

3. EXCAVATED FEATURES

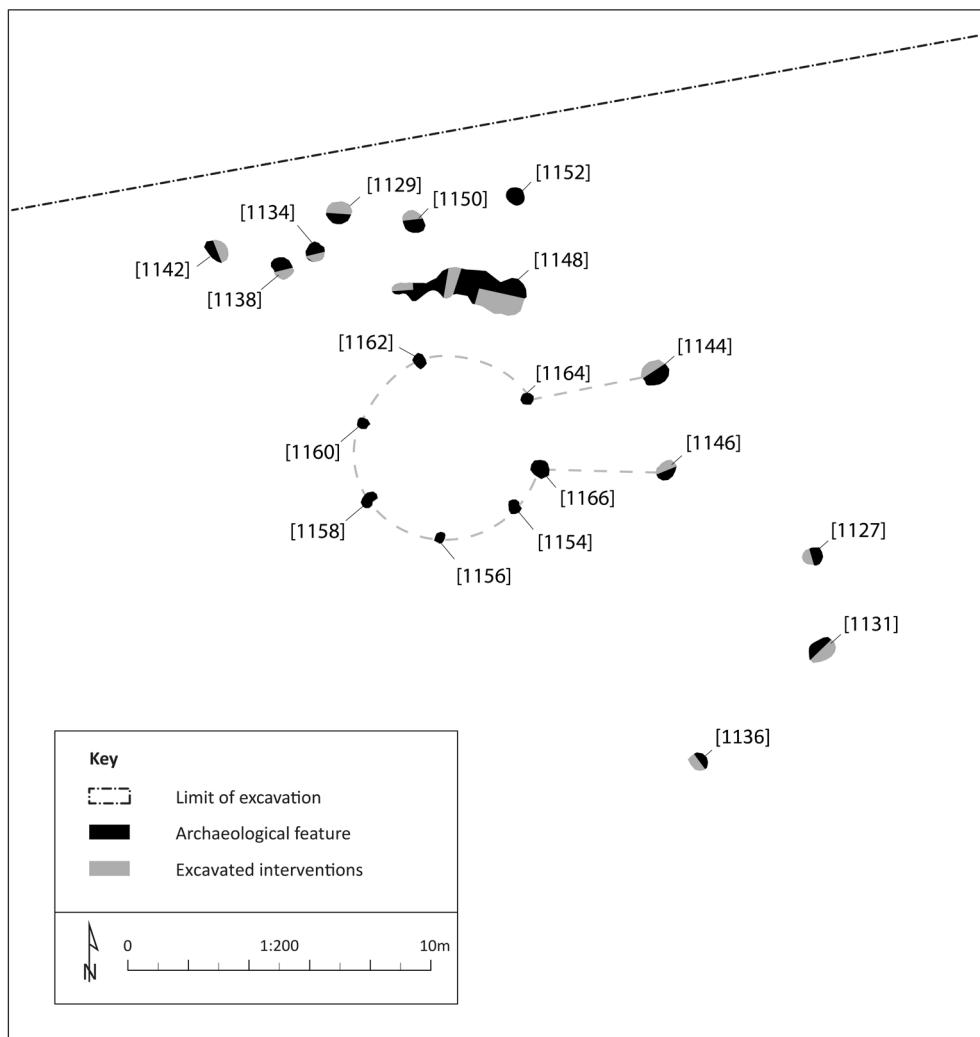
The five excavation areas, Areas C, D, E, G, and H, lay within two rough pasture fields, which comprised rolling ground with a substantial degree of variation in topography (Illus 1). The topsoil across the site varied in depth from 0.25m to 0.85m and had been affected by ploughing. Plough scarring was visible where the topsoil was shallow on the higher ground with topsoil accumulating on downslopes and within hollows. The dark brown organic-rich sandy topsoil lay over a mixed subsoil comprised of mixed sands and gravels.

3.1 Area C

Area C was the largest area to be machine stripped and measured 3,750m². The western and

southern sides of Area C sloped downwards with archaeological features concentrated on the higher flat central area (Illus 2). In total, 12 pits and seven postholes were uncovered in a group.

The seven postholes, [1154], [1156], [1158], [1160], [1162], [1164], and [1166], were similarly sized, measuring between 0.55m and 0.38m in diameter. These features were straight-sided, with depths between 0.12m and 0.26m with occasional packing stones. These postholes appear to form a post-ring roundhouse, c 6.2m in diameter, with a possible entrance to the east, defined by Pits [1144] and [1146] (Illus 3). A scatter of pits lies to the east and north. Also in the area of the post-ring, Context [1148], may represent two amalgamated features, but it was not possible to discern the exact relationship between these features



Illus 2 Area C plan

and the post-ring during excavation. A radiocarbon date (Table 1) from hazelnut shell (SUERC-94900) from Fill (1159) of Posthole [1158] returned an Early Neolithic date range of between 3640 and 3533 cal BC at 2-sigma, which suggests an Early Neolithic date for the roundhouse. The charcoal from this feature was characterised as redeposited food and fuel waste associated with occupation of the structure but there is a possibility that the material is residual. It is possible that the charcoal, rather than deriving from the active use of the roundhouse, may have derived from earlier activity on the site, possibly from the nearby pit features, and as such the post-ring roundhouse could be later in date.

To the north of the roundhouse there was a cluster of well-defined pits, [1129], [1134], [1138], [1142], [1150], and [1152], which were all similar in size and profile with fire-cracked stones, charcoal, and burnt bone flecks common to all. In Pits [1129], [1134], [1150], and [1152], prehistoric pot sherds

were recovered (Table 2). Pit [1129] contained three sherds from two vessels; Pit [1134] was found to have 11 sherds from two vessels and Pit [1150] held eight sherds from two vessels. Lastly, Pit [1152] contained seven sherds from at least two separate vessels, one of which was lugged. All eight vessels from these features are classed as Early Neolithic round-based bowls. Radiocarbon dates (Table 1) were sought for two of these pits, with hazelnut shell dated from Pits [1129] and [1134]. The sample (SUERC-94898) from Pit [1129] returned an Early Neolithic date range between 3513 and 3360 cal BC at 2-sigma while the sample (SUERC-94899) from Pit [1134] produced an Early Neolithic date range between 3640 and 3522 cal BC at 2-sigma. From Pit [1129] a Late Mesolithic microlith was recovered, which was likely intrusive.

More than half of all the hazelnut shell fragments identified from the Neolithic period were recovered from just three features in Area C, Pits [1129], [1134], and [1150]. Hazelnuts would have been an



Illus 3 Post-ring roundhouse Area C

important part of the diet during this early phase of occupation on site and would have been gathered from the local environment. Evidence for cultivated crops in Area C was relatively scarce but included small amounts of hulled barley and barley, crops typical of similarly dated sites. The absence of any chaff fragments suggests that cereal processing did not occur in the immediate vicinity.

To the south-east of the roundhouse was a scatter of three pits, [1127], [1131], and [1136]. Pit [1127] was a heavily plough truncated feature but contained some decorated pottery sherds and a retouched flint artefact (SF 33; Illus 20). The flint artefact was a chisel arrowhead, considered to be Middle Neolithic in date (Ballin 2017: 23). The pottery comprised eighty sherds from a single vessel, potentially a Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pot. An assessment of organic residue demonstrates that the vessel was used to process dairy products, such as milk, butter, and cheese. A radiocarbon date (Table 1) from a hazelnut shell (SUERC-94886) dated the pit fill to between 3091 and 2922 cal BC at 2-sigma, a Late Neolithic date that broadly corresponds to both the pottery and lithic evidence. The dates and artefact assemblage from the excavated features within Area C suggest two phases of activity, an Early Neolithic post-ring roundhouse with associated pits and a small cluster of Late Neolithic pits.

3.2 Area D

Area D measured 1,250m² and was the northernmost area excavated, with a topography that was even and flat and topsoil that was relatively shallow. Ten features were uncovered within Area D with no discernible focus of activity and no finds recovered (Illus 4).

Features [1106], [1115], [1117], [1121], and [1123] were all small pits, measuring less than 0.50m in diameter. Pits [1104], [1108], and [1113] were larger subcircular pits around 1.0m in size. Pit [1119] was an elongated feature, 1.9m long. All of these pits contained charcoal flecking and some had fire-cracked stones and burnt bone fragments.

Pit [1110] was the largest feature in Area D and more distinctive in character. It was oval in plan, measuring 3.25m east to west by 1.95m north to south. It was 0.65m deep and its upper fill, Context (1111), contained numerous large stones with

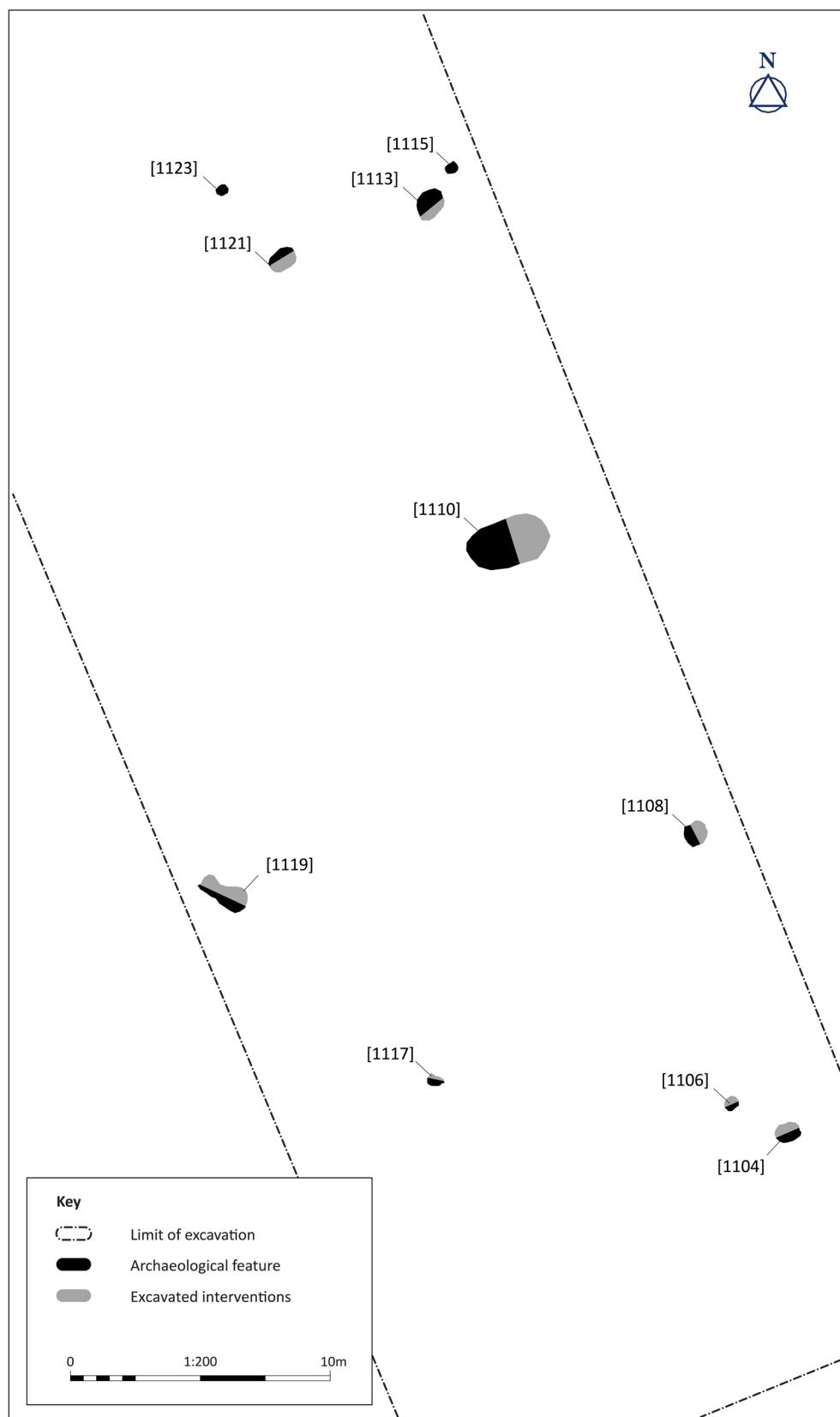
charcoal flecking over a lower fill, Context (1112), which comprised lenses of burnt material. An early medieval date was returned from a sample of hulled barley cereal (SUERC-94904) from (1112), with a range between cal AD 670 and 857 at 2-sigma (Table 1). In Pit [1110], there were 455 cereal caryopses identified as oats (42%), hulled barley (27.4%), barley (15.2%), naked barley (0.2%), and cereal (15.2%), interpreted as domestic food refuse. Similarly, three fragments of hazelnut in Pit [1110] are viewed as domestic food refuse.

3.3 Area E

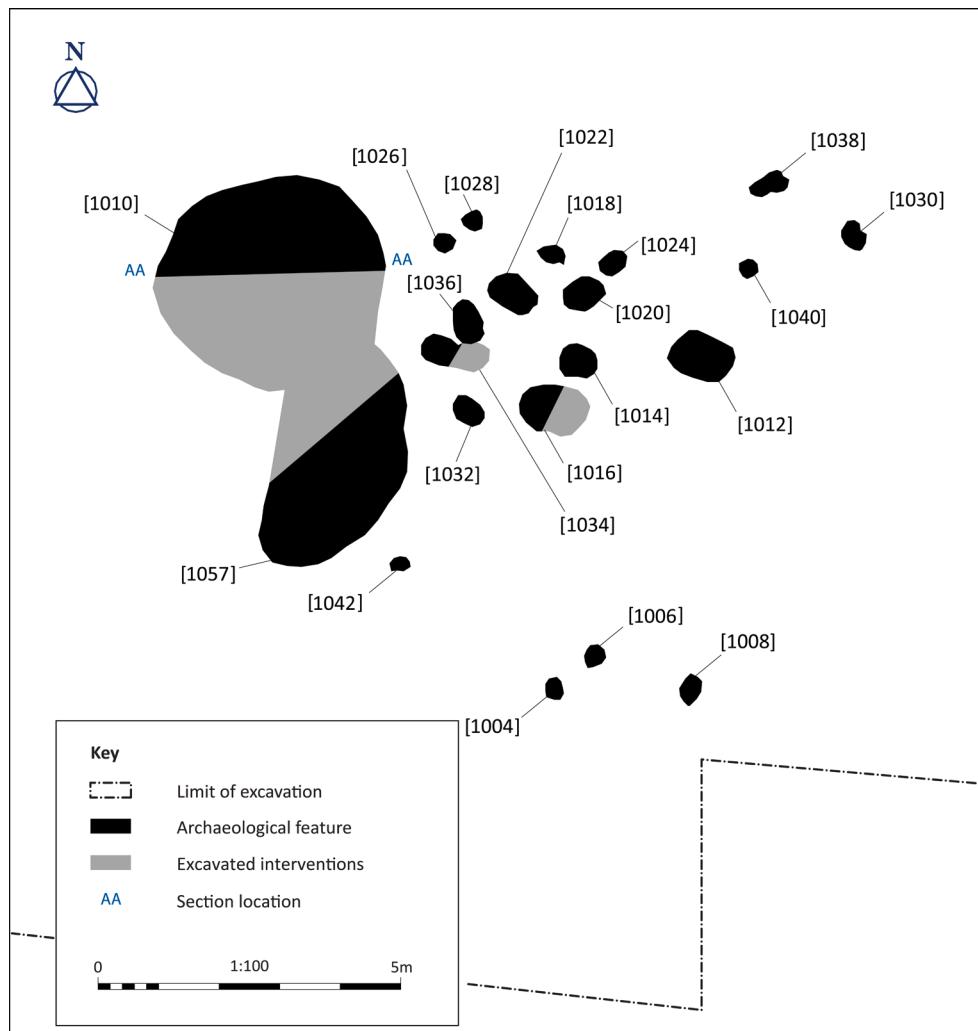
Area E covered 480m² and contained two phases of activity with 21 features uncovered (Illus 5). The earliest features are prehistoric pits, of which there are 19 in total. There is a distinct central cluster of nine pits, [1012], [1014], [1016], [1018], [1020], [1022], [1032], [1034], and [1036], with three postholes, [1024], [1026], and [1028], around the northern edge of this group and with further features, Contexts [1038], [1030], and [1040] a little to the east. Lastly, there are four features further to the south, [1004], [1006], [1042], and [1008]. The pits were very well-defined, deep, and oval or subcircular in plan with maximum dimensions of 1.2m by 0.9m. Charcoal flecking and fire-cracked stones were common to most pits. The smaller posthole features often had packing stones present. Whilst there is a dense array of features there is no obvious pattern or structure that could be discerned. Outlying features included two pits, [1030] and [1038], and a posthole, [1040], lying to the east, and four postholes, [1004], [1006], [1008], and [1042], to the south. However, no finds were recovered from these features.

Pottery was recovered from four features within the central grouping, Pits [1018], [1020], [1022], and [1034] (Table 2). In total 38 sherds representing six different vessels were identified with all attributed to the Early Neolithic round-based bowl tradition. From Pit [1020] was recovered a broken saddle quern stone which appears to have been worn through from use (Illus 6) and also showed signs of use to sharpen axes. Its form and patterns of wear suggest a Neolithic date.

A small amount of hazelnut shell came from several features in Area E, while two blackthorn



Illus 4 Area D plan



Illus 5 Area E plan



Illus 6 Pit [1020] with quern stone in situ

stones were recovered from Postholes [1004] and [1028], and a small amount of cultivated crops was evidenced, including barley and hulled barley from Pits [1018], [1020], and [1036], with a single example of oats from Pit [1038]. Hazelnut shell was radiocarbon dated from Pits [1018], [1020], and [1022]. The sample (SUERC-94887) from Pit [1018] returned a range between 3696 and 3538 cal BC at 2-sigma with the sample (SUERC-94888) from Pit [1020] producing a very similar range between 3651 and 3532 cal BC at 2-sigma. Finally, hazelnut shell from (SUERC-94897) Pit [1022] provided a slightly earlier range of between 3761 and 3645 cal BC at 2-sigma. These dates (Table 1) suggest that this activity relates to the Early Neolithic period, somewhere around 3750 to 3550 cal BC.

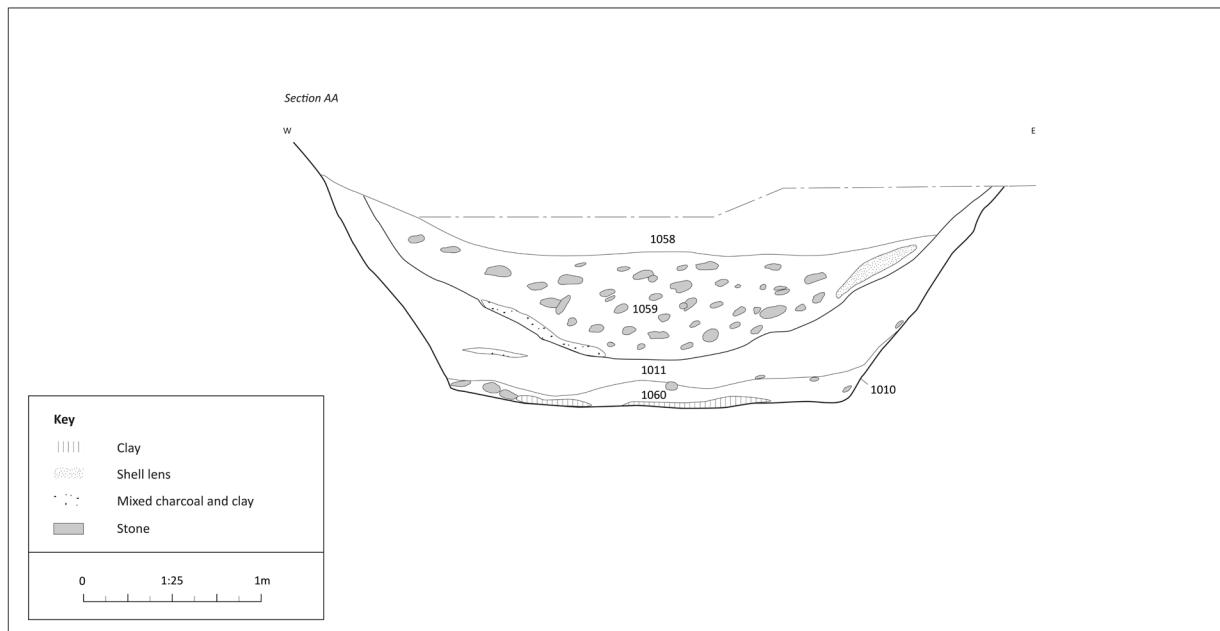
The last two features within Area E were the largest pits excavated during these works. These two pits, [1010] and [1057], were intercutting with Pit [1010] cutting through the earlier Pit [1057] (Illus 7). Feature [1057] was aligned north to south and

was oval in plan, measuring 4.0m by 2.4m with its northern edge truncated by Pit [1010]. Pit [1057] was relatively steep sided and had a depth of 1.55m. Its basal fill, Context (1061) comprised banded sands and silts suggesting a gradual infilling of the pit. This deposit was recut with a steep sided cut, Context (1062), which was filled by a greyish brown sandy silt with patches of clay, Context (1063). The upper fill, Context (1064), was a sandy silt which contained medieval pottery sherds, animal bone, and animal teeth. The pottery comprised two rim sherds from the same vessel, V3, a locally made cooking pot belonging in the Scottish medieval Redware tradition which could date from the late 12th, but more likely the 13th century. Alder charcoal (SUERC-94896) from (1064) produced a date range of cal AD 1224 to 1283 at 2-sigma (Table 1), which corresponds well with the pottery.

The later pit, [1010], was circular in plan with a diameter of c 4.2m and had a depth of 1.55m (Illus 8). The basal fill, Context (1060), comprised



Illus 7 Medieval Pits [1010] and [1057]



Illus 8 Section of Pit [1010]

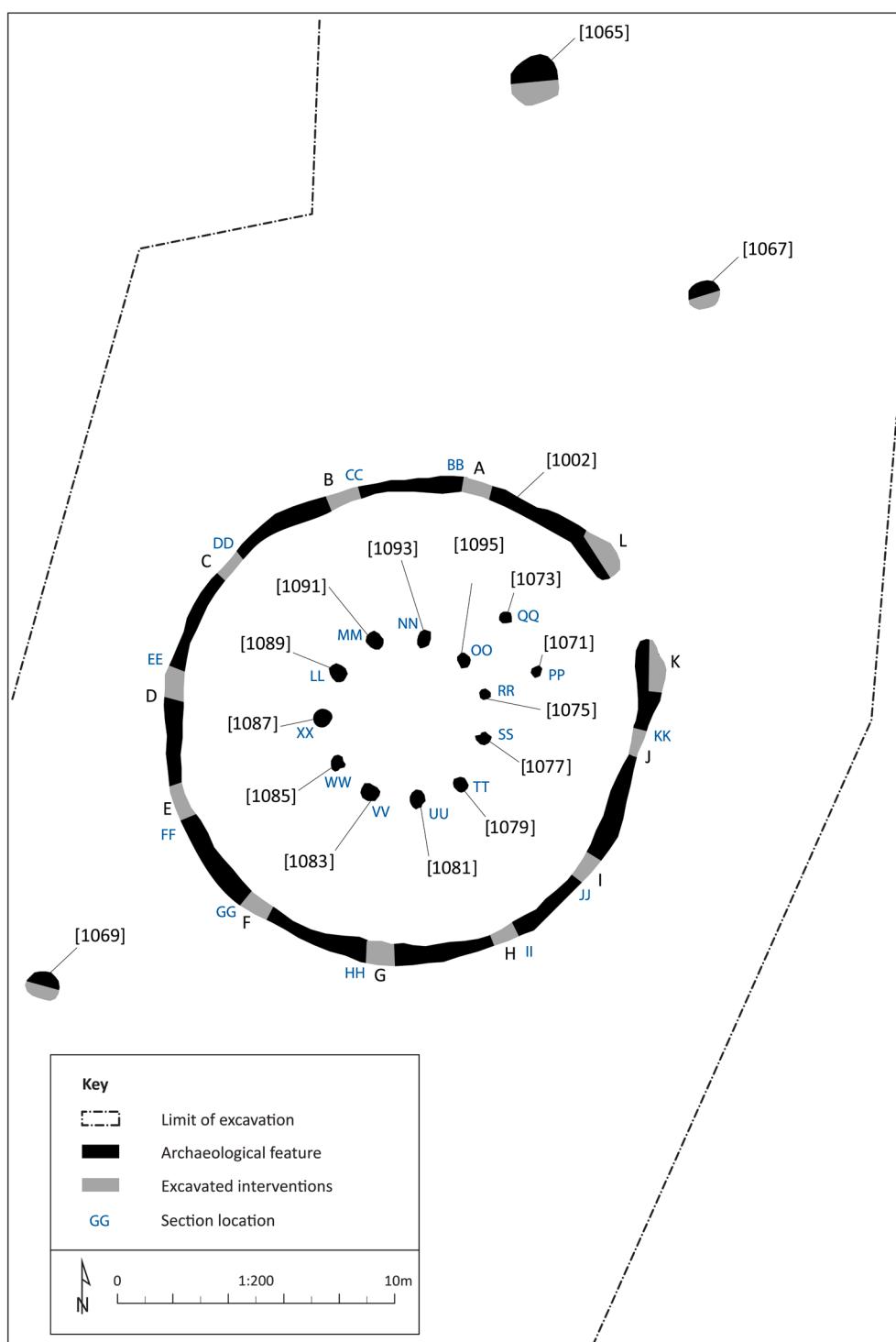


Illus 9 South facing section of medieval Pit [1010]

banded silty sand no more than 0.18m deep and was overlain by a deposit of green boulder clay, Context (1011), which was up to 0.42m thick (Illus 9). A group of medieval pottery sherds was recovered from this clay deposit, which was covered by a thick deposit of sandy silt with stone, Context (1059), with a few lenses of charcoal and a small deposit

of clam and mussel shell. From this deposit was recovered a fragment of a stone mortar (SF 21). The upper fill, Context (1058) was topsoil-like material that covered the whole pit.

The pottery from this pit was part of the Scottish medieval Redware tradition with nine conjoining sherds from a Redware jug, V1 and a single sherd



Illus 10 Area G plan

from a globular jug, V2. The mortar fragment recovered from Context (1059) is part of a rare class of coarse stone objects and appears to be made from locally derived stone rather than being imported to the site. These artefacts are typically seen as being from the 12th century at the earliest but more commonly 13th to 14th century in date.

Charred cultivated oat charcoal (SUERC-94895) from Fill (1060) produced a date range between cal AD 1269 and 1298 at 2-sigma (Table 1). This agrees well with the proposed pottery and mortar dates as well as being slightly later than the date returned for Pit [1057]. A few fragments of hazelnut shell were recorded in Pit [1010] and one raspberry seed in Pit [1057] along with a wide variety of common agricultural weeds and natural wild plants across both pits. The two pits contained a total of 730 cereal caryopses dominated by oats with lesser amounts of rye, hulled barley, barley, wheat/rye, cultivated oats, naked barley, bread/club wheat, and emmer. The cereal is domestic food debris and given the presence

of a culm node and weeds, may represent processing waste from threshing and winnowing.

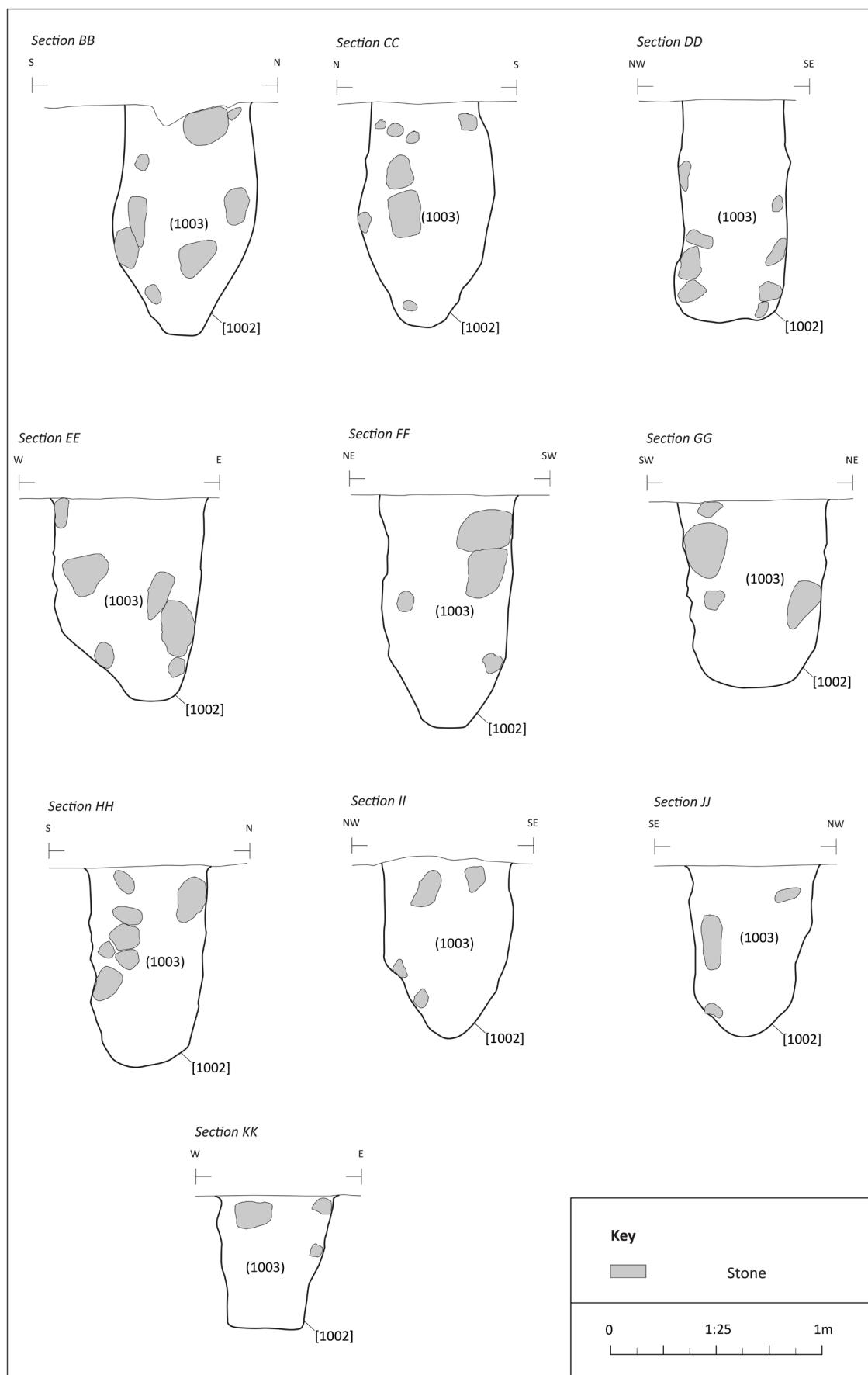
The fills of the two intercutting pits examined here bear testimony to a range of site formation processes. Soil micromorphology provides little or no indication of the function of either pit (Roy 2020). The lack of anthropic indicators suggest that the pits were not used for waste disposal and similarly would indicate that had the pits been used for food storage or industrial processes, they must have been thoroughly cleaned out prior to infilling. The infilling deposit, Context (1063), of Pit [1057] was likely a deliberate act of backfilling whereas Pit [1010] appears to have mostly infilled naturally over a longer period of time with multiple events as indicated by finely stratified horizons of sediments.

3.4 Area G

This area was focused over a known cropmark enclosure site. In total 2,800m² was stripped



Illus 11 South-west facing view of Enclosure [1002] and post-ring roundhouse



Illus 12 Sections of Palisade [1002], Slots A to K



Illus 13 North-west facing section of Slot F through Palisade [1002]

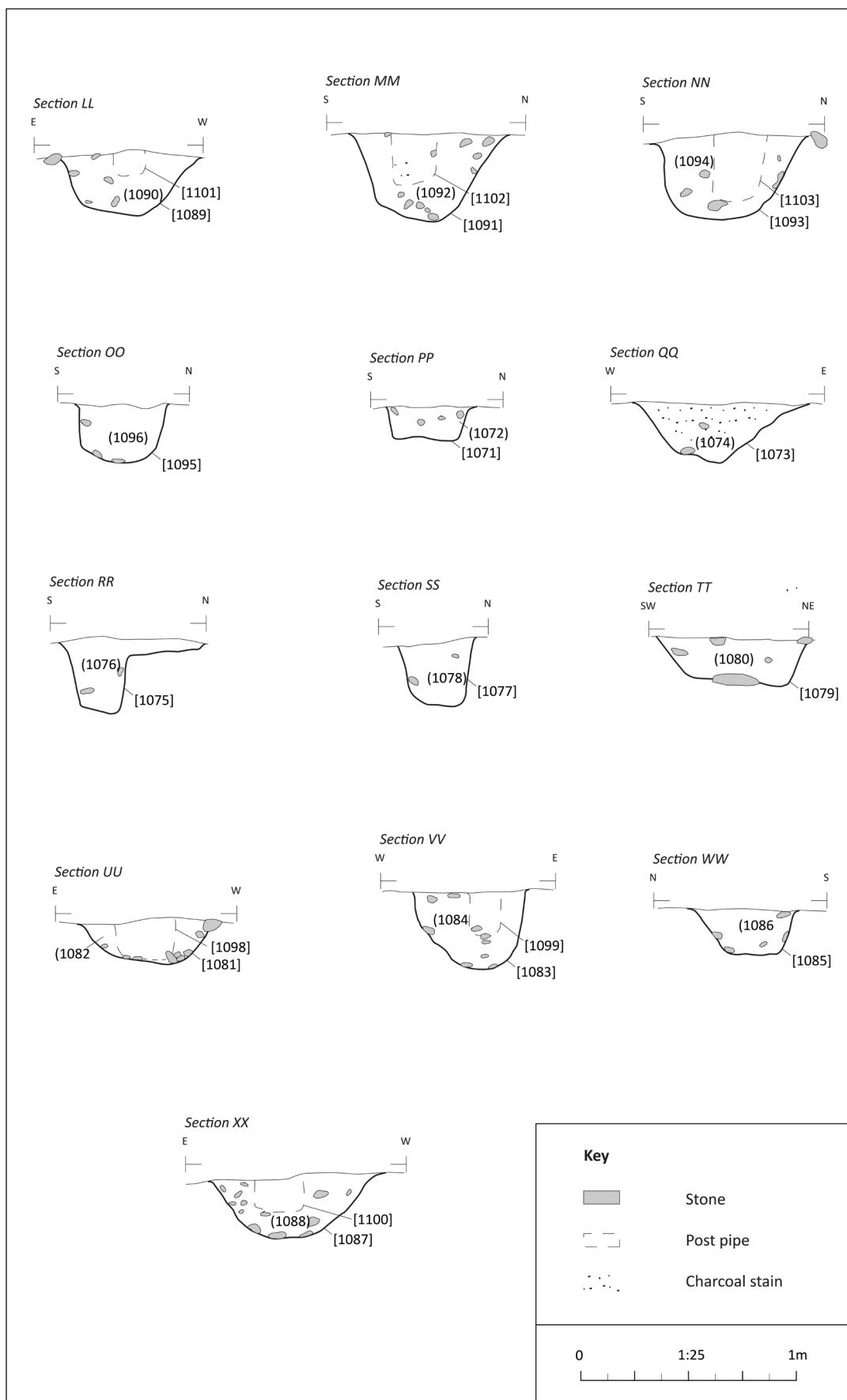
uncovering the full enclosure, [1002] along with an internal post-ring roundhouse and three external pits: [1065], [1067], and [1069] (Illus 10 & 11).

The palisade enclosure was very clearly defined and was circular in plan with an internal diameter of c 17.5m. The enclosure, [1002], had a north-east facing entrance, 2.6m in width, with enlarged rounded terminals. A series of slots, recorded as Slots A to Slot L, were excavated throughout the enclosure. Typically, the enclosure was formed by a vertically sided cut onto a flat base, suggesting a wooden palisade (Illus 12 & 13). The palisade was between 1.10m and 0.65m deep with an average depth of around 1.0m. Its width varied from 0.47m to a maximum of 0.70m.

The central roundhouse was very well preserved with its plan (Illus 10) comprising 11 postholes with an axial symmetry through the entrance posts, [1075] and [1095] (Illus 14). Another two external posts, [1071] and [1073], signify the existence of a porch a little over 2.0m from the post-ring. The entrance of the roundhouse was aligned on the entrance of the enclosure to the north-east. The



Illus 14 North-east facing view of post-ring roundhouse within Enclosure [1002]



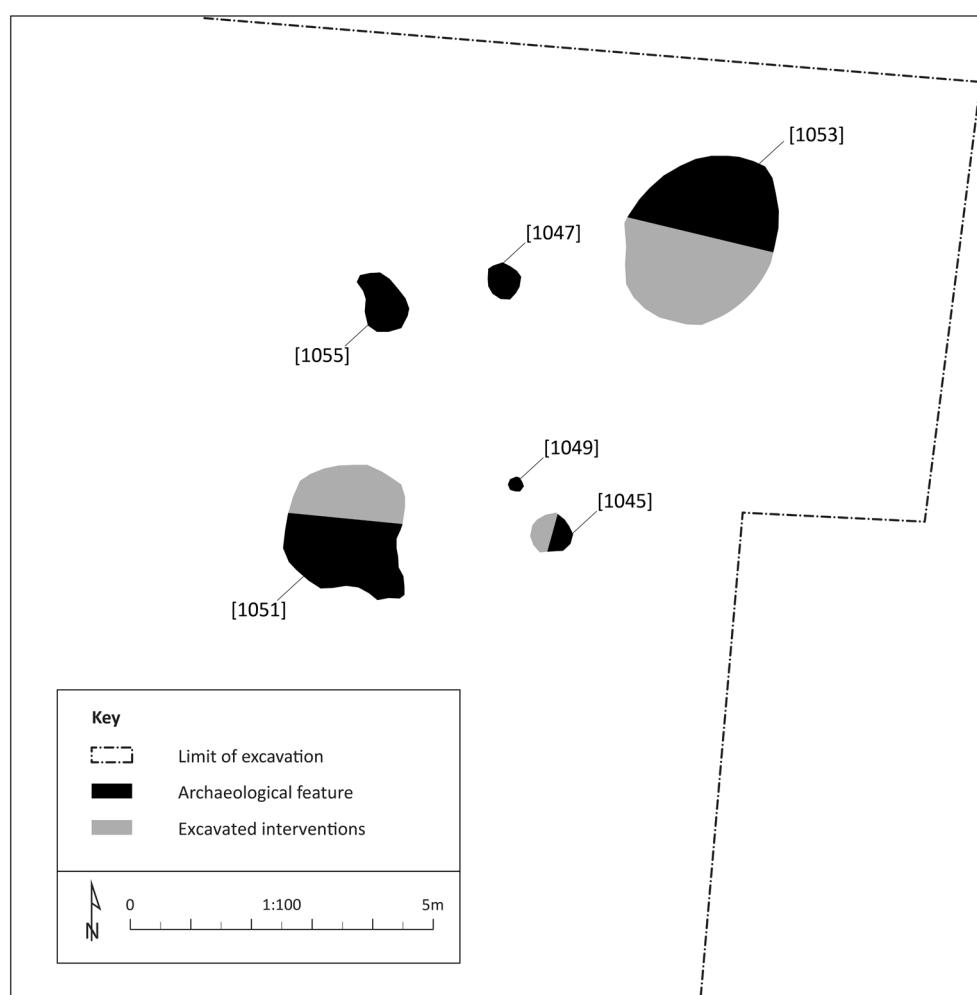
Illus 15 Sections of postholes of roundhouse

structural post-ring measured 6.25m in diameter, with postholes between 0.32m and 0.56m in diameter (Illus 15). Six of the postholes, [1081], [1083], [1087], [1089], [1091], and [1093], contained charcoal-rich postpipes, which were suggestive of in situ burning of structural timbers, though subsequent charcoal identifications suggest this was fuel waste.

No internal features were identified within the roundhouse or elsewhere within the enclosure though it is likely that the site has seen a degree of erosion through ploughing and as such any originally shallow features could have been lost to truncation. No artefacts or finds were recovered from the enclosure or the associated roundhouse.

Three large well-defined pits were recorded outside the palisaded enclosure, Pits [1065],

[1067], and [1069]. The largest pit, [1065], lay c 13.0m to the north and comprised a near circular pit with a diameter of 1.77m and a depth of 0.32m. The single fill contained many stones near the base, some of which showed signs of burning and heat cracking. The other two pits were similarly sized, oval in plan and were no more than 0.20m deep. As with Pit [1065] there was evidence of burning with charcoal and fire-cracked stones, perhaps representing dumped refuse deposits. Pit [1067], located south-east of [1065] was marked by a relatively large assemblage of charcoal; although only hazel was identified to species, this was the largest concentration of charcoal (206.3g) recovered from any feature, and charcoal analysis suggested this might represent burning of a structural component. However,



Illus 16 Area H plan

during excavation the presence of in situ burning was not perceived.

The small assemblage of cereals identified from features in Area G comprised hulled barley (54%), barley (16%), oats (5%), emmer (1%), wheat (1%), and cereal (23%). The majority of these were concentrated in external Pit [1069] and the mix of cereal caryopses and culm nodes represent possible evidence for the disposal of crop processing waste.

Four radiocarbon dates were sought for Area G (Table 1), two for the palisade enclosure and two for the post-ring roundhouse. Hazelnut shell (SUERC-94890) from Slot A of the palisade was dated to between cal AD 90 and 236 at 2-sigma, with alder charcoal from Slot B (SUERC-94894) returning a broadly similar date range of cal AD 81 to 222 at 2-sigma. The two dates for the post-ring were also very similar, with hazel charcoal (SUERC-94095) from Posthole [1083] dated to around cal AD 91 to 239. A second date from non-structural birch charcoal (SUERC-94906) recovered from the fill of Posthole [1093] ranged between cal AD 85 and 230. All four dates suggest a single phase of use of the site most likely during the second century AD.

3.5 Area H

This small area on the southern side of the development area to the east of Area E encompassed 450m² (Illus 16). In Area H there were five pit features, two relatively large in size, [1051] and [1053], and three smaller, [1045], [1047], and [1055], and a single posthole, [1049]. The three smaller pit features ranged from the nearly 1.0m in diameter Pit [1055] to Pit [1045], with a diameter of 0.62m. The single posthole, [1049], was 0.30m in diameter with packing stones placed within a cut 0.16m deep. A single sherd of a Neolithic round-based bowl was recovered from Pit [1045].

The two large pits were different from the other features in Area H in terms of scale. Pit [1051] was subcircular and measured 2.30m east to west by 2.12m north to south. Pit [1053] was larger but also subcircular at c 3.0m north to south by 2.80m east to west with steep sides leading to a deep base, 1.1m down.

A single date (Table 1) was retrieved for a sample of charred pine (SUERC-94889) from Pit [1045], which gave a 2-sigma date range between 2570 and 2356 cal BC.