



***THE DARTMOOR
ARCHAEOLOGY AND BRACKEN PROJECT***



INTERIM REPORT FOR 2002 SEASON



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INTERIM REPORT FOR THE 2002 SEASON

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Introduction

The weather was kind to us during the 2002 excavation. It rained whilst we erected the tents, stopped the moment the last peg was inserted into the ground and apart from some welcome overnight rain, remained dry for the two weeks we were at Teigncombe. The constant sunshine did however create a couple of problems,. The first was the emergence of plagues of midges and the second was the intense light which made it difficult to differentiate the very subtle features we were seeking. The first challenge was partially overcome by the liberal use of insect repellent (although my brand seemed to attract wasps) and the second was partly resolved by the use of our portable cloud, which consisted of a large tarpaulin held aloft by ranging poles.

The excavation commenced on Saturday 10th August and continued until Sunday 25th August, with a total of 274 person days being worked by 24 individuals. Two fresh trenches were opened up within the house and further work was carried out within Trench 2. No work was carried out within Trench 1. This area is much more advanced than any other and it was considered important to try and bring the other areas down to a similar position. Much of our effort was directed towards Trenches 5 and 6 (Figure 1) where we successfully removed the post-prehistoric deposits together with recording the rhizome mat. In Trench 2 much of our time was spent cleaning up the upper prehistoric levels and examining in detail the mottled materials encountered. In particular, two 1m squares were excavated carefully recording the different materials encountered. At the end of the season all three trenches were protected with a layer of plastic sheeting covered by soil and stones.

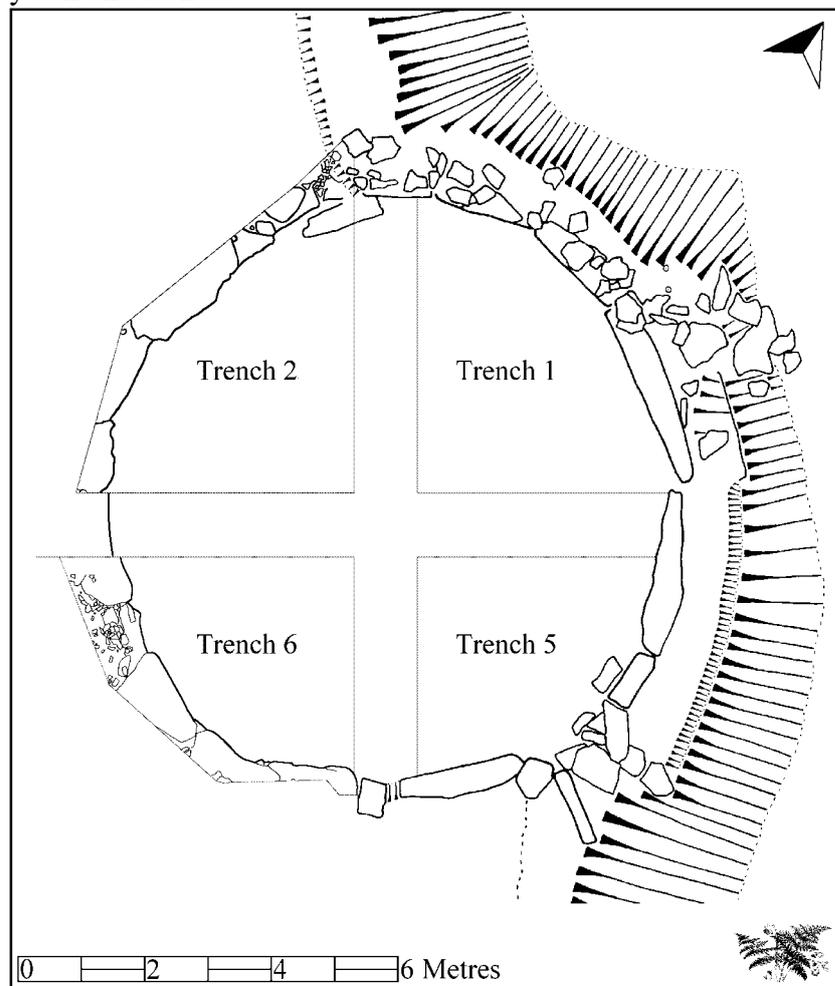


Figure 1 *Plan of the round house showing the position of excavation trenches investigated during 2002*

The Stipe Survey

Prior to the excavation a detailed survey of the bracken plants growing within the building was carried out (Interim Report for 1999 Season). Further analysis of the results has now been possible and provides a useful insight into the character of the infestation within this building. As well as plotting the precise position of each plant their heights were also recorded. The grid reference for each plant has been entered onto a spreadsheet together with information concerning their height. Using this information it has been possible to generate a series of illustrations showing variations in the distribution of different sized plants (Figures 2 - 8).

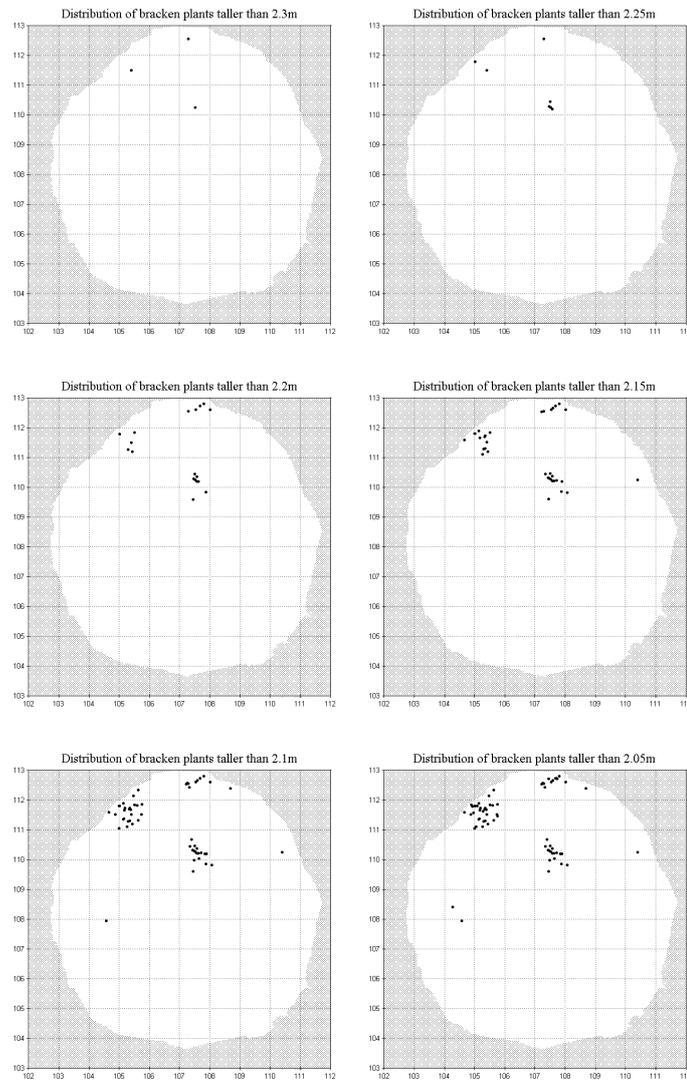


Figure 2 This series of illustrations show the interior of the house as white and the bracken plants as small black dots. The numbers along two sides refer to the site grid. Three plants taller than 2.3m high were encountered. Interestingly these three plants form the focus for many of the tallest plants, with all plants with three exceptions above 2.05m high being close to the three highest plants. If one accepts that the plants are taller because they are growing from the oldest part of the rhizome mat, it may be possible to view the series of illustrations as indicating in very broad terms the manner in which the bracken spread within the building.

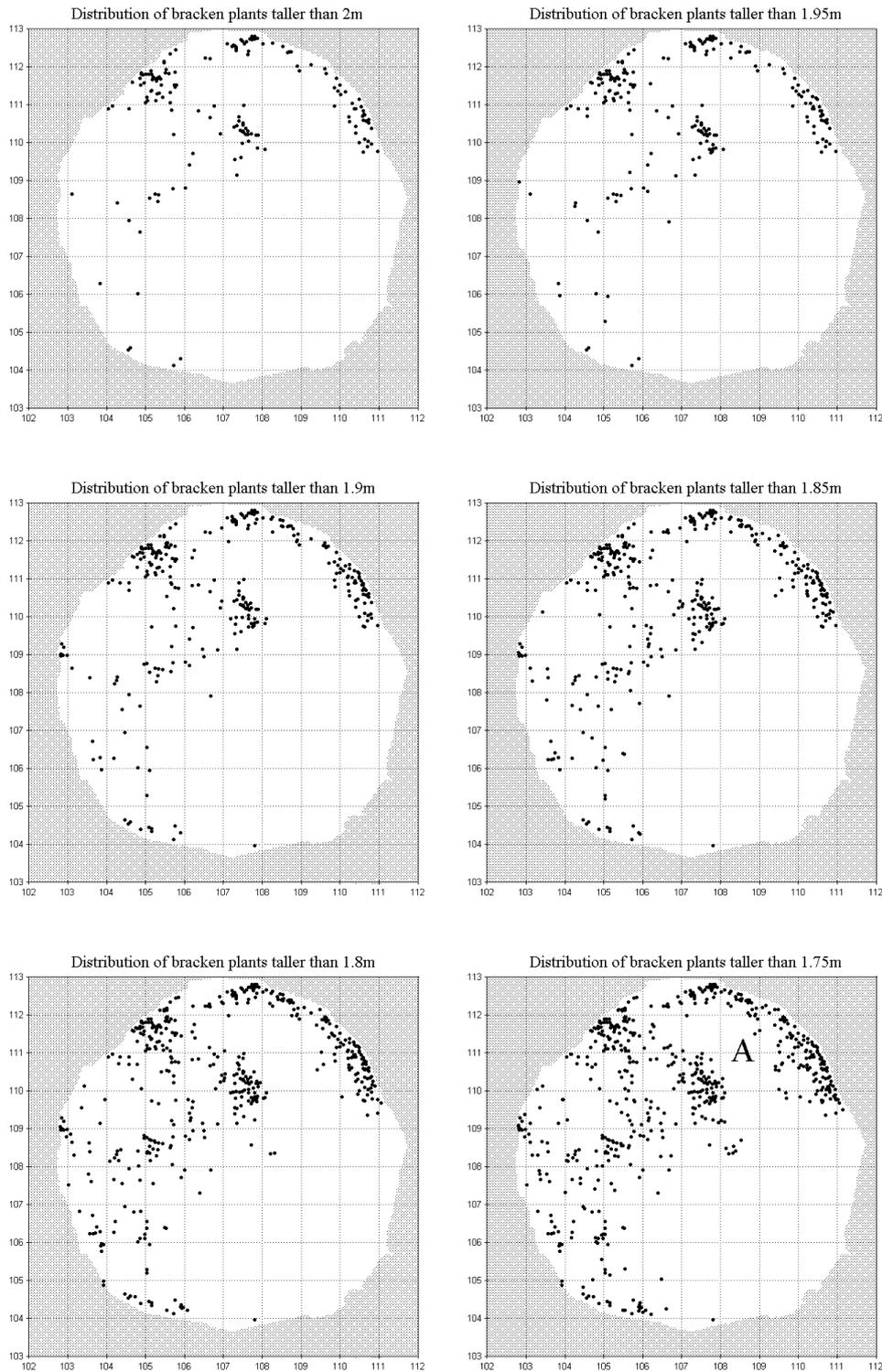


Figure 3 The most notable feature of this series of illustrations is the total absence of any bracken plants taller than 1.75m in the south eastern part of the building. The reason for this is probably related to the recent history of this part of the building. In this area there have been considerable accumulations of soil following the clearance of the scrub in the fields around. The other part of the house where excavation has demonstrated a considerable build of soil during recent years is in the area marked "A" and here too there are no tall plants. It would therefore appear that the addition of soil may impede bracken growth.

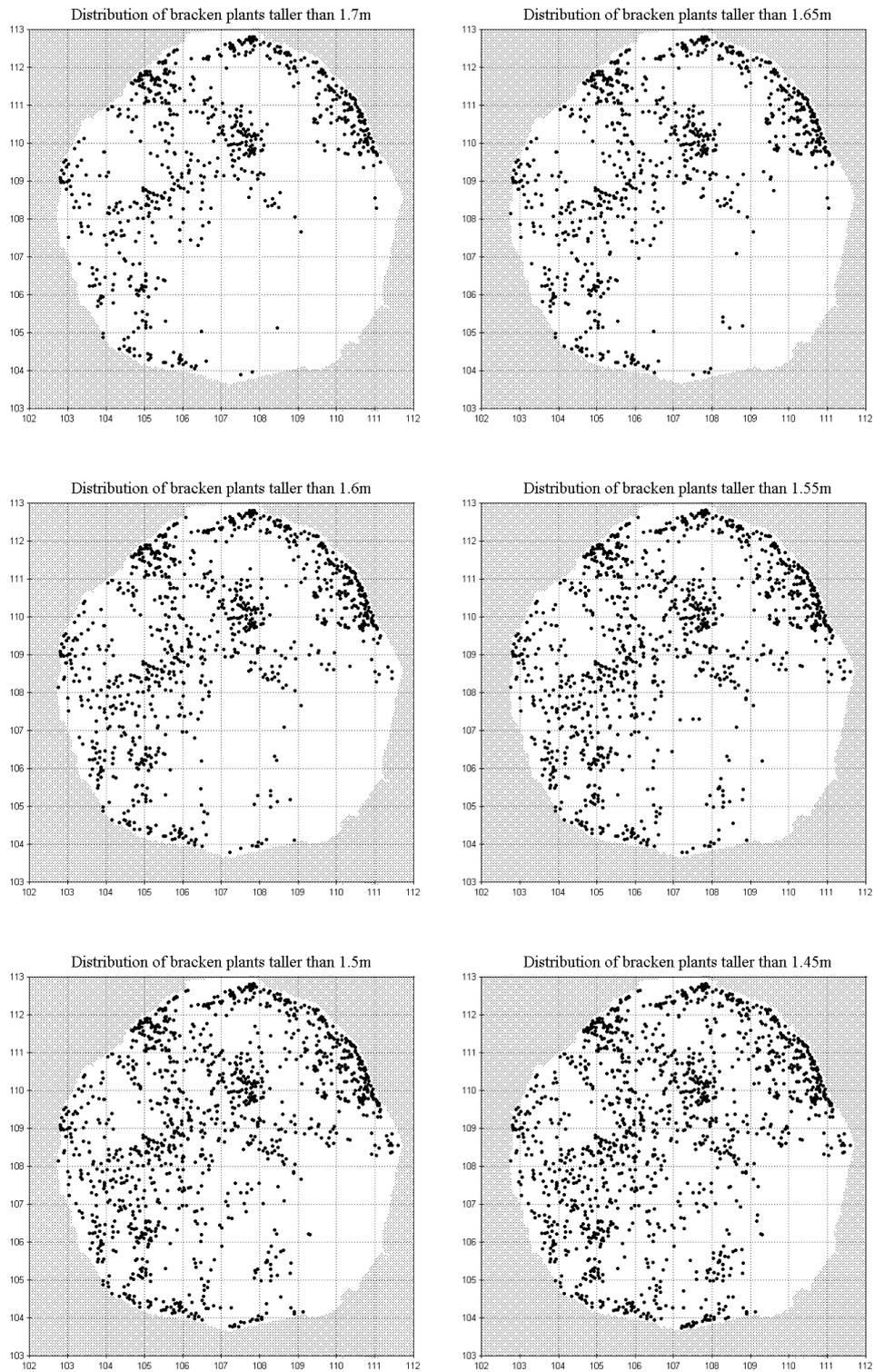


Figure 4 Again the areas with recent soil build up have very few tall plants growing. In addition it must be significant that there are no plants over 1.45m tall in the area adjacent to the doorway. There are a significant number of tall plants adjacent to the wall. This is particularly marked against the north eastern wall of the building.

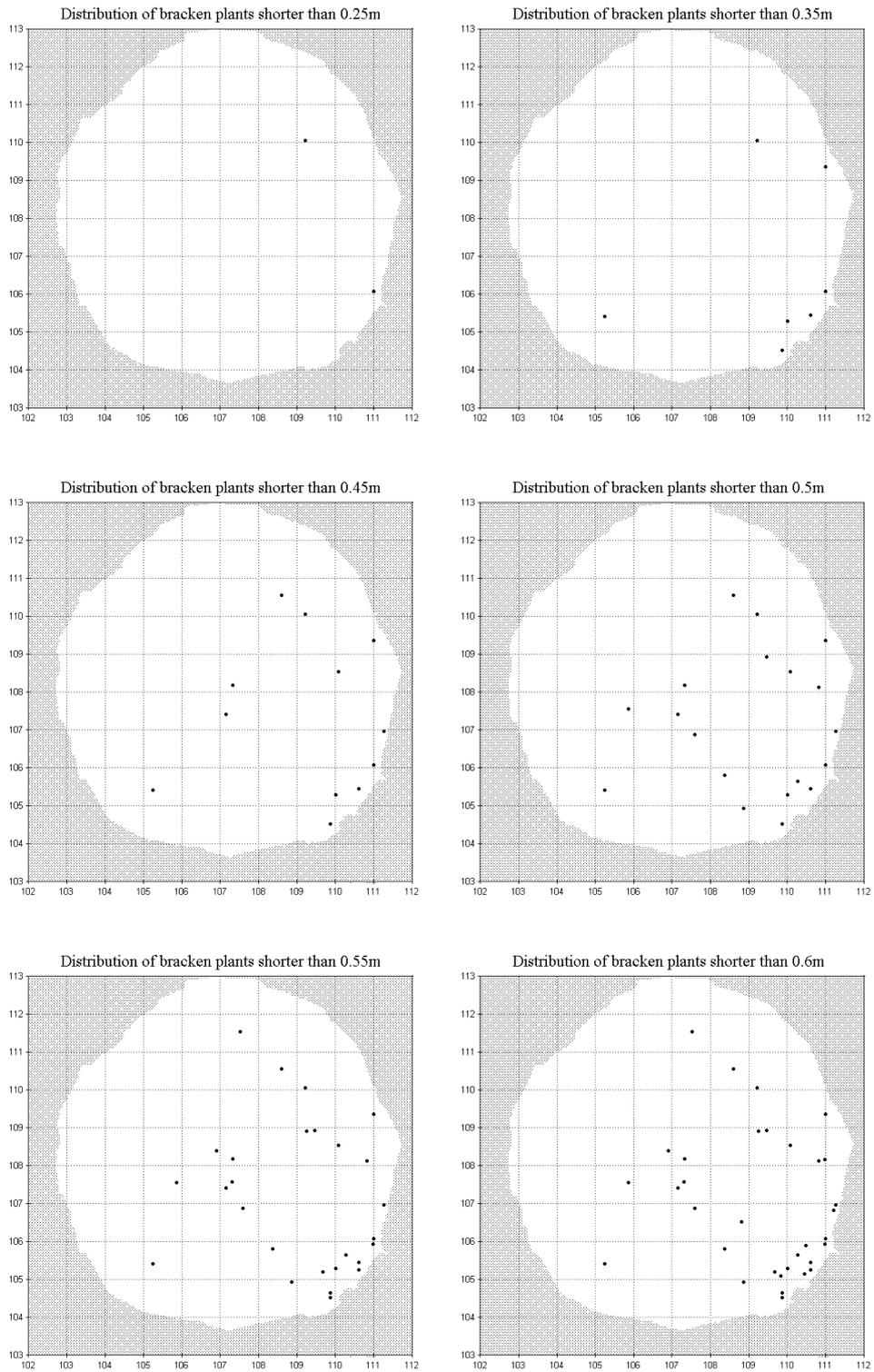


Figure 5 This illustration highlights that the distribution of the shorter plants coincides predominately with those areas where the taller plants were absent. In particular there is a marked concentration of shorter plants adjacent to the doorway where there were no plants taller than 1.45m high.

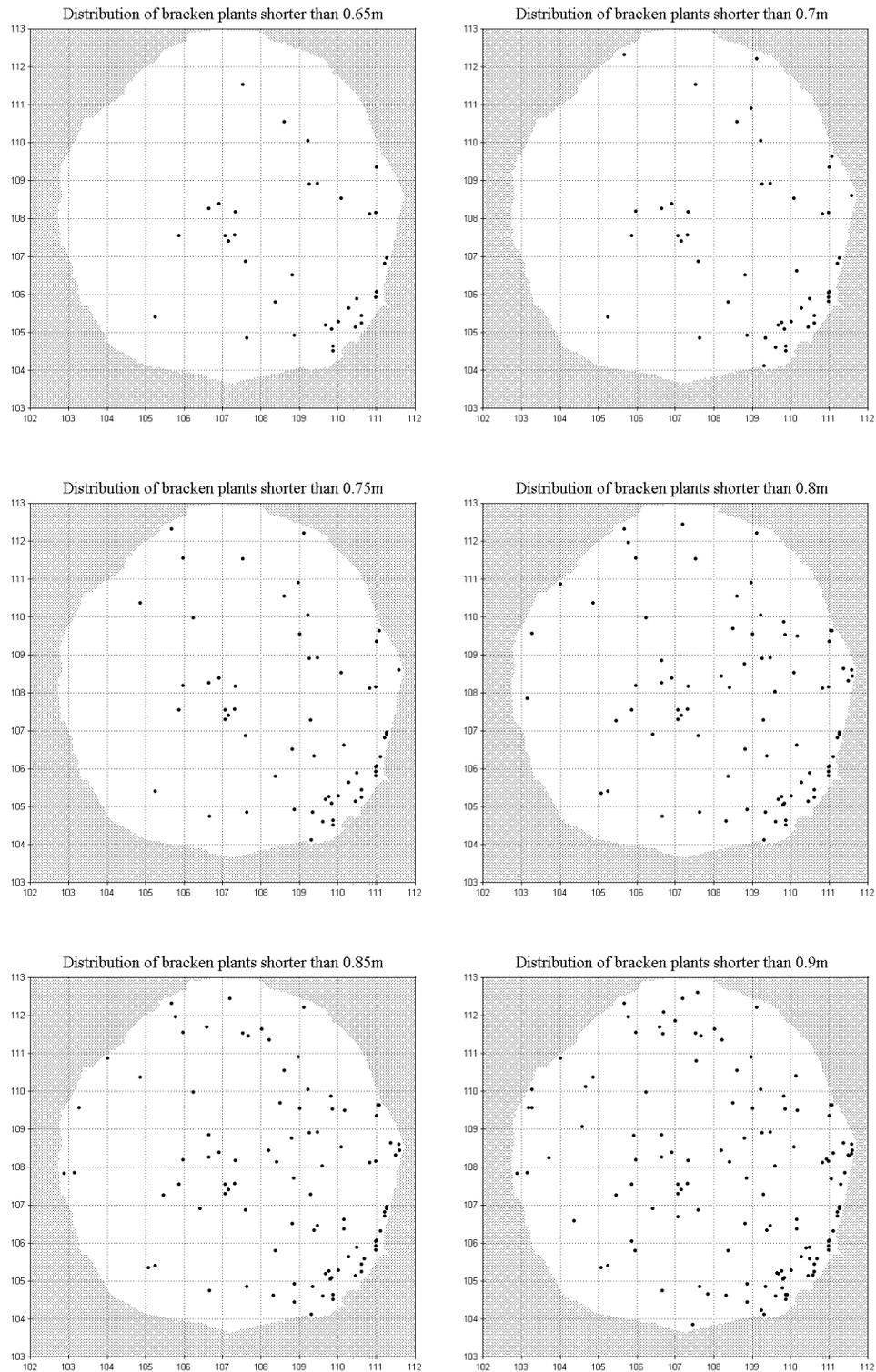


Figure 6 As taller plants are progressively added the distribution becomes less and less clustered. In particular, the distribution of plants under 0.9m is widespread.

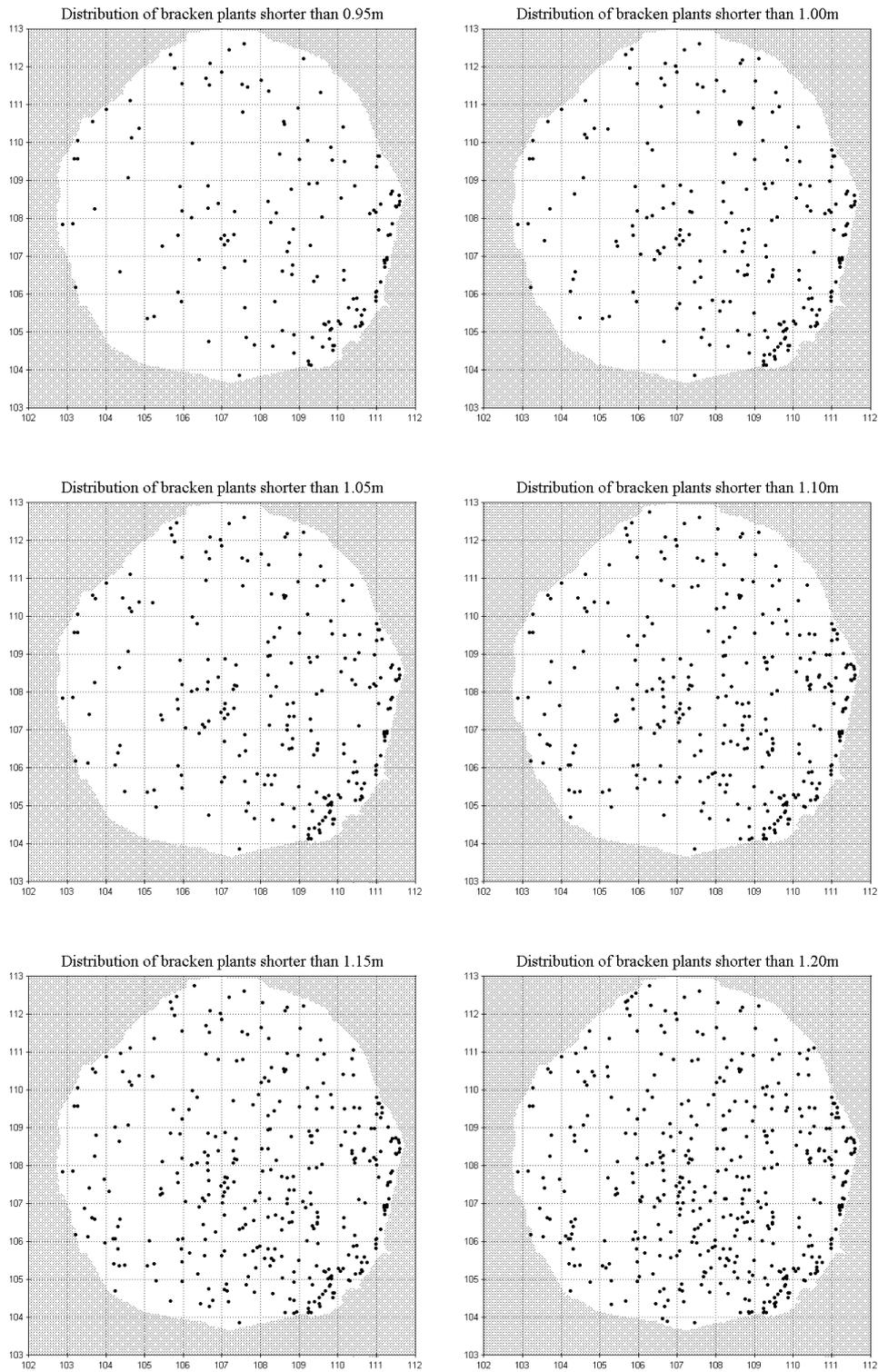


Figure 7 This series of distribution plans highlights the marked concentration of plants adjacent to the south eastern wall of the house. This illustrates that even relatively short plants will also tend to cluster adjacent to features such as walls.

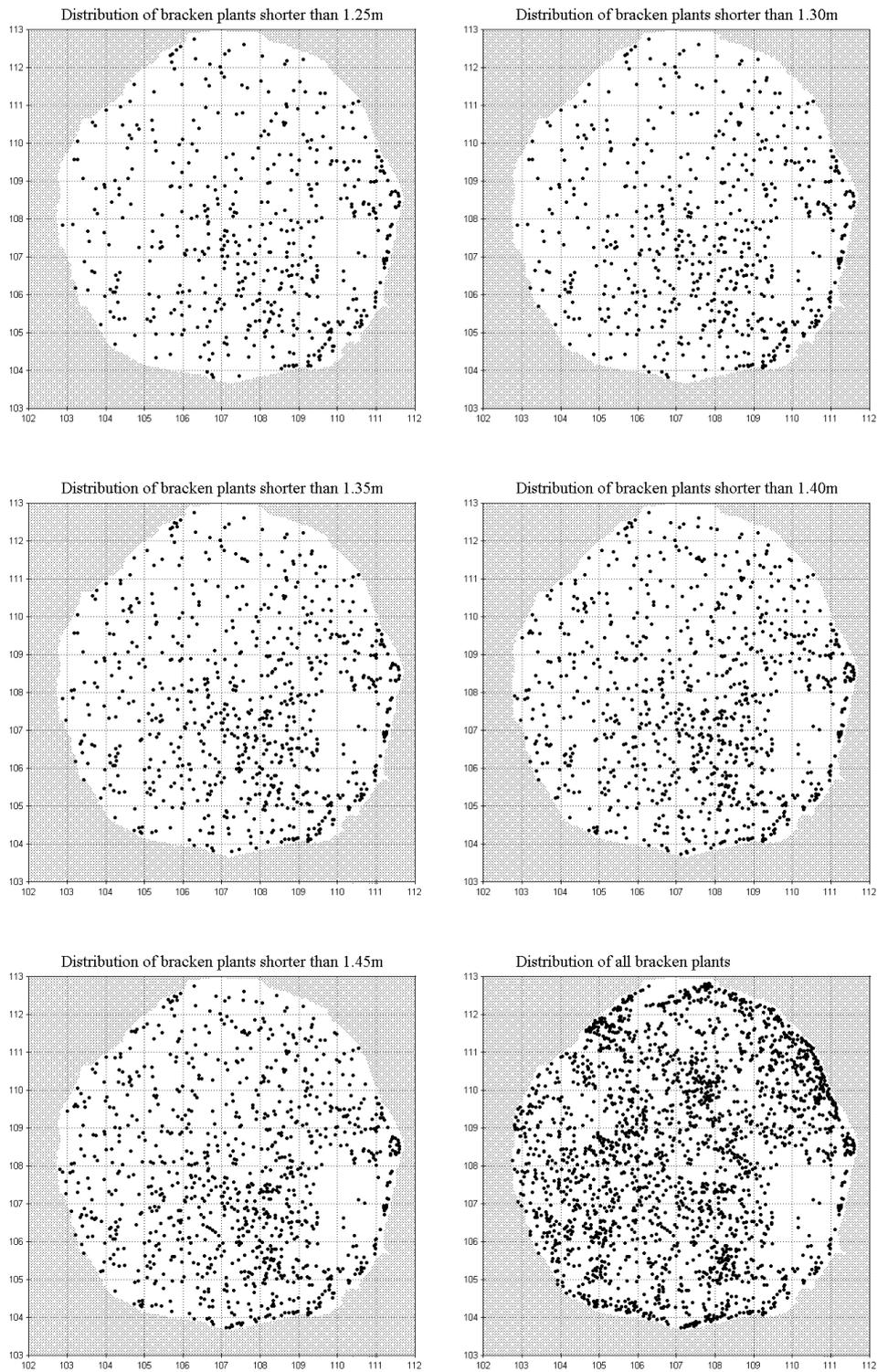


Figure 8 As more and more plants are added to the plans the obvious clear area adjacent to the doorway becomes more evident. The final plan shows at the same scale the distribution of all the plants. This plan clearly shows discrete areas of clustering and similar sized areas with few or even no plants. The linear arrangement of some clusters reflects the underlying rhizomes.

Stipes and Rhizomes

One of the aims of the project is to establish whether or not there is a relationship between the number of bracken plants and the rhizomes below? One might expect that an area containing large numbers of tall plants would also have a particularly dense (and therefore destructive) rhizome mat, whilst areas with fewer plants might have less rhizomes. Until the excavation work is complete any analysis will necessarily be incomplete, but we have now carried out enough work for broad patterns to emerge. There are two main ways in which the relationship between plants and underlying rhizome mat can be examined. The first is to compare the number of plants in each 1m square with the length of rhizomes and second is to compare the total height of plants in each 1m square with the length of rhizomes. To make the calculations more meaningful it is necessary to use the extrapolated density of both plants and rhizomes lengths because very few complete 1m squares have been examined. Figure 9 illustrates using proportional circles the number of stipes in each 1m square. There are considerable variations with the largest number in a single square being 104 and the smallest four. Apart from the small number of stipes within the south eastern part of the building and all of the larger numbers being adjacent to the wall the distribution within the house is

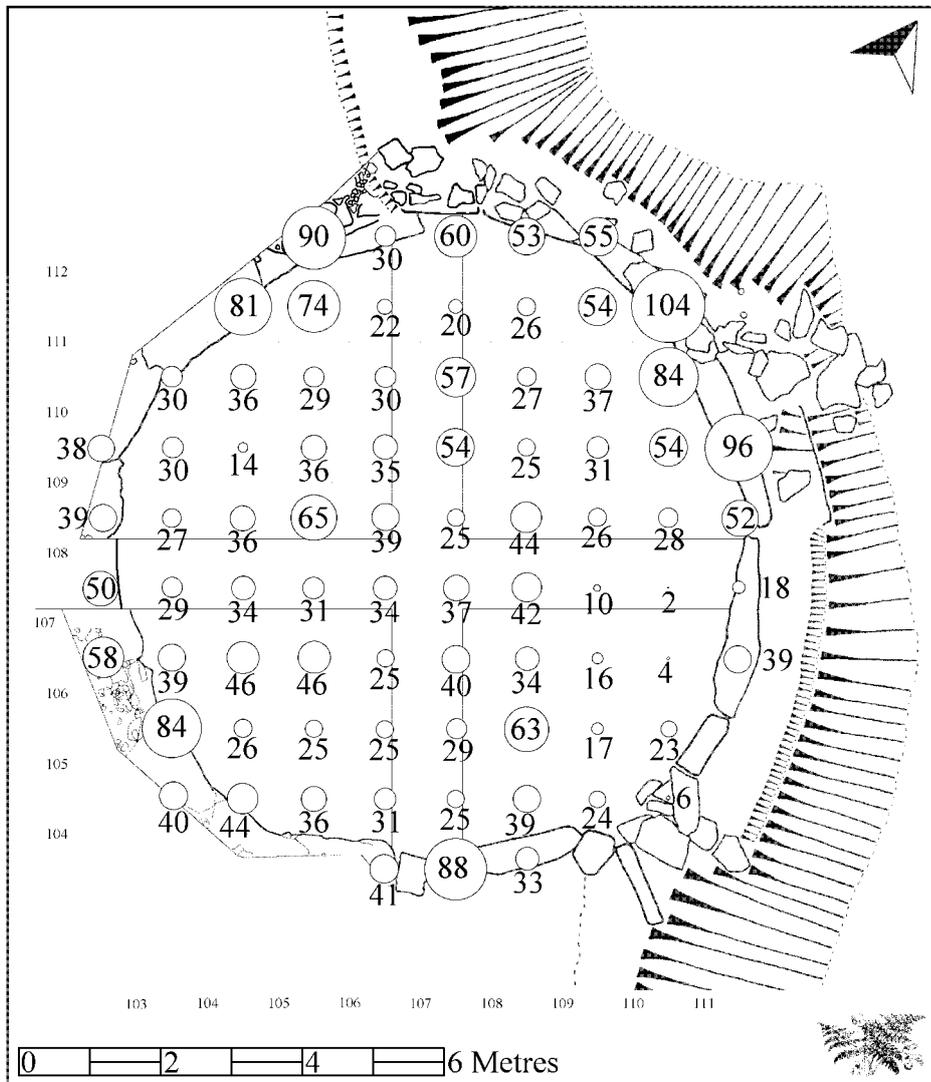


Figure 9 Plan showing the density of stipes in 1m squares. The numbers within the proportional circles refer to the number of stipes recorded per square metre.

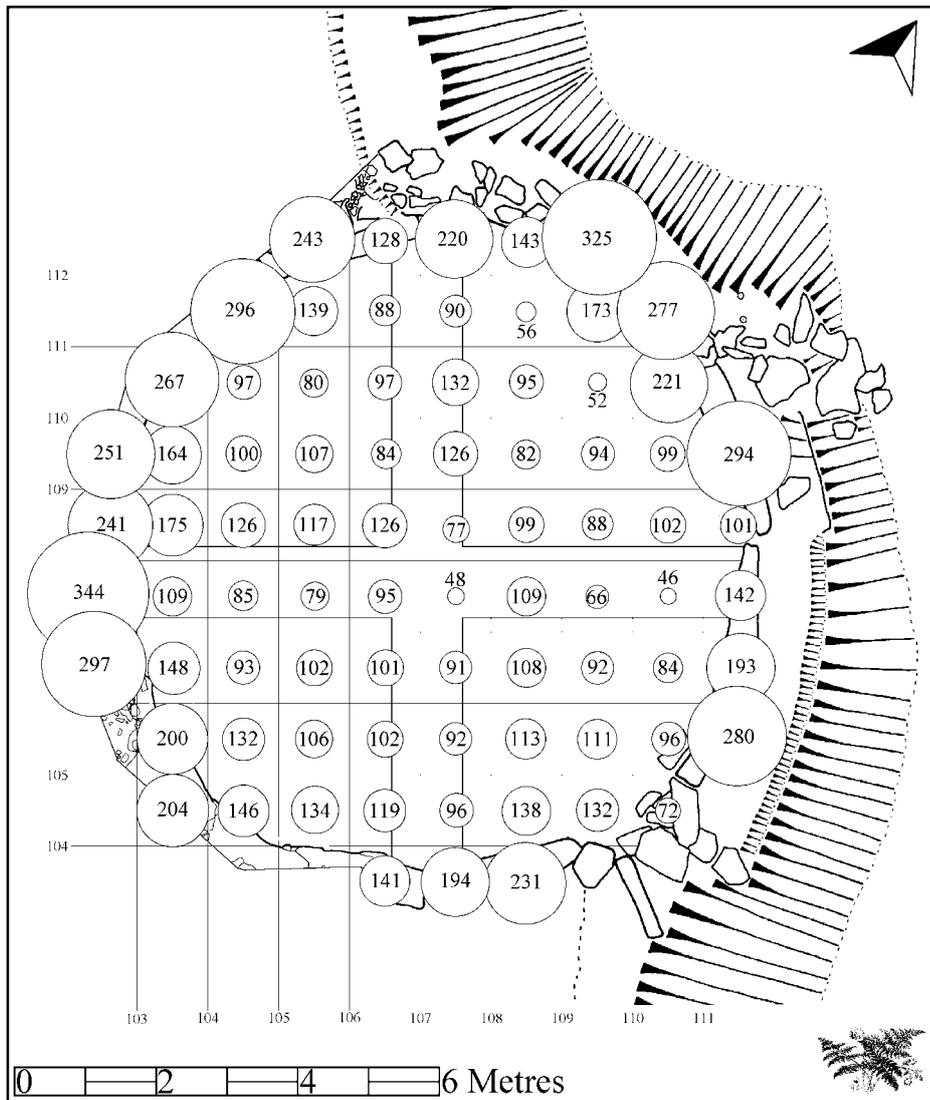


Figure 10 Plan showing the density of rhizomes in 1m squares. The numbers within the proportional circles refer to the length of rhizomes (expressed in metres) recovered from each square.

fairly uniform.. This is in marked contrast to the picture emerging from the density of rhizomes. In Figure 10 it is very noticeable that the density of rhizomes adjacent to the wall is substantially greater than that within the rest of the house. This illustrates very clearly that the damage caused by rhizomes within a building is likely to be much greater adjacent to the walls. It also indicates that damage even within an individual structure will not be uniform. Some parts may escape serious damage, whilst other parts may be totally destroyed. Important stratigraphical information is often sought by archaeologists at the interface between hard surfaces and softer deposits and it would appear that care needs to be used when using information from this sensitive area when investigating sites which are either infested or have been infested with bracken. This is a theme which we will continue to investigate as work on the house proceeds.

The Rhizome mat in Trenches 5 and 6

The decision was taken at the start of the 2002 season to tackle the rhizome mat in Trenches 5 and 6 in a rather different manner to the techniques adopted in Trenches 1 and 2. It was felt that we already had enough information concerning the precise character of the mat from our earlier work and that therefore nothing was to be gained from recording the exact position of each rhizome. Instead about 0.2m of topsoil was carefully removed over both trenches and the rhizomes encountered were cleaned and left in their original positions prior to a photographic record being made. This information equates roughly to layers 1 and 2 within Trench 2 and represents the densest part of the rhizome mat in Trench 6.

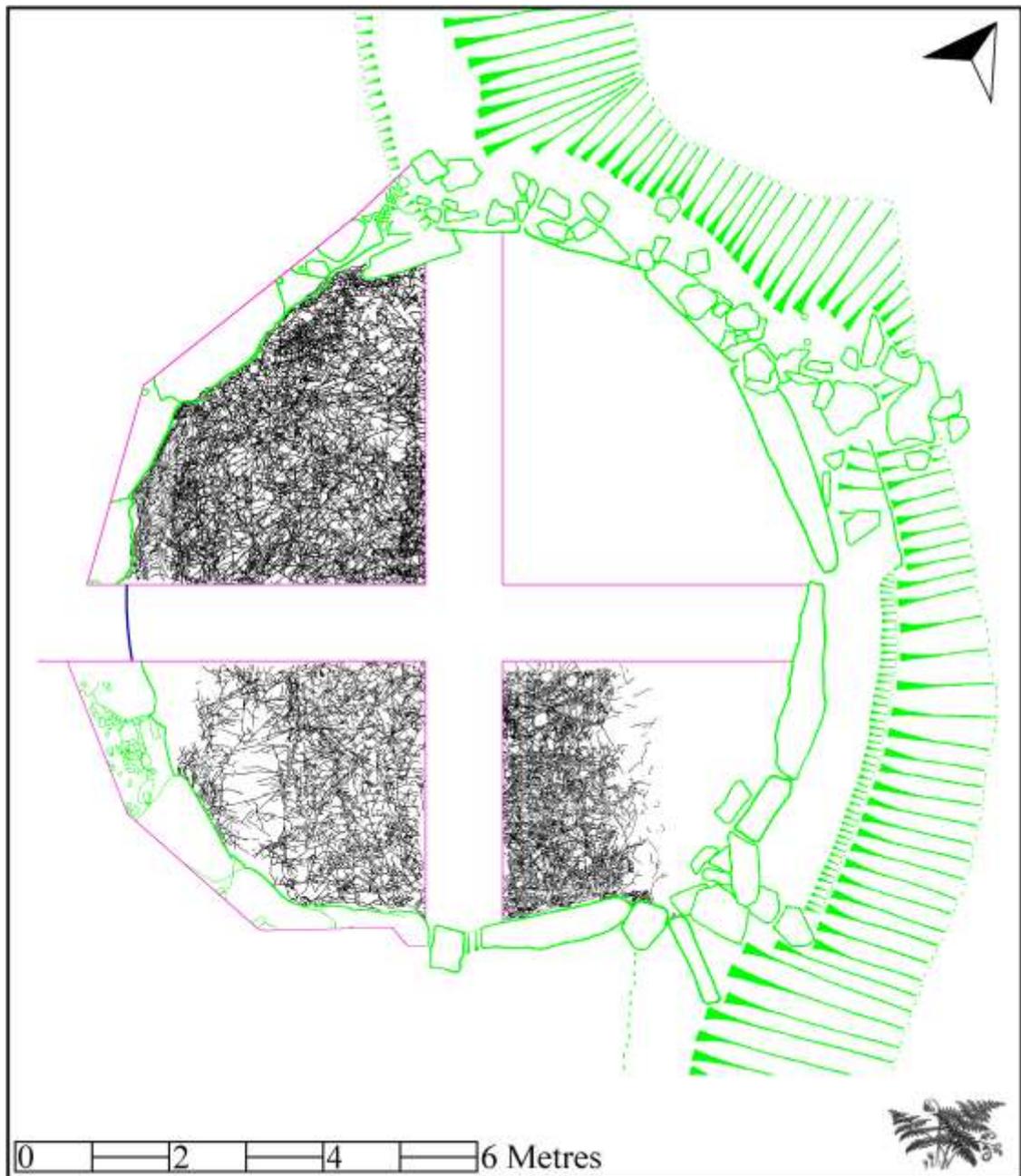


Figure 11 Plan showing the rhizome mat in Trenches 2, 5 and 6.

In Trench 5 the rhizomes were limited to the western part of the trench. Once the position of these rhizomes had been photographically recorded they were removed and measured 1m square at a time. During the course of the rest of the season, the historic overburden was carefully removed in layers with the rhizomes encountered being measured. This means that the total length of rhizomes from each 1m square is known and form the basis of part of Figure 10 in this report and will inform future analysis.



Figure 12 View from the north of the rhizome mat in Trenches 5 and 6.

The apparent absence of rhizomes in the eastern part of Trench 5 is a consequence of the mat being very much deeper in this area. The reason for this is related to substantial accumulations of silt resulting from the disturbance above the house during recent field improvements. The density of rhizomes recovered so far from these trenches are shown in Figure 10.

Within the building as a whole we have now recovered and recorded 5.826km of rhizomes, although more remain within the existing trenches and under the baulks. Our work to date has dramatically demonstrated exactly what a rhizome mat looks like and clearly disruption of this kind is not to be welcomed on archaeological sites.

One of the aims of the project is to establish a methodology for identifying evidence for historic rhizome activity. Layers when freshly exposed show very clear signs of mottling patterns which seems consistent with what one might expect from rhizomes which have fully rotted away. To try and establish a three dimensional picture of what such a mat could have looked like two small 1m square areas were selected for intensive investigation within Trench 2. Two areas with clear evidence of mottling were selected. Following careful cleaning each area was photographed through a grid. A 1cm layer was then carefully removed and the resulting surface cleaned and photographed. This process was repeated 7 times in each square in the anticipation that it would be possible to demonstrate beyond doubt that the mottling was a result of rhizome activity. The results from the northern square were most productive and it was possible to identify a small number of narrow linear zones of darker material which probably represent the site of rhizomes or roots. A large number of irregular shaped were also identified and these look as if they may represent the remains of disturbance caused by stipes and or rhizomes. Further analysis of the results of this work will be needed, but it would appear at this stage that it will be very difficult to demonstrate visually either the date or the precise type of root activity that caused the damage.

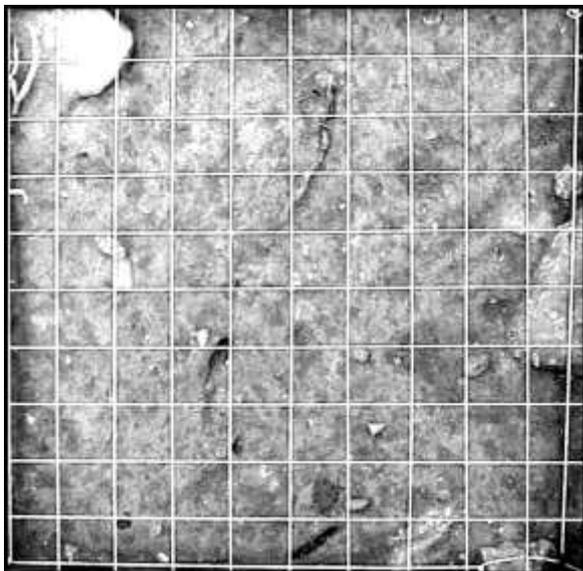


Figure 13 *The upper level within the northern 1m pit in Trench 2. Mottling and several narrow linear dark bands are clearly visible.*



Figure 14 *The second level within the Mott northern 1m pit in Trench 2. Large numbers of mottles remain at this level.*

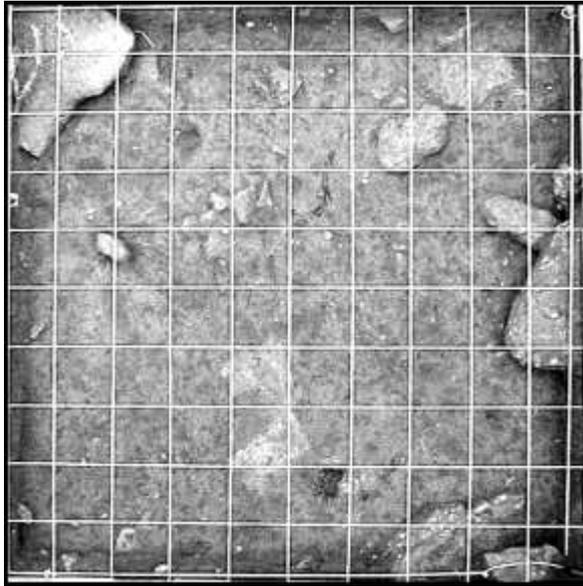


Figure 15 The third level within the northern 1m pit in Trench 2. Mottles and linear bands are visible in what probably represents the interface between later debris accumulation and the upper part of an occupation surface.

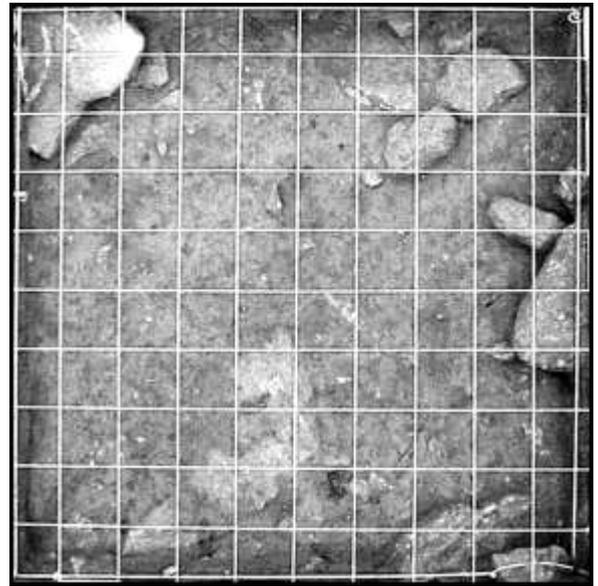


Figure 16 The fourth level within the northern 1m pit in Trench 2. This is probably the upper part of an occupation surface.

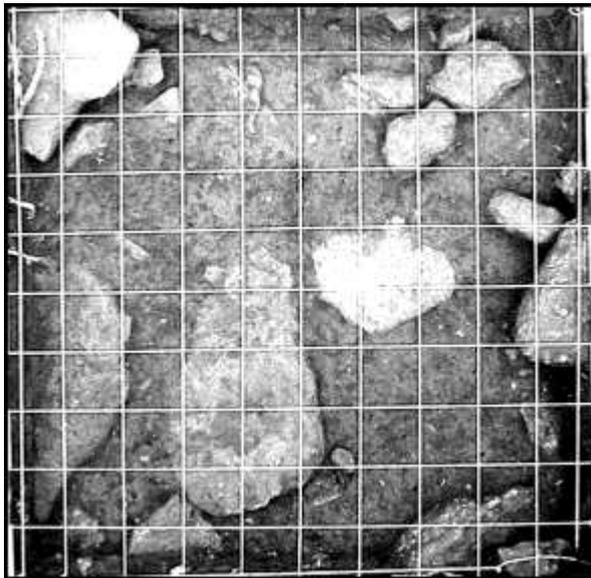


Figure 17 The fifth level within the northern 1m pit in Trench 2. Mottles remain visible within this occupation surface.

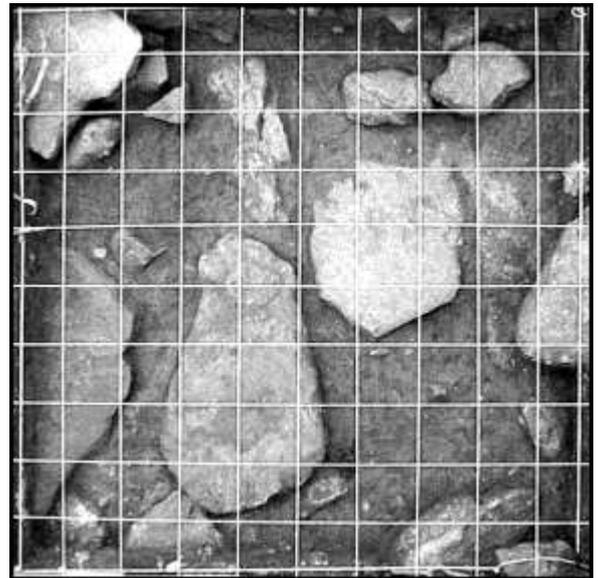


Figure 18 The sixth level within the northern 1m pit in Trench 2. Much of the pit is now taken up with stones some of which represent a floor surface.

Artefact Distributions

This series of plans is designed to form the basis for the spatial presentation of the artefacts recovered during the excavation. A vertical interval of 10cms has been chosen, but this will be reviewed as work progresses. The largest percentage of artefacts so far recovered lie between 98.20m and 99m above the site datum and the eight resulting illustrations are presented below together with some commentary. The outline of the house is shown together with the site grid and onto this are plotted the artefacts. The numbers next to each symbol refer to the small find number allocated to each artefact at the time of discovery. Different symbols have been utilised to represent different types of artefact. Pottery is shown with a diamond, lithics with a St Andrews cross, flints with a cross, crystals with an open square and modern materials such as plastics with a circle.

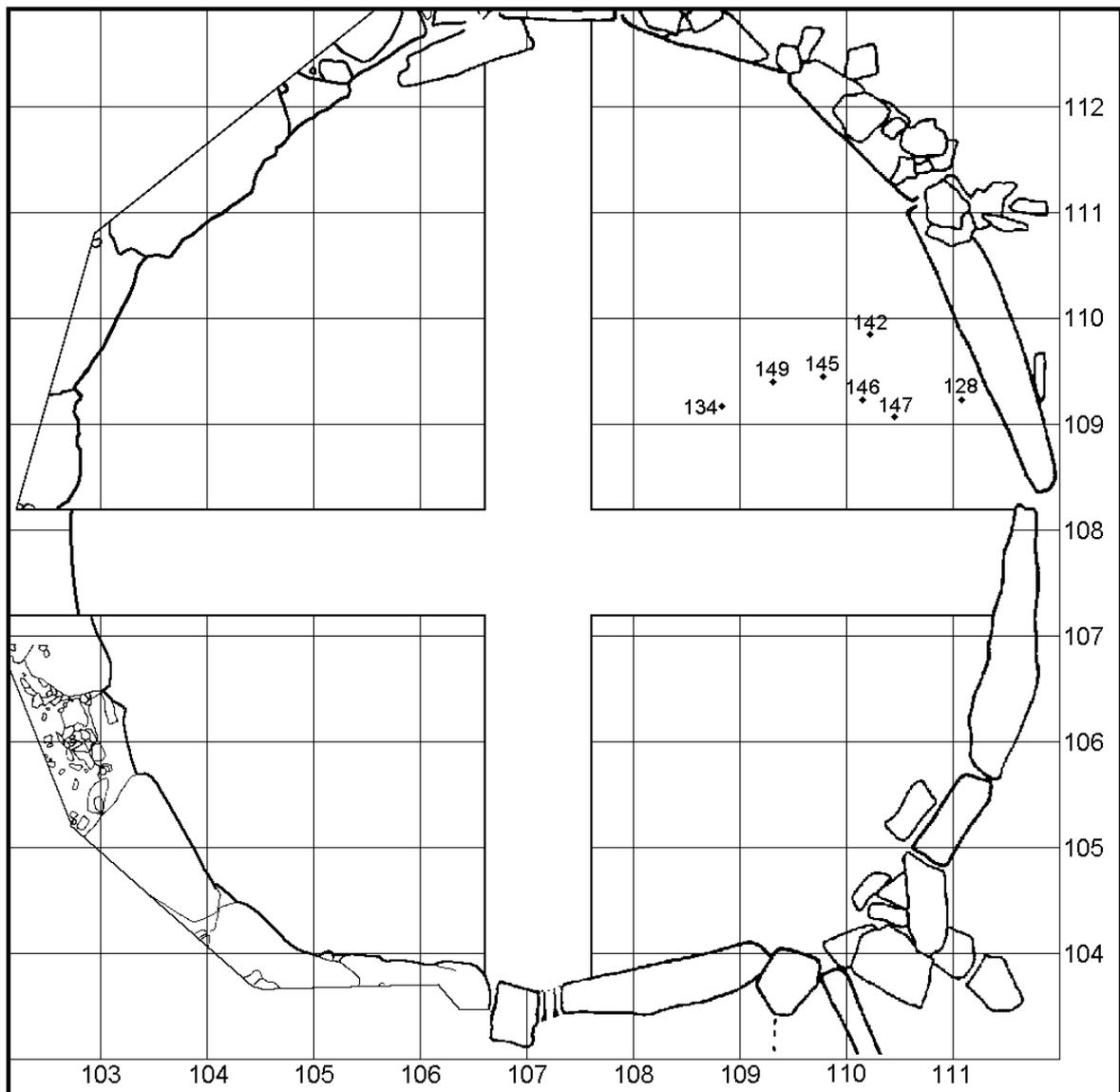


Figure 19 Distribution of artefacts between 98.20m and 98.29m above site datum.

All seven artefacts are sherds of prehistoric pottery and lie within Trench 1. There are four sherds of Dartmoor stream fabric and two of Permian volcanic, none of which have any diagnostic features. This distribution is not meaningful in an archaeological sense, reflecting as it does the deeper excavation work carried out in this area during the 2000 season. As work proceeds a more complete picture of artefact distribution at and below this depth will be obtained.

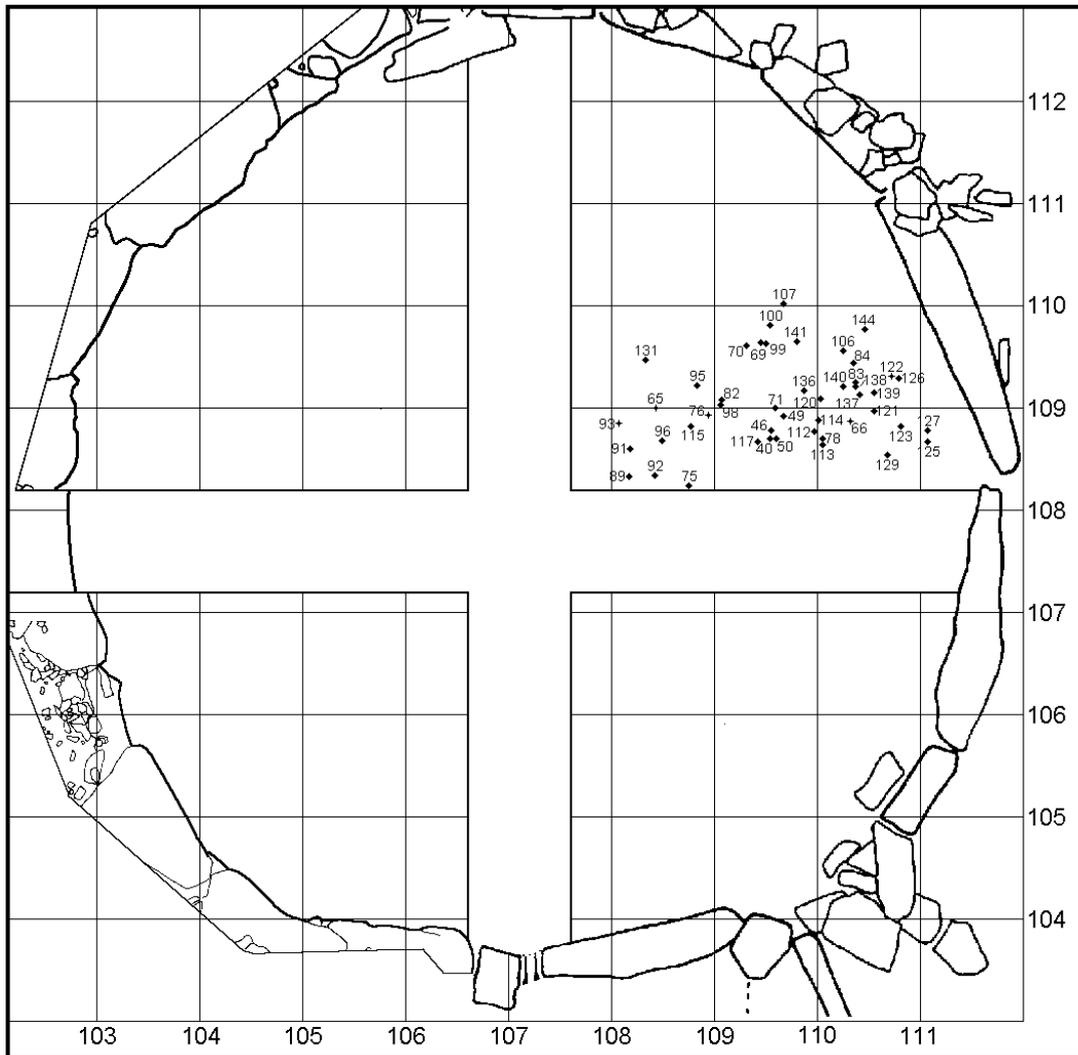


Figure 20 *Distribution of artefacts between 98.30m and 98.39m above site datum.*

This level must surely coincide with a prehistoric occupation surface(s), at least within Trench 1. A total of 41 sherds of prehistoric pottery and one sherd of Roman samian (**71**), together with two whetstones (**66** and **93**), two flints (**65** and **122**) and a stone sphere (**76**) were recovered from this layer. The prehistoric pottery includes two sherds of Permian volcanic, three of a granitic fabric and 36 sherds of Dartmoor stream fabric. Sherds **138** and **140** possess cable rims and **75** is decorated with finger nail impressions. Until work is completed within Trench 1 it is not known whether the obvious clustering of artefacts towards the southern part of the trench is significant. Possible explanations for this phenomena could include levelling up an erosion hollow with debris rich material, a use of the area which led to it been prone to artefact accumulation or perhaps post occupational accumulation of debris within the lowest part of the building. As work continues these and other possible interpretations will be examined as they will be crucial in establishing whether the observed distribution has been affected in any way by post depositional activity such as rhizome activity. Of particular help in this respect maybe the single sherd of Roman pottery found in the centre of the artefact cluster at 98.35m above site datum. The absence of any artefacts in the three other trenches is because this layer has not yet been investigated in those areas.

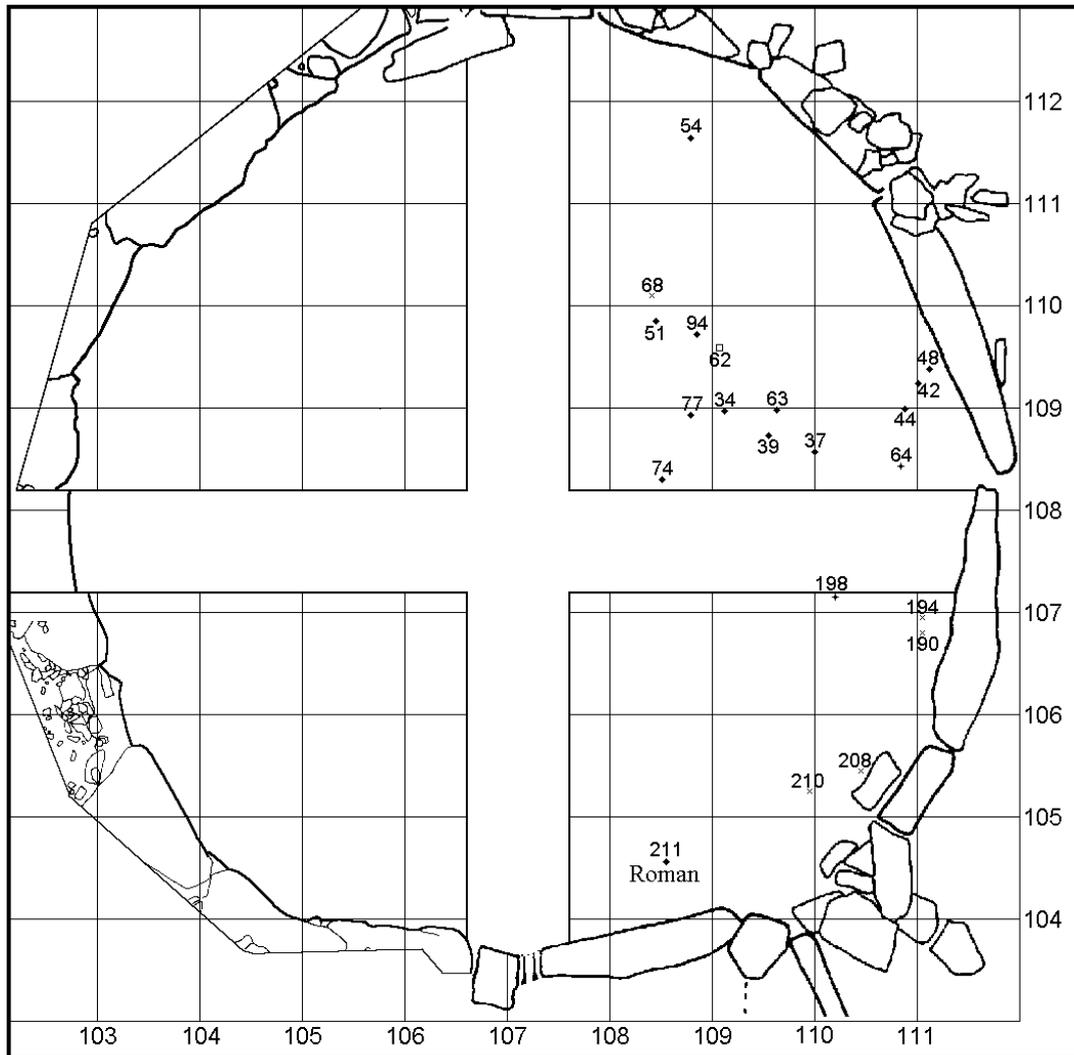


Figure 21 *Distribution of artefacts between 98.40m and 98.49m above site datum.*

This level currently contains 12 sherds of prehistoric pottery, a sherd of Romano-British SW Dorset black burnished ware (**211**), five water rounded pebbles (**68**, **190**, **194**, **208** and **210**), a whetstone (**198**) and quartz crystal (**62**). Ten of the prehistoric sherds are of Dartmoor stream fabric including one with a cable rim (**34**), sherd **94** is Permian volcanic and **77** is granitic. Four of the water rounded pebbles, together with the whetstone lie within Trench 5, where only the one sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered. This apparent concentration may reflect some form of activity zone within the house, but obviously much work needs to be carried out in this area to confirm or refute this suggestion. Within Trench 1 most of the artefacts again lie within the southern part of the area, but this time at least one sherd lies some distance to the north of the previous cluster. The density of artefacts within the southern part of the trench is much less than before. One possible explanation is that this represents material that has been displaced upwards from the layer in which it was deposited. Careful correlation of the artefacts (particularly the pottery) with their location may be needed to establish the nature of any displacement. This layer has yet to be investigated within Trenches 2 and 6.

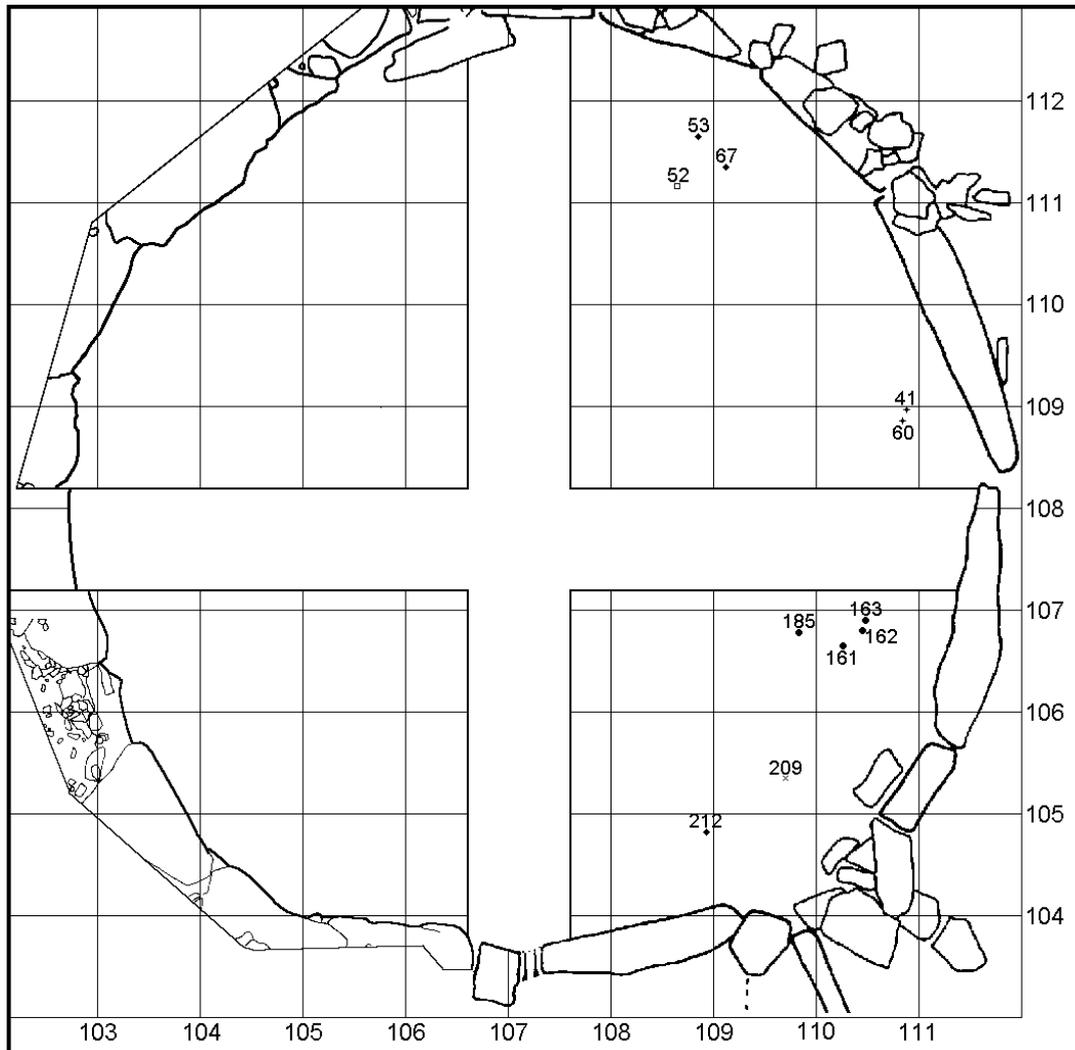


Figure 22 *Distribution of artefacts between 98.50m and 98.59m above site datum.*

This level represents an important one for our investigation because artefacts of modern, early post-medieval and prehistoric dates are all represented. The only sherd of prehistoric pottery (**212**) lies close to the doorway and is of Dartmoor stream fabric. The modern finds include three pieces of yoghurt pot (**161**, **162** and **163**) and a fragment of yellow plastic (**185**). Two sherds from a North Devon ware cup of a type possibly as early as 1480, but most likely to be 16th century (**53** and **67**) were recovered very close to each other and would certainly appear to indicate that in the northern part of Trench 1 the early post-medieval surface was between 98.56m and 98.58m above site datum and about 0.34m below the late 20th century surface. Identification and dating of these sherds was provided by John Allan (Exeter Museum) and brought to attention of the author by Henrietta Quinnell.

The only two prehistoric artefacts in the once congested southern part of Trench 1 are a rubbing stone (**41**) and hammer stone (**60**). It may significant that these are much larger and more robust than the relatively large numbers of pottery sherds that lie below. This again may provide a clue to the taphonomic processes at work within the house. In the northern part of Trench 5, just over a metre from these stones is a small cluster of modern plastics. These artefacts lie within a hollow identified by the pre-excavation contour survey and despite their relative depth they all lay within the turf and topsoil which was particularly deep in this part of the site.

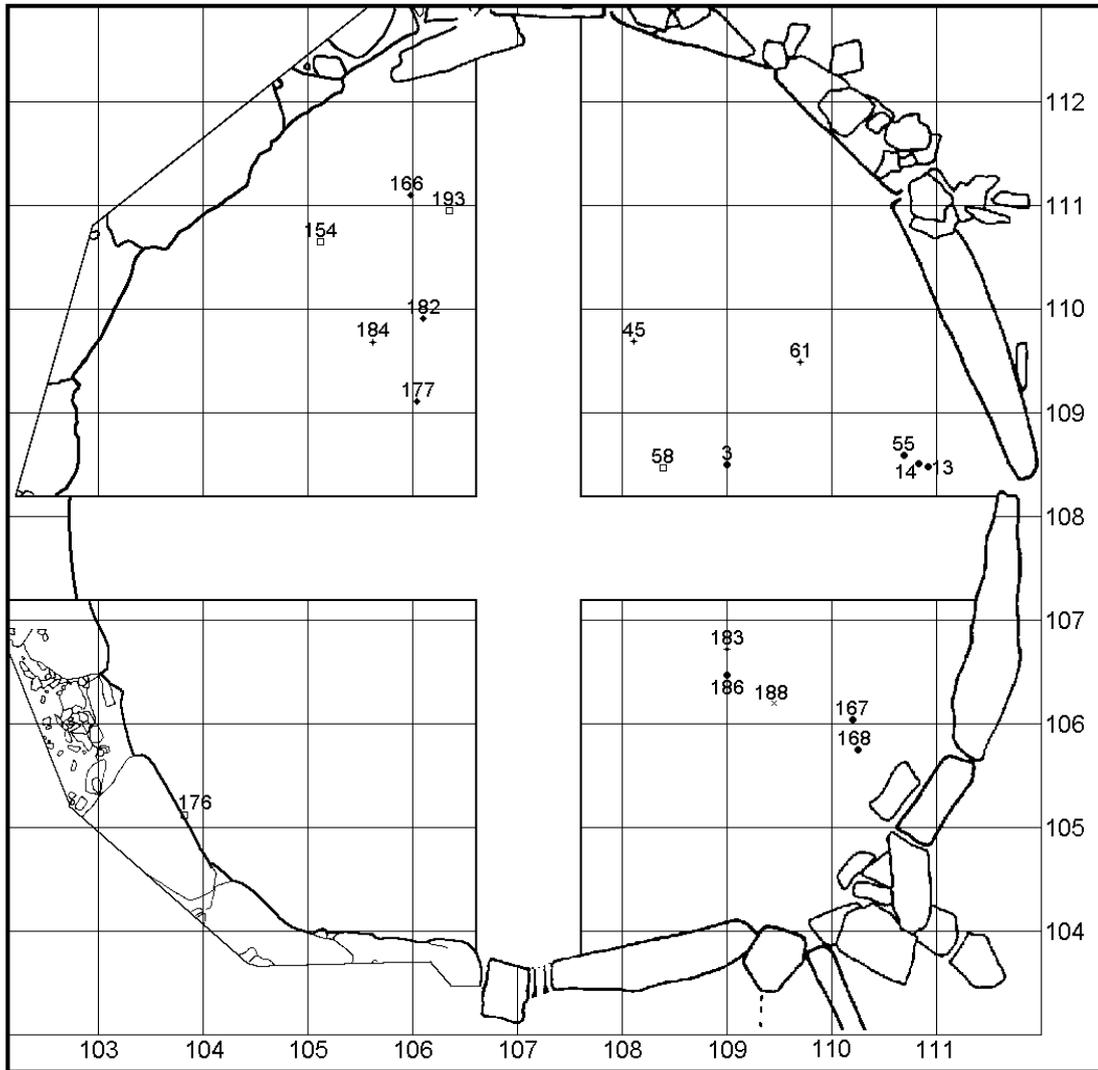


Figure 23 Distribution of artefacts between 98.60m and 98.69m above site datum.

Within the eastern part of the building this layer contains predominantly modern material. In the western part of the building by contrast there are no modern artefacts. Three sherds of prehistoric pottery were identified at this level. Of these **182** is of Dartmoor stream fabric and **166** and **177** are of gabbroic fabric, probably Trevisker. This illustration highlights very clearly that we are not dealing with a building with a level floor or occupation surface. The prehistoric artefacts in the western part of the building lie at a higher level than those in the east. The most likely explanation is that the building had a sloping floor. This will of course have had an impact on the character of weathering and erosion on the occupation surface in the period following the removal of the roof. One might for example expect artefacts in the upper western part of the building to have crept downslope, becoming incorporated in lower lying hollows. The cluster of prehistoric artefacts shown in Figure 20 may represent such a hollow.

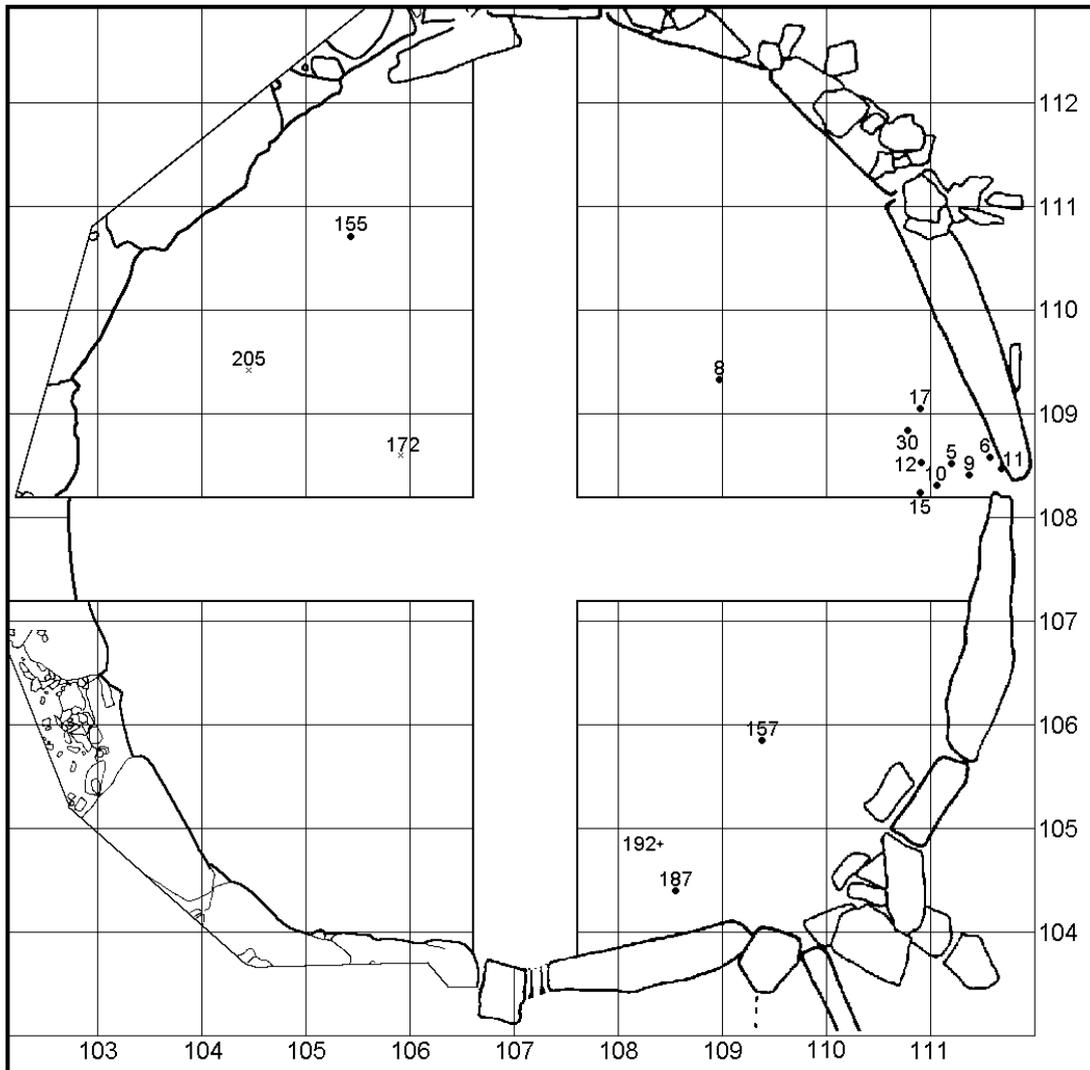


Figure 24 Distribution of artefacts between 98.70m and 98.79m above site datum.

This level contains mainly modern finds many of which are clustered in the south eastern corner of Trench 1. This cluster is somewhat reminiscent of the prehistoric finds in Figure 20 and may suggest that the taphonomic processes operating within the building were similar in both the prehistoric and modern periods. Finds of prehistoric date are limited to a flint (**192**), and two water rounded pebbles (**172** & **205**).

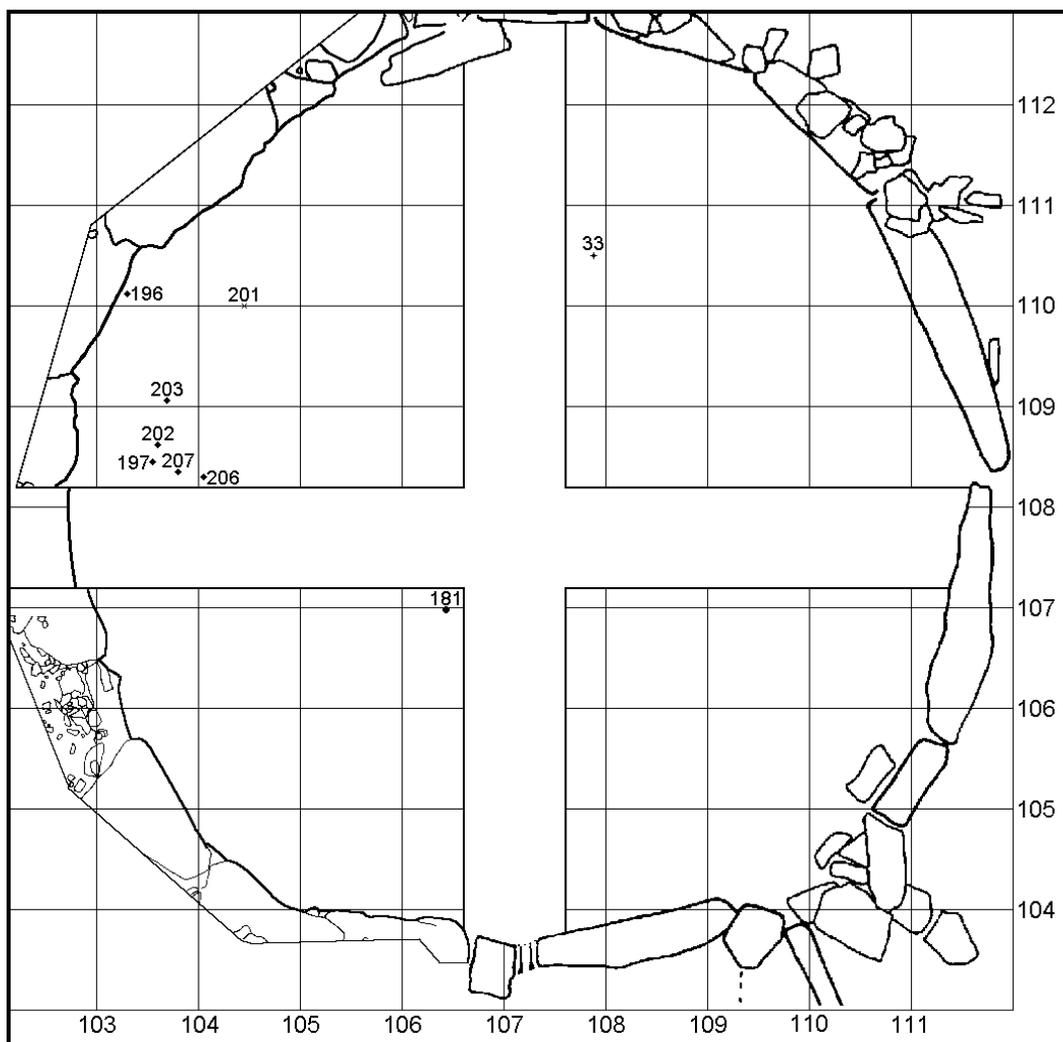


Figure 25 Distribution of artefacts between 98.80m and 98.89m above site datum.

A cluster of prehistoric artefacts in the western part of Trench 2 provides conclusive evidence that the prehistoric archaeology within the house is at a much higher level. By contrast in the eastern parts of Trenches 1 and 5 these levels are higher than the pre-excavation land surface. There are three Trevisker Ware sherds at this level, one of which (**202**) has a very distinctive rim. Three further sherds were recovered of which two are of granitic fabric and one of Dartmoor stream.

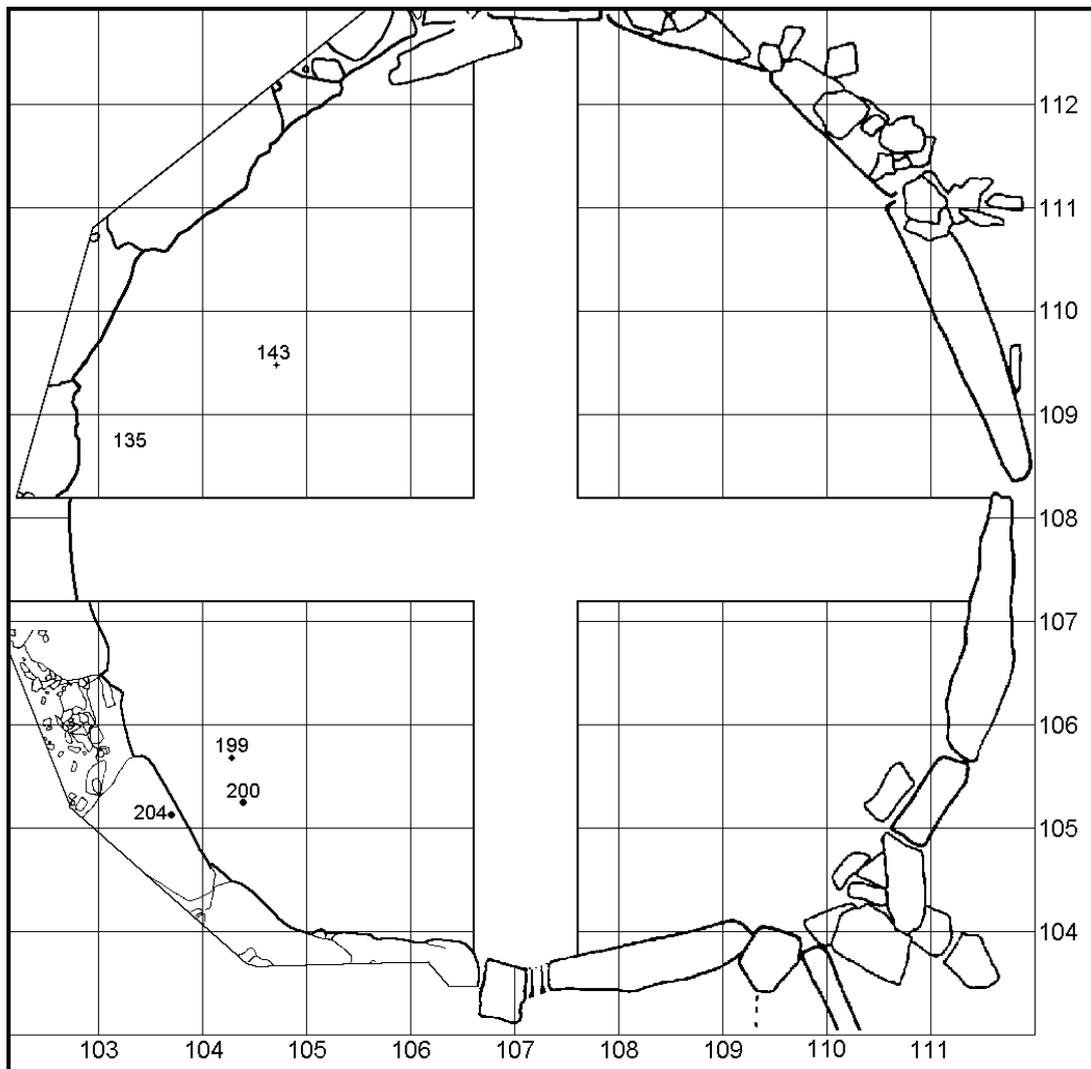


Figure 26 *Distribution of artefacts between 98.90m and 98.99m above site datum.*

There are no deposits in the eastern trenches and therefore all the finds are limited to the western part of the building. Even here there are few finds, with both prehistoric artefacts lying within material containing modern finds. The flint (**143**) has clearly been redeposited and the single sherd of Dartmoor stream pottery (**199**) lay within a rabbit burrow having clearly been displaced from elsewhere. Above this level there are no prehistoric artefacts.

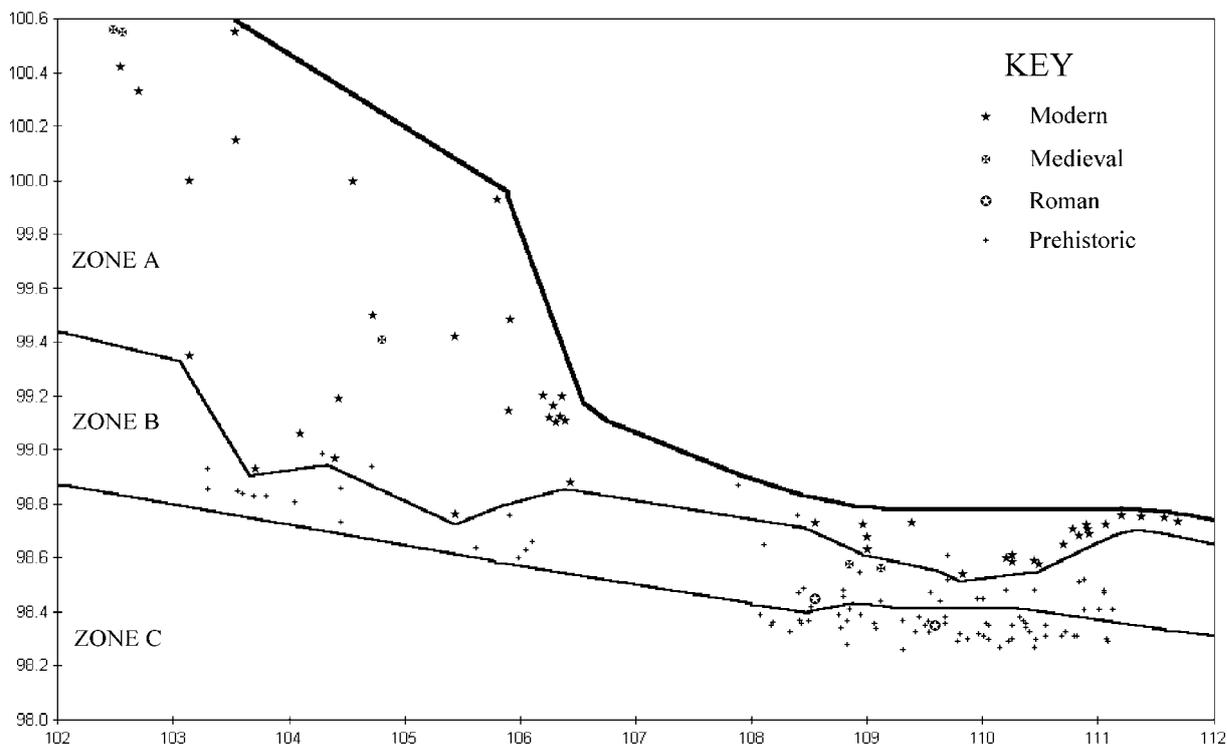


Figure 27 View from the south illustrating the depth of artefacts within the round house.

Figures 27 and 28 graphically present the position of the artefacts encountered so far during the excavation. The upper line denotes the approximate position of the pre-excavation turf level. Zone A represents post-medieval build up of soil within the house. Many of the artefacts are of modern date including pieces of yoghurt pot, glazed pottery, various plastics and metal objects. These finds mean that we can be sure that this zone represents 19th and 20th century soil and rubble accumulation. A small number of prehistoric artefacts were found within this zone and it can therefore be safely deduced that none of these finds are in their original position. All of them have been moved from elsewhere and redeposited together with some modern material within the building. The most likely explanation is that the field above the house was brought into cultivation and following heavy rain some of the topsoil together with the artefacts it contained were washed into the building. This explanation does not however satisfactorily explain the position of the only sherd of prehistoric pottery (**199**) in this zone (Figure 28). This sherd does not appear to be particularly abraded and it is therefore unlikely that it was present in the nearby topsoil for years before being washed into the building. The clue to explain its presence within Zone A lies in its discovery within a rabbit burrow close to the body of a dead rabbit. It is therefore much more likely that this sherd has been displaced upwards by burrowing rabbits. The remaining prehistoric artefacts are all robust flints which most likely have rolled down the hillslope with the topsoil. A total of five flints representing over half of the assemblage from the building lie within this zone. This tells us that the fields surrounding the building contain more flints than the building itself and that many of the flints so far encountered within the building were originally deposited elsewhere.

Zone B represents a transitional area between the securely dated modern deposits and the prehistoric ones represented by Zone C. The upper line is relatively secure, following as it does the lower limit of modern finds. The lower line by contrast is rather more subjective, relying more on the density of finds rather than anything more tangible and is therefore likely to be reviewed as work progresses. This said, however, it must be significant that two sherds of 16th century pottery lie within this zone, confirming that some of these deposits were being laid down during the late medieval early post-medieval period. The spatial proximity of these sherds suggests that they were deposited within the building rather than being the result of redeposition from elsewhere. A

preliminary analysis of the finds from Zone B indicates that there are 23 sherds of prehistoric pottery, 14 stone implements, six quartz crystals, two flints, the two sherds of 16th century pottery and two bundles of rabbit bones. Of particular interest and possibly significance is the relative high percentage of stone implements within this zone (Figure 28). Post depositional processes are likely to have contributed to this situation because clearly small sherds of pottery are likely to have responded in a different manner to the much larger and heavier stone artefacts. In general terms the pottery sherds are much more likely to have been incorporated into the soil more quickly than the larger pieces which may have been disturbed frequently by livestock moving through the building. The observed distribution of artefacts in Zone B can certainly be explained purely in terms of livestock or people wandering through the derelict building on a rainy day. Their hoofs or feet sinking into the soil pushing some artefacts deeper into the ground whilst at the same time displacing others upwards. This sort of activity could have gone on for several years before fresh material from the slopes above filtered down the hillside and eventually provided a protective layer and ended the seasonal movement of finds. By contrast a rhizome interpretation of the observed distribution is much more difficult to justify, because if this had played a major impact on disturbing artefacts one would have expected a greater percentage of the smaller pottery sherds than was observed. This may suggest that the impact of rhizome damage on artefact stratigraphy may be less than was feared.

Apart from a single sherd of Roman samian ware Zone C contains only prehistoric artefacts. A total of 49 sherds of pottery, together with three stone implements, one crystal and two flints have to date been recovered from this zone. The sherd of Roman pottery does hint that the stratigraphy is perhaps not quite as safe as one might hope. The sherd came from the centre of the clearly defined cluster of prehistoric material in the southern part of Trench 1 and does imply contamination. The source of this contamination cannot be established with any certainty. The hoof of a Roman cow may have pushed the sherd down into the earlier prehistoric levels, or a later Norman rabbit may have set home here or the sherd may have been pushed down by a root or rhizome.

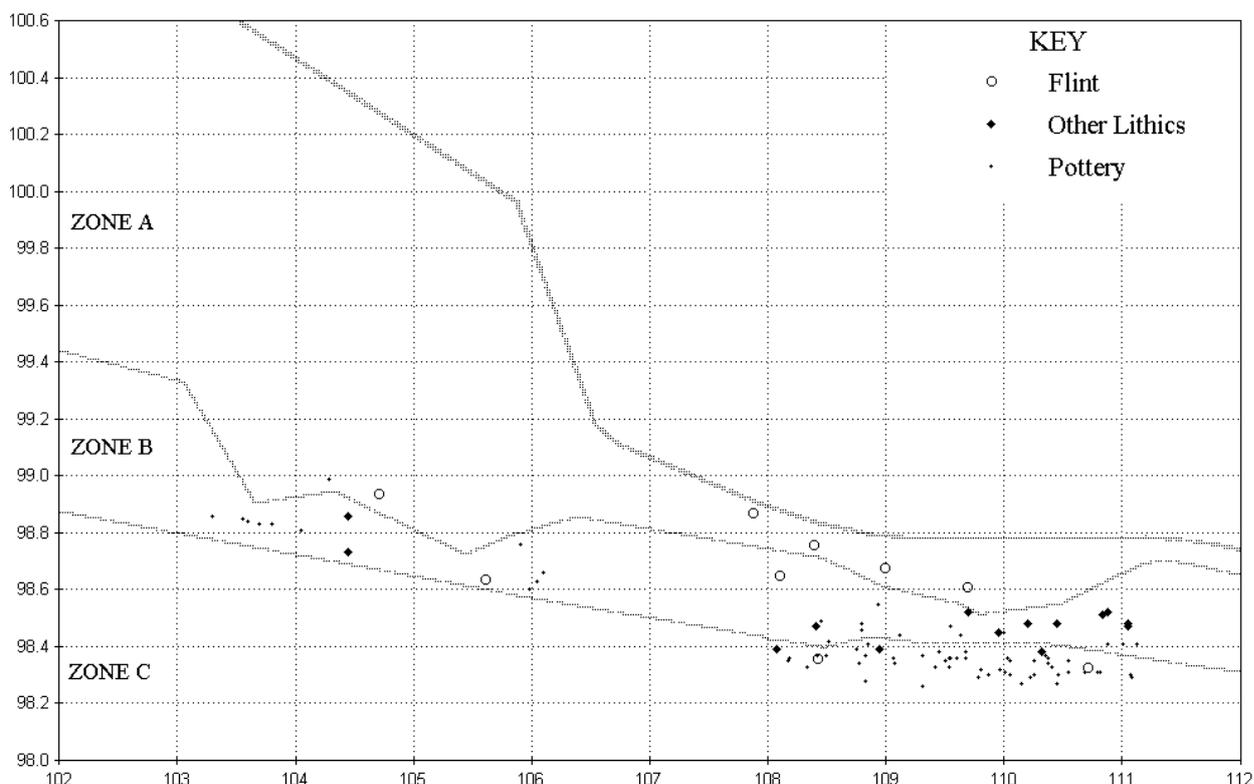


Figure 28 View from the south illustrating the depth of prehistoric artefacts within the round house

Why collect crystals?

Traditionally, crystals on prehistoric sites have been treated as finds. The idea being that they are pretty to look at, could have been used as play things by children or had some sort of significance to the people who lived there. On granite, crystals occur naturally and therefore one might expect to find them even if they had not been brought to the house by its inhabitants. Crystals encountered during the Teigncombe excavation have been collected and their positions recorded. To date, a total of 26 crystals representing just over 12% of all finds, have been found. Figure 29 illustrates their position relative to the 3 deposition zones and prehistoric artefacts. The illustration clearly highlights that most of the crystals were found in the material deposited in modern times, with only one in the "secure" prehistoric zone. Furthermore, by comparing the distribution of the crystals with that of the prehistoric artefacts it is clear that there is no correlation between the two. This strongly supports the idea that the crystals are in no way connected with activity at the house. As work continues we will continue to collect crystals and this should allow us to prove beyond any doubt whether crystals played any part in the lives of the people at Teigncombe.

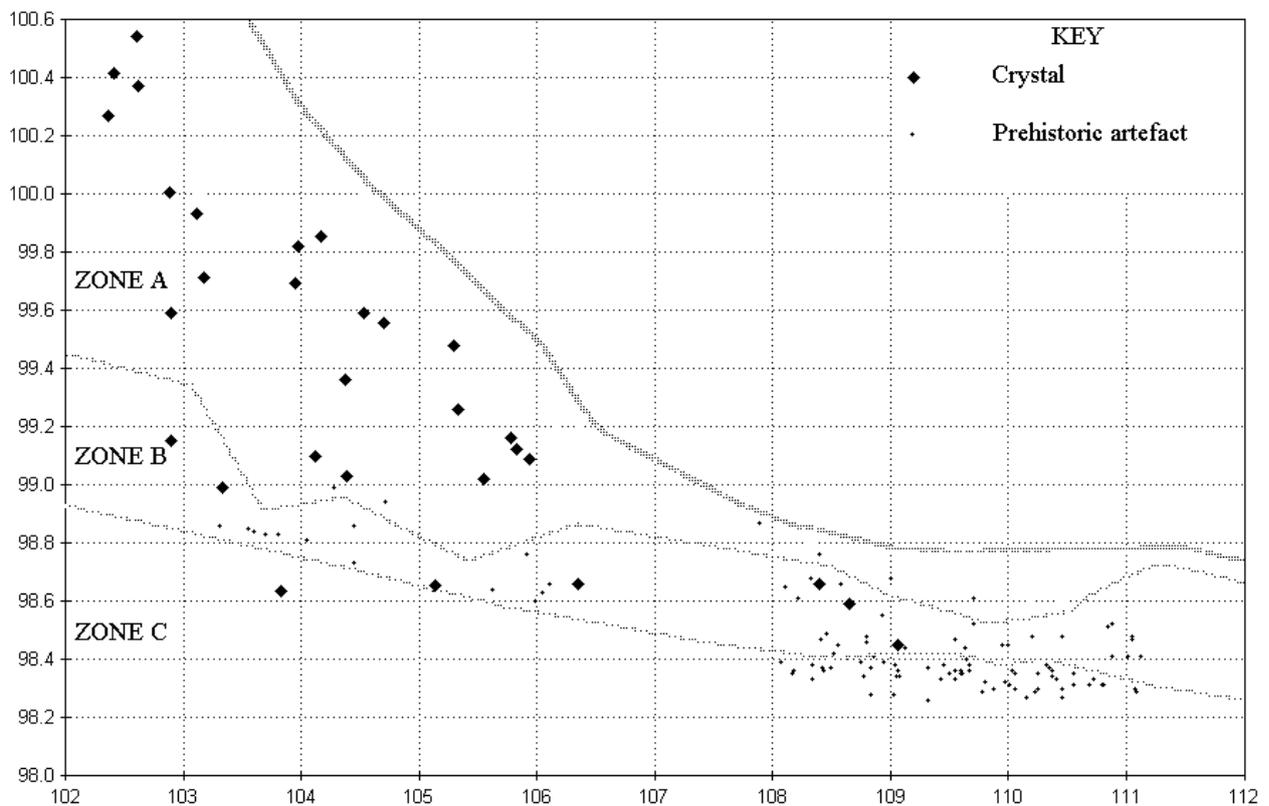


Figure 29 View from the south illustrating the depth of crystals within the round house

The Site Matrix

During the excavation the different materials encountered have been allocated separate context numbers. The relationship between these contexts is crucial for an understanding of the stratigraphy. Figure 30 illustrates the relative position of contexts containing artefacts together with an interpretative comment. The thought processes involved in constructing a matrix such as this help us to understand and hopefully explain the history of the house. As well as recording the three dimensional position of each artefact they are all allocated a context number and this in turn helps us to date each context.

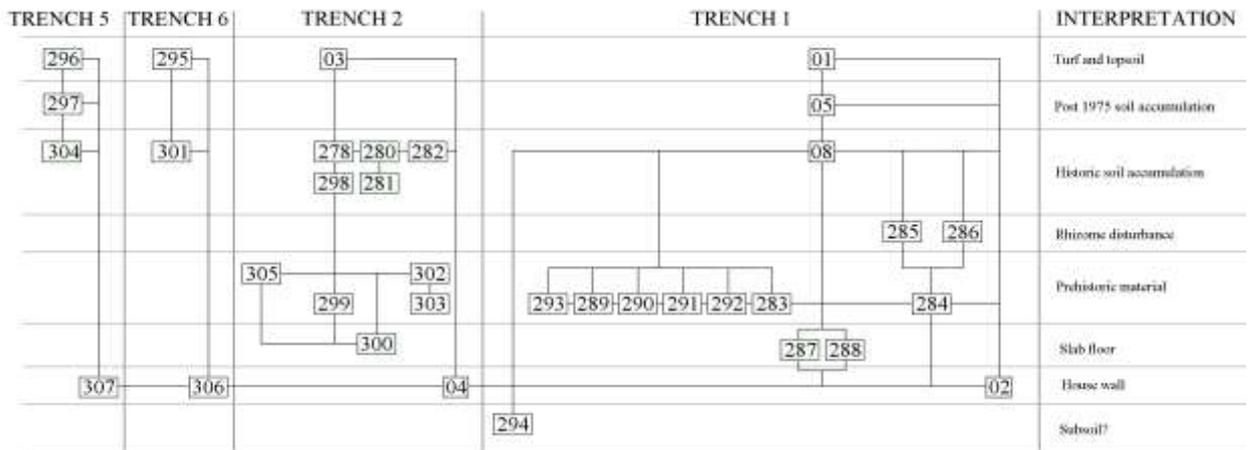


Figure 30 Simplified matrix showing the relationship between the major contexts within the round house

Conclusion

In broad terms, the 2002 season represented a year in which we removed a substantial percentage of the historic deposits together with a large part of the rhizome mat and prepared the way for a detailed examination of the impact of rhizomes on the prehistoric archaeology surviving within the building. Many of the results of this work will be viewed within the context of the first two years work and provide the setting for what is to come.

INTERIM REPORT ON THE POTTERY FROM THE 2000 AND 2002 SEASONS

Henrietta Quinnell

The two seasons together produced 60 prehistoric sherds, 49 in 2000 and 11 in 2002, which greatly expands the assemblage from the 12 found in 1999. At least four fabric groups are present and the date range is extended to include Middle Bronze Age (MBA) as well as Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age (LBA/EIA).

The Middle Bronze Age is most clearly represented by a Trevisker flat-topped rim (202) with incised decoration beneath; there are good comparisons at Dean Moor eg Fig 20 No 2 (Fox 1957). This sherd and four others without diagnostic features have been examined by Dr Roger Taylor who considers they should be described as of gabbroic admixture fabric; all were found in Trench 2 fairly close together in Zone B. Although rim 202 is very fresh, its high stratigraphic position suggests that this material may have collapsed into the building after disuse rather than being directly related to activity within it. Gabbroic admixture fabric, Lizard gabbroic clay with added rock fragments, is the most common Trevisker fabric of the Middle Bronze Age in Cornwall (Parker-Pearson 1990, 19). Trevisker pottery may also be made of gabbroic fabric without added rock fragments, as is the only previous find of gabbroic pottery from Dartmoor, a vessel from the Smallacombe Rocks settlement (*ibid* no 80). Only three other Bronze Age sites with gabbroic pottery are known from Devon, a cremation burial at Elburton near Plymouth, a vessel from a barrow at Upton Pyne (Quinnell 2001, 24) and a probable Middle Bronze Age group from a round house at Staddon, Plymouth excavated early in 2003 (*per. comm* author).

One abraded sherd (94) has volcanic rock inclusions, with five further probable sherds which are all very small, The fabric of 94 is very distinctive and has recently been recognised in MBA contexts at Heatree on Dartmoor (Quinnell 1991) and at Hayes Farm near Exeter (Woodward and Williams 1989; H. Quinnell *per comm* for the more extensive assemblage from Cotswold Archaeology excavations 1999). The volcanic inclusions appear to come from the Permian of the Exe valley and will be described at present as 'Permian volcanic fabric'. Similarly sourced volcanic inclusions are found in Middle Iron Age South Western Decorated (Glastonbury) ware (Peacock 1969, Group 6) but are smaller and the fabric has a different finish. At present Permian volcanic fabric has not been recorded in LBA/EIA assemblages. All sherds were found in Trench 1 in Zone C among material (see below) which is likely to be LBA/EIA in date. Either they are redeposited or represent continued, and unsuspected, use of this fabric into the LBA/EIA.

The majority of sherds, 42, are in the distinctive fabric to which the 1999 assemblage belonged. Inclusions indicate a source in a stream valley a few miles off the granite and a provisional description of 'Dartmoor stream fabric' may be used. A detailed description was included in the previous interim report. In 1999 the distinctive typological feature was a cable rim, an upright rim with expanded top decorated with finger nail impression and a row of finger nail impressions beneath. The 2000 assemblage included both another cable rim sherd and a body sherd with finger nail decoration. It is now clear that a number of vessels are represented. The date range of c. 750-550 BC suggested in the previous interim may continue to be used for this material at present, but the scarcity of data for the LBA/EIA ceramic sequence means that even this date broad range should only be regarded as provisional. The Dartmoor stream fabric sherds including cable rim fragments dominate the assemblage in Zone C, the artefact-rich zone immediately above the House floor.

Some nine sherds have a range of inclusions deriving from the granite and may be grouped at present as 'granitic'. Some variation may be established with further study. The only formal feature was a base angle. Granitic sherds occur both in the Zone C artefact concentration and with the Trevisker sherd at a higher level.

The expansion in the fabric range since the 1999 excavations, and the likelihood that the final seasons may extend this even further, has made it sensible to defer detailed fabric study and comparison with Fox's Kestor assemblage until the conclusion of the excavations.

Totally unexpected was the presence of two sherds of Roman date, Roman material being

notoriously scarce on Dartmoor. One (71) is a small piece of samian, a Dragendorf form 27 cup likely to be late first or early second century in date. The second (211) is a body sherd of South West Dorset Black-burnished ware, a ware which, from studies at Exeter (Holbrook & Bidwell 1991, 91-4) was in production during the Roman period until the earlier 3rd century. Both sherds were abraded. The sherds were found 5m apart, one at the top of Zone C and the other at the base of Zone B. The sherds may well come from vessels which were contemporary in use and indicate activity in the late first to early second centuries AD in the immediate vicinity of the House. The details of their findspots should be helpful in consideration of disturbance and intrusion within the House interior.

Several small sherds of medieval cooking pot have now come from topsoil. There is also a small range of sherds from 16th century to modern. These come from various depths in Zones A and B and will be useful tracers in studies of soil formation and disturbance within the House.

A number of themes which will be important in the study of the assemblage were outlined in the previous interim report - chronology, sourcing, abrasion, and interpretation of taphonomy and of activities leading to the deposition of ceramics. The extension in date and fabric range only emphasises the importance of these themes. The Teigncombe-Kestor area of Dartmoor *may* be unusual for the broad chronological range of activities, but it is surely not unique. It is fortunate that the bracken project is developing at a time when understanding of Devon prehistoric ceramics is rapidly increasing and that its methodology will allow the maximum information eventually to be gained from the artefacts recovered.

Acknowledgements

I must start this year by thanking everybody for their patience. The diggers and visitors to the excavation will be aware that August 2002 was a difficult one for me. The excavation coincided with our move from Wembworthy. We left our home behind for the last time two days after the end of the excavation and throughout it we were involved in moving all our worldly possessions into a couple of wooden field shelters. At the time of the dig we had not yet seen anywhere we liked and this combined with headaches associated with moving heavy items until well after dark each and every night meant that I was not always in the best of moods. So although not present at all on the dig this year I would like to give a big thank you to Helen and Iona who worked extremely hard behind the scenes making the whole thing possible.

Our eventual move to Carmarthenshire in November 2002 and the resulting confusion that ensued explains in large part why the Interim has been so delayed this year. I will try better next year, although I suspect that by then I will have another excuse. In many ways the excavation ran itself this year and for this I have to thank the entire work force. There were a few new faces this year, but the bulk of the digging, shifting, moving and recording was carried out by the stalwarts, who in spite of everything keep on returning for further punishment. In past years, I have always seemed to manage to omit someone from list, so apologises in advance this time. The ever helpful volunteers this year included Bob Bruce, Judith Cannell, Graham Carne, Judi Clarke, Chloe Clifford, Geoff Day, Janet Daynes, Gordon Fisher, Judith Farmer, John Hodge, Wendy Howard, Lorinda Legge, Deric Munro, Jane Passmore, Mike Passmore, Bill Radcliffe, Shirley Ryan, Helen Scobling, Fran Stilton, Esmée Sykes, Janet Trezise, Sue Watts, Anne Whitbourne and Roland Williams.

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Deric Munro introduced me to the “joys” of digital photography and he kindly agreed to carry out the photogrammetric work. Figures 13 - 18 are his responsibility and the rhizome mat plans of Trenches 5 and 6 are derived from his series of photographs. The use of a digital camera meant that during this year my teetering exploits on top of a ladder were kept to a minimum - for which I was very grateful.

Devon Archaeology Society and the Archaeology Club of Eggesford provided us with many of the tools and equipment and I would like to specially thank in this context, David Fitter (DAS) and Janet Daynes and Gordon Fisher (ACE). Thanks also to Serina Rowse (DNPA) for building us two stiles and Patrick Stanbury for keeping his sheep at bay.

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