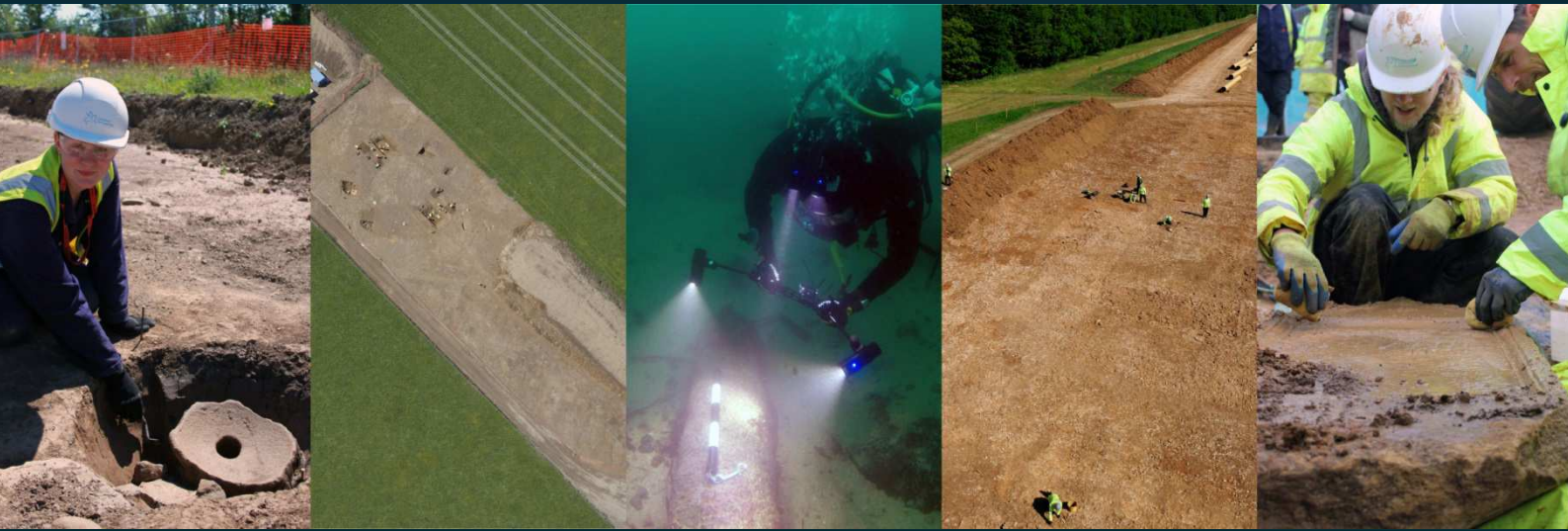


Land to the rear of 18 Russell Close Powick Worcestershire

*Archaeological Excavation
Summary publication report for Transactions of the
Worcestershire Archaeological Society*



*on behalf of
Bovis Homes*

CA Project: 9181
CA Report: 16561

November 2016



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Summary report: excavation of an Iron Age palisade enclosure at Powick, 2014

By Andrew Mudd, Peter Busby and Steve Sheldon

Abstract

A small archaeological excavation ahead of housing development on a hill spur near Powick, south-west of Worcester, uncovered slight remains of an Iron Age enclosure defined by a shallow ditch that had replaced what was interpreted as a slot for a timber palisade. Parts of an outer ditch and enclosure annexe were also revealed. There were few internal features and a restricted group of finds, mostly comprising Middle Iron Age 'Malvernian' pottery. Of interest was an unusual spread of cremated human bone and charcoal at the south-east entrance.

The site's place in the Iron Age landscape and settlement pattern is discussed. It is suggested that the enclosure may have represented a pastoral settlement within the wider farming landscape.

Introduction

In July and August 2014 an archaeological excavation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) on land to the rear of 18 Russell Close, Powick, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SO 8197 5093; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken at the request of Bovis Homes in advance of housing development over the 2.8ha site, planning permission for which had been granted by Malvern Hills District Council conditional upon a programme of archaeological excavation. This was targeted on Iron Age features within an area of c. 0.25ha, previously identified in a pre-determination evaluation (CA 2012).

The development site, which lay in open fields at the time of the archaeological work, is bordered to the north by the A449 Malvern Road, to the east by the Crown Inn public house, to the west by farmland and to the south by houses fronting Russell Close (Fig. 2). The excavation area lay at approximately 55m OD on a hill spur that falls dramatically away to the south and west, with its eastern side bounded by a north/south-orientated dry valley (formerly a watercourse). The underlying geology is mapped as Triassic Sidmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2014). The natural substrate, comprising red-brown clay with gravel and sand patches, was exposed across the excavated area.

Standard methods were employed in the excavation and soil sampling, commencing with the removal of overburden by mechanical excavator. Full details of the excavation

results are available in an excavation report (CA 2015), which is available as a download from CA's website (www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk, CA report no. 15857). The present publication is a summary of that report and draws attention to the significance of the findings as a contribution to an understanding of Iron Age settlement in the region.

Excavation results

The Iron Age features comprised three elements that were not stratigraphically related but which, by their spatial pattern, appear to have been broadly of the same phase. They comprised the inner enclosure palisade slot, later redefined by a ditch; pits, postholes and curvilinear gullies in the centre of the enclosure; and the outer enclosure ditch (Figs 3 and 4). The outer ditch had a substantial recut on its eastern side, and was also cut by a large pit, while it cut a small number of minor interior features, but there was no evidence of a significantly distinct phase of activity. Only two sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the site and are likely to have arrived as casual rubbish from manuring or other agricultural activity after the enclosure had gone out of use.

Inner enclosure palisade and ditch

The inner enclosure was initially formed by a palisade (comprising palisade trenches A, B, C and 2524). The enclosure was almost square (c. 34m across) with rounded corners. In section, the palisade trench typically had a nearly vertical inner side and a more moderately sloping outer side, with a flat or slightly concave base. It was typically 0.6m wide and 0.5 m deep, although occasionally larger (Fig. 5). In a number of excavated sections through the palisade trench a clear, vertically sided column of darker fill was observed. Although difficult to observe in plan, it is likely that this fill occupied a post-pipe, suggesting that the palisade was constructed by placing vertical posts side by side. A total of 41 sherds of Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill of palisade trench A, including 35 sherds from three vessels from terminal 2495. The other sections of palisade had fewer finds.

A number of gaps were present in the enclosure circuit defined by the palisade. In the south-eastern corner two gaps, 5.6m and 8.0m wide, were present either side of a sort section of palisade trench (2524) between trenches A and B. Towards the centre of the southern arm of the enclosure was a 1.35m-wide gap, and a further gap, c. 7m wide, lay on the western side. It would appear that these gaps represent deliberate breaks in the circuit rather than being the effects of later truncation, due to the considerable depth of the palisade trench in these areas. Palisade trench D appeared to form part of an annexe on the western side of the enclosure. The surviving stretches of this feature were shallower and narrower

(up to 0.4m wide and 0.35m deep) than those of the main enclosure, although clearly of the same design. It is possible that a similar palisade abutted the main enclosure on the northern side, although evidence for this would have been removed by the later ditch (Ditch K).

Several shallow postholes were identified cut into the top of palisade trench fill on the northern and eastern sides. It is possible that they had once been more numerous but had been removed by the later ditch. In view of their shallowness it seems probable that they were not intended as a complete replacement for the palisade, but for *ad hoc* support as needed.

In a later phase of the enclosure the palisade was replaced by a ditch (ditch sections E and F), excavated on the same alignment but cut to a slightly shallower depth than the palisade trench. The ditch was generally broad (0.9–1.0m) and 0.4–0.5m deep with a concave profile (Fig. 5). Palisade trench 2534 between the two entrances on the south-eastern side was also re-cut by a short ditch segment (2496), which contained 22 sherds of Iron Age pottery from at least four vessels, as well as charcoal and burnt stone in the upper fill. Part of the southern boundary was remodelled as ditch G. This made the boundary straighter and moved the southern entrance of the enclosure c. 1.6m to the north. This entrance became more complex over time and appears later to have been blocked by a short length of ditch, 2185/2198, and subsequently replaced by two large postholes, 2193 and 2201, which may have been for a narrow gateway between ditches F and G. Both postholes were over 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep, and contained Iron Age pottery.

Pits, postholes and other features within the inner enclosure

A concentration of pits and postholes bounded by the enclosure ditch are probably of Iron Age date, although only about half a dozen contained any dating evidence. They varied in form and were generally shallow (often less than 0.1m deep). Many of the pits/postholes of this group may represent the remains of post-built structures, although none were clearly identifiable. Shallow curvilinear gully L, towards the centre of the enclosure, may represent part of a drip gully around a round or partly circular structure, perhaps even an annexe to a central roundhouse (for which there is room in the centre of the enclosure, although surviving features are absent). To the south, two broad shallow pits, 2293 and 2295, contained burnt clay and charcoal, but as there was no *in situ* burning evident it is not certain that these were hearths or fire-pits.

Outer enclosure ditch

The outer enclosure, comprising ditches H, I and J, lay approximately 6m outside the inner enclosure ditch on its northern and eastern sides. It continued to the south-west, beyond the

south-east corner of the inner enclosure and outside the stripped area. The enclosure ditch varied in size, being deepest on the eastern side where it reached a width of 2m and a maximum depth of 0.76m, but elsewhere it was rather smaller. A c. 11.5m length of the eastern arm of enclosure ditch I had been re-cut to a depth reaching 0.93m. No artefactual material was recovered from this recut and the reasons for this episode of recutting remain unclear, although Iron Age dating seems probable.

A narrow entrance (0.6m wide) was identified on the northern side of the enclosure between ditches H and I. A more substantial entrance, c. 1.7m wide, lay in the south-eastern corner between the terminals of ditches I and J.

Cremation deposit

Two charcoal-rich deposits, 2035 overlying 2036, containing fragments of cremated human bone were found at the north-eastern terminal of ditch J and are likely to have been pyre debris. Deposit 2036 was the final, deliberately deposited fill in the ditch terminal, and above it deposit 2035 was an area of subsoil with burnt bone and charcoal incorporated. There was no evidence of *in situ* burning in the ditch and the material is likely to have been re-deposited. Radiocarbon dating on cremated human bone from deposit 2036 provided a date of 352–55 BC (95.4% probability) which may be refined to 211–86 BC (73.6%: SUERC-62336). A second bone sample from the same deposit provided a date of 196–42 BC (95.4%: SUERC-62367). Given the late phase of this deposit, at face value this would indicate that activity on the site dates to no later than the mid 1st century BC.

Gullies, pits and postholes within the outer enclosure

A number of pits and other features between the inner and outer enclosures were similar in character to those within the inner enclosure. A group of short, narrow gullies in the north-eastern corner may represent agricultural features (possibly small pens) or structural beam slots. Most of these features yielded no artefactual material but their location, contained by the outer ditch, suggests an association with the Iron Age occupation, and one of the gullies was stratigraphically earlier than the recut of Ditch I.

Finds

There were a limited number and range of artefacts from the site. The most significant was a small assemblage of late prehistoric pottery. This has been analysed in detail (CA 2015, Appendix B) and a summary is presented below. Two small unfeathered sherds of Severn Valley Ware was the only Roman pottery. There were no objects of metal from Iron Age features. A flint flake from an Iron Age ditch was probably redeposited.

Of more significance was a small collection of fired clay (16 fragments; 21g) from deposit 2036, the upper fill of Ditch J containing the cremated human bone. Two small fragments (3g) that occur in an orange fabric with a light, pinkish smoothed surface are identified as Droitwich briquetage. As such this material is representative of the ceramic containers used to dry and transport salt from the Droitwich brine springs. The fabric is distinguished by homogenised clay pellet and small burnt-out organic inclusions. It approximates to organic/'marly' briquetage fragments common to the Middle to Late Iron Age. Other fragments occur in quartz-rich (sandy) fabric with sparse organic and ferrous inclusions, whose origin is less clear.

Also of interest is a fragment of worked stone (quartzite) from Ditch I, with two flat faces that are well smoothed/polished. Similar items are relatively common from Iron Age and Romano-British sites and have been interpreted as polishers, the smooth surfaces resulting from wear from the smoothing of textiles such as linen.

Later prehistoric pottery by E.R. McSloy

A total of 559 sherds (3.22kg) was recovered. The assemblage is heavily fragmented with a mean sherd weight of 5.8g. There are indications that much of the fragmentation occurred at the time of, or following, deposition and the result of the fragility of the material due to a combination of a low firing temperature and a hostile burial environment. This is demonstrated by the two largest context groups: layer 2121 (a colluvial deposit outside the enclosure) and ditch fill 2179 (terminal 2177 of Ditch G), with 124 and 104 sherds respectively, both of which comprise for the most part single well-fragmented vessels.

There are only eight rim sherds and most are too small to aid determination of vessel forms. They are mostly simple rounded or pulled rims (Fig. 6: nos 3-4). Only vessel no. 2 exhibits any elaboration, this being one of the two sherds carrying decoration in the form of horizontal scoring. Large vessel no. 1 was probably a storage jar and the well-fragmented vessels from 2121 and 2179 are probably comparable.

The assemblage is composed of pottery in four identified fabrics. The large bulk of the assemblage (c. 93%) comprises rock-tempered fabrics (IG1 and IG2) equivalent to Peacock's (1968) Group A, the source of which being the Malvern Hills lying immediately to the south-west. Pottery manufacture using rock temper sources from the Malverns has its roots in the Middle Bronze Age (Timby 2004). By the Middle Iron Age (c. 4th to 1st centuries BC) the area was associated with a distinctive range of vessel forms and decoration, examples of which were traded well beyond the primary north Gloucestershire/Worcestershire area of use. The source of the small quantities of vesicular and quartz-tempered pottery, which make up the remainder of the assemblage, are less certain although there are no indications that these are not local.

The Malvernian fabrics that characterise the assemblage are representative of a long tradition. Narrower dating within the 4th to 1st centuries BC is prompted by the few rim and decorated sherds present, and also by an absence of forms common to earlier and later traditions. 'Ducked-stamped' (S-shaped or chevron-shaped impressions at the rim zone) and other distinctively-decorated vessels, which characterise the some Middle Iron Age assemblages from the region (Peacock 1968), are absent, although vessel no. 2 falls broadly within this style, defined by Cunliffe as the Croft-Ambrey-Bredon Hill style (Cunliffe 2005). Whether the absence of 'duck-stamped' or other impressed pottery relates to the site type of varying chronology is unclear. A hint that the Powick group can be placed earlier in the suggested date range comes from the absence of Malvernian Palaeozoic limestone tempered ware (Peacock's Group B). While proximity to source may come into play, the increasing abundance of this ware across the Middle Iron Age has been noted at sites such as Beckford (Ford and Rees forthcoming).

The meagreness of the pottery assemblage from an area of a farmstead or similar habitation site is noteworthy. This, together with the preponderance of storage vessels, the scarcity of decorated vessels and those more suited to food preparation or consumption, and the absence of cooking-related residues, is perhaps an indication of specialist site use for food storage, or perhaps one for part-time occupation.

Illustration catalogue

- 1 Large storage vessel (jar). Upright neck with squared rim top. Pit 2072 (fill 2065). Fabric IG1.
- 2 ?Jar with flattened/T-shaped rim. Grooves to rim top and below rim. Ditch 2496 (fill 2497). Fabric IG1.
- 3 ?Jar with pulled/sl. everted rim. Outer enclosure ditch J, cut 2253 (fill 2254). Fabric IG1.
- 4 Large ?jar with short everted rim. Relict soil layer 2121. Fabric IG1.

Biological evidence

Biological evidence was sparse and not well preserved. The deposits of cremated human bone from deposits 2035 and 2036 of enclosure ditch J are of most significance (below and CA 2015 Appendix H). Other bone was very poorly preserved, with just four of the 88 items recovered identifiable to species. All four were of cattle (*Bos Taurus*).

Thirty-four bulk soil samples yielded small quantities of charred grain, some identified as emmer or spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*/t. *dicoccum*), glume bases and wild seeds

such as brome (*Bromus*), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) and amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibian*). Single examples of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) and cherry pip (*Prunus*) fragment were also recovered. This is indicative of general domestic waste with no specific indication of the location of hearths or food processing activity.

The charcoal was also poorly preserved and where identifiable showed a range of species such as oak (*Quercus*), alder/hazel (*Alnus glutinosa/C. Avellana*), hawthorn/rowan/crab apple (*Cretaeagus monogyna/Sorbus/Malus sylvestris*) cherry and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). These are typical of domestic fuel waste. In contrast, the charcoal from the 'pyre' deposits 2035 and 2036, Ditch J, was dominantly oak with smaller quantities of alder/hazel. This is more typical of wood chosen for the construction of pyres.

Cremated human remains by Sharon Clough

Two deposits (2035 over 2036) containing cremated human bone were sampled from ditch terminus 2253 (enclosure ditch J). Bone from deposit 2035 weighed 80.9g and that from 2036 weighed 235.2g. There was no *in situ* burning and the quantity of charcoal was relatively low. The quantity of burnt bone was limited, and the fragments were small in size.

The bone was mostly white in colour, fully calcined, but there were a number of fragments that were white on the outer surface and grey on the inner. This suggests some heat variation across the pyre, but the general efficiency of the cremation was good. As the majority of fragments were small, this prevented identification of elements, so it has not been possible to establish a minimum number of individuals. Deposit 2035 included a mixture of ploughsoil, which suggests that truncation and fragmentation had taken place after burial. This may be a significant contributing factor to the small fragment size and low weight of bone recovered.

The deposit is likely to be re-deposited pyre debris or re-deposited cremated remains. If it were pyre debris, this would suggest the presence of the pyre within the vicinity and that cremations were conducted nearby (McKinley 2000). Pyre debris also usually contains (depending on soil type) burnt flint, burnt stone, burnt clay and fuel ash slag. It is the mixed nature of the deposit which identifies it as pyre debris (McKinley 2000). The total weight of bone, 323.7g, is within the range for pyre-related debris found at Westhampnett, 0.1–422g (McKinley 1997).

Radiocarbon dating by Sarah Cobain

Radiocarbon dating was undertaken to confirm the date of cremated human bone from Ditch J. The samples of bone were analysed during September 2015 at Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC), Rankine Avenue, Scottish Enterprise Technology Park, East Kilbride, Glasgow. The results are presented in Table 1. Uncalibrated dates are

conventional radiocarbon ages. The radiocarbon ages were calibrated using the University of Oxford radiocarbon Accelerator Unit programme OXCal. 4.2 (Bronk Ramsey 2009) using the IntCal13 curve (Reimer *et al.* 2013).

Discussion

The excavation uncovered unexpected remains of a Middle Iron Age enclosure which, in its first phase, was defined by a palisade that showed some evidence of repair, and later was redefined by a ditch with an assumed (but not demonstrated) bank. The enclosure was mirrored on its northern and eastern sides by an outer ditch, partly re-cut, and there were ditches to the west suggesting the presence of an annexe there. The early palisade was defined by a narrow but relatively deep trench. Individual post-pipes were not identifiable and it seems likely that the palisade was constructed of contiguous or nearly contiguous posts. Alternatively, it is possible that dismantling the palisade resulted in the loss of definition of the locations of more widely spaced posts. The observed asymmetry of the palisade trench suggests that that posts were inserted from the exterior up against a vertical inner edge. The evidence for refurbishment of the palisade includes postholes lying mostly outside the original circuit, perhaps also suggesting construction from that side. Both methods of working may imply the motive of containing something within, as opposed to protection from something outside. Based on the estimate that stable free-standing posts need one-third of their length in the ground (Dixon 2002, 90–91), it can be suggested that the palisade was about 1.5m tall from the contemporary ground surface.

Given the depth of the surviving palisade trench it appears that the gaps in the circuit represent entranceways rather than the effect of later truncation. Two relatively wide gaps were present on the south-eastern side, either side of a short segment of palisade trench (2524). There was also a wide gap on the western side, although it cannot be known whether this served anything more than the annexe. There was a narrow entrance of the southern side which was re-modelled over time. This may have been designed to exclude animals such as cattle, although it may have suited sheep as well as people. Any of these entrances may have been closed with lighter or temporary fencing. The complete circuit of the outer enclosure was not recovered but it would seem that the overall layout was designed to manage access to and from the south via the southern and south-eastern entrances, and to limit access on the other sides.

Features internal to the enclosure did not form clear patterns that could be interpreted as structures. Curving gully L did not define the arc of a circle and it is possible that it formed or partly formed a structure such as a screen, about 6m across, rather than a roundhouse. There is room for a roundhouse to have lain in the centre of the enclosure,

perhaps with Gully L as an ancillary structure, but, if this had been the case, all the evidence has been lost. To the south, a group of small pits/postholes and gullies may relate to other structures whose form is uncertain. Short single or paired ditch slots are sometimes found on Iron Age settlement sites with suggestions that they may have been the more deeply founded elements of agricultural structures, or perhaps drying racks or planting trenches (e.g. Upex *et al.* 2010, 74). There were 3–4m-long gullies in the north-eastern corner of the outer enclosure that may have held timber beams and possible structural features at the south-eastern entrance. On the western side of the enclosure are groups of two or three post-holes, perhaps the locations of agricultural features such as tethering posts. In the southern part of the enclosure were two large, shallow pits containing burnt clay and charcoal (2293 and 2295), the latter with small quantities of wheat and wood charcoal suggesting the processing of cereals nearby. None of the features showed *in situ* burning and none appear to have been hearths or ovens. Other internal features included relatively broad but shallow depressions, which may have been tree-root disturbances or created in some other way, for instance by confined animals.

The site was characterised by a poverty of material remains as well as a lack of readily interpretable interior features. This was partly due to the aggressive soil conditions, which left less than 5% of the small collection of recovered animal bone identifiable. Other remains were also sparse. The pottery assemblage perhaps weighted towards storage jars rather than a wider range of cooking and serving vessels, and the botanical remains did not indicate crop-processing on anything but a small scale. While the scant remains may in part reflect the general shallowness of features on the site, there is the impression that this may have been a somewhat specialised habitation where a limited range of domestic activity was undertaken. It may have been a seasonal settlement, or one housing a particular section of society.

The palisade would certainly have been an effective way of controlling livestock and a detectable concern with defining entrances may have been primarily to do with managing animals. Palisades are certainly not typical of Middle Iron Age settlements, although they may have been more prevalent than it appears in view of their vulnerability to loss during subsequent modifications. Comparable examples are not close in terms of site type. The 'hillfort' at Castell Henllys, Pembrokeshire, had an extensive early phase of palisade that was a precursor to larger ditches and banks that seem always to have been defensive in intent (Mytum 2013). The monumental scale is entirely lacking at Powick and the features in the interior here are not typical of Middle Iron Age settlements where roundhouse locations can be prominent, whether as posthole patterns or penannular gullies. Within Worcestershire, Middle Iron Age penannular gullies have been found at the extensive settlement at Beckford in the Carrant Valley (Britnell 1974). They have also been recorded at

Wychbold (Jones and Evans 2006) and Bredon (Upex *et al.* 2010), although in neither case were the gullies deep and more than average truncation might have removed all evidence for roundhouses completely. At the large double-enclosed site at Blackstone, overlooking the Severn floodplain in the north of the county, pits and postholes were common but Iron Age buildings were difficult to define, making the nature of the occupation uncertain (Hurst 2012, 36). This site also had evidence for a palisade construction in one of its phases of enclosure, but in respect of its size and defensive architecture it was very different to the Powick enclosure. The accumulating evidence indicates that there was a variety of settlement forms in different parts of the modern county, perhaps reflected in differing architectural styles and ranges of material remains.

Cremations and other special deposits

There were a small number of unusual deposits that may be considered deliberate or 'special' placements. In the terminal (2177) of Ditch G by the southern entrance was recovered most of an Iron Age vessel (104 sherds, or 19% of the entire site assemblage by sherd count). It is possible that this was a deliberate placement of a complete vessel, or sherds of a vessel already broken. Similarly, in layer 2121 to the east of the enclosure were 124 sherds of another broken vessel (22% of the site assemblage). This may originally have been placed whole in a shallow pit but no feature edges were definable and the soil layer, protected from later ploughing in a shallow depression, was just 100mm deep at most. Relatively large numbers of sherds (35) also came from the south-eastern terminal 2495 of palisade trench A, and in the later phase from ditch segment 2496 (22 sherds) on the opposite side of the south-eastern entrance, but these are fragments from several vessels and probably represent more fortuitous collections of rubbish, perhaps from nearby middens.

The top fills of ditch J terminal 2253 (fills 2035 and 2036), which occupied the southern arm of the south-eastern entrance of the outer enclosure, contained a spread of charcoal and cremated human bone. The bone, while confirmed as containing human remains, possibly of more than one individual, is too fragmentary to determine anything more about the individual or individuals represented. Radiocarbon dates on two bone fragments were focused on calibrated ranges in the 1st or 2nd centuries BC, confirming their association with the Middle Iron Age occupation. The deposit of bone also contained wood charcoal, where identifiable overwhelmingly oak, which is typical of pyre debris. Other remains included amorphous fragments of fired clay of uncertain derivation, and small pieces of what has been identified as briquetage. The evidence shows that this deposit represents the remains of cremated individuals together with debris from the pyre. There is, however, no clear indication that this was the site of the pyre. It is perhaps more probable that pyre deposits were collected unsorted and put in the top of the ditch on the southern

side of the enclosure entrance. The effects of subsequent erosion and ploughing have undoubtedly resulted in truncation and so it is not clear how much of the original deposit has been lost.

The cremation deposit appears to represent an example of Middle Iron Age mortuary ritual that is, so far, unique in the county. It is clearly distinct from the Late Iron Age rite of cremation found in south-east England (sometimes referred to as Aylesford-type burials) where the dead were disposed of in formal cemeteries, often accompanied by vessels and other offerings, and adjacent to recognisable pyre sites (Fitzpatrick 1997, 208–13; Pearce 1997).

Mortuary rites in the Middle Iron Age are most often characterised by disarticulated remains or sometimes complete burials in pits in and around settlements, or in boundary features, although there is considerable regional variation (Cunliffe 2005, 544–9). Middle Iron Age cremation burials are occasionally found. In the west of England, isolated examples come from Cotswold Community, and perhaps Horcott Pit, both in the upper Thames Valley (Powell *et al.* 2010, 82; Lamdin-Whymark *et al.* 2009, 107). In Leicestershire, cremated human bone came from outside the entrance to a roundhouse at Enderby (Meek *et al.* 2004, 13) and from the centre of a large four-post structure at Wanlip (Beamish 1998, 13–16). Middle Iron Age cremated bone, though not certainly human, also came from an enclosure at Cawston, Warwickshire (Powell and Mudd forthcoming). In common with deposits of uncremated bone from settlement sites elsewhere, these rites may be seen as incorporating the deceased into domestic life, reflecting complex beliefs relating to death, fertility and renewal. At Powick it would seem significant that the cremated remains were deposited adjacent to the south-eastern entrance, both a boundary and a location that has wide resonance as a location of structured deposition at this time (e.g. Woodward and Hughes 2007). It also represented the final filling of this ditch and may have reflected a deliberate act of closure of the site as a whole. The probable identification of Droitwich briquetage with the cremated remains (while absent from elsewhere) raises the possibility that the mortuary rituals at the site included the use of salt, perhaps to aid preservation of the corpse. There is, however, no known association between briquetage and Iron Age burials and little chance of detecting salt residues in the archaeological record (Janice Kinory, pers. comm.), and so this suggestion would be difficult to substantiate on any site and remains highly speculative.

The Powick enclosure in context

The enclosure at Powick is a rare example of a Middle Iron Age site that is not a hillfort and also lies away from the river valleys of the region, such as those in the Bredon and Kemerton area (Dinn and Evans 1990; Hurst 2002, 3-4; Wigley 2002, 1). It may therefore be of a regional type that has received little recognition. It is difficult to determine whether the

enclosure complex was a permanent farming settlement. The limited nature and range of features and finds make it distinctive from other sites of this date, although it is to be acknowledged that there is no clear definition of what typical Iron Age farmsteads in the region looked like. The Iron Age settlement at Saxon's Lode, Ripple, on the bank of the Severn, is a case in point (Barber and Watts 2008). This apparently unenclosed farming settlement was defined only by a spread of grain storage pits, grouped in small clusters, without any evidence for buildings or, it seems, other features such as ditches. The several alternative interpretations offered for this situation are all unsatisfactory in some respects (ibid., 72-4). The exceptional truncation of the site was one possible explanation for the lack of features, as was the possibility that this was a zone of storage as distinct from one of habitation. The idea that the site might have been a central storage area for a number of farms is perhaps the least convincing explanation of the three in view of the relatively low density of pits present (ibid., 73). While the evidence remains a subject for debate, it seems that there were factors within the regional Iron Age tradition of settlement that make house sites and foci of occupation difficult to recognise.

At Powick, the palisade defines the site in a taxonomic sense and its construction clearly would have been a significant investment. It would have been an effective way of controlling livestock and a detectable concern with defining entrances may also have been primarily to do with managing domestic animals. It can be envisaged that the enclosure was intended both to prevent animals straying and to protect them from theft or predators. While none of the interior features can be interpreted very specifically, it is possible that the site contained relatively rudimentary structures primarily associated with tending livestock. This may have been on a temporary or seasonal basis such as a cycle of transhumance, and perhaps done by certain members of the farming community who left a less easily interpretable signature of their presence than is found on other settlements. The high, clayey location may be significant in this regard, and it is possible that it was a summer pastoral residence of a kind later found in upland Britain (the shielings of northern England and Scotland, and the *hafotai* of Wales) in medieval and early post-medieval times. This impermanence clearly did not entail less attention to some aspects of the settlement, such as the construction of the palisade and certain deliberate deposits of pottery and human remains, and the site can be assumed to have had a degree of importance whatever its specific status.

As a counterpart, Saxon's Lode may well have had a greater specialism in grain production, perhaps reflecting a greater dichotomy between arable and pastoral aspects of farming than is commonly envisaged. The lack of enclosures here at this time may also be relevant, boundedness perhaps being associated with the proximity of livestock and the need to keep them away from growing crops (and perhaps also from thatched buildings).

After the harvest, livestock may have been brought on the arable land to graze and overwinter. In this farming regime one might envisage an extensive habitation and usage of the land in the form of scatters of interconnected but somewhat specialised settlements, with grain production concentrated on the more favourable free-draining river terraces such as Saxon's Lode, and with the higher slopes, as at Powick, having a more pastoral emphasis.

Acknowledgements and archive

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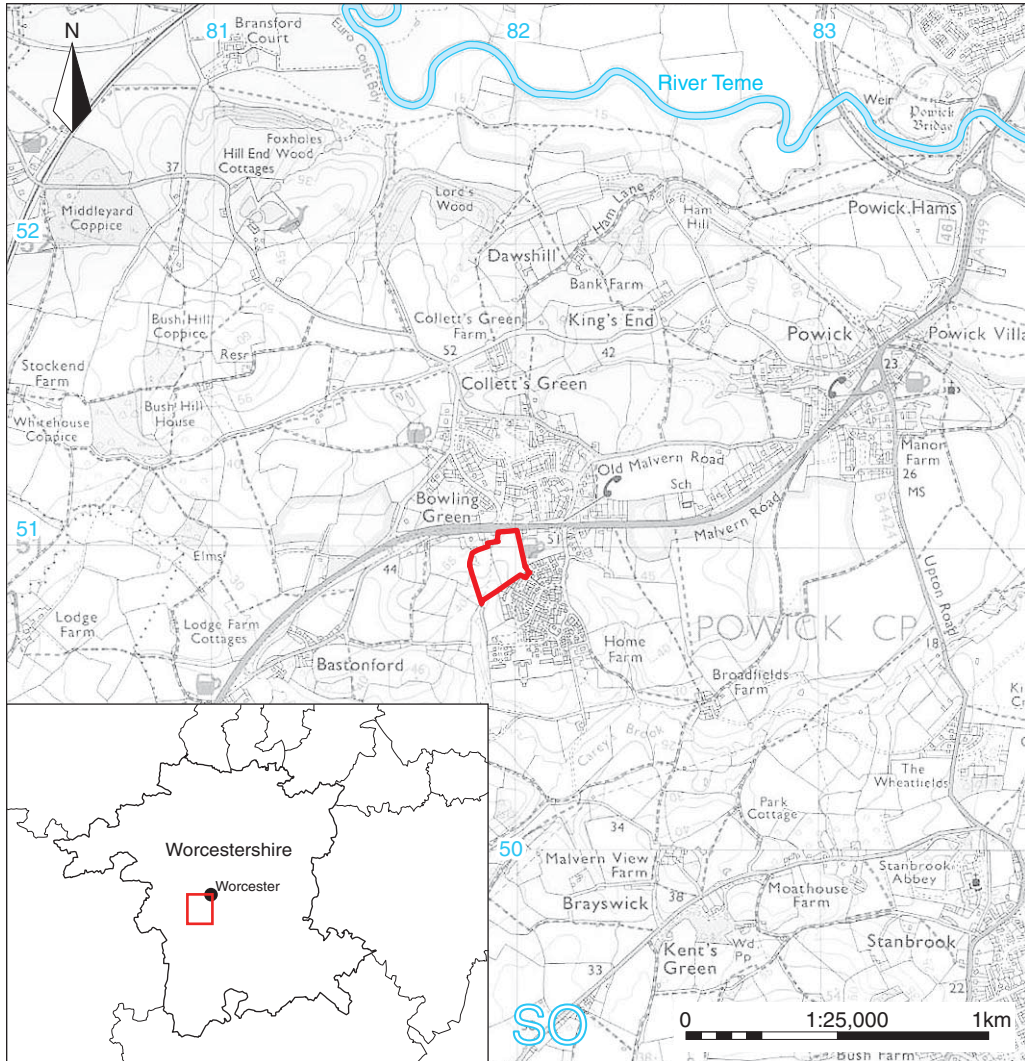
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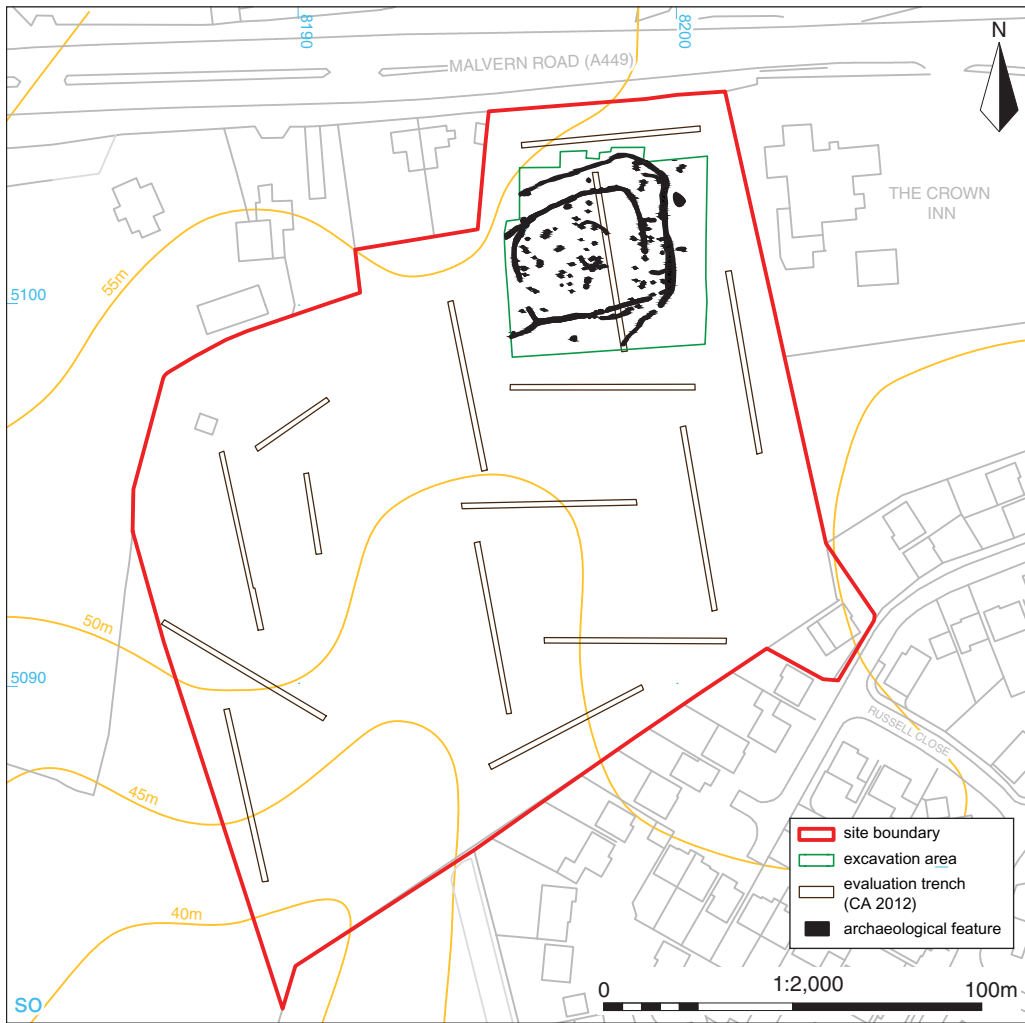
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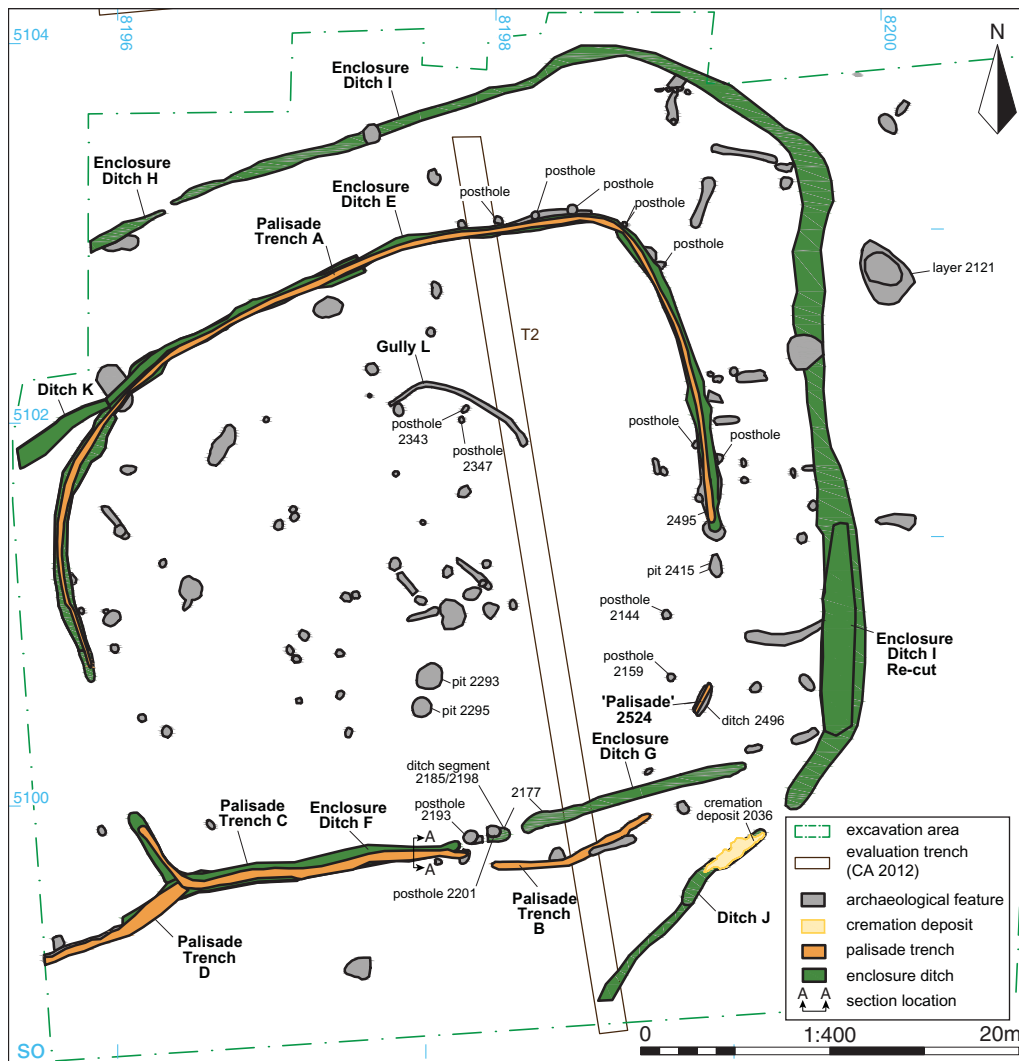
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Site location plan (1:25,000)



The site, showing the excavation area and location of the evaluation trenches (1:2000)

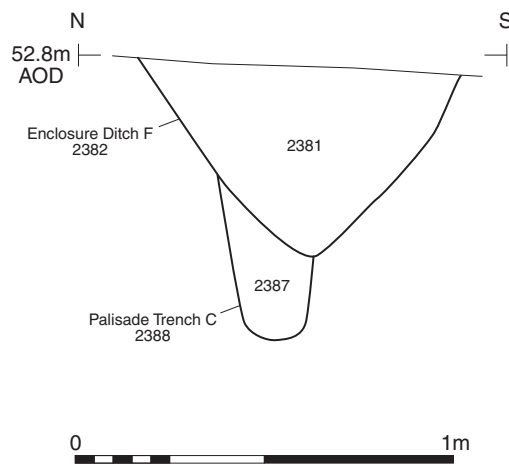


Site plan with selected features identified (1:400)

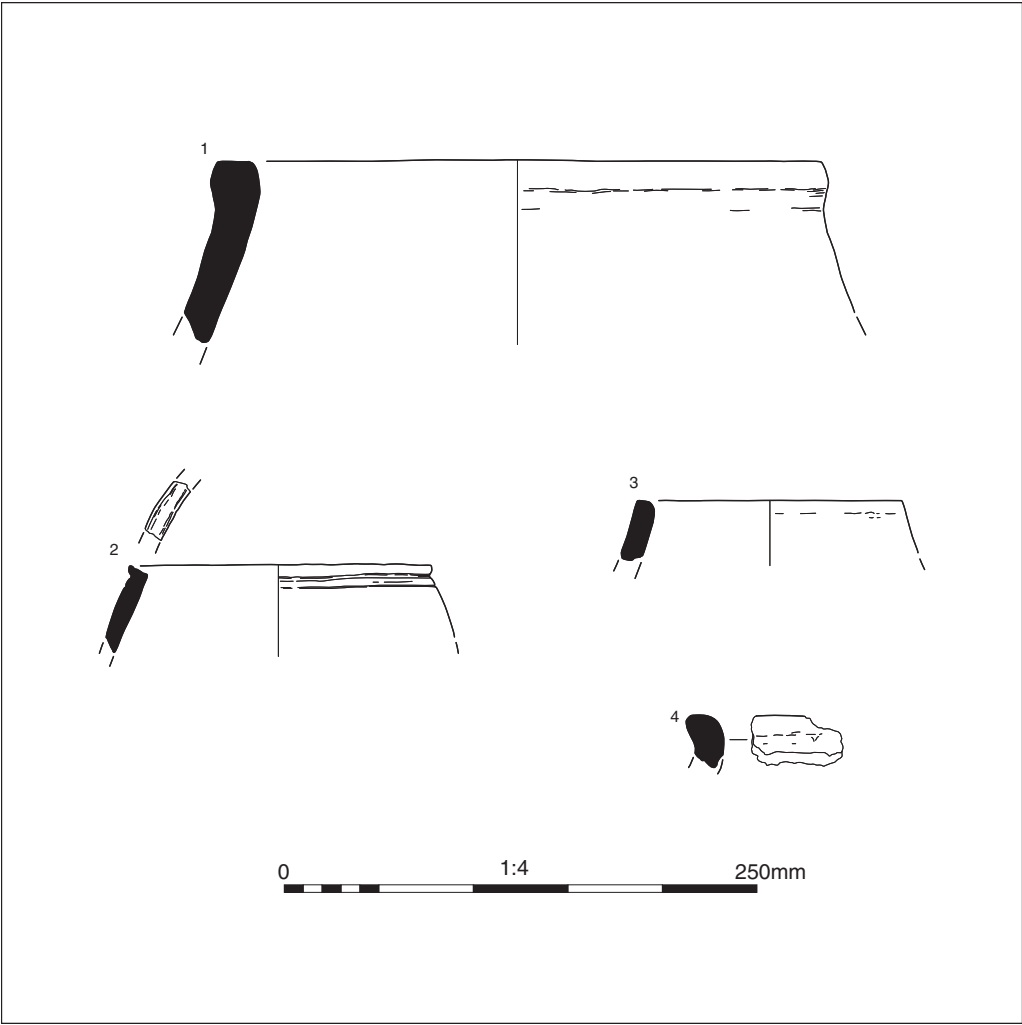


Excavation of the outer enclosure ditch, looking south-west toward the Malvern Hills

Section AA



Section of palisade trench C and enclosure ditch F looking east (1:20)



Iron Age pottery (1:4)

Russell Close, Powick: publication tables

Table 1: Radiocarbon dating results

Feature	Lab No.	Material	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	Radiocarbon age	Calibrated radiocarbon age 95.4% probability	Calibrated radiocarbon age 68.2% probability
Context 2036 Ditch J (intervention 2253)	SUERC-62367	Cremated human bone – cranium	-21.1‰	2089 ± 30 yr BP	196–42 cal BC (95.4%)	163–129 cal BC (25.4%) 120–87 cal BC (25.7%) 78–55 cal BC (17.1%)
Context 2036 Ditch J (intervention 2253)	SUERC-62336	Cremated human bone – long bone	-17.3‰	2137 ± 30 yr BP	352–298 cal BC (16.6%) 229–221 cal BC (1.0%) 211–86 cal BC (73.6%) 80–55 cal BC (4.3%)	342–327 cal BC (6.8 %) 204–112 cal BC (61.4%)

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