Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Rhum

Mesolithic and Later Sites at Kinloch, Excavations 1984–86

Caroline R Wickham-Jones

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3 THE EXCAVATION: RESULTS

THE FIRST SEASON: TESTING THE SITE

The first season of excavation was designed to locate and assess the nature of the archaeological site. The excavation of the sample quadrats clarified the distribution of flaked stone in the ploughsoil, and a clear concentration of material in the SE area of the field was identified (Ill 5). Few of the metre squares in the N two-thirds of the field contained over 20 pieces of lithic material, and none had over 50, whilst in the SE corner densities of between 200–1800 pieces per m^2 were recorded. A clear N edge to the scatter, coinciding with the density of 50 pieces per m^2, could be drawn just to the S of the 15m contour. Elsewhere, to the S, E and W, the scatter continued to the field boundary. The field slopes down to the SE corner but the possibility that the accumulation of artifacts might have resulted from natural processes was quickly ruled out by a comparison with the distribution of other artifactual materials (eg fragments of glass and nineteenth century ceramics), as these were evenly distributed across the field. The position of the lithic scatter was therefore closely defined, and it seemed likely that this might indicate the location of the archaeological site. To confirm this hypothesis it was necessary to check the spatial association between the area of the lithic concentration and the locations of any preserved features; in order to do this five quadrats were enlarged and excavated (Trenches AA – AE, Ill 4).

THE EXCAVATED QUADRATS: RESULTS

A key for use with the plans and sections is available on a fold out attached to ILL 12 (facing p 40)

TRENCH AA

Trench AA contained an amorphous, sterile pit, which is probably a large root hole.

TRENCH AB

A dark gravelly feature lay in the NE corner of the original quadrat. The excavation did not recover any artifacts, and the discolorations and textural alterations proved to be largely natural. Marine re-working of the underlying till in the late-glacial period has resulted in a banding and sorting of the general matrix; this was also visible elsewhere on the site. The feature itself had originally formed as a slight hollow in this stony glacial subsoil and it was filled by soil creep. In addition, traces of modern agriculture, in the form of ploughmarks, were evident; agriculture had undoubtedly contributed to the soil differentiations initially observed.

TRENCH AC (Ill 7)

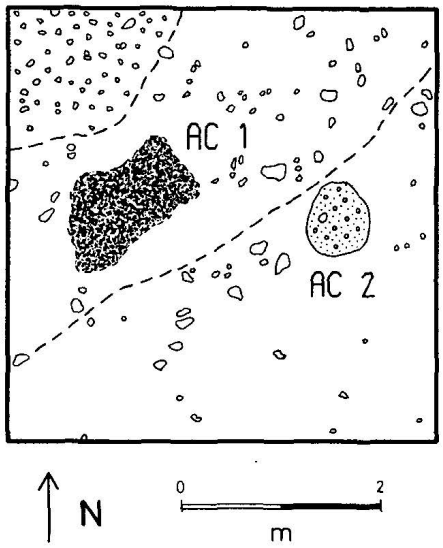
A banded feature appeared to run NE-SW across the original quadrat. Excavation revealed this to be part of a complex of amorphous colour and textural changes within the subsoil matrix. These were natural and related to the reworking of the glacial till. On the surface of the till lay a patch of charcoal (AC 1). This contained carbonised hazel-nut shell, together with a small assemblage of lithics, and it probably represents the base of a truncated pit. To the E a single post hole was recognised (AC 2): it consisted of a clear post pipe surrounded by a packing of small stones, and it contained a number of flaked lithics and pieces of carbonised hazel-nut shell.

TRENCH AD

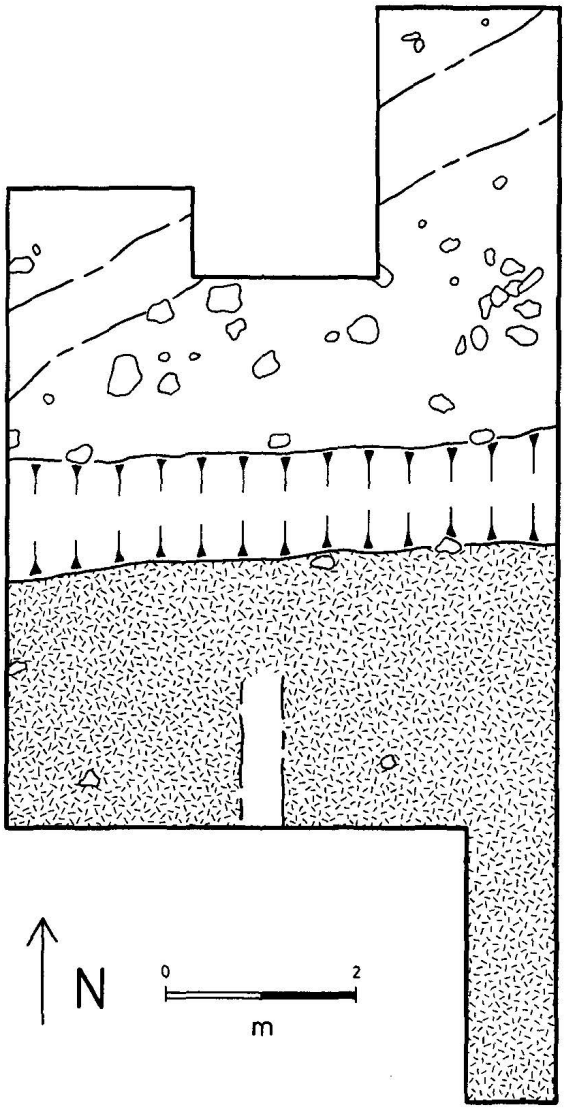
During excavation of the sample quadrat one of the metre squares was overdug to reveal a charcoal rich soil containing a large number of flaked lithics. Excavation revealed this to be part of a complex of intercutting pits and hollows. All contained large amounts of artifactual material, including hammerstones and abraded pumice, and the usual flaked lithics.

Type	Number
PEBBLES	26
CORES	156
BLADES	238
REGULAR FLAKES	1506
DEBRIS	26441
MODIFIED ARTIFACTS	
Microliths	318
Non-Microlithic	153

Table 1: Ploughsoil sample: the lithic assemblage.



ILL 7: Trench AC: excavated features.
For key see ILL 12.



ILL 8: Trench AE: excavated features.
For key see ILL 12.

TRENCH AE (Ill 8)

The subsoil of the original quadrat revealed a clear differentiation in texture between the N and S halves of the trench. This proved to mark the remains of an old, robbed field-dyke running E-W across the field. The dyke is not marked on any known maps of Kinloch, and must have gone out of use before 1877 when the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map was prepared. In addition, a rubble field drain, and a later tile drain were uncovered. All were cut into the natural, which in the S half of the trench consisted of a compacted, rotted sandstone gravel possibly related to the 'bank' material uncovered in Trench BA (see below this section). No prehistoric artifacts were recovered from this trench.

SUMMARY

Excavation of the extended quadrats revealed that archaeological features were indeed preserved, and that their location coincided exactly with the area of the lithic scatter. The main archaeological site was, therefore, judged to lie in the S portion of the field; it was bounded to the N by the edge of the scatter and elsewhere by the limits of the field.

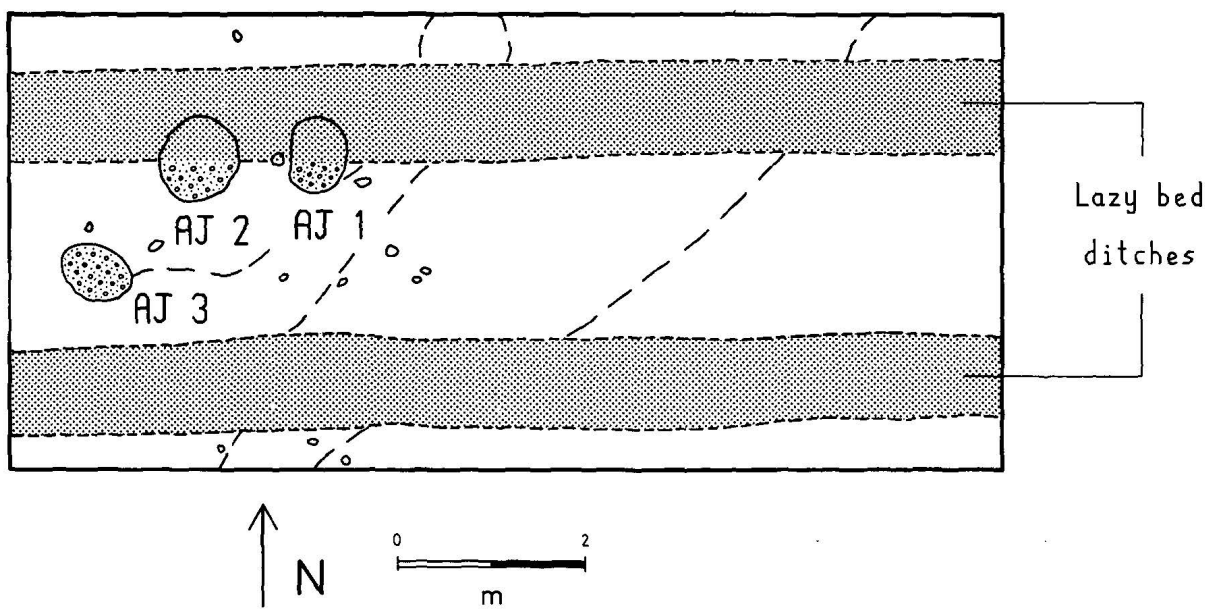
DISCUSSION: THE NATURE OF THE SITE

The nature of the site was assessed by analysis of the types of artifact recovered and of the types of feature preserved.

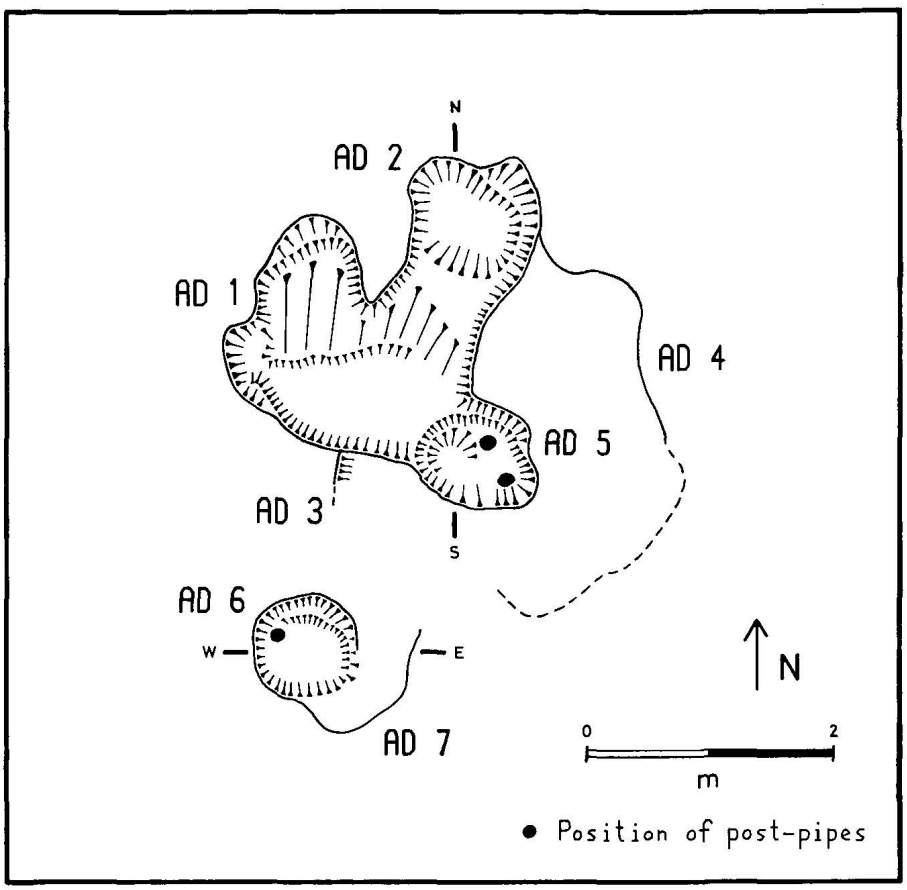
The artifacts consisted primarily of a large assemblage of flaked lithics. From the sampling of the ploughsoil 28,838 pieces were recovered. Much of this was knapping debris, but there were also many regular flakes, together with a significant number of blades, many microliths, and a few other retouched pieces (Tab 1). The retouched pieces included two complete, and eight fragmentary, leaf-shaped points. All the microliths were made on small narrow blades, and the presence of several hammerstones confirmed the impression that knapping had taken place on site. Finally, the existence of two pieces of pumice, both with deep grooves from the abrasion of points of bone or other materials, pointed to the large part of the original artifactual assemblage that had not survived (Ill 88).

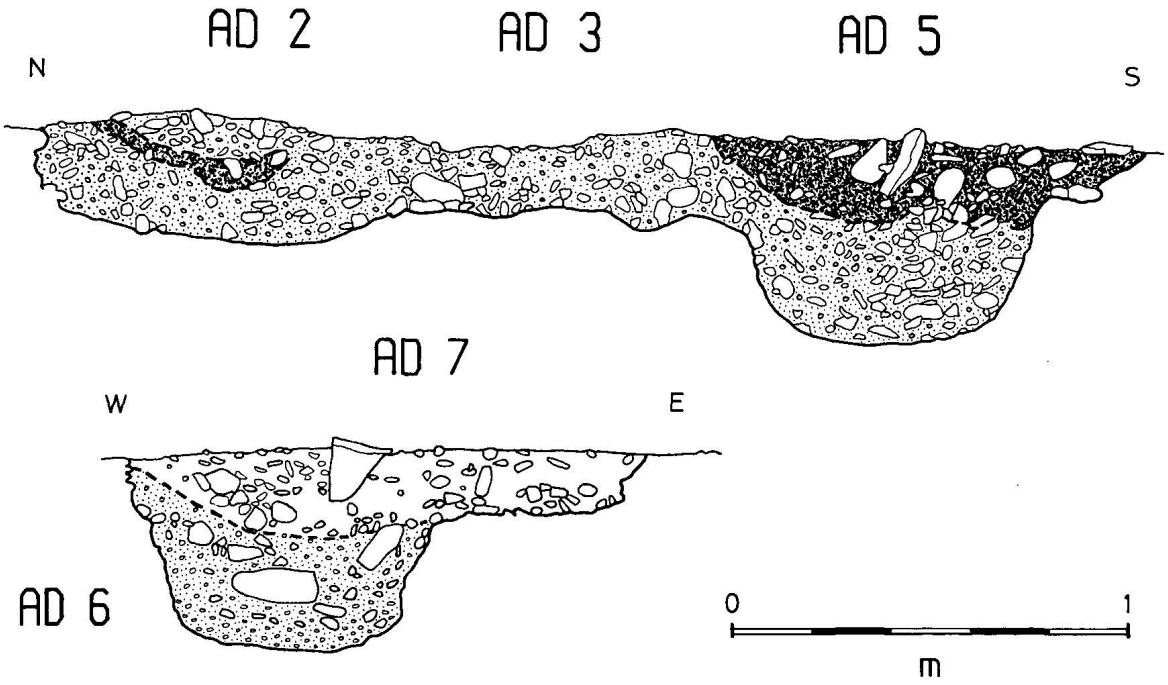
The artifacts demonstrated the existence of a late mesolithic site, with some indication from the leaf-shaped points that activity had continued into the neolithic. Excavation of the features supported this. All the prehistoric features examined could be parallelled on mesolithic sites elsewhere (Woodman 1985a, 7–31: McCullagh forthcoming), and all contained artifacts comparable with those from the ploughsoil sample. This mesolithic interpretation was confirmed after excavation by the production of two radiocarbon determinations based on carbonised hazel-nut shell found in one of the pits (AD 5). The dates (8590±95BP, GU–1873 and 8515±190BP, GU–1874; Chapter 10) place the site at the start of the later mesolithic period, and make it the earliest certain evidence, at the time of writing, for the human settlement of Scotland. Dates obtained in the later seasons were to confirm the existence of some neolithic remains on site, though these were separated by a period of several thousand years from the mesolithic occupation.

At the end of the first season the archaeological site had been located and chronological information obtained; subsequent seasons were designed to explore the site in detail, and the results of these seasons are presented below.



ILL 9: Trench AJ: excavated features. For key see ILL 12.





ILL 10: Trench AD: excavated features. For key see ILL 12.

THE MESOLITHIC EVIDENCE

Mesolithic remains were found in five areas of the site: Trenches AC, AD, AG, AJ and BA. Trenches AC and AJ revealed only limited evidence of activity; Trenches AD and BA, an extension of AG, produced more extensive evidence.

RESULTS FROM THE TRENCHES

TRENCH AC

The remains in Trench AC consisted of the base of a pit and an isolated post-hole (see above; Ill 7).

TRENCH AJ (Ill 9)

The bases of three pits (AJ 1, 2 and 3) were recovered in Trench AJ. Each was truncated by the construction of lazybeds, so they add little to an understanding of the site as a whole.

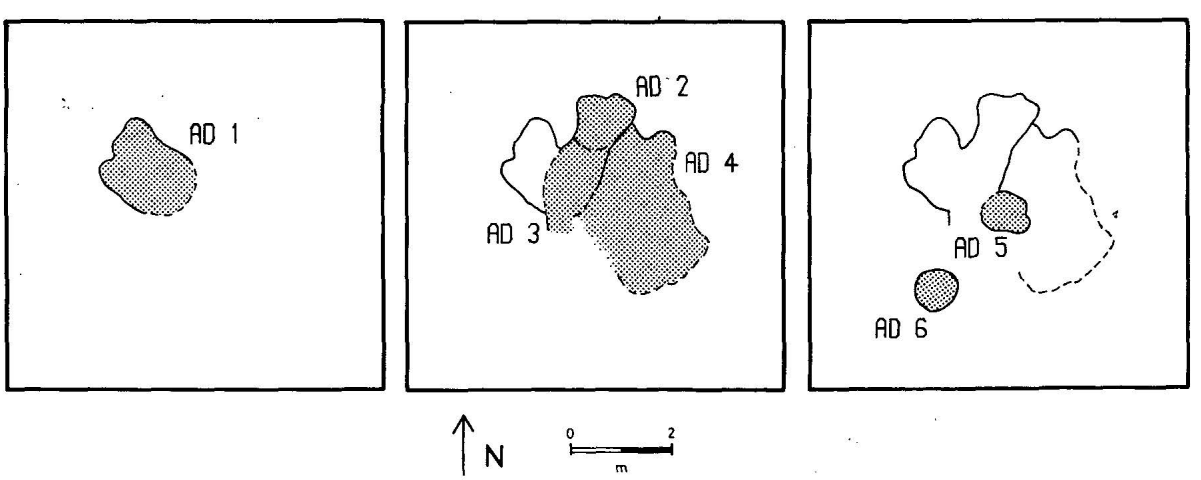
TRENCH AD (Ill 10)

A complex of mesolithic pits and hollows (AD 1–6) survived in Trench AD. The earliest was a deep, irregular hollow (AD 1) which was greatly altered by later activity. The surviving edges were steeply cut in places, but for the most part they followed the natural incline of the subsoil strata. The hollow was slightly modified by, or for, human use, but it seems to have been naturally formed, possibly as a tree root hole. The base was level, and the hollow appeared to have been deliberately infilled; the pebbly fill contained both lithic debris and a quantity of carbonised hazel-nut shell (Ill 99), but much had been removed by the cutting of a later pit (AD 3).

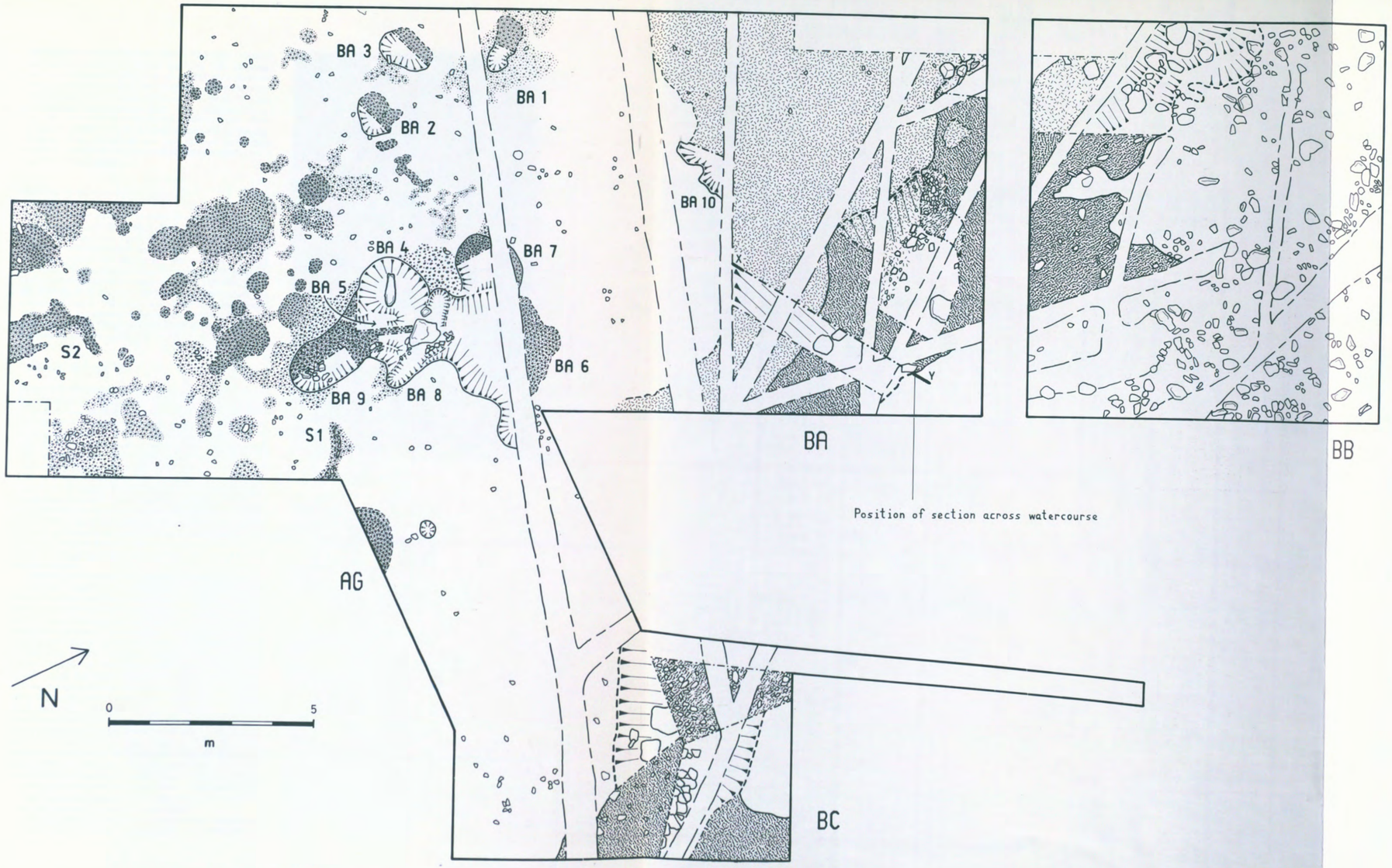
Sometime after the backfilling of AD 1 another shallow hollow (AD 4) was formed together with two small pits (AD 2 and AD 3). AD 4 was largely obliterated by AD 2 and AD 3, but it survived towards the E side of the complex. The relationship between these three features was unclear, but it is likely that the pits AD 2 and AD 3 were cut at the same time. They appear to have been open and then deliberately filled together. Little of AD 4 survived; it had been much altered by the later pits, and both the edges and base were difficult to define in the stony, banded subsoil. The fill comprised pebbles and gravel mixed with a brown soil which had percolated through to the subsoil. Charcoal was also recovered, together with burnt and unburnt lithic material.

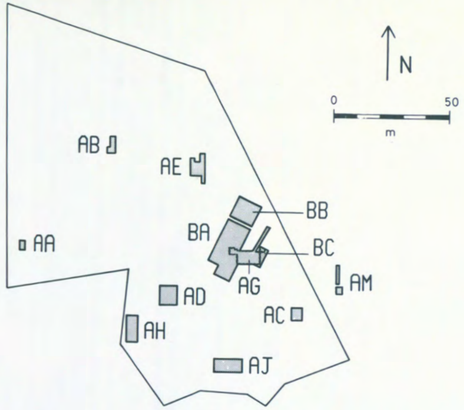
Finally, two further pits were dug in the S half of the area (AD 5 and AD 6). Both were similar in size, shape and fill. AD 5 was cut through the earlier fills of AD 3 and AD 4, and it had a less regular shape than AD 6. At the surface AD 5 measured 0.8m × 0.9m; it had steep sides, sloping to a depth of 0.5m and the profile suggested that little surface truncation had taken place. AD 5 had been deliberately backfilled with a charcoal-rich, gravelly soil containing burnt lithic material, and two post pipes were clearly visible within the fill. Towards the top of the pit lay a group of rounded cobbles; some were heavily abraded from use, others were apparently unused (Ills 79, 83, 84). AD 6 was cut through the backfill of AD 4. It was polygonal in plan, measuring 0.8m × 0.9m at the top and 0.5m in depth with almost vertical sides and little sign of surface truncation. AD 6 was also deliberately backfilled, and a single post had been placed into the pit.

Although the sequence in which the features formed was clear (Ill 11), the interpretation of the activities that lead to their formation is difficult. The trench measured only 7m × 7m and it is possible that further remains lie untouched only two or three metres from the excavated features. Certainly, the original hollow (AD 1) appears to have been natural; it may have provided a good working area but at



ILL 11: Trench AD: the phasing of pits AD 1-AD 6.





KEY TO PLANS AND SECTIONS

- Silt
- Gravel
- Silt/Gravel Mix
- Charcoal
- Sandstone Gravels (dumped)
- Peat
- Natural Strata
- Field Drain (Plan)
- Field Drain (Section)

ILL 12: Trenches AG, BA, BB, & BC: excavated features; key to plans and sections.

some point it was deliberately infilled, and there seems to have been a quantity of rubbish including both lithic and organic material in the fill. Then, after a further hollow and two shallow pits were dug, two distinctive, steep-sided pits were cut and three upright posts set into them. It eems unlikely that these represent part of any substantial structure; the posts may have supported a rack or frame, but it is equally possible that they acted as markers for the pits. Analysis of the pit fills did not shed light on the original contents, apart from the usual burnt hazel-nut shell and an amount of lithic debris.

TRENCH AG (Ill 12)

Trench AG was laid out to provide a transect from the central ridge across the boggy hollow of the watercourse at the E edge of the field. Features associated with mesolithic activity were only found at the W edge of this trench where the discovery of two conjoining pits prompted a small extension. Within this extension lay a complex of intercutting pits containing dark, organic, artifact-rich fills. These pits had all been cut by a modern field drain which ran across the trench. The small size of the extension meant that further examination of these features was left until the following season when a larger Trench (BA) could be stripped around the area.

TRENCH BA (Ill 12)

Trench BA contained abundant evidence for activity in the mesolithic period. The features uncovered in the extension to Trench AG proved to be only part of a variety of well-preserved features extending across the trench: pits, hollows, stakeholes and slots. These features were visible after the removal of topsoil as patches of dark organic-rich soil. In general they had a less gravelly matrix than the surrounding subsoil and many could be seen to contain lithic artifacts. Once they were emptied the profiles of these features suggested that little vertical truncation had taken place in this area of the site (see Ill 24), and this was supported by the results of the soil analysis (Jordan mf a & b, 3:C2–D7). Some features were surrounded by a shadow, or ghost, apparently caused by the percolation of material from the original fills and the reworking of the feature edges. These ghosts made the excavation of the features a difficult process.

Towards the W edge of the trench lay a group of features (BA 1, BA 2 and BA 3). Two (BA 1 and BA 2) were shallow hollows containing the usual dark fill with carbonised hazel-nut shell and some lithic material. The larger (BA 1) also contained several fragments of broken stone slabs. These occurred in two clusters and appeared to have broken from one or more larger slabs; the nine fragments of the main cluster could be rejoined into six pieces. Further analysis of these fragments suggested that their overall shape was quite different to that of the natural cobbles occurring across the site and that they may have been affected by heat (Jordan mf c, 3:D8–D14). It seems likely that BA 1 contained the broken remains of one or more hearth slabs. BA 3 was a pit with steeper sides than the adjacent hollows, and it was more akin to the deeper pits AD 5 and AD 6. Like them it was apparently deliberately backfilled, but there was no sign of any upright posts within the fill. As well as the usual lithic artifactual material, the fill contained many pieces of broken stone slab. None of these could be rejoined but, like those in BA 1, later analysis suggested that they may have resulted from the dumping of broken hearth slabs.

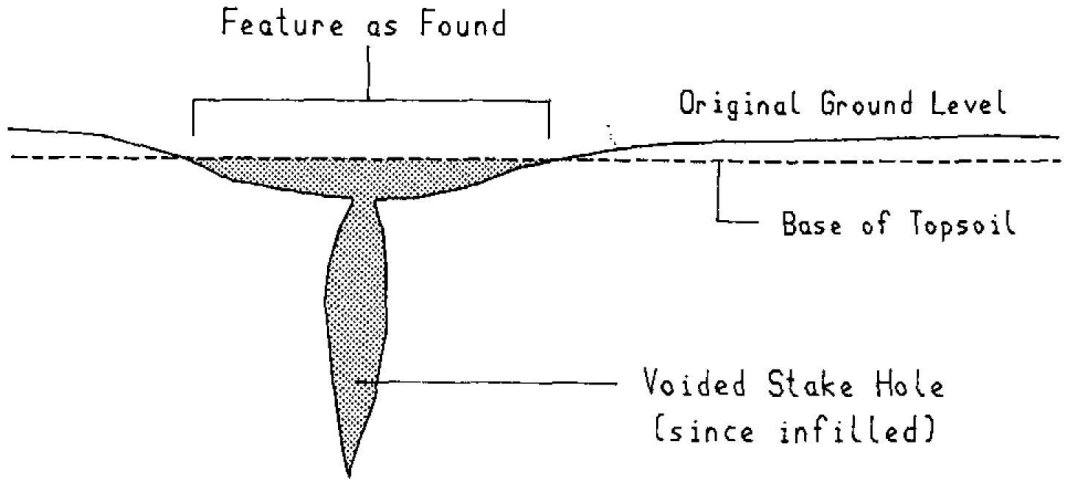
In the E half of Trench BA lay an intricate complex of pits and hollows partially uncovered in the extension to

ILL 13: Slot I: from the E.

Trench AG. Both the shape and profile suggested that this complex had resulted from a sequence of separate activi-ties, but the reconstruction of this sequence proved diffi-cult because of the uniformity of the fills. Furthermore, it was not possible to finish the excavation of this complex in the time available. The following description is therefore based on the excavated profiles of some of the features, and on the gross visible differences of the fills.

The N end of the complex comprised four hollows (BA 4–7) with a deep linear pit (BA 8) which cut through their centres. The N edge of these hollows was destroyed by a field drain which, in combination with the linear pit, made it impossible to determine the inter-relationship of the hollows. The hollows were each roughly circular in plan and gentle in profile with dark organic fills containing quantities of lithic debris and carbonised hazel-nut shell (Ill 99). A large oblong stone lay towards the base of BA 4. The deep linear pit (BA 8) had steep sides and contained large angular stones in its fill. It appeared either to predate the hollows or to have been cut when they were open. No evidence of post pipes was observed, but the association of the pit and hollows does bear a resemblance to the complex of features in Trench AD.

The S end of this complex consisted of a linear hollow (BA 9) which was only partially excavated. It resembled the other hollows of the complex in profile and content except at the S end where a deposit of angular blocks lay up against a steep edge. Excavation suggested that these blocks had formed an early part of the fill of this feature and had protected the original sides, elsewhere subsequent wear or weathering had led to a gentler profile. These



ILL 14: The characteristic profile of a stakchole.

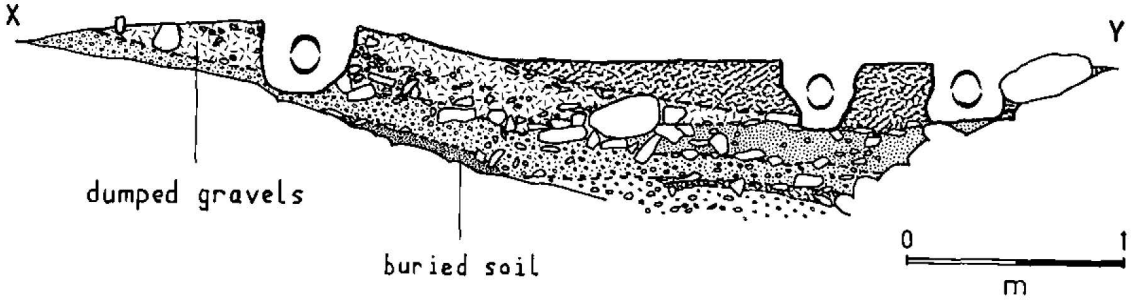
blocks were aligned with the adjoining foundation slot (S1), and it is possible that the two features originally supported part of a timber structure. The relationship of BA 9 with the rest of the complex was not explored.

Further S in the trench a variety of dark fills were recorded, presumably representing similar pits, hollows or other features but they were not excavated. Across this area, however, a number of probable stakeholes and slots were uncovered, and some of these were excavated. The slot (S1) has already been mentioned; it curved to the E of feature BA 9 for a distance of 1.5m. Although shallow, it was clearly visible, marked from the surrounding subsoil by the alignment of flat stones vertically bedded along its length (Ill 13). Its depth never exceeded 0.2m. Slot S2 to the S also appeared to be structural: in this case a rectangular corner formed of conjoining stakeholes. In addition, at least 16 individual stakeholes were uncovered, but the poor weather conditions and coarse subsoil matrix made these particularly difficult to excavate. A number were examined by trowelling off spits 0.3m deep and planning and photographing the features after the removal of each spit. In this way they were found to have a characteristic profile as the collapse of the top of the feature had lead to the formation of a small dished area below which a narrow 'cylinder', usually less than 0.1m in diameter, extended for at least another 0.1m (Ill 14). Thus excavation helped to confirm the interpretation of these features as potential stakeholes but others must undoubtedly lie undiscovered, and it is not possible to reconstruct certain upstanding structures from the evidence examined. Nevertheless, there is a clear indication that structures did exist on site (Chapter 14 below).

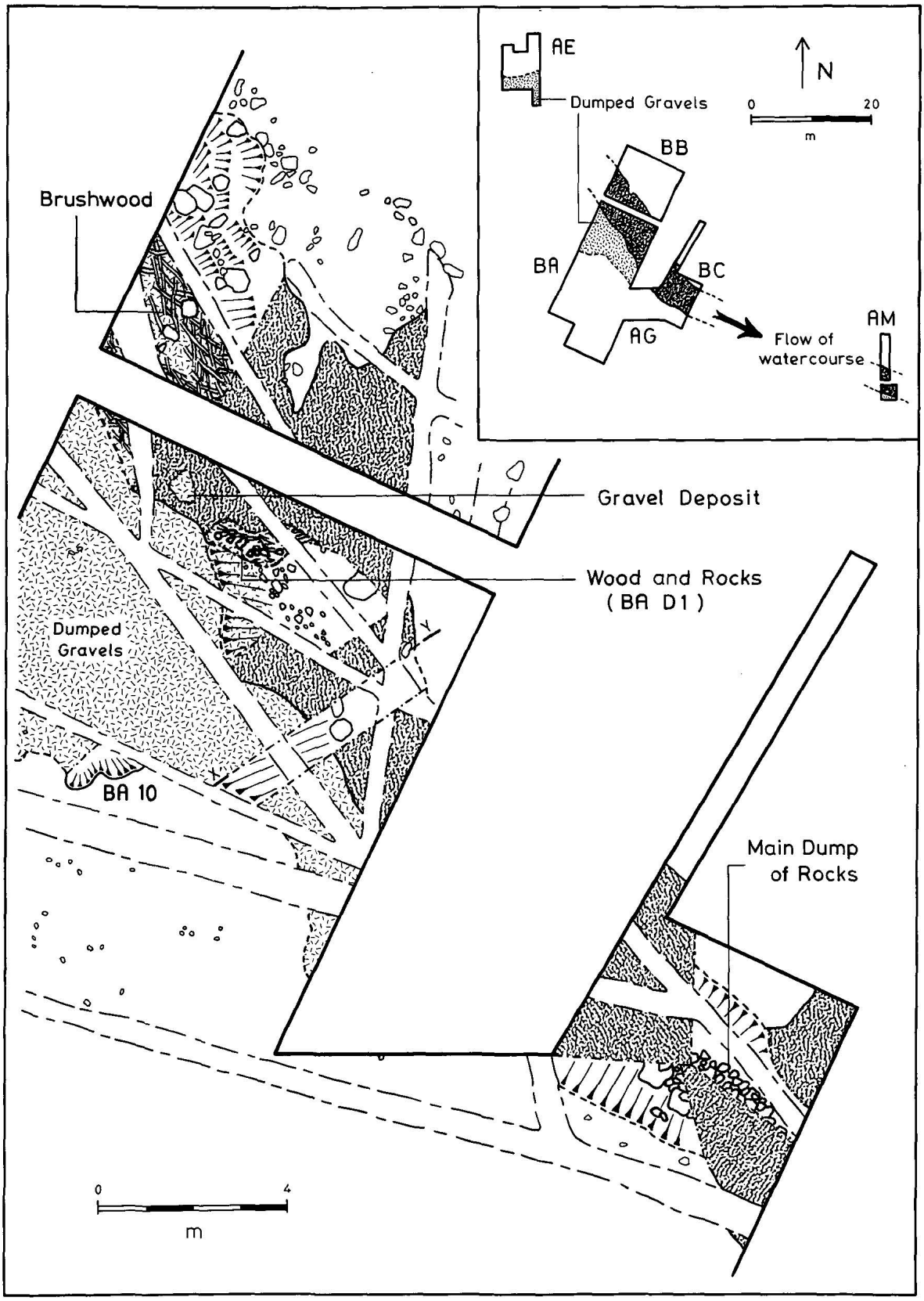
The N end of Trench BA abutted the defunct watercourse which today is a wet flush (Ill 15). One shallow hollow (BA 10) was uncovered immediately to the S of the watercourse and this hollow was subsequently dated to the mesolithic period (7880±70 BP, GU-2147); it contained the usual dark fill with much carbonised hazel-nut shell as well as lithic debris. The hollow was sealed by gravelly material that lay along the S bank of the watercourse and was apparently artificially deposited (Jordan mf a, 3:C2–D2). This dumped material was not completely excavated so that it is possible that other mesolithic features remain undiscovered beneath it.

LATER REMAINS

Evidence for the later remains derived primarily from the area of the watercourse and associated gravel dumps, principally in trenches AG and BA. No clear stratigraphical relationship could be defined between the mesolithic evidence and the remains of later activity in this area. The only demonstrably neolithic feature, dated by charcoal to the mid third millennium BC (4725 + 140BP, GU–2043) was a hollow above a mesolithic pit in Trench AD.



ILL 15: The watercourse: section X-Y. See 111 16 for the location of the section, For key see 111 12.



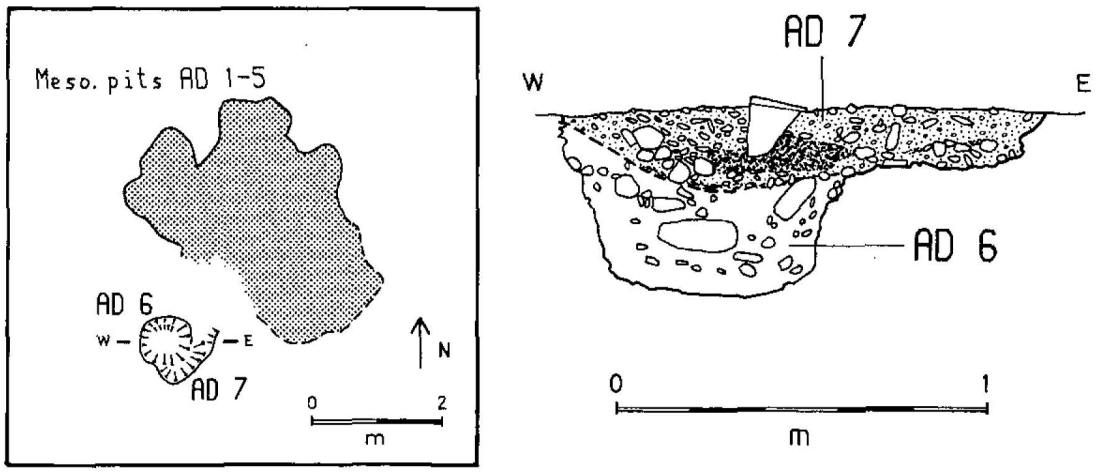
ILL 16: The watercourse: excavated features. For key see Ill 12.

ILL 17: Brushwood deposits in the watercourse: from the N.

THE WATERCOURSE AND THE BANK DUMPS

The bottom of the watercourse was only reached in one small section (Ill 15; Ill 16). At the base lay gravel deposits containing a few lithic artifacts which were presumably derived from the nearby mesolithic remains. Above these basal gravels there were deposits of buried soil that contained a few lithics and this soil was dated from associated carbonised hazel-nut shell to 7140±130 BP, (GU-2211). All the dated mesolithic features were earlier than this, thus it is probable that the inclusion of cultural material into the soil occurred after the mesolithic settlement had been abandoned. The soil had apparently slumped into the watercourse from the S bank, and it was truncated on its downhill side by running water, which suggests that the burn was still flowing when the mesolithic site was in occupation. At the same level in the watercourse, however, a thin layer of peat had formed so that the date of the soil must represent the last possible date at which the burn was active, and it is likely that by this time it was sluggish and intermittent (Chapter 12).

The dumped gravelly materials occurred along the length of the S bank of the watercourse and extended out into it. They consisted of a sandstone gravel containing occasional lithic artifacts. The gravelly materials appeared to be largely derived from the local till and gravels, but analysis suggested that they were not naturally accumulated (Jordan mf a, 3:C2-D2). In the infill of the watercourse both the slumped soil and the lowest thin growth of peat lay below these gravel dumps (Ill 15), indicating that the burn had become sluggish, and that peat had started to form, before the deposition of the gravel.



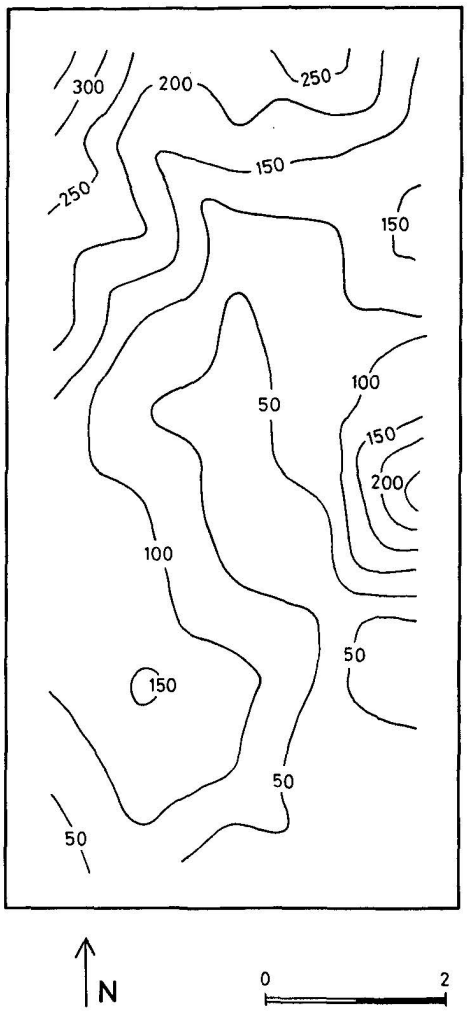
ILL 18: Trench AD: features AD 6-AD 7. For key see Ill 12.

The gravel was presumably derived from the surface of the adjacent site and had apparently been scraped up and spread along the edge of the developing bog. This gravel 'bank' never stood high; there were no great spreads of material that would have resulted from the destruction of a larger feature. On the bank the gravel dumps lay directly below the ploughsoil and sealed at least one mesolithic feature (BA 10); in the watercourse they lay below the main growth of peat.

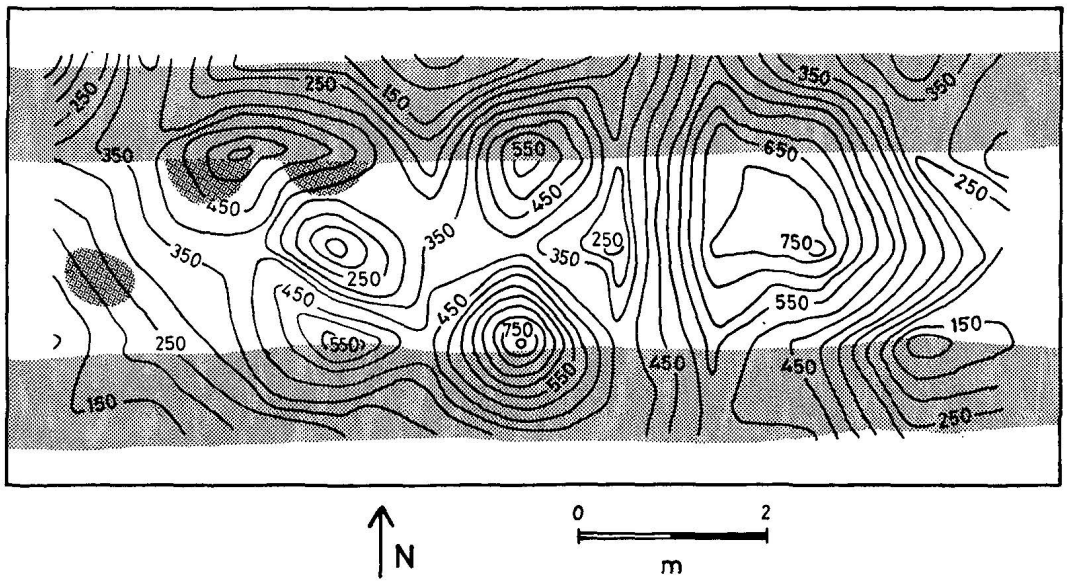
The gravel dumps, therefore, post-date the mesolithic occupation of the site and they seem to pre-date the later activity on site. This later activity is predominantly related to human interference in, and around, the burn in the third millennium BC. Although it is possible that the dumps do relate to this phase, there was no clear stratigraphical relationship between the remains of the two periods. Bearing in mind the environmental indications of human disturbance in the period between the mesolithic and the later activity (Chapter 11), the possibility of the build up of the 'bank' at any time in this period cannot be discounted. This leaves a span of some three thousand years during which it could have been formed.

Isolated gravelly deposits containing some lithic debris were found elsewhere in the peat of the watercourse (Ill 16), and these too may be associated with the scraping up and deposition of gravels from the site. Furthermore, a number of rafts of matted wood lay within the peat throughout the watercourse (Ill 17). Analysis of the wood suggested that these were not natural assemblages but had possibly resulted from scrub clearance (Chapter 11; McCullagh mf. 3:A3–A11). One (D1) was dated to the early third millennium BC (4080±60BP, GU-2148) by which time there is other evidence for activity on site.

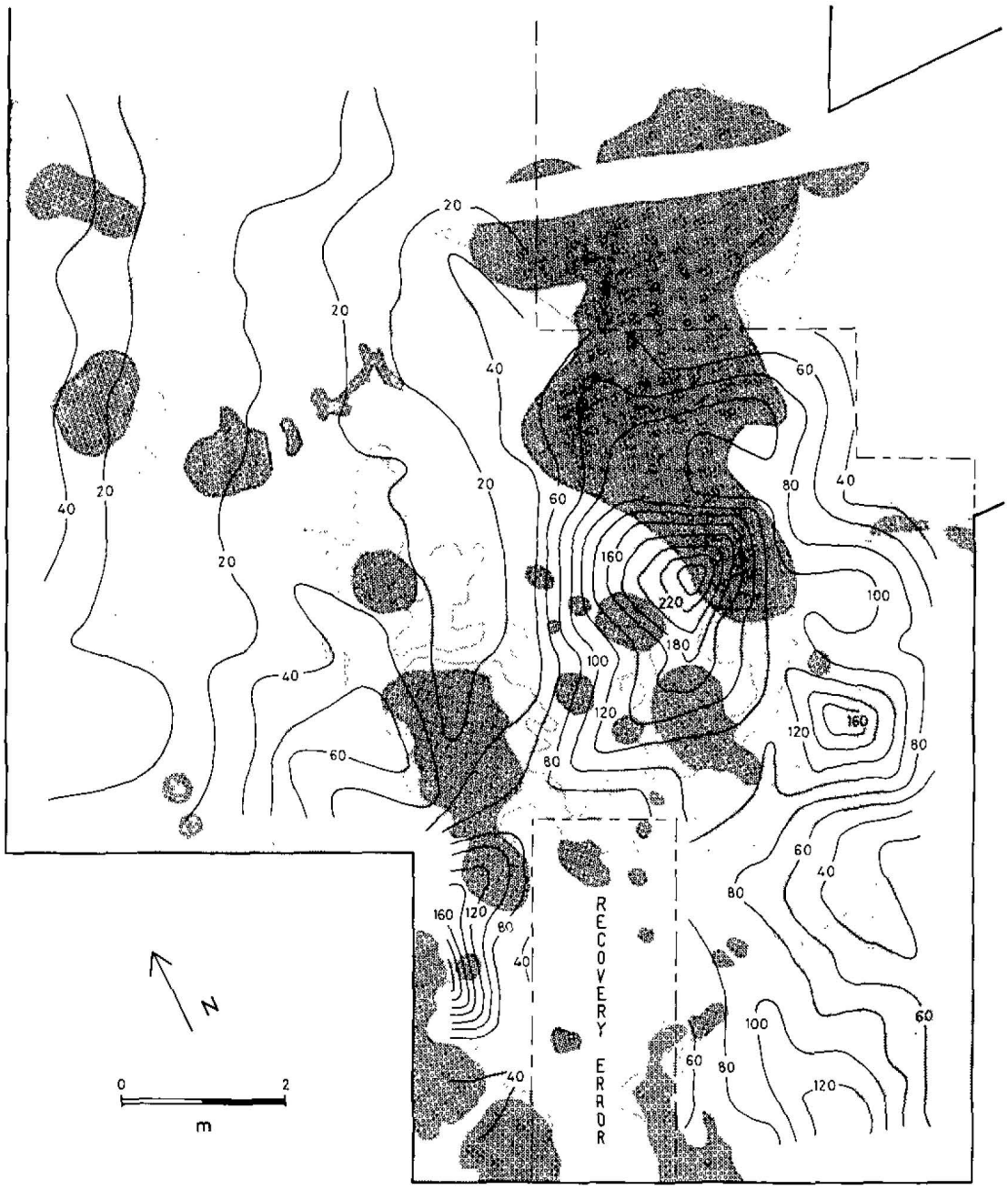
Further gravel deposits were discovered upstream in Trench AE. During excavation it was not possible to interpret these deposits because the trench was too small, but they are similar to the gravel dumps of Trench BA, and they lie clearly along the line of the S bank of the watercourse (Ill 16).



ILL 19: Trench AH: the density of lithic material in the ploughsoil. Contours at intervals of 50 finds per sq m. No stratified contexts survived in this trench.



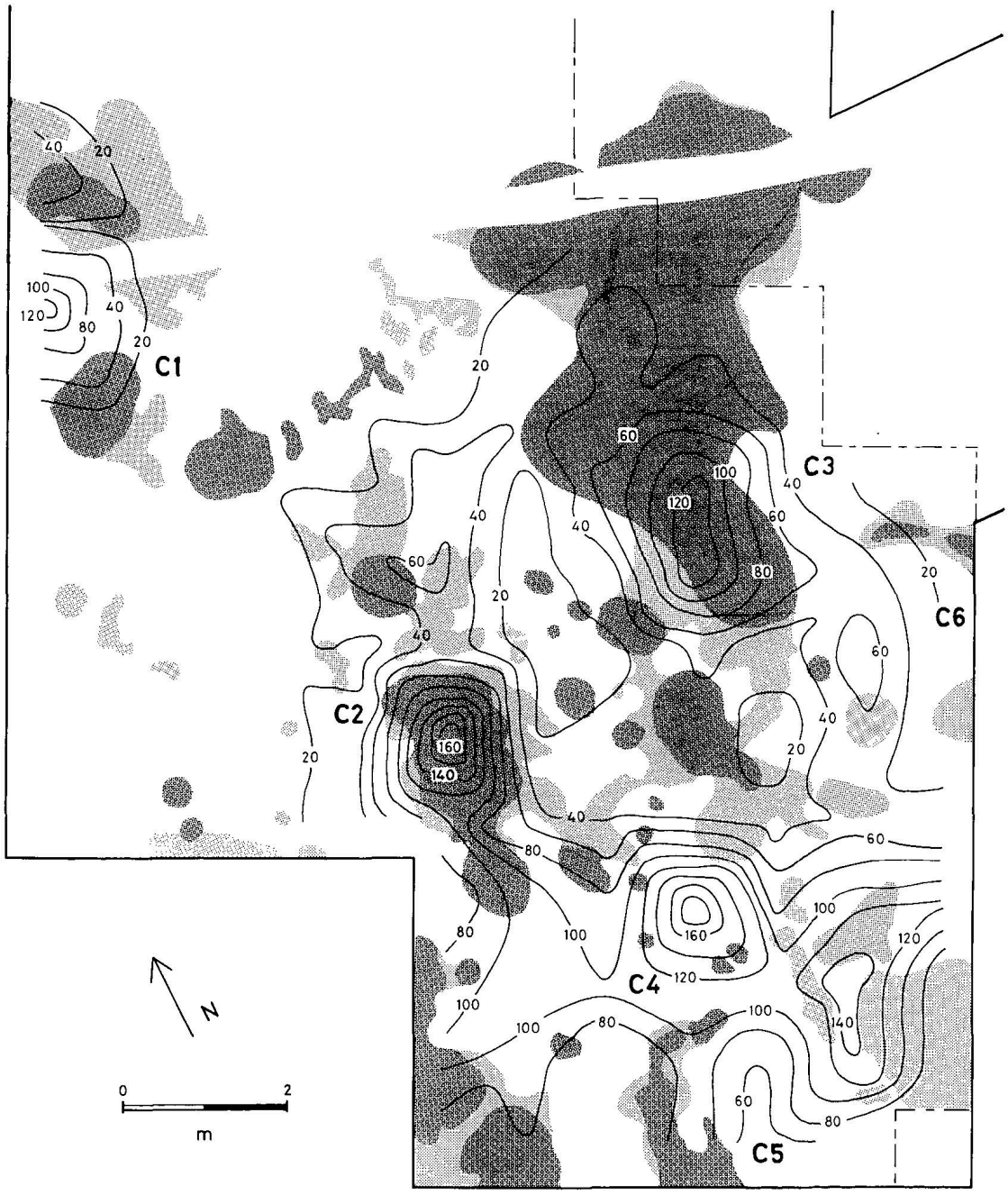
ILL 20: Trench AJ: the density of lithic material in the ploughsoil. Contours at intervals of 50 finds per sq m. Surviving contexts are stippled.



ILL 21: Trench BA: the density of lithic material in the ploughsoil. Contours at intervals of 20 finds per sq m. Surviving contexts are stippled.

THE NEOLITHIC REMAINS

No certain evidence for structures relating to the neolithic period were found within the areas investigated. To the N of the watercourse boulder clay lay immediately below the ploughsoil and, with the exception of two stakeholes of uncertain association, no features of archaeological interest were uncovered. To the S, in Trench AD, a small shallow hollow (AD 7) had formed across the top of one of the mesolithic pits (AD 6) (Ill 18). At the base of this hollow lay a thin peaty layer, on top of which a gravelly silt had been deposited containing larger stones as well as both lithic debris and charcoal. This layer was subsequently dated to the mid third millennium BC (4725±140BP, GU-2043). This was the only demonstrably neolithic feature discovered on site. There is, of course, much potential for other areas of neolithic activity amongst the unexcavated features and areas of the site, but so far the only other deposits uncovered relating to this period are those in and around the peat of the watercourse. The



ILL 22: Trench BA: the density of lithic material in the cleaning layer. Contours at intervals of 20 finds per sq m. Surviving contexts are stippled.

nature and existence of these deposits suggest that further neolithic material must lie somewhere close to the excavated areas.

The main evidence for activity in the neolithic consists of a deposit of rocks, together with organic material, fragmentary pottery (Chapter 9), and lithic debris (Chapters 5 and 6), all lying within the peat of the watercourse towards the E end of the excavated area (Trenches AG and BC; Ill 16). The peat within which the deposit lies apparently started to form before the deposition of the first rocks. A radiocarbon determination based on wood within the deposit produced the date of 3890±65BP (GU–2042); but the date of the deposit is problematical because the deposit also contained pottery of a type thought to be earlier than the radiocarbon determination and pumice that is probably derived from a later Icelandic eruption (c. 2700 BP; Chapter 9). Some of the rocks were substantial; two in particular were of great size and they must have protruded above the surface of the watercourse. Within the deposit the artifactual material was presumably derived from nearby occupation debris, whether of a domestic or other nature. The rocks must have been cleared from the surface of the surrounding land where they may once have played a part in the mesolithic structures (Chapter 14).

INFORMATION FROM THE PLOUGHSOIL

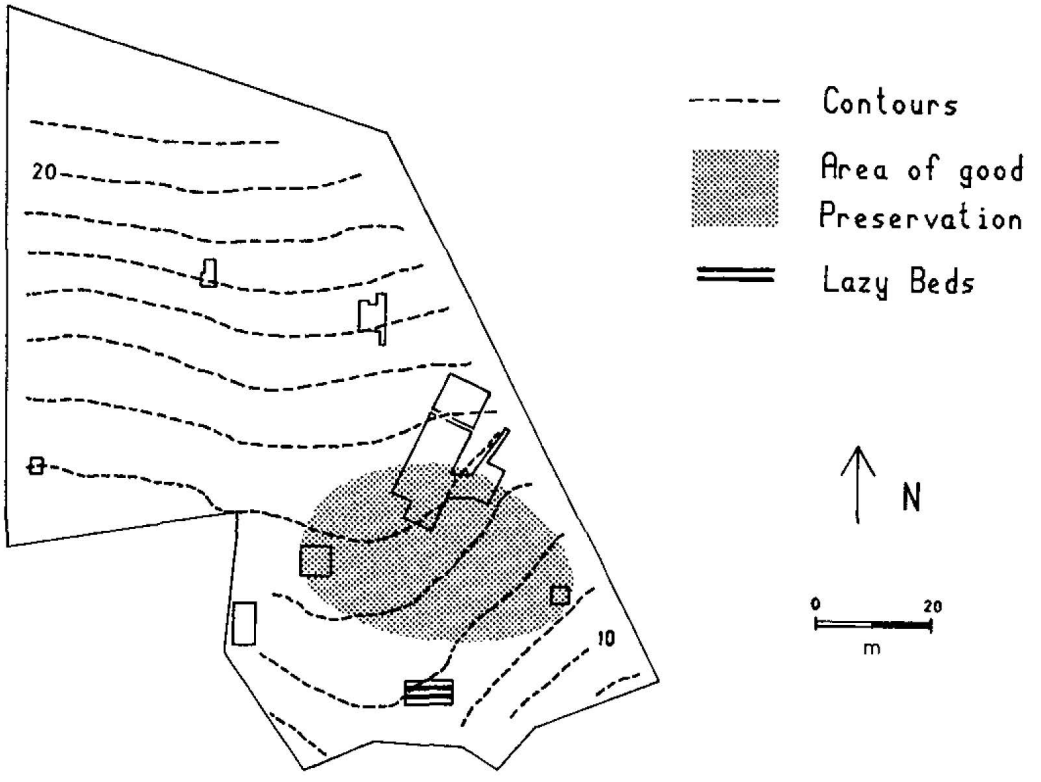
Contour maps of the lithic density per metre square within the ploughsoil of each trench have been drawn up. These show specific concentrations of material surviving within each trench, which could be compared to the positions of the remaining features. In general, the ploughsoil concentrations overlay the features; there were also, however, concentrations with no underlying features. These results are illustrated for the three trenches in which the spatial pattern proved of most interest: Trenches AH; AJ; and BA (Ills 19–22). Trench AD might have been of interest but the trench was laid out so closely around the complex of stratified features that it provided little scope for the recognition of any differential patterning of artifacts within the ploughsoil both over and away from the stratified material. Trench AC was too small for any patterning to be observed.

TRENCHES AH and AJ

The distribution of material across Trenches AH and AJ is shown in Ills 19 and 20. All the material from the ploughsoil has been combined with that from the cleaning layer below, whether recovered manually or by wet sieving. Trench AH (Ill 19) is of interest as here there were no surviving stratified contexts, but the spread of lithic material within the ploughsoil has several clear concentrations which are probably the remains of ploughed out features. Trench AJ (Ill 20) was heavily truncated, but the bases of three pit-like features survived and lithic concentrations were also visible. One of these concentrations coincided with the existing features and three others lay above apparently barren subsoil. Interestingly, there was no obvious relationship between the spread of artifacts over the trench and the two lazy-bed ditches that ran down the length of the trench. This suggests that, although the construction of the lazy-bed ditches must have destroyed any underlying archaeological features, it did not result in the long distance movement of the material from those features.

TRENCH BA

Two contour plans were drawn up for Trench BA. This was in part because of the larger size of the trench and of the more complex spread of underlying features, but it was also because the body of the ploughsoil was not sieved. Illustration 21 demonstrates the general spread of material recovered by hand from the body of the ploughsoil; illustration 22 shows the spread of material recovered (both by wet sieving and manual collection) from the cleaning layer at the base of the ploughsoil. In general, the two plans highlight similar concentrations of artifacts, with



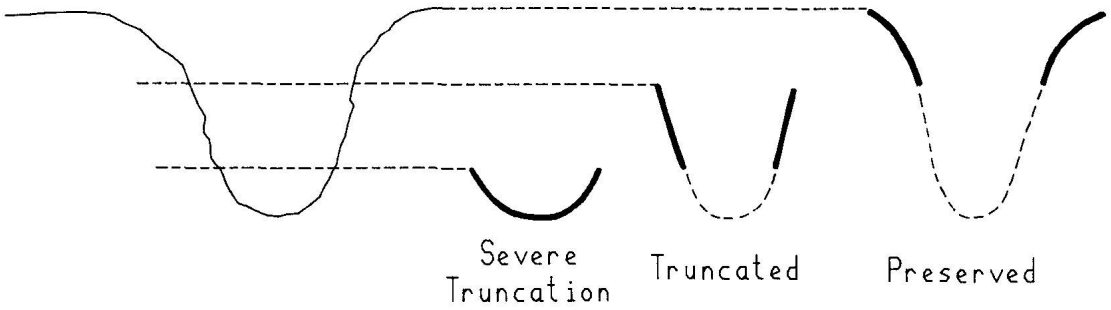
ILL 23: The conditions of preservation across the site.

the difference that the pattern in Ill 21 is less well defined. The three main concentrations of material outlined in Ill 22 (C1–C3) apparently relate to underlying pit complexes and the areas with a particularly low density of artifacts generally correspond to areas of featureless sub-soil. These featureless areas are in sharp contrast to the apparent 'ghost features' of Trenches AH and AJ.

In addition to the pit complexes, Trench BA contained several possible structural features (the arcs of stakeholes and the slots), but these show no uniform relationship with the quantities of material immediately overlying them. One lithic concentration (C 4) lies neatly within one of the stakehole arcs. The area outlined by a slot (S2), however, contains distinctly fewer lithics than its surroundings (C 5), as does area C 6 defined by another slot (S1) (see Ill 12). Given the palimpsest of features in this trench (many of which were never excavated), it is difficult to associate the uneven spread of material with specific feature complexes.

PRESERVATION WITHIN THE FIELD

It was apparent from the start that uneven truncation of the old land surface had taken place across the field, resulting in considerable variation in the preservation of the archaeological remains (Ills 23, 24). The site lies across a slight ridge which runs down towards the sea; to the E of the ridge Trenches AC, AG, and BA all contained well-preserved features below a depth of some 0.25m of ploughsoil.



ILL 24: The relationship between the profile of a pit and the degree of truncation.

ESTIMATING PRESERVATION

In Trench BA it was possible to estimate the truncation by comparing the artifactual content of the surviving pit fills with the quantity of material in the ploughsoil directly above. As the relationship between the two was always in the order of 70% pit fill to 30% ploughsoil material, the observation (made during excavation) that only the surface of the features had been destroyed was supported. To the W of the ridge the formation of the ploughsoil had disturbed the archaeological remains. No features survived in Trench AH, although the spatial patterning of the artifacts in the ploughzone did suggest that features had once been present (see above, this Chapter). To the S. where the ridge broadened out, other agricultural disturbance had taken place and the shadows of two lazybed ditches showed up clearly in Trench AJ, where the only surviving features were the bases of three pits. Across the centre of the ridge less truncation had taken place: Trench AD contained a complex of features that had lost little from their tops.

The archaeological features are well preserved across only a part of the area defined by the lithic scatter, and even within this restricted area there is some variation in their survival. Towards the N end of Trench BA and to the S in Trench AC heavy truncation had removed all but the deepest features. Across the centre of the site the features were better preserved but no prehistoric occupation soil survived and, moreover, a variety of post-depositional processes had taken their toll of the feature fills which were reduced in most cases to a homogeneous dark, silty material. This lack of internal structure was frustrating for excavation, particularly where the features consisted of complexes of intercutting pits and hollows, and in these cases a number of different techniques were used to try to identify the original stratigraphy; none was entirely successful.

The general contour map of lithics within the ploughsoil (Ill 5) shows that the density of material does not drop off towards the present-day field-boundary, and it seems likely that the site originally extended outwith the area enclosed today. To the W and S, modern disturbances have destroyed any archaeological remains; lithics have been collected to the E, although the ground outside the field wall has been churned up in recent times by domestic animals and no archaeological features survive. Stratified features are, therefore, only preserved within the modern field, elsewhere the site has apparently been destroyed by agricultural activity. Cultivation ridges cover the slopes around the site and they continue along the N shore of

Loch Scresort. The results of excavation in Trench AJ indicate that the lazy beds had destroyed any archaeological remains over which they extended. It seems unlikely that the main area of the site was ever subject to this form of cultivation and, indeed, no evidence of lazy beds was found across the main body of the field.

COMMENT

No estate records relating to Kinloch have survived, so the detailed agricultural history of this area must remain unknown, but it appears that the archaeological preservation owes much to the chance agricultural uses of the land.

EXCAVATION OUTSIDE THE FIELD

Four test trenches (AK, AL, AM and AN) were opened outside the immediately threatened area. Three of these (Trenches AK, AL and AM) were quadrats of $4m^2$ dug immediately adjacent to the site (Ill 4). Within this area lithics had been collected from the ground surface, but in Trenches AK and AL any archaeological features had been destroyed. Stratified material only survived within Trench AM, and this appeared to be the downstream continuation of the watercourse.

TRENCH AM

Here the peat contained much stone, together with lithic debris and two sherds of pottery, whilst on the S edge of the peat, and extending out into it, there were gravel deposits similar to those upstream. This trench was too small to examine the remains in detail, but prehistoric material has clearly survived outside the field boundary, and it does appear to be broadly in line with the remains discovered on the main site. In most places, however, the ground outside the field has been severely disturbed for many years and, although the lithic material suggested that the prehistoric remains extended to the SE, no features have survived this disturbance. The excavation of a long narrow extension to the N of Trench AM confirmed that the preservation of prehistoric remains in this area was extremely patchy. Within one metre of the surviving features of Trench AM further modern disturbance was discovered, and to the N of that lay bedrock.

TRENCH AN

Further to the E a trench (AN), of $16m^2$, was opened across an area where disturbance caused by a narrow track had revealed lithic artifacts in the thin peaty soil (Ill 4). An assemblage of some 600 lithics was recovered (Tab 27), but no prehistoric features lay within the area investigated. Much of the trench contained a compacted hillwash that overlay a buried soil.