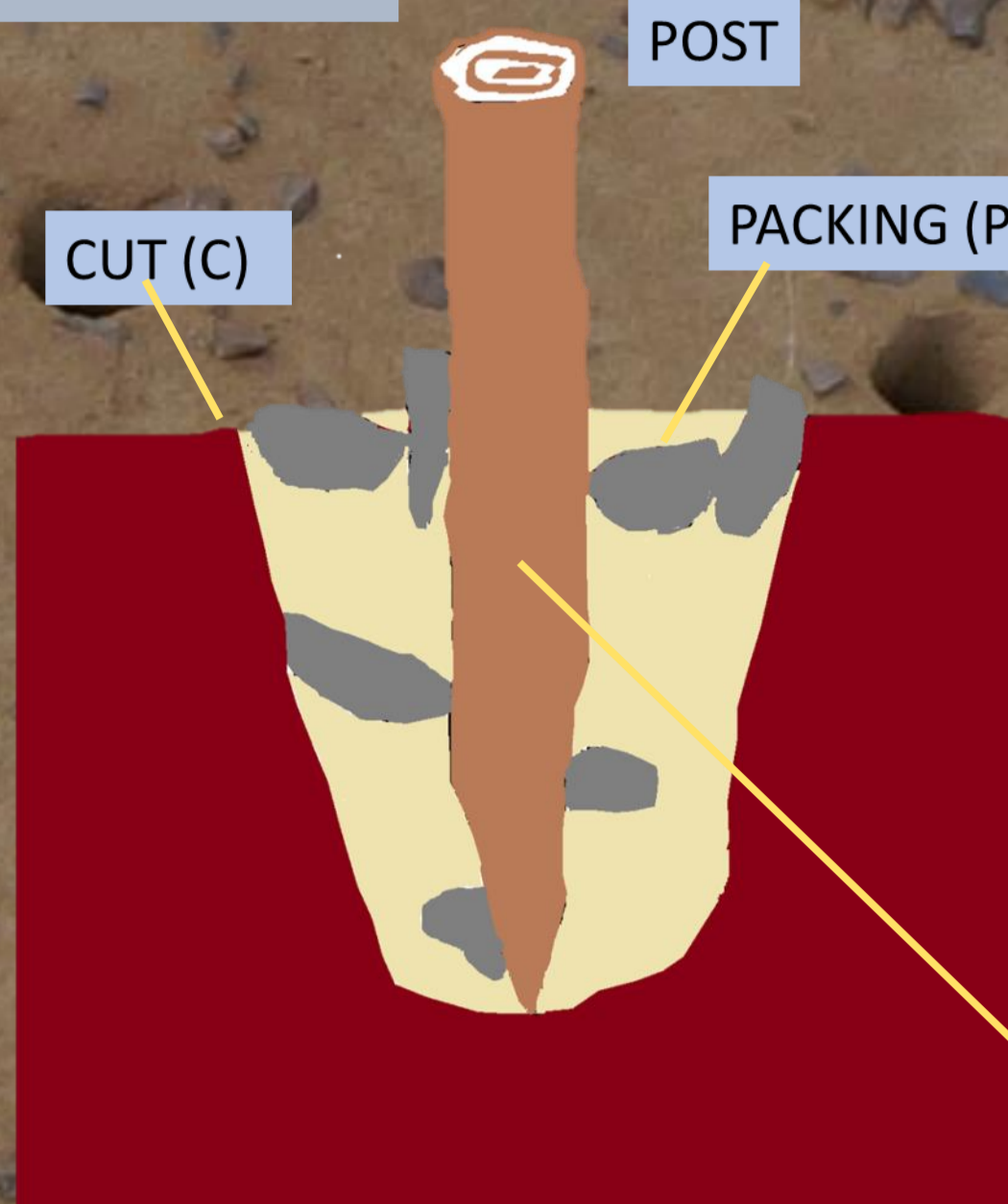


# EXACAVATING POSTHOLES AT COCKS FARM ABINGER

Posthole terms:



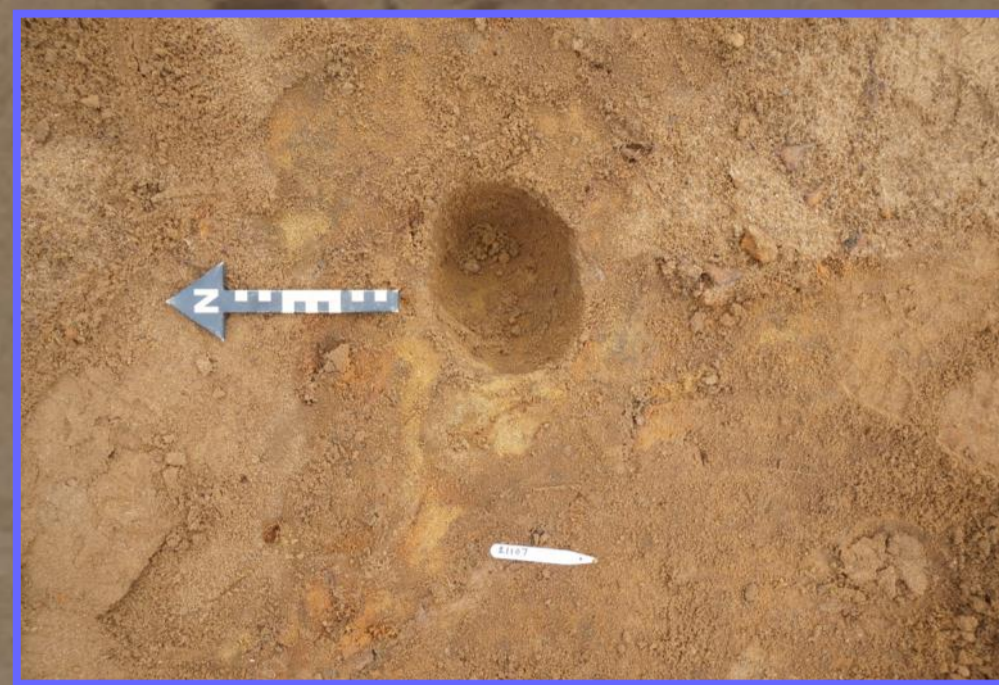
How are postholes made?

- 1. Make a post.**  
In cross-section it might be:  
Round wood (circular)  
Half-timber (D-shaped)  
Quarter-timber (right-angled triangle with a curved side)  
Square  
Triangular.  
Its base might be:  
A central point  
An edge point  
Tapering  
A wedge  
Rounded  
Flat

Or any other shape that takes your fancy eg oblong with a half-wedge base

How are postholes made?

- 2. Place the post: A**  
Dig a hole? Not necessarily, some posts are just driven into the ground with no packing stones. This is the usual method for modern fences.



These can be hard to find and are often unconvincing. Look for a fill of a different texture and colour to the surrounding soil and preferably hard sides cut into the natural. If the posthole lines up with others that is a great help. This one is part of a Romano-British building.

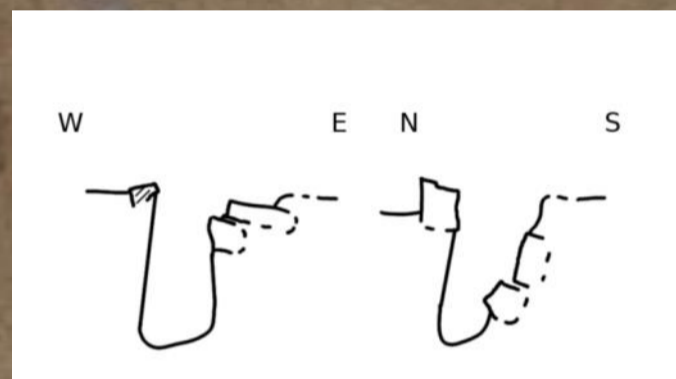
How are postholes made?

- 2. Place the post: B**  
Dig a hole, put the post at its base and then drive the post further down. Usually packing stones are then placed around the part of the post above the driven section.

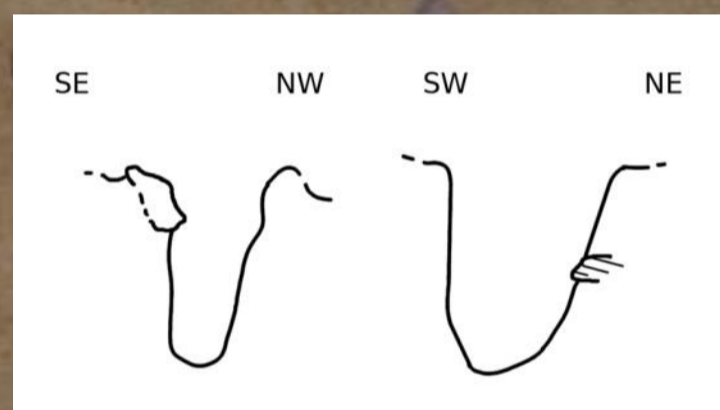
How are postholes made?

- 2. Place the post: C**  
Dig the hole, place the post in it and pack all around. Packing stones will be found to the base of the post-pipe.

The stones should help to find these. A great proportion of the postholes at CFA are this sort, including all of the Early Neolithic ones (of which this is an example).



Many CFA Romano-British postholes are of this kind. Sometimes the post was placed against the edge of the cut, in which case there is only a partial circle of stones. The number of stones to the NW of this Romano-British post may be because the building would exert most pressure in this direction.



How are postholes made?

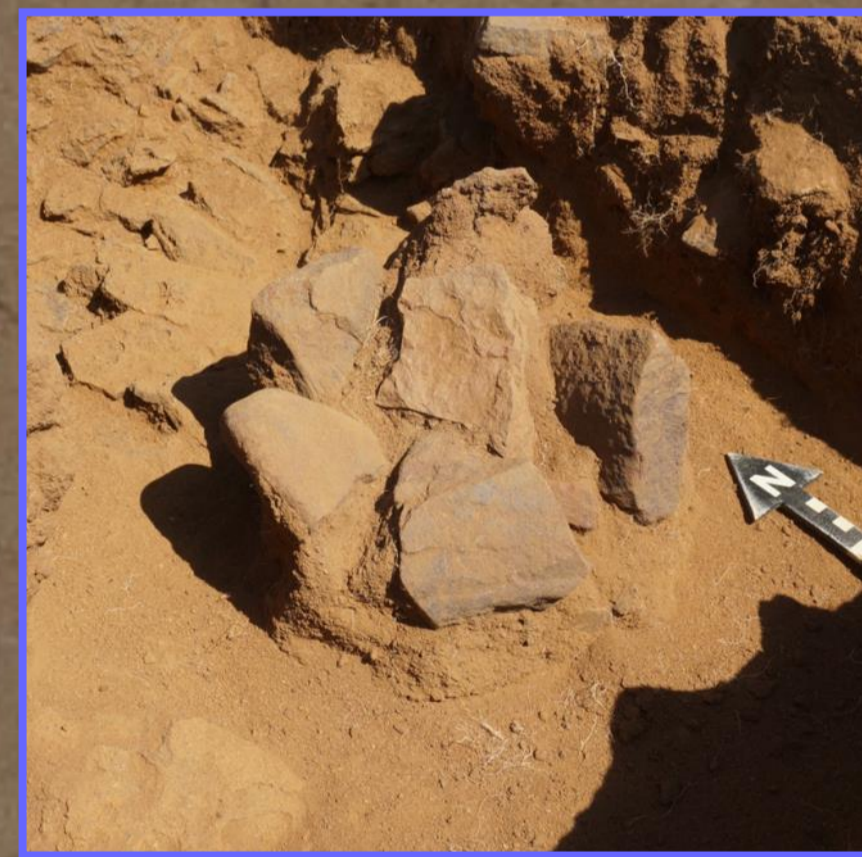
- 2. Place the post: D**  
If the ground is very soft, or if it is important to get all the post-tops at the same level packing may be placed under the post.

How are postholes made?

- 2. Place the post: E**  
Sometimes the base of the post is placed at ground level on a heap of packing – a postpad. This implies good carpentry in the building. A postpad is extremely unlikely to be part of a fenceline.



This post belonging to the second phase of a Romano-British roundhouse had a piece of tile placed horizontally at the base. Others in the same ring had stones at the base. Note that this posthole was not apparent on the surface: it was found by measurement from others.



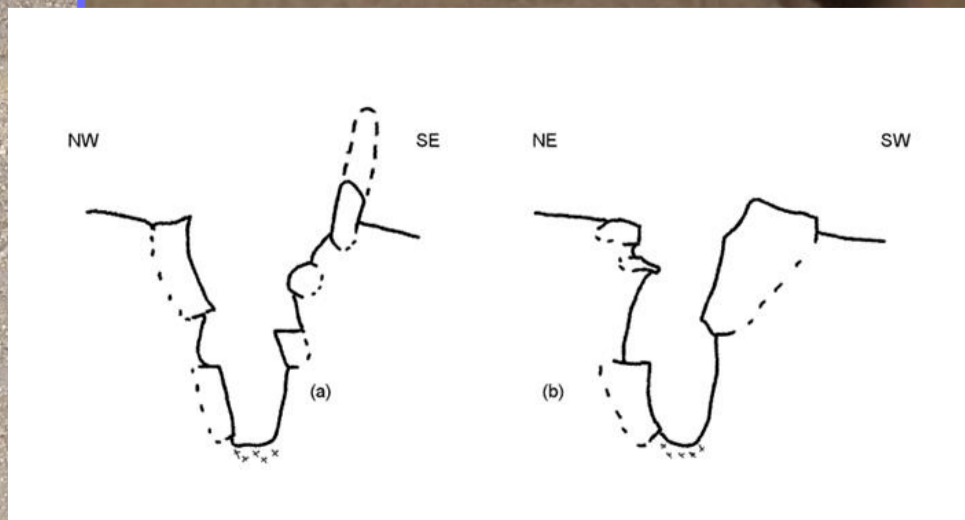
There are very few postpads identified at CFA, only about 11 (out of over 2400). But if a post was placed on in situ ironpan there would be nothing to see

Excavating postholes.

- 1. Identifying a possibility:** from position of potential packing stones. Do they form a circle? Are some vertical? (if so why?)

Before excavation

After excavation



Before excavation

After excavation



# EXCAVATING POSTHOLES AT COCKS FARM ABINGER

## Excavating postholes.

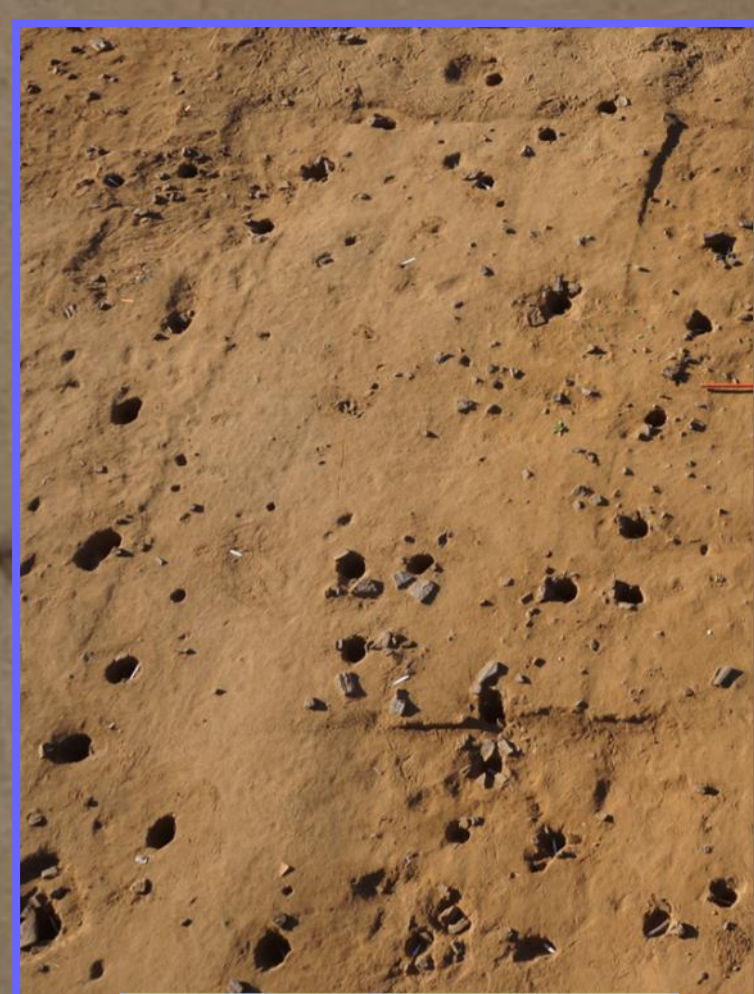
1. Identifying a possibility: from a difference in appearance or texture of potential fill



Excavated posthole. NB dark fill and stones not all over postpipe.

## Excavating postholes.

1. Identifying a possibility: based on previously excavated postholes.



Inner circle suspected



Inner circle outlined



Postholes excavated

## Excavating postholes.

2. Excavation.

There are various methods:  
Excavate half of the post-pipe.

Excavate half of the whole posthole (to the cut).

Excavate all of the postpipe leaving the packing in place.

At CFA we now (nearly) always do the last. This is because:

The posts are too small (sometimes only 8cm diameter) for the first.

Many of the posts are too close together for the second (the cuts intercut).

The cuts are often very hard to identify in the sand,

Removing only the postpipe allows cross-profiles to be drawn. This best defines the shape of the post. The packing that touches the post is of course then visible. The type of post used seems in general to vary much more than the packing and so to be the most reliable guide to the date of the posthole and therefore the structure to which it belongs.



Fine tools, brushes and spoons are used to remove the fill of the postpipe. The edges of the pipe are identified by packing stones, change in texture/colour etc. Finds in the fill are photographed, recorded and kept. The posthole is then recorded.



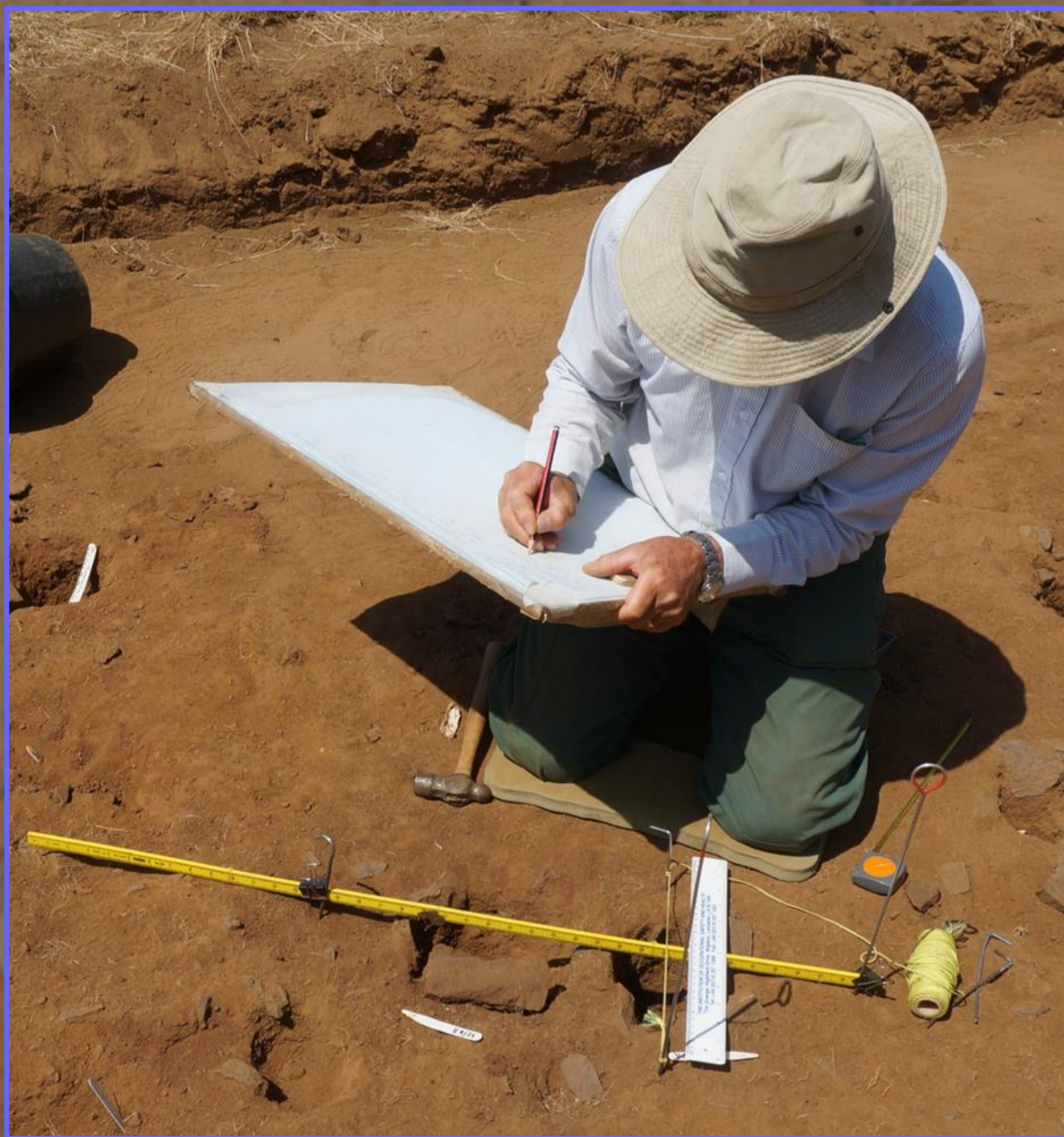
## Excavating postholes. Recording.

Each posthole has a context number – just one because it is easier to remember, and to reduce the number of contexts. This number is divided: eg 32388F (the fill) 32388P (the packing) and 32388C (the cut). It is important to distinguish between finds from the fill and the packing.

Every posthole is photographed - sometimes more than once if there are details that need recording or extra excavation.

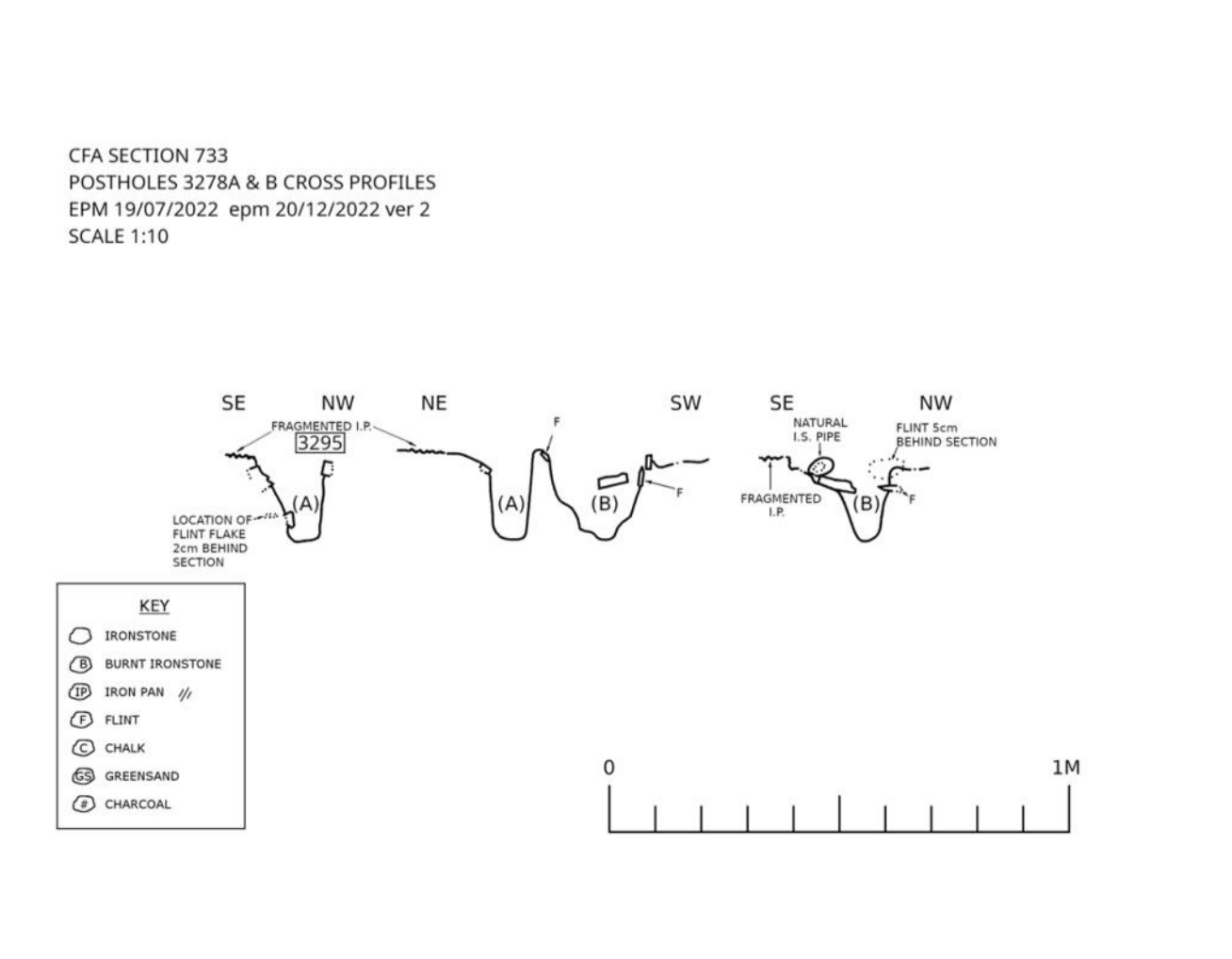
A form is filled in. This includes a rating (given by the excavator) of how convincing the posthole is.

## Excavating postholes. Drawing.



The trench plan will show the top of the posthole. Important postholes and a representative sample of the others have their cross-profiles drawn.

Here the cross-profiles below are being drawn. Note the natural ironstone pipe.



SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY		POSTHOLE CONTEXT RECORD SHEET	
SITE CODE (CFA)2	GRID REFERENCE (post centre top)	SITE SUB-DIV	CONTEXT NUMBER (1 only)
			32388
FILL	LENGTH	BREADTH	DIAMETER
	1.0	8	
PACKING/PAD	DEPTH/HEIGHT	SHAPE/PLAN	SHAPE/SECTION
	2.0	Oval	Wedge?
CUT			
FILL: COLOUR: Red / brown (dark)		PACKING/PAD: BASE: Not yellow sand	
COMPOSITION: sand		LINING: 1 // not a c 10-12, 100 c 10, 1000 c 10 6-6	
TEXTURE: soft		SURFACE: ON PIPE: some natural sloping c 1, 1 natural c 1, 1 c 1, 1 natural c 1 (10 c 10)	
INCLUSIONS: 1 c 1 c 1 (3 c 1), 1 c 1		SURFACE: OUTER: 1 c 1 c 1 (10 c 10) 1 // c 1 c 1 (10 c 10)	
PART OF WITHIN		THIS CONTEXT IS	
CONTAINS		SAME AS	
EQUIVALENT TO		UNCERTAIN	
DESCRIPTION (include spacing/context numbers if posthole aligns with others)			
27 SE 340, 14 W 389 - 6c 151 7/10			
Animal / not 2c 10 in 10 c 10, c 10			
PLANS 10 B	SECTIONS/ELEVATIONS/PROFILES	PHOTOGRAPHS	
SAMPLE NUMBERS	RELIABILITY	METHOD OF EXCAVATION	
	GOOD FAIR POOR		
INTERPRETATION			
COMPLETED BY: ELL		CHECKED BY:	DATE/PERIOD/PHASE
DATE: 23/02/22		DATE:	R-B