

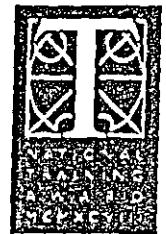
ROMANO-BRITISH AND LATE PREHISTORIC
EXCAVATIONS AT DUTTONS FARM,
LATHOM, WEST LANCASHIRE

2ND INTERIM REPORT: 1999-2001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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With Liz Callander and Jeff Speakman
June 2002



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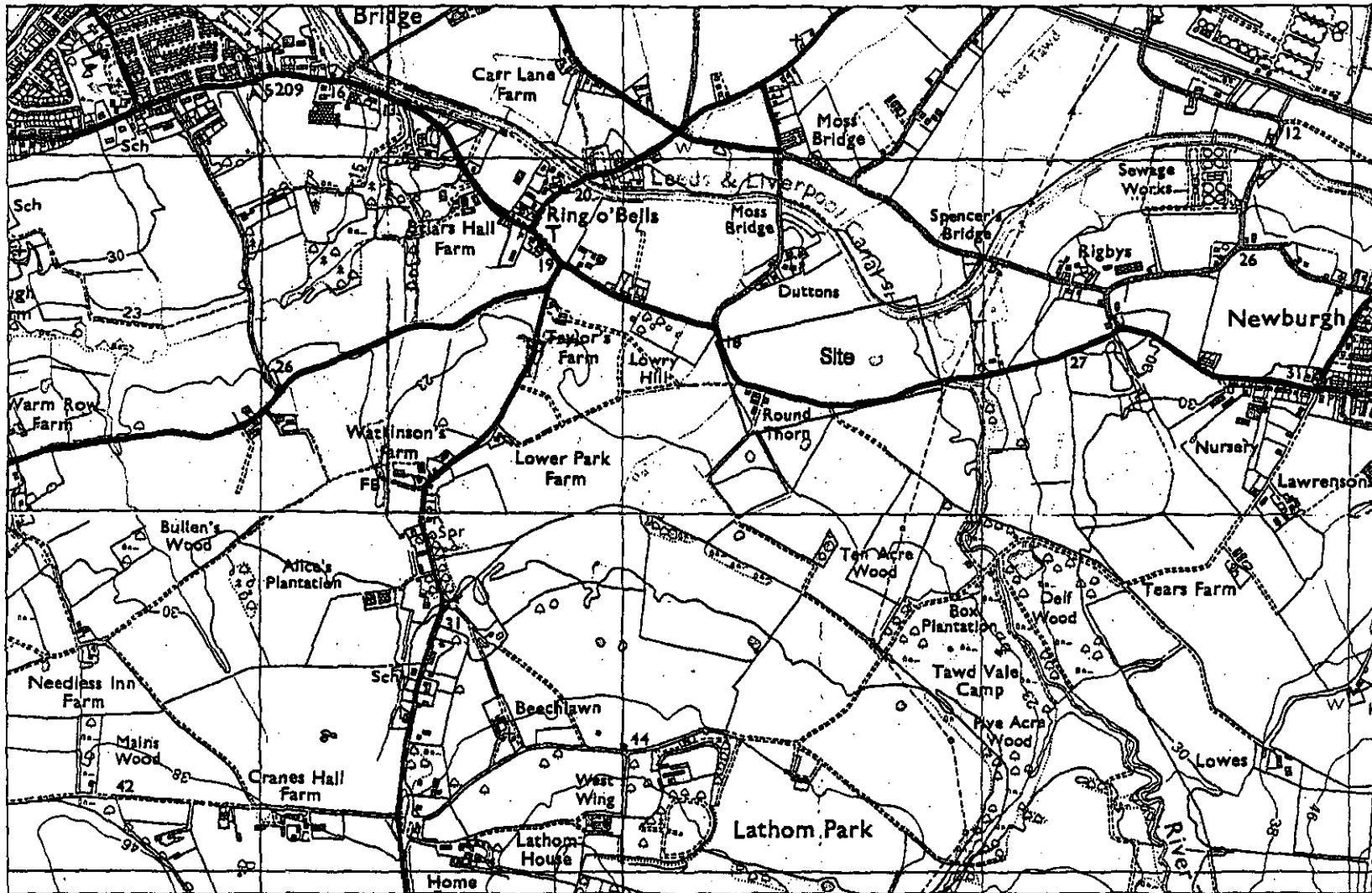


Fig 1: Location of Excavation Site

Prehistoric and Romano-British Excavations at Duttons Farm, Lathom, West Lancashire: Second Interim Report, 1999-2001.

R. W. Cowell
with Liz Callander and Jeff Speakman

Background

In the autumn of 1998 staff from the Field Archaeology Section of Liverpool Museum were invited to give advice on the importance of archaeological finds that had been discovered by members of the Lathom and District Archaeological Society. These came from land affected by a Transco gas pipeline to the south of Duttons Farm, Lathom, West Lancashire (Figs 1 and 2). Evidence from the pipeline corridor included a few sherds of sandy orange pottery, a sherd of samian, possible tile, and a beehive quernstone, as well as a number of sub-soil features. This suggested a potentially important Romano-British site lay in the vicinity of the pipeline.

In October to December 1998 a gridded fieldwalking survey was undertaken of the field to the south of the pipeline corridor, covering an area of c. 6.7 ha. In subsequent years, areas to the north of the pipeline, amounting to a further 2 ha, have been walked by Steve Baldwin of the Lathom Historic Society, as well as surrounding fields. Alongside this, three seasons of excavations have taken place. This work has been undertaken by Liverpool Museum on behalf of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. Each season has lasted approximately six weeks, with the first four weeks acting as a teaching excavation for Liverpool University students.

The Excavations

Method

Five trenches have been dug so far. Trenches I and X were investigated in the first season (Cowell and Adams 2000) but not taken further in subsequent years. The main focus of the three seasons, and reported on here, has been on trenches IV and IX, while trench VIII was opened in 2001 (Fig. 2). Each year two or three trenches have been worked on simultaneously by teams of students, each consisting of c. 12-15 members with six trained supervisors. The

topsoil, c. 0.30 m deep, in each trench overlies a light brownish-yellow Shirdley Hill Sand. This surface is extensively cut by recent plough furrows, running in all directions.

Trenches X, IX and IV were placed hard up against the southern edge of the gas pipeline easement. Here, construction traffic had lowered the subsoil c. 0.1-0.15 m beneath the general excavation level found outside this area. This means that all but the deepest features are quite heavily disturbed in the easement trench.

Trench IV

The area excavated in this trench amounts to about 800 sq. m. Its northern edge is defined by the presence of the easement corridor. About 1-2 m of the easement is included in the northern part of the trench running parallel to its edge (Fig. 3). This trench was originally placed to investigate the general location of the quernstone found in the gas pipeline.

Trench IX

Trench IX is located c. 90 m to the west of Trench IV (Fig 2). It measures c. 600 sq. m in area, with a small adjacent trench (IXa) of c. 90 sq. m. The cut for the gas pipeline easement runs across the northern edge of the main trench in a band c. 0.5 to 0.6 m wide (Fig 4). This trench was placed here because a number of Romano-British finds came from the general area of a ditch which ran northwards across the pipeline easement corridor, but which was not investigated in detail at the time.

Trench VIII

Trench VIII is situated c. 20 m to the south-east of trench IX and measures c. 700 sq. m in area. It was opened up in 2001, placed to locate the potential continuation of linear features running from trench IX.

In the event, subsoil conditions made this difficult to do. The surface was laced with

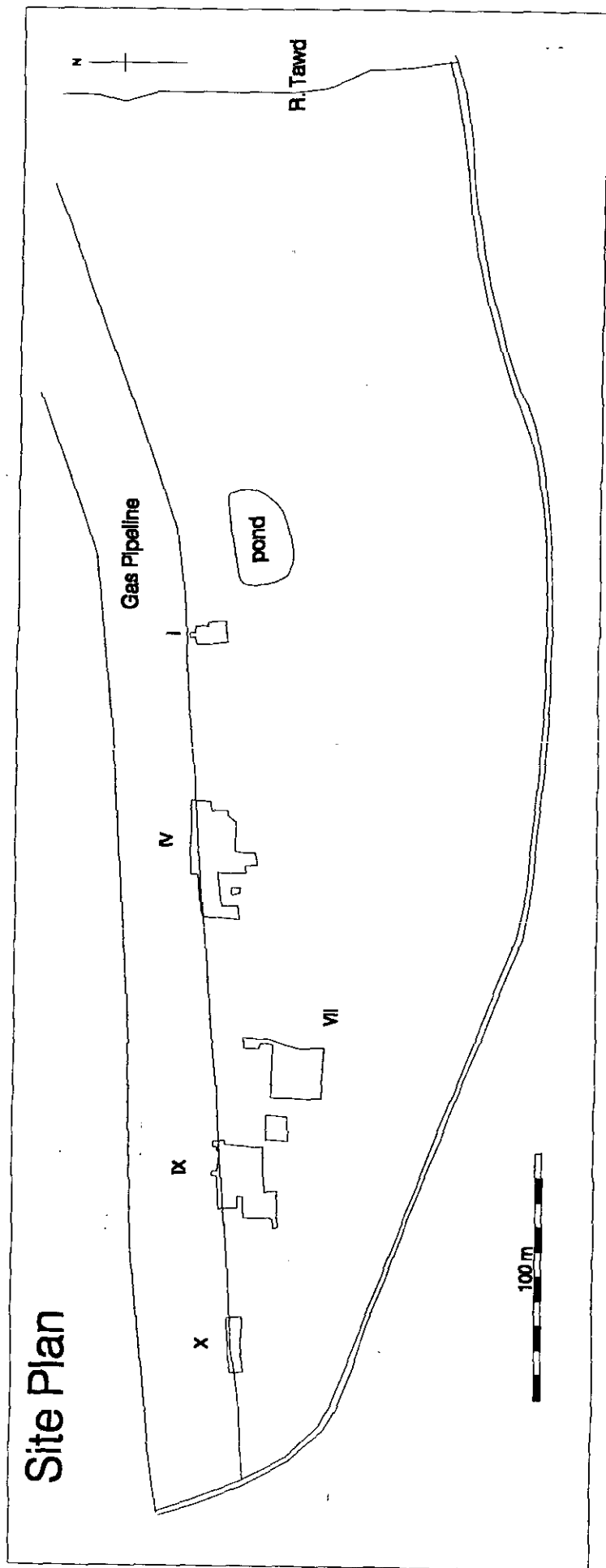


Fig. 2: Location of Trenches

curving and linear bands and larger irregular areas of iron-rich, hard orange-brown sand. Features cut into this layer, if rapidly backfilled, would be extremely difficult to spot and may have been missed. Wherever this material was tested, it turned out to be a natural deposit. A preliminary interpretation is that this material may be associated with late or early post-glacial events, perhaps associated with variations in ground water levels or possibly with altered drainage patterns.

A few features were recognised cut into those patches of yellow-brown sand that existed. These included two short, wide curvilinear gullies, separated by a short gap. Both contained almost identical deep, wide postholes [928] and [934] which must have held massive posts. Initially, it appeared as if they may have formed part of a structure, although perhaps another possible interpretation is that they may represent something associated with the agricultural landscape; possibly gateposts or a field entrance of some sort. One posthole [892] contained small flecks of Romano-British orangeware, although it may have been deposited by natural means as it was present in the top of the fill.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Early Prehistoric

Fieldwalking has produced evidence, in the form of a concentration of struck flint, of a small early prehistoric site, slightly to the east of the pond (Fig. 2). To the west, the excavations have produced similar material for early landuse. This is difficult to date, as it has not been found in sealed contexts, nor can it be compared to other regional material dateable on typological grounds. For the moment, until more evidence is available, it is assumed to be early prehistoric in date (ie. before c. 4000 cal BC). It is found mainly in Trench IV, where later activity has probably disturbed the prehistoric land surface, so that nothing of the activities associated with this period survives, other than the flintwork.

This material is likely to be associated with small groups of people making repeated visits to a favourable area of land. The presence of a possible spring in the field, its proximity to the River Tawd, light soils, nearby wetlands, and the moderate to high uplands a short distance to the east, represent some of the attractions of this site

to mobile groups who would have looked for their resources over a wide area of the landscape.

There is a small amount of struck flint spread widely across the field, that shows that people still used the area after farming had been introduced into Britain, after c. 4000 cal BC up to the period around about 1000 BC. However, very little can be said about this phase of activity yet.

Late Prehistoric/Romano-British

The most significant results, however, have come from a number of features relating to the first settled long term occupation on the site. This is represented by a late Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead with evidence of agricultural landscape features in use during the Romano-British period.

The main evidence for this settlement so far comes from trench IV. This appears to have had a large enclosure ditch around it, of which c. 35 m of its southern circuit has been identified. Most of its eastern and western circuit will have been lost to the construction of the gas pipeline. There is evidence that this ditch was recut at least twice in places, as natural silting took place.

The earliest structure within the enclosure so far is a four-poster, structure 2 (Fig 3). There were no finds associated with the post-holes from this structure, so dating is uncertain but it is earlier than roundhouse 1, which was in use during either the 2nd or 1st century BC. A second four-poster, structure 3, cannot be adequately associated with any of the buildings on the site on present evidence, although it is very likely associated with some phase of the late prehistoric settlement.

Four-posters are usually associated with the storage of grain (Gent 1983). The thick, deeply set posts are thought to have carried a raised floor perhaps to keep damp at bay. They are found on many late prehistoric and early Romano-British sites (Musson 1991), including high status hillforts, as well as smaller farmsteads. This is the second site to include them in the region, after an example from a double-ditched enclosure at Brook House Farm, Halewood, which was associated with mid to late Iron Age Cheshire Very Coarse Pottery (Cowell 2000).

Trench IV

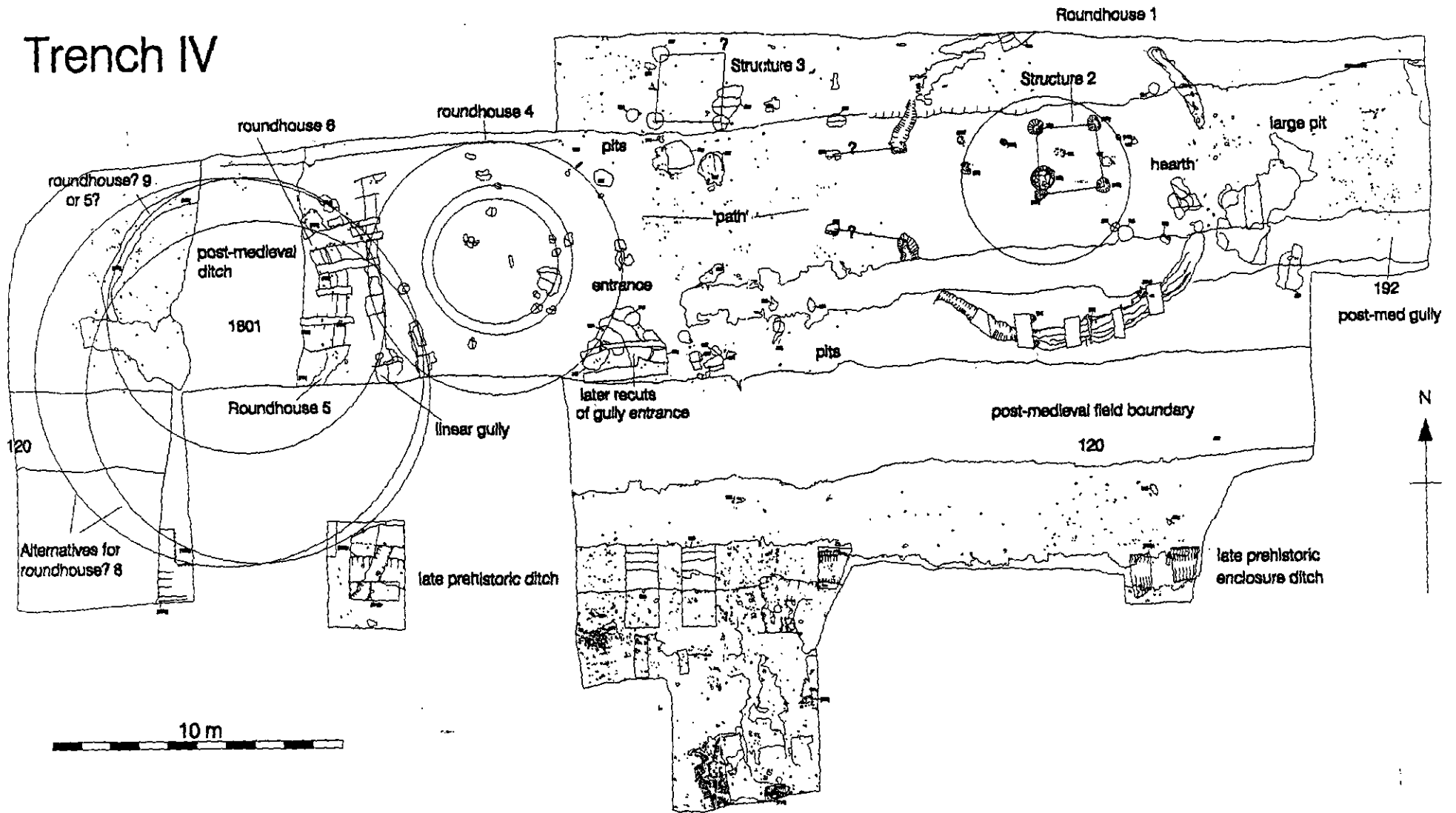


Fig. 3: Features in Trench IV

The structure 2 four-poster was probably dismantled and replaced, possibly almost immediately, by roundhouse 1. The positioning of the central post of the roundhouse, over the south-eastern post of the four-post Structure 2, may be coincidental. Alternatively, it may have some social, belief or similar association.

The roundhouse was in use sometime during the period cal BC 170-5 (Beta-153893, Beta-153894). This falls within the period covered by the use of beehive querns (Buckley 1979, Welfare 1985), one of which came from the *Transco* pipeline adjacent to the house.

The circular gully had an internal floor diameter of 10.3 m (Fig. 3). Two entrances were located, one on each side, on an east-west axis, with the eastern one slightly the wider. The western entrance may have had a porch attached, although the evidence for this is evidence is not unequivocal.

A function for the circular gully has not yet been definitively assigned. There is some evidence that the frame of the wall was set in the outer gully, although this kind of feature is often interpreted as a drainage feature, with the line of the wall set several metres inside it.

The roundhouse 1 gully may have had posts set at c. 2 m intervals along its internal edge, although because of modern disturbance, these were only located on the southern part of the circuit. The stratigraphic association between gully and post-holes has to be interpreted from very subtle evidence but there is reasonable confidence that these posts could have helped support the rafters of the roof, as part of the wall construction. On some sites, it has been suggested that the rafters would have been set on a continuous tie-beam running around the circuit at the top of the wall posts.

There was some evidence also for stakes being placed either in the gully, or on its internal edge, between the post-holes along this southern segment of gully. These stakes may have operated as part of the wall structure. Some stakes may have been burnt *in situ* in the gully in this area. Additionally hazel, willow and buckthorn charcoal came from the foundation gully, although it is not clear whether this represents structural timber or firewood. Small fragments of daub were found in the gully fill but not enough to suggest that this material

formed the facing to the wall, although this is perhaps an option. A mixture of mud and organic matter may be another option. The large pit found outside the eastern entrance, a feature found commonly with roundhouses, may have been associated with this.

The rafters of the, probably conical, roof may also have been supported by a strong central post, c. 0.3 m wide. This central post is an uncommon feature of Iron Age houses, but it may be that extra support was needed in the soft sandy subsoil at this site. This might also help explain the posts on the edge of the gully, another rare feature, which acted as wall and roof supports. However, there are other potential interpretations for central posts, such as potstands, or a support for a mezzanine floor for storage in the roof area, or a pivot for room dividers (Reynolds 1979, 35-6).

There was no evidence to suggest what the structure was roofed with, but from the evidence of approximately contemporary classical writers, Celtic houses are reported to have been thatched (Reynolds 1979, 30).

Several small pits or post-holes were located inside the building, some of which could have belonged to an internal ring of posts. This would have served to both help support the roof and divide the floor area into different zones, around which different kinds of activities could have been structured. The most likely candidates would suggest a possible diameter for an inner ring of c. 5.8 m.

The only evidence for a hearth inside the building came from an area of pits at the edge of the floor area, by the east entrance. A series of four intercutting pits had truncated potential hearth deposits in an earlier pit. Because of the loss of Iron Age floor levels through modern ploughing, there is no direct evidence that this was necessarily contemporary with the use of the house. Although some late Bronze Age and Iron Age house do have hearths close to doorways, the majorities have them in the centre of the house.

The central post was removed, either as part of the dismantling of the house or a partial reorganisation of its internal space, and its cavity packed with orange clay. There was no obvious indication that this formed the base for a hearth.

The northern ditch terminal of the eastern entrance included the only two sherds of late prehistoric pottery from the site, in the final silting of the gully. This may represent a special deposit associated with the disuse of the house. It is noteworthy that this building seems to be of one phase, with no evidence of rebuilding, and was subsequently avoided when new structures were built. This was not the case with a series of roundhouses lying about 10 m to the west, which had been rebuilt on approximately the same spot. This may allude to its special nature, either in functional or social terms, during its life or resulting from its disuse.

The group of buildings to the west of roundhouse 1 consists of three secure examples, and another potential three complete or partial rebuilds, for which the evidence is less strong for a confident interpretation. The 2002 season of excavations will investigate these interpretations further.

The earliest of these buildings may be roundhouse 4, which appears to have been built of an internal ring of posts and an external ring of stakes, with short gully segments only around the entrance on the south-east. The western half of this building was destroyed by later structures. The structure, although very fragmentary, exhibited enough regular, repeated features to suggest that such patterns could warrant its interpretation as a roundhouse. Its diameter was a little over 8.5 m.

The posts of the internal ring, which would have taken the rafters of the roof, with a diameter of c. 5 m, had been replaced at least once and possibly some of them twice. This can be seen particularly well where two groups of three adjacent post-holes lie c. 1.35 m apart (with a pit lying between the two groups) (Fig. 3). The gap between them mirrors another one, c. 1.6 m wide, between two short segments of gully, which lie c. 1.75 m to the east. This has been interpreted as the entrance, which faces south-eastwards.

A line of three stake-holes, on the northern side of the gullies continues the outer wall. These have identical and distinctive blue-grey clay and charcoal fills, which, with their positioning in relation to the gully entrance, allows a confident interpretation of their function, despite only a curving alignment of about 2 m in length being represented. Several of the post-holes from the internal circuit also had the same kind of bluey-grey silty clay fill as the stake-holes. The same

kind of fill is additionally found in a short segment of gully on the south side of the entrance. This though, has been heavily truncated by a series of short, intercutting segments of curving, probable late prehistoric, gullies with very organic fills.

There are several estimates available as to how long a timber-built roundhouse may have lasted before the timbers had rotted enough to warrant rebuilding or replacing. These vary from approximately 20 to 100 years, depending on the type of timber used and other factors. Even using the lowest estimate, it would seem from the post-hole pattern that this house may have been in use over a period of c. 40-60 years.

Without radiocarbon dates, it is difficult to know if this house was contemporary with structure 1. An area of pits to the west of structure 1 appeared to respect the western entrance of the latter, leaving a notional 'path' into the building. The entrance to roundhouse 4 was not aligned on this 'path', but led directly into the area of pits. This might suggest that the two were not in contemporary use.

The post-built construction, without continuous outer gully, is also unique, so far, on the site. Although it would have been preferable that more of the potential outer circuit of the walls had survived later disturbance, the survival of the stake-holes points to the fact that the outer gully has not been lost to subsequent erosion. Further work may establish whether the difference in construction results from chronological factors, has come about as a result of function, or purely through structural choice.

One structure, that on spatial grounds could be contemporary with roundhouse 1, lies c. 17 m to the west, partially overlying roundhouse 4. Unfortunately, the evidence is very partial for this building, structure 8, and admits of alternative interpretations.

One of these would have an entrance facing east-north-east, using two curving lengths of gully, c. 2 m apart, and separated by a late prehistoric or Romano-British linear gully. The northern segment was only confidently identifiable on the surface, its fills being too faint to excavate in section. This entrance would tie in better with the 'path' to roundhouse 1 between the pits. The evidence for this structure, though, would mean it had a diameter of c. 13.4 m, which seems a

little large in the context of what has been found on the settlement so far. This is not a preferred option on the current evidence, which means that the northern segment of gully may be associated with potential roundhouse 9 (see below).

The other alternative for structure 8 would see a smaller structure, c. 11.8 m in diameter, although its circumference would only be represented by the short southern segment of gully south-east of the linear prehistoric/Romano-British gully. Its status as a roundhouse would thus be in more doubt. The evidence for an entrance accordingly would also be reduced.

Most of the floor area and circumferences of these alternative structural interpretations have been lost to post-medieval ditches. There may be a little scope for further investigation of these competing interpretations in the 2002 season.

Overlying the potential structure 8, whichever of the alternatives is accepted, although without any indication of their chronological relationship, lies evidence for two more roundhouses, structures 5 and 6. The floor areas and some of the circumferences of these structures have been badly disturbed by the two post medieval ditches. However, enough survives of their outer circular gullies, on the eastern side, to be confident of some details.

There are some doubts about the western part of the roundhouse 5 circuit (see below) but it still seems to provide good evidence for a round or nearly round building of c. 8.8 m in outer diameter. Roundhouse 6 is more fragmentary, and there is no current evidence for the location of its western circumference, but enough of the eastern side is visible to be reasonably confident that it had an outer circumference of c. 7.6 m.

Roundhouse 6 can be shown to be the earliest in the sequence. There may also have been another rebuilding phase lying between these two (potential structure 7, not shown on Fig 3). Too little survives, of extremely subtle deposits, to know if this represents a total rebuild or just a partial reconstruction.

These houses were rebuilt almost on top of one another. The roundhouse 5 gully being almost immediately adjacent to that of roundhouse 6. If potential structure 7 represents an intervening phase of building, then the roundhouse 5 gully was cut directly into the silted-up gully of the

former (ie. is later than it), whose construction had itself cut into the silted up roundhouse 6 gully.

This suggests a minimum of perhaps three generations of people living on this spot, if we can assume a minimum of 50-75 years covered by the structures. On some calculations, this figure could, of course, be up to double this.

There is the possibility that this sequence may have been even longer. A fourth structure (if the intervening potential structure 7 rebuild is accepted as the third) may also have existed approximately on the same spot. It is not certain if the main gully circuit identifiable to the west of the post medieval ditch (1801) belongs to roundhouse 5, whose fills are very similar, or not. If they do, then this structure was not round but appreciably flattened on the western side.

If it does not belong to roundhouse 5, and is part of a circular structure, then a case could be made for it having a circumference of c. 9.5 m. This would take in the northern segment of gully that has been putatively put forward as belonging to alternative interpretation 1 of structure 8. That was thought to be the less likely alternative for that structure and its association with potential roundhouse 9 seems slightly the more likely.

This potential structure 9, however, needs more work on it in 2002, before it can be confidently included in the calculations for the length of occupation associated with the site of structures 5 and 6.

The final building in the sequence, structure 5, contained two sherds of Romano-British pottery in its final fill. This could date to any time from the late 1st to the late 3rd century AD.

This structure did not, however, have an entrance on its eastern side, unlike roundhouses 1, 4, and potentially alternative 1 of structure 8. It is possible that this results from a difference in function. The difference in date between this and at least roundhouse 1 may alternatively suggest the possibility of some reordering of elements of the settlement in the early Romano-British period.

The chronological position of the linear prehistoric/Romano-British gully immediately to the east of roundhouse 5 is unclear at the moment, other than that it is later than

Trench IX

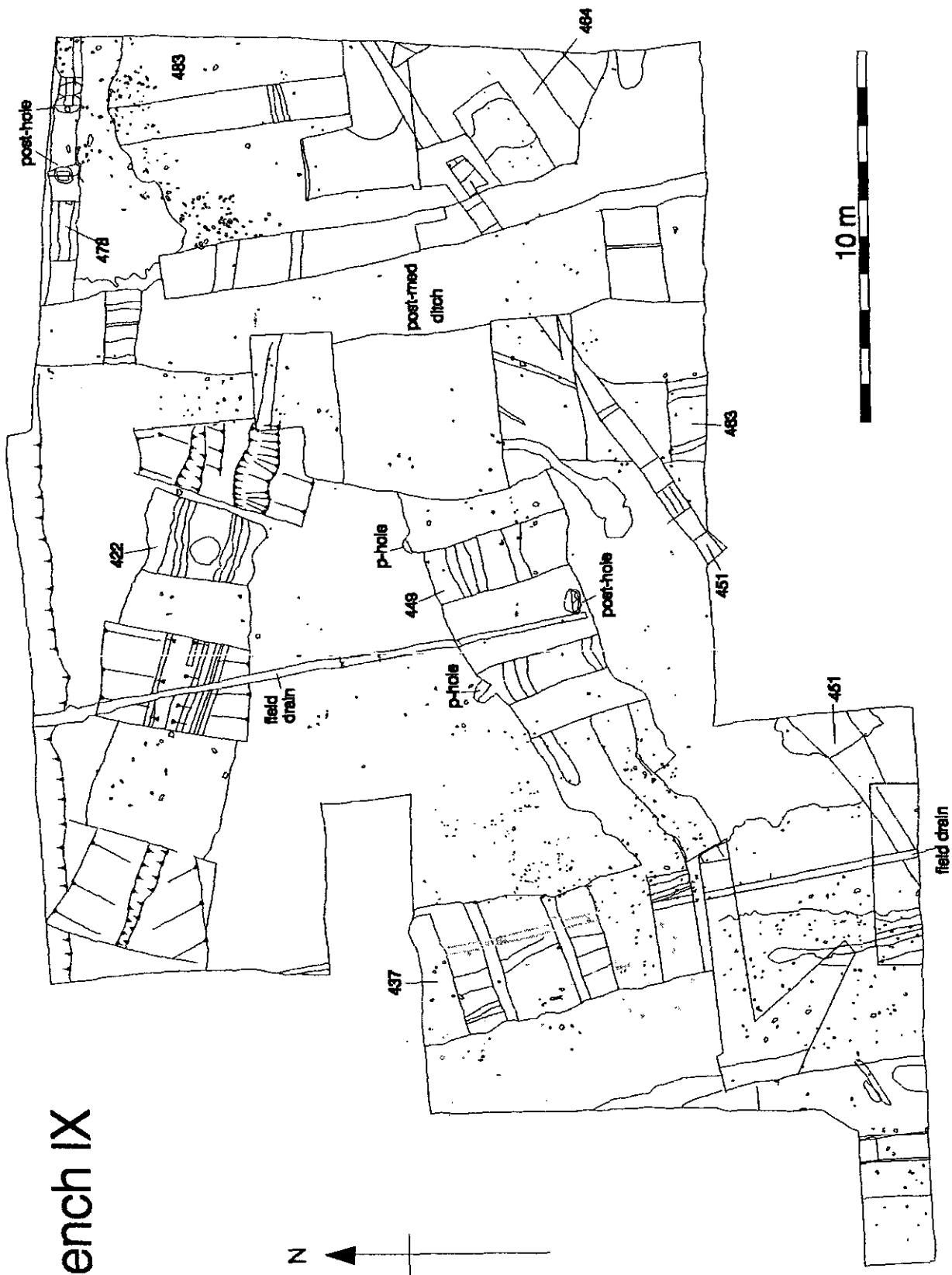


Fig. 4: Features in Trench IX

roundhouse 4 and the potential structures 8 and 9. It has yet to be proved to be contemporary with roundhouse 5, but the lack of an eastern entrance to that structure would make it possible that they could be associated on spatial grounds.

Of the large number of Iron Age house known in Britain, an overwhelming majority have entrances orientated in an arc from north-east (midsummer sunrise) and particularly east through south-east (autumn equinox and midwinter sunrise respectively). There are some arguments that this range of orientations may be purely functional, associated with light, or wind direction. Others suggest it is part of a belief system of which these key periods of the year are significant in the construction and use of the house (Giles and Parker Pearson 1999).

The subtle fills of the gullies associated with roundhouse 6 and the potential structure 7 rebuild, suggest that these earlier gullies were backfilled rather than allowed to silt up with occupation debris. In contrast, the final fills of the roundhouse 5 gully were very heavily impregnated with this kind of deposit, including much charcoal. This suggests that this particular spot was abandoned, sometime during the earlier part of the Roman period. Whether a subsequent new structure was built elsewhere, will occupy the direction of the next phase of research.

It will be crucial to tie the date for the abandonment of structure 5 down further, but what seems evident is that, in general terms, this settlement represents a gradual drift of buildings westwards, over several centuries. The significance of this is that during this time Roman rule was imposed on the countryside of southern Britain. In North West England, the unknown question is; to what extent did this new political and social reality affect the native farmers of Celtic stock, such as those who lived here at the Duttons Farm site?

That this site may hold some of the answers to this question is suggested, not only by the evidence of settlement spanning the period either side of the Roman arrival in Britain, but by elements of the agricultural landscape associated with the farmsteads on this spot.

The main evidence for this comes from Trench IX, to the west of the settlement area (Fig. 4). This consists of a number of trackways and field boundaries. The trackways consist of short

lengths of hollows, many of them with distinctive linear depressions, between c. 0.3 to 0.6 wide, running along their base, which has led to their interpretation as the ruts left by carts.

All the relationships between these features have not been properly understood yet, and it is hoped that the 2002 season will address this further. Their disposition, however, provides great potential for investigating changes in landscape use and organisation across the late prehistoric-Romano-British chronological boundary.

Most of these features cross each other and several head towards a low, ill-drained area where their alignments are lost in the general homogenous matrix (483). This is interpreted as a poorly drained area, where movement along the tracks has hollowed out and churned the surface. The upper part of layer (483) is very stony and it seems as if this area may have been consolidated with rubble, which included Romano-British pottery.

At least one of these features (422), appears to have been in use during the Romano-British period, to judge by the finds of pottery and coins from its fill. It runs diagonally across the trench in a north-western to south-eastern alignment for a distance of c. 15 m (Fig. 4). The hollow is c. 3 m wide and c. 0.4 m deep. In the base are a number of linear depressions, c. 0.2 m deep, running in the same alignment. On its eastern edge it is cut by the silted ditch of a late post-medieval field boundary, which runs north-south across the trench.

The fill of the hollow contained heat shattered stones, charcoal flecks, small fragments of coal and concentrations of unworked stone, up to 0.3 m across. These varied between sub-angular, sub-rounded and tabular. The tabular fragments were often laid flat against the edges of the cut. Poorly defined concentrations of stone occurred above the linear depressions described above. In addition to these inclusions, this layer contained occasional fragments of Romano-British orange ware and Black Burnished Ware pottery,

It also contained a small hoard of 14 coins, including 13 silver and one copper alloy. They are issues of Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian. This gives a *terminus post quem* for the deposit of AD 138 (ie. they had to have been deposited at an unknown date after AD 138). The coins were found dispersed across an area

measuring c. 0.75 by 0.75 m. This suggests that the hoard was not in its original burial place, but had been disturbed, probably prior to its deposition in the track fill. If this is correct, then it is likely that deposition occurred significantly after 138 AD, but is likely to have been during the Roman period (ie. before the beginning of the 5th century AD).

The hollow is interpreted as a trackway, the narrow depressions in the base being wheel ruts. The stones found within the fill may originate in attempts to stabilise the surface. It is likely that the coins were accidentally deposited during one of these episodes. Some of the larger blocks of stone and fragments of tile could have been taken from a demolished building. Further research intends to try to test this theory.

A second trackway (449), converging on the former from the south-west, has also produced Romano-British finds from its surface. It is c. 2.5 m wide and runs for a distance of c. 12 m, before being crossed by two other similar features at each end. It has short sections of narrow, shallow gullies running along its base.

It appears to be associated with three possible post-holes, two on its northern and one on its southern edge. All are quite shallow, and vary in size from c. 0.8 to 0.4 m in diameter.

This is not as deep as trackway (422) and it is not totally clear yet if the finds in its upper fill represent material which silted in during the use or immediate disuse of the feature ie. during the Romano-British period, which is possibly the more likely, or it is redeposited material from an earlier surface ie. the trackway is later than the Romano-British period and has cut through a surface containing Romano-British pottery.

Two trackways (437, 463) cross feature (449) in a north-south direction, although work in 2002 is still needed to confidently identify the chronological relationships between them.

On the western side, lies feature (437). It is c. 13.5 m long and is c. 3 m wide and 0.3 m deep, with narrow linear depressions in its base. The upper fills of these two features (437 and 449), in approximately the area they cross, have produced five sherds of Romano-British pot and one medieval sherd. Although it appears as if one at least of these two trackways may have been in use in the Roman period, it cannot be adequately

shown yet that there is not an earlier Romano-British surface which has been disturbed by the creation of features (437 and 449).

The eastern feature (463) is fragmentary and little can be said about it at the moment. It runs in a north-south direction out of the trench, on its southern edge. It is c. 2.4 m wide but only c. 4.8 m of its length has been confidently identified. Its middle segment is cut by a later, narrow ditch (451, see below) while its northern end has an, as yet, insecurely understood relationship with hollow-way (449). To the north of hollow (449), feature (463) potentially runs towards the Romano-British trackway (422). However, the truncation of the surface by the post-medieval ditch has so far prevented clear identification of either of the earlier features in the crucial area where they might cross.

A fifth feature (464) is located in the south-eastern part of the trench, running in a south-easterly direction for c. 3 m from area (483), before it meets the edge of the excavated area. As this is only a short segment, which runs into the homogenous area (483), it is not clear what this represents. Its main identifiable features are two narrow gullies ranging from c. 0.45 to 0.25 m in depth. These may be a continuation of the Romano-British track (422) but there are some indications that they might represent two narrow, converging ditches, which might therefore be field boundaries. There is currently no absolute indication of its date, other than that it predates ditch (451).

This latter feature has been identified for a length of c. 22.5 m in the trench, running north-east/south-west. It is c. 0.6 m wide and 0.5 m deep, in parts V-shaped, while in others it has a more rounded base.

Feature (451) is very different from the other linear features in this trench and represents a boundary ditch of some kind, probably associated with a field. Its dating at the moment is problematic but would seem to date to some time from the Romano-British to early post-medieval periods.

Whatever date it has, it does serve to place all three trackways/linear features (437, 463, 464) earlier than it, and dating of this feature is a priority. It contains four sherds of Romano-British pottery and tile, but also two small finds of post-medieval date. Neither of these groups of

material is necessarily accurate in dating the use or disuse of the feature. The Roman material may be redeposited from earlier features cut by the ditch, while the later material could have been introduced into it through more recent agricultural or natural disturbance. It may well turn out to be dated to somewhere in between these two extremes.

If it is a post-medieval ditch, then it is most probably of the early part of that period (16th/17th? century), as it is cut through by a later post-medieval field boundary. If it is Roman, then it implies that the three trackways it cuts through are Roman or earlier. Given the rearrangement evident in the landscape features in this area, it suggests that some could therefore be appreciably earlier. However, more work needs doing before any of these questions can be answered.

One further implication of the trackway evidence, particularly from feature (422), is that the finds from the trackway and from the gas pipeline in this area suggest that the inhabitants of the farmstead associated with these agricultural features had access to Romanised goods such as pottery and tile. They may thus have used building techniques that differed from traditional native styles. This would be particularly important in the light of the settlement evidence from Trench IV, where a roundhouse appears to have been abandoned in the early Roman period. The identification of settlement elements later than the 1st or 2nd century AD is therefore another important feature of future research on the site.

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