
4 THE MEDIEVAL RURAL SETTLEMENT (TRENCH 2)

An overall plan of Trench 2 is shown in [illus 3](#). To the west, two broad linear gully systems (F5, F7) and several pits were revealed running roughly east-west along the low ridge, with a ditch (F8) to the south. Two discrete structures (F13, F14) and several large pits (F15–18) were located to the south of the central area. The remains of an enclosure (F19) and a possible structure with stone footings (F24) were also revealed, situated slightly north-east of F13 and F14. Several pits of varying size and depth were also exposed to the north of F19 in the central part of the site. Two narrow gullies (F23 and F20) ran roughly east to west across the northern part of the site.

4.1 ‘Sunken-floored’ structures and associated features

Two discrete structures, F13 and F14, were well-defined as irregular oval or sub-rectangular shallow depressions containing associated structural elements.

F13 ([illus 4](#)) was an irregular sub-rectangular feature measuring *c* 7.5m by 4m. It was defined by a shallow cut 1301, with a level base 0.1m deep. The base of the feature was cut by several irregular pits, situated mainly around the perimeter, and there were gravel patches on the surface. The pits measured between 0.7m and 1.6m in diameter and were 0.2m to 0.5m deep, steep or vertically sided and filled with dark silt and occasional large stones. Two pits at the west end of the feature produced interesting assemblages of finds. Pit 1313 contained several large stones in its upper fill, including two mortars/anvils and a pivot stone ([illus 5](#)). Large quantities of charcoal were recovered from pit 1315, as well as a decorated soapstone spindle whorl and 11 sherds of medieval pottery. A concentration of charcoal, ash and scorched sand, 1307, was located close to the centre of F13. The pits were sealed by a dense deposit of grey silt, 1302, which formed the fill of F13 and contained fragments of bone, charcoal and medieval pottery sherds. This fill underlay an extensive spread of large stones forming a layer up to 0.5m deep, which was contained within the topsoil matrix. They became visible during excavation after removal of only 0.3m depth of topsoil, and appeared to have been disturbed by plough action. Fragments of animal bone, medieval pottery sherds and an iron sickle blade were recovered from the base of the stones.

F14 ([illus 6–7](#)) was situated 4m to the east of F13 and was a roughly sub-rectangular feature, aligned east–west and measuring 5.4m by 3.5m; it had partial straight edges to the west, south and

east sides with well-defined corners, but a less well-defined, curving northern edge which may have been truncated. The cut, 1401, was sharply defined with sloping sides and a flat base, and was *c* 0.3m in depth at the centre. It included a slight step along the straight edges, varying in width between *c* 5cm–20cm. The feature’s north-eastern edge was defined by large stones set onto the subsoil surface. Two small stake-holes (1405, 1407) were revealed cut into the subsoil at the south-western corner, and another stake- or post-hole with packing stones (1411) was cut near the centre of the northern edge of the feature. There was an area of modern disturbance at the north-east corner of F14.

The floor of F14 was cut by sub-rectangular pit 1424, which was located at the west end of the structure, and abutted an oval patch of burnt sand (1425) to its east. Pit 1424 was filled with the same deposit which made up the primary fill of F14 (1404), a fine dark brown silt, suggesting that it was open during the life of the structure. Overlying this in the south-western quadrant was a 0.05m thick layer of burnt material which contained charcoal (1403). The main fill of the feature was 1402, a homogenous spread of fine silt, which contained over 100 sherds of medieval pottery, a hammerstone, fragments of bone and charcoal fragments. This may represent an abandonment layer which formed after the structure went out of use.

At the north-west corner, F14 was cut by an elongated oval pit 1413 (3m × 1m × 0.25m in depth). At its narrowest point, where it intersected the edge of F14, this pit contained two large stones, one of which has been identified as a discarded trough (1417; Jackson [below](#)). These either continued the line of the structure wall or, possibly, formed a threshold. Four stake-holes cut the base of the pit, three on the inside of F14 and one on the outside, in a linear arrangement. The two largest, one inside (1420) and one outside (1415), were approximately 1m apart. The pit was filled with a dark sandy silt containing sparse limpet shells and occasional stones.

F14 was abutted by an oval pit (1426), measuring 2.3m × 1m and 0.2m deep, on its northern edge. It was filled with a compact dark silt containing a large quantity of periwinkle and limpet shells, fragments of animal bone and four sherds of medieval pottery.

To the east of F14, five pits were identified ([illus 3](#)). The closest, F15, consisted of one circular (1501; 2m diameter, 0.7 deep) and one oval (1505; *c* 2m × 1.2 m, *c* 0.5m deep) pit, the former cutting the latter. Both had vertical sides and a slightly concave base. Pit 1501 produced over 100 sherds of medieval pottery and some animal bone, the majority from

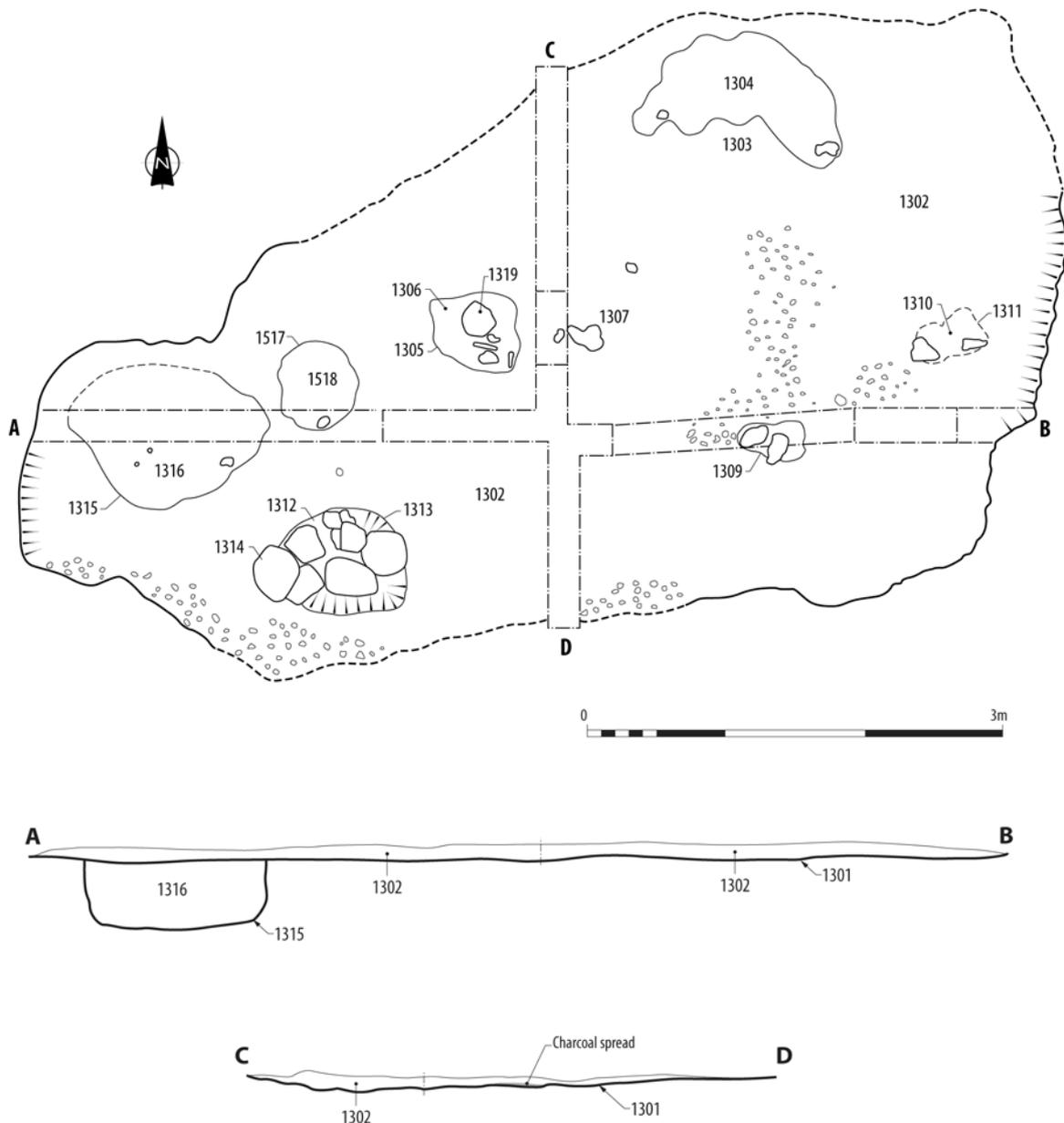
its primary fill. One sherd of modern earthenware from the upper fill is presumed intrusive. The two lower fills of 1505 were organic and peaty in nature, containing charcoal, medieval pottery and animal bone, and were covered by large angular stones, over which was a layer of dense silt.

Three further pits (F16–18) were situated adjacent to each other in a curvilinear arrangement and aligned roughly south-east to north-west. F16, the furthest east in the excavated area, was located *c* 6m east of the east end of F14. F16 was a circular pit (1601) measuring 0.8m in diameter and reaching a depth of 0.9m and was filled with sandy silt (1602). F17 was a roughly circular pit (1701) measuring *c* 1m in diameter and 0.6m deep. The fill (1702) comprised fine sandy silt and contained several large angular stones (1703) in the base. F18 was a large circular pit (1801) *c* 2m in diameter and

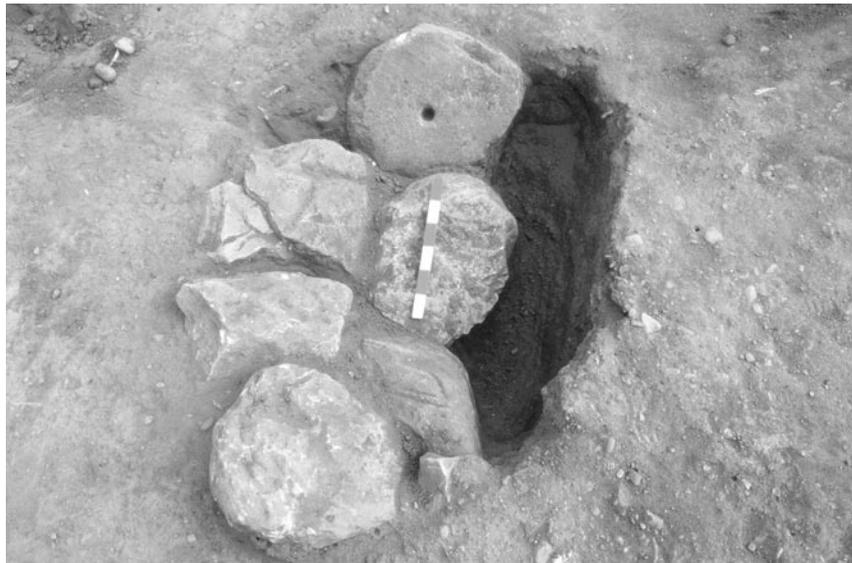
0.9m deep. Much slumping of the sides of the pit had occurred and the cut was very unclear in places. It was filled with mixed sand and silt (1802), and contained three large flat stones in the base. All had been subject to bioturbation, and each produced a few fragments of medieval pottery. Fragments of charcoal were recovered from F18.

4.2 Enclosure F19

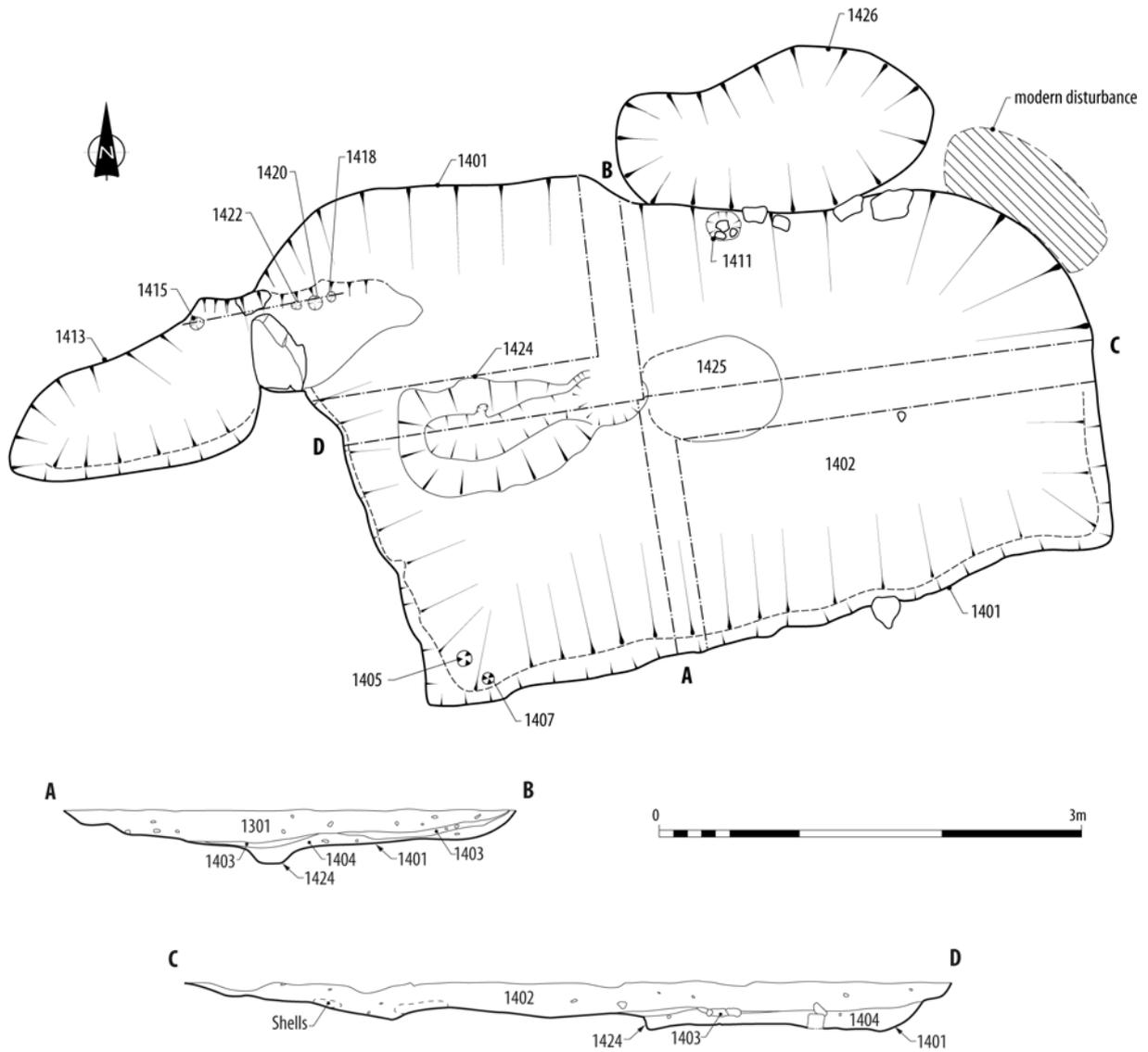
F19 (illus 8) was located towards the east end of the trench, *c* 8m to the north of F14. It comprised an elongated rectilinear enclosure defined by gully lines, on an approximately east to west alignment and measuring *c* 27m by *c* 7m. The feature lay under an area of relatively shallow topsoil and had been severely disturbed and truncated by ploughing.



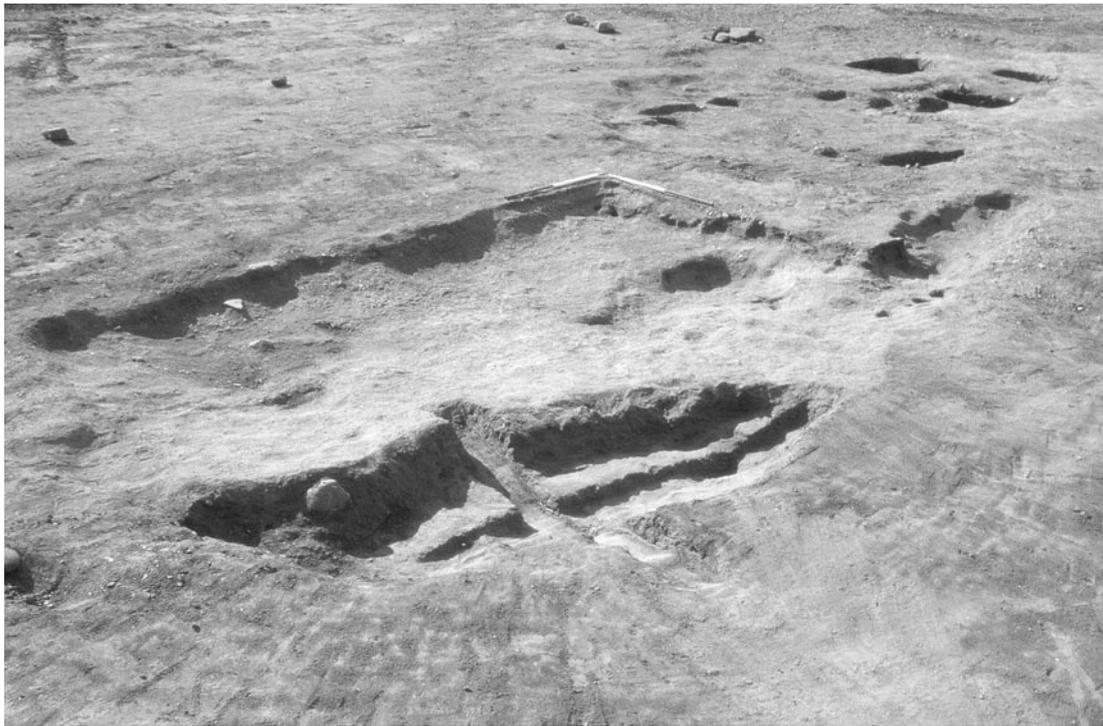
Illus 4 Plan and sections of F13



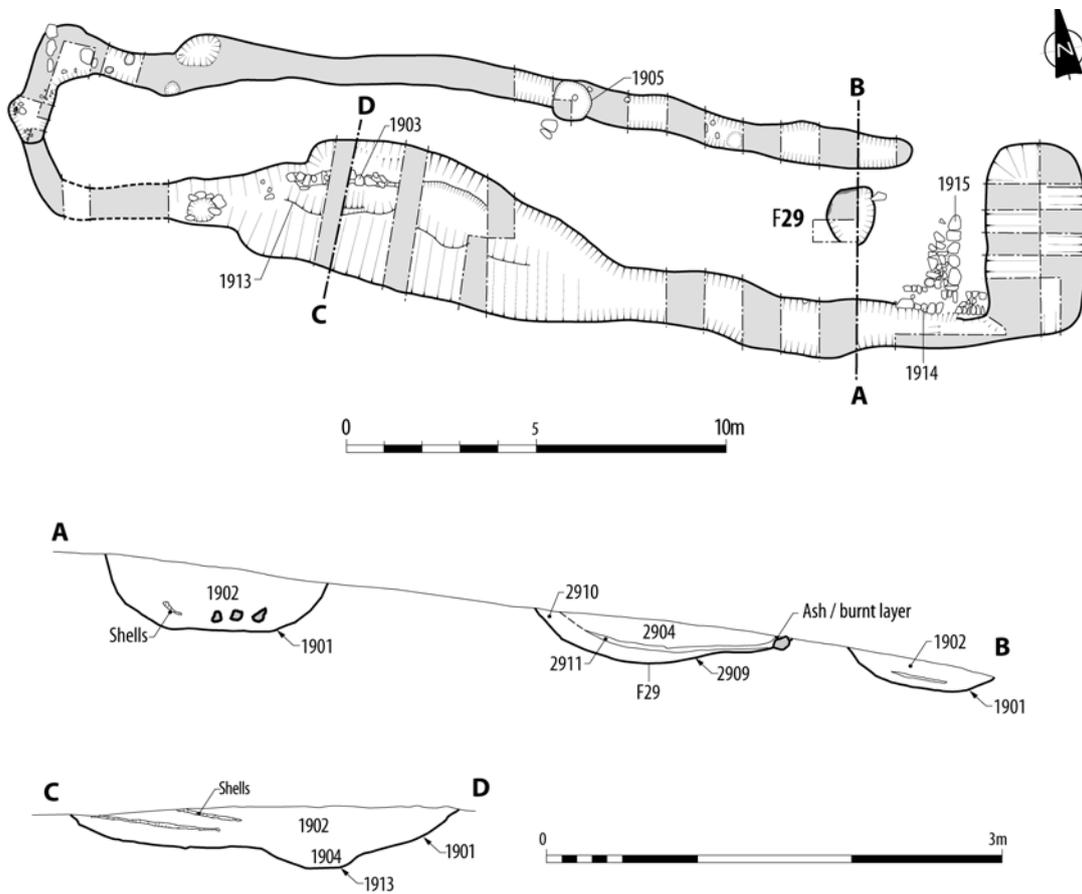
Illus 5 Pit 1313 half-sectioned with in situ stones in upper fill visible including pivot stone



Illus 6 Plan and sections of F14



Illus 7 South-facing view of F14 with pit 1426 in the foreground. The pits in the floor of F13 can be seen to the top right of the picture



Illus 8 Plan and sections of F19



Illus 9 Wall 1915

The gullies and much of the interior of the feature were sealed by firm dark silt (1902). This contained extensive stone tumble within the interior of the enclosure, with a particular concentration around the north-west corner. It may represent a post-abandonment layer.

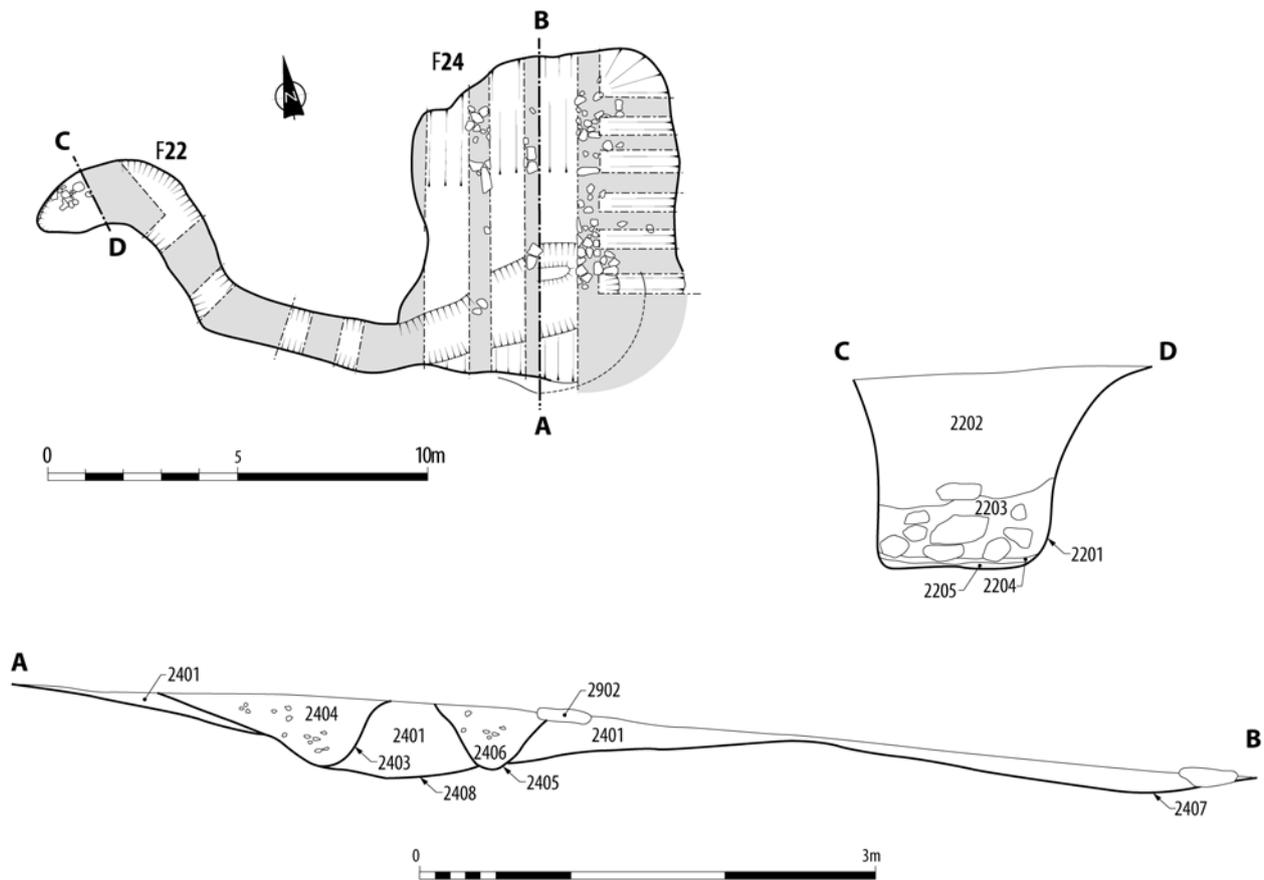
Two parallel gullies aligned approximately east to west were linked at the west end, forming a rectangular enclosure with a break at the north-east corner, possibly representing an entrance. The enclosure was less well defined towards its east end. The gully defining the north and west edges of the feature measured *c* 1m wide by *c* 0.15m deep. The cut (1901) had shallow sloping sides and an irregular base. A circular pit (1905), *c* 1m in diameter, had been cut into the north gully approximately midway along its length. It had steeply sloping sides and a concave base at a depth of 0.4m. It was filled with dark, organic-rich silt (1906). No finds were recovered from the fill.

On the south side, the gully became significantly deeper and wider, measuring *c* 1.4m wide by *c* 0.7m deep. The fill contained several thin lenses of shell. A ditch had been re-cut (1913) near the centre of the south gully, at the point close to the centre where it widened to 3.5m for a length of 6m. The re-cut was *c* 6.5m in length by *c* 1m wide and was 0.6m deep with steeply sloping sides and a concave base. It lacked

defined termini at either end, and merged into the main gully 1901. The fill of the re-cut (1904) was a dark grey silt containing occasional shells. It had merged with 1902 due to bioturbation and leaching. Several large stones (1903) were contained within the fill, which may represent tumble from a possible former structure.

The gully defining the east edge of the feature turned 90° to the north from the south gully and terminated close to F22. Here, the cut had shallow sloping sides and a concave base with a rounded terminus, and measured *c* 2m wide and 0.3m deep. It seems likely that it formed a continuation of the gully, and it may have run towards F22 as a waste drain. Alternatively, the gap between its terminus and the east end of the north gully may represent an entrance.

Two wall footings forming a 90° return were discovered within the enclosure at its south-east corner (*illus 9*). Footing 1914 was aligned parallel to the southern gully and was constructed as two parallel rows of large sandstone blocks set onto the subsoil surface, forming a double-skinned cavity foundation. It extended for *c* 2.3m and was 0.7m wide. The other footing (1915) abutted this on its north side at a right-angle. It was built from large blocky sandstones set onto the subsoil surface without any definite structural pattern other than their



Illus 10 Plan and sections of F22 / F24

alignment. This footing extended for *c* 2m and was 0.7m wide. There was no evidence of a foundation trench for these stones.

A possible hearth pit (F29) was discovered inside the enclosure, located towards the east end of F19. It was cut into the subsoil and measured 1.4m in diameter by 0.6m deep. The primary fill (2910) comprised a dark silt deposit 0.2m thick, which contained charcoal and burnt material. Overlying this was a 0.1m-thick deposit of charcoal-rich burnt material (2911). Above this was a dark silt fill (2904). It is possible that the thin layer of charcoal-rich burnt material represents sweepings or refuse rather than in situ burning.

Finds from F19 included over 300 sherds of medieval pottery, over 500 bone fragments, a fragment of painted window glass, two stone mortars, a knife, an annular buckle and a fragment of buckle plate. All datable objects from the feature appear to belong to the 13th–14th centuries.

One possible interpretation of this feature is that the shallow gullies were dug to provide material to create a level house platform on which to build at least one stone-footed structure. The profiles of the gullies, which have shallow outer sides and slightly steeper inner sides levelling off at the top, would be compatible with this interpretation. This suggestion is discussed further below. It is also possible that

the gullies served as waste drains running alongside the structure.

4.3 Other structures

F24 (*illus 10–11*) was defined by a sub-rectangular hollow (2408) aligned approximately north–south and measuring *c* 8.7m by 7m, with gently sloping sides and a depth of 0.15 to 0.4m. It was filled with firm dark silt (2401) which merged with the undisturbed topsoil extant over this part of the site. Fragments of animal bone, a copper alloy buckle frame, an iron blade, a grinding stone and over 100 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the fill.

On the south side of the hollow, a curvilinear gully, 2403, cut the silt fill and ran out of the hollow towards the north-west for *c* 15m, curving round and merging with F22 (see *below*). The gully was 1.1m wide and 0.5m deep with a U-shaped profile, and was filled with dark silt (2404) which contained a high concentration of shells, as well as some medieval pottery. To the north of the east end of gully 2403, a narrower gully (2405) measuring 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep ran parallel for *c* 4m, merging at either end. The relationship between the two was unclear. The fill of 2405 was the same as 2403 in



Illus 11 North-facing surface view of F24

general make-up, although it contained significantly less shell and no pottery.

A spread of stones, 2402, was apparently contained within fill 2401, although few of the stones rested on the floor of the hollow. On plan they suggested a rectilinear or square structure, but some of the stones may represent paving or tumble rather than footings. It seems likely that the southern edge of the stones was delineated by gully 2403, although some lay above its fill, possibly due to later tumble and plough action. They did appear to overlie the fill of 2405, however. At the northern side, large stones were set directly on the subsoil surface, and the feature appeared to be defined by a discontinuous vestigial shallow depression (2407). This may represent a former foundation ditch for a stone wall, although too little survived to be certain of this interpretation.

F22 (*illus 10*) comprised a large oval pit situated at the end of the ditch running from F24. The pit measured *c* 2m long, 1.8m wide and 1m deep, and was aligned ENE-WSW. The cut (2201) of the pit was vertically-sided with a flat base. The primary fill was a black organic peat *c* 0.03m thick (2205), which underlay a 0.1m deposit of degraded shells contained within loose sandy clay (2204). This shell-rich deposit underlay a 0.5m-thick layer of large sub-angular stones contained within a matrix of grey gritty clay (2203). Over this was a deposit of dense silt (2202) containing limpet and periwinkle shells. Fragments of bone and medieval pottery

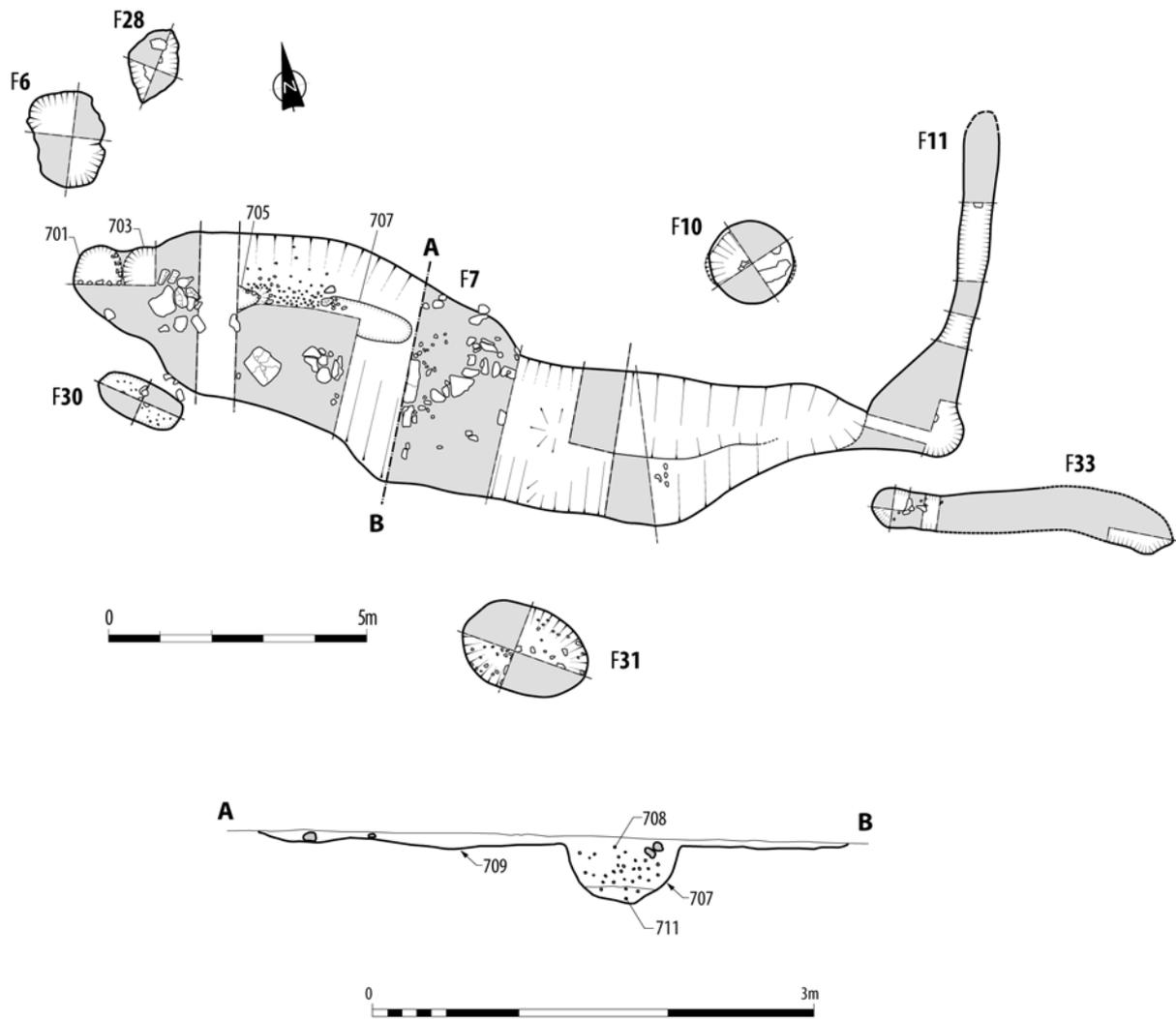
sherds were recovered from the upper deposit, which merged with the fill of gully 2405.

It seems likely that F22 formed a sump or soakaway for gully 2405, which may have functioned as a drain. The stone spread, though vestigial, is likely to represent another stone-footed structure similar to that identified in F19. Whether the two structures were contemporary is uncertain, as the gully cut the fill of F24. It is not clear whether the fill represents an abandonment layer within a hollow around the putative stone structure, or whether it was intentionally backfilled before the construction of the possible drain.

4.4 Complex of features to the west of the site

A series of ditches and pits was excavated in the western third of the site (*illus 3*). Three primary features comprising large linear gullies (F5, F7 & F8) aligned roughly east to west occupied the west of the site.

F5 comprised a shallow irregular gully extending *c* 7m from the western baulk of the trench. It measured up to *c* 4.9m wide and had a possible deeper re-cut along its south edge, measuring up to 3m wide and 0.3m deep. The gully terminus was irregular in plan and featured a possibly re-cut curvilinear slot orientated north-south and measuring *c* 5m by 1m and up to 0.3m deep. The fill of F5 was a variable compact stony silt which contained



Illus 12 Plan and section of F7

occasional shell inclusions. No stratigraphical relationships between the possible re-cuts and the main gully could be discerned with any certainty from the fill. Fragments of animal teeth and bones and sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the main fill. A copper alloy token was recovered from the fill of the narrow linear slot.

F7 (illus 12) was on the same alignment as F5, situated c 5m to its east. It consisted of a series of oval pits and linear ditches cut within a broad, shallow gully measuring c 13.5m long and 3–4m wide. Due to bioturbation and soil leaching it was not possible to resolve stratigraphical relationships between the individual pits and ditches. The cut (709) of the main gully varied in depth from 0.2m to 0.6m, with very shallow sloping edges and an irregular concave base. The eastern terminus narrowed to 1.5m and merged with the southern terminus of F11 (below). The fill was compact grey silt (710) throughout, which contained several large worked stones including two pivot stones, although they were not in situ. Finds included animal bones,

sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery and a copper wire loop. The upper fill had been disturbed by ploughing so finds from there must be viewed as being less than secure.

Four pits were cut into the base of F7. The western terminus of the feature was defined by two rounded pits (701, 703) with steep edges and slightly concave bases, each measuring c 1m in diameter and 0.4m deep. The two other pits (705, 707) were oval in plan, with steep sides and irregular concave bases, and measured c 1.8m by 0.6m and 0.6m deep. The pits were filled with compact grey gravelly silt (702, 704, 706, 708) which was indistinguishable from the surrounding fill of the main gully (710). One pit (707) contained medieval pottery in its fill.

A linear ditch (F11), aligned north to south, was located at the east end of F7 and filled with dark stony silt (1102). It measured c 15m long by 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep, although its northern extent was truncated out and its southern extent merged with the eastern edge of F7. Bone, medieval pottery sherds and charcoal were recovered from

the fill. Its stratigraphical relationship with F7 was unclear due to the homogeneity of the fills and truncation.

There is a possibility that F7 formed the south side of another structure similar to F19, possibly with an open north side. The north–south gullies at the east ends of F5 and F7 could then form the east and west ends of the ‘enclosure’ which was dug to form another house platform. At 23m in length, this would be slightly shorter than F19, but the surviving length of F11 suggests that it could have been slightly wider, perhaps up to 7m. However, the presence of pits within the gully base is a defining attribute of F7, and is absent from the ditches forming F19, so it is equally likely that F7 represents a different type of feature.

F8 (*illus 3*) was a linear ditch which ran roughly ENE to WSW, extending 25m from the western baulk of the trench, *c* 10m to the south of F7. It was *c* 1m wide and *c* 0.3m deep, and had sloping sides with a shallow concave base. Limpet shells accounted for *c* 50% of the loose stony fill. It appeared to have been truncated at the west so it may have extended further. A few sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery and animal bone fragments were recovered from the fill.

Several other ditches and pits were located in the west of the site (*illus 3*). A shallow linear ditch (F33) was situated to the east of F7, on the same alignment as the main gully of F7. It measured 5.9m by 0.7m and 0.25m deep and had a dark stony silt fill containing medieval pottery. A NNW–SSE aligned ditch (F27) was located to the north of F7, *c* 6m by 0.3m and 0.15m deep and had a stony silt fill.

Several circular and oval pits (F6, F9, F10, F28,

F30, F31) measuring between 1.2 and 2.5m in diameter were situated close to F5 and F7, though without any stratigraphical association. Small quantities of medieval pottery sherds, animal bone fragments, degraded shell fragments, mortar and charcoal were recovered from several of the pit fills and a large flat stone was found in the base of F28, which may represent a padstone.

4.5 Other features

Four pits and two narrow ditches occupied the north of the site (*illus 3*).

The ditches (F20, F23) were visible for up to 25m running east to west along the north edge of the site. F20 was 0.3m wide and *c* 0.2m deep, and was filled with fine sandy silt, from which sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. F23 had been truncated and survived to less than 0.01m deep, and was only faintly visible in damp conditions along its entire length, although a hammerstone/pounder and eight sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the fill.

The pits (F12, F21, F25, F32) were sub-circular to oval and were spread between F20 and F19. They measured between 0.6 and 1.4m in diameter and up to 0.3m deep. The fill of F12 contained animal bone fragments and medieval pottery, F32 contained limpet shells and thin horizontal lenses of ash and F21 contained charcoal, fragments of a copper alloy vessel and medieval pottery sherds.

An isolated oval pit (F26) was located in the south-west of the site. It was 1.8m by 1m and 0.2m deep, and filled with fine stony silt.