

An Iron Age and Early Romano-British Site at Hatford Quarry, Sandy Lane, Hatford

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SUMMARY

An area of one hectare was excavated at the western margin of a known prehistoric and Romano-British settlement complex. A few flints suggested intermittent activity perhaps from as early as the Mesolithic period, but the earliest features, including a possible ring gully and a small enclosure, were probably of later middle Iron Age date. These features were succeeded in the late Iron Age by a rectilinear field system, which was itself of two phases. Groups of pits, postholes and an infant burial were associated with the field boundaries, but there was no clear evidence of structures. Modest quantities of finds indicate that these features were related to a low status settlement concerned with the practice of mixed agriculture, occupation of which had probably ceased by the end of the 1st century AD.

Between March and May 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological excavation at Hatford Quarry, Sandy Lane, Hatford, Oxfordshire (SU 3285 9565) to mitigate the latest phase of mineral extraction. Since an evaluation carried out by Tempus Reparatum in 1990 had revealed localised evidence for Iron Age activity in the form of ditches and a pit in this area, this work was commissioned by Hatford Quarry Ltd at the request of Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council, in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16).

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies c. 4 km. east of Faringdon, on the south side of Sandy Lane, north-west of the village of Hatford (Fig. 1). It is situated at c. 100 m. O.D. on the south-facing slope of the valley of the Frogmore Brook, a tributary of the River Ock, descending from the Corallian Ridge, with a clear view across the valley to the Ridgeway and Berkshire Downs. The natural geology consists of sand deposits of the Corallian Beds overlain by limestone.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in an area of known archaeological importance, principally for the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Quarrying to the east of the site on both sides of Sandy Lane over a considerable period of time has revealed evidence for extensive settlement of these periods, which is, however, poorly known because of limited recording.¹ Fieldwalking to the south has suggested that a Roman villa may have been located on the opposite side of the Frogmore Brook roughly 600 m. south-west of the present site.²

¹ R. Hingley, 'An Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement on Hatford Down, Hatford (Oxfordshire)' (unpubl. MS. 1980); see also Bourn, op. cit. note 3, 66.

² D. Miles, 'Confusion in the Countryside: Some Comments from the Upper Thames Region', in D. Miles (ed.), *The Romano-British Countryside: Studies in Rural Economy* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser. 103, 1982), 63.

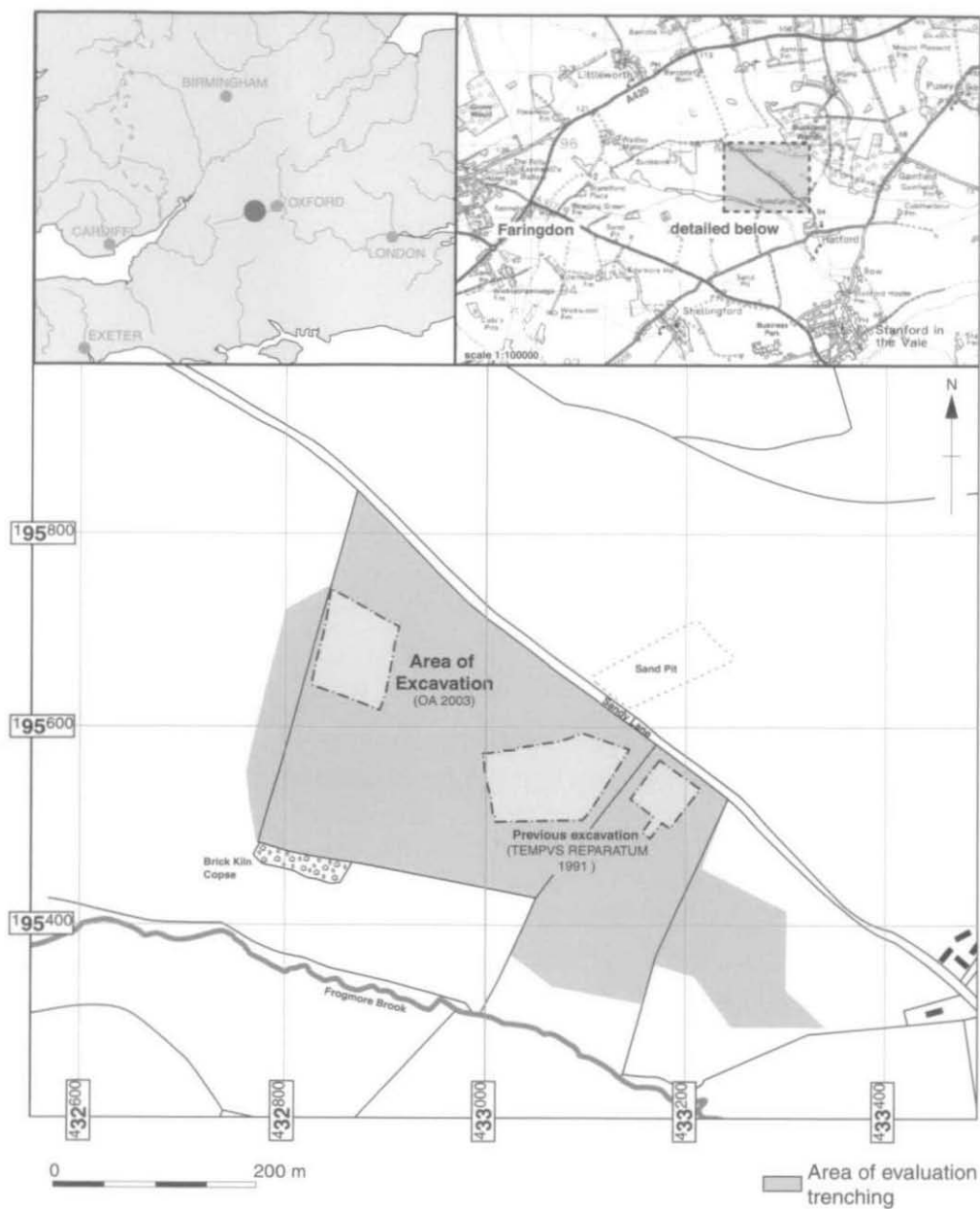


Fig. 1. Site location.

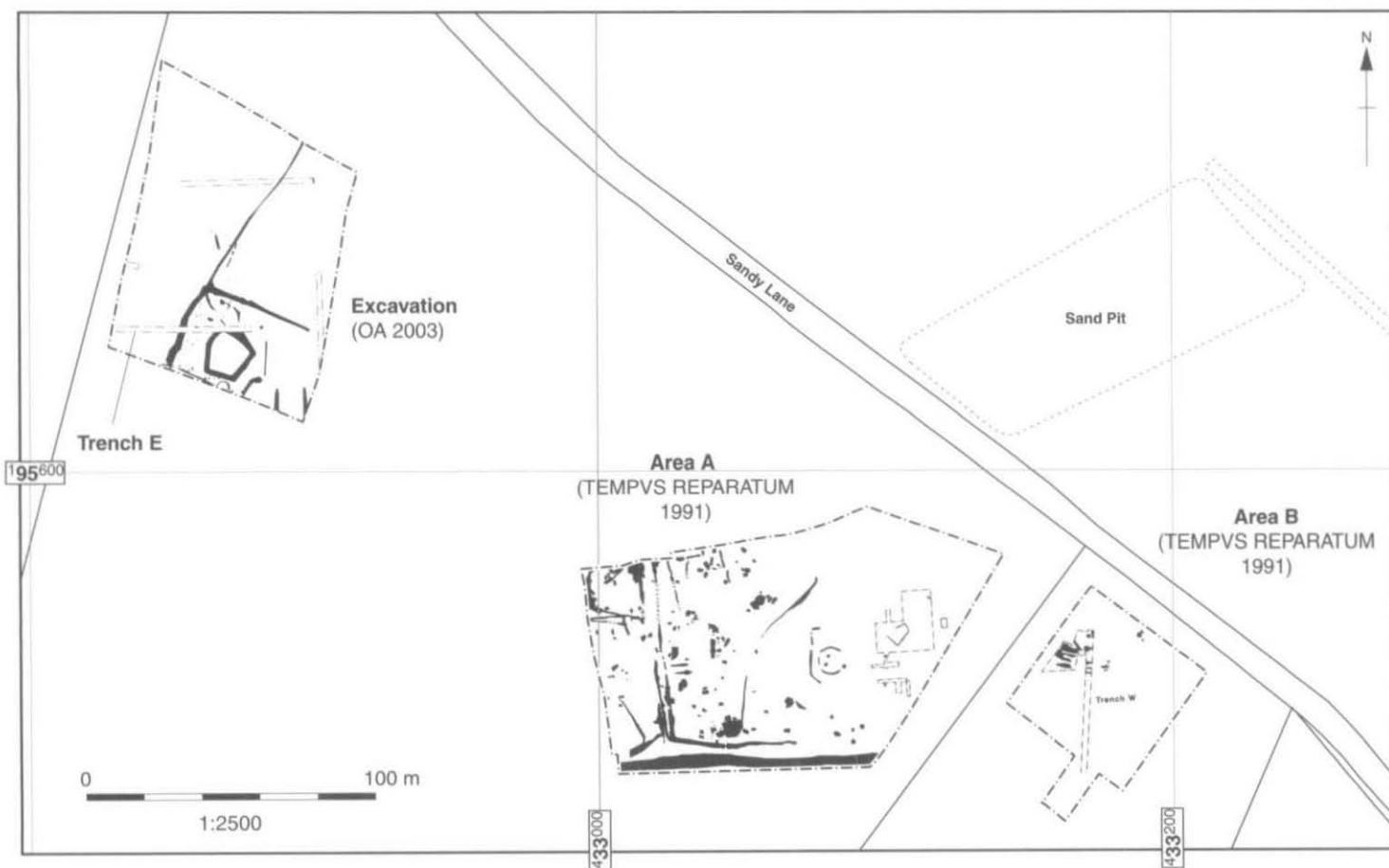


Fig. 2. General plan of excavated areas. OA and Tempus Reparatum sites.

In 1989 and 1990 Tempus Reparatum carried out a field evaluation of a proposed extension to the existing area of sand extraction, consisting of a total of 51 trenches.³ Two areas of archaeological remains were identified, one of which, roughly 200 m. to the south-east of the present site (Fig. 2, Areas A and B) was excavated by Tempus Reparatum in 1991. This excavation uncovered part of a middle Iron Age settlement including a roundhouse associated with pits, ditches and a cobbled surface, overlain by part of a Romano-British field system and trackway.⁴

The other area centred on evaluation Trench E (Fig. 3), which contained a 3 m.-wide ditch, a curving or penannular ditch and a pit, all dating to the late Iron Age. It was this area which was the focus of the OA excavations which are the subject of this report.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

During the fieldwork an area of c. 100 m. x 100 m. was excavated, in the area of evaluation Trench E. The overburden, comprising 0.25 m. of modern ploughsoil, was removed using a mechanical excavator to expose the natural sand and limestone into which the archaeological features were cut. A plan of the site was drawn and all archaeological features were excavated by hand and recorded in accordance with standard OA practice.⁵

THE EXCAVATED SEQUENCE

General

The natural geology consisted of compacted sand (103) to the south, overlain across the northern part of the site by a hard, brashy limestone (102). The archaeological features were generally filled by very similar reddish brown sandy silts making the definition of stratigraphic relationships difficult.

Phase 1: features pre-dating the field system (Figs. 4–7)

A number of undated features, including Ring Gully 434, Ditch 435 and some pits which are all stratigraphically earlier than the 1st-century field system, indicate the presence of a phase of occupation preceding the field system. A roughly trapezoidal ditched enclosure (209) seems also to pre-date the field system, although whether it was contemporary with the other phase 1 features is unclear.

Ring-gully 434, ditch 435 and pits 152 and 184 (Figs. 4–5). Ring-gully 434 was circular in plan and c. 10 m. in diameter (Fig. 4). The gully was up to 0.5 m. wide with a maximum surviving depth of 0.25 m (Fig. 5, Sections 64, 73 and 76, Cut 328). It was incomplete due to truncation from ploughing, as a result of which most of the north-east and south-east quadrants were missing. It had an east-facing entrance of an unusual form, the gully turning inward to form an inverted 'porch'. Only the south side of this entrance survived intact, although a short stretch of gully (211) recorded in section and partially truncated by Boundary Ditch 431 may have represented the remains of the north side. If this is so, then the entrance was 3.0 m. wide with an in-turned porch or entrance passage 1.5 m. long. Four postholes were identified which could have formed part of the entrance to the structure. Posthole 309 was located less than a metre from the terminus of the southern side of the entrance while postholes 209, 259 and 261 were all located at the threshold and may have held posts supporting the entrance structure. Despite the absence of internal features the gully is interpreted as having been the drainage gully surrounding a roundhouse, the internal supports of which have been completely removed by plough action. It contained no artefacts and so remains undated, although it is stratigraphically earlier than ditches belonging to the late Iron Age/early Romano-British field system, and was noted as being filled by a lighter, more orangey material than features of that phase.

³ Tempus Reparatum, 'Archaeological Assessment: Manorhouse Farm, Hatford, Oxfordshire' (unpubl. client reports for Sands and Gravels (Standlake) Ltd., 1989 and 1990); R. Bourn, 'Manorhouse Farm, Hatford, Oxfordshire: An Iron Age and Early Romano-British Settlement', in R.J. Zeepvat (ed.), *Three Iron Age and Romano-British Rural Settlements on English Gravels* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser. 312, 2000), 6.

⁴ Bourn, op. cit. (note 3), 1–70.

⁵ D. Wilkinson (ed.), 'OAU Fieldwork Manual' (OA unpubl. MS., 1992).

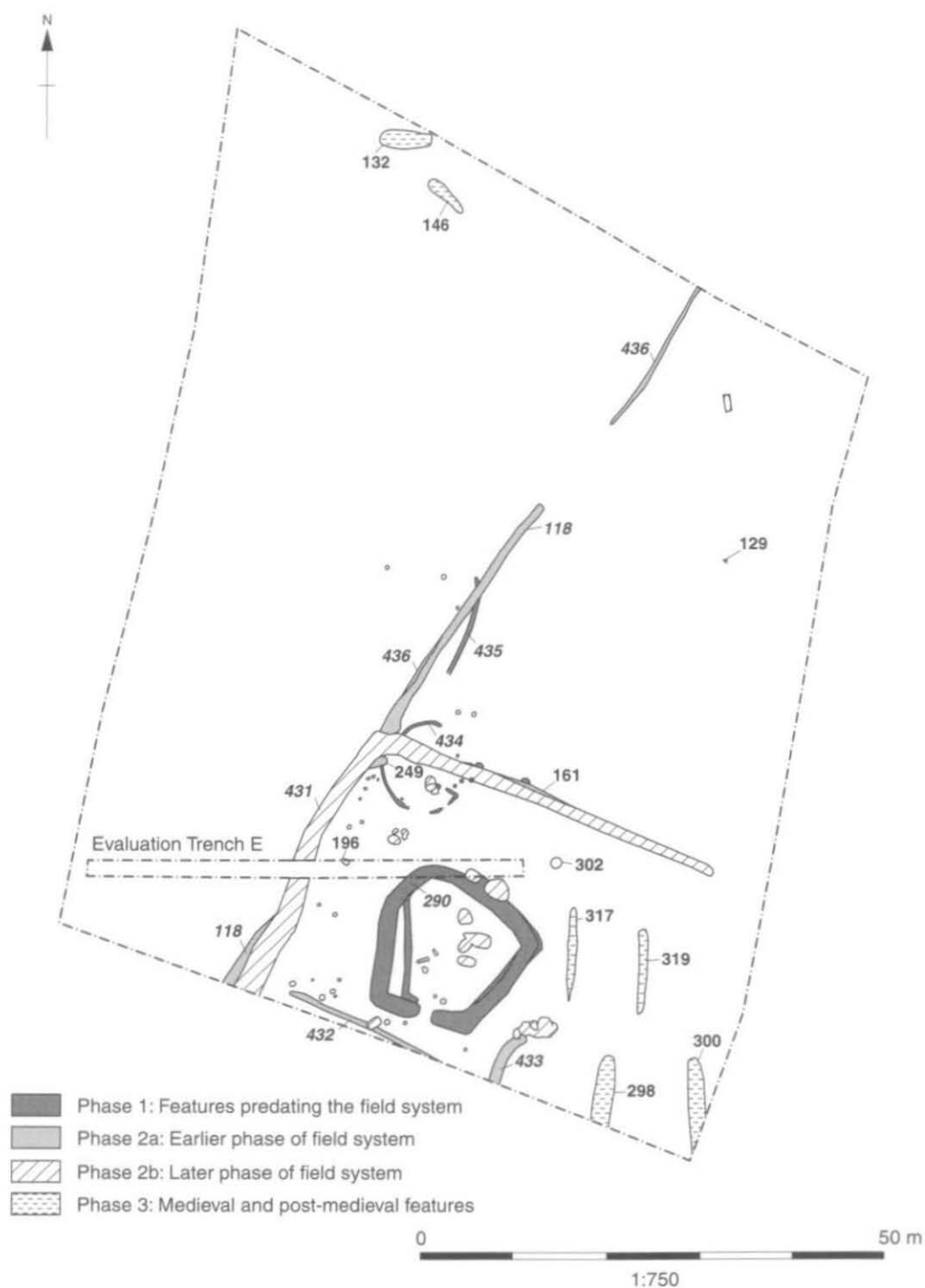


Fig. 3. Overall plan of all features.

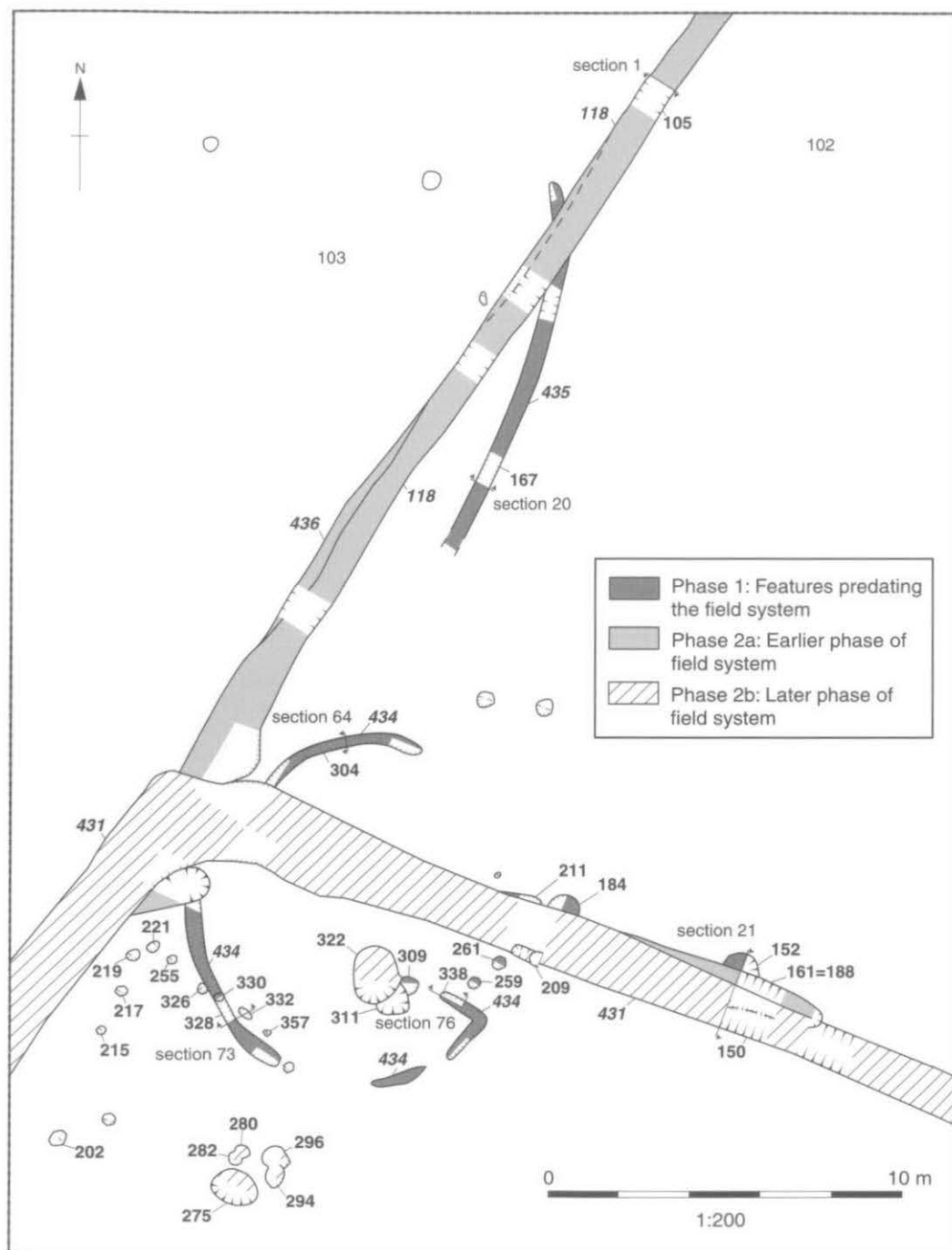
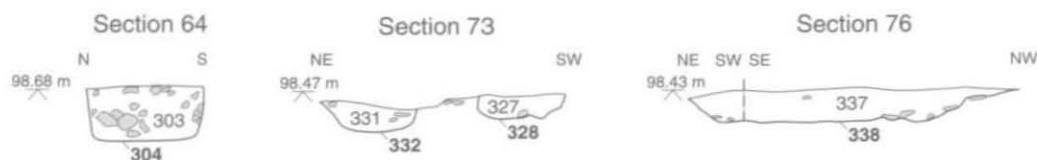


Fig. 4. Detailed plan of phase 1 and other features in the central area of the site.

Sections through ring-gully 434



Sections through ditch 435



Fig. 5. Sections of phase 1 features.

A curving ditch (435) was located 5 m. to the north of the ring gully (Fig. 4). Like the ring gully it had suffered from the effects of ploughing, surviving only to a depth of 0.12 m. (Fig. 5, Section 20). A total length of 11 m. survived but neither of the extant ends was an original terminus. The ditch contained no dating evidence, but was cut by 1st-century field Boundary Ditch 118. Its fill more closely resembled that of Ring Gully 434 than those of later features, and this combined with the stratigraphic evidence indicates that these features formed part of an earlier phase of occupation.

Two pits (152 and 184) located to the east of Ring Gully 434 and cut by the ditches of the later field system may also have belonged to the same phase of activity as the Ring Gully and Ditch 435 (Fig. 4). Pit 184 was situated immediately to the east of the north side of the entrance through the ring gully. It was circular in plan, and had been cut on its south side by Field Boundary Ditch 431. It measured 0.95 m. in diameter and was 0.22 m. deep with vertical sides and a flat base. Its only fill, 183, yielded small abraded sherds of middle Iron Age pottery which, if not residual, may provide the only evidence for the date of this phase. Pit 152 was located 4.5 m. further east, and as with Pit 184 its south side had been cut away by a later field boundary ditch. It was circular with a diameter of 1.1 m. and had an irregular profile. This feature contained no dating evidence but pre-dated the field system stratigraphically and so is likely to belong to the same phase of activity as the other features in a similar stratigraphic position.

Enclosure 290 (Figs. 6-7). The curving ditch recorded during the evaluation was revealed by the excavation to be part of a small irregularly shaped ditched enclosure (290; Fig. 6). Due to the absence of dating evidence it is uncertain whether this enclosure was contemporary with Ring Gully 434 and Ditch 435 or belonged to a separate phase of activity. The latest of its ditches, however, seems to have been almost completely filled before phase 2 began.

Two phases of this enclosure were identified, the earlier of which was substantially truncated by the later recutting. This truncation was particularly acute on the east and north sides, the latter of which had been completely removed. The first phase of the enclosure would have been *c.* 15 m. long and roughly trapezoidal in shape, with a width of 8.5 m. at the south end and 16 m. at the north end. There was an entrance at least 2 m. wide through the narrower south end, the eastern terminus of which was completely cut away by the digging of the later phase of the enclosure ditch. The enclosure ditch was 0.7-0.8 m. wide and varied in depth from 0.2 m. on the west side to 0.55 m. on the east. It contained two fills of gravelly silt which contained no artefacts (Fig. 7, Section 58, Cut 292).

In its later phase the enclosure was recut in a more irregular shape. On the north, east and south sides it followed the alignment of the earlier enclosure with greater or lesser exactness, but on the west side took a new, wider line to create a roughly sub-rectangular enclosure with a crooked west side. The enclosure was now roughly 17 m. square with an entrance 1 m. wide which retained the south-facing position of the earlier entrance. The new ditch was steep-sided with a flat base, and was 1.9 m. wide and 0.55-0.8 m. deep. It contained a sequence of four fills indicative of natural infilling (Fig. 7, Sections 93, 59, 77, Cut 343, and

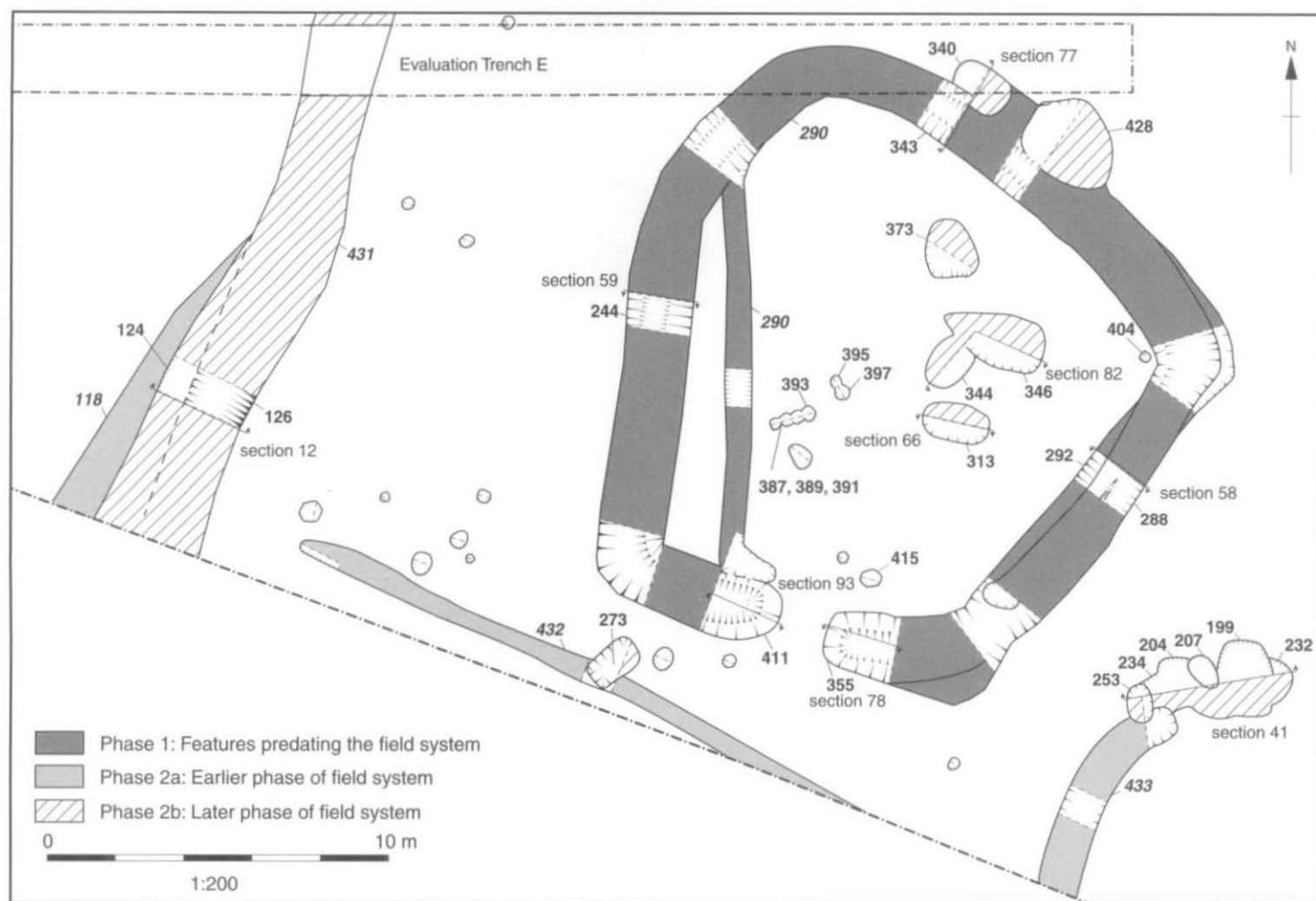


Fig. 6. Detailed plan of Enclosure 290 and later pits.

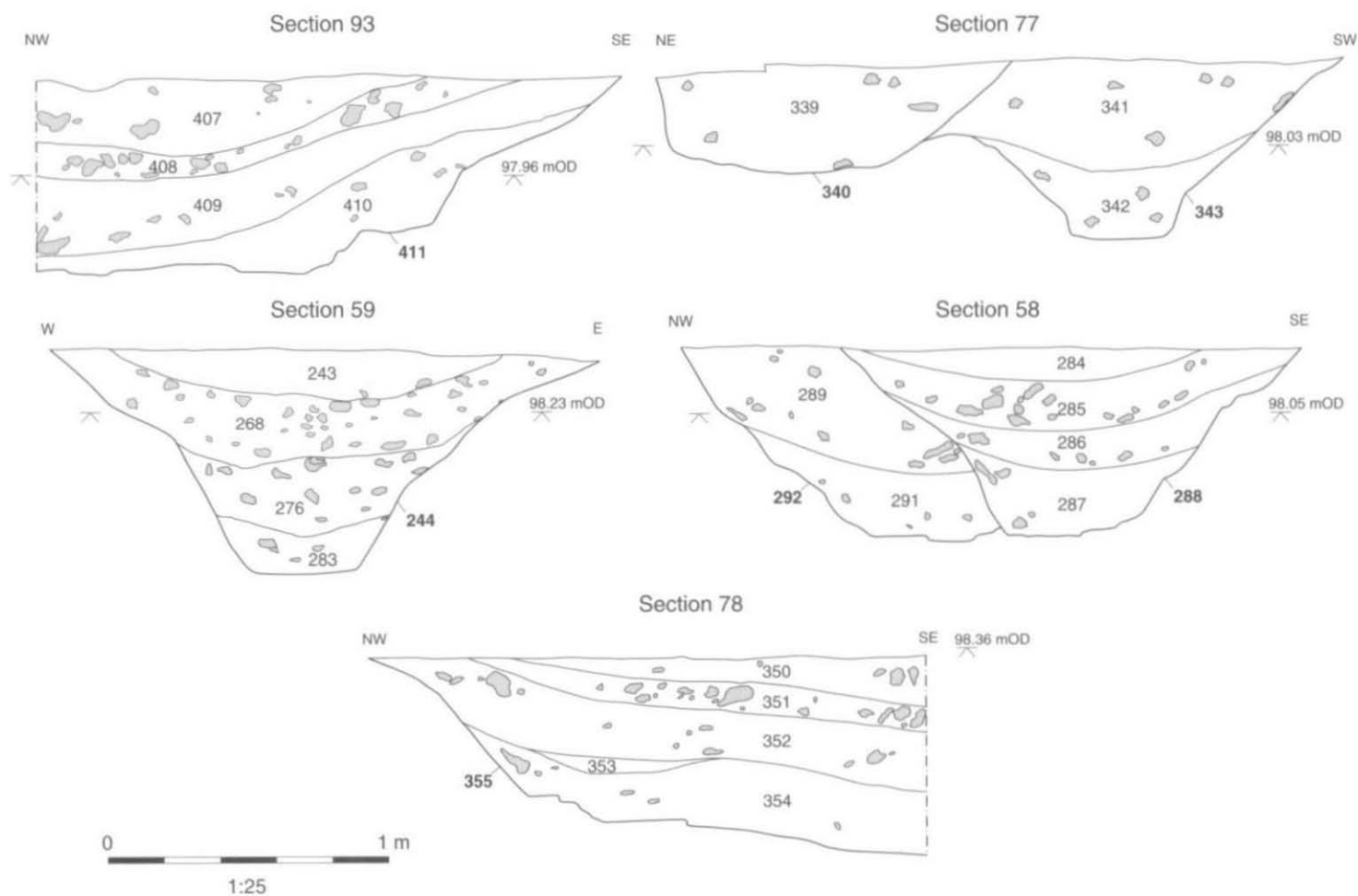


Fig. 7. Sections of phase 1 Enclosure 290.

Section 58, Cut 288). The primary fill was of redeposited natural sediment eroded from the ditch sides. Above this were two secondary fills, the upper of which was consistently the stonier. These were in turn overlain by a deposit of mottled brown and grey silt interpreted as a layer of topsoil which had formed in the hollow in the top of the largely silted ditch. The only exceptions to this sequence were at the east terminus where a charcoal lens (353, Fig 7, Section 78) overlay the primary fill, and at the south-west corner where a deposit of green clay (419) lay in a similar position. On the north side of the enclosure the upper fills were absent presumably due to truncation from ploughing. The lower fills were devoid of artefacts, but the upper layer contained substantial quantities of domestic refuse in the form of pottery sherds, burnt stone and butchered bone. The ceramic evidence from this uppermost fill indicates that the final silting up of the feature occurred during the 1st century AD.

A number of postholes and small pits were located within the enclosure, none of which yielded any datable material. In some cases, such as postholes 387, 389, 391 and 393, and 395 and 397, these features intercut as if representing a series of posts placed consecutively in approximately the same position (Fig. 6). However, no clear structures were apparent. The only feature within the enclosure for which a possible function can be suggested is Posthole 404, located in the angle of the north-east corner of the enclosure, which may have held a post marking this corner when the enclosure was initially being laid out.

Phase 2: late Iron Age/Romano-British field system and associated features (Figs. 3, 8 and 9)

During the 1st century AD a rectilinear field system was established on the site, cutting through the earlier Ditch 435 and Ring Gully 434. The field system was based on a discontinuous ditch aligned north-south with returns branching off it on the east side to define rectangular field enclosures.

Phase 2a – earlier phase of field system. In its earliest form the roughly north-south boundary was formed by a shallow V-shaped gully (436) up to 0.46 m. wide with a maximum surviving depth of 0.3 m (Fig. 3). This feature survived only intermittently across the site due to truncation by ploughing and by Ditch 118, which subsequently replaced it on the same alignment. It is, however, probable that it originally extended across the entire length of the excavated area.

The boundary marked by Gully 436 was later redefined by the digging of a more substantial ditch (118) on the same alignment (Fig. 3). Ditch 118 was up to 1.4 m. wide and 0.45 m. deep with steep sides and a flat base (Figs. 4 and 8, Section 1). It was traced (discontinuously) for a distance of some 67 m., terminating at its north end 33 m. from the northern edge of the excavated area (Fig. 3). A short length of ditch with a terminus (249) projected at an angle from the east side of Ditch 118, probably indicating that an entrance through Ditch 118 existed at this point, the opposing terminus of which had been truncated by later Ditch 431.

Further east was another stretch of ditch (161=188), aligned east-west, largely cut away by later Ditch 431, but similar in profile and dimensions to Ditch 118 (Figs. 4 and 8, Section 21, Cut 161). This probably represents the remains of a feature perpendicular to the line of Ditch 118 and intended to subdivide the area to its east. It extended c. 19 m. eastward from Ditch 118 before terminating.

Ditch 432 may have been a further contemporary subdivision (Fig. 6). It was aligned east-west perpendicular to Ditch 118 and lay some 33 m. south of 161=188 at the southern margin of the site. This ditch is likely to have belonged to the earlier phase of the field system rather than to the later phase represented by Ditch 431 (see below) as it was cut by Pit 273, the pottery from which suggests that it was contemporary with Ditch 431.

Ditch 433, again at the southern margin of the site, may also have been a part of the field system (Fig. 6). Although only the northernmost 6.5 m. length of this feature lay within the area of the excavation, it appeared to run on an approximately north-south alignment parallel to Ditch 118, before curving slightly eastward at its northern terminus. The ditch had a profile consistent with the other features making up the field system, with fairly steep sides and a flat base, and had similar dimensions, being up to 1.15 m. wide and 0.38 m. deep. It was cut by a later complex of intercut pits (see below, pits 199, 232, 207, 204, 234 and 253), some of which contained 1st-century pottery. For this reason Ditch 433 has been assigned to the earlier phase of the field system.

Phase 2b – later phase of field system. After Ditch 118 had silted up its southern part was recut as Ditch 431 (Fig. 3). This phase of the boundary extended into the area of the excavation for 30 m. on the same alignment as the previous Ditches 436 and 118. It then turned to the east and extended 37 m. in this direction before terminating. Ditch 431 varied in width from 0.9 to 1.9 m. and was up to 0.65 m. deep. The profile of the ditch varied according to the geology into which it was cut, being steep-sided and flat-based where dug into compacted sand (Fig. 8, Section 12, Cut 126) and more V-shaped toward its eastern end where it was dug into the harder, brashy limestone (Fig. 8, Section 21, Cut 150). At the angle where the ditch turned eastward the limestone side of the ditch (228) was found collapsed into its base. Throughout its length the ditch was filled by a stony lower deposit overlain by a more silty upper layer, in a sequence consistent with the feature having been allowed to silt up naturally.

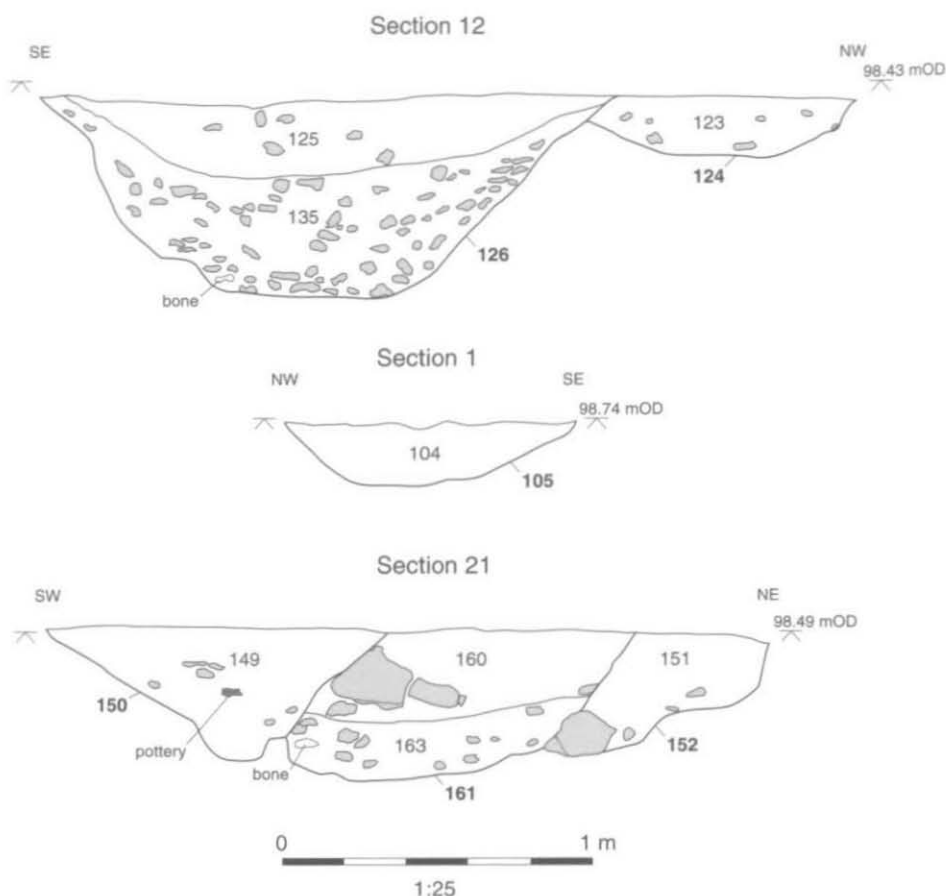


Fig. 8. Sections of phase 2 ditches.

This sequence of ditches probably represents modifications during a single period of use rather than over separate phases of occupation, and the ceramic evidence suggests that they all date from within the period c. AD 10–70.

Postholes associated with field system

Most of the postholes identified in the excavation were scattered along the north side of Ditch 432 (Fig. 6) and the eastern side of Ditch 118/431 (Figs. 3 and 4). Their location suggests that they are the remains of fence-lines running along these boundaries.

The absence of any clearly identifiable alignments or regularity in the spacing of these features is likely to be due to the destruction of former postholes by ploughing. The existing features had clearly been substantially truncated, often surviving to a depth of only a few centimetres. The only exception to this is in the angle formed by the return of Ditch 431, where a series of closely spaced postholes (215, 217, 219, 221, 255, 326, 330, 332 and 357) formed a distinct L-shape, cutting Ring Gully 434 (Fig. 4). This could represent either the corner of a fence-line or part of the north and west sides of a structure which did not otherwise survive.

Infant Burial 203 (Fig. 4)

Infant Burial 203 was located in a small circular grave pit (202) 0.45 m. in diameter within the scatter of postholes along the east side of Ditches 118 and 431 (Fig. 4).

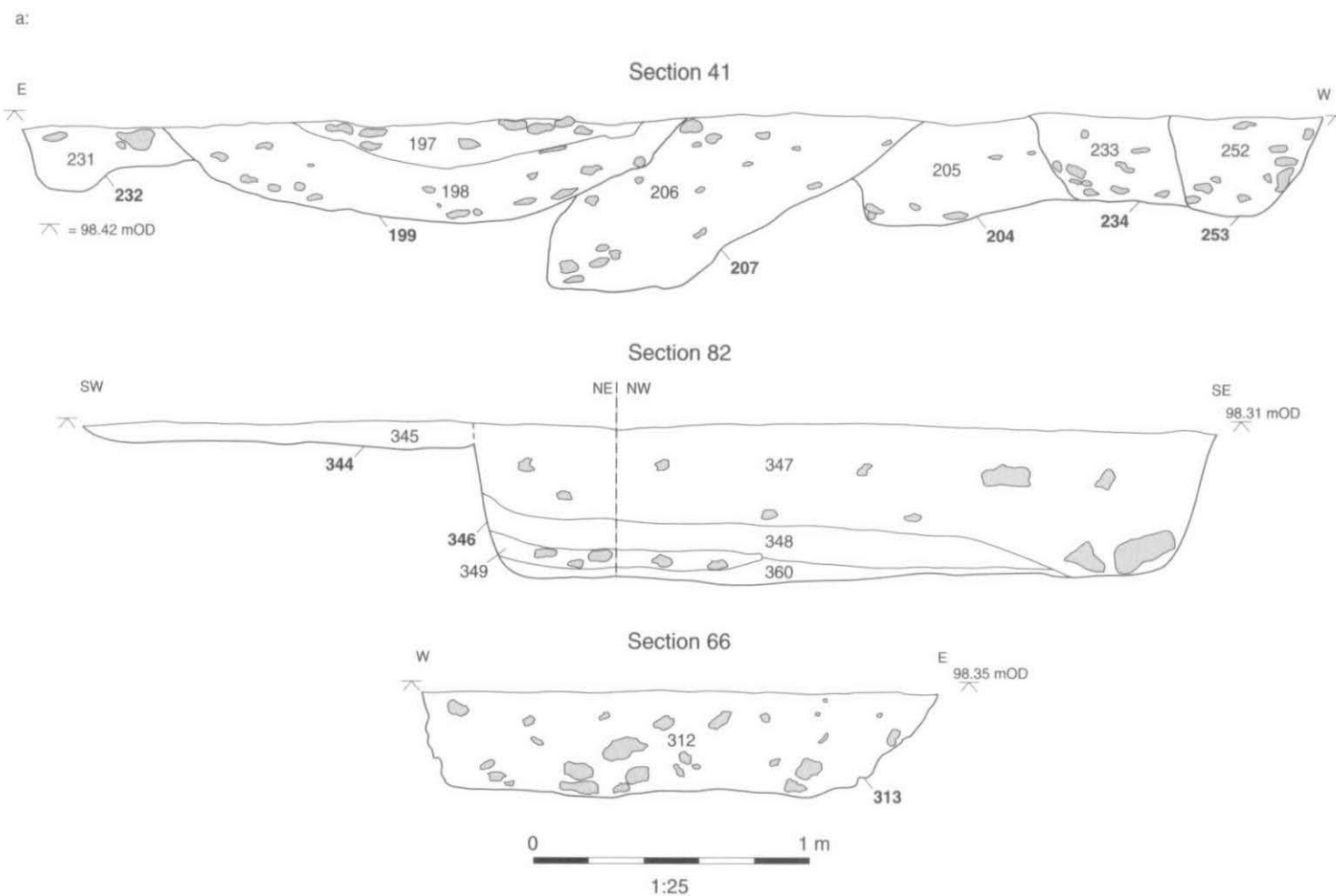


Fig. 9. Sections of phase 2 pits.

The pit had been lined with a thin layer of green clay (200) on which the body of a neonate no more than one month old was lain. The body was slightly disturbed, but appeared to have been buried in an articulated state with the head at the western end. The burial was sealed by backfilling with the spoil from the digging of the pit. As with the postholes in its vicinity, the grave pit had clearly been significantly truncated, its surviving depth being only 50 mm. The burial contained no intrinsically datable material, but its spatial association with the main north-south field boundary is suggestive of a date contemporary with the field system, and a burial of this sort would not be out of place in such a context.

Pits

A number of pits were uncovered in the excavation which, according to the ceramic evidence, were all broadly contemporary with the field boundary ditches. All of these pits are located in the south-east part of the excavation area within the area enclosed by Ditch 431, and, in the cases of Pits 253 and 273, cut elements of the earlier phase of the field system, and so may be associated with the system's later layout. The pits can be grouped spatially into three distinct clusters.

The first complex of six intercutting pits (199, 204, 207, 232, 234 and 253) was located near the south edge of the excavation (Fig. 6). These pits were all oval or sub-rectangular in shape, with steep sides and more or less flat bases (Fig. 9, Section 41). Although there was a certain amount of variety in their dimensions (the largest (199) being 2.2 m. across and the smallest (207) 1.1 m.) they were all of a similar depth, averaging around 0.3 m. Most of the pits contained only a single fill of reddish brown sandy silt, indicating that they were deliberately backfilled. Pits 199, 204 and 207 contained small quantities of pottery dating to the 1st century AD. Pit 199, the largest and possibly the latest in the sequence, contained a dump of burnt stone in its upper fill. At the south end of the pit complex, Pit 253 cut the terminus of Ditch 433, which formed part of the earlier phase of the field system.

A second, loosely spaced group of six pits (313, 340, 344, 346, 373 and 428) lay across the north half of the earlier Enclosure 290, with Pits 340 and 428 cutting the enclosure ditch itself (Fig. 6). Pits 313, 340, 344, and 346 were all oval in shape while Pits 373 and 428 were more sub-circular, the latter being the largest of these features with a diameter of 3.1 m. With the exception of Pit 344, which had a maximum depth of 0.1 m., these pits were all of a similar depth, with a range from 0.36 m. to 0.58 m. Most of the pits were backfilled with a single fill (Fig. 7, Section 77, Cut 340 and Fig. 9, Sections 66 and 82, Cut 344). Pit 346, however, exhibited a slightly different sequence of infilling (Fig. 9, Section 82, Cut 346). In this feature, two layers of dark, charcoal-rich material (360 and 348) were separated by a lens of clean yellow sand (349) which had collapsed from the side of the feature, and were sealed by a layer of backfill (347). This group of pits produced a greater quantity of pottery than did the other pits, with Pit 313 yielding a total of 45 sherds. In addition, Pit 340 contained an iron pruning hook (SF4).

The third loose group of pits (275, 311 and 322) was located in the angle formed by the return of Ditch 431, Pits 311 and 322 lying within the arc of the earlier Ring Gully 43 (Fig. 4). Pit 311 was a shallow, circular feature 0.9 m. in diameter and 0.25 m. deep. It cut Posthole 309, which may have been associated with the ring gully. A copper alloy brooch (SF3) was retrieved from the fill of this pit (310). The western side of Pit 311 was cut by Pit 322, which was oval in shape and slightly larger, with a maximum width of 1.65 m. A thin lower fill of reddish brown silty sand (321), possibly the result of natural erosion from the sides of the pit, was overlain by a deliberate dump of burnt stone (320). Both pits yielded sherds of late Iron Age/Romano-British pottery. Pit 275 lay 6 m. to the south of these pits. It was very similar to Pit 322 in its shape and dimensions, and also contained an upper fill of burnt stones (269) overlying a primary fill of reddish brown material. Two double postholes (280 and 282, and 294 and 296) were adjacent to this pit on its northern side. These features may represent a pair of posts which were replaced in approximately the same positions, but whether they were associated with the use of the pit is uncertain.

There were also two isolated outlying pits. Pit 302 lay at the north-east limit of the distribution of pits, still within the area enclosed by Ditch 431 (Fig. 3). It was oval in plan, measuring 0.85 m. by 0.75 m. but only 80 mm. deep. Its only fill was a dump of burnt stone (301) which contained pottery contemporary with that from the field system and the other pits. Located near the southern edge of the excavation, Pit 273 was sub-rectangular with a flat base (Fig. 6). It contained a single fill of probably deliberately backfilled material (272) and cut Ditch 432, which formed one of the east-west divisions of the earlier phase of the field system.

Phase 3: medieval and post-medieval features (Fig. 3)

Four linear features (298, 300, 317 and 319) interpreted as plough furrows lay parallel to each other, aligned north-west to south-east, toward the south-east corner of the excavation (Fig. 3).

Two sausage-shaped features each about 5 m. long were identified at the north end of the site (132 and 146; Fig. 3). The fills of both features contained fragments of ceramic building material. They are both probably the product of post-medieval quarrying.

THE FINDS

Quantities of finds from the site were generally quite small. Pottery formed much the largest material category.

METAL OBJECTS by PAUL BOOTH

Copper alloy

SF3, Context 310, Pit 311, phase 2b (Fig. 10, No. 1). Penannular brooch of Fowler⁶ Type B with one terminal turned back on the outer face of the ring, its end coiled above. The other terminal is broken and the pin is missing. The ring is slightly distorted and has a maximum outer measurement of 33 mm. The patina is in good condition locally. The type is broadly characteristic of the late Iron Age and early Roman periods but closer independent dating is not possible. No close parallels have been noted from the region. Regional examples of the general type in Iron Age or early Roman contexts include one from Mount Farm, Dorchester, but of Fowler's Type C, with the terminal coiled at right angles to the plane of the ring,⁷ while another example from Barton Court Farm was unfortunately unstratified.⁸ Penannular brooches from Woodeaton, apparently all of Type D, are probably all of Roman date.⁹

SF1, Context 183, Pit 184, phase 1. Tiny amorphous fragment.

Iron

SF4, Context 339, Pit 340, phase 2b (Fig. 10, No. 2). Curved hook blade with fragmentary socket for hafting. The blade curves from the top of the socket so that the tip (the extreme end of which may be missing) is horizontal. There are very corroded traces of a possible rivet to secure the socket to the handle (type ii in the classification of handle attachments discussed by Cunliffe and Poole).¹⁰ The length of the blade (c. 60 mm. from tip to top of socket) and its curvature indicate that the object belongs to Type 3 of Manning's category of small hooks.¹¹ These are related to but generally smaller than objects defined by Manning as reaping hooks and presumably have a related function such as pruning. This implement type is common in the Iron Age as well as the Roman period¹² and could be of either date here. A rather larger 'reaping hook' is known from an Iron Age context at Ashville,¹³ while another example, from a context probably of late Iron Age date, has been published recently from Slade Farm, Bicester.¹⁴ Neither of these has the socket of the Hatford example, however.

SF5, Context 347, Pit 346, phase 2b. Sub-rectangular lump, maximum dimensions 37 mm. x 31 mm. x 10 mm. with small projection on one corner.

⁶ E. Fowler, 'The Origins and Development of the Penannular Brooch in Europe', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 26 (1960), 149-77.

⁷ J.N.L. Myres, 'A Prehistoric and Roman Site on Mount Farm, Dorchester', *Oxoniensia*, ii (1937), 39 and plate IVB, 3.

⁸ C. Harding, 'The Brooches', in D. Miles (ed.), *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxon: An Investigation of Late Neolithic, Iron Age, Romano-British and Saxon Settlements* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 50, 1986), microfiche 5: D8-9, no. 6.

⁹ J.R. Kirk, 'Bronzes from Woodeaton, Oxon', *Oxoniensia*, xiv (1949), 15.

¹⁰ B. Cunliffe and C. Poole, *Danebury, an Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire. Volume 5. The Excavations 1979-1988: The Finds* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 73, 1991), 340.

¹¹ W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum* (1985), 56-8.

¹² Cf. e.g. M. Macgregor and D.D.A. Simpson, 'A Group of Iron Objects from Barbury Castle, Wilts', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Mag.* 58 (1963), 394-402; L. Sellwood, 'Objects of Iron', in B. Cunliffe, *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire. Volume 2. The Excavations, 1969-1978: The Finds* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 52, 1984), 346-9.

¹³ M. Parrington, *The Excavation of an Iron Age Settlement, Bronze Age Ring-Ditches and Roman Features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon (Oxfordshire) 1974-76* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 28, 1978), 78-9, no. 7.

¹⁴ J. Foster, 'Metalwork', in P. Ellis, G. Hughes and L. Jones, 'An Iron Age Boundary and Settlement Features at Slade Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire: A Report on Excavations, 1996', *Oxoniensia*, liv (2000), 250-2.

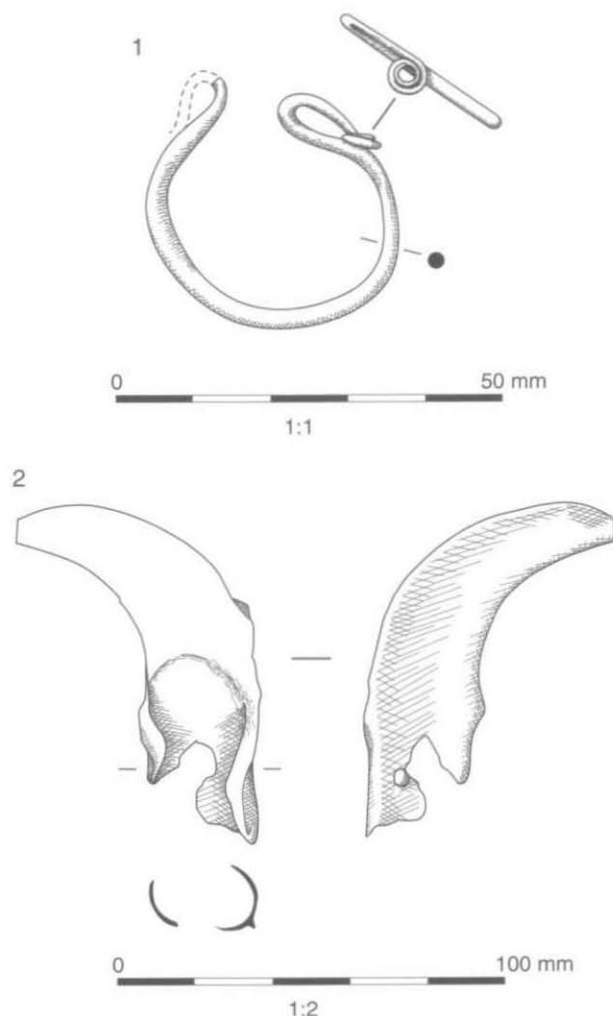


Fig. 10. Metal finds: penannular brooch, SF3 (1); iron hook, SF4 (2).

FLINT by KATE CRAMP

An assemblage of 27 struck flints and one fragment of burnt unworked flint (1 g.) was thinly distributed across 15 contexts, the majority of which contained single pieces (Table 1). The assemblage probably consists of redeposited material of mixed date.

The assemblage

Despite the likelihood that the material is largely if not entirely residual, its general condition implies that relatively limited post-depositional movement has occurred. Weathered chalk flint nodules appear to have been the main source of raw material for the production of the debitage and tools within the assemblage. The condition of the cortex implies the exploitation of superficial deposits rather than of freshly mined nodules. Gravel-derived flint also appears to have made some contribution to raw material supplies.

The assemblage is composed mainly of unretouched debitage, including 15 flakes and two bladelets. Most of the flakes are chronologically undiagnostic, although the two tertiary bladelets from Contexts 269 and 347

TABLE 1: QUANTIFICATION OF FLINT BY TYPE AND CONTEXT

Category	Context/Feature															Total
	U/S	180	198	252	268	269	272	284	303	312	341	347	398	414	417	
	-	431	199	253	290	275	273	290	434	313	290	346	290	415	290	
Flake	1		1	1			1	2	1			3	1	2	2	15
Bladelet						1						1				2
Rejuvenation flake tablet											1					1
Irregular waste		1										1				2
Multi-platform flake core		1										1				2
Core on a flake	1															1
Retouched flake															1	1
Other scraper												1				1
Notch					1											1
Unclassifiable retouch										1						1
Burnt unworked flint						1										1
Total	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	7	1	2	3	28

may be Mesolithic or Neolithic in date.¹⁵ The assemblage contains three flake cores. On technological grounds, the cores are most consistent with a Neolithic or Bronze Age industry, but could be earlier.

The retouched component consists of four pieces. Context 268 contained a tertiary blade with two inversely retouched notches on the left-hand edge and an old proximal snap. It is possible that these notches were part of a failed attempt at microlith manufacture using the microburin technique,¹⁶ which suggests a Mesolithic date for the piece.

Context 312 contained an unclassifiable retouched piece, perhaps a knife or fabricator fragment, although it lacks the distinctive rounded use-wear often associated with fabricators. The tool has been made on a reused blade in a heavily corticated and worn condition with large, semi-abrupt retouch removals to both sides.

Discussion

As a group, the flintwork from the site appears to represent low levels of prehistoric activity over a long period of time, perhaps from the Mesolithic period onwards. The absence of chronologically distinctive types and large *in situ* assemblages precludes more precise dating and fuller interpretation of the material.

WORKED STONE by RUTH SHAFFREY

Fill 226 of Ditch 224 (part of the phase 2b Ditch 431) contained the only piece of worked stone on the site (SF22). This carefully shaped rubber, with a smoothed but slightly convex grinding surface, is of unknown original length but would have measured approximately 120 mm. wide when complete and is now 54 mm. thick. It is burnt and weathered but is probably a fragment of May Hill Sandstone. Saddle querns and rubbers made of this stone were distributed widely across Oxfordshire in the Iron Age and occur on nearby sites such as Abingdon Vineyard.¹⁷ The distribution of this stone has recently been reviewed by Roe.¹⁸

POTTERY by PAUL BOOTH

The excavation produced some 593 sherds of later prehistoric and Roman pottery, weighing 6.169 kg. (average sherd weight 10.4 g.). The pottery was in moderate condition, preservation of surfaces was variable, and average sherd weights, particularly for the earlier material, were quite low. The material was recorded using the standard OA system for later prehistoric and Roman pottery, details of which can be found in the project archive. The approach is exactly as utilised in reporting on the material from the 1991 excavation¹⁹ and that report gives more extensive discussion of many issues which are directly relevant to the present, smaller assemblage.

An initial scan suggested that the majority of context assemblages were of late Iron Age or early Roman date (hereafter abbreviated to LIA/R for convenience), although a middle Iron Age component was also recognised. On further examination, however, it was clear that the character of the assemblage did not allow every sherd to be attributed to one or the other of these two main groupings with confidence. This is because a number of fabric traditions originating in the middle Iron Age continued in use into the late Iron Age. Close dating of some sherds was therefore impossible, usually because they were too small for diagnostic characteristics of manufacture, for example, to be apparent. Indications of wheel-throwing were one such characteristic, but it is notable that not all the certain LIA/R pottery was wheel-thrown, so hand-made sherds could not be assigned automatically to the middle Iron Age or earlier periods. Chronologically diagnostic feature sherds were scarce and consisted principally of rims and bases.

Because of these uncertainties the pottery was assigned to one of two main groups. The first consisted of sherds whose fabric was recorded in terms of inclusion types using the standard approach for later prehistoric material. The second consisted of sherds which could be assigned with some confidence to one of the ware

¹⁵ M.W. Pitts and R.M. Jacobi, 'Some Aspects of Change in Flaked Stone Industries of the Mesolithic and Neolithic in Southern Britain', *Jnl. Archaeol. Sci.* 6(2) (1979), 163-77; S. Ford, 'Chronological and Functional Aspects of Flint Assemblages', in A. Brown and M. Edmonds (eds.), *Lithic Analysis and Later British Prehistory* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser. 162, 1987), 79.

¹⁶ M.-L. Inizan, H. Roche and J. Tixier, *The Technology of Knapped Stone* (1992), 69.

¹⁷ F. Roe, pers. comm.

¹⁸ F. Roe, 'Worked Stone' in J. Timby and G. Hey, *Yarnton: Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement and Landscape* (Thames Valley Landscapes, in prep.).

¹⁹ P. Booth, 'The Iron Age and Roman pottery', in Bourn, op. cit. (note 3), 26-7.

groups characteristic of the LIA/R period in the region. For the reasons outlined above, sherds in the first group include material of middle Iron Age (and possibly earlier) date, as well as fragments which might, had they been larger, have been demonstrated to belong to the LIA/R group. Since this component cannot be quantified the uncertain sherds have been left in the 'later prehistoric' group, with the result that the importance of this group in the assemblage as a whole is overemphasised, though the extent of the overemphasis is unknown.

Fabrics – 'later prehistoric'

These fabrics were defined on the basis of their two principal inclusion types and an indicator of fineness (on a scale of 1, very fine, to 5, very coarse). The definition of fabrics using this system does not necessarily serve to identify production sources, since these are unknown for Iron Age material within the region. Nor does it automatically follow that identically coded sherds were from the same (unknown) source, merely that their makers exploited very similar clay and tempering resources, indicating a uniformity of potting tradition. The range of inclusion types utilised was broad, but most would have been widely available or have occurred naturally in common clay sources in the region. The inclusion types present, and their identifying letters, were as follows:

- A – quartz sand
- B – glauconitic sand
- C – calcareous sand/grit
- F – flint
- G – grog
- L – limestone
- M – mica
- N – none visible
- P – clay pellets
- S – shell (usually fossil)
- V – vegetable/organic (sometimes voids)

Combinations of these inclusions produced 42 separate fabrics, although it is likely that a number of these represent variation within the repertoire of individual potters or localised potting traditions. The fabrics and their quantities are listed in Table 2 below. Together they amounted to 219 sherds with an average weight of 7.7 g. Six main fabric groupings are represented, with principal tempering components of quartz sand, glauconitic (black) sand, calcareous grits, flint, limestone and shell. The average sherd weight of these groups can be used to shed light on their chronology. The shell-tempered sherds, in particular, have a low average weight (only 4 g.). Many of these were abraded and it is very likely that these fabrics are entirely residual in the present assemblage. Indeed it is likely that they are of early Iron Age rather than later date, as shell was the dominant regional inclusion type in that period.²⁰

The chronology of some of the other fabric groupings is less clearly defined, but the limestone-tempered group stands out by virtue of its high average sherd weight (13.7 g.) and the occurrence of bead-rim jar forms characteristic of the late Iron Age. It is therefore likely that the whole of this group should be seen as contemporary with the E and R ware groups of the LIA/R assemblage (see further below), and purely in terms of fabric there is no meaningful distinction between these sherds and some of those assigned to the E50 ware group. The 'later prehistoric' limestone-tempered sherds are all handmade, however.

The limestone and the potentially related calcareous grit fabric groups comprised the majority of the 'later prehistoric' assemblage (66% of sherds and 76% by weight). There were some similarities in vessel form between the two groups and it may be significant that their surface appearance was very similar, the characteristic mottled appearance being produced by abundant rounded or sub-rounded (in the case of the crushed material of the limestone-tempered group) inclusions. Some chronological overlap between these two groups is likely, therefore. With regard to the remaining fabric groupings, flint-tempering is known as a regional tradition in the late Iron Age (e.g. at unpublished sites such as Abingdon) and is thought unlikely to have occurred in the middle Iron Age in this area, so the small number of sherds assigned to this group were probably contemporary with the LIA/R material, though lacking characteristics that would demonstrate this conclusively. The sand-tempered fabric groups are perhaps best seen as characteristic of the middle Iron Age,

²⁰ Cf. G. Lambrick, 'Pitfalls and Possibilities in Iron Age Pottery Studies: Experiences in the Upper Thames Valley', in B. Cunliffe and D. Miles (eds.), *Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain* (Oxf. Univ. Comm. for Archaeol. Monograph 2, 1984), 174–5.

TABLE 2: QUANTIFICATION OF 'LATER PREHISTORIC' POTTERY FABRICS

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. sherds</i>	<i>Weight (g.)</i>	<i>Vessels (type and no. when more than one)</i>
AB2	1	2	
AC3	10	52	
AF3	1	16	
AM2	3	24	
AM3	3	26	
AN2	2	9	
AN3	3	4	
AS3	4	12	
AV3	1	4	
<i>A Subtotal</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>149</i>	
BA3	6	47	
BL3	1	9	
BS3	6	32	
<i>B Subtotal</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>88</i>	
CA3	2	12	
CA4	70	399	C(3), CB, CD, D
CA5	1	62	
CB3	1	10	
CG4	1	3	
CL4	4	20	
CN3	5	8	
CN4	22	257	CB(3), CH
CP4	1	16	
CS3	1	1	
CS4	2	8	
<i>C Subtotal</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>796</i>	
FA4	1	5	
FG4	9	67	
FN4	1	4	
<i>F Subtotal</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>76</i>	
LA4	1	21	
LA5	3	12	CH
LC4	9	103	CH
LC5	1	8	
LG4	8	115	CH
LN4	9	228	
LV4	5	5	
<i>L Subtotal</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>492</i>	
SA3	2	1	
SA4	7	31	
SA5	3	10	
SB5	1	3	
SC4	2	17	
SC5	2	13	
SG4	1	3	
SN4	1	1	
SN5	2	5	
<i>S Subtotal</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>84</i>	
Total	219	1685	13

as such fabrics formed the dominant regional tradition at that time. Some of these sherds could have been later, however. Equally it is likely that the calcareous grit-tempered tradition was of middle Iron Age origin. On the basis of the present assemblage it can be suggested that this tradition provided an element of ceramic continuity between the middle and late Iron Age periods.

Fabrics – late Iron Age/early Roman

The 374 sherds (average weight 12 g.) in this general category were mostly identified in terms of subgroups of the major ware categories defined for this period. These sherds comprised 62.9% (72.4% by weight) of the total pottery assemblage, the major categories represented being white wares (W), 'Belgic-type' wares (E),²¹ oxidised coarse wares (O), reduced coarse wares (R) and black-burnished ware (B). Quantification of these wares is presented in Table 3.

Components of the E ware group dominated the assemblage (totalling 80% of LIA/R sherds) and the only other significant group was reduced coarse wares, consisting entirely of Savernake products (fabric R95) and a few sand-tempered sherds (recorded as fabric R30) which were themselves comparable to Savernake products in a number of respects and may not have been much different in date. The only other wares or ware groups present were fine sandy white and orange fabrics (W36 and O10 respectively) and a single sandy oxidised sherd (O20), all likely to be derived from the Oxford region. Two sherds of black-burnished ware (B10) were the only pieces in the entire assemblage likely to have come from a more distant source, although it is not absolutely certain that these were products of the Dorset BB1 industry.

Amongst the 'Belgic-type' wares grog-tempered (E80) fabrics were most important. These are characteristic of the period, but did not dominate the assemblage completely (amounting to 55% of E ware sherds), being supplemented by fine (E20) and coarse (E30) sand-tempered wares and limestone- (E50) and flint- (E60) tempered wares. All these subgroups are likely to have been relatively locally produced, but none can be ascribed to a particular source.

TABLE 3: QUANTIFICATION OF LATE IRON AGE AND ROMAN WARES

<i>Ware</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>No. sherds</i>	<i>Weight (g.)</i>	<i>Vessels (type and no.)</i>
W36	Fine sandy white ware	3	35	
E20	Fine sand-tempered 'Belgic-type' fabrics	28	192	CD, D
E30	Coarse sand-tempered 'Belgic-type' fabrics	46	427	CD
E50	Limestone-tempered 'Belgic-type' fabrics	42	319	CH(2)
E60	Flint-tempered 'Belgic-type' fabrics	19	343	CH, D
E75	General large angular quartz(ite) fabrics	1	7	
E80	Grog-tempered 'Belgic-type' fabrics	164	1460	C(2), CD(2), CE(2), CH, CI, D(3)
O10	Fine oxidised 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products	2	5	C
O20	Sandy oxidised coarse wares	1	3	
R30	Moderately sandy reduced coarse wares	4	151	
R95	Savernake ware	62	1519	CD, CH
B10	Black-burnished type ware (BB1)	2	23	CK
Total		374	4484	22

²¹ In the sense of I. Thompson, *Grog-Tempered 'Belgic' Pottery of South-Eastern England* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser. 108, 1982), 4.

Vessel forms

Only 35 vessels were represented by rim sherds: 13 in the 'later prehistoric' fabrics and 22 in the LIA/R wares. These were quantified by count (in Tables 2 and 3) and by rim equivalents (RES: percentage of rim circumference surviving), which are tabulated in relation to fabric in Table 4. The vessel form codes used are as follows:

- C jar, type indeterminate
- CB barrel-shaped jar
- CD medium-mouthed but otherwise indeterminate jar
- CE squat, high-shouldered jar
- CH bead-rim jar
- CI angled everted-rim jar
- CK 'cooking pot' type jar
- D jar/bowl, uncertain

TABLE 4: QUANTIFICATION OF VESSEL TYPES BY FABRIC/WARE (RES)

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Vessel Type</i>							<i>Jar/bowls</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Jars</i>								
	<i>C</i>	<i>CB</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>CE</i>	<i>CH</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>CK</i>	<i>D</i>	
CA4	0.09	0.03	0.08					0.03	0.23
CN4		0.24			0.02				0.26
LA5					0.03				0.03
LC4					0.15				0.15
LG4					0.17				0.17
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>0.09</i>	<i>0.27</i>	<i>0.08</i>		<i>0.37</i>			<i>0.03</i>	<i>0.84</i>
E20			0.16					0.02	0.18
E30			0.10						0.10
E50					0.09				0.09
E60					0.10			0.05	0.15
E80	0.12		0.10	0.13	0.06	0.12		0.14	0.67
O10	0.07								0.07
R95			0.15		0.20				0.35
B10							0.03		0.03
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>0.19</i>		<i>0.51</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.45</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>1.64</i>
Total	0.28	0.27	0.59	0.13	0.82	0.12	0.03	0.24	2.48

The assemblage is too small for detailed analysis, but its very simple nature is apparent: the vessels present are entirely jars of various types or uncertain jar or bowl types (with insufficient of the vessel surviving for the distinction, based on the likely height to rim diameter ratio, to be determined). There were no clear indications of the presence of other vessel forms even amongst the body sherds.

The simplest forms are type CB (barrel-shaped) jars, a classic middle Iron Age type in the region, from which the characteristic late Iron Age bead-rim jar (type CH) probably developed. The distinction between these two types was not always very clear. Together they accounted for the great majority of the identifiable 'later prehistoric' assemblage, and variants of type CH jars, including an example with a 'minimal' rim, continued to be important amongst the LIA/R fabrics. Type CD, generic medium-mouthed jars, were also important in these fabrics. It is likely that some, if not most, examples of this type were in fact of the high-shouldered type CE, particularly characteristic of the period in this region, but the surviving sherds were insufficiently large for this to be demonstrable. Identified type CE jars, and the angled everted-rim type CI, the latter potentially indicative of a later 1st-century AD date, were confined to ware group E80. One further

jar form, of the so-called 'cooking pot' type characteristic of black-burnished ware, occurred in fabric B10. The rim form was quite upright and it is possible that this vessel pre-dated the main period of export of the Dorset BB1 industry from about AD 120 onwards.

Use and reuse

Evidence for use and reuse of pottery was recorded in the form of indications of burning and modification of sherds. External sooting was noted in six cases, one each in fabrics/wares CN4, LG4 and E60 and three examples in E80. There were five instances of internal burnt residues, in fabrics LG4, LN4, E30 (two examples) and E80 (multiple sherds in one context have been recorded as one example). In both cases these deposits are thought to reflect the use of the vessels for cooking rather than general burning after breakage and/or disuse. No instances of limescale, another common form of evidence for cooking, were noted.

The occurrence of holes drilled in vessel bases and walls post-firing is a well-known characteristic of the LIA/R ceramics of the region, with occasional earlier examples. Five examples were noted here. One, in fabric LN4, comprised a large central hole in a base (No. 20), while the others, in wares E60, E80 (two examples) and R95, were of smaller holes in vessel walls. Usually these were in the lower walls, but a type CH jar (No. 14) in Context 310 (Pit 311) had one such hole and another one in the shoulder. The purpose of the latter hole is unclear. Holes in bases or lower body walls may have served to convert jars to strainers or steamers or similar.

Finally there were two cut-down sherds, one (No. 9, fabric E30) apparently for use as a small lid and one, in fabric E80, a fragment of a spindle whorl some 45 mm. in diameter.

It is notable that the evidence for use and reuse is confined largely if not entirely to fabrics which would have been in use in the LIA/R phase of the site rather than earlier.

Context and chronology

Pottery was recovered from 64 contexts. The quantities of material by feature type are given in Table 5.

The majority of the pottery came from ditch fills, but the material from pits was notably less fragmented than that from ditches. This suggests, as might be expected, that the latter contained a relatively high proportion of redeposited sherds. Even in the pits the average weight of the sherds was not particularly high and does not suggest that these features were used for primary rubbish disposal.

Nine of the context assemblages were potentially dated earlier than the late Iron Age, on ceramic criteria alone. Seven of these, however, were from features assigned to LIA/R phases of the site, leaving only unphased Postholes 129 and 196 (Fig. 3) possibly representing ceramically dated earlier activity. Each of these features produced a single sherd. It is most likely that these were residual and that the features were of similar date to the great majority of others on the site.

The pottery fabrics were quantified by phase (Table 6) to see if any clear trends emerged relating to the development of the assemblage through time, but patterning was not particularly apparent. The percentage of handmade sherds increased rather than declined from phase 1 to phase 2, but this may reflect a relatively high rate of redeposition of early material in the phase 2 features, as well as the possibility that at least some of the handmade fabrics remained in use in the post-Conquest period (see above). The phase 1 assemblage was dominated by 'Belgic-type' (E) wares. These were less important in phase 2, which is probably indicative of the decline in use of these fabrics in the later 1st century AD, corresponding to the appearance of small quantities of 'Romanised' coarse wares and rather larger amounts of Savernake ware (R95), which comprised 10% of sherds (and 26.5% of the pottery by weight) in phase 2b.

TABLE 5: QUANTIFICATION OF LATE IRON AGE/ROMAN POTTERY BY CONTEXT TYPE

<i>Context type</i>	<i>Number of contexts</i>	<i>No. sherds</i>	<i>Weight (g.)</i>	<i>Average sherd weight (g.)</i>
Uncertain	1	2	4	2
Pit fill	17	155	2027	13.1
Posthole fill	5	12	73	6.1
Ditch fill	41	424	4065	9.6

TABLE 6: QUANTIFICATION OF POTTERY FABRICS/WARES BY PHASE

Fabric	Unphased		Phase 1		Phase 2a		Phase 2b		TOTAL	
	No. sh.	Wt (g.)	No. sh.	Wt (g.)	No. sh.	Wt (g.)	No. sh.	Wt (g.)	No. sh.	Wt (g.)
AB2					1	2			1	2
AC3			5	36			5	16	10	52
AF3			1	16					1	16
AM2			1	3			2	21	3	24
AM3			1	8			2	18	3	26
AN2			1	4			1	5	2	9
AN3					2	3	1	1	3	4
AS3			2	3			2	9	4	12
AV3			1	4					1	4
BA3							6	47	6	47
BL3							1	9	1	9
BS3							6	32	6	32
CA3					1	3	1	9	2	12
CA4	2	5	19	83	3	11	46	300	70	399
CA5							1	62	1	62
CB3							1	10	1	10
CG4			1	3					1	3
CL4							4	20	4	20
CN3							5	8	5	8
CN4			9	176	1	2	12	79	22	257
CP4							1	16	1	16
CS3							1	1	1	1
CS4							2	8	2	8
FA4							1	5	1	5
FG4			1	3			8	64	9	67
FN4			1	4					1	4
LA4							1	21	1	21
LA5	1	7	1	3	1	2			3	12
LC4							9	103	9	103
LC5	1	8							1	8
LG4							8	115	8	115
LN4					2	18	7	210	9	228
LV4							5	5	5	5
SA3					2	1			2	1
SA4			2	4	2	3	3	24	7	31
SA5	1	3	1	5			1	2	3	10
SB5							1	3	1	3
SC4							2	17	2	17
SC5							2	13	2	13
SG4			1	3					1	3
SN4	1	1							1	1
SN5					2	5			2	5
W36							3	35	3	35
E20	4	20	20	150			4	22	28	192
E30			18	215			28	212	46	427
E50			4	47	9	99	29	173	42	319
E60	1	25	10	136			8	182	19	343
E75					1	7			1	7
E80	6	32	62	553	7	53	89	822	164	1460
O10					1	3	1	2	2	5
O20					1	3			1	3
R30							4	151	4	151
R95	2	18	9	213	16	260	35	1028	62	1519
B10					1	17	1	6	2	23
Total	19	119	171	1672	53	492	350	3886	593	6169

General discussion

The small group of pottery recovered in the 2003 excavation is in many respects a microcosm of the larger assemblage excavated in 1991 and published in 2000 (it may be noted that the work on that pottery report was mostly carried out in 1994). Some of the differences in emphasis between the two assemblages may simply reflect their different sizes, but it is clear that they were not exactly similar in character. The present assemblage contains limited evidence for activity of early Iron Age date, and the material indicative of this was entirely residual. Middle Iron Age pottery was relatively scarce and, in contrast to the situation in the 1991 excavation, did not include a particularly important sand-tempered component. The fact that the principal fabric categories (C and L fabrics) in the 'later prehistoric' element of the assemblage seem to have developed directly into elements of the LIA/R assemblage suggests that activity here may only have started in the later part of the middle Iron Age. This was suggested for the 1991 assemblage,²² but may be seen in a more marked fashion here.

The 2003 assemblage was dominated by characteristic LIA/R fabrics of the E ware tradition. The chronology of these has been discussed above, but their principal period of currency is likely to have been the first three quarters of the 1st century AD. These wares comprised 80% of the sherds assigned to the LIA/R phase, whereas in the 1991 assemblage they totalled only 56.6% of such sherds.²³ The consequent wider range of other fabric types seen in the 1991 assemblage suggests a longer chronological range than in the present site, albeit one that did not extend beyond the middle of the 2nd century AD at the latest. In the present assemblage the only numerically significant fabric apart from the E wares was Savernake ware, R95. The case for seeing this as essentially contemporary with the majority of the E wares was argued in detail in 2000²⁴ and is not contradicted by any of the present evidence, while the case for the pre-Conquest origin of Savernake ware has been restated by Timby.²⁵

On this basis, 'Romanised' fabrics which could (but need not all necessarily) be seen as later in date than the E wares amounted to a mere 3% of the LIA/R pottery. The occurrence of fabrics such as W36 and O10 is paralleled in the 1991 assemblage, but the 'Romanised' reduced coarse wares seen there are notable by their absence in the 2003 site. This suggests that activity at the latter ceased even earlier than in the settlement areas examined in 1991. The only evidence against this is the two small black-burnished ware sherds which ostensibly suggest continued activity after c. AD 120. As indicated above, however, it is not certain that these were Dorset BB1 products. More to the point, the cooking pot rim form is an early one which would be acceptable in a later 1st-century context. It is known that some BB1 was reaching Cirencester at this time,²⁶ and it is likely that it was distributed east of Cirencester to sites such as Claydon Pike in the same period.²⁷ It is therefore possible that this early distribution extended as far as Hatford, although this would not have been predicted otherwise. Other explanations may be possible, but the context groups producing the two sherds (147 and 270) are amongst the latest from the site and there is no suggestion that the black-burnished ware was intrusive, in contrast to the 1991 excavation, in which small quantities of anomalous late Roman pottery were encountered. Intrusive later material was conspicuously absent in the 2003 site.

Overall, therefore, the pottery suggests cessation of activity on the present site before the end of the 1st century AD, or in the early 2nd at the latest if the conventional BB1 chronology is applied. The later dating would keep this part of Hatford in line with a widely observed regional trend of settlement dislocation in the early 2nd century AD, discussed in the earlier report²⁸ and in a broader context,²⁹ but the present evidence may indicate that such general trends can conceal a range of minor variation.

From the point of view of the variety of fabrics and forms present the LIA/R assemblage appears to be very basic. So-called 'fine and specialist wares', here consisting solely of the three white ware sherds in fabric W36, formed only 0.8% of the pottery, substantially less than the 5% (again consisting almost entirely of white wares)

²² Booth, op. cit. (note 19), 42.

²³ Ibid. 32.

²⁴ Ibid. 40–1.

²⁵ J. Timby, 'A Reappraisal of Savernake Ware', in P. Ellis (ed.), *Roman Wiltshire and After: Papers in Honour of Ken Annable* (2001), 73–84.

²⁶ V. Rigby, 'The Coarse Pottery', in J.S. Wachter and A.D. McWhirr, *Early Roman Occupation at Cirencester* (Cirencester Excavations, I, 1982), 168.

²⁷ S. Green and P. Booth, 'The Roman Pottery', in D. Miles, S. Palmer, A. Smith and G. Edgeley Long, *Iron Age and Roman Settlement in the Upper Thames Valley: Excavations at Claydon Pike and Other Sites within the Cotswold Water Park* (Thames Valley Landscapes, forthcoming).

²⁸ Booth, op. cit. (note 19), 43.

²⁹ M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (2000), 106–10.

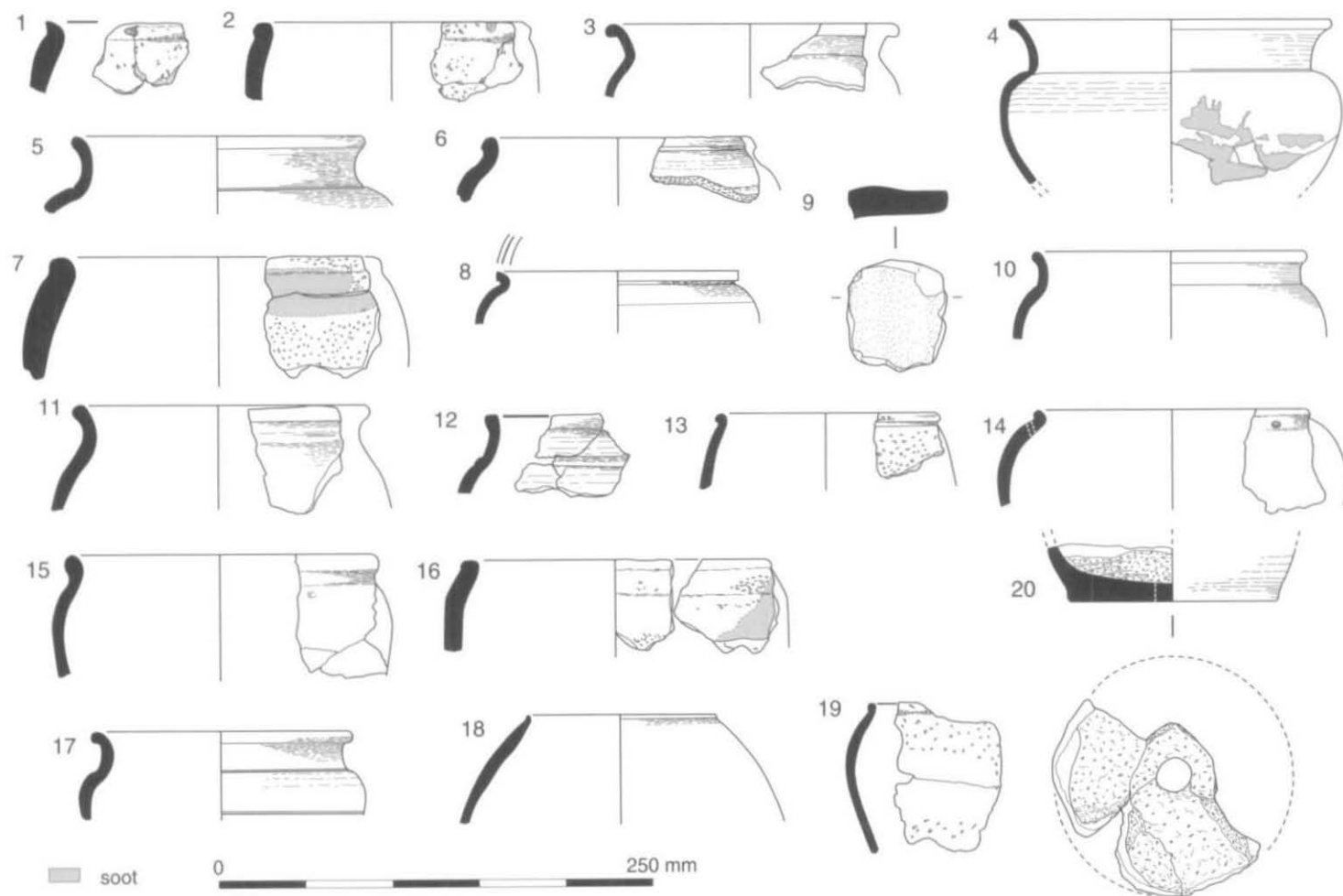


Fig. 11. Late Iron Age and Roman pottery.

recorded in the 1991 assemblage. In either case, the ceramic evidence places Hatford firmly amongst the low-status rural settlements of the early Roman period in the region,³⁰ the present assemblage being most closely comparable to sites such as Thornhill Farm near Lechlade and Gravelly Guy and Old Shifford further down the Thames. All these sites had a similar development, with activity ceasing by or (more usually) in the early 2nd century. Old Shifford is most closely comparable to the present site in that settlement was almost entirely confined to the 1st century AD, with very limited indications of middle Iron Age settlement.³¹ There the fine and specialist ware figure was only 0.2% of the total.

The very narrow repertoire of vessel forms is also noteworthy. The emphasis on jars is again a distinctly rural characteristic,³² seen here in extreme form.

Catalogue (Fig. 11)

The vessels are arranged in phase sequence. In each entry the fabric or ware code is given first, with inclusion types in brackets where appropriate. This is followed by the vessel-type code. The context number and then the feature number are given at the end.

Phase 1

1. CN4. Type CB jar. 341. Enclosure 290.
2. CN4. Type CB jar. 399. Enclosure 290.
3. E80 (GA). Type CD jar, burnished on top of rim and shoulder. 284. Enclosure 290.
4. E80. Type CE jar, burnished overall, with soot deposit on exterior. 361. Enclosure 290.
5. E20. Type CD jar. 407. Enclosure 290.
6. E60. Type CH jar, burnished on top of rim and shoulder and with exterior sooting. 407. Enclosure 290.
7. CN4. Type CB jar with exterior sooting. 417. Enclosure 290.
8. E80 (GA). Type CI jar, burnished overall. 417. Enclosure 290.
9. E30. Shoulder sherd of large jar roughly trimmed to rounded shape. 417. Enclosure 290.

Phase 2a

10. R95. Type CD jar. 270. Ditch 432.

Phase 2b

11. E30 (AV). Type CD jar. 180. Ditch 431.
12. E80 (GF). Type CD jar. 198. Pit 199.
13. LC4. Type CH bead-rim jar. 310. Pit 311.
14. E80 (GV). Type CH jar with holes drilled in the vessel wall. 310. Pit 311.
15. CA4. Type CD jar. 312. Pit 313.
16. LG4. Type CH jar. 312. Pit 313.
17. E80 (GA). Type CE jar with grooves. Possibly a Savernake product (cf. R95). 312. Pit 313.
18. R95. Type CH jar, burnished overall. 312. Pit 313.
19. CN4. Type CH jar, with burnished zone on lower body. 345. Pit 344.
20. LN4. Simple, substantial base with large well-formed hole drilled in middle, post-firing. Some interior burnt residue. 125. Ditch 431.

FIRE CLAY by PAUL BOOTH

Fired-clay finds apart from pottery consisted of two fragments (36 g.) of post-medieval ceramic building material, one each from Contexts 133 (Pit 132) and 145 (Pit 146), and 43 pieces (1324 g.) of fired clay. The latter occurred in a range of relatively fine fabrics, containing mixtures of sand, shell and calcareous grit inclusions. Most of the smaller pieces were amorphous. Amongst the remainder were three well-fired fragments with two approximately perpendicular surfaces, possibly parts of triangular loomweights, one each from Contexts 351, 361 and 416, all in Enclosure 290. Most notable, however, were nine fragments in a sand and shell-tempered fabric – seven from Context 341 and one each from 351 and 353 – all again from Enclosure 290, and all probably from the same flat block-like object (Fig. 12). This was 35–40 mm. thick, with

³⁰ Ibid. 173, Fig. 6.11.

³¹ G. Hey, 'Iron Age and Roman Settlement at Old Shifford Farm, Standlake', *Oxoniensia*, ix (1995), 93–175.

³² Cf. J. Evans, 'Material Approaches to the Identification of Different Romano-British Site Types', in S. James and M. Millett (eds.), *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 125, 2001), 27, Fig. 5.

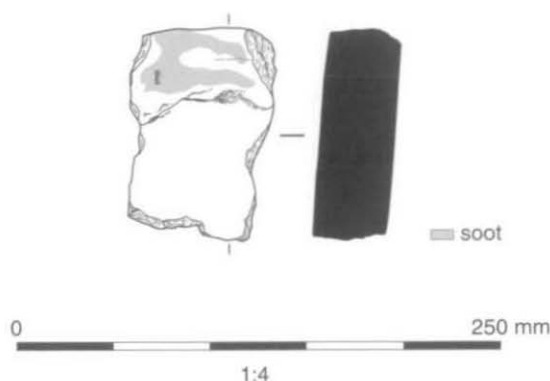


Fig. 12. Fired-clay object.

a minimum length and width of 110 x 68 mm. It had one straight edge and was possibly burned (rather than differentially fired) on the upper surface.

The object has affinities with a category of clay discs found quite widely in the Upper Thames Valley at sites such as Old Shifford,³³ Farmoor³⁴ and Alchester³⁵ and in several of the sites evaluated in the area of the potential Abingdon Reservoir.³⁶ At several of the latter sites, however, a category of material labelled 'underfired tile' was also widely present. This was characteristically a fairly soft, heavily sand-tempered material usually grey-brown or reddish brown in colour and formed into flat slabs, typically c. 30–40 mm. thick (rather thicker than the discs mentioned above).³⁷ This material, most common in early Roman contexts, is exactly analogous to the Hatford object, but its function remains unclear. Very similar material also occurs in an early Roman enclosure at Appleford.³⁸ A relative absence of standard Roman tile was notable in the Abingdon area sites, as at Hatford, but it is far from certain that the other blocks served as a substitute for tile. In comparison with the clay discs, however, they are apparently rectilinear and consistently thicker. Neither group of material is well understood; possible interpretations of the discs include a function as ceramic lids, or for cooking or perhaps as stands for pottery vessels. The thicker blocks may have been related, but if so their occurrence alongside the discs in the Abingdon area sites suggests some distinction of function.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS by ANNSOFIE WITKIN

A single neonate skeleton (203) was found in a shallow circular grave cut with an irregular base (202). The skeleton had been placed on a thin layer of clay (200) and the grave backfilled with a mid brown sandy silt (201). The grave was located adjacent to a north-south field boundary ditch (431) amongst a scatter of postholes possibly associated with the boundary. Although the burial is not intrinsically datable, its proximity to the nearby middle Iron Age settlement and late Iron Age/early Roman field boundaries strongly suggests a similar date.

³³ Hey, *op. cit.* (note 31), 136–8.

³⁴ G. Lambrick and M. Robinson, *Iron Age and Roman Riverside Settlements at Farmoor, Oxfordshire* (C.B.A. Res. Rep. 32, 1979), 53–4, nos. 124–7.

³⁵ P. Booth, J. Evans and J. Hillier, *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester, Oxfordshire, 1991* (Oxford Archaeology Monograph 1, 2001), 261.

³⁶ C. M. Hearne, 'Archaeological Evaluation in the Vale of the White Horse, near Abingdon, 1992–9', *Oxoniensia*, lxxv (2001), 7–12.

³⁷ OAU, 'Abingdon Reservoir Proposal, Abingdon, Oxon: 1998 Archaeological Evaluation Report – C23' (OA unpubl. report for Thames Water Utilities Limited, 1998), 37.

³⁸ Excavation by OA in 2000. Report in preparation.

The condition of the bone was poor. All bones had extreme cortical erosion and were therefore very thin. None of the long bones was complete. The bones present comprised cranial vault fragments, long bone shafts of all the long bones, ribs and some vertebrae.

Although no complete long bone was present the overall size of a near-complete tibia allowed the age to be estimated as up to one month (neonate).³⁹ No pathological lesions were present.

The presence of infant burials within or close to areas of occupation, often associated with boundaries, is not unusual in this period.

ANIMAL BONE by EMMA-JAYNE EVANS

A total of 880 fragments of bone and teeth were hand-excavated, and 13 fragments recovered from sieving. The refitting of broken elements reduced the fragment count to 577 (3373 g.). Apart from two unidentifiable bones from a post-medieval quarry pit, all the bones analysed from this site are dated to the late Iron Age/early Roman period.

Condition

Overall, the bone has survived in poor condition, with the majority of bone attaining grade 4 using the criteria of Lyman.⁴⁰ The bone has survived in slightly better condition in the pits than in the ditches, possibly due to the pits being backfilled whereas the ditches were left open, exposing the bones to more weathering.

Due to the poor condition of the animal remains, the majority of the bones from the site consist of fragmentary elements, with well over half the bones having fresh breaks. The poor quality of the bone and the degree of fragmentation has resulted in only 20% of bone being identified to species. As well as inhibiting the identification of the bone to species, the poor condition is very likely to have caused a bias in species representation, as smaller mammal bones are much less likely to have survived. The poor surface condition has also probably affected the incidence of butchery, gnawing and pathology: no evidence of these processes was noted on any of the bones.

Species representation

As can be seen from Table 7, the majority of the bone was found in the ditches, with 33.4% of bone coming from Enclosure ditch 290.

TABLE 7: TOTAL NUMBERS OF ANIMAL BONES AND TEETH BY SPECIES AND FEATURE TYPE

	<i>Sheep / goat</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Domestic fowl</i>	<i>Roe deer</i>	<i>Unid.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ditches	35	28	31	2	1	—	377	474
Pits	11	2	1	1	—	1	72	88
Postholes	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10
Surface finds	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>460</i>	<i>575</i>

Sheep/goat is best represented by numbers of identified fragments, and a large majority of the unidentified bones came from medium-sized as opposed to large animals. It is likely that all these bones belong to sheep. Sheep/goat seem to have been more frequently deposited in pits than other species, as also noted at the Iron Age/Romano-British site at Ashville.⁴¹ Tooth eruption and wear stages could be used to estimate age at death of sheep/goat for only five mandibles: three with an age between 20 and 34 months, one between 3 and 5 years, and one between 5 and 8 years. Fusion data gives little further evidence as to the age at death of the population due to the poor condition and, in particular, a lack of articular ends of long bones. Of the bones for which articular ends are present, only one proximal tibia was unfused (indicating an age at death of less than 3–3.5 years), the remainder being fully fused bones from older animals.

³⁹ J.L. Scheuer, J.H. Musgrave and S.P. Evans, 'The Estimation of Late Fetal and Perinatal Age from Limb Bone Length by Linear and Logarithmic Regression', *Annals of Human Biology*, 7(3) (1980), 257–65.

⁴⁰ R.L. Lyman, *Vertebrate Taphonomy* (1996).

⁴¹ J. Hamilton, 'A Comparison of the Age Structure at Mortality of some Iron Age and Romano-British Sheep and Cattle Populations', in Parrington, op. cit. (note 13), 126–33.

Cattle were less common than sheep/goat. Age at death using tooth eruption and wear stages could only be ascertained for two mandibles, one of which was aged as adult, the other senile. As with sheep/goat, the information obtained from fusion data was limited, although all the elements with articular ends present were fully fused.

Pig bones were present in numbers equal to cattle. Of the mandibles that could be aged, two that were likely to be from the same animal were deemed to be immature, with another likely to be adult. Since pigs were valued primarily for their meat, it is unlikely that the animals would have been kept to an old age. Burning was noted on one calcaneus, with the element burnt brown/black.

Very few fragments of horse were found at the site, while domestic fowl and roe deer were each represented by a single element.

Discussion

The main consideration that must be taken into account when discussing remains of this condition is the likelihood of biases in the assemblages. Assemblages in such poor condition will almost certainly favour larger more robust bones, with the bones of small animals and juveniles less likely to survive. Therefore, the fact that sheep/goat are present in higher numbers than cattle is likely to reflect quite well the relative proportions of the species present on the site, as one would expect the smaller sheep/goat bones to be more susceptible to poor conditions. The small sample size does not, however, allow a detailed analysis of animal husbandry regimes.

It is nonetheless likely that the main element of the economy of the site was sheep/goat, with cattle and pigs being utilised in smaller numbers. It may also be suggested that, whilst the presence of a sheep/goat aged 5–8 years indicates that they were kept for secondary products such as milk and wool, the presence of three animals killed aged 20–34 months suggests that they were also being killed at the optimum age for consumption. It is not unusual for sheep/goat to be found in larger numbers than cattle during this period, and the relatively high number of pig bones might also be seen as a Roman influence, as pigs seem to have been more common during this period than in others.⁴² It is probable that pigs were kept for their meat, as they provide very little in the way of secondary products. The number of horse bones recovered was very low, possibly indicating that their use for transport was not a necessity. The lack of juvenile bones for all species in this assemblage is probably due to the conditions, rather than to their original absence from the site. It is probable that the remains are from domestic waste.

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by DENISE DRUCE

Twenty-seven bulk samples of up to 40 litres were taken from selected features in order to carry out analysis of the charred plant remains. Ten bulk samples were chosen for analysis and these are shown, along with the associated contexts and features, in Table 8.

Results

All of the samples contained cereal grains and the majority of these consisted of cf. *Triticum spelta/dicoccum* (spelt/emmer wheat). Two samples contained well-preserved grains that were tentatively identified as *Triticum* cf. *spelta*. Limited numbers of *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) and *Avena* sp. (oats) were also recorded.

The cereal chaff was similar to the cereal grain, with all but two of the samples containing *Triticum* sp./*Triticum* cf. *spelta*, while most also contained *Avena fatua* (wild oat) awn fragments, which suggests that the *Avena* sp. grains found in a number of the samples were of the wild variety.

Two samples contained *Corylus avellana* (hazel) shell fragments and many of the samples contained a limited number of *Brassica* sp. (cabbage, etc.) seeds. However, even if *Corylus avellana* and *Brassica* sp. were collected or cultivated as a food source the low amounts suggest that neither were likely to have formed a major part of the diet.

Of the weed seeds Poaceae (grass family) are the most abundant in all of the samples, followed by Fabaceae (pea family), with high values of *Carex* sp. (sedges) in at least some of the samples. The assemblage was generally typical of grassland or cultivated land with some element of wet or damp ground.

Charcoal was scarce (see Table 8) and those pieces large enough to exhibit adequate amounts of identifiable characteristics were too distorted to be able to identify with any degree of certainty.

⁴² E. Hambleton, *Animal Husbandry Regimes in Iron Age Britain* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser. 282, 1999), 41–60.

TABLE 8. CHARRED PLANT REMAINS (NUMBERS OF SPECIMENS)

	Sample No.	2	3	4	6	7	8	10	11	14	15
	Context No.	269	312	320	348	350	353	374	407	162	327
	Feature	P 275	P 313	P 322	P 346	DT 355	DT355	P 373	DT 411	D 148	G 328
	Sample size (litres)	32	32	35	30	40	28	40	28	40	38
Cereal grain											
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i> /dicoccum	cf. Spelt/emmer wheat	5	5	7	25	20	3	9	–	23	1
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i>	cf. Spelt wheat	–	–	–	1	–	2	–	–	–	–
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, hulled twisted grain	1	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	2	–
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, hulled symmetrical grain	1	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley undiff.	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Avena</i> sp.	Oats	1	1	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Cerealia indet.	Indeterminate grains	20	6	11	14	25	–	9	6	32	6
	Total cereal grain	31	13	21	42	47	5	18	6	57	7
*Cerealia indet. frag.		22	85	36	64	196	55	77	42	118	9
Cereal chaff											
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	Spelt wheat glume base	21	7	16	48	7	–	18	–	4	–
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i> frag.	cf. Spelt wheat glume base frag.	–	2	–	21	–	–	12	–	–	–
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i>	cf. Spelt wheat spikelet fork	–	–	–	7	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat glume base frag.	–	2	10	106	–	1	6	–	11	–
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat spikelet fork base	–	4	2	19	11	5	9	–	–	–
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley rachis	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	–
<i>Avena fatua</i>	Wild oat awn frag.	2	–	13	3	18	3	19	3	2	–
cf. Cerealia indet.	Culm node	2	–	1	4	11	4	3	3	4	2
	Total chaff	25	15	42	209	47	13	67	5	21	2
Other edible plants											
<i>Corylus avellana</i> frag.	Hazelnut shell frag.	–	–	–	–	8	–	–	–	–	1
<i>Brassica</i> sp.	Cabbages	–	1	1	2	–	1	1	–	3	–
Weed seeds											
<i>Ranunculus</i> cf. <i>repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Chenopodium/Atriplex</i> sp.	Goosefoots/oraches	–	1	–	1	–	1	–	1	–	–
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat hen	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Common chickweed	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Silene</i> sp.	Campions	–	1	–	2	–	1	–	–	–	–
<i>Polygonum</i> undiff.	Knotgrasses	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–

<i>Rumex</i> sp.	Docks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep's sorrel	4	4	1	4	1	3	3	-	-	-
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	-	-
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Brambles	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
<i>Potentilla</i> sp.	Cinquefoils	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Fabaceae <4 mm	Pea family	3	35	4	13	15	62	18	5	8	12
Fabaceae >4 mm	Pea family	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
cf. <i>Medicago</i> sp.	Medicks	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Apiaceae	Carrot family	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Oenanthe</i> sp.	Water-dropworts	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Mentha</i> sp.	Mints	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Plantago</i> sp.	Plantains	-	2	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	-
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Galium</i> sp.	Common marsh-bedstraw	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater knapweed	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Cirsium</i> sp.	Thistles	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	Stinking chamomile	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Juncus</i> sp.	Rushes	1	6	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
<i>Carex</i> spp. trigynous	Sedges - three-sided	-	5	3	7	3	22	4	-	-	-
<i>Carex</i> spp. lenticular	Sedges - two-sided	-	3	-	6	6	16	-	-	-	-
Poaceae <2 mm	Grass family	7	24	23	42	30	230	29	10	-	5
Poaceae 2-4 mm	Grass family	3	9	6	83	22	-	33	2	32	1
Poaceae >4 mm	Grass family	-	1	-	5	6	-	1	-	1	-
<i>Bromus</i> sp.	Bromes	1	3	9	-	1	-	6	1	1	-
Indet.	Indeterminate seeds	2	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	3	1
Indet.	Unknown seeds	-	2	-	2	5	2	5	1	1	-
	<i>Total weeds</i>	25	102	52	180	91	367	104	23	51	21
Charcoal											
indet frags. < 5 mm		5	-	-	1	12	6	9	1	12	4

P=Pit, DT=Ditch Terminus, D=Ditch, G=Gully.

* Cereal fragments less than half of whole grain.

Discussion

Although some of the samples from Hatford Quarry contained relatively few charred plant remains, the assemblages as a whole were similar in content, reflecting a typical late Iron Age/Romano-British open arable landscape with spelt wheat as the dominant crop. The evidence suggests that barley formed a secondary crop, and this was especially evident in the material from the pits directly associated with the field system. The weed seed assemblage is also typical of that associated with arable agriculture during the late Iron Age and early Romano-British period in the Thames Valley and, in addition, the presence of indicators of damp meadow or wet ground may reflect the expansion of cultivation into areas perhaps previously considered marginal for crops. This mixed assemblage of arable weeds and damp or wet habitat indicators is similar to the weed assemblages from the Iron Age/Romano-British sites at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon⁴³ and at Farmoor.⁴⁴

Much of the material appears to represent the waste generated during the later stages of sieving, following the parching and pounding of the stored grain prior to use.⁴⁵ The higher levels of cereal grain relative to the cereal chaff and weed seeds in Sample 2 (Context 269, Pit 275) and Sample 14 (Context 162, Ditch 148), however, may suggest that these samples contain a higher percentage of grain that was accidentally burnt during the parching stage. Sample 8, the primary fill from Cut 355 in Enclosure 290, which probably predates the field system, may represent clearance waste of vegetation growing around or in use within the settlement.

LAND SNAILS by ELIZABETH C. STAFFORD

The flots from the samples retrieved for charred plant remains were also examined under a low-power microscope for the presence of land snails. Land snails were preserved in the majority of features in abundance, ranging from 50 to more than 300 identifiable individuals in each sample. All of the assemblages, however, were very similar in composition and of low diversity in terms of the number of species present. The species were identified and an estimate of abundance made. Nomenclature follows Kerney.⁴⁶ The evidence is only summarised here; details can be found in the project archive.

The open country species *Pupilla muscorum* and *Helicella itala* dominated the assemblages, with lesser quantities of *Vallonia* sp. particularly *V. excentrica*, and *Trichia hispida*. Occasional specimens of *Vertigo pygmaea* were also identified. Shade-loving species were almost entirely absent apart from single occurrences of *Discus rotundatus*, *Carychium* sp. and worn apices of *Cochlodina laminata* in some of the samples. The assemblages indicate that dry, very open conditions prevailed in the vicinity of the features whilst they were infilling. The character of the assemblages together with the lack of freshwater slum or ditch species suggests that the features remained dry for the period of use and during infilling. There is no evidence to suggest woodland or scrub in the locality of the site during the period of occupation, or that any of the linear features or the enclosure ditch contained heavy vegetation such as a hedgerow. The occasional occurrences of shade-loving species may well be residual elements deriving from an earlier period when less open conditions prevailed at the site. This is supported by the predominance of worn apical fragments. *Candidula* sp. were present in some of the flots. These species, although consistent with open country conditions, are thought to be a medieval introduction.⁴⁷ It is quite possible that these shells have been moved down the profile by bioturbation. This is supported by the fact that all the flots contained quantities of modern roots, seeds and the modern burrowing snail *Cecilioides acicula*.

DISCUSSION

A small assemblage of worked flint was retrieved as residual material in later features indicating that there was a human presence on this part of Hatford Down for much of the prehistoric period, possibly from the Mesolithic onwards. However, the small size of the assemblage indicates a low level of activity and does not allow for more detailed interpretation.

⁴³ M. Jones, 'The Plant Remains', in Parrington, op. cit. (note 13), 93–110.

⁴⁴ M. Robinson, 'Plants and Invertebrates: Interpretation' in Lambrick and Robinson, op. cit. (note 34), 113–115, 119–20.

⁴⁵ G. Hillman, 'Reconstructing Crop Husbandry Practices from the Charred Remains of Crops', in R.J. Mercer (ed.), *Farming Practice in British Prehistory* (1981), 123–62.

⁴⁶ M. Kerney, *Atlas of Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Britain and Ireland* (1999).

⁴⁷ Ibid. 179.

The presence of a number of features stratigraphically earlier than the 1st-century field system and a small quantity of earlier, residual pottery indicates the existence of a phase of occupation pre-dating the late Iron Age/early Roman period. The main elements of this early phase are Ring Gully 434, Ditch 435 and a small number of pits and postholes. Penannular gullies such as 434 are a common occurrence on Iron Age sites and are usually interpreted as drainage gullies surrounding circular roundhouses. This example has a diameter of c. 10 m., which is consistent with similar structures recorded elsewhere in the Upper Thames Valley.⁴⁸ The in-turned entranceway, forming an inverted porch 1.5 m. deep, is unusual, but is aligned on the east-facing orientation that is the norm for such structures.⁴⁹ Although three postholes which may form part of the porch structure were identified in the vicinity of the entrance, there were no contemporary features internal to the ring gully.

A length of ditch (435) located to the north of the ring gully probably belongs to the same phase of occupation. Certainly, its alignment and curving form distinguish it from the later field system, as does the nature of the material filling it. The ditch was shallow, and had been truncated by ploughing resulting in the survival of only a short length. This truncation may also be the reason for the sparseness of features belonging to this phase.

The small number of surviving features attributable to this phase of activity and the absence of artefactual material obviously hamper any interpretation of the nature and date of this occupation. A small assemblage of residual middle Iron Age pottery was retrieved from later features and this suggests a possible date for this earlier phase of occupation. Similar settlement remains, more securely dated to the middle Iron Age, were discovered in previous excavations c. 250 m. east of the current site⁵⁰ and it is possible that the similarity of the evidence from the two sites indicates a broadly similar date. The present site may, however, be seen as marginal to the main focus of settlement to the east, examined in 1991, and activity on the present site may have started a little later than in that area.

The date of the construction of Enclosure 290 is similarly obscure. Although material contemporary with the 1st-century field system was retrieved from the uppermost fill of the enclosure ditch, this layer is interpreted as resulting from the formation of topsoil in the hollow left by the silting up of the feature. This material is therefore likely to post-date the enclosure's abandonment and does not provide a date for its construction and use. How long a period of time passed between the enclosure passing out of use and the final silting of its ditch is unknown, as the lower fills were devoid of artefacts. In the absence of any chronological indicators, it is unknown whether the enclosure forms part of the phase of settlement evidenced by Roundhouse 434, or belongs to a separate episode of activity.

In its original form the enclosure was quite regular and trapezoidal in shape, but was later recut as a more substantial ditch with an irregular plan. The same south-facing entrance was, however, retained in both phases. The need to re-dig the enclosure ditch might suggest that use of the feature extended over a fairly long time-span. The failure of the later ditch to follow the line of its predecessor may have been deliberate, intended to increase the size of the enclosed area, but could also indicate that a period of abandonment occurred between two phases of use, during which time the original ditch became silted up and its exact line

⁴⁸ T. Allen, D. Miles and S. Palmer, 'Iron Age Buildings in the Upper Thames Valley', in Cunliffe and Miles, *op. cit.* (note 20), 89–101.

⁴⁹ A. Oswald, 'A Doorway on the Past: Practical and Mystical Concerns in the Orientation of Roundhouse Doors', in A. Gwilt and C. Haselgrove (eds.), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies* (Oxbow Monograph 71, 1997), 87–95.

⁵⁰ Bourn, *op. cit.* (note 3).

was lost. It should be noted, however, that multiple recutting of the ditches of small enclosures within a fairly short overall time-span is a characteristic of several late Iron Age sites in the region, including Linch Hill Corner,⁵¹ Gravelly Guy and Yarnnton.⁵²

Although a handful of postholes were identified within it, the enclosure did not contain any recognisable structure. The absence of artefactual material from its fills indicates that it did not serve a domestic purpose, and the most plausible interpretation is that it was used as a stock enclosure. It may be relevant that in both its phases the entrance faces down-slope, toward the Frogmore Brook and the meadows alongside it, which are likely to have been exploited for grazing.

The series of boundary ditches identified in the excavation represents the establishment of a ditched field system during the early part of the 1st century AD. The ceramic evidence indicates that this was in use for a relatively short period, ending toward the end of the 1st century or early in the 2nd. The alignment and rectilinear form of this field system, along with the dating evidence, suggests that it is part of the same system of field boundaries previously identified c. 250 m. further east in excavations by Tempus Reparatum in 1991.⁵³ The 2003 excavation seems to have identified the western limit of the field system, since the archaeological features do not extend to the west of the north-south boundary defined by Ditch 436.

The construction of so extensive a field system and the amount and frequency of maintenance demonstrated by the recuttings and modifications recorded in the excavation represent a substantial investment of labour, and a major change in the occupation and management of the landscape of Hatford Down. The establishment of a series of permanent boundaries is likely to be associated with the adoption of a more permanently sedentary pattern of settlement, and may indicate a change in exploitation of this area from grazing to a greater emphasis on arable over pastoral farming. There was no direct evidence for structures in this phase, but the quantities of domestic debris are sufficient to suggest that domestic activity was located within or very close to the site. The general paucity of structural evidence for sites of this type in the late Iron Age and Roman periods is a well-known characteristic of the region,⁵⁴ but may be explained in part by the use of mass-wall construction (such as cob) for buildings, rather than the continuation of structural traditions that involved setting timber posts in the ground.⁵⁵ Even light ploughing would remove all traces of such structures.

The evidence from both the charred plant remains and the molluscan assemblage indicate an open, arable landscape with spelt wheat as the dominant crop. The presence within the weed seed assemblage of indicators of wet ground is probably the result of the proximity of the site to the Frogmore Brook and the expansion of arable agriculture in that direction, while the molluscan evidence indicates that the area of the site itself was consistently very dry, as would be expected from its location on the well-drained Corallian Sand. The occupants of the site exploited the main domestic animal species. Of these, sheep

⁵¹ W. F. Grimes, 'Excavations at Stanton Harcourt, Oxon. 1940', *Oxoniensia*, viii-ix (1943), 19-63.

⁵² G. Lambrick and T. Allen, *Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt: The Development of a Prehistoric and Romano-British Landscape* (OA Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 2005); Timby and Hey, op. cit. (note 18).

⁵³ Bourn, op. cit. (note 3), 14-20.

⁵⁴ Cf. Henig and Booth, op. cit. (note 29), 94-5.

⁵⁵ Allen, Miles and Palmer, op. cit. (note 48), 94; cf. G.D. Keevill and P. Booth, 'Settlement, Sequence and Structure: Romano-British Stone-Built Roundhouses at Redlands Farm, Stanwick (Northants) and Alchester (Oxon)', in R.M. and D.E. Friendship-Taylor (eds.), *From Round House to Villa* (1997), 43.

were most important, supplemented with smaller numbers of cattle and pig. The relative frequency of the latter may reflect increasing Roman influence on the stock-rearing practices of the region, though the general chronology and character of the site suggest that Roman influence would probably have been less marked here than it was elsewhere.

The ceramic evidence is typified by a very limited range of vessel forms and a paucity of fine wares, indicating that Hatford was a low-status settlement comparable to similar rural sites at Thornhill Farm and Gravelly Guy. The chronological range is shorter than that found in the 1991 excavation, possibly indicating that this western end of the field system was abandoned earlier than the main occupation area, which lay further east.

Occupation seems to have come to an end during the latter part of the 1st century or early in the 2nd, perhaps a little earlier than seen in the 1991 excavation, where early-2nd-century settlement was better attested. In this respect Hatford conforms with a wider pattern of settlement dislocation seen at this time throughout the Upper Thames Valley.⁵⁶ The cause of this widespread dislocation, which affected a majority of lower-status rural settlements but does not seem to have impacted on the larger nucleated settlements or the villas of the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch area, is unknown, but it may perhaps result from politically driven changes in land tenure which are not archaeologically detectable. Romano-British settlement did, however, continue nearby, both to the east and to the south-west at the site of a probable villa on the other side of the Frogmore Brook.⁵⁷ Since that site is known only from surface evidence there is insufficient evidence to judge its exact chronological relationship to Hatford Quarry, though the broad 2nd- to 4th-century date range assigned to the surface material has been taken to suggest a sequential relationship between the two sites.⁵⁸ The present site presumably continued to function as part of the wider agricultural landscape, but there is no direct evidence to indicate the precise nature of such use. It is notable, however, that the Roman trackways identified in the 1991 excavations were aligned east-west (the principal alignment) and north-south, suggesting that the alignment established for the field system in the present excavation was maintained into the Roman period. It is unclear how long this layout persisted, but it may have survived relatively late, relating to a focus of continuing settlement located to the east and reflected by the scatter of 4th-century coins found in the 1991 excavation.⁵⁹

Medieval exploitation of the area was recorded in the form of plough furrows in the south-eastern area of the excavation, interpreted as the remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation. More recently, however, parts of the valley had been common pasture.⁶⁰ The post-medieval period was represented by a pair of probable quarry pits, reflecting an ongoing local tradition of quarrying and related activities, indicated for example by the name Brick Kiln Copse found just 300 m. south of the present site.

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⁵⁶ Henig and Booth, *op. cit.* (note 29), 106–8.

⁵⁷ Miles, *op. cit.* (note 2).

⁵⁸ Bourn, *op. cit.* (note 3), 68.

⁵⁹ J.A. Davies, 'The Coins', in Bourn, *op. cit.* (note 3), 46–7.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bourn, *op. cit.* (note 3), 5.

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LOCATION OF THE ARCHIVE

The site archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service, Standlake (accession no: OXCMS 2003.31), and a microfilmed copy of the paper records will be deposited at the National Archaeological Record, RCHME, Swindon.