Broomhill Farm
Bourton Heath
Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation 1991

(EXTRACTS ONLY)

Warwickshire
County Council

LATE BRONZE AGE/EARLY IRON AGE POTTERY FROM 1303/1

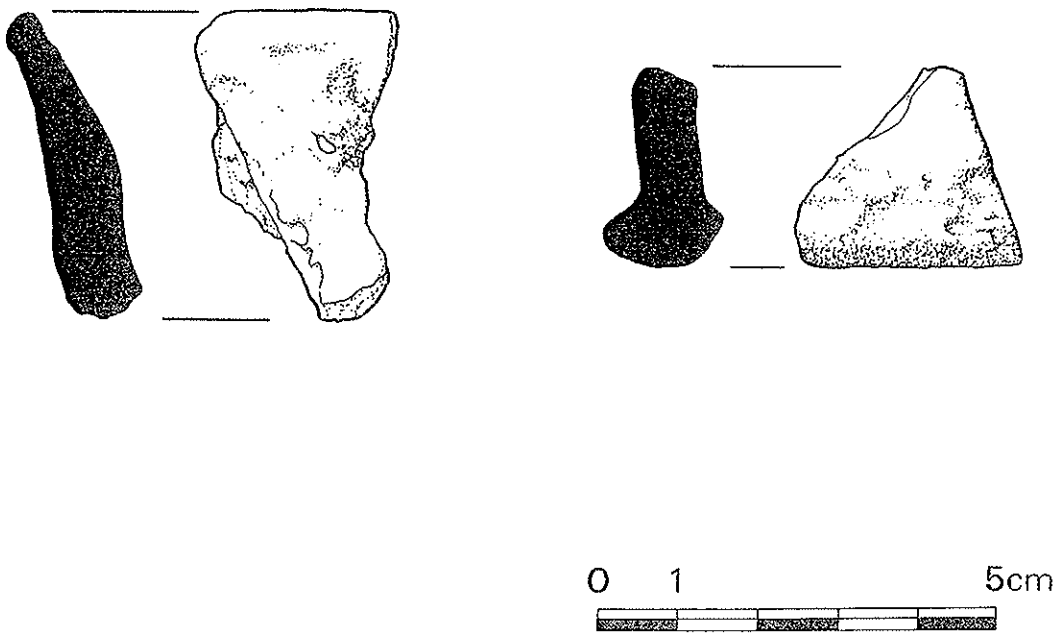

Fig 9

7. Discussion of Finds

7.1 The number of finds recovered during the trial trenching was relatively small, the most important groups being the assemblages of prehistoric pottery from pit 1303 and the sections of enclosure ditch 3601, 3602, and 3801. The former included both a rim and a base sherd, and these, together with the composition of the fabrics, suggest a date either in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age (c1400-600 BC). The latter comprised only a small number of body sherds, but on the basis of the fabric would appear to date to the middle Iron Age (c600-400 BC).

7.2 Several of the features were sampled for charred plant remains, and preliminary analysis suggests that carbonised seeds and other material do survive albeit in small quantities. No organic preservation has been observed.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The archaeological fieldwork at Broomhill Farm allows the following conclusions to be drawn concerning past human activity in the application area:

8.2 Early prehistoric activity is indicated by the small number of worked flints recovered during the fieldwalking survey. However these are not sufficient to suggest settlement or other intensive land use. Some may even date to the later prehistoric period.

8.3 During the later Bronze Age or early Iron Age (c1400-600 BC) a linear boundary feature was constructed across the area of the application site. This comprised a series of subcircular pits, some of which were subsequently recut. Parts of the linear boundary appear to comprise lengths of ditch rather than individual pits. At least one enclosure appears to have been appended to the linear boundary (Field 4) and may have been used either for settlement or for stock control.

8.4 The function of the pit alignment is not clear, but the pits and lengths of ditch may have served to provide spoil for the construction of a small bank. Further lengths of ditch, parallel to the pit alignment, may also have been dug at this time. It is likely that this boundary feature served to demarcate territorial areas, and it forms part of a much wider network of boundaries and settlements in the area.

8.5 At a later date, probably during the middle Iron Age (c600-400 BC), a small subrectangular enclosure of unknown function was constructed (Field 3). This is similar to many others in the area known from aerial photographs. It likely that during the period from the later Bronze Age to the middle Iron Age, the area of Bourton Heath was cleared and used for crop cultivation as well as stock rearing.

8.6 At an unknown date, but possibly towards the end of the Sub-Boreal, the area of which the application site forms part began to develop into a heathland habitat. This may have been the result of a combination of climatic deterioration and anthropogenic factors, including the farming practices of the inhabitants of the area during the later Bronze to middle Iron Ages. From the Roman to the medieval periods the heathland was probably used for rough grazing.

8.7 At some stage of the post medieval period, prior to the 18th century enclosure of the area, a field boundary ditch was dug parallel to the course of the prehistoric linear boundary. It must be assumed that some part of the boundary feature - either the low earthwork remains of a bank, a hedge, or the impressions of the pits themselves - must have been visible for this to have been possible. This suggests that little or no ploughing took place on Bourton Heath between the later prehistoric and post medieval periods.

8.8 From the 1760s the area of Bourton Heath was subject to parliamentary enclosure, and the surviving pattern of fields was defined. The land was then improved and turned over to crop cultivation once more.

9. Implications of the Proposed Development

9.1 The archaeological fieldwork on the site has shed considerable light on the history of its past land use. It has also left several uncertainties which could only be resolved by further fieldwork at some time in the future. In particular, more research is needed into the environmental history of the site and its surroundings.

9.2 The extraction of sand and gravel and associated works would obliterate all archaeological features in the area affected, whether previously known or otherwise. Areas used for soil mounding and plant would be seriously disturbed by topsoil stripping and the passage of heavy machinery.

9.3 The weight attached to the need to protect and preserve archaeological remains is influenced by the importance of those remains in a national and local context. Among the more significant factors used to gauge that importance are the type, period, state of preservation and rarity of the remains.

9.4 For the purposes of this evaluation report, the archaeological potential of areas of the application site has been assigned on the basis of a two tier system of classification (Fig 10), and recommendations have been formulated on this basis.

10. Recommendations

10.1 High level of significance.

This category identifies known or likely areas of archaeological features of high potential. These should either be excluded from the extraction scheme in order to preserve the deposits they contain, or be subject to thorough and extensive investigation in advance of extraction or other works followed in due course by full analysis and publication of the results. Any such investigations should be carried out to the satisfaction of the Mineral Planning Authority.

10.2 Medium to low level of significance.

This category identifies areas which contain either no features, or a number of undated features, and which lie in proximity to areas of high archaeological potential. In these areas it should be sufficient for an intensive watching brief to be undertaken. They should be observed and examined for archaeological features when the topsoil is removed, and full provision should be made for investigation and recording to the satisfaction of the Mineral Planning Authority.

Bibliography

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Turner, J. 1981 — The Iron Age, in I. Simmons and M. Tooley (eds) The Environment in British Prehistory, 250-281. London: Duckworth.

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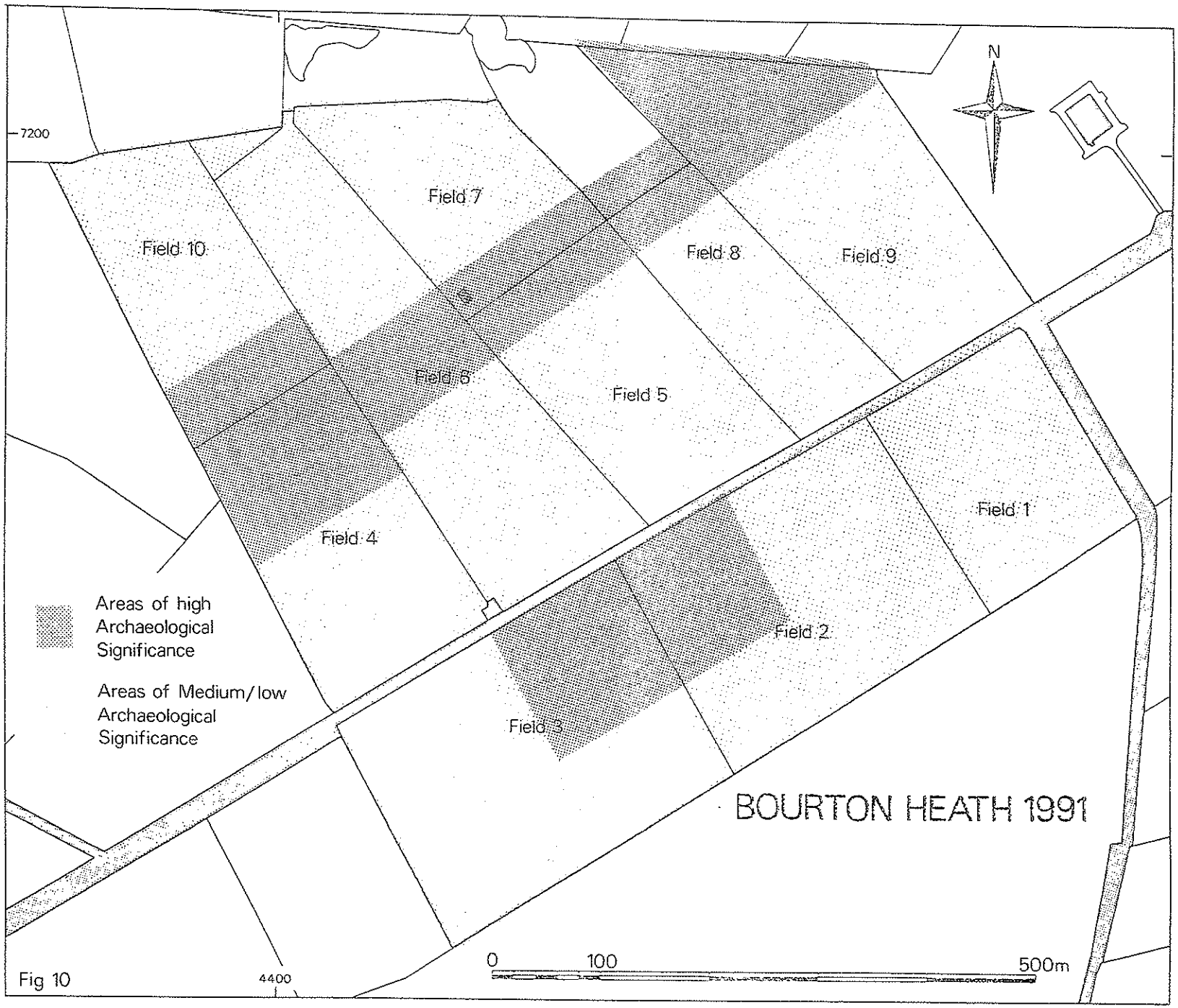
7200
4400
N
Field 1
Field 2
Field 3
Field 4
Field 5
Field 6
Field 7
Field 8
Field 9
Field 10
Areas of high Archaeological Significance
Areas of Medium/low Archaeological Significance
0
100
500m
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Fig 10