

KAS / LEES COURT ESTATE – STRINGMANS FIELD 2019 EXCAVATION

PROJECT CODE: SF19

SITE: Stringmans Field, near Stringmans Farm, Faversham ME13 0LA

NGR: TR 0248 5435

PLANNING REFS: n/a

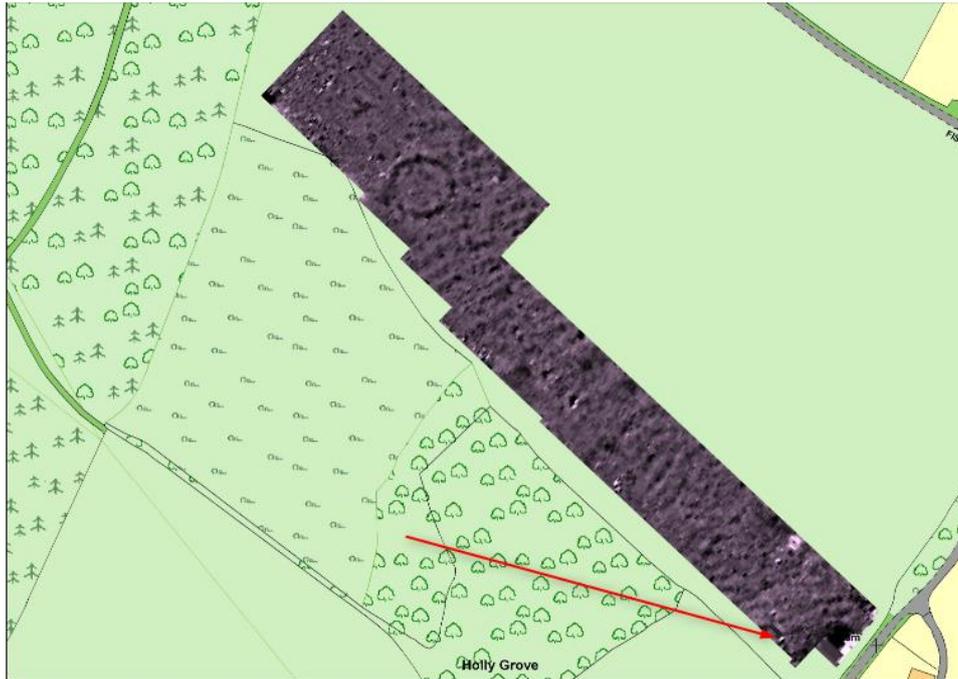
DATE: 8th – 19th July 2019

PREPARED FOR: Kent Archaeological Society and Lees Court Estate



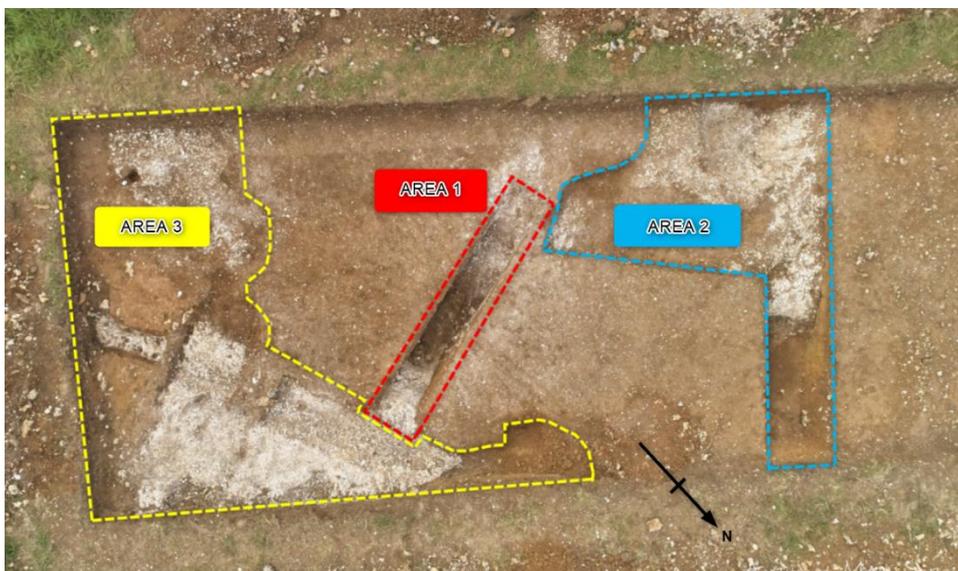
1. INTRODUCTION

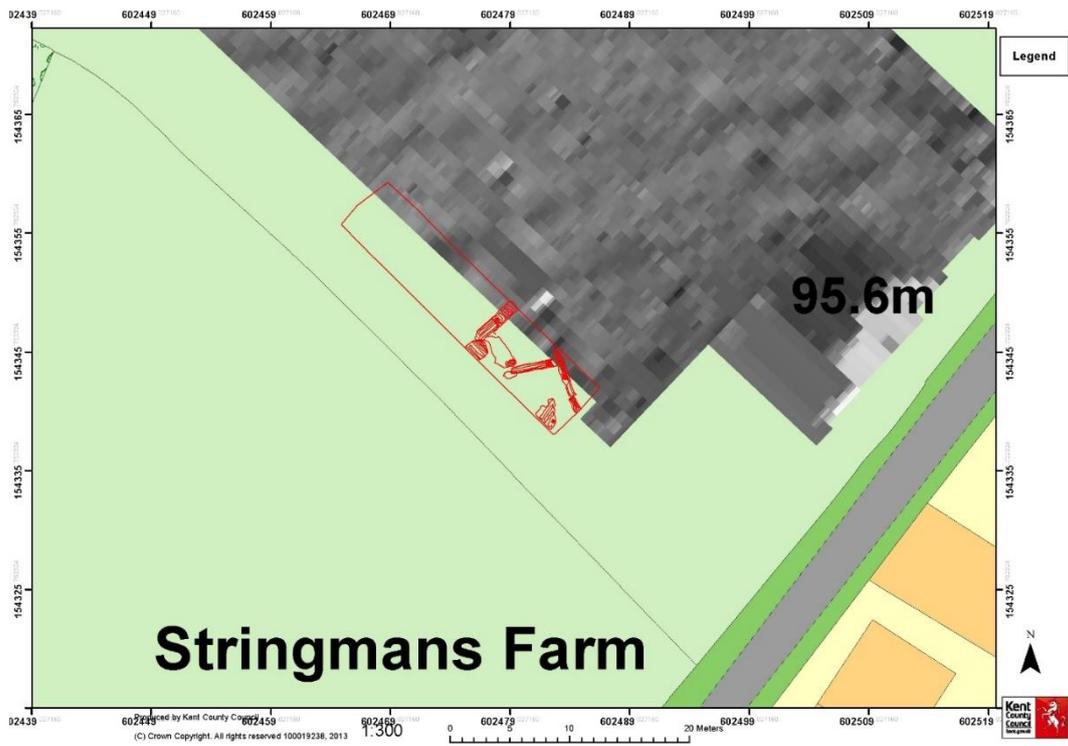
- 1.1. The KAS plans to return to the excavation site at Stringmans Field in July 2019 to clean up the existing trench and further determine the extent and function of the probable barrow feature.
- 1.2. The initial excavation at Stringmans Field (TR 0248 5435) was carried out from 12th – 24th September 2018 as part of the KAS Lees Court Estate Archaeological Project. A 25m x 5m trench was de-turfed and topsoil removed by machine over a strong magnetic response (see Fig 1), the result of a KAS geophysical survey carried out in April 2018.



(Fig 1 – geophysics results of Stringmans Field – April 2018, courtesy of KCC)

- 1.3. The 2018 excavation results have been divided into three trench areas as labelled below:





(Fig 2: trench/area map of 2018 excavations)

(Fig 3: rectified trench features overlain on geophysics results, courtesy of KCC)

1.4. The trenches and their internal features were plotted using a Leica GNSS, the results of which are overlaid on the geophysics (magnetometry) results. It should be noted that the first rectification of the geophysics results may not be as accurate as of the current GNSS plan. However, what is clear is the excavation did investigate the general area of the strong magnetic response exhibited by the ring ditch.

2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS 2018

- **Area 1**

2.1. Following this summer's excavation, the evidence that emerged from the excavation in Stringmans Field suggests the most likely explanation for the feature/anomaly shown in the geophysics (Fig 1) is a Bronze Age barrow. A combination of geophysical and excavation evidence suggests the probable barrow has a ring ditch c.15-20m in diameter, approximately 1.0 to 1.5m wide and c.1.0m in depth.

2.2. The outer cut for the ring ditch [521] is clear (see Figs 4 & 5) in slot trench:

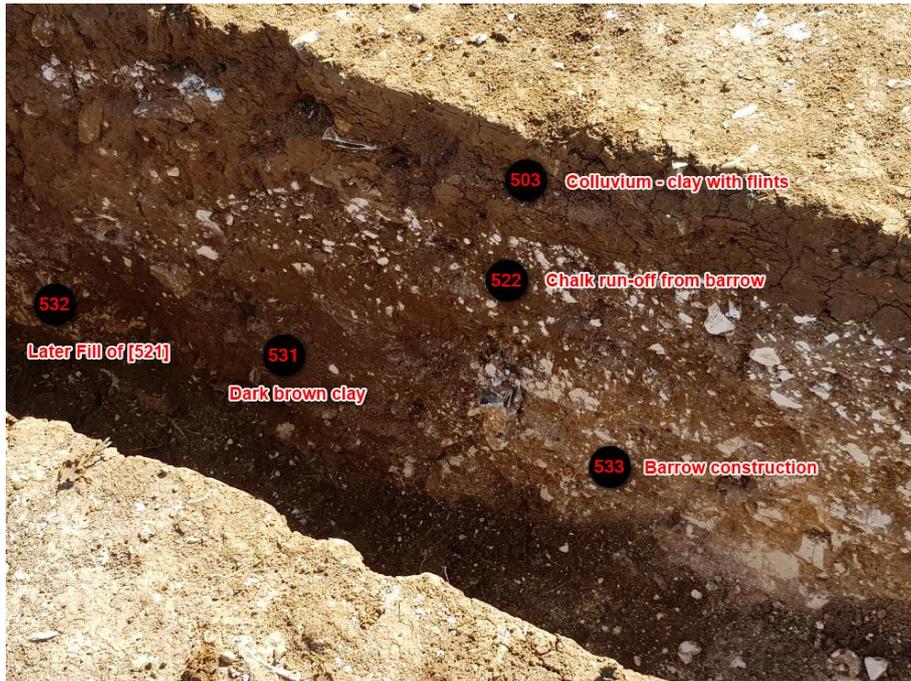


(Figs 4 & 5 showing outer ditch cut [521] into natural chalk bedrock)

2.3. The probable barrow structure appears curvilinear and composed mostly of up-cast chalk from the excavated ring ditch, though the final height of the barrow (and its total composition) may have been hindered during the construction phase by the discovery that the natural chalk bed appears to dive off to sandy clay (solution hollow?) to the northwest quadrant of the ring ditch.

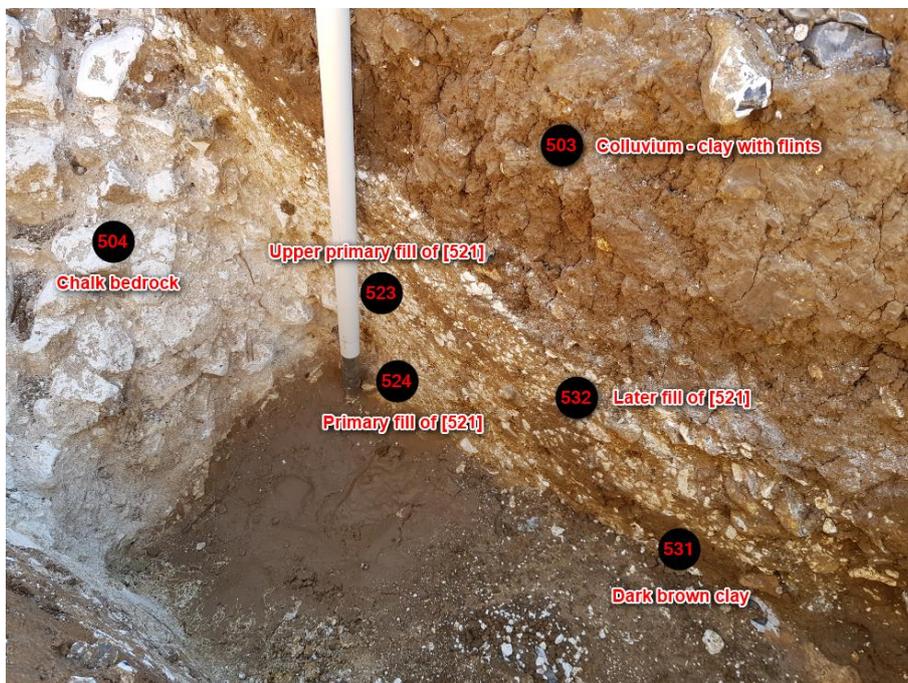
2.4. Slot trench in Area 1 provides the clearest indication of the probable ditch and barrow structure as shown in Figs 4 & 5.

2.5. South of [521] is the first indications of the barrow super-structure (533), which appears to be composed of large chalk pieces in a thin brown silty clay matrix. (522) exhibits a pronounced curvilinear profile, but its matrix is too fine and silty to be a permanent structure. Therefore, (522) is believed to be a chalk/soil run-off from barrow surface.



(Fig 6 – northwest facing section of slot trench in Area 1)

2.6. There appears to be a primary fill (524) of [521]; (523) is likely to be a later episode of (524) as its chalk composition is less pulverised.



(Fig 7 - northwest facing section of slot trench in Area 1 showing fills of [521])

2.7. (532) is a later fill of [521] that also suggests [521] has undergone a series of re-cuts over time, though no context numbers have been attributed to any re-cuts until further excavation reveals conclusive evidence for these potential events.

- **Area 2**

2.8. An excavation in Area 2 to the northwest reveals a possible continuation of the ring ditch cut through this sandy clay (527) and (528). This discovery came as something of a surprise, given the ring ditch in Area 1 is cut into the chalk bedrock. The alternative view (to be tested in 2019) is that the ring ditch is cut through natural chalk further south beyond the trench edge.

2.9. Three ceramic sherds (totalling four gms) were found in Area 2:

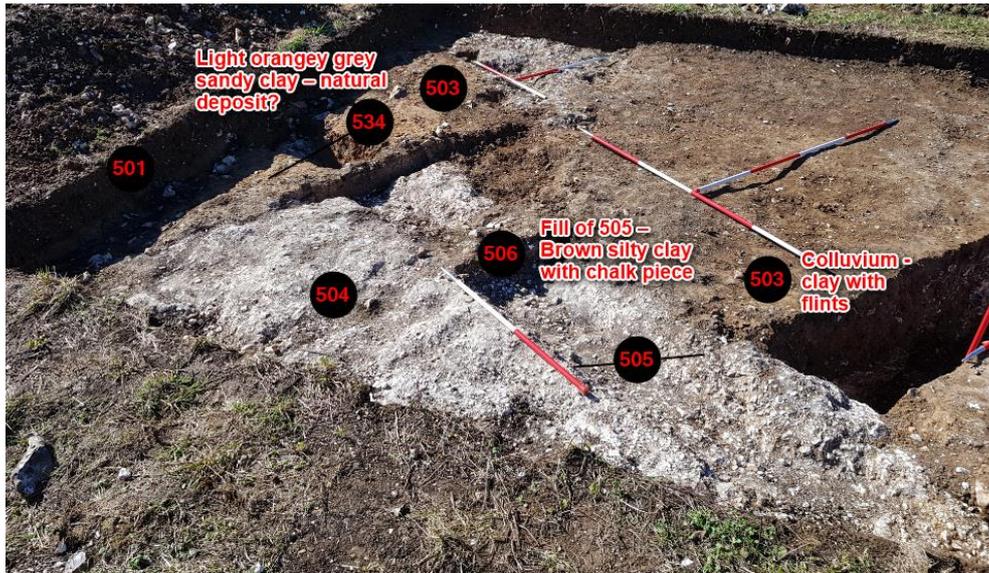
- 2 EP? Beaker flint-tempered ware (slight EBA preference, c.2000-1700 BC range; same vessel);
- 1 LP flint-tempered ware (slight MBA>MBA/LBA preference, c.1550-1350/1150 BC emphasis).
- Same-vessel elements are small but only slightly worn; the thin body wall and dual-tone firing suggests the possible Beaker period date. Their condition compared with the second entry suggests they may be residual in context. The second entry is fairly small, coarse-gritted and near-fresh.
- Likely commencement date - nothing obviously earlier than, possibly, c.2000 BC.
- Likely end-date: If not residual – between c.1550-1150 BC.¹

- **Area 3**

2.10. Area 3 presented some issues, not least because a shallow linear ditch some became apparent which, at the time, was thought to be responsible for the magnetic anomaly in the geophysics results. Indeed, it was not until the slot trench in Area 1 was excavated to a depth that indicated the presence of a much broader and deeper ring ditch, that this notion was dismissed.

2.11. The relationship between ditch [505] and [521] remains unclear. [505] is partly cut into the natural chalk (504) but its fill was visible once the top and plough soils were machined off. As (504) runs off towards the southeast, [505] continues as a linear and cuts through (534) – which sits atop (504) and extends into the section wall. Unfortunately, this part of [505] has been overcut onto the natural chalk towards the section wall, so the profile cut into (534) has been lost, though it remains visible in the section wall.

¹ Initial Ceramic Report by M. Macpherson-Grant (Dec 2018)



(Fig 9 – Trench in Area 3 showing ditch [505] & stratigraphic matrix)

2.12. One ceramic sherd (totalling >1gm) was found in (506):

- 1 LP flint-tempered ware (MBA>EIA preference, c.1550-600/50 BC emphasis);
- small, split scrap, one face remnant, otherwise near-fresh;
- likely commencement date – nothing earlier than c.1500BC likely end-date – uncertain but if residual – between c.1550-600BC²

3. CONCLUSIONS FROM 2018

- 3.1. A combination of geophysical and excavation evidence suggests the presence of a Prehistoric monument with a ring ditch c.15-20m in diameter, most likely a barrow structure.
- 3.2. Ceramic analysis from secure contexts indicates the barrow structure likely commenced use/function c.2000BC and continued until c.1000BC.
- 3.3. During this time the probable barrow ring ditch appears to have been re-cut at least twice, suggesting a period of maintenance spanning c.1000 years.

² Initial Ceramic Report by M. Macpherson-Grant (Dec 2018)

4. AIMS & OBJECTIVES FOR 2019 EXCAVATION STRATEGY

4.1. The probable barrow site at Stringmans Field is complex, both archaeologically and stratigraphically. The fact that the barrow was built partly into chalk and partially into clay makes the excavation problematic to track, while a scarcity of finds to date makes analysis difficult. Nevertheless, the projection of the probable barrow ring ditch is estimated in Fig 10 below:



(Fig 10 – Trench showing ditch [521] projection)

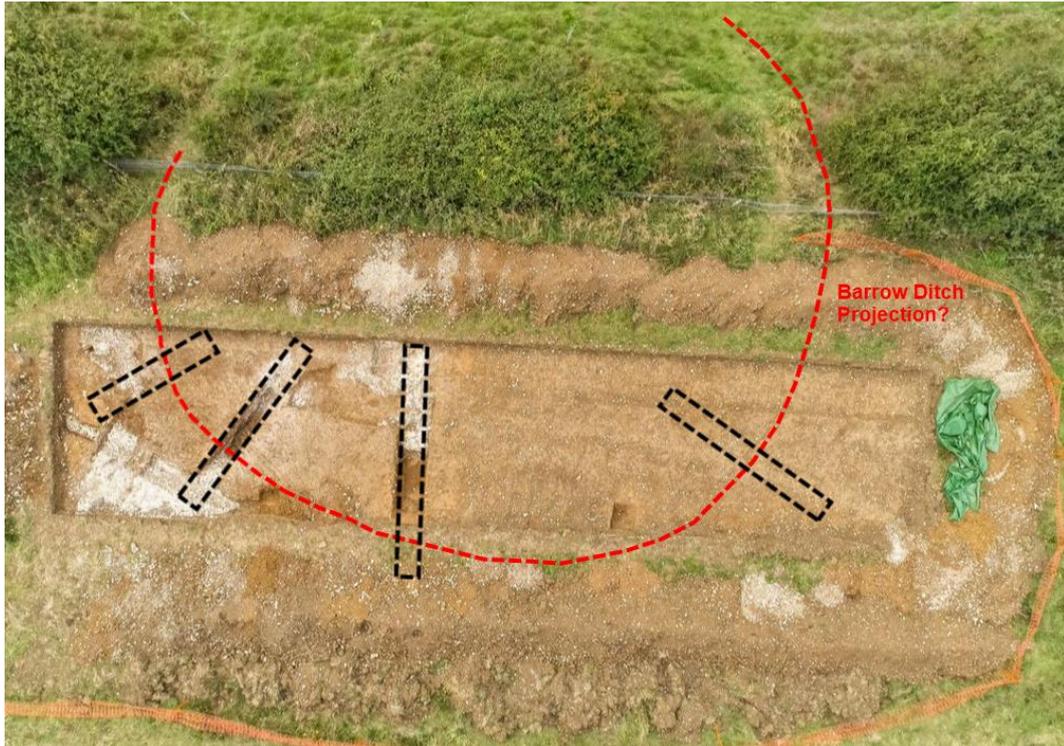
4.2. The aims and objectives for the 2019 excavation at Stringmans Barrow feature are as follows:

4.3. Aims

- 4.3..1. Establish the role and function of feature;
- 4.3..2. Determine the diameter and extent of ring ditch associated with the feature.

4.4. Objectives

- 4.4..1. To achieve 4.3..1 & 4.3..2, extend/clean up existing slot trenches and excavate additional slot trenches through [521] towards the centre of the barrow to gain further insight into re-cuts of ring ditch and increase the potential for locating stratified finds
- 4.4..2. Fig 11 below details 2019 trenching plan:



(Fig 11 – Trench plan details for 2019)

- 4.5. A small team of KAS, SWAG and SHAL volunteers will undertake the work from 8th – 19th July 2019.
- 4.6. A small group of Year 10 Work Experience Students from St Georges CofE Secondary School, Gravesend, will be on site from 15th – 19th July to learn archaeological fieldwork skills.
- 4.7. All volunteers will be covered by KAS insurance policy.
- 4.8. A risk assessment will be drawn up and appraised prior to the commencement of excavations and will be signed by all participants
- 4.9. A metal detectorist will be onsite for a small number of days – a metal detecting agreement has been drawn up and will be signed by all parties during the excavation.

Richard Taylor

Site Director 2019

5. Appendix A – Context register

Context No	Context Type	Area No	Plan No	Section No	Description	Initials	Date
501	TS	1,2,3			Top Soil	DW	12/9
502	Sub Soil	1,2,3			Sub Soil	DW	12/9
503	Natural	1,2,3			Colluvium/hillwash – Orangey clay with flints	DW	12/9
504	Natural	1,2,3			Seaford Chalk	DW	12/9
505	Cut	3		1	Gully cut (NW-SE)	DW	12/9
506	Fill	3		1	Fill of 505 – Brown silty clay with chalk pieces	DW	12/9
507	VOID						
508	VOID						
509	Cut	3		3	Post-hole cut	DW	17/9
510	Fill	3		3	Post-hole [509] packing	DW	17/9
511	Fill	3		3	Post-void	DW	17/9
512	Cut				Natural deposit?	DW	17/9
513	Fill				Natural deposit?	DW	17/9
514	Cut			4	Natural deposit?	DW	18/9
515	Fill			4	Natural deposit?	DW	18/9
516	Cut				Natural deposit?	DW	20/9
517	Fill				Natural deposit?	DW	20/9
518	Cut				Natural deposit?	DW	20/9
519	Fill				Natural deposit?	DW	20/9
520	Deposit				Re-dep chalk	DW	20/9
521	Cut	1		5	Ditch cut	RT	21/9
522	Deposit	1		5	Chalk run-off from the barrow	RT	21/9
523	Fill	1		5	Fill of [521] chalk pieces in brown silty clay	RT	21/9
524	Fill	1		5	Primary fill of [521] pulverised chalk and clay homogenous mix	RT	21/9
525	Natural	2,3			Black manganese layer above chalk – natural deposit?	DW	21/9
526	Natural	2,3			Flint deposit over 525 – natural deposit?	DW	21/9
527	Natural	2			Light orangey grey sandy clay – natural deposit?	DW	21/9
528	Natural	2			Light grey orange sandy clay – natural deposit?	DW	21/9
529	Fill	2			Ditch fill [521]? – dark clayey silt	DW	21/9
530	Cut	2			Ditch cut [continuation of 521]?	DW	21/9
531	Deposit	1		5	Dark brown clay	RT	21/9
532	Fill	1		5	Later Fill of [521] chalk pieces in brown silty clay	RT	24/9
533	Deposit	1		5	Larger chalk pieces in thin brown silty clay matrix – barrow construction?	RT	24/9
534	Natural	2			Light orangey grey sandy clay – natural deposit?	RT	24/9

