CHAPTER 3

THE MIDDLE IRON AGE FARMSTEAD

THE FARMSTEAD ENCLOSURE (ENCLOSURE 2) (FIGS 2, 5, 14–20)

The farmstead enclosure occupied a gravel area with a slight slope from west to east between the northern arms of a silt-filled palaeochannel (FIGS 2 and 5, CF52; p. 66). The enclosure ditch (AF39, CF6) was V-shaped in profile and must have been around 1.4–1.5 m in depth after allowing for the 0.4 m or so that had to be stripped off prior to excavation (FIGS 14–15). No remains survived of any bank, although the way in which the pits inside the enclosure were set back from the inner edge of the ditch points to the previous existence of an internal bank about 2.0 m wide at its base. The ditch and bank were substantial enough to secure any animals kept in the enclosure and protect them from predators (human as well as animal). However, it is dubious if they were large enough to provide anything more than this. A narrow ditch (FIG. 14, CF132) cut across the southern half of the entrance points to the entrance being blocked for a time, or to its having incorporated posts set in a construction trench. (A similar ditch was found across the entrance to Enclosure 3.) The uppermost surviving fills of the ditch of the farmstead enclosure contained a small quantity of later Iron Age pottery (44 g) indicating that it must still have been an earthwork in the funerary phase of the site.

Two currency bars had been carefully placed flat on their faces near the side of the enclosure ditch of Enclosure 2 (FIGS 14 and 20). They lay side by side with the socketed ends to the north. They appeared to have been placed on the surface of the ditch as opposed to buried in a pit. There were no indications of a pit, although detecting such a feature is likely to be difficult if, as is likely, its fill would have been very similar to the silt in the ditch. However, the relationship of the currency bars to the ditch and its fill gave the strong impression that they had simply been laid on the side of the ditch after about 0.4 m of silt had accumulated in the bottom of it (FIG. 14).

Close to the area where the currency bars had been placed, a pit (CF415) had been dug into the upper part of the ditch fill and part of the cremated remains of a human adult, together with some charcoal, put into it. The pit was not visible at the level of the excavation surface, but appeared to be sealed by the further accumulation of material into the ditch. Despite its proximity to the currency bars, the pit was stratigraphically much later than them (FIGS 2 and 14). The pit certainly relates to the funerary phase of the site, but the currency bars are more likely to be associated with the farmstead, because their deposition seems to be relatively early in terms of the ditch fill. (It should be borne in mind that the ditch is likely to have been about 400 mm deeper than shown in FIGURES 14–15.)

There were various other pits inside the enclosure. They can be divided into three groups based on size, shape, and fill. The first group may be the result of clearing the site of bushes and trees prior to the laying out of the farmstead. The second group seems to have been associated with a round-house, while the third may have been for storage. The groups are as follows.

Group 1) ?Clearance features (FIGS 2, 10, 15–16)

Several pit features (AF40, AF44, CF172, CF175, CF176, CF194, CF195; FIGS 15–16) have similar fills of slightly loamy stony sand. Most of them contained some charcoal, but with few or no datable finds. Three pits (CF172, CF175, CF194) are long shallow oval features orientated north-west/south-east and appear to form a distinct sub-group. Two of them (CF175 and CF194) are cut by pits datable to the Middle Iron Age within the ?round-house, and may be associated with them. AF44 (FIG. 10) was cut by the enclosure ditch (AF32/AF39/CF6).

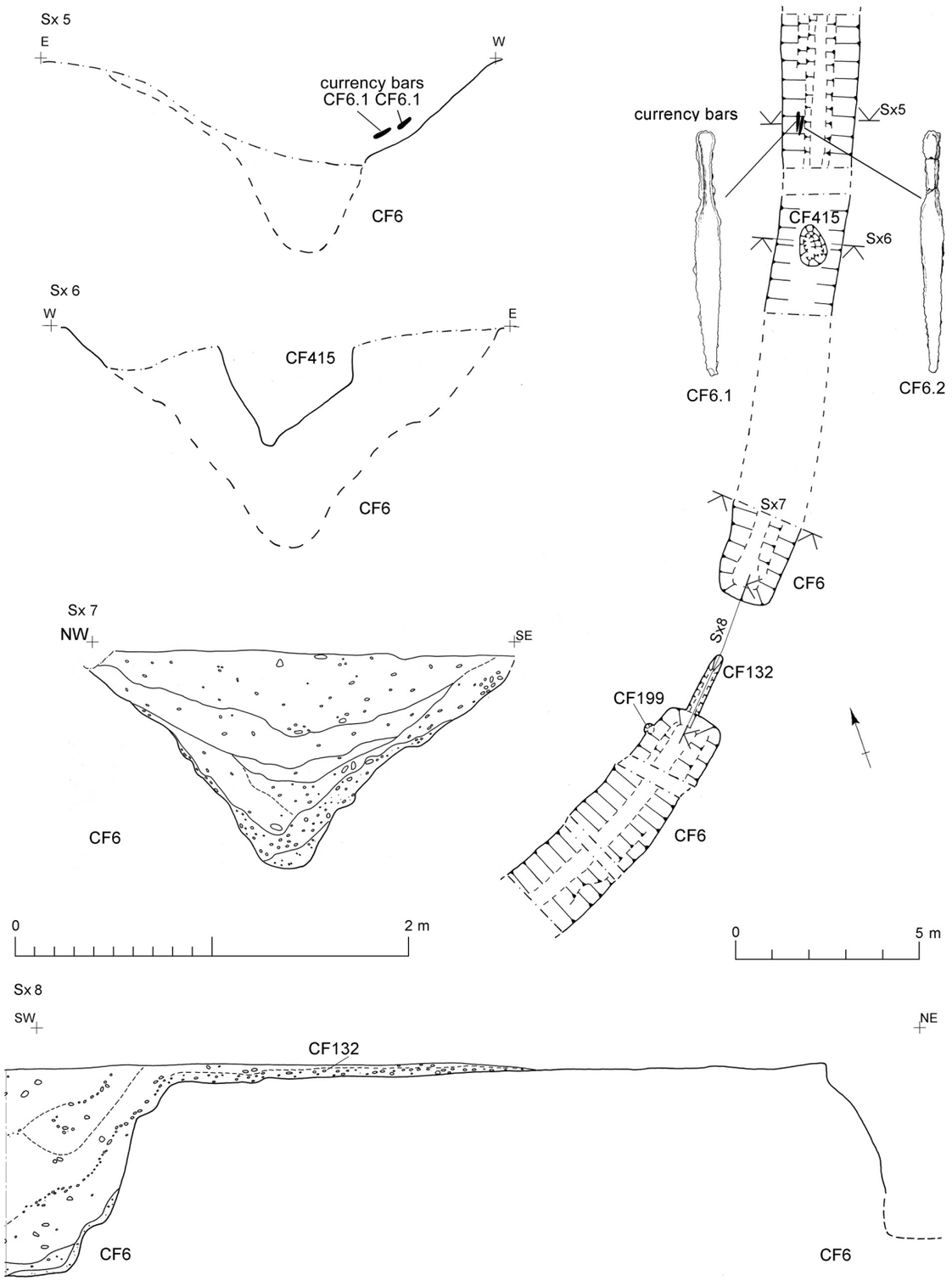

FIG. 14. Enclosure 2 ditch: sections (scale 1:30) and plan showing location of currency bar hoard and pit CF415

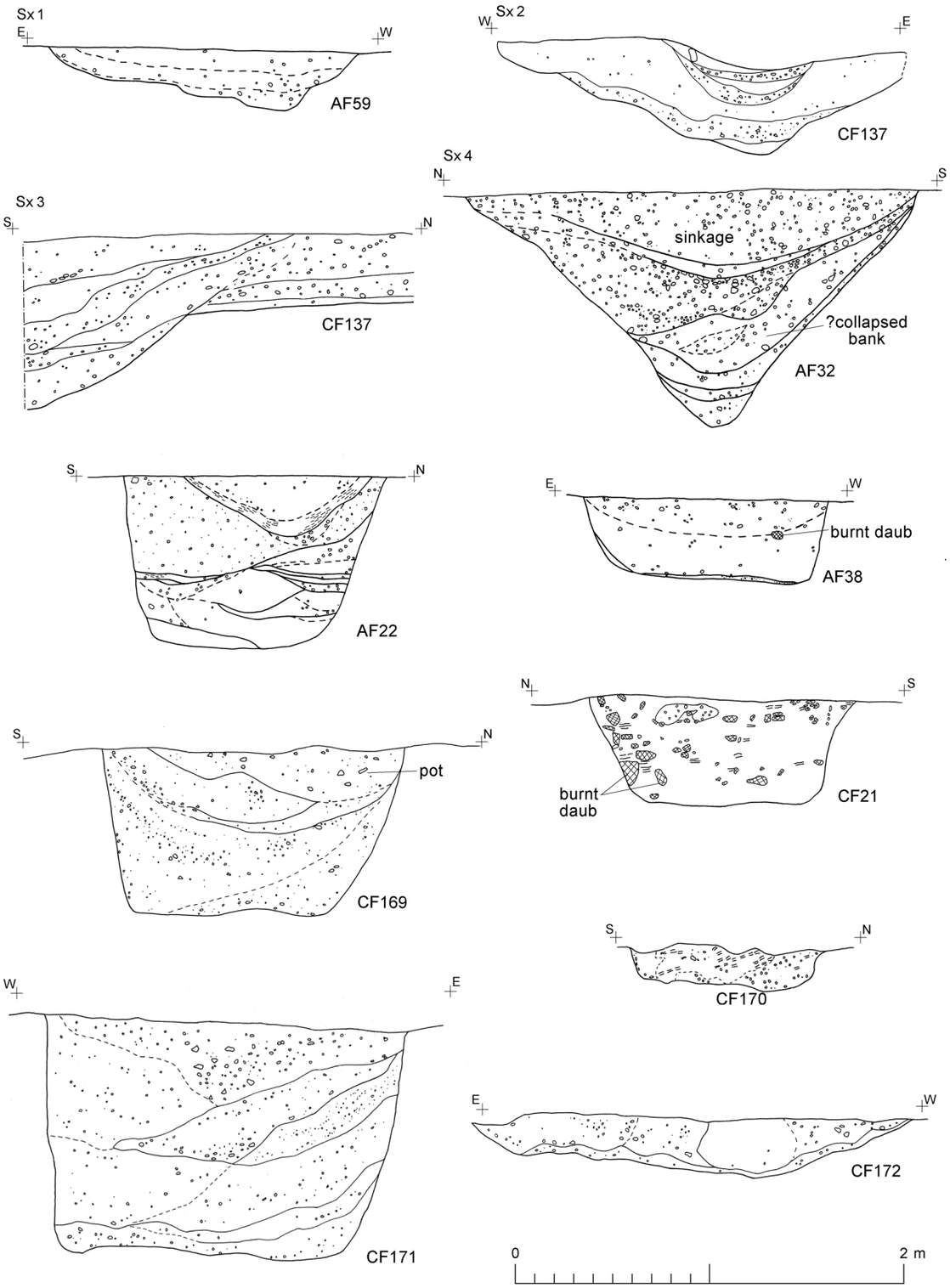

FIG. 15. Boundary ditch CF137/AF59: sections; Enclosure 2 ditch AF32: section; Enclosure 2 pits: sections (scale 1:30)

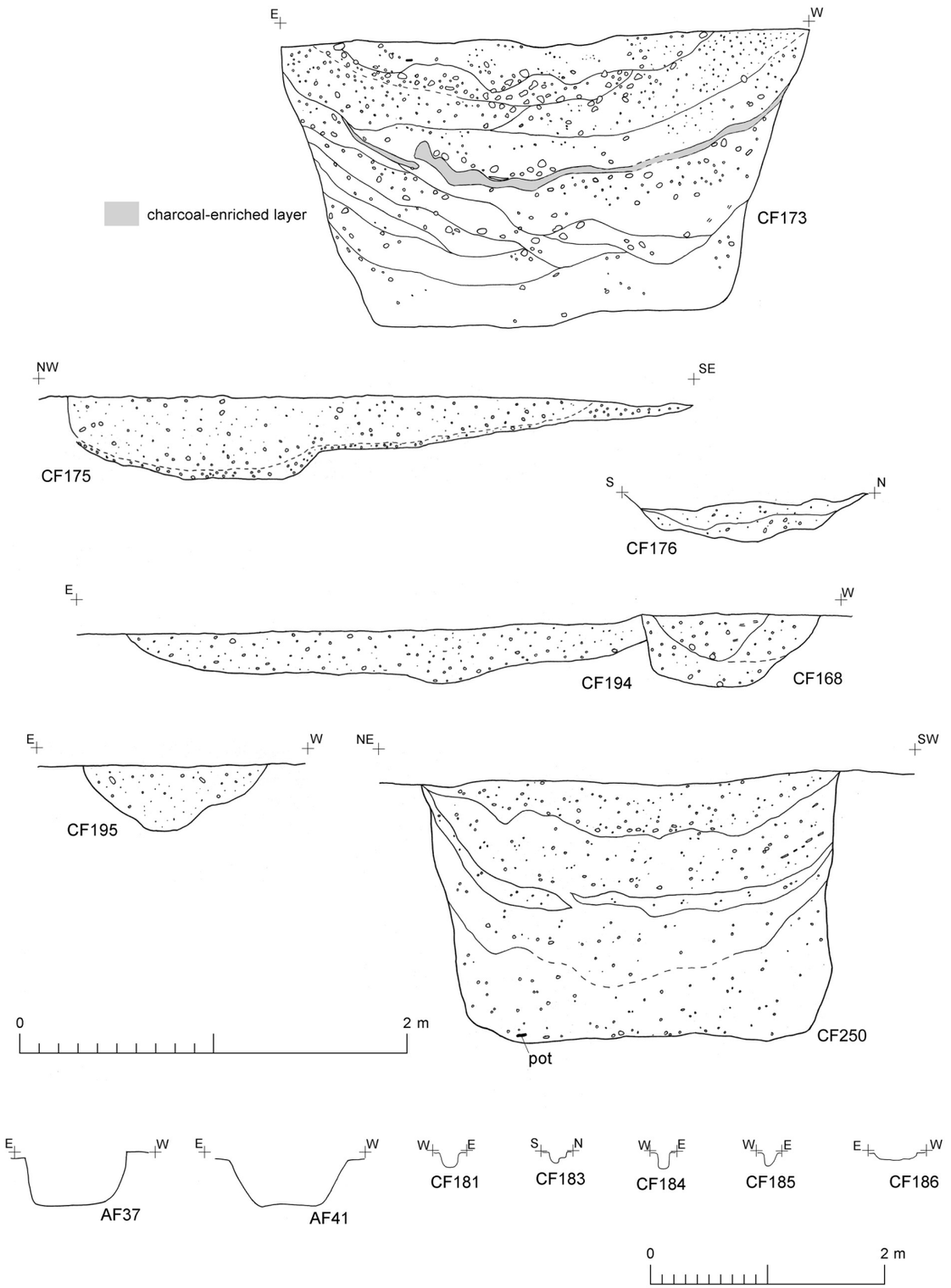

FIG. 16. Enclosure 2 pits: sections (scale 1:30) and profiles (scale 1:50)

Group 2) Pits associated with a possible round-house (FIGS 2, 16, 17)

A small group of features can tentatively be interpreted as the remains of a round-house (FIG. 17). The evidence is slender but the diameter (about 15 m) is consistent with such an interpretation, as is the position of the porch (facing the entrance to the enclosure) and the footprint of the building in relation to the distribution of pits (the two being mutually exclusive).

The wall and porch of the putative round-house are represented by five possible stake- or post-holes (FIG. 2, CF181 and CF183–6; FIG. 16). Four of them were in an arc which seemed to correspond to part of the circumference of the round-house. The fifth one was to the south-east of the other four, in a position compatible with one of two post-holes needed to form a porch.

The pits could be distinguished from the surrounding natural sand and gravel by their darker silty fills. Four of them (CF181 and CF183–5) were similar in size (about 100–150 mm in width and depth). CF186 was different from the others, being broad and shallow (about 350 mm across and 50 mm deep) and filled with stony clay.

There were two unusual smaller pits (FIG. 2, CF168 and CF170) about 7 m to the west of these features. CF168 contained a complete, intact Middle Iron Age pot (C1468) lying upright but tilted to one side, as if it had been knocked over when the pit was backfilled. Also within the fill at the south end of the pit was a patch of sandy clay containing fragments of fired daub. The fill of the other pit (CF170) included diffuse bands of charcoal. Both pits had rounded profiles, and both cut the west ends of earlier pits (CF175 and CF194). The latter are assumed to be clearance features, although their elongated shape, shallow profile, and relationships to CF168 and CF170 raise another possibility, *i.e.* that they were secondary features which were dug to allow the insertion of vertical posts into the round-house. This would mean that CF168 and CF170 were post-pits backfilled after the removal of the posts.

The group of five stake or post-holes would have probably been regarded as natural features or root holes had it not been for the presence of the pot in CF168 (FIG. 25, 20). This complete vessel, buried in the centre of a round-house, was clearly a deliberately placed deposit for which there is an identical parallel from elsewhere in Colchester. In 2003 on Area 2 of the Garrison redevelopment, a Middle Iron Age round-house was discovered with a pit in the centre containing a complete pot just as at Stanway (Brooks and Masefield 2005, figs 7–8; p. 61).

Group 3) ?Storage pits (FIGS 2, 15–16, 17)

In the south-west angle of the enclosure were three large deep pits (CF171, CF173, CF250; FIGS 2, 15–16, 17) dug so that they were almost touching without intercutting. The northern two (CF171 and CF250) were sub-circular features approximately 2.0 m in diameter and about 1.0 m deep, while the third (CF173) was sub-rectangular and just under 3.0 m long, 2.0 m wide and 1.5 m deep. All three had flat bases and vertical sides with no signs of a weathered profile, as if they had not been left open for any length of time. They all contained Middle Iron Age pottery but relatively few other finds. The latter included an iron disc and a fragment of an iron saw (CF250.1 and CF250.2), both from the middle of the fill of CF250, and a piece of worked sandstone (CF171.1) from pit CF171. The three pits are of the sort usually interpreted as having been used for storage.

To the north and east of these were six other pits (AF22, AF37, AF38, AF41, CF21, CF169; FIGS 2, 15–16) which may also have been used for storage. They all contained Middle Iron Age pottery, and had near-vertical sides and flat bases. They ranged in size from AF37, which was 1.1 m long and 0.45 m deep, to AF22, which was 2.3 m long and 0.9 m deep. Most of them were smaller than CF171, CF173 and CF250.

THE POSSIBLE DROVEWAY (FIGS 2, 5, 15, 17)

A shallow, linear ditch (CF137/AF59) up to 2.0 m wide and 0.5 m deep (as measured after stripping) extended in a north-eastwards direction from the north-east corner of Enclosure 2 (FIGS 2, 5, 15, 17). Its course is traceable as cropmarks on aerial photographs for a distance of

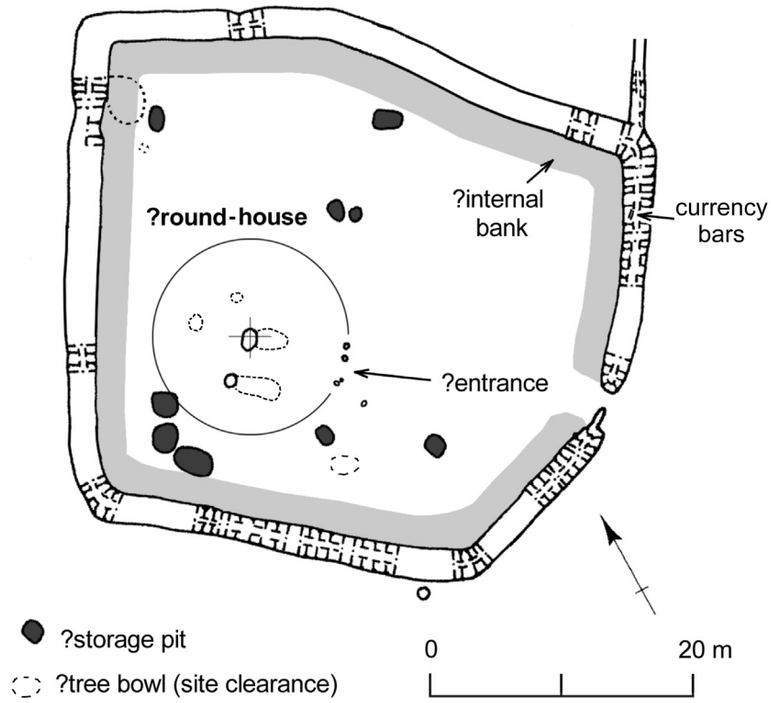

FIG. 17. ?Interpretative plan of the layout of Enclosure 2

about 450 m as far as a modern orchard where cropmarks would not show. A small quantity of Middle Iron Age pottery from AF59 shows that the feature represents a pre-existing boundary ditch which was respected during the construction of Enclosure 1.

Several enclosures similar to the farmstead at Stanway have been recognised in Essex and elsewhere (Buckley *et al.* 1987, 74–5), at Orsett 'Cock' (Carter 1998), Gosbecks (*CAR* **11**, 96–8), and the Airport Catering Site, Stansted (Havis and Brooks 2004, 79–188). These indicate that the example at Stanway would have been integrated with a droveway or a system of droveways leading to fields and areas of pasture. At Gosbecks and elsewhere in Camulodunum, the droveways have been sufficiently well traced to indicate that they did not simply relate to individual homesteads, but formed a single system that must have facilitated the free movement of people and animals throughout the whole settlement. No such droveway can be recognised at Stanway, although the ditch CF137/AF59 might represent the west side of one, since Enclosure 3 is parallel to this ditch but offset by about 24 m, which is more than enough to accommodate a droveway.

THE PITS NORTH OF ENCLOSURE 2 (FIGS 2, 5, 18)

The features north of Enclosure 2 consisted mainly of isolated Middle Iron Age or undatable pits (FIG. 2). With only one minor exception (BF10 in Enclosure 3, see p. 71), all of them were to the west of the ?boundary ditch CF137/AF59 (FIG. 5). They can be described in terms of two groups plus two or three isolated examples. In the absence of vertical stratigraphy or dated finds their relationship to Enclosure 2 and the later Enclosure 1 was often uncertain.

The first group (AF24, AF26–27, AF47) was near the centre of what was to become Enclosure 1 (FIGS 2, 5, 18). Of all the pits, these seem to relate most clearly to Middle Iron Age occupation. Three contained small, burnt stones or 'pot-boilers' and charcoal. Burnt stones were found widely over the whole site, but the bulk of them (29.2 kg) were recovered from AF24. AF24 and AF27 had similar linings of thin sandy clay. Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from AF26, AF27 and AF47 with some burnt daub from AF27. The general

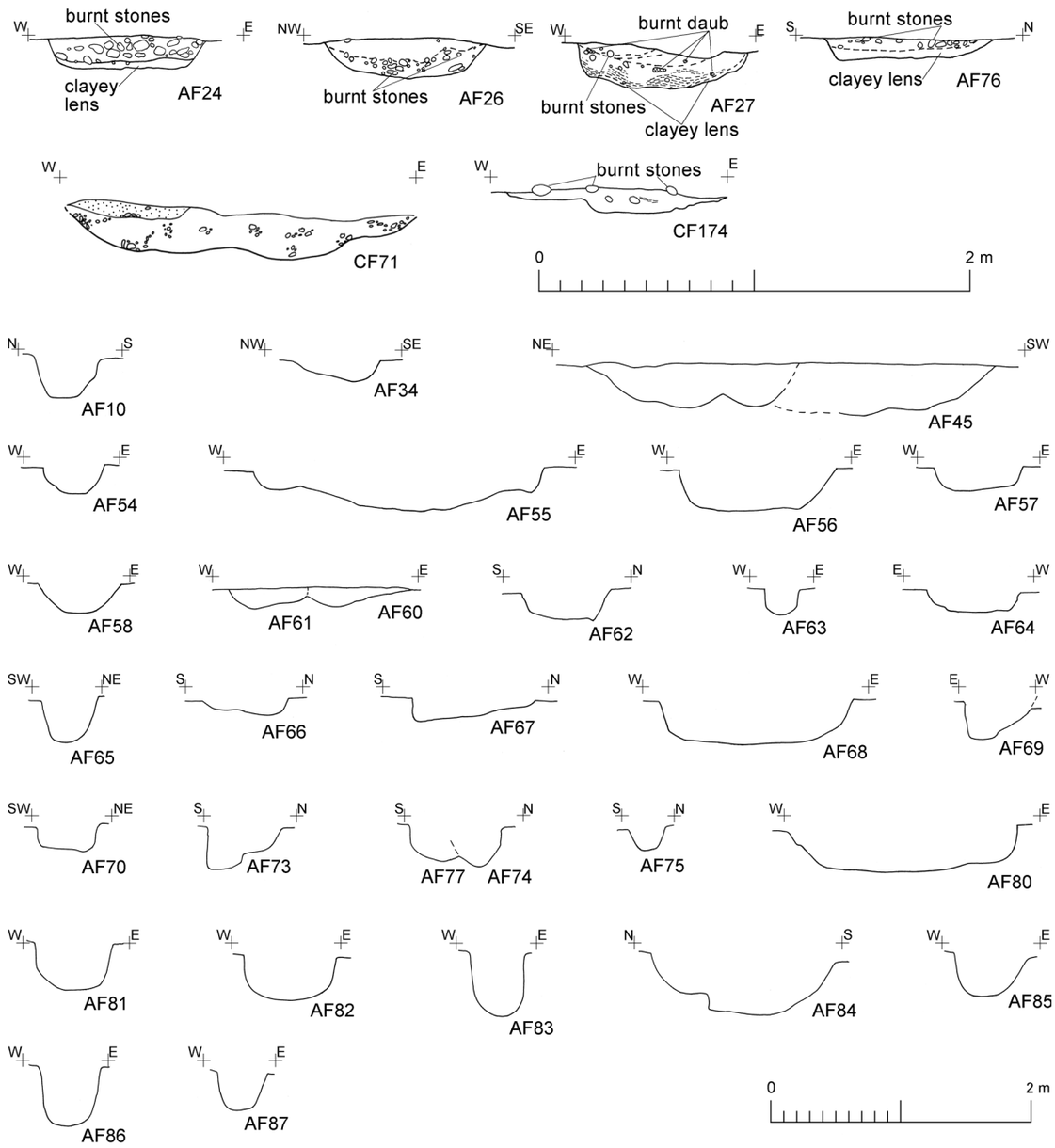

FIG. 18. Pits outside Enclosure 2: sections (scale 1:30) and profiles (scale 1:50)

similarity of the features in the group suggests a common function, such as the parching of grain (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, 374–5), as well as a similarity in date.

The other group (AF54–58, AF60–62, AF64, AF68, AF73–F74, AF80) was situated near the north-east corner of Enclosure 1 (FIGS 2, 5, 17). They all contained Middle Iron Age pottery. Some nearby undated features (AF63, AF65–67, AF69–70, AF75–78) seemed to be associated with them. Burnt daub from AF69 (3.2 g) and AF77 (2.6 kg) included fragments with wattle voids that may have derived from an oven or kiln. Pit AF76 also contained burnt stones.

Other undated features in this area included a pit (AF45) with a layer of charcoal-rich fill on the bottom of the feature, and a group of small pits or post-holes (AF81–7; FIG. 18). A ?post-hole/pit (AF7) in the north-west corner of the enclosure contained Middle Iron Age pottery. An unstratified piece of worked flint from Enclosure 1 could have been of Iron Age date (FIG. 13, SF1).

If Enclosure 1 had had an internal bank, it would have sealed several of the Middle Iron Age features (*e.g.* AF54, AF58, AF73, AF74), which would therefore have pre-dated the Enclosure 1 ditch. Despite the relative shallowness of these pits (mostly 0.3 m or less), their position on plan suggests that some could have been post-holes from a structure, although the rectilinear alignment of the ?post-holes is perhaps unlikely in a structure of this date. It is possible that the apparent alignment of the pits is due to chance, and some or all could have pre-dated the Enclosure 1 ditch and ?bank while others could have been contemporary with them or post-dated them.

THE CURRENCY BARS

By Richard Hingley

DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION (FIGS 5, 14, 19–20)

Two deliberately placed currency bars were located within the ditch on the eastern side of Enclosure 2 (FIGS 5, 14, 20). The two bars were positioned side by side on the inner side of the enclosure ditch, apparently early on in the history of the infilling of the ditch, but the context is open to some interpretation (p. 26). They may be comparable in form to the leaf-shaped currency bars discussed by Allen (1967, 314). This report considers the social context of the Stanway bars and their relationship to other currency bars that have been found in Britain and on the Continent.

The so-called currency bars of Britain are part of a widespread western and central European phenomenon. Crew has defined currency bars as: 'Refined bar iron, forged into a wide variety of blade shapes, usually with some form of socket. Density about 6.5 to 7. Used as trade iron.' (Crew 1995a, 277). Currency bars differ from other types of 'trade iron', including billets and hooked billets, in the distinctive range of forms that have been attributed to them (*ibid.*). The British examples have been discussed by a number of authors since their initial identification (*e.g.* Smith 1905; Allen 1967; Salter and Ehrenreich 1984; Hingley 1990; 1997; Crew 1994; 1995a; 1995b). Bars occur on at least 55 sites in Britain. A minimum number of 1,574 bars is represented, and these are made up of 67 distinct finds (Hingley 2005, appendix 1). Broadly similar bars have been found across France and in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland (Doswald 1994; Martin and Ruffat 1998, especially distribution map fig. 4; Serneels 1998, fig. 33, a typology of the various iron bars that occur in Western Europe; Feugère 2000).

The dating of currency bars in Britain is a problematic issue since few have been found in directly datable contexts (Crew 1994, 348). Allen argued that they are broadly of Middle Iron Age date as they pre-date the appearance of Belgic pottery and metalwork (Allen 1967, 322). Evidence from more recent excavations supports this suggestion in that, when dating evidence is found at all, the bars are usually associated with Middle Iron Age pottery, although no examples have been absolutely dated. The Stanway bars are particularly important in this respect, as Enclosure 2 is Middle Iron Age (with pottery), and pre-dates the Late Iron Age/early Roman burial enclosures. Currency bars in general may, however, have continued in use rather later than the Middle Iron Age. A hoard from Camerton, Somerset, contained three currency bars that appear to have been associated with an axe that, on typological grounds, should be of Roman date (Jackson 1990a, 20). Nevertheless, a Middle Iron Age date seems likely for the Stanway examples.

Crew has argued that a wide variety of bar forms occurred. The consistency of each type arises from the fact that each distinct group was made in single workshops, and that this is the reason for the regional distribution of the various types (Crew 1995a, 277–8). As a result, the four main kinds of currency bar that have been distinguished in past accounts, *i.e.* sword-shaped, spit-shaped, plough-share and leaf-shaped bars (Allen 1967; Hingley 1990), no longer constitute a viable classification. At least 20 distinct types of bar can now be distinguished (Crew 1994, 346; 1995a, 278). It still appears true, however, that the 'sword' and the 'plough' formed a basis for many of the regionally defined types of currency bar that Crew has defined (Hingley 2005, 197).

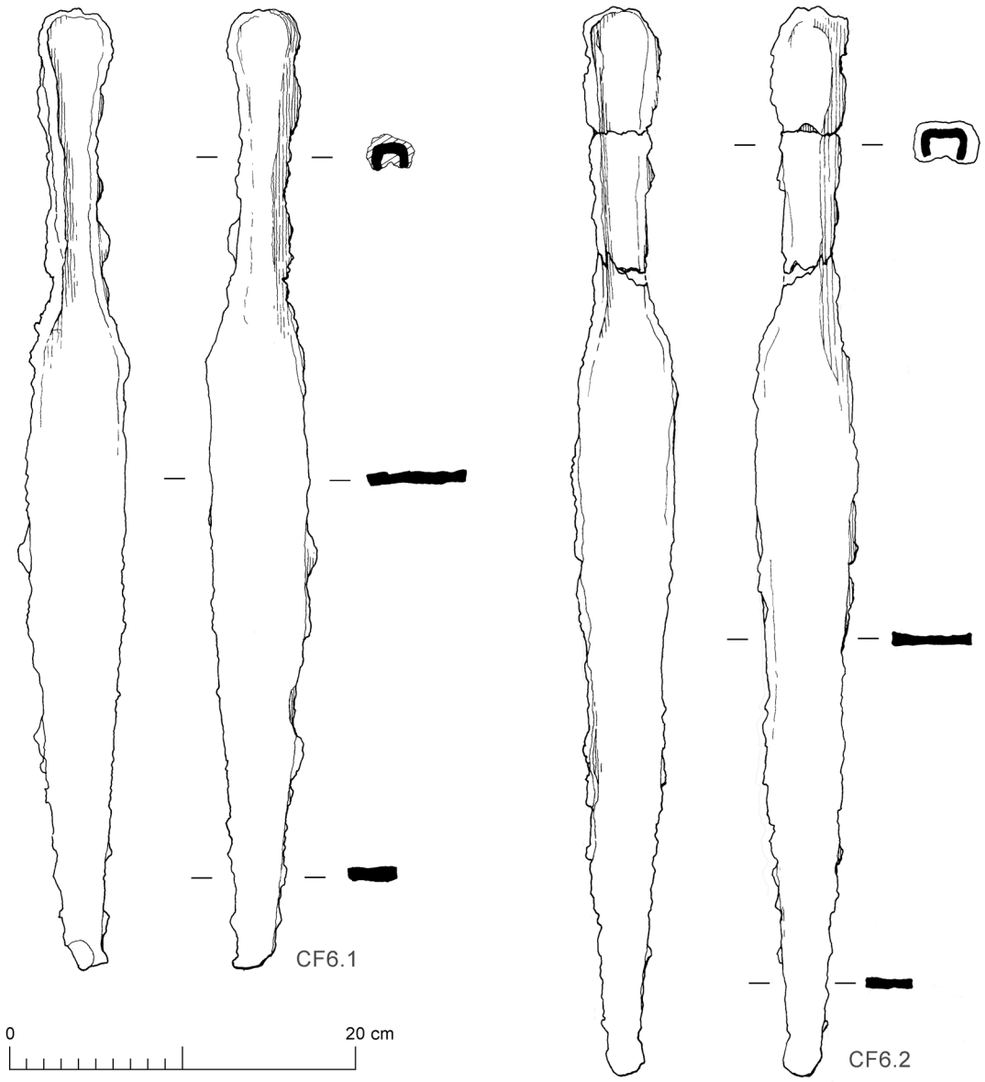

FIG. 19. Iron currency bars from the Enclosure 2 ditch (scale 1:4)

The Stanway bars would usually be identified as leaf-shaped (FIG. 19; catalogue descriptions pp. 46–7) and are most similar to examples from two findspots in Cambridgeshire, at Ely and Barrington. (For these bars, *see* Allen 1967, plate 32 and Crew 1995b.) These leaf-shaped bars may be based in symbolic terms on the spear-head (Allen 1967, 314). The two bars from Stanway and those from the other two sites in East Anglia may indicate a distinctive subgroup that emanated from a single workshop, as suggested by Crew. Further discoveries will be required if this supposed group is to be defined in any greater detail.

Crew has suggested that the wide variety of forms and weights militates against the idea that the bars operated as part of a standard currency system and that instead they represented trade iron (Crew 1994; 1995a). Currency bars appear to form one aspect of the increased evidence for exploitation of iron stock from the 3rd–2nd century B.C. onward, and they may have operated within a political system in which industrial production was becoming increasingly centralised within particular regions of southern Britain (Sharples 1990). They constitute one of a number of types of trade iron that occur across Britain at this time, including the billet and hooked billets (Crew 1995a). The forms adopted for currency bars, the thin blades and curved sockets, perhaps demonstrated their character as more fully refined than the other types of trade iron (Crew 1991).

FIG. 20. Enclosure 2 ditch CF6: iron currency bars *in situ*

The idea that currency bars represented trade iron stresses the economic and practical value of the objects, interpreting them as having a primarily functional rôle in the manufacture of iron objects. The production and circulation of these items becomes part of the practical industry of iron production. The idea that the production and circulation of currency bars reflected the value of the objects in terms of the iron that they contained suggests that they were buried with the intention of retrieval and use. Were currency bars hoarded as items of material value, as many past studies have suggested, or were they deposited as a ritual activity, or a combination of both?

SYMBOLIC AND RITUAL ASPECTS

It is unlikely that the hoards in which these objects occur had a utilitarian function in the production of iron objects (Hingley 1990; Martin and Ruffat 1998). Most surviving bars, including the Stanway examples, were carefully buried and not subsequently disturbed. It is also evident that the currency bars themselves had more than a practical function (Doswald 1994, 335; Hingley 1997). The symbolic aspect of the bars is indicated by the use of symbols connected with the taking of life, the sword and perhaps the spear, and an item connected with agricultural production, the plough, as a basis for the form of some of these bars (Hingley 1990; 1997). The currency bar formed a stage in the production cycle of iron artefacts and at the same time had symbolic associations both with the agricultural cycle and human life cycles (*ibid.*, 13).

The bars occur in a range of contexts that indicate acts of ritual deposition both in Britain and on the Continent (Brunaux 1988, 44; Doswald 1994, 335; Hingley 1990; Martin and Ruffat 1998, 110; Muller 1990, 94). Three types of context of deposition have been defined within Britain (Hingley 1990): those that are closely related to settlement boundaries; those that can be termed 'natural'; and other contexts which do not fall into either of these categories. It appeared from the information that was available in 1990 that these three different types of context defined at least two distinct regional practices of deposition. They included a core zone in Dorset, Wessex and the West Midlands, in which hoards occur within settlement boundaries,

and a peripheral area in which they were positioned in natural and other contexts (Hingley 1990). Discoveries since 1990, including the Stanway hoard, suggest that the distinction between the core and the peripheral zones is breaking down (Hingley 2005, 190). The Stanway examples come from the peripheral area but were deposited in a settlement boundary, in keeping with many of the hoards in the core zone. A second, recently discovered, hoard of two currency bars from Hinchingbrooke Park Road, Cambridgeshire, also came from a settlement boundary context (Hinman 2003, 8, 11, fig. 5).

Most finds of currency bars are single or occur in small groups. Some very large hoards have, however, been found, and it often appears that the bars were deliberately buried as a group (Hingley 2005, 185). Even a single object probably formed a deliberate deposit, for it is unlikely that a complete bar would be accidentally lost or discarded. In some cases, the small groups are buried together in a way that emphasises their significance as a group. This is the case for the two Stanway examples, which were placed side by side.

It is likely that currency bars had a practical function as trade iron, but at the same time the hoards do not make sense as stores of iron to be retrieved. Currency bars in general occur on a range of significant Middle Iron Age settlements. Some of the large hoards have been found on hillfort sites, and hoards from enclosed settlement sites tend to be smaller in size (Hingley 1990; 2005, 191). The exchange of trade iron may have formed one of the methods by which individual communities in later prehistoric Britain attempted to create domination over others. Iron was a very powerful material that was valuable in producing state-of-the-art weapons and vitally important agricultural tools. The acts of control over the process of production, circulation and deposition may have been used to create new forms of power (Hingley 1997). These forms of power, however, were not distinct from the symbolic context of the production, use and hoarding of these items. The deposition of currency bars at Stanway suggests that the occupants of Enclosure 2 in the Middle Iron Age had access to these valuable and powerful objects and were able to deposit them in a significant context.

THE STRUCTURAL CLAY (FIG. 23; TABLE 7)

The site produced nearly 52 kg of structural clay, much of it burnt, with most coming from Enclosure 2, where it was concentrated in pit CF21, and from Enclosure 1, where it was concentrated in two small pits in the north-east corner of the site, AF69 and AF77 (TABLE 7). As such a high proportion of the whole assemblage comes from the Middle Iron Age enclosure, with comparatively little coming from the line of enclosures to the east (just over 1 kg), it seems unlikely that any of the latter derives from the burial rite. Most of the clay from Enclosure 1 is probably also of Middle Iron Age origin, with that from AF69 and AF77 possibly indicating the site of one or more ovens or kilns. The Middle Iron Age material from CF21 in Enclosure 2 is examined in detail below.

TABLE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF STRUCTURAL CLAY

Enclosure	*Total (kg)*	*Percentage of site assemblage*	*Concentration within enclosure*	*Percentage of enclosure assemblage*
1	8.755	17%	Pits AF69, AF77: 5.6 kg	64%
2	42.050	81%	Pit CF21: 39.7 kg	94%
3	0.032	0.06%	–	–
4	0.635	1.22%	–	–
5	0.495	0.95%	–	–
total	**51.967**	–	–	–

ENCLOSURE 2: PIT CF21 (FIG. 23)

Pit CF21 in Enclosure 2, the Middle Iron Age farmstead, produced 39.7 kg of clay fragments, most with scorch marks or other evidence of burning, from one or more structures. A number of loomweight fragments were also found in the pit (p. 38), but two of the three fabrics from which they were made were quite distinctive, enabling even small pieces lacking any form or original surfaces to be separated from the main bulk of the clay assemblage. The third loomweight fabric closely resembles structural daub, and it is possible that some small featureless fragments in this fabric may be included in the material discussed below.

The assemblage can be broken down into three groups.

Group A. Large pieces with an outer surface and wattle marks, or one of these features. Made in a sandy clay, the fragments are usually orange to orange-brown in colour, although patches of reduction are present beneath the surface of some fragments, and on the surface of others. The wattle marks run in one direction only, often set very close together. On only one piece is there evidence of both vertical and horizontal wattling. The surfaces of these pieces were in general flat or nearly so, although some are slightly convex and some slightly concave. Others have been carefully shaped and a very few have edges as well as surfaces. FIGURE 23, CF21.9, appears to be from an entrance, with the edge set to one side of a wattle 20 mm in diameter and just covering one 14 mm in diameter. The former is noticeably stouter than the majority of the wattles. FIGURE 23, CF21.10, is similar, although the edge has not been dragged completely over the outer wattle. Most of the surface of this piece is reduced, including the wattle voids.

Group B. Fragments with a convex outer surface and no wattle marks. Occasionally a concave inner surface survives. The fabric is in general harder, denser and less sandy, and has many patches of greenish-yellow, as well as red streaks from naturally occurring iron deposits.

Group C. Fragments, both small and medium-sized, in the same fabric as Group A, but with no distinctive features, although some with small patches of sharp grit exposed may be from a floor.

The material breaks down by weight thus:

Group A (large fragments with a flat outer surface and/or wattles): 16.6 kg,
Group B (convex fragments with no wattles): 2.2 kg,
Group C (fragments in a similar fabric to Group A but with no distinctive features): 20.9 kg.

Groups A and C are structural daub, originally air-dried, but now scorched and 'fired'. The heat applied must have been prolonged, but does not seem to have been very intense, as no vitrification is present as it was on burnt daub fragments from the burnt hut C11 at Little Waltham, Essex (Drury 1978, 114). While patches of reduction are present both within the fabric and on the surface of some pieces, the surfaces of the voids left by the wattles are rarely blackened. The surviving wattle marks are rounded, most are about 10 mm in diameter but range from 6 to 20 mm, and show that small branches must have been used. The limited range of diameters and the concentration around 10 mm might be evidence for the use of coppiced wood.

At Little Waltham, the upright voids in the structural daub came from branches or saplings ranging from 20 to 40 mm in diameter as well as some riven timber, and there was clear evidence of horizontal wattling incorporated into the framework (*ibid.*). The Stanway material differs markedly from the Little Waltham assemblage in the use of smaller uprights, and the evidence for the use of horizontal pieces is extremely slight. In this respect it resembles elements of the assemblage of fired clay from a Late Iron Age to early Roman ditch at Woodham Walter, Essex. Among this material were some large fragments of daub with vertical wattling but little evidence for the use of horizontal timber (Major 1987, 39). The structure from which this daub derived was not positively identified, but may have been an oven rather than a hut.

The quantity of material recovered from pit CF21 is very small compared to that used in the construction of a hut, and the small size of the vertical wattles together with the lack of

horizontal wattles suggests that these pieces come from a much smaller structure. Where the wattles are close together, in some cases touching each other, there was clearly no room for branches to be woven in horizontally. The internal reduction of the clay might argue for the daub deriving from a structure subjected to prolonged periods of heat, such as an oven, and something of that size would also be in keeping with the use of small close-set wattles, although the straight wattles and more or less flat outer surface show that the structure had a vertical wall.

Group B from pit CF21, with convex outer and concave inner surfaces, is almost certainly from the rounded top of an oven. The iron-rich clay is very distinctive, and its plasticity is shown in places by lines of torsion similar to those seen in some of the loomweights (see below). The pieces appear to have been subjected to more heat than those of Groups A and C, although this could be caused by a different response to the same heat by a different fabric.

If Group B derived from the same structure as Groups A and C, it would be expected that the hard and distinctively coloured fabric of the former would co-exist on some pieces with the softer sandy fabric of the latter, and that the convex outer surface of the former would give way to the flat surface of the latter. There are two small fragments in Group B which may provide this evidence, one with a flat outer surface, although only measuring 42 by 35 mm, and one only slightly convex piece, quite sandy on one side but with Group B fabric on the other, and some of the Group A fragments are slightly convex. This is not sufficient proof that all the fired clay from CF21 came from one structure, but does raise the possibility of only one source for this assemblage. Similarly, the mixture of structural clay and loomweights from this pit suggests that the oven might have been used as a kiln to fire the weights.

THE LOOMWEIGHTS

DESCRIPTION (FIGS 21–3; TABLES 8–9)

Four more or less complete loomweights and fragments of several others, totalling nearly 8 kg in weight, were recovered from pit CF21 in Enclosure 2, the Middle Iron Age farmstead. Isolated fragments came from other pits in Enclosure 2, the ditches of Enclosures 1, 2 and 5, the fill of the chambers in Enclosures 1 and 4, and the ditches of the ?mortuary enclosures in Enclosures 4 and 5 (FIGS 21–3; TABLES 8–9). With the possible exception of a few fragments from the north ditch of Enclosure 5, all are Middle Iron Age in date.

Four fabrics are distinguishable. Fabric A is a dull orange-brown and hard, with very rare small grits and pebbles, and the core, where exposed, clearly shows the lines of torsion caused during manufacture. The surface shows little abrasion. Fabric B is similar, but with a large number of pebbles included, and is in consequence very brittle. The core of both examples of this fabric has shattered rather than simply fractured. The surfaces of the weights in both these fabrics show many grass or straw marks from material that must have adhered to the surface during drying. Baked clay blocks from Willington, Derbyshire, were similarly marked (Elsdon 1979, 199). Fabric C is a pale orange-brown, soft, with a high sand content. The core shows comparatively few stress lines. The examples in this fabric, which is only slightly harder than structural daub, are more abraded than those of the other two. A fragment of a loomweight in a similar fabric came from a Middle Iron Age context at Birchanger, Essex (Major 1994, 43). Fabric D is orange-brown, and pale orange to buff in some places on the surfaces, which are smooth but have some voids from contact with vegetable matter. It is hard, with well-formed angles between surface and edge. This fabric occurs only in the northern ditch of Enclosure 5, and so may be Late, rather than Middle, Iron Age in date. Given the absence of Late Iron Age domestic occupation on the site, if the Fabric D fragments are contemporary with the burials, they may be associated in some way with the funerary rites.

Several of the faces of weights of Fabric A show some sinkage towards the centre, a feature that is most marked on one side of CF21.2 (FIG. 21), where the form of the depression echoes the triangular shape of the face, the points extended in sunken channels to the corners. The other side has also sagged in a similar way, but not as markedly, while on CF21.1 (FIG. 21), the

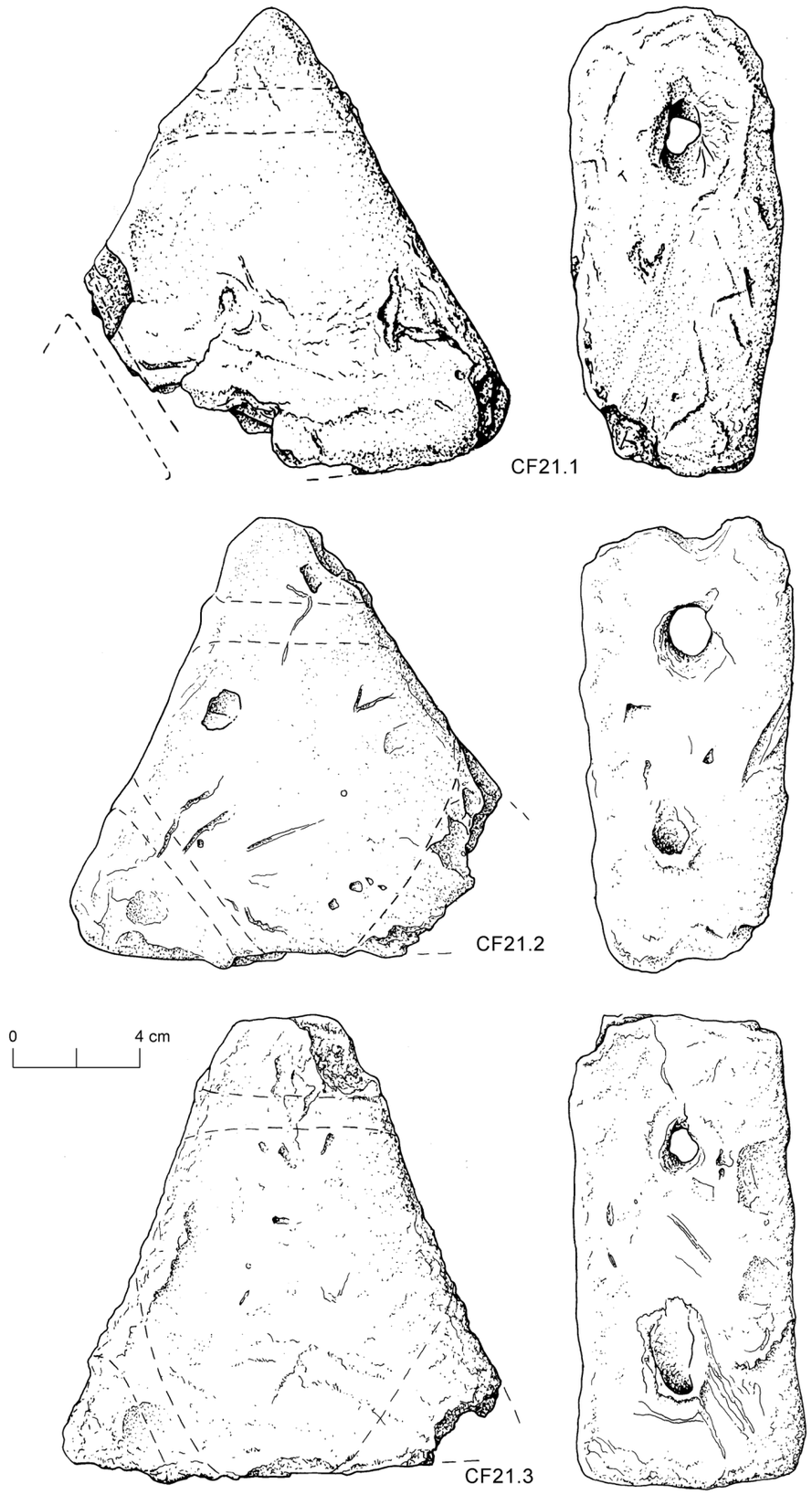

FIG. 21. Loomweights from pit CF21 (scale 1:2)

TABLE 8: THE MIDDLE IRON AGE LOOMWEIGHTS: SUMMARY OF THE MORPHOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

	Context	*Fabric*	*Length*	*Width*	*Wt (g)*	*Angle form*	*Holes*	*Notes*
CF21.1	Enclosure 2, pit	A	149	66	869	plain	2	
CF21.2	Enclosure 2, pit	A	144	66	997	saddle	3	
CF21.3	Enclosure 2, pit	A	137/145	69	1189	2 plain, 1 truncated	3	
CF21.4	Enclosure 2, pit	C	145	80	567	plain	2	
CF21.5	Enclosure 2, pit	A	148	72	1217	saddle	3	
CF21.6	Enclosure 2, pit	A	77	66	198	saddle	1	small corner fragment only
CF21.7	Enclosure 2, pit	B	135	64	528	saddle	1	other 2 corners missing; possibly same weight as CF21.8
CF21.8	Enclosure 2, pit	B	133	–	637	saddle	1	other 2 corners missing; possibly same weight as CF21.7
AF22.1	Enclosure 2, pit	A	87	–	215	flat sloping area, fingertip depression	1	other 2 corners missing
AF38.1	Enclosure 2, pit	A	122	–	373	saddle	2	3rd corner missing

TABLE 9: SUMMARY OF OTHER LOOMWEIGHT FRAGMENTS

Context or feature no.	*Context*	*Fabric*	*No. of fragments*	*Total weight (g)*
AF25	Enclosure 1, chamber	C	1	71
AF56	Enclosure 1, pit	A	1	111
AF17	Enclosure 1, north enclosure ditch	A	4	84
CF6	Enclosure 2, enclosure ditch	A	3	109
CF21	Enclosure 2, pit	A	21	1,784
CF250	Enclosure 2, pit	A	1	175
BF24	Enclosure 4, chamber	A	1	7
BF30	Enclosure 4, east ditch of ?mortuary encl.	A	10	79
BF30, BL23	Enclosure 4, east ditch of ?mortuary encl.	A	7	107
CF1	Enclosure 5, north enclosure ditch	A	9	154
CF1	Enclosure 5, north enclosure ditch	D	7	200
CF46	Enclosure 5, west ditch of ?mortuary encl.	A	3	82
C –	unstratified	A	4	102

feature shows only as stress marks in the centre of one face. This pattern is probably the result of laying the weights flat to dry before firing. While the edges dried quite quickly and kept the clay there taut, the weight of the wet clay could cause the upper face to sag downwards. When the weights were turned to allow the base to dry, the same effect occurred but was less marked.

Three of the weights were perforated at all three corners (FIG. 21, CF21.2, CF21.3, FIG. 22, CF21.5), and two were definitely perforated twice (FIG. 21, CF21.1, FIG. 22, CF21.4). Another with only two perforations is lacking its third corner (FIG. 23, AF38.1). Similarly, where only one perforation is recorded it should be viewed as a minimum, rather than evidence that some weights only had a single perforation. The perforations appear to have been made by pushing a stick completely through the clay, as there is clearly an entry hole and an exit hole for each perforation,

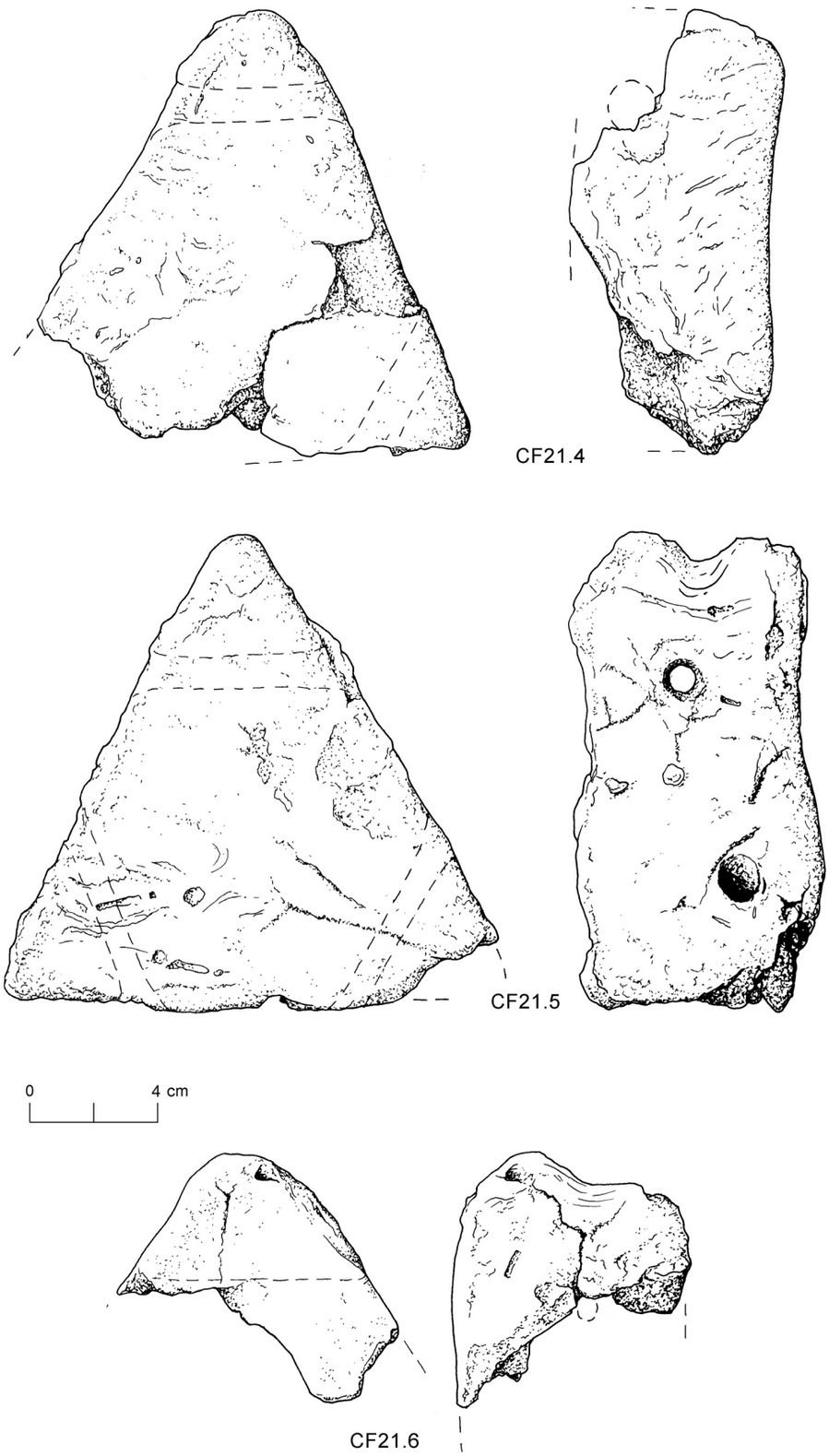

FIG. 22. Loomweights from pit CF21 (scale 1:2)

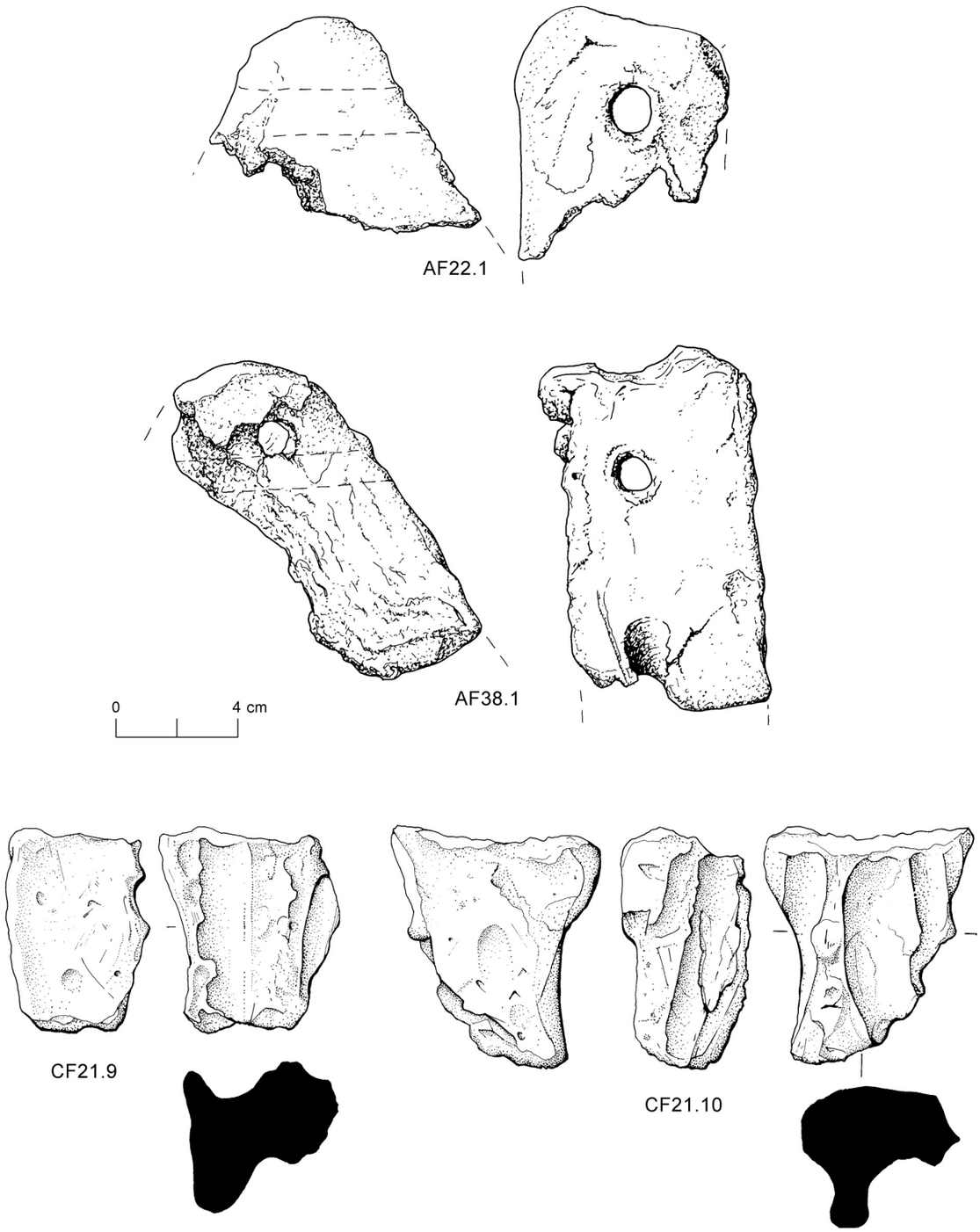

FIG. 23. Loomweights from pits AF22 and AF38 (1:2) and structural clay from pit CF21 (scale 1:1)

with clay dragged into the former and pushed outwards around the latter. The size of the perforations varies considerably; some are very narrow, the smallest only 6 mm, while others are much larger, up to 14 mm or more. Most of the weights are at their thickest across the position of a hole, the clay having been forced outwards when the hole was made.

Some weights have additional features on the corners: CF21.3 (FIG. 21) has one corner truncated to form a small platform; AF22.1 (FIG. 23) has a flattened sloping area, in the centre of which is a slight finger-tip depression marked with an incised X; and many have a groove or

saddle set across the angle (*e.g.* FIG. 21, CF21.2, FIG. 22, CF21.5, CF21.6, FIG. 23, AF38.1). On some the groove is only about a finger's width across and has a smooth surface, but on CF21.6 it is wide and has an irregular surface. The narrow smooth grooves may have been made simply by pressing the side of a stick or finger into the clay, the larger rougher ones by both pressing and rolling. Grooves or saddles (wide grooves) have been noted on several weights dating to the Early, Middle, and Late Iron Age at a range of sites, such as Gussage All Saints, Dorset (Wainwright 1979, fig. 76, 4020), Winnall Down, Hampshire (Bates and Winham 1985, fig. 70, 4, 8), Maxey, Cambridgeshire (Crowther 1985, 174–9), West Stow, Suffolk (West 1990, fig. 51, 144c), and in Essex at North Shoebury (Wymer and Brown 1995, fig. 84, 8), Ardale (Major 1988, fig. 81, 4), Slough House Farm (Major 1998a, 162), Orsett 'Cock' (Major 1998b, 106, fig. 69, 1, 4), and Ardleigh (Major 1999, 158).

Wear around the holes of loomweights from Burgh, Suffolk, and Orsett 'Cock', Essex, suggest that they were hung with one point downwards (Martin 1988, 63; Major 1998b, 106). The purpose of the grooves noted on some weights may have been to anchor the warp thread firmly in place. Experimental work has shown that a triply perforated loomweight could have been used with the weight hung point downwards so that the warp threads passed through two holes, enabling the weight to ride freely up or down the threads. A string in the third hole was used either to move the weight backwards or forwards or to attach it to a frame (Wilhelmi 1977, 180–4).

The most complete examples suggest that loomweights in Fabrics A and B weighed approximately 1.2–1.3 kg when complete and had sides measuring between 145 and 150 mm. This is slightly smaller and lighter than many other triangular loomweights, but places them at the bottom of a range rather than defines them as specifically small. For example, Middle Iron Age loomweight Types B and C from Winnall Down, Hampshire, averaged about 1.7–1.8 and 1.9–2 kg respectively, with Type B having a minimum side length of 150 mm (Bates and Winham 1985, fig. 71). At Danebury, Hampshire, the weight of Type 1 loomweights was concentrated between 1.2–1.5 kg (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, 375). At North Shoebury, Essex, the side length was about 150 mm (Wymer and Brown 1995, 125), and at Maxey, Cambridgeshire, about 170 mm (Crowther 1985, fig. 120, 7). Gregory estimated a complete weight of 2 kg for examples from Thetford, Norfolk (1992, 148). Major gives an average of 2.5 kg for triangular loomweights from Essex (1983, 117), but this figure is affected by the inclusion of a group of large weights, some as heavy as 3.5 kg, which may be thatch rather than loomweights (Jones and Jones 1973, 33; Wymer and Brown 1995, 125), and is further complicated by the wide date range and the many types of fabrics from which these objects were made.

DISCUSSION

The triangular form of loomweight originated in the Middle Iron Age and did not die out until after the Roman conquest of Britain, when it is usually assumed that the form was replaced by the Roman pyramidal weight, though the latter are very rarely found (Wild 1970, 63; Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 57). The evidence for domestic weaving in Roman Britain is very slight compared to that of the immediately preceding Late Iron Age, and of the succeeding pagan Anglo-Saxon period, though spindlewhorls are comparatively frequent finds. Two factors are undoubtedly responsible: economic change, as increasingly urbanised communities ceased weaving their own textiles and bought commercially made, perhaps imported, fabrics instead, and technological change, as the paucity of loomweights of any form argues strongly for the warp-weighted loom having been replaced by the vertical two-beam loom.

In practical terms the presence of loomweights is indicative of the use of an upright warp-weighted loom for weaving textiles, and it is most likely that the fibre used was wool, though vegetable fibres may also have been produced. Wool implies the herding of a flock of sheep or goats, and permitting many of the animals to achieve maturity rather than slaughtering most within their first or second year, as would occur in a herd kept for the production of milk or meat (Payne 1973, 282–4). Unfortunately, the lack of animal bone resulting from the acidic soil conditions at Stanway means that this idea cannot be tested.

In many periods loomweights occur in clusters, and, again in practical terms, this is often taken to imply that they are from the same loom. From Bronze Age Sussex, for example, ten weights in association with part of a burnt loom frame were found in a pit at Cock Hill (Ratcliffe-Densham and Ratcliffe-Densham 1961, 86, 100–1, pl. XIb), and thirteen weights were found together at Itford Hill (Burstow and Holleyman 1957, 200). Early Iron Age pits at Winnall Down, Winchester, contained clusters of weights interpreted as coming from a single loom (Bates and Winham 1985, 92). Very large numbers of loomweights came from many of the huts of the Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow, Suffolk, and in Huts 15 and 21 lay in rows as they fell from burning looms (West 1985, 138). In this light, it is possible to see the group of loomweights from Enclosure 2 CF21 as deriving from one loom, though the presence in the same pit of a quantity of structural daub from an oven or kiln might imply that they are wasters (p. 37).

It has been argued that deposits of loomweights and other artefacts may have a ritual aspect, for example, at the Caburn, East Sussex, nearly all the loomweights (35 out of 38) were found only in the bottom 'third' of pits, as were many other types of finds, and it has been argued that this recurring pattern is evidence that the infilling of the pits was a ritual act, possibly a public one (Hamilton 1998, 29, 38, fig. 5). This does not seem to be the case at Stanway, where many of the weights are represented by small fragments only, recovered from features, mainly ditches, dating to the mid 1st century A.D. Similarly, in CF21 they were not deliberately positioned within the feature, but scattered throughout the fill and mixed with structural daub (p. 37).

In Essex a clear example of loomweights being used in a ritual feature dates to the Early Iron Age at Burnham-on-Crouch, though in a very different situation to the 'ritual' disposal in pits mentioned above. Broken loomweight fragments and baked clay slabs were used to construct a platform about a metre across for the votive placing of a Late Bronze Age omphalos pot (Couchman 1977, 75). Although many other loomweights have been recovered from excavations within the county (Major 1983), none has been recognised as a ritual deposit.

Catalogue of the largest fragments

CF21.1 FIG. 21. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. Perforated on two corners, though only a short part of the inner wall of one perforation remains at the broken corner. Diameter of complete hole 11 mm. Some sinkage on both faces. The angles are plain. Maximum length 149 mm. Maximum thickness 66 mm. Weight 869 g.

CF21.2. FIG. 21. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. Perforated on all three corners. The two surviving angles have a groove across the centre. Hole diameters vary from 6 mm to 14 mm. One face is markedly sunken, the other less so. Surviving width 144 mm. Maximum thickness 66 mm. Weight 997 g. Part of the damaged corner may be among the fragments from CF21 listed in TABLE 9.

CF21.3. FIG. 21. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. The apex is slightly truncated, the other angles plain. Perforated on all three corners. Stress marks rather than sinkage on one face. Height 137 mm, longest side about 145 mm. Maximum thickness 69 mm. Weight 1189 g.

CF21.4. FIG. 22. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric C. Slightly abraded. Perforated across two corners, but neither hole retains its full diameter as the weight has split in two lengthwise. No sign of sinkage on the surviving face. Maximum length, incomplete but with the break close to a corner, 145 mm. Assuming the holes to be set close to the middle of the edges, maximum thickness approximately 80 mm. Weight 567 g.

CF21.5. FIG. 22. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. Perforated on all three corners. The two surviving angles have a groove. Hole diameters 7 to 10 mm. Markedly sunk on one face. Complete side 148 mm. Maximum thickness 72.5 mm. Weight 1,217 g.

CF21.6. FIG. 22. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. Only one perforated corner remains. There is a wide irregular groove on the angle. Maximum length 77 mm. Maximum thickness 66 mm. Weight 198 g.

CF21.7. Not illustrated. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric B. Only one perforated corner survives. It has a groove across the angle. Length of longest incomplete edge 135 mm. Maximum thickness 64 mm. Weight 528 g. Possibly the same weight as CF21.8.

CF21.8. Not illustrated. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric B. Only one perforated corner remains, in many fragments. There is a wide irregular groove on the angle. One face is concave due to sinkage. The other is more or less flat. Maximum length 133 mm. Maximum thickness 68 mm. Weight 637 g. Possibly the same weight as CF21.7.

AF22.1. FIG. 23. SF13. A363. MIA pit. Enclosure 2**.** Fabric A. Perforated corner fragment, with part of the angle flattened, sloping, and with a finger-tip indent. The base of this small depression is marked by two crossing incised lines. There is a possibility that these are natural, as the surface of the weight is covered with grass or straw marks, but the positioning of the mark within the indent is quite precise. Maximum length 87 mm. Weight 215 g.
AF38.1. FIG. 23. SF34. A496. MIA pit. Enclosure 2. Fabric A. Fragment consisting of most of one edge and one corner. Two perforations, diameters 9–10 mm. The surviving corner has a groove across the angle. Maximum length 122 mm. Weight 373 g.

THE OTHER OBJECTS FROM ENCLOSURES 1 AND 2 (FIGS 24, 29)

ENCLOSURE 1

The fragments of Middle Iron Age loomweights residual in the features of Enclosure l (TABLE 9) suggest that some of the metalwork from the enclosure may also be Middle Iron Age. This is particularly likely in respect of the fragments of iron-working slag (SF44) from the southern ditch of Enclosure 1, especially as the north-western section of the Enclosure 2 ditch also produced a small fragment of iron-working slag. The identifications of these fragments are by Sarah Paynter (CfA).

Two brooch spring fragments (FIG. 29, AL4.1–AL4.2, SF9, SF8) came from the subsoil (AL4) immediately below the ploughsoil at the northern end of Enclosure 1 and may be contemporary with either enclosure.

The enclosure ditch of Enclosure 1

AF31: SF44. A490. South side of enclosure ditch. Fragments of iron-working slag. Three fragments are part of one piece (total weight 29 g), porous with quartz grains adhered to the surface. A fourth fragment is also porous, weight 11 g. These fragments are likely to be smithing debris. A fifth fragment is undiagnostic, weight 12 g. Probably residual from the Middle Iron Age activity in Enclosure 2.
AF31: A481. South side of enclosure ditch. Fragments of what may be an iron strip, now largely consisting of shattered corrosion bubbles. a) SF404 (from soil block). Maximum length 48 mm, width 10–23 mm. b) Bulk find. Maximum length 43 mm, width 9–14 mm.
AF53: A607. East side of enclosure ditch. Upper half of an iron nail with sub-circular head. Length 37 mm.
AF53: A616. East side of enclosure ditch. Iron ?nail shank fragment. Length 38 mm.

Pit

AF61: SF126. A565. Pit. Eight pieces of iron, including five nail shank fragments, two possible nail heads, and an amorphous fragment. Longest shank fragment 30 mm.

ENCLOSURE 2 (FIGS 19, 24)

Very little metal was recovered from Enclosure 2, but important items are fragments of slag from the enclosure ditch, AF39 and CF6. Further fragments of iron-working slag came from AF31, the south enclosure ditch of Enclosure 1, not far from AF39, and these, too, almost certainly relate to the occupation of Enclosure 2. The occupants of Enclosure 2 clearly worked iron on the site, and did not necessarily have to acquire manufactured metal goods from elsewhere.

Iron-working on the site is also implied by the deposition of two currency bars (FIG. 19, CF6.1–2) in CF6, the eastern arm of the ditch close to the entrance, although interpretation of these objects is bound up with their symbolic aspect as well as their utilitarian one (pp. 26, 33–6).

The other items from the enclosure include an iron saw (FIG. 24, CF250.1), which is evidence for woodworking within the enclosure, and a highly idiosyncratic sandstone artefact (FIG. 24, CF171.1). Almost every surface of this object appears to have been used either to sharpen or smooth metal items, probably blades, producing a very unusual shape, superficially similar to a large astragalus. While the form the stone has acquired may not have initially been intended, it appears ultimately to be deliberate, and therefore a ritual interpretation is tempting, although difficult to support.

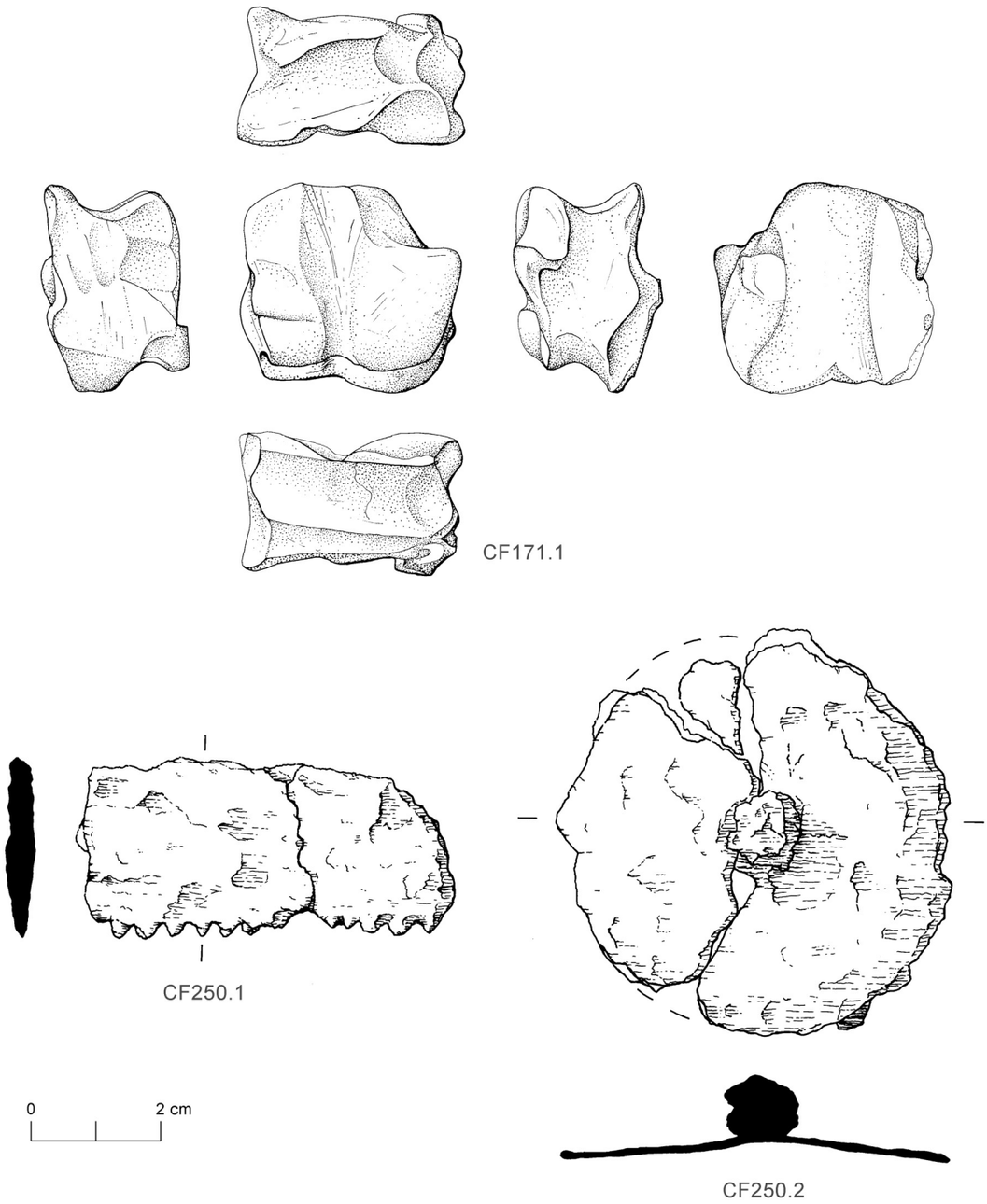

FIG. 24. Finds of stone (CF171.1; scale 1:2) and iron (CF250.1–2; scale 1:1) from Enclosure 2

The end of the occupation of this enclosure appears to have been marked by the deposition of the two currency bars in the boundary ditch, close to the entrance. They are briefly catalogued below and discussed above by R. Hingley (pp. 33–6). A report on the metallurgical analysis of the iron is given on pages 327–8.

Enclosure 2 ditch

AF39: A471. Small fragment of burnt cinder-like material. Weight 2 g.
AF39: SF43. A486. Fragment of undiagnostic iron-working slag. Weight 14.31 g.
CF6.1 FIG. 19. SF388. C201. Iron currency bar with leaf-shaped blade, rounded tip, long U-shaped socket, and rounded terminal. Length 542 mm, maximum width 52 mm.

CF6.2 FIG. 19. SF389. C202. Iron currency bar with tapering blade with rounded tip. The shoulders are much less marked than on SF388. The socket is long and U-shaped close to the blade, but flat-bottomed at the upper end. The terminal is missing. Length (incomplete) 564 mm, maximum width 62 mm.
CF6: C1333. Fragment of iron-working slag, probably from the bottom of a hearth as vitrified clay is incorporated on one side. Weight 289 g.
CF6: SF300. C1478. Tiny tapering strip of iron. Possibly from the tip of a knife. Length 18 mm, width 10 mm.
CL142/CF6: C1342. Fragment of undiagnostic iron-working slag. Weight 29 g.
CL26/CF6: C57. Iron nail with damaged circular head and square-section shank. Length 30 mm, tip missing.
CL114/CF6: SF305. C1340. Iron ring of circular section, in two fragments. Probably penannular, the ends appear to be plain and tapering. Internal diameter of 20 mm, 4 mm thick.

Enclosure pits

AF37: SF23. A493. Pit. About 40 small fragments of copper-alloy sheet. Most measuring at the greatest approximately 1–2 by 1–2 mm. The largest is 7 by 10 mm, and convex.
AF37: SF408. A448. Pit. Iron nail shank fragment. Shaft square in section. Length 75 mm.
AF38: A456. Pit. Iron nail shank with round-section shaft. Length 54 mm.
CF171.1 FIG. 24. SF307. C1329 CL159/CF171. Pit. Piece of sandstone abraded by use/wear into an unusual shape. Almost every surface appears to have been used either to sharpen or rub metal objects, in particular edged blades, and perhaps other materials. Rounded channels along two of the sides are particularly well worn. Maximum dimensions 60 by 65 by 41 mm. The highly idiosyncratic shape of this object tempts interpretation as a ritual item, although in the absence of a parallel, or of its recovery from an obviously structured deposit, this is difficult to prove.
CF250.1 FIG. 24. SF303. C1436. Pit. Fragment from the end of an iron saw, with rounded tip. The teeth are slightly irregularly spaced and set at varying angles, although in general they slope backwards. Length 55 mm, width 25 mm.
CF250.2 FIG. 24. SF304. C1444. Pit. Iron disc in three fragments, with a stud set in a central perforation. Diameter 60 mm. The precise function of discs such as this has yet to be determined (Sellwood 1984, 370).
SF299. CL173/CF173. C1443. Pit. Fragment of an iron square-section shank, almost certainly from a nail. Length 30 mm.

THE LATEST MATERIAL FROM ENCLOSURE 2

Cremated bone was recovered from various places in the enclosure ditch of Enclosure 2. Feature CF415 cut the upper fill of the eastern arm of the enclosure ditch of Enclosure 2. It contained a quantity of cremated human bone (30 g) mixed throughout its fill. Apart from CF415 and a few minute fragments, the remainder of the burnt bone (3.3 g) from CF6 came from its upper fill. Some 0.5 g of it came from the butt-end of the ditch forming the south side of the entrance where the bone was associated with a single grog-tempered ware sherd of Late Iron Age/early Roman date. Most of the bone (2.8 g) came from the fill of the ditch where it formed the south side of the enclosure, but was not closely associated with any sherds. The cremated human bone from CF6 seems likely therefore to have been intrusive or (more likely) to have belonged to a late phase in the silting up of the ditch and post-dated the use of the enclosure as part of a Middle Iron Age settlement.

There was no Late Iron Age–early Roman pottery from features inside the enclosure. A small number of sherds (14 sherds, 44 g) from the upper fill of CF6 indicate that the enclosure was almost certainly still an earthwork in the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. Two fabrics were present: fabric GTW (4 sherds although 1 sherd may be in fabric HZ), and fabric ROW (10 sherds). The sherds in fabric ROW are from the east side of the entrance ditch terminal and are probably from the same vessel. All of the Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery came from the surface or upper surviving ditch fill, although one sherd in Fabric ROW is recorded from the lower fill and is certainly an error or intrusive in that context.

Pottery from the upper fill of CF6: Fabric GTW, 3 sherds (C55, C1347, C147 — sherd crazed ?burnt). Fabric GTW or HZ, 1 sherd fragment (C60). Fabric ROW, 10 sherds possibly from a beaker (C19, C20, C26, C60, C62).

THE EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY (FIGS 25–6; TABLES 10–21)

By Paul R. Sealey

INTRODUCTION

Stanway produced 2,512 stratified sherds of Early and Middle Iron Age pottery weighing 17.476 kg. By far and away the majority is pottery of Middle Iron Age date or type, which is 95% by weight. Most of the Middle Iron Age pottery is abraded and the average sherd weight is 6.9 g, a low figure for assemblages of this date. Despite this, the site produced enough large sherds with diagnostic typological features to be able to attempt a characterisation of the pottery. This was possible because the assemblage had not been significantly contaminated with earlier pottery, and the abandonment of Stanway shortly after the Roman invasion meant that the Iron Age pottery has not been obscured by a complex depositional history. In Essex and neighbouring counties it can be difficult to distinguish Middle Iron Age from early Saxon pottery (Barton 1962, 95; Drury and Wickenden 1982, 12; Gregory 1995, 90; Woudhuysen 1998, 50–53; Brown 2004, 53), and so the absence of post-Roman activity on the site also allowed the Iron Age pottery to be kept in sharp focus.

The Early Iron Age pottery came from two adjacent pits in Enclosure 1. Most of the Middle Iron Age material came from pits inside Enclosure 2 and its ditch sections. More was retrieved from pits inside Enclosure 1 and its ditch. Some of the Enclosure 1 Middle Iron Age pottery was residual in two of the Late Iron Age burials. Very little Middle Iron Age pottery was retrieved from the three eastern enclosures, where it was residual. Very few contexts had large groups of material. The largest single group of Middle Iron Age pottery came from the Late Iron Age chamber in Enclosure 1.

EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY FABRICS

All the fabrics were fired in a reducing atmosphere to give pottery that is black, sometimes with darker or lighter brown and grey patches. Inclusions are described as temper whether or not there is reason to think they were deliberate additions to the clay by the potter. The only inclusions that might be described as temper in the technical sense are those which do not occur naturally, *i.e.* crushed burnt flint (which appears as angular white grains), chopped vegetable matter, and grog (crushed pottery). Even some of these might be accidental additions introduced by the conditions in which the potter worked (Woudhuysen 1998, 33).

To a greater or lesser degree, all the Stanway fabrics have inclusions of fine silver mica. Such mica is typical of much Iron Age and Roman pottery from Essex and East Anglia. It is quite distinct from the black or golden mica found in wares elsewhere in Britain. Indeed its presence in pottery from the Roman forts at Camelon in Scotland allows the detection of troop movements there when the last garrisons were withdrawn from East Anglia after the Boudican revolt (Swan and Bidwell 1998, 23–4).

The pottery was divided into fabric groups using a modified version of the scheme devised for Essex by Brown (1988, 263–4). Sand and flint inclusions were divided on the basis of size with a numeric code as follows: 1 = <0.25 mm, 2 = 0.25–1 mm, and 3 = 1–2 mm. Two more size categories were recognised with flint: 4 = 3–4 mm and 5 = >4 mm. Inclusions were divided on the basis of their frequency into three categories designated A, B and C as follows: A = <6 grains per cm², B = 6–10 grains per cm², and C = >10 grains per cm². Combinations of numbers and letters conveniently indicate inclusion size and frequency. When the pottery was processed, the many permutations of particle size and frequency led to the division of the material into 46 fabrics. Amalgamating related fabrics led to a more manageable set of 14 fabrics for the published report.

Fabric A fine sand (1)
Fabric B fine sand (1) with vegetable temper
Fabric C sand (2A–2C)
Fabric D sand (2A–2C) with vegetable temper
Fabric E coarse sand (3A)
Fabric F fine flint (1A–1B and 2A–2B)
Fabric G fine flint and sand (flint 1A, with sand 1 and 2A)
Fabric H flint and sand (flint 2A–2B, with sand 1 and 2A–2C)
Fabric I coarse flint (flint 3A–3C and 4A)
Fabric J coarse flint and sand (flint 3A–3B, with sand 1, 2A–2C and 3A)
Fabric K coarser flint and sand (flint 4A, with sand 1, and 2A–2B)
Fabric L very coarse flint (5A)
Fabric M very coarse flint and sand (flint 5A, with sand 1, 2A–2C and 3A)
Fabric N chalk and sand (chalk 3A, with sand 2A–2B)

PHASING OF THE EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY (TABLE 10)

Phasing features with Early and Middle Iron Age pottery was difficult because there was so little in the way of vertical stratigraphy on the site. None of the pits with such material actually cut each other, a circumstance that makes one wonder if pits were located with care so as to respect earlier pit activity. Despite these difficulties, it proved possible to arrange the material in three phases, details of which are given below; their absolute chronology is explained in a separate section (pp.55–6). It should be emphasised at the outset that Early and Middle Iron Age pottery is spread very unevenly throughout these phases: three-quarters come from IA Ceramic Phase 2, and the very modest amounts from some of the other phases means that comparisons between them can only be made with reservations (TABLE 10).

TABLE 10: INCIDENCE OF EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY BY SHERD COUNT AND SHERD WEIGHT BY PHASE

Phase	*Date*	*Sherd count*	*Sherd wt (g)*	*Percentage count*	*Percentage weight*	*Average sherd weight (g)*
Phase 1	600–300 B.C.	61	872	2.4	5	14.3
Phase 2	300–50 B.C.	1,755	13,467	69.9	77	7.7
Phase 3	50–25 B.C.	384	1,637	15.3	9.4	4.3
Enclosures 3–5	A.D. 35–60	113	717	4.5	4.1	6.3
unstratified		199	783	7.9	4.5	3.9
totals		2,512	17,476			6.9

IA CERAMIC PHASE 1 (FIG. 25; TABLE 11)

Phase 1 is Early Iron Age and is confined to two adjacent pits in the southern half of Enclosure 1, AF28 and AF46 dated *c.* 600–300 BC (TABLE 11). The latter had sherds from only two vessels, both of which had been burnt after breakage. None of the other pits in the immediate vicinity had any diagnostic finds at all (pits AF30, AF34, AF35 and AF42) and cannot be dated. Recognition of Early Iron Age material at Stanway turned on the high proportion of flint-tempered (as opposed to sand-tempered) pottery and on the typology of one of the two jars from AF46.

Typology of the Early Iron Age pottery (FIG. 25)

The AF46 jar (FIG. 25.1) has steep straight sides with a carinated high shoulder and a short neck with a flat-topped rim decorated by finger-tip impressions. There are oblique and vertical wipe marks on the exterior. It is in the coarse flint-tempered Fabric I. The antecedents of the form can be seen in the occasional smaller version from earlier, post-Deverel-Rimbury contexts (Brown 1988, fig. 15, no. 14). Larger vessels like the one from Stanway are later and typical of Early Iron Age assemblages in Essex, where they are associated with fineware carinated bowls of the Darmsden-Linton pottery style zone defined by Cunliffe (Cunliffe 1968, 178–81, figs 1–4; 1978, 42, 360). The Stanway jar exemplifies the coarseware component of Darmsden-Linton. A similar jar at Mucking (Essex) had been used for grain storage (Barford 2002, 125). Comparanda from elsewhere in the county include vessels from Linford, Lofts Farm, Maldon Beacon Green, and North Shoebury (Barton 1962, fig. 1, nos 1–3; Brown 1988, fig. 17, nos 72–5; 1992, fig. 6, no. 25; 1995, fig. 67, no. 123). Two more or less complete profiles of these large vessels have been published from Stansted airport (Brown 2004, figs 34–5).

Darmsden-Linton carinated bowls are found across Essex (Sealey 1996, 46) and, although none was present at Stanway, it seems reasonable to relate the Early Iron Age pottery at Stanway to this style zone. Further north the same linkage cannot be maintained. At Trowse (Norfolk), a large assemblage of Early Iron Age pottery had similar high-shouldered jars, but carinated fineware bowls of Darmsden-Linton type were conspicuous by their absence (Percival 2000, figs 138–42).

The declining incidence of flint tempers

As one moves from the Late Bronze Age into the Early and Middle Iron Age in Essex, there is a decline in the quantity of exclusively flint-tempered pottery and an increase in purely sand and sand-with-flint temper (Brown 1988, 269). The same is true of Cambridgeshire (Woudhuysen 1998, 36–7), Suffolk (Martin 1988, 34) and Norfolk (Gregory 1995, 90). Moreover, if Runnymede Bridge (Surrey) was typical, as flint temper receded in importance the flint grains tended to become smaller and sparser (Needham 1996a, 111). Although there was no uniform rate of progression, this trend from flint to sand is typical of much of southern Britain from the middle of the first millennium B.C. (Rigby 1988, 103).

It is significant that all the pottery from AF46 was in the flint-tempered Fabrics F and I (FIG. 25, 1–2). In the adjacent pit AF28, purely sand-tempered pottery sherds *are* present, but they amount to only 24% by weight. This is a far lower sand content than the other Enclosure 1 pits and so it seemed appropriate to place it in the same phase as AF46.

TABLE 11: PHASE 1 SHERD COUNT AND SHERD WEIGHT IN GRAMMES BY FABRIC

Fabric	*Sherd count*	*Sherd weight (g)*	*Percentage by sherd count*	*Percentage by weight*
A	4	5	6.6	0.6
C	2	8	3.3	0.9
F	22	231	36	26.5
H	1	4	1.6	0.5
I	24	586	39.3	67.2
J	7	33	11.5	3.8
K	1	5	1.6	0.6
totals	61	872		

IA CERAMIC PHASE 2 (FIGS 25–6; TABLE 12)

Phase 2 has most of the Middle Iron Age pottery from the site and has been assigned to the period *c.* 300–50 B.C. (TABLE 12). The Phase 2 features are the Enclosure 2 ditch sections with all the Enclosure 2 internal pits, the Enclosure 1 internal pits (apart from the two IA Ceramic Phase 1 pits and the IA Ceramic Phase 3 funerary features), and the ?droveway ditch AF59/CF137.

TABLE 12: PHASE 2 SHERD COUNT AND SHERD WEIGHT BY FABRIC

Fabric	*Sherd count*	*Sherd weight (g)*	*Percentage by count*	*Percentage by weight*
A	608	4,022	34.6	29.9
B	66	854	3.8	6.3
C	433	3,295	24.7	24.5
D	24	507	1.4	3.8
E	6	43	0.3	0.3
F	89	635	5.1	4.7
G	10	37	0.6	0.3
H	94	500	5.3	3.7
I	145	1,159	8.2	8.6
J	170	1,200	9.7	8.9
K	75	804	4.3	5.9
L	7	48	0.4	0.4
M	26	294	1.5	2.2
N	2	69	0.1	0.5
totals	**1,755**	**13,467**		

We saw above that as the Late Bronze Age gives way to the Early Iron Age in Essex, there is an increase in the amount of purely sand-tempered pottery and of pottery tempered with flint-with-sand. At the same time, the proportion of exclusively flint-tempered pottery declines. It is clear that this progression continues throughout the Iron Age at Stanway, because among the pottery of Middle Iron Age type from the *c.* 50–25 B.C. IA Ceramic Phase 3 Enclosure 1 ditch only about a quarter is flint- or flint-with-sand-tempered (28% by weight), compared to the 98% from the two Early Iron Age pits of Phase 1. Although it would be unrealistic to expect a uniform progression through time away from flint to sand temper, the proportions of the different fabrics in various features do hint at their relative dates. Some of the implications of this can be explored by looking at the fabrics in various of the Phase 2 features.

The Enclosure 2 ditch (FIG. 26)

The Enclosure 2 ditch produced 817 sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery weighing 5.454 kg. By sherd weight, the flint and flint-with-sand fabrics made up 62% of the total. Although the ditch included a few sherds of Neolithic Peterborough ware, there is no reason to think that the flint and flint-with-sand fabrics are seriously contaminated by earlier material because — apart from the pit CF174 (filled with burnt flints, but no pottery) just outside the ditch of Enclosure 2 — there are no earlier features on the site which could have contaminated the ditch fill. Moreover, the ditch fill included considerable quantities of the burnt flint pebbles that would have been the source of this temper. Even so, the proportion of Middle Iron Age pottery tempered with flint or with flint-and-sand looks high, certainly compared to the Iron Age village at Little Waltham (Essex) where tempers with flint never amounted to more than 8% of the illustrated vessels (Drury 1978, 55, 58). Little Waltham compares well with the Witham sites WH2 and WH3, where 91% by weight of the Middle Iron Age pottery was sand-tempered (Brown 1993, 108). But at Ivy Chimneys on the outskirts of Witham, only 11% by weight of a large Early and Middle Iron Age assemblage was tempered by sand without flint (Turner-Walker and Wallace 1999, 125), and at Orsett in south Essex no less than 49% of the Middle Iron Age pottery by sherd count was purely flint-tempered (Brown 1998b, 89). Clearly the composition of Middle Iron Age fabrics in Essex is a good deal more variable than has previously been allowed.

One assumed at the outset that study of the ditch sections in detail would have shown that most of the flint and flint-with-sand fabrics were in the lower levels, with exclusively sand-tempered fabrics dominating in the upper levels. In fact that was not the case. These fabrics were more or less evenly dispersed throughout the lower, middle and upper ditch fills. This was established by looking at the pottery from the most productive of the sections across the ditch. In their lower fills, flint and flint-with-sand fabrics accounted for 61% of all the pottery by sherd weight.

This is not far removed for the average figures for the ditch as a whole. Moreover, the material from the lower fills of these sections only amounted to 14% by sherd weight of the ditch fill. Most of the pottery came from the middle and upper fills. Study of the sections gives no reason to think the ditch was recut, although it could have been kept free of accumulations of infill by regular scouring. It would seem that the silting of the ditch took place quickly, at a time when exclusively sand-tempered fabrics made up rather less than half the pottery.

What this might mean in terms of absolute dates is little more than guesswork. But working backwards from the *c.* 50–25 B.C. IA Ceramic Phase 3 (when only about a fifth of the pottery was tempered with flint and flint-with-sand) towards the — less securely dated — beginning of Phase 2 *c.* 300 B.C., one can venture the suggestion that the Enclosure 2 ditch had silted up to the point where it was little more than a hollow by the end of the 2nd century B.C.

A very few Late Iron Age sherds (14 sherds weighing 43 g) were recovered from the Enclosure 2 ditch sections. Apart from an intrusive sherd in the lower fill and another sherd in the middle to upper fill, they all came from the upper fills. This is a trifling quantity compared to the Middle Iron Age pottery from the ditch, but it suggests the hollow which the Enclosure 2 ditch had by now become was still receiving pottery after the introduction of Late Iron Age pottery from *c.* 75 B.C., and it allows us to extend IA Ceramic Phase 2 towards the middle of the 1st century B.C.

The question immediately arises as to why it was thought necessary to have a ditch in the first place. If it had a utilitarian and purely functional role, it would presumably have been maintained. There are many Iron Age enclosures in southern Britain with ditches that were either deliberately backfilled or allowed to fill naturally soon after their excavation in antiquity, which raise important questions about their function (Bowden and McOmish 1987, 81–3), and Stanway Enclosure 2 may now be numbered among them.

Middle Iron Age pits in Enclosures 1 and 2 (FIGS 25–6)

The pits in the interior of Enclosure 2 produced 411 sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery weighing 3.476 kg. The incidence of pottery fabrics from these pits is very different to that of the ditch itself. By sherd weight, the flint and flint-with-sand fabrics made up only 17% of the total respectively. The corresponding figure for the ditch is 62%. Although the sample is small, the differences are striking and suggest that the interior pits were dug after the enclosure ditch had significantly silted up.

The pits inside Enclosure 1 have also been assigned to Phase 2. Although there is little direct stratigraphical evidence to support this, typologically their pottery is certainly Middle Iron Age. These pits produced 500 sherds weighing 4.406 kg. By sherd weight, the flint and flint-with-sand fabrics account for just 15% of the total, almost half the proportion coming from the Enclosure 1 ditch itself. It is interesting that the cluster of Middle Iron Age pits in the north-east corner lie within (and seem to respect) the ditch CF137/AF59. Some of them are close enough to the northern ditch of the enclosure to have been buried beneath an internal bank, and so pre-date the creation of the enclosure, in which case they can be assigned to Phase 2 rather than Phase 3.

IA CERAMIC PHASE 3 (FIGS 25–6, 39; TABLES 13–18)

Phase 3 sees the introduction of grog-tempered and wheel-thrown Late Iron Age pottery of 'Belgic' type (TABLE 13). Although such pottery starts to become significant in the funerary record in Essex and neighbouring counties from *c.* 75 B.C., it does not significantly impact on assemblages of pottery from other contexts in Essex until later, from *c.* 50 B.C. (p. 56).

Enclosure 1 (TABLE 14) was presumably cut at the time of the funeral represented by the chamber AF25 (p. 69). None of the funerary contexts in Enclosure 1 has any imported Roman pottery and this suggests a date for them — and for the Enclosure 1 ditch — before *c.* 25 B.C. By sherd weight, Middle Iron Age pottery constituted 32% of the pottery from the ditch fill. Its average sherd weight is far less than the Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery from the ditch, suggesting that at least some of it is residual, perhaps from Middle Iron Age pits destroyed when the ditch was cut. But such pits are only present in the north-east corner of Enclosure 1 and so

TABLE 13: PHASE 3 SHERD COUNT AND SHERD WEIGHT BY FABRIC

Fabric	*Sherd count*	*Sherd weight (g)*	*Percentage by count*	*Percentage by weight*
A	209	785	54.2	47.9
C	108	509	28.1	31.1
F	4	11	1	0.7
G	9	54	2.3	3.3
H	17	80	4.4	4.9
I	4	24	1	1.5
J	28	133	7.3	8.1
K	5	41	1.3	2.5
totals	**384**	**1,637**		

TABLE 14: SUMMARY OF THE STRATIFIED POTTERY FROM THE ENCLOSURE 1 DITCH BY TYPE

	Sherd count (g)	*Sherd weight*	*Average sherd weight (g)*
Middle Iron Age	77	392	5.1
Late Iron Age and Roman	63	848	13.5
totals 140	**1,240**	**8.9**	

residuality cannot explain all the Middle Iron Age material in the ditch. The simplest explanation is to postulate that the ditch was cut when Middle and Late Iron Age wares were in contemporaneous use, and their relative proportions suggests the ditch was cut later — rather than earlier — in the transition period at *c.* 50–25 B.C.

Surprisingly, the major source of IA Ceramic Phase 3 Middle Iron Age pottery was AF25, the Late Iron Age chamber to the west of the centre of Enclosure 1. The chamber produced 295 sherds weighing 1.215 kg, 7% by sherd weight of the entire Early and Middle Iron Age pottery assemblage from Stanway (TABLE 16). Its early date raised the possibility that the funeral took place when Middle and Late Iron Age wares were in contemporary use. This raised the awkward possibility that the Middle Iron Age sherds were part of the funerary ritual, particularly as the two Late Iron Age pots from the floor of the grave were themselves represented by sherd material (FIG. 39, AF25.1–2). Details of the pottery from the chamber are given in TABLES 15–16.

The two Late Iron Age pots had been smashed before the chamber was backfilled and not all of the sherds from each vessel were present. Presumably both pots had been smashed outside the pit at the funeral and the missing sherds were not incorporated in the fill. AF25.1 is

TABLE 15: DETAILS OF THE BROKEN LATE IRON AGE POTS IN CHAMBER AF25

Pot	*Sherd count (g)*	*Sherd weight*	*Average sherd weight (g)*
AF25.1	61	377	6.2
AF25.2	69	314	4.6

TABLE 16: VERTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY SHERDS IN CHAMBER AF25

Fill	*Sherd count*	*Percentage by sherd count*	*Sherd weight (g)*	*Percentage by sherd weight*
top	194	65.8	757	62.4
middle	62	21.0	262	21.6
floor	39	13.2	196	16.1
totals	**295**		**1,215**	

represented by a complete rim circuit and (very approximately) about 40% of the rest of the vessel. The second vessel (AF25.2) has about 60% of the rim circuit and some 30% of the remainder of the pot. Both lay on the floor of the chamber. As both pots were represented by sherd material and in neither case could the whole pot be restored, there was no logical difference between this Late Iron Age pottery and the Middle Iron Age sherds from the chamber. The similarities are reflected in the average sherd weights — 5.3 g for the Late and 4.1 g for the Middle Iron Age pottery. But the Middle Iron Age pottery was not confined to the floor of the chamber — indeed most of it came from the upper fill. Only eight joining sherds were found among the Middle Iron Age pottery, and the abraded condition of the sherds made it unlikely they represented funerary goods. There were seven fabrics present, and the rims show that at least fifteen vessels were represented. The impression given is of a disparate group of residual material that had no direct connection with the funeral.

The distribution by feature of the residual Middle Iron Age pottery from Enclosures 3–5 is shown in TABLE 17, where it was decided to include unstratified Middle Iron Age pottery to emphasise the fact of its presence. TABLE 18 gives the incidence by fabric for the stratified Middle Iron Age pottery.

There were no definite Middle Iron Age features in Enclosures 3–5 and it is worth asking how this pottery came to be there in the first place. The most plausible explanation is that they arrived as inadvertent inclusions in middens of organic material (food scraps, butchery waste, ash from fires, byre sweepings and the like) that had accumulated on settlements and subsequently been spread over fields as manure. Rhodes (1952, 13) was the first to suggest this to explain abraded sherds in ancient field systems, and his views have been widely endorsed (Taylor 1975, 30; Fowler 1981, 167, 202, 213–14; 2002, 138, 148, 156, 208–11, 311; Cunliffe 1995, 12). Manuring was of particular importance with arable fields because of the depletive effects of prolonged cultivation on the soil (White 1970, 124, 126). The potential of pottery scatters derived from manure to assess land use in the Roman period was fully developed in the Maddle Farm (Berkshire) project (Gaffney and Tingle 1989, 209–25). On this view, the area where Enclosures 3–5 were laid out had been cultivated farmland in the Middle Iron Age.

TABLE 17: STRATIFIED AND UNSTRATIFIED MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY FROM ENCLOSURES 3–5

Feature	*Sherd count*	*Sherd weight (g)*
Enclosure 3 pit BF10	2	2
Enclosure 3 pyre-site BF1/BF16	4	9
Enclosure 3 ditch	5	40
Enclosure 4 ditch	23	360
Enclosure 4 chamber BF24	58	245
Enclosure 4 ?mortuary enclosure	15	42
Enclosure 5 ditch	4	14
Enclosures 4–5 ditch	2	5
Enclosures 3–4 unstratified (Area B)	7	18
totals	**120**	**735**

TABLE 18: STRATIFIED SHERD COUNT AND SHERD WEIGHT BY FABRIC FROM ENCLOSURES 3–5

Fabric	*Sherd count*	*Percentage by count*	*Sherd weight (g)*	*Percentage by weight*
A	47	41.6	203	28.3
C	46	40.7	264	36.8
E	1	0.9	6	0.8
H	5	4.4	13	1.8
I	3	2.7	19	2.7
J	4	3.5	24	3.4
K	3	2.7	14	1.9
N	4	3.5	174	24.3
totals	**113**		**717**	

ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY OF THE EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY

Darmsden-Linton pottery: radiocarbon dates

The earliest Iron Age pottery at Stanway is a group of material whose affiliations are with the Darmsden-Linton pottery style zone. Stratigraphic evidence from the well at Lofts Farm (Essex) shows Darmsden-Linton pottery developed there after the Late Bronze Age wares on the site (Brown 1988, 271–2). A calibrated radiocarbon date for this Darmsden-Linton assemblage gives a date of cal. B.C. 905–805, but this is felt to be too early (Needham 1996b, 255, *pace* Martin 1993, 38 citing HAR-8514). One of the three calibrated radiocarbon dates from Stansted airport for Darmsden-Linton pottery also looks too early, at 1130–810 B.C. within the 95% confidence level range. Two others from Stansted within the 95% confidence level range look more reliable, at 518–384 B.C. and 760–520. The last date is from pit F2171, a group dominated by post-Deverel-Rimbury plain and decorated wares, but with a Darmsden-Linton pedestal base, evidently the start of the style (Brown 2004, 41). There are two uncalibrated radiocarbon dates for a large group of Early Iron Age pottery from Rectory Road at Orsett (Essex) of 160 ± 80 b.c. (HAR-4527) and 400 ± 70 b.c. (HAR-4635) (Hamilton 1988, 78). The pottery has typological features suggesting a date towards the end of Darmsden-Linton *c.* 300 B.C., and the radiocarbon dates are consistent with that chronology. Another (late) radiocarbon date from North Shoebury (Essex) for a similar jar to a Stanway Early Iron Age vessel from AF46 (FIG. 25, 1) has been calibrated to cal. B.C. 390–20 cal. A.D. (Brown 1995, 87 citing HAR-5104).

Although there is an understandable reluctance to resort to radiocarbon to refine chronologies for the Early Iron Age because of the relatively flat character of the Pearson and Stuiver calibration curve for the period *c.* 800–400 B.C. (Bowman 1990, 55, 57), the Essex radiocarbon dates for Darmsden-Linton pottery suggest a *floruit* somewhere between the 7th and 4th centuries B.C.

Darmsden-Linton typology and the links with Gaul

Another line of approach lies with Hawkes (1962), Hodson (1962, 142) and Barrett (1978, 286–7), who suggested that the pedestal bases of what we now call Darmsden-Linton (and indeed other wares in southern Britain) were modelled on continental prototypes of 6th-century B.C. and later date. There are apparently no groups of Darmsden-Linton bowls without such bases and so there is no need to put the start of the style back in the 7th century B.C. (*pace* Sealey 1996, 47). Subsequently, important evidence for the date of Darmsden-Linton pottery has come from the large assemblage excavated at Fordham (Cambridgeshire), kindly shown to me by Dr J.D. Hill. A series of luminescence dates for this material cluster in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., with a pooled mean date for occupation of 520 B.C. ± 80 ± 180 (Barnett 2000, 441, 446–7, 454).

Similarities between the tripartite fineware bowls in Darmsden-Linton pottery and the La Tène I ceramics of the Marne confirm that it was still in vogue then (Bretz-Mahler 1971, pls 109 and 114). In absolute terms, this means *c.* 475–400 B.C. (Hatt and Roualet 1977, 11, 13, 17). Barrett suggests that pedestal bases may have lasted until the 4th century B.C. in Britain. This is borne out by the association of a La Tène Ib brooch associated with a Chinnor-Wandlebury pedestal-base bowl from Ravensburgh (Hertfordshire) (Dyer 1976, 157, 423; Hull and Hawkes 1987, 97, 103, pl. 30, no. 6932). The brooch was dated *c.* 350 B.C. by E.M. Jope (in Dyer 1976), and less specifically as 4th century B.C. by Hull and Hawkes. Evidence for the continued production of Darmsden-Linton pottery after the mid- to late 4th century B.C. is wanting, and it seems reasonable therefore to date the Early Iron Age pottery at Stanway *c.* 600–300 B.C.

Middle Iron Age pottery

The Middle Iron Age pottery from Stanway can be assigned to the following centuries, although there are very few radiocarbon dates for Essex Middle Iron Age pottery to confirm this. Four dates are available from the village at Little Waltham (Drury 1978), but two of them

may have been contaminated by earlier, Neolithic charcoal. The other two are cal. B.C. 400–1 cal. A.D. at 2σ (HAR-1088) and cal. B.C. 370–50 cal. A.D. at 2σ (HAR-1120) suggesting that pottery of Middle Iron Age type was indeed current in the middle of the second half of the 1st millennium B.C. (Jordan *et al.* 1994, 93). A date of cal. B.C. 400–90 at 2σ (HAR-6701) from Asheldam Camp came from burnt grain associated with a Middle Iron Age pot with curvilinear decoration (Bedwin 1991, 24, 36). Two uncalibrated radiocarbon dates for Middle Iron Age pottery elsewhere in the county are consistent with this broad picture. One from Heybridge is 150 ± 80 b.c. (Wickenden 1987, 11) and another from Mucking, associated with a glauconite-tempered bowl of Little Waltham form 13, gave 140 ± 70 b.c. (Hamilton 1988, 80).

The start date of Late Iron Age wheel-thrown and grog-tempered pottery

The terminal date of the Middle Iron Age pottery at Stanway is best approached by considering when the wheel-thrown grog-tempered pottery of Late Iron Age type that displaced it made its first appearance. There is no consensus about when such Aylesford-Swarling 'Belgic' pottery developed in Britain. Thompson (1982, 16) saw it emerging late in the 1st century, after *c.* 30 B.C. On the other hand, the Baldock (Hertfordshire) report puts the earliest grog-tempered wheel-thrown material there in the early to mid-1st century B.C. (Rigby 1986, 273–7). Haselgrove (1997, 58) and Hill (2002, 146) have gone even further and claimed that 'Belgic' pottery was current in eastern England from as early as the late 2nd century B.C. The question of the start date of 'Belgic' pottery is discussed by the writer elsewhere (Sealey forthcoming a), but it may help to give a summary of the situation here.

A very few graves in Kent with 'Belgic' or Aylesford-Swarling pottery have Nauheim brooches. Such brooches were current from *c.* 125–50 B.C. and it is possible that these graves could be earlier rather than later in that time bracket. But the most common early brooch associated with Aylesford-Swarling pottery is the *c.* 75–25 B.C. *Knotenfibel* and it was in the lifetime of these brooches that 'Belgic' pottery first became significant (Stead 1976). Even so, in some areas there was a time lag between the first appearance of Aylesford-Swarling pottery in graves and its later adoption and use on settlement sites. This was the case at the *c.* 90–50 B.C. Westhampnett cemetery (Fitzpatrick 1997), although in West Sussex Aylesford-Swarling never became the dominant component of pottery assemblages in the prelude to the Roman invasion. North of the Thames, where it did become dominant, the timelag between the presence of 'Belgic' pottery in graves and settlements sites is most evident in parts of Essex and south Cambridgeshire (Thompson 1988; Thompson 1995, 90; Hill 1999b). In Hertfordshire, Aylesford-Swarling pottery had displaced earlier wares *c.* 75–50 B.C. at Foxholes Farm (Partridge 1989), although such an early date is not replicated on other settlements there or elsewhere north of the Thames. In Essex, Aylesford-Swarling pottery did not significantly impact on settlement pottery assemblages until at least *c.* 50–25 B.C. (Sealey 1996, 55).

Further north in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, its adoption took place even later. Although some settlements on the periphery of East Anglia had developed a taste for this new pottery in the last decades B.C. and the start of the following century (Farrar *et al.* 2000), wheel-thrown grog-tempered wares did not reach most parts of East Anglia until after the Roman invasion (Gregory 1995, 93–4; Lyons and Percival 2000, 222).

The development of Aylesford-Swarling pottery was a protracted and piecemeal process that took place at different times in different parts of the country; the pace at which it displaced existing pottery styles also varied from region to region. We need to face up to the fact that contemporary pottery assemblages in parts of Essex and East Anglia can be quite different, even on sites not far apart: the awkward implications of this will need to be addressed more fully in the future.

TYPOLOGY OF THE MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY (FIGS 25–6; TABLES 19–20)

Typologically the earliest element in the Middle Iron Age pottery is a thin-walled and straight everted rim in the fine flint Fabric F from ditch AF59, which is quite unlike any other Iron Age rim from the site (FIG. 25, 4). Initially it was thought to be an Early Iron Age Darmsden-Linton

bowl, but the absence of horizontal grooving above the carination suggests the vessel is later than Phase 1. It is best explained by a very few bowls from the initial Essex Middle Iron Age that are transitional in form between Early Iron Age carinated bowls and their round-shouldered Middle Iron Age successors. There are parallels from the Ivy Chimneys site at Witham and from the Stansted Airport Social Club site (Turner-Walker and Wallace 1999, fig. 86, no. 13; Brown 2004, fig. 31, nos 16–18).

A limited range of forms is present in the developed Middle Iron Age pottery from Stanway. The typical Middle Iron Age vessel is a deep open bowl with a gently rounded or slack S-profile, often with a high shoulder and unemphatic neck (FIGS 25–6, 9, 20, 28, 33, 36). Sometimes the necks are deeper and more concave, with a more pronounced break in curve at the shoulder (FIGS 25–6, 10, and 40). Some vessels with this same general profile are narrow enough at the rim to be described as jars (FIGS 25–6, 11–12, 32, 39). Some profiles have no neck at all, and suggest a hemispherical bowl form (FIGS 25–6, 26, 31). Such pots offer a possible glimpse of some typological development in the Middle Iron Age pottery. One says this because they are confined to two vessels from pits in the interior of Enclosure 2 which had apparently been dug late in Phase 2, after the Enclosure 2 ditch had filled (there were none in the ditch itself). Another neckless vessel has steep straight sides descending from a rounded rim (FIG. 25, 22). Rims are usually round and plain, but some are pointed or tapered. Others are thickened, one by pinching between the thumb and forefinger. A few have neatly finished flat upper surfaces (FIGS 25–6, 3, 5, 7, 25, 33, 44–5, 55). Rim angle varies a great deal; a few even rise vertically from the shoulder (FIG. 26, 37, 49). Most bases are flat. Very occasionally they are slightly dished (FIGS 25–6, 18, 34). Usually the base is no thicker than the sides of the pot, with one exception (FIG. 25, 6); sometimes there is a protuberance at the junction of wall and base (FIG. 26, 46). A distinct novelty is the miniature pot, made by pushing the thumb into a ball of clay (FIG. 26, 50; *see* pp. 60–1 for its function).

Pottery transitional between the Middle and Late Iron Age (FIG. 26)

A very few sherds can be seen as transitional between Middle and Late Iron Age ceramics. The Enclosure 2 ditch had a rim in grog-tempered ware with a straight and flat top, more Middle than Late Iron Age (FIG. 26, 47). Another such rim was retrieved from the chamber BF24. The same context had a sand-tempered rim with corrugations or cordons typical of Aylesford-Swarling ceramics but here on a sand-tempered and handmade pot of Middle Iron Age technique (FIG. 26, 54 and 53 respectively). Another handmade pot with a flat rim of Middle Iron Age type in grog-temper from Enclosure 4 also looks transitional (FIG. 26, 55).

Decoration of the Middle Iron Age pottery (TABLES 19–20)

The only parts of the Early and Middle Iron Age pots that were at all regularly decorated were the tops of the rims (TABLE 19), but only twenty-five (17%) of the 149 rim sherds were decorated. The most common form of decoration was a line of finger-tip impressions; there was one example of finger-tip-with-nail impressions. The only other decoration consisted of straight incised lines neatly executed and cut obliquely across the rim at regular intervals (FIGS 25–6, 1, 5, 10, 16, 22, 44). In the Early Iron Age, finger-tip impressions are found on the bodies of vessels as well as on the rims. Eventually finger-tip impressions on the body pass out of fashion in the Essex and East Anglian Middle Iron Age and the technique becomes confined to the rim, as at Stanway (Percival 2000, 112).

TABLE 19: DECORATED RIM SHERDS

Type of decoration	*Number of sherds*	*Sherd count by fabric*
Finger-tip impressions	17	A (7), C (4), D (1), F (1), I (1) and J (3)
Finger-nail impressions	1	J (1)
Straight incised lines	7	A (6) and J (1)

TABLE 20: DECORATED BODY SHERDS

Type of decoration	*Number of sherds*	*Sherd count by fabric*
Incised lines	22	A (8), C (7), E (3), J (2) and K (2)
Wipe marks	6	B (1), H (1) and J (4)
Finger-nail impressions	1	C (1)

There is very little in the way of surface decoration on the Early and Middle Iron Age body sherds. Only 29 of the 2,512 sherds (1%) had some kind of decoration on parts of the vessel other than the top of the rim. One sherd had a row of three finger-nail impressions. A few others had shallow, generally parallel wipe marks. Incised decoration took the form of straight or occasionally curved and generally parallel lines. Sometimes a diagonal line might cut across one of these tramlines (TABLE 20). The tiny size of so many of the Stanway sherds means that it is impossible to judge how much of a vessel was decorated, but two vessels represented by larger sherds suggest that in their case at least much of their surface may have been (FIGS 25–6, 1, 32). Two other sherds decorated with incised lines are illustrated. One has two diverging straight lines, and the other two parallel horizontal lines below the rim (FIGS 25–6, 22, 54). So few of the Stanway Early and Middle Iron Age vessels have decorated bodies that one is left wondering why any were decorated at all. Although a few sherds have burnished or smoothed (wiped) surfaces, they are rare and the Stanway vessel population does divide itself convincingly into a fine- and coarseware component.

MANUFACTURE OF THE EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY

The Early and Middle Iron Age pottery was a handmade tradition. Interior surfaces often have the lumpy and uneven finish of handmade ceramics, and there were no signs of interior throw marks or the perfect symmetry of form found in competent wheel-thrown pottery. Vertical wipe marks on a few sherds may have been intended to disguise and consolidate the coil construction as well as make the vessel easier to handle (Percival 2000, 108).

SOURCES OF THE EARLY AND MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY

The contribution of ethnography

Ethnography suggests that most potters in pre-industrial societies obtained their clays and tempers from the immediate vicinity. Arnold (1985) showed that 33% of the potters in his research sample drew their clay from within 1 km of their workshops. No less than 84% secured clay from within a 7 km radius. Temper procurement revealed a similar pattern. Fifty-two per cent of the potters found suitable temper within 1 km, and 97% from within 6–9 km (Arnold 1985, 38–51). The relevance of this to the study of Iron Age pottery in Britain has been keenly advocated by E.L. Morris (1995; 1997). The implications are that most — in some cases all — of the pottery on an Iron Age site would have been made within 9 km and that wares made from materials only found further afield can be regarded as non-local.

Stanway and Abbotstone compared

Excavations at Abbotstone (Benfield and Brooks 1999), only 1.4 km west of Stanway, produced another assemblage of Middle Iron Age pottery (Sealey 2005). Phase 1a at Abbotstone was contemporary with Phase 2 at Stanway, but the proportions of fabrics are quite different. At Abbotstone, 93.4% by weight of the pottery was composed of fabrics tempered with sand (and some sporadic vegetable matter and chalk), but the comparable figure for Stanway is only 65.4%. Pottery tempered with only flint was rare at Abbotstone, whereas at Stanway it was significant: 1.9% and 13.5% respectively by weight. The same picture emerges from the fabrics tempered by sand-with-flint. At Abbotstone they were only 4.8% by weight, but at Stanway the proportion was 21.1%.

In antiquity, Abbotstone and Stanway are sites that could have been reached from each other on foot in only a few minutes. Although they used pottery that is indistinguishable typologically,

there are sufficient differences in the incidence of pottery fabrics on both sites to suggest that they drew on different sources of supply. The simplest explanation is that both communities made their own pottery, in which case Abbotstone and Stanway confirm the findings of ethnography described above.

The nearest source of potting clay to Stanway lies 250 m away in two outcrops of London clay that lead south towards the Roman river. Another potential source is to be found 2.5 km to the east in the chalky boulder clay. Although this was never used in the Roman period (Rodwell 1983, 15), it was presumably the source of the very few chalk-tempered vessels in Fabric N. Sand and flint for use as temper were readily available at Stanway itself. The large deposits of burnt flints and stone on site (pp. 18–21) were presumably the source of the crushed burnt flint present in so much of the Early and Middle Iron Age pottery. Petrological analysis of the pottery was not attempted because there was no reason to think that any of the tempers were exotic.

Evidence for traded wares in the Middle Iron Age

Although the likelihood is that the Stanway pottery is essentially local, we should not exclude the possibility that some of it reached the site from elsewhere. The difficulty of sourcing Iron Age pottery in Essex and East Anglia on the basis of petrological investigation of tempers has hitherto tended to discourage attempts to identify imported products. But a few exotic pieces suggest that the movement of pots across quite long distances may have been more common than is generally allowed. A Glastonbury-ware bowl from Middle Iron Age Heybridge (Essex) had originated in the Shepton Mallet area of Somerset (Brown 1987, 31, fig. 15, no. 34, 32) and a fineware Early Iron Age bowl from Langwood Ridge (Cambridgeshire) had limestone inclusions showing it was made at least 20 km away (Hill 1999a, 25).

The homogeneity of so much of the Late Bronze Age and Early to Middle Iron Age pottery found in south-eastern England between the Thames and the Wash could not have come about without the movement of potters or their products across wide areas, even though it is unlikely that petrological analysis will be able to establish this for the bulk of the wares present. So one can only welcome signs that the identification of non-local pottery on the basis of its typology, decoration or general finish is now on the agenda. A bowl imported from the European mainland as early as the Late Bronze Age at Boreham (Essex) was recognised as such on the basis of its distinctive decoration and typology (Brown 1999, fig. 2.4, no. 21, 16). Hill (1999a, 25) has identified an exotic Early Iron Age Chinnor-Wandlebury fineware bowl from Wandlebury itself in Cambridgeshire. Another (unpublished) Chinnor-Wandlebury fineware bowl from Abbotstone quarry (Essex) — only 1.4 km west of Stanway — reached the site from the Cambridgeshire region (Sealey 2005). Another Early Iron Age vessel from Valley Belt at Trowse (Norfolk) has been identified as non-local on the basis of its decoration and form (Percival 2000, 175). At Late Iron Age Baldock (Hertfordshire), yet another pot was proposed as 'foreign' for much the same reasons (Rigby 1986, 260, 267, 270, fig. 106, no. 21). Other examples could be cited. Of course these ceramic items of exchange can only be recognised because they stand out from the milieu in which they were deposited. Exotic vessels of indistinguishable fabric and typology to that of the pottery at their ultimate destination may forever elude us.

BURNT RESIDUES ON MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY (TABLE 21)

Sixteen of the 2,512 Middle Iron Age sherds (0.6%) had black deposits adhering to the surfaces. They consist of thin patches of matter less than a millimetre or so thick, sometimes with a cracked surface. It is apparent these residues were formed in antiquity because they do not run over the edge of the break on the sherd. This matter gives every impression of being the remains of accidentally burnt or charred foodstuffs. Half were on the inside of the pot, half on the outside. Five of the sherds with exterior residues have them on the rim. To have consistently stuck to the outsides of pots on and below the rims, the foodstuff that caused the residues was presumably a thick and viscous fluid with a consistency like porridge.

TABLE 21: DETAILS OF SHERDS WITH BLACK RESIDUES

Feature	*Sherd count*	*Date*	*Fabric*	*Position on sherd*	*Illustration*
AF59	1	Phase 2	H	interior	not drawn
AF62	1	Phase 2	A	exterior	FIG. 25, 10
CF6	4	Phase 2	B	interior (1) exterior (3)	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	N	exterior	FIG. 26, 36
CF6	1	Phase 2	C	interior	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	A	exterior	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	H	exterior	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	H	interior	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	A	interior	not drawn
CF6	1	Phase 2	A	interior	not drawn
Chamber AF25	2	Phase 3	C	interior	not drawn
Chamber BF24	1	early Roman	C	exterior	not drawn

The breakdown by fabric for sherds with burnt residues is as follows: Fabrics A, B and C (4 sherds each), Fabric H (3), and Fabric N (1). Details are given in TABLE 21. It is interesting that the residues are most common on the finer sandy fabrics. One might have expected them to have been more common on the coarser fabrics, where the larger size of the inclusions would have safeguarded the pot from thermal shock and stress during the cooking process. At Wardy Hill (Cambridgeshire), burnt residues were present in equal quantities on Middle and Late Iron Age fine- and coarsewares (Hill and Horne 2003, 181), reflecting the same apparent mismatch between fabric and function seen at Stanway. It is also puzzling that burnt residues are less common in south-east England on Late Iron Age grog-tempered and wheel-thrown pottery than they are on earlier wares. Eventually the tabulation of data from many different sites may elucidate the processes involved (Moorhouse 1986, 111).

Examination of a residue from the Middle Iron Age village at Little Waltham (Essex) showed it to be the remains of a vegetable gruel (Evans 1978). Four Middle Iron Age pots with burnt residues buried at a spring in Stock (Essex) had contained a starchy preparation derived in all likelihood from a cereal in water, to which salt had been added. The preparation had evidently been boiled until it burnt (Hedges 1977, 77). A cereal product has also been identified in a burnt deposit on a *c.* A.D. 40–60 sherd from another Essex site (Evans 1987a). Residues of this kind are seldom reported in Essex and East Anglia. The region has nothing comparable to Mount Farm (Oxfordshire), where burnt residues were found on 6% of the Iron Age sherds (Lambrick 1984, 169).

A recent review of the evidence for prehistoric food does not mention the topic of burnt food remains on pottery (Legge *et al.* 1998) and the work done by Evans is now felt to be less useful than analytical work addressed to organic residues actually lodged in the walls of the pot (Barclay 2001, 33–4). Even in those cases, reservations have been expressed on the grounds that a vessel might have been used for several different contents in the course of its life and that post-depositional contamination may distort the results (Barber and Ashmore 1990, 141).

Radiocarbon dating of burnt residues on Iron Age pottery from the Western Isles of Scotland by accelerator mass spectrometry has produced useful results (Haselgrove *et al.* 2001, 5). Eventually it may prove worthwhile to attempt the same elsewhere (Willis 2002, 13). In view of this, the recording of burnt residues in published reports should be undertaken as a matter of routine to signal this resource for future research.

MIDDLE IRON AGE POTTERY: FUNCTION AND RITUAL

Function

We may begin with the miniature pot from the Enclosure 2 ditch (FIG. 26, 50). Very similar miniatures were found at Middle Iron Age Heybridge in Essex (Brown 1987, fig. 15, no. 35,

33) and — with Early Iron Age Darmsden-Linton pottery — from Darmsden itself (Suffolk) (Cunliffe 1968, 184). It is too small to be a crucible of the kind found at Middle Iron Age Woodham Walter in Essex (Rodwell 1987, fig. 15, no. 13, 22; Evans 1987b), and, in any case, its clean surface has nothing that resembles industrial matter. A utilitarian function is not immediately obvious and it is worth considering the possibility that these were toys.

Ritual

No evidence has been adduced yet to show that Essex and East Anglia saw the regular structured filling of pits on a ritual basis in the Iron Age, as in Wessex and Sussex (Cunliffe 1992; 1995, 72–88; Hill 1995; Hamilton 1998). But a few instances are now known of deposits of pottery in the region that bear every appearance of intentional and even careful deposition (as opposed to the casual disposal of broken and unwanted sherd material).

Some examples will illustrate the range of practices involved. Two Middle Iron Age pots had been neatly stacked inside each other in a pit at Barley (Hertfordshire) to produce a *placed* deposit (Cra'ster 1965, 1). Rather different are two pit deposits from Essex. A small and steep-sided pit at Slough House Farm near Heybridge had Early Iron Age pottery of Darmsden-Linton type in the bottom fill. Sherds from at least eight fineware bowls and jars were present. Some were elaborately decorated with impressed circlets filled with a white mineral inlay. Vessels like this are rare, and the recovery of so many from the same context suggests selective and purposive deposition of material in a ritual act (Wallis 1998, 17; Brown 1998a, 132, 134–6, nos 41–7). Another unusual pit fill was SCS 2187 at Stansted airport, where another pit had been filled with Darmsden-Linton pottery in one operation. Many large and freshly broken sherds were present alongside tiny abraded sherds, suggesting that the pit had been filled with material from a surface midden as well as fresh domestic rubbish in a deliberate act (Brown 2004, 53). Every care was taken to identify pits with similarly anomalous fills at Stanway, but the exercise proved to be in vain.

The only possible instance of the ritual deposition of Iron Age pottery at Stanway involves the only full-size complete Middle Iron Age pot from the site (FIG. 25, 20). The vessel lay not quite upright but at an angle in the base of a small pit (CF168) in Enclosure 2. There were no other surviving finds. Apart from graves at the end of the period, complete pots are hardly ever found in pits in the region in the Iron Age. A prosaic explanation is possible of course: intact pots could have been discarded because their contents had turned rancid or the pot had been contaminated by mould (Rigby 1986, 259). Some other examples of complete non-funerary pots that come to mind are the vessel placed in the bottom of a bell-shaped pit at Late Iron Age Baldock in Hertfordshire (*ibid.*, 273, fig. 105, no. 1), a Darmsden-Linton bowl laid on its side in a pit at Stansted airport in Essex (Brown 2004, 53), and a complete Middle Iron Age jar buried in the primary silt of a ditch at the entrance to a small enclosure with round-house at Ardleigh (Essex). The excavators suggested the last example was a foundation deposit (Erith and Holbert 1970, 18, fig. 15, no. 36). A near-complete Middle Iron Age pot from Stansted airport buried with a cattle jaw bone was also described as an offering (Havis and Brooks 2004, 24; Brown 2004, 53). Complete pots were a component of the ritual fills of pits at Danebury hillfort in Hampshire (Poole 1995, 249, 261), and that alone should alert us to the possibility that these vessels from eastern England might also have a ritual dimension.

In the case of the Stanway pot, its credentials as a ritual deposit are enhanced by its position, central to the round-house postulated in Enclosure 2. Another Colchester round-house is relevant here. The structure was a Middle Iron Age house at Ypres Road on the Garrison site (Brooks and Masefield 2005, 20–1). In the centre of the house, a small pit contained large fresh sherds of a bowl with carefully wiped inner and outer surfaces to give a polished and smooth finish that suggests a pot made with particular care (Sealey in Brooks and Masefield). No other pottery was associated with the Ypres Road bowl. The position of both pots in identical positions can hardly be coincidental and we seem to be dealing here with a specific instance of placed deposition.

DISCUSSION

The Early and Middle Iron Age pottery from Stanway is an assemblage of significant size. Most of the entries on the register of later prehistoric pottery groups from England are smaller than 1,000 sherds (Morris and Champion 2001, 254), although Stanway is dwarfed by the very largest groups from Essex and East Anglia (Hill and Horne 2003, 146). Its interest is enhanced by the dearth of Middle Iron Age pottery from north-east Essex. The most important single group came from the Little Oakley villa in Tendring Hundred, 27.5 km east of Stanway (Barford 2002, 114–31). Closer to Stanway is an important group from Ardleigh, 7.5 km north-east of Colchester town centre (Erith and Holbert 1970, 18–24). But the usefulness of Ardleigh is undermined by a lack of information about the fabrics and their quantification, or indeed stratigraphy. Closer to Stanway, a few scraps of Early and Middle Iron Age pottery were found at Church Lane, 2 km to the north-east (Partridge 1993). A larger group than Church Lane — but still much smaller than Stanway — was excavated at Abbotstone 1.5 km to the west (Benfield and Brooks 1999; Sealey 2005). Otherwise there is little Early or Middle Iron Age pottery from the Colchester region at all. Stanway is the largest collection of Early and Middle Iron Age pottery from north-east Essex, and the first of significant size from the Colchester region. One needs to move further south-west in Essex to find groups of Early and Middle Iron Age pottery of comparable size. One of the closest is the 1,150 Early and Middle Iron Age sherds weighing 12.977 kg from Ivy Chimneys outside Witham, 17 km to the south-west of Stanway (Turner-Walker and Wallace 1999, 125).

The Middle Iron Age pottery from Stanway belongs to a distinctive pottery style zone found widely across Essex and East Anglia. For Norfolk and Suffolk, the tradition is described in two excellent surveys (Martin 1999, 74–81; Percival 1999). It is handmade in a range of sand, flint and flint-with-sand-tempered fabrics. Apart from finger-tip impressions on the tops of rims and the occasional decorated body sherd, it is a resolutely plain ware tradition. Vessel forms are limited and dominated by variations on the theme of bowls and jars with slack S-profiles. Bases are generally flat. Important assemblages have been published from Spong Hill (Gregory 1995) and Caistor St Edmund (Harford Farm) in Norfolk (Percival 2000, 108–14). To the north-west, this ceramic is flanked by the East Midlands scored ware so common beyond the Fens and the Wash (Elsdon 1992). In Suffolk there are key groups from West Stow (West 1990, 60–8) and Burgh-by-Woodbridge (Martin 1988, 37–9, 46–7). Cambridgeshire has two large assemblages, from Wardy Hill in the Fens and Little Paxton in the south-west of the county (Hill and Horne 2003; Hancocks 2003). It spills over into east Hertfordshire, where it is represented by the pottery from Barley (Ozanne 1961). In Essex the number of published sites with Middle Iron Age pottery is now considerable, far more than for neighbouring counties (Sealey 1996 for a survey). Since 1996 the major published groups from Essex are the sites at Witham (Rodwell 1993, 100–2; Brown 1993, 108–10; Turner-Walker and Wallace 1999, 123–7) as well as Slough House Farm and Howell's Farm, north of Heybridge (Brown 1998a, 134–6, 139–41).

Enough data are now available for regional groups to be distinguished within this pottery, particularly for Essex. A striking omission from the Stanway repertoire is the everted footring bowl, Little Waltham Form 13 (Drury 1978, 54–6). No base from Stanway has a footring. The closest approach is the faintly dished base found on only three vessels (FIGS 25–6, 18 and 34 for two of them). This is not the picture in central and south Essex, where Form 13 is common. Petrological analysis indicates the presence of glauconite in some of them, and an origin in the Mucking-Chadwell area has been claimed (Drury 1978, 128; Hamilton 1988, 76, with more details of the petrology). In fact, the source is the Maidstone region (Thompson 1982, 7, 11–12, her Medway zone; *see* also Pollard 1988, 31–2), and these pots represent a trade in vessels from Kent, north across the Thames (not the other way round). Local (Essex) copies are found in other fabrics. Along the Thames estuary, the composition of Middle Iron Age assemblages more closely resembles those of Kent than of districts further north. Both regions are further linked by the number of vessels decorated with stamped patterns and curvilinear decoration (Elsdon 1975; Brown 1991).

Stanway has nothing indicative of contact with the Thames estuary regions of south Essex. There are no Form 13 bowls or stamped and curvilinear pottery. Its Middle Iron Age pottery is plainer and more severe, in an idiom that has more in common with Suffolk than with central or south Essex. It is to be hoped that the differences between the Middle Iron Age pottery from the north and south of the county will be explored further in future research.

Catalogue of illustrated Early and Middle Iron Age pottery

FIGURE 25

1. Fabric F. Black core with light red-brown surfaces, burnt after breakage. Finger-tip-with-nail impressions on the rim, with oblique and vertical wipe marks on the exterior. Pit AF46 in Enclosure 1. Phase 1.
2. Fabric I. Black core with red surfaces, burnt after breakage. Pit AF46 in Enclosure 1. Phase 1.
3. Fabric J. Black core with a brown interior, and a mottled brown and dark brown exterior. Pit AF28 in Enclosure 1. Phase 1.
4. Fabric F. Brown core and surfaces; the exterior has been wiped smooth. Ditch AF59. Phase 2.
5. Fabric A. Black core and interior, brown exterior. Finger-tip impressions on the rim. Pit AF26 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
6. Fabric A. Black core with red surfaces. Pit AF55 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
7. Fabric C. Black core with mottled red-brown surfaces. Horizontal burnish marks on the outer surface. Pit AF55 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
8. Fabric D. Dark brown core and surfaces. Pit AF62 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
9. Fabric C. Grey core and brown surfaces. Burnished outer surface. Pit AF62 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
10. Fabric A. Black core with brown interior, light brown exterior. The rim is decorated with straight incised lines, and on the body below the shoulder there are incised straight lines cut obliquely across the surface. Burnt residues run down the exterior over the neck and shoulder. Pit AF62 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
11. Fabric C. Black core with light brown interior, dark brown exterior. Pit AF68 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
12. Fabric C. Black core with mottled brown and black surfaces. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
13. Fabric A. Light brown core and black surfaces. Horizontal burnish marks on the outer surface. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
14. Fabric G. Grey core and interior, brown exterior. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
15. Fabric A. Grey core and red-brown interior, dark brown exterior. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
16. Fabric C. Brown core and interior, dark grey-brown exterior. Finger-tip impressions on rim. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
17. Fabric B. Black core with mottled brown and grey surfaces. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
18. Fabric B. Black core and interior, brown exterior. Pit AF80 in Enclosure 1. Phase 2.
19. Fabric A. Black core with brown surfaces. Enclosure 1 ditch. Phase 3.
20. Fabric A. Black core and exterior, light brown interior. Pit CF168 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
21. Fabric E. Black core with light red-brown surfaces. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
22. Fabric J. Brown core and surfaces. The rim is decorated with straight incisions cut obliquely across the top; below the rim there are two deep score lines. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
23. Fabric A. Black core and interior, light red-brown exterior. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
24. Fabric B. Black core with dark brown surfaces. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
25. Fabric M with vegetable temper. Black core with a light brown interior, grey exterior. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
26. Fabric B. Black core with light brown surfaces. Pit AF22 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.

FIGURE 26

27. Fabric E. Brown core and surfaces. Pit CF159 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
28. Fabric C. Black core with grey interior, brown exterior. Pit CF168 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
29. Fabric C. Black core and surfaces. Pit CF168 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
30. Fabric K. Black core with grey interior, brown exterior. Pit CF250 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
31. Fabric A. Black core and exterior, light grey interior. Pit CF250 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.
32. Fabric J. Dark grey core with red surfaces. Pit CF21 in Enclosure 2. Phase 2.

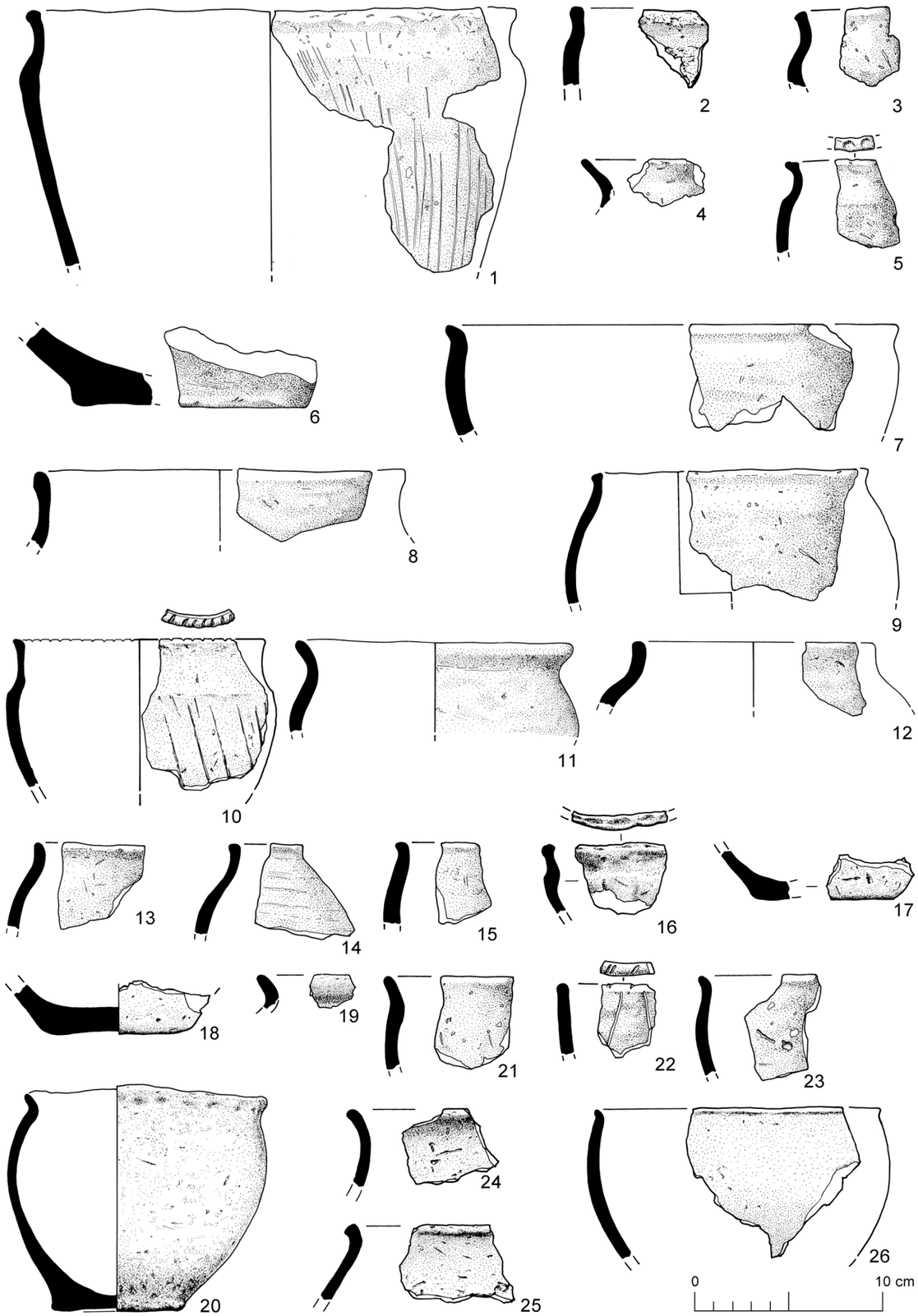

FIG. 25. Early and Middle Iron Age Pottery. Nos 1–3: Phase 1 (Early Iron Age); nos 4–18 and 20–28: Phase 2 (Middle Iron Age); no. 19: Phase 3 (transitional Middle to Late Iron Age)

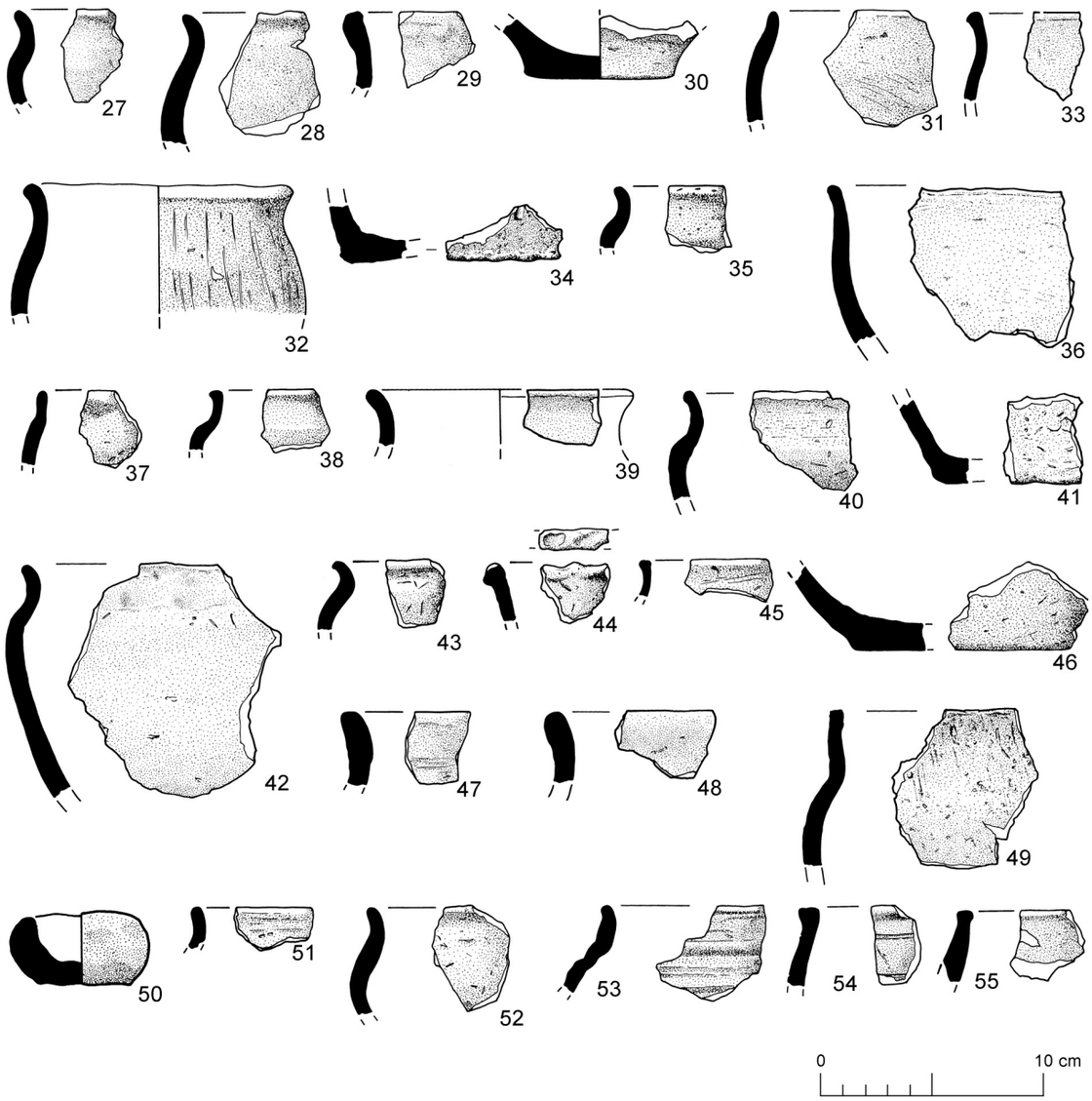

FIG. 26. Middle Iron Age Pottery. Nos 31–52: Phase 2 (Middle Iron Age); nos 53–5: Enclosure 4 (transitional Middle to Late Iron Age sherds in Late Iron Age/early Roman features)

33. Fabric B. Grey core with brown interior, black exterior. Burnt residues on the exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L15 (middle fill). Phase 2.
34. Fabric I. Dark grey to black core with brown surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L15 (middle fill). Phase 2.
35. Fabric J. Grey core with brown surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L15 (middle fill). Phase 2.
36. Fabric N. Black core with brown surfaces. Burnt residues run down the rim towards the shoulder. Enclosure 2 ditch, (middle fill, associated with the currency bar hoard). Phase 2.
37. Fabric B. Black core and surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L126 (middle fill). Phase 2.
38. Fabric N. Black core with dark grey interior, brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L150 (lower fill). Phase 2.
39. Fabric C. Grey core with mottled brown and red-brown surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
40. Fabric C. Grey-brown core and interior, brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.

41. Fabric K. Dark grey core with mottled dark brown interior, mottled light brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
42. Fabric D. Black core with light brown interior, mottled light red-brown to brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
43. Fabric D. Black core with dark brown interior, brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
44. Fabric D. Black core and inner surface, brown exterior. Finger-tip impressions on the rim. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
45. Fabric B. Grey core with light brown surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2
46. Fabric K. Black core with dark grey interior, mottled dark grey to dark brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, L114 (upper fill). Phase 2.
47. Late Iron Age Fabric 3BA. Brown core and surfaces. The flat rim is Middle Iron Age in form, but the fabric is grog-tempered. Not enough survives to judge if it is hand- or wheel-made. Enclosure 2 ditch, L117 (upper fill). Phase 2.
48. Fabric A. Black core with brown surfaces. Enclosure 2 ditch, L116 (upper fill). Phase 2.
49. Fabric K. Black core with brown interior, dark brown exterior. Diagonal incised score marks on the exterior below the rim. Enclosure 2 ditch, L161 (middle fill). Phase 2.
50. Fabric J. Light brown surfaces (the core is not accessible for study). Complete miniature pot. Enclosure 2 ditch (middle to upper fill). Phase 2.
51. Fabric A. Brown core and interior, light brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch (middle to lower fill). Phase 2.
52. Fabric C. Dark grey-brown core and interior, brown to dark brown exterior. Enclosure 2 ditch, (middle to lower fill). Phase 2.
53. Fabric A. Black core and surfaces. Chamber BF24 in Enclosure 4. Early Roman.
54. Fabric A. Grey core with light brown interior, dark brown exterior. Two horizontal grooves on the exterior below the rim. Chamber BF24 in Enclosure 4. Early Roman.
55. Late Iron Age Fabric 3BA. Brown core and surfaces. The flat rim is Middle Iron Age in form, but the fabric is grog-tempered; hand-made. North ditch (BF31) of the ?mortuary enclosure BF32 in Enclosure 4. Late Iron Age/early Roman.

PALAEOCHANNEL CF52 AND ITS FINDS (FIGS 2, 5, 27)

Cremated bone	none	
Objects	CF52.1	spearhead
	CF52.2	spearhead
	CF52.3	drip of lead
Residual finds	none identified (context metal detected only)	

On the west side of the 1996 excavation area was a broad palaeochannel (FIGS 2 and 5, CF52) which formed a shallow depression filled predominantly with pale silt. This ran at a gentle slope down from north–south. To the north the feature was formed from the merging of two smaller silt-filled channels. The main channel was between about 70 m across where the two smaller channels merged, and 30 m across at the south edge of the site area. This feature was cut by the Middle Iron Age enclosure (Enclosure 2). South of Enclosure 2, early Roman pottery sherds and two iron spearheads were found just below the excavation surface of the channel silt. A machine-excavated trench was cut across the main channel to its base and at that point the channel proved to be between about 0.8 m and 0.3 m deep, the deeper sections being on its eastern side. It was predominantly filled with pale brown sandy silt. In places in the lower part of the feature this overlay a thin gravel layer at the base and also divided pockets of gravels. These gravels were concentrated in the eastern, deeper half of the feature and merged into the sands and gravels at the channel base. The gravel pockets rising between broad areas of the silt fill gave the impression that the feature may have been formed from a number of smaller channels. There were no finds from the excavation section cut across the channel.

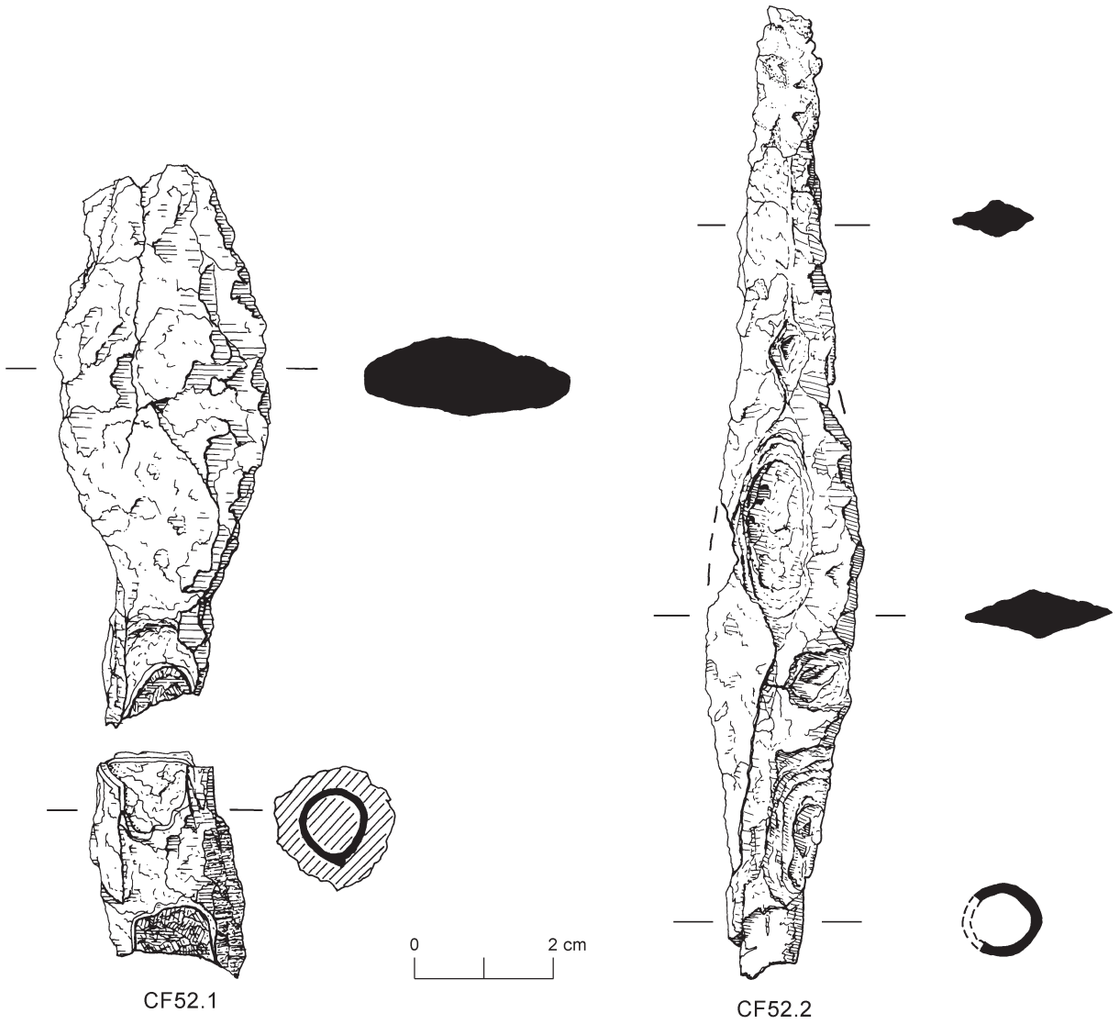

FIG. 27. Iron spearheads from the palaeochannel (scale 1:1)

Finds (FIG. 27)

The feature contained a small tapering resolidified drip of lead and two spearheads. The two spearheads were found some distance apart (FIG. 27), but probably form a small hoard or votive deposit; the lead drip is unlikely to belong with them. Three small body sherds (5 g) from a jar or bowl in fabric RCW were recovered from just below the level of the excavation surface when cleaning around spearhead CF52.1. The dating of spearheads is difficult, and usually depends upon associated material or stratigraphy (Feugère 2002a, 131). The location of this pair suggests that they relate to Enclosure 2, although they may well be later. A deposit of six spearheads found in the backfill of the inner ditch of a triple-ditched square enclosure at Orsett 'Cock', Essex, with a seventh found nearby in the central ditch, has been dated to about the time of the Roman invasion, supported by the retrieval of a possible Roman artillery bolt head from the inner ditch (Major 1998c, 83, figs 53–4; Carter 1998, 167–8, fig. 12). A major characteristic of the Orsett deposit was the range of shapes present, with no two spearheads being precisely the same, although the group can be divided broadly into leaf-shaped and narrow blades. That one example of each of these forms is present in the Stanway deposit suggests that the same rationale informed the selection of this group, but the evidence is slight and certainly not enough to prove that the two hoards were close in date or contemporary.

The lead drip, if deliberately deposited as part of the Stanway hoard, would support a date of after A.D. 43. However, similar resolidified drips of post-Roman date are often retrieved from ploughsoil, including from this site (listed in archive), and this piece may therefore be intrusive, perhaps the result of settlement, leaving open the question of the date of the hoard.

CF52.1 FIG. 27. SF390. C123 F52. Iron socketed spearhead in poor condition. The blade is leaf-shaped and smooth-edged and was probably of lenticular section with no obvious central rib, although the metal has delaminated and the original shape is therefore not certain. The tip of the blade is missing. Surviving length 110 mm, maximum width 28 mm.

CF52.2 FIG. 27. SF391. C204 F52. Iron socketed spearhead with most of the socket missing. The blade is narrow, with no angularity to the edges, and of lozenge-shaped section with a slightly flattened midrib. Surviving length 137 mm, maximum surviving width 23 mm.

CF52.3 SF204. C127 F52. Small tapering drip of lead, 24 mm long, maximum width 6 mm. Weight 1.24 g. Not illus.