

Archaeology at Grendon Quarry, Northamptonshire

Part 2: Other prehistoric, Iron Age and later sites excavated in 1974–75 and further observations between 1976–80

by

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SUMMARY

Excavations were carried out at Grendon in 1974–5 in advance of gravel quarrying and a report describing the Neolithic and Bronze Age features was published in 1985. The following report describes an Iron Age enclosure and at least three pottery kilns also excavated at that time, together with the results of a watching brief and salvage excavations carried out subsequently, whilst quarrying was in progress. The principal features located during the latter work included (1) at least three ring ditches and four Bronze Age vessels found in small pits; (2) a complex of pit alignments and their relationships; (3) an unusual pre-medieval agricultural system consisting of 27 parallel trenches (spade-dug), possibly used for growing vines; (4) four Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured structures and evidence for iron-working at this time.

INTRODUCTION

The present report concludes a description of the archaeological recording which was undertaken at Grendon during extensive gravel quarrying in the parish between 1974–80. A report on a major series of Neolithic and Bronze Age features has been published previously (Gibson and McCormick, 1985) and that evidence is now reappraised in conjunction with a description of the later prehistoric and other features noted both

formerly and during subsequent salvage excavation and related observation. Further descriptions of individual features and an account of the circumstances of their excavation are contained on microfiche (references as M1, M2, etc).

Within the quarry area to the south of the River Nene, air photography had previously revealed two main concentrations of ring ditches, enclosures and linear boundaries (Fig 1: Areas 1 and 2). Archaeological response to their destruction varied. Excavation of the south-west complex, occupying a ridge of gravel in Area 1 (NGR SP 873617), was carried out in 1974–5 and revealed Iron Age and Roman features in addition to the early prehistoric landscape already reported upon between 1976–80. Separate salvage excavations and watching briefs were undertaken on a flat gravel terrace above the floodplain in Area 2 (NGR SP 877623 – 881615). Initially carried out by Mr G. Foard in 1976, the work was continued by the writer. The principal features in Area 2 include a complex of pit alignments, an agricultural trench-system or ‘lazy beds’ and an Anglo-Saxon settlement.

All archaeological work at the quarry was sponsored by the Department of Environment and organised by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit. Thanks are due to the quarry owners, Mixconcrete (Holdings) Limited, for their constant co-operation. The illustrations used in the report have been prepared by the following people, Jean Eisenhower Figs 10, 11 and

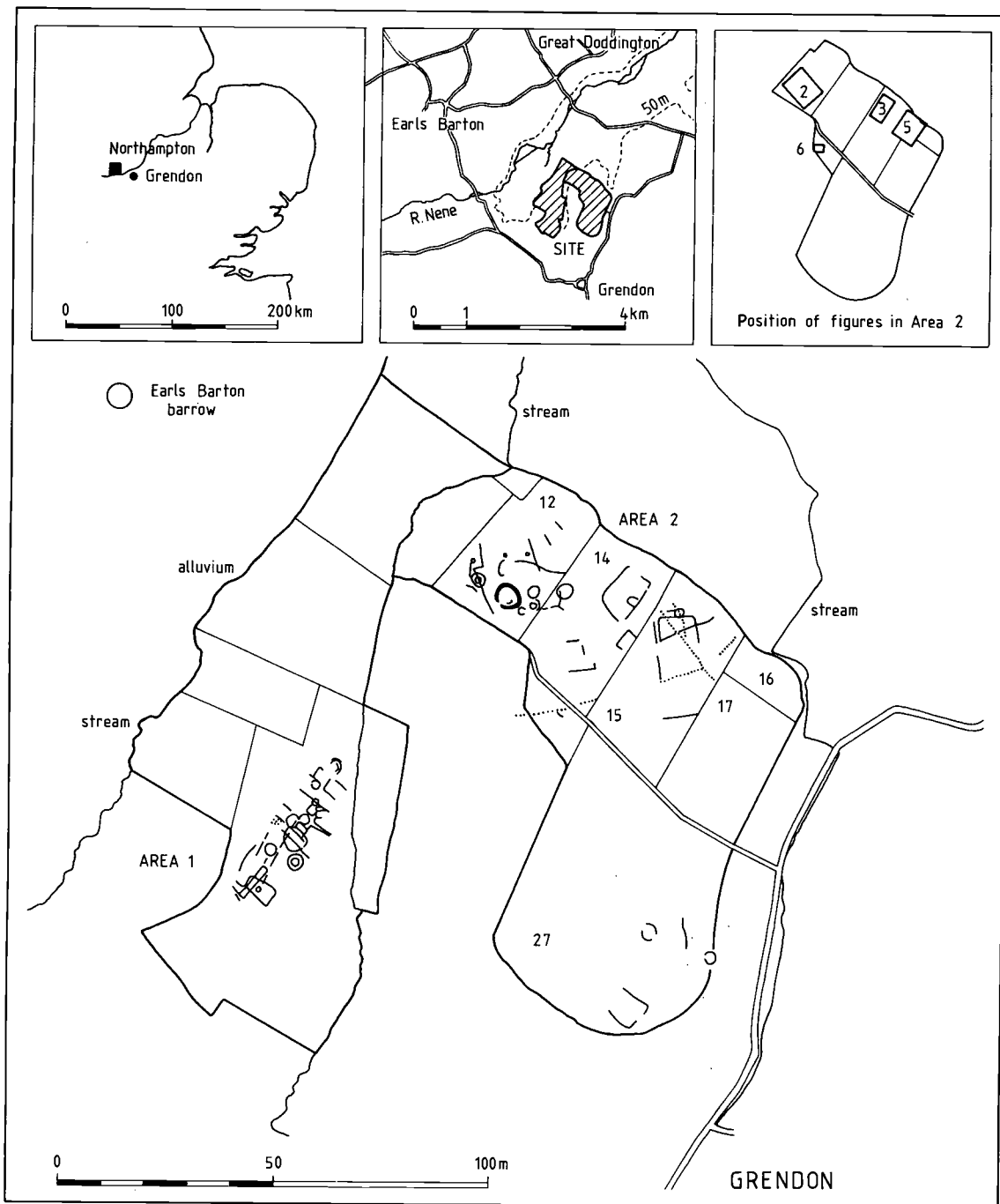


Fig 1 Grendon, Northants: location and cropmarks, based on aerial photographs held by Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit. Cf. RCHM 1979, Fig 53.

21; P. Foster Figs 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8; Cecily Marshall Figs 1 and 7; M. McCormick Figs 9, 18–21; Muriel Thompson Fig 4 and A. Williams Figs 14–17. The site records and the finds have been deposited in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive.

NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE

Six ring ditches and a possible square barrow were recorded in Area 1 (Gibson and McCormick, 1985) and a further six were revealed by aerial photography in Area 2. Other early prehistoric features in Area 2 included ditches and a number of small pits, four of which contained Bronze Age vessels.

The ring ditches excavated in Area 1 are assigned to the Middle Bronze Age. Unfortunately little work was possible on the ring ditches in Area 2 and they remain undated.

RING DITCHES (FIGS. 2 & 3 M2, 3 & 14)

In Area 2 it was possible to examine the platform within two ring ditches at gravel level, but no central burials were located (Figs 2, F14/15; 3, RD 7).

F14/15 was a double ring ditch with the outer ditch enclosing a platform c. 30 m in diameter, and the inner ditch an area some 13 m in diameter. Neither ditch was excavated but at gravel level the inner ditch appeared as a series of linked pits containing quantities of dark loam and pebbles. Five roughly aligned, circular pits were sectioned between the two ditches (F16–F20). They were up to 0.55 m deep in the gravel, and among them F16 contained a crouched inhumation on the bottom.

RD7 enclosed a platform some 20 m in diameter but no internal features were located. A number of small pits nearby may however have been contemporary, and an unusually long barbed and tanged arrowhead lay beneath a large pebble or grindstone on the base of one of them (Fig 4).

BRONZE AGE URNS

The remains of four Bronze Age urns were found in small pits to the east of the double ring ditch F14/15 (Fig 2, Fs 8–11. Cf Fig 4). Two biconical food vessels had been inserted in pits dug into the filling of an earlier small ring ditch or gully (F7) (see M3), and two tripartite collared urns were present in separate pits some 20 m to the north (Fs. 10, 11).

The only other materials present were cremated bone and a fragment of bronze pin found in the urn from F10.

F13, AN OVAL ENCLOSURE OR ? LARGE RING DITCH (FIG 2)

F13 may have been one of the most important early prehistoric features at the site and it is therefore unfortunate

that resources were unavailable for excavation prior to quarrying. It appears that a mound, some 0.5 m high and 60 m across, formerly covered the site and observation suggests there may have been a kerb, or perhaps a retaining wall around it. At one point, an Anglo-Saxon pit had probably been dug in the area encompassed by the ditch (F4).

The ditch, showing on previous aerial photographs, was between 5–8 m wide at gravel level but in the absence of detailed excavation it remains possible that its overall width was due to recutting. The ditch enclosed an area c. 50 m in diameter but it is not possible to determine whether the feature was originally oval or had an entrance on the west, as suggested by the cropmark. Although no dating evidence was obtained, the feature may represent a type of barrow or henge.

OTHER FEATURES

Of the two lengths of ditch F21 and F22 (Fig 2) the former is stratigraphically earlier than the double ring ditch F14/15 and may be part of an early prehistoric field or boundary system. F22, to the east, contained no dating evidence but is assigned to the prehistoric period by the nature of its fill (see M2). A similar hook-shaped length of ditch was found adjacent to a Neolithic ring ditch at Aldwinckle, Northants (Jackson, 1976, Fig 13).

To the south-east at the junction of fields 15 and 17 three small features (Fig 5, F1–3) may also be of an early date. One contained two fragments of flint-tempered pottery, possibly Neolithic, and several flint flakes, and another a decayed antler pick. A nearby deposit of black loam seems to have developed in the early prehistoric period although its precise date and origins are unknown (cf. M17).

THE FINDS

THE BRONZE AGE POTTERY (FIG 4)

(From a dissertation, *Excavations at Grendon, Northamptonshire*, by Muriel Thompson, edited by A.M. Gibson).

Pottery which can be dated to the early Bronze Age was recovered from features F8–11 in Field 12.

1. A complete bipartite vase food vessel from F8 had been reconstructed prior to examination and it was decided to leave the vessel complete rather than remove a sample for thin sectioning.

The food vessel had a rim diameter of 16 cm and a base diameter of 10 cm (ratio 8:5) giving the vessel a rather squat shape. The rim had a slight internal bevel formed by an internal and external thickening which gave the rim an oblique 'T'-section.

The vessel was decorated with incised lines on both the bevel and the body. The bevel carried oblique lines of stab and drag incisions while the body was decorated with four rows of diagonal lines in the same technique and which were opposed to form two encircling lines of complete herring-bone motif. The decoration extended fractionally below the carination of the vessel, which itself was an ill-defined feature. Apart from the infringement just mentioned, the vessel is undecorated below the shoulder.

The external surface of the vessel had been smoothed

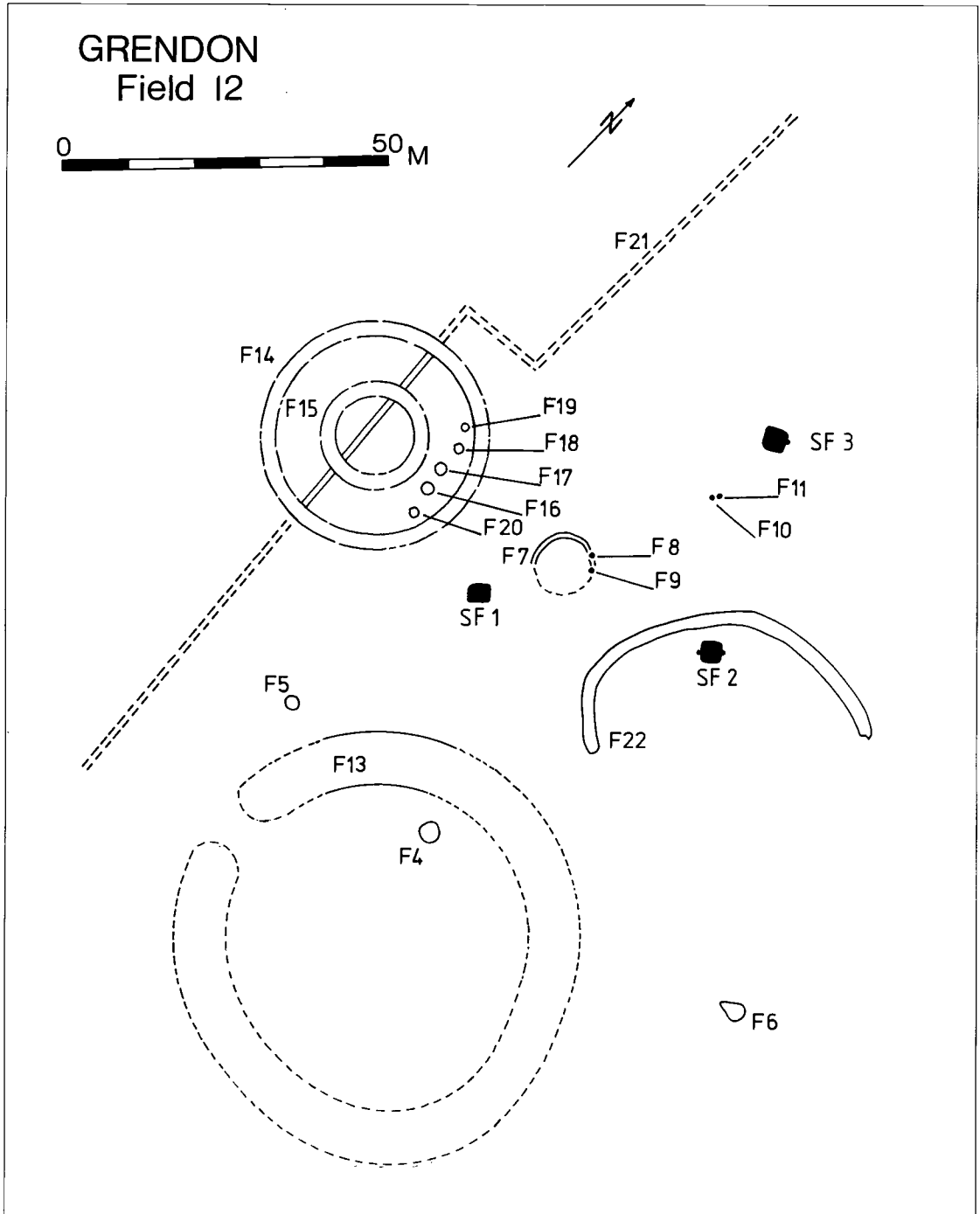


Fig 2 Grendon, Northants: features recorded in Field 12.

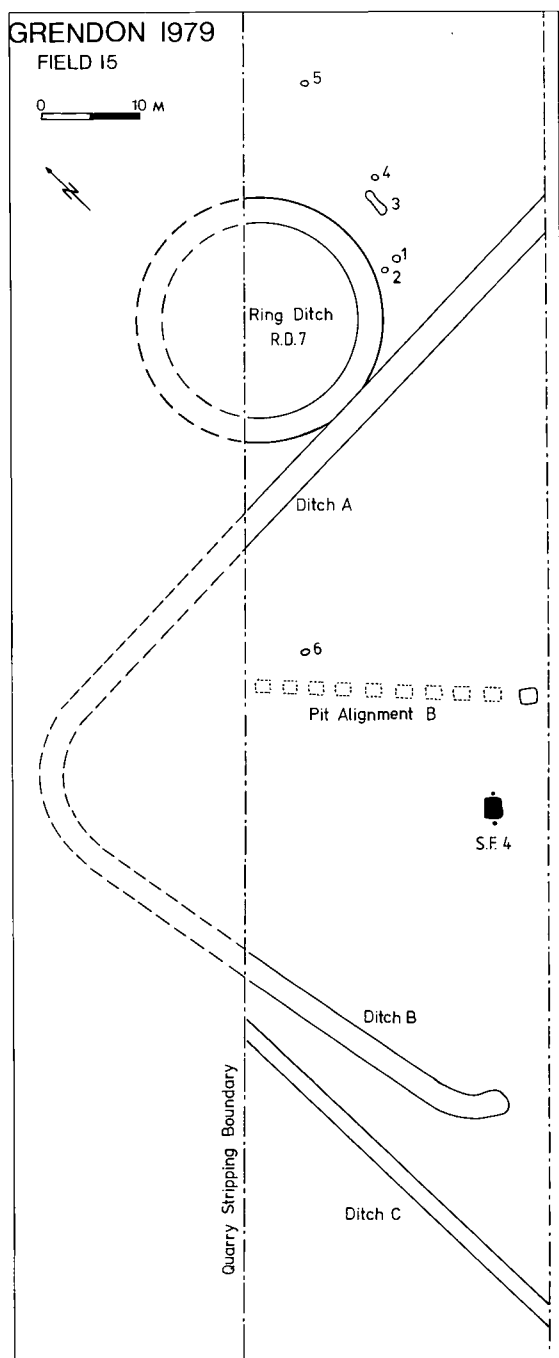


Fig 3 Grendon, Northants: features recorded in Field 15.

and the internal surface wiped. The vessel was unaccompanied.

2. Part of what was most probably a bipartite vase food vessel was recovered from feature F9 (the sherds being recovered from their earth matrix in the laboratory during post-excitation processing). It was only possible to reconstruct the base and parts of the rim of the vessel and the rim to base profile is conjectural. The base had a diameter of 7 cm and the rim diameter was 14 cm (ratio 2:1).

The rim was thinned internally and had been slightly out-turned. Below this externally a horizontal incised line further distinguished the rim from the body.

The vessel had been decorated with incised lines on the upper portion of the exterior and on the rim bevel. The exact nature of the bevel decoration is difficult to determine, but two-directional incisions suggest panels of herring-bone motif changing direction at regular intervals.

The body of the vessel was decorated with four horizontal incised lines bordering single bands of short running chevron incisions. This decoration does not appear to extend below the carination and it is likely that the lower part of the body was undecorated.

This vessel was also unaccompanied.

3. The upper portion of a tripartite collared urn was recovered from F10. It is probable that the vessel had been inverted in the pit and the base had been destroyed by ploughing or scraping.

The earth fill of this pot was excavated in the laboratory and contained part of a cremation, a fragment of a bronze pin or awl and some oak charcoal.

The urn, like the food vessels, was coil-built and it could be seen in section that the collar had been added to the body in two parts. Firstly, a strip of clay had been added to the outside of the incomplete vessel and the vessel wall had been thinned to take this addition. Secondly, a strip of clay had been added internally and smoothed over the lower join. The collar was deepened by the drawing up of these two coils.

The collar was decorated with twisted and whipped cord. The twisted cord was applied in three encircling lines with overlaps clearly visible. Single vertical rows of whipped cord maggots filled the zones between the twisted cord.

The rim diameter of the vessel was 21–22 cm.

The body of the urn had been decorated, with vertical columns of multi-directional whipped or plaited cord-horizontal impressions being the most common. This decoration is rather faint.

4. The lower portion of a tripartite collared urn (body only) was recovered from F11. The vessel had probably been upright in the pit and the collar destroyed by ploughing or scraping. This vessel was also coil or ring-built.

On surviving portions, decoration was confined to the cavetto zone and consisted of four rows of short, vertical twisted cord lengths.

The urn was unaccompanied.

THE FLINT ARROWHEAD (FIG 5)

This unusually long arrowhead (60.6 mm) was found beneath a large stone on the base of a small pit. (F.6 in Field 13, Fig 3 and p 9) The upper part of the pit had not survived.

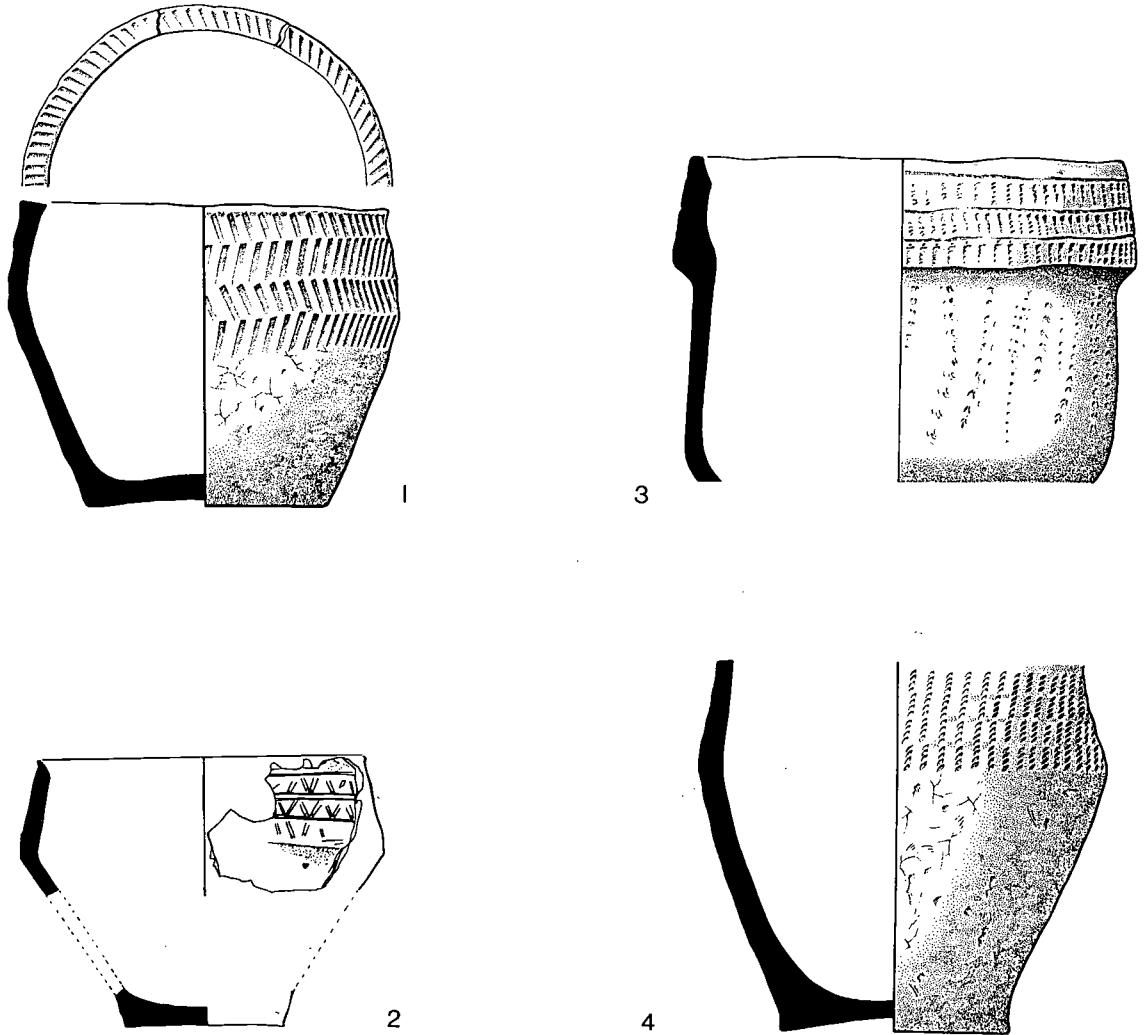


Fig 4 Grendon, Northants: Bronze Age pottery and flint from Area 2. (scale 1:4).

Elongated arrowheads such as this are uncommon and its delicacy and finely-executed finish may suggest it was made as a funerary or ritual object. The pit where the arrowhead was found was situated close to a ring ditch and the object may therefore fit into this category.

IRON AGE

There appears to have been intensive activity on the gravel terraces at Grendon during the Iron

Age. Numerous pit alignments, observed both from the air and on the ground, were probably boundaries of early Iron Age date, and the pottery scatter found during quarrying suggests that many of the enclosures and ditches showing as cropmarks belong to either the middle, or middle to late Iron Age (Fig 1; cf. RCHM 1979, Fig 53).

Only enclosure A in Area I was completely excavated, but Iron Age pottery came from the filling of the enclosure ditches in Field 13; at the

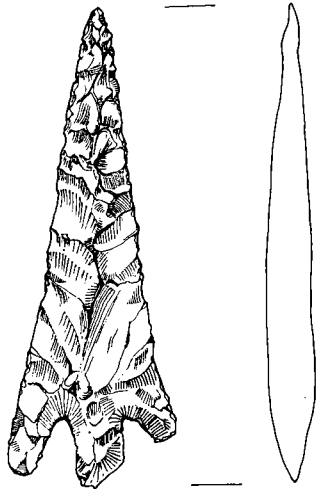


Fig 5 Flint Arrowhead (Actual Size)

north-east corner of Field 14, and from undefined features on the north side of Field 27. The pottery is not more closely diagnostic than of the mid-to-late Iron Age, and it is uncertain whether the enclosures were broadly contemporary or represent settlement drift.

PIT ALIGNMENTS

Although a complex series of pit alignments was revealed it was only possible to plan and excavate a limited number of them in selected areas. Four alignments were located in Fields 13–17 (Figs 3, 6 and 7), one in part at least a double row of pits, and a further example was noted from the air in Field 27 (RCHM 1979, Fig 53). During quarrying the infillings of many pits were exposed, but the only dating evidence obtained was a single sherd of pottery of early Iron Age type. Where the pit alignments intersected other Iron Age enclosure ditches, however, the pits were always stratigraphically earlier.

Three pit alignments (A, B and C) converged near the junction of Fields 15, 16 and 17 (Fig 6). Since the upper deposits of sand and gravel in this area were of no commercial value and were scraped away during overburden clearance, the pits or lines of pits were seen but few could be plotted individually or in detail.

Alignment A was traced by aerial photography and surface observation for a distance of 550 m across Fields 13, 15 and 16. At the intersection of Alignments A and B the pits did not overlap and in Alignment A the spacing of the pits was inconsistent. This may suggest that either the pits in Alignment B were dug first, or that there was an entrance-way between fields at the intersection.

To the east, the pits in Alignment A became increasingly

shallow to a point near a stream where no further traces were located. Whilst it is possible that the decreasing depth was due to surface erosion, it is more likely to reflect the high water level at the time of their original excavation. In 1980 the ground was waterlogged and the presence of peat or organic mud in the pits suggests that the area was wet and marshy when they were open. It is therefore likely that the alignment began at a natural barrier such as the stream or an adjacent waterlogged area immediately to the west. The alignment appears to have deviated around a large rectangular pit (F7) suggesting that it was at least present, if not related, when the pits were dug. The feature appeared as a single pit, with a maximum depth of 1.3 m but was very irregular and could have consisted of several pits or hollows. No dating evidence was obtained, but there was a thick layer of organic mud on the bottom (M22). At Gretton Northants, an alignment of pits started at a linear ditch, and there were similar unexplained features nearby (Jackson 1974, Fig 15).

Alignment A is seen running south-west on aerial photographs, and the pits observed in Field 13 (Fig 7) are almost certainly part of the same alignment. Three of the eleven pits planned in this area overlay vestiges of earlier pits and provide rare evidence for recutting. At Briar Hill, Northampton a pit alignment of more than one phase was found but the smaller holes of the earliest alignment probably held posts (Jackson, 1974, Fig 4).

The double pit in this alignment (F5) is unusual, but the irregularity of alignment may be the result of gangwork. It has been suggested that this was the reason for groups of pits being off line at Gretton (Jackson, 1974).

Alignment B and Ba. Pits in Alignment B were planned to the east of the ring ditch in Field 15 (Fig 3) as well as in the areas where they crossed Alignment A and where was a slight change of alignment (Fig 6).

There was a double line of pits, some 3–4 m apart, to the east of the intersection between Alignment A and B, and where observed, the pits at either side were approximately opposite each other. They also seemed to be running parallel and, if contemporary, could have formed a double boundary or perhaps flanked a trackway. Similar double lines of pits have been found by aerial photography (Northants SMR) and an example was excavated at Tallington, Lincs. in advance of gravel quarrying (RCHM, 1960, Fig 8).

Alignment C appears to be a bifurcation of Alignment A (Fig 6). The pit linking the two systems was larger than average and, if recut, could suggest that Alignment C was dug to replace the eastern section of Alignment A. This seems reasonable as the V-shaped area between the two alignments and the stream may not have made a suitable land unit. The base of the pits at the north-east end of the exposed alignment contained blue clay, which suggests that, as at the east end of Alignment A, it ran into a wet area.

Shallow ditches overlay the pits and followed the lines of both Alignment C and Alignment Ba. If not a coincidence, it may suggest that these two alignments were at some stage in contemporary use.

The pits. A total of 17 pits was either totally or partially excavated and most had a constant depth of between 1 m–1.3 m below the modern surface. The exceptions were the shallow

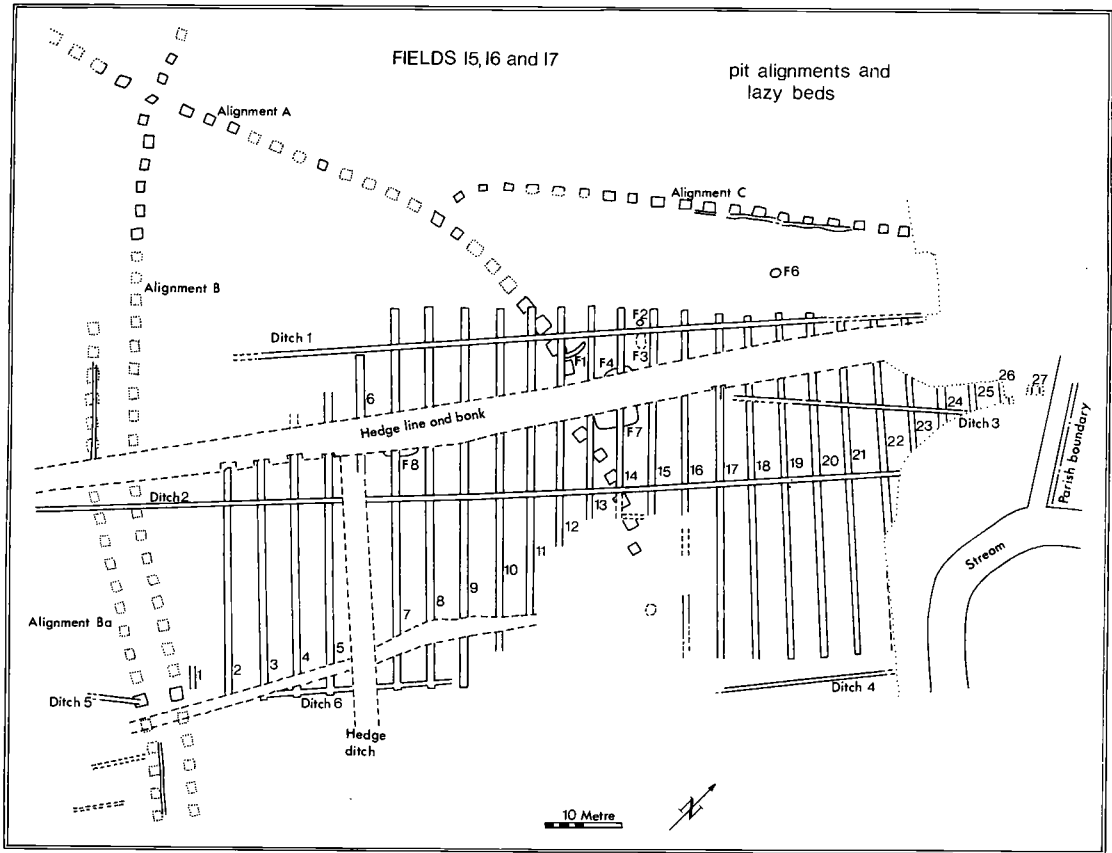


Fig 6 Grendon, Northants: Pit alignments and lazy bed system in Fields 15–17.

pits at the south-east end of Alignment A where conditions may have been wetter. The upper edges of the pits could have been eroded, but at gravel level almost all had angular corners and appeared rectangular to square in plan. All the excavated pits appear to have silted naturally (M22). The distance between the centres of the pits in all four alignments ranged between 2.8–3.8 m, but the variation between the spacing of pits in any one alignment was not more than 0.6 m.

DISCUSSION

Aerial photographs frequently show pit alignments meeting and crossing at acute angles but it is rarely possible to determine if different alignments were contemporary. At Grendon, however, it seems clear that some alignments formed part of a broadly contemporary boundary system, albeit with modification, since Alignments A and C may be secondary to Alignment B. It is assumed that the pit alignments were boundaries between fields or other land-holdings, and this likelihood is increased by the discovery of later linear ditches along their line at Grendon and at other

quarry sites such as Ringstead and Wollaston (reports forthcoming).

The rectangular or square shape of the pits has been a constant feature of the five other alignments investigated by the writer in Northamptonshire, as also is the fairly even depth and spacing (Jackson, 1974). These characteristics betray an organised approach to what appears to be a simple matter of creating boundaries. In Scotland, pit alignments are known which are associated with linear banks (Halliday, 1982) but at Grendon there was no evidence of a bank or where it may have been positioned. At Ringstead, Northants, no upcast was found with a pit alignment even though the ancient surface had been preserved by a later accumulation of alluvial clay.

The dating of pit alignments has not been consistent and it seems alignments of pits can be found during different periods of time. However the evidence from Northamptonshire sites, such as Gretton (Jackson, 1974) and Ringstead (Jackson, 1978), suggests that alignments with evenly-spaced square to rectangular pits, like those at Grendon, date to the earlier Iron Age period. In this respect it is significant that wherever they have a stratigraphical association with other Iron Age features the pit alignments have always been found to be the earlier features.

IRON AGE FEATURES IN FIELD 13 (FIG 7)

In addition to the pit alignment a number of other Iron Age features were revealed in Field 13 when a haul-road was cut.

ENCLOSURE E

Limited cleaning and excavation revealed a small sub-rectangular enclosure, measuring 13.5 m × 10 m, with an entrance 2.35 m wide at the south-west corner. The ditch had been recut twice on its inner edge (M12) and a small quantity of middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from its filling.

The ditch of a small D-shaped enclosure at Weekley, Northants had similarly been recut along the inside (Jackson and Dix, 1986–7) and the small size of the enclosed area suggests that any bank with these enclosures may have been positioned externally. Five small enclosures, of possible Iron Age date, occur nearby in Field 27 (F1. *cf.* RCHM 1979, Fig 53) and others have been excavated locally at Earls Barton (Windell, 1983) Briar Hill, Northampton (Bamford, 1985), and Stanwick (forthcoming).

DITCHES B, C AND D

Ditches C and D probably formed the corner of separate enclosure, some 20 m east of Enclosure E. They cut several pits in the probable continuation of pit Alignment A. A linear ditch, Ditch B, was exposed at the side of the haul-road and contained clean gravel in its upper filling. It appeared to be linked to Ditch C by a small triangular stone drain, and could have served as an overflow for the enclosure ditch. A small quantity of Iron Age pottery found in the filling of Ditch B was similar to the material from the ditch of Enclosure E.

THE TRENCH SYSTEM (FIG 6)

A series of 27 parallel trenches extended over an area of 4,000 sq m. The individual trenches were up to 49 m long and each was between 0.8–1 m wide; they were between 3–3.7 m apart. The trenches were generally dug down to the top of the natural gravel and as a result were c. 1 m deep below the modern surface on the west, but as little as 0.25–0.3 m deep at the east. There were two areas where the rectangular layout of the trenches was not uniform. At the west corner it seems likely that the trenches were shortened because of rising ground and increasing overburden, while on the east side some were probably too shallow to survive. (In the latter case the gravel came up to the topsoil and in 1980 the area was waterlogged). Each trench was flat-bottomed, with square ends and near vertical sides, suggestive that they were probably spade-dug (M23/24).

On the south-east side a contemporary ditch ran at right-angles (Ditch 6). Although only 0.5 m wide it was of the same depth as the trenches and had a similar filling. All other ditches which crossed the trenches were found to be of later date.

The trenches survived for a depth of up to 0.4 m in the bedrock after topsoil stripping and where excavated there was no evidence of erosion from the sides. Most were dug through a yellow gritty clay or silt which appeared to be able to

withstand prolonged exposure. Many of the trenches contained grey silty loam at the base, overlain by a mixture of yellow gritty clay and loam.

Variations in the filling includes black loam, where cutting through a buried deposit of this material (M.23), and a lower filling of peaty silt or clay in the wetter areas.

The angle of rest of the lower layers of loam suggest that this deposit may have been top soil which had eroded or been pushed in from the sides. The lack of silting layers above this loam appears to indicate that the trenches were subsequently deliberately filled, and perhaps raises the possibility of them being dug as bedding trenches for trees or plants.

Another and much more extensive series of parallel trenches was found by the writer in 1990, whilst carrying out an evaluation at Wollaston quarry, some 2.8 km to the north-east. A full excavation was carried out later by Northamptonshire Archaeology and vine pollen was recovered from the trenches, together with a small amount of Roman pottery (Meadows, forthcoming).

The width, depth, and profile of the trenches at Wollaston is basically similar to those at Grendon, but at Wollaston the features were more widely spaced (5–8 m centre to centre). While the trenches at Grendon could be part of a lazy bed system of agriculture it seems more likely, in view of the evidence from Wollaston, that they were dug to grow grapevines.

The only dating evidence for the trench system at Grendon consists of a single sherd of Iron Age pottery from one of the trenches, and a sherd of Roman pottery from a ditch that overlay the trenches. Whilst lazy-bed cultivation has a long history it is almost certain that Medieval plough soil overlay part of the trench system. This soil was quite different to that occurring in the trenches and a pre-Medieval date is therefore postulated for the features. On the east side the features appear to pre-date the parish boundary and may also pre-date the present bend in the stream.

At the east corner the trenches are foreshortened, possibly because of the increasing depth of overburden above the gravel. An aerial photograph shows a possible ditch or pit alignment at this corner however (R.C.H.M., 1979, Fig 53), and although this did not survive, it is conceivable that the trenches occupied a field bounded by ditches that followed the alignments of Pit Alignments Ba and C.

AREA 1, ENCLOSURE A (FIG 8)

by A. McCormick and D. Jackson

The enclosure was revealed by aerial photography before excavations began in 1974 (*cf.* Gibson and McCormick, 1985, pl. 1). Although the prominent ring ditches were the main focus of the work at that time, the Iron Age enclosure appeared to be a discrete feature of the landscape, and therefore worth recording.

Up to 0.7 m of overburden was removed mechanically over the whole of the enclosure and the underlying gravel surface cleaned by hand. The local subsoil was variable and it was found that features could not be detected above the gravel surface.

The ditch of the main enclosure (F4) enclosed a trapezoid area 72 m long and 41 m and 27 m wide at the east and west ends respectively. Its west side followed the curvature of an

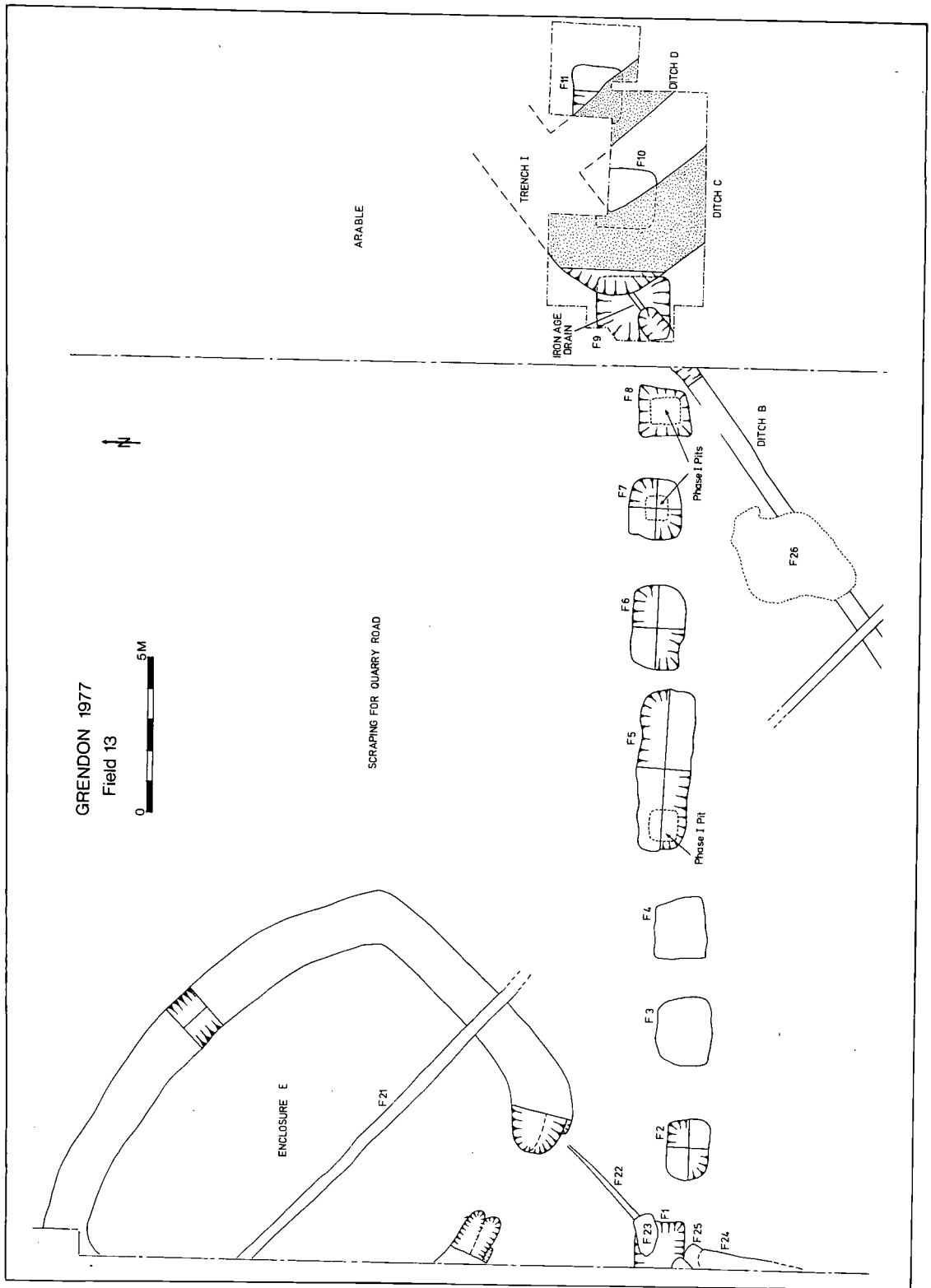
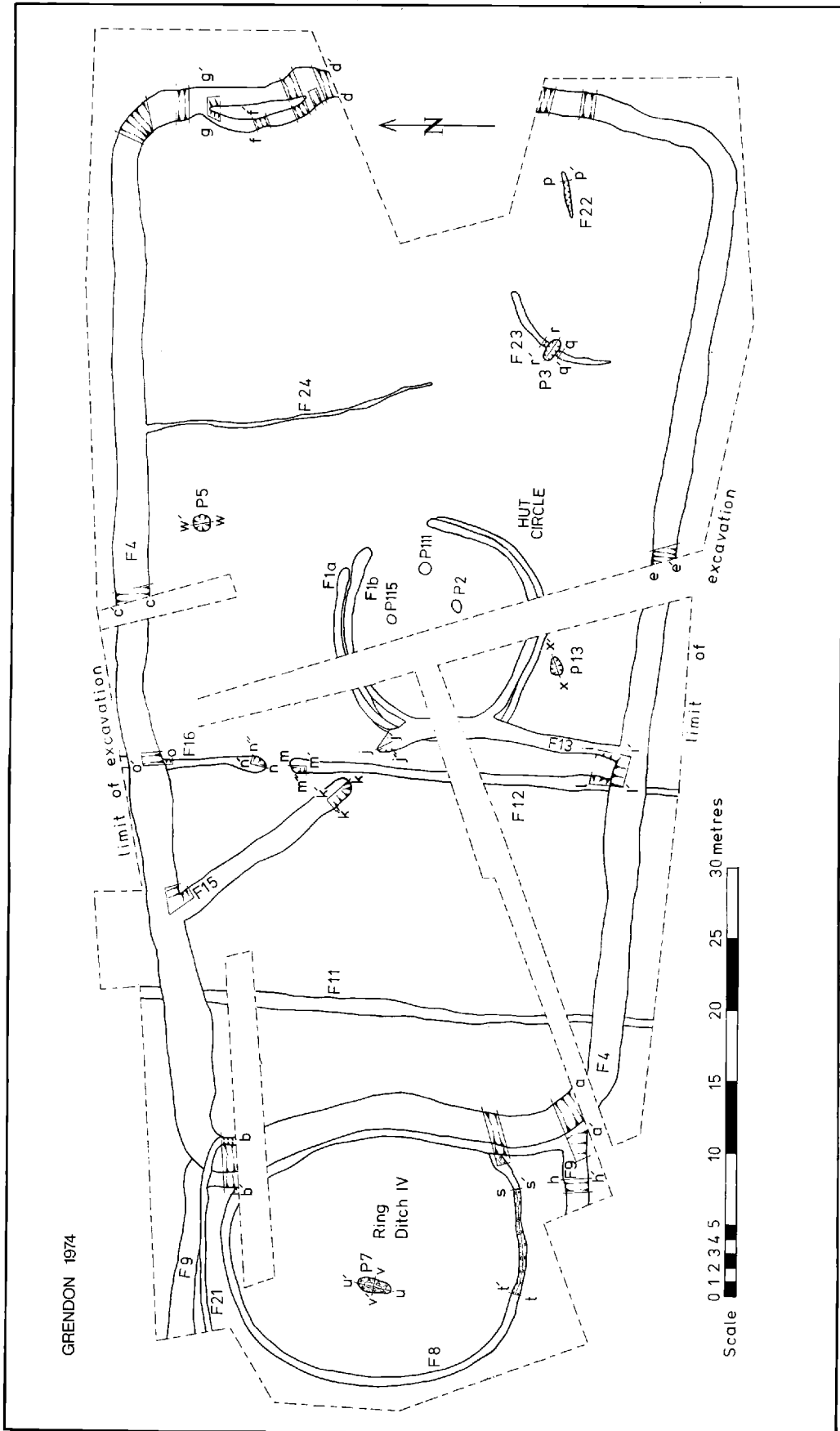


Fig 7 Grendon, Northants: features in Field 13.



earlier ring ditch, suggesting that there was a standing barrow when the enclosure was created (Gibson and McCormick, 1985, ring ditch IV). No definite entrance was located, but a bifurcation of the ditch near the north-east corner could represent the position of an entrance way. Post-holes sunk into the filling of the ditch there may have flanked a gateway.

Where excavated the ditch varied from 1.05–1.35 m deep, and had a consistent V-shaped profile (M34). Its filling of alternate bands of brown loam and stony or gravelly silt derived mainly from inside the enclosure, perhaps from an internal bank. Pottery and animal bones were found in all levels of the ditch.

THE HUTS

A hut circle, roughly central within the enclosure, was defined by a series of circular gullies with an opening at the east. The earliest gully F1c only survived for a short length. Its replacement F1a, defined an area 14.5 m in diameter and had an entrance width of 7 m. There was clear evidence that the gully was dug in linked, straight sections c. 6 m long. In its final phase the gully encompassed a slightly smaller area and had a narrower opening 4.5 m wide. At this time its south side was linked to a ditch which divided the main enclosure (see F13–F15 below). The hut gullies were c. 0.6 m deep below the topsoil, and had silted up with orange-brown sandy loam, but with darker earth and gravel layers near the base. There was no indication that they had held posts (M35).

The only features found within the area defined by the gullies were three small pits P2, P111 and P115. Each contained red clayey loam, many animal bones, and some pottery. There was no evidence of post-sockets in the pits and no other postholes survived.

The remains of a separate curving gully F23 in the south-east corner of the enclosure may indicate the site of a second house or alternatively represent some other structure. A short length of ditch/gully to the east is of uncertain function (F22).

THE ENCLOSURE DIVIDER F13 AND F15

At about the same time as the final recutting of the hut gully (F1b). The ditch itself was 0.6 m deep and there was an entrance gap 3 m wide, just to the north of the hut gully.

OTHER FEATURES

Ditch F9. This ditch forms the eastern end of a possible enclosure, sharing a common boundary with the west end of Enclosure A. Where excavated the ditch was 1.45 m deep, and contained silt layers which had derived from inside the enclosure. Aerial photographs did not reveal the west end of the enclosure and quarrying operations afforded no opportunity for recording. It is possible that it may have opened on to the marshy boundaries of a known pre-Roman watercourse.

Ditches F11, F12 and F16. Aerial photographs suggest that these ditches form part of a long rectangular enclosure measuring 86 m × 17 m. The ditches were up to 0.4 m deep in the gravel and there was an entrance-way 1.6 m wide on the

east side. No dating evidence was found but it may be significant that the filling of red-brown sandy loam was similar to the material found in ring ditches I, II, III and IV (cf. Gibson and McCormick, 1985).

F21. This shallow ditch or gully was undated and overlay the main enclosure ditch at the west end.

Ditch F24. The base of a shallow ditch, or palisade trench, ran from north to south across the area between the supposed entrance to the enclosure and the hut circle. It extended from the enclosure ditch on the north for a distance of at least 20 m.

Pits inside the enclosure. (P3, P5 and P13). Only three pits were found within the enclosure but none of them were typical storage pits. Pits 3 and 5 contained Iron Age pottery.

DISCUSSION

Trapezoidal or rectangular Iron Age enclosures similar to that at Grendon are common, and others have been excavated in the region at Twywell (Jackson, 1975) and Aldwincle (Jackson, 1977).

If the well-drained gravel terrace of Area 1 at Grendon was used for arable farming in the Iron Age, the enclosure may have been sited deliberately on the margin of the better land. At Twywell the settlement was sited where clays and pervious soils meet, and it was suggested that this may have been to exploit different land use (cf. Collis, 1979, 254).

The practice of forming smaller compounds within the main enclosure is also known from Twywell, Aldwincle, and Wakerley (Jackson and Ambroxe, 1978). Such small compounds or pens were presumably formed to enable livestock to be kept within the enclosure, but away from dwellings and other structures. It is known that many enclosures in the Midlands housed single family units (Cunliffe, 1978) and Grendon is probably a good example of the type.

The hut circle ditch presumably represents the drainage gully around the main house, but as in similar examples no trace of the structure survived. The excavation of a well-preserved house at Brigstock showed that the house wall lay slightly more than 1 m from the drainage gully, and by analogy the Grendon house could have been between 11–12 m in diameter.

Many middle Iron Age sites contain a profusion of storage pits and at Twywell, for example, no less than 180 were found in the excavated area. They do not seem to be as common on some gravel sites, however, possibly because of a high or fluctuating water table. At Grendon no storage pits were found in the vicinity of the enclosure although some of the 48 pits found 100 m to the north (Area E) may be of this date (see below). It is possible that the storage pits were sited away from the enclosure on slightly higher ground.

There was no evidence on which to assess the economic basis of the settlement. The small amount of animal bones contained the usual domestic species and there was no evidence of arable activity.

A small quantity of Iron Age pottery was found during other excavation in Area I, particularly to the north in Area E (Fig 9). (Gibson and McCormick, 1985). This suggests that activity in this period was not confined to Enclosure A.

IRON AGE POTTERY

by Susan Morris and D.A. Jackson

Approximately 700 sherds of pottery were found during the excavation of Enclosure A. Most material came from clearance above the main ditch and the hut circle, and presumably had largely derived from the upper layers of those features. Since the assemblage includes some Belgic sherds, the material from the clearance may not all be contemporary. The pottery illustrated in Fig 9 has therefore been selected mostly from the excavated features.

FABRIC

Approximately 95 per cent of the pottery contains shell or calcareous inclusions, which is normal for many Iron Age sites in Northamptonshire. The shell content varies from coarse to fine and from dense to sparse, with some of the finer wares containing grog or sand. The residue of pottery without shell contains quartz with occasional grog inclusions (see M36).

FORMS

Both large jars and fine-ware bowls occur in the assemblage. The forms are fairly typical for the region and parallels can be found on many sites including the Hunsbury hillfort, Northampton (Fell, 1936, and unpublished material in Northampton Museum) and Geddington (Jackson, 1979). The number of large jars in the assemblage is notable at both Grendon, Hunsbury, and Geddington.

SURFACE TREATMENT

Examples of finger tipping on the rim and scoring on the body occurs amongst the pottery from Grendon. Such surface treatment is usually found among middle to late Iron Age pottery in the region, although the percentage of scored ware from Grendon is comparatively low (2%).

DATE

In general the pottery is not sufficiently diagnostic to enable it to be dated closer than middle to late Iron Age. Globular bowls such as No 7 can be paralleled on the late Iron Age sites at Hunsbury and Weekley (Jackson and Dix, 1986/7), and are unlikely to be any earlier than mid 2nd century B.C. The small amount of scored ware in the assemblage is not an indicator of date, within this period, as it is far less common in the east of the county than it is to the north and west. Most of the Iron Age pottery from Grendon can probably be dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., with the site originating in the middle Iron Age period.

CATALOGUE

1. Rim, flattened top, definite edge on interior, rounded rim on exterior, smooth finish, fine to medium shell. Clearance above hut circle.
2. Rim, upright, large jar form, flattened top, thick profile, smooth, fine to medium shell, some grog. Enclosure ditch (F4).
3. Rim, flattened top, sharply defined lip on exterior, slight lip on interior, fine to medium shell, some grog. Hut circle (F1A).
4. Rim sherd, upright rim, rounded body, finger-nail impressions obliquely along rim, fine to medium shell. Hut circle (F1A).
5. Rim, flat top, large jar form, profile narrows below rim, smooth rounded body, fine shell. Hut circle (F1B).
6. Rim, flat topped, deep finger impressions along top, irregular scoring on exterior, roughly smoothed, large jar form, coarse to medium shell, some grog. Enclosure ditch (F4).
7. Rim, flattened top, rounded body, smooth finish, fine to medium shell. Ditch F7.
8. Rim, flat topped, slightly rounded on exterior edge, smooth, jar form, fine shell, some grog. Enclosure ditch (F4).
9. Rim, rounded top, slightly concave neck, ridge or small protuberance below, fine to medium shell, some grog. Hut circle (F1A).
10. Rim, upright, round topped, smooth finish, fine shell, some grog. Enclosure ditch (F4).
11. Rim, flat top, rounded exterior edge, smooth rounded body, fine shell. Ditch F9.
12. Rim, flat topped, upright, rounded body, smooth finish, fine shell. Hut circle (F1A).

ROMAN

Roman features in Area 1 include the remains of a trackway, a possible bridge or causeway, at least three pottery kilns, and a number of ditches and postholes (Fig 10).

The Roman ditches, or fence lines, were only located in limited areas, but originally may have been more extensive. Pottery from the kilns dates to the 1st or 2nd centuries A.D. and the material found in the ditches is of the same period.

THE BRIDGE OR CAUSEWAY

Several timber piles were revealed *in situ* where a presumed trackway crossed an old watercourse. Unfortunately only four survived the use of heavy machinery, and it is uncertain whether they supported a bridge or causeway. Three of the piles were aligned east-west, along the line of the trackway, but the fourth may have formed part of a second row to the south.

The individual piles, which were round rather than square, were some 0.2 m in diameter and

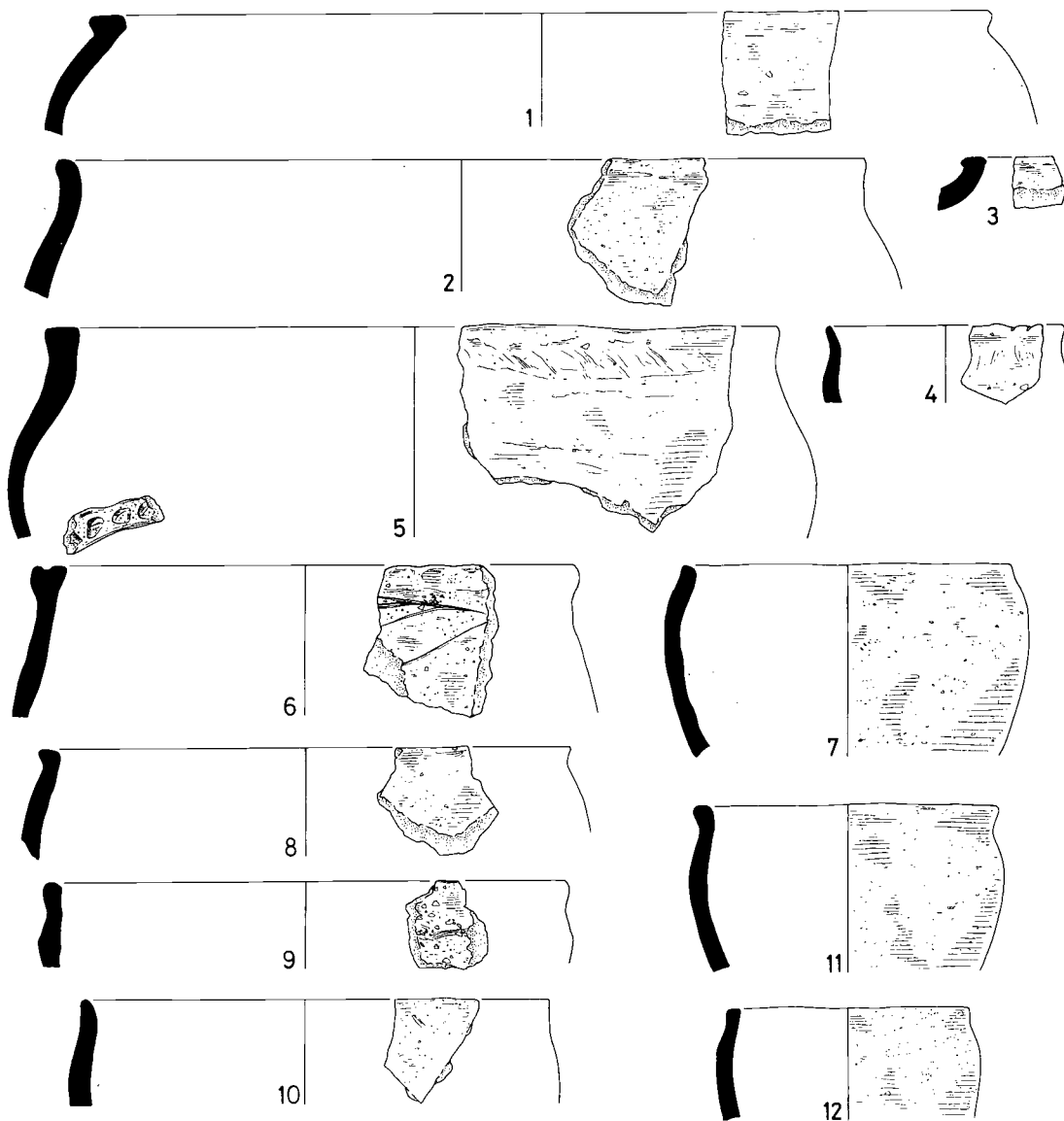


Fig 9 Grendon, Northants: Iron Age pottery from Enclosure A (scale 1:4).

spaced between 1.6 m–2 m apart. Their sharpened ends had been driven into the gravel at the base of the watercourse, and the piles themselves survived to a height of c. 1.5 m above the gravel. The old watercourse was filled with clay and silts, but the level of silting when the piles were positioned is uncertain.

The remains of a metallised trackway, presumed to be Roman, overlay the clay silts, but it is possible that the piles pre-date the re-use of the alignment since the ditches to the east of the watercourse (E35–7) suggest that the position of the trackway may have altered over time.

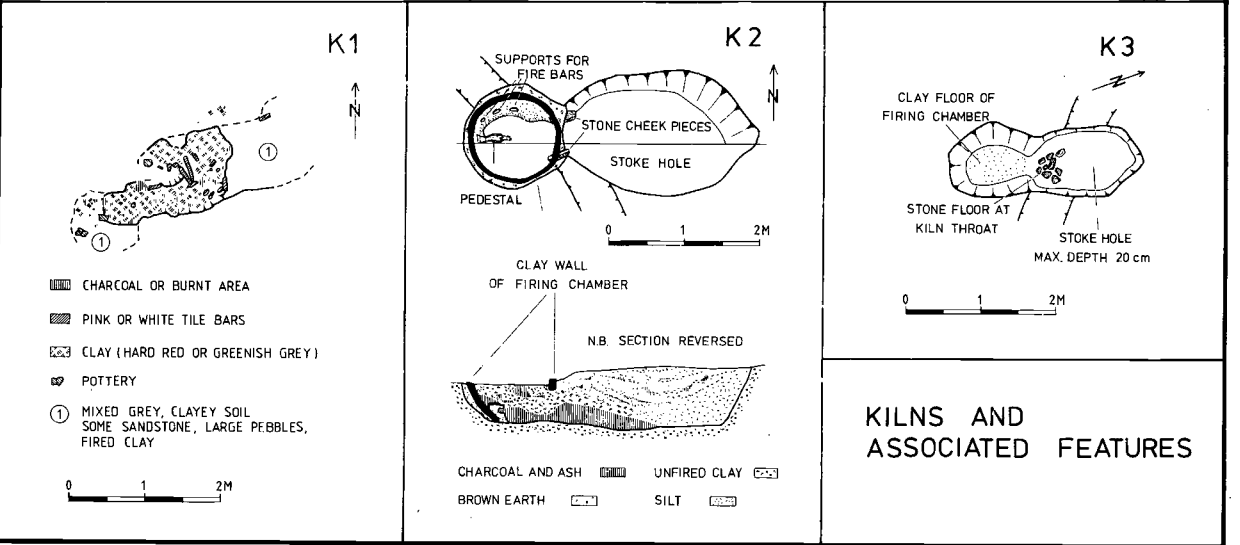
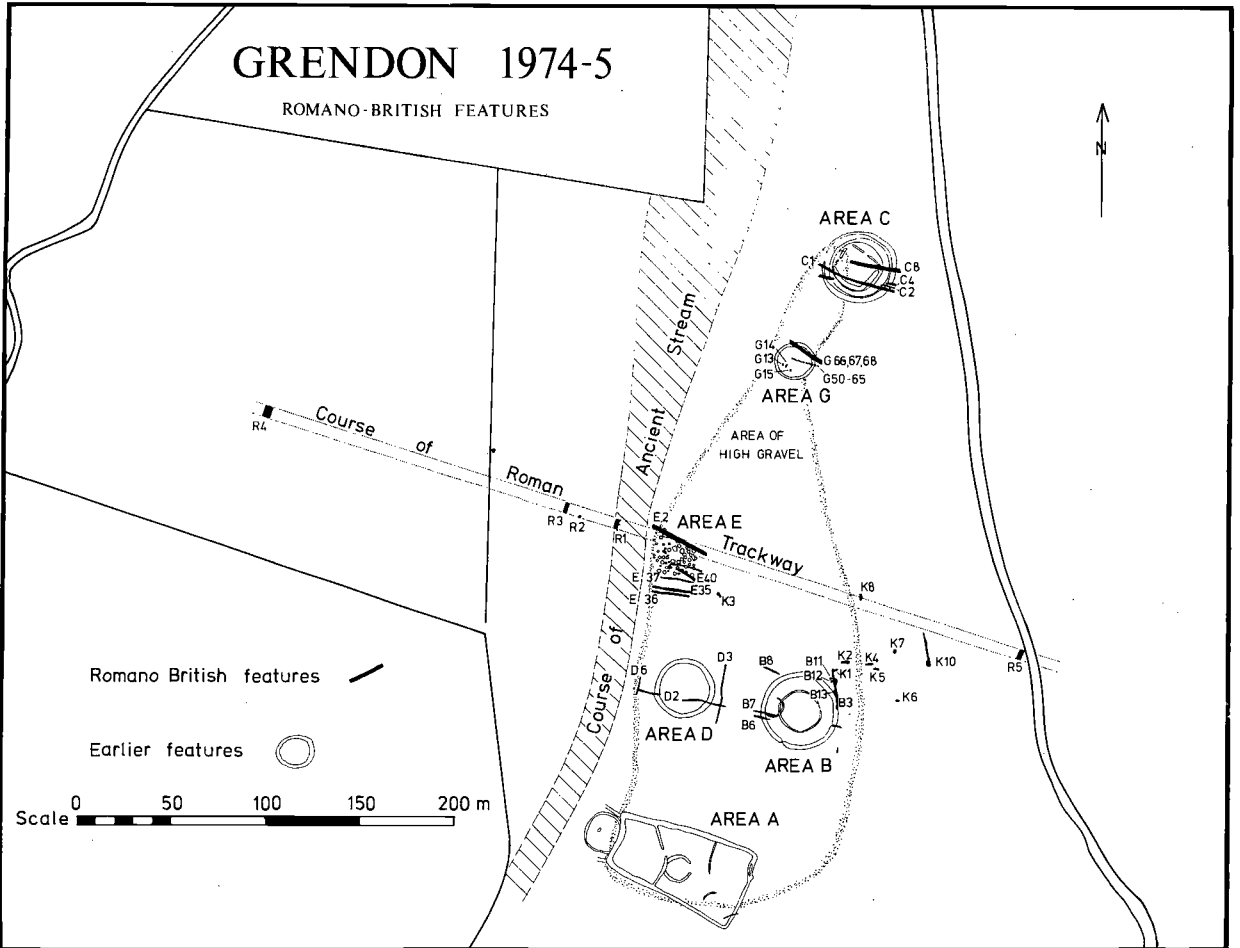


Fig 10 Grendon, Northants: Area 1, Roman features.

THE POTTERY KILNS

by E.H. MacRobert

A number of features were identified as Roman pottery kilns (Fig 10, K1-8, K10; no record of the position nor a detailed plan of K9 has been located), but publication of only three structures in a recent national gazetteer of Roman pottery kilns (Swan, 1984, M521-522, K1-3) implies a degree of re-appraisal of the evidence by the excavator which is consistent with the interpretation offered in the present study below. No conclusive evidence survives for the identification of K4-K10 as pottery kilns, and where detailed plans are extant these features apparently comprise a number of pits or intercutting pits and ditches.

Detailed consideration of all the features, together with analysis of the ceramic assemblages, is available in the archive report retained in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive (MacRobert, 1987). The present

discussion is limited to the three structures which can with certainty be identified as kilns.

Limitations of the circumstances of excavation resulted in only a summary field record of each kiln being prepared, in the form of a plan and in one case a section (Fig 10). The evidence suggests that K1 and K3 were surface or shallow kilns with a clay floor in the firing chamber. The layout of K3 is more coherent whereas the original outline of K1 is unclear, comprising an area of clay with scattered kiln bars but no readily apparent specific shape. An area of flat stones in the stokehole of K3 at the mouth of the flue differs from the previously published description of a flue with stone cheek pieces (Swan, 1984, M422), and probably results from confusion with K2.

More detailed information is available about the structure of K2. It comprises a sunken kiln, with a clay lining to the walls of the firing chamber in which three niches are assumed to be supports for the fire bars. An apparently slab-shaped clay pedestal extended from the back wall of the chamber opposite

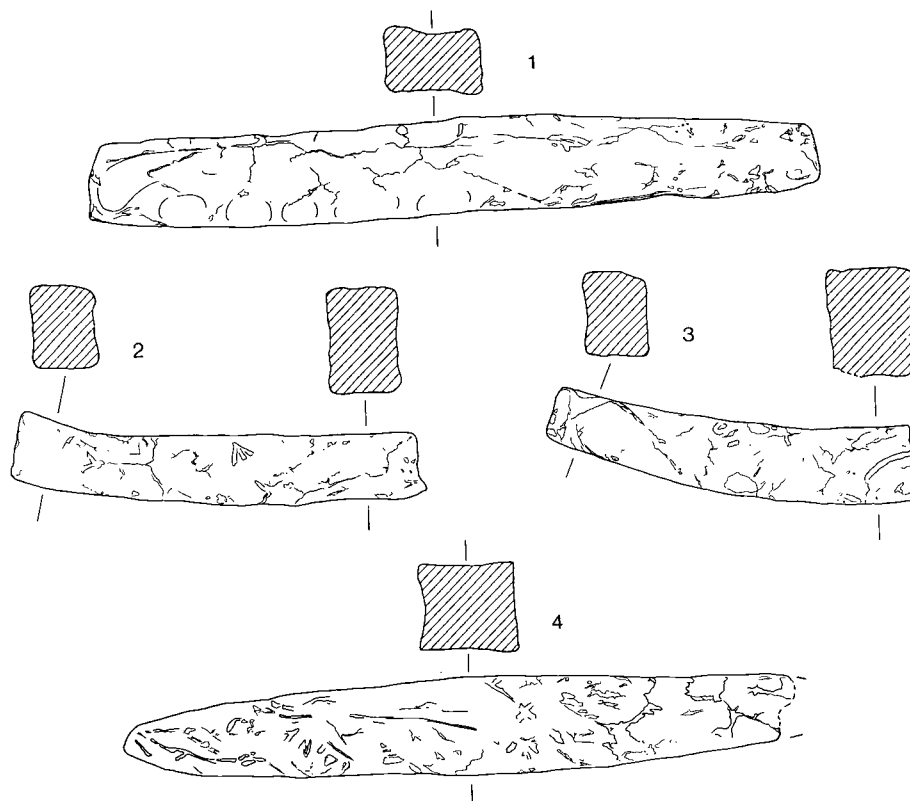


Fig 11 Grendon, Northants: Kiln bars (scale 1:4).

the flue, but had probably not survived intact. No evidence has been found for an additional dumb-bell-shaped pedestal (*cf. loc cit*).

None of the kiln bars featured in K1, which are recorded as being white or pink, has been located, and in contrast those from K2 and K3 are all grey. They are consistently square or rectangular in section, most are straight, and some taper, but only one is complete (Fig 11, 1). There are also a few curved examples (*ibid* 2–3), a type which is of uncertain function (Swan, 1984, 64). No hooked kiln bars have been traced (*cf. op cit*, M522), and it is possible that confusion has arisen between the hooked type found at Ecton (Johnson, 1969, fig 9, 4), and the curved bars from Grendon. Similarly, no examples of circular, unperforated clay plates or of quern have been located (*cf. Swan, 1984, M521*), although there are some platey clay fragments, fairly flat but with irregular outline, from K3 only. The lack of evidence for careful shaping of these pieces may indicate that they derive from the dome of a kiln rather than being internal kiln furniture (*ibid*, 64). There is also a bone tool assigned to the finds assemblage from K3 (M 39; *cf. Swan, 1984, M521*).

None of the ceramic groups from the three kilns is large (K1=280 sherds; K2=598 sherds; K3=74 sherds) and none has a context more specific than a kiln as a whole. They are all similar in range but differ in their emphases. All contain grog-tempered, shelly or grey sandy wares, with smaller amounts of oxidised pottery, and South Gaulish samian in K1 and K2. The predominant material in K1 and K3 is grog-tempered, whereas the majority of the pottery in K2 is grey sandy ware. Only a small amount of the main pottery type in each case shows obvious signs of being waster material. A few sherds are warped (Fig 12, 8; 15–16), some have a cracked or crazed exterior surface (nos. 1; 10), and a number of grey-ware sherds in K2 and grogged ware in K3, in both instances most notably bases have flaked so that usually only the exterior surface survives (nos. 12; 16–18).

The grey ware in K2 is macroscopically very similar to that often described as Ecton-type, and presumably derives from the local Jurassic clay sources (Johnson, 1969, 75). It has a frequent medium to large quartz content and is typically fired with a pale grey core and darker grey surfaces, although many vessels in the collection are also partially oxidised. In addition, there is a smaller group of material with similar quartz content but with dark grey or black surfaces, again sometimes partially oxidised. The main forms are necked and channelled rim jars (nos. 8–9; 11), an everted rim jar (no. 10), segmental bowls (no. 14), platters with internal moulding (no. 13), and a simple rim dish. There are also distinctive groups of bases both in K2 (no. 12) and in grog-tempered ware in K3 (nos. 15–17). The only identifiable grog-tempered rims in K3 are a necked jar and a platter with internal moulding (no. 18). The grogged wares in K1 comprise a very similar range of forms to that in K2, with the addition of storage jars (nos. 1–2) and carinated bowls (no. 3). There are also a number of shelly ware jars with a double channelled rim (no. 5) but no storage jars occur in shelly ware (*contra* Swan, 1984, M521). It should also be noted that the main ceramic type in K3 is distinctive in fabric from that in K2 (*contra ibid*, M522).

The majority of the pottery in all three kilns is

chronologically coherent, dating to the mid-to late 1st century A.D. There are however a few sherds in K1 and K3 which are typologically later, namely the grey ware simple rim and pie-dishes (nos. 6–7). The presence of these pieces, the samian, and a possible *Verulamium* – region mortarium in K2, indicates the mixed nature of the assemblages, and casts doubt on how representative they are as kiln groups. Given the mixed and fragmentary nature of the groups it seems likely that they represent backfill of the kilns; although it is possible to determine that grog-tempered and grey sandy wares were made at the site, the evidence is much less conclusive for shelly ware, and it is not possible to state categorically which kilns were used for the production of the particular types. It would seem consistent to make a link between the predominantly reduced assemblage of K2 and the sunken kiln structure (*cf. Swan, 1984, 55*), and between the grog-tempered ware and the technologically earlier surface structures K1 and K3, but the suggested associations and implied chronological development must remain speculative.

CATALOGUE

FIG 11. Kiln furniture from K2 and K3 in a grey sandy clay with grass or straw impressions on the surfaces and in the fractures.

1. Complete kiln bar. Thumb-marks on one surface.
2. Kiln bar fragment. Slightly curved and tapered at one end.
3. Kiln bar fragment. Curved and slightly tapered at one end.
4. Kiln bar fragment. Straight and tapered at both ends.

FIG 12. 1–7 from K1.

1. Storage jar with cracked exterior surface. Grog-tempered with shell and sand.
2. Storage jar. Grog-tempered.
3. Bowl, possibly carinated. Grog-tempered.
4. Dish. Grog-tempered with sand.
5. Channelled rim jar. Shelly.
6. Simple rim dish. Upper Nene grey ware.
7. Pie-dish. Upper Nene grey ware.

8–14 from K2.

8. Necked jar with warped rim. Upper Nene grey ware, partially oxidised.
9. Necked jar. Upper Nene grey ware, partially oxidised.
10. Everted rim jar with cracked exterior surface. Upper Nene grey ware, partially oxidised.
11. Channelled rim jar. Upper Nene grey ware with black surfaces.
12. Footring base. Interior surface flaked off. Upper Nene grey ware, partially oxidised.
13. Platter with internal moulding. Upper Nene ware with black surfaces.
14. Reeded rim segmental bowl. Upper Nene grey ware with black and partially oxidised surfaces.

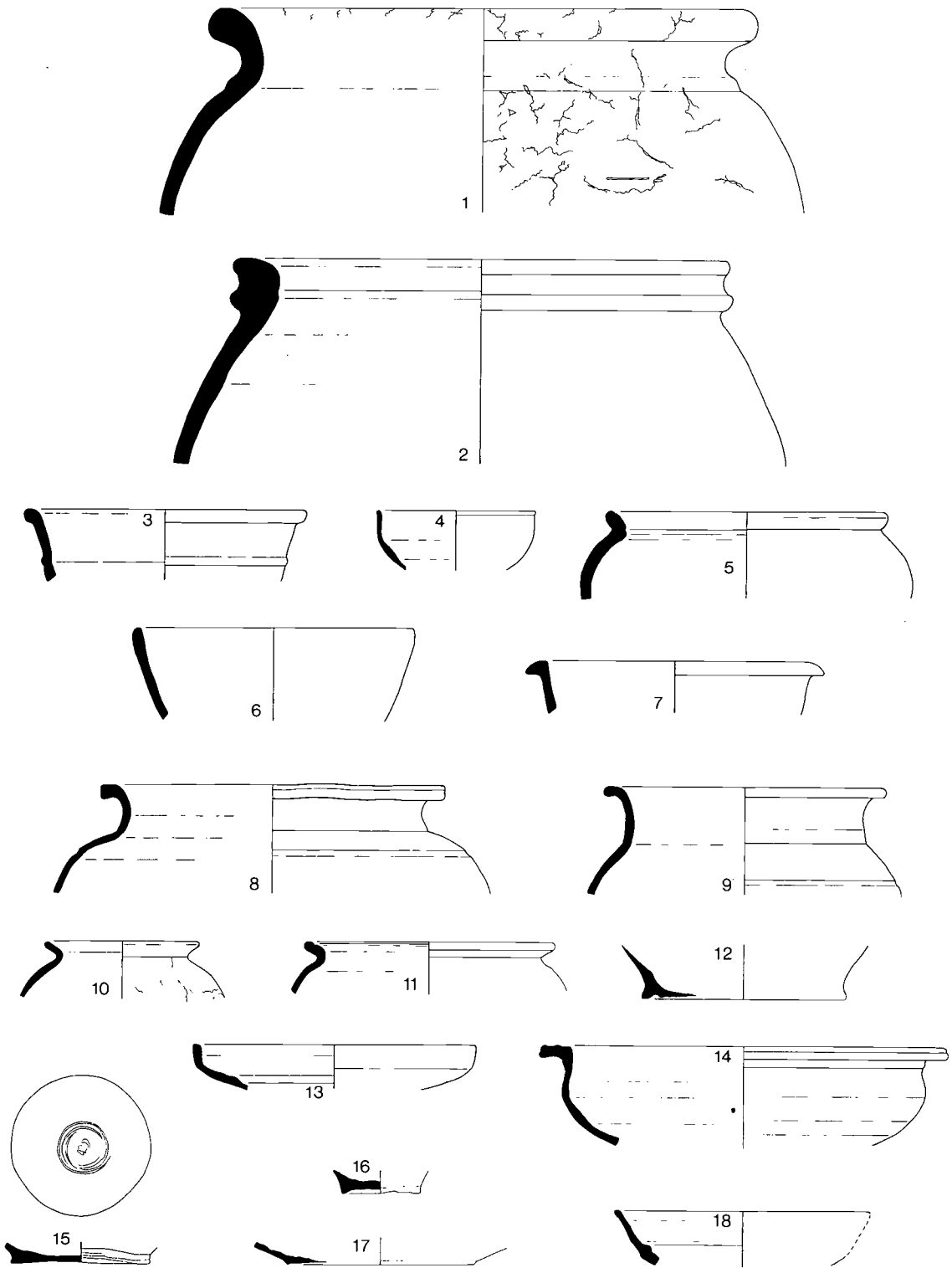


Fig 12 Grendon, Northants: pottery from the kilns, scale 1/4.

- 15–18 from K3
15. Warped base with spiral groove on exterior. Grog-tempered.
 16. Warped footing base. Interior surface flaked off. Grog-tempered.
 17. Base. Interior surface flaked off. Grog-tempered.
 18. Platter with internal moulding. Exterior surface flaked off. Grog-tempered with sand.

ANGLO-SAXON

Anglo-Saxon features at the west end of Area 2 included four sunken-featured structures, two possible iron-smelting furnaces, and various pits. A few post-holes were also noted, but with deep soil-stripping the plans of timber buildings were unlikely to survive.

THE SUNKEN-FEATURED STRUCTURES

(FIG 13 AND M5 M15)

Three sunken-featured structures were found situated at least 30 m apart in Field 12 (Fig 2), and a fourth was present in Field 15 some 330 m from the main group (SF4: Fig 3). A large area quarried in Fields 12 and 14 could not be examined at gravel level so the full extent of the Anglo-Saxon settlement is unknown. The area around SF4 in Field 15 was closely observed, however, and the structure appears to have existed in isolation. A single sherd of Saxon pottery was found in the upper fill of Ditch B nearby and it is possible that the structure was sited in a ditched enclosure.

The full extent of SFs 2 and 3 had not survived, but it seems likely that each pit originally extended to the axial post-hole, and that both were roughly square or rectangular in plan. The maximum surviving depth of the pits varied between 0.37 m in SF1 to 0.15 m in SF4. The filling in the former feature was very varied and it is possible that a secondary activity occurred in the partially-filled pit.

In each case the axial post-holes were situated to the east and west and are probably the most accurate guide to the size of the individual structures. From centre to centre the post-holes were 2.95 m apart in both SFs 1 and 3, 3.25 m apart in SF2, and 2.54 m apart in SF4. There was an extra post-hole within SF3 (ph3) and three structures had an additional post-hole which appears to have been external.

A post-impression in one of the axial post-holes of SF3 (ph2) suggests it held a large post c. 0.3 m × 0.25 m in diameter. Further evidence of the strength of the structures can be inferred by the depth of the post-holes: some survived to a depth of 0.65 m and may have been considerably deeper from the Anglo-Saxon ground surface.

In Northamptonshire, similar Anglo-Saxon structures have been excavated in Northampton, both in the town centre (Williams, 1979; Williams and Shaw, 1981) and at Briar Hill to the south-west (Bamford, 1985), and at Raunds (Dix, 1986–7). At each site the plan and general size of the structures was comparable to those at Grendon. Other features

of this type have been located at Wollaston and Oundle, although at the latter site the feature contained pottery of the 5th century A.D. (Chapman and Jackson, 1993–4; Johnston, 1993–4).

IRON WORKING

The removal of topsoil for a haul-road in Field 12 revealed at least one, and probably two, iron smelting furnaces. The features were recorded by G. Foard in 1976. Furnace F46 was set in a pit dug 0.4 m deep into the subsoil. The sides of the pit were reddened by heat and some clay lining, 0.25 m thick, survived *in situ*. Slag occurred both within and around the furnace. The overall plan is not clear, possibly due to reconstruction, but in one phase the internal diameter of the furnace bowl appears to have been c. 0.25 m. The furnace was sited 60 m south-west of SF1.

Another possible iron-working feature, F47, was noted 90 m NNW of Furnace F46. It was not excavated but contained both slag and fired clay.

No dating evidence was recovered from either furnace but iron-working debris occurred in other Anglo-Saxon features on the site. It seems unlikely that the debris could be residual, due both to the large size of the individual pieces and the absence of residual pottery.

There are few parallels for early-middle Anglo-Saxon furnaces, although an example was excavated at Camp Hill, Northampton in 1985 (Jackson, 1993–4). The Camp Hill furnace was oval, 0.25 m × 0.2 m in diameter, and its vertical walls survived to a height of 0.15 m; slag had been tapped into a small adjacent pit.

At Camp Hill the furnace was sited on ironstone, and iron ore was probably extracted from a small pit nearby. At Grendon a possible source of material for smelting may have been localised deposits of bog ore, such as are likely to have been present in the river valley (Dr J. Bayley, pers. comm.).

PITS

The Anglo-Saxon pits were distinguishable from the prehistoric features by the greenish-brown loam they contained. Four pits were partially excavated, and two were at least 1 m deep in the gravel and may have been wells or other waterholes. It was not possible to expose and plot all of the pits, but the large size of some examples suggests that they may have been quarries.

One pit, F4, lay within the circumference of the presumed early prehistoric monument F13 (see p 6). The pit extended from 3–5 m from the inside edge of the ditch, and appears to have been covered by an (eroded ?) mound before quarrying began. Furnace debris as well as sherds of pottery were found in the pit and an Anglo-Saxon date seems assured.

POST-HOLES

A group of at least five large post-holes was destroyed during overburden clearance (F24). They were 70 m east of the nearest sunken-floored feature. The greenish loam and a piece of slag noted in these fillings suggest they were Anglo-Saxon.

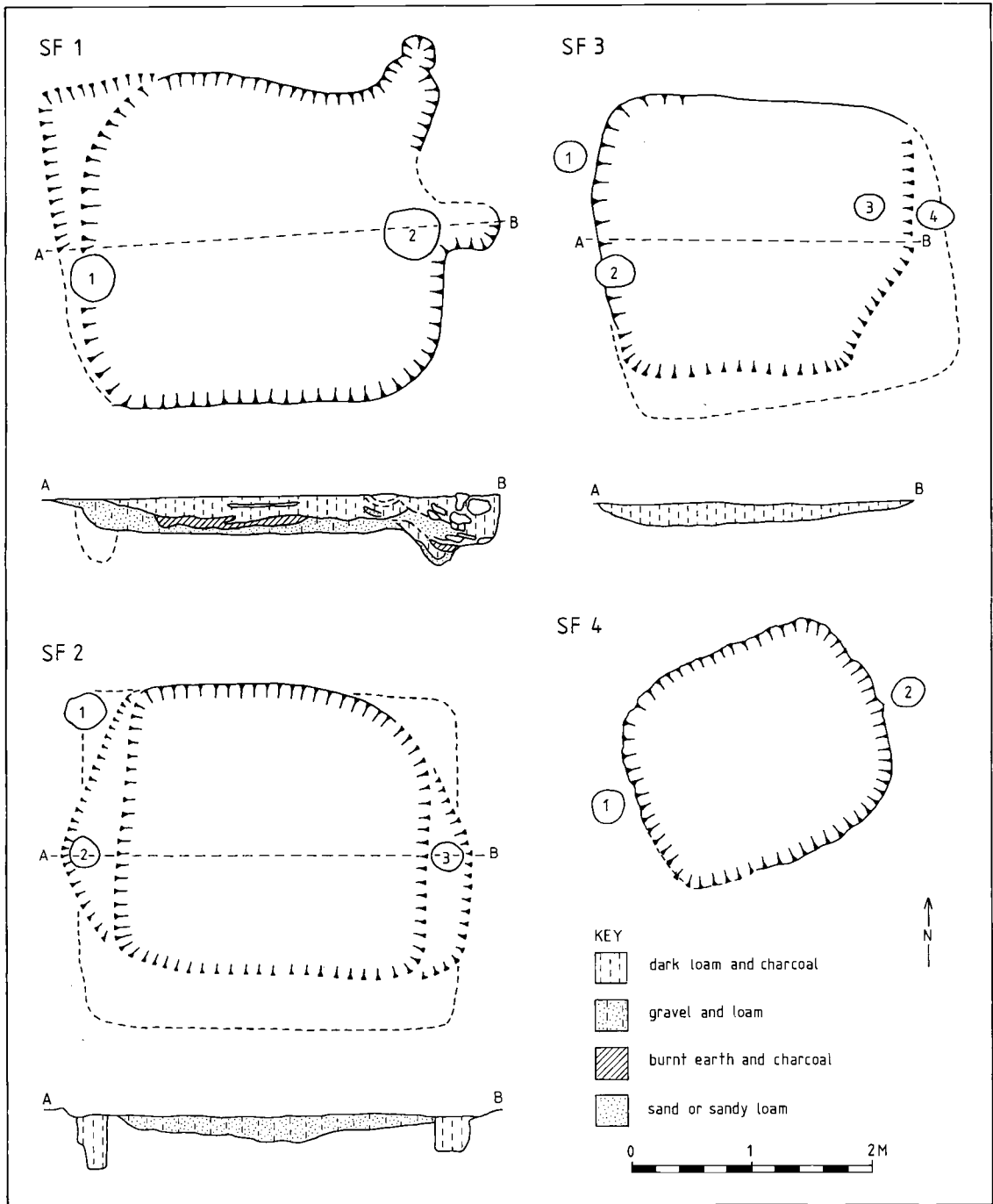


Fig 13 Grendon, Northants: Anglo-Saxon sunken featured structures.

BURIALS

Two shallow inhumation burials were noted during soil-stripping, but both were either partly scraped away or too badly crushed to merit salvaging. One burial appeared to be in a pit, F12, and the other in a shallow ditch F25. Although neither was dated the underlying fillings were similar to those in Anglo-Saxon features.

THE ANGLO-SAXON POTTERY FROM GRENDON

by Terry Pearson

The pottery from the 1976 and 1977 excavations was analysed by Muriel Thompson who undertook this work as a part of a Certificate Course in Post-Excavation studies at the University of Leicester in 1980. This work now forms part of the archive and the results, along with material from the 1979 excavation, have been presented here. At the time this report was in preparation, the stamped and decorated sherds documented by Thompson were not available and cannot at present be traced.

A total of 413 sherds was recovered from the Anglo-Saxon features and included a range of stamp decorated, burnished sherds and a bossed vessel with linear design.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Of the 17 clay fabrics identified by visual inspection and i.c. 20 binocular microscope, eight were thin-sectioned – the full descriptions of which can be found in the archive. The range of forms was identified and a rudimentary analysis of the technology made through visual inspection of the sherds. The pottery from the 1979 excavation was integrated with the earlier material and type series. The pottery types have been reincorporated into fabric groups based on the dominant petrology that they represent in order to bring this report in line with the presentation of other material from the county. This reassessment of the fabrics from Grendon suggests that there is clear evidence of Middle Saxon pottery types (B1 & B2 below) as distinct from the earlier Early–Middle Saxon fabrics. In addition, it suggests that the contexts ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon period can be sub-phased into a) the Early–Middle Saxon and b) the Middle Saxon periods. This is

in line with the evidence from Maxey in the north of the county. (Addeyman, 1964).

THE FABRIC GROUPS

The 413 sherds were divided into 17 pottery types including 1 Romano-British, 1 Prehistoric sherd and 4 pieces of loom-weights. These pottery-types have been further sub-grouped into 10 categories based on the similarities between them. These categories have been listed below:

PR	Prehistoric sherd (Type 15) [Described in archive]
RB	Romano-British sherd (Type 13) [Described in archive]
A1	Early–Middle Saxon sandstone-tempered (Types 1, 2, 3, 5, & 17)
A2	Early–Middle Saxon granite-tempered (Types 4 & 7)
A3	Early–Middle Saxon ferruginous sandstone-tempered (Type 6)
A4	Early–Middle Saxon quartz-tempered (Types 14, 16 & 12)
A5	Early–Middle Saxon ironstone-tempered (Type 9)
B1	Middle Saxon Ipswich-type ware (Type 10)
B2	Middle Saxon shell-tempered (Type 11)
LM	Early–Middle Saxon Loom-weights

THE POTTERY GROUPS

A: The Early–Middle Saxon Pottery

The Early–Middle Saxon pottery comprised the most dominant group representing 94.7 per cent of the assemblage by sherd count. The different fabrics in the group suggest that the assemblage includes local and regionally-traded material. Petrologically the group can be divided as follows:

The largest group comprises the sandstones (A1) which accounts for 60 per cent of the Early–Middle Saxon assemblage. These comprise fabrics with pure and clean sandstones and the quartz derived from them. The petrology suggests that the fabric was locally produced from either the Blisworth limestones or the local boulder clays. The next largest group (A3), the ferruginous sandstone-tempered wares represents 31.2 per cent of the assemblage. These fabrics are

QUANTIFICATION

Table 1: The number of sherds by Fabric Group and Feature

Feature/Fabric Group	PR	RB	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	LM
1976/7 Barrow										
Surface	1									
SF1			98	8	66					1
SF2			28	9	10		1			
SF3		1	48	9	24	1				
SF4				61	2	19	1			
1976/7										
F4					2	1		1		
F6						1			4	
F26									11	3
Total Sherds	1	1	235	28	121	4	1	1	15	4

The quantity of sherds by fabric type are listed in the archive.

Table 2

Group	Dominant Inclusions	Sherds	%	Source
A1	Sandstone	235	60.0	Blisworth Limestone or the local Boulder Clays
A2	Granite	28	7.1	Mountsorrel formation Leicestershire
A3	Ferruginous Sandstone	122	31.2	Northampton Sands or Bunter Sandstones
A4	Quartz	4	1.0	Local-regional Alluvial?
A5	Ironstone	2	0.5	Northampton Sands/Ironstone

more difficult to provenance in that they could have derived from the wider region covered by the Northampton sands and Bunter sandstones. The granite (A2) tempered fabrics account for 7.1 per cent of the assemblage, and represent traded pottery as there is no known source for this inclusion in the county. The nearest granite source to the site is the Mountsorrel formation in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire. The wide distribution of granite-tempered types in Northamptonshire (Gryspeerd, 1981 & 1981a) and Lincolnshire (Walker, 1978, 224–229) give an indication of the scale of the trade of this type. Group A4 is poorly represented in the Grendon assemblage and may represent the local exploitation of alluvial clays. The ironstone-tempered type A5 is only represented by two sherds and probably derives from the same source region as group A1.

While the technological aspects of the assemblage have not been fully quantified the dominant method of manufacture appears to have consisted of coiled construction. Extensive wiping and smoothing of the surfaces is evident in the formation process. There is no evidence for the use of convex moulds as has been found elsewhere (Foard and Pearson, 1985; Pearson, forthcoming (a) and (b)) and examination of the base sherds suggests that the majority were coiled. Coiled flat bases would seem to be an early feature and are present in the assemblage (Fig 14 nos 3 & 7; Fig 15, nos 34 & 37); however, sherds from rounded bases were also identified, although they were made by a similar method. It is suspected that some of these bases were coiled into a concave mould although no evidence for this was recognised. The lamp sherd (Fig 13, no 9) was pinched from a single lump of clay. A relatively high proportion of sherds was burnished (7.16 per cent of the Early–Middle Saxon pottery) and 10 sherds (from a minimum of 5 vessels) were decorated with impressed stamps (Fig 15, nos 29–31), incised lines (Fig 14, nos 10, Fig 15, nos 26–30) and bosses (Fig 14, nos 10), the latter deriving from a vessel with linear incised design.

The technology presents an intriguing aspect of the assemblage in that it shows a markedly different range of technique than that apparent from the nearby site at Yardley Hastings (Pearson, forthcoming (b)) although the petrological sources of the clay are similar to both sites. In combination with the dateable elements that are apparent in this assemblage (the decorated sherds in particular), which are absent from the Yardley Hastings group, it would suggest that they belong to different phases of evolution in the local Early–Middle Saxon pottery industry, with the Grendon assemblage being earlier and predating the introduction of the Middle Saxon types which were found in association at Yardley Hastings.

A wide range of form variation is apparent in the group but all can be paralleled with examples of domestic pottery

recovered associated with pagan burials in the region (Myres, 1977). The basic forms have been described below:

Jar/Bowls	Slightly everted rims with vertical walls (Fig 14, nos 1, 2, 15 & 16).
Small Jars	Slightly everted or upright pinched rims with angled neck leading outwards to a bulbous body (Fig 14, nos 5, 8, & 14; Fig 15, nos 32, 33 & 36)
Large Jars	Larger versions of the small jars with similar characteristics (Fig 15, nos 17 & 37).
Biconical Jars	Jars with sharply-angled upper body and upright or slightly everted pinched rims. The upper body sherds have a conical profile. Sherds from the biconical waist of such vessels were recovered. (Fig 14, nos 4, 6, 11 & ?12).
Bossed Vessel	Large vessel with bosses and incised ?combed decoration (Fig 14, no 10). The design consists of a series of vertical panels with alternating bosses and blank spaces. Above this zone the decoration is fragmentary but would suggest that comb?-incised chevrons adorned the neck of the vessel.
Decorated Urns	Sherds from three vessels with impressed stamp decoration. Cartwheel variation (Briscoe, 1981, 6, type A 5C): 'vestigial version of the cartwheel motif in a panel defined by incised lines' (Fig 15, no 29). A sherd with four similar stamps (Fig 15, no 31) and a large piece of a vessel with a lower panel/zone marked by double incised lines the area above being stamped (<i>ibid.</i> , 5; type A 4a ii 'closed-ended circular cross') (Fig 15, no 30). Incised line decoration on its own was apparent on three sherds (Fig 15, nos 26–28).
Lamp	Small saucer-shaped vessel with pinched lug to one side of the rim (Fig 14, no 9).

The decorated vessels suggest that a date in the early Saxon period and probably of the 6th century could be attributed to this phase of occupation at Grendon. The bossed vessel with linear design (Fig 14, no 10) falls into an English series (Myres, 1977, 48, Fig 280–4) and it was argued that this style developed in the final decades of the 5th and continued into the 6th century. The stamp-decorated pottery would also fall into the series in production during the 6th century. The problem with dating and identifying these sherds is that it is

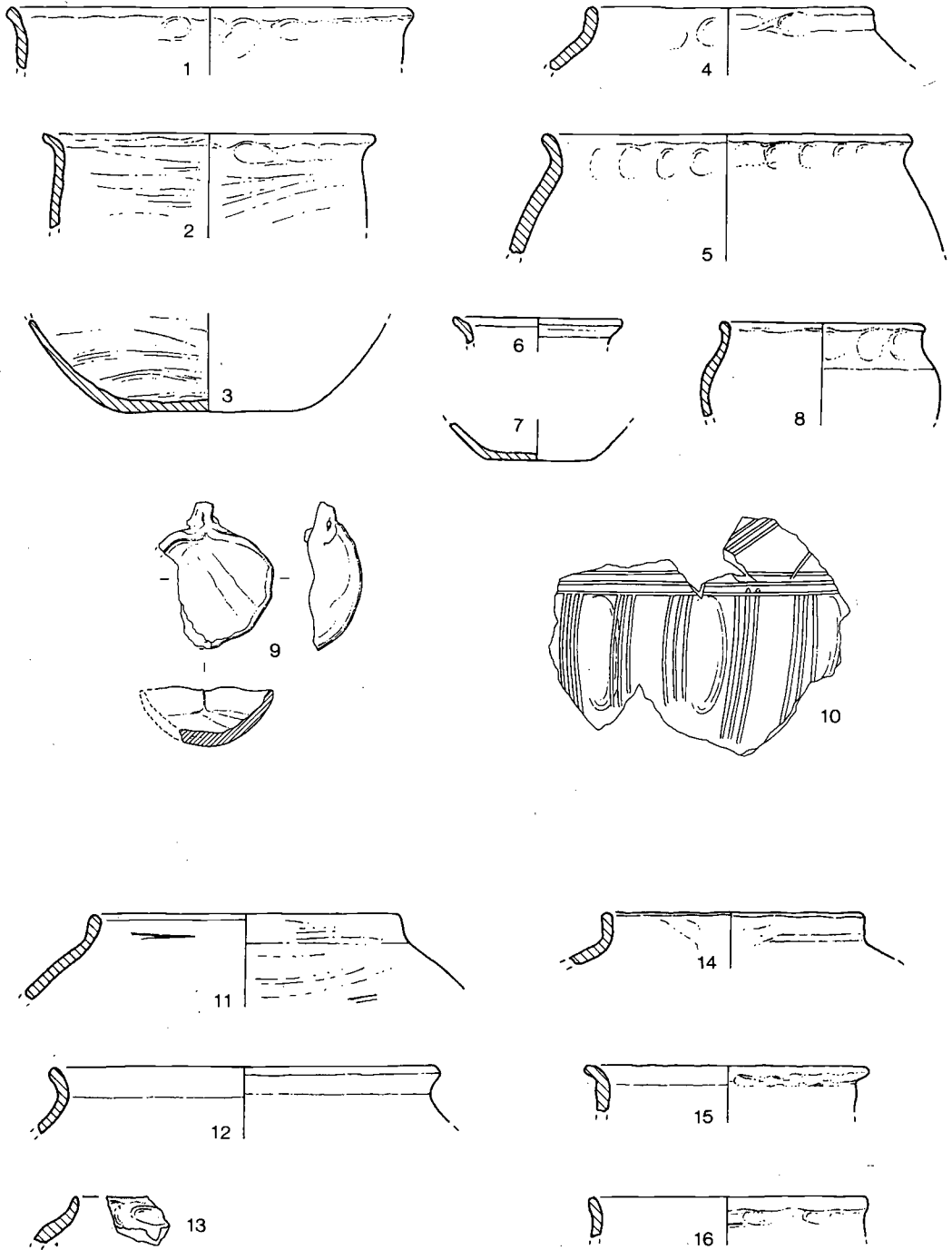


Fig 14 Grendon, Northants: Early - Middle Saxon pottery (scale 1:4).

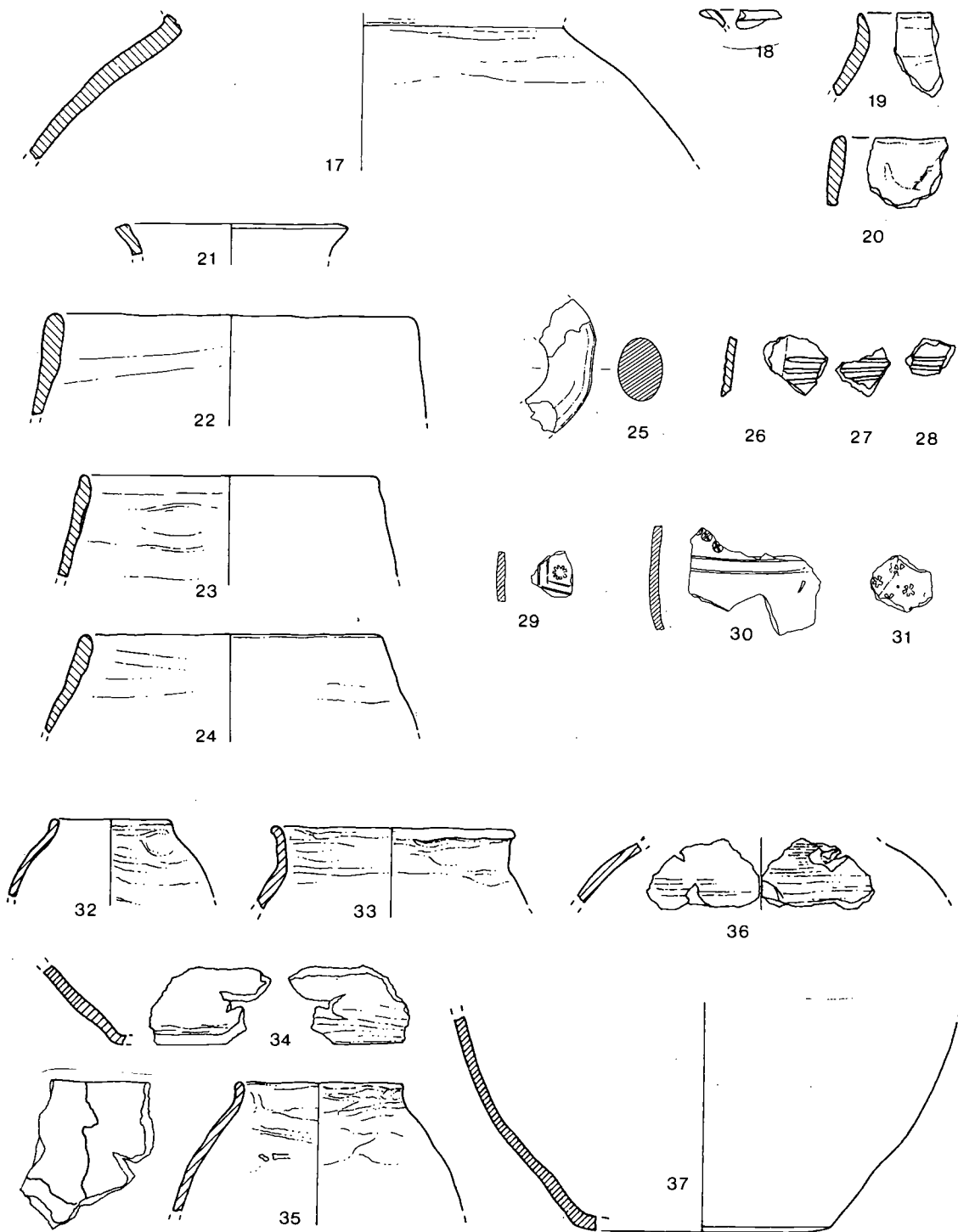


Fig 15 Grendon, Northants: Early – Middle Saxon pottery (Nos 17–20 & 26–31) Middle-Saxon pottery (Nos 21–24) and loomweight (No 25) (scale 1/4).

difficult to get a picture of the complete decorative scheme because of their fragmentary nature. It was not possible to tell which context the decorated sherds (Fig 15, nos 26–31) came from as they were missing at the time this report was compiled and the information was not in the archive.

B: The Middle Saxon Pottery

Sixteen sherds of Middle Saxon pottery were identified in the assemblage. One sherd is of Ipswich-type ware (Hurst, 1957, 26–60; 1976; West, 1963, 233–303) while the remaining fifteen are shell-tempered. Middle Saxon shell-tempered wares are known in Northamptonshire from Maxey [Maxey type ware (Addyman, 1964, 47–58)] and at Northampton [Type S3 (McCarthy, 1979, 155–6)]. A similar type is also found in Bedford [Type A12 Local Shelly Fabric (Baker *et al.*, 1979, 155)].

The hand-made shell-tempered sherds from Grendon are hand-made with distinctive slightly inward turned straight rims (Fig 15, nos 22–24) with the coil construction clearly

visible in the fabric section. The outer surfaces were extensively wiped over while the clay was wet (to remove the finger marks and to smooth the surface), resulting in the deposition of a layer of fine clay (self-slip) concealing the shell-grits in the fabric. While more work on these Middle Saxon shell-tempered types is needed they are emerging as an important type in Northamptonshire. The forms cannot be paralleled with the series from Maxey (Addyman, 1964, 47–58) or Lincolnshire (Addyman and Whitwell, 1970). A related type of shell-tempered pottery was recovered from Yardley Hastings and the technique of manufacture was the same as that found in the Early–Middle Saxon types from that site, signifying possible continuity. This suggests that within this region of Northamptonshire the shell-tempered wares conformed with local styles as opposed to the distinctive form range of the Maxey-type wares from Lincolnshire (Addyman and Whitwell, 1970, 96–102). There is a lack of absolute dating evidence for Middle Saxon sites in general and for the pottery in particular; however, dates within this period have

Description of the Illustrated sherds

FIG	Number	Archive Number	Fabric Group	Fabric Type	Feature Number	Form	Description
14	1	1.7	A1	1	SF1	Jar/bowl	Straight Sided
	2	6.2	A3	6	SF1	Jar/bowl	Straight Sided
	3	1.1	A1	1	SF1	Large jar	Base with flat base
	4	3.26	A1	3	SF1	?biconical jar	
	5	3.25	A1	3	SF1	Small jar	
	6	6.3	A3	6	SF1	?biconical jar	
	7	1.3	A1	1	SF1	Small jar	
	8	2.9	A1	1	SF1	Small jar	
	9	6.9	A3	6	SF1	Lamp	Pinched lug on rim
	10	6.65	A3	6	SF1	Bossed vessel	With linear design
	11	4.5	A2	4	SF2	?biconical vessel	
	12	5.2	A1	1	SF2	?biconical jar	
	13	9.1	A5	9	SF2	Small jar	
	14	1.27	A1	1	SF2	Small jar	
	15	4.7	A2	4	SF2	Jar/bowl	
	16	4.8	A2	4	SF2	Jar/bowl	
17	7.5	A2	7	SF3	Large jar	Neck sherd	
18	4.6	A2	4	SF3	Jar		
19	3.46	A1	3	SF3	?biconical vessel		
20	3.20	A1	3	SF3	Jar		
21	10.1	B1	10	F4	Small jar	Ipswich type ware	
22	11.6	B2	11	F6	Jar	Shell tempered	
23	11.5	B2	11	F6	Jar	Shell tempered	
24	11.4	B2	11	F6	Jar	Shell tempered	
25	8.1		8	F26	Loomweight		
26	6.45	A3	6	?	Jar	Incised decoration	
27	6.48	A3	6	?	Jar	Incised decoration	
28	6.46	A3	6	?	Jar	Incised decoration	
29	1.19	A1	1	?	Jar	Incised decoration	
30	1.25	A1	1	?	Jar	Incised decoration	
31	6.66	A3	6	?	Jar	Stamped decoration	
32	n/a	A1	1	SF4	Small jar		
33	n/a	A1	1	SF4	Small jar		
34	n/a	A1	2	SF4	Large jar		
35	n/a	A1	2	SF4	Small jar		
36	n/a	A3	6	SF4	Large jar		
37	n/a	A3	6	SF4	Large jar		

been established for Maxey-type Mares (Addyman, 1964, 47–58; Addyman and Whitwell, 1970, 100).

The rim sherd of an Ipswich-type ware small jar was recovered from pit F4. The form of this vessel corresponds to West's type E (1963).

DISCUSSION

The pottery from Grendon comprised a small assemblage which is of some importance in the regional synthesis of Early and Middle Saxon pottery. The pottery recovered from the sub-phase (a) contexts compared to phase (b) (Table 1) demonstrates that there was a distinct ceramic difference. This adds further weight to the contention that by the time the Middle Saxon shell-tempered wares (group B2) were established the Early–Middle Saxon types (A) were no longer being produced. A similar picture was presented by the material from Maxey (Addyman, 1964, 48 Table 1). It remains a target of future excavations to attempt to establish the date when this change in the ceramics occurred.

THE NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GRENDON IN ITS SETTING

by Alex Gibson
(Written in 1988)

The rescue and salvage excavations described in this report augment the already published results of the rescue excavations in Area 1 at Grendon; a gravel tongue extending into the flood plain of the River Nene and occupied by domestic and ritual sites of the prehistoric period (Gibson & McCormick, 1985). A square barrow, or mortuary enclosure, of the third millennium, ring ditches and a pit complex of the second millennium, and a farmstead of the first millennium (reported here) are tightly packed onto the gravel peninsula. In addition, the first millennium farm in Area A cuts what appears to be an earlier, oblong, ditched enclosure, probably dated to the Neolithic and related to the cursus and long barrow classes of monument. To this can now be added the second millennium ring ditches of Area 2.

As was stated in the first report, the ritual and prehistoric landscapes excavated at Grendon fit well the distribution of third and second millennia ritual monuments in the Nene Valley clustered on, or just above, the floodplain of the now regular but previously multi-channelled river. As could be seen from the distribution of ring ditches and barrows, almost every gravel outcrop in the middle and lower reaches of the Nene Valley has

been utilised as a focus for ritual activity (Gibson & McCormick, 1985, Fig 30). Clustering of monuments at major river confluences or on islands within the multi-channelled valley floor may have indicated the territories of local groups, staked claims to grazing or resource rights with the barrows acting as territorial indicators (Fleming, 1971). However there is an increasing amount of data suggesting that the well-attested veneration of wet places in later prehistory may have its roots in the second millennium (Bradley, 1984) and the possibility must be considered that seasonal flooding of the Nene, its reed marshes and meanderings may all have had much more than an economic significance to the populations of the third and second millennia.

Ritual significance or not, the Nene Valley would also have been a rich resource area and have attracted settlement on the well-drained terraces above the flood plain throughout prehistory. The valley floor would have been lush, attested by ample aerial photographic evidence of numerous palaeochannels with, no doubt, the pools and interspersed marshes that these infer. Cattle need easy access to a good water supply – adequately met by the lush water meadows of the Nene – while crops could be grown on the lighter soils of the gravel terraces, and other livestock could graze or forage at the forest's edge. The natural vegetation would have provided reeds for thatching or matting, willow for hurdling and other exploitable flora. Fish, wildfowl and game would have supplemented the diet (as a result of more favourable environmental preservation). Recent work on the Fen edge, in the Somerset Levels and in the delta area of the Netherlands has shown how complex was the exploitation of wetland environments (Pryor, *et al.*, 1985; Coles & Coles, 1986; Louwe Kooijmans, 1985). In the Netherlands at least, this exploitation was extensive. The resources were of more than simply subsistence value but central to an extensive trade network with the interior (Louwe Kooijmans, 1986). The poor survival of organic data so far encountered in the upper Nene valley means that such a concise picture of Neolithic economic interaction is unlikely to present itself in this area, but there is no reason to expect that the Neolithic populations of the Netherlands would have been unique in their exploitation of valuable local resources.

Evidence for Neolithic occupation in the Nene

valley is becoming abundant. The square barrow or enclosure at Grendon has already been reported (Gibson & McCormick, 1985). Lying in the centre of a rather irregular double ring ditch and associated with Grimston and Mildenhall pottery, this site draws obvious parallels with the mortuary enclosure at Aldwincle (Jackson, 1976). That these sites are unusual in the repertoire of third millennium funerary monuments is of little relevance as our knowledge of this aspect of prehistoric ritual in the East Midlands is so scant. Recent and as yet unpublished work by Loveday, Halpin, Windell and Clay is, however, doing much to alter the obvious archaeological lacuna.

Mention has been made here of the elongated ditched enclosure underlying the first millennium farmstead in Area 1 at Grendon. No dating materials were found in the excavated sections of the ditches of this enclosure but reference to the plan (Fig 7) shows that the ditches of the monument are cut by all other features and nowhere – in an albeit limited excavation – does the enclosure itself cut another archaeological feature. Strength to the previously tentative identification of this site as a cursus-related monument of the third millennium B.C. has recently been found in the numerous Midlands analogies in Loveday's thesis (1985). Long barrows of eastern England, and East Anglia in particular, or Giant Hills I and II at Skendleby, and many others survive in the Midlands as cropmarks only (Hogg 1941; Phillips, 1936; Evans & Simpson, 1986; Loveday, 1980).

Further support has been afforded by the excavation of a similar arrangement of elongated ditched enclosure with ring ditches at West Cotton in the Nene Valley. This enclosure has curved ends and substantial ditches unlike the Grendon example which is rather more slight and has squared ends. However as the Grendon enclosure is roughly aligned on barrows I, II and III, so too is the West Cotton enclosure roughly aligned on an area of substantial ring ditch construction (Dix, 1986–7). The possibility of a second elongated ditched enclosure at West Cotton and the recent discovery of a long turf mound (Windell, pers comm.) make this an exciting area for the study of a third-second millennium ritual complex. Also, like the ring ditches in areas 1 and 2 at Grendon, the ritual

monuments at West Cotton spread far beyond the area of excavation, and current gravel extraction indicates a more or less continuous distribution of ring ditches and burials southwards towards Irthlingborough (Dix, 1986–7).

It may be more than coincidence that these ritually important complexes in the valley bottom are overlooked from the slopes above West Cotton by a large double-ditched circular monument occupying a sloping area in close proximity to water. This site has been interpreted as a possible henge monument and is referred to hereafter as the West Cotton henge for convenience. The location of this site is typical of monuments of the henge class and flints of types common in the late third and early second millennia have been collected from the area (Foard, pers comm.) The ditches of this monument are widely spaced and as such the site is unusual though not unparalleled. The henge monument at Arminghall had similarly dispersed ditches (Clark, 1936) and proved to have had a low intermediate mound. It also remains a possibility that the inner ditch at the West Cotton henge does in fact represent a ploughed out barrow and if so, then might be seen as being similar to Duggleby Howe where the large Yorkshire round barrow is surrounded at a considerable distance by an interrupted ditch (Riley, 1980). It is also interesting to note at this stage the possible hengiform monument (F13) in area 2 at Grendon. Though a possible mound is reported here, this site has the appearance of a class I henge monument with possible entrance to the west (p 5 & Fig 2 above). This site lies just over 80 m to the north-east of the long enclosure in site A (area 1) and is almost, though not exactly, aligned on it. Actual or inferred stratigraphical relationships between henges and cursus monuments are well attested (Houlder, 1968; Loveday, 1985) and it is indeed unfortunate that this tantalisingly interesting site could not have been more fully explored.

Third millennium settlement is also becoming better known in the Nene valley, particularly on the gravel terraces (I am grateful to Glenn Foard for retrieving this information from the Northamptonshire SMR). Discoveries of flint and stone artefacts are common as both casual finds and as the results of organised field walking as a glance through many issues of 'Archaeology in

Northamptonshire' in each *Northamptonshire Archaeology* will show.

These finds and their findspots combined with the excellent aerial photographic cover of Northamptonshire comprise a most important database for reconstructing prehistoric settlement patterns. A full study of their significance holds much promise and is long overdue.

The high standard publication of the results of the excavations at the major third millennium centre at Briar Hill (Bamford, 1985) has at long last demolished the 'Midlands Vacuum' theory of past generations of prehistorians. Here in the upper Nene valley a major site was constructed and occupied for over a millennium – although not necessarily continuously. Bamford argues for the site being a high prestige monument with its population importing much of their agricultural and industrial requirements. Petrological analysis of the Mildenhall pottery points to eastern contacts and artefact importation, most likely using the Nene valley as one of a presumed number of trade routes. The situation of the causewayed enclosure was possibly to dominate trade routes between the south and east of the region and the Midlands interior: we may be a stage nearer the already mentioned coastal/hinterland economic interaction theories of recent Dutch archaeological theory.

Both Grimston ware and Mildenhall pottery was found at Briar Hill as also at Grendon site C reinforcing the theory of eastern contact. At Grendon, this pottery was of an extremely good quality: well-finished and well-fired. In this light it is strange that bowls capable of a large degree of reconstruction were not present. The main concentration of fragmentary ceramics was around the facade of the first monumental phase and it may be that this facade was a focus of ritual attention and that pottery was either broken against this or was dumped here in an already fragmentary state.

Later third millennium settlement is attested along the Nene valley by finds of impressed wares in the Peterborough tradition of southern Britain. This pottery is associated with the later Neolithic occupation of Briar Hill in the west and, of course, from the Fengate area of Peterborough in the east – though mainly from Wyman-Abbot's fieldwork and only in small amounts from the more recent excavations (Wyman-Abbot, 1910;

Pryor, 1980). Other finds from along the Nene valley include Ecton (Moore *et al.*, 1975) and Earls Barton findspots of Peterborough were tended towards riverine situations and this view is still largely correct today. The situations of the sites at Ecton and Earls Barton are, therefore, typically in keeping with Peterborough ware distribution patterns. Smith also pointed out in her thesis that the frequent use of the articulated ends of bird bones to decorate vessels in the impressed-ware tradition may well point to the importance of wildfowling in the economy, once more suggesting the importance of the river valley environment.

Indeed, supporting this hypothesis, bird bone impressions do appear to have been used on late Peterborough pottery in the Mortlake style from Ecton (Moore *et al.*, 1975, Fig 7, 3, 4) in the same style from Briar Hill (Bamford, 1985 Fig 55), and in the Fengate substyle from Earls Barton (Jackson, 1984, Fig 9, P2) erroneously identified in the pottery report as 'collared urn-type'. (The same misidentification is relevant to P1, P3 and P4 on the same illustration which are similarly best interpreted as Peterborough ware).

A closer scrutiny of the illustrations of the pottery from the pre-barrow contexts at Earls Barton suggests that we are dealing entirely with Neolithic and beaker forms and not with the later mid-second millennium ceramics identified in the report. P21 and P22 would fit much more easily into a Grimston or Mildenhall assemblage rather than the unsatisfactory attribution of these sherds to an undecorated globular urn tradition of a local facet of the Deverul Rimbury complex. This reappraisal does not significantly alter the interpretation of the constructional sequence of the barrow nor is it at odds with the radiocarbon dated from the pre-barrow surface as might at first appear. The charcoal samples dated to the later second millennium from the pre-barrow contexts (Jackson, 1984 table 2) need not themselves be primary but the result of human activity immediately prior to the construction of the barrow while the late third or early second millennium impressed wares may have been residual and many centuries old. That is, a Bronze Age barrow constructed on a long forgotten site of Neolithic occupation.

Published corpora of prehistoric artefacts in Northamptonshire are overdue particularly in

view of recent finds and discoveries through fieldwalking and rescue excavations. The amount of flintwork recently collected is immense and study of the components of each assemblage may shed important light on all prehistoric settlement patterns: the study of Iron Age flint assemblages is long overdue not only in Northamptonshire.

In addition to the third millennium activity already described and as a continuation of it, we have a growing number of rich beaker burials. The site at Barnack with a W/MR beaker, archer's wristguard, bone toggle and copper knife has been published and is well known. This important grave group has been supplemented recently by the discovery of a richly-accompanied primary beaker burial beneath a barrow at West Cotton (Dix, 1986–7) and by the primary pit interment with a beaker and rich artefact package below a barrow at Irthlingborough. This burial is furthermore unique in having been covered by a primary 'cairn' comprised almost totally of *Bos* crania fragments (Davis & Payne, 1993). Beakers are otherwise rare in Northamptonshire though sherds are found among the residual material at Grendon (Area 1), at Briar Hill, Earls Barton, and of course there is a large beaker corpus from Wyman-Abbott's excavations at Fengate (Wyman-Abbott, 1910; Gibson, 1980, 1982). Yet more sites of this period doubtless wait to be discovered both in the study of alluvium-covered contexts such as already described at West Cotton/Irthlingborough and in detailed assessment of lithic scatters already advocated above and as demonstrated at Brixworth by Martin & Hall (1980).

The corpus of second millennium pottery has grown dramatically in recent years. Both food vessel and collared urn pottery has been found at Grendon, some of the material from Area 2 (described here) being of very good quality. In general the second millennium pottery from the area is represented largely by collared urns. Food vessels are rare though a rim sherd from a southern vase food vessel are described in this report. Both bipartite and tripartite collared urns are found at Grendon, in particular the unusual grave group of four collared urns – one bipartite and three tripartite – from cremation 2 in area 1 site B (Gibson & McCormick, 1985).

While the ceramic record points to the continuity of land use in the Nene valley in the

third and second millennia, so too does the tradition of monument construction. Grendon site C and Aldwinckle both see traditionally 'Bronze Age' ring ditches covering existing 'Neolithic' monuments which date in radiocarbon terms to the early part or middle of the third millennium. A distribution of ring ditches was published in the first Grendon report mainly from aerial photographic evidence (Gibson & McCormick, 1985). Though some of these sites may very possibly be large ring-groove timber houses it is unlikely that this error of inclusion will change dramatically the overall pattern of dense second millennium land-use in the valley bottom and on the gravel terraces increasing towards the lower end of the valley. Available radiocarbon data from Grendon and Earls Barton suggests that this ring-ditch construction phase was taking place by the mid-second millennium – almost a millennium after the Neolithic phase (for discussion of these radio-carbon dates see Jackson, 1984, p. 26, for Earls Barton and Gibson and McCormick, 1989 for Grendon). That the occupation may have been continuous, however, may be suggested by the later Neolithic impressed pottery finds from Ecton and Earls Barton, the grooved ware from Grendon area 1 site C and the recent finds of beaker pottery from West Cotton and Irthlingborough. The possible henges at West Cotton and Grendon area 2 (F13) may demonstrate that the construction of major ritual monuments may also have continued uninterrupted. Once more a study of the flint assemblages and the exploration of sites on the valley sides in relation to the current excavation of sites in the valley bottom will present a fuller picture of the second millennium occupation – both domestic and ritual – in this rich and important area of the prehistoric Midlands.

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CONTENTS ON MICROFICHE

The salvage work in Area 2 is described field by field on the microfiche and not by period as in the volume print.

- M1 Circumstances and conditions in Area 2.
- M2 Detailed description of work in Field 12. (Fig 2)
- M3 Early prehistoric features in Field 12.
- M5 Anglo-Saxon features in Field 12.
- M6 Burial in Pit Field 16.
- M7 Plan of possible iron smelting furnace in field 12.
- M8 Features in Field 13. (Fig 6).
- M12 Sections of the pits in the pit alignment, and Ditch E, in Field 13.
- M13 Features in Field 14 and 27. (Fig 1)
- M14 Features in Field 15 (Fig 3)
- M17 Features extending over Fields 15, 16, and 17. (Fig 5)
- M22 Sections of pits in the pit alignments and Pit F7.
- M23 Sections of the trenches in the trench system and overlying ditches.
- M24 Sections of the trenches in the trench system.
- M25 Area 1: The excavation of Enclosure A, by A. McCormick. (Fig 7)
- M33 Plan and sections of the hut circle within Enclosure A.
- M34 Ditch sections in the area of Enclosure A.
- M35 Ditch and pit sections in the area of Enclosure A.
- M36 The Iron Age pottery from Area 1: Fabric and surface finish, by Sue Morris.
- M39 Bone tool from Roman kiln.