

Archaeological Watching Brief of Land at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, Kent September 2011

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Archaeological Watching Brief of Land at
St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade,
Thanet, Kent

NGR 625852 167122
Site Code: STN 11
Planning Application: TH/11/0111

Report for
Mr J. Pace

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief of land at St Nicholas Court Farm, St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, Kent. A planning application (TH/11/0111) for the construction of a solar array park at St Nicholas Court Farm whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the construction work on any archaeological remains.

The work was carried out in accordance with consultations with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, KCC.

The archaeological investigation consisted of monitoring of the excavation of trenches for electric cabling linking the ends of solar panel arrays and main cable runs between the site and the main electric grid. In addition watching the stripping of topsoil and subsoil to create foundation bases for an inverter housing.

A scan of the excavated spoil from the ground-works with a metal detector was also done.

The programme of archaeological works revealed two cremations with Cremation One from c.50 -AD75 and Cremation Two dating from c.75-100AD (Appendix 1).

In addition 20 worked flints were retrieved (Appendix 2).

The Archaeological Watching Brief has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives set by the Senior Heritage Officer in an Archaeological Specification dated April 2011.

INTRODUCTION

Swale and Thanet Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Mr Pace of St Nicholas Court Farm to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with consultation with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, KCC, and a written archaeological specification. The watching brief was carried out between the 27th and 30th June 2011.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

St Nicholas Court Farm is in the hamlet of St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, which is situated on the Isle of Thanet. The site centre is at NGR 625852 167122. The farm on which the site is

located is dominated by St Nicholas Court, an historic building listed Grade II*. The main house dates to the 16th century and has a 14th century underground crypt. According to the British Geological Survey, the area lies on Head Brickearth with uncapped exposures of Chalk nearby.

PLANNING

The site has planning permission for the Solar Array from Thanet District Council. The planning reference is TH/11/0111 whereby the Senior Heritage Officer requested that an archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to monitor specific groundworks associated with the solar array.

The following Condition was attached to the planning permission.

1.3 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is in an area of considerable archaeological potential relating to known discoveries close-by. Archaeological work associated with the improvements to the A299 and the erection of agricultural buildings at the farm has revealed early Iron Age pottery, a Roman amphora (probably associated with a cremation burial), Roman pottery sherds, human skeletal remains and ditches and pits which may all suggest that a Romano-British settlement site existed in the vicinity.

There are extensive cropmarks in the surrounding area (Plates 1,2), including ring ditches and Bronze Age barrows to the south west and west of the application site. A WWII pillbox once stood in the field to the west, part of a line to the west of St Nicholas. Trenching associated with this line could be in the field.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

HER entries in the near vicinity of the development site include:

TR 26 NE 27

Cropmarks of several ring ditches have been reported near St. Nicholas Court Farm. They are possibly the remains of Bronze Age barrows (Plate 1).

TR 26 NE 68

Three ring ditch cropmark features and a linear feature have also been identified near to St Nicholas at Wade.

TR 26 NE 112

Cropmark of a ring ditch with an internal feature.

TR 26 NE 162

A Mid Iron Age occupation site and an early Roman wall were found during work in advance of road development.

TR 26 NE 202

The remains of a Romano – British settlement were found at St Nicholas Court Farm. Possible site of a Roman villa. (TSMR Site 0304-1).

TR26 NE 240

A World War 11 pillbox formally located near Potten Street.

Further information on the potential of this area is provided in the County Historic Environment Record held in the Heritage Conservation, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, ME14 1XX (telephone 01622 221536)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The County Archaeologist has advised that the watching brief should be targeted at three aspects:

1. The stripping of ground deposits (topsoil and subsoil) to create foundation bases for an inverter housing. These excavations should be carried out with a flat bladed bucket under the direction of the supervising archaeologist and in a manner that would allow any archaeology present to be properly exposed, identified and investigated before subsequent disturbance by construction. The archaeologist should then record and investigate any archaeology visible before stripping to full construction depth is completed.
2. Monitoring of the excavation of trenches for electric cabling linking the ends of the solar panel arrays and main cable runs between the site and the main electric grid.
3. The archaeological contractor is to compile a full account of the ground deposits encountered during the works. The objective of such recording is to assist in further understanding of the potential impact of the works.

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks.

Trenching was carried out on 27th to 30th June 2011, with the excavation of nine trenches for the cable runs measuring 0.65m in width and between 10m and 30m in length. Trench location was to an agreed plan carried out by the solar array contractors.

The trenches were scanned for finds during and after excavation. Excavation was carried out using an 8 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothed bucket for the cable runs and a toothless ditching bucket for the invertors, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Trenches were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal exposed features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. Layers and fills are recorded (**001**). The cut of the feature is shown [**001**]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes; these are used in the report and shown in bold. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the KCC Archaeological Specification (2011).

MONITORING

No site visits by the Heritage Officer (KCC) were carried out.

RESULTS

The first activity on site was by the piling of the solar array galvanised steel uprights by the ground contractors followed closely by the excavation of the cable runs. Work had already started on this phase of development before SWAT Archaeology was informed. An archaeologist was on site later that day and two of the nine cable run trenches had been excavated. Unfortunately in Trench 1 a cremation group of Roman pots had been disturbed by the machine which had been fitted with a toothed ditching bucket. Although the KCC Specification specifies a toothless ditching bucket for the work on the inverter housing there is no such requirement for the cable trench runs.

The cremation group had been so disturbed that one vessel and its contents (Cremation 2) were on the spoil heap and the other (Cremation 1) had about 70% of its pot truncated. The remains of the two pots were collected and excavation of the remainder of the surviving pot were photographed and drawn prior to removal. The handful of small pieces of burnt bone left for collection were not of a condition to allow meaningful work to be undertaken by an osteo-archaeologist. The pottery was analysed by the pottery specialist and Cremation 1 is dated to between c.50-75 AD and Cremation 2 to between c.75-100 AD (Appendix 1).

Subsequently 20 worked flints were retrieved from trench runs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in a reasonably tight distribution pattern. The lithic specialist reports that:

“This assemblage comprised twenty pieces of worked flint, with most contexts producing only a single example. One round ‘thumbnail’ scraper of likely Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age date was recovered from Trench 1. [101], but patination suggests it is likely to be residual in that context. Most of the other flintwork was unpatinated, as expected in areas of brickearth geology, but showed damage from the processes of natural abrasion, ploughing and perhaps trampling”.

This suggests that any finds not derived from modern ploughsoil contexts had seen a degree of exposure prior to incorporation within their context, or perhaps derived from former ploughsoil contexts. Thumbnail scraper aside, many of the other tools and flakes were simple, expedient or sometimes crude pieces which would not be out of place in broadly Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) assemblages. One small utilised flake from Trench 1 [102] and a knife from Trench 5 [501] could be of Mesolithic/Earlier Neolithic or Neolithic date, but a later date cannot be discounted.

The Archaeological Watching Brief continued for the rest of the groundworks but no further archaeology was revealed.

Geology revealed was constant across the site and comprised topsoil- a grey brown sandy clay loam of about 35cm thick overlaying a darker grey brown sandy stiff clay with numerous chalk fragments presumably from ‘marling’ and about 20cm thick which overlaid the natural strata of dark brown orange stiff brickearth. No strata of chalk was revealed even in excavation for the inverter slabs which reached a depth of 52cm.

Excavation of the remains of the cremation pot started with the cleaning of the vertical faces on the west and east sides of the trench cut. No archaeology was exposed on the east face but on the west face remains of one pot (Cremation 1) were exposed for recording and photography (Fig. 3 and Plate 2). OD height and ground level was 18.29m AOD and

OS location of the cremation is 625818.1m E. 167118.4m N. Most of the remains of the pot sat in **(01)**, the topsoil, a grey brown sandy clay loam of 33cm thick. The pot obviously had suffered severe truncation from ploughing and most of the fabric and cremation contents were scattered through this topsoil. The base of the pot (Cremation 1) has been dated to about 50-75AD and sat on the top of the strata underlying the topsoil. This strata was about 20cm thick **(02)** and comprised a darker grey brown sandy stiff clay with numerous chalk fragments and overlaid the natural brickearth **(03)** of which 5cm was exposed.

The second pot (Cremation 2) was retrieved from the spoil heap.

A metal detector survey was carried out but the ferrous and non-ferrous material recovered was modern and mostly fastenings discarded by the solar array contractors.

FINDS

Finds retrieved were:

234 Roman pot sherds (Cremations 1, 2);

20 worked flint; and

One fragment of cremated bone from context (01), weight 1gm.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological Watching Brief has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil **(01)** overlying subsoil **(02)** sealing Head Brickearth **(03)**. There is a strong possibility that Prehistoric ditches and features which are known to exist on the site (Plates 1, 2) were not recognised as the cable run trenches were not cut with a toothless ditching bucket. However a significant spread of Prehistoric stone tools was recognised and recorded and a possible Roman cemetery (Cremations 1, 2) identified.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Jim Pace for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Senior Heritage Officer, Kent County Council for his advice and assistance.

Dan Quintain and Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Mike Robson on metal detector. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This.

The project was managed by Dr. Paul Wilkinson MifA.

Appendix 1.

THE DATING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE FROM :

ST.NICHOLAS-AT-WADE EVALUATION 2011 (STN-EV-11)

A. Primary quantification : 234 sherds (weight : 1kg.152gms)

B. Period codes employed :

LIA>ER = Late Iron Age to Early Roman
LIA-ER = Late Iron Age-Early Roman transition
ER = Early Roman

C. Context dating :

C.1 : Excavated contexts :

Trench 1 : Cremation 1

Context: 103 - 134 sherds (weight : 874gms)

131 sherds LIA>ER 'Belgic'-style grog-tempered ware (cordoned jar, ? Thompson 1980 Type B3-1, c.25 BC/50-75 AD emphasis; **same vessel**)

3 sherds LIA-ER 'Belgic'-style grog-tempered ware (c.25 AD/50-75 AD emphasis; **same vessel = Context 104 Vessel 1**)

and :

1 fragment cremated bone (weight : >1gm)

Comment : Two vessels represented -

103/Vessel 1 : Over 130 sherds from a wide-mouthed, cordoned and footed jar with a short everted rim sitting above a short neck and swelling rounded body decorated with single shoulder and girth grooves. Represented by rim-neck, shoulder, body and base sherds – a few large-, some moderate-sized but mostly by highly fragmented small sherds and scraps. The vessel is incomplete and no body section is represented by a complete circumference. Although some sherds have fresh breaks, most are slightly worn. Sherd surfaces are mostly only lightly worn but a few edges have longer-term wear-patterns – indicating earlier, pre-2011, fragmentation and reduction - probably due to ploughing. The vessel fabric is medium-hard and reduced a drab grey-brown – and does not have either the harder or more oxidized fabric of a Romanising product. The dating applied is intrinsic – **but see Assessment below**

? *Cremation vessel 2* : Three fairly small>medium sized grog-tempered bodysherds, **not** the same as *103/Vessel 1* – and probably arriving as a modern intrusion from *Cremation 2* during machine-clearance.

Likely date : Possibly from c.25 BC, more probably between c.50-75 AD

Trench 1 – Cremation 2 :

Context: 104 - 100 sherds (weight : 278gms)

20 sherds LIA>ER 'Belgic'-style grog-tempered ware (small bowl/cup form, c.25 AD/50-75 AD emphasis; **same vessel = Context 103**)

80 sherds ER Gallo-Belgic-style fine buff sandy ware (butt-beaker, probably Rigby 1995 Fabric IV, c.50/75-125 AD, **same vessel**)

Comment : Two vessels represented –

104/Vessel 1 : Represented by 23 sherds (including those intruded into Cremation 103) from a small slightly angle-shouldered bowl, or more probably, cup form. The majority of the vessel is missing – including any rim sherds - only a single medium-sized base, and a small quantity of shoulder and body sherds remain. Sherds are mostly fairly worn but not heavily. A few have fairly marked edge abrasion – indicating pre-2011 breakage and reduction. The fabric is *slightly* harder-fired than the vessel from *Cremation 1* with one or two paler buff grey-brown patches – but need not be significantly later in manufacture date.

104/Vessel 2 : Represented by 80 highly fragmented mostly small-sized, with a few medium-fairly large sized, sherds. The rim is missing as is two-thirds of the base. The vessel is mostly represented by bodysherds from a fine very thin-walled butt-beaker with panels of rather lightly impressed rouletted decoration. Although some sherds appear freshly broken with unworn chipping, most breaks are lightly worn – and the vessel was almost certainly disturbed and broken by earlier plough action. The fabric is fairly hard-fired, finely sandy with a fairly high iron content and should belong to Rigby's Fabric IV group of Gallo-Belgic beakers – possibly imported - although pre-2000 AD records indicate a mainly Canterbury-area distribution – and possibly an eastern Kentish origin (Rigby 1995, 648-650). The dating applied is intrinsic and influenced by the associated native grog-tempered cup or bowl – **but see Assessment below**

Likely date : c.75-100 – or up to 125 AD at latest

D. Assessment :

As indicated the dating supplied above is intrinsic – and assumes that they need not be contemporary. It is possible that chronologically disparate burial times may be represented, especially if different family burial plots are involved. However both were found fairly close together within a relatively small evaluation area – and it is unlikely that the latter point need apply. Here the governing element is the Gallo-Belgic type butt-beaker from *Cremation 2*. In Canterbury Fabric IV butt-beakers do not occur in pre-Conquest contexts, nor those that pre-date c.70 AD (Rigby op.cit. 650). So that, although they could have begun to appear shortly before c.70 AD, their main production period is more certainly during the last quarter of the first century and into the second. Since the small grog-tempered drinking vessel accompanying it does not have the pale buff or pink-red more oxidized fabrics of Romanising native wares possibly datable to the late first, more definitely, the first half of the second century AD – a manufacture date for this vessel prior to c.100 AD is more than likely.

Summarising – superficially, on the basis of fabric types and firing trends - *Cremation 1* could be placed anywhere between c.25 BC-50 or 75 AD and *Cremation 2*, allowing for a degree of usage-time for it's drinking-vessel, between c.75-125 AD. However, if both burials are chronologically relatively close, this initial dating changes. *Cremation 1* is almost certainly not later than c.75 AD. The basically reduced fabric of the drinking-vessel from *Cremation 2* does not suggest a production date radically later than the vessel from *Cremation 1* – almost certainly no more than 25 years, quite possibly less. Technically, this places *Cremation 1* to between **c.50-75 AD** and *Cremation 2* to between **c.75-100 AD**. If it is considered constructive to suggest likelihoods, a date between c.60-80 AD might accommodate both burials, even if not taking place at the same time.

E. Recommendations

1. Both cremations seriously reduced by plough and recent machine action and beyond viable reconstruction – other than, if asked for, the abstraction and modification of parallels from existing reports to illustrate the types of vessels represented.

F. Bibliography

Rigby 1995 :

Rigby, V. with Green, M.J., 'Early Gaulish and Rhenish imports' in Blockley, K, *et.al.*, *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas*, The Archaeology of Canterbury V (Part II) 1995, 639-668

Thompson 1982 :

Thompson, I., *Grog-tempered 'Belgic' pottery of South-eastern England*, British Archaeological Reports **108 i-iii**, Oxford 1982.

Analyst : N.Macpherson-Grant 30.7.201

Appendix 2

Flint Report by Paul Hart

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1. Abstract

This assemblage comprised twenty pieces of worked flint, with most contexts producing only a single example. One round 'thumbnail' scraper of likely Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age date was recovered from [101], but patination suggests it is likely to be residual in that context. Most of the other flintwork was unpatinated, as expected in areas of brickearth geology, but showed damage from the processes of natural abrasion, ploughing and perhaps trampling. This suggests that any finds not derived from modern ploughsoil contexts had seen a degree of exposure prior to incorporation within their context, or perhaps derived from former ploughsoil contexts. Thumbnail scraper aside, many of the other tools and flakes were simple, expedient or sometimes crude pieces which would not be out of place in broadly Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) assemblages. One small utilised flake from [102] and a knife from [501] could be of Mesolithic/Earlier Neolithic or Neolithic date, but a later date cannot be discounted.

2. Introduction

A total of 20 worked flints weighing 202g were recovered during the archaeological work at St. Nicholas at Wade (site code St. N. W). The finds had been washed and dried and were examined in good light using hand lenses of 5x and 10x magnification. Weights were calculated to the nearest gram. All dates given are *circa*.

The major characteristics of the assemblage are presented in Table 2. This format hopefully provides a useful overview and negates the need for a more extensive written summary. No artefacts require drawn illustration at this time; three artefacts have been photographed and these are presented as Plates 1-3. If further work is conducted at this site then a revised flint report with illustrations may be necessary. A categorisation of the flint assemblage by their potential period date is presented in Table 1 below.

- **Table 1: Categorisation of the flint assemblage by potential date**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Total</i>
Beaker/Early Bronze Age	2400-1550 BC	
Round 'thumbnail' scrapers		1
Later Bronze Age/Iron Age	1550-800+ BC	
Combined piercer and scrapers (on natural flint)		1
Unknown (Bronze Age?)	? (2000-800+ BC?)	
Possible cores - multiplatform		1
End scrapers		1
Possible side scrapers		1
Miscellaneous scrapers		1
Combined end and side scrapers		1
Combined notched scraper and possible knives		1
Combined knife and possible end scrapers		1
Miscellaneous retouched flakes - used as scrapers		1
Possibly utilised flakes - used as scrapers		1
Utilised possible cores - used as scrapers		1
<i>Total</i>		<i>10</i>
Unknown	?	
Denticulates		1
Knives		1
Combined notched and side scrapers		2
Combined convex side and notched scrapers		1
Combined notched, end and side scrapers		1
Utilised flakes - used as knives		1
Utilised flakes (function uncertain)		1
<i>Total</i>		<i>8</i>
Total		20

3. Period codes employed

<i>Code</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Date</i>
BK/EBA	Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age	2400-1550 BC
BA+	Bronze Age and Iron Age	2000-800+ BC
LBA+	Later Bronze Age and Iron Age	1550-800+ BC
-	Unknown	Undated

4. Quantification and dating

The information presented in Table 2 below comprises:

- **Class** (waste, retouched, utilised etc., with subdivisions).
(B) denotes that the flint has been burnt.
(RU) denotes the re-use of an old, patinated flake.
- Illustration (I) – Plate or Figure number of an illustration of this artefact.
- The quantity (**Q**) of flints in that particular class.
- Hammer type (**Ham**) – Hard stone (quartzite or rolled flint pebble), Soft Stone (cortexed flint nodule) or Soft organic (antler, wood or bone).
- Platform preparation (**PP**) – present/absent (Yes/No).
- Shape of the flake (**S**) – Short or Squat (L:B ≤1.0:1), Long (L:B 1.1-1.9:1), Narrow (blade proportions but lacking the parallel sides and dorsal ridges of a true blade), Blade (L:B ≥2.0:1); BLadelet (blade <12mm wide) or Angular Shatter.
- Flake type (**F**) – how much cortex remains: Primary (complete dorsal cortex), Secondary (partial dorsal or *platform cortex only), Tertiary (no cortex) or Natural.
- Patination (**Pat**) – None/Early/Moderate/Strong patinas of Blue, Grey or White colours.
- Weight (**g**) – weight of the flake to the nearest gram.
- **Date?** – a potential date expressed as a period code (see Section 3 above), to be considered with caution in most cases. (NB. In cases of re-used flakes the date is based on the likely period of re-use).

The entry “-” denotes that the characteristic is unknown, often due to breakage.
(Sometimes an estimate of the characteristic is possible).

The entry “?” denotes the characteristic is uncertain.

The date category provides a useful quick review of the assemblage but must be considered with important caveats. Only a small percentage of flintwork can ever be strictly dated to a recognised type and date estimates for most are largely based upon how individual or groups of potentially contemporary pieces generally agree with the broad characteristics expected of flintworking industries of different periods. Most dates should be considered in this light. Some of these elements are dealt with in more detail in the Summary and Discussion further below.

• **Table 2: Characteristics of the flint assemblage by context**

Class	I	Q	Ham	P P	S	F	Pat	(g)	Date?
[101]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Round 'thumbnail' scraper	1	1	H	N	SH	S	MBW	10	BK/EBA
[102]									
<i>Utilised</i>									
Flake	2	1	? (S?)	Y?	L	T	N	1	-
Utilised? flake - knife?		1	H	?	L	T	N	4	-
<i>Total</i>		2						5	
(103) T.1									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Piercer/scraper		1	-	-	-	N	N	9	LBA+?
[103]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Notched scraper/knife?		1	-(H)	-	SQ	S	N	13	-(BA+?)
<i>Utilised?</i>									
Scraper?		1	H	N ?	SH	T	N	9	-(BA+?)
<i>Total</i>		2						22	
[104]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Miscellaneous scraper		1	-(H)	-	AS	T	N	4	-(BA+?)
Miscellaneous retouch - scraper		1	H	N	SQ	T	N	13	-(BA+?)
<i>Total</i>		2						17	
[202]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Knife/end scraper?		1	H	N ?	SH	S	N	8	-(BA+?)
[301]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Denticulate		1	-	-	AS	S	N	2	-
[302]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
End/side scraper		1	-(H)	-	AS	S?	N	18	-(BA+?)
[303]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Notched/side scraper		1	H	N	SH	S	EBW	8	-
[304]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
End scraper		1	H	N	SQ	S*	N	6	-(BA+?)
[401]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Side scraper?		1	-	-	-(L)	P?	N	4	-(BA+?)
[402]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Convex side/notched scraper	3	1	? (H?)	N ?	L	T	N	2	-
[403]									
<i>Utilised?</i>									
Core? - scraper?		1	-(H)	N ?	-	(S)	N	30	? BA+
[501]									
<i>Retouched</i>									
Knife?		1	? (H?)	Y?	L	S	EBW	5	-
[502]									
<i>Waste</i>									

Core? - multiplatform	1	- (?)	N	-	(S	N	32	? BA+
)			
<i>Retouched</i>								
Notched/side scraper	1	? (H?)	-	L	S	N	19	-
Notched/end/side scraper	1	- (H)	-	AS	T?	N	5	-
<i>Total</i>	3						56	
Total	20						202	

5. Summary

The assemblage as a whole featured the use of black and grey-black flint, most of fair quality, some pieces showing small cherty inclusions. Remnant cortex showed that Bullhead Bed flint ([101], [301], [403] and [501]), other glauconitic flint ([103], (103) T.1 and [202]), weathered dark grey cortexed flint ([302]) and weathered buff cortexed flint ([303], [304] and [502]), had been used. There were no identifiable instances of the use of freshly extracted chalk flint. All of the raw material had probably been obtained from weathered surface or subsoil deposits.

Only one typological formal tool was present, a skilfully made 'thumbnail' scraper (Plate 1) recovered from [101], likely of Beaker Period to Early Bronze Age date, 2400-1550 BC. Similar scrapers do occasionally occur in earlier industries, but a later date is preferred. With perhaps the exception of a combined convex side/notched scraper (Plate 3) from [402], none of the other retouched tools showed the same level of skill or care for formal tool-making as the 'thumbnail' scraper and none can be certainly identified as being of the same period. The scraper was potentially residual in its context and thus context relationships cannot help in identifying potentially contemporary material. It does at least offer a *terminus post quem* for the date of its context.

Undiagnostic flintwork of the same date may be present however. Some of the more neatly worked undated tools on better quality secondary or tertiary flakes, such as from [102], [202], [303], [402], [501] and [502] perhaps, might not be out of place in a broadly Early Bronze Age assemblage, though a later date is equally possible. It is not possible at present to say whether the 'thumbnail' scraper was part of a larger domestic assemblage, or was present in isolation, perhaps disturbed from a funerary context.

Flintwork recovered from [103], (103) T.1, [104], [302], [304], [403] and [502] all share characteristics which, though not specifically diagnostic, are elements common in Late Prehistoric flintworking industries of broadly Bronze Age and Later Bronze Age date. The tools present are somewhat simple, sometimes crude, often with small working edges irregularly retouched onto the small, often irregular flakes which have been used as blanks for their manufacture. A combined piercer/scraper from (103) T.1, retouched on an irregular fragment of natural flint, could be Later Bronze Age (or later) in date. The expedient use of fresh flakes, old flakes or natural flints with existing edges suitable for quick and simple modification into a tool used for the task at hand and then discarded, all at minimal cost, is typical of that industry. The limited range of tool types present (scrapers, piercers, knives) is what would be expected.

The nature of the contexts, their relationships and the geology underlying each was not known, though it is thought that brickearth comprised the general superficial geological deposit present on site (Paul Wilkinson *pers comm.*). The 'thumbnail' scraper from [101] appeared unabraded but showed evidence of chalk-soil patination, suggesting it was potentially residual. The remainder of the flintwork were largely unpatinated, as expected in areas of brickearth geology. Many appeared battered and abraded however, caused by processes of natural abrasion, plough damage and trampling perhaps. This suggests that most had seen some degree of exposure prior to incorporation within their context, or perhaps derived from ploughsoil contexts.

Beaker/Early Bronze Age 2400-1550 BC

A well made round 'thumbnail' scraper (Plate 1), retouched on a small, short, hard hammer-struck flake of good quality black Bullhead Bed flint, was recovered from [101]. Both lower lateral sides and the distal end had seen direct, semi-abrupt, invasive and semi-invasive

retouch which had created a continuous, regular, convex working edge. The semi-invasive retouch had part-truncated an existing, invasive flake scar. More invasive and more abrupt retouch was present along part of the distal end and up one lateral margin (left side). Very fine, uni-marginal, direct scarring, possibly the result of use-wear, was present intermittently along the working edge. The tool did not seem to show macroscopic evidence of significant, heavy use.

The scraper seemed fresh and unabraded, but did show differential patination, with the dorsal surface featuring the earliest stages of patination and the ventral surface exhibiting a moderate blue-white patina. Such patina results from exposure in areas of chalk-soil geology.

Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age and possibly later (Iron Age) 2000/1550-800+ BC

Two possible crude, little used cores were recovered from [403] and [502]. Both were heavily battered, abraded and plough-damaged and featured unpatinated and one strongly blue-white patinated natural facets. Given their condition, the use of these nodules is not certain, but if so then a Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) date is likely. The example from [403] comprised a piece of Bullhead flint which showed at least one flaked facet potentially the result of flint knapping. A small area of continuous, uni-marginal but irregular scars along one right-angled margin could have been the result of utilisation as a scraper. A possible small multi-platform core which featured a couple of potential knapped flake scars and remnant weathered buff cortex, was recovered from [502].

A small, irregular natural flint from (103) T.1 had been neatly and abruptly retouched toward one thinning corner, creating a point probably used as a piercer. Other irregular flake scars were present, but one right-angled edge featured a continuous series of fine, uni-marginal scars which could represent the retouch or use of this edge for scraping. The expedient selection of a natural flint with edges suitable for use with limited modification could suggest a Later Bronze Age (Mid and Late Bronze Age) or later date.

Undated flintwork

A convex sided scraper with possible additional scraper notch (Plate 3), recovered from [402], is worthy of note. This comprised a small, possibly hard hammer-struck tertiary flake with one lateral margin (left side) retouched directly and abruptly into a steep convex profile. Uni-marginal direct fine scarring, possibly use-wear, was present along the working edge. The opposite lateral margin featured a small, narrow (6mm wide), direct semi-abrupt notch, perhaps originally created with a single blow. Fine, uni-marginal direct scarring along the notch edge could be use-wear. The dating of this piece is uncertain, though the quality of the retouch suggests that it is unlikely to date too late. The small convex scraping edge would not be out of place in a Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age assemblage and it could potentially be associated with the 'thumbnail' scraper from [101]. This is speculation however.

A utilised flake (Plate 2) from [102] is also worthy of note. It comprised a small, mostly parallel sided thin flake and featured very fine, direct abrupt possible utilisation scarring around part of the distal end (left side). The thin linear platform had possibly been prepared and the flake may have been soft hammer-struck, though this is not certain. The flake could potentially be Mesolithic or Neolithic in date, but a later date cannot be discounted and uncertainty remains.

A naturally backed long flake of Bullhead flint from [501] may also feature a small area of platform preparation, but again this is not certain. The one thin, uncortexed lateral margin showed an area of very fine, inverse abrupt retouch along the thicker part of the edge towards the proximal end, which continued as finer abrupt uni-marginal scarring along the edge towards the distal end. This flake may have been used as a knife.

A denticulated flake from [301] comprised a small fragment of Bullhead flint where one long margin showed a continuous series of direct, abrupt retouch scars. These scars were very fine towards one end, bolder towards the other and created a denticulate profile to this small, difficult to hold flake fragment.

The notched scrapers from [103], [303] and [502] were all quite neatly executed, with direct, abrupt retouch creating relatively shallow notches on the left-hand lateral margins of the hard

hammer struck flakes. The example from [103] featured a neat concave notch approximately 8mm wide. The platform had also seen direct, abrupt and semi-abrupt retouch truncating a white patinated natural surface, with direct scarring on the shallower, semi-abruptly retouched area possibly suggesting use for cutting. The two examples from [502] featured broader notches (14mm wide), though the larger flake also had a narrow (8mm wide), shallow, direct abrupt notch truncating cortex towards the proximal end of the opposite lateral margin. This flake was partially backed by buff cortex, a broad area of which towards the distal end had been truncated by direct, abrupt retouch creating an additional scraper edge. Similar abrupt retouch and use-wear scarring was present on a similarly 90° angled dorsal side above.

The smaller notched flake from [502] also featured additional end and side scraper working edges. A little direct, but mostly inverse, abrupt, irregular retouch truncated a thick, overshot distal end, while inverse, semi-abrupt retouch was present along much of one lateral margin opposite the notch. The notch itself had a flat-based profile, cut into the flake at steep angles. This form was similar to a smaller example in a similar flint-type from [303], which featured a flat based notch 9mm wide. The opposite margin of this latter flake also showed a small area of direct, abrupt and semi-abrupt retouch truncating cortex. Direct marginal scarring present on this edge was potentially use-wear from use as a side scraper. This flake featured remnant weathered buff cortex, as did the larger of the two notched flakes from [502]. A notched flake of different character was also recovered from [402] (see further above).

6. Discussion

This was a small assemblage with most contexts producing only a single worked flint. The presence of either chalk-soil patination or, more frequently, abrasion resulting from either natural processes, trampling or plough damage, suggest that most pieces were either residual to some degree or derived from current or former ploughsoil contexts. Remnant cortex suggests that the varied raw materials used (Bullhead, glauconitic, dark grey and buff cortexed nodules) were obtained from weathered surface or subsoil deposits.

Most of the flintwork was unpatinated or only lightly patinated with blue-white colours common to areas of chalk-soil geology. It is thought the flintwork was recovered from an area where brickearth comprised the superficial geological deposit, so it is expected that the flints would not show significant effects of patination. The Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age 'thumbnail' scraper from [101] was an exception. It featured differential moderate patination, suggesting that it could have seen a degree of surface/near surface exposure in an area of chalk-soil geology and remained static during that time. The covering of brickearth might be patchy and so the scraper need not have traveled far; it does appear far less abraded than most flints from this site. If it was recovered from an area of reasonably thick brickearth, it does suggest some degree of movement has occurred between the place where it was discarded and the context from which it was recovered. The processes of patination are not yet fully understood however and exceptions to the generally observed trends do occur.

Few flints aside from the Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age 'thumbnail' scraper contained diagnostic elements which offered a reliable indicator of their date. No certain evidence of platform preparation or soft hammer-striking were present. No blade flakes were present and few flints showed the characteristics of skilled flint knapping techniques expected in products of Mesolithic, Earlier Neolithic or broadly Neolithic date. A small utilised tertiary flake (Plate 2) from [102] could potentially be Mesolithic or Neolithic in date, though a later date cannot be discounted. Likewise a simple knife on a naturally backed long flake of Bullhead flint from [501] could potentially be Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age in date. Both of these featured small areas of potential platform preparation abrasion which would usually preclude a post Early Bronze Age date. Uncertainty remains over the nature of that abrasion however.

Bullhead flint, as seen in the flake from [501], appears to have been favoured during the Earlier Neolithic for its good flaking properties and, during the Later Neolithic, perhaps also partly for the colour of its cortex too. In an Early Neolithic pit containing residual flintwork of potential Late Mesolithic date, discovered next to the QEQM Hospital, Margate in 2005 (Moody and Gardner 2005), the recognisable use of Bullhead flint was confined to the contemporary, Early Neolithic material. Excavations at Barrow Hills in Oxfordshire showed

that 87% of the site's Bullhead flint occurred in Late Neolithic Grooved Ware contexts, suggesting deliberate deposition (Barclay and Halpin 1999). Similar circumstances have been found on Neolithic sites elsewhere. Butler (2005) has also noted that there may have been a particular preference for using Bullhead flint in the Earlier Neolithic to produce quality flakes and blades.

Later *ad hoc* use was also made of Bullhead flint however. On a brickearth site excavated at Manston Road, Ramsgate in 2003 (Boast, Gardner and Moody 2004), a significant proportion of the raw material from the Middle Bronze Age contexts derived from Bullhead nodules, occurring more frequently than would be expected on a normal chalk-soil site. The use of this material in that site's Middle Bronze Age phase (the lithic 'Later Bronze Age'), may have been a consequence of its availability and accessibility however, due to the nature of the geology in the Pegwell area.

The St. Nicholas assemblage as a whole was generally composed of small, short, hard hammer-struck flakes, sometimes irregular in shape. The overall impression was that the bulk of the assemblage comprised a collection of potentially Late Prehistoric Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) material. While the nature and the availability of the local raw material will always be a factor in flake morphology, it is thought that good sized nodules of at least fair quality flint should have been available in the vicinity and so the character of the flakes present in the assemblage is thought to represent a true reflection of knapping strategies and skill levels.

The one typological formal retouched tool recovered was the 'thumbnail' scraper of likely Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age date (Plate 1) from [101]. A small, neatly worked convex shaped side and notched scraper (Plate 3) from [402] could potentially be contemporary with the 'thumbnail' scraper, though this is speculation. Many of the other retouched tools were generally simple or expedient types, with small areas of sometimes irregular retouch making use of the limited available areas of the flake margins. The characteristics of the retouch on many of these other tools, the apparent expedient though practical use made of small and irregular shaped flakes as blanks for tool manufacture, the small range and likely limited use-life of the tools, help suggest that they may be broadly Bronze Age and/or Later Bronze Age (or later) in date.

Similarities in the character and positioning of the retouch on the notched flakes from [103], [303] and [502] were noted and all of those tools featured additional scraping or cutting edges. Some degree of association for those tools could be suggested, but this is speculation only and none could be assigned a certain date. Whether there is any relationship between the contexts for those pieces is not known, but all have the potential to be residual, so little firm conclusions can be drawn at this time. Butler (2005) suggests that Later Bronze Age notched pieces were often small and usually notched laterally, but rarely featured other retouch.

The character of the flakes appears to compare well with those recovered from the Middle Bronze Age contexts at the Manston Road Ramsgate site noted further above. Those were also generally hard hammer-struck, short, square-ish or squat flakes, with a noticeable absence of blade-flakes and well-proportioned long flakes. It was also noted that there was a certain similarity about all the struck flakes from those Middle Bronze Age features, which included flakes featuring platform preparation as well as other undiagnostic residual material likely to have been present. It was thought that this could suggest that any residual material would not be too 'early' and might largely be confined to a Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age Phase, or perhaps that platform preparation was a technique still sporadically employed in the Middle Bronze Age industry on that site. Platform preparation was noted in an assemblage from a Later Bronze Age and Early Iron Age site at Micklemoor Hill, West Harling (Clark and Fell 1953; Young and Humphrey 1999).

Many of the retouched flakes from those Manston contexts showed fine, careful, skillful retouching on somewhat arbitrarily selected flake blanks. It was noted that while such workmanship might be considered unusual for a Middle Bronze Age industry, the general flake characteristics and simple nature of the tools would not. The one flake that didn't exhibit

delicate, marginal retouching was a hard hammer-struck primary Bullhead flake with a crude-looking, broadly denticulated edge. The denticulated flake from the St. Nicholas site was also of Bullhead flint, but smaller and more finely worked. The one proper notched scraper recovered from the Middle Bronze Age contexts at the Manston Road Ramsgate had been directly and abruptly retouched onto the platform of a squat, hard hammer-struck flake.

Overall this may be a small assemblage with limited diagnostic traits, but it does offer some potential evidence of two broad episodes of Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age and Bronze Age/Later Bronze Age (or later) activity in the vicinity. The 'thumbnail' scraper from [101] is of particular interest, for while the Isle of Thanet has a significant quantity of Beaker Period and broadly Early Bronze Age monuments in the form of round barrows and flat graves (of which a significant proportion have been excavated), the amount of identified lithics of this date recovered from Thanet is comparatively small. Few settlement sites have been sampled or discerned and little flintwork has been recovered from funerary contexts. An Early Bronze Age round barrow excavated by Wessex Archaeology at Cliffsend in 2004/05, which unusually produced a significant cache of flintwork from the central grave, awaits publication.

Thus the local character of the Beaker Period and Early Bronze Age flint knapping industries, its general products beyond the classic diagnostic tool-types, along with its associated debitage, is largely unknown and it may be easy to assign too late a date to 'late'-looking products lacking other diagnostic traits or associations.

7. Bibliography

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Plates 1 to 3: Artefacts from the flint assemblage



Plate 1
Round 'thumbnail' scraper
Beaker Period/Early Bronze Age
Context [101]



Plate 2
Utilised flake
Date uncertain
Context [102]



Plate 3
Combined convex side and notched scraper
Date uncertain
Context [402]

Scale in centimetre divisions (1:1)
Flints orientated proximal end upwards



Plates



Plate 1. Google (2007) AP of St Nicholas at Wade Court Farm.



Plate 2. Google (2007) AP of solar array site at St Nicholas at Wade Farm.



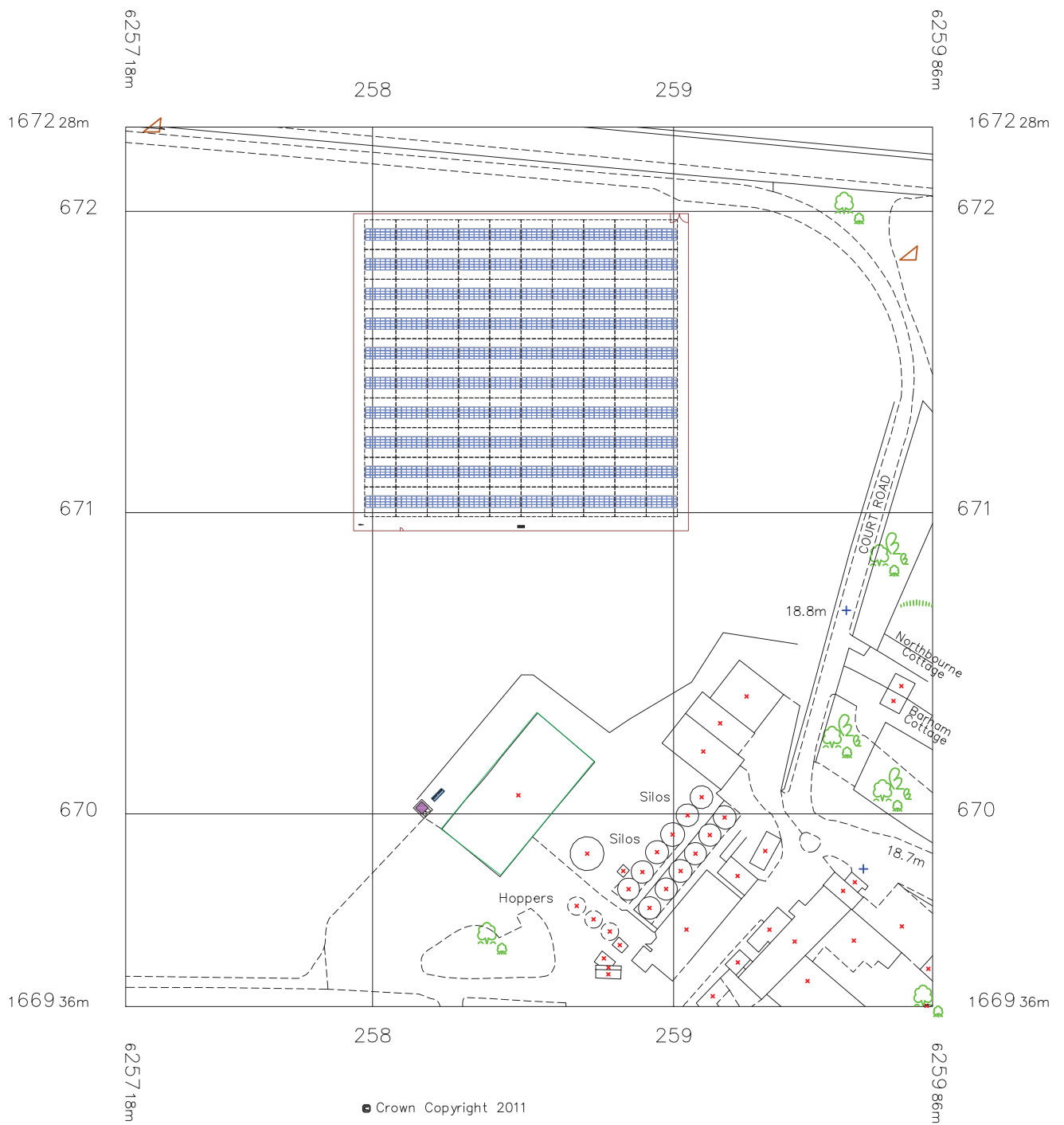
Plate 3. View of site (looking north-east).



Plate 4. Photograph of Cremation 1 in situ (scale is in 5cm segments).



Plate 5. Cremation 1 being excavated (scale in 5cm segments).



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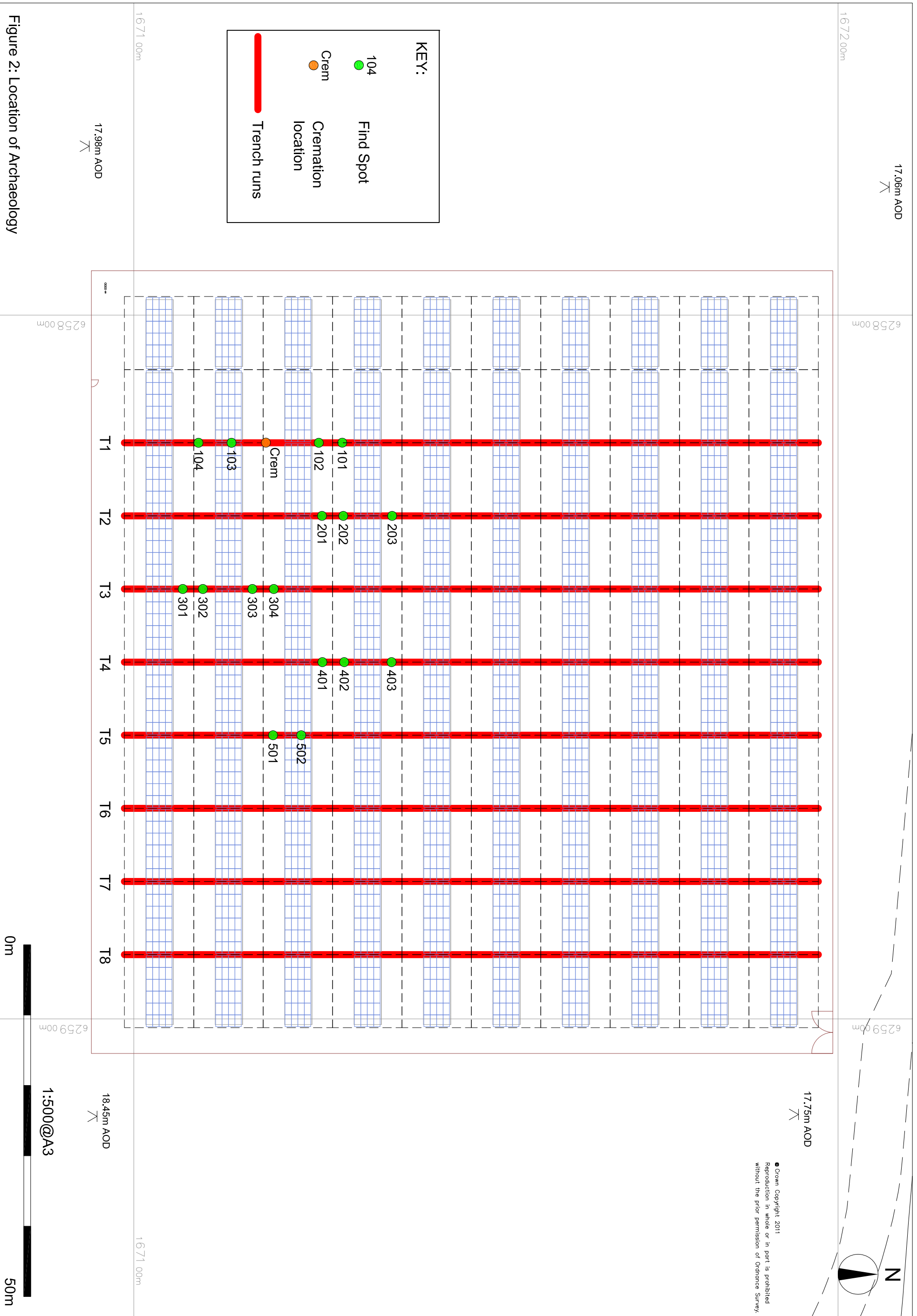
1:2000@A4



Figure 1: Location of Site

0m

200m



Section of Cremation

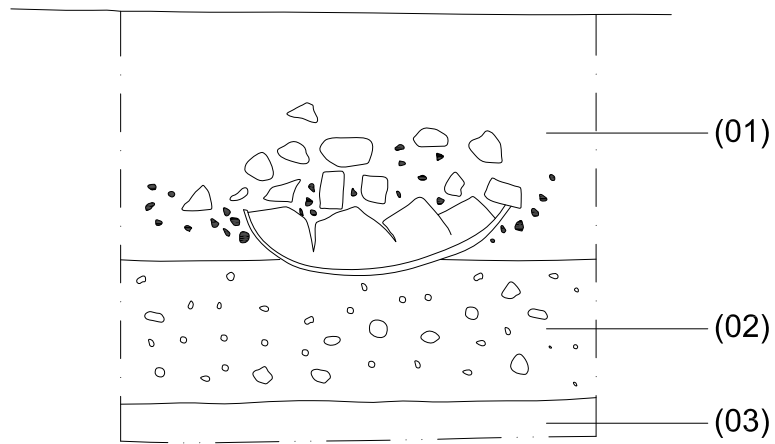
18.29m AOD

S

N

KEY:

- Bone
- Chalk



Plan of Cremation

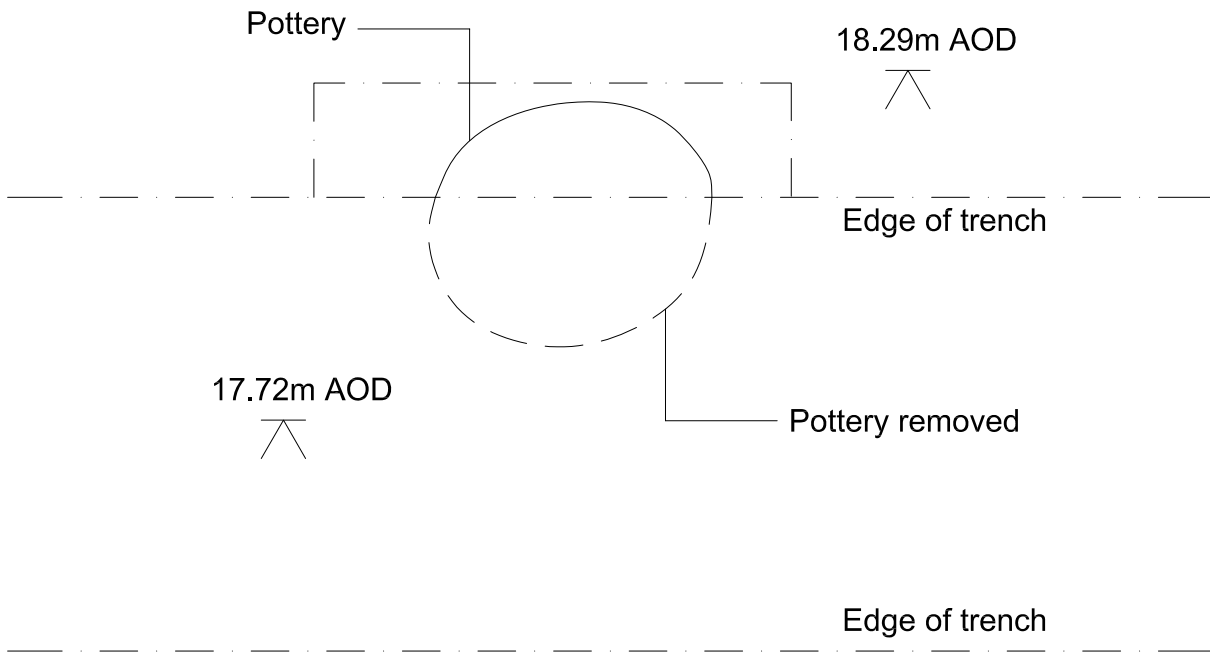


Figure 3: Section and Plan of Cremation

1:10@A4

