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A Late Bronze Age enclosure at Lynton Way, Sawston, Cambridgeshire

Phil Weston, Andrew A. S. Newton and Kate Nicholson

with contributions from Martin Tingle, Peter Thompson,
Carina Philips and Val Fryer; illustrations by Caroline George

In October 2005, an archaeological excavation was undertaken by Archaeological Solutions Ltd on land at Lynton Way, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. The excavation revealed the southern part of a D-shaped enclosure, with an entrance located on its south-east side; the ditches extended beyond the limits of the excavation but the remainder of the enclosure and its associated field systems have been identified in an aerial photographic assessment (Palmer 2005). Along with further enclosures identified to the south-west, the excavated enclosure might have been part of a wide-reaching unified system of land apportionment. Close to its entrance, the enclosure ditch was cut by a large pit which might have had symbolic significance. In the north-west corner of the excavation, within the enclosure, two partial concentric circles of postholes and stakeholes were identified and interpreted as representing a roundhouse. Artefacts were sparse but the pottery and struck flint assemblages were consistent with the date of c. 1100BC indicated by radiocarbon dating.

The investigation of this site, located east of Lynton Way and the Icknield County Primary School, on the northern edge of Sawston (NGR TL 4942 4977; Fig. 1), has revealed a circular building set within a Late Bronze Age enclosure shown by aerial photographic survey (Palmer 2005) to be part of a wider system of land apportionment. Large-scale systems of land division are known in the region, particularly from the western fen edge area (e.g. Pryor 2001; Pryor 2006, p. 123), but these differ somewhat in form from those identified in the Sawston area. As well as verifying the Late Bronze Age date of the excavated and crop-mark features, post-excavation research has sought to understand their significance in terms of the contemporary development of south Cambridgeshire, and to place them in context by establishing the nature of the landscape in which they were set and their relationship to contemporary sites in the area.

Sawston, which lies about 10 kilometres south-east of Cambridge (Fig. 1), between the Rivers Cam and Granta, has been an attractive area for settlement from prehistory onwards. Early activity might have been stimulated by the proximity of the Icknield Way,

which brought people through the area, and by the light gravel soils of the Cam valley, which could itself have formed another important regional route (Woolhouse, Williamson & Harris 2005). Bronze Age activity in the Sawston area is better attested than that of earlier periods. A swathe of settlements and burial sites of this date runs south-west to north-east along the chalk hills of south Cambridgeshire (Last 2000), though settlement might have remained concentrated on the light river gravels, particularly those of the Cam, to which the available agricultural technology of the period was suited. At least ten Bronze Age ring-ditches, probably the remains of barrows, lie to the north of Sawston. Several Early Bronze Age flint daggers, typical of the Beaker culture, have also been found approximately one kilometre north-east of the Lynton Way site. A Late Bronze Age hoard, including three axes and two spears as well as several broken pieces, typical of the sort left (but never collected) by travelling smiths on the Icknield Way, has also been found in Sawston Parish (Taylor 1998, p. 75).

Bronze Age enclosures have recently been excavated, along with evidence for Iron Age settlement, at Sawston Police Station (Mortimer 2006a; Cessford & Mortimer 2004), and an investigation at Sawston Hall has identified Bronze Age, as well as later, activity (Mortimer 2006b). Cropmarks indicating the presence of enclosures in the immediate area of and about 200 metres south-west of Lynton Way were known prior to the current investigation (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) 04118); several of them have been built over without formal archaeological investigation. Although no direct dating evidence had been found for them, they had been tentatively considered to be of Roman date, based on their form and on a find of Romano-British pottery not far from the more south-westerly group.

The Iron Age enclosed or fortified sites of Borough Hill and Wandlebury Ringwork lie 2.3 kilometres west and about four kilometres north, respectively, of the Lynton Way site and form part of a string of such sites stretching from the Thames to the fen edge, dividing East Anglia from the rest of the country. This line

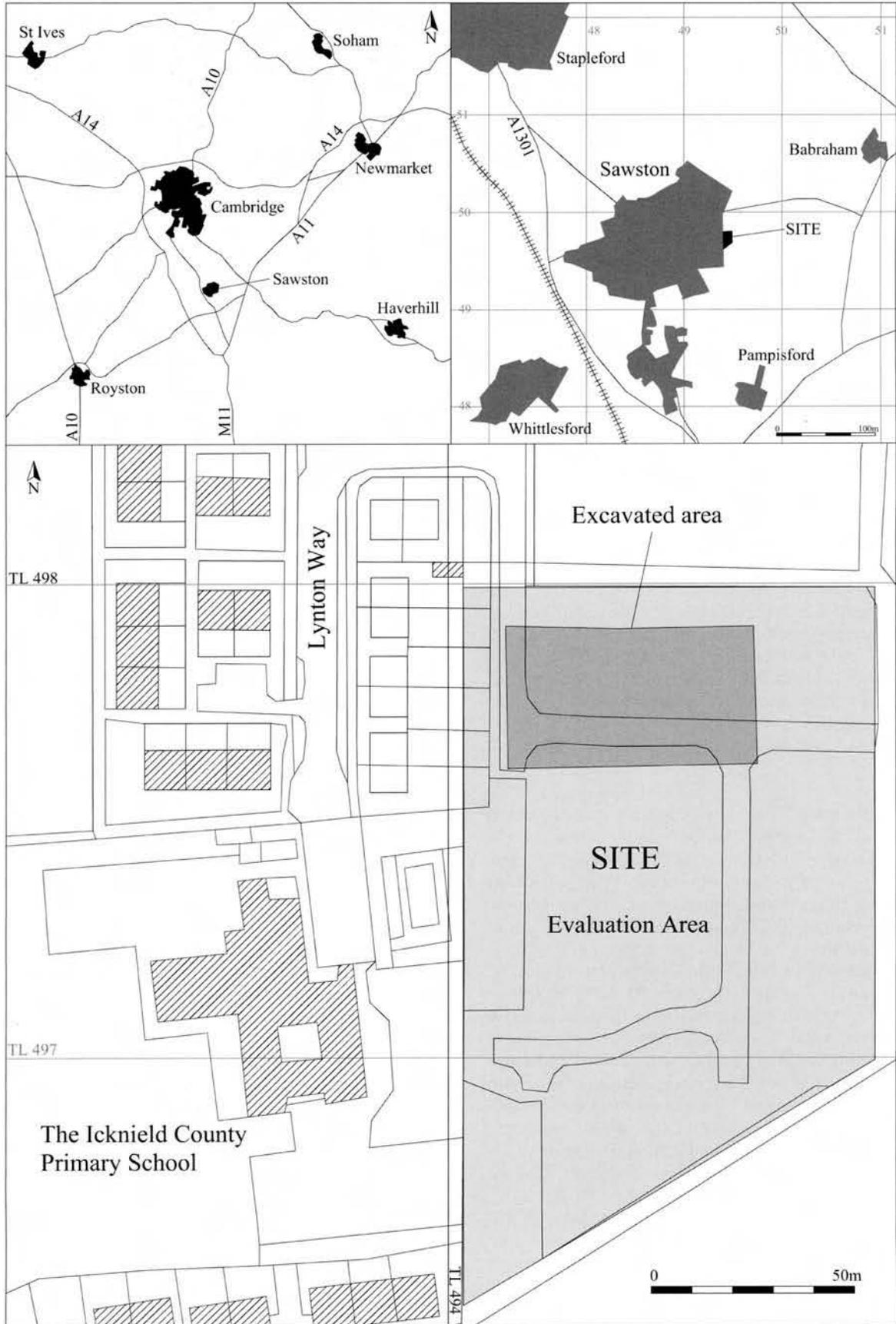


Figure 1. Site location.

of fortifications might have its origins in inter-tribal conflicts, as the territories of the Iceni, Trinovantes and Catuvellauni, all met in Cambridgeshire (Bray & Way 1997, p. 3). They also mark the route of a probable north-south communications network through the region (Malim 2000). The Borough Hill site might have controlled a fording point of the Cam on one of the branches of the Ickniel Way (Taylor 1998, p. 3). It is of interest then to note that Bronze Age activity prior to the establishment of the enclosures or fortifications is attested at Borough Hill (Mortimer 2001; John Samuels Archaeological Consultants 2003), and that recent investigation at Wandlebury Ringwork has revealed tantalising evidence to suggest the possible existence of a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age palisaded enclosure preceding the earliest elements of the Iron Age ringwork (French 2004, p. 59).

The investigation

Prior to the excavation, a trial trench evaluation (Woolhouse, Williamson & Harris 2005) revealed features in seven of its nine trenches (Fig. 2). The features in Trenches 1, 5 and 6 were considered to be of natural origin, but archaeological features were present in Trenches 2, 3 and 4; these were further investigated during the open area excavation, and are discussed below. A single, shallow, undated pit was also revealed in Trench 9. A subsequent programme of test pitting (Fig. 2), which aimed to recover artefacts from the ploughsoil, returned negative results. The area selected for excavation comprised 1560 square metres in the north-western corner of the larger site (Fig. 2). The excavation revealed 15 archaeological features, detailed descriptions of which are contained in the site interim report (Harris & Nicholson 2005).

An aerial photographic survey (Palmer 2005), which re-examined all available aerial photographs of the area, was also commissioned as part of this investigation. Its results, summarised below, have been invaluable in interpreting the excavated features.

The enclosure: excavated features

The archaeological features previously identified in Trial Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were revealed by excavation to be ditches forming the southern part of an enclosure (F2041 and F2004, recut as F2030; Fig. 3) extending beyond the limits of the excavation. The enclosure ditches were substantial features, between two and three metres wide and up to 1.25 metres deep, but both varied in profile along their lengths. F2041 was the more variable of the two, having steep sides and a narrow, flat base in Seg. B. (see Fig. 3) but being much shallower (just 0.49 metres) with moderately sloping sides and an undulating base to close its terminus (Seg. A.). F2004 had moderately sloping sides, in places much steeper at the top than at the base, and a rounded base, but was generally broader and shallower in its southernmost extent, probably because of a rise in the natural topography of this area. It was apparent that, after it had been filled in, ditch F2004 was

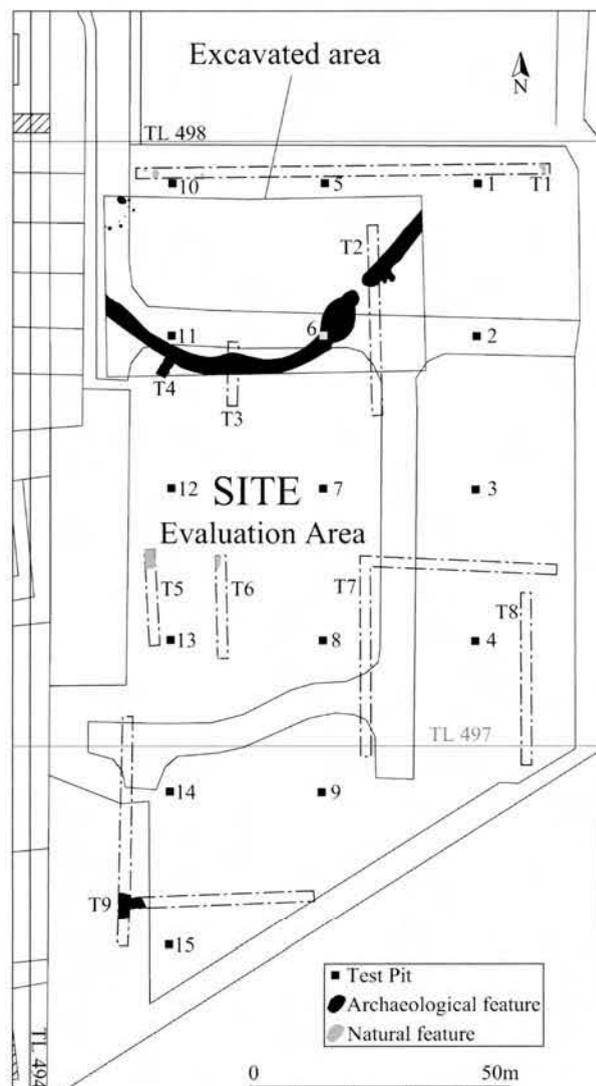


Figure 2. Test pit and trial trench locations.

recut along part of its length (Segs A. and B.) as ditch F2030, though this was much shallower (0.32 metres) than the original cut. It was not possible to establish a chronological relationship between ditch F2030 and the large pit F2051, described and discussed below.

The seven sherds of pottery recovered from the enclosure ditches were of Late Bronze Age date (see Thompson below); this dating evidence was supported by the 15 pieces of worked flint recovered from the ditches (see Tingle below) and by the radiocarbon date of 1100–800 BC (see Newton below) obtained from a sheep/goat molar from ditch F2004. Also recovered, from ditch F2041, was a fragment of pale grey-buff sandstone, probably the edge of a saddle quern (identification by Nina Crummy). Two of its fractured edges were scorch marked, suggesting that it could have been reused as a potboiler or to line the edge of a hearth.

A south-east facing entrance to the enclosure, which was also apparent in the cropmarks identified by the aerial photographic survey, was located within

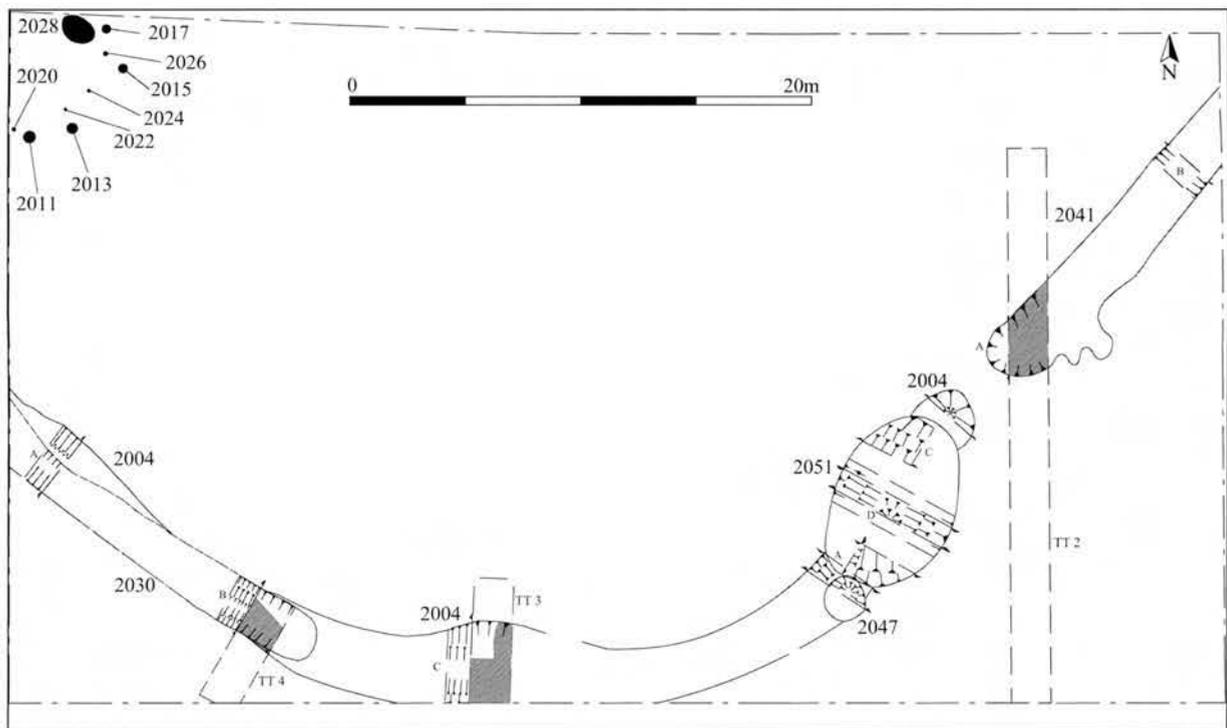


Figure 3. Archaeological features.

the excavated area, between the termini of the two ditches. Its precise width is uncertain (1.8 metres or up to 10.5 metres), owing to ambiguity in the interpretation of ditch F2004's eastern terminus: the feature north-east of pit F2051 could have been a discrete pit, rather than the end of ditch F2004.

The enclosure: aerial photographic assessment

The aerial photographic assessment (Palmer 2005; Fig. 4) provided a clearer picture of the previously-known cropmarks in the immediate area of Lynton Way and to the south-west. The positions of the excavated enclosure ditches are consistent with their having formed the southern part of a sub-square or D-shaped enclosure, the rest of which is indicated by cropmarks north of the excavated area. This enclosure seems to have been part of a larger system of land division, with an adjoining enclosure to the south. The somewhat unusual inclusion of curved lengths was suggested to be a response to changes in the local topography. The degree of apparent superimposition of features within or adjacent to the site suggested either redesign or change in use.

One of two short, parallel 'possible ditches' identified by the aerial photographic assessment might have been encountered during the trial trench evaluation, in Trench 5, though the position of the feature does not match perfectly with that of the cropmark (compare Figs 2 and 4). This feature was thought at the time of the evaluation to be of natural origin, perhaps either a solution hole or of glacial origin (Woolhouse, Williamson & Harris 2005, p. 18); its presence as a

cropmark does not belie this interpretation. The similarity of alignment between the cropmarks in the area of the site and the broader-ditched enclosures to the south-west (see Fig. 4) might indicate that these features were all part of one system of land allotment, including fields, tracks and settlement areas.

Pit F2051

A very large pit, F2051 (9.5 x 5.5 x 2.9 metres), cut ditch F2004 close to its terminus. The pit was roughly oval in plan and had a regular profile with the slope of its sides increasing from gentle at the top to vertical near its narrow, flat base (Fig. 5, Plate 1). The slope of the sides might have been broken by steps, but these were only clearly apparent to the north-west. This feature thus resembled a very large posthole; it has been suggested (K. Gdaniec Pers. comm.) that it could have been a monumental feature, its shaft holding a large post with symbolic significance.

The animal bone assemblage from pit F2051 included a partial disarticulated dog skeleton from L2063, L2062 and L2059 (see Fig. 5). The pit also contained eight sherds of pottery dating to the eleventh to eighth or seventh century BC (see Thompson below) and 32 pieces of Late Bronze Age or Iron Age struck flint (see Tingle below). A radiocarbon date of 1380–1100 BC (see Newton below) obtained from the humerus of the dog skeleton (from L2063) suggests (assuming that the dog skeleton was not residual) an earlier rather than a later date within the range implied by the pottery dates. The implications of this radiocarbon date are discussed below.

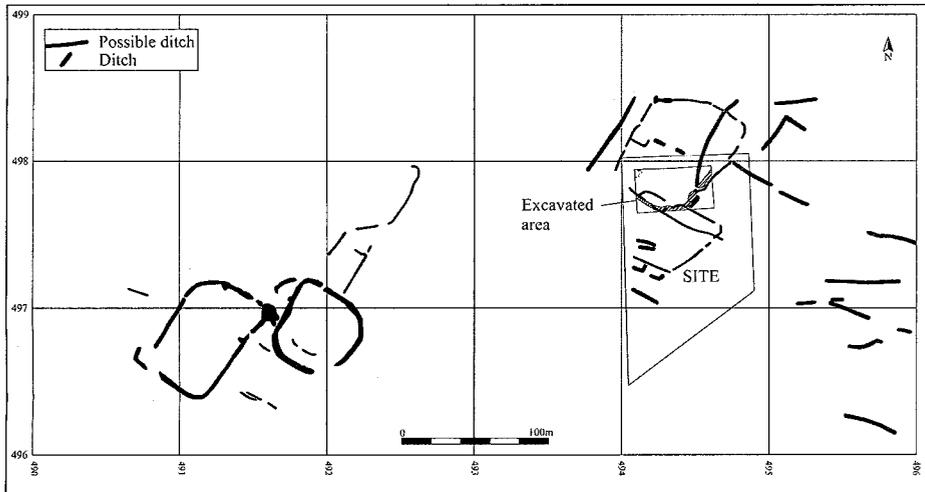


Figure 4. Cropmarks identified during aerial photo survey, after Palmer 2005.

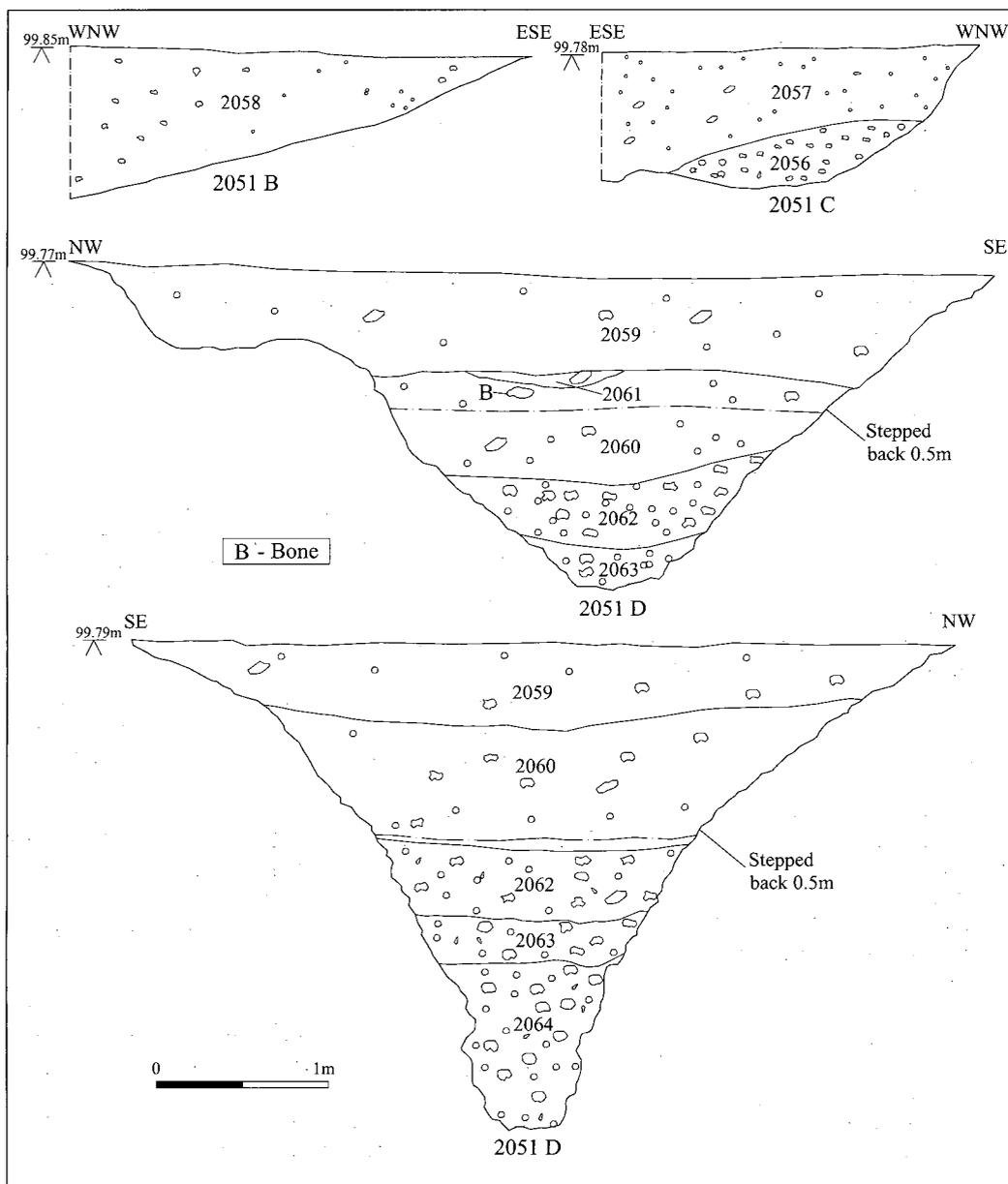


Figure 5. Sections of F2051.

A second, smaller pit (F2047) was cut through the upper fill of enclosure ditch F2004 and was cut by pit F2051. This feature had a steeply sloping north-eastern side and a steep stepped south-western side; it contained no datable finds.

The circular structure

Two concentric partial circles, the outer of postholes and the inner of stakeholes, were identified in the north-western corner of the excavated area (Fig. 3). These are thought to be part of a roundhouse, contemporary with the enclosure in which it stood. The postholes and stakeholes were cut into the natural chalk, and contained similar fills of mid brown, moderately loose silty sand or sandy silt. The postholes (0.36–0.4 metres diameter, 0.14–0.32 metres deep) had sides ranging from moderately sloping to near-vertical, with flattish undulating bases; the stakeholes (0.09–0.2 metres diameter, 0.1–0.26 metres deep) had steep to near-vertical sides and V-shaped bases. Although plough damage was revealed by the trial trench evaluation to have been concentrated south of the excavated area, some of the postholes and stakeholes (particularly F2013, F2024 and F2020) are thought to have been truncated from above. A shallow pit (F2028) was located within the concentric circles. No finds were recovered from any of these features.

The flint

Martin Tingle

Forty-two pieces (426 grammes) of worked flint were recovered from the enclosure ditches and from pit F2051 during the excavation; a further 17 pieces (212 grammes) had been found in the topsoil and subsoil during the trial trench evaluation. Fifty-six pieces (2003 grammes) of burnt but apparently unworked flint was also recovered. Terminology used to describe the flakes recovered follows Andrefsky (1998, p. 104).

Sawston is situated in an area of underlying chalk with discontinuous clay capping. The worked flint appears to derive from secondary flint deposits, perhaps within the terrace gravels of the Cam or Granta.

The assemblage is dominated by tertiary and uncorticated flakes with a small number of primary, secondary or broken flakes. The evidence does not suggest *in situ* flint knapping. Only one retouched tool was identified, a scraper recovered from the topsoil during the evaluation. There are no diagnostic pieces within either assemblage, but the assemblage as a whole is consistent with later Bronze Age or possibly Iron Age flint-working (Humphrey 2003).

The pottery

Peter Thompson

The combined evaluation and excavation recovered 26 sherds (188 grammes). Of these, 20 sherds were stratified, coming from the enclosure ditches and pit F2051.

The stratified material was all prehistoric, as was one unstratified sherd from the topsoil. The remaining unstratified sherds are post-medieval red earthenwares and a sherd of stoneware. The prehistoric pottery is, overall, in quite poor condition, abraded with an average sherd size of 7.8 grammes.

Three sherds in a dark grey fabric with pale brown surfaces, containing platy shell between one and four millimetres across, were recovered from ditch F2004 during the trial trench evaluation. The largest of these (one centimetre across) is in quite good condition, with fresh breaks and only slight erosion to the surfaces; it is probably from a large coarse-ware vessel. During the excavation, this ditch yielded a sand and shell-tempered simple upright rim, also from a thick-walled vessel. Such sherds are reminiscent of thick-walled large Deverel-Rimbury-type vessels which usually appear in bucket, barrel or urn forms during the Middle Bronze Age (Gibson 2002, pp. 105 & 106). Similar examples in shelly fabrics have been found at Broadlands, Peterborough (Thompson 2007, p. 16). Also from ditch F2004 was a thin sherd tempered with sand and fine crushed flint, and with a smooth, almost polished external surface. The presence of finer wares such as this sherd is a characteristic of the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (Barrett 1980a, pp. 302–3).

Ditch F2041 contained four small sherds with shelly fabrics, probably from the same vessel. The sherds from ditch F2030 were in a dark grey fabric with buff and dark brown external surfaces, containing sparse to moderate fine shell and sand. These sherds cannot be closely dated but are probably of Late Bronze Age or Iron Age date. An unstratified black grass-tempered sherd from the topsoil could date from the Middle or Late Iron Age.

Pottery from pit F2051 included a flat, slightly pinched-out base in a mixed temper of sparse flint with quartz sand and chalk, from L2056. A similar base from Papworth Everard was recovered from a Late Iron Age context (Thompson 2006). Also present, in L2061, was a sherd in a very mixed fabric comprising sparse angular flint, grog and rounded chalk and sand, whilst the remaining sherds from the feature were in fabrics containing flint, sand or grass. L2059 contained the upper profile of a slack shouldered jar with simple upright rim containing sand and crushed flint temper (Fig. 6). Though incomplete, this bears similarities to post Deverel-Rimbury 'Plainwares' as outlined in Knight's ceramic sequence (Knight 2002, p. 128). The jar's upper profile has some similarities to vessels from Aldermaston Wharf, Berkshire, radiocarbon dated to the eleventh to ninth century bc (Bradley *et al.* 1980, p. 238, figs 14 & 239, figs 15 & 248) and from Knight's Farm, Berkshire whose radiocarbon dates centre around 740 and 600 bc (Bradley *et al.* 1980, p. 271, figs 33 & 283). This jar is also similar to Barrett's plain-ware assemblage, which includes examples from Cambridge (Barrett 1980a, p. 304), and particularly similar to jar P29 from Runnymede Bridge, Surrey, which dates to between 1000 and 700 BC (Longley 1991, p. 181, fig. 78).

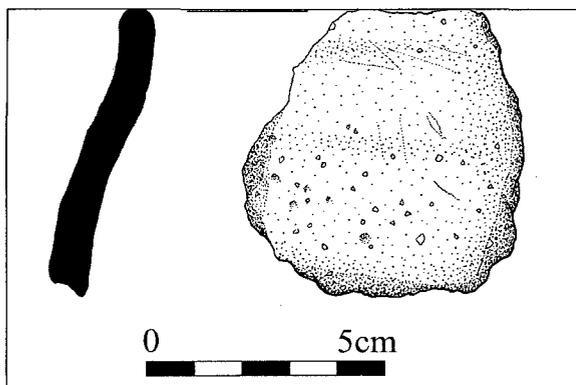


Figure 6. Upper profile of jar found in pit F2051.

The general lack of decoration in the assemblage is consistent with a post-Deverel-Rimbury date, although the small size of the assemblage is acknowledged. Flint tempering, as seen in the jar from F2051 (L2059) as well as in the finer sherd from ditch F2004, is an innovation which occurred (or re-occurred, having previously been seen in the Neolithic) during the later Bronze Age. The transition from the early to later Iron Age saw a reduction in its use and a return to the use of sand, shell and grass (Bryant 1997, p. 26). The presence of these fabrics in the Lynton Way assemblage may suggest a Middle Iron Age date, and so a broad date range of 14/1200 to 200 BC is possible. From the evidence presented above though, a later Bronze Age date is favoured over an Early to Middle Iron Age one.

The animal bone

Carina Phillips

A small animal bone assemblage of only 221 fragments was recovered from enclosure ditch F2004 and the two pits which cut it. The bone was badly preserved; root damage had occurred particularly to the bone surface and brittleness resulted in much modern fragmentation. The poor state of preservation hindered the identification of species and is likely to have affected the recognition of butchery marks.

Only 51 fragments could be identified to species. Cattle (*Bos* sp.) and dog (*Canis familiaris*) bones were present in similar numbers (24 and 21, respectively), though the latter were all from the same animal; sheep/goat (*Ovis/Capra* sp.; 4 bones) and horse (*Equus* sp.; 2 bones) were also present. The dominance of cattle (large) over sheep/goat (small) bones may be due to a bias of preservation. Seventeen bones which could not be identified to species were assigned to the category 'large-sized' (cattle, large deer and horse), and 21 to the category 'small-sized' (sheep/goat, small deer, dog and pig (*Sus* sp.)). No evidence of butchery was identified, and it was not possible to estimate the ages or sizes of any animals except the dog.

The dog bones were recovered from pit F2051 (L2059, L2061 and L2063; see Fig. 5). The remains

were partially complete; most long bones, right and left metacarpals and two phalanges, part of the sacrum, two lumbar vertebrae, atlas, part of the left mandible and two maxillary teeth were present. The bones came from an adult dog. The mandibular teeth exhibited much wear and lumbar vertebrae exhibited osteophytosis (lipping) of the vertebral body, indicating that the dog might have been in old age. An estimation of shoulder height was calculated as 53.1 centimetres, from measurements of three long bones; the absence of the skull prevented consideration of head shape.

The distribution of the dog skeleton throughout three fills of pit F2051 suggests that the carcass was disarticulated at the time of deposition. The absence of butchery marks suggests that no deliberate dismembering took place. It is possible that erosion obliterated such evidence, particularly cut marks, but the completeness of some of the long bones (the left femur, left humerus and radii) indicates that any butchery must have been careful and deliberate (using a knife) so as to leave no marks. It seems most likely that the dog's carcass had decomposed to the extent that it became disarticulated when disturbed. The spreading of the carcass between the fills of F2051 is discussed below.

Given the unusual nature, and possible symbolic significance, of pit F2051, attention must be given to the possibility that there was a ritual aspect to the deposition of a partial dog carcass in its fills. Finds of complete or near complete animal carcasses, especially of dogs and horses, deposited in significant features without apparent economic or practical explanation, are a well attested, though much debated (cf. Wilson 1992), phenomenon of the Iron Age in southern Britain. They have been labelled as 'special deposits' (cf. Grant 1984; Wait 1985) or as examples of 'structured deposition' (cf. Hill 1995). Such deposits have also been found in Bronze Age contexts (e.g. Needham 1991, p. 380) and dog remains occur frequently in ritual deposits of Bronze Age date (cf. Green 1998, p. 11; Cunliffe 1992, p. 77; Hinman 2004). No parallel has been identified, however, for the special or structured deposition of dog (or other species) remains in a manner comparable to those recovered from pit F2051. It thus seems most likely that a mundane explanation should be sought for the presence of the dog remains in this feature (see below).

The environmental samples

Val Fryer

Six samples for the extraction of the plant macrofossil assemblages, taken from the upper fill of ditch F2041 and sequential fills within pit F2051 (L2063, L2062, L2060, L2061 and L2059; see Fig. 5), were submitted for assessment. A tabulation of results is included in the site archive. All plant remains were charred. Modern contaminants including fibrous roots, seeds and arthropod remains were present in the sample from the ditch, but were rare in the samples from pit F2051.

Grains and seeds were exceedingly rare. Samples from ditch F2041 and pit F2051 (L2061) contained single cereal grains, puffed (probably as a result of combustion at high temperatures), fragmented and not identifiable to species. Black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*) and goosegrass (*Galium aparine*) type seeds were also present in both of these samples, and might indicate the burning of grassland herbs. Further evidence for combustion of organic remains at high temperatures (black porous cokey and tarry material) was present in the sample from L2059, and charcoal fragments were present in all samples save that from L2063, though not in quantities sufficient to indicate deliberate deposition of burnt waste. The charred plant remains are likely to have derived from scattered or wind-blown detritus, accidentally incorporated into the ditch and pit fills.

Mollusc shells formed the major component of all six assemblages. Although identification of some specimens was prevented as a result of a heavy encrustation of fine silt particles, all four ecological groups of terrestrial taxa identified by Evans (1972) were represented. Open country species occurred most frequently: shells of *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia costata* were abundant within all six assemblages, suggesting that reasonably dry, short-turfed grassland conditions prevailed in the area. However, a small number of shells of woodland and shade-loving species were also present, possibly indicative of local shaded microhabitats (such as hedges or isolated small stands of shrubs or small trees). The molluscan assemblage from L2060 differed from the others, with an increased representation of shade/moisture loving taxa including *Punctum pygmaeum* and *Vallonia pulchella*. The moister surface conditions implied by this assemblage may indicate that L2063 incorporated material imported to the site from a wetter area.

Radiocarbon dating

Andrew A S Newton

Two samples were selected for radiocarbon dating in order to provide absolute dates for the enclosure (ditch F2004) and the large pit that cut it (F2051). This was considered necessary given the perceived significance of the features and the scarcity of datable material recovered from them. The samples comprised a sheep/goat molar from the second fill (L2007) of ditch F2004 and a dog humerus from pit F2051 (L2063), Seg. D. Radiocarbon dating was carried out by Beta Analytic Inc. of Miami, Florida, using radiometric standard delivery analysis of collagen. Dates were calibrated according to the maximum intercept method (Stuiver & Pearson 1998; Stuiver & van der Plicht 1998), incorporating a fine splitting mathematical approach (Talma & Vogel 1993).

It was expected that the two samples would date to the Late Bronze Age or possibly to the Early to Middle Iron Age (see Thompson, above). The sheep/goat molar from ditch F2004 dated to 1100–820 BC (Beta 219153; 2790±60BP), while the dog humerus

from pit F2051 dated to 1380–1100 BC (Beta 219154; 2990±40BP). The implications of the earlier date range obtained from the sample from the stratigraphically later pit are discussed below.

Discussion

The date of activity at the site

The pottery assemblage from the Lynton Way site is very similar to that from the Late Bronze Age site of Aldermaston Wharf in Berkshire (Bradley *et al.* 1980, pp. 232–48); comparisons with sherds from this site and others has led to the suggestion of a Late Bronze Age date for the enclosure, roundhouse and associated activity, although the possibility of an Early to Middle Iron Age date could not be fully discounted. Analysis of the flint assemblage also suggested a date range of Late Bronze Age or possibly Iron Age.

Radiocarbon dates of 1100–820 BC and 1380–1100 BC were obtained respectively from a dog humerus from ditch F2004 and a sheep/goat molar from (stratigraphically later) pit F2051. The date for ditch F2004 confirms the Late Bronze Age date of the enclosure. It is, however, possible that the bone sample from pit F2051 was not in its original depositional context: although the sample was selected from a partially complete skeleton and from a sealed context, it is possible that the three deposits containing the dog bones were redeposited from elsewhere, and that the bones were already present within them when they were dumped in the pit. The majority of the dog remains were recovered from L2062 and L2063, which were very similar (see Fig. 5) and could have derived from the same original deposit. The remaining atlas and metacarpal were from L2059, which might have represented the finer (silty) components of that original deposit (see Fig. 5), perhaps fractionated out as it was transported to the Lynton Way site, or stored prior to deposition in F2051. The premise that (some of) the fills of this pit were transported to the site from elsewhere is supported by the mollusc assemblage from fill L2060.

This interpretation would explain the spread of the dog skeleton between three different fills of pit F2051, and would also account for the earlier radiocarbon date obtained from the dog humerus, as compared with that from the sheep/goat molar from ditch F2004. If the dog bones are considered to have been deposited as part of these three fills, then the provenance of the pottery and flint from these contexts is not secure: all could be residual. However, the Late Bronze Age date of the feature remains valid as datable pottery and flint were recovered from other fills of the pit, and no finds of other dates were recovered.

Despite the neatness of the interpretation proposed above, it remains plausible that (whatever the derivation of these fills of pit F2051) the partial dog skeleton represents a (comparatively) recently deceased animal whose remains were thrown into the pit as

it was being (rapidly) backfilled. If this was the case, then the radiocarbon dates from ditch F2004 and pit F2051 must be interpreted as showing that the pit was dug and backfilled soon after the ditch was filled in, and that both events occurred in about 1100BC, confirming the Late Bronze Age date suggested by pottery and flint analysis.

The field systems

The features excavated at the site correlate almost exactly with cropmark features identified by the aerial photographic assessment (Palmer 2005; Fig. 4). The aerial photographic assessment shows that the excavated ditches are part of a roughly D-shaped or sub-rectangular enclosure, the remainder of which extends to the north, and that this enclosure forms part of a complex field system. Other ditches and 'possible ditches' identified by the aerial photographic assessment within the excavated area (and, with the exception of a single feature in Trench 5, within the wider evaluation site) were not archaeologically attested. The posthole/stakehole structure identified at the site would have stood towards the south-western corner of the D-shaped enclosure.

Consistency of alignment suggests that this system might be associated with cropmark enclosures to the south-west and excavated enclosures at Sawston Police Station (Mortimer 2006a) as part of a unified system of land allotment. The Late Bronze Age date of the excavated enclosure ditches can thus be tentatively extended to the rest of this proposed unified system (cf. Brown & Murphy 2000, p. 12). It is thus likely that the Roman date previously assumed for the more south-westerly enclosures is erroneous, and that the pottery on which it was based was not associated with them, but rather with archaeologically attested Romano-British activity in Sawston, for example at the Police Station (Cessford & Mortimer 2004). Bronze Age features at Sawston Hall (Mortimer 2006b) and various Bronze Age artefacts recovered in the area might also have been associated with the putative Late Bronze Age field system. It must be noted though that this theory cannot be proved: it remains possible that the observed similarity in alignment is coincidental, and that the cropmark enclosures to the south-west of the site were not part of the same system as (or even contemporary with) those excavated at Lynton Way.

Such a wide-reaching, unified system of land allotment is consistent with a Bronze Age landscape, but such systems are usually characterised by large boundary ditches, some stretching to hundreds of metres in length, forming long strips of land that were then subdivided into smaller plots by the imposition of further ditches or by hedge-lines. The best known of these systems is at Fengate (Pryor 2001), on the western fen edge. The form of the enclosures seen in the aerial photographic assessment at Sawston bears more similarity to later (Iron Age) field systems, which appear to have developed more organically, following no discernable pattern as elements were added.

The D-shaped enclosure is also generally considered to be a Mid- to Late Iron Age form, with some continuing in use into the Romano-British period (Wilson 2000, p. 165). However, a range of forms is known for later Bronze Age enclosures (Barrett 1980b), and circular enclosures of this date have also been found, for example at Mucking and Springfield Lyons in Essex (Champion 1999). Such sites appear to be restricted to the east of England (Cunliffe 1995, p. 30).

The atypical morphology, for the Late Bronze Age, of the proposed system of land division could indicate a slightly unusual tradition of land allotment, possibly related to that which saw circular enclosures constructed in Late Bronze Age Essex. Alternatively it may be that the site represents a very early move to the use of the type of field system more commonly associated with the Iron Age. Cunliffe (2005, p. 69) suggests that the Middle and Late Bronze Age was a period of transition from the simple agricultural regimes of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age to the more sophisticated approach to agricultural exploitation typical of the Iron Age and Roman periods. It is possible that the field systems evident in Sawston represent this transitional period. Continuity in activity from the later Bronze Age into the Iron Age is well attested at sites in the Sawston area, for example at the Police Station (Mortimer 2006a; Cessford & Mortimer 2004) and Sawston Hall (Mortimer 2006b), and it thus seems fitting that the wider landscape should be divided in a manner consistent with transition between the two periods.

It should be noted that the highly regular rectilinear fields and paddocks of the Late Bronze Age landscape at Fengate was originally set out in the earlier Bronze Age (Pryor 2001). The regularity of the fields within such systems is suggestive of fair apportionment of resources between the rival claims of a large and well established community (Cunliffe 2005, pp. 37–8). It might be that land allotment and division followed a different system in areas, like Sawston, that were being divided up for the first time in the Late Bronze Age, although an extensive system of regular, rectilinear fields at West Deeping, Lincolnshire, also has its origins in the later Bronze Age (Pryor 2006, pp. 109–23). Another possibility is that topographic factors influenced the manner in which land was divided; it is notable that, unlike Sawston, the best known typically Late Bronze Age field systems in East Anglia all lie at relatively low elevations, close to the fen edge.

The posthole and stakehole structure

The double-ringed structure in the north-western corner of the excavated area could represent the first Bronze Age dwelling known in the Sawston area. The arrangement of the outer ring of postholes and inner ring of stakeholes has led to the interpretation of these features as a roundhouse (Harris & Nicholson 2005, p. 14). However, the structure was located at the corner of the excavated area and much of it remained unexcavated. It is possible that the unexcavated part

of the structure would have yielded finds or features, such as central hearth, that would confirm that structure was occupied. A piece of sandstone saddle quern thought to have been reused as a pot-boiler or to line a hearth suggests at least one episode of domestic activity, but it was recovered from one of the enclosure ditches (F2041) and so may not represent activity associated with the circular structure.

The absence of finds from features associated with the structure, and the general paucity of finds from the site, might indicate that the post and stake settings had a non-domestic function, perhaps as an animal pen or shelter. This would fit neatly into the argument that the excavated site represents part of a wider later Bronze Age field system.

Scarcity of occupational debris is not necessarily inconsistent with settlement having occurred. For example, a post-built circular structure seven metres in diameter that was encountered during excavations ahead of the Fordham by-pass, Cambridgeshire, was interpreted as a roundhouse despite the absence of associated artefacts (Mortimer 2005). This roundhouse was subsequently dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age based on finds recovered from the associated field system and on typological grounds (*ibid.*).

The layout of postholes and stakeholes, and the absence of an encompassing ring ditch or drip gully at Lynton Way makes interpretation as an early (i.e. Bronze Age, not Iron Age) roundhouse seem the most probable. The roundhouse excavated at the Late Bronze Age enclosure at Loft's Farm in Essex displayed a similar double ring structure and a number of buildings like this are known on the chalklands of southern England (Brown 1988). The outer ring of postholes in buildings of this type represents the line of the outer wall, while the inner ring represents roof supports.

The duration of occupation at Lynton Way

Most Middle to Late Bronze Age settlements appear to have been short-lived (Cunliffe 2005, p. 238), though (in contrast to Middle Bronze Age settlements that rarely demonstrate more than two or three phases of occupation) some Late Bronze Age sites display extensive sequences of rebuilding of dwellings, suggesting occupation over several centuries (Brück 1999). It may be that occupation at the Lynton Way site conforms to Cunliffe's generalisation, and was short-lived with only a single phase of activity. This may account for the scarcity of artefacts, animal bone and plant macrofossils indicative of domestic activity, though it is thought that truncation of relevant deposits and destruction or dispersal of artefactual and environmental evidence by later ploughing was also a significant factor.

The apparent single phase of occupation at Lynton Way may be explained as a result of a neolocal residence pattern, a cause to which the single phases of occupation at Middle Bronze Age sites is often attributed. This is the ethnographically common occurrence of children leaving the parental home and establishing their own household upon marriage.

Such single-phase settlements are established upon marriage, occupied throughout the life-span of the head of the household and then abandoned (Brück 1999). However, it is possible that the remains of further roundhouses, displaying evidence for rebuilding and thus for more than one phase of occupation, might exist beyond the limits of the excavated site.

Pit F2051

The large oval-shaped pit (F2051) cut enclosure ditch F2004 close to (or possibly at) its southern terminus. Its function is unclear: the natural chalk geology of the site rules out its use as a large watering hole or well (the water table was not encountered during excavation), and there is no evidence to suggest the disposal of domestic waste. The pit tapered sharply in profile (Fig. 5) and the possibility has been suggested that it might have been a (very) large posthole, and have held some form of 'tribal marker'. The stratigraphic relationship of this pit to the enclosure ditch indicated that the ditch was filled in before the pit was cut. However, the pit might have been in use at the same time as the ditch's (much shallower) recut (F2030), and the in-filling of ditch F2004 does not necessarily imply that the rest of the enclosure ditches (F2041 and those seen as cropmarks) had also been filled in before pit F2051 was cut (Figs 3 and 4).

The erection of a marker-post could have been an elaboration of a newly enlarged entrance to the enclosure (between the termini of ditches F2041 and F2030). Alternatively, the erection of a massive post might have acted as a notice of (continuing) ownership of the land following the disuse of the enclosure and the infilling of (all of) its ditches; it might even have been considered important that the location of the former entrance to the enclosure should be marked. Deliberate acts of 'closing-down' of burial mounds and cairns have been identified in the earlier Bronze Age and it has been suggested that similar acts of planned abandonment of settlement sites were carried out (Nowakowski 2001). The in-filling of ditch F2004, the digging of pit F2051 and the putative erection and subsequent removal of a 'tribal marker' might have constituted such an act. If the radiocarbon-dated bone and tooth were both in their primary depositional contexts, then pit F2051 cannot have been in use for long (as a posthole or as an open feature).

Whatever the function and duration of pit F2051, it seems that its backfilling was rapid, unless parts of the dog skeleton were being deliberately conserved for deposition in this pit during more widely spaced episodes of backfilling. The possible function of the pit as the posthole for a large 'tribal marker', combined with the attested role of dogs in Bronze Age ritual activity (see Philips, above), invites speculation on a possible ritual aspect to the interpretation of the presence of the dog skeleton, possibly including the reserving of bones especially for deposition in this feature. However there are no known parallels for such an act resulting in the spreading of a skeleton across several fills within a feature. It is considered

more likely that the dog remains are residual or were deposited as a convenient means of disposal, as discussed above.

Conclusion

The archaeological features excavated at Lynton Way represent part of a Late Bronze Age system of land division and enclosure, the unexcavated portions of which have been identified from aerial photographs. The presence of a roundhouse suggests that this field system was not just an agricultural landscape but that there was also some degree of domestic occupation. The aerial photographic assessment demonstrates that a second, similar, set of enclosures exists to the south-west of Lynton Way, on a similar alignment. It is suggested that both sets of enclosures were part of an (atypical) unified system of Late Bronze Age land division. Given the identification of evidence for Late Bronze Age activity preceding the Iron Age enclosed or fortified sites at Borough Hill and Wandlebury Ringwork, and the recovery within the parish of a hoard of bronze items thought to have been left by an itinerant smith (Taylor 1998, p. 75), it is possible that the anthropogenic Late Bronze Age landscape stretched over a very large area, representing a widespread system of social organisation.

The site might also contribute to furthering the understanding of how populations and settlements developed in later prehistory. The Bronze Age settlement evidence at Sawston lies within a wider landscape in which both earlier and later activity are archaeologically attested. Nearby precursors include the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age ritual site at the Babraham Road Park and Ride site about four kilometres to the north (Hinman 1998). Later (Iron Age) settlement is well attested in the area, for example at Sawston Police Station (Cessford & Mortimer 2004), and significant population centres such as the Borough Hill and Wandlebury Ringwork enclosed or fortified sites are nearby.

Cunliffe (2005, p. 69) has described the Middle and Late Bronze Age as a transitional phase between the agricultural systems of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age and the more sophisticated regimes of the Iron Age. It seems that the Lynton Way site reflects this theme of transition, possibly representing an amalgam of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement and land division patterns. The roundhouse, being a post-built construction and lacking a drip gully, has a Bronze Age appearance. The apparent single-phase occupation of the roundhouse, possibly indicating a neolocal residence pattern, is also a phenomenon associated with the Bronze Age. However, the similarity of the enclosures and field systems in which the roundhouse is set to those of the Iron Age, may suggest that field-systems and layout of enclosures more commonly associated with later periods were already being used in the Late Bronze Age in this area.

The large pit F2051 is an intriguing feature because of its great size, its relationship to enclosure ditch

F2004 and the lack of clear evidence for its function. The possibility that it had a ritual function as the setting for a large 'tribal marker' can be neither proved nor disproved.

There is evidence to suggest a dislocation in the settlement pattern in some areas of the East Anglian region, such as the Lea Valley, during the Bronze Age/Iron Age transition (Bryant 2000). However, the area in which the Lynton Way site is located demonstrates plentiful evidence of the continued use of sites through this transitional phase, and the site itself appears to be an eloquent representation of this transition; a frozen moment in the evolution of the Bronze Age settlement form into that of the Iron Age. This suggests that social or economic conditions present in the south Cambridgeshire area might have allowed this apparently smooth development from Bronze Age to Iron Age settlement form and function that was not possible in other parts of East Anglia. Identification of these conditions may form an important part of future research agendas for the Eastern Counties for this period and could assist in increasing what is currently known about the social and economic effects of the ending of bronze production and exchange networks and the introduction of iron technology, an area of research which is at present poorly understood (Bryant 2000).

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Plate 1. Pit F2051, Lynton Way, Sawston. This may have been a monumental feature, its shaft holding a large post with symbolic significance.