
Short Report:

Thorney, Willow Hall Farm Quarry: TL 2476 0205 (ALBION report 2016/198) David Ingham

The first seven hectares excavated at this new gravel quarry revealed Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman remains. The Bronze Age material comprised seven water-pits and a few smaller pits, a cremation burial, and a small ring ditch that may represent either a roundhouse or a burial monument (Fig. 1).

The open landscape of the Bronze Age became

largely enclosed in the Iron Age. The fields and enclosures are likely to have been used for livestock: the layout of some of the ditches seems particularly designed to have helped with the controlled movement of animals, while no evidence for arable cultivation was found. Cattle bones dominate the faunal assemblage, though their more robust nature may have ac-



Figure 1. Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman remains at Willow Hall Farm Quarry.

counted for this preservation bias, plus the overall number of bones recovered is relatively small. Water-pits/watering hollows were dispersed throughout the enclosure system, as well as a thin scatter of smaller pits. Only one contemporary roundhouse was definitely identified; a second post-built structure is more likely to have been an animal pen, while there was also a four-post structure and a few less identifiable features that may have had a structural function. Very few artefacts were recovered from any of these features, making it unlikely that there was any sustained domestic activity on site – the combined Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery assemblage amounts to just 179 sherds (1.3kg).

Exactly when the enclosures were formed is uncertain, but their small pottery assemblage, recovered primarily from associated pits, suggests a Middle Iron Age date. This is supported by the change in alignment for the Early Roman field systems that

cut across them, indicating a degree of discontinuity with their Iron Age precursors. A roughly east–west drove-way was identified, with field systems radiating off it, but this arrangement was short-lived, and only fragmentary remains of the field systems survived. A north–south branch was added to the drove-way (probably connecting with the scheduled site to the north at Bar Pasture Farm), and at least two enclosures on the same alignment were identified, one containing a roundhouse. These Roman features also yielded only a small artefact assemblage. Only two new water-pits were dug, perhaps indicating that some of the Iron Age ones remained accessible.