Wessex Archaeology

Somborne Park Farm, Little Somborne, Stockbridge, Hampshire

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

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February 2008

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Project Background 1
1.2 Location, topography and geology 1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background 2
2 AIMS 2
2.1 Archaeological Watching Brief 2
2.2 Method 3
3 RESULTS 3
3.1 Introduction 3
3.2 Tree throw/Feature 22 4
3.3 Quarry features 5
3.4 Enclosure 79 7
4 FINDS 8
4.1 Introduction 8
4.2 Flint 8
4.3 Pottery 9
4.4 Animal Bone 10
4.5 Human Bone 11
4.6 Fired Clay 11
4.7 Stone 11
4.8 Other Finds 11
5 ENVIRONMENTAL 13
6 DISCUSSION 13
7 CONCLUSIONS 17
8 POTENTIAL AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS 18
9 THE ARCHIVE 19
10 REFERENCES 20
11 APPENDIX 22
11.1 Table 2: Enclosures as plotted by Palmer (Palmer 1984) 22

Figure List

Figure 1 Site location plan
Figure 2 Phased plan of all features showing profiles across enclosure ditch 79
Figure 3 Section through enclosure ditch 79 and features 50 and 42
Figure 4 Selected photographs

Somborne Park Farm, Little Somborne, Stockbridge, Hampshire

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by APECS Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land at Somborne Park Farm, Somborne Park Road, Little Somborne, Stockbridge, Hampshire, during ground works prior to construction of a new grain store. The Site, is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 437940 133055.

The watching brief was carried out between 11th November and 9th December 2007.

The Site lies in an area of extensive Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British field systems and enclosures that make up a complex distribution of settlement across much of this area.

A previously unrecorded 'D' shaped enclosure, defined by a ditch 138 m long, that enclosed an area of 0.14 ha formed the principal feature recorded during the watching brief. It was dated by pottery to the Iron Age period. A series of quarry pits and a tree throw containing an assemblage of worked flint were also revealed during the course of the works.

The principal phase of activity relates to the construction of a small Late Iron Age farmstead within the enclosure, populated by families growing and processing cereals, rearing stock and undertaking small scale metal-working. However the most significant contribution made by the work is the discovery of the enclosure, its position in the landscape and its relationship with other similar enclosures in the area. The addition may make it possible to speculate on the position of other similar enclosures in the area particularly along the east valley side of the River Test.

The watching brief at Somborne Park Farm has produced an important set of data that relates to prehistoric activity and settlement on the Hampshire Chalk. Consequently it is recommended that the results of this report are published in the Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by APECS Ltd on behalf of Sombourne Park Farm (the Client). The co-operation and help given by Mr Jeffrey Allison and Mr Peder Lundgaard is gratefully acknowledged, in particular with respect to additional funding. Thanks are also due to Peter Grace (Farm Manager) for his assistance and the assistance of his team during the course of the work.

The watching brief was undertaken by Phil Harding with assistance from Neil Fitzpatrick, Luke Brannlund, Julia Sulikowska, Claudia Eicher, Steve George, Daniel Hart, Oliver Good, Steve Kemp and Mark Stevens.

The site digital survey was undertaken by Ruth Panes. This report was compiled by Phil Harding who also assessed the worked flint. The illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James. The animal bone was assessed by Jessica Grimm and the remaining finds were assessed by Lorraine Mepham. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Caroline Budd.

Somborne Park Farm, Little Somborne, Stockbridge, Hampshire

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by APECS Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land at Somborne Park Farm, Somborne Park Road, Little Somborne, Stockbridge, Hampshire, during ground works prior to construction of a new grain store. The Site, is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 437940 133055 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The watching brief was required as a condition for planning consent granted to the Client by Test Valley Borough Council (Application no: TVS.02941/2, condition 7), the local planning authority, for the proposed development.

1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2007), approved by David Hopkins of Hampshire County Council on behalf of Test Valley Borough Council before work began, set out the methodologies to implement the watching brief.

1.1.4 The watching brief was carried out between 11th November and 9th December 2007.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site, centred on NGR 437940 133055 (**Figure 1**), covered *c* 0.5ha of land situated to the south-east of Stockbridge, and on the north-western edge of Little Somborne village. The eastern boundary was defined by Somborne Park Road and the southern boundary by an existing corn-drying plant. The main complex of Somborne Park Farm lies approximately 150m to the south.

1.2.2 The site lies on a gently sloping parcel of arable land at *c* 75 metres above Ordnance Datum (m aOD) that rises to 95 m aOD to the north but falls to 45 m aOD in the valley below. This location coincides with the head of a slight spur, defined by a shallow coombe to the west, on a south facing slope of the Somborne valley, a tributary of the River Test, which flows south in its valley approximately 3 km to the west.

1.2.3 The Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales, Solid and Drift Edition 1:50,000, Sheet 299) shows the underlying solid geology of the Site to comprise Upper Chalk with many flint nodules.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 A brief search for archaeological and historic sites within a 1km radius of the site via the Archaeology Data Service (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk) indicated two medieval sites relating to the origins of the village of Little Somborne.

1.3.2 However, evidence of extensive Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British field systems and enclosures exists from Little Somborne and the adjoining parishes that record a complex distribution of settlement across much of this area. In order to avoid confusion between previous discoveries in the parish the results of the watching brief will be referred to as Somborne Park Farm.

2 AIMS

2.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

2.1.1 The watching brief set out:

- To identify and record any archaeological remains that were present on the site before their destruction by the development.
- To recover artefacts to determine the approximate date, economy, status, utility and social activity of any remains.
- To determine the approximate extent, condition and state of preservation of the remains.
- To place any remains within the broader local landscape.
- To recover Palaeo-environmental samples to reconstruct details of the associated economy.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 The watching brief made provision for all ground work to be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist during the removal of topsoil and natural subsoil. All stripped surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and deposits and, where possible, spoil was scanned for artefacts.

2.2.2 Sufficient time was granted by the ground work contractor to allow any archaeological deposits and features to be sampled and recorded before their final removal. The watching brief was maintained until such time that all features and deposits of archaeological potential had been examined and the likelihood of additional remains being exposed was exhausted.

2.2.3 All excavation and recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, drawn, and photographic elements. Archaeological features and deposits were plotted using a Total Station/GPS and related to Ordnance Survey grid and datum.

2.2.4 The discovery of well preserved deposits at the site was considered to be of sufficient interest to necessitate more extensive examination than was included in the watching brief but not to require a contingent excavation. A modified approach to the methodology was therefore agreed with the developer whereby these deposits were excavated systematically by machine. This work was undertaken with constant archaeological supervision, using a toothless grading bucket, making it possible to maximise artefact recovery and their distribution as well as record more sections than might otherwise have been possible.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The natural sequence of deposits comprised approximately 0.20-0.30 m of dark brown silty clay topsoil which overlay a similar thickness of red brown Clay-with-Flints. This veneer of material was present across the entire site obscuring the archaeological features below. This layer was removed with the topsoil in order to clearly expose any archaeology. Once the Site had been stripped it became clear that the features had been cut from above the layer.

3.1.2 The natural chalk surface contained large numbers of flint nodules and was crossed by a series of continuous, irregular, sub-parallel periglacial stripes which ran north to south down the slope. These features were characterised by small, broken chalk rubble in a creamy paste matrix but elsewhere was replaced by pockets of clay-with-flints. These features were thought most likely to result from solution of the chalk by periglacial activity or occasionally to be the result of a tree throw.

3.1.3 A small number of these features were sectioned to categorise their form and depositional sequence, to evaluate the presence/absence of artefacts and confirm their natural formation. Others containing similar deposits and with similar alignments were subsequently not investigated. Some features were of similar character but were crescentic or perpendicular to the natural periglacial striping of the chalk. These features were thought more likely to be the result of tree throws, features which have been known to have attracted human activity and to sometimes contain valuable evidence of early settlement in the filling.

3.2 Tree throw/Feature 22

3.2.1 An elongated oval area of red brown clay, approximately 4 m long and 1 m wide was located at the southern edge of the striped area aligned approximately E-W across the site (**Figure 2**).

3.2.2 The excavated section indicated that the feature measured approximately 2 m across and 0.6 m deep with sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with chalk rubble that was particularly prevalent at the south edge and alternated with bands of silty clay that had weathered in from the south.

3.2.3 The basal deposit was darker, with a hint of charcoal flecking that may reflect more organic material derived from the original ground surface. Towards the centre the fill was characterised by light brown chalky rubble that formed a central 'core' of deposit. The northern part of the section comprised mid to dark brown silty clay with mixed flint nodules, which was considered to represent the silted 'ghost' of the root bole of a fallen tree.

3.2.4 No artefacts were recovered from the lower parts of the fill; however near the surface a cluster of flint knapping debris, approximately 0.50 m in diameter, was mixed with the chalky deposits on the southern side. The flint was concentrated in the base of the weathered hollow against the probable root bole. The concentration of flint thinned to the south.

3.2.5 The condition of the material and presence of microdebitage (chips) indicates that this material is of one period, although it is uncertain whether the flint was flaked in the shelter of the fallen tree, using flint disturbed by the upturned roots, or was dumped there after it had been produced.

3.2.6 The absence of any associated features or of contemporary activity suggests that this is an isolated occurrence, possibly representing the activity of a single person or small group moving through the landscape.

3.2.7 Activity of this type, utilizing tree throw features, has been observed in a growing number of instances in Britain where it is frequently dated to the Early Neolithic period (4,000-3,000 BC). It is an important indicator of early activity on this part of the Chalk Downs at a time when hunting was still being undertaken but when settled communities were becoming established.

3.3 Quarry features

3.3.1 Two large elongated undated features (42 and 74) (**Figures 2 and 3**), thought to be quarries, were found towards the eastern extent of the stripped area. They were associated with two pits, one of which contained large sherds from an Early Iron Age jar. The two large features were located adjacent to and outside the ditch of an Iron Age enclosure, which cut through them.

Feature 42

3.3.2 Feature 42 measured approximately 11 m N-S, 4.5 m E-W and 1 m deep. A machine cut slot was dug to recover details of the profile and section. This showed that the eastern edge was undercut and that the base was irregular, with deeper circular depressions.

3.3.3 A single deposit (45) comprising a series of chalk rubble tips that originated from the west confirmed that this was one feature and not an intercutting complex of individual pits. The tips could be traced upwards but were noticeably more decalcified towards the surface.

3.3.4 The deepest part of the feature contained a large number of unworked flint nodules, presumably taken from the chalk and thrown behind the advancing quarry face. Animal bones, possibly 'placed' deposits were also found in the base of the depression; no other artefacts were recovered from this machined section, although an additional jaw bone was found when the deposit (76) to the north was removed.

3.3.5 The deposit at the eastern end of the quarry feature comprised decalcified dark brown silty clay. This was darker towards the base (46) which may represent a period of stabilisation following the main period of silting and backfilling.

3.3.6 At the west end of the quarry the tips of back fill were cut by a broad feature [50], which was itself cut by the Late Iron Age enclosure ditch [78]. Feature 50, possibly a pit, was only recorded in the section of the machine cut slot, which hindered interpretation. It measured approximately 1.5 m wide at the surface and 0.60 m deep with sloping sides and a flat base. The northern and southern edges could not be identified and no dating evidence was recovered from the feature.

3.3.7 This feature was filled with dark brown silty clay (48, 49), which included tip lines containing charcoal and areas of red clay, some apparently fired, to the west (49) but were less distinct on the east (48). Red clay was also incorporated into the filling of the subsequent enclosure ditch [78]. The clay, which was not apparently local to the site, with the associated charcoal may best be regarded as having been derived from some form of domestic oven or industrial furnace.

Feature 74

3.3.8 An irregular complex of pits and quarries was present approximately 5 m south of quarry 42 (**Figures 2 and 4**). It was impossible to define the extent of individual features on the surface or to establish their stratigraphic relationships apart from the enclosure ditch that was clearly later than all others.

3.3.9 A backfilled machine-cut slot, of unknown function or origin, ran through this group of features. This was re-excavated to provide a section that could be cleaned and recorded.

3.3.10 The largest feature [74] comprised a quarry hollow, approximately 3.5 m across and up to 1.3 m deep with steep vertical and undercut sides and an irregular base. It was filled (75) with a series of roughly parallel chalk rubble beds alternating with mid brown silty clay layers. These deposits showed no respect for the profile of the feature nor did they demonstrate any reduction in particle size from the base upwards, which suggested that this feature was also backfilled deliberately. Animal bone, possibly 'placed', was also found at the base of the feature.

3.3.11 The edge of a second pit/quarry [71] was recorded immediately to the west while a third feature [69] was cut by the main enclosure ditch. This last feature measured approximately 1.80 m across and 0.55 m deep and may equate with feature 50 to the north. It was filled with orange-brown silty clay (70).

Pit 37

3.3.12 A sub-rectangular/oval pit [37] (**Figures 2 and 4**), approximately 2 m across was sectioned 8 m to the east of these quarry groups. It had originally been excavated with steep, irregular, sometimes undercut edges and with a flat base, approximately 1m deep.

3.3.13 An animal bone lay on the base, which was covered by 0.30 m of dark brown silty clay (41) containing bands of heavily weathered chalk rubble. Sub angular flint nodules, up to 0.15 m across lay in the base of the central weathering cone, suggesting that this feature had silted naturally.

3.3.14 The main part of the pit was filled with heavily decalcified, strong dark brown, slightly silty clay (40) which was capped by a layer of large flint nodules (39), up to 0.25 m across. Traces of human activity comprising flecks of charcoal within the upper deposit and a sherd of pottery found on the surface of the feature, which may be contemporary with the filling of the enclosure ditch. There was otherwise very little evidence by which this feature could be dated.

Pit 65

3.3.15 A sub circular pit, 1.12 m long. 0.95 m wide and 0.30 m deep, with steep sloping sides and a flat base was located approximately 2 m south of quarry 74 (**Figures 2 and 4**). It was filled with dark grey brown silty clay (66) and included flint nodules that were mixed with large sherds of unweathered, hand made Iron Age pottery with finger tipped decoration.

3.4 Enclosure 79

3.4.1 A previously unrecorded 'D' shaped enclosure (79) defined by a ditch 138 m long that enclosed an area of 0.14 ha formed the principal feature recorded during the watching brief (**Figures 2 and 3**). Three sections were dug by hand to record ditch profiles and fillings and to recover stratified artefacts from the terminals and a corner of the enclosure.

3.4.2 The remainder of the ditch was emptied systematically by machine in segments (51-64), each 10 m long, to maximise the quantity of material obtained from the ditch, to assist with artefact distributions that might reflect human activity in differing parts of the site and to record additional sections.

3.4.3 The enclosure comprised three gently curving sides with a flattened in-turned entrance in the south – east corner. The sides were generally regular, however on the south side the ditch kinked noticeably to turn at a near right angle in the south west corner.

3.4.4 The entrance measured approximately 3 m wide, was located on the south side and was slightly in-turned. The ditch was approximately 1.80 m wide and 0.70 m deep with steep sloping sides and a narrow flat base. This part of the enclosure was constructed to a higher standard than elsewhere, possibly, with its accompanying bank, to provide an impressive approach to the site. No traces of a bank survived anywhere around the site.

3.4.5 Away from the entrance the ditch narrowed and became shallower, measuring approximately 1 m wide and 0.20 m deep immediately opposite to the entrance. The sides were more gently sloping with a broad rounded base.

3.4.6 The ditch fills were similar in all sections; heavily decalcified silty clay that was frequently flecked with chalk at the base with large flint nodules and increased presence of domestic refuse in the upper fills. Intermittent dumps of burnt flint, a feature noted during recent excavations at the Iron Age enclosure on Winnall Down II, were also present around the circumference of the ditch.

3.4.7 Flint nodules were sufficiently common in the upper fills of the ditch to suggest that they may have resulted from deliberate backfilling of the ditch or as a result of field clearance activities.

3.4.8 No internal features, post holes, traces of structures or artefacts were found that reflect the organisation, layout or distribution of activities in the interior of the enclosure. This may be due in some degree to the likelihood that the upper parts of the site have been truncated by former ploughing and accelerated by the recent topsoil stripping. It is also probable that post holes have been made difficult to observe by the heavy clay subsoil and that buildings may have been constructed directly onto the chalk using flint foundations. The absence of such features is not unique to this site and similar problems of spatial patterns have been encountered elsewhere in the region.

4 FINDS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The watching brief produced a small finds assemblage in which worked flint, pottery and animal bone were represented in moderate quantities, other material types being restricted in both range and quantity. All finds have been quantified by material type within each context, and the results are presented in **Table 1**. The finds assemblage is multi period, but appears to be entirely prehistoric dating from the Neolithic through to the Late Iron Age although there is a possibility that some of the ceramics may span the period of the Roman conquest. Condition is fair to good.

4.2 Flint

4.2.1 The material from context 029 comprises waste core preparation debris from the working of large nodules that appear in the clay with flints capping and may have weathered from the root boles of blown trees. The flint is mottled, black and grey in colour, although now lightly patinated, with thermal fractures, some crystalline pockets and some starch fracture; otherwise it appears to flake reasonably well.

4.2.2 The two flake cores were failed or abandoned pieces; one has a single thermal striking platform with flakes removed from the short axis of the nodule. There is no evidence of platform reparation. Blank production was limited and rejection was due to recession of the striking platform edge. The other core has a well prepared striking platform from which two flakes have been removed.

Other flakes were removed in a more haphazard way from other parts of the core. Percussion was by hard hammer percussion. The large numbers of flakes suggest that other cores were prepared but were taken away from the production site.

4.2.3 The small quantity of microdebitage is derived from percussion including bulbar scars, type fossils of debitage. No preparation or retouch chips were noted. The absence of large quantities of microdebitage suggests that the assemblage represents dumped waste from flaking in the close vicinity.

4.2.4 No comprehensive refitting was attempted but two *Siret* fractures (accidental breakages), two blades and two flakes, the latter in a distinctive speckled flint, could be conjoined, confirming the fact that this was a single assemblage.

4.2.5 No tools or traces of tool manufacture were present.

4.2.6 Worked flints were found from a number of other contexts. All were in a similar condition to the material from the tree throw indicating that none had moved far from their place of origin. None were otherwise notable although a flake, in a slightly rolled condition and almost certainly from core tool thinning, was found in context 063.

4.2.7 No datable artefacts were found with the assemblage, however the apparent use of a tree throw feature as a suitable receptacle for discarded waste is more in keeping with Neolithic activity than of Bronze Age date. The discovery of an isolated core tool thinning flake, in a more weathered condition than the main assemblage, might be linked to the apparent association of Clay-with-Flints with axe production in the Neolithic period (Gardiner 1984).

4.3 Pottery

4.3.1 The pottery sherds recovered are in a restricted range of fabric types – flint-tempered, grog-tempered and sandy. They appear to fall into two chronological groups.

4.3.2 The earliest material comprises sherds from pit 65 (fill 66); these are all in soft, sandy fabrics and may represent a single vessel, of which the rim and shoulder survives. This is from a large, coarseware jar with upright rim and finger-impressed shoulder, datable on typological grounds to the Early Iron Age. These sherds are in relatively unabraded condition and could represent a single, deliberate deposit of one vessel. Sherds from context 15 are in a very similar fabric and are tentatively dated to the same period.

4.3.3 The remaining sherds are in a mixture of sandy, flint-tempered and grog-tempered fabrics. The sandy fabrics are generally slightly harder than those from pit 65. Vessel forms include bead rim jars/bowls (contexts 54, 59, 61), a carinated bowl (context 14), and a pedestal base (context 64). Several sandy sherds carry shallow tooled decoration. While the possibility exists that some

of these sherds could be post-conquest (later 1st century AD), no wheelthrown, 'Romanised' wares were recovered, and this group is most likely to be of Late Iron Age date (1st century BC to mid 1st century AD).

4.4 Animal Bone

4.4.1 The potential of the assemblage to provide information about husbandry patterns, population structures and consumption practices was ascertained from the number of bones that could give information on the age and sex of animals, butchery, burning and breakage patterns. The number of bones that could provide metrical information was also counted.

4.4.2 Conjoining fragments that were demonstrably from the same bone were counted as one bone in order to minimise distortion, and therefore specimen counts (NISP) given here may differ from the absolute raw fragment counts in **Table 1**. No fragments were recorded as 'medium mammal' or 'large mammal'; these were instead consigned to the unidentified category.

4.4.3 The extent of mechanical or chemical attrition to the bone surface was recorded, with 1 indicating very poor condition, 2 poor, 3 fair, 4 good and 5 excellent. The numbers of gnawed bone were also noted. Marks from chopping, sawing, knife cuts and fractures made when the bone was fresh were recorded as butchery marks.

4.4.4 The assemblage from Little Somborne Park consists of 217 hand collected mammal bone fragments. 52% of the assemblage could be identified to species. As the identified assemblage is quite small, it is probably not representative in terms of husbandry strategy or population characteristics (Hambleton 1999, 40).

4.4.5 The overall condition of the bone is fair with quite a few contexts in poor condition. Only one bone showed traces of canid gnawing and three bones showed butchery marks. The root etched surfaces of most of the bones probably obscures gnawing and butchery marks. No burnt bones were seen. With 6%, the number of loose teeth is normal and the material thus not extensively re-worked.

4.4.6 The identified remains consist of horse (n=18), cattle (71), sheep/goat (18), pig (5) and dog (1). Of these, 23 could be aged and 14 measured. Some teeth and bone fragments clearly indicate younger and older animals.

4.4.7 Of note is a sheep/goat mandible (context 8) with signs of inflammation around the premolar roots.

4.5 Human Bone

4.5.1 Five degraded fragments of adult human femur were found redeposited in the enclosure ditch, segment 63.

4.6 Fired Clay

4.6.1 The fragments of fired clay from context 47 appear to represent a small, crudely made, rectangular block, perhaps an item of portable kiln furniture. These fragments are in a fine, poorly wedged clay matrix with no visible inclusions and with a slightly soapy feel. Fragments from other contexts are in similar fabrics, and exhibit flat or curved surfaces; these may also derive from objects, perhaps of a similar nature to that from 47, or from oven plates. Possible parallels are not uncommon on other Iron Age sites in Hampshire. A similar rectangular block was found at Micheldever Wood, interpreted as kiln or hearth furniture (Fasham 1987, fig. 34, 4) and oven plates, with both flat and curved surfaces, are known from Danebury (Poole 1984, fig. 4.76-78) and Winnall Down (Bates and Winham, fig. 69).

4.7 Stone

4.5.1 All of the nine fragments of stone recovered are greensand, and all but one can be definitively identified as quern fragments – the ninth is almost certainly also a quern fragment, but retains no signs of working. Two fragments (contexts 7 and 14), are identifiable as upper stones from rotary querns; it is likely that all other fragments also derive from rotary querns.

4.8 Other Finds

4.6.1 Other finds include a small quantity of burnt, unworked flint (unknown date and origin), one iron nail, and a small quantity of slag.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	Fired Clay	Worked Flint	Pottery	Stone	Other Finds
004	7/241	9/1114			2/44		
005	23/101	4/403					
007	27/168	12/1219			2/15	1/503	
008	5/47						
011	3/18	4/370			2/47		
013	6/31						
014	15/102		1/26		29/177	1/769	30g slag
015					8/25		
029				339/6542			
039		1/85					
041	4/43			5/694			
045	13/53						
047	6/18	1/224	12/250	1/8	2/13	1/257	1 iron
051	20/207						
052	37/467		6/98		7/105	1/130	
053	47/631		3/54	1/67	10/250		
054	74/760	1/8			4/53		
055	65/437				4/58		
056					2/9		
057	1/3				7/80		
058	1/4						
059	1/3				6/44	1/177	
060					5/28		
061	30/355			2/98	11/72	2/480	
062	11/155		1/16	1/4		1/211	
063	9/537			2/46	1/22	1/376	5 human bone
064	10/56		1/10	1/5	5/98		
066					162/2363		
068		2/26		2/47			
072	2/73						
075	14/62	3/260		4/27			
076	2/217						
U/S							
TOTAL	**433/4789**	**37/3709**	**24/454**	**359/7542**	**269/3503**	**9/2903**	

5 ENVIRONMENTAL

5.1.1 No material from the enclosure ditch was available in the extensive quantities required for a 40litre sample. Therefore no environmental analysis was undertaken.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1.1 The results of the watching brief at Somborne Park Farm are locally/regionally significant. They reflect on the nature and survival of evidence relating to early settlement and its distribution across this part of the Hampshire Downs.

6.1.2 The record of prehistoric settlement and land use in this part of Hampshire is well documented from soil and crop marks revealed from aerial survey data (Palmer 1984). The results primarily record the distribution of prehistoric farming as it developed through the Late Bronze and Iron Age periods.

6.1.3 Apart from extensive study centred on Danebury hill fort and its environs (Cunliffe, 2000: Cunliffe and Poole, 2000) there have been very few opportunities to establish an associated chronology using results from excavation. Work has been restricted to the results from Danebury and by a small number of developer-funded projects initiated by pipeline installation across the landscape.

6.1.4 The watching brief at Somborne Park Farm produced results that are principally of interest to the study of Iron Age settlement on this part of the Hampshire Downs. It has indicated that evidence for significant, but slight, enclosures, possibly masked by the underlying Clay-with-Flints can remain undetected on aerial photographs.

6.1.5 However the watching brief has also produced evidence that illustrates the story of earlier human activity on the Chalk Downs.

6.1.6 The record of Neolithic activity in this part of Hampshire is known primarily from the distribution of long barrow mounds, of which Palmer (1984) listed fifteen within the Danebury Environs. Within the study area none were located to the east of the River Test. Additional diagnostic material has been recorded from surface collections and fortuitous discoveries during excavations, including a mixed assemblage, principally assigned to the Late Mesolithic

(Brooks, 2000) but likely to contain artefacts of a later date, from Woolbury Camp, 2.5 km north of Somborne Park Farm.

6.1.7 Gardiner (1984) highlighted the use of areas capped by Clay-with-Flints as a source of raw material for axe production during the Neolithic. Despite this the density of material recovered, especially from the surface, has been extremely thin. A recent surface collection project undertaken by Wessex Archaeology along the route of a pipeline that terminated only 7 Km north-east of Little Somborne at Crawley Down produced very low levels of flint assemblages (WA in production).

6.1.8 This in itself is not uncommon. Healey (1983) argued that surface collections often only reflect the distributions of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age activity and that Early Neolithic activity is preserved in subsoil features, including pits and more frequently tree throw hollows.

6.1.9 This trend has been observed in several parts of the country including Cambridgeshire (Evans, Pollard and Knight 1999) and Kent (Harding, in press Table 5). The assemblage from Somborne Park Farm lacks diagnostic tools and regrettably cannot be securely dated; however aspects of the technology and the use of a tree throw hollow as a repository for knapping waste suggests that it more likely to be of Neolithic date.

6.1.10 This activity underlines the value of areas capped by Clay-with-Flints, characterised by large nodules of good quality flint, as places of valuable raw material. The discovery of a core tool thinning flake, unrelated to the dump of core preparation waste, nonetheless also indicates an awareness of Clay-with-Flints as a raw material source for large tools.

6.1.11 The absence of any traces of settlement, including finished retouched tools and cores reinforces the idea that this episode illustrates small scale industrial activity where cores were taken away. It represents activity that is likely to have been repeated many times in the area.

6.1.12 Evidence for settlement and land use during the Bronze Age in this part of Hampshire is slight. Palmer (1984) recognised a bipartite division of monuments with round barrows from the Early Bronze Age and extensive Wessex linear ditch systems that developed in the Middle/Late Bronze Age. Monuments, principally round barrows, were present on the east side of the River Test valley but were thinly spread.

6.1.13 The principal use of the site at Somborne Park Farm is marked by activity that relates to separate phases in the Early and Late Iron Age. Excavations at Woolbury hill fort also found evidence for Early Iron Age occupation and re-

use in the Late Iron Age (Cunliffe and Poole, 2000), a pattern that was observed elsewhere in the wider Danebury Project.

6.1.14 At Somborne Park Farm the Early Iron Age was represented by an isolated pit (65) that contained the remains of a large, coarse-ware jar with upright rim and finger-impressed shoulder. The sherds were relatively unabraded and most likely to be from a single, deliberate deposit of one vessel. Additional sherds, in a very similar fabric and probably of the same date, were found on the machine excavated surface (15), forming the top of pit 37. This pit lay approximately 12 m NE of pit 65, with both pits in close proximity to a pair of elongated quarries.

6.1.15 Of these features only pit 65 can be dated with any certainty, the pottery from pit 37 was found on the surface and neither of the quarry features contained datable material. However both quarries had been backfilled and were cut through by the construction of the Late Iron Age enclosure ditch and possibly by the intervening feature 50.

6.1.16 Quarry features of this type are a recurring feature of Iron Age sites in Hampshire. Fasham (1985) described complex sets of similar features from Winnall Down that inter-cut and had been re-cut from the Early and Middle Iron Age. The pottery from Little Somborne Farm confirms an Early Iron Age presence on the site that may also have included the quarry scoop features.

6.1.17 This activity may have been intermittent or centred on settlement nearby before the construction of the subsequent Late Iron Age enclosure; however it is apparent that the development of this enclosure occurred on a site that was possibly already known to the local inhabitants. It is also conceivable that just as there are no traces of structures or artefacts within the Late Iron Age enclosure that any additional traces of earlier open settlement have been similarly removed.

6.1.18 The principal feature of the site was the construction of the Late Iron Age enclosure. The location of the site, its size and design fit well with other enclosures plotted from aerial photographs. It is likely that the industrial and economic activities also reflect on other sites in the area and their relationships to local hill forts at Danebury and Woolbury.

6.1.19 Table 2 (Appendix) shows details of eleven enclosures plotted by Palmer, their height aOD, drainage, area and shape; most lie within complexes that probably reflect multi period activity. The table also shows a number of unenclosed settlement sites in the immediate area.

6.1.20 Palmer noted seven ‘D’ shaped or rectilinear enclosures that averaged 0.6 ha located along the Wallop Brook at approximately 800-1,000 m intervals. All

are associated with complex 'celtic' field and linear ditch systems. Most lie at about 70 m OD, approximately 70 m below the crest of the Hampshire chalk plateau.

6.1.21 He also recorded similar closely spaced enclosures of comparable location spacing, area and form in the Somborne valley and another at Green Place that overlooks the River Test. The newly recognised 'D' shaped enclosure at Somborne Park Farm fills a gap in the distribution of these enclosures, lying approximately 1 km from enclosures at North Park, Little Somborne and Lower Chalk Hill.

6.1.22 Cunliffe (1983, Fig 71) illustrated that these small farmsteads appeared to be associated with parcels of land that extended back from a local watercourse, which often lay within 500-1,000 m, to the higher parts of the Chalk. However he cautioned against assuming that they were all contemporary indicating that the results of the Danebury Environs Project (Cunliffe, 2000) had demonstrated that this was not so.

6.1.23 Cunliffe's distribution was poorly represented on the east side of the River Test; however the discovery of the enclosure at Somborne Park Farm fills a gap in the distribution and suggests that the spatial patterns are maintained on this side of the valley.

6.1.24 It is likely that this enclosure, located on a favourable south facing valley side also lay within an area of 'celtic' fields, although none are currently visible on aerial photographs.

6.1.25 The south facing entrance of the Somborne Park Farm enclosure overlooks the Somborne valley. The results of the excavation suggests that the ditch is relatively insubstantial but functional; however it is likely that much of the upper part has been reduced by ploughing or was truncated by the machine strip. The most demonstrative part of the enclosure was the entrance where the ditch and, by inference, the bank were more substantial. This reflects the situation at Winnall Down (Fasham 1985), where the ditch of the 'D' shaped, Phase 3, Early Iron Age enclosure of 0.4 ha was twice the size at the entrance than elsewhere in the circuit.

6.1.26 The centre of the enclosure produced no features or artefacts to demonstrate the distribution and density of structures or activity areas. This is by no means surprising; features, primarily pits and post holes, are often scarce. Locally, at Woolbury Hill (Cunliffe and Poole, 2000) which is capped by Clay-with-Flints, an excavation area of 1,500 sq m, inside the defences of the hill fort, produced only six pits and no post holes.

6.1.27 Buildings at Danebury Hill fort (Cunliffe, 1983) were predominantly constructed using woven wattle panels, possibly supporting clay built walls. It is more than likely, in any case, that post or stake holes were cut into the Clay-with-Flints but did not penetrate the natural Chalk.

6.1.28 The artefact assemblage leaves little doubt that the enclosure was occupied and activities that reflect the economy of the site may, to some extent, be reconstructed by the distribution of material in the ditch.

6.1.29 Most of the artefact assemblage was located in the upper part of the ditch, a feature that was observed at both Winnall Down I (Fasham, 1985) and II (Davis, 2007), a feature that suggested at the former that the ditch had been back filled deliberately.

6.1.30 A simple plot of the distribution of material within the ditch indicates that material was more prevalent along the south side of the enclosure. This was especially true of bone, pottery and burnt flint, which was noted but not collected. Quern fragments were concentrated in the north east segment of the enclosure. It is possible that the reduced quantity of material from the western part of the enclosure resulted from the machine stripping; however no burnt flint, which was elsewhere prevalent, was observed in the upper parts of the ditch.

6.1.31 Bone was recovered as part of the artefact assemblage from the ditch, where it was mixed with other domestic and industrial waste. However bone occurred exclusively on the floor of pit 37 and a hollow in the base of quarry 42 on the east side of the site, where it may represent deliberately placed deposits.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 The principal phase of activity on the Site relates to the construction of a small Late Iron Age farmstead within an enclosure, populated by families growing and processing cereals, rearing stock and undertaking small scale metal-working. However the most significant contribution made by the work is the discovery of the enclosure, its position in the landscape and its relationship with other similar enclosures in the area. The addition may make it possible to speculate on the position of other similar enclosures in the area particularly along the east valley side of the River Test.

7.1.2 The watching brief at Somborne Park Farm has produced an important set of data that relates to prehistoric activity and settlement on the Hampshire Chalk. The story begins with early exploitation of flint by probable Neolithic communities.

8 POTENTIAL AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1.1 The watching brief at Somborne Park Farm produced unexpected results that are nevertheless of considerable importance and interest to the study of the Iron Age landscape on this part of the Hampshire Downs.

8.1.2 As such it is considered that the report should be published and the information disseminated to a wider readership in an appropriate archaeological journal, more specifically the Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club.

8.1.3 It is considered that this watching brief report should be edited to include details of site location, the purpose of the project, results of the work and a discussion of the results, with special reference to other known sites in the area. The text would be supported with a location plan, including known settlement in the area, a site plan and a representative selection of section drawings.

8.1.4 It is considered that some additional work is required to document the archaeological back ground of the area and more especially to relate the findings at Somborne Park Farm to the results of previous work, principally the Danebury Environs Project.

8.1.5 The finds assemblage is limited in size and range and hence archaeological potential. The pottery has already been used to provide the chronological framework for the site; further analysis is unlikely to enable further refinement of this dating, or to add to a general understanding of the site, and is not therefore proposed. No other material types are represented in sufficient quantity to warrant further examination. Any proposed publication could utilise information gathered as part of this assessment phase. The bone assemblage is similarly too small to be representative of husbandry and hunting practices of this site in the Late Iron Age and no further work is recommended. However, this assemblage should be considered when further excavations were to be undertaken near the site.

9 THE ARCHIVE

9.1.1 The paper archive and all artefacts are currently held at Wessex Archaeology's head quarters at Portway House where they are given temporary storage under the project code 67790. It is intended that the archive will be deposited with the relevant Hampshire museum for permanent storage.

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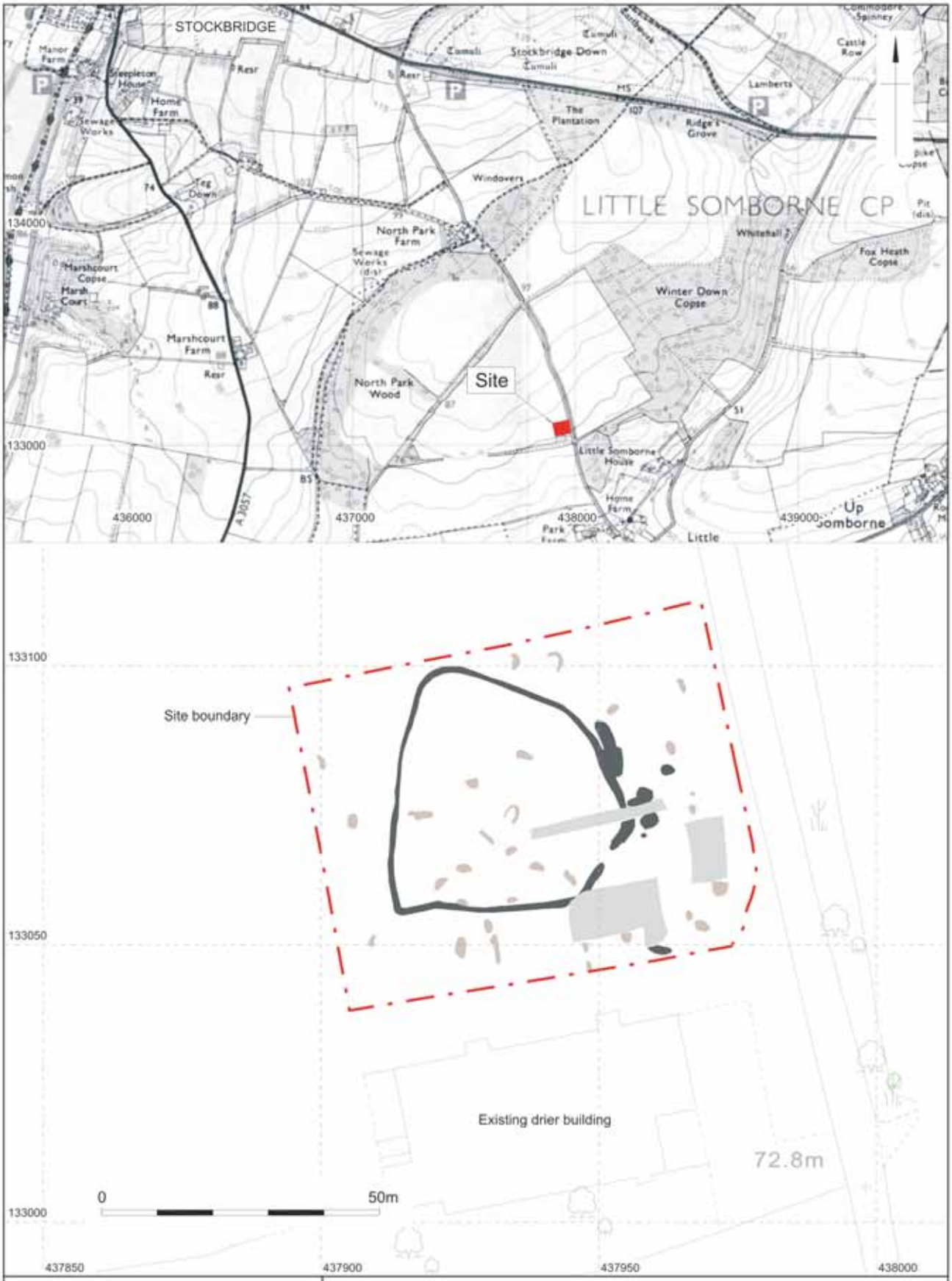
11 APPENDIX

11.1 Table 2: Enclosures as plotted by Palmer (Palmer 1984)

Site	NGR	Drainage	OD height	Area	Shape	Other
Enclosure						
Woodlease Copse	293319	Test	105	0.23	Rectilinear	In complex
Whiteshoot Plantation	295330	Wallop Brook (s)	70	<0.25	D shaped	
Waterloo Farm (south)	296341	Wallop Brook (s)	65-70	0.76	Rectilinear	In complex
Waterloo Farm (north)	297342	Wallop Brook (s)	65-70	0.84	Rectilinear	In complex
Bustards Corner	291356	Wallop Brook (s)	80	0.27	D shaped	In complex
Nine Mile Water Farm	302343	Wallop Brook (s)	70	c.1.00	D shaped	
Broughton East	323326	Wallop Brook (n)	55	1.12	D shaped	In complex
Houghton Drayton	329320	Wallop Brook (n) /Test	55	0.28	D shaped	In complex double ditch
Green Place	367343	Test (e)	95-100	0.18	Rectilinear	In complex
Little Somborne	**379330**	**Somborne**	**75**	**0.14**	**D shaped**	

Lower Chalk Hill	382319	Somborne	80	<0.25	Rectilinear	In complex, unenclosed settlement
Little Somborne	389329	Somborne	80	1.25	Curvilinear	Excavated
Unenclosed settlement						
Darfield	314348	Wallop Brook (n)	75			In complex
The Buildings	317332	Wallop Brook (n)	65			In complex
Everley Farm	334330	Test	70			In complex
Hoopers Bottom	357321	Test	60			In complex
North Park	367336	Test/Somborne	95			In complex
Rookley House	393332	Somborne	85			



Archaeological features

Tree throws or natural features

Modern disturbance

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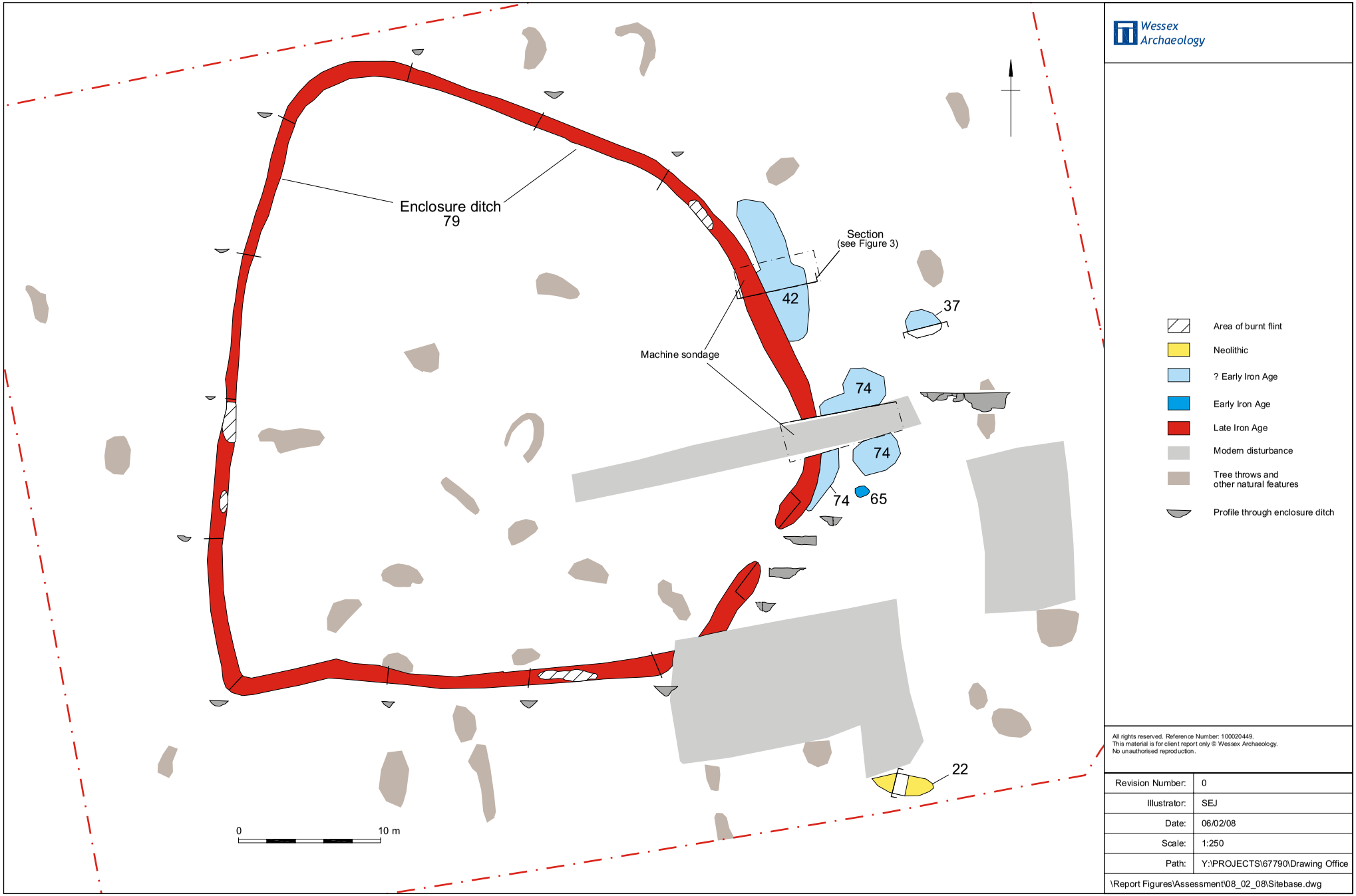
Site location plan

Figure 1



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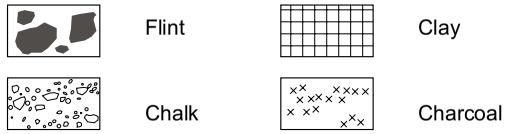
Phased plan of all features showing profiles across enclosure ditch 79

Figure 2



North facing section through enclosure ditch 79 and features 50 and 42

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Section through enclosure ditch 79 and features 50 and 42

Figure 3

South facing section through feature 37

Plan of pit 65

Section through feature 22 from the east

South facing section of ditch 74

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Selected photographs

Figure 4

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