The Excavation of an Early Bronze-Age Ring Ditch, Middle Bronze-Age Pits, and Iron-Age and Roman Enclosure Ditches at Bowling Green Farm Quarry, Chinham Farm, Faringdon

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SUMMARY

Excavations in advance of mineral extraction revealed a range of archaeological finds and deposits of prehistoric and Roman dates. The earlier periods were represented by a small causewayed ring ditch and a few pits of Bronze-Age date, and residual Mesolithic flints. The ring ditch was probably dug at the end of the early Bronze Age, with a radiocarbon determination of 1691–1530 cal BC on charcoal from its lower fill. Middle Bronze-Age re-use of the monument saw a crouched inhumation burial providing a radiocarbon determination of 1413–1290 cal BC. Middle Bronze-Age inhumation burials are most unusual at a time when cremation burial in urns was the norm. Finds included early and middle Bronze-Age pottery and a deliberately broken bronze rapier blade. In the early Iron Age a rectangular ditched enclosure was constructed. Final use of the site took place in mid Roman times when a markedly rectangular ditched enclosure with both double and triple elements replaced the Iron-Age enclosure.

Three seasons of archaeological excavation were carried out between May 2007 and June 2014 by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd on a parcel of land covering *c.*7.7 hectares at Bowling Green Farm Quarry extension, known as Chinham Farm, Faringdon, Oxfordshire centred on SU 3135 9489 (Fig. 1). Planning permission had been granted by Oxfordshire County Council to extract sand and limestone from this area, subject to a condition which required a programme of archaeological investigation.

The site lies on the northern side of the A417 between Faringdon and Stanford-in-the-Vale, in the Vale of the White Horse. It is located on the Corallian Ridge which runs east–west and divides the Oxford Clay basin, and the topography is a gentle rise from the south to the north to 103 metres above Ordnance Datum for *c.*200 metres then the land drops gently over another 200 metres down to the Frogmore Brook at 98 metres AOD. The geology is Jurassic Corallian Beds (clays, sands and limestones) and Lower Greensand (sands, ferruginous sands) and sponge gravels (Faringdon Sponge Gravels).[1] During the excavations limestone and sponge gravel were noted on the southern part of the site whilst on the northern slope, sand and sandy clay natural geology was noted down to the Frogmore Brook. The extension area was to the east of the existing quarry (Fig. 2).

[1] BGS, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 253, Drift Edition (1971).

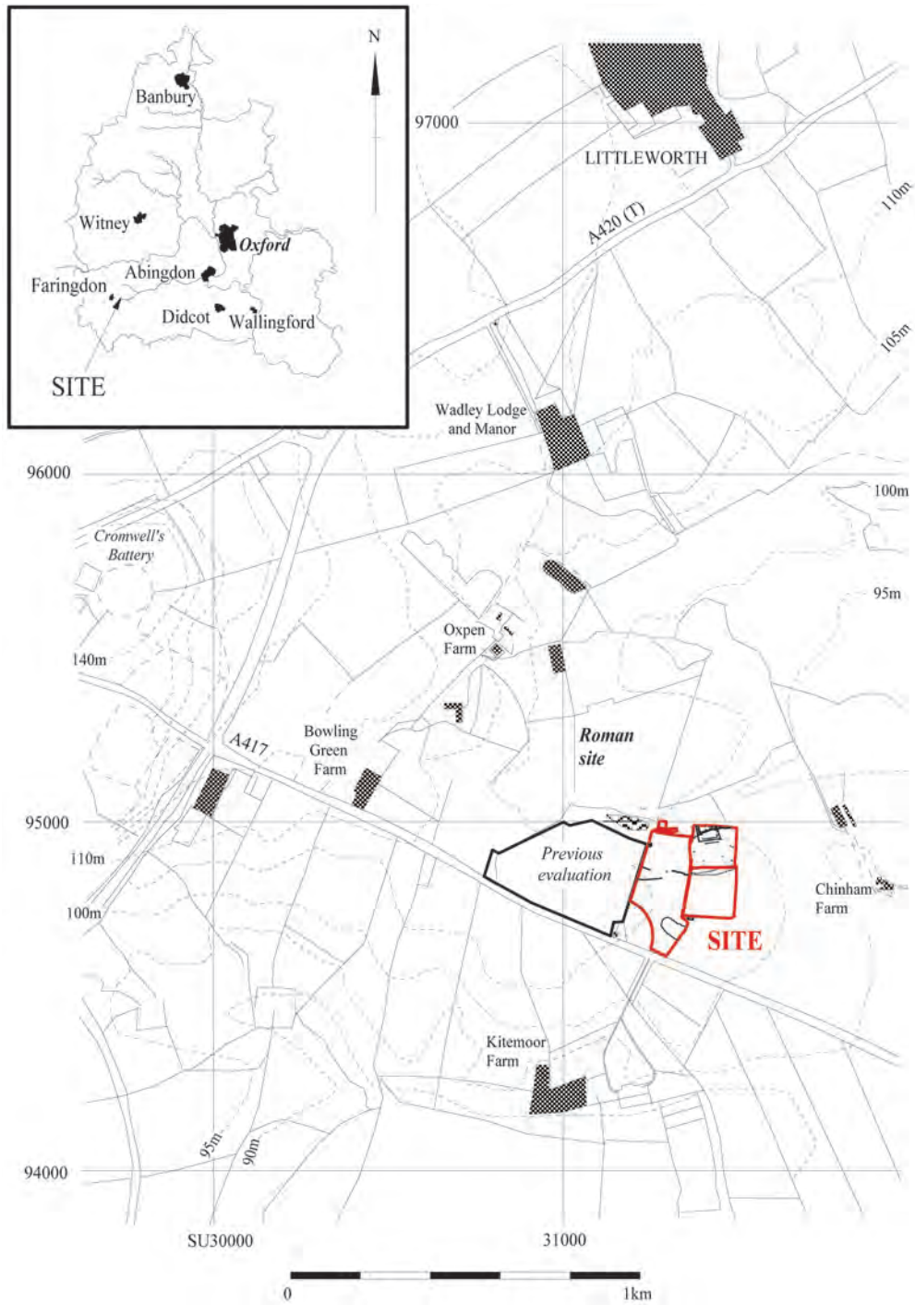

Fig. 1. Site location.

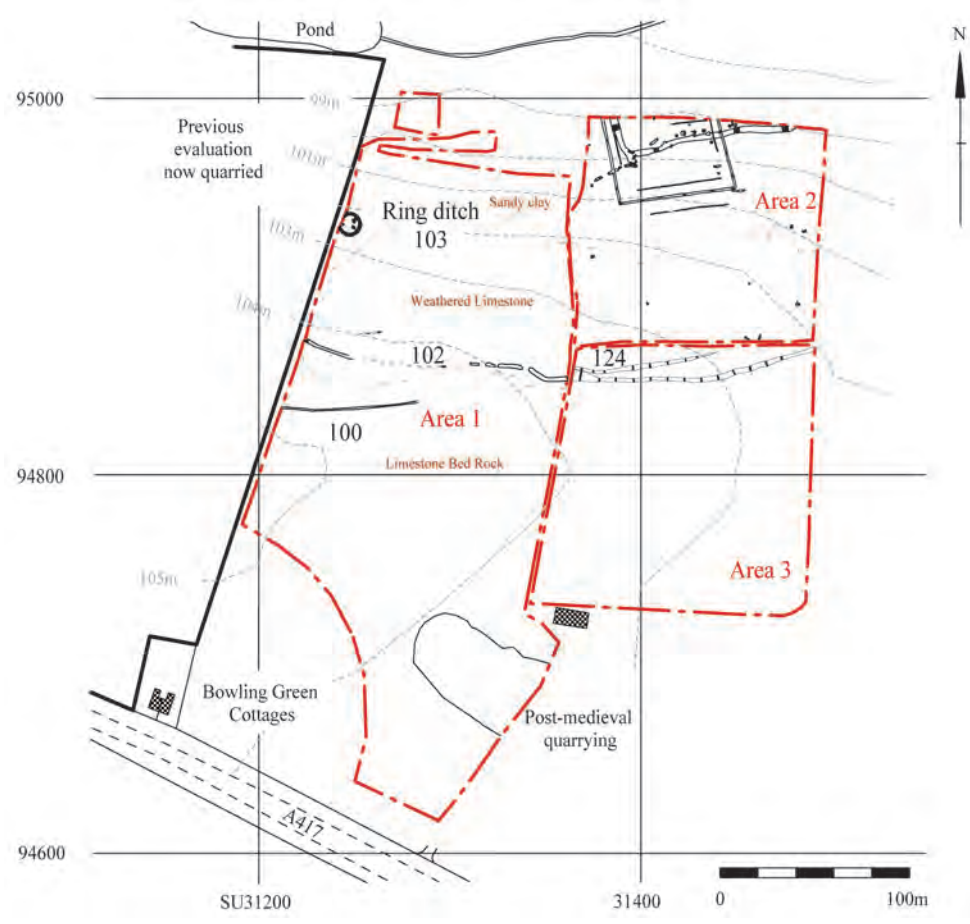

Fig. 2. Detailed location of excavated areas, showing underlying geology.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological background of the area, incorporating a survey of the Corallian Ridge undertaken by Hingley in 1980 with field-walking and air photographic survey of the upper Thames valley, was summarized thirty years ago by Bradley,[2] who concluded that the Corallian Ridge was just as densely occupied as the gravels of the Thames valley in the Bronze Age, with twenty-one ring ditches identified and several flint scatters at the eastern end of the ridge. Recent work has added considerably to this.

Archaeological investigations immediately to the north of the site in the 1980s and early 1990s (by Oxford Archaeological Unit and Oxford University Archaeological Society) revealed a substantial middle to late Iron-Age and Roman settlement. Stone buildings, ovens, kilns and wells were found and the site was considered as a small market town.[3] Evaluation on the existing Bowling Green Farm Quarry to the west of the new extraction area revealed further

[2] R.J. Bradley, 'The Bronze Age in the Oxford Area, its Local and Regional Significance', in G. Briggs et al. (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1986), maps 5 and 6.

[3] R.A. Chambers, 'Stanford-in-the-Vale: Bowling Green Farm', *SMidlA*, 18 (1988), p. 87; idem, *SMidlA*, 19 (1989), p. 82; idem, *SMidlA*, 20 (1990), pp. 54–5.

Roman ditches, presumably part of outlying field boundaries associated with the Roman settlement to the north.[4] Cropmarks representing a double-ditched droveway with adjoining rectangular enclosure were visible on an aerial photograph, also to the west of the site.

During the later-medieval and post-medieval periods the site was agricultural land. The Ordnance Survey map of the 1870s shows a quarry on the south-eastern fringes of the site. A desk-based assessment of the site itself concluded that there were no known sites within the extraction area and it was considered to have relatively low archaeological potential, but recommended field evaluation by trial trenching.[5]

DISCUSSION

The most significant findings of the fieldwork comprise three components. The location of an unexpected ring ditch of early Bronze-Age date (re-used in the middle Bronze Age) was a surprise in an area that has been well studied from the air. The other significant find is the Iron-Age enclosure and occupation, apparently re-visited and remodelled in the Roman period. Other periods were only sparsely represented.

The Mesolithic component of the site is similar to others that occur on the sand outcrops of the Corallian Ridge throughout Oxfordshire, where modest numbers of flints have been found, such as at the nearby excavation at Coxwell Road, Faringdon.[6] The majority of the Mesolithic flint component of the site came from ditches that are dated to the Iron-Age or Roman periods. The retouched blade came from a pit without any other dating evidence and could be of Mesolithic date, as could the broken blade from a tree bole. There is no evidence of clustering of the Mesolithic flint across the site and therefore little or no evidence of settlement. As the majority of the flint came from later features it would appear to be residual and to indicate casual loss in the landscape.

The ring ditch was an unexpected but welcome discovery in an area of the Corallian Ridge where, as discussed above, it was suggested by cropmark and survey evidence that earlier prehistoric funerary remains could be expected, but which had not previously been proven. The ring ditch was causewayed, had an internal diameter of just nine metres and presumably surrounded a mound, traces of which seem to have survived from the presence of large stones and boulders from the mound's core. It is also possible that the larger stones ('doggers') formed a kerb. Charcoal from the lower fill of the ditch produced a radiocarbon date of 1691–1530 cal BC which is just into the middle Bronze Age. The small size of the ring ditch is also more typical of middle Bronze-Age monuments.[7] There is no direct evidence of burials from this period of the monument's life cycle, however the recovery of residual early Bronze-Age pottery including biconical urn fragments together with disturbed cremated remains, which may be contemporaneous, suggests they at one time did occur, either directly associated with the ring ditch (103) or mound, or close by. It seems unlikely that the cremated bone in pit 410, over 200 metres to the south-east, dates from this period (see below), but it is not impossible.

The ring ditch may have been located specifically with regard to local ground conditions, being sited just to the south of the boundary of the limestone rock, on a softer more malleable geology, suitable for providing material for capping the mound and making it much easier to excavate the ditch. Is this a deliberate choice of position based on pragmatic (geological) conditions, or was the ring ditch positioned from topographic, visibility, territorial or

[4] 'Bowling Green Farm, Faringdon, Oxfordshire, Archaeological Evaluation Report', unpublished OA report (1994).

[5] 'Bowling Green Farm Extension (Chinham Farm): Desktop Assessment', unpublished OA report (2003).

[6] R. Holgate, *Neolithic Settlement of the Thames Basin*, BAR BS, 194 (1988); S.D.G. Weaver and S. Ford, 'An Early Iron Age Occupation Site, a Roman Shrine and Other Prehistoric Activity at Coxwell Road, Faringdon, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2005), pp. 119–80.

[7] A. Woodward, *British Barrows: A Matter of Life and Death* (2000), p. 43.

phenomenological considerations? It does appears that the monument was visible in the physical and mental landscape for several centuries.

The ring ditch was reused later in the middle Bronze Age, with a crouched inhumation burial being inserted into the partially back-filled ditch. The bones of the skeleton were dated to 1413–1290 cal BC. Other evidence for middle Bronze-Age activity was the deliberately broken rapier blade and middle Bronze-Age pottery. This reuse is typical with many earlier monuments being the focus of fresh activity in the middle Bronze Age.[8] The quantities of material and their distribution almost exclusively in the later fills of the ditch, together with the middle Bronze-Age intercutting pits (12, 18, 19 and 21) placed within the causeway could suggest a deliberate infilling of the ditch and removal of the causeway to ritually close the monument.

What is most unusual, however, is the burial rite. Re-use of earlier burial monuments in the middle Bronze Age is usually for cremation burials, most often within urns, which are clustered together ('urnfields'). These are to be found in secondary contexts such as the top of the infilled ditch or inserted into the mound. The radiocarbon date, stratigraphy, metalwork and pottery associations all place the burial firmly in the middle Bronze Age, yet the rite is more characteristic of the early Bronze Age. Middle Bronze-Age cremation burials in urnfields are not commonly recorded in the upper Thames region[9] and this inhumation perhaps indicates the continuation of a burial rite long after other regions of the country have adopted the practice of cremation.

The remaining Bronze-Age component is limited to two pits widely spaced on the eastern portion of the site over 100 metres to the east of the ring ditch. The first of these, pit 237 contained large sherds from a handmade, thick-walled vessel, probably urn, whilst the other pit, 302, contained only three extremely small pot crumbs of an earlier prehistoric date. It is difficult to interpret these limited data, as they could represent occupation in the Bronze Age with the loss of all other traces due to ploughing, or simply represent isolated deposits of unknown function well away from any occupied area. Although at some distance, the presence of the ring ditch could have had some importance in shaping the use of the landscape beyond. The presence of other earlier prehistoric features has been suggested by cropmark and survey evidence. The recovery of a piece of Beaker pottery on the site must be viewed in this context as it was residual in a later Iron-Age ditch and may have been transported down hill.

The Iron-Age occupation consisted of a series of pits and short lengths of ditches roughly aligned south-west to north-east across the lower (northern) part of the site, which were later cut by a large enclosure ditch which appeared to be roughly rectangular. The southern edge of the enclosure ditch was on a similar alignment to the pits and short lengths of ditch and may have replaced the latter as a boundary feature across the site. The majority of the enclosure lies down slope of the site and beyond the current limit of the quarry works. It is possible that some of the pits within the enclosure are associated with it, but no evidence apart from position was recovered to expand on this possibility. No other internal features indicating settlement were seen although these may have existed further down slope, or may have been eroded away in the mobile sandy soils. The vast majority of the pottery dated to the early Iron Age came from the large enclosure ditch which indicates that the land division dates from this period. The further Iron-Age ditch, part of which was segmented, to the south-west, at the top of the slope on the limestone is not obviously related but might mark the extreme limit of the land in use at this time. A substantial middle to late Iron-Age and Roman settlement has also been recorded to the north of the site.[10] A cropmark of a double ditched droveway with adjoining rectangular enclosure which may also be of Iron-Age origin, is visible to the west of

[8] Ibid.
[9] Bradley, 'The Bronze Age in the Oxford Area'.
[10] HER, PRN 9237.

the current quarry workings on an aerial photograph,[11] giving a landscape context to the large enclosure on the site. Two sherds of Roman pottery were also recovered from the enclosure ditch which may suggest that it had not completely silted up for several hundred years and still survived as a landscape feature. The Roman pottery could of course be intrusive (both sherds came from points on the ditch where it was cut by a Roman feature), but as the later Roman ditch and gullies follow a similar orientation to the Iron-Age enclosure it would be a remarkable coincidence unless some part of this land division was still visible.

The cremation deposit in pit 410 from Area 3 has been tentatively phased by its proximity to an Iron-Age ditch, but it could just as easily be earlier, related to the Bronze-Age remains to the north-west, but at this period the bone would more normally be expected to be contained in an urn, which was not the case here.

Roman use of the site was characterized by an enclosure ditch with internal and external gullies on the same alignment, and just one pit. All the Roman activity in Area 2 is broadly dated to the second and third centuries AD, but the lone ditch in Area 1 appears to be later. The enclosure ditch and gullies form an unusual monument with few sites with even approximately similar forms reported locally.[12] A double-ditched, markedly rectilinear, farmstead is recorded at Tewkesbury in the Severn Valley and a triple-ditched shrine enclosure recorded at Charlbury, Oxfordshire.[13] Perhaps a closer comparison can be made with a later Roman triple-ditched enclosure at Waylands Nursery, Wraysbury, Berkshire.[14] Comparison with the altogether more massive and complex triple-ditched enclosure at Fison Way, Thetford cannot be pressed any more closely than the multiplication of ditches.[15] Some of the enclosures at Gill Mill, Ducklington, are marked by multiple boundaries, but this appears likely to reflect time depth rather than deliberate elaboration.[16] The enclosure and gullies resemble field boundaries rather than the type of ditch generally used for stock or settlement enclosures. Gully 110 may be an indication that the northern edge of the enclosure was just outside the excavation area or could represent an internal division within the enclosure. The ditch and gullies ran parallel and appeared to maintain the same orientation and spacing. It is possible that they were dug successively to define a boundary whose position was approximately known, but where the precise location of the original ditch was lost. However, at Chinham Farm it seems unlikely that this redefinition of the original boundary on two further occasions could occur, and maintain the same spacing and orientation. The pottery from the enclosure ditch and gullies does not indicate any depth of time for the filling of the ditch and gullies apart from a little first century pottery from a corner of the enclosure ditch (310) which may be residual. On balance the ditch and gullies should be considered as contemporary.

The function of triple boundary enclosed sites in the Iron-Age and Roman periods has been considered elsewhere,[17] and at Chinham Farm, whilst it is not possible to rule out settlement use it would appear that the enclosure was used primarily for handling livestock, on the periphery of the extensive settlement to the north. The quantity of finds is quite low, suggesting no settlement in this area itself, and certainly here there is nothing to suggest any votive and hence religious connection.

[11] Ibid. PRN 12002.

[12] D. Miles (ed.), *The Romano-British Countryside; Studies in Rural Settlement and Economy*, BAR BS, 3 (1982).

[13] N. Holbrook, 'The Roman Period', in N. Holbrook and J. Jurica (eds.), *Twenty-Five Years of Archaeology in Gloucestershire: A Review of New Discoveries and New Thinking in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol* (2006), pp. 97–131, esp. fig. 6; M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (2000), fig. 5.13.

[14] J. Pine, 'Late Bronze Age Occupation, Roman Enclosure and Early Saxon Occupation at Waylands Nursery, Welley Road, Wraysbury' in S. Preston (ed.), *Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon Sites in Eastern Berkshire: Excavations 1989–97*, TVAS Monograph, 2 (2003), pp. 119–37.

[15] T. Gregory, *Excavations in Thetford, 1980–82, Fison Way*, East Anglian Archaeology Report, 53 (1991).

[16] P. Booth and A. Simmonds, 'Gill Mill, Ducklington and South Leigh, Oxfordshire: Post-Excavation Assessment and Project Design', unpublished Oxford Archaeology report (2011).

[17] Pine, 'Waylands Nursery', pp. 133–5.

One thing of note is the total absence across the east of the site (Areas 2 and 3) of any bone (including teeth) and there was also an absence of metalwork finds, in contrast to the previous excavations to the north-west and Area 1 to the west. This may be a further indication of the use of the enclosure for stock, instead of settlement, and seems to be backed up by the small amount of charred seeds recovered from the samples. However, it may also be due to the acidity of the sandy soils that have removed bone and metalwork from the record unless well-protected in deep feature fills, the features here often being quite shallow. If this area has also been more heavily ploughed than surrounding land, then the enclosure could still represent a settlement, with any postholes or sill beam slots not surviving to sufficient depth.

The southern ditch (124), revealed in Area 3, is only tentatively assigned a Roman date; it might mark the edge of the settlement in this direction, and if so, closely corresponds with the area occupied in the Iron Age, even though there is nothing to show any continuity of occupation.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

The three seasons of work are here referred to as Areas 1, 2 and 3 (Fig. 2). Area 1 covered an irregular area of *c*.4.4 ha, Area 2 was a rectangular area of *c*.1.6 ha to the east, while Area 3 covered 2.2 ha south of Area 2. As mineral extraction would necessarily destroy any archaeological deposits present, the whole area was excavated. Topsoil and subsoil, typically 0.5 m deep, were mechanically stripped from all areas under continuous archaeological supervision, to expose the archaeologically relevant horizon, limestone to the south and sand or sandy clay geology towards the north. On the slope, colluvial deposits were removed, becoming deeper towards the north. By chance, there is almost no correlation between features and very little overlapping of dates of finds, across the three areas (the only exception is that ditch 102 crosses both Areas 1 and 3). All archaeological features were planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, with sampling of features dependent on their type, according to the agreed scheme. Suspected cremation burials (one in Area 3, and four deposits within the ring ditch) were whole-earth sampled in 20 mm spits and fully excavated. Bulk soil samples were taken from 60 sealed contexts for environmental evidence and to enhance small finds recovery, although ultimately to very little effect. Based on pottery, flint, radiocarbon dates and stratigraphy, six phases have been defined. A few undated or clearly post-medieval features are not discussed, and their numbers not shown on the plans to reduce clutter.

Phase 1: Mesolithic

A flint backed blade was the only datable find from pit 200. A microlith from ditch 5 is a crescentic form and is intact and patinated. Both are considered residual, as cut features of Mesolithic date are exceptionally rare. They presumably reflect casual loss, the microlith perhaps as part of an arrow during a hunting expedition. Other components of the flint collection may also indicate a Mesolithic date but they too were recovered from later (Iron-Age or Roman) features.

Phase 2: Early Bronze Age

A somewhat surprising, but welcome, discovery was that of a ring ditch (103) (Figs. 3, 4 and 5). This was located on the sandy clay geology just off the brow of the limestone hill, but on the slope. This monument comprised elements of a circular ditch, with a causeway to the north. The causeway was later cut into by pits 12, 18 and 19. The full plan of the ditch was not observed as the west side was under a hedge line which was to be left in place. The ditch was fully excavated within the area available. It had an internal diameter of 9.05 m was between 1.30–1.89 m wide and between 0.32–0.60 m deep. The precise causeway dimensions could not be discerned due to the later pits 12, 18 and 19 but would have been in the region of 1–1.5 m.

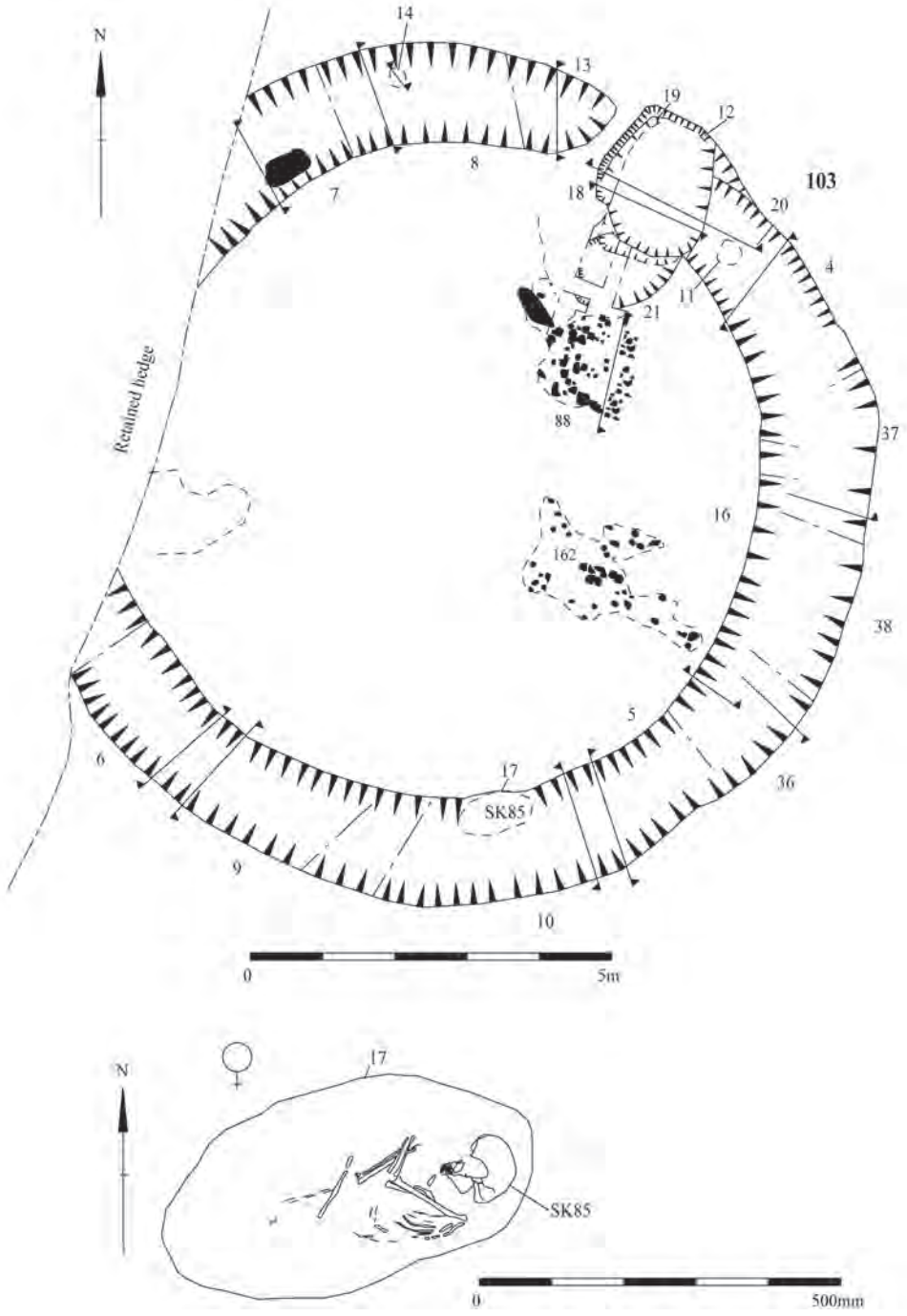

Fig. 3. Plan of ring ditch 103 with detail of skeleton 85 enlarged.

Fig. 4. Ring ditch during excavation, looking south-west; scales 2 metre, 1 metre.

It appears that the ditch was excavated, and the barrow mound constructed, in the later part of the early Bronze Age. Charcoal from a lower fill of slot 10 (154) gave a radiocarbon date for the earliest filling of the ditch of 1691–1530 cal BC (probability 94.4 per cent) which is just into the middle Bronze Age. The only pottery from stratigraphically early deposits within the ring ditch was a single small body sherd from a lower fill of slot 5 (59). However, supporting an early Bronze-Age date for the initial construction of the monument was the large assemblage of early Bronze-Age pottery recovered, mixed with material of middle Bronze-Age date in the upper fills, together with a few sherds residual in the Iron-Age and Roman features. This is further discussed below.

Enclosed within ditch 103 were deposits of limestone, sandstone, chert and flint of large-medium stone sizes set within a sandy clay matrix (88 and 162), which was in contrast with the clean sandy clay geology surrounding the monument. All the stone would have been locally available. These materials were all that remains of an internal rubble core of the mound, enclosed by the ring ditch. Other materials would presumably have been used to form a mound, such as the spoil excavated from the ditch, and turf. Of note are the 'doggers' – large (15–25 kg), silicified carbonate mudstone nodules which are in contrast to the smaller stone fragments. These possibly represent remnants of kerb stones edging the monument. Similar stone deposits including a 'dogger' were recorded within the lower fills of ditch 103, some at steep angles on the inside face, showing they originated from the mound. This suggests that the monument had fallen into a state of decay, either later in the early Bronze Age, or at least by the middle Bronze Age. The latter is plausible given the middle Bronze-Age pottery from the middle and upper deposits infilling the ditch. There was no evidence of a burial beneath the mound or within the ring ditch in the early Bronze Age, but the possibility of one higher up within the mound cannot be ruled out. Various other unworked stones were also recovered

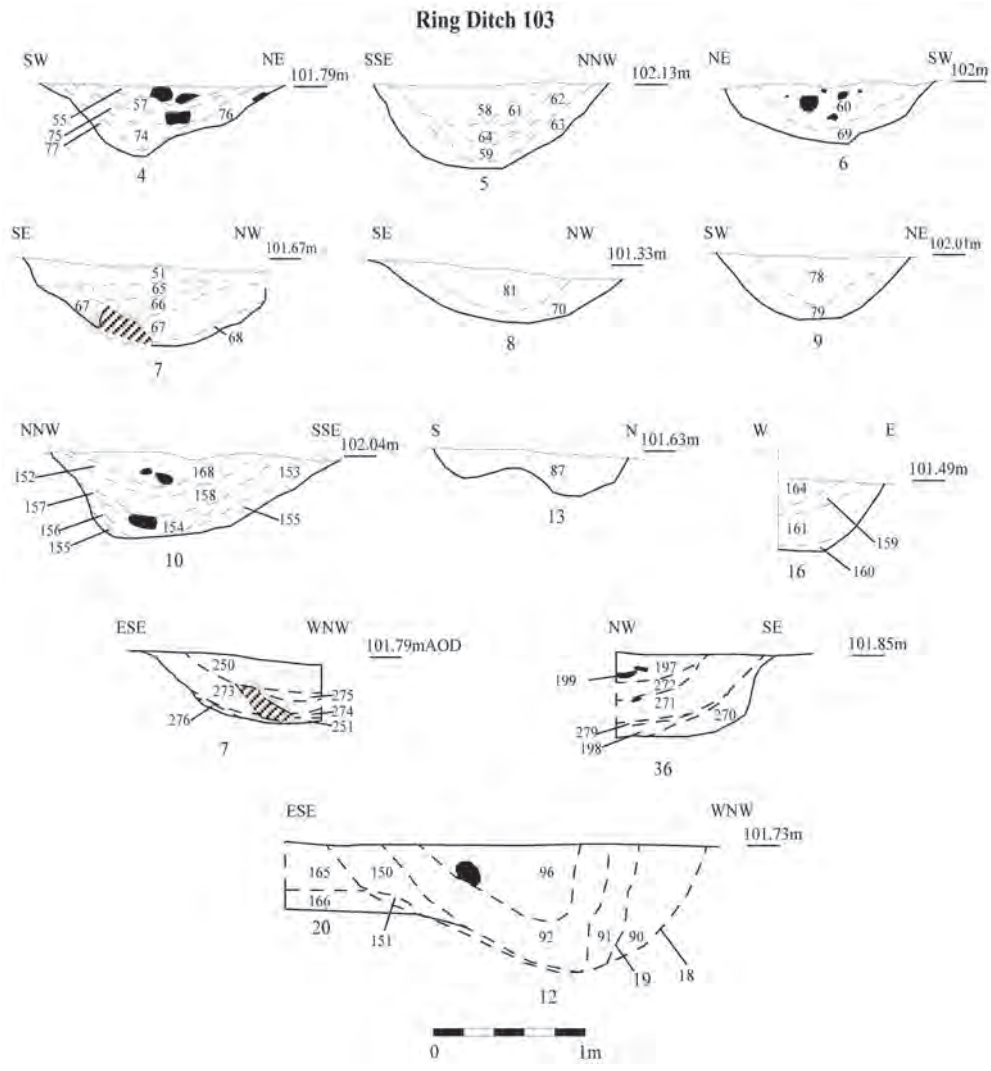

Fig. 5. Sections of ring ditch 103.

from ditch 103 and grave 17: all the stone was unworked and all would have been locally available (ferruginous sandstone pebbles, shelly limestone and chert pebbles).

Phase 3: Middle Bronze Age

Infilling of the ditch occurred with the upper fills containing large quantities of middle Bronze-Age pottery, with some deposits also containing early Bronze-Age sherds (twice as many early sherds as middle). Other activity showing reuse of the monument in the middle Bronze Age was the grave (17) containing Skeleton 85 which truncated slot 10 (fill 152). The cut was ovoid, 1.07 m by 0.55 m (Fig. 3, inset). The inhumation, probably a female, was orientated east (head) to west, facing north and lying on the right side, in a crouched position. The arms were bent at the elbows with the hands close to the face. A flint knife had been placed on the head and the grave appeared to have been sealed or marked by large stones in the upper fills of the

grave together with early Bronze-Age and middle Bronze-Age pottery and small fragments of cremated bone. This latter material was scattered in three deposits, two (71, 73) within the grave and one (86) within the ditch fill below in slot 10, and was probably redeposited from one or more disturbed burials. Even so, deliberate (re-)placement of the cremated bone as part of the inhumation rite seems probable. The skeleton was radiocarbon dated to 1413–1290 cal BC (probability 92.5 per cent at two sigma). An anomalous date from a tooth of the same burial was discounted by the laboratory (see below).

One noteworthy find was the discovery of a middle Bronze-Age rapier blade from the upper fill of slot 4 (55). It had been bent and snapped in antiquity and may have been deliberately 'killed' to serve as a symbol of the ditch's passing out of use. Typologically the rapier can be dated from 1600–1400 BC. Also indicative of middle Bronze-Age use of the monument were three intercut pits (12, 18 and 19) (Fig. 3), which cut the ditch terminal (20) at the causeway, and whose function could have been to seal and 'close' the monument.

Pit 18 was the first of the pits to be excavated. It was ovoid, 1.50 m by 1.78 m, with steep concave sides and was 0.70 m deep. It contained two sherds of residual early Bronze-Age pottery. It was then truncated by pit 19 whose plan was difficult to discern because of later truncation; it was smaller than pit 18 but just as deep, 0.70 m, with quite steep sides. Again after infill this was truncated by another pit (12), which had steep sides and an irregular base and contained pottery of both early and middle Bronze-Age dates. Pit 12 may have truncated pit 21 just to the south; however, this was unclear. This pit was 1.20 m by 140 m and 0.80 m deep with concave sides and a rounded base. No finds were recovered from its silty fill (167). On Area 2, just two features belong to this period. Pit 237 was roughly oval in plan and was filled with mid grey brown clayey sand (454) which contained pottery that only probably dates to the Bronze Age. Some 90 m north-east of 237, pit 302 was circular in plan with slightly undercutting edges and a flat base. It had three fills (478–80) with middle fill 478 containing three very small pieces of pottery that may have an early prehistoric date, and the base fill (480) contained a broken flint flake. Pit 237 was about 150 m from the ring ditch, but at the same contour level on the slope, while pit 302 was over 180 m away and slightly down slope.

Phase 4: Early Iron Age (Figs. 6 and 7)

Iron-Age activity on the site comprised a sequence of intercutting pits and a large enclosure ditch in the eastern part of the site, and a ditch to the south which was continuous in the eastern area but segmented to the west.

The enclosure ditch Ditch 111 was 108 m long, between 4.15 m and 6.10 m wide and between 0.78 m and 1.25 m deep with steep sides and a flat base (Figs. 7 and 8). It entered Area 2 near the north-west corner and was aligned roughly north-north-west to south-south-east, before turning at roughly 90° heading from west-south-west to east-north-east and appearing possibly to be just about to return towards the north-north-west under the northern limit of excavation. It was excavated in four 3-m long, full-width slots (213, 215, 306 and 322), and seven relationships with other features were also investigated (211, 226, 229, 231, 234, 340, 344). It was filled with a sequence of (generally) five or six clayey sands, silty clays and sandy clays. Only six of the many fills recorded contained any pottery: amounting in total to 14 sherds of early Iron-Age pottery, but with one sherd of second- to third-century Roman pottery from cut 322 (fill 5550 and cut 322 (fill 558) also contained one sherd of Beaker pottery. The Roman pottery came from high up in the deposit sequence and may be intrusive whilst the Beaker sherd must be considered residual. A sherd of Roman pottery from cut 234 (fill 451) at a point where the ditch was cut by Roman gully 115 may also be intrusive. Ditch 111 cut pits 120, 228, 230 and had an uncertain relationship with pit 225. Roman ditch 106 cut 111 but the relationship with gully 109 was unclear: 109 is considered later (Fig. 8).

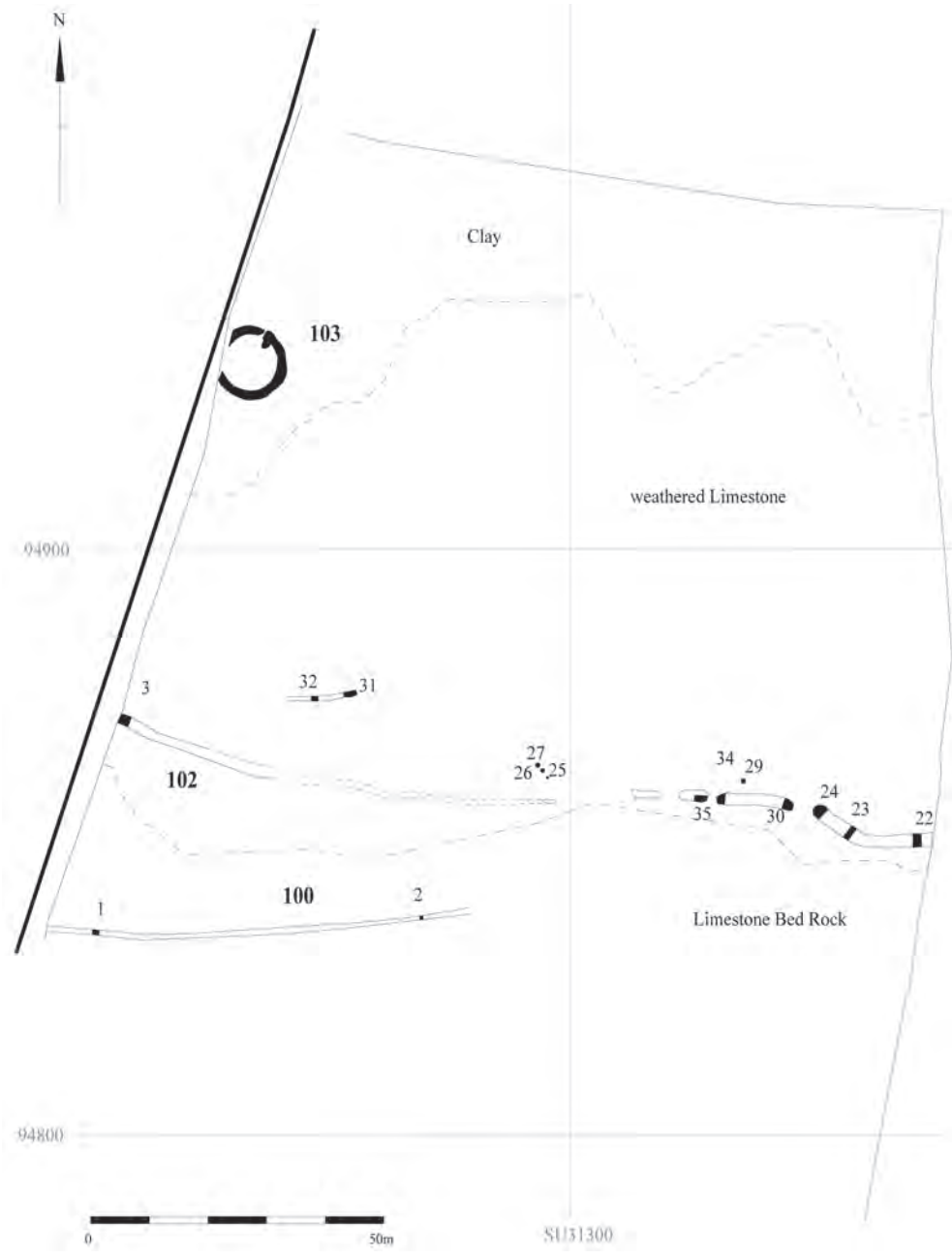

Fig. 6. Plan of Area 1.

Pits and pit groups Several individual pits were investigated by more than one slot and thus given group numbers are well as cut numbers. Pit group 123 (334, 345) was roughly oval in plan 2.8 m long, 2 m wide and 0.89 m deep with several fills (576-82) the lowest of which (576) contained 14 sherds of early Iron-Age pottery. Pit group 123 cut pits 333 and 335 and was cut by pit group 113.

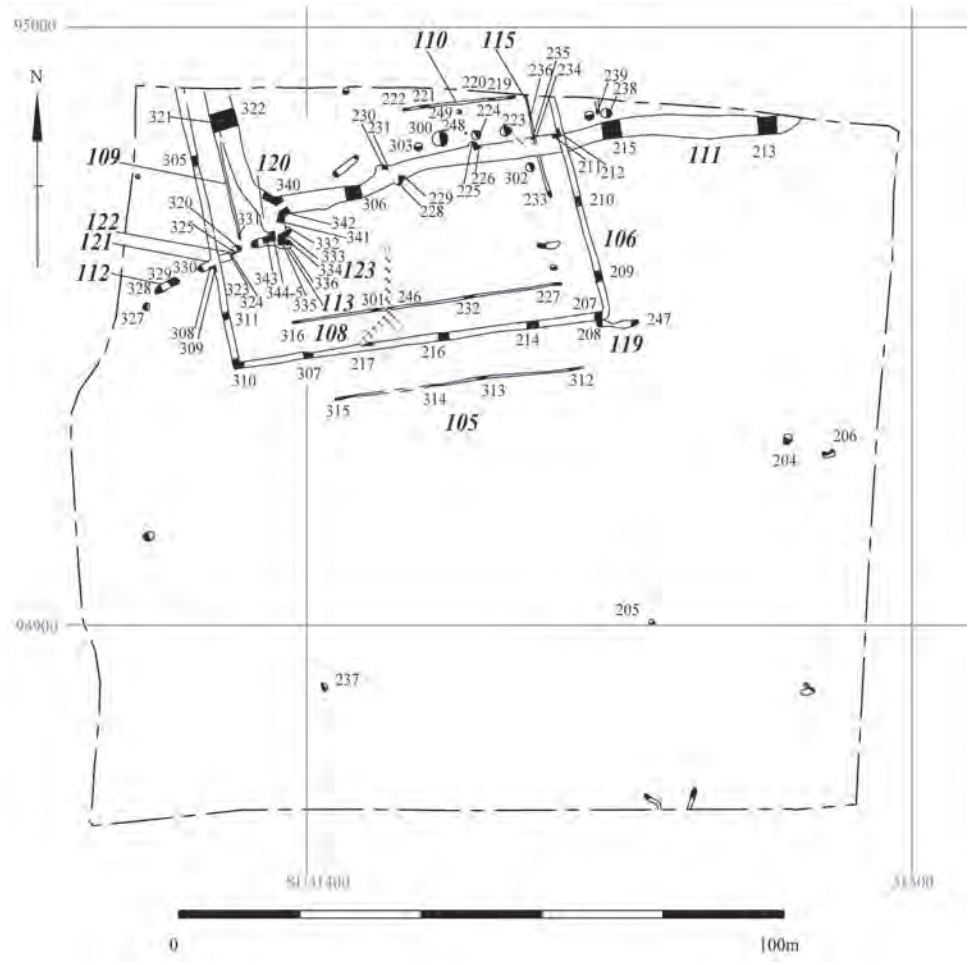

Fig. 7. Plan of Area 2.

Pit 120 (341, 343) was irregular in plan, 3.5 m long by 3.5 m wide and 0.82 m deep, with three fills. Pit 120 was cut by pit 333 and ditch 111. All of pits 225, 228, 230, 332, 233, 335, 336 were cut by the enclosure ditch and so must be early Iron Age or earlier. All were circular or close to it in plan and none contained any finds.

Other features Although undated by pottery, ditches 112, 114 and 121, gully 122 and pits 223, 224, 240, 248, 249, 303, 320 and 327 are likely to be of Iron-Age date. These ditches and pits form roughly linear groups to the south (112, 121, 122, 320, 327 and 330) and north (114, 223, 224, 240, 248, 249 and 303) of the large Iron-Age enclosure ditch 111 and their layout seems to be dependent on it (or vice versa). Several short stretches of ditch appear to form part of a longer but segmented ditch marking a boundary that allows access, similar to pit alignments.[18] Ditches 112, 114 and 121 were between 4.4 m and 6.0 m in length, 0.80 and 1.31 m in width and 0.23–0.35 m in depth. Ditches 112 (328, 329) and 114 (338, 339) were filled

[18] G. Lambrick with M. Robinson, *The Thames through Time: Later Prehistory, 1500BC–AD50*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 29 (2009), p. 58.

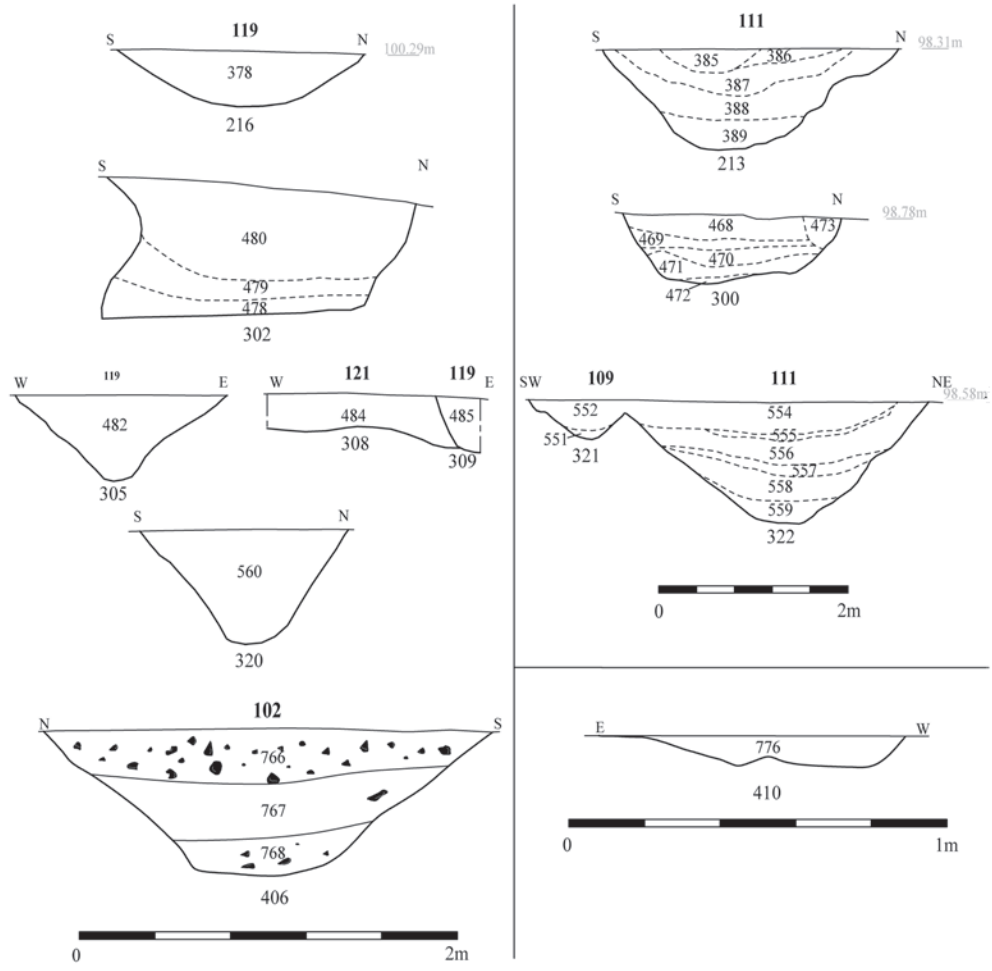

Fig. 8. Sections of features in Area 2.

with mid red brown clayey sand. Ditch 121 had two fills, a mid red brown clayey sand (569) beneath which was light red brown clayey sand (570). It was cut by Roman ditch 106, and a short length of gully (122) ran from the eastern end of ditch 121 to pit 320 but no relationship could be seen with ditch 121.

Pits 223, 224, 240, 248, 249, 303, 327 and 320 were all circular or sub circular in plan. Pits 240 and 327 each had two sandy fills while all the others had a similar single fill of mid brown grey clayey silt.

Segmented ditch 102 (Fig. 6) contained a pottery assemblage (32 sherds) which consists of sandy wares which are Iron Age, and probably from the second half of the period, but cannot be dated more closely. A single sherd of Roman oxidized sandy ware from slot 3 is likely to be intrusive. This ditch was aligned approximately east-west before curving round to the north-east, and was traced for over 260 m across both areas 1 and 3, although a stretch in the middle was planned and not excavated. It continued beyond the site boundary in both directions. The ditch was 1.7–1.9 m wide in the western excavation and 0.47–0.62 m deep with gaps between segments between 1.25 m and 4 m. To the east in Area 3, however, it was continuous, and much better preserved, surviving to between 2–3.32 m wide and up to 0.84 m

deep. Its segmented and somewhat sinuous nature is unusual but increasingly seen as likely to be characteristic of Iron-Age boundaries (if rarely confirmed).

A single small pit (410) containing a deposit of cremated bone was located immediately to the south of ditch 102 (slot 400) and may be of Iron-Age date, though it contained no finds apart from the bone. The feature was nearly circular in plan with a diameter of 0.34 m and a depth of just 0.09 m. There was only 150 g of bone, but given the shallowness of the cut, this may once have been a full cremation burial that has been mostly ploughed away. Equally, it is not uncommon for cremation burials (particularly in the Iron Age) to contain only what appears to be a 'token' amount of bone, and it is possible that the deposition of bone was incidental to the rite.[19]

A small posthole (27) could also be of Iron-Age date, though its pottery could equally well be Bronze-Age. This feature was ovoid in plan 0.36 m by 0.45 m and 0.25 m deep and contained fifteen pottery sherds.

Phase 5: Roman (Fig. 7)

The Roman phase was almost entirely confined to Area 2 and consisted of a rectangular enclosure ditch 106 inside which were a series of gullies (108, 109, 110 and 115) parallel to the enclosure ditch roughly 4 m away from it. Two further gullies (105, 239) lay parallel to the enclosure ditch on the outside.

Ditch 106 (excavated as 12 slots) entered the site near the north-western corner aligned north-north-west to south-south-east to a roughly 90º return aligned west-south-west to east-north-east to a second roughly 90º return aligned south-south-east to north-north-west where it exited the site (Fig. 6). The ditch varied from 1.05 m to 1.30 m in width, 0.25–0.45 m in depth with steeply sloping sides and a flat base to the east and south with a slightly concave base to the west, mostly with a single fill (though in places more) which variously contained pottery from the second to third centuries AD. Fill 498 in cut 310 contained pottery from the first-century AD. Ditch 106 cut Iron-Age ditches 111 and 121 and in turn was cut by possible later Roman ditch 119.

Gullies 108, 109 and 115 were dug parallel to the internal side of ditch 106 and were roughly equally distant from the three sides of ditch 106 (between 4 and 5 m). They varied from 17.5 m to 45.2 m in length, in width from 0.25 m to 1.05 m and in depth from 0.03 m to 0.41 m, all with a concave base. The majority of the cuts had a single fill of mid grey brown clayey sand. Pottery from the second to third centuries was recovered from single contexts within gullies 109 and 115. Gully 115 cut ditch 111 but no relationship could be seen between gully 109 and ditch 111.

Gully 110 may be similar to 108, 109 and 115, possibly parallel to an unseen northern return of ditch 106 outside the excavation area but more likely an internal division, perhaps at the mid-point of the enclosure. If this was the case, the enclosure within ditch 106 would be 61 m (east–west) by around 73 m (north–south) internally, or 51 m by 62 m within the inner gullies. Gully 110 was 20 m long, between 0.38 m and 0.42 m wide, just 0.08 m deep with a concave base. It contained pottery dated to the second century or later.

Gullies 105 and 239 followed a similar plan to gullies 108, 109 and 115 but on the outside of ditch 106 to the south and north-east respectively. They varied from 2.8 m to 42 m in length, in width from 0.38 m to 0.66 m and in depth from 0.05 m to 0.14 m, both with a concave base. Neither gully contained any dateable artefacts. There was no corresponding outer gully on the enclosure's west side, and indeed assigning the very short gully 239 to this role on the east side is only speculative.

Pit 300 contained pottery dated to the second century AD or later.

In Area 1, ditch 100 was aligned east–west, this was only observed for *c*.75 m probably because all that remained was the shallow remains of the base 0.07–0.10 m deep. The ditch

[19] D.W. Harding, *Death and Burial in Iron Age Britain* (2016).

was 1.30 m wide and contained just three sherds of late third-/early fourth-century pottery. It bears no obvious connection to the features on Area 2 but it is possible it was associated with ditch 124 in Area 3.

In Area 3, ditch 124 was located just north of Iron-Age ditch 102 and roughly parallel to it. It did not extend into the Phase 1 area, and clearly terminated at the east end within this area (405). Eight slots were excavated, showing that it varied considerably in width (1.1–3.34 m) and depth (0.12–0.29 m), although the widest slot (418) possibly represents two features which could not be distinguished; elsewhere it was mostly under 2 m wide and very shallow. It had a single fill of mid-reddish brown silty sand throughout. Pottery from the ditch was exclusively Roman in date, although some doubt is cast on the dating by a fragment of medieval tile from the terminal (405) and post-medieval finds in slot 418 (a fragment of clay pipe). These, however, must derive from an overlying layer (described below). It is roughly on the same line as ditch 100 and so may share its later Roman date.

Phase 6: Post-Medieval?

At the line of the modern field boundary between Areas 2 and 3, both ditches 102 and 124 were overlain by an extensive spread (787) of mid-reddish brown silty sand, not very different from the fill of ditch 124 but extending over at least 5 m width, and in places being pressed down into the top of the ditch fill, achieving a maximum depth of 0.48 m where this occurred, but mainly under 0.15 m deep elsewhere. It is probable that a similar deposit accounts for the anomalous recorded width of slot 418. This may represent a reworking of upper ditch fills through natural agency. The few other post-medieval features are detailed in the archive.

FINDS

The pottery from Area 1 is of markedly different character and date from that from Areas 2 and 3, and so the material was examined by two specialists. A combined summary is presented as Table 1; more detail on both assemblages is in the site archive. Several other classes of artefact and ecofact were so rare, or so poorly preserved, as to merit little or no comment here; again details are in the site archive or the online client reports.

THE POTTERY FROM AREA 1 by FRANCES RAYMOND

The pottery assemblage from Area 1 is composed of 1,068 sherds weighing 3,538 g, which are principally of early to middle Bronze-Age date with a distribution focussed on the ring ditch (103). This material is lightly to moderately abraded and is highly fragmented, providing only limited evidence for vessel form. The few featured sherds are derived from biconical vessels, while decoration is restricted to horizontal cordons, bosses and rows of fingernail impressions. The pottery was analysed according to the guidelines of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (with more details in archive).[20] None of the featured sherds provide sufficient evidence for vessel style to warrant illustration. Fabric letter codes relevant to this report include: C – calcareous inclusions composed of limestone sometimes accompanied by fossil shell and ooliths; F – burnt flint; G – grog; S – sand; and V – voids principally representing leached limestone, but with the occasional addition of fossil shell.

The Early to Middle Bronze-Age Pottery

Virtually all of the 1004 sherds (3,291 g) of early to middle Bronze-Age pottery are derived from the ring ditch (103) and associated features (12, 17, 18 and 19). The majority of fragments

[20] Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group, *The Study of Prehistoric Pottery: General Policies and Guidelines for Analysis and Publication*, Occasional Paper, 1 and 2 (2010).

Table 1. Pottery summary by context

Cut	*Fill*	*Group*	*Type*	*EBA*	*MBA*	*IA*	*samian*	*mort*	*Rcw*	*No*	*wt (g)*
			unstratified	7	4	10	–	–	4	25	89
1	52	100	Ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	5
2	53	100	Ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	5
3	54	102	Ditch	–	–	6	1	–	–	7	16
4	56	103	Ditch	24	–	–	–	–	–	103	147
5	58	103	Ditch	132	10	1	–	–	–	143	260
5	59	103	Ditch	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	5
6	60	103	Ditch	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	19
9	78	103	Ditch	2	–	–	–	–	–	2	6
10	85	103	Ditch	5	3	–	–	–	–	8	8
10	86	103	Ditch	246	92	–	–	–	–	338	887
12	97	103	Pit	2	–	–	–	–	–	2	7
16	164	103	Ditch	8	–	–	–	–	–	8	15
17	71	103	Grave	85	67	–	–	–	–	152	400
17	72	103	Grave	3	4	–	–	–	–	7	40
17	73	103	Grave	133	31	–	–	–	–	164	516
18	90		Pit	2	–	–	–	–	–	2	15
19	92		Pit	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	10
19	96		Pit	1	1	–	–	–	–	2	291
23	180	100	Ditch	3	–	–	–	–	–	3	3
24	191	100	Ditch	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	2
27	186		Posthole	–	14	1	–	–	–	15	117
34	196	100	Ditch	–	–	3	–	–	–	3	3
35	194		Pit	–	–	32	–	–	–	32	66
36	197	103	Ditch	14	16	–	–	–	–	30	170
36	253	103	Ditch	5	12	–	–	–	–	17	57
37	250	103	Ditch	9	–	–	–	–	–	9	63
38	252	103	Ditch	1	44	–	–	–	–	45	306
39	199	103	Ditch	–	32	–	–	–	–	32	297
209	367	106	ditch	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	58
210	368	106	ditch	–	–	–	1	–	8	9	16.25
213	385	111	ditch	–	–	4	–	–	–	4	7
213	388	111	ditch	–	–	2	–	–	–	2	15
214	371	106	ditch	–	–	–	–	–	22	22	109
215	372	111	ditch	–	–	8	–	–	–	8	19
216	378	106	ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	7
221	383	110	gully	–	–	–	–	–	17	17	79
233	450	115	gully	–	–	–	–	–	223	223	2206
234	451	111	ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	7
237	454		pit	–	2	–	–	–	–	2	107
300	471		pit	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	1
302	479		pit	–	3	–	–	–	–	3	4
305	482	106	ditch	–	–	–	–	9	13	22	400
309	485	106	ditch	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	41

Table 1. (continued)

Cut	*Fill*	*Group*	*Type*	*EBA*	*MBA*	*IA*	*samian*	*mort*	*Rcw*	*No*	*wt (g)*
310	498	106	ditch	–	–	1	3	–	4	8	25
319	551	113	pit	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	2
321	552	109	gully	–	–	–	1	–	8	9	29
322	555	111	ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	9
322	558	111	ditch	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	2
334	579	123	pit	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	11
345	591	123	pit	–	–	14	–	–	–	14	56
402	759	102	Ditch	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	9
404	762	102	Ditch	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	2
416	785	124	Ditch	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	4
417	786	124	Ditch	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1
415	791	102	Ditch	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	8
418	792	124	Ditch	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	18

mort: mortarium; Rcw: Roman coarsewares; undated crumbs not included

(68 per cent by sherd count; and 62 per cent by weight) are in various grog tempered fabrics of early Bronze-Age character and represent the remains of at least nine different vessels. These came from the eastern half of the ring ditch, where they were concentrated in the south-eastern sector, mainly in the middle Bronze-Age grave (17): 471 sherds, weighing 1,368 g, but with another notable cluster in slot 5 (133 sherds, 247g). Just a light scatter of sherds was recovered from slots 4, 9, 16, 36, 37 and 38 and from pits 12, 18 and 19.

Much of the grog tempered pottery from the ring ditch either occurs alongside middle Bronze-Age ceramics or is stratified above contexts containing this later material and is demonstrably residual. The only possible exception is a single wall sherd (weighing just 5g) from the lower fill of slot 5 (59).

Fragments of grog tempered pottery occurred throughout the fills of grave 17 (fills 71 to 73), and the ditch fills it cut into (85 and 86), and in slot 5 were virtually all from top fill 58. Stylistically diagnostic sherds were confined to these contexts. The assemblage from the grave incorporates the remains of at least seven vessels including one biconical urn with a pointed bevelled rim. Refitting sherds from this urn were recovered from grave fill 73 and ditch fill 86. Four of the other vessels are represented by simple, upright rounded rims; another is denoted by a single bevelled rim sherd with an external expansion; and the last can be distinguished on the basis of contrasting fabric characteristics. The remaining featured sherds from the grave include four with horizontal cordons, both pinched and applied; two with applied bosses; one with a fingernail row; one with a single fingernail impression; and one with a pre-firing pierced hole.

The assemblage from slot 5 includes the remains of up to three different vessels, two with upright rims either simple and rounded or flattened with an external expansion. The featured sherds include one applied boss and an angled shoulder from a biconical urn decorated with a row of fingernail impressions.

The middle Bronze-Age assemblage of 317 sherds (1,249 g) was confined to the ring ditch (103) and associated features (17 and 19), concentrated in the grave cut 17 (197 sherds, 482 g) and in two of the nearest slots (slot 36: 60 sherds, 412 g; and slot 38: 44 sherds, 303 g). Virtually all of the middle Bronze-Age pottery is tempered with limestone (306 sherds, 1,221 g; Fabrics SV/1 and V/1). The exceptions are 11 sherds (28 g) from slots 5 and 36, made from sandy flint tempered ware FS/1.

The pottery represents the remains of at least four middle Bronze-Age vessels, but the confined fabric range and the limited evidence for vessel form may well have led to the estimate of vessel equivalents being on the low side. Stylistically diagnostic fragments came from grave 17 and slot 36. The middle Bronze-Age sherds from the grave were again distributed throughout the fills (71–3), and ditch contexts below (85 and 86). They are made from a single fabric (VS/1) and include the remains of two vessels with upright rims: one simple and rounded and the other bevelled with a slight external expansion. The other featured fragments include an angled shoulder from a biconical urn and part of a horizontal cordon. The pottery from slot 36 also came from several fills (197, 199 and 253) and is mostly made from the same fabric as in the grave (VS/1: 57 sherds, 405 g). Diagnostic fragments include a few sherds from a vessel with an upright, simple rounded rim and an applied horizontal cordon; and a shoulder from a slack biconical urn. Three wall sherds in a contrasting sandy flint tempered ware (FS/1) are all burnished and include one with a shallow tooled line, most typical of the technique used to decorate globular urns.

Fabrics Seven fabrics characteristic of the early Bronze Age occur in the assemblage, all containing common to very common frequencies of grog: FGS/1, G/1, GS/1, GS/2, GSV/1, GSV/2 and GV/1; 687 sherds, 2,042 g). Vessels made from these wares have predominantly oxidized exteriors with colours tending mainly towards reddish brown and brown, and unoxidized cores and interiors. With the exception of a single fabric represented by one fragment (GSV/2; 10 g) all of the wares are coarse (with inclusions ranging up to between 5.0 and 9.0 mm). The majority of grog tempered sherds are made from one of three fabrics that additionally include sparse to moderate quantities of rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 1.0 mm.; FGS/1, GS/1 and GS/2; 583 sherds, 1,526 g), which in FGS/1 occurs alongside sparse quantities of coarse burnt flint (up to 5.0 mm; 11 sherds, 79 g). Sparse angular voids characteristic of limestone (up to 2.0 mm) are additionally present in three other fabrics (GSV/1; GSV/2 and GV/1; 23 sherds, 89 g), while similar voids are rare in a fourth (G/1; 81 sherds, 427 g). Rare glauconite altered by heating to limonite also occurs in two of these wares, alongside sparse rounded grains of quartz sand (0.2 to 0.5 mm; GSV/1 and GSV/2; 16 sherds, weighing 78 g).

Most of the middle Bronze-Age pottery is made from one of two medium grade fabrics (with inclusions ranging up to 4.0 mm) characterized by common voids typical of limestone (SV/1 and V/1; 306 sherds, 1,221 g). In the majority this is accompanied by sparse rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.3 mm; SV/1; 302 sherds, 1,216 g). Vessels made from these fabrics have predominantly brown oxidized exteriors and unoxidized cores and interiors. A small group of 11 sherds (28 g) is made from contrasting ware FS/1, containing very common sub-rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.5 mm) and tempered with common fairly fine crushed burnt flint (0.2 to 2.0 mm).

The Late Prehistoric and Roman Pottery

The 64 sherds (247 g) of late prehistoric (probably early Iron-Age, though some could be middle Bronze-Age) and Roman pottery from Area 1 are all featureless wall and base fragments. The majority of the late prehistoric sherds from Area 1 are sandy wares, some with sparse amounts of limestone, which can be assigned broadly to the Iron Age, but cannot be dated any more precisely. The largest group is derived from pit 35 and represents the fragmented remains of a single vessel (32 sherds, just 66 g).

The Roman sherds were recovered from ditches 100 and 102, while the Iron-Age pottery is derived from these same features and from one of the slots through the ring ditch (5, 58), a posthole (27) and a pit (35). The six sherds (42 g) of Roman pottery are heavily abraded. Apart from one fragment of coarse oxidized sandy ware, all are greywares. Three of these sherds from ditch 100 are in a fine reduced-micaceous sandy fabric of the type produced by the Oxfordshire kilns, pointing to a later Roman date.

Discussion

The limited stylistic evidence indicates that biconical urns were being deposited at the ring ditch during both the early and the middle Bronze Age. Biconical urns are relatively rare in Oxfordshire with noted examples from Barrow Hills, Radley, Yarnton, and the Rollright Stones.[21]

The long currency of biconical urns is typical of the region encompassing the Upper Thames and extending into the Cotswolds, where these vessels continued to be produced into the middle Bronze Age.[22] The distinction between the pottery of the two periods relies in this case, as in some others, on fabric characteristics. The grog tempered wares are part of the traditional early Bronze-Age repertoire of fabrics used for a variety of urns. The radiocarbon date of 1691–1530 cal BC is entirely consistent with these findings, pointing to activity on the site towards the end of the known currency of collared urns and of the early Bronze-Age biconical urn series.

The attribution of the limestone and fossil shell tempered wares to the middle Bronze-Age finds support on some Cotswold sites in Gloucestershire, including Bevan's Quarry and Shorncote Quarry and has been identified as a typical attribute of the middle Bronze Age in the region.[23] The radiocarbon date from the grave of 1413–1290 cal BC supports the dating indicated by the ceramics.

THE POTTERY FROM AREAS 2 AND 3 by JANE TIMBY

The work in Area 2 resulted in the recovery of 357 sherds of pottery weighing *c.*3.2 kg, to which Area 3 added just 18 sherds (67 g) dating to the earlier and later prehistoric and Roman periods. The pottery was in fairly poor condition with a number of well fragmented sherds, reflected in a low overall average sherd weight of just 9 g in Area 2, dropping to just 3.7 g from Area 3. There were a few instances of multiple sherds from single vessels. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each context. The group is very small with few featured pieces. The range of wares is very similar to those previously recovered from the Faringdon area,[24] both in terms of composition and chronology.

Beaker / Bronze Age

Iron-Age ditch 106 (322, fill 588) produced a very small sherd of oxidized ware with a black core which may be Beaker. Pit 237 produced two sherds from a handmade, thick-walled (21mm thick) vessel, probably a Bronze-Age urn. The brown fabric with a black core has a

[21] R.M.J. Cleal, 'Prehistoric Pottery', in A. Barclay and C. Halpin, *Excavations at Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire, Vol 1: The Neolithic and Bronze Age Monument Complex*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 11 (1999), pp. 195–210; A. Barclay, 'Beaker and Early Bronze Age Pottery', in A. Barclay et al., 'A Prehistoric Enclosure at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 66 (2002), pp. 124–7; T. Darvill, 'The Neolithic and Bronze Age Pottery', in G. Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones: Megaliths, Monuments and Settlement in the Prehistoric Landscape*, English Heritage Archaeology Report, 6 (1988), pp. 90–3.

[22] A. Woodward, 'Bronze Age Pottery', in C. Parry, 'Excavations near Birdlip, Cowley, Gloucestershire, 1987–8', *Transactions of the Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 116 (1999), pp. 66–7; idem, 'Prehistoric Pottery', in N. Holbrook, 'The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Lower Farm, Bishop's Cleeve: Excavations Directed by Kenneth Brown 1969', *Transactions of the Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 118 (2001), pp. 85–7.

[23] H.E. O'Neil, 'Bevan's Quarry Round Barrow, Temple Guiting, Gloucestershire, 1964', *Transactions of the Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 86 (1968), pp. 16–41; A. Barclay, 'Pottery', in A. Barclay et al., 'Excavation of Neolithic and Bronze Age Ring-Ditches, Shorncote Quarry, Somerford Keynes, Gloucestershire', *Transactions of the Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 113 (1996), pp. 21–60; idem, 'Prehistoric Pottery and Fired Clay', in P. Bradley et al., 'The Excavation of Two Barrows at Merton, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 62 (1998), pp. 64–73.

[24] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in S.D.G. Weaver and S. Ford, 'An Early Iron Age Occupation Site, a Roman Shrine and Other Prehistoric Activity at Coxwell Road, Faringdon', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2004), pp. 136–59.

moderate frequency of fine, calcined flint, temper. Pit 302 (479) contained three extremely small pot crumbs in a brown fabric with sparse voids which also suggest an earlier prehistoric date.

Iron Age

Some 30 sherds from Area 2 were designated Iron Age on the basis of fabric. These include sparse fossil shell-tempered wares, sandy wares and sherds with an iron-rich fabric which are likely to date to the early Iron age. None of the pieces are featured but one sherd from pit 334, in a micaceous sandy ware, has a red haematite-slipped finish.

Fourteen Iron-Age sherds came from ditch 111 (slots 213 and 215) unaccompanied by later material, although Roman sherds came from another slot along this ditch. A further 14 sherds came from pit 345 and single sherds from ditches 310 (along with Roman sherds) and 334 (unaccompanied).

Thirteen prehistoric sherds from Area 3 include ten in a sandy ware containing fossil shell and limestone from subsoil (751). A similar small sherd came from slot 404 (fill 762) in ditch 102. Also from ditch 102 are single sherds of sandy ware and a ware with sparse coarse fossil shell. The evidence is slight but the character of the pottery indicates a middle-late Iron-Age date for this ditch.

Roman

The bulk of the assemblage, 85.8 per cent by sherd count, dates to the Roman period. Most of the wares derive from local industries, in particular there are sherds recognizable as coming from the Oxfordshire industry (grey, white and oxidized sandy wares and whiteware *mortaria*). Continental imports include five sherds of samian whilst the only regional import is a small sherd of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware. The samian is unusual in that it appears to include one, possibly two sherds from the base of a South Gaulish *crater* from ditch 310 which suggests a possible Claudian or Claudio-Neronian date. The same feature also contained a dish of Dragendorff type 18. One broken samian fragment from gully 321 may be East Gaulish, as is possibly one extremely small fragment from ditch 210.

The local wares include very few featured pieces to allow close dating. Most of the sherds from gully 115 terminus 233, a large group of 223 sherds and thus 62.5 per cent of the assemblage, actually come from a single large grey-ware jar with an expanded, slightly pendant rim. With the exception of ditch 310 which appears to date to the early Roman period most of the other features would suggest a later second- or third-century phase of activity. There are no colour-coated wares or other typical later Roman products present suggesting that there is no occupation dating after the middle of the third century, in contrast to Area 1 where one feature does appear to be later than this.

After gully 115, the greatest concentrations of Roman pottery came from ditches 106 and 111. Ditch 106 produced 64 sherds amongst which is a body and base-sherd of gritted Oxfordshire white-ware mortarium and nine sherds from a single Oxfordshire white-ware flanged bowl copying a mortarium form but with no grits (cf. Young 1977, form W62, dated to the third century), as well as the early South Gaulish samian. Ditch 111 produced 17 sherds of which 14 are Iron Age, suggesting either an unrecognized cut or a high proportion of redeposited material.

There are five sherds of Roman date from Area 3: four from ditch 124 and one from surface spread (787) over the top of ditch 124. The presence of a late Roman shelly ware and a colour-coated ware, possibly Oxfordshire, would suggest this is likely to be a late Roman feature. The other sherds comprise generic oxidised and fine grey sandy wares.

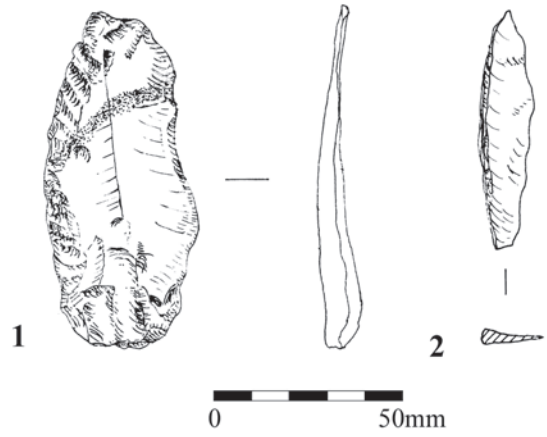

Fig. 9. Flints (see text for details).

STRUCK FLINT by STEVE FORD

A small collection of 30 struck flints comprised 21 flakes, four narrow flakes, a microlith, a knife, a spall, a core fragment and a finely retouched blade (Table 2). All were most probably residual. Several of the pieces are fresh whereas the majority are patinated and at least one fairly weathered and edge damaged. The flint is presumably derived from the chalklands to the south of the site.

The knife (Fig. 9.1) is made from a flake and is invasively retouched on the left hand edge of the dorsal surface with steeper, blunting? retouch on the right hand edge. It is intact and patinated but otherwise undamaged. It is of Neolithic/early Bronze-Age date. The knife was recovered from above the skull of the inhumation burial (grave 17). An association of flint tools, especially knives, with early Bronze-Age inhumation burials is a fairly common event though the dating in this instance is firmly within the middle Bronze Age.

The microlith is a crescentic form of later Mesolithic date and is intact and patinated (Fig 9.2). It was recovered from ring ditch slot 5 as a clearly residual find. The microlith presumably reflects casual loss, perhaps as an arrow during a hunting expedition. Although of minor significance in itself it does fall within a broader pattern of settlement within the region, which is concentrated on the Corallian ridge north of the River Ock.[25]

Four flakes from the ring ditch included both fresh and patinated pieces. They are not closely datable and could be either residual or contemporary with use of the ditch.

Despite being such a small collection, it is notable that there is a high narrow flake/blade component, with the latter pieces being well made and not a fortuitous by-product of flint knapping. They indicate a Mesolithic component to the collection, with the undiagnostic pieces perhaps being of similar date. One notable piece is a backed blade 53 mm long, made on a slightly cherty blank though it is not known if its grey colour is a product of patination. Both dorsal sides of the blade have been retouched with a (broken) point at the distal end.

The association of Mesolithic flintwork with the sand outcrops of the Corallian ridge through Oxfordshire is repeatedly noted, with several larger occupation sites recorded, such as at Tubney, or more modest numbers of flints, as at nearby Coxwell Road, Faringdon.[26]

[25] Holgate, *Neolithic Settlement of the Thames Basin*.

[26] Ibid.; P. Bradley and G. Hey, 'A Mesolithic Site at New Plantation, Fyfield and Tubney, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 58 (1993), pp. 1–26; Weaver and Ford, 'Coxwell Road Faringdon.'

Table 2. Catalogue of struck flint

Cut	*Fill*	*Feature type*	*Intact Flake*	*Intact Blade*	*Broken Flake*	*Broken Blade*	*Other*
4	55	Ring ditch	1	–	1	–	
4	56	Ring ditch	–	–	1	–	
5	59	Ring ditch	–	–	–	–	microlith
7	66	Ring ditch	–	–	1	–	
15	84	Ring ditch	–	1	–	–	
10	86	Ring ditch	–	–	–	–	knife
12	97	Ring ditch	–	–	1	–	
200	350	Pit	–	–	–	–	retouched blade
205	358	Pit	1	–	–	–	
206	360	Treebole	–	–	–	1	
215	372	Ditch	1	–	–	–	*Spall*
213	385	Ditch	1	1	2	–	core fragment
213	388	Ditch	–	–	–	1	
223	391	Pit	–	–	2	–	
302	480	Pit	–	–	1	–	
305	482	Ditch	1	–	–	–	
306	486	Ditch	1	–	–	–	
319	551	Ditch	–	–	1	–	
322	555	Ditch	1	–	–	–	
322	558	Ditch	1	–	–	–	
334	581	Pit	1	–	–	1	
408	771	Ditch	1	–	–	–	

BRONZE OBJECTS by ROBIN TAYLOR

Three pieces of bronze were recovered, all from ring ditch 103 (slot 4, 55). The pieces are much corroded with adherent material and the surfaces are damaged, although showing a smooth green patinated surface in several places. The broken ends of each piece do not match up neatly with each other, but they are clearly all part of the same object.

1. A pointed blade tip, 55 mm long, 13 mm wide at the break and 2.5 mm thick at the centre. The blade thickens at the centre, forming a lozenge-shaped cross section. The edge is very damaged and there are no traces of a milled blade edge. There are bright green corrosion products, where pieces of the surface have broken away.
2. A blade section, broken at both ends, 23 mm long, 13 to 15 mm wide, 2 to 3 mm thick at the centre. Lozenge-shaped cross section.
3. A longer piece of blade section, broken at both ends and laterally bent. 72 mm long, 14 to 15 mm wide, 3 mm thick at the centre. Lozenge-shaped cross section. This piece has a relatively undamaged area of patinated surface which shows many fine lines and striations when examined under magnification (x20); there are also hints of shiny bronze showing through. These lines may represent ancient polishing and sharpening.

Therefore, we have a blade that was at least 150 mm long which has been bent across along its length and snapped in antiquity. The blade fits the form of a middle Bronze-Age rapier and the

lozenge section would match Burgess' Group II,[27] which dates to the first phase of the middle Bronze Age. The typology of rapiers is based on blade cross-section and the form of the butt,[28] which is of course missing from this piece. The form and width of this blade are matched by an example from the River Thames, which Burgess and Gerloff assign to their Group II, Type Taplow.[29] Generally, rapiers have broader blades with a width across the shoulders of 50–70 mm and reach lengths of 200–400 mm.[30] Almost all Group II rapiers are single finds and about 90 per cent come from rivers or other wet places, with a considerable number coming from the River Thames; many seem to have been deliberately deposited in an unused condition.[31] Burgess and Gerloff placed Group II in the Acton Park phase, around 1400 BC; this phase can be labelled MBA1 and spanned the dates 1600–1400 BC.[32]

The bending and breaking of bronze objects is certainly a feature in the later Bronze Age and can be seen as an action to ritually destroy an object and put it beyond use, while the form of such a narrow blade could suggest that it was made for a more ceremonial, than functional use.[33]

HUMAN BONE by CERI FALYS

A single inhumation burial (skeleton 85) was excavated from grave 17, cut into the partially backfilled ring-ditch 103. At the time of excavation, the skeleton was recorded as being 50 per cent complete, although poorly preserved. As the skeletal remains were lifted from the ground, all elements were extremely fragile and became increasingly so, which limited the amount of post-excavation cleaning and analysis possible. The preservation of the bone was extremely poor, with all elements highly fragmented and largely unidentifiable.

The age of the individual could only be assessed based on the dentition (teeth were among the elements better preserved). The third molars were present, and all molars showed some degree of dental wear, which suggested an age of 35 to 45 years at the time of death. It was also noted that even the maxillary and mandibular incisors, canines and premolars demonstrated tooth wear, perhaps indicating an edge-to-edge bite pattern of the anterior teeth (no over-lap of the maxillary front teeth over the mandibular teeth).

The sex of the individual was estimated to be probable female based on the morphology of several traits of the skull (mandible shape, nuchal crest and mastoid processes) and an overall gracile appearance. However, it was also observed that some muscle markings were quite pronounced.

Possible pathological alterations were observed on the mandibular and maxillary canines, premolars and molars. Very faint linear horizontal grooves were noted very close to the cemento-enamel junction, however, these lines were obscured by the enamel surface damage. It is possible these defects of the teeth represent linear enamel hypoplasia, which are caused by systemic stresses affecting the body during dental development in the jaw, either nutrition-related or the result of disease.[34]

[27] C.B. Burgess, 'Bronze Age Dirks and Rapiers as illustrated by Examples from Durham and Northumberland', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 2nd series, 1 (1968), pp. 3–26, fig. 1.

[28] C.B. Burgess and S. Gerloff, *The Dirks and Rapiers of Great Britain and Ireland,* Prähistorische Bronzefunde, Abt. IV, Band 7 (1981).

[29] Ibid., plate 15, no. 99; M.J. Rowlands, *The Production and Distribution of Metalwork in the Middle Bronze Age in Southern Britain*, BAR BS, 31 (1976), plate 44, no. 1821.

[30] Burgess and Gerloff, *Dirks and Rapiers*, p. 20.

[31] Ibid. pp. 41 and 46.

[32] Ibid. plate 134; R.J. Taylor, *Hoards of the Bronze Age in Southern Britain: Analysis and Interpretation*, BAR BS, 228 (1993), p. 23, table 1.

[33] M. Barber, *Bronze and the Bronze Age: Metalwork and Society in Britain c.2500–800 BC* (2003).

[34] D. J. Ortner, *Identification of Pathological Conditions in Human Skeletal Remains,* 2nd edn (2003); C. Roberts and K. Manchester, *The Archaeology of Disease*, 2nd edn (1995).

CREMATED BONE

Tiny quantities of cremated bone were recovered from four contexts within ring ditch 103; all appear to have been redeposited from one or more disturbed burials. The total weight of under 50 g of bone (not all of which is human) represents the remains of at least one sub-adult or adult (*c.*13–40 years old) of unknown sex.

A single deposit containing a total of 153 g of human cremated bone was excavated in 0.02 m spits from undated pit 410 in Area 3. All the bone was (probably) from a single adult, whose sex could not be determined. The majority of bone was white, indicating an efficient cremation process, except for portions of cranial vault and tooth roots, which displayed patches of blue-grey in addition to white, which suggests the head was not subjected to the same burning time, temperature, and/or oxygen supply as the postcranial elements.

Other than signalling the presence of these meagre remains, no meaningful analysis could be carried out.

ANIMAL BONE

A tiny assemblage of animal bone was recovered from Area 1, even less from Area 3 and none at all from Area 2. The preservation of the bone was extremely poor and very little was identifiable. Three fragments from ring ditch 103 were from a cow radius-ulna. Two fragments from pit 29 were large mammal rib. A medium-sized mammal is represented by a fragment of tibial shaft in ditch 102. No further information could be retrieved.

CHARRED SEEDS AND CHARCOAL

Bulk soil samples were processed from 60 contexts. Plant macrofossils were extremely rare, consisting only of three indeterminate cereal grains and a single example each of wheat, barley (all from Iron-Age ditch 111), one grass seed and a fragment of hazelnut shell. Charcoal was also rare and usually too small or badly preserved to permit identification (even from the cremation deposit). Five samples contained material tentatively identified as oak or ash (*Quercus* sp. or *Fraxinus excelsior*) and a few fragments of hawthorn, apple, blackthorn, or plum (Pomoideae or *Prunus* sp.).

RADIOCARBON DATING

Three samples were submitted to the Leibniz Laboratory at the University of Kiel for radiocarbon dating. Details of methodology are in the archive. Calibration used CALIB rev 5.01 Data set: IntCal04.[35] The results are presented in Table 3. Two samples were taken from skeleton 85 (bone and tooth) but given the same lab code (KIA 34583). The tooth enamel gave a significantly younger age than the bone collagen. The collagen age is closer to the measured ^{14}C-age of the charcoal sample KIA 34584 from lower down in the ditch. A possible explanation could be contamination of the tooth with secondary calcite with a younger age signature. That may also explain the more positive d^{13}C value of the tooth carbonate in comparison to the collagen d^{13}C value. The later date is therefore rejected.

[35] P.J. Reimer et al., 'IntCal04 Terrestrial Radiocarbon Age Calibration, 0–26cal kyr BP', *Radiocarbon*, 46:3 (2004), pp. 1029–58.

Table 3. Radiocarbon dates

Lab ID	*Context*	*Material*	*Radiocarbon Age*	*Calibrated Date*	*Probability*
KIA34584	ditch 103	Charcoal	BP 3342±27	1726–1721 cal BC	1.0 %
	slot 10 fill 154			**1691–1530 cal** BC	**94.4 %**
KIA34583	skeleton 85	A> Bone collagen	BP 3074±2	**1413–1290 cal BC**	**92.5 %**
	grave cut 17			1280–1270 cal BC	2.9 %
		B> Tooth enamel	*BP 1663±29*	*321–434 cal BC*	*87.8 %*

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