

# Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham

By MARGARET GRAY

## SUMMARY

*This excavation report describes a prehistoric ring ditch, prehistoric linear features and pits, followed by Romano-British field enclosures.*

## INTRODUCTION

NORTHFIELD FARM is on the south bank of the Thames, about a mile south-west of Dorchester-on-Thames. Half a mile north, also across the river, is Burcot, reputed site of a Roman villa, and two miles to the south is Sinodun.

The crop marks (FIG. 1, PL. 1) were first noticed in a drought in 1893 by Henry J. Hewitt, the tenant of the farm. He caused a professional survey to be made, and himself excavated two sites, mainly in the area to the south of the present excavation. F. Haverfield visited these 'diggings', and concluded that they were of a 'late Celtic or Roman village'.<sup>1</sup> The crop marks were included by G. W. G. Allen in his paper on this area,<sup>2</sup> and also in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments publication *A Matter of Time*.<sup>3</sup> There is a published air photograph of the site after its excavation, taken in 1970, showing a blank area in the crop marks.<sup>4</sup> A special survey of the whole area has been made by J. Hampton for the National Monuments Record, R.C.H.M., and the results of this are published in Appendix 2. In view of this, no mention is made here of any crop marks outside the area excavated, except those directly related to it.

The excavation took place in Scabbs field (SU 553953) for a period of seven weeks during July and August 1969. In response to a threat of large-scale gravel extraction, the Upper Thames Archaeological Committee decided to arrange a series of excavations on selected sites on this large area of crop marks. Unfortunately, a change of tenancy meant that the project had to be abandoned after this initial excavation.

The finds and a more detailed record of the excavation are deposited at the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services at Woodstock.

I would like to thank the owners of the land, St. John's College, Oxford, and the tenant farmer, Mr. Clarke, for allowing access to the land, and for their co-operation whilst the excavation was in progress, and the Department of the Environment, then the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, for their grant to the Upper

<sup>1</sup> F. Haverfield, 'Some Romano-British Remains in the Upper Thames Valley', *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* (2nd series) 18 (1901), 10-16.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. G. Allen, 'Cropmarks seen from the air, Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham, Berks', *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 164-5, Fig. 10, Pls. 16-21.

<sup>3</sup> R.C.H.M., *A Matter of Time* (1960).

<sup>4</sup> D. Benson, D. Miles, C. J. Balkwill and N. Clayton, *The Upper Thames Valley: An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey No. 2 (1974), 66, Fig. 36, Pl. 6.

Thames Archaeological Committee. The equipment, and the full-time services of Mrs. J. Greenaway, were supplied by Reading Museum. An average of ten full-time archaeologists worked a six-day week, including G. Lewis as assistant supervisor, N. Clayton as site assistant, J. Fletcher as finds assistant, and C. Chaplin and L. Good as surveyors. Additionally much help was supplied by part-time local volunteers.

Help and advice in publication has been supplied by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, who arranged for some of the plans to be drawn by Patricia Roberts. The manuscript was typed by June Bill. The pottery has been examined by Christopher Young and Joanna Bird, and drawn by Melvyn Card. I am grateful to Barbara Noddle for the report on the Animal Bones, and to C. B. Denston of the Duckworth Laboratory of Physical Anthropology, Cambridge University, for his report on the Human Remains.

#### GEOLOGY OF THE SITE

The valley gravel on this site consisted of fragments of oolitic limestone, chalk flints and red quartzite pebbles, and lies on the first river terrace.<sup>5</sup> Information supplied by the Amey survey suggests that in the area of the site, the thickness of this gravel is 2.3 m.

The site lies within a large meander of the Thames. Evident on the ground, and as a dark line in the air photographs, is a bank, about 40 m. north of the excavated area. It is not certain without excavation if it is a natural feature at the boundary of the flood plain, or a man-made one to prevent flooding of the farm land. There is no doubt that flooding of the land was a hazard. The Amey survey reports 72 known floods between 1894 and 1971, and that a peak flood in 1971 extended over the river meadows. Even in the very dry conditions of the 1969 summer excavations, the water table was encountered at 47.05 m. above sea level, the average ground level of the site being 48.66 m. The farmer reports that standpipes in the fields could supply water to cattle troughs from localised waters, and Haverfield reports on the number of Romano-British wells found in the Hewitt excavations.

The alluvial spreads of red-brown clay show very clearly in the air photographs (PL. 1) and the difficulties of their excavation are recorded in this report. It is interesting to note that the peri-glacial ice-wedge casts encountered by the writer on excavations at Stanton Harcourt and Eynsham were not present on this site.

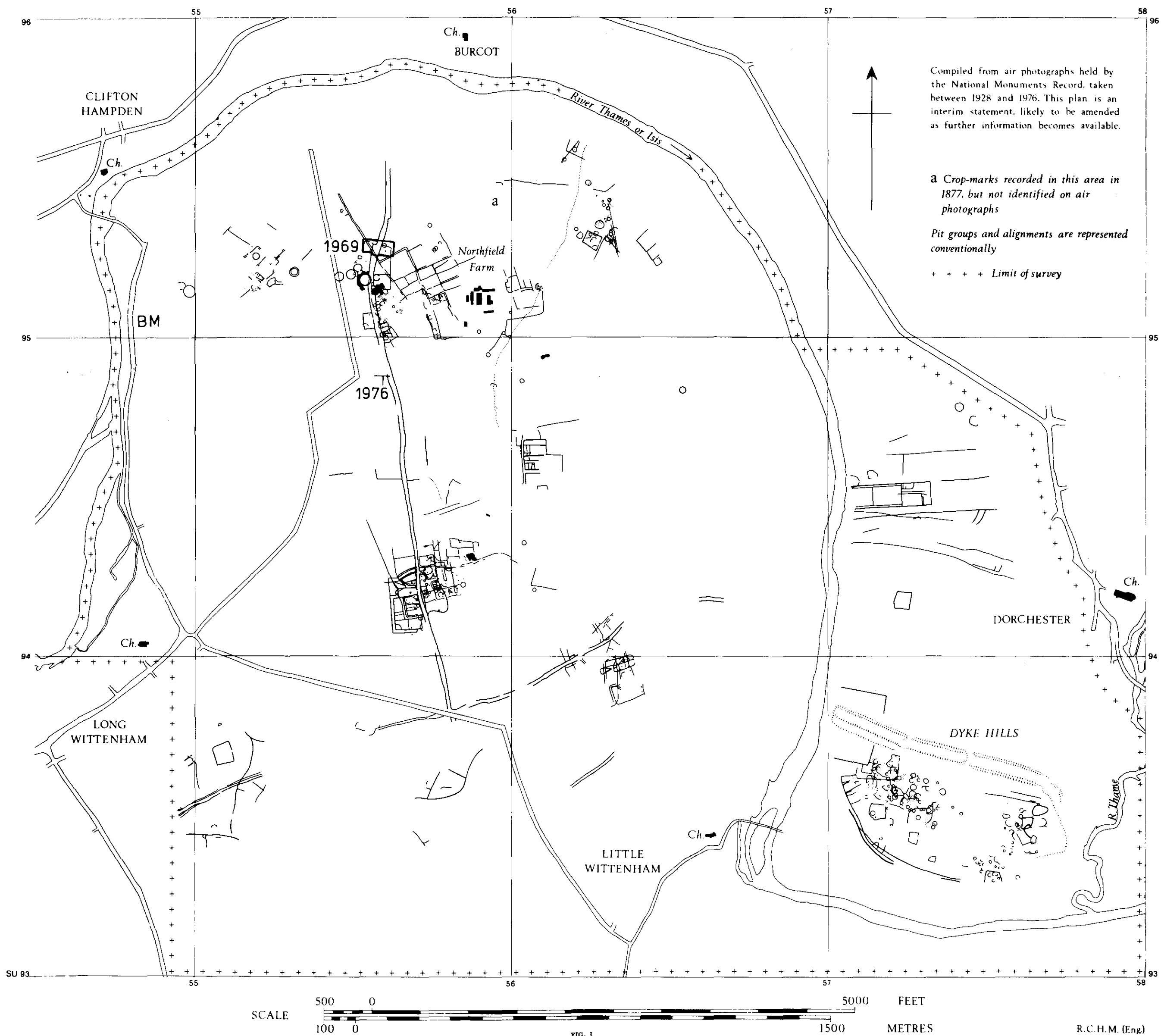
#### THE EXCAVATION

*Stratification.* Continuous ploughing over many years had removed most of the stratification from the site. At the north end there was only an average of 10 cm. of ploughsoil over the gravel, and the gravel itself had been eroded by ploughing. The only stratification was within the features themselves.

*Levels.* These were related to the Bench mark (50.40 m. AOD) shown on the area plan (FIG. 1) and, therefore, all figures quoted are AOD (Newlyn). All section lines were levelled to this datum, and the bottoms of all features were also measured;

<sup>5</sup> Sources consulted include H.M.S.O. *British Regional Geology, London and the Thames Valley*. The Geographical Association, *British Landscapes through Maps, II, The Oxford and Newbury Area*, by P. D. Wood. J. Phillips, *Geology of Oxford and the Valley of the Thames* (1870). Geological Survey of Great Britain Drift Map, Oxford District.

## CROP-MARKS IN THE VICINITY OF LONG WITTENHAM AND AT THE DYKE HILLS DORCHESTER



these measurements are included with the information about each individual feature. It was considered essential, owing to the presence on parts of the site of thick bands of red clay, to record measurements in this way; measurements from the surface of the gravel would not have been a true indication of the depth of the features. Also it was felt that should any excavation take place in the future, these levels would be necessary information.

*Method of Excavation.* 0.364 hectares was stripped by grader of its ploughsoil, and the resulting surface was cleaned with Dutch hoes. Over one-third of the site, especially in the southern part of the cleared area, there was a layer of red, natural clay averaging 25 cm. in depth. This was similar to that encountered at City Farm, Hanborough<sup>6</sup> and Mucking<sup>7</sup> where similar difficulties in its excavation were encountered. Because of extremely dry conditions at the time of its excavation, and its compression by mechanical stripping of ploughsoil, the deposit was impossible to excavate efficiently. Indeed, large ditches which were known to run through it did not differ from it in colour and texture, and only showed as small pebble lines. If there had been smaller features in it, it was not possible to see them. All visible features were recorded at this stage and the clay was removed down to the surface of the gravel. It was felt that, as all measurements were taken with a level from a fixed site datum, the loss of information in the area of the site covered by this deposit would be negligible.

All ditches and other features were completely emptied, baulks being left at strategic points for sections, and then finally removed. The position of these baulks is shown in the site plans (FIGS. 3 and 4), and all sections and levels which are not

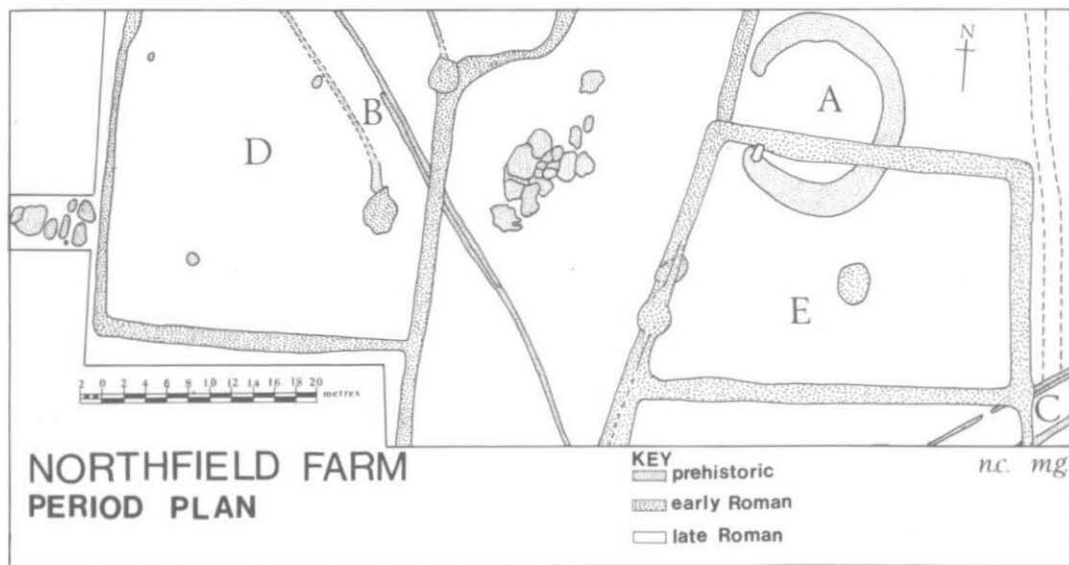


FIG. 2

<sup>6</sup> H. Case, N. Bayne, S. Steele, G. Avery, H. Sutermeister, 'Excavations at City Farm, Hanborough, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, xxix/xxx (1964-5), 8.

<sup>7</sup> M. U. Jones, 'Excavations at Mucking, Essex, First Interim Report', *Antiq. J.*, xviii (1968), 211 ff.

illustrated in this report may be consulted in the card-index deposited at the Dept. of Museum Services, Woodstock.

After the site had been finally cleaned, a 15 metre grid was laid out, all features were numbered, and a plan of the soil-marks was made. The features, both man-made and natural, were totally excavated.

As the area of the excavation was very large (90 m. W.-E.  $\times$  45 m. N.-S.), the period plan (FIG. 2) has been divided into two site plans (FIGS. 3 and 5), for the west and for the east features respectively.

#### THE WEST FEATURES: PREHISTORIC (Plan, FIG. 3)

*Ditches, B.* Parallel ditches, 27 and 37, ran N.W. to S.E. across the site and are visible on the air photograph (PL. 1) for some distance each side of the excavated area, but less clearly to the S.E. where Ditch 37 appeared to die out completely in places.

Ditch 37 was only visible as a dark brown sandy line, which was very intermittent, and sometimes only showed as stained gravel. It was too shallow to section anywhere on the site, but it showed in the N. section of the cutting, where the ploughsoil is only 9 cm. deep, at a depth of 30 cm. below the ground surface. It was filled here with dark brown sandy soil. The Roman pit 38 cuts off the last visible remains of it in the excavated area.

Parallel to it ran Ditch 27, whose width was very variable, and it is presumed that this ditch, like 37, had suffered very much from continuous ploughing, as, in places, only its bottom survived. The natural gravel survived to a greater height on the west side of the ditch, which may indicate that it had been protected by a bank. There had been re-cutting of this ditch at some time. Baulk VII (Section S5, FIG. 4) showed two distinct ditches, 27a and 27c, but this may have been caused by the extension of this ditch to the north rather than a re-cutting of the original ditch. The two ditches converged at Baulk III where they were cut by the Roman ditch 28/36 (Section 6, FIG. 4), and Ditch 27a finished just to the south of this point, whilst 27c continued. Ditch 27c was the earliest ditch, cut away in the central area by Ditch 27a, which then continued to the north. It seems perhaps a coincidence, but there may have been some relationship between the termination of the parallel ditch, Ditch 37, and this ditch extension of Ditch 27, as these alterations happened in the same area of the site. The north of the site, where these ditches ran and where there was not much depth of ploughsoil over the natural gravel, was riddled with irregular holes; these are not shown on the plan, and were probably caused by animal runs. Eight sections across Ditch 27 were drawn and are deposited with the complete site record. They show three or four layers of dirty soil, alternating with clean, yellow-brown sandy soil, beneath a top layer of black-brown soil. There is an indication of post-holes in Ditch 27c, at its south end, with a certainty of six posts. Levels from the north:—*N. end of excavation*, surface of ploughsoil 48.27, bottom 27a 47.62. *Baulk VII* 48.36, bottom 27c 48.27, bottom 27a 47.76. *Baulk II* 47.94, bottom 27c 47.27, bottom 27a 46.95. *Baulk I* 47.84, bottom 27c 47.02, bottom 27a 47.49. *Baulk IV* 47.90, 47.56. *Baulk V* 47.94, 47.51. *Baulk VI* 47.91, 47.63. *S. end of excavation* surface of ploughsoil 48.60, bottom 27c 47.66.

The sides of the ditch were always fairly vertical and the bottom was flat. There were no finds of any kind, but the ditches can be considered to be pre-Roman as they were cut by the Roman features Pit 38 and Ditch 28/36. They were of similar nature to Ditches 79/80 on the plan of the east features (FIG. 5) and may well join up with them south of the present excavation, to form the boundaries of early fields.

There is the possibility that there was a third parallel ditch, Ditch 39, but this survived only as a soil mark of dark brown stained gravel, except in the north section of the excavation where it was 44 cm. deep from the surface of the ploughsoil, with a trace of a bank on the west side. It was filled with brown sandy soil.

On this plan are also shown features which contained no finds, except small fragments of Bronze Age pottery, and are considered to be prehistoric because of the absence of

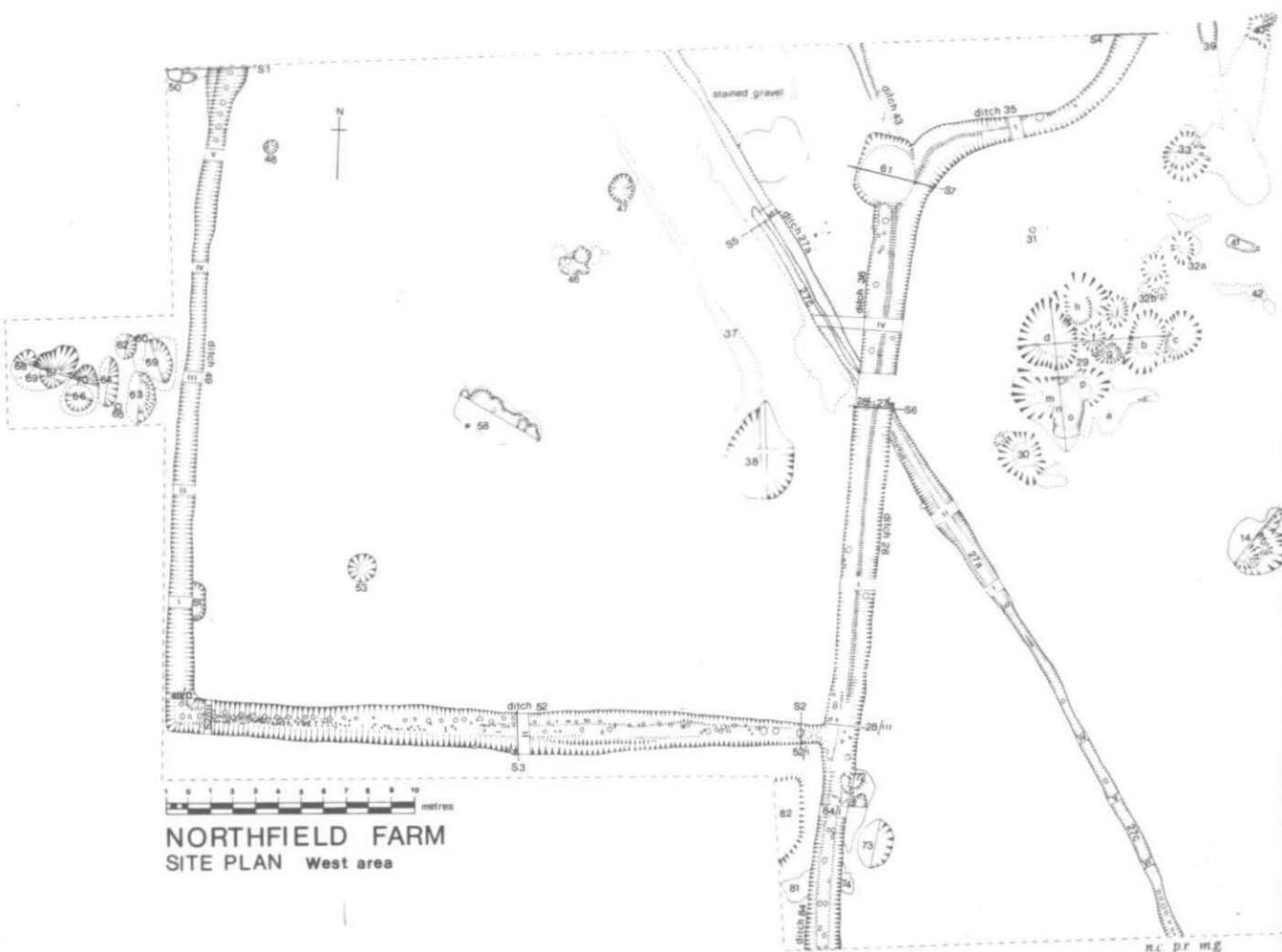


FIG. 3

Roman finds, and the nature of their fillings. They comprised Pits 59 and 62-70, which were complexes of circular and sub-rectangular features, many of which intersected each other. They were excavated by taking a half-section across, as shown in plan (FIG. 3). All had similar fillings of light brown sandy soil. Levels, top measurement given first:— 59 47.86, 47.52. 62 47.91, 47.83. 63 47.88, 47.71. 64 47.96, 47.86. 65 47.98, 47.84. 66 48.02, 47.73. 67 48.01, 47.86. 68 47.99, 47.63. 69 47.97, 47.74. 70 47.97, 47.80.

The purpose of these pits is obscure, but they were very like Pits 29 a-q, which contained Bronze Age pottery, and the fillings were not like those of features elsewhere, considered to be caused by tree root disturbance.

*Pits 29a-q.* These intersecting pits were also filled with light brown sandy soil with some small gravel. The surface of the natural gravel was very compact and was encrusted



with a white crystalline substance, probably carbonate of lime.<sup>8</sup> These were excavated by taking half-sections, the rest of the fillings being removed later. Finds (not illustrated) included:—

- 29a Two fragments of Bronze Age pottery
- 29d Three fragments of Bronze Age pottery
- Bone fragments from knife handle

Levels: *E.-W. Section Line* 47·91. *N.-S. Section Line* 47·89.

*Bottom of features, a/e* 47·40. *b* 47·71. *c* 47·63. *d* 47·64. *f* 47·67. *g* 47·71. *h* 47·44.  
*j* 47·72.

*Pit 47.* This circular pit was of regular shape, with sides sloping gradually at the top, but more vertically lower. Level at section line was 47·92, at bottom 47·54. There were 4 layers:—

- a Dark grey-brown clayey soil, some gravel
- b Pale, ginger brown clayey soil, some gravel
- c Ginger brown sandy with gravel
- d Dirty yellow gravel and red-grey clay

No finds.

*Pit 48.* This small circular pit was of regular shape, with sloping sides falling to a base. Level at section line was 47·86, at bottom 47·74. There was a homogeneous fill of dark brown soil, with much charcoal.

No finds.

*Pit 50.* This was a small oval pit of regular shape, cut by the north extremity of the excavation. Full diameter not known. Level 47·93 at section line, 47·78 at bottom. Filled with homogeneous brown sandy soil. (Section S1, FIG. 4).

Finds. Two small sherds of Bronze Age pottery.

*Pit 53.* This shallow circular pit was of regular shape, with sides sloping to a flat bottom. Level at section line was 48·05, at bottom 47·91. It was probably only the base of a ploughed-out pit, with bottom layer of dirty dark brown sandy soil with much gravel.

No finds.

*Post-Hole 31.* This circular post-hole was of regular shape, with sides sloping to rounded base. Level of top 48·04, of bottom 47·86. Filled with dark brown sandy soil.

No finds.

#### THE WEST FEATURES: ROMANO-BRITISH (Plan, FIG. 3)

*Ditches, Enclosure D.* Only the southern part of this field enclosure could be excavated, as the northern ditch lay under crop. There was animal bone and pottery in all the ditches, except that Ditch 59 lacked pottery; these, like the small finds, building materials and other objects are fully listed and described in the Finds section.

*Ditches 49, 52, and 28/43.* These three ditches formed the west, south and east ditches of an enclosure, and the area available for excavation was 28 m. × 28 m.

*Ditch 49.* This ditch ran N.-S.; its depth below the ground surface and its relationship with the prehistoric feature 50 are shown in Section S1 (FIG. 4). There was a possibility of a bank on its west side, overlying 50. It was a shallow V-shaped ditch, filled with layers of dirty gravel over the primary silting. There was a possibility that it had held posts along its whole length, but these posts had not penetrated the primary silt or the natural gravel, and were not easy to define. At its north end, six post-holes were found, 20 cm. apart, with an average depth of 28 cm. from the bottom of the ditch. The ditch was uneven in width, and curved in an easterly direction after reaching the north edge of the excavation. Six sections across this ditch were drawn and are deposited with the complete site record. Levels:— *North end of excavation* surface of ploughsoil 48·60, bottom 47·45. *Baulk V* 48·00. *Baulk IV* 47·86, 47·52. *Baulk III* 48·01, 47·53. *Baulk II* 48·04, 47·96. *Baulk I* 48·16, 47·58. *Baulk 0* 48·22, 47·64.

<sup>8</sup> J. Phillips, *Geology of Oxford and the Valley of the Thames* (1870), 476.

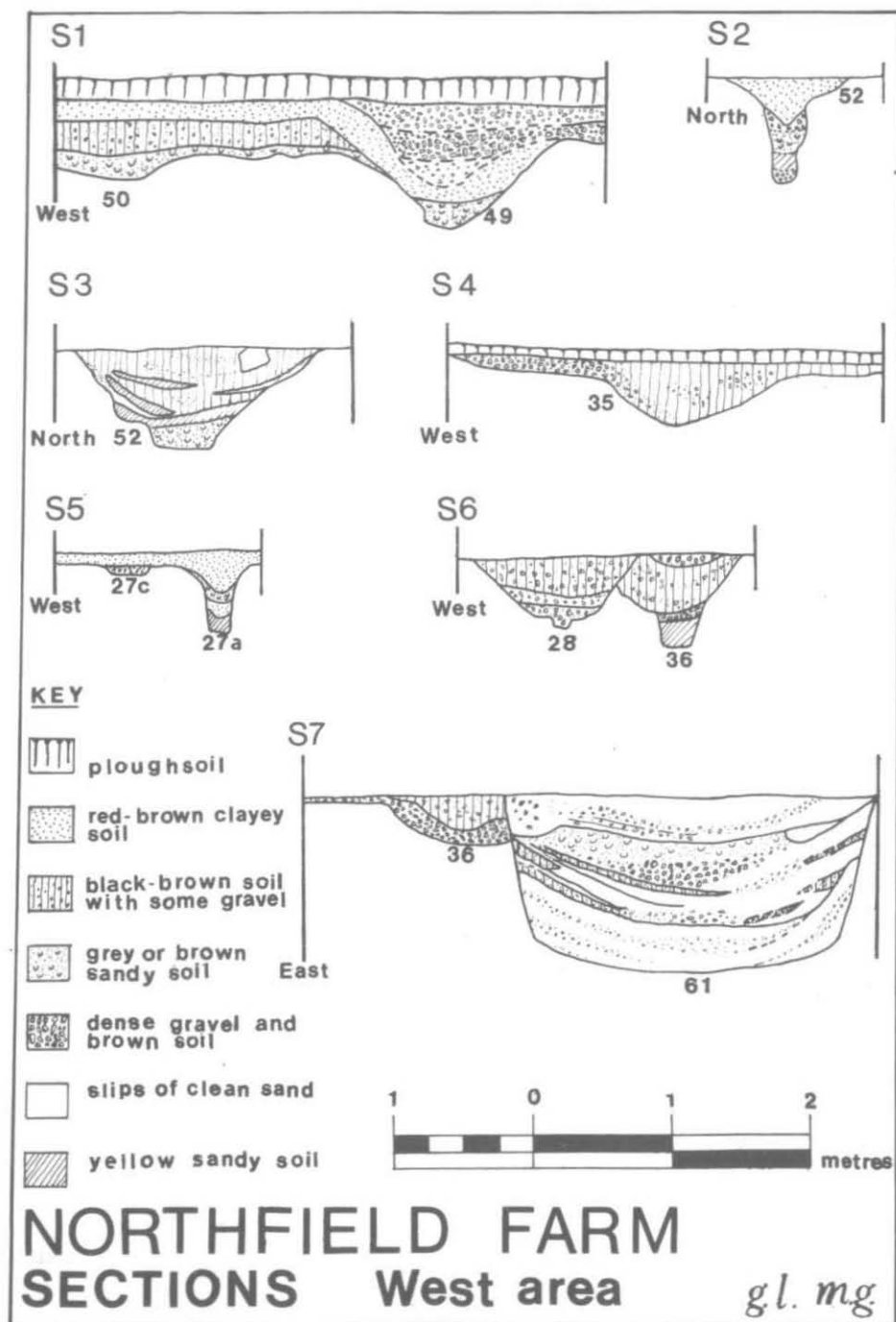


FIG. 4



*Ditch 52.* This ditch ran E.-W. and was filled with the same material as Ditch 49. The pottery, except Type GO II, came from the primary silts, as did also the burnt stone. The ditch had held posts along its whole length. At its junction with the east ditch, Ditch 28, it was narrow with single posts. A section through one of these post-holes is shown in Section 2 (FIG. 4). The ditch became much wider to the west, with two rows of posts at Baulk II giving way to a row of posts with supporting rows of stakes on the south side as it approached the S.W. corner. As the post-holes did not cut each other, the timbers were presumably all inserted at the same time, with heavy reinforcing towards the corner (PL. II, A). The stake-holes showed as yellow-orange gravelly soil, the colour possibly being caused by water running down the stakes when they were in position. The post-holes had fillings of alternate layers of dirty sand and gravel; the filling of the ditch is shown in Section S3 (FIG. 4). Three sections across this ditch were drawn and are deposited, with the measurement of the depth of each post, in the site record. The average depth of the posts at the west end of the ditch was 34 cm. below the ditch bottom, and of the stakes 18 cm. Levels:—*Baulk I* Top 47.93, bottom of ditch 47.60, bottom of p.h. 47.20. *Baulk II* 48.03, 47.28. *Baulk III* 48.20, 47.16.

The photograph (PL. II, A) and Section 3 (FIG. 4) show that, unlike the simple V-shaped Ditch 49, this ditch had a shelf on the north side, was sloping on the south side, and had a fairly flat bottom.

*Ditch 28.* This was the most easterly of the three ditches, and was later than, and an addition to, Ditch 35/36/84. Ditch 43 may be an extension of this ditch to the north, but the sequence was interrupted by the digging of the large pit 61. Post-holes were found in the places indicated on the plan (FIG. 3), but they were not easy to define clearly, and many did not penetrate the gravel. The nature of the ditch and its relationship with Ditch 36 can be seen in Section 6 (FIG. 4).

The sides sloped, like those of Ditch 49, and the nature of the filling was much the same. Levels at the baulks from the north:—*Baulk V* bottom 47.48. *Baulk IV* top 48.40, bottom 47.50. *Baulk II* 47.97, 47.50. *Baulk I* 47.20, 47.55. *Baulk III* 47.96, 47.70.

The average depth of the post-holes at the south end, near Baulk III, was 47.59. Those further north averaged 47.42.

*Ditch 43.* This ditch was only visible in the north section of the excavation; the bottom of the ditch was at a depth of 44 cm. below the surface of the ploughsoil. Like all the features at the north end of the site, it had suffered from continuous ploughing, and only the bottom of the ditch survived. It was filled with the same material as the other three ditches and contained more pottery and burnt daub. Further south it was so shallow that it only showed as a dark brown staining on the gravel and, like 28, was cut by the large pit 60. There was a post-hole in it, near the north baulk, whose depth was 8 cm. below the bottom of the ditch.

It would seem, therefore, that these four ditches formed a palisaded enclosure which had been added to the long N.-S. ditch 35/36/84. The ditches in the S.E. corner were very shallow, and if there had been an entrance, it would have been here.

*Ditch 35/36/84.* This was part of a very long ditch which shows clearly on the air photograph (PL. I). Some way to the south of the excavation this ditch turns east and eventually joins the major ditch 6/54/85, which is described in the report on the eastern features of the site. At the north end of the excavation Ditch 35 veered off towards the east. After the north baulk of the excavation it appears only faintly on the air photograph; this is consistent with its becoming shallower as it proceeded north across the excavated area. About 60 m. north of the site it becomes much clearer and runs parallel with Ditch 6/54/85.

*Ditch 35* appears to have had a bank on the west side. This showed in the section of the north baulk of the excavation S4 (FIG. 4) where the ditch was 55 cm. below the surface of the ploughsoil. The ditch was filled with red brown soil, more gravelly at the top. Levels:—*N. Baulk* Ploughsoil 48.56, bottom 48.01. *Baulk I* 48.47, 48.81.

*Ditch 36* was a continuation southwards of the same ditch and had the same filling and range of finds. It was cut by Pit 61 (Section S7, FIG. 4). Levels from the north:—*At*

*Pit 61* 48.04, 47.68. *Baulk V* bottom 47.65. *Baulk IV* 48.40, 47.60. *Baulk II* 47.97, 47.50. *Baulk I* 47.20, 47.50. *Baulk III* 47.96, 47.58.

*Ditch 84* was again similar in filling and range of finds. Since it was not cut by *Ditch 28* it was clear that it was a ditch with sloping sides with post-holes, as on the plan (FIG. 3). It was so shallow where *Ditch 52* joined it that there may have been some kind of an entrance at this point; this matter is discussed in the conclusion to the report. In this area it cut a complex of tree root and natural disturbances. Levels from the north:—*Baulk I* 47.95, 47.69. *Baulk at S. end of site* Ploughsoil 48.42, 47.74. *Average of posts at S. end* 47.80.

*Pit 38*. This was excavated in quadrants, the N.E. and S.W. sectors being completely emptied. The plan (FIG. 3) and section (not illustrated) show a large pit 4 m. by 3 m. with sloping sides. It was not possible to reach the bottom as it was below the water-table. It was filled with homogeneous red-brown sandy clay and charcoal with a grey silty sand at the water-table. The finds were distributed evenly throughout the filling. It was probably a water-hole for the stock kept within the stockade. Levels:—*Centre of pit*, top 48.00, bottom at water-table 47.05.

*Pit 61*. This had an entirely different type of filling and shape. The section (S7, FIG. 4) shows a vertical-sided pit with tip-lines of gravel throughout its filling. There was one sherd of grass-tempered Saxon pottery in the top layer, but there were two sherds of Roman pottery lower down in the pit. It was later than *Ditch 36*, and may have been contemporary with the palisaded enclosure D, as *Ditch 28* seemed to terminate here rather than be cut by the pit. The sherd of Saxon pottery may have been carried here by ploughing. Levels:—*Centre of pit* top 48.04, bottom 46.78.

*Pit 58*. This was an oval pit which was not considered to be tree root disturbance, although its sides were irregular. A section was taken through it N.W. to S.E. and the north sector was emptied. It was filled with red-brown sandy soil and contained fragments of R/B building material, and charcoal. There was possibly a post-hole at the west end. Levels:—*Centre of pit* top 48.01, bottom 47.69.

*Pit 73*. This was a similar type of feature to 58. It was sectioned N.-S. and the east sector was emptied. Its filling contained no finds. Levels:—*Centre of pit* top 47.95, bottom 47.68.

Tree-root and animal disturbances accounted for features 14, 30, 32, 33, 41, 42, 46, 72, 81, 82. Natural features in, and natural staining on, the gravel accounted for 40, 45, 50, 74. All were sectioned and excavated.

#### THE EAST FEATURES: PREHISTORIC (Plan, FIG. 5)

##### *Ring Ditch A*

Method of excavation:—Four quadrants were set out from the central point, and the ditch was divided into three radial baulks, with extra baulks at the entrance terminals and in the N.E. sector. These sectors, numbered 2-4, 10, 57, were then excavated horizontally, and drawn at every 20 cm. These detailed overlay plans are deposited with the site records; only the final plan after complete excavation is illustrated in this report (FIG. 5). After each quadrant had been excavated, the sections at the baulks were drawn, and the baulks were removed.

Structural features:—The penannular ditch was continuous except for the entrance causeway, 6.60 m. wide, and was slightly oval in shape, measuring 18.50 m. N.-S. × 15 m. E.-W., and enclosing an area 13 m. N.-S. × 11 m. E.-W. If a bank had formed part of the original structure, it must have been entirely destroyed subsequently. Indeed, the Roman ditch and the interment may have cut through a feature which was at that time invisible on the ground, and there was no Roman pottery in the top filling of the Ring Ditch, which contained only post-medieval finds brought there by modern ploughing. There is slight evidence of a slipped-in external bank in Section 11 (FIG. 6). It was felt that originally the ditch had been considerably deeper, and also wider, and therefore the ditch, as excavated, probably only represents the lower part of a very ploughed-out structure. The depth varied slightly, the levels being:—*N.W. Terminal* Top 48.21, bottom

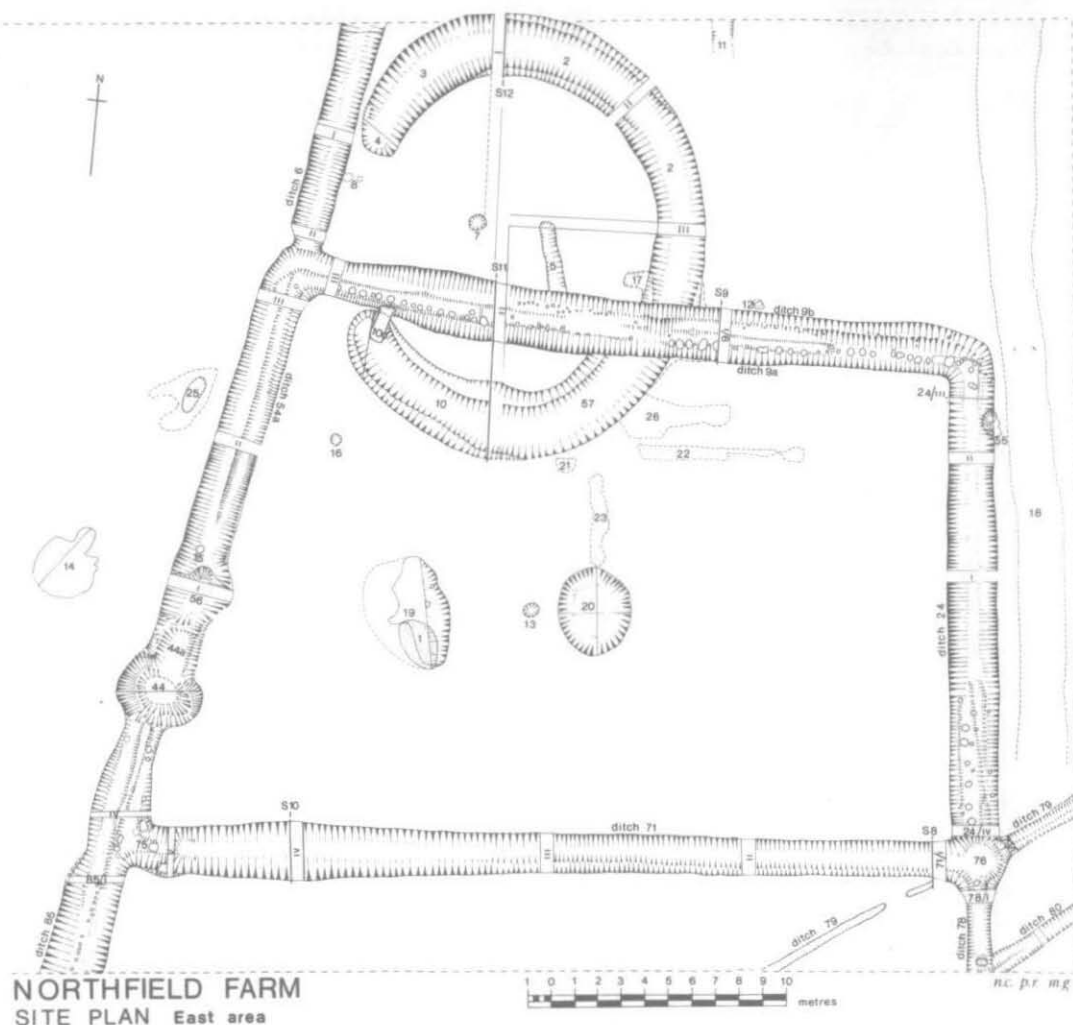


FIG. 5

47·67. *Baulk I* 48·29, 47·45. *Baulk II* 48·26, 47·74, *Baulk III* 48·10, 47·34. *Baulk IV* 48·02, 47·06. *S.W. Terminal* 48·12, 47·30. Levels were taken at intermediate points during the excavation, and the figures are deposited with the site records. This includes also a profile taken N.-S. and one taken E.-W., which is not illustrated in this report.

The filling was compact, dark black-brown soil of fine texture, alternating with layers of this soil with gravel. There was a quantity of charcoal and snail-shells, many of them in a very fragile condition. The ditch had sloping sides and a flat bottom, except on the south side, where it had been re-cut, and this re-cut formed a shelf on the inside perimeter. All round the ditch the slope on the inner edge was more vertical for the last 50 cm. The natural gravel at the sides and bottom of the ditch was very concreted and was stained bright yellow. In places, however, the natural at the bottom was grey sand with gravel,

and before this was reached, the ditch silting became orange, followed by a band of pebbles (Sections 11 and 12, FIG. 6). The layers in the illustrated sections are:—

*Section S 11*

1. Buff sandy soil with much gravel.
2. Dark brown soil and gravel.
3. Brown soil and gravel.
4. Light brown sandy soil and gravel.
5. Dark brown soil.
6. Dirty light brown soil and gravel.
7. Dirty brown soil with sand and gravel.
8. Mixed natural gravel and dirty sand.
9. Dirty orange sand and grits.

*Section S 12*

1. Brown soil and gravel.
2. Orange-brown sand and gravel.
3. Dark brown soil.
4. Dark brown soil and gravel.
5. Dark brown soil.
6. Brown soil and gravel.
7. Dirty brown sand with gravel.
8. Orange sand and grits.
9. Slips of clean sand.

The terminals were rounded, with a fairly vertical end, the ditch sides becoming more sloping, and the inner shelf more pronounced, as they approached this end.

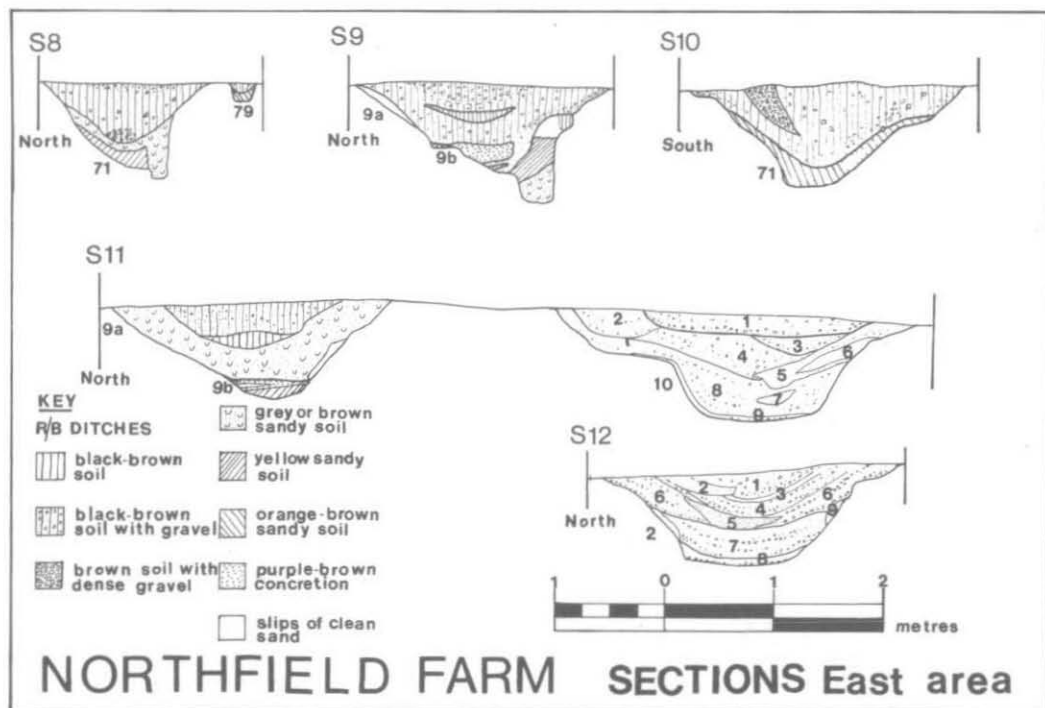


FIG. 6

g.l. m.g.

Slightly off centre was Pit 7, which had a similar filling of black-brown fine soil to the Ring Ditch. It was 60 cm. in diameter and had sloping sides to a flat bottom. Since there was a great deal of charcoal and a small quantity of burnt bone, this pit may have held a cremation, but little remained for detailed analysis. (Levels:— top 48.00, bottom 48.21).

South-west of the Ring Ditch there was a small post-hole, with a similar type of filling to the Ring Ditch. It had vertical sides and a flat bottom. There were some fragments of pottery in this feature, but they were too small to identify. (Levels:— top 48.03, bottom 48.23).

Apart from finds of all periods carried by ploughing into the top levels of the ditch, there were no stratified finds to date it. In sector 2 there were two stone objects which could have been parts of hones and two very small fragments of pottery, possibly of Bronze Age date, but both were very high in the filling. There were no objects in the primary silting.

### *Prehistoric Ditches C*

Ditches 77, 79 and 80 crossed the S.E. extremity of the site, and probably belonged to the same field system as Ditches B on the west part of the site. Their junction with the Roman ditched enclosure E is shown in the photograph (PL. II, B).

Ditch 77 appeared to have been re-cut or re-aligned at some time, with the shallower ditch on the south side. It was not possible to see their relative dating as only the bottoms remained, nor was it possible to see any sign of a bank at the point where they reached the east baulk of the excavation. The filling of both was black-brown sandy soil, with bands of dirty gravel and orange-brown silt. Levels:— *Section at E. Baulk* Top of ploughsoil 48.29, top of S. ditch 48.06, bottom 47.82, top of N. ditch 48.00, bottom 47.66. *At Baulk I* Top of both ditches 48.03, bottom S. ditch 47.85, bottom N. ditch 47.60.

After it had been cut by the Roman ditches 24/78 at Junction 76, the north ditch only of 77 continued very shallowly (numbered 79). There was a break in it, possibly for an entrance, 1.0 m. wide. The ditch terminated at each side of this entrance with an elongated end which was very shallow (Section 8, FIG. 6). It had a layer of black-brown soil over an orange brown gravelly primary silt. Like 77 it had fairly vertical sides and a flat bottom, and may have contained posts. There was one pot-boiler in the filling. There was no sign of a bank at the point where it reached the south baulk of the excavation. Levels:— *Baulk I Ditch 71* top 47.77, bottom 47.64. *At S. Baulk of excavation* top of ploughsoil 48.30, top of ditch 47.79, bottom 47.58. *Gravel surface at entrance* 47.77, bottom of S. terminal 47.50.

Ditch 80 ran parallel to Ditch 77/79 and was cut by the Roman Ditch 78 at the south baulk of the excavation. Although it started by the east baulk as a single ditch with sloping sides to a rounded base, with a dark black-brown filling over a brown gravelly primary silt, it divided into two ditches before it reached the south baulk of the excavation. Therefore, Ditch 80 was recut or realigned at the point where the parallel ditch 79 became single, and vice versa. This follows the same pattern as that observed with the prehistoric ditches B in the west part of the site. There was again no sign of a bank in the main baulks of the excavation. Levels:— *East Baulk of Excavation* top of ploughsoil 48.25, top of ditch 47.91, bottom 47.53. *Baulk I* top 47.96, bottom 47.61. *South Baulk of Excavation* top of ploughsoil 48.37, top 47.87, bottom (a) 47.63, (b) 47.60.

### THE EAST FEATURES: ROMANO-BRITISH DITCHES ENCLOSURE E (Plan, FIG. 5)

The whole of the enclosure was excavated (Ditches 9, 24, 71 and 54) and its relationship to Ditches 6, 85 and 78 examined. There was animal bone and pottery in all the ditches, with the exception of Ditches 6 and 78, which contained no animal bone. These, like the small finds, building materials and other objects are fully listed and described in the Finds section. The ditches can be divided into three phases, all the alterations happening in a relatively short span of time.

Originally Ditch 6/54b/85 ran N.-S. across the area. It shows on the air photograph to extend for a great distance, both north and south, beyond the excavation. Subsequently Ditches 9b, 24 and 78 were added to make a very large field, whose southern boundaries show on the air photograph to have been about 80 m. south of the excavation. Finally Ditch 71 was cut across the northern end of this large field, and, with alterations to the other existing ditches, made up a palisaded enclosure bounded by 71, 54a+b, 9a+b, 24, this enclosure becoming an appendage to the still existing larger field.

Ditch 6/54b/85 was of a similar nature to Ditch 35/36/84, and therefore, need not be described in great detail. There may have been posts along its whole length, but these



were only clearly visible in Ditch 85, and are shown on the plan (FIG. 5). Six sections across the ditch were drawn and they show a V-shaped ditch, filled with alternate layers of brown sandy soil and dirty gravel, with a primary silting of yellow gravel. The sections at the excavation baulks show that there may have been a slight bank on the west side. The post-holes in Ditch 85 were individually levelled, their average being 47.18 m. Levels: 6 Baulk I top 48.51, bottom 48.00. 54a Baulk II 48.32, 47.70. 84 S. Baulk of Excavation top of ploughsoil 48.55, top 48.21, bottom 47.07 (other levels in site records).

When the field boundaries 9b/24/78 were added to this linear ditch, the corners became rounded. There was a distinct break between Ditch 6 and Ditch 9 at the N.W. corner, and Ditch 9 cut through the prehistoric ring ditch, which was by then probably invisible. Very little remained of this ditch, and most of it was cut away when the later palisaded enclosure was made. It shows as a shelf on the N. side in Section 9, Baulk III (S9, FIG. 6). The same pattern was observed in Ditch 24, which ran south after its junction with 9. Its true shape and depth can be seen in Baulk 78, I where it was sloping at the top, yet vertical lower down, with a flat bottom. Here there was evidence of post-holes in the primary silt, as in the ditches in the east part of the site. Pit 56 was contemporary, constructed in the line of Ditch 54, which was also widened and deepened. Levels:— 9b Baulk II 48.18, 47.58, 24 Baulk I 48.07, 47.53. 78 at S. Baulk of excavation top of ploughsoil 48.37, top of ditch 48.07, bottom 47.50. Pit 56 top 48.10, bottom 47.45 (other levels in site records).

Finally the cross ditch 71 linked Ditches 54, 9, 24, to make a trapezoid stockaded enclosure. The latter ditches were deepened and widened and posts were inserted. A section through a post-hole is shown in the section of Ditch 9, Baulk III (S9, FIG. 6), where the posts were very clearly seen in the primary silting. The filling of these final ditches was a uniform brown soil over the primary silting. This suggests that when the site went out of use, the posts were withdrawn, and the ditches backfilled, rather than that a gradual silting up took place. Further evidence of this occurs during discussion of the 4th-century inhumation into an already filled ditch.

The four ditches had sloping sides to a flat base, with a greater slope to the outer edge. A typical section is illustrated in Ditch 71, Baulk IV (S10, FIG. 6). A representative list of levels is Ditch 9 Baulk II 48.18, 47.36. Ditch 24 Baulk IV 47.95, 47.17. Ditch 71 Baulk IV 47.95, 47.20. The depth of all the post-holes is included with the site record; in Ditch 9 they varied between 47.08 and 47.40. Owing to flooding of the bottom of Ditches 71 and 24, it was not possible to define the post-holes below the water table. The junction of Ditches 24 and 71 is shown in the photograph (PL. II, B) where they cut away the prehistoric ditches.

*Pits.* A large pit, Pit 44, was cut into Ditch 54, completing removing its filling and extended beyond its boundaries. It was filled with ginger brown soil, much the same as the Ditch 54 filling, but with more small gravel, the bottom layer being fine grey silt: the pit gave the impression of having been deliberately backfilled, as there were tip-lines of small gravel. It had sloping sides to a flat base. Levels:— top 48.00, bottom 46.84.

In the centre of the enclosure there was a large oval pit which may have been a watering-hole for animals, Pit 20. Its filling was unlike that of Pit 44, and consisted of three layers. A 55 cm. layer of ginger-brown soil covered a 42 cm. layer of dirty brown clayey soil with much charcoal and many large pebbles. This lay over a 26 cm. thick layer of blue-grey clay, with no pebbles. The sides were sloping and the bottom rounded. Levels:— 47.97, 46.74.

There was a small pit, Pit 55, on the outer edge of Ditch 24 south of its junction with Ditch 9; this was contemporary with Ditch 24 and filled with similar material. At the bottom of it was a regularly shaped post-hole with a flat bottom. Levels:— 48.08, 47.69.

During machine stripping it was noticed that there was a concentration of pottery in the area of Feature I. It was an oval feature with many large river pebbles lying within a pronounced hollow, which being only 10 cm. deep did not reach the natural gravel. If there had been any post-holes they would have been lost, at this high level, in ploughing. It may be all that remained of a cattle shelter. Level:— 48.32, 48.22. Beneath it lay

an irregular oval feature, 19, which may have been caused by early tree root disturbance. It was in an area where the red clay lay over a natural dip in the gravel surface.

Also in this area of much Roman pottery and animal bone there was a regularly shaped small pit, 13, filled with ginger brown soil. It was bowl shaped with a flattened bottom. Levels:— 48·10, 47·89.

On the east side of Ditch 24 the natural gravel was stained dark brown from the N. edge of the excavation until the S.E. corner of the stockaded enclosure. The section at the N. baulk of the excavation showed a 20 cm. thick layer of fine buff-grey gravel lying on a very uneven natural gravel surface, in which there were several ruts, cutting up to 10 cm. down into this gravel. There is a possibility that this could be a trackway to the enclosure, or along the field boundary of the larger field.

There was Roman pottery in feature 11, a ploughed out ditch, which showed as stained gravel, but in the N. section of the excavation it was 20 cm. deep below the bottom of the ploughsoil, with a slight bank to the west of it. It may be contemporary with Ditch 6, but had gone out of use when the field boundaries were altered. Its filling of ginger brown soil suggests that it was Roman rather than prehistoric.

The latest feature on the site was the burial 10d which cut the south side of the Ring Ditch and the north side of Ditch 9, both of which must have been filled in at the time the grave was cut, as the grave edges and filling of light brown gravelly soil could easily be differentiated from the ditch fillings at top levels. The sides of the grave were vertical and the filling homogeneous, with more gravel at the north end, and some charcoal. The skeleton (FIG. 7) was lying, extended, against the west side of the grave cut, with head to the north. The spine was bent and the head pressed against the north end of the grave, indicating that perhaps the grave had not been dug long enough. With this burial there were two iron objects and three nails, which lay over the bones, but there was no other indication of a coffin.

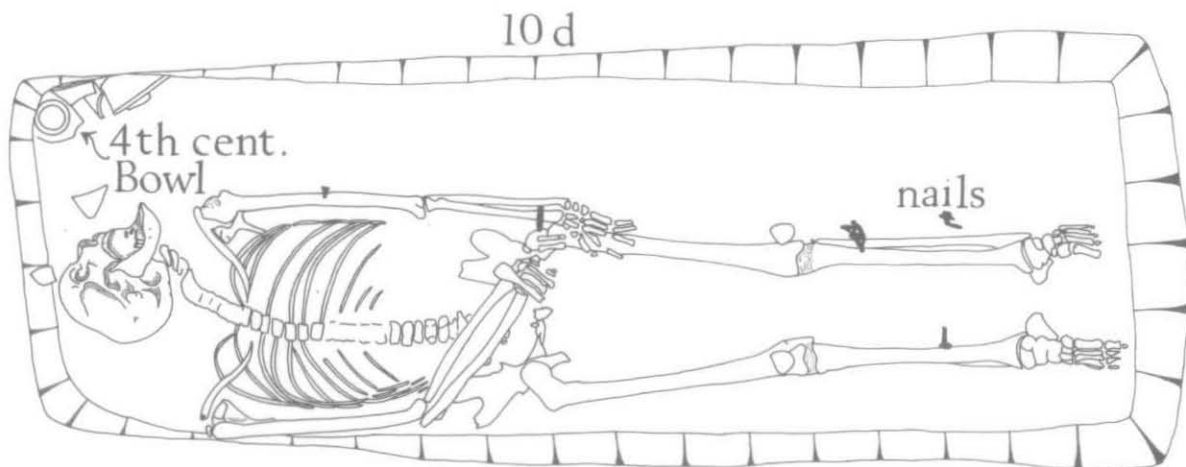


FIG. 7  
Fourth-century inhumation.

Near the skull, in the N.E. corner of the grave was a colour-coated bowl of fourth-century date, which seemed to have been broken before its deposition, as the fragments of it lay scattered around the skull, 6–7 cm. above the bones. Levels:— *top of grave* 48·07, *bottom S. end* 47·49, *N. end* 47·52.

Ploughing marks, of unknown date, accounted for features 21–23, animal and tree root disturbance for 5, 8, 12, 17, 26, 83, a modern animal burial for 25, and a modern bore-hole for 15.



## CONCLUSION

*The Ring Ditch* (see Period Plan, FIG. 2). It is difficult to class this Ring Ditch as a type of Class I Henge like that found at the neighbouring site at Dorchester. There was only rather uncertain evidence of an outer bank, and there was no sign of post pits in the uniformly flat bottom of the ditch. It was only half the size of the monuments found at Dorchester, which were mainly Neolithic.<sup>9</sup> This Ring Ditch corresponds more closely to the 'henge-barrows' described by P. Ashbee,<sup>10</sup> symmetrical ditches with single entrances surrounding Bronze Age barrows. It resembles closely the causewayed barrow excavated at Litton Cheney, Dorset,<sup>11</sup> where J. S. Wachter suggests a chronology of (i) turf stripping, (ii) ditch and grave digging, (iii) placing of burial, (iv) erection of mound—much of it subsequently slipping back into the ditch, (v) hole dug for central post-hole. The two groups of intersecting pits, also of Bronze Age date, may have been quarry pits for this Ring Ditch, or for others to the south and east of the excavated area, which show clearly on the air photograph. Such quarry pits have been observed by J. Collis,<sup>12</sup> as occurring where extra material for the bank is needed.

*The Parallel Ditches B and C.* These ditches, which must meet about 18 metres south of the excavation, are difficult to date. They contained no finds but are certainly pre-Romano-British. Further work, beyond the boundaries of the present excavation, would probably produce more evidence of their date and purpose.

*The Romano-British Ditches.* The two phases of enclosures following linear ditches on both the east and west parts of the site indicate a change in farming practice, with the fields getting smaller and including palisaded stockades. The range of pottery is confined to the end of the first century A.D. and into the second century. Apart from the fourth-century bowl, with the burial which cut into the already back-filled first- to second-century ditches, there is no pottery on the site from any later date, except that brought in with the ploughsoil. It seems likely that the enclosures are the field system for the farmstead excavated by Hewitt in 1893. The scarcity of pottery in the ditches on the north and west sides, and its abundance in the ditches of the south and east, suggests the concentration of occupation in the area of the features which he excavated. That this community had only a short existence is suggested by the confined range of the pottery. It is, however, difficult to imagine why this area of open land should subsequently be left uncultivated, unless it was due to climatic change and the difficulty of continual flooding when the river overflowed its banks.

The small enclosure with its deep settings for posts suggest cattle raising rather than sheep. The animal bone report shows a preponderance of cattle over sheep. Both in dating and in structures this site resembles that at Fisherwick, Staffs.,<sup>13</sup> where cattle-raising in the late first and second centuries A.D. was the main concern. At Tallington, Lincs.,<sup>14</sup> there were small enclosures attached to long trackways but with no evidence of palisades, and it is suggested that they were used for impounding

<sup>9</sup> R. J. C. Atkinson, C. M. Piggott and N. K. Sanders, *Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon. Sites I-VI* (1951).

<sup>10</sup> P. Ashbee, *The Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain* (1961), 132.

<sup>11</sup> J. S. Wachter, 'Litton Cheney Excavations, 1956', *Proc. Dorset N.H. and A.S.*, 80 (1958), 160-77.

<sup>12</sup> J. Collis, *The Excavation of Rural Settlements*, South Hants. Arch. Rescue Group, 7.

<sup>13</sup> H. Miles, 'Excavations at Fisherwick, Staffs., 1968', *Trans. S. Staffs. Arch. & Hist. Soc.*, x (1968-9), 1-23.

<sup>14</sup> D. P. S. Peacock, 'A Roman Site at Tallington', *Trans. Lincoln Arch. Soc.*, ix (1962), 110-24.

animals for a special purpose, such as calving. G. W. B. Huntingford<sup>15</sup> suggests that ditches and banks on their own, unless they are hedged, are no barrier to cattle, and that a stout palisade would have been an advantage both to keep the cattle in and to prevent cattle-raiding. He suggests that a wooden stockade can be further reinforced by piling up thorns and brushwood on the outside of the fence, which not only hinders raiders, but also deters wild beasts. The entrances could be varied at will by removing the posts and filling the ditches.

There are other recorded instances of valley sites being abandoned in the second century. At St. Ives, on the banks of the Great Ouse, H. J. M. Green<sup>16</sup> describes a period of desertion after the second century. However, the site at Little Paxton, Hunts. on the banks of the Ouse<sup>17</sup> had more activity in the third and fourth centuries, although it had existed since the late first. A series of Romano-British enclosures has been plotted from the air in the Warwickshire Avon Valley.<sup>18</sup> One of these, Site 71 at Charlecote, was excavated by the present writer (publication forthcoming) and found to be of late first century to second century A.D. and to have had a short period of existence; at this site there were also palisaded enclosures.

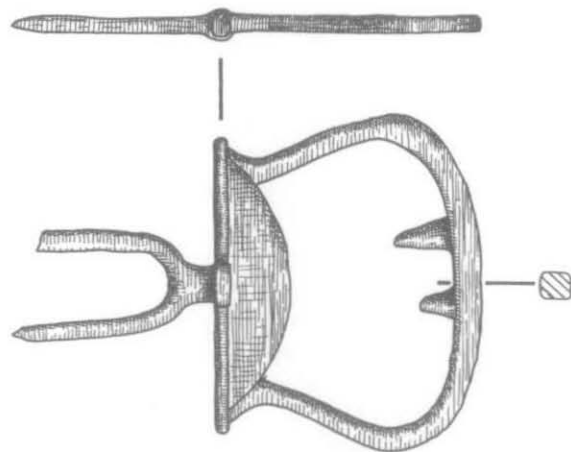


FIG. 8

Iron buckle. Scale 1 : 1.

<sup>15</sup> G. W. B. Huntingford, 'Defences against Cattle Raiding', *Antiquity*, VIII (1932), 429-36.

<sup>16</sup> H. J. M. Green, 'A Romano-British Farm at St. Ives', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.*, LII (1959), 23-9.

<sup>17</sup> E. Greenfield, 'The Romano-British Settlement at Little Paxton, Hunts.', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.*, LXII (1969), 35-37.

<sup>18</sup> G. Webster and B. Hobley, 'Aerial Reconnaissance over the Warwickshire Avon', *Arch. J.*, CXXI (1965), 1-22.

## THE FINDS

## IRON OBJECTS

The only iron object of note was a belt buckle (FIG. 8), which was found unstratified in the ploughsoil. There was one nail (length 8.9 cm.) with a flat head and rectangular shank in the top of the Ring Ditch S.E. quadrant, and one unstratified nail in the ploughsoil of similar size. Apart from these there were three nails in Ditch 71a (lengths 10, 9 and 7 cm.), all with rectangular shanks.

Associated with the inhumation 10d were four round headed nails, with circular shanks (lengths 3-4 cm.) and one very corroded, unidentifiable, iron object. The position of these in relationship to the skeleton is shown in FIG. 7.

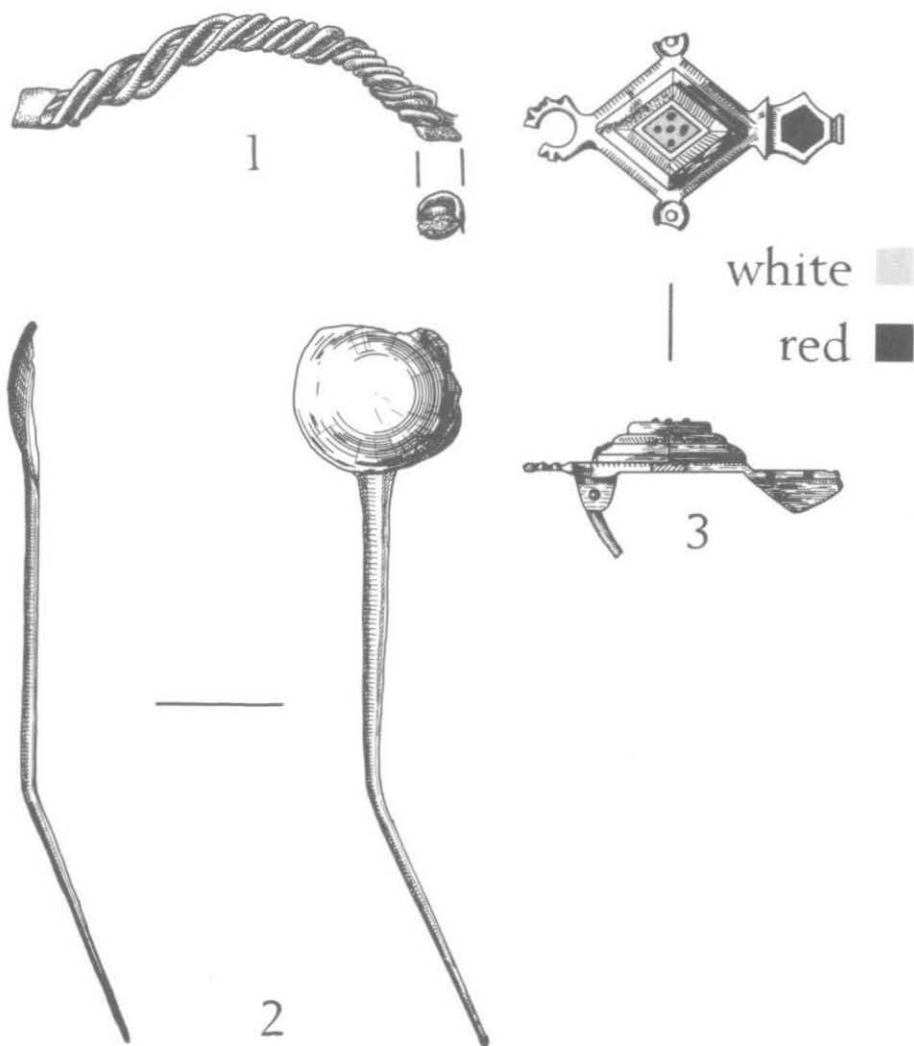


FIG. 9

Bronze objects. Scale 1 : 1.

## BRONZE OBJECTS (FIG. 9)

- 1 Bracelet with four strands of copper wire twisted over fibre.<sup>19</sup> (Ditch 54. Depth 48.07 from SD).
- 2 Bronze spoon with circular bowl, tapered handle. (Ditch 9).
- 3 Bronze brooch. Lozenge shaped, with centre raised up in three stages and filled with white enamel, inlaid with five black or dark blue glass beads. The catchplate end is hexagonal with red enamel inlay, and the hinge end is a notched loop. The pin is hinged, but broken off. The lateral lugs are round and incised with small circles. The decoration on the raised stages consists of fine incised lines. (Ditch 71a).

It is difficult to find parallels for this brooch. The nearest comparison is with the Type 29 lozenge-shaped brooches with lugs from Nor'Nour,<sup>20</sup> especially with brooches Nos. 139, 149, 151 (Fig. 19) and with 253 (Fig. 25). These brooches can be as early as the first century A.D., but are mainly second century in date.

## BONE OBJECTS (Not Illustrated)

The only bone object was many small fragments of a knife handle from Pit 29d.

## STONE OBJECTS (Not Illustrated)

Flint flakes were found in Ditch 54b (one flake) and Ditch 36c (one flake). A complete flint scraper with intact bulbar end was found in Ditch 71a.

There was a quantity of pot-boilers, consisting of fire-shattered local river pebbles. They were found in Ditch 9a (1 fr.), Pit 20a (2 frs.), Ditch 24a (1 fr.), Ditch 36a (12 frs.), Ditch 36b (1 fr.), Pit 38 (3 frs.), Ditch 49 (1 fr.), Ditch 52 (10 frs.), Ditch 54 (2 frs.), Ditch 71a (14 frs.), Ditch 79 (1 fr.). There was also one large unburnt river pebble from Pit 29d, and one small one from Ditch 9a, which had a burnished surface as if used as a 'rubber'.

Stone which is not found in the immediate vicinity of the site included burnt sandstone from Ditch 36a (2 frs.), from Ditch 52 (1 fr.), from Pit 56 (2 frs.) and from Ditch 71a (1 fr.). There were also eight pieces of dressed sandstone in Ditch 24, a piece of burnt tufa from Ditch 71b, and a piece of shale from Ditch 36b. There was one piece of lias limestone from Ditch 84, four pieces of limestone from Ditch 71a and two from Pit 44.

Stone which could have been obtained more locally, possibly from the Stanton Harcourt region, was three pieces of conglomerate from Ditch 71a, one from Ditch 54, one from Ditch 36a (burnt), one from the top of the Ring Ditch filling (smooth on one surface), and a large round lump of heavy conglomerate from Ditch 75 which could have been used as a hammering stone. There was also a piece of conglomerate from layer (c) in the Ring Ditch with one worn surface, which could have been broken off from a hone.

In Ditch 71a there were three pieces of the same sandstone quern (thickness at outer edge 4 cm.) and there was a similar piece in Ditch 9a. Ditch 54a produced a piece of sandstone quern which was micaceous and had large quartz grits (thickness 6 cm.).

## ROMAN BRICK AND TILE

Small fragments of brick were found in Ditch 7, Ditch 20a and 20b, and in the top of the Ring Ditch, and tile in Ditch 20a and 20b, and Ditch 54.

## BURNT CLAYS

Burnt daub and burnt clay from furnace structures were found in Ditch 36a (6 frs.), Ditch 36b (1 fr.), Pit 38 (2 frs.), Ditch 45 (35 frs.), Pit 44 (2 frs.), Ditch 49 (2 frs.), Ditch 71a (18 frs.), 71b (16 frs.), Ditch 76 (4 frs.).

<sup>19</sup> cf. K. M. Kenyon, *Excavations at the Jewry Wall Site, Leicester*, Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries, No. XV (1948).

<sup>20</sup> M. R. Hull, 'The Nor'Nour Brooches'. Appendix to D. Dudley, 'Excavations at Nor'Nour in the Isles of Scilly, 1961-2', *Archaeol. J.*, cxxiv (1967), 28-64.

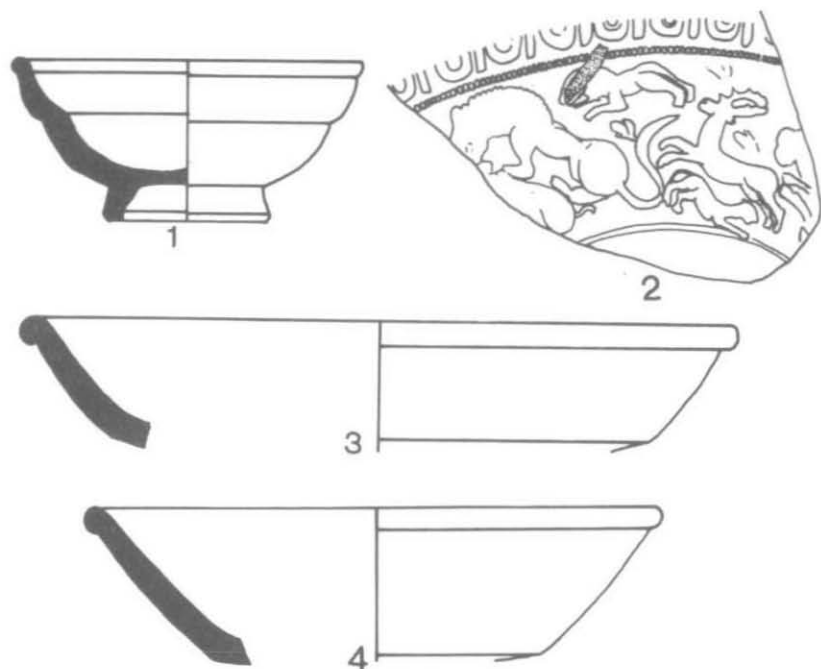


FIG. 10

Samian pottery. Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

## MORTAR

A large piece of mortar was found in Ditch 36c.

## SLAG

Four pieces of iron slag were found in Ditch 54.

## POTTERY

*The Samian.* By JOANNA BIRD

*F 71a*

1 Dr. 27, Central Gaul, first half 2nd cent.

2 Dr. 37, style of Cinnamus of Lezoux. This is ovolu 3 with fine beads.<sup>21</sup> The panther is a small version of o.1518;<sup>22</sup> the other animals (bear, o.1627; stag, o.1781; and lion and boar, o.1491) and the leaf motif all occur on stamped bowls, c. A.D. 145-75.<sup>23</sup>

3 2x Dr. 18/31, Central Gaul, mid 2nd cent.

*F 75*

4 Dr. 18/31R, Central Gaul. Stamped R O—T.I.M ( ). Provisional date, c. A.D. 125-50.

*Romano-British.* By CHRISTOPHER J. YOUNG

Only a representative sample of the pottery is illustrated in this report. A statistical table, showing the quantity of sherds in each feature, with their weights and type fabrics, is deposited with the site records, with the remainder of the pottery drawings. Type fabrics are indicated in the text by the following abbreviations:

GS I Fine, light grey, smooth, sandy fabric. Oxon. kiln product.

GS III Coarse, light grey, sandy with black inclusions. Oxon. kiln product.

<sup>21</sup> J. A. Stanfield and G. Simpson, *Central Gaulish Pottery* (1958), Pl. 162, 61.

<sup>22</sup> O = F. Oswald, *Index of Figure-types on Terra Sigillata* (1936-7).

<sup>23</sup> Stanfield and Simpson, *op. cit.* note 21, Pl. 163, 66, 71, 73.

- GS IV Coarse, dark grey or black, sandy with mica.  
 GS V Fine grey, sandy, hard fired. Oxon. kiln product.  
 GS VI Fine, grey, smooth, sandy, with buff interior.  
 GO I Fine, grey, sandy, with orange interior. ?Oxon. kiln product.  
 GO II Very fine, grey 'skin' over orange/buff interior. Oxon. kiln product, but finer than most. Used in the 1st-2nd cents. A.D. for beakers and samian copies.  
 PS I Fine, pink, sandy, flecked with red inclusions. Oxon. coarse white ware, used mainly for flagons and jars.  
 OS I Fine, orange, with sandy inclusions, micaceous. Oxon. kiln product.  
 BS I Fine, smooth, orange-red, sandy. Oxon. kiln product.  
 PG I Pink/grey, micaceous, sandy.  
 GC I Coarse, grey/buff, sandy. Oxon. kiln product.  
 GC IV Very coarse, grey, sandy, micaceous. Storage jar fabric.  
 CG I Very coarse, pink/grey, 'corky', with large grits. Storage jar fabric.  
 CC Red colour coated. Oxon. kiln product.

The largest group of representative pottery was found in Ditch 71. This is discussed first. Pottery not found in this group is then discussed in the order used in the account of the excavation.

#### *Ditch 71 (FIG. 11)*

- 1 Mortarium; hard, sandy, buff with multicoloured translucent quartzite grits; Oxon. kiln product. Ox P,<sup>24</sup> Type M 14, c. 180-240.
- 2 ?Poppy-headed beaker; GS I; Ox P, Type R 34, 2nd cent.
- 3 Small necked jar; GC I; Ox P, Type R 24, 1st-4th cent.
- 4 Pedestal base; GO III; Ox P, Type R 14. The type was current 2nd-4th cent., but the fabric suggests a 1st-2nd cent. date.
- 5 Beaker with cornice rim; GO II; Ox P, Type R 31, mid 1st-2nd cents.
- 6 Wall sided, bead rimmed bowl; GO I; Ox P, Type R 43, 2nd-3rd cent.
- 7 Curved wall, flat-rimmed bowl; GC I; Ox P, Type R 41, 1st-2nd cent. (but can be later).
- 8 Jar; GS III; Ox P, Type R 21, 1st-mid 2nd cent. (but can be later).
- 9 Necked jar; GO I; Ox P, Type R 24, 1st-4th cent.
- 10 ?Poppy-head beaker; GS I; Ox P, Type R 34, 2nd cent.
- 11 Bowl with out-turned rim; GS V; Ox P, Type R 57, 2nd-4th cent.
- 12 Bowl with flat, out-turned rim; GO I; Ox P, Type R 41, 1st-2nd cent. (but can be later).
- 13 Bowl; GS I; Ox P, Type R 57, 2nd-4th cent.
- 14 Large storage jar; CG I; 1st-4th cent.

The pottery from this ditch suggests that it was filled at about the end of the second century A.D.

#### *Pottery from other features (FIG. 12)*

- 15 Bowl with reeded, out-turned rim; GS I; Ox P, Type R 56, 2nd cent. (Ditch 43).
- 16 Small jar; PS I; Ox P, Type W 33, 1st-4th cent. (Ditch 36).
- 17 Carinated bowl with flat, out-turned rim; GS I; Ox P, Type R 57, 2nd-4th cent. (Ditch 36).
- 18 Cooking-pot; finely granulated dark grey ware, calcite-gritted, and slightly burnished. Saxon. (Pit 61).
- 19 Baby's feeding bottle; GS V; this is a previously unrecorded Oxford type. (Ditch 36).
- 20 Flanged dish, copy of samian Dr. 38; BS I. (Ditch 36).
- 21 Straight sided bowl, copy of samian Dr. 33; OS I; Ox P, Type O 43, c. 240-300. (Ditch 36).
- 22 Jar with cornice rim; OS I; Ox P, Type O 9, c. 240-300. (Ditch 36).
- 23 Bowl copying Dr. 38; CC; Ox P, Type C 51, c. 240-400. (Ditch 84).
- 24 Narrow mouthed jar; GS I; Ox P, Type R 15, 1st-4th cent. (Ditch 54a).
- 25 Bowl copying Dr. 29 or 30; GS VI; Ox P, Type R 64, late 1st-2nd cent. (Ditch 9).
- 26 Lid; GO I; (Ditch 9).
- 27 Dish with beaded rim; GO I; Ox P, Type R 52/3, post 180. (Ditch 24).
- 28 Wide-mouthed necked jar, with carination at shoulder, and pedestal base; GS VI; Ox P, Type R 26, 1st-2nd cent. (Ditch 54).
- 29 Wide-mouthed jar; GC I; Ox P, Type R 24, 1st-4th cent. (Ditch 54).
- 30 Hemispherical bowl copying Dr. 37; OS I; Ox P, Type O 45, 2nd cent. (Pit 44).
- 31 Small beaker; GS V; Ox P, Type R 31, c. 50-150. (Pit 20).
- 32 Beaker; GS V; Ox P, Type R 31, c. 50-150. (Pit 20).
- 33 Complete bowl; CC; Ox P, Type C 81, c. 300-400.

The range of pottery types from the site is typical of the Upper Thames Valley. As might be expected, nearly half of it is attributable to the main group of Oxford kilns, the nearest of which lay just to the north of Dorchester.

#### *Pottery other than Romano-British*

The Bronze Age pottery was all too fragmentary to illustrate in this report, and there were no rim sherds. The post-medieval pottery is not illustrated, and the Saxon sherd is illustrated in FIG. 12, no. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Ox P = C. J. Young, *The Romano-British Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region* (forthcoming).

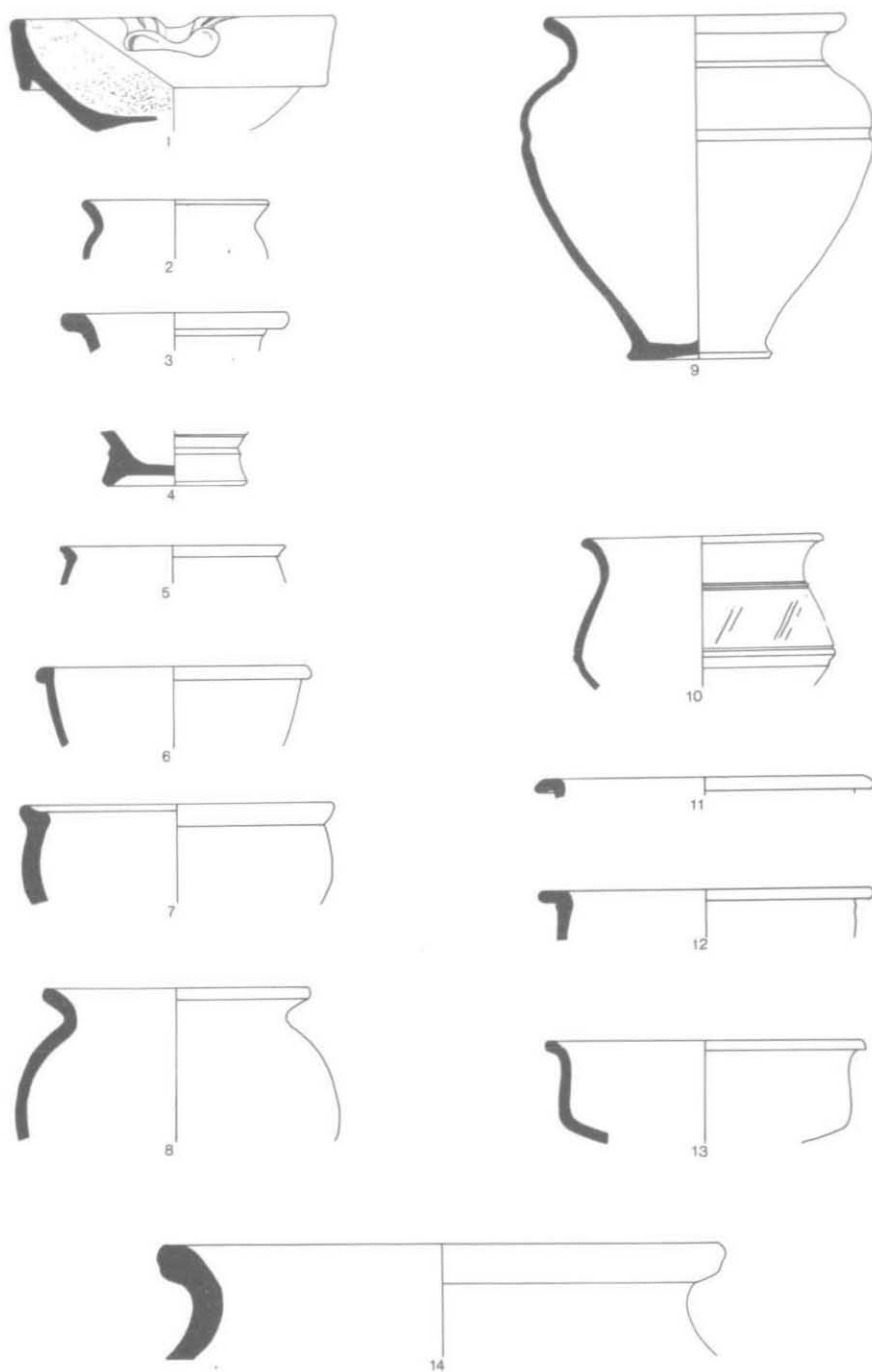


FIG. 11  
Romano-British pottery from Ditch 71. Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$ .



## THE HUMAN REMAINS. By C. B. DENSTON

The remains consisted of a skull and certain postcranial bones.

The maxilla and basal area of the cranium were broken, the fragments partially eroded preventing restoration of the affected area. The cranium displayed distortion, possibly the result of post-mortem earth pressure, with most of the alveolar border of the mandible broken or eroded, and condyles lost post-mortem.

Long bone shafts were mainly intact, though post-mortem breakage accounted for the loss of some extremities.

The sex of the individual represented by the remains was possibly male. The evidence for this was not overwhelming as the skull and bones of the feet were not masculine. The long bones supported the hypothesis of a male individual rather than a female.

Six long bones were sufficiently preserved to produce maximum length measurements enabling computation of the stature of the individual, the regression formulae of Trotter and Gleser suggesting a stature of approximately 5 ft. 6 in. This stature is identical with the mean of twenty-five to thirty Iron Age-Romano-British males from Maiden Castle, but 2 in. shorter than a mean of 5 ft. 8 in. of sixteen males from Frilford, Berks., based upon femoral lengths.

The age at death of the individual was possibly in the region of 45-55 years, according to the degree of closure of cranial sutures, and of attrition of the teeth.

The femora and tibiae displayed platymeria and platycnemia respectively. Platymeria (excessive antero-posterior flattening of the femur in the region of the shaft just below the greater trochanter), and platycnemia (transverse flattening of the tibia in the region of the shaft at the nutrient foramen) appear to be more common among present-day 'primitive' populations than among 'westernized' peoples. A wide range of theories has been put forward to account for the conditions; a nutritional cause is suggested, but the majority have a preference for mechanical explanations. Platymeria is said to be more common among women, while platycnemia tends to occur with greater frequency in males.

Lipping at the articular extremities of the ulnae, and the rims of the acetabulae of the innominate bones suggested the possibility of osteoarthritis.

The oral health of the individual as gauged from the existing portions of the maxilla and mandible was far from good, four out of nine teeth displaying neck caries, teeth lost from the jaws *ante-mortem*, and a cavity in the maxilla alongside the incisive fossa, the result of an abscess. Furthermore alveolar recession in the area of the mandibular molars suggested periodontal infection of a considerable degree, and all this, plus an uneven surface and minute foraminae in the palate of the maxilla, conjectures a gloomy picture of the oral health of this individual.

The skull was also inspected for any discontinuous trails (non-metrical) with negative results.

## THE ANIMAL BONE FOUND IN THE ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES

Identified by BARBARA NODDLE

This small collection of bones consisted largely of bones from two cattle, one rather larger than the other, although parts of them appeared in several different layers. There is a possibility of a third animal.

There were also horse, sheep, pig and a few dog and cat bones, but the fragmentary nature of these bones precludes their being assigned to individual animals. Since there were no duplicate bones they may have derived from a disturbed animal burial site rather than from conventional food waste.

The condition of the bones was uniform, and their state of preservation suggests a date consistent with the Roman period at other sites in the area. The size of the cattle bones also suggests a Roman date, as they were larger than those reported from prehistoric sites.<sup>25</sup>

*Cattle. First animal*

Bones from this animal were found in Ditches 71 and 24 and Pit 44. They comprised mandibles, vertebrae, upper limb bones of humerus, radius, ulna, and lower limb bones of patella and both astragali. The astragali have been used to deduce the body weight of the animal as 300 kg. Of the lower limbs there were a pair of metacarpals and one metatarsal, but no phalanges. This was a large animal, the bone dimensions being within the modern range, and the width of the metacarpal shaft suggests that it was a bull.

*Second animal*

Bones from this animal were found in Ditches 9 and 54 and Pit 20. They comprised a pair of mandibles, a large atlas vertebra suggesting a heavily horned animal, a number of other vertebrae and ribs and an astragalus which suggested a body weight of 200 kg.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A. P. Jewell, *Man and Cattle*, Royal Anth. Inst. Occasional Papers, No. 18 (1963).

<sup>26</sup> B. A. Noddle, *Domestationsforschung und Geschichte der Hauserie*, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest (1973).

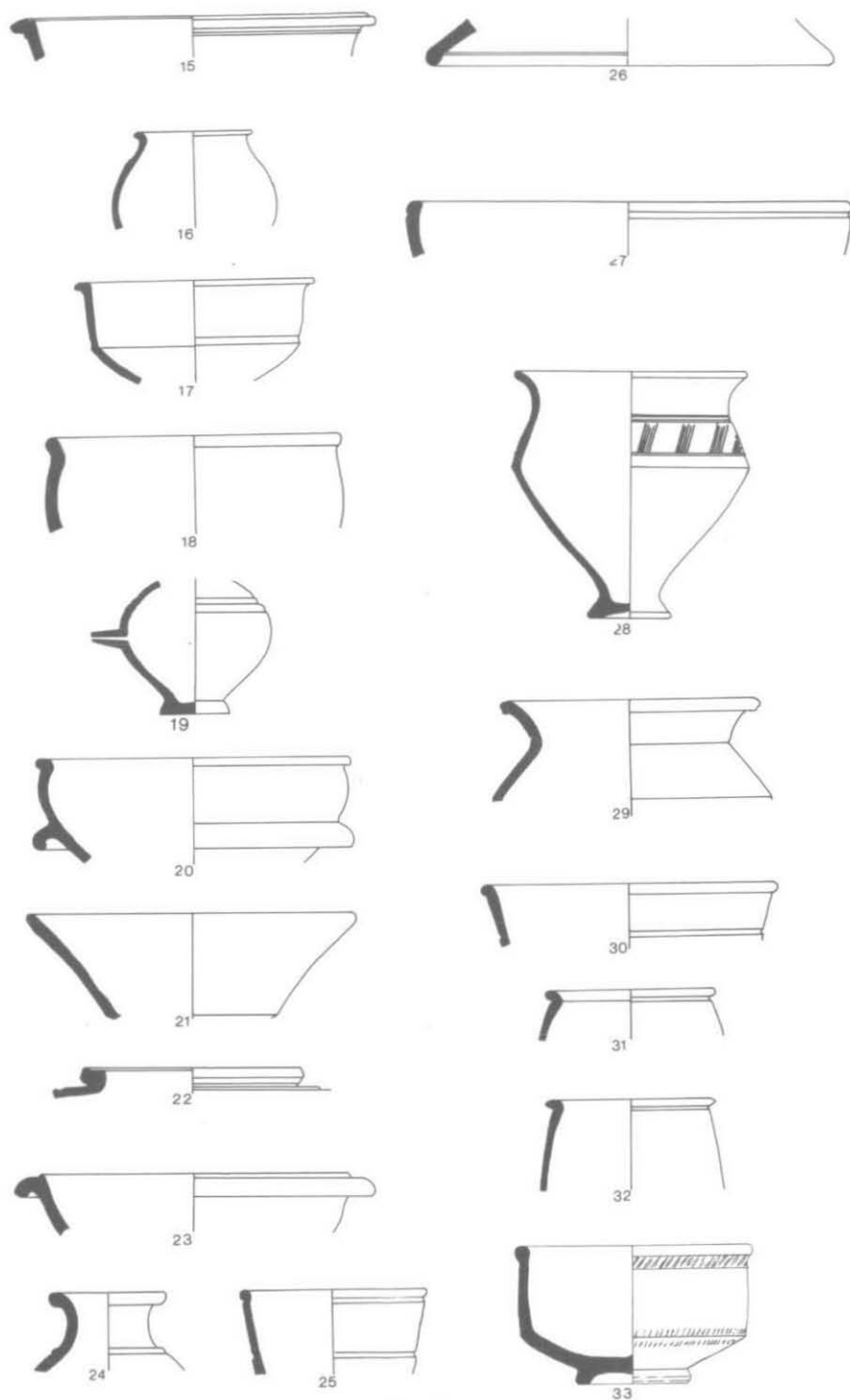


FIG. 12

Romano-British (nos. 15-7, 19-33) and Saxon (no. 18) pottery. Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$ .

## Third animal

The identification of this as a single specimen was less certain as it was more fragmentary. The bones were found in 13 (area over Ring Ditch), Ditches 71 and 85 and Pit 44. They comprised two immature vertebrae, fragments of calcaneum and metacarpal and the distal epiphysis of a femur. There were also some deciduous teeth and a first phalanx. This was not only a younger animal, it was also smaller.

## Sheep

Sheep bones were found mainly in Pit 20, but also in Ditches 36 and 54. They comprised vertebrae, fragment of pelvis, fragment of humerus, fragments of tibia, fragment of metatarsal, femur and three loose teeth. If this is one animal it is of slight dimensions, comparable with the present day Soay sheep, although the molar is somewhat larger.

## Pig

Three fragments of pig bone were found in Ditches 35, 54 and 71; they were skull, incisor and femur fragments respectively. These could have come from a single animal, but the evidence is not conclusive.

## Dog

In Pit 20 there were the humerus, femur and tibia of a puppy.

## Cat

In Pit 20 there was a cat radius.

## Horse

There were a number of horse bones scattered through many of the layers. None of them was measurable, and all could have been derived from the same animal, except one, the phalanx of a foal from Ditch 71.

## Conclusion

This assemblage of bones may be compared with the contents of two wells at Tripon-tium.<sup>27</sup> Here too there was a mixture of complete animals, largely male, with other fragments of animal bone.

Only the animal bone from within features was examined; there was a quantity of unstratified bone in the ploughsoil. A detailed record of bone measurements, the quantity of bone and total weights of it from each feature are deposited with the site records.

## APPENDIX I

## PLOUGHING AT NORTHFIELD FARM. By GEORGE LAMBRICK

A small trial excavation consisting of two machine cut trenches, together with information provided by the owner, Mr. Whittle, for which I am most grateful, has given some idea of the condition of the site in relation to its modern agricultural use. Since the full extent of the site was only discovered from the 1930s onwards, there is no prospect of obtaining such useful antiquarian comments as those for Alchester.<sup>28</sup> The gravel terrace provided most of the common fields for Long Wittenham and traces of ridge and furrow, surviving either as earthworks close to Northfield Farm or as cropmarks further away, attest to its being arable since the Middle Ages. It is marked as arable on Rocque's map of Berkshire in 1761,<sup>29</sup> and has almost certainly remained so since, though some areas, especially near the farm, have been kept as pasture in modern times at least. The floodplain, a 120 to 200 m. wide strip of land round the north and east sides of the terrace next to the river, has not been ploughed in modern times, is marked as pasture by Rocque and bears no sign of ridge and furrow. The features showing on air photographs on the floodplain may thus be expected to be the best preserved, and are perhaps comparable to those at Port Meadow, Oxford, or at Pinkhill which lies opposite the excavated floodplain sites at Farmoor.<sup>30</sup> Apart from the floodplain features all the other cropmarks are on regularly cultivated arable.

Ploughing is mostly carried out at normal depths (c. 20-23 cm.) though occasionally it has been deeper for potatoes. Continued ploughing at the same depth is not likely to cause any immediate damage: soil erosion which might cause an increased absolute depth

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> G. Lambrick, 'Ploughing at Alchester' in C. J. Young, 'The Defences of Roman Alchester', *Oxoniensia*, XL (1975), 155-60.

<sup>29</sup> J. Rocque, *A Topographical Survey of the County of Berks* (1761).

<sup>30</sup> G. Lambrick and M. Robinson, *Farmoor* (1978).

of disturbance is probably minimal on such a level site, especially as any earthworks must have long since been flattened. The Roman field system mostly does not respect the earlier prehistoric features, though a deviation in the western droveway ditch suggests that the largest barrow (just south of the 1969 excavation) may still have retained a slight mound.<sup>31</sup> The medieval ridge and furrow where visible on the photographs also ignores earlier features. It is thus reasonable to suppose that the site was largely flattened by the Roman period and that the process may have been completed by medieval plough teams. No doubt the depth of ploughing was increased with the development of mechanical traction, but there is no reason now to expect significantly deeper levels of ploughing.

The modern threat is that of subsoiling, and it was to assess this that the 1976 trenches were dug (FIG. 1). The trenches were sited and excavated by Mr. R. A. Chambers and I am grateful for his comments. The trenches did not definitely locate the droveway ditches as intended, but the north-south one revealed the marks of subsoiling penetrating to 70 cm. There was no marked difference in the consistency of the soil where the tines had disturbed the soil, and were it not for changes in the colour of the soil the operation would have been undetectable.<sup>32</sup> The soil was sandy silt in this area (almost certainly a filled in river channel) and it is only the fields on this difficult soil and the areas of deep clayey topsoil which have been subsoiled. These areas consist of the two fields south of the road to Northfield Farm and east of New Barn and Long Wittenham (including the southern concentration of cropmarks); and the western edge only of the two fields next to the floodplain north-east and east of Northfield Farm. The plough headlands were subsoiled twice, and the operation has been carried out on at least one and possibly two occasions. The work was done with a 3 tined subsoiler set to work at 45 to 60 cm. deep.

The degree of damage is doubtful: certainly the subsoiler will have penetrated well into the archaeological features, but in view of the way in which the soil has resettled it is doubtful whether any distinct damage could be detected in soft filled features even if any has been done. With walls, wells, corn-driers and the like more damage might have occurred but it would be necessary to locate such features before it could be assessed.

The 1969 excavations confirmed that normal ploughing is done at 20 to 23 cm. but in the 1976 trenches it was mostly around 25 cm., and the plough had bitten deeper in one place to 29 cm., the subsoil being turned into the topsoil (visible in section as jagged teeth of subsoil slanting upwards). This must have been done at the previous ploughing to have remained visible and suggests that at least when potatoes are planted ploughing reaches depths of up to 30 cm. and may occasionally be causing new disturbance. What may be lost in this way could only be assessed in large scale excavation in the fields where this deeper ploughing is done: there is nothing to suggest from this evidence that such extra disturbance is very extensive.

There is no indication that either subsoiling or occasional fairly deep ploughing will cease altogether in these fields: both are necessary agriculturally, and it is unfortunate that this should be so on such an extensive archaeological site. It has still not been possible to assess at all easily how damaging subsoiling may be to the features with soft fills which predominate on gravel sites of this sort and it is therefore not possible to reach any firm conclusion about the areas where this operation has been carried out. For the rest it seems evident that normal ploughing is not a serious threat and that deeper ploughing for potatoes has probably already caused most of the damage which is likely to result from it.

#### APPENDIX 2

##### CROPMARKS AROUND NORTHFIELD FARM. By DAVID MILES

The cropmarks which occupy the area between Northfield Farm and Long Wittenham village form the largest surviving coherent complex in the Upper Thames Valley. The

<sup>31</sup> D. Miles, 'Fields in the Upper Thames Valley' in H. C. Bowen and P. J. Fowler (eds.), *Early fields and land allotment in the British Isles* (1978).

<sup>32</sup> G. Lambrick, 'Modern cultivation equipment and its likely archaeological effects in the light of its design and usage', in R. T. Schadla-Hall and J. Hinchcliffe (eds.), report on a seminar on plough damage (forthcoming).

loop of the Thames between Dorchester and Long Wittenham encloses approximately four square kilometres of land free of extensive modern settlement or gravel quarrying. Except for the narrow strip of pasture on the floodplain alongside the river, the whole of the area is given over to arable, growing principally barley and potatoes.

The Northfield Farm cropmarks were among the earliest to be investigated in the county, if not the country. Stephen Stone pioneered the identification of cropmarks in the mid nineteenth century, and in 1893 Mr. Hewett, the tenant of Northfield Farm, followed Stone's example by excavating among the cropmarks which covered the land around his farmhouse. Hewett carried on piecemeal digging throughout the 1890s, but while his standards of excavation were not high, even for the time, the production of an extensive plan of the cropmarks<sup>33</sup> was a remarkable achievement. This survey was carried out on the ground measuring the marks visible in the standing crop in Scabbs Field and Fox Furlong to the west, north and east of Northfield Farm. The surveyors believed the enclosure ditches to be the foundation trenches of buildings: so the marks appear to be rather regular and schematic in this plan but they are otherwise accurately drawn. A block of rectangular enclosures in the Hewett and Haverfield survey, 350 metres due north of the farm buildings, does not appear in any aerial photographs, but there is no reason to doubt its existence.

In the early 1930s the first aerial photographs of the site were taken by Major Allen, who subsequently produced a plan of the cropmarks.<sup>34</sup> Since the 1950s the area has proved to be one of the most photogenic in the country and the cropmarks have been well documented by the Cambridge Committee for Aerial Photography and the National Monuments Record. The latter organisation has recently carried out a programme of experimental photography over the area which has resulted in the latest plan, published here (FIG. 1).<sup>35</sup>

The analysis of cropmarks and earthworks without excavation is fraught with danger. In a previous cropmark survey,<sup>36</sup> descriptions were in basically geometric terms: circles, rectangles and so on, with a minimum of assumption as to period or function. Excavations over the past fifty years have enabled us to relate specific shapes to certain periods and occasionally to function; for example, recent attempts have been made to identify Saxon sunken huts and houses.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand the ring-ditch, most commonly interpreted as a ploughed-out Bronze Age barrow offers a variety of options; Iron Age house gulleys, Neolithic henges or houses, animal pens, Roman temples and mausolea present similar forms in the crop. The amount of archaeological effort expended in Britain on non-destructive fieldwork and analysis has been and is relatively small; consequently techniques are crude in comparison with those used to extract data from excavations or compared with those used by fieldworkers in other countries where less emphasis is placed upon excavation.<sup>38</sup>

One of the aims of Margaret Gray's excavation was to provide information which would aid the interpretation of the cropmarks at Northfield Farm as a whole, and for this reason her trenches were sited at the intersection of the two trackways W.N.W. of the farm. This commentary accompanies the most recent plot of the cropmarks, taken from photographs available up to 1976 but it is very much an interim statement. Already new marks have been discovered south of Long Wittenham village. In the summer of 1976 a planning appeal was held to decide on the question of gravel extraction at Northfield Farm. At present (May 1977) the fate of the site is not known.<sup>38a</sup> Whether we are in the process of

<sup>33</sup> V.C.H. Berks, I, 219.

<sup>34</sup> G. W. G. Allen, 'Cropmarks seen from the air, Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham, Berks', *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 164-5.

<sup>35</sup> I am grateful to the staff of the National Monuments Board Air Photography Division for producing the cropmark plan.

<sup>36</sup> D. Benson and D. Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley; an archaeological survey of the river gravels* (1974).

<sup>37</sup> D. Benson and D. Miles, 'Cropmarks near the Sutton Courtenay Saxon site', *Antiquity*, 48 (1974), 223-6.

<sup>38</sup> For example: D. H. Thomas, 'Predicting the Past' (1974), 36-43 and refs.

<sup>38a</sup> The planning application for gravel extraction at Northfield Farm has been rejected by the Secretary of State for the Environment, following the appeal (Nov. 1977).

analysing an archaeological complex which is safe for the future or planning an excavation strategy in advance of gravel extraction, we cannot afford to neglect the information already available in the aerial photographic record. Controlled fieldwalking and more detailed plotting and analysis than is being attempted here would enable us to propose theories which could be tested by excavation, not necessarily on this site, but at others where similar patterns recur.

The backbone of the Long Wittenham cropmark complex is a North-South running trackway, which can be traced for 1700 metres. In the south there is a T-junction or possibly a crossroads with a track running S.W.-N.E. We know from excavation that the trackway system was in use in the early Roman period. By the first or second century A.D. it seems that the landscape here was formalised to the extent of having settlements linked by lanes running through extensive agricultural areas. Many if not most of the Long Wittenham cropmarks seem to pre-date this track and seem to indicate different methods of controlling and utilising the land.

Around Northfield Farm, that is the land on either side of the N.-S. Romano-British trackway, there are at least four dozen ring ditches varying in size from 35-40 metres to 8 metres. Most have single ditches, but one is a double concentric circle (553952). The largest circles cluster at 555952. Hewett found flint and a female burial when he excavated a circle only 24 feet across in this area.<sup>39</sup> It seems likely that some of these ring ditches are the flattened remains of barrows. That at least one had a mound surviving in the early Roman period is indicated by the kink in the N.-S. trackway at 555952, where it crosses a silted-up ditch, but presumably avoids a vestigial mound. It may be significant that this is one of the largest and hence longest surviving of the barrows. North of it there is a circle with a flattened S.W. side. A similar feature dating to the Bronze Age was excavated at Ashville, Abingdon, and indicates the sequence of barrow building on both sites.

The smaller circles are a particular problem as both their date and function are open to question. Margaret Gray's excavated example is tentatively interpreted (p.9-12, 15) as a prehistoric henge barrow. A penannular enclosure recently excavated at Thrupp, Abingdon by myself is thought to be a Neolithic hut circle. The existence of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ritual monuments at Northfield Farm indicates the presence of nearby contemporary settlements. These need not show as cropmarks and if they do appear, at present we may not recognise what we are looking at.

There are several clusters of small circles with associated pits, which probably indicate foci of prehistoric settlement. The experience of excavation leads us to the assumption that they are likely to be Iron Age, but this may be incorrect. One such settlement nucleus is on the edge of the gravel terrace (563953) overlooking the flood plain. There are about a dozen circular enclosures, averaging 12 metres across, which resemble Iron Age huts and enclosures recently excavated at Ashville and Farmoor.<sup>40</sup> A rectangular enclosure 50 metres long with a south-eastern entrance opening onto a trackway probably post-dates the circular features. Dense clusters of marks probably indicate pits; whether for storage or rubbish they suggest a degree of permanence at the settlement unlike the Farmoor flood-plain seasonal sites. The pits seem to cluster in discrete areas and this has also been observed on several excavated sites.<sup>41</sup> N.W. of this complex a circle and linear features lie on the flood plain. These are probably only a fraction of the features which exist below the relatively unphotogenic flood-plain turf.

A string of small circles and pit groups form a settlement focus alongside the N.-S. Roman track (at 556951). Several of these circles are cut by the track's eastern ditch, but the north-south alignment of these presumed hut circles may point to the existence of a prehistoric forerunner of the Roman ditched trackway. The alignment of the Roman track and Iron Age huts at Farmoor suggest a similar interpretation there. The third

<sup>39</sup> V.C.H. *Berks*, I, 220.

<sup>40</sup> I am grateful to M. Parrington, G. Lambrick and M. Robinson for information in advance of publication.

<sup>41</sup> For example: the writer's excavations at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon and those of D. Benson at City Farm, Long Hanborough.



concentration of small circles is among the extremely complex group of cropmarks in the south (557942) where about a dozen are visible. There appear to be three concentrations of prehistoric occupation, but other ring ditches can be seen in isolation or in more enigmatic relationships. Three circles (SU560950) may be linked by linear ditches also adjoining a triple ditched enclosure. Any interpretation of these features would be pure speculation at this stage. They are crossed by (or overlay?) a sinuous pit alignment, one of very few in the Thames Valley, which runs for at least 930 metres from the flood-plain of the Thames to the south of Northfield Farm, where it curves to the south. A short stretch of a second alignment is visible to the S.W. (SU557946) running almost parallel to the first. A third alignment has recently been photographed<sup>42</sup> south of Long Wittenham village also running N.W.-S.E. The date and function of pit alignments is open to question but they may form major boundaries around land allotments. Each of the three major prehistoric settlement foci referred to falls within a block of land 'defined' by the alignments.

Evidence of detailed land allotment can be seen in the block of enclosures immediately N.W. of Northfield Farm. Margaret Gray excavated part of the narrow trackway which is associated with these but unfortunately detailed dating evidence was not forthcoming. So called Celtic field systems are not found in the Thames Valley, presumably because the unploughed baulks surrounding prehistoric and Roman fields have long since been obliterated and unlike sloping chalk downland, flat gravel terraces do not encourage the development of lynchets. Square enclosures occur around settlements indicating paddocks and closes. This block consists of at least twelve separate enclosures averaging approximately 55 by 30 metres with the largest being 125 by 70 metres. The narrow trackway runs between them. In a number of cases entrances give access from one enclosure to another. Hewett's excavations showed that there were wells in at least three of the enclosures. The presence of wells suggests that these are paddocks close to a settlement possibly for managing stock or even containing farm buildings. The largest N.E. enclosure has inside it a subrectangular enclosure with an inturned entrance on its S.W. side. Within this is a (?) hut circle possibly with a N.W. entrance (if correct this is unusual as hut entrances tend to be to the S.E.). This feature probably pre-dates the enclosure. If we are correct in seeing these enclosures as paddocks rather than arable fields then the latter may have existed on either side of the trackway to the N.W.

The main N.-S. track has been dated to the early Roman period by Margaret Gray. The emphasis on metalled Roman roads has led to a neglect of the minor lanes and tracks of Roman Britain. Here we can see part of the comprehensive system of communications which must have existed in rural areas. At its northern end the track disappears where it reaches the flood-plain. Immediately opposite on the north bank of the Thames lies the site of a Roman building and the Golden Balls pottery kilns,<sup>43</sup> near Burcot church; this might indicate a river crossing and a wharf for the shipment of pottery.

West of Northfield Farm there is a block of enclosures alongside the track. Hewett found wells in four of them<sup>44</sup> which he described as being 7-8 feet deep and lined variously with timber, stone and wattle; one had steps down into it, a type of water-hole also found by myself at Appleford, and described as a potters' puddling-hole at Allen's Pit, Dorchester.<sup>45</sup> Piggott has ascribed a ritual purpose to these wells<sup>46</sup> but their primary function was probably more prosaic. Some of the pottery from them survives in the Ashmolean Museum and is late first- or second-century Romano-British. Haverfield did not locate any buildings in his excavation but he did find wall plaster and roofing tiles<sup>47</sup> and also third- and fourth-century coins.

The trackway continues south for 650 metres before joining another major settlement complex, much of which must belong to the Roman period. We cannot be certain whether

<sup>42</sup> I am grateful to David Wilson of the Cambridge Committee for Aerial Photography for this information.

<sup>43</sup> Benson and Miles, *op. cit.* note 5, Map 37.

<sup>44</sup> *Op. cit.* note 7.

<sup>45</sup> D. B. Harden, 'Two Romano-British Potters'-Fields near Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936): 90-2.

<sup>46</sup> S. Piggott, *The Druids* (1974), 64, Fig. 28.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.* note 7.



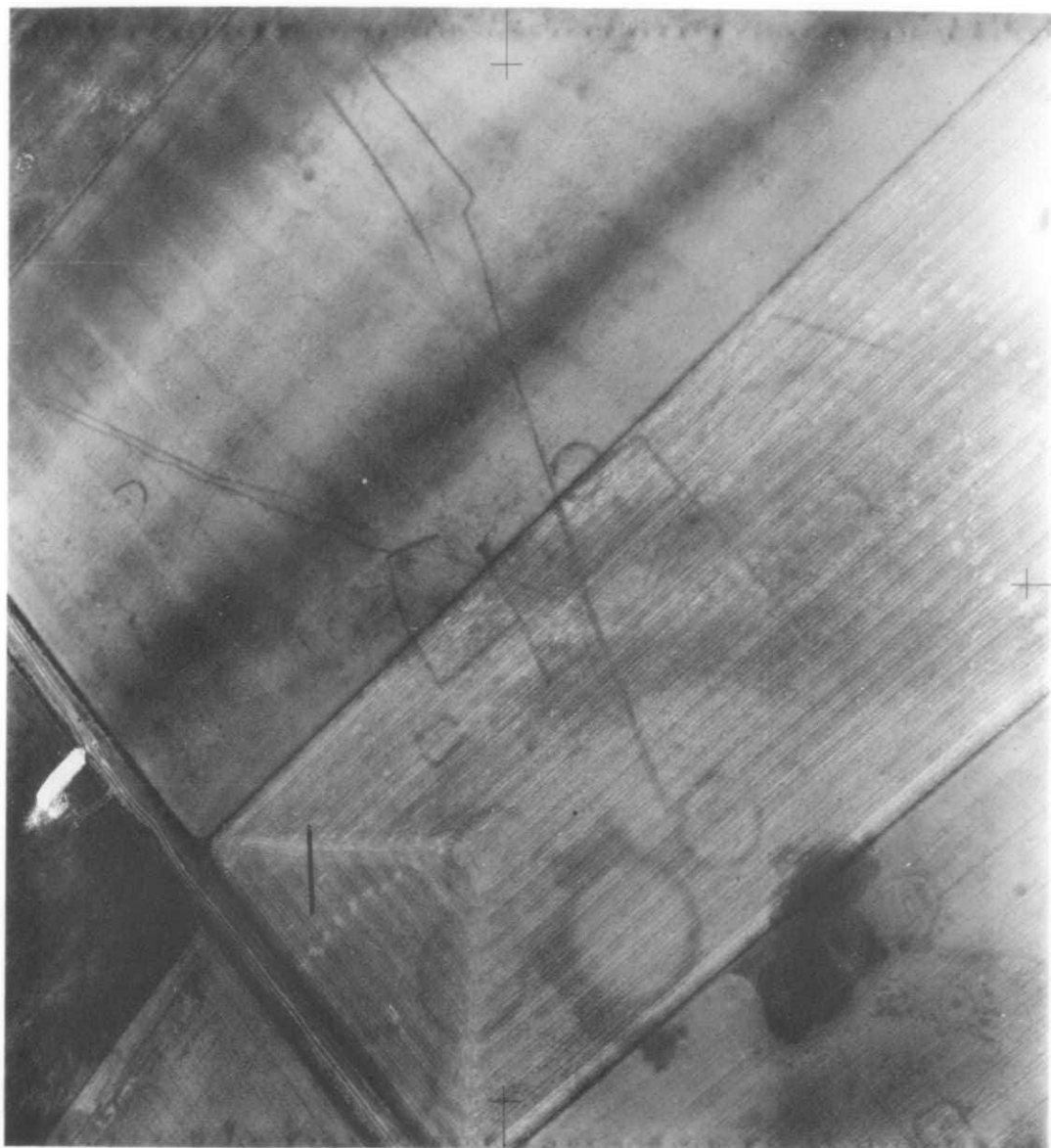
this gap is a genuine one. The track may have crossed an area of largely arable fields between two settlements. There are areas of heavier alluvial soil here, less conducive to the production of cropmarks, but also ideal for growing cereals. Recent photographs require more careful analysis before any conclusions can be reached.

Nothing is known about the southern cropmark complex from excavation and it is not intended to analyse it here, except to say that it shows an even more complicated palimpsest of prehistoric and Romano-British settlement traces.

Recent photographs of the area south of Long Wittenham have shown possible rectangular Saxon buildings. No obvious Saxon features are visible in the Northfield Farm area, although some of the pit-like marks may indicate Saxon huts. In the Saxon and medieval periods settlement concentrated at Long Wittenham. Northfield Farm provided the main area of open fields and the strips are partly visible as cropmarks. The latest cropmark feature is the block of enclosures at SU561946 which is the site of Littleton, a hamlet destroyed in 1838. Little is known of this settlement, but the aerial photographs show that it was constructed in the open fields of Long Wittenham, for the ploughed-out strips can be seen running under it.

*The Society is grateful to the Department of the Environment for a grant towards the publication of this paper.*

PLATE I



Air photograph of crop-marks at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham (1961). North-east at top.

*Ph.: W. A. Baker*

PLATE II



A. Excavated length of Ditch 52.



B. Junction of enclosure E and prehistoric ditches C.

*Ph. : M. Gray*