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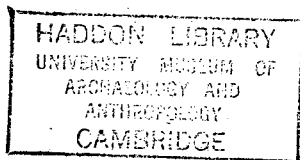
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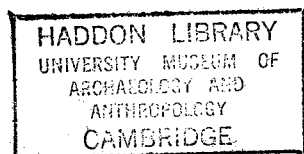
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1969

Published for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (incorporating the Cambs and Hunts
Archaeological Society) by Imray Laurie Norie and Wilson Ltd, Wych House, Saint Ives, Huntingdon

Printed in Great Britain at the University Printing House, Cambridge o

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LATE SAXON SETTLEMENTS IN THE ST NEOTS AREA

P. V. ADDYMAN

II. THE LITTLE PAXTON SETTLEMENT AND ENCLOSURES

Commercial developments on the Ouse terrace gravels in the St Neots area in recent years have revealed a number of Late Saxon settlements. The present paper is the second of three¹ which present information recovered in excavation prior to their destruction. Specialist reports for all the sites will be given in a fourth paper together with an assessment of the contemporary environment, economy and material culture.

SUMMARY

Rapid topsoil stripping for gravel extraction south of Little Paxton in 1961 and 1962 revealed several thousand archaeological features over more than 20 acres. Records were made of a grave, a ring ditch, pits, wells, hearths, ovens, post holes and ditches of various periods, although very few could be excavated before destruction. Part of the area was examined in detail in 1962, revealing at least two phases of Late Saxon occupation, perhaps representing an agricultural settlement within the berewick of Little Paxton. At one time the area was occupied by a ditched sub-rectangular enclosure, with an entrance having post holes for a double gate. The enclosure contained pits and wells, and perhaps also houses in the unexplored part. A system of ditches aligned on the enclosure probably represented a droveway and field boundaries. At another time in the Late Saxon period part of the area was occupied by a circular palisaded and ditched enclosure. Controlled excavation could not take place before destruction, but much tenth- and eleventh-century pottery, almost exclusively St Neots ware, was recovered, together with a normal range of stone, metal and bone-work and several wooden objects.

INTRODUCTION

Exploitation of the First-Second Terrace gravels² of the Ouse, valued commercially for their high quality, has continued on a small scale for many years in Little Paxton parish.

¹ The Eaton Socon settlement was described in *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), pp. 38-73, where references to previous excavations are given (n. 1). An account of the St Neots site, and specialist reports will appear in subsequent *Proceedings*.

² E. Greenfield, 'The Romano-British settlement at Little Paxton, Hunts,' pp. 35-57 above.

The gravels, well drained, but with a dependable water supply at a depth of a few feet, bear light fertile soils. On similar gravels in the Welland and Avon valleys archaeological traces of human occupation from Neolithic times to the present have recently been demonstrated,¹ and such occupation has long been known on the gravels of the Nene near Peterborough, and of the Middle Thames. The Ouse valley gravels are no less rich in traces of early settlement; but they are less well known to archaeologists

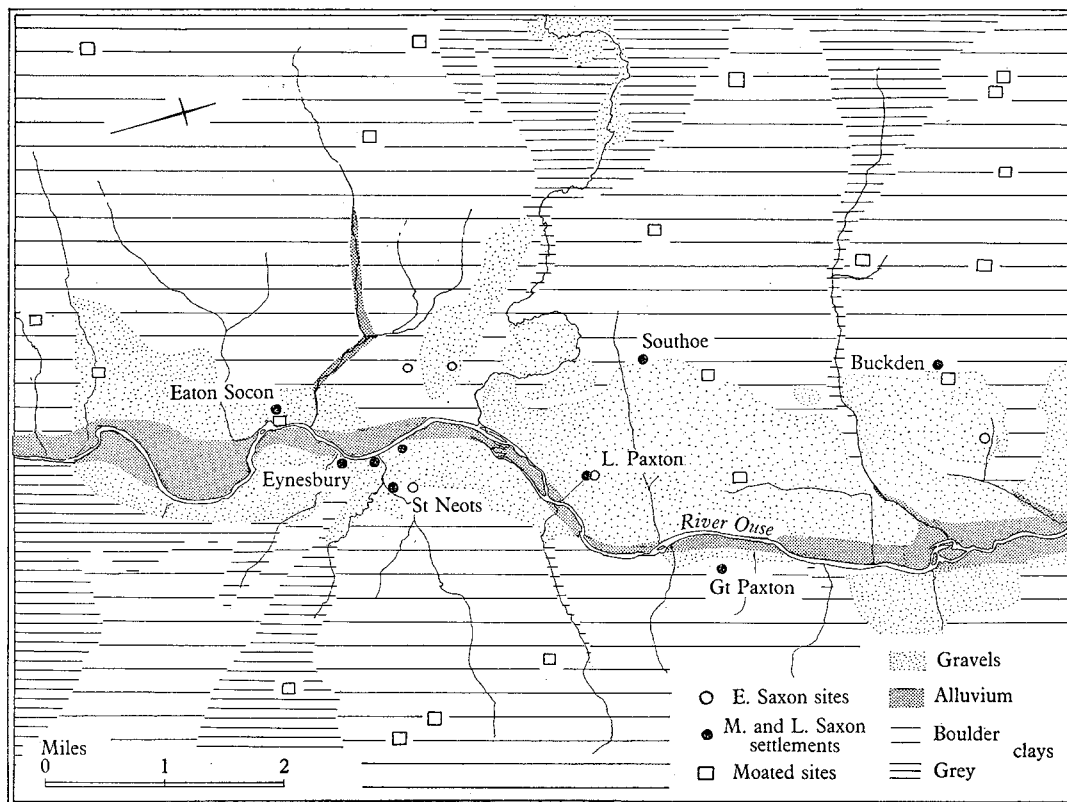


Fig. 1. The St Neots area: geological map showing the distribution of early, middle, late Saxon, and moated sites in relation to the clay and gravel. (Based on the Ordnance Survey 2½ in. map and the 1 in. geological survey (N.S.) by permission of the Directors General.)

in the absence of a survey to collate the evidence of aerial photography and, happily, in the absence until recently of large-scale gravel extraction. Such extraction is now revealing the richness of the area in the very moment of destruction. Modern quarrying technique involves successive removal of topsoil, the secondary soil, known locally as 'hogging', and finally the gravel. Archaeological features are visible between the removal of topsoil and the removal of 'hogging'. Aerial photography has sometimes provided foreknowledge of the presence of an archaeological site, as with the Roman farm and its attendant enclosures excavated some 500 yards from the

¹ R.C.H.M., *A Matter of Time* (H.M.S.O., 1960); and *Archaeol. J.* cxxi (1964 [1965]), pp. 1-22.

present sites in 1958.¹ Other photographs² show enclosures a few hundred yards west, presumably connected with the hamlet still extant here in the eighteenth century. Yet for the area which is the subject of this report there are no aerial photographs showing archaeological features. Perhaps the several thousand features present were too slight to produce cropmarks; or perhaps no photographs were taken under optimum crop conditions. Whatever the reason, it is clear that no threatened area at Little Paxton, and presumably elsewhere on the gravels, can archaeologically be written off merely on the absence of cropmarks on air-photographs.

Attention was drawn to the present site in the spring of 1961 when Early Anglo-Saxon burial urns were discovered in topsoil dumps from Area A (Fig. 2).³ During unsuccessful attempts to locate the Early Saxon cemetery Mr C. F. Tebbutt found many archaeological features, including an isolated grave, a ring ditch, and numerous Late Saxon ditches, pits and a hearth. The main features were planned, and some were partly excavated. As quarrying continued in the south part of Area A five or six deep wells were discovered, some timber-lined, all apparently Late Saxon in date. Only one of these could be investigated in detail. The Late Saxon features, it seemed, probably belonged to a settlement.

When quarrying began in Areas B and C in autumn 1961 more of the supposed settlement was uncovered, and the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Ministry of Public Building and Works undertook a partial survey (Area B). In the 75,000 sq. ft recorded there were some 560 features of which at least half were probably prehistoric. The prehistoric features could be distinguished either by Late Neolithic pottery and flints in their fills, or failing this by the character of their fills. Every feature shown to be Late Saxon had a more or less even dark soily fill. The prehistoric features had dark centres, black, blue-grey or brown, which merged at the edges to a fine clay, orange, yellow, or grey. The fine clay was taken to be an immature vertical B horizon formed since abandonment⁴ and the assumption was that for some reason, perhaps the shorter time lapse, perhaps through continual ploughing since the settlement's desertion, this had not developed in the Late Saxon features. The prehistoric aspects of the site were further investigated for the Ministry by Miss A. Best, and will be described separately.

The plan of Area B confirmed impressions that the Late Saxon site was a settlement, with gated enclosure containing wells, rubbish pits, post holes, and presumably dwellings in Area D to the south. The Ministry therefore proposed the controlled excavation of Area D in the summer of 1962, and meanwhile Mr Tebbutt and local helpers excavated the features in the more immediately threatened Area B. Area C, also immediately threatened, contained few features if any of Anglo-Saxon date, and was not examined in detail. Quarrying plans changed in the spring of 1962, and Area E was opened, again revealing Late Saxon features. Some, apparently

¹ Pp. 35-57 above; to Mr Tebbutt's list should be added the sites described in *Proc. C.A.S.* LXI (1968), pp. 9-14.

² University of Cambridge Collection of Air Photographs XK 93-7. Several sets of parallel ditches make for a single area of the river bank, perhaps suggesting a former river crossing west of the excavated site.

³ *Proc. C.A.S.* LV (1962), pp. 8-12.

⁴ *Med. Archaeol.* VIII (1964), pp. 64-8.

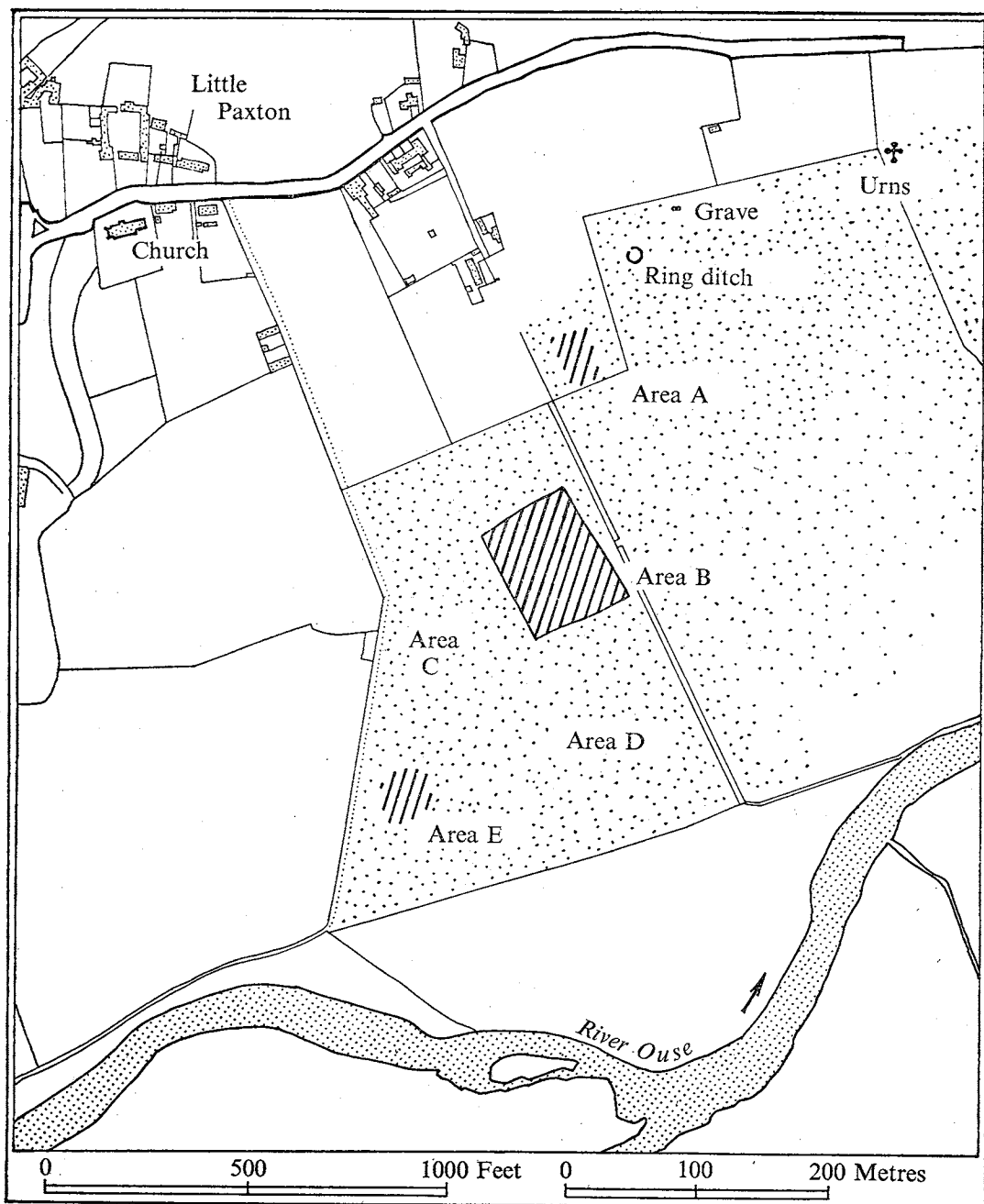


Fig. 2. Sites examined at Little Paxton in 1961 and 1962. Areas destroyed by gravel extraction are stippled. (Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map, by permission.)

representing the wall trenches, post holes and other features of a wooden building, were recorded by Mr Tebbutt.

The work in 1961 and early 1962 was carried out with the full co-operation of the quarry owners, Messrs Inns and Co., to whom all concerned are grateful indeed. It is only sad to record that exigencies of gravel demand caused them to destroy the whole of areas D and E within four days of the start of the Ministry's excavation. The only opportunity in recent years to recover the plan of a Late Saxon rural settlement was thus tantalizingly lost.

Various evidence suggests¹ that Little Paxton was one of three unnamed bere-wicks of Great Paxton in the Domesday survey. Great Paxton, an unusually large manor of 25 hides with 41 plough teams, was held in 1086 by the Countess Judith, widow of Earl Waltheof; and it had formerly been held by the King. There is no mention of a church at Little Paxton in Domesday but the architectural evidence, not least the remarkable tympanum of the reset south door,² indicates that it was standing by the mid-twelfth century. The later manorial history of Little Paxton, one of fragmentation of estates, hardly hints at possible tenth- to twelfth-century local topography, nor can much more be made from surviving patterns. Contacts with Great Paxton must always have been important, and the direct route must have been, then as now, by Wray House, formerly a ferry, over a mile downstream from the site. If nothing in the history or topography of the parish suggests an interpretation for the Late Saxon settlement, equally there is nothing, except perhaps inherent unlikelihood, to prevent the settlement actually having *been* the Little Paxton of the mid-eleventh century.

The circumstances of excavation and observation have led to a certain unevenness in the quality of the record. The exact location of some of the sites in the wasteland of quarry was particularly difficult to establish. The deposited records³ will demonstrate where errors may lie.

THE INVESTIGATION

Area A

Area A includes the whole of the former large field O.S. 145. Mr Tebbutt's systematic observations began when the field was half destroyed, and when work on the remainder was proceeding. At this stage it was thought that most of what must have been thousands of features in the area were of natural origin. In the dry summer conditions they appeared as grey clayey patches. Only those clearly artificial were recorded. In the light of investigations in Area B in the wet conditions of January 1962 it must be assumed that in fact most of the features were artificial. The account here is confined to descriptions of an isolated inhumation grave, a ring ditch, and a sample 50-ft square recorded in detail.

¹ *V.C.H. Huntingdonshire*, I, p. 352 n., and H.C. Darby, *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 318.

² *V.C.H. Huntingdonshire*, II, p. 335 and plate.

³ The excavation records and finds are deposited in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, with the exception of a selection of pottery, in the Teaching Collection of Southampton University Archaeology Department.

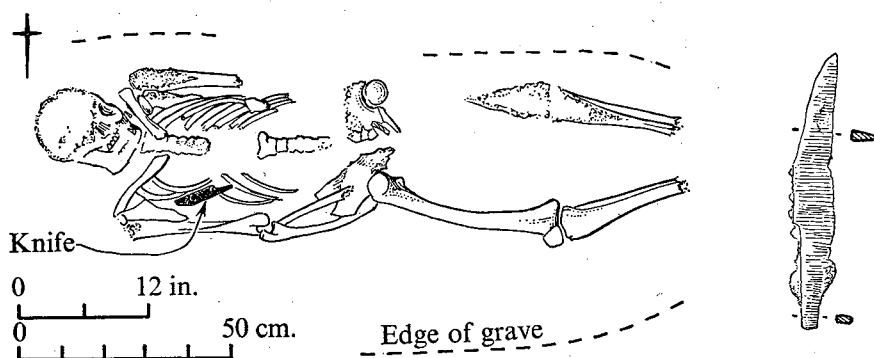


Fig. 3. Inhumation grave in Area A; and knife (scale $\frac{1}{8}$) from the grave.

The grave (Fig. 3)

An isolated grave, located during mechanical topsoil scraping, proved on investigation to contain an extended male inhumation orientated accurately and laid out with arms by the sides and hands on the pelvis. There was a small iron knife on the right shoulder. The grave, originally about 2 ft 6 in. deep, had largely been destroyed by the scraping, which also damaged the skull. The only dating evidence was the knife, a common type with angled back which could belong to any part of the Anglo-Saxon period, and indeed possibly even later. If the orientation can be given significance perhaps a date in the Middle Saxon period is the most likely. There was no evidence of associated burials, but the grave cannot have been far from the burial site of the cremation urns found earlier on spoil heaps from Area A.

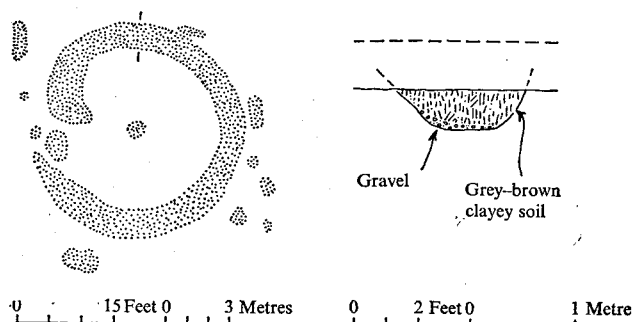


Fig. 4. Ring ditch and associated features in Area A.

The ring ditch (Fig. 4 and Plate I)

A discontinuous ring ditch and associated oval and circular pits located after scraping were planned and sectioned. The ditch was about 33 ft in external diameter, 4 ft wide, and about 1 ft 3 in. deep. There was one gap in the ditch, around which were several hollows. Other hollows were found at intervals round the edge, though it is not certain these were part of the monument. A shallow pit was found at the centre. Both ditch and hollows were filled with a fine sandy clay of grey-brown colour,

similar in character to the fills of various prehistoric features in Area B. There were no finds apart from charcoal.

Empty ring ditches are a common feature of the archaeology of south English valley gravels, and their interpretation is not easy. They usually occur in groups associated with barrows and are thus thought of as religious monuments.¹ This example, isolated, with a very shallow ditch, and with an entrance, may tempt an interpretation as the drip-trench of a small circular hut, of which the post holes did not penetrate the 'hogging'. Such huts are also a well-known feature of the gravels, in the Iron Age at least.²

Sample area (Fig. 5)

Four of the fourteen features within the carefully cleaned 50 ft square were narrow trenches, apparently related to each other and part of a system of enclosures. One, 1090, extended 110 ft south-east of the sample area where it turned and was joined by two other trenches. Within the area 1090 turned again, apparently to meet the three other trenches which ran parallel towards it from the south-west. The pits and post holes in the corner may represent an entrance structure at this point or, if the trenches are bedding trenches for palisades (p. 70 below), as strutting for the corner. Other features in the sample area were similar to many encountered in Area B, but their significance is not clear.

Near by were found the ditch 1080, and pit 1081. The pit, some 3 ft 6 in. deep, had quantities of St Neots ware and much charcoal in its fill of even gravelly soil. Several other pits of this nature were found in the southern two-thirds of Area A. They were apparently rubbish pits, as they did not reach the water table. Several wells were located in the south part of Area A, and are described below (p. 72). South of the sample area was found 1091 (Fig. 11), an oval pit some 2 ft deep containing alternate layers of burnt red clay and grey ashy soil with a partly burnt lining, and some relining, of yellow-brown clay. It is interpreted as a much-used hearth. The sample area demonstrated that all the Late Saxon

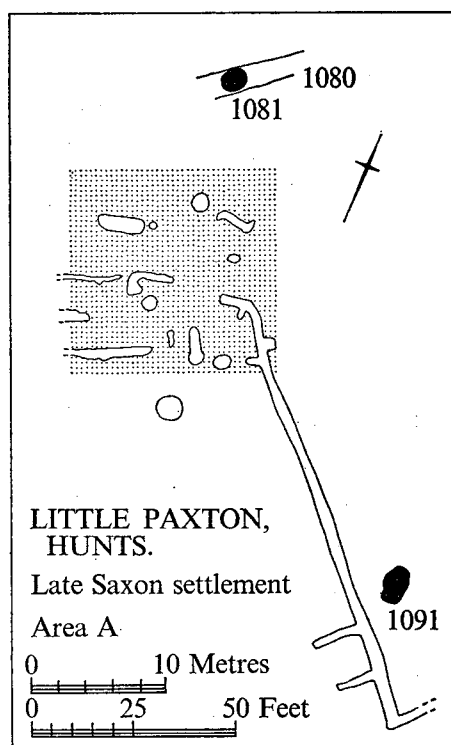


Fig. 5. Little Paxton Late Saxon settlement: part of Area A. Only the stippled area was examined in detail and similar features undoubtedly existed everywhere around. Features in black were certainly Anglo-Saxon, and most of the rest probably.

¹ *Oxoniensia*, xxviii (1963), p. 18, where other references are given.

² Drip trenches are usually narrower, cf. Draughton, Colsterworth and Heathrow (S. S. Frere (ed.), *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (London, Inst. of Archaeol., undated), pp. 17-28).



Fig. 6. Area B of the Late Saxon settlement. Features shown in black were certainly Late Saxon; many of those shown in outline produced direct evidence of prehistoric date.

features of Area B, ditches, trenches, pits, wells and post holes, extended into Area A, and it is tantalizing that more of them were not recorded.

Area B (Figs. 6, 7 and 8)

Over 560 features were found in the 75,000 sq. ft of Area B, and of these more than half were probably prehistoric. All are shown in Fig. 6, those for which there was direct evidence of Late Saxon date being shown in black. In addition to those for which there was direct evidence, many straight short trenches and a number of the post holes must also have been Late Saxon, as will be argued below.

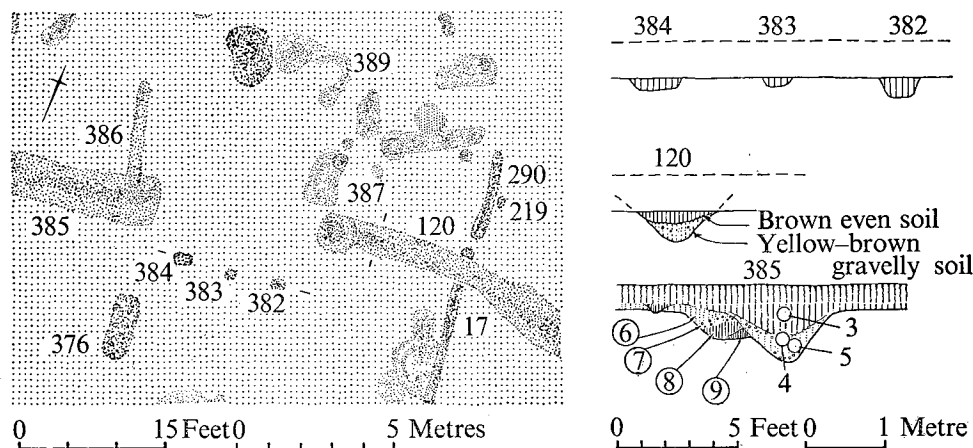


Fig. 7. Gateway into the enclosure in the south part of Area B. The section across ditch 385 is taken outside the area of the plan, at a point where the ditch ran out of the excavation.

The main feature of the area in Late Saxon times must have been the enclosure represented by ditches 385 and 120, apparently with a gate between them within which were pits (1, 2, 7, 33, 34), wells (339, 458) and some trenches and post holes. Outside the enclosure, and apparently aligned on the gateway, were various narrow trenches, sometimes in pairs running more or less parallel, and sometimes associated with post holes either along their length, at their ends, or near by. One well (582) and four pits of varying character were also found in this area. On the eastern side of Area B several ditches, post holes and trenches seemed less clearly related to the general layout, and some, 91, 125 and 132, seemed to form part of an oval or circular enclosure, perhaps of another period. Most of this must have lain in the destroyed Area A, and it may even have contained the wells noted above.

The ditched enclosure

The enclosure was bounded by the ditches 385 and 120, and possibly the trench 24. 385 was more or less uniformly 5 ft wide, while 120 varied somewhat in width. Both wherever sectioned had a round-bottomed V profile (Fig. 7, sections). Normally the fill had an upper layer of even, more or less stone-free mid-brown soil; and a lower,

yellowish, more gravelly layer. Where 385 ran out of the excavation it was possible to record a full cross-section including the modern topsoil. At this point it was clear that 385 (layers 3-5) cut into the fill of an earlier linear feature on the same line (layers 6-9). The earlier feature, shallower and flat bottomed, had been almost completely destroyed in the main area by the scraping process. Also cut into the fill of the earlier feature was a small post hole, on the inner lip of 385. There was no indication in the lie of the fill layers of 385 or 120 of a preferred direction of silting, and thus no suggestion of an unrevetted bank near the lip. The earlier feature, however, had silted almost completely from outside the enclosure, the lower layers being of fine soil, presumably derived from the weathering of surrounding topsoil; and thus again there is no suggestion of an unrevetted bank on the inner lip.

385 cut through a small Late Saxon pit 481 (Fig. 6), and it was joined by the short narrow trench 386 just west of the entrance. The line of this was traceable for a short distance in the filling of 385. East of the gateway, 120 was joined by the similar trenches, 17 and 290, but here the ditch appeared to cut the trench 17. 17, 290 and 386 were quite similar, all being about 12 to 18 in. wide, shallow and flat bottomed. There were darker patches, presumed to represent post positions in 290, and doubtless all represented bedding trenches dug for posts set 18 in. or so apart. 17 seems to have been dug in two parts, for it kinks abruptly some way south of its intersection with 120 (Fig. 6). If the interpretation as post-bedding trenches is correct, the features presumably represent palisades.¹ It is quite conceivable that palisade 386 was standing while ditch 385 was silting, thus accounting for its partial appearance in the fill of that feature. And equally it is conceivable that ditch 120 existed contemporarily with 17 through which, on a straight reading, it appeared to cut. Such an interpretation is desirable for it is difficult to disregard the apparent relationship of the complex of trenches outside the ditched enclosure, of which 17 is clearly an integral part, to the gateway of the enclosure. It seems possible that the trench or ditch 24 (Fig. 6) represents the east side of the ditched enclosure. If this is so, there would seem to have been a gap in the ditching at the north-east corner.

The entrance to the ditched enclosure seems to have been in the gap between 385 and 120. At this point there are three post holes set some 4 ft inside the ditches. The two outer posts were oval in plan and more substantial in depth, suggesting that they were the hanging posts for double gates. The centre hole would have held a catch post for them. Mr Tebbutt has remarked that the distance between outer posts is 10 ft, which was, until the advent of the combine harvester, the norm for farm gates in the area. The position of the gate, not in the gap between the ditches but behind it, argues cogently for the former presence of a fence within the ditches. Both the shallow post hole seen in section on the inner lip of 385 (Fig. 7, sections) and the row of posts within ditch 132 of the oval or circular enclosure described below hint that such a fence would have been constructed of posts.

The ditches, some of the trenches, and the pits and wells (discussed separately)

¹ Such palisades occur on many Dark Age settlements on the Continent, e.g. W. A. Van Es, *Wijster*, (Groningen, 1967), and at Federseen Wierde, *Germania* (1957, 1961, 1963).

produced considerable amounts of St Neots ware, lava, burnt daub and other finds of a domestic character, and the very presence of wells and rubbish pits strongly suggests that the ditch and supposed fence enclosed a settlement. No trace of buildings was found in the area excavated, but the shallow wall-trenches and sill-beam slots which might be expected in the area at this period¹ might well not have penetrated the topsoil far enough to have appeared in the mechanically cleared 'hogging'; such slots as were found on the site were often very shallow. It was clearly desirable to excavate some of the enclosure by hand to test this hypothesis, and to record the layout of the remainder, but circumstances unhappily denied the opportunity.

The oval or circular enclosure (Fig. 8)

Just within the excavation on the eastern edge of Area B part of a second enclosure was found. It was represented by two narrow trenches, 91 and 125, and a line of post holes, 129 to 136. The ditch 132, of similar character to ditches 385 and 120, lay outside the line of post holes and was undoubtedly connected with it. Post hole 129 may well have represented a gatepost for a gate closing the gap to trench 91; and the post hole at the south end of 91 may have had a similar function in the gap to trench 125. The small trench 61 cut away part of the filling of 125, and clearly belonged to a later phase of the site. Within the enclosure the post holes 54 to 56 and 61, 65, 66 etc., perhaps represent a timber building and, though no direct evidence was obtained of their date, they could well belong to the Late Saxon period.

The small trench joining the southern end of 132 resembled in character those connected with 120 in the ditched enclosure; it is presumably contemporary with the oval enclosure. This evidence, by no means conclusive, suggests that the oval enclosure is later than the ditched enclosure. Finds from the oval enclosure were closely comparable to those from the ditched enclosure.

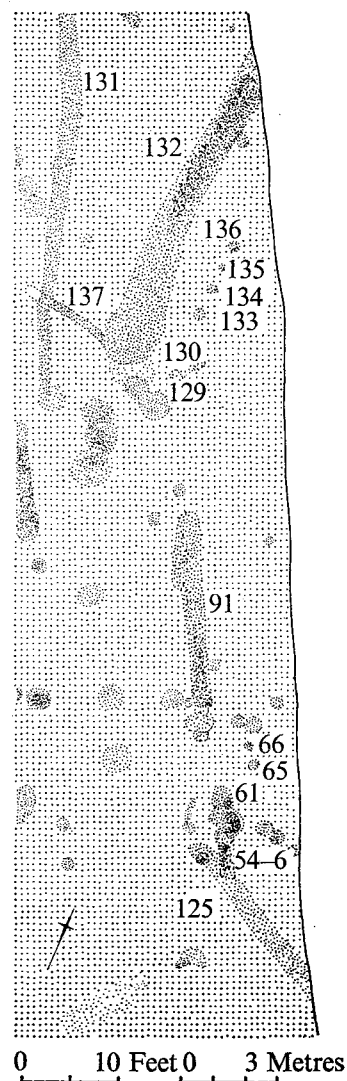


Fig. 8. Enclosure with ditches, gateways and possible fences, on the east side of Area B.

¹ Maxey, Northants., *Med. Archaeol.* viii (1964), pp. 42-3; Buckden, Hunts., *Proc. C.A.S.* lv (1962), pp. 13-22; St Neots, Hunts., *Proc. C.A.S.* forthcoming; and further afield, Dorchester, Oxon., *Archaeol. J.* cxix (1962), pp. 125-8, and Thetford, Norfolk, *Med. Archaeol.* xi (1967), pp. 191-2, where the wider linear features are clearly ditches.

Trenches and slots (Fig. 6)

Most of the numerous trenches and slots in Area B seemed to be part of a system related to the gateway of the ditched enclosure. Trenches 209, 584, 436, and the southern part of 21 ran more or less north-south, and apparently bounded a driveway some 40 ft broad leading towards the gate. Trench 207 may have been added inside 209 at a later date to narrow the northern part of the 'driveway' to 29 ft. Running more or less at right angles to the 'driveway' were the parallel features 443 and 440, to the west, and the northern part of 21, to the east. These features may have bounded fields ranging from 100 ft to 150 ft wide outside the enclosure. Where 443 and 440 met 209 and 207, an additional trench had been cut within the driveway, with stake holes along its edge, and with a deep pit, perhaps a very large post hole, perhaps a well, at the junction.

The trenches which make up the 'driveway' and 'field boundaries', though they seem to form part of a unitary system, vary greatly in character. 21, for instance, is made up of individual lengths of short trench of slightly varying width and depth (Fig. 11). The lengths sometimes do not join precisely, and there are occasional widenings, presumably marking the positions of posts. 584 by contrast is of even width throughout. The more or less parallel trenches 440 and 443, with the similarly more or less parallel 209 and 207, seem to represent yet another variation, similar perhaps to the stockade recently found at Water Newton¹ apparently defending a holding of some importance. There seems to be no reason to suggest the two elements in these pairs were of different dates. The outer in each case (Fig. 11, section) seems to have been the deeper. No indication could be obtained from the limited excavation of what stood in either trench, though there were no indications of individual post positions and the implication is an horizontal beam. If so this implies a method of fence building which seems oddly wasteful of timber. It is perhaps noteworthy that features 440 and 443 contained little occupation material. By contrast, 435, 209 and 21 contained many finds and the latter much burnt material. It is possible that this part of the system was destroyed by fire.

In addition to the supposed driveway and field boundaries there was a number of other trenches, or trenches and posts, the function of which is by no means clear. The slot 292, apparently terminating in post holes, with three post holes adjacent, clearly represents a structure. Less deeply set elements have probably not survived, and its interpretation must await the discovery of similar arrangements on a better-preserved site. The slots 19 and 252, to the north, may represent an inturned entrance arrangement for the supposed eastern field; alternatively it may be connected with the long slot 131, some 28 ft to the east, to which 19 is parallel. Various short oblong trenches (407, 405, 406, 487, 494-6) and two post holes 413 and 414 in the

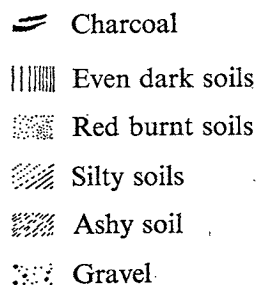


Fig. 9. Conventions for the sections.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LVI-LVII (1964), pp. 70-2. The Water Newton site is similar in many ways to Little Paxton.

southern part of the 'droveway' and in the western 'field' seem to share this alignment, though direct evidence of Saxon date was obtained for only one of them. The short trenches are best interpreted as having contained one or more posts; they are perhaps the heavier elements of a linear structure running across the central part of Area B or even of a building. Until comparable structures are discovered where the lighter elements are preserved it is also impossible to interpret this series of features.

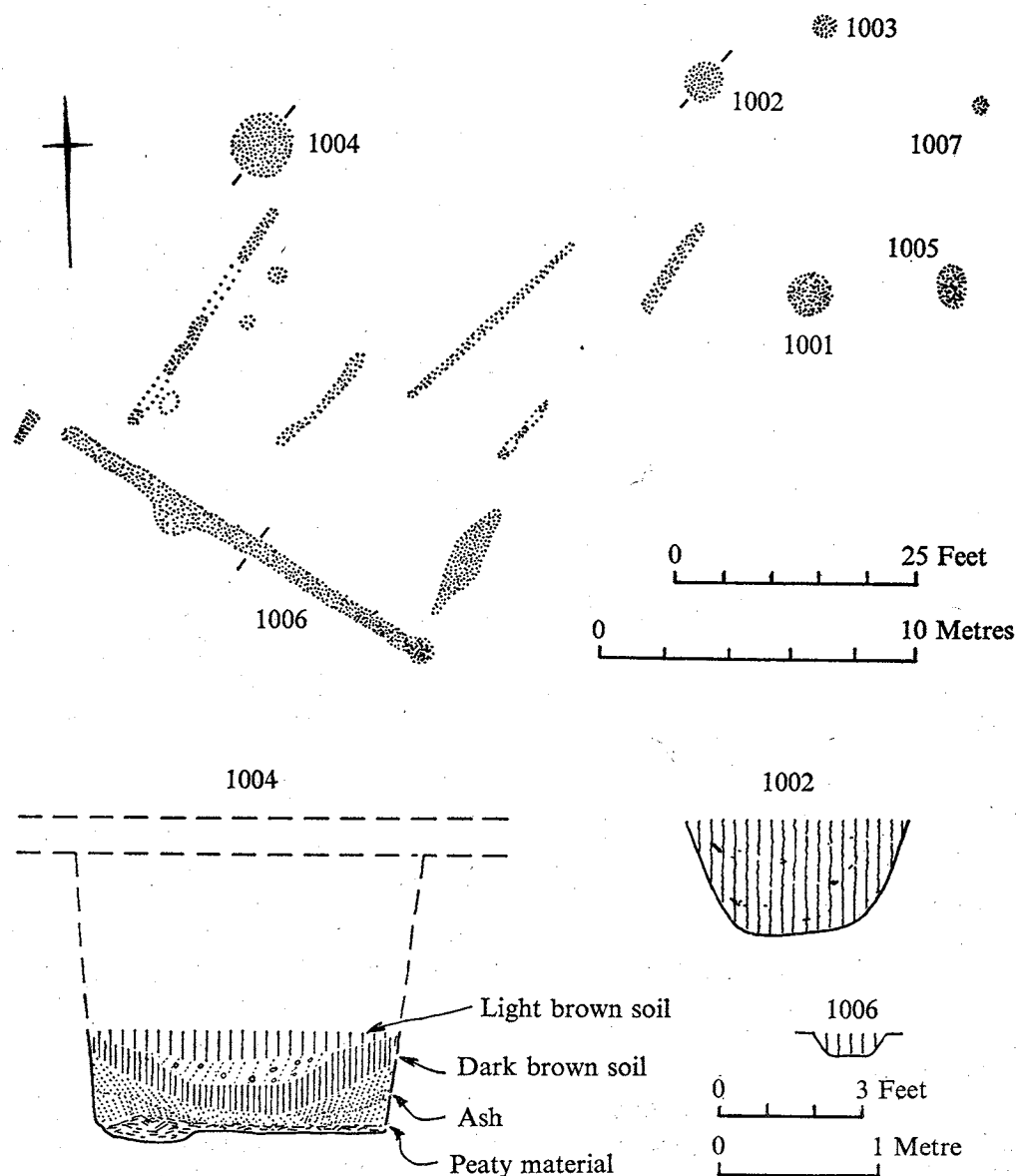


Fig. 10. Possible structures in Area E.

Pits and wells (Fig. 11)

The pits and wells from Areas A and B are discussed here together. Six pits were found within the ditched enclosure, together with one, possibly two, wells. In addition two possible wells were found in Area B outside the enclosure, and four, possibly five, were located and cursorily examined by Mr Tebbutt during gravel digging in Area A. Most of the pits in Area B were rapidly sectioned by Mr Tebbutt. Their profiles are included in the deposited records. The pits fall into four main types. *Type 1* had a rounded profile with a depth of between 2 and 4 ft below the top of the 'hogging' and a fill of alternate layers of even brown soil and darker, often more gravelly soil containing occupation material, bones and pottery. They are interpreted as rubbish pits. The section of 33 is given as an example; 1, 2, 33 and 34 fall into this category, together with 1081 and two unnumbered pits in Area A. *Type 2*, of which only one example was found, 7, has a stepped profile with a depth of 1 ft 6 in. below the surface of the 'hogging'. The fill was of alternate layers of yellow sandy material and black charcoal-rich soil and there were stake holes in the upper part of the side. The charcoal layers seemed to dip into a hollow in the centre of the hole filling, and the hole may best be interpreted as a post hole, though the stakes are difficult to explain. They were too close to have been supports, and may have been part of a structure connected with the supposed post. *Type 3* presented, in its final weathered state, a stepped profile reaching depths of from 3 to 5 ft below the top of the 'hogging'. They did not reach the present water table, and there was no indication in their fill, for instance by the formation of iron pans,¹ that the water table was ever high enough for them to have done so. They contain a major element of weathered gravel and soil, derived from the upper edges of what were presumably much more steep-sided pits originally. There are often layers of more dirty, soily material. In many respects these pits resemble those in the Middle Saxon settlement at Maxey, Northants.,² where such pits also did not reach the water table, or were water-logged only occasionally. There seems to be no way of deciding their function, but uses as storage pits, for industrial purposes, and as latrines have suggested themselves. *Type 4* was represented by one pit only, 481, partly cut away by the ditch 385. It was oblong, 6 ft 6 in. long, 2 ft 9 in. wide, and 1 ft deep, with a hard flat gravel bottom and almost vertical parallel sides. A great amount of burnt clay had been deposited in the pit shortly after it began to fill, though there was no sign of *in situ* burning. The threadpicker (Fig. 16, no. 10) came from this pit, together with much St Neots ware. Presumably the pit had a domestic function of some sort.

The wells, eight or nine in number, all reached the water table, now at a depth of just over 5 ft below the surface of 'hogging', but formerly, before the extensive gravel working in the area, perhaps a little higher. It was not possible to undertake controlled excavations of any examples, but 582 (Fig. 11) and 458 were sectioned by Mr Tebbutt, and others observed. The upper part of 458 was filled with layers of stoneless brown loam, dirty brown loam with occupation material, St Neots ware,

¹ Maxey, *op. cit.* p. 33 n. 14.

² Maxey, *op. cit.* pp. 32-6 and fig. 8.

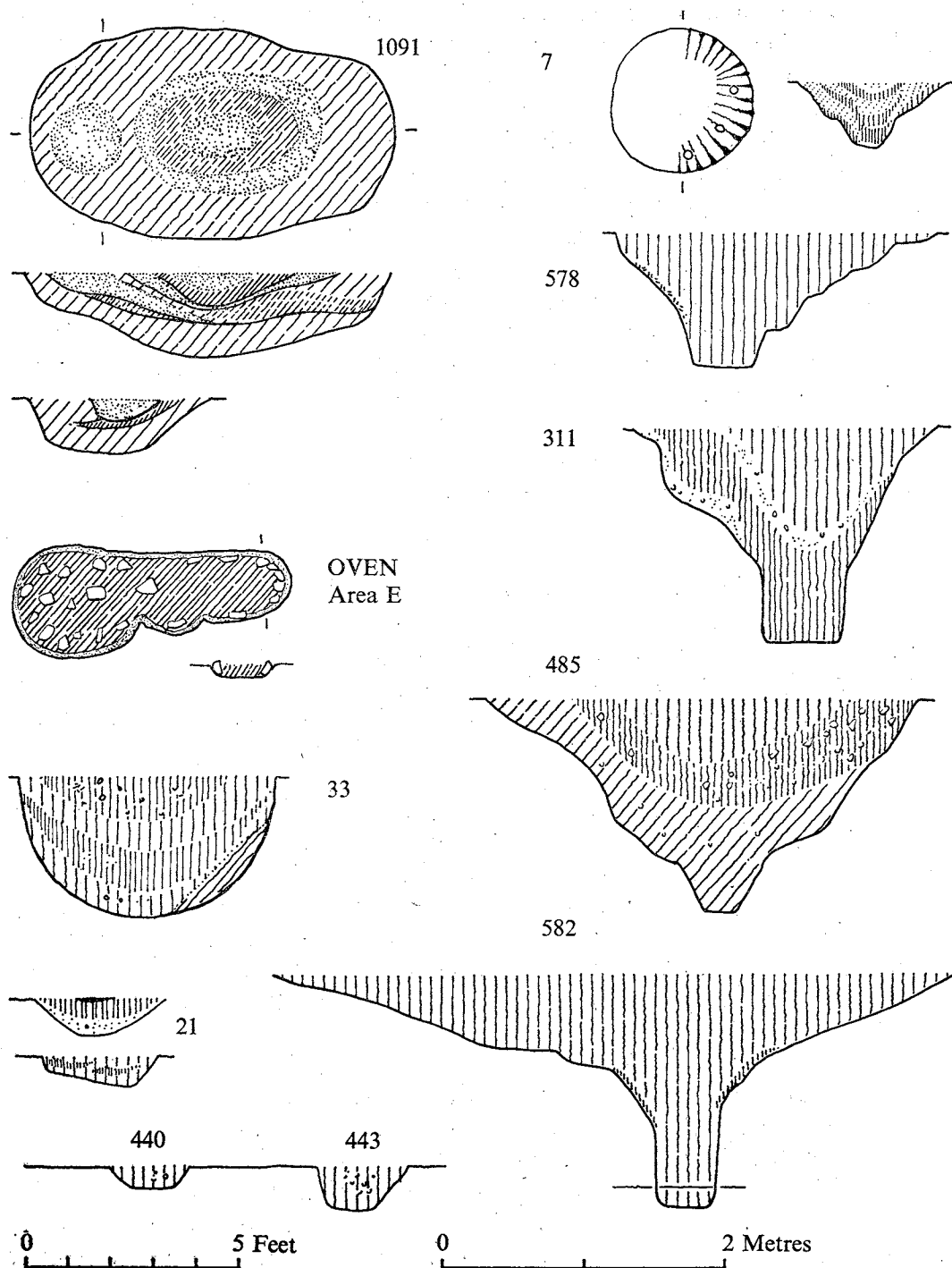


Fig. 11. Sections of hearth 1091, oven, various pits and wells, and ditches 21, 440, and 443.

etc., gravelly loam, and yellow silty material. This material derived presumably from natural weathering and from rubbish dumping. Below these layers the well had a narrower shaft, some 3 ft wide, filled with dark blackish soil, backed by about 9 in. of dirty gravel. The well had clearly been lined with wood, of which one piece was preserved near the bottom, and the digging shaft behind filled with gravel. Various pieces of wood were found jammed against one side of the well, in a position which led Mr Tebbutt to suppose that 'the well had become dilapidated and wood was jammed against one side to make rough steps or a foothold to dip out water' (Plate II). Several pieces of the wood had been worked, and are described below (Fig. 17, pp. 87-89). Well 582 was in many respects similar, though the only trace of a lining was a layer of dark soil on the lower part of the pit's weathered shoulders. 339, seemingly on the surface a well, was not traced to any depth. 311 and perhaps 485, though not reaching the modern water table, may also have been wells. The four or five wells noted in Area A were located in the final phase of gravel extraction, when the shafts were cut into during the course of quarrying by dragline excavator. At least two seem to have been wood-lined, perhaps having been square, with interlocking timbers.

Area C

A cursory examination of Area C showed that there were few, if any, Late Saxon features, though many of the general type shown to be prehistoric could be seen, and there was a broad curving ditch, also probably prehistoric. Resources and time were not available before its destruction for detailed examination or a plan to be made. Very few features of any sort were noted at the western end of the area.

Area D

On the assumption that the ditched enclosure in Area B with its rubbish-filled pits and wells surrounded a Late Saxon settlement, an area excavation was undertaken in Area D. Though work was brought to an abortive halt after four days by the summary destruction of the area, it was clear that removal of the topsoil had again destroyed the lighter elements of any formerly existing buildings, and only a few pits and slots were located. The ditch 385, however, extended at least a further 27 ft south into Area D. The settlement clearly petered out in the north part of the area.

Area E (Fig. 10)

Topsoil removal in Area E, followed rapidly by gravel extraction, located what was apparently either an extension of the settlement in Area B, or perhaps a separate group of structures of similar date. Part of the area was rapidly surveyed and excavated by Mr Tebbutt to reveal a complex of post holes, slots and pits. The linear features were flat-bottomed shallow straight-sided slots, presumably emplacements for sill beams, and occasional post holes were found at the terminations and along the length. Mr Tebbutt interprets the slots as representing a rectangular house, and suggests that the post holes 1001 to 1005 represent a circular structure near by, perhaps some sort of tower. The pit 1004 near the north-west wall of the rectangular

structure had more or less straight sides and a flat bottom on which lay a deposit of detritus-rich mud containing numerous plant remains (pp. 89-91 below). Above this were layers of ash, dark brown soil with charcoal, pottery and other occupation material, and in the top the light brown soil, presumably derived from natural weathering, normally found in such pits. The character of the fill does not directly help an interpretation of the function of 1004, though the pit may well have been some sort of store, or open soakaway. That it was a latrine, as first thought, seems unlikely. The plant remains give a useful indication of the contemporary environment, apparently one of arable and open grassland. Weeds of cultivation confirm the agricultural activities of the Little Paxton villagers, otherwise inferred from their use of lava querns (p. 86).

No doubt many other Late Saxon features lay in and around Area E, but detailed examination was not possible. For instance a small oven (Fig. 11) some 70 ft from the rectangular hut was noted, with burnt clay lining and stone base, having an over-all length of 6 ft, a width of 2 ft 6 in. at one end, and of 1 ft 3 in. at the other. Presumably further structures lie in the field adjacent to the west, for which outline planning permission has been given for gravel extraction, and where air-photographs show a complex of cropmarks.

INTERPRETATION

The finds from Little Paxton leave no doubt of the date of occupation of the site. They must belong to the late ninth, tenth and early eleventh centuries. The nature of the structures, however, is by no means so clear. They seem to cover an area extending almost a third of a mile, and include at least two formal enclosures in the central part of the area, defined either by ditches, palisades, fences or by a combination of all three. The two enclosures are not necessarily contemporary. What appears to be a droveway and further palisade- or fence-defined areas have been set out in relation to the gateway of one of the enclosures. Rubbish pits and wells occur within the enclosures, and sometimes also outside, and there are various settings of post holes and slots which suggest buildings of some sort, perhaps of several periods, again both within and without. Most of the features produced considerable amounts of Late Saxon pottery, bones representing food refuse, fragments of lava querns, and other objects of metal and bone. All these finds are domestic in character, and suggest the close proximity of an occupied settlement. Indeed it seems perverse, in view of the character of the finds, and of the presence of wells, to interpret the enclosures as anything other than delimiting a settlement. Yet no recognizable houses were found within them, and indeed the only acceptable buildings, themselves somewhat enigmatic, lay 500 ft to the west. Perhaps traces of buildings might have been found if hand excavation from topsoil level had been possible; or conceivably timber building techniques were employed which did not necessitate the digging of deep post holes or bedding trenches, as was the case in some later periods.¹ The assumption

¹ *Oxoniensia*, XXVI/XXVII (1961/2), pp. 100-1.

is made here as a working hypothesis, at least until comparable settlements have been excavated to make a fuller understanding possible.

Doubtless the parallel features leading up to the gate of the main enclosure represent the limits of some sort of access way, perhaps best thought of as a wide droveway. It leads, possibly significantly, in the direction of the present village of Little Paxton. The areas defined by slots and trenches on either side of the droveway are most logically explained as fields, though even here occupation material is abundant. Furthermore there are hints of structures, albeit not clearly of houses, within them, and more particularly at their entrances. They may equally therefore represent the limits of holdings within the settlement. Alternatively they may be something in the nature of home fields for the settlement within the enclosure, where agricultural buildings might be expected.

Any of the hypotheses which seem necessary to explain the Little Paxton structures raise considerable theoretical problems. If the site is a settlement, it would imply either that the site of the village of Little Paxton shifted to its present locale about the time of the Conquest; or that there were detached units of settlement within Little Paxton, quite extensive ones, if the hints of settlement in each of Areas A, B and E are taken into account. No good reason for the first possibility suggests itself. The second possibility conflicts with what is known, little enough in truth, of the character of pre-Conquest settlements in this area. It would suggest individual farm units with their own ancillary buildings and homefields, perhaps even with their own droveways leading to the village centre, in an area for which the open-field system is thought to have been the norm. The most convincing explanation would be to see the settlement as an example of those estates within a parish to which references are so often made in ninth-, tenth- and eleventh-century documents,¹ and the character of which is so difficult to visualize. Such estates may be represented elsewhere in the area by the now destroyed Southoe site,² albeit a site which continued in occupation. A similar, or perhaps grander, estate may well be represented by the structures elucidated by Mr Charles Green at Water Newton.³ Support for the idea of fragmentation perhaps lies in the later history of the manor, subdivided and with many free tenants.⁴ Until such an estate is isolated and examined, and until we know the morphology of a local Late Saxon village and its fields, it will be impossible to interpret the Little Paxton site with assurance.

THE FINDS

Pottery and animal bones were found in most of the Late Saxon features excavated at Little Paxton, and a number also contained fragments, unhappily usually small, of lava of Niedermendig type. A few contained burnt daub, objects of stone, metal and

¹ A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1939), for example pp. 74-83; 226-31; and many similar estates.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* xxxviii (1936-7), pp. 158-63.

³ *Proc. C.A.S.* lvi/lvii (1962/3), pp. 68-88.

⁴ *V.C.H. Huntingdonshire*, II, pp. 332-3.

bone, and organic materials. These objects are described below to provide evidence for the date and character of the site, and their associations are given in Table 1. In addition, slags and other special materials were recovered, and a number of soil samples were taken to provide general environmental information. An over-all assessment of this material and the animal bones will be undertaken in the final report on the St Neots area Late Saxon settlements, together with an analysis of all elements of the contemporary economy and environment. An exception is made below with the important deposit of botanical specimens from pit 1004, which has immediate relevance to the interpretation of the pit and the site.

THE POTTERY

Relatively few of the 1,050 or so features located on sites A and B were excavated, but 46 contexts between them provided a total of some 950 sherds of Late Saxon pottery, predominantly in St Neots ware. The contexts included ditches, trenches, wells, pits and post holes, which clearly varied considerably in the length of time they were open to receive rubbish. Boundary ditches for instance may have been sporadic dumping grounds for many years, while rubbish pits may only have been open for a few weeks, and even wells, after they had gone sour, were probably filled relatively rapidly. Whatever their relative value, the many discrete contexts do provide useful associated pottery groups, a much-felt need in Late Saxon pottery studies. Three groups contain over a hundred sherds, two over fifty, and five over twenty-five. The pottery is described below according to variations in form, but the main associations are summarized on p. 92.

The pottery was remarkably homogeneous. Very few groups contained anything other than St Neots ware. Only one sherd of a Thetford ware storage jar was found (Fig. 12, 29), and there were but a few body sherds of cooking pots. Other local groups¹ containing St Neots ware of various dates have shown a similar lack of Thetford ware, and the Middle Ouse was clearly on the very edge of the marketing area. There was also a dearth of Stamford ware, more surprising since most of the local groups² have contained it in small quantities at least. At Little Paxton there was a solitary cooking pot sherd (Fig. 12, 25). Another solitary sherd was the sole representative of Torksey ware on the site; the form could not be established, but the grey-red-grey-red-grey cross-section seemed typical enough. The occurrence of Torksey ware on the site at all is perhaps surprising, for Huntingdonshire is outside the normal area of distribution. In addition to these meagre representatives of the Late Saxon wares of Eastern England three sherds were found of a thin-walled roulette-decorated pot in sandy brown fabric (Fig. 12, 26). It is almost certainly a

¹ Cf. assemblages from St Neots settlement. There was little Thetford ware at Eaton Socon (*Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 55) or in the 1929-30 excavations at St Neots (*Proc. C.A.S.* XXXIII (1931-2), pp. 146-8); only a few sherds were found at the Great Paxton lime kilns (*Proc. C.A.S.* XXXV (1934), p. 101).

² Stamford ware was very rare at Eaton Socon, *op. cit.* p. 55, and at St Neots; it was apparently absent in the Great Paxton assemblage.

Thetford ware pot, though curiously reminiscent of the recently defined Mercian wares of the ninth and tenth centuries.¹

The conspicuous dearth of imported pottery emphasizes that Little Paxton's sources, for ceramics at least, were very much with its own locality, the heartland of St Neots ware.² If, as has been suggested, pots were being transported from afar by river, the boats did not stop at Little Paxton, nor did the villagers purchase such pots at the local market in St Neots or Eaton Socon. Only the lava quern, an essential item for grain producers in this stoneless locality, attracted the thrifty householder (p. 86 below).

The St Neots ware from Little Paxton, characteristically pinkish, but always with shades of grey and even black, contained the usual considerable quantities of included pounded shell in the fabric and, apart from a generally harsher feel than some of the soapier Oxford or Bedford region variants,³ was quite typical. The fabric of the sherds was, indeed, so nearly identical that it is only described below when it varies from the norm.

All the common St Neots ware types are represented in the Little Paxton assemblage, cooking pots, dishes and shallow bowls. As usual cooking pots (Fig. 12) predominate; about half have a rim diameter of 5 in. or less, while only two, 7 and 22, the latter of exceptional form, have a diameter of more than 8 in. Rim forms vary from the slightly everted and unthickened (1-5) through the slightly everted and slightly thickened (6 and 8-10); the everted with pronounced thickening (11-13); and those with a sharp eversion, but no internal hollow moulding in the rim (7 and 14-18); to those with a similarly sharp eversion, but with a slight internal hollow moulding (19-24). Bases are almost always sagging (30-37). A large number of profiles are published here in the belief that a study of size, and of the subtle variations in rim form are the only ways of differentiating between St Neots ware cooking pottery of varying dates. All major sherds from large associated groups are drawn.

The small size of the cooking pots, together with their uniform fabric and relatively simple rim form, suggest they are all pre-Conquest in date. The twelfth century versions reach rim diameters of up to 14 in. The absence of 'Early Medieval' wares presumably indicates further that they antedate the mid-eleventh century. Noticeably absent from the assemblage, however, are the hand-made versions of St Neots ware cooking pots such as were found at Eaton Socon, and which are putatively early in the series;⁴ to these a ninth-century date has tentatively been assigned, and the Little Paxton cooking pots would thus presumably all derive from the tenth century, with a possible start in the ninth, and continuation into the eleventh. Some indication of a survival into the eleventh is provided by the frequency of cooking pots with slight internal hollow mouldings on the rim. These do not occur in the early deposits of

¹ So-called Chester ware now coming from many Mercian sites, e.g. Hereford: *Current Archaeology*, ix, pp. 242-4.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), p. 52 and fig. 1; *Oxoniensia*, xvii-xviii (1952-3), pp. 106-9.

³ The harsher feel of Huntingdon area fabrics has several times been noted: *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), p. 52 and LVIII (1965), p. 57. Little Paxton sherds were included in a fabric study on material from Maxey: *Med. Archaeol.* VIII (1964), pp. 50-1 and Table II, nos. 620219-20.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 53-6.

Eaton Socon, but are frequent in the context immediately antedating the castle. Similarly at Therfield, Herts.,¹ evidence has been adduced to assign the pre-castle assemblage, which contains them almost to the exclusion of others, to the eleventh century.

Bowls (Fig. 13) form a high proportion of the vessels in the Little Paxton assemblage. They include some more or less upright-sided examples with slightly thickened or slightly flanged rims (Fig. 13, 1-4). In form and treatment these are reminiscent of the handmade upright-sided pots from Maxey, Northants.,² representing apparently the Middle Saxon pottery of Lincolnshire/north Northants.,³ which may provide an ancestry for the type. The type is also perhaps represented in the so-called 'ginger-jars' in Thetford ware.⁴ In function they are perhaps related to the normal form of deep St Neots ware bowl with inturned rim (Fig. 13, 5-14 and 20-7), which at Little Paxton makes up 80 per cent of the total number of bowls. The 'socketed' bowl, a rare St Neots ware form, makes its appearance twice in the assemblage: Fig. 13, 15-16 represents one at least, and possibly a second, neatly and precisely made small example; and 17, from a larger but apparently similar vessel, is distinguished by stamped decoration on the rim. 18 and 19 come from equally rare barrel-shaped vessels with upright perforated lugs.

Rather less well represented in the Little Paxton assemblage is the familiar open shallow dish with inturned rim. Only one was found in the large group from the well 458, and no example at all was found in Area E, or in the ditch 385. In contrast, however, sherds from several examples were found in the trench 21. None has quite the hammer-head rim of the type examples from St Neots.

The Little Paxton assemblage has little to add to knowledge of technique of production of St Neots ware. A few examples show structure in the fracture which seems to indicate a practice both of outturning or perhaps of thickening the rim in the final stage of throwing; and in some cases of inturning. Several cooking pots have a scratched internal finish (Fig. 12, 3, 7, 11 and 24) which is almost certainly intentional. The bowl Fig. 13, 23 has been overfired, producing a harder, harsher fabric, lighter in weight than the normal, but the fabric has fissured, and the surface is on the point of spalling and flaking. It illustrates how critical the firing temperature must have been in the production of the ware.

POTTERY CATALOGUE

All the pottery illustrated except Fig. 12, Nos. 25, 26 and 29 is in wheel-thrown St Neots ware. The fabrics are typically grey- or black-cored, with pink, grey or purplish black surfaces, and they contain abundant shelly inclusions. Such range of variation as they exhibit is not great, and extremes can often be found in a single pot. It has not seemed worth while, therefore, to describe either the colour or fabric of any sherd, except when it is not in St Neots ware, or when it greatly varies from the norm.

¹ *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* xxvii (1964), p. 71.

² *Med. Archaeol.* viii (1964), pp. 56-8.

³ *Ant. J.* (1969), forthcoming.

⁴ *Norfolk Archaeol.* xxxiii, pt. 2 (1963), p. 154, no. 54.

Cooking pots (Fig. 12, 1-28 and 30-7).

1. Small cooking pot with slightly thickened rim. B, well 458.
2. Similar; apparently the clay was folded inwards to produce the thickening. B, well 458.
3. Small cooking pot with pronounced horizontal scratches internally produced during throwing (cf. nos. 7, 11 and 24). E, 1001.
4. Small cooking pot with slightly everted stubby rim reminiscent of hand-made Middle Saxon pots. B, well 358.
5. Small cooking pot, everted thickened rim. E, 1002.
6. Small/medium cooking pot with sharply everted almost flat-topped rim. Several examples of this type were found in Area A, but none elsewhere. A, unnumbered pit.
7. Small to medium cooking pot with sharply everted rim with a slight external ridge. A, pit 1.
8. Small cooking pot with thickened everted rim. E, 1007.
9. Similar, with external neck groove. B, 7.
10. Smallish cooking pot with pronounced thickening to rim apparently achieved by folding clay outwards. Black surfaces, E, 1007.
11. Similar to 10, but more sharply everted. E, 1007.
12. Small cooking pot with thinnish more or less sharply everted thickened rim, folded out. E, 1005.
13. Small cooking pot with short everted rim; similar to Eaton Socon Fig. 8, 12, typologically the first of the wheel-thrown St Neots cooking pots from the site. B, ditch 385.
14. Very small cooking pot, with everted thickened rim. B, slot 21.
15. Very small thin-walled cooking pot, with everted rolled-over rim. B, pit 7.
16. Similar to 15, though clearly not the same pot; thinner, even more finely thrown, with ridge on outside of rim. B, pit 7.
17. Small cooking pot with sharply everted thickened rim with slight internal hollow moulding. B, 2.
18. Similar; more pronounced hollow moulding. B, well 458.
19. Small cooking pot with everted rim, pronounced internal hollow moulding; very similar to Eaton Socon (Fig. 8, 20) which came from an apparently late deposit at the base of the castle bank. B, 19.
20. Small cooking pot, upright thickened rim. B, slot 21.
21. Very small cooking pot with flaring mouth. B, well 458.
22. Medium cooking pot in pink fabric, softer and soapier than the site norm, with very sharp eversion to rim, internal hollow moulding, and pronounced external throwing grooves. The pot is unlike anything else from the site, or from adjacent assemblages, and may perhaps be an import to Little Paxton from another part of the St Neots ware province, perhaps Bedford¹ or Oxford.² B, 33.
23. Very small cooking pot with thickened everted rim. Some internal horizontal scratching. E, 1007.
24. Small cooking pot with abruptly thickened slightly everted rim. B, well 458.
25. Very small cooking pot in very hard fine fabric, salmon inside, creamy grey outside, with pink-cream-grey-cream-pink core. Probably Stamford ware. B, well 485.
26. Very small thin-walled cooking pot in fine hard sandy fabric with micaceous inclusions and a slightly pimply surface. The rim has a slight groove internally just above the angle,

¹ Bedford Museum collections.

² The pronounced rilling is often seen on Oxford examples, though Professor Jope thought of these as possible imports to the area, *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952-3), pp. 85-7; xxiii (1958), p. 42, fig. 13, B2.1.

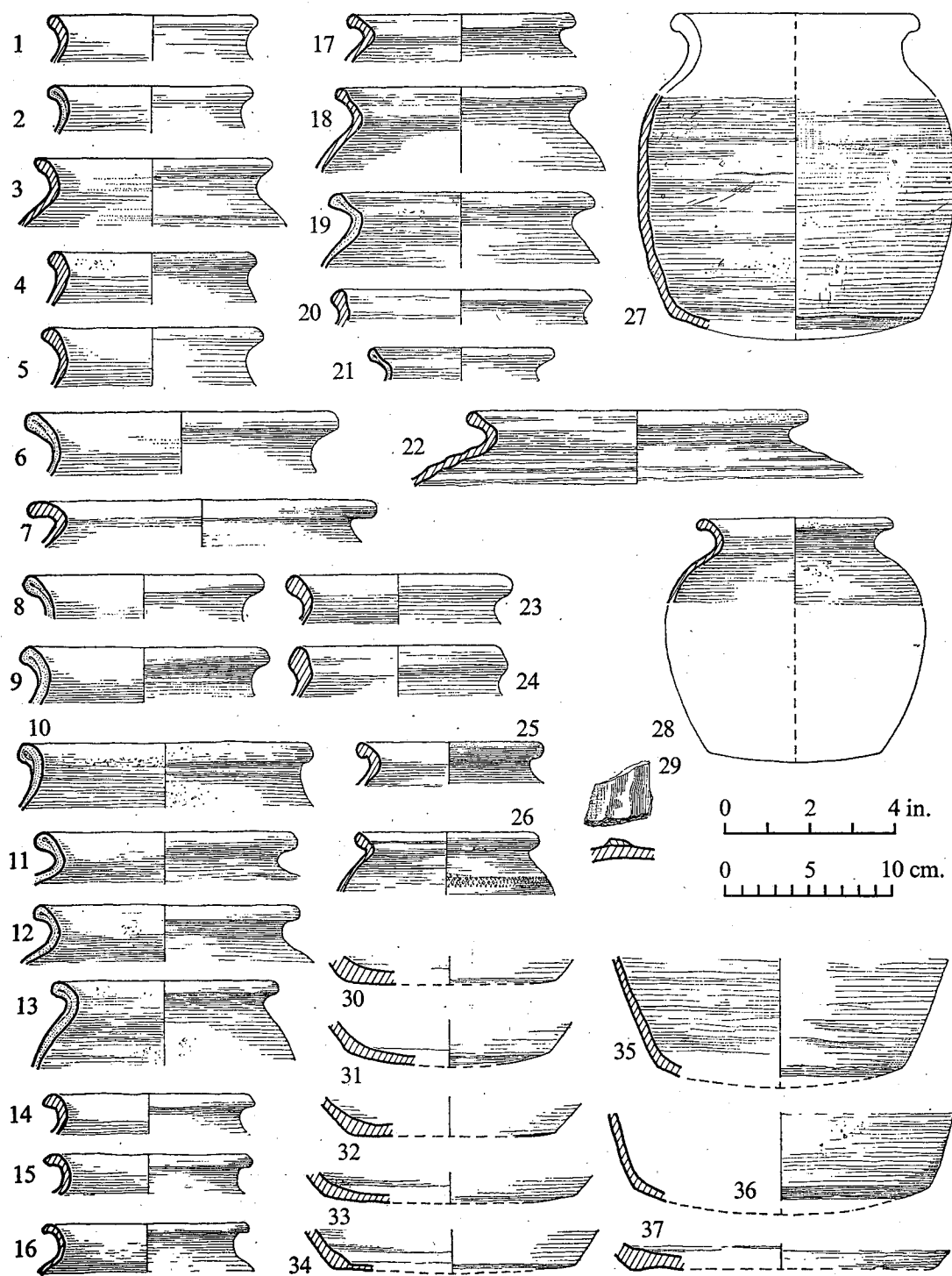


Fig. 12. Cooking pots; all in St Neots ware except 26 and 29, in hard sandy ware. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

perhaps a lid seating, and there is a narrow band of diamond rouletting on the shoulder. Joining sherds contrast in colour, presumably through partial accidental refiring of one; but it is probable that the original colour was a greyish brown. A Thetford ware, or possibly Mercian, import to the area.

27. Lower part of a small cooking pot, probably typical of the bodies and bases of most of the pots described above, with marked internal irregularities from throwing and finishing. B, 438.

28. Very small cooking pot with everted and rolled-over thickened rim. B, 458.

29. Body sherd of large vessel in mid-grey hard fine sandy fabric, with vertical applied thumbled strip. Thetford ware storage jar. Unstratified surface find.

30-37 exhibit the range of thickness and angle of cooking-pot bases. 30, B, 439; 31, B, 458; 32, E, 1007; 33, B, 132; 34, B, ditch 385; 35, B, 132; 36, B, 7; and 37, B, 2.

Bowls (Fig. 13, 1-27)

1. Upright-sided apparently barrel-shaped vessel with thickened folded-out rim of triangular cross-section. The sitting angle is difficult to establish in each of sherds 1-4. 1-3 at any rate resemble the typical barrel-shaped pots of the Group III assemblages at Maxey, Northants., now shown to be the Middle Saxon pottery of Lincolnshire. The Little Paxton pots may have some relationship with these, though apparently wheel-thrown. B, 1.

2. Slightly inturned (?) barrel-shaped vessel rim of triangular section and pronounced internal hollow moulding just below flat top. B, 6.

3. Barrel-shaped vessel similar to 2, though apparently, from the small sherd, rather larger. The sitting angle is again doubtful. B, 1. The three sherds come from closely adjacent features, though they do not seem to represent the same vessel.

4. Flat-topped rim, apparently of a bowl or dish of slightly flaring shape, but resembling 1-3 in its flat top. B, ditch 385.

5. Bowl or dish with upright sides and flat-topped 'inturned' rim of triangular cross-section. Salmon pink internally. B, well 458.

6. Bowl, presumably deep, with flaring sides, cf. the Great Paxton series.¹ B, 6.

7. Similar bowl, with slightly more 'inturned' rim. B, 440.

8. Bowl, more flaring sides than 5-7, and perhaps a dish. Sharp internal ridge. B, ditch 385.

The bowls 4-8 are apparently related to 1-3 in rim form, and may well explain, between them, the processes whereby the characteristic form of St Neots ware 'hammer-headed' bowl came about. When a manufacturing site for St Neots ware is located the suggestion can easily be tested.

9. Deep bowl, flat-topped rim, with marked internal and external bevel. B, well 458, found behind the wooden lining of the well.

10. Bowl, with triangular-headed flat-topped rim. B, well 458.

11. Bowl with triangular sectioned rim, undercut externally, slightly 'inturned' with throwing groove, on rim top. B, 458.

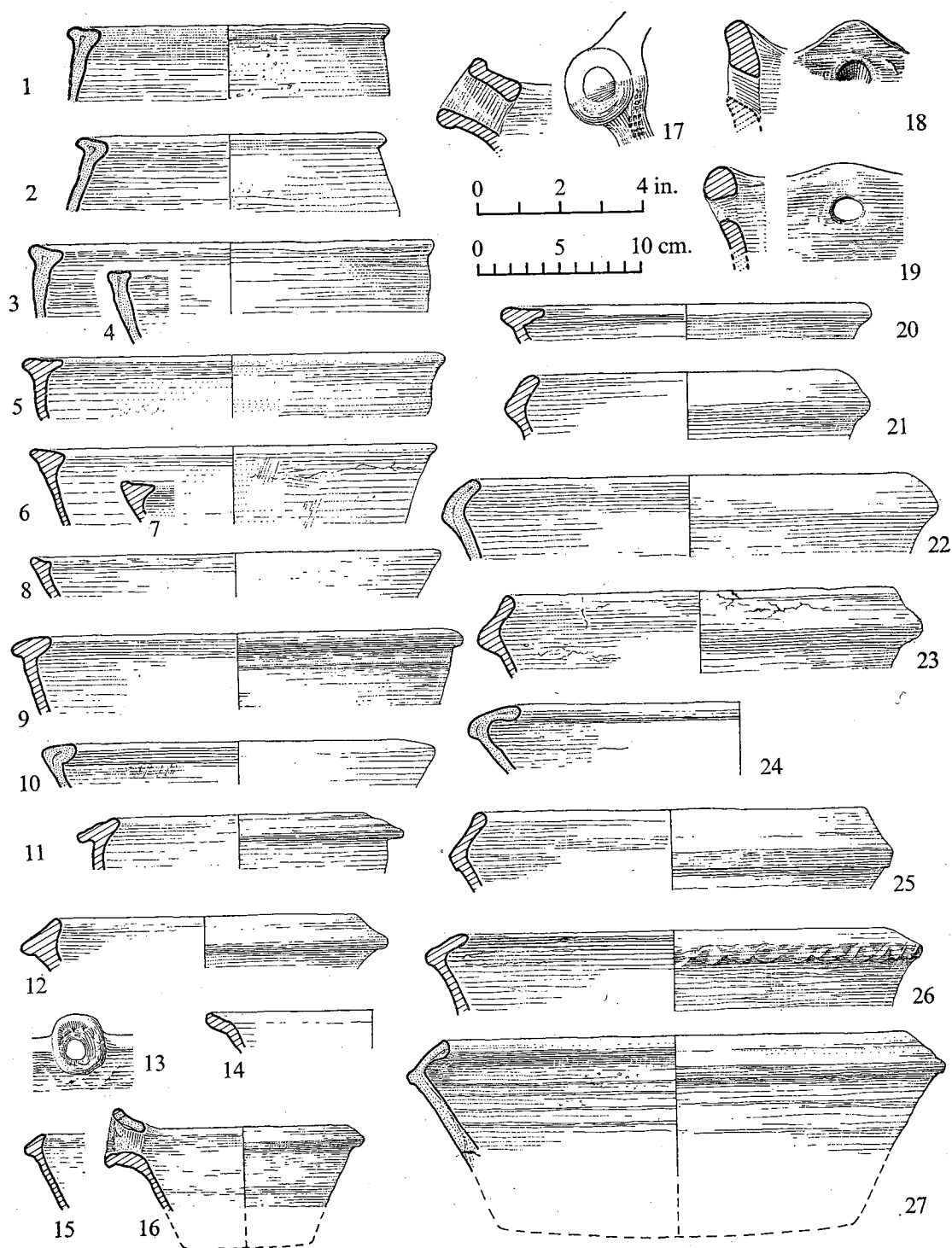
12. Bowl with heavy triangular sectioned rim, slightly 'inturned', with marked external bevel. B, slot 21.

13, 15 and 16. Details of a small socketed bowl,² one of the rarer St Neots ware types. The tubular socket was added to the triangular-sectioned rim to which it was luted externally. The bowl rim was then pushed through the hole in the socket and roughly luted to it, and the internal ridge of the bowl rim smoothed across the bridge. The economy and practicality of the method of attachment, together with the elegance and precision of the bowl itself, make the vessel an outstanding individual piece in the St Neots ware series. E, 1007.

14. Small bowl with flaring rim and open shape. Larger bowls of this form are known. B, 20.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), p. 66, fig. 7, 5.

² *Beds. Archaeol. J.* III (1966), pp. 19-21.

Fig. 13. St Neots ware bowls. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

17. Tubular socket, perhaps of another 'socketed bowl', of greater size, and more closely similar to the Abington Pigotts example. The rectangular grid stamps on the rim of this example are unusual for St Neots ware though the use of stamps on socketed bowls has been noted.¹ B, 376.

18. Lug, presumably from a deep barrel-shaped bowl of the type known from Abington Pigotts and Cambridge.² The perforation in this example is markedly oblique. B, ditch 385.

19. Thickened rim and lug, presumably of a bowl akin to the type suggested for 18. The rim has been markedly thickened above the perforation, partly by spreading the displaced clay from the hole, and partly through the addition of an extra pad. B, ditch 385.

20. Bowl with triangular-sectioned rim. B, 436.

21. Bowl with 'inturned' rim of simple form. B, 458.

22. Bowl with thickened 'inturned' rim, apparently folded outwards. B, 21.

23. Bowl with inturned rim; light pink, harsh and fairly hard; many cracks and incipient spalling presumably through overfiring. B, 458.

24. Large bowl with very pronounced inturned rim and moulding on external angle. B, unstratified.

25. Bowl with weakly inturned rim, but pronounced moulding on external angle.

26. Bowl with inturned rim and neat small finger mouldings on external angle. B, 12.

27. Bowl with thickened inturned rim. B, 21.

Dishes (Fig. 14, 1-7)

1-6. Shallow dishes with inturned rims, all of more or less similar size, differing mainly in the character of moulding on the shoulder. The type is a common one in St Neots ware assemblages. 1 from B, 436; 2 from B, 21; 3 from B, 453; 4 from B, 132; 5 from B, 458; 6 from B, 21.

7. Open shallow dish with thickened flattened rim. The light pink surface of the exterior has almost completely peeled off, suggesting the outside was finished off by wiping surplus clay over the surface. The form is unusual in St Neots ware. A, 3.

Other forms (not illustrated)

Among the great number of sherds not published here there are a handful in fabrics other than St Neots ware. There is also a small St Neots ware sherd perhaps from the lip of a cresset lamp.

STONE OBJECTS

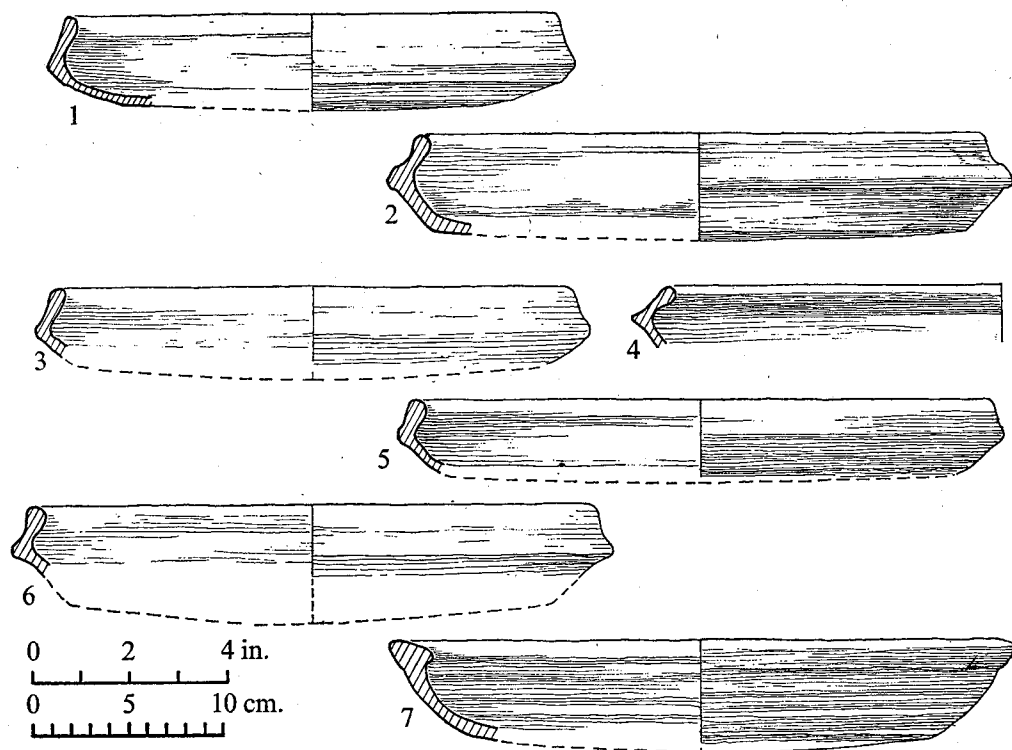
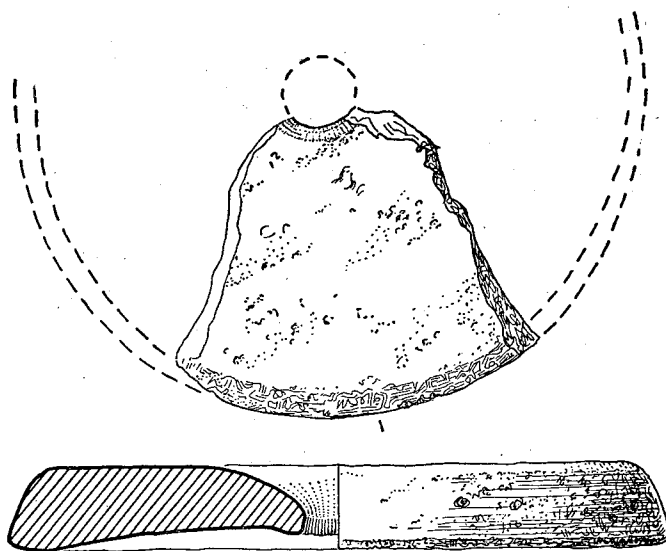
Querns (Fig. 15)

Part of the lower stone of a limestone quern (underside shown) with extensive wear and slight lipping round the apparently somewhat off-centre central hole. In type the quern closely resembles the more commonly found imported lava examples, though it is almost certainly of local stone. Manufacture of querns, even perhaps the finishing of lava ones,³ may well have taken place locally in the Late Saxon period. Estimated diameter *c.* 1 ft 8 in. (*c.* 51 cm.). B, 458.

¹ *Oxoniensia*, XXIII (1958), p. 71 and fig. 13, Z. I.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), p. 55, fig. 2, 6.

³ The stones mentioned as an item of trade in a letter from Charles the Great to Offa, *E.H.D.* I, p. 781, A.D. 796, were almost certainly lava blocks for millstones. Since Dunning's discussion of the trade in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark Age Britain* (London, 1956), p. 232, many lava fragments have turned up on Early and Middle Saxon settlements, and there can hardly have been a break in the trade from late Roman times to the end of the Middle Ages.

Fig. 14. St Neots ware dishes. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.Fig. 15. Limestone quern. Scale $\frac{1}{6}$.

Small fragments of lava, of Neidermendig type, found in eight contexts presumably also come from querns.

Flints (not illustrated)

Two flint blades found in B, 21 may have been used in Late Saxon times. One has a heavy bluish white general patina, but extensive secondary trimming, giving denticulated edges, with no patination. The re-use may well have taken place in Saxon times. The second is a blade which, in contrast to demonstrably Neolithic flints from the site, has no patination. It may also be Saxon. The function of the blades is not clear, but the use of flint in Saxon times has been inferred.¹

METAL OBJECTS

Iron objects (Fig. 16, 1-7)

1-3 are knives of a simple form commonly found on Saxon domestic sites of all periods,² having a straight back angling towards the tip, a blade of triangular cross-

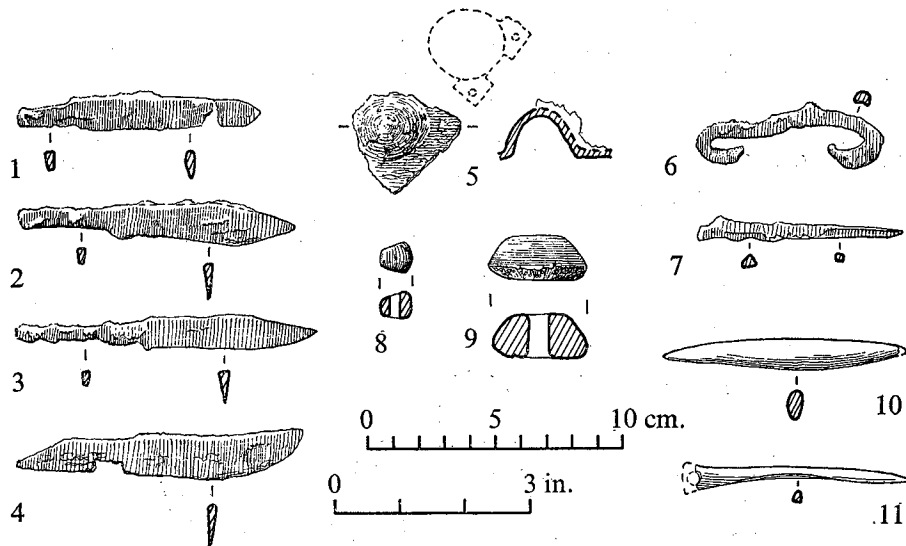


Fig. 16. Objects of bone (9, 10, 11), glass (8), and iron (1-7). Some of the iron objects are drawn with the aid of X-ray photographs. Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.

section, and a short tang of rectangular cross-section. The knife from the burial in Area A (Fig. 3) is of this type. By contrast 4 has an upturned tip, though it is otherwise similar. 5, badly corroded, is a flat plate with two perforations, presumably for attachment, and a pronounced dome. It may be incomplete, the plate perhaps having been square. Its function is obscure, but it could have been the foot of a box or piece of furniture. The double-hooked object, 6, is apparently complete and the

¹ From the occurrence of iron strike-a-lights in Early Saxon graves.

² *Med. Archaeol.* VIII (1964), p. 60.

ends show some attempt at moulding and finishing. 7 is a pin of a common simple Saxon type,¹ though its triangular section is unusual. The findspots of the iron objects were 1: B, 132; 2: B, 21; 3: B, 458; 4: B, 458; 5: B, 376; 6: B, 458.

OBJECTS OF GLASS

Glass bead (Fig. 16, 8)

The asymmetrical bead, apparently bluish or greenish in colour, comes from B, 21, and is apparently one of the central elements from a composite necklace.

BONE OBJECTS

The spindle whorl (Fig. 16, 9) is crudely made from a femoral head. Fig. 16, 10 and 11 are two objects whose occurrence is almost the hallmark of Anglo-Saxon settlement sites of all periods. The threadpicker is of the type discussed by Miss Crowfoot,² and the perforated pin is best paralleled in the York series.³ 9: B, 7; 10: B, 481; 11: A, pit 1.

WOODEN OBJECTS

The lower levels of the various wells in Areas A and B produced numerous pieces of wood, often broken, discarded, or re-used. They included posts, planks, slabs and shaped fragments, a number of branches showing axe and saw marks, a split sapling trunk bored with a circular hole, and many twigs. Fig. 17 shows six objects which show some degree of shaping. None is identifiable, but they are illustrated on the grounds that few enough examples of Late Saxon carpentry of any sort are known.

1. One of two similar spars, perhaps the split portions of a single object. The original object would have had a short cylindrical end, rebated twice to a narrower oval-sectioned shaft which broadened towards the tip and became more rectangular. Both fragments showed signs of considerable wear after splitting, accounting for the faceted end. The object had perhaps been re-used, perhaps in winding gear for the well. Area A, well. Wood unknown.

2. Part of wedge-shaped thin plank, both ends broken; width 4.5 in. Another plank from the same context, not illustrated, was 5.5 in. wide, and 0.75 in. thick. B, 458. 'Oak, *Quercus robur* type, cut from timber at least 12 in. diameter.'

3. Triangular-sectioned beam, bottom end broken, with broad smooth notch on one side; made from a quartered trunk. B, 458. 'Oak *Quercus robur* type, a quartered branch.'

4. T-shaped object made from a thin block tapering towards each end. There is a pronounced notch on the underside of the cross-piece on one side. Well 458. 'Oak, *Quercus robur* type, at least 6 in. diameter.'

5. Thickish block of dressed wood with notch on one side. B, 458. 'Oak, *Quercus robur* type, from timber at least 12 in. diameter.'

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 65 and fig. 11, 3-4.

² *Trans. Leics. Archaeol. Soc.* xxviii (1953), p. 50.

³ *Archaeologia*, xcvi (1959), p. 85 and fig. 14.

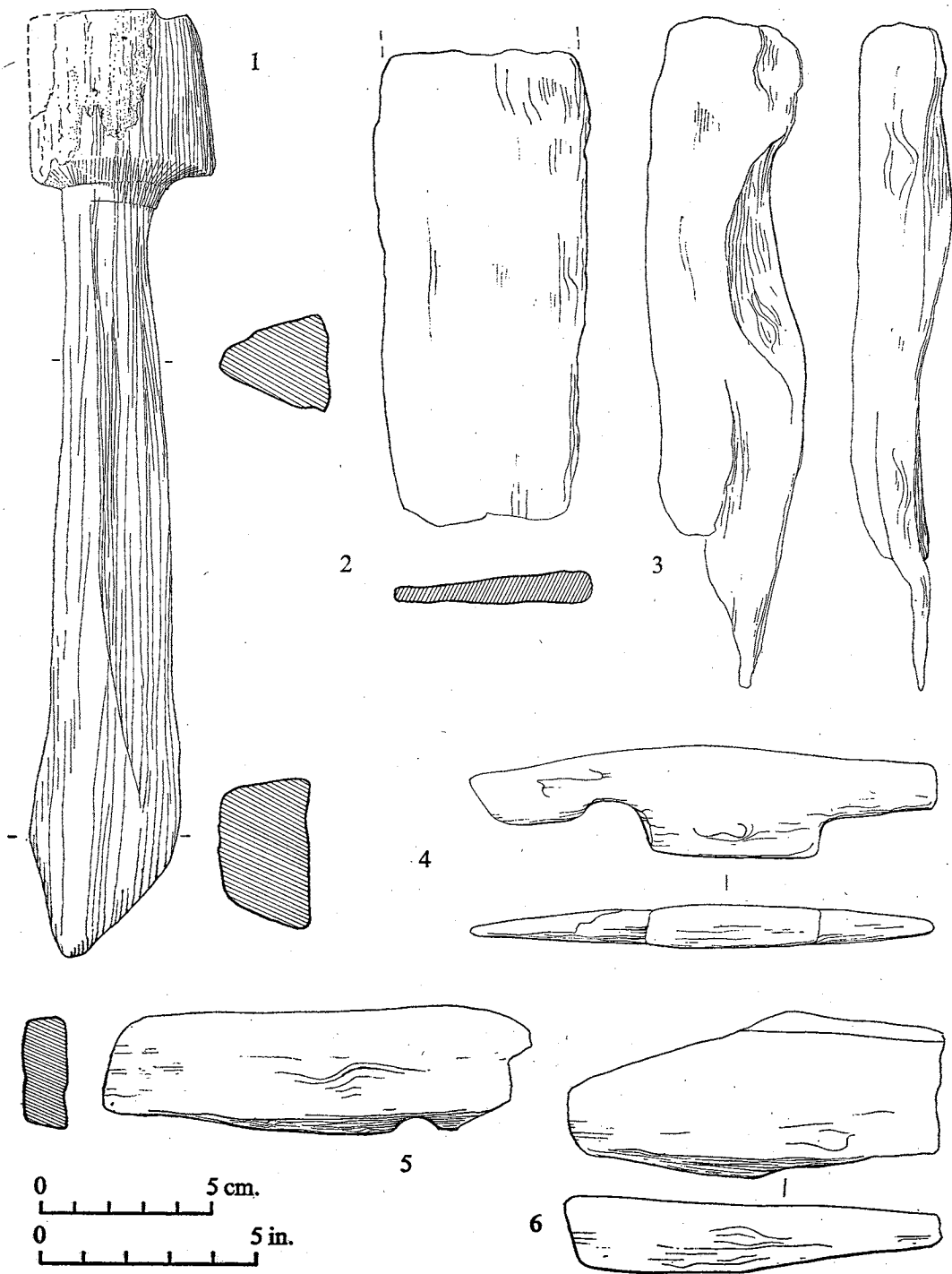


Fig. 17. Objects of wood. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

6. Slab with carefully chamfered end. B, 458. 'Oak, *Quercus robur* type, from timber at least 12 in. diameter.'

G. C. Morgan, who kindly identified the above objects, notes that the following species occurred amongst the twigs and fragments not illustrated: *Corylus avellana*, hazel; poplar, *Populus* sp.; *Acer campestre*, maple; *Crataegus* sp., hawthorn (?).

MACROSCOPIC PLANT REMAINS

Samples of the detritus-rich mud from the flat-bottomed pit 1004 in Area E were submitted by Mr Tebbutt to the Department of Botany in the University of Cambridge. Professor Godwin, through Miss M. J. Burroughs, has kindly provided the following report:

Two samples of a detritus-rich mud were submitted. Both had been labelled 1007, but we distinguished between them, arbitrarily labelling them A and B. The samples were taken from a layer of plant material which overlay clean bedded gravel; on top of it was a layer of wood ash, which was overlain by dark brown loam with charcoal, Late Saxon pottery, bones, etc.

Sample A consisted of a dark brown, detritus-rich mud with a little clay, a few stones, wood and plant fragments. Sample B was very similar to A except that it contained silt and no clay.

MACROSCOPIC PLANT REMAINS

	Organ	Numbers found in	
		A	B
Wet ground—river banks			
<i>Carex otrubae</i> Podp./ <i>C. vulpina</i> L.	Nutlet	8	1
<i>C. vesicaria</i> L.	Utricle	2	—
<i>Drosera intermedia</i> Hayne	Seed	1	—
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i> L.	Nutlet	17	5
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> L.	Fruit	6	10 ⁺
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i> L.	Achene	—	1
<i>R. repens</i> L.	Achene	—	2
Cultivated land			
<i>Aethusa cynapium</i> L.	Fruit	3	2
<i>Agrostemma githago</i> L.	Seed	—	4
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i> L.	Seed	3	5
<i>Anthemis cotula</i> L.	Fruit	1	10 ⁺
<i>Atriplex patula</i> L.	Seed	—	5
<i>Chenopodium album</i> agg.	Seed	—	1
<i>Legousia hybrida</i> L.	Seed	—	2
<i>Mentha arvensis</i> /M. <i>aquatica</i> L.	Nutlet	4	9
<i>Odontites verna</i> (Bell) Dum.	Seeds and embryos	4	4
<i>Papaver argemone</i> L.	Seed	1	3
<i>Plantago major</i> L.	Seed	1	6
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> L.	Fruit	—	1
<i>Scandix peten-veneris</i> L.	Fruit	3	4
<i>Solanum nigrum</i> L.	Seed	—	1
<i>Sonchus asper</i> Hill.	Fruit	15	6
<i>S. oleraceus</i> L.	Fruit	1	—

	Organ	Numbers found in	
		A	B
Cultivated land			
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	Fruit	1	6
<i>U. urens</i> L.	Fruit	—	3
<i>Valerianella dentata</i> Poll.	Fruit	1	—
Grassland and ruderal			
<i>Achillea millefolium</i> L./ <i>A. ptarmica</i> L.	Fruit	6	5
<i>Carduus crispus</i> L./ <i>C. nutans</i> L.	Fruit	—	10 ⁺
<i>Centaurea nigra</i> L.	Fruit	1	—
<i>Cerastium holosteoides</i> Fr.	Seed	1	—
<i>Daucus carota</i> L.	Fruit	2	9
<i>Galium aparine</i> L.	Fruit	1	—
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> L.	Fruit	1	—
<i>Knautia arvensis</i> L.	Fruit	1	4
<i>Lapsana communis</i> L.	Fruit	—	3
<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i> L.	Fruit	—	3
<i>Linum catharticum</i> L.	Seed	1	7
<i>Melandrium album</i> Mill.	Seed	—	1
<i>Pastinaca sativa</i> L.	Fruit	—	3
<i>Petroselinum segetum</i> L. (Koch)	Fruit	—	2
<i>Picris hieracioides</i> L.	Fruit	1	—
<i>Polygonum convolvulus</i> L.	Fruit	—	2
<i>Prunell vulgaris</i> L.	Nutlet	—	3
<i>Ranunculus acris</i> L.	Achene	4	1
<i>Rumex acetosella</i> agg.	Nutlet and perianth	2	15
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	Seed	1	—
<i>Silene cucubalus</i> Wiebel	Seed	1	—
<i>Stellaria graminea</i> Retz.	Seed	4	2
<i>Torilis japonica</i> (Houtt.) D.C.	Fruit	6	10
Cf. <i>Trifolium pratense</i> L.	Calyx	—	1
Miscellaneous			
<i>Carduus</i> sp.	Fruit	—	1
<i>Carex</i> spp.	Nutlet	4	12 ⁺
<i>Cirsium</i> sp.	Fruit	—	1
<i>Potentilla</i> sp.	Achene	5	1
<i>Rhinanthus</i> sp.	Seed	1	1
Gramineae	Caryopsis	1	5
Mosses			
<i>Antitrichia curtipendula</i> (Hedw.) Brid.	Leafy shoots	—	+
<i>Camptothecium sericeum</i> (Hedw.) Br. eur.	Leafy shoots	—	+
<i>Neckera complanata</i> (Hedw.) Hüb.	Leafy shoots	—	+
Cf. <i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i> (Hedw.) Warnst.	Leafy shoots	—	+
<i>Sphagnum</i> sp.		+	—

The lists of plant remains from the two samples are very similar and can therefore be considered as one flora.

The majority of plants identified are those common to open land, grassland and waste places. Plants such as *Sambucus nigra*, *Picris hieracioides* and *Linum catharticum* are at the present day found mainly on calcareous soils. Apart from these there are plants characteristic of cultivated

land; two of these in particular, *Agrostemma githago* and *Valerianella dentata*, are cornfield weeds. *Ranunculus flammula*, *Filipendula ulmaria* and the *carices* are examples of plants which grow on wet ground.

The mosses (all identified by Mr J. H. Dickson, Sub-department of Quaternary Research, Cambridge) include *Antitrichia curtipendula*, *Camptothecium sericeum* and *Neckera complanata* which all commonly grow on trees, walls or stones, while *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* grows in meadows. The presence of *Sphagnum* is interesting as some species of *Sphagnum* grow in close association with *Drosera intermedia*.

The samples represent an infilling by remains of plants growing on the ditch banks, together with plants of grassland and cultivated land growing near by.

A very similar assemblage of plant remains was found in a tenth- to eleventh-century Saxon ditch at Winchester, Hants.

Special notes on plants not previously found fossil

Drosera intermedia is normally a plant of acid bogs, which formerly occurred in Huntingdonshire (Dony, *The Flora of Bedfordshire*) but has long been extinct there. *Scandix pecten-veneris*, an arable weed, although widely distributed, is now less common on account of the use of selective weedkillers. *Knautia arvensis* is a common plant of roadsides, field borders and grassland modified by human activity.

M. J. BURROUGHS

LEATHER

A few small fragments of thonged welting attached mainly to the remains of soles came from 485. J. H. Thornton of Northampton College of Technology kindly provides the following report:

It is difficult to be certain what they were but they do appear to me to be pieces of the upper/sole junction of turnshoes.

The turnshoe method of construction was the standard method in this country from the departure of the Romans in the fifth century up to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The majority of the medieval turnshoe soles, uppers and complete shoes which I have examined, however, all have the stitch-holes made from the edge to the flesh side of the sole. The thread is used for the seam and the stitch-holes are usually something in the order of five or six to the inch. There is not usually a rand (or welt) enclosed by the seam between upper and sole. I have come across such rands from time to time and, of course, once the thread seam has rotted away the rand can easily be lost or not identified as part of the shoe.

The Little Paxton specimens, however, not only have a rand included but the seam itself is set in from the edge. Thonging is used, and not thread, these thongs forming a single serpentine seam as distinct from the typical hand-sewn thread seam which came later and in which the thread entered the holes from both sides. I think there are at least two knots visible at the ends of thongs.

In my analysis of the shoes found by I. M. Stead at the south corner tower in York,¹ I described the turnshoe seam and its development from the crude thonging form into the more sophisticated stitched form and I pointed out that both types occurred in the York specimens. Also several specimens had the seam passing in and out of the same side of the sole and not through the edge, thus leaving the edge itself projecting beyond the upper as it does in the Little Paxton samples.

I suggested that the earlier thonged specimens at York could be as early as the tenth century and it would seem to me, therefore, that the Little Paxton ones could be of a similar date or earlier.

¹ *Yorks. Archaeol. J.* xxxix, pts. 155 and 156 (1958), pp. 515-30.

HUMAN BONES

Skeleton from Area A, Isolated Grave

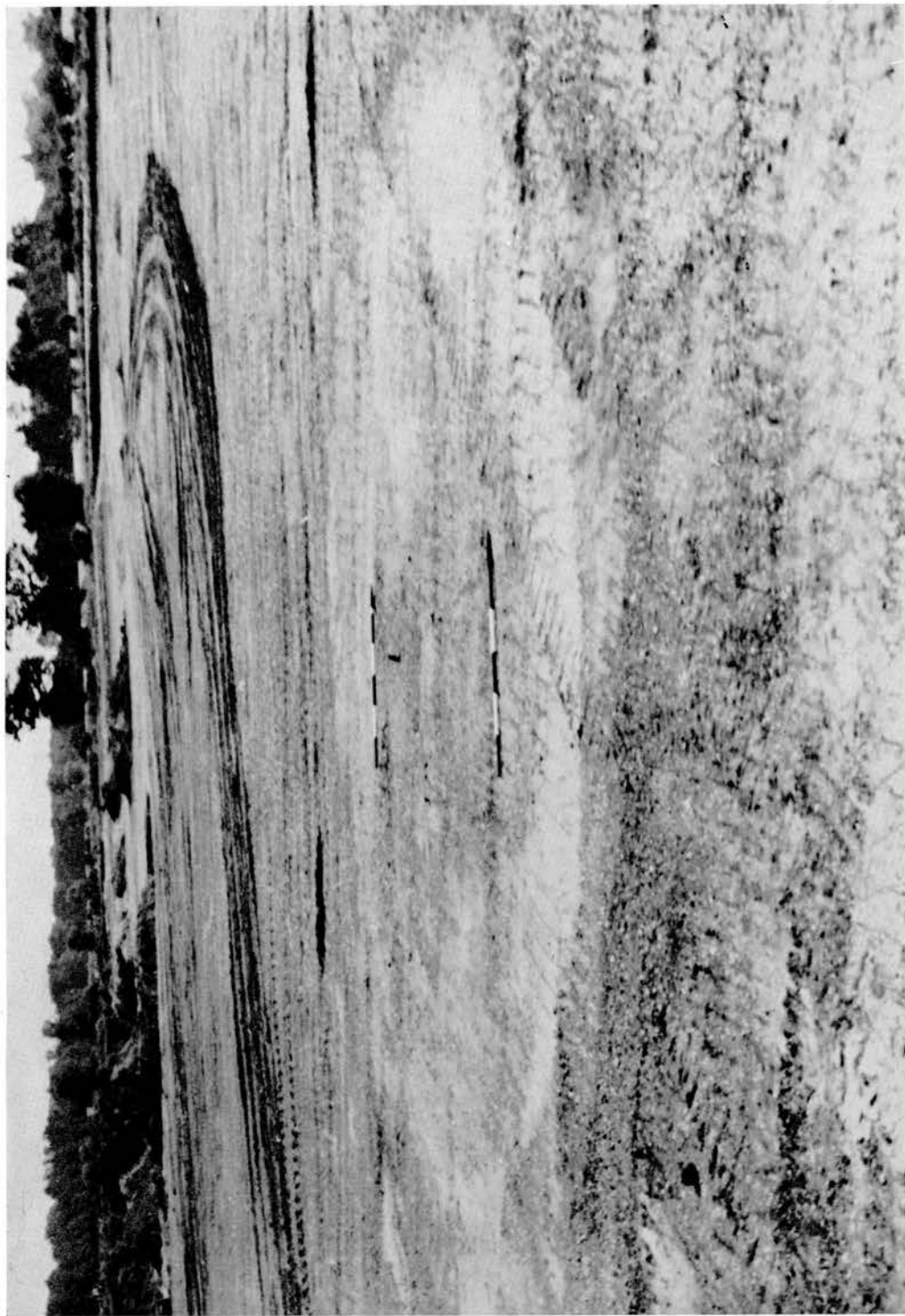
The following is a list of the skeletal material which was left after mechanical digging; from these remains, age, sex and height have been estimated.

- Skull: two canines and one premolar.
- Axial skeleton: R Clavicle (part), R scapula (part), rib fragments, fragments of four lumbar vertebrae, sacrum (part), pelvis: parts of R ilium and ischium, parts of L ilium and ischium, plus other pelvic fragments.
- Long bones: R humerus (head missing), R radius and ulna (proximal ends only)
R 1st metacarpal.
R femur, L femur (fragments of head and distal end)
R and L tibia (proximal ends), R and L fibula (shafts only).
- Age: 25 ± 5 , estimated from the maturity of the skeleton and the wear on the teeth.
- Sex: male, determined from shape of pelvis and angle of sciatic notch.
- Height: 174 cm, calculated from Trotter and Gleser's equations for estimation of living stature
(5ft $8\frac{1}{2}$ ins) from long bones for American whites (male) and checked against Dupertuis and Hadden's general formulae for reconstruction of stature from long bone lengths.

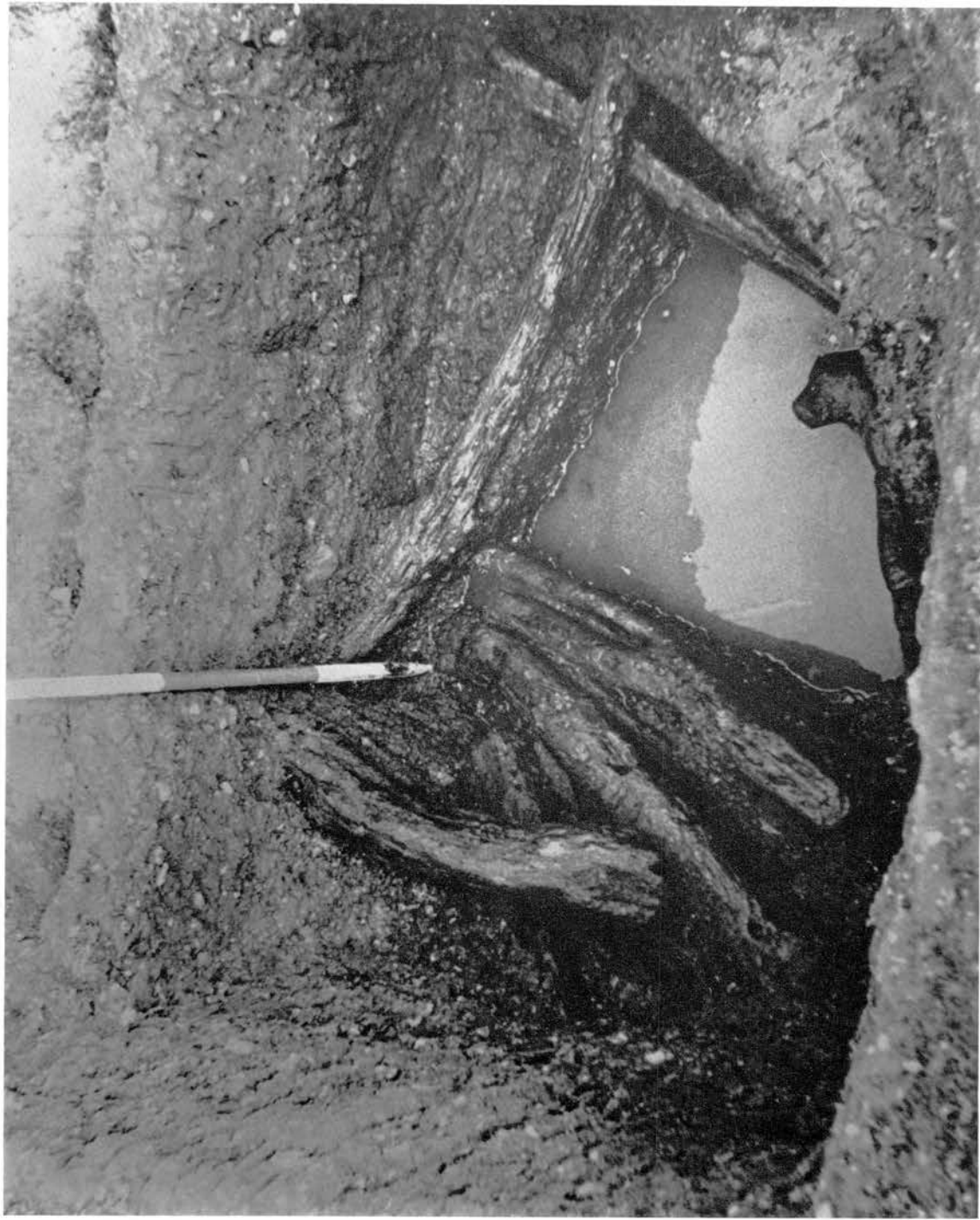
S. G. REES-JONES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr C. F. Tebbutt's archaeological vigilance led to the discovery of the site, and much of the information was retrieved by him. He has with the utmost generosity placed this material at my disposal for the purposes of the report, and I am delighted to acknowledge indebtedness to him throughout. For permission for the work to take place thanks are due to Inns and Co., the gravel pit owners. Welcome help with the digging came from N. W. Alcock, R. G. W. Prescott, and other members of the Cambridge Archaeological Field Club, and locally from C. Daines and G. Rudd. Miss M. D. Cra'ster helped in various ways with equipment and organization. Mr J. G. Hurst's advice and help have been unfailing throughout, and the report owes far more to him than is apparent. Professor E. M. Jope has helped in a similar way. Mr L. Biek of the Ministry's Ancient Monuments Laboratory has advised throughout on specialist problems. I am also grateful to Professor Godwin and Miss M. J. Burroughs for their botanical report.



Little Paxton: ring ditch visible after mechanical removal of topsoil in Area A. *Photo, Addyman.*



Well 458 in Area B, showing wood, mostly re-used, which seems to have functioned as a lining or as a standing platform (p. 74). *Photo, G. Rudd.*

TABLE I. *Associations*

Feature	Stone	Lava	Burnt clay	Slag	Iron	Bone	Other materials
1	.	x	x	.	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	.	x	.	.
7	.	.	x	.	.	x	.
15	.	.	x	.	.	.	.
21	x	.	.	.	x	.	Glass bead
22	.	x	.	.	.	.	.
34	.	.	x	.	.	.	.
332	.	x	.	.	x	.	.
376	.	x	.	.	x	.	.
385	.	x	x	.	.	.	.
438	x	.	.	.	.	.	.
439	.	.	x	.	.	.	.
458	x	.	x	x	x	.	.
481	.	.	x	.	.	x	.
485	x	x	x	.	.	.	.
1008	.	.	x	.	.	.	.
1009	.	.	x	.	.	.	.
1050	x	x	.	.	.	.	.
1051	.	x	.	.	.	.	.
Total of contexts	5	8	11	1	5	2	1

NOTE: All the above features contained pottery except 481. The following features produced pottery but no other finds: 6, 13, 19, 20, 24, 25, 33, 120, 121, 195, 210, 311, 336, 391, 403, 435, 436, 440, 523, 578, 1001, 1002, 1005, 1006, 1007, and two unnumbered pits, total 46 contexts.

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Abbreviations. Vol. xv, App. XV, no. 15, pl. XV, p. 15, l. 15, n. 15—for volume, appendix, number, plate, page, line and note respectively. Abbreviated titles of Journals can be found in the *World List of Scientific Publications*, 3rd ed. (1952), but any self-explanatory abbreviation may be adopted: *Ant.*, *Ant. J.*, *Arch.*, *Arch. J.*, *B.M.C.*, *J.R.S.*, *P.P.S.*, *Proc. C.A.S.* are frequently recurring examples.

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VOLUME LXII

JANUARY 1969 TO DECEMBER 1969

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