Bronze Age date.

Although the majority of features located remain undated, a few appear to be Bronze Age. It is possible that this may be more recent activity that contains residual artefacts. The concentration of postholes is significant as features bear strong similarities to those dated on prehistoric sites in the area.

The site would appear to be a habitation area located with a wider agricultural landscape. It may well have had an enclosing bank and ditch, several houses and internal fenced divisions.

The site had been heavily disturbed by ploughing and modern services, but some features had survived. Unfortunately this only gives us a glimpse of what might have been on the site



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4	0.25	0.13	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
5	0.2	0.17	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
17	0.12	0.12	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
34	0.1	0.18	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
35	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
36	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
37	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
41	0.15	0.22	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
65	0.11	0.1	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
71	0.16	0.17	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
72	0.16	0.23	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
73	0.13	0.11	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
74	0.17	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
75	0.12	0.12	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
6	0.18	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
7	0.12	0.18	Grey silty clay
19	0.15	0.05	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
28	0.15	0.09	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
30	0.18	0.13	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
48	0.1	0.11	Brown clay loam

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
53	0.2	0.14	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
54	0.15	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
55	0.2	0.12	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
23	1.1 x 0.7	0.11	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
24	1.2 x 0.9	0.25	Yellow-brown silty clay with chalk fragments
27	0.4 x 0.25	0.14	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
47	0.65	0.14	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
9	0.2	0.24	Grey silty clay with chalk fragments
12	0.15	0.16	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
18	0.15	0.15	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
20	0.15	0.1	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
21	0.1	0.2	Brown-grey clay loam with chalk fragments
29	0.2	0.25	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
40	0.18	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
43	0.15	0.2	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments

45	0.15	0.22	Brown clay loam
46	0.13	0.16	Brown clay loam
49	0.17	0.16	Brown clay loam
50	0.13	0.21	Brown clay loam
52	0.2	0.22	Brown clay loam
56	0.12	0.32	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
62	0.2	0.22	Mid brown clay loam with chalk fragments
83	0.13	0.13	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
84	0.2	0.12	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
85	0.2	0.17	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
86	0.22	0.15	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks

Post Hole	Dia. (m)	Depth (m)	Fill
87	0.12	0.08	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
88	1.2 x 0.5	n/a	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
89	0.5 x 0.3	0.15+	Orange-brown clay loam with charcoal flecks
92	1.5	n/a	Brown clay loam with charcoal flecks