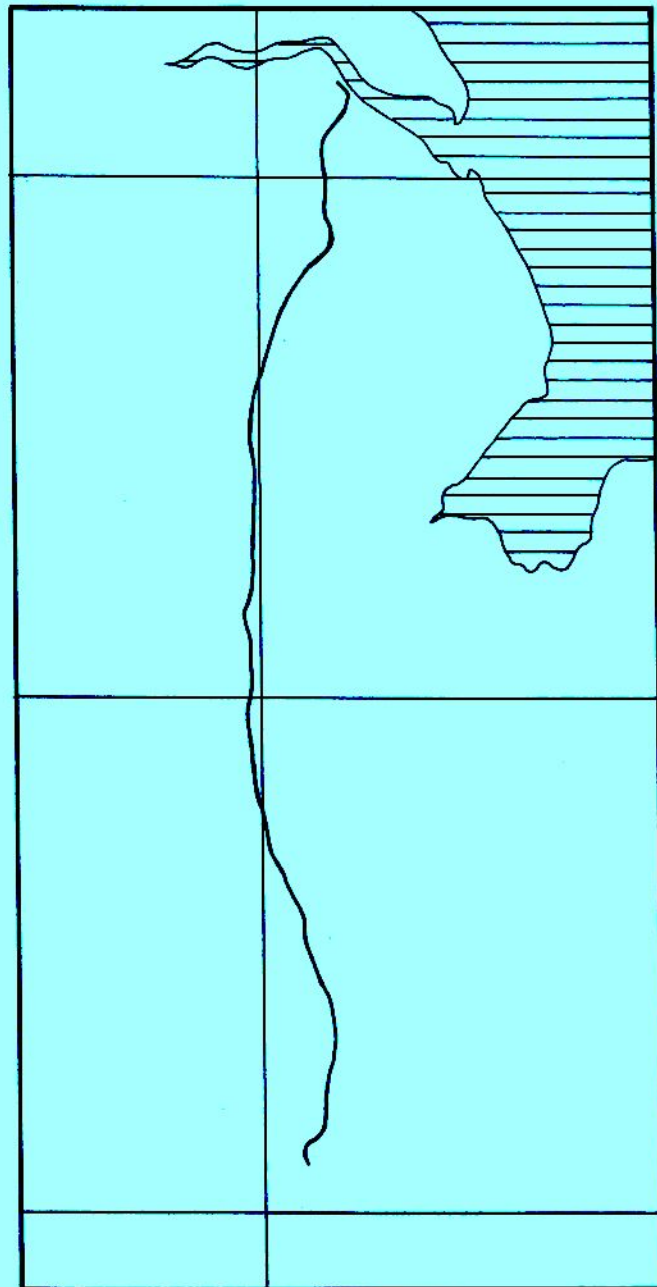


*An Archaeological Assessment
on the route of the Humberside
to Buncefield Pipeline.*

Tea Green, Offley, Hertfordshire



H-B 41-04



PETROFINA (UK) LTD.

HUMBERSIDE TO BUNCEFIELD PIPELINE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION,
ASSESSMENT REPORT

TEA GREEN, OFFLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE

by

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND LEISURE
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION

OCTOBER 1990

NB. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and they take full responsibility for them. They are not necessarily the views of the North Hertfordshire District Council.

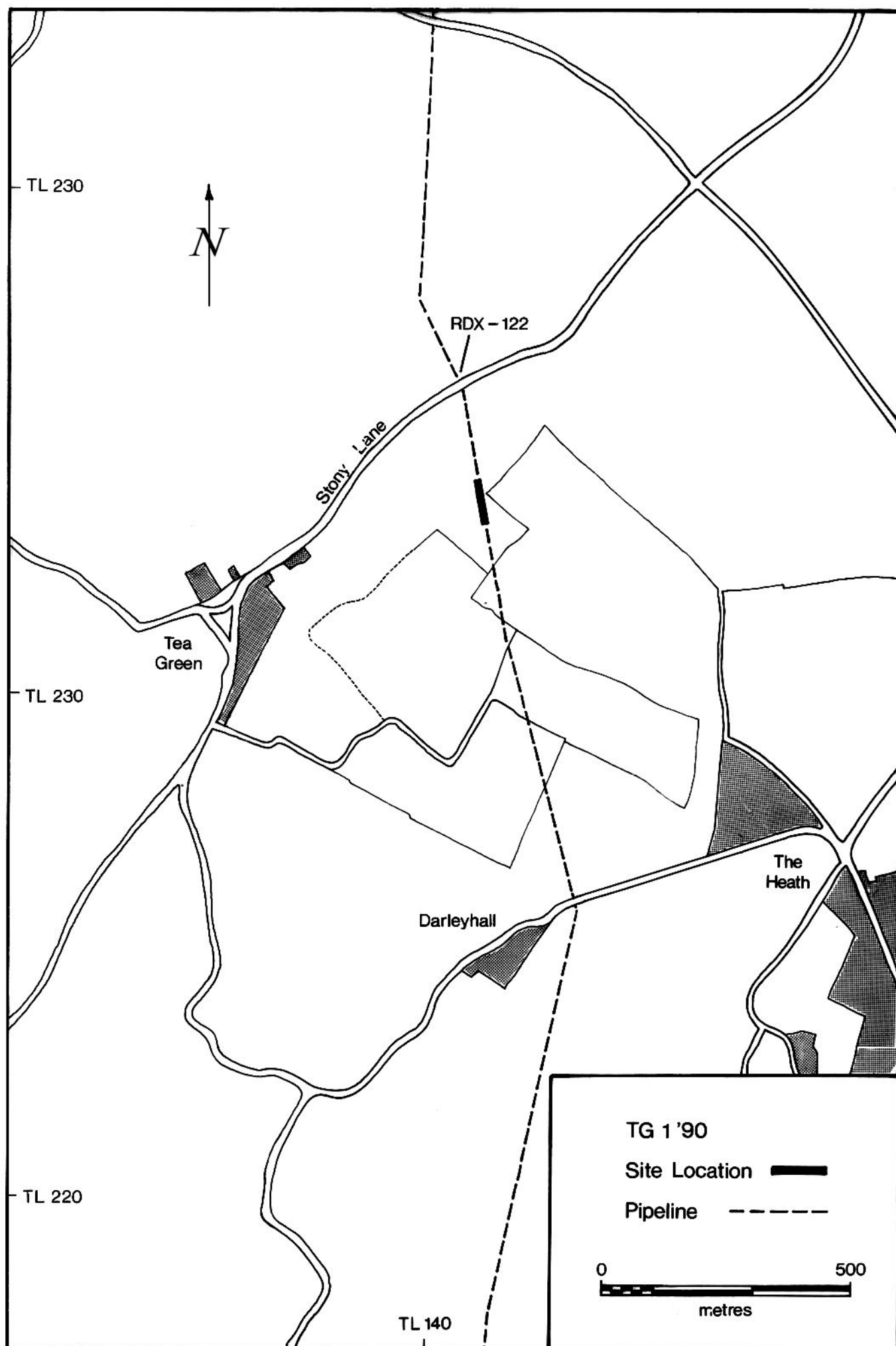


Fig 1
1

TEA GREEN, OFFLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE

Petrofina Site ref: HB-41-04
NHDC (Letchworth Museum) Site ref: TG-1-90

1. In June 1990 during the construction of the Petrofina pipeline across arable fields to the east of Tea Green, Hertfordshire, Dr. P. Darling (Wessex Archaeological Trust) noted the presence of an archaeological feature, a ditch containing pottery and carbonized material in the section wall of the pipe trench, approximately two hundred and fifty metres to the south of road crossing 122 (see fig. 1).

The North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service Field Archaeology team was currently investigating a Romano-British settlement near Winch Hill Farm (HB-41-02, WHF-2-90) on the pipeline route, nearly a mile to the south of Tea Green. Accordingly it was arranged that two members of the team would divert their attentions to this new discovery.

2. On inspection of the site, a further seven features were identified in the trench extending over a distance of ninety five metres north of the original ditch (ditch No.1).

Work continued over the following three days, during which time the trench walls were cleaned by hand, and the profiles of the various features drawn and photographed. Layers and cuts were allocated numbers and described on pro-forma recording cards, and artifact collected under these numbers. Further pottery was recovered from the spoil heaps and referred to specific features wherever possible. The locations of the features were established and the orientations of the ditches noted. Heights were calculated from the Fina spot height marker, number 679.

A fourteen metre wide strip to the west of the pipe trench had been stripped of topsoil to allow access for construction traffic. However no features were noted here, and at the time of recording the surface had been obscured by vehicle tracks and dust.

3. The ditches were numbered 1-6, and the pits labelled A and B (see fig. 2). Ditch No. 1 was 2.4 metres wide and 0.75 metres deep, orientated NW/SE. The west facing section incorporated a grog-tempered, coarse ware jar (Baldock fabric 2B) containing cremated bone and carbonized wood, which had been deposited in the backfill from the northern ditch edge, breaking the vessel and scattering its contents in a crescent shaped deposit. A sufficient number of sherds were recovered to enable a reconstruction of the vessel's profile, which could be dated to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age (early to mid 1st century AD). The jar had been perforated below the rim indicating secondary use as a hanging vessel prior to assuming its final purpose as a cinerary urn. Fragments of two other coarse-ware vessels

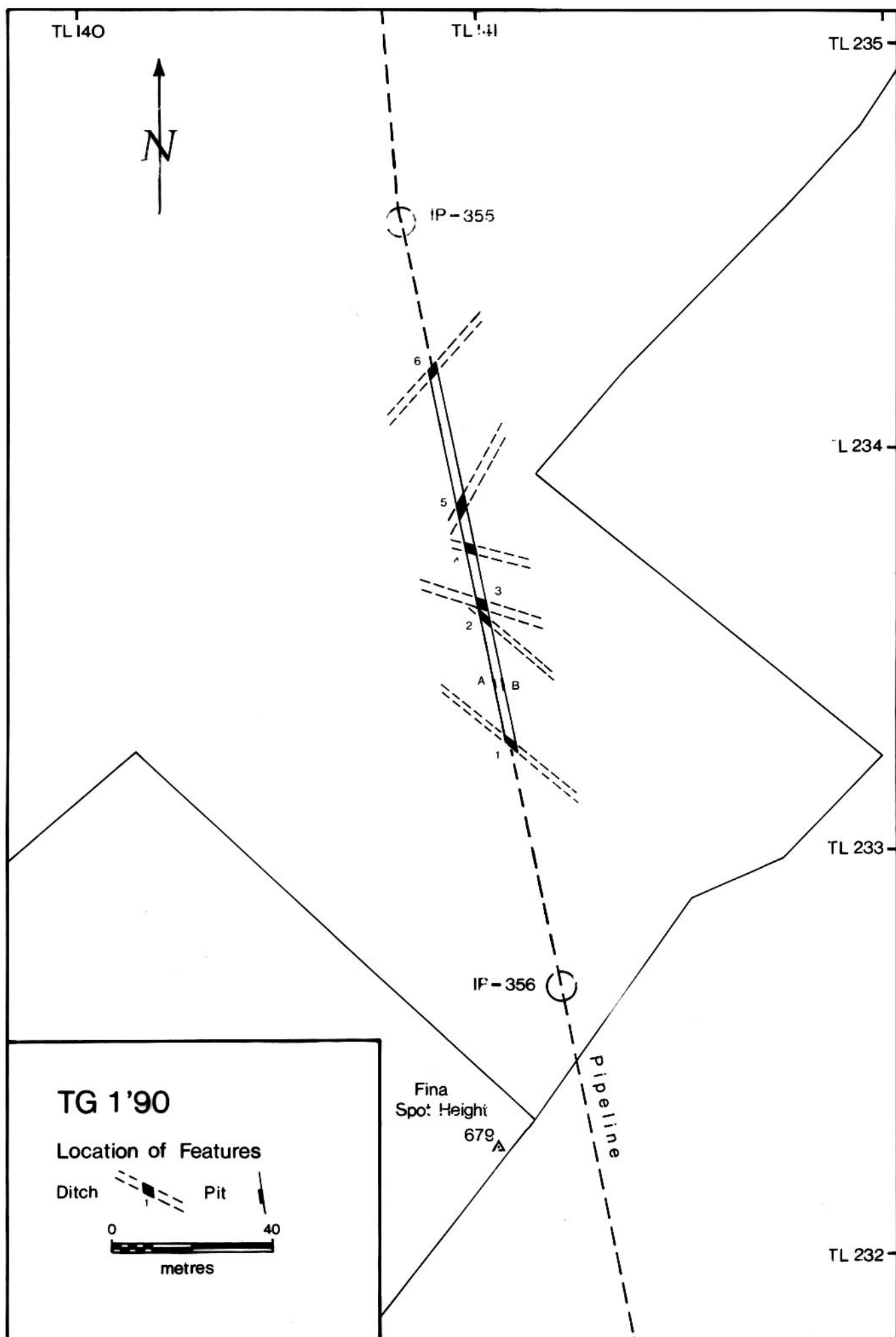


Fig 2
3

and some pieces of animal bone were found associated with this vessel, perhaps indicating that a food offering had accompanied the burial in its original location.

Ditch No. 2 was 1.3 metres wide and 0.6 metres deep, orientated in the same direction as ditch No. 1. Ditches Nos. 3 and 4 were both orientated WNW/ESE, the former being 2 metres wide and 0.95m deep and the latter 1.6 metres wide and 0.68m deep. Ditch No. 6 was 2.1 metres wide and 0.68 metres deep. Both were alligned similarly NE/SW.

All the ditches contained homogenous fills with only one or two layers apparent. Grog tempered coarse ware and fine, sand tempered grey ware fragments, dateable to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age were recovered from all the ditches, except ditch 6 which contained no finds.

The two pits (A & B) were identified as such since their profiles were visible in one trench wall only. Pit A was 1.15 metres wide and 0.58 metres deep, pit B was 2 metres wide and 0.18 metres deep. Neither pit produced finds, however their fills were similar to those of the ditches.

4. The features identified in the pipe trench near Tea Green appear to be the boundary ditches and pits of a hitherto unknown late Iron Age settlement, abandoned (and the features possibly backfilled) in the early to mid 1st century AD. The redeposited cremation in Ditch 1 may be an isolated burial, disturbed as the ditches became redundant, although it is possible that a cremation cemetery belonging to the settlement lies nearby.

The alignments of the ditches (see fig. 2) may be interpreted to form enclosures, however no two ditches display sufficient similarities to suggest compatibility, nor does the narrow range of dates from the recovered pottery allow for any reliable phasing.

Appendix: List of finds.

Pottery : 5,508 g
Human (cremated) bone : 15 g
Animal bone : 230 g
Worked flint (unstratified) 1.5 g

5. The site at Tea Green represents a previously unknown Late Iron Age settlement in an area where few such settlements have yet been recorded.

Its archaeological significance within the County is certainly sufficient to justify a fuller report than this interim account being prepared for publication, probably in the County Journal.

- a. Specialist reports will be required on the pottery and human bone.
- b. Further illustrations will be required such as sections and some pottery. Perhaps two weeks work for an illustrator.
- c. The production of a final publishable Report will require input from the site director, an illustrator, two specialists and maybe a post-excavation assistant. Once the specialist reports were available, it should be possible to produce the final Report over a period of about a month.