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# Contents

# Iron Age settlement and Romanisation on the Isle of Ely: the Hurst Lane Reservoir site

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*The rescue excavation of an extensive Middle/later Iron Age settlement and its ensuing Romano-British occupation at Hurst Lane on the west side of Ely is reported, and the continuities between its two phases are explored. Having evidence of 35 roundhouses, this is one of the most dense Iron Age sites in the region. A development model of their associated compounds is outlined. One of these had marked affinities with the Wardy Hill Ringwork, which allows for discussion of the nature of concentric enclosure elaboration. Numerous 'loose' human remains were recovered, including a modified skull found in 'foundation deposit-like' circumstances associated with a major roundhouse. Review is made of the Iron Age and Romano-British settlements excavated on Ely during the 1990s. The island's cultural/'tribal' affiliations are considered, as is also the apparent poverty of its assemblages and the processes of its Romanisation.*

As a great land-locked fen island surrounded by marsh, the Isle of Ely is an intriguing archaeological context, one that directly pertains to questions of bounded territory and 'closed systems'. Prior to the 1990s, very little archaeological fieldwork had occurred on the island proper. The potential scale of its Iron Age occupation had, however, been highlighted through the Fenland Project Surveys (Hall 1996; Hall & Coles 1995), and the wealth of Bronze Age metalwork from its skirtland and internal marsh embayments (Grunty Fen and the Cove of *Cove*-ney) had long suggested still earlier usage (see, for example, Fox 1923). This paper is primarily concerned with the excavation of a major Iron Age settlement complex (with subsequent Romano-British usage) by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at Hurst Lane, on the eastern flanks of the Cove embayment and only one kilometre north-west of the city of Ely itself (Fig. 1). However, drawing upon the results of other recent excavations within the Cove's environs, specifically the nearby Trinity Lands site, the paper also considers the potential Iron Age colonisation of Ely's claylands. Addressing this requires discussion of the island's later Bronze Age seasonal usage, and equally the character of its Romanisation. Potentially relevant as regards the latter and Ely's status as a fen island are notions of 'backwaterness' and the possible survival of archaic traditions, which are also fundamental to 'island archaeologies' in general (e.g. Sahlins 1987's 'islands of history').

These issues are further brought into focus by Ely's situation within the broader cultural geography of Iron Age Eastern England and the question of 'outside' linkages. It falls, on the one hand, just north of the Aylesford-Swarling border and the limits of Late Iron Age Romanised gaulish influence (for example Birchall 1965; Hill, Evans & Alexander 1999). On the other hand, it lies immediately west of the sphere of the Iceni polity and south of their later expansion into the central Fenland islands of March, Stonea and Chatteris (Evans 2003b; Gregory 1991; Jackson & Potter 1996). This complicated political/cultural geography is suggestive of a social mosaic, and that there was not one Iron Age, but many (i.e. non-homogeneous communities).

Finally, with its layout clearly resonating with the Wardy Hill Ringwork at Coveney on the island (Evans 2003a), the main Hurst Lane compound suggests a domestic origin for the latter's eventual defensive elaboration. Analysis of the plans of the two sites provides insights into the nature of the concentric organisation of space and the character of domestic/defensive enclosure.

## The Hurst Lane reservoir

The site was investigated under dire rescue circumstances between mid-July and September 1999, as a reservoir was being constructed in conjunction with house-building along Ely's western margin. Whereas the sites relating to the latter were adequately covered through County Council development control, the reservoir had inadvertently escaped planning procedures as its location had been moved from an original application site. The settlement was only discovered during the course of construction, when it was visited by CAU staff working nearby at the West Fen Road complex (see below and Mortimer, Regan & Lucy

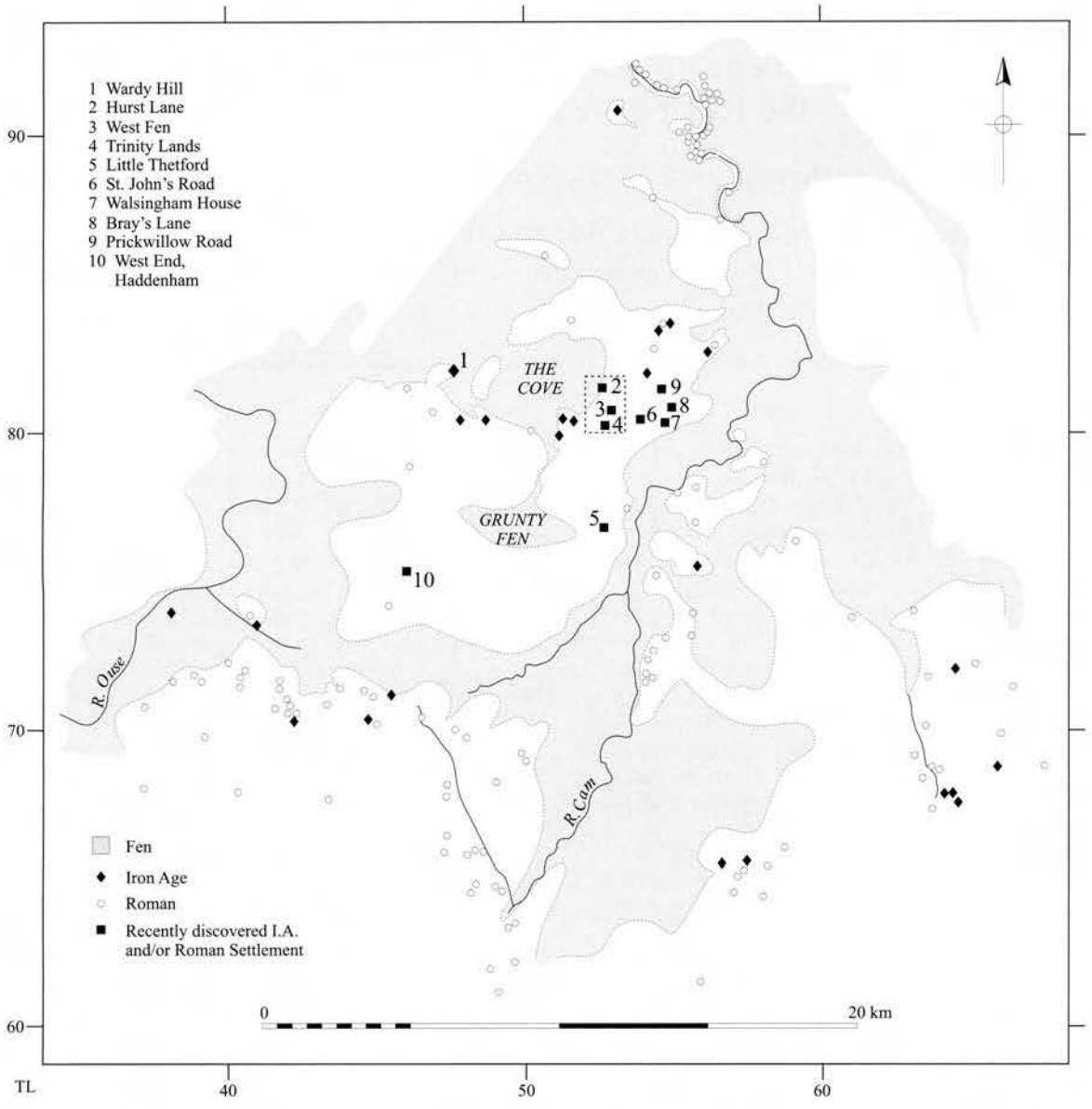


***Figure 1.*** *The Isle of Ely Iron Age and Roman settlements on the island and the adjacent 'mainland' (dashed box indicates area of Fig. 2).*

2005). Following rapid negotiation, a successful application was duly made to English Heritage to retrieve, in effect, whatever was possible from the site.

The site was low-lying, at approximately two to four metres OD, on a gravel terrace flanking the eastern side of 'The Cove' embayment (see Evans 2003a, pp. 10–15 for full discussion of the area's geology and environmental sequence). In the course of the investigations a 2.85-hectare area was stripped (under varying degrees of archaeological control). As indicated in Fig. 2, trenches were also cut off the western fen/Cove-edge side to check whether settlement features extended in that direction; the results proved negative. With upwards of 35 roundhouses present – the largest number exposed on a settlement in the region since the Cats Water, Fengate excavations (Pryor 1984) – the site obviously represents a great missed opportunity. Given the circumstances, the decision was made to focus energies on the main southern horseshoe-shaped compound and its associated roundhouses (Figs 3.I & 6). This was due to the marked similarities it had with the arrangement of the interior of the Wardy Hill Ringwork that had been excavated seven years before. Indeed, many of the issues raised in this paper are discussed in greater detail in that site's publication (Evans 2003a).

The eaves-gullies of most of the Hurst Lane roundhouses were test-excavated (generally metre-long segments of their entrance terminals) and comparable segments were dug, where possible, across the compound and fieldsystem ditches. However, this coverage was too limited to allow, for example,

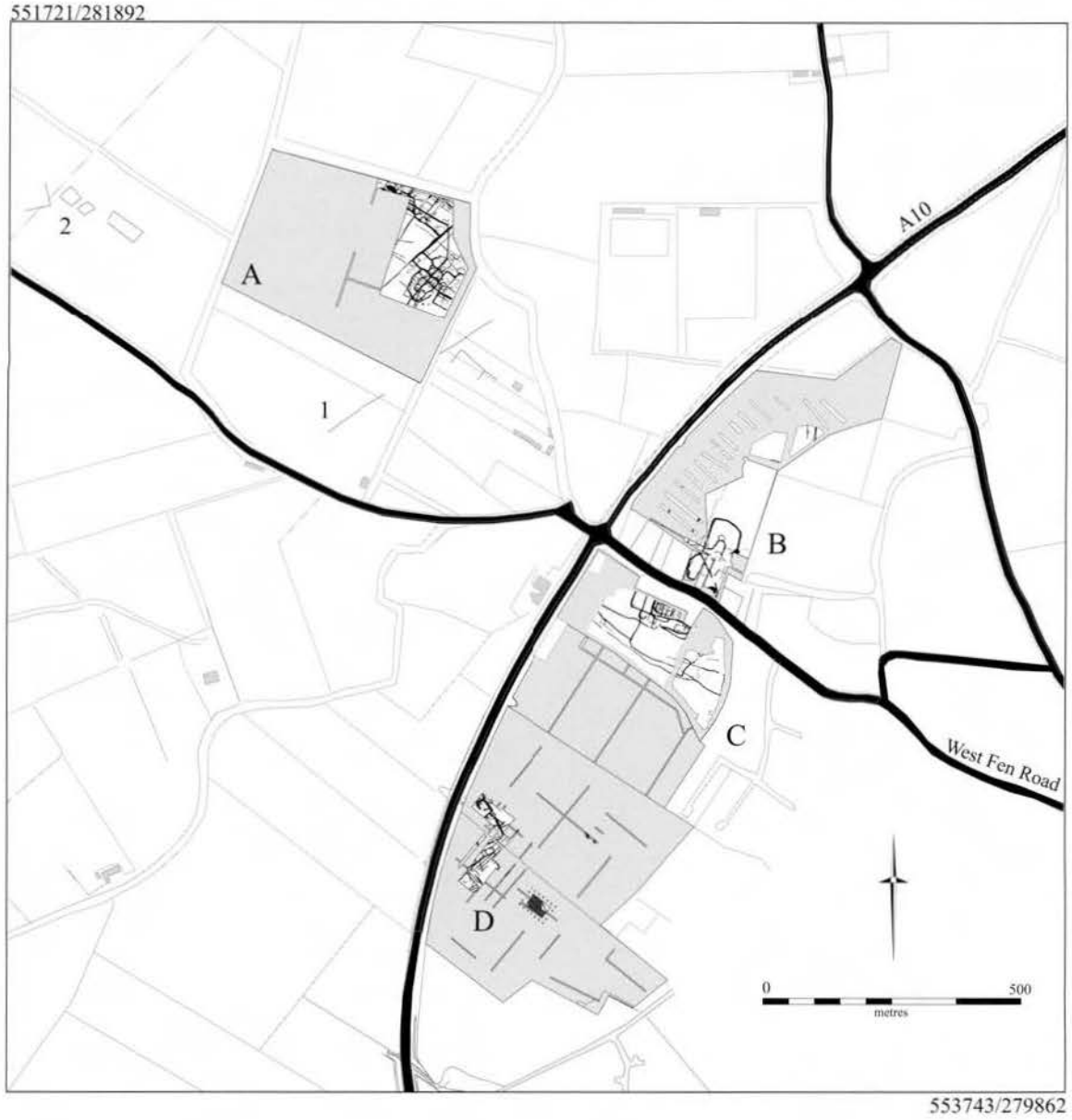


***Figure 2.*** *The West Fen Road Area Sites (Iron Age and Roman phases shown only): A) Hurst Lane Reservoir; B) West Fen Road North; C) West Fen Road South; D) Trinity Lands (1 and 2 indicate cropmarks).*

meaningful distributional analysis, and even for the horseshoe compound its sampling can only just be considered adequate (Fig. 6). This then was not a matter of fine-grained archaeology and the results must not be 'pushed' further than is reasonable. Although enclosure-system development models will be explored, much stratigraphic ambiguity remains (and the base-plan includes a degree of simplification).

**Pre-Iron Age usage**

A recent paper has highlighted pre-Iron Age usage of the Isle of Ely in the light of its heavy clay subsoils (Evans 2002) and its arguments need not be repeated here. Given Hurst Lane's location on terrace gravels, particularly important in this regard is the sheer paucity of its Neolithic and Bronze Age usage. No features could definitely be attributed to these periods and, apart from nine sherds of Bronze Age pottery, only 42 pieces of worked flint were recovered. As identified by C. Conneller, the latter include diagnostic Mesolithic/earlier Neolithic, Late Neolithic and later Bronze Age items.

Ely's environmental sequence is critical in this context (see Evans 2003a, pp. 10–15 for outline and Waller 1994) for, originally part of the Chatteris 'peninsula', it only became 'islanded' over the course of the first millennium BC. This inundation led to a great loss of low, gravel terrace skirtland, whose 'host' communities were probably both the source of those groups journeying to Ely's clays prior to the Iron Age and

also for its 'new' settlement from that date. Given this, before the Early/Middle Iron Age well-drained sub-soils might have been sufficiently accessible (at lower altitudes adjacent to water), so that the Hurst Lane terrace need not have been deemed particularly 'special'.

### Iron Age settlement

Two distinct Iron Age settlement foci were exposed, though neither in their entirety. Whereas that in the north, Cluster II, extended still further in that direction, the southern clearly continued east, beyond the limits of investigation (Cluster I; Fig. 3). Cluster II was the more minor and included the eaves-gully-circles of four definite roundhouses (Structures/Str. 19, 21, 22 & 24), with the fragmented lengths of eight more 'possibles' identified (Str. 20, 23, 26–30; Fig. 4). It also included a trapezoidal ditch compound (F). This appeared to be contemporary with one of the larger house circles that lay within its interior (Str. 24), and a segmented-ditch 'annex' (G) extending from its south-eastern side truncated, or at least impinged upon, three of the roundhouses (Str. 19, 21 & 22). The south-western side of this compound was not defined; it is presumed to have been re-cut by the line of the main Roman fieldsystem at that point.

The three-segment length of ditch extending east from Compound F is a most unusual feature to occur late in an occupation sequence (segmented digging more commonly initiated modes of continuous enclosure-ditching). Where excavated, it was found to be 1.4 metres wide and 0.45 metres deep. Although its line cut through the eaves-gullies of Structures 19, 21 and 22, closer scrutiny indicates that in all three instances the interruptions to the ditch corresponded with the buildings' interior. At no point did they extend more than a metre beyond the gullies and, therefore, it is conceivable – albeit unlikely – that it actually respected the structures *per se*. In other words, the buildings (and their walls) could, in theory, have still stood with their gullies so 'linked'.

The plan that was recovered of the compounds of the southern settlement cluster (I) was much more complete (Fig. 4). It consisted of a large horseshoe-shaped compound (A), whose north-eastern aspect was conjoined by four smaller sub-square or polygonal paddocks (B–E). The circles of 12 largely complete roundhouses were exposed (Str. 2–4, 8–15, 17 & 18), with the partial rings of some four further buildings also present (Str. 5, 7, 12 & 16; see below concerning the status of Structure 6).

The two settlement foci and their buildings were arranged axially. The axis of Cluster II is obviously southeast-northwest, whereas Cluster I's was on the return southwest-northeast alignment. The latter's buildings occurred on two main parallel axes: Structures 2, 3 and 8, and 4, 6, 9, 14, 15 and 17, with Structures 11, 13 and 18 perhaps forming a third eastern line. Whilst complementary to the general arrangement of their respective compound systems, this layout reflected the predominately south-eastward orientation of the roundhouses.

As outlined below, in the case of Settlement Cluster I and the development model of its compounds, it was not possible to determine with certainty whether any portion of the Iron Age settlement predated the establishment of the main 'horseshoe' enclosure, however much that might have been expected. The same is not true for Cluster II, where 'open' settlement clearly occurred prior to the establishment of Compound F (Fig. 4). This was marked by a series of minor linear ditches that extended throughout that area, and also by concentrations of pits and postholes. (Similar discrete features also occurred across the northern portion of Cluster I and extended east to the limits of excavation there. However, because that cluster also coincided with an area of Roman settlement – and very little excavation took place to differentiate between them – there cannot be the same degree of determination as for Cluster I.) As for Structures 22 and 23, a number of the minor Cluster II ditches were also clearly truncated by Compound F's perimeter.

When considering issues of Iron Age chronology and efforts to establish the origins of the Hurst Lane settlement, in hindsight perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the excavation programme was its emphasis on eaves-gully-defined round buildings at the expense of pits and posthole-defined structures. given this, and that gully-surround buildings seem to be a hallmark of Middle/later Iron Age occupation in the region (they are uncommon in Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age contexts), a major issue then becomes whether any non-gully-defined buildings occurred within the area of Cluster II. Unfortunately the evidence is ambiguous. Although there were suggestive groupings of postholes, none definitely described a roundhouse pattern (a distinct 'four-poster' setting did, however, coincide with the interior of Structure 19). The pottery from the few features that were excavated in the area consisted of a mix of flint-tempered and also sandy Middle/later Iron Age fabrics, and is comparable to other portions of the settlement (see Percival below). Therefore, there is no compelling evidence that any part of the settlement pre-dated the earlier Middle Iron Age, although the area probably saw some manner of usage during the Early Iron Age.

As outlined by Percival below, the site's pottery assemblage provides some degree of chronological control for the buildings' sequence. 'Earlier', La Tène-associated forms were found (without later types) in Structures 3, 4, 9 and 16, with the latest, Conquest-period pottery types being recovered from Structures 2, 6, 8, 10, 15 and 24. However, in the case of Structures 2, 8, 15 and 24, earlier types also occurred. Whilst for the most part this was probably the result of redeposition and residuality, given its stratigraphic associations Structure 15 cannot be 'late' (see below) and, therefore, in that instance the Conquest-period wares might be intrusive.

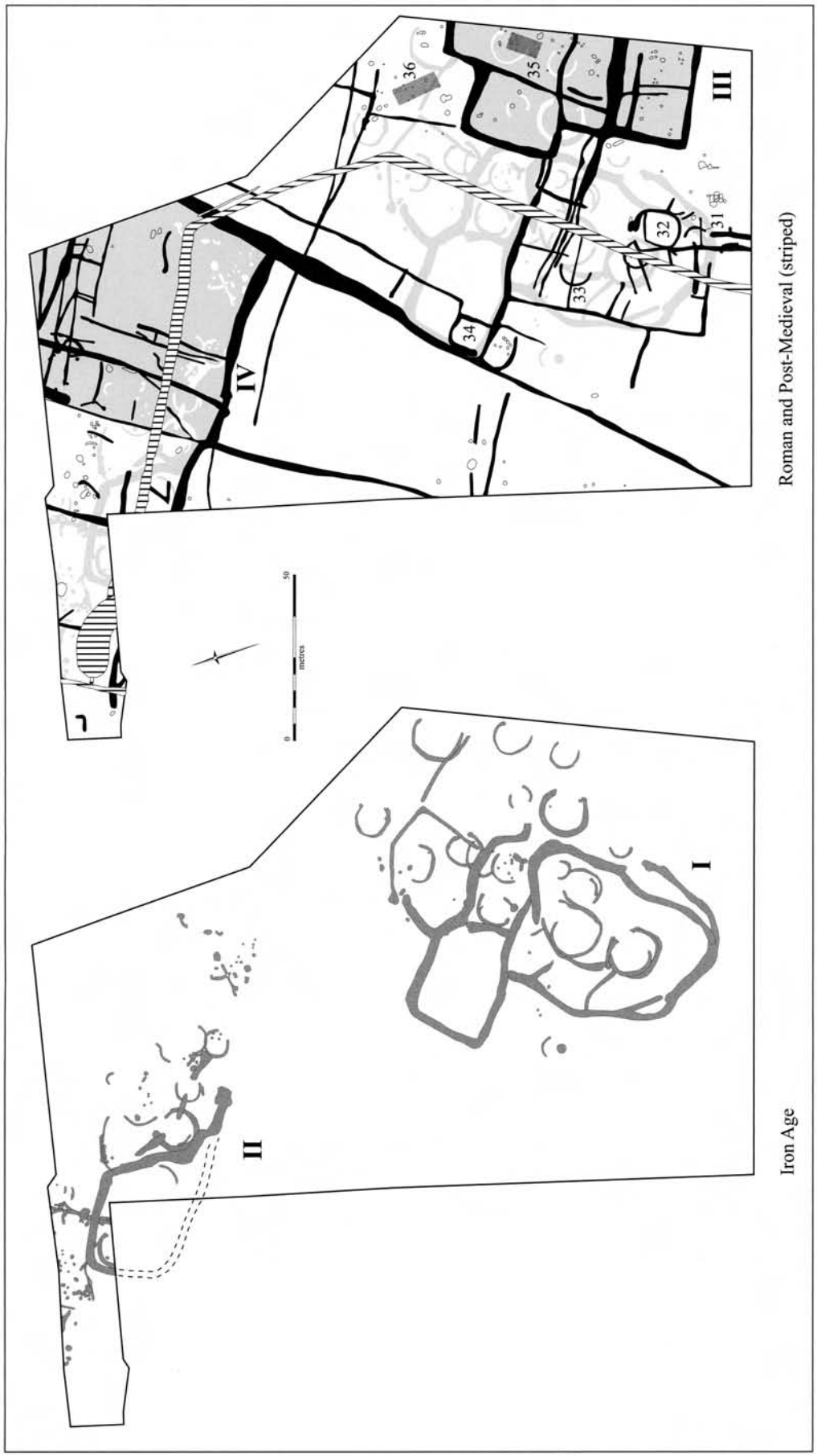


***Figure 3.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir Phase plan showing main settlement clusters (I–IV).*

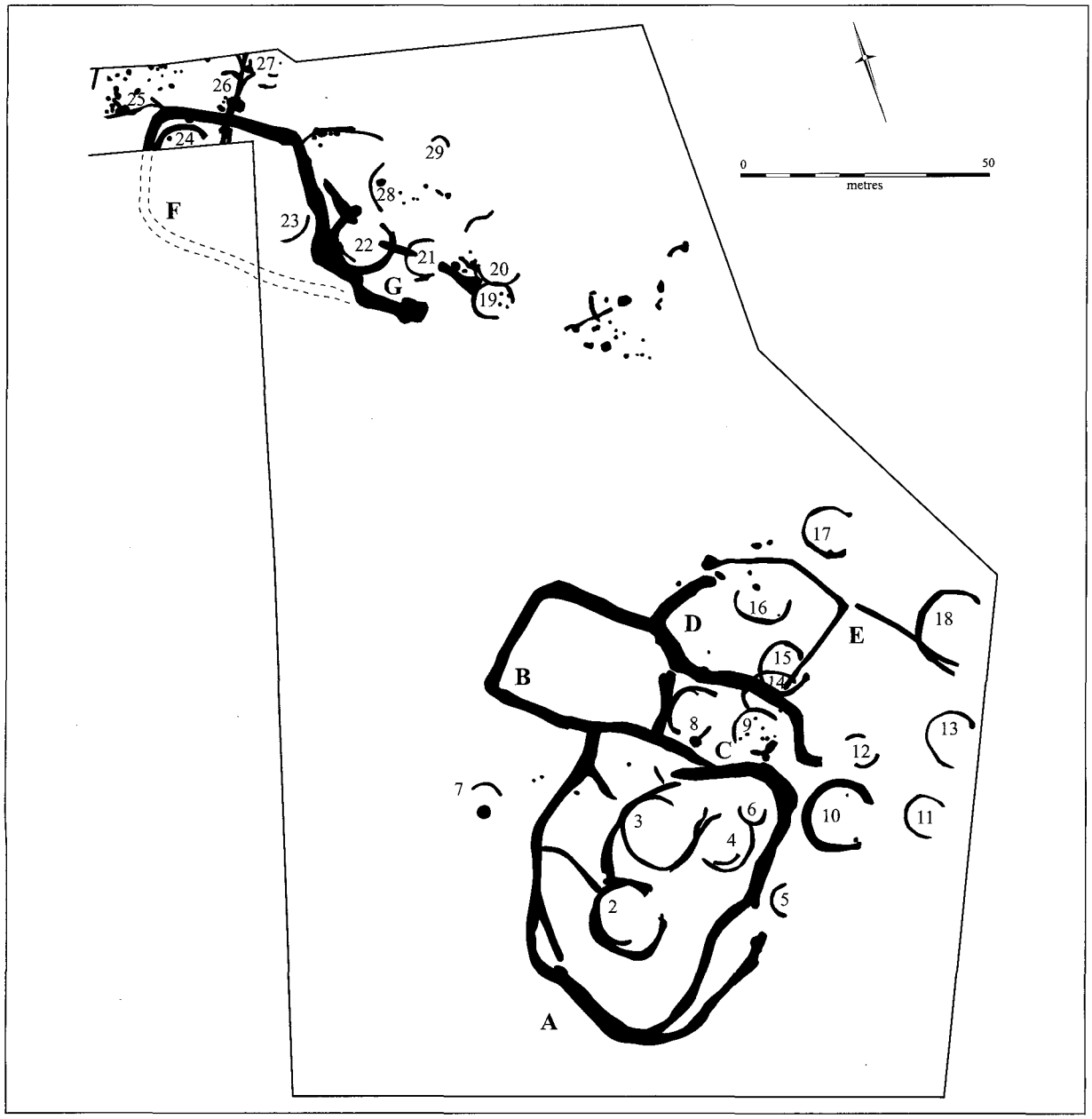


***Figure 4.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir Iron Age compounds (A-G) and structures (2–29).*

*A development model*

When attempting to outline the development of the site's Iron Age enclosure systems, two points warrant attention. First, of the building-associated compounds, the southern 'horseshoe' (A) is the only one in which the perimeter ditch did not truncate earlier round structures. In other words, there is no reason for it not to have been an 'early' or primary construct. Secondly, there was general similarity between Cluster II's 'double-enclosure' arrangement and Compounds B and C in Cluster I (Fig. 5). Both included a western sub-square unit (B/F) with a smaller quasi-trapezoidal annex on their eastern sides (C/G) and, therefore, these two 'pairings' might have been broadly contemporary.

If these pairings were contemporary, then a development model can be postulated for the Cluster I compounds. The sequence is from south to north: first the Compound A 'horseshoe' alone, with the B/C double-unit then added to its northern side (the secondary status of B to A is apparent as the north-western corner of the latter seemed paramount, with the plan of Compound B compromised in relationship to it; Fig. 5); finally, the more markedly angular and linear Compounds D and E (*cf.* the bulbous 'organic' character of A–C's ditches) were added to the northern side of B/C. As a whole, the enclosure complex seems to have been accessed from, and opened onto, the east.

Having established this, it is now possible to consider the phasing of the primary enclosure –

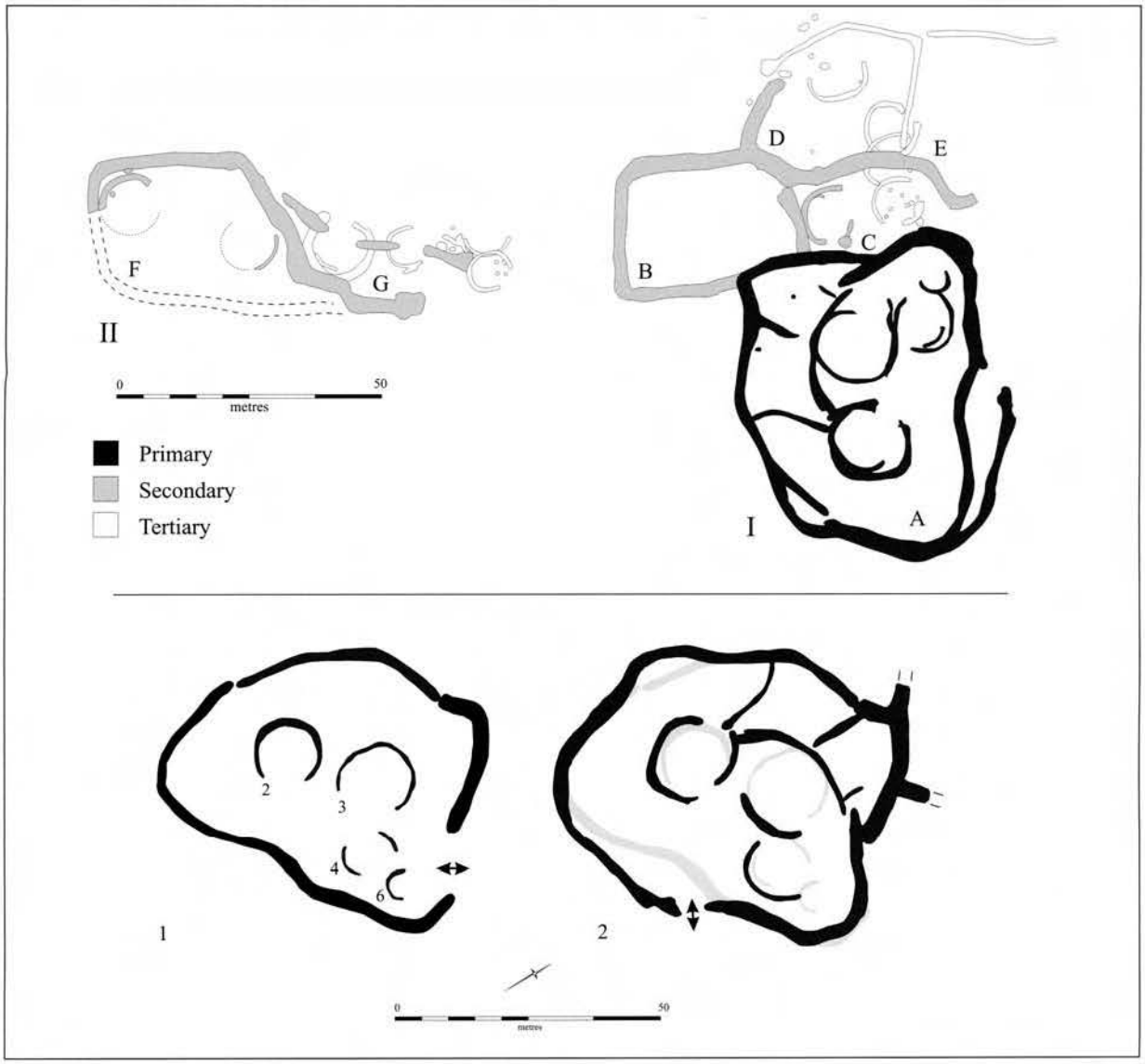


***Figure 5.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir Development model of Iron Age compounds (top) and, below, for Compound A: 1) primary; 2) secondary components.*

Compound A's 'horseshoe' – and, in particular, what changes the secondary addition of the B/C double-cell on its northern side might have entailed. While it had a *c.* 4.70 metre-wide entrance along its central eastern side, this only occurred in its secondary circuit. Although requiring a considerable degree of supposition and plan-based inference (as opposed to relying purely on stratigraphic determination), it clearly started with a quasi-trapezoidal plan, involving a straight northeastern 'front' (with a *c.* 8.00 metre-wide entrance gap) from which extended its sub-circular perimeter (Fig. 5.1). Its boundary was 1.40–2.40 metres across and 0.45–1.00 metres deep, generally having a broad 'V'-shaped profile (F. 418, 462 & 475; Figs 6 & 7.A). Segmented construction was evident at two points along its western aspect: a 0.75 metre-wide 'gap' between F. 418 and F. 462, with the ends of the latter and F. 475 abutting in the northwest of the circuit (Fig. 6). These clearly marked construction-related 'interruptions' and not entrances as such.

The secondary alteration to this compound clearly related to the addition of the northern two-cell 'pairing' (Compounds B & C), as ditch F. 466 closed its access in that direction (Figs 6 & 5.2). Of the remainder of its circuit, the southern and eastern sides were 'boxed' to create a more sub-square arrangement in plan with the new entrance in its eastern side. This secondary circuit was comparable to the first, being 1.30–2.40 metres across and 0.50–1.00 metres deep (Fig. 7.B).

Equally crucial, however, is what these alterations imply for the internal settlement space of the compound as, in addition to blocking the primary northern entrance, the line of ditch F. 466 projected into its interior (Figs 6 & 5.2). In order to appreciate this

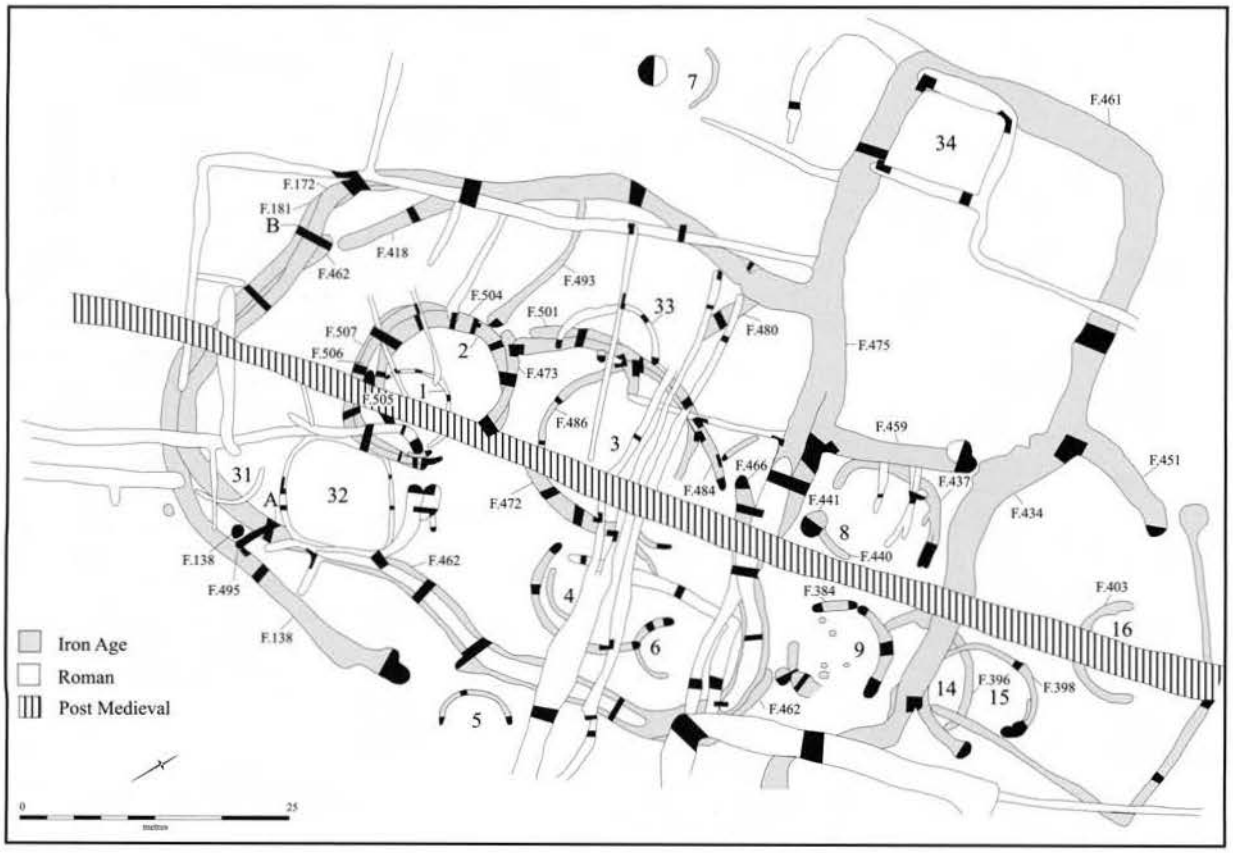


*Figure 6. The Hurst Lane Reservoir Area of Compound A, base-plan showing excavation segments (blackened).*

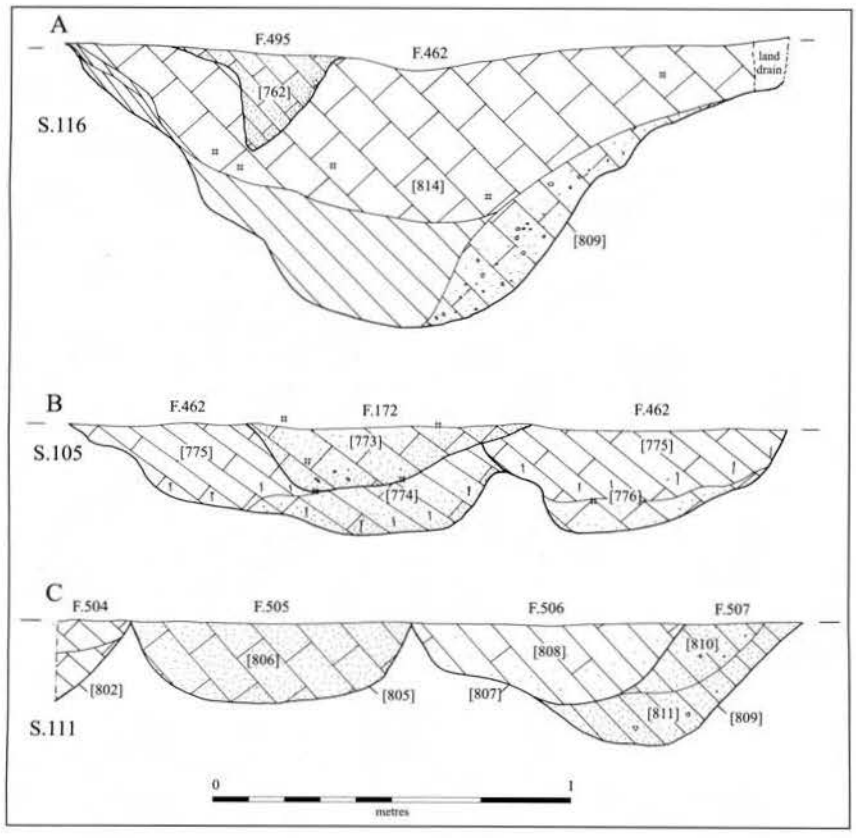


*Figure 7. The Hurst Lane Reservoir Sections (see Figs 6 & 14 for locations).*

layout, the development of the compound's roundhouses must be taken into account. Three, possibly four (see below), eaves-gully-surrounded roundhouses were located within its interior. The two largest – Structures 2 and 3 (with diameters of about 15 metres) – lay centrally, with Structure 4 tucked between Structure 3 and the main perimeter ditch. Based on the arrangement of their re-cut eaves-gullies, the doorways of all three evidently opened eastward (although there is less certainty in the case of Structure 4, which was *c.* 11 metres in diameter). As indicated on Fig. 9, the eaves-gullies of both of the main structures were originally of penannular plan. In the case of Structure 4, its gullies flanked its northern and southern sides but were not 'closed' along the western back side.

The regularity of this layout was altered with the closure of the compound's northern entrance. The interior projection of ditch F. 466 continued in the line of gully F. 484/501 that curved around the north-western side of Structure 3 (truncating its eaves-gully) and terminated at the gully of Structure 2 (Figs 6 & 5.2). Corresponding with this – and the compound's new eastern access – the circles of all of the roundhouses were subsequently redefined by more robust 'ditch/gully' arcs around their eastern, and in the case of Structures 2 and 4, southern, sectors. These developments obviously related to a major reorganisation of the compound's internal space, and the line of ditches F. 466 and F. 484/501, together with the southern arc of Structure 2's gully (F. 506/507), effectively separated off a 'back' interior swathe. Probably relating to the penning of livestock, this 10–13 metre-wide 'rear' crescent appeared to be sub-divided by a spoke-like arrangement of gullies: F. 493 (protruding from the main perimeter and continuing south-east to the line of Structure 6) and, possibly, ditch F. 480 (and also a minor gully length lying ten metres north-east of it). That ditch F. 493 directly conjoined with the compound's perimeter would suggest that the latter was without a substantial interior upcast bank. This, however, might just have been a localised phenomenon, as the approximately two-metre-wide stand-off between Structure 4's eastern eaves-gully and the compound's circuit could, in fact, suggest the line of just such an embankment (Fig. 6).

The 'half gully-circle' (*c.* 5.70 metres in diameter) of yet another structure (6) lay in the interior north-eastern corner of the compound (Fig. 6). It is difficult to be certain of its status. On the one hand, the secondary compound perimeter (F. 466) seemed to respect it and it appeared to be truncated by the end of the re-cut eaves-gully of Structure 4. On the other hand, morphologically it is akin to a series of small, 'half-arc' Early Roman structures that were later sited within the compound (see below; Str. 1, 31 & 33; though all of these cut Iron Age features) and a sherd from a mid-late first-century AD jar was recovered from its fills. Yet comparable sherds were also recovered in association with Structure 2's eaves-gully, and they do no more than suggest that these features were 'open' (if not in use) during the Conquest period. Equally, other comparatively small 'half-arc' structures of definite Iron Age attribution were also present within Cluster I (Str. 5 & 7). Therefore, caveats aside, Structure 6 is also tentatively assigned to the compound's Iron Age usage.

Equally pertinent is whether Structures 2–4 were entirely contemporaneous; while late Conquest-period wares were present in Structures 2 and 6, they were absent from 3 and 4. Yet, given the spatial dynamics and modification of the enclosure's interior, it is unlikely that the relationship between these buildings was only successive (i.e. Structure 2 replaced 3/4). It is, therefore, more plausible that the usage of Structures 3/4 overlapped with 2, and that only some time after the enclosure went through its secondary alterations were Structures 3/4 dismantled. (While ditch F. 484 truncated Structure 4's gully it still respected the building's 'circle', which was then also subject to further recutting of its gully on its eastern side; F. 472.) As remarked upon by Percival below, there can be little doubt that Structure 2 (and also 6) was still standing until, at least, the mid-first century AD.

As our attention must now shift from the Compound A 'core' of Cluster I to its secondary paddocks and the 'exterior' buildings, the inadequacy of the site's excavation becomes more apparent (Figs 4 & 6). Based on those dynamics that have already been recognised, such as 'paired' and/or ancillary buildings (and also the results from other sites; e.g. Evans 2003a and Evans & Hodder 2006), simple patterning, such as large roundhouses necessarily succeeding smaller structures, is not a realistic option. Given this, any analysis of the site's broader settlement pattern must, by necessity, seem arbitrary and lack the subtlety of convincing settlement history.

Apart from a subsequent square Roman structure (34), no buildings whatsoever were found within the interior of Compound B and, similarly, none could be definitely ascribed to Compound E. Of the structures within Compound D, only the northern half-circle of Structure 16 could possibly be contemporary. This, however, seems to have been of 'early' attribution and was unlikely to have stood within the compound as such. Structures 14 and 15 were definitely truncated by the ditch separating Compounds C and D (F. 391). The eaves-gully of Structure 15 cut that of 14, whose southern arc was also truncated by Structure 9 (which lay centrally within the interior of Compound C). Although there is no basis by which to establish any relationship between Structures 9 and 15 (the latter was accompanied by Late Iron Age/Conquest-period wares which were lacking in Structure 9), this three-building overlap suggests a long sequence of re-building and does not seem paralleled within Cluster II.

It is equally difficult to be certain whether Structure 8 was contemporary with Compound C as its western boundary (F. 459) impinged upon that building's eaves-gully. As suggested by the two parallel east-west ditches that cut through the interior of Structure 8 from the F. 459 boundary, the line of

the latter might have, at least in part, been re-cut in Roman times, and this could account for its truncation of the eaves-gully. Yet Structures 8 and 9 were uncomfortably crammed into Compound C and certainly it is likely that the latter – having only Middle Iron Age tradition wares – predated it (if standing it would have blocked the original northward access into Compound A). However, Structure 8 had Late Iron Age/Conquest-period pottery associated with it, and the manner in which the southern arc of its eaves-gully deflected from its circle (i.e. straightened) could well indicate that it was contemporary with this compound and the later phases of the site's Iron Age occupation.

Similarly, and more a matter of speculation than resolution, the site's four largest roundhouses all fell within the area of Cluster I: Structures 2, 3, 10 and 18 (see below). The spacing between the latter three is generally comparable, with the close packing of Structures 2 and 3 being attributable to their location within the interior of the 'horseshoe' compound. It could, therefore, be postulated that all of these 'great' houses were contemporary and that, at its height, the settlement cluster saw four major households in residence (perhaps also with clients or attendants). (The only evidence against this is that the northern boundary of Compound E truncated Structure 18; nevertheless, all four of these main buildings could, theoretically, have been contemporary immediately before the truncation occurred.) Alternatively, it might have been a matter of the successive 'pairings' of two households; Structures 10 and 18 could have at first stood together only to have been shifted and re-built as Structures 2 and 3 within the 'horseshoe' enclosure. Yet this scenario would have been unlikely, as Structure 10 included Late Iron Age/Conquest-period wares and therefore was probably contemporary with Structure 2. Unfortunately there were not the stratigraphic means, nor were the buildings exterior to Compound A excavated in sufficient detail, to establish an artefactual basis by which to determine the exact relationship between Structures 10, 18 and 2/3. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that unenclosed buildings continued to stand side-by-side with those within the compound system.

*House types and artefact densities*

The site's Middle/later Iron Age settlement architecture is typical of the region. Consisting of small pits, wells and eaves-gully-surrounded roundhouses, the properties of such components have been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (Pryor 1984; Evans 2003a; Evans & Hodder 2006) and need not be rehearsed here. In many instances, the recovery of the house gullies at Hurst Lane was only partial and their truncation by later features hindered full recovery of their plans. Equally, the intense re-cutting of some of the eaves-gullies makes it difficult to ascertain their original form. In the majority of cases, few, if any, postholes survived in association and, as was also true at Wardy Hill, the uprights of their buildings could not have been deeply footed. In short, this site does little to further understanding of Iron Age roundhouse form.

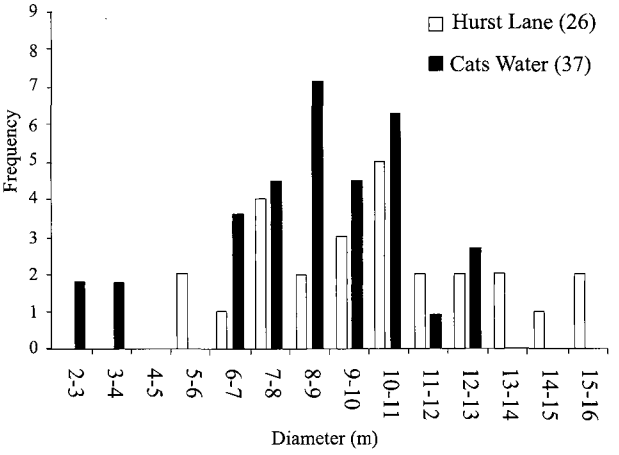


***Figure 8.*** *Comparison of roundhouse diameters from Hurst Lane and Cats Water, Fengate settlements.*

With gullies ranging from about five to 15 metres in diameter (measured from gully mid-points), three main size categories of structure can be distinguished: small (5–8 metres), medium (8–12 metres) and large (12–15 metres; Fig. 8). Not surprisingly, the mid-range buildings are the most frequent (43%), with 25% of the structures attributable to the smallest category. As mentioned, the four largest round structures all occurred within Cluster I and, with diameters of about 15 metres each, Structures 2 and 3 were amongst the largest roundhouses known within the region (see Evans 2003a, p. 228). Interestingly enough, the larger structures displayed a degree of ranked or, at least, successive 'pairing' by settlement-area. At the upper end were Structures 2 and 3 set within the 'horseshoe' enclosure. Thereafter, lying immediately east of Cluster I's compounds, were the unenclosed Structures 10 and 18 with diameters of some 14 metres; the two largest structures within Cluster II – 22 and 24 – both had diameters of about 12 metres.

Variability is apparent in the types of the eaves-gullies surrounding the structures (Fig. 9). Most of those recovered would seem to be of a 'C'-plan, that is defining two-thirds to three-quarters of a circle, and very few were of a 'classic' penannular form (i.e. the gully only being interrupted for the doorway itself, for example Structures 2 & 3). Against this, there were also a number where the gully formed a half-circle or less. Whereas, entirely typical of the period's building traditions, the 'C'- and penannular-plan roundhouses were oriented either east or south-eastwards (e.g. Oswald 1997), the 'half-or-less circle' structures showed greater variation (e.g. Structure 16 oriented north-eastwards and 7 south-westwards).

Given their size and situation, Structures 2 and 3 are potentially 'special'. Attempting to evaluate their status, their total number of finds has been estimated, factoring for the marked differences in the excavation sample of their eaves-gullies (c. 26% and 16% dug respectively; Table 1).

*Table 1. Artefact populations Structures 2 and 3 (*excludes material from pit F. 505).*

| | Structure 2 | Structure 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Total pot | 319 (7791g)* | 82 (1269g) |
| Pot per metre | 31.9 (779g) | 12.4 (192g) |
| Total bone | 307 (7998g)* | 73 (1786g) |
| Bone per metre | 30.7 (800g) | 11.1 (271g) |
| **Estimated total pot** | **1246 (30,434g)** | **497 (7691g)** |
| **Estimated total bone** | **1199(31,242g)** | **442 (10,824g)** |

Due to the relative proportions of their excavated samples, Structure 2's figures are probably the more representative, and its substantially greater numbers are essentially the result of the larger scale (and intensity of re-cutting) of its eaves-gullies. Based on this, Structure 2's estimated pottery population could, for example, be compared to the two 'great' houses at Wardy Hill (Str. I & IV, 931 & 1689 sherds respectively). However, it would have had only about 30–40% of their animal bone (see Evans 2003a, pp. 208–11, tables 59 & 60, fig. 104, see also 248, table 69 for comparison to the Little Thetford buildings).[1]

Again, although surely biased by the much greater amount of excavation accorded it, Structure 2 would seem different on two other accounts. As outlined by Higbee and Clarke below, there is the frequency (and indeed occurrence at all) of pig bone, which in this case represents 15.6% of its faunal assemblage. Within the settlement's context this could suggest a relatively 'elite' diet (see e.g. Davis in Evans 2003a, p. 127). There is also the presence of human bone and, more specifically, of skull fragments (see Dodwell below). The latter were associated with three of the site's roundhouses (Str. 2, 3 & 9; Fig. 15). In the case of Structure 2, apart from a fragment of skull from its eaves-gully (and also human phalanges), there was the evidence of pit F. 505 (Fig. 14). Lying immediately south-east of the gully, the base of this feature had been paved with 'slab-like' sherds from a large storage vessel. Set upon these was the dome of a human skull, which had evidently been detached by a series of severe blows. Therefore, although contingent upon in-field sampling strategies, Structure 2 does seem to have been a 'distinguished' residence, albeit at a lowly level.

### Romano-British usage

The two areas of Iron Age settlement were eventually superseded by a Romano-British fieldsystem, whose axes generally 'boxed in' and thus respected the earlier compounds' boundaries (Fig. 3). Although some degree of phasing and expansion or infilling was apparent within the later system, the excavation was not sufficiently intensive to detail this. Suffice to say that the layout of the fieldsystem suggests that the main focus of settlement lay to the south-east (Cluster III), with another possibly lying to the north (Cluster IV), and that in both instances they lay immediately beside the Iron Age foci in these respective areas.

A note of caution (and context) is necessary when evaluating the site's Roman chronology and usage. As outlined below (see Lucas *et al.*), the vast majority of its pottery assemblage dates from the first and

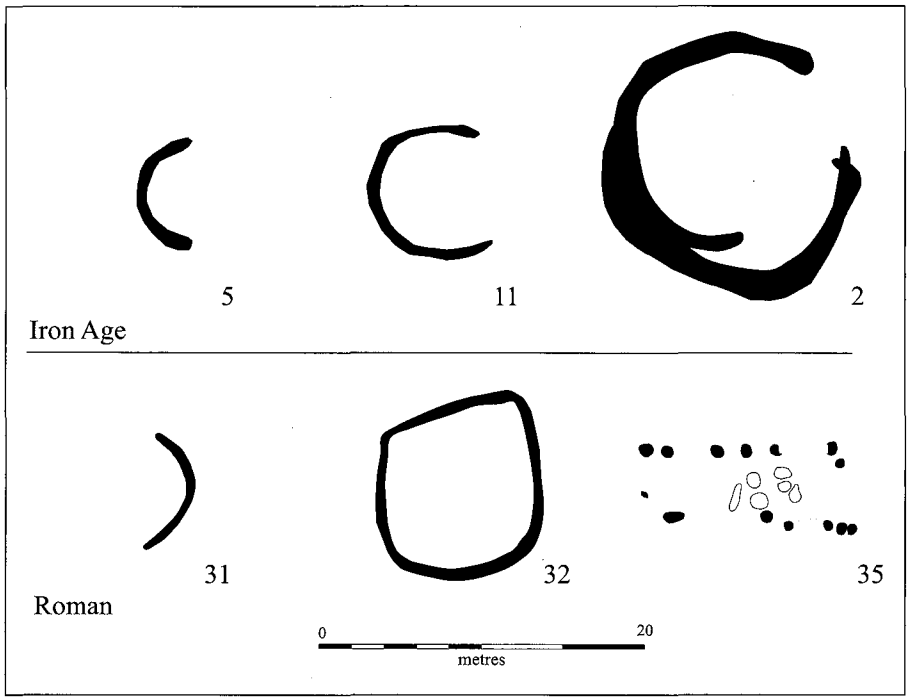


***Figure 9.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir main Iron Age and Roman structure types.*

earlier second centuries AD, with very little later Roman material (and no coins whatsoever). Recovery might have been severely biased by the excavation strategy. Focusing on the core of Iron Age Cluster I (where immediate post-Conquest occupation might have been localised within the 'horseshoe' compound), few Roman contexts were investigated beyond this immediate area and where it was thought that later activity could have continued throughout the later second until, at least, the third century AD. As outlined below, it must be relevant that the developed cores of Clusters III and IV are comparable to those at the Prickwillow Road and West Fen Road Roman settlements (see below), which continued to be occupied until Late Roman times. By reference to the latter two sites, it seems unlikely that Hurst Lane's Roman settlement would have been so elaborated or 'complex' had its usage ceased by the mid-second century.

Five structures defined by gullies can be attributed to this period at Hurst Lane (Fig. 3). All of these might have been shed-like and of ancillary status to houses *per se*. Three consisted of only 'half-arc' gullies, 6.70–9.00 metres in diameter (Str. 1, 31 & 33), whereas the other two were of sub-square form (Str. 32 & 34; *c.* 10 x 10 metres). Yet it is notable that four of these fell within the area of the Iron Age 'horseshoe' compound (Str. 1, 31–3; Fig. 6); the upper fills of this compound's north- and south-eastern sides contained quantities of Early Roman finds (and along its south-eastern aspect the compound was not 'boxed' by a Roman boundary). It might be relevant that the 'half-arc' gully buildings located within the compound (Str. 1, 31 & 33) were all later truncated by ditches associated with the main Romano-British fieldsystem. This could, therefore, suggest that these structures and the Romano-British settlement debris in the upper profile of Compound A's circuit (in part backfilled) might actually attest to some manner of post-Conquest interregnum usage, with the main Romano-British system perhaps being laid out in the later decades of the first century AD. In this case, only the two sub-square structures (32 & 34) would have been contemporary with the fieldsystem itself. (This postulated succession could be furthered by the fact that in the south of Compound A one of the 'arc-plan' structures – 31 – was cut by a ditch that extended from the east side of a boundary that framed, and thereby respected, the southern sub-square structure, 32.)

In addition, two possible post-built structures could be tentatively distinguished within the area of Cluster III (Fig. 3). Unexcavated, both could only be generally attributed to the site's Roman occupation (and identified as buildings *per se*). The first, Structure 35, extended over 5 x 12 metres and was aligned with the paddock system of the period in this area (Fig. 9). The other (and more dubious), lying to the north and off-alignment – Structure 36 – extended over about 5.50 x 20 metres.

**Iron Age pottery**

*Sarah Percival (with a contribution by David Williams)*

The excavations produced 3659 sherds of pre-Roman pottery (59.5 kilogrammes). Following assessment of the full assemblage, a sample of *c.* 1700 sherds (39.9 kilogrammes) from 121 contexts was selected for full analysis (Table 2). This included contexts known to contain large and well-preserved assemblages, sherds with form or fabric of particular interest, and pottery from structures and other features of significance to the interpretation of the site.

***Table 2.*** *Sherd count and weight of Iron Age Pottery*

| Date | Quantity | Weight (g) |
|---|---|---|
| Earlier to Mid-Iron Age 500–300 BC | 512 | 10,579 |
| Mid- to Late Iron Age 300 BC–AD 50 | 902 | 24,137 |
| AD 50 onwards | 281 | 5100 |
| **Total** | **1695** | **39,816** |

Of the Iron Age sherds that were studied, most were large and well preserved, with an average sherd weight of 23 grammes. The assemblage contained a range of domestic vessels, some with soot and limescale residues, which suggests that they were used for cooking. The majority dated from the later Iron Age, the third to first centuries BC, and included a number of transitional forms indicating that the assemblage was starting to become Romanised.

Pottery was chosen principally from Settlement Cluster I, with a smaller quantity from Cluster II. The sherd count and weight of pottery chosen for analysis from each settlement area is shown below (Table 3).

***Table 3.*** *Sherd count and weight of sherds by site location*

| Location | No. of contexts | Sherd count | Sherd weight (g) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cluster I | 85 | 1254 | 28,046 |
| Cluster II | 24 | 341 | 8604 |
| Surface finds | 6 | 58 | 838 |
| Unattributed | 4 | 44 | 2294 |

*Fabrics and production*

Seventeen fabrics were identified from five main fabric groups. The most numerous were the sandy fabrics, which represented 76.2% of the total Iron Age assemblage (30.33 kilogrammes). Ten quartz sand-tempered fabrics made up the sand-tempered group (Group Q); of these, seven were hand-made and three were wheel-made. Sand-tempered fabrics were used for all the major forms represented at the site with the exception of the largest storage jars, which were manufactured exclusively from shell-tempered fabrics.

Shell-tempered fabrics made up the second most numerous fabric group. Two such fabrics were identified (S1 & S2), both hand-made. These were divided into medium and coarse wares, and were used for a range of medium-sized jars and large scored storage jars. Thin-section analysis of these fabrics indicated that the shell was fossilised and derived from a local fossil-rich clay source (see Williams below).

Flint-tempered fabrics made up a small but significant percentage of the assemblage (6.7%; 2.67 kilogrammes) and were used for a range of medium-sized jar forms. The

presence of such fabrics is of interest as they were commonly used in the earlier Iron Age and might indicate an early element within the assemblage. An early date for at least some of the flint-tempered wares was suggested by the presence of fingernail-impressed decoration, which was applied to the rim top of one vessel in Structure 4 ([372]), although the sherd could have been residual. A degree of residuality was also suggested by the condition of the sherds, 10.4% (278 grammes) of which were abraded or very abraded. It is also possible, however, that coarser inclusions, such as flint-tempering, continued to be used well into the Middle Iron Age (Percival 1996, p. 265).

Organic tempering was present in 3.9% of the assemblage (1547 grammes). The presence of organic-tempered fabrics is often taken to be indicative of 'Belgic' or Aylesford-Swarling style pottery of the later Iron Age and early Roman transitional period. However, both fabrics of this type here were hand-made.

Wheel-made fabrics made up 11.0% of the assemblage by weight (4371 grammes; 15.0% excluding earlier-Middle Iron Age material). A few sherds were identified as possible proto-greywares (56 grammes), which were wheel-made of dense micaceous sandy fabric. The remainder of the assemblage (29 grammes) was of indeterminate prehistoric date.

The assemblage can, therefore, be classified as a sand-tempered assemblage and, as such, is typical of the majority of later Iron Age pottery from the Ely area. The predominance of sandy fabrics shows strong parallels with other later Iron Age sites in and around the Isle of Ely (see below), in particular with West Fen Road (72.9% sandy fabrics), Watson's Lane, Little Thetford (73.8%), St John's Road, Ely (82.3%) and Wardy Hill, Coveney (71.8%).

Evidence for pottery production was limited. One sherd ([374]) from a large, rough wiped coarse ware jar had a large spall missing from the surface just below the rim. Its interior had limescale residues, indicating that it had been used for boiling water. The presence of the spall indicates that the vessel had been misfired, but despite this damage the pot was still put into use, which suggests that it had been made locally and not traded in. Thin-section analysis indicated that, in common with Wardy Hill (Hill & Horne in Evans 2003a) and Haddenham, the majority of the clays for the sand- and shell-tempered wares found at Hurst Lane were from local sources (see Williams below). This suggests there was localised domestic-scale production supplying users within a relatively small area. As such, it falls well within the pattern for pottery production in the Middle to Late Iron Age identified by Morris (1996, p. 45) and indicates that pots did not travel more than 30 kilometres from where they were produced. In addition to the locally made pots, trade or exchange from outside the local area brought in a small number of pots. No sherds from beyond the Isle of Ely and its immediate environs were definitely identified by thin-sectioning, although the Late Iron Age wheel-made rilled vessel sherd was of indistinct provenance and might, therefore, have been non-local (Sample 10; see Williams below).

*Petrological Analysis*
*David Williams*

Ten representative Iron Age sherds were thin-sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope for a detailed description of the fabric of each. Ely lies in an area of Jurassic Kimmeridge Clays and Cretaceous Lower Greensands, covered in part by Glacial Sand and Gravel, Boulder Clays, Alluvium and Peat Fen deposits (Geological Survey One-Inch Map of England Sheet No. 173).

The petrological results tabulated below show that in theory the dominant non-plastic inclusion types present in the sample sherds could all have been derived from clays and sands found in the locality of Ely. Glauconite, for example, which was present in eight of the 10 sherds, is commonly associated with Lower Greensand formations. The packed fossil shell of Sherd 9 might have derived from the local Kimmeridge Clays, although of course a source further afield is also quite possible. A likely origin for the predominantly quartz fabric of Sherd 10 is more difficult to predict given the ubiquity of the inclusions.

A comparison with a selection of Iron Age fabrics from Wardy Hill, to the north-west of Ely, and with Haddenham to the south-west, both previously thin-sectioned by the writer, show a number of fabric similarities with those from Hurst Lane (Williams in Evans 2003a and in Evans & Hodder 2006). Sherds with a high calcareous content, mainly fossil shell, sometimes with bryozoa, are common to all three sites, as are Jurassic deposits. Like Hurst Lane, many of the sherds from Wardy Hill and Haddenham also contained glauconitic pellets, with Fabric Q12 at Wardy Hill also having elongated organic voids present (this fabric accounted for 6.6% of the assemblage). However, only at Wardy Hill did there not appear to be glauconitic clays or sands within the immediate vicinity. Moreover, at that site there was a clear fabric distinction between the earlier, hand-made vessels, which did not contain glauconite, and the Late Iron Age wheel-made ones that did. At Hurst Lane, glauconitic fabrics were found in the Middle Iron Age hand-made wares as well as in the later wheel-thrown pottery. At Wardy Hill, there were a number of sherds that included angular pieces of grog. This form of tempering was not recognised in the thin-section samples analysed from either Hurst Lane or Haddenham.

*Glauconite*

1) [444] <596> **Hand-made pedestal base** (?early Middle Iron Age)
2) F. 505 [917] <1197> **Hand-made sherd**
3) [965] <1301> **Hand-made Type A vessel** (?early Middle Iron Age)
4) F. 440 [360] <436> **Hand-made base**
5) F. 463 [659] <869> **Hand-made rim sherd**
6) SF. 159 <218> **Hand-made sherd from large vessel**
   Thin-sectioning showed that scattered randomly throughout the clay matrix were frequent well-rounded disaggregated oxidized pellets of glauconite. Also present were frequent grains of ill-sorted quartz, mostly monocrystalline but a few with undulose extinction, a number of large organic voids, some still containing carbonised plant remains (also visible in the hand-specimen), the odd piece of flint, a few flecks of white mica and some opaque iron oxide. Samples 5 and 6 were slightly finer textured than the other sherds, containing less quartz and organic voids. Sample 2 also contained a piece of ironstone.
7) [630] <825> **Hand-made Type A jar**
   This was a similar fabric to Samples 1–6, including the large organic voids, but it also contained some small pieces of shell scattered in the clay matrix, which were lacking from the latter group.
8) F. 505 [912] <1197> **Wheel-made rim** (mid–late first century AD)
   This fabric had a similar range of non-plastic inclusions

to Samples 1–6, with the exception that it appeared to lack the distinctive large organic voids that were a characteristic of the latter group. The fabric also contained the odd small piece of cryptocrystalline limestone.

*Fossil Shell*

9) F. 505 [880] <1128> **Hand-made dense shelly fabric**
Thin-sectioning showed a clay matrix crowded with platelets of fossil shell. Included in this were a relatively high number of pieces of fossil bryozoa skeletal material. This aquatic invertebrate animal occurs in a wide range of geological formations, most notably the Jurassic. Also present in the fabric were a moderate amount of quartz grains and a little opaque iron oxide.

*Quartz*

10) [125] <168> **Wheel-made, rilled vessel** (mid–late first century AD)
Thin-sectioning showed a groundmass of frequent silt-sized grains of quartz with a moderate scatter of larger grains, average size 0.20–0.50 millimetres. Also present were some pieces of flint of a similar size-range to the larger quartz grains, some flecks of white mica and a little opaque iron oxide.

Form and decoration

The assemblage was recorded using the type series developed by Hill (Hill & Horne in Evans 2003a). No whole vessels or complete vessel profiles were found. The site is characterised by upright-rimmed, slack-shouldered forms and, as such, is typical of other sites excavated around Ely (*ibid.*). The use of these utilitarian-style vessels appears not to have changed for several centuries from at least 300 BC and continued well into the first century AD, when they occurred alongside wheel-made forms (Hill 2002, p. 145).

Slack-shouldered jars (Form A) were the most numerous vessel found on the site representing 35% of the identifiable rims (89 examples). The jars were found throughout, being present in Structures 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, the enclosure ditch of Compound A and that of Compound F in Settlement Cluster II. These jars were also found within the pits that were excavated. Eighteen of the rim sherds were burnished. Decoration was present on three Form A jars: two examples had fingertip impressions applied to the rim top; the third had tool-incised slashes applied to the top of the rim. Such decoration might be an earlier trait. This is interesting in light of the longevity of the slack-shouldered jars, perhaps suggesting that early decorative techniques continued in use along with the earlier vessel form. Sooting occurred on four examples and limescale deposits were found on one. This suggests that the jars were used for cooking and for boiling water. All of the examples were made of hand-made fabrics, mostly with quartz-sand inclusions, although a small number contained flint.

A second slack-shouldered bowl form in hand-made fabrics was also present. This was similar to Form A, but with a flared open-neck (Form D, 12 examples). Unlike the ubiquitous Form A jars, which were widespread over the site, these were only found in the eaves-drip gullies of Structures 2, 3 and 9 and in a pit ([521]). The jars were also found with the earlier trait of fingernail-impressed decoration applied to the rim top (one example) and slashed decoration to the rim top (two examples). The decorated sherds were found in Structures 2 and 3.

Closed bowls with distinct upright rims (Form B) also made up a significant proportion of the assemblage (10%; 26 sherds). These were found both with and without burnishing. The closed bowls were found in the enclosure ditches of Compounds A and F, and Structures 2, 8 and 9. Three examples of a small, undecorated closed bowl (Form C) were also recovered (Str. 15). A single sherd from a small, globular closed bowl with no neck and beaded rim (Form M) was also present. Found in Compound A, the form of this bowl references the 'La Tène'-style bowls found on Iron Age sites such as West Fen Road (Percival in Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005) and elsewhere in southern East Anglia. A single decorated sherd (Str. 16, [305] Fig. 10.2) had an impressed dimple surrounded by square-tooth comb impressions. Dimples have been found on earlier Iron Age sherds from Wandlebury (Hartley 1957, fig. 7.1, p. 23), which also produced sherds with dotted or combed decoration (*ibid*, fig. 8.36). The presence of this distinctive 'La Tène'-style pottery suggests an earlier date for Structure 16.

An unusual high-shouldered jar form (K), identified as being unique to Hurst Lane within Cambridgeshire during the assessment of the assemblage (Hill in Evans & Knight 2000a), was found in Structures 2, 10, 15 and 16 in Settlement Cluster I and Structure 27 and in a well ([965]) within Cluster II. This form also has associations with earlier 'La Tène' forms (*ibid.*). Barrel-shaped vessels (Form T) were found in Structures 16 and 26. These can be dated typologically to around 300 BC from parallels found at Danebury (Phases 4 and 5) and, more locally, at Hinchingbrooke Park, Cambridgeshire, where they are dated to the fourth to second centuries BC (*ibid.*). All of these forms were found in hand-made sandy fabrics.

Distinctively later or transitional forms included the hand-made and wheel-made cordoned jars and bowl forms (Form R, five examples; Form Q, six examples). These were relatively finely made and contained no visible residues or soot marks to suggest use in cooking. Rims from the cordoned jars were only found in Structure 2 and as surface finds elsewhere. All but two of the cordoned bowl sherds were wheel-made.

Open globular-style bowls with 'S'-shaped profiles and rounded rims (Form G) made up 17% of the rim forms (42 sherds). The sherds might be from one vessel and were wheel-made. No burnishing or decoration was found on these and no residues diagnostic of use were present. The globular bowl sherds were only found in Compound A. A second globular bowl form – a similar, rounded open bowl with rounded rim-ending – was found in Structure 3 and Compound F (three examples).

Of the 252 rim sherds examined, 97 had measurable rim diameters. The measurements showed a range of vessel sizes between 80 and 750 millimetres in diameter. The majority fell between 180 and 200 millimetres, with 190 millimetres being the most frequent size that was found. The range of vessel sizes is compatible with other Iron Age sites excavated in Cambridgeshire, in particular with Little Paxton Phase 4. There the Late Iron Age/transitional pottery assemblage was found to contain 'extremely large vessels', most commonly with diameters of 120 millimetres, 160 millimetres and 200 millimetres (Hancocks 2003).

Scoring was only present on just under 3% of the sherds (1160 grammes) and was found in Structures 2–4, 8, 22 and 24, within an isolated pit ([384]) and in the ditch of Compound A. Scoring occurred on both shell-tempered and sandy fabrics; Structure 2 produced the largest assemblage (374 grammes).

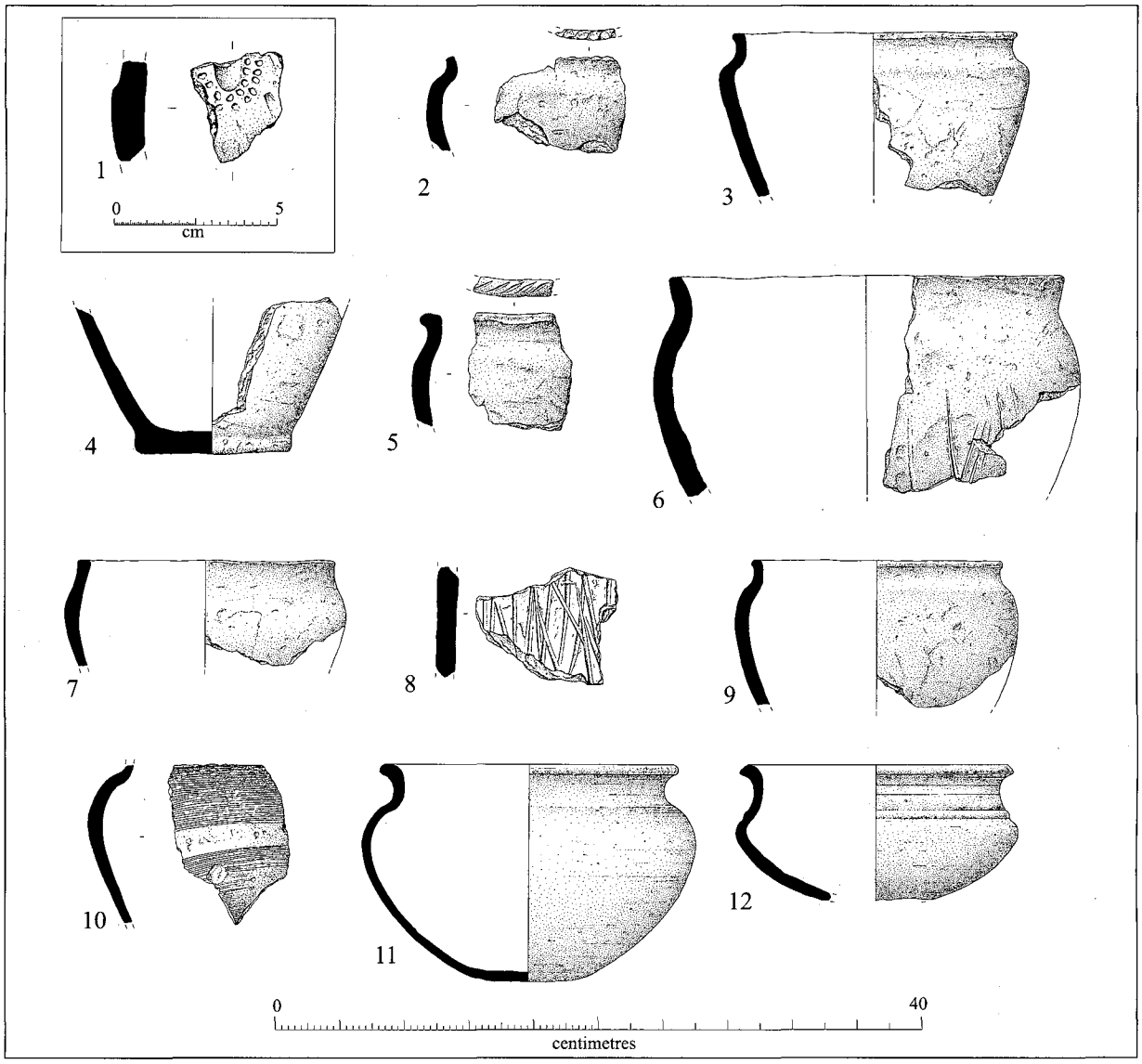


***Figure 10.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir Iron Age pottery.*
1) Decorated body sherd, Fabric Q2 ([305], F. 403, Structure 16), earlier Iron Age; 2) Rim, fingertip impressed on top, type A1, Fabric Q9 ([305], F. 403, Structure 16), earlier Iron Age; 3) Rim, type E4, Fabric Q2 ([923], F. 520, pit), earlier Iron Age; 4) Base, type 2 ([928], F. 521, pit), earlier Iron Age; 5) Rim, slashed on top, type A9, Fabric Q1 ([416], F. 455, interrupted boundary), earlier Iron Age; 6) Rim, type A1, Fabric F1 ([058], surface find), Middle Iron Age; 7) Rim, rim type K1. Fabric Q2 ([331], F. 398, Structure 1), Middle Iron Age; 8) Scored body sherd, Fabric Q3 ([395], Structure 22), Middle Iron Age; 9) Rim, type A9, Fabric Q2 ([474], F. 463, Compound A) Middle Iron Age; 10) Decorated body sherd (combed), Fabric Q4 wheel-made ([125], surface find), Late Iron Age/Roman transitional; 11) Rim, type G9, Fabric Q4 wheel-made ([480], Compound A), Late Iron Age/Roman transitional; 12) Rim, type R9, Fabric Q4 wheel-made ([507], Structure 2), Late Iron Age/Roman transitional.

The Hurst Lane assemblage had an average sherd weight of 23 grammes. This was much higher than those noted from contemporary sites, which usually fall around 11 grammes. The high average sherd weight probably resulted from the exclusion from full analysis of the unstratified and redeposited material, as only contexts containing large and *in situ* assemblages were selected for study. Within the settlement, there were some differences in the average weight and condition of sherds. The smallest sherds were found in the enclosure ditches. Those from Settlement Cluster I had an average weight of 18 grammes and those from Cluster II, 15 grammes. However, rates of abrasion varied between the enclosure ditches: sherds from ditches in Cluster II were better preserved than those from Compounds A, B and C. The sherds from the house structures were generally larger. Those from Settlement Cluster I had an average weight of 23 grammes and those from Cluster II, 25 grammes. Small quantities of abraded and very abraded sherds

were also found within the house eaves-gullies. Structures 15 and 27 had particularly abraded assemblages, perhaps suggesting that the pottery found within them was redeposited from a midden or surface deposit. Only a few pits were excavated at Hurst Lane, and only 153 grammes of pottery was recovered from them (excluding F. 505 associated with Structure 2). This suggests that rubbish was not disposed of in pits and was perhaps deposited in middens and only later became incorporated in open features such as eaves-gullies and enclosure ditches. The larger size of sherds in the house gullies could suggest that they had travelled less distance than the smaller sherds found in the enclosure ditches, indicating that the middens were placed close to the houses.

No clusters of diagnostic sherds were observed: rims and base sherds were dispersed through all classes of feature. Sooting and limescale deposits were only found on sherds recovered from the house gullies (Str. 2, 9, 17, 22 & 27) and the fill of one pit, which suggests that cooking had been undertaken within these. Structures with no sooted or limescale-encrusted sherds (Str. 3–8, 10, 15, 16 & 20) might have been used for other purposes, such as craft production, and these generally produced smaller assemblages. Finely-finished burnished sherds were found in small quantities in Structures 2–4, 8–10, 15, 16, 20, 22, 24 and 27. This could suggest that Structures 3, 4, 10, 15, 16 and 20, which contained no sooted and limescale-encrusted sherds but did contain fine wares, might have been used for consuming food and not cooking. Scored Ware was associated with Structures 2, 3, 4, 8 and 22, and also 24, where it was associated with the more finely-finished vessels. The paucity of sherds showing evidence of cooking deposits within the enclosure ditches is curious, if the pottery was transferred there from dwelling-related middens where cooking and eating took place. This could suggest that pottery found in the enclosure ditches derived only from middens or scatters associated with other activities.

Dating of Iron Age pottery based on typological development has its problems and the Hurst Lane assemblage demonstrates a number of these: long-lived vessel forms, a limited range of vessel types and a lack of decoration that could be used to mark stylistic development. The site was deficient in deeply stratified contexts with independently datable associations and much of the pottery appeared to have been redeposited. Nevertheless, the presence of distinctive pottery styles, in particular the La Tène-influenced forms, imply that Structures 10, 15, 16 and 27 belonged to an earlier phase, whilst Structure 2 was the latest or longest-lived Iron Age structure on the site and yielded wheel-made forms alongside hand-made ones.

The earliest pottery found at Hurst Lane is the La Tène-influenced sherds such as the dimple and comb-impressed decorated sherd found in Structure 16 ([305]; Fig. 10.1). Similar decoration is paralleled at Wandlebury (Hartley 1957) where it was dated to the end of the Early Iron Age, 500–300 BC. No distinct focus for earlier activity was discernible from the pottery evidence, although Settlement Cluster I Compound B and Structures 3, 4, 9 and 16 all contained pottery of earlier form and decoration. In Cluster II, Compound F's ditch, Structures 24 and 27, the interrupted boundary and a few isolated pits ([384], [388] & [389]) also appeared to be early.

The Middle to Late Iron Age pottery is primarily an undecorated or plain ware assemblage and is attributable to about 300 BC onwards. The pots were mostly hand-made and occurred in a relatively limited range of forms, chiefly medium-sized jars with some bowls. Few vessels had scored surfaces, which might represent a functional element of the assemblage, perhaps coming from storage jars. It is also possible that whilst the majority of the pots were made locally on the Isle of Ely, pots with scored decoration might not be local and could, therefore, have been imported.

Pottery of the latest Iron Age/transitional Roman phase was found in Settlement Cluster I in contexts associated with Structures 2, 3, 6, 8 10 and 15, and with Structure 24 in Cluster II. The transitional forms show a greater range of forms, with cordoned jars and bowl forms and open globular style bowls with 'S'-shaped profiles. These were in both hand-made and wheel-made fabrics. The contexts where transitional forms were found also contained the slack-shouldered jar forms that characterise the mid-to-Late Iron Age assemblage and suggest that hand-made utilitarian jar forms continued in use alongside the wheel-made bowl forms. The lack of soot or other evidence of use on the wheel-made bowls suggests that they might have formed the tableware component of the assemblage (Hill 2002, p. 147). The presence of tablewares and the increased range of vessel forms could also indicate that the Late Iron Age inhabitants of Hurst Lane chose to incorporate new Roman eating and dining habits at some time during the immediate pre-Conquest period.

### Roman Pottery

*Gavin Lucas, Gwladys Monteil and Katie Anderson*

The excavations produced 1856 sherds of Roman pottery (*c.* 25 kilogrammes; mean sherd weight 13.8 grammes). The majority were small and abraded, but there were some noteworthy groups of medium to large unabraded sherds. The date of the assemblage was, on the whole, of the first or early second century AD, with a few unstratified sherds from machine-spoil contexts dating to the later second to third century (forming less than 1% of the total sherd count). The bulk of the material analysed came from the area of Settlement Cluster I as defined by the earlier, Iron Age enclosure/settlement complex, and the Roman features there were divided into three groups: Iron Age enclosures (upper fills), Roman structures (1, 31–4), and Roman enclosure ditches.

The material from tertiary fills of Iron Age enclosure contexts ([560], [636] & [885]) consisted of first

or early second-century AD pottery and did not have any exceptional characteristics. A gully ([761], cutting the 'horseshoe' enclosure; Fig. 6), located near Roman Structure 32 and adjacent to grave F. 138, yielded an important group of early material. Probably of immediately post-Conquest date, it included a possible imported Gallo-Belgic butt beaker with incised decoration (Fig. 11.3).

Within Compound A there were other sherds that dated to the second century AD, including a greyware shallow dish and a single sherd of Southern Gaulish Samian. Although there was only a small quantity of material, it shows that this area of the site was still in use in the second century.

All of the Roman structures associated with Settlement Cluster I/III (31–4) could be dated to the mid-late first century AD, with a significant quantity of the pottery being of pre-Flavian date. Therefore, it seems likely that these structures were all built within a short space of time. The nature of the pottery in terms of the fabrics and their condition made it hard to distinguish earlier material from later, and thus it was difficult to determine the exact chronological order of these structures. This was largely because the most common fabrics were oxidised and reduced quartz-tempered wares, which were difficult to source and date. However, this could imply a continuation of the Iron Age fabrics into the later period when they were used to make the more Romanised forms. As already discussed, there were some examples of pottery from the second century in this area of the site, which implies that the site was still in use at this time. It, therefore, seems possible that there were local wares of this later date, but because they were non-diagnostic or of a generic form it was not possible to date them more accurately.

Oxidised and grey coarse wares, mostly local, dominated the Roman assemblage. There was a significant number of vessels which appeared to be very similar to products from Horningsea, with a good representation of oxidised storage jars, especially the examples with a typical bifid rim (Str. 33, [707]; enclosure context [215]). There were also several grey and reduced wares, especially some bowls and, again, also large storage jars (enclosure contexts [636], [625] & [215]). This is a pattern seen at a number of other sites in Ely, including Prickwillow Road, where a steady increase in Horningsea pottery occurred over its Roman sequence, peaking in the third to fourth century AD (Mackreth in Atkins & Mudd 2003). The material from Hurst Lane dates to the mid–late first century AD, which is generally earlier than the Horningsea products and which could imply that a different source was making very similar pottery at an early date.

The assemblage included a number of coarse ware jars from the kilns of Harrold (Bedfordshire), which are likely to date from the late first century AD. There were three sherds of ring and dot beakers, one associated with Roman Structure 31 (Fig. 11.4) and another from ditch F. 515 ([886]). All were of a very similar sandy grey fabric with mica. The exact source of these vessels is unclear, but similar fabrics are known in the Cambridge area. The fabric, decoration and other finds from the same context also point towards a mid–late first century AD date. A few buff-ware beakers were also recovered ([102], [125], [150], [225], [560] & F. 137; Fig. 11.2). These, although their production source could not be determined, were most likely to have been produced locally and to date from the mid-first to second century AD.

Two unusual coarse-ware fabrics were identified. One was a thick, heavily flint-tempered coarse ware associated with forms such as storage jars; the other a sandy oxidised hard fabric associated with what could have been a cheese-press (unstratified; Fig. 11.1).

A single sherd of mortarium was recovered, unfortunately from an unstratified surface context. Oxidised with a grey core, with quartz and mica inclusions, it was similar to vessels produced at Hadham (Hertfordshire). It was found with six other sherds, including a late Colchester colour-coated ware. These two sherds are, therefore, important because they date to the mid-second to third century AD and were thus the latest dated pottery from the assemblage. Because they were from an unstratified context they cannot be used to date any specific area of the site, but they are a good source of evidence to show that pottery was still arriving at the site as late as the third century AD.

The overall occurrence of fine wares was very low. Few Samian wares were recovered (ten sherds, or less than 1% of the total number); they only consisted of plain forms (dish forms Dr. 18/31, 31, 31R, 36 and cup form Dr. 33) and came from south and central Gaulish kilns. Stratigraphically they did not show any particular pattern, apart from their near-complete absence from Settlement Cluster I (one sherd in [885]). However, these sherds are still one of the best sources of evidence from the site to show that trade continued into at least the mid-second century AD.

As mentioned, another possible import was a Gallo-Belgic decorated butt beaker (Type Cam 113; Fig. 11.3), probably of a pre-Flavian date, found in gully [761]. Because this was only a single vessel, it has very little impact on the overall understanding of the site. Nevertheless, it is still useful as it shows that the site did have some access to finer 'imported' pottery, even if it was through other means rather than direct trade (i.e. down-the-line exchange).

Jars were the most common vessel forms, representing over 66% of all the rims by count and 60% by weight. The most common form was the necked jar with a small beaded rim, although there were a number of other forms (e.g. Fig. 11.5). The range of jars in the assemblage reflected activities that were taking place on the site, including both cooking and storage. Other vessel forms such as beakers and dishes (although there were only a few examples of the latter) would have been used for the serving and consumption of food and drink. Evidence of use on a number of sherds included sooting and heavy limescale deposits.

This assemblage largely consists of a basic range of domestic wares such as large storage jars, bowls, cooking jars and dishes. The small number of table wares (e.g. beakers), as well as the complete lack of flagons, is noticeable. From a regional point of view, the presence of material from the Horningsea kilns in such early contexts is of importance (see e.g. Gibson & Lucas 2002 for a broader discussion). Yet, perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Roman material is its relationship to the Late Iron Age assemblage. The

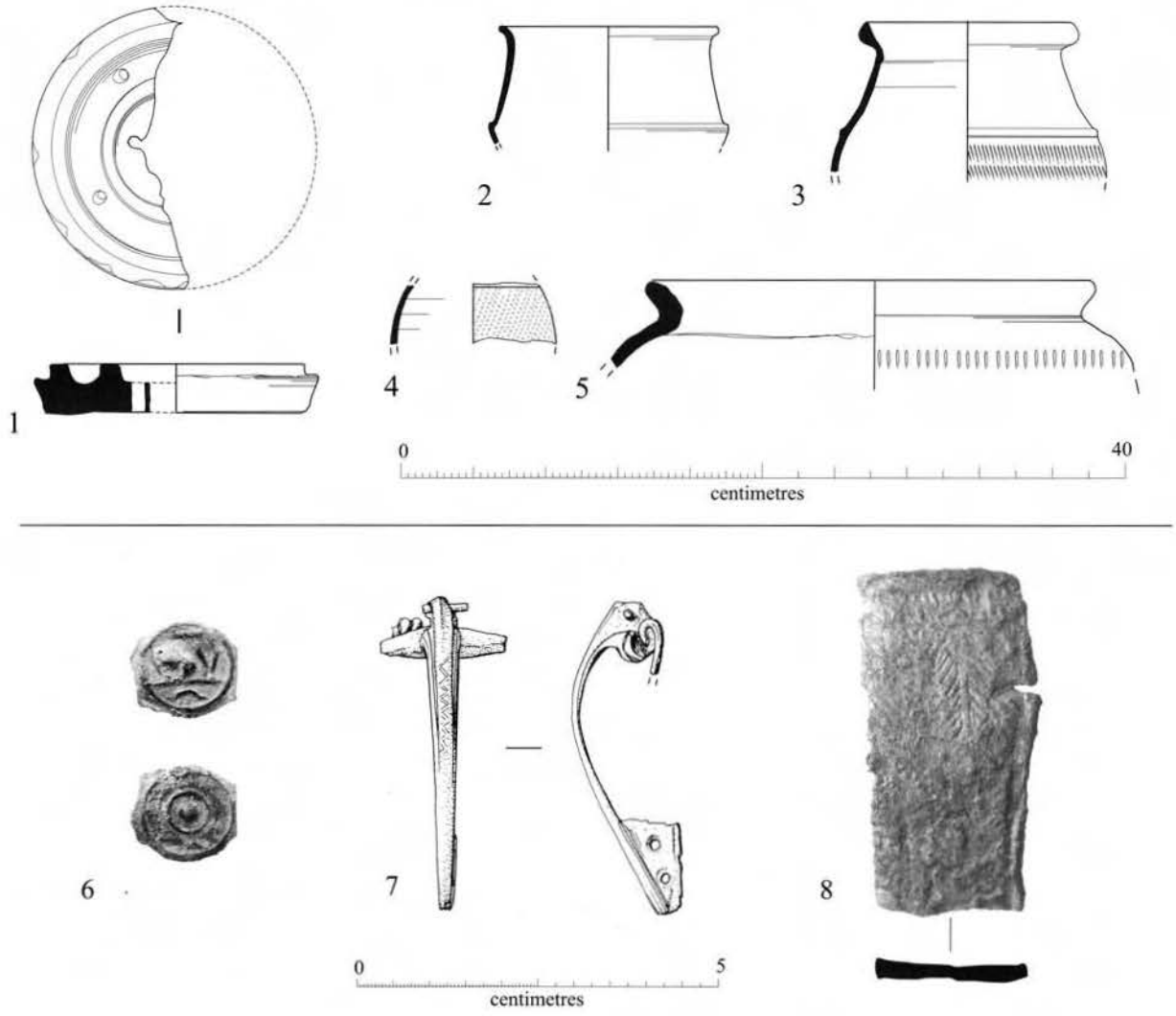


***Figure 11.***
*Top: The Hurst Lane Reservoir Romano-British Pottery.*
*1) Cheese press, hard, sandy oxidised fabric (<1837> & <1850>, both unstratified contexts); 2) Soft, sandy buff coloured beaker with cordon (F. 171, <1484>); 3) Gallo-Belgic butt beaker with incised decoration (pre-Flavian; [761], F. 495, <992>); 4) Sherd with ring and dot decoration, soft, sandy grey ware with common silver mica (source unknown but probably dated mid–late first century AD; F. 139, <1438>); 5) Large grog-tempered jar with scored line decoration on the body ([894c], <1167>).*
*Bottom: Small Finds (1:1): 6) potin 7) Colchester Derivative brooch; 8) decorated copper alloy strip.*

pottery continued right through the transitional phase and, therefore, it is possible to see any changes on the site that were reflected in pottery types. The pottery shows that Roman influence was having an impact at a relatively early stage and there was a significant number of pre-Flavian wares (including one imported ware from [761]), even if the quantities of such pottery were low. The range of local products began to include more 'Romanised' forms, such as cornice rim beakers and shallow dishes, although these vessel forms never became common at the site. The jars that had been produced in the Iron Age continued to be made in the Roman period with little change in form and many were still hand-made. The lack of imported amphora, as well as the very small quantity of fine wares and imports, suggests a relatively low socio-economic position or low level of Romanisation for the settlement.

## Metalwork

### *Brooch* (Donald Mackreth)

Colchester Derivative (<1818>, SF. 44, near F. 356; Figs 11.7 & 15.13) The bilateral spring is held in the Harlow manner: an axis bar through the coils passes through the lower of two holes in a plate behind the head of the bow, the chord is held in the upper hole. The plate is carried over the head as a ridge and runs down the bow where it dies out. The lower part has a groove on each side and

| Fabric | Count | % | Wt (g) | % | EVEs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buff ware with quartz and mica | 4 | 2 | 85 | 1 | 0.59 |
| Buff ware with rare grog and iron | 2 | 1 | 19 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Buff ware with quartz | 3 | 1.5 | 7 | 0.1 | 0.18 |
| Gallo-Belgic buff ware | 9 | 4.4 | 115 | 2 | 0.28 |
| Grey ware with quartz and black iron | 7 | 3 | 354 | 6 | 1.12 |
| Grey ware with quartz and mica | 11 | 5 | 288 | 4 | 2.75 |
| Grey ware with quartz & limestone | 5 | 2 | 177 | 3 | 0.3 |
| Grey ware with quartz | 9 | 4 | 253 | 4 | 0.64 |
| Hadham red-slipped ware? | 1 | 0.5 | 26 | 0.4 | 0 |
| Harrold Shelly ware | 4 | 2 | 143 | 2 | 0.1 |
| Horningsea Oxidised ware | 21 | 10 | 640 | 10 | 1.79 |
| Horningsea Reduced ware | 9 | 4.4 | 224 | 4 | 0.63 |
| Horningsea Grey ware | 9 | 4.4 | 302 | 5 | 1.53 |
| Imitation black burnished ware | 3 | 1.5 | 51 | 0.6 | 0.26 |
| Oxidised quartz-tempered ware | 30 | 15 | 815 | 13 | 2.65 |
| Oxidised sandy ware with mica | 16 | 8 | 475 | 8 | 1.13 |
| Oxidised sandy ware with iron and mica | 14 | 7 | 764 | 12 | 1.07 |
| Oxidised ware with pink grog | 1 | 0.5 | 636 | 10 | 0.15 |
| Reduced ware with quartz | 9 | 4.4 | 149 | 2 | 0.46 |
| Reduced ware with quartz and mica | 22 | 11 | 364 | 6 | 1.79 |
| Reduced ware with quartz, mica and grog | 5 | 2.4 | 79 | 1 | 0.59 |
| Reduced ware with quartz, mica and shell | 3 | 1.5 | 42 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Reduced, shell-tempered ware | 4 | 2 | 244 | 4 | 1.28 |
| Reduced ware with black iron | 4 | 2 | 61 | 1 | 0.52 |
| Southern Gaulish Samian | 1 | 0.5 | 4 | 0.1 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **206** | **100** | **6317** | **100** | **20.1** |

***Table 4.*** *The count, weight and EVEs of all rims and bases*

the front of the ridge is decorated with walked graver work. The rest of the bow is plain and the catch-plate has two circular holes and the relics of a pin-groove.

A member of the Springhead sub-variety of the Harlow Type, this brooch lacks the groove down the upper part of the type as first defined by the writer, but is in all other respects a full member of the group. The distribution of all three versions of the Harlow type is firmly based in Essex and the rest of East Anglia as well as Hertfordshire. The two holes in the catch-plate show that this is a developed form. The date-range for all the examples of the Springhead so far recorded by the writer is, as usual, wide. However, it indicates a *floruit* from the middle of the first century AD. Other examples of the whole family of Harlows indicate that the end of the range is close to AD 80/85; the use of circular piercings in the catch-plate is probably no earlier than AD 50/55.

***Iron Age coin*** (J. D. Hill)

A single Class II potin coin was recovered from F. 373 associated with Structure 18 (FS. 968; Figs 11.6 & 15.14). Uninscribed, it is similar to British Museum 718 (Hobbs 1996). Potins were cast, not struck, coins. They can be divided into two main types, with those of Class I being larger than Class II. Class I potins were probably made, and had their main areas of circulation, in Kent and the lower Thames Valley. The smaller Class II potins are concentrated in Hertfordshire and Essex. Potins fall into Phases 2 and 3 of Haselgrove's chronology for British Iron Age coinage (1993).

Class I potins in Kent and the Lower Thames Valley were clearly being produced from as early as 150 BC, with Class II potins made in southern East Anglia dating slightly later. Hoard finds from Castle Hill Ruffs (Surrey) and Deal (Kent) confirm that potins were possibly being made, but were certainly still in circulation, at the end of the first century BC (Haselgrove 1988). A large hoard of Class II potins was found in the foundation trench of a circular building at the enclosed settlement at Stansted Airport (*c.* 50–25 BC; Haselgrove 1988; Havis & Brooks 2004, pp. 115–20). Unlike Class I potins, Class II coins only occur in small numbers in contexts earlier than 10 BC, and are most common in deposits dating to the early first century AD. This coin could have been minted as early as the later second century BC or as late as the third quarter of the first century BC, and could have been in circulation for some time thereafter.

Potins were probably special purpose money, which was only used in certain kinds of transaction and not as all-purpose early cash (see Haselgrove 1988 for a detailed discussion). Haselgrove has argued that, particularly north of the Thames, they probably featured prominently in long-distance contacts between major settlements, with a strong maritime and riverine emphasis in their distribution. In Hertfordshire and Essex, 77% of potin finds have been found on major defended and nucleated settlements. This may be significant for this find, although many potins outside their normal areas of circulation occur as apparent ritual deposits.

***Small Finds*** (Adrian Challands, Fig. 11)
The 12 metalwork small finds examined consist of eight objects. Aside from a modern enamelled strap, the ironwork comprises various types of nail. Two lead artefacts were recovered: a medieval cloth seal (post-fourteenth century; F. 159 <1825>) and a small weight or sling-shot ([899] <1824>). Of the two copper alloy objects, one was probably a post-medieval lamp fitting; the other, probably Roman:

> Copper alloy decorated strip (F. 514; [883] <1823>; Figs 11.8 & 15.15) The 1.2 millimetres-thick, slightly curved, strip is 23.7 millimetres long by *c.* 11 millimetres wide. One side of the long axis has a beaded edge and the other edge is broken. The short axis has one slightly out-turned edge intact, with the other side broken. A small countersunk rivet is centrally located 3.5 millimetres away from the out-turned edge. The artefact appears to have been cast and, where not obscured by corrosion, decoration may be seen. The decoration consists of a leaf design, located at a right-angle to the out-turned edge, and a slash motif along the long axis broken edge.

Found in a pit dating from the Roman phase, the strip's leaf design is reminiscent of motifs often seen on Samian pottery, although the corrosion meant that a full identification could not be made. The object is probably a small fragment of a larger artefact that might have been part of a binding strip for a stave-constructed bucket or, if bent to a smaller diameter, a wooden drinking vessel.

## Other Finds

Both worked and unworked stone was recovered from the site, the majority consisting of burnt pieces (9.5 kilogrammes) probably used as hearthstones or potboilers. Five pieces of worked stone were recovered: three saddle quern fragments, a quern rubber and a whetstone.

Twenty-two kilogrammes of fired clay was recovered (1648 fragments). By weight and count, the majority derives from loomweights. The material occurred across the site, but with the larger fragments coming from features related to structures or pits.

Only five contexts yielded pieces of Roman tile. These consisted of four abraded fragments of tegulae from F. 118, F. 357, [337] and [966], and a fragment of floor tile from F. 38.

Three hundred and eighty pieces of fuel ash slag (6.2 kilogrammes) were recovered from eaves-gully contexts. Although a considerable assemblage, this material was only a by-product of intense burning and not necessarily a type-artefact of industry as such.

## Environmental Remains
*Chris Stevens*

Twenty samples were processed, 19 from Iron Age contexts: Structures 2, 3, 8, 24, 26, 27, and enclosure ditch contexts [429], [486], [601], [638] and [660] from Settlement Cluster I, and [409] and [415] from Cluster II; and one from Roman Structure 31. The residue was collected using a one millimetre mesh, and the flot using a 0.50 millimetre mesh; both were sorted using a low-powered stereo binocular microscope for charred plant remains and molluscs (nomenclature follows Stace 1991).

*Molluscan remains*
Several molluscs were recovered, several of which are associated with water environments and in the case of *Bathyomphalus contortus* with rivers and/or lakes. Some of the land molluscs, however, might have been relatively modern. Of the water molluscs, only twisted ramshorn (*Bathyomphalus contortus*) could be associated with more permanent riverine environments, and only a few shells were recovered (from both Str. 2 & 3). Of the open country species, *Pupilla muscorum*, a species of disturbed environments, was recovered in quantity from enclosure ditch [601] (Settlement Cluster I), while *Vallonia* sp., a species of long, dank grassland and herbage, that was only grazed periodically, was common in many of the samples.

*Plant remains*
Of the 19 samples examined, all but two (Str. 26 [923] and the ditch of Compound A [898]) contained cereal remains. Of these, most were chaff, mainly glume bases and predominantly of emmer (*Triticum diccocum*). However, remains of spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare sensu lato*), probably of the hulled six-row variety, were seen from both grains and rachis fragments from Structure 26 ([880]). A single grain of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum sensu lato*) was also recovered from Structure 2 [855] and two rachis fragments of the same species from the eaves-gullies of Structures 24 ([938]) and 3 ([757]). Both of these finds were only partially charred and might, therefore, represent possible modern contamination.

Several samples were particularly rich in cereal remains, and contained over 50 items, such as those from Structures 2 ([855], [880] & [897]) and 8 ([631]), and the upper fill of enclosure ditch [415] (Settlement II); the Roman Structure 31 ([886]) was also rich. The primary fill of the enclosure ditches [638] (Settlement Cluster I), and [409] (Settlement Cluster II) yielded reasonable quantities of charred cereal remains, whilst few were found in samples from Structures 24 ([938]) and 26 ([928]), and enclosure ditches [429], [601] and [660] (Cluster I).

Most of the seeds of wild plants came from weeds of arable fields, brought in with the crop. Consequently many were found in high numbers where cereal remains were also high. generally the finds of seeds of wild species far outnumbered those of cultivated species. The most common species remains were those of arable species such as oats (*Avena* sp.), possibly of the cultivated variety, *A. sativa*, but more probably of the wild type (*A. fatua*), and fat-hen (*Chenopodium* sp.) which appeared in all but a few samples. Other common species were orache (*Atriplex* sp.), fig-leaved goosefoot (*Chenopodium ficifolium*; associated with nitrogen-rich arable fields), brome grass (*Bromus* sp.), scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), red-shank (*Persicaria maculosa*; associated with arable fields), clover (*Trifolium* sp.), cat's tails (*Phleum* sp.) and meadow grass (*Poa* sp.; associated with poorly tilled fields, or fields recently turned over from pasture/meadow); also common were blinks (*Montia fontanum*

subsp. *chondrospermum*) and spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), probably associated with the wetter areas of arable fields. Other wet ground species also included seeds of great-fen sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) from Structure 2 ([880]) and Roman Structure 31 ([886]). Like the ecologically similar spikerush, this might also represent an arable weed of prehistoric fields, rather than having entered the site through collection for fire tinder, wattle and daub and thatch, for example. The species was also recovered from Late Iron Age and Roman samples from Watson's Lane, Little Thetford (Stevens in Lucas 1998; Stevens in Lucas and Hinman 1996; see Evans 2003a, p. 248).

Of those remains that are unlikely to have come in with crop species, the thorns of hawthorn might have been introduced with scrub material used for tinder. The probable fragment of sloe/cherry stone and the bramble seed could either have entered in a similar way, or might reflect the continued exploitation of wild food resources.

The samples reveal much about crop husbandry and storage practices. In most of the samples, the number of crop remains increased in parallel with the seeds of wild species, which suggests that the latter were weeds from the crops, rather than coming in with other sources. The higher number of glume bases than estimated glume wheat grains would indicate that the waste came from the daily processing of grain, as crops were most probably stored in spikelet form. This is largely because the pounding and removal of glumes is very time-consuming to carry out immediately after harvest, and, also, because glumes help to protect the crop whilst in storage from insects, bacterial and fungal damage. The high number of weed seeds that were smaller than the grain also suggests that the crops were stored in a relatively unclean state. The relatively high numbers of rachis fragments of barley compared to grain further indicates that the crops might have been stored unthreshed, possibly prior to winnowing as sheaves, although this is somewhat more speculative. The site then shows that crops were generally harvested with little or no processing carried out immediately after, sometime between June and September, and put directly into storage. On a regular (possibly daily) basis then, crops (mainly consisting of emmer wheat, but occasionally spelt) would have been taken from storage, possibly threshed, winnowed and coarse-sieved, but certainly fine-sieved and pounded; further threshing, sieving and hand-sorting of large weed seeds and chaff would have been carried out prior to their preparation (by, for example, grinding and roasting) as food for consumption.

Such practices compare well with many of the sites of this date in the region from Cambridgeshire. The site, however, differs from the excavations carried out in 1995 and 1999 at West Fen Road (south), especially from the from the later Roman phase (Fig. 12; Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005, p. 101). Results from this site would seem to indicate the storage of cleaned grain, suggesting that the organisation and available labour was greater than at Hurst Lane.

The samples are also important in what they indicate about the way in which the crop was managed and harvested, and where fields were located. The presence of seeds of wet ground species – blinks, spikerush and great-fen sedge – indicates that there was considerable wetness in some parts of the fields, the presence of a high watertable in the spring, and the probable near-proximity of ancient or existing stream and river channels. Seeds of *Anthemis cotula* were relatively common at Little Thetford (see below; Stevens in Lucas 1998), although absent from many of the other sites in the Cambridgeshire region of Iron Age date, becoming more common at a local level in the Roman and later periods. The species is characteristic of clay soils and its absence from the Hurst Lane site would seem to indicate that such soils were not exploited in this instance. A few of the species, such as *Montia fontana* subsp. *chondrosperma*, *Stellaria* sp., *Aphanes arvensis* and *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, suggest that the soils were more sandy or gravelly. Meanwhile, it is possible that plants such as *Prunella vulgaris*, *Bromus* sp. and *Plantago lanceolata* might indicate drier, perhaps calcareous, soils.

The main crop that was sown, as stated, would appear to have been emmer. Such a predominance was also seen at Wandlebury hillfort (Stevens unpublished; see Cyganowski & Ballantyne in French 2004), but less so for other sites in the region. Six-row barley is a frequent find from the Late Iron Age, but the higher dominance of grains of emmer and spelt was then much more common (across Britain as a whole), when compared to the earlier and Middle Iron Age (Stevens unpublished).

Where the region is unique is in the high presence of seeds of the Chenopodiaceae compared to seeds of *Vicia* and/or *Lathyrus*. The Hurst Lane site was dominated by seeds of this family, as are a number of the other Late Iron Age sites in the area. Many sites in Britain saw a change in the ratios of these two groups, with an increase in *Vicia* and *Lathyrus* sp. compared with seeds of the Chenopodiaceae from the Middle Iron Age going into the Early Roman period (Jones 1981). Such an increase is only seen at some sites in East Anglia and then during the Roman period (e.g. Little Thetford; see below). At Hurst Lane, no such change is recorded, although some seeds of Vicia/Lathyrus were present. Although Jones (1981) originally suggested that such a rise is connected with a decline in soil fertility (loss of nitrogen), it would seem more probable that it reflected a change in sowing regime from spring sowing to autumn sowing (Stevens 1996). It would then appear that the inhabitants at Hurst Lane were most probably practising spring sowing, although perhaps some autumn sowing was also undertaken. Given the likely location of many of the fields in low-lying areas around the site, which would have been prone to ever-increasing flooding, it is probable that many were unsuited to autumn sowing and that drier fields at higher elevations might have been hard to find within the immediate vicinity of the settlement.

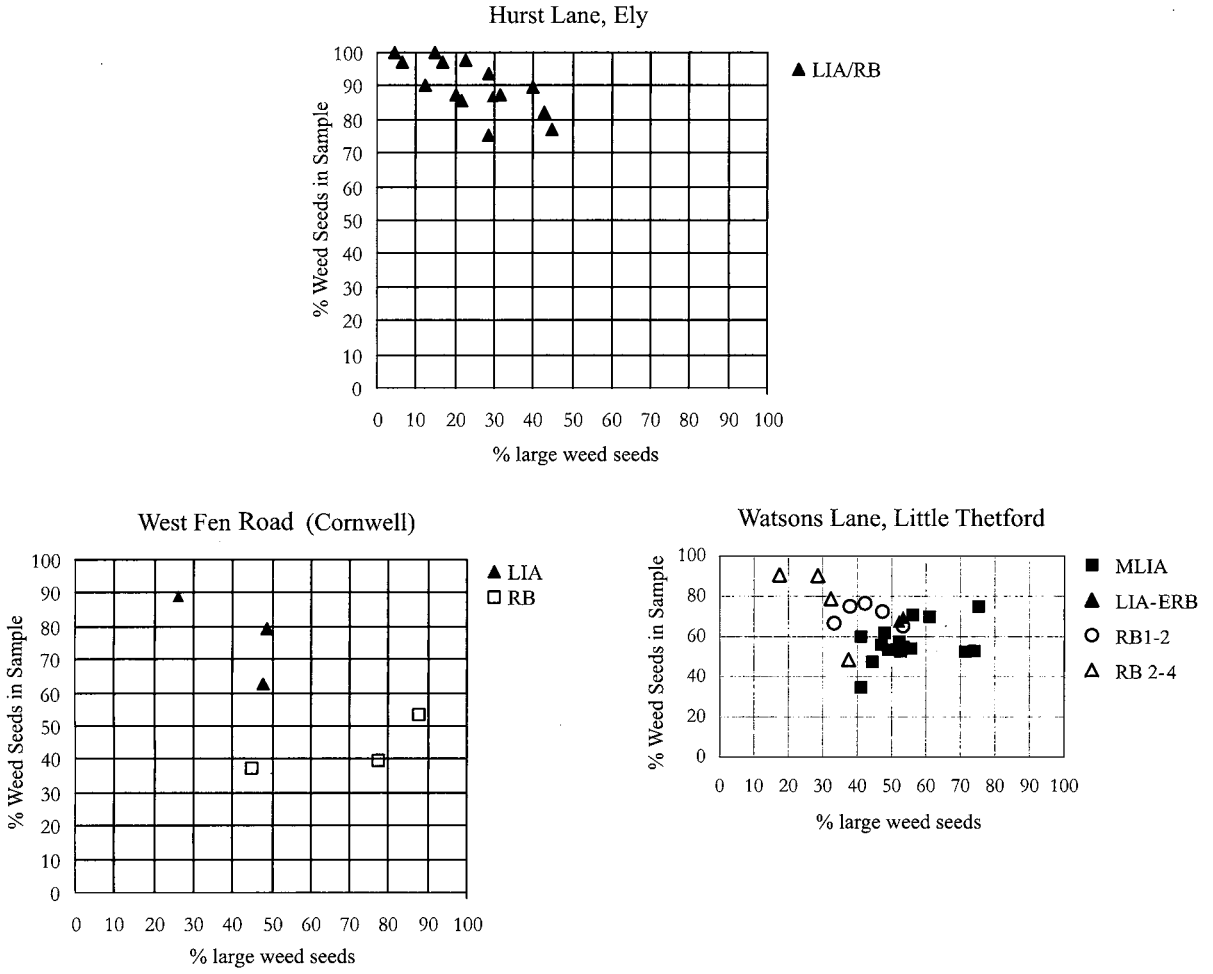


***Figure 12.*** *Comparative plant assemblages showing the percentage of weed seeds (to grain; vertical axis) plotted against percentage of large weed seeds (from a total of all weed seeds) for samples from Hurst Lane, West Fen Road (south) and Watson's Lane, Little Thetford (MLIA, Middle/later Iron Age; LIA-ERB, Later Iron Age-Early Romano-British; RB 1–2/2–4, respectively Early and Late Romano-British phases at Watson's Lane).*

The occurrence of grass seeds, especially of *Phleum* and *Poa* sp. is again common in Britain for this period (Stevens 1996). They, at least, indicate relatively poor tillage by ard, and/or perhaps by hand, and might also suggest that the fields were previously undergrazed grassland. Crops would have been harvested in July to August and, judging from the number of low growing weed seeds, such as clover (*Trifolium*), plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and parsley piert (*Aphanes arvensis*), it is probable that they were harvested low on the stem, probably by sickle. The presence of cereal root fragments (basal culm nodes) would further suggest that some of the crop was uprooted, probably unintentionally, during harvesting. As stated previously, after harvesting they would appear to have been gathered and put directly into storage, possibly as sheaves, rather than as semi-cleaned grain. The crops would have then been taken and processed on a regular basis as and when needed.

Lastly, the relatively small number of water molluscs in the ditches would tend to suggest that, unlike the Roman ditches at West Fen Road (south; Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005), they were drier and less prone to holding standing water. Also, the absence of woodland molluscs would indicate that the site was much more open; the hedge-element present at the West Fen Road site was not seen here.

### Animal Bones

*Lorrain Higbee with Andrew Clarke*

The total quantity of material recovered was 6179 fragments or 77 kilogrammes of bone. Resulting from the extreme rescue circumstances of the excavation, the majority of bone fragments were from unphased contexts. Phased material included a relatively large sample from Settlement Cluster I and various enclosure ditches of Iron Age date, as well as smaller quantities from the northern Iron Age settlement (II) and Roman contexts. The diagnostic fraction of the assemblage was dominated by domestic species,

particularly cattle (45%) and sheep/goat (41%). Other species identified included pig (9%), horse (3%), dog (1%) red and roe deer, domestic fowl, goose, hare and frog/toad.

As very little material was recovered from Roman contexts, with only cattle and sheep/goat identified, these finds will not be discussed below (nor will the assemblage from unphased contexts).

The majority of the material derived from Settlement Cluster I and its various enclosure ditches. Domestic species dominated the assemblages from the site's sub-divisions and included cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, dog and domestic fowl. In addition, fragments of red deer antler and several bones from a frog/toad were recorded from enclosure ditch contexts [636] and [429] respectively. Large samples were recovered from Structure 2, and the enclosure ditches of both Compounds A ([636]) and B ([464]). The assemblages from these were mixed in terms of the presence of bones considered to represent high and low value meat joints. Butchery marks in the form of heavy chops were observed with the greatest frequency on cattle bones and related to primary carcass dismemberment and the reduction of the carcass into meat joints. Fine knife cuts were only observed on the distal articulation of cattle humeri and astragali, and on sheep/goat bones. Skulls were generally recovered in a highly fragmented state. However, with the exception of a virtually complete sheep skull and horn cores from Structure 2 ([894]), in most instances it was possible to see that horn cores had been cleanly removed at the base for further working. Evidence of the utilisation of red deer antler was attested to in the recovery of off-cuts from [636].

Several bones from a lamb and the skull of a three-and-a-half to four-year-old horse were also recovered from Structure 2 ([364]), and, from Structure 10 (F. 367), the articulating forelimb from a calf was recorded. Generally, however, the quantity of bone that could be dated was too limited (at less than 3%) to attempt to reconstruct the settlement's husbandry practices.

There was some evidence that cattle were used for traction, in the form of pathological conditions associated with joint stress and other skeletal abnormalities indicative of repeated mechanical loading. A metatarsal from Structure 2 ([364]) showed early signs of the development of spavin to the proximal articulation, and several other long bones, in particular proximal humeri and metatarsus, were recorded with enlarged muscular attachments (or enthesophytes).

Three bone objects were recovered from structure and enclosure ditch contexts; all were fashioned from sheep/goat long bones. The first was a metacarpal with mid-shaft perforation from Structure 10 (F. 367), the second was a metatarsal from ditch fill [675], which had a perforation through the proximal articulation, and the third object, a tibia from ditch [464], had a highly polished surface from repeated handling.

The low frequency of bone recovered from Settlement Cluster II is largely attributable to the recovery methods that were employed. Material was collected from the surface of features with minimal hand-excavation. The available information is, therefore, greatly limited due to the overall sample size, and even the enclosure ditches on this side of the site yielded little material in comparison with those related to Cluster I. Only bones from the three common domestic species, cattle, sheep/goat and pig, were identified.

*Table 6. Settlement Cluster II: number of identified specimens per species (NISP) for selected structures.*

| | Structure | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Taxon** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **24** | **26** | **27** | **Total** |
| Cattle | 1 | - | 1 | 3 | 18 | - | 23 |
| Sheep/goat | - | - | 1 | 1 | 7 | - | 9 |
| Pig | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Cattle-sized | - | - | - | - | 16 | 1 | 17 |
| Sheep-sized | - | - | 4 | - | 1 | - | 5 |
| Unidentifiable | - | 1 | 10 | 20 | 24 | 4 | 59 |
| **Total** | **1** | **1** | **17** | **24** | **66** | **5** | **114** |

Before discussing the Hurst Lane assemblage, it is worth emphasising that it was recovered under a severely limited excavation strategy. The net result of this means that the assemblage is biased in terms of both the quantity and the types of bone that were recovered. Settlement Cluster I was selected for more intensive excavation than II; hand-recovery skews species ratios in favour of large bone fragments and the bones from larger species (Payne 1975) and this could account for the higher frequency of cattle bones relative to sheep/goat and pig. Further, the assemblage as a whole has only been subjected to an initial assessment (Higbee in Evans & Knight 2000a)

***Table 5.** Iron Age Settlement Cluster I: number of specimens identified to species (NISP) for the enclosure ditches and selected structures.*

| **Taxon** | **Enclosure** | **Structure** | | | | | | | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 16 | 17 | |
| Cattle | 20 | 31 | 2 | 1 | - | 4 | - | - | 4 | 62 |
| Sheep/goat | 13 | 19 | 2 | 4 | - | 1 | 2 | - | - | 41 |
| Pig | - | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| Horse | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 5 |
| Chicken | - | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Cattle-sized | 7 | 12 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 21 |
| Sheep-sized | 3 | 12 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | 17 |
| Unidentifiable | 107 | 88 | 8 | 15 | 1 | 7 | 14 | 4 | 21 | 265 |
| **Total** | **152** | **176** | **12** | **21** | **1** | **13** | **17** | **5** | **26** | **423** |

with further work by Clarke on selected features and structures (Tables 5 & 6). Thus, the following discussion is restricted to species ratios and, to a lesser degree, intra-site variability of these. With these caveats in mind, the assemblage is compared to other local sites on the Isle of Ely and other sites in the region.

To date, a number of period (Maltby 1996) and regional reviews (Crabtree 1994; Grant 1984; Hambleton 1999; Huntley & Stallibrass 1995; Knight 1984; Lambrick 1992; Maltby 1994; and Robinson & Wilson 1987) have been published and, of these, Hambleton's is perhaps the most comprehensive. Her study adopts Grant's comparative study of the Wessex and Upper Thames Valley animal bone assemblages and extends it to include a number of site and zooarchaeological characteristics (e.g. mortality profiles and skeletal element representation). Grant's (1984) study took account of OD heights and concluded that sites on higher ground tended to have higher percentages of sheep bones. Hambleton extended this to include underlying geology, settlement type and date and applied it to animal bone assemblages from all regions of Iron Age Britain. For Eastern England and East Anglia, she concluded that there was a great deal of intra-regional variation in species ratio, particularly with regard to the relative importance of cattle and sheep. Further, this variation did not appear to be influenced by geology, topography or type of site, although their date was of some significance with later sites, particularly those that continued into the early Romano-British period. These exhibited significant changes in species proportions, which might reflect Continental dietary preferences and husbandry practices.

The Hurst Lane data have been plotted against the sites used in Hambleton's study, with the addition of a few more recently studied assemblages including those from Ely (Table 7 and Fig. 13), to give a general overview of how Hurst Lane fits with general local and regional trends. The plot shows a dense cluster of sites with high percentages of cattle (40–54%) and sheep/goat (35–48%) and a low percentage of pig (6–12%). The Hurst Lane assemblage falls within this cluster together with two other Ely assemblages, from Prickwillow Road (Deighton in Atkins & Mudd 2003) and West Fen Road (Higbee in Mudd forthcoming; Higbee in Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005). Other regional sites within this cluster include West Stow, Bancroft, Cat's Water, Market Deeping, Farningham Hill, Earith and Burgh. By comparison, two other Ely sites, Wardy Hill (Davis in Evans 2003a) and Watson's Lane (Higbee in Lucas & Hinman 1996; see below) are part of a separate cluster characterised by higher percentages of sheep/goat (55–75%) and pig (6–22%) and lower percentages of cattle (18–29%). Other regional sites within this cluster include Edix Hill, Hawks Hill, Haddenham Sites V and VI and Greenhouse Farm. The species ratios represented by sites in this cluster are similar to the assemblages from Wessex and central southern England studied by Hambleton. The separation of the Ely sites into these two clusters does not appear to be influenced by geology, topography, site-type or date. Outliers from the main clusters are characterised by either very high percentages of cattle (e.g. Wavendon Gate and Hartigans) or pig (e.g. Skeleton Green and Puckeridge-Braughing) and, in most cases, date to the Late Iron Age and/or Early Romano-British period; a few, particularly those with high percentages of pig, have strong connections with the continent.

If the broad variation in species ratios between the Ely sites cannot be accounted for by general site characteristics, then what are the factors influencing the choice of animal husbandry? In order to answer this, one needs to look at the mortality profiles and skeletal element representation, but this information is not available for the Hurst Lane assemblage. Further, Davis (in Evans 2003a) in his recent report on the animal bones from Wardy Hill suggests that, in addition to the bias resulting from preservation and recovery, the pattern will be skewed by exchanges between producer and consumer sites. He suggests that prime beef and mutton might have been obtained from surrounding settlements in order to meet the demands of this higher status, local centre. Mortality profiles and skeletal element representation for the other Ely sites suggest that cattle and sheep were managed for a range of commodities, with prime meat animals a priority. Further, at the Prickwillow Road site Deighton (in Atkins & Mudd 2003) suggests that there was some out-sourcing for beef.

In addition to the main livestock species, other domesticates have been identified from the Hurst Lane assemblage, including horse, dog, domestic fowl and goose. These are frequently identified from Iron Age sites in the Fenlands. Wild species are less common, with only deer and hare identified, indicating the limited exploitation of wild resources. This stands in contrast to sites such as Haddenham (Evans & Serjeantson 1988) and Wardy Hill (Davis in Evans 2003a), both of which show some degree of exploitation of Fenland resources.

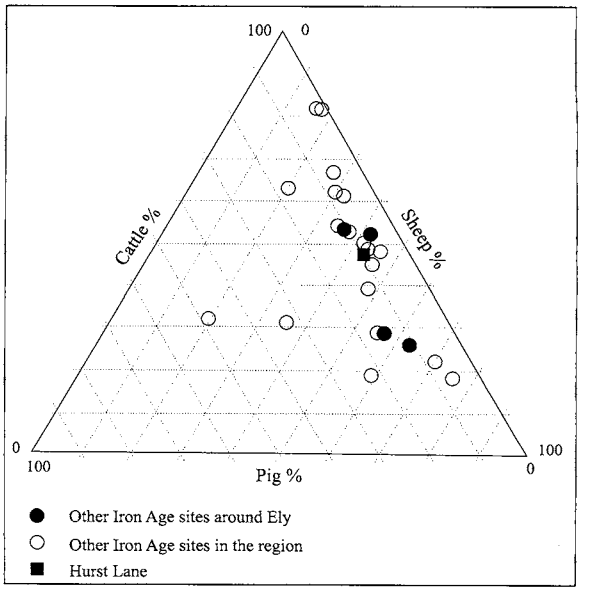


*Figure 13. Comparative plot of faunal assemblages.*

Analysis of intra-site variations in species ratios is difficult for the reasons already outlined. Tables 5 and 6 quantify the Hurst Lane assemblage recovered from the main enclosure ditches of Settlement Cluster I and from a selection of structures from both settlement clusters. Most of the animal bone recovered from the more intensively excavated Cluster I was from the enclosure ditch and Structure 2. Cattle bones were more common than sheep/goat bones from both. Bones from large species have been shown to have been more common in peripheral areas of settlements (Wilson 1996), whilst bones from medium-sized animals, such as sheep/goat and pig, were more common within the settlement core. This pattern has been seen in the assemblage from Wardy Hill (Davis in Evans 2003a), but does not appear to fit the Hurst Lane assemblage. Interestingly, Structure 2 in Cluster I also yielded the highest proportion of pig bones from the site. Pig accounts for about 7% of the total number of bone fragments from this structure (15.6% NISP). A similar association of pig bones with the main roundhouses was noted at Wardy Hill (Evans 2003a, p. 137).

In conclusion, the Hurst Lane assemblage is broadly similar to other assemblages from Ely and the region in terms of species ratio and intra-site spatial patterning. However, there is also great variation in species ratios within the region that does not appear to be influenced by geology, topography or site-type.

| Site | Date of sample | Reference | OD height | % NISP Cattle | % NISP Sheep | % NISP Pig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bancroft | EIA-LIA | Holmes & Reilly 1994 | 76-150 | 53 | 37 | 10 |
| Blackhorse Rd | MIA | Legge, Williams & Williams 1988 | 76-150 | 67 | 27 | 6 |
| Burgh | LIA | Jones *et al.* 1987 & 1988 | 76-150 | 40 | 48 | 12 |
| Cat's Water | IA | Biddick 1984 | 0-25 | 50 | 42 | 8 |
| Earith Sites I & II | IA | Higbee 1998a & b | 0-25 | 45 | 46 | 9 |
| Edix Hill | LIA | Davis 1998 | - | 29 | 55 | 16 |
| Elms Farm | LIA/RB | Albarella & Johnston 2002 | - | 63 | 20 | 16 |
| Farningham Hill | LIA | Locker 1984 | 26-75 | 48 | 46 | 6 |
| Greenhouse Farm | EIA-LIA | Higbee 2000 | - | 18 | 75 | 6 |
| Haddenham Sites V &VI | MIA | Evans & Serjeantson 1988 | 0-25 | 22 | 70 | 8 |
| Hartigans | IA | Burnett 1993 | 26-75 | 82 | 17 | 1 |
| Hawks Hill | IA | Carter, Philipson & Higgs 1965 | 76-150 | 19 | 59 | 22 |
| **Hurst Lane, Ely** | **EMIA-LIA** | **This publication** | **0-26** | **45** | **41** | **9** |
| Ivinghoe Beacon | EIA | Westley 1968 | 225+ | 61 | 32 | 7 |
| Market Deeping | MIA-LIA | Albarella 1997 | 0-25 | 49 | 43 | 8 |
| Pennyland | MIA | Holmes 1993 | 76-150 | 62 | 30 | 8 |
| **Prickwillow Rd, Ely** | **LIA** | **Deighton in Atkins & Mudd 2003** | **0-25** | **53** | **36** | **11** |
| Puckeridge-Braughing | LIA-RB | Fifield 1988 | 26-75 | 31 | 36 | 33 |
| Skeleton Green | LIA-RB | Ashdown & Evans 1981 | 26-75 | 32 | 19 | 49 |
| **Trinity Lands, Ely** | **MIA-LIA** | **Clarke in Masser 2001** | **0-25** | **46** | **47** | **7** |
| **Wardy Hill** | **MIA-LIA** | **Davis in Evans 2003a** | **0-25** | **29** | **56** | **15** |
| **Watson's Lane** | **IA** | **Higbee in Lucas & Hinman 1996** | **0-25** | **26** | **63** | **11** |
| Wavendon Gate | LIA | Dobney & Jaques in Williams, Hart & Williams 1996 | 76-150 | 82 | 16 | 2 |
| **West Fen Rd** | **IA** | **Higbee in Mudd forthcoming; Higbee in Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005** | **0-26** | **52** | **42** | **6** |
| West Stow | MIA-LIA | Crabtree 1990 | - | 54 | 35 | 11 |

***Table 7.*** *List of sites plotted in the tripolar graph (Fig. 13; percentages for sites in Ely are in bold). Note that Hurst Lane percentages take account of other species; the majority of regional data (taken as Eastern England and East Anglia) are from Hambleton (1999) and OD height categories also follow Hambleton.*

## Human Remains

*Natasha Dodwell*

Human remains were recovered from 12 contexts, of which three can be dated to the Iron Age and two to Roman usage, with the remainder being without firm attribution (Figs 14 & 15). Both single skeletal elements and articulated inhumations were identified. Of the former, the recovery of 'loose' skull fragments in both unphased and Roman contexts might suggest their Iron Age attribution or origin.

*Iron Age*

Structure 2 ([880]; Figs 14 & 15.1) The calvarium (dome of a skull) recovered from pit F. 505 exhibits at least two fracture lines. The evidence suggests that the individual, a mature adult, probably received a blow to the back of the head, which has split open the skull from posterior to anterior, and another to the left side. Several cut marks were also recorded on the parietal bones either crossing, or being crossed by, the fracture line. In addition, a fracture line occurs around the circumference of the skull resulting in the detachment of the calvarium. Again, the skull has an unusually polished appearance. Human phalanges were also recovered from a bulk sample taken from the southern terminal of this building's eaves-gully (F. 508, [855]; Fig. 15.2).

Structure 3 ([656]; Fig. 15.3) Left portion of the frontal bone (the metopic suture, located on the midline of the frontal bone is completely retained). The sutures are sharp and distinct, which suggest that the individual was a young adult. The skull is highly polished, both internally and externally.

Structure 9 (F. 383, [422]; Fig. 15.4) Re-fitting fragments (modern breaks) of a parietal bone. The degree of suture closure suggests that the individual was a middle-aged/mature adult. The exterior of the skull is highly polished.

*Roman*

Re-fitting fragments of a middle-aged/mature adult parietal bone were recovered from F. 149 (Fig. 15.12) and the distal third of an adult left humerus was also recovered (S.F. 536; Fig. 15.11).

*Unphased Attribution*

This included a crouched adult skeleton within grave F. 138 (Fig. 15.5) and two infant inhumations (both less than four months old, F. 147 & F. 434; Figs 15.6 & 15.7); fragments of the right upper arm and shoulder, ribs, the cervical and upper thoracic vertebrae, skull fragments and teeth were recovered from the enclosure ditch of Compound B (F. 461; Fig. 15.8), and skull fragments from middle-aged/mature adults were in F. 224 and F. 276 (Figs 15.9 & 15.10).

## Dating

Due to the limited resolution of the site's excavation (and a paucity of articulated skeletal remains), only three radiocarbon samples were submitted. Two of these involved AMS techniques; unfortunately one failed in the pre-treatment stage. The other, from grain in F. 505, Structure 2, provided an assay of 1990±60BP (cal. BC 190–AD 90; Beta-186937); this is clearly acceptable and reflects that building's Conquest-period status. The third was from human bone in the 'headless' F. 138 inhumation. This provided a date of 2010±60BP (cal. BC 170–AD 110; Beta-195164) and would suggest that it was broadly contemporary.

## Comparative sites

Due to the rescue circumstances of the Hurst Lane excavations, and the broad-brush nature of the findings, discussion of its results benefit from a greater sense of context. Apart from the earlier excavations at Wardy Hill (Evans 2003a), over the last decade four medium-/large-scale investigations have occurred of Iron Age/Roman settlements on the eastern side of the island.[2] Of these, the most relevant are those of other neighbouring Cove-side sites at West Fen Road and the Trinity Lands (Fig. 2). The former has, in part, recently been published (Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005; Mudd forthcoming); the excavations slightly further afield at Prickwillow Road (Fig. 1) appeared in print two years ago (Atkins & Mudd 2003). Therefore, the results of both only require summary discussion, as do more limited evaluation-related findings and the site at Watson's Lane, Little Thetford. The same, however, is not true of the Trinity Lands site (see though Masser 2001) and, accordingly, its results are reported in greater detail.

*The Trinity Lands excavations (TL526804)*

Excavated by the CAU in the winter of 2000/2001 in advance of development for housing, the site was located towards the end of a distinct clayland spur along Ely's western side and lay between 9 and 20 metres OD (Fig. 2). The excavations were divided into two main components: a later Iron Age/Romano-British settlement and paddock system (Area I), and more dispersed evidence of earlier prehistoric usage. Facets of the latter have been outlined in an earlier summary (Evans 2002). Apart from the usual ubiquitous artefact-scatter 'background' (130 worked flints and a polished axe, etc.), two ditches of possible Bronze Age attribution were present on the main site (Fig. 16), and a sherd of what was probably Collared Urn was recovered from their otherwise sterile fills. South of the main area of excavation, a large waterlogged pond-like hollow was investigated (Fig. 2). Attesting to its 'early' utilisation, not only did this have deposits of burnt flint associated with it, but also sherds of Late Bronze Age Post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery; a fragment of human skull was also recovered from its fills.

Although the main excavations were confined by the A10 by-pass (Area I), the Iron Age/Early Roman site must continue beyond it. The settlement was entirely unknown prior to the area's trial trench evaluation in the summer of 1999 (Masser & Evans 1999). It was not particularly dense and the focus of both phases of settlement probably falls to the west of the site *per se*; within the area of the excavation, the Iron Age occupation was localised to its extreme north-western corner (Masser 2001). In the main consisting of a sub-rectangular paddock system (Fig. 16.A), its south-eastern side was later extended and minor linear features within it suggests that the interior was sub-divided. The partial arc of a small ring-gully in its southern end (6.70 metres in diameter) was evidence of a minor roundhouse (Str. 2; Fig. 16.2). In the extreme north-western corner of the site was

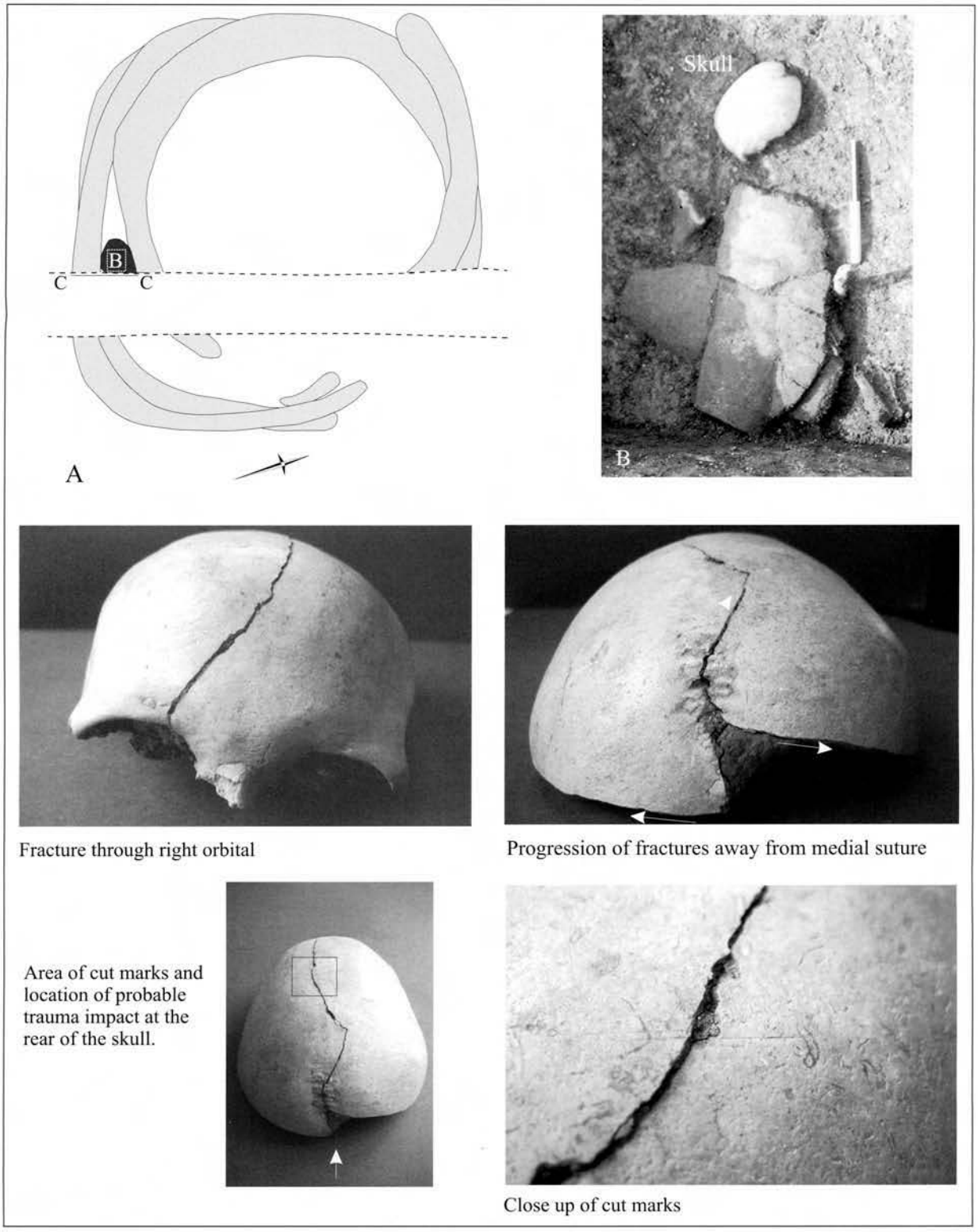


***Figure 14.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir Structure 2, pit F. 505 human skull deposits (A; note location of Section C, Fig. 7); B) detail of skull and pottery spread in the base of the pit; below, details of skull trauma.*

what appeared to be the southern half of a much more substantial eaves-gully, approximately 15.50 metres in diameter (Str. 1; Fig. 16.1). Up to 2.00 metres wide and 0.70 metres deep, this showed evidence of re-cutting and its midden-like fill deposits also extended throughout the upper profiles of adjacent features. (It is just possible that, rather than encircling a roundhouse, this marked the south-eastern end of an occupation compound with an irregular plan; this, however,

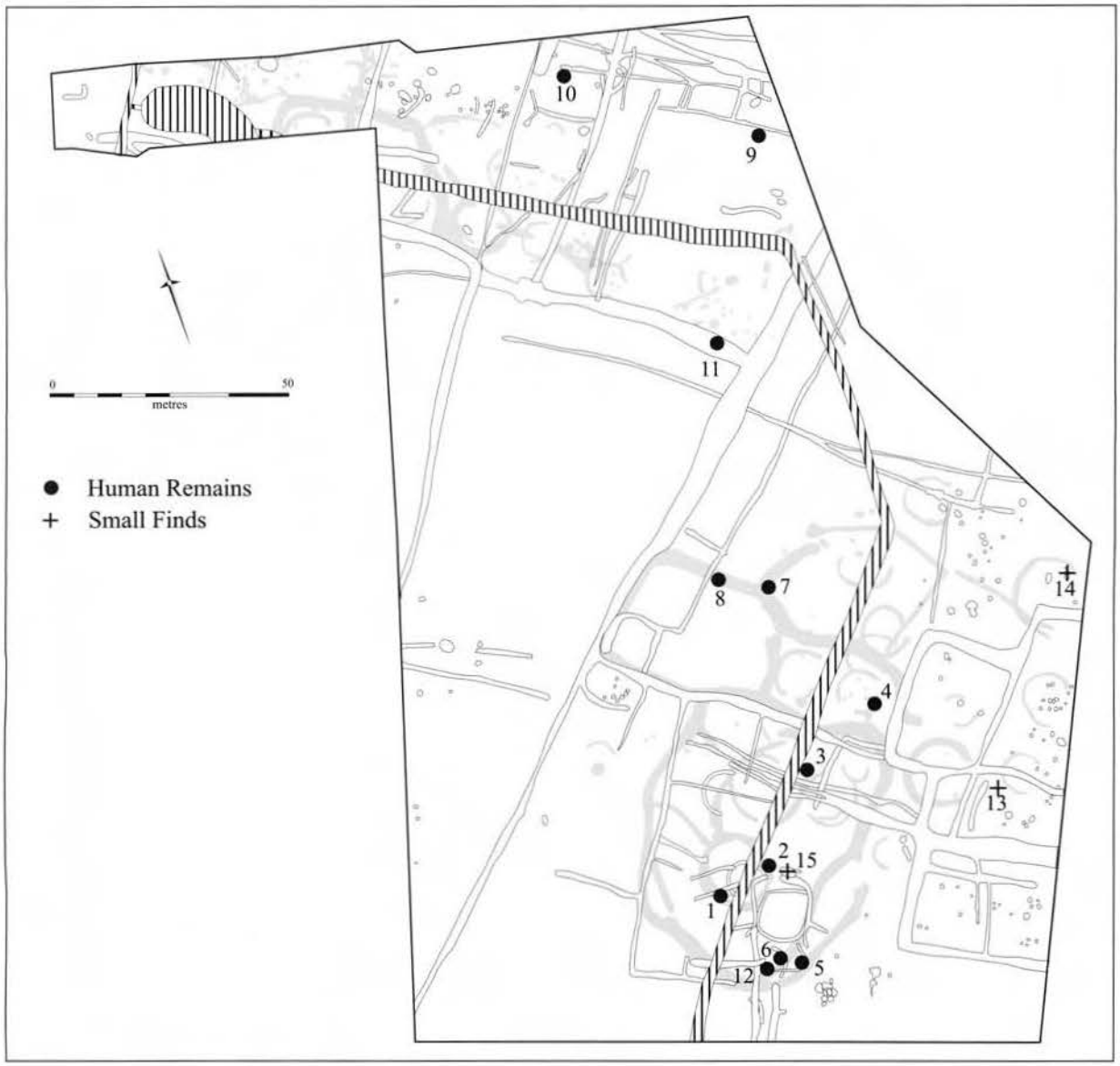


***Figure 15.*** *The Hurst Lane Reservoir: Distribution of human skeletal remains (1–12) and small finds (13–15).*

seems unlikely.) Comparable with practices at Hurst Lane, a fragment of skull (the superior portion of a youthful adult, occupal bone), appearing to have a polished interior surface, was recovered from ditch F. 4049 that ran immediately south-west from the side of Structure 1's eaves-gully.

Thereafter, the ditched paddock system was extended southwards. The most immediate 'block' (Fig. 16.B) also entailed the redefinition of the eastern side of the original Iron Age enclosure. The southernmost paddock (Fig. 16.C) was generally more slightly 'bounded' and could have post-dated 'B'. Its north-eastern corner was subdivided to define a small two-cell rectangle (15.4 x 11.80 metres + 7.9 x 11.8 metres). Although possibly relating to the penning of stock, this might alternatively have defined a building and higher densities of finds were associated with it (Fig. 16.3). As outlined below, first-century AD Early Roman pottery was recovered from Paddocks B and C (although intermixed with Late Iron Age wares). The manner in which these paddocks extended the alignment of the original Iron Age compound and redefined its north-eastern side again suggests direct continuity between the site's Iron Age and Early Roman phases.

The settlement was not particularly distinguished. No Roman tile was, for example, recovered, nor any Iron Age or Roman coins or brooches (despite thorough metal-detecting of features and spoil heaps). Analysed by K. Anderson and L. Webley, the pottery assemblage consisted of about 1400 sherds, of which some 500 were of later Iron Age date. All of the latter probably dates to the first century BC or first century AD, with most coming from the area of Compound A; approximately 20% were wheel-made (*c.* 10% burnished). The Late Iron Age wheel-made pottery generally consisted of jars, often with horizontal cordons or rilling; there were two pedestal bases. The wheel-made vessels were all probably from relatively late in the Late Iron Age, and led directly on to the forms present in the Roman assemblage.

All the Roman pottery can be dated to the first century AD, with the bulk probably coming from the immediate post-

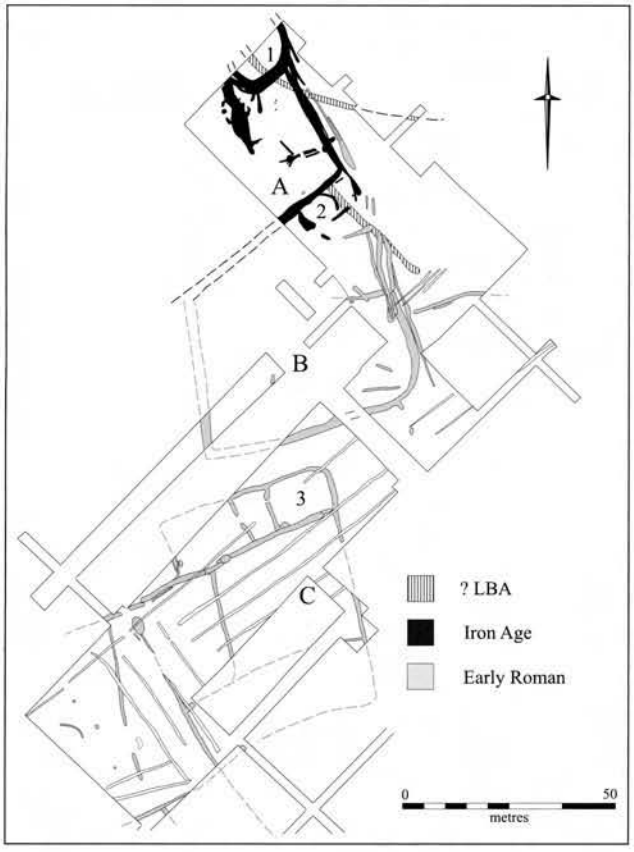


***Figure 16.*** *The Trinity Lands Site Area I phase plan showing Structures 1–3. The rectilinear arrangement of the two southern paddocks (B & C) and their putative building (Str. 3) differs from the layout of its Iron Age settlement. Given the tight dating of this site, either – as was apparent at the Greenhouse Farm/Cambridge Airport site (Gibson & Lucas 2002) – its rectilinear system must be considered a Late Iron Age 'invention', or that initial Romanisation must have had a major impact on its layout. Perhaps furthering the former interpretation is the fact that its 'grid' lies off the common alignment of the island's Roman settlements (Fig. 18) and also off the orientation of Hurst Lane's Iron Age settlement.*

Conquest period (*c.* AD 50–60). The assemblage contained only locally produced coarse ware vessels, with no imported or fine wares, and the fabric types were limited to oxidised and grey wares. The range of vessel forms was very limited with jars dominating and only four rim sherds representing any other type of vessel, all of which were bowls. There were several different types of jar (including cordoned), but plain-necked jars with everted rims were the most common.

A notable feature of this assemblage, both in the Iron Age and Roman periods is the absence of fine wares and dominance of locally made, functional coarse wares. This might, to some extent, reflect the location of the excavations at the margins of the settlement complex. It might also, however, indicate a low status for this site relative to others in the area, and isolation from the distribution networks for fine and imported wares.

Only a small assemblage of animal bone was recovered (452 pieces) and of this only 23% could be identified to species. Whereas in Iron Age contexts cattle and sheep/goat were found in comparable percentages (42.4% and 43.9% respectively), the Early Roman usage appeared to see a rise in cattle (65.7%) with a decline in the number of sheep/goat (25.7%). In addition, four pig bones (6.1%) and two bones each of dog and bird were identified in the Iron Age assemblage. These species were totally absent in the Roman contexts, which, however, included three horse bones (8.6%; only one horse bone was present in Iron Age contexts).

An AMS radiocarbon date was achieved from the upper fills of Structure 1's eaves-gully – 2130±40BP (cal. BC 370–110; Beta-186938) – although somewhat earlier than anticipated, it is considered generally acceptable.

*West Fen Road, Ely (TL 530808)*

It was the construction of a pipeline along the northern side of West Fen Road in 1996 that first led to the discovery of a substantial later Iron Age settlement (Fig. 2; Gibson 1996; see also Evans 2003a, pp. 245–8). Subsequent house construction on both sides of the road in 1999 resulted in the excavation of a major multi-period complex – with occupation of all periods from Iron Age to medieval times – that might have been determined by the route of a causeway either north to Downham or west to Coveney. While across the southern fields (excavated by the CAU; Mortimer, Regan & Lucy 2005; see Evans 2002 for a summary of pre-Iron Age findings) only limited Iron Age occupation was found in the form of two small sub-square compounds (one having a central roundhouse), the core of the Iron Age complex lay to the north where it was excavated by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit (Mudd 2000 and forthcoming).

Of Middle/later Iron Age date, in the main the enclosure complex north of the road seems to have consisted of a large sub-square, deeply ditched enclosure with a more irregular/polygonal compound on its southern side (Fig. 18.1). Three roundhouses were identified within the complex's interior. Three human skull fragments were recovered from the enclosures north of the road, as indeed was another from the main sub-square compound south of it. It is notable that there seemed to be no direct interconnection or ditch-linkage between the southern compounds and the northern enclosure complex. In the context of the Hurst Lane findings, it is relevant that a La Tène-style decorated sherd was present in the pottery assemblage.

The Roman system (dating from the later first to fourth centuries AD) was focused in the area south of the road, and consisted of a network of smaller sub-square settlement paddocks with conjoining larger field blocks to the south (Fig. 18.7). Reminiscent of the Hurst Lane layout, it represents a farmstead of fairly lowly status. One inhumation (in a coffin and with hobnail boots) could be definitely attributed to the Roman occupation, with another crouched burial being of ambiguous status. Twenty-three Roman coins were recovered in total from all phases of the fieldwork. Aside from one Trajanic coin, these dated to the third to fourth century; no Iron Age issues were present. Equally, despite extensive metal-detecting, only three brooches were recovered: a Colchester and a poorly cast Langton Down type (the third was too small to identify).

*Prickwillow Road, Ely (TL 553813)*

The excavations in 1999–2000 by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit across an 1.8 hectare site on the north-eastern side of the city of Ely itself have recently been published (Fig. 1.9; Atkins & Mudd 2003). This Iron Age/Romano-British settlement lay relatively 'high' at about 20

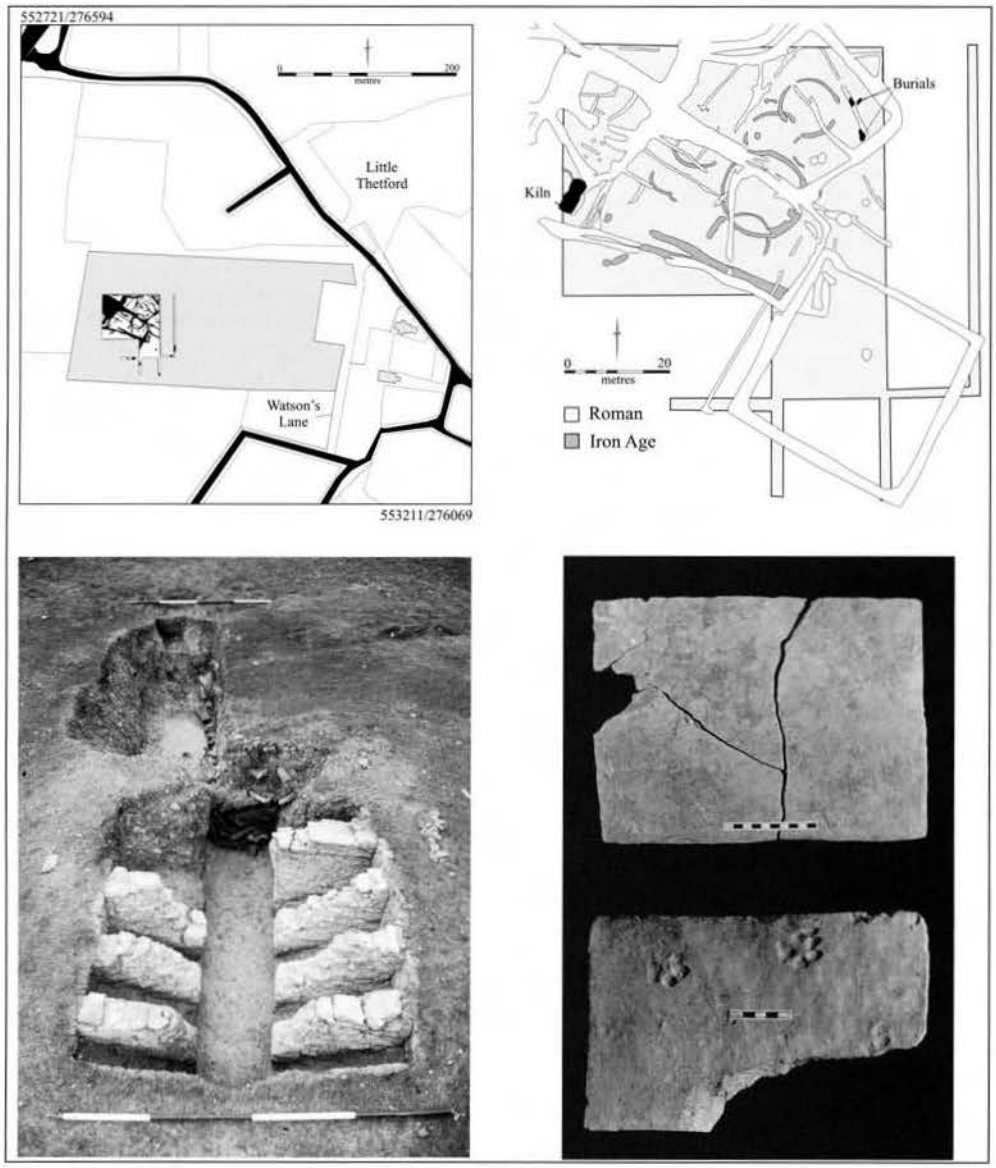


***Figure 17.*** *Watson's Lane, Little Thetford. Top: location and phase plans (note the extension of features beyond area of excavation is based on geophysical survey data); below, photograph of excavated Roman tile kiln (left) and, right, complete and paw-impressed tiles.*

metres OD on land with a mixed geology. Against a later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age background 'presence' (97 flints recovered), the first main phase saw intermittent, earlier Iron Age activity (fifth to third centuries BC) marked by dispersed pits and a single length of ditch. Two crouched inhumations were assigned to this period, and a fragment of a human skull was found in one of the pits.

Thereafter, from the third century BC onwards (Middle Iron Age), the locale saw permanent settlement through to the fourth century AD (Fig. 18.5). At least within the portion of the complex that was investigated, the Iron Age occupation was not particularly intense (only one house gully, set within a larger midden-associated sub-circular enclosure, was recovered) and was localised to only the western third of the area across which the Roman paddock system eventually extended. Although no buildings, as such, were identified in relationship to the latter, a cemetery including five cremations and 15 inhumations, and dated to the third to fourth centuries AD, was excavated. The recovery of kiln bars provided evidence for local Roman pottery production during the first to second century AD, although no kilns were found.

Two Late Iron Age brooches were recovered: a Nauheim type (70/60–30/20 BC) and the other, in iron, a Drahtfibel type (40–60 BC); no Conquest-period or Roman brooches were found. Of the 30 Roman coins from the site, all but three dated to the later third to fourth centuries, the remainder being earlier second-century issues.

*Watson's Lane, Little Thetford (TL 528763)*

This densely occupied later Iron Age and Romano-British site was located on Kimmeridge and Boulder clays and was excavated by the CAU in 1995 (Figs 1.5 & 17; Lucas & Hinman 1996; Lucas 1998). The later Iron Age settlement consisted of eight roundhouse gullies, not all of which were contemporary, associated with enclosure ditches. As this phase of

the site has been discussed elsewhere (Evans 2003a, p. 248 and fig. 127), the Romano-British occupation will be focused upon here.

The later Iron Age settlement was overlain by a series of linked enclosures around the mid-first century AD. Although some of the enclosure ditches contained only Iron Age pottery, this need not imply a pre-Conquest inception, but rather a lag in the adoption of Romanised ceramics. There was a lack of later first-century AD Roman pottery across the site, most of the material being from the second to third centuries with some dating to the fourth century. Iron Age tradition pottery probably continued for half a century or more into the Roman period, a post-Conquest caesura in occupation seeming unlikely.

No definite Romano-British buildings were found, and the settlement 'core' might have then shifted to the north of the excavated area. Though around 30 kilogrammes of Roman pottery was recovered, there were relatively few fine wares or specialised vessels such as mortaria, suggesting that low-grade ceramic refuse was received from the main settlement. Seven coins were found, all dating to the third or fourth century. Copper alloy objects included a finger ring, nail cleaner, and steelyard; a lead steelyard weight was also found. There were no brooches.

Some of the enclosures were associated with industrial activity. Most notable was a tile kiln, probably constructed in the later second or early third century and abandoned in the fourth century (Fig. 17). The stoke pit contained huge quantities of tile, including unusual structural tiles (lydions, pedales and sequipedales) as well as roof tile (tegulae and imbrices). The unusual tile types indicate the presence of a skilled craftsperson, producing tiles for fairly high status Romanised clients elsewhere, as they did not appear to have been used for buildings within the immediate vicinity. Finds of slag indicated that there was also copper alloy working at the site.

The site changed character in the fourth century, when pottery deposition was reduced and the kiln abandoned. Probably dating to this latest phase of the site was a square enclosure in the south-east that could, on morphological grounds, have been a shrine. The only internal feature of the enclosure was a pit containing fourth-century pottery. In the north-eastern part of the site was a group of three adult inhumation burials (two males and a female) which might also have been Late Roman. None of the burials had grave goods, although the female was probably wearing hobnail boots; one of the males had been decapitated with his head placed between his legs.

Evaluation-related trenching within Ely's environs has also yielded relevant results. Fieldwork on the former Witchford Aerodrome – adjacent to the site of a putative 'Roman Camp' – revealed Late Roman ditches (Crank 2000). Equally, lying 750 metres east of the main West Fen Road complex on the western side of the City itself, evidence of later Iron Age settlement has also been found at St John's Road (Fig. 1.6; Abrams 2000). Whilst no wheel-made wares occurred within its Iron Age pottery assemblage (65 sherds), a Conquest-period Aucissa brooch was recovered. Although a few Roman sherds were present (including one Horningsea ware), no distinct suite of features could be assigned to this period. Earlier, evaluation fieldwork along Ely's north-western margins (falling between the West Fen Road/Hurst Lane and Prickwillow Road sites) revealed a low density background of struck flint and an isolated pit included numerous sherds from two Bronze Age vessels (Robinson & Bray 1998).

Evidence for Late Iron Age and Roman activity has also been found in the centre of Ely proper at Brays Lane and at Walsingham House (TL 541801; Figs 1.7 & 1.8). A single trench at the latter, excavated by the CAU in 1991, revealed a pit and a ditch, both containing wheel-made Late Iron Age pottery with a few Roman sherds (Hunter 1992b). Of a total of 96 sherds of Iron Age pottery from the site, 60 were wheel-made. This is a significant amount of material given the excavation area, and the features uncovered could thus have been part of a substantial Late Iron Age settlement.

The site at Brays Lane, near the centre of Ely (TL 551805), lies on Greensand and was also excavated by the CAU in 1991 (Hunter 1992a). Several phases of activity were revealed (primarily a series of ditched medieval paddocks), although at no stage did the site see intensive settlement. Pre-Iron Age finds (e.g. 146 worked flints) indicated only sporadic activity from the Late Mesolithic through to the Late Bronze Age. The site saw more substantial use in the Late Iron Age, and pits and two ditches were recovered. Although no definite Romano-British features were present, 18 sherds of that date were found (largely local grey wares of first- to second-century AD date). Therefore, the area's usage in Late Iron Age and Roman times is thought likely to have been agricultural rather than settlement-related.

## Concluding discussion: continuities and marginalities

The site at Hurst Lane shows clear evidence of continuity from the Iron Age to the Roman period. Not only is this evident from its ceramic sequence, but also from the layout of the successive settlements. Whilst the Romano-British occupation marks a substantial reorganisation – a rectilinear system replaced a much more 'organic' network – the Iron Age compounds also seem to have determined the arrangement of a number of the Roman ditches. As has been outlined, such continuity is also found on other sites of the period in the area. What is singularly important in the case of the Hurst Lane settlement and particularly the occupation of Iron Age Compound A, is the potential evidence of activity in the interregnum. The concurrence of re-cut Iron Age boundaries in the later first century AD suggests more than just vague 'earthwork' determination, but a respect of landholding. Thus far on the island, Early Roman sites seem only to occur on previous Iron Age settlements. Yet, it is equally unlikely that the Conquest was only a matter of generally evolving 'mind-sets' involving negligible economic change, and that sometime between AD 50 and AD 80 the site's inhabitants suddenly decided to adopt *en masse* rectilinear field-systems and buildings. Although by no means sufficiently detailed,

the evidence from the site suggests an interval of decline between about AD 40/50 and AD 70/90 when, in effect, settlement struggled on. Thereafter, the Romano-British layout might have involved continuity of tenancy, but whether this indicates the resurgence of the site's leading Iron Age families or only of their attendants is unknown.

In the light of most of the Cove sites' apparent Conquest-period continuities, the absence of any direct evidence of the Boudiccan rebellion is crucial, as was also recognised at Wardy Hill (Evans 2003a, pp. 270–2). In other words, settlement seems to have continued without any sign of military retribution (i.e. traces of conflagration) in the decade prior to the Flavian era. Nor, in fact, has such evidence been found in association with the Iceni-affiliated communities at Stonea or Langwood (Jackson & Potter 1996; Evans 2003b) and this could suggest that the geography of the revolt lay further to the east. Yet is this really the case? Did, for example, the Trinity Lands settlement actually see a 'Roman phase' at all or was it just a matter of a Late Iron Age site – admittedly receiving Early Roman-type kiln products – continuing until about AD 60–70, with occupation thereafter apparently stopping? Hurst Lane's *interregnum* occupation could equally be assigned to the decade between AD 60 and 70, with the establishment of its more formally Roman system only occurring during the Flavian era. If so, whilst the Rebellion *per se* might not be in evidence, then at least post-Rebellion reorganisation could be apparent. Yet until synthetic studies are forthcoming from other areas of Eastern England it remains difficult to distinguish strictly Rebellion-related dynamics from the processes of Romanisation in general.

Certain factors distinguish the Ely sites. That Iron Age cremations have not been forthcoming from any, further confirms the Aylesford-Swarling border as a distinct archaeological divide (see Hill, Evans & Alexander 1999). Against this, the recovery of 'loose' human bone in the southern Hurst Lane cluster is paralleled on all of the Cove-side settlements. Apart from those remains in terminal phase contexts at Wardy Hill (Dodwell in Evans 2003a, p. 232 and fig. 116), skull fragments were also found on the Trinity Lands site, the West Fen Road settlements and also at Prickwillow Road. Finding skeletal remains has become commonplace on settlements of the period (see Hill 1995), and such deposition clearly reflects a tradition dating back to the later Bronze Age (Brück 1999). However, the frequency at which they occur at Hurst Lane (and their consistency in the other Ely excavations, often despite limited exposure or sampling) could suggest that these practices were taken to a greater extreme on the island than in other adjacent areas and that this might imply some manner of distinct cult activity. Skeletal remains were not found at anything like this frequency at either the Cats Water, Fengate (Pryor 1984), the Upper Delphs, Haddenham or the Colne Fen, Earith settlements (Evans & Hodder 2006). What, aside from their frequency, distinguishes the Hurst Lane human remains is the extreme degree of manipulation and that the F. 505 skull deposit was found in house foundation-circumstances. At Wardy Hill, such 'working' of bone was discussed in terms of violence to the body and the issue was raised whether this could have only been perpetrated upon 'outsiders', be they the vanquished or slaves (Evans 2003a, p. 258). Whilst it could be argued that this might have been too normative an appraisal, the F. 505 skull certainly attests to an extreme degree of trauma; the blow to it could have caused the death of the individual. The skinning cuts upon it would equally suggest that the skull did not derive from excarnation. (This, and the polishing upon it and other fragments of human skull from the site would obviously indicate that it was *skulls* and not heads that were handled.)

Amongst the foremost traits of Ely's sites is the relative poverty of their assemblages. Despite the extensive use of metal detectors on these sites there is, for example, a paucity of brooches: only six or seven Late Iron Age/Conquest-period brooches have been recovered from the five main excavations (and from the evaluation at St John's Road). Even more marked is the absence of later Iron Age coinage. Hurst Lane's potin aside, very few coins of the period have ever been recorded from the island and none from any of the recent excavations.[3] This is in direct contrast to sites further south within the Aylesford-Swarling zone, and to the Iceni-affiliated communities on the central Fenland islands. The latter would include the great Stonea/Stonea Grange 'centre' (Jackson & Potter 1996) and also the Langwood Farm complex on Chatteris (Evans 2003b). Not only has Iron Age coinage been recovered from the Langwood site (of Iceni and Trinovantes/Catuvellauni issue; see Chadburn in *ibid.*), but also much Early Roman coinage, which probably resulted from trade with their army (see Reece in *ibid.*). These mid–later first-century AD Roman coin issues are missing from the Ely sites. This could suggest that the army was not present in any substantive way on the island (i.e. regularly stationed), although the Witcham helmet could belie this (*cf.* Evans 2003a, p. 271). Alternatively, only Iron Age coin-using communities might have received coinage in kind through trade, and exchange with other 'partners' could have been through barter. Be this as it may, the same is equally true for use of brooches in the Late Iron Age and Conquest period/later first century AD. They have been frequently found on the central Fenland sites and south in the Aylesford-Swarling zone, but not on the island.

Yet it might be inappropriate to describe Ely's assemblages only in terms of relative 'poverty'. The deployment of metalwork – coins and brooches – amongst Late Iron Age communities could well have been socio-politically specific. Unlike neighbouring groups to the north and south, Ely's inhabitants might simply not have expressed their identity through these media to any great degree and this could, in turn, have influenced responses to Romanisation.

However 'marginal' it might have been (itself a weighted term), what affinities the island then had would seem to have lain to the south (and south-west

up the Cam Valley). Admittedly this argument is largely one of default rather than of positive attributes. Nevertheless, within the specific context of the Hurst Lane settlement, the potin and Harlow-type brooch, both of which are northern outliers of their core distributions, could be interpreted as expressions of this. The paucity of fine metalwork of the period from the island would argue against an eastward (and later northward) Iceni-affiliation, while the very low level of Scored Ware from all the Ely sites (1.5–4.1%) distinguished its communities from those of the Ouse Valley and western fen-edge (e.g. Colne Fen, Earith and the Upper Delphs, Haddenham; see Table 8 and Hill in Evans & Hodder 2006).[4] Given these evident complexities, it is clearly inappropriate just to view the region's Iron Age in terms of simple tribal identities. Rather, the evidence would suggest shifting multiple 'centres' and, correspondingly, continuously redefined 'margins'.

*Modes of enclosure*

When taking into account factors of phasing, the Hurst Lane Iron Age settlement(s) do not necessarily provide evidence for particularly intense occupation at any one time. Generally comparable to the Cats Water site (Pryor 1984), no more than three to eight roundhouses need have been strictly contemporary and this might represent, at most, three to five household groupings. Yet, in contrast to the other Ely sites of the period (though in some instances this was clearly determined by factors of preservation), the overall number of round buildings at Hurst Lane suggests a more sustained multi-household occupation. Perhaps this reflects the better-drained sub-soils on which it was located. If so, this could indicate that, although heavy claylands were clearly colonised during the Middle/later Iron Age (see below), light soil-sites might still have been the preferred choice of settlement.

As discussed within the Wardy Hill report (and at Haddenham; Evans 2003a and Evans & Hodder 2006), there was limited reflection of household status amongst the region's Iron Age settlements. Hurst Lane's most obvious candidate to indicate status would have to be Structure 2, which was contemporary with the Settlement Cluster I horseshoe-plan enclosure. By way of parallel with enclosures elsewhere, this could have obvious ramifications in terms of what, by extension, Wardy Hill went on to become. Yet the only apparent difference of its household, apart from building size (which it shares with Structure 3), was the frequency of pig bone; given the site's faunal assemblages relative to structure-size, this might only have been result of the intensity of excavation. Nevertheless, viewed from the perspective of Pryor's 'first-amongst-equals' arguments for Cats Water, Fengate (1984), within a context of low-level distinction this could have been sufficient. In other words, in different circumstances Compound A's resident household could have gone on to have distanced itself further from the rest of the settlement through the construction of a more elaborated form of enclosure. Yet in the case of the ringwork at Wardy Hill, the realisation of this potential is what was crucial, as the 'command of labour' would appear to have been the main distinction of the social status of its inhabitants, regardless of whether this was a matter of purely kin- or client-based relationships. Here, as is so often the case, it is well-nigh impossible to differentiate 'expression' from 'catalyst'. In short, to what degree did perceived threat and its defensive response itself give rise to and/or significantly enhance existing social authority/status?

The question remains whether Hurst Lane's horseshoe compound should itself be described as 'defended'. The ambiguities of this appellation have been addressed elsewhere (Evans & Knight 2002; Evans 2003a, pp. 258–63). Whilst certainly not ranking as a 'fort', it still might qualify as a 'defended farmstead' and the area it enclosed (1850 square metres) is at the upper end of 'domestic-scale' enclosures (*ibid*, table 70). Yet, in opposition to the layout of the compound at Wardy Hill, and more typical of 'domestic' enclosure layout, the buildings of the main Hurst Lane compound were located in its centre and not off to one side to allow any mass gathering (Figs 18.2 & 18.3). It is an inherently domestic-type arrangement: the 'household(s)' commands its core and no meeting space was held in reserve.

That the Cluster A horseshoe compound at Hurst Lane bears such a strong formal resemblance to the innermost circuit of the ringwork at Wardy Hill suggests a domestic origin for what was to become the latter's heavily defended form (Fig. 18.3). The en-

| Site | Number (weight) | Wheel-made % | Scored % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hurst Lane | 1183 (29,237g) | 15.0 | 4.0 |
| West Fen Road (south) | 656 (7781g) | <1 | 1.5 |
| Watson's Lane | 1212 (13,662g) | 4.7 | 4.1 |
| Wardy Hill | 5311 (60,988g) | 23.5 | 1.8 |
| Haddenham V | 15,015 (174,055g) | <0.1 | 25.9 |
| Cats Water, Fengate | 11,180 (267,432g) | 13.7 | 52.3* |
| Werrington | (29,260g) | ? | 44 |
| Owls End Rd, Bury | 156 (518g) | 10.0 | 3.1 |

***Table 8.*** *Comparative Iron Age pottery assemblages (NB: for Hurst Lane, the early Middle Iron Age phase of site excluded when calculating wheel-made % but included for burnished/scored %. * Maximum percentage by feature; no overall total available).*

closure at Hurst Lane did not see such elaboration and, instead, other small, sub-square 'domestic-type' compounds were appended to its north-eastern side. Whereas insufficient of the plan of the western core of the Trinity Lands enclosure was recovered to determine the settlement's full form, the main West Fen Road enclosure would seem to have been of a much larger scale (Fig.18.1). Though lacking the successively concentric circuits of Wardy Hill and, in the main, of sub-square plan, with ditches 2.50–3.00 metres wide and 1–1.30 metres deep, it might also be classed as defended; the smaller and 'removed' sub-square compounds extending south of the West Fen Road settlement perhaps represented no more than the equivalent of Hurst Lane's appended paddocks (Compounds B–E).

Most Iron Age enclosure systems are relatively 'organic' in their layout and it is often difficult to untangle their sequences. Given the parallels between the horseshoe-plan of Compound A and the inner circuit of the Wardy Hill ringwork, and accepting this as an expression of a local, bounded domestic spatial/settlement 'type', the crucial point is the character of their elaboration and the trajectories of their development. To a greater or lesser degree, both involved principles of concentricity. Yet, whereas the inhabitants at Wardy Hill went on to add an outer circuit (with a 'non-active' swathe between), it was the interior of Hurst Lane's enclosure that was sub-divided and this new swathe was elaborated with further quasi-radial, spoke-like ditch divisions (Fig. 18.2). The former development was made more 'monumental' by adding still larger units of demarcation (which in the case of Wardy Hill were of defensive function), whereas the latter might attest to a more distinctly domestic mode through progressive sub-delineation of the interior. Yet, it is clearly not just a matter of the island having had a single enclosure-type model or that distinct forms of enclosure somehow represented cultural 'blueprints'. The layout of the main West Fen Road North Site's 'square' (with its central roundhouse; Fig. 18.1) had its clearest affinity with the Werrington enclosure near Peterborough (Mackreth 1988) – a Scored Ware settlement. If pushing the evidence, the complex at Fisons Way (Gregory 1991) could be considered a concentric elaboration of this basic form towards the construction of an apparently ritual compound (see Evans 2003a, p. 263 concerning ritual and defensive 'concentricity' and also what distant parallels there are for the form of the Wardy Hill/Hurst Lane enclosures). There is no easy resolution of these issues and certainly the evidence from the island is not, as yet, at hand to advance one overarching explanation.

*The social fabric*

Across the eastern half of the Isle of Ely, Iron Age/Roman settlement densities are now known to occur at intervals between 500 metres and 1.5 kilometres. There was little excavation prior to the 1990s, but since then the pace of development, at least on the island's eastern side, has led to more intensive fieldwork than in much of the region. How are we to evaluate its settlement patterns as regards issues of continuity and colonisation? There are parallels for this, and the West Cambridge plain would, for example, seem to have hosted comparable densities (Lucas 2002; Evans & Lucas forthcoming) and, too, a contemporary 'uptake' of claylands. Although a more widespread phenomenon, this colonisation of heavy soils would seem not just to have been prompted by population pressure; some areas of lighter sub-soils, that saw intense utilisation during the later Bronze Age, were largely abandoned during the Iron Age (e.g. Barleycroft/Over, see Evans & Knight 2000b). Even if soil exhaustion was a contributing factor, the colonisation of claylands was probably a matter of positive choice, possibly relating to developments in agricultural practices. As discussed in Evans 2003a, within a context of landscape colonisation, rather than just relating to issues of carrying capacity, such high density settlement distributions could equally reflect the operation of social life. The draw of 'neighbours' – both to ensure security and, also, to further a social fabric and a successful 'breeding' population – is something that should not be underestimated.

The dynamics of these landscape incursions are themselves important. Despite the evidence from Wardy Hill and the Trinity Lands, pre-Middle Iron Age usage would largely seem to have been intermittent and probably related to seasonal pastoral and/or foraging activities.[5] These annual cycles of 'going out' from settlement (i.e. transhumance and 'tasking') could have been how Ely's environs became known and, similar to the processes proposed for the Upper Delphs, Haddenham (see Evans & Hodder 2006; *cf.* Evans 1987), eventually settled. These traverses and, by extension, the source of Ely's colonisation during the Iron Age, might not, however, have been over great distances. It is in this context that factors relating to the area's environmental sequence become crucial, as the island's low gravel skirtland – largely inundated during the course of the first millennium BC and thereby isolating the rise – could have been the original 'home' of these communities. This low skirtland swathe has yet to see any substantive investigations and, pending this, such discussion remains speculative.

Against this background, it is difficult to establish any obvious sense of social hierarchy for the island's sites. How is one to evaluate the relative status of Hurst Lane's Compound A household against that of West Fen Road's northern compound? If enclosure itself is a distinguishing trait, then both could have been relatively 'elevated' when compared with the remainder of Hurst Lane's population (or the 'mass' at Watson's Lane, Little Thetford). Yet, this differentiation might have been so materially insignificant as to be largely indistinguishable, and none of these sites seem to have had particularly distinct trade connections. However, the recovery of a Samian platter from the eaves-gully of one of Wardy Hill's main round buildings might reflect some degree of 'privilege' and could correlate with the fact that the ringwork had the highest frequency of both wheel-made Iron Age pottery (23.5%;

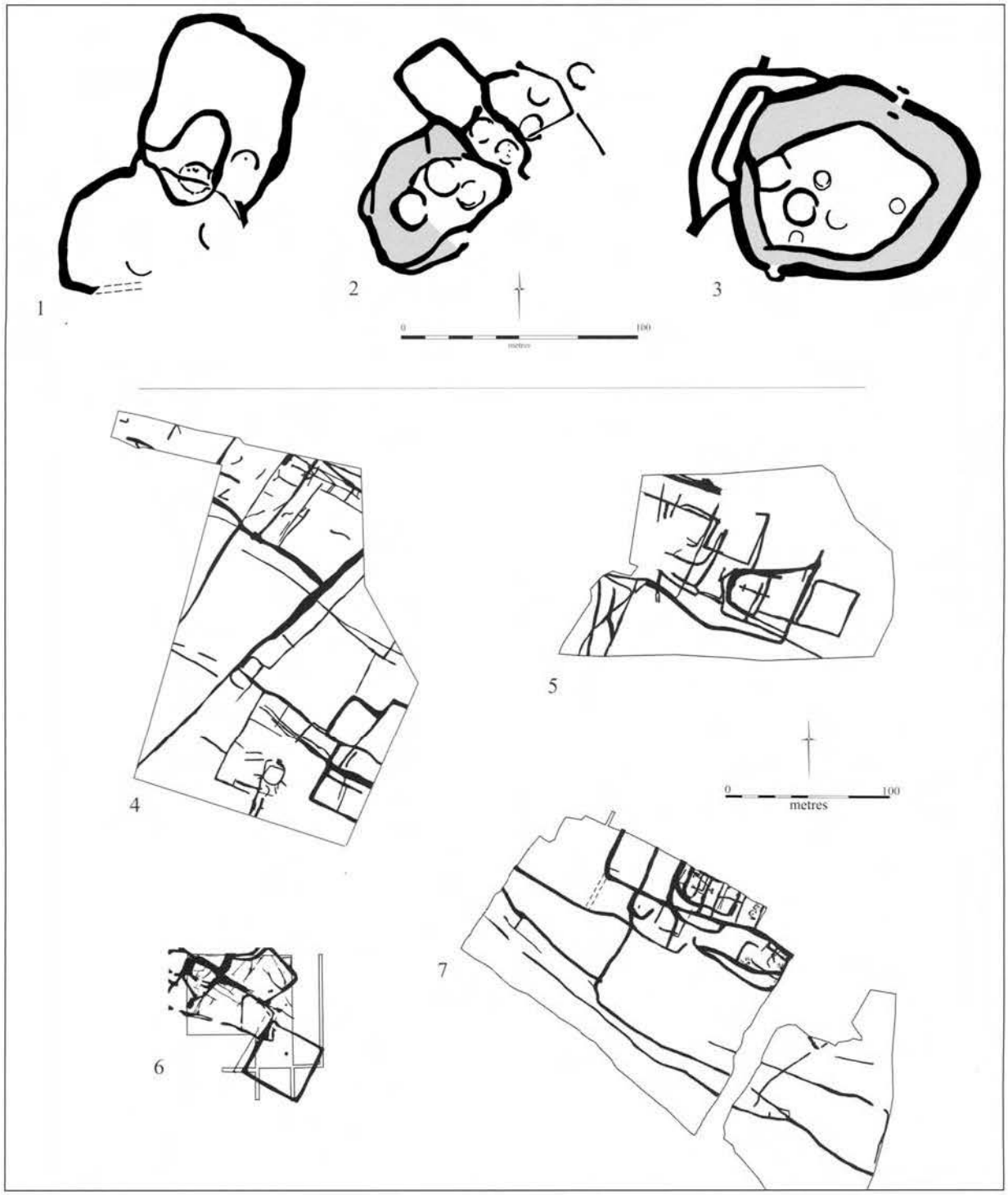


***Figure 18.*** *Comparative enclosures on the Isle of Ely*
*Iron Age: 1) West Fen Road (north); 2) Hurst Lane Reservoir; 3) the Wardy Hill ringwork, with grey-toned swathes indicating concentric 'elaboration' (2, internal/domestic; 3, external/'monument');*
*Roman: 4) Hurst Lane Reservoir; 5) Prickwillow Road; 6) Watson's Lane, Little Thetford; 7) West Fen Road (south; note that all of these sites share the same generic or 'landscape' orientation that probably had its origins in the Late Iron Age or earlier).*

Table 8) and pig bone (15% overall; Table 7) from any of the Iron Age settlements investigated on the island to date. Admittedly, these are subtle differences of only a few percentage points within these categories, but it may be in this that status alone was otherwise expressed. This could, equally, relate to the function of these sites. Whereas the West Fen Road (north) and Hurst Lane 'horseshoe' enclosures might rank as 'de-

fended farmsteads', only the ringwork at Wardy Hill could be counted as a 'fort' (albeit of minor proportions). If so, it may well be telling that, aside from the very limited investigations at Walsingham House and St John's Road (i.e. potentially 'incomplete' site-wide representation), only at Wardy Hill was there no kind of continuity into Roman times: there was some manner of 'visitation' or usage, but not continuity of settlement as such.

Over the last 15 years, our picture of the Iron Age communities of the southern Fenlands has become increasingly nuanced and, appropriately, more fragmented. Clearly it was not a matter of shared environmental factors resulting in a uniform cultural tradition. Rather, the picture seems increasingly one of a social mosaic involving diverse burial practices, and metalwork-using and ceramic traditions. With Ely falling just beyond the borders of the Aylesford-Swarling Late Iron Age 'core zone' (and betwixt traditional 'tribal' spheres), simple development models and standard measures of social hierarchy or settlement status surely cannot be mechanically applied to its archaeology.

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## Endnotes

1 The artefact densities within Compound A's perimeter – mean of 19 pieces of bone and 11.5 sherds per metre segment – is relatively low compared with the inner circuit of the Wardy Hill ringwork, having respectively 40% and 71% less pottery and bone (see Evans 2003a, pp. 212–14, table 60).

2 This study was written prior to the issuing of the report by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (now Archaeological Solutions) on the site they excavated in 2003 at Haddenham village on the south-western side of island (Fig. 1.10; Grassam 2005; Phillips & Grassam 2006). This involved the excavation of a second- to fourth-century AD Roman settlement, apparently without any Iron Age predecessor. It would, however, appear that only a small portion of a much larger settlement complex was excavated and so this cannot be known with certainty.

3 Only seven coins are known from the island (as listed in the Celtic Coin index). They are, indeed, a mixed group and consist of three Iceni issues, two Atrebates and single occurrences of Corieltauvi and Trinovantes/Catuvellauni issues. In addition, Hall (1996, p. 68) cites the earlier recovery of an Iron Age coin from Haddenham.

4 As indicated in Table 8, the frequency of wheel-made pottery at Hurst Lane (15%) would be in keeping with its occurrence in other assemblages within the region, with only Wardy Hill having a higher percentage on the Isle of Ely (23.5%; see Hill & Horne in Evans 2003a). Despite extensive efforts, it has proven impossible to obtain comparative percentage-based figures for later Iron Age assemblages within the Aylesford-Swarling core-zone.

5 The votive deposition of later Bronze Age metalwork in wet deposits might, therefore, have occurred in a context of seasonal gatherings; the meeting of diverse groups in 'off-site' circumstances could itself have promoted the performance of 'display rituals'.