

3. EXCAVATION

3.1 Trench D

The initial excavations undertaken by EAFS during 1993 and 1994 (Dean 1993, 1994) had revealed that a series of post-medieval and later 19th-century levelling and demolition deposits overlay the uppermost Mesolithic deposit (1401) to a depth of *c* 0.50m. The results of the 1995 excavations revealed two Mesolithic phases of deposition/activity overlying the C-horizon subsoil (1460).

3.1.1 Phase 1 (Illus 5a)

The primary excavated deposit was a mottled layer of dark-yellow and orange-brown clay sandy-silt (1424/1429), which covered the base of the trench in places to a maximum depth of 0.20m. This layer appears to represent the interface between the original ground surface (1401/1408) contemporary with the primary phase of Mesolithic occupation and underlying subsoil. The upper levels of this layer contained struck lithics.

This appears to represent the main phase of occupation and comprises a group of intercutting, shallow pits located within the centre of the trench and associated with a group of stake holes situated within the south-east corner of the trench (see Illus 6). The majority of deposits associated with the pit features contained quantities of burnt hazelnut shells and lithic material.

The primary pit [1430] within the sequence consisted of a shallow oval cut with irregular near-vertical sides. The pit was filled by two deposits of dark-brown clay sandy-silt (1420) and (1426). The feature was truncated by further pits [1425] and [1432] on both its western and eastern edges and was also partially truncated by a pit of post-medieval date excavated in 1994 by the EAFS.

A shallow pit [1432] was located along the eastern side of the primary pit [1430]; this feature was roughly oval in plan and was filled by a clayish sandy-silt deposit. The remains of a truncated, small semi-circular pit or post hole feature [1425] appeared stratigraphically contemporary with the pit. The eastern side of this feature had again been removed by the post-medieval pit. This pit/post hole feature was filled by a dark grey-brown sandy clay-rich silt, which again contained quantities of

burnt hazelnut shells and struck lithics. Apparently contemporary with both of these features was a thin deposit of dark-brown clay-rich sandy-silt (1427) which overlay the western side of pit [1430].

Located to the east of the primary pit [1430] was the remains of a further shallow oval pit feature [1459]. The pit was heavily disturbed by an animal burrow, though an undisturbed fill of sandy clay-rich silt (1428) survived across the base and eastern side of the feature.

This central group of pit features was sealed under a roughly circular layer of mid-brown clay-silt (1409), which again produced quantities of burnt hazelnut shells and lithic artefacts.

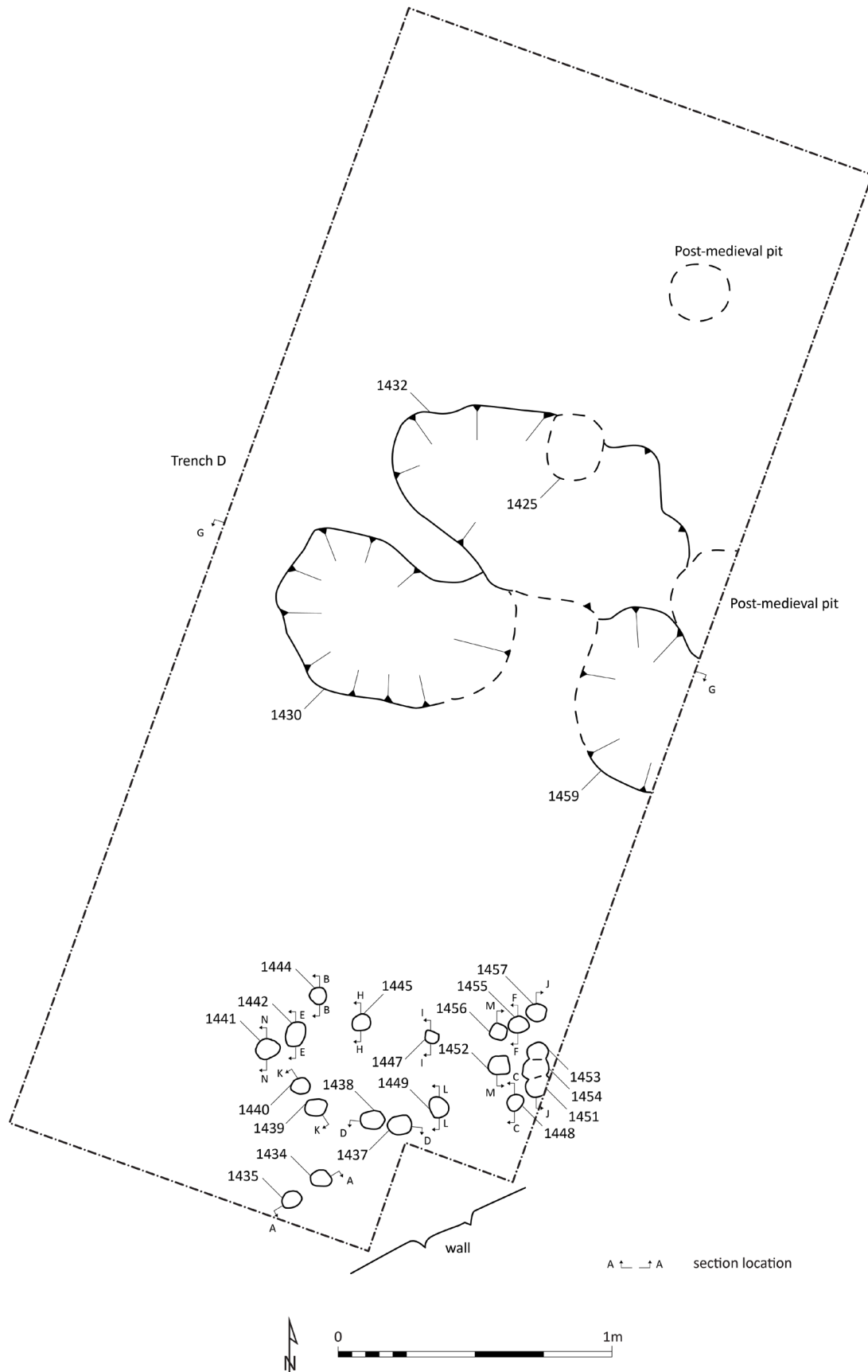
A cluster of 20 stake holes were located within the south-east corner of the trench (Illus 6). The stake holes all displayed similar dimensions (diameters ranging between 0.04m and 0.07m and depth between 0.04m and 0.15m) and were filled with a homogeneous sandy clay-silt. Eight of the stake holes contained the usual mix of lithic material and burnt hazelnut shell. The dense concentration of the stake holes, lack of discernible pattern and the limited scale of the trench excavation reduces the scope for any meaningful structural discussion.

The above features were sealed under a mixed buried soil of orange-brown sandy clay-silt (1401/1408), which ranged from 0.12m to 0.34m in depth. This layer contained the main concentration of lithic artefacts.

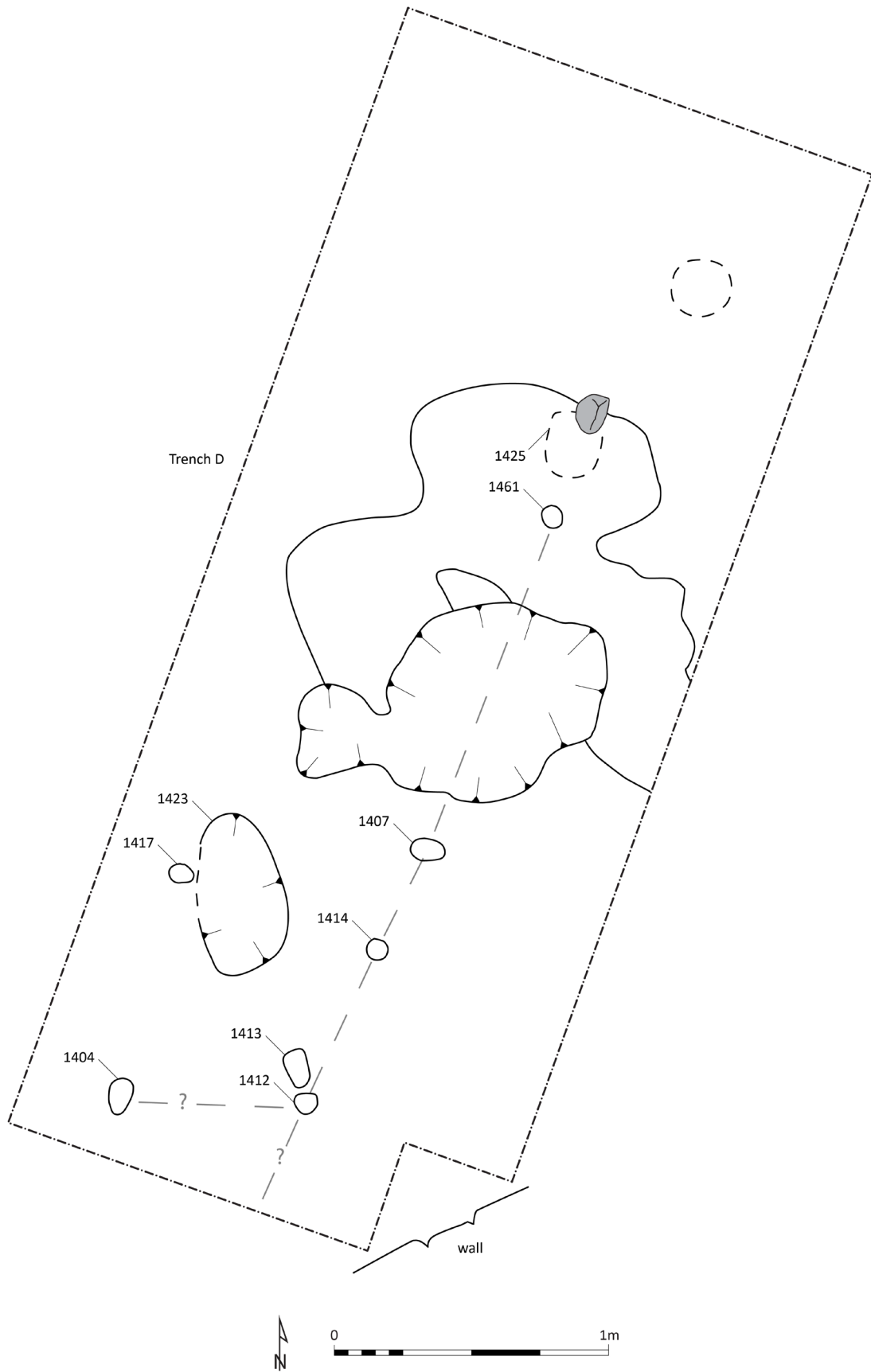
It is possible that this layer originally formed the ground surface associated with the above features rather than appearing to overlie them as was recorded during the excavation process. The general similarity between the fills of the above features and this layer is likely to have resulted in their late identification. Differences between the fills and layer (1401/1408) only really became apparent at the interface between (1401) and the lighter (1424/1429). This latter layer is therefore probably an artificial boundary reflecting a natural interface between the original ground surface and the underlying subsoil (1460).

3.1.2 Phase 2 (Illus 5b)

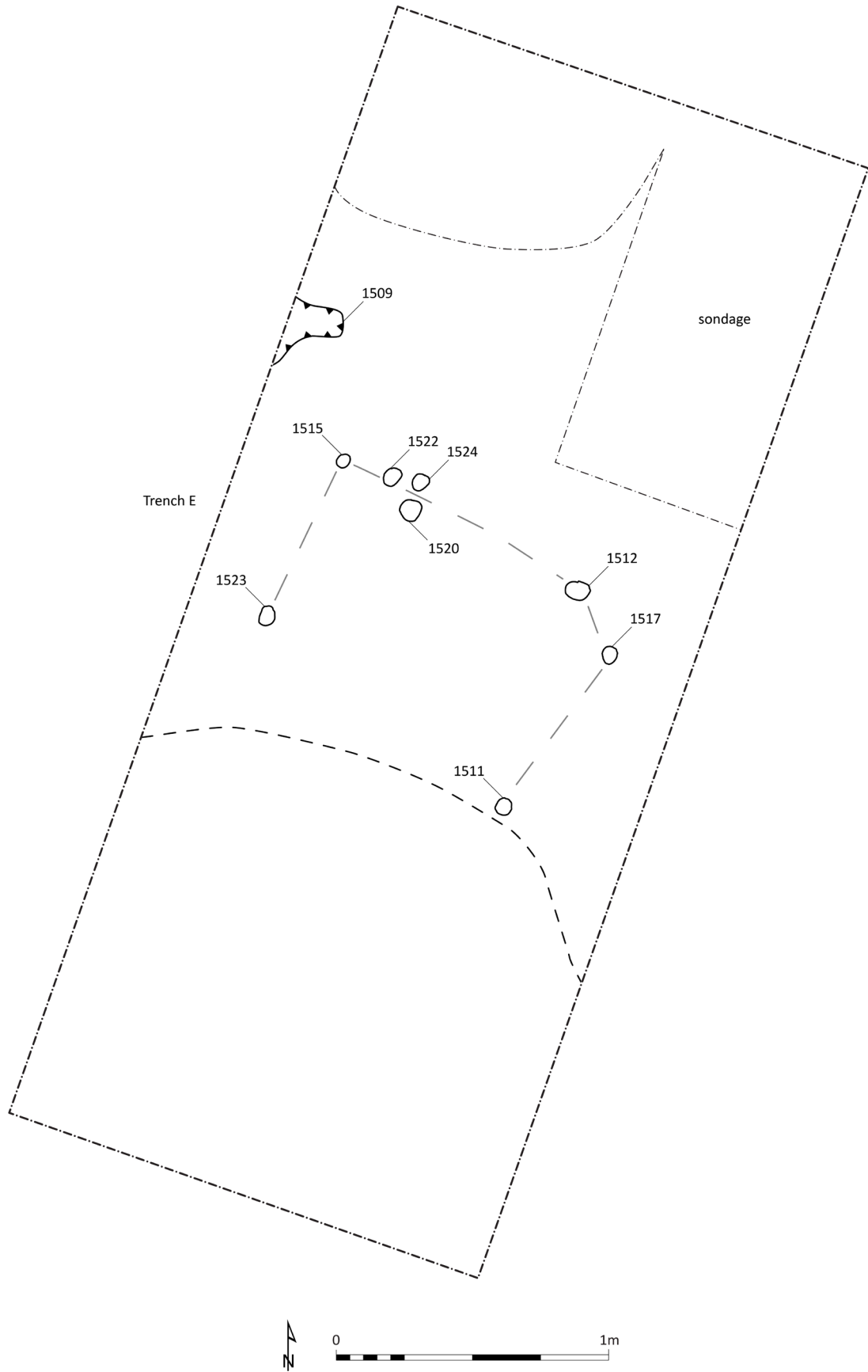
Cut into the surface of layer (1401/1408) was a group of seven undated stake holes of uniform size and depth (diameter 0.05–0.07m, depth 0.06–0.08m). Five of these stake holes [1407], [1412],



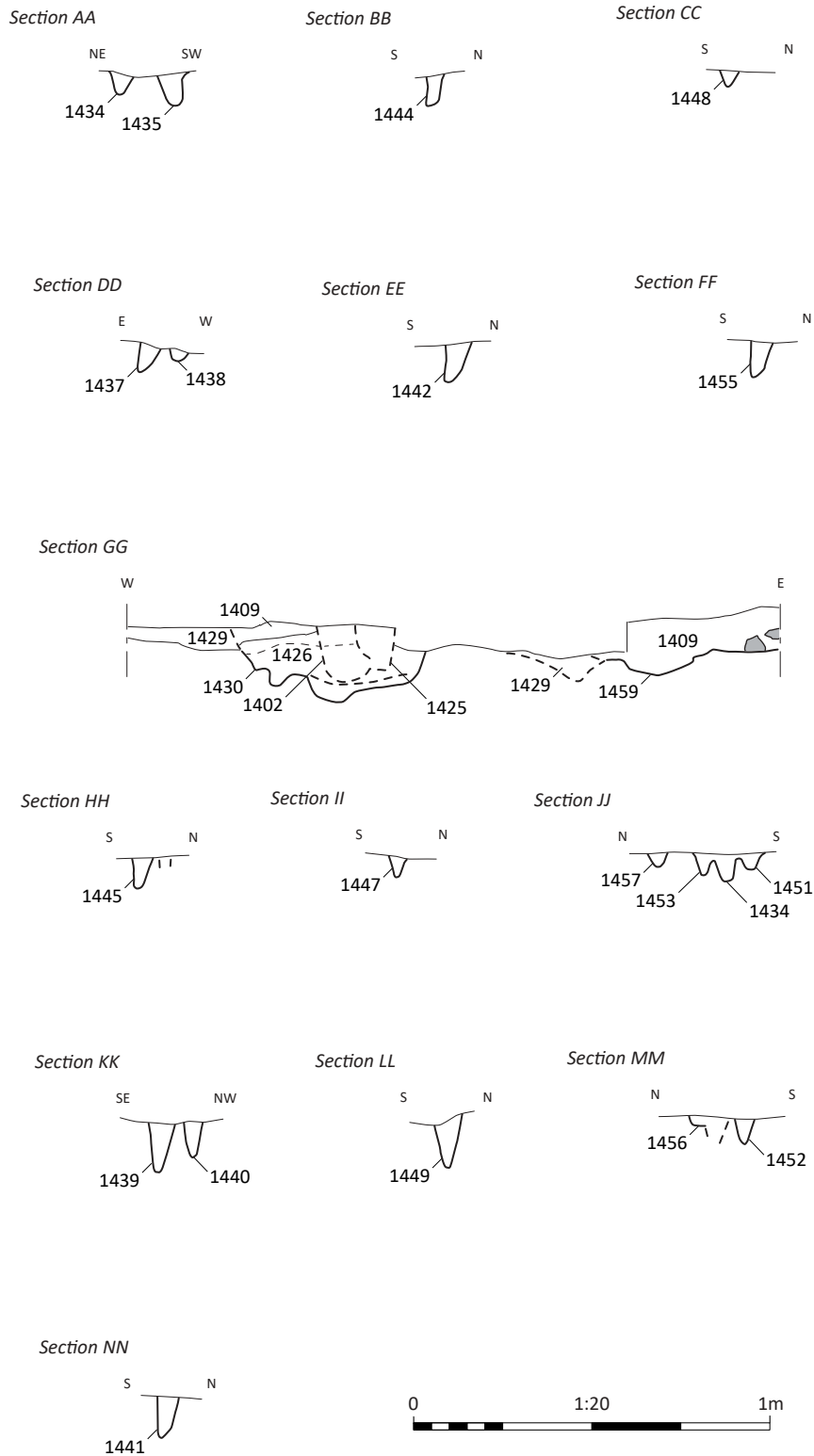
Illus 5a Trench D Phase 1. (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 5b Trench D Phase 2. (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 5c Trench E. (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 6 Profiles of stake holes within Trench D. (© AOC Archaeology Group)

[1413], [1414] and [1461] clearly form part of a north/south fence-line running down the centre of the trench.

Located to the west of this fence-line was the possible truncated base of a small oval pit [1423]. The pit was filled by a dark grey-brown sandy silty-clay (1422), which contained a small quantity of lithic artefacts. It is possible that this feature relates to a secondary Mesolithic phase of occupation, though given the shallow nature of the feature and history of the site, a later date cannot be discounted.

3.2 Trench E

The results from the previous year's excavations undertaken by the EAFS had demonstrated that post-medieval activity on the site had had a demonstratable effect upon the survival of earlier deposits, and two post-medieval pits had truncated all such deposits from the southern half and north-west corner of the excavation trench (Illus 5c). In addition, a sondage was also excavated within the north-east corner of the trench to assess the character of Mesolithic deposits when first discovered in 1994.

The 1995 excavations revealed a single phase of activity, and the earliest deposit was a thin (0.02m thick) layer of mottled brown clay-silt directly overlying the C-horizon subsoil. This deposit is a

continuation of the layer (1424/1429) identified in Trench D.

A total of eight stake holes and a small-pit/post hole was recorded cutting into the deposit (1506). The stake holes were all circular in plan (with diameters of 0.06–0.08m), with six of the features forming a north-west/south-east alignment across the trench, with two further features [1511] and [1523] appearing off-set to the south.

Located to the north-west of this group of stake holes, and partially underlying the western baulk, were the truncated remains of an irregular-shaped pit/post hole [1509]. This feature was filled by a deposit of dark-brown silty-sand (1508), containing charcoal and lithic material.

Three deposits of mid-brown, sandy clay-silt (1504/1505, 1502, 1501) were recorded across the trench, most probably representing variations within the same general layer. The lowest of these deposits (1504/1505), overlying natural geology, was situated in the centre of the trench to a depth of 0.04m. The uppermost deposit (1501) occurred as an irregular, almost circular, spread overlying the eastern side of the trench to a maximum depth of 0.11m. This upper deposit appears to mirror the underlying group of stake holes, though this effect may be superficial and a result of post-medieval truncation of the site.