

The Excavation of Neolithic and Medieval Mounds at Tansor Crossroads, Northamptonshire, 1995

by

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SUMMARY

Two of a group of three circular mounds set on a spur of high ground overlooking the valley of the river Nene at Tansor, Northamptonshire, were partially excavated prior to a road improvement scheme. The larger mound had originated as a Neolithic mortuary or funerary enclosure, with the encircling ditch and barrow mound dating to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age. Respect for the site continued into the late Bronze Age and it was also a focus for early Saxon burials. Its chronology has been defined by a series of radiocarbon dates. The smaller mound was a medieval windmill mound. The cross-tree slots of a post mill lay at the centre of a low clay mound encircled by a broad ditch. It was apparently in use for no more than a few decades around the middle of the thirteenth century. The absence of any timber remains suggests that the windmill had been systematically dismantled.

INTRODUCTION

The mounds at Tansor Crossroads (NGR TL057901) lie in the valley of the river Nene to the south-east of the village and 10km south-west of Peterborough (Fig 1). They lay immediately north of the old A605 road and were due to be affected by an upgrading of this road, the Warmington Bypass and Tansor Improvement scheme, which covered a total distance of 3.8km between Tansor Lodge and Elton Park. An archaeological evaluation of the proposed route was carried out by the Contracts Section of the former Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit between 1991 and 1993 (Shaw 1993). The results formed the basis

for defining the requirements for the investigation of archaeological sites to be affected by the road construction (Kidd and Foard 1993). The site discussed in this report lay on the Tansor Improvement section of the scheme, which comprised the construction of a new carriageway to the north of the existing road between Tansor Lodge and Tansor crossroads.

Archaeological evaluation had identified the presence of a group of three circular mounds (Fig 2). Given the rare survival in Northamptonshire of upstanding Bronze Age round barrows they were assessed as of national importance and Northamptonshire Heritage defined a strategy comprising the pre-emptive open area excavation of those parts of the "barrows" lying within the highway boundary (Kidd and Foard 1993).

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council, Planning and Transportation Department to carry out the work, and the pre-emptive excavation was completed between May and June 1995. A watching brief was carried out during topsoil stripping prior to road construction later in 1995, but no further archaeological features were seen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was carried out under the direction of Andy Chapman, Michael Webster was site supervisor and there was a team of five project assistants, Rob Atkins, Tony Baker, Steve Morris, Kate Pollard and Paul Thompson. Robin Holgate provided advice and guidance on flint analysis. The description of recent land use is based on

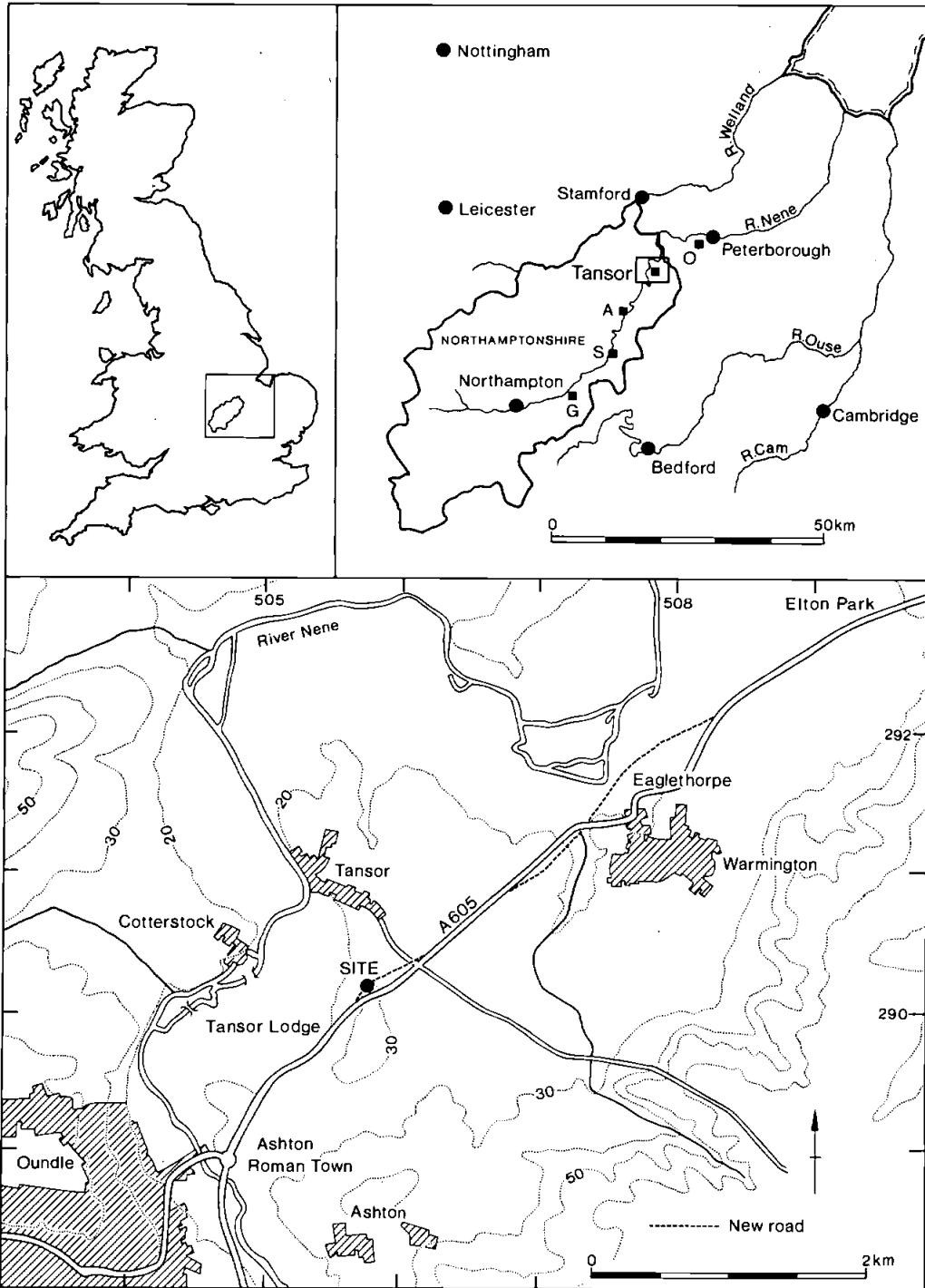


Fig 1 Tansor Crossroads, Northamptonshire: Location Map
(Neolithic oval and long barrows: G: Grendon; S: Stanwick; A: Aldwinckle; O: Orton Longueville)

information provided by Mr Gould and his father, the present farmers and land owners.

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The mounds are situated at 31 m above OD on the northern end of a spur of higher ground directly overlooking the river valley (Fig 1). The floodplain is bounded by the 20 m above OD contour, and to the north-west the river comes within 750 m of the site.

The prehistoric mounds sit on the end of the spur with the ground to the west and north dropping away sharply, while to the north-east and east there is undulating high ground. This location provides extensive uninterrupted views in all directions except along the spur to the south, where the steadily rising ground blocks any view beyond. The appearance is that of a location specifically chosen for the distant views provided, and from the valley the mounds would have been visible against the skyline.

The underlying geology comprises a tenacious grey to blue grey clay capped by mixed light grey to yellow-brown silty clays, both of the Kellaways Beds. These are sealed by a surface deposit of boulder clay comprising yellow tenacious clay with scattered pockets of gravel; an extensive area of gravel lay beneath the eastern end of mound 1.

PREVIOUS FIELDWORK

It is surprising that these mounds were unknown until the late 1970s when the three ring ditches were recognised on aerial photographs taken by both Steve Upex and the Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit. This omission is perhaps even more notable as the field is listed as How Hill on the Field Name Map of 1932 held in the Northamptonshire Record Office. The term How or Howe is derived from the Old Norse word *Haugr*, denoting a natural or artificial mound, in the same sense as Low or Lowe which derives from Old English (Field 1982, 271-2). The field name therefore indicates that the presence of these artificial mounds had long been recognised locally, and may even have carried through as a folk memory from their use as Saxon burial mounds.

The evaluation of the site between 1991-3 comprised a contour survey of mounds 1 and 2, a magnetometer survey of all three mounds that failed to produce a clear record of even the main ring

ditches, and a fieldwalking survey (Shaw 1993, Site 5, sections 8.1 and 11.5, figs 5, 8 and 9).

The fieldwalking recorded a scatter of struck flint running from the mounds to the Tansor Crossroads, c 300m to the east. There was a slight concentration over the mounds: two 20m stints each produced 5-9 flints while elsewhere individual stints typically produced 0-4 flints, although a single stint to the immediate south-west of the crossroads also produced 5-9 flints (Shaw 1993, fig 15).

The final stage of site evaluation comprised a single trial trench 38m long by 1.5m wide running between mounds 1 and 3 (Fig 2, and Shaw 1993, trench O, section 16.16 and fig 25). It confirmed the presence of ditches around mounds 1 and 3 but only the upper 100-300mm of the ditch fills was excavated. Only a single worked flint was recovered.

THE PRE-EMPTIVE EXCAVATION

The excavation was constrained by the limits of the road corridor, although all of Mound 3 was included due to the possibility that this area would be disturbed during construction work. Prior to excavation a detailed contour survey was carried out across all three mounds (Fig 2).

The thin ploughsoil, no more than 300mm thick, was removed using an Akerman H7 excavator with a toothless bucket. The L-shaped excavation area was 75m long by up to 50m wide, a total area of 2250m². The clay subsoil and the archaeological deposits dried rapidly, making it impossible to clean the surface in the conventional manner of trowelling or hoeing; instead, the surface was carefully brushed. Ground conditions remained dry almost throughout the excavations, making it difficult to define the surface limits of archaeological deposits; in some instances the identification of cut edges was similarly difficult. The intractable clay soils also considerably slowed the rate of excavation.

The ditches encircling Mounds 1 and 3 were sampled to establish their plan forms and development sequences, but the later deposits that partially obscured them and the fills of the medieval furrows were not extensively removed. General plans were compiled at 1:50 and the central areas of both mounds were planned at 1:20; sections were drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20. All finds were individually recorded in 3-dimensions, although the post-medieval finds from the upper fills of the

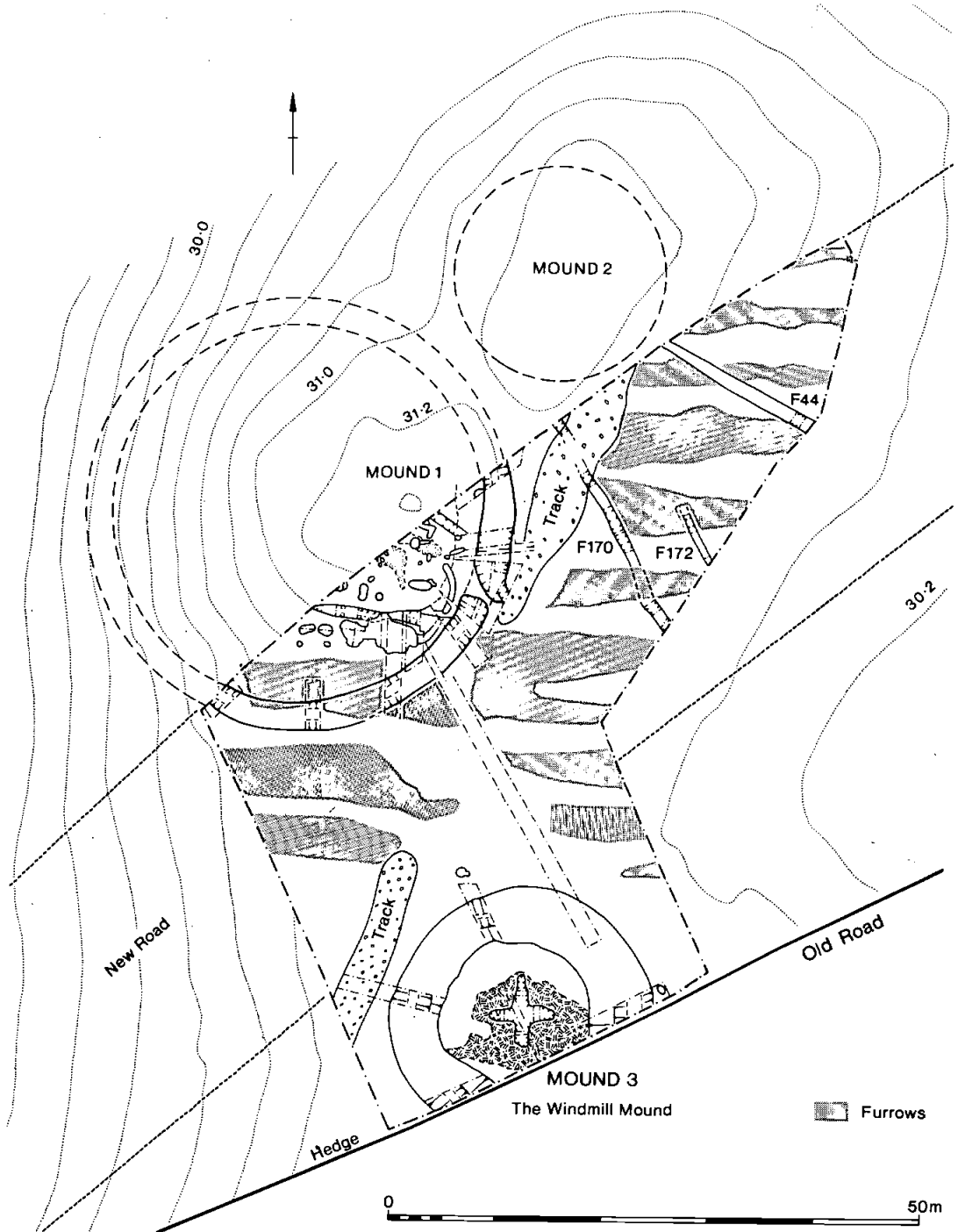


Fig 2 The excavated area, general plan

windmill mound ditch were given only approximate co-ordinates.

FORMER LAND USE

Medieval arable cultivation is clearly evidenced by the furrows of the former ridge and furrow field system (Fig 2); the broader field pattern has been determined by David Hall (pers com). More recent arable usage is denoted by field drains and plough damage, although for the sake of clarity these have been omitted from the published plans. Episodes of field drainage include: nineteenth century, inverted "U"-shaped ceramic drains on the same alignment as the medieval ridge and furrow; drains packed with limestone and gravel, some aligned with the ridge and furrow; parallel mole drains aligned with the modern fields; and drains running southward from the mounds which were inserted in 1976 when the

land was brought into intensive arable cultivation. The drains cut up to 200mm into the subsoil and had caused little damage to the surviving archaeology; they cut the ditches of both mounds but did not extend across the central areas.

Two phases of plough damage were evident. Pairs of plough lines 500-600mm apart and spaced at regular intervals of c 2.6m, lay on the same alignment as the ridge and furrow to the west of a recent field boundary ditch (Fig 2, F44), and to the east were aligned parallel to the ditch. They appear to denote a single episode of deep ploughing, perhaps "clay busting", and with the U-shaped ceramic drains they probably mark the commencement of the nineteenth century arable exploitation. The Gould family have owned and farmed these fields since 1928. They were then under pasture and apart from a couple of years of arable use during the last war, c 1942-43, they remained under pasture until 1976, when they were drained and brought into arable

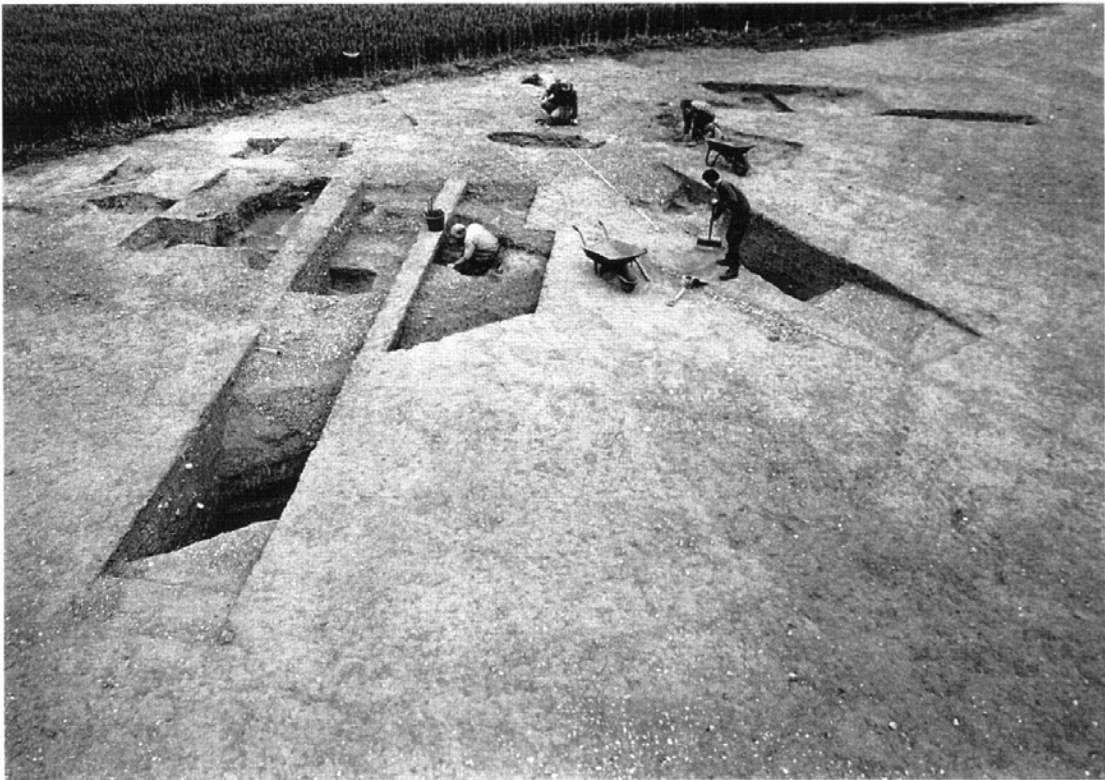


Plate 1 Mound 1: The Neolithic funerary monument, general view looking north

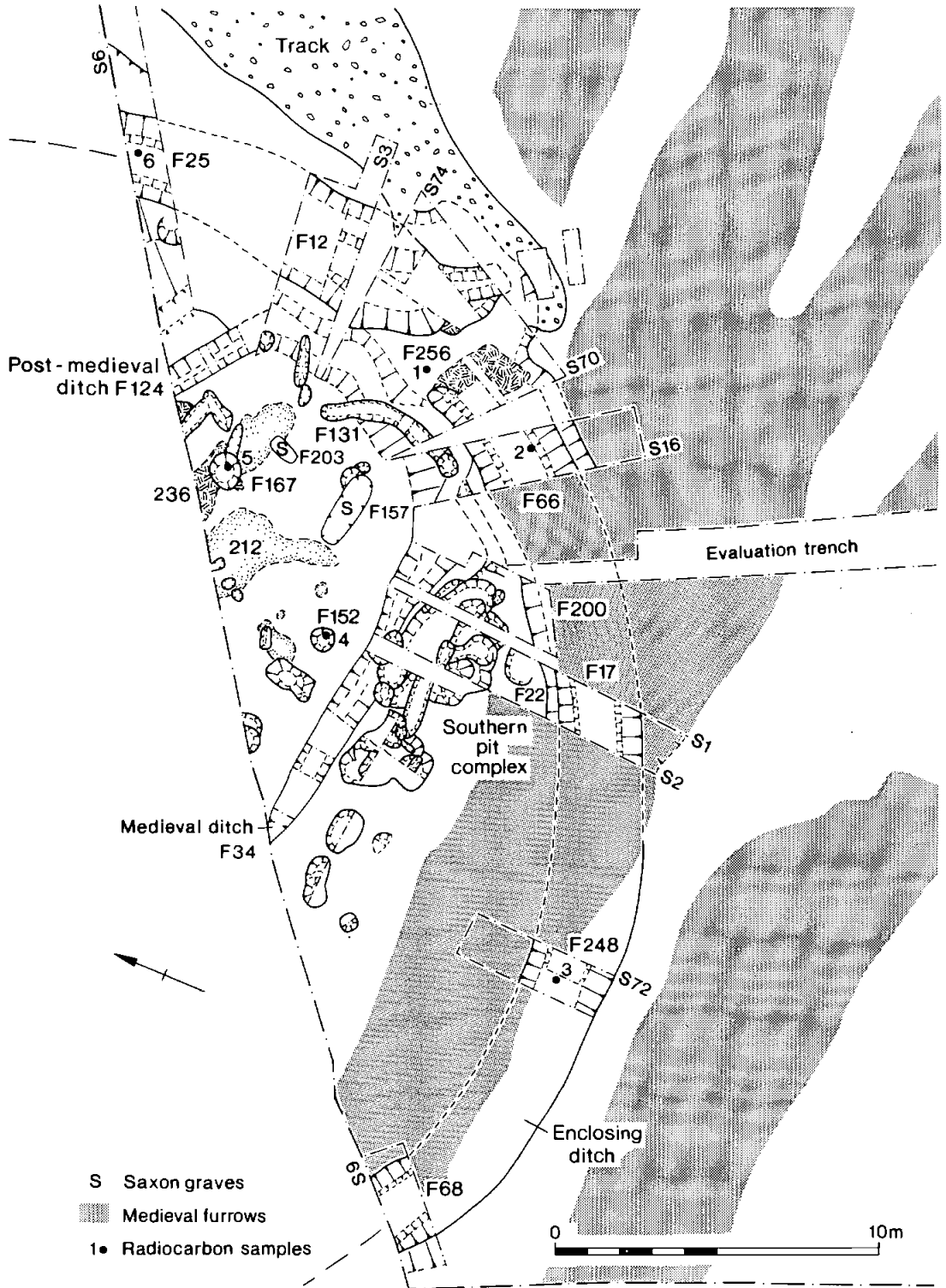


Fig 3 Mound 1: the Neolithic funerary monument

usage; it was at this time that the field boundary revealed by excavation was removed. The field has remained under annual cultivation since then and this intensive modern use has been clearly evidenced in the recorded plough damage across the central areas of both mounds. Continuing arable exploitation of the unexcavated part of mound 1 and of mound 2 will certainly cause further progressive damage to the central areas of these monuments, and this will ultimately result in the total loss of any shallow features and other ephemeral evidence similar to that recovered in the excavations. Northamptonshire Heritage have been investigating options to ensure the long term preservation of this archaeological resource, but at the time of writing no solution has been agreed or implemented.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The report is organised to progress from the general to the specific. The initial sections summarise the form and development of the Neolithic funerary monument and the Bronze Age barrow, and its broader context is briefly discussed. The medieval windmill mound is also briefly described and discussed. Full details of the excavated evidence, the recovered finds, the radiocarbon dates and the environmental data are catalogued separately in a series of appendices.

MOUND 1: THE NEOLITHIC FUNERARY MONUMENT AND BRONZE AGE BARROW

INTRODUCTION

Following the removal of the topsoil it was evident that a smaller proportion of Mound 1 lay within the road corridor than had been anticipated. However, there was considerable compensation when it was realised that it possessed a more complex plan than would be expected for a Bronze Age round barrow (Fig 3). A Neolithic origin was suspected, with the possibility that it represented a funerary or mortuary enclosure similar to the site 11km to the south-west at Aldwincle excavated in the 1960s (Jackson 1976; Fig 1, A).

The unexpected nature of the monument necessitated changes in excavation strategy. All cut features of prehistoric date within the central area were fully excavated and the remnant prehistoric subsoil was removed, apart from where it filled shallow hollows in the natural subsoil. The pit complex on the southern side was sampled along its entire length by the excavation of a single exploratory cross-section and subsequently by the excavation of alternate quadrants. The investigation of the encircling ditch was

limited to a series of cross-sections. A larger area was opened over an inserted causeway, but this was only found during the final week of excavation and the underlying ditch was not fully excavated.

THE FORM, DEVELOPMENT AND CHRONOLGY OF THE MONUMENT

The complete structural form and chronology of the monument cannot be elucidated and confirmed as only 20% of the area has been excavated. Nevertheless, it can be shown that it comprised a composite monument with at least two major structural periods, each with several sub-phases (Fig 4). A series of radiocarbon dates provide a chronological context running from the middle of the fourth millennium BC to the first millennium BC. The structural and chronological sequence may be summarised as follows:

PERIOD/ PHASE	ACTIVITY/ PHYSICAL EVIDENCE	RADIOCARBON DATE
PRE-PERIOD 1: MESOLITHIC ACTIVITY		
	Early soil horizon and Mesolithic flint scatter	5245-5065 cal. BC (Beta 84662)
PERIOD 1: THE NEOLITHIC FUNERARY MONUMENT		
Phase 1	The origin of the monument. Central pit containing Mortlake wear and possibly associated with burials; Southern pit complex bounding central area	3635-3365 cal. BC (Beta 84660)
Phase 2	Recutting of the southern pit complex Partitioning of the central area. Further shallow pits. Further burials ?	2030-1885 cal. BC (Beta 84659)
PERIOD 2: THE LATE NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE BARROW		
Phase 1	The formation of the barrow The cutting of the encircling ditch, and the raising of the central mound	
Phase 2	The accumulation of the secondary ditch fill Fill includes possible Beaker and Bronze Age Um sherds.	
Phase 3	Insertion of the access causeway Shallow recutting of the upper ditch silts, containing charcoal and some burnt pebbles	1285-900 cal. BC (Beta 89834 and Beta 89835)
Phase 4	Final ditch silting, Silts accumulating in wet Conditions. Pit associated with final silting	905-805 cal. BC (Beta 84661)

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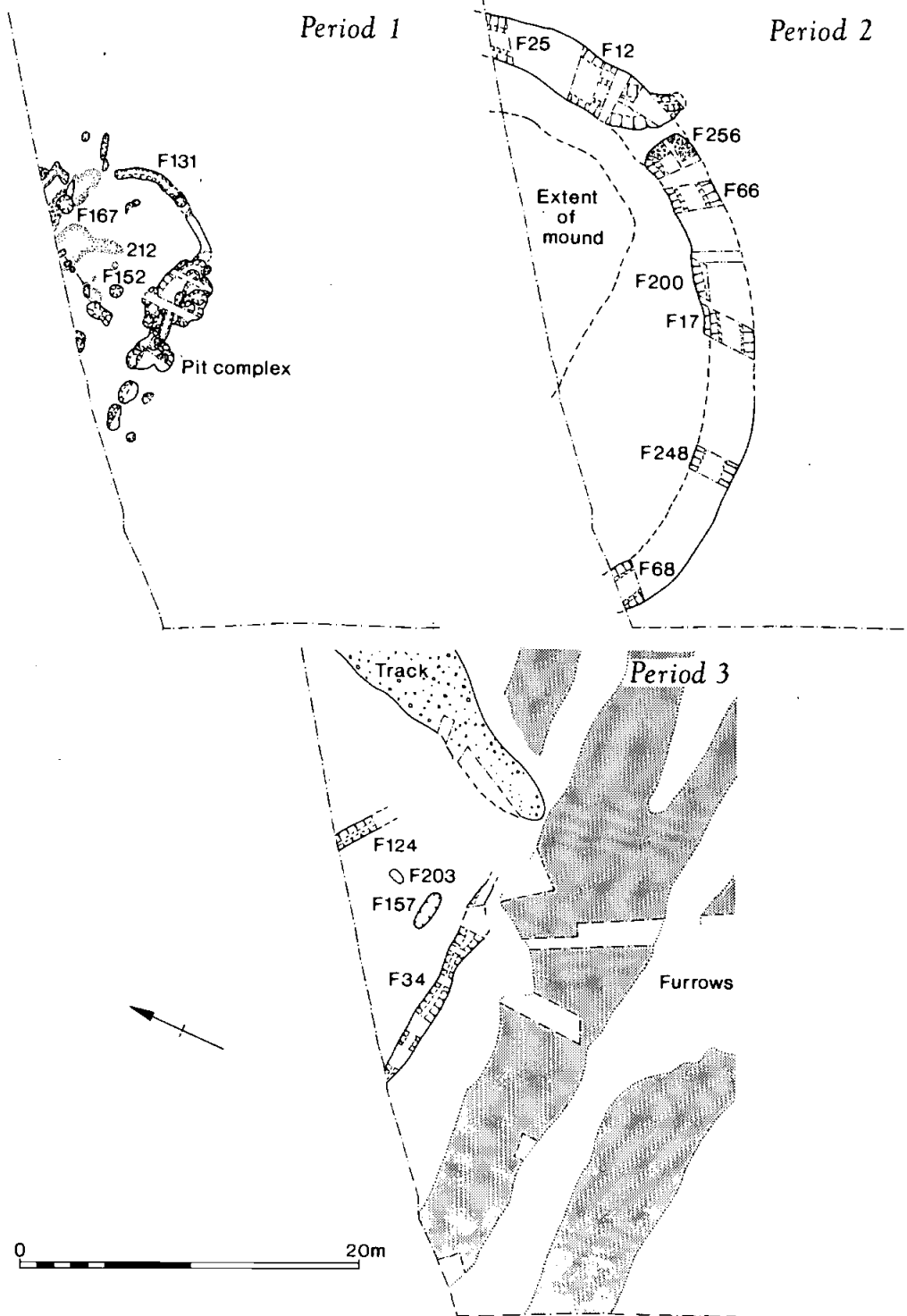


Fig 4 Mound I: Period plans: 1, Neolithic/early Bronze Age; 2, Bronze Age; 3; Saxon and medieval

PERIOD 3: LATER ACTIVITY

- | | | |
|---------|---|---------------------|
| Phase 1 | Fill of subsidence hollow,
containing Romano-British pottery | |
| Phase 2 | Early Saxon inhumation burials | 7th century AD |
| Phase 3 | Medieval field system and
windmill | 13th-14th centuries |
| Phase 4 | Post-medieval field boundaries | |

PRE-PERIOD 1: MESOLITHIC ACTIVITY

Across the eastern half of the central area there were remnants of an early subsoil of heavily leached silts (Fig 3, context 212), and similar material also filled several shallow, irregular hollows in the natural gravel or clay subsoil. It forms the lower part of a pre-mound soil horizon truncated by later activity, possibly by de-turfing during the Neolithic use of the central area.

A few pieces of worked flint of possible Mesolithic date and a radiocarbon date of 5245-5065 cal BC (Beta-84661; this and subsequent dates are quoted at 1 sigma) from residual charcoal within the primary silts of the ditch enclosing the Neolithic monument both attest to some human activity in this area prior to the construction of the monument, but there is insufficient evidence to say any more about its nature.

PERIOD 1: THE NEOLITHIC FUNERARY MONUMENT

PHASE 1: THE ORIGIN OF THE MONUMENT

The best estimate for the date of origin of the monument is provided by a radiocarbon date of 3635-3365 cal BC (Beta-84660) from wood charcoal from a large pit on the eastern side of the central area (Fig 3, radiocarbon sample 5, pit F167). The sample included some oak heartwood from matured timbers, so it might be appropriate to allow for an "old wood effect" and to suggest that the actual date of origin may have been slightly later, perhaps nearer c 3000 BC. The recovery of sherds of Mortlake ware from the same pit is also consistent with an origin in the later fourth millennium BC (Fig 17, 1-3).

The original monument probably comprised a rectangular enclosure with an eastern entrance (Figs 3 and 4a). The southern side was defined by a line of substantial pits, the southern pit complex, and it is presumed that a comparable arrangement lies to the north, unexcavated. The first phase comprised at least five pits set c 2.5m apart centre-to-centre, and up to 0.80m deep to the east but becoming progressively shallower towards the west (Fig 9A and plate 2). The steep-sided profiles suggest that they may have been post-pits but if so the removal of the posts prior to backfilling must have removed any direct evidence for their former presence.

At the east a curvilinear gully or slot, F131, up to 0.25m deep, appears to have defined an eastern facade. Its western end was 0.50m deep, F142, and lay beside the easternmost pits. If it is assumed that this too was partnered by a similar slot to the north then there would have been a broad entrance at least 6m wide. It produced no evidence for the former presence of posts but it could have held a light but continuous fence. The original enclosure may have measured some 20m north-south. It was at least 15m long,

but the western end lay outside the excavated area. If the later barrow ditch encompassed its earlier extent it would have had a total length of 25-28m, with 9 or 10 pits along each side.

Activity within the enclosure comprised a series of pits and small postholes. The largest pit, F167, was circular, near vertically sided and 1.05m in diameter by 0.55m deep (Fig 8). It contained a complete base and single rim and body sherds from a Mortlake bowl or bowls, a quantity of carbonised hazel nut shells, and a scatter of pieces of wood charcoal from both hazel and oak.

The function of this pit is unknown. It does lie close to the edge of the excavated area, so it is possible that it could have been accompanied by a second similar pit more than 1.0m to the west. Such a pair of pits might form a mortuary structure similar to that excavated at nearby Aldwinckle, where two inhumation burials lay between post-pits set 2.0m apart (Jackson 1976, 24 and figs 7 and 10 and plate 5). The neutral to acid soils at Tansor had resulted in the loss of virtually all bone, only a few fragmentary cattle teeth were recovered from prehistoric deposits, so it is possible that evidence of former burials had been lost. If this central pit had held a post it was evidently later removed and the pit backfilled; the Mortlake ware may either have been included in the original fill around the postulated post or been inserted at the backfilling of the pit.

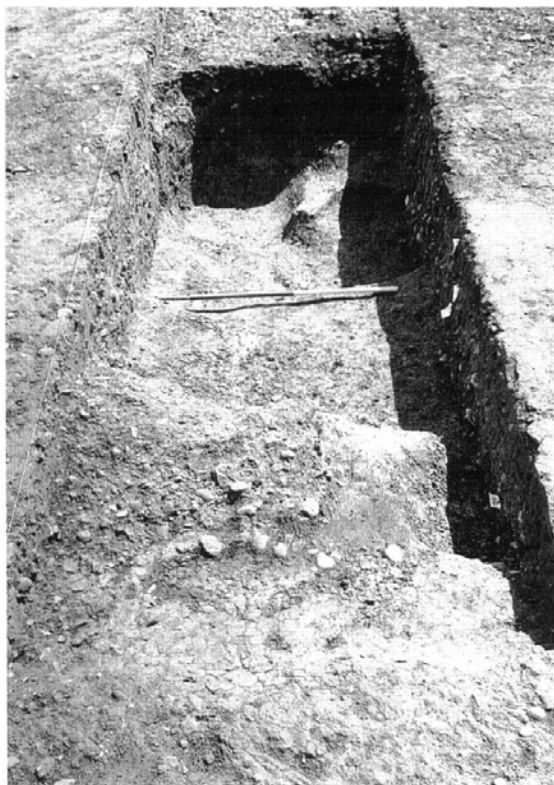


Plate 2 Mound 1: The southern pit complex, between S1 and S2 and showing pit F30

After the pit had been filled a shallow, sub-rectangular hollow was excavated over and around the pit and then filled with a layer of redeposited natural clay which sealed the pit fill (Fig 3, context 236). This clay also sealed the truncated early soil horizon indicating that at least this area had been de-turfed shortly prior to and perhaps immediately before the deposition of the clay; later disturbance precludes the possibility of identifying the full extent of this de-turfing.

The postulated removal of the post and the deposition of the clay layer may both have been part of a single process involving the levelling and concealment of a mortuary structure. It is therefore tentatively suggested that central pit F167 may have been part of a primary mortuary structure that was levelled at the first reorganisation of the pit complex forming the surrounding enclosure. No other features in the central area can be certainly attributed to this first phase of activity.

PHASE 2: THE RECUTTING OF THE SOUTHERN PIT COMPLEX

The original southern pits were replaced by a new line of pits set slightly further to the north. At the east the old pits were filled, sealed by a layer of clay, and then replaced by a pair of elongated slots (Fig 9, B). As before, the pits to the east were the deepest, up to 0.50m deep. Both the slots and the pits were subsequently recut

at least once. The westernmost end of the curvilinear gully or slot forming the eastern facade was removed at this time, and the lack of evidence for recutting of the rest of this feature may suggest that it was entirely lost. So in this second phase the enclosure may have comprised two parallel sides and been fully open at its eastern end.

There are no later pits in the central area either of any appreciable depth or forming pairs suggesting the possible location of mortuary structures. It must therefore be presumed that any other mortuary use either lies within the unexcavated part or had left no recoverable evidence. However, there are numerous smaller pits and postholes.

A near north-south line of four small pits or post-holes, and a larger pit at the southern end of the line are presumptively contemporary on the basis of this common alignment. They may denote the presence of a line of posts or even a fence, perhaps to form a transverse partitioning of the central area. A few sherds of possible Beaker pottery from one of the pits suggests that they are a late feature, probably closely preceding the construction of the central mound.

Two pits produced quantities of charcoal, and oak heartwood charcoal from one pit (Fig 3, radiocarbon date 4, pit F152) has given a radiocarbon date of 2030-1885 cal BC (Beta-84659). This provides a terminus post quem for the construction of the central mound and indicates that the usage of the central area spanned a period of not less than 1000 years, from around 3000 BC to 2000 BC.

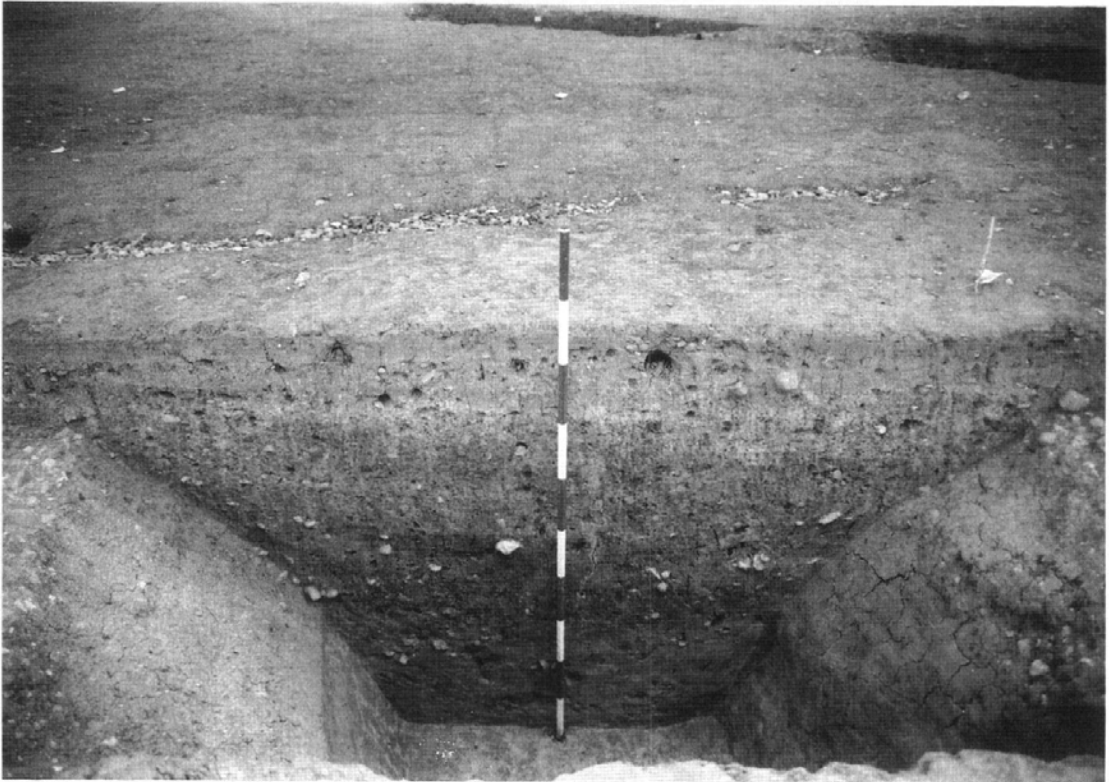


Plate 3 Mound I: The barrow ditch, F66 section S16

Few finds were recovered from any of the features associated with the use of the mortuary enclosure. The fills of the pits and slots of the southern pit complex produced only a sparse scatter of flint, and a few small sherds of possible Beaker pottery were recovered from some of the later pits and the fill of the subsidence hollow. The location of the only two leaf arrowheads at the eastern end of the central area, from the terminal of the curvilinear slot or gully and from a shallow pit, provides some support for seeing this end as both the point of access and the focal activity area.

PERIOD 2: THE LATE NEOLITHIC/BRONZE AGE BARROW

The second major structural period involved the transformation of the monument from an open funerary enclosure to a round or oval barrow (Figs 3 and 4b). The later of the two radiocarbon dates from the central pits indicates that this event can be dated to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, at around 2000 BC.

PHASE 1

The encircling ditch, probably of near circular plan, enclosed an area c 35m in diameter. The U-shaped ditch was consistently 1.6m deep with a broad flat bottom, 1.0m wide (Figs 11 and 12 and plate 3). A rapid accumulation of primary silt, largely derived from collapse and slumping of the upper edges, had perfectly preserved the original near vertical-sided, profile. A small quantity of charcoal from the primary fills, which were devoid of finds, has given a radiocarbon date of 5245-5065 cal BC (Beta-84662; Fig 3, radiocarbon sample 6, ditch section F25). This extremely early date must be regarded as coming from residual material related to some pre-mound activity.

While no remnant of a central mound had survived its former presence is evidenced by both the survival of a "ghost" of the mound in earthwork and the partial preservation of an early soil horizon. It must largely have comprised the stiff natural clays that would have been excavated from the encircling ditch. While the ditch is evidently at least near circular in plan, both the extent of the early soil horizon and the modern surface contours suggest that the central mound was probably elongated east-west, respecting the linear boundary provided by the southern pit complex; the latest recutting of some of these pits could mark a refurbishment at or even post-dating the formation of the mound. From the estimated extent of the mound and the probable dimensions of the encircling ditch it may be suggested that the ditch would have produced sufficient material to construct a mound perhaps slightly under 1m high.

Activity related to Neolithic pit F167 has already been cited as demonstrating that at least one area of the pre-mound soil horizon had been truncated in antiquity as a probable result of de-turfing, but loss of the mound and disturbance from modern cultivation make it impossible to determine whether the central area was de-turfed before the formation of the central mound.

PHASE 2

Small quantities of flint, some possible Beaker sherds and some sherds probably within the Bronze Age Urn tradition were present in the secondary fills of the enclosing ditch where they might derive either from near contemporary activity on and around the

mound or be residual from much earlier activity within the central area. Further sherds in the Bronze Age Urn tradition were recovered from a shallow pit isolated between the southern pit complex and the enclosing ditch (Fig 3, pit F22); these base and lower body sherds might denote the former presence of a complete vessel here.

PHASE 3

Long term respect for the barrow is indicated by the insertion of a causeway on the south-eastern side of the ditch circuit (Figs 3 and 4, and plate 4). It was formed by dumping layers of gravel and clay into the prominent hollow above the secondary silts (Fig 11, S71/75). There was a shallow recutting of the ditch to the immediate north, and an associated length of ditch up to 0.90m deep turned southward to a projecting terminal. To the south of the causeway there was a short length of narrow slot or ditch along the inner edge of the ditch. They may have served to demarcate this entrance way.

A shallow scarp cut into the natural along much of the inner edge of the ditch, but most prominent adjacent to the causeway, and a broad cut into the natural around the projecting ditch terminal were probably both part of this same process of refurbishment. This event has not been specifically dated but the late Bronze Age date for later ditch silts suggest that it most probably occurred at around the end of the early Bronze Age, c 1500 BC.

The inserted causeway indicates that there was a provision of access to the central mound, but the loss of the mound makes it impossible to determine the nature of any associated contemporary activities. They could have been of comparable intensity to the later use of the central mound or platform at Orton Longueville, Peterborough (Mackreth et al, forthcoming, Period 4), which included inhumation burials, the deposition of pots and the provision of standing posts.

The significant quantities of residual struck flint within the final and subsidence fills of the ditch (Period 3, phase 1), and also some possible Beaker pottery and two sherds possibly from a collared urn, may be largely material originally deposited on and around the mound at this time, although some of the worked flint may derive from late Bronze activity, see below.

Subsequently, a shallow pit was cut into the silts to the north of the causeway; it was filled with a distinctive grey clayey loam with sparse charcoal flecking (Fig 7, context 240). Along at least an 11m length on the southern side of the ditch circuit there appears to have been a continuous layer containing charcoal, ashy soils and some burnt pebbles, possibly with localised concentrations. This material only occurred between the centre and the outer edge of the ditch, suggesting that it was deposited from outside. An isolated deposit of charcoal rich soils was located to the south of the causeway. Charcoal from these latter two deposits have given radiocarbon dates of 1285-1045 cal. BC (Beta-89834; Fig 3, radiocarbon date 3, F248) and 1110-900 cal. BC (Beta-89835; Fig 3, radiocarbon date 2, F66), indicating a late Bronze Age date for these events.

PHASE 4

The final filling of the ditch was by the slow accumulation of heavily mottled sandy to clayey gritty silts; their nature suggests that at this stage the ditch was often holding standing water. These

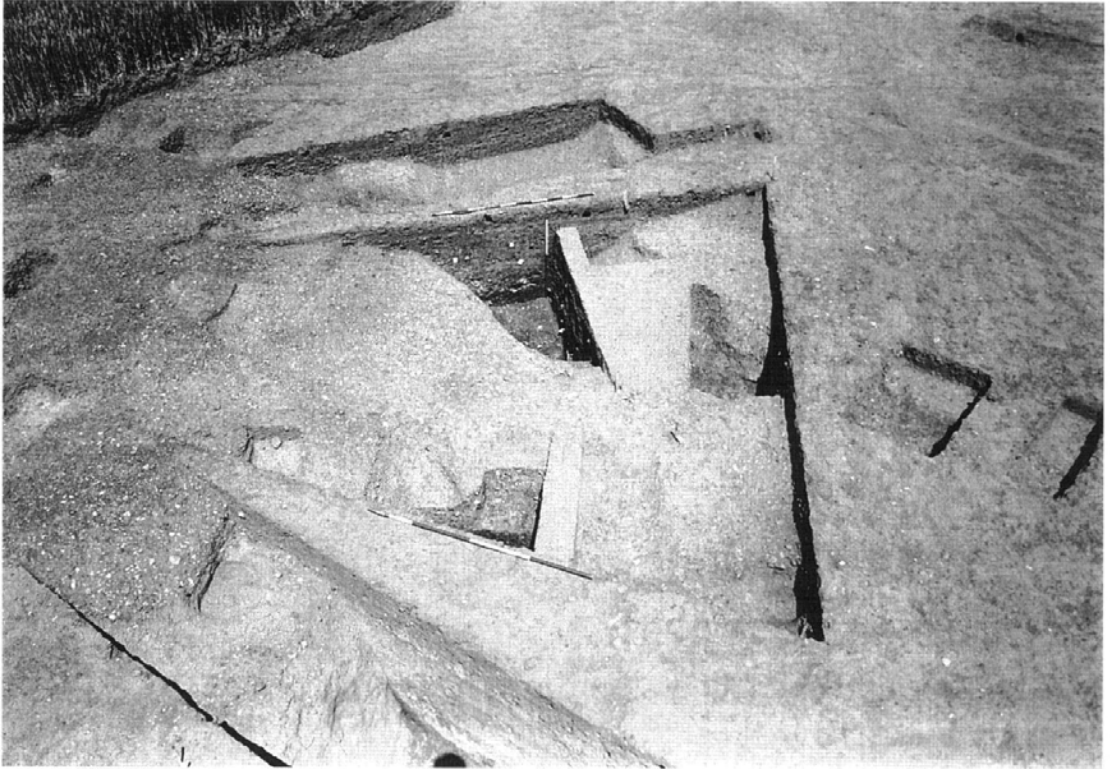


Plate 4 Mound 1: The barrow ditch, showing the causeway as partially excavated

silts contained some scattered charcoal, some pottery and quantities of struck flint. Most of this material is probably derived from the re-deposition of earlier deposits situated on the ground surface inside the ditch.

Directly above the causeway and at an intermediate level within the final silts, although perhaps cutting down from a higher level, there was a shallow pit filled with blackened soil and much charcoal; nearby there was a cluster of cobbles, some of which were burnt (Fig 13, contexts 215 and 235). As the causeway must have been largely obscured by the silting the positioning of this pit may have been coincidental, but it could be seen as denoting some continuing respect for the causeway, and for the monument as a whole. Charcoal from this feature has provided a radiocarbon date of 905-805 cal. BC (Beta-84661; Fig 3, radiocarbon date 1). Therefore there is evidence that respect for the monument, including the digging of pits and the deposition of charcoal rich soils, had continued to near the end of the Bronze Age.

The filling of the subsidence hollow above the ditch fills occurred during the Romano-British period, but it also contained a higher density of struck flint than either the secondary or the final fills. It would seem most likely that this flint had formerly been deposited on or around the central mound and was brought into the ditch as a result of cultivation in the Roman period which was probably the first major act of denudation of the upstanding mound.

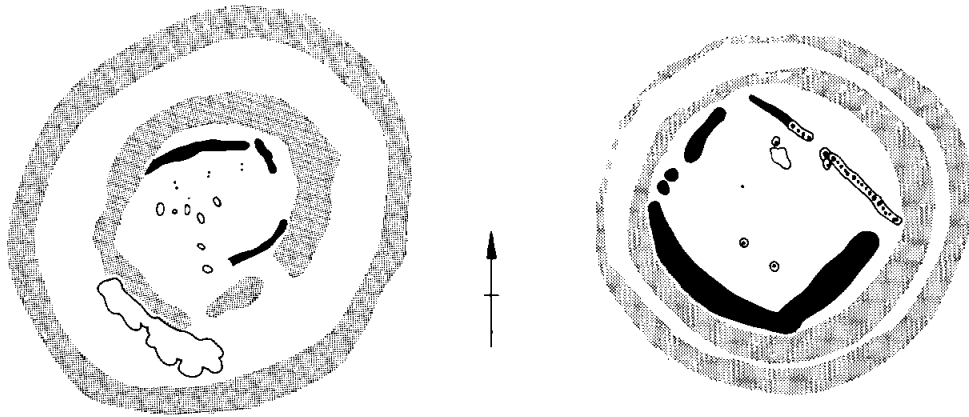
NEOLITHIC OVAL/ROUND BARROWS IN THE NENE VALLEY

THE KNOWN NEOLITHIC ROUND BARROWS

The discovery and excavation in 1968 of a Neolithic mortuary enclosure at Aldwincle, Northamptonshire (Jackson 1976), was summarised by Kinnes (1976, 42-3) as providing an important extension to "both the known structural variation and the habitat range" of a "widespread non-megalithic round barrow tradition during the Neolithic" with a "wide range of structural forms" ... "many of which have close affinities in standard non-megalithic long barrow practice".

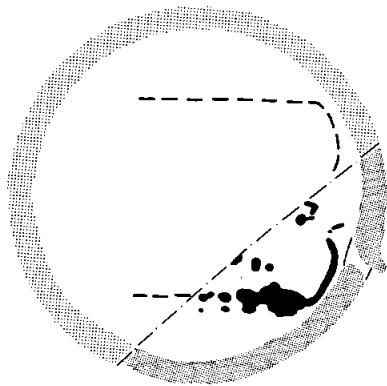
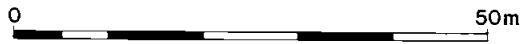
Since the publication of the Aldwincle site two further examples of similar Neolithic enclosures had been identified and excavated within the Nene valley (Fig 5). At Grendon, Northamptonshire, a rectangular enclosure with a timber facade, later enclosed by a pair of concentric ditches, lay at the northern end of a dispersed group of six Bronze Age ring ditches (Gibson and McCormick 1985, site C ring ditch V). At Orton Longueville, Peterborough a well preserved, multi-phase Neolithic mortuary structure, closely comparable to mortuary structures associated with long barrows, was later enclosed within a penannular ditch and early Bronze Age burials were set into a central mound or platform formed from the upcast (Mackreth et al, forthcoming).

THE EXCAVATION OF NEOLITHIC AND MEDIEVAL MOUNDS AT TANSOR CROSSROADS

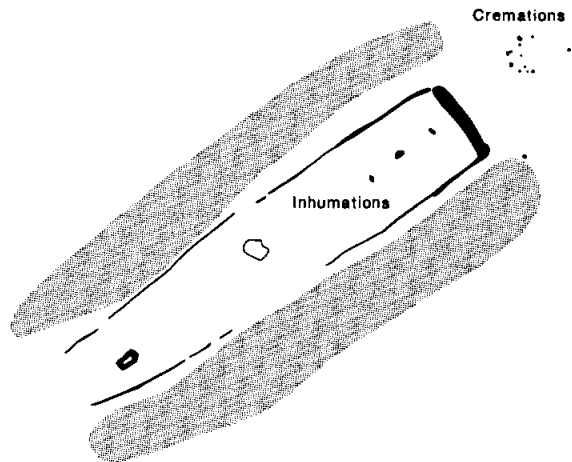


Aldwinckle, the Mortuary Enclosure

Grendon Quarry, Ring Ditch V



Tansor Crossroads, Mound 1



Stanwick, Redlands Farm
Long Barrow

Fig 5 Neolithic funerary monuments in the Nene valley; comparative plans

The only long barrow confirmed by excavation within the county has also been excavated recently at Stanwick, Redlands Farm, Northamptonshire (Moore and Jackson 1990). It lies at the southern end of a major and extensive complex of Neolithic to Bronze Age monuments, excavated as part of the Raunds Area

Project (Windell 1989 and Parker Pearson 1993, 132, fig 123). The discovery of a probable fourth example of a Neolithic mortuary or funerary enclosure under a round or oval mound at Tansor, Northamptonshire, therefore provides a useful addition to the small corpus of such sites within the Nene valley.

TOPOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The four round/oval barrows and the Stanwick long barrow all lie within or on the margins of the Nene valley (Fig 1: G, Grendon; S, Stanwick; A, Aldwinckle; T, Tansor; O, Orton Longueville). They are all within c 1 km of the river but while the sites at Stanwick, Aldwinckle and Orton Longueville are on the floodplain, Tansor and Grendon are on higher ground either overlooking the river or close to tributary streams.

The spacing of these sites along the length of the Nene valley is remarkably consistent, with extreme values of 10.5 km and 12.5 km. However it would be presumptive to claim that this might reflect the genuine distribution of these monuments, and thus be potentially indicative of the territories that they may have been serving. All of these sites were chance discoveries resulting from the investigation of suspected round barrows, and clearly there may be other unrecognised examples still awaiting discovery within the Nene valley.

ASSOCIATED MONUMENTS

None of the Neolithic oval/round barrows are known to have a direct association with other Neolithic monuments, but the Stanwick long barrow lies at the southern end of a major and extensive complex of Neolithic monuments. There are however Bronze Age round barrows in close proximity in every case with the possible exception of Tansor, although the unexcavated mound 2 may fulfil this role. In some instances the continued use of the monument in the Bronze Age has been amply demonstrated. Most specifically, there does appear to be a close association with Beaker activity, either in terms of general date, the presence of Beaker pottery or of Beaker burials. At Grendon the main phase of burial activity appears to occur at the beginning of the later half of the early Bronze Age (Gibson and McCormick, 1985, 64) but four sherds of Beaker pottery were recovered from the ditches of the oval/round barrow (*ibid.*, 63). At Aldwinckle there are nearby Beaker burials under barrow mounds, and at Stanwick three Beaker burials lay towards the north-eastern end of the long barrow; and there are also nearby barrows containing Beaker burials.

At Tansor the later of the two radiocarbon dates from the central pits, 2140-1755 cal. BC (Beta-84659), would suggest that the enmounding of the monument may well have dated to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, and small sherds of possible or probable Beaker pottery were recovered from this pit, from another central pit, and from the secondary and final fills of the enclosing ditch, a total of 21 sherds. In addition, there are two Beaker burials from isolated pits at Ashton Roman town (B Dix pers com), some 1.6 km to the south, and a Beaker burial in a pit at Eaglethorpe near Warmington, 2.2 km to the north-east, was recovered in the excavations during 1995 along the northern part of the Warmington bypass (S Parry pers com). At Orton Longueville pottery associated with several burials set into the central mound or platform of the Period 4 monument (D Mackreth et al, forthcoming) included a Food Vessel and a handled vessel with Beaker/Food vessel affinities, while one of the burials has given a radiocarbon date of 1739-1520 cal. BC.

THE NEOLITHIC TRADITION

In attempting to establish parallels for Neolithic monuments of non-standard forms, as broadly encompassed within such

terminology as oblong ditch, oval barrow and mortuary enclosure, authors have cast their net widely and with some diversity, as is shown by the various assemblages of comparative site plans (e.g Loveday 1989, fig 4.9, and Gibson and McCormick 1985, fig 25). Indeed, as was concluded in the discussion of Grendon, Northamptonshire (Gibson and McCormick 1985, 43), "parallels for the rectangular monument at Grendon are difficult to find. Initially Grendon was thought to be a mortuary enclosure similar to that at nearby Aldwinckle, but comparison of the plans shows that this is certainly not the case unless we visualise a common purpose with diversity of plan and construction."

But perhaps it is in this final statement that meaning may be found. These sites may indeed be displaying a close comparability of purpose but expressed within a diversity of specific constructional forms. The difficulty in appreciating this may merely reflect the limited knowledge of the possible diversity of structures concealed beneath the "standard" long barrow, where the final form of long mound with flanking ditches provides such an apparent narrowly defined appearance. If it had been possible to see the structures at Grendon, Aldwinckle, Tansor and Orton in their final forms, as oval or round mounds with encircling ditches, then they would have appeared to possess very similar structures and would have been classified as a closely related group, providing that we could disassociate them from Bronze Age round barrows. It is therefore suggested that it is the loss of the final form as an upstanding earthwork that has led to the emphasis on the diversity of the underlying structures. The conclusions drawn as to the levels of comparability or diversity is therefore influenced to a large degree by the typically poor state of the physical survival of the structures themselves.

Once these monuments are seen as assemblages of distinct elements, and not as complete entities, then they can be viewed as having a logical common origin within an established tradition. The principal common elements comprise:

- 1) Mortuary structures, characteristically the linear burial or mortuary zone, most frequently defined by terminal posts and with or without surviving evidence for a more elaborate mortuary house. At Tansor a single pit suggests the possible former presence of such a structure.
- 2) The mortuary enclosure, a square or rectangular enclosure most typically defined by a ditch. At Tansor an alignment of intercut pits and slots has been interpreted as forming the southern side of such an enclosure, possibly delimited by lines of substantial free-standing posts. The shallow gullies forming the early enclosure at Aldwinckle clearly can not be regarded as providing a substantial enclosing ditch, and it could be postulated that they may have held individual posts of an enclosing fence.
- 3) The formal eastern facade, most characteristically defined by closely set timber uprights. This element is formed by the eastern slot or gully at Tansor; it cannot be shown to have held posts, but it may have held some form of light timber fence forming a continuous, if not a monumental, facade.

While the underlying structures are diverse, the final forms of the monuments are consistent not merely in style, but also in terms

of their actual dimensions (Fig 5). The respective internal diameters of the enclosing ditches are: Aldwinckle, 34.0-39.5m; Grendon, 32.0m; Tansor, c 34.0m; and Orton Longueville 23.5-28.5m. This consistency may be of some use in the identification of future possible examples located by aerial photography or geophysical prospecting. These diameters certainly exceed the mean for Bronze Age round barrows, so any circular to oval monument of comparable size, especially given any indication of internal linear or curvilinear features, should be regarded as having a potential Neolithic origin.

The oval/circular mounds are also comparable in scale to the Stanwick long barrow, and it would seem likely that that they were all used by social groups of similar size and expending similar levels of energy and social organisation in the creation, maintenance and refurbishment of these monuments.

BRONZE AGE CONTINUITY

The sealing of the former burial areas beneath mounds in the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age may be seen as a final act that terminated the active life of the monument. However, the evidence from many sites is that both respect for, and active use of, these sites was either continued or was re-established in the early Bronze Age.

Only at Orton Longueville did the central mound or platform

survive, and a complex pattern of Bronze Age burial and other activity was recovered post-dating the provision of the ditch and mound. The former presence of similar activity at the other sites, where the mounds have been totally lost, must be strongly suspected but the evidence is largely circumstantial. The later provision of an entrance causeway at Tansor may parallel a causeway at Orton in providing access to a monument still in active use, while the marked concentration of flint within the fill of the subsidence hollow over the ditch may well have been derived from material originally deposited on or around the mound in the early Bronze Age. No similar entrance causeways were recovered at either Aldwinckle or Grendon, but there was only minimal excavation of the ditches at these sites, and at any future discoveries the location of buried causeways should be seen as a significant priority.

Of particular value at Tansor are the three radiocarbon dates from deposits of charcoal rich soils in the upper fills of the enclosing ditch. These appear to denote a continuing, if perhaps periodic, respect for the monument within the middle to late Bronze Age, between c 1300 BC and c 800 BC. Even if the nature of this activity is uncertain, it still suggests that the active period of respect for the monument had a duration in excess of 2000 years; throughout this period it clearly had a continuous existence as a defined feature of the local landscape, and this must be true even if we cannot demonstrate the presence of a continuous sequence of actual activity leaving recoverable



Plate 5 Mound 1: Early Saxon grave pit F203, with accessory vessel

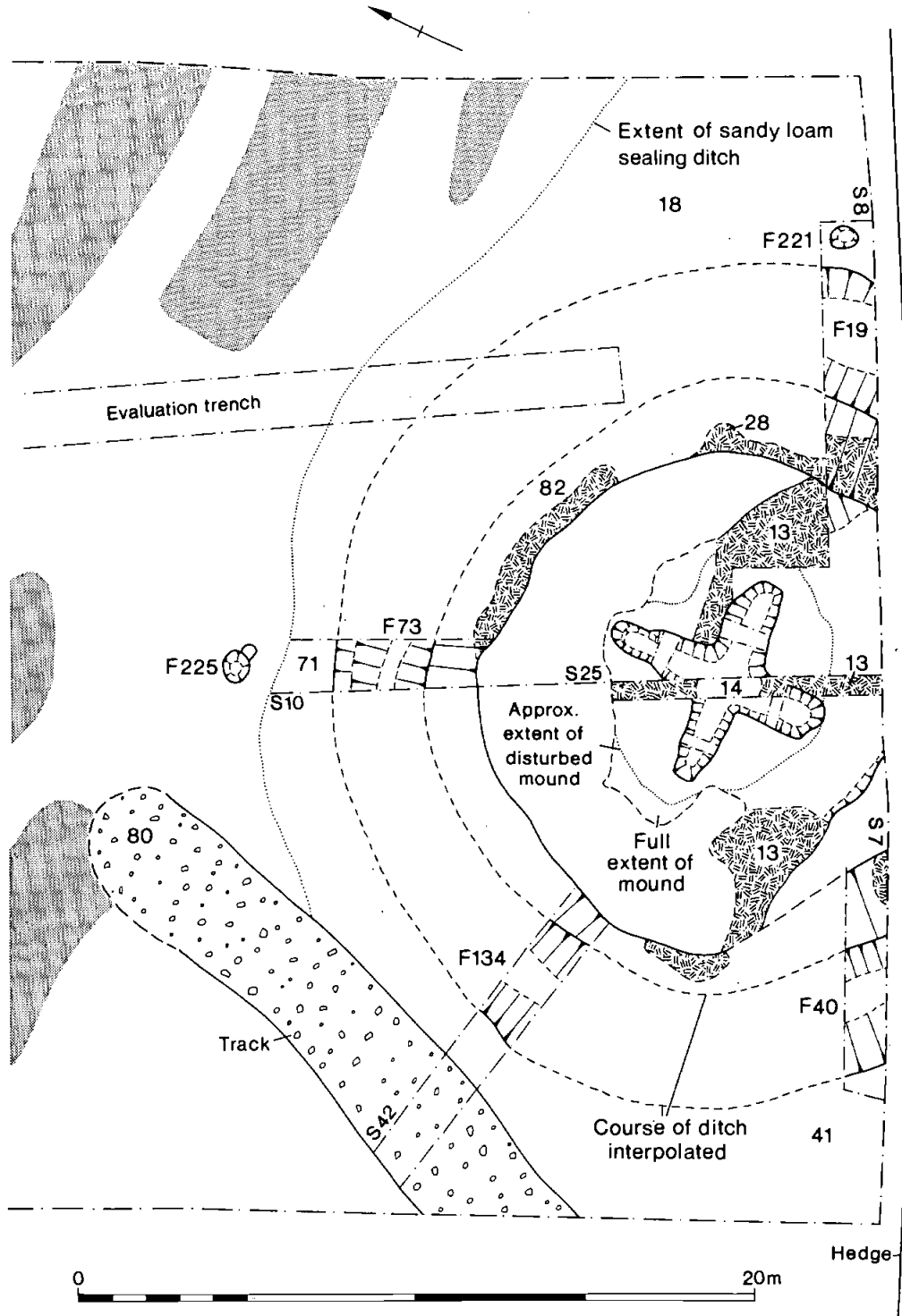


Fig 6 Mound 3: The Windmill mound

remains. Its further survival as a recognisable landscape feature for another c 1500 years is demonstrated by the final reuse of the mound for burial in the early Saxon period, and finally by the recognition of the presence of these mounds in the recent field name, How Hill.

LATER ACTIVITY ON AND AROUND MOUND 1

PERIOD 3, PHASE 1: ROMANO-BRITISH ACTIVITY

The homogeneous brown loam filling the subsidence hollow over the enclosing ditch produced a small quantity of Romano-British pottery, predominantly dating to the third to fourth century AD. The additional presence of struck flint, possibly brought into the ditch as a result of cultivation, may suggest that this period marks the first major denuding of the upstanding mound. Further sherds of Romano-British pottery were also recovered from the ditch around the medieval windmill mound.

Given the location of the major Roman town of Ashton only 1.6km to the south and several smaller sites within similar distances this is not surprising, and the material recovered can be regarded as having been merely casually discarded (Fig 1). A single Romano-British sherd from a shallow slot cut into the fills of the southern pit complex might suggest that there was some more specific activity of Roman date, but a further possibility is that at least some of this Roman material was introduced to the site during the early Saxon usage of the mound for burial, see below. Its presence in the subsidence hollow over the enclosing ditch does indicate that a shallow earthwork of the ditch survived until the Roman period and probably into the early Saxon period.

PERIOD 3, PHASE 2: THE EARLY SAXON BURIALS

Two early Saxon burials were recovered from within the central area of mound 1 (Fig 3, S and 4). No bones had survived but the former presence of an adult female inhumation in a pit 2.30m long, F157, was denoted by a soil stain and a small assemblage of beads associated with silver wire rings and a silver pendant (Fig 14). A nearby pit only 0.95m long, F203, had probably contained an infant or child inhumation, as a plain early-middle Saxon pottery vessel stood at one end of the pit (Plate 5 and Fig 21).

These burials probably represent part of a small Saxon cemetery set on and around the prehistoric mound, but how extensive this may have been is impossible to determine as further burials placed higher on the former mound may have been lost to ploughing, while others could still lie within the unexcavated area. No graves were found beyond the barrow ditch but any such evidence would probably have been completely removed by later ploughing.

The small assemblage of grave goods associated with the female burial display similar characteristics to the material retrieved from a series of Anglo-Saxon graves at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard. They contrast with the richly endowed graves of the fifth and sixth centuries AD and show features reminiscent of seventh century burial practises: the east-west alignment of the grave, the paucity of grave goods and the nature and style of the objects. It has been argued that such features may distinguish the earliest Christian interments from lavish pagan burials (Hyslop 1963, 190-4 and Boddington 1990, 179-182).

PERIOD 3, PHASES 3 AND 4: BOUNDARY DITCHES ON MOUND 1

Two linear ditches cut across the margins of the central area of Mound 1. An east-west ditch, F34 (Figs 3 and 4), 1.0-1.5m wide by 0.20m deep, ran along the northern edge of the southern pit complex. Its homogenous fill of brown clayey loam was virtually indistinguishable from the final fill of the subsidence hollow over the southern pit complex, although some sections suggest that it cut this layer. To the east it was traced to the inner edge of the enclosing ditch where it appeared to cut the fill of the subsidence hollow, but they were so similar that beyond this the ditch was lost. The coincidental location of this ditch with the southern pit alignment may result from it respecting the southern side of a mound on the same alignment, but this is also the same alignment as the medieval ridge and furrow. A single rim sherd suggests a medieval date, thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

A ditch at the eastern end of the central area, F124 (Figs 3 and 4), was 0.85m wide by 0.30m deep, with a fill of homogeneous brown sandy loam with some gravel. To the north-west, in the unexcavated area, it would have cut across the former barrow mound, as if showing no respect for its presence. To the east it cut the fill of the subsidence hollow over the enclosing ditch but beyond this it was lost. There was no dating evidence, but the ditch is on the same alignment as the probable post-medieval boundary ditch at the eastern end of the excavated area (Fig 2, F44).

THE MEDIEVAL WINDMILL MOUND

Mound 3 lay immediately adjacent to the old A605 road, with the roadside hedge cutting across the southern part of the mound and ditch (Figs 2, 6 and plate 6). From within the field it was visible as a low, sub-circular mound. Excavation began on the assumption that it formed a Bronze Age round barrow. However, the initial sections across the ditch produced quantities of post-medieval finds from the final fills and medieval pottery from the lower fills. With these indications, it was realised that this was most probably a medieval windmill mound, and work was then concentrated on the location and excavation of the central area, where it was anticipated that there would be the cross-tree slots denoting the former presence of a post mill.

STRUCTURE AND FORM

A broad ditch, 1.0m deep, enclosed an area 13.0-14.5m in diameter (Fig 6, F19, F73, F134, and F40, and Fig 15). It was continuous within the excavated area but may originally have been C-shaped, with the broader and straighter ditch lengths adjacent to the hedge perhaps lying close to terminals flanking a southern opening. These parts of the ditch also produced the bulk of the recovered medieval pottery.

The central clay mound had been much disturbed by ploughing but to the south it survived up to 0.20m high (context 13). The central area around the cross-tree slots had been dug out, and this had probably occurred when the windmill was systematically dismantled. The cross-tree slots were c 6.4m long and up to 0.75m deep, but as a result of the absence of any surviving timbers nothing can be said about the detailed nature of the timber structure that supported the post mill (Fig 16 and plate



Plate 6 Mound 3: The windmill mound, general view

7). One slot was slightly shallower and may denote that there was a small vertical offset between the base plates similar to that seen at the Great Linford post mill (Mynard and Zeepvat 1991, 104-107). A layer of tenacious clay filling a shallow shelf around the inner edge of the ditch may have formed a base for a track for the turning of the tail gate (Fig 6, contexts 28 and 82).

The medieval pottery recovered from the ditch, the cross-tree slots and the mound is consistent in comprising only early Lyveden/Stanion wares and shelly coarsewares; the ditch produced primary deposits of large fragments of single vessels (Fig 22). They provide a closely defined date range of c 1225-1250, suggesting that the mill was in use for no more than a few decades. We may speculate that it was probably systematically dismantled so that it could be rebuilt at a new location, but it may merely have been in order to reuse the valuable timbers. Why it had such a short lifetime at this location is unknown.

The medieval furrows do not continue across the mound and there was post-medieval pottery within the upper ditch fills. This indicates that the disused mound survived as a substantial earthwork until at least the nineteenth century, since when it has been denuded by ploughing.

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Documentary evidence indicates that windmills had been introduced into England by at least the middle of the twelfth

century (Hills 1994, 35-9). Twenty examples can be dated to the 1190s and thereafter they spread rapidly, but particularly across eastern England. The Tansor post mill is therefore a relatively early windmill, apparently constructed no more than a century after their introduction. It is closely comparable to the Great Linford mill (Mynard and Zeepvat 1991, 104-107) which has been dated to the later thirteenth or very early fourteenth centuries: it had 7.6-8.1m long cross-tree slots, indicating that the two structures were of similar form and size.

There is no known documentary reference to the Tansor windmill but given its short lifetime this is only to be expected. Domesday Book records Tansor, in Willybrook Hundred, as being held by the King, and there is no further reference to the lordship until the twelfth century Northamptonshire Survey. Maud, grand-daughter and heiress of Hasculf de St.Hiliary, who held 5.5 hides in Tansor, married Roger de Clare, third earl of Hertford. His grandson, Gilbert, became earl of Gloucester, and thus Tansor became part of the honour of Clare held by the earls of Gloucester (VCH 1906, 595-99). From the overlordship of Gilbert the manor was divided. In 1211 half the vill of Tansor was granted to Robert, son of Humphrey, grandfather to Ralph Camoys. The rest was apparently held by Roald, son of Alan constable of Richmond. This division continued through the medieval period.

It is of interest that in providing a windmill at this location they choose to form a new mound and not to reuse one of the nearby prehistoric mounds. This inevitably entailed the



Plate 7 Mound 3: The windmill mound, the cross-tree slots

expenditure of rather more labour than would have been involved in the reuse of a prehistoric mound. Perhaps the answer lies in the desire to locate the mill adjacent to a medieval road and not within the medieval field system.

THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

MOUND 1

This section catalogues the detailed excavated evidence relating to Mound 1, the Neolithic funerary monument and Bronze Age barrow.

THE PREHISTORIC SUBSOIL, 204/212

A homogenous pale white to light yellow, fine, slightly clayey silt, with a powdery texture when dry. Up to 100mm thick over the natural gravel across the higher and least disturbed eastern end of the central area (Figs 7 and 8, S63). The upper part, when undisturbed by plough damage, was virtually free of any pebble inclusions while the lower c 50mm contained sparse pebbles, 40-80mm in diameter, but no finer gravel. A "tongue" extending south from the larger of the two main areas overlay and filled two shallow, bowl-shaped hollows penetrating up to 100mm into the natural gravel. Isolated patches of subsoil to the immediate south-west, near pits F231 and F165, filled similar shallow hollows.

It was overlain by the modern ploughsoil. To the north-east a small area was overlain by a clay layer, 236, of Neolithic date; there was no developed soil horizon between them, indicating that this area had been stripped of turf and topsoil prior to the deposition of the clay. However, it cannot be taken as being necessarily indicative of the full removal of the turf and topsoil across the central area at some time prior to the construction of the mound.

The subsoil had survived more extensively prior to the recommencement of arable cultivation in the 1970s. In the years following this mound 1 was defined by an area of "whiter soil" visible after ploughing (G Johnson pers com), and this is consistent with plough disturbance of the subsoil. This was also evident during excavation where the topsoil was clearly much lighter in colour above the central area. Adjacent to pit F167 small blocks of yellow clay were also present within the topsoil, indicating that clay layer 236 had also been disturbed in recent years.

THE CENTRAL PITS AND LAYER 236

Pit F167

A sub-circular pit, 1.00-1.05m in diameter by 0.55m deep. A shallow linear slot to the east, F168, 1.05m long, 0.40m wide and 0.10m deep, is assumed to be contemporary and associated (Figs 7 and 8, S34 and S35). The lower fill, 177, comprised mixed and mottled light grey to orange-brown gritty sandy silts, compact and partially concreted by iron panning, with frequent pebble

THE EXCAVATION OF NEOLITHIC AND MEDIEVAL MOUNDS AT TANSOR CROSSROADS

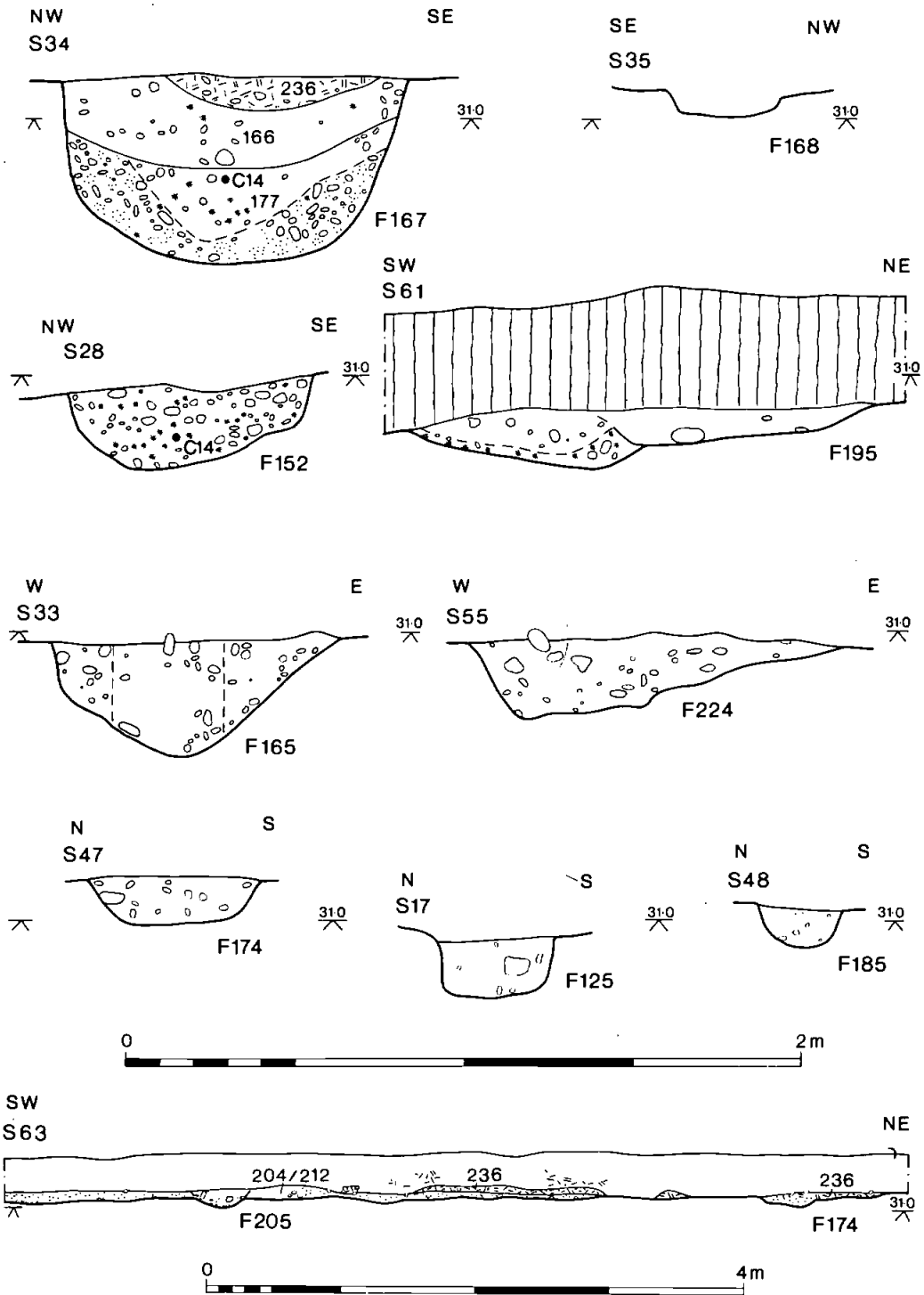


Fig 8 Mound 1: Sections, features in the central area

inclusions. A conical central core contained only sparse pebbles, many small pieces of iron stained charcoal, up to 10-15mm long, and carbonised hazel nut shells, some of which came from within the complete base of a Mortlake bowl. This and single rim and body sherds from a further Mortlake bowl or bowls lay at the interface of the stony and stone-free fills 100-200mm above the base of the pit (Fig 17).

The upper fill, 166, comprised medium brown to light grey friable silty sand with sparse pebbles and some charcoal flecking; there was a sharp interface with the overlying clay, layer 236. The lower fills are consistent with the slumping of a stony packing following the removal of a post, perhaps c 0.40-0.50m diameter. The adjacent linear feature may have formed a ramp to aid the insertion of such a post. The pottery assemblage lay at the interface of the stony and stone-free lower fills, it is therefore uncertain whether they were deposited in the original packing or later. The radiocarbon date is from wood charcoal from the lower fill, 177, comprising hazel and some oak heartwood (Beta-84660).

Clay layer 236

A layer of mottled yellow to yellow brown tenacious clay, up to 100mm thick. It filled the subsidence hollow over pit F167 and patchy remnants extended westward to the limit of excavation, where it was 50mm thick (Figs 7 and 8, S63). It fills a shallow, flat-bottomed hollow. The southern edge was well defined but the northern limit was less certain, a small isolated patch of clay lay to the immediate east of pit F174. It probably had a rectangular plan, c 4.0m north-south and in excess of 1.9m east-west. To the east of pit F167 the survival of the subsoil may have been a result of formerly being protected by the clay layer. If so, the clay would have extended a further 2.4m eastward. How far it continued westward into the unexcavated area is unknown.

During excavation it was thought that this clay layer might represent the only surviving remnant of a former central mound, but its deposition within a shallow hollow and within the subsidence hollow over an early pit, F167, suggests that it was deposited long before the appearance of the central mound. The presence of small blocks of clay within the overlying ploughsoil has already been noted as being indicative of recent plough disturbance of this layer.

Linear pits F174 and F223

F174 probably terminated immediately beyond the limit of excavation, it was 1.40m long, 0.50m wide and 0.05-0.12m deep (Figs 7 and 8, S63). F223 was 1.40m long, 0.52m wide and 0.10-0.15m deep. Both were filled with light to medium brown, friable sandy loam with some pebble inclusions, the relationship between them was not established. F174 cut layer 236, but there were patchy lenses of clay in its fill. This and a single sherd of probable Beaker pottery suggests that it belongs with the later use of the central area, a leaf shaped arrowhead was also recovered (Fig 19, 14).

Pit F152

A sub-circular to sub-square pit, with steep sides and a concave base, 0.73m diameter by 0.28m deep (Figs 7 and 8, S28). The fill was a medium brown friable sandy loam with frequent inclusions of fine gravel and pebbles and some burnt cobbles of 80-100mm diameter. The radiocarbon date is from small pieces of charcoal, all oak heartwood, scattered throughout the fill (Beta-84659). A single base sherd of probable Beaker pottery was recovered.

Pit F195

Only the southern half lay within the excavated area (Figs 7 and 8, S61). A sub-circular pit with shallow sides and a concave base, 0.70m diameter by 0.18m deep, cut on its eastern side by a shallower, sub-circular to sub-square pit, 0.75m diameter by 0.11m deep. Both were filled with a fine medium grey silty sand with some pebble inclusions; the primary fill of the earlier pit was heavily flecked with comminuted charcoal.

MINOR FEATURES

Four small pits, F176, F205, F211, and F231, oval to circular in plan, with diameters of 0.30-0.70m (Fig 7). F231 comprised two adjacent circular hollows, 0.30 and 0.35m in diameter, and F205 was probably similar. F231 and F211 were 0.02 and 0.05m deep; the others were 0.11-0.14m deep. They were all observed during the removal of the subsoil and c 0.05m should be added to give their true depths. They were all filled with light grey-brown fine silt, slightly darker than the subsoil; three contained sparse charcoal flecking and F231 was more heavily flecked with comminuted charcoal.

F205 contained five small, abraded sherds of possible Beaker pottery, and a discoidal scraper from the subsoil immediately adjacent to it may also have been from this feature. These finds suggest that this line of four possible truncated postholes probably relate to a late phase of activity within the central area.

Pit F165

An irregular, sub-rectangular pit 1.55m long, 0.80m wide and 0.35m deep; at its southern end there was an inclined shelf, 0.14m deep, and a small oval pit, 0.45m long by 0.24m deep (Figs 7 and 8, S33). In excavation there was considerable difficulty in differentiating between the fills and the natural silty clay into which it was cut. At least in part the upper edges were near vertically-sided with a ledge at a depth of c 0.20m. The fills comprised mixed, compact and heavily mottled pale yellow-white to light grey-brown fine silty to sandy clay with some to moderate pebble inclusions. Slightly higher concentrations of pebbles to the west and yellow brown sand in the fill to the east suggest the possible presence of a near vertical central "pipe", c 0.33m in diameter.

UNDATED FEATURES WITHIN THE CENTRAL AREA

F125 was a well defined slot at the eastern end of the central area, with near vertical sides and a flat base, 1.55m long, 0.40m wide and 0.16m deep (Figs 7 and 8, S17). The fill was an homogeneous friable, brown sandy loam with some pebbles. It pre-dates the filling of the subsidence hollow over the adjacent ditch, but is otherwise undated. An adjacent oval pit, F185, 0.65m long, 0.25m wide and 0.10m deep, with steep sides and a concave base, was filled with medium brown sandy loam with sparse charcoal flecking and sparse pebble inclusions (S48).

Another pit in this area, F126, was sub-square, c 0.50m diameter by 0.25m deep, with steep to near vertical sides and a flat bottom. The fill was a medium to light brown sandy loam with some to moderate pebble inclusions. It was largely removed by post-medieval ditch F124. Both F125 and F185 lie at right angles to the nearby terminal of the south-eastern slot or gully, F131, and this might suggest that they are related to it, perhaps flanking an entrance way to the mortuary enclosure.

Two shallow hollows, F224, 0.10 and 0.25m deep (Fig 8, S55), were filled with friable sandy loam with moderate pebble inclusions similar to the sandy natural gravel. The absence of any charcoal flecking or finds might suggest that they are natural features. They were cut by early Saxon grave pit F157.

THE SOUTH-EASTERN SLOT OR GULLY, F131 AND F158

A steep to near vertically-sided and flat-bottomed slot or gully, 0.50-0.60m wide (Figs 7 and 11, S70; Fig 12, S19 and S16). At the terminal it was 0.10m deep; it deepened to the south and adjacent to pit F132 it may have had an original depth of c 0.40m, but erosion from the adjacent ditch had reduced this to 0.25m. At the northern terminal the fill was a medium brown sandy loam with sparse pebbles, similar to the underlying natural. To the south it was mixed orange-brown clayey sand and light grey silty clay, with sparse pebble inclusions, again similar to the underlying natural, but also including scattered small cobbles of c 100mm diameter. The slot contained no pottery and only a few flints, but a leaf-shaped arrowhead was recovered from the terminal (Fig 19, 13). There was a sub-rectangular pit within the base of the slot, F132, 0.68m long, 0.58m wide and 0.14m deep, with the same fill.

To the south-west the slot was cut by a medieval ditch, F34, but it probably continued through an unexcavated area to the eastern end of the southern pit complex, F158, where it was truncated by the barrow ditch and cut by one of the later pits. However, its alignment was respected by a deeper length of linear slot, F142, which formed one of the earliest phases of the pit complex (Fig 10 and Fig 9, A). Although much disturbed by later pits, this steep-sided slot was c 4.5m long by 0.40-0.50m deep and 0.45-0.60m wide at its base. At the western terminal there was a shallow hollow. The primary fill was a light grey clayey silt with sparse pebbles and sparse charcoal flecking in places, and the secondary fill was a light grey fine clayey silt heavily mottled with orange clayey sand and with sparse to frequent pebbles.

THE SOUTHERN PIT COMPLEX

An initial section was cut across the broadest part, Sections 1 and 2. This revealed its complex nature as a sequence of intercut pits, and subsequently alternating quadrants were excavated to provide both longitudinal and cross-sections. These are shown from the same viewing direction, so some appear reversed (Fig 10). The central part of the longitudinal section has been interpolated from the plan and section evidence.

THE SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT

The reconstruction of the sequence of development (Fig 9, A-D) is based on the known recutting and on the overall logic of the plan form, which suggests the presence of two successive lines of pits. The original arrangement (A) probably comprised five pits, F30, F127, F219, F220, and F213. They are spaced at intervals of 2.40-2.60m, centre-to-centre, apart from the easternmost pits which are spaced at 1.60m and lie adjacent to the linear pit, F142, which appears to relate to the south-eastern slot. These two were later replaced by a single pit, F144, which cut F142.

The silty upper fill of pit F144 suggests that there may have

been a period of abandonment prior to the deposition of a layer of clay, 7, and the cutting of a new line of pits, F162, F143, F87, F115, and F116, c 1.20m to the north of its predecessor (B). They were recut at least once (C). To the west the line comprised individual pits spaced at c 1.50m apart, centre-to-centre; to the east there were two elongated pits or slots with terminal pits. The fill of pit F113, which is late in the recutting sequence, contained a distinct post-pipe defining the presence of a transversely set rectangular post or plank (D).

Very little dating evidence was recovered; there were single sherds of possible Beaker pottery from the final fills of pits F87 and F162, and from slot F147 and the final fill above this. The final phase of activity comprised two linear slots, F147 and F150, flanking a thin layer of gravel, 148 (D). Some other pits, F36/102, F100, F259, may also be contemporary. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery from F147 suggests that these features relate to activity of either Roman or early Saxon date; its presence indicates that the pit complex had not been sealed beneath a barrow mound.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE PITS

The individual pits were usually filled with clean clays and clayey silts with only sparse gravel inclusions. Charcoal was rarely present and only as small pieces or comminuted, so there was no material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The fills probably largely derive from the rapid re-deposition of natural clays and silts, rather than longer term natural erosion, and this is supported by the steep to near vertical-sided profiles of many pits.

It is tempting to suggest that these were all post-pits and slots, and their dimensions indicate that they could have held substantial timbers, perhaps 0.40-0.50m in diameter in some instances. In addition, the basal slots in some pits, F219 and F106, could suggest the provision of rectangular planks. However, with the exception of a single late phase pit, F113, there were no post-pipes to provide clear evidence for the former presence of posts. The progressive redevelopment of the complex may have entailed the removal of posts and the deliberate backfilling of the pits, with this producing the typical homogeneous fills and the occasional noted presence of a difference between the central fills and the material against the cut sides. It must remain uncertain whether these pits ever did hold posts or whether they were a succession of pits defining the limits of the central area in much the same fashion as the chains of pits defining the boundaries of Neolithic causewayed enclosures.

THE COMPONENT FEATURES AND LAYERS

Pits F30, F127, F144

Pit F30, circular with steep to near vertical sides and a flat base, c 1.0m in diameter by 0.80m deep. Against the sides there was 200mm of clean yellow clay lumps in a mixed matrix of yellow clay and light grey sandy clay. The central fill was darker and contained more pebbles. This may suggest the presence of a central pipe c 0.60m diameter. Linear slots to the north, and pre-dating F144, appear to be associated to this pit. Pit F127, sub-circular or sub-square pit with steep to near vertical sides, c 0.75m diameter by 0.58m deep, with a broad shelf to the north, 0.43m deep. Fill of mottled light grey silty clay and orange-brown clay; the fill above the shelf was a cleaner clay. Pit

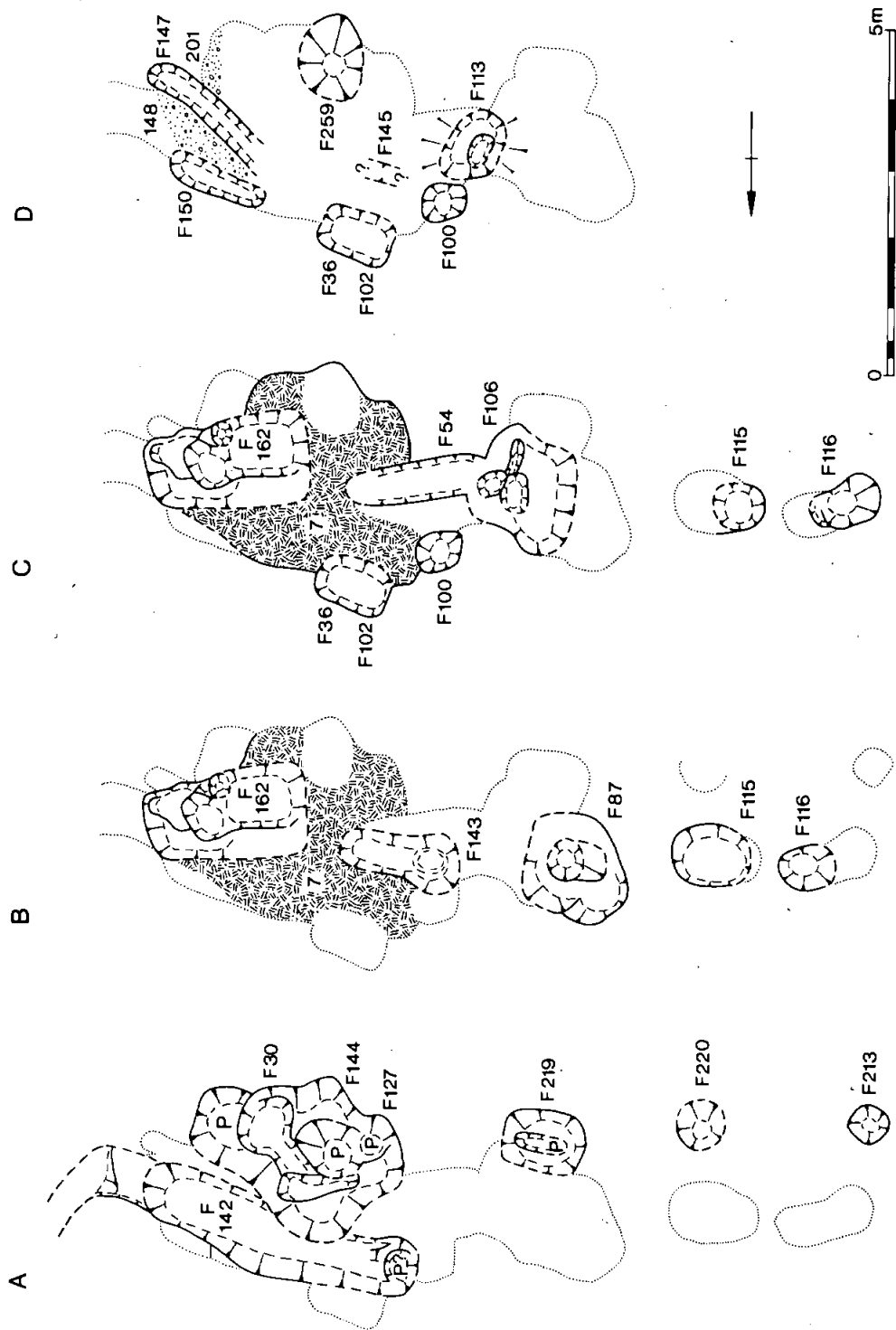


Fig.9 Mound 1: The development of the southern pit complex

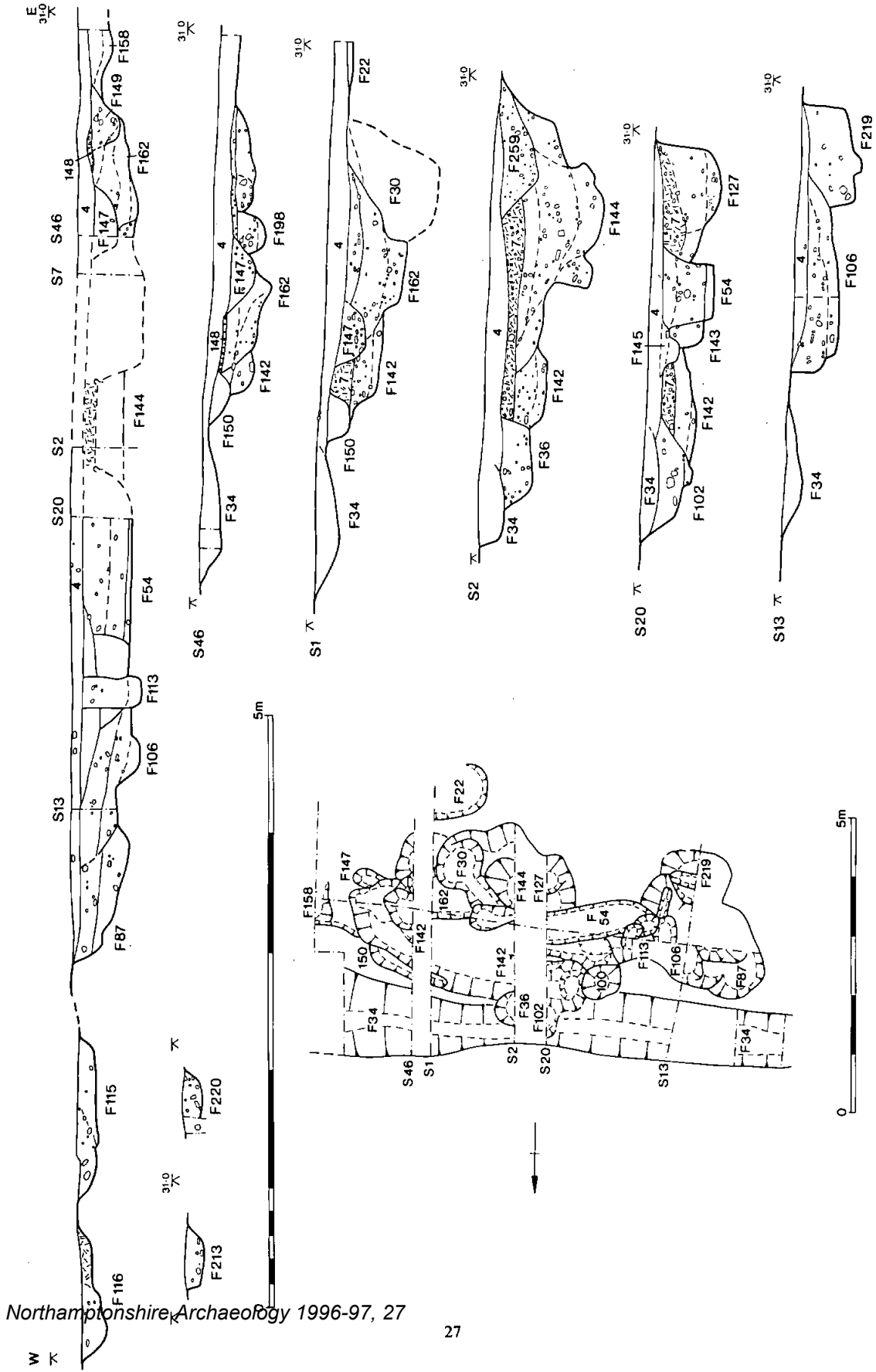


Fig 10 Mound 1: The southern pit complex, plan and sections

F144, a sub-circular pit, c 1.0m in diameter by 0.95m deep, with broad shelves on the northern and southern sides, 0.48 and 0.60m deep, to give a total width of c 2.3m north-south. The primary fill was a light grey soft silty clay mottled with orange-brown sand; the secondary fill was mixed, streaked and mottled yellow-brown clay and light grey silty clay; the fill above the shelf to the south was a more compact brown to orange-brown clay. The final fill was a light grey sandy silt heavily mottled and streaked with orange-brown sand. The relationship between pits F127 and F144 was not established.

Pits F219, F220 and F213

Pit F219, sub-rectangular, c 1.30m long by 0.85m wide and up to 0.45m deep, with near vertical sides and a flat base with a central linear slot, 0.18m wide by 0.07m deep. Fill of light grey fine silty clay very heavily mottled with orange-brown sandy clay, contained sparse charcoal flecking. Pit F220, partly removed by a modern field drain but probably sub-circular, c 0.75m diameter by 0.18m deep. Fill of light grey-brown sandy silt with moderate pebble inclusions. Pit F213, sub-square, 0.50m diameter by 0.16m deep, steep to moderately steep sides and a flat base. Fill of mottled light grey-brown silt with yellow-brown clay; frequent pebble inclusions and sparse charcoal flecking.

Layer 7

A 70-190mm thick layer of compact yellow to yellow-brown clay with some charcoal flecking and some pebble inclusions. It appears to denote an episode of deliberate infilling and levelling with redeposited natural clays.

Pit F162

A large sub-rectangular pit or pits, 2.4m long by 1.7m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.70m at the west end. This deeper western end may have formed the original pit with a later recut to the east, although the distinctions in the fill may merely reflect differential filling. The eastern pit was 0.50m deep but with an uneven bottom. Both were filled with mixed yellow-brown, red-brown and grey-brown silty to sandy clays. The distinction between the primary and secondary fills and the eroded upper edges of the western pit suggest that it was probably left open to silt naturally. At the east the fill is cut by two small pits or postholes, F149 and F198. The final fill was a heavily streaked and mottled light grey to orange-brown silt.

Linear pits F143 and F154

The earlier pit, F143, was between 1.20m and c 1.70m long; the eastern end lay beneath an unexcavated bank. It was near vertically-sided and flat-bottomed, 0.35m deep; at the west there was an oval hollow 0.08m deep. The fill was mixed light grey fine clayey silt and yellow clayey loam. Pit F54 cut away the southern half of its predecessor. It was 0.70m wide by 0.45m deep, with vertical sides and a flat bottom. Neither end was located, but it was between 1.4m and 2.0m long. There was a distinctive primary fill, 70mm thick, of medium grey clayey loam with sparse pebbles and some charcoal flecking, and contained a small scatter of struck flint. The remainder of the fill comprised mixed light brown sandy clay mottled with orange-brown sandy to silty clay. The near vertical sides of both slots indicate that they had not been left open for any appreciable time.

Pits F87, F106, and F113

Three successive sub-square to sub-rectangular pits, the

recutting progressed eastward. Pit F87, sub-square, at least 1.30m long by 1.60m wide and 0.30m deep, but with a central hollow 0.50m deep. The fill was a light grey clayey silt with some orange-brown sandy clay mottles and some cobbles of 60-80mm diameter. The upper fill was slightly darker and more mottled. No recutting was identified but the plan and profile suggest the presence of successive intersecting cuts. Pit F106, sub-rectangular, 1.45m long by 1.80m wide and 0.50m deep with a flat bottom containing a central pit. A steep-sided slot, 0.55m long by 0.15m wide and 0.10-0.20m deep, was cut into sloping south side of the pit. The fill was similar to the fill of F87 but lighter in colour. Pit F113, sub-rectangular, 1.10m wide by 0.80m long and 0.40m deep. The former presence of a probable rectangular post was defined by a pit, 0.50m long, 0.25m wide and 0.18m deep, and by a clearly defined, vertical-sided pipe of white, fine silty clay within the pit fill of similar but darker silts streaked and mottled with orange-brown sandy clay.

Pits F115 and F116

Pit F115, sub-rectangular, 1.40m long by 0.95m wide and up to 0.20m deep. Fill of light to medium grey clayey silt with some yellow clay mottles, the slightly higher pebble density at the shallower western end suggests that this is a 0.75m long recut of a pit original 1.0m long. Pit F116, sub-rectangular, 1.10m long by 0.60-0.70m wide and 0.10 to 0.20m deep. Fill of the original pit to west contained yellow clay inclusions, while the deeper recut was filled with light grey fine silty clay. Although the natural around pits F115 and F116 had been more heavily truncated these pits were still shallower than those further to the east.

Pits F100, F36/102 and F259

Pit F100, sub-circular, up to 0.70m diameter by 0.40m deep, with steep to near vertical sides. Fill of light brown to light grey sandy to silty clay with mottles of yellow clay and a few cobbles of 60-80mm. The fill against the pit sides contained a higher pebble density. Pit F36/102, sub-rectangular, 1.20m long by 0.80m wide and 0.30m deep, with steep sides and a flat bottom. Fill of mixed light yellow brown to brown, sandy to silty clay heavily mottled with light grey silt and orange sand, with a few small cobbles of 60-80mm. Pit F259, recognised in section only, cuts layer 7 and pit F144, probably sub-circular, 1.15m diameter by 0.35m deep with shallow sides and a concave base. Fill of orange-brown sandy loam with moderate to frequent pebbles; few similarities to the other pit fills.

Linear slots, F147, F150 and ?F145

Linear slots F147 and F150 were cut into the fills of pit F162, they were both steep-sided, 0.35-0.40m wide by 0.20-0.25m deep. F150 was 1.60m long and F147 was at least c 2.0m long, they converged towards the west. Both were filled with light brown to grey sandy clay. A 30-40mm thick layer of small gravel pebbles in a matrix of light brown sand, 148, lay between the slots and to the south of F147. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery came from F147. F145 was only identified in section, it comprised a steep-sided, flat-bottomed cut filled with light brown sandy loam. It was either a posthole or a short length of linear slot.

Final fill, layer 4

Layer 4 was a homogeneous, friable brown sandy loam with sparse pebble inclusions. At the east it could not be differentiated from the filling of the subsidence hollow over the adjacent barrow ditch. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered.

Pit F22

F22 lay between the southern pit complex and the enclosing ditch. It was sub-rectangular, at least 1.0m long by 0.90m wide, but survived to a depth of only 0.05m. It was filled with brown sandy clay heavily flecked with comminuted charcoal, and contained five small sherds from the base and lower portion of a vessel possibly belonging to the Bronze Age Um tradition (see section 7.1). This may suggest the former presence of a complete vessel standing upright within this pit.

THE BARROW DITCH

A 43m length of the ditch lay within the excavated area, with an internal diameter of c 35.5m it represents approximately 36% of an estimated total circumference of c 117.5m (Figs 3 and 7). Six sections were cut through the ditch and a larger area was investigated around the causeway to the east. The full or partial excavation of 14.6m of the ditch provides a 34% sample of the available length. The sections are shown with the inner edge to the left, so some appear as mirror images of the drawn faces (Figs 11 and 12).

The ditch

The ditch had a consistent "U"-shaped profile (Figs 11 and 12, and plate 3). The flat bottom was 1.0-1.2m wide; the lower sides showed little evidence of erosion and had a 70-80 degrees slope to a height of 0.50-0.70m. The ditch was 1.6-1.7m deep with respect to the top of the natural subsoil, although at the south, F68, it was 1.5m deep as a result of the greater truncation of the natural. The original depth would probably have been c 1.9-2.0m. It was 2.5-3.0m wide, but the lower profile indicates an original width of perhaps 2.3-2.4m at ancient ground level.

Primary fills

The preservation of the lower ditch profile indicates that the primary silts had accumulated rapidly. They comprised discrete and well defined blocks, often quite steeply angled, of yellow-brown to light grey clays and silty clays with some gravel inclusions. Where the ditch had cut through pockets of natural gravel quantities of sand and gravel were also present. They clearly derived almost exclusively from erosion of the upper sides of the ditch. The primary silts accumulated to a depth of 0.4-0.6m, by then the ditch sides had reached a stable angle of 40-50 degrees to the vertical. No artefacts were recovered from any of the ditch sections. In one instance, F25, there was a small cluster of charcoal fragments (radiocarbon date Beta-84662), but the early date suggests that the charcoal was residual in this context.

Secondary fills

The transition between rapid primary silting and slower secondary silting was quite sharply defined. The secondary silts comprised well mixed deposits of yellow to orange-brown clays and silty clays with quantities of light grey-brown clayey silts, with sparse gravel inclusions; some mottling and streaking suggests intermittent waterlogging. The lower and upper secondary fills were usually similar, merging almost imperceptibly at indistinct pebble trails, but the upper levels were also slightly greyer in colour. To the south a different pattern was seen in sections F248, F17, and F66, where the lower secondary fill was clearly distinguishable from a much darker

and more homogenous layer of grey clayey silt from 0.10-0.22m thick (Fig 12, S72 context 246 and S16 context 90). This may have included organic material, and its homogeneous nature may suggest that it accumulated rapidly, perhaps as a result of deliberate dumping. The small quantity of pottery recovered from the secondary fills included some possible Beaker sherds, all from the upper secondary fills in section F248.

The entrance causeway

The eastern entrance causeway was not fully excavated, but it was shown that the original ditch was present beneath, so there had been no earlier interruption at this point (Plate 4). The causeway was 2.0-3.0m wide and comprised a 0.30m thick layer of clean yellow clay, 238, and compacted gravels, 216, deposited over the secondary ditch fills (Fig 11, S75/S.71). To the south-west there was only minimal, if any, recutting of the ditch, which would still have been c 0.7-0.8m deep, and 0.50m deep with respect to the lowest point of the causeway. However, a steep-sided, round-bottomed linear slot, F237 (Fig 11, S50), 0.70m wide by 0.40m deep, was cut along the inner edge of the ditch; it contained frequent large pebbles and small cobbles of 50-100mm diameter. It was probably between 1.6m and 2.0m long.

To the north-east of the causeway there was a more complex sequence of events, but incomplete excavation leaves some of the details uncertain. A possible terminal to a 1.0m deep recut was tentatively defined in excavation (Fig 11, S75), but this was not confirmed by the cross-section and it may have been a false edge created by slight variations in the secondary fills. Along the outer edge of the barrow ditch there was a ditch 0.90m deep, F244 (Fig 7 and Fig 12, S73), which ran eastward to a terminal. Its westward extent is unknown but it must have been at least c 2.0-2.5m long. The marked scarp in the natural along the inner edge of the ditch adjacent to the causeway, and a broad shallow shelf around both the projecting terminal of ditch F244 and the inserted causeway, were probably both cut at this time.

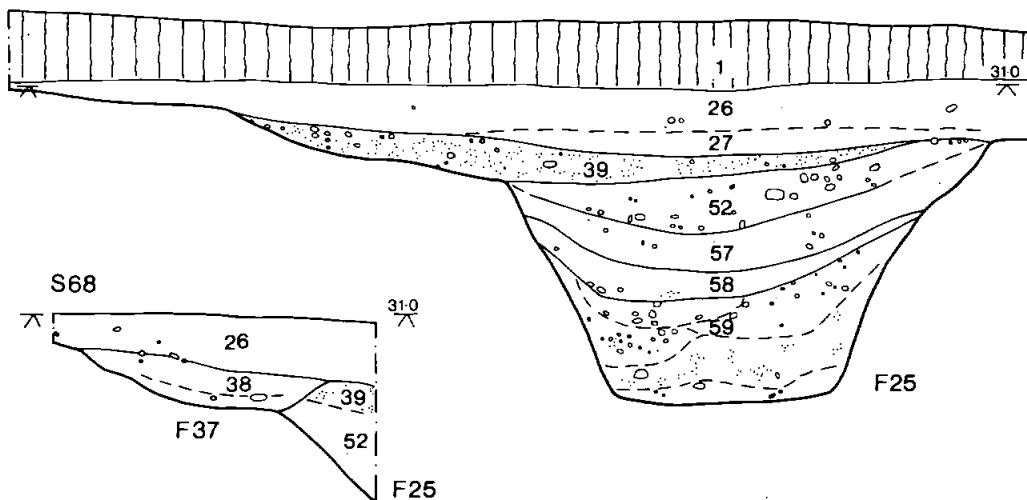
Charcoal rich deposits

Mottled orange and grey sandy clays accumulated within the ditch (Fig 11, S75/71, 241 and 252), lapping up over the margins of the causeway. To the north-east of the causeway they were cut by a shallow pit, c 3.5m long, 2.0m wide by 0.40m deep, filled with a grey to dark grey clayey loam (Fig 7); the lower part was more compact than the upper and a thin spread of comminuted charcoal lay at the interface.

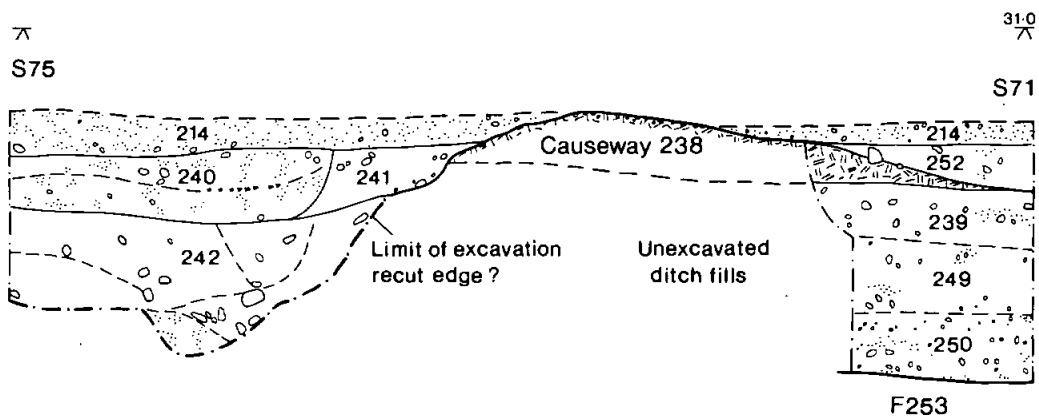
The westernmost ditch sections, F68 and F248, both contained distinctive charcoal rich fills at the base of the final silts (Fig 12, S9, context 69 and S72, context 234), and a continuous surface scatter of charcoal between these sections indicates that the charcoal rich soils ran continuously for at least 11m, terminating somewhere between F248 and F17. In F68 it comprised charcoal flecks and small pieces of charcoal concentrated in a thin band at the base of layer 69, with sparse charcoal inclusions within 69. In F248 there was a thin charcoal scatter at the outer edge of the ditch and also a 60mm thick layer of grey brown clayey sand, 234, containing frequent charcoal from hazel and buckthorn, some small burnt pebbles and patches or mottles of fine light grey, "ashy", silt. A localised deposit of charcoal at the base of the final silt in F66 (Fig 12, S16) may also be contemporary. It was up to 0.80m in diameter by 50mm thick and lay towards the outer edge of the ditch; it contained charcoal from oak branch wood and hawthorn or apple.

Charcoal samples from F248 and F66 have given radiocarbon dates indicating a late Bronze Age date for the deposition of

S6



S75



S70

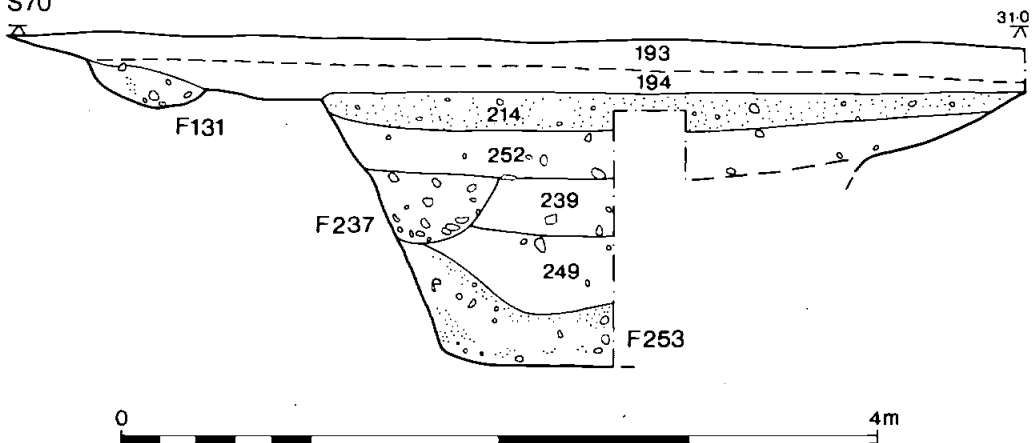


Fig 11 Mound 1: Sections, the barrow ditch

THE EXCAVATION OF NEOLITHIC AND MEDIEVAL MOUNDS AT TANSOR CROSSROADS

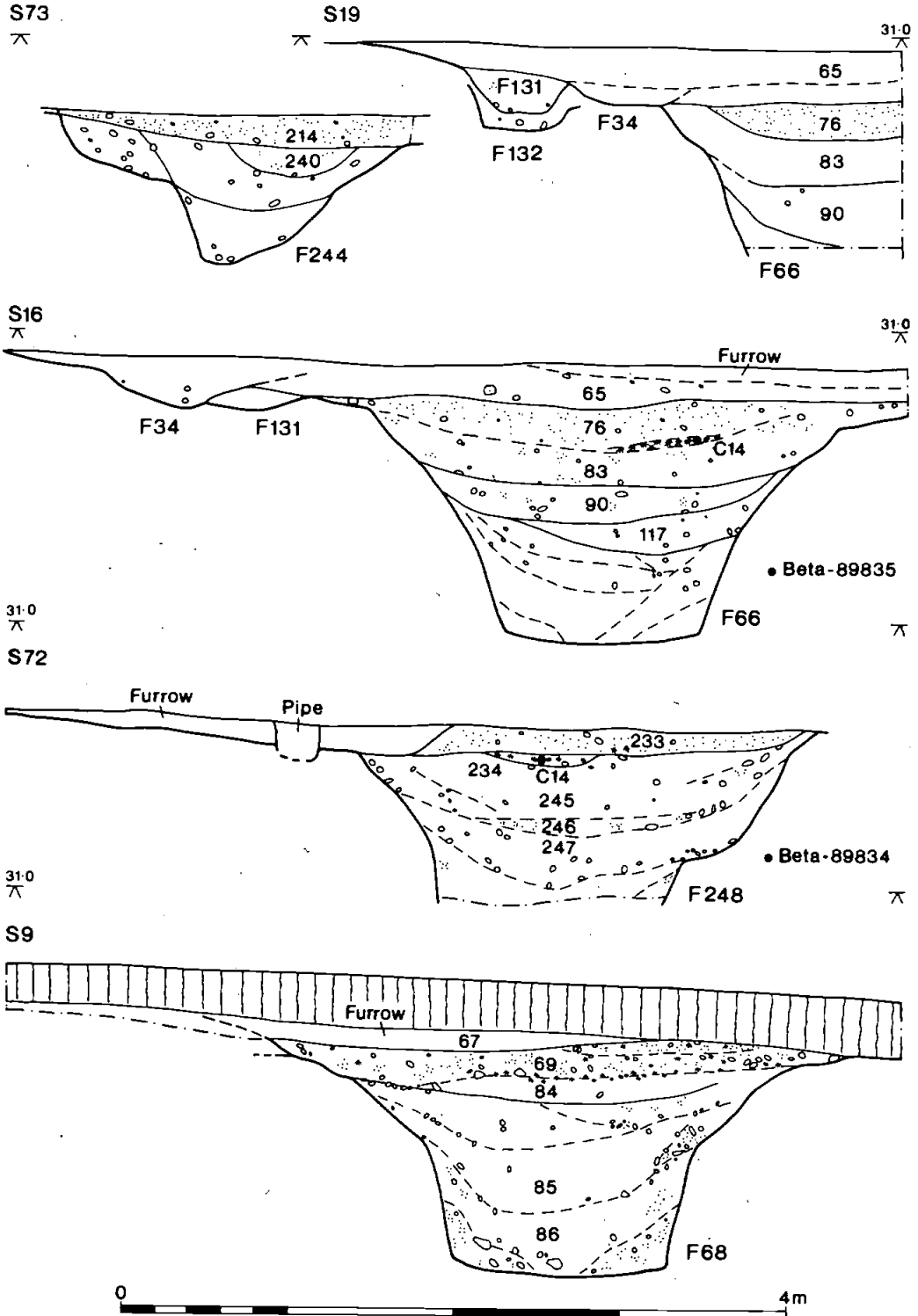


Fig 12 Mound I: Sections, the barrow ditch

these charcoal rich soils (Beta-89834 and Beta-89835). A few sherds of possible Beaker pottery came from layer 234 and are therefore probably residual in this context.

Final fills

Around most of the ditch circuit the final fill was a distinctive and homogeneous layer, up to 0.25m thick, of very heavily mottled and streaked mixed light brown, orange-brown to light grey gritty to clayey silts with some pebble inclusions (Figs 11 and 12, contexts 39, 214, 76, 233 and 69). The character of this layer suggests that it was deposited either in standing water or, at the least, that there were extended periods of waterlogging. Sparse charcoal inclusions were present where they overlay charcoal rich deposits. It contained a quantity of residual struck flint and some pottery.

Above the causeway the final fill, 214, was cut by a shallow sub-circular pit, F 215 (Fig 13), 0.75m in diameter by at least 0.09m deep. It was seen at an intermediate level within the silts, suggesting that it was either cut during their accumulation or had been fully cut through these silts but had not been recognised at the higher level. Across the base of the pit there was a 40mm thick layer of blackened soil containing a dense scatter of charcoal fragments, including numerous pieces 20-30mm long and up to 20mm in diameter. They came from *Prunus* species (blackthorn, plum, etc.) and *Pomoaceous* trees (hawthorn, apple, etc.). The gravel beneath was discoloured but it is uncertain whether this was a result of subsequent leaching

or burning in-situ. The charcoal has been radiocarbon dated Beta-84661).

At a similar level within the silts, and 1.5m to the south, there was a tight cluster of several cobbles of up to 150mm diameter, some of which were burnt, 235. No cut was identified but they must have lain at the base of a small circular pit of 0.35m diameter. The ditch fills were sealed and obscured by an homogeneous brown clayey loam with sparse pebbles, that extended beyond the ditch and merged with fills of the medieval furrows (Figs 11 and 12, contexts 26/27, 193/194, and 65). The lower part contained a scatter of Romano-British pottery and a large quantity of residual flint.

THE MOUND

Ploughing had removed all traces of any central mound within the excavated area. However, its former presence can be inferred from the general topography of the sub-circular to sub-square "mound" standing c 0.40m high, and also from the survival of a prehistoric subsoil across the highest part of this area. The mound must have been progressively removed by ploughing from at least the medieval period onward, but the final removal had been sufficiently recent to preserve its former extent as a "ghost" earthwork in the modern topography.

The extent to which the modern topography may define the shape of the former mound is uncertain. The area of subsoil

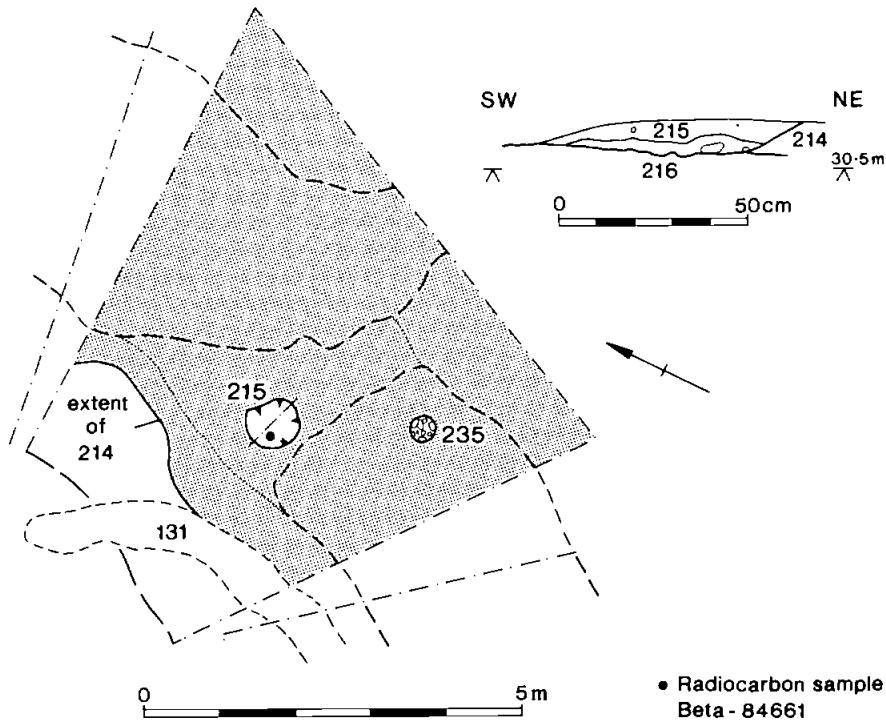


Fig 13 Mound I: Plan and section, pits 215 and 235

indicates the presence of the mound at the eastern end of the central area, but over the southern pit complex the modern ground level is lower and truncated. If this reflects the original form of the mound it would suggest that it stopped to the north of the southern pit complex, rather than continuing to the ditch, and this would denote the provision of a mound elongated east-west, rather than a circular mound, and respecting the postulated east-west alignment of the Neolithic mortuary enclosure.

The eastern half of the enclosed area also occupies the highest ground, at 31.2mOD, while at the west the ditch circuit was c 1.2m lower. The eastern end of the mound would therefore have stood above the western end, even given a mound of constant height. The clear definition of the earthwork only across the eastern half of the area may suggest that the western end of the mound was actually lower in height, and so had been ploughed away sooner.

We may tentatively estimate the height of the mound from the probable dimensions of the original ditch. A depth of 1.9-2.0m, a basal width of 1.0-1.2m, and a surface width c 2.3-2.4m provide a cross-sectional area of c 3.23m². Combining this with an original circumference of c 117.5m, we can deduce that the excavation of the ditch entailed the removal of c 380m³ of material, mainly tenacious clays but also including gravels. If we assume that the central mound was of an oval to sub-rectangular plan, measuring c 20 by 25m, then the mound would have covered an area of c 500m². Making no allowance for expansion of the excavated material, 380m³ of material would form a flat-topped mound 0.76m high. At a high expansion value of 1.5, the mound could have been 1.14m high. We may therefore suggest that the original mound may have had an average height of c 1.0m.

MOUND 2

Mound 2 lay beyond the road corridor and can only be characterised from the information available from aerial photography and contour survey. The aerial photographs recorded a single ring ditch and in earthwork it is closely comparable to Mound 1, forming a low sub-circular to oval mound (Fig 2). Within the excavated area the subsoil surface sloped upwards to the north adjacent to Mound 2, indicating the presence of a zone immediately around the ring ditch that had been protected from plough erosion. This indicates the presence of a mound but, as with mound 1, it is likely that this has been largely ploughed away. The surface contours might suggest that the mound has an oval plan, aligned north-east to south-west, but this may be distorted by the post-medieval track along its southern margin. The ring ditch is approximately 20m in diameter and the separation between the ring ditches of mounds 1 and 2 is probably at most c 3m.

LINEAR DITCHES SOUTH OF MOUND 2

Two parallel linear ditches, 5.5m apart, ran south-eastward from Mound 2. They pre-date the medieval furrows but are otherwise undated (Fig 2). The western ditch, F170, was seen intermittently for 21.50m across the width of the excavated area. It was V-shaped, up to 1.1-1.3m wide by 0.3-0.4m deep, and had been recut at least once. The eastern ditch, F172, was traced for a length of 5.3m; it was lost beneath a medieval furrow and there was no indication of its presence further to the north. It was

V-shaped, up to 0.55m wide by 0.20m deep. Both ditches were filled with heavily mottled grey-brown to red-brown sandy clay with sparse pebbles. They are most closely comparable to the final fill of the ditch around mound 1, although this may merely be indicative of a similar process of silting under waterlogged conditions, rather than indicating any close chronological relationship.

Three struck flints were recovered from ditch F170, including a scraper and a cutting blade. A single sherd of medieval pottery is recorded as coming from the same ditch but is probably intrusive from the overlying furrow. These ditches may have formed part of a boundary system which respected the location of the prehistoric mounds, but this could have occurred at any time from the Neolithic creation of Mound 1 up to the formation of the medieval ridge and furrow field system.

THE EARLY SAXON BURIALS

Grave F157

A sub-rectangular grave pit, 2.30m long, 0.80m wide and 0.25m deep, aligned near west to east (Fig 14). No bone survived but the skull was represented by an ovoid block of darker, stone-free loam, but no tooth fragments were recovered; a nearby soil stain probably represents part of the left humerus. The body shape was defined by a slightly darker and looser loam, and a longitudinal ridge of stonier fill to the east denoted the position of the legs, it suggests that the body was laid supine and extended. It is identified as a female burial from the group of glass and paste beads, some linked by fine silver wire rings, and the poorly preserved remnants of a silver pendant; an iron knife blade was found on the base of the grave in a position indicating that it was formerly attached to a belt (Fig 20).

Grave F203

A sub-rectangular grave pit, 0.95m long, 0.45m wide and 0.30m deep, aligned near south-north (plate 5). No bone was recovered and the identification of this feature as a grave is based on its shape and on the presence of a pottery vessel standing upright at the north-west corner (Fig 7). From the size of the grave it is clear that this must have been the burial of an infant.

THE MEDIEVAL WINDMILL MOUND

THE ENCLOSING DITCH

The ditch was sub-circular in plan, with an internal diameter of 13.0-14.5m and an external diameter of 24.0-25.0m (Fig 6). The northern half of the circuit was quite closely circular but to the south both arms were straighter, possibly implying that they were approaching terminals flanking a southern entrance. The ditch was 4.2-5.8m wide in total, narrower to the north and broader along the southern arms. The main ditch was a broad, U-shaped cut 2.8-3.5m wide, and 1.4m deep.

There was a shelf around the inner side, 0.30-0.40m deep. To the north this was 1.0-1.5m wide and on the southern arms it was 2.2-2.5m wide (Fig 15). A layer of compact and homogeneous tenacious blue-grey clay lay on this shelf, 28 and 82; to the east it was 250mm thick and ran up over the outer edge of the mound, elsewhere, it was either thinner or absent, probably as a result of subsequent erosion. It is quite distinct from the yellow clay of the

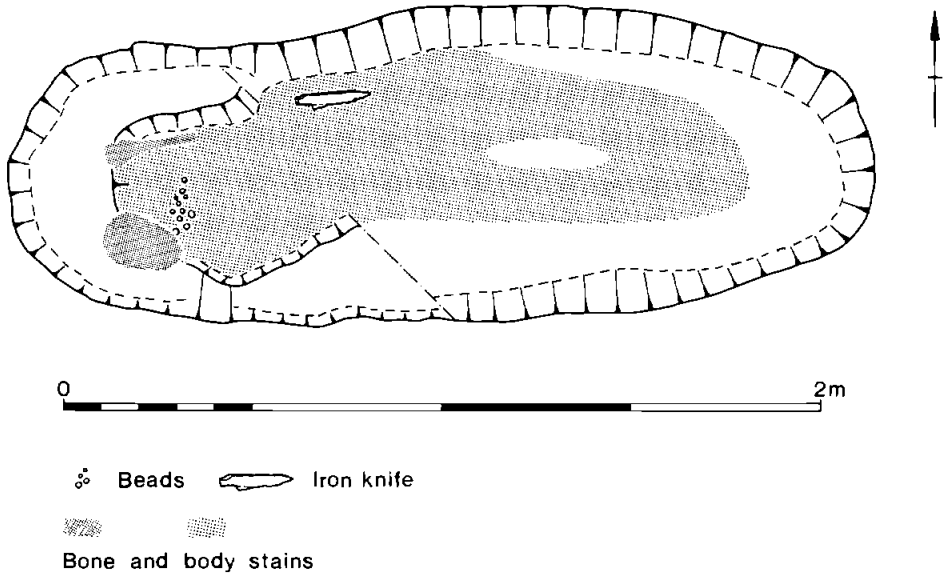


Fig 14 Mound 1: Early Saxon burial F157

mound and it would appear that this feature was a deliberate creation at the formation of the windmill.

The fill of the main ditch comprised fairly homogeneous layers of mixed and mottled blue-grey to yellow-brown clay and silty clay, with sparse pebble inclusions, similar to the natural through which the ditch was cut (Fig 15, S8 contexts 53 and 51, and S7 context 48). Primary pottery groups were deposited on or near the base of the ditch. They comprised substantial parts of

individual vessels crushed by the clay fill (Fig 22).

The upper fill was a layer of brown clayey loam, probably denoting the formation of a stable soil horizon (Fig 15, S8 context 43 and S7 context 42). The final fill comprised darker brown clayey loams which extended well beyond the outer edge of the ditch (S8 context 18/20 and S7 context 41), in the sections adjacent to the roadside hedge it contained quantities of post-medieval to modern artefacts.

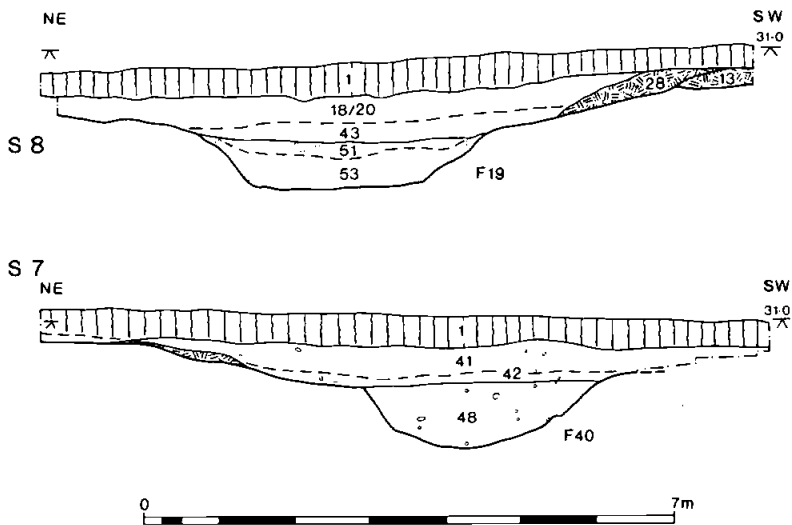


Fig 15 Mound 3: Ditch sections

THE MOUND

The mound of homogeneous tenacious yellow clay stood to a height of 0.20m adjacent to the roadside hedge, where it was least disturbed by modern ploughing (Fig 6, context 13). It was cut by numerous plough lines running parallel to the hedge and lumps of clay had been redeposited within the overlying topsoil. To the north the mound had been totally lost. To the east and west it still extended to the ditch, probably as a result of the clay lying within a shallow hollow cut up to 0.20m into the underlying subsoil. The surviving extent of the mound probably defined the full extent of this hollow.

The only feature visible within the exposed surface of the mound was a central, sub-circular "pit" that was later seen to comprise darker clays within a subsidence hollow over the centre of the cross-trees slots. Only the central part was excavated, and it appeared that there were distinct upper and lower clay layers across an area c 6.5-7.0m in diameter, with the cross-tree slots cutting the lower 50-100mm thick layer of the undisturbed clay. The removal and re-deposition of the upper part of the mound probably indicates that the central area had been extensively disturbed at some stage, most probably during the removal of the cross-tree timbers, with the same material being redeposited following the filling of the slots.

THE CROSS-TREE SLOTS

In plan these were first observed as indistinct linear concentrations of cobbles and some smaller gravel within a clay matrix indistinguishable from the mound. In the absence of any in-situ timbers the four arms were only partially excavated and the central baulk was not removed (Fig 15 and Plate 7). The north-south slot, F94/F118, was 6.80m long in total, but 6.43m long excluding the shallow ledge at the northern end. The east-west slot, F92/F122, was 6.33m long. Both were flat-bottomed and 0.65-0.75m deep, but the east-west slot was c60-70mm shallower. There was no apparent abrupt change in level at the junction of the slots, but overcutting may have removed this evidence. There was a central sub-circular or sub-square depression, 0.60m in diameter, 110mm deeper than the north-south slot and 40-50mm deeper than the east-west slot.

The slots were 0.74-1.46m wide. Three terminals were square-ended, but the southern terminal and the central lengths of the slots were broader and less steep-sided. They had probably been widened when the timbers were removed, although erosion following the removal of the timbers may have been a contributory factor. The three better preserved terminals define the original form of the slots as near vertically-sided and 0.75-0.85m wide at ground level with basal widths of c 0.40m.

No direct evidence of timbers had survived, indicating that the demolition of the windmill had included the removal of the basal cross-trees. The general character of the timbers can be quantified. The basal lengths of the slots suggest maximum timber lengths of c 5.6m and c 5.8m, while the best preserved terminal indicates a maximum width of c 0.40m. In addition, the slightly shallower east-west slot indicates that this timber had been set at a slightly higher level.

The fills of the slots comprised 60-100mm of silty primary silt, perhaps indicating that they were left open for a short period after the removal of the timbers. At the base of the terminal of the

eastern slot there was a dense scatter of charcoal. The upper fills were fairly homogeneous, comprising mixed yellow to yellow-brown sandy clay with mottles of light grey sandy to silty clay, all reflecting the natural deposits through which the slots were cut. This was sealed by tenacious yellow clays of redeposited mound material, 13. At the intersection of the slots this layer contained a higher pebble density and a central hollow, 2.20m in diameter by 0.30m deep, was filled with brown silty clay, 14.

MINOR FEATURES

To the north of the windmill mound there was a near vertically sided pit or post-pit (Fig 6, F225), 0.85m in diameter by 0.75m deep. The fill included some charcoal. A shallow pit, 0.85m in diameter by 60mm deep, (Fig 6, F221), lay just beyond the eastern edge of the windmill mound ditch. Both of these features are of unknown date.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIDGE AND FURROW

There was no indication that the windmill mound had been established over an existing field system, although the mound and later deposits around the margins of its ditch were not extensively removed in order to test this. The southernmost recorded furrow of the medieval field system terminated short of the ditch but it is unclear whether this is original or a result of its removal by later ploughing on the ridge of higher ground to the immediate north of the windmill mound. There was no evidence that any furrows ran over the windmill mound, to indicate that it had been taken back into the field system following its abandonment, and the post-medieval finds from the ditch support this interpretation. From the available evidence it is concluded that during its lifetime the windmill mound occupied a small block of land at the margin of the field system, and following its abandonment it was probably left as an upstanding and uncultivated mound.

THE POST MEDIEVAL TRACKWAY

A length of track, 18.5m long and 3.7m wide, ran on a north-easterly alignment past the western side of the windmill mound (Fig 6, context 80). A single section showed that the metalling comprised compacted limestone with heavily worn surfaces and some gravel in a matrix of stiff brown clay. To the north the surface petered out as it approached the top of the slight ridge, where it had probably been removed by ploughing. Further to the north, adjacent to mound 1, the track was represented by a sparse and much disturbed spread of worn limestone and gravel in brown clayey loams (Figs 2 and 3).

The track overlay the furrows of the medieval field system, indicating that it was of late- to post-medieval date and therefore had no direct association with the windmill. The only dating evidence was provided by miscellaneous pieces of iron and several post-medieval horseshoes recovered from the disturbed road surface adjacent to the windmill. The track probably continued north-eastward to join a farm track which is still in use today.

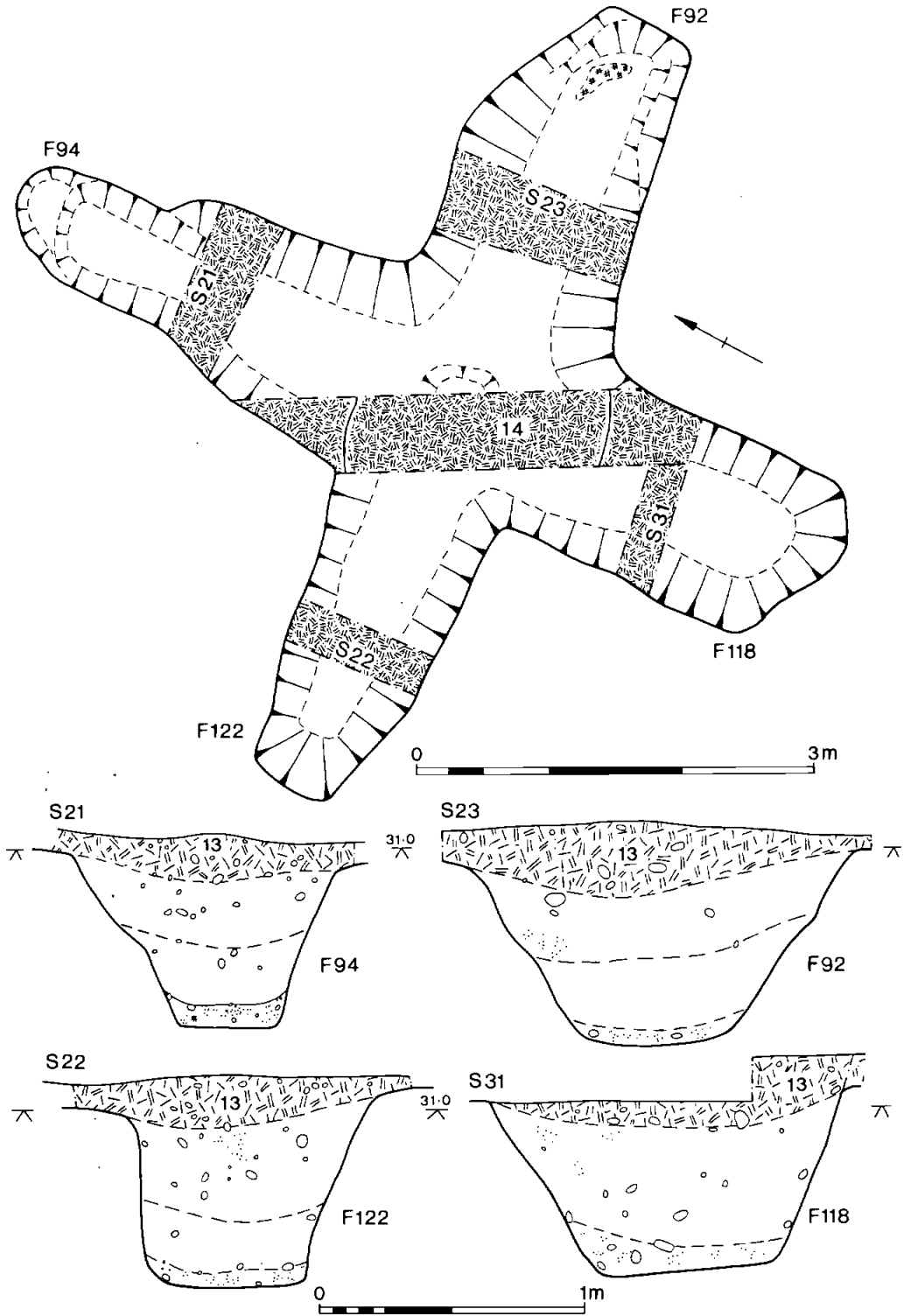


Fig 16 Mound 3: The cross-tree slots, plan and sections

THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

THE NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE POTTERY

by Alex Gibson

The material from mound 1 represents a small and generally unremarkable assemblage spanning the mid-Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age. Identifications of the majority of the ceramics are hampered by the abraded and residual nature of the sherds identified as being Beaker or later. The most important element of the assemblage are the two or three Peterborough Ware vessels from pit F167. These are in a homogeneous fabric suggesting a single assemblage and are well within the Mortlake tradition (Fig 17, 1-3).

Despite the proximity of the eponymous site, published assemblages of Peterborough Ware are comparatively rare in the eastern Nene Valley (Abbott 1910). Mortlake Ware is recorded from Orton Longueville (Pryor 1978, 95) and a small amount of atypical material from the Cat's Water site, Fengate. Indeed the meagreness of the Peterborough assemblage from the modern excavations at Fengate were remarked on by the excavator (Pryor 1984, 129). By far the closest parallels typological and regionally, if not in fabric, come from the site at Ecton, Northampton where a considerable Mortlake assemblage was located (Bamford in Moore and Williams 1975), and from Wollaston Quarry (Gibson forthcoming). The short twisted cord impressions on vessel 167/1 (below and Fig 17, 1) are also paralleled in the Ecton assemblage (vessels 1 and 2).

In the present assemblage 167/3 (Fig 17, 3) has a flattened (as opposed to flat) base. This may be deliberate, transitional between the Mortlake proper and Fengate styles, or it may be that the vessel had been stood upright on a flat surface before the clay had dried sufficiently. Either way, the same phenomenon was noted at Ecton (vessel 2). These bases do appear to have a flattened (as opposed to flat) nature. The "flat" bases of the Rudstone style (Manby 1975) and Fengate styles (Smith 1956; 1974) are deliberately moulded and also, perversely, rarely perfectly flat. Tansor 167/3 and Ecton vessel 2 are likely to have been far more stable than some other "flat" based Peterborough pots.

The radiocarbon date of 4720±90 BP (Beta-84660) is perhaps a little early for Mortlake style, but would

still fit with the emerging earliness of fully developed Peterborough Ware (Gibson and Kinnes forthcoming). The Ebbsfleet Ware from Gwernvale, Powys (Britnell and Savory 1984) has a date of 4590±80 BP (CAR-116), the Mortlake Ware from Meole Brace, Shropshire (Hughes and Woodward 1995) is similarly early at 4570±85 BP (OxA-4206). Some of the dates for the Mortlake/Fengate hybrid at Horton (4585±75 BP [OxA-3576] and 4520±80 BP [OxA-3578]) also coincide with the Tansor date-range (inf S Ford). The earlier date of 5120±110 BP (HAR-1141) and 5030±90 BP (HAR-4821) from Mount Farm are probably too early (inf G Lambrick).

CATALOGUE OF NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE POTTERY

All sherds have been examined macroscopically and no microscopic analysis has been used in the fabric summaries.

Pit 167, Context 177: Vessel 167/1 (Fig 17, 1)

Rim sherd from a Mortlake style Peterborough vessel. The fabric is quite soft and friable though the light brown surfaces are well preserved. The outer surface is slightly pitted. The fabric averages 8mm thick, has a "soapy" texture, and contains abundant finely crushed grog. Evidence for the method of manufacture, coil or ring building, is represented by a join void, resulting from the imperfect bonding of clay coils or rings, visible in the rim section. It suggests that the outer lip of the rim has been applied. The diameter of the rim has been in the region of 250mm. The rim is "T"-sectioned with a pronounced outer lip and slight inner lip. It is flat-topped though the rim slopes slightly towards the outside. The neck is externally concave in keeping with the style. The decoration comprises twisted cord impressions. Internally, two rows of oblique and slightly curved twisted cord impressions are arranged in herring bone form above a horizontal line of twisted cord. On the top of the rim, a centrally placed encircling cord line separates two zones of closely set twisted cord lengths set radially to the rim. Externally in the neck are a series of regularly spaced vertical crescentic impressions, probably fingernail impressions though possibly ill-defined twisted cord. This vessel may be the same as 167/2 below, the fabric is certainly similar. In view of the differences of decoration and evidence to the contrary, however, it may be safer to assign the two sherds to different vessels within the same tradition.

Vessel 167/2 (Fig 17, 2)

Body sherd from the wall of a Mortlake style Peterborough vessel. The fabric is quite soft and friable with a very abraded black inner surface and a pitted light brown outer surface. The fabric averages 10mm thick, has a "soapy" texture, and contains abundant finely crushed grog. Evidence for the method of manufacture, coil or ring building, is represented by at least two join voids visible in the breaks. The decoration comprises three horizontal rows of fingertip impressions. These are deep (c 4mm) and close-set to the extent of having raised small ridges of dislodged clay around each impression giving the appearance of increased depth.

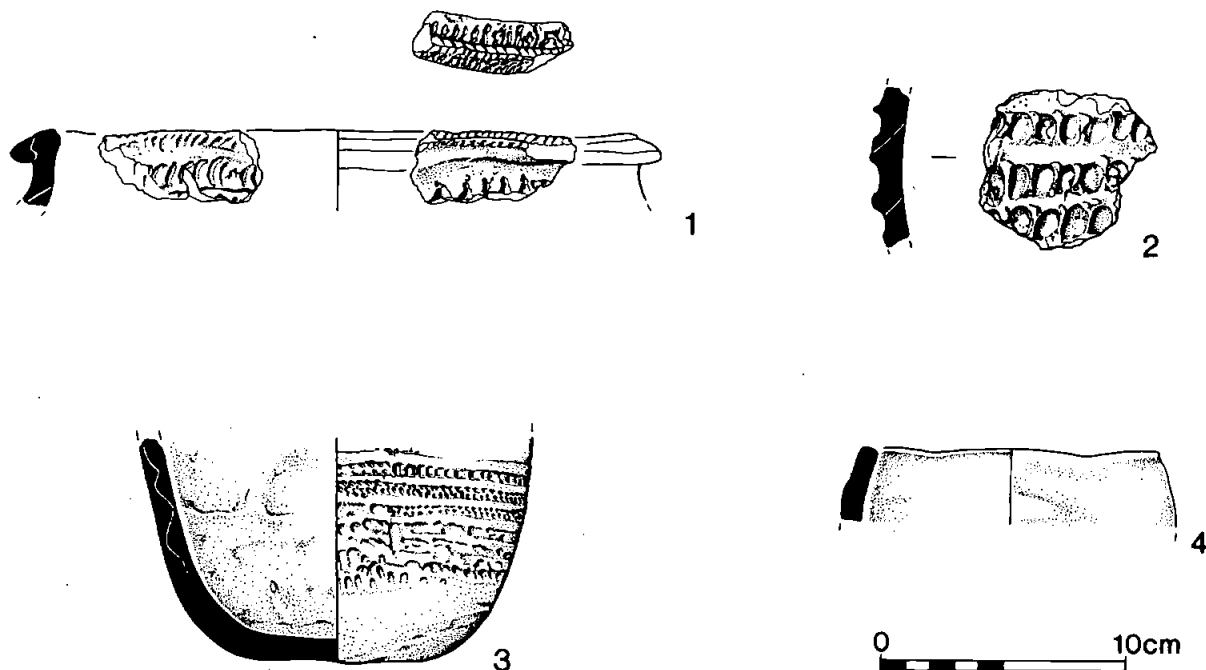


Fig 17 The Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery

Vessel 167/3 (Fig 17, 3)

Body sherd from the wall and lower portion of a Peterborough vessel, possibly in the Mortlake style. The fabric has been quite soft and friable (but is now conserved) with a very abraded black-brown inner surface and a pitted brown to reddish-brown outer surface. The fabric averages 9mm thick, has a "soapy" texture, and contains abundant finely crushed grog. Evidence for the method of manufacture, coil or ring building, is represented by a number of join voids visible in the breaks. The core of the fabric is black attesting the incomplete combustion of carbonaceous deposits within the clay. The surviving portion of the vessel has a maximum diameter of c 160mm. The base is flat though it is perhaps more correct to say that it is transitional between flat and rounded in that the vessel stands comfortably on its base but that there is little distinction between the base and the curvature of the lower vessel wall. The decoration is abraded and lightly impressed but appears to comprise six horizontal rows of plaited cord impressions. Below these horizontal lines, at the very base of the pot, are vertical to slightly oblique twisted cord horseshoe impressions. These are only visible on one section of the vessel, however, and appear to be designed to fill an unevenness in height. There appears to be a grain impression on the lower wall of the sherd.

Pit F152

Probable Beaker base sherd in a soft friable fabric with abraded and pitted surfaces. The outer surface is reddish-brown and the inner surface is dark grey-brown. The fabric contains abundant

crushed grog which erupts both surfaces. The vessel is undecorated but the base angle carries traces of a slight moulding suggesting a lip or foot to the vessel.

Pit F174

Probable Beaker sherd, small, abraded and undecorated with a brown outer surface, black core and with the inner surface missing. The sherd survives to 5mm thick. It appears to contain some finely crushed grog and sand. The outer surface is slightly crazed.

Pit/posthole F205

Five possible Beaker sherds, very abraded residual sherds with reddish-brown surfaces and a black core. Contains crushed grog. Undecorated.

*THE SOUTHERN PIT COMPLEX**Pit F162, final fill*

Possible Beaker sherd, abraded, in a hard fabric with brown outer surface, black inner surface and core. The fabric is 5mm thick and contains finely crushed grog.

Pit F87, final fill

Possible Beaker sherd, fine hard fabric with a brown outer surface, black core and grey inner surface, contains some sand and averages 5mm thick.

Slot F147

Possible Beaker sherd, very abraded residual sherd with reddish-brown surfaces and a black core. Contains crushed grog. Undecorated.

Pit F22

Three sherds from the base and lower portion of a dark grey undecorated vessel in a slightly "soapy"-textured fabric with abundant grog inclusions. The fabric varies between 12mm thick towards the outside of the base to 15mm thick at the slightly domed centre. The base has a diameter of c 90mm. One sherd has a trace of a fingernail impression on the outside though this may be accidental rather than deliberate decoration. It is difficult to be certain as to the identification of this pot in the absence of formally diagnostic traits. It possibly belongs to a vessel in the Bronze Age Urn series.

THE BARROW DITCH

Secondary Fill: Section F248, Contexts 245 and 234

Five possible Beaker sherds, very abraded, probably residual, in a soft, porous fabric with a red outer surface, black inner surface and core. The fabric appears to contain some grog.

Section F248, Context 234

Possible Beaker sherd, abraded, in a soft porous brown fabric with outer surface only remaining. Contains some grog.

Section F248, Context 245

Possible Peterborough sherd, soft, porous and very abraded with an orange-brown fabric with a pitted outer surface and missing inner surface. The fabric survives to 11mm thick and the curve of the outer surface suggests a bowl-shaped vessel.

Section F66, Context 83 and 90 (Fig 17, 4)

Rim and body sherd from a small cup or bowl of uncertain identification. The fabric is soft and porous with abraded surfaces, brown externally and black internally. The fabric is 8mm thick and the rim diameter 120mm.

Final fill: Section F25, Context 39

Twenty sherds probably from within the Bronze Age Urn traditions, in a hard, well-fired fabric averaging 100mm thick and containing abundant finely crushed grog. The outer surface is reddish-brown, the inner is similar but with a purplish tinge. The inner surface in particular is pitted. None of the sherds are decorated and none show formal traits other than a flat base. Further sherds, from the secondary fill in section F66, context 83, and the final fill in section F68, context 69, are in an identical fabric and may also be from this vessel.

Section F68, Context 69

Possible late Neolithic sherds plus crumbs from a soft friable vessel in a black voided and abraded fabric. The fabric contains grog. Two sherds possibly from a Collared urn, in a well-fired grog-filled fabric with a red-brown outer surface and black inner surface. The sherds average 7mm thick.

Subsidence Fill: Section F12, Context 3

Possible Beaker sherd, small, with light pink-brown surfaces and a black core. Contains grog.

Section F66, Context 65

Possible Beaker sherd, small abraded sherd with reddish-brown surfaces and a grey core. Undecorated, 5mm thick.

PROBABLE NEOLITHIC/EARLY BRONZE AGE SHERDS

Sherds too small to be diagnostic were recovered from the following features:

Central area: pit F185, ditch F124

Southern pit complex: pit F102, pit F148, and subsidence fill

Barrow ditch, secondary fills: section F17, context 49; section F248, 234

Barrow ditch, final fills: section F12, 11; section F17, 16; section F68, 69; section F256, 214; slot F237, 252.

Barrow ditch, subsidence fills: section F17, 15; section F66; section F256, 193/194.

THE WORKED FLINT

by Andy Chapman

INTRODUCTION

A total of 323 struck flints was recovered. The 264 pieces from mound 1 includes 182 from Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts and 82 from later contexts. A further 59 pieces were recovered from cleaning the natural, the fills of the medieval furrows and from the medieval windmill mound. The composition of the assemblage and its distribution within the major feature groups is summarised in Table 1; the categories follow the definitions used by Holgate (1988, 38-42). The struck flint recovered in fieldwalking during evaluation is not included in the present analysis; it is of the same general character as the excavated assemblage.

THE RAW MATERIAL

The flints are typically of fresh appearance. A majority, c 70%, are of vitreous quality, dark to light grey and mid grey-brown to brown in colour. The remainder comprises either vitreous flint with granular inclusions, c 20%, or an opaque, granular flint, mottled light grey in colour, c 10%. The cortex is typically yellow brown to red brown, depending on the degree of iron staining.

The recovered cores indicate that much of the flint was derived from small pebbles. However, some flakes, the larger blades and some implements are certainly from larger cores. The gravel pockets within the natural clay on the site could have provided some suitable flint, but the most likely

Table 1: Composition of the flint Assemblage

	Early Neolithic-EBA	Bronze Age	Post-Prehistoric	U/S	Totals
Cores	7	8	9	7	31S
Shattered Pieces	8	0	5	3	16
Core Rejuvenation Flakes	1	2(1TAB.)	0	0	3
Flakes	63	39	44	30	176
Blades/Bladelets	4/3	1/-	2/-	1/1	8/4
Scrapers	4	4	4	3	15
Knives	0	0	0	2	2
Cutting Flakes/Blades	4/6	4/3	2/3	2/2	12/14
Leaf Arrowheads	2	0	0	2	4
Transverse Arrowheads	0	1	2	0	3
Ovate	0	1	0	0	1
Serrated Blades	1	0	0	0	1
Fabricator	0	0	0	1	1
Notched Flakes	1	0	1	2	4
Piercers	0	0	0	3	3
TOTALS	110	72	82	59	323

source for the majority of the material would be gravel deposits in the Nene valley.

CHRONOLOGICAL GROUPS (Table 1):

1) Early Neolithic to early Bronze Age:

- a) The subsoil, 204/212, and residual finds in the central area.
- b) The central pits.
- c) The southern pit complex.

2) Bronze Age:

- a) The secondary and final fills of the barrow ditch.

3) Post-prehistoric

- a) The subsidence hollow fills of the southern pit complex and the barrow ditch.

4) Unstratified:

- a) All material recovered from beyond Mound 1.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of the technologies represented the assemblage can be divided into two groups. The first, and smaller, group comprises a soft hammer-struck blade industry, utilising good quality gravel flint. In particular, the brown vitreous flint, which comprises only 15% of the total, appears to have been preferred for the production of blades and larger flakes. The presence of a single core tablet (Fig 18, 1) and a small number of bladelets might suggest the presence of a residual Mesolithic component. A notched piece worked on a large axe-thinning flake could derive from either a Mesolithic or an early Neolithic flint axe (5).

The majority is in keeping with an earlier Neolithic blade industry, including cutting blades, a single serrated blade (Fig 19, 19), and seven cores with prepared platforms used for the production of flakes and/or blades (2). The two leaf-shaped arrowheads (13 and 14) are also characteristic of the earlier Neolithic period although their appearance in later contexts is well attested.

The second, and larger, group comprises a hard hammer-struck flake industry characteristic of later Neolithic and Bronze Age flint knapping practice, producing flakes with wide butts, prominent bulbs of percussion and with the frequent occurrence of hinge fractures. This technology utilised a wide range of flint but much of it was of poor quality. The majority of the recovered cores are irregular, without prepared platforms, and were utilised for the production of flakes (3); at the extreme some examples had only 1-3 removals.

A small number of pieces can be specifically assigned; the three transverse arrowheads (15-17) and two discoidal cores (4) are characteristic of the later Neolithic. The three discoidal scrapers (8) would be considered characteristic of the late Neolithic or Beaker periods, and three small discoidal or "thumbnail" scrapers (9 and 10), and a pressure flaked knife (12) are characteristic of a Beaker to early Bronze Age date. Together they appear to denote a continuance of activity through the later Neolithic and at least well into the early Bronze Age, and this is supported by the radiocarbon dates.

Many of the implements recovered cannot be closely assigned; these include a single bifacially worked ovate (18), eight end or end/side scrapers (6 and 7), a backed-blade knife (11), a fabricator (20), three notched flakes (19), and two piercers (22). In addition, 26 flakes and three blades bearing some evidence of secondary flaking have been classified as miscellaneous retouched. Some examples appear to be the butts of broken implements, probably end or side/end scrapers, others have partial edge retouch and may represent unfinished implements; those with abrupt retouch may be unfinished scrapers.

The two flint industries has no simple representation in the stratigraphic sequence. The most convincing evidence is

THE EXCAVATION OF NEOLITHIC AND MEDIEVAL MOUNDS AT TANSOR CROSSROADS

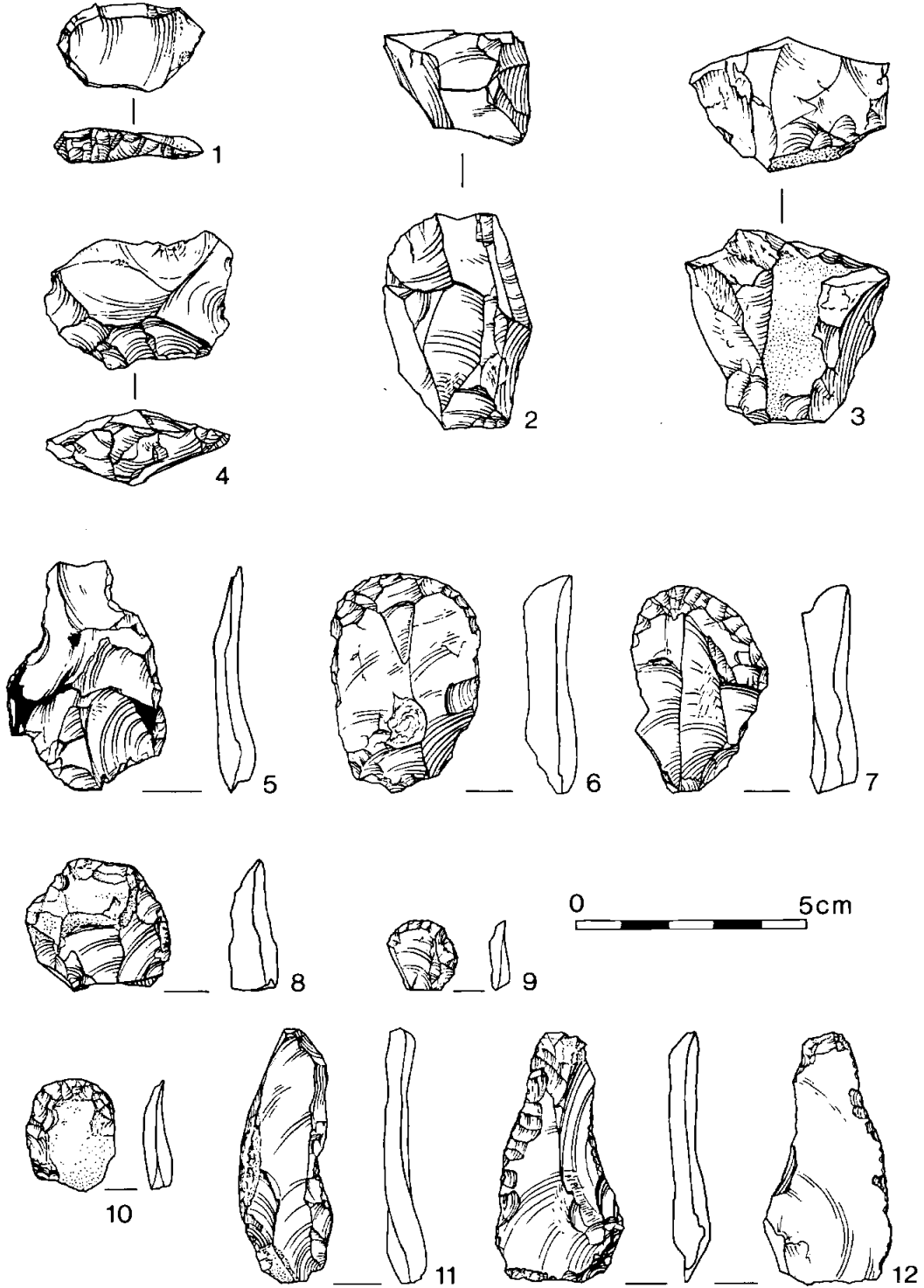


Fig 18 The worked flints, 1-12

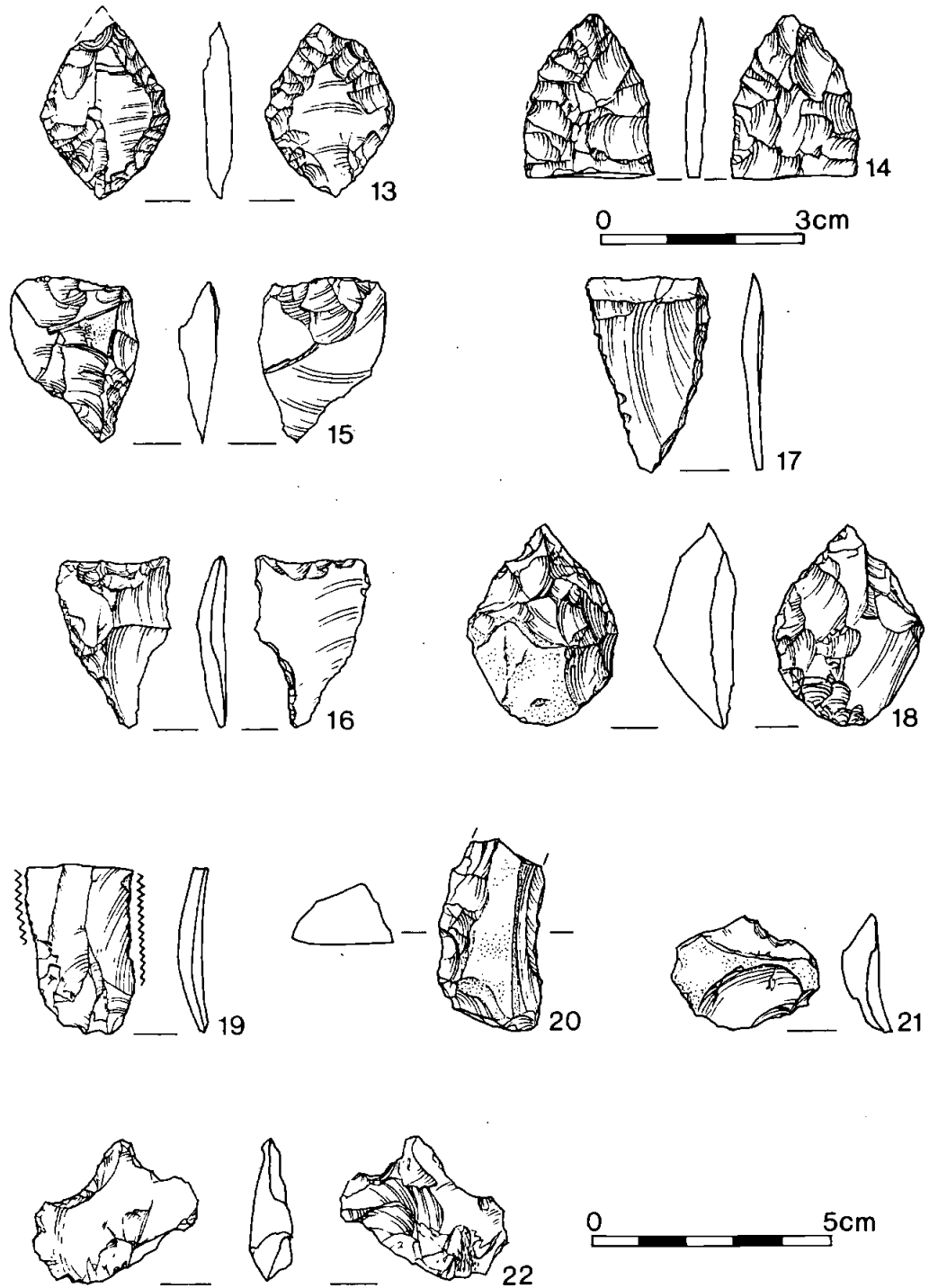


Fig 19 The worked flints, 13-22

THE EXCAVATION OF NEOLITHIC AND MEDIEVAL MOUNDS AT TANSOR CROSSROADS

provided by the distribution of blades, bladelets, cutting blades, retouched blades and the single serrated blade; fifteen of the thirty one examples were from contexts certainly or probably pre-dating the central mound. In addition, fourteen of the twenty four soft hammer-struck blades and flakes are from the earlier contexts in the central area, although this group does include many of the blades already considered above. The implication is that soft hammer-struck blades are most common within the central area and therefore pre-date the construction of the mound, and many of the remainder could be residual in later contexts. Of the small group of seven cores with prepared platforms, three are from relatively early contexts.

There are too few specific implements for their spatial or stratigraphic distribution to be considered, but a few examples are worthy of comment. The two leaf-shaped arrowheads are both from the eastern end of the central area, pit F174 and the terminal of slot/gully F131. The three transverse arrowheads are all from later contexts; the secondary fill of the barrow ditch and the subsidence fills of the southern pit complex and the barrow ditch.

The small discoidal, or "thumbnail", scrapers (9 and 10) are regarded as characteristic of Beaker to early Bronze Age activity, but one was recovered from pit F167 which produced a Mortlake ware assemblage. It came from within 20-30mm of the ground surface and so could have been intrusive; this piece also has invasive rather than abrupt retouch and may be better characterised as an unusually small discoidal knife (10).

A further point worthy of note is the recovery of 109 flints from the final and subsidence fills of the barrow ditch; the latter context produced Romano-British pottery. This would suggest that a major episode of early Bronze Age flint deposition on and around the mound is only represented by the sample that was eventually redeposited in the latest ditch fills.

List of illustrated worked flint

- 1 Core tablet. Barrow ditch, final fill, F76, sf333
- 2 Core. Class C. (3 platforms). Flake and blade scars. Central pit, 166/F167, sf475
- 3 Core. Irregular. Large flake scars. Barrow ditch, final fill, 11/F12, sf577
- 4 Core. Discoidal. Mound 3, medieval windmill mound, sf439
- 5 Axe thinning flake, notched. Barrow ditch, subsidence fill, 15/F17, sf98
- 6 End scraper. Barrow ditch, secondary fill, 247/F248, sf662
- 7 End/side scraper. Barrow ditch, final fill, 233/F248, sf598
- 8 Disc scraper. Unstratified, surface cleaning, sf27
- 9 Disc scraper, "thumbnail". Central pit/posthole, F205, sf549
- 10 Disc scraper, "thumbnail", invasive retouch. Central pits, 166/F167, sf471
- 11 Knife, blunted and notched, backed (abrupt retouch). Mound 3, medieval windmill mound, sf452
- 12 Knife, pressure flaked (plano-convex type). Mound 3, medieval windmill mound, sf177
- 13 Leaf arrowhead. Slot/gully, 192/F131, sf513
- 14 Leaf arrowhead (broken). Central pit, 173/F174, sf478
- 15 Transverse arrowhead, chisel. Barrow ditch, subsidence fill, F68, sf354
- 16 Transverse arrowhead, chisel. Southern pit complex, subsidence fill, 146, sf461
- 17 Transverse arrowhead, *petit tranchet*. Barrow ditch,

secondary fill, 249/F253, sf655

- 18 Ovate. Bifacial invasive retouch. Barrow ditch, final fill, 76/F66, sf314
- 19 Serrated blade (broken). Southern pit complex, 7, sf2
- 20 'Fabricator' (broken). Unstratified, surface cleaning, sf26
- 21 Notched flake. Unstratified, surface cleaning, sf23
- 22 Piercer. Formed between abruptly retouched notches. Unstratified, spoil heap

ANIMAL BONE

Virtually no bone was recovered from prehistoric contexts but this is largely accounted for by loss of bone in the neutral to acid soil conditions. It is therefore possible that evidence for the former presence of human skeletal material had been lost. The recovered pieces of unburnt bone all comprise fragments of cattle tooth enamel. Some fragments came from the lower fill of pit F167, while the other three examples are from the final and subsidence fills of the barrow ditch. A single fragment of burnt bone was recovered from pit F240 to the immediate north of the inserted causeway.

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Ruth Pelling

Six samples of charred plant remains were submitted to the Environmental Archaeology Laboratory in the University Museum, Oxford, for examination. Five consisted of wood charcoal extracted from samples submitted for radiocarbon dating. One sample consisted largely of charred nut shell fragments.

METHOD

Each charcoal sample was sieved through a 2mm mesh. The first ten fragments were examined from each, with the exception of sample 11, context 234, which contained only two fragments. Individual fragments of charcoal were fractured and examined in transverse section at magnifications of x20 and x40, and in tangential and radial longitudinal sections at x100 and x200. Identifications were based on reference to the key for European Hardwoods in Schweingruber (1978) and by comparison with modern comparative reference material held in the University Museum, Oxford. The sample of charred nut shell was examined in its entirety, at a magnification of x20.

RESULTS

The results are displayed in Table 2. Samples are recorded by context and feature, the two samples from pit F167 have been combined, and quantities are expressed as number of fragments.

Three *taxa* have been positively identified to generic level, *Quercus* sp. (oak), *Corylus* sp. (hazel) and *Rhamnus* sp. (buckthorn). The *Quercus* identified from pits F152 and F167 was identified as heartwood on the presence of tyloses. The *Quercus* from context 83 was from younger, possibly branch wood. The charcoal identified as cf *Prunus* sp. (blackthorn, plum, etc.) was most reminiscent of *Prunus*, but could not be positively identified as rays were frequently up to 8 cells wide,

Table 2: charred plant remains

Taxa/Context	166/177 F167	F152	234 F248	83 F66	F215
<i>Quercus</i> (Oak)	2	10	-	3	-
<i>Corylus</i> (Hazel)	8	-	1	-	-
<i>Rhamnus</i> (Buckthorn)	-	-	1	-	-
cf <i>Prunus</i> (Blackthorn, plum, etc)	-	-	-	-	8
<i>Pomoideae</i> (Hawthorn, apple, etc)	-	-	-	7	2
Indeterminate	6	-	-	-	-
<i>Corylus avellana</i> (Hazel nut shell)	40	-	-	-	-

slightly wider than would normally be expected. The *Pomoideae* group consists of the Pomaceous trees including hawthorn, apple and pear, which are not easily distinguished to generic level, so are recorded as a single group. The indeterminate charcoal from context 177 in F167 was too encrusted with minerals and badly distorted by charring to allow identification. All the nut shell fragments from F167 were identified as *Corylus avellana* (hazel).

DISCUSSION

The taxa represented in the samples are of deciduous trees or shrubs, some of which are characteristic of basic to neutral soils (Clapham et al, 1989), and are commonly found in British prehistoric contexts. *Rhamnus*, *Prunus* and certain of the Pomaceous trees are not very tolerant of shade. *Corylus* forms a common shrub layer within lowland oak woods. It is likely, therefore that the charcoal assemblage represents the utilization of thickets or woodland margins in the vicinity of the site. The *Quercus* heartwood identified from pits F167 and F152, could

have derived from matured timbers. The remaining charcoal fragments may have been derived from a variety of sources such as fuel, or the burning of structural or artefactual wood. *Corylus avellana* nut shell fragments are frequently recovered from Neolithic contexts (eg Moffet et al 1989). Hazel nut formed a significant part of the 'muesli' diet of early agricultural economies, along with other wild plant resources.

THE RADIOCARBON DATES

The results of the six radiocarbon determinations are catalogued below, Table 3. They were undertaken by Beta Analytic Inc., Miami, Florida, USA. They are standard radiometric determinations (Beta-84660 and Beta-89835 were given extended counting) with the exception of Beta-84662, a small sample dated by accelerator mass spectrometry. The calibration to calendar years is by the Pretoria Calibration Procedure program (Vogel et al 1993, Talma and Vogel 1993, and Stuiver et al 1993).

Comparative dates for other excavated and published Neolithic funerary monuments in Northamptonshire are also given (Table 4).

Table 3. Radiocarbon determinations

Lab No	Sample No	Sample and Context description	C14 age BP (bc)	cal BC	1 Sigma 2 Sigma
Beta-84661	TC95/569/F215	Wood charcoal, cf <i>Prunus</i> sp. and <i>Pomoideae</i> group. Pit F215 cutting final silting of the enclosing ditch above the causeway.	2700 ± 70 (750)	825	905-805 990-785
Beta-89835	TC95/361/83	Wood charcoal, <i>Pomoideae</i> group and <i>Quercus</i> sp. Branch wood. Deposit sealed by final silting of enclosing ditch, section F248.	2840 ± 80 (890)	990	1110-900 1250-820
Beta-89834	TC95/111/234	Wood charcoal, <i>Corylus</i> sp. and <i>Rhamnus</i> sp. Layer sealed by final silting of enclosing ditch, section F248.	2970 ± 70 (1020)	1170	1285-1045 1395-980
Beta-84659	TC95/431/F152	Wood charcoal, <i>Quercus</i> sp. heartwood (mature timbers?). Small pit, F152 in central area.	3610 + 90 (1660)	1945	2030-1885 2140-1755
Beta-84660	TC95/492/F167	Wood charcoal, <i>Corylus</i> sp. and <i>Quercus</i> sp. heartwood (mature timbers?). Pit F167 in central area with Mortlake Ware assemblage.	4720 + 90 (2770)	3510	3635-3365 3675-3335
Beta-84662	TC95/282/F25	Wood charcoal, unidentified. Primary silts of enclosing ditch F25.	6620 ± 60 (4270)	5215	5245-5065 5270-4985

Table 4. Radiocarbon determinations from other Neolithic funerary monuments in Northamptonshire

Site	Lab No	Context type	C14 age BP (bc)
Aldwinckle	Har - 1411	Bottom of inner ditch	4560 ± 70 (2610)
Grendon Area C	Har - 1495	The timber facade	4280 ± 70 (2330)
Grendon Area C	Har - 1497	The square ditch	4700 ± 130 (2750)
Grendon Area C	Har - 1498	Internal posthole	4950 ± 80 (3000)

ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY

by Tora Hylton

A total of 30 sherds of Romano-British pottery was recovered from the subsidence fills of the barrow ditch and from the ditch around the windmill mound. The assemblage is highly abraded and represents a small group of kitchen and table wares in local fabrics; Nene Valley Colourcoat and Greywares. The pottery dates to the third and fourth centuries AD, with the exception of a single grog-tempered rim sherd, from a bowl, which may be first or second century AD in date. Diagnostic sherds include a small Greyware flanged bowl and sherds from Colourcoat beakers, including two pedestal bases.

EARLY SAXON GRAVE GOODS

by Tora Hylton

The grave goods from F157 comprise 13 complete glass beads, and fragments of a further two, fragments of at least 2 fine silver wire rings, fragments of a silver pendant, and an iron knife (Fig 20). The beads and silver rings were scattered in a narrow linear zone 170mm long and terminating beside the pendant and skull stain. The arrangement was disturbed and the original pattern is uncertain, but the presence of pairs of identical beads certainly indicates that there had been some form of symmetrical arrangement.

Fragments of fine, circular-sectioned silver wire were recovered in two groups and in four instances fragments of wire were still threaded through beads (a blue annular, a turquoise biconical, a brown annular and a turquoise fluted bead). The same technique was used on a necklace from Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Hyslop 1963, Grave No 32, 179), and it has been suggested by others (Lethbridge 1931, 76) that the rings were in fact sewn on to the dress and the beads suspended from them. The well preserved rings from Chamberlains Barn, demonstrate that silver rings were often joined together with a thread, which also suspended a bead in the centre of each ring. These parallels would suggest that the Tansor group may have comprised two loops of beads, with a similar combination and arrangement, each attached to a wire ring. Three beads, two yellow and one turquoise, are fluted. This type are often associated with silver rings and at the Buckland cemetery, Dover, Kent the two examples recovered occur in graves dated to AD 650-700 (Evison 1987).

The fragmentary silver pendant lay at the end of the line of beads and rings. Stylistically it is simple, decorated with a centrally placed boss and repousse motif. Such objects are not uncommon, amongst many others, examples are known from the Buckland cemetery, Dover, Kent (Evison 1987, Grave 67, 3a/b, 4), West Stow, Suffolk (West 1985, fig 33.1) and Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire (Hyslop 1963, figs 13,b and 17, h). Like the presence of coloured beads and wire rings, the use of silver pendants is said to belong to a class of jewellery which characterises later cemeteries (Ibid 1963, 220).

The knife had been worn at the waist or suspended on a belt, like five of the burials from Westgarth Gardens, Bury St Edmunds (West 1988, 8). Knives are probably the commonest objects found in Anglo-Saxon graves (Hirst 1985, 88). This example is recognisably Saxon in date, with an angled back and straight cutting edge. It is typical of Evisons Type 5 (Evison 1987, 113), which she assigns a seventh century date.

CATALOGUE OF GRAVE GOODS (Fig 20)

The silver pendant (a)

The largest surviving piece measures 16x8mm. As excavated it appeared to comprise two plates of sheet silver separated by a thin layer of organic material, although this effect may have been produced by dislocated fragments from a single plate. The upper plate is decorated with a raised central boss (diameter: 6.0mm). Other fragments appear to be decorated with a punched motif, but the form of decoration is indeterminate. Two fragments of a silver ring found near the pendant may indicate that it had been suspended from a silver ring. Estimated diameter: c 40mm

The Silver rings (b)

Thirteen fragments of fragile and slightly corroded, circular sectioned silver wire (diameter: 1.5mm) represent at least two rings. They are undecorated and taper slightly towards the terminals, two of which are hooked while another has a piece of wire coiled round it. This suggests that the rings may have been secured either by 'sliding' knots (Hyslop 1963, fig 8) or hooks. Estimated diameter of rings: c 20mm

The beads (c)

13 beads were recovered intact. They comprise, in illustration order, nine opaque glass beads - 2 yellow fluted; 2 turquoise biconical, one with brown striations; 2 green annular; 1 turquoise fluted; 1 red brown globular; and 1 white annular, with pale blue spots - and four translucent glass beads - 1 brown annular (second possible example fragmented); 2 blue annular, one still containing a fragment of silver wire (third example fragmented);

The knife (d)

Whittle tang knife, iron. Back of blade rises up then angles down to tip. Incomplete, end of tang missing. cutting edge horizontal. Blade - Length: 124mm Width: 17mm Thickness: 3mm

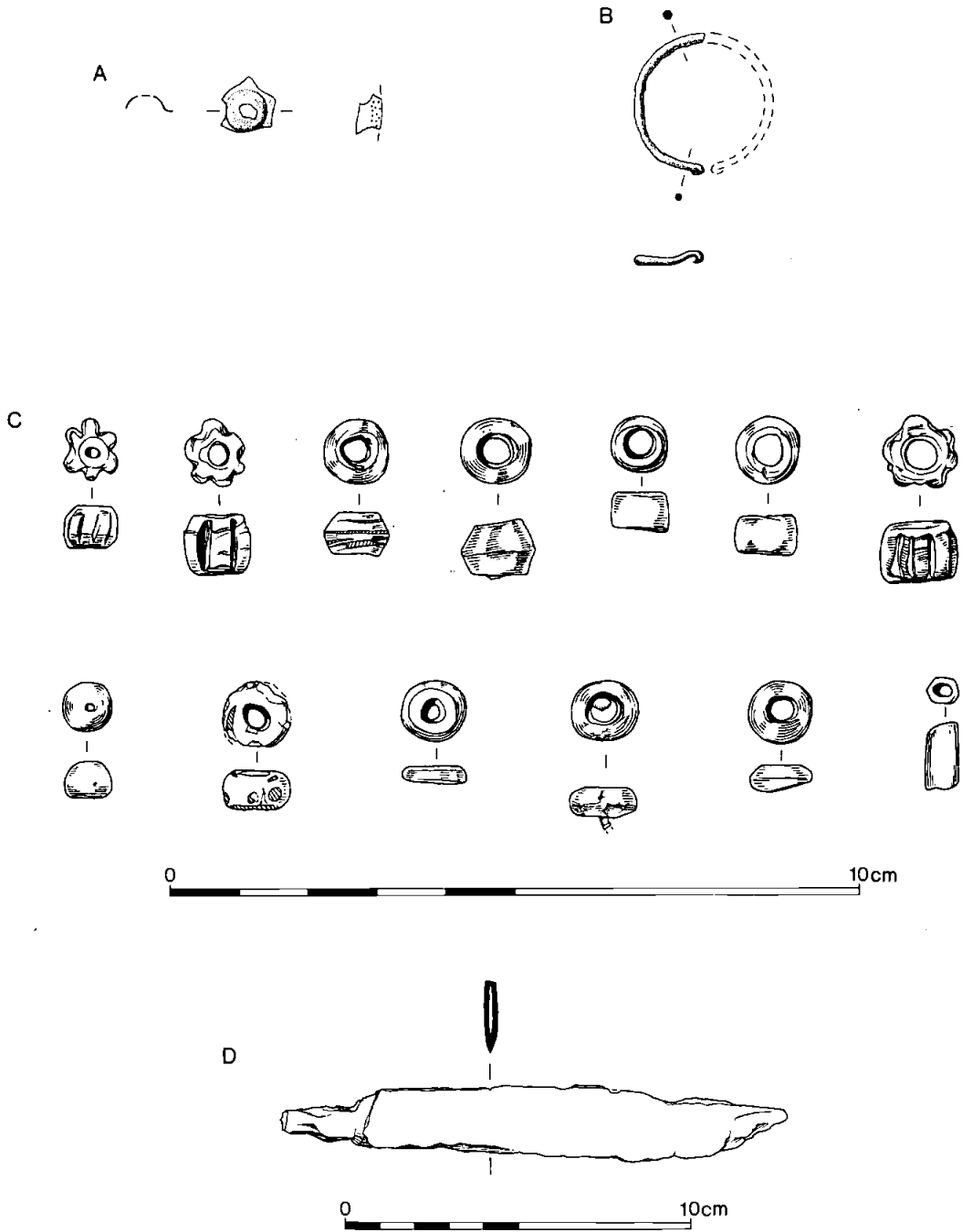


Fig 20 The early Saxon grave goods, F157

EARLY/ MIDDLE SAXON POTTERY
by Paul Blinkhorn

A single complete, although damaged, accessory vessel was recovered from pit F203. It was friable and has been conserved with a 10% solution of PVA (Fig 21). The surfaces of the vessel are generally brown, but areas of the outer body below the shoulder are quite blackened, suggesting that it had been used in a domestic context. The fabric had few visible inclusions, although surface voids are suggestive of leached-out oolitic limestone. Some of the early Saxon pottery from nearby Stoke Doyle Road, Oundle (Pearson 1994) was made in such a fabric, and medieval pottery with oolitic fabrics is common at Tansor.

The fact that the vessel is undecorated is in keeping with the seventh century date suggested by the grave goods from the adjacent burial, F157, as plain pottery was generally the norm at that time. The size of the vessel is worthy of comment. Julian Richards' (1987) analysis of cremation urns of the early Saxon period has indicated that the size of such vessels was generally related to the age of the individual in contained. There is no definite evidence that the same applies to accessory vessels from inhumations, but it may be significant that this pot is relatively small, and the dimensions of the grave indicate that the burial was that of an infant.

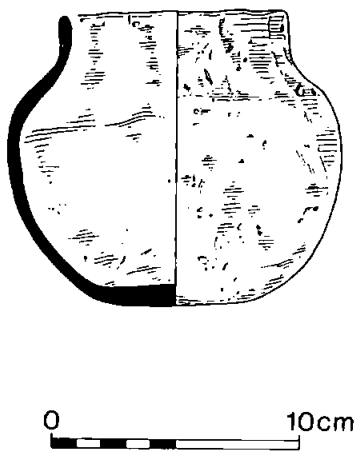


Fig 21 The accessory vessel from F203

THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY
by Paul Blinkhorn

The excavation produced 165 sherds of Roman and later pottery, total weight 3.236kg, the majority coming from mound 3, the windmill mound. The occurrence was as follows:

Fabric	CTS Code	No	Weight (gm)
Early / Middle Saxon		2	8
Shelly Coarseware	330	37	807
Lyveden/Staniion 'B' Ware	320	71	2096
Lyveden/Staniion 'D' Ware	322	1	1
Post-Medieval	1000	24	210

There is little doubt that the medieval contexts date to c AD 1225-1250 (ceramic phase Ph2/0, Blinkhorn in print), as the only medieval pottery types are Lyveden/Staniion 'B' glazed ware and Shelly Coarseware. The only later pottery types are a single, very small sherd of Lyveden/Staniion 'D' ware and some post-medieval wares. The structural features of the mill, the mound and cross-tree slots, and the lower fills of the ditch, contained only pottery of Ph2/0 date. The absence of later medieval wares such as Potterspurry Ware (Mynard 1970) and Raunds-type Reduced Ware (Blinkhorn forthcoming) must be for chronological reasons, as such wares are common occurrences at contemporary sites in north-eastern Northamptonshire.

The pottery from the windmill mound ditches is from primary deposits, with fragments of perhaps no more than ten different vessels (3 shelly coarseware) present. The four rimsherds had a mean EVE of 20% complete. All the Lyveden/Staniion 'B' sherds originated from green-glazed jugs with slip decoration, all the Shelly Coarseware sherds were jars.

Illustrated vessels (Fig 22)

- 1 Lyveden/Staniion 'B' ware jug. Grey fabric with buff surfaces. Patchy yellowish-green glaze with slip-stripes, same as 2. Context 48, mound 3, primary ditch fill
- 2 Lyveden/Staniion 'B' ware jug. Grey fabric with pale orange-brown outer surface. Patchy green glaze with white slip stripes which appear yellow through the glaze. Context 48, mound 3, primary ditch fill,
- 3 Shelly Coarseware. Grey fabric with orange-red surfaces, outer heavily sooted. Surface inclusions leached out. Context 48, mound 3, primary ditch fill

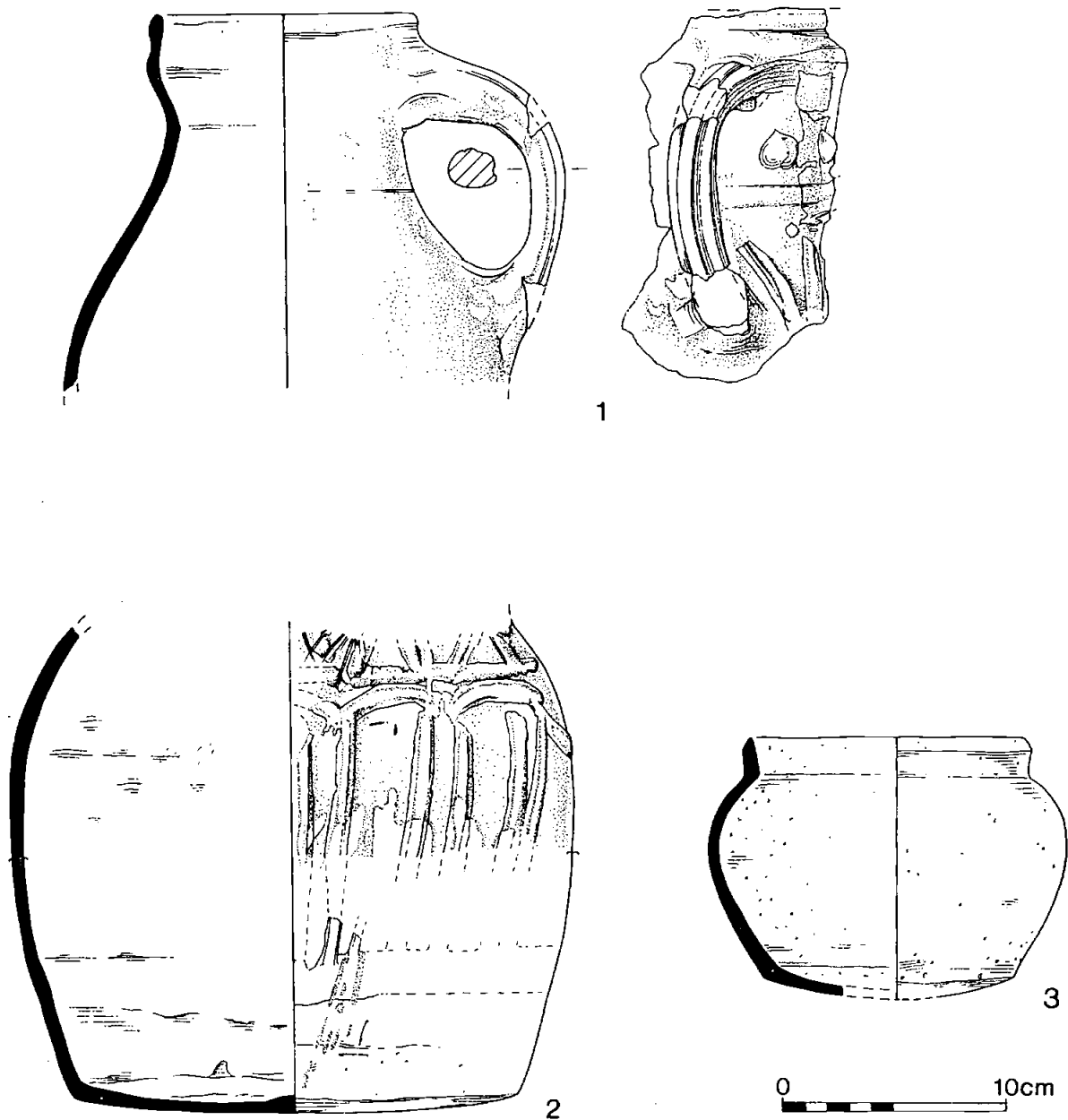


Fig 22 The medieval pottery

OTHER MEDIEVAL FINDS
by Tora Hylton

There are two other objects of medieval date. A copper alloy prick-spur goad was recovered from the upper fill of the subsidence hollow over the barrow ditch of mound 1. It has a quadrangular lozenge-shaped head, a style that was common in the 12/13th centuries; similar examples are known from Thetford (Ellis 1984, fig 141, 275). A whetstone (micaceous schist) was found within the final fill of the windmill mound ditch; they were traded from Scandinavia in the 11-14th centuries and were very much in use during the medieval period.

POST MEDIEVAL FINDS
by Tora Hylton

The assemblage of post-medieval finds comprises objects of iron, copper alloy, lead, glass, ceramic, and stone, together with a few clay tobacco-pipe stems. Many of the objects are of indeterminate form and are of little value for dating purposes. Iron objects from the metalled track include four horseshoes of eighteenth/nineteenth century date; two are fullered with 6/7 square-holes, some still retaining nails with square heads. In addition there is a small number of structural nails. Twenty six objects, predominantly of iron and glass, were recovered from the upper fills of the windmill mound ditch. Much of the glass is recent bottle glass. The only copper alloy object is a gilded watch-winder (key) with ornate openworked bow. Some post-medieval pottery, including material of eighteenth and nineteenth century date was also recovered. Objects from other parts of the site include a fragment of an iron knife blade and an incomplete sandstone hone with a possible knife point sharpening groove.

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