



NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS  
AT  
CHURCH LOKE, BURGH CASTLE, NORFOLK

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## EXCAVATIONS AT CHURCH LOKE, BURGH CASTLE, NORFOLK

### **SUMMARY**

In response to an application for change in land use at Church Loke, Burgh Castle, (Fig. 01) trial excavations were undertaken, followed by full excavation of the entire affected area. The excavation revealed activity relating to two main periods, the Romano-British and Late Saxon. Within these periods different phases of activity were identified. The majority of the archaeological features excavated were linear and appear to have formed field boundaries or drainage channels. One post built structure, and one oven were also identified.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The site at Burgh Castle became subject to archaeological investigation as a planning requirement when application was received to extend the present graveyard of the parish church. This proposed change of land usage provided the opportunity to investigate any Romano-British activity associated with the nearby fort and any Saxon activity which may be linked with the establishment of the church in its present position. The work, which comprised trial trenching followed by area excavation, was undertaken by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit on behalf of Burgh Castle Parish Council and was funded by a grant from English Heritage. The trial trenches were excavated in October 1993, while the main excavation lasted for 4 weeks during June 1994.

### **TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY**

The site (SMR No.13227) (TG 4765 0490) lies on the 10m contour standing above and to the east of the River Waveney and associated marshlands, which lie at 0m OD. It was located immediately to the south of the present churchyard boundary of Saints Peter and Paul and c.250m to the north east of Burgh Castle Roman Fort (Fig. 01). Much of the area surrounding the fort is scheduled, although in May 1995 that status did not extend northwards to the church boundary. (The scheduled area has since been enlarged). The excavated area, the fort and the church all lie on a tongue of higher land which is bounded to the east by the North Sea and the west by the alluvial flatlands. The subsoil in this area is boulder clay with intercalated sands. This is capped in places by glacial outwash sands and gravels. In the excavated area the boulder clay was covered by c.0.40m of sand at the west edge of excavation, while at the east end of the excavation areas of the clay were seen to rise to the surface of the natural subsoil horizon.

### **PREVIOUS EXCAVATIONS**

Only two previous archaeological interventions in the area are recorded, both of which were located within the standing walls of the fort. The first were carried out by Henry Harrod in 1850 and 1855 on behalf of Sir John Boileau (Morris, 1949). His trenches were positioned in order to establish the location of the west wall of the fort, which had by that time collapsed. Traces of wall foundations were located at the bottom of the slope, although in the light of subsequent excavation these are thought to have been harbour works (Johnson, 1976). The only other excavation work was undertaken by Charles Green between 1958 and 1961, where trenches were located, again within the fort walls, and the west wall of the fort located (Johnson, 1983).

No excavation has ever taken place outside of the walls apart from antiquarian

investigations in the field to the east of the fort. However the area around the fort has been subject to intensive survey by metal detecting, the majority of this being undertaken with the co-operation between the detectorists and the Norfolk Museums Service. The results of this fieldwork include a wide range of metal finds and a quantity of Romano-British pottery. The metalwork includes an Iron Age silver coin, almost one thousand Romano-British coins, a pagan Saxon wrist clasp, Middle Saxon coins and brooches, Late Saxon Brooch and Medieval coins and metalwork. This extensive range of metal objects indicate that significant activity may have been taking place in the area for a considerable period of time.

Aerial photography has also expanded knowledge of the extent of hidden features in the landscape. This is especially significant in the field to the east of Church Loke where a number of linear features are evident. These however are primarily located 0.75km away from the excavation area, although here the receptiveness of the crops is variable, probably due to the patchy nature of subsoil.

### **RESEARCH AIMS**

Three major areas of research were identified before the excavation began. The first of these was the possibility of locating evidence relating to pre-Fort occupation in the area. At present nothing is known of this period so any evidence of either a prehistoric or early Romano-British date would help greatly in the understanding of the settlement background to the establishment of the Saxon Shore fort in the 3rd century.

The second major aim was to try and establish the nature and extent of any archaeological features which proved to be contemporary with the fort. It was hoped that information on the character of the settlement would be forthcoming thereby offering a comparison to other Saxon shore forts and their associated *vici*, in particular Brancaster where a large *vicus* has been recognised.

Finally it was hoped that evidence would be forthcoming in linking the Saxon activity identified by excavation within the fort to the current church site. Early Saxon activity might reflect the nature of any occupation and could be set against the context of discussions on the decline of the fort. Middle Saxon evidence may help establish whether the settlement of Cnobheresburg, referred to by Bede, is to be found here or at Caistor-on-Sea, while Late Saxon evidence may be linked to the establishment of the present church. It should be noted that the dedication of SS Peter and Paul is unusual in Norfolk and can be considered to be early.

### **THE EXCAVATION**

#### **Introduction**

The trial work had established that there was a depth of overburden in excess of 1.0m across the site. This indicated that there would be a large quantity of topsoil to be moved by machine. As there was no space available outside the excavation area for the storage of topsoil, the stripping had to be undertaken in two separate stages. The initial phase of topsoil stripping commenced at the west end of the site and extended east for c. 30m. During the topsoil strip the ground was surveyed by metal detector and other finds were retrieved where possible. Once this first area had been cleared work commenced on the excavation of the features. This area was open for 7 days, before the topsoil was replaced and the rest of the excavation area stripped of topsoil. This area was also open for 7 days before backfilling.

The topsoil stripping revealed a greater depth of overburden than had been anticipated, this was possibly result of soil deposition against an ancient boundary. In general this was deeper towards the west edge of the excavation where the subsoil was seen at depth of 1.2m in the south corner. However, in the north corner, the subsoil was not revealed because it was located below the health and safety limit of 1.2m. A sondage showed that the depth of the subsoil was 1.5m below present ground surface. The subsoil gradually rose across the site to a depth of 0.9m at the east edge of the site.

The topsoil was removed in two large spits. All of the features, except one (an oven), located in the north west corner of the excavation, were first identified where they were seen to be cutting the natural subsoil. This could be due to differential truncation, or to the fact that the non-burnt features are generally less visible at a higher level.

The majority of the features investigated were identified as ditches, probably forming field boundaries. The main alignment of these was north-south and east-west. These were identified as belonging to two major periods of activity, the Romano-British and the Late Saxon. The same alignment appeared to be maintained throughout the Romano-British period, despite recuts and alterations to the exact layout. The earliest Late Saxon feature however pays no regard to this and is seen to cross the site from the north-west to the south-east.

The ditches can be presumed to form enclosures, although, because of the limitations of the size of the area excavated these can be difficult to define. The enclosures can be seen to have under gone a series of rearrangements, redefinitions and subdivisions.

A sequence was established for the ditches and their re-arrangements at different areas of the site, but it was not possible to link these together into an overall and comprehensive sequence covering the whole site. Much of the reorganisation was clearly localised and at no time during the Romano-British period does there appear to have been an overall replanning or realignment of the boundaries.

The dating evidence provided by the finds assemblage was not conclusive enough for a precise phasing of activity on the site to be established. This was primarily due to the homogeneity and the small quantity of the finds assemblage. It was clear that there were no obvious instances of material having been deliberately dumped into the ditches; they had filled as the result of natural silting processes. This means that the fills of these features contained residual material, which will reflect the most intensive period of occupation in the vicinity. This is illustrated by the fact that the Late Saxon features also contained much Romano-British material.

Despite the difficulties in establishing dated phases of activity it has been possible to establish a broad sequence for some of the features. There can be no clear and discrete division between the differing phases, as the overall development of the site must be seen as a continuous and evolving process.

#### **Early Features**

The earliest alignment of linear features identified consisted of two parallel ditches, 2.5m apart, located at the east edge of excavation and extending east beyond the edge of excavation (Group A, Fig. 03). Of the segments excavated the average depth was 0.14m, and each contained a single fill, which in general was a mid brown sandy silt, with occasional iron pan staining. No finds were recovered from these features, so it was not possible to establish a firm

date for them. However, stratigraphically they were the earliest features excavated and could be Romano-British in date, or possibly earlier.

### **Romano-British Features**

All those features which have been dated to the Romano-British period were of a 3rd-4th century date. No artefacts of an earlier date were recovered. Within this late Romano-British period the linear features have been grouped on stratigraphic and spatial analysis. In general the trend appears to be from large fields to smaller enclosures.

The first establishment of field boundaries across the area can be seen (Group B, Fig. 03). This consisted of three ditches, two on the same east-west alignment and the third running broadly north-south. Those running east-west were separated by a gap of 10m, although this may have been created by over machining. An entrance did exist at the north-east corner of the enclosure. The over all dimensions of the enclosure was not established as the ditches extended beyond the west and south edges of excavation, but were in excess of 50m east-west and 15m north-south. Finds from this phase included grey ware and part of a quern stone.

At a later date this enclosure could be seen to be redefined on its north edge. The new ditch followed very much the same alignment, with its east end turning to the south and terminating to form an entrance here before the start of the north-south ditch which formed the east boundary (Group C. Fig. 03). This new north-south boundary was located c.13m further west than the original boundary. Finds from these ditches included grey wares and some fine wares.

Subsequent to this the pattern of ditches became more complicated and activities at either end of the site cannot be related to each other. Two aligned ditches crossed the centre of the site, with the north end curling to the east (Group D, Fig 04). These extended across the full width of the excavation and beyond the north and south limits of excavation.

Two rather sinuous ditches cut this feature. These were more or less parallel and extended from the north edge of the excavation across the site on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment (Group E, Fig 04). Part of a quern and some Grey Wares along with some fine ware were recovered. These ditches were noticeably less substantial than the other features in this area.

These activities cannot be connected with any of the groupings made to the west end of the site, where three north south ditches have been grouped together (Group F, Fig. 04), not only because of their alignment but also more strongly because of their stratigraphic location. Two of these ran the full width of the site and were spaced 20m apart. The third could only be seen to extend half way across the site from south to north. The north end of this feature was somewhat confused by the multitude of ditches converging at this point. Finds were few, the only pottery being recovered was Grey Ware, along with small quantities of bone and brick and tile.

This group was cut by a single east-west ditch which ran close to the south edge of excavation (M50, Fig. 04). Pottery from here included both Grey Wares and fine wares. This east-west ditch was cut by two ditches running broadly parallel to each other on a north-south alignment, although turning to the east at their north end. A third ditch to the east and forming an approximate right-angle to these, is also included in this group.

Located in the north west corner of the site was a feature, interpreted as an oven, which can with some certainty be dated to this period. It was made up

predominantly of clay and flints and survived at a height of approximately 0.20m above the natural subsoil (Fig. 05). This perhaps is a good indication of the level of the ground surface during this period. This feature was quarter sectioned and seen to have been an oven, oval in shape measuring 1.60m x 1.00m and a maximum of 0.30m deep. The base of the oven was formed by a layer of olive yellow clay (206). A series of large flints were set within this clay deposit forming a rough outline to the clay. These were probably part of the construction of the oven walls. Above this, and sitting on top of 206 was a pinky red clay deposit (205). The colour was due to the affects of heat, indicating that this was the internal floor of the oven which had been affected by heat from the furnace. Surrounding the clay was a narrow band of loam. This build up, either accidental or possibly deliberate, around the sides of the oven, appears to have occurred during its period of use. The stoke hole was located at the east end of the feature and was represented by a deposit of charcoal which was probably made up of rake offs from the fire. On the out side of these deposits which form the oven was a deposit of mixed olive yellow and pinky red clay (207). This was the result of the oven superstructure being destroyed when it was no longer functional. No pottery was found sealed within these deposits, although a few sherds of Romano-British Grey Wares and fine wares were recovered from the area immediately after machining. From the evidence recovered it has not been possible to establish the exact function of this oven.

Only one pit (255) was seen within the area of excavation . This was located midway along the south edge of the site. This pit was the most substantial feature on site. It was ovate in shape and measured 2.2m x 2.9m, and was quarter sectioned to a depth of 0.95m (Fig 06). All the fills were made up of sandy silt. The fills alternated between silty sands with significant amounts of charcoal and sandy silts with clay patches. This suggests that the pit was used for refuse disposal followed by a deposit deliberately back filled to seal the waste, and that this sequence was followed twice before the pit was abandoned to fill up naturally. The dating of this pit relies upon the presence of Romano-British Grey Ware in the lowest excavated fill. It was also cut by the earliest Late Saxon ditch.

Two other groups were identified belonging perhaps to the Romano-British period, although they have no stratigraphic link to any other features. The first (Group H) was made up of three linear and parallel features running north-south, towards the west end of the site (Fig. 02). These were on average 5m in length and only 0.10m deep. No pottery was recovered from them although a small quantity of brick/tile, bone and flint were recovered.

The second group (Group J) was made up of a series of post-holes which looked to form part of a rectangular structure (Fig. 07). This structure was aligned east-west. The south row consisted of four post-holes, one of which was recut, and one of which had a square post-pipe. Their average depth was 0.16m. The north row consisted of two post holes, one of which was truncated so that only a few millimetres of dark fill existed. The other, however was noticeably square in shape. The post holes defined an overall area of 2.75m x 1.30m. Interpretation of this structure is difficult, although its location in a primarily agricultural landscape suggests that it may have served as a short term shed or barn.

#### **Late Saxon Features**

Two groups of features dating to the Late Saxon period were identified (Fig. 08). These were apparent not only from their stratigraphic relationship, but also from a distinctive finds assemblage including Thetford-type Ware and significant quantities of fragmentary Romano-British brick and tile, and some

fired clay with wattle impressions. They also contained Romano-British Grey wares and fine wares. This gives an indication of the fact that a significant quantity of Romano-British debris was residual in the area. The earliest of the two groups belonging to this period was made up of a single ditch (M63, Fig. 08). This crossed the site from the north west corner and extended beyond the south edge of excavation approximately half way along the length of the site. This north-west to south-east alignment was an obvious contrast to all the other features which were broadly aligned on the compass points and with the fort. However this realignment was not to persist and the final group, seen to be cutting this, reverted to the north-south alignment. This later group (Group G, Fig 08) was made up of three north-south ditches all located in the west part of the excavation.

#### THE FINDS

The finds assemblage, while not large, was sufficient broadly to date many of the features. The finds from the site are primarily of Romano-British date, although a significant quantity of Late Saxon pottery and some later material was present. A notable quantity of struck flint, including some tools was also recovered.

Following the excavation assessment reports were completed for each material type. These were compiled by Alice Lyons with the following exceptions; Post-Roman pottery - Irena Lentowicz, Animal bone - Trevor Ashwin, Coins - John Davies, Environmental - Peter Murphy. Data from these reports is detailed and synthesised here.

#### Pottery

(Table 1)

During the assessment of the ceramic assemblage the pottery was divided into broad fabric types and quantified by sherd number, weight (g) and vessel type. All percentages given in this report were calculated by weight.

A total of 285 sherds weighing 3.889kg was recovered during the excavation. Of the pottery 80.3% is Romano-British, 15.4% is Early Medieval, 1.1% is Late Medieval, 1.8% is Post-Medieval and 1.4% is Modern.

The most common type of Romano-British ceramic found was Grey Wares, which made up 72.2% of the Romano-British assemblage. This is not unusual as Grey Wares formed the bulk of utilitarian domestic pottery. In total twelve jars, seven bowls and seven flanged bowls were recorded. In addition to this two forms unusual to Norfolk were noted. These consisted of a Grey Ware mortarium and two miniature jars, which were found within the topsoil. All the pottery indicates a date of late 3rd-4th centuries. The forms of the Nene Valley Colour Coated vessels date to this period, as does the Shell Tempered Ware pottery. Both the Much Hadham Oxidised Red Ware and the Oxfordshire Red Colour Coat are thought not to have been traded in this part of the country until the 4th century.

Of the stratified Romano-British pottery 35% was found within contexts also containing Early Medieval pottery. The Romano-British sherds from these later contexts were generally smaller in size and abraded, and this material was therefore residual.

Only 32% of the Thetford-type ware was recovered from stratified contexts. The fabric is distinctive and varies from other Thetford-type Ware found in Norfolk due to unusual firing which had left the pottery quite friable and orange in colour. It is of interest to note that no earlier Saxon pottery

fabric was represented. This is in direct contrast to the finds from the excavations within the fort itself, which produced significant quantities of Ipswich-type Ware but no Thetford-type Ware.

Only eight sherds of pottery were found dating outside the Romano-British or Late Saxon Periods, this group was made up of two Late Medieval Transitional sherds, four sherds of Glazed Red Earthenware and two modern sherds.

#### Brick and Tile

(Table 2)

A total of 185 fragments of brick and tile, weighing 9.699kg were recovered during the excavation. Of this 89% by weight was Romano-British in date, 5.6 % Medieval with 5.5% being later in date.

Of this a total of 90 pieces, weighing 8.695kg was Romano-British, the greatest proportion (41.8%) being floor tile. Tegula, imbrex and flue tiles were also recovered. The quantity found within the stratified contexts was small with a noticeable increase associated with the Late Saxon Group G features. This seems to indicate re-use or dismantling of material robbed from the fort walls during this period and compliments the soil matrix which itself contained greater elements of flecks of brick and tile.

Over all the small nature of this assemblage seems to indicate a lack of buildings within the immediate area of the excavation. It is probable that this material would have come from structures located either within or very close to the fort itself, or its walls.

#### Other Finds

(Table 3)

Other finds from stratified contexts include bone, fired clay, stone (including lava) and flints. These are quantified in Table 3

#### Animal Bone

1.188kg of bone was recovered from 18 contexts. Anatomies of cattle, sheep/goat, horse and pig were identified. The condition of the bone was variable, much of it being of friable inconsistency. Traces of canid gnawing were seen on the ends of a small number of bones, but no butchery marks were identified.

#### Fired Clay

A total weight of 0.164kg of fired clay was found on site, all from stratified contexts. Of this 71g came from M63 and Group g. The rest of this group came from unphased contexts. Impressions of wattle were noted on 4 of these fragments.

#### Stone and Lava

Three pieces of worked stone were recovered from the excavation. Two of these were recovered during the machining process and were a fragment of burnt granite and a piece of sandstone. One limestone fragment with a smooth curved surface was found from the Group G contexts. This was probably part of a quernstone. A further 23 fragments of quernstone (weighing 0.752kg) were recovered. Eight of these were found within the topsoil the rest were recovered from stratified contexts, which were either Romano-British in date or unphased.

#### Iron and Lead

A total of 12 iron artefacts were recovered, all during the machining process. Of these 11 are nails whilst the twelfth had a rectangular tapering shank with

a hooked end. Five lead artefacts were also recovered from the topsoil. Four of these are metal working debris, small irregular cut offs or spillage, while the fifth was probably a weight. It is oval in shape with a flat base and curved upper surface.

#### Copper Alloy

A total of 28 copper alloy finds were recovered, all unstratified, of which 17 are coins. Other artefacts included one fragment of metal working debris, two buttons, one thimble, one horse buckle, one bronze disc, one fitting and four unidentified objects. All are post-Roman in date.

The seventeen coins form an essentially late-Roman group, restricted to coins from the most prolific periods of coin loss in Roman Britain (Tables 4 and 5). The earliest is an antoninianus of Claudius II (AD 268-270). The peak of the coin loss belongs to the years between 317-30. The latest Roman coins present are those of the House of Valentinian (364-78). Percentages of the coins relating to the separate issue periods are shown in Table X. Within the restricted chronological span represented, the most prolific period of loss is between 317-30. This overall chronological distribution is unusual, as later Constantinian coins of period 13b, and Valentinian coins, of period 15a, are normally more common on Romano-British sites than those of period 13a. This suggests that there was most activity at this location during the 320s AD. However, this group is really too small for statistical analysis.

The coin assemblage from Green's excavations (Johnson, 1983) comprised 1086 identifiable coins of which 98% are irregular copies of Constantine coinage dated AD 330-48. Only eight are dated earlier and eleven to the second half of the 4th century. These were largely assigned to sixteen hoards with only a small number considered to be site finds.

In comparison, of the coins recovered from this excavation only one falls within the period AD 330-48, ten are earlier and five later. However, in recent years large numbers of coins have been recovered from the extra-mural area by metal detecting. Of these 1534 are datable (including those from this excavation). Overall there is a peak of coin-loss in Period 13b (AD 330-48), with 57% of the recovered coins dating to this period. This figure might be even higher if the illegible 4th century coins could have been included (D. Gurney, pers. comm.).

#### Flint

In total seventeen flints were recovered during the excavation. Five flakes and one scraper came from the topsoil, while the remainder are identified as residual finds from stratified contexts. Of these five were blades and one was a horseshoe scraper with the remainder being flakes.

#### Environmental data

Sampling on site was confined to limited bulk sampling due to the dry, sandy and relatively clean nature of the fills. The aim was to gain some information on the activities taking place on the site. However the samples generally produced very little material and had also been contaminated with more recent material via the numerous root channels and animal burrows, which were evident in the majority of the features. The contaminated nature of these and their extremely small size meant that no further information could be gained from further detailed examination.

#### Summary

Analysis of the finds recovered reveals a small assemblage primarily dating from the late 3rd to late 4th centuries. No early pottery fabrics were reco-

vered. The Roman finds confirm the late date of the fort and the associated civilian activity in this area.

The discovery of substantial amounts of stratified Late Saxon/Early Medieval Thetford-type Ware is important because it was unusually fired suggesting that there may be a previously unidentified kiln in the area. The ditches which were Late Saxon/Early Medieval in date contain residual late Roman pottery fabrics Nene Valley Colour Coat and Shell Tempered Ware and Romano-British tile as well as contemporary Thetford-type Ware.

#### DISCUSSION

The unusually large depth of overburden, which was difficult to interpret. However the sandy nature of the deposit indicates that it was probably the result of the accumulation of wind blown deposits. The depth of overburden also indicates that modern agricultural activity could not have truncated the archaeology. However truncation of the features from above was witnessed during the excavation, increasingly so towards the east end of the site. The truncation of the features was particularly noticeable with the late Saxon ditch M63, which at its west end was 0.40m in depth, but only 0.05m at its east end so indicating that truncation across the site has not taken place recently, but at some point in time after the Late Saxon period. It is apparent from this that, in the Romano-British and Late Saxon periods, the level of the topsoil was much lower than that today. Supporting evidence came from the location of the Romano-British oven, which survived at a level c.0.20m above any other features, so giving some indication of the Romano-British ground level. The survival of such clay built structures above the overall level of truncation was not unusual and has been recorded in trial excavations at Snettisham, Norfolk (Flitcroft, 1991).

The dating of the excavated features lies primarily with the pottery recovered from the site. The analysis of this assemblage has indicated two clear periods of activity dating to the later Romano-British period and the Late Saxon/Early Medieval.

No prehistoric features were located although a number of flints of Neolithic date were identified as residual artefacts in a few contexts.

The earliest features on site (Group A) were not datable from artefactual evidence, and so it is only possible to say that they were earlier than the later Romano-British period. They may be early Romano-British or prehistoric in date. The fact that these appear to originate from the east of the site is also significant, as the greater concentration of later features was towards the west end of the site. It is however possible that the Romano-British features have obliterated other earlier features. It does appear then that there may have been some earlier activity in this region, with its centre being on the higher ground to the west of the present excavation and the known Romano-British occupation in the fort.

The majority of the features were, according to the artefactual evidence, of a late 3rd-4th century date. This is contemporary with the probable date given for the founding of the fort (Johnson, 1983). The principle surviving character of this activity was the use of ditches to outline enclosures and land parcels. The constantly changing nature of these suggest that they define areas of differing land usage rather than ownership, as ownership boundaries may be expected to have stayed more constant through time.

The number of features and different groups indicate a constantly changing

landscape, and as the majority appear to be late Romano-British these changes take place over a relatively short period of time. The general trend appears to be from large area enclosures towards smaller, less well defined, enclosures. These also seem to have gradually become more concentrated towards the west part of the site. This seems to indicate a contraction in the area of use, perhaps even becoming seasonal depending on resources and demands. There was a distinct paucity of evidence for structures, which together with the paucity of domestic waste, suggests that these enclosures were away from the centre of settlement and therefore were probably of an agricultural use. The one possible building identified gave no clue as its function. However its location within what appears to be primarily agricultural landscape suggests that it too was not a domestic habitation but a possible barn/shed associated with the localised activities. It was not possible to establish with which of the enclosures that this structure was associated.

The oven was of a construction which allowed only a single incident of use, with its destruction being necessary to retrieve its contents, suggesting that it was constructed for a specific need of the particular time. This ties in with the constantly changing boundaries, as this all indicates that this particular area was used, on an occasional basis in response to the needs of the day.

The precise relationship between the enclosures and the fort was unclear, however the artefactual dating and the alignment of the features with the fort shows that they were probably contemporary. It seems plausible, however, that the excavation revealed the enclosures associated with the necessary food production, either grain or animal products, to supply either the fort or vicus or both. The fort itself must either have imported its supplies along the river or cultivated the land on the higher ground around the fort.

Many of these details contrast with the results of the 1974 and 1977 excavations to the west of the Shore fort at Brancaster (Hinchliffe, 1985). Here the evidence was also reduced to a complex network of ditches, which were interpreted as possible house plots of a settlement area which was originally carefully planned. Again the relationship between the fort and this area was unclear, but unlike the ditch system revealed by the excavation at Burgh Castle, that at Brancaster was seen to be on a different alignment to the fort. This evidence suggests that the origins of the fort and the ditch systems were not contemporary.

The excavation produced no evidence of Early or Middle Saxon activity. This was some what surprising considering the quantity of metal detected artefacts of this period recovered and the evidence uncovered by Green within the fort walls.

The final period of activity revealed by the excavation can be dated by the pottery, Thetford-type ware to the Late Saxon/Early Medieval period. The earliest Late Saxon phase was represented by a single feature which paid no respect to the earlier features. This single ditch served as a boundary ditch, and as with the Romano-British features contained little domestic refuse suggesting that it was not in the immediate vicinity of a settlement area. The second phase of activity belonging to this period re-establishes the former alignment on site. This is perhaps not surprising as the standing remains of the fort would have to some extent suggested this alignment for any boundaries. It is also possible that this re-alignment back to the cardinal points may be associated with the establishment of the church, which, because of Christian tradition would have been on the same alignment as the fort. No other connection could be made with the founding of the church or the poss-

ibility that Burgh was Bedes Cnobheredburg.

It is worth examining how well the excavation work was able to answer the questions set by the original research aims. In identifying the presence or absence of pre-fort activity there was a certain amount of success. There was no conclusive evidence for extensive settlement earlier than the 3rd century. The number of Neolithic flints suggests that there was probably some human activity in the area at this time. However as all the flints were found either from the topsoil or as residual elements within later features the exact provenance of these is uncertain. The earliest features on the site, though probably pre-fort are undatable due to the lack of finds.

The Romano-British field system revealed has proved to be contemporary with the evidence for the occupation of the fort itself. Its nature indicates that there was no formal laying out of this area and that it was purely agrarian in nature. This confirms that there was no formal lay out to the *vicus* in this particular area on the outside of the fort.

Discussion has taken place over the actual function of the Saxon Shore forts, and their effectiveness as a coastal defensive system. Recently it has been suggested that their two primary functions may have been for the supply of stores and materials and the transportation of troops. (Cotterill, 1993) That the forts may have acted as a collection and shipment centre for supplies has been suggested for Burgh Castle on the evidence of the bone and antler assemblages from Greens excavations. Grant (Johnson, 1983) suggested that the evidence for the making of these materials into objects may have provided a source of objects with which to trade. The evidence from the present excavations cannot confirm the idea that the forts primarily acted as trading centres, but neither can it refute it.

The lack of any evidence from the Early Saxon period suggests that this may have had a very limited area, perhaps solely within and immediately around the fort. The number of finds previously recovered by metal detecting the soil could easily have been dispersed by agricultural activities. The Late Saxon evidence though fairly sparse was significant in its location close to the church (no evidence was found by Green (Johnson, 1983) relating to this period) and may indicate either a hiatus of activity between the early and late Saxon periods or a movement of activity away from the fort towards the location of the church.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown that this small excavation has gone some way in answering the questions set by the initial research design. There was slight evidence suggesting early (but undated) activity in the area. The majority of the features excavated proved to be contemporary with the occupation of the fort. These however did not indicate that there was large or semi formalised *vicus* in this area outside the fort. Indeed the evidence shows a landscape, dedicated to agriculture and constantly changing, probably as a reaction to changing needs of the local community.

The post Roman activity appears limited to the Late Saxon period where this was again enclosed agricultural land. No evidence was recovered linking the excavated area to the postulated early Christian settlement here, nor was there any evidence associated with the foundation of the church in its present position. However the survival of the features, which was primarily due to the unusual quantity of overburden, bodes well for the survival of the archaeology in the area, particularly that between the excavation and the fort.

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TABLE 1  
POTTERY BY GROUP AND FABRIC

	GW	OW/WW	NVCC	STW	OXRCC	OXWCC	BB	MH	THET	EMW	LMT	GRE	MOD
	No. Wt.												
UNSTRAT	55 675	4 20		7 136	13 292	1 14			21 420	1 16	2 44	5 70	5 80
GROUP A													
GROUP B	9 338												
GROUP C	3 36		1 14										
GROUP D	2 72												
GROUP E	4 32		1 2		1 6								
GROUP F	5 94				1 12	1 8							
M50	3 32	1 36	1 16	5 34	1 2								
M63	14 120		1 2	1 8					1 8				
GROUP G	30 260		5 70	3 20					8 120				
GROUP H	3 38		1 50										
GROUP J	2 20												
PIT 255	4 26												
OVEN	9 246			1 5			1 50						
OTHER	36 270	2 2	3 31	3 18	1 4			1 2	2 18				

List of Abbreviations.

BB Black Burnished Ware (unspecified)  
EMW Early medieval ware  
GRE Glazed Red Earthen-ware  
GW Grey Ware  
MED Medieval  
MH Much Hadham  
LMT Late medieval/transitional  
MOD Modern  
NVCC Nene Valley Colour Coat  
OTHER Other stratified contexts  
OW/WW Oxidized Ware/White Ware  
OXRCC Oxfordshire Red Colour Coat  
OXWCC Oxfordshire White Colour Coat  
STW Shell Tempered Ware (Romano-British)  
THET Thetford-type Ware  
UNSTRAT Unstratified

TABLE 2

BRICK AND TILE BY GROUP AND TYPE

GROUP	ROMAN								
	TEGULA	IMBEX	FLUE	FLOOR	UNIDENT	MED	POST MED	UNIDENT	
	No. Wt.	No. Wt.	No. Wt.						
UNSTRAT	2 260	3 270		6 1537	26 1843	11 584	16 376		
GROUP A									
GROUP B	1 800								
GROUP C	1 76								
GROUP D									
GROUP E	1 114			3 392	1 16				
GROUP F		1 24			71 558				
M50	1 152								
M63	1 50				6 92				
GROUP G		1 72		4 1013	3 162			8 38	
GROUP H			1 202						
GROUP J									
PIT 255									
OVEN									
OTHER	1 56	3 102		2 662	7 238			2 10	

TABLE 3  
OTHER FINDS

	BONE		FIRED CLAY		STONE		LAVA		IRON	LEAD	SLAG	COPPER ALLOY	FLINT
	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
UNSTRAT	2	120			2	405	8	40	12	5	1	27	5
GROUP A													
GROUP B	1	21											2
GROUP C	3	25											
GROUP D	3	1											
GROUP E	1	32					4	606					
GROUP F	36	355											
M50	3	23											
M63			2	22									4
GROUP G	21	117	3	49	1	165							2
GROUP H	5	115											2
GROUP J													
PIT 255	14	222											
OVEN													
OTHER	7	157	2	93			11	106					2

TABLE 4  
 COIN LOSS BY ISSUE PERIOD

ISSUE PERIOD	NO.	%
10 (AD 259-275)	1	6.7
11 (275-294)	2	13.3
12 (294-317)	1	6.7
13a (317-30)	5	33.3
13b (330-348)	1	6.7
14 (348-364)	2	13.3
15a (364-378)	3	20.0
2nd-3rd cent.	1	
Post-Roman	1	

TABLE 5  
LIST OF COINS

SMALL FIND NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DATE
2	House of Constantine Follis R GLORIA EXERCITVS, 1 standard	AD 335-40
4	Constantine I Follis R SOLI INVICTO COMITI Trier mint	AD 309
5	Gratian AE3 R GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI Arles mint	AD 367-75
6	House of Valentinian AE3 R GLORIA ROMANORUM Lyons mint	AD 364-78
13	Gratian AE3 R GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI Arles mint	AD 367-75
14	Constantius II Irregular AE2 R FEL TEMP REPARATIO, falling horseman	AD 354-64
15	Probus Antoninianus R LAETITIA AUGUST	AD 276-82
16	MAGENTIUS AE2 R GLORIA ROMANORUM	AD 350-3
17	Crispus Follis R BEATA TRANQUILLITAS Lyons mint	AD 320-3
18	Barbarous radiate R SALUS AUG	AD 270-84
19	Claudius II Antoninianus R Illegible	AD 268-70
20	House of Constantine Follis R PROVIDENTIAE AUGG\CAESS	AD 316-20
21	Henry V Penny	AD 1413-22
31	House of Constantine Follis R PROVIDENTIAE AUGG\CAESS	AD 324-8
38	House of Constantine Follis R VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP	AD 316-20
41	Constantine I Follis R BEATA TRANQUILLITAS Trier mint	AD 320-3
46		AD C2-C3

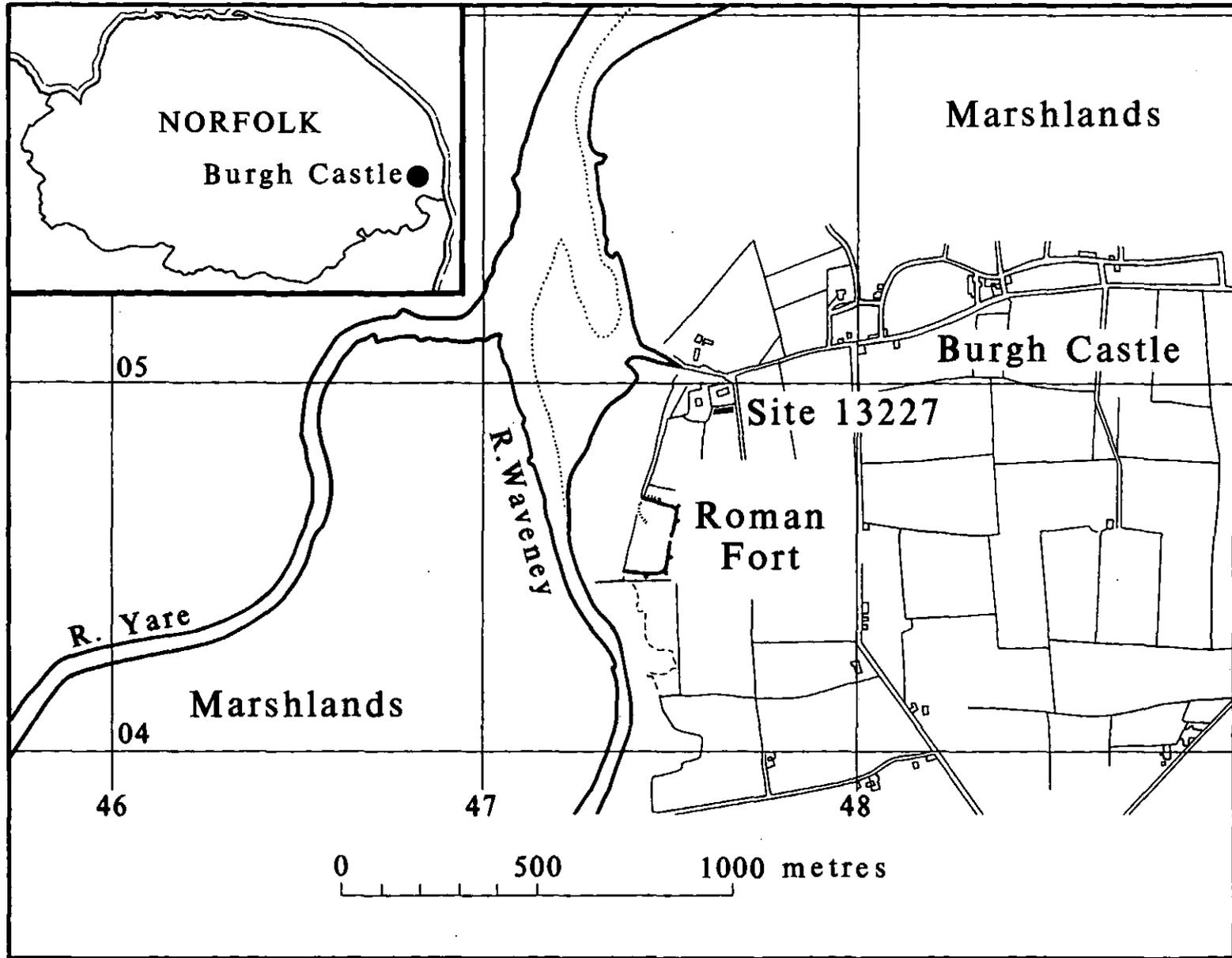


Figure 1.

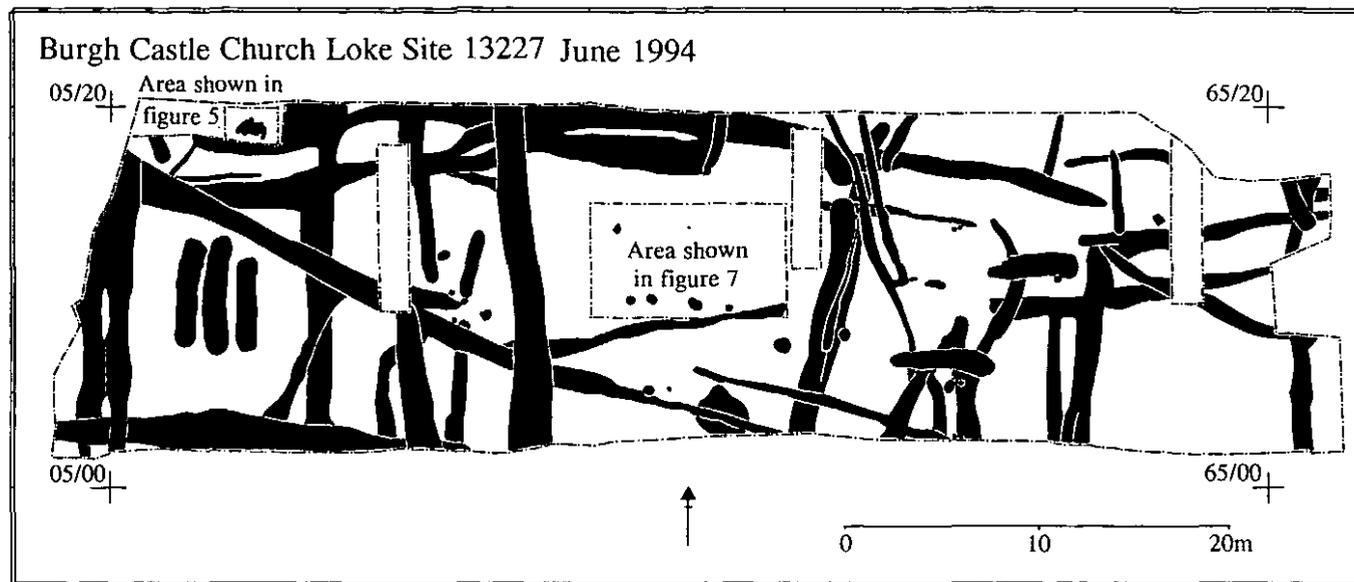


Figure 2.

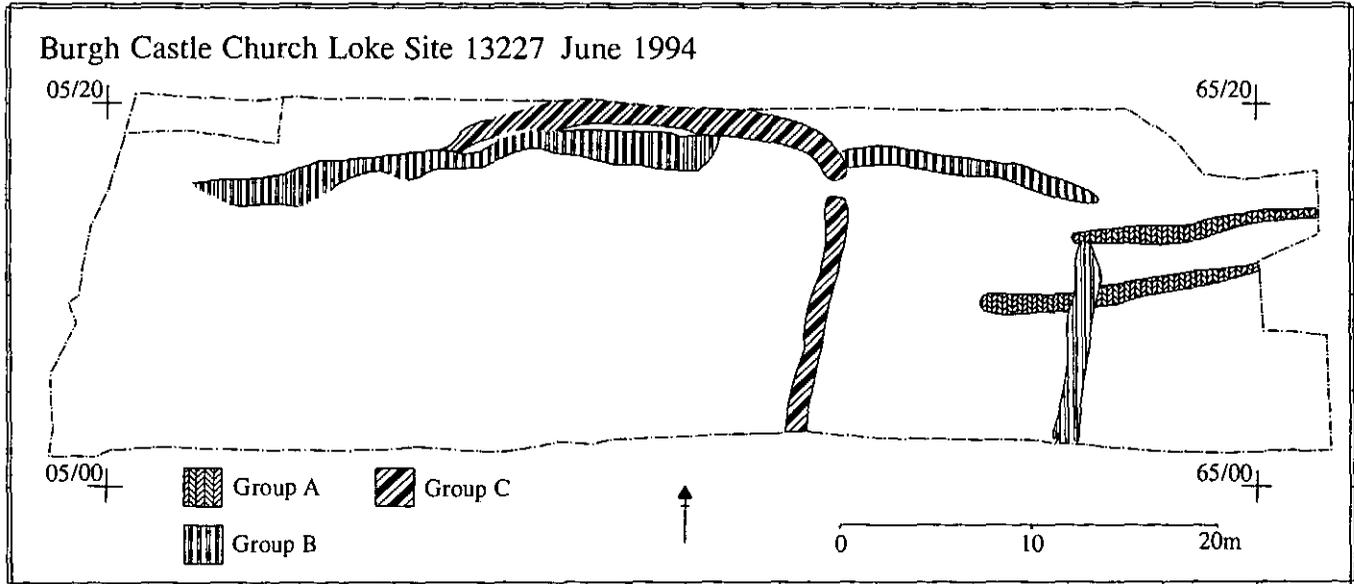


Figure 3.

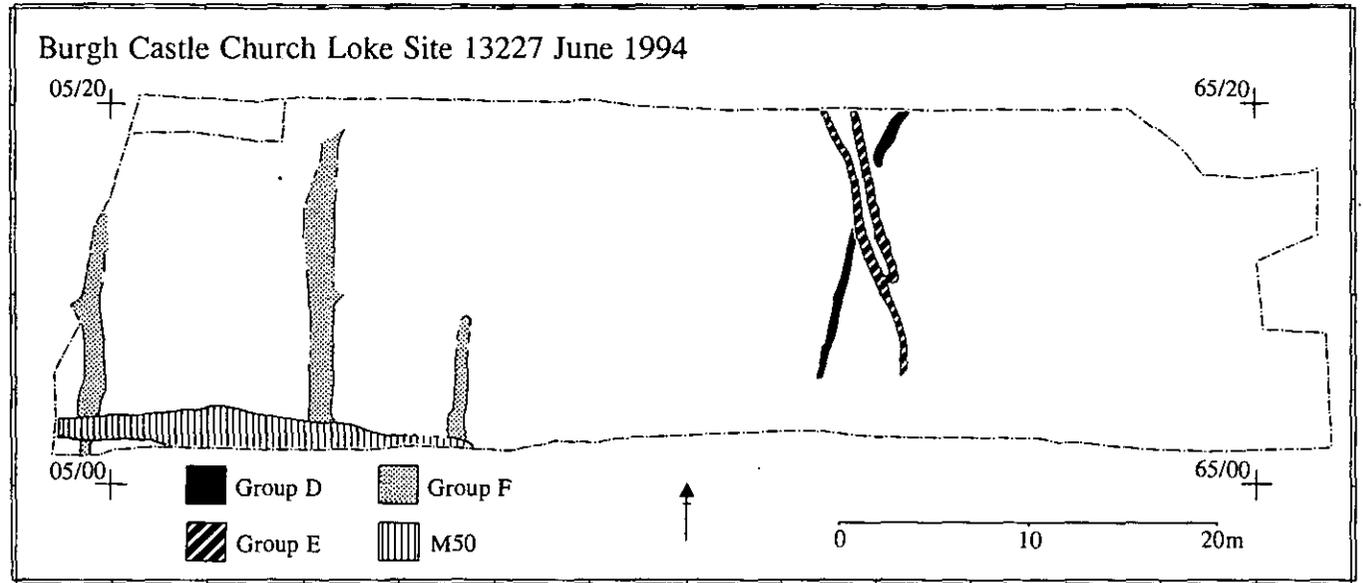
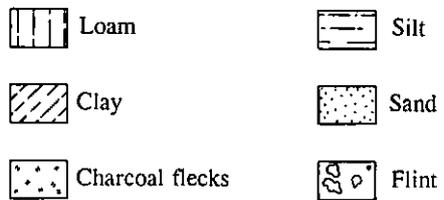
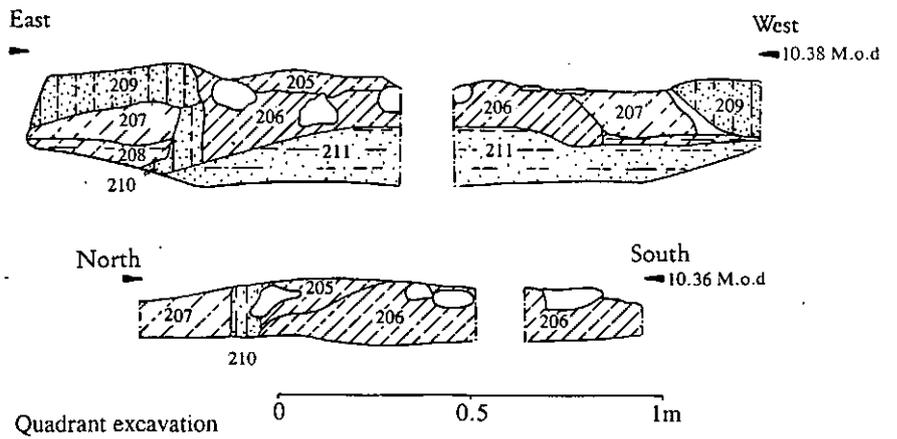
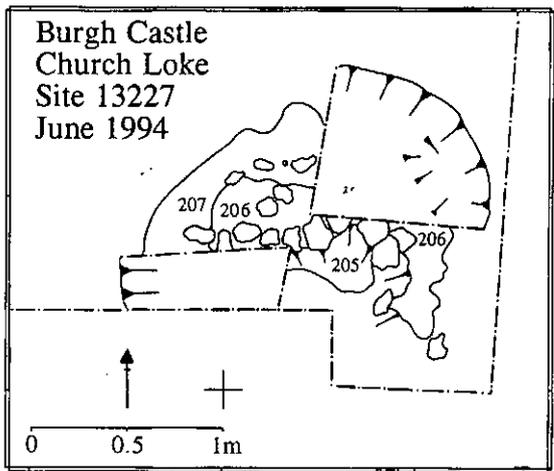


Figure 4.



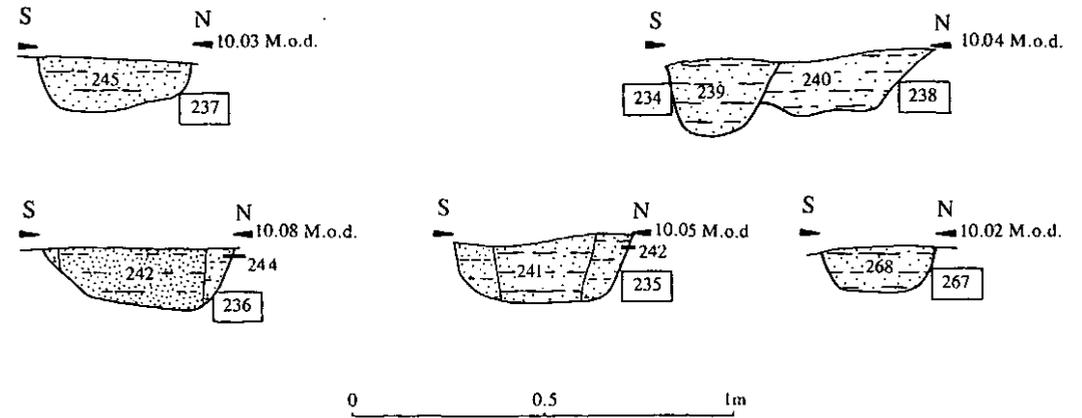
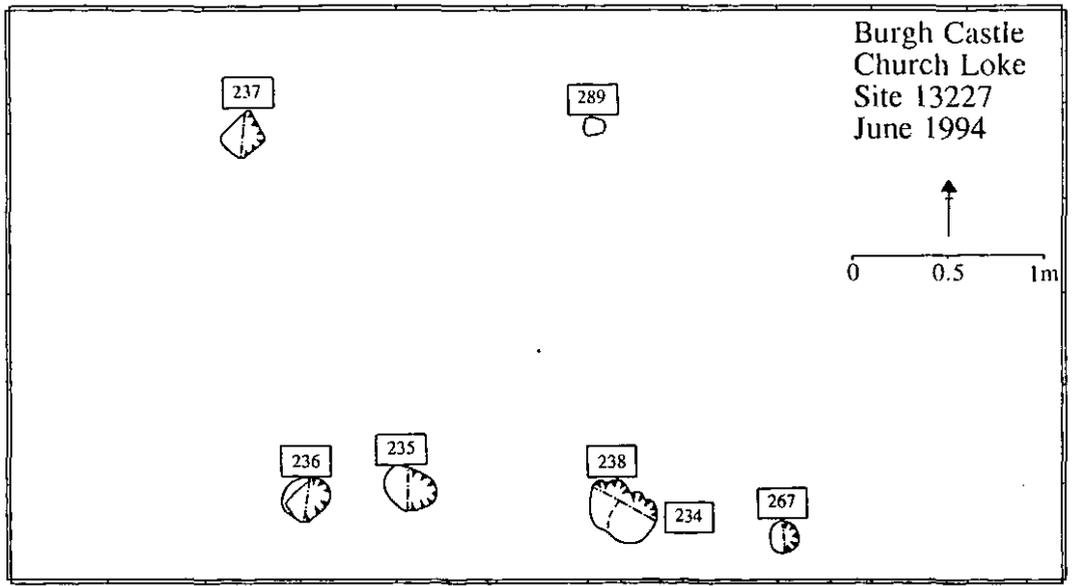
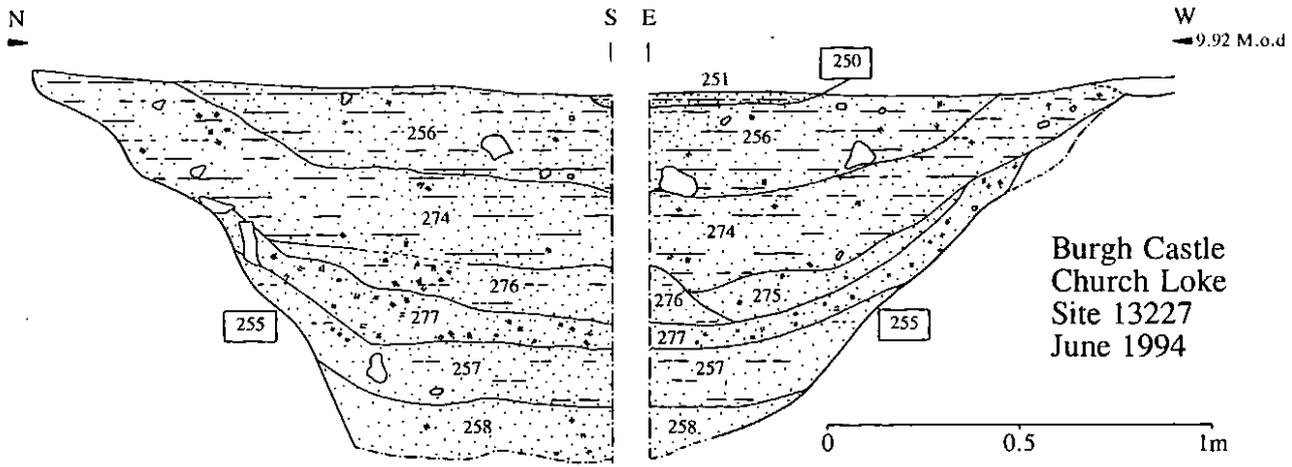


FIGURE 17



Quadrant excavation

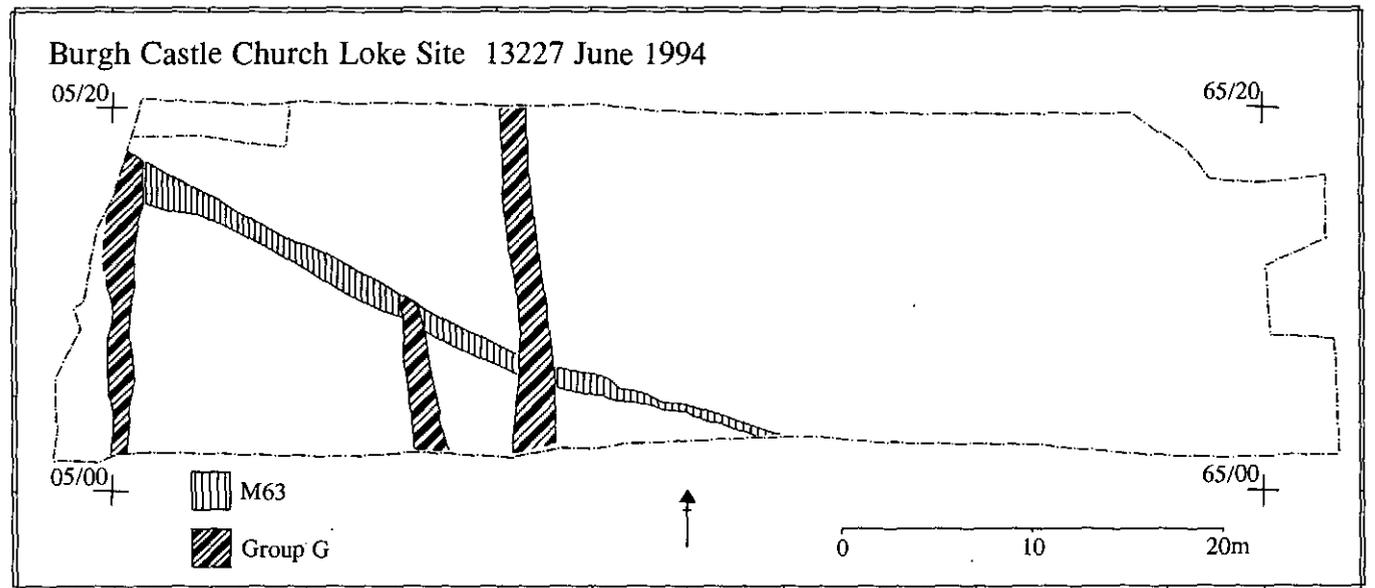


Figure 8.