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RESCUE EXCAVATIONS ON FOSSIL FIELDS AT KASEKÜLA, WEST ESTONIA

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INTRODUCTION

In connection with the plans of *Partek Nordkalk Eesti AS* to enlarge its limestone mining at Kaseküla (West Estonia), archaeological investigations were carried out in this area (c. 10 ha). Earlier inventories had yielded only some remains of fossil fields in the area under consideration, which is located c. 600 m southwest of the prehistoric and historical village Kaseküla and c. 200 m west of a famous Late Stone Age site and a group of Late Bronze Age stone-cist graves (see Kriiska *et al.* 1998; Mandel 1975). The investigations were carried out with two objectives: (1) the mapping of the whole area with the aim to locate all the remains of earlier land use, and (2) the excavation of some selected field remains with the purpose of dating the complex and getting information about the land use.

The area investigated was mostly covered with a pine forest and rather dense juniper undergrowth, which made the mapping difficult. The major part of this area was very flat and even, which apparently was a result of cultivation over an extended period. This fossil field was divided in two by a natural ridge, orientated in NNE–SSW direction; the ridge was 10–25 m wide and 0.5–1 m high (Fig.). Judging by a very uneven surface, this ridge has never been cultivated.

Altogether 78 clearance cairns and six baulks were located during the mapping of this area. The clearance cairns were 2–6 m (usually 2.5–3.5 m) in the diameter and 0.3–0.5 m in the height. The cairns were mostly located in the eastern and central part of the area, i.e. on both sides of the ridge. Both the cairns and baulks were usually covered with turf; still, sometimes there were some uppermost stones visible on the surface. As one can see on the map (Fig.), the field remains were not uniformly distributed over the area – rather, they were concentrated in smaller or larger groups. The limestone bedrock extended higher in such places and therefore more pieces of limestone were peeled off by a plough. This is indicated by the observation that in the areas of cairn concentrations, the thickness of soil on the bedrock was only around 15–20 cm, while elsewhere it was much thicker. There were also several bedrock bulges extending above the surrounding

Fig. Map of fossil fields of Kaseküla.

Joon. Kaseküla fossiilsete põllujäänuste plaan.

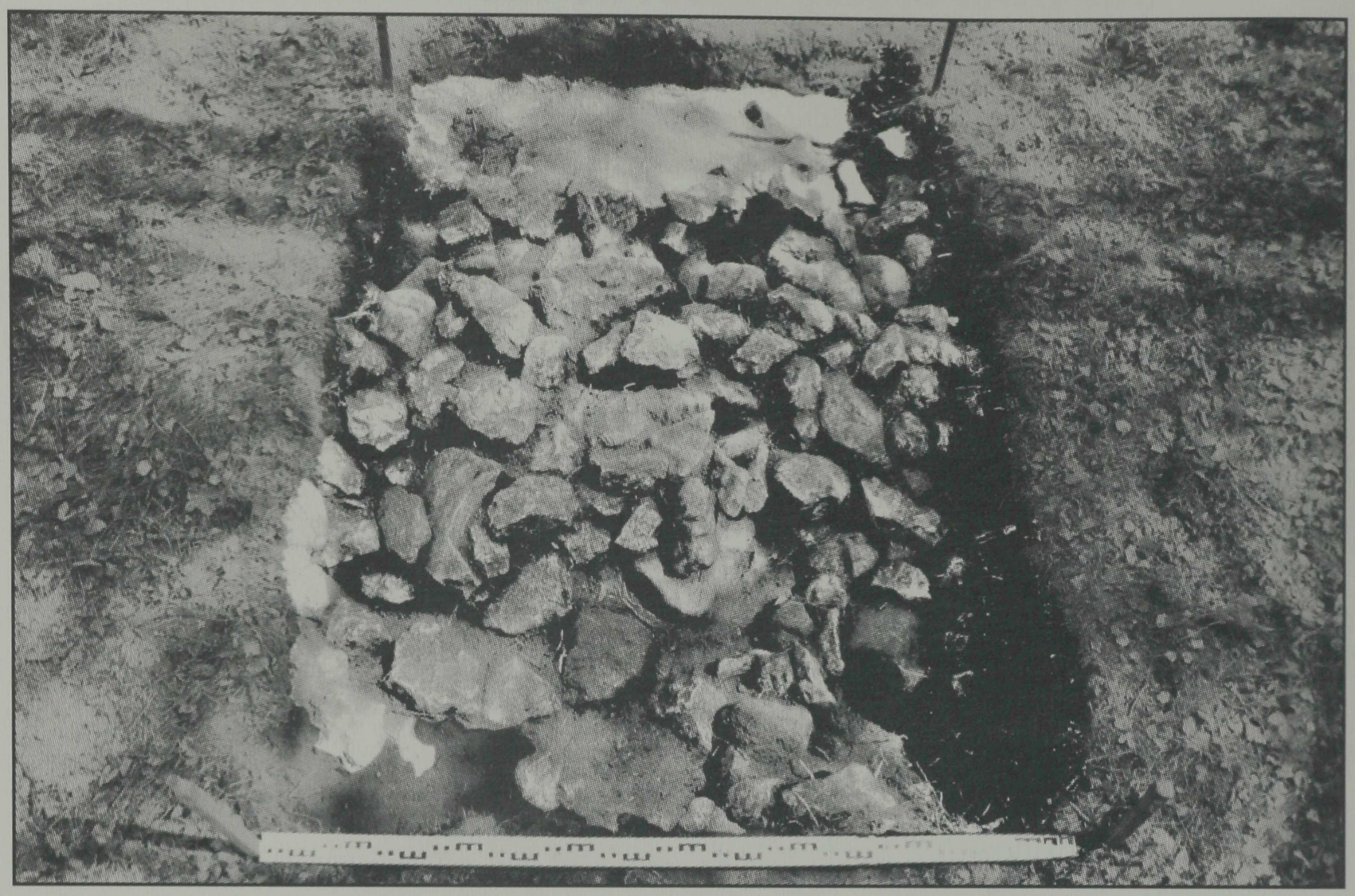

Photo 1. Trench in baulk No. 1, the uppermost layer of stones.
Foto 1. Läbilõige põllupeenrast nr. 1, ülemine kivikiht.

surface and forming sometimes the major part of the "clearance cairns" (see below). It is also possible that the cultivation in the areas with more cairns has been longer than in the other places. Two to four excavations were made in each group of cairns.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS

Group A (c. 0.6 ha) was located in the nort-northeastern corner of the investigated area, where 14 cairns were concentrated in a dense group and some scattered further away. Two rather short and low baulks were located there as well. One cairn (No. 29) was completely and two cairns (Nos 30 and 6) partly excavated in this group. All these cairns consisted mostly of limestone slabs, with relatively few granite stones. The cairns had different sizes and one of them was located at a small bedrock bulge. Under the lowest stones of these cairns there was a thin humus layer containing small pieces of charcoal. Generally speaking, there was only little charcoal under the field remains of Kaseküla, and very often the amount was not enough for radiocarbon dating. A carbonised nutshell

Photo 2. Trench in baulk No. 5.
Foto 2. Läbilõige põllupeenrast nr. 5.

(*Corylus avellana*) and a piece of quartz were found in cairn No. 30, and two sherds from different hand-made clay vessels were reported from cairn No. 29.

Group B was situated southeast of group A and consisted of two long baulks and six clearance cairns. Three of the six cairns were lined up with baulk No. 1, which was investigated by a trench (5.6 m²). The baulk consisted of relatively bigger limestone slabs and granite stones, some of which had been in fire (Photo 1). Although the edges of the stone cover of this baulk were rather straight, no wall-like constructions were discovered in the trench. The original width of the baulk's stone cover was around 0.9–1 m and the height 0.4 m. Between and beneath the lowest stones some pieces of charcoal together with nutshells and three probable grain seeds (it is not possible to identify them more exactly) were found. Clearance cairn No. 26 was also excavated in this group – it was rather similar to the cairns described above. The amount of charcoal gathered beneath the cairn was too small for radiocarbon dating.

Group C (c. 0.4 ha) was in the central portion of the investigated area, c. 40 m southwest of group B. It consisted of 11 clearance cairns and two short baulks.

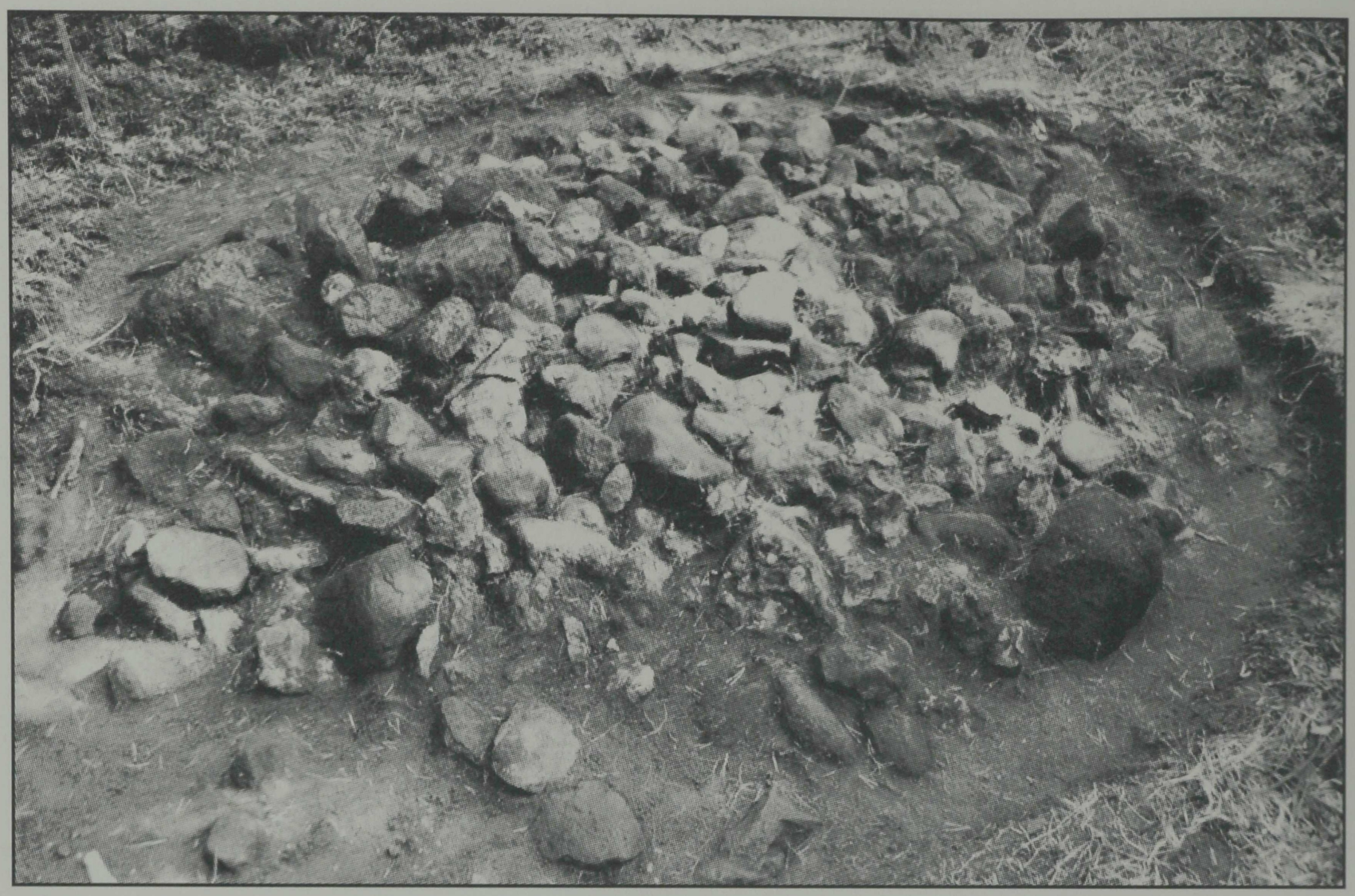

Photo 3. Clearance cairn No. 42, the uppermost layer of stones.
Foto 3. Põllukivihunnik nr. 42, ülemine kivikiht.

Three cairns were excavated first in this group. One of them (No. 21) turned out to be a round-shaped bulge of bedrock extending above the surrounding ground surface; some small stones had also been thrown on this bulge. Cairns No. 59 and 23 were partly excavated. The first of these consisted mostly of limestone slabs which had been thrown around a small bedrock bulge; charcoal was absent but some nutshell fragments were found there. Cairn No. 23 consisted of both limestone slabs and granite stones, and there was a boulder at the centre. Beneath this cairn, there was a humus layer containing charcoal pieces and a potsherd. Finally, one of the baulks was also investigated by a 3 m wide trench (Photo 2). This baulk was formed by placing bigger boulders in a more or less straight row, while smaller stones were thrown in between those boulders. No charcoal or other finds were discovered from this excavation.

Group D (c. 0.4 ha) was located south-southeast of the latter and consisted of 12 clearance cairns. Two cairns were completely excavated in this group. Cairn No. 61 consisted of both limestone slabs and granite stones, many of which were burned. Only a little charcoal and eight nutshell fragments were discovered there. Cairn No. 65 consisted mostly of granite stones thrown on and around a bedrock

Photo 4. Clearance cairn No. 38, the uppermost layer of stones.
Foto 4. Põllukivihunnik nr. 38, ülemine kivikiht.

bulge. Here, too, only some pieces of charcoal and a nutshell were found.

Group E, the largest at Kaseküla (c. 1.8 ha), was situated west of the ridge. Altogether 33 clearance cairns were located here in two parallel rows; the cultivation strip between those rows was c. 30–50 m wide. One cairn was excavated completely and two partly in this group. Cairn No. 42 consisted of granite stones which were thrown around a boulder (Photo 3). A relatively large amount of charcoal and a piece of nutshell were collected from beneath this cairn. Cairn No. 38 was one of the biggest at Kaseküla (the diameter reached 5 m) and it was piled up between several boulders (Photo 4). Although many stones of this cairn had been in fire, the amount of charcoal was very small. Cairn No. 16 consisted mostly of granite stones as well, and some of them were burned. A bovine tooth was discovered from this cairn.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the investigations at Kaseküla, the remains of fossil fields were concentrated in five smaller groups. Four of them consisted of 6–16 clearance cairns

and baulks of various sizes; the area of these groups varied between 0.4 and 0.6 ha.The fifth group was larger in size (1.8 ha) and consisted of 33 cairns.The cairns were concentrated in areas where the limestone bedrock extended higher, i.e. closer to the present ground surface, and where pieces of bedrock could have been peeled off more easily by ploughing.At least one of the cairns (No. 21) was actually a bulge of bedrock, and smaller bulges were discovered under several other cairns as well.

As indicated by probable grain seeds found beneath baulk No. 1, this area was already cultivated before the forming of the cairns and baulks. This may also explain why so little charcoal was discovered beneath the field remains. Such charcoal usually originates from slash-and-burn before the piling up of cairns and baulks, and if there was a forest or dense brush, there would certainly have been more charcoal but no grain seeds under the stones of the field remains. Since this was not the case, one may suppose the opposite – that land was relatively open and already cultivated before the cairns and baulks were erected.

The three potsherds found allow dating the field remains of Kaseküla to the Middle or Late Iron Ages.The radiocarbon samples confirm this supposition, they belong to the period between 8th and 12th centuries (see Table).

Table. Radiocarbon dates from fossil fields of Kaseküla
Tabel. Kaseküla fossiilsete põllujäänuste radiosüsiniku dateeringud

Sample	Lab. No	Conventional C^{14} years BP	Calibration (1 sigma) cal AD	Location
1	Tln-2424	1163±105	730–985	cairn No. 30
2	Tln-2430	1192±55	775–940	cairn No. 29
3	Tln-2443	1017±74	900–1155	baulk No. 1

References

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FOSSIILSETE PÕLLUJÄÄNUSTE PÄÄSTEKAEVAMISED LÄÄNEMAAL KASEKÜLAS

Valter LANG

Seoses Partek Nordkalk Eesti AS taotlusega laiendada oma paekaevandust Hanila vallas Kasekülas, toimusid u. 10 ha suurusel alal arheoloogilised päästekaevamised. Uuritavat ala kattis valdavalt männimets, kus alusmetsaks oli tihe kadastik. Suurem osa pinnasest (joon.) oli üsna tasane, olles kujunenud selliseks ilmselt pikaajalise maaharimise tulemusel. Fossiilset põllumaad lõhestas NNE–SSW-suunaliselt kulgev looduslik seljak, kõrgusega 0,5–1 m ning laiusega 10–25 m piires. Otsustades äärmiselt ebatasase pinnamoe põhjal, polnud sellel seljakul kunagi põldu tehtud.

Kokku registreeriti uuritaval alal 78 põllukivihunnikut, mille läbimõõt ulatus 2–6 m, olles tavaliselt 2,5 ja 3,5 m vahel. Lisaks põllukivihunnikutele avastati veel kuus kamardunud või osaliselt kamardunud peenart. Plaanil (vt. joon.) on näha, et põllujäänused ei paiknenud oma levikualal ühtlaselt, vaid koondusid väiksematesse rühmadesse. Võib arvata, et paas tõusis nendes kohtades maapinnale lähemale, mistõttu kive esines künnikihis rohkem või siis tõmbas ader neid rohkem põhjast lahti. Seda kinnitab asjaolu, et seal, kus hunnikuid oli tihedamalt, ulatus paepealne mullakiht vaevalt 20 cm, olles tihti isegi alla 15 cm; mujal oli mullakiht prooviaukude põhjal otsustades märksa paksem. Samuti esines põllujäänuste rühmades paekühme, mis tõusid ümbritsevast maapinnast kõrgemale ja moodustasid vahel suurema osa põllukivihunnikuna registreeritud moodustistest. Igast põllujäänuste rühmast uuriti osaliselt või täielikult läbi 2–4 muistist.

Rühm A paiknes uuritud ala kirdeosas, kus 0,6 ha loendati ühtekokku 14 põllukivihunnikut tihedas kobaras koos ning mõned hajali kaugemal; siin avastati ka kaks lühemat ja madalamat peenart. Sellest rühmast kaevati täielikult läbi üks (nr. 29) ja osaliselt kaks (nr. 30 ja 6) põllukivihunnikut. Kõik need hunnikud olid kokku loobitud paekividest, raudkive esines suhteliselt vähe. Hunnikud olid erineva suuruse ja kõrgusega, üks neist oli visatud ümbrusest kõrgemale tõusvale paekühmule. Kõikide hunnikute alumiste kivide all oli õhuke mullakiht, milles esines väikesi söetükikesi. Sütt esines Kaseküla põllukivihunnikute all vähe ning tihti ei piisanud saadud kogusest dateerimiseks radiosüsiniku meetodil. Põllukivihunnikust nr. 30 leiti söestunud pähklikoor (*Corylus avellana*) ja kvartsikild; hunnikust nr. 29 saadi kaks erinevatest nõudest pärinevat potikildu.

Rühm B asus eelmisest rühmast mõnikümmend meetrit kagu pool ning koosnes kahest pikast peenrast ja kuuest hajali põllukivihunnikust. Sellest rühmast uuriti ühte peenart (5,6 m² suuruse tranšeega) ning ühte põllukivihunnikut (nr. 26). Peenar koosnes suurematest pae- ja raudkividest, osa kive oli põlenud (foto 1). Kuigi peenra kivilademe servad olid üsna sirged, polnud siin siiski mingit müürilaadset konstruktsiooni. Peenra kivilademe esialgne laius võis olla 0,9–1 m ning kõrgus 0,4 m piires. Alumiste kivide vahel ja all esines väikesi söetükikesi, kuid üsna hõredalt. Samas kihis avastati ka 6 sarapuupähkli koort ning 3 söestunud viljaseemet, mida polnud võimalik täpsemalt määrata. Põllukivihunnik nr. 26 kaevati läbi täielikult, oma koostiselt sarnanes see teistega.

Rühm C (0,4 ha) paiknes uuritud ala keskel, B-rühmast u. 40 m edelas ja koosnes 11 põllukivihunnikust ja kahest lühikesest peenrast. Siin uuriti kõigepealt kolme põllukivihunnikut (nr. 21, 59 ja 23), millest esimene osutus paepangaseks, kuhu oli visatud ka väiksemaid põllukive. Teistest hunnikutest kaevati läbi pool. Selles rühmas avati 3 m laiuse tranšeega ka üks peenar, mis koosnes ritta pandud suurtest raudkividest ning nende ümber visatud väikestest põllukividest (foto 2). Ühtki leidu ega söetükki sellest kaevandist ei saadud.

Rühm D (0,4 ha) paiknes C-rühmast mõnikümmend meetrit lõunakagu pool ning koosnes 12 põllukivihunnikust. Siin kaevati täies ulatuses läbi kaks põllukivihunnikut (nr. 61 ja 65). Neist esimeses esines pae- ja raudkive enam-vähem pooleks, kusjuures palju kive oli põlenud. Söetükke oli kivikuhila all väga vähe, saadi 8 pähklikoort. Teine hunnik koosnes enamasti raudkividest, mis olid visatud paerünka peale ja ümber. Siit leiti vaid mõned söetükikesed ja üks pähklikoor.

Rühm E (1,8 ha) asetses uuritava ala keskosas, seljakust lääne pool. Siin oli 33 põllukivihunnikut piki seljaku läänejalamit. Hunnikud paiknesid hajali kahe rööbitise vööndina: läänepoolses oli 7 põllukivihunnikut, sellest 30–50 m ida pool oli aga kuhilaid tihedamalt ja mitmes reas. Selles rühmas kaevati täielikult läbi üks (nr. 42) ja osaliselt kaks põllukivihunnikut (38 ja 16). Esimene neist koosnes peaaegu täielikult raudkividest, mis olid visatud ühe suurema rahnu juurde (foto 3); kivide alt saadi rohkesti sütt ja üks pähklikoor. Hunnik nr. 38 oli uuritutest üks suuremaid (läbimõõt 5 m) ning visatud mitme lähestikuse rändrahnu vahele (foto 4). Ka hunnik nr. 16 koosnes valdavalt väiksematest raudkividest, millest osa olid tules olnud. Hunniku jalamilt leiti veise purihammas, sütt esines äärmiselt vähe.

Nagu näitasid põllupeenra nr. 1 alt leitud arvatavad söestunud viljaseemned, oli see ala põlluks olnud juba enne nende põllukivihunnikute ja peenarde rajamist. See seletab ka seika, et sütt esines põllujäänete all äärmiselt vähe. Pärineb ju selline süsi tuletegemisest enne põllukivihunnikute või -peenarde rajamist. Seega, kui siin oleks kasvanud mets ja võsa, oleks aletamisest jäänud järele hulganisti sütt ning põllujäänuste all ei oleks saanud esineda söestunud viljateri. Kuna nõnda see ei olnud, siis tulebki arvata vastupidist – maa oli enne põllukivihunnikute ja -peenarde rajamist metsast lage ja ilmselt olnud kasutusel samuti põlluna. Vähene hulk sütt, mida siit-sealt leiti, võis pärineda näiteks kütise põletamisest.

Üksikud leitud potikillud ning radiosüsiniku analüüsi tulemused (vt. tabel) võimaldavad Kasekülas uuritud põllud dateerida keskmisse ja nooremasse rauaaega, ajavahemikku 8.–12. sajandisse.