Early Roman and Late Anglo-Saxon Occupation at Langford Park Farm, London Road, Bicester

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SUMMARY

Archaeological excavation in 2013 at Langford Park Farm, Bicester, in advance of the lowering of ground for a flood compensation scheme, revealed evidence for early Roman and late Anglo-Saxon field systems in the floodplain of the Langford Brook. The early Roman layout consisted of large fields, with two later phases of subdivision into smaller paddocks, before an abandonment, probably before the middle of the second century. There were no indications of buildings, although a tiny quantity of opus signinum *flooring suggests there must be one nearby, and all categories of finds were rare. Two small deposits of cremated bone may be remains of pyre debris rather than burials. There was then apparently no use of the site until a late Anglo-Saxon phase which consisted of a layout very similar to the small paddocks of the last Roman phase. Both the Roman and late Anglo-Saxon periods provided small quantities of pottery, animal bone and plant remains.*

Between July and November 2013, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd (TVAS) carried out an excavation of *c.*1.30 hectares of land at Langford Park Farm, London Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire (SP 5845 2134) (Fig. 1), in advance of the lowering of ground for a flood compensation scheme. The site is located on the south side of Bicester, north of Graven Hill and south of the Oxford–Bicester railway line. The site is on the north-eastern side of Langford Park Farm and was flat agricultural land at a height of 66 metres above Ordnance Datum in the floodplain of the Langford Brook, which flows south-west past the northern edge of the site. The underlying geology consists of Kellaways Sand Member. The archaeological potential of the site had been demonstrated by evaluation trenching which revealed early Roman and late Anglo-Saxon deposits from several locations across the site.[1]

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in an area of notable prehistoric and, especially, Roman occupation, while the centre of Bicester is producing increasing evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period. Almost all of the archaeological evidence in the area, apart from Alchester Roman town, has come to light in the last two decades.[2]

Excavations at Bicester Fields Farm, about 1.2 kilometres north of the present site, just on the other side of Langford Brook, located a settlement dated to the late Iron Age (first

[1] A. Taylor, 'Langford Park Farm, London Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation', unpublished TVAS report 10/107 (2010).

[2] Pre-medieval Bicester is barely mentioned in G. Briggs et al. (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region,* Oxford University Department for External Studies (1986).

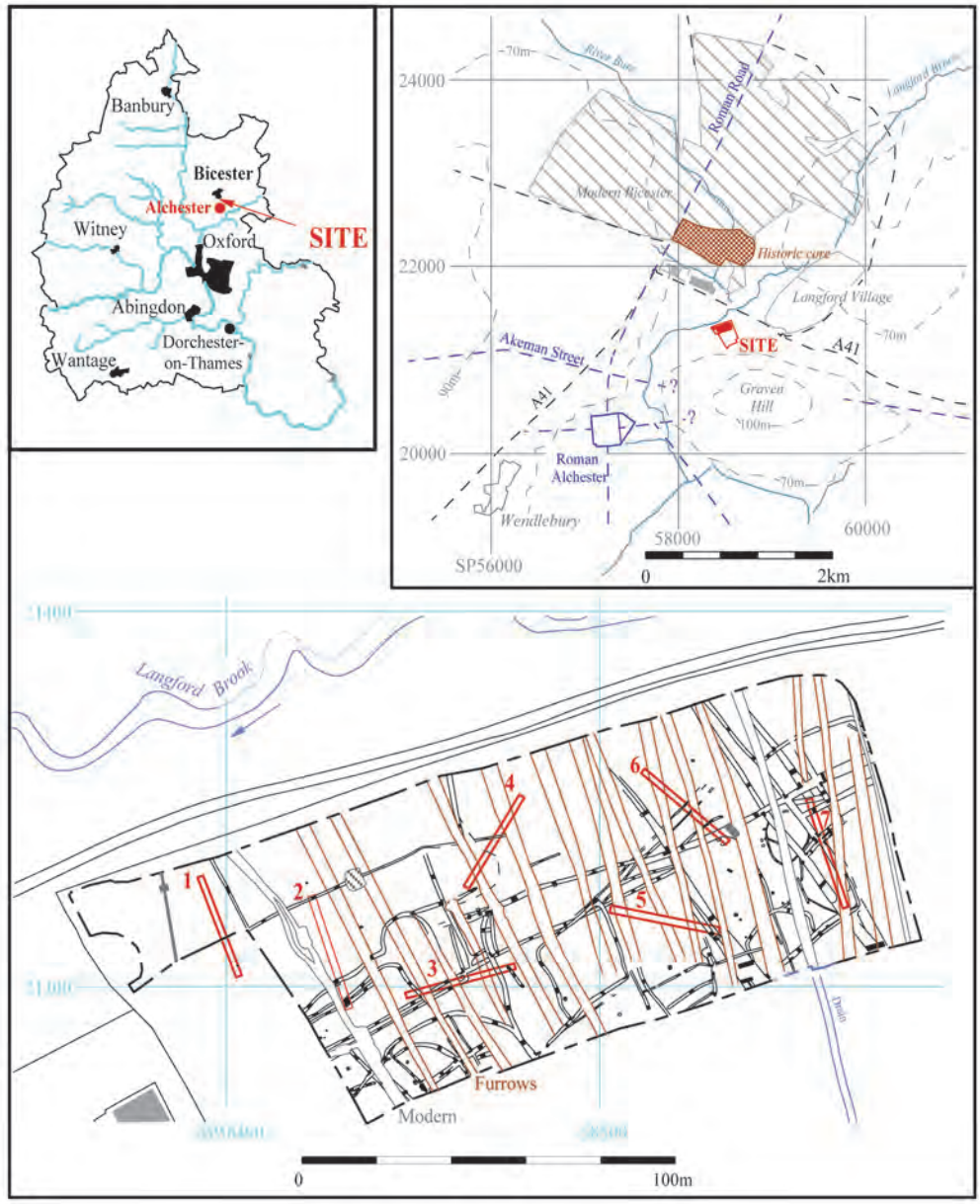

Fig. 1. Langford Park Farm, Bicester: site location in Oxfordshire, Bicester, and in detail (showing evaluation trenches).

century BC to first century AD).[3] It comprised a complex enclosure with two phases, together probably lasting a hundred years. This enclosure contained the remains of a single roundhouse, and other gullies, and a human burial and animal skeletons were recorded surrounding the enclosure. The economy of the site was largely pastoral but the evidence for unusually large

[3] A.M. Cromarty et al., 'The Excavation of a Late Iron Age Enclosed Settlement at Bicester Fields Farm, Bicester, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, 64 (1999), pp. 153–233.

cattle suggests it may have been of high status. Mesolithic flintwork was also recovered, suggesting earlier prehistoric activity.

The site lies north-east of the Roman small town of Alchester, the background for which has been explored elsewhere and need not be repeated here.[4] There has been much recent archaeological work outside the walled town.[5] Unusually, the town is set near, though not quite on, a major road junction. Margary route 160, from Towcester to Dorchester (and beyond to Silchester), passes north-east to south-west through Bicester on the line taken by the modern A4421 to the north, turning south along Wendlebury Road and meeting Akeman Street some 300 metres north of Roman Alchester.[6] A minor road from the east gate of the Roman town might also join Akeman Street having, presumably, skirted Graven Hill.[7] Akeman Street then continues on to Cirencester. If the line of Akeman Street east of the town passes north of Graven Hill rather than climbing it (and it is not clear until much further east), then it would pass very near the south edge of the current site (Fig. 1).

A substantial early Roman occupation site, dating from the first to second century, was recorded during evaluation followed by very limited excavations in 1994 at the Bicester Retail Village, just 300 metres to the north of Langford Park Farm and also in the Langford Brook floodplain.[8] Several phases of ditch digging were identified, with building structures likely to be the remains of a group of farms. That site was interpreted as reclaimed land, with ditches serving not only as boundaries but as drainage channels. Water channels of the River Bure silted up over the period of occupation, in increasingly wetter climatic conditions.

Another Roman settlement, this time incorporating late Iron-Age evidence (ring gullies, postholes and ditches), was recorded 200 metres to the north-east during trial trenching.[9] A further evaluation 200 metres to the north-west revealed two palaeochannels on the floodplain of Langford Brook with archaeological features surviving within a sequence of three phases of alluvial deposits. Few of the features investigated provided dating evidence but by extrapolation of the results of the excavated sites nearby, it is considered that this initial phase of activity dates to the late Iron Age or early Roman period.[10]

At Bicester Park, 2 kilometres to the north-east, excavations examined part of a Roman rural settlement, which may have been established with respect to a linear land boundary of late Iron Age/early Roman origin, and was in use from the later first century AD to the late third or early fourth century. It was defined by a series of rectangular enclosures and

[4] E. Sauer, 'Alchester: Origins and Destiny of Oxfordshire's Earliest Roman Site (The Tom Hassall Lecture for 2005)', *Oxoniensia*, 71 (2006), pp. 1–29. Compare with the scant picture available to B.C. Burnham and J.S. Wacher, *The 'Small Towns' of Roman Britain* (1990), pp. 97–103.

[5] P.M. Booth et al., 'Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester, Oxfordshire, 1991', Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 1 (2001); E. Sauer, 'Merton/Wendlebury: The Roman Army at Alchester', *SMidlA*, 29 (1999), pp. 61–5; idem, 'Wendlebury, Alchester, a Vexillation Fortress of the Year AD 44', *SMidlA*, 31 (2001), pp. 72–6; idem, 'Wendlebury (Alchester), an Annexe of AD 44 and the Earlier(?) Main Fortress', *SMidlA*, 32 (2002), pp. 84–94; idem, 'Wendlebury (Alchester Fortress), Headquarters, Granary and Timber Bridge', *SMidlA*, 33 (2003), pp. 90–105; idem, 'Wendlebury (Alchester Fortress), the 2003 Season', *SMidlA*, 34 (2004), pp. 78–84; idem, 'Edinburgh University (Alchester)', *SMidlA*, 35 (2005), pp. 89–94. Significant results are also expected from recent work in advance of the Bicester to Oxford railway line upgrade, especially at Langford Lane, which provided a transect across the southern extramural area either side of the Alchester–Dorchester road (https://oxfordarchaeology.com/archaeology-case-studies/440-bicester-to-oxford-rail-line).

[6] I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (1955), p. 144; J. Lewis, 'Wendlebury Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire, Phase 2: An Archaeological Evaluation', unpublished TVAS report 10/97 (2010).

[7] E. Sauer, 'Alchester, a Claudian "Vexillation Fortress" near the Western Boundary of the Catuvellauni: New Light on the Roman Invasion of Britain', *The Archaeological Journal*, 157 (2000), illustration 1.

[8] C. Mould, 'An Archaeological Excavation at Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 61 (1996), pp. 65–108.

[9] 'Bicester Office Park, Archaeological Trench Evaluation', unpublished Network Archaeology report (2007).

[10] D. Gilbert, 'An Archaeological Evaluation of Land off London Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire', unpublished JMHS report, 1768b (2007).

sub-enclosures, separated from a domestic area to the south by a trackway. A likely southern continuation of this site was uncovered during more evaluation work at Bicester Park.[11]

At Whitelands Farm, around 1.5 km to the west, a multi-period site ranged from the early Bronze Age to the middle Anglo-Saxon period.[12] Late Iron-Age and Roman features comprised quarry pits, ditches, corn driers/ovens, pits and postholes, enclosure ditches, stone-lined tanks and culverts. Anglo-Saxon features (fifth to seventh century) consisted of dispersed pits and postholes and re-use of a stone-lined tank.

The historic (Anglo-Saxon and medieval) core of Bicester was in the south of the modern town, not far from the current site.[13] A substantial Anglo-Saxon settlement dating from the fifth century onwards has been found to the rear of the King's Arms, Market Square.[14] Other Anglo-Saxon evidence for the town remained slight until the recent discovery of a seventh-century cemetery.[15] Slight evidence for early/middle Anglo-Saxon activity was also found during the evaluation at Bicester Park.[16]

DISCUSSION

Prehistoric

The earliest activity on the site is represented by Mesolithic struck flint, all residual in later features. These finds are likely to be a product of casual loss or discard rather than being indicative of occupation.

Roman

The Roman period is represented by at least three phases of activity (Fig. 2). Some of the earliest cut features date to the middle of the first century AD. The first phase might have its origins in the late Iron Age, but an early Roman date is preferred as no feature contains only pre-conquest pottery. It appears that a fairly complete field system was laid out during this period. There are also a small number of pits (25, 123, 311, 506, 507 and 545) in this phase. Ditch 1023 may indicate the eastern limit of the site (although there is a single pit east of it) but all the other boundaries continue beyond the excavated area, north, south and west.

There is no evidence of settlement structures, but it is possible there were buildings somewhere in the near vicinity. The very modest quantity of ceramic building material is no clear indicator of nearby buildings, as this durable material can be re-used, but the presence of *opus signinum* (from one of the medieval or later furrows which cover the site) is probably more significant in this regard as it was less likely to be re-used.

Bone finds show managed cattle and sheep/goat, horse and pig. The quantity of finds was insufficient for reliable statistical comparison but the assemblage appears broadly typical of most domestic assemblages of the period. The indication of the butchery of horse is notable but by no means rare for the period. It remains a moot point if horse was butchered for human consumption or as dog-food in this period.[17] The charred plant remains indicated that

[11] A. Westgarth and S. Carlyle, 'A Roman Settlement at Bicester Park, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia,* 73, (2008), pp. 121–46; 'Bicester Park, Land South of London to Banbury Railway Line, Bicester: Archaeological Evaluation Report', unpublished OAU report (1997).

[12] J. Martin, 'Prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Activity at Whitelands Farm, Bicester', *Oxoniensia,* 76 (2011), pp. 201–10.

[13] J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Bicester: The Minster and the Town', *Oxoniensia*, 67 (2002), pp. 133–40.

[14] P.A. Harding and P. Andrews, 'Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Settlement at Chapel Street, Bicester: Excavations 1999–2000', *Oxoniensia,* 67 (2002), pp. 141–79.

[15] J. Lewis et al., 'Middle Anglo-Saxon Cemetery and Medieval Occupation at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Bicester', *Oxoniensia*, 79 (2014), pp. 148–56.

[16] 'Bicester Park'.

[17] R. Lauwerier, *Animals in Roman Times in the Dutch Eastern River Area,* ROB Nederlandse Oudheden, 12 (1988).

Fig. 2. Phase plan, phases 2, 3i and 3ii (furrows removed, inset magnified 150 per cent).

predominantly wheat but also barley, rye (not positively identified) and oats were eaten. The lack of chaff does not necessarily mean that cereal processing did not occur on the site; rarity of chaff is a phenomenon repeatedly reported from archaeological deposits.

The Roman boundaries changed even through the narrow time frame of the Roman occupation. In Phase 2 there appears to be a series of quite large fields and the system is seen to extend the full width of the site. There does appear to be a series of linear divisions within these larger parcels of land, likely created as part of a stock management system. There was then remodelling of the site during Phase 3. In Phase 3i the main focus of change was in the east, while much of the Phase 2 system in the west was still in use. In the east a series of small enclosures was excavated within a larger rectangular field (ditches 1028–31 and 1038) and a narrow trackway extends the limits eastwards, with the larger field's western boundary still provided by the Phase 2 ditch 1022. In Phase 3ii there was again remodelling in the eastern part of the site. Some of the small enclosures were overlain by a large ditch (1032) forming the axis from which further subdivisions were made. It does not appear there was much change in the centre or the west of the site but given the short period covered by the two phases it seems entirely possible that parts of the field system laid out in Phase 2 were still in use. The later smaller enclosures were most likely used for stock control. One may be considered as evidence for a building (1037) but it is far from convincing and a pen is more probable. There does not appear to be any significant change in diet, however there are only a limited number of charred seeds and none of the cereal from Phase 3 could be identified to species.

The apparent abandonment of the site in the early second century follows a marked regional trend and is matched nearby at the almost adjacent site at Oxford Road (though there the start of occupation was more clearly pre-conquest than can be shown to be the case here), while at Bicester Fields Farm late Iron-Age occupation may have ceased even before the conquest. The creation of the new town at Alchester ought, of course, to have drawn population off the land around to settle it, but in fact this pattern is rarely clearly evinced in the archaeological record of the period, and even if inhabitants did move from their farms into the town, the fields would probably have continued in use. Possibly the fields in the area did continue in use, simply with no new cutting of ditches, and no opportunity for pottery to find its way into them, but in a floodplain setting ditches required constant cleaning out so this scenario seems unlikely. The Oxford Road site showed evidence for flooding with alluvium both pre-dating and post-dating the Roman occupation there, and that seems a more plausible explanation for abandonment here than a movement of population. Evidence for a rising water table from the middle Iron Age through the early Roman period is now well established and although there is no direct evidence for it here, the abandonment of this site fits the pattern.[18] It may be that the attempt to bring this somewhat marginal land into use in the first place reflected increasing pressure on resources in the 1st centuries BC and AD.

There is no evidence of zoned usage of any specific area or plot within the overall site, in any phase – indeed there is little evidence for land use other than the ditches themselves, with few pits and postholes of Roman date. Finds of all kinds were sparse, so that no differentiation could be made amongst activities leading to the fills of various features.

The two deposits of cremated bone on the site unfortunately were so poorly preserved as to permit virtually no useful information to be derived from them apart from their shared use of willow/poplar wood charcoal as fuel for the pyre rather than the more usual oak.

Anglo-Saxon

The site was abandoned for more than half a millennium, until the very late Anglo-Saxon period. During the late Anglo-Saxon period a series of ditches and enclosures was laid out and

[18] G. Lambrick with M. Robinson, *The Thames Through Time: The Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames. The Thames Valley in Later Prehistory: 1500BC–AD50*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 29 (2009), pp. 31–4.

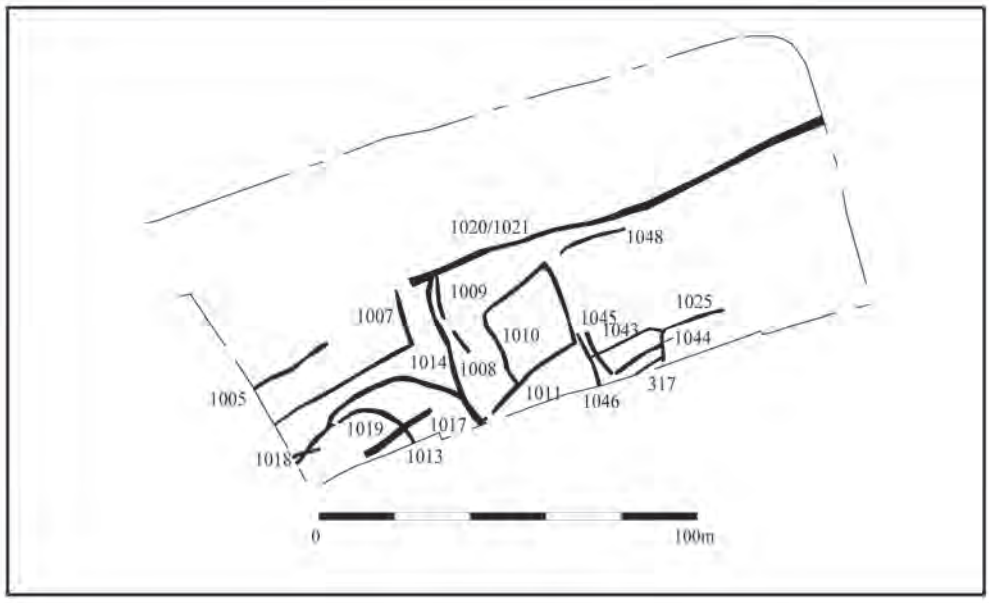

Fig. 3. Phase plan, phase 4 (furrows removed, insets magnified 150 per cent).

utilized probably to corral stock (Fig. 3). The broad alignment of the layout was similar to the Roman one, but it appears that both simply reflect the topography, dominated by the brook to the north. The late Anglo-Saxon phase is markedly restricted to the line south of ditch 1020, perhaps suggesting that the land to the north was still prone to flooding. Again there is no evidence of building remains but, as above for the Roman phases of occupation, the full extent of the settlement has not been identified with features continuing past the edges of the excavation to south, west and east.

The faunal remains recovered show a slightly wider range of species, including cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, deer, dog and crow, though the latter two were probably not consumed, and the sample as a whole remains small. The charred plant remains indicated the typical presence of barley, rye (again, not positively identified), wheat and oats, with much more barley than previously, but still from small samples offering little other detail as to the nature of cereal production or diet. Again other finds were lacking.

The late Anglo-Saxon evidence at Langford (rectilinear ditches and enclosures) can be considered in relation to the growing debate about the origins and functions of ditched boundaries and enclosures.[19] The middle and late Anglo-Saxon periods saw the emergence of many settlements characterized by systems of ditched enclosures. These linear features varied in size, shape and extent but were likely to be accompanied by banks and hedges, and many were re-cut or the systems remodelled over long periods. Why did these boundary features become a prominent element in the settlement patterns of this time? Some of the theories focus on changes in animal husbandry practices, such as a shift to more intensive stock rearing regimes with the possibility that animals were kept closer to settlements than before, thus enclosures and droveways kept the animals away from buildings and funnelled stock traffic away from crops and hay meadows. Others discuss the enclosures/boundaries in

[19] A. Reynolds, 'Boundaries and Settlements in the Later Sixth to Eleventh-Century England', in D. Griffiths et al. (eds.), *Boundaries in Early Medieval Britain*, Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History, 12 (2003), pp. 98–136; H. Hamerow, 'The Development of Anglo-Saxon Rural Settlement Forms', *Landscape History*, 31 (2010), pp. 5–23.

relation to social control and order in terms of where legal and other responsibilities began and ended.[20]

The biological and landscape evidence from this site, as far as it goes, indicates an open landscape with ditched fields and enclosures probably accompanied by hedges in both the Roman and Anglo-Saxon phases. It is likely that the enclosures were used for stock management but the larger field pattern in Phase 2 could suggest arable cultivation. The plant macrofossil evidence indicates wheat, barley, perhaps spelt/rye and oats being found together with a range of weed seeds typically associated with cultivation: it is not impossible that the cereals present in lowest quantities (oats and possibly rye) themselves were weeds, or accidental inclusions in the wheat or barley crop. Yet this need not indicate cereals were being grown in the near vicinity as they could have been bought into site from elsewhere, pre-processed. The charcoal, as ever, would be from wood selected for fuel from a wider, possibly much wider, variety of woodland and again could come from some distance, but both dry oak woodland and damper conditions favouring willow (along the brook) are indicated. The apparent preference for willow in the cremation deposits is unusual but may reflect nothing more than local availability.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Earlier evaluation trenching on the site had revealed features of late Iron Age/early Roman and late Anglo-Saxon dates throughout the area.[21] As a result of these findings, full excavation of the area to be reduced was required to fulfil the planning condition. The evidence from features and finds from the evaluation is fully integrated into the description below.

Topsoil and overburden were mechanically stripped from an area roughly 160 m by 80 m (Figs. 4 and 5). All archaeological features were planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, with sampling of features dependent on their type, according to the agreed scheme. Two suspected cremation burials were whole-earth sampled in 20 mm spits and fully excavated. Bulk soil samples were taken from 38 sealed contexts for environmental evidence and to enhance small finds recovery. Some of these yielded carbonized environmental material and many also produced small quantities of finds (but typically only non-descript fired clay).

The area contained a high density of features, mainly ditches and gullies, some forming enclosures, with some pits, and a small number of postholes and two cremation burials. The site is a multi-phased one with (possibly) later Iron-Age and certainly early Roman activity, in three probably continuous phases, followed by late Anglo-Saxon occupation, but showing no continuity between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. Medieval or post-medieval activity is represented in the form of around 20 close-spaced (4.5–7.5 m apart) furrows aligned north-north-west to south-south-east across the entire site. The furrows have been removed from plans for clarity, and are not further discussed. The archive contains full information on *c.*650 separately recorded contexts.

PHASE SUMMARY

The site is described in the following phases: Phase 1 is represented only by residual flints (Mesolithic); Phase 2 (ceramic phase 1a) is late Iron Age to earliest Roman (up to Flavian); Phase 3 (ceramic phase 1b) is early Roman (Flavian to early second century); and Phase 4 (ceramic phase 2) is late Anglo-Saxon (tenth–eleventh century).

Based on the pottery analysis, some features within the early Roman period have more refined ceramic chronology (ceramic phase 1a or 1b) but others could be assigned only to

[20] Ibid.
[21] Taylor, 'Langford Park Farm'.

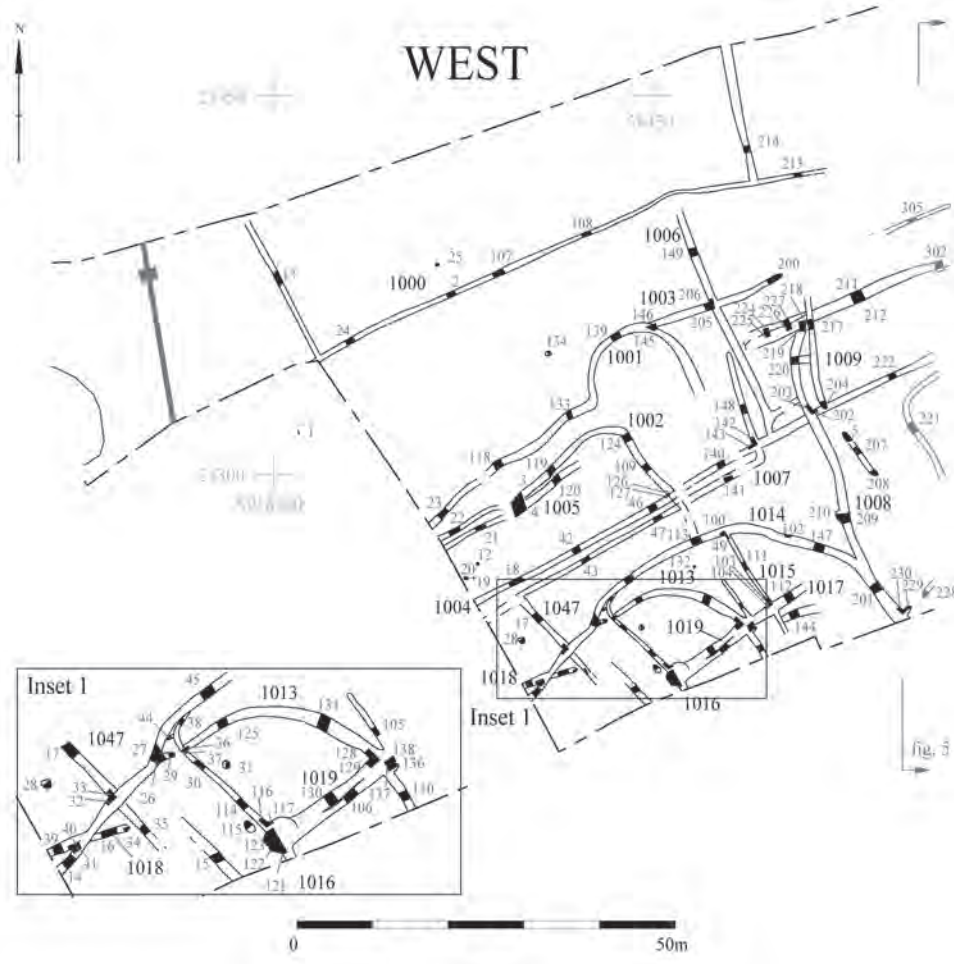

Fig. 4. Western portion of site, plan of all excavated features.

a broad Roman phase (ceramic phase 1; spanning site Phases 2 and 3). However, many of these latter features have been shown to have stratigraphic relationships; this has permitted sub-division of the majority of these elements on the finer chronological scale. The majority of features in all phases form field/enclosure boundaries, which allows landscape analysis, as well as direct stratigraphic relationships, to be used as a basis for phasing. Other Roman features have been attributed to sub-phases on the basis of an assessment of the site on a landscape scale together with a logical fit into the site development narrative, where strictly chronological evidence (finds or stratigraphy) is lacking. However, it must be admitted that some details of the sub-phasing are speculative. Spatial organization on a landscape scale is useful when trying to widen the discussion about lifestyle, community and society. Such data are required to consider topics such as land division, land ownership, and social interaction, so the uncertainties over chronology should be borne in mind, and where phasing is speculative this is made clear below.

Phase 1: Mesolithic

The earliest occupation is represented by struck flint, all appearing as residual material; the collection includes a Mesolithic component, with possibly all the flint belonging to this period.

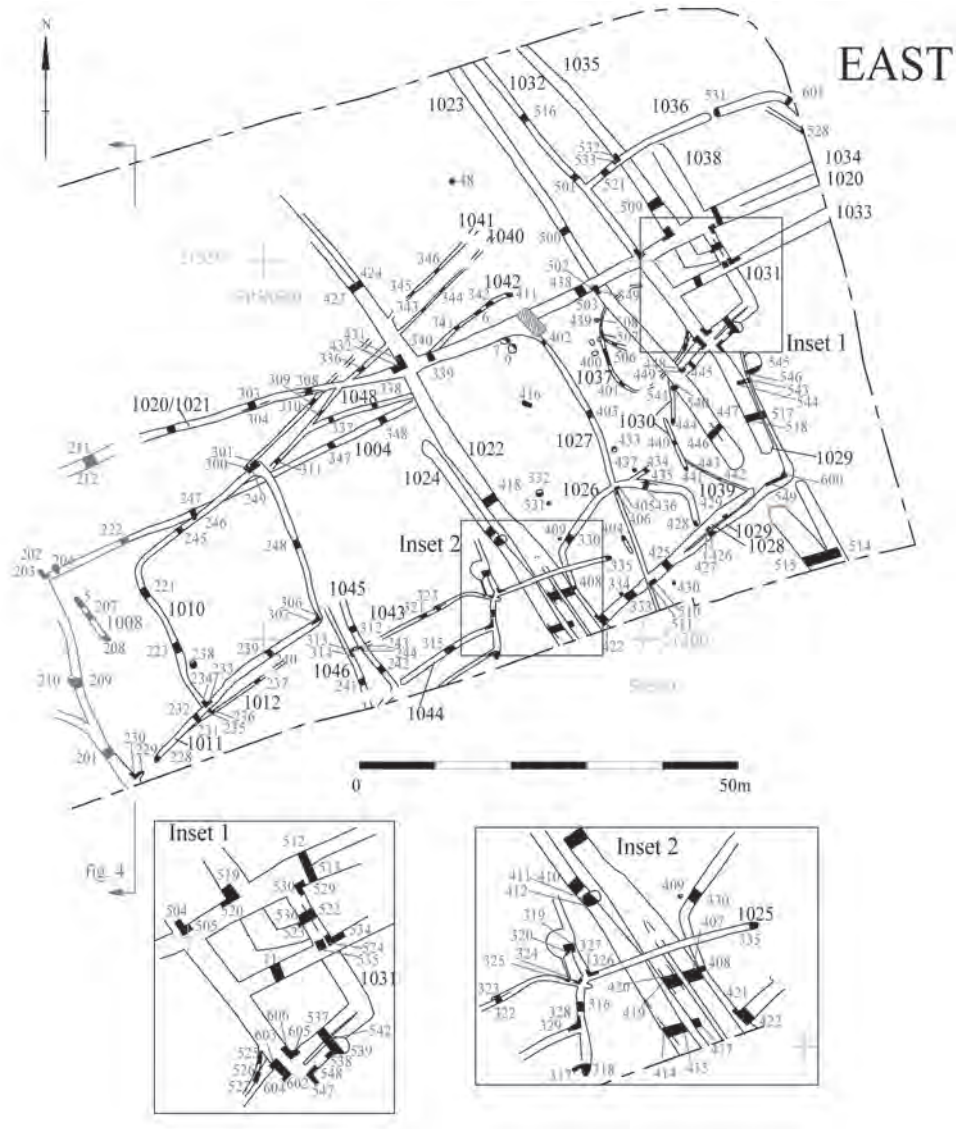

Fig. 5. Eastern portion of site, plan of all excavated features.

These finds are likely to represent casually lost or discarded finds and point to a low level of activity in the area at this time.

Phase 2: Later Iron Age–Early Roman (up to Flavian c.AD 69)

Some features have pottery dated to a broad later Iron Age to early second century date (ceramic phase 1 undifferentiated) but site stratigraphy allows them to be more tightly phased in this early phase. Other features in this phase contain pottery exclusively belonging to ceramic phase 1a. Most of the features are ditches, and as the pottery dates the period when they were filling, they were probably laid out a couple of decades (or more) earlier: the ceramic chronology does not allow a clear division into pre- and post-conquest, but there are no individual pottery assemblages with purely pre-Roman wares, so no definitely pre-conquest use of the site can be demonstrated.

The earliest field system is represented by a series of ditches and gullies (13, 214, 1000, 1001, 1003, 1004, 1006, 1022, 1023, 1024, and 1042). The east-south-east to west-north-west and north-north-west to south-south-east axis of the system appeared to be influenced by the Langford Brook to the north; no full plans of fields were observed within the site area.

In the west and through the centre of the site a long stretch of ditch (1004) was laid out for at least 104 m on an east-south-east to west-north-west alignment. It was rather slight, at between 0.61 m and 0.90 m wide and between 0.14 m and 0.28 m deep (Fig. 6) but seems to have had a lasting influence on site layout. This ditch is poorly dated with its only finds being an intrusive Anglo-Saxon sherd (slot 18) and some pottery crumbs; however stratigraphy places it early in the site development and the favoured interpretation (based on the layout) is that it was related to other Phase 2 features (Fig. 2). Ditch 1004 at its eastern end is likely to have joined with ditch 1022, but a medieval or later furrow obscured this relationship: as 1004 did not continue beyond 1022, they are taken to be contemporary. Ditch 1022 was *c*.70 m long, on a north-north-west to south-south-east axis, both north and south of ditch 1004, and between 1.20–1.90 m wide and 0.35–0.60 m deep (Fig. 6). It had been redefined in stretches but not completely recut along the entire length: nonetheless it probably survived into the next phase. Parallel to this and *c*.1 m to the west was ditch 1024. This was recorded for 31 m, entirely to the south of ditch 1004, and it was between 0.80 m and 1.40 m wide and 0.23–0.30 m deep (Fig. 6). This could be either an earlier version or a replacement for ditch 1022; or part of a very narrow droveway into the southern field created by ditches 1004 and 1022. Alternatively, such a shallow feature recalls Columella's method for creating a hedged boundary.[22]

Approximately 35 m to the north of ditch 1004 was another linear ditch (1000) on a broadly parallel alignment for *c*.80 metres. From this two further ditches (13 and 214) led off on a south-south-east to north-north-west alignment, creating the southern edge of a further field leading towards the brook to the north. Ditch 1006 has also been assigned to this phase and taken with ditches 1000 and 1004 creates a small field/paddock, with an entrance gap in the north. This field would be 37 m south-south-east to north-north-west and over 50 m west-north-west to east-south-east. Within this field were further divisions, an irregular ditch 1001 and a small stretch of gully 1003, which are likely to do with stock control, 1001 forming a small semi-circular pen.

In the east of the site was ditch 1023 on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment, *c*.25 m to the east of ditch 1022 and parallel to it; this ditch appeared to have an entrance from the east towards the south edge of the site. This is considered to be part of the larger system on landscape considerations and this is not contradicted by the pottery dating. It may have marked a broad droveway on the edge of this system (or between fields extending further east, no trace of which survived in the area explored here). This ditch was *c*.75 m long with an entrance gap of *c*.5 m, towards the south. It was between 0.90 m and 1.50 m wide and 0.30–0.45 m deep (Fig. 6). It may have marked the limit of the system at this point, as no linear features, and only a single pit, were located east of it.

A small stretch of gully 1042 divided the area between ditches 1022 and 1023; its function is unclear and it might fit better in the next phase but it contained 23 sherds of mainly grog-tempered pottery which appears early. Small gully 506/7 has likewise been attributed to this phase on the basis of its ceramics but it may fit in the next phase.

There were only a small number of pits attributed to this phase (25, 123, 332 and 545), on the basis of their pottery. Pit 25 was 0.49 m in diameter and 0.11 m deep. Pit 123 was over 1.49 m by over 0.94 m and 0.23 m deep. Pit 332 was 1.00 m by 0.90 m and 0.67 m deep. It produced a large amount of mostly indeterminate cereal grains, with wheat the most numerous of those identified. A small number of barley and oat grains were also recorded alongside a number of chaff fragments and weed seeds. Pit 545 was 2.00 m in diameter and over 0.50 m deep.

[22] O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (1986), pp. 183–4.

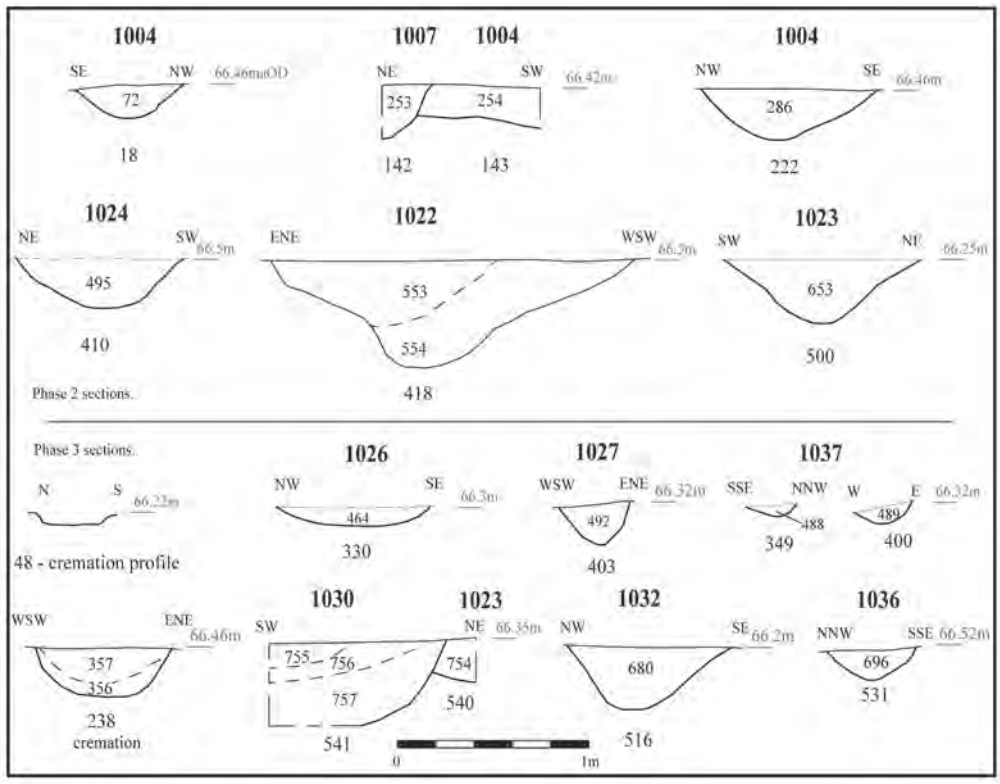

Fig. 6. Sections of Roman (Phases 2 and 3) features.

A small sub-rectangular pit 416 (1.03 m by 0.50 m and 0.16 m deep) was located centrally between ditches 1022 and 1023. It contained a large number of tiny flecks of burnt animal bone (sheep/goat or pig), twenty sherds of pottery (but mostly just crumbs) and a small but varied assemblage of charred plant remains, mostly weeds and indeterminate cereal but including hazelnut and peas, with charcoal dominated by willow/poplar with a little oak. This was initially considered on site as a possible cremation (indeed the presence of hazelnuts, and dominance of willow/poplar charcoal is very similar to the plant remains recorded from cremation 238) but it contained no human bone and the animal bone is more likely accidentally burnt than deliberately cremated. It is probably just a dump of kitchen fire waste, but the possibility that it was the remains of a burnt animal sacrifice cannot be wholly discounted, or even the disposal of pyre remains from a cremation, from which the human bone has been carefully removed. Its pottery suggests the early date, but it is possible this feature belongs in phase 3 with the two cremations.

Phase 3: Flavian to Early Second Century

The basic orientation of the site established in Phase 2 continued to dominate its use into Phase 3 (Fig. 2). Based on stratigraphy there appear to be two distinct sub-phases of activity and re-landscaping of the site in this short period, so the phase has been subdivided into Phases 3i and 3ii. It should be noted that there is no ceramic difference between these sub-phases. It is uncertain if the previous boundaries remained in place (even with their ditches filled up, hedges or banks could have marked these lines) but it is quite likely, as the new boundaries seem somewhat incomplete otherwise.

Phase 3i (Fig. 2, centre) There appears to a reorganization, mainly in the eastern part of the site, with ditches being laid out to form smaller enclosures, but within the overall layout already defined. It is suggested that parts of the field system laid out in Phase 2 were still visible in the landscape and in use during this sub-phase of site occupation, with the main change being the replacement of ditch 1023.

In this interpretation, ditch 1022 was still in use as a western boundary and ditch 1028 was excavated to create a southern boundary, then extended as 1029, cutting across 1023, to create a replacement for 1023. Ditch 1028 was recorded for *c.*25 m and contained only ceramic phase 1b pottery. Ditch 1029 was on a south-west to north-east axis for 33 m before turning on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment for *c.*15 metres. To the north of this was ditch 1030, which was segmented and joined with 1038 in its north-eastern end. Ditch 1038 was 1.50 m wide and over 0.50 m deep (Fig. 6) and recorded on a north-north-west to south-south-east axis for *c.*30 m. Ditch 1034 appears to join with this ditch, extending the system of boundaries out of the site to the east.

Ditch 1031 was seen just to the north of 1030 and may have been an earlier version of this ditch or a replacement; yet it is still part of this field/enclosure system. Another stretch of ditch 1035 has been assigned to this phase of site development; this being 28 m in length, 1.70 m wide and 0.32 m deep. It parallels 1038 and stops short of its southern end, forming a trackway or drafting race for stock management leading into the site to the north and stopping just short of the area of small enclosures/pens.

The partial ground plan of an enclosure 1037 was recorded. One may consider it to be a ring gully structure but as only part of the penannular gully was recorded and it was not especially close to a true circle it is far more likely to be a pen for stock. This gully was extremely ephemeral, being between 0.26–0.33 m wide and just 0.05–0.10 m deep (Fig. 6). If projected, the structure had a *c.*11 m internal diameter. It contained no internal features but the gully itself contained pottery and animal bone. It had an opening to the north-east but whether this was an entrance or merely that the gully was not deep enough to penetrate the geology is not possible to tell. It was also truncated by a furrow to the south. It contained ceramic phases 1a and 1a/b pottery but from a layout perspective, it fits best in this sub-phase.

The same can be said of enclosure ditch 1026, which only contained ceramic phase 1a/b pottery but fits well into a site plan if considered as the same phase as 1028/9, to form another small stock enclosure. Alternatively, a morphologically very similar 'D'-shaped enclosure within a larger enclosure at Old Shifford Farm has been interpreted as enclosing a building based on the quantity of finds recovered, although there was no structural evidence.[23]

In the far west of the site a stretch of ditch 1002 has been assigned to this phase on the basis of stratigraphy and limited pottery evidence. It was observed on a east-west alignment for *c.*29 m before turning sharply to the south for *c.*16 m; it cut ditch 1004 but also probably relied on the latter to create a small pen. Also in the far west of the site, parallel ditches 1047 and 1016 on a north-west to south-east alignment are likely to represent the corresponding western edge of the field created by ditches 1004 and 1022 (in which case, it would be 82–86 m wide) and mark a similar subdivision as that formed by 1002. There was no dating evidence from either of these, but they were cut by Anglo-Saxon ditches: they could belong to the earlier phase but appear to represent a similar process to what is happening in this phase. A cremation burial (48) was recorded west of ditch 1035, it contained two tiny sherds of Phase 3 pottery and may have been urned but if so this had been removed by later ploughing. It has been placed in Phase 3i but equally could belong in Phase 3ii. The cut for the burial was ovoid in plan 0.51 m by 0.57 m and 0.09 m deep (Fig. 6) and it contained bone fragments from a single adult individual of indeterminate sex.

[23] G. Hey, 'Iron Age and Roman Settlement at Old Shifford Farm, Standlake', *Oxoniensia*, 60 (1995), pp. 107–12.

Although its location within a Phase 4 enclosure might suggest that cremation deposit 238 should belong in that phase, late Anglo-Saxon cremation is not considered plausible, so cremation 238 is assigned to this phase along with cremation 48, though they are some 72 m apart and probably in different fields. The similarity in the fuel wood used might also suggest the two features are of similar dates. This cremation burial was in a pit, 0.70 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep (Fig. 6) and was fully excavated in spits. No pottery was recovered but it did contain substantial amounts of charcoal, and burnt hazelnut, peas and cereal remains and burnt bones from a single adult individual, of indeterminate sex.

Pits 7, 28, 319, 331, 412 and 439 have been placed in this sub-phase. Pit 412 contained ceramic phase 1a pottery but stratigraphically it cut ditch 1022. Pit 28 was 0.59 m in diameter and 0.12 m deep; it contained 1 sherd of ceramic phase 1b pottery and could in truth belong to either of the Phase 3 sub-phases. The same can be said of pits 319 and 331. Pit 439 contained 34 sherds of pottery dated to ceramic phase 1b. This pit was 0.88 m in diameter and 0.30 m deep. It was located close to gully 1037 thus has been placed in the same sub-phase.

Phase 3ii (Fig. 2, bottom) In this sub-phase a change in the layout of the field and or boundary divisions was undertaken; again the foci of activity being in the eastern part of the site. Many of the ditches assigned to Phase 3i have been truncated by these later features, marking a more emphatic change in land-use. However again it is possible that western parts of the systems laid out in Phase 2 were still visible and in use during this phase of the site occupation (Fig. 2).

Ditch 1032 was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east for *c.*64 m before terminating; there was an entrance gap of *c.*4 m and the ditch then continued for another *c.*12 m before exiting the excavation area, 0.90–1.50 m wide and 0.35–0.60 m deep (Fig. 6). It represents the latest version of the boundary first marked as ditch 1023; further east than the latter but west of the Phase 3i line. Two ditches 1033 and 1036 appear to be contemporary and create a small field and or paddock off to the east. Ditch 1036 was aligned north-east to south-west; it was 1.00–1.10 m wide and between 0.10 m and 0.33 m deep (Fig. 6) and a small entrance of *c.*1 m was observed giving access to the small field. Ditch 1033 was on a similar alignment, was 1.00 m wide and 0.20 m deep. It is suggested that a trackway comprising parallel gullies 1040 and 1041 was also contemporary with other Phase 3ii features. Unfortunately there was no pottery nor clear stratigraphic relationships; yet on a landscape scale they fit nicely into this sub-phase and their new alignment suggests that the line of 1004 was no longer the basis for the rest of the layout. The gullies were *c.*2 m apart and observed for 50 m. They were shallow and in places no more than an ephemeral stain, being between 0.32 m and 0.40 m in width and 0.07–0.19 m in depth.

Gully 1027 has been assigned to this phase due to stratigraphy, i.e. cutting 1026 and 1028. It was *c.*41 m in length on a north–south axis before bending round to the west. It was 0.40 m wide and 0.14–0.21 m deep (Fig. 6). It contained six fragments of pottery, three fragments of sandy mortar and a scrap of burnt animal bone.

Pit 542 has been placed in this sub-phase, on the basis of eight sherds of pottery, two of which are ceramic phase 1b, the pit being 0.80 m in diameter and over 0.30 m deep.

Phase 4: Late Anglo-Saxon (Tenth or Eleventh Century)

The site appears then to have been abandoned until the late Anglo-Saxon period. During this phase of site occupation a new series of ditches and enclosures appear to have been laid out and utilized (Fig. 3). The prevailing alignment remains south-west to north-east as previously, perhaps more west-south-west to east-north-east, but the earlier boundaries were distinctly ignored and cross cut by the main features of this phase.

A long boundary ditch 1020 was excavated on a west-south-west to east-north-east axis for at least 116 m from the eastern edge of the excavation, and at its western end it stopped short of ditch 1007, likely to create an entrance into the field system to the south. It was recut

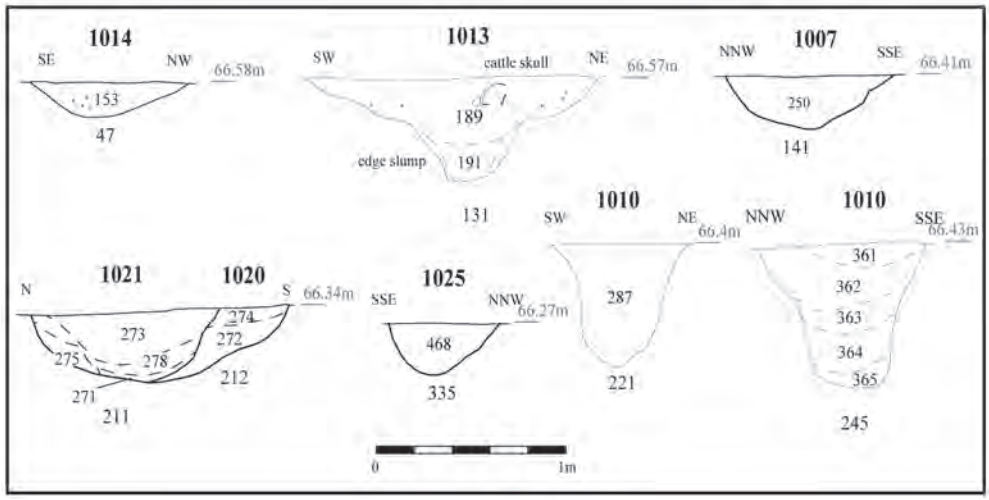

Fig. 7. Sections of Anglo-Saxon (Phase 4) features.

as 1021 (Fig. 7). No features of this period were located north of this line. The recut ditch contained a large assemblage of burnt cereal (oats, barley, wheat). Ditch 1007 was recorded for *c.*16 m on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment before turning sharply to the west-south-west where it was observed for at least a further 40 m. Just to the north of this was ditch 1005 on the same alignment as ditch 1020. Ditches 1005 and 1007 together mark a track or droveway heading west.

Ditch 1008 combines with ditches 1020 and 1007 to form part of the field/boundary system. This was recorded on a north-west to south-east alignment for *c.*40 m and appeared to join with 1020 at its northern end. Ditch 1009 appears to be a later adaptation of this same system; it cut ditch 1021 and presumably replaced 1008. Ditch 1009 contained pottery, animal bone and a small amount of cereal remains.

Within the land enclosed to the east of ditch 1008 and south of 1020 was a small rectangular enclosure (1010) which had been redefined on its southern edge (1011) and this ditch appears to stop short of ditch 1008 to create an entranceway within the larger enclosure. Ditch 1010 enclosed an area of 361 sq m, and was between 0.70–0.90 m wide and 0.18–0.75 m deep (Fig. 7) – in places substantially deeper than other ditches on the site despite being narrow – and contained pottery, animal bone, and cereal grains including barley, oats and wheat. Ditch 1011 was 0.70–0.90 m wide and 0.25–0.30 m deep.

The only internal feature within the enclosure was cremation burial 238. As discussed in Phase 3i above, it is unlikely to belong to Phase 4 as the Anglo-Saxons had stopped cremating long before.

To the west of ditch 1008 and south of ditch 1007 were a number of sub-circular ditches 1013 and 1014 together with ditches 1018, 1017 and 1019.

Ditch 1019 was the earliest in the sequence, and contained a reasonably large assemblage of burnt cereal grains including wheat and oats. It was cut by ditch 1017; both were on a north-east to south-west axis. They were truncated by enclosure ditch 1013 as was a small stretch of ditch 1018.

Part of a sub-rounded enclosure ditch (1013) was recorded protruding from the south-western edge of the excavation. The ditch was between 0.42–1.54 m wide and 0.15–0.45 m deep (Fig. 7). There was a small entrance gap in the north. This ditch contained Anglo-Saxon pottery, animal bone and cereal remains. Unfortunately there was no visible relationship between this and enclosure ditch 1014. It was either replaced or was a replacement for the

larger enclosure 1014 (Fig. 3). Ditch 1014 was also sub-rounded; it was poorly dated but can be placed in this phase on the evidence of stratigraphy. It was between 0.47 m and 0.97 m wide and 0.13–0.28 m deep (Fig. 7).

POTTERY by JANE TIMBY

The excavation resulted in the recovery of an assemblage of 738 sherds of pottery, weighing 9,080 g to which can be added a further 127 sherds weighing 1,253 g from the evaluation (Table 1). Most of the assemblage appears to date to the early Roman and to the late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval periods. Five post-medieval sherds were noted, all from surface or subsoil contexts.

In general terms the assemblage is quite well fragmented with slightly worn abraded sherds indicative perhaps of slightly hostile ground conditions and the fact that much of the material is quite soft and low fired. Despite this there are a few instances of multiple sherds from single vessels. Diagnostic featured sherds were sparse and the typological range limited. Sherds were distributed across 60 cut features so many of the individual groups are quite small. Only 13 groups produced 20 or more sherds with the maximum being 72 sherds from early Roman ditch 1022. Eight per cent of the sherds were too small to classify (OO in the table) and are excluded from the fabric percentages.

The assemblage was sorted into fabrics based on the principal inclusions in the paste and subdivided according to the size range and frequency of these inclusions. The sorted sherds were quantified by sherd count, weight and the rims measured for the estimation of vessel equivalents (EVE). Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces. Known, named traded Roman wares were coded using the national Roman fabric reference series.[24] Other wares were coded according to the main constituents in the clay and the firing colour.

Late Iron Age–Early Roman

Most of the pottery, 82 per cent by sherd count, appears to date to the early Roman period. The assemblage is dominated by local oxidized and reduced grog-tempered wares (57 per cent by count) in both handmade and wheel-made forms. The remaining assemblage comprises 14.6 per cent calcareous wares (shell and limestone) and 27.7 per cent sandy wheel-made wares. In addition there are two tiny sherds of probably South Gaulish samian, two sherds of Baetican amphora and one fine flint-tempered sherd. The evaluation produced a single Dorset black-burnished ware (DOR BB1) jar base from ditch 8 and a single sherd of Oxfordshire white ware mortarium came from ditch 1013.

The following fabrics and forms were noted:

Flint-tempered (FL): a single sandy ware sherd with a sparse frequency of finely crushed (> 2 mm) calcined flint. Possibly residual.

Grog-tempered wares (BWGR, BSOXGR, GYGR, OXGR): generally quite soft fabrics with a smooth soapy feel. Equates with Oxford fabric E80.[25] Forms include handmade, wheel-finished and wheel-made vessels, mainly necked jars (Fig. 8.1), everted rim jars (Fig. 8.2), necked bowls and wide-mouthed bowls (Fig. 8.4). A cordoned bowl or beaker was recovered from gully 404 and a single example of a lid from ditch 1001. Multiple sherds from a flared rim jar in OXGR came from ditch 1029. A flat base from a sieve came from pit 439. One sherd

[24] R. Tomber and J. Dore, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook*, MoLAS Monograph, 2 (1998).

[25] K. Brown, 'The Pottery', in A.M. Cromarty et al., 'The Excavation of a Late Iron Age Enclosed Settlement at Bicester Fields Farm, Bicester, Oxon', *Oxoniensia,* 64 (1999), pp. 172–95.

Table 1. Pottery summary by fabric

	Fabric	*Description*	*No.*	*No. %*	*Wt*	*Wt %*	*EVE*	*EVE %*
LIA-Roman								
Import	LGF SA	South Gaulish samian	2	0.3	0.5	0.0	–	–
	BAT AM	Baetican *amphora*	2	0.3	37	0.6	–	–
Grog	BSOXGR	black-surfaced oxidized grog-tempered	8	1.3	59	0.9	–	–
	BWGR	black grog-tempered	63	10.4	962	14.6	60	10.0
	GYGR	soapy grey grog-tempered	50	8.3	804	12.2	40	6.7
	GYGRSA	light grey grog-tempered	2	0.3	18	0.3	–	–
	OXGR	oxidized grog-tempered	170	28.1	2653	40.3	264	43.9
	GRSA	grog tempered sandy ware	52	8.6	825	12.5	36	6.0
Flint	FL	fine flint-tempered sandy ware	1	0.2	3	0.0	–	–
Calcareous	BWCA	black calcareous ware	10	1.7	95.5	1.5	5	0.8
	SH	shelly ware	78	12.9	423	6.4	43	7.2
Sandy	BSGY	black surfaced grey sandy ware	1	0.2	13	0.2	–	–
	BSOX	black surfaced oxidized sandy ware	12	2.0	901	13.7	37	6.2
	BWSY	black sandy ware	16	2.6	152.5	2.3	12	2.0
	BWFSY	fine sandy black ware	3	0.5	12	0.2	–	–
	GY	grey sandy ware	6	1.0	25	0.4	5	0.8
	GYF	fine grey ware	1	0.2	3	0.0	–	–
	GYRS	red slipped coarse grey ware	1	0.2	4	0.1	–	–
	OXF RE	Oxfordshire grey sandy ware	69	11.4	850.5	12.9	10	1.7
	OXF FR	fine grey Oxfordshire ware	29	4.8	306.75	4.7	57	9.5
	OXF WH	Oxfordshire white ware *mortaria*	1	0.2	8	0.1	–	–
	OXIDF	fine oxidized ware	8	1.3	67.25	1.0	25	4.2
	OXID	fine sandy oxidized ware	12	2.0	146	2.2	7	1.2
	WW	white/cream sandy	8	1.3	88	1.3	–	–
sub-total			*605*		*8457*		*601*	
Saxon	SXBWSA	black sandy ware	2	3.0	45	10.0	–	–
	SXORSA	organic tempered sandy ware	4	6.1	13	2.9	–	–
	SXQTZ	quartz sand-tempered	3	4.5	23	5.1	–	–
	OXR	St Neots type ware	46	69.7	344	76.6	57	89.1
	OXB	late Saxon Oxford ware	11	16.7	24	5.3	7	10.9
sub-total			*66*		*449*		*64*	–
Post-med			5	–	116	–	–	–
	OO	unclassified crumbs	62	–	58	–	–	–
TOTAL			**738**		**9080**		**665**	

EVE (Estimated Vessel Equivalent) x 100

% calculated on subtotals based on broad phases (LIA-Roman/Saxon/Post-Medieval)

from a handmade storage jar from ditch 1042 was decorated with a row of finger depressions around the upper body.

Grog and sand-tempered (GRSA) (Oxford fabric E30): sandy wares with variable amounts of grog. Both wheel-made and handmade vessels, exclusively everted rim jars forms.

Calcareous wares (BWCA; SH): this group includes a black, soft, soapy, ware with sparse calcareous grits or voids where the inclusions have decayed and variable amounts of quartz sand (BWCA) and a shelly ware (SH) (Oxford fabric E40). In both cases the vessels are handmade; there are no featured sherds in the former and mainly rolled rim jars in the latter. One sherd of BWCA from furrow 514 has internal burnt residue.

Sandy wares: most of the individual groups are quite small but include a black-surfaced grey or oxidised sandy ware (BSGY, BSOX). The latter features a channel-rimmed jar (Fig. 8.3) and the ware is more common in the Northamptonshire area. There are various black, grey and oxidised sandy wares divided by texture into a finer and coarser variants and a single coarse grey sandy ware with traces of a matt orange-red slip. In addition there are eight sandy off-white wares, one sherd with an incised lattice. Some of the black sandy wares are handmade but most of the vessels are wheel-made. Diagnostic sherds are sparse and mainly confined to jars.

Oxfordshire wares: grey sandy Oxfordshire wares (OXF RE) account for 10.3 per cent of the assemblage with a further 4.3 per cent for the finer variant (OXF FR). Most of the wares probably fall into Alchester fabric R11 where it appears from the early Roman period on.[26] Forms include a cordoned, necked jar and a wide-mouthed grooved rim jar (Fig. 8.5). A sherd of OXF FR from ditch 1020 has burnt internal residue. Amongst the other Oxfordshire wares is a sherd of white ware *mortarium* (OXF WH) and possibly some of the oxidized wares. Vessels are again mostly confined to jars.

There is also a single sherd of Back Burnished ware (DOR BB1) from the evaluation.

Discussion The tradition of grog-tempered pottery dates back into the later Iron Age but continues with little perceptible change into the early Roman period. From around the pre-Flavian period sandy, more Romanized wares start to appear along with a few imports. The DOR BB1 and Oxfordshire mortarium suggest activity at the site continued into the second century but there is no evidence of any later Roman occupation.

The features can broadly be divided into those potentially belonging to the earliest phase of use and those which appear to be later. The earlier, which could be later Iron Age-early Roman up to the Flavian period, are characterized by grog-tempered or calcareous wares whereas the later shows the presence of grey and oxidized sandy wares which probably date from the Flavian period into the early second century. In many cases the groups are predominantly grog-tempered with just single potentially later sherds. On this basis the earlier features include pits 331–2, 412, 416 and 545; gullies 404, 506, 1037 and 1039; and ditches 435, 1001, 1021, 1031 and 1042. The later phase of activity appears to include pits 439 and 542; and ditches 515, 1002, 1020, 1028–9, 1032–6 and 1038. Ditch groups 1022–4, 1026–7 and 1030 appear to be intermediate with mainly early sherds but occasional potentially later pieces. The assemblages are too small in some cases to be certain and it is not possible to determine whether some or all of the sherds might be residual.

Overall the Roman pottery suggests a modest low status settlement in the locality dating from the first century into the early second century and almost totally reliant on locally produced

[26] J. Evans, 'The Iron Age and Romano-British Pottery', in P. Booth et al., *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester* (2002), p. 330.

pottery. The vessel repertoire is dominated by jars, including several sherds from a large storage jar from furrow infill (59), followed by bowls. This pattern of form range is again typical of a small rural settlement with vessels primarily concerned with the storage and processing of agricultural produce. The assemblage from Langford Park Farm appears to be broadly contemporary with that recorded for the earlier components at Bicester Fields Farm although at the latter the assemblage was not thought to extend much, if at all into the Roman period.[27] A small amount of later Iron-Age or early Roman activity was also noted at Priory Road, Oxford Road (the closest parallel in terms of chronology) and more intensively at Whitelands Farm where there appears to have been intermittent mid-later Roman activity as well.[28]

Catalogue of Illustrated Sherds (Fig. 8)

1. Cordoned, necked jar; handmade but turn-table finished. Fabric: BWGR. Gully 1027 [508] (663).
2. Sharply everted rim, handmade jar. Fabric: OXGR. Ditch 1030 [537] (751).
3. Channel-rim jar. Fabric: BSOXSY. Ditch 1034 [512] (673).
4. Wide-mouthed, wheel-made bowl. Fabric: OXGR. Ditch 1036 [531] (696).
5. Wide-mouthed wheel-made jar with a flat rim with a slight depression/ lid seating and a girth grooved around the body. Fabric: OXF FR. Ditch 1028 [530] (694).

Late Anglo-Saxon–Early Medieval

Some 66 sherds, 449 g, from the excavation date to the late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval period to which an additional two sherds can be added from the evaluation. At least five fabrics could be discerned. All the sherds came from features focused in the south-west of the excavation area.

The following fabrics and forms were noted:

Black sandy ware (SXBWSA): a handmade, black, sandy ware with a moderately frequent density of well-sorted quartz sand (0.5–1mm). Featured sherds include a rounded base from ditch 1018. The only other pottery from this feature is a bodysherd probably from the same vessel. There were no other examples of this ware from the site so dating remains a little uncertain but is suggested to be mid–late Anglo-Saxon.

Sandy and organic-tempered ware (SXSORSA); four bodysherds of a moderately coarse sandy ware with burnt linear organic inclusions. Possibly equates with fabric V401 suggested to be of early–middle Anglo-Saxon date.[29] Possibly residual here in a late Anglo-Saxon ditch or evidence of a continuation of the fabric into the late Anglo-Saxon period.

Quartz-sand-tempered (SXQTZ): three bodysherds containing ill-sorted polycrystalline angular quartz showing clear faceting (fabric Q409). Middle or late Anglo-Saxon.[30]

St Neots type ware (OXR):[31] this is the commonest of this group of fabrics accounting for 69.7 per cent by sherd count. Vessels include triangular-rimmed bowls (Fig. 8.6) and dishes (Fig. 8.7) and wheel-made everted rim jars. This ware first appears in the early tenth century

[27] Brown, 'The Pottery'.

[28] S. Wallis, 'Roman and Late Saxon Occupation at 61 Priory Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 74 (2009), pp. 132–4; Mould 'Oxford Road, Bicester'; Martin, 'Whitelands Farm, Bicester'.

[29] L. Mepham, 'Pottery', in P.A. Harding and P. Andrews, 'Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Settlement at Chapel Street, Bicester: Excavations 1999–2000', *Oxoniensia*, 67 (2002), pp. 151–5.

[30] Ibid.

[31] M. Mellor, 'Oxfordshire Pottery: A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-medieval Pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, 59 (1994), p. 55.

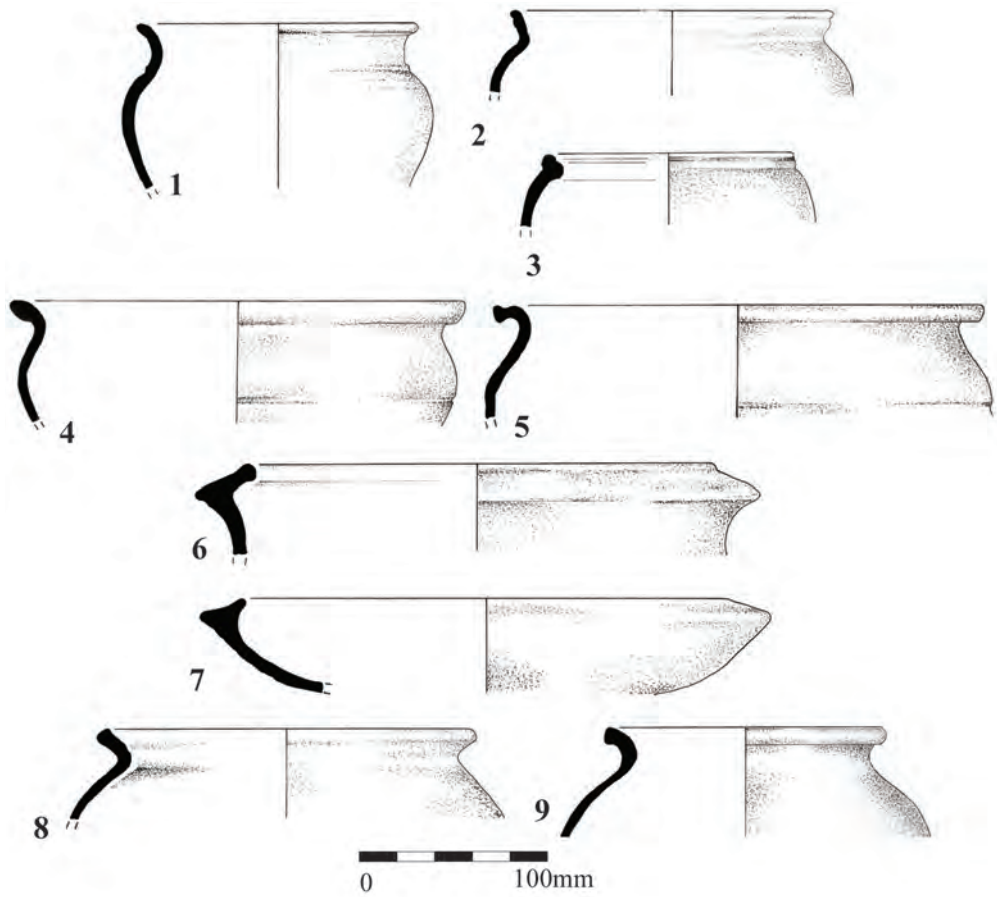

Fig. 8. Pottery: 1–5, late Iron Age/early Roman; 6–9, late Anglo-Saxon/early medieval.

and was particularly common in Oxford and Northampton in the first half of the eleventh century. It was found in ditches 1010–1013 and 1019.

Late Saxon Oxford ware (OXB).[32] The only vessels in this fabric appear to be handmade jars/cooking pot (Fig. 8.8). All the sherds came from ditch 1017. The ware was widely distributed across the Oxfordshire area in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Discussion Although a moderately small group of material this adds to the expanding pattern of Anglo-Saxon occupation in the Bicester area. Late Anglo-Saxon activity has been previously documented at Proctor's Yard and Priory Road.[33] Early to middle Anglo-Saxon pottery has been recorded at Chapel Street, Whitelands Farm, and during work in advance of the A421 improvements.[34] The middle Anglo-Saxon period has proved slightly elusive and

[32] Ibid. p. 37.
[33] G. Hull and S. Preston, 'Excavations of Late Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval Deposits on Land at Proctor's Yard, Bicester', *Oxoniensia*, 67 (2002), pp. 184–92; Wallis, '61 Priory Road, Bicester'.
[34] Harding and Andrews, 'Chapel Street, Bicester'; Martin, 'Whitelands Farm, Bicester'; J. Evans, 'Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Pottery', in P. Booth et al., *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester* (2002), p. 382.

it is possible that the earlier wares continue or that it was aceramic.[35] This assemblage is too small to add much to this debate but might suggest the former.

Catalogue of Illustrated Sherds (Fig. 8)

6. Deep-sided, handmade, dish. Fabric: OXR. Ditch 1011 [307] (389).
7. Handmade shallow dish. Fabric: OXR. Ditch 1009 [207] (267).
8. Everted rim jar, handmade, wheel-finished? Fabric: OXB. Ditch 1019 [130] (188).
9. Everted rim, wheel-made jar. Fabric: OXR. Ditch 1013 [14] (67).

STRUCK FLINT by STEVE FORD

A small collection of 15 struck flints was recovered during the fieldwork, almost all from subsoil contexts. The collection comprised six flakes, four narrow flakes, four spalls (pieces less than 20x20mm) and a blade core. Three spalls came from a sieved context, burnt deposit 416. The narrow flakes and blade core suggest that the collection at least partly includes a Mesolithic component, with possibly all the material belonging to this period. A single struck flint was recovered from the evaluation, as a residual find from Roman ditch 8. It was a small broken flake of uncertain (but earlier prehistoric) date.

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL and FIRED CLAY by DANIELLE MILBANK

A total of 2,081 g of ceramic building material (45 fragments) was recovered from 20 contexts during the excavation. The assemblage includes pieces of roof tile, with at least two and perhaps four Roman *tegulae* present, but most other pieces were too small to be identified. Even within this small assemblage, a range of fabrics was present and includes one (unstratified) medieval bichrome glazed floor tile of the 'Penn' type (details in archive).

A small collection of *opus signinum* flooring (15 pieces weighing 593 g) was recovered from a furrow base but might suggest the presence of a building of some architectural pretension not otherwise hinted at by the excavation results.

Fired clay weighing 236 kg was recovered during the excavation, and another 577 g from the evaluation, largely from sieved soil samples, and most from the cremation deposits. The majority of the fired clay was in very small fragments which could not be identified, and some from the cremations might simply be from where the ground surface was scorched below the pyre. However, some from pit 439 was identifiable as daub and it is possible that some or all of the remaining material represents very fragmented daub.

ANIMAL BONE by MATILDA HOLMES

A small, highly fragmentary assemblage of animal bone was recovered. The majority came from late Anglo-Saxon contexts of Phase 4 (Table 2), but also from the early Roman phases (2 and 3). The size of the sample does not warrant detailed analysis (only 241 bones were identified to species across all phases), so only a basic summary is given. There were no obvious deposits of butchery or craft-working waste, and it is likely that this represents the remains of animals culled, processed and consumed on site in all phases. The archive contains more detail.

[35] P. Blinkhorn, 'Pottery', in G. Hey, *Yarnton: Saxon and Medieval Settlement and Landscape: Results of Excavations 1990–96*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 20 (2004), pp. 269–71.

Taphonomy and Condition (Table 3)
Bones were in good to fair condition, but highly fragmentary. A high proportion of gnawed bones indicates that bones were not buried immediately after discard, but were available for dogs to chew. The number of refitted fragments and ratio of loose mandibular teeth to teeth remaining in the mandible was also high, suggesting the assemblage may have been subject to substantial post-depositional movement.

The Assemblage
In all phases the main domesticates predominated, with cattle most common, followed by sheep/goat then pig (Table 2). This is a typical pattern on the clay geology of the area, to which cattle are better suited than sheep. Bones from all parts of cattle and sheep/goat carcasses were present

Table 2. Animal bone summary by phase (fragment count)

Species	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Phase 4*
Cattle	33	24	75
Sheep/ goat	7	10	24
Sheep	18	–	5
Pig	2	8	12
Horse	3	7	10
Dog	–	–	1
Deer	–	–	1
Corvid	–	–	1
Total Identified	**63**	**49**	**129**
Large mammal	45	40	391
Medium mammal	20	58	64
Unidentified bird	–	2	1
Unidentified mammal	180	121	266
Total	**308**	**270**	**851**

Table 3. Animal bone vondition and taphonomy

Condition	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Phase 4*
Fresh	3	–	1
Good	18	18	77
Fair	15	11	15
Poor	3	3	7
Almost unrecognizable	3	1	1
Total	42	33	101
Butchery	29%	9%	11%
Burning	0%	0%	0%
Gnawed	35%	42%	13%
Fresh Break	14%	33%	55%
Refit	36=10	153=5	90=25
Loose teeth: teeth in mandibles*	12:9	7:2	15:14

* only 4th premolar and molars included

(details in archive), suggesting that animals were culled, butchered and consumed on site. This is reflected in the butchery data, predominantly from Phases 2 and 4, which is concentrated on the major limb bones and vertebrae of the major domesticates, representing the skinning, disarticulation and jointing of carcasses typical of food waste. Horse remains were also recorded in low numbers in all phases, and there is a chop mark on a horse ulna from Phase 2.

Other species present included dog, deer (a fragment of antler) and a corvid (crow) in the late Anglo-Saxon assemblage. The increase in diversity in this phase is probably due to the greater sample size than a reflection of the number of taxa present in life at the settlement.

Very little can be inferred of the economy or animal husbandry of the site, nearly all of the very few bones with epiphyses or diaphyses present were fused, only a single cow from Phase 3 died at less than 15 months of age. Tooth wear data were slightly more abundant, and similar in all phases, indicating a mixture of juvenile cattle at prime meat age and older animals that would have lived into maturity, providing traction or milk. Sheep and pigs were all culled at ages consistent with meat production.

CREMATED BONE by CERI FALYS

Two contexts (deposits 154 in pit 48; and 356 in pit 238) containing burnt human bone were whole-earth recovered, in spits of 0.02 m and wet-sieved to a 1 mm mesh size, with all burnt bone and other associated residues separated for analysis. The degree of fragmentation of the bone was exceptional, and preservation was poor, so osteological analysis was severely hampered. Each deposit contained remains of one adult individual (total bone weight of 358 g in pit 48, 237 g in pit 238) but sex could not be determined for either and no more detailed analysis was possible: the few details recorded are available in the archive.

NON-HUMAN BURNT BONE by CERI FALYS

A total of 95 fragments of non-human burnt bone weighing just 19 g was recovered from six contexts. The remains were fairly well preserved, with the exception of the high degree of fragmentation. Each context contained bone of a mixture of colours ranging from unburnt brown to charred black, blue-grey and white. Variations in colour reflect the efficiency of the burning process. As with the human bone, fragmentation was severe, and beyond stating that a minimum of one large and one medium-sized animal were represented, no analysis was possible. The mixture of bone colours within each context might suggest that these remains were the result of the cooking process rather than cremation.

METALWORK and SLAG by STEVEN CRABB

Metal finds were especially scarce. Part of a simple copper alloy bracelet was recovered from Phase 2 ditch 1042, slot 6. An iron object from Phase 2 pit 332 consists of a flat rectangular plate with a rounded end. It has a nail or pin present at the rounded end. There was a portion of flattened iron ring from Phase 4 ditch 1013 (slot 41). This type of ring has a number of potential uses as a fitting or suspension ring. Two nails were recovered from Phase 3 features, gully 1037 (slot 400) and ditch 1028 (slot 510). A single small piece of iron tap slag from ditch 1013 (slot 128) is no little than a stray find and may easily be residual.

PLANT REMAINS and CHARCOAL

Bulk soil samples for flotation were taken from features from all phases. The remains were identified by Rosalind McKenna whose full report is in the archive, and only summarized

here. The preservation of the charred remains was mostly poor. Charred plant macrofossils were present in seventeen contexts (Tables 4 and 5). Although the charcoal was mostly too small to identify, identifiable remains were present in fifteen contexts (Tables 6 and 7). Where over 100 charcoal fragments were present a random selection of 100 was identified. The tables exclude samples from which only indeterminate cereal could be identified; separate samples or sub-samples from the same context have been combined.

Charred Plant Remains other than Charcoal

Cereal grains included wheat (*Triticum* sp.) in eight contexts, barley (*Hordeum* sp.) in ten contexts, spelt/rye (*Triticum spelta*/*Secale cereale*) in three, and oat (*Avena* sp.) grains in seven (Tables 4 and 5). Spelt/rye and oats were present in tiny amounts, whereas the remains of barley and wheat ranged up to nearly five hundred. Indeterminate cereal grains, however, dominated most samples. There was little difference between the samples by phase (rare or single items apart). If *Triticum* was dominant in Phases 2 and 3, with barley present only in pit 332, barley was more prominent in Phase 4, but in fact of the samples with more than ten identifiable items, ditch 211 (Phase 4) was the only one to show more barley than wheat (and it also had more cereal indet. than both combined).

Remains of arable weeds were found in most of the samples that produced cereals, such as grasses (Poaceae), goosefoot/orache (*Chenopodium/Atriplex*), docks (*Rumex*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*). All of these would have been brought to the site along with harvested cereals.

There was chaff present in three samples, but only single items in each. The rarity of chaff may suggest that the grain was already threshed and winnowed by the time it reached the site, but it may also reflect taphonomic/survival factors.

Charcoal

Willow/poplar dominated samples from Phase 2, with an appreciable amount of oak and a tiny amount of elm. However this may be misleading, as willow/poplar was found only in the burnt deposit 416 (possibly pyre debris?) in this phase. Phase 3 was dominated by willow/poplar charcoal, followed by elm, with oak almost absent, and there was a single fragment of common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) from cremation 48. Although the charcoal is almost all from the two cremation deposits, willow/poplar dominated in other contexts as well in this phase. Phase 4 produced hardly any charcoal but showed a slight dominance of oak over willow/poplar, with no other wood represented. The results from the cremations, from which several thousand fragments were identified from individual spits, are presented as percentages to facilitate comparison with the other samples, from which only 100 (maximum) fragments were analysed. Intra-feature comparison of separate spits suggests any variation there was entirely random.

The samples, particularly those from the cremation deposits, seem to reflect deliberate choices of fuel rather than being representative of the local environment overall. The typical composition of cremation wood assemblages shows that oak was predominantly used for the pyre structure, with other species used as kindling. The difference here might suggest a scarcity of oak available, or may indicate that extra kindling (in the form of willow/poplar) was added to maintain the fire. Oak may be over-represented in the record for cremations elsewhere due to its more robust heartwood. Possibly the remains here reflect deposition of debris from the edges of the fire where the temperatures were not as high. The burnt hazelnut shells, unusual finds for this period, again only in the cremation-related deposits, might have been accidentally burnt on the wood, along with kindling, rather than being eaten, but this is purely speculative and there was no hazel charcoal.

Table 4. Charred plant remains (Phases 2 and 3)

Sample	28	34	35	36	38	39	37	43	
Feature	238	332	332	332	416	416	349	402	
Context	356	469	470	471	551	552	488	492	
Feature Type	Cremation	Pit	Pit	Pit	Burnt Deposit		Gully	Gully	
Phase	2?	2	2	2	2	2	3i	3i	
Corylus avellana L.	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	Hazel nut (shell)
Chenopodium spp. / *Atriplex* spp.	1	6	28	4	–	1	–	–	Goosefoot / Orache
Polygonum lapathifolium (L.) Gray	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	Pale persicaria
Fallopia convolvulus (L.) A. Love	–	–	1	–	1	1	–	–	Black bindweed
Rumex L. spp.	–	2	3	–	1	–	–	–	Dock
Rubus spp.	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Bramble
Crataegus monogyna Jacq.	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	Hawthorn
Vicia / Lathyrus spp.	1	–	1	–	3	8	–	1	Vetch / pea
Pisum sativum L.	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	Garden pea
Melilotus /Medicago /Trifolium spp.	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	Melilot, Medick, Clover
Galium aparine L.	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	Cleaver
Anthemis cotula L.	–	2	8	–	–	–	–	–	Stinking chamomile
Carex L. spp.	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	Sedge
POACEAE	–	12	10	6	–	–	1	3	Grass
Avena spp.	–	–	6	6	–	–	–	–	Oat
Avena awn	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	Oat awn
Hordeum spp.	–	–	6	31	–	–	–	–	Barley
Triticum spelta / Secale cereale	–	2	4	–	–	–	–	–	Spelt / Rye
Triticum spp.	–	–	35	477	–	–	–	–	Wheat
Indeterminate Cereal	4	5	–	845	9	6	4	4	
Cereal rachis node	–	–	–	56	1	–	–	–	
Cereal culm	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	
Cereal chaff	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	
Unidentified	–	–	2	9	–	–	–	–	

Table 5. Charred plant remains (Phase 4)

Sample	10	17	18	22	23	24	26	27	29	
Feature	14	130	131	204	207	208	211	221	245	
Context	67	188	189	264	267	268	271	285	364	
Feature Type	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	
Chenopodium spp. / *Atriplex* spp.	2	1	4	2	–	–	–	–	–	Goosefoot / Orache
Stellaria media (L) Vill	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	Common chickweed
Fallopia convolvulus (L.) A. Love	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Black bindweed
Rumex L. spp.	–	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	Dock
BRASSICACEAE	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Cabbage Family
Rubus spp.	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	Bramble
Crataegus monogyna Jacq.	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Hawthorn
APIACEAE	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Carrot Family
Hyoscyamus niger L.	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Henbane
Vicia / Lathyrus spp.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	Vetch / pea
Pisum sativum L.	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	–	–	Garden pea
Melilotus /Medicago /Trifolium spp.	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Melilot, Medick, Clover
Lapsana communis L.	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	Nipplewort
Anthems cotula L.	–	4	–	–	–	–	7	–	–	Stinking chamomile
Carex spp.	–	11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Sedge
POACEAE	–	29	–	2	–	–	2	2	1	Grass
Avena spp.	–	10	3	–	–	–	8	3	2	Oat
Avena spp. Awn	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	Oat awn
Hordeum spp.	3	3	2	3	3	1	269	10	–	Barley
Triticum spelta / secale cereale	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	–	–	Spelt / Rye
Triticum spp.	–	32	11	2	–	–	139	26	7	Wheat
Triticum glume base	–	–	2	10	–	–	5	–	7	Wheat
Indeterminate Cereal	6	52	15	–	3	1	545	–	–	
Cereal rachis internode	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	
Cereal rachis node	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	
Unidentified	–	9	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	

Table 6. Charcoal (Phases 2 and 3)

	Sample	34	35	36	38	39	21	32	44	14	28
	Feature	332	332	332	416	416	144	319	440	48	238
	Context	469	470	471	551	552	255	453	591	154	356
	Feature Type	Pit	Pit	Pit	Burnt	Deposit	Ditch	Pit	Ditch	Cremation	Cremation
	Phase	2	2	2	2	2	3i	3i	3i	3?	3?
	No. frag	12	12	100+	100+	200+	2	200+	11	1700+	5000+
	Max. size (mm)	10	11	23	14	13	21	17	15	25	25
Salix / Populus	Willow / Poplar	–	–	–	33	39	2	85	1	69	69
Quercus	Oak	4	2	44	8	5	–	–	4	3	–
Ulmus	Elm	–	–	–	2	–	–	15	–	–	–
Rhamnus catharticus	Common buckthorn	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	<1	–
Indeterminate		8	10	56	57	56	–	–	–	28	31

Table 7. Charcoal (Phase 4)

	Sample	15	17	22	23	26	27
	Feature	106	130	204	207	211	221
	Context	162	188	264	267	271	285
	Feature Type	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch
	No. frag	2	23	12	1	50+	2
	Max. size (mm)	13	11	12	17	29	18
Salix / Populus	Willow / Poplar	2	3	–	–	–	2
Quercus	Oak	–	4	10	1	7	–
Indeterminate		–	16	2	–	43	–

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