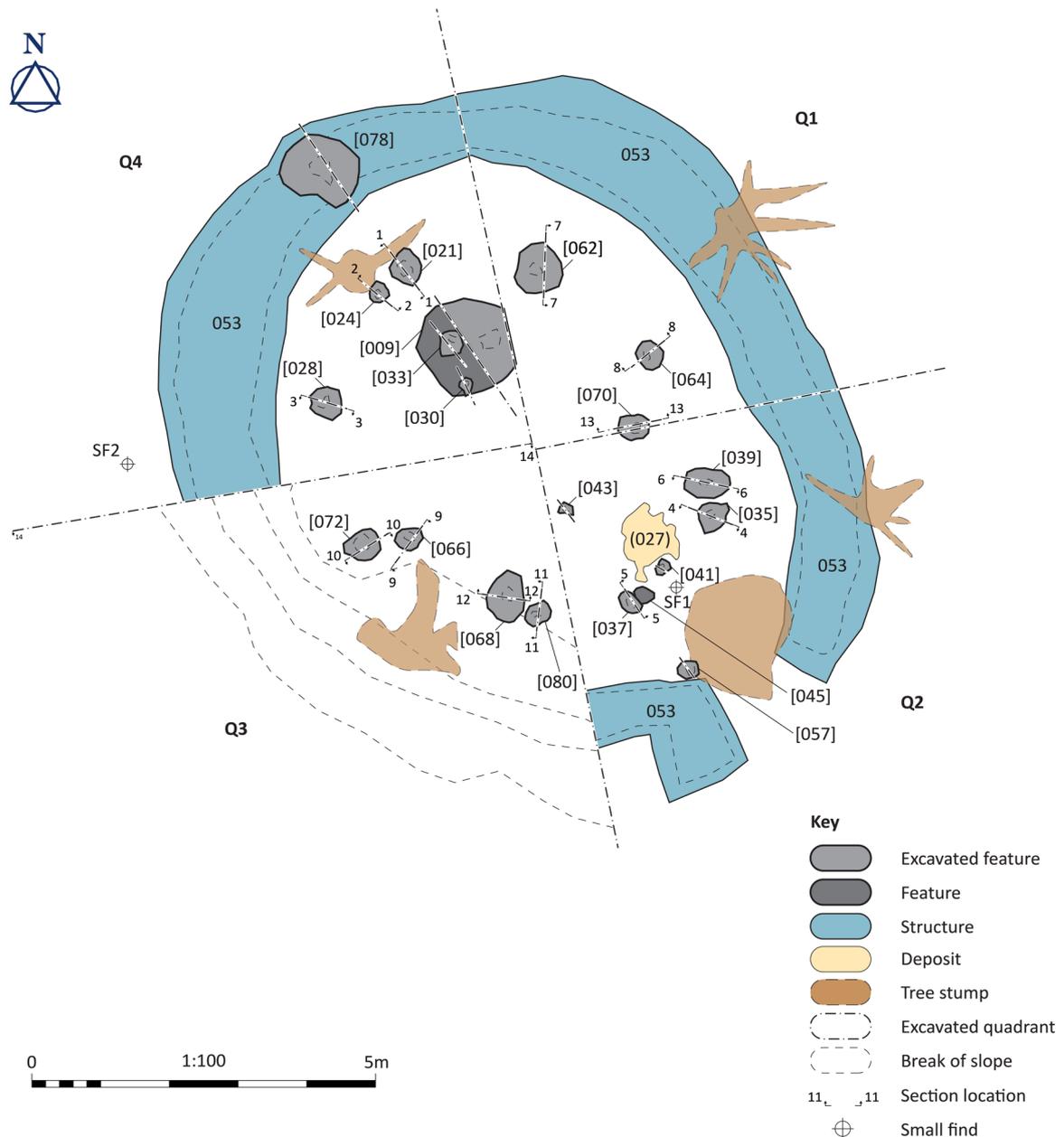


### 3. SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

The site at Beaully substation was covered in a thin deposit of turf, heather, and moss, Context (001), which generally measured 0.10m in depth. Beneath the topsoil was a poorly defined podzol deposit, Context (002)/(006), comprising friable, mottled dark and light brownish grey silty sand, which covered the entire area. This varied in depth from

0.05m up to 0.30m. The glacially deposited subsoil (003) consisted of loose reddish-yellow sandy gravel with frequent rounded stones.

The excavation revealed a roundhouse, [053] (Illus 4), measuring 8m x 7m internally. The walls, which were c 0.3m high, comprised a foundation layer of turf and an upper layer of stone rubble (Illus 5). The structure contained an internal post-ring set a distance of approximately 1.0m from the inner wall face.



Illus 4 Plan of Beaully Substation roundhouse with quadrants (Lindsey Stirling & Sam O’Leary, AOC Archaeology)

### 3.1 Neolithic activity

The earliest activity on the site was represented by Pit [078], which was identified below the wall foundations at the northwestern side of the roundhouse and cut into the subsoil, Context (003). It had a circular shape with straight sloping sides and a flat base, and measured 1.2m in diameter and 0.25m deep. The fill comprised a dark greyish brown gravel/sand with frequent large rounded stones. Radiocarbon dating (Table 1) of pine roundwood charcoal (SUERC-122117) retrieved from the single fill of Pit [078] produced a date range of 2881–2636 cal BC (at 95% probability), suggesting that activity at the site stretched back to the Late Neolithic period.

### 3.2 The roundhouse construction

The roundhouse measured 12m x 10m in diameter (Illus 4). The walls survived as two courses: a lower turf foundation course, Contexts (011)/(047)/(048), and an upper stone course, Contexts (013)/(051) (Illus 5). The turf foundation course comprised a mottled, dark greyish-brown sandy silt measuring

1.2m to 1.4m wide; it was consistently 0.15m thick. Two fragments of hazel charcoal (SUERC-111663 and SUERC-122116) were obtained from wall core material, Contexts (011) and (047), and returned broadly consistent Middle Bronze Age date ranges of 1498–1312 cal BC and 1610–1451 cal BC (at 95% probability), respectively.

The upper stone course was identified in Q1, Q2, and Q4 but was poorly preserved throughout – as it had been disturbed by tree roots. This course was up to 0.85m wide and *c* 0.25m thick and consisted of long, angular and rounded stones, each 0.15m to 0.30m in size.

The interior of the roundhouse contained a posthole setting, which was roughly oval in plan and covered an area measuring 6.0m northwest/southeast x 5.0m northeast/southwest. Its nine postholes, Contexts [021], [028], [037], [039], [062], [064], [068], [070], and [072] (Illus 4 and 6), were each set at a distance of between 0.7m and 1.4m from the inner wall face, with approximately 2.0m between each posthole. The postholes were similar in shape and generally measured 0.4 to 0.6m in diameter and 0.08 to 0.27m deep.



Illus 5 Section through roundhouse walls (AOC Archaeology)

Three postholes, [030], [033], and [043], were located closer to the centre of the structure and may represent internal partitions. Each feature measured 0.15 to 0.45m in diameter, and survived to a depth of 0.05 to 0.15m.

The entrance to the structure, which had been severely disturbed by the removal of a large tree stump, was on its southeastern side. It was defined by a gap in the roundhouse wall. The western side of the entrance was elaborated where the roundhouse wall protruded outwards at roughly 90°. Posthole [057] was identified immediately inside, and a small area (less than 1.0m<sup>2</sup>) of a possible cobbled surface, Context (027), was identified 1.2m from the entrance, between Postholes [035] and [037].

### 3.3 Use of the roundhouse

The interior of the structure contained Contexts (017) and (032), deposits that were tentatively interpreted as severely disturbed occupation layers. They comprised friable, dark brownish grey silty sand with moderately small to medium angular and rounded stones and rare charcoal flecks. A sample of oak charcoal (SUERC-111668), recovered from Context (032), returned a date of 1676–1511 cal BC (at 95% probability).

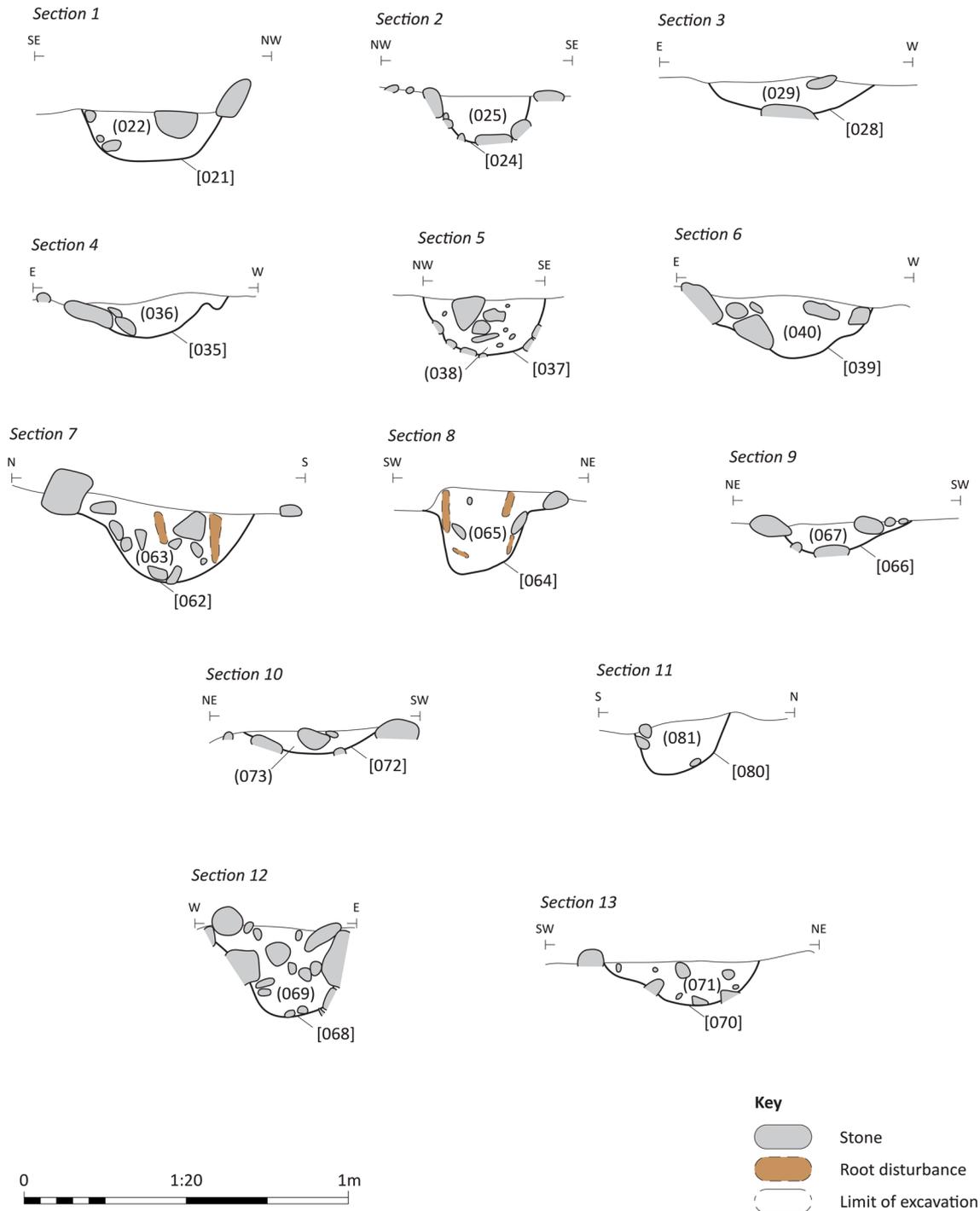
Deposit (020), which measured 0.2m x 0.3m in plan, was identified close to the centre of the structure. It comprised a reddish-brown silty sand with rare small, rounded stones. It was interpreted as a heat-affected deposit due to its colour; however, it did not appear to contain any charcoal.

The structure appears to have undergone repairs and/or alterations throughout its use. Several postholes (Contexts [024], [035], [041], [045], [080], and [066]) were located close to larger post-ring postholes, perhaps representing props or supports during repair/replacement of the original posts. In addition, post-pads were identified at the top of Postholes [021] and [072], which appear to have been inserted after the bases of the posts decayed. As the posts decayed, occupation material appears to have filled the postholes. Four samples, two fragments of oak charcoal (SUERC-111670 and SUERC-111671) and two fragments of hazel charcoal (SUERC-111669 and SUERC-122115), recovered from fills of four postholes, Contexts (073), (081), (071), and (040), returned date

ranges of 1746–1546 cal BC, 1495–1304 cal BC, 1746–1546 cal BC, and 2451–2148 cal BC (all at 95% probability), respectively, suggesting a broadly Middle Bronze Age *terminus post quem* for the natural infilling of the postholes. It is likely that the unusually early date from Context (040) (SUERC-122115) represents residual material, related to earlier occupation in the area. Alterations were also made to the interior, when a cobbled surface, Context (027), was laid above occupation Deposit (032), near the entrance between Postholes [035] and [037]. Pit [009] also appears to be a later insertion as it cut occupation Deposit (017). It measured 1.30m x 1.20m in plan and 0.16m deep. Although this pit contained the remains of fuel debris, its function was unclear. A sample of alder charcoal (SUERC-111662) was recovered from Fill (008) of Pit [009], which returned a date range of 1612–1447 cal BC (at 95% probability), overlapping with dates obtained from various posthole samples.

### 3.4 Abandonment

When the roundhouse was no longer inhabited and had gone out of use, in the Middle Bronze Age, the stone and turf walls collapsed, forming a circular bank made of collapse deposits, Context Group (005), which was on average 2.0m wide and up to 0.4m high (Illus 7 and 8). The interior of the bank primarily comprised collapsed turf material, Contexts (010), (012), (015), (023), (026), and (052), which were generally of a mottled reddish-brown sand with occasional small rounded and angular stones and rare charcoal flecks. These deposits measured 0.1 to 0.3m deep, and were banked against the internal wall face, spreading between 0.5m and 0.8m towards the centre of the structure. Two flint artefacts, SF03 and SF05, were recovered from the collapsed turf material. SF05 is a thumbnail scraper which dates to the Early or Middle Bronze Age. One fragment of oak charcoal (SUERC-111664) was recovered from Context (015), which returned a date range of 1880–1644 cal BC (at 95% probability). The relatively early Bronze Age date of the oak sample may be due to the ‘old wood’ effect as the longevity of this species can lead to misleadingly early radiocarbon dates. A similar collapsed turf deposit, Context



**Illus 6** Sections through principal postholes (Lindsey Stirling & Sam O’Leary, AOC Archaeology)

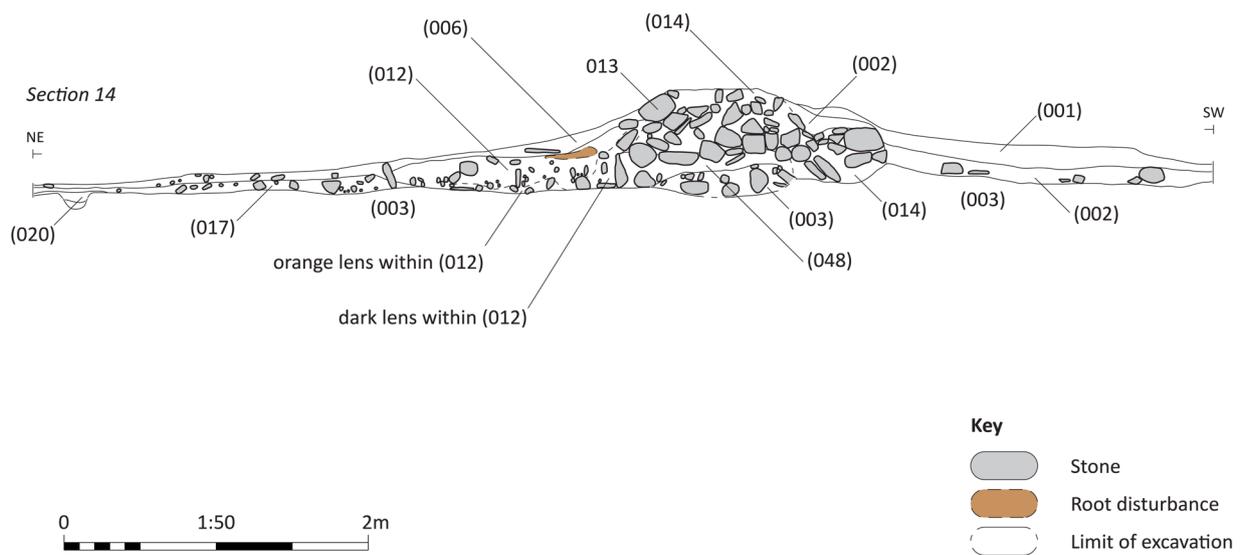
(019), was identified on the exterior of the bank, close to the entrance, in Q2. The collapse deposits, Contexts (014) and (016), located around the exterior of the bank were generally much more stone-rich, consisting of greyish brown silty sand with frequent angular and rounded stones. A

saddle quern (SF02) was identified within stone collapse (014).

The posts within the roundhouse interior appear to have been left to decay in situ or were cut close to ground level, as evidenced by the presence of in situ or slightly slumped packing stones.



Illus 7 Orthographic image from pre-excitation photogrammetric model (AOC Archaeology)



Illus 8 Representative section through the roundhouse bank/walls (Lindsey Stirling & Sam O'Leary, AOC Archaeology)