



Practical Archaeology Training Course 2006, Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley, Dorset

Excavation Report



**Practical Archaeology Training Course (2006),
Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley, Dorset**

Excavation Report

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Summary

This report summarises the results of all the archaeological investigations to date carried out at Home Field, Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley, Dorset (NGR. ST 9980 1461), but focuses in detail on the results of the 2006 fieldwork. It presents the results of a three week excavation run as a practical archaeology course for the general public by Wessex Archaeology. It also summarises the results of earlier work undertaken by Martin Green (1985/6, 1995) and Wessex Archaeology (2004 and 2005).

This was the third season of research excavation carried out on the site and comprised two small areas which are extensions to the earlier excavations. The excavation was carried out between 4th – 22nd September 2006. The results from the archaeological investigations at Home Field have highlighted the major period of activity being from the Late Bronze Age into the Middle Iron Age (11th - 7th to 5th - 3rd centuries BC). A small quantity of Beaker period (2600 – 1800 BC) and Romano-British (AD 43 – 410) pottery from the previous excavations indicates small-scale activity of these dates in the area, though the nature of the activity is difficult to ascertain.

The 2004 and 2005 excavations recorded a sub-rectangular banked enclosure, with a short, externally ditched section on the west side, which was constructed in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (11th - 7th century BC) and continued in use until the Middle Iron Age (5th – 3rd centuries BC). Internal settlement features that were identified included quarry hollows, four-post granary structures and two possible Middle Iron Age roundhouses. The 2006 excavations unearthed further internal features relating to the settlement enclosure. Another four four-poster granary structures were encountered in conjunction with a large number of post-holes relating to Late Bronze Age – Early/Middle Iron Age structures and associated fence lines. Evidence for demarcation between settlement and agricultural storage was also discerned with the main focus of domestic activity concentrated in the northern part of the excavation area. Evidence for the recutting of postholes implies repair and suggest that some of the structures may have been utilised over relatively long phases of time. The pottery recovered also suggests that activity/occupation spanned the Late Bronze Age through to the Early and Middle Iron Ages, although this need not have been continuous. Other features such as shallow pits provide further evidence for domestic activities (such as hearths) as well as events of a more ceremonial nature. The palaeoenvironmental evidence indicates that sometime in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age the local landscape changed from downland pasture to arable. This change may have been part of the reorganisation of the landscape upon the construction of the settlement enclosure.

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Summary (cont...)

The large number of postholes suggests the presence of a number of structures, not all of which can be easily discerned at present, but which may be associated with both circular roundhouses and rectangular, aisled, timber houses. The latter may demonstrate parallels with Middle Bronze Age structures uncovered by Martin Green during earlier excavations in the adjacent Fir Tree Field.

The settlement enclosure is possibly associated with an extensive Celtic field system and lynchet running down Gussage Cow Down and across Home Field respectively. The 2006 excavations uncovered evidence to confirm that this enclosure had a positive bank around its northern extent, but with no accompanying ditch.

The overall evidence from all the fieldwork shows that activities included flint knapping, bronze and iron metalworking, textile manufacture and grain storage. The chalk quarrying may have been for cob wall construction, whitewash (for daub walls) or marling of calcium deficient fields. Animal husbandry included the keeping of cattle, sheep/goat and pig, though it is not possible to ascertain the relative importance of each species. Dog remains, possibly domesticated, were also present.

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Acknowledgements

The third season of fieldwork could not have been undertaken but for the generosity shown by Martin Green, the landowner. Wessex Archaeology are very grateful to Martin for his continuing agreement to allow the Training Excavation to be carried out on his land in Home Field, and continuing the exploratory archaeological work he carried out in the 1980s and 1990s. Wessex would also like to thank him for allowing us access to his excellent museum. Martin's knowledge, enthusiasm and good humour helped make the course a great success.

Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank John Winterbottom for providing a thoroughly interesting introduction to prehistoric pottery, through his practical demonstrations of pottery manufacture, and for allowing the course participants to take part in making, decorating and firing their own vessels.

All the Wessex Archaeology staff involved in the project would like to thank the participants for showing enthusiasm, good nature and a zest for learning, even under occasionally rather inclement conditions! This has helped make the training courses and excavation such a success and so enjoyable.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Margaret Bunyard (Education Manager), who also managed the Outreach/Educational side of the project. The fieldwork was directed by Catriona Gibson, with assistance from Ellie Brooks and Gemma White. Kayt Brown and Talla Hopper gave practical courses on finds processing and Doug Murphy trained students in survey, and both he and Ellie Brooks provided the on-site survey. Lectures were given on site by Jessica Grimm (animal bone) and Matt Leivers (pottery). Furthermore, both Martin Green and Phil Harding gave impromptu demonstrations of flint knapping, which the students enjoyed thoroughly.

This report was compiled by Dr. Catriona Gibson, and edited by Dr. Andrew Fitzpatrick with assistance from Lorraine Mepham (pottery, finds) with Dr. Matt Leivers (flint) and Jessica Grimm (animal bone). The palaeoenvironmental analyses for Martin's earlier work were carried out by Sarah Wyles, Dr. Chris Stevens and Dr. Michael J. Allen. The illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Wessex Archaeology Ltd. and Martin Green. It summarises the results of the 2006 excavations at Home Field, Down Farm (NGR. ST 9980 1461) – hereafter referred to as the ‘Site’, as well as containing a brief summary of earlier excavations of the Site, including the Wessex Archaeology’s 2004 and 2005 training excavations (directed by Chris Ellis) and Martin Green’s own projects (1985/6, 1987/88, 1995).

1.1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by members of the general public, supervised by Wessex Archaeology staff between 4th – 22nd September 2006.

1.1.3 Wessex Archaeology is committed to the greater public understanding of archaeology and the dissemination of the results of its investigations as part of its educational objective as a charitable organisation. To that end, Wessex Archaeology decided members of the public would be given the opportunity to carry out the present research excavation under professional supervision.

1.1.4 The aim of the excavation and associated workshops was that the participants should learn the processes of archaeological excavation and recording and the fundamental principles of archaeological interpretation. The participants were all given a number of lectures and practical activities by finds, environmental, animal bone and surveying specialists during the project. Participation in the making and firing of pottery on site using prehistoric technology was also undertaken.

2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY

2.1.1 The Site is located on an area of high chalk downland called Cranborne Chase, situated between Poole and Salisbury. This area of high undulating downland rises from the south-east to a dramatic scarp at its northern edge where the ground lies at c. 270m above Ordnance Datum. A small number of watercourses cross the Chase and drain to the south-east. Down Farm is located within the Allen valley.

- 2.1.2 The Site lies on a gently north facing slope on the south-west side of the Allen valley at a general height of *c.* 76m (aOD) though the ground rises to Gussage Cow Down to the south to a height of 110m (aOD). The underlying geology is Upper Chalk which has shafts, caverns and tunnel valleys caused by excess water running through fissures in the chalk. In places Clay-with-Flints cap the chalk. This is seen in certain areas of the Allen valley, where Valley Gravel is also recorded.
- 2.1.3 To the east of Down Farm a number of periglacial features called ‘naleds’ have been recorded (Catt *et. al.* 1980). These are the result of periglacial action which led to coombe-rock (eroded chalk) collecting around frozen springs. Today, this creates a distorted and pock-marked landscape of discrete mounds and hollows.
- 2.1.4 The Site is presently part of a Habitat Improvement Scheme and is put over to pasture (Green 2000, 145).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Archaeological setting

- 3.1.1 The Site lies in the central stretch of the Cranborne Chase (**Figure 1**), one of the most rich and archaeologically significant landscapes in southern England.
- 3.1.2 Cranborne Chase has been an important area for archaeological research, from the beginnings of archaeology as a scientific endeavour. Fieldwork has been carried out by notable archaeologists such as Colt Hoare, Lieutenant General Pitt Rivers, Sumner, Keiller and more recently by Barrett, Bradley and M. Green.
- 3.1.3 Close to Down Farm, remains from all periods have been found. The prehistoric periods from the Mesolithic (10,000 – 4000 BC) to the Iron Age (700 BC – AD 43) are particularly well represented. The sites include scatters of Mesolithic flints, prehistoric open settlements as well as an impressive number and range of prehistoric ritual or ceremonial sites. The sites include the Late Neolithic Dorset Cursus (*c.* 3360 – 3030 BC) and the henges of Knowlton and Wyke Down as well as Later Neolithic Grooved Ware period settlements at Wyke Down and Fir Tree Field immediately to the east (Green 2000). Beaker period (2400 – 1800 BC) settlement is also known from Fir Tree Field where a cluster of pits lay below an Early Bronze Age (2400 – 1500 BC) pond barrow. A large number of Early Bronze Age round barrows are known from the immediate area, including Wyke Down to the north.

3.1.4 Later activity is present in Fir Tree Field where a Middle Bronze Age (1500 – 1100 BC) enclosed settlement overlay the earlier Grooved Ware period open settlement (Barrett *et al.* 1991) The Middle Bronze Age settlement appeared to have comprised a single rectangular structure (Barrett *et al* ibid, Figure 5.27). Iron Age (700 BC – AD 43) activity is particularly evident near the Site. This includes a series of Late Bronze Age/Iron Age drove-ways and Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British (100 BC – AD 150) ‘banjo’ enclosures on Gussage Cow Down (Green 2000).

3.1.5 To the south and south-west of Down Farm, running down from Gussage Cow Down, an extensive Celtic field system has been recorded from aerial photographs (Bowen 1990). Small square or sub-rectangular (Celtic) field systems are mainly Iron Age or Romano-British in date though may extend back to the Middle Bronze Age (Bradley *et al.* 1994; Yates 1999, 2001). The system could be contemporary with the extensive complex of Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British ‘banjo’ enclosures on Gussage Cow Down.

3.1.6 A component of the Gussage Cow Down Celtic field system is a lynchet that runs across Home Field and which marks the boundary between soil types in the valley (Green 2000, 129). This was investigated in 1995. Lying just to the south of the lynchet a sub-rectangular enclosure was also investigated (Green 1986; Bowen 1990). The enclosure was also investigated as part of the present fieldwork (see below).

3.1.7 Romano-British activity near the Site is represented by Ackling Dyke, the major Roman road running from the provincial capital in London (*Londinium*) to Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*) via Old Sarum (*Soriodunum*). Settlement extended into the Romano-British period on Gussage Cow Down with continued use of the ‘banjo’ enclosures and areas beyond. A possible Roman-Celtic temple is also recorded in this area.

3.1.8 Little Anglo-Saxon (AD 410 – 1066) evidence exists in the immediate area of the Site though secondary burials of this date have been recorded from early Bronze Age barrows at Woodyates and Oakley Down to the north. A further possible secondary burial of this date was recorded from the nearby Down Farm ring-ditch (Barrett *et. al.* 1991).

3.1.9 A hedge line bisecting the Allen valley is thought to preserve a boundary between two Late Saxon estates (850 – 1066 AD). The northern part of this boundary is preserved in the present Down Farm track and public footpath. There is little Anglo-Saxon evidence in the Dorset area. This is probably due to a number of factors such as exhaustion of the downland soils by this time, low population densities and the lack of survival to the present of poor quality Anglo-Saxon pottery in the ploughsoil.

3.2 Excavations 1985/6-88, 1995

3.2.1 Martin Green carried out excavations within Home Field on or near the Site in the 1980s and in 1995 which comprised a 330 m² area, mostly outside, but also within the sub-rectangular enclosure (**Figure 1**). A 50m x 4m trench dug in 1995 sectioned the lynchet to the north.

- 3.2.2 Outside the enclosure's eastern earthwork side, a small number of features were recorded. They included two large quarry hollows (**F.1**, **F.2**) which contained abraded, Early Iron Age (700 – 400 BC) pottery, worked flint, animal bone, metalworking waste and a bone awl. Two flint knapping clusters of material were also recorded in the base of **F.1** (Green 1986, 173). A number of postholes in the area were also recorded in 1987-88 as the trench was extended to the west (**HF 87/88**), and two of these postholes predated the quarry hollows.
- 3.2.3 Some of the postholes excavated by Martin Green formed elements of structures including four-post structures. One of the postholes contained a few sherds of Early Iron Age pottery. Two larger postholes were thought to be likely post-pits forming part of a possible substantial western facing entrance or porch to a roundhouse. The southerly post-pit forming this entrance contained a large finds assemblage including a single sherd of residual Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery, quernstone fragments and at least three fired clay loomweights from **F.5**.
- 3.2.4 In 1995 M. Green investigated the lynchet in Home Field. A trench (**HF 95**) was excavated across the lynchet. A single possible posthole (**PH.1a**) was recorded. Palaeoenvironmental samples were taken from soils within the 'negative' lynchet and below the 'positive' lynchet. A single sherd of Late Bronze Age (1000 – 700 BC) or Early Iron Age (700 – 400 BC) pottery was recovered from the buried soil horizon. The results from these have been discussed in earlier reports (see Wessex Archaeology 2004 and 2005).

3.3 Excavation 2004

- 3.3.1 Two trenches, *c.* 32m apart (**Trenches 1-2**), comprising a total of 532m², were excavated to extend **HF87/88**. They were located to record the possible roundhouse that the two post-pits (**F.4**, **F.5**) suggested lay to the west, as well as other settlement features within the enclosure. **Trench 2** was excavated to characterise the short section of enclosure that ground observation of a crop mark showed to be ditched along this side, and part of the enclosure's interior.
- 3.3.2 In **Tr.1** some postholes of the north-western and south-eastern circumference of a *c.* 15m diameter roundhouse (**142**) were recorded suggesting that post-pits **F.4** and **F.5** did belong to the entrance as originally proposed. This entrance was oriented to the east.
- 3.3.3 In **Tr.2** a further undated four-post structure (**212**) was recorded to the west of a large MIA quarry hollow (**232**). In the west of the trench the northernmost length of the enclosure's western ditch (**237**) was recorded. This *c.* 10m length contained Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (11th - 7th century BC) pottery in its primary fills, though it also contained residual Beaker and later MIA pottery in its later secondary fills. The right side of a cow skull was recorded on the base of ditch segment **241**.

3.3.4 A well-preserved series of antler pick marks were clearly visible in the base of the ditch in segment **217/241** (Wessex Archaeology 2005, **plate 1**). A c. 3m wide strip of relatively unweathered chalk natural immediately east of the ditch may indicate the location of an internal bank subsequently destroyed, but no clear evidence of collapsed bank material was discernible in any of the ditch segments.

3.3.5 By the northern ditch terminal a very shallow scoop (**202**) was recorded which contained an undated, articulated cow skeleton (**260**). The cow was laid on its right side with the head to the north, although the skull was missing (Wessex Archaeology 2005, **plate 2**). The skeleton had been badly truncated by ploughing and little of its left side remained. This ‘placed deposit’ may represent the ritual marking of an entrance. Though unproven from faunal analyses, it is possible that the partial cow skull from the base of ditch segment **241** came from the animal buried in pit **202**.

3.4 Geophysical surveys

3.4.1 Prior to the 2005 fieldwork a magnetometer and topographic survey were undertaken over the area of Home Field where the Site is located as part of an undergraduate research project at Durham University (Legg 2005). A small number of features were discernible in the results which may represent postholes or quarry hollows (the larger features), though specific structural remains or settlement activities were not readily apparent (*op cit*, 1).

3.4.2

3.5 Results from 2005 excavations

3.5.1 In 2005 Wessex Archaeology continued the training excavations and opened two trenches immediately adjacent to the 2004 excavations. The excavation comprised three small areas which were all extensions to the previous excavation areas. Further interventions were excavated through the segmented enclosure ditch (which runs roughly north-south), and which was dated to the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age (11th-7th centuries BC). A number of internal features relating to settlement and other activities were also encountered. These included intercutting irregular chalk quarry hollows (**187-190, 506-508**) which contained Early Iron Age pottery and burnt flint. A large number of postholes and stakeholes were also encountered, and in a number of cases, some patterns were discerned. This included the recognition of a possible roundhouse structure (**774**) and a number of four-post structures (e.g. **601, 748, 702** and **718**).

3.5.2 Two large postholes (**556, 569**) were set just under 3m apart close to the northern edge of Trench 1a, and were thought to represent the entrance of a roundhouse with the entrance facing south-south-west. However, if these substantial posts did represent part of a structure, the majority of it lay beyond the trench to the north. Both posts had packing and a post-pipe was also visible in posthole **556**. In addition at least four four-posters were recognised, represented by sub-rectangular structures measuring roughly 2m x 2.5m.

3.6 The Archive

3.6.1 The artefacts, and any accompanying documentary records from Martin Green's (**HF 86**, **HF 87/88** and **HF 95**) and Wessex Archaeology's fieldwork (**WA 04-06**) have been compiled into a stable, fully cross-referenced and indexed archive in accordance with Appendix 6 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2nd Edition, English Heritage 1991).

3.6.2 Martin Green's and Wessex Archaeology's archives are currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire. The Wessex Archaeology archives are under the project codes **56390** and **56392**. On the completion of the present research excavations by Wessex Archaeology the full archive will be handed over to M. Green.

4 METHODOLOGY - 2006 EXCAVATIONS

4.1 Introduction to areas opened

4.1.1 The 2006 excavations joined up the areas already opened in 2004 and 2005 (see **Figure 1**). Initially a roughly rectangular area was opened using a 360° tracked machine under constant archaeological supervision between **Trench 2A**, **WA4** and **Trench 1A** and linking the earlier trenches together. This measured c.20m on its NW-SE axis and c. 19m on its NE-SW axis (**Area 3A**; a total stripped area of 380m²; **Figure 2**).

4.1.2 It was anticipated that a large number of archaeological features would be encountered, given the fairly dense nature of archaeology on either side (**Figures 1 and 2**). However, a relatively small number of postholes were revealed, and an actual 'blank' zone in the eastern part of this site was also encountered with no postholes visible at all, only stakeholes. The large number of stakeholes were seemingly arranged in two lines orientated roughly north-east – south-west (see **Figure 2**). These were thought to represent a double fence-line that may have formed a sub-division within the settlement enclosure.

4.1.3 On this basis, it was decided to extend the excavation area northwards from the location of **Trench 1A** where the entrance to a possible roundhouse had been identified in 2005. It was anticipated that further postholes relating to this structure might be revealed, providing a better understanding of its size and form. Furthermore, it was hoped that this extension to the original trench might reveal further evidence for the enclosure surrounding the settlement that was thought to exist only as a positive bank in this part of the site. However, because of time constraints this research aim could not be investigated this season and was therefore left until the 2007 season.

4.1.4 During the end of the first week, a second rectangular area was opened. This area (**Area 3B**) measured c. 25m NE-SW and 19.50m NW-SE (giving a total area of c. 487m²). In comparison to **Area 3A** a denser concentration of features, predominantly postholes, but also a small number of quarry hollows, stakeholes and pits, were exposed (**Figure 3**).

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 The machine stripping of both areas removed approximately 0.25m of undifferentiated topsoil, immediately beneath which the interface with the chalk natural was revealed. While the natural chalk was relatively unweathered, a number of modern plough scars was evident across the Site, indicating some level of truncation.

4.2.2 After machine stripping, both areas were cleaned back by hand and all features revealed were mapped using the GPS survey equipment and tied into the Ordnance Survey Grid and Ordnance datum (metres above Ordnance Datum [m aOD]). All of the discrete features in **Area 3A** were half-sectioned (50% excavation), and some of the larger postholes were 100% excavated. In addition, all postholes that were thought to form part of structures (roundhouses or four-post structures) were fully excavated. The majority of discrete features in the southern half of **Area 3B** were also half-sectioned, with a minimum of 50% excavation. Furthermore, large samples of larger features (at least 25%) of the quarry hollows were excavated, and two interventions through the terminals of the enclosure ditch (that had been begun in the previous seasons) were completed.

4.2.3 All excavated features were drawn by hand at the appropriate scale (1:10 for sections, and generally 1:20 for plans), and were tied in using the Site Grid as well as through GPS survey. A full photographic record was taken for all features and general site working shots. A dumpy level was also used on Site to take levels for all features.

4.3 Reinstatement at the end of the Excavation

4.3.1 Larger features (quarry hollows and the enclosure ditch) were lined with a permeable textile membrane (Terram) prior to backfilling. Since such a dense (and slightly unexpected) concentration of postholes were revealed in **Area 3B**, it was not possible to excavate all of these in the time allowed. The northern half of **Area 3B** had not been cleaned back after machine stripping, and a thin layer of soil defining the interface between the topsoil and the chalk natural protected these features. However, in the southern half of the trench, where features had been cleaned up but not excavated, a decision was taken to cover these features with Terram and then cover them with spoil, in order to protect them from weathering until 2007. In addition, a plastic tag was placed in the spoil of the excavated postholes when they were backfilled with spoil.

5 RESULTS

5.1.1 A total of 102 postholes, six pits, two stakeholes, eight quarry hollow pits and two slots through the ditch were excavated.

5.1.2 The densest concentration of features lay in the central and southern part of **Area 3B**. It was clear that the density of features began to drop off in the northern part of the site towards where the enclosure boundary may originally have existed.

- 5.1.3 Possible indirect evidence for the bank was indicated by the relatively pristine, unweathered chalk in this part of the Site – it appeared to have been protected by a positive feature. This had also been noted during the earlier excavations by Martin Green (Wessex Archaeology 2004, **Section 2.2**).
- 5.1.4 The dense concentration of postholes in the central and southern part of **Area 3B** was also associated with a number of other features, including at least three pits. In addition, an extension to the ‘quarry hollow/ quarry working’ cluster was identified in this part of the Site.

5.2 Postholes

- 5.2.1 In **Area 3A**, a minimum of four possible four-posters (Group Numbers **1109-1112** see **Figure 2**) were identified in this area, which are discussed in more detail below.
- 5.2.2 While some patterns could be discerned amongst the postholes in **Area 3A**, in **Area 3B** their dense concentration meant that it was more difficult to identify posthole groupings. Rather than circular structures being easily identifiable, the linear regularity of some of the postholes implied that they may have formed fence line boundaries or rectangular structures (see **Figure 3**).
- 5.2.3 Several of the posts in this area provided evidence for recuts, implying continued maintenance. Furthermore, finds retrieved from this part of the Site, particularly the pottery, also provided evidence of activity spanning the Late Bronze Age into the Early and Middle Iron Ages.
- 5.2.4 The postholes excavated were almost all circular (a few oval or sub-circular features were identified). In plan, they ranged from 0.1m to 0.7m in diameter (with an average diameter of 0.3m), and their depths ranged from 0.05m to 0.61m (with a mean depth of 0.22m).
- 5.2.5 Out of the 102 postholes excavated, evidence for post-packing (generally in the form of chalk or flint nodules) was identified in 33 examples, often in the more substantial postholes. Often the packing comprised several large flint or chalk nodules placed around the post to keep it in place (**Figures 2 and 3**). In several cases, tabular chalk had been used in thin rectangular wedges. Eleven postholes provided evidence for post-pipes, where the posts had rotted *in situ*.
- 5.2.6 The absence of post-packing or post-pipes from the other postholes does not imply that they originally lacked wooden posts; rather that perhaps in a large number of instances the posts had been removed when a structure fell into disuse or was abandoned.
- 5.2.7 Thirty-eight of the postholes contained a single fill, a further 30 had two fills while five had three fills and only one had four fills.

5.2.8 The majority of the postholes were circular with straight or concave sides and a relatively flat base. Several of the postholes contained some points of interest and these will be described in slightly more detail below. Of some interest was the fact that three of the post-holes had recuts demonstrating re-use and suggesting maintenance and longevity of some of the structures. This would include postholes **871**, **900** and **930** which were recut by postholes **895**, **898** and **883** respectively.

5.3 Four-post structures

5.3.1 A small number of four-post structures could be identified with some certainty in **Area 3A**, where the less dense clustering of posts made patterns easier to identify. It is likely that activity in this area can be attributed broadly to a single phase, while that in **Area 3B** may be associated with several different phases of activity, and this is supported by the pottery dating.

5.3.2 Four-post structure **1109** is constituted by postholes **1001**, **1003**, **1038** and **1072**. All of these were roughly similar in size and formed a rectangular structure 2.8m by 1.8m. In general the postholes were *c.* 0.3m in diameter and 0.16m in depth, although **1001** was slightly more substantial (0.25m deep). Posthole **1003** was cut by a later stakehole **1007**. All of the posts contained chalk or flint rubble fills that may represent displaced packing, and **1038** contained a deliberate backfill.

5.3.3 Another rectangular four-post structure (**1110**) lay 6m north of **1109**. It had similar dimensions (2.7m by 1.8m) but the four posts (**851**, **958**, **1041** and **1046**) comprising this structure were rather more substantial. On average they measured 0.33m in diameter and over 0.32m in depth, and two of them had evidence of packing, while the posts had been removed in the other two. Post **1041** had evidence for a clear post-pipe 0.2m in diameter, surrounded by chalk packing and implying that this post had been left to rot *in situ*.

5.3.4 A further 4m to the north-east an almost perfectly square four-post structure (Group **1111**) was noted. This comprised postholes **858**, **860**, **956** and **1063**. All of the posts were very similar in diameter (0.3m) and depth (0.3m) except for post **1063**, which was 0.38m deep and contained a clear post pipe (0.2m in diameter). Two of the postholes contained finds – posthole **956** produced animal bone, and **1063** contained animal bone and struck flint.

5.3.5 Four-post structure **1112** was situated a further 4m to the east of **1111**, and comprised postholes **808**, **820**, **854** and **952** to make a small rectangular structure 2m by 1.8m in size. Again the posts were of similar dimensions (generally 0.3-0.4m in diameter and 0.17m deep). Two of the posts (**820** and **808**) contained stone packing and post **952** also contained burnt flint.

5.3.6 None of the postholes comprising these four-posters contained datable finds but it is likely that they are broadly contemporary with those excavated previously.

5.4 Pits

5.4.1 Four pits were excavated, one in **Area 3A** and three in **Area 3B**. Potentially associated with the four-poster structures in the western part of the Site, and only 2m to the east of four-post structure **1110**, lay an oval pit (**849**). The pit was 1.25m by 0.8m in plan, 0.28m in depth and contained three fills. An initial chalky primary fill lined the sides and base of this feature, implying the pit had begun to weather gradually prior to two episodes of deliberate backfilling. The upper fills were relatively rich in finds, and contained 12 small and relatively abraded Iron Age potsherds, four fragments of animal bone (74g) and nearly 1.5kg of burnt flint. Although the finds might suggest that this pit may have acted as a repository for general discarded rubbish, it seems unlikely that the pit was originally dug to fulfil this function, as it is small and shallow. Instead, it could have been associated with crop-processing, drying and storing activities linked in with the granary structures. As it fell out of use, perhaps the pit was subsequently filled up with rubbish from the adjacent settlement focussed in **Area 3B**.

5.4.2 Pit **902** was a small oval feature (1.2m by 0.8m in plan and 0.38m deep), which was cut by posthole **1020** once it had fully silted up. The pit itself contained a small quantity of burnt flint, struck flint and two sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery (11g).

5.4.3 Less than 0.5m to the north of this pit was pit **947**. This was a sub-circular and shallow pit, which was surrounded by a number of stakeholes and postholes, some of which may have been contemporary. It was 2.5m by 1.6m in plan but only 0.2m deep. The nature of the fills and finds contained within this pit suggest some intent behind their deposition (see **Figure 3**). A deposit comprising pottery, struck and burnt flint, animal bone and a human femur appeared to have been deliberately placed upon a platform of burnt flint and chalk nodules in the centre of this pit. This deposit included a large number of Middle Iron Age pottery (59 sherds weighing 154g) that represented at least two vessels including rim sherds of a saucepan pot and a tool decorated body sherd. The flint assemblage (all hard hammer struck) included eight flakes, two flake cores and one scraper. The lithic assemblage is earlier in date than the pottery and implies the flint component was residual (see **Section 6.3.2** below). However, as the flints were also clearly deliberately deposited within this feature, it is possible that had been curated as ancestral items by the Iron Age population. The deposit had been covered with a deliberate backfill and had not been left open to silt slowly.

5.4.4 Only 3.5m to the south-east of pit **947** was another small pit, **906**. This was roughly circular in plan (0.65m in diameter), and again relatively shallow, with a depth of only 0.2m. The feature had been deliberately backfilled with a large quantity of burnt charcoal-rich material that included over 21kg of burnt flint. There was no evidence for *in situ* burning activity implying that this feature was not a hearth-pit but rather may have been used to receive the rake-outs from nearby fires, perhaps from within adjacent domestic dwellings.

- 5.4.5 Of some interest was the presence of a semi-complete pot (half of an Early Iron Age All Cannings Cross type of bowl – see **Figure 3**) that had been placed against the southern-most edge of the pit cut, possibly deliberately.
- 5.4.6 The pits suggest a focus of activity in a small part of the landscape over a period of up to five or six hundred years. The continued reference to a particular spot in the landscape through such pit-digging may have been accidental, but the evidence suggests a combination of both domestic and perhaps ritual activity within this locale.

5.5 Roundhouses or Rectangular buildings?

- 5.5.1 In **Area 3B**, it was harder to distinguish groupings of postholes, due to the dense distribution of features in this area. It is possible that a whole series of four-post structures, fencelines, roundhouses and rectangular houses may be untangled from these posthole clusters through further analysis. The more substantial ones are likely load-bearing posts forming parts of structures rather than simply defining field boundaries or hedge lines.
- 5.5.2 The two more substantial postholes (postholes **911** and **964**) identified in the south-eastern part of **Area 3B** may form part of a porch or entrance, that could be part of the same structure (though not necessarily a roundhouse) that was identified in **Trench 1A** in 2005 (postholes **556** and **569**). Posthole **911** was 0.7m in diameter and 0.5m in depth, while posthole **964** was 0.6m in diameter and 0.6m in depth. Together, with postholes **556** and **569**, they may have formed a porch structure measuring roughly 3m by 3.4m in size, orientated south-east.
- 5.5.3 Although this alignment is perfect for an entrance to a later prehistoric roundhouse, the frustration comes from attempting to discern elements of a circular post-built structure to accompany it.
- 5.5.4 During the previous excavations, two possible circular roundhouses were identified.. Elements of a third possible roundhouse (Group Number **1118**) were identified in the south-eastern corner of **Area 3A** where at least seven postholes were identified that formed a roughly circular arrangement c. 7.5m in diameter. These postholes were all fairly substantial, measuring generally c. 0.3m in diameter and 0.2-0.25m in depth, with a possible entrance to the south-east.
- 5.5.5 A number of the posts in **Area 3B** form linear arrangements (see **Figure 3**), and may have formed rectangular rather than circular structures. Excavations by Martin Green in Fir Tree Field (i.e. the field immediately to the east of the Site) revealed evidence for an enclosed Middle Bronze Age settlement that comprised an aisled rectangular building (see Barrett *et al* 1991, Figure 5.27). It is possible that this rectangular building tradition continued in use into the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age at Down Farm if these postholes (after further analysis) prove to be components of rectangular structures.
- 5.5.6 The extrapolated lines on the drawing in **Figure 3** are conjectural, and merely highlight the possibility of rectangular structures as well as circular forms of architecture in **Area 3B**.

5.6 Quarry Hollows

5.6.1 The 2004 and 2005 seasons had already excavated representative parts of quarry hollows. Four further quadrants were placed through quarry hollows that were revealed in **Area 3B** (quarry hollow groups **1115** and **1116**). These confirmed earlier observations and demonstrated that the quarry hollows comprised a number of individual intercutting shallow pits that were generally quite rich in finds.

5.6.2 Quarry hollow Group **1115** contained a minimum of four slightly irregular intercutting pits (**944**, **989**, **991** and **999**), between 1.5 and 2.8m in diameter and 0.2-0.35m deep. In several cases, the horizontal cleavage planes in the chalk bedrock had been exploited to quarry the chalk. Finds from these features included several abraded sherds of Iron Age pottery, small fragments of animal bone and struck and burnt flint. The fills imply that the hollows had been allowed to silt up naturally, and finds associated with domestic activity in the immediate vicinity had become trapped within the hollows.

5.6.3 These shallow features may have been quarries for marl to make cob walls. Posthole **877** contained chalk marl within its backfill, which may derive from the marl-daub walls of a structure in the vicinity.

5.7 Enclosure Ditch

5.7.1 The postholes, pits and stake-holes all form part of a multi-phased settlement complex at Down Farm that is partially enclosed on the western side by the enclosure ditch (**Figures 1 and 2**) exposed during the 2004 field season, and excavated during the 2004-2006 seasons. The ditch itself only extends for a distance of 18.5m in length. It is *c.* 1.8m wide although it widens out towards its southern terminus to 2m, and 1m deep.

5.7.2 Several sections had already been excavated through this enclosure ditch during the 2004 and 2005 seasons. Only one further section was fully excavated in 2006 (section **355**), in order to recover a full snail column from the silted up ditch fills of the northern terminus. Furthermore, unusual deposits occur at the terminal ends of such features. The 2004 season had excavated a headless but otherwise articulated cow skeleton from a shallow pit by the northern ditch terminal, and a partial cow skull (possibly the same animal) had been placed within the enclosure ditch itself (although not at the actual terminus).. However, despite the full excavation of the northern terminus **355**, no further evidence for structured deposition was encountered.

5.7.3 However, one find of note was a large sherd of a Middle Bronze Age decorated bucket urn from the upper fill of this ditch. While it is likely that this sherd is residual and that the enclosure is of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date, its size (105g) and unabraded nature implies the presence of Middle Bronze Age activity in the immediate vicinity of the ditch, and possibly truncated and disturbed during the creation of the Iron Age settlement enclosure.

5.7.4 During the earlier excavations, a strip of unweathered chalk was identified to the east of the enclosure ditch, and was likely to have been preserved by an internal bank associated with the ditch. Excavation in 2005 demonstrated that the enclosure ditch has both a northern and southern terminus and cropmarks suggest that it does not continue any further as a ditched boundary. However, there is some indication from the soilmarks that a positive feature does continue around the whole settlement area, forming a roughly sub-rectangular enclosure.

5.7.5 One of the aims of extending the excavation area to the north through the opening up of **Area 3B** was to determine whether any evidence for a bank could be detected. The chalk in the northern part of **Area 3B** was much less weathered with fewer plough scars cutting across it, implying that it may have been preserved under a positive feature. This better preserved area was mapped and it extended over an area roughly 6m in width and throughout the entire extent of the trench (see **Figure 3**). To confirm whether this could be the result of a bank, a contour survey was undertaken across this part of the Site. This confirmed a slight rise in the chalk at this level, and implied that where the mound existed it was between 0.1m and 0.2m higher than the surrounding area. Although this is only a subtle height difference, this would be expected if the mound had been largely ploughed away over the previous two millennia, but still preserved the prehistoric chalk surface at a slightly higher level.

6 FINDS

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The excavation of 2006 has added a small assemblage of finds to that recovered over the past two seasons. Worked and burnt flint, animal bone and pottery are represented in moderate quantities, with single occurrences of slag, stone and human bone.

6.1.2 All finds have been quantified by material type within each context, and the results are presented in **Table 1**. All data have been added to the project database (Access). Subsequently, all finds have been at least briefly visually scanned, in order to provide broad details of their nature, condition and potential date range.

6.2 Pottery

6.2.1 The 162 sherds are all of later prehistoric date, and occur in three broad fabric types: flint-tempered, shelly and sandy (some also containing rare chalk and/or shell). The condition of this material is fair to poor; the assemblage is highly fragmentary, and most sherds are small and heavily abraded (mean sherd weight is 3.4g). There is a scarcity of diagnostic material, which has hampered close dating in many instances.

6.2.2 One large body sherd in a coarsely flint-tempered fabric, with an applied vertical strip, can be identified as Middle Bronze Age, deriving from a bucket-shaped vessel of Deverel-Rimbury type (context **362**).

- 6.2.3 Some other flint-tempered sherds, although undiagnostic, could be of similar date but are more likely to fall within the post-Deverel-Rimbury tradition of the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age (contexts **886**, **903**, **939**), while others are later (see below).
- 6.2.4 Two other vessels, both in sandy fabrics, can also be assigned to the post-Deverel-Rimbury tradition: a coarseware jar with finger-impressed shoulder (context **980**) and a fineware furrowed bowl, red-finished, of Cunliffe's early All Cannings Cross style of the 8th to 7th centuries BC (Cunliffe 1991, 64-5, fig. A.2) (context 907).
- 6.2.5 Two small groups of sherds in well-sorted, flint-tempered fabrics (respectively from contexts **948** and **949**) can be dated as Middle Iron Age. Context **948** includes a beaded rim from a convex vessel, possibly a saucepan pot form, while a body sherd with tool decoration was found in context **949**.
- 6.2.6 Other undiagnostic body sherds in sandy and shelly fabrics are at this stage broadly dated as Early/Middle Iron Age.

6.3 Worked Flint

- 6.3.1 Thirty-nine pieces of struck flint were recovered. The majority of the assemblage consists of nodular flint. All pieces have a cream/white covering patina. The source of the material is undoubtedly local, probably obtained from the Upper Chalk during the digging of pits and ditches or during cultivation. Technology is direct, hard hammer percussion.
- 6.3.2 Thirty-five unretouched flakes were recovered, along with three flake cores and a single scraper. The majority of the material is typical of later prehistoric lithic technology: direct, hard hammer percussion, normally producing crude flakes; and an evident lack of skill seen in platform breadth, obtuse angles, termination type, core preparation technique (or lack of it) and failed removals. Amongst this material, the group of 11 pieces from contexts **948** and **949** stand out as significantly different. A single large nodule has been broken up and knapped, after which a number of the larger pieces (flakes and cores) have been used as hammers.
- 6.3.3 There are also two flakes with what appears to be platform preparation; one of these has edge damage resulting from use, the other a scraper-like retouch. Given the date of the pottery from these contexts (Middle Iron Age: see above), the flint must be residual.

6.4 Burnt Flint

- 6.4.1 Burnt, unworked flint was recovered in some quantity (just under 30kg), although nearly three-quarters of this total came from a single context (21.4kg from Early Iron Age context **907**). Only two other contexts (**850** and **961**) produced more than 1kg. Burnt flint is intrinsically undatable, and of uncertain origin, although often associated with prehistoric activity, as is the case here.

6.5 Stone

6.5.1 One piece of possibly utilised stone was recovered – part of a flattish, rounded pebble with possible traces of wear around one end (Middle Iron Age context **948**).

6.6 Human Bone

6.6.1 A single piece of redeposited human bone was recovered – an adult femur (context **995** from pit **947**). The bone is in poor condition, heavily etched and eroded.

6.7 Animal Bone

6.7.1 Only 66 bones were hand-recovered (conjoining fragments that were demonstrably from the same bone were counted as one bone in order to minimise distortion). All bone was in poor or very poor state. The bone surface had a very pitted appearance and was powdery. Only 16 bones could be assigned to species: one horse, 12 cattle and three sheep/goat. Context **878** contained the fragmented part of a possible cattle skull and context **882** contained the fragmented mandible of a calf.

6.7.2 The assemblage contained one gnawed and one burnt bone. Two of the bones identified to species can be measured and four can be aged. The assemblage contained four loose teeth.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1.1 The research project was successful in achieving its training goals and all the participants acquired a good introduction to field archaeology, both in excavation and recording. The feedback from all the students was generally very positive and all felt that they had learned and achieved a great deal.

7.1.2 At this assessment stage only preliminary statements may be made, especially with regards to the patterning of the postholes. However, the excavations have clearly highlighted the importance of this part of the landscape and demonstrate that it attests to a variety of domestic and other activity from the Late Bronze Age through to the Middle Iron Age (possibly from 1000/900BC – 500BC).

7.1.3 At this stage, some broad patterns may be discerned. It would appear that the principal domestic (and possibly also ritual) focus of activity is situated in the northern part of the excavation area within **Area 3B**. Evidence for both circular and possibly also rectangular structures may be identified in this area, spanning the Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age. Further analysis of these postholes should aid in a better definition of broad chronological groups and patterns of features. An attempt to discern such patterns may be possible through an analysis of posthole diameters, depths, spacing and fill sequences etc.

7.1.4 The dense area of postholes was identified in **Area 3B**, highlighting the relative intensity of settlement activity in this particular zone in comparison to the surrounding area. The majority of postholes in **Area 3B** were more substantial both with respect to diameters and depths in comparison to **Area 3A** and the previous excavation areas (see **Figures 4-5** below). Furthermore, more of these postholes provided evidence for post-packing and post-pipes (see **Figure 6**). All of this evidence suggests the presence of more substantial structural evidence in **Area 3B**, with load bearing deep posts that may have supported roofs or other elements that originally formed the superstructures of domestic dwellings.

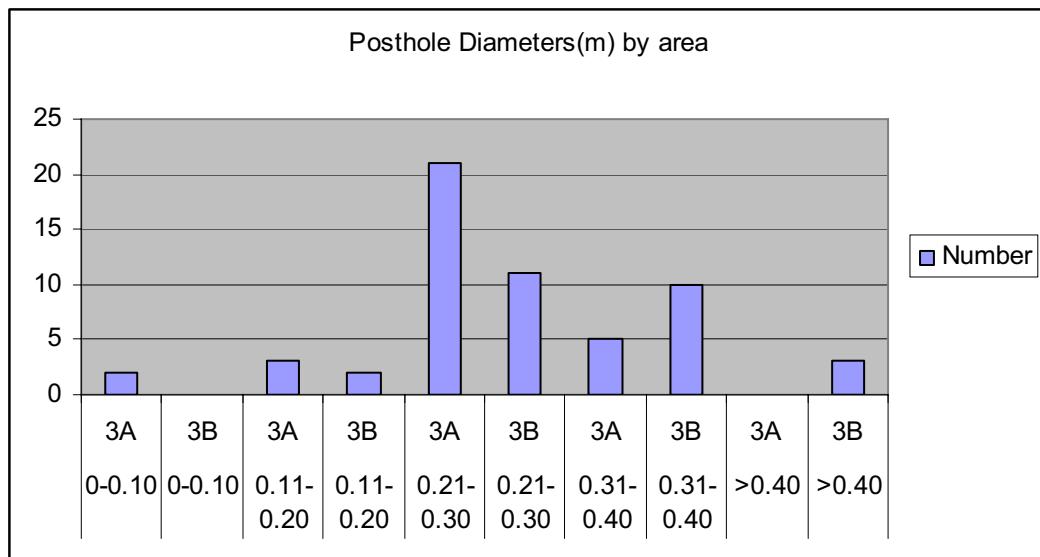


Figure 4

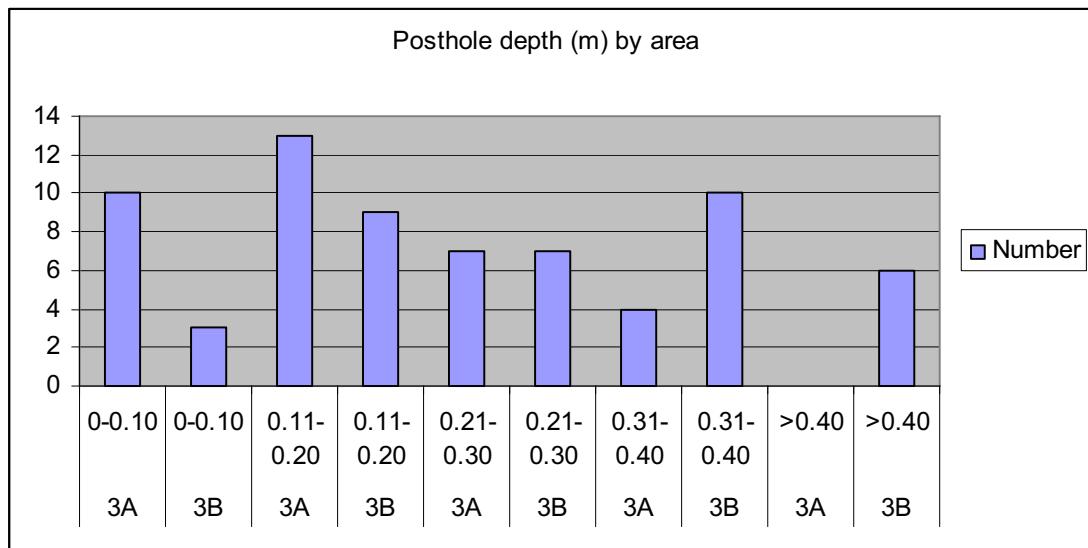


Figure 5

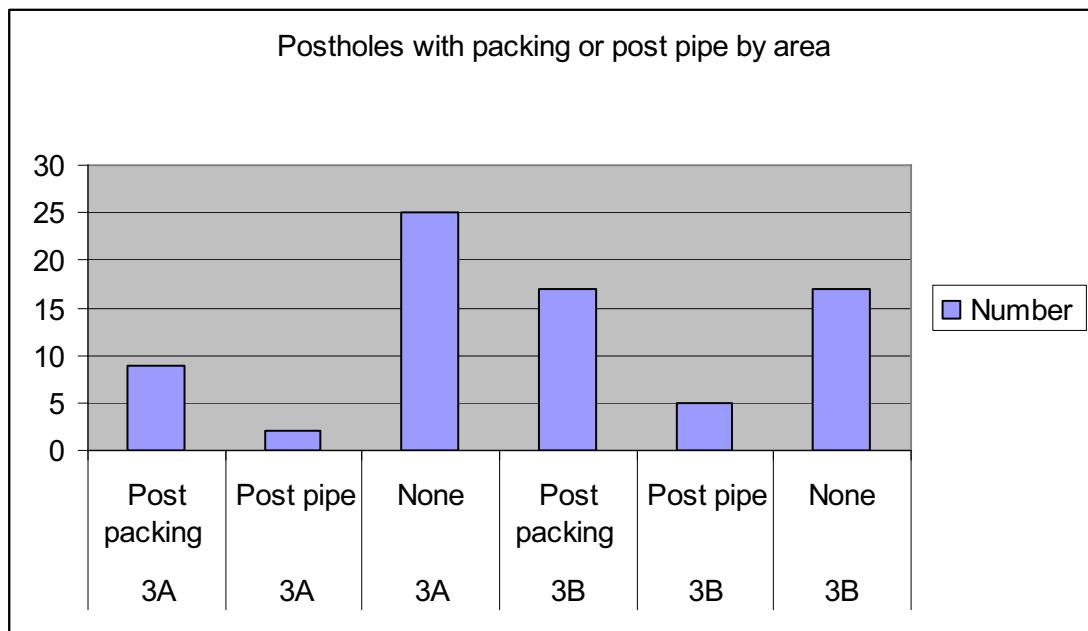


Figure 6

7.1.5 On the basis of the above discussion, it is possible to suggest that the zone defined in **Area 3B** may have been linked to settlement activity, associated with the construction of round or rectangular structures. The stakehole fencelines may have demarcated this zone and segregated it from the areas to the south and west, where the majority of four-post granary structures have been noted. Thus we can tentatively suggest a differentiation in the use of space, with actual settlement perhaps confined to the north (where the denser concentration of material culture has also been noted), and the south where activities associated with the processing and storage of grain may have been situated. A total of ten four-post structures have now been identified from the 2004-2006 excavations, which is a fairly significant number.

7.1.6 The pits associated with the settlement in **Area 3B** attest to a range of activities, not all of them strictly functional. There is evidence that hearths and ovens may have been located in the vicinity, and the rake-outs from fires were deposited in pits. However, the structured deposit of human and animal bone in association with smashed pots and possibly curated struck flint in one of the pits suggests activity of a less prosaic nature. Further fieldwork and analysis should add greater definition to the emerging picture of the various activities undertaken in the prehistoric landscape of Home Field.

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Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes; number only for worked flint)

| Context | Animal Bone | Burnt Flint | Worked Flint | Pottery | Other Finds |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 306 | | | 1 | | |
| 358 | 1/1 | | 5 | | |
| 362 | | | | 1/105 | |
| 532 | 2/5 | | | | |
| 800 | 1/1 | | | 2/11 | |
| 801 | 1/6 | | 3 | | |
| 806 | | 1/136 | | | |
| 821 | | | | | |
| 822 | | 2/346 | | | |
| 827 | | | 1 | | |
| 830 | | 1/22 | | | |
| 831 | | 1/1 | | | |
| 833 | | | | | |
| 848 | | 8/189 | | | |
| 850 | 4/74 | 27/1365 | | 2/5 | |
| 851 | 1/1 | | | | |
| 856 | | | | 10/20 | |
| 859 | | 1/1 | | | |
| 862 | | 5/245 | | | |
| 866 | | 2/73 | | | |
| 876 | | 2/126 | | | |
| 878 | 40/23 | | | | |
| 882 | 8/20 | | | | |
| 886 | | 1/1 | | 2/6 | |
| 889 | | | | | |
| 892 | | 2/12 | | | |
| 894 | | 1/181 | | | |
| 903 | | 3/12 | 2 | 2/11 | |
| 906 | 1/4 | | | | |
| 907 | | 698/21,392 | 2 | 43/112 | |
| 910 | 4/28 | 1/462 | | | |
| 912 | | 24/600 | 1 | | |
| 931 | | | | 2/4 | |
| 939 | 3/31 | | | 13/42 | |
| 941 | | 1/6 | | 1/5 | |
| 947 | | 1/102 | | | |
| 948 | 11/10 | 4/138 | 4 | 42/123 | 1 stone |
| 949 | 2 | | 7 | 17/31 | |
| 953 | | 2/336 | | | |
| 957 | 16/32 | | | | |
| 961 | 52/66 | 19/2031 | | | |
| 965 | | 1/3 | 2 | | |
| 966 | | | | 3/7 | |

Table 1 (cont...): All finds by context (number / weight in grammes; number only for worked flint)

| Context | Animal Bone | Burnt Flint | Worked Flint | Pottery | Other Finds |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 968 | | | | | |
| 972 | | 6/54 | | 3/7 | |
| 978 | | 1/33 | | 5/11 | |
| 980 | | 3/33 | 1 | 2/18 | |
| 982 | | 1/30 | | | |
| 990 | | 4/483 | | | |
| 992 | | 7/293 | 6 | 6/17 | |
| 995 | 27/304 | | | | 7 human bone |
| 1000 | | 2/20 | | 6/18 | |
| 1002 | 3/2 | 8/457 | | | |
| 1014 | | 6/169 | | | |
| 1050 | | 3/161 | | | |
| 1061 | | | 1 | | |
| 1065 | 10/3 | | 1 | | |
| 1096 | | | 2 | | |
| 1102 | | 1/114 | | | |
| TOTALS | 187/682 | 850/29,628 | 39 | 162/553 | 1/23 |

APPENDIX 1

| File No. | NAR Cat. | Details | Format | No. Sheets |
|--------------|----------|--------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| 1 | - | Index to Archive (2004) | A4 | 1 |
| 1 | - | Project Specification (2004) | A4 | 8 |
| 1 | A | Client Report (2004) | A4 | 20 |
| 1 | B | Day Book (photocopy) (2004) | A4 | 12 |
| 1 | B | Context Index (2004) | A4 | 6 |
| 1 | B | Context Records (2004) | A4 | 141 |
| 1 | B | Graphics Register (2004) | A4 | 3 |
| 1 | B | Levels (photocopy) (2004) | A4 | 7 |
| 1 | B | Survey Data Print-out (2004) | A4 | 19 |
| 1 | D | Photographic Register (2004) | A4 | 16 |
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| 1 | E | Environmental Sample Register (2004) | A4 | 1 |
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| 1 | C | Context Finds Records (2004) | A4 | 5 |
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| 5 | A | Client Report (2005) | A4 | 33 |
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| 5 | B | Context Records (2005) | A4 | 242 |
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| 5 | B | Number Record (2006) | A4 | 1 |
| 5 | B | Context Index (2006) | A4 | 11 |
| 5 | B | Context Records (2006) | A4 | 333 |
| 5 | B | Graphics Register (2006) | A4 | 6 |
| 5 | B | Levels (photocopy) (2006) | A4 | 8 |
| 5 | B | Survey Data Print-out (2006) | A4 | 22 |
| 5 | B | Site Graphics (2006) | A4 | 84 |
| 5 | D | Photographic Register (2006) | A4 | 33 |
| 5 | C | Object Register (2006) | A4 | 1 |
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| FINDS | | 4 BOXES | | |

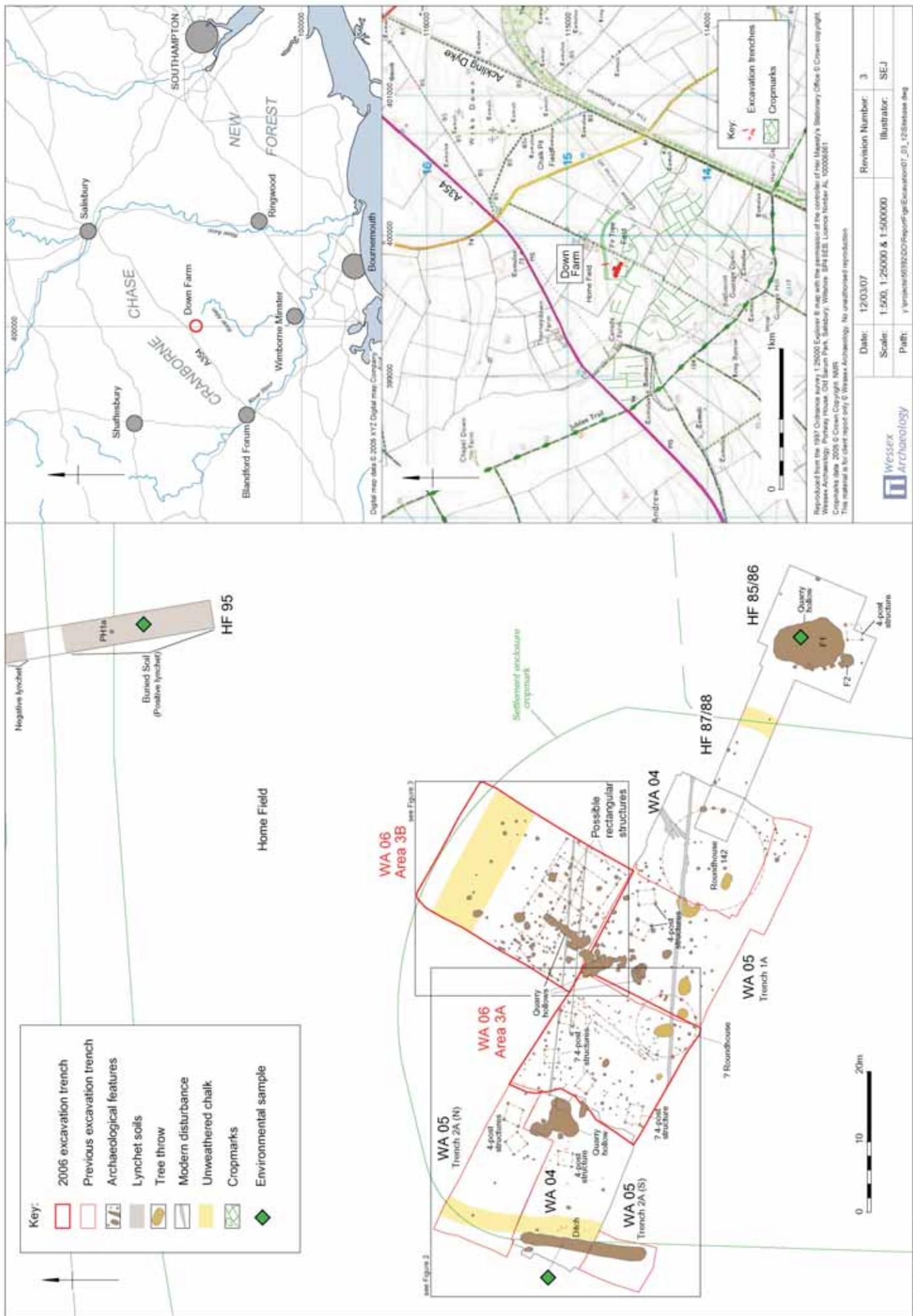


Figure 1

Site location maps

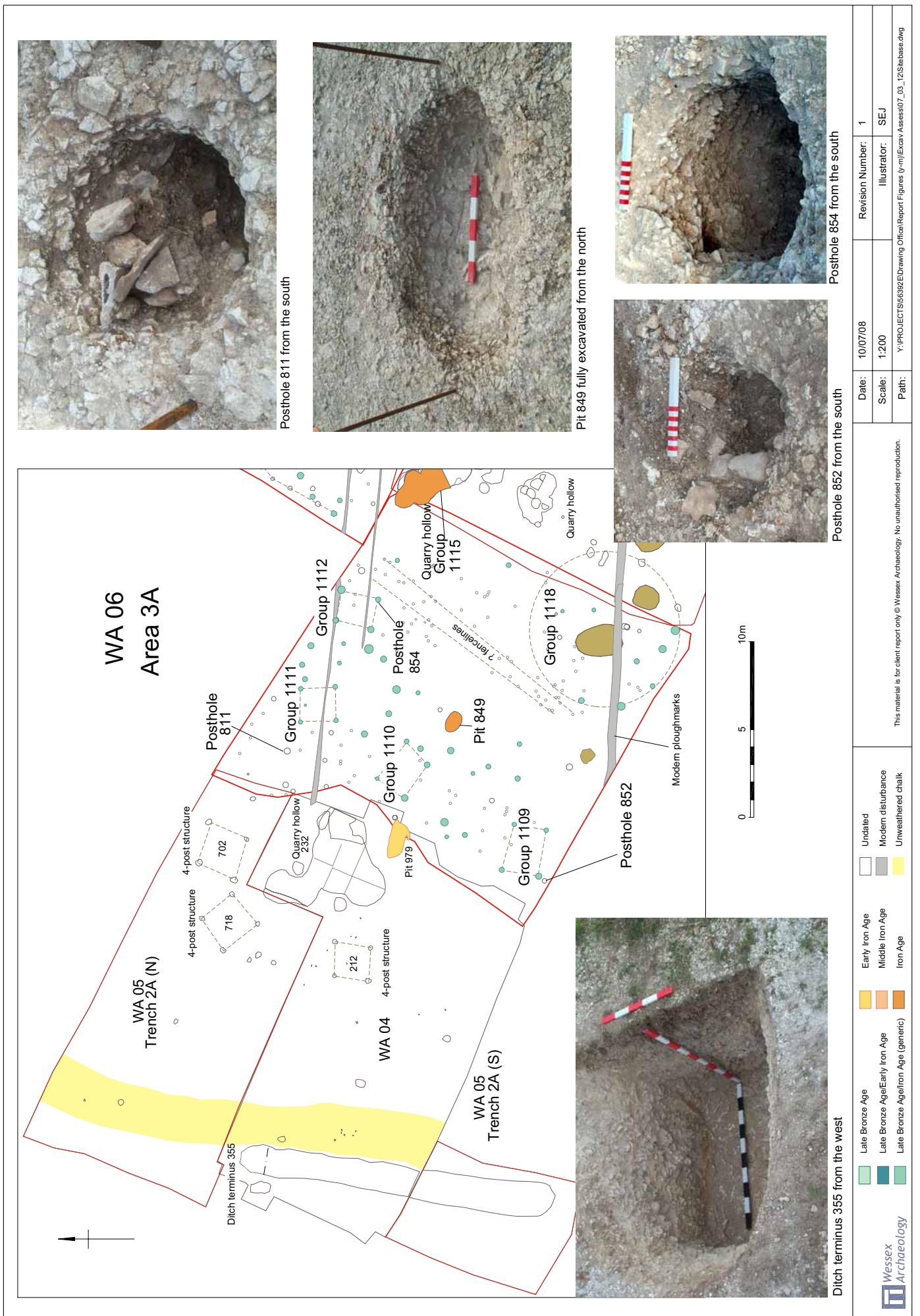


Figure 2

Plan of Area 3A with photographs of selected features

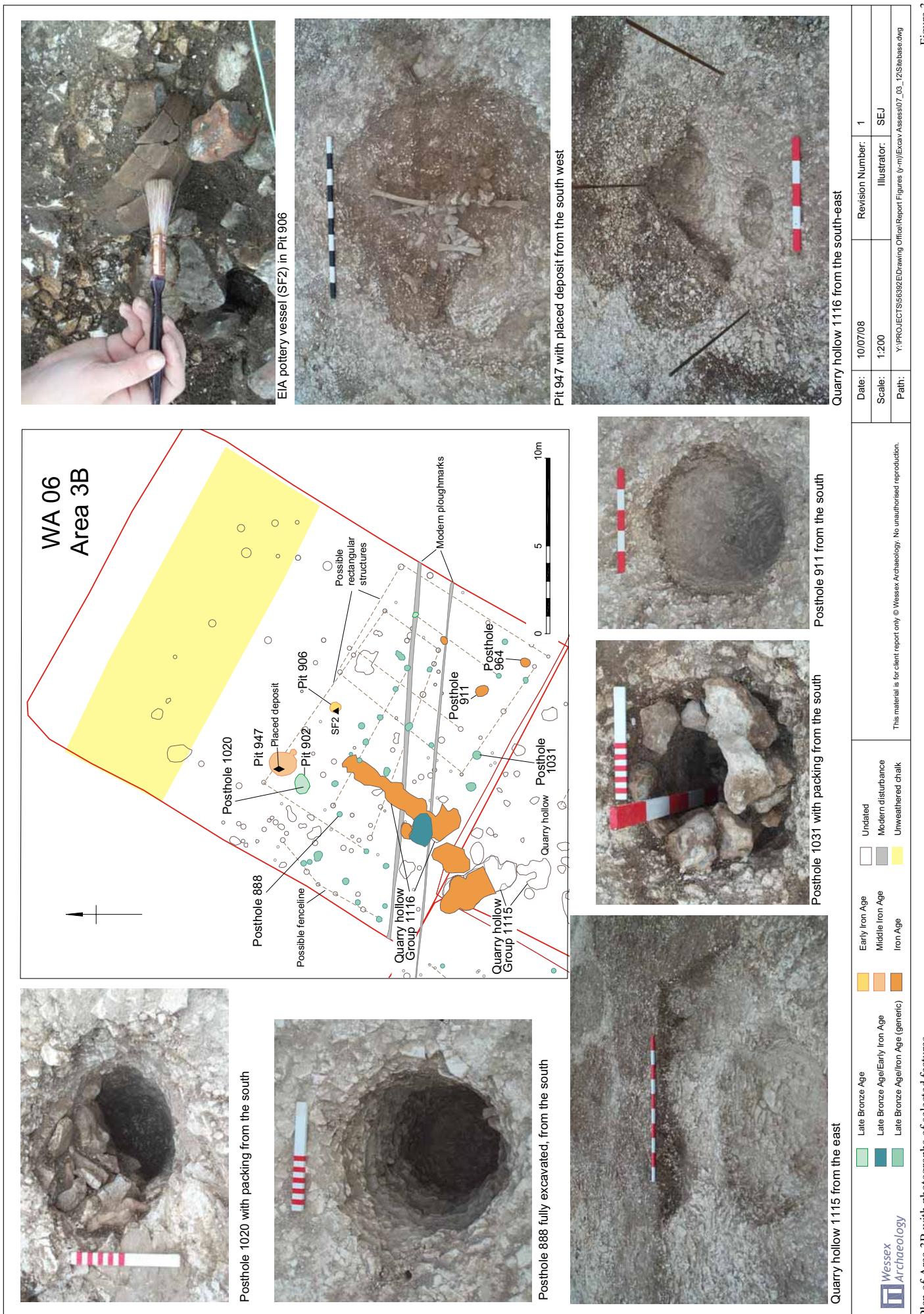


Figure 3

Plan of Area 3B with photographs of selected features



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