Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Settlement Patterns at North Stoke, Oxfordshire

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SUMMARY

The article considers the contribution of fieldwalking to the study of Iron Age to medieval settlement in the Thames Valley S. of Wallingford. It is argued that the survey of large areas of land provides a basis for documenting aspects of the changing nature and distribution of settlement. Despite the coarseness of the data and uncertainties in its interpretation, it provides a view of settlement patterns which is not yet obtainable from excavated sites or other types of survey such as aerial photography.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on evidence for prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement recovered during an extensive fieldwalking project. The study area was located to examine pre-Iron Age settlement, but the opportunity to examine the evidence for later periods was not overlooked. Summaries of the prehistoric lithic evidence have already appeared,[1] and the prehistoric discussion here is concerned primarily with the Iron Age.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The survey area consists of a 6- by 4-km. block of the Thames valley, 3 km. S. of Wallingford. It is located on the E. side of the valley and runs from the Thames up the chalk scarp of the Chilterns. The geology comprises mainly Lower and Middle Chalk, followed in importance by River-Gravel and a more ancient gravel called 'Older

[1] S. Ford in R. Bradley and R. Holgate, 'The Neolithic Sequence in the Upper Thames Valley', in R. Bradley and J. Gardiner (eds.), *Neolithic Studies; a Review of Some Current Research* (BAR cxxxiii, 1984), 107–134; S. Ford, 'Flint Scatters and Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in South Oxon. and East Berks.', in A. Brown and M. Edmonds (eds.), *Lithic Analysis and later British Prehistory* (BAR clxii, 1987), 101–136.

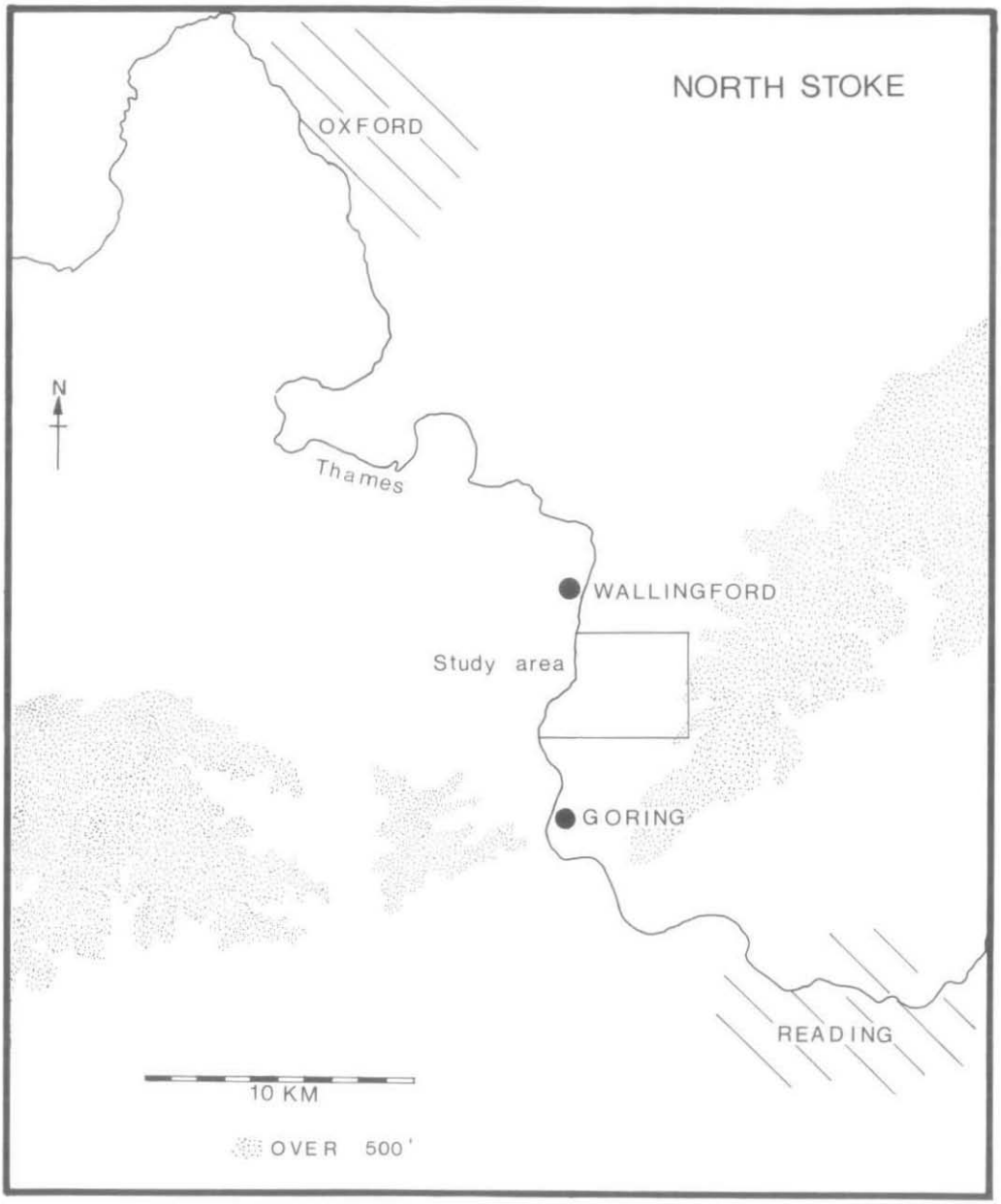

Fig. 1. Location of the North Stoke study area.

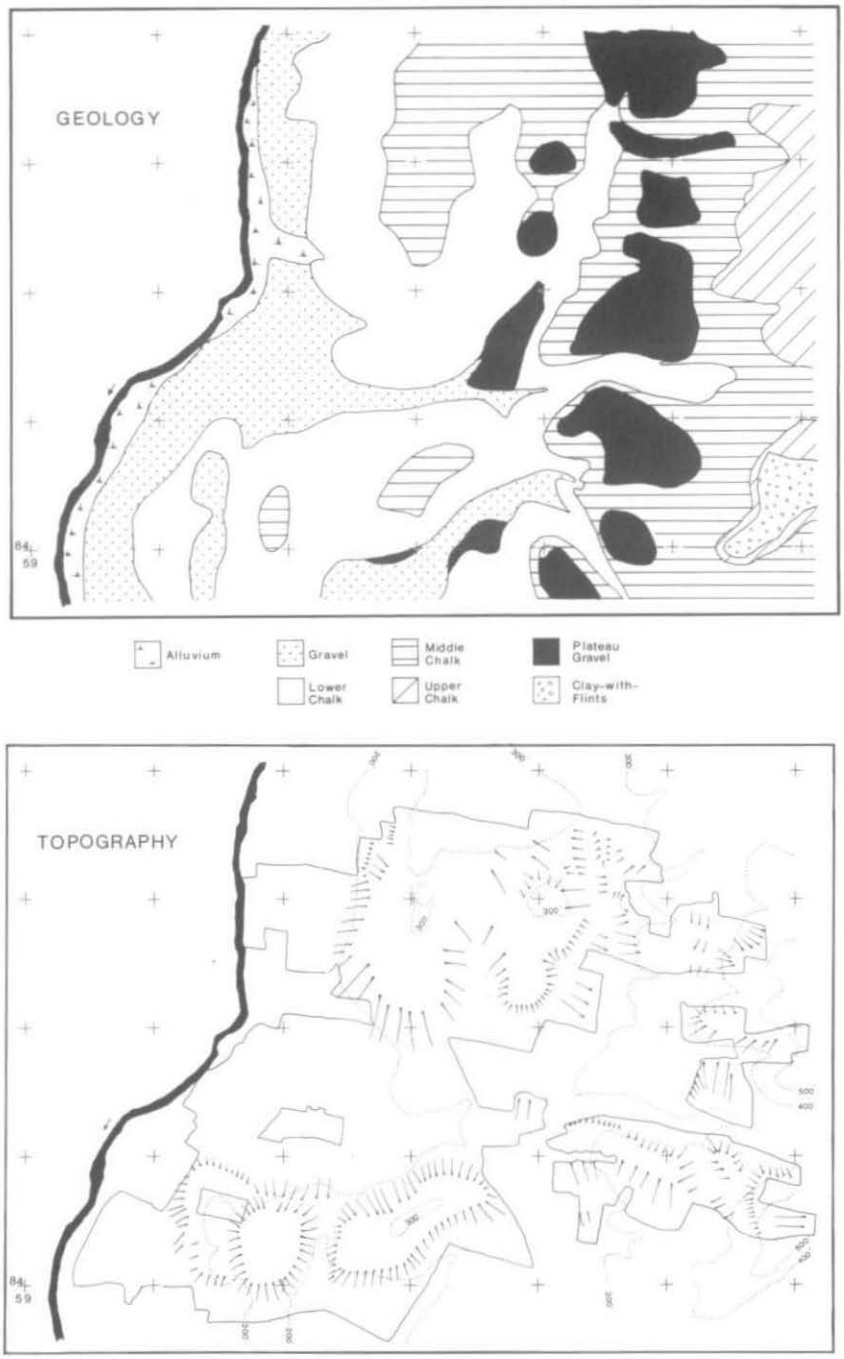

Fig. 2a–b. *a*: Geology of the area. *b*: Topography of the area, showing slopes where colluvial deposits may exist (contours in feet).

Coombe' but more appropriately described as Plateau Gravel (Fig. 2a). The topography is dominated by two major features, namely the Thames itself and two dry valley systems originally draining the Chilterns. The latter have produced a convoluted pattern with a number of hills, ridges and gently undulating downlands. Some of these are defined by markedly steep slopes.

BACKGROUND

Before this survey, Roman finds comprised a possible villa,[2] several coins, two burials on the W. bank of the Thames and a quern of Andernach lava which can now be located on a site. Four enclosed sites are known. One is undated (SU 616835).[3] The site at SU 607854 is likely, from the evidence of fieldwalking, to be relevant to Roman settlement studies and is adjacent to the possible villa.[4] The Devils' Churchyard (PRN 9131, SU 652840) has been shown to be of middle to late Iron-Age date.[5] Limited trial-trenching failed to locate the fourth[6] (SU 619865) suggesting that it is either a very insubstantial site or a relatively recent soil-mark (see below). The South Oxfordshire Grims Ditch[7] was trenched in a road widening scheme; the evidence showed that it post-dated the Middle Iron Age, but is also thought to have been constructed at this time.[8]

Saxon stray finds are much thinner on the ground, being confined to scramasaxes from the Thames and an inhumation cemetery dug into the Iron Age Grims Ditch (PRN 2194).

Apart from the locations of the modern villages of North Stoke, South Stoke and Ipsden, and the pre-inclosure plan of the open fields of South Stoke, most interest for the medieval period lies in the Deserted Medieval Village at Little Stoke.[9] A second D.M.V. is located just to the N. of the survey area, at Mongewell.

FIELDWALKING METHOD

Approximately 90 per cent of arable fields within the study area were fieldwalked, totalling 9.68 km^2. The method consisted of traversing fields along lines spaced 20 m. apart and aligned N.–S. All material was collected at 20 m. intervals along each line so that, theoretically, it could be replaced within a 20×1 m. strip on the ground. Assuming an average visibility of the ground-surface extending 0.5 m. on either side of the line walked, 5 per cent of the surface of each field was examined. Fields were usually walked at some time after the crop had emerged but before crop-growth obscured a significant proportion of the surface. Environmental factors which could have affected recovery of finds such as stoniness of ground, dryness, sunniness, and high crop growth were

[2] J. St. Joseph, 'Aerial Reconnaisance in Britain 1961–64', *Journal of Roman Studies*, lv (1965), 74–89.

[3] D. Benson and D. Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley: an Archaeological Survey of the River-Gravels* (Oxford Archaeol. Unit Survey No. 2, 1974), map 45.

[4] St. Joseph op. cit. note 2.

[5] R. Chambers, 'The Devil's Churchyard: an Iron Age Enclosure at Checkendon, Oxon., 1979–81', *Oxoniensia*, li (1986), 25–30.

[6] Benson and Miles op. cit. note 3, Map 43.

[7] R. Bradley, 'The South Oxfordshire Grims Ditch and its Significance', *Oxoniensia*, xxxiii (1968), 1–13.

[8] J. Hinchcliffe, 'Excavations of Grims Ditch, Mongewell 1975', *Oxoniensia*, xl (1975), 122–135.

[9] M. Mellor, 'The Pottery from Little Stoke, Oxon., in P.D. Catherall, M. Barnett and H. Maclean (eds.), *The Southern Feeder. The Archaeology of a Gas Pipeline* (British Gas Corporation, 1984).

recorded. Also recorded are areas where colluvial deposits certainly or probably exist and may mask underlying archaeological deposits. The areas where colluvium is likely to accumulate (at the bases of slopes) are shown graphically in Fig. 2b so that some account of their effects on the distribution of finds can be made.

3682 sherds of pottery were recovered during widespaced fieldwalking, but rarely did they exceed 4×4 cm. Fourteen per cent are rim or base sherds, with only 5 per cent of diagnostic form or decoration including glazing. Dating has thus been largely dependant on fabric analysis only, and the inaccuracies in dating these small sherds will become evident in the following distribution maps. The proportions of sherds assigned to each period are shown in Table 1. A simplified analysis identified 43 fabrics. The detailed descriptions have been deposited with the finds and site archive in the Ashmolean museum.

TABLE 1: DATES OF POTTERY RECOVERED (NUMBER OF SHERDS)

Prehistoric (general)	669
Early Bronze Age	4
Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age	11
Late Iron Age/Early Roman	332
Roman (general)	1532
Roman (1st–2nd centuries)	2
Roman (2nd–3rd centuries)	28
Roman (3rd–4th centuries)	75
Roman (4th century)	1
Early Saxon	33
Late Saxon	1
Medieval (general)	314
Medieval/Post-Medieval	52
Undated	628
TOTAL	3682

IDENTIFICATION OF SITES

Figs. 3–5 show the distributions of pottery finds per hectare, subdivided by period. From this, clusters of finds were selected as possible sites. For the Roman and medieval periods a pottery density of 10 per hectare (5 per cent sample) was regarded as the minimum value for inclusion, but for prehistoric, Saxon and undated pottery any visual clustering was further examined. The second stage involved the production of pottery distribution maps of potential sites at a scale of 1:2500, the pottery being subdivided by date. This served two functions: first, a more precise location and shape of the pottery scatter could be provided; secondly, potential shifts in the location of a site over time might be reflected in the distribution of well-dated sherds.

From the initial (hectare) method, 16 locations were identified. The detailed plots suggested that four of the clusters (72A, 72D, ST105b and ST105c) are not significant, being merely random fluctuations in the density of finds, or spreads of material adjacent to the large site ST105a. The latter site can, however, be convincingly subdivided into three clusters (ST105subN, ST105subS and ST105subPH). The final stage of analysis involved tabulating the composition of the clusters by date and fabric. Details of the sites are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

PREHISTORIC (Fig. 3a)

684 sherds were assigned a prehistoric date. Four are thought to be earlier Bronze Age on both fabric and decorative attributes. Eleven are certainly of the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, distinguished by distinctive finger decoration on shoulders and rims. 231 sherds were flint-gritted, often thick, soft and with large inclusions. Most but not all are likely to be pre-Iron Age. How many of these, and of the flint/sand fabrics, are Roman or later is unknown. The remainder are more ambiguous. Some are identical in fabric either to vessels from the Middle Iron Age pit (Appendix 1), or to some of the distinctive LBA/EIA sherds from fieldwalking. The others are only thought to be prehistoric on the basis of their thickness and softness.

The sherds are distributed across the landscape, with relatively few on the higher ground and with quite large areas with no finds. This pattern is generally similar to that for the flintwork,[10] but with some local differences. In particular, three clusters (ST72A, ST72D and ST76) are not coincident with higher densities of flintwork.

Six areas of higher density can be seen on Fig. 3a. ST72F is coincident with a Roman site and implies some misdating. ST72D is an isolated area of only six prehistoric sherds and is somewhat dubious; ST56 is coincident with an area of Saxon settlement as well as with a dense scatter of flintwork from several periods. Most of the prehistoric pottery here is undiagnostic but does not appear to pre-date the Iron Age. It could, however, be Saxon.[11] ST76 is a low- to medium-density cluster in an area with relatively little flintwork. The most striking cluster on Fig. 3a is the largest site, ST105.

This site is in part coincident with a large number of pits and a possible enclosure seen on aerial photographs.[12] The finds are spread over some 15–20 ha., more-or-less in the same areas as a large Roman spread but with some subtle variations. Examination of plots of finds at a scale of 1:2500 suggested three denser concentrations of about 1 ha. in extent. Comparison with the Roman patterns shows that two of these denser areas are coincident with the Roman sub-clusters (ST105subN and ST105subS). Given the inaccuracies of dating small sherds from fieldwalking (see undated section), this suggests that some misdating has occurred. One cluster (ST105subph), though, was located away from the Roman clusters and certainly indicates a prehistoric focus. Sherds dated to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period have a distribution restricted to those areas with most Roman pottery. Finds from fieldwalking include a small number of items which are diagnostically Later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. The excavated pit (Appendix 1) was of Middle Iron Age date[13] with some residual Early Iron Age 'haematite'-coated sherds.[14]

Hingley[15] has discussed the high density of Iron Age sites on the gravels of the Upper Thames Valley. Here large unenclosed sites (but incorporating enclosures) are to be found at densities exceeding 1 per km^2. The higher ground of the Cotswolds shows a

[10] Ford op. cit. note 1, Fig. 8.2.

[11] J.G. Hurst, 'The Pottery', in D. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976), 283–348 (at p. 307).

[12] Benson and Miles op. cit. note 3, Map 43.

[13] G. Lambrick pers. comm.

[14] A. Middleton, 'Technological Investigation of the Coating on Some 'Haematite Coated' Pottery from Southern England', *Archaeometry*, xxix (1987), 250–61.

[15] R. Hingley, 'Towards Social Analysis in Archaeology: Celtic Society in the Iron Age of the Upper Thames Valley', in B. Cunliffe and D. Miles (eds.), *Aspects of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (Oxford Committee for Archaeology Monograph 2, 1984), 72–88.

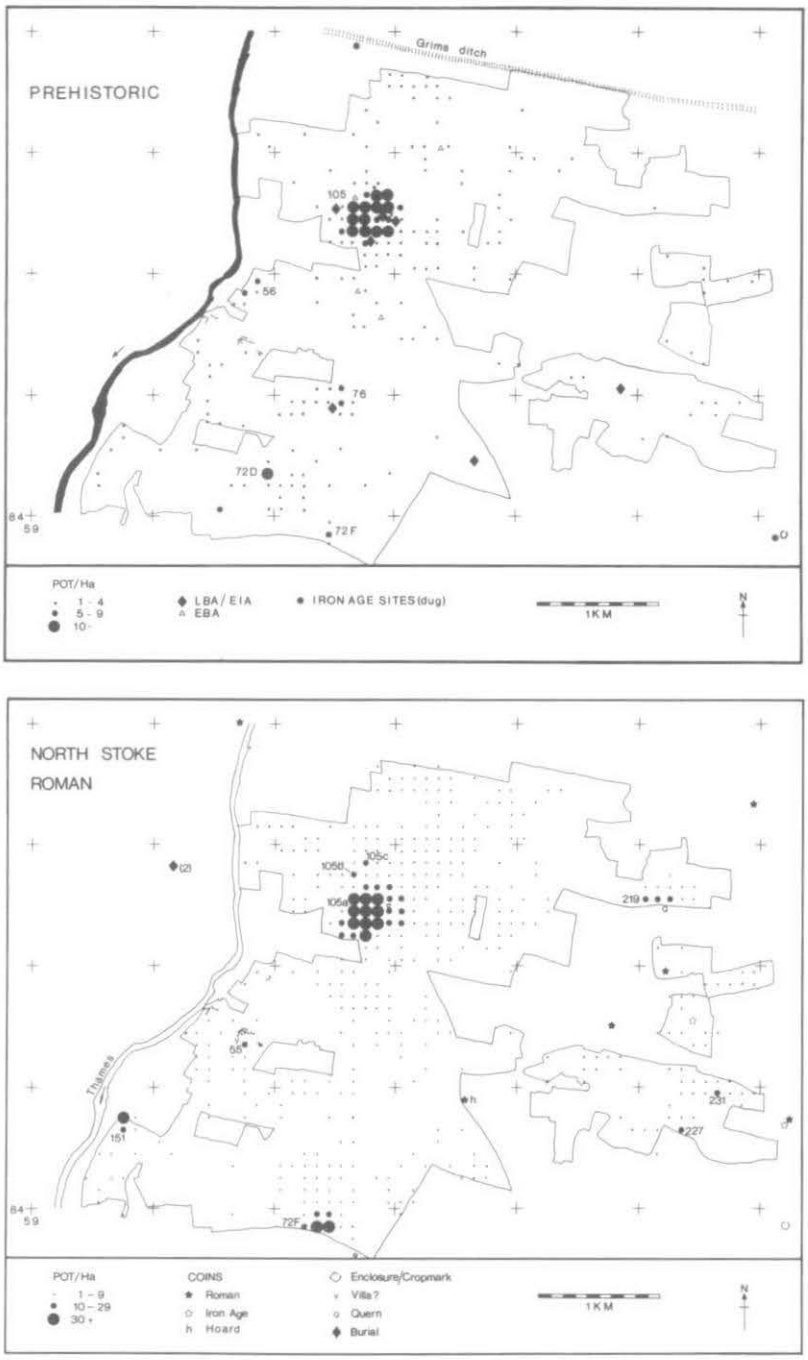

Fig. 3a–b. *a* Prehistoric and *b* Roman pottery, from wide-spaced fieldwalking and S.M.R. information.

lower density and a much greater proportion of enclosed settlement. These differences, it is argued, which indicate important variation in the social organisation of the Iron Age, are also observable in Roman times with the low-lying areas exhibiting much less Romanisation.

The density of settlement at North Stoke is much lower than for the Upper Thames, with only two certain Iron Age sites (ST105, and Devil's Churchyard enclosure). The status of the pit discovered during the trenching of the Grims Ditch is unclear.[16] Although it may be stretching the data too far, there is a hint of a similar division of site types according to topography.

The South Oxfordshire Grims Ditch crosses the northern part of the survey area and is probably a major Iron Age territorial boundary.[17] A smaller linear ditch or hollow-way can be seen on aerial photographs adjacent to the site at ST105. As yet there is still too little information on Iron Age settlement patterns for these data to be incorporated into a wider discussion of the Grims Ditch and Iron Age territoriality.

ROMAN (Fig. 3b)

Nine clusters of Roman pottery were initially identified by the method outlined above. Two were quickly dismissed as peripheral scatters from the high-density site ST105a. Relatively low densities were found on three sites, even though a general cluster of Roman pottery made a visual impact. One of these sites, ST55, produced a further 42 Roman sherds in a random sample and is thus a certain site. The slight doubt about the validity of ST227 and ST231 could be resolved by further fieldwalking.

The area of these scatters, with one exception, is 1–2 ha. with sherd densities ranging from 10–60 per ha. Given the uncertainties of initial widespaced fieldwalking, these differences cannot be regarded as important at present. In the case of ST105a, a site of different character is evident. The area of the site is 20 ha. within a general spread of c. 40 ha. In places the sherd density exceeds 80 per ha., and this site alone accounts for more than a third of the total pottery finds. The detailed plot (Fig. 4) indicates that there are two foci within the site (ST105subN and ST105subS). These are detailed along with the other sites in Table 2.

Table 3 shows the composition of these sites by dated sherds. Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, as a proportion of all Roman pottery combined with undated pottery, varies between *c.* 9 per cent and 25 per cent, with ST105a having only 8.7 per cent. The two sub-clusters of ST105 have 7 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. Later Roman pottery (3rd–4th centuries) is sparsely represented, being absent on two sites and below 5 per cent on the others. The two sub-clusters of ST105 both provide figures of 4 per cent and generally have very similar date compositions. Again the evidence requires cautious interpretation, but it appears that the *floruit* of ST105a was at a later date than for the other sites.

Roman settlement is well represented over the whole of the survey area. It is found in a variety of topographical settings such as on the floor of the Thames valley (ST155, ST55), the floor of a minor dry valley (ST72F), plateau and plateau slopes (ST105, ST223, ST231) and a ridge-top (ST219). Roman pottery generally is to be found in most locations, which (assuming that this material derives from manuring) suggests wide-

[16] Hinchcliffe op. cit. note 8.
[17] Hinchcliffe op. cit. note 8; Bradley op. cit. note 7.

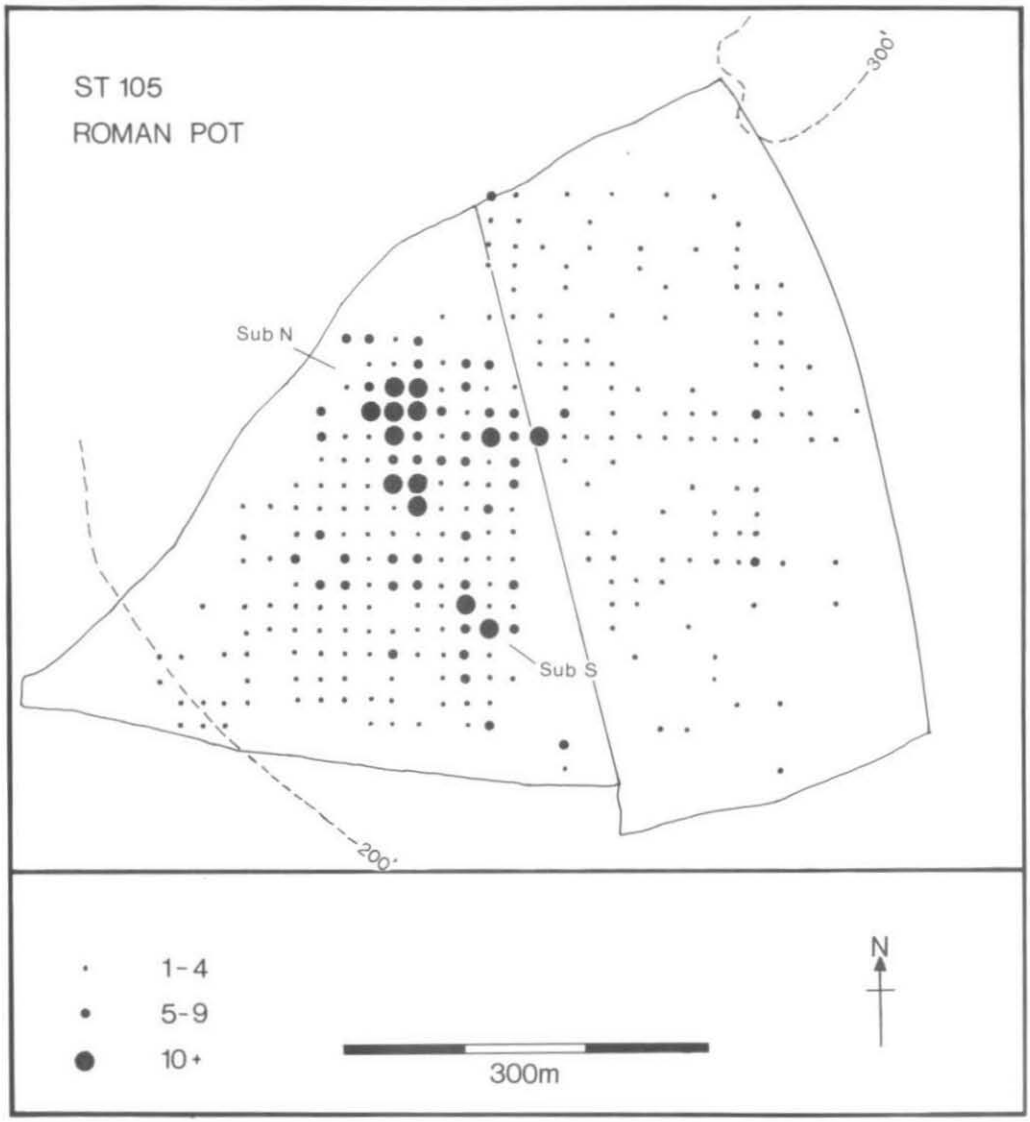

Fig. 4. Detailed plot of pottery distributions on Roman site ST105.

spread arable cultivation. Even parts of the prehistoric cropmark complex[18] were ploughed, if the finds and stratigraphic evidence in two excavated ring-ditches are anything to go by.[19]

Three themes can be addressed generally on the basis of the data presented here: settlement mobility/nucleation; settlement hierarchy; and settlement densities.

[18] Bradley and Holgate op. cit. note 1, Fig. 8.10.

[19] H. Catling, 'A Beaker Culture Burial at North Stoke, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, xxiv (1953), 1–12; S. Ford, 'The excavation of a Ring Ditch at North Stoke, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, xlix (1984), 1–7.

TABLE 2: SITE DETAILS

SITE	DATE	AREA	GEOLOGY	TOPOGRAPHY	COMMENTS
55	Roman	1Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	Coincident with cropmark enclosure. Coin: C1st–2nd. Villa? (St Joseph 1965) PRN 9970
56a	Saxon	2Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	
56b	Saxon	3Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	Possible
58	Saxon	2Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	Possible
61	Med.	1Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	Adjacent to Little Stoke DMV. (Mellor 1985)
72A	Prehist.	1Ha	M. Chalk	Hilltop	Dubious
72D	Prehist.	1Ha	L. Chalk	Hillslope	Dubious
72F	Roman	3Ha	Gravel/L. Chalk	Valley floor	
76	Prehist.	2Ha	L. Chalk	Valley floor	Possible
105a	Roman/ Prehist.	20Ha	Low/Mid Chalk	Plateau slope	Jurassic Limestone present
105subN	Roman	1Ha			
105subS	Roman	1Ha			
105subPH	LBA-MIA	1Ha			
105b	Roman	1Ha	L. Chalk	Plateau slope	Manure scatter adjacent to 105a
105c	Roman	1Ha	L. Chalk	Plateau slope	Manure scatter adjacent to 105a
123	Undated	4Ha	M. Chalk	Plateau	Possible
151	Roman	2Ha	Gravel	Valley floor	
219	Roman	3Ha	Plateau Gravel	Ridge	Quern: Andernach lava. PRN 9158
227	Roman	2Ha	M. Chalk	Plateau slope	
231	Roman	1Ha	M. Chalk	Plateau slope	Coin: Claudius II Gothicus AD268–70

For the seven certain sites a density of 1 every 1.4 km.^{2} occurs (1 every 1.1 km.^{2} for all nine clusters). This compares with the figures of 1 site every 1 km.^{2} in the Upper Thames region.[20] It is higher than the densities in East Berkshire (1 every 2.4 km.^{2}) and East Hampshire (1 every 2 km.^{2}), but lower than parts of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire (1 every 0.5 km.^{2}).[21]

Recent studies[22] have suggested that Roman settlements may have characterised by a high degree of mobility. (This term is used here for the total abandonment of old sites in favour of new locations, not to describe settlement drift.) In Northampshire[23] a large number of Roman sites are known, but not all were occupied throughout the Roman period. Sites beginning in Later Roman times are recorded in Wiltshire.[24] Total-collection fieldwalking at Ashridge Wood (Berks.) only provided material of Late Iron Age to 2nd-century Roman date.[25] To test this idea of mobility at North Stoke, the

[20] D. Miles, 'Confusion in the Countryside. Some Comments from the Upper Thames Region', in D. Miles (ed.) *The Romano-British Countryside.* (B.A.R. ciii(i), 1982), 53–80.

[21] S. Ford, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey* (Berks. County Council Dept. of Highways and Planning Occ. pap. 1, 1987); S. Shennan, *Experiments in the Collection and Analysis of Archaeological Data: The East Hampshire Survey* (1985); RCHM *County of Northampton*, ii (1979); A. Simco, *Survey of Bedfordshire. The Roman Period* (Bedfordshire County Council and R.C.H.M., 1984).

[22] e.g. C. Taylor, *Village and Farmstead* (1983).

[23] *R.C.H.M. Northants.* op. cit. note 21.

[24] B. Cunliffe, 'The Later Roman Period, c. 250–367 AD', *V.C.H. Wiltshire*, i(2) (1973), 453–59.

[25] Ford op. cit. note 21.

TABLE 3: DATE COMPOSITION OF SHERDS ON SITES

SITE	DATE									
	PREHIST. general	LBA/ EIA	LIA/ ROMAN	ROMAN/ C1–C3	ROMAN/ C3–C4	ROMAN general	SAXON	MEDI-EVAL	UN-DATED	TOTAL
55	1	–	2	–	–	9	–	2	3	17
56a	9	–	–	–	–	1	10	2	20	42
56b	8	–	1	–	–	1	7	2	2	21
58	1	–	1	–	–	2	5	3	7	19
61	–	–	1	–	–	2	1	15	2	21
72A	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	14
72D	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	9
72F	20	–	36	–	1	105	–	13	31	209
76	10	–	–	–	–	2	–	3	1	16
105a	370	6	88	28	45	751	2	39	104	1450
105 subN	52	–	11	3	6	128	–	3	7	212
105 subS	23	–	9	4	4	74	–	3	7	124
105 subPH	45	–	–	–	–	5	–	3	3	55
105b	1	–	3	–	3	7	–	3	4	18
105c	1	–	–	–	–	11	–	–	2	14
123	6	–	3	–	–	5	–	10	14	38
151	3	–	8	–	2	36	–	3	8	63
219	1	1	13	–	1	31	–	2	10	59
227	–	–	3	–	–	8	–	–	1	12
231	1	–	2	–	1	10	1	–	6	20

date-range of pottery from each site (Table 3) can be examined. There are, of course, several qualifying factors (low sample sizes, small sherd sizes, etc.) which make caution necessary in accepting the results.

It has been suggested above that all the sites could have commenced in Late Iron Age or early Roman times, but not all sites could be shown to survive into the Late Roman period. The proportion of 3rd- to 4th-century pottery is generally low, and it is absent from the two smallest scatters. This pattern may be partly a result of economic factors. The main diagnostic Later Roman pottery is Oxfordshire colour-coated ware,[26] which may have been too expensive to be used on poor settlements. On the other hand, this pottery has been recorded on sites of lowly status excavated elsewhere.[27] The hypothesis of high mobility requires some sites to commence in Later Roman times, a feature not apparent here. We may tentatively conclude that mobility is not represented in the settlement patterns of this survey area.

Some of the patterns here might be more consistent with the traditional model of late Roman nucleation.[28] The data in Fig. 3b show that there is a hierarchy of sites, ST105 being much greater than the others. An argument could be made for ST105 being initially similar in character to the others, increasing in size and status only at a later

[26] C. Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region* (B.A.R. xxxxiii, 1977).
[27] G. Lambrick pers. comm.
[28] Cunliffe op. cit. note 24, 457; C.J. Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England* (1981), 10.

date. The relatively low proportion of 'early' pottery may result from the swamping effect of much more abundant later material. Against this is the modest quantity of material from the 3rd and 4th centuries.

An alternative interpretation of ST105 is that the large size of the Roman site is due essentially to the continuity of the pattern established in the Early/Middle Iron Age. The influence of Iron Age traditions on the basic structure of Roman settlement patterns, as proposed by Hingley for the Upper Thames region,[29] may be present elsewhere in the Thames Valley.

ANGLO-SAXON

Fig. 5a locates the 34 certain sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery from widespaced fieldwalking, in addition to sherds found during fieldwork on prehistoric sites. With the exception of a sherd of Late Saxon St. Neots ware, the remainder are all grass- (dung-) or grass- and sand-tempered sherds of Early to Middle Saxon date.[30] It is likely that a proportion of the undated pottery is also Saxon, especially where coincident in distribution with the grass-tempered material.

Three features of the distributions are of note. First, it can be seen that the finds are heavily biased towards a low-lying/terrace-edge setting. This cannot be easily dismissed as a result of differential conditions of collection or survival. Pottery of other periods is widely distributed over the study area and it is inconceivable that Saxon pottery, if widely present, would have been consistently overlooked. Differential survival of pottery due to variable agricultural regimes almost certainly influences some aspects of the pattern of finds recovery. But again, such factors cannot fully explain the observed patterns with, for example, prehistoric pottery (a material not noted for its durability) occurring in a variety of topographic and geological settings.

Secondly, the finds recovered form two to three clusters. Despite the small amount of material this suggests the location of actual sites.

Thirdly, it has been suggested that grass-tempered pottery is not as unique to the Saxon period as is usually thought: Iron Age sites in Wessex have produced small quantities of grass- and sand-tempered pottery.[31] However, it is not recorded from the extensively excavated sites in the Upper Thames region and was absent from the area of the extensive Early-Middle Iron Age site (ST105) in this study area.[32] The fact that the grass-tempered pottery here clusters away from sites of other periods suggests that it represents a valid chronological phase.

Tables 2 and 3 provide details of the Saxon sites. ST58 is represented by a very few dispersed sherds, and is interpreted only as a possible site. ST56 has been subdivided into two (56a and b) but could in reality be part of the same complex. ST56a was subsequently 'totally collected', with some 795 Saxon sherds recovered from two clusters within an area of 1.5 ha. The majority of sherds suggest a date relatively early in the Saxon period but with a small amount of Late Saxon St. Neots ware again present.

It is noteworthy that Saxon settlement was only located close to the Thames. Miles

[29] Hingley, op. cit. note 15.
[30] M. Mellor pers. comm.
[31] S. Davies, 'Excavations at Old Down Farm, Andover: Part II: Prehistoric and Roman', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeol. Soc.* xxxvii (1980), 81–164 (at p. 97).
[32] M. Mellor pers. comm.

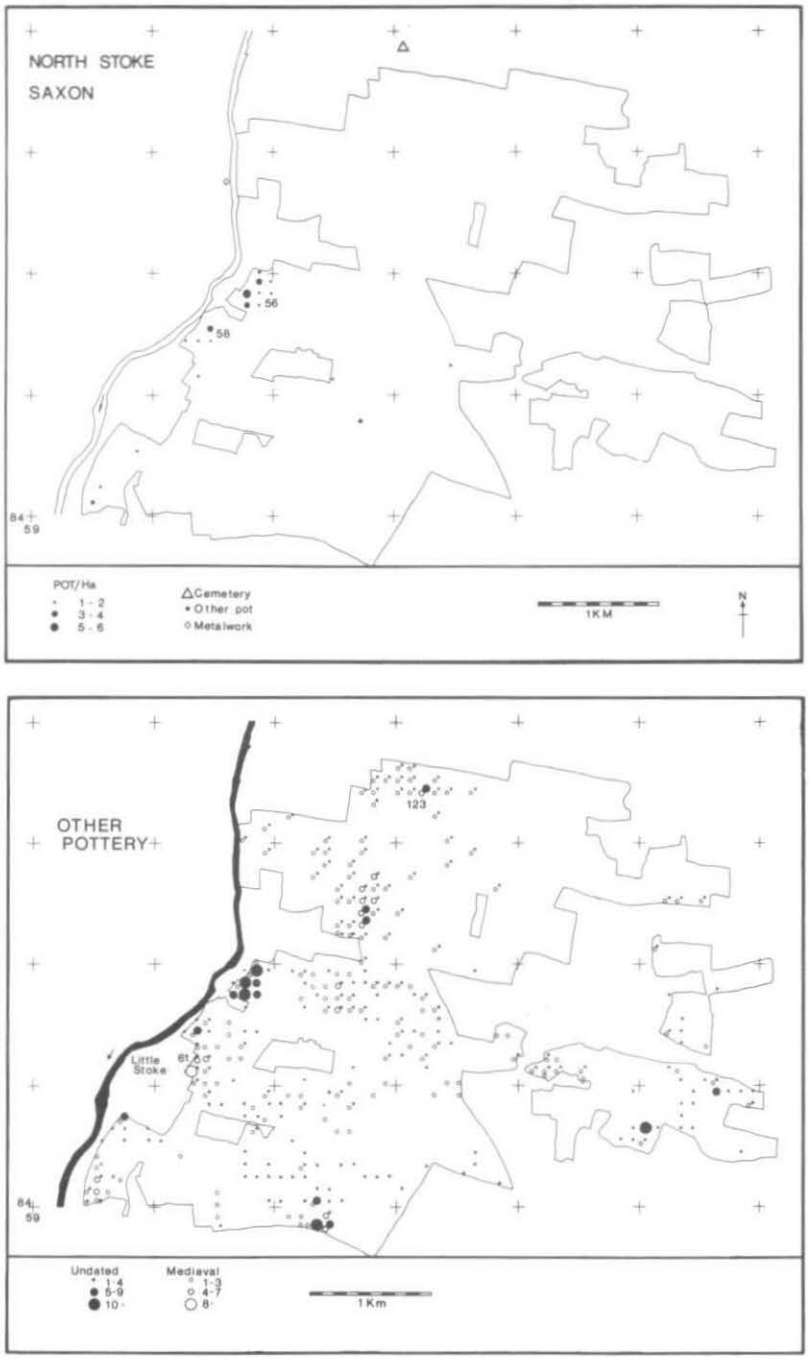

Fig. 5a–b. *a* Anglo-Saxon and *b* medieval and undated pottery, from wide-space fieldwalking and S.M.R. information.

has observed a lack of early Saxon sites along the N. bank of the Thames in this area,[33] but this may merely reflect the usual factors governing the discovery of sites. The lack of large expanses of gravel reduces the susceptibility of sites to discovery by aerial photography, and the level of fieldwork generated as a response to development pressure is low.

There may be historical explanations for the lack of Saxon settlement away from the Thames. It has been suggested that a British enclave in the Chilterns may have prevented Saxon incursions into the area.[34] Myres has proposed that the string of early Saxon sites located along the S. bank of the Thames were the settlements of planted *foederati* along the northern frontier of a Saxon enclave based at Silchester.[35] Hawkes has provided the most recent summary of early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the region.[36] In S.E. Oxfordshire the pattern appears to show settlement restricted to the Thames valley floor and sides, and our evidence does not contradict this view.

The early- and mid-Saxon landscape is now thought to have been characterised by a changing pattern of settlements, which multiplied and disappeared, expanded and contracted.[37] Some believe that early settlement concentrated along rivers.[38] In East Berkshire, for instance, 24 settlements are known, most of them sited near rivers and 14 of them on the river gravels; none is known on the Upper Chalk.[39] However, more recent fieldwork has shown that settlement could also be away from river-valley settings: at Great Doddington (Northants.) fieldwork has located eight small Saxon settlements within the parish boundary, with no obvious preference for the 'good' land.[40] In his consideration of Chalton (Hants.) Cunliffe has cited other examples of hilltop settlements.[41] Arnold and Wardle have suggested a reorganisation of settlement patterns in Middle Saxon times whereby upland sites were abandoned in favour of low-lying ones, more similar to the present-day distribution of village settlement.[42]

It is probably still too early to generalise about the nature and density of Saxon settlement patterns. In an area of roughly 3 k.^{2} around Cassington and Eynsham (Oxon.), a total of eight settlements with six related cemeteries have been recorded,[43] while nine settlements and two cemeteries are known in the parish of Brixworth (Northants.) (? approx. 15 km).[44] In contrast, concentrated fieldwork in an area of East Berkshire failed to locate any new Saxon settlements.[45]

[33] D. Miles, 'Abingdon and Region: Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement Evidence', in T. Rowley (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* (B.A.R. vi, 1974), 36–41 (at p. 40).

[34] Ibid.

[35] J. Myres, *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (1969), 89.

[36] S. Hawkes, 'The Early Saxon Period', in G. Briggs, J. Cook and T. Rowley (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1985), 64–108 and Map 11.

[37] P. Fowler, 'Agriculture and Rural Settlement', in D. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976), 23–48 (at p. 32).

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ford op. cit. note 21, 97.

[40] Taylor op. cit. note 22, 116.

[41] B. Cunliffe, 'Saxon and Medieval Settlement in the Region of Chalton', *Medieval Archaeol.* xxvi (1972), 1–12 (at p. 5); M. Bell, 'Excavations at Bishopstone', *Sussex Archaeol. Colls.* cxv (1981), 1–299.

[42] C.J. Arnold and P. Wardle, 'Early Medieval Settlement Patterns in England', *Medieval Archaeol.* xxv (1981), 145–49.

[43] Hawkes, op. cit. note 36, 102.

[44] Taylor op. cit. note 22, 113.

[45] Ford op. cit. note 21.

MEDIEVAL POTTERY (Fig. 5b)

Predictably, there were many finds from the area close to the D.M.V. at Little Stoke, and moderate amounts from areas close to existing villages.[46] Smaller amounts, and some large tracts without finds, occur on the higher ground. One feature of the distribution again highlights uncertainties in the data, in particular the difficulty in dating much of the pottery: for Roman sites ST105a and ST72F the increased numbers of medieval sherds seems too coincidental and suggests some incorrect dating. Spurious topographical or geological factors may also be influencing recovery in this area.

UNDATED POTTERY (Fig. 5b)

Some 628 sherds of pottery, usually of sandy fabrics, could not be satisfactorily assigned to any one period, although most are unlikely to pre-date the Iron Age. By comparing Fig. 5b with Fig. 5a (Saxon) and Fig. 3b (Roman), it can be seen that a certain proportion is likely to be of Roman or possibly Saxon date. Only a single higher density area on Fig. 5b (ST123) is not coincident with a dated site. Its proximity to the Saxon cemetery (Fig. 5) may be noted; equally, however, it is within an area of prehistoric and medieval pottery and dense flintwork.

CONCLUSION

This paper has considered aspects of early settlement patterns using the evidence gained from extensive and systematic fieldwalking. It is clear that much detailed information obtainable by excavation or aerial photography cannot be obtained by fieldwalking. However, fieldwalking does provide a more thorough indication of settlement distributions than these other approaches.

APPENDIX

During trial-trenching (14×2 m.) to locate the possible enclosure at SU 6189086480, two pits were found, and one of these was excavated. It was circular (diameter 1.2 m.) with a U-shaped profile cut into the chalk bedrock for 80 cm. Its final use appears initially to have been for the burial of organic refuse. The bottom layer (L5), a brown loam and angular chalk lumps with more chalk at the bottom, contained much animal bone. The layer above (L4) consisted predominantly of angular chalk lumps, and was presumably the original upcast used to bury L5. The top fill (L3), a brown loam, contained a substantial quantity of pale-yellow daub together with the best-preserved pottery (Fig. 6, 5); it probably represents midden material dumped in the general area of this pit. All layers contained bone, pottery, charcoal and a few flints, and L4 also contained iron slag. The flints and many of the smaller sherds are probably residual. Only the partly restorable vessels from L3 and the top of L4 can be regarded as *in situ*, though possibly disturbed by rabbits. The bone assemblage, identified by Julie Lovett, produced no surprises, comprising cattle, sheep, pig, horse, dog, frog/toad and (from L3 only) rabbit. General parallels for the pottery can be found in Iron Age (phase 2) contexts at Ashville.[47]

[46] Mellor op. cit. note 9.

[47] M. Parrington, *The Excavation of an Iron Age Settlement, Bronze Age Ring Ditches and Roman Features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon, (Oxon) 1974–76* (C.B.A. Research Report xxviii, 1978).

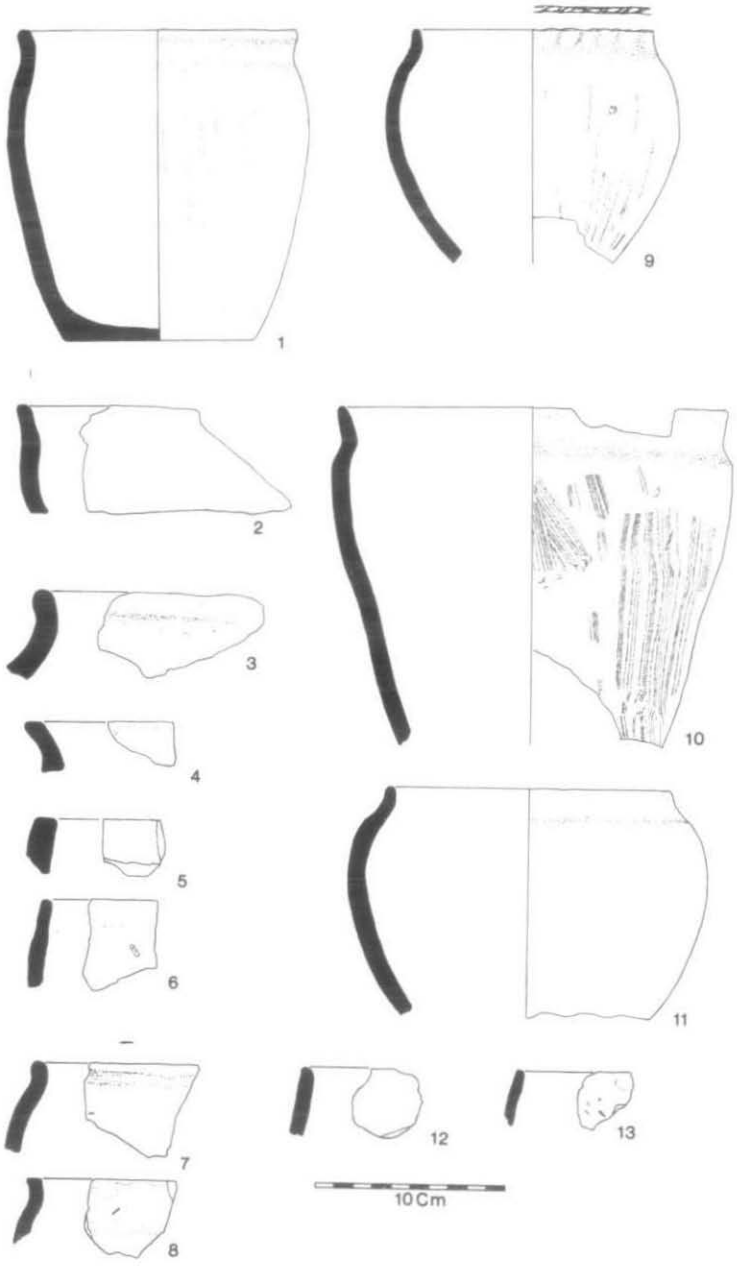

Fig. 6. Middle Iron Age pottery from pit.

The following pottery from this pit is illustrated in Fig. 6:

From L3:

1 (Fig. 6, 1). Almost completely restored jar with weak profile. Approximately 50% from L4. *Fabric*: dense sand with occasional rounded 'flints' and sparse angular flints, both up to 6 mm. Hard. *Colour*: inside: black except near rim; outside: orange/red, some black; core: black. *Surface treatment*: possibly smoothed or grass wiped.

2 (Fig. 6, 10). 25% of large shouldered jar in three non-joining pieces. All from L3. One sherd of possibly same vessel from L4 and similar sherd from L1. *Fabric*: medium sand, sparse flint, occasional voids (grass). Fairly hard. *Colour*: inside: black; outside: orange but black towards rim; core: brown. *Surface treatment*: vertical finger smears; extensively grass-wiped.

3 (Fig. 6, 11). One-third of shouldered jar. Seven joining sherds. All from L3. *Fabric*: Dense fine sand, Sparse voids. Hard. *Colour*: inside: pale orange and black; outside: pale orange and black; core: pale orange and black. *Surface treatment*: burnished on outside extensively and inside rim.

4 (Fig. 6, 2). Rim-sherd of bowl. Two body-sherds and a base-sherd perhaps from the same vessel. *Fabric*: Sparse fine sand, sparse flint, voids (grass). Fairly hard. *Colour*: inside: brown; outside: brown: core: black. *Surface treatment*: burnished exterior.

5 (Fig. 6, 5). Rim with square section. (see also Vessel 22, L4). *Fabric*: dense sand, hard. *Colour*: inside: dark red; outside and core: orange. *Surface treatment*: burnished on both surfaces.

6 (Fig. 6, 4). Rim-sherd. *Fabric*: dense sand, occasional rounded 'flint' and angular flint up to 4 mm. Hard. *Colour*: brown throughout.

From L4:

7 (Fig. 6, 9). One-third of small bowl, and eight non-joining sherds. Two sherds are from L5. Quantities of carbonised residues on interior surface. *Fabric*: dense fine sand, occasional voids. Hard. *Colour*: inside: black but pale orange near rim; outside: pale orange; core: black. *Surface treatment and decoration*: vertically grass-wiped. Finger-impressions on top of rim.

8 (Fig. 6, 6). Rim-sherd. *Fabric*: sparse fine sand, occasional voids. Hard. *Colour*: black throughout. Black slipped and burnished exterior.

9 (Fig. 6, 7). Rim-sherd. *Fabric*: dense fine sand (Greensand). Hard. *Colour*: black throughout except for orange band beneath outer surface. Slipped and burnished.

10 (Fig. 6, 8). Rim-sherd. *Fabric*: Fine sand, sparse chalk. Hard. *Colour*: inside and core: black; outside: dark orange. *Surface treatment*: slipped and burnished.

11 (Fig. 6, 12). Rim-sherd. *Fabric*: Fine sand, occasional voids (grass). Fairly hard. *Colour*: brown throughout.

From L5:

12 (Fig. 6, 3). Rim-sherd, perhaps from vessel 20. *Fabric*: fine sparse sand, occasional voids (grass). Fairly hard. *Colour*: inside and core: black; outside: orange.