

Two New Pit Alignments and a Hoard of Currency Bars from Northamptonshire

By D. A. JACKSON

1. A NEW PIT ALIGNMENT AT BRIAR HILL FARM, NORTHAMPTON

In 1969, a pit alignment, probably of Iron Age date, and some other Iron Age features were found during construction work for a new housing estate at Briar Hill Farm, some 1½ miles south-west of Northampton town centre (SP 740589), and less than ½ mile north of the Iron Age hill fort at Hunsbury (FIG. 2). An excavation confined to available areas of the alignment was subsequently carried out by the author on behalf of the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Department of the Environment in the autumn of that year.

Thanks are due to the Northampton Town Council for permission to carry out the excavation, and to the contractors, Bacal Ltd., who also provided mechanical plant free of charge. Financial arrangements for the excavation were made by Mr. R. Robertson-Mackay, who has also provided valuable assistance during the preparation of this report. The illustrations are by Mrs. C. Boddington and Mr. J. Thorne of the Ancient Monuments Drawing Office and a report on the flints has been kindly provided by Mrs. E. Healey. Other help during publication is acknowledged from Mrs. E. Healey, Mr. B. Dix and Mr. A. Rollings.

GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

The pit alignment is situated on a slope at 300 ft. O.D. To the north, the ground slopes down to the river valley half a mile away, but to the south, it continues to rise to its highest point at Hunsbury Hill. The pits are aligned in an east-west direction almost parallel to the course of the river Nene at this point. The geology of the site includes the variable beds of Northampton Sand and Ironstone, and consists generally of sandstone rubble or sand. There are also patches of impervious clay however, and where these existed, the pits were observed to hold water after rain.

THE EXCAVATIONS. (FIGS. 3 and 4).

When archaeological features were first observed by the author in house foundation trenches during the spring of 1969, it was not possible to do more than clean down the sides of the trenches, and later to carry out a limited excavation inside the house foundation walls, before the floors were laid. These early investigations suggested the features were probably pits but it was not until the following autumn that the existence of a pit alignment was confirmed.

The extent of the excavations was limited by builders' trenches, spoil heaps and stacks of building materials (see FIG. 3). The excavation work was mainly concentrated in the area of the initial discoveries (Sites A, B and C) and in a trench on the western extent of the development (Site F). A further trench (Site D) was excavated midway between these two areas to confirm the course of the alignment. The work here was in a confined area and difficult; not only were

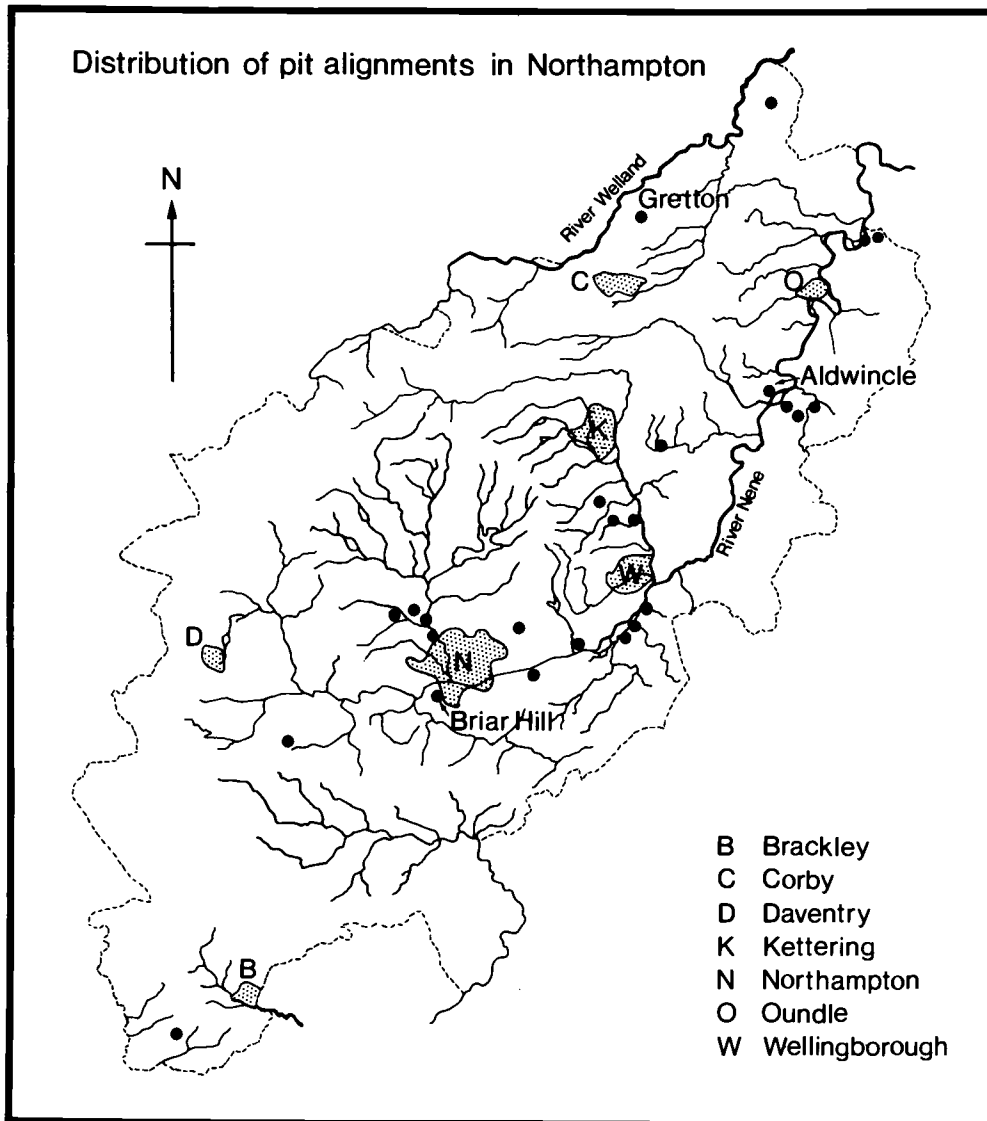


Fig. 1 Pit alignments in Northamptonshire

the pits found to be off the line projected through Sites A-C to F, but the pits were buried by 3 ft. of drift deposit. (Pits 27 and 28, FIGS. 4 and 7). A shallow gully (F. 29) running roughly parallel to the line of pits was also found in Trench D. It was not observed elsewhere and its relationship to the alignment is not clear (FIG. 4). Before the course of the alignment was confirmed in Trench F, disturbances were observed in a drain trench to the east. On investigation these features were clearly not part of the alignment, but seem likely to have been a ditch of unknown date running diagonally across the drain trench. (Site E, FIG. 3).

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

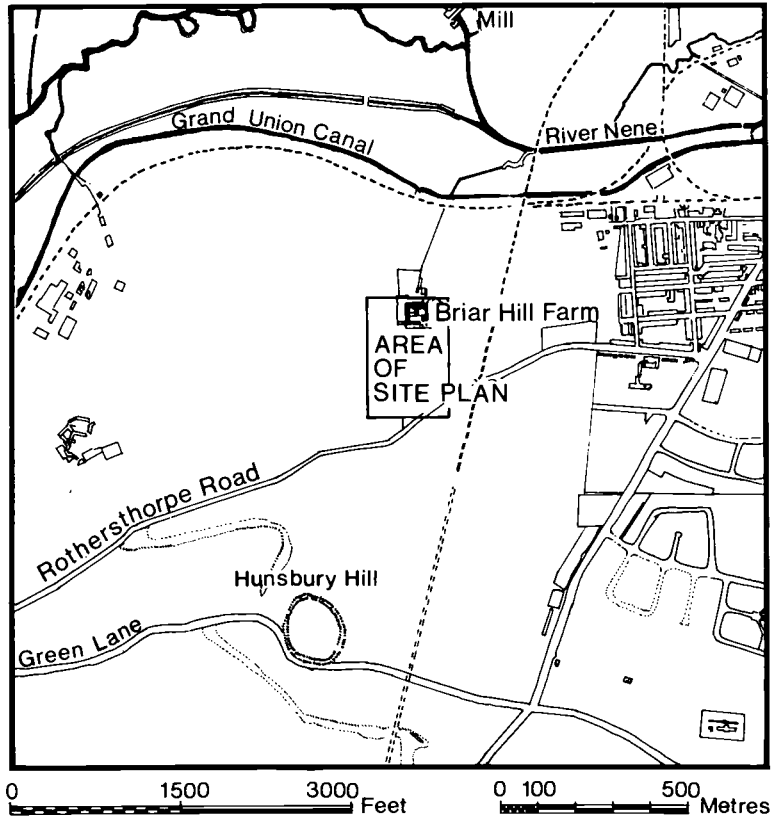


Fig. 2 Briar Hill Farm. Location plan

THE ALIGNMENT

The length of the alignment traced across the housing estate was roughly 500 ft., and there is no reason to doubt that it continued at either end.

The pit alignment has two, and perhaps three phases, the latest of which was a line of large deep pits which replaced and in some instances practically destroyed a double alignment of smaller pits or post holes. The possibility of the whole pit complex being contemporary, with the smaller pits holding vertical timbers, does not seem likely even if the sides of the larger pits were originally vertical, because of some instances, as for example, Pit 15a in Trench B (FIGS. 4 and 6) where most of the smaller pit had been destroyed by the larger one.

PERIOD 1

There appears to have been a double row of the smaller pits but their chronological relationship is not clear. Two of these small pits, one in each row (Pits 6 and 7 in Trench B, FIG. 4) are almost at right angles to the rest of the alignment and seem to form a pair. This may suggest the contemporary presence of pits in each row.

The filling of Pit 6 indicates that it originally held a rectangular object, presumably a timber post (FIG. 6). This "post" was some 12 in. by 6 in. in diameter with the

BRIAR HILL, NORTHANTS. 1969

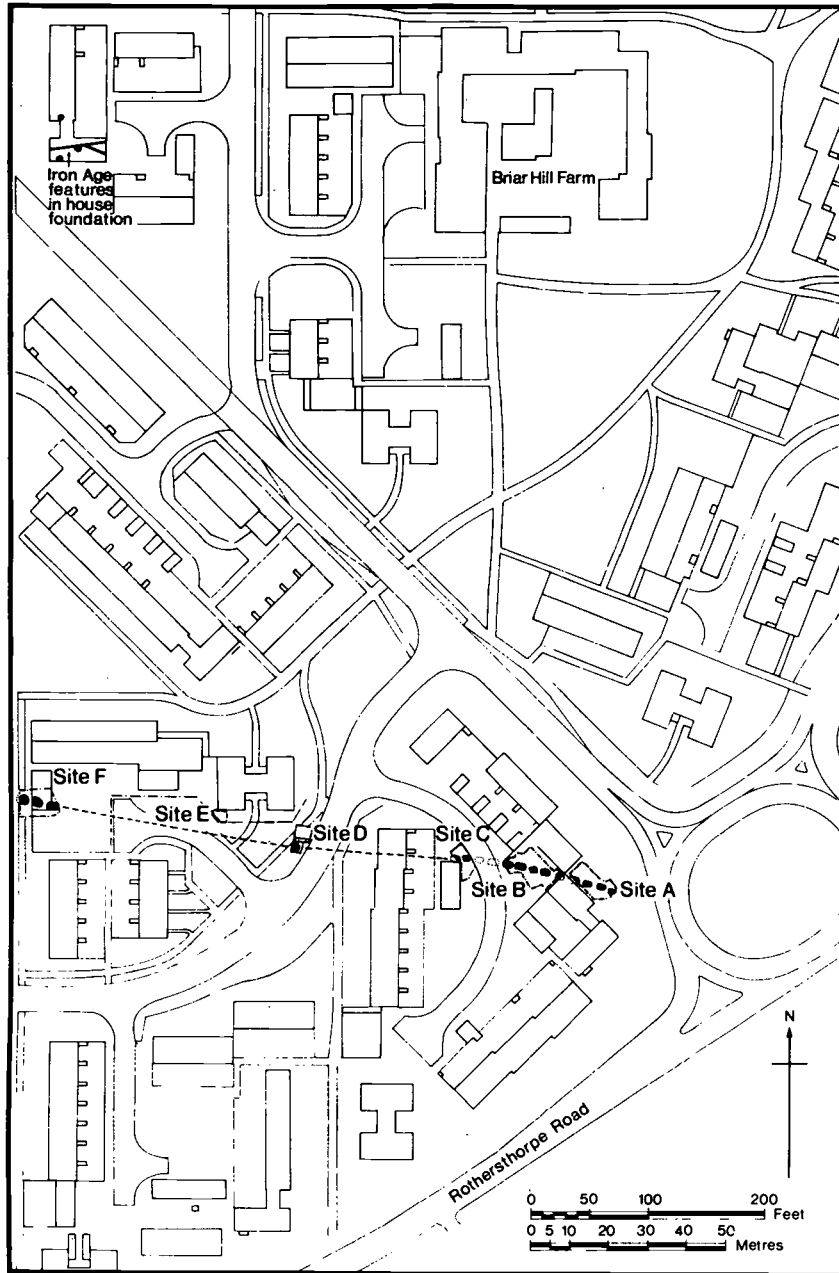


Fig. 3 Briar Hill. Site plan

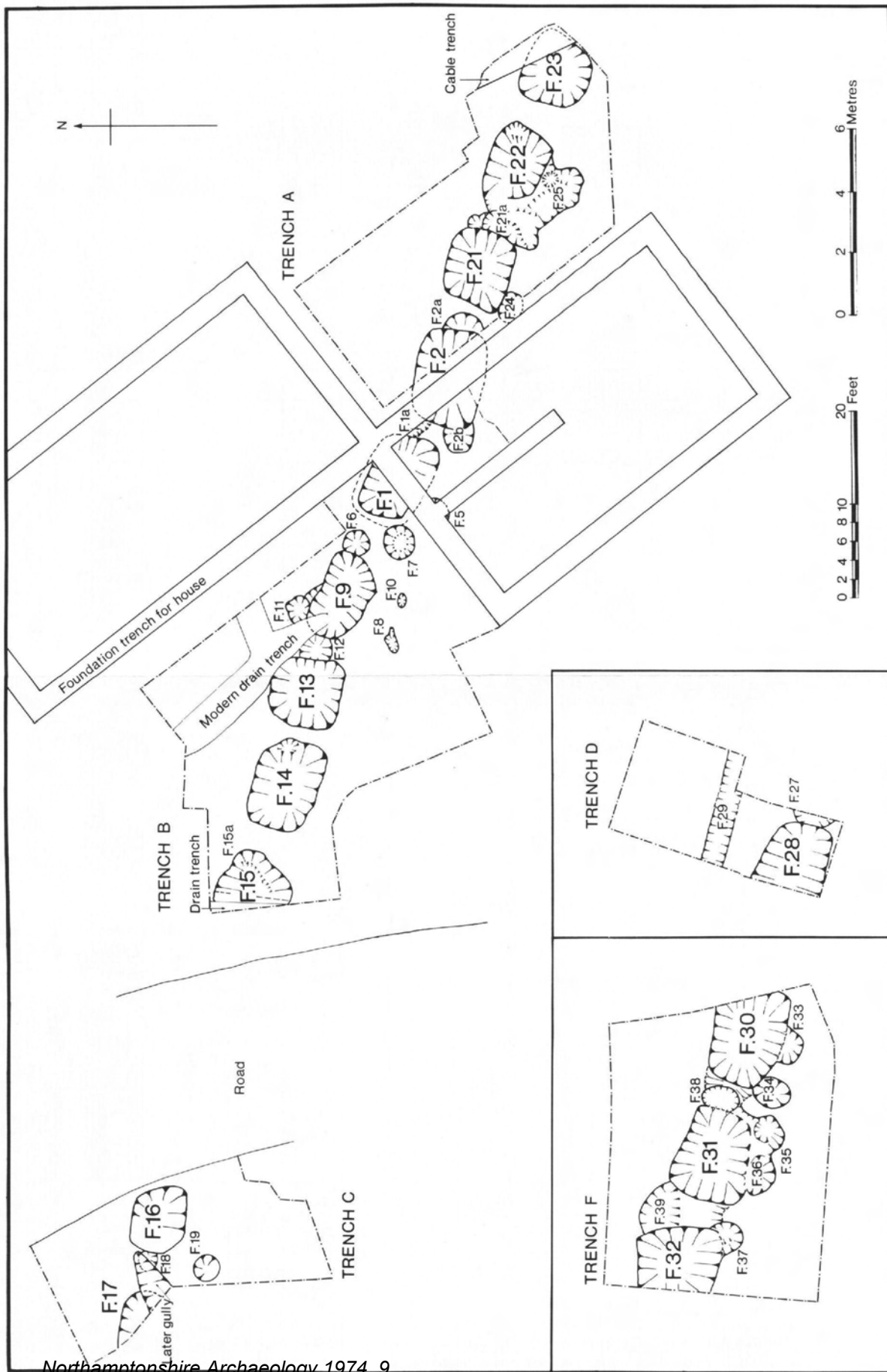


Fig. 4 Briar Hill. Plan of the excavated areas showing the pits at the level from which they were excavated.

long axis at right angles to Pit 7. However, similar post ghosts were not conclusively found in any of the other pits.

The bottoms of the pits were mainly flat, with diameters that ranged from one to two feet. The upper edges were largely eroded or disturbed, as can be seen in FIGS. 5 to 8. Details of the depths are given in Table A below, but it is unlikely that any of these pits were originally less than 2 ft. 6 in. deep.

TRENCHES A AND B (FIG. 4)

The line of small pits on the north side (Pits 15A, 12, 6, 1A, 2A and 21A) is referred to as Line 1B. This line is presumed to have originally been continuous in these trenches, but some of the features had largely been destroyed by the pits of Period 2. By comparison Line 1A to the south consists of only 4 pits, Pits 7, 2B, 24 and 25, and the last named is very irregular in outline. In addition to these two rows, there are two pits, F.11 to the north, and F.5 to the south which do not line up with either of the suggested alignments and there are also the remains of two small post holes (F.8 and F.10) which lie roughly on Line 1A. The spacing between the pits in Line 1A varied from 9 to 12 ft. This may also be true of the pits in Line 1B although here it is not certain how many may have been subsequently destroyed by the later pits.

TRENCH C (FIG. 4)

One pit in Line 1A (Pit 19), and one in Line 1B (Pit 18) were found in this trench.

TRENCH D (FIG. 4)

Pit 27 in this trench is presumed to belong to Period 1. This assumption is based on its position in relation to the larger pit (F.28) which apparently belongs to Period 2. The profile and filling clearly show that Pit 27 was left open and silted up with material eroded from the sides of the pit (FIG. 7). It was 2 ft. in diameter at the bottom which is larger than the average for the pits of the period and was originally at least 3 ft. deep.

BRIAR HILL, NORTHANTS.

TRENCH A Section through Pits F21-F22

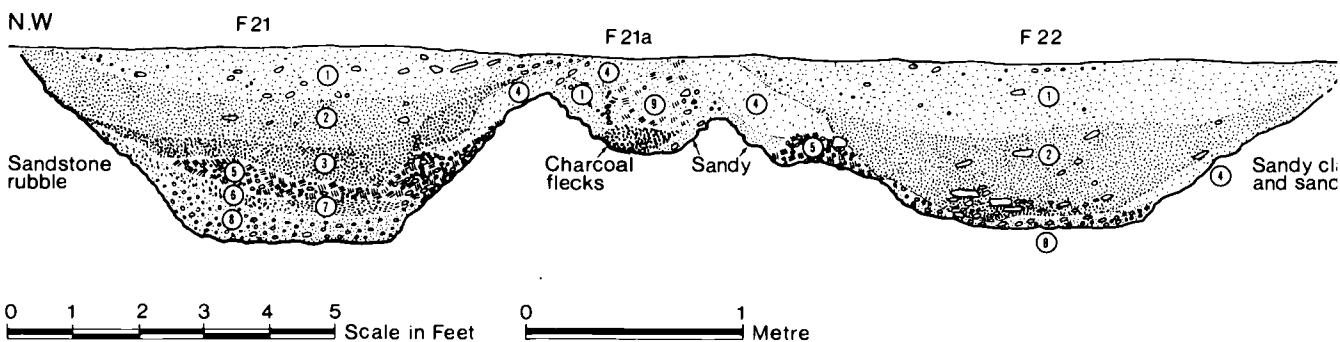


Fig. 5 Briar Hill. Section through Pit 21a of Period 1, and Pits 21 and 22 of Period 2.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

TRENCH F (FIG. 4 AND PLATES 3 AND 4)

The two features, F.38 and particularly F.39, are very irregular in shape but are presumed to be the remains of pits in Line 1B. On the south side there are five pits, presumably in Line 1A, which are spaced between 1 ft. and 4 ft. apart, this being much closer than the pit spacings found elsewhere. A consistent feature of these pits was the stony nature of the filling in the bottom.

BRIAR HILL, NORTHANTS

TRENCH B

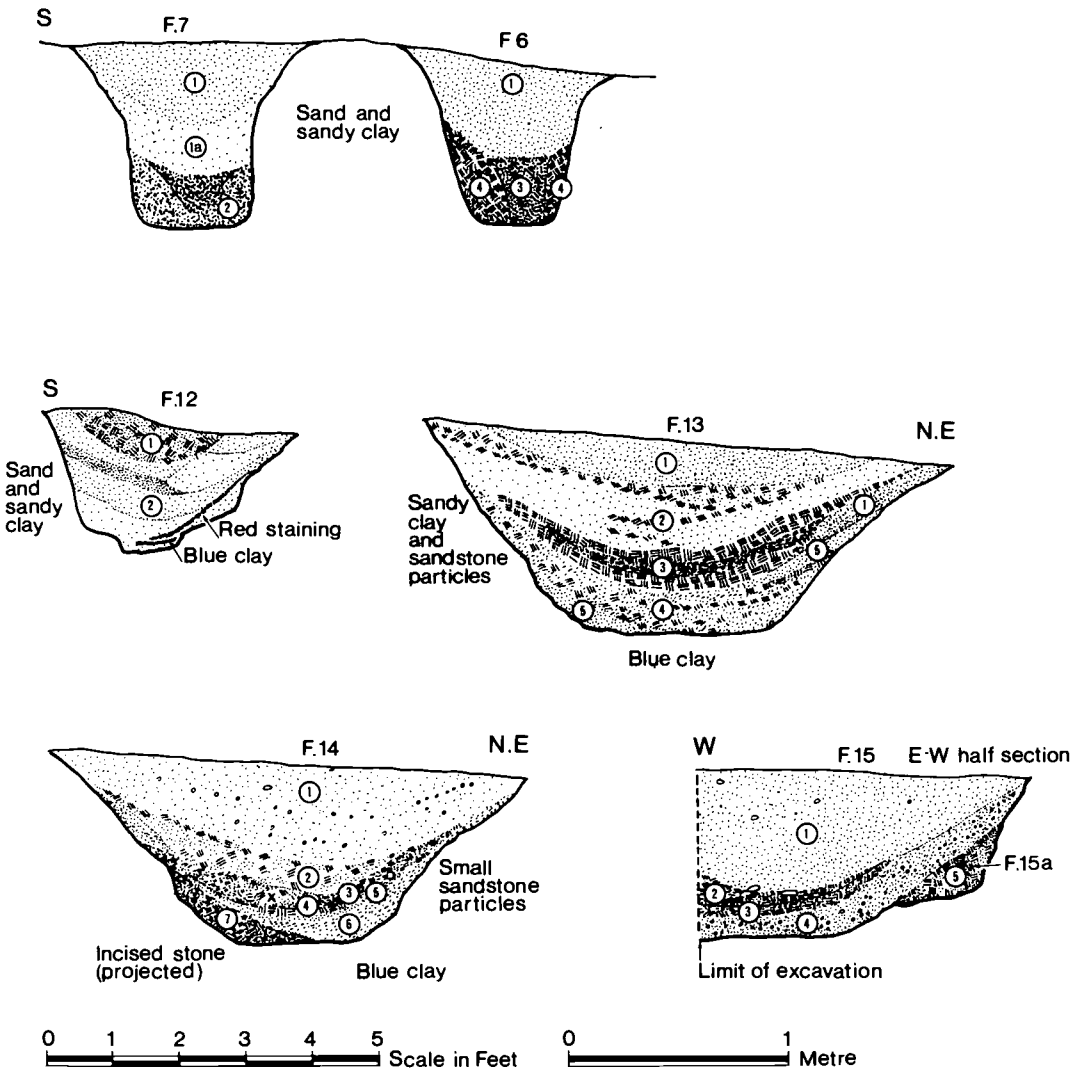
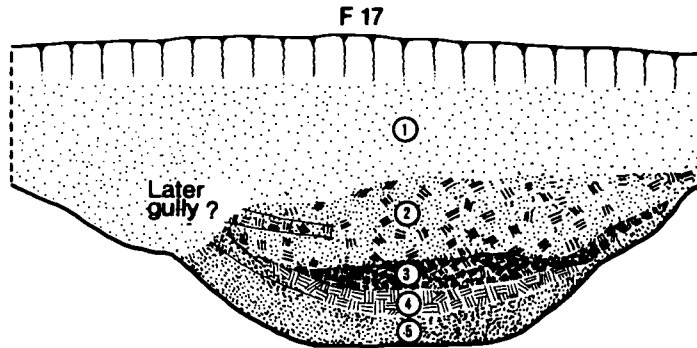


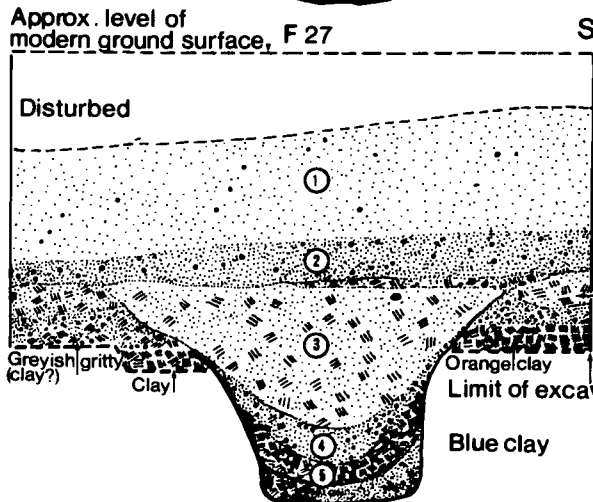
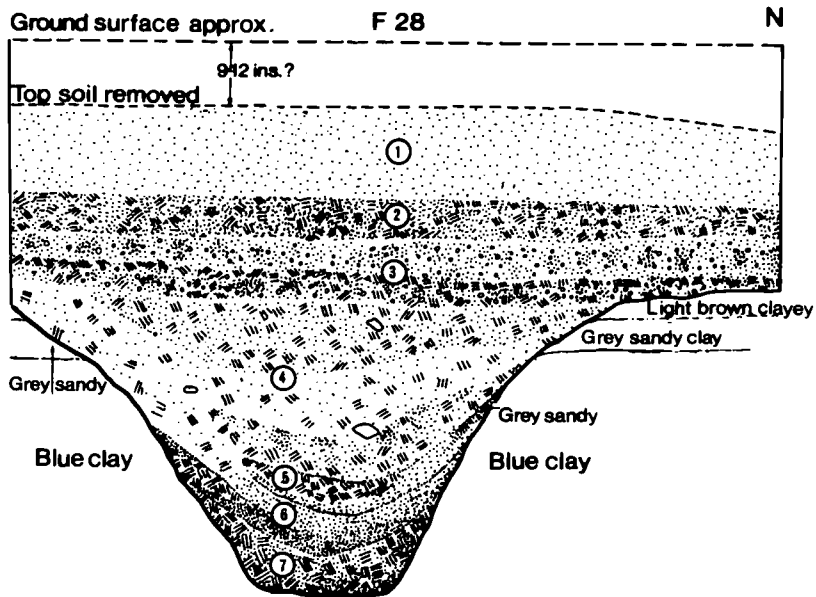
Fig. 6 Briar Hill. Sections through Pits 6, 7, 12 and 15a of Period 1, and Pits 13, 14 and 15 of Period 2.

BRIAR HILL, NORTHANTS

TRENCH C S.W Side



TRENCH D



NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

PERIOD 2

The larger pits (F's. 1, 2, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 28, 30, 31 and 32) have all been assigned to Period 2. The most characteristic feature of the fifteen pits which were excavated was their rectangular or occasionally square plans, e.g. F.21 and Plates 1 and 2. The profile of the pits as found was like an inverted truncated pyramid but the pit sides were no doubt originally more vertical.

At the top the pits were between 8 and 10 ft. in length and 6 and 8 ft. in width but the size had obviously been enlarged by subsequent erosion. At the bottom

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TRENCH F

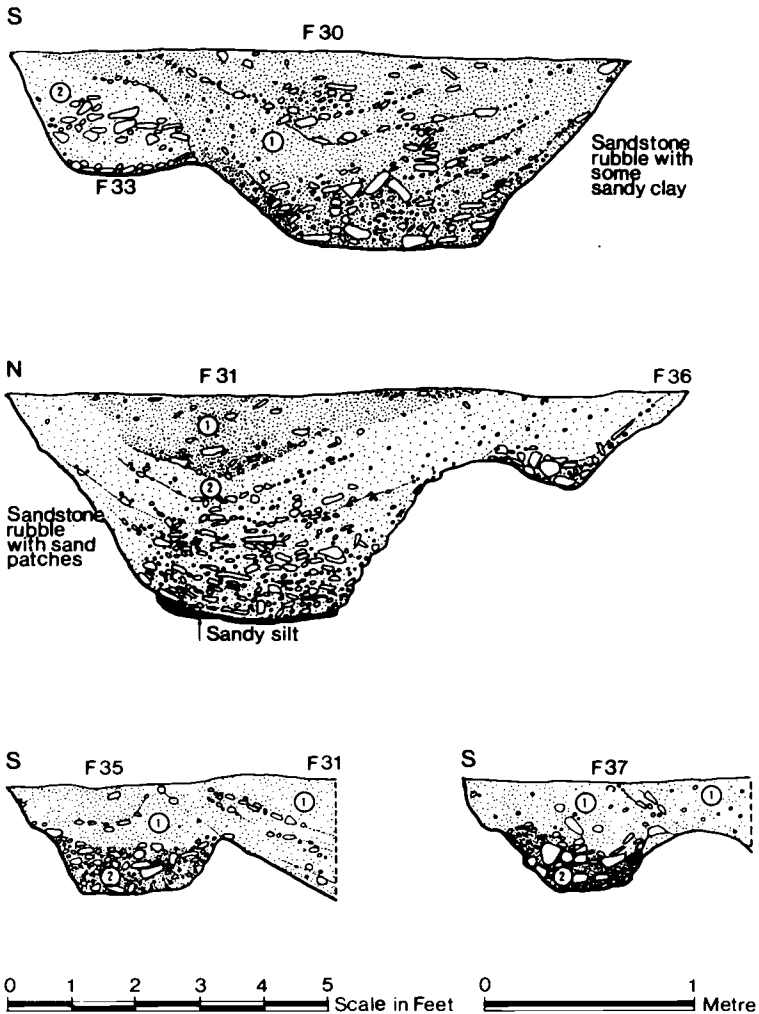


Fig. 8 Briar Hill. Sections through Pits 33, 35, 36 and 37 of Period 1 and Pits 30 and 31 of Period 2

the width of the pits varied from 2 ft. to 3ft. 6 in. but their length (along the alignment) was usually greater than their width.

It is not possible to accurately estimate the original depths of all the pits because of later disturbance of the upper levels, but Pit 28 in Trench D was found to be at least 4 ft. deep (see Table A below and FIG. 7). There is no evidence to suggest there was any great variation in the depths of the pits when they were originally dug and it is suggested that they were all 4 ft. to 4 ft. 6 in. in depth.

The distance between the pits, at the excavated level, varied between 1 ft. 6 in. and 4 ft., but if allowance is made for erosion of the sides then originally they would have probably been between 4 and 5 ft. apart. The distance between them from centre to centre varied from 10 ft. 9 in. to just over 13 ft. which suggests that they were fairly regularly spaced. Irregularities in line and dimension, such as occurs in the area of Pits 9 and 1 may be due to gang work. Similar irregularities have been found to occur in excavations mentioned below (page 43).

There was no evidence that these large pits had held posts or had been cleaned out or re-dug. It appears that they were left to silt up naturally. The silting lines do not appear to have come in from any particular direction, which may suggest the spoil dug from the pits was not positioned adjacent to the holes (FIGS. 5 to 8).

TABLE A
TABLE OF DEPTHS—BRIAR HILL PIT ALIGNMENT
PERIOD 1 PERIOD 2

Pit No.	Excavated depth of pits (ft. and ins.)	Over-burden	Depths from modern surface	Pit No.	Excavated depth of pits (ft. and ins.)	Over-burden	Depths from modern surface
2a	2. 1	1. 7	3. 8	1	3. 3	1. 6	4. 9
2b	2. 2	1. 6	3. 8	2	3. 2	1. 7	4. 9
6	2. 9	1. 6	4. 3	9	2. 6	1. 9	4. 3
7	2. 9	1. 6	4. 3	13	3. 3	1. 7	4.10
11	1. 3	2. 5	3. 8	14	2.11	1. 3	4. 2
12	2. 2	1. 7	3. 9	15	3. 0	1. 2	4. 2
15a	2. 6	1. 2	3. 8	16	2. 5	1. 9	4. 2
18	1. 3	1. 9	3. 0	17	2. 4	1. 9	4. 1
19	1. 3	1. 9	3. 0	21	3. 2	1. 7	4. 9
21a	1. 7	1. 7	3. 2	22	2. 8	1. 9	4. 7
24	1. 4	1. 6	2.10	23	2. 6	1.10	4. 4
25	1. 7	1. 8	3. 3	28	4. 0	3. 3	7. 3
27	3. 0	2.11	5.11	30	3. 2	1. 5	4. 7
33	2. 0	1. 6	3. 6	31	3. 8	1. 3	4.11
34	2. 0	1. 6	3. 6	32	3. 8	1. 4	5. 2
35	1. 9	1. 6	3. 3				
36	1. 6	1. 7	3. 1				
37	1. 9	1. 5	3. 4				
38	1. 9	1. 4	3. 1				

The pits in Trench A and those in the east end of Trench B contained darkened earth, and many small weathered sherds of pottery, suggesting they had probably been dug through an earlier occupation site. The sherds are probably of early Iron Age date (v. below and FIG. 9) but no occupation layer of this period survived in the excavated trenches.

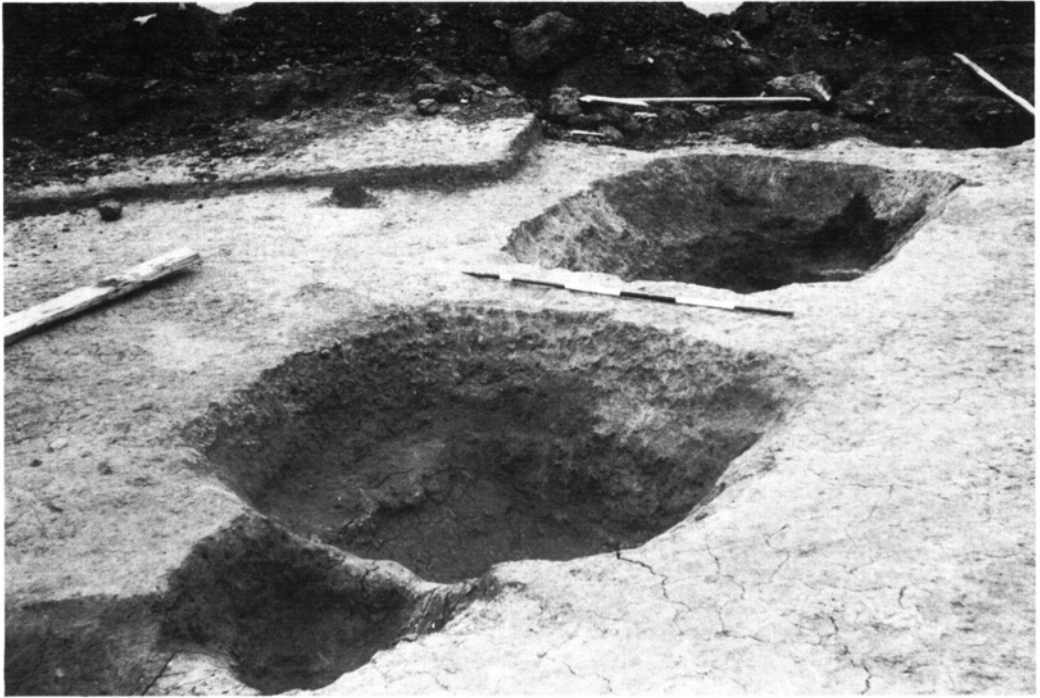


Plate 1 Briar Hill. Pits 13 and 14 after excavation



Plate 2 Briar Hill. Section of Pit 13. Note the square bottom
Northamptonshire Archaeology 1974, 9



Plate 3 Briar Hill. Trench F, looking S.E. The large pit in the foreground is Pit 31 and to the right of this four smaller pits of Period I can be seen



Plate 4 Briar Hill Section showing Pit 30 cutting Pit 33
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NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

DESCRIPTION OF LAYERS IN THE ILLUSTRATED SECTIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

Br = Brown, Gr = Grey, Y = Yellow, Gg = Ginger, Dk = Dark, Lt = Light, Gts = Grits, Ea = Earth, Sty = Stony, Gty = Gritty, Sdy = Sandy, Cly = Clayey.

Pits F.21 — F.22 (FIG. 5).

(1) Gg-br ea with sandstone gts. (2) drk-br ea. (3) very dk ea. (4) lt gty ea. (5) cly ea, very sty. (6) sandstone gts. (7) silt. (8) y-silt and sandstone rubble. (9) y-br sdy ea.

Pit F.13 (FIG. 6).

(1) Br sdy ea. (2) mixed sdy ea and clay. (3) wide band of lt green clay with dirty clay running through the centre. (4) silt of sandstone particles and sdy clay. (5) silt.

Pit F.14 (FIG. 6).

(1) Lt br ea. (2) gg-cly ea. (3) mixed dirty clay. (4) lt green clay. (5) orange sand. (6) sdy silt. (7) dirty y-green clay.

Pit F.15 (FIG. 6).

(1) Br sdy ea. (2) buff-green silty clay. (3) gg silty clay. (4) gg-br ea and sandstone particles. (5) gg-br cly ea.

Pit F.12 (FIG. 6)

(1) Br-cly ea. (2) mainly sand of various colours.

Pits F.6-F.7 (FIG. 6).

(1) Br. ea. (1a) lighter silty. (2) dk br sand and silt. (3) dk ea and clay. (4) cly.

Pit F.17 (FIG. 7).

(1) Lt br ea. (2) greeny-br cly ea. (3) gr-br clay. (4) lt blue and gr clay. (5) br-sdy silt.

Pit F.27 (FIG. 7)

(1) Gg sdy ea. (2) gg-br ea. (3) mixed lt br sand and clay. (4) gr gty sdy. (5) orange clay.

Pit F.28 (FIG. 7).

(1) Gg sdy ea. (2) silt or clay (gg). (3) gg mottled sdy ea; some small stones. (4) lt br sdy clay. (5) gr clay. (6) gr-br sdy. (7) mixed clays.

Pits F.30-F.33 (FIG 8).

(1) Br, very sty ea. (2) lt sdy ea.

Pits F.31-F.36 (FIG. 8).

(1) Br sty ea. (2) lt sdy ea, very sty.

Pits F.35-F.31 (FIG. 8).

(1) Gg-br ea. (2) gg-br very stony ea.

Pit F.37 (FIG. 8).

(1) Gg-br ea. (2) br sty ea.

OTHER FEATURES

During the excavation of the pit alignment some Iron Age features were noted in house foundations to the north (FIG. 3). The remains of three circular pits and part of a shallow ditch were excavated but it was not possible to carry out any extensive work. The pits were dug about 1 ft. 6 in. into the sandstone bedrock, and the diameters were in two cases 4 ft. 6 in. and in the other 5 ft. 9 in. The small amount of pottery recovered from the pits is dateable to the 1st and perhaps 2nd century BC (see below and FIG. 10) and suggests occupation during this period.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF THE PIT ALIGNMENT

Pit alignments are a fairly common archaeological feature in Northamptonshire, some 25 examples being known to date (FIG. 1). Double rows of pits are known at such sites as Tallington, Lincs. (Simpson 1966, FIG. 1), and three are known from aerial photographs in Warwickshire (Webster and Hobley 1964, pl. IIIA). At one of these sites, Church Lawford, there is a considerable difference in the size of the pits in the two rows, just as was found at Briar Hill.

The evidence from Pit 6 suggests the smaller pits at Briar Hill held posts or stakes, presumably of timber. However, the inconsistent spacing and eroded edges of the pits question whether they ever supported a boundary fence or barrier although this possibility cannot be ignored. A tentative suggestion is that the holes may have held traps in the form of sharpened stakes. These stakes could have been held in an upright position by placing packing in the bottom of the pits or by fixing them to base plates.

The large pits of Period 2 are comparable to pits excavated in other alignments in Northamptonshire, namely at Aldwinckle¹ and Gretton.² At each of these sites, the angular shape, even depth, and fairly regular spacing of the pits have been a consistent feature.³

No dating evidence was found in the pits at Briar Hill as all the finds were residual, but an Iron Age date has been established for the alignments at Gretton and Tallington. In the area of the alignment at Briar Hill there is the Hunsbury hill-fort to the south, the Iron Age occupation just north of the alignment referred to in this report, and also a large double ditched rectangular enclosure to the west of the housing estate (Hollowell 1971, PL. 5 No. 1) which may also be of this date.

THE FINDS

The finds from the pits are all presumed to be residual from earlier occupation. They consist of the pottery referred to above, and an unusual piece of incised or decorated sandstone found in Pit 13 (see below and FIG. 11). Nine struck flints were also found in the pits but unlike the pottery, their distribution was more random (see below and FIG. 12).

POTTERY FROM THE PITS (FIG. 9)

Approximately 240 sherds of pottery were found in the fillings of the pits east of Pit 14. The sherds were small and weathered and included only 11 rims and 16 sherds with traces of decoration.

The fabrics are mainly fairly hard and sandy, and the following wares were distinguished:

1. Buff/grey ware throughout. Coarse sandy surface.
2. Outer face ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ the thickness of the sherd) orange or red/brown to buff: inner face usually dark grey. Hardness variable but often sandy with some larger grits and sparse shell. About 30%.
3. Fine smoother wares. These represent some 8% of the total. Colour variable: no grits but often slightly sandy: some decorated pieces.
4. Buff or brown, "corky", poorly fired ware. About 5%.

The distinction between the fabric types is not great, and many of the sherds have traits from two or more of the wares described above.

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED MATERIAL

1. Plain rim. Outer face red/brown: inner face buff: core light grey: sandy feel. Fabric 3. F.1 layer 2.

¹ D. A. Jackson. Report forthcoming.

² See page 32.

³ The implications of the evidence from all three alignments is discussed on page 00.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

2. Plain rim with diagonal incisions on outer edge. Outer face buff: inner face and core dark grey. Fabric I. F.1 layer 2.

3. Outer face dark brown: core and inner face dark grey, decorated with incised lines. Fabric 3. F.21 layer 1.

4. Plain rim. Outer and inner face, light brown: core grey. Fabric 3. F.2 layer 2.

5. Slightly outward curving rim with diagonal incisions on outer edge. Description as No. 4. F.2 layer 2.

6. Outer and inner face, buff: core grey: slightly sandy: decorated with incised lines or grooves. F.21 layer 1.

7. Inturned rim. Brown slightly sandy ware. F.9 layer 2.

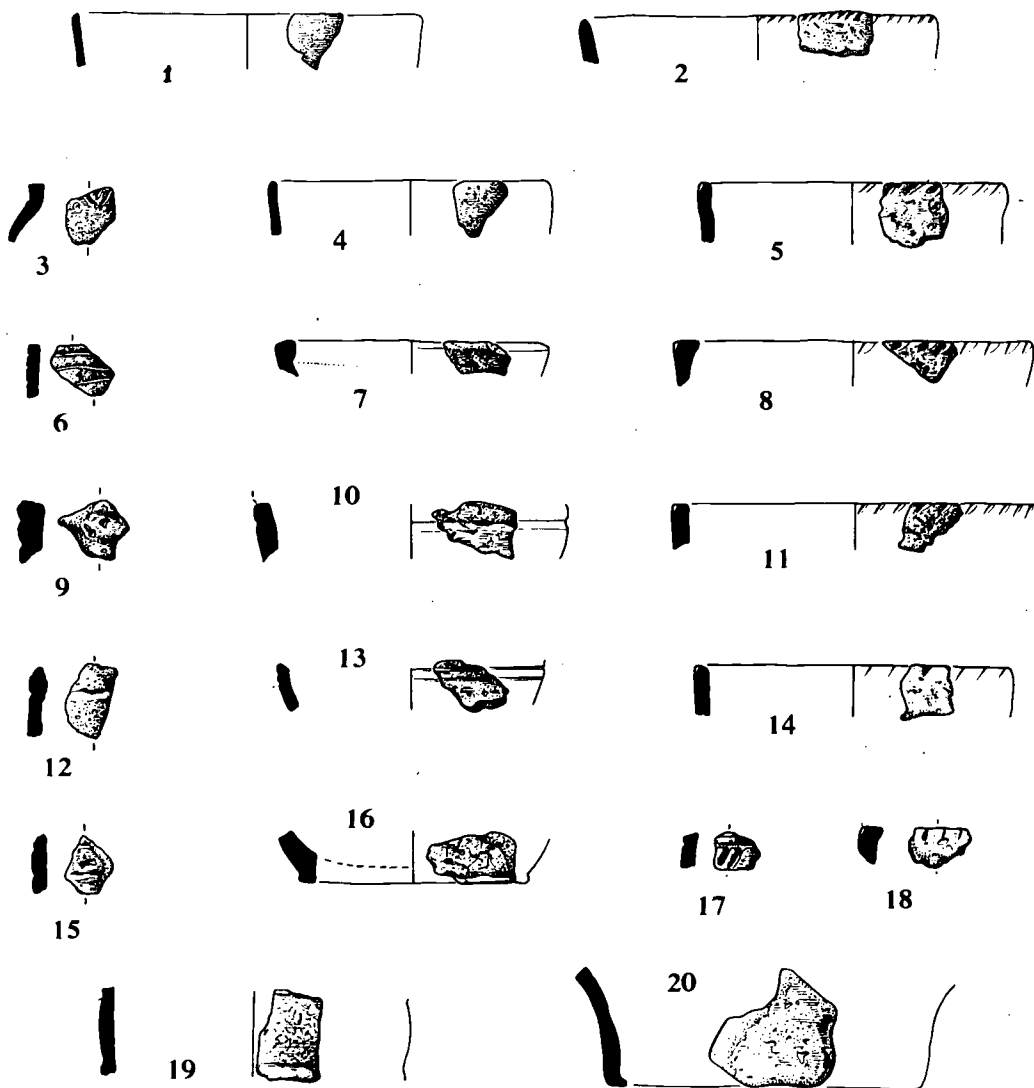


Fig. 9 Briar Hill. Residual pottery from the pits ($\frac{1}{8}$)

8. Inturned rim with wide incisions on outer edge. Light brown to dark grey: not sandy. Fabric 3/4. F.9 layer 2.
9. Outer face dark brown: inner face and core buff/grey: decorated with wide grooves. Fabric 2. F.22 layer 2.
10. Outer face orange/buff: inner face and core, dark grey: decorated with a wide groove. Fabric 2. F.22 layer 4.
11. Plain rim with diagonal incisions on outer edge. Dark brown to black. Fabric 4. F.21 layer 8.
12. Buff/grey. Decorated with a wide groove on outer face. Fabric 4. F.1 layer 2.
13. Outer face orange/brown: core and inner face dark grey. Decorated with two narrow grooves. Fabric 2. F.9 layer 2.
14. Plain rim with incised lines on outer edge. Dark brown to grey, slightly sandy. F.25.
15. Outer and inner face brown: core grey. Decorated with incised lines or grooves externally. Fabric 1. F.22 layer 2.
16. Base with slightly splayed foot. Orange/pink ware: inner face grey/brown, slightly sandy. F.1 layer 2.
17. Outer face dark brown: inner face grey: core buff: decorated with incised lines. Fabric 3. F.2A.
18. Outer face red/brown: inner face and core dark grey: decorated with ? diagonal incisions. Fabric 2. F.22 layer 1.
19. Outer face light brown: inner face and core dark grey: decorated with a wide groove. Fabric 2. F.9 layer 2.
20. Possible base. Outer face light brown: inner face and core dark grey/brown. Fabric 1/2. F.2 layer 1.

DISCUSSION OF THE POTTERY

This pottery is difficult to parallel but on the analogy of unpublished material from other sites in Northants⁴ the sherds are presumed to be of early Iron Age or possibly late Bronze Age date.⁵ Pottery decorated with diagonal incisions on the rim is common at Fengate (Hawkes, 1943) and occurs at West Harling (Clark and Fell 1953, FIG. 12, 25), but in contrast to these sites there is no clear evidence of vessels with angular profiles amongst the Briar Hill sherds. This may indicate they are perhaps more closely comparable to the pottery from the late Bronze Age/early Iron-Age site at Ivinghoe Beacon, in Buckinghamshire (Cotton and Frere 1968 FIG. 18, 55 and FIG. 19, 101). Some of the fabric and decoration of the Briar Hill pottery, however, is similar to late Neolithic/early Bronze Age wares and an earlier date cannot entirely be discounted.⁶

IRON AGE POTTERY FROM THE HOUSING ESTATE (FIG. 10)

The Iron Age pottery found in house foundations at Briar Hill consisted of only four sherds, each of which is illustrated.

⁴ From sites excavated by the author, namely a settlement site at Weekley, the pit alignment at Gretton, and from a barrow ditch at Ecton (*Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 8, 1973).

⁵ I am grateful to Mr. R. Robertson-Mackay for undertaking a preliminary examination of this pottery.

⁶ I am grateful to Professor C. F. C. Hawkes and Professor S. Piggott for suggesting this.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

CATALOGUE

FIG. 10. no. 21. Rim of slack situlate form. Dark grey, moderately hard ware with brown patches on outer face. Outer and inner face smoothed but bumpy: practically devoid of grits. F.4 (Pit).

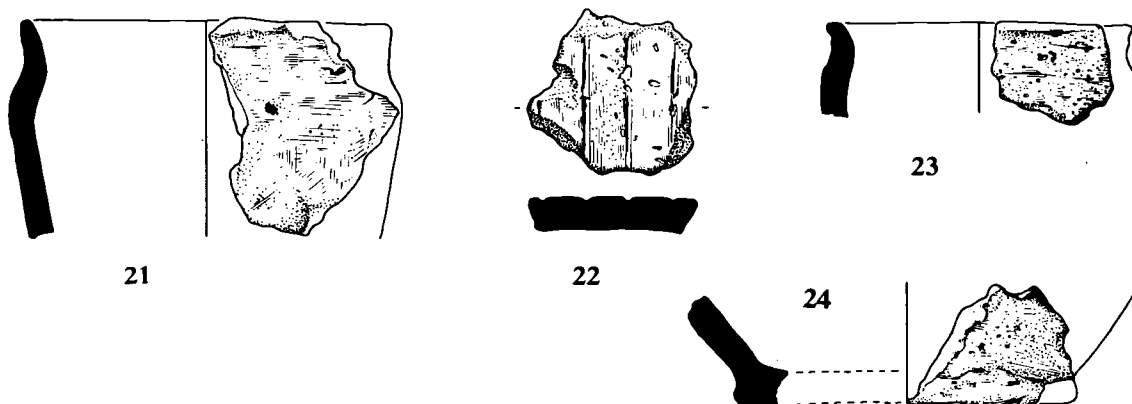


Fig. 10 Briar Hill. Iron Age pottery from the housing estate (1/8)

No. 22. Outer Face moderately rough and hard, orange/brown ware, decorated with shallow vertical grooves: inner face and core, blue-black with grass or straw impressions. No grits.

No. 23. Everted rim of bead rim type. Dark brown to black, soft ware, with red/brown inner face: tempering material leached out. F.3 (Pit).

No. 24. Base with slightly expanded foot. Similar ware to No. 21. F.4.

COMMENT

This type of pottery has been found widely by the author on late Iron Age sites in Northamptonshire and appears to date to the 2nd or 1st century B.C. No. 23 appears to be late and was found with Belgic pottery at Ringstead, (unpublished excavation by the author) and No. 22 can be paralleled at the nearby site at Upton (Jackson *et. al.* 1969). This latter sherd has evenly spaced grooves made with a rounded tool: this type of decoration is part of the scoring technique which is particularly common at Twywell⁷ and sites in the north of the county.

THE INCISED SANDSTONE (FIG. 11 AND PL. 5)

A piece of brown ferruginous sandstone (Northampton Sands)⁸ 4 to 5 in. in diameter and 1 3/8 in. thick was found in Pit 13; one corner of the stone had been broken off in antiquity. A series of wide V-shaped lines had been incised on one flat and prepared surface, to form a chequer pattern originally about 4 1/2 in. square (FIG. 11 and PL. 5). There was also a single groove on the back of the stone.

⁷ D. A. Jackson, "An Iron Age settlement at Twywell, Northants". Report forthcoming.

⁸ Geological description kindly supplied by Dr. F. W. Anderson of The Institute of Geological Sciences. The sandstone occurs as natural bedrock in the area of the pits.

Parallels to this kind of decoration, or pattern of incised lines, have occurred in various Neolithic contexts. They have been found in the far north at Skara Brae in the Orkneys (Childe 1931, pls. LII, LIII, LIV,) in the Isle of Man at Ronaldsway (Bruce and Megaw 1947) and in Wales at Graig Llwyd (Warren 1921). Examples have also been found at Windmill Hill, Wilts. (Smith, 1965, FIG. 57) and on detached slabs of chalk or scratched on the sides of flint mines, i.e. at Harrow Hill in Sussex (Curwen 1926, pl. VII). The closest parallels to the Briar Hill example have been found on slabs of chalk, notably at Whitehawk Camp in Sussex (Curwen 1936, pl. III) and more recently at Stonehenge Bottom, Wilts (Vatcher 1969, p.310). At the latter site two square plaques of chalk were found in a pit with Neolithic material which are closely comparable in size and decoration with the example from Briar Hill.

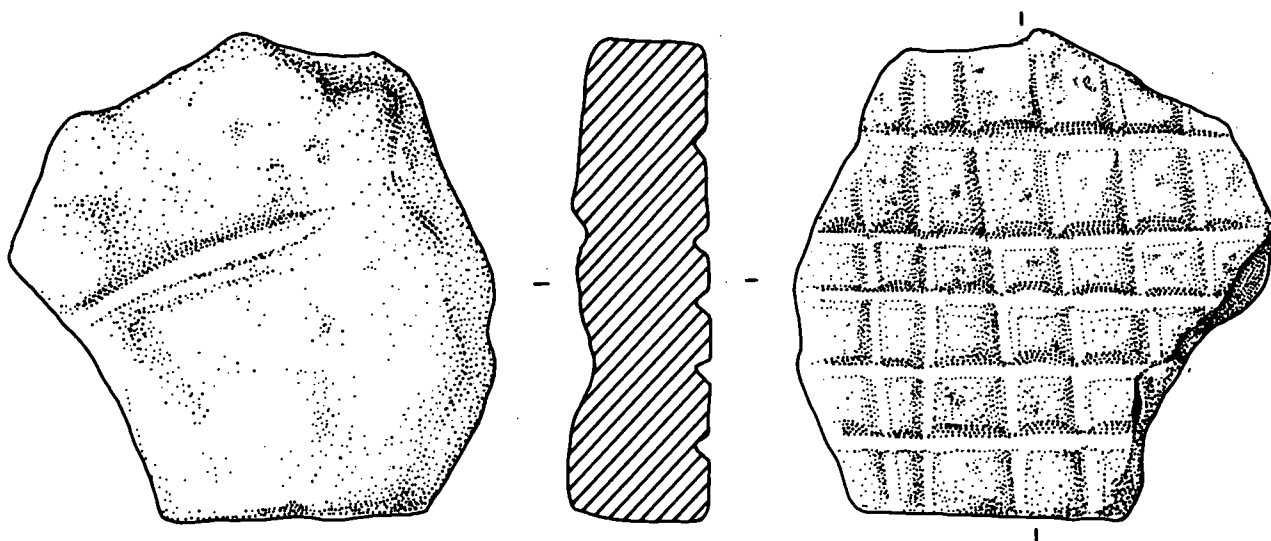


Fig. 11 Briar Hill. The incised stone ($\frac{1}{2}$)

The parallels cited above suggest this object is derived from the Neolithic period, but this evidence cannot be conclusive. The only supporting evidence is the abundance of Neolithic and early Bronze Age flints found in the neighbourhood.⁹

THE WORKED FLINTS

By Elizabeth Healey

The struck flints illustrated in FIG. 12 were found in the filling of Features 1, 2, 21, 31 and 32 of the pit alignment, as derived material, and in the sub-soil of Trenches A and F.

The drawings were made by the Ancient Monuments Illustrators' Office,

⁹ Since this report was drafted evidence of Neolithic occupation has been located just west of Briar Hill housing estate. Information from Mr. J. Williams, Archaeological Officer, Northampton Development Corporation.

Department of the Environment. I am grateful to Mr. R. Robertson-Mackay for reading this report and for his comments.

Macroscopic examination of the flint shows that the raw material varies in colour from opaque mottled grey, F.6 to dark brown, F.5, and one piece, F.1, is slightly patinated. F.3 has a heavy patina on one side and seems to be a reused piece of flint. Three of the artefacts had extensive areas of cortex on them; in two instances, F.1 and F.8, the cortex is unweathered but in the third, F.6, it is rolled and the flake seems to have been struck from a pebble.

The implements are all retouched flakes or blades¹⁰ which have been struck either from regularly worked cores as the long parallel scars on the back of F.1 and F.2 indicate, or from smaller pebbles like F.6. The artefacts are regularly retouched but there is no indication of pressure flaking. The artefact types present are described below:

FLAKE WITH RETOUCH ON SIDE AND END

F.1 is a blade truncated at the butt end by the removal of the bulb of percussion and striking platform and having four main removals on the dorsal surface and an area of cortex on one edge. The end has then been retouched by the removal of

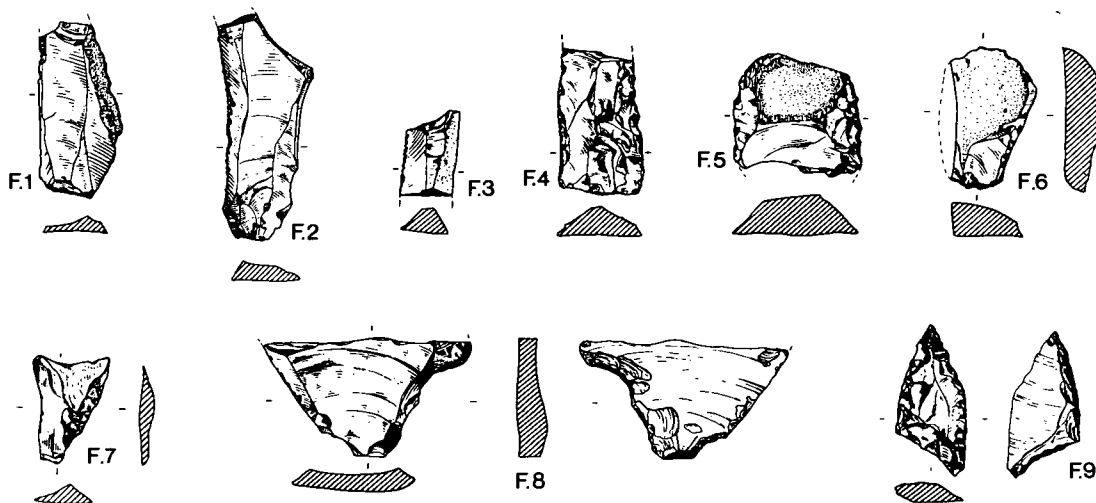


Fig. 12 Briar Hill. The struck flints ($\frac{1}{2}$)

regular short but steep, squill-like flakes; this retouch is continued along both edges, partly inversely. When examined under magnification wear and crushing can be seen on the end and longer edge. The distal end has been damaged in modern times.

SERRATED FLAKES

Minute denticulation was observed on the edges of two blades, F.2 and F.3. The denticulations were made by the removal of small regularly spaced flakes from

¹⁰ The term 'blade' is used here to describe a parallel-sided flake with a breadth to length ratio of 1:2 or greater.

the bulbar face, with occasional spalls coming from the dorsal face. No silica gloss is apparent on either flake.

F.2 is a parallel sided blade showing three main removals on the dorsal surface, producing a trapezoidal cross section. The distal end has been damaged but seems originally to have been pointed. There is a small patch of cortex on the striking platform. The serrations occur on the longest edge and although not regularly spaced, average 7 teeth per cm.

F.3 is a triangular sectioned blade with flattened top and shows three removals on the dorsal surface. The steeper edge is heavily patinated. One end of the flake has been obliquely truncated and retouched. The serrated edge has regularly spaced deeply notched teeth averaging 8 per cm.

Serrated flakes have wide chronological and cultural associations. In Post-Mesolithic industries they are well documented with Neolithic bowl cultures at Windmill Hill with an average of 13.5 teeth per cm. and in later Neolithic industries, for example at West Kennet Avenue, where they had an average of 10.5 teeth per cm. (Smith 1965, 91f and 239). The Briar Hill examples are therefore more like those from West Kennet Avenue.

KNIFE

F.4 was the only knife found. It is the lower portion or butt end of a parallel sided blade of triangular cross section retouched along both edges, one more steeply and extensively than the other. The bulb and striking platform (the face of a core) are still present. Steep, but small, regular squill-like flakes have been removed along one edge of the knife mostly from the bulbar surface, but occasionally from the dorsal surface. This edge exhibits slight wear. The other edge has steeper but irregular retouch except along the extreme margin, along which regular very small flakes have been removed.

Such knives, characterized by edge retouch on a parallel sided blade, were isolated as a specific type at Dorchester (Atkinson *et al* 1951, 71).

SCRAPERS

Two scrapers are present amongst the illustrated material. They are both poorly retouched. The retouch on F.5 is on the distal end and along one side of a squarish flake with the striking platform and the bulb of percussion broken off, it measures 25 mm. in length (min.) and 29 mm. in width. It is 9.5 mm. thick. The dorsal surface shows two main removals and an area of cortex on the distal end. The side is retouched at a steep angle (80-90°) but the retouch on the corner of the distal end is flatter (an angle of 50-60°) de-volving to the removal of small squills along part of the end; it is undercut and shows slight wear. The cortex has not been consistently removed. There is some spalling on the under face of the flake.

The scraping edge of F.6 is on the distal end of a flake which has subsequently been broken longitudinally. Cortex covers most of the dorsal surface, but there are three small scars parallel to the axis of the flake. The flake measures 32.5 mm. in length, by 18 mm. wide, the flake being 9 mm. thick. It is steeply retouched by the removal of short flakes but the cortex is not always removed. The scraping edge is retouched at an angle of 70- 80°, and is slightly worn. The bulbar end has been modified by retouch.

Scrapers are of course an ubiquitous type but show considerable variety of form even within a closed industry as can be seen at Hurst Fen (Clark 1960, 217), Windmill Hill (Smith 1965, 93f) or Durrington Walls (Wainwright 1971, 164). However metrical analyses of stratified groups with different cultural associations show that although scrapers are, on the one hand, similar in some respects, on the other hand there would appear to be certain trends in preferred thickness and angle of retouch (see for example Smith 1965, 95, Wainwright 1971, 164f, or Bradley 1970, 357). The two scrapers from Briar Hill would fit into either group, but would perhaps be more like examples from Later Neolithic industries, particularly in the style of retouch.

ARROWHEADS

Two arrowheads, F.7 and F.9, are of *petit tranchet* derivative form and it is likely that F.8 also belongs to this category. F.7 and probably F.8 are of the triangular or chisel ended class and F.9 is of the asymmetric or lopsided form (Clark 1934, 36ff).

F.7 is a chisel ended arrowhead with the unretouched transverse edge of the flake providing the cutting edge. It is made on a flake with two main flake scars parallel to the main axis of the flake. The striking platform and bulb of percussion have been removed, and the resulting edge steeply retouched; this retouch becomes flatter towards the base and continues round the base of the arrowhead. The other edge has been truncated, but not retouched. The cutting edge is shorter than the other two edges and as such belongs to Clark's class C.

F.8 also seems to belong to the chisel ended class of arrowhead. It is part of a large flake with three main removals on the dorsal surface. The distal end of the flake has been broken but was probably intended to be the cutting edge. One edge is slightly concave making the arrowhead slightly asymmetric in form. The striking platform and bulb of percussion have been modified by steep retouch but this has not entirely removed them. The steep retouch continues on one of the sides forming a concave edge where it meets the cutting edge. On the other side the retouch only extends for a limited distance. It is continued by the removal of regular squill like flakes on the dorsal face. The partially removed striking platform and the sharp break on the cutting edge suggest that this is unfinished, probably class D.

The other arrowhead, F.9, is of asymmetric or lop-sided form, the cutting edge being longer than the other two sides. It is made on a flake. Regular squill-like flakes have been removed along the margin of the cutting edge. The point and other two edges, the shorter of which is concave, have been blunted with flat bifacial flaking. The dorsal surface has had flakes removed from all over it, but the bulbar surface is unworked, except for the bifacial edge retouch. This arrowhead belongs to Clark's class H.

SUMMARY

The worked flints were found as derived material and their relationship to the pottery, probably of Iron Age date and also residual, is not clear. It has not been possible to assign the worked flints to an exact archaeological horizon, because as a group they are not sufficiently diagnostic, also there is an absence of struck waste material and numerically they are too small to be considered representative of an industry.

However on typological grounds the arrowheads of *petit tranchet* derivative form would suggest a date somewhere in the Late Neolithic. None of the other artefact types present would be out of place in such a context. This would also suggest that the worked flint probably belongs to one industry. It has also been seen that the technological aspects which have been considered would not contradict such a date.

It would seem therefore that the worked flint at Briar Hill is consonant with that generally found in Late Neolithic industries and may represent some activity on the site during this period.

2. A NEW PIT ALIGNMENT AND A HOARD OF CURRENCY BARS AT GRETTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

A pit alignment and other archaeological features were discovered at Park Lodge quarry, Gretton, after a large area of topsoil had been removed prior to iron ore extraction. Features were first noticed on the site by the writer, who subsequently directed a limited programme of excavation and recording. This work was carried out on behalf of the Department of the Environment early in 1972.

Grateful thanks are due to the British Steel Corporation for their help and for a preliminary analysis of the currency bars arranged by Dr. D. V. Riley. Further analysis and conservation has been carried out by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory and by Mr. R. Hedges of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, University of Oxford. (This work will be published as a separate report.) The plans and sections were drawn by Miss E. Hollingshead of the Ancient Monuments Drawing Office and the pottery by Mr. P. Foster. Mr. T. M. Ambrose of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford provided valuable assistance in preparing this article for publication.

THE SITE

LOCATION

The site lies on a limestone plateau, at 350 ft. O.D., south-east of the broad valley of the River Welland, and just over one mile from the river itself (N.G.R. SP 910946). (FIG. 13). It is situated in an area which has been extensively quarried for iron ore in recent years. Modern quarrying has frequently produced evidence to show that the local ore was being widely worked in Roman and pre-Roman times.

METHOD OF EXCAVATION

Topsoil removal left only a limited surface area of bedrock sufficiently clean to reveal archaeological features. Mechanical aid was therefore employed to clear the loose material which obscured the ditches and much of the pit alignment. Selected areas were then cleaned by hand, and the features excavated or planned. It is unlikely that any major features remained undetected.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

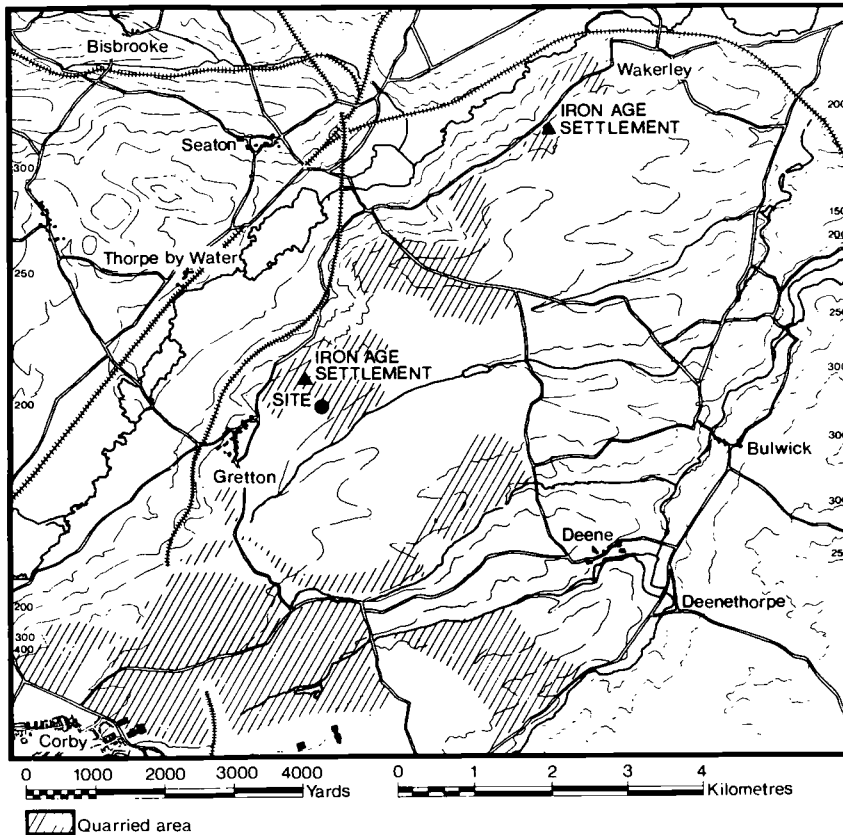


Fig. 13 Location map, Gretton

SUMMARY OF OCCUPATION

PRE-ROMAN IRON AGE

Pottery recovered from the pit alignment suggests occupation on the site in the Early Iron Age, although no stratigraphy of that period had survived. Pits 20-22 produced small weathered sherds of Early Iron Age date and almost half a vessel, broken and scattered in a deposit of dark soil, was found in Pit 39 (FIG. 17, 1). The pottery from these pits, however, may be residual. Pits 19-25 contained dark, charcoal-flecked soil, perhaps indicative of nearby occupation.

At some time probably in the first century B.C., a hoard of iron sword-shaped currency bars was buried on the north-east side of Pit 39. Some 35m. to the south-east of the hoard, evidence of iron-smelting activity was located. By analogy with other local sites, this may be regarded as dating from the Roman period.

In 1969, an Iron Age ditch was noted near the quarry edge, some 300m. north-west of the pit alignment (FIG. 13). Excavation of this feature was not possible, but animal bones and late Iron Age pottery were found on the exposed surface of the ditch. It seems likely that there had been a settlement site in the immediate vicinity, which the quarrying had destroyed.

ROMAN PERIOD

Traces of iron working activity, probably of Roman date, were located to the south of Ditch A (FIG. 14). Further topsoil removal since the excavation suggests that this activity extends over a wider area to the south-east. No precise dating evidence was obtained from the two shallow ditches (Ditch C and Ditch D) (FIG. 14), but the former contained heavy concentrations of charcoal and the latter lumps of iron ore, which indicates that they were contemporary with the iron working.

INDETERMINATE

The irregular feature F.42 (FIGS. 14 and 16) cannot safely be assigned to either the Iron Age or the Roman period. Some hard-gritted sherds were recovered from the upper fill, but these could belong either to the Iron Age or the Anglo-Saxon period. It was not possible to associate Ditch B, Ditch B.a. or Ditch E with any other features (FIG. 14).

DESCRIPTION OF THE FEATURES

THE PIT ALIGNMENT AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES (FIG. 14 and PL. 6).

The exposure of an alignment of pits of this length presented an opportunity to compare their shapes, diameters and spacing by surface planning and their depths, profiles and fills by selective excavation. The planned length of the alignment was 114 m. and covered 40 pits. Twenty-eight of these were planned in detail and six others were located but not accurately planned (Pits 1-6). A further six were not accessible (Pits 7, 8, 10, 33, 34, 35) but their positions can be presumed from the spacing of the recorded pits. Measurements are shown in Table B.

The line of pits in all probability continued beyond the working quarry face to the north-east. At its southern end, the alignment terminated at right-angles to a deep linear ditch (Ditch A).

FORM

The pits were mainly square or rectangular in plan, varying in size between 1.42 m. and 1.92 m. in length and between 1.08 m. and 1.60 m. in width. Their profiles show gently sloping sides and flat bottoms and the resultant box-like form seems to have been the shape originally intended. The one exception was Pit 37, which seems never to have been completed. The excavated depths shown in Table B are taken from the level left by the surface stripping and do not accurately reflect the original depths of the pits. For example, 60 cm. of overburden (30cm. of overburden and 30 cm. of soil) were removed from above Pit 9. The depth of this pit from the modern surface was therefore 1.30 m. and the original depth not less than a metre.

SPACING

The spacing between the centres of the pits was extremely regular, the average distance being 2.90 m. with only a 10 cm. variation occurring in the planned area. The distance between the pits varied from 1-1.5 m.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

GRETTON Park Lodge Quarry

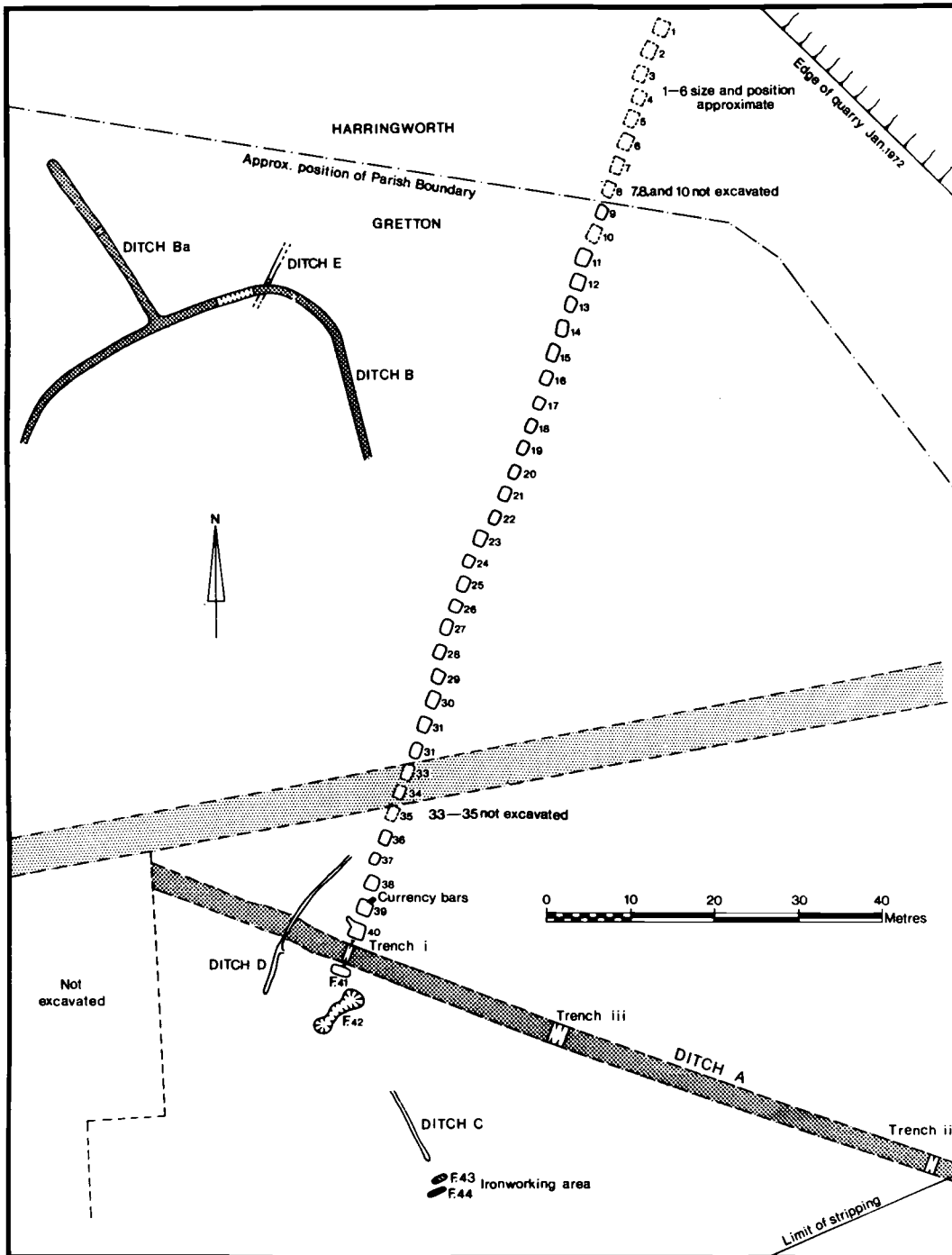


Fig. 14 Gretton. Plan of pit alignment and other archaeological features

FILLING

Layers 4 and 5 were common to most of the excavated pits (FIG. 15). Layer 5 consisted of clayey silt up to 7 cm. in depth, usually overlain by layer 4, a thick layer of dark, silty soil. The horizontal profiles of layer 4 may have resulted from levelling out by heavy rain. The filling in the majority of the pits above this soil layer was quite mixed, suggesting that it was the product of artificial filling. In any case where the pits had been dug through clay, their sides would not have remained vertical, if the pits had been left to silt up by natural processes. This suggests that the pits were deliberately filled in not long after they were excavated, although the rate of the primary silting is difficult to assess.

TABLE B. MEASUREMENTS OF THE PITS, GRETTON

Pit No.	Length	Width	Distance Between Pits	Depth	Pit No.	Length	Width	Distance Between Pits	Depth
9	1.42 m.	1.08 m.		70 cm.	24	1.45 m.	1.33 m.		
11	1.65	1.57			25	1.50	1.30	1.45 m.	
12	1.65	1.60	1.20 m.		26	1.40	1.40	1.22	
13	1.92	1.30	1.00		27	1.64	1.35	1.13	
14	1.88	1.40	1.10		28	1.50	1.30	1.50	
15	1.43	1.37	1.17		29	1.67	1.35	1.15	
16	1.58	1.35	1.37		30	1.95	1.45	1.00	
17	1.50	1.35	1.48		31	1.70	1.40	1.30	
18	1.48	1.20	1.39		32	1.70	1.21	1.00	76 cm.
19	1.56	1.20	1.38		36	1.64	1.10		70
20	1.45	1.15	1.48	84	37	1.43	1.00	1.20	34
21	1.70	1.17	1.30	95	38	1.67	1.60	1.30	96
22	1.30	1.20	1.50	85	39	1.67	1.58	1.36	1.03 m.
23	1.80	1.55	1.25		40	1.87	1.60	1.10	87
			1.35						

DITCH A (FIGS. 14, 15 and 16).

Ditch A was sectioned at three points (Trenches i-iii). In Trenches i-ii the ditch was on average 1.3 m. in depth (into bedrock) and 2.45 m. in width. In Trench iii the ditch was only 80 cm. deep, possibly owing to the hardness of the bedrock at this point. Surface planning confirmed that it was continuous and of fairly even width. No bank survived, and the ditch sections gave no indication as to which side of the ditch this would have originally been positioned (FIG. 15). Dating

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

GRETTON Park Lodge Quarry

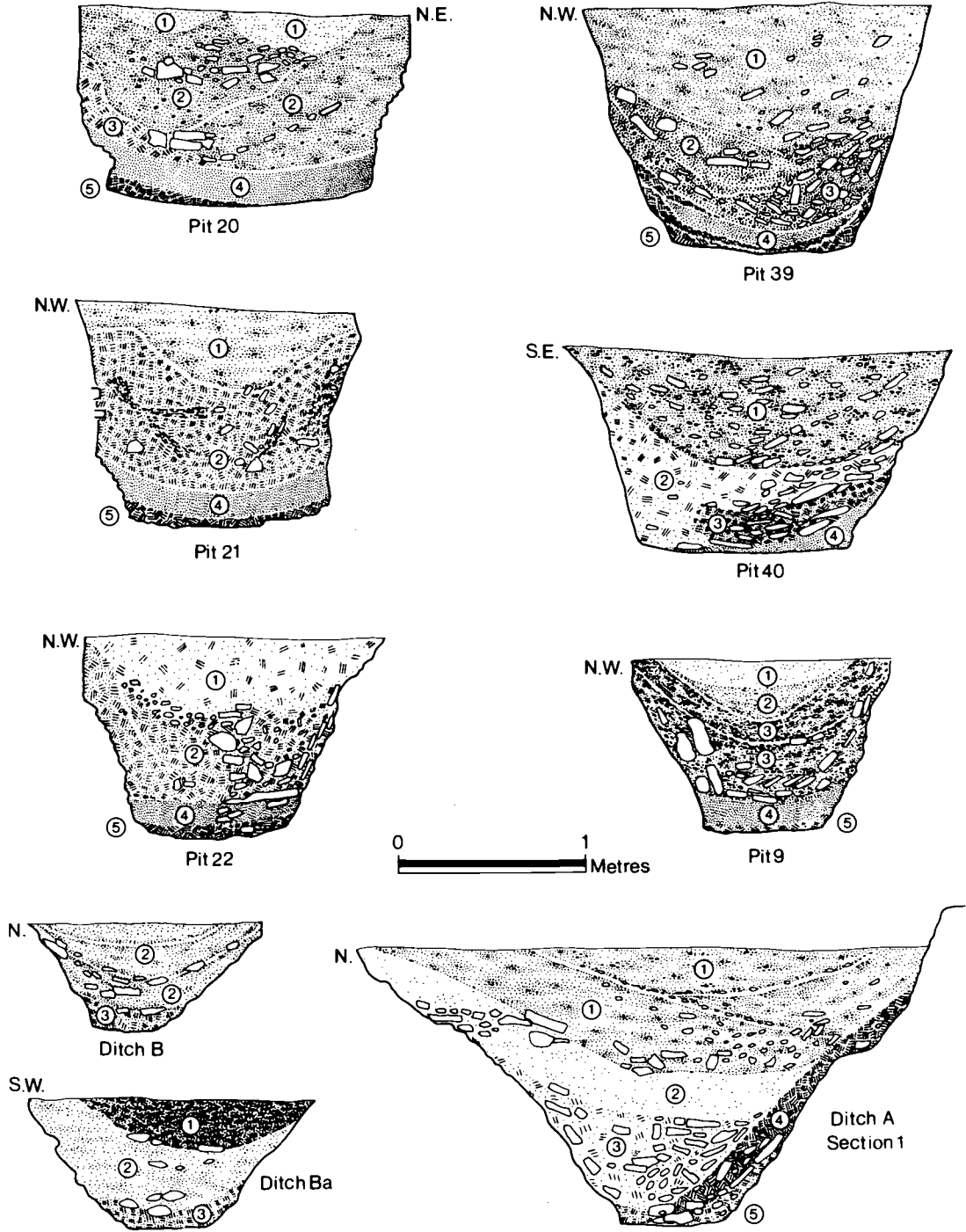


Fig. 15 Gretton. Sections of the pits and ditches

evidence was meagre. The only finds were a few sherds of Roman grey ware from the upper fill (Trench ii) and weathered fragments of Iron Age pottery from the middle fill (Trench ii). The chronological relationship between Ditch A and the pit alignment is difficult to assess, although Pit 40 did contain a greater amount of bedrock than the other pits (FIG. 15).

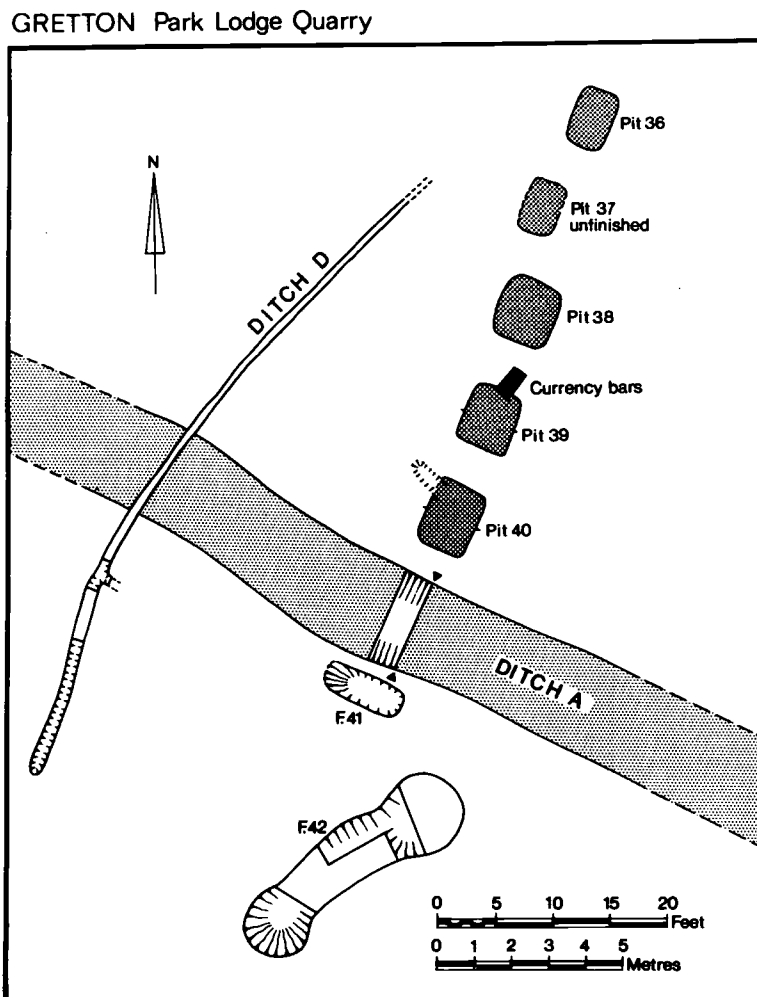


Fig. 16 Gretton. Plan showing southern end of the pit alignment and the position of the currency bars

FEATURE 41 (FIG 16).

A narrow rectangular pit lay to the south of Ditch A. It continues the line of the pits and is assumed to have been part of the alignment. The pit measured 80 cm. in width and 2.4 m. in length, with a maximum depth into bedrock of 35 cm. at its eastern end. It was filled with yellow stony clay and gingery soil, and produced part of a bronze ring-headed pin (FIG. 18).

FEATURES CONNECTED WITH IRONWORKING

FEATURES 43 AND 44 (FIG. 14).

Two parallel strips of burnt subsoil overlain by a thin layer of ash, and other scattered traces of burning suggest iron working activity. Parallel strips of burning such as these occur on a number of local sites and are associated with iron smelting furnaces of the Roman period.¹¹ They are usually 3-3.5 m. in length and probably indicate ore-roasting or forging. (F.43: surviving length 1.5 m; width 45 cm. F.44: surviving length 2.2 m., width 40 cm.)

DITCH C (FIG. 14).

The remains of a shallow ditch were located north-west of the iron working features. It had survived for a length of 9 m. and may have been associated with the iron working.

DITCH D (FIG. 16)

This ditch is stratigraphically later than Ditch A and is probably of Roman or later date. Ironstone fragments were found in the southern end. Its maximum surviving depth was 30 cm.

OTHER FEATURES

FEATURE 42 (FIG. 16)

The irregular nature of this feature suggests that it may have originally been a quarry pit. It had a maximum depth of 80 cm. and was filled with gingery brown soil and stones. Dating evidence from this feature was ambiguous (see pottery report, page 41).

DITCHES B, B.a. and E (FIGS. 14 and 15).

No occupation debris was recovered from these ditches. Their dating and purpose remain uncertain, although stratigraphically Ditch E was earlier than Ditch B.

(Ditch B: depth 45 cm.; width 98 cm. Ditch B.a.: depth 53 cm.; width 1.2 m. Ditch E: depth 26 cm.; width 60 cm.)

DISCUSSION

The angular shape and fairly consistent depth of the pits at Gretton are features typical of the pit alignments excavated at Aldwincle (Jackson, forthcoming) and Briar Hill (page 13). Aerial reconnaissance and excavation have shown that the even spacing of pits is a feature common to most of the known pit alignments in Northamptonshire (Hollowell 1971). Certainly this seems to indicate that the key element in a pit alignment is the pit rather than a boundary bank its upcast might have helped form. In contrast to the alignments at Briar Hill and

¹¹ At Bulwick and Wakerley (D. A. Jackson, report forthcoming).

Aldwinckle, the sides of the pits at Gretton showed that very little erosion had taken place before the pits were filled (FIG. 15). The primary silting in the pits may well be the product of one winter's weathering. This would suggest that the pits at this site at least had a relatively temporary function. Slight displacements of short stretches of the alignments at Aldwinckle and Briar Hill were noted. At Gretton, a displacement occurs after every five or six pits (FIG. 14). This may indicate gang work as has been suggested for similar displacement along the pit alignment at Tallington, Lincs. (Simpson 1966).

Although no positive conclusions can be drawn from the relationship between Ditch A and the alignment (FIG. 14), it is interesting to note that F.41 on the south side of Ditch A is clearly related to the alignment. The positioning of F.41 seems to suggest that the alignment is terminating at a pre-existing line. Certainly aerial survey of pit alignments in Northamptonshire has revealed a number of alignments with apparent associations with enclosures and linear ditches (Appendix 2).

No precise dating evidence has been recovered from any of the pit alignments so far excavated (Appendix 1). A late Iron Age date has been put forward for the alignment excavated at Tallington, Lincs. (Simpson 1966), and at Langford Downs, Oxon., the pit alignment was said to be later than three periods of Belgic occupation (Williams 1946-7, 54-5). At Aldwinckle, Northants., the alignment was of probable Iron Age date (Jackson, forthcoming). At Gretton, the relationship between Pit 39 and the hoard of 'currency bars' suggests a pre-Belgic date for the alignment if current dating of sword-shaped currency bars is accepted (Allen 1967, 322). The Early Iron Age pottery from Pit 39 and the bronze pin shaft from F.41 indicate a fourth century B.C. date, although this occupation debris may have derived from earlier occupation on the site. A date for the alignment would therefore fall between the fourth and first centuries B.C.

THE FINDS

THE HOARD OF CURRENCY BARS

A number of bent and broken iron bars were found scattered in disturbed material after the site had been cleared by mechanical scraping. Subsequent excavation revealed a hoard of approximately 35 sword-shaped currency bars, some of which were broken. Re-assembly of the broken bars and those found scattered nearby suggests that the total number of bars in the hoard was not less than 48, but as the bars lay just below the ploughsoil the original number may have been higher.

The bars lay closely packed, in the remains of a shallow pit with their handles or hilts, many of which were in a fragmentary condition, at its south-west end. The shape of the pit suggests that it had been dug simply to contain the bars and not some form of container. It was 30 cm. wide at the north-east end and increased in width to 40 cm. at the south-west end (PL. 7). Its depth was c. 8 cm. The way in which the bars had been positioned indicates that they were placed in the pit in handfuls or perhaps in bundles of about six bars. It is hoped that subsequent work in the laboratory will determine whether any traces of a binding material survive.

Preliminary analysis of the metal suggests that local Northampton sand and ironstone could have been the source of the ore used in the bars, but it seems

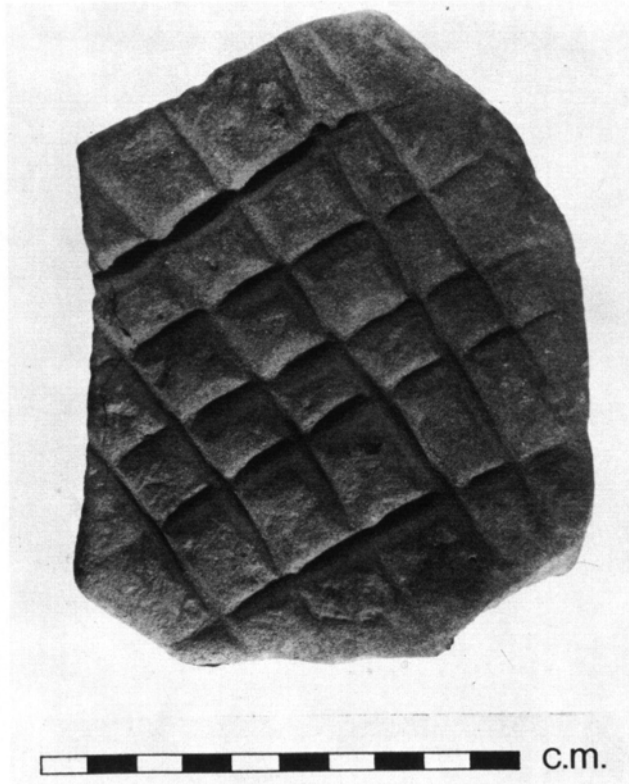
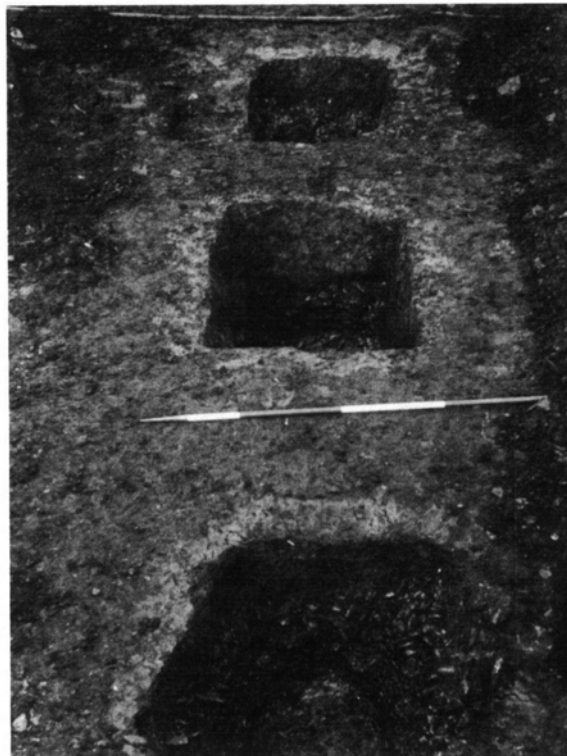


Plate 5 Briar Hill. The slab of incised sandstone



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Plate 6 Grettton. Pits 20, 21 and 22 (Pit 22 is in the foreground)

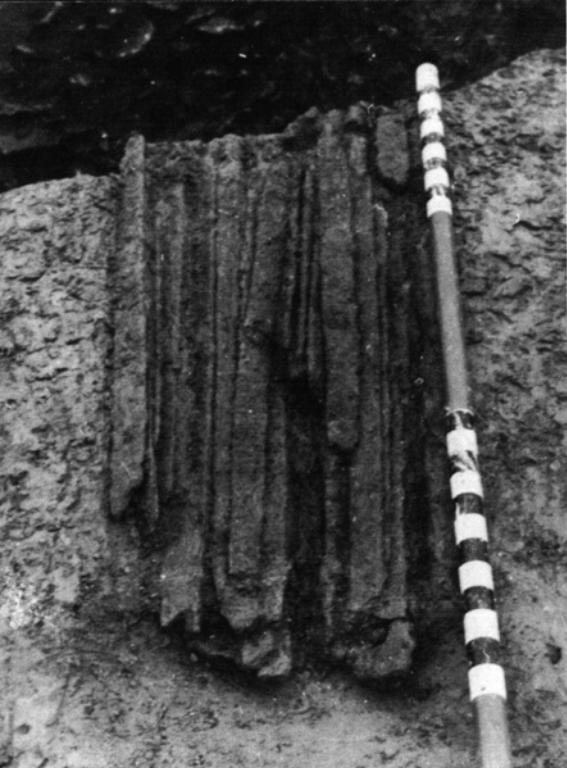
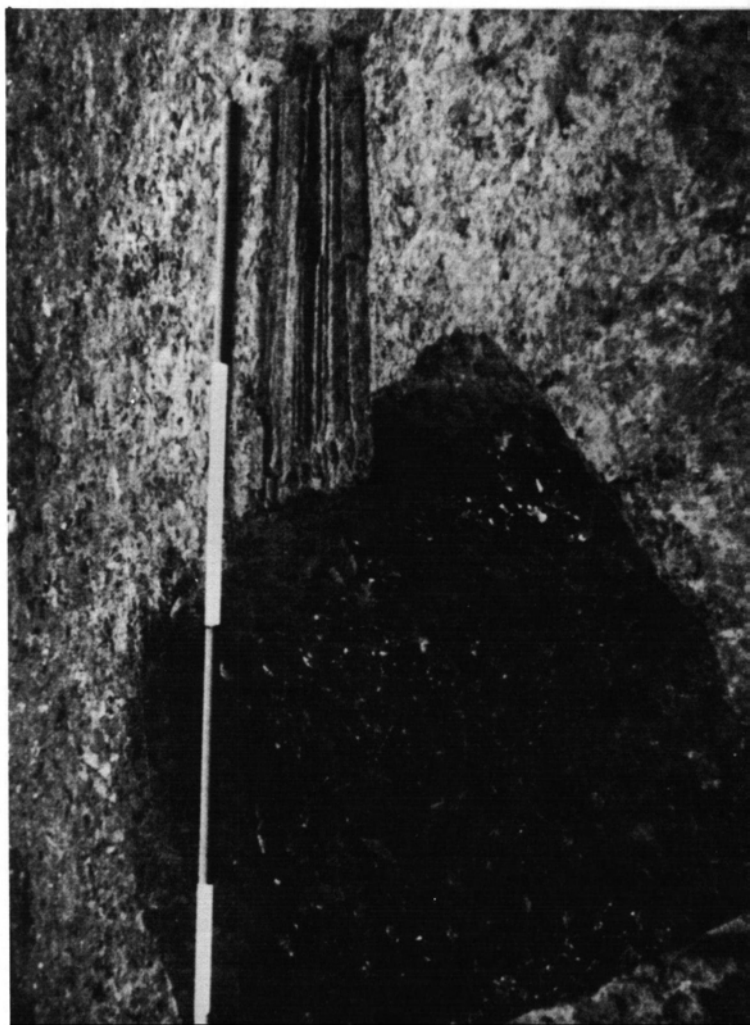


Plate 7 Gretton. The hoard of currency bars



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Plate 8 Gretton. The currency bars in relation to Pit 39

more likely that a nodular seam would have been preferred. Some three miles to the north-east of Wakerley, Iron Age smelting furnaces have been found in which the nodular ore was being used (Jackson, forthcoming). It may be significant that the site at Gretton, like those at Madmarston and Hunsbury, lies near the Jurassic Way (Grimes 1951). Both Madmarston and Hunsbury have produced iron work hoards (Fowler 1960; Fell 1937).

THE POSITION OF THE HOARD IN RELATION TO THE PIT ALIGNMENT (FIG. 16 and PL. 8).

The currency bars overlay the edge of Pit 39 by 6 cm. It seems reasonable to suppose that Pit 39 predates the deposition of the hoard. It may be that the positioning of the bars on the alignment was fortuitous, although the most likely explanation is that the bars were buried on the edge of a shallow depression left after Pit 39 had been largely filled.

THE POTTERY (FIG. 17)

With the exception of six sherds of Roman grey ware from the upper filling of Ditch A, the majority of the sherds from the site are of Early Iron Age date. The very hard gritty fabric of the sherds from F.42 is unusual in local Iron Age pottery, and may be of Anglo-Saxon date.

Form

The sherds were generally too small to assess the form of the vessels. The pot from Pit 39 (FIG. 17, 1) can be paralleled at Fengate, Peterborough (Hawkes 1943, FIG. 9, Y.1). Similar vessels were found in the earlier levels at Rainsborough Camp in south-west Northamptonshire (Avery *et. al.* 1967, FIGS. 29 and 31).

Fabric

A standard characteristic of the pottery is the dark grey core. This colour often extends through to the inner face with only slight variations, but the outer face varies in colour from light orange-buff to dark brown or grey. With the exception of the sherds from F.42 the pottery is soft or moderately hard and the surface is often uneven. Sherds with a sandy fabric were almost totally absent and only those from Pit 40 contained shell tempering. The sherds from F.42, although comparable in colour to the other pottery from the site, were hard but smooth and contained many coarse grits.

Decoration

Only two sherds, apart from the vessel from Pit 39, have decoration. This consists of a single incised line.

Distribution

The Early Iron Age pottery was widely distributed and was found in the following positions: Pits 20-22, 44 sherds. Pit 38, 2 sherds. Pit 39, 2 sherds and the vessel described above. Pit 40, 7 sherds including 5 from one vessel. Ditch A (Trench ii), 5 sherds. F.42, 28 sherds, most of which probably came from one vessel. Not less than 24 vessels seem to be represented.

Illustrated pottery

FIG. 17(1)— Vessel with everted rim and finger nail impressions on the shoulder. Outer face brown, but with orange-red patches on the neck. Inner face buff to dark grey. Surface fairly smooth, but uneven. Moderately hard ware with a few fine grits. (Pit 39, Layer 2).

(2)— Thickened rim. Surface dark grey-brown. Moderately hard smooth ware. (Pit 21).

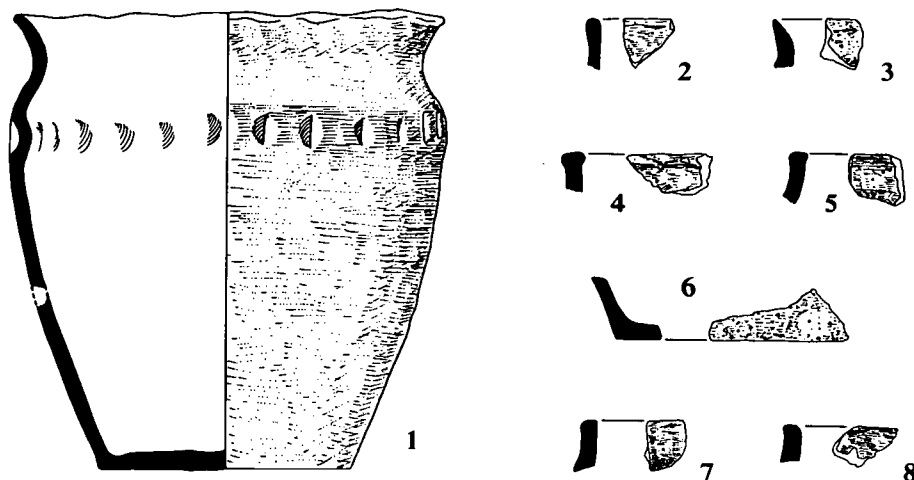


Fig. 17 Gretton. The pottery ($\frac{1}{2}$)

(3)— Internally bevelled rim. Outer face reddish brown, inner face dark grey. Moderately hard, coarse ware. (Pit 22).

(4)— Expanded rim. Surface very light buff. Fabric fairly soft. (Pit 38).

(5)— Expanded rim. Surface dark brown. Fabric rather soft and smooth. (Pit 40).

(6)— Plain base. Greyish brown throughout. Moderately hard ware. Very shelly fabric. (Pit 40).

(7)— Plain rim. Dark grey-brown. Hard, smooth ware with coarse grits. (F.42, disturbed).

(8)— Plain rim. Dark grey to black throughout. Very hard ware with coarse grits. (F.42, disturbed).

THE BRONZE PIN (FIG. 18)

Part of a bronze ring-headed pin was recovered from F.41. The fragment was kindly examined by Dr. I. M. Stead, who suggested that it was the shaft of a ring-headed pin of Iron Age date. The pin was X-rayed in the Ancient Monuments Laboratory and the following information was received from Mr. L. Biek:

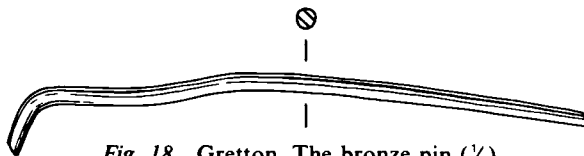


Fig. 18 Gretton. The bronze pin ($\frac{1}{2}$)

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

Both ends are broken. The taper at the 'point' end clearly suggests an original 'real' point very close to the present end. The other break is square and non-indicative. Microscopical examination however, reveals along the object clear evidence of mineralized fibres in broken, short curled lengths. Although no evidence of 'weave' can be seen, the presence of mineralized fibres is typical of areas found in other cases adjacent to identifiable textile, and supports the view that the object is a brooch pin.

Other ring-headed pins have been found in Northamptonshire at Ecton (Jackson 1973, 37) and at Hunsbury Hill (Fell 1937, 63). The pin from Ecton was found in the ditch of a barrow in probable association with Early Iron Age pottery.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LAYERS IN THE DRAWN SECTIONS (FIG. 15)

THE PITS

Layer 4 — all sections. Dark silty soil.

Layer 5 — all sections. Orange-brown clay and silt.

Pit 20. 1 — light silty soil. 2 — dark brown soil. 3 — light brown clayey soil.

Pit 21. 1 — dark brown silty soil. 2 — mixture of orange-brown clay and earth.

Pit 22. 1 — light brown clayey soil. 2 — mixture of orange-brown clay, soil and stones.

Pit 39. 1 — brown silty soil. 2 — dark brown soil. 3 — brown stony soil.

Pit 40. 1 — brown stony soil. 2 — yellow, gritty clay and soil.
3 — yellow gritty clay, soil and orange clay.

Pit 9. 1 — light brown silt. 2 — dark brown silt. 3 — gingery-brown stony soil.

THE DITCHES

Ditch A.

1 — light medium-brown silty soil. 2 — light silty soil.

3 — yellow gritty clay with some soil. 4 — orange-brown clay.

5 — mixture of 3 and 4.

Ditches B and B.a.

1 — dark brown silty soil with charcoal flecks. 2 — gingery-brown soil.

3 — gingery-brown earth with yellow gritty clay.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF EXCAVATED PIT ALIGNMENTS

<i>Location</i>	<i>Comments and references</i>
Lincolnshire, Tallington	Gravel terrace. The pits were found to vary in size and shape. Part of alignment double. (Simpson 1966; Jones 1961).
Midlothian, Inveresk	(Piggott 1958).
Northamptonshire, Aldwincle	Gravel terrace. Regular depth with original rectangular shape surviving at the bottom of the pits (Jackson, forthcoming).
„ Briar Hill Farm	(Page 13).
„ Gretton	Dug into limestone and retaining their original angular shape. Re-filled after a short period.
Oxfordshire, Langford	Gravel terrace. Pits bowl-shaped at the bottom. (Williams 1946-7).
Staffordshire, Shenstone	Limited excavation. A Roman 1st century sherd found in one of the pits. (Whitehouse 1961).

APPENDIX 2

INDEX OF PIT ALIGNMENTS IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (FIG. 1)

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Grid Reference</i>	<i>Approx. Known Length in Ft.</i>	<i>Geology</i>	<i>Special Comments</i>
E Aldwinckle	TL 805003	1,000	Gravel	Single alignment, other ditches associated.
Billing	SP 80526391		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Between two enclosures.
E Briar Hill	SP 740589	500	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Single alignment.
Chapel Brampton	SP 72626582	900	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Single alignment.
	SP 73016532	120	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	From enclosure.
	SP 72956465	750	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	On line with above and joining enclosures.
				Single alignment.
Cranford	SP 916768	600	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Single alignment.
Croughton	SP 534344		Limestone	Single alignment.
Collyweston	TL 001024		Limestone	T-junction.
Duston	SP 73226386		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Two alignments.
Earls Barton	SP 84586250		Gravel	Close and parallel to ditch.
	SP 85076283	520	Gravel	Single alignment.
Grendon	SP 87966203	390	Gravel	Single alignment.
	SP 88076232		Gravel	Close and parallel to enclosure ditch.
E Gretton	SP 909946	400	Limestone	At right angles to ditch.
Harlestone	SP 71106535		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Junction at acute angle.
Isham	SP 886737		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Two alignments in field.
Little Houghton	SP 81106003	925	N'ton Sand/Ironstone	T-junction, enclosures in angle.
Little Harrowden	SP 894720		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Single alignment.
	SP 880722		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Single alignment.
Stowe Nine Churches	SP 62605600		N'ton Sand/Ironstone	Two alignments from same enclosure.
Titchmarsh	TL 01647985	300	Cornbrash	Single alignment near enclosure.
	TL 03317951	300	Cornbrash	Single alignment.
	TL 02157900	300	Cornbrash/Oxford Clay	Single alignment.
Warmington	TL 88309216	750	Gravel	Close and parallel to ditch.
	TL 08169194	820	Gravel	Single alignment.
Wollaston	SP 89546377	450 x 2	Gravel	Two crossing at acute angle.
	SP 89546377		Gravel	Adjacent corner of next field. At right angles.
	SP 88776300		Gravel	Close and parallel to ditch.
	SP 88776300		Gravel	Joining enclosures and parallel to side of one.
	SP 900645		Gravel	Single alignment.

Excavated pit alignments are marked E.

References: All other alignments were noted on air photographs taken by Professor St. Joseph and Mr. R. Hollowell. Professor St. Joseph's air photographs are housed in the Office of the Committee for Aerial Photography, Cambridge. Mr. R. Hollowell's air photographs are described in the *Bulletin of the Northamptonshire Federation of Archaeological Societies*, 6, 1971.

Note: Appendix 2 contains more alignments than are shown on FIG. 1 because at some sites two independent alignments can be seen. Where sites are fairly close together, however, they may be part of a single complex.

NEW PIT ALIGNMENTS

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