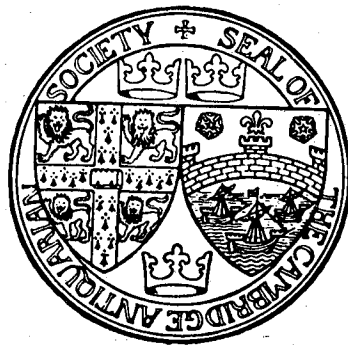

Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

Volume LXXX

for 1991



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Published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1992

ISSN 0309-3606

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Archaeological Excavations at Godmanchester (A14 / A604 Junction)

Gerald A. Wait

Introduction

The area investigated lies in the south-eastern corner of the junction of the A14 and A604 roads, immediately east of the town of Godmanchester, Cambs. (Fig. 1).

The area was field-walked during topsoil stripping by County Archaeology staff in 1988, and Roman pottery and Neolithic flints were recovered. This led to the placing of an archaeological constraint for assessment on planning applications to develop the area as a redistribution centre, hotel, and roadside restaurant. Tempvs Reparatum were retained in 1989–90 to conduct first an assessment and, consequent upon the discovery of a Roman site, further excavations.

The site lies in a small shallow valley on the south side of the broad valley of the River Great Ouse. The lower, western, part of the site lies on mixed second-third terrace gravels consisting of sand, gravel, silts and clays mixed by glacial activity. The higher ground to the east consists of outliers of the Huntingdonshire clay hills, comprised of Oxford Clay (Fig. 2).

The development area lies adjacent to the Roman town of Godmanchester, at a distance of c. 700m. The presence of a Roman site within the development area was thus likely. The modern suburbs of Godmanchester, across the new A14 from the development, have resulted in a variety of Roman material being recorded in the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record. The Cow Lane Roman villa, currently under excavation by the Central Excavation Unit, is located approximately 700m to the north of the development area. For more detailed background, see Fig. 3 and Green 1960, 1961, 1975; Friend 1968, 1978, and Haigh 1989 (Fig. 3).

This report summarizes 2 phases of assessment and a further area excavation.

Assessment Excavations 1989–90

A small area of the development area was assessed by trial trenching. The results of this assessment were almost entirely negative. No archaeological contexts were located and only very small quantities of abraded Roman and Medieval pottery were recorded.

A second assessment of most of the remaining area was commissioned. An extensive programme of trial trenching demonstrated that some 90% of the area contained no archaeological features. However, an area of c. one hectare in the extreme south-western corner of the proposed development revealed a relatively dense pattern of ditches, gullies and pits, dated by pottery to the Roman period (Fig. 4).

Excavations

An area of c. 1400 square metres was stripped mechanically to the top of the natural subsoil and subsequently cleaned by hand. All archaeological features were planned (Figs 7, 8, 10, 12, 13). Within the cleaned area, sections were excavated through the intersections of features in order to establish a stratigraphic sequence (see matrix, Fig. 5). Further sections through features were excavated to recover evidence of their nature and date. All sections were recorded, drawn, and photographed. A series of soil samples was collected on the basis of a strategy devised (see paleobotanical report, Archive 4).

Overview of Results

The site appears to have been occupied during three broad periods. First, during the Mesolithic period (c. 10,000–4000 BC), the site was visited and perhaps used as an encampment. Later, during the Later Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age (c. 3000–1500 BC), the

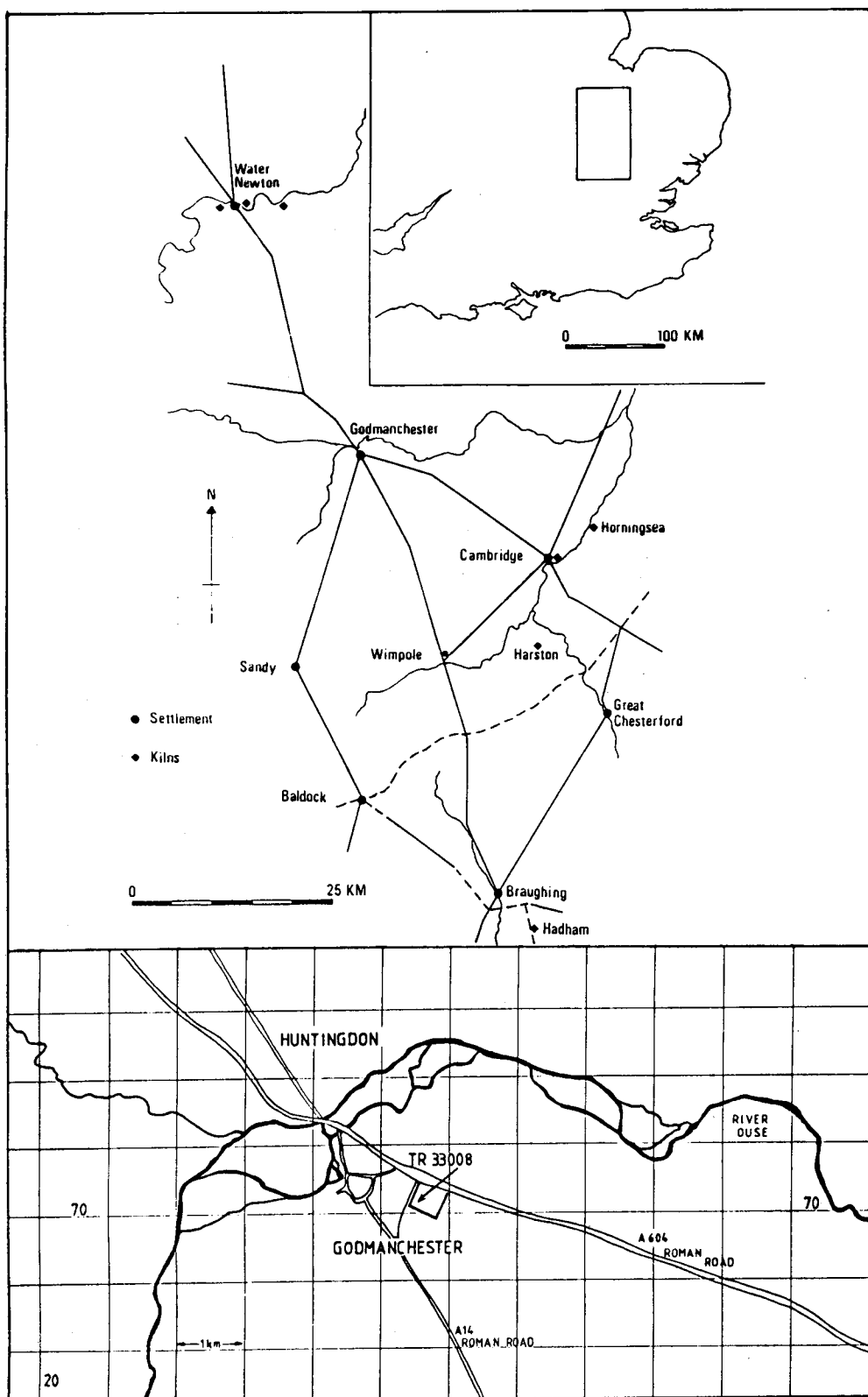


Figure 1.
Location of Site.

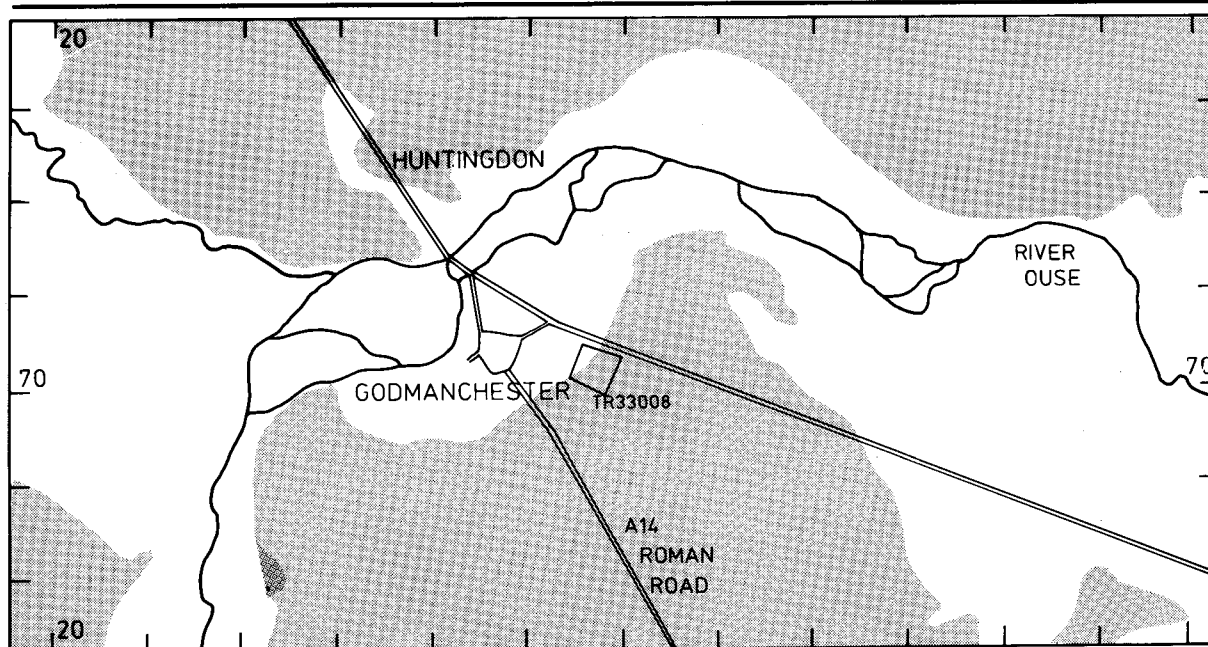


Figure 2.
Simplified geology, shaded area Oxford Clay and Boulder Clay.

site was probably part of a farmstead. No structural features of either of these two periods survive, but the numerous worked flint artefacts provide the means of interpretation. The third period of occupation was the most intense – this is the very Late Iron Age and Roman period (c. 50 BC–AD 350). During this period four distinct phases of occupation can be discerned, only one of which is likely to have entailed domestic occupation on this site. The Romano-Celtic occupation appears to have been either poor or small-scale or both, based on the relative paucity of finds.

Early Prehistoric: Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age

No features were found which can be dated to these phases of the earlier Prehistoric period. However, utilization of the site is clearly represented by artefacts of flint found as residual survivals within the fill of later, Romano-Celtic, ditches and pits. It seems clear that use and occupation of the site in the intervening 4000 years has destroyed any structural remains (see archive for report on the flintwork by Dr R. Holgate, Archive 3).

Mesolithic flints, characterized by the use of a soft hammer and careful preparation of cores, include debitage and both cutting and piercing tools. These suggest that the site was either visited periodically for food procurement (and other activities) or was part of a settlement of some description.

The Later Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age flintwork consists again of both debitage and a

variety of implements (end and side scrapers, simple cutting tools, a backed knife and a later Neolithic arrowhead; Fig. 6). The site was clearly exploited during these periods, perhaps as part of a farmstead.

Phase I: The Late Iron Age and Early Roman Period (Fig. 7)

The first of the phases of Romano-Celtic occupation at Godmanchester consists of a series of ditched enclosures. The major north-south ditch [2902] along the western edge of the excavation appears to demarcate one edge of the site. Extending to the east (uphill) are a series of ditches including [1030], [1028], [1051], [1018], [1047], [1006] and [1039]. These appear to mark out a series of narrow plots of land. There is little convincing evidence for the functions of these plots, but the most likely explanation is a series of gardens or paddocks.

Detailed Context Descriptions

[2902/1413] is the large north-south ditch along the west side of the site, c. 2.60m x 1.40m, with a broad U profile, generally dark grey brown ZCL fills, with gravel inclusions varying up to 40% of some layers.

[1030] is an east-west ditch draining into [2902], again a broad U profile, c. 1.12m x 0.68m, ZCL fills ranging from dark brown to dark yellow brown or grey brown, with gravel inclusions <5%.

[1028/1045/1405] is another east-west ditch, broad U-profiled, varying from 0.40m to 1.0m wide and 0.12m to 0.36m deep, with ZCL fills of

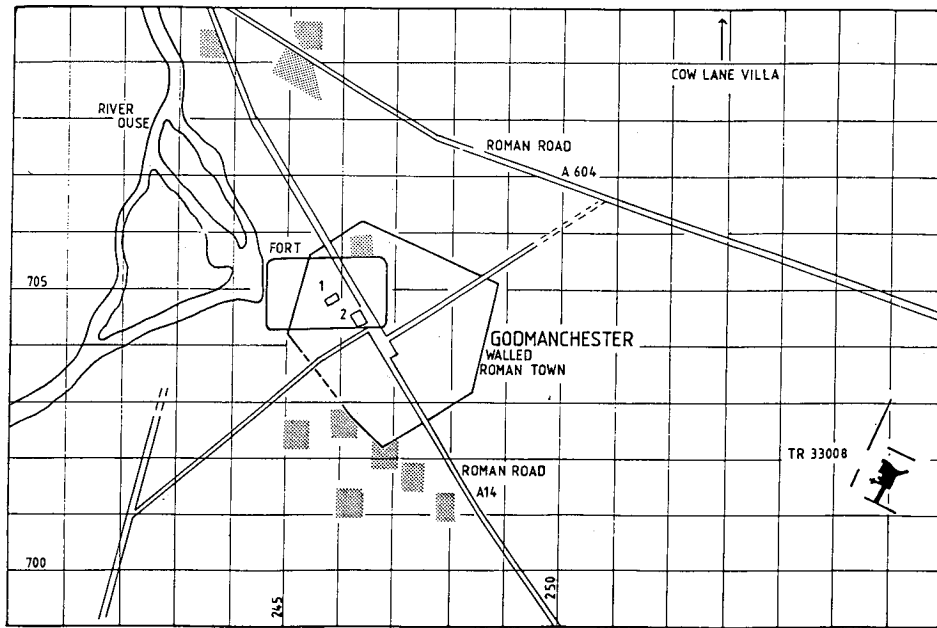


Figure 3.
Roman Godmanchester (after Green 1975, Fig. 10, with additions).
Stippled areas are cemeteries, 1 is the mansio, 2 is the basilica.

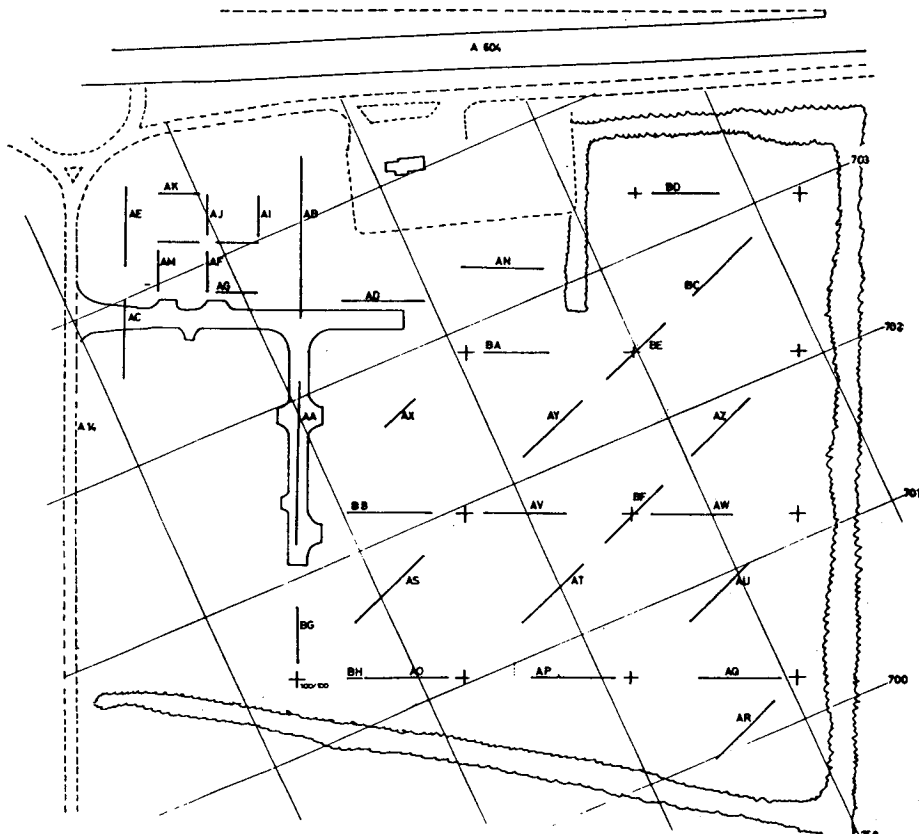


Figure 4.
Assessment Trenches 1989–90.

GOODMANCHESTER 1990 STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX

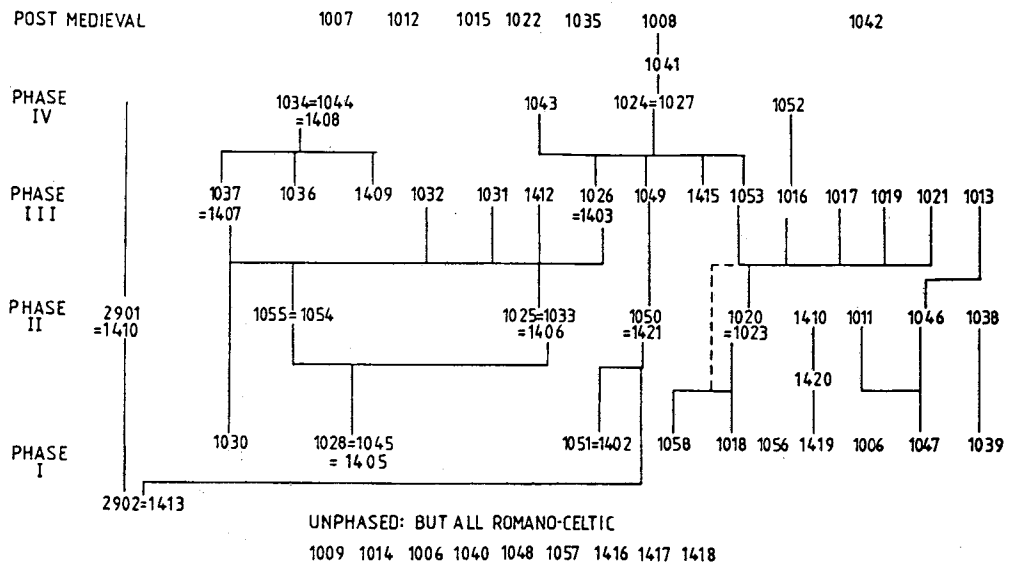


Figure 5.
Stratigraphic Matrix.

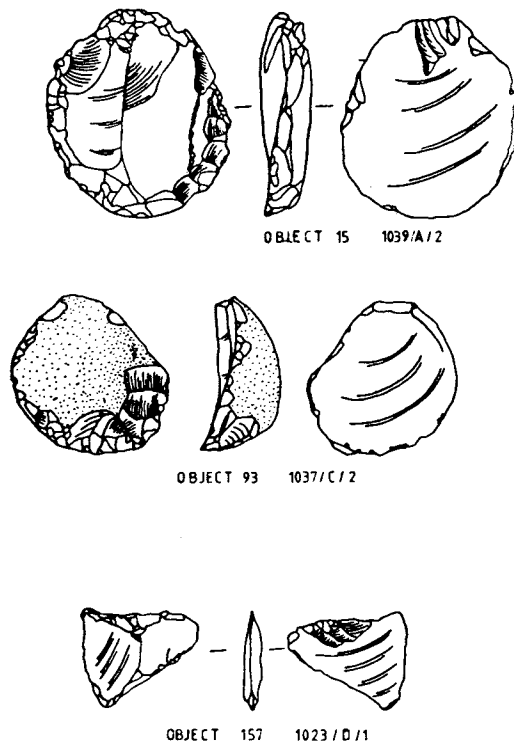


Figure 6.
Worked flint. Object 15 scraper; object 93 scraper; object 157 petit tranchet arrowhead.

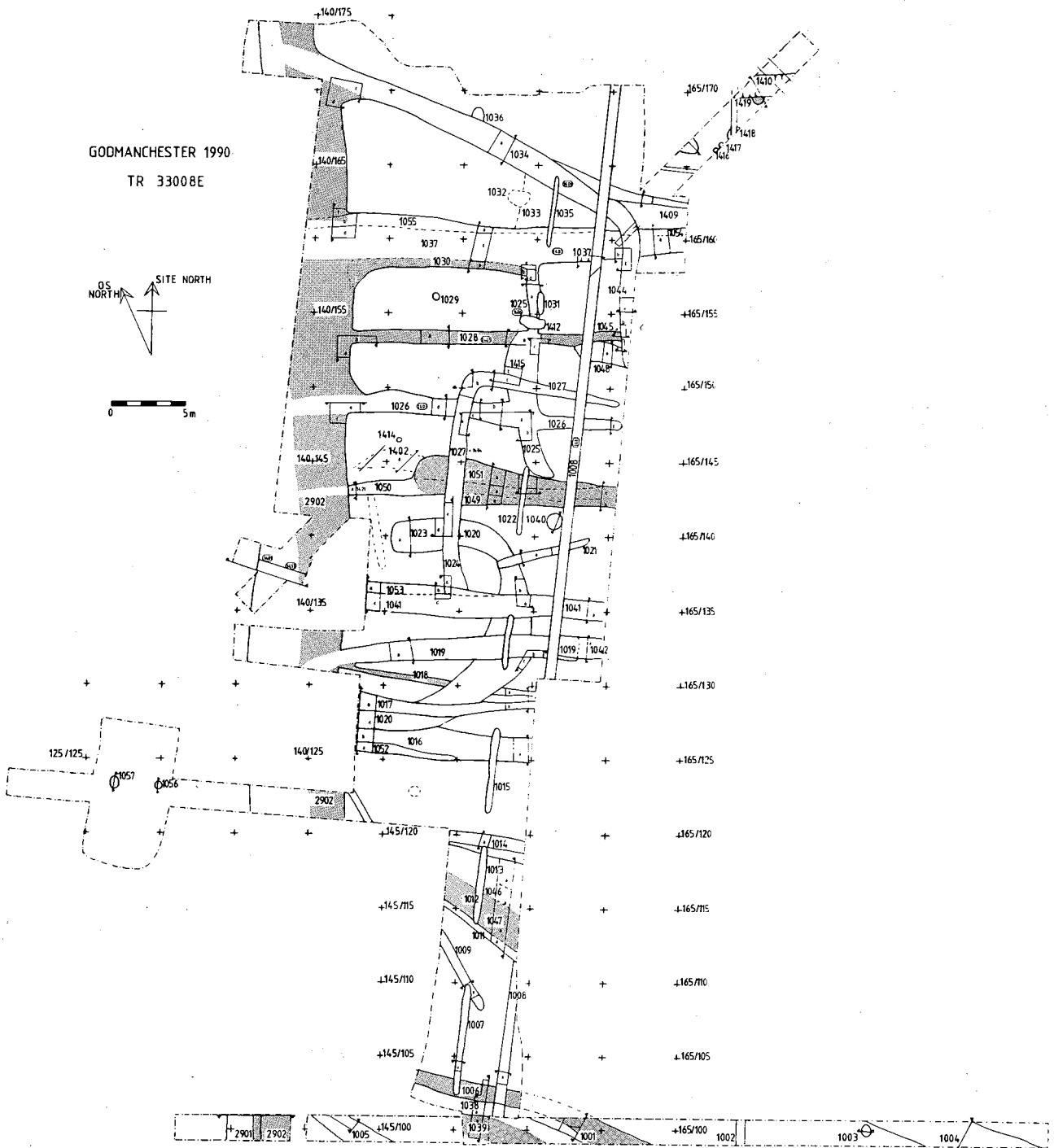


Figure 7.
Site plan, Phase I features shaded.

dark grey or dark yellow brown, generally 5% gravel inclusions.

[1051/1402] is also an east-west ditch, shallow and flat bottomed (1.10m x 0.12m), with yellow and grey brown SCL fills, 1–10% gravel.

[1006] is a shallow V-profiled ditch (0.84m x 0.36m) with dark brown ZCL fills.

[1047] is a broad U-profiled east-west ditch, c. 3.0m x 1.38m, with ZCL fills ranging from yellow brown to dark yellow brown, generally 1–2% gravel.

[1039] is a deep irregular V-profiled ditch, 2.0m wide and 1.2m deep, with ZCL fills ranging from dark brown to yellow and dark yellow brown, 2% gravel inclusions.

[1058], [1018], [1056] and [1419] are all small shallow post holes with dark brown or dark grey brown ZCL and SCL fills.

Note: ZCL = silty clay loam; SCL = sandy clay loam. Fill colours were determined using the Munsell colour system, based on the 10YR card. In general, the fills were mixtures of grey and brown, but yellow browns were encountered where the subsoil was more sandy, most notably to the east. All orientations are based on site north, not OS north; see compass indications on site plans.

The animal bones recovered from ditches of this phase include those of all the common domesticates (sheep/goat, horse, cattle and dog) but pigs are perhaps unusually uncommon (Archive 5). Carbonized plant remains (see Williams and Murphy, Archive 4) include arable crops and weeds, hedge maintenance and scrub clearance, and a variety of local weeds. Domestic refuse was present but much less common than is normally expected on a settlement site.

Only seven small finds were recovered from features dated to this phase. These consist of two small bits of slag (probably iron working such as blacksmithing), three lumps of daub (from a wall) a few oyster and mussel shells, and a coin of the House of Constantine (c. 330–48 AD). These few objects give little clue of the nature of occupation during this phase, except that such occupation could not have been either very intense or of high status. The relatively late date of the coin does not date the phase (ceramic evidence suggests a date of the late first century BC), but rather the last infilling of the ditch [2902].

A single neonatal human infant was buried in the fill of ditch [1028], immediately east of where this ditch crossed the infilling of ditch [2902] ([1028/B]). The infant may not have been securely buried as the post-cranial bones were found scattered along some 20cm of the ditch,

and separated from the skull fragments by up to 40cm (see Archive 6).

The pottery from Phase I contexts is dominated by sherds of Shell Tempered Ware (STW), a coarse kitchen storage and cooking range of vessels, probably made in the Nene Valley. Close parallels in both fabric, form, and decoration occurred at Werrington (Mackreth 1988: 107–15) where they date to the Late Iron Age. The next most common ware is 'Coarse Ware X' (CSX), a local Late Iron Age type of fabric and vessel, again probably kitchen vessels. The rarity of finer table wares is significant, suggesting that such vessels were not present on site. A few sherds of Samian forms Dragendorf 18/31R and 27 suggest the last fill of the ditch [1030] dates to c. AD 100–50; a terminus post quem for this phase.

Considered together, the evidence suggests that Phase I was a very Late Iron Age or Early Roman occupation of the site that never became intense. The occupation may have been either seasonal or simply too diffuse to have resulted in the deposition of many domestic artefacts.

Phase II: The Early Roman Period (Fig. 8)

During Phase II, the ditched layout of the site was altered. The large ditch [2902] was replaced by [2901], on the same alignment but shifted slightly to the west. Extending off this were ditches [1410], [1055], [1050], [1020/1023], [1046], [1011] and [1038]. The semicircular enclosure formed by ditch [1020/1023] is of the appropriate size and shape to have contained a circular round-house in typical Celtic style, but no structural traces were located. Ditch [1025] appears to create two roughly square enclosures with a narrow gap along the southern boundary formed by ditch [1050].

Detailed Context Descriptions

[2901/1401] is the recut of the earlier [2902] ditch along the western edge of the site, broad V-profiled 3.2m x 0.80m, with dark grey brown ZCL fills and gravel inclusions varying 2–10%.

[1055/1054] is an east-west ditch, generally 1.80m x 0.96m (much shallower to the east) of broad U profile with dark brown, dark grey brown or dark yellow brown ZCL fill, with 2% gravel.

[1025/1033/1406] is a shallow east-west ditch of broad U profile with steep sides, averaging 0.56m x 0.44m, with SCL fills ranging from dark grey to very dark grey brown, and 1–2% gravel.

[1050/1421] is a shallow U-profiled ditch, averaging 0.56m–0.80m wide and 0.30m–

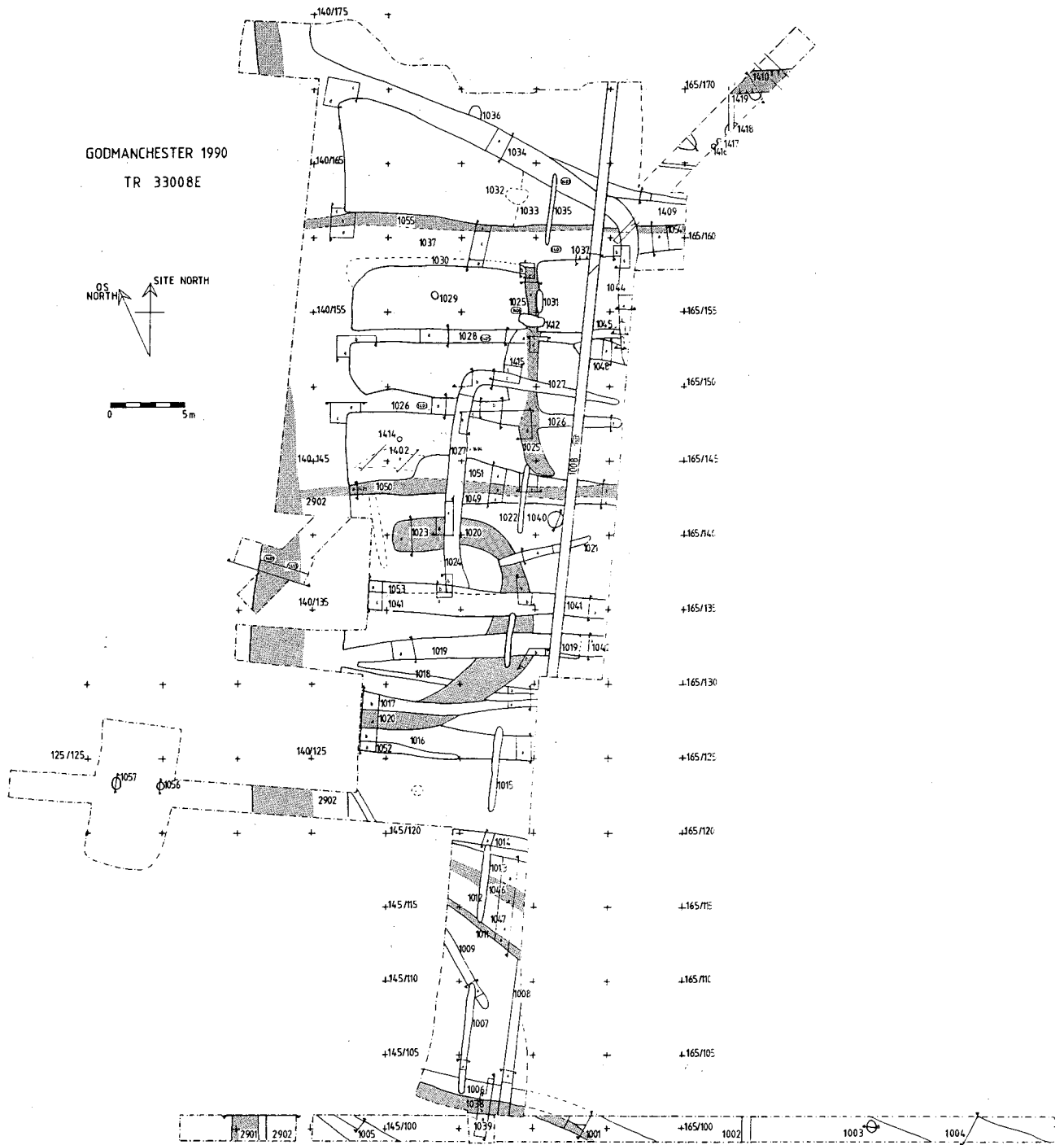


Figure 8.
Site plan, Phase II features shaded.

0.40m deep, with dark brown, yellow brown and dark yellow brown SCL fills and 1–2% gravel.

[1020/1023] is the penannular ditch, 2.40m–2.50m wide and 0.94m–1.12m deep with a V profile, with dark brown to dark yellow brown SCL fills and 1–5% gravel.

[1410] is a broad U-profiled ditch some 2.0m wide but of unknown depth, with dark brown to dark grey brown ZCL fill, and 5% gravel.

[1420] is a shallow posthole 0.5m x 0.2m, with mid-dark grey brown ZCL fill.

[1011] is a very shallow U gully, 0.45m x 0.08m deep, with dark grey brown ZCL fill.

[1046] is a shallow U-profiled ditch, 1.6m x 0.78m deep, with dark brown to dark yellow brown ZCL fill and 2–5% gravel.

[1038] is a broad V-profiled ditch, 1.10m x 0.43m deep, with dark brown or dark grey brown ZCL fill, and 1% gravel.

The animal bones from Phase II contexts are very similar to those from Phase I, with the same species represented. Carbonized plant remains include arable crops and weeds, hedge maintenance and scrub clearance, and a variety of local weeds. Domestic refuse was present but much less common than normally expected on a settlement site.

The small finds of Phase II are slightly more informative. A single lump of iron slag is balanced by a lead 'dribble' (waste from melting and using lead), again suggesting limited craft work in the vicinity. Other finds include a single iron nail, an iron ring, an iron hobnail from a boot, and two fragments of grain-grinding quernstones. Another coin, of Gordian III (238–44 AD), was found, again in the top of the fill of a ditch, and thus dating the end-use of the ditch.

The Phase II pottery assemblage is again dominated by the two coarse fabrics Shell Tempered Ware and 'Coarse Ware X'. The presence of these two fabrics in quantity and the absence of fine wares from the Nene Valley, again suggests a small scale or seasonal occupation of little social pretension or wealth. There is little evidence in this phase of the presence of the developing Roman town of Godmanchester just half a kilometre to the west. In general, the pottery suggests a date for this phase in the later first century AD.

In the butt-end of ditch [1020/1023] a single burial of a human infant was recovered (Fig. 9; see Archive 6). The burial of neonate infants in ditch terminals on sites throughout the Iron Age is now well documented (Wait 1985: 83–121; and Wait forthcoming) and probably represents the ritual burial of individuals with peculiar sacral characteristics, including, for example, infants who died before being named

as a member of the society and might therefore have been buried separately as not quite complete people.

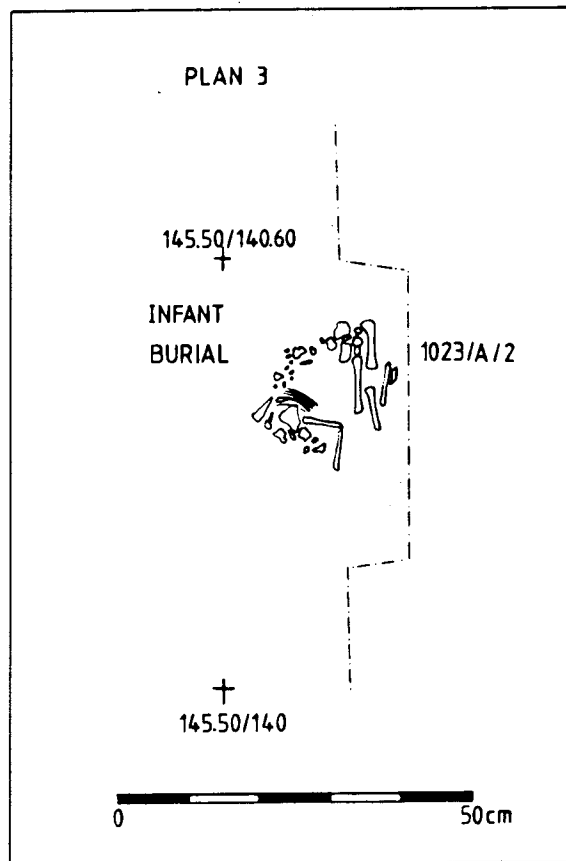


Figure 9.
Burial of infant, feature 1023/A/2.

The second phase follows very much in the tradition of Phase I, consisting of ditched enclosures or paddocks. One semi-circular enclosure may have contained a building in the native 'round-house' style, but this could not be proved.

Phase III: Mid-Roman Period (Fig. 10)

Phase III represents an increased amount of activity on site. The earlier ditch [2901] was probably maintained. Draining into it were ditches [1037], [1026], [1053], [1019], [1017], [1016] and [1013]. Smaller ditches such as [1415], [1049] and [1021] acted as internal dividers within the larger ditched enclosures. In the gap between the northern butt-end of [1415] and the larger ditch [1037] were two burials of adults.

Detailed Context Descriptions

[2901] still in use, as above.

[1037/1407] is a broad V-profiled east-west ditch, ranging from 0.90m to 2.44m wide and

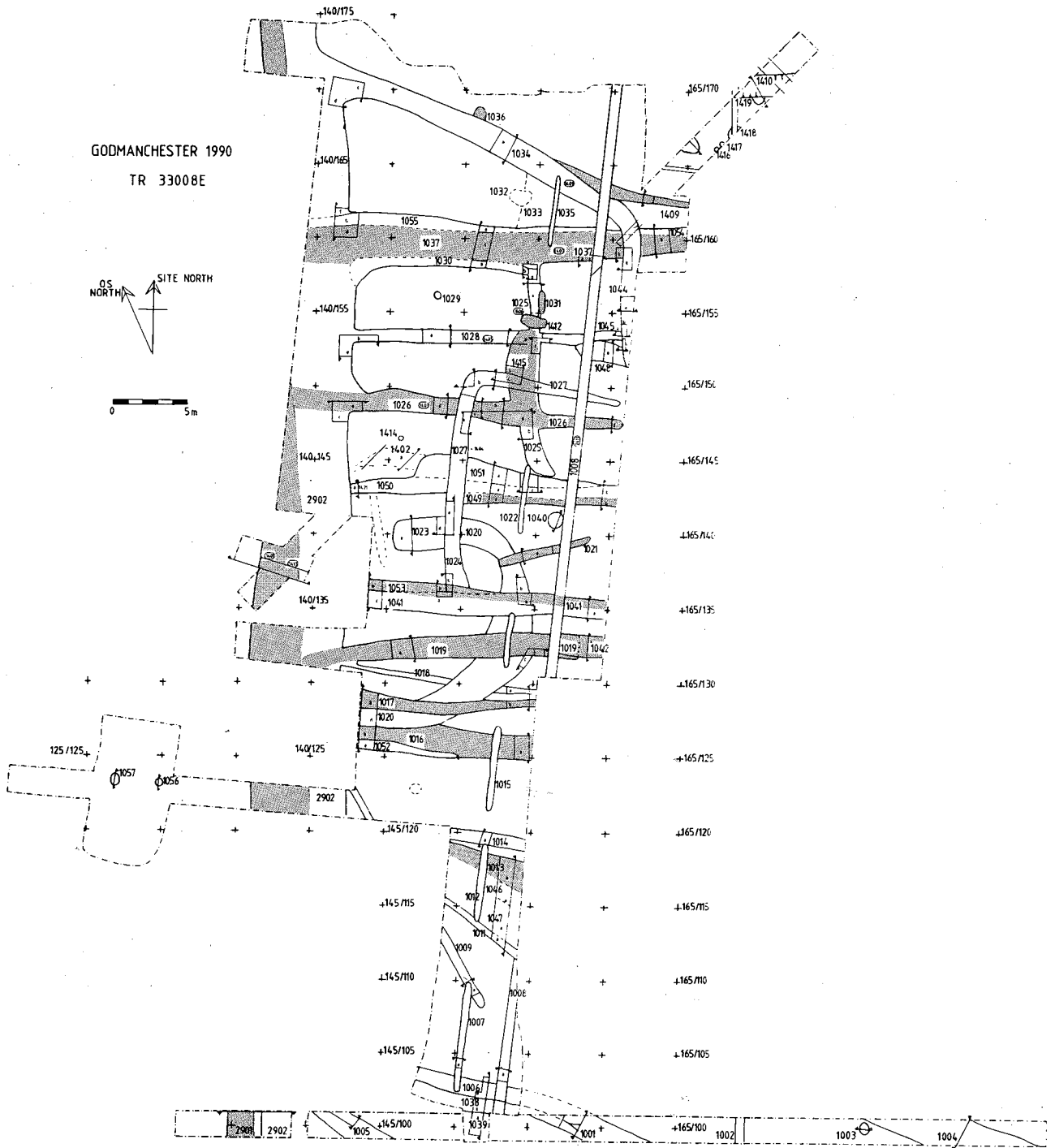


Figure 10.
Site plan, Phase III features shaded.

0.64m to 1.04m deep, with brown-dark brown or dark grey brown ZCL fills and 2–5% gravel. This ditch contained the majority of the ceramics recovered from the site.

[1409] is a shallow U-profiled ditch 0.48m x 0.16m deep, with dark grey brown SCL fills and 10% gravel.

[1031] and [1412] are graves (see Fig. 11 for shape and dimensions) with grey brown ZCL fills.

[1026/1403] is an east-west ditch, of broad U profile with steep sides, ranging from 1.5m x 0.12m near ditch [2902], to 0.85m x 0.17m near its eastern terminal, with dark brown to dark yellow brown ZCL fill and 1% gravel.

[1049] is a very shallow U-profiled gully, with generally yellow brown to dark brown SCL fill and 1% gravel.

[1415/1043] is a short length of north-south ditch or elongated pit, with very steep to vertical sides and a flat bottom, ranging from 1.00m–2.20m x 0.78m–0.84m deep, with very dark grey brown ZCL fill with large amounts of charcoal.

[1053] is another U-profiled ditch, 1.00m x 0.48m, with dark grey brown SCL fill and 2% gravel.

[1016] is a larger east-west ditch, varying from 1.30m–1.60m wide and from 0.50m–0.68m deep, with a broad U profile, and dark brown to dark yellow brown ZCL/SCL fill and 1–5% gravel.

[1017] is a U-profiled east-west ditch, 0.30m x 0.12m at the eastern edge and 1.5m x 0.72m at the western edge of site, with dark brown or dark grey brown ZCL fill and 1–5% gravel.

[1019] is a broad flat-bottomed U-profiled ditch, east-west, ranging from 0.60m x 0.12m to the east and from 1.24m x 0.34m to the west, and dark grey brown to very dark grey brown ZCL/SCL fill and 2–5% gravel.

[1021] is a shallow U-profiled gully, 0.50m x 0.14m, with dark brown SCL fill and 1% gravel.

[1013] is a large flat-bottomed U-profiled east-west ditch, 1.70m x 0.70m, and dark brown to dark yellow brown ZCL fill and 2–5% gravel.

The animal bones from Phase III contexts are significantly more numerous than from earlier phases, suggesting an increase in the intensity of occupation. The animals represented are the same domesticates as in previous phases, but in greater numbers. Carbonized plant remains from this phase include arable crops and weeds, and a variety of local weeds indicative of an open grassland environment. Hedge and scrub remains were virtually absent. While present, domestic refuse was again much less common than would normally be expected on a settlement site.

Phase III contexts contained the greatest number of small finds, thirteen in all. These include two collections of wall-daub, two fragments of roof-tile, two iron nails, some slag, an unidentifiable lump of iron, and two quernstone fragments. A single coin of the House of Constantine (330–48 AD) again dates the last filling of a ditch. A sherd of imported Samian fine ware with a potter's stamp, indicating that the pot was made by SARRA or SARRVS working at la Graufesenque during the reign of Nero (c. 54–68 AD), was also recovered. Like the flintwork, this artefact is probably residual, originating in the Phase I-II occupation of the site. The pottery assemblage as a whole suggests that this phase is of the early second century AD.

The pottery from Phase III contexts is significantly different from the earlier phases. Where the most common ceramics had been the coarse wares STW and CSX, they become insignificant. In their place are Black Plain Ware (BPW) and Nene Valley Grey Wares (NVGW), two of the slightly finer kitchen wares. These two wares were uncommon at Wimpole, only 20 miles to the south of Godmanchester (Lucas and Wait in Horton and Wait forthcoming). Also, the Sandy Grey Ware (a) (SGW(a)) becomes more common; this may be a product of the developing kiln centre at Horningsea, north-east of Cambridge. The greatest distinction between Phase III and the earlier phases is one of magnitude – Phase III produced four times as much pottery as any of the other phases.

A second distinction is that Phase III (or conceivably Phase II) also included nearly all of the fine table wares recovered from the site. This may be interpreted to mean that Phase III involved the first and perhaps only direct domestic occupation of the site during the Romano-British period.

The two human burials of Phase III (Fig. 11) were found close together, in an apparent gap between ditches [1415] and [1037]. Burial 1412 was oriented north-west–south-east (head to the south-east), and was in a crouched position on the right side. This individual was a mature, possibly middle-aged, adult male, very robust and with long arms. He suffered degenerative conditions due either to age or possibly to the stresses of heavy manual labour. The other burial (1031) was an adult female aged about 20 years old at death. She was buried in a grave oriented north-east–south-west (head to north-east), on her right side and slightly crouched. She had a very gracile, slender, build, and suffered from severe dental caries and abscesses. Both of these individuals showed the

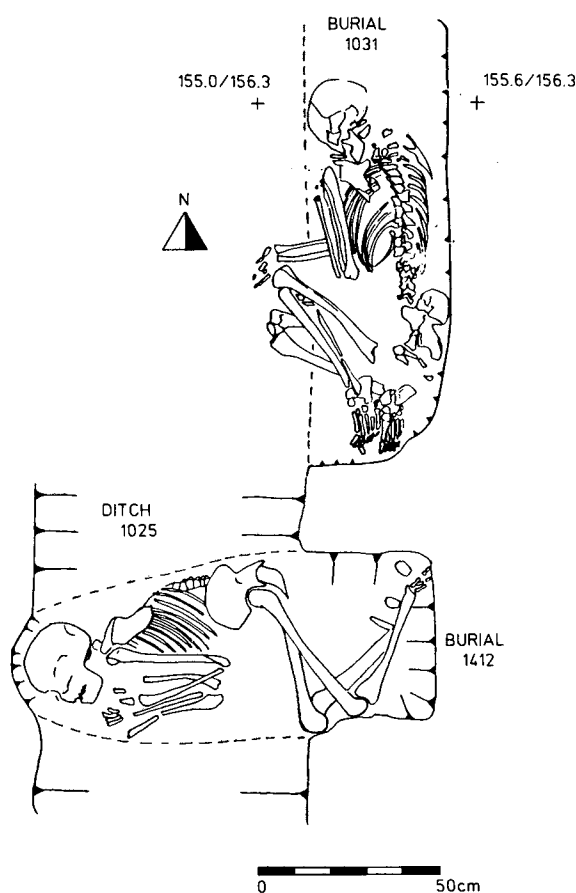


Figure 11.
Human burials [1412] and [1031].

same dental anomaly of diastema, or spacing between their incisors, and this may suggest a familial, blood relationship between the two (for details see Archive 6).

Phase III appears to represent a more intense occupation of the site. However, the site still seems to be either relatively poor or a seasonal occupation.

Phase IV: The Mid- to Late Roman Period (Fig. 12)

Phase IV appears to be a much less intense occupation. It is likely that the major ditch [2901] was still a functioning boundary, off which [1034/1044] formed a large sub-rectangular enclosure. Ditches [1041] and [1024/1027] formed a second enclosure, with a small gap entrance between [1027] and [1044]. Further south, the small gully [1052] demarcates another small or narrow enclosure.

Detailed Context Descriptions

[2901] still in use, as above.

[1034/1044/1408] is a broad flat-bottomed U-profiled ditch curving along the north and east sides of the site, ranging from 1.90m x 0.48m to 0.20m x 0.44m where it disappears under the eastern edge of the site, with generally dark brown to dark yellow brown ZCL fills and variable 2–15% gravel.

[1043] is a posthole of a deep V profile, with dark grey brown ZCL fill.

[1024/1027/1404] is a broad U-profiled gully forming a right-angled enclosure in the centre of the site, generally 1.00m x 0.30m, and dark grey brown to dark yellow brown ZCL fill and 2–5% gravel.

[1052] is a broad U-profiled ditch, 1.20m x 0.42m, and dark brown to dark grey brown Z/SCL fill and variable 2–10% gravel.

[1041] is a larger east-west ditch varying in profile from U to V, and from 0.60m x 0.40m to 1.10m x 0.58m, with variable dark brown, grey brown and yellow brown ZCL fill and 2–5% gravel. This ditch contained the well-stratified Samian vessel of form Curle 15 (or Ludovici Tc) which should date to the second century AD.

The animal bones from Phase IV are also much less numerous than in the preceding phase, though all the usual Roman domesticates are present. Carbonized plant remains from this phase include arable crops and weeds, and a variety of local weeds indicative of an open grassland environment. Hedge and scrub remains were virtually absent. While present, domestic refuse was again much less common than would normally be expected on a settlement site.

Phase IV contexts contained only three small finds: two iron nails and a fragment of quernstone.

The pottery indicates that this phase may have included domestic occupation of the site, and should date to the second and third centuries. A flanged bowl in the top of ditch [1028] is probably of the fourth century (Fig. 13, no. 3), and with the coins probably represents the last occupation of the site. Black Plain and the Nene Valley Grey wares remain common, and Sandy Grey Ware (b) (probably another Horningsea product) becomes quite prominent.

Phase V: Post-Medieval (Fig. 13)

During the post-medieval period, a discontinuous line of small shallow gullies or slots was dug across the site from south to

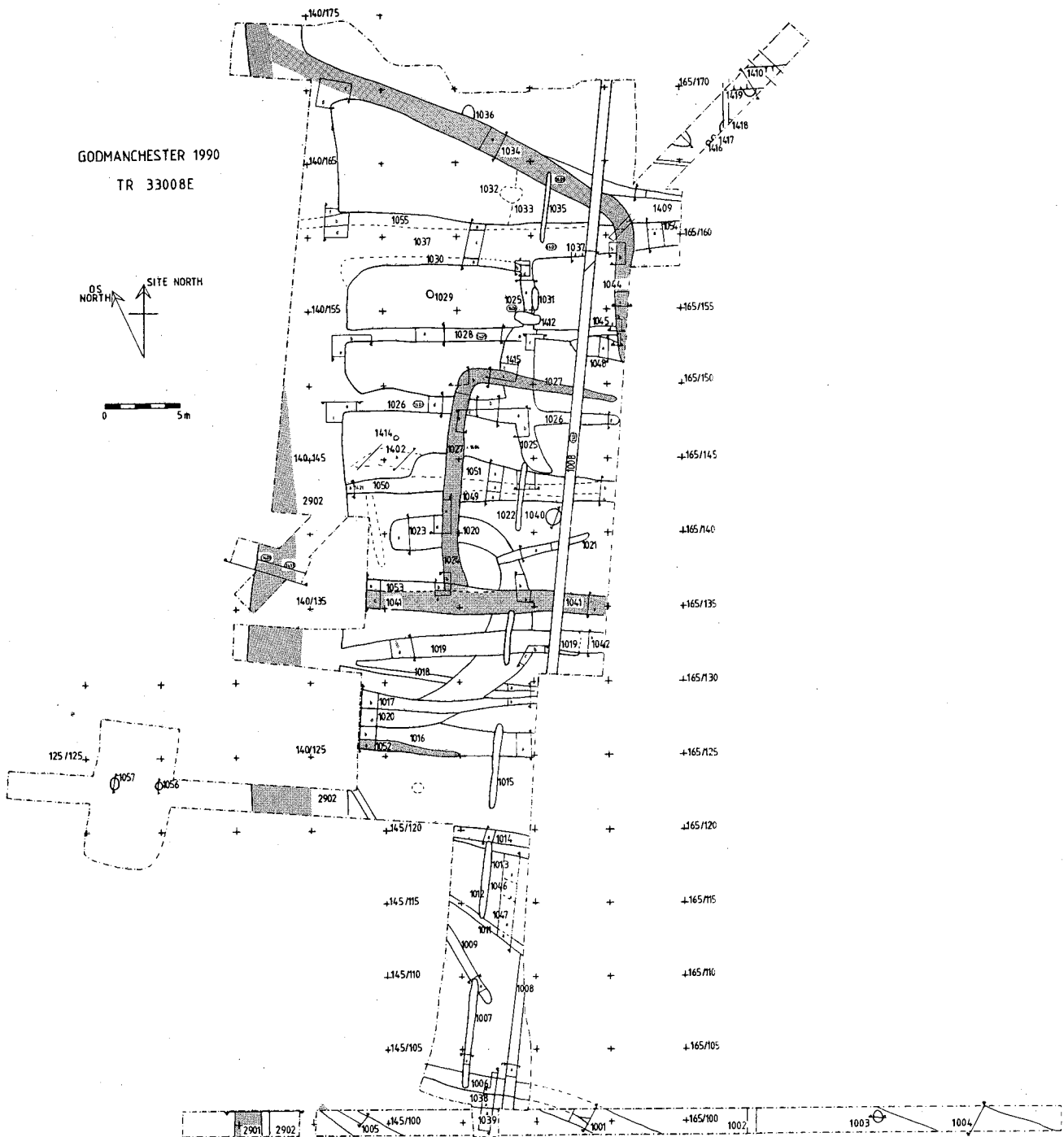


Figure 12.
Site plan, Phase IV features shaded.

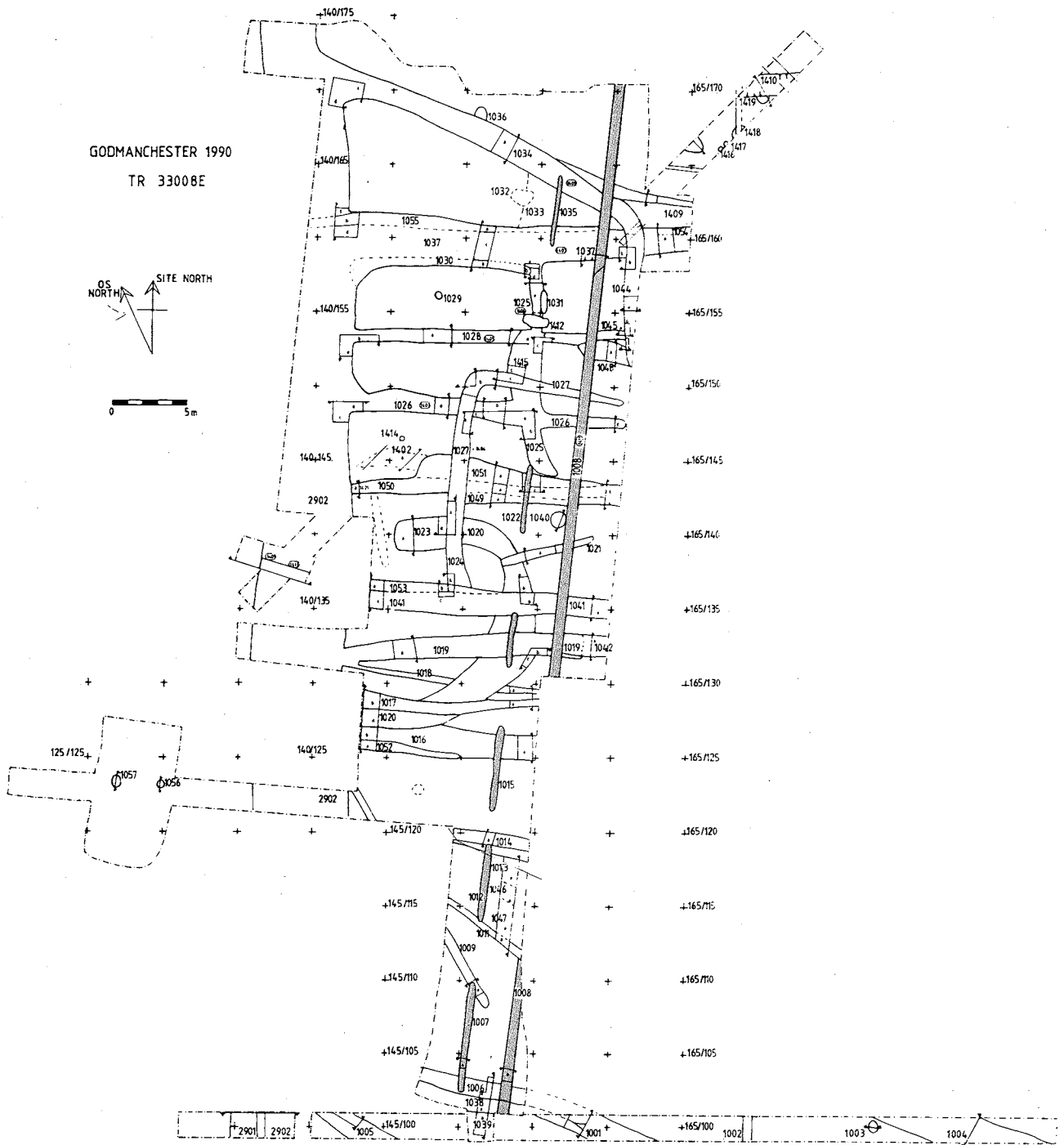


Figure 13.
Site Plan, Phase V (Post-Medieval) features shaded.

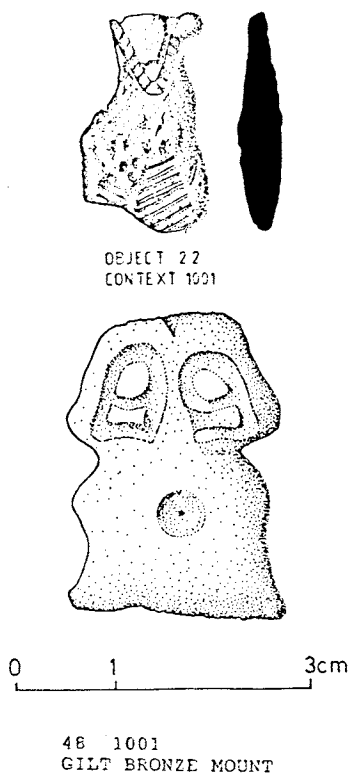


Figure 14.
Objects of copper alloy, scale 1:1.

north. Parallel to these to the east was a land drain, probably placed during the 19th century. The function of the earlier slots is obscure.

The features of the final phase of occupation are clearly dated by the pottery and finds, including a fragment of a tobacco pipe, and numerous land drains.

Small Finds in the Topsoil

The machine-stripped topsoil was searched by a metal detector, resulting in the recovery of a number of metal objects of interest. These include four iron boot hobnails, a small bronze stud or rivet, iron slag, lead dribble waste, and five coins. The earliest of the coins is one of Gordian III (239–40), while two of the coins are of the House of Constantine (330–48), one of the House of Valentinian (364–78), and one of Valentinian I (364–78). These coins should all belong to Phases III and IV. Rather more unusual is a moulded bronze mount, probably decoration from a belt (Fig. 14). Most unusual of all is a most extraordinary bronze mount of a helmeted human head, inlaid with gold to form eyes and the outline of the helmet. The object appears to have been damaged both at the top and along the bottom, and has a rivet protruding from the back where it was once attached to another object (belt or shield?) as a

decoration. (Unfortunately this was found by a local metal detectorist on the site just prior to the excavations; a photograph of the object was given to the excavators, see Fig. 14). Research has located no parallel for this object, but its decoration may be paralleled in style by an Anglo-Saxon wrist clasp from West Stow (West 1985, Fig. 298 no. 4; identification by Val Williams).

Discussion

The earliest occupation of the site was during the Mesolithic, and later during the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. During both of these periods, the worked flints suggest that the site was occupied domestically, as a campsite during the Mesolithic, and as a farmstead during the Neolithic/Bronze Age. Unfortunately, no features dating to these periods were recorded.

The occupation of the site during Phases I and II is likely to have been in the first centuries BC and AD. This probably did not involve very much domestic occupation activity on the site, judging from the low number of small finds and the small quantity of pottery. The features suggest a pattern of small enclosed paddocks or plots, demarcated by ditches and possibly by hedges or fences.

Unfortunately, the removal of much of the topsoil long before excavations may have drastically reduced the amount of material available for investigation.

Phase III (late first or second century AD) marked an upsurge in activity, mirrored in both the quantity and quality of material remains. The pottery of this phase, including the Samian of this phase but occurring residually in a later ditch, suggests that domestic occupation may have occurred on the site, but no structural features pertaining to a house were observed. The features of this phase appear to represent an unusual series of ditched enclosures, being very long and narrow, rather than rectangular with a width to length ratio of 1:2, as is more common.

The final Phase IV of the Romano-Celtic occupation is marked by a reduction in the scale of occupation, with fewer but larger enclosures demarcated by ditches. Pottery and small finds are again less common, though the site was still occupied long enough to have had fourth-century coins lost there.

Analysis of the carbonized plant remains recovered by flotation analysis of the soil samples has added further information (see Williams and Murphy, Archive 4). During the first two Romano-British phases the plant remains are dominated by three types. Arable crop and weed remains are common, probably indicating that arable crop processing was occurring on the site (the exact stage of processing cannot be specified). Remains of hedge and scrub vegetation were also common, interpreted as the remains of hedge maintenance. During the later Romano-British phases, arable crops and weeds were again predominant. There were, however, very few traces of hedge and scrub remains, suggesting that such routine maintenance was either discontinued or occurred elsewhere. Local weeds now appear to derive from a grassland environment. Taken together, this may suggest a more open situation. In all phases the remains were considered incidental, in some sense resulting from waste disposal from bonfires close to site, rather than representing any specific on-site activity. A variety of small bones and mollusc shell was also recovered from the soil samples. These occurred in a much lower density than is normally expected from settlement sites, indicating that little domestic refuse was being deposited in these features. This may be interpreted to mean that there was relatively little domestic occupation on the site.

During the four Romano-Celtic phases, the site was apparently a small farmsite located

approximately 700m outside the developing small town of Roman Godmanchester. It may have been occupied intermittently or perhaps as a farm managed by people living in the town itself, a situation often speculated on but rarely documented (cf. Reece 1989: 40; McWhirr 1981: 58; Green 1975: 191, 202).

Godmanchester has traces of a Claudian fort (see Fig. 3), but this was apparently shortlived. The main civilian settlement began c. AD 70 (cf. Green 1960, 1961, 1975, 1986). During this early settlement, Green documents some agricultural activity occurring within the town itself and posits a system of laying out the town and its agricultural domain, which is controversial (see discussion below). By about AD 120, a mansio (or inn serving the imperial postal system) was built along Ermine St (now the A14) and the area of the town enclosed within a large dyked or ditched defensive earthwork. The mansio had an adjacent bath complex divided into separate bathing facilities for the two sexes. The mansio and bath complex was large and quite elaborate, with stone-built ground floors, half-timbered first floors, plastered walls, tessellated and mosaic floors and slate roofs (Green 1975: Fig. 11). Just west of the mansio was a shrine complex devoted to a god identified as Abandinus from an inscription (cf. Green 1986).

The beginning of the the third century involved the construction of a town basilica (or town hall) (Green 1975: Fig. 13), again a fairly elaborate building. By the later third century Godmanchester was enclosed by a large, defensive masonry wall, with external stone towers added later. During this period, inhumation cemeteries were maintained outside the town walls around the south-western corner and also along the Cambridge road where it by-passed the town to the north (see Fig. 3 above). A possible period of destruction may have occurred at the end of the third century.

By the fourth century the town was in revival of some sort, with the mansio and basilica sites deliberately demolished and the building material re-used to provide the external towers to the town defences. Continuing occupation is indicated by fifth-century style pottery at various sites around the town, and in very late inhumation graves. As there are no known Anglo-Saxon cemeteries nearby, Green suggests that the town remained essentially Roman in character well into the sub-Roman period.

The site excavated falls between two areas of Green's 'infield and outfield' systems which he thought characterized an official system of

division of the area of the town (albeit with Celtic influence), but the layout of the ditched enclosures does not correspond to that suggested by Green (1978: Fig. 4) nor do the sizes of the enclosures which have been demarcated. The layout and dating evidence may be used to support Cleary's rather different interpretations (1987: 85–6) of a more organic, pre-Roman, origin and organization for the town's rural hinterland. During Phase III, approximately the second century AD, the site was occupied domestically, probably with an unlocated house somewhere adjacent to the excavated area. This may have continued during Phase IV, as indicated by the coins, or have decreased back to a seasonal usage (as suggested by the pottery assemblage and the environmental evidence).

The relationship between this site and the Roman villa site at Cow Lane, Godmanchester (currently under excavation by the Central Excavation Unit of English Heritage) cannot as yet be determined, but it may have been either an independent smallholding or absorbed within the Cow Lane estate. This site overlaps with only the earlier phases at Cow Lane (cf. Friend 1968, 1978), which appears to consist of an aisled building which Friend dates to the second century AD (Friend 1978: 12) and essentially predates the apparent floruit of the villa there (c. the fourth century, Friend 1978: 12). This may be used to argue that this small farmstead was subsumed within the growth of the villa.

During Phase III, two adults were buried in a gap between two of the small enclosures into which the site was divided. This practice of burying adults along field or enclosure ditches was not uncommon during the second and third centuries AD. This custom was, however, rather more common among relatively rural populations, rather than the extra-mural location of this site. Certainly Godmanchester did have 'official' cemeteries in use during this period.

During Phase IV, the site reverted to a less intense use of enclosures on different alignments, without large quantities of artefacts. Phase IV probably predates the expansion of the pottery industries at Hadham (approximately the fourth century for large-scale production and wide distribution), as products from these kilns are quite rare.

Acknowledgements

The first phase of assessment was carried out on behalf of Norfolk House Construction Ltd through their agents, Sayer Chester and Associates. The second assessment and further excavations were commissioned by Vanbrugh Land PLC. The financial commitment of both groups is gratefully acknowledged. D. Davison, E. Moth and G. Lucas all provided help when needed most.

The complete archive is deposited with the Archaeology Office of Cambridgeshire County Council, for inclusion into the County Sites and Monuments Record.

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Proceedings Volume LXXX, 1991

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