
Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman at Downham Road, Ely

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This paper outlines and discusses the Later Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman archaeology identified during excavations carried out in 2015 and 2016 at Downham Road, Ely, prior to the construction of East Cambridgeshire Leisure Village. A scatter of pits together with a modest but coherent artefact assemblage provides ephemeral evidence of settlement activity during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, whilst Middle Iron Age pit wells provide evidence of primarily pastoral activity, taking place on the periphery of the extensive settlement complexes known in the area. Pollen and plant remains from Middle Iron Age features as well as the accumulation of alluvium and colluvium attest to the surrounding environment, land-use and its impact on the landscape. Downham Road is one of numerous sites to be excavated on the Isle of Ely in recent years. Cumulatively these sites provide evidence to re-address the former island's prehistoric sequence. Finally, a network of field boundaries and planting beds seen across site, attest to arable use during the Roman period.

Recent excavations at Downham Road (Fig. 1) revealed significant archaeology dating to the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period, but was dominated by a network of Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement features that form a further component of the extensive West Fen Road complex (Mortimer *et al.* 2005) to the southeast. On the basis of the 2010 evaluation results (Appleby *et al.* 2010), the project was designed specifically to investigate the Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains, the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age features were encountered incidentally, and were somewhat unexpected on Ely's claylands. The Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman phases will be the focus of this paper, whilst the Anglo-Saxon sequence will be covered in a separate article (Cessford, forthcoming). In its local context, the prehistoric and Roman activity is particularly relevant to current archaeological studies of the Isle of Ely, as a number of recent excavations, including Downham Road, have produced results that significantly modify the previously-developed understanding of the 'island'. Prior to the 1990s, limited fieldwork had been carried out across Ely. However, during the late 1990s and early 2000s a number of large-scale fieldwork projects (including Watson's Lane (Lucas 1998), Trinity Lands (Masser 2001),

Wardy Hill (Evans 2003), Prickwillow Road (Atkins and Mudd 2003), West Fen Road, (Mortimer *et al.* 2005; Mudd and Webster 2011) and Hurst Lane Reservoir (Evans *et al.* 2007)) were carried out in relatively quick succession (Fig. 2). These sites formed the basis from which Ely's prehistoric and Roman sequence was articulated. The results highlighted the frequency of Middle Iron Age–Roman occupation in contrast to the sparse evidence for earlier activity, prompting the notion that, other than some Late Bronze Age 'seasonal use' (Evans, 2002), the heavy clays primarily underlying Ely were unsuitable for prolonged occupation until the Middle Iron Age, at which time settlement became extensive (see Evans 2003; Evans *et al.* 2007 for detail). This model is paralleled across the clayland of the wider region. More recent excavations comprising Lancaster Way (Wright 2018), Cam Drive (Phillips and Morgan 2015), North-West Ely (Moan and Phillips 2018), Field End, Witchford (Phillips and Blackburn 2019) together with Downham Road (Figs. 1 and 2) have prompted a comparable shift in our understanding of Ely's prehistoric and Roman sequence. Although these sites provide further evidence of the scale and complexity of the island's use during the Middle Iron Age–Roman period, particularly in the case of the Lancaster Way settlement complex and banjo enclosure (Wright 2018), they also provide compelling evidence for Ely's earlier usage, of which Downham Road forms an integral component.

Setting

Ely exists as an area of high ground within the Fens, a lowland zone of East Anglia subjected to Holocene marine incursion preceding subsequent Fen development, which rendered Ely an island locked by fresh water marsh from the beginning of the 1st millennium BC until drainage in the 17th Century AD (Waller 1994). Located roughly 1km northwest of the historic centre of Ely, the Downham Road site sits between 10m and 3.5m OD, occupying the lower slopes of the 'island', just inland from the margin with Ely's West Fen (Fig. 2). This area of former wetland, otherwise termed 'The Cove' or 'Coveney Embayment' (Evans

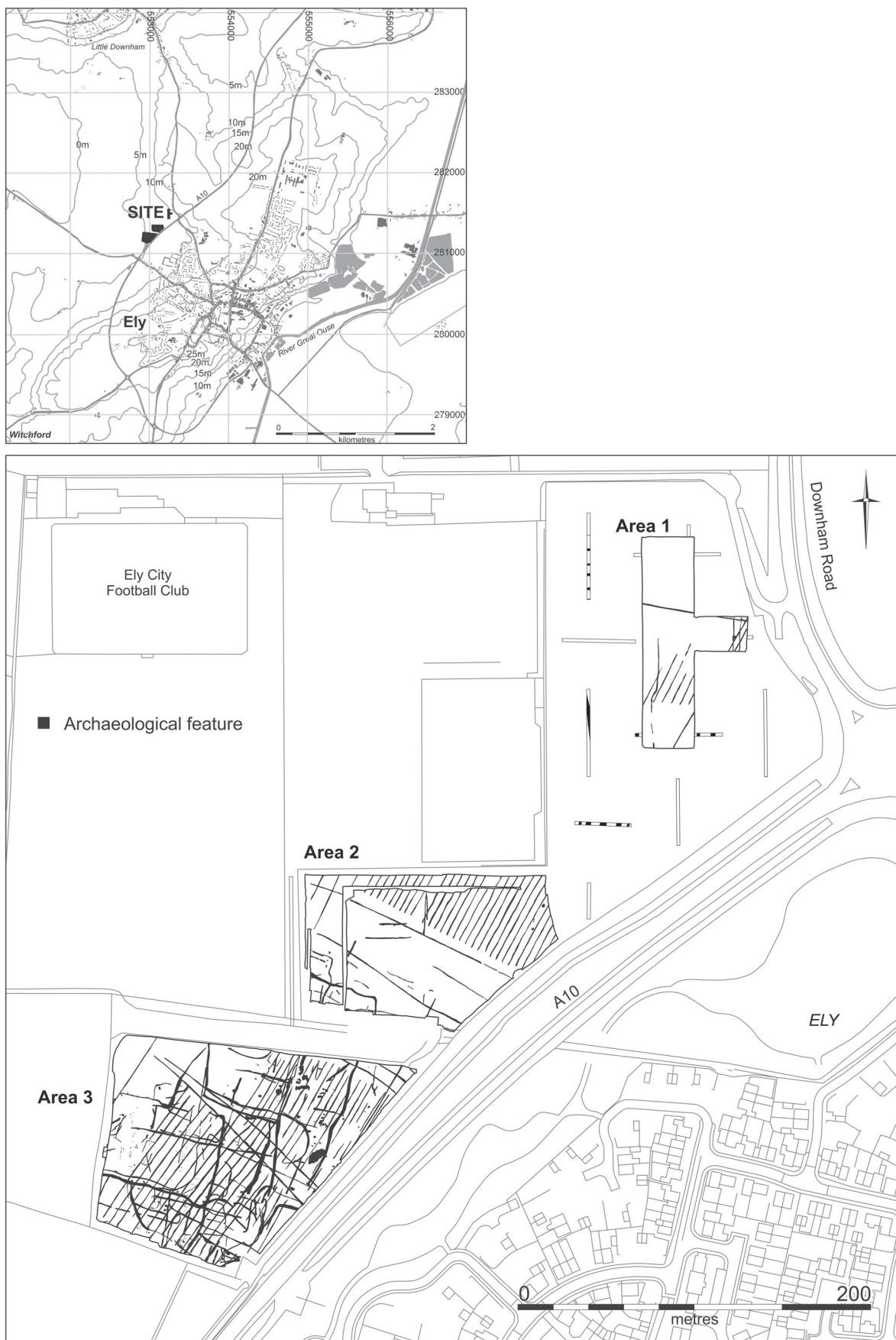


Figure 1. Site location.



Figure 2. Iron Age and Roman contexts on the Isle of Ely, showing known Bronze Age and Iron Age sites.

2003), has been recognised for its concentration of Iron Age and Roman sites (Evans 2003, Evans *et al.* 2007). The site sits within a small east–west orientated valley, which previously drained the western slopes of Ely, although any trace of this pre-existing watercourse has now been re-worked into a network of contemporary dykes and drainage ditches (shown in Fig. 2). The valley bottom sits between Areas 2 and 3, falling a mere 6.5m (10–3.5m OD) from the valley crest (north of Area 1), but appearing prominent relative to its surroundings. The geology underlying the site consists of Oadby Member Till, a chalky boulder clay with thin layers of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 1980).

The Excavation

Before considering the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity, reference must be made to the small assemblage of 26 worked flints, which attest to a Neolithic ‘background’ presence. In keeping with West Fen Road (Mortimer *et al.* 2005) and Hurst Lane (Evans *et al.* 2007) as well as other excavations across Ely, low density lithic assemblages signify a presence on Ely’s claylands during the Neolithic, which was probably task based in nature, but this cannot be interpreted as evidence of either settlement or activity of any longevity.

Later Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age activity is represented by 58 pits, postholes and pit wells distributed in a linear swathe across Area 3, with a smaller outlying cluster in Area 2 (Fig. 3). Of these, 27 produced a mixture of Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Middle Iron Age pottery, with further sterile pits assigned to this period on account of their distribution and on morphological grounds. The few features that contained high quantities of pottery could be accurately phased to the Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age or Middle Iron Age, but given the general low density of material and the quantity of residual and possibly intrusive pottery within features, the majority of pits could only be assigned a broad Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age date. Residual material caught up in later features accounts for a considerable component (13%) of the Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age pottery assemblage. This is largely due to the density of Roman and Anglo-Saxon features which provided a catchment to receive such material.

Late Bronze Age

Late Bronze Age activity was represented by 121 sherds of pottery (1.2kg) confined to the linear swathe of features in Area 3 (Fig. 4). Within this, two small oval pits, F.520 and F.522 (Fig. 3) represent the most convincing evidence for Later Bronze Age features, containing 19 and 15 sherds of pottery respectively. However, the highest yields of Late Bronze Age pottery occurred residually in Middle Iron Age Pit Well 1, clearly demonstrating the problems with residual material on site and the ambiguity it creates for phasing.

Early Iron Age

Early Iron Age activity was present in Areas 2 and 3 (Fig. 3 and 4). The features in Area 3 produced a total of 14 sherds of residual pottery, an insubstantial quantity relative to Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age wares, implying the Early Iron Age presence in this area was fleeting.

A single pit (F.70) located in Area 2 (Fig. 3) contained sufficient pottery (52 sherds, 1.3kg) to be dated to the Early Iron Age, which was supported by a radiocarbon date on faunal material (Table 1). The oval pit measured 1.7m x 0.7m and 0.50m deep, was potentially a component of a further cluster of features extending beyond the limits of the excavation area to the east. Its fill sequence comprised a primary deposit of greyish clay eroded from the exposed edges of the feature with an upper fill consisting of dark grey charcoal rich clay-silt containing frequent pottery and 0.383kg of animal bone as well as some burnt stone and daub fragments. The deposit appears to represent mixed cultural detritus derived from domestic activity presumably re-deposited into the pit via accumulation in some form of surface context (such as an occupation scatter or ‘midden layer’). The radiocarbon determination on animal bone from the pit returned a date range of 750–408cal BC (95.4% probability, SUERC-85507) or more than likely 590–408cal BC (63.2% probability), which corresponds well with Early Iron Age dates from across East Anglia (see Brudenell 2012; Atkins and Percival 2014). As set out above, the taphonomic characteristics of the animal bone from which the radiocarbon determination was measured, show the date is likely to refer to the general period in which activity took place, rather than the actual cutting of the pit itself.

Middle Iron Age

Middle Iron Age activity was represented by the 241 sherds (4.116kg) of pottery making up over half the later prehistoric assemblage. It was largely distributed amongst features making up the swathe of pits in Area 3, with just eleven sherds recovered from Area 2 (Fig. 4). Pit Well 1 in Area 3 was assigned to this phase on the basis of a radiocarbon date (SUERC-85509) on log ladder WD5, whilst Pit Well 2 and Pits F.593 and F.594, also in Area 3, contained sufficient ceramic evidence to be included in this phase (Fig. 3). A further seven pits in Area 3 and two pits in Area 2 also contained a little Middle Iron Age pottery.

Pit Well 1 comprised four intercutting pits and a group of shallow irregularly shaped hollows (Fig. 5), which appeared to be the result of heavy trampling around the well. In its earliest form (F.629 and F.668) the pit well was oval in plan, c.5m in diameter and 1.7m deep with gradual or sometimes stepped edges. In contrast, the later re-cuts (F.624 and F.725) were distinctly shaft-like in form, measuring only c.3m in diameter and 2.10m deep. A well-sorted organic silt made up the primary silting episode, indicating almost permanent waterlogging with vegetation

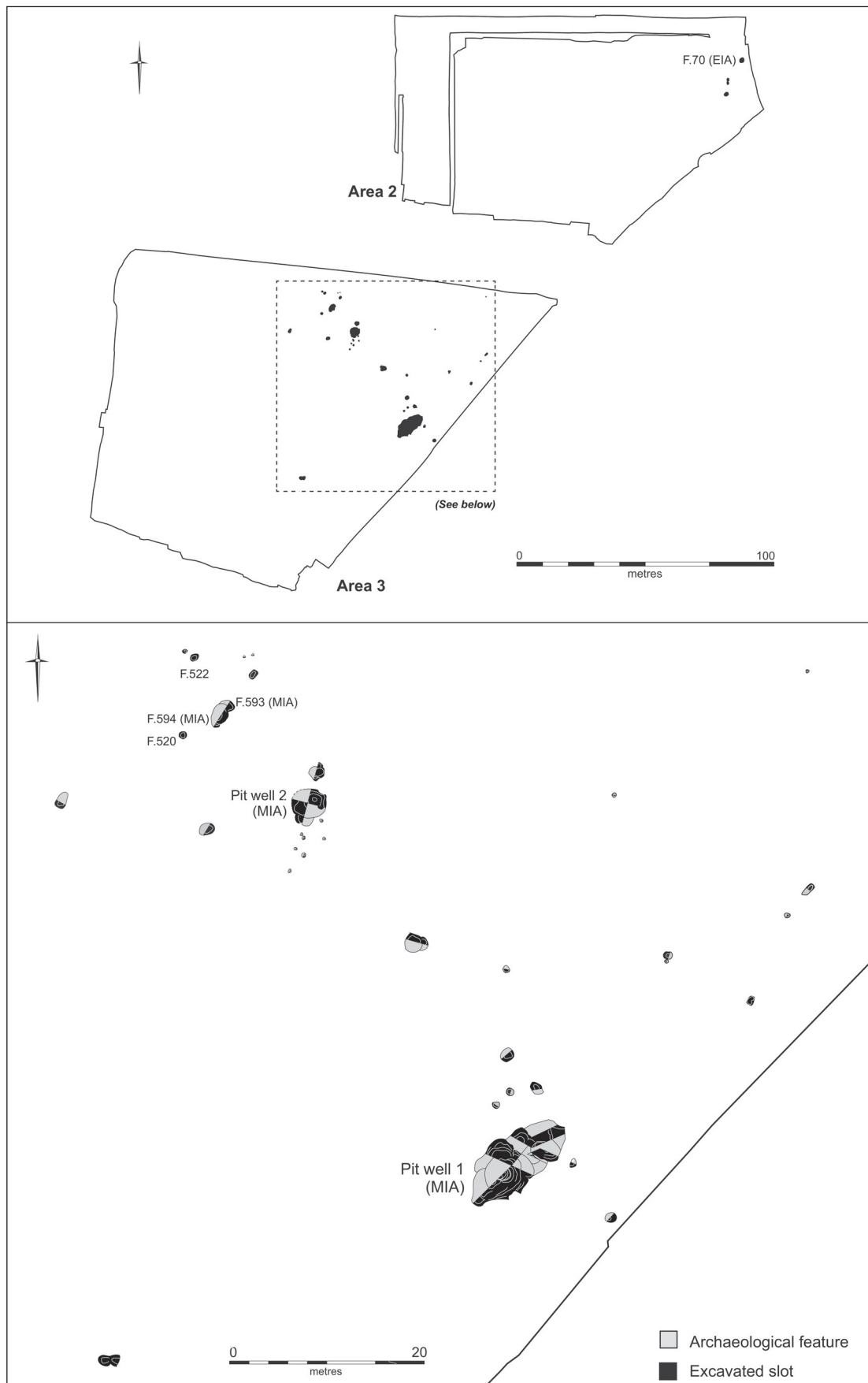


Figure 3. Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age features.

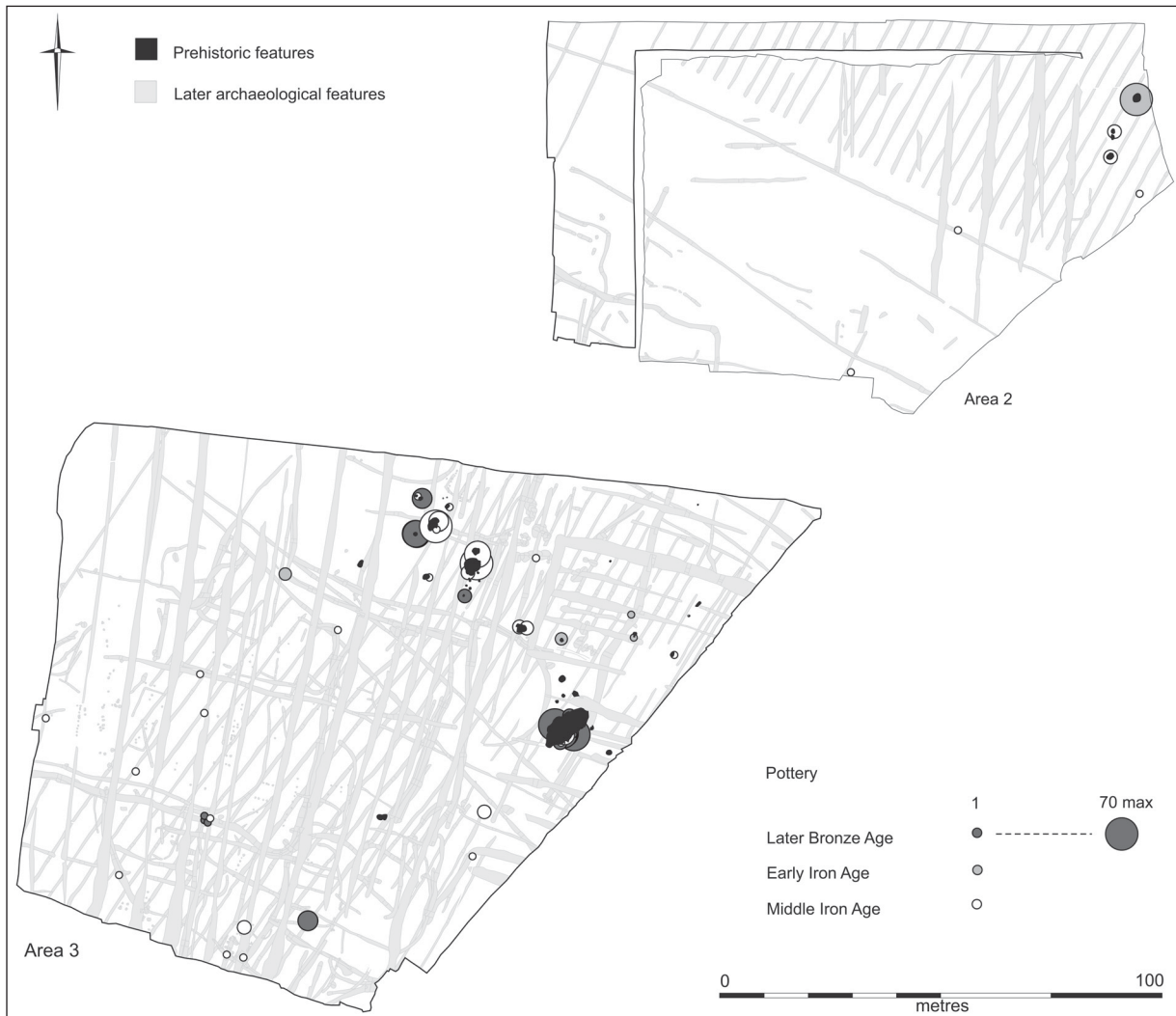


Figure 4. Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age pottery distributions.

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from Iron Age features (*IntCal13 atmospheric curve*).

Laboratory code	Feature	Material	Radiocarbon Age	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (0/00)	Calibrated date range 95.4% (calBC)	Posterior estimate 95.4% (calBC)
SUERC-85507	70	Bone, mature Horse	2440±24	23.1	750–408	750–683 (24.1%) 668–638 (8.1%) 590–408 (63.2%)
SUERC-85509	624	<i>Quercus</i> sapwood (outer 10 rings)	2224±24	24.8	378–204	378–341 (16.5%) 326–204 (78.9%)

including rushes and sedge (Simmons, this report) growing and rotting *in situ*. The capping fills produced a modest assemblage of pottery spanning the Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age and 0.379kg of animal bone. The latest cut (F.624) contained two log ladders (WD5 and 6) and a Y-shaped post (WD4) (Fig. 5), possibly used to stabilise a log ladder or hoist buckets (Robinson Zeki, this report). Interestingly, log ladder WD5 showed evidence of being worked with a saw. Log ladders are now routinely recovered from Bronze and Iron Age pit wells across East Anglia. It is as-

sumed that these objects provided access in and out of the wells. Consequently, it is unusual that two ladders should be found in the same context together, suggesting one or both of the ladders were used in wells across the site and finally abandoned in the latest well in the sequence. The outer 10 rings of sap wood from ladder WD 5 returned a radiocarbon date of 378–204cal BC (95.4% probability, SUERC-85509) but probably 326–204cal BC (78.9% probability) (Table 1), which is broadly consistent with the earliest century and a half of the Middle Iron Age. As set out

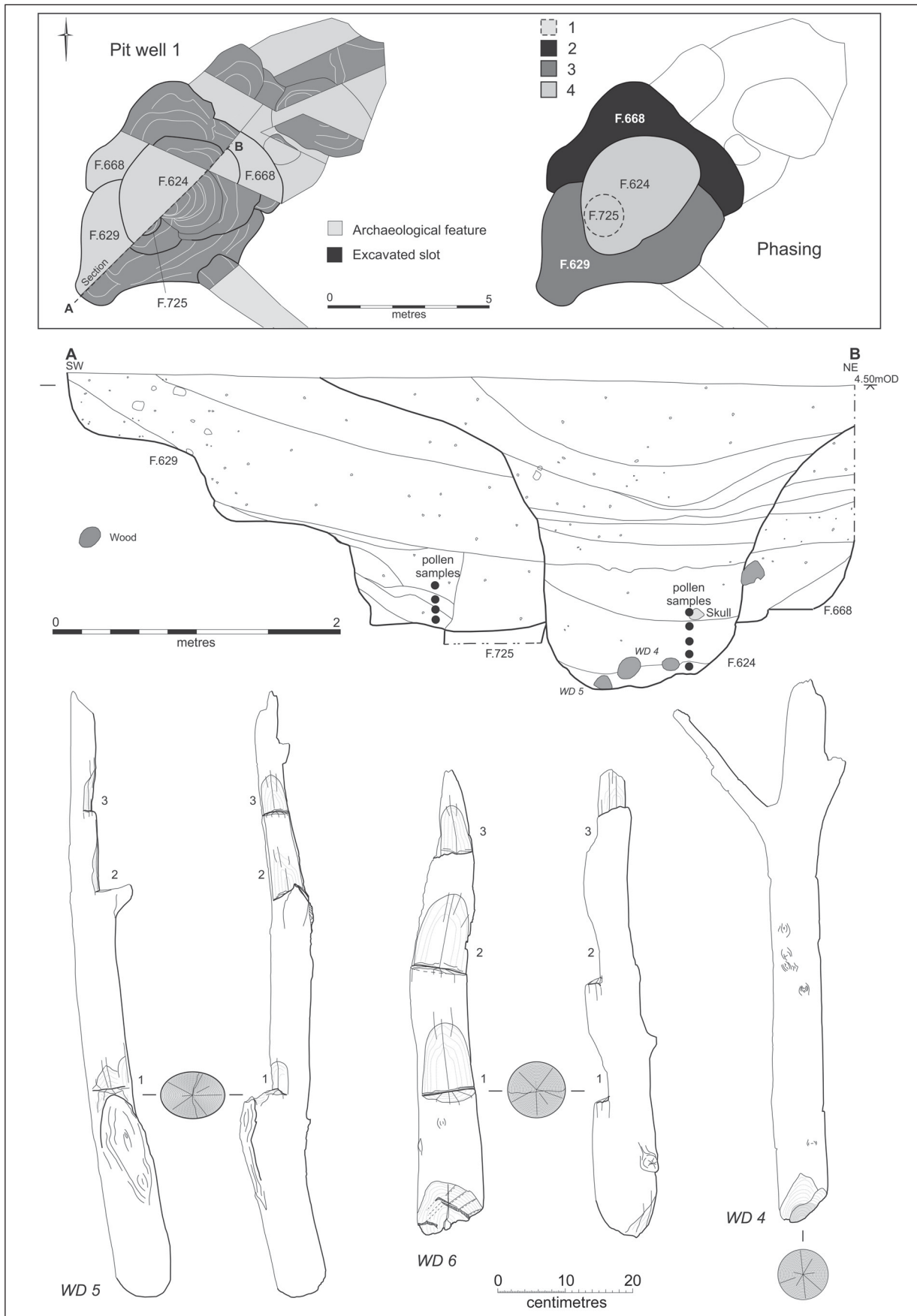


Figure 5. Pit Well 1 in plan and in profile with Log Ladders and Forked Pile.

above, the relationship between log ladder WD5 and the original cut of the pit well (F.624) is ambiguous. As a result, the radiocarbon determination represents no more than a general indication for when the wells were in use across the site.

Pit Well 2 was morphologically similar to Pit Well 1, established as a large oval feature (3.50 diameter, 1.18m deep), which was re-cut with a shaft-like profile (1.05 diameter, 1.38m deep). Well-sorted organic silt formed the basal silts again, indicating waterlogging and probably vegetation growing and rotting within the feature. The capping fills produced a relatively

high frequency of pottery (74 sherds, 2.036kg) and a considerable quantity of faunal material (1.549kg).

A further pit cluster, comprising two intercutting features (F.593 and F.594), yielded 71 sherds of pottery (1.57kg), animal bone, fragments of a triangular loom weight and half a spindle whorl.

Roman

Roman features at the site comprised a series of narrow, U-shaped ditches that appear to define large fields arranged in a rectilinear formation (Fig. 6). The

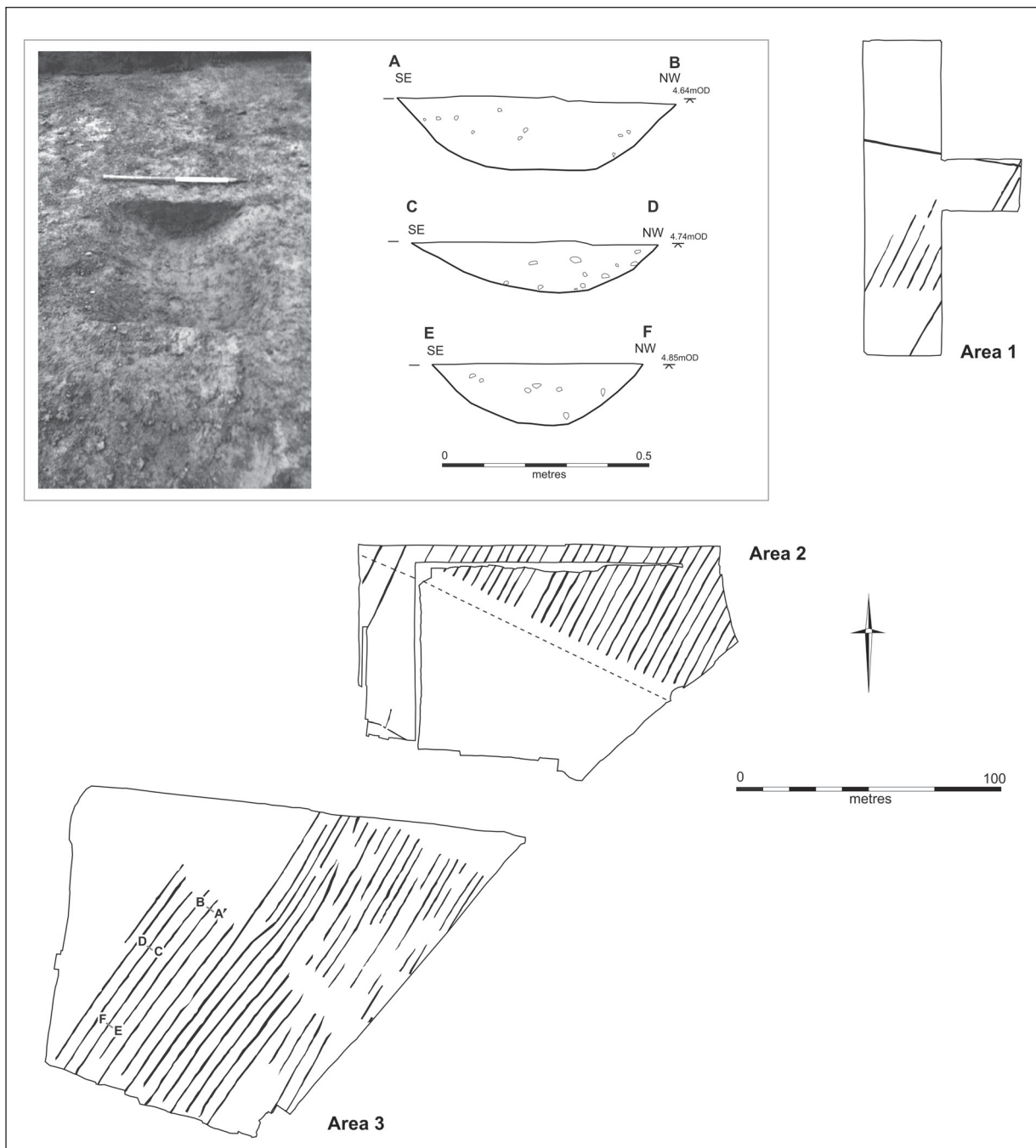


Figure 6. Roman features.

fields contained regular, evenly spaced (c. 4m), shallow gullies, interpreted as cultivation slots or planting beds. The major northwest-southeast aligned ditch in Area 2 (shown as a dashed line on Fig. 6), has its origin in the Roman period. Clearly defining the southern extent of the planting beds, this ditch was subsequently re-used to demarcate the Middle Anglo-Saxon droveway (Cessford, forthcoming). Some 47 sherds of 1st–4th-century AD Romano-British pottery, weighing 0.488kg, were found in association with these features, none of which definitely post-date the mid-3rd century AD. The planting beds mostly contained a single fill with no indications of re-cutting or re-establishment, suggesting a single phase of large-scale agriculture, presumably linked to a contemporary settlement somewhere in the vicinity.

The Artefact Assemblage

Later Prehistoric Pottery

Kate A Beats and Sarah Percival

A total of 441 sherds (6.742kg) of Later Prehistoric pottery were recovered from 52 features (Table 2). The pottery spans the Later Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age and includes rims from 26 vessels.

Later Bronze Age

The Later Bronze Age assemblage is characterised by the extensive use of flint temper, present in 63% of the assemblage which also contains quartz, chalk and shell. Rims are present from five vessels. All are flattened rims with at least one vessel displaying slack or weakly defined shoulders and hollowed or out turned neck (Brudenell 2012, form G). The jar has a post firing drilled perforation on the vessel neck, perhaps to carry out a repair (Fig. 7, 3). Base sherds are pinched out and the sherd surfaces are smoothed or roughly wiped. The extensive use of flint tempered fabrics compares well with the West Fen Road (Percival 2000; 2005) and Hurst Lane (Percival 2007) assemblages.

Early Iron Age

A total of 66 Early Iron Age sherds weighing 1.413kg were recovered from five features, principally pit F.70. Within the Early Iron Age assemblage five fabric groups were identified. Around 35% of the sherds are made of fabrics containing shell, 33% are flint tempered and the remainder contain a mix of chalk,

quartz and grog. The single rim is direct and rounded (Fig. 7, 5). Vessel forms are shouldered with three vessels, all from pit F.70, having fingertip impressions marking the shoulder similar to those found in pottery of Brudenell's 'mature decorated group' found for example at Linton (Brudenell 2012, Fig.5.21) and dating to c. 600/500–350/300BC.

Middle Iron Age

The more substantial Middle Iron Age assemblage of 241 sherds (4.116kg) includes rims from 20 vessels. The Middle Iron Age pottery was mostly recovered from pits and pit wells which produced 82% of the assemblage, the majority of which is made of sandy shell and quartz-tempered sherds typical of the Middle Iron Age. Sandy fabrics formed 47% of the total assemblage and shelly fabrics a further 20%. The remainder contained sparse flint, grog, organic inclusions or chalk. These fabrics are likely to be made using locally sourced materials and compare well with contemporary assemblages such as at Wardy Hill (Hill and Horne 2003). The feature sherds are fragmentary, resulting in a low number of measurable rims. The most common form is the simple slack-shouldered open vessel (Type A), identified using the Wardy Hill type series. This form is characteristic of the Middle Iron Age and parallels with the nearby sites of Hurst Lane (Percival 2007) and West Fen Road (Percival 2000). The assemblage contained a large shell-tempered storage vessel with a diameter of 30cms in tub form (Type P, Wardy Hill, Hill & Horne 2003). The coarse ware assemblage was predominately plain, a characteristic in common with Hurst Lane (Percival 2007) and West Fen Road (Percival 2000 & 2005) with no evidence of scoring or finger decoration to the body, but three instances of finger-nail impressed rim tops (Fig. 7, 2). Scored decoration was also absent from West Fen Road (Percival 2005) and found on less than 3% of sherds from Hurst Lane (Percival 2007). Scored wares are considered to be imports in this area, in which case their absence from this site might suggest a lack of trade or gift exchange (Percival 2005, 60).

There is a fine ware component to the assemblage, with 4% of sherds having a burnished surface, represented by a minimum of two vessels. This is a low percentage when compared to nearby West Fen Road (20%), Wardy Hill (10%) and Lancaster Way (15%) as well as Haddenham (8%), suggesting that the assemblage is characterised by coarse wares.

The Middle Iron Age assemblage suggests occupa-

Table 2. Breakdown of assemblage by ceramic phase.

Ceramic Phase	No. of sherds	Weight (kg)	% by count	% by weight	MSW
Late Bronze Age	131	1.208	29.71%	17.92%	9g
Early Iron Age	66	1.413	14.97%	20.96%	21g
Middle Iron Age	241	4.116	54.65%	61.05%	17g
Unidentifiable	3	0.005	0.68%	0.07%	>1
Total	441	6.742	100%	100%	15g

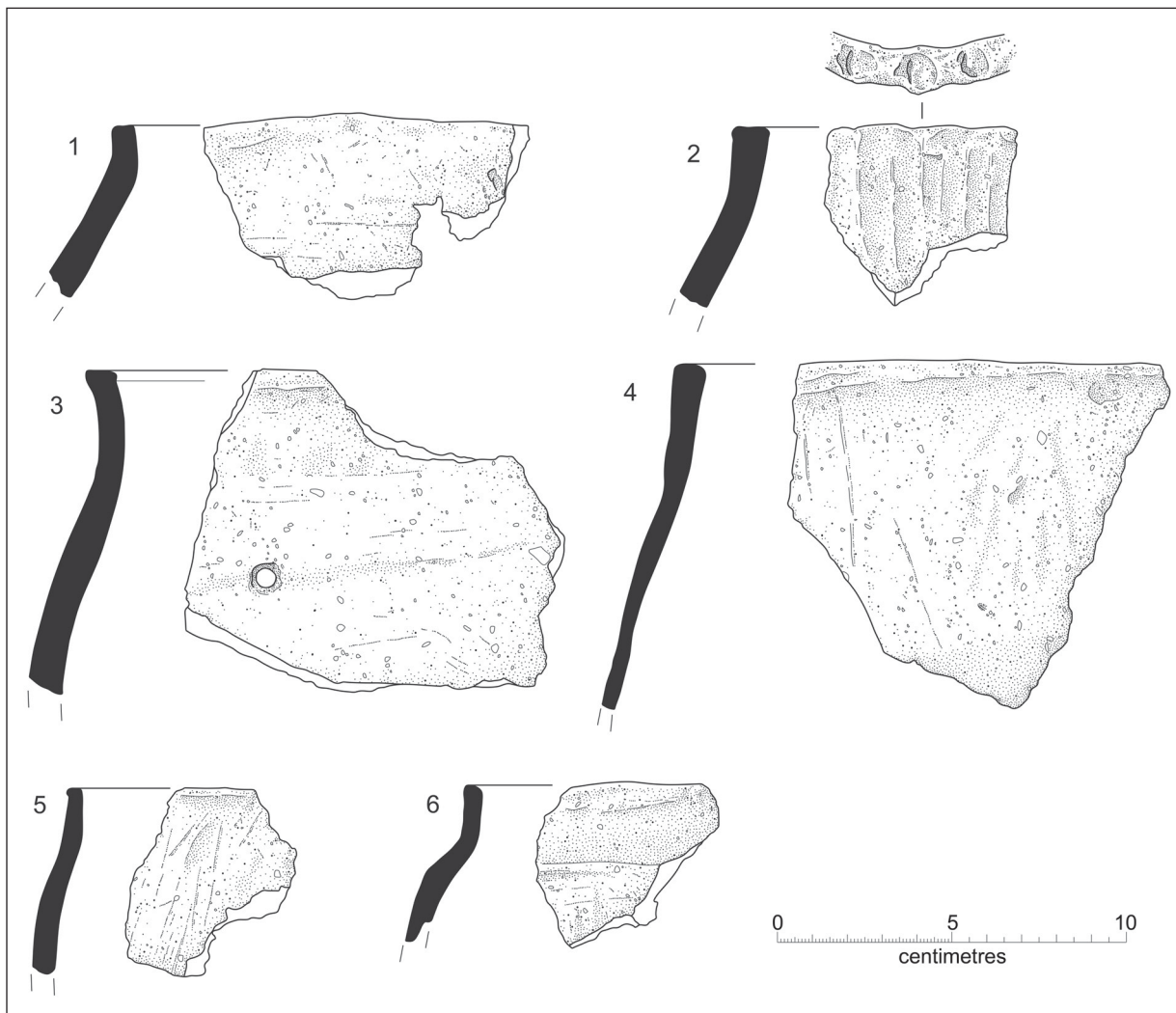


Figure 7. Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery.

- 1) Large Middle Iron Age jar with everted rim. Well-sorted quartz fabric. Similar to Type A (Wardy Hill, Hill and Horne 2003);
- 2) Medium sized Middle Iron Age jar with finger-tipping on rim. Moderate shell-tempered fabric with occasional flint. Similar to Type A (Wardy Hill, Hill and Horne 2003);
- 3) Late Bronze Age storage jar with everted rim and weak shoulders. Post-firing perforation. Moderate poorly sorted flint fabric. Type G (Trumpington Meadows, Brudenell 2018);
- 4) Large Middle Iron Age jar with rounded rim, indistinct shoulder and a diameter of 30cms. Moderate shell-tempered fabric with occasional flint. Type P (Wardy Hill, Hill and Horne 2003);
- 5) Small Early Iron Age bowl with everted. Sparse well-sorted flint fabric. Type A (Trumpington Meadows, Brudenell 2018);
- 6) Small Middle Iron Age bowl with everted rim, marked shoulder. Sparse shell-tempered fabric. Type O (Trumpington Meadows, Brudenell 2018).

tion at the site from c. 350BC to around the mid-1st century BC. When viewed alongside nearby assemblages of Hurst Lane and West Fen Road, it reflects a consistent ceramic character, with the domestic use of a limited range of locally produced forms in the plain ware tradition.

Roman Pottery

Francesca Mazzilli

The assemblage of 47 sherds, weighing 0.488kg, comprised mostly unsourced early Roman and Romano-British coarse wares and buff sandy ware. In addition, five fragments of the imitation black-burnished ware were recovered. The only sourced fabrics are the Nene Valley White Ware (5 body sherds) and the East Gaulish Samian Ware (1 body sherd). The latter is the

only import recovered on site. The assemblage covers the 1st–4th century with 61% dating from the 2nd–4th century. However, no diagnostic sherds are later than the late 3rd century.

Faunal Remains

Vida Rajkovača

Of the assemblage's 611 fragments (7.053kg), 263 specimens were recorded and 105 were assigned to species level, a figure which corresponds to *c.* 40% of the recorded assemblage (Table 3). Surface preservation ranged from moderate to quite good, though fragmentation affected the material to a degree, as evidenced by a proportion of loose teeth and unidentifiable elements.

Features that could only be broadly dated to the Late Bronze Age through to the Middle Iron Age produced a relatively insignificant sub-set of bone, amounting to some 49 specimens, weighing 0.4kg. The assemblage was restricted to the three main livestock species, ovicaprid being the most prevalent (Table 3). The feature dated to the Early Iron Age (F.70) contained a horse tibia and a horse ulna fragment (2 fragments, 0.383kg), both elements showing heavy erosion and weathering. Middle Iron Age features yielded more substantial bone deposits, amounting to 212 fragments and 1.723kg of bone waste. The dominant cattle cohort, evident within the NISP and MNI counts, is consistent with period patterns for the wider area. However, assemblages from Ely tend to show a preference for sheep (e.g. Hurst Lane (Evans *et al.* 2007), Wardy Hill, Evans 2003, Lancaster Way (Wright 2018)).

For the Middle Iron Age, the skeletal elements for the two main 'food species' showed a very slight under-representation of joints of high meat value compared to mandibles, skull elements, metapodials and phalanges. Butchery evidence was recorded on ten specimens, including a sheep skull, which appeared to have been chopped in half and limb bones split

axially for marrow removal. Fine marks consistent with meat removal were also observed on limb elements. The range of species, the character of butchery and the skeletal element count all point to a relatively typical domestic assemblage.

Waterlogged Wood

Iona Robinson Zeki

Six items of waterlogged wood were recovered from F.624 (2071), the latest re-cut of Pit Well 1. Three of these items can be characterised as incidental inclusions, i.e. oak and alder debris which accumulated within the pit as a result of peripheral, natural and/or cultural processes. The remaining three items (Table 4), two log-ladders and a substantial forked pile (Fig. 5), related directly to the use of the well. These three items were in good condition, with excellent preservation of woodworking evidence (Table 4). Samples of these items were submitted for dendrochronological analysis, but no cross-matching was found either between the samples' tree-ring sequences or between the samples' sequences and reference data of prehistoric, Romano-British or medieval date (Tyers 2018).

The ladders are notable for their differing forms and the woodworking techniques employed in their production. The first (WD5) is a 'classic' log ladder, with three, vertically-aligned notched steps hewn in a substantial, straight log. The second (WD6) is a variant, with three misaligned steps, utilising adjacent side-branch heels to give reasonable footholds, in a thinner and not entirely straight bough. This appears to reflect expedient use of material not particularly well-suited for the task.

Log ladders are relatively common discoveries in Later Prehistoric wells locally, with 18 recovered by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit from Cambridgeshire alone (Evans & Patten 2011; Gibson & Knight 2006; Patten 2009; Robinson Zeki forthcoming; Taylor & Panter 2018). Ladder form varies across this group, a reflection of *ad hoc* production, and the

Table 3. Number of identified specimens and the minimum number of individuals for all species by phase; the abbreviation *n.f.i.* denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

Taxon	Late Bronze Age - Middle Iron Age			Early Iron Age			Middle Iron Age		
	NISP	%NISP	MNI	NISP	%NISP	MNI	NISP	%NISP	MNI
Cow	2	13.3	1	.	.	.	47	53.4	4
Sheep/ goat	11	73.3	1	.	.	.	32	36.4	3
Sheep	1	6.7	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pig	1	6.7	1	.	.	.	6	6.8	2
Horse	.	.	.	2	100	1	2	2.3	1
Roe deer	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1.1	1
Sub-total to species	15	100	.	2	100	.	88	100	.
Cattle-sized	12	.	.	.	.	.	45	.	.
Sheep-sized	16	.	.	.	.	.	63	.	.
Mammal n.f.i.	6	.	.	.	.	.	16	.	.
Total	49	.	.	2	.	.	212	.	.

Table 4. Worked wood from F.624, Pit Well 1. Roundwood is defined here as wood that has not been converted into timber through splitting, hewing or sawing. Ring counts and growth speed characterisation from Tyers (2018). Blade depth expressed as a percentage of width = Curvature Index (CI) % = $D/(W/100)$.

WD4 - Forked Pile	
Dimensions	Length 1486mm; max. diameter 139 x 118mm; two extant side-branches commencing 1160mm from proximal end, one forming a y-shaped fork.
Wood Type	Roundwood; 21 growth rings, fast grown; multiple side-branch heels and knots.
Taxon	Oak (<i>Quercus</i> sp.)
Woodworking	Proximal end has been axe-hewn from multiple directions to point; no evidence of woodworking on forked side-branches; two axe stop-marks recorded on point (average stop-mark width to depth ratio 44:5.8mm, average stop-mark CI % = 13.07).
WD5 - Log Ladder	
Dimensions	Length 1678mm; max. diameter 144 x 141mm.
Wood Type	Roundwood; 107 growth rings, slow grown; off-centre pith, growth slightly crooked, item may be large bough; two large side-branch heels.
Taxon	Oak (<i>Quercus</i> sp.)
Woodworking	Proximal end has been sawn at a right angle to create a flat ladder 'foot'; axe/adze and saw have been used to cut three flat-bottomed notches (footholds) in the side of the log at irregular intervals; two of these notches have been cut directly above the heel of trimmed side-branches, to create a deeper tread; steps are not vertically aligned, with the lowest step at a 45o angle to the upper two steps; kerf marks from the saw blade present on the proximal end and on two step notches.
WD6 - Log Ladder	
Dimensions	Length 1324mm; max diameter 162 x 161mm
Wood Type	Roundwood; 37 growth rings, fast grown; several small side-branch knots.
Taxon	Oak (<i>Quercus</i> sp.)
Woodworking	Proximal end has been axe-hewn from two directions to form a wedge-shaped ladder foot (i.e. utilisation of felled end); three, vertically aligned, flat-bottomed notches (footholds) have been cut into the side of the log with an axe; seven axe stop-marks were recorded (average stop-mark ratio 54.6:5.7mm, average stop-mark CI % = 10.47).

Downham Road 'variant' ladder fits within that pattern, although the use of a saw in its manufacture is more notable (see below). The ladders are distinct from the majority of the find assemblages of pit wells, in that they attest to the primary use and maintenance of these features as water-sources, rather than to secondary deposition of refuse within the features. Forked or y-shaped piles are occasional finds in association with log ladders and have been interpreted as simple hoists, used to hold a bucket in an upright position as it is drawn (Taylor 2011, 28; Robinson Zeki forthcoming).

The presence of saw-marks on a log ladder of Middle Iron Age date (WD5) is unusual and noteworthy. Iron Age saws, predominately of Middle or Late Iron Age date, have been found in small numbers in Britain (Darbyshire 1995, 407–53). However, saw-marks on Iron Age wood are rare and tend to occur in Late Iron Age assemblages, such as at Glastonbury Lake Village (Sands 1997). So, while the presence of saw-marks on bone and antler is well-documented from earlier Iron Age contexts (Darbyshire 1995, 425), this provides a rare example of evidence of the use of a saw for woodworking in the Middle Iron Age.

Other finds

Further artefacts include 48 pieces (0.63kg) of burnt and worked clay of Iron Age origin, of which 28 pieces (0.540kg) were fragments from at least six separate triangular loom weights, two further pieces (0.030kg) were possible daub fragments and one fragment was half a moulded round clay spindle whorl (Timberlake 2018). A total of 26 worked flints were recovered from the site, most of which appeared to be the products or by products of systematic flake production or core reduction focused on narrow flakes and blades, characteristic of Neolithic assemblages (Beadsmoore 2018). Some 0.67kg of burnt stone was also recovered, the vast majority from Middle Iron Age pits, F.593 and F.594 (Timberlake 2018).

Environmental Evidence

Environmental indicators are drawn from two specific sources, the deposition of alluvium and colluvium in the valley bottom and foot slope, as well as pollen and water-logged plant macrofossils recovered from the Middle Iron Age Pit Well 1. A small assemblage of charred plant remains was also recovered from the

site. However, this consisted entirely of unidentified wood charcoal and has consequently not been included here (see Wright *et al.* 2019). Descriptions of the alluvium and colluvium are outlined below along with summary reports on the pollen and water-logged plant remains.

Alluvium and Colluvium

A grey, well-sorted silt clay alluvium was identified in the south of Area 2 and north of Area 3, filling the lowest contour of the valley. It was up to 1.5m thick in the valley bottom, thinning out up slope and merging with the colluvium collected in the foot slope. No clear stratigraphic relationship could be seen between these layers, the merged contact possibly implying that their deposition was to some degree simultaneous. The colluvium, a result of the erosion of soils down slope is now generally accepted to be accelerated if not caused entirely by cultivation (Bell 1983; Allen 1988), thus directly indicating former arable activity at Downham Road. The alluvium on the other hand accumulated slowly as a result of episodic, possibly seasonal flooding events confined to the valley bottom and presumably associated with the water course believed to have existed in the apex of the valley located between Area 2 and 3. The relationship of the alluvium to the archaeological features provides a basic temporal understanding of these environmental processes. Iron Age and Roman features were sealed beneath the alluvium whereas the Middle Saxon features (see Cessford, forthcoming) were cut from 0.25m above its basal horizon indicating that flooding did not occur until after the Roman field complex had been established, but prior to the Middle Saxon period. The relationship between the colluvium and archaeological features was unclear and no further evidence was recovered to date its deposition.

Pollen

Steve Boreham

Pollen counts were undertaken on samples from the earliest (F.629) and latest (F.624) cuts of Middle Iron Age Pit Well 1 (Table 5, Fig. 5). The samples are therefore sequential, although broken by what is assumed to be a relatively short interval. Preservation was variable, finely divided organic material sometimes made counting difficult and totals were lower than statistically desirable, so caution must be employed in the interpretation of the results. Preservation may also account for the absence of *Urtica* (nettle) when the waterlogged plant remains clearly show its presence on site.

F.629

The samples represent riparian (bank-side), meadow and grassland communities, with marginal emergent aquatic vegetation, hazel scrub/hedgerow, and willow/alder carr (wet woodland) nearby. Cereals were only detected in the upper-most sub-sample and the absence of disturbed ground indicators suggests that arable activity and indeed

poaching by cattle, must have been happening at some considerable distance from the site. Oak is present in the bottom three samples, but not in the upper sample, which uniquely contains cereal and juniper pollen. Heather (*Ericaceae*, a lover of acid well-drained soils) pollen is present only in the basal sub-sample, whilst spores of the polypody fern (*Polypodium*), usually taken as indicator of mature trees on which it is an epiphyte, occurs only in the sub-sample from 19cm. Rock-rose (*Helianthemum*, a lover of chalk grassland) pollen occurs in the bottom two subsamples, whilst meadowsweet (*Filipendula*, a riparian plant) occurs only in the upper two sub-samples). Although the pollen concentrations were relatively low, there is little evidence for post-depositional modification of the pollen signal, usually indicated by elevated proportions of spores and *Asteraceae* pollen.

F.624

The samples represent meadow and grassland communities, with riparian (bank-side) plants, marginal emergent aquatic vegetation, wet woodland (willow/alder carr), hazel/oak scrub/hedgerow, and some evidence of nearby arable activity. There are minor changes worth noting through this sequence as well, although their significance is difficult to assess. Birch and juniper are present in the upper two samples, together with members of the pink family (*Caryophyllaceae*) and members of the cow parsley family (*Apiaceae*), perhaps suggesting an expansion of scrub and tall-herb meadow communities. The spores of the polypody fern (*Polypodium*), usually taken as an indicator of mature trees on which it is an epiphyte, occurs only in the sub-sample from 35cm. The soil disturbance indicator ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) occurs in all but the uppermost sub-sample. There is little evidence for post-depositional modification of the pollen signal in this pollen sequence.

Pollen analyses show a post-clearance signal, from a landscape of pastoral and probably arable use, with hedgerows, spinneys and a few scattered trees. The curious absence of soil eutrophication and disturbance indicators in F.629 and F.624 hints that this pit well feature was separate from intense human activity. The continuous presence of aquatics show that the site did not dry out over the time represented here.

Waterlogged Plant Remains

Ellen Simmons

A total of two samples from Pit Well 1 were processed for the recovery of waterlogged organic remains. The samples were taken from the same contexts as the pollen (the basal fills of F.629 and F.624). Assessment indicates that although moderately rich assemblages of over one hundred plant seeds are present in both well fills, F.629 contains a relatively low diversity of taxa while well F.624 contains a moderate diversity of taxa (Table 6).

The seeds of plant taxa present in both well fills include segetal plants, which are commonly associated with fertile, disturbed and cultivated soils, and ruderal plants commonly associated with rough and waste ground, including nettles which indicate nutri-

Table 5. Pollen species present in Pit Well 1.

Feature	F.629				F.624				
Context	2444	2444	2443	2441	2071	2070	2070	2069	2069
Pollen sub-sample	5cm	10cm	19cm	25cm	5cm	15cm	25cm	35cm	45cm
Trees & Shrubs									
<i>Betula</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.8
<i>Pinus</i>	3.4	2.3	1.2	1.2	3.7	3.4	3.3	5.1	5.3
<i>Quercus</i>	5.6	5.8	4.9	0.0	7.4	5.1	3.3	2.5	1.8
<i>Tilia</i>	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Alnus</i>	4.5	5.8	8.5	5.9	13.0	5.1	5.0	7.6	3.5
<i>Corylus</i>	15.7	11.6	9.8	12.9	5.6	5.1	8.3	10.1	7.0
<i>Salix</i>	3.4	3.5	4.9	5.9	0.0	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.0
<i>Juniperus</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.8
Herbs									
Poaceae	32.6	29.1	31.7	27.1	37.0	44.1	41.7	30.4	40.4
Cereals	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.8	1.8
Cyperaceae	3.4	4.7	4.9	5.9	7.4	5.1	6.7	3.8	5.3
Ericaceae	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Asteraceae (Asteroidea/Cardueae) undif.	2.2	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Asteraceae (Lactuceae) undif.	0.0	2.3	1.2	1.2	0.0	1.7	3.3	1.3	3.5
<i>Artemisia</i> type	0.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.3	0.0
<i>Cirsium</i> type	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.8
<i>Centaurea nigra</i> type	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0
Caryophyllaceae	1.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.8
Chenopodiaceae	3.4	4.7	3.7	2.4	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Brassicaceae	3.4	3.5	3.7	5.9	1.9	3.4	1.7	2.5	1.8
Fabaceae	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Filipendula</i>	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.2	3.7	0.0	1.7	3.8	3.5
<i>Helianthemum</i>	1.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.3	0.0
Lamiaceae	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.8
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.3	0.0
<i>Ranunculus</i> type	1.1	2.3	2.4	1.2	0.0	3.4	3.3	1.3	3.5
<i>Rumex</i>	3.4	4.7	3.7	3.5	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.3	3.5
Apiaceae	3.4	3.5	2.4	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.8
Liliaceae	0.0	1.2	2.4	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lower plants									
<i>Polypodium</i>	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0
Pteropsida (monolete) undif.	6.7	8.1	8.5	9.4	7.4	8.5	6.7	8.9	7.0
Pteropsida (trilete) undif.	2.2	1.2	1.2	3.5	1.9	3.4	1.7	5.1	1.8
Aquatics									
<i>Sparganium</i> type	9.0	10.5	7.3	5.9	9.3	8.5	6.7	8.9	8.8
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	1.1	2.3	1.2	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sum trees	13.5	15.1	14.6	7.1	24.1	13.6	11.7	17.7	12.3
Sum shrubs	19.1	15.1	14.6	20.0	5.6	6.8	10.0	11.4	8.8
Sum herbs	58.4	60.5	59.8	60.0	61.1	67.8	70.0	55.7	70.2
Sum spores	9.0	9.3	11.0	12.9	9.3	11.9	8.3	15.2	8.8
Main Sum	89	86	82	85	54	59	60	79	57
Concentration (grains per ml)	58501	41112	41066	40634	51629	51709	52585	63911	49956

ent enriched soils. The segetal plant red goosefoot is abundant in well F.624 and can be associated with the nutrient rich margins of ditches and ponds, which are trampled by livestock, as well as with arable fields (Preston *et al.* 2002). Scrub type vegetation in the vicinity of well F.629 is indicated by bramble, birch and elder. Damp and open grassland is indicated in the vicinity of well F.624, along with damp or wet soils in

the vicinity of both well fills. Aquatic plant species indicating standing water are also present in both well fills.

Table 6. Waterlogged plant species present in pit wells. key, + = < 10 items, ++ = 10-29 items, +++ = 30-49 items, ++++ = 50-99 items, +++++ = > 100 items.

Feature number	629	624
Sub-sample volume (litres)	1	1
Volume of organic material recovered (ml)	40	30
Wild/weed plant seeds*		
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus/acris/repens</i> (bulbous/meadow/creeping buttercup)		+
<i>Ranunculus scleratus</i> L. (celery-leaved buttercup)	+	
<i>Ranunculus</i> subgen. <i>Batrachium</i> (DC.) A.Gray (water crowfoots)	+	++++
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. (bramble / blackberry)	++	+
<i>Potentilla anserina</i> L. (silverweed)	+	
<i>Urtica urens</i> L. (small nettle)		+
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L. (common nettle)	+++++	+++
<i>Betula</i> sp. (birch) seed	+	+
<i>Betula pendula</i> Roth (birch) bract	+	
Brassicaceae (cabbage family)		+
<i>Nasturtium</i> sp. (water cress)		++++
<i>Persicaria maculosa / lapathifolia</i> (redshank / pale persicaria)		++
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> agg. (knotgrass)		+
<i>Stellaria media</i> (L.) Vill. (chickweed)	+++++	++
<i>Chenopodium</i> spp. (goosefoots)		+
<i>Chenopodium</i> cf. <i>rubrum</i> (red goosefoot)		++++
<i>Montia fontana</i> ssp. <i>chondrosperma</i> (Fenzl) Walters (blinks)		++
<i>Galium aparine</i> L. (cleavers)	+	
<i>Plantago major</i> L. (greater plantain)		++
Lamiaceae (dead nettle family)	+	
<i>Carduus</i> spp. / <i>Cirsium</i> spp. (thistles)	+	++
<i>Sonchus asper</i> (L.) Hill (prickly sow thistle)		+
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L. (elder)	+	
<i>Lemna</i> sp. (duckweed)		+++
<i>Juncus</i> spp. (rushes)	++	++++
<i>Carex</i> spp. (sedges)	+	+
Poaceae (grasses)	+	
Total identifiable wild / weed plant seeds	+++++	+++++
Other plant material*		
Herbaceous plant roots / stems	+++++	+++++
Thorns		+
Wood		
2-4 mm wood fragments	+	+++
<2mm wood fragments	+++++	+++++

Discussion

Environment and Land-use

As demonstrated by the palaeoenvironmental evidence, there is a clear distinction between the pre-alluvium and 'active' alluviating landscape at Downham Road, which falls approximately at the Roman/Anglo-Saxon boundary. The pre-alluvium landscape will be discussed here, whilst the later environment will be presented along with the Anglo Saxon archaeology in a forthcoming paper (Cessford, forthcoming). Prior to alluviation, the landscape was clearly a more stable environment, less prone to flooding and with limited detectable soil erosion. The valley itself had a relatively more pronounced contour, un-denuded

by alluvial and colluvial processes. It is tempting to see intensified agricultural practice in the Roman period (represented by the planting beds) as the main influencing factor on the deposition of alluvium and colluvium, certainly in terms of the colluvium (Bell 1983, Allen 1988, Boardman 1992). However, advancing peat formation in Ely's West Fen may have led to increased flooding on the fen margin. As illustrated by the plant and pollen remains dating to the Middle Iron Age (unfortunately deposits in earlier and later features were non-conducive to organic preservation), the surroundings were a mosaic of pasture with some arable land-use, scattered trees, hedgerows, fragments of woodland and heather present early in the sequence. Although poorly represented, cereal cultivation is present later in the time slice, but this presumably took place away from Pit Well 1 given the

total absence of cereal debris (chaff, glumes, etc.) in the waterlogged plant remains. Pastoral land-use appears to become intensified later in the sequence, as evidence of weeds indicating disturbed or trampled ground are more prevalent among the assemblage from the latest re-cut of Pit Well 1 (F.624). Scrub or hedgerow species grew in the immediate vicinity of the well, implying that hedges may have formed a component of the architecture of the site. Birch is the only tree species present in both the pollen and plant remains indicating its presence immediately on site, whereas other further tree species were situated in the surroundings.

Until recently the environmental record for later prehistoric and Roman Ely has been somewhat sparse. Of the previous large-scale projects only Wardy Hill (Evans 2003) and West Fen Road (Mortimer *et al.* 2005) have produced meaningful environmental data. Recent fieldwork at Downham Road and Lancaster Way (Boreham 2019) have considerably expanded the current database particularly for the Middle Iron Age. Pollen counts were relatively low at all of the mentioned sites, which must be taken into consideration when making broader conclusions surrounding Ely's environmental sequence. Nonetheless, the combined sequences seem to indicate a very open landscape with patchy scrub of hazel and juniper, with woodland only present as a distant hint, throughout the Middle Iron Age and Roman periods. Of greater significance, Downham Road is currently the only Middle Iron Age site on Ely with evidence of cereal production. This is particularly interesting, as Downham Road was not used for settlement at this time. In contrast, the extensive Middle Iron Age settlements at Wardy Hill and Lancaster Way show a total absence of cereal pollen. This may indicate that proximity to a settlement was not a principal factor when choosing arable land.

Later Prehistoric and Roman activity at Downham Road

Firm conclusions concerning the chronology and character of the prehistoric activity at Downham Road remain elusive given the ambiguity surrounding the phasing of the prehistoric component of the site. It is clear that there was at least a sporadic presence from the Late Bronze Age through to the Middle Iron Age, with activity focused on the area of the pit cluster throughout. The general linear arrangement of the features across Area 3 (Fig. 3) suggests activity may have adhered to a boundary, possibly defined by a hedge as indicated by palaeoenvironmental evidence. Following the Middle Iron Age, no evidence can be attributed to the Late Iron Age, despite Downham Road sitting within an area of concentrated occupation during this time. Subsequently, the site clearly undergoes intense arable use during the Roman period.

The Later Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Middle Iron Age activity at Downham Road is represented exclusively by pits and pit wells. Whilst this con-

forms to regional Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age site types, Middle Iron Age sites differ and are typically made up of dense arrangements of enclosures and eaves gully defined roundhouses. In the context of these settlement characteristics, the Later Bronze Age and Early Iron Age features at Downham Road are broadly consistent with the subtle evidence, which typically constitutes settlement activity during this time in the Fens. The single pit in Area 2 securely dated to the Early Iron Age (F.70) offers a more fine-grained insight into practice during this period. The relatively substantial artefact assemblage recovered from this feature comprised a range of fine and coarse pottery vessels, animal bone, pieces of structural daub and burnt stone, materials reflecting a range of activities commonly associated with 'domestic practice' during the Early Iron Age. The daub fragments also potentially provide evidence a structure was present on the site. The pottery assemblage, comprising small components of twelve vessels, suggests the artefact assemblage as a whole derived from a much larger, more diverse group, which presumably accumulated in surface deposits of occupation debris, which was largely re-worked elsewhere into the modern plough-soil or completely eroded away along with the prehistoric soil horizon. Consequently, the Early Iron Age occupation was potentially more extensive than the single feature suggests. However, with no cereal remains, quern stones or four-post structures, at least within the area exposed by the excavation, there is limited evidence to show that occupation was prolonged or 'established'. Contemporary Fenland sites such as Cromwell Community College, Chatteris (Atkins and Percival 2014) or the multiple sites recently identified at Soham (Billington and Moan 2019), appear to present more compelling settlement evidence.

A parallel can be drawn between Downham Road's Early Iron Age feature and the dispersed Early Iron Age pits seen across the West Cambridge and North West Cambridge developments on the claylands around Cambridge. With no sign of structural features or cereal remains on these sites, the sparse evidence was seen as reflecting temporary occupation, perhaps associated with 'task' related activities (Evans and Lucas, forthcoming). However extensive storage pit sites are a feature of the Early Iron Age sequence in the Cambridge region (Trumpington Meadows (Evans *et al.* 2018) and the Marshalls Site (Tabor 2019)), which gives a much clearer contrast between 'established settlement sites' and 'temporary sites' here, than in the Fenland context.

The Middle Iron Age remains comprised pit wells along with a number of smaller pits, but crucially no features commonly associated with established settlement (e.g. enclosures and roundhouses). Hence the Middle Iron Age land-use appears to be largely pastoral, with clear evidence for watering domestic animals, probably cattle and sheep according to the faunal remains, activities which conceivably occurred at the periphery of settlement. The Middle Iron Age artefact assemblage, comprising pottery, animal bone,

loom weights and a single spindle whorl fragment, represents practices which are typically domestic in nature. Although modest in quantity, the assemblage is abundant enough to indicate Downham Road was located in relatively close proximity to a settlement, possibly at West Fen Road, located only c. 250m to the south. Sites such as Downham Road are rarely identified, as excavation tends to focus on settlement proper, rather than 'off site' activity areas, at least in part because these 'low density sites' are difficult to detect by usual survey methods. The Middle Iron Age landscape at Milton Landfill, to the north of Cambridge (Phillips 2015) may be one of few regional parallels. Here, settlement defined by enclosures was located some distance from a contemporary pit well and a group of other pits, crucially exposed within the same excavation area. Also of importance is the evidence for the use of a saw for woodworking identified on log ladder WD5. This ladder was conclusively dated to the Middle Iron Age by radiocarbon dating, providing comparatively early evidence for the use of saws as a woodworking tool prior to the Late Iron Age.

During the Roman period, it is clear the site was intensively used for cultivation. Much like the preceding Middle Iron Age phase, Downham Road was located on the periphery of settlement. The planting bed features seen extensively within the field system at Downham Road are recognised as a common component of the regional Romano-British rural landscape and identified at several Roman sites across Ely itself, including Lancaster Way (Wright 2018), Trinity Lands (Masser 2001), Cam Drive (Phillips 2017) and Ely Road, Little Thetford (Tabor and Wright 2018) amongst others. Although there is currently no data to determine what crop was produced in association with these features, it is clear they had some form of specialised horticultural function (Smith *et al.* 2016). The modest pottery assemblage recovered from the Roman features was probably caught up in 'midden waste', which was used to 'enrich' or 'manure' the cultivation soil. The low mean sherd weight relative to the Hurst Lane Reservoir settlement assemblage, implies some post-depositional fragmentation possibly resulting from re-deposition and cultivation. With a pottery date range from the 1st–4th century and no diagnostic sherds later than the 3rd century, the field complex is likely to date to the mid–later part of the Roman period, or at least to have gone out of use by the latter centuries of the Roman period.

Although other Roman settlements may exist undiscovered within the landscape, Hurst Lane Reservoir and some of the main boundaries at West Fen Road share comparable alignments to the Downham Road complex (Fig. 2). This suggests that the agricultural land at Downham Road may be associated with one or both of these sites, and may hint at the scale to which land on the periphery of settlement was turned over to agricultural use. However, with no evidence of a field system present around the settlement zone at the West Fen Road Consortium site (Mudd and Webster 2011), it is clear farmland was not

necessarily sited immediately adjacent to settlement. Perhaps other factors, such as the suitability of the land and soil conditions also influenced the location of agricultural land.

Later Prehistoric Ely

Evidence of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age activity on the Isle of Ely has previously been elusive and generally confined to small, residual assemblages of material recovered from later features. A few Early Iron Age pits and a burial were present at Prickwillow Road (Atkins and Mudd 2003), but, yielding only a small quantity of pottery, their dating was somewhat ambiguous, whilst the identification of a possible Early Iron Age roundhouse at West Fen Road, was considered tentative (Mortimer *et al.* 2005, 16). This 'structure' contained no dateable material. The lack of convincing settlement evidence led Evans (2002, 2003, 2007) to conclude that Ely's claylands were largely uninhabited prior to the Middle Iron Age, with activity limited to Late Bronze Age seasonal use when grazing land exposed around the skirt-lands of the island was flooded. At these times, metalwork was deposited into the fenland margins around Ely, accounting for the sizeable quantity of Middle and Late Bronze Age implements recovered from Grunty Fen and West Fen (Evans 2002, 49). The evidence from Downham Road now provides a tangible trace of occupation prior to the Middle Iron Age, albeit not as intensive or prolonged as the evidence for contemporary occupation identified at Soham or Chatteris. It is of note that these latter sites occurred on more favourable geologies and Soham was a more accessible fenland 'peninsula' as opposed to an 'islands' proper. In combination with the settlement evidence at Downham Road, Middle Bronze Age field-system and settlement evidence has been exposed at Cam Drive (Phillips and Morgan 2015); Middle Bronze Age burials and a Late Bronze Age settlement and metalwork production site was excavated at Field End, Witchford (Blackbourn 2018); and Late Bronze Age settlement has been identified at North West Ely (Phillips and Blackbourn 2019). All of these sites decisively attest to an investment into the claylands of Ely earlier than previously thought.

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