ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

3521

SERIES/No CONTRACTOR

AUTHOR P Murphy October 1981

TITLE Aelvedon, Site J 1981; Charred plant remains

Site	: Kelvedon
County	: Essex
Code	: KL 81 J
Director	: M. Eddy
Type of site	: Complex of pits, ditches etc.
Period	: Prehistoric - Roman
Geology	: Brickearth and Terrace Gravels
Type of material	: Charred plant remains

Kelvedon. Site J 1981

As is usual at sites on decalcified brickearth, preservation conditions for biological remains were very poor. Samples have been examined from only two contexts: 146, a Roman oven and 106, a prehistoric pit. There was no direct artefactual dating evidence for 106 but there was reason to suspect that it was of early date, possibly Mesolithic: unlike all other pits and ditches at the site it was overlain by some 10cm of colluvium (161), and a scatter of Mesolithic and later flintwork came from this part of the excavation.

106

The brickearth into which this feature was cut was a variable yellowish-brown to strong brown silt loam, with common brown infilled root channels and worm burrows, slightly stony (gravel to small rounded to angular flints) with fine subangular blocky structure and abundant fine pores. At the base of the feature the brickearth was paler and less disturbed, but otherwise similar in lithology. The pit fills (162, 163, 164) and the deposit overlying the pit (161) consisted of re-worked brickearth and were distinguishable from the undisturbed brickearth only on slight colour variations and charcoal content, although 163 was slightly more stony. 162 differed from all other fills in the feature: it contained a high proportion of charcoal fragments and 'ashy' material, giving an overall dark greyish-brown colour. Prominent infilled root channels penetrated through 162 into 164.

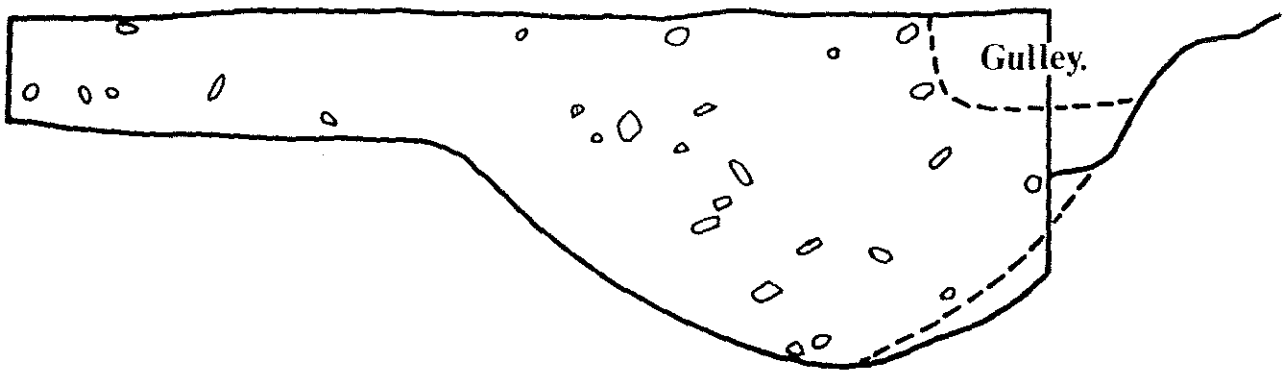
A 30kg sample of 162 was examined. Charcoal fragments were extracted from a 20kg sub-sample for C14 dating by manual water flotation in the laboratory, collecting the flot in a 0.5mm mesh sieve (finer meshes were found to clog with silt). Charred material was collected in the same way from the remaining 10kg. for identification. The dried flot was sorted under low power of a binocular microscope. The non-floating residue was washed out over a 1mm nesh sieve, dried and sorted for bone fragments and artefacts.

The 10kg sample produced very small fragments of burnt bone, chips of heat-shattered flint, a possible flint flake and charcoal. Fragments larger than 7mm were identified: these were exclusively of oak (Quercus sp.).

146

A 200g sample of charred plant material was examined. The sample contained

fragments of oak charcoal (Quercus sp.), nine Triticum sp. (wheat) caryopses, six indeterminate cereal caryopses and fragments, and a fragmentary Bromus caryposis. These cereal remains need not necessarily indicate that the oven was used for cereal drying: they could be derived from incompletely threshed ears used as kindling in the stoke-hole.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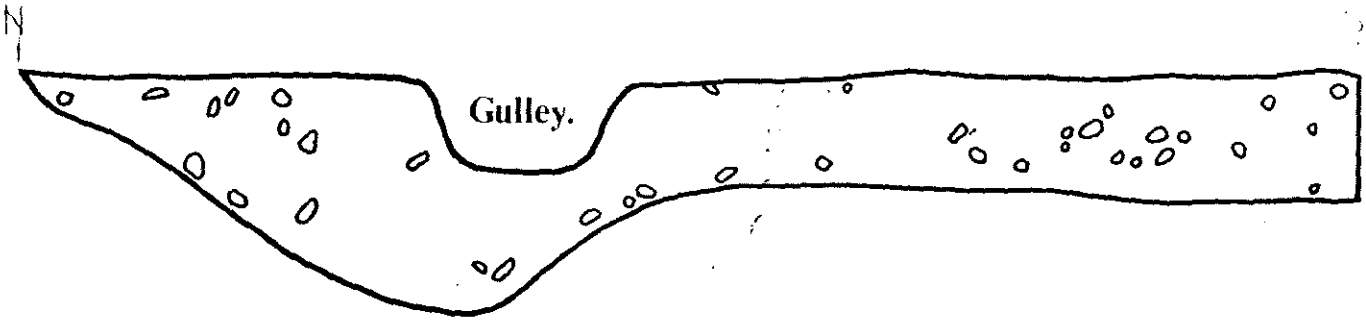
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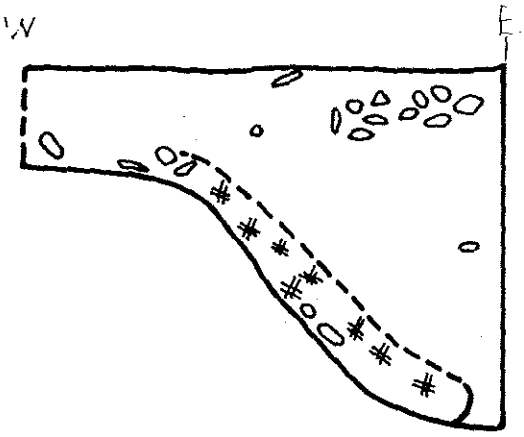
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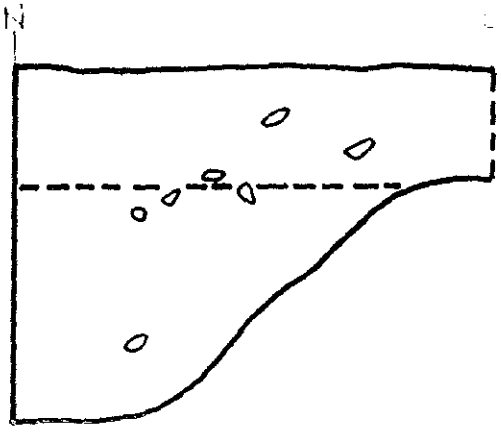
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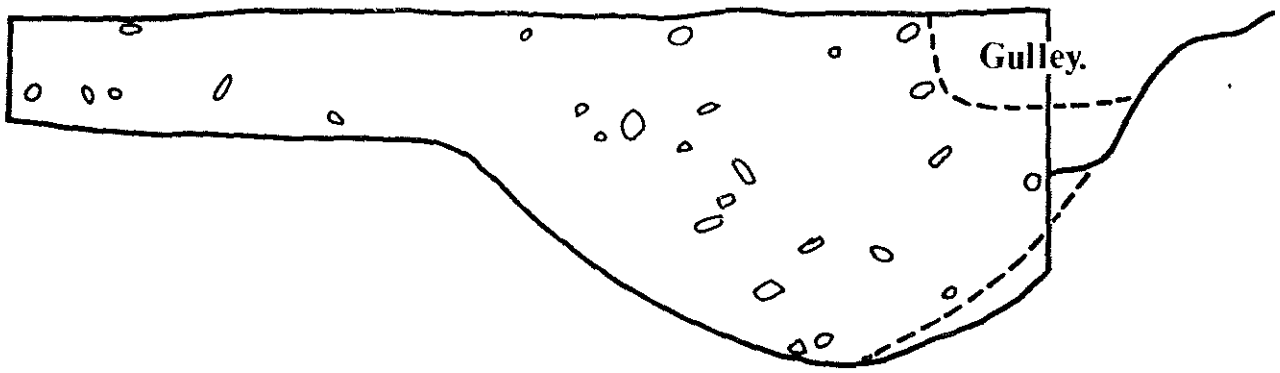
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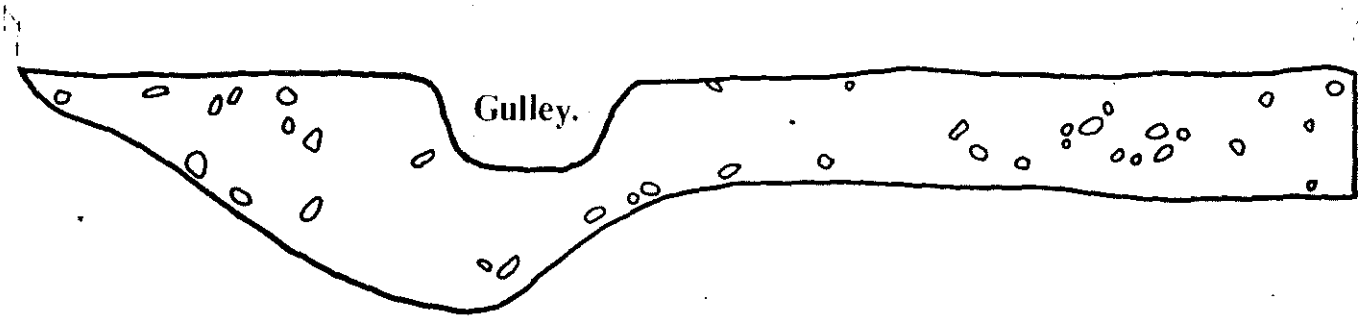
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