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The Fenland Project, Number 6: The South-Western Cambridgeshire Fenlands

East Anglian Archaeology
Cambridgeshire County Council 1992

EAST ANGLIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

The Fenland Project, Number 6: The South-western Cambridgeshire Fenlands

by David Hall

with contributions from
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Cover illustration A blow in Holme Fen, taken from TL 2112 8810 looking west. Photo David Hall

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CAR	Cambridgeshire Archaeological Record (an item held in the Sites and Monuments Record at Shire Hall, Cambridge)
CRO	Cambridgeshire County Record Office
CUCAP	Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs
CUL	Cambridge University Library
HRO	Huntingdon Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)

The Fenland Survey

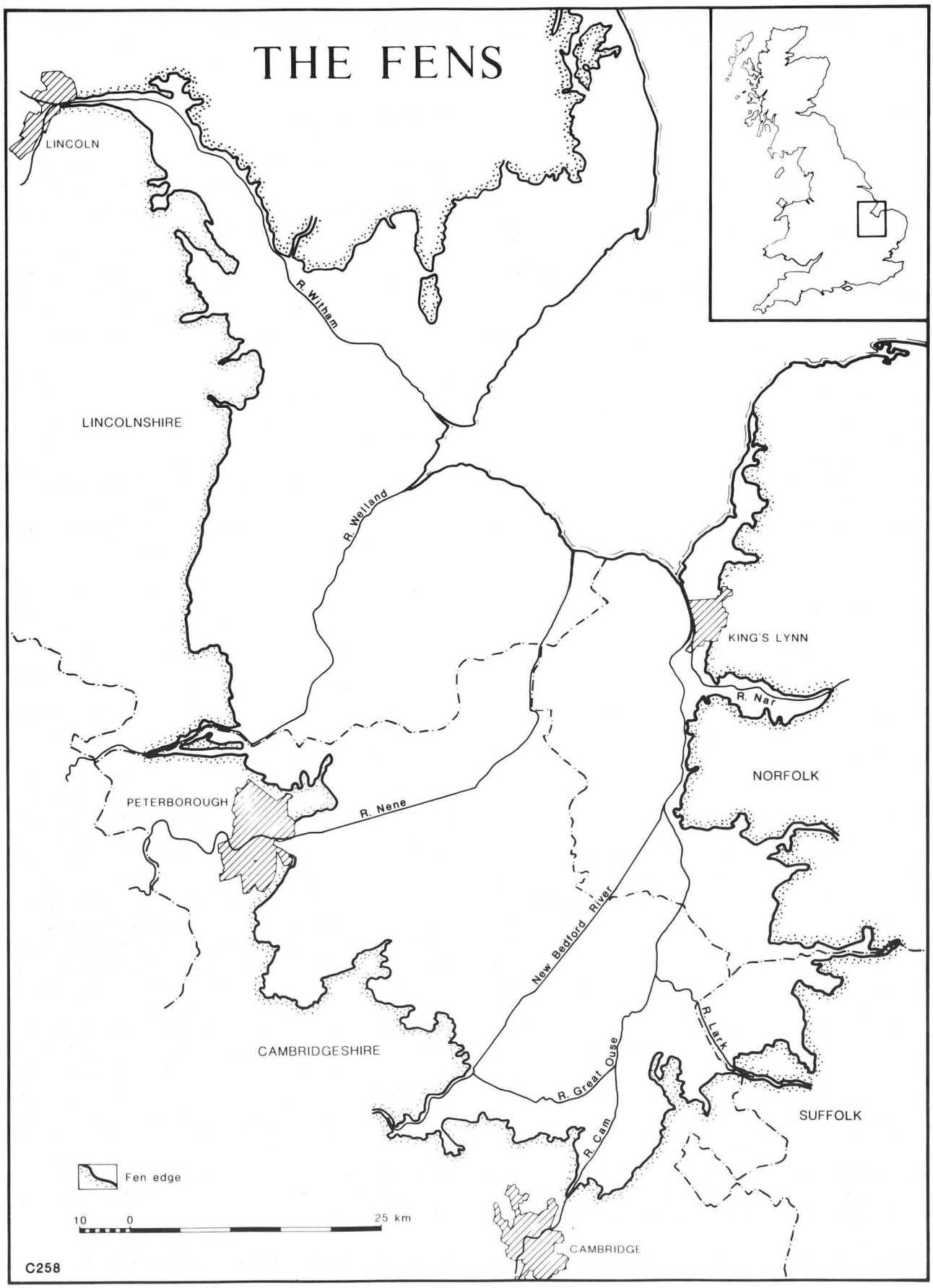


Figure 1 Location of the Wash Fenlands

1. Introduction to the Fenland Survey Reports

I. Introduction

(Fig. 1)

The Fenlands of the Wash form what is probably the most important and extensive resource of well-preserved archaeological sites and landscapes in Great Britain. The Fenland Project Committee was set up in 1981 to provide information necessary to establish policies for the preservation or excavation of nationally important monuments and landscapes within the Fenland area. The significance of wetland archaeology is now fully recognized (Coles 1987), and action was necessary in the Fens because of continued destruction caused by modern agriculture and lowering of the water-table.

The Fenland Project exists to initiate and co-ordinate archaeological and environmental research in the one million acres (4,000 square kilometres) of the Wash Fenland. The overall aims are to record the environment, stratigraphy, landscape and archaeology of the area. When this has been completed the most important monuments and landscape regions will be considered for preservation and scheduling; some monuments may need excavating if they cannot be preserved. The first priority has been to make an archaeological survey of as much as possible of the total area. At the same time threatened sites, already recognised as of national importance, have been excavated (Pryor *et al.* 1986; Evans and Hodder 1987; Potter and Jackson forthcoming). The Project is also engaged in environmental research on the complex Flandrian deposits of the Fenland stratigraphy.

The Fenland Project acts in conjunction with regional and county archaeological arrangements, and the Project's Field Officers are based within the local framework where there are already research facilities. The direction of work is controlled by a Committee that includes representatives of English Heritage (alias the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (England)), The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), the British Museum, the University of Cambridge, the Fenland Archaeological Trust, and the counties of Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk (Coles and Hall 1983). The Project is primarily funded by English Heritage, with input for specific projects by the British Museum and Cambridge University.

This report is the second in the series of survey reports that will describe the whole of the Cambridgeshire Fenland. The first has already appeared (Hall 1987a) and the scheme shown on the back outside cover shows the regions that will be dealt with in future reports. The format of this volume follows that of the first, as much information as possible being given in map form supplemented by parish commentaries, and with numerical data presented as tables in microfiche. The main descriptive text of essays is introduced with a background to Fenland archaeology and the formation of Flandrian deposits; a final summary emphasises significant findings and important items that require urgent attention.

II. Previous work

Interest in the antiquities of the Fenlands dates from the 17th century when the physical remains of Roman Britain were first being identified. In the case of the Fenland there was an incorrect assertion that the Sea Bank, an earthwork surrounding the the Wash protecting the Fens from marine flooding, was of Roman origin (Dugdale 1772). Genuine Roman antiquities from the siltlands were reported by Stukeley (1776) and since the early 19th century, items of flint, metal and pottery have been discovered in large quantities, disturbed from ancient ground surfaces newly exposed by wasting peat (Babington 1883; Fox 1923).

The Fenland Research Committee, formed in 1932, pooled research expertise in Fenland environmental studies and archaeology, including amongst its members Gordon Fowler, Harry Godwin and Grahame Clark. After 1945 its work centred mainly on studies of the Roman Fenland (Phillips 1970). Medieval geographical and historical studies of the Fenland were published by Darby in 1940 and revised in 1974 (Darby 1974).

The accelerating destruction of archaeological and environmental remains in the Fenlands since 1945 prompted an assessment to be made, in 1976, of the quality of surviving monuments in Cambridgeshire (Hall 1981a). Out of this initial survey, supplemented by excavations at Maxey, and the recognition that wetlands in neighbouring counties were under similar threat, came the formation of the Fenland Project, in 1981, leading to the current work.

Skertchly studied Fenland geology and natural history during the 1870s (Skertchly 1877). The basis of modern work was established with two significant advances, firstly the recognition that the sinuous 'silt hills' of the Fenland are extinct water courses, the mapping of which allows the earlier drainage pattern to be reconstructed (Fowler 1932). Secondly came the dating of buried Fenland strata by relating them to archaeological deposits (Clark *et al.* 1935). Godwin and his co-workers also began their studies in the southern Fenland during the 1930s, which laid the foundation of all subsequent environmental work (Godwin and Clifford 1938, Godwin 1940). Detailed surveys of the surface soils in various parts of the Fenlands have been made by the Soil Survey of England and Wales since 1965, the Ely report by Seale was the first to map the drainage system of the prehistoric Fens on a large scale (Seale 1975a). The survey made for the Cambridge region by Hodge and Seale (1965) and the work of Seale *et al.* (1976) cover part of the region described in this volume. The Sheets published for Chatteris (Seale 1975b) and Stilton (Burton and Seale 1981) are entirely within the region.

III. Fenland Pleistocene and Flandrian deposits

(Fig. 2)

The Fenlands draining into the Wash extend to approximately 4,000 square kilometres and lie in the counties of Cambridge, Lincoln, Norfolk and Suffolk. Present-day

surfaces lie between 2m below and 3m above Ordnance Datum (OD), and Flandrian accumulations vary in type from peat to clays, coarse silts and sands. In the south there are islands large and small, reaching as high as 36m in one case (Haddenham), although 1–5m is more common. The present variety of the landscape is a result of the alternate phases of marine and freshwater dominance in the area during the last 5,000 years, which will be briefly outlined below.

Both Pleistocene and Flandrian deposits are the subject of current research and many of the theories and interpretations of the complex and variable deposits are under review, especially with respect to dating. The work of Waller (forthcoming, this series) has much altered the view of Flandrian deposition and full details can be consulted in his report. The following is a summary of what is believed to have occurred in Cambridgeshire.

The Fens lie in a low area having a base of soft Jurassic clays hemmed in by higher ground of hard limestones and chalk on the north-west and south-east. The region lies open to the Wash on the north-east, and so was liable to marine inundation at various times during the Pleistocene epoch and subsequently. The fen floor contains channels, now infilled, up to 100m deep, possibly scoured out when sea levels were low. Pleistocene deposits of Chalky Till occur on the high ground of the western fen-edge and on some of the islands (Gallois 1978, 1979, 1980). Gravels occur along the fen and island margins, the oldest identified in Cambridgeshire may be the March Gravels, which outcrop in the neighbourhood of March and Chatteris (West 1972, 87–98). Recent work suggests that the term March Gravel has been used for material that consists of Ipswichian sediments mixed with Devensian gravels (West 1987).

The Fenland landscape has been modified by periglacial processes. The circular depressions up to about 1km diameter that occur in several regions are thought to have formed under such conditions; their origin has been discussed in detail by Burton (1987). It is possible that the hollows were formed by the weight of a large lens of ice pressing on a soft surface, but another explanation is that they were created by thermokarst processes. The depressions form a striking feature of the complex fen edge at Farcet and Conington (Plate I).

In Cambridgeshire freshwater peat was being formed as early as the 6th millennium BC. The earliest examples are 7690 ± 400 BP (SRR–1757) at Tydd St Giles *c.* −9m OD (A. Horton pers. comm. to M. Waller 1987) and 6575 ± 95 BP (HV 10011) at *c.* −8.0m OD near Guyhirn (Shennan 1986a). As the peat slowly spread during subsequent millennia, it caused the forest that had grown previously to die and become entombed. These trees were preserved by the wet conditions (as 'bog oaks'), and have to be dug out when they interfere with agriculture (Plate II).

From the 3rd millennium BC onwards the major

Plate I Vertical air photograph of Conington Fen, showing periglacial features, TL 19 84. *Cambridge University Collection; copyright reserved.* (RC8EF)

Plate II Prehistoric logs in Holme Fen, TL 21 87

embayments have been subject to extensive marine flooding that deposited layers of clays and silts. At the same time the extent of the wetland was increasing with peats forming at the edge of the region of direct marine influence. In between the phases of active minerogenic deposition there were periods when peat spread over much of the marine silts and clays. In Cambridgeshire extensive marine strata have been identified. Godwin suggested that there was commonly a sequence, working from bottom to top, of: lower peat; fen clay; upper peat; upper silt

Further complications were introduced by the British Geological Survey (Wyatt 1984) and Hall (Hall 1987a, 4–8). The names used by Godwin (1940), the British Geological Survey and Hall are listed in Table 1.

Godwin 1940	*British Geological Survey 1984*	*Hall 1987a*	*This volume*
lower peat			
fen clay	Barroway Drove Beds	Barroway Drove Beds	marine clay
upper peat			
	younger Barroway Drove Beds	Upper Barroway Drove Beds	silty clay
upper silt	Terrington Beds	Terrington Beds	silt

Table 1 Names of Flandrian deposits

It is evident from the Table that matters were complicated and that uniformity had not been achieved by different workers. It is now clear that Fenland deposits are so variable in age and lithology, that names covering the whole or large regions of the Fenland are not valid (Waller forthcoming). Thus the only marine clay, hitherto called fen clay, deposited at Farcet Fen is identical in appearance to material called once by the same name occurring at Peacock's Farm, Littleport. The environmental changes to and from a brackish environment at both sites are also identical. Yet the age of these sediments differ; at Littleport the clay was deposited in the late Neolithic period but at Farcet the clay is of Bronze Age date, by which time peat was being deposited in the Littleport region on top of the marine clay. It is therefore inappropriate to give the two clays the same name, and completely inaccurate and misleading to assign a chronology to a deposit on the basis of its lithology, as has been done by all previous workers in the area.

In this report descriptions have been confined to the lithology observed on the ground surface, since this is what has been mapped during the survey. Where dating evidence is available either from excavations or from the recent work of Waller (which has incorporated radiocarbon determinations) attempts have been made to assign a chronology.

The marine deposits were drained by a network of sinuous channels, linking up to form dendritic patterns. These are now represented in the fen as raised banks of clay or silt, and were first identified by Fowler who called them roddons (Fowler 1932). The channels became silted up and now stand proud of the fen surface partly because they had tidal levees when formed (Godwin 1938) and partly because of post depositional compression and wastage of the surrounding peat. Extensive networks of roddons only occur in areas of marine influence; small lengths of roddons made of alluvium can occur where major rivers enter the fen. Roddons are further discussed by Hall and Silvester (Hall 1987a, 9–10; Hall and Silvester 1985).

The region reported in this account is almost entirely the south-western fen basin that had the later, Bronze Age, deposit of soft grey marine clay on top of basal peat. Only in the north east, at Wimblington and Manea, are there marine clays belonging to the south-eastern embayment, probably deposited in the Neolithic period.

The lowest marine deposit, the fen clay of Godwin, was considered, on the basis of pollen diagrams and the continuity of the fen clay/upper peat surface, to have been deposited synchronously across the Middle and South Levels (Godwin and Clifford 1938, Godwin 1940). Archaeological evidence and subsequently radiocarbon dating (largely from the South Level) suggested deposition during the 3rd millennium BC (Willis 1961, Clark and Godwin 1962). Godwin later revised his interpretation indicating that the marine influence may have persisted later than the 3rd millennium in the Holme basin (Godwin and Vishnu-Mittre 1975). This is supported by recent results from nearby Farcet Fen, already mentioned, where the maximum extension of the marine clay occurred in the Early Bronze Age (after 3700 ± 60 BP; 2175–1985 Cal. BC (Q–2552); Waller forthcoming). At Whittlesey Mere marine clay was deposited between 3720 ± 75 BP (Q-2812, 2273–1985 Cal. BC) and 3250 ± 70 BP (Q–2811, 1665–1435 Cal. BC). Differences in the timing and altitude between different parts of the Fenlands have been attributed to crustal movements (Godwin and Vishnu-Mittre 1975, Shennan 1982; 1986a,b).

The nature of the material deposited during this

marine episode (a soft sticky blue-grey clay) is indicative of a low energy environment. Earlier authors refer to a brackish lagoon (Godwin 1940), however such a term is usually used to describe areas enclosed by coastal barriers. It seems doubtful whether there ever were lagoons during the marine phases, and it is more likely that this material was deposited in an open coastal environment in the type of successional sequence described by Shennan (1986b). The extent of the deposit in the area under discussion is shown on Figure 2.

A silty marine deposit, identified by archaeological survey in the Thorney area, in the previous report (Hall 1987a, 7–8), is now dated to the Early Bronze Age, since it overlies peat dated 3820 ± 110 BP (Q-2809, 2470–2085 Cal. BC) at Wallace's Drove (TF). The term silty clay has been used in the current report; Figure 2 shows the occurrence of silty material in the region, it being limited to the north, and is only at all significant at Benwick and Doddington. However, there is no evidence that the silty material in these last two parishes is the same date as at Thorney, the two regions being separated by the Whittlesey islands.

A third marine deposit is a coarse 'silt' called the Terrington Beds by the British Geological Survey. In this report Terrington Beds are called 'silts' and refer to the coarse silts of the Wisbech region, lying at 2.0–3.0m OD and supporting Roman habitation. The silts do not occur extensively in the region under discussion in this volume, small areas being present at the north of Manea and Wimblington.

Since the end of the Bronze Age nearly all the area described in this report has been under continuous peat growth without any interruption from incursions of marine/brackish water. In the previous report (Hall 1987a, 9) it was suggested that a raised *Sphagnum* bog hemming in the marine floods would explain why the later marine episodes did not reach southern Cambridgeshire. This model is now seems less likely since the work of Waller (forthcoming) who has shown that there is little environmental evidence for *Sphagnum* or other acid bog species away from the deposits of the Holme/Yaxley basin described by Godwin and Clifford (1938) and Godwin and Vishnu-Mittre (1975).

The exceptions to the areas of continuous peat growth are the freshwater lakes or meres that developed near the fen edge. Most of the lakes were very shallow and deposits of whitish clayey marls formed in them. Since drainage, the marls ghost the mere sites, contrasting starkly with the surrounding black peat. Jennings (1950) studied Redmere in Norfolk, which lies close to the roddon of the Little Ouse. He came to the conclusion that the mere was formed by water accumulating against the river bank, unable to drain into it because of the levees of silt. He suggested a date of formation contemporary with the levee formation.

It has been generally accepted that meres formed next to large roddons, or in the case of active rivers, by the levees. It is true that Ramsey Mere lay next to the medieval course of the Nene and if this course were in existence in the Iron Age the levee theory could be invoked. Godwin likewise sought to explain the formation of Whittlesey Mere on the assumption that the Nene ran around its northern edge and had levees (Godwin and Vishnu-Mittre 1975, 565–6). This is difficult to accept because the Nene did not have its course here until the Mere was drained in 1848. Bodger's map of 1786 and Dugdale's of *c.* 1630 both show the Nene entering Whittlesey Mere at the north (via Conquest Lode), and leaving at the south. Further, the whole southern course of the Nene bears no relation to any of the roddon systems and was largely canalised and created in the post-Roman period (see Hall 1987a, 46, for the March section). The extent of the late marine silts is shown in Hall 1987a (Fig. 3, p. 5), for the March area and on Figure 2 of this report. It is clear that the silt is very limited and bears no relation to the Medieval Nene, and so cannot have formed levees along its sides.

Although Godwin appears in this instance to have been incorrect as to the mode of mere formation, it is, however, clear that the mere originated during or soon after the deposition of these silts elsewhere. A date of 1995 ± 70 BP (Q–2810 100 Cal. BC–95 Cal. AD) has recently been obtained from peat beneath the marl of Whittlesey Mere.

The most recent Flandrian deposit is alluvium brought down by the major rivers, and to a lesser extent by brooks. Near the Nene exit at the north and the Ouse to the south, there are extensive deposits of alluvium, up to 2m deep, and covering hundreds of hectares. There is also frequently a narrow band of peaty colluvium along the edge of the fen.

The general sequence, in summary, was first the growth of a deciduous forest that was drowned during the Neolithic period and buried by peat. Over most of the region, except Wood Walton and Holme fens and a thin belt along the fen edge, brackish marine conditions had developed by the Early Bronze Age. During this episode marine clay was deposited, becoming several metres deep in places. A small area of silty material may have accumulated during a subsequent (late Bronze Age?) marine phase, but only in the north of the study area. When the brackish water receded peat accumulated over the whole of the region, except for the north and in the main channels. Peat growth was then continuous and uninterrupted until drainage in the 17th century, except where there was development of freshwater meres, or deposition of alluvium in the post Roman period. The extent of Flandrian deposits currently visible on the fen surface is given on Figure 2. More details and depositional evidence for the Flandrian deposits can be found in the essays below.

IV. Reconstruction of the Fenland landscape

The different types of fenland peat and sediment described above, being of various dates, offer scope for reconstruction of the landscape at each major archaeological period. The earliest identifiable phase is the marine clay with roddons stage. In the area at present under consideration only the deeper parts would have been directly under marine influence in the Neolithic. The maximum extent of the phase, as indicated at Farcet, occurred in the Middle Bronze Age (after 3700 BP, see above), even though described in the period plans as 'Neolithic'. This should be taken into account in the parish discussions, where plans showing roddons have Neolithic sites marked on them. The fen edge is taken as about the −1m contour, being the top of the marine clay.

A deposit of silty material at the north, mainly in Benwick and Doddington, may represent a later Bronze Age marine incursion. The associated roddons again al-

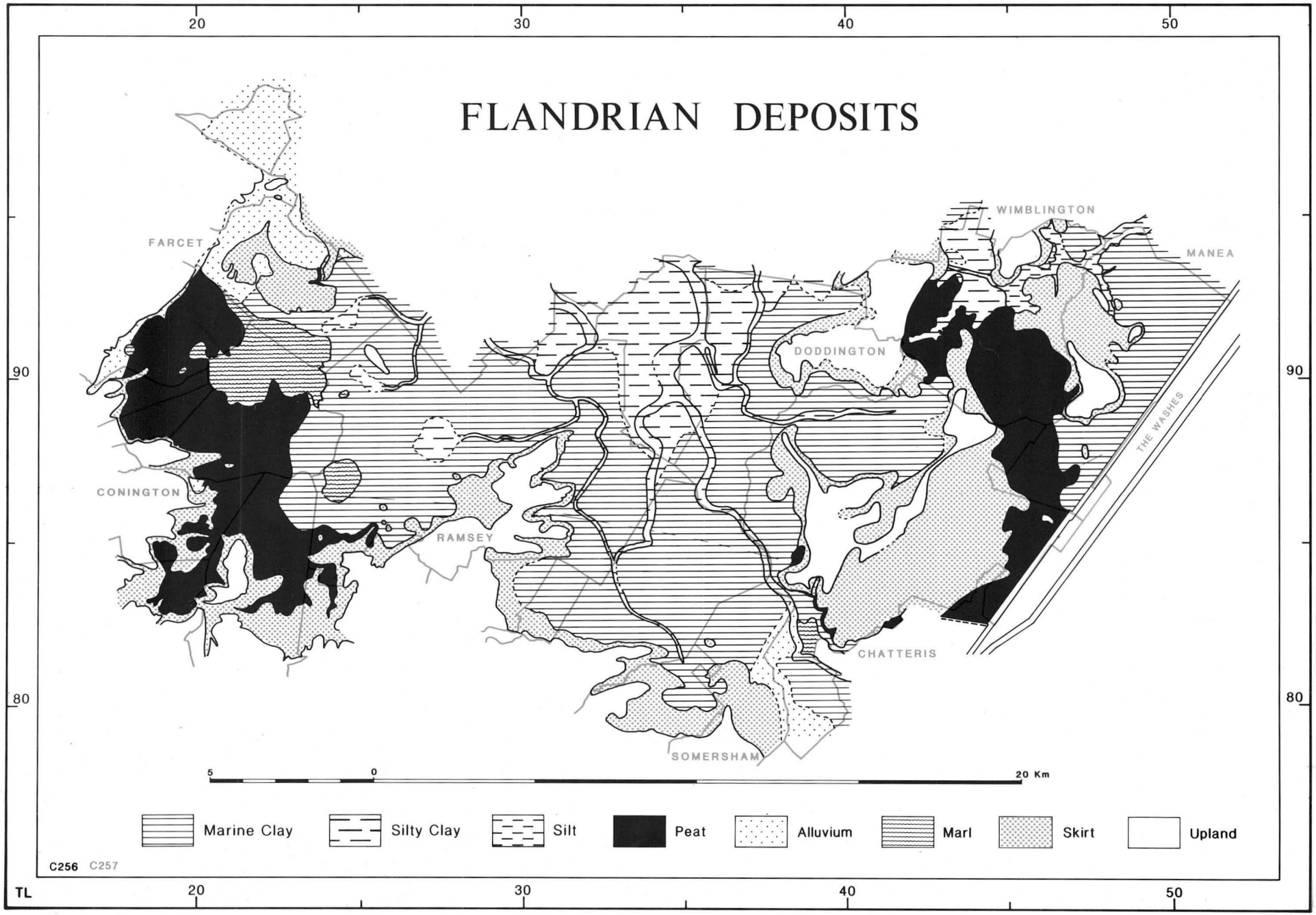


Figure 2 Flandrian deposits in the area surveyed

low the reconstruction of the contemporary drainage pattern. Most of the southern part of the Cambridgeshire Fenland was covered by peat during this phase, and the fen edge is taken to be at the present day mean sea level, which appears correct as far as can be judged from the occurrence of the lowest Bronze Age settlement sites (and also happens to be the present-day level of the peat fen-edge as it shrinks away).

In the north east of the region, the Iron Age marine phase, when coarse silts (the 'Terrington Beds') were deposited, similarly left its drainage pattern in the roddons. The area covered by this deposit is even less than the preceding period; in the south peat continued to grow to about the 2.5m contour, which is taken to be the fen edge. During the Roman period the coarse silts were utilised, mainly on the roddons, as at Manea. The peat level fell somewhat and the fen edge is taken to be 2m, sites being found in the skirtland as low as 2.1m.

By late Saxon times the peat at the fen edge had reached at least 3m and 3.5m in the Middle Ages. On the medieval period plans the fen edge is drawn at 3.6m, the line can generally be observed on the ground as a dark stain where the skirt begins, and is often clear from the 'modern' field pattern or from early estate maps. Medieval fields on the islands and upland can be reconstructed by plotting the linear earthworks that mark their boundaries (Hall 1982).

2. Introduction to the South-western Cambridgeshire Fen Survey

I. The study area
(Fig. 3)

Below are presented the results of archaeological survey in the Fenland of the western part of the county of Cambridgeshire. The parishes were originally in three historic counties: Flag Fen, being part of Peterborough, in Northamptonshire, Chatteris, Wimblington and Manea in Cambridgeshire (Isle of Ely) and the remainder in Huntingdonshire. The parishes were surveyed in the years shown below. In order to save time, only the fen ground was surveyed for those parishes that lie on the the fen edge, with land spanning upland as well as former wetlands. A location plan of the region is given on Figure 3 and the area of each parish or group of parishes is listed in Table 2.

The range of fen types is varied, running from fen edge with deep peat through the various marine deposits, just touching the edge of the coarse silt fen at the north of Manea. The western edge forms a scarp rising to 37 metres, and in the east of the region are the low islands of Chatteris and Manea; Doddington and Wimblington lie on the southern part of another low island which they share with March. Between the islands and the mainland ran the main pre-Flandrian channel of the River Ouse, which continued to take most of the upland water until the post-Roman period. There was a diversion, probably artificial, being called a lode in the 13th century (see Chatteris below) west of Sutton, which became the old county boundary. The water draining along this course of the Ouse continued to diminish until there was none at all

Group	*Survey date*	*Area (hectares)*
Peterborough and Stanground	1986	2,500
Farcet and Yaxley	1980	2,500
Holme and Denton area	1976–7	2,500
Sawtry and Wood Walton areas	1985	3,800
Ramsey	1978 & 1985	6,445
Warboys and Bury	1977 & 1985	2,200
Pidley cum Fenton and Somersham	1977 & 1985	1,600
Benwick and Doddington	1985 & 1983	9,175
Wimblington	1978–9	3,141
Manea	1978	2,702
Chatteris	1978 & 1985	6,121
Total		42,684 (105,474 acres)

Table 2 Parish groupings and areas

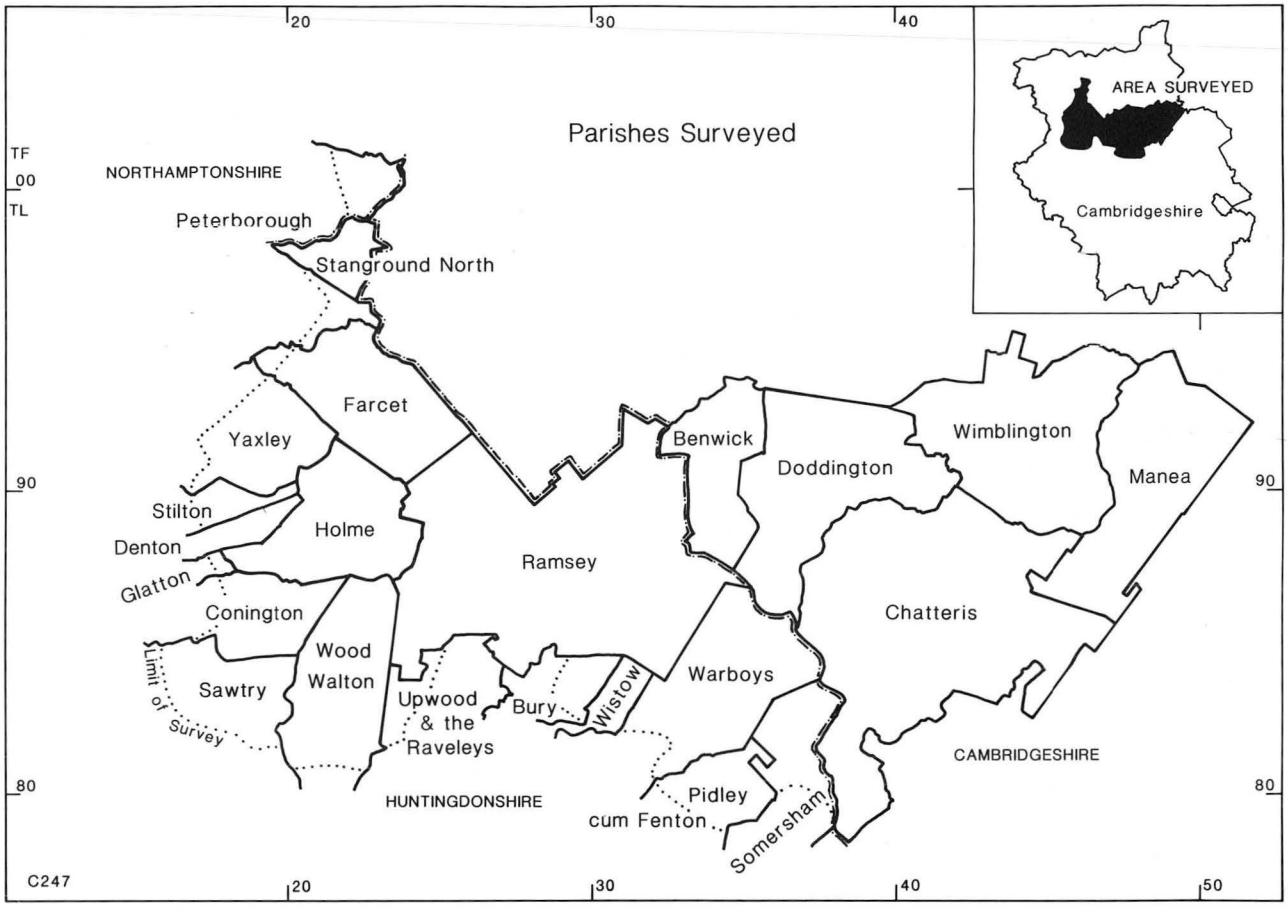


Figure 3 Location of the parishes surveyed

after the 17th century. Seale (1975a, b) has studied the courses of the river.

About half the area was peat fen throughout most of the Flandrian period, but at the north there were marine deposits, as described. The region was also noted for its freshwater lakes, or meres, in the Middle Ages, Whittlesey Mere being the largest inland lake in England, after Windermere.

Ramsey and Chatteris are the largest settlements in the region each with a population near 6,350; Doddington and Wimblington each have *c.* 1,450 inhabitants and Manea 1,170. There are no other villages with high populations within the fen area surveyed, but just to the north are sizeable Yaxley and Farcet; Stanground is now a suburb of Peterborough. The fen ground is almost entirely arable although it is broken by the trees of Wood Walton Nature Reserve and Holme Wood; on the western edge some of the heavy Oxford Clay land remains as pasture at Conington, Sawtry, Great Raveley and elsewhere.

II. Organisation of this Volume

Each parish group is treated separately. As explained, the use of parishes as survey units has had to be abandoned at the fen edge because many of them have a great deal of upland that would take too long to survey and not yield any water-logged sites. Where there are a number of small parts of several parishes they have been drawn and considered together to minimize the number of figures required. Each essay has an introduction, an account of its geology and Flandrian deposits, followed by a description of the archaeology, grouped in conventional periods.

The archaeological information presented is almost entirely that newly discovered or reassessed as a result of the current survey. It was amplified by access to the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs, and reference to any published work. All previously known sites have been visited and reinterpreted where necessary; normally there is much improvement in the understanding of the context and function of a site. Finds in private possession have been recorded when seen, especially if they have not been reported previously. Artefacts in museums have not been examined, and comments rely on published accounts or the data in the County Sites and Monuments Record held at Shire Hall, Cambridge (CAR). Generally this report is an account of the present survey rather than a comprehensive synthesis of all known information. At the same time the quantity of new data and the unreliability of much of the old ensures that the present account is likely to be the most comprehensive and accurate that is available.

The published parish plans are all at a scale of 1:40,000, which allows most of them to fit on to a single page. The first map of each series shows the modern landscape with built-up areas shaded. Next a plan shows the extent and quality of fieldwork which is essential for weighting interpretations, as well as indicating where infilling might be required in future. Four categories of 'fieldwork quality' have been recorded, according to the following scheme:

1. Field conditions good to ideal; walked in 30m transects.
2. Fieldwork sufficiently detailed to record soils, roddons, mineral soil exposures, etc. Coverage considered adequate; normally used for archaeologically sterile areas with peat or marine clay, and also used on extensive areas of Jurassic and Till clays which have been walked in 100m transects.
3. Potentially informative area walked in 30m transects but conditions of weathering or crop unsatisfactory. Mainly used for thick crop coverage of corn or rape.
4. Not visited.

The symbols used for these categories are marked on Figure 4.

Archaeological plans appear as required in the parish texts; there is no fixed number for each account since every area is unique and there may be insufficient change in the landscape between successive periods to warrant another map. The medieval period plans include some topographical fen and field names that have been taken from manuscript and published historical sources. Generally, however, there has been little time to follow up the field survey with studies of historical geography. Cropmarks have been placed on the appropriate period plan when they could be assigned a chronology; otherwise they will be found on the Roman period map. See Appendix 1 for further comment on aerial photography.

The archaeological period-plans include estimates of the extent and nature of the fen environment, which involve elements of subjectivity and interpretation. The information source is the Flandrian deposit map, Figure 2; from the boundaries of the deposits there shown, the fen extent at different periods is estimated using the following guidelines.

There are no separate plans for the Mesolithic period, sites of this date being shown on the Neolithic plan along with the marine clay and roddon stage of fen development. Bronze Age plans include watercourses if there was a marine silt stage, elsewhere peat formed over the marine clay and is marked with rush symbols on the plans. Iron Age plans likewise show watercourses in the silt phase, where present, although most of the region was peat fen, as it was also in the Roman period, except for the major channels. No Saxon plans have been drawn and the medieval plans include some documentary evidence as well as that resulting from this survey.

It is stressed that the 'contemporary' fen environments are very schematic, especially as often long periods are represented during which there were changes. The main purpose of the reconstructions is to give a context to the archaeology, showing what ground was wet, and also to show when there were significant changes in the fenland such as a change from peat to marine mudflats. It is also stressed that on a diagram purporting to show a marine mudflat episode that there would have been development of peat beyond the area of direct marine influence, so that many of the areas shown would have had an outer band of freshwater fen or peat. The extent of this would be variable in time and place according to the topography and whether the marine phase was ingressing or ebbing; it is thus impossible to represent such variable conditions on a single diagram even if all the data were available.

III. Fieldwork techniques and recording

The reasons for taking a parish as a unit of survey have been given previously (Hall 1987a, 15), and the same scheme has been followed for the present region. The aim

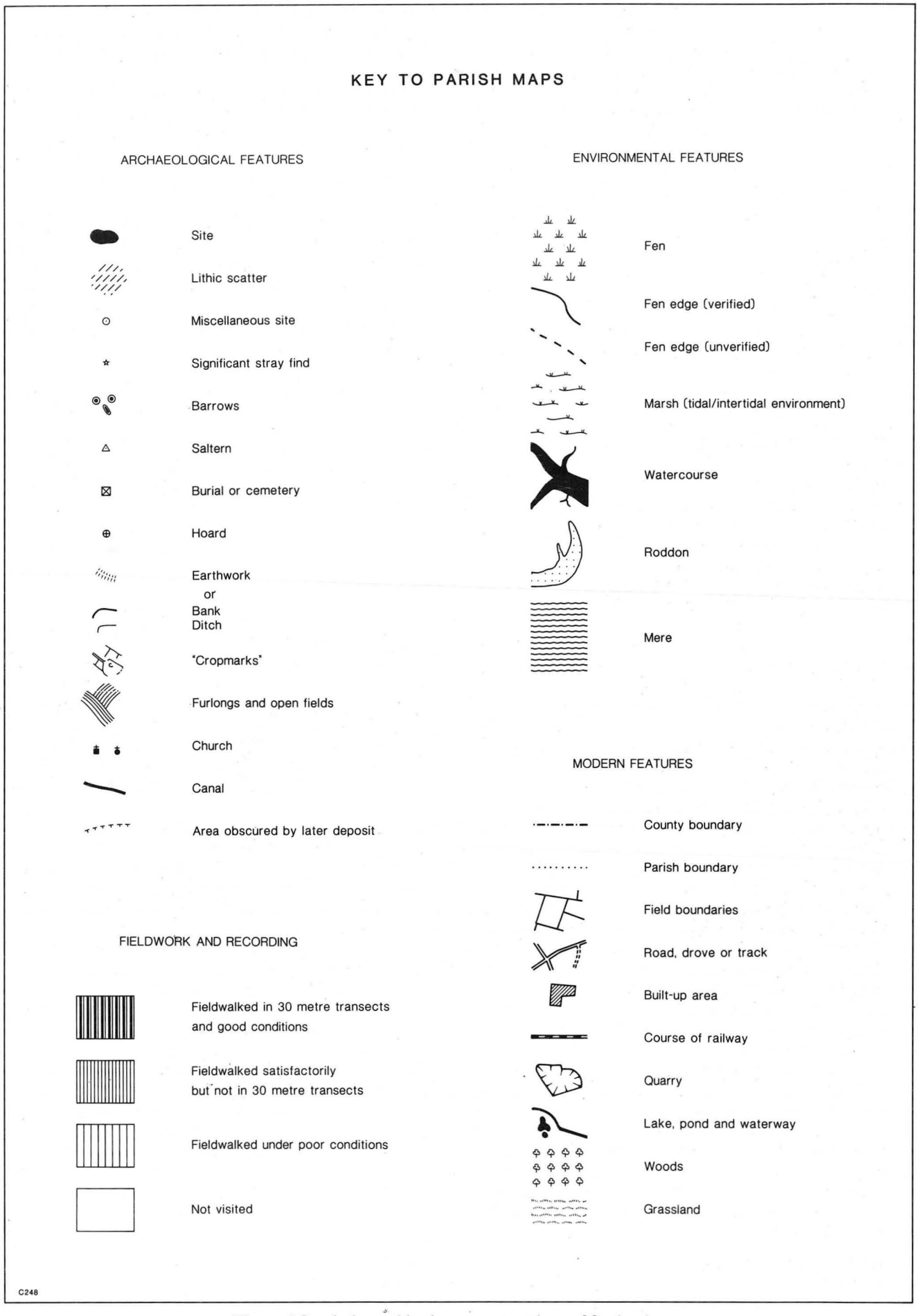


Figure 4 Symbols used in the reconstructions of fen landscapes

was to make a complete coverage of the county's fenland, selection of particular parishes therefore being unnecessary.

Methods in the field

Some preparation is necessary before beginning survey work, the main item being the provision of 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey maps marked with all previously known archaeological information. On to them are plotted roddons from vertical aerial photographs, so when in the field they can be checked and differentiated into sediment types where appropriate. On the ground more sense can often be made because large roddons up to 1km in width, not visible on photographs, can be identified and mapped.

Ideally each field is walked, when suitably weathered, in 30m transects to collect artefacts and identify occupation debris, earthworks and upstanding monuments. The crop and condition of every field is recorded as this information is required for the fieldwork-quality plans. The nature of the Flandrian deposit and any soil boundary is indicated on the working plans.

All known sites are checked to confirm their existence and improve the interpretation and context. Collections of artefacts are made from all sites, lines of walking are then closed to 5m as far as the site stretches, to ensure that a representative sample is found. Material is bagged and labelled on the spot. Most sites are large enough to be sketch plotted accurately, in cases of difficulty an optical square and surveyor's compass are used.

Rapid survey techniques can be used in areas of deep peat or barren marine deposits. Transects of 200m are sufficient to confirm sediment type and check a roddon pattern. Drainage dykes of each field are checked to see if there is any old ground surface exposed that does not breach the topsoil in the field. Transects of 100m are also used on extensive areas of clay soil, such as the upland of Sawtry.

Writing up at the end of each day is essential. Sites are given their 8-figure grid references, notes made about them and tables of numerical data are compiled ready for entering into sites and monuments systems. A second copy of the 1:10,560 map is used to draw up site locations, Flandrian sediment boundaries, roddons and landscape data. In the out-season for fieldwork, finds are washed, counted, identified, catalogued and submitted for expert comment, if necessary. Maps are drawn in ink ready for reduction and the site notes expanded into a form suitable for adaptation into a final report.

The finds have not been the subject of specialist reports except in the case of the Roman material which was examined by D.A.Gurney. Lithic finds were sorted and classified by P.W. Martin and pottery of the Iron Age, Saxon and medieval periods was identified by the author. Much more detailed work could be done on the finds; they are stored at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

Sites and monuments record and gazetteer

In the field, artefact concentrations and earthworks of archaeological significance are classed as conventional 'sites'. Each site is given a number in sequence of discovery or visit. Sites are distinguished in the gazetteer by the letter 'S' although this does not appear on the plans. Lesser areas of significance, where evidence is poor at the time of the site visit, or different from normal field-surface data (such as artefacts cast out of a drain that cuts through a site), are given a series of numbers prefixed by 'U'. This class may be used for sites previously reported but not assessed during the survey (for such reasons as subsequent destruction or not visited).

Significant artefacts, such as prehistoric axes, recovered as stray finds away from conventional sites or settlements are assigned a series of numbers prefixed with 'A'. This category may include finds previously recorded as well as those discovered during the Fenland Survey. Both 'U' and 'A' types are marked on the plans (where plotted) to distinguish them from undifferentiated 'S', sites. Each record has a series of parameters (grid reference, period, lithology etc.).

The Gazetteer is arranged by parish in groups in the same topographical order as the essays. There are also notes placed at the end of each parish section, usually comprising items reported in the literature that have poor records and are not worth entering into a full sites and monument system, which is aimed at detailed and precise recording of fieldwork data. The complete Gazetteer will be found in fiche format at the end of this volume (Gazetteer 1).

Aerial photographic evidence is discussed in Appendix 1 and the details of photograph numbers and comments are also to be found in fiche format as Gazetteer 2.

The Parish Essays

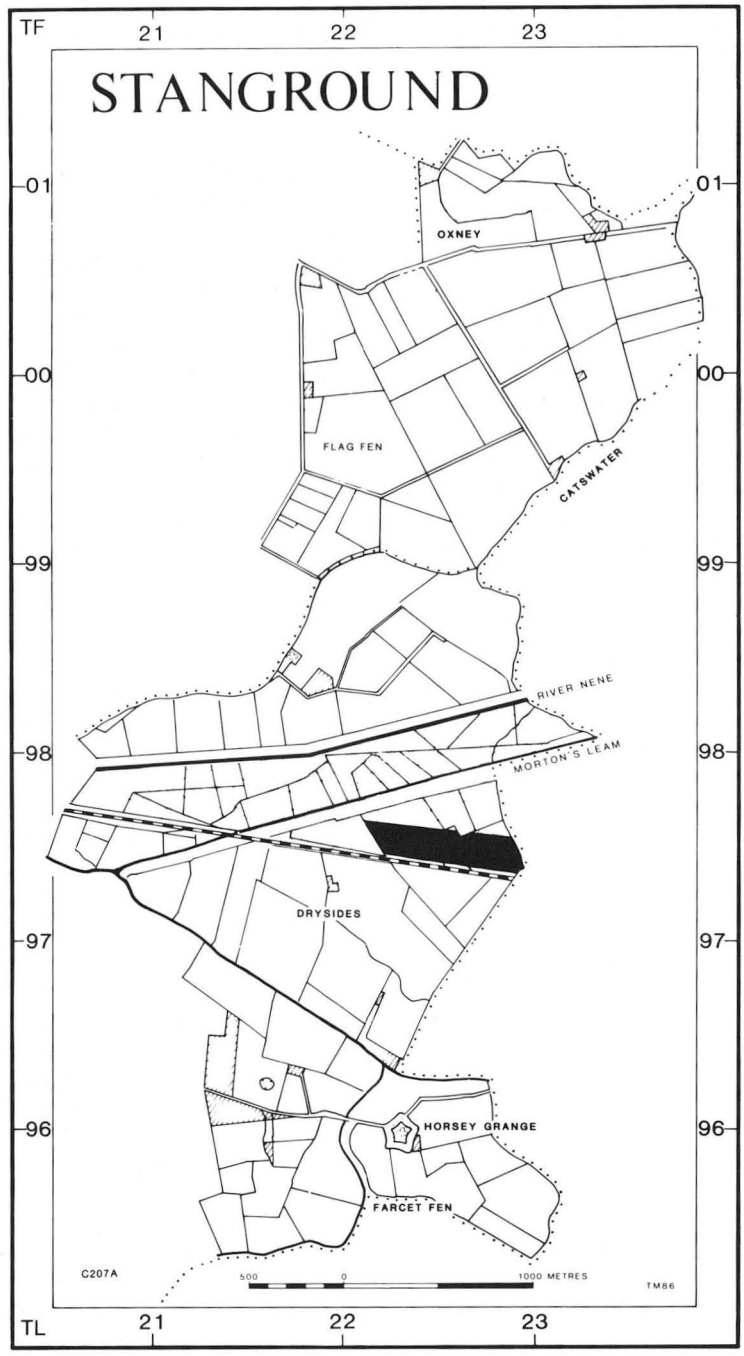


Figure 5 Modern landscape and topography

3. Parts of Peterborough and Stanground

I. Introduction

(Figs 5 and 6)

Much of this region has now been destroyed by urban development. The present survey and report is only concerned with the small area of fen and fen edge (2,500 hectares, 6,000 acres) still exposed and usable as agricultural land, there being no attempt to catalogue and discuss the very large quantity of archaeological material discovered over the last hundred years as Peterborough spread out towards the fen. It was, nevertheless, necessary to study the small area involved to link up the results of the Fenland Survey with the extensive programme of excavation undertaken at Flag Fen by F.M.M. Pryor and his co-workers (Pryor 1974, 1978, 1980, 1984).

The Peterborough portion of the region, formerly in Northamptonshire, consists of Flag Fen which is a basin hemmed in by the peninsula of Oxney to the north, and Northey Island, formerly part of Whittlesey, to the south east. Stanground, formerly in Huntingdonshire (Page *et al.* 1936, 212–217), is a peninsula surrounded by the medieval course of the River Nene and having fen ground called Drysides on the north and Farcet Fen on the south. Horsey is a small island lying to the east.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The bedrock is Oxford Clay, exposed on the Stanground peninsula and at Horsey; Oxney is a ridge of Second Terrace Gravel (British Geological Survey Sheet 158, 1:50,000 series (1984)). The area is of considerable interest because it lies at the outfall of the Nene into the Fen. The pre-Flandrian course of the river has long been a matter of dispute, Skertchly considered that it ran north of Whittlesey (Skertchly 1877, 69–70) and recent workers have suggested a southern route (Evans 1979). It is clear that the river would not have originally occupied its medieval course; which having flowed north and north-east for 60km in a valley between 2 and 5km wide through upland Northamptonshire, suddenly turned south-east and then south-west through a narrow channel 200m wide at Horsey. Study of the Flandrian deposits has resolved the problem, although the course is not easily visible from the surface because of masking by post-Roman alluvium.

The main channel cut south of Whittlesey passing between the island of Horsey and Whittlesey island more or less where the King's Dyke does so. This has been proved by the work of Burton who found a deep channel filled with marine clay (Burton 1985, 43) hidden by later alluvium, and extending back from a fairly substantial roddon in Whittlesey Fens (see Hall 1987a, figs 38 and 42 for a plan). There is a linear, slightly raised bank across Drysides which may be part of the Nene roddon. Flag Fen has a deep peat filling and late marine clay funnels back towards it from Thorney Fen, just reaching the eastern boundary, the Catswater. Very probably some of the Nene water flowed along this route by the Bronze Age.

The sequence of Flandrian levels is more easily understood by reference to Thorney and Whittlesey (Hall 1987a, 48 and 55–6). Peat would have formed at an early date in the deep channel, and when the marine clay was deposited it probably reached as far inland as the area near Horsey; a boring here would be required to prove it. Subsequent marine levels did not reach anywhere near the region, and there was a continuous growth of peat until it was covered by alluvium. Most of the fen ground in the area still has about 2m of peat, and the alluvium covering is very extensive, often to a depth of more than 2 metres. Most of the alluvium dates from the post-Roman phase, as is proved by the excavations immediately north where sites of all periods from prehistoric to Roman were buried by it (Pryor 1974, 1978, 1980, 1984).

During this continuous peat growth the River Nene must have been affected. From events in Thorney and Whittlesey it is clear that water was going both north and south of Whittlesey in the Bronze Age, and that the Neolithic course to the south was still active during the Roman period. The final change to the southern route through Whittlesey Mere is likely to be Saxon or medieval in date because there is a greater quantity of alluvium in the south than along King's Dyke. Although the Catswater was considered the northern course of the Nene in medieval historical records, the lack of alluvium lying along its course shows that only a limited quantity of muddy flood-water took that outlet.

III. Archaeological sites

(Fig. 7)

There is very little visible archaeology in the Fen studied because of the peat coverage. Stray finds of various periods have come both from the Fen and the Fen edge. A Palaeolithic grey flint axe 'from Stanground' is in Peterborough Museum (L631). Bronze Age metal-work has been discovered in two places as chance finds in the Fen, one knife was found near Oxney, and a leaf-shaped sword has come from Horsey as well as a socketed bronze axe (for details see Gazetteer 1). A few cropmarks occur near Corporation Farm (TL 21 98, not plotted), where the gravel terraces that have yielded so much archaeological material begin to dip deeper under the Fen. The area is covered by alluvium and no finds have been recorded.

Only one prehistoric site is known, at the north-eastern corner of Stanground. This is site *4*, a well preserved wooden structure of the Bronze Age, currently under excavation. It was discovered in 1982 by a programme of regular checking of freshly cleaned dikes (Pryor 1983); excavation was essential because of dehydration of the waterlogged timbers and loss of other environmental evidence. The structure, as so far revealed, is most impressive with upright and horizontal carpentered timbers belonging to a rectangular three-aisled building placed on a timber platform. The floor was covered with planks that had been dusted with coarse sand. The building stood in peat fen just west of Northey island and was presumably placed there for some kind of protection. A radiocarbon date (revised since publication by correction of the carbon-14 calibration) of the 8th century BC and finds of pottery and flint suggest a structure of the late Bronze Age (Pryor *et al.* 1986).

In 1828 Artis recorded that a dug-out canoe was

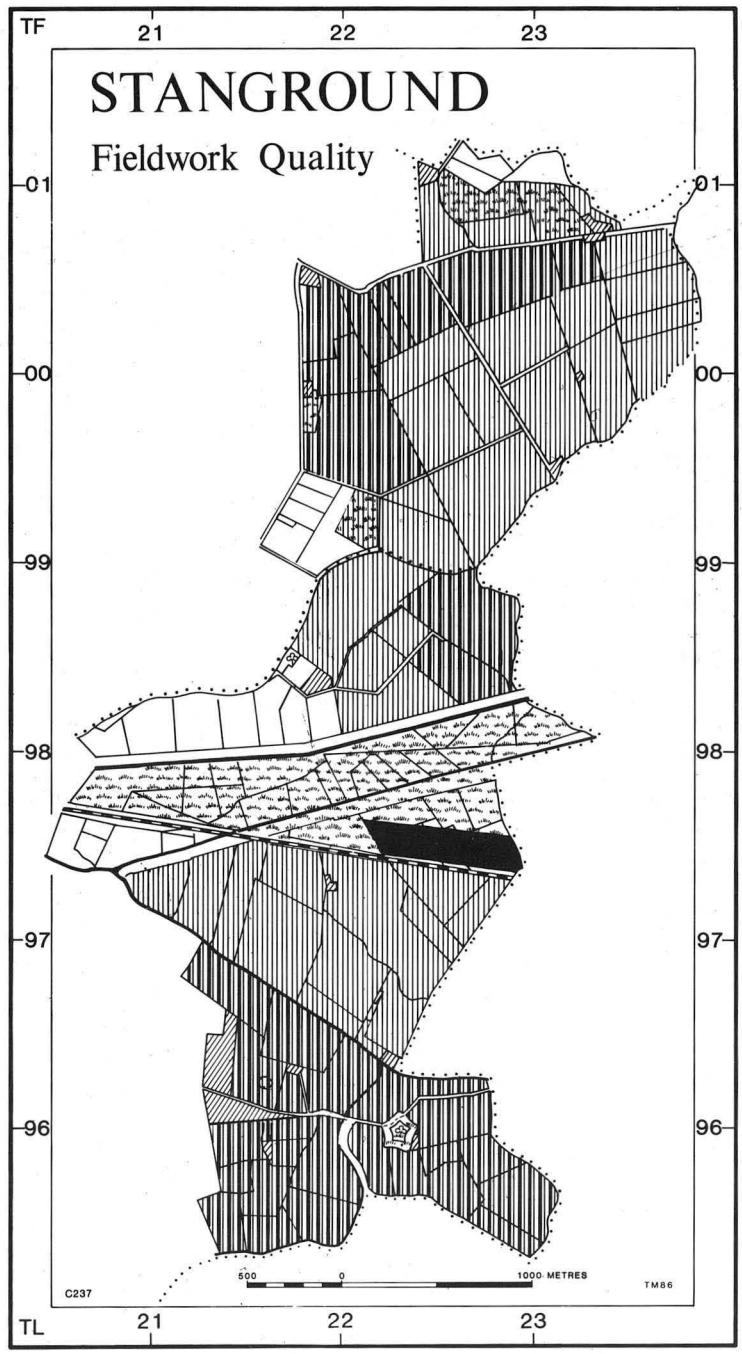


Figure 6 Quality and extent of fieldwork

found 'at the junction of the river Nen at Horsey'; it was presumably prehistoric, and measured 9m in length and 0.9m at its widest point. Another vessel made of two logs pinned together lay nearby, and there were two barbed fish spears, two spear heads and two forks (Artis 1828, pls 57 and 58).

There are no Iron Age sites in the area but Roman sites abound on the adjacent fen edge of this region and the neighbouring parishes. The Fen Causeway traverses the boundary of Stanground and Flag Fen, being made up of limestone rubble, forming a track about 3m wide. It crosses a narrow part of the Fen going to Northey island and on to Whittlesey, actually running over the Bronze Age wooden building.

The most significant Roman site is Stanground *3*, which covers at least 2 hectares (the site is partly built over) and has an industrial area with much kiln debris. The kilns appear to have been made of limestone and tile and produced vessels with reduced fabrics. Individual kilns can be identified on the ground from the concentration of large wasters and broken kiln furniture. One of the kilns was excavated by Danell and Hartley in 1965; it was dated to the first half of the 3rd century and produced wares in a grey-white fabric with a grey-black 'metallic' slip (Danell 1973). The site runs under the alluvial deposits next to the river where there may be waterlogged remains. Material has been collected from this site previously, although there has been confusion with another kiln site to the north, found in 1901 and investigated subsequently (not marked on Figure 7 being to the north-west at TL 2084 9709). On site *3* there were wasters, kiln furniture and pottery dating from the late 1st–4th century

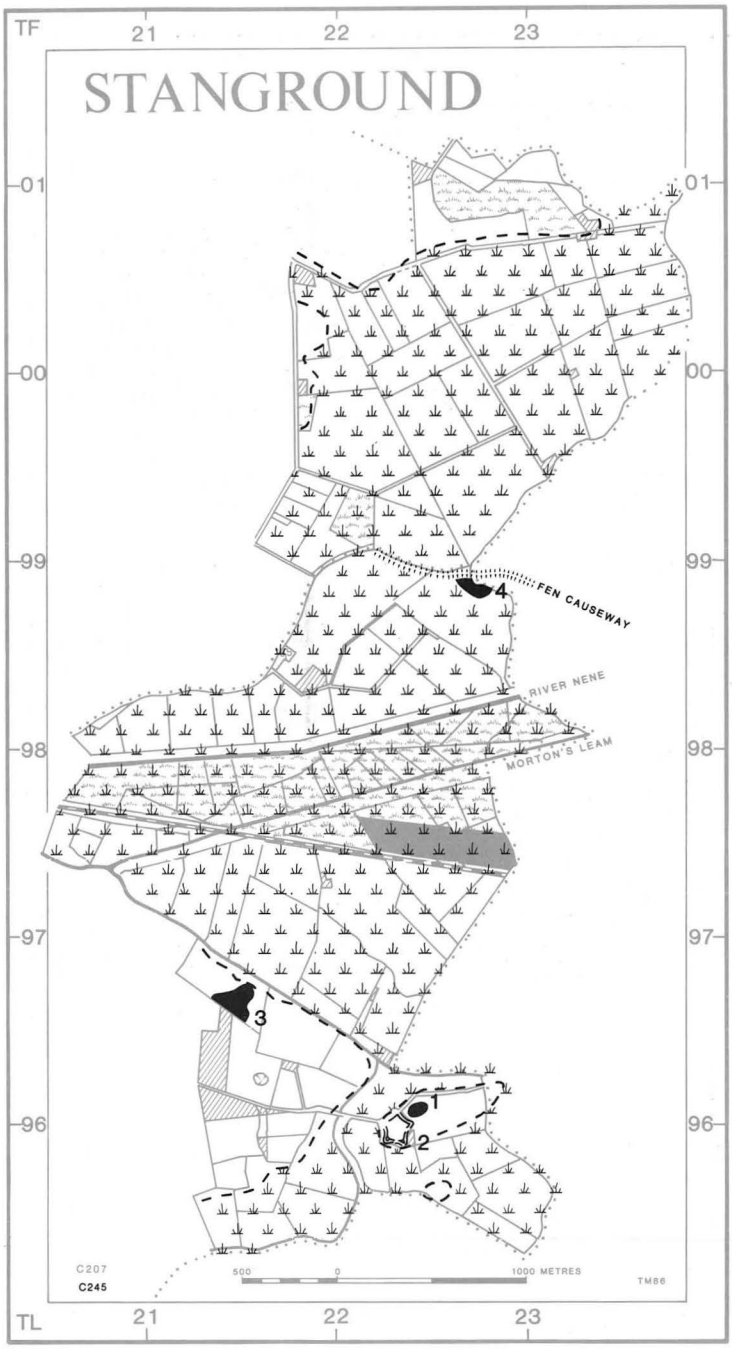


Figure 7 Archaeological sites

AD. A wharf and causeway were also said to have been identified (Page *et al.* 1926, 251; Peterborough Museum 1902, 20–1; Fox 1923, 223). Further Roman finds have come from the west of site *3* at TL 214 965 and the finds collections in Peterborough Museum may contain material from all three sites. It is possible that site *3* was associated with a wharf and that it forms part of a series of industrial sites making use of the close proximity of Oxford Clay, suitable for firing, fen peat for fuel, and the river for the potters' water supply and transport.

Stanground 1 has a lot of stone building-debris and red roofing tile, suggesting a structure of substance. It was partially excavated by Peterborough Museum Society Archaeological Field Club in 1961, but no report is extant. Pottery of the 2nd–4th centuries is preserved in Peterborough Museum. On a small island to the south of Horsey (at TL 2243 9573) some skeletons, thought to be Roman were ploughed out in *c.* 1960 (E. Standen pers. comm. 1987); there were no indications of a site on the ground in 1982. As discussed elsewhere there is much confusion about the origin of Roman pottery said to have come from Horsey Toll and Horsey Grange, and any work on the collections should be preceded with an assessment of their reliability (Hall 1987a, 59).

Five Viking swords and spears were found in the river at Stanground in 1825 and subsequently; they are not well provenanced (Salzman 1938, 326–7).

Stanground belonged to Thorney Abbey and formerly included Farcet and had common grazing rights in Northey and Kingsdelph (now in Thorney and Whittlesey parishes respectively; Page *et al.* 1936, 212). The name is first recorded in *c.* 1000, and means 'stony

ground' although the exact significance of stones here is no longer obvious (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 199).

There is one medieval site in the Fen, near the Bronze Age wooden building, site *4*. A wide scatter of 13th and 14th century sherds lie on the area, although there was no dry land at the time and the sherds probably came from a building on piles used as a landing or fishing platform on the Catswater. A building called Muscot stood there as late as 1617. There was a ferry point over the Catswater at Muscot in the 15th century linking Peterborough to Northey and Whittlesey, continuing the use of the Fen Causeway (Halliday 1986, 2). The site was at a strategic point where the counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon and Northampton formerly met, as well as the lands of Peterborough, Thorney and Ely Abbeys.

Flag Fen was formerly called Borough Little Fen to distinguish it from the Great Fen (Gover *et al.* 1933, 226). It belonged to the inhabitants of Peterborough for common grazing. On the dry peninsula to the north of Flag Fen is a farm on the site of a grange of Peterborough Abbey. It is a dry land site but has interest because much of the original fabric survives (Haigh 1988, 36–7). The grange was acquired by the Abbey soon after 972; a chapel is mentioned in the late 12th century. It was enlarged in the early 14th century and there were other works done at that time, including the building of a bridge to Borough Little Fen so that Oxney cattle could graze there. The site was once surrounded by a moat, now no longer visible (Mellows 1925, 60–1).

Horsey Grange Farm stands in the middle of a 17th-century Cromwellian fort, which has well preserved ramparts, site *2*. The fort is in the form of an irregular pentagon with an internal 'diameter' of about 91m. The ramparts are *c.* 3m wide at the top and stand up to 1.8m high above the inside and have a berm 4.5m wide on the outside; at each corner there is a bastion for a gun emplacement. There is some damage to the monument by the farmhouse and the main road that cuts it at the north; a toll-keeper's house has been built on the edge of the north-west bastion (RCHM (England), 1926, 248; Page *et al.* 1926, 312–313; Page *et al.* 1932, 15–22 for the Civil War in Huntingdonshire). The earthwork, a scheduled ancient monument (number SAM 156), is a fort constructed to control the bridge over the Nene. It was referred to in 1644, and there is a contemporary plan surviving (BL Stowe MSS 1025, 56).

Figure 7 shows sites of all periods marked on a plan with the reconstructed Roman fen. The extent of fen would have changed little since the end of the Neolithic period because the surrounding higher ground falls at a sharp angle.

4. Parts of Farcet and Yaxley

I. Introduction
(Figs 8 and 9)

These two villages have some suburban character being so near to Peterborough. Most of the upland has been extensively quarried for Oxford Clay by the London Brick Company; the fen parts of the parishes remain intact, comprising about 2,500 hectares (6,000 acres). They are not rich in archaeological remains, in spite of a favourable fen-edge location. Yaxley Fen consists of deep peat devoid of any exposed settlement site.

Farcet was part of Stanground parish until 1885 and some of Whittlesey Mere is reckoned as being in Farcet parish (Page *et al.* 1936, 166); this is not treated here but described with the remainder of the Mere under Holme (q.v.). Farcet Fen has no major topographical names; that part near the upland is called New Meadow (TL 21 94) and the north-eastern quarter next to Whittlesey is Eight Roods Land (TL 23 93). The western part of Yaxley Fen is called Hod Fen, and Trundle Mere lies to the south east (Fig. 11, TL 19 90).

This report is only concerned with the archaeology of the fen ground; the badly damaged upland was not surveyed nor will its previously known archaeology be discussed.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

Farcet Fen contains a large island which rises as high as 3m in places. It mostly consists of Till (boulder clay) but there are areas where gravels are exposed, and intermediate mixed gravelly-clay deposits occur also. In plan the island has a complex indented shape with a large depression towards the west-centre that is probably a modified pingo or thermokarst feature (already referred to). A narrow peninsula approaches from Whittlesey to the north. There is a gap separating it from the main island, but the curious way that the peninsula makes for one of the island's indents suggests that once the two did link.

All the low part of the region supported a peat fen by the end of the Neolithic period. Although having the characteristic soft blue-coloured material described as 'fen clay' elsewhere, the Farcet deposit was not laid down until the Early Bronze Age south of Clapgate Farm (TL 23 92). A radiocarbon date at TL 2323 9212 gave 3700 ± 60 BP (Q–2552; 2175–1985 Cal. BC) for the peat immediately underlying the marine clay.

The clay spread as far west as the entrance to the periglacial depression in the south and occupied all the low ground in the east. At the north, marine clay penetrated the narrow gap between the main island and the Whittlesey peninsula and spread in a thin belt on the west side of the peninsula. Since the clay lies relatively high up in the westerly draining basin of Eight Roods Land between Farcet Fen island and Whittlesey, it follows that there was peat in this basin and that the marine flood was only able to enter a gap between the pre-Flandrian peninsula and the peat.

Western Farcet Fen and all of Yaxley Fen consist of deep peat without any marine clay. There was continuous growth until drainage in the 17th century and later; there is still more than 2.5m of peat near Conquest Lode (TL 21 92). The marine silts believed to be Late Bronze Age occur at the south east of Farcet Fen but nowhere else in the two parishes.

Subsequently the whole area, except the highest parts of Farcet Fen island, was covered with peat during the Iron Age and Roman periods. In Saxon and medieval times the Nene forced its southern channel through the area and flowed into Whittlesey Mere (immediately to the south). The river was canalised into the Mere via the Conquest Lode, on both sides of which there is a tailback of fresh-water marl from the Mere. This wedge of marl is thickest in the deep fen near the Mere.

The most extensive medieval deposit is river alluvium. This lies as the upper deposit on the north and west of Farcet island, and covers nearly all the island as a thin layer now mixed with pre-Flandrian materials in ploughsoil. The alluvium did not penetrate as far as Yaxley Fen; a small deposit of marl there shows that Whittlesey Mere formerly extended to this area.

Peat loss in Yaxley Fen has been considerable. A road, passing under the railway embankment built *c.* 1850, presumably then at field level, was 1.8m above the surrounding field level in 1983. A pump placed in a drain in 1947, when there was 4.2m of peat remaining, was left dry and useless in a dike with peat down to 3.0m in 1983, *i.e.* a loss of 1.2m of peat in 36 years or 3.33cm (1.3 inches) yearly.

III. Early prehistoric activity
(Fig. 10)

The deep peats of Yaxley Fen produced no prehistoric finds and the heavy soils of Farcet were not attractive to early settlers. Unprovenanced Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flints 'from Farcet' are in Peterborough Museum (accession numbers L1174–5 and 1177–8). Only one site yielding flints, probably a settlement, was discovered during the present survey, lying on the gravelly peninsula extending from Whittlesey (site *1*). There was a range of flints including a small Mesolithic blade, some large flints and a non-patinated Bronze Age scraper, however, most of the material seemed to be Neolithic. The site has potential for waterlogged, contemporary remains being preserved under marine clay that lies a few metres from it. Background flint-scatter was negligible elsewhere; measurements near Clapgate (TL 23 92) gave 2.9 flints per hectare on one field and two neighbouring fields had no flints at all. On the only part of the upland examined, at Farcet (TL 195 928) there were a few Bronze Age flints on a gravelly area of glacial Till.

A Neolithic plan showing the fen landscape has not been drawn. There were watercourses, now roddons of marine silty clay, on the eastern side of Farcet Fen only, the remainder of the area being peat. These roddons are illustrated below on the regional Neolithic plan (Fig. 56).

The only other monuments were two barrows, presumably dating from the Bronze Age. Both are damaged by ploughing, being reduced to low mounds 14m diameter and about 30cm high (sites *2* and *UI*). Site *2* yielded a single flint and the other produced no finds. Neither is

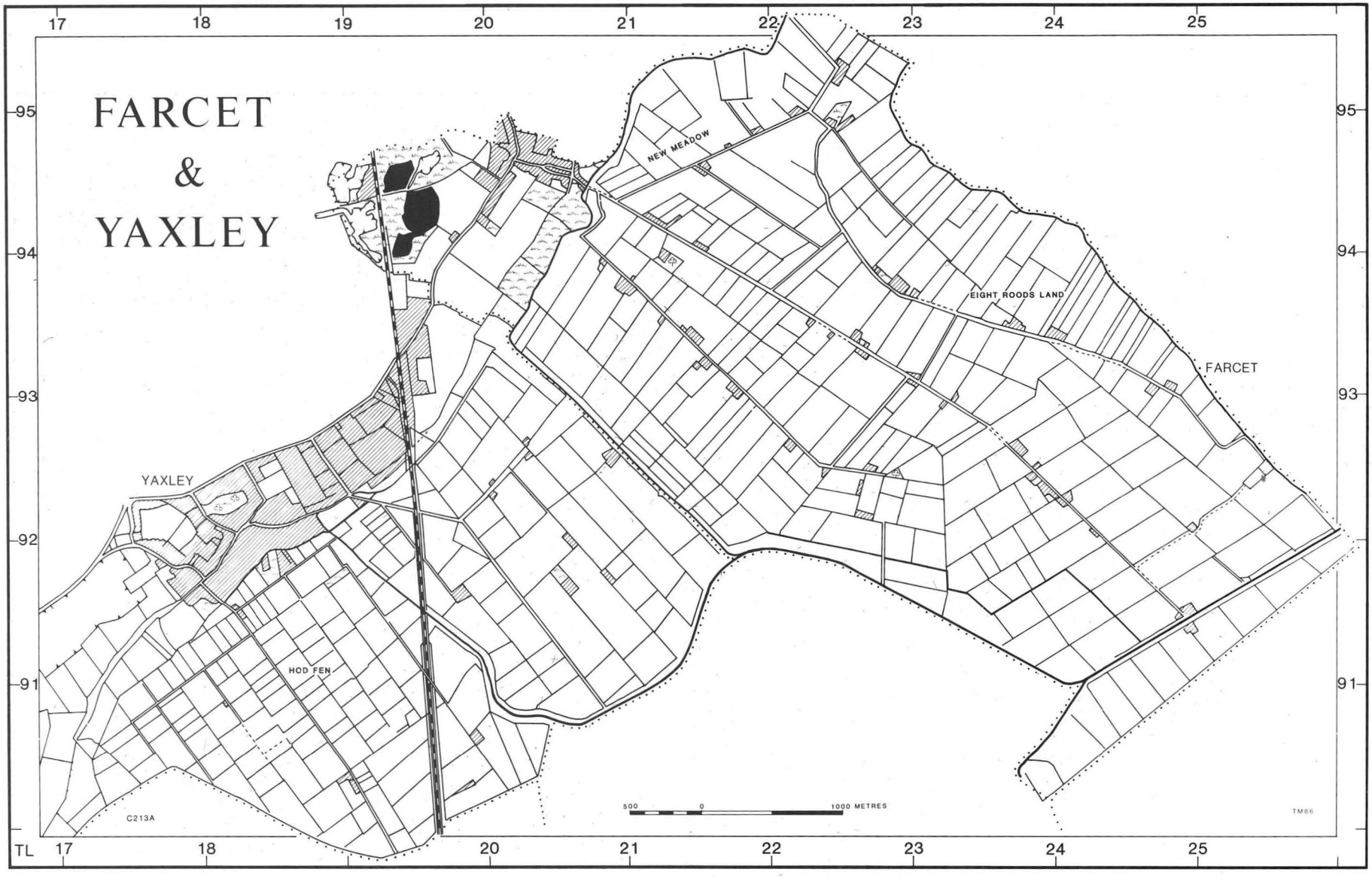


Figure 8 Modern landscape and topography

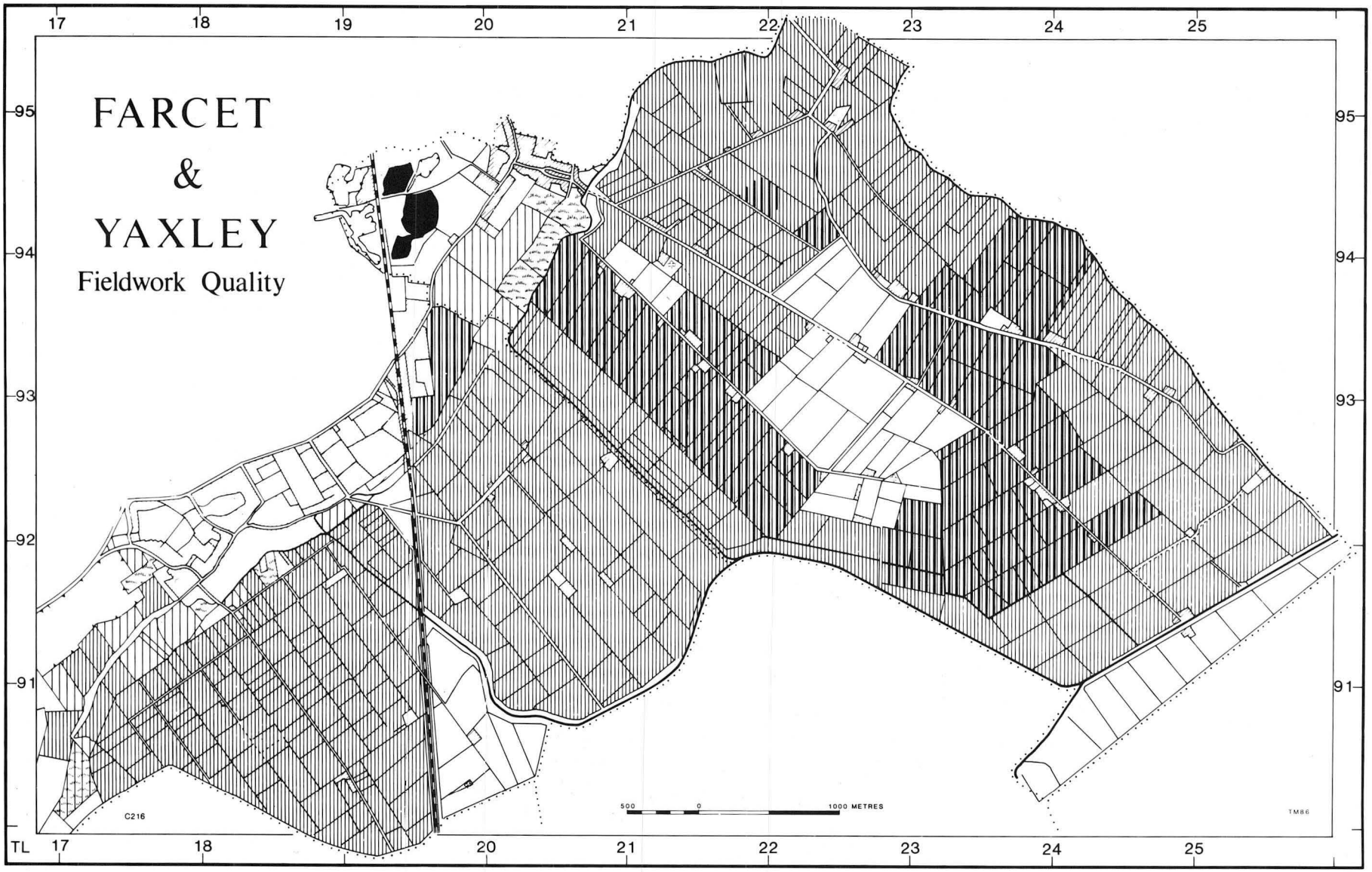


Figure 9 Quality and extent of fieldwork

likely to have wet remains, since both now lie on a 'hill' top.

There was a small area of burnt flint at site *U2* in a typical fen-edge location. It was probably a cooking site of the type found throughout the English Lowlands and very common in the south-eastern Cambridgeshire fen-edge where they are associated with sites of the early prehistoric period. This small example at Farcet is of the same date according to its low elevation; during the Iron Age and later the site would have been drowned. By analogy with Irish excavated sites (fulacht fiadha) this burnt flint patch is presumed to be a cooking site where typically there was a pit to contain water into which red-hot flints were rolled to boil it. Experiments have shown that meat can be cooked in this manner (Coles 1973, 52–3); the pebbles were presumably removed for reheating after use, which would account for their heated and crizzled appearance.

English examples of these cooking or 'pot-boiler' sites have been excavated in East Anglia and the Midlands and have been associated with early prehistoric pottery. Two sites at Lackford and Mildenhall, Suffolk, had no pit, but only a burnt layer (Murphy 1978). Recent excavation at Swales Fen, Mildenhall, revealed a plank-lined pit associated with burnt flints (Martin 1988). At Birmingham two excavated mounds of burnt quartzite pebbles revealed pits sealed underneath; like the Fenland sites they (and others in the area) were close to water. Sites in the Birmingham region have produced radiocarbon dates indicating use in the Early and Middle Bronze Age (Barfield and Hodder 1980). They were interpreted as cooking pits, although no bone was discovered. Other suggested functions of the burnt mounds and associated pits – to heat water (for washing or saunas) or to produce fire-shattered pebbles – are not convincing.

Two unprovenanced Bronze Age finds from Farcet parish are in Peterborough Museum (see Gazetteer 1).

Figure 10 shows the fen extent reconstructed for the Late Bronze Age and marks the sites of all early prehistoric finds. All the fen was peat except for the south east where marine flooding deposited silty material. The major roddons are shown and there was also a wide, but very shallow, deposition of the silt over about 500 hectares around them.

IV. Roman and medieval

(Fig. 11)

There were no Iron Age sites in the area surveyed nor were any Roman finds discovered. Roman burials have been found at the highest part of Farcet Fen (site *U3*), but no finds were visible on the ground when visited, there being no indication of a settlement. One burial, discovered in 1906, was covered by a stone slab of dimensions 1.8 by 0.75m, and a skull was ploughed out at a later date. The location is similar to the burials reported from Stanground. Both probably relate to the Roman sites at Whittlesey (Hall 1987a, 57–9) or Stanground. Another Roman site was discovered near Cow Bridge, Yaxley, in about 1955 (Yaxley *U1*; see Gazetteer 1). Sherds and kiln debris were collected.

The upland of both parishes was doubtless as intensely occupied as the neighbouring Ortons to the north or Glatton and Sawtry to the south west (see below). There are a few records of material being discovered during brick clay extraction (see Gazetteer 1).

Farcet was one of the earliest endowments of Thorney Abbey, given in the 10th century. There were shared rights between Ramsey and Thorney Abbeys in Ramsey marsh and it was agreed that Thorney should have that part towards Yaxley and Farcet, free of claim, in 1224 (Page *et al.* 1936, 166). The name is recorded as *Fearresheafde* in *c.* 955 and means 'bull's head' (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 185). Yaxley was granted to Thorney at the same time as Farcet (Page *et al.* 1936, 241). The name, first recorded in *c.* 955 as *Geakeslea*, means 'a clearing where there were many cuckoos' (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 201–2).

During medieval times much of the Nene water passed between Farcet and its Fen, other quantities reaching the sea via King's Dyke, Whittlesey and the Catswater. Much of the northern part of the Fen would have been covered by flood water in wet seasons, according to the river alluvium deposit. The Farcet fen-island would have been good grazing ground in summer, being barely covered with peat.

Medieval canalisation of the Nene and Yaxley Brook into Whittlesey Mere occurred via Conquest and Yaxley Lodes respectively. Yaxley Lode did not have exactly the same course as at present, a linear deposit of marly-alluvium to the south-west of the present course shows the position of an earlier stage, itself having two routes into Trundle Mere. It is first mentioned in 1227 as *Jackeslada* (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 302). A wide spread of marl next to the Conquest Lode, where it joins Whittlesey Mere, shows where the channel was once much wider, probably before canalisation.

The lodes had banks sufficiently high to allow erection of buildings. A medieval site producing sherds of the 13th to 15th centuries associated with building stone, burnt stone and domestic bone *etc.*, occurs at the junction of Conquest Lode with the mere (Yaxley site *1*). An excavation of part of the site, in about 1952 by Garrood, is said to have occurred, but no record is available. This site could have been a toll point, or one of the many fishing and landing stages found all around the Mere (see Holme, below). Yaxley site *1* may be that recorded in 1279 as a fishery let to Henry le Katur (Page *et al.* 1936, 167); at that date the fishery was said to be on Farcet Lode, which is probably an alternative name for Conquest Lode.

On Bodger's map of the Mere (dated 1786) the site is marked as 'Mouth Cote' and on Jeffery's map of Huntingdonshire (1768) as Smith's Mouth. A deed of 1679 grants two 'boat gates' (the privilege of fishing) formerly in the occupation of Bevis Smith and two 'coate lands' where an ancient messuage formerly stood (HRO 106 dd F Bundle 7). This deed clearly identifies the site, and suggests that the name 'cote' on Bodger's map represents the locations of fishermen's dwellings.

Yaxley was an inland port of some consequence throughout the Middle Ages and until the 17th century. Goods were off-loaded and carted at least 56km (35 miles) inland; coal still reached central Northamptonshire by this route in 1628 (Hall and Harding 1985, 133). The exact site of the hithe was not located during the survey and it doubtless has been destroyed by the modern village.

As explained the upland of the two parishes, even where it survives undamaged, was not investigated except for a small area of Farcet. All of it has the characteristic linear banks left by medieval fields. A small area of ridge and furrow survives in permanent pasture pad-

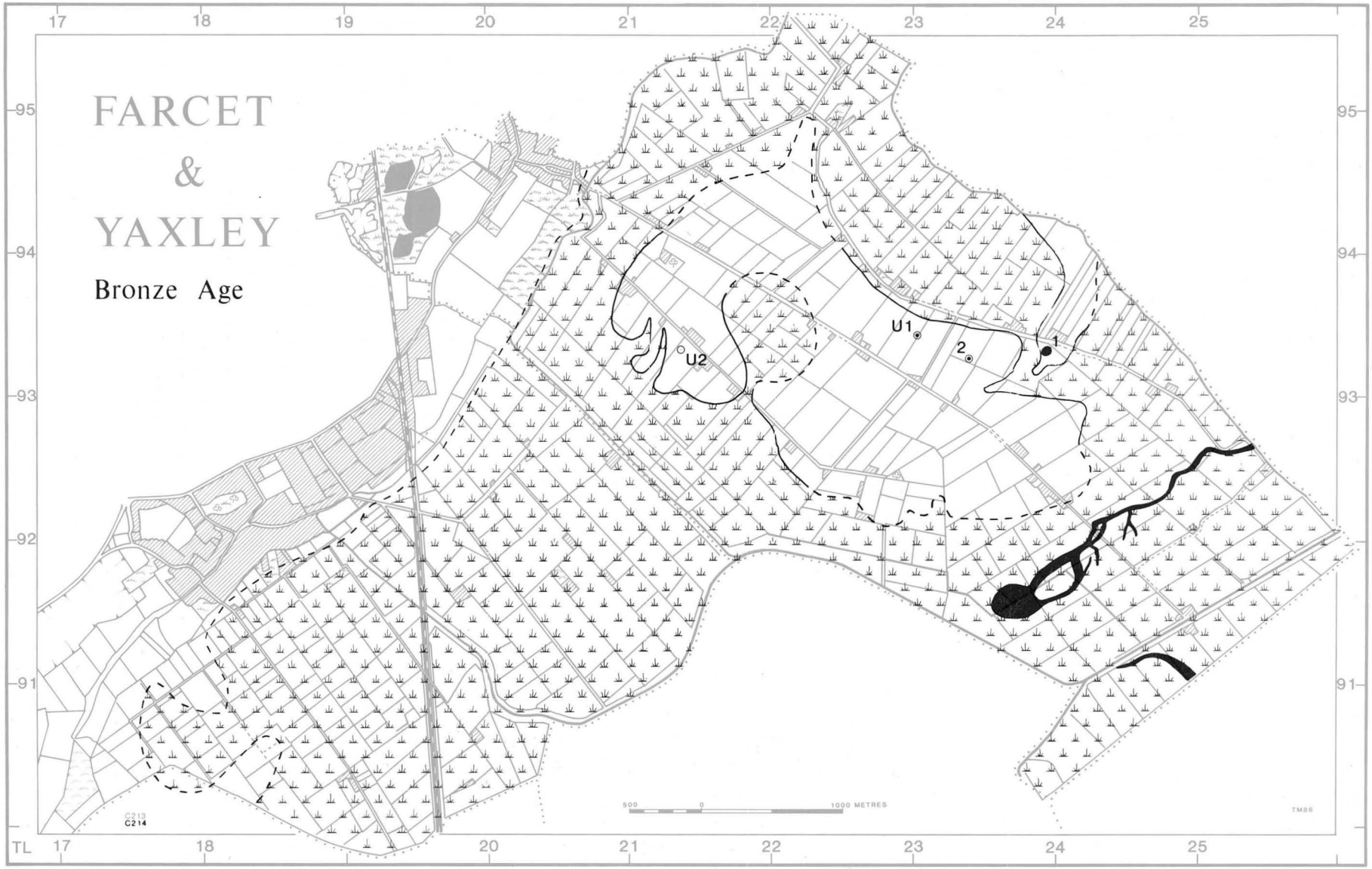


Figure 10 Bronze Age landscape

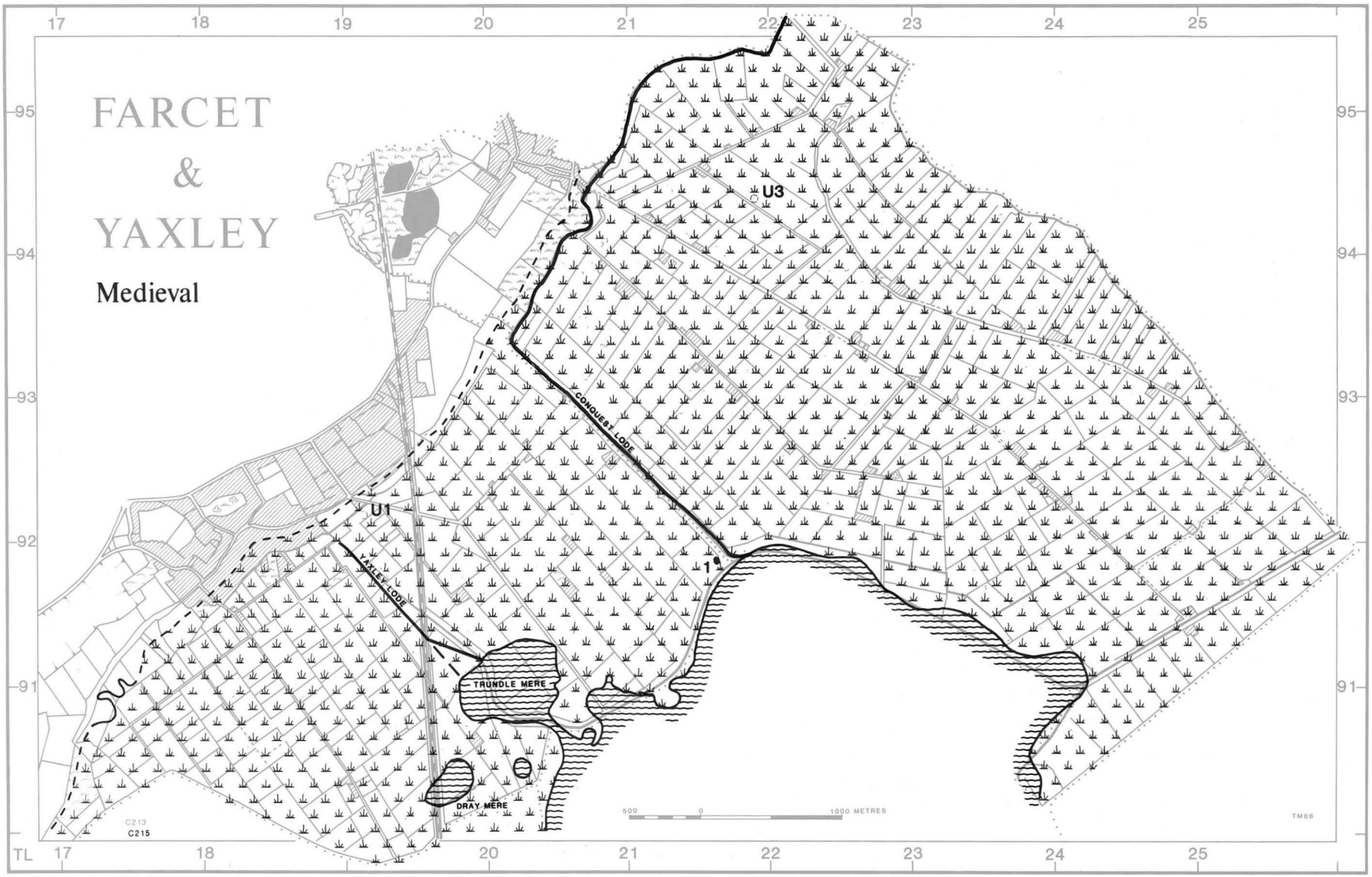


Figure 11 Medieval landscape

docks near Yaxley, TL 176 922, and was photographed in 1969 and 1974 (see Gazetteer 1).

Figure 11 shows the maximum extent of the medieval fen and marks features of Roman and medieval date. To the south were the meres, Whittlesey Mere forming the southern boundary of the area. Within Yaxley parish were the small round meres of Trundle, recorded as *Trendelmere* in *c.* 955, and *Draymere*, dreigmere, dray or dragnet in 1022 (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 202).

5. Holme with parts of Glatton and Stilton

I. Introduction
(Figs 12 and 13)

This region consists primarily of Holme with a little of the neighbouring upland of Glatton and small areas of Denton and Stilton that are fen ground. The shrunken village of Caldecot had a narrow tongue of fen now incorporated in Denton, (not distinguished on the figure); also included in the region is the north-eastern part of Whittlesey Mere that is now part of Farcet parish. The area surveyed comprises some 2,500 hectares (6,000 acres).

Holme had an estimated population of 580 in 1986 (Cambridgeshire 1987), most of it being concentrated in the village; the fen ground has only a few inhabited farms. The topography of the area of Fig. 12 is low fen-edge on the west and peat fen over most of the remainder. Whittlesey Mere formerly occupied the north east. The tree cover is more extensive than is usual in a fen parish, afforded by Holme Fen Nature Reserve and parkland next to the village.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The bedrock consists of Oxford Clay, both on the fen edge and in the basin. There is a considerable amount of Glacial Till (boulder clay) on the neighbouring upland. The fen basin developed a deciduous forest after the last glacial phase and this was later engulfed in fresh-water peat. Large numbers of preserved trees, 'bog oaks', remain buried under the modern fields and have to be removed when it is desired to produce root crops (Plate II).

The fen basin is deep and peat formed early, eventually becoming some 8.7m (28.5ft) thick before the 17th century drainage. Marine clay reached the eastern part of Holme Fen and Whittlesey Mere. It is visible in dike sections or as roddons, representing mud-flat drainage channels. No later marine material reached the area; the drainage patterns of all later periods are therefore not recoverable, there being no roddons to preserve them. Freshwater lakes or meres formed in the area, probably in the immediate pre-Roman period. The largest was Whittlesey Mere, and there were several other smaller ones (see below for details). The discovery of Roman finds in Whittlesey Mere indicates that water existed there before the end of the Roman period (assuming that the finds were lost from a boat), but the evidence for Roman material deposited in the Mere is poor. However the environmental evidence shows that the marls lie on top of peat dated to 1995 ±70 BP (Q–2810; 100 Cal. BC–95 Cal. AD) and therefore indicate that the Mere was in existence by the early Roman period. The water entering these meres,

Plate III Whittlesey Mere; the location of the former mere is indicated by the deposit of white marl, TL 23 89. *Cambridge University Collection; copyright reserved.* (RC8H)

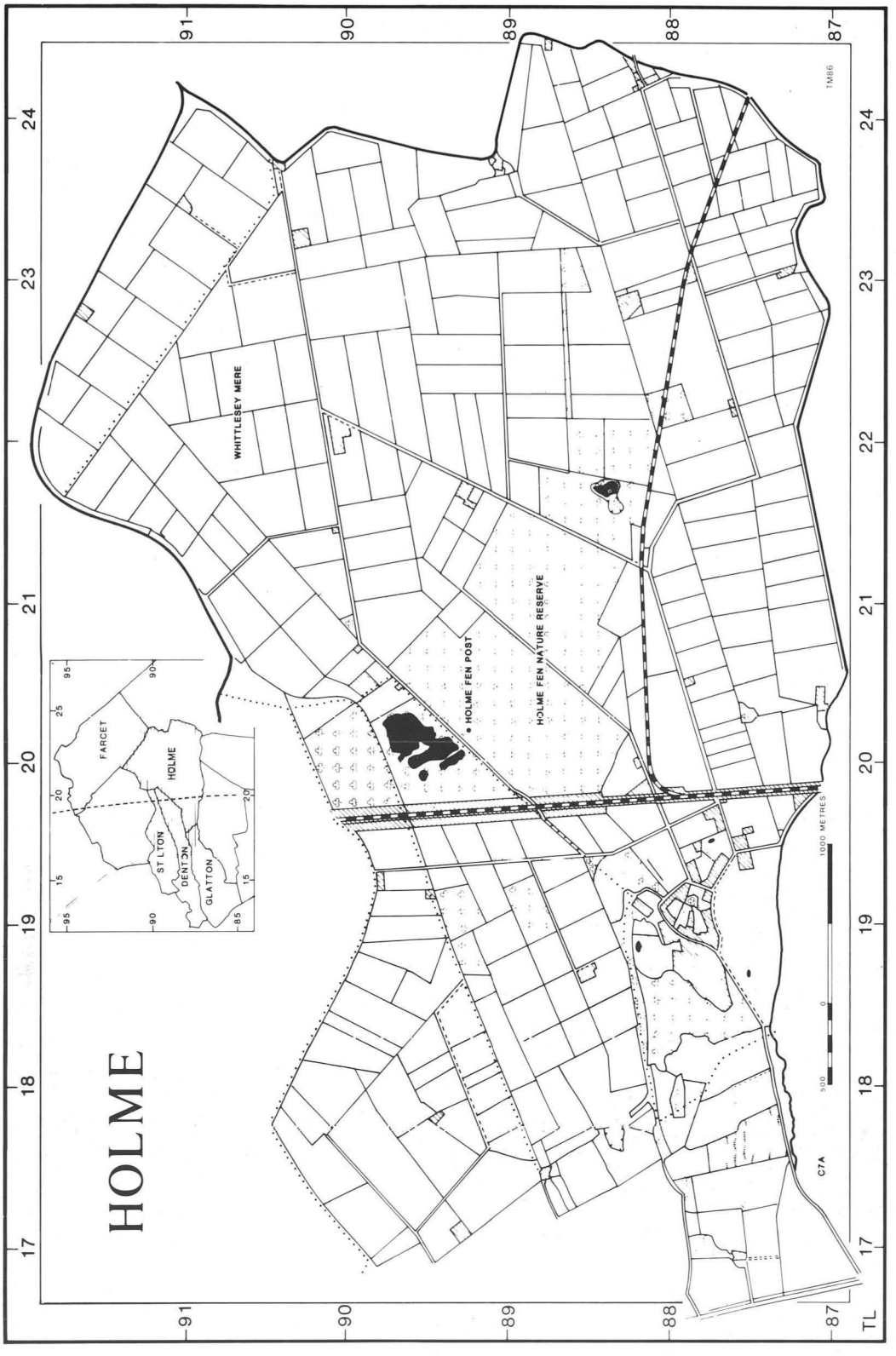


Figure 12 Modern landscape and topography

mostly coming from the Nene, was calcareous and deposited a shelly-clay marl, often mixed with alluvium. Hence most of the meres can now be identified in the drained landscape as whitish spreads contrasting starkly with the black of the peat (Plate III). Brown-grey colluvium can be found along the skirtland, next to the medieval fen edge.

Holme Fen basin has a very small catchment for drainage from the surrounding upland and this probably was a significant factor in the development of an acid *Sphagnum* peat. Until recently such species as *Sphagnum* moss, cotton-grass and ling, all characteristic of acid raised bogs, were common in the area. Studies on the acid bogs of Holme Fen have been reported by Poore (1956), Mittre (1959) and Godwin and Vishnu-Mittre (1975).

Before the drainage of the fen in the 17th century, peat had grown to a contour of *c.* 3.6m at the fen edge. By 1848, near to Whittlesey Mere, the peat level was 1.60m above Ordnance Datum and this had fallen (1980) to −2.29m below OD (calculated from the levels recorded in connection with the Holme Fen Post (TL 2022 8925),

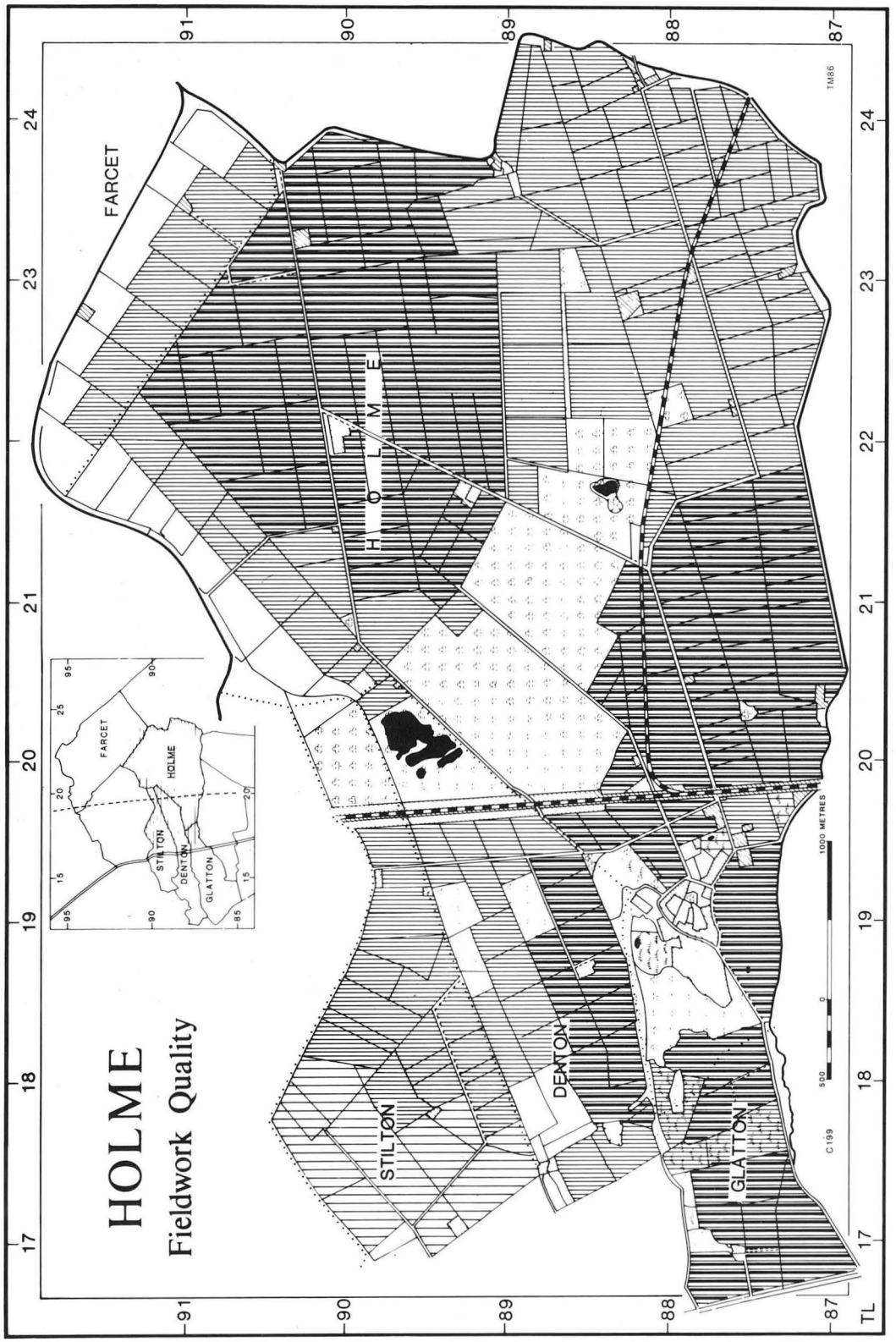


Figure 13 Quality and extent of fieldwork

Darby 1983, 181–2). The total loss of peat has therefore been about 5.89m (19.3 feet, not estimating for a raised bog). The lowest parts of Holme Fen lie at 3m below OD (1980) being the lowest lying land in Great Britain. Hutchinson (1980) has made a full study of peat shrinkage in the area. A full account of the soils of the region is given by Burton and Seale (1981).

III. Prehistoric

(Fig. 14)

Prehistoric activity is slight in the area, most of the old land surface being covered by peat and much of the skirt and upland being of clay. A gravelly skirt peninsula at Holme produced a few flints (site *4*) and a number of flints came from this area before 1954. Most were said to be Neolithic, but Wymer identified 83 of them as being Mesolithic (Wymer 1977, 134). Several polished flint and

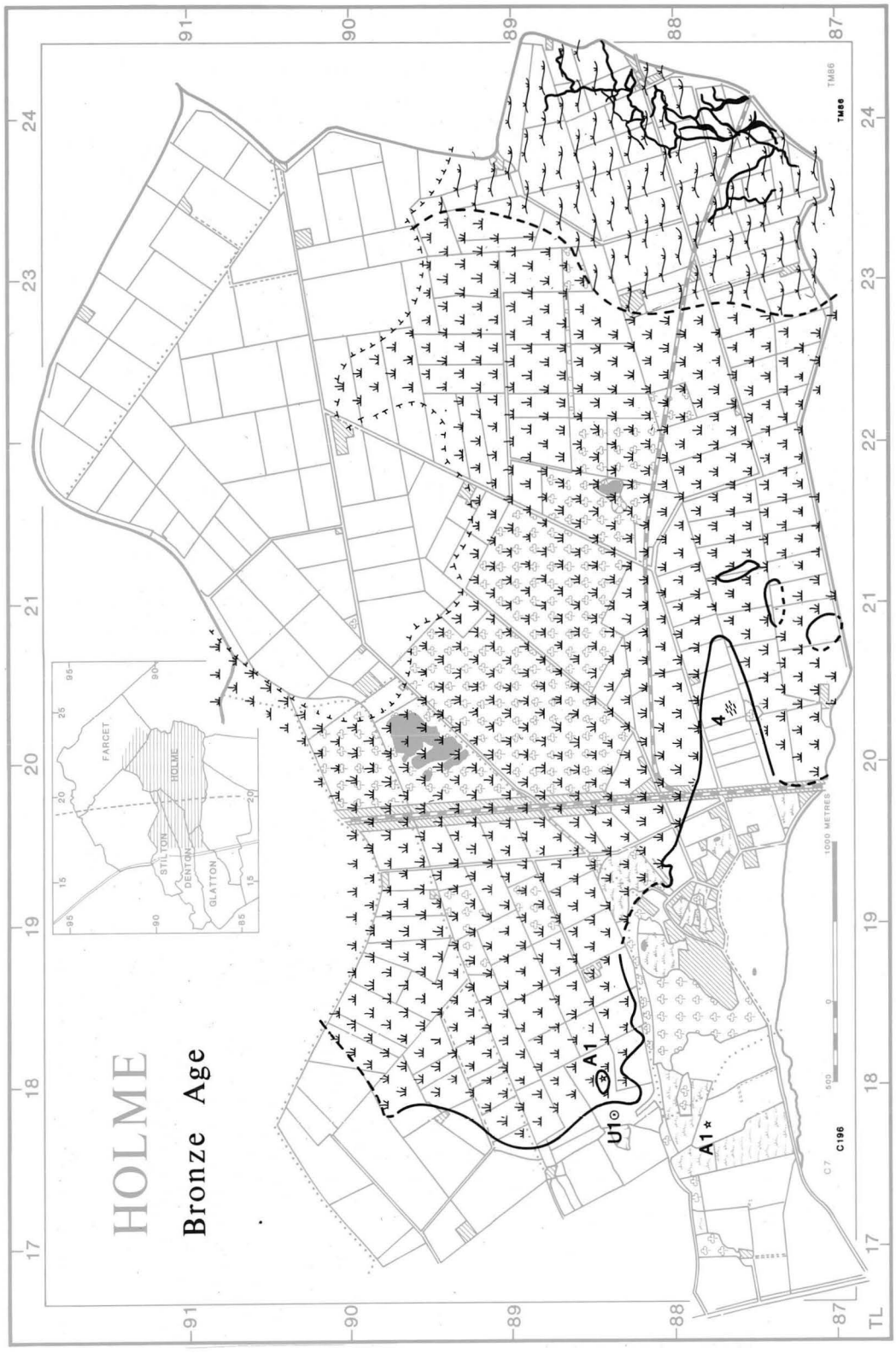


Figure 14 Bronze Age landscape

stone Neolithic axes have been found as chance finds, but none of these find spots is likely to represent settlement.

The Bronze Age, too, is poorly represented; a hoard of 4 socketed axes was discovered when Whittlesey Mere was drained and there are several unprovenanced objects in Peterborough Museum from the area (Evans 1881, 130–1). These objects and the Neolithic axes probably represent a background similar to that at Wood Walton where details of finds are better recorded (see below). Small quantities of worked flint were found during the survey on gravelly land near Ermine Lodge (area of TL 193 878) and at Holme village. Again, these were of a background nature.

In Denton Fen the skirtland had a burnt pebble and flint area with charcoal and burnings but no other finds (Fig. 14, Denton *U1*). It was interpreted as a cooking site of prehistoric date (for a discussion of these sites see Farcet, above).

No Iron Age sites were discovered during the survey, although sites Holme *1* and Glatton *2*, which are

mainly Roman, produced a few indeterminate sherds that could be late Iron Age. Figure 14 shows all the prehistoric finds and the fen extent during the Bronze Age. To the east are drawn the roddons that occur in the marine clay area; they would have been active during the early Bronze Age and have been buried by peat later in the period. The limit of marine clay has been taken from the work of Burton and Seale (1981, map of Peat Depth). Part of the boundary, where the clay thinned to a horizontal wedge and disappeared, allowing the upper and lower peat to unite, was observed in a freshly cleaned dike at TL 230 878.

IV. Roman and medieval

(Fig. 15)

No Roman sites occur in the fen because there was no dry ground available; the skirt, too, produced no sites since it forms only a very narrow band of no great extent. However on the upland there was much activity, familiar on Huntingdonshire boulder clay. Two sites occur in Glatton; site *1* produced late Roman pottery sherds and occupational debris in a hill-top location. Site *2* was larger with burnt pebble areas that probably represent hut sites. A quern reported nearby, at TL 176 879 (1954) was probably from this site.

Some finds came from the fen, a quern from TL 1995 8720 (Plate IV), a single sherd from TL 1995 8750 and a few oyster shells widely distributed, but none is likely to represent a settlement, most of the land being too low. Three pewter plates, said to be Roman, were discovered during the draining of Whittlesey Mere; there were also medieval metalwork and pottery. Two plates survive in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, which are Roman, but the medieval finds clearly make the date of deposition post-Roman. Roman pottery was said to have been found in the Mere site during the 1930s, but the evidence is only oral. There certainly could not have been a habitation site in such a location, and the evidence for authentic Roman finds from the Mere is not convincing (see Gazetteer 1), although the carbon-dating evidence shows that it is possible.

No separate Roman period plan has been produced. Sites are shown on the medieval plan, Figure 15. The fen edge was similar to that shown in the Middle Ages, lying between the lines shown on Figures 14 and 15. The whole of the area would probably have been peat.

Holme is first recorded as *Glatton cum Hulmo* in 1167; the name means a 'holme' *i.e.* an island or, more commonly, a peninsula surrounded by fen, water, or a river, as in the present case (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 188). Glatton is recorded in 957 as *Glaedtuninga* meaning 'cheerful' or 'pleasant' farm, and Denton occurs in *c.* 980 as *Dentun*; from its location and later name-forms it would mean the place in a valley (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 187 and 183).

Holme and Glatton formed a single parish until the early 19th century when it was split into two. Before then Holme was a chapelry of Glatton. For this reason Holme is not mentioned in *Domesday*, being assessed with the main village. Glatton became the property of the crown in 1214 (Page *et al.* 1936, 185), and by the 15th century was administered as part of the Duchy of Lancaster from Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire (account rolls, PRO DL 29).

At the north-east corner of the area lay Whittlesey Mere (Plate II). Until it was drained in the 1850s it was one of the largest lakes in the country, covering about 760 hectares in summer and about 1,200 (3,000 acres) in winter (Wentworth-Day 1954). Whittlesey Mere was planned accurately by Bodger in 1786 (reproduced by Cambridgeshire County Council 1985), and his map shows it extending to 635 hectares (1,570 acres). This agrees well with the area of marly deposit that lies in a shape closely corresponding to the 1786 map.

In 1086 the Mere was shared between the abbeys of Peterborough, Thorney and Ramsey, which had fishing rights. The fisheries are described with the boundaries of the Mere in 1225–28, and the other adjacent meres of Trundle (to the north TL 20 90, in Yaxley parish), and Ugg Mere (at the south TL 24 86, in Ramsey parish) are mentioned (Page *et al.* 1936, 186). Fishery in the sense

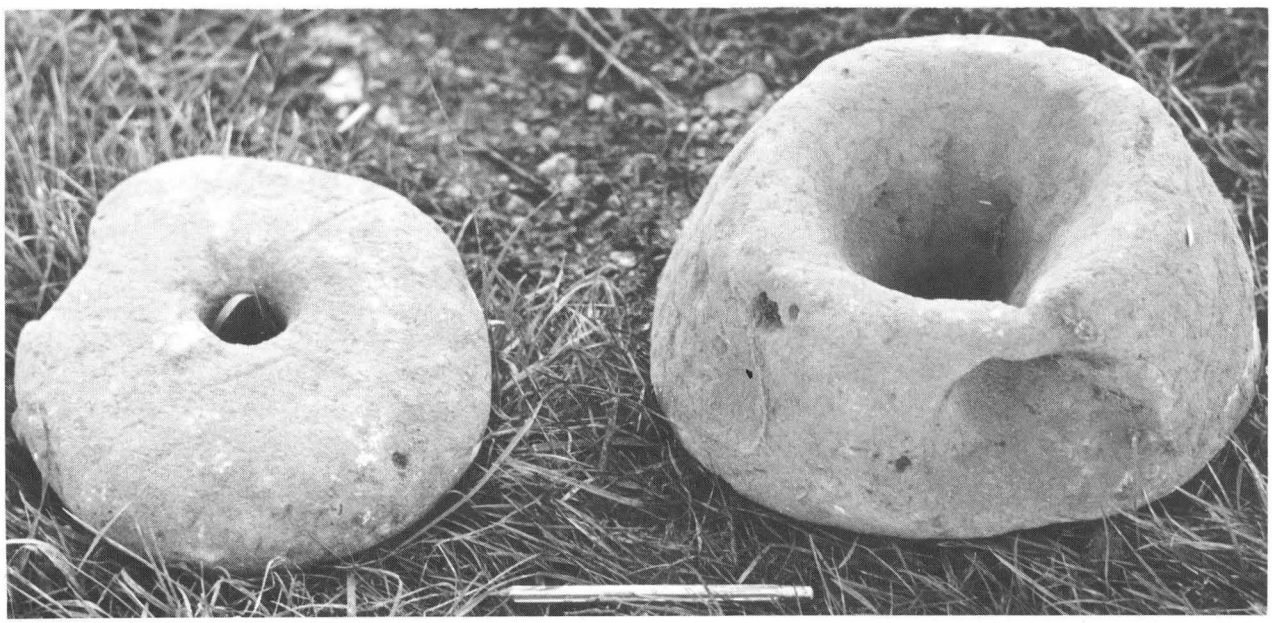


Plate IV Roman quern and (medieval?) fishnet weight at Top Farm, Holme, TL 203 871

Figure 15 Medieval landscape with Roman sites

described here probably means the right of fishing on a certain length of the shore line, or the right to have a boat to fish in the open water.

In 1306 the abbot of Thorney had five cotes abutting on the Mere and five boat gates to fish in the Mere. These are presumably actual landing stages (several places called cotes are marked on Bodger's map). Various nets and other fishing gear are listed.

During the 1976–7 survey two medieval sites were discovered on the south side of Whittlesey Mere (Holme *2* and *3*). At site *2* there was a large quantity of medieval pottery mostly dating from the late 13th century with some of the 15th–16th centuries. There were also a few pieces of limestone and a lot of burnt material. During a fen blow a large number of small lead weights of various shapes were revealed, doubtless being weights for fishing lines and nets. Site Holme *3* produced much 13th–century pottery, some pieces of stone and and burnt daub.

Here also were a few pieces of 17th–century pottery, a windmill mound and soilmarks of small enclosures. The last features could be post-medieval and show that some of the medieval fisheries continued until relatively recently. Net weights were often made from pieces of stone; a large example is shown on Plate IV.

The 13th–century pottery is of a type found in large quantities in Cambridgeshire; the sizeable sherds from this find spot (site 2) form a useful group. The pottery is similar to material from Lincolnshire and East Anglia, but the source kilns have not been identified. These two sites are almost certainly two of the fisheries described in the sources quoted above. Another has already been mentioned on the north side of the Mere, lying in Yaxley parish.

Whittlesey Mere was on the Fenland transport routes; when it was drained large pieces of stone, each about a cubic metre and scoured with masons' marks, were found near Engine Farm (Plate V). Doubtless the stones are a lost cargo, capsized into the water, that failed to reach a designated monastic house or other important building.

On the upland the remains of medieval fields were clear, both as soilmarks of individual strips and the linear banks representing furlong boundaries. The pattern of fields is reconstructed on Fig. 15 for as much of the upland that was surveyed; this only occurred in Glatton and Holme.

Most of Holme Fen was drained in 1631 with the digging of Bevill's Leam and associated drains, but Whittlesey Mere remained, being too deep to be taken in the early gravity-drained system. About 1300 acres southwest of the Mere were also left undrained. Several large fields are marked on a map of *c.* 1685 which became the basis of later farms (reproduced by Page *et al.* 1936, 182). A tithe map of *c.* 1847 shows the state of the Mere before drainage, by this time the large square fields of the 17th century had been subdivided into less regular 'rectangular' fields.

Whittlesey Mere was drained between 1849 and 1853; the process has been well recorded (Astbury 1958) and more recently discussed by Darby. At the same time measurements of peat shrinkage were obtained by means of the Holme Fen post (Darby 1983, 178–82). The post has rather a complicated history, but it shows that the peat levels fell rapidly at first and then more slowly (for details of the actual levels see above). Darby illustrates the post and the state of the Mere on the One Inch Ordnance Survey map of 1826.

Plate V Medieval blocks of limestone etched with masons' identification marks, discovered when Whittlesey Mere was drained, TL 232 909

6. Wood Walton with parts of Conington, Sawtry, Upwood and Great Raveley

I. Introduction

(Figs 16 and 17)

Topographically this region consists of fen-edge basins next to a scarp of upland which rises fairly sharply in the south from 0 to 37m. The villages lie low down (except Upwood), but not on the fen edge, and have most of their territory on upland, sharing small areas of fen. The modern parish of Upwood and the Raveleys includes Upwood, Great Raveley and Little Raveley. None of the last hamlet is reported here, and little of Upwood. Next to the fen lies some of the medieval upland of Great Raveley, which has been surveyed. The fen in the area and the upland that has been surveyed comprise about 3,800 hectares (9,500 acres).

The land is nearly all arable but the open appearance is broken up by the scarp and various woods, the Wood Walton Nature reserve being the most prominent in the Fen (Fig. 16). On the adjacent upland there are trees and spinneys in the parkland at Conington and various woods are visible on the scarp.

Sawtry is the largest of the villages (estimated population 4,460 (Cambridgeshire 1987)), having appreciable modern development; but Conington (210) and Wood Walton (230) are shrunken. There are some timber-framed buildings in all three.

Much of the region was studied and field walked by the late Jesse Robert Garrood, MD, FSA (1874–1959). He lived and practised with his father-in-law at Alconbury, and was introduced to field archaeology during the First World War by George Wyman Abbot, a Peterborough solicitor. Garrood was active in the Cambridge and Huntingdonshire Archaeological Society and became first joint president when it merged with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1952. He was for many years archaeological correspondent to the Ministry of Works and curated the collection of antiquities at the Huntingdon Literary Institution made by Robert Fox in the 19th century (Bushnell 1961). He reorganised and added to this collection which eventually became the founding material for the Norris Museum at St Ives.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The underlying geology consists of Oxford Clay which is exposed at the fen-edge slopes. On the high ground beyond the fen-edge scarp is a thick covering of clayey Till broken with the occasional patch of glacial gravel. The scarp is deeply indented forming a complex series of bays and promontories. At least two of the bays appear to be periglacial features from their circular shape (Plate I; Burton 1987); Duckpit Fen in Conington, and another indent immediately to the east of it (TL 18 84).

Flandrian marine deposits occur in the form of a marine clay bed in a small part of the north. Although covered with peat, a roddon system can be discerned (Figs 2 and 18). Deep peat containing large quantities of 'bog oaks' still covers most of the fen area. There was continuous growth of peat until 17th–century drainage, and in the final stage there was a raised acid bog supporting many species of plants otherwise rare in the region (see under Holme). It is in Wood Walton that the classic work by Godwin and his collaborators in establishing the nature of the Fenland stratigraphy was undertaken in the 1930s (Godwin and Clifford 1938). Near the fen edge, post-Roman alluvium spreads out from brooks issuing off the high ground, covering earlier deposits. The large basin of Sawtry Fen consists mainly of this material on the surface.

To the north east of the area there are marls deriving from the lakes of Ugg Mere (in Ramsey, adjacent, Fig. 25) and Brick Mere (Fig. 20), although they are very shallow. A small quantity of colluvium can be found along the medieval fen edge. A full account of the soils of the region is given in the recent work of Burton and Seale (1981).

The steepness of the scarp in many places causes the fen to extend to much the same area today as it did before drainage, even though several metres of organic remains have disappeared. The band of skirtland between the medieval dry land and the existing peat can be quite narrow, limiting the amount of wetland archaeology that can be discovered. This, combined with the exposure of Oxford Clay (a material rarely preferred for settlement during any period) along the level of the skirtlands, causes quite severe restraints on the occurrence of habitation sites or other remains.

III. Prehistoric

(Fig. 18)

Previous work in the area indicates a potential importance reflected by the large number of artefacts deposited and recorded in the Norris Museum, St Ives, and elsewhere. These discoveries were mostly made during the 1920s and 1930s by Garrood.

The present survey has shown that there are only two areas where there is a concentration of flints, fire-cracked material, and occasionally pottery, in sufficient quantities to regard them as 'sites'. These are Wood Walton *2* and *3*. Wood Walton site *U1*, lying to the east of *2* and *3* should perhaps be added as a third, but lesser, site. All the sites lie on glacial gravel on the top of two small promontories jutting into the fen. They lie close to each other around the former Castlehill Farm site.

Site *2* was mainly Neolithic with a little Bronze Age material. The collection includes blade cores, serrated flakes and a plano-convex knife. Site *3* was Neolithic with a similar range of material, there were also three sherds of Grooved Ware pottery. The small site *U1* was mainly Mesolithic. Therefore, as adjudged from the surface finds, the sites appear to be predominantly Neolithic, but some pieces of Mesolithic and Bronze Age affinity have also been made.

Two collections, made to provide a background away from the sites in grid square TL 21 83, yielded densities of 4 and 7 flints per hectare. This contrasts with the higher density on site *3* of 70 flints per hectare. The

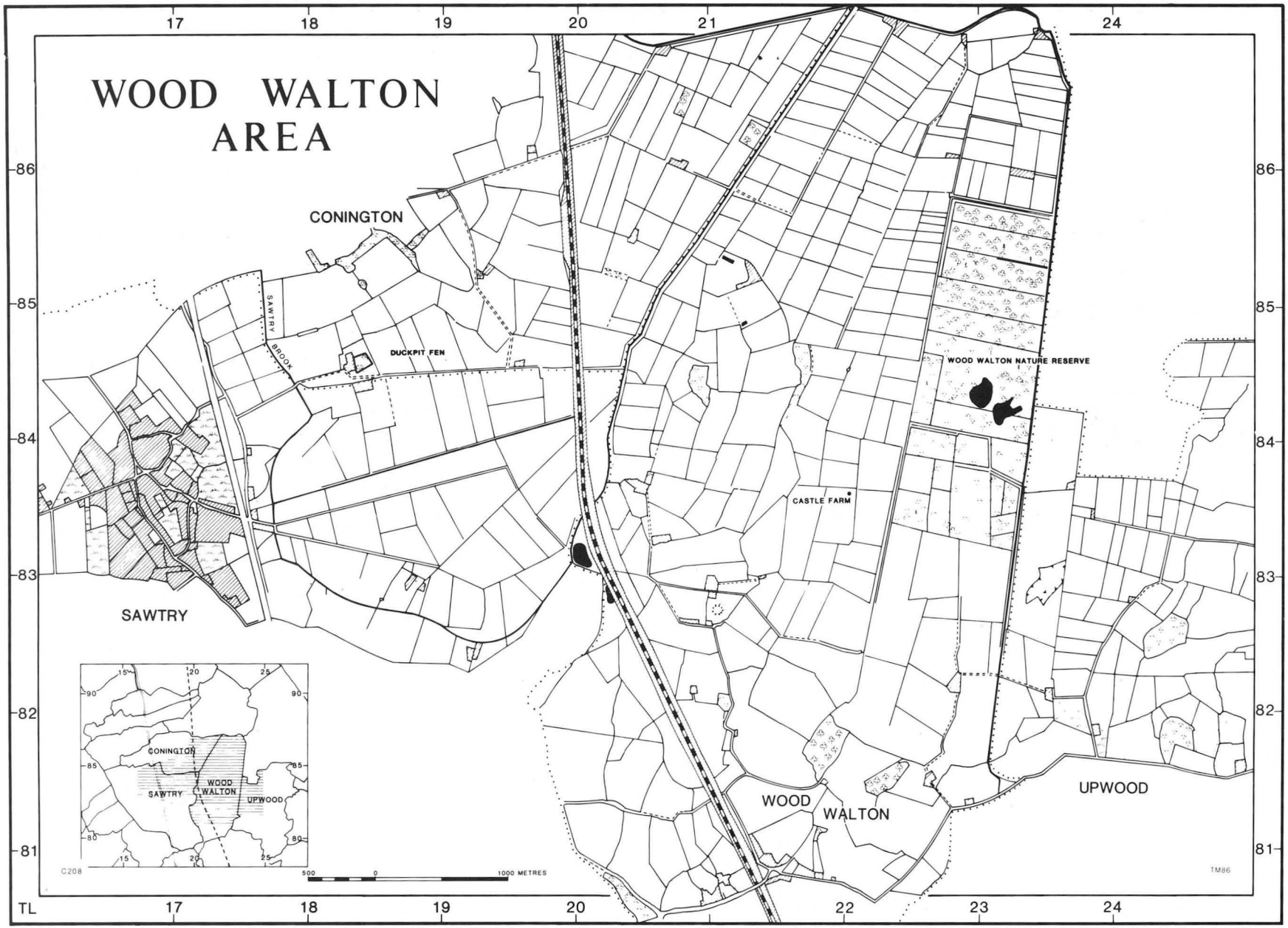


Figure 16 Modern landscape and topography

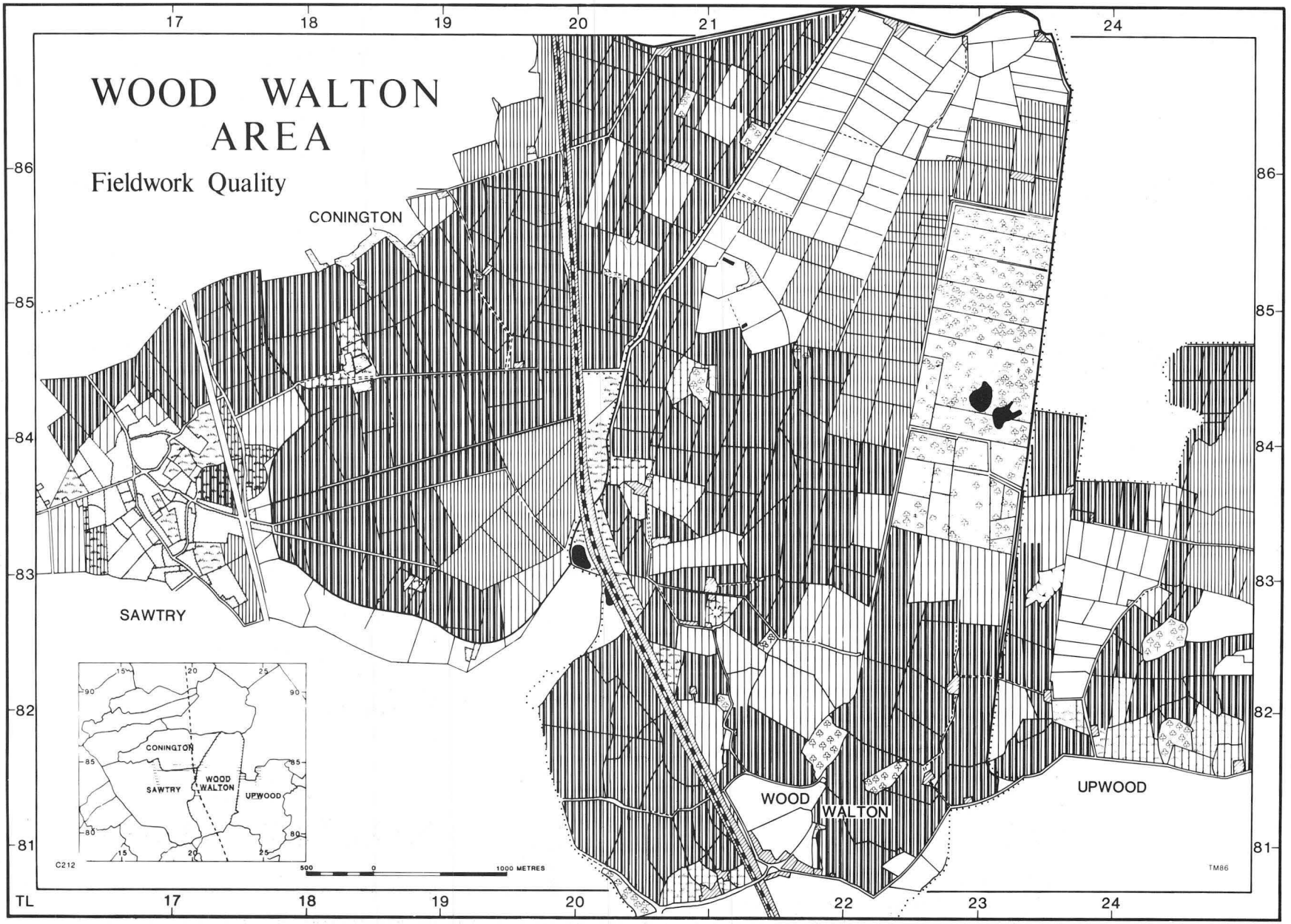


Figure 17 Quality and extent of fieldwork

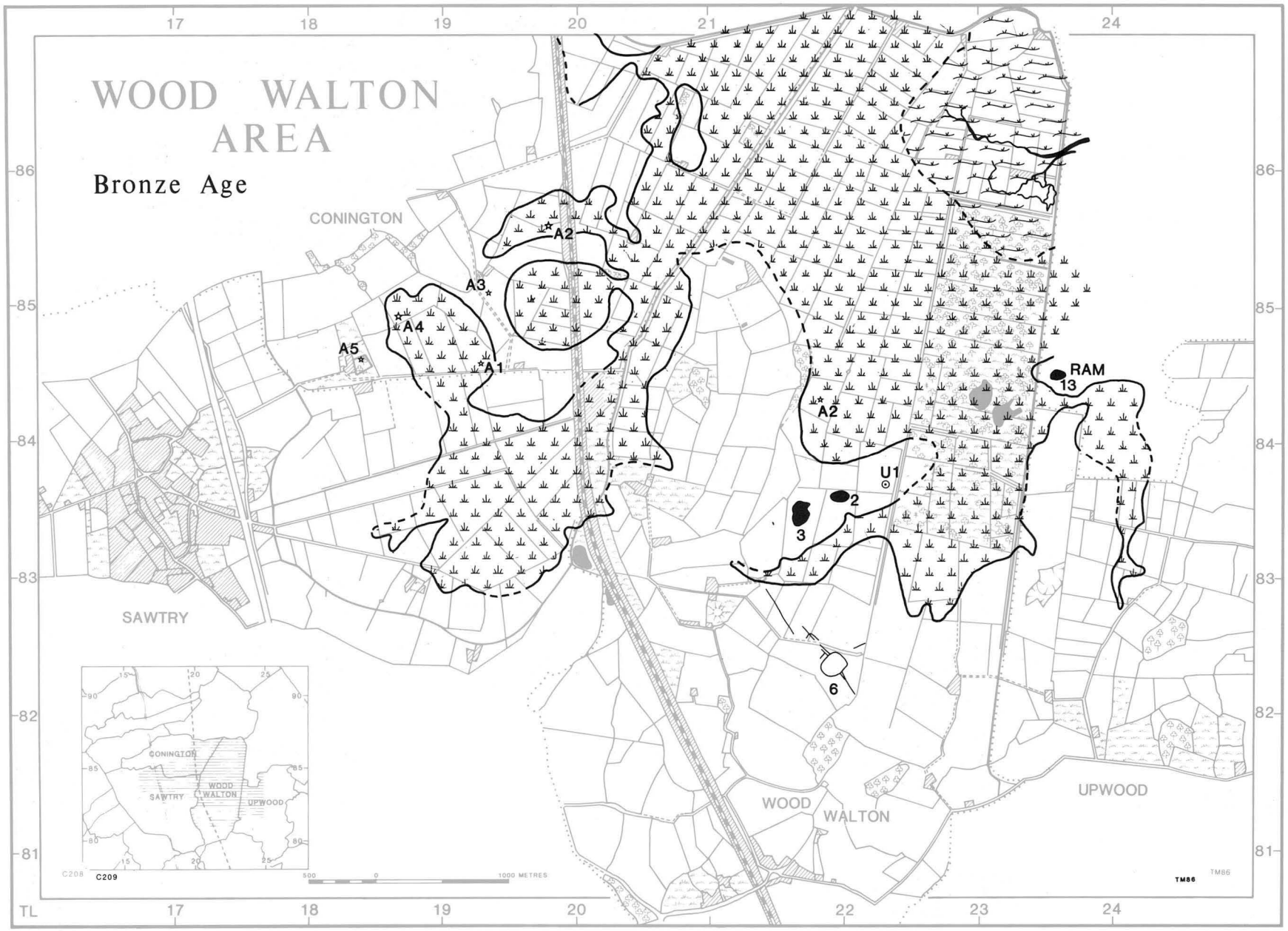


Figure 18 Bronze Age landscape

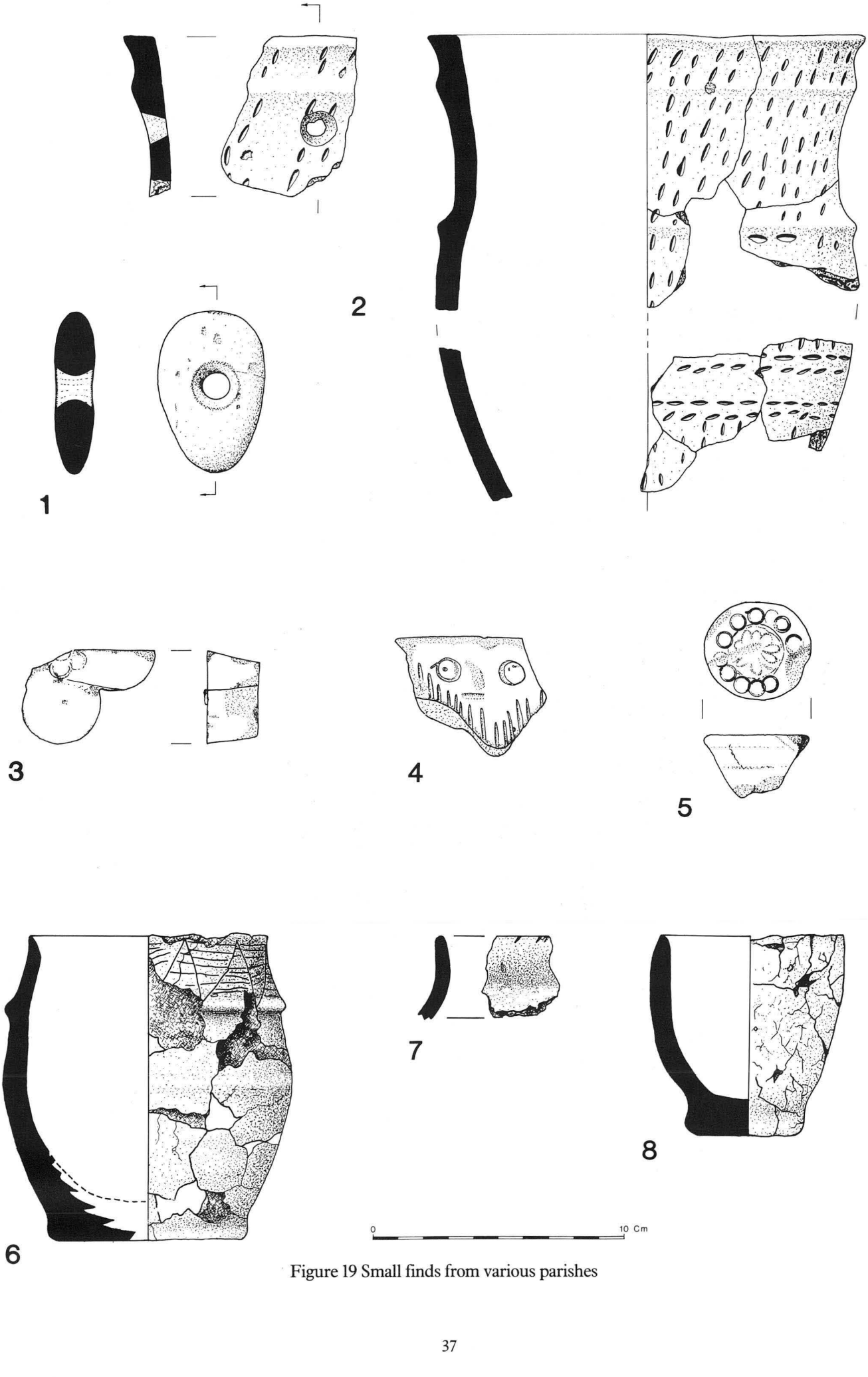


Figure 19 Small finds from various parishes

number of flints discovered during the present survey was doubtless much reduced because of the earlier intensive collecting. The two main Wood Walton sites have previously produced fragments of Mesolithic axes, and a few other stray finds of the period have been found elsewhere in the parish (see Gazetteer 1 notes).

The many Neolithic axes found on and in the immediate area of the sites by Garrood (1937a) reinforces the importance of them locally. Artefact A1 (Wood Walton) came from site *U1*, being a small triangular flint polished on both sides. The scatters of artefacts found over a wide area of this region, at Sawtry, Conington, and elsewhere are likely to derive from activities relating to the Wood Walton sites. The nearby Ramsey site *13* is part of the series, and yielded a large quantity of material. There are no other sites in the region and the surrounding peat-covered land surface lies too low to reveal more sites of the period.

Neolithic axes have been discovered in Conington Fen and fen edge, and a few finds are recorded on the Sawtry hinterland (see Gazetteer 1 and notes). As well as material previously known, the present survey has recorded more Neolithic finds held by farmers, particularly at Conington (A1–3, and 5).

Bronze Age finds are less well represented. There are scattered chance finds of two pieces of metalwork in Wood Walton fen and a few arrowheads from the upland. Sawtry Fen has produced a Bronze Age stone axe-hammer, and Conington a socketed-and-looped bronze axe. There is little evidence of activity in the Bronze Age on the principal lithic sites.

Figure 18 is titled 'Bronze Age' because it shows the reconstructed fen edge at that period (being the same as the existing surviving peat). Archaeologically it is a composite prehistoric map showing all finds and remains of the lithic periods. The finds located by Garrood have not been plotted because they would give the impression that the area is more important than other regions that have not had the same repeated search for artefacts. The Wood Walton sites are too high above the peat to expect much survival of wet remains, although it is likely that artefacts and pollen from the surrounding area do survive in the nearby Fen. Figure 18 also shows the roddon pattern at the north east; this would have been covered by peat in the later Bronze Age, but would have existed as a system of watercourses in the early Bronze Age period during the marine clay stage.

IV. Iron Age and Roman

(Fig. 20)

No Iron Age sites were identified in the area of the present survey, although 'Belgic' material has been reported west of Grange Farm (TL 225 816, Norris Museum X712). No site was visible near, even though ground conditions were good and there was a freshly cleaned ditch nearby. It is possible that the site location recorded is mistaken.

Iron Age sites are abundant outside the immediate area on the boulder clay plateau. Garrood excavated one in Sawtry at Stocking Close, TL 203 798, between 1929 and 1933 (Garrood 1937b). Roman material was also present as well as that from the Early Iron Age and Belgic period; some of the finds are in the Norris Museum (X1105–9). Many Iron Age sites occur at Abbots and Kings Ripton, and another on the high ground at Raveley (Hall 1988).

Roman finds in Wood Walton are sparse. The only occupation site is Wood Walton *5*, with an area of sherds and dark soil on top of the scarp overlooking the fen. A few finds have come from Wood Walton Fen (see Gazetteer 1 notes) but no sites were identified or looked likely at the reported findspots.

Two Roman sites occur in the fields at Sawtry within the survey area, both on boulder clay (sites *5* and *6*). A third small site may occur near the village (*U1*), but as it is mixed with medieval pottery it may represent dumping of waste from site *3*. This last site is complex; Roman pottery was excavated by Garrood in 1939 and the site was subsequently scheduled as an earthwork 'Roman village'. Most of the earthworks are clearly of medieval type, with paddocks and ponds partly overlying ridge-and-furrow. On the high ground is a ring ditch that has been interpreted as a 17th–century gun placement. Most likely there is a Roman site covered by later earthworks. One Roman site was discovered in the survey area at Conington (site *2*) which yielded late pottery. Ditches were visible in the side of a freshly cleaned modern dike.

The overall findings for this group of parishes is that there was little Roman occupation on the fen edge. The fen itself was too deep to support occupation, and there was very little skirtland. Most of the intensive settlement in the region was outside the area of survey on the Till of the upland; Abbots Ripton has many such sites (Hall 1988). The fen edge marked on the plan is that of the Middle Ages, but it would not be much different in the Roman period.

V. Saxon and Medieval

(Fig. 20)

No Saxon remains were discovered in the area; none would be expected on the heavy soils. Immediately outside of the area, south-west of the Sawtry Abbey (site *1*), Saxon sherds were discovered at Sawtry Judith, a deserted village site (Brown and Taylor 1980, 115–7). Farther south, at Abbots Ripton, there is a scatter of early Saxon sherds on a patch of glacial gravel (site *9*, TL 2474 7815, Hall 1988; Late Saxon occupation in the Wood Walton area is proved by Saxo-Norman wares discovered next to the shrunken settlements).

Wood Walton was first recorded in 1086 as *Waltuna*. From the place-name forms it has been argued that it might mean a walled (Roman) site (*weall-tun*) rather than the usual *weala-tun* referring to the Romans (British, *wala*) at a nearby location (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 225). The Roman site Wood Walton *5* does not have much stone; there may be other local Roman sites of a more impressive type but the most likely interpretation is that *weald-tun* was meant, meaning a wood or wold, referring to the wooded clays that abound in the area.

Wood Walton medieval settlement is interesting because it was dispersed in three separate areas with an isolated church lying midway between the two oldest and most important parts. The present day village of Wood Walton is the largest and lies at the south of the three; it has the stump of a medieval cross and there are several hectares of shrunken earthworks at the western end. The church lies next northwards, sited with its rectory alone on a hill top. A church is mentioned in *Domesday*, and there is a 12th–century gravestone at the site. No other

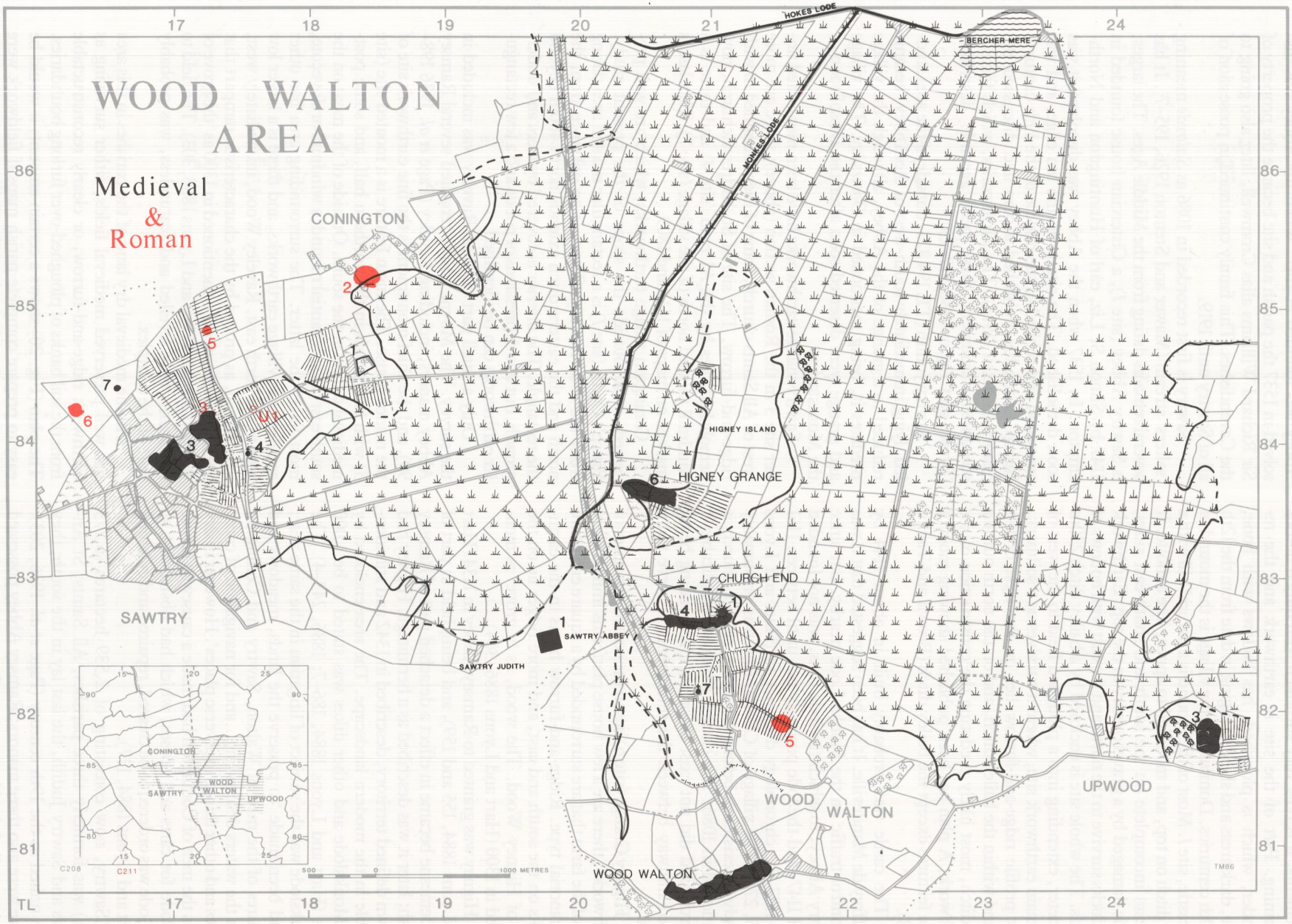


Figure 20 Roman sites and medieval landscape

medieval remains occur around it.

Church End (site *4*) lies at the centre of the three settlements; it is now very shrunken with only 6 houses remaining. Part of the site is earthwork and the remainder, which is ploughed, has hollows with bone, stone, dark areas and sherds ranging in date from the 12th to 20th centuries. Dominating the village is the mound of the castle, site *1*. Most of the mound is a natural hill with a ring ditch on top, and modified to appear like a motte. It appears incomplete on the south and south-east sides, and is damaged by a gravel quarry in the top. Earthwork paddocks survive to the north and the east with hollows of ponds. The whole site is enclosed by a bailey ditch 230m diameter, extending into a ploughed field to the west of the main earthwork site, where it survives as a soilmark. Low profile ridge-and-furrow lies on the west of the mound within the bailey ditch, and on the north outside the ditch, most likely predating the construction of the earthwork. A plan has been published showing most of these features except the bailey ditch (Brown and Taylor 1978).

The castle was probably built in about 1144 by Geoffrey de Mandeville. It has been suggested that it was to control traffic on the Monks Lode nearby, but since Sawtry Abbey, to which the lode runs, was not founded until 1147, and the lode probably not until between 1161 and 1177 the chronology does not fit (Hart and Lyons 1886, 275). The village of Church End was presumably already in existence before the motte since a church is mentioned in 1086. The church siting is inexplicable if Church End did not exist before it, the building being placed midway between the settlements to serve them both.

Higney Grange (site *6*) lies in the centre of a series of earthworks; there are a few house platforms immediately east of the farm that are surrounded by a square enclosure of manorial type. Ridge-and-furrow hems in the earthworks on the south and east, and more ridges lie on the east of Higney Wood. The wood, as 'a grove' is mentioned in 1300 (Hart and Lyons 1886, 304).

Higney was granted to Ramsey Abbey in 1134 (Hart and Lyons 1884, 155 and 159), and being held as part of the demesne became in effect a detached part of Ramsey parish; later it was described as a hermitage. Higney had its own defined territory, described in 1342 and still identifiable in the modern landscape. The area enclosed by the Monkslode and other dikes was stated to be 1,000 acres (Hart and Lyons 1884, 186–7; 1886, 243–4). The Monkslode was the subject of litigation in the same year; it had been made 'to preserve the lands, meadows and pastures of the men of Walton, Sawtry and Conington from the waters descending...and for navigation of corn, turves and other things to diverse places'. However in dry times the men of Conington had made a causeway across the lode for carts and horses, which had obstructed it. The lode was ordered to be cleared, repaired and enlarged (Hart and Lyons 1884, 177).

Sawtry, now consisting of 2,539 hectares (6,273 acres) was formerly three parishes, All Saints, St Andrews and Sawtry Judith, the last lay in the south; they were united in the 19th century (Page *et al.* 1936, 203). There were also three manors; Ramsey Abbey possessed one, later called the Moyne manor because it was let to a family of that name for 300 years. After the Dissolution in the 16th century it became the property of the Cavendish family. Sawtry Beaumes manor passed through the Beaumes and Louthe families until it too came to the Cavendishes. Sawtry Judith was the parish in which the Abbey was founded in 1147. When the Abbey was dissolved in 1537 the parish and site became the property of Sir Richard Williams alias Cromwell, later also going to the Cavendishes. This family continued in possession of all of Sawtry until 1919.

Sawtry is first recorded in 1086 as *Saltrede* meaning 'salters' stream (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 195–7). It has several remains dating from the Middle Ages. The largest is Sawtry Abbey (site *1*), a Cistercian house founded in 1147 by Simon St Liz, earl of Huntingdon and Northampton. In 1537 when the Abbey was dissolved it was soon demolished. The site is on the fen edge, and was excavated and robbed in the middle of the 19th century. Inskip Ladds has published a plan and discussed the history in detail (1914). The earthworks, which form a scheduled monument, have been recently described (Brown and Taylor 1980, 117–23).

Sawtry Judith (TL 194 823, outside of the area studied, lying immediately south-west of the Abbey) became reduced to a grange of the Abbey, although the village predates it, being mentioned in *Domesday*. The village and grange were deserted soon after the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Sawtry village earthworks have been mentioned under site *3* in the Roman section (above); there are more west of All Saints church, some of them hemmed in with ridge-and-furrow. The site of St Andrews church, now demolished, lies by the A1 road (site *4*) and there is a windmill mound north of the village (site 7). This last is marked on maps of 1612 and 1809.

Conington village earthworks, which are well preserved, were outside the scope of the present study. Bruce's Castle (site *1*) is a rectangular moated area dating from the 13th century. There is an entrance from the north and the eastern ditch extends north 400m beyond the rectangle. The interior is covered by trees and undergrowth, but two depressions of ponds and a few rectangular earthworks can be identified.

Only a small part of Great Raveley was included in the survey. The Moyne family tenanted several Ramsey Abbey manors, including Raveley (Page *et al.* 1936 198–99), and the chief monument is the fine earthwork site of the manor house. The main feature is a moated site (site *3*) with two ponds in the northern half, and some post-medieval debris in the south. Outside of the moat on the south east is a substantial mound, a windmill or dovecote, most likely the latter. The surrounding area has other smaller scale village earthworks, and there is a larger low area to the north east. Raveley Wood, immediately west, is medieval, as proved by the characteristic rampart that encircles it; the wood is mentioned in 1300 as 'the grove of William Moyne' (Hart and Lyons 1886, 303). The field to the south, now levelled and featureless, was probably part of the complex.

All the medieval dry land of the parishes in this area has well preserved medieval fields, either surviving as earthwork ridge-and-furrow, or clearly reconstructable from the soil banks of ploughed-over furlong boundaries. The plan (Fig. 20) shows a certain amount; it would be easy to prepare complete parish maps if fieldwork were extended to the whole area. The fields are characteristic Midland type with reverse-S curves at the ends of the individual strips. Upwood has a map dated 1853 showing the complete furlong pattern (HRO SF459).

7. Ramsey

I. Introduction
(Figs 21 and 22)

The medieval parish of Ramsey was split into two parts in 1860 forming a new parish and settlement, Ramsey St Mary's, in the Fen. The two are treated as one in this account, covering an area of 6,445 hectares (15,926 acres), and having a combined population of 6,390 (Cambridgeshire 1987). Higney, a detached island near Wood Walton, has long been considered part of Ramsey parish (Page *et al.* 1926, 194–5) but has been discussed in this report under Wood Walton.

Ramsey lies on a complicated spur extending 5km into the fen with many indents. The settlement centres around a T-junction formed by the Great Whyte and High Street, south-west of the former monastery. There are several late-medieval timber-framed houses surviving, often masked by a more recent facade. Church Green forms an attractive area with a pond next to the parish church of St Thomas of Canterbury and the remains of the 15th–century abbey gatehouse. The Abbey site is now occupied by a school, the oldest part of which contains medieval work and was probably an undercroft. Ramsey St Mary's is mainly of 19th–century origin with more recent buildings. It is scattered along a straight 17th–century road leading from Ramsey Heights in the south to Ponders Bridge and Whittlesey in the north. A few of the side droves also have houses and farms along them.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits.

The low peninsula of Ramsey and the small area of upland at Biggin (TL 27 84) consist of Till (boulder clay) overlying Oxford Clay. There are some small areas of gravel on the fen edge and on an island at Elsie Farm (TL 25 90). The main peninsula has some gravelly admixture north of Worlick Farm (TL 31 86). The whole parish lies low, the highest upland no more than 19m above OD; most of the extensive fen ground is near to sea level. At the extreme south-west of the parish the fen edge is deeply indented with an almost enclosed channel running south into Upwood parish (TL 23 84).

Peat developed early in much of the fen, drowning and preserving the Neolithic forest. Many 'bog oaks' occur in New Fen and Lotting Fen (TL 26 86, west to TL 24 85). There is still deep peat with logs at Ramsey Heights. The main Flandrian deposit is marine clay lying on peat, and thinly covered by later degraded peat. The natural drainage was by a series of dendritic systems, now represented by roddons, that mostly unite and make for the Nene in Whittlesey parish. East of the Ramsey peninsula the drainage was via the Ouse (West Water) running north towards Benwick. The wide roddon of the river, some 250m across, transverses the eastern edge of the parish (Figs 2 and 23).

During the late Bronze Age most of the fen developed peat which grew more or less continuously until the 17th century AD, there being no deposition of further marine sediments. Exceptional to this was the west of the parish around Elsie and Daintree Farms where there was some deposition of silty material. The ground surface is mainly marine clay, but the roddons are large and silty, encircling the island of Elsie and backing towards Whittlesey Mere via Daintree. They represent the southern course of the Nene which approached Benwick by means of a complex series of distributaries (see Hall 1987a, Whittlesey and Thorney). These Ramsey roddons mostly unite and enter Whittlesey in Glassmoor Fen. More silts occur in the larger roddons north of Ramsey as far west as TL 27 87. Part of the fen around these latter roddons has a very thin coating of silty clay, and there was probably a saltmarsh between them; this is not shown on Figure 24, but the area of silt is indicated on Figure 2. In the late Bronze Age Ramsey Fen would have been all peat except for the west and a small part of the north where there were saltmarsh conditions; other wide watercourses would still be open and tidal.

The Nene eventually crossed the fen by a route via Whittlesey Mere into the west of Ramsey Fen and so to Benwick (the 'old course' of the 17th century). Two freshwater lakes or meres had formed by medieval times; Ugg Mere and Ramsey Mere, covering 115 and 155 hectares respectively. Clay marls were deposited in the bottom of Ugg mere which are now exposed on the fen surface contrasting with the black of the peat when of appreciable depth, and allowing the mere to be mapped accurately; there is very little marl in Ramsey Mere and the earlier roddons are visible through it.

Soils of part of Ramsey parish are discussed by recent publications of the Soil Survey of England and Wales, at the west by the report of the Stilton area (Burton and Seale 1981) and at the east by the report on the Chatteris area (Seale 1975b).

III. Early prehistoric
(Fig. 23)

A Palaeolithic axe (A1) was discovered in Victoria Road, Ramsey as a chance find, presumably coming from glacial drift. Mesolithic flints discovered during the present survey occur on sites *5* and *7*, along with the Neolithic material. A few single finds have been made; a perforated pebble-hammer from near Ramsey Heights (A5, Fig. 19, 1), a fine core from site *2* (Fig. 24) and other single flints at various locations (TL 3087, TL 2986, TL 2985, not marked on the plan). The only quantity of Mesolithic flints came from sites *5* and *7* (Fig. 23) lying on small pockets of sandy gravel.

Neolithic activity was likewise very limited, as would be expected on a terrain that consists of so much heavy clay. The sites already mentioned, *5* and *7*, along with two more, also on small outcrops of gravel, *13* and *14*, produced flints. The finds are mostly blades and cores occurring with fire-cracked flint, characteristic of settlement sites. Site *13* has a lot of material and lies on a low peninsula, potentially controlling the narrow valley from Upwood. A polished axe, A3, also came from near this area. Site *14* lies on a very low spread of gravel and is likely to run under the fen deposits. Other finds of axes have been made at various times on the pre-Flandrian ground; a greenstone polished axe in 1830 (A2, Gazetteer 1) and

more recently at the south west in the Ramsey Heights area, A3, and a grey-flint polished axe, A4.

The four lithic sites almost certainly represent settlement that was responsible for the axes and flints discovered elsewhere, including Wood Walton (q.v.). Sites *5*, *7* and especially *14* have potential for the survival of contemporary waterlogged remains, since they lie so close to the fen.

IV. Bronze Age

(Fig. 24)

The most striking remains of the Bronze Age are the barrow groups; all were new discoveries and quite unexpected. Sited on clayey gravel they give no cropmarks and had not been detected by aerial photography. All are placed on top of the long spur of Ramsey protruding north in to the fen, and are in a classic 'hilltop' siting, once commanding an extensive prospect over the fen, although they lie no higher than *c.* 6m OD.

The barrows, eight in all, lie in a main group of 5 mounds (site *1*) all are about 0.5m high and 25m diameter, with a single mound (site *2*) and another pair (site *8*) slightly larger at 35m diameter and 0.65m above the ground surface. Site *1* yielded a few rough cores and other waste flakes nearby, but no convincing evidence of occupation (barrows elsewhere, such as Chippenham (site *1*, TL 6736 6693), often produce a few Bronze Age flints in association).

Flint-producing areas that probably do represent settlements were found at sites *4* and *6*. They lie on small gravel pockets on the fen edge and yield rough material characteristic of the Bronze Age and mostly unpatinated. At site *6* there was a fine polished flint knife; both sites had fire-cracked flint present.

A different kind of burial site has been discovered at Elsie Farm (site *15*). There are no finds on the surface but soil disturbance when making a potato clamp revealed a Beaker cremation in a decorated urn (Fig. 19, 2); it may be part of an urnfield. Along with the barrows at Whittlesey and Thorney, the Ramsey cremations and barrows continue an extensive fen-edge 'ritual area'.

The Ramsey lithic sites may relate to the barrows, and probably to other lithic sites on similar pockets of lighter soil farther back in the boulder clay hinterland (such as occur at Abbots Ripton (Hall 1988)). The landscape is illustrated on Figure 24, being mostly peat and with only a few watercourses active.

No sites of the Iron Age and Roman periods were found during the survey at Ramsey. There are reports of sherds discovered as chance finds in the town itself, and a coin hoard was found near Worlick (site 9). Details will be found in Gazetteer 1.

V. Saxon and medieval

(Fig. 25)

No Early or Middle Saxon sites were discovered during the survey, and none would be expected on the clay terrain. The town of Ramsey grew up because of the presence of the monastery; it is not mentioned in the *Domesday Survey* of 1086, either because it was still considered to be part of Bury parish, or because it was not assessed, having been granted almost royal privileges, like a county palatine. The town was sufficiently established and important to have a grant of market in 1200 (Page *et al.* 1926, 188), but never became a borough, the abbots maintaining their tenants in villein status.

Medieval finds were discovered at two locations. A dark area with sherds was found out in the fields (site *3*). This could have been a midden (similar ones were discovered near the monastic site of Denny Abbey in Waterbeach (site *U2*, TL 4970 6848)) or possibly a small lodge house connected with the abbots' park immediately to the south. Most of the sherds were of 13th–century date with one of the 15th century. Nearby the ground was uneven, so quarrying followed by dumping of rubbish cannot be ruled out.

More medieval material has come from north of the abbey (site *17*). When surveyed in March 1978 the field was ploughed but showed soilmarks and remains of earthworks. The precise nature was vague, there being two gravel terraces, a pond and finds of building materials. The pottery sherds were mainly 13th century in date and included a face jug, stamped decorated sherd and a piece of glazed tile (Fig. 19, 3–5). Most of the fabrics had a mixed sandy and shelly fabric, like the material from Holme site *2*, probably deriving from some local kilns as yet unlocated. Since 1978 the field has been filled with houses and large quantities of pottery have been recovered (E. Davies, pers. comm. 1986). It is likely that much of the material is rubbish from the abbey rather than occupation or structures; it is clear from the medieval court rolls that waste was being placed in this general area (E. DeWindt & A. DeWindt pers. comm. 1986).

A major topographical feature of Ramsey is Cnute's Dyke, forming much of the north-west corner of the parish boundary. It has been claimed as Roman, probably because it is nearly straight (Phillips 1970, 186). In view of the paucity of Roman activity at Ramsey and the certain lack of any major site, a Roman date is unlikely. The feature cannot be a drainage work since it cuts across the Wood Walton fen basin, not following any logical or topographical route that could function as drainage. The route gives a possible explanation; the Dyke linked Ramsey with the Peterborough region, its most likely purpose being a canal to bring stone for the abbey. If this be true then the canal would probably date from the 10th century, and be connected with the foundation of the monastery.

There was a park belonging to the abbey and a soilmark of a rampart survives south of Park Farm (TL 30 85). The remainder of the boundary was probably formed by the curving drove to the north so enclosing an area of about 40 hectares (Fig. 25).

The abbey (site *16*) was founded in 969 by Ailwin, and had its own area of jurisdiction called a banlieu, nominally a league around the abbey buildings. This has been identified to reach to Wistow and Raveley, and so included the modern parishes of Ramsey, Bury, Upwood, most of Wistow and a little of Great Raveley (Page *et al.* 1926, 188). There are several accounts of its history and many of the detailed monastic records survive allowing a complete picture of the great abbey and its estate to be compiled. It owned almost the whole of north Huntingdonshire and had estates in many other counties. After the Dissolution in 1539 the site and some estates passed to the Williams, alias Cromwell, family until 1676, becoming the property of the Fellowes family in 1737 (Page *et al.* 1926, 194).

Sir Henry Williams sold the building materials of the abbey. The present school, incorporating Abbey

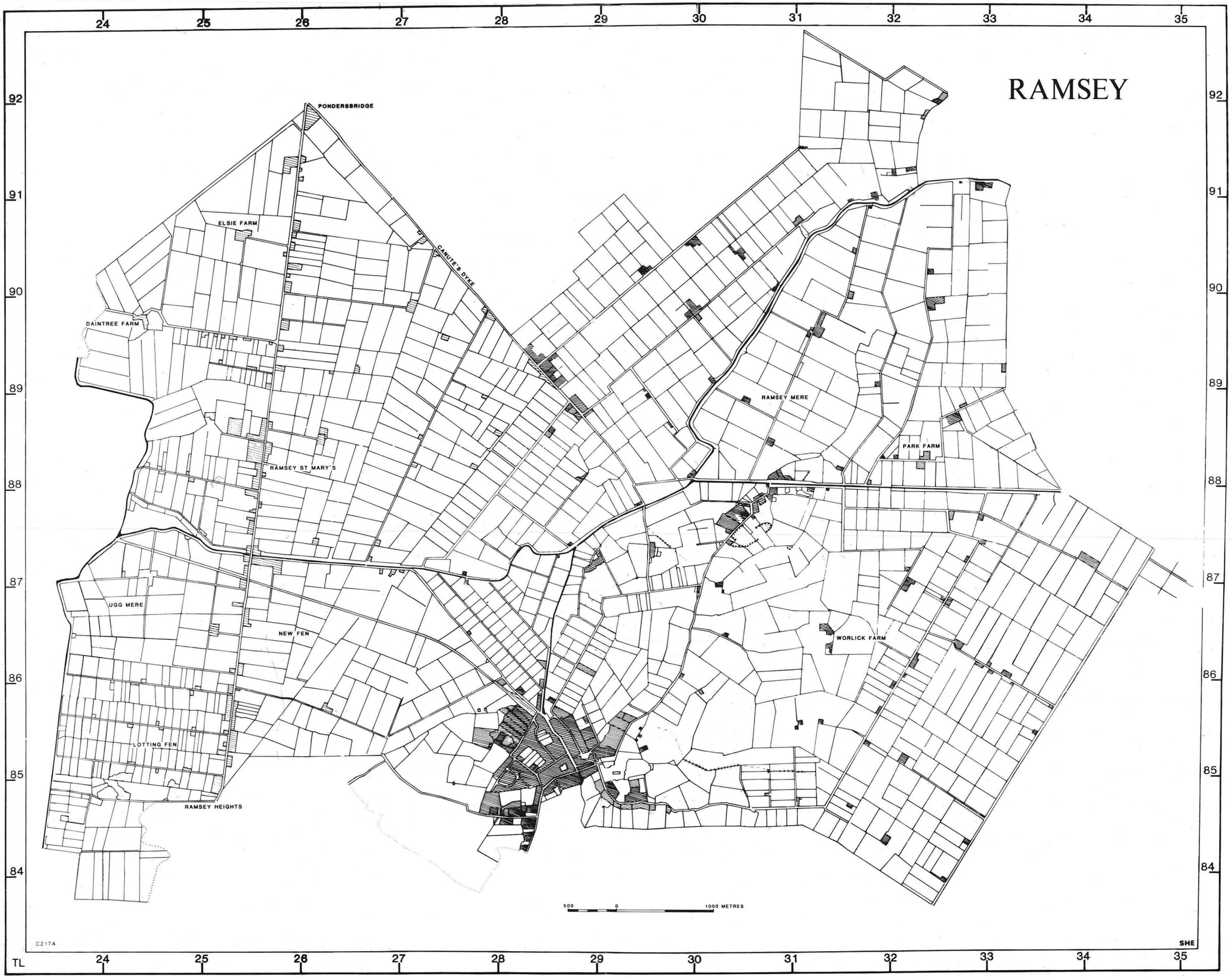


Figure 21 Modern landscape and topography

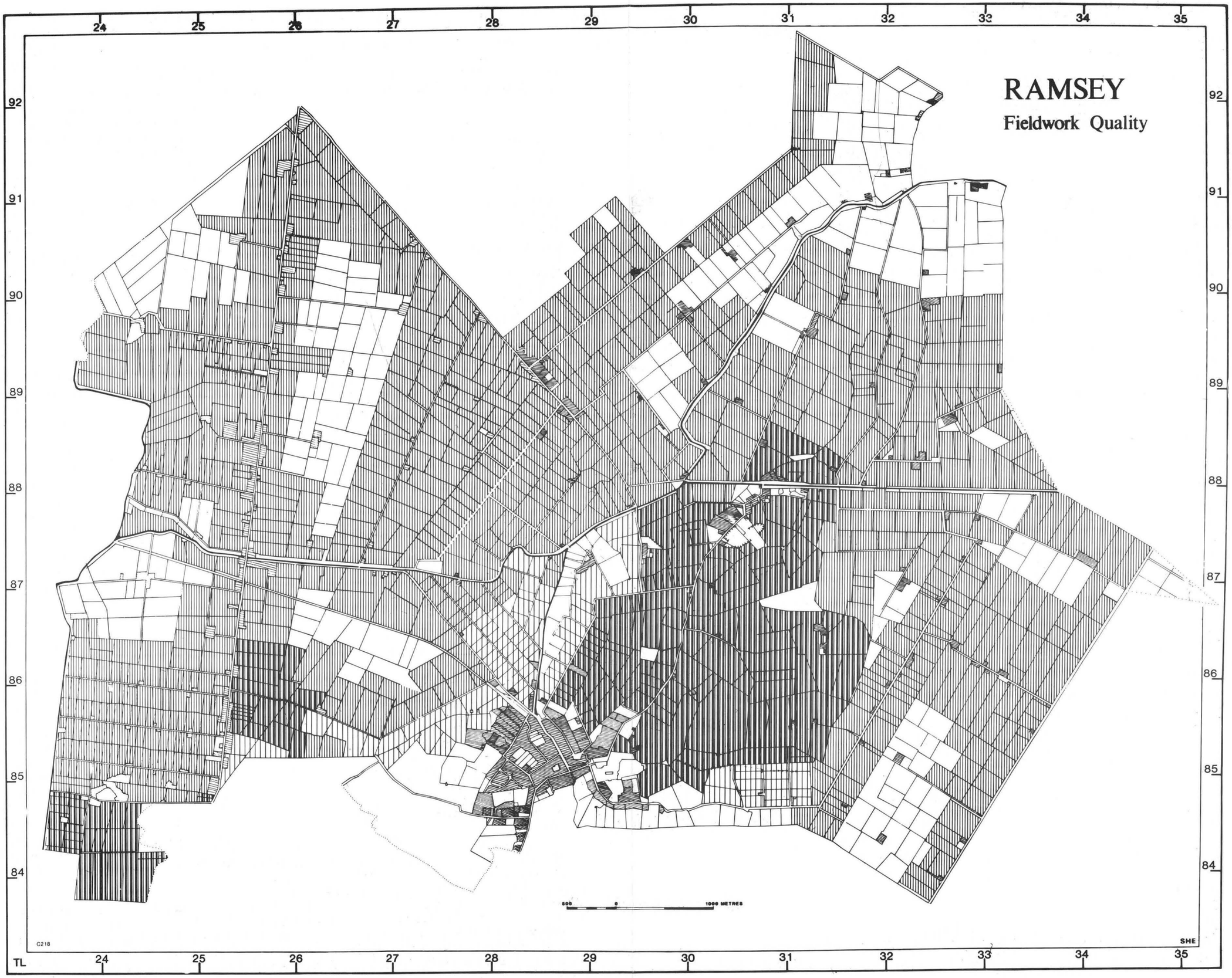


Figure 22 Quality and extent of fieldwork

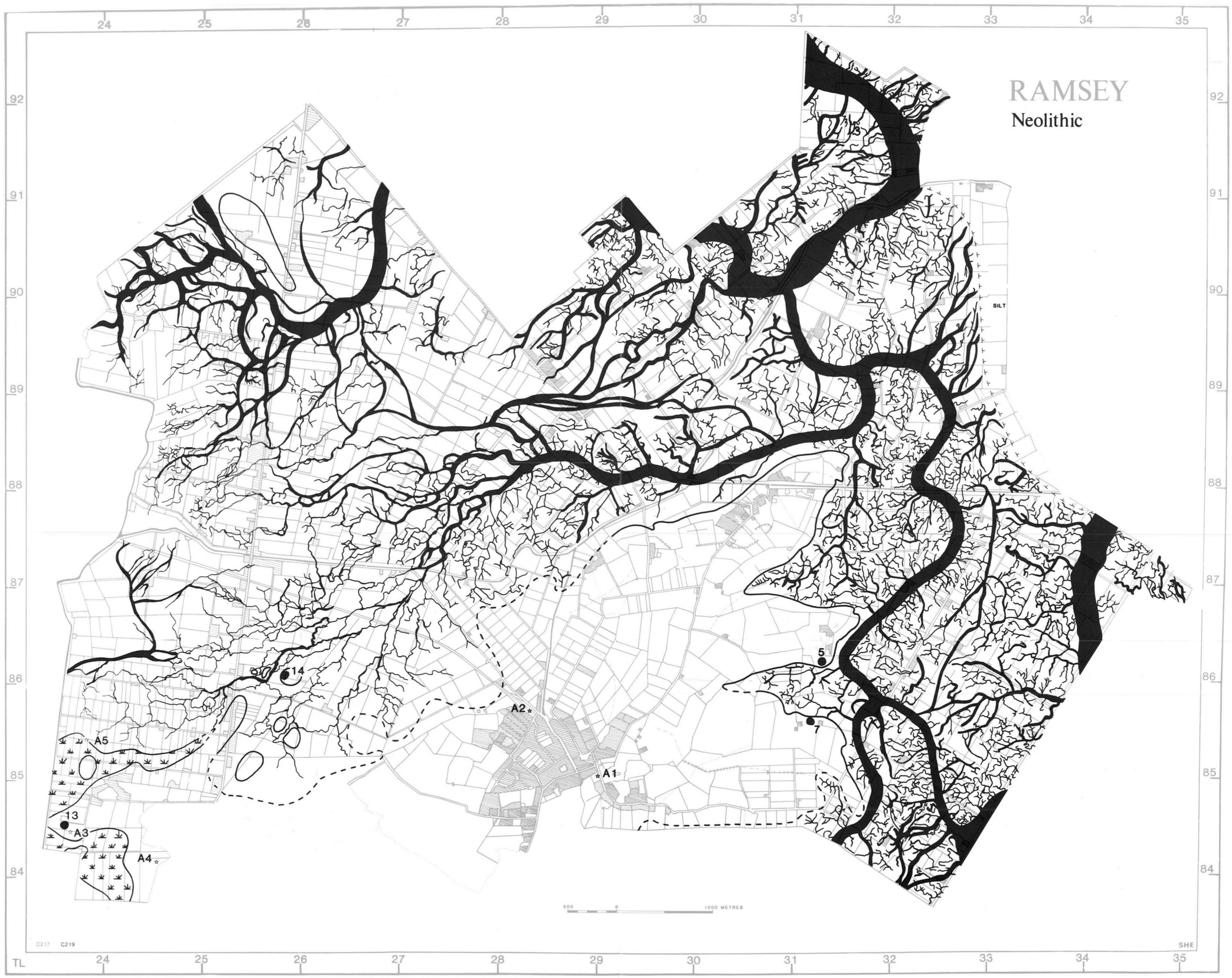


Figure 23 Neolithic landscape

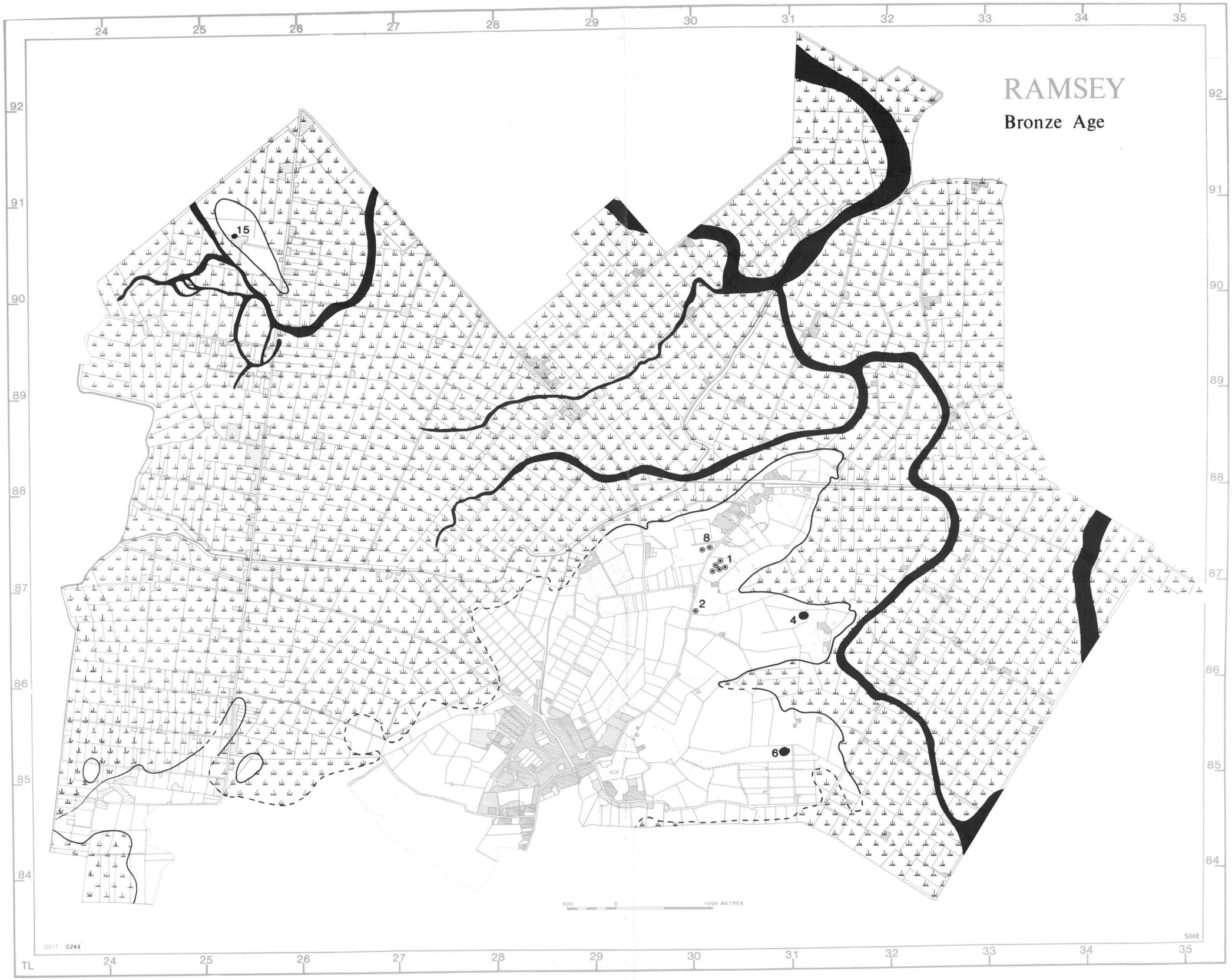


Figure 24 Bronze Age landscape

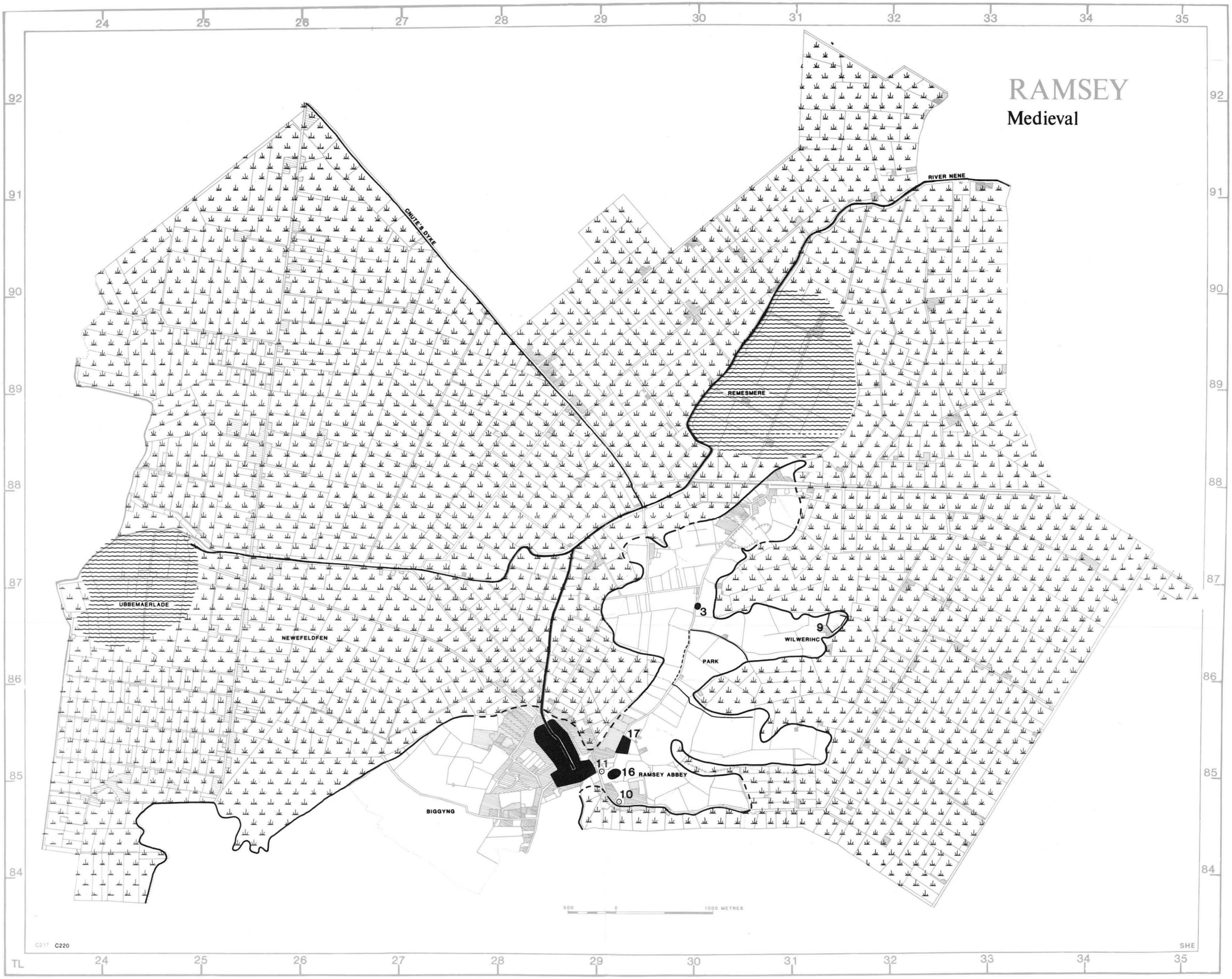


Figure 25 Medieval landscape

House, contains all that survives of the great building. The remains are probably part of the lady chapel, although much disguised and hidden by 19th century and later additions. The most impressive part of the medieval fabric exposed is the 13th–century undercroft (Plate VI). Entry to the school is made through the remains of part of the monastic 15th–century gate-house (site *11*).

Within Ramsey parish there were the granges of Higney (discussed under Wood Walton), Biggin, and Bodsey. The present building at Bodsey contains some medieval work; it was first recorded in 1216 (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 214). There are walls 3.6m high surviving from part of the 13th–century grange; in the 14th century a chapel was added, much of which is incorporated in the present building. There are other reused architectural fragments inside the house (Haigh 1988, 72–3).

In the grounds of Ramsey Abbey School is site *10*, a small motte surrounded by a moat that may perhaps be associated with Geoffrey de Mandeville who occupied the abbey in 1140–4. It was converted to an ice house much later. Worlick, site *9*, is a complex of moats and fishponds, now rather obscured. Part of the site yielded sherds of the 14–17th centuries and a large quantity of 17th–century building debris.

The fields of Ramsey were partly ploughed in Midland-type ridge and furrow which can be traced north of the town; *nortwodefelde* is referred to in the cartulary (Hart and Lyons 1884, 94). Not all the available land seems to have been cultivated in this manner, the ground at the far north of the peninsula probably being left as pasture. Since the abbey had such a large income in kind and money it was not necessary that all the parish receive intensive cultivation. A similar lack of extensive ridge and furrow was observed at Thorney, probably for the same reason (Hall 1987a, 52–3).

Some topographical fen and upland names of medieval date are marked on Figure 25. Biggin is recorded as *biggyng* in 1286, New fen was *le newefeldfen* in 1303, Ramsey Mere was *remesmere* in the 13th century, and Ugg Mere was *ubbemaerlade* in 1022 (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 213–7). Since Ugg Mere Court Road was formerly *ubbemerecote* in *c.* 1230, it seems that there were 'cottages' or a fishing platform on the mere as at Whittlesey Mere (see Yaxley and Holme, above). Worlick was *wilwerihc* in 1242; the Great Whyte (*la wihte* in the 13th century) formerly had a watercourse down the middle that must have been artificial because it cuts through the narrow peninsula joining Ramsey to the mainland. There was formerly a 'stream running from Wistow and Bury to the High Lode, north of the town', which presumably included the Great Whyte (Page *et al.* 1926 189).

Plate VI Ramsey Abbey undercroft, TL 292 851

8. Warboys, Bury and Wistow

I. Introduction

This region is similar to Wood Walton in topography with a high Till-covered upland falling sharply to the fen as a spectacular scarp some 30m high, and affording extensive views.

There are no islands in the fen according to the published detailed work of the Soil Survey of England and Wales, and as judged by reconnaissance survey along droves. The fen consists of deep deposits without prospect of any discoverable archaeology; hence only small areas were investigated. A small part of the upland was surveyed.

II. Geology and Flandrian Deposits

The underlying geology is Oxford Clay with boulder clay capping on the plateau. The Flandrian deposits are a uniform marine clay (Fig. 2) with well developed roddons representing watercourses that drained northwards. The larger roddons have a silty fill in the middle, as found at Ramsey and Benwick. Thereafter the fen developed uninterrupted peat until the 17th century; since then much of the organic material has wasted away and the present surface is of a mixed peat and marine clay. The Soil Survey of England and Wales have published a detailed study of the soils of most of Warboys, accompanied by maps based on aerial photographs that show the roddon system (Seale 1975b).

No sites occur in the fen or on the small amount of upland studied. However, a chance discovery of a boat fashioned by hollowing out part of a tree was made in Turf Fen at TL 317 827, lying 0.6m below the surface. It was excavated during 1909–10 and found to be 11.3m long and 1.14m maximum width (Plate VII; Noble 1914, 143–4 and 194; Peterborough Advertiser 9 April 1910, 7). The published find spot falls close to a moderate sized roddon of the marine clay (dating to the Early Bronze Age according to the Farcet evidence, see above), at which date the watercourse was presumably navigable by a boat of that size.

The boulder clay on the upland would no doubt have been densely settled in Roman and Iron Age times as has been proved at an adjacent hinterland parish, Broughton, where there are 4 sites in 960 hectares. All the upland of Warboys has well developed banks left by medieval ploughing.

In view of the lack of archaeology and availability of the large scale maps of roddons and soils published by the Soil Survey, no period maps have been drawn for this area. The sequence of fen landscapes can be seen on a smaller scale in the regional maps discussed in the summary (Figs 56–60).

Plate VII Bronze Age boat found at Warboys in 1910, TL 317 827

9. Parts of Pidley cum Fenton and Somersham

I. Introduction
(Figs 26 and 27)

These parishes continue the fen-edge topography and soils seen at Warboys; a high plateau covered with Glacial Till (boulder clay) falling sharply to a fen which contains an extensive deposit of marine clay with roddons. Fenton is a shrunken village consisting of a farmhouse and a few cottages lying low down; Pidley is larger (population estimate of the combined parish in 1986, 300) and Somersham forms a substantial village lying near the fen edge (population 3,390 (Cambridgeshire 1987)). All three settlements were in Huntingdonshire, but Somersham belonged to the bishop of Ely, intruding into an area mainly belonging to Ramsey Abbey, so causing many disputes. Most of the fen ground has been surveyed, and for Pidley some of the upland.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The bedrock is Oxford Clay which is exposed on the scarp and on a peninsula extending north-eastwards from Fenton. Glacial activity has left boulder clay on the plateau and much gravel on another peninsula running northwards from Somersham North Fen. The gravels of High North Fen belong to the March series at the base with Devensian material on top (West 1987). The peninsula curls round a small, near circular depression that is probably of periglacial origin. In the basin between these two peninsulas lies Pidley Fen, now covered by Flandrian material.

The main sequence of Flandrian deposition was that characteristic for all this fen edge; development of a Neolithic base peat followed by a widespread Bronze Age marine phase leaving a deposit of clay. The pattern of drainage is clear in the roddon network (Figs 2 and 28), although there is a little masking in the Pidley basin; the roddons unite into larger ones and, when they were active watercourses, drained towards the early prehistoric course of the Ouse, either directly or via a large channel traversing Warboys (Fig. 57).

Thereafter continuous peat growth occurred until recently. Colluvium occurs around the fen edge, especially in the Pidley basin. The river Ouse formed a new course from Earith towards Ferry Hill, Chatteris. It forms a large roddon composed of a rather brown alluvium that completely ignores the earlier marine clay roddons. The dating is almost certainly post Roman; the old county boundary with Huntingdonshire lies along the roddon, so it is clear that there was a stream or river lying in the roddon during the Middle Ages. Evidence elsewhere has shown that the drainage pattern in the Roman period follows the older roddon network (Hall 1981b, figures pp. 38 and 40) and it is not until the Saxon period that there are any major changes. Also, the spread of alluvium, elsewhere shown to be post-Roman, along the Neolithic Ouse course (in Chatteris q.v.) is not nearly so extensive as it is along and around the Somersham roddon. Hence a Saxon date seems very probable for the origin of this watercourse.

The Soil Survey of England and Wales have given an account of this area in their detailed study (Seale 1975b).

III. Prehistoric
(Fig. 28)

The higher gravels of Somersham have many cropmarks and there are several known finds from gravel extraction disturbance and other sources. As there was little prospect of wet deposits in this area it was not investigated.

In the fen the earliest site discovered was a substantial Mesolithic flint concentration, site *1*, that is partially covered by marine clay. It lies on the extremity of the Somersham peninsula next to the periglacial depression, where there is a deposit of sand. The area exposed is 2.6 ha (6 acres) and the density of finds is high. Of a total of 794 flints, nearly all patinated, there were 34 blade cores, 62 utilised flakes, 74 reworked flints, 1 piece of tranchet axe, 1 piece of polished axe and 18 microliths. Among the latter were triangular forms, oblique blunted points, rod forms and backed blades. There are no diagnostically Neolithic flints in the assemblage (except for the fragment of polished axe), and no pottery and only 1 piece of bone was discovered. An unusual discovery for the region were 5 small ('thumb-nail') patinated scrapers that must be Mesolithic from the general context and the low siting of the find spot. On a higher location, and under alkaline conditions, they would have been classified as Bronze Age 'thumbnail' scrapers. Mesolithic small scrapers of this type are known from Hampshire (Rankine and Dimbleby 1960, fig. 5).

The site is the largest Mesolithic one known in the county and is significant partly because it is not 'contaminated' by later material, and mainly because it runs under marine clay where it is likely to be undisturbed and waterlogged. Some of the waterlogging will probably be contemporary.

On the same peninsula there is a small Neolithic site (*2*), somewhat higher up. It yielded various flints and a polished greenstone axe. A few other background flints were discovered at TL 3578 8189 on a small island; it is possible that many more early lithic sites lie buried under Somersham Fens. The Fens of Pidley and Fenton, being a heavy clay skirtland, yielded no prehistoric remains.

A Bronze Age palstave has been reported from TL 36 81 in a position suggesting that it was probably dropped in a watercourse, now a roddon (see Gazetteer 1). If correct this is further evidence that marine conditions in the region survived into the Middle Bronze Age, as proved at Farcet.

IV. Roman and medieval
(Fig. 29)

The only other site in the Somersham part of the area was Roman, site *3*, lying on the fen edge. It produced sherds of Horningsea Wares and other sherds dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries and some ceramic tile. There was a dark area with occupation remains and much domestic bone. It is an outlier to the large number of Roman sites dis-

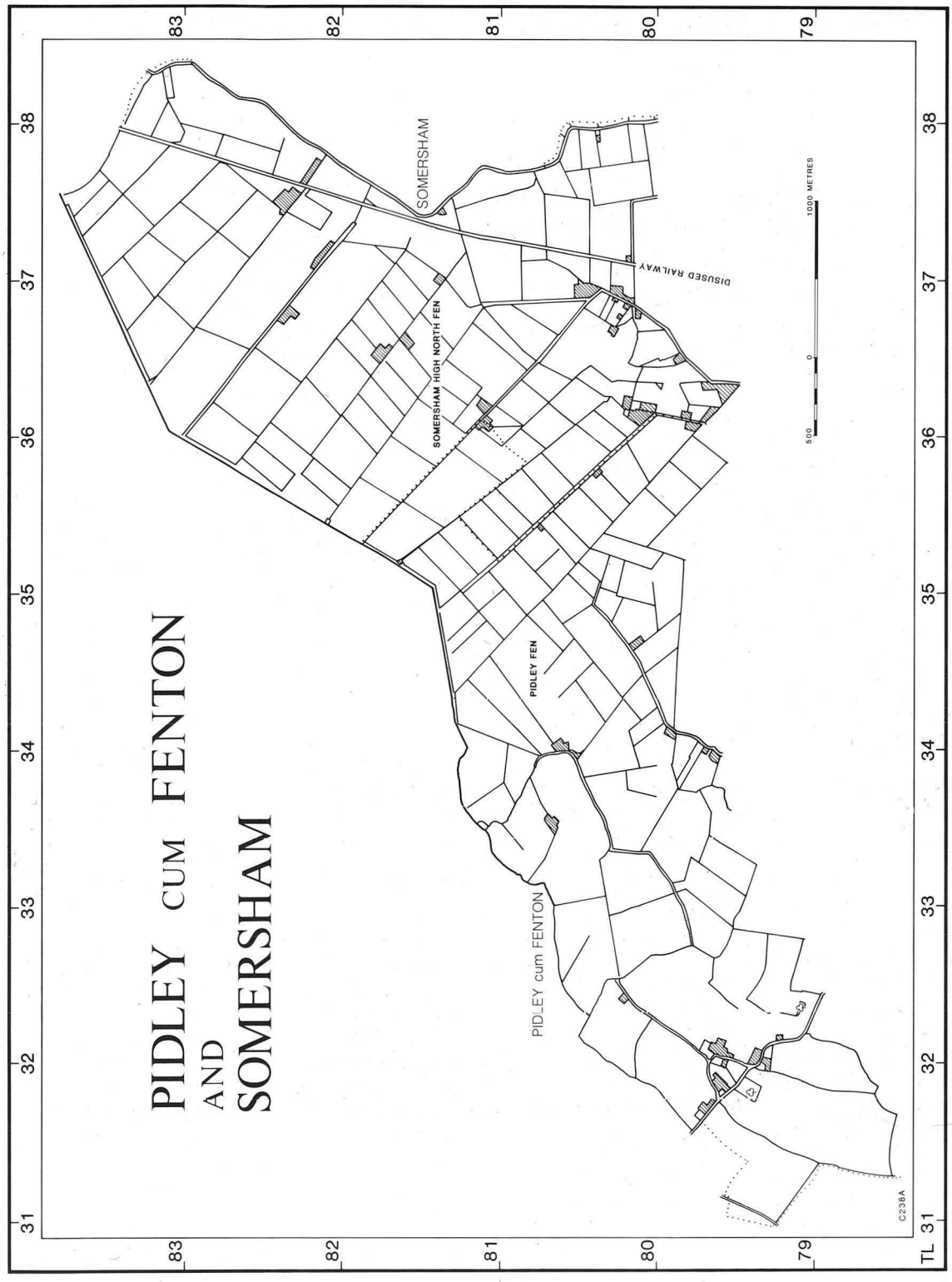


Figure 26 Modern landscape and topography

covered on the gravel terraces of Earith, Colne and Somersham, now largely quarried away (Phillips 1970, 192–5). A coin hoard found in about 1731 and colour-coated vessels in Wisbech Museum have been assigned to this area (Phillips 1970, 195, TL 37 31), although the description 'found near the road leading from Somersham to Chatteris' would fit a large number of the sites to the south equally as well as site *3*.

The south-eastern boundary of the area, the old county division between Huntingdon and Cambridge is part of the later course of the Ouse. It has been postulated as Roman, because of its straightness (Phillips 1970, 189), but is more likely to be Late Saxon, as discussed above under the Flandrian deposits.

At Fenton a Roman site (*1*) was located on top of a spur of skirtland in the fen; a typical 'hill top' site that would give a good view over the neighbourhood. There was a dark area with burnt stone, sherds and a fragment of quern.

Upland was surveyed at Fenton only. The village

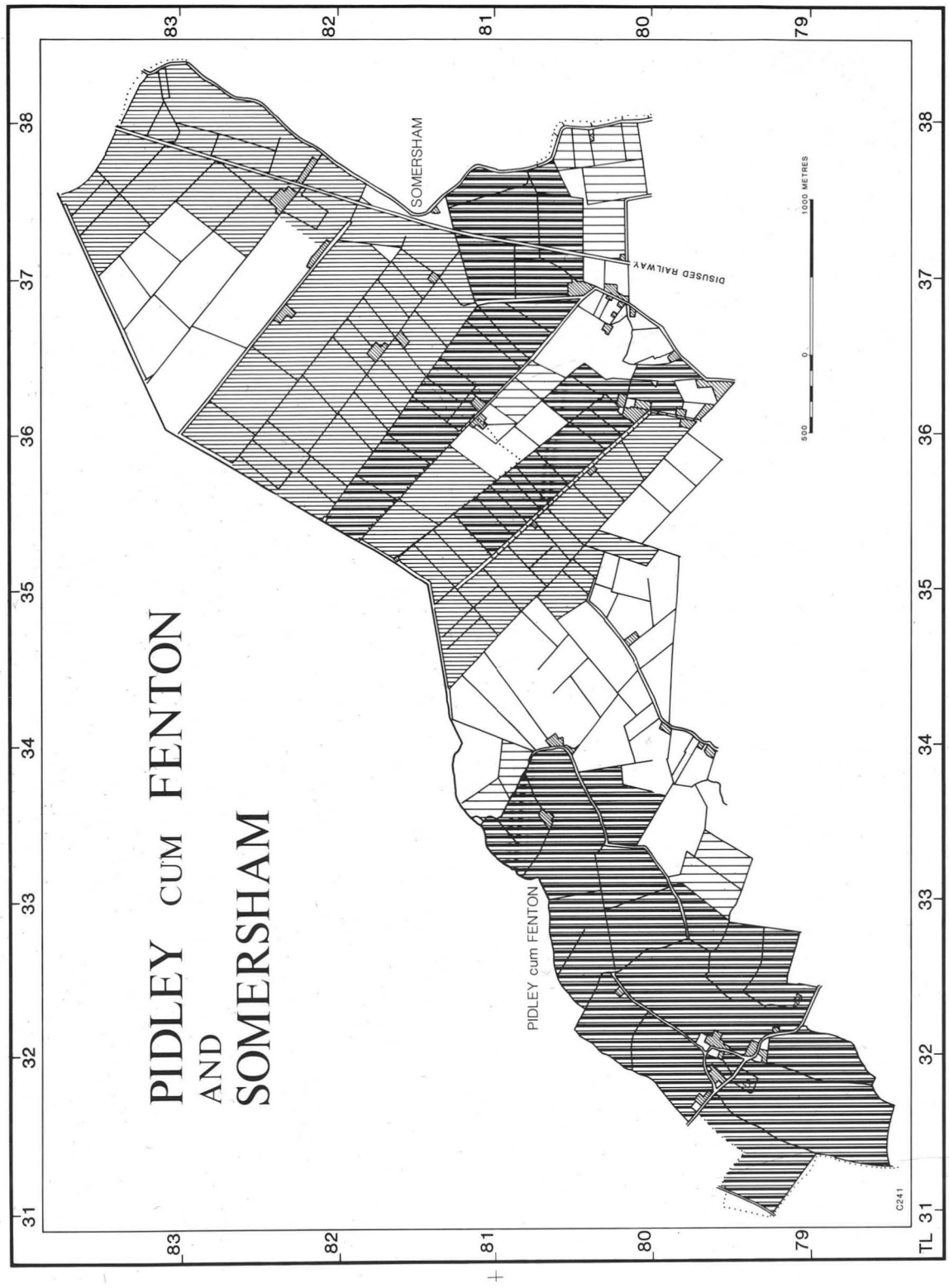


Figure 27 Quality and extent of fieldwork

site is now largely ploughed over leaving a dark area with occupation debris and burnt pebbles from hearths, domestic bone and medieval sherds. It was possible to map the exact extent of the village and its paddocks. The surrounding upland had the usual linear soil ridges left by medieval fields. It would be simple to complete the whole pattern for the township, the ridges being large and well preserved. Only a few medieval earthworks survive near Manor Farm, where there are some ponds and a few vague boundaries.

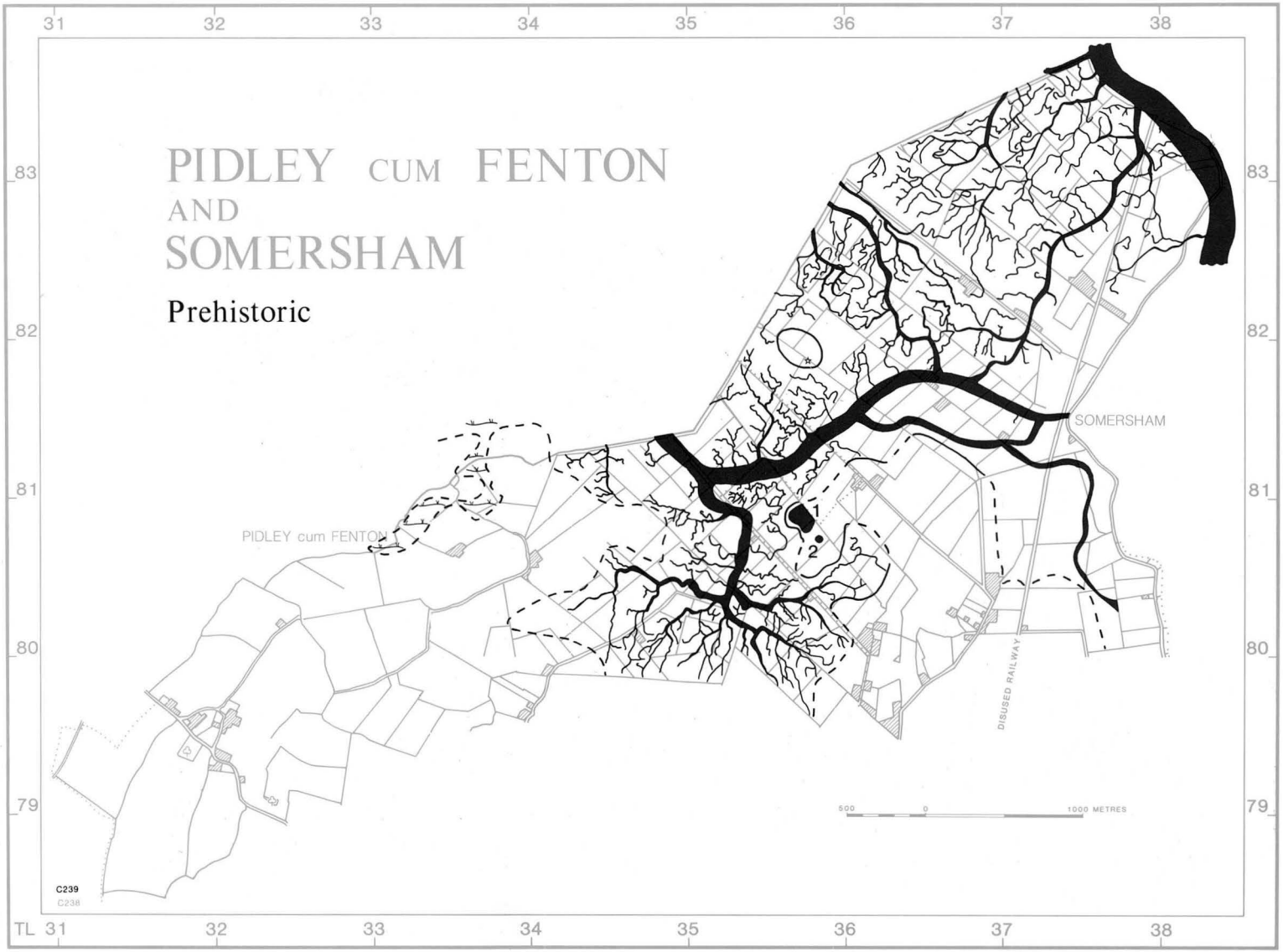


Figure 28 Prehistoric landscape

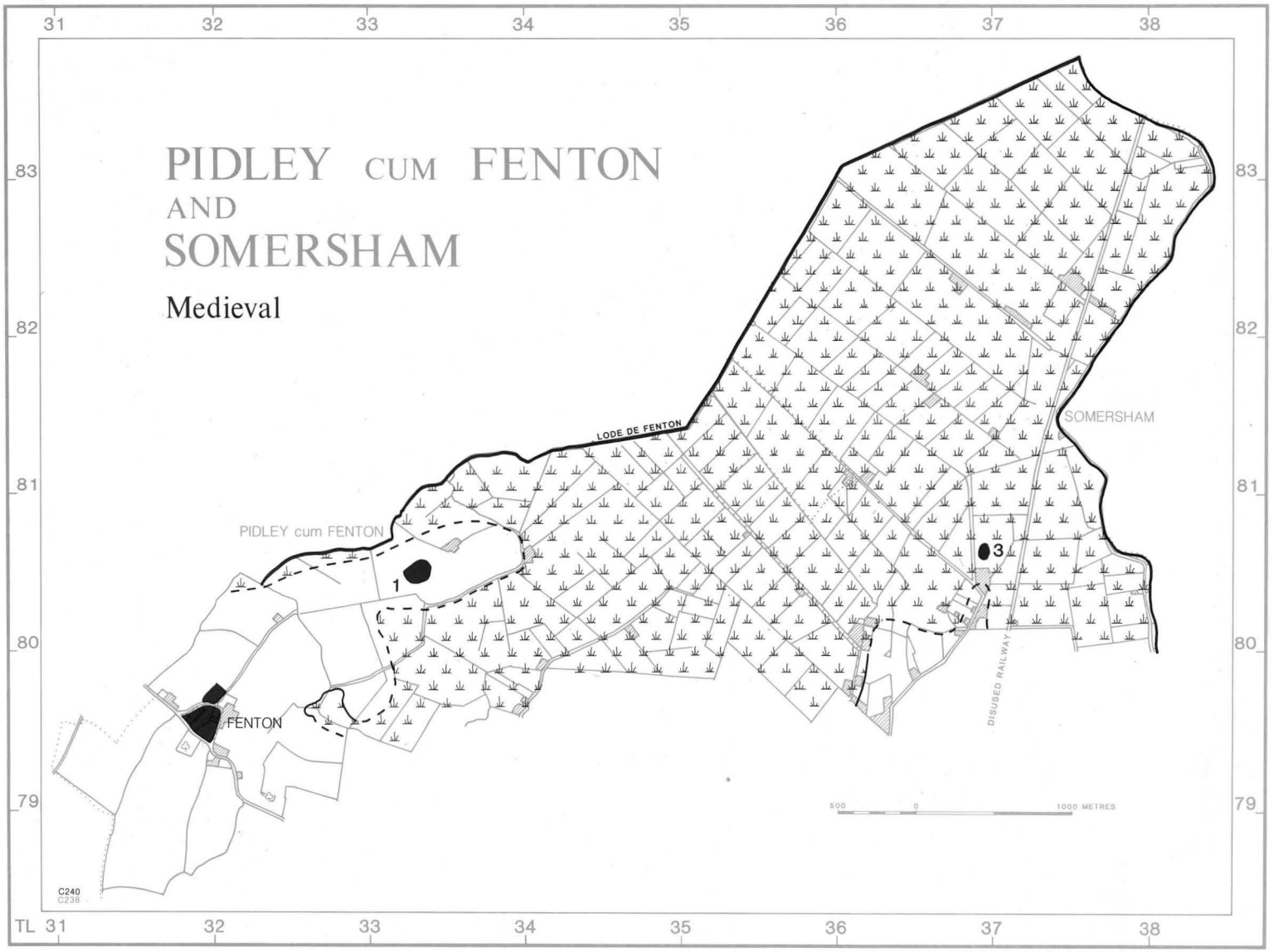


Figure 29 Medieval landscape

10. Benwick and Doddington

I. Introduction

(Figs 30 and 31)

Doddington was, until about 1700, the chief settlement on the island that includes Wimblington and March, the last two places then being subsidiary townships within the one parish. Benwick was also a dependency, bringing the total area of the medieval parish to 15,297 hectares (37,801 acres). Doddington township is now a separate parish and is a typical fen-island village with a population of 1,250. Benwick is a settlement with medieval origins, placed on the roddon of the Ouse; it is the only medieval village in the peat fen not to lie on a pre-Flandrian island or peninsula. The massive clay roddon makes a very unstable footing for buildings (Plate VIII). Benwick has a population of 570 (Cambridgeshire 1987). It has no archaeology until Middle Ages, the chief interest being the fen deposits. The Fenland of the region is all arable and very open with no spinneys and few trees.

Doddington has yielded a few archaeological finds from the gravels over the last century and a half, but Benwick has produced nothing before the post-medieval period. Not all of the upland on the island was investigated, being in the hands of many smallholders.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The underlying bedrock at Doddington is Ampthill Clay (Gallois 1978), but most of the island surface consists of March Gravels. The greater part of both parishes developed a peat fen in the early prehistoric period that then became affected by marine conditions depositing clay. The drainage is clearly shown by the pattern of roddons, mostly running into the Ouse when they were active watercourses. To the south of Doddington there is a small basin, mostly in Curf Fen, Chatteris, that contains marine-clay roddons. North-west of the Doddington pre-Flandrian lobe of land, further roddons represent watercourses that ran north through Ranson Moor. The river Ouse roddon is the dominant feature running across the area, joining up with another large one from Pidley Fen immediately south of Benwick (Figs 2 and 32).

Silty-clay deposits occur in the Ouse roddon and along the major roddons. Silty clays occur extensively north of Benwick in White Fen, where the name acknowledges the difference in the soil type, the silt being much lighter than peat or earlier marine clay. In the south east at Curf Fen and north west in Ranson Moor there is a shallow and extensive layer of silt. Parts of Curf Fen have

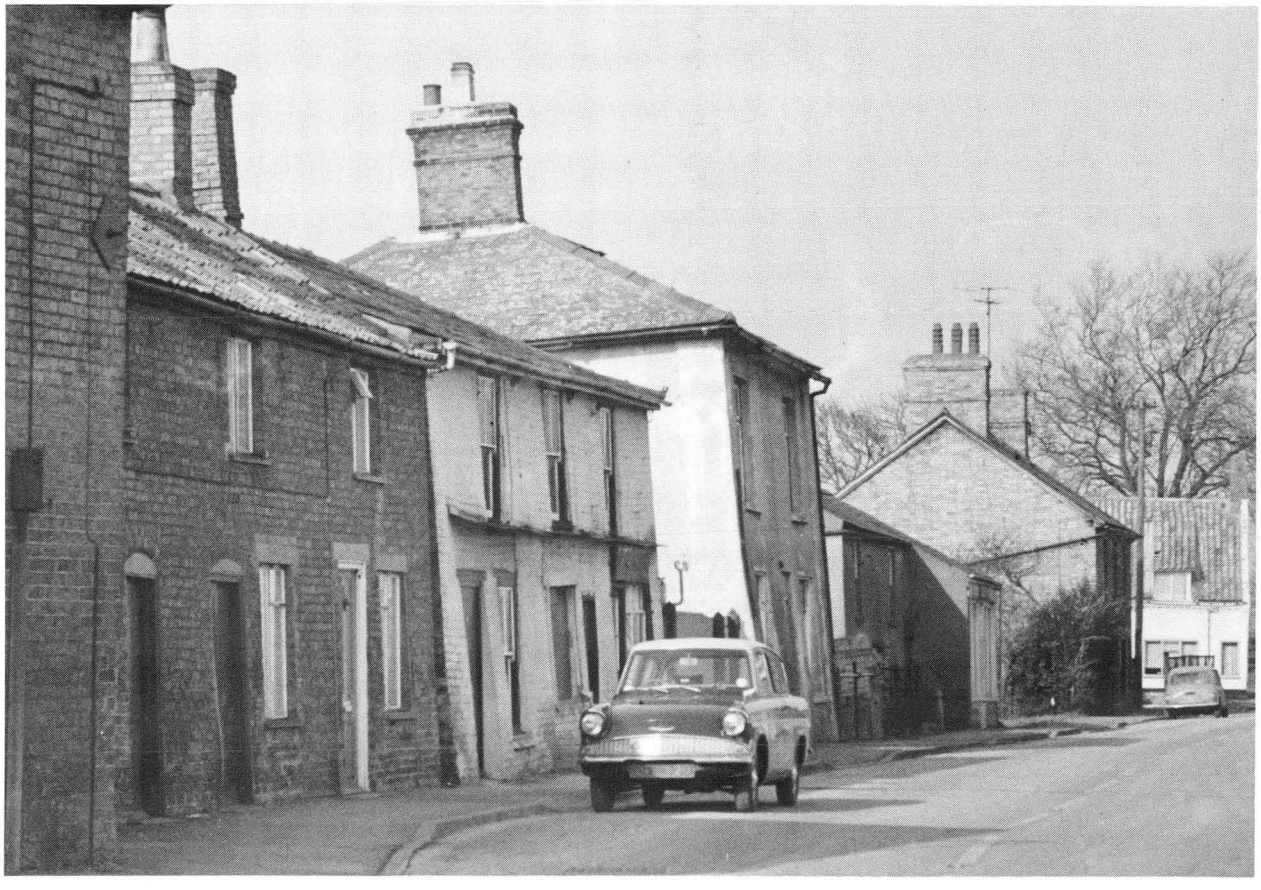


Plate VIII Benwick village street, TL 342 903

been exposed in section and the silts lie directly on marine clay in the roddons, showing that the clays and silty clays are of similar date, the silts occurring in locations where there was high energy.

There are no later marine deposits, the whole area being covered by peat, except for the reduced channel of the Ouse. This channel was no longer the only outlet for the river, some water going via the West Water to Ely and Wisbech, and later to King's Lynn. At Benwick Mere there is a shallow freshwater marl deposit lying in an angle of the roddon. The deposit is likely to be Iron Age and later in date and makes it difficult to see the fine detail of the underlying roddons.

The southern part of the area is dealt with by the Soil Survey of England and Wales (Seale 1975b), and the varying course of the River Ouse has been discussed by Seale (1980).

III. Prehistoric

(Figs 32 and 33)

Very few prehistoric remains have been discovered in this area. A perforated pebble hammer has come from near Manor Farm (TL 418 903) and an unprovenanced plain, socketed looped-axe 'from Doddington' is at March Museum. During the survey a few flints were found on the gravels along the Benwick Road, Doddington (TL 38 91). An unprovenanced Bronze Age Beaker is in Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (see Gazetteer 1). No Iron Age finds are known.

IV. Roman and medieval

(Fig. 34)

A Roman site (*1*) occurs in the skirtland of Doddington, it produced sherds and occupational debris from a dark area. Another site occurs at the south (*U1*) near Primrose Hill, not exactly provenanced. Finds were made in 1873 and 1882 of late Roman pottery and a hearth, then buried by peat (Phillips 1970, 195). There are other poorly located Roman finds from Doddington, such as those from 'Curf Fen' – probably the same as *U1* (see Gazetteer 1).

The most significant medieval site at Doddington is Manor Farm, built on the remains of one of the more important granges of the Bishop of Ely. Doddington has a small quantity of medieval ridge and furrow of the Midland type. Formerly the whole island was covered with strip fields and the linear banks left at the furlong boundaries are clearly visible. Many of these strips are marked on a map of Doddington *c.* 1630.

The Ely estate at Doddington was accumulated by several purchases before the Conquest (Pugh 1953, 110), Doddington being first mentioned in *c.* 975 (Reaney 1943, 251). The manor was assessed at 5 hides in 1086 with fisheries yielding 27,150 eels. On the foundation of the see in 1109, Doddington became one of the bishop's main residences. By 1493 the manor house was leased and, in the late 16th century, Ely had to relinquish some of its estates, Doddington being granted to the lessee Sir John Peyton in 1602. The manor continued with the Peyton family until the end of the 19th century. Various other small manors existed in the 13th and 14th centuries, the details being given by Pugh (1953, 110–6).

There are several surveys of Doddington manor which illustrate the type of economy and land-use at the time. The first two, taken in 1222 and 1251, show that Doddington had a demesne (home farm) of about 260 acres, there were two parks, the great park of 80 acres and the little park of 70 acres. There were two cow pastures, one at Stonea and one at Dereford (now Dartford) both for 40 cows and two bulls. Many fisheries and meadows were let out. Wimblington, March and Marchford are mentioned as settlements distinct from Doddington. 'March' was the area with arable fields in the St Wendreda's Church area, and 'Marchford' had only cottages and paddocks with no arable land. These properties and their closes are still identifiable on the modern map, and more easily on a Tithe Map of 1840, as a series of closes lying either side of the Nene. Benwick also consisted of a few cottages without arable, precariously situated on the levees of the Nene. The work-services and rents of the tenants are fully described (BL Cotton Tib. Bii (1222); CUL EDR G/3/27 (1251)).

The topography of medieval Doddington is shown on Figure 34. Ranson Moor was *revensho* in 1227, and near to it was *kekaldre* (copalder) in 1244 meaning a 'hollow alder'. How Moor was *hoo* in 1221 and *hoofen* in 1251, referring to the southern spur of upland. Beezling Fen to the south west was *bilsinge* in the 13th century (Reaney 1943, 252–3). Benwick was *Beymwich* in 1221; Reaney suggests that the name means 'bean farm' (1943, 246–7), but this seems extremely unlikely in view of the siting and land-use revealed by the early historical surveys. White Fen does not occur until 1636, the colour of the soil probably not being evident until after the drainage, when dikes were cut exposing the silty marine deposit under the peat.

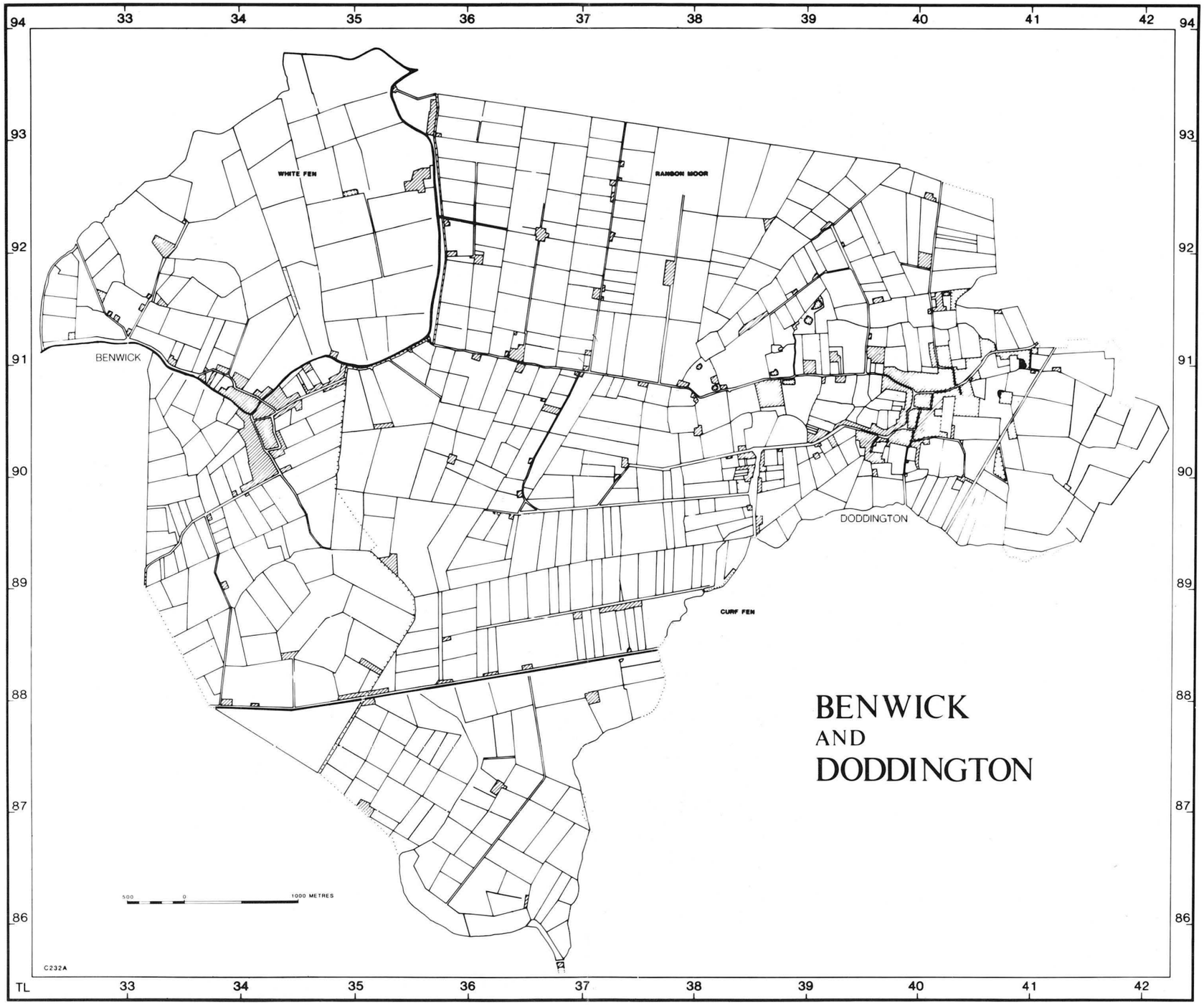


Figure 30 Modern landscape and topography

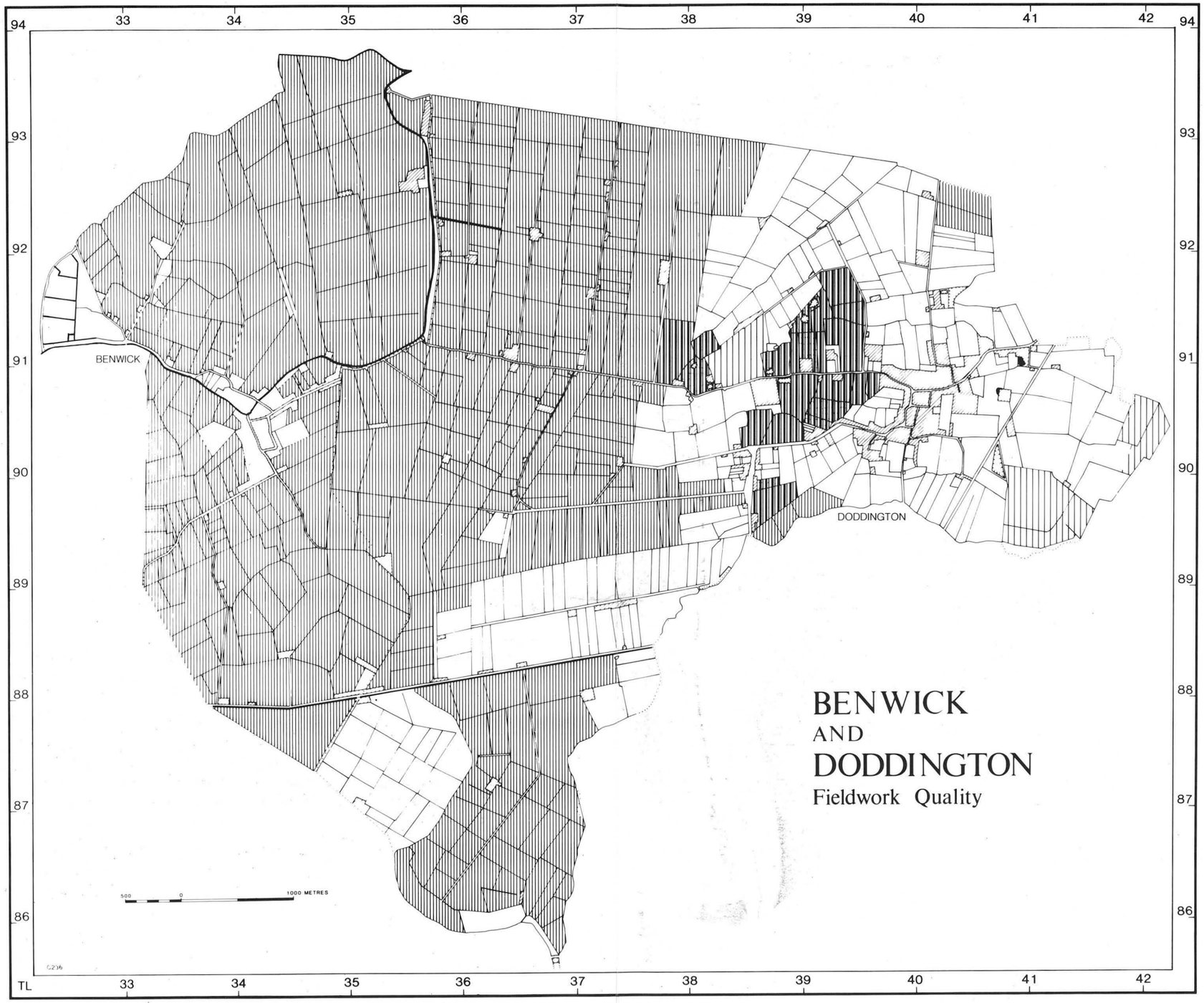


Figure 31 Quality and extent of fieldwork

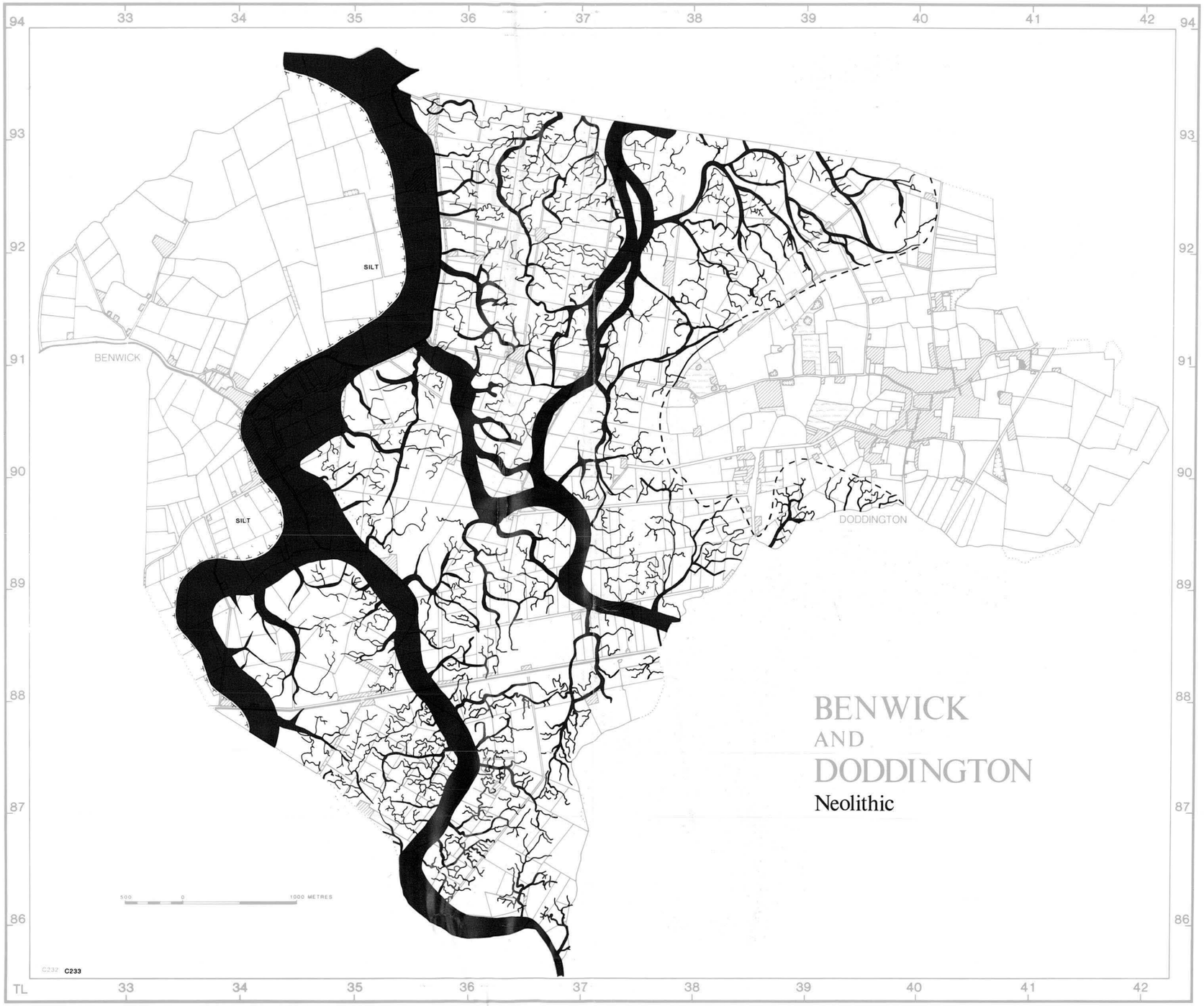


Figure 32 Neolithic landscape

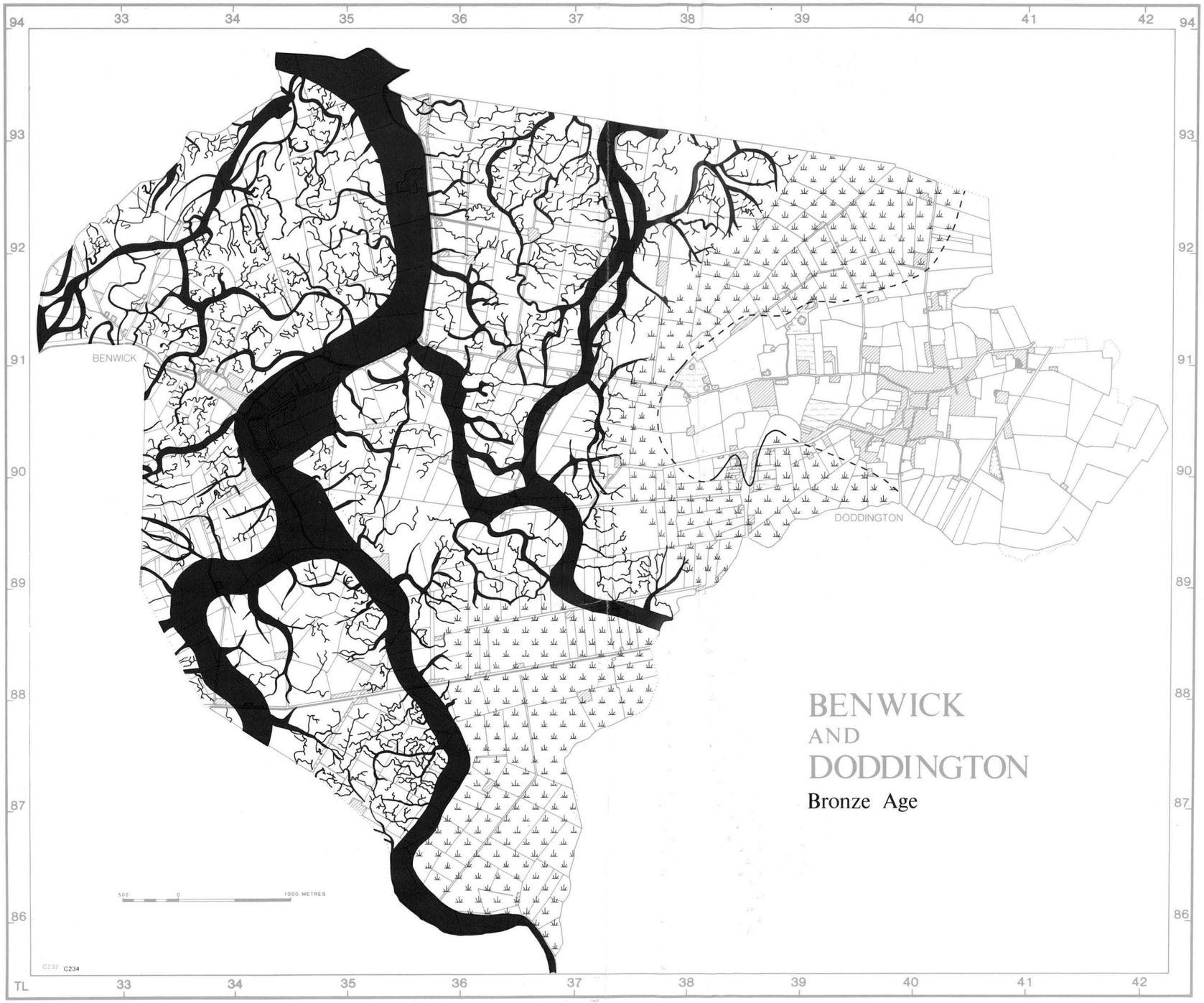


Figure 33 Bronze Age landscape

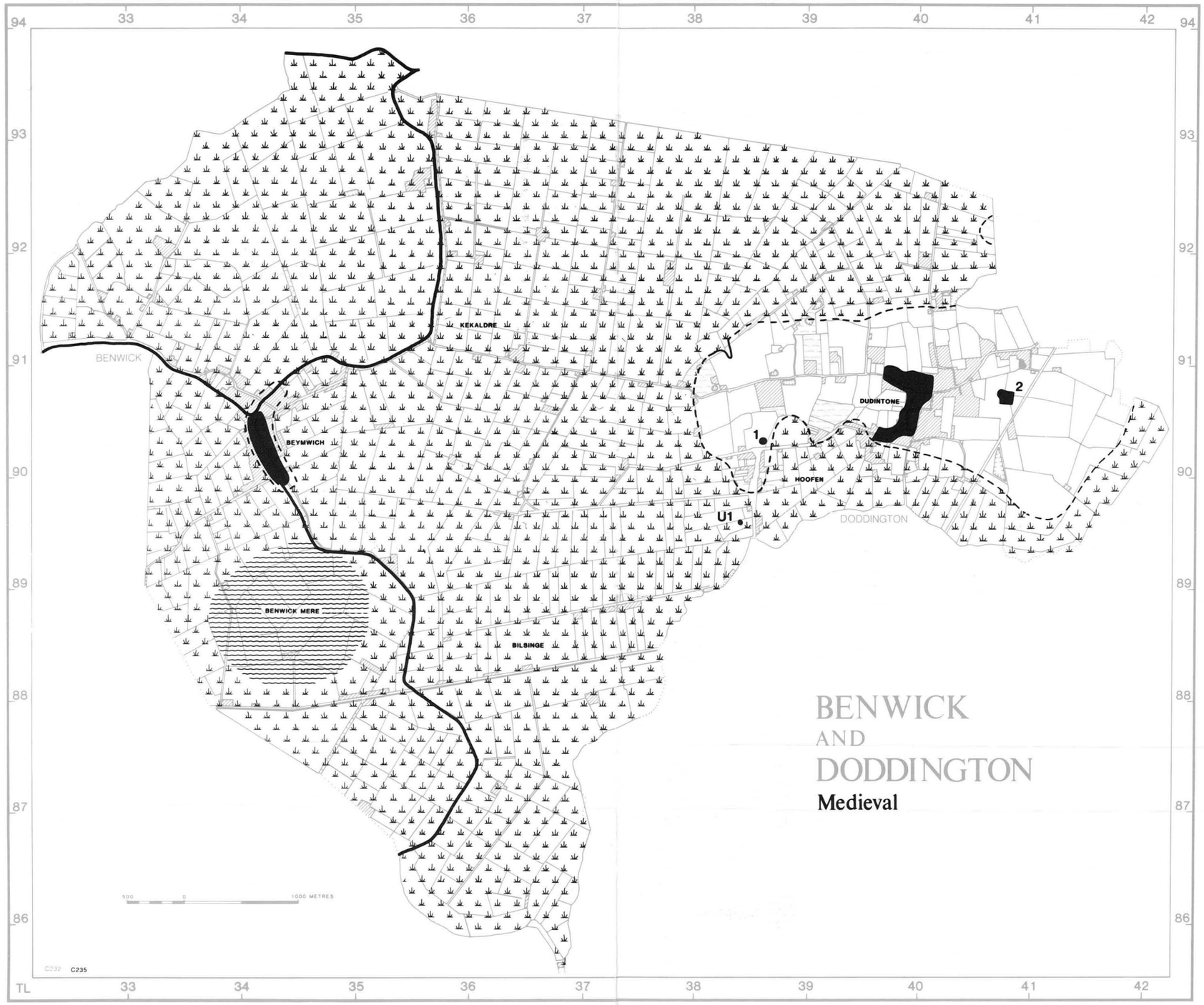


Figure 34 Medieval landscape

11. Wimblington

I. Introduction
(Figs 35 and 36)

Wimblington lies in the middle of a long island shared with March to the north and Doddington to the south; it was formerly, like March, a hamlet in Doddington parish. It was split from Doddington in 1847 and covers 3,141 hectares (7,762 acres). The island is a low, narrow ridge rising only to 6.6m OD. There are a few 18th–century buildings, but most of the houses are 19th century and later. The settlement is somewhat dispersed, there being parts of it to the north east at Eastwood End and the Hook; it has a total population of 1,400 (Cambridgeshire 1987). The general appearance is typical of a large Cambridgeshire fen village. The parish shares with Chatteris a small part of Honey Hill to the south, and to the east lies part of Stonea island shared with March. Farther east Jenny Gray's Farm is located on an extension of Manea island.

The island of Stonea has long been famous for many sites and finds dating mainly from the Bronze Age to Roman periods. It formerly had prehistoric earthworks of barrows and the so-called Iron Age 'camp', now all badly damaged, which were first photographed from the air in 1936 (Crawford Collection).

Four sites have recently been excavated in the parish; a barrow (site *2*), a section of the Iron Age ditch and rampart (site *1*) and two Roman sites. Of the latter, one was a small excavation at the Golden Lion and the other the large-scale work undertaken by the British Museum at Stonea Grange (sites *10* and *18*); these will be discussed below. A fifth site that has had investigation is site *11* on Honey Hill, studied by F.M. Walker of Manea in 1924 when it consisted of earthworks in a pasture field; no detailed report survives.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The underlying bedrock is Ampthill Clay; Wimblington ridge is capped with Till (boulder clay) to the north and partly by March gravels on the remainder. Stonea ground surface consists of boulder clay and later terrace gravels, while at Honey Hill there are March Gravels. The area near Jenny Gray's Farm has both boulder clay and March Gravels (British Geological Survey sheet 173 (Ely) 1980).

The ridge forms the watershed between the two major embayments of the southern fen, that of the south east taking in Ely fens and the south-western embayment including the fens from Earith to Whittlesey. The marine deposits either side of the ridge are respectively late Neolithic on the east and Early Bronze Age on the west, as explained in the general introduction and under Farcet.

The greater part of the Flandrian deposit is peat, which still survives up to a metre in depth. It probably began to form during the late Neolithic period; buried trees are still found occasionally, one of length 22.5m (75ft) being removed in 1978. Very small areas of marine clay deposits occur at the north of the parish, spreading both sides of Stonea; they show the usual dendritic drainage systems, now surviving as roddons (Figs 2 and 37).

Peat growth continued over most of the fen during the Bronze Age, but a silty clay was deposited north of Stonea island. The large drainage channel (now a roddon) between Wimblington and Stonea, a dominant feature of the Iron Age fen (Fig. 37), probably began to form during the Bronze Age as well.

The Iron Age marine incursion that deposited silt encircled the southern part of Stonea with yellow silts and developed three major channels, now visible as large roddons (Fig. 38). Elsewhere peat growth kept pace with the rising watertable preventing any extension of marine silting. An archaeological dating of the latest silt was afforded by the Stonea Grange excavations where a late Bronze Age occupation site was sealed by silt which in turn supported Roman settlement. After the Roman period there was continuous peat growth until the Middle Ages.

III. Early prehistoric activity
(Fig. 37)

Two Palaeolithic hand-axes were discovered at Stonea, as well as two other pieces of Palaeolithic type, a flake from Wimblington Common (TL 43 90) and a core at Ancaster farm (TL 45 95), not well provenanced (Baden-Powell 1950). No flint concentrations suggesting settlement of either the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods have been discovered, although axes of both periods have been found widely scattered over the peat fen (see Gazetteer 1 and Fig. 37, A1–2). There is much likelihood of settlement existing under the deep peat lying on extensive gravel deposits at the south east. The excavation of a barrow at Stonea exposed Neolithic pottery and a few pits and postholes underneath the mound which were interpreted as representing settlement (Potter 1976, 28–9, 32–4 and 49; see site *2* below).

Lithic sites that probably represent settlement or other activity of the Bronze Age occur to the east at Jenny Gray's Farm and at Stonea. The first, site *4*, produced characteristic roughly worked and unpatinated flints; there was also a single sherd from a decorated beaker. Other Bronze Age flints occur at Stonea site *6*. A few flints were found with the Roman and Iron Age material at site *13*, which is the find spot of a hoard of 5 Bronze socketed axes (Salzman 1948, 279–303). A number of flints were found around the barrow, site *17*, and more near site *9*. Small quantities of flints of indeterminate age were collected from pockets of gravel at TL 444 890, TL 441 893, TL 469 930 and TL 41 93. Site *19* (Fig. 38) also yielded some flints an a plano-convex knife. A shaft-hole axe and a rapier, both poorly provenanced, are known from the area (Roe 1979, Trump 1972).

The chief monuments are various barrows, all of them now badly plough damaged. Two occur at Honey Hill, surviving to a height of about 1 metre (site *11*, SAM 23). One mound had a dark annular mark of its surrounding ditch; there were no finds. Two very damaged mounds lie south of Jenny Gray's Farm (site *3*); there were no finds on the mounds themselves but a thin scatter of roughly worked flints occurred in the general area. On the east side of Stonea is a ploughed-out barrow now represented by a perfectly circular gravel spread (site *9*).

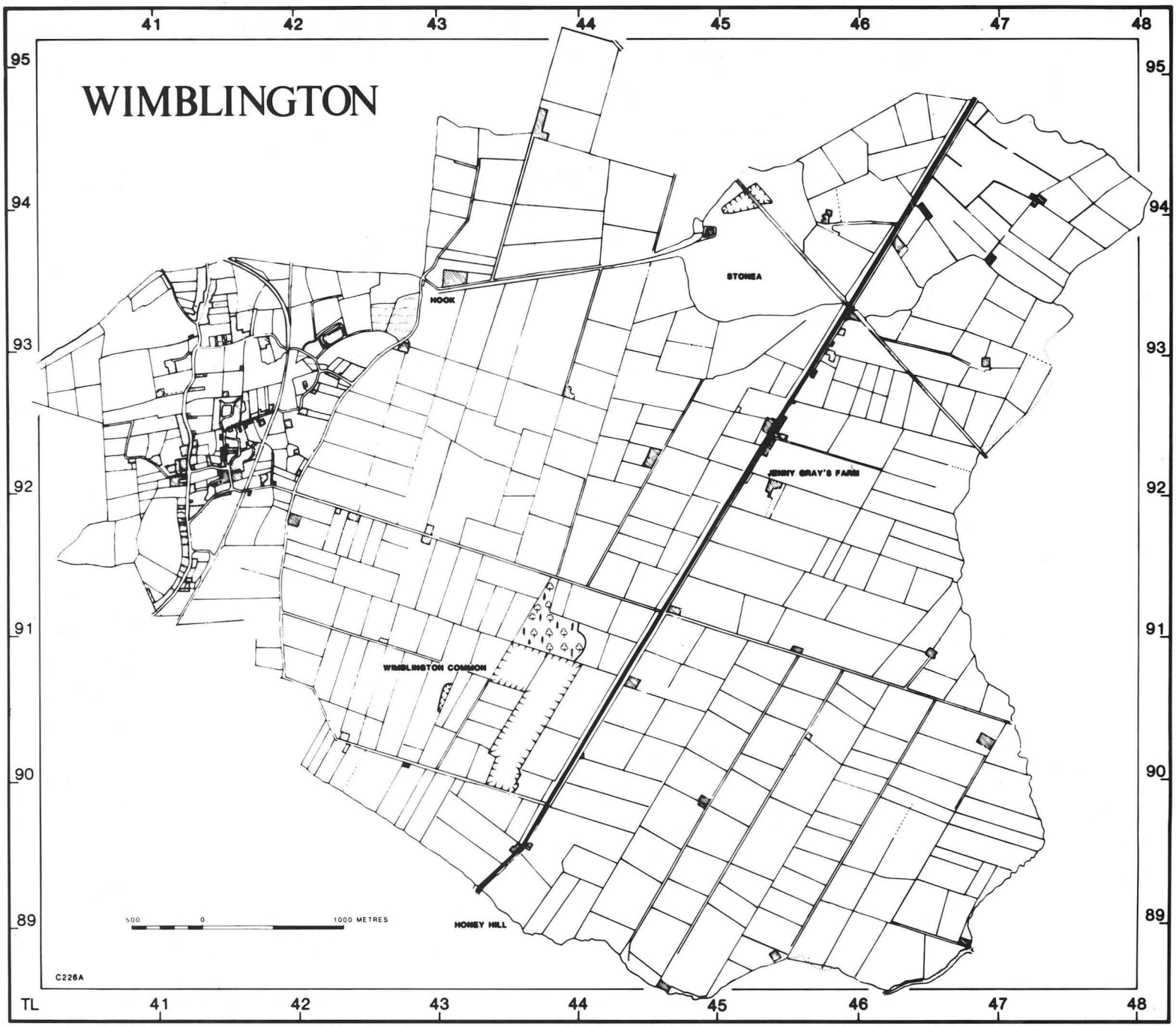


Figure 35 Modern landscape and topography

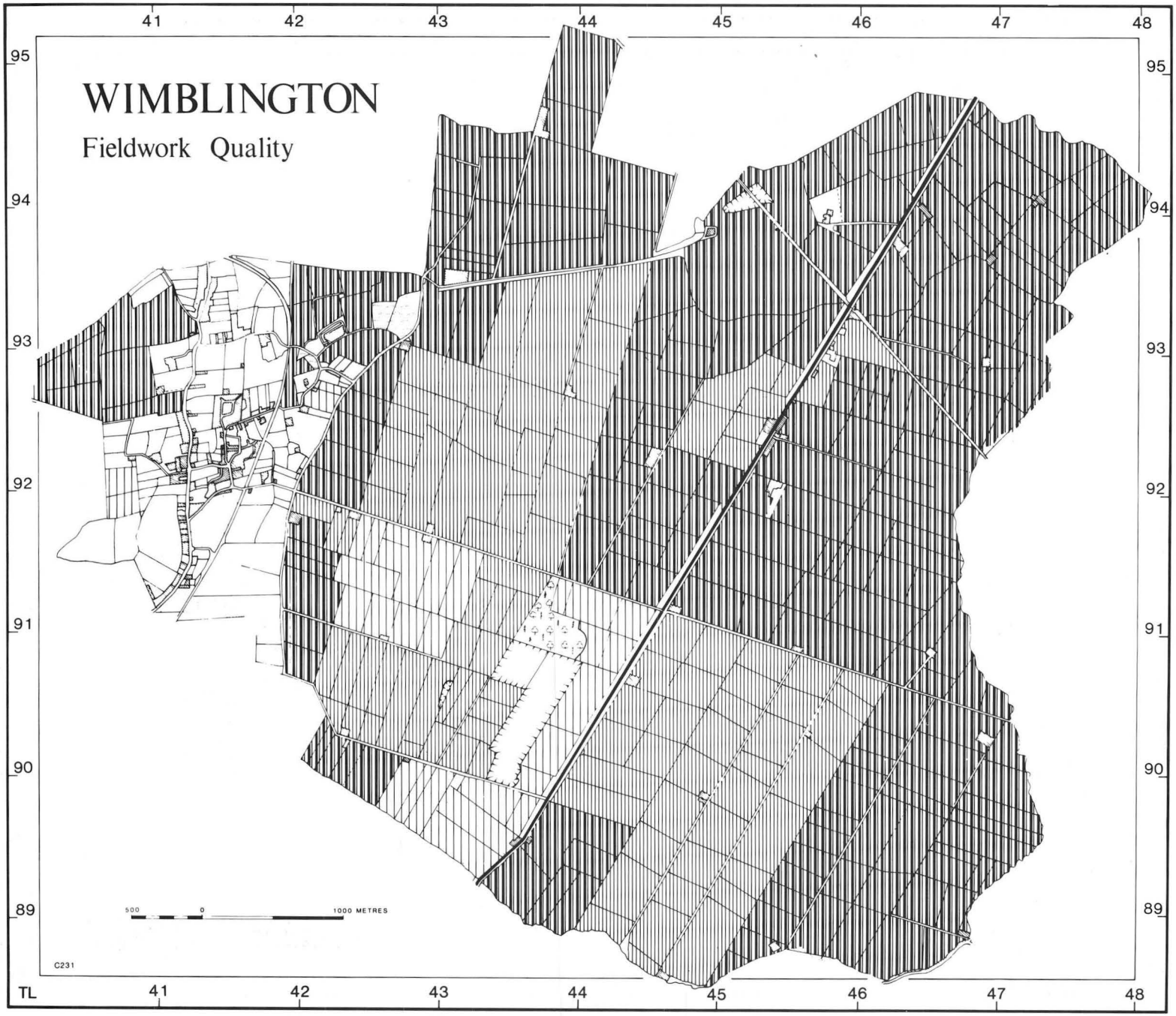


Figure 36 Quality and extent of fieldwork

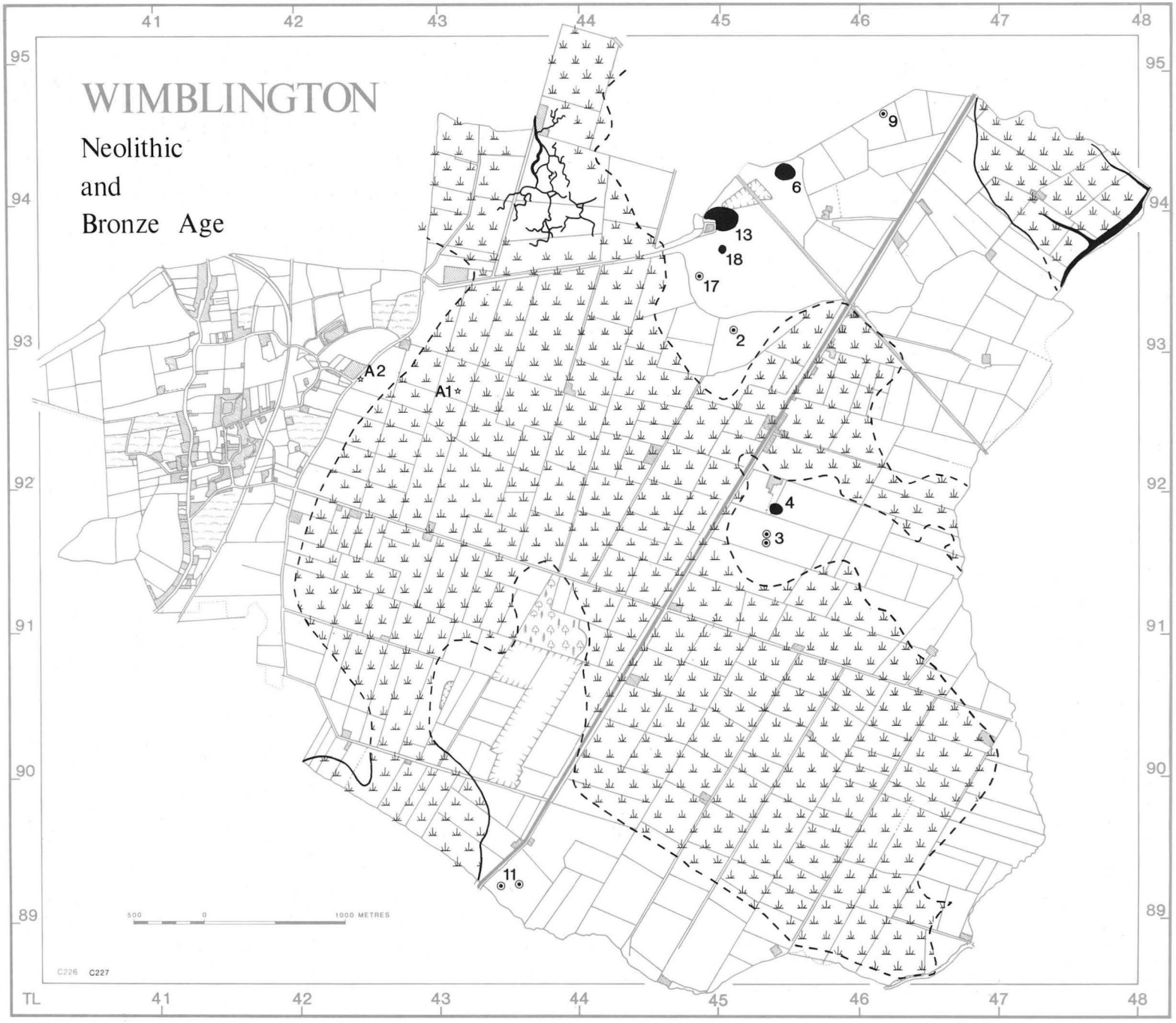


Figure 37 Neolithic and Bronze Age landscape

It yielded a sherd of pottery and a piece of human skull as well as a number of flints in the adjacent area. Together with two more mounds nearby in March parish (Hall 1987a, 40) it forms a small linear cemetery. A low mound that is probably a barrow occurs at site *17*, where there were quite a lot of flints.

On the south of Stonea a barrow was excavated in 1961–6 (site *2*) and dated to the Early Bronze Age (Potter 1976, 32–7). The eroded mound was 19.5m in diameter and yielded bones from 2 cremations. One, an elderly woman, was placed in a central pit which had jet and amber beads from a necklace dispersed in its fill. The other cremation, a young man, was associated with an urn.

A Late Bronze Age occupation site was discovered during the recent excavations at Stonea Grange (Fig. 40, site *18*). The major feature was a hut-circle ditch of diameter 13m and various other ditches and post holes. Plain and decorated pottery, 2 socketed axe fragments and a few crude flints were recovered (Potter and Jackson 1982).

IV. Iron Age

(Fig. 38)

The site at Stonea known as Stonea 'Camp' or the 'Stitches', site *1*, has long been believed to be an Iron Age 'ringwork', and was for many years the only monument of the period known in the fens. An aerial photograph taken before destruction has been published (in Phillips 1970, plate Ib). There is a ramparted double-ditched D-shaped enclosure, apparently of two different phases, one 'D' inside the other but sharing a common south-west side (Fig. 39); (Phillips in Salzman 1948, 46–7). Only part of the inner curved ramparts now survive, and even these are rather eroded; it is unfortunate that a scheduled site (SAM 22) formerly in good condition as an earthwork was subjected to arable cultivation.

Sherds of reddish Iron Age pottery were abundant at the south end of the camp. Brooches and a necklace have been discovered from the south-western rampart by metal detector users (W. Cross pers. comm. 1977) and skeletons of unknown date have been ploughed out of one of the ditches (D. Bradshaw pers. comm. 1977).

A section of one of the western earthwork ramparts showed that it was of single phase construction without timber revetment. Finds from the excavation and surface collections indicated a date around the middle of the 1st century AD (Potter and Jackson 1982). This is in accord with a find of Icenian coins at Stonea (Evans 1890, 586–7, Allen 1970). Other Icenian coins have been reported 'near Wimblington' (Allen 1970) and recently an Icenian coin hoard was discovered at March (Potter 1983). Potter and Jackson (1982) have recently discussed the function of the site.

Several early Iron Age occupation sites pre-dating the 'Camp' are known on Stonea island, and on the heavier clays of Wimblington island. Site *13* produced Iron Age sherds along with Roman pottery and Bronze Age flints, being part of a complex site. A dark area with Iron Age sherds and other occupation remains and a loomweight occurs on the fen edge at site 7; it coincides with cropmarks of enclosures and a droveway. Sites *19* and *20* at Wimblington are both Iron Age and Roman with the usual dark area of bone, sherds and fragments of burnt stone from yards and hearths. Site *4* at Jenny Gray's Farm has early Iron Age sherds as well as Bronze Age material. Site *8* is a saltern producing a briquetage different from the usual Roman material; it may be Iron Age, but there were no diagnostic sherds other than a few each of the Iron Age and Roman periods. Site *19* (Fig. 40) has similar briquetage that may be Iron Age.

A few late Iron Age sherds, contemporary with the date of Stonea Camp, were found near Jenny Gray's Farm, site *4*, and also a sherd each at sites *7*, *10* and *19*. Site *4* has a square cropmark that is most likely Iron Age, but has been plotted on Figure 40 with other cropmarks.

V. Roman

(Fig. 40)

Stonea Grange (site *18*) is the most important Roman site in Wimblington, and the whole of the Cambridgeshire Fenland. It was discovered by fieldwork in January 1979, then appearing as a raised mound of building stone with other debris of tile and plaster *etc.*, about 1 metre high and 63 metres across. Subsequent excavations by the British Museum during a five-year programme (1980–4) have revealed the following sequence of Roman activity (Potter and Jackson forthcoming).

The first phase was a large stone building; limestone walls were placed on a solid stone platform to form a square structure of side *c.* 16m with an apse on the west side. The large quantity of stone used had to be brought from the Peterborough region about 30km away. The building was heated by means of a box tile and hypocaust system and was adorned with plaster, some of which was painted to look like marble; it also had glazed windows. The massive footings suggest that it was two or three stories high, and so would appear as a tower dominating the fens. It was constructed in the first part of the 2nd century AD (Hadrianic period) and a corridor and hall were added soon afterwards. The whole site seems to have been laid out at the same time as the building of the tower. There was a grid of gravel roads forming insulae, and planned on a regular system. These insulae contained wooden buildings, wells and clusters of pits. Both the stone tower and many of the wooden buildings were demolished in the early 3rd century, although parts of the site were occupied during the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Another significant building was located 200m north east of the main site; this was of square 'concentric' plan suggesting it to be a Roman-Celtic temple. Several 'ritual' objects have been looted from the site in recent years, the most striking being a votive tablet dedicated to Minerva and made of gold. These objects presumably came from the temple. Another interesting feature was a large sump-like pit, 11m across and some 4m depth; it was filled in the Antonine period and contained an enormous amount of organic material including wooden artefacts and much environmental data (Potter and Jackson forthcoming).

A parallel for the tower structure is to be found at Anguillara near Rome (Potter and Whitehouse 1982). The size of the Stonea structure and the expense involved in assembling its materials suggest great wealth. The site was possibly the political successor to the Iron Age 'camp', but in the 3rd century became of little significance. It was placed somewhat out of the way from the important roads and canals that cross the fens via March. Maybe the commercial aspects of these routes became more important so that Grandford and Flaggrass (in

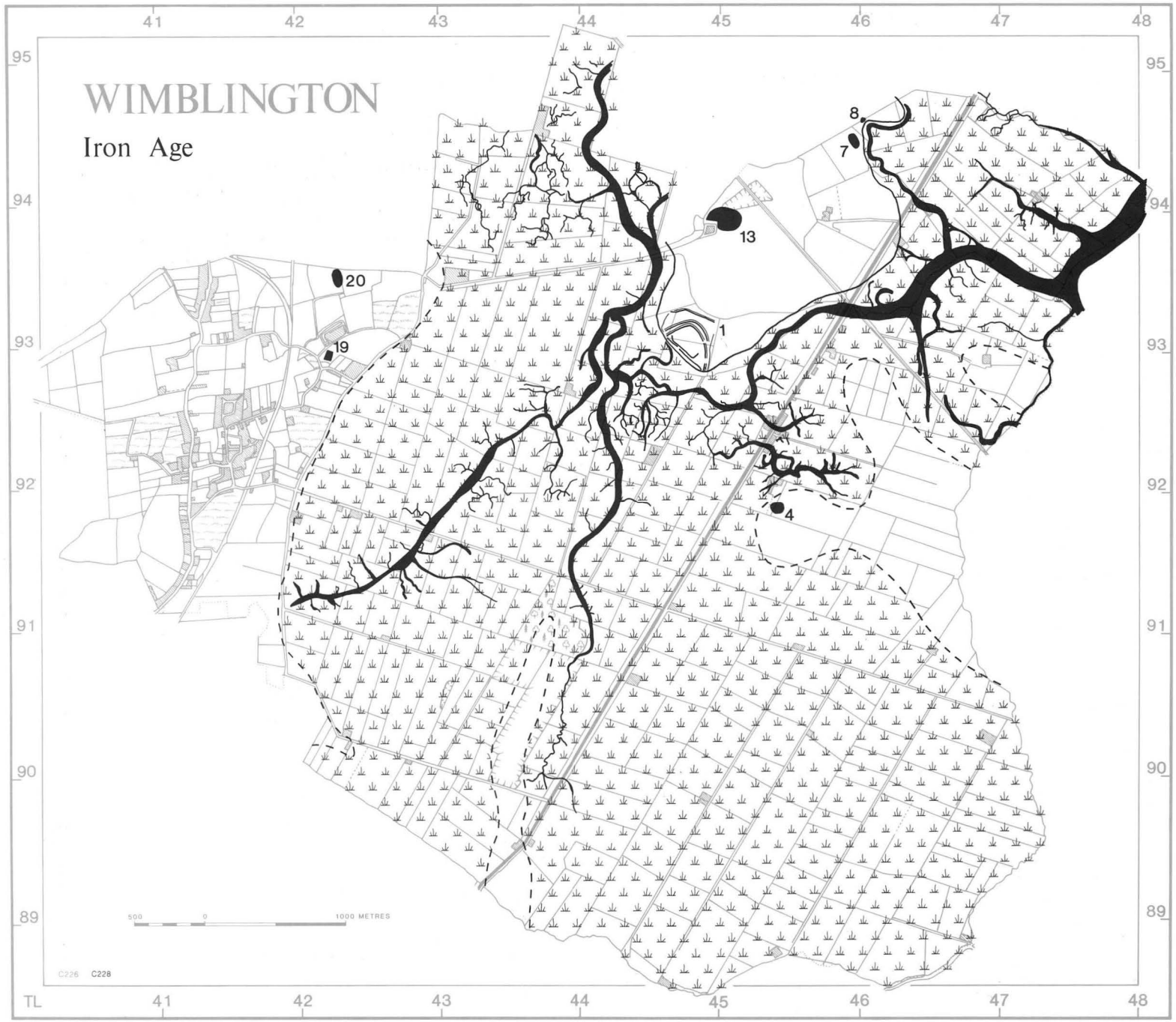


Figure 38 Iron Age landscape

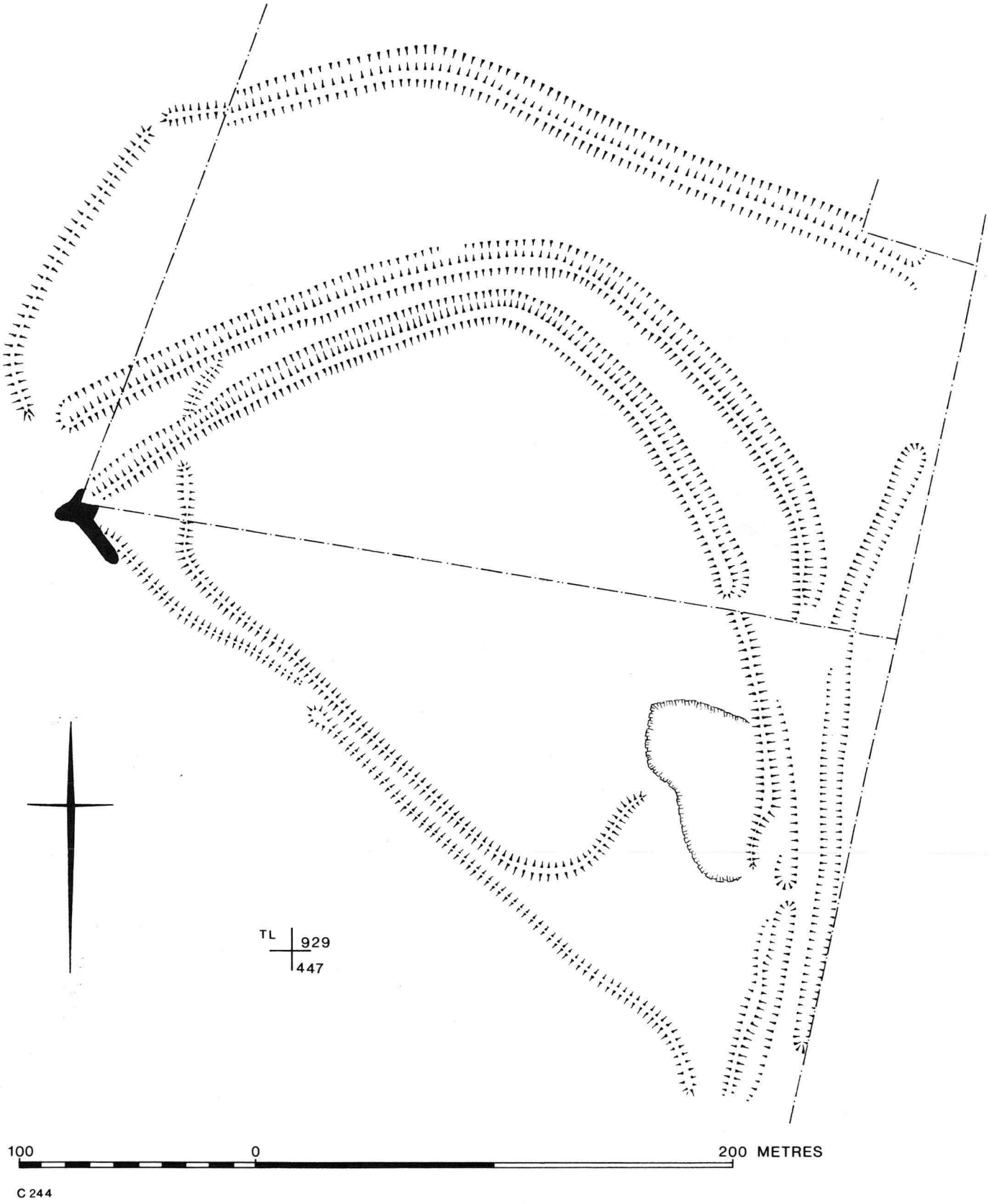


Figure 39 Stonea 'Camp', site 1

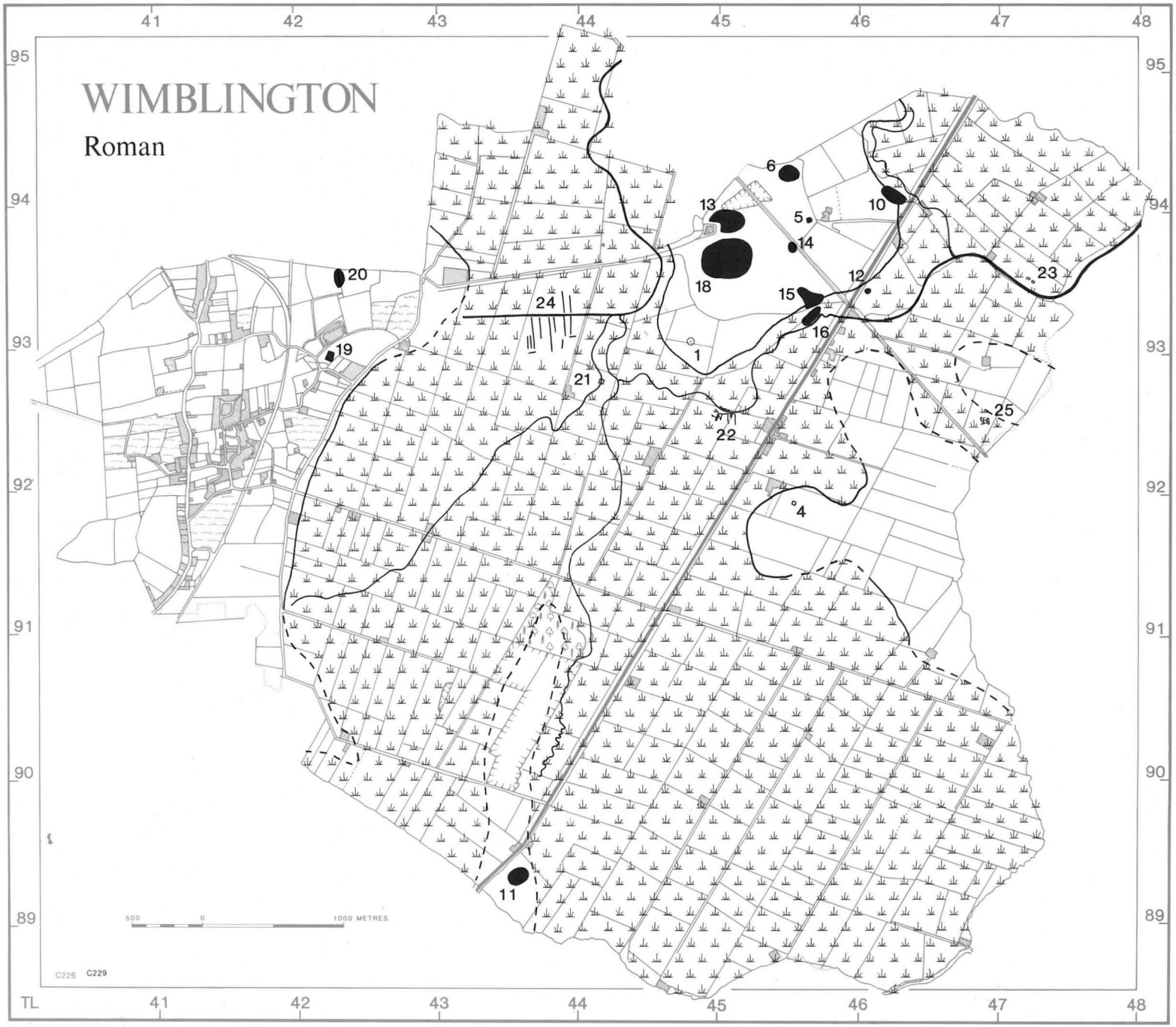


Figure 40 Roman landscape

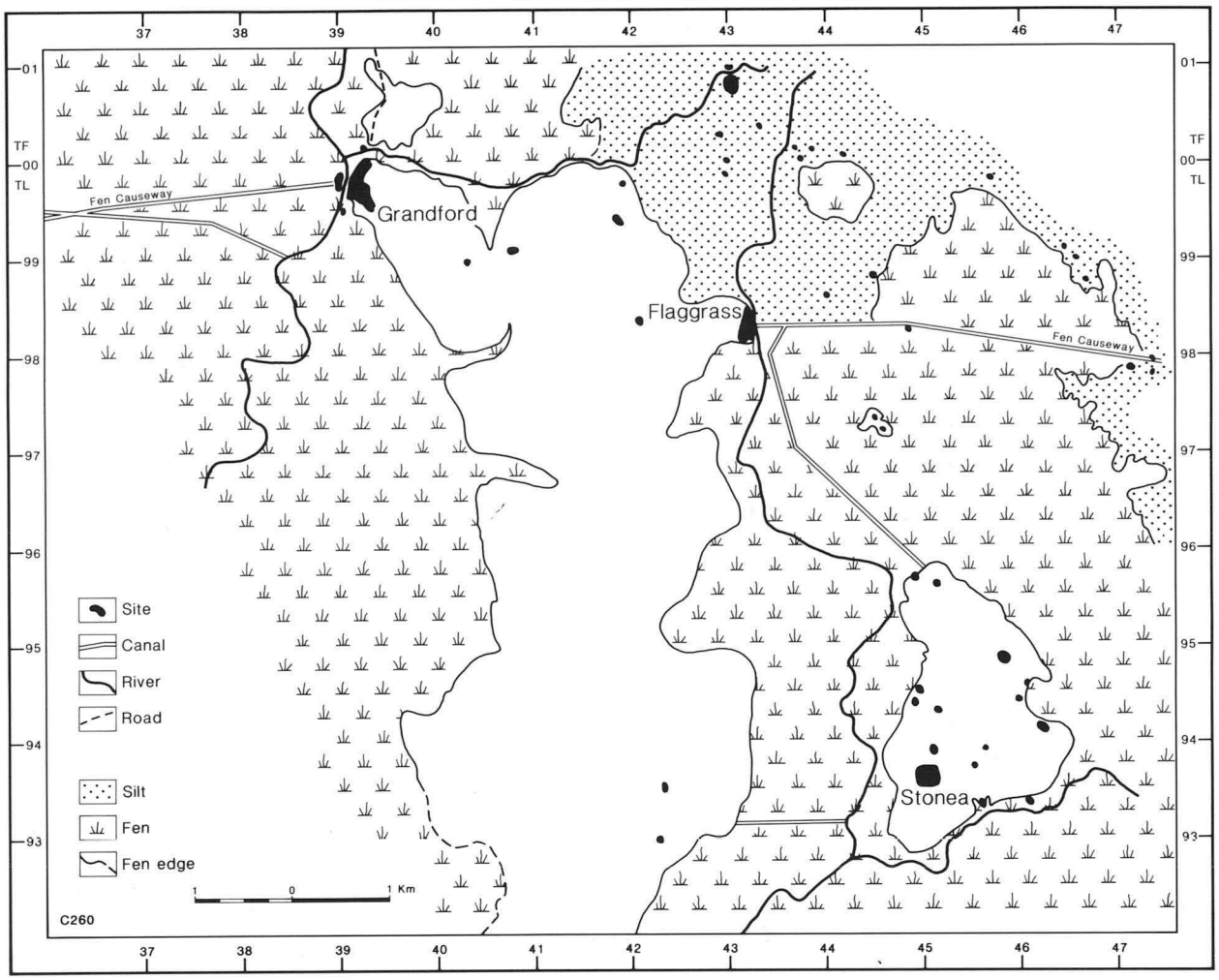


Figure 41 Roman sites and canals in the Wimblington and March region

March) superseded Stonea. Although Stonea island was linked by canal to Flaggrass this was not converted into a road when it became silted up, as occurred with the Fen Causeway to the north. Another canal linked Stonea directly with Wimblington to the west (site *24*); it too became silted up and abandoned. East of the Stonea site are cropmarks of the ditches of a road 600m long aligned east-west (Gazetteer 2, TL 456 935).

A plan of the sites and canals in the vicinity of March and Wimblington (Fig. 41) sets Stonea in the regional context. The linear silt banks crossing various parts of the fen are interpreted as canals for the following reasons. They now exist as 'roddon-like' features standing proud of the ground surface about 1.5 to 2m. Their straightness, in most cases, marks them out as being artificial and they cut across what was Roman peat fen, linking silt roddons that would have then been active watercourses flanked by levees. Had the silt banks been designed *ab initio* as roads then it is difficult to understand why, for instance, the Rodham Farm Canal and Fen Causeway were not located two kilometres farther north, when they would have traversed dry silt only. The geographical setting for the linear silt banks to have been canals is therefore clear; they link active rivers and were deliberately constructed through peat, which would have been easier to work than cutting a channel in shifting silt.

The silt forming the 'roddons' of the canals most likely originated from the natural watercourses draining the fen; these had silty brackish water backing up at high tide. Proof that salt water reached the region is evident from the large number of Roman saltern sites that occur; the canals cut across many of these tidal creeks and it is likely that silt accumulated. The canals were filled with silt before the end of the Roman period as shown by the occurrence of sites on the levees of the Rodham Farm Canal in the parishes of March and Upwell; these have yielded saltern briquetage and Roman pottery. The sherds from the Upwell site (*11*, TL 4612 9805) were assigned a date range from the late 2nd to the late 3rd centuries (Hall 1987a, 42).

An alternative interpretation that the silt banks were designed as roads using silt to create a deep footing of firm make-up through the peat fen is most unlikely. When wet, silt is very soft and mobile, quite unsuitable as a building material. If a route over silt was desired then the 'dry land' immediately to the north would surely have been selected, whereas the eastern length of Rodham Farm Canal from March was aligned south of a projection of the line it took from Whittlesey, which ensured that the maximum length of peat was traversed before reaching the silts of the Old Croft River.

Salway discussed the nature of the Fen Causeway and Rodham Farm Canal (in Phillips 1970, 216–8). He came to the view that the silts had accumulated in the canal before the gravel road was constructed. He attributed the flooding to the 3rd century from the evidence

of an excavation by Phillips which showed that a site at Welney had been buried by silt at this date (1970, 135–7; 231). A catastrophic single event is not necessarily the cause of the silting; it could equally well have been a gradual process.

Only the Rodham Farm Canal had its silted 'roddon' used to make a road, the Fen Causeway. A section is needed to prove that the route began as a canal and then had a road constructed along the silt fill at a secondary stage. This has not yet been possible but an interesting section of the Roman Nene became exposed in 1987. The length of river (now a roddon) leaving Grandford in March (TF 3941 0015) has a curving course as it makes its way to Elm (Hall 1987a, fig. 23), which was presumed to be a natural stream. A section visible during dike cleaning showed that the base of the channel was cut a metre or more into the underlying pre-Flandrian gravel, and it was filled with silt. The river therefore occupies an artificial course, even though it is not straight; probably a natural watercourse had been widened and canalised by the Romans.

The smaller Roman sites at Wimblington appear to be both agricultural and saltern in type, some of them continuing from Iron Age settlement. Salterns, as expected, occur on the edge of active watercourses, in what are now silt roddons. In the Roman period they would have had small central channels bringing tidal brine to the peat areas. None of the sites away from the roddons had briquetage. Site *6* has the soilmarks of a series of parallel banks and ditches; it is similar to March site *16*, which lies not far away. Both probably represent horticulture in the form of lazybeds; earthwork examples survive at Bullock's Haste, Cottenham (Phillips 1970, 213, plate 17). The Cottenham and Stonea 'lazybeds' both occur near major complexes of settlement sites.

The excavation at *The Golden Lion Inn*, site *10*, of a small ditched enclosure 10.5 by 12m produced pottery and animal bone. Inside the enclosure there was probably a timber building with daub walls; the site commenced in the first half of the 2nd century AD and lasted until the mid 3rd century. The animal bones recovered suggested an economy based on cattle and sheep raising (Potter 1976, 23–54).

The other sites in Wimblington parish are of varied type. Numbers *10* and *13* have Iron Age origins and a hoard of 3rd century AD coins came from Stonea Camp (site *1*). Salterns and sherds were found at sites *15* and *16*, lying on or next to silt roddons, which must, therefore, have been active watercourses at the time. Small sites occur at *5* and *14*.

The Roman site at Honey Hill, *11*, has a large area of dark soil indicating occupation. When it was an earthwork Fowler (as OS correspondent 1949) reported that there were 15 'earthen rings' which were possibly house sites; although a different interpretation is given to the similar cropmark circles that occur at Manea, site *7* (see below for a discussion). Walker excavated on this site in 1924 and found sherds of samian, colour-coated wares, Horningsea and other coarse wares (Walker 1924). Aerial photographs show enclosures of a paddock or field system.

Three cropmark sites, *21*, *22* and *23*, lie around Stonea which, from their location on roddons, cannot be earlier than Roman and are unlikely to be later from their situation and type. These sites may be huts and small stock enclosures relating to summer grazing of the fen. Site *24*, which is identified by soilmarks and cropmarks, is interpreted as a silted-up canal linking Stonea to Wimblington island; there are also linear marks at right angles to the line of the canal. All the marks show as yellow silt lines on the ground. They are here interpreted as turbaries, that is peat cuttings that have been filled (naturally) by silt. Ditched enclosures containing at least 15 small circles occur in the area of TL 459 931, and two others at TL 451 926 (Gazetteer 2). These are believed to be agricultural; see Manea below for more discussion of these features.

Overall, Roman settlement at Wimblington was always very diverse having a probable regional centre at Stonea Grange as well as smaller agricultural sites and salterns.

VI. Saxon and medieval

(Fig. 42)

Early Saxon occupation debris and post holes and slots, the remains of buildings, were found during the excavations at Stonea Grange. Thereafter the centre of activity seemed to move to Doddington, where the medieval parish, including all the March island and Benwick, was 15,297 hectares (37,801 acres). It presumably was the successor to Stonea as a local administration centre, probably because Stonea has become difficult for access as fenland conditions became wetter.

No other Saxon material is known from Wimblington parish; the likely area for such settlement lies under the village where there are gravels.

Wimblington is first mentioned in *c.* 975 meaning 'Wimbel's or Wynnbeald's farm'. It has no separate manorial history from Doddington, always being part of that manor (q.v.; Pugh 1953, 112–3). Stonea was uninhabited in the Middle Ages, being mentioned in the early surveys of Ely possessions only as a vaccary or cow pasture. A grange, (presumably Stonea Grange Farm destroyed in *c.* 1960) is first mentioned in 1600 as part of Bishop Heyton's alienations (BL Add. MS 5847 p.89).

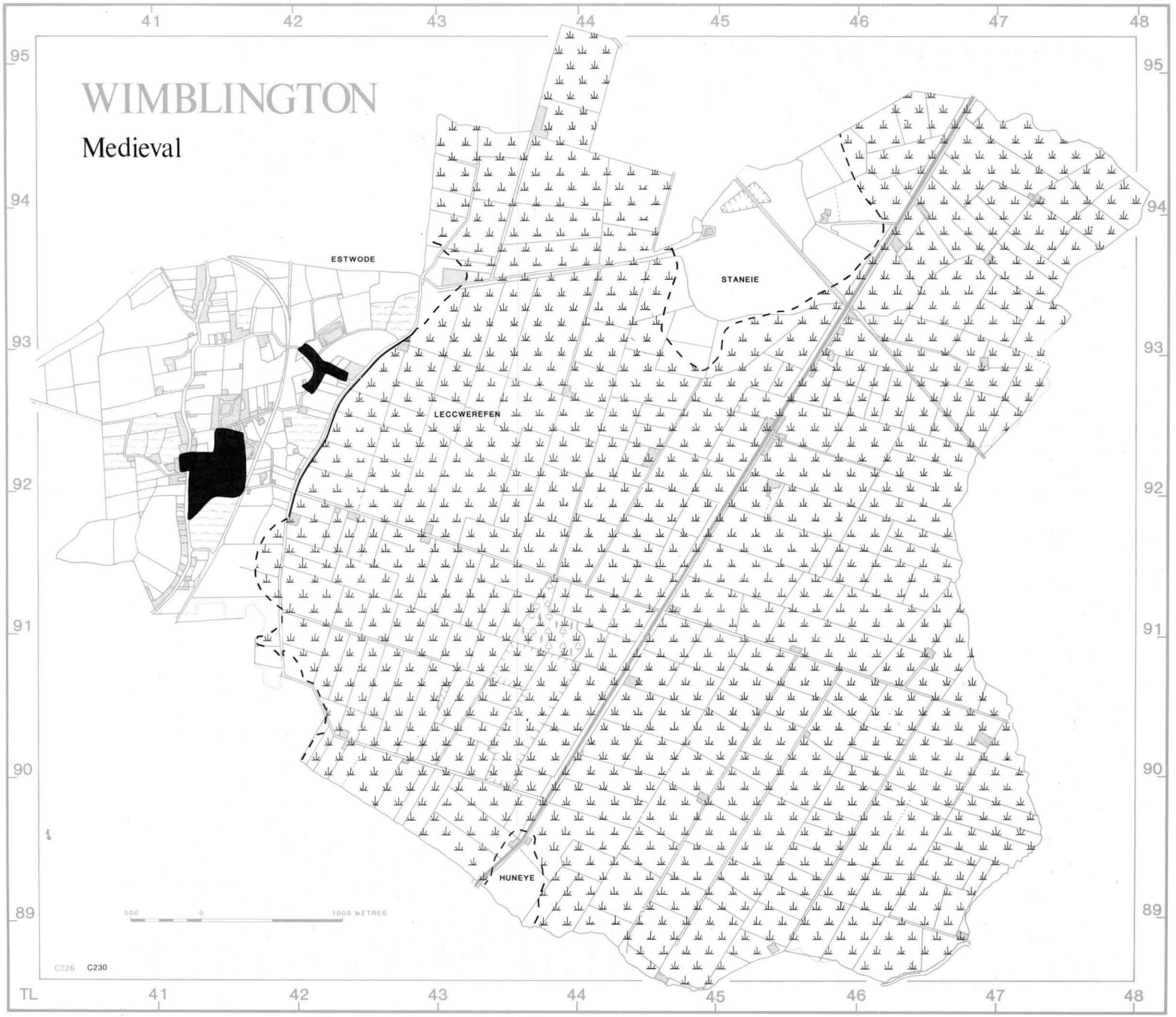


Figure 42 Medieval landscape

12. Manea

1. Introduction
(Figs 43 and 44)

The modern parish of Manea consists of 2,702 hectares (6,677 acres) lying on the north-west side of the Bedford Rivers. The west and north boundaries are defined by a medieval canal, the Darcey Lode. Before the 17th century Manea formed part of Coveney parish. The population in 1986 was estimated to be 1,170 (Cambridgeshire 1987). Manea is an elongated island lying very low, with a maximum altitude of about 5 metres. Two other small islands lie to the north, Watering Hill and Bedlam Hill. There are no old buildings and the appearance is of a predominantly 19th–century settlement, although there were plans to build a showpiece settlement called Charlesville in the 17th century in honour of Charles II and his support of drainage schemes (Pugh 1953, 136).

Previously published archaeological information about Manea is sparse, being limited to notes of (approximate) artefact find-spots by Fox (1923, 7, 54, 229 and 263), and a Roman site recorded by Phillips (1970, 216). A newspaper article describing an excavation by F.M. Walker, a local teacher, also survives and seems to be the only record of that discovery.

Walker was an avid collector of flints and prehistoric metalwork. He used to work the Manea fields or cycle out farther away carrying a bag on his back to hold finds. Pupils from the school were sometimes allowed to accompany him; he does not seem to have walked the fields in any systematic way, but wandered around. He amassed a large collection of artefacts from the region, none of which was published. Many of his flints went to Wisbech Museum in his life time, but it is believed there were very many more kept in huts that were disposed of after his death. A collection of metalwork, formerly on display in his house, has unfortunately been lost. As far as is known he only undertook two excavations, at the barrow described below and at the Wimblington part of Honey hill.

The flint groups surviving in Wisbech Museum are unusual for their date of collection, in that they seem to be fairly intact – there being axes and fine arrowheads which are often abstracted from collections before they are passed on. The other feature of the groups is that all the flints are marked with a few letters such as SBH. Labels of this type are at first sight meaningless, but having relocated the sites during the 1978 survey and becoming familiar with the names of local landowners it was obvious that SBH stands for Sears, Bedlam Hill, i.e. that part of Bedlam Hill which belongs to the Sears family. The sites can thus be identified and the Wisbech collections assigned 8-figure grid references; SBH is site *2*, at TL 4865 9039. Most of the flints have now been so identified, having discovered the names of the owners of Manea gravelly fields in the 1920s and 1930s. A summary report of the Walker flint collections is given in Appendix 2.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

Manea lies on a bedrock of Ampthill Clay which rises to a low ridge linking up with Stonea. Most of the ridge has a covering of Till (boulder clay) with two small pockets of March Gravels. These form two small islands north of Manea at Bedlam Hill (TL 48 91) and Watering Hill (TL 47 92). The area of the medieval island above the 3.6m (12ft) contour is 165 hectares.

The main Flandrian deposit is marine clay which lies on an earlier Neolithic peat. The drainage, represented by well developed roddon systems (Fig. 45), was via channels running to the north-east towards the Old Croft River. There is still a fairly deep covering of peat in many places, some of it lying directly on the pre-Flandrian ground at the south. Silt entered the north of the parish during the Iron Age near Watering Hill; the Darcey Lode, forming the boundary there, is now a large roddon nearly 2m above the surrounding fen.

An interesting detail proving that there was a high water-table and concomitant peat growth during the Iron Age is shown west of Watering Hill. The present surface consists of boulder clay with a linear 'roddon' of silt lying directly on it (Fig. 47, west of site 5). The conditions under which silt was deposited can only have been in a drainage channel existing in a shallow peat fen; now the peat has wasted away only silt remains. The ground level here is 2.4m which is too high for peat development in the early prehistoric periods, and therefore it must have continued to form and build up, covering almost the whole parish, since there is so little deposition of silt.

Watering Hill was the site where peat was sampled under a silt roddon. In section it was clear that there was first a channel partly filled with marine clay, which later developed into a much wider watercourse that received a silt deposit. Peat sealed under the silt was submitted for radiocarbon dating and gave a result of 2555 ± 45 BP, which calibrates to between 820 and 440 BC (Q–2113; Hall and Switsur 1981, 76). The sample was acid, but this may have been due to the presence of iron pyrites (that oxidizes to sulphuric acid) rather than because the peat itself was acid. The date was of archaeological significance because it was the first time that the silts had been shown to be Iron Age or later, some workers believing them to be as early as 3000BP (Churchill in Phillips 1970, 139).

III. Mesolithic and Neolithic
(Fig. 45)

Three areas produced sufficient quantities of worked flints and fire-cracked flint to qualify as Mesolithic 'sites', numbers *1*, *2* and *8*. Both *1* and *8* yielded microliths, blades and a tranchet axe. The amount of material was somewhat sparse but this is accounted for by the extensive collecting of Walker. Another Mesolithic axe came from Bedlam Hill, but no evidence of accompanying lithics was found there. A perforated pebble hammer, possibly Mesolithic, was discovered on clay at TL 4792 9023 (Roe (1979, 36) has shown that some of these hammers are of later Neolithic or early Bronze Age date).

All the significant flints that represent activity sites (very probably settlement) occur on pockets of sandy gravel. The whole area would have been dry land during

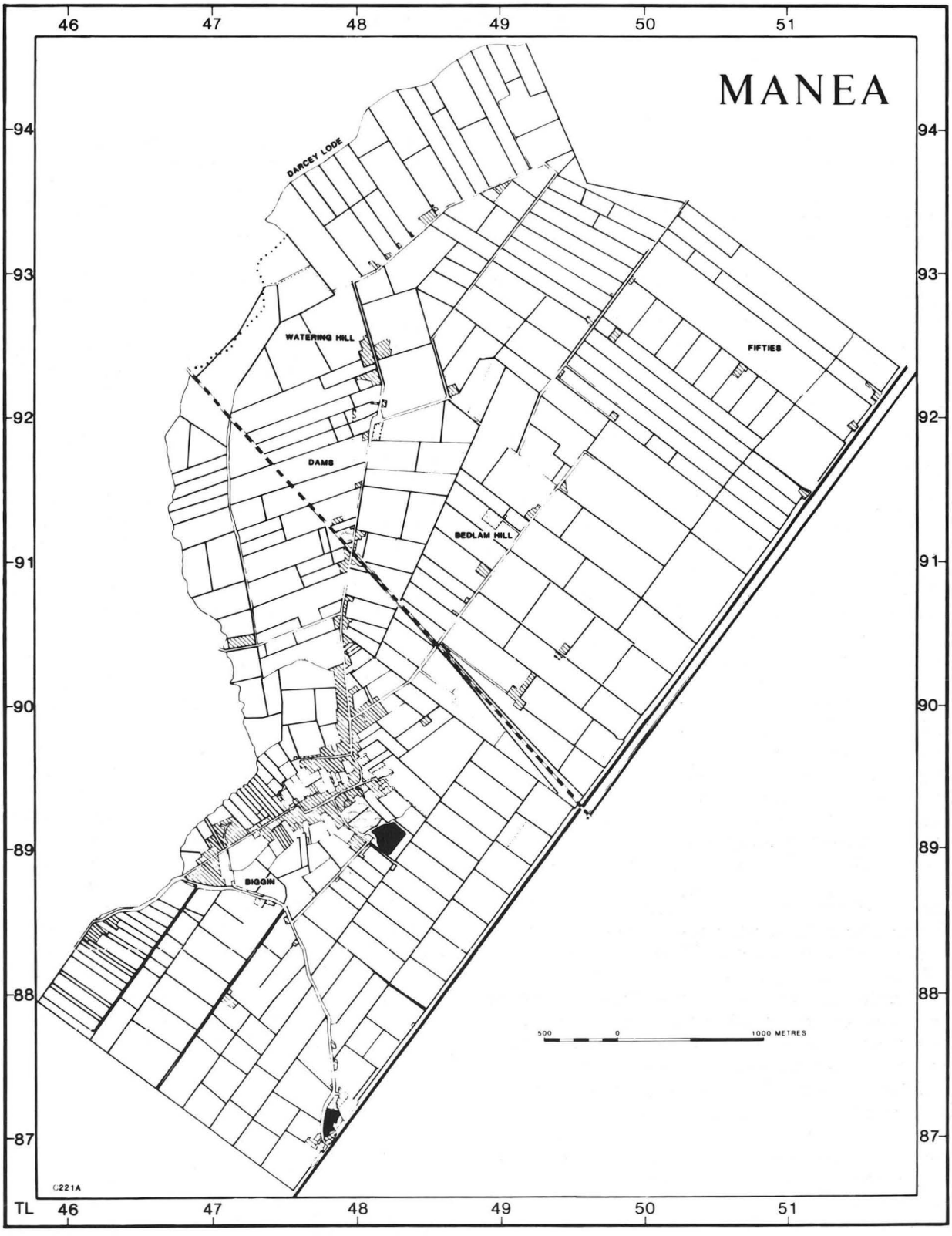


Figure 43 Modern landscape and topography

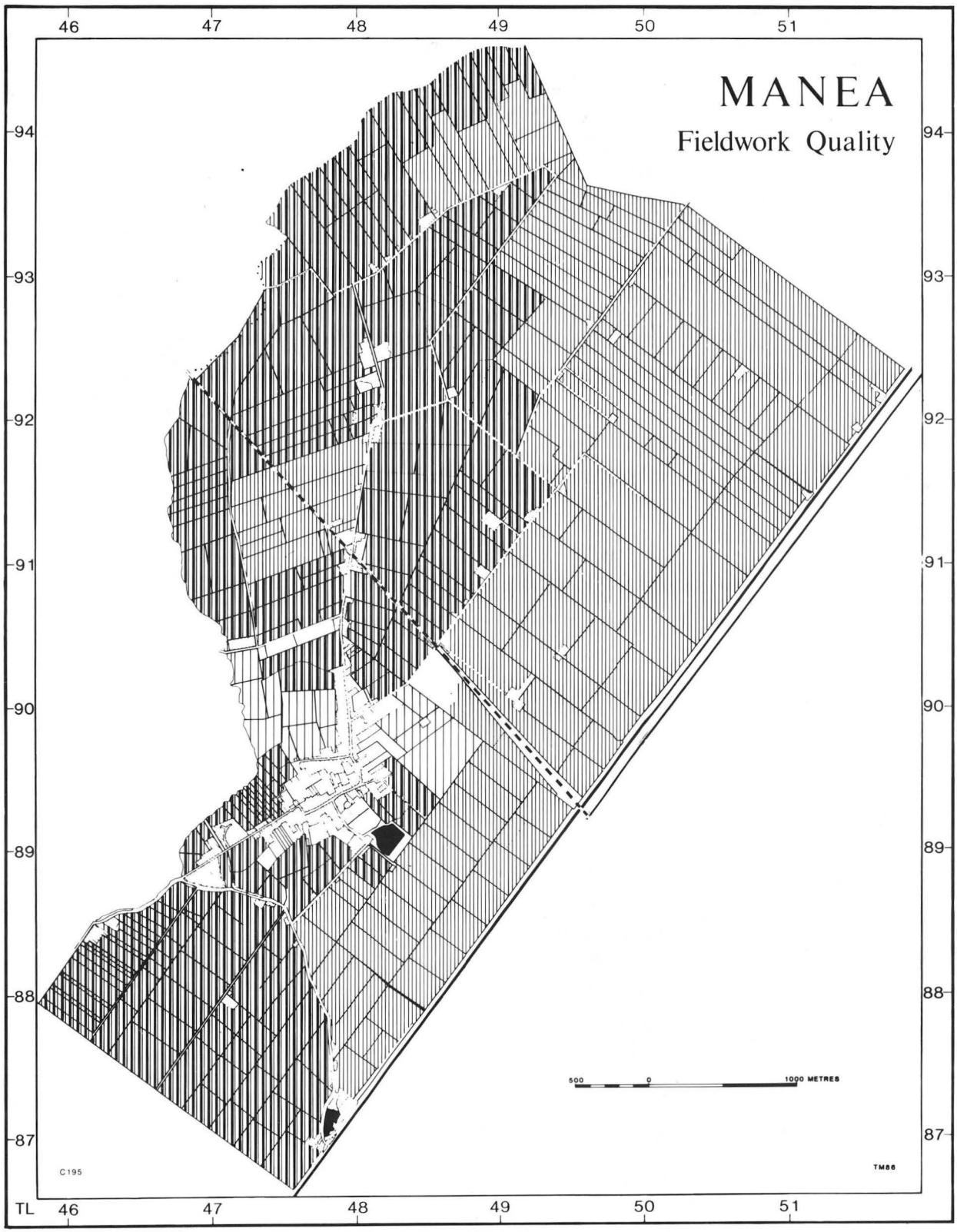


Figure 44 Quality and extent of fieldwork

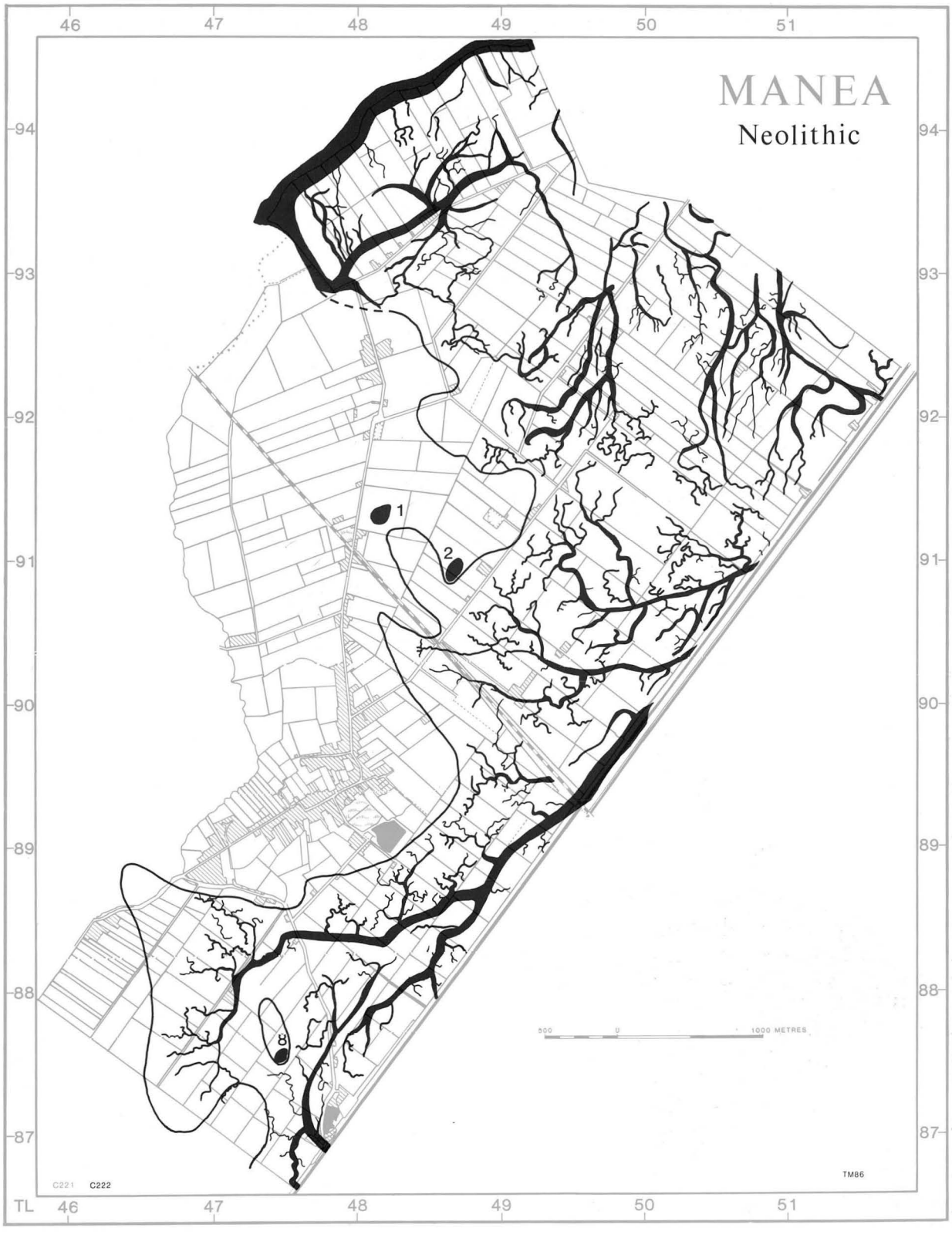


Figure 45 Neolithic landscape

the early part of the period, slowly becoming wetter on the eastern side, where there may be more material buried.

Only one flint area of the Neolithic period was discovered, this also being site *1*, where there was the Mesolithic activity already mentioned. In spite of the relative paucity of flints discovered at Manea they were sufficient to locate the sites discovered by Walker. Interpretation and assessment comes more from the Wisbech collections than the material located in 1978. By far the greatest number came from Site *2*, Bedlam Hill. Walker's labels show that he found flints from nearly the whole of the hill area. They are a mixed assemblage of the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods (Appendix 2).

The landscape at the end of the Neolithic period would have been as shown on Fig. 45. Earlier there would have been a fairly extensive peat fen on the east, and then the whole would have been covered by a saltmarsh that deposited marine clay. The roddons represent the drainage channels in the mud flats. Site *2* lies at +0.6m OD, so proving that the peat was below this level during the Mesolithic phase.

IV. Bronze Age

(Fig. 46)

There was considerable Bronze Age activity at Manea, again mainly limited to light soils, at sites *3*, *4*, *9*, and *10*. Sites *3* and *4* produced a few worked and fire-cracked flints; there may also be another site at TL 472 920. The largest is site *9* where a concentration of flints was discovered on a patch of sand.

Several Bronze Age burials were discovered in 1929 when a barrow (site *10*) was excavated by Walker. There were 5 inhumations, at least one of them flexed, five deposits of cremations and a further 5 cremations in urns. Beads and tools were recovered but there is no record of the associations. None of the finds can now be traced. The barrow was located on heavy clay without any flints around; it appears to have been sited on marginal ground at the edge of the island. Various other Bronze Age artefacts are known from chance finds made over the years, such as a looped and socketed axe (A3 from TL 4825 8932) and a large barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (see Gazetteer 1 notes).

Early in the Bronze Age there would have been a saltmarsh depositing marine clay to the east, but during most of the period there was reversion to a fresh-water peat with a rising water table causing a continual decrease on the area of dry land. Figure 46 shows the later Bronze Age landscape with an estimated fen-edge at Ordnance Datum. During this period Manea would be an island for the first time, being cut off from Chatteris and Stonea.

V. Iron Age

(Fig. 47)

Iron Age settlement at Manea was previously unknown, but like other areas in the Isle of Ely, the parish does have settlement of the period. Three sites, *3*, *5* and *6*, all dating from the Early Iron Age, were discovered. Pottery sherds from site *3* are mostly shell or flint gritted contrasting with site *5* which are sandy; however it is unlikely that these variations represent any significant difference in culture or date. Sites *3* and *5* lie on gravels, but *6* is on clay, showing as elsewhere in the Fens and East Midlands that in the Iron Age, settlement sites were located on heavier soil for the first time.

The water table during the Iron Age rose so that dry land at Manea was reduced to three islands, Manea itself, Watering Hill and Bedlam Hill. During the Iron Age the area near the Wash received the marine flooding that deposited the silt in the Wisbech region. This material just reached Manea in the north at the Darcey Lode with a few watercourses, now roddons, tailing back south of Watering Hill. The peat surrounding the Iron Age saltmarsh had just covered the plateau west of Watering Hill, as demonstrated by the silt roddon already mentioned above. The estimated height of this plateau is 2.4m and the roddon was probably 0.6m before partial dispersion by ploughing, thus giving a height of 3.0m for the fen edge during the Iron Age.

Figure 47 shows the Fen in the Iron Age, nearly all of it being peat, and drained by channels no longer surviving. The watercourses near Watering Hill are shown as stipple, but they would have been active with marine water backing up depositing yellow silt. The section of a Manea roddon revealing marine clay and silt was made at TL 4790 9300; the radiocarbon sample was taken between these two marine deposits (Hall and Switsur 1981).

VI. Roman

(Fig. 47)

Two Roman settlements, *5* and *6*, were discovered; both yielded an abundance of sherds and occupation debris. At site *5* there was probably continuity from the Iron Age since Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (Belgic) pottery was also found. The site spreads over 0.8ha, and yields much saltern briquetage, made of a reddish-yellow porous fabric. This Watering Hill site represents the southern limit of salterns in the region, and its existence shows that the Darcey Lode and its tributaries were still active watercourses with salt water backing up at high tide. The source of fuel would have been the peat, and north of the area is a series of parallel silt banks, believed to be the filled-in channels of peat cuttings. Site *5* has a wide date-range from the 1st to 4th century AD (as well as the Iron Age), but site *6* has only late Roman material.

Site 7 is only known as a cropmark, there being no finds. It consists of a droveway with an angle in it, and a number of small circles between 8 and 15 metres in diameter, mostly lying to the north-east of the droveway (Fig. 48). Some of the circles lie on silt which means they must date from Roman times or later. Parallels for these small circles, all without finds, are widespread on the silt Fen to the north, around Wisbech. Many of the groups are close to Roman sites as is the Manea example, although at the same time a few of them overlie Roman ditches, just as one of the Manea circles cuts the droveway ditch. In spite of this a medieval date was proposed for some of them at Elm because many of them seemed to fit in between the ditches of medieval strip fields; the circles were proposed as drainage gullies for stacks of corn sheaves (Hall 1978, 27; Wilson 1978, 43–5).

Wimblington site *11* had 'earthen rings' reported that may be the same type and more are recorded on the Chatteris part of Honey Hill (site *1*, Gazetteer 2). A full reconsideration will be given in the report covering the Wisbech region when all the examples can be assessed (Hall, forthcoming). On balance a Roman date for most of these circles seems likely.

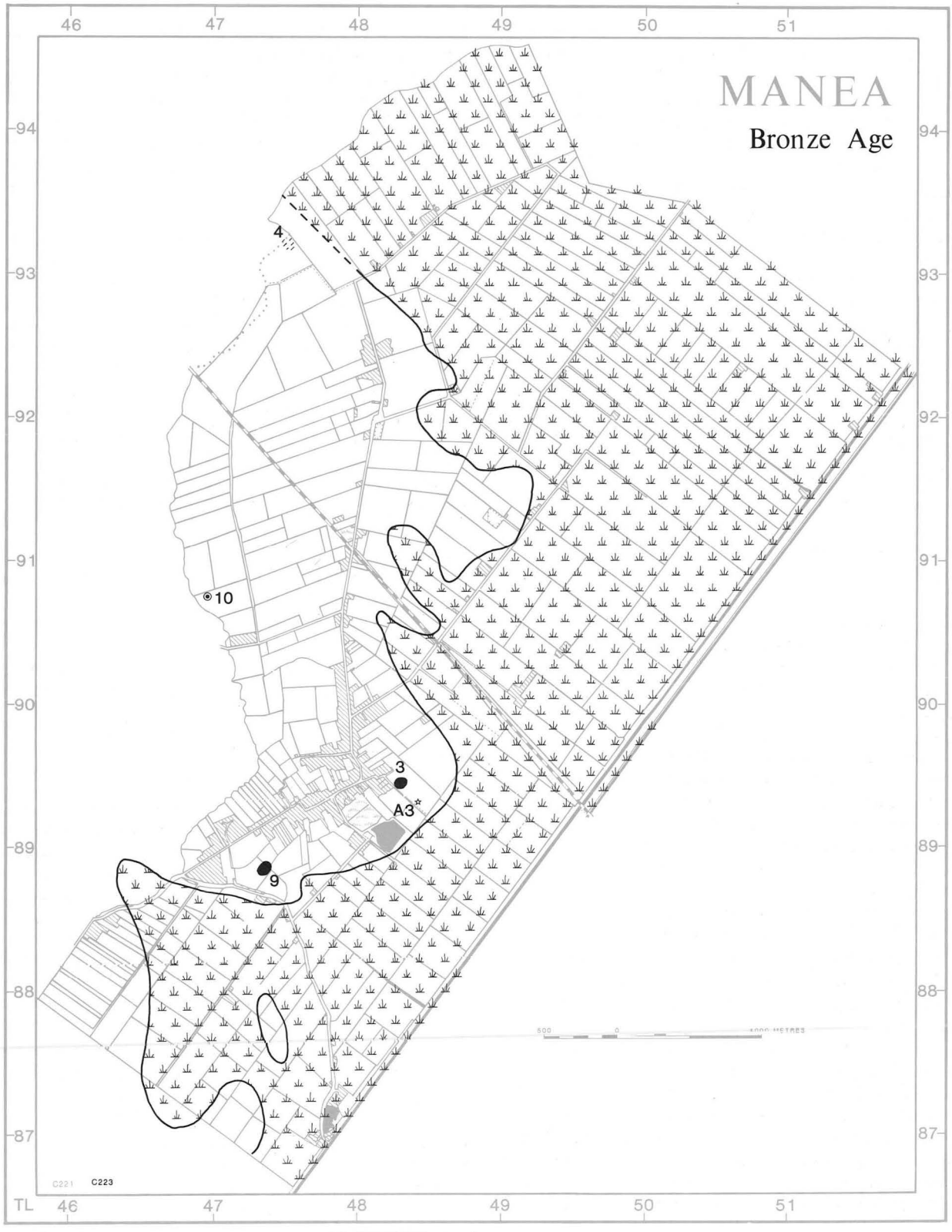


Figure 46 Bronze Age landscape

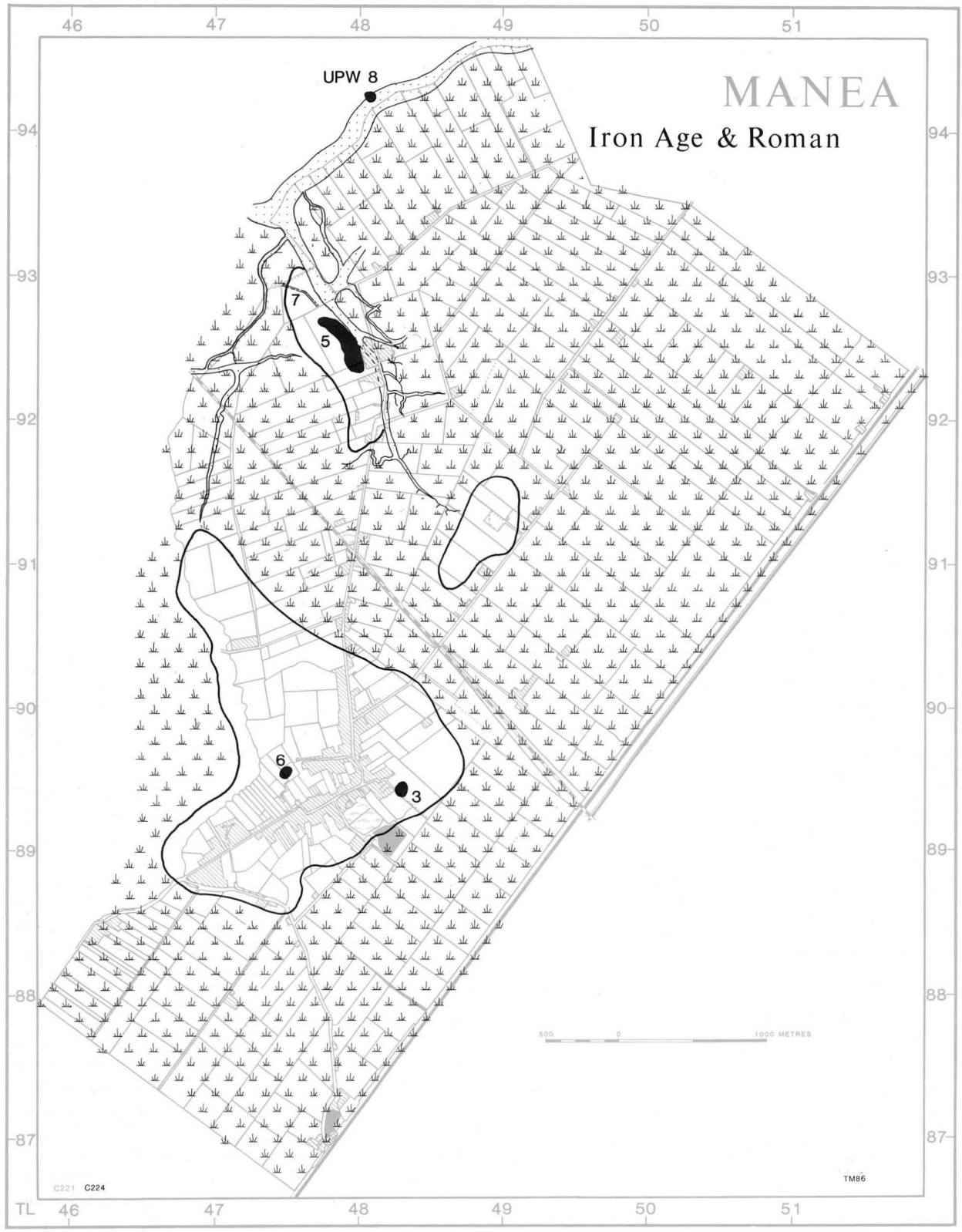


Figure 47 Iron Age and Roman landscape

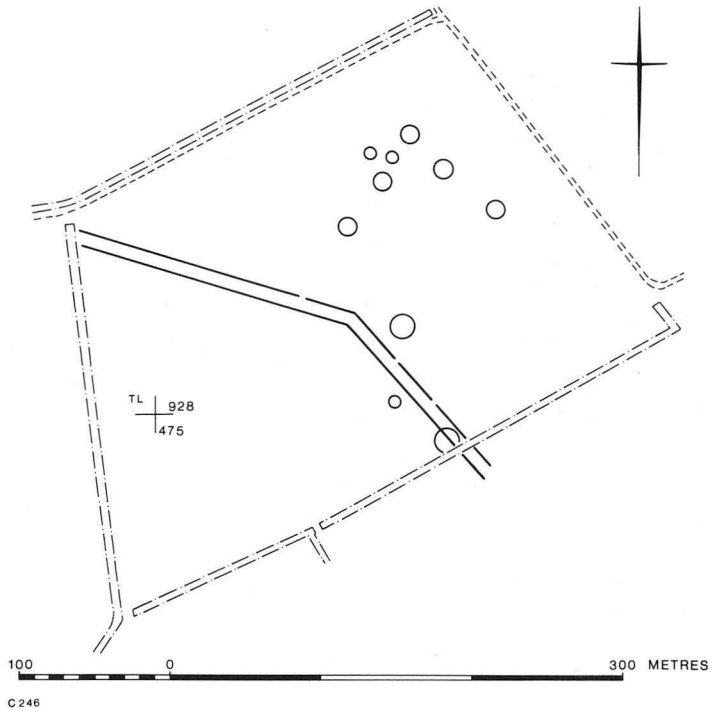


Figure 48 Cropmarks at site 7

The Roman landscape is difficult to reconstruct precisely. The fall in water table noted in the peat fen of southern Cambridgeshire (Phillips 1970, 120–1), would suggest a Manea fen-edge at about 1.8m. This would have caused the three islands shown on Figure 47 to increase in size slightly. The silt areas of Manea would have become dry and the Darcey Lode would have developed as a roddon. That most of the lode was firm ground is demonstrated by the existence of a Roman site on it in the parish of Upwell (site Upwell *8*). The roddon would still have had a small central tidal channel to allow the ebb and flow of brackish water to the salterns. Most of the fen would be peat, as in the Iron Age.

VII. Medieval and later

(Fig. 49)

No Saxon or early medieval material has been found at Manea: the island was probably uninhabited. The first reference to it is in 1177; the name means 'grassy island' (Reaney 1943, 235–6). The manorial descent followed that of Coveney which belonged to Ely monastery by 1060. In the 12th century it was granted to be held by the prior and convent for 5s. rent, and this was still being paid in 1541 when the overlordship was transferred to the Dean and Chapter of the new foundation. The manors of Coveney and Manea were held by the families of Lisle (1210–1379) and Scrope (1379–1563) as undertenants. In 1563 they were sold to Symeon Steward with whose family the property remained until 1649, then descending to the Robinson family until 1883, after which the estates were dispersed (Pugh 1953, 36–40).

The landscape was one of unbroken peat fen rising to the 3.6m contour at the edge. The Darcey Lode, a canal cut along the west and northern parish boundary has a varying nature. At the west it follows the medieval fen-edge; across Watering Hill the winding course presumably followed a natural channel in the shallow peat; on the north it follows the large Neolithic roddon that drained Wimblington Fen into the Old Croft River. A central channel, surviving from the Roman period, is still visible as a hollow. The lode was called *darsey* in 1437 and is probably the same as the *moneyeslode* (Manea lode) in 1251; Reaney suggests that it means 'wild animals' stream' (1943, 4 and 236).

Along the southern edge of Manea island ran another canal, the Oxlode, coming from Little Downham Hythe. These canals were part of the extensive network of Saxon and medieval communications; the water route to Downham from Kings Lynn was by way of the Old Croft River and so to the Darcey and Oxlodes around Manea. The area called Dams (Fig. 43) is now all skirtland and was probably a medieval intake from a shallow part of fen, maintained by a bank or dam. On the west it was protected by the bank of the Darcey Lode, and on the south by the rising ground of Manea island. A similar, but larger and more complicated area called Dams occurs at Coveney, where about 1,000 acres of shallow fen were similarly reclaimed. Byall fen takes its name from a lost and unidentified watercourse; an earlier form is Byhe (1251) for 'by the river' (Reaney 1943, 211). Perhaps the lost *ea* (river) was the Oxlode.

Hayward's survey of the fen in 1636, before drainage, shows that the fen south-east of the Oxlode was part of Byall fen, a total of 5,185 acres, at the north of the village was the Dams, 689 acres (the whole of the present Dams, Crane and Fen farm and the Waterings (Fig. 43)). All the eastern part of the parish was part of Estmore, a large tract of fen running from Coveney to Downham and Littleport, totalling 13,420 acres. There were various small enclosures around the village (CRO, R59/31/3/2 & 3). Cranmoor (lots) was *cranemoore* in 1473 (Reaney 1943, 236).

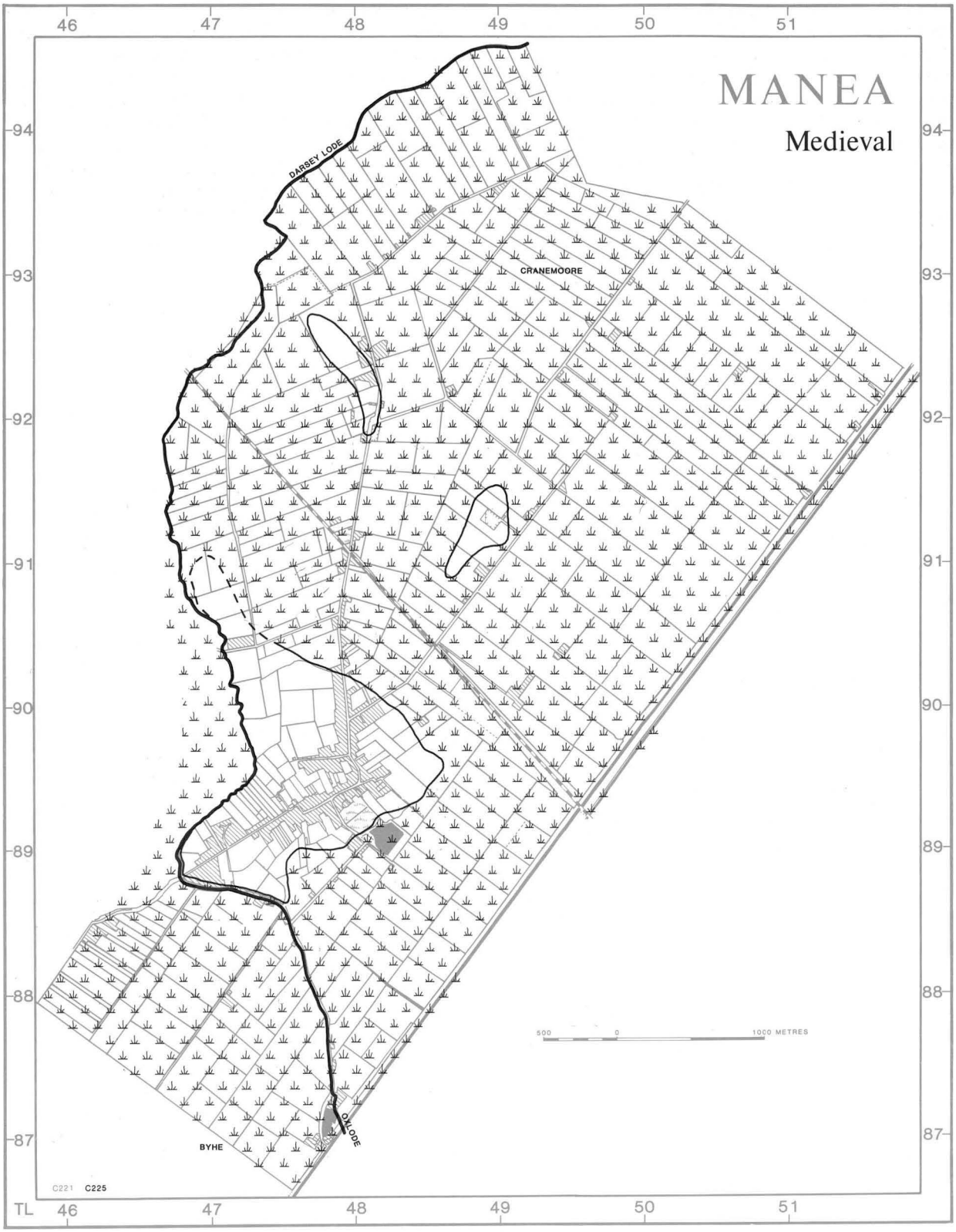


Figure 49 Medieval landscape

A limited amount of medieval strip cultivation survives in a few paddocks as ridge and furrow. In *c.* 1670 Enham or West field is recorded (CRO, R57/19/1), and at the time of enclosure, Daisy (Darcey) Lode Furlong is mentioned. There were two parliamentary enclosure acts; one in 1804 dealt with Fodder Fen and the Cow Common (CRO, 191/3–4), and another in 1834 enclosed the open fields. The post-medieval ditched fields and agriculture are well documented in court rolls and later surveys. A survey of the Rokeby estate in 1830 shows topographical names (CRO, R57/19/17), and a tithe map of 1848 states owners, field names, acreages and crops; almost the whole of the parish was arable by that date (CUL Maps, bb.53 (1).01.102). Manea Fifties was one of the allotments, which in all totalled 95,000 acres, given to the Duke of Bedford in return for his capital investment in the general fenland reclamation (CRO, 59/31/4/4 & 5). The Fifties was a 1,000 acre block of this divided into twenty 50–acre holdings. Downham Parts or Bishops Land was originally allotted to Downham.

13. Chatteris

I. Introduction
(Figs 50 and 51)

Chatteris is a large parish of 6,121 hectares (15,125 acres) and population of 6,330. It consists of a substantial island with a long extension beginning at Langwood (TL 41 85) and continuing to Honey Hill at the north (TL 43 88). Only a narrow gap at Curf Fen (TL 38 88) separates it from Doddington. There is mainly shallow fen at Westmoor (TL 38 87) and a long extension of fen ground at the south down to Holwood (TL 38 80). The south-western part of the parish boundary is the old county boundary with Huntingdonshire and was, in the prehistoric period, the major course of the River Ouse. More shallow fens lie to the south east and east, Horseley Fen (TL 40 83) and Langwood Fen (TL 43 85). To the north at Normoor and Benson's Fen are deeper fens (TL 41 88).

The small town contains a number of 17th- and 18th-century buildings as well as later accretions that include recent light industry. There are no ancient remains at the site of the nunnery.

The archaeology of Chatteris is dominated by the terrace of Horseley Fen which is rich in early prehistoric remains and was drowned before the Iron Age. All of the cropmarks in the region are therefore early and there is no confusion with Iron Age and later remains, although there are linear ice cracks that have been taken for archaeological remains.

II. Geology and Flandrian deposits

The underlying bedrock is Ampthill Clay. There are March Gravels at Honey Hill, but most of the Chatteris gravelly soils are later terrace gravels. Often these have an upper half metre mixed with clayey material (especially at Langwood) that make them unpreferred for early settlers, but at the south west in Horseley Fen the ground is gravelly. There is a small pocket of sandy glacial gravel at the southern end of Langwood (British Geological Survey, Sheet 173, Ely (1980)).

Peat formed early at the extremities of the parish only, and was soon covered by the first marine inundation that deposited marine clay during the early Bronze Age period (Fig. 53). The drainage system was dominated by the Ouse at the west and a wide watercourse coming out of Benson's Fen at the north. A clayey marine silt occurs along the large watercourses, and is mostly confined to the larger roddons in Benson's and Curf Fens (Fig. 52). A section across Curf Fen revealed that in the roddons the silts lie directly on marine clay without separation by peat, showing that the marine clay and clayey silt are of similar date, the difference in deposit reflecting different energy conditions. During the late Bronze Age there would have been a peat fen creeping up the gentle slopes of Chatteris island, and by the Iron Age peat covered an area approaching that of the Middle Ages, there being no further marine deposition at Chatteris. For the remainder of their history the Chatteris Fens were all peat, slowly rising to *c.* 3.5m until the 17th century.

A change in the course of the Ouse occurred at the south west, probably in the post-Roman period. A new channel, probably partly canalised, was formed from Earith to a point near Ferry Hill (TL 38 83), where it joined the old one. The river course now exists as a wide roddon of brownish alluvium. There is also a considerable spread of alluvium over the immediately adjacent land, covering the marine clay and masking the roddon system in the Holwood area. Colluvium occurs at the medieval fen-edge; its post-Roman date is demonstrated by the partial burial of a Roman site (*29*, see below) in the skirtland.

There is also a small amount of peat with shells of the same type that are found in deposits of marl, presumably contemporary with phases of mere formation elsewhere.

Since the 17th-century drainage most of the peat has wasted leaving extensive tracts of gravelly skirt soils.

The Soil Survey of England and Wales has mapped the area and studied the west of Chatteris in detail (Seale *et al.* 1976; Seale 1975b).

III. Neolithic
(Fig. 52)

A Palaeolithic axe is recorded by Baden Powell (1950). The greater part of the parish was dry land during the Neolithic phase, but most of the surface soils were slightly too heavy to attract settlement. Exception occurs in Horseley Fen and Ferry Burrows (TL 39 82) where there are three occupation sites, *35*, *37*, *38*, three other flint scatters *U1*, *U2*, *U4*, and an isolated hearth (*U3*).

Site *35* is a widespread flint scatter with a few fire-cracked flints; it also yielded a piece of a greenstone polished axe. Site *37* is partly buried by marine clay and yielded flints and large pieces of Neolithic pottery as well as bone and charcoal. It is a significant occupation site that runs under fen deposits and is likely to offer environmental evidence. On slightly higher ground is site *38* which has a dark area associated with occupation yielding flints (including large scrapers), pottery, burnt flint and a lot of burnt pebbles. It has a small subsite to the east lying by the side of the soilmark of a ditch which is presumed to be contemporary, partly because of the low altitude (it could not be later than Bronze Age) and mainly because another ditch forming an enclosure linking to the soilmark ditch is overlaid by the occupation remains. The main ditch continues as an earthwork into a pasture field to the south east; it is the only known earthwork Neolithic ditch in the whole of the Fenlands. Aerial photographic evidence reveals that the ditch is the eastern arm of a probable enclosure, only the southern section is missing.

East of site *38* is another enclosure linked to it by a single ditch, and to the south is a smaller trapezoid enclosure that probably relates to the main area, although the small enclosure interrupts the expected line of the large one (Gazetteer 2). A linear ditch occurring as a cropmark lies farther to the south, but it does not form part of site *38*; it may be Neolithic since one of its side branches cuts a barrow, site *33* (Fig. 53). The many right angle-branches may be parts of paddocks.

Areas *U1* and *U2* are both flint scatters; *U1* lies on a slight mound that is unlikely to be a barrow. *U2* is a

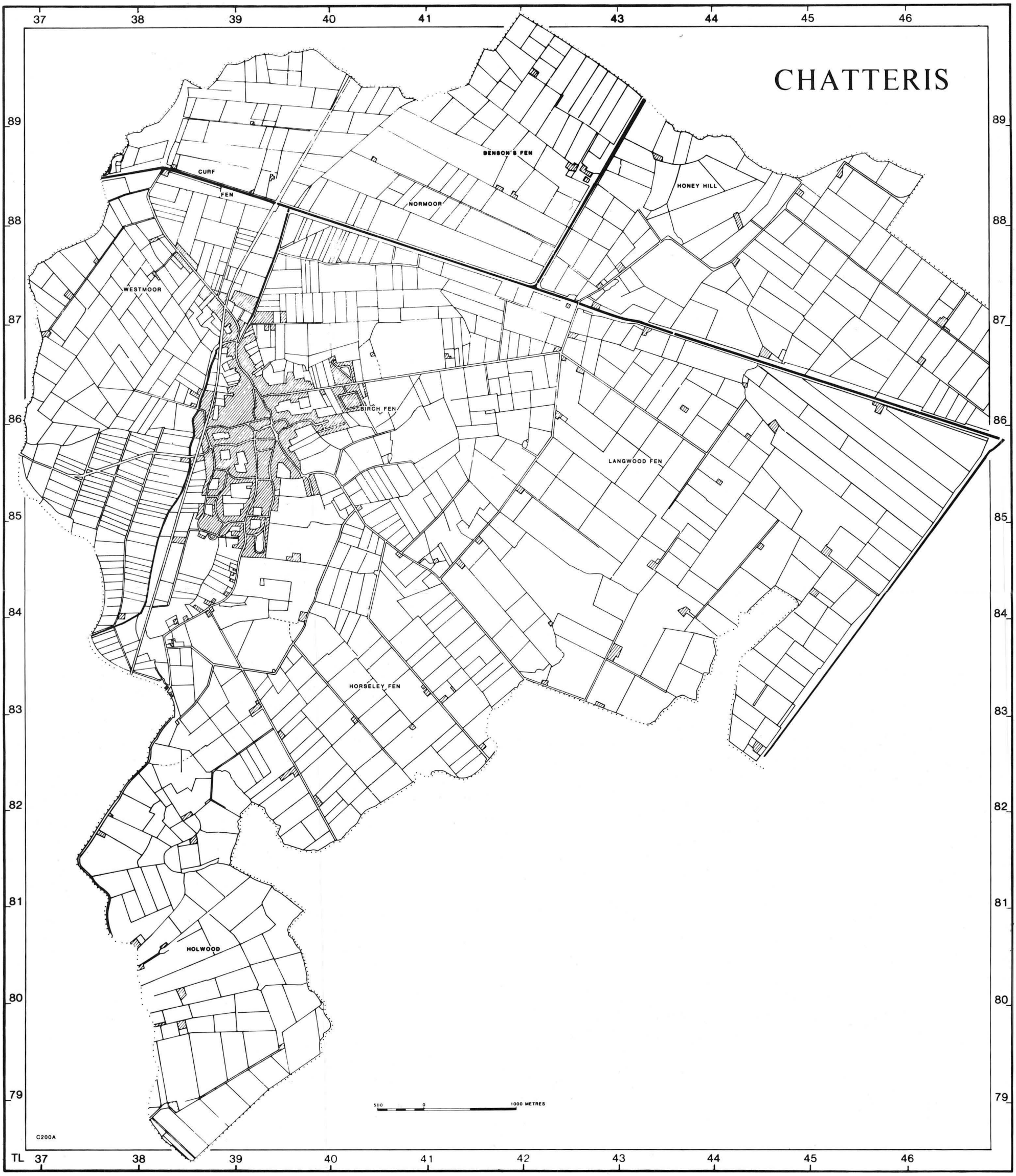


Figure 50 Modern landscape and topography

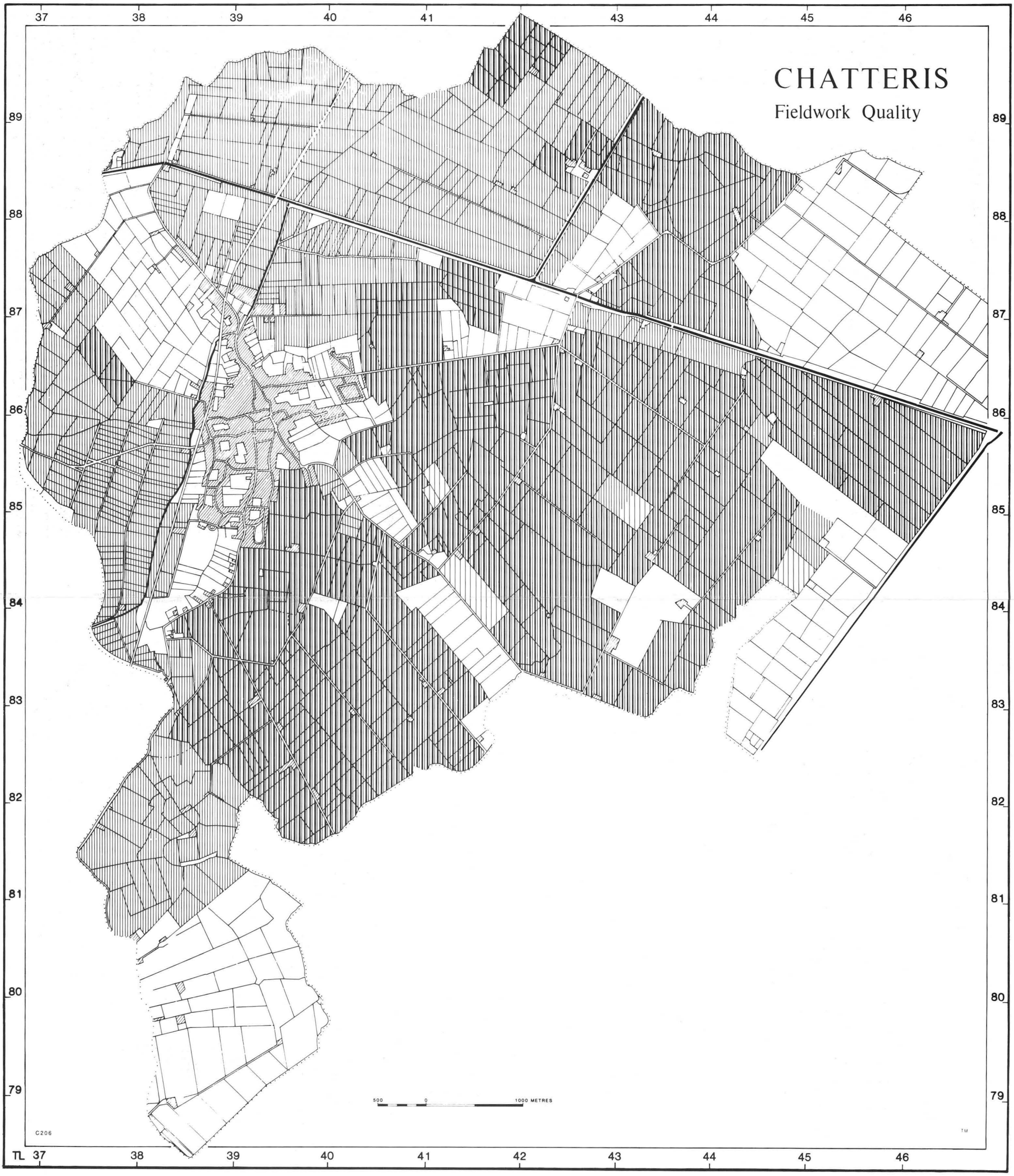


Figure 51 Quality and extent of fieldwork

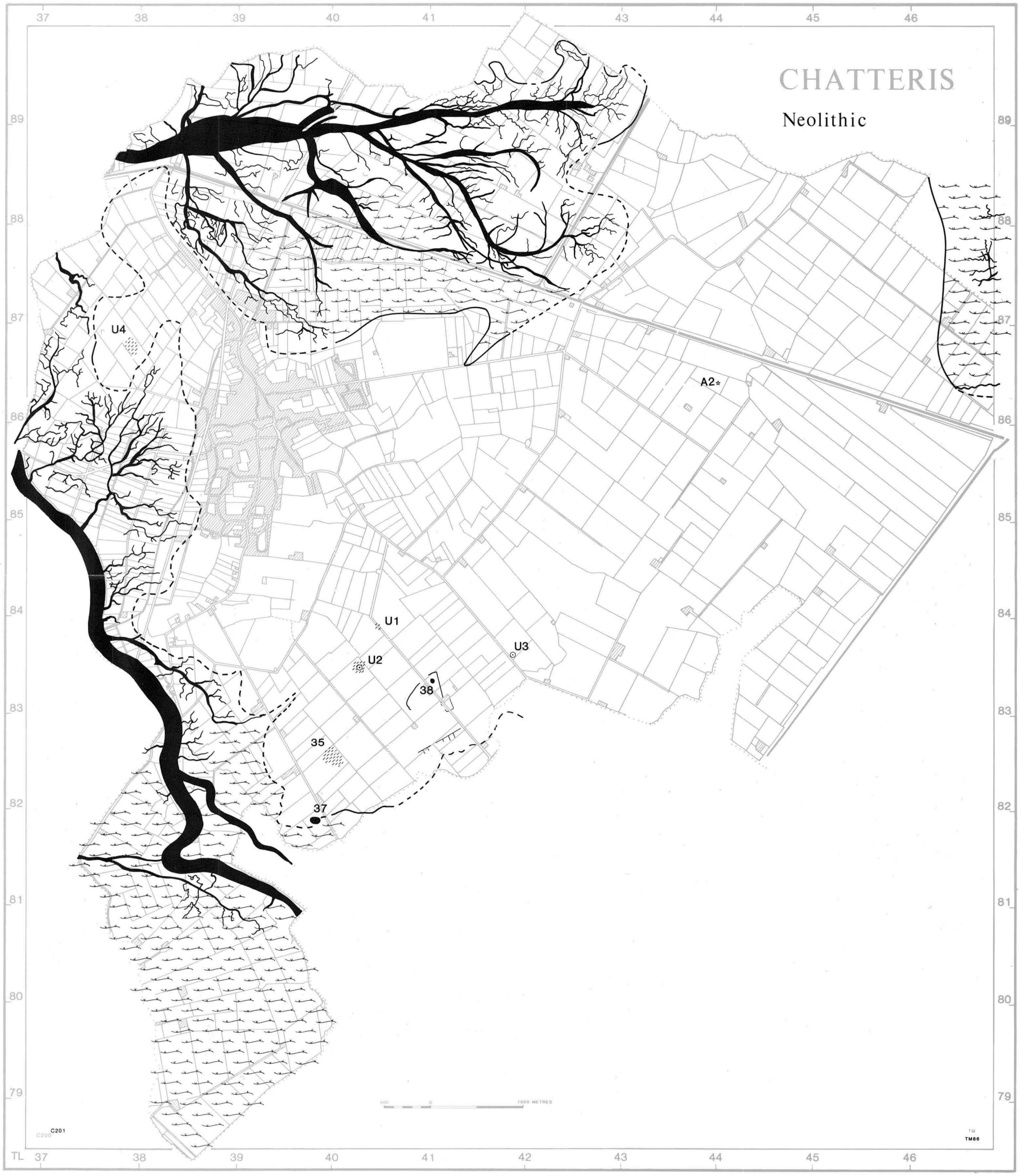


Figure 52 Neolithic landscape

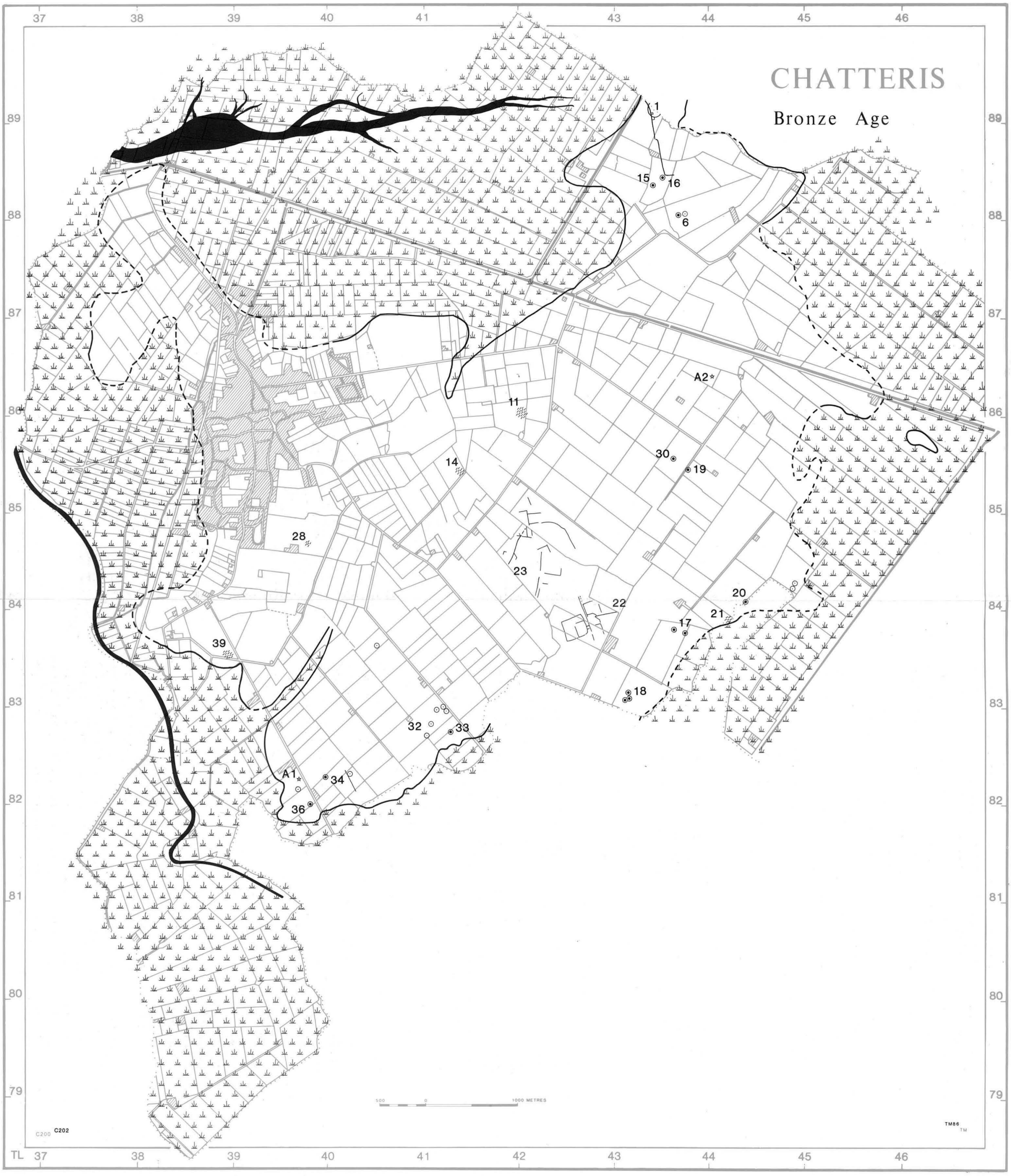


Figure 53 Bronze Age landscape

widespread scatter covering 2 hectares, and *U3* is an undated hearth with burnt stone and flint, fire-cracked flint and a few waste flakes. It is presumed to be Neolithic, and represents a background activity that would not be easily detected in land subjected to medieval and modern agriculture, being dispersed by the plough and unrecognizable. The comparatively short period of modern ploughing in the Fens allows such features to be identified.

Other possible Neolithic flints occur at West Moor, *U4*. The concentration of material is too thin to be classed as a normal 'site', the density of finds being 18 flints per hectare, no more than what has been classed as background in Horseley Fen (below). A polished greenstone axe has been found near to this site (see Gazetteer 1). Elsewhere, single finds of axes occur without any evidence from the field survey of there being any associated activity. In Langwood Fen 3 greenstone axes have been found, and others are reported in the general area (Clough and Green 1972; see Gazetteer 1 for unpublished museum items). Background flint concentrations and cropmarks unassociated with finds are described below in the description of Bronze Age remains; some of them may be Neolithic.

IV. Bronze Age

(Fig. 53)

Peat fen had encroached on all sides since the Neolithic period, covering all the marine clay in Benson's Fen. The only active watercourses that received marine deposits were the Ouse to the west and a wide creek at the north.

Chatteris is remarkable for the large quantity of Bronze Age metalwork that has been found over the last century, little of it precisely provenanced. It is difficult to assess the significance of the finds, but probably many of them came from cemeteries disturbed by agriculture. Where datable the finds belong to the Middle or Late Bronze Age, making it unlikely that they could have derived from barrows (in spite of Fowler's reference (as OS correspondent in 1949) to 'weapons' being found near the barrow field, site *17*, below). There could have been late cemeteries near the barrows. It is unlikely that the objects were 'votive' placed in the fen, since as far as can be ascertained the finds were made in areas that were dry land in the Bronze Age. (Salzman 1938, 278–9 and 310; Brown and Blin-Stoyle 1959, 188–2; Coles 1962, 156–90; Evans 1881, 250–1; Fox 1923, 64–5; see also Gazetteer 1 for unpublished museum items).

A dispersed barrow-field is the chief monument, occupying the eastern half of the island and comprised sites *6, 15–20, 32–4*, and *36*. There are 15 barrows in all, in various states of plough damage; some are near the fen edge and may have Bronze Age environmental evidence in the lower parts of the surrounding ditches. No alignments can be discerned and the general dispersion roughly near the fen edge is closely paralleled by the barrow fields at Thorney and Catswater (Hall 1987a, 60 and Fig. 43).

Three of the barrows lie on Honey Hill, sites *6*, *15* and *16*. Site *6* is a scheduled monument (SAM 24) and was described by Fox in 1923 as 'an undisturbed and perfectly circular ditched mound (a tumulus not a motte) in a field of old pasture. It is 100 feet in diameter'. The mound was still intact in 1950 but has now received serious plough damage. At the site visit in 1978 two small vessels were recovered from the plough soil, a decorated collared urn and a plain thumb pot, along with the rim of a third vessel, all lying together in the centre (Fig. 19, 6–8). There were several areas of burning and charcoal, but no other grave-goods or bones. The barrow was then 1.5m in height and was surrounded by a slightly hollow dark annulus representing the ditch. To the east of it is another small ring ditch visible on aerial photographs; it was not identified in 1978 nor mentioned by Fox who saw the field in earthwork condition.

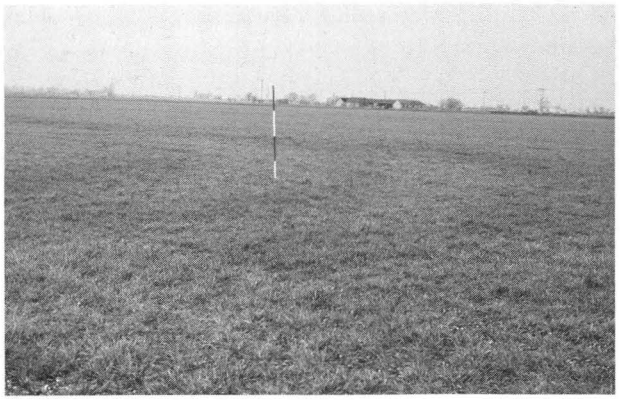
The pottery from site *6* has parallels with a complete collared urn cremation assemblage from a secondary context in a barrow at Hermitage farm, Haddenham (Haddenham site *3*, TL 4081 7495). The decorated rim from Chatteris (Fig. 19, 7) is similar to a complete jar 11.5cm high at Haddenham, and the small collared urn (Fig. 19, 6) is similar in size and shape to another vessel from Haddenham. The Haddenham small vessels were placed inside a large collared urn impressed with herringbone decoration (Longworth 1984, motif J5). Charcoal from pyre sweepings gave a date of 3360 ± 50BP (BM–2497) for the Haddenham cremation, consistent with the established date range for collared urn burials (C. Evans pers. comm. 1987).

Site *15* is a large mound still about 1.8m in height, and cut by a modern hedge on the north west. There were some flints in the vicinity, but not enough to suggest any kind of occupation; it is quite common to find a few flints in the mounds of Bronze Age barrows. Aerial photographs show a ring ditch inside a square ditch, suggesting that there is possibly a Roman temple on this site. Site *16* lies near to *15*, and is another large mound partly overlain by some of the Roman remains from site *8*. Many skeletons lying east to west in parallel rows without grave-goods were being ploughed out of the mound in 1978; they are not necessarily contemporary. Site *1* may have had some barrows, according to early aerial photographs, and there are two more on the Wimblington part of the Hill, making a fairly compact group.

Site *17* consists of two barrows on the fen edge now almost ploughed away and visible as light areas. Not far to the south west is site *18*, a group of three barrows; although a scheduled monument (SAM 42), the site has nearly disappeared; a few flints were discovered nearby. A small, badly damaged barrow was found at site *19*, and another at *20*. Near to the last was a low yellow mound with a faint soilmark of the surrounding ditch (site *30*); there were a few flints. At the south of Chatteris island were three more barrow sites, *33*, *34* and *36*, all appearing as light coloured soilmarks and low mounds; *33* yielded a few flints, *34* and *36* each had a dark mark of their surrounding ditch. North of 33 are cropmarks of four more ring ditches, none with mounds (Gazetteer 2). North of site *36* there are cropmarks of three more ring ditches and a small oblong enclosure that are probably related to it. None of these was visible on the ground and the features may never have had mounds over them. A polished flint knife (A1) also came from this same cropmark field.

Site *32* is a scheduled cropmark area (SAM 43). When visited three concentric circular ditches were visible in young corn, the outer diameters being 31.5, 40.5 and 46.5m (Plate IX). The area was quite flat and no longer looked like a ploughed-out barrow; this probably because the monument has been much disturbed. There was formerly a pond or pit dug into monument as well as a drove going through it, the dikes of which have been

Photo Alan Reynolds 1986, copyright Alan Reynolds.
Plate IX Chatteris site 32: (a) from the air and



(b) from the ground, TL 4102 8271

filled and the whole site levelled and ploughed. North of the site is a small ring ditch not visible on the ground. There are several other ring ditches recorded on air photographs additional to the barrows described, they are marked on Figure 53 (Appendix 1 and Gazetteer 2).

Sites that may be settlements were sparse, only *11*, *28* and *39* being likely. There were fired-cracked flints, waste flakes and a scraper along with rough pottery at *28*, and site *11* had flints, mostly waste flakes and fire-cracked material; *39* was the most interesting, with waste flakes, a scraper and fire-cracked flints, and runs underneath peat where preservation of wet remains may be good. Other sites producing some flints were *14*, *21*, *22*, and *23*; *21* yielding a single potsherd and waste flints, but no fire-cracked material; *22* had a thin background of flint lying on a cropmark area. The cropmarks form a droveway with large rectilinear enclosures either side. Site *23* has a similar flint background on cropmarks of mainly linear form with two rectilinear paddocks. To the south are more linear cropmarks possibly linking together sites *22* and *23*. Dating cannot be precise, but sometime in the prehistoric period is likely because of the low altitude, close to two metres.

The only site yielding pottery is *26*, where it is mixed with Iron Age and Roman material. The sherds are all late in the period; a piece of bronze axe also came from the site and evidence of bronze working, but to which period this should be assigned cannot be determined (CAR 111–5).

The collections of flints used for background measurements (see Table 3, below) sometimes coincided with cropmarks; two ring ditches and a linear ditch occurred in areas with background densities of 7 and 18.8 per hectare (Table 3.4 and 3.8). No soilmarks or earthworks were visible on the ground. Another ring ditch visible as a cropmark occurs at TL 405 836, also in association with background flints (Table 3.9 and Gazetteer 2).

Site *1* had three mounds, possibly barrows, indicated on the Ordnance Survey map. These are no longer visible, but the remains of an enclosure with traces of a rampart can be seen; a few flints laid around but not in sufficient quantity to suggest occupation. Aerial photographs reveal two small ring ditches and two small square enclosures, the last abutting on a long linear ditch linking to the area of the barrows sites *15* and *16* (Appendix 1, Gazetteer 2).

The evidence for Bronze Age occupation is not very great; all the sites that may be habitational are on higher ground, away from the barrows which are consistently near the fen edge. So, as found elsewhere in the fens, there seems to be a selective land use, domestic sites and burial areas not being intermixed, and with the barrows often lying on the poorer clay-and-gravel ground. The evidence is perhaps not as clear as Thorney and Isleham for markedly differing land-use; the Chatteris data are tempered by the variable background lithics near some of the barrows which may have been left by the occasional visits of graziers (see discussion of lithics, below).

Chatteris fens have been used to study the concentration of 'background lithics'. The technique was to collect flints from the 'non-site' areas when operating the usual 30m transect searches. Flints were collected and counted for each transect and the density worked out assuming that a swath 5m wide has been covered (*i.e.* 2.5m either side of the walker). The results for various fields in Horseley Fen are listed in Table 3.

Although these concentrations are lower than the lithic areas designated as 'sites' (*e.g.* 35, 38 and 39) they are very much higher than most regions of Chatteris. For instance the field in which lies site *U3* produced no flints at all, and Langwood Fen, on the clay-gravel soils yielded 0.57 flints per hectare between sites *17* and *19* (*c.* TL 43 84).

There is appreciable variation in the level of background flints; from near sites 34–5 (Table 3, above) they were concentrated at the north-east of the area and perhaps should be considered as an extension of site *35*. At the field centred TL 3992 8300 the flints occurred on the gravel only, ceasing at the boulder clay. It was not the case that all the lightest gravel soils had a background of flint; the next 2 fields at 200m and 400m south east of the last mentioned there were no flints at all on the gravel.

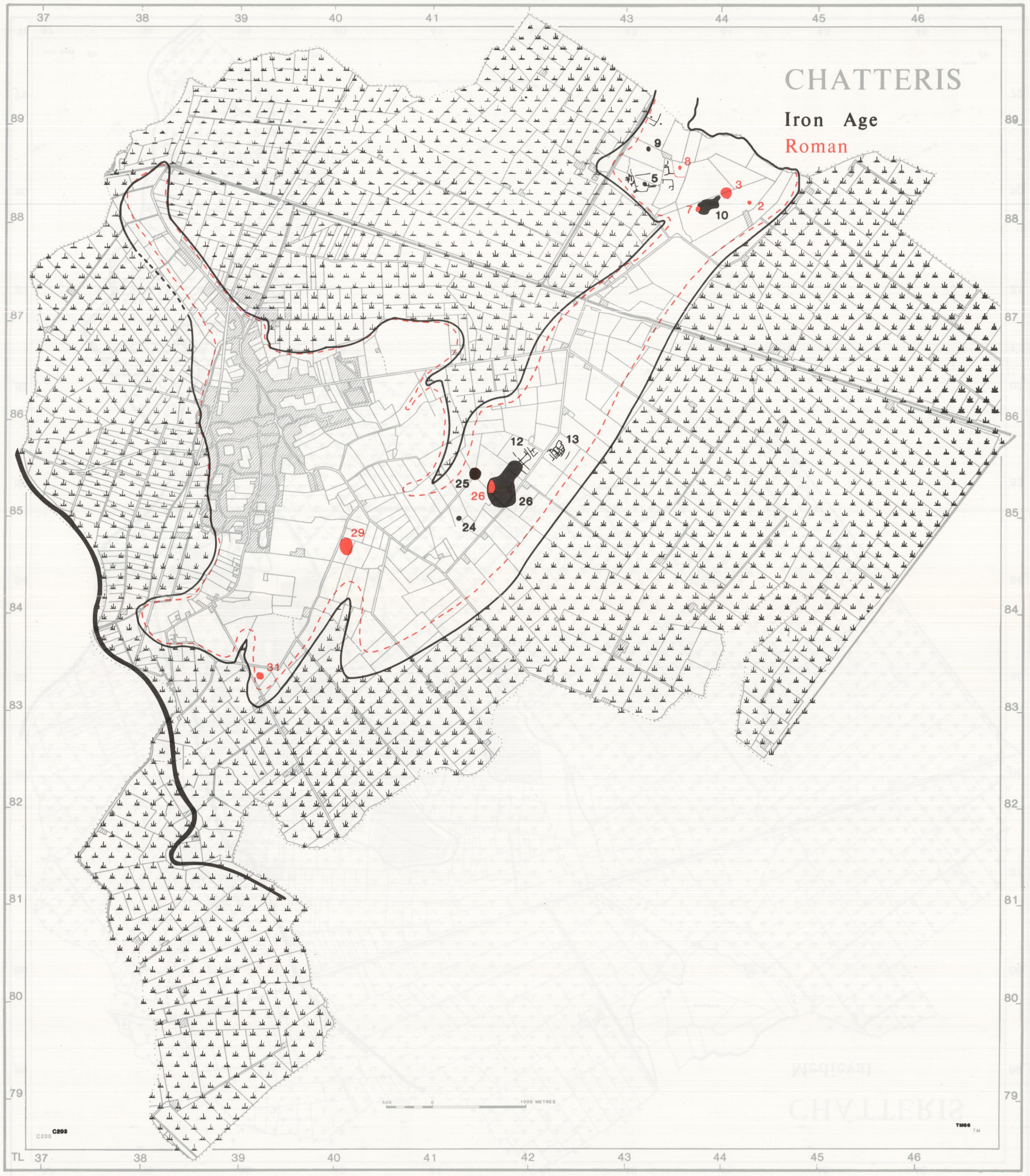


Figure 54 Iron Age and Roman landscape

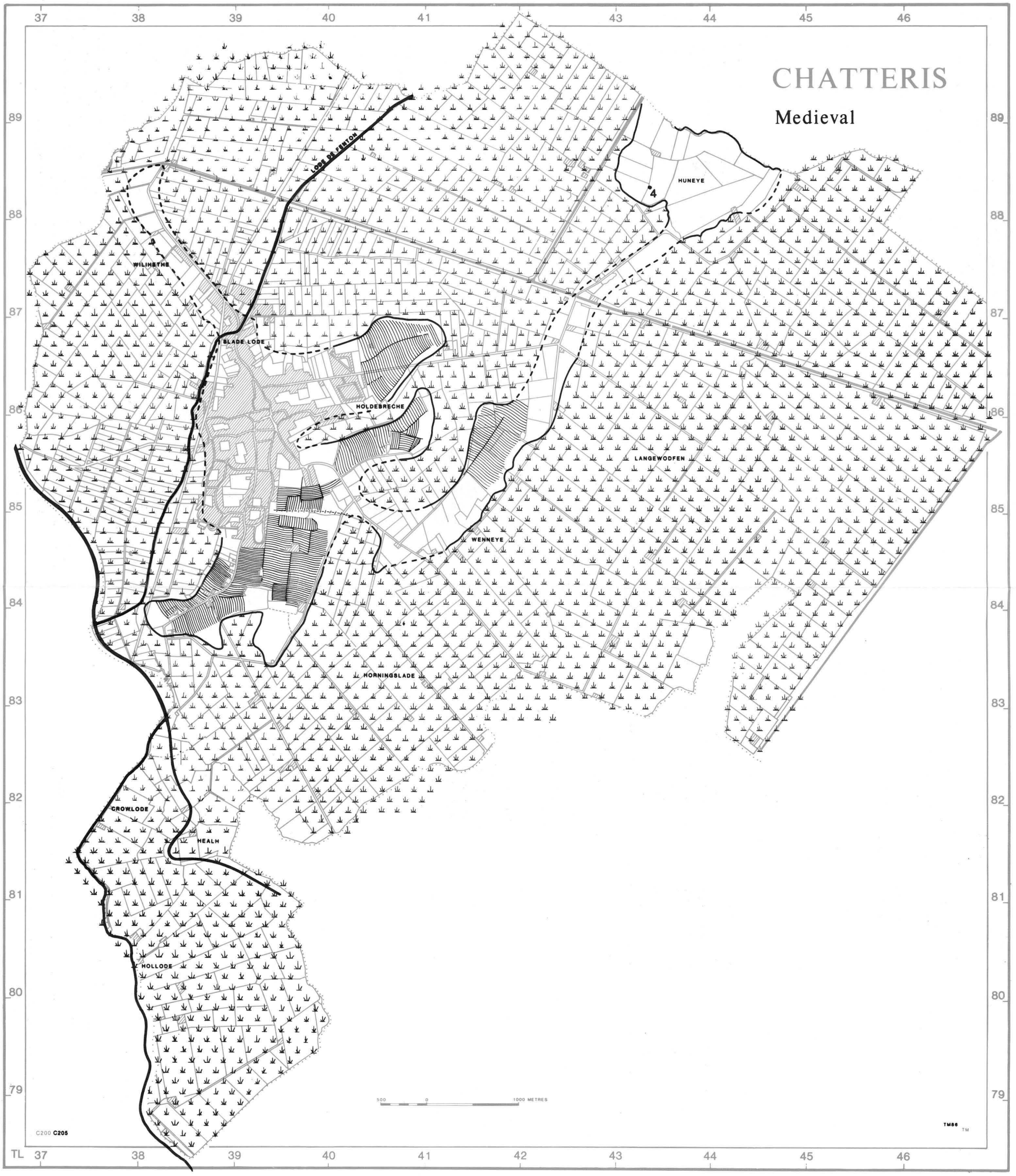


Figure 56 Medieval landscape

	Field/area centre	*Number of flints per hectare*	*Notes*
1	TL 43 85	7	in the whole kilometre square
2	TL 3950 8250	13.5	West of site 34
3	TL 4023 8273	14	
4	TL 4022 8221	7	Between sites 32 and 37
5	TL 4067 8225		with flint no.4 on a cropmark
6	TL 4047 8244	2.9	
7	TL 4064 8281	8.8	West of sites 32 and 35
8	TL 4011 8232	18.8	all at top of field, east of site 34, on cropmark
9	TL 4046 8370	18.6	South of U1 (Fig. 51), on cropmark
10	TL 4072 8355	25	East of U2 (Fig. 51)

Table 3 Background lithic concentrations at Chatteris

It is clear that there is some complex land-use in operation (although all the flint backgrounds may not be contemporary). More detailed systematic collection of material from the whole landscape, related to excavation of some of the identified 'sites' is probably required before further understanding can be achieved.

Several areas of cropmarks occur in Horseley Fen, mostly without any associated finds, many forming series of enclosures. Two possible 'ditches' were sectioned by modern dikes near TL 4043 8262, but since they do not link up with the other cropmark ditches it is possible that they were silt filled ice wedges; there were no finds. From the lie of the land as a terrace at about 1.5–1.8m OD these cropmarks are likely to be early prehistoric (being drowned in the Iron Age and later). They presumably relate to a grazing and animal-breeding activity. Some of the background flints referred to above may be from temporary 'camp sites' of herders and shepherds.

V. Iron Age

(Fig. 54)

Chatteris is remarkable for its Iron Age sites; there are six with occupation remains and two with cropmarks that are possibly Iron Age. The two largest sites are *26* and *10*, covering 10 and 2.5 hectares respectively. They both have intense occupation with dark areas, burnt stone, domestic bone and large quantities of sherds. Many early forms of pottery are present, some probably dating to the late Bronze Age.

Site *26*, at Langwood, is the largest Iron Age site in the Cambridgeshire Fens. It has had sherds and metalwork collected, none of the finds being closely provenanced, which makes it impossible to distinguish between sites *26* and others nearby. Although site *26* lies on a 'hill-top' location it does not appear to have a defensive ditch. Perhaps it was the chief site in the region until late in the period when a more remote and ramparted site was chosen at Stonea, where there was more protection from the adjacent fen. There are linear cropmarks and a small rectangular enclosure that is possibly a building within the main occupation area (Fig. 55).

Sites *5* and *9* lie at Honey Hill and are small; the first has slight traces of linear paddock boundaries to the north, visible on the ground, but more complete when seen as cropmarks. Not all the cropmarks are necessarily contemporary since they link up with the Roman sites *1* and *8*, which are also closely intermixed with earlier prehistoric features (see Gazetteer 1 and Figs 52 and 53 red). Iron Age sites *24* and *25*, both with the usual dark stain of occupation, are perhaps to be interpreted as outliers of the large site nearby (*26*); early sherds as well as Belgic and Roman occur in *25*, so that like *26* it had a long life, whereas site *24* is Iron Age only. Both sites *12* and *13* are cropmarks of linear features and enclosures without surface finds, *13* has linear soilmarks visible on the ground; they are assumed to relate to the site *26* complex, but just could be earlier prehistoric or Roman.

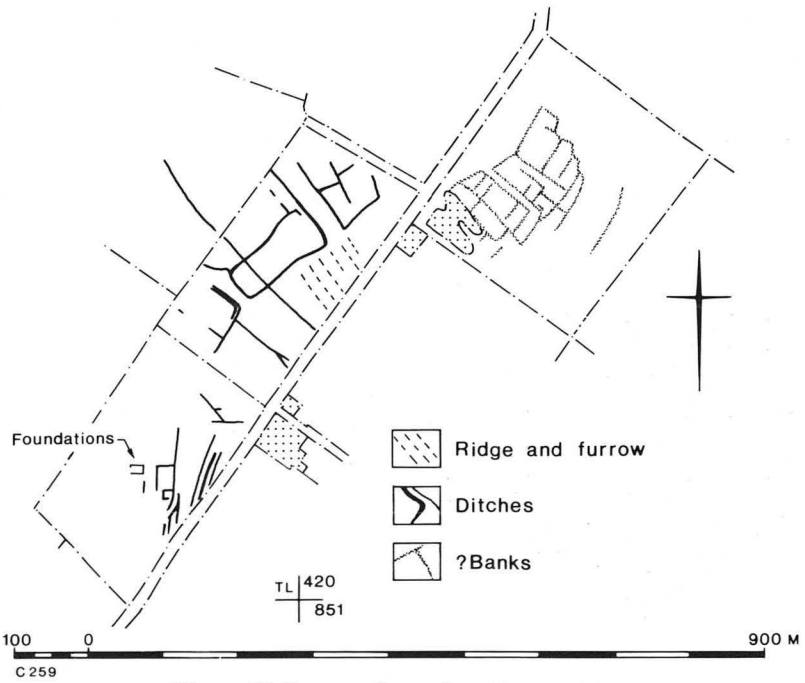


Figure 55 Cropmarks at sites 12, 13 and 26

VI. Roman

(Fig. 54)

Five sites occur at Honey Hill with site *3* as the richest centre. It has a wide area of dark stain with the usual occupation debris of bone, pieces of quern, and sherds ranging from early samian to late colour-coated wares. Sites *2* and *7* are probably outliers of this large site; *7* has late pottery sherds and there are paddock boundaries near, but they are most likely to relate to the Iron Age site *10*, nearby. Roman paddock boundaries are to be found at site *8*; when surveyed in 1978 they were quite clear, the area being ploughed only since 1972. A single house site with large sherds of samian, colour-coated and other wares occurred but the remainder of the enclosures were full of dark soil with little domestic debris, suggesting use as animal breeding paddocks. The enclosure boundaries consisted of ditches and low banks, now eroding to leave light coloured soilmarks. The barrow, site *15*, that has a square cropmark ditch around it may be a Roman temple, as already mentioned.

Sites *25* and *26* have already been mentioned under the Iron Age; both continued into the Roman period, but not on so large a scale. They have sherds from the late Roman period and so are sites with a very long history, and were probably important in the region. Sites *12* and *13*, to the north east of *26*, have also been mentioned under the Iron Age, but some of the cropmarks may be Roman. Site *29*, to the south west lies on boulder clay skirt, and also has a long period of occupation as there are sherds of Late Iron Age (Belgic) through to colour-coated wares. The site is partly buried by colluvium and may have wet remains preserved. There was the usual dark occupational soil stain. A smaller late Roman area occurs at site *31*.

Chatteris appears to have been an important area in the Roman period, with so many large sites. It was well away from the saltern industry and the economy was most likely based on stock raising.

VII. Saxon and medieval

(Fig. 56)

No Saxon remains were discovered during the field survey. The only medieval site away from the town was at Honey Hill, site *4*. There is a dark occupation area with quantities of 13th- and 14th-century sherds as well as later material; some of the debris spreads on to the nearby barrow, site *15*. This is possibly the location of a 'manor' mentioned in the 16th century as belonging to the Wendy family (Pugh 1953, 105). Site *5* also close to *4*, yielded a few medieval sherds.

The main Chatteris island, but not Honey Hill, was subjected to Midland-type strip cultivation forming ridge-and furrow. Most of it is now ploughed away, but can be reconstructed from the linear soil banks at furlong boundaries; the plan is shown on Figure 55. Birch Fen, formerly *holdebreche*, 1240, refers to the peninsulas here newly broken or 'breached' for arable (Reaney 1943, 248).

Water communications to March and Elm were via Fenton Lode (*lode de Fenton* in 1285; Hart and Lyons 1893, 57–8) and also *sladelode* (13th century, Reaney 1943, 251); the West Water at the county boundary was still navigable according to the name *Hollode* in 1240 (now Holwood, Reaney 1943, 248). The section of river immediately north of it was called *crowlode* (now Crollode, TL 37 81, Hart and Lyons 1884, 427–9). The use of these lode names shows that the West Water had been canalised along this length, and probably farther. The Crollode section is fairly straight, but Holwood is crooked, so that presumably some natural course or contour was used in the latter. The wide spread of alluvium either side of the southern section of the West Water proves that this was a major outlet of water in the Middle Ages. Phillips suggested a Roman date for the canalisation (Phillips 1970, 189), which cannot be disproved from surface evidence, although straighter lengths of cutting would by expected by comparison with the Roman canals at March and Cottenham.

At Chatteris there was a medieval landing place or hithe at TL 38 87, *wilihethe* in 1251, now recalled in Willey Farm. The hithe was probably on Chatteris island at the *slade lode*. The early name of the fen to the south was *oldhalf* (1300) from healh, a nook or corner, where the Hammonds Ea bends. *Langewodefen* is mentioned in 1251 and Horseley or Horselode Fen as *horningslade* in 1240. It is probably a personal name relating to a canal or watercourse no longer obvious. Horseway (TL 42 86) was *horsehythe* in 1238, being a landing stage for horses or a muddy landing place (Reaney 1943, 249). Honey Hill was *Huneye* in 1229, probably the 'island' belonging to Huna. There was some wood here and probably elsewhere on the island as well as Langwood.

Chatteris was first recorded in 974 (Reaney 1943, 247). Reaney notes that one meaning of the name is 'hill fort' from the Welsh *cader*; this must be a possibility in view of the large Iron Age and Roman sites present. There are no visible rampart-type defences, but the island site would have its natural fen protection. The other interpretation of the name, preferred by Reaney, is 'wood stream' from British *ceatta*, 'wood', and Old English *ric*, 'stream'. This fits the topography, the stream being the West Water and the medieval names attest to the island being wooded.

At the *Domesday Survey* in 1086 there were two main manors, one belonging to Ramsey Abbey and one to Ely. Ramsey retained its manor until the Dissolution, although in 1391 Ely was recognized as overlord. A survey of *c.* 1240 describes the property of the manor in detail. Meadow is listed at many places including *wenneye* (Wenny TL 41 84), *wyliethe*, *delfe*, *crowlode*, *hollode* and at *estre at hunneye*. There was also wood at Honey Hill. A very full description of each tenant's holding and the work-service dues is given (Hart and Lyons 1884, 429–7).

After the Dissolution of the monasteries the manorial property was sold to Thomas Wendy in 1558. Later members of the family were dealing with Honey Hill separately until it passed to the Peytons of Doddington and descended with their other property. The rest of this manor was dispersed through various hands.

The Ely holding at Chatteris in 1086 was afterwards held by the nuns of Chatteris Abbey until the Dissolution. This Abbey was founded in about 1010 by the Saxon royal family connected with the foundation of Ramsey Abbey. However, Chatteris Abbey was given to Ely by Henry I, and was thereafter subordinate to it. The possessions of the nunnery before *Domesday* were not great; they and later acquisitions are described in a cartulary (Salzman 1948, 220–3). After the Dissolution the nunnery land was acquired by the Rowe family. The descent of the property, along with other late small manors is outlined by Pugh (1953, 104–6).

The nunnery, dedicated to St Mary, (site *40*) has no visible standing remains. It stood in Park Street where some architectural fragments have been discovered.

16. Summary

I. Introduction

This chapter summarises the details of the parishes previously discussed to give a regional view. Like the main text the data are taken by period and presented on a series of plans (Figs 57–61). Particular attention is paid to those sites that are rare, well preserved, or are likely to have water-logged environmental remains.

The plans show a changing Fenland landscape, the earliest reconstruction being the marine conditions of the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period (depending on the parish), when an extensive salt marsh was drained by tidal creeks and channels. Thereafter marine episodes had little direct effect on the greater part of the region, most of it remaining as peat fen. The late marine phase that occurred in the Iron Age is represented by deposits in the north of the area. There was a change of landscape caused at this time as the marine deposits and the surrounding peat surrounding them covered prehistoric dry land at the north east. In the west there was less change in the area of peat fen because the fen edge lies at the foot of a relatively steep scarp.

II. Early Prehistoric

(Fig. 57)

Figure 57 shows the early marine landscape salt marsh with sites (flint scatters) of both the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods; no individual artefacts have been plotted. Some of the sites produced flints of both periods, details of which may be found in the parish essays, although only the dominant phase is shown on the plan. The western fen edge has no sites at all, emphasising that Oxford Clay and boulder clay Till were undesirable to early settlers.

There are only four Mesolithic sites, all lying on pockets of sand or sandy gravel at the fen edge; two of them have waterlogged potential since they are partially buried by peat and marine clay. The Somersham site in the south is the most extensive of the period known in the county. It is not possible to reconstruct the fen accurately during the Mesolithic period because of burial by later deposits. Most likely there was a limited peat fen centring on the Ouse, with much more dry land than shown on Figure 57. It is also possible that there are more lithic sites buried by the fen. During the later Mesolithic period peat would have spread west into the Wood Walton and Holme basin which lies as low as -5m. However on the east, Wimblington Fen would have still been dry, so that Doddington, Manea and Chatteris would have been joined to the Isle of Ely, itself attached to the Cambridgeshire mainland at the south.

Neolithic sites are likewise fairly sparse, eleven being marked on the plan. They, too, occur on gravelly pockets that outcrop amongst the extensive clay deposits in the terrain. None of the sites is now prolific in flints except that at Ramsey Heights, many of them probably suffering from the extensive collection made by previous fieldworkers. A few of the sites are partly buried by fen deposits and so have interest for survival of undisturbed and wet remains.

The most interesting prehistoric area is the south eastern part of Chatteris, where the lie of the land presented a gravelly terrace which was dry until the Iron Age, so that early remains were not affected by later activity. A large Neolithic 'enclosure' (not complete on all sides), partly surviving as an earthwork, has domestic occupation material on the surface. There are other undated cropmarks and a variable background of flints in some fields that coincide with cropmarks. The whole area warrants further detailed work.

The western prehistoric sites at Wood Walton and nearby are of some interest because of the early field work of Garrood. He diligently collected artefacts over a wide area for many years, and the finds of axes and other flints give the impression that the whole region was important in the prehistoric period. The present survey has shown that there are only three or four sites in the Wood Walton Fen area that could have been domestic, producing flints and pottery, there being no other prehistoric sites in the region. The axes discovered prove to be single chance finds. These sites most probably, therefore, were the source of the widespread artefact scatter, and the whole area represents the land unit that was associated with them. There is little likelihood of many sites later than the Mesolithic period being buried by fen deposits because most of the land lies too low.

The Fen landscape during the saltmarsh stage was dominated by the wide channel of the Ouse entering from Earith at the south and continuing northwards on the west of Doddington and March. Tributaries joined it from adjacent embayments at Curf Fen, Chatteris, on the east and from the large basin north of Ramsey Heights on the west. To the far east is a small part of the salt marsh based on the major eastern fen embayment, draining the rivers Cam, Snail and Lark. This received marine flooding in the Late Neolithic period while the west was still peat covered and the the Early Bronze Age fen conditions were reversed, the east being peat covered.

Figure 57 shows all the pre-Bronze Age sites; in the Neolithic period only the small eastern part would have been salt marsh with roddons, all the remainder being peat (the Figure was drawn before the accurate dating of the deposits was determined).

III. Bronze Age

(Fig. 58)

There was more archaeological activity during this period. A total of 17 lithic sites that probably represent settlement was discovered, none being very prolific in finds. Few of them were near enough to the fen edge to offer very much preserved, contemporary wet organic remains, and all were on gravelly outcrops. Late Bronze Age sites have been identified by excavation at Stanground and Stonea and a possible urnfield occurs at Elsie Island in Ramsey. These last three sites have all been discovered by removal of soil and could not have been identified by surface field survey.

Barrows are widespread in the region, there being four groups in all; two small ones occurring at Farcet (2) and Ramsey (7), and larger dispersed fields lying at Chatteris (14) and Manea-Stonea island (7). Figure 58 shows

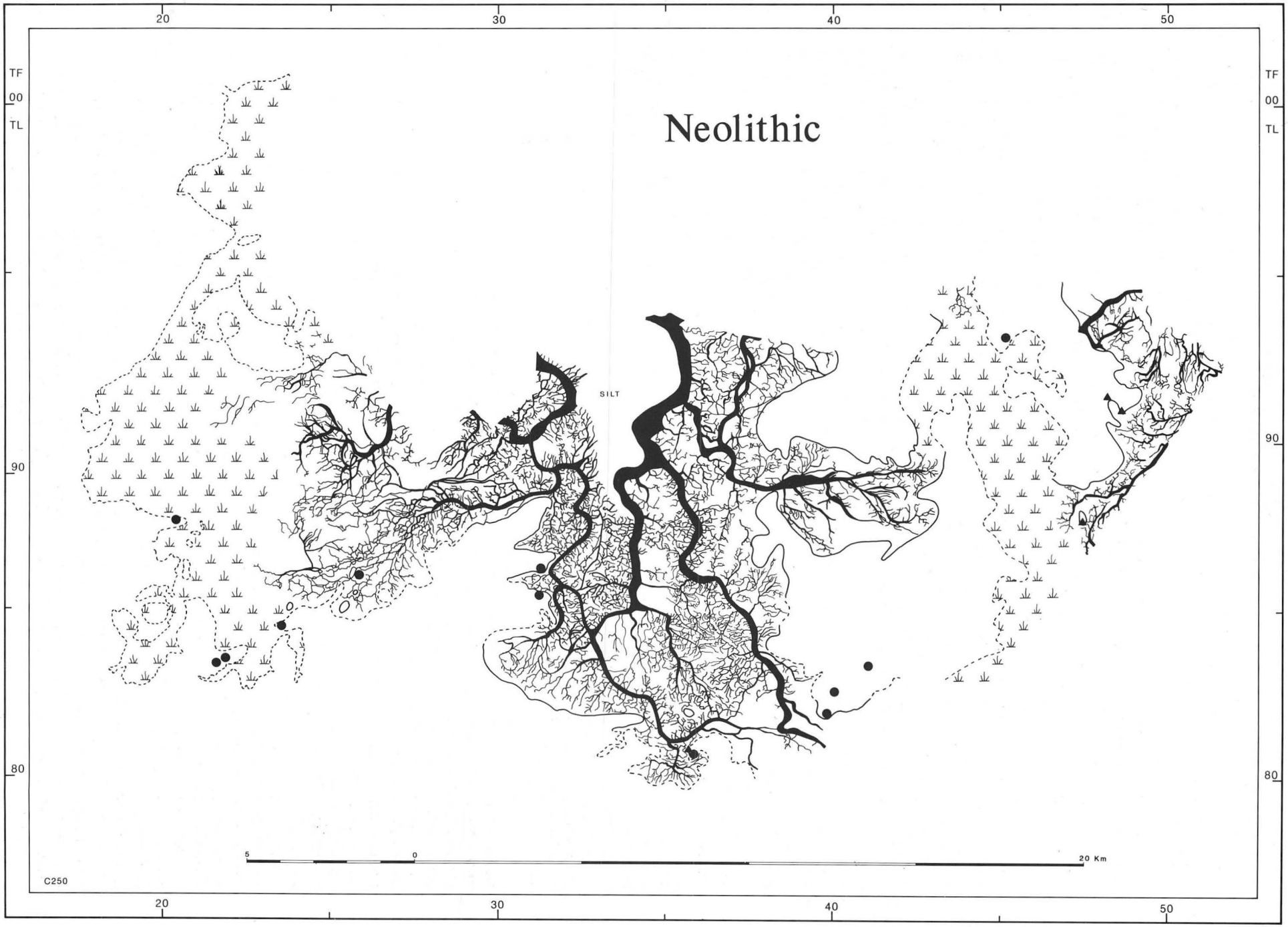


Figure 57 Regional plan of Neolithic fen

the barrow groups by open-circle symbols, each individual barrow not being indicated if there is a compact group. The barrows were not always placed on the lightest gravels, which seem to have been preferentially used for settlement, as at Ramsey. In some cases barrows were located on mixed clayey gravels. There are no significant alignments of the monuments, but they tend to be sited near the fen edge, as is particularly evident at Chatteris, and paralleled by the barrowfield at Thorney (Hall 1987a, 60).

About half of the monuments are new discoveries; only two are scheduled monuments (both badly eroded) and one, at Manea has been excavated (and destroyed) but not published. All of them are subject to ploughing, but in spite of this several still have significant mounds that may well preserve worthwhile remains (at Ramsey and Chatteris). Several of the barrows lie close to the fen edge where there may be contemporary environmental evidence. The barrows south east of Chatteris lie on the same terrace as the Neolithic remains and are not disturbed by the activities of later periods (except modern ploughing).

The large amount of Bronze Age metalwork recorded from Chatteris over the last century more probably derives from cemeteries lying amongst the barrows. The best evidence supporting this is the note made by Fowler in 1949 that one of the modern fields containing barrows was known by old people as the 'battleground' because of the large number of bones and weapons discovered. Since the metalwork is middle or late in the Bronze Age it is unlikely that it came from the barrows themselves. As far as can be ascertained from the poor provenance of the metalwork most of it occurred on what was dry land in the Bronze Age, so that an interpretation of the finds as 'votive' deposits in the fen is unconvincing.

The relationship between settlement and burial areas fits the regional pattern described previously, the extremes being the burial areas of Thorney and Borough fen contrasting with the lithics of the Isleham region (Hall 1987b). The same principle seems to working on a local scale in the area of Figure 57, with very few of the lithic sites being close to the barrows and the barrows themselves yielding at most a few flints and no occupation remains of pottery, burnt pebbles or burnt crizzled (calcined) flint.

The fen was dominated by the River Ouse and its tributaries in the early part of the period, clay being deposited in most of the area (as shown in the centre part of Fig. 57) with silty deposits at Benwick and Doddington with smaller quantities in the major adjacent creeks (Fig. 58). There is not likely to be a break between these phases of deposition, Figure 58 showing merely a later stage of that represented by Figure 57. In the middle and late phases of the Bronze Age the water table had risen and the whole area was covered by peat causing Chatteris and Stonea/Manea to become became islands for the first time.

IV. Iron Age

(Fig. 59)

The settlement pattern revealed by Figure 59 shows a marked skewing to the islands of the east, not a single Iron Age site being discovered in the west of the region. This reflects partially that not much of the adjacent upland was surveyed in the west, because slightly farther away at Broughton and Abbots Ripton there was abundant Iron Age occupation of the boulder clay Till. Most of the fen edge surveyed consists of Oxford Clay, and Figure 59 is a clear demonstration that, as with previous periods, it was not preferred for settlement.

The islands of Chatteris, Wimblington, Stonea and Manea produced many Iron Age sites, all of them except the ringwork 'Stonea Camp' being new discoveries. Most of the sites lie on clay soil and offer few cropmarks, the surface evidence of sherds and other occupation remains being the only indication of their existence. The full range of the Iron Age is represented, very early sherds occurring at the two large Chatteris sites, and late (Belgic) sherds occurring elsewhere, as well as Icenian coins from Stonea Camp and March. It is clear that the region was of importance in the Iron Age, with the two large Chatteris sites being the dominant ones early on. Neither appears to have had defensive ditches, the fen probably being considered sufficient a protection. The Stonea ringwork is late and may represent a central site being removed from Chatteris to a more defensible location at the corner of a small island surrounded by salt marsh.

The fen landscape consisted of an extensive peat, reaching to a higher watertable than hitherto, decreasing the size of the fen islands. There was salt marsh activity only at the north east. Here the marsh had encroached over land previously dry, to split off Manea island from Stonea. Water communication with the coast would have been possible from sites near the salt marsh, which may be another reason for creation of a regional centre to Stonea Camp, probably replacing the Chatteris sites.

V. Roman

(Fig. 60)

Roman settlement was more extensive than that of the Iron Age with continued utilisation of clay soils. There was settlement of the western fen edge, but all of the sites lie on boulder clay Till, and none on the Oxford Clay. The western sites are small and all appear to have been rural except Stanground which was an industrial area producing pottery. The western portion of the Fen Causeway which crossed the Fens via March ran along the northern boundary of Stanground. Much of its earliest stage (north of the area of Figure 60) began as a canal which became silted up and later used as a road (for discussion see Hall 1987a, 41).

On the eastern islands, settlement was very dense (some continuing from the Iron Age), and may have been administered in the second century from the large site at Stonea Grange. The settlement seems to have been intended as a small, planned site with some urban like character dominated by a large stone building. There were insulae with timber buildings and a grid of streets, and also a nearby temple complex. There was water transport by a short canal running westwards to Wimblington island, and another canal north of Stonea island linked the Grange settlement with the other important March sites (Fig. 41 and see Hall 1987a, 57–8). The large stone building was demolished in the early 3rd century and the settlement seems to have reverted to an agricultural community. The canals had become blocked with silt by this time, which may have contributed to the failure of Stonea to receive proper urban status.

Stonea island also had sites producing salt by evaporating brackish water that backed up tidal streams. The

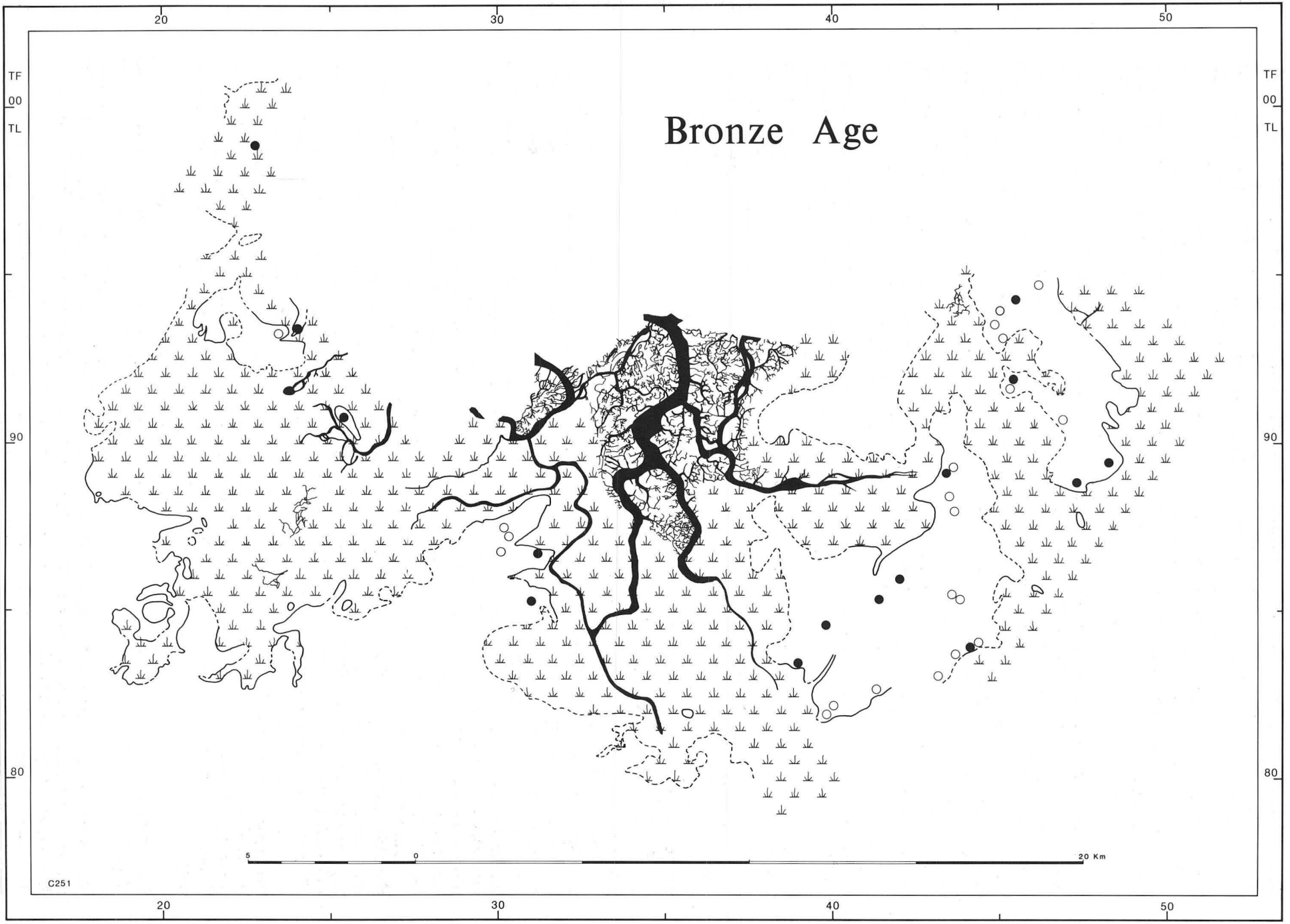


Figure 58 Regional plan of Bronze Age fen

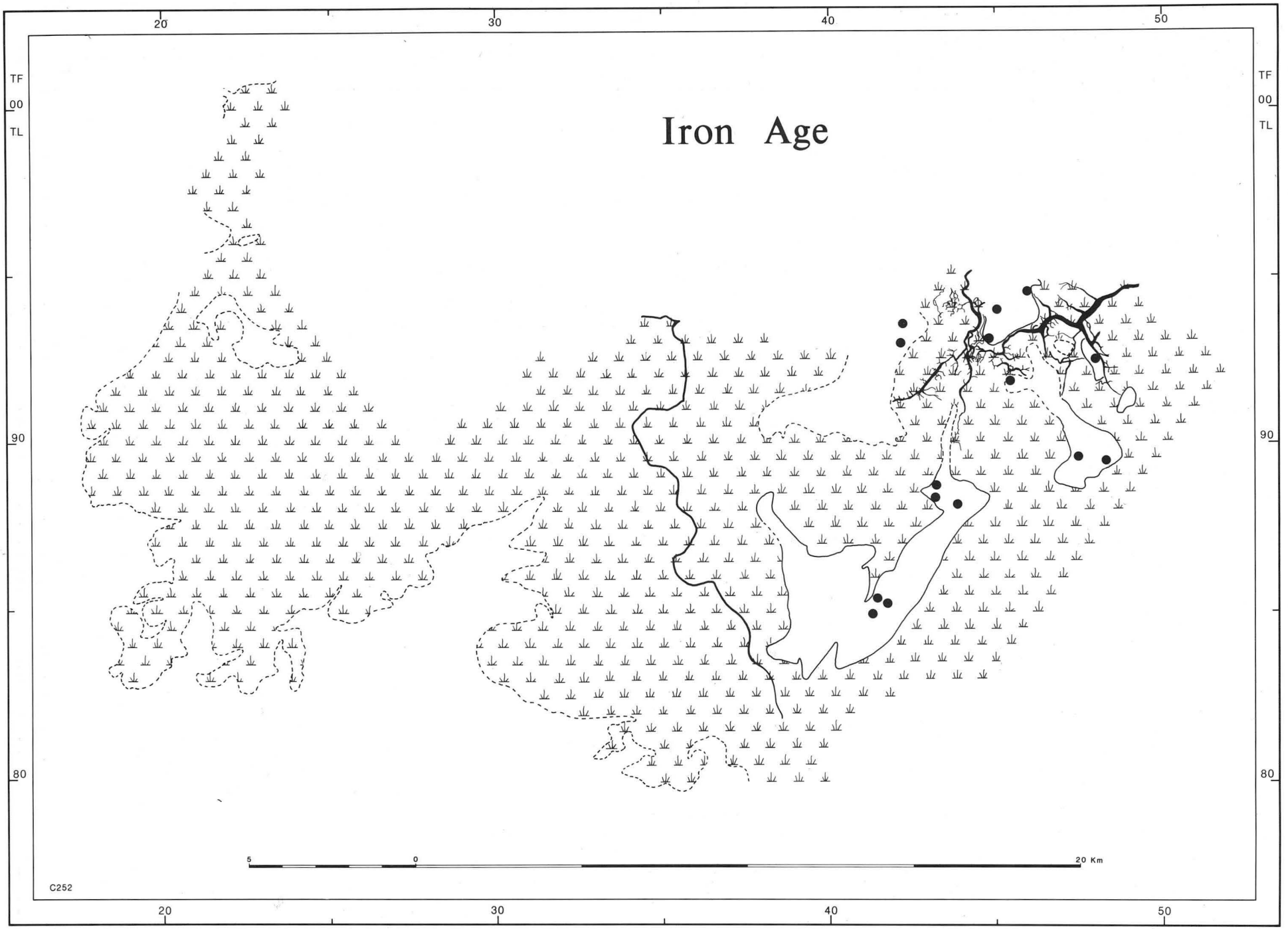


Figure 59 Regional plan of Iron Age fen

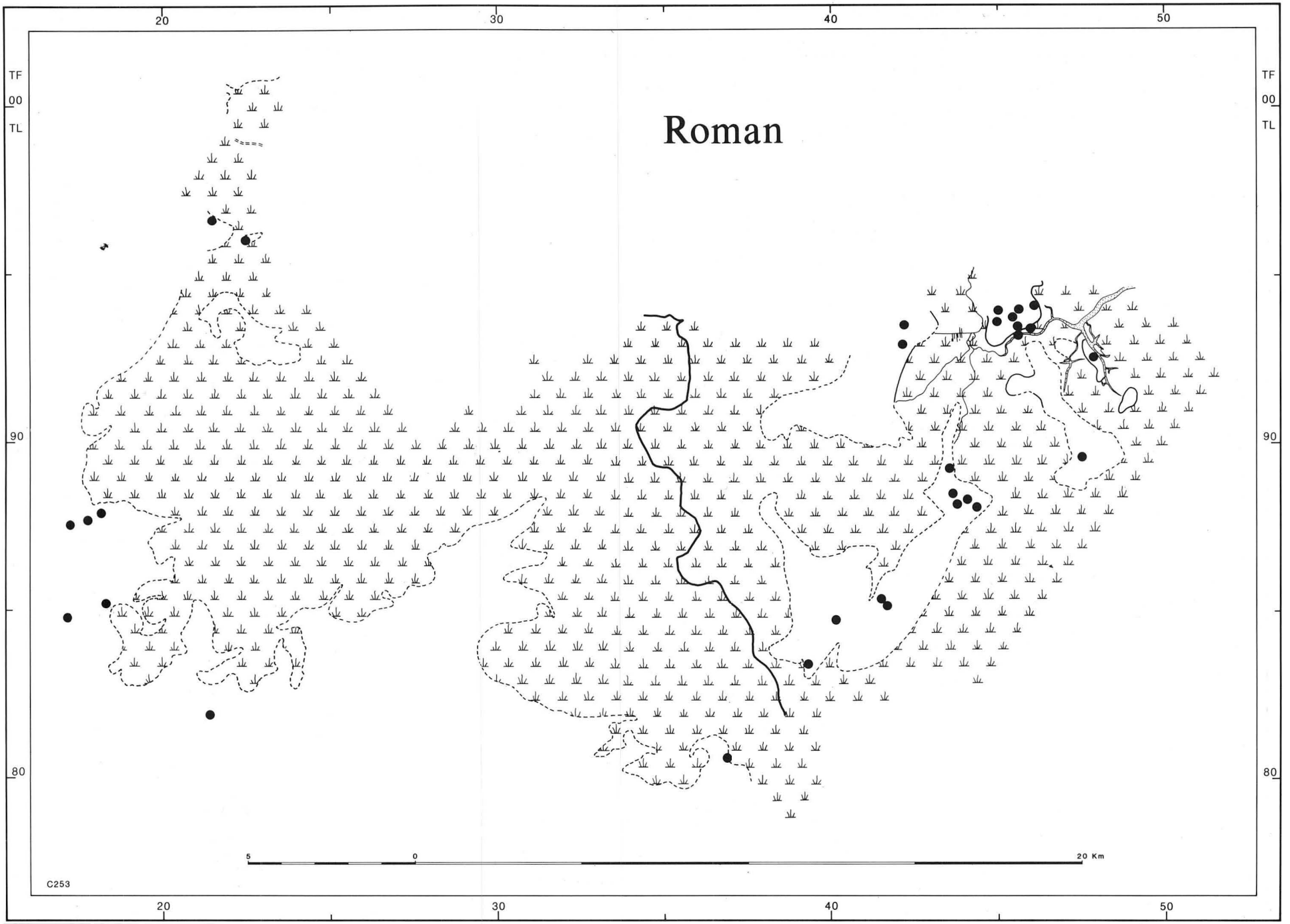


Figure 60 Regional plan of Roman fen

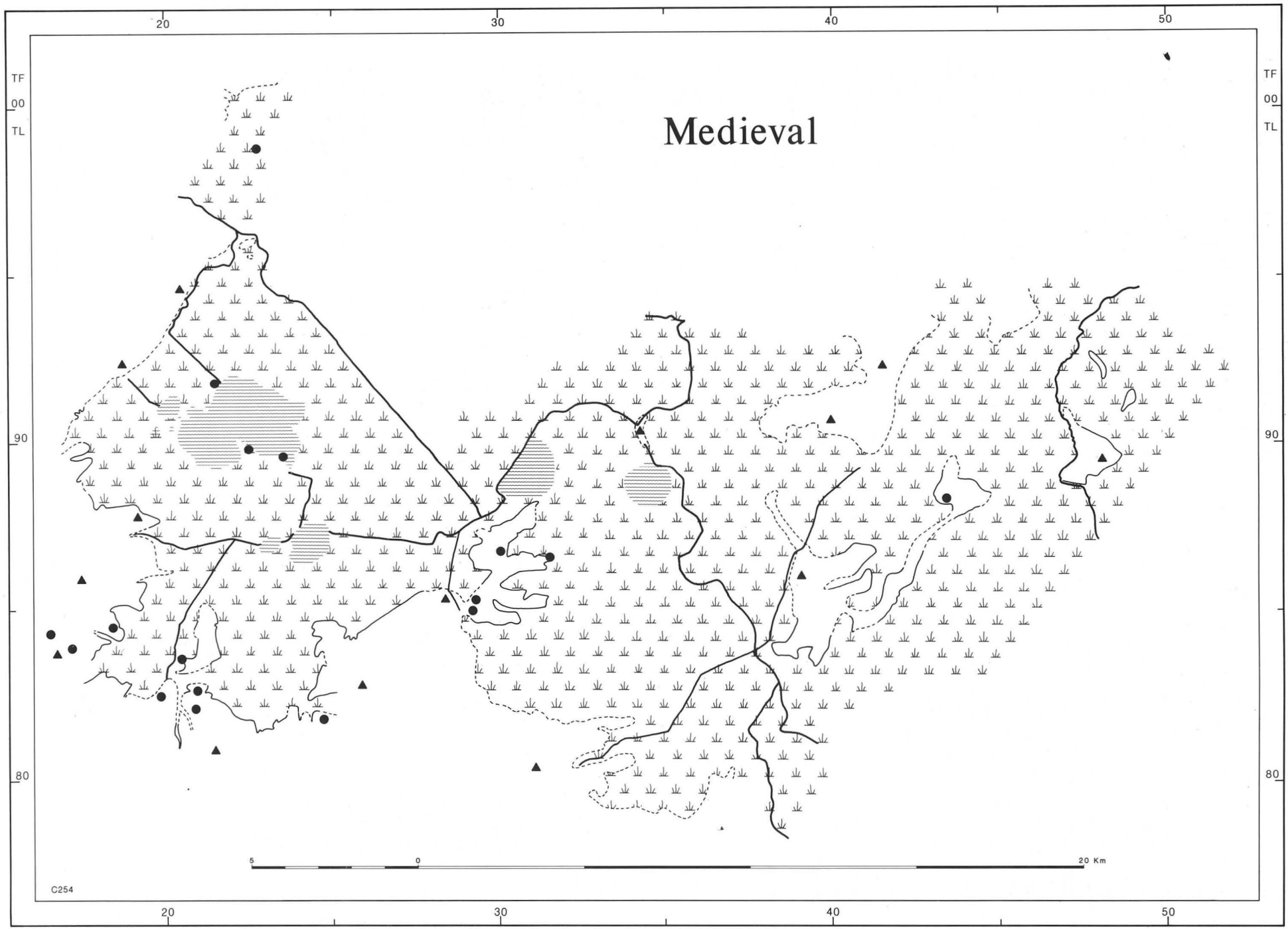


Figure 61 Regional plan of medieval fen

fuel was fen peat, some of it cut from turbaries which occur on the large scale in the area immediately north; there are a few parallel silt banks that represent peat cuttings lying at right angles to the line of the canal leading westwards to Wimblington. There were several Roman sites at Chatteris, two of them adjacent to the large Iron Age settlements at Langwood and Honey Hill.

The whole fen was peat and the drainage pattern, except for the Ouse and the major rivers near Stonea, is not recoverable, the evidence having wasted away. All the mainland brooks would have crossed the Fen, but no attempt has been made to show them on Figure 60. The water table was slightly lower than during the Iron Age, but this did not expose a significantly increased area of land for exploitation. At Manea and Stonea a few settlements were placed or spread on to silt roddons that had become reduced to levees with central channels.

Overall the Roman settlement can be divided into two clear parts. On the western fen edge the sites were part of the dense occupation on the nearby boulder clay plain, which probably belonged to the territory of Durobrivae, whereas the fen-island sites were mostly part of the complex of salterns and settlements in the March and Elm regions of the silt fen, probably administered from the settlement at Stonea Grange.

VI. Saxon and Medieval

(Fig. 61)

Little Early Saxon material occurs in the region; absence of preferred settlement sites available for survey (on light soils above 3.5m) is the probable reason. The limited suitable areas, such as Chatteris, are now built over.

The medieval fenland landscape was well developed and utilised. There were fewer, but larger, settlements on the fen islands than previously, and more were newly sited near the fen edge where before there had been little activity. The whole wetland area consisted of peat, there being no more active marine phases because of flood protection around the Wash. Dominant features of the landscape were the freshwater lakes or meres, which probably had origins in the Iron Age and Roman periods. These were adjacent to the courses of the medieval rivers and were used as part of a complicated water-communication network linking all the major vills and monasteries with the sea via Kings Lynn. Many of the water courses were artificial canals, cut straight across the fen, especially those relating to the monastic sites at Ramsey and Sawtry which needed direct routes to building stone in the Peterborough area. The Ouse retained its natural course for the most part, although there was a canalisation near Somersham that is probably Late Saxon. Even crooked lodes, such as the Darcey Lode on the west of Manea, can be artificial. The Darcey Lode followed the contours of the medieval fen edge on the west and then utilised the diminished watercourse in the centre of a roddon at the north.

Another canal began at Fenton Brook, crossing the Ouse near Ferry Hill, Chatteris, and continued to Doddington where it probably followed the eastern fen edge and linked up with Elm and Wisbech (and later Kings Lynn). This afforded a direct route to the sea; it was most likely constructed for the benefit of the chief administrative manor of Ramsey Abbey at Broughton (just inland (at TL 2848 7820)) rather than the small village of Fenton.

The most important inland port was at Yaxley. The site is no longer visible, but must have been at the landward end of Yaxley Lode and was approached via the 'old course' of the Nene through March, and the Meres of Ramsey and Whittlesey. Goods reached the Midlands from the north of England via this route, the gentry of Northamptonshire receiving coal into the 17th century.

The ownership of the whole of the area was ecclesiastical, (except for Holme), and several monastic sites lie in the region, the most considerable being Ramsey. The religious houses vied with each other over their boundaries and for rights of common and fisheries in the Fenland, showing that the fen was not considered a wasteland but a valuable resource of food, fuel and grazing. The settlements differed from upland vills, not just because of their fenland location on lonely promontories and islands, but because income was not limited to their own produce. The Fenland vills did not have to achieve the self sufficiency approached by many upland manors and vills, because so much of their income in money and kind arrived from other manors outside the region. This was probably the reason for the small areas of medieval strip-ploughing visible on some of the islands. Thus although the area of ploughable land near to Ramsey and Doddington was limited, both had parks close to them, which were clearly more important to the monastic houses than arable. The banks of soil left by medieval fields on the islands are low-profile and limited in extent, in marked contrast to the large ridges formed on the chalk slopes of southern Cambridgeshire, where strip cultivation was intensive and continued to the 19th century.

VII. Conclusion

The survey has given a better view of the archaeological potential of the region. As with the Peterborough and March region most of the sites are newly located and defined. Although much destruction by desiccation and ploughing has occurred there are still many sites in a good state of preservation, especially those dating from the early prehistoric era. Action is nevertheless urgently required or sites and monuments will continue to be lost.

Appendix I : The Aerial Evidence

by Rog Palmer

Introduction

Some soils in the area, notably those on the islands and skirtlands of Chatteris and Wimblington, supported past communities whose settlement remains include ditches and banks which have been recorded from the air as crop or soil marks. This aerial information, when mapped, can supplement that gained from the field survey either by giving context to scatters of artefacts or by revealing previously unknown features or sites. Results of air photography were used in this way in the first of the Fenland Survey volumes (Hall 1987a) but more detailed interpretation has been carried out during the compilation of this present survey.

Mapping and Interpretation

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Cambridgeshire has recently undergone reorganization during the process of its computerization. As part of this, the county's air photo record was reassessed and remapped; initially under the supervision of this author in 1983, but since completed by a succession of MSC teams. Updating of the aerial record was made using only photographs in the Cambridge University Collection (CUCAP) and utilized an edition of the author's computer program (Palmer 1977) adapted to run on the County Council's mainframe. This program allowed the transposition of interpretations from oblique photographs to plan and was also useful for rescaling from vertical frames. Output was plotted at scales of 1:10000, 1:10560 and 1:2500 of which the former became the basis of the SMR air photo overlays. Copies of these overlays, where relevant, were made available to this Survey, but more use was made of the computer plotted output at 1:10560 as this matched the scale of the Survey's working maps. In all cases this computer rectified output was checked against the air photos to enable basic archaeological interpretations to be drawn on to the Survey's maps. Two small areas were mapped at 1:2500 (Manea site 7 and Chatteris sites *12*, *13* and *26*) to elucidate details which would be unclear at smaller scales. These maps are reproduced in this volume with the relevant parish essays (Figs 48 and 55).

In April 1989, when the bulk of this volume was undergoing the editorial process, this writer received a post-reconnaissance grant from the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME). This allowed the incorporation of interpretations from RCHME material into the aerial maps of the whole of the Cambridgeshire fens. In the area covered by this volume much of this work confirmed that drawn from CUCAP cover or added slightly to its extent and although it could not be added to the parish maps (which by that date had been reduced for printing) a few specific comments are made below and all features from both sources appear in Gazetteer 2.

The air photographs examined for parishes in this volume were those at CUCAP taken before 1989 and those held in the oblique library of the RCHME Air Photography Unit taken before June 1986. The majority of the new mapping was computer transposed using the Bradford system (Haigh 1983) as installed on the IBM PS/2 Model 80 computer at the Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge. Output was edited and combined as necessary with the CUCAP material on the Project's 1:10560 maps.

Comment

Among the more significant points noted from this more complete picture of the area are:

Chatteris: TL 411 832 (site *38*). Important because of its neolithic element: the features shown in Figure 51 can now be seen to have internal and external enclosures, rectangular in shape, which may be parts of an associated field system.

Chatteris: area TL 4284 (sites *22* and *23*). The extent of the field system has increased and the new information makes it more likely that the two parts shown were once linked together.

Chatteris: TL 4336 8835 (site *15*). This site, identified as a round barrow, can now be seen to be enclosed on three sides by a small ditched enclosure (the likely fourth being masked by modern boundaries) which itself lies at the end of a drove linking that site with a larger ?paddock 100m to the west. The site may be that of a temple as paralleled at Haddenham site *1* and Thorney site *44* (Hall forthcoming).

Wimblington: Much that is new in the parish lies in the Stonea area and appears on the March map in the final volume covering the Cambridgeshire fens (Palmer forthcoming, Figure 102). Missing from that map are two sites south of Stonea Camp:

Wimblington: TL 437 925. Ditched enclosure system based on a roddon and likely to represent a settlement/saltern site (see below).

Wimblington: TL 450 925 (site *22*). Extension of features shown in Figure 39 lying on a roddon and identified from fieldwork as a settlement/saltern.

The published scale of the parish maps is too small to show clearly many of the details mapped from air photographs. In some cases these details assist our archaeological understanding of the features mapped although they are of minor relevance to the current aims of the Survey. Parish maps in this volume which include air photo information show this in slightly edited form suitable for the published scale of 1:40000, whilst the original mapped interpretations remain on copies of the 1:10560 maps as part of the Project's archive.

Gazetteer 2 is arranged alphabetically by parish. Within each parish the record is in National Grid order. Where there is correlation with field surveyed 'sites' the parish number of the latter is given in column 2 (S) allowing easy reference to Gazetteer 1. The fourth column lists the principal photographs used for mapping, copies of which may be inspected in the libraries of CUCAP or the RCHME. Identification of source is as follows: obliques from CUCAP are prefixed by one, two or three letters (eg XS 27), verticals by either RC8–, K17–, or V– (eg RC8–EB 248) and can usually be viewed stereoscopically; RCHME acquired material is filed under a four-figure grid reference followed by an index number and, for stereo sets, frame numbers (eg TL4480/2/453–455); for reasons of space these sometimes appear in abbreviated form. The final column allows brief description and comments to be made, with cross references to other sites and sources (other than Phillips 1970) where relevant. If fea-

tures were sketched on to the working maps this is also noted in column five: no comment on mapping means that features were computer corrected. The descriptive notes are an abbreviated comment on the mapped features (and occasionally on the reliability of that information) and are not intended to provide definitive archaeological statements: nor should they be used as such.

Abbreviations for Parish names used in Gazetteer 2

CHA	Chatteris	WAR	Warboys
DOD	Doddington	WMB	Wimblington
MAN	Manea	WWN	Wood Walton
PCF	Pidley cum Fenton		

Appendix 2: The Walker Collection

by Robert Middleton
(Fig. 62)

Introduction

This appendix summarises a quantitative analysis of a collection of lithic artefacts in Wisbech Museum, collected in the March/Manea area of the Cambridgeshire fens (centred on TL 460 930) by Mr. F.M. Walker of Manea between the 1920s and the 1950s. Most of the material has been provenanced using details recorded on each flint by the finder and by the re-discovery of the sites by David Hall of the Fenland Survey (this volume). For an outline of the methods employed and a full description of the material see Middleton (forthcoming a). This has permitted a number of sites to be isolated of which seven (denoted by the letters A-G) contained sufficient material (from 363 to 1123 pieces) for meaningful quantitative analysis. Four of these were from adjacent fields in the same area, Bedlam Hill, and one aim of this study was to determine the number of periods of flintworking represented at this locality. As a result one of these sites (Site C, Tuck Bedlam Hill) has been included in the analysis even though it only included 68 pieces.

The late Mesolithic material could be distinguished by its thin, creamy-white patination, whilst the later, unpatinated material was divided into periods based upon both artefact typology and the metrical attributes of the waste material. Although there are many problems associated with the use of surface alteration for dating purposes, in this case it did act as a general guide, although on a piece-by-piece basis often such dating was not secure.

Discussion

The use of temporally diagnostic typological and technological attributes, associated with differential patination, has allowed the periods of activity on each site to be determined. This discussion presents summaries of the salient attributes for the assemblages of each period, followed by a brief review of possible site function.

Late Mesolithic

The late Mesolithic material consists of a thin scatter of lithic artefacts across the landscape, with concentrations at sites D and E (Fig. 62). Many of the isolated finds appear to have been recovered from activities such as dyke cutting which provided access to buried land surfaces beneath later fen deposits.

The late Mesolithic material is internally consistent and has the following characteristics:

a) Both A2 (partially worked, single platform) and B1 (two parallel platforms) blade cores predominate with only one or two platforms being worked on each piece. Rejuvenation was by the creation of a new platform at 90° to the existing one.
b) The end products of the knapping sequence were blades (with a breadth:length ratio of 2:5 or less) and blade-like flakes produced using soft and hard hammers.
c) Low implement to by-product ratio (<1:10).
d) The artefacts were simply made, consisting of blades lightly trimmed into retouched flakes and points. A few simple microliths were present, and there was evidence, from two micro-burins, for their on-site manufacture.

This pattern is consistent with a widespread use of the landscape, with concentrations of material on small areas of gravel on slight rises above a developing fen. The flints may represent small camps on areas of well drained ground at the edge of the fen 'islands'. These locations provided exploitable flint resources, where implements were manufactured, but were later removed from the sites and used elsewhere. This pattern is replicated elsewhere in the fens with concentrations of late Mesolithic material on sandhills with a background scatter of artefacts in the buried land surfaces, for example at Shippea Hill (Clark *et al.* 1935, Whittle 1985), Crowtree Farm (French forthcoming) and Foulmire Fen, Haddenham (Hodder 1987).

Early Neolithic

Documenting the extent of earlier Neolithic activity solely from the evidence of lithic artefacts can be extremely misleading. The number of diagnostic artefacts is small, debitage can be masked by larger amounts of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity and it may be less archaeologically visible than both earlier and later periods for behavioural reasons (Healy 1987). The metrical data for the late Mesolithic material correlates with that from other contemporary Fenland assemblages (Middleton forthcoming b) which suggests little overlap with earlier Neolithic material. This would suggest that, generally speaking, the lack of earlier Neolithic material cannot have been completely masked by the earlier assemblages. Despite the problems outlined above, the lack of diagnostic artefacts in the collection would suggest a lack of activity in this period in the March/Manea area.

This reflects the situation in the fens as a whole where the onset of locally widespread peat growth confined visible activity to certain foci on the fen edge, for example at Fengate (Pryor 1974, 1984 and pers. comm.) and Etton (Pryor *et al.* 1985).

Late Neolithic

Artefacts dating to the late Neolithic were widespread throughout the collection with five of the quantified sites (A-E) predominantly containing material of this date, four of which (A-D) were confined to the area of Bedlam Hill (Fig. 62). The evidence indicates that these four sites were internally consistent and marked by the following characteristics:

a) Most waste flakes (flakes exhibiting no retouch) had a breadth:length ratio of 2:5 to 4:5 with between 5 and 6.5% blades and 15 and 22% broad flakes (with a breadth:length ratio of 5:5 or more).
b) The majority of waste flakes were between 4 and 6mm thick.
c) Retouched flakes predominated over scrapers as the most common artefact type.
d) There were relatively small numbers of denticulates and notched flakes, comprising between 1.5 and 6% of the implements.
e) The scrapers varied between 25 and 60mm in length and between 20 and 50mm in length.
f) There were low frequencies (1–4) of small, scale-flaked ('Thumbnail') scrapers.

The other late Neolithic site (E) is broadly similar in many ways but differs from the above group in the following respects:

a) A more restricted range of flake types was present, with 5% being blades and 11% broad flakes.

Figure 62 Location Map of March/Manea area showing sites (letters) and find-spots (numbers). A, B, C, D=Bedlam Hill; E=Gaul/Gall Road March; F=Biggins Hill; G=Jenny Grays Farm; H=Butchers Hill; I=Council Holdings; J=Doctors/Rutland Farm; K=Dunham Hill; L=Linwood Pit; M=Purls Bridge; N=Gypsy Corner; O=Honey Farm; P=Primrose Hill; Q=Brown(e)s Hill. 1=Mepal Pit; 2=Belaugh Spinney; 3=Bonds Farm; 4=Boons Farm Drove; 5=Plantation Farm; 6=Rookery Farm. Stippled areas=areas of non-specific finds; dashed lines=extent of gravel. Sites H–Q, 1–6 are discussed in Middleton (forthcoming).

b) More denticulates and notched flakes were present, being 13.5% and 14.8% of the implement totals respectively.

c) The scrapers varied between 25 and 55mm in length and 30 to 45mm in breadth, tending to be smaller and squatter than those in the above group.

d) More 'Thumbnail' scrapers present (8).

Both groups of metrical data fit well with late Neolithic sites from other parts of the fens and East Anglia (Healy 1984: Tables 2 and 4).

The restricted range of flake shapes at site E may suggest that it has more in common with the early Bronze Age sites of F and G (see below), and so may be later in date than sites A to D. This is also reflected in the higher number of Bronze Age scrapers present and the tendency for scrapers generally to be smaller than those from sites A to D.

On a subjective basis, sites J, M, N and O (Fig. 62) which were not quantified, are probably of the same date. These sites tend to be, although not exclusively, located on the small patches of gravel presumably both for good drainage and access to raw materials.

Early Bronze Age

The quantified material from sites F and G, along with many of the stray finds, can be dated securely to the early Bronze Age. The flint assemblages have the following characteristics:

a) The most common length:breadth ratios of intact waste flakes was between 3:5 and 5:5 with between 1.7 and 3.1% blades and between 27.8 and 31.4% broad flakes.
b) The commonest flake thickness was between 6 and 8mm.
c) The most common implement type were scrapers (31.2 to 53.5% of implements) with retouched flakes the second most frequent.
d) The frequency of scale-flaked scrapers increased to make up between 26.7 and 31.8% of all scrapers.
e) There was a greater diversity of scraper forms, but the short-end type remained by far the commonest.
f) Scrapers were smaller in size, ranging in length between 15 to 50mm and 15 to 45mm in breadth. The most frequent scraper thickness was between 9 and 10mm, which is thicker than late Neolithic examples. The range of size variation was less than in the earlier scrapers, indicating that their form was more standardised. They also tend to be more square in form than the late Neolithic types.
g) Notched flakes and denticulates are present in greater numbers than in the late Neolithic sites described above, comprising between 7 and 15% of all implements.

All of these characteristics fit with those defined for Beaker/Bronze Age waste material by Ford (1987) and Healy (1984), with the proportions of blades under 7% and with broad flakes comprising over 15% of the total. The reduction in scraper dimension from the late Neolithic noted by Healy (1984, table 3) for Beaker-associated flint industries also appears to hold true. These scraper sizes also contrast with the large scrapers from the middle Bronze Age assemblage from Grimes Graves dated to 1134 ± 44 bc (BM–1097) (Mercer 1981, 36) where the most common scraper lengths are between 50 and 70mm, compared to 20 to 40mm for sites F and G (Saville 1981, fig. 8).

The presence of thumbnail scrapers and knives with fine, invasive edge retouch at sites F and G indicates an early Bronze Age date; for example, they have been found in Beaker associations on the eastern fen edge at Hockwold (Bamford 1982) and at Plantation Farm, Shippea Hill (Clark 1933). These forms are, however, notably absent from the later sites such as Grimes Graves (1134 ± 44 bc (BM–1097)) (Mercer 1981), Fengate, Newark Road subsite, (1600 ± 200 bc (HAR–777) and 720 ± 90 bc (HAR–407)) (Pryor 1978), and Mildenhall Fen (*c.* 1200 to 100 bc) (Clark 1936).

Sites F and G are internally consistent in terms of both technology and typology, which would suggest a degree of contemporaneity and functional unity.

Both the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age sites had a high percentage of retouched forms, the bulk of which were informal implements, coupled with an overall lack of elaborate artefacts. These features indicate that these may have been settlement sites, although the exact criteria for such sites largely remain to be established. Three factors may suggest that these sites were possibly part of a shifting settlement system based upon livestock:

1) The small size of each site, suggesting that each settlement episode was of short duration.
2) The March/Manea area consists of a series of small, boulder-clay 'islands' whose soils are likely to have been too heavy and ill-drained for arable agriculture.
3) The assemblages are dominated by implements which may be used for the preparation of animal products, such as scrapers, denticulates, points (designed for piercing) and borers (used with a rotary motion).

Within any study such as this, based purely on one class of artefact, conclusions such as those outlined above must remain speculative; it is only the thorough excavation of one of these sites located in the middle of the Fens that will allow the study of all classes of material to confirm or deny the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age economy outlined above.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that museum flint collections (where the contextual information can be recovered) are worthy of metrical analysis. Such collections should not be seen in isolation, but rather used to build up a detailed picture of local spatial and chronological trends in flintworking.

The study of the Walker Collection has elucidated the extent and degree of land use in the March/Manea area of the fens and has complemented the Fenland Survey of the same area. In providing a larger sample of flintwork from known sites, it has supplemented our knowledge of the distribution of new sites and the extent of the background scatter of material.

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Appendix 3: The Roman Pottery

by David Gurney

The following discussion concerns Roman pottery from 39 sites in the nine parishes of Chatteris, Conington, Fenton, Glatton, Raveley, Sawtry, Stanground, Wimblington and Wood Walton. It follows the format of the report on the Roman pottery by Fiona Cameron (1987) in the first Fenland Project survey volume (Hall 1987a). Much relevant background information about Fenland pottery is presented in that report, which will not be duplicated here.

The pottery from these sites was examined in part by the present writer and in part by Fiona Cameron to whom the present writer is indebted.

Wares

The Nene Valley potteries, producing colour-coated wares, grey wares, self-coloured wares, London-type wares, mortaria and, almost certainly, shell-gritted wares, appear to have supplied most Fenland sites from the second quarter of the 2nd century AD onwards. For all these wares see Howe *et al.* 1980. The kilns at Horningsea (Walker 1912) supplied grey storage jars to Fenland sites in the late second and third centuries.

The only significant import from the continent was samian ware. Samian sherds were recovered from 41% of the sites in the survey area. Two sites, Chatteris *26* and *29*, produced larger collections (eight and 12 sherds respectively), and the samian sherds from the former include three decorated sherds. It may be significant that two sites in Chatteris, *8* and *26*, are the only sites in the survey area to produce sherds of the only other import, amphorae. No amphorae were found in the Peterborough to March survey area (Cameron 1987).

As in the Peterborough to March survey area, none of the sites here produced Central Gaulish or Rhenish colour-coated wares. From almost all the sites there are varying amounts of reduced wares, and these are almost certainly from local sources. A few mortaria sherds were found, and these are mainly from the Nene Valley potteries. One sherd from an Oxford Ware red colour-coated mortarium was recovered from Chatteris *31*.

The parish of Stanground includes the site of the most easterly kiln of the Nene Valley colour-coated industry known to date, and this was excavated in 1965 by G.B. Dannell and B.R. Hartley (Dannell 1973). The kiln is dated to the first half of the 3rd century, and the wares have a distinctive grey-white fabric with a grey-black, almost metallic slip. Not surprisingly, Stanground Site *3* close to the kiln site produced 13 sherds of this ware, including a rim sherd from a segmental dish imitating samian Form 36 (Dannell 1973, fig. 1, no. 1a; Gurney 1985, fig. 92, no. 252) and a body sherd from a rouletted beaker (Dannell 1973, fig. 1, no.10; Howe *et al.* 1980, fig. 3, nos 33, 34).

The number of sites on which each of these wares occurs is listed by parish in Table 4. Table 5 lists the percentages of sites out of the total number of sites in the survey area on which each of the wares occurs. Table 5 also includes the results from the Peterborough to March survey area (Cameron 1987, table 3) for comparison.

Discussion

The most common of the identifiable wares can be seen from Tables 4 and 5 to be Nene Valley Grey and Colour-Coated Wares and shell-gritted wares. Cameron's comments on the longevity of these wares and the narrower date-ranges of self-coloured and London-type wares are equally applicable here.

Two sites in Chatteris produced amphorae sherds, and sites in the same parish also produced the largest collection of samian, some of which is decorated. Horningsea Wares were recovered from only three parishes, Chatteris, Raveley and Wimblington. Only one site produced a flagon sherd, Chatteris *25*, and in the Peterborough to March area, only two sites produced flagon sherds, these both in the parish of March (Cameron 1987, table 2). The parish of Chatteris has produced more samian (including decorated) than any other parish in the survey area, it is the only one to produce sherds of amphorae and a flagon, and it is one of only three parishes to produce Horningsea Wares; there is also a sherd of an Oxford Ware mortarium from one of the Chatteris sites. While the interpretation of pottery from survey may be misleading, these facts combine to suggest that certain sites in the Chatteris area may perhaps have been somewhat more affluent than sites elsewhere in the survey area.

Comparing the percentages of sites with a given pottery type in the survey area with the results from the Peterborough to March area (Table 5), the percentages of sites with most pottery types is similar. The main differences are 1) fewer sites have Nene Valley Grey Ware, 2) fewer sites have gritty buff wares and 3) fewer sites have oxidised wares. The only type to show a percentage increase is the amphorae, due to sherds from two sites in Chatteris.

Conclusions

The general comments made by Hartley and Hartley (1970) hold true for this group of field survey sites as they did for those in the Peterborough to March area (Cameron 1987). There was little far-reaching trade to these sites, shell-gritted storage jars are relatively common and flagons are scarce. Virtually all of the pottery in use was manufactured locally in the large-scale potteries of the Lower Nene Valley.

A final comment concerns the cheese-press, which has been held to be a relatively common form on Fenland sites (Hartley and Hartley 1970, 168), although this has never been quantified. There are no examples of cheese-presses from the sites considered here, and there is no reference to the form by Cameron (1987) so it was presumably absent. Published Fenland examples are few and far between, and while the Hartleys' statement may hold true for some areas, the evidence is presumably to be found in museum collections yet to be studied in depth or published. The absence of the cheese-press here and in the Peterborough to March area is worth noting. The form which is comparatively robust should survive well in the ploughsoil, if present and should have been recovered.

Ware	*Chatteris*	*Conington*	*Fenton*	*Glatton*	*Raveley*	*Sawtry*	*Stanground*	*Wimblington*	*Wood Walton*
samian	5	0	1	1	0	0	0	8	1
NVCC	5	1	1	2	2	2	2	6	1
NVGW	6	1	1	1	0	2	2	7	1
NVSC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
mortaria	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	0
gritty buff	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
flagons	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Horningsea	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	0
shell-gritted	8	1	1	2	1	1	2	10	1
oxidised	9	0	0	0	2	0	1	6	0
reduced	14	1	1	2	1	2	2	13	1
London-type	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
amphorae	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total of sites	14	1	1	2	2	2	2	14	1

Abbreviations: NVCC = Nene Valley Colour-coated; NVGW = Nene Valley Grey Ware; NVSC = Nene Valley self-coloured

Table 4 Analysis of Roman pottery types: number of sites producing each ware-type, by parish

Ware	*Percentage of sites*	
	Cameron 1987	This volume
samian	48.5	41.0
NVCC	62.8	56.4
NVGW	85.7	53.8
NVSC	11.4	10.3
mortaria	31.4	28.2
gritty buff	20.0	7.7
flagons	5.7	2.6
Horningsea	28.5	25.6
shell-gritted	74.3	69.2
oxidised	62.8	46.2
reduced	97.1	94.9
London-type	5.7	5.1
amphorae	0.0	5.1

Table 5 Percentages of sites with a given pottery type; results for this volume compared with results from the Peterborough to March area (Cameron 1987)

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Place names are followed by the abbreviated county name. In addition, (C) = Cambridgeshire, (N) = Norfolk, and (S) = Suffolk.

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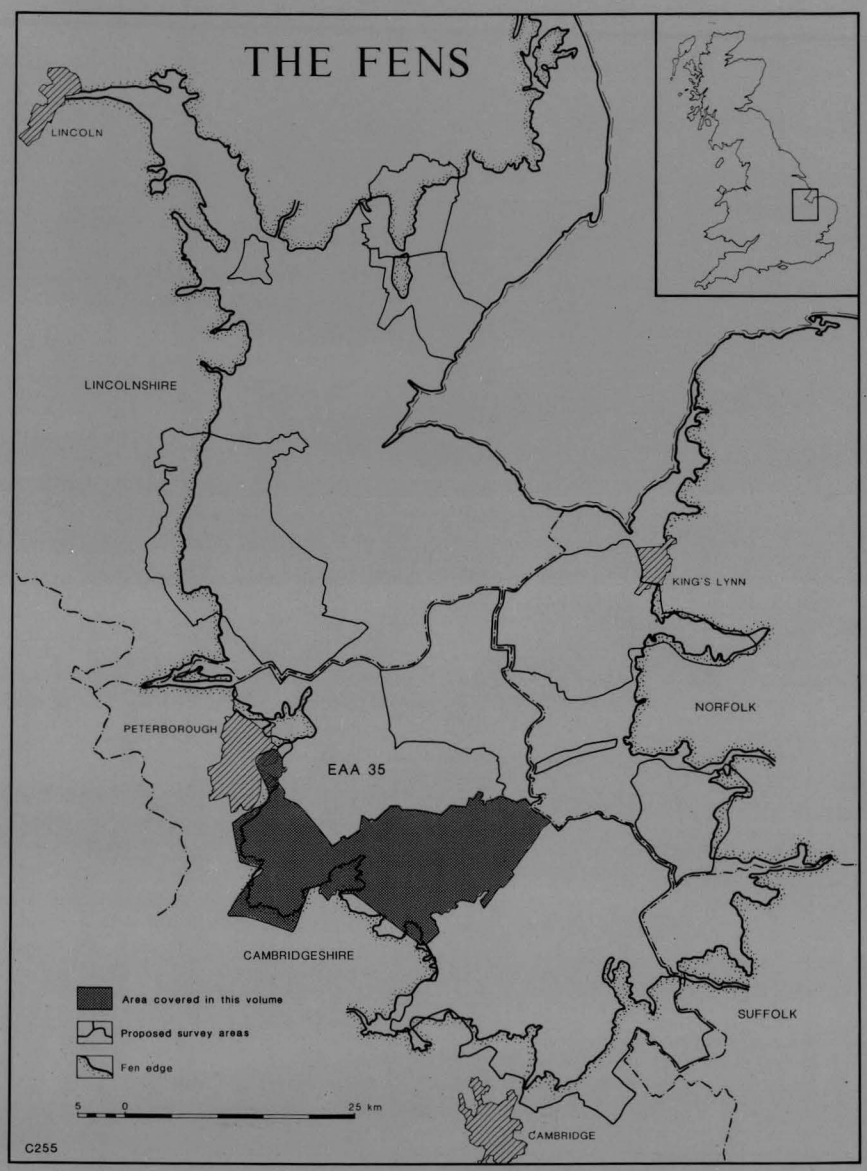

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