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## Excavations at Linton Roman Villa



Cambridgeshire  
County Council

# EXCAVATIONS AT LINTON ROMAN VILLA

TL 571 462

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*Report no. 88.*

*Excavation of Roman Building, Area B*



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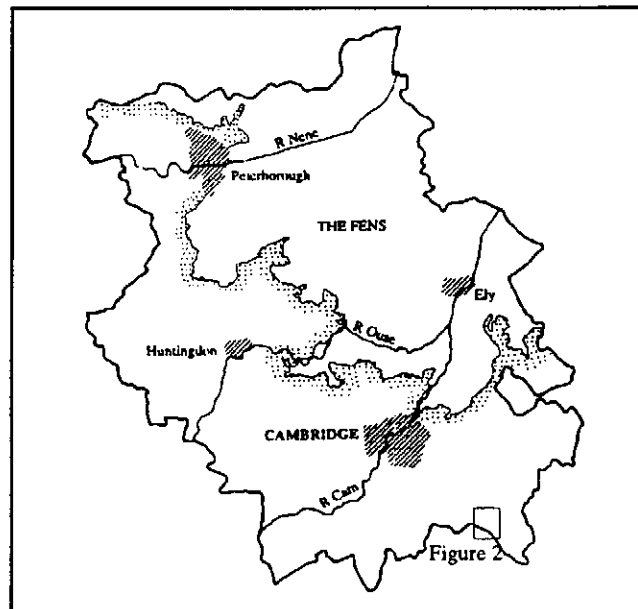
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Excavations at Linton were conducted by the Archaeology Section of Cambridgeshire County Council in September 1990, in advance of a new water pipe-line proposed by the National Rivers Authority (Figures 1 and 2). The pipeline ran adjacent to the large Roman villa site at Linton, formerly in the Essex parish of Hadstock, and it was predicted that considerable archaeological remains were likely to be affected by the pipe trench and the nearby outfall. In view of the importance of the villa site, the NRA agreed to fund rescue excavations in the area.

The Ashdon to Linton pipeline was part of the NRA's Lodes Granta scheme. The scheme aimed to connect a triangle of Ashdon, Cambridge and Newmarket, and was designed to improve the flow of the River Granta, maintain the quality of the river water and conserve the environment and wildlife. The water obtained was to meet increasing consumption in the Cambridge area.



*Figure 1 Map of Cambridgeshire*

Excavations uncovered an extensive range of Roman buildings, associated ditches and yard surfaces. The complex of buildings lay some 50m away from the wealthy villa excavated by R C Neville in 1846-1850. The walls had coursed flint rubble foundations and one building was subdivided into at least 5 small rooms. Pottery dated from the second to the fourth century AD. A collapsed length of Roman walling, Iron Age pits and gullies and field ditches of Belgic date were also observed. In places the buildings were buried by 1.5m of colluvial hillwash. The foundations have been largely preserved intact, except where cut by the narrow pipe trench.

## 2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology at Linton is predominantly chalk, with areas of valley gravels and alluvium following the course of the River Granta. The site of the Roman villa is approximately 40 to 50 metres above sea level, and is around 50 metres away from the River Granta. The river valley is steep at this point, and the ground slopes considerably to the east away from the main villa building. The river valley is currently marshy but seems to have been less so in antiquity. Many of the deposits noted in the pipe trench at Linton were colluvial in origin, that is soil washed down the hillside, often carrying archaeological debris, to collect in the valley bottom.

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Linton area is rich in archaeological material (Figure 3). Just south of the town are the remains of a large Roman villa, excavated by Richard Neville in the 19th century, and some half mile further south are the large Roman burial mounds of Bartlow. Roman burials and scatters of Roman, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon material have been found close to the villa and in the village of Linton. Mediaeval earthworks lie across the river to the east of the villa.

#### 3.1 Prehistory

The earliest material known from the immediate area are a group of Iron Age coins discovered by Neville during his excavations of the villa (SMR 9842, TL 571 462). There were no associated structural remains recorded, but the coins indicate pre-Roman activity in the area.

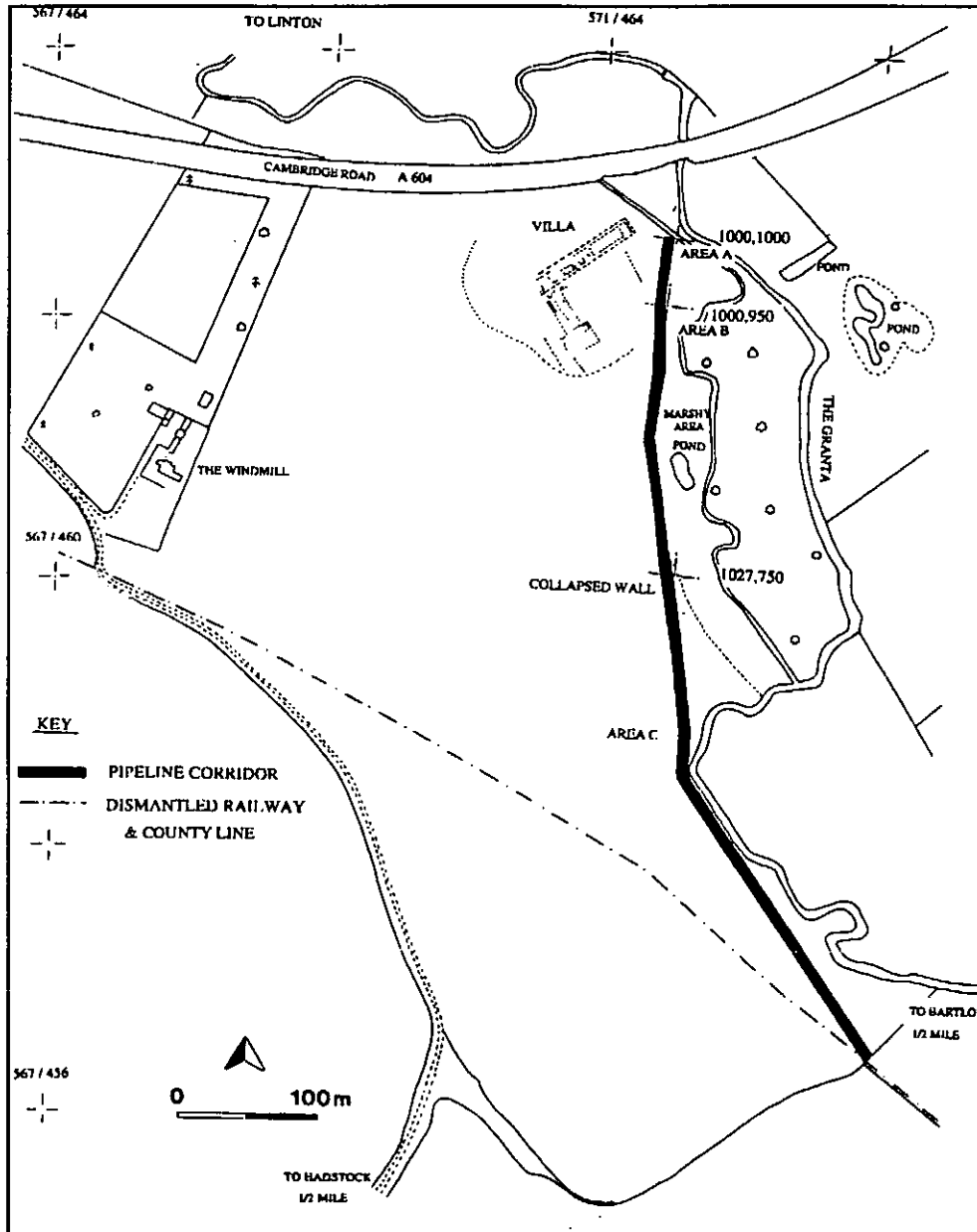


Figure 2 Location Map showing the Ashdon to Linton Pipeline

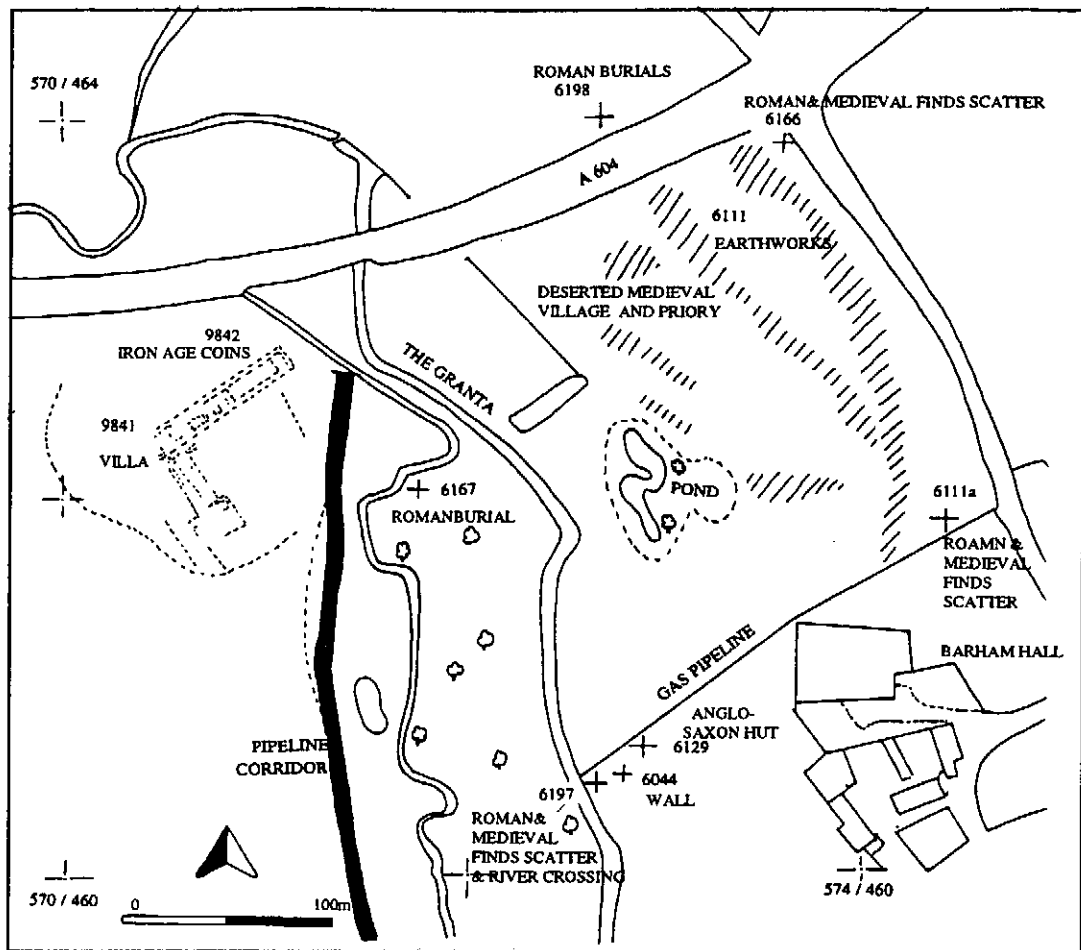
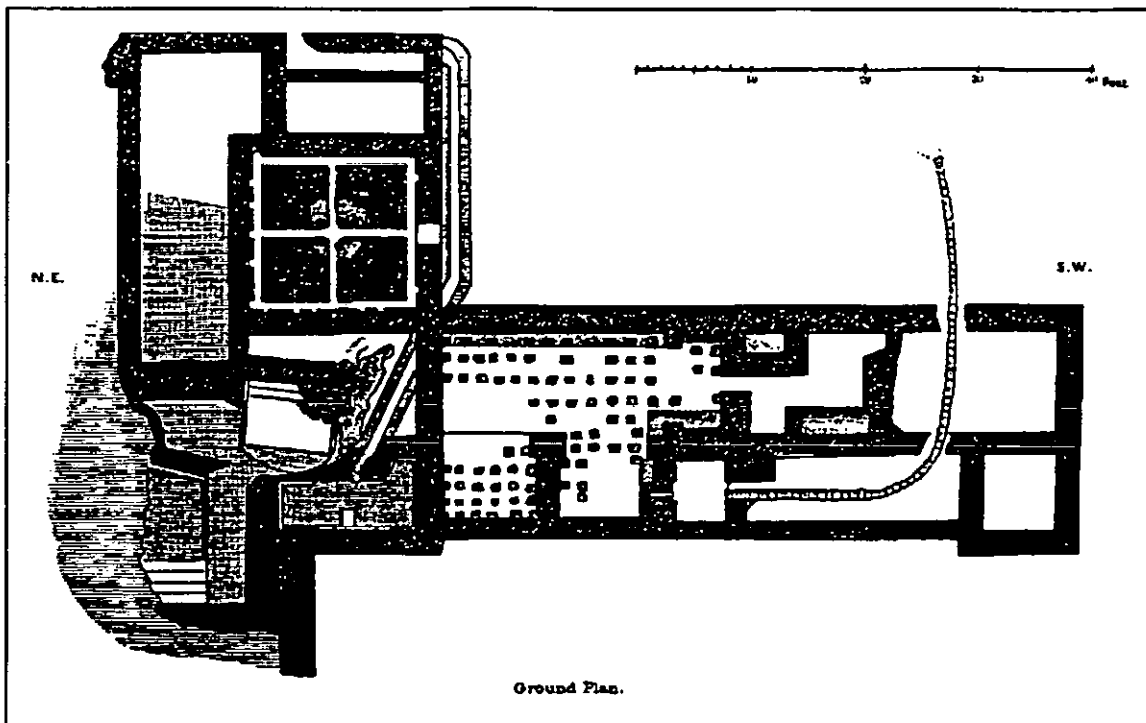


Figure 3 Archaeological Sites in the Pipeline Area

### 3.2 Roman Remains

The Roman villa, formerly in the Essex parish of Hadstock, was found by labourers during land ditching operations in 1826, and partly excavated between 1846 and 1860 by Richard Neville (SMR 9841, TL 571 462). At that time, the field was "entirely covered with foundations" (Neville 1847: 352). The villa is visible today as crop marks which show clearly in aerial photographs. In plan it seems to have been a normal corridor villa with a bath suite projecting from the north east end to form an 'L' (Figure 4).

Excavations demonstrated that the bath house was remodelled at least once, and that there were hypocaust heating systems throughout the villa. Outlet drains from the bath suite were identified, and a separate drain from a latrine. The villa was on a slope above the river, and drainage may have been a problem. The bath rooms excavated by Neville were considerably lower in level than the adjoining living rooms as a result of the hill slope. The villa was brick built, with the exception of its south-west corner, where flint, chalk and clunch was used. Much of the masonry from the walls had been robbed prior to Neville's explorations and it seems that traces of walls extended beyond the area that he identified and recorded. A mosaic pavement was found in 1846 and relaid at Audley End. Other pavements were said to have been destroyed by ploughing. Fragments of painted wall plaster confirm that this was "a residence of superior character" (Neville 1851: 29). Roofing tiles and box flue tiles were recovered in great numbers. Infant burials were reportedly found during the excavations along with metal objects such as tweezers, a chain, samian and other pottery, and about twenty coins of different date.



*Figure 4 Ground Plan of the Villa at Linton (from Neville 1851: 28)*

Neville also investigated a Roman inhumation cemetery just north of the modern A604 (SMR 6198, TL 572 464). Two inhumations were found alongside a wall "faced with large square Roman flanged tiles" (Neville 1857: 64), and other inhumations were located nearby, one of them carelessly buried. The only grave goods were iron nails, occasional Roman sherds and an iron spearhead. In 1926, a Roman cremation burial was discovered just to the east of the villa, close to the River Granta (SMR 6167, TL 571 462). The burnt remains were in a pit with a number of early Roman pots, a bronze brooch, a stud in the form of a lion's head, and the remains of a dog, possibly a domestic pet. A large amphora was found close by.

Roman material was also identified over the eastern half of the field near Barham Hall, east of the River Granta (SMR 6111a, TL 573 462), with a small concentration in the north east corner (SMR 6166, TL 574 463). A regular gravelled area close to the river suggested a Roman road and it is likely that there was a bridge or ford at the site (SMR 6197, TL 572 460, Collins 1980). A wall containing several pieces of Roman tile was found close to this, but the date of its construction was not determined (SMR 6044, TL 57- 46-).

Half a mile to the south of the villa, and well within view, were the seven burial mounds of Bartlow Hills, of which four survive (Hull 1963: 39-44). Conical in shape, these contained extraordinarily rich Roman cremation burials. Five mounds had large wooden chests, and another a brick cist, within which were sacrificial offerings of food and drink, exotic vessels of decorated bronze, glass and pottery, and other objects such as lamps. These are late first and early second century in date, and demonstrate the high status of the individuals buried there. Their proximity to the villa at Linton suggests possible links between the occupants of the house and the occupants of the mounds, but a further Roman villa is known at Bartlow itself which may be more directly connected with the burials, and there are other wealthy villas known in the vicinity.



### **3.3 Anglo Saxon Remains**

Anglo-Saxon activity in the area is represented by the discovery of a pit house, or *grubenhous*, close to the Granta and dated to the sixth century AD (SMR 6129, TL 572 460, Collins 1980). Anglo-Saxon pottery and metalwork has also been found, and there is a cemetery in Linton itself (SMR 67114, TL 56- 46-: not shown on map).

### **3.4 Medieval Remains**

On the east side of the River Granta, there is a series of earthworks, mostly amorphous and unintelligible, comprising ditches, slopes and platforms (SMR 6111, TL 573 462). These are the remains of the deserted mediaeval village and priory of Barham. Quantities of medieval pottery have been found in the area. (SMR 6111a, TL 573 462). Abundant medieval finds and building debris were recovered next to the River Granta, no doubt part of the Barham complex (SMR 6197, TL 572 460).

## **4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The water pipe line was located in an rich archaeological area, as described above. The route was designed to avoid the villa itself, but the area to the east was directly affected. Limited rescue excavations were therefore undertaken. The aim was to test any remains that might be associated with the villa and, if possible, to provide dating evidence. The northern part of the pipe line, next to the villa, was to be the focus of most archaeological work. However, once soil stripping had taken place, archaeological features were visible along much more of the pipe line than anticipated. It was necessary to modify the original research design, and divide labour and time over the entire trench, so that dating evidence and stratigraphy could not be investigated in as much detail as had first been hoped.

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology was fourfold: field-walking; metal detecting; observation and selective excavation. Initially, the area above the Roman villa was field-walked. This was to the west of the pipeline and locally known as the Red Field. Material was recorded on a 25 metre grid, and provided a general context for the excavations (Appendix G). Metal detectors were then used over the pipeline easement to provide a pre-excavation inventory of metalwork, and an impression of artefact distributions. Finds were later checked against sub-surface features and were removed in case of unauthorised metal detecting of the site. The machine topsoil stripping along the pipeline was carefully monitored, and areas of potential archaeological interest identified. The trench was then cleaned, planned and photographed in advance of selective excavation of archaeological features. The machine digging of the pipe trench itself was finally observed, particularly in sensitive areas, and such features as were visible in the narrow trench recorded.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Field walking

The pipe trench itself was first tested, with one transect walked along its 650 metre length and material recorded and collected every 25 metres. This small survey demonstrated a concentration of finds in the northern part of the trench, close to the villa, and a clear fall-off to the south. A 25 metre grid for fieldwalking was established in the field to the west of the pipeline. The large size of the grid was dictated by the limited time scale and the nature of the development. The east boundary was defined by a scrub area along the course of the River Granta, the north by the Linton bypass, the west by an area of high ground and the south by the field boundary drain.

Conditions were initially good. The soil was well weathered, although visibility was reduced by oilseed rape leaves from a previous crop. Members of the field crew walked 25 metres apart and systematically collected artefacts over the northern half of the field. Tile and stone counts were recorded within each 25 metre collection transect, but were not retained due to the large quantity. The transects were widened to 50 metres in the southern part of the field, due to the lack of time, but finds were still recorded in 25 metre blocks. This part of the field was walked after it had been ploughed (harrowed and rolled) and when the ground was much wetter.

As had been expected, there was a marked concentration of material in the north east corner of the field, above the villa (Appendix G). There was a great quantity of Roman roof tile, as well as tesserae from decorated floors and pottery. Undated material such as bone, worked stone and metalwork seemed to be concentrated in this area, perhaps indicating an association with the villa. There was also later material in the form of medieval and post-medieval pottery. Prehistoric worked flint, some of it fire cracked, was spread widely across the field indicating that the area had been heavily used long before Roman times (Appendix F). The field walking survey provided valuable background evidence for the excavations. The large size of material recovered suggests that ploughing is currently damaging the monument.

### 6.2 Metal Detecting

The northern end of the trench was surveyed using a metal detector, and produced approximately 100 finds within the first 150 metres cleared. These were concentrated in the north, close to the villa, and consisted of Roman coins, lead, bronze pin heads and one fine fibulae, and medieval and post-medieval tokens and buttons (Appendix B). Iron objects were not recovered. The finds were rich considering the downslope location of the trench, and the amount of previous illicit metal detecting in the area (three or four teams were known to have been detecting in nearby fields in the week prior to the excavations). Find spots were marked, and the finds themselves removed for safekeeping. Finds further down the pipe trench were concentrated along the line of one of the buildings.

The ground above the villa was also metal-detected, and the finds were recorded on a 5 metre grid. Most of the material recovered was lead, but there were also two pewter vessels, approximately ten coins and several brooches or fibulae. This survey was carried out because of the likelihood that the villa would be unscientifically and illicitly detected in the near future.

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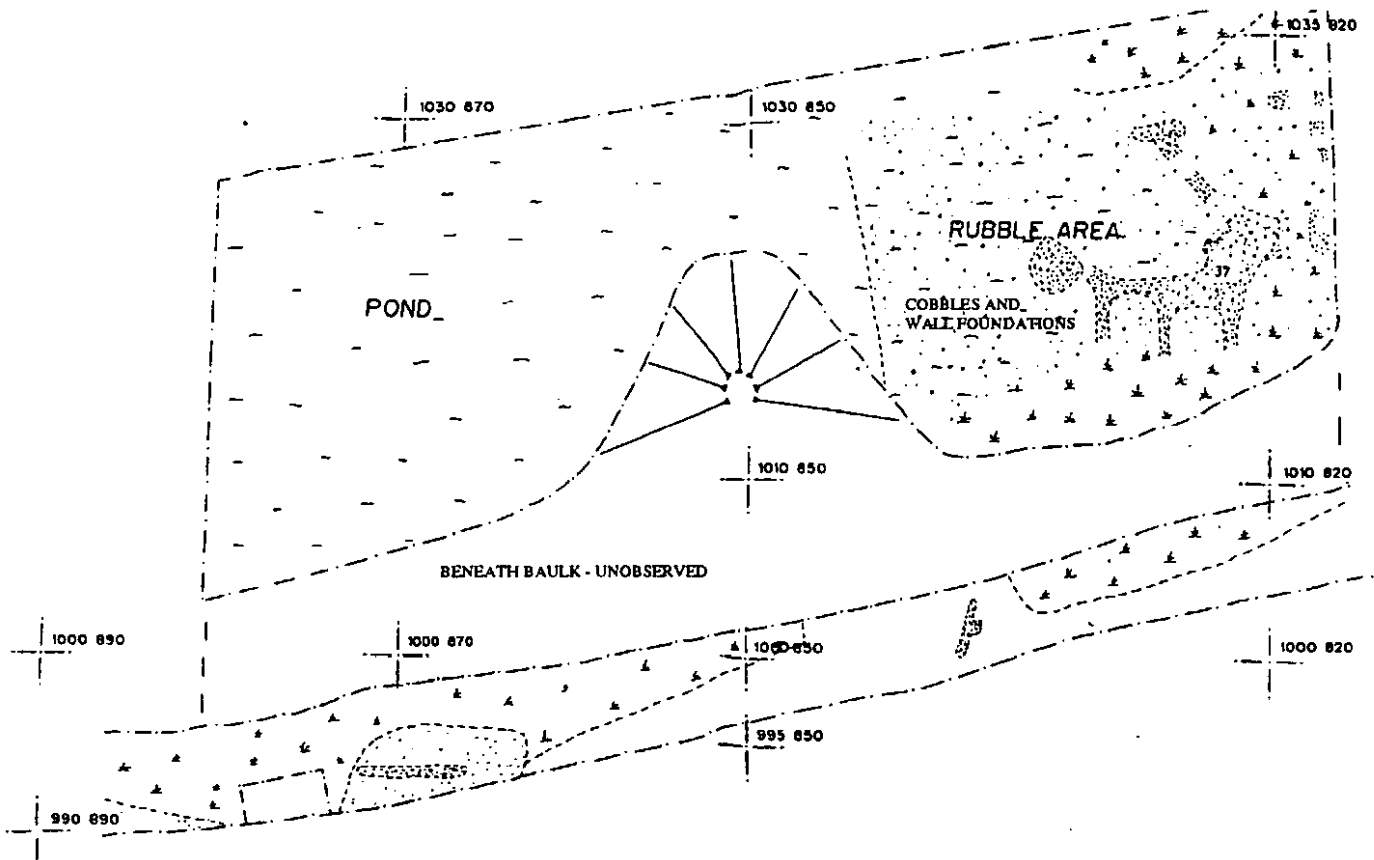
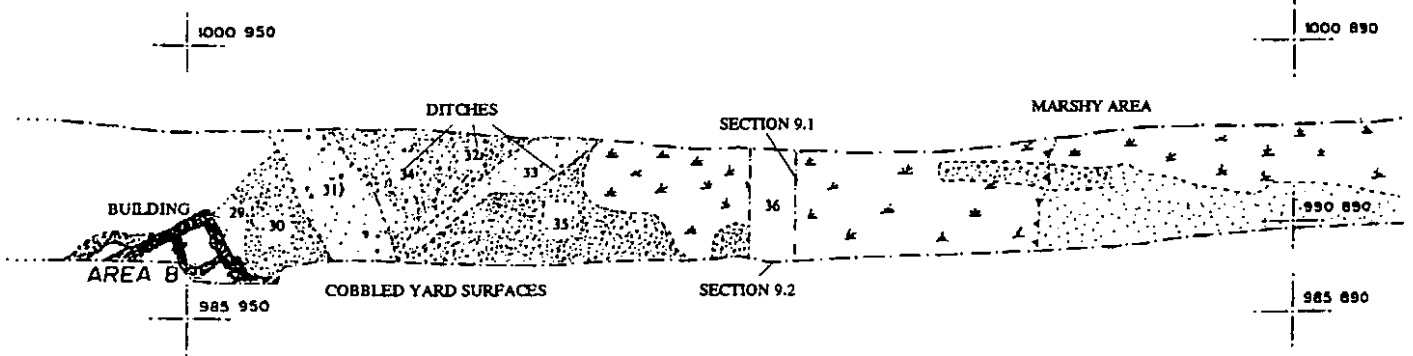
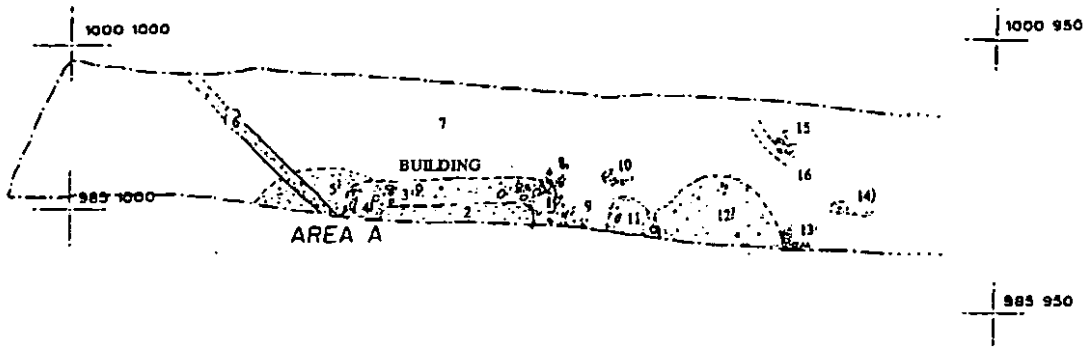
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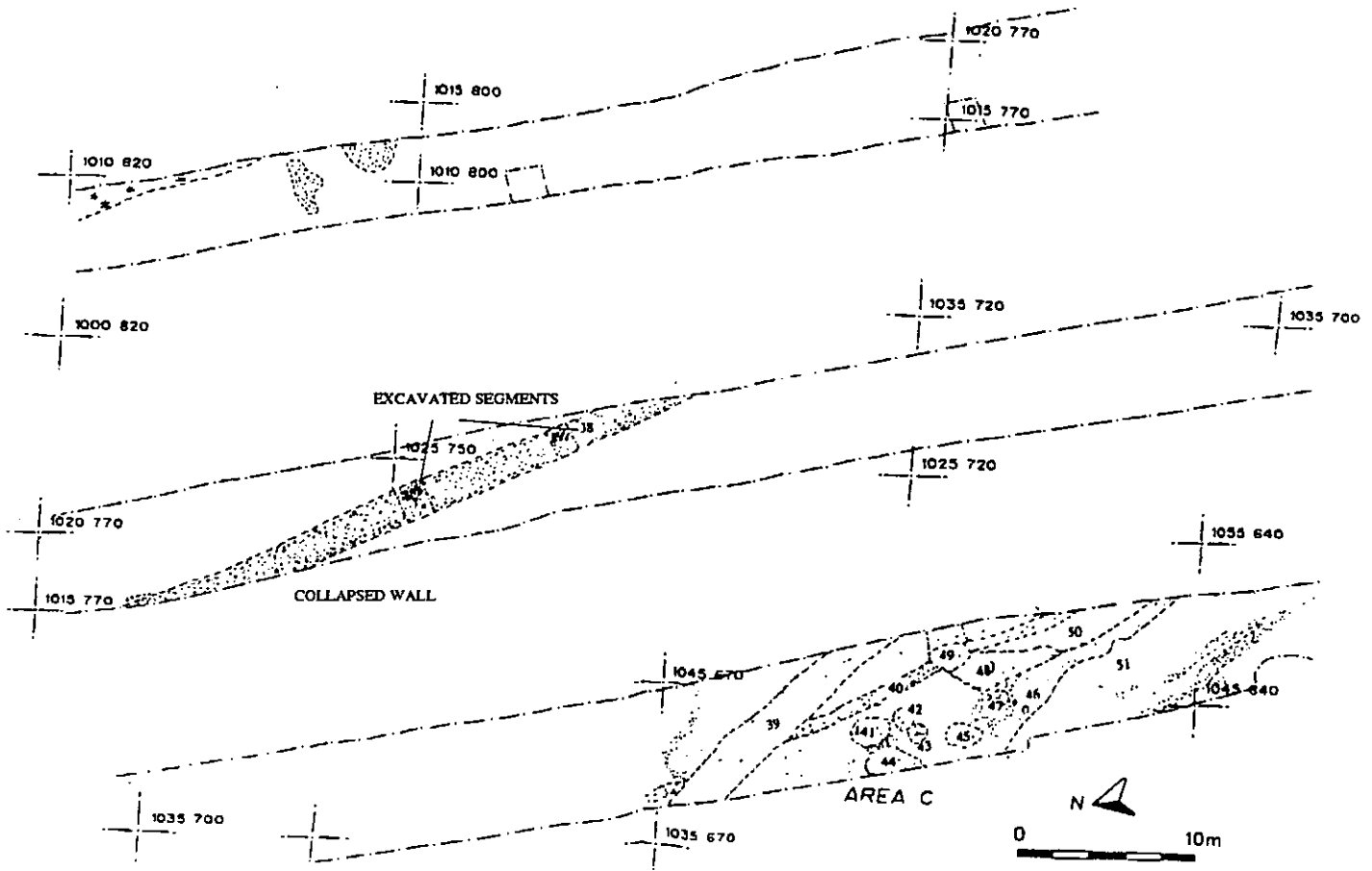


Figure 5 Trench Plan of Excavations at Linton

The main part of the building extended westwards beyond the edge of the trench. The north and south walls were not satisfactorily located. A possible southern buttress or wall corner [8] was identified and contained well-laid, tightly packed flint. Randomly packed flint rubble continued from here towards the edge of the trench and was possibly the wall's southern return. The north wall may have been hidden by a mixed, compacted spread of destruction material beyond the wall [5], but a hand-dug trial slot in the area failed to expose any buried remains.

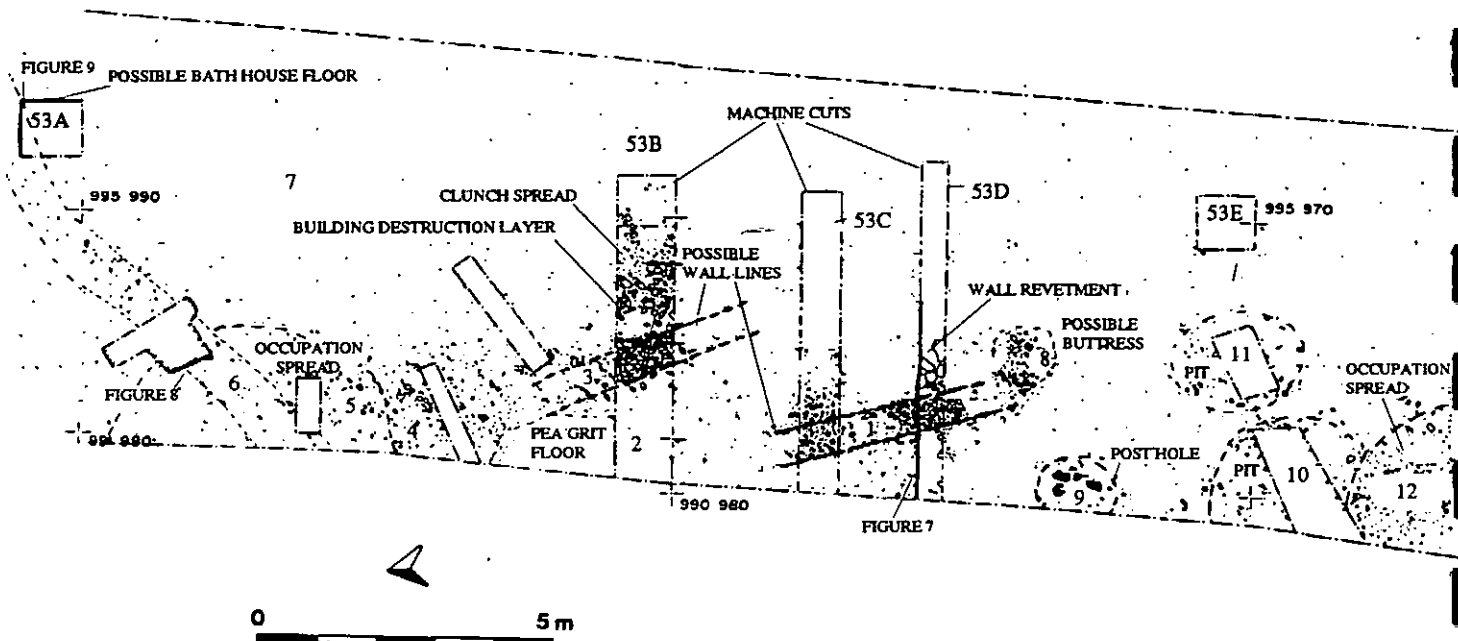


Figure 6 Plan of Area A

West of the building was a linear gully [6]. Partial excavation of this showed it to be both deep and wide, containing a mottled silty fill with chalk, stone, mortar, charcoal, tile, gravel and oyster shell in at least three distinct layers (Figure 8). A machine-dug test pit [53A] uncovered a layer of *opus signinum*, a type of Roman cement floor surface, at a depth of 0.35 metres (Figure 9). It is likely that this was redeposited flooring from the villa's bath complex, extending over a minimum of 10 metres. No associated structural remains were found.

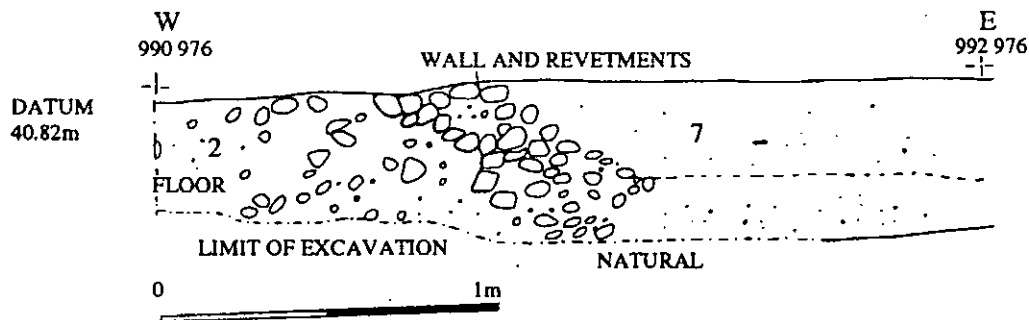


Figure 7 South Facing Section through Building in Area A

To the south of the building was a series of post holes and pits. A tile-lined post hole [9] lay close to the southern extent of the room, with two pits nearby ([10] and [11]). The pits were partially excavated and shown to be of Roman date. They contained general household waste including charcoal, oyster shell, animal bone, tile and pottery, including a fragment of a mortarium [11]. Several other pit features ([13], [14] and [15]) lay beyond an intense cluster of flint, rubble, stone, tile, charcoal, pottery and bone [12]. One small circular pit was excavated [15] and found to cut into a subsurface linear feature, possibly a gully from an earlier occupation phase [16] (see Figure 5).

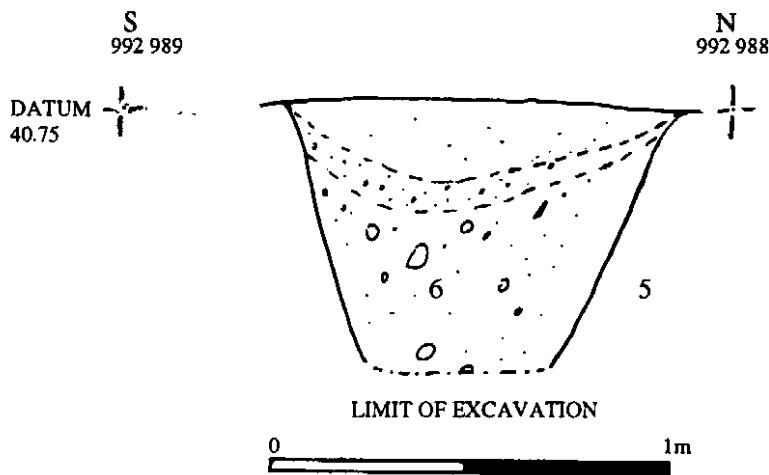


Figure 8 East Facing Section through Ditch 6

The building apparently collapsed outwards and downslope. There was a surface concentration of debris just north of the main room, containing flint, chalk, charcoal, much tile and pottery [5] which suggested a fall northwards and outwards. A massive rubble destruction layer, perhaps from an earlier building, was exposed by a machine cut through the wall at a depth of some 0.30 metres [53B]. This dipped down sharply to the north east and confirmed the direction of the wall's collapse. A small test pit [53E] also contained destruction material from the building.

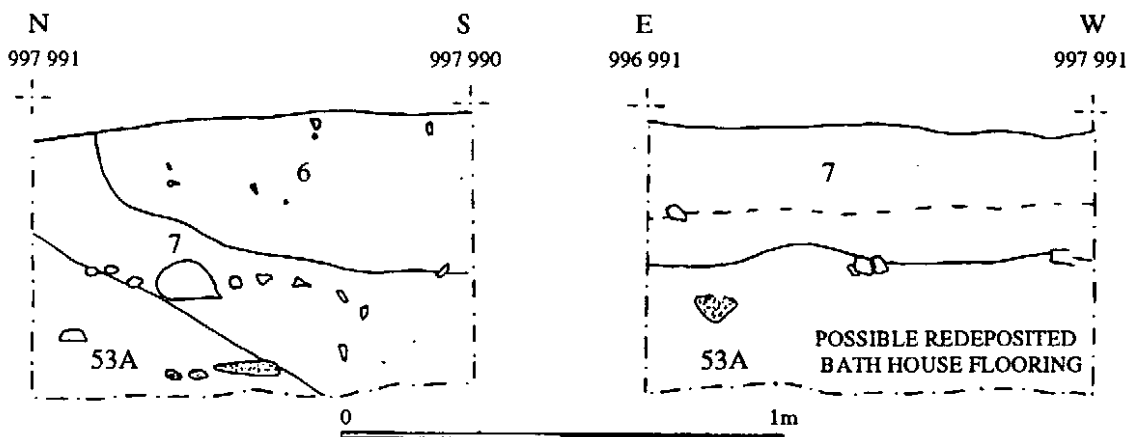


Figure 9 West and South Facing Sections through Test Pit 53a

**Area B** This building complex was defined by a series of flint rubble wall foundations, clearly visible after topsoil stripping operations (Figure 10). The foundations ran into the west baulk of the trench, forming a right angled corner. The ground surface dipped clearly to the east with rich organic deposits overlying the Roman ground surface. The building consisted of several small rooms which appeared to have laid floor surfaces of chalk and small gravel fragments. The rooms were oriented northwest-southeast and lay only about 50 metres east of the villa's main living block. The aerial photographs of the villa may indicate archaeological features in this area, and another small enclosure in the scrublands nearby.



*Figure 10 Plan of Area B*

Finds were collected during the initial cleaning of Area B, and included intrusive modern glass, and seventeenth or eighteenth century clay pipe fragments [7]. There were clusters of bone and pottery, but on the whole less than in Area A. In marked contrast to Area A, there was very little tile, perhaps indicating a different roofing method. The lack of cement flooring, *opus signinum*, suggests that this was a block of storage rooms.

Further cleaning of the area showed the building in more detail. Little excavation was undertaken. The building consisted of one main, subdivided room, and a separate small, irregular room tacked on to the north. The wall of this little room [21] seemed to abut that of the main complex [17], and was made up of large flint cobbles, enclosing a chalk and flint floor [26]. It is just possible that the small room was in fact earlier than the main one. A concentration of fine chalky fragments close to the main wall [17] may indicate that the floor [26] had been cut by it, rather than built onto it at a later stage.



The main room had substantial flint rubble wall foundations ([17] and [18]) and was subdivided by a series of internal walls ([19] and [20]) into several smaller rooms, each only 2 or 3 metres across. The start of the north wall of the main room was observed, again made of random uncoursed flint [22]. A possible thickening of the outside wall [17] was noted, which may have been to compensate for the mechanical pressure of the walls down the slope. The floors seemed to survive *in situ* ([23], [24], [25]), and consisted of small rounded chalk fragments with occasional flint gravels, set into a dirty orange sandy silt. A cluster of flint cobbles in the centre of one floor [23] could indicate a further internal room division, but there was insufficient time for excavation to clarify the sequence.

A section dug through the east wall of the building showed that the wall was made up in a series of cobbled layers down to 40 or 50 cm, bedding onto a mixed chalk and clay natural (Figure 11). Below wall [17] were perhaps the foundations for earlier walls [52]. A likely threshold was identified in the south wall of the main room as well as a possible internal post hole [27]. A further small feature [28] was cut into the chalky surface but not investigated further. The building was backfilled and not affected by the pipe trench. It is therefore preserved *in-situ* for future investigation.

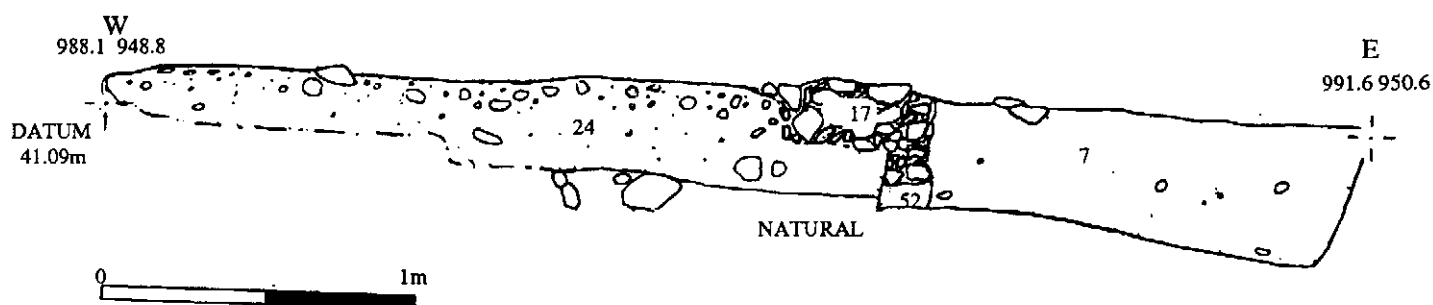


Figure 11 South Facing Section through Building in Area B

**Courtyard Area** Beyond the threshold to the building was a cobbled outer courtyard [30], cut by a large ditch [31]. The courtyard surface was composed of finely laid chalk and gravel, and yielded such finds as oyster shell and animal bone. Excavation of the ditch showed the clear collapse of stony yard surfaces into its north and south edges. The fill was a yellow silty clay, perhaps deliberately backfilled. Quantities of painted wall plaster were recovered.

The cobbled surface continued to the south ([34] and [35], see Figure 5), made of densely packed medium and large stones, with humic loam in between. The ground surface dipped down sharply to the east. This cobbling may indicate a Roman attempt to consolidate the sloping ground surface beyond the villa, and to compensate for the natural wetness of the area. The cobbled area [34] was rich in finds such as pottery, tile, animal bone and oyster shell. It may have been a deliberate dump zone. The rubbish would have served to further consolidate the ground surface. Two ditches ([32] and [33]) cut across the cobbled area. These were filled with tile fragments of various kinds (flue, roofing tegulae and flat), and contained very dark stony soil. Ditch [33] had a concentration of cobbles running along its centre at the surface.

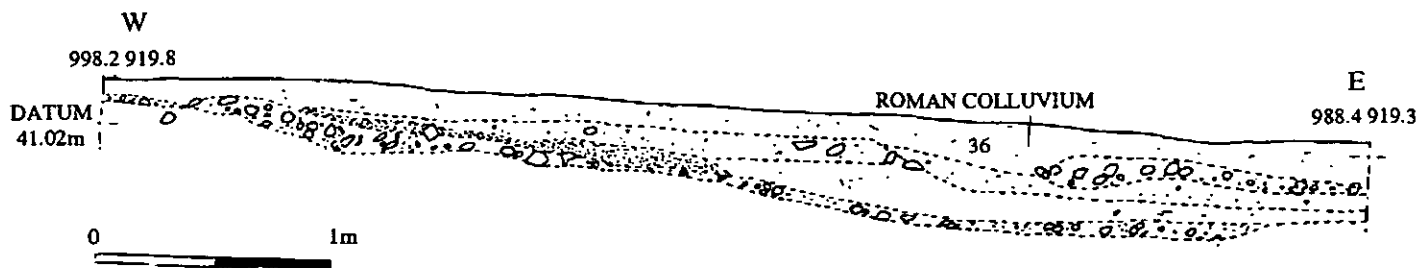


Figure 12.1 North facing Section of Machine Trench 36

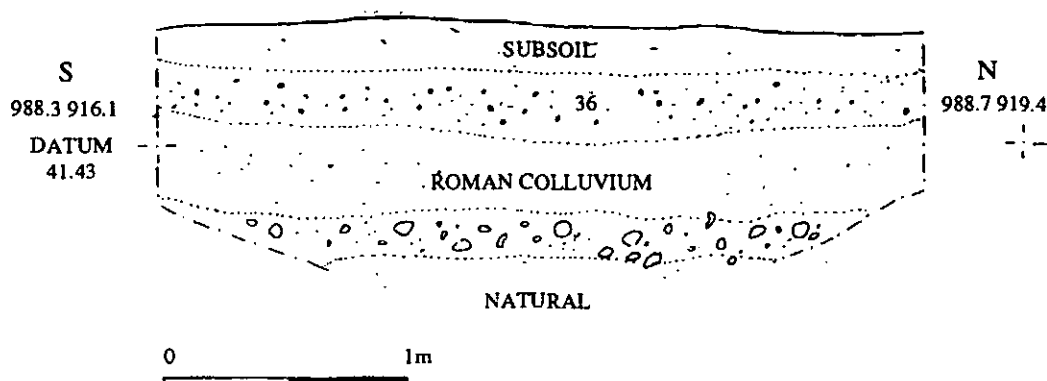


Figure 12.2 East Facing Section of Machine Trench 36

There was no sign of any *in situ* building at this point, but remains were deeply buried, as was demonstrated by a machine section dug across Trench 36. Facing north, this machine cut showed archaeological horizon, particularly the Roman colluvium, sloping down to the east (Figure 12.1). The Roman colluvium was buried beneath subsoil and silt at a depth of 0.50 metres, as was shown in the east facing section, and lay above a layer of flints and gravel (Figure 12.2). The natural deposits in this area were variable, disrupted by chalky marl, and consisting of sticky grey clay and orange gravels.

**Marsh Area** South of Building B and its courtyards, the trench dipped down into a wet and boggy area (Figure 5). Test pits dug to the natural soil indicated that archaeological features were deeply buried. A modern artificial pond lay just to the east of the trench, and marshy ground next to it contained cobbling and surfaces thought to belong to Roman buildings [37]. Test slots dug above possible wall lines recovered quantities of Roman tile and mortar at depth of 0.20 metres. The presence of Roman remains here suggests that the valley must previously have been dry. Musket balls were found above the Roman layers, probably from hunting and wildfowling.

Further exploration of this area took place when the farmer decided to enlarge the pond. Peaty humic swamp deposits and clays were removed, by machine, over an area approximately 5.0 metres by 5.5 metres. The digging came down onto natural looking light grey clay and gravels. Next to the new pond were the remains of possible laid chalk floors or yard surfaces, extending into the swamp to the south, at a depth of about 1.50 metres. Metal detecting in the vicinity by the farmer recovered five coins. Pottery and animal bones were also located, and chalk deposits at a depth of about 0.30 metres.

**Collapsed Wall** South of the marsh area, the ground surface rose once more and became drier, with less organic subsoil. Quantities of Roman tile were found, some of which was associated with a broad linear feature cutting across the trench (Figure 5, [38]). Nails and coins from metal-detecting confirmed that it was a Roman feature. Initially the feature was interpreted as a path or road, but excavation demonstrated that it was in fact a collapsed wall. This feature may indicate the extent of Roman building in the area, perhaps a boundary wall. Roman construction obviously took place well beyond the villa buildings themselves. A considerable quantity of pottery was recovered, including some late fourth century material, which had presumably worked its way into the stone courses after the wall's collapse.

The top surface was weathered, and showed up red-brown against the light brownish orange hillwash. The wall had frequent small chalk and flint pebbles, and cobbling along either side. Two one metre wide slots were excavated across the feature (see Figure 5). The first exposed tightly laid flint gravel, and yielded occasional fragments of tile and possible Iron Age pottery. Pebbles were sparse in the centre of the feature, although lower deposits seemed to have a tightly laid foundation. The second slot exposed a stony horizon on the east side, tightly laid. There was a deep flint cobble curved foundation on the east side. It was possibly reused later as a metalled path.

**Area C** The ground level continued to rise towards the southern end of the trench, reaching a plateau close to the present course of the River Granta. A series of pits and ditches were excavated which appeared to be the remains of a small settlement, late Iron Age or early Roman in date (Figure 13). Most of the ditches ran towards the river. Many archaeological features were immediately obvious on cleaning the surface, but were complicated by disrupted natural geology. Selective excavation of archaeological features was undertaken, concentrating on dating those to be affected by the pipe trench.

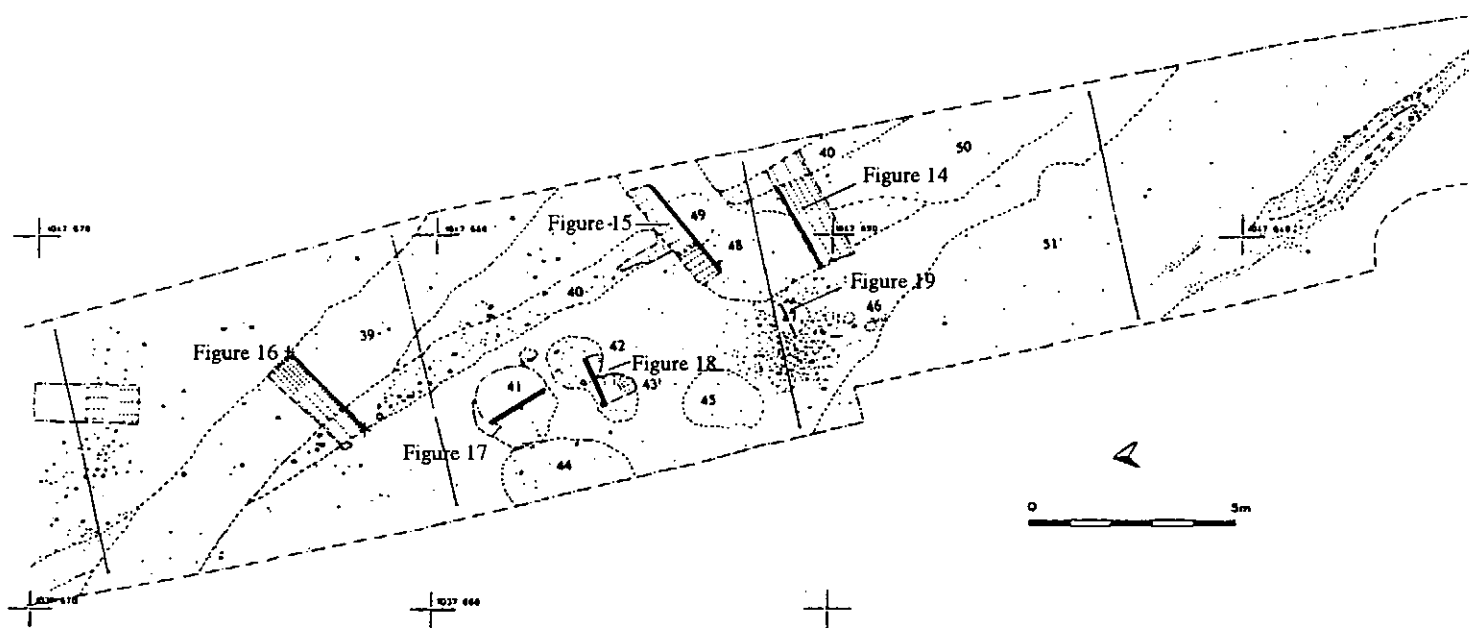


Figure 13 Plan of Area C

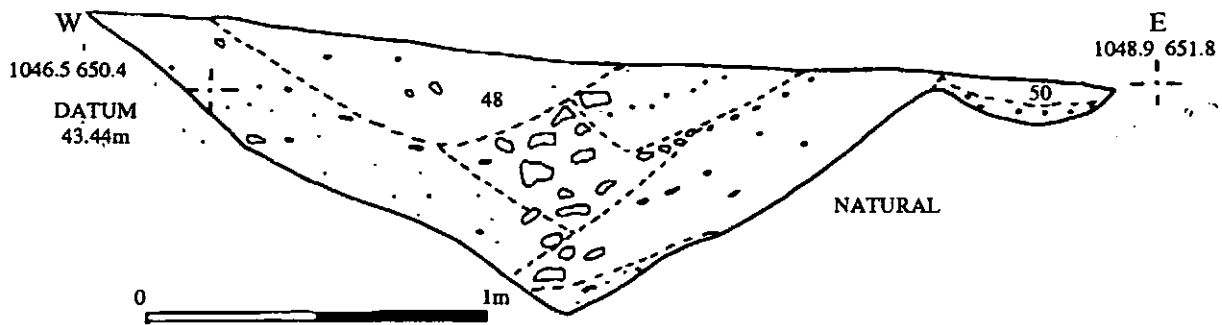


Figure 14 South Facing Section through Ditch 48 and Feature 50

Three ditches or gullies were excavated in the area, all clearly related and of late Iron Age / early Romano-British date. The earliest was a right angled 'V'-shaped ditch approximately 1 metre deep [48] and filled with silty sands and stones, but very little archaeological material (Figure 14). The ditch seemed to have been deliberately backfilled and capped by chalk to provide an entrance to the gully features beyond. It cut across a shallow gully [40], running north west to south east. Below the chalky surface of the ditch, and beneath the base of the gully, was a deep circular cut feature [49], filled with similar silty material, which was perhaps a large post hole related to the entrance way (Figure 15). Another 'V'-shaped ditch [39] cut across the gully several metres further north (Figure 16). The dark fills of these ditches contained late Iron Age and Belgic pottery, together with fragments of a Roman mortarium, tile and tesserae, animal bone and, in the bottom of ditch [39], a bronze brooch.

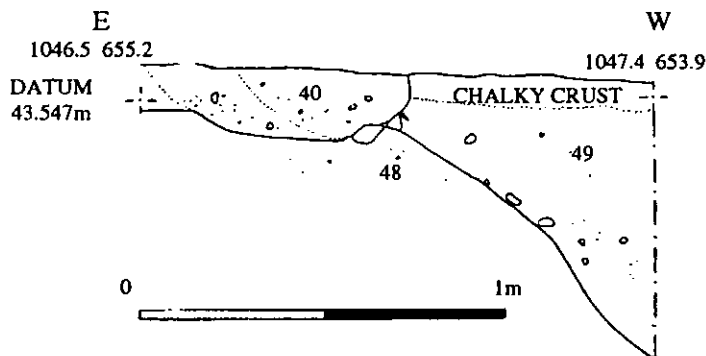


Figure 15 North Facing Section through Gully 40 and Cut Feature 49

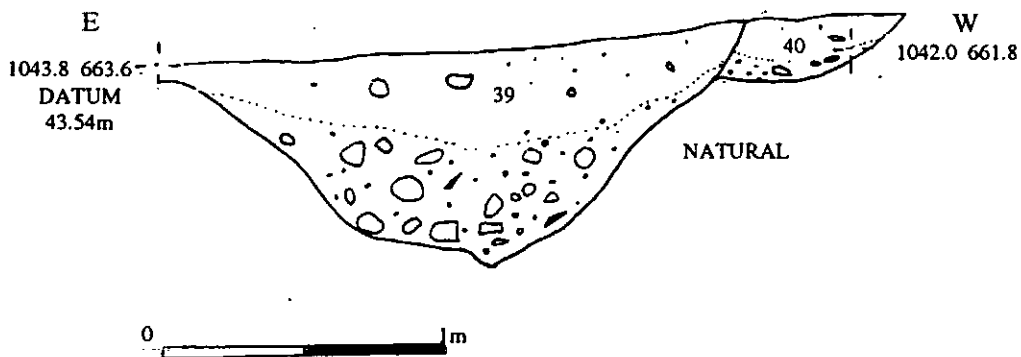


Figure 16 North Facing Section through Ditch 39 and Gully 40

Several round storage pits were also excavated in this area of the site and produced fragments of hand-made vessels and some black-burnished wares ([41], [42] and [43]). They are interpreted as grain storage pits, and are adjacent to an unexcavated spread of occupation material [44]. Pit [41] was circular and at least 1 metre deep with a very dark black, charcoal-rich fill. It was unlined, backfilled with ash and charcoal. Finds consisted of Iron Age pottery, animal bone, mostly pig, and some burnt stone (Figure 17). A very similar, but somewhat shallower pit [42] was excavated to the south. Pit [42] cut into an earlier pit [43] (Figure 18), which was shallow with rounded sides, mixed chalk and clay deposits, and occasional bone, pottery and burnt stone. Environmental samples taken from pit [42] included charred wheat grains and glume bases, and are interpreted as residual material burnt in the pit during a cleaning episode (Appendix C).

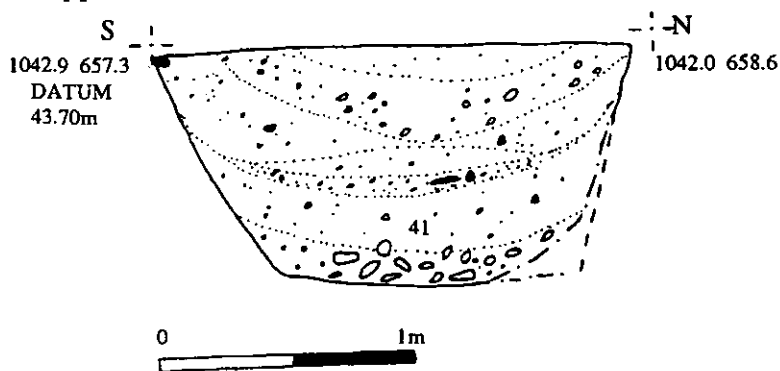


Figure 17 East Facing Section through Pit 41

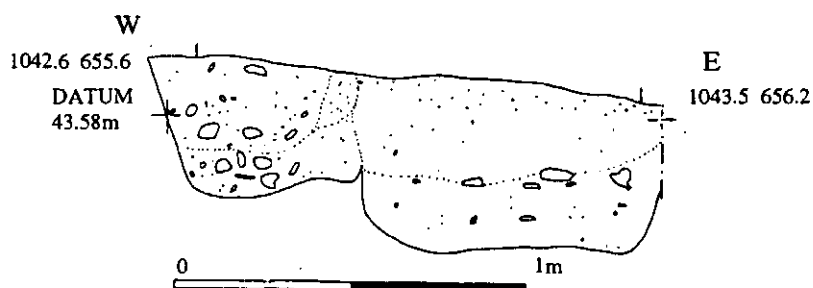


Figure 18 South Facing Section through Pits 42 and F43

A further small pit [47] was excavated slightly to the south (Figure 19). This was a small circular feature cut into an natural area of flint cobbles. Only 22 cm deep, the pit had a dark fill with some flint pebbles, as well as animal bone, pottery and stone. This was interpreted as a post pit. It contained large and medium sized cobbles that may have been as used as packing to support the post itself. There was insufficient time to investigate any relationship with a nearby line of possible post holes [56], or other possible structural remains.

The pipe trench continued beyond this point across the field to the site of the old railway line, but no further archaeological features were visible. Any features close to the railway itself were likely to have been deeply buried beneath rammed chalk from the embankment, at least one metre below the topsoil. However, no remains were found even when the pipe trench itself was cut through the layers.

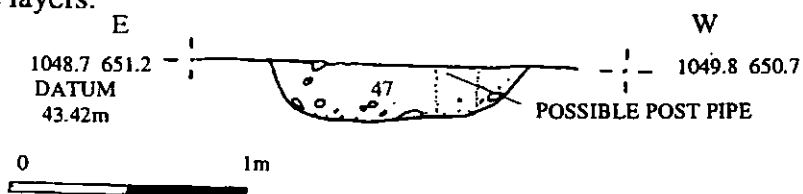


Figure 19 North Facing Section through Pit 47

## 7 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The earliest archaeological remains identified during the work at Linton are the lithic artefacts collected during fieldwalking. No fixed date can be given to the assemblage, and there were no associated features discovered (Appendix F). Mesolithic through to Bronze Age activity seems to be represented. Within the excavation area were the remains of a pre-Roman settlement sited on a small, dry plateau above the river. Grain storage pits of Middle Iron Age date were identified, containing the charred remains of wheat crops and various weed seeds. Several Roman ditches cut across the area. Prior to the discovery of this settlement, pre-Roman activity was known only from some Iron Age coins located during excavation of the villa.

The most substantial material discovered during the excavation was Roman and clearly related to the villa itself. Three quite distinct building units were investigated. The first was a complex series of flint wall foundations and grit floors, associated with several pits and ditches. Material had collapsed from the building downslope towards the river, including many roofing tiles and much abraded pottery. The second was apparently a range of small storage rooms with flint walls, beyond which was a cobbled courtyard area. The third unit was situated in a very marshy area, and could not be investigated in detail, but again seemed to have flint wall foundations. Pottery and coins were found in the area. A collapsed Roman wall was also identified south of these buildings, apparently related to the main villa complex. This was perhaps a boundary wall, as there was no evidence for it being part of any building, but its extent is not clear. Pottery, coins and other artifacts from the site indicate occupation between the second and fourth centuries AD. The lack of dating evidence and the limited areas exposed in the trench restrict interpretation, but Roman activity at Linton was clearly extensive.

The villa at Linton seems to have been substantial, and well appointed, situated on rich agricultural land close to the course of the River Granta. Neville's excavations located painted walls, mosaic floors and a bath suite. The impression of wealth is supported by the quantity of finds from the site, such as pottery, personal items and ornaments. The villa's overall layout is unclear, but aerial photographs indicate a corridor-type structure (Percival 1976: 38) with a central, rectangular suite of rooms and two wings built at the sides, one of which housed the bath rooms. The 1990 excavations located probable storage areas to the east of the house, and the possible boundary wall of an associated enclosure. The villa was part of the dense Roman landscape of Southern Cambridgeshire, one of at least eighteen villas in the region. In its immediate vicinity were several Roman burials, a road and a river crossing. Approximately one mile away were the rich burials at Bartlow Hills, and other wealthy villas.

The excavations discovered little evidence of post-Roman activity. Anglo-Saxon presence in the area is shown by the cemetery at Linton (SMR 67114, TL 56- 46-) and a sixth century *grubenhause* in the field adjacent to the villa (Collins 1980). Medieval and post-medieval finds were plentiful in the excavation and survey, but these lacked contextual information.

The archaeological remains uncovered at Linton were unexpectedly extensive and investigation of the site therefore limited. Excavations were directed towards establishing and recording an overall plan of deposit. It was not possible to recover detailed dating evidence for the villa as had been initially hoped. The pipe trench was directed along the least damaging part of the corridor, avoiding the buildings which had been exposed. These were backfilled and are preserved in-situ for any future investigation. It is hoped that future work will clarify the dating of the villa, and throw light on the extent and nature of the complex as a whole. Prehistoric remains in the area, including the Iron Age riverside settlement also merit further research, alongside the Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Mr J Barker of Ravenstock Farm, the owner of the Roman Villa at Linton, for permission to excavate at the site, and for his continuing support and enthusiasm throughout the project. Thanks are also due to Mr B Barton, the National Rivers Authority's Project Engineer, and to Mr M Loughlan of Breheny's for help and co-operation during the excavations. Also to Mr B Parkinson and Mr Glover, who conducted a metal detector survey of the pipeline.

The excavation and post-excavation team deserve particular thanks for all their hard work: Helen Bailey, Simon Bray, Bob Butler, Erica Guttman, Jez Meredith, Janet Miller, Ben Robinson and Sarah Tarlow. For illustrations, we would like to thank Bob Butler, Caroline Gait and Donald Bell, and for specialist analysis of material from the site A Clapham, C Going, J Hale, G Haley, J Pluviez and G Wait.

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## APPENDIX A THE PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN POTTERY

C J Going

The pottery from the Linton villa site totalled approximately 10kg and dated from the middle Iron Age to the later fourth century AD. The only post-Roman pottery among the material submitted for examination was a fragment of a clay pipe from a cleaning context.

The assemblage is first discussed for the generally rather faint light which it sheds on the dating of the salient features in areas A-C. It is followed by a brief chronological summary. More detailed indices of the pottery are to be found in the site archive.

**Area A** Pit [9] produced a small quantity of abraded material suggesting an infilling date not before the later Antonine period, or shortly after. Pit [10] contained pottery datable down to the middle or later third century or slightly later, while pit [11] produced material indicating a fourth century date, possibly after c. AD 350, which would make it one of the latest pits from the site. Ditch 6 produced a small, generally undiagnostic quantity of pottery including, from near the bottom, a sherd of a late shell tempered jar of probably post mid-fourth century date which was backfilled after, or more probably simply post-dates, the mid fourth century AD. A mixture of large, abraded sherds of second to third century pottery came from floor [2]. It included a large rim sherd (c. 0.18 Eves) of a Colchester mortarium probably datable to the second half of the second century. Post-hole [9] produced a small amount of large pottery sherds which may have been inserted as post-packing. Few of them were chronologically characteristic, but the presence of a late shell tempered rilled jar rim suggests, as with ditch [6], a later fourth century date. The wall deposits (Contexts [1], [3], [13]) produced no pottery.

**Area B** With the exception of the unusual context [38] (see below), the walls from area B (Contexts [17-21]), like those in area A, produced no pottery. Floors [23], [25] and [26] were equally unproductive. Floor [24], however, proved an exception, producing material principally of the first and second centuries AD. Like the floors and walls, surfaces identified as exterior yards [29], [30], [34] and [35] were comparatively sterile as well. Only yard [34] produced material. Essentially these were wares dating to the second and perhaps third centuries AD. The ditches which cut these cobbled yards, however, were rather more productive. From these contexts [31-33] came some of the latest pottery from area B, although unfortunately it was not particularly diagnostic, the forms being generally long-lived third and fourth century AD types. The exceptional wall was [38], which was first thought to be a path before its collapsed state was recognised. It contained a considerable quantity of pottery which presumably worked its way into the stone courses after the collapse of the structure. This material included pottery datable to the latter part of the fourth century.

**Area C** The earliest features from this area were the three middle Iron Age pits [41-43] and probably also pit [47]. The earliest of the trio is [43] which is cut by [42]. Each produced a small number of fresh sherds. The Romano-British features were less impressive. Ditch [48] produced pottery of the second and third centuries AD. It was cut by ditch [40], which produced a sherd of shell-tempered pottery probably datable to the later fourth century. Neither post hole [46] nor feature [49] produced any material.



**Summary and Discussion** In summary, save for the interesting though small middle Iron Age pit groups (contexts [41-43] and [47]) from area C, the pottery is best described as a limited but highly characteristic collection of Romano-British wares from the East Anglian / North Essex fringes. As it principally comes from clearing or other post villa contexts its evidential value is rather low, however. The pottery was predominantly second and third century AD, with a little later material. Imported fine wares included samian, mostly from central Gaul (platters and dishes with the occasional chip from a f. 37). There was a paucity of decorated sherds and no stamps were noted. Other imported fine wares included 'rough-cast' folded beakers from North Gaul, while amphorae are represented by the occasional Dressel 20 sherd (amphorae were rare on the site). Provincial British pottery included sherds from the major manufacturers of Colchester (mostly mortaria and possibly some colour-coated beakers) and the Nene Valley (plain rimmed dishes, flange rimmed bowls and a few rouletted or *barbotine* decorated beaker sherds). Later Roman material included late shell-tempered pottery, a small number of oxidised Hadham ware sherds and a few small fragments of Oxfordshire red wares. The remainder of the assemblage, indeed most of the pottery, came from local (ie. Cambridgeshire / North Essex) sources. There were no groups which merited quantification.

The Illustrated Material: Middle Iron Age from Pits 41 and 42

Pit 42 (Nos 1-4)

- 20.1 Rim of a shouldered jar in a hand-made, gritty fabric. The surfaces are finger marked but otherwise left untreated.
- 20.2 Three sherds of a campanulate bowl in hand-made reduced fabric. Surfaces finger-wiped, but otherwise untreated.
- 16.3 Lower side wall and base of a situlate jar in a hand-made reduced fabric. Surfaces smoothed but otherwise untreated.
- 20.4 Rim of a shouldered jar. Hand-made, reduced sandy fabric. Surfaces untreated.
- 20.5 Rim of a small necked jar in a hand-made, reduced fabric. Rough finish.

Pit 41 (Nos 6-8)

- 20.6 Neck and upper body of a small necked jar. Surfaces smoothed and burnished. Fairly fine, reduced fabric.
- 20.7 Rim and body sherd of a large necked jar with crude finger marks on the neck and finger wiped body. Sandy, reduced fabric.
- 20.8 Rim of a necked jar in a crude, hand-made fabric. The finish is rough.

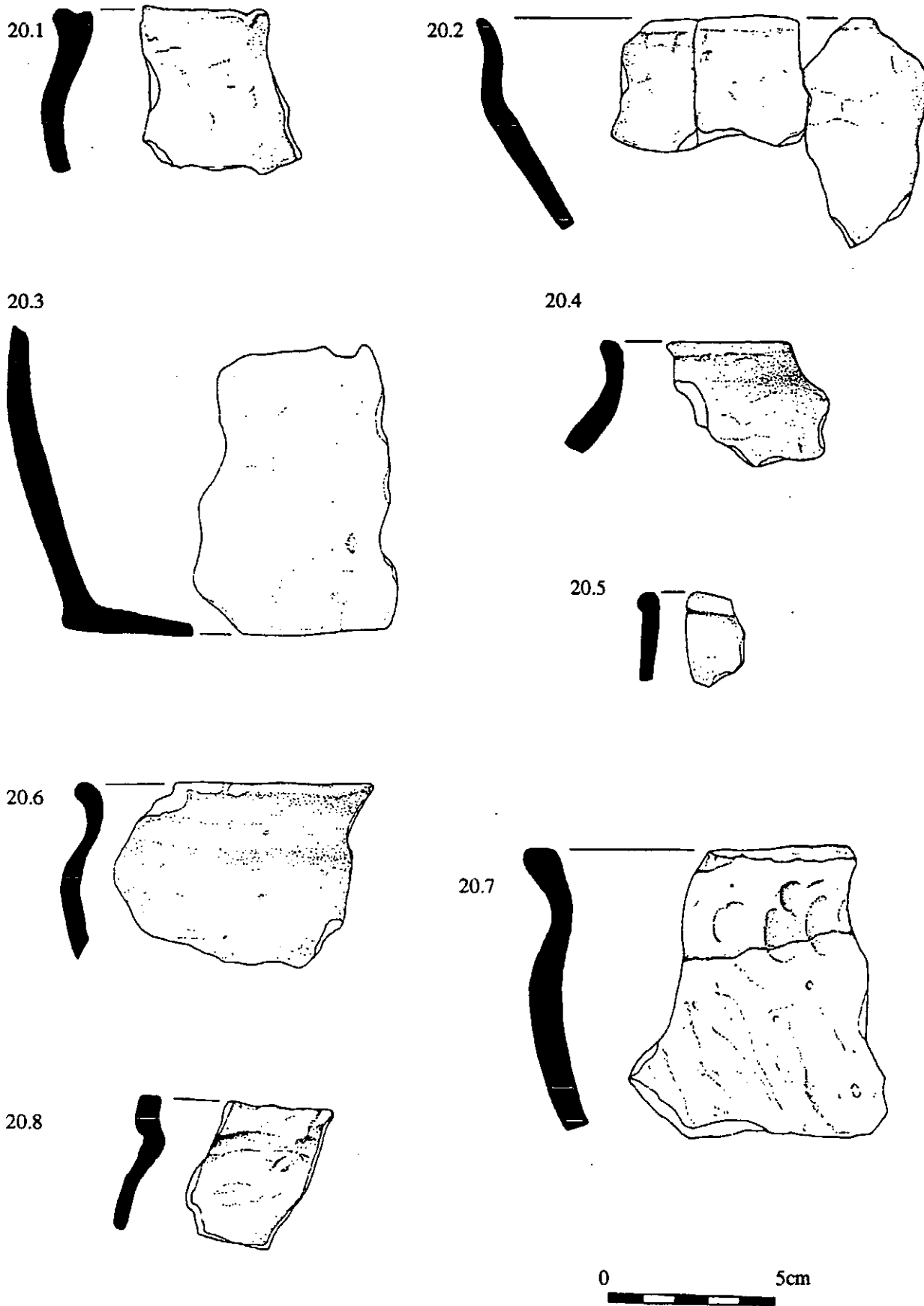


Figure 20 Iron Age Pottery from Pits 41 and 42

## APPENDIX B THE ARTEFACTS

Dr G A Wait

A total of over 460 small finds were recovered during the rescue excavations at Linton. Most were the product of metal-detecting and many cannot be attributed to precise archaeological contexts. The objects have been identified and catalogued by Ms J Pluviez (see archive held by CCC Archaeology).

There were 74 Roman coins recovered during excavation, of which 60 could be identified. A further 52 coins were provided by the landowner, which he had recovered from the site. The total of 112 coins were studied and are presented as a standard histogram in the archive. Coin loss was low prior to the late third century, though this included one bronze Iron Age coin of Cunobelinus. Thereafter the general pattern conforms to Reece's "normal" (Reece 1987: 83) for British sites, except for a tail off in the late fourth century - a feature common on sites in Norfolk and Suffolk (but not at the nearby villa site at Great Wilbraham).

There were more than 386 other "small finds". Many are post-medieval, and all contexts include some post-medieval finds. There were 41 iron objects, including one knife. The remainder are mainly nails, strips, rods, wires and unidentifiable fragments. A wide variety of lead objects were recovered; these are common to Roman sites, used for buildings (roofing, windows) or for repairing pottery, pipes and so on. One lead vessel fragment is present, and one biconical weight for a steelyard. Copper alloy was the most common material present. Undiagnostic objects include fragments of sheeting, buttons, nails, studs, buckles, bracelets etc. Four Roman brooches were identified. These include one Colchester-type brooch of the first century AD (Figure 21.14), one Colchester derivative brooch of the later first century (Crummy 1983), and one fan-tailed rosette brooch also of the later first century AD (21.11). The fourth brooch is unparalleled and the decoration does not appear to be Roman in style. A photograph of a fifth brooch (not available for study) was examined (Figure 21.21). This is an elaborate plate brooch with an enamelled lozenge. The main panel has chequered millfiori squares in yellow and red separated by blue stripes. This second century brooch is the most prestigious of the objects recovered.

Considered together, the small finds collection is typical of the "villa" type settlements in southern Britain.

Illustrations (by Donald Bell, Sarah Hinds and Caroline Gait):

This is a sample of material recovered from the site during excavations and in subsequent survey. None of the objects have a known archaeological context.

- 21.1 Bone pin with semi-spherical head.
- 21.2 Bone pin (Small Find No. SS64). Small conical head and groove below. Shaft diameter 3 mm, straight, broken at 70 mm. As Colchester 1983 Type 2, probably C1-C2.
- 21.3 Ligula / scoop (Small Find No. 5). Small oval cupped end, circular shaft handle tapered to a point, bent. Total length 104 mm. As Colchester 1983, 60 no. 1897.
- 21.4 Copper alloy pin. Spherical head. Shaft curved.

- 21.5 Copper alloy pin. Spherical head and straight shaft.
- 21.6 Finger ring. Plain silver.
- 21.7 Finger ring, bronze, bezel dimpled for enamel now lost. 3rd century.
- 21.8 & 9 Dice
- 21.10 Oval plate brooch, bronze, blue and red enamel decoration, missing central gemstone boss, coiled spring now lost. 2nd century.
- 21.11 Rosette type brooch (Small Find no. SS167). Missing pin and bent at the head. Type as Camulodunum type XI. Flat bow having circular upper part with a central hole (for the attachment of a decorative plate) and three (?) marginal incised lines. The fantail has four longitudinal bands of two relief lines with a central beaded line. The catchplate has a single circular hole. The spring cover is apparently plain but damaged at the ends. Similar to Camulodunum Pl. XCIV nos. 80, 81. First century (Claudian onwards).
- 21.12 Bronze clothes pin, scallop shell head, 2nd-3rd century.
- 21.13 Fibula brooch, 'T' style, fluted spring cover, open work catchplate, bow with prominent central ridge. Early 2nd century.
- 21.14 Colchester type brooch (Small find no. SS 25). Damaged catchplate and spring. Spring has 10 coils. bow is circular in section, plain (?) and tapered. Arms are short and flat with incised lines. The catchplate pierced with several square holes. Length 87 mm, arm width 24.5 mm. As Camulodunum, Pl. XC no. 15.
- 21.15 Open work belt pendant, probably late Roman continental. Origin possibly military.
- 21.16 Lightweight bronze belt or clothes plate, decorated with hare motif, originally surrounded by enamel work, now lost. Probably 3rd century.
- 21.17 Lightweight cast bronze belt pendant.
- 21.18 Roman pewter spoon bowl, probably 2nd-3rd century.
- 21.19 Copper alloy buckle. Mediaeval or post-Mediaeval.
- 21.20 Tag end, 9th century Saxon style, horsehead and interlace.

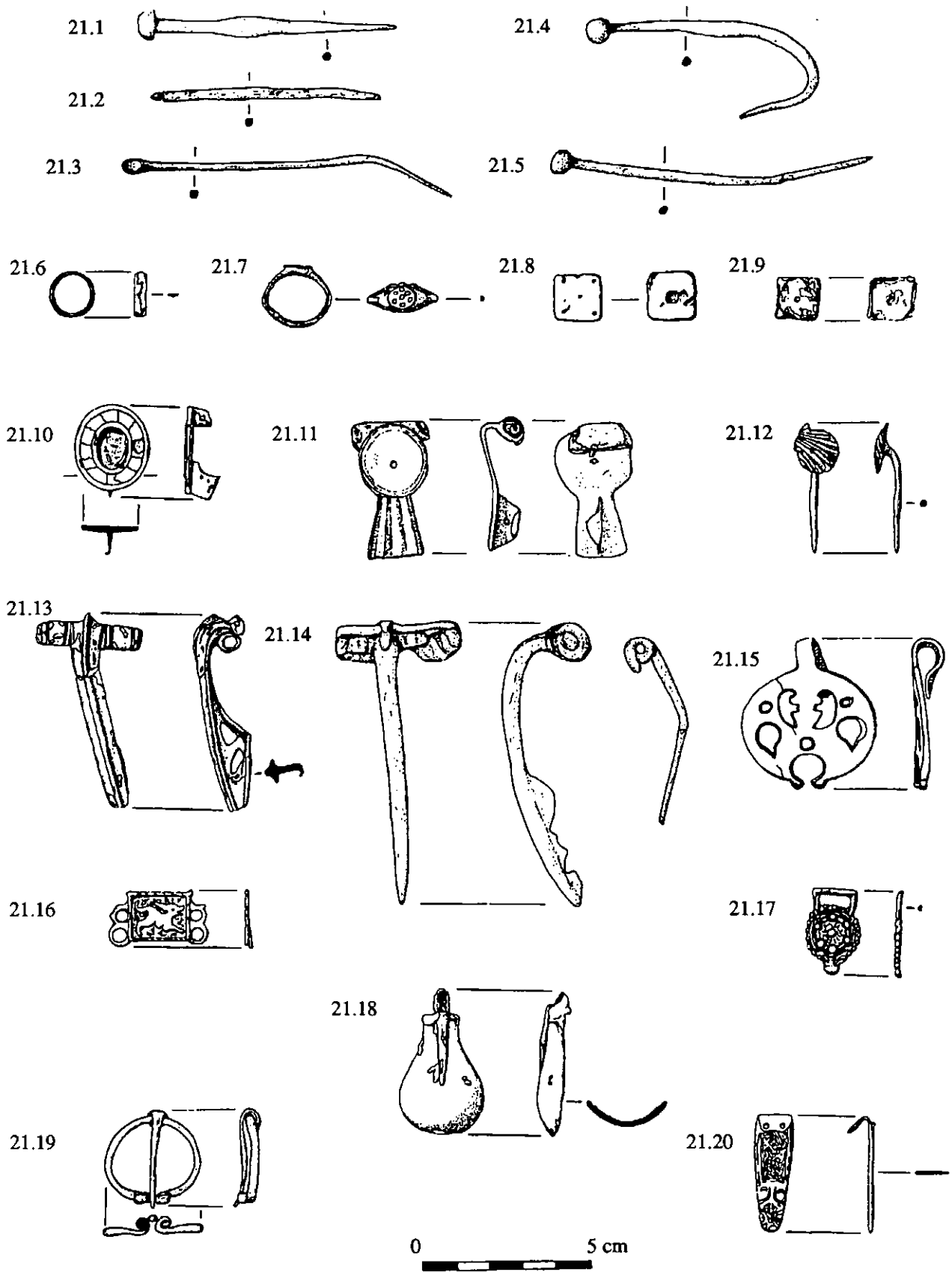
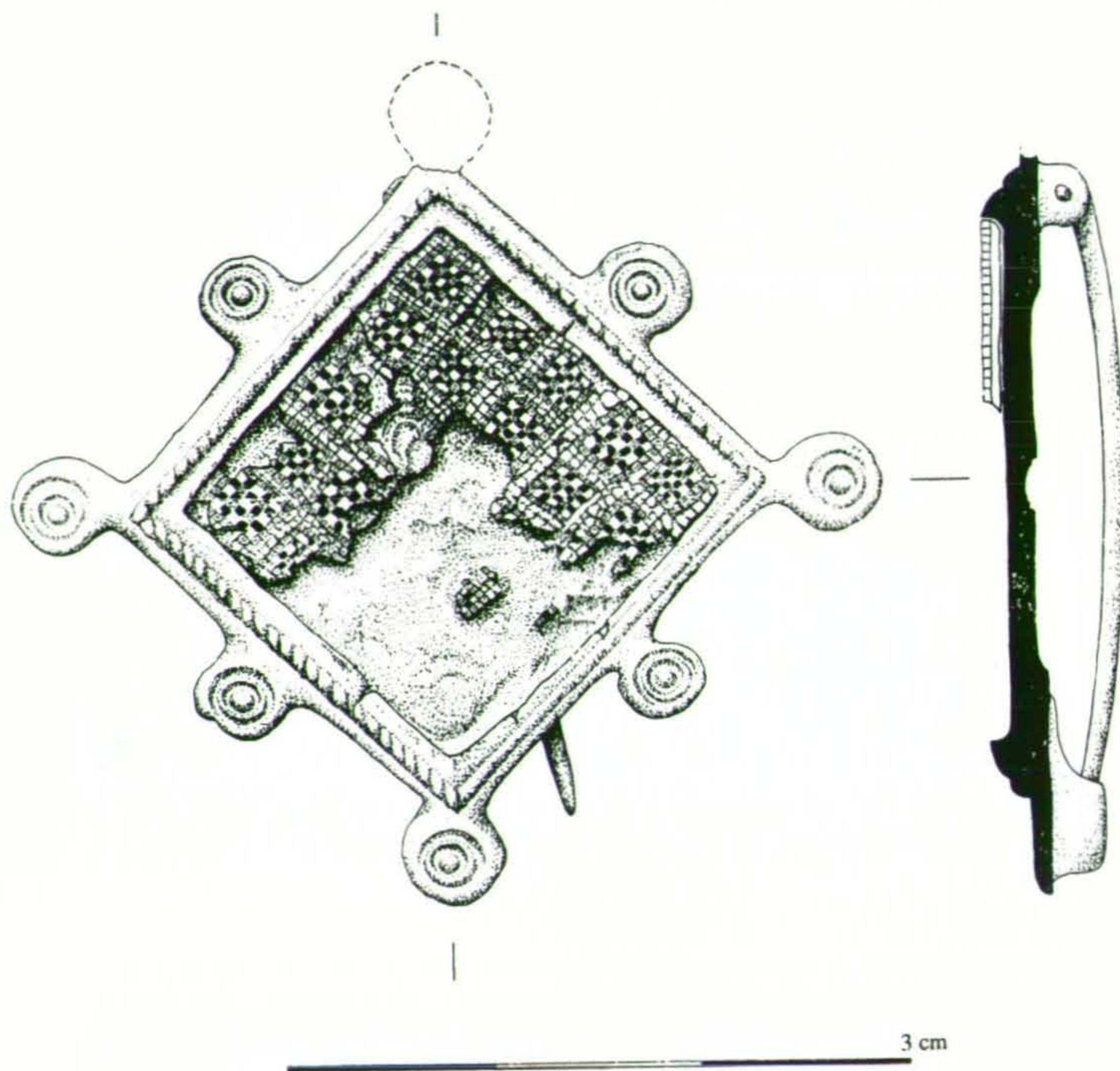


Figure 21 Artefacts from Excavation and Survey at Linton



21.21 Cloisonné plate brooch. The brooch is mainly comprised of a fairly heavy metal alloy (copper or pewter?). Cast with sunken face filled with mosaic-like design, possibly of glass based enamel. Six chequer board sections each formed of red, yellow and black tesserae, bordered by blue lattice. Back of brooch has circular depression and central shallow hole, slightly lipped. Copper alloy pin runs the length of the diagonal and is hinged and latched with iron fittings. Seven leaf like structures, cast with rest of brooch, have circular designs somewhat irregularly stamped on them. Appears very similar to Hattatt no. 144. Probably second century.

## APPENDIX C ANALYSIS OF PLANT REMAINS FROM PIT [41]

A J Clapham

Nine litres of grey black sandy ash were taken from pit 49 and washed over a 500 mm mesh sieve. Twenty-two millilitres of the resulting sample were analysed, consisting of charred plant remains. The preservation of the plant remains was not good, especially the grains of the cereals, and identification was possible only to genus level. Some intrusive elements were present, such as small rootlets, fat hen and knot grass. The sample was analysed using a Wild M3 stereomicroscope with magnifications from 6.4 to 40X (See archive for details).

The most common find was 1950 wheat glume bases (*Triticum* sp.), including emmer (*Triticum dicoccum*) and spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*). Only 27 cereal grains were identified, again including emmer and spelt wheat and also one example of bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). Surprisingly, a number of sprouting embryos of wheat were found, and also grains of possible oats. Weed species were not common in the sample. Rye grass (*Lolium* sp.) was most common, with other species present such as clover (*Trifolium* sp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) or blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), docks (*Rumex* sp.) and scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) (Species names follow Clapham et al, 1989).

As the plant remains were found in a sample taken from a circular pit and most of the remains were of cereals, it is safe to surmise that the pit was used for the storage of cereal crops. The glume wheats (in this case emmer and spelt) are usually stored as spikelets, still enclosed within the glumes, in temperate climates and processed piecemeal as and when required. Although the number of glume bases is greater than the number of cereal grains, this may be expected as some of the grains would have been released during initial threshing and some spikelets could well have been sterile.

If the pit had been used for storage for a long period of time, it would be necessary before any new crop was stored to sterilise the pit. One way of doing this was to set fire to the remains of the previous harvest. Spikelets and weed seeds left in the pit would char and be preserved. They would be both chemically and biologically inactive and would not contaminate the new crop. The presence of the sprouted wheat embryos suggests that some grains were spoiled or became wet during storage and sprouted. Some of the crop was thus useless and this could be one reason why the pit was sterilised.

The mixture of the two glume wheats, emmer and spelt, could mean that the two cereals were grown together as a single crop (the processing techniques are the same for both crops) or that they represent two separate storage events, where emmer was stored one year and spelt in another. The bread wheat could mean the same, although it was unlikely to have been grown with the glume wheats as the processing is different at some stages. Most likely, the bread wheat was a contaminant of the main glume wheat crop. In the absence of the most critical identification characters, it is not possible to say whether the oats were a crop or a weed of the crop. The rye grass is important because if it was darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) it was poisonous and would have spoiled the flour. The presence of weed seeds in the sample is explained by the fact that they were harvested and processed along with the cereal crop, and could not always be completely sieved out.

## **APPENDIX D FAUNAL REMAINS**

J Hale

In general, the bones from Linton are very poorly preserved and fragmentary, having sustained much damage during excavation. This, combined with the small number of bones, make any elaborate treatment inappropriate so that only a brief study of the faunal material was undertaken.

Approximately 1 kg of bones was recovered during excavation, including examples of cow, pig and sheep or goat, and many bones too badly damaged for identification. This species representation is not untypical, comprised of the main domesticates to be found on any rural site of the Roman period. A single round piece of worked bone was recovered from the surface cleaning of the site above Area B. From pit [12], adjacent to building A, came a mature sheep or goat mandible, a rib and a possible cow limb bone, while immature sheep or goat tarsals were recovered elsewhere. A single fragmentary metatarsal was tentatively identified as human, and came from cleaning contexts in the north of the trench. However, it must be stressed that the limited size and fragmentary nature of the material prohibits detailed analysis and interpretation.

## **APPENDIX E OTHER SAMPLES**

No further environmental samples were taken during the excavations at Linton. The wet deposits close to the pond were examined by Peter Murphy of University of East Anglia to see whether sampling was worthwhile. He decided that it was not, as the layers were essentially of colluvial organic rich origin, and not alluvial flood deposits. This was supported by the presence of landsnails in the wet peaty post-Roman overburden and the lighter stony Roman humic layers. The organic preservation of Roman deposits therefore seemed unlikely.



## APPENDIX F FLINTS RECOVERED DURING FIELDWALKING

G Haley

Only a selected sample of the lithic material collected during the fieldwalking survey of "Red/Church" field, Linton was considered in the present study. All the material beyond 200 metres East of the base line was looked at, but over that part of the field nearest the villa, where the concentration of surface material was greatest, only a transect running along the pipe-trench easement, East-West, and two transects running North-South, were considered.

The collection as a whole proved rather disappointing, consisting almost entirely of debitage with no characteristic tools that would allow a date to be associated with the material. One abortive attempt to manufacture a projectile point may have been identified, along with an end scraper and a fragment of an end scraper and a possible borer. None of these tools are very convincing artefacts and their identification is only tentative. This effectively leaves only the knapping debitage to consider. In all, 240 flints were examined closely to establish their nature as either knapped products or machine produced/natural products. Details such as colour of flint, degree of patination and basic technological characteristics were then recorded.

The condition of the material was very fragmentary, suggesting much machine damage had been sustained, probably from ploughing. Machine / natural flakes account for around 28% of the flints examined. Material from the pipe-trench transect along the northern edge of the field contained approximately 51% natural / machine produced pieces. It seems that machine disturbance is particularly bad in this area. The exploited raw material is almost exclusively a good quality, fine grained, black / mottled grey-black flint. Much appears to have been surface collected, evidenced by a thin, worn and pitted cortex on many artifacts, but some fine black flint still retains the thick, unworn chalky cortex of material quarried from the chalk.

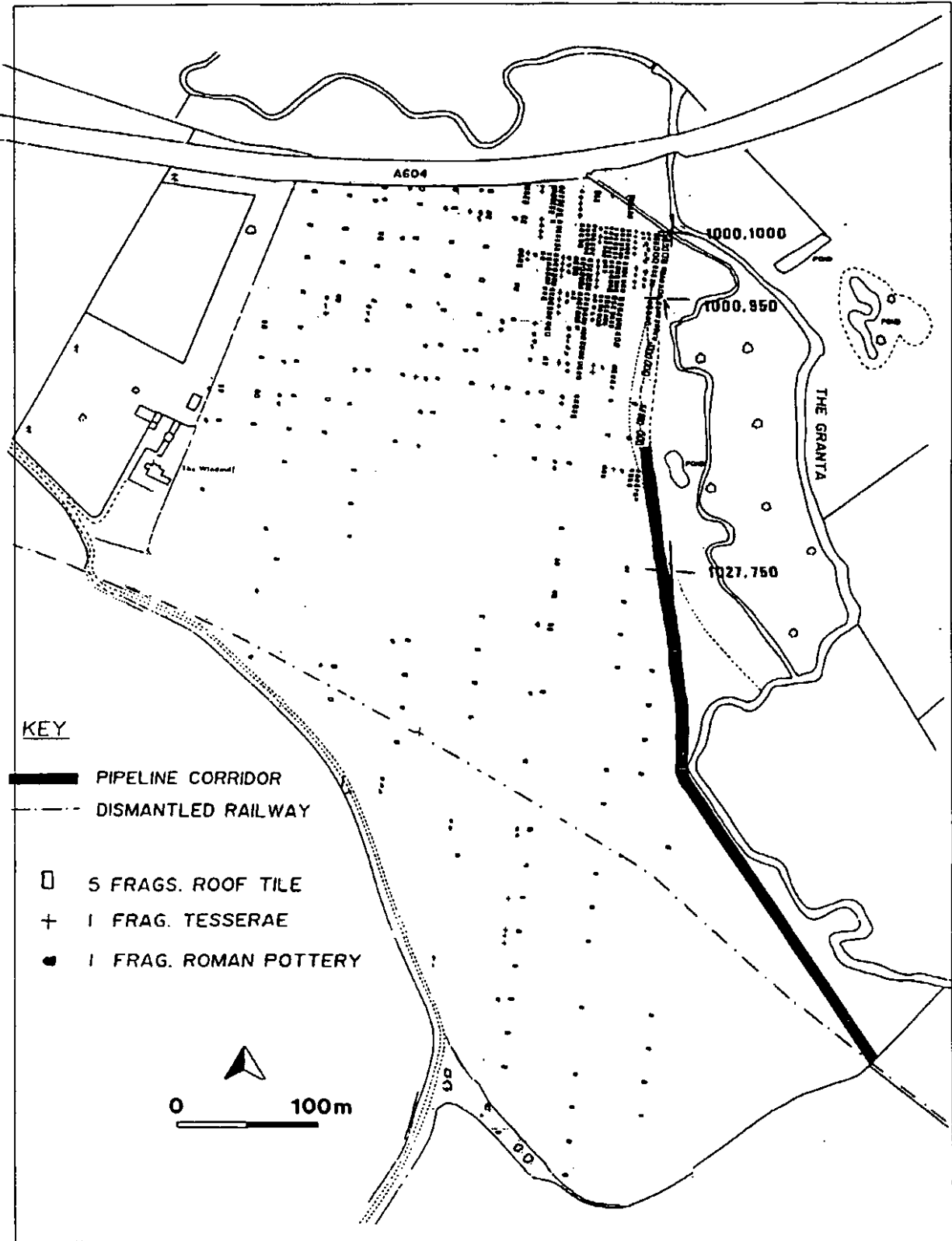
Morphologically the debitage consists mostly of incomplete flakes, usually crude and irregular in form, along with a few cores and blade segments. 20 probable cores were identified, with varying amounts of cortex retention. They are irregular and angular in shape, usually with single or dual platforms, though some examples of multi-platformed cores were also recovered.

Technologically, striking platforms and bulbs of percussion on those artifacts where such features survived were almost, all plain and salient in character. This suggests that knapping was carried out using a hard hammer, probably by direct percussion. Some support for this is found in one piece of black flint with an impacted hollow, characteristic of use as a hammer stone. Four pieces of flint show signs of being subjected to heat. Whether this is evidence of intentional heating to help knap the flint cannot be said on the strength of the few pieces here, but it can be noted that the pieces came from areas of concentrated knapping.

The degree of patination displayed by these flints varies considerably, from no visible surface alteration, right through dense patination of fractured surfaces. Patina development depends on the depositional conditions as well as time, but close spatial association of artifacts suggests a variation in age. This, however, is complicated by evidence for re-use in later antiquity.

To conclude, no fixed date can be given to this collection of flints. Mesolithic through to Bronze Age material is likely to be represented, as indicated by the presence of a number of blade segments as well as the differences in patination discussed above.

**APPENDIX G**  
**DISTRIBUTION MAPS OF MATERIAL COLLECTED**  
**DURING FIELDWALKING**



*Figure 22a Ceramics*

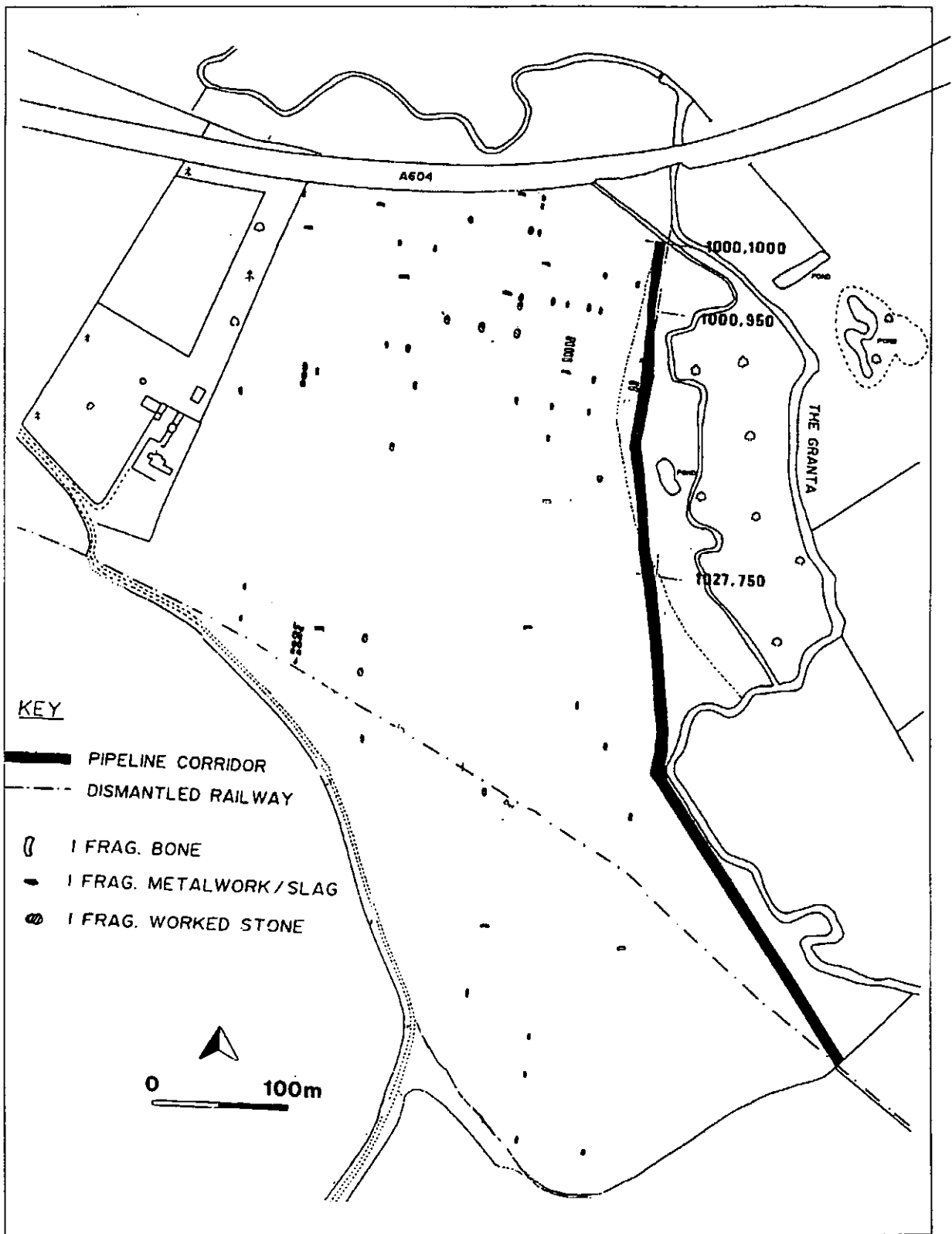


Figure 22b Worked Stone and Metalwork

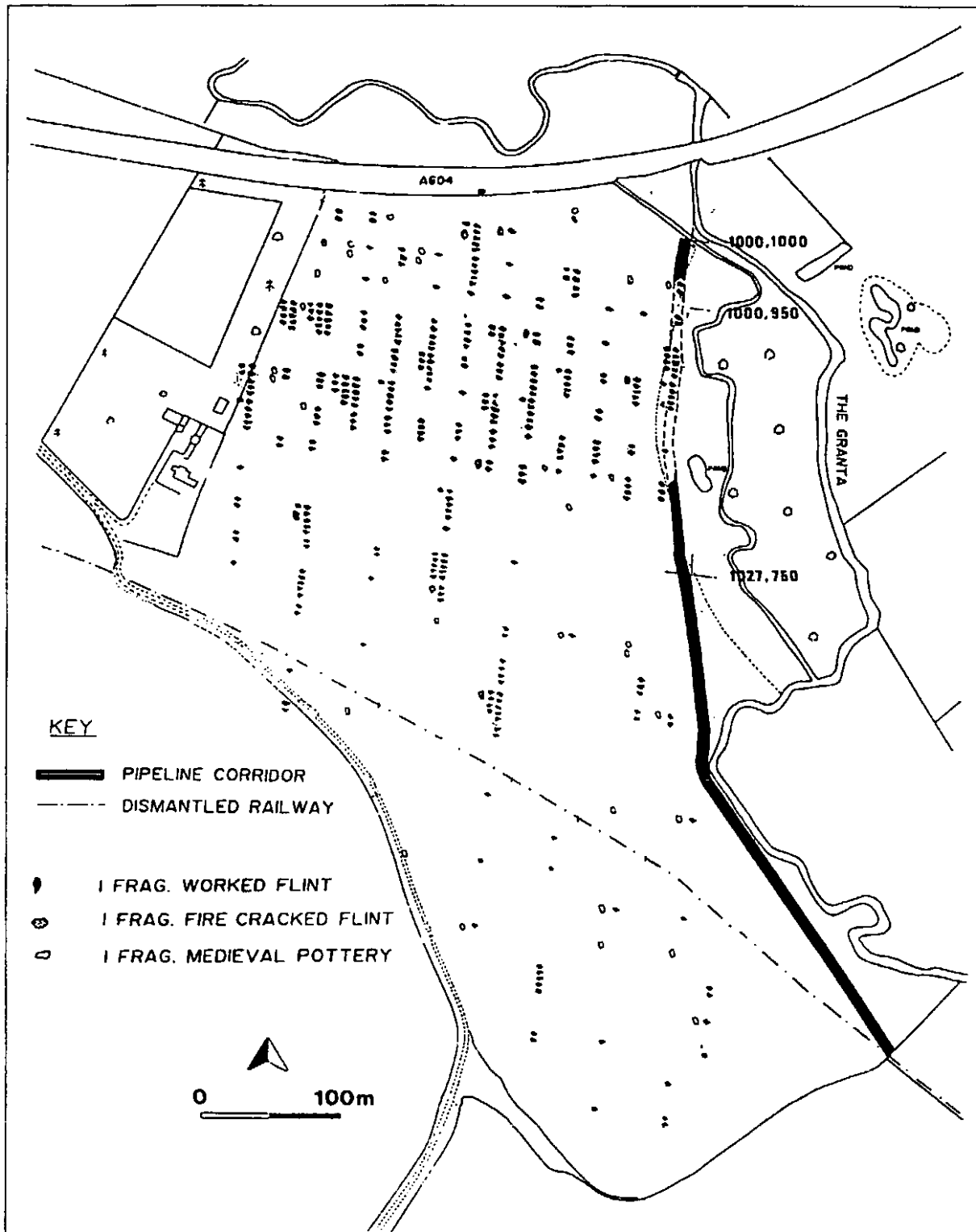


Figure 22c Lithics



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