Iron Age and Roman settlement at Mallard Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire

by

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with contributions by
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SUMMARY

Late Iron Age and early Roman enclosures and a Roman walled enclosure were investigated in an open area excavation. The small, square Iron Age enclosure was surrounded by a deep ditch with a narrow western entrance, conforming to the Wootton Hill type, but it was probably part of a more extensive settlement. The enclosure contained several deep storage pits, some of which held deposits of selected finds including a quern and antler working debris. The enclosure was in use from the 1st century BC to the mid-1st century AD, when it was encompassed within a more complex system of shallower ditches that formed a new enclosure. Nearby domestic occupation is indicated by the presence of numerous shallow pits. The ditched enclosure was abandoned before the mid-2nd century AD, when a walled enclosure was created to the south. The lengths of heavily robbed stone wall formed the northern side of a rectilinear enclosure that would probably have contained a high-status building, perhaps a villa. A T-shaped oven and a well to the north may have been contemporary ancillary features. The walled enclosure was levelled in the 4th century or later. The apparent main focus of the later Roman settlement within the walled enclosure has been largely lost to 20th century quarrying.

INTRODUCTION

An open area excavation of an Iron Age and Roman settlement was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land off Mallard Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire in 2001 (Figs 1 and 2; NGR SP 8536 6458). The work formed part of the planning requirement by Wellingborough Borough Council for the construction of three industrial units. The excavation followed a desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation, which had established the presence of important archaeology on the northern part of the site (Atkins and Masters 2000).

The archaeological work has been funded by Spacewall Ltd with Mike Dawson of CgMs Consulting acting as project manager on behalf of the developer. Myk Flitcroft, Planning Officer at Northamptonshire Heritage, monitored all the stages of works and gave useful advice. The archaeological works were managed by Sean Steadman, and the fieldwork was directed by Rob Atkins. The team of project assistants who worked on the various phases of work includes Simon Carlyle, Ian Fisher, Jacqueline Harding, Steve Hayward, Richard Jones, Danny McAree, Chris Naisbitt, Rob Smith and Edmund Taylor. A first draft of the report was prepared by Rob Atkins under the supervision of Sean Steadman. The final report has been compiled by Andy Chapman. The illustrations were drawn by Jacqueline Harding.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

A hundred metres to the north of the excavation, the digging of a pipe trench was observed during 1973 (Fig 2). Six probable Iron Age ditches were uncovered and in one area Roman pottery was observed (Harper 1974, 83). It is uncertain what

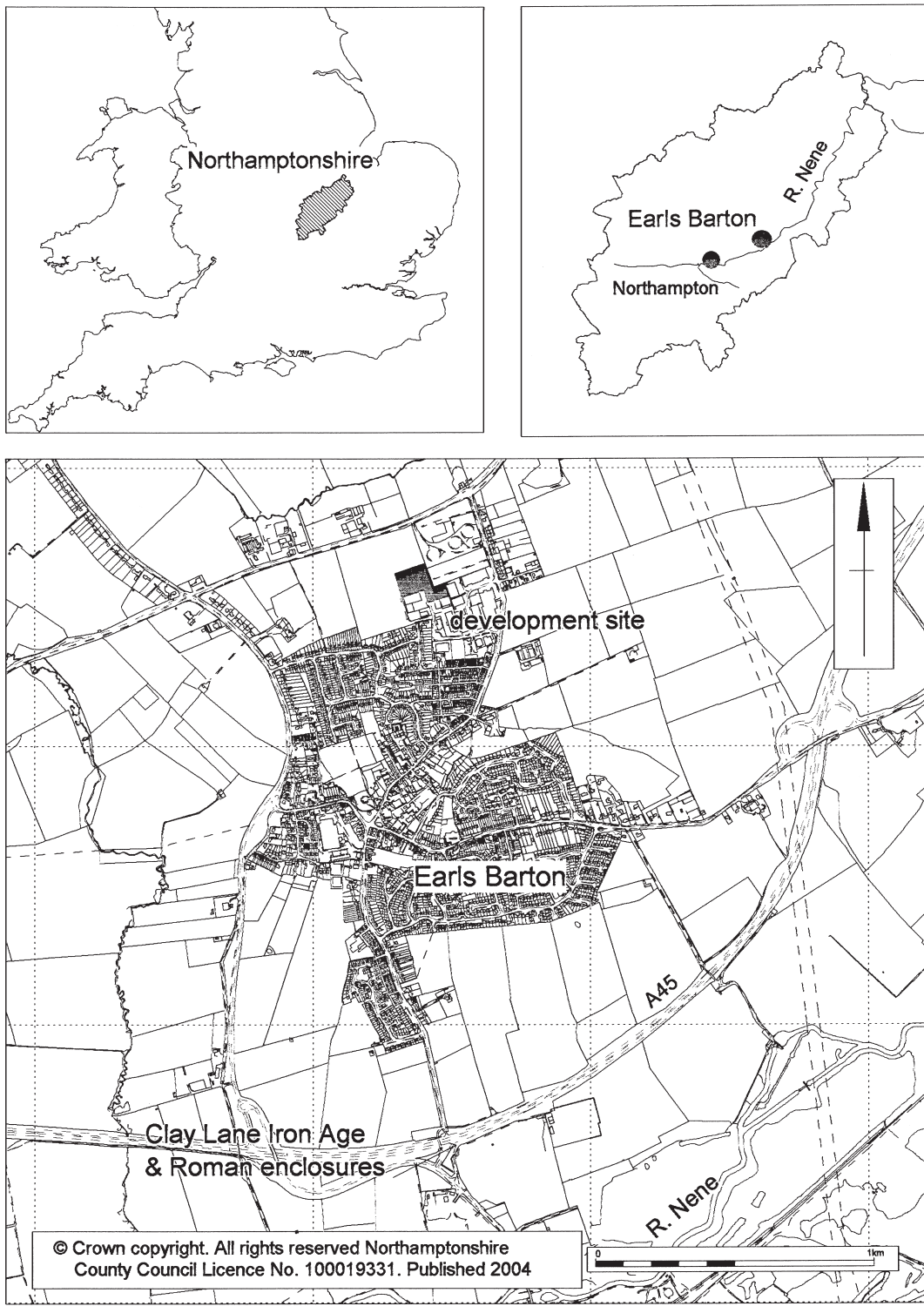

Fig 1 Site location

significance should be attached to these finds as the surrounding area produced no associated crop marks in air photographs and there has been no fieldwalking or geophysical survey of this area, but they would appear to have been outlying parts of the excavated settlement. An early 20th century ironstone quarry lay along the western and southern sides of the study area (Fig 2; Tonks 1989, 140-150), and the excavations have shown that this had removed significant archaeological remains and probably the core of the Roman settlement area, which may have been a villa. There is no record of any archaeological finds being made during the excavation of the quarry.

Generally, the Nene Valley is known to be rich in archaeological sites of all periods. A plethora of Iron Age and Roman farmsteads or larger settlements have been recorded through previous excavations. Within Earls Barton parish, there were major excavations to the south of the village in the early 1980s at Clay Lane, in advance of construction of the A45 bypass, which have only been partially reported (Fig 1; Windell 1982). Recent work to the immediate west of this has located further extensive areas of Iron Age and Roman settlement to both the north and south of the A45 (Walsh & Maull 2003). Fieldwork in advance of gravel extraction during the 1990s to the south of the river below Wollaston, which lies on the valley side opposite Earls Barton, has recorded both Iron Age and Roman farmsteads, no more than 300m to 400m apart on average, and including a Roman vineyard that would have formed part of a villa estate (Meadows forthcoming). On higher ground to the east at Doddington an extensive Iron Age settlement covering 4 hectares has also been excavated (Thomas and Enright 2003).

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
by Rob Atkins with Steve Critchley

The site lies on the periphery of an industrial estate on the northern outskirts of Earls Barton (Fig 1). It is near the top of a south facing valley side, sloping gradually from 97.5 to 96m OD. The underlying geology of the site has been mapped by the Geological Survey of Great Britain as Lower Middle Jurassic, Inferior Oolite sediments of the Northampton Sand and Grantham Formation, formerly the Lower Estuarine Series (BGS 1989, sheet 186). The excavation uncovered Ironstone bedrock except in the western portion of the site where it was overlain by pale yellow-brown sands, probably filling a post-glacial fluvial/hillwash channel. There are limestone outcrops recorded a few hundred metres to the west of the excavation area.

METHODOLOGY

THE DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

The excavation site is more than 500m north of the historic core of Earls Barton. It therefore lies to the north of medieval village but within its associated field system. The earliest map evidence, the 1838 Inclosure Map, shows the area within fields. In 1913 the landlowner, William Chetwode Whitworth, leased the site to the Earls Barton Iron Ore Company Ltd for quarrying (Tonks 1989, 140-150; SMR record 8406/1/1). In the event, only the extreme western side of the site was quarried, and the remainder was untouched and had become fields again by about 1930. It recent times, with the expansion of Earls Barton, the site had been a caravan holding park.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
by Peter Masters

Prior to trial trench evaluation a geophysical survey was carried out using a Geoscan Research FM36 Fluxgate Gradiometer. The survey was limited to the northern part of the site as the remainder was inaccessible due either to large amounts of dumped iron and other materials or to areas of dense undergrowth. This survey located the Iron Age enclosure and identified the presence of pits within it. It also located parts of the later system of linear ditches to the south of the enclosure (Fig 2).

TRIAL EXCAVATION

Four trial trenches were excavated in March 2000 to investigate the rectangular enclosure detected by geophysical survey as well as other parts of the development area which had been inaccessible for the geophysical survey. The trial trench across the main enclosure confirmed the results of the geophysical survey and identified further features including gullies, pits and a possible posthole. A trench to south located Roman features but two trenches to the south-east contained no archaeological remains.

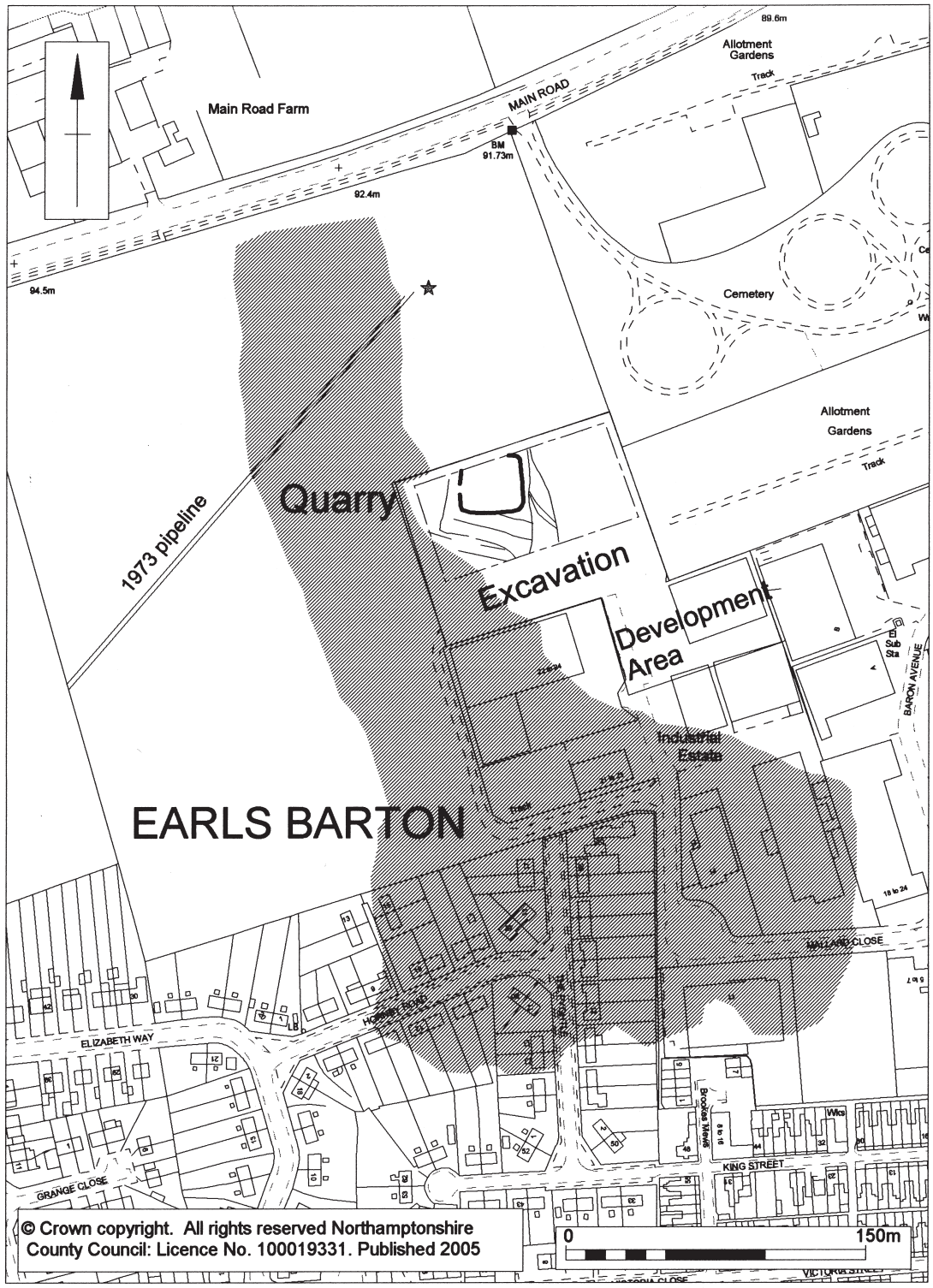

Fig 2 The excavated area

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

The open area excavation was carried out in January and February 2001. A rectangular area covering 105m by 50m was opened in the northern part of the site to take in the area which the geophysics and trial trenching had shown to contain archaeological features (Fig 2). A 360º excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to remove topsoil and subsoil.

The site was planned at 1:50 and sections were drawn at 1:10. Pits were sectioned, and three Iron Age pits that produced larger finds assemblages were fully excavated. The ditch system was also extensively sectioned. Each discrete feature and layer was given a unique context number and was described on a pro-forma record sheet. Bulk environmental soil samples, of 20 and 30litres, were recovered from well-dated features. Pottery, animal bone, ceramic and stone building materials, fired clay and shell was recovered as bulk finds allocated to context. Other finds were individually numbered. Steve Critchley surveyed the site several times using a metal detector, and found all the coins as well as several other objects.

THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

SUMMARY OF SITE CHRONOLOGY

The sequence of development is summarised below (Table 1). The broad pottery dating for the purely late Iron Age assemblages from the lower fills of the Iron Age enclosure ditch and some of the internal pits is 2nd-1st century BC. However, the form of the site and the associated activity seems most likely to have occurred within a limited time span, and there is evident continuity within the pattern of usage and filling of the internal storage pits. It is therefore suggested that the origin of the site is most likely to lie within the 1st century BC, with occupation running through continuously to the mid-1st century AD. It is further suggested that there may have been a maximum duration of settlement of no more than a century. The mixed assemblages containing both late Iron Age pottery and earlier Belgic forms came from the secondary and upper ditch fills, and some pits, indicating that the later use of the enclosure spanned this transition phase.

The early Roman ditch systems show a close respect for the plan of the Iron Age enclosure, indicating that the new development was set within continuity of broad form, and presumably of function. The new enclosure system was in use through the 1st century AD and was probably abandoned in the early 2nd century. Unfortunately, the excavations were too limited to locate the full extent of the Roman enclosure systems.

Similarly, what appears to be the core of the later Roman settlement to the south, which was apparently set within a walled enclosure, had been largely lost to quarrying. This walled enclosure was constructed in the mid-2nd century and probably contained a high status domestic range, perhaps a villa. The presence of a well and a T-shaped drying oven show that in this later phase the northern area was serving ancillary functions set apart from the main domestic focus. The precinct wall appears to have been systematically levelled in the 4th century AD, marking the demise of perhaps 400 years of continuous occupation.

Table 1: Summary of site chronology

Period/phase	Description
Late Iron Age Enclosure 1st century BC- to mid 1st century AD	Construction of square enclosure and use and filling of deep storage pits
Late Iron Age/early Roman settlement mid 1st century to early 2nd century AD	New enclosure system and scattered pits (respecting position of IA enclosure)
Roman settlement Mid 2nd century-4th century AD	Formation and use of walled enclosure. Well and T-shaped oven
Later activity medieval 20th century	 Site lies within medieval field system Roman settlement partly lost to quarrying

THE LATE IRON AGE ENCLOSURE (1st CENTURY BC TO MID-1st CENTURY AD)

ISOLATED DITCHES

The earliest features appear to have pre-dated the digging of the main enclosure ditch. A shallow gully (430) ran north to south for over 10m along the inner edge of the western arm of the enclosure ditch (Fig 3). At the south-western corner of the enclosure a short length of shallow ditch (335) ran westward, but its relationship to the enclosure ditch was not securely established and this may even have been part of a late recut linking the enclosure with the early Roman ditch systems to the west.

THE ENCLOSURE

A broad, deep ditch enclosed a sub-square area measuring 25m east-west, an area of 0.06ha (Fig 3). There was a single entrance on the western side, which was 3.0m wide and lay just south of centre, but there was no formal gateway marked by post-pits (Plate 1). Although there was no clear evidence for an internal bank, no features of Iron Age date were found within 2.0-2.5m of the ditch, suggesting that there may have been a narrow bank, perhaps using large blocks of ironstone and limestone to form steep revetments. Some of this material was later thrown back into the ditch, with a major dump in the northern entrance terminal, see below. The occurrence of quantities of limestone is of interest since this must have been especially imported as the ditch only cut ironstone bedrock.

Plate 1 General view of Iron Age enclosure, looking east through entrance

The V-shaped ditch was 2.8-3.4m wide by 1.80-1.95m deep, tapering to a narrow base. It was sectioned in four places (Plate 2), and also at the entrance terminals (Fig 4, S.82 and S.91). The lowest 0.50-0.80m of the fills mostly comprised rapid silting containing some small ironstone pieces, and in general the steep sides suggest that it was not open to any depth for a great length of the time. Late Iron Age, pre-Belgic, pottery dating from the 2nd -1st centuries BC, was recovered from the lowest fills.

The secondary fills were a complex mixture of layers of sandy

Plate 2 The Iron Age enclosure ditch, looking west (315)

loams containing varying quantities of small ironstone pieces. Some of these also contained mixed assemblages of late Iron Age and earlier Belgic pottery, along with animal bone and a little charred grain and chaff. The pottery was mainly recovered from around the south-eastern corner where in one section there was a distinctive charcoal rich layer within the secondary fills (layer 445, ditch 443). A large deposit of fuel ash slag came from the final fill on the western arm to the north of the terminal (layer 15, ditch 24). The overall appearance is of the localised dumping of domestic debris at irregular intervals around the ditch circuit.

Very few finds came from the entrance terminals, but it appears that regular scouring had kept at least the northern terminal open to near the end of the life of the settlement (Fig 4, S.91). Above the primary fills and spanning the entire width of the ditch there was a 0.75m deep dump of stone, mostly large limestone and some ironstone pieces, measuring up to 250mm in length, and also including half of a Millstone Grit beehive quern (Fig 13, 3). This material may have come in as a single deposit, perhaps when a revetment to an internal bank was levelled into the ditch.

Around the rest of the circuit the final filling of the 0.50m deep hollow above the secondary fills also contained much stone rubble, although not including so many large fragments. The rubble fills quite a steep-sided hollow, showing that the silting had not reached a stable level prior to this. This rubble may therefore also have derived from a single act of bank levelling. The upper fills contained some wheel-thrown Roman pottery dated to the mid-1st century AD, as well as a Denarius of Tiberius (AD 14-37).

THE PITS AND POSTHOLES

Much of the available space within the enclosure was occupied by numerous pits. There would certainly not have been enough free space for it to contain a roundhouse of 10m diameter, especially if there had been an internal bank as well. In fact, it would only have been possible to fit in a structure some 5m in diameter either to the south, over the central scatter of postholes or in the north-eastern corner. It is therefore possible that the enclosure was only occupied by the pit groups, and any associated domestic buildings would have lain elsewhere perhaps within further contemporary enclosures that have not

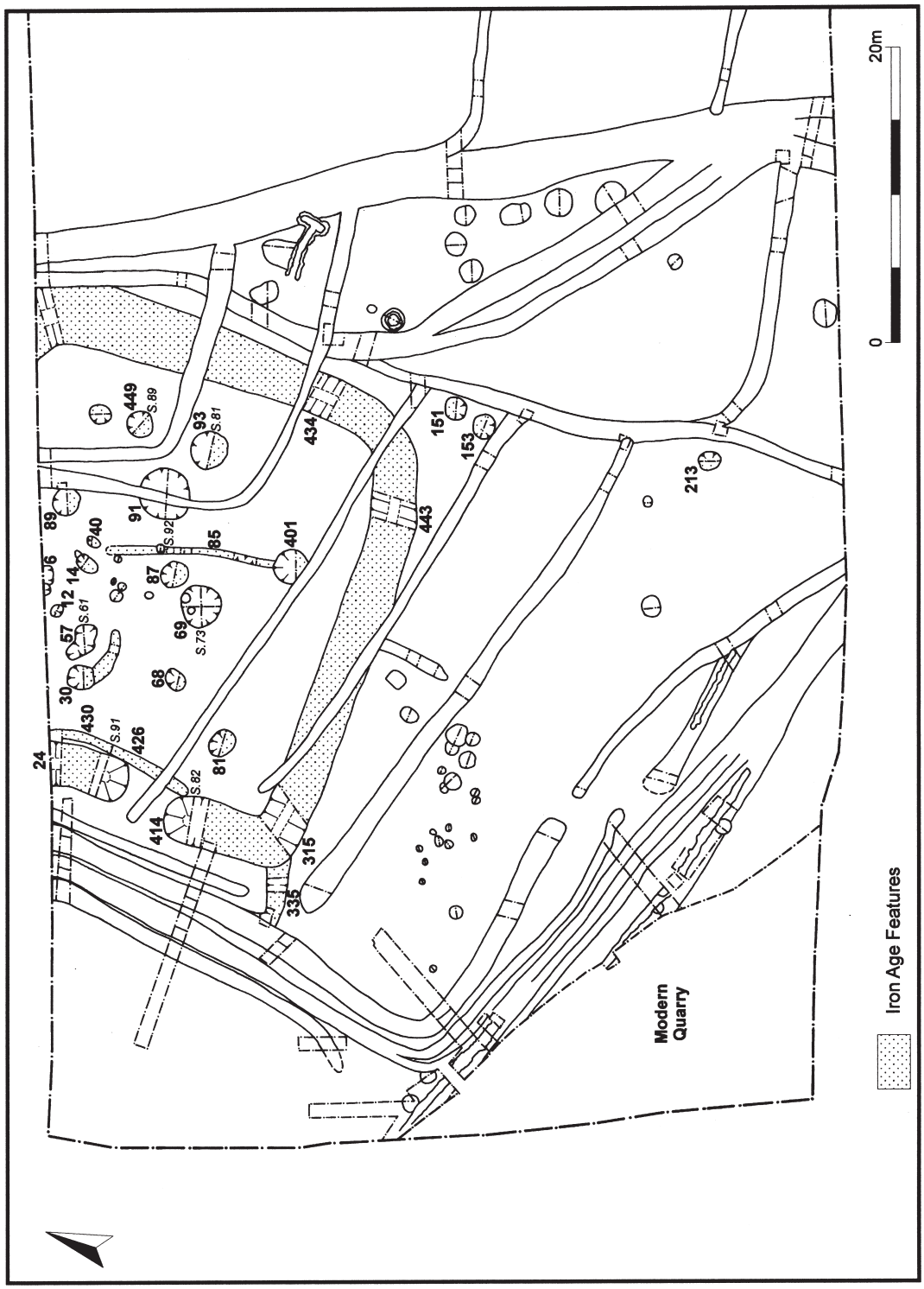

Fig 3 The late Iron Age enclosure

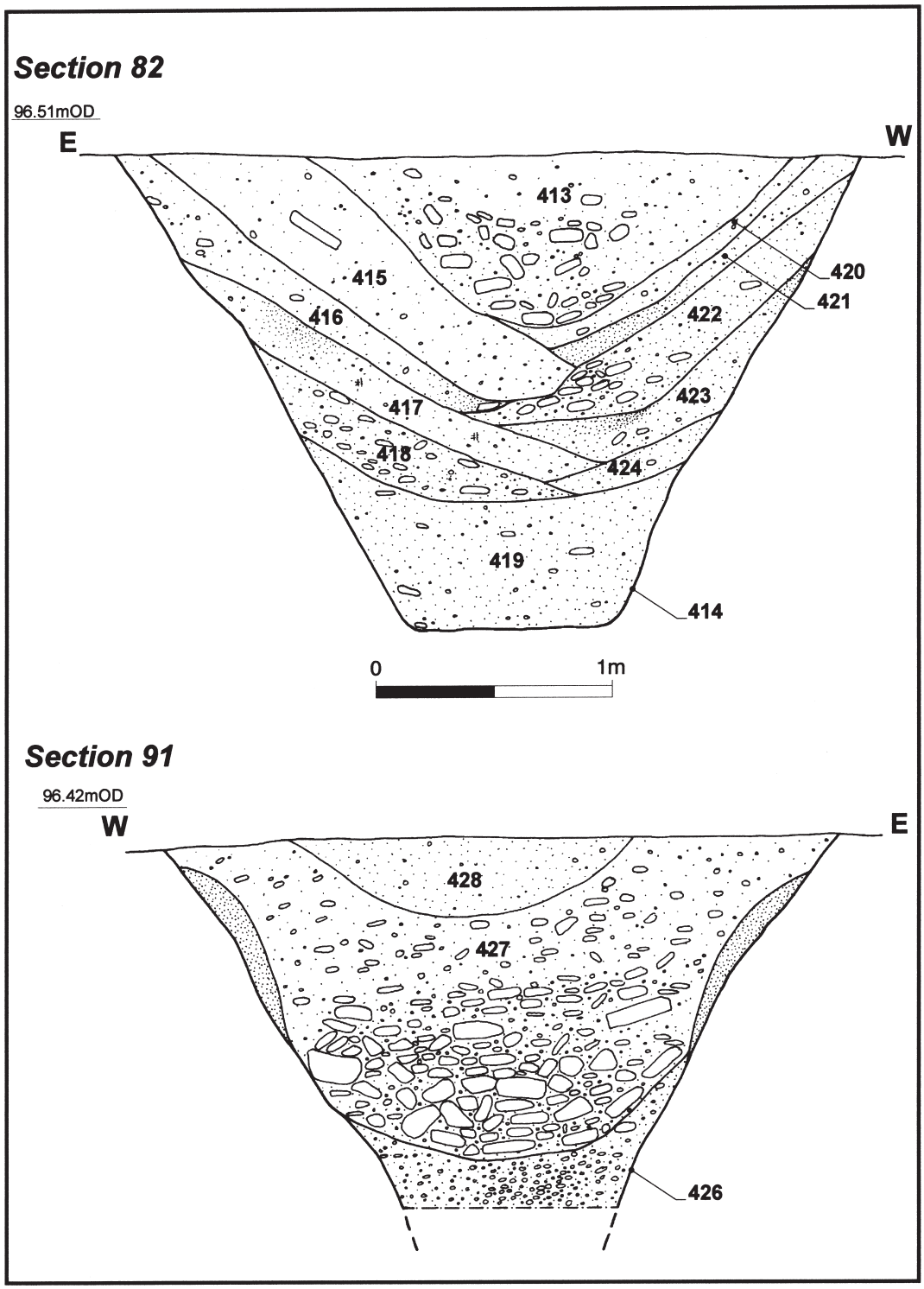

Fig 4 Enclosure ditch sections, 414 and 426

been located. One possibility is that the excavated enclosure was subsidiary to a domestic centre to the south and on the same area later occupied by the Roman walled enclosure.

In the centre of the enclosure there was an irregular scatter of postholes or small pits forming no coherent pattern (Fig 3). Two of these were cut into the fill of a late pit (69), and another cut a linear gully (85). This gully was 0.50-0.65m wide and 0.30m deep and ran north to south for 13m. Its fill contained a considerable amount of late Iron Age pottery (73 sherds weighing 2,604g) and although it was recorded as cutting the fills of pit (401), suggesting a later date, the similarity of the fills leaves this relationship uncertain. It is possible that it may have acted as a drain for a small central structure sitting over the posthole scatter.

In the south-eastern quarter of the enclosure there were four large storage pits that produced only late Iron Age pottery (91, 93, 449 and 87), and two that also contained Belgic forms (69 and 401). However, although the two largest pits (91 and 69) had differing pottery assemblages, both produced very similar antler working debris. It is therefore suggested that the use of the pits most probably occupied a single phase of use within a relatively short period of time that spanned the introduction of the new pottery styles.

The pits were all steep-sided and flat-bottomed storage pits. Pit 91 was 3.5m in diameter and in excess of 1.65m deep, it was not bottomed (Fig 5, S.92). The lower fill contained much smaller ironstone rubble, but above this there was a distinctive layer of dark grey soil, rich in comminuted charcoal (411). The upper fill was a dump of large limestone rubble (410), while the relatively stone-free final fill (92) contained half a beehive quern (Fig 13, 4). Several pieces of sawn antler tines were scattered through the secondary fills (411, 410 and 92) perhaps suggesting that these layers were all deposited within a short space of time.

The adjacent pit (93) was slightly smaller, at 2.3m in diameter and in excess of 1.4m deep (Fig 5, S.81 and Plate 3). The lower fill, 94, was rich in comminuted charcoal, while the secondary fills contained a massive dumped deposit of limestone and ironstone slabs and blocks (407), tipped in from the eastern side, where the internal bank may have stood. To the east there was a smaller pit (449), which was 1.6m in diameter by 1.25m deep, with near vertical sides and a flat bottom (Fig 6, S.89). The primary fill contained comminuted charcoal (452), while the final fill (450) contained some large slabs of limestone. To the west, pit (87) was 1.6m diameter by 0.9m deep with near vertical sides and a flat bottom. It had a fairly homogeneous fill (88) of grey brown silty sand containing some small stone fragments and sherds from a globular bowl.

Plate 3 Iron Age pit (93)

All of these pits also produced some pottery and animal bone, but not in exceptional quantities. The most significant assemblage came from pit (449), where the primary and secondary fills contained shreds from a scored ware vessel, a globular bowl and a sherd with curvilinear La Tene decoration.

Pit (69), which contained some earlier Belgic pottery, was 2.3m in diameter and 1.65m deep with steep edges and a flat base (Fig 6, S.73). The lowest 0.75m of the fill comprised clean loose small ironstone pieces with few finds, implying that the bottom half of the pit was deliberately backfilled. Above this there was a thin grey charcoal flecked loam, less than 0.1m thick, (392). Immediately above this, at the base of secondary fill (385), there was a near complete shed antler from a mature stag, with two tines sawn off. Two further sawn antler tines also came from this layer of mixed sandy loams and stone rubble, along with some pottery and animal bone. This fill was sealed by a further thin layer of grey ashy material with charcoal (384). The final fill was a 0.5m thick dump of limestone rubble (383). To the south, pit (401) was 2.2m in diameter by 0.60m deep, with steep sides and a flat bottom. It had a fairly homogeneous fill of grey brown sand containing frequent small pieces of ironstone.

In the north-western part of the enclosure there was a group of smaller pits. Pit 30, at the western end of the group, was the most similar to the eastern pits, at 1.5m in diameter by 1.3m deep, with vertical sides and a flat bottom. The primary and final fills were both dark soils, with the final fill also containing quantities of ironstone and limestone. The remainder of the fill was clean redeposited natural sands and small ironstone fragments. It produced few finds apart from some animal bone from the final fill.

Pit (57) was probably a pair of intercut pits (Fig 6, S.61). It was 0.6m deep and the fill of brown silty sand contained a primary pottery assemblage of thick-walled sherds from a large storage vessel or vessels (104 sherds weighing 8,260g). It also contained a possible piece of antler working waste, a complete saddle quern, 70% of all fired clay from the site (1,095g) and a single lump of iron slag, possibly from the lining of a smithing hearth. This seems to represent one quick episode of localised filling. It may be noted that this pit lay close to the length of enclosure ditch (24) that contained a dump of fuel ash slag in its final fill. Together, these deposits may indicate that there had been a concentration of events in this quarter of the enclosure involving intense heating, and apparently including at least some iron smithing. Another nearby pit (6) was 1.2m long and 0.45m deep, but the fill of grey brown friable loamy sand contained relatively few finds. Pit (89), at the eastern end of the northern group, was 0.95m in diameter and 0.35m deep, with steep sides and a flat bottom.

The pits outside the Iron Age enclosure were typically much shallower, and the majority can be dated to the later Roman settlement. However, a more substantial pit beyond the south-eastern corner of the Iron Age enclosure, (153) was 1.6m in diameter by 1.3m deep, with vertical sides and a flat bottom (Fig 3). It contained a fairly homogeneous fill, with some distinct lenses of charcoal rich soils in the lower fill, and also produced a small assemblage of late Iron Age pottery. An adjacent pit (151) was of the same diameter but only 0.35m deep. It seems likely that these were both of Iron Age date.

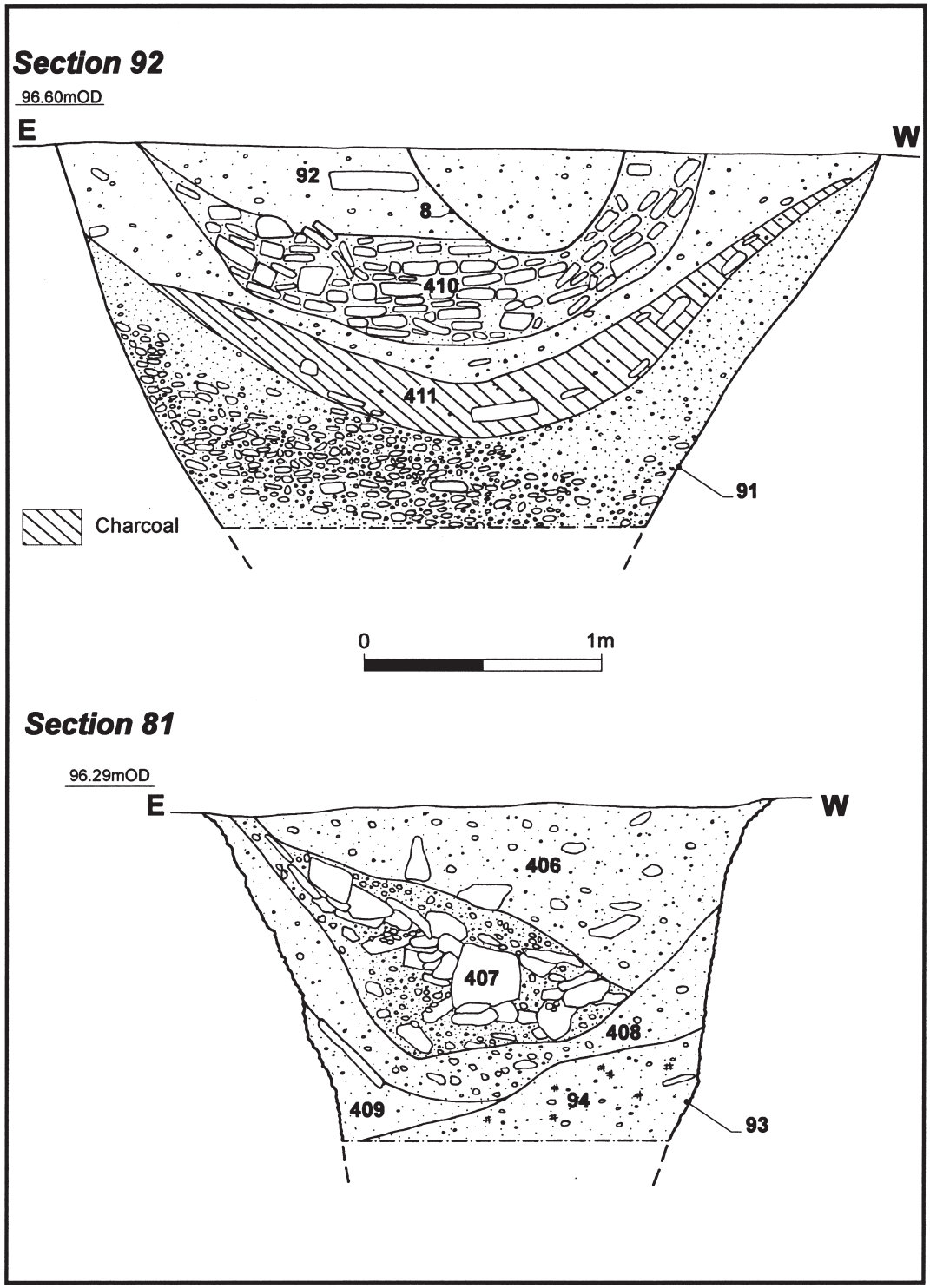

Fig 5 Sections of internal pits, 91 and 93

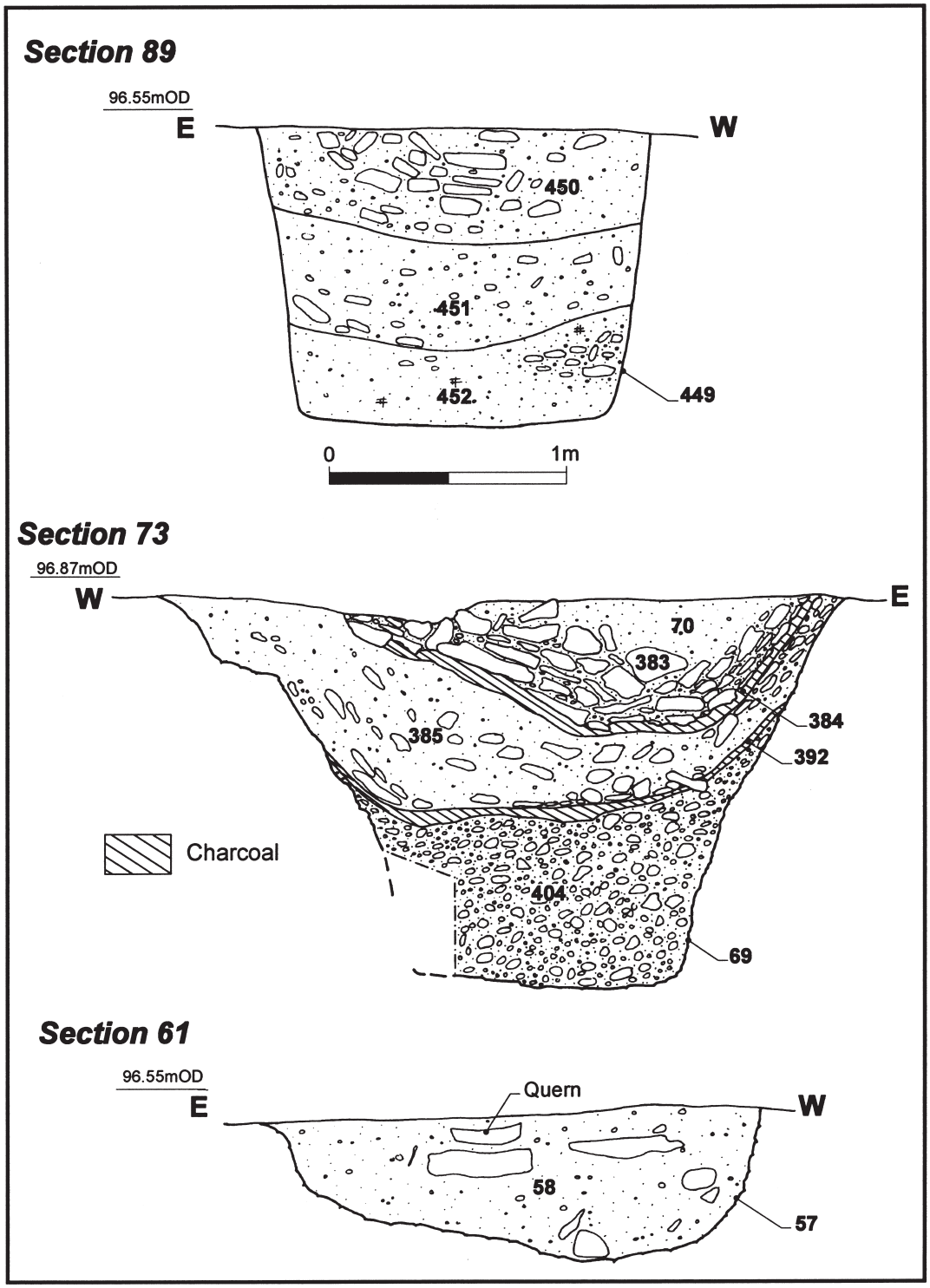

Fig 6 Sections of internal pits, 449, 57 and 69

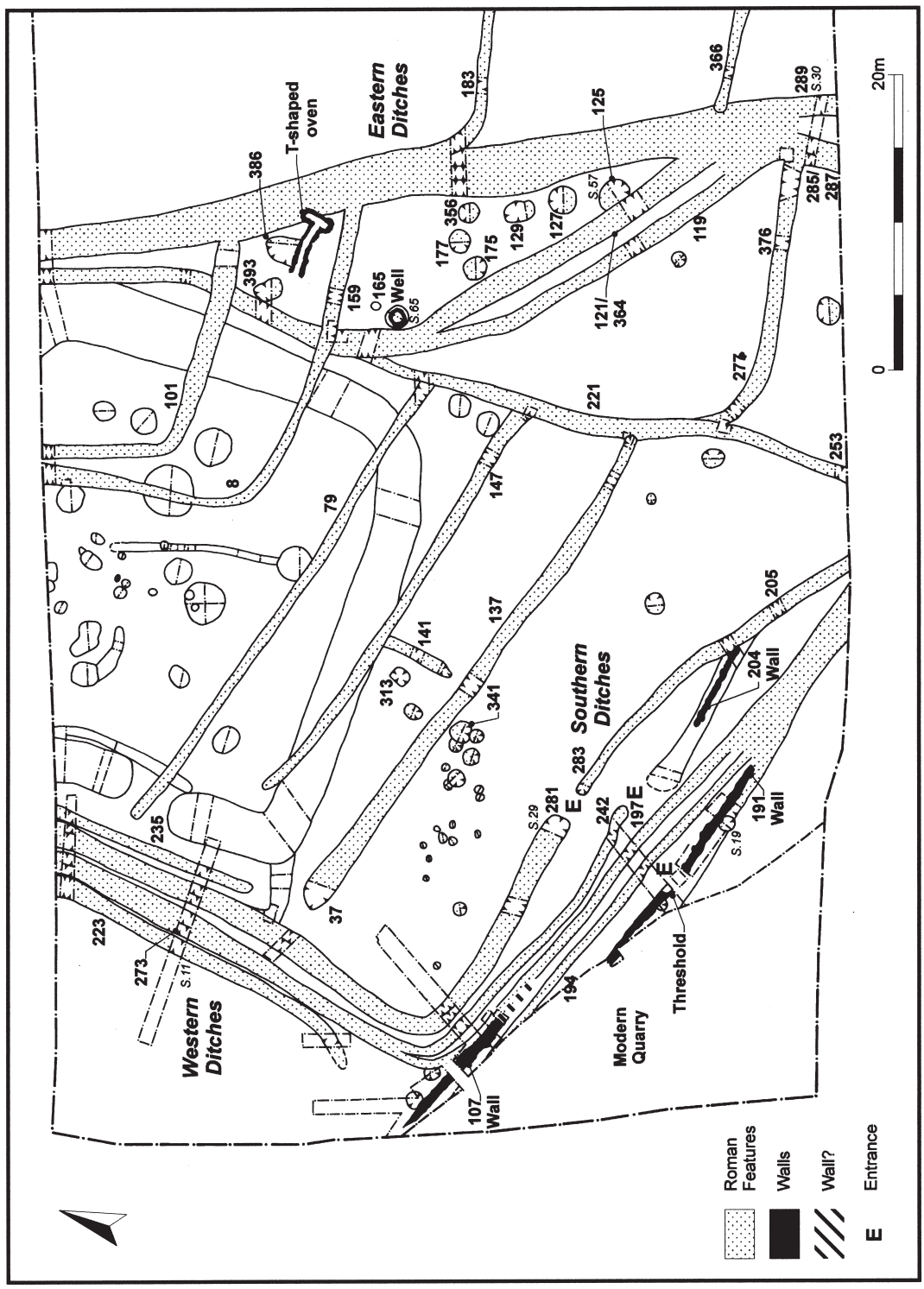

Fig 7 The late Iron Age/Roman settlement

THE LATE IRON AGE/EARLY ROMAN SETTLEMENT (MID-1st CENTURY AD TO EARLY 2nd CENTURY AD)

The pottery from the ditches and pits of this phase includes a large assemblage of material dating to the middle of the 1st century and up to 75/80 AD, which appears to have been the main period of Roman activity in this area (Fig 7). The western ditches contained no later material, but this may have been a result of later truncation of the upper fills due to the surrounding soft silty natural. The ditches to the east, which were cut into ironstone bedrock, contained 1st century material but the upper fills of the later cuts also contained smaller quantities of pottery that run into the early 2nd century, suggesting that they had silted up 125/150AD. A few intrusive sherds of 3rd/ 4th century date were also recovered.

THE ENCLOSURE SYSTEM

The final fills of the ditches and pits of the late Iron Age enclosure typically comprised dumped stone rubble, perhaps as a single act of levelling before it was superseded by shallower linear ditches of the new, more extensive enclosure system (Fig 7). However, there was an evident emphasis on continuity of overall plan form. The western and southern sides of the new enclosure were of regular rectilinear form, but to the east there was a more complex system of ditches for which the detailed sequence of development was not fully established. As the northern and southern extremities of the enclosures were not recovered there were no physical links between the western and eastern halves of the system. However, the basic arrangement appears to have been a rectangular enclosure that encompassed the Iron Age enclosure and measured at least 50m N-S by 35-40m E-W. There was an entrance to the south, which may denote the presence of contemporary activity further to the south. To the east a further ditch system running at an angle to the enclosure formed an outer boundary to most of the settlement related activity, and may have formed the eastern side of a trapezoidal enclosure at some stage. Between the two main eastern ditches there was a series of ditches that crossed between them either directly or obliquely, suggesting that the main N-S ditch systems overlapped chronologically within a complex system of ditch recutting. Within the enclosure there were a number of internal subdivisions, perhaps of different dates, and towards the end of the use of the enclosure a double ditch system formed a smaller sub-enclosure in the north-eastern corner. Pits contemporary with the enclosures lay to the south, dated to the 1st century, and to the east, dated to the 1st to early 2nd century, but the area of the former Iron Age enclosure appears to have been avoided.

THE WESTERN AND SOUTHERN DITCHES

The western and southern ditch systems comprised two parallel ditches, each of which had been recut at least once. Along the western arm they had either V- or U-shaped profiles and were 0.30-0.60m wide by 0.20-0.40m deep, (273)/(271) and (49)/(47), and on both the inner and outer margins there were shorter lengths of ditch, (223) and (235), which terminated short of the south-western corner of the enclosure (Fig 8, S.11). These shallow ditches were cut into silty sand, in which the ditches were difficult to identify, and the sections had to be overcut to locate the edges. Along the southern arm the inner ditch system deepened as it approached an inturned entrance terminal (Fig 8, 281, S.29), where it was 1.5m wide by 0.90m deep, cutting solid ironstone bedrock. The entrance was 2.0m wide, and to the east a much shallower, U-shaped ditch (283), 0.8m wide by 0.2-0.4m deep, continued the southern arm eastward to the limit of excavation (205). The inner component of the outer ditch system had a terminal (242) lying to the east of the entrance through the inner ditch. This entrance must also have been at least 2.0m wide. The eastward continuation of the ditch appears to have later been reused as the construction trench for a stone wall (204). A further two ditches to the south, (197) and (194), appeared to be continuous, V-profiled ditches, 1.2-1.4m wide by 0.60-0.70m deep. Ditch (197) appeared to be part of the enclosure system, but ditch (194) and a possible further ditch beneath wall (191) may have been the northern arm of a separate enclosure system which was later replaced by the double-walled enclosure.

THE EASTERN DITCH SYSTEM

To the east the major boundary to the domestic activity was a linear ditch system with at least three or four phases of ditch cutting. To the south the individual ditches were 0.4-0.50m wide by only 0.25m deep (Fig 8, S.30, 285/287 and 289), but further north they were up to 0.80m deep. The only two features that lay to the east of this boundary were two linear ditches running eastward, (183) and (366), and forming part of an outer system of paddocks or fields.

A second north to south ditch (221/253) lay to the west, this was on roughly the same alignment as the western arm of the Iron Age enclosure. It therefore converged with the easternmost ditch until at the northern end of the site the two ran parallel. A linear ditch, (277)/(376), and an obliquely aligned ditch system, (121/364) and (119), linked the two north-south ditches. The obliquely aligned ditch system was certainly a later addition, and it cut one pit of the eastern pit group (Fig 8, S.57), but beyond this the full sequence of development was not determined. Parts of this ditch system produced quantities of material dating to the mid- to late 1st century AD, but smaller quantities of material running through to the mid-2nd century where also present.

THE INTERNAL SUB-DIVISIONS

The main ditches of the late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure system avoided transgressing on the area of the late Iron Age enclosure. However, later sub-divisions did cut across this area. A series of three shallow parallel ditches appear to have formed subdivisions of the central area (79), (147) and (37)/(137), although it seems unlikely that they were all in contemporary use. They all branched off from the inner eastern boundary and terminated a few metres from the western ditch system. In the north-eastern corner of the enclosure two roughly parallel, L-shaped lengths of ditch, (101) and (8/159) ran into the easternmost boundary ditch and appear to the have formed a small sub-enclosure set in the north-eastern corner of the larger enclosure. These ditches cut across the inner ditch system,

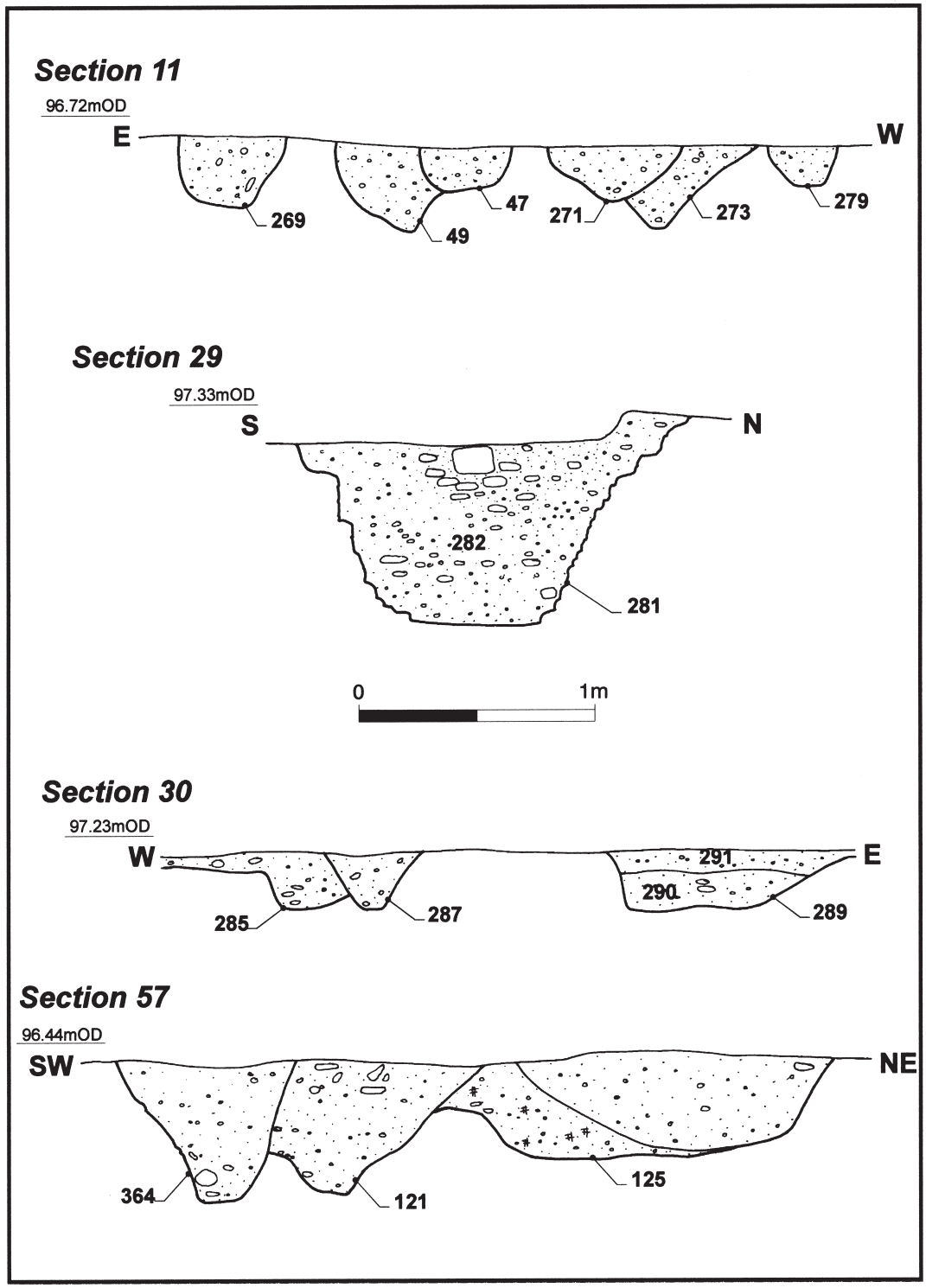

Fig 8 Sections of late Iron Age/early Roman ditches

suggesting that it was the eastern boundary only that survived to the end of the life of this enclosure system.

INTERNAL PITS

There were two groups of pits. A scatter of small pits and postholes in the southern part of the enclosure are dated to the mid to late 1st century and a group of larger but still quite shallow pits between the two eastern ditches, are dated to the mid 1st to early 2nd century.

To the immediate south of the Iron Age enclosure a small sub square pit (313), 1.0m square by 0.55m deep, with vertical edges and a flat base was fully excavated as it was packed with a primary later Belgic pottery assemblage dated between 40 and 75AD. A total of 288 sherds (weighing over 10kg) was recovered, with a wide range of vessels represented including a girth beaker, storage jars and smaller jars and bowls (Figs 14, 1-4 & Fig 15, 8-11). This feature had originally been exposed and partly excavated in the trial excavation (Atkins & Masters 2000, pit 03).

The pits and postholes further to the south lay between the southern arm of the enclosure and the southernmost sub-division. The scatter of postholes, on average 0.45m in diameter and 0.25m deep, many with limestone packing, lay within an area measuring *c*10m by *c*4.5m. They may relate to a timber structure or structures, but the plan was too incomplete to determine a building form. A cluster of pits lay to the immediate north-east of the postholes, and these were up to 1.5m in diameter but only 0.2-0.4m deep, and produced only small quantities of domestic debris, including a shallow bowl of mid-1st century date from pit (341).

The group of six pits between the eastern boundary ditches were all sub-circular, between 1.3m and 2.3m in diameter and 0.30-0.50m deep (Fig 8, S.57, 125). They contained very few finds, but one produced a single sherd dated to the 1st to early 2nd century, suggesting that these pits belong with the later use of this enclosure. A pit further to the north (386), 0.6m deep, and cut by the later T-shaped oven also contained a little pottery dated to the later 1st to early 2nd century. In addition there were a few further small pits scattered across the south-eastern part of the enclosure. None was more than 0.6m deep and none produced any significant amount of pottery or animal bone.

THE ROMAN SETTLEMENT (2ND TO 4TH CENTURIES AD)

By the middle of the 2nd century the complex of enclosure ditches were filled in and thereafter there was only sparse activity within the excavated part of the site. To the east there was a stone-lined well and a T-shaped oven (Fig 7), both of which were probably in use during the later occupation of the site, although the fills of these features inevitably included much redeposited pottery from the 1st century occupation.

However, the partial survival of the stone-walls to the south shows that this was not a cessation of occupation but merely a reduction in activity which left significant below ground remains in this northern area. As the area to the south has been lost to quarrying, the nature and scale of the focus of the later Roman settlement will remain unknown. However, the presence of the walls does denote that this was an establishment of some status and wealth. Given the fragmentary nature of the surviving remains it is difficult to interpret them definitively, but they seem best viewed as parts of a walled enclosure. This can be presumed to have been rectangular in plan and it would probably have contained a substantial domestic arrangement, perhaps comprising a small stone-built villa. The enclosure would have measured in excess of 50m E-W, indicating that the minimum area enclosed would have been *c*0.25ha but no upper limit can be determined. It may be noted that a small villa at Wootton Fields, Northampton was enclosed within a ditched enclosure or precinct some 70-80m square, enclosing 0.5ha (Chapman et al forthcoming), while a Roman settlement at Glapthorne Road, Oundle (Maull 2004) comprised ditched enclosures and an adjacent walled enclosure, only partially investigated, which was 50m wide. All three of these sites may therefore have been of broadly similar size, within domestic enclosures of between 0.25 and 0.50ha, and perhaps they were also of comparable status and prosperity

THE WELL AND THE T-SHAPED OVEN

A stone-lined well and a nearby T-shaped oven were probably both in use through the 2nd entury, if not later, and seem likely to denote the use of this area as an ancillary working zone serving the main domestic focus within the walled enclosure to the south.

The well might have been constructed in the first-century and may have fallen out of use quite early, but the only dating is provided by late 2nd mid-3rd century pottery recovered from the upper fill that had clearly accumulated after abandonment and dismantling of the upper part of the lining (Fig 9, S.65 and Plate 4).

Plate 4 The stone-lined well shaft (165)

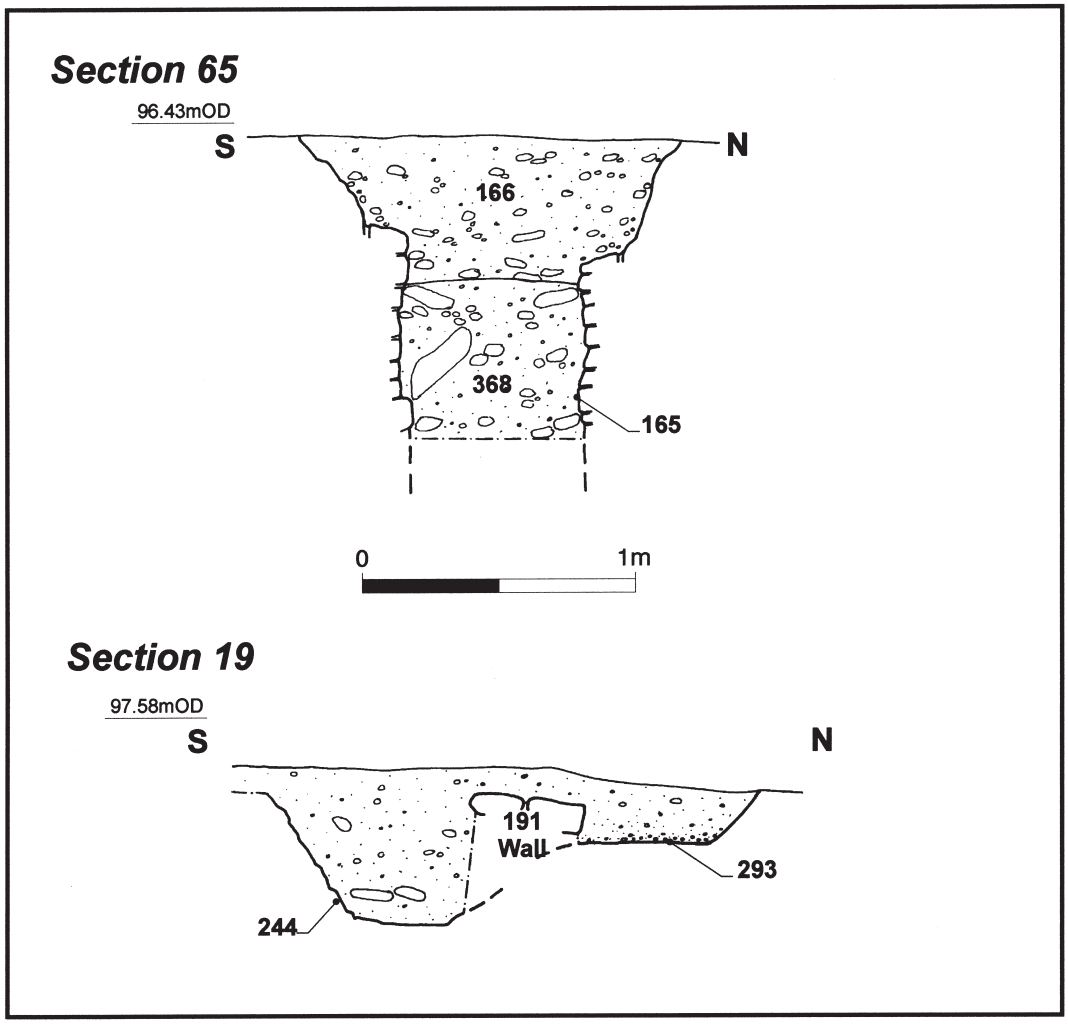

Fig 9 Sections of the Roman well and the enclosure wall

The well shaft had a surface diameter of 1.4m. The stone lining began at a depth of 0.35m or more below the surface, and roughly square blocks of ironstone and limestone lined a shaft 0.70-0.80m in diameter. The fills were excavated to a depth of 1.1m below ground level and coring indicated a total depth of 4.65m, where stiff blue Upper Lias clay was encountered at the base of the Ironstone. The fill of the shaft contained some larger stone blocks, suggesting that the upper part of the lining had either accidentally or deliberately collapsed into the shaft to terminate its use, while the upper fill had accumulated more slowly.

A T-shaped oven, serving as a corn drier and/or malting oven, cut both the eastern boundary ditch and an earlier pit, suggesting that it is dated no earlier than the 2nd century, potentially coming into use following the formation of the walled enclosure and the abandonment of the northern enclosure. The surviving flue and chamber lining comprised up to six courses of small ironstone blocks bonded together with clay (Plate 5). The flue was 4.3m long by 0.50m wide and the end chamber was 1.8m long by 0.3-0.5m wide, narrowing in towards the extremities. Some of the stones within the chamber lining were burnt, suggesting that they had been reused perhaps from an earlier oven. Towards the end of the flue the walls and the adjacent natural were burnt red.

The oven flue had been backfilled with domestic rubbish. This included most of three nearly complete and near identical jars (Fig 16, 16) and part of a stamped mortaria of *Vediacus*, who was probably operating in the Nene valley in AD150-180 (Fig 16, 17). The mortaria was heavily worn, suggesting that it had been well used before being discarded, and it was also heavily burnt, perhaps indicating that it was deposited as part of the construction, or at least during the use, of the oven. This would indicate a late second into third century date for the oven.

Plate 5 Roman T-shaped oven

Plate 6 Roman wall (191), showing the wall face

THE WALLED ENCLOSURE

To the south, adjacent to the area destroyed by modern quarrying, fragmentary remains of three lengths of stone wall were exposed (Fig 7). Across the western half of this area the ironstone natural lay below a substantial silt layer, which made identification of cut features difficult, and parts of the walls had been totally robbed and the other lengths had been levelled to below the surface of the natural silts (Plate 6). As a result, the full details of the plan were not recovered. However, two of the wall lengths (107) and (204) may have been the western and eastern ends of a wall forming the northern arm of a walled enclosure. To the east the wall (204) only ran to edge of ditch (205) suggesting that the north-eastern corner of the enclosure may have been open. A similar opening was present in the walled enclosure at Glapthorn Road, Oundle (Maull 2004). There was evidently a broad central break in this northern wall. Wall (191) lay between and parallel to the other wall lengths and flanked the break in the northern wall, but was set a further 3.5-4.0m to the south. A length of 16.5m was uncovered and there appears to have been a central gateway some 2.0m wide. This was defined by a break in the wall and at the western margin of this opening a large flat-laid slab of worn limestone, 0.90m long by 0.5m wide, appeared to be a surviving threshold stone (Plate 7).

Plate 7 Roman wall (191), showing the worn threshold stone

The wall arrangement suggests that there was either a double gateway or successive northern walls, or that the break in the northern wall had been where the gateway was set back from the main façade of the walled enclosure. No lengths of linking wall set at right angles were recorded but these may have been ground laid and therefore lost when the enclosure was levelled.

The walls had been constructed within broad, but shallow and flat-bottomed trenches. These were up to 1.80m wide by 0.25-0.45m deep, although in one instance there is a ditch, or perhaps a pit, (244) that was 0.55m deep (Fig 9, S.19). These trenches seem unnecessarily wide for wall construction, and it may be more likely that they were constructed within an existing set of shallow ditches that had previously defined a southern enclosure. In some instances the walls appear to be founded on top of up to 0.10m of soils, which supports the interpretation of these features as pre-existing ditches and suggests that they had not been fully cleaned out before wall construction commenced.

The northern wall face survived to the west of the gateway in wall (191) but elsewhere the wall was only defined by a combination of the original rubble core and, in places, only a rubble scatter left in the base of the robber trench. The surviving wall face and core were typically 0.40-0.60m thick, but the original width of the wall must have been at least 0.9m. The wall was well-made with a coursed northern face mostly in roughly squared limestone blocks from 0.25-0.40m long, but also included some ironstone and flint pieces, but no more than the two basal courses had survived. The core consisted of limestone and ironstone fragments up to 0.15m long and bonded with grey clay.

The soils abutting the surviving walls and overlying the levelled walls produced the majority of the 3rd and 4th century material that was recovered from the site. This includes the Oxford ware flagon top in the shape of a woman's head, dating to the mid to late 4th century AD, which is considered to be a high status object (Fig 17 & Plate 8). The survival of the wall as primarily rubble wall core with only short lengths of the northern face surviving indicates that the walled enclosure was systematically dismantled with the best quality stonework being removed for reuse elsewhere. There is no indication as to when this may have happened. It may have occurred in the late Roman period marking a final phase of reorganisation of the settlement, perhaps denoting a decline in the fortunes of the site. However, it is also possible that this robbing could have occurred as late as the late Saxon or early medieval period, the next time after the Roman period when building stone was a used and valued commodity, but there is no surviving evidence to determine this.

THE FINDS

WORKED FLINT
by Alex Thorne

Six worked flints were recovered as residual finds. All but one are either utilised or exhibit retouch and these include both a scraper and a pressure-flaked knife. The flakes are predominantly soft-hammer struck, where the point of percussion has survived. The pieces can probably be assigned to the Neolithic period.

THE IRON AGE POTTERY
by Dennis Jackson and Andy Chapman

Approximately 516 handmade sherds, weighing 19,370g have been assigned to the Iron Age period, and a further 75 sherds from the evaluation have also been included. The pottery derives almost entirely from the fills of the enclosure ditch and from the pits within the enclosure, and forms a well stratified group dating primarily to the 1st century BC and the first half of the 1st century AD.

A full quantification of the fabrics has not been produced, but two broad categories are evident. The coarseware jars all contain shell. This typically includes coarse shell, occurring in anything from sparse to dense quantities, with pieces measuring up to 5mm which often erupt through the surfaces, as in the large poorly finished jar from pit 57 (Fig 10, 1). The thinner walled bowls, including some burnished globular bowls, also typically include shell, but as sparse to moderate quantities of more finely crushed shell, with pieces rarely exceeding 1-2mm. The second group

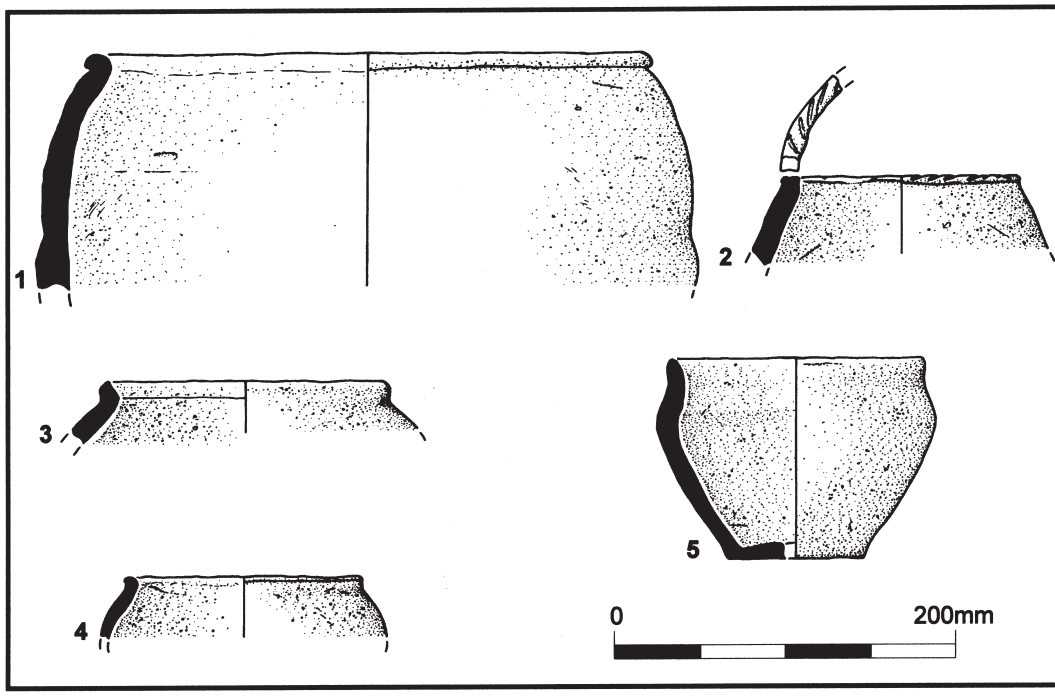

Fig 10 Iron Age pottery: 1-5

comprises a fine hard fabric, slightly sandy, and a few globular bowl sherds in this harder fabric also have inclusions of ironstone grit. The later Iron Age forms are typically in this harder fabric including a necked jar with a pronounced shoulder, a corrugated vessel and a globular bowl with zones of combed decoration (Fig 11, 6, 10 and 11).

There is a normal range of rim forms among the total of 54 rim sherds, and a normal range of decorative styles. There are five small sherds from burnished bowls with reduced grey/black surfaces decorated in the curvilinear style. These include a vessel with multiple dimples in the Hunsbury-style, as defined by Foster (1999, fig 1A), which has a distribution centred on Northampton and the upper reaches of the Nene, although other sherds might be from the less profusely decorated Desborough bowl form but are too incomplete to be certain (ibid, fig 1B), which occurs across the central part of the county between the middle reaches of the Nene and the Welland valley (Foster 1999, fig 2). Both forms would be appropriate at Earls Barton which could be seen as lying near the boundary of these two zones.

The assemblage is, however, dominated by coarseware jars, and the high mean sherd weight of 37.5g reflects the high proportion of large thick-walled sherds in the assemblage. This may suggest that the enclosed area was used for the processing and storage of agricultural produce. A few scored ware vessels with deeply incised irregular vertical scoring are present but a majority have only light and shallow scoring. Three rims have finger nail impressions (Fig 10, 2). A common vessel form from the site is a jar with an inturned upper wall and a direct rim (Fig 10, 2 and 8). Other vessel forms consist of globular or slack-sided bowls and small jars with vestigial rims, as well as thick-walled jars with rims that are rounded or folded externally (Figs 10 & 11; 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7). The most notable form is a necked and sometimes

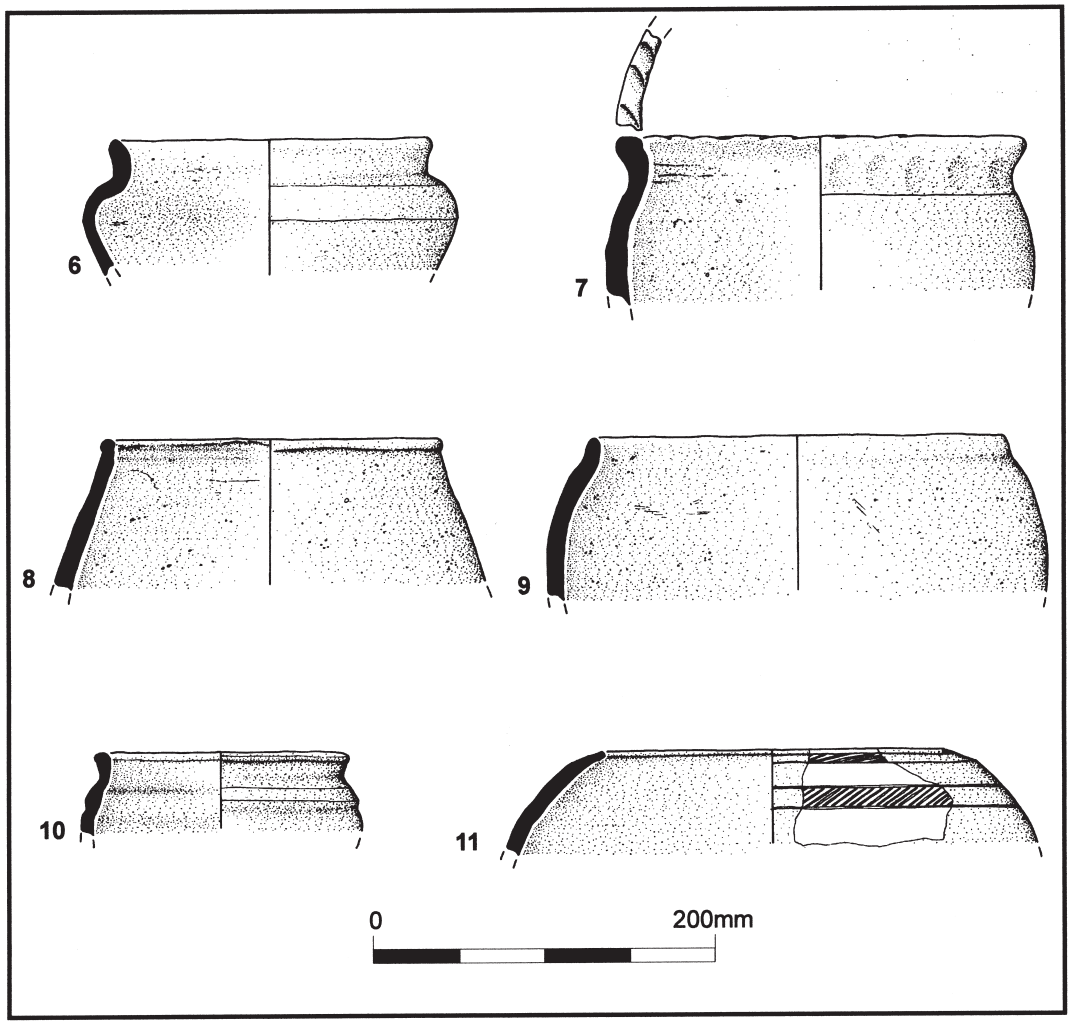

Fig 11 Iron Age pottery: 6-11

corrugated vessel (Fig 11; 6 and 10), in black or dark grey ware, with an out-curving rim. It is often highly burnished and although not common is one of the earliest forms found on local late Iron Age sites such as Aldwincle, Rushden and Weekley.

The small amount of diagnostic pottery from the lower fills of the enclosure ditch cannot be dated any closer than the later middle Iron Age (1st or perhaps 2nd century BC). The middle and upper fills of the enclosure ditch contained sherds dating to the earlier late Iron Age and later Late Iron Age ('Belgic') periods respectively. These include the corrugated and decorated vessels (Fig 11, 10 and 11) as well as larger jars with shallow grooves and deep fingertip impressions on the neck and combed decoration across the body.

Most of the features within the enclosure appear to date to around or just before late Iron Age (Belgic) pottery was introduced. A total of 320 sherds of pottery, many of them from large jars, came from pits and a drainage gully within the enclosure. Less than ten of these sherds are of early Belgic type, and they probably span the limited period of time when this pottery was introduced. The tubby rounded rims of the large and medium sized jars also support a transitional phase for the date of the pottery.

CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED POTTERY (Figs 10 and 11)

1. Large, thick-walled jar, coarse irregular surface with light horizontal scoring, external surface grey/brown, reduced core and internal surface, the fabric contains sparse large shell fragments. Fill 58, Pit 57
2. Jar, flat-topped rim with oblique incised decoration, brown internal and external surfaces, contains sparse large shell. Fill 58, Pit 57
3. Jar/bowl, everted rim, reduced grey/black, contains moderate coarse shell. Fill 58, Pit 57
4. Small globular jar, bead rim, oxidised orange/brown surfaces, contains sparse fine shell. Fill 58, Pit 57
5. Rounded bowl, plain rim, flat base, well-finished with lightly burnished external surface, reduced grey core and internal surface, grey/brown external surface, contains sparse fine shell and sparse ironstone. Fill 88, pit 87
6. Shouldered jar, well-finished with burnished external surface, particularly on the neck and rim, reduced grey/black, hard sandy fabric. Fill 384, pit 69,
7. Jar, flat-topped rim with shallow finger impression on rim and neck, contains dense coarse shell. 24 (evaluation), upper fill of enclosure ditch
8. Large jar, reduced grey/black, neck and rim oxidised brown externally, lightly burnished external surface, contains sparse coarse shell.. 146, final fill of enclosure ditch (315)
9. Jar, reduced grey/black, hard sandy fabric. 146, final fill of enclosure ditch (315)
10. Jar, corrugated wall, reduced grey/black, heavily burnished external surface, hard sandy fabric 23 (evaluation), upper fill of enclosure ditch
11. Globular bowl, zones of combed decoration, patchy grey to brown surfaces, hard sandy fabric. 422, upper secondary fill of enclosure ditch (414)

OTHER IRON AGE FINDS
by Ian Meadows and Andy Chapman,
with Steve Critchley, Mark Curteis and Donald Mackreth

A small assemblage of finds other than pottery was recovered from the Iron Age enclosure ditch and pits. They comprise a copper alloy brooch, a pre-conquest Roman silver denarius, antler and worked bone objects, a complete antler and several pieces of sawn antler tine as deposited working debris, and four querns.

A copper alloy brooch, found in a residual context, has been dated by D Mackreth as later 1st century BC into 1st century AD. A pre-conquest Roman silver denarius from the final fill of the enclosure ditch is of interest as they are a rare site find on British rural sites (pers comm Dr Mark Curteis). Silver rich coins such as this were withdrawn from circulation as coins were continually debased, giving them a short circulation life. It was probably deposited before *c*60 AD.

Ag denarius Tiberius (?) (14-37AD)
Obv. laureate head to right: Rev. Seated figure (?) Livia
SF7, context 146, final fill of enclosure ditch 315

There is also a small copper alloy rod and a lump of copper alloy casting, which waste came from the final fill of the enclosure ditch (434), which suggests that copper alloy working may have been carried out on the site in the early 1st century AD. In addition, part of the body and rim from a ceramic crucible, in excess of 40mm deep, with copper residues on the external surface, was recovered from a context of Roman date, where it was perhaps residual. It is very similar to a large assemblage of copper alloy casting crucibles of middle Iron Age date from a settlement at Coton Park, Rugby, Warwickshire (Chapman forthcoming).

A large bone weaving comb (Fig 12, 1) came from pit (57), and a bone handle decorated with double ring-and-dot motifs (Fig 12, 2) came from the enclosure ditch on the eastern side. There was also part of an antler handle from pit (89), with traces of an iron rivet, which may have provided a pivot for a folding blade or razor.

ILLUSTRATED FINDS (FIG 12)

1. Bone, weaving comb. A plain crudely shaped butt and a shaft that flares from 27-47mm across, Six teeth, now lost, have been coarsely cut with little further finishing. No decoration was present on the surface of this example. Length 140mm. A detailed discussion of these objects occurs in Cunliffe 1984 (Selwood 371-8). Small find 35, context 58, pit 57, Iron Age enclosure ditch
2. Bone, handle (butt end survives). Decorated with double ring-and-dot motifs 50mm long (broken) by 20mm diameter. Small find 56, context 435, enclosure ditch 434

Apart from the worked antler objects, there is also a collection of 12 pieces of antler-working debris. Of special interest is a near complete 12-point antler from a mature red deer stag, gathered following its shedding during spring (Red deer shed around April). Two sections had been removed from the crown, and the other tines were untouched. This had been deposited in pit (69) at the base of the secondary fills. The other pieces comprised six individual sawn tine fragments, two joining pieces of a sawn

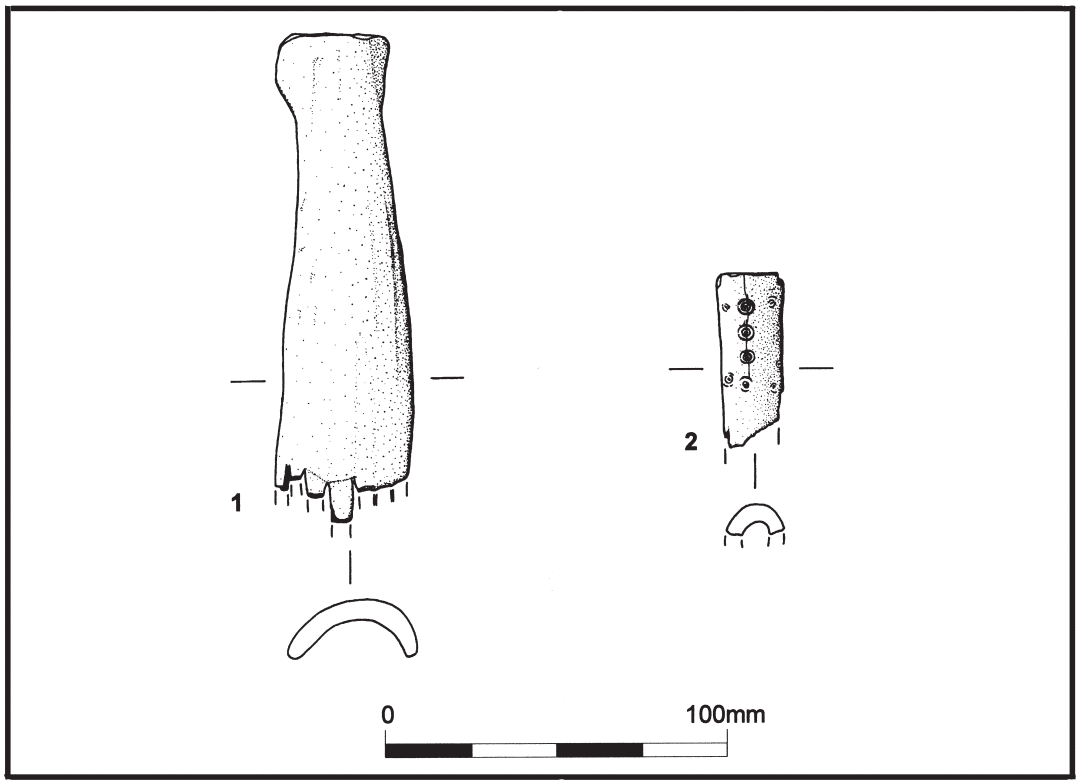

Fig 12 Iron Age finds: worked bone, 1-2

main shaft, two joining fragments of trez tine and two joining fragments of the brow line and bez. These were recovered from the secondary fills of pit (69) above the complete antler and from the secondary fills of pit (91).

The recovery of this quantity of antler as discarded or buried material, when much of it could clearly have been utilised in a variety of ways, suggests that the resource was plentiful. That there had been careful collection of antlers from an area of woodland is demonstrated by the examples that clearly come from shed antlers, rather than removed from animal kills.

There are five small fragments of fired clay, with maximum dimensions of 50mm, from objects with smoothed surfaces. All are too small to be certain of their function but they may include pieces of loomweight and at least one oven or kiln plate.

QUERNS
by Andy Chapman
(geological identifications by Steve Critchley)

The four querns from Iron Age contexts comprise a saddle quern, two beehive querns and a small fragment identified purely on its sandstone geology. The saddle quern was formed on large erratic boulder, 290mm long by 165mm wide and 65mm thick, with a worn concave grinding surface. The two beehive querns are of particular interest. They are both of Hunsbury type, with broad U-shaped hoppers (Fig 13, 3 & 4: Watts 2002, 30-32), and they are both upper stones that have been split almost perfectly in half vertically, to expose full cross-sections. One of these stones came from the upper fill of pit (91) and the other was from the secondary fill in the northern terminal of the enclosure ditch (426). In both instances the circumstances of their deposition and the vertical fracture could suggest that they had been deliberately split prior to burial in significant deposits. The complete saddle quern, from pit 57, may also have been a deliberate deposit, while the small fragment from pit 69 is more likely to be a casual discard.

The probable source for the sandstone querns would be exposures within the Carboniferous Namurian (Millstone Grit) and Westphalian (Coal Measures) Series in the Southern Pennines. All the fragments are predominantly composed of quartz, varying amounts of subordinate feldspar and in some rock fragments with white mica and detrital haematite present. All have well-developed siliceous cements.

ILLUSTRATED QUERNS (FIG 13)

3. Beehive quern upper stone, Sandstone (Millstone Grit). Hunsbury type, with U-shaped hopper and a handle socket that penetrates through to eye just below base of hopper. 300mm diameter by 165mm high. Small find 36, context 427, ditch 426, north terminal of enclosure entrance

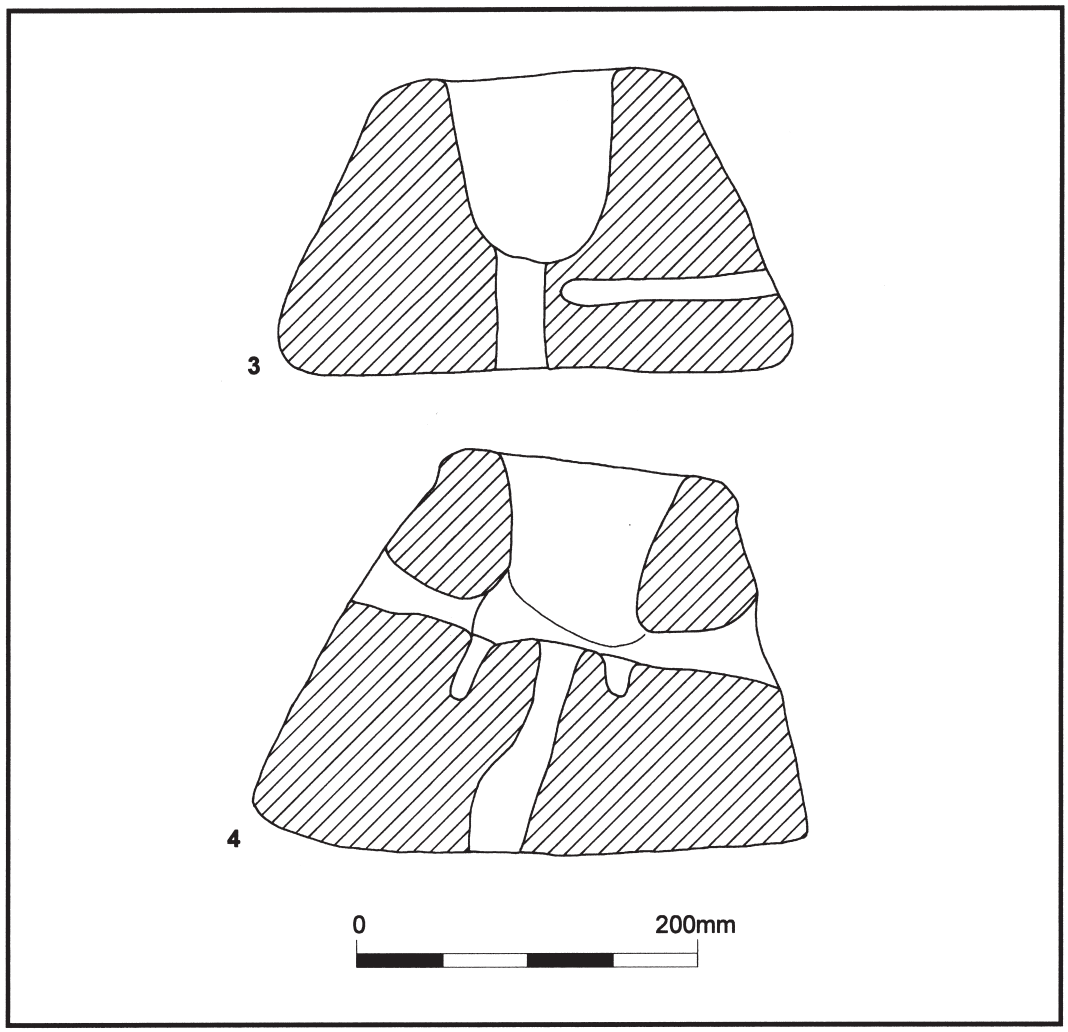

Fig 13 Iron Age finds: querns, 3-4

4. Beehive quern upper stone, Sandstone (Coal measures?). Hunsbury type, with well-formed, flat-topped collar and a U-shaped hopper. Opposed handle holes penetrate to base of hopper, and there are two smaller, vertically bored holes at the base of the hopper, 10mm and 14mm in diameter. 320mm diameter by 220mm high. Asymmetrically worn. Small find 42, context 92, pit 91

SLAG
by Andy Chapman

A total of 4,620g of slag was recovered from 16 contexts. The majority was from the upper fills of the Iron Age enclosure ditch in association with other dumped debris and pottery dated through to the mid 1st century AD. A single layer north of the northern terminal produced nearly half of the total (2,120g). The majority of this material is light, highly vesicular and grey to dark grey and dark red brown in colour. Some pieces have pale off-white areas, and some have glassy surfaces. This material is all characteristic of fuel ash slag and falls within the category known as "Iron Age grey".

There is a small amount of denser, dark grey slag containing air bubbles of *c*1mm. These are undiagnostic iron slag in small pieces with maximum dimensions of no more than 50mm. Of particular interest is a fragment from pit (57), which comprises a lump of iron slag adhering to a thin plate of fuel ash slag with a glassy surface, which may have come from a hearth lining.

There is therefore limited evidence for ironworking on the site, most probably smithing, but diagnostic material is absent. Some

of the fuel ash slag appears to derive from hearth lining material, but this is unlikely to apply to the large, irregular fragments from the single layer, which may come from some other high-temperature event, perhaps even the burning of a timber structure.

THE ROMAN POTTERY
by Donald Mackreth, with Kay Hartley

A total of 1851 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 56,040g, were recovered from the evaluation and excavation. The pottery has been divided into the following periods:

Late Pre-Roman Iron Age: a cultural mix running to *c* 55/60AD
Roman 1: to75/80 AD
Roman 2: to *c* 200 AD, but basically before 125/150AD
Roman 3: 3rd century to later 4th century

These are not so much strict chronological brackets, but ones in which there are definable traits.

Most of the assemblage is mid 1st century AD into 2nd century. There was little 3rd or 4th century pottery from the excavated site although this may only reflect a sharp decline in activity within this northern part of the area. There is a wide selection of pottery types, with some Samian (including imitation Terra Nigra), mortaria, amphoria as well as regional wares (Black Burnished, Colour Coated and Oxford) and local wares. The latter included fine locally produced pottery from Rushden. Of particular interest is a rare flagon top with female head (Fig 17 and Plate 8). Charmian Woodfield has identified it as of Oxford ware dating *c*350-400 AD. It is a high status object and seems to have vague religious connotations, for example, two were recovered from the temple of Nodens, at Lydney, Gloucestershire.

The chief interest in the assemblage is its middle 1st century pottery. There seems to be continuity between the pre-conquest occupation and post-conquest activity. All wheel-turned pottery has been classified as Roman pottery although in reality the distinction between the Iron Age and Roman pottery is somewhat artificial, as some of the early wheel-turned pottery is probably contemporary with the late handmade Iron Age pottery and, in addition, most of the Roman grogged wares, and a few others, were coil-made. A few features contained both handmade late Iron Age and early wheel-turned Roman pottery. No stress is laid on a pre-Conquest date though in rare instances material and contexts have been dated probably before 40 AD. One site that gives a coherent view of the late pre-Roman Iron Age, and which is relevant here, is The King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1989). The published dating placed the greater part of its use into the Roman period, however, a recent discussion of surprising basic absences of two brooch types abundant in the first two decades of the Roman period points to the need to revise the dates. Niblett (1999, 219) points to a need to use the indicated possible start date of the cemetery of 15BC and to adjust the rest accordingly. If this is done, then all of Periods 1 and 2 at King Harry Lane will be pre-conquest, and at least half of Period 3. It is this revised dating that has provided the date ranges proposed for the Earls Barton assemblage.

FABRICS

1 Shelly. Tempered with shell any instances where there is any sign that sand was more than purely accidental, it is mentioned.

2 Grogged wares have ground up baked clay, usually assumed to be wasters crushed to temper the clay of newer pots. Grog can be hard to spot: the technique of making pots so that in section the walls appear to be flaky will presumably have resulted in the re-used material also being flaky. Frequently, however, the misalignment of shell or a piece with definite boundaries will mark it out. An exception is in some of the oxidized wares where what has been called grog here shows itself as almost square or rectangular inclusions. It may be that these are not grog, but until a test can be made, it is assumed to be. As it happens, this type of "grog" seems to be temporally limited: the rest of the assemblage going with it frequently shows signs of being very early in the Roman period at least.

3 Sandy. No concerted attempt has been made to distinguish between sparse ordinary or heavily loaded fabrics. However, a noticeable tendency for the particular pot to be one way or the other is noted. In the whole of the local area sandy wares were commonplace and it is the form, firing characteristics and surface finish which are the more diagnostic features.
Rushden or Rushden-type. The one genuine Rushden pot, catalogue entry 11 (Fig 16, 13), and another vessel (Fig 16, 12), are so close that both must have come from the same factory. The problem is identifying which one it is in the published report on the Rushden pots, but in essence it is Fabric B of the Intrusive Group (Woods and Hastings 1984, 26). The fracture is slightly hackly and the section well filled with fine sand.

4 CC, Colour Coat Nene Valley products are normally recognizable and are classified as NVCC here, but there are items which might be continental - Rhenish or Gallic. As there are no really late deposits here, and only a small number of contexts of the 3rd and 4th centuries, any colour coat which has a red fabric has for the moment been assumed not to be Nene Valley.

5 NVCC, creamy sand-filled fabric. Used by other centres on a large scale near Lincoln and a much smaller one at Great Casterton, it is fairly safe to assume that the bulk here must have come up the river from the region of Durobrivae.

6 NVGW, there is also a lesser element in the industry which seldom gets a mention: the self-coloured wares. Nearly All Nene Valley has a prepared surface, whether it is a definite slip, or deliberate fuming.

7 Self-Coloured generally cream with the heavily-sanded fabrics of the normal Nene Valley products, but there are others which are red etc. and from elsewhere.

8 OXCC = Oxford used here for sherds with a deep red colour coat and frequently of a relatively soft fabric.

9 Other, mainly mortaria, which is present in small quantities.

TS. Samian, there is little from the site. The distinction drawn between South Gaulish (SG) and Central Gaulish (CG) is on the basis of what shows in the fracture as much as in the form. The former has white specks to a greater or less degree, while the latter is basically free of these. Not a universal rule, but good enough for the identifiable forms to confirm: f18/31, f33, f37, f35-6 are on the whole always 2nd century. There is a period when it seems there was an interruption in the Samian supply at the end of the 1st

century which lasted until the period c.120-5. Again, not a universal rule but good enough to provide a useful dating generalisation.

TN. Terra Nigra imitation usually reserved for bodies which are very pale, almost white, with a very dark if not near black finish.

BB. Black-burnished handmade sandy, usually heavily so, grey grains, wheel-finished rims etc.

POTTERY CATALOGUE

LATE PRE-ROMAN IRON AGE: A CULTURAL MIX RUNNING TO c55/60AD

1. Girth Beaker with an upper upright neck with a central burnished groove, the rim is slightly everted. Thinly potted in a fabric with finely crushed shell. Wheel-thrown. Above the marked shoulder is a zone with a cordon top and bottom, the rest of the profile curves down to a slight foot-ring. The form is of pre-conquest origin, the difficulty is to place the fabric. The use of fine shell is not typical of the main fabrics in use on this site which are either coarse shelly or grogged with or without sand. It is probably dated to the middle decades of the 1st century AD.
   Context 435, final fill of Iron Age enclosure ditch [434], eastern side.
2. Girth Beaker, lightly grogged and with sparse sand, the form is basically the same as 6/D5, but more exaggerated with a taller upper part. Wheel-thrown and fired with a dark grey core with orange skins and fumed once to what seems to have been a brownish grey. The upper part has a single concave profile, the bead rim forming a ridge to match the two below. The shoulder is more marked than in the last and there was a recurve in the profile down to a weak foot-ring. Later than catalogue entry 1, but not later than *c* 60/65.
   Context 274, ditch 273, western ditch system.
3. Pottery from Context 314, pit 313 (equals evaluation trench pit 03)

   (Fig 14, 1) Girth beaker, mixed sand and grog, fired a pale orange throughout. There is a cavetto rim over a broad cordon with a narrow one on each side, the smoothed shoulder slopes down to the maximum diameter beneath which the surface is not so fine and ends in a foot-ring. This piece is a developed form and is best evidenced in conquest and early post-conquest deposits. The suggested date-range is 40-65.

   (Fig 14, 2) Bowl/jar, in fine sandy fabric with some small bits of grog. The whole is fired nearly black. The weak cavetto rim has a bead around the top and a thin cordon at the base. The high shoulder shows signs of having been smoothed. The rest of the profile is incomplete but seems not to have been markedly ovoid. There is evidence that the interior up to the lower neck was slipped.
   The form is a common one and there is little to provide a close date, unless it is the grog. The form is beginning to appear in this fabric in Phase 2 of the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1989, 350, fig 151, 310.3) and is in pre-conquest deposits at Skeleton Green (Partridge 1981, fabric 1, 59, fig 23, 91-4). An indication that the fabric alone is not a good indicator of date is provided by Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986), where fabric 1 conforms with fabric 24 here, but is largely confined to first century contexts (*ibid*, 260), but the basic parallels for the form are early-mid first century and in ordinary grog-tempered Fabric 2 (*ibid*., and 289, fig 113, 114-9). On the whole, the present specimen in likely to fall within the range of 35/40-60/65 AD.

   Pit 313 also produced a substantial assemblage of other contemporary vessels including further bowl forms (Fig 14, 3), a necked jar (Fig 14, 4) and at least three large storage jars (Fig 15; 8, 9, 10 and 11).
   Also from pit 313, a dish in grogged ware, there is a little sand, but not enough to count as a proper constituent. Flat-bottomed, curved outside face of the wall, the interior has a sloped surface at the bottom with a small cordon top and bottom. Not enough of the base is present to be sure that there had not been a foot-ring. Bearing a family resemblance to platter/dish forms imported into Britain before the conquest, this example lacks the change in profile common to those. Here there is a generic semblance with a small group seemingly of Claudian - Neronian, even early Flavian times (Woods 1971, Brixworth villa, 10, fig 8, 1-5). The articulation of the mouldings inside, however, point to the earlier part of this range and can be likened to those found on terra nigra forms (cf. Frere and St Joseph 1974, 98. fig 51.17): 40/45-55/60 AD.
4. Pottery from context 275, soil layer associated with western ditch system

   (Fig 14, 5) A cook-pot with an upstanding rim curving down into the interior. The shoulder is high and sweeps down to form what had been an ovoid profile. Fabric 2; plentiful crushed grog, no discernible sand, fired an orange buff with burning on the outside.

   (Fig 14, 6) A cook-pot with an upright, slightly, everted rim with a channel underneath. Fabric 2 crushed grog and with fine sand, the pot is thin-walled, fired buff with some burning on the outside. The shoulder is high, but here the wall at the top is almost vertical and there are circumferential wipe-marks.
   These two show in their fabric their affinities with the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age pottery tradition of the South-East. The forms are not typical of anything in the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1989, 145-92), and obviously owe more to local Iron Age forms such as Weekley Ceramic Phase 2 (Jackson and Dix 1987, 85-9, figs 37-9).

   (Fig 14, 7) Cook-pot, with everted rim reminiscent of a butt beaker: rounded outside with a sloped surface on the inside, the slow curve to the profile may have recalled the form of a butt beaker more closely, had more survived. The very top of the wall is burnished ending below in a groove below which there is a rough surface with latticing made up of vertical and diagonal lines. Fabric 3; fine sand, fired brown fumed grey inside and out, there is burning on the outside. The fine sandy fabric may be one from Rushden and the weak butt beaker-form points to an early date in the Roman period. The latticing is found at Rushden and Verulamium on analogous forms (Woods

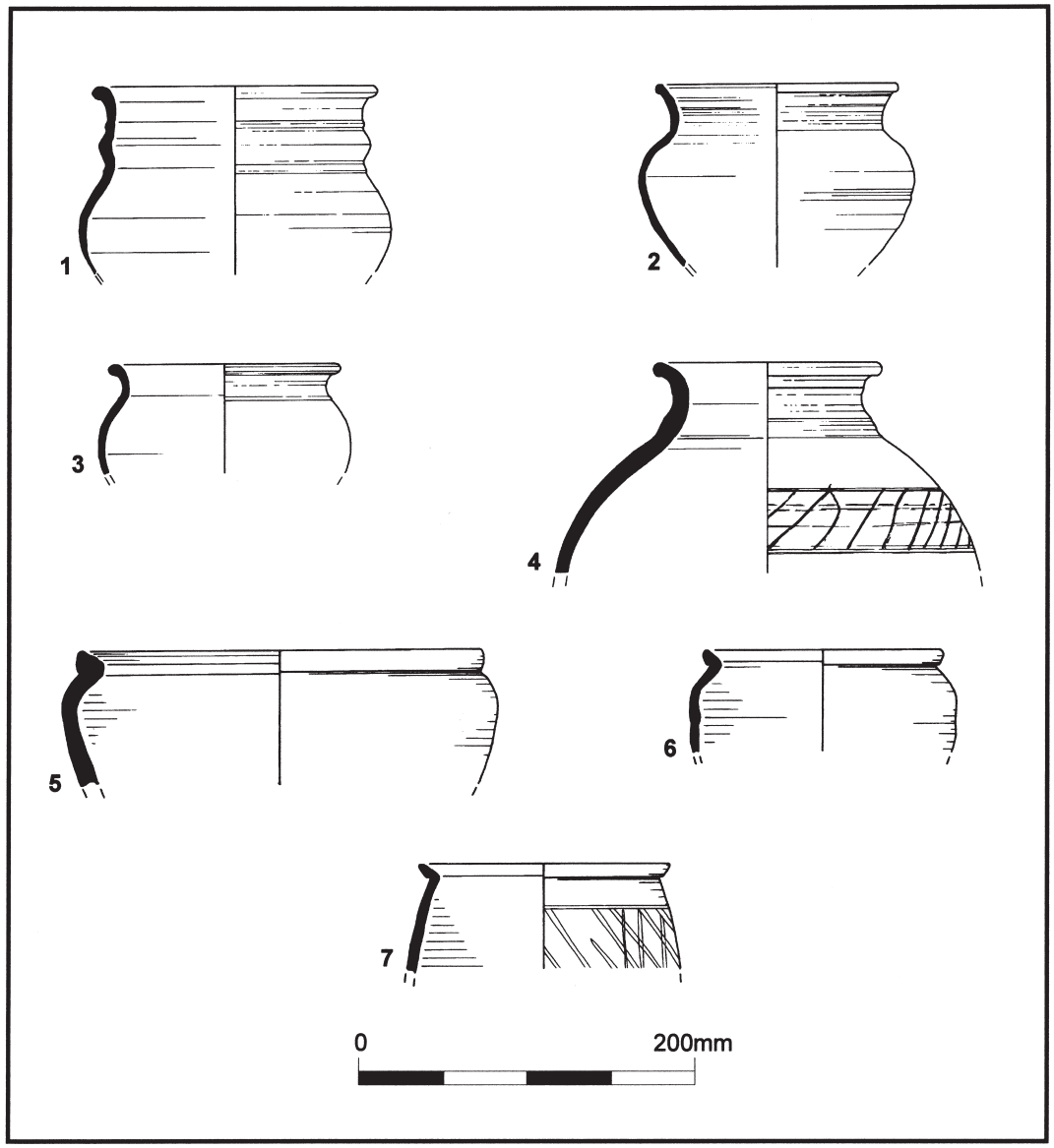

Fig 14 Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, 1-7

and Hastings 1984, fig 9.16, 75; Frere 1972, 270 fig 101,62). The date should not be later than 60/65 AD.

5. Cook-pot, wheel-thrown, the fabric has grog and unsorted sand and grits and is fired basically brown with a darker core and has a roughly finished exterior. The rim is slightly everted and has two channels on the inside. The profile is a single curve from the rim downwards. Probably of the same date as (Fig 14, 6).
Context 243, ditch 242, southern ditch system (terminal).

ROMAN 1: TO 75/80 AD

6. Shell-tempered storage jar with an upright channelled rim, thick, and with nicks along higher outer edge. The form is hard to parallel. One may note the channelled rim and the shape is not unlike that of a jar from Weekley dated to 50-75 (Jackson and Dix 1987, 79, 189, fig 39,148), the rims of neither conforming with the usual out-turned forms.
Context 371, ditch 101, north-eastern ditches.

7. Pierced lug/handle in a slightly corky fabric, traces of grog, but none of the vesicas show any obvious sign of having once housed fragments of shell. The form suggests that it may have been mounted horizontally: the curve on the inner end would suit a rim and the groove around the hole is on one side, which slopes up. There is a groove running around the edge above which the top part is thicker and projects more. Although handles or lugs are known, e.g., at Weekley (Jackson and Dix 1987, fig 31,40) and Irchester (Hall and Nickerson 1967, fig 9,11) where they are vertical on the side of vessels, or as vertical on the rim of a bowl from Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986, fig 112,1-7) and at Longthorpe on a lid (Dannell and Wild 1987, fig 45,117d), the present example is unusual in being horizontal. Style and fabric point towards the middle of the first century.
Context 122, ditch 121, eastern ditches.

8. (Fig 16, 12) A globular pot, wheel-thrown with an upstanding cavetto rim. There is a marked cordon at the base and the shoulder of the pot has two zones, each bounded by a groove, with rouletted decoration. Very sandy with small even-sized grits, hard fired with a variable grey-brownish tinge to the fracture and fumed a near black inside and out with a squared outer edge. The fabric is very close to the one undoubted example of a Rushden pot, catalogue entry 11 (Fig 16, 13), the two fabrics being indistinguishable. The dating is fairly securely before *c* 60/65.
Context 80, gully 79, west-east gully across Iron Age enclosure.

9. Cook-pot, lid-seated (channel-rim) slightly everted small rim. Fabric is practically indistinguishable from the Rushden type (Fig 15, 12) and the genuine article (Fig 16, 13). Hard, the core is a very pale grey and the surface skin a pale orangeIf the form and fabric are good signs, then the date is before 75 AD. Context 375, ditch 101, north-eastern ditches.

10. Cook-pot, sandy, but with grits and grains of a larger and more variable size than the Rushden-type ware. Everted lid-seated rim, no neck, high shoulder and a very slight ogee in the profile down to a flat base. Hard fired to a brownish grey, lighter inside than out. Probably before 75 AD.
Context 363, ditch 364, eastern ditches

11. Pottery from context 31, ditch 289, eastern boundary ditch (Fig 16, 13) Bowl, imitation f30, with bead rim, pulvination under that separated from the main decorated zone, and a groove above and below the carination. Paint was applied as a band in all four grooves and as a wavy line in the main decorative zone. The fabric has the same sandy character as the others described as Rushden type and the firing results in a very pale slightly buff colour, the external surface being well burnished. Almost certainly a Rushden product, it is the same as one from Irchester (Woods and Hastings 1984, 92, fig 9.34, 176). The dating is essentially before 60/65.

(Fig 16, 14) Reeded rim bowl, sandy fabric perhaps not as fine as the Rushden type and with some grog of the same fabric. Fired nearly black. The rim has a deep groove next to the inner edge and smaller ones in the middle. The underside has a cordon. The wall has a groove at its base where the carination begins and two burnished lines, one at the top and the other in the middle. Related to Camulodunum 246A (Hawkes and Hull 1947, 265), which is given the date-range of the conquest to *c*65. The form here is a little crisper, the rim is very close to that of a strainer from Rushden (Woods and Hastings 1984, 48, fig 9.4,32). The equivalent form from Longthorpe is slacker (Dannell and Wild 1987, 149, fig 41,56). The form, however, persists and its dating on Hadrian's Wall is *c* 80-125/30 (Gillam 1957, 22-3, fig 23, 214-5). In the present case, the care in manufacture and the very dark firing favour the earlier part of the indicated range, perhaps 55/60-80/90 AD.

(Fig 16, 15) The same sandy, hackly fracture as (Fig 15, 13) in this case fired to have a pale grey reduced surface. The rim is small and everted with a fairly long slope inside. There is no neck, the shoulder has a rouletted band at its base with a cordon under. There are two more rouletted bands with cordons ending on the preserved section with another band of rouletting. There is the rim from what appears to be a precisely similar pot from the same layer. The basic form has two reasonably close parallels at Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986, 294, fig 117,154; 297, fig 118,166) and derives from pots such as the barrel beaker in grogged ware from a Phase 1 burial at the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1989, 338 fig 140.grave 263). Neither of the Baldock pots has the full globular form implied by the Earls Barton pots, the first is in a grogged fabric and dated to the early/mid first century, the second in a sandy one and is dated to *c* 60, but their affinities are clear. A closer parallel comes from Verulamium (Frere 1972, 270, fig 101,62) and dated to 49-65 AD (Frere 1984, 268). The date may be expressed as c.45-60/70 AD.

12. Rim of an olla, the fabric is very reminiscent of the Rushden type noted above, a mid grey fumed surface. Fired a very pale grey/buff. Finely potted with a cavetto rim and a series of shallow cordons on the neck. No close parallels seen. The date ought to be first century and not necessarily near the end. Context 290, ditch 289, eastern boundary ditch.

13. Shallow bowl, sand and grog, fired near black and then finished in oxidising conditions to give an orange to brown finish. The out-turned rim has a groove around its outer edge and one inside to form a bead. The wall is shallow and the base slopes quickly towards the missing base. The outside has shallow grooves and a heavily fingered surface. Closely related in form to a grog-tempered platter from a Phase 1 burial at the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1986, 342, fig 143,279.2), the date is perhaps unlikely to be as early as the first quarter of the first century. Weaker forms occur before the conquest at Skeleton Green (Partridge 1981, 80, fig 38, 2-3), but the general difficulty in finding good parallels points to a short life and a range of 35/40-55/60 AD is probable.
Context 342, pit 341, south of Iron Age enclosure.

ROMAN 2: TO c200 AD, BUT BASICALLY BEFORE 125/50AD

14. Bowl, grogged ware, oxidised firing giving a pale orange body with a slightly darker surface. The appearance of the sherd suggests an almost hemispherical form with a thickened upper wall with three deep grooves outside and

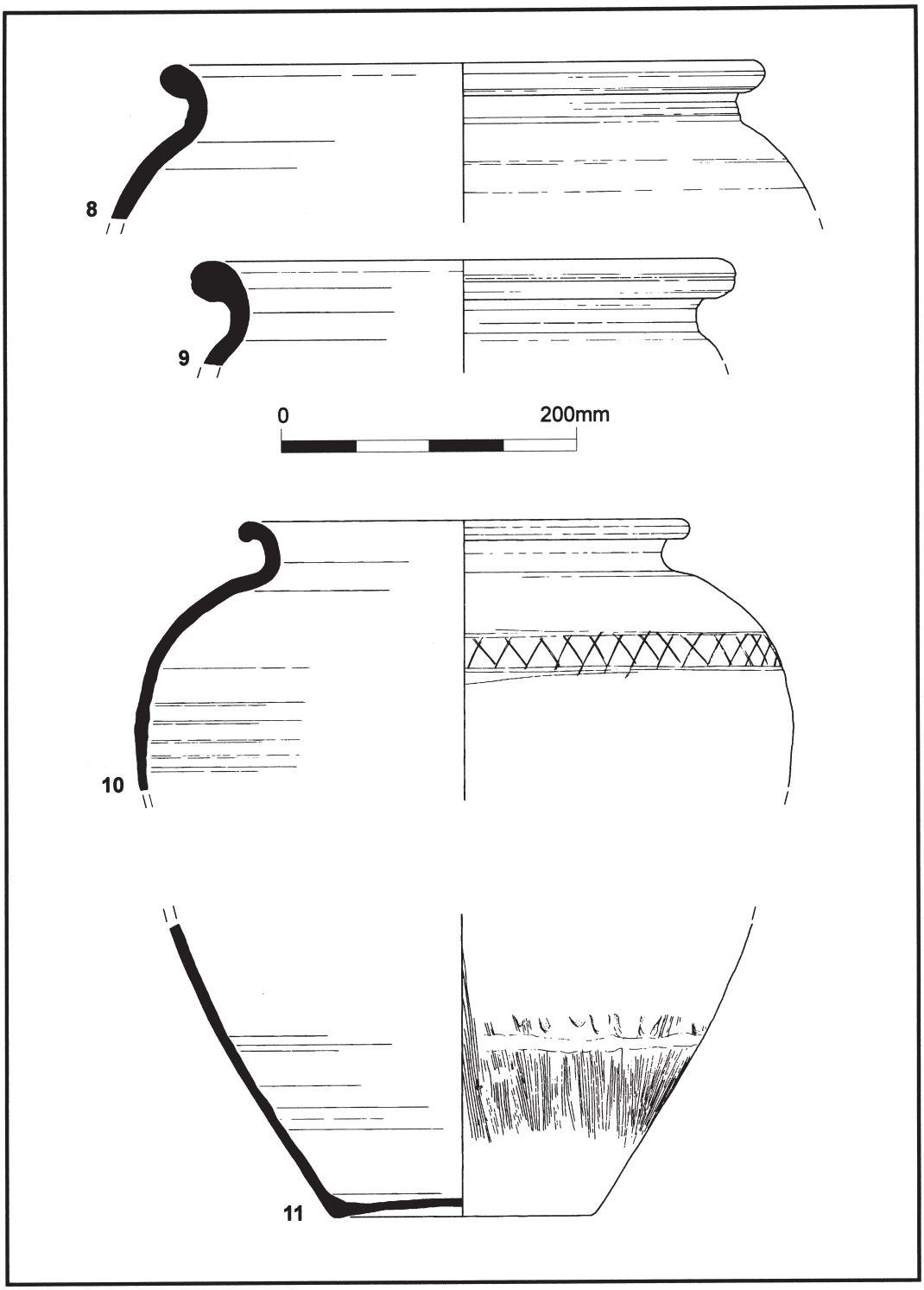

Fig 15 Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, 8-11

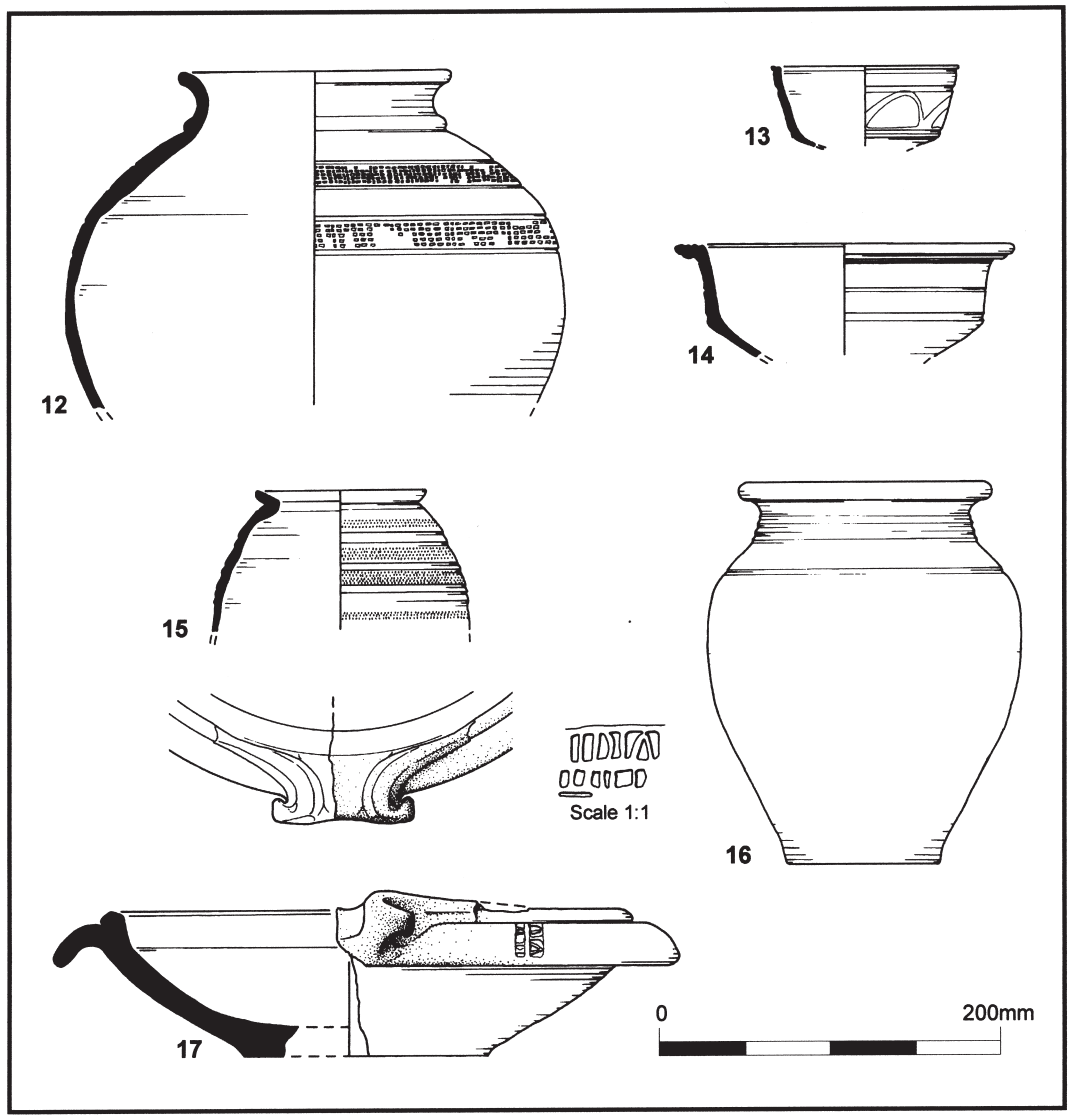

Fig 16 Roman pottery, 12-17

a wide and shallow one on the rim which is inturned. The form appears at Longthorpe on the kiln site and dates to before 60/65 (Dannell and Wild 1987, 147, fig 40, 51). A close parallel from Verulamium was dated 130-60 (Frere 1984, 241, fig 101, 2416) and was used to date one from Folly Lane, Verulamium (Niblett 1999, 245, fig 76, 48). As grogged ware is not to be expected in the second century, the likely date is in the first and not at the end. This is suggested by what was almost certainly a parallel from the Durobrivae area (Perrin 1999, 42, fig 24, 25), the group being given the range *c*60-120 AD.
Context 387, pit 386, cut by T-shaped oven.

15. This is a form which could be described as being a poppy head beaker. Moderately sandy and fired black with the exterior burnished. The rim is tall in proportion to its diameter and leans out slightly. It has a shallow concave interior and a groove at its base on the exterior. The body is bulbous and the base is lost. The poppy head beaker itself makes its appearance towards the end of the first century (Frere 1972, 285, fig 107,255; 1984 213, fig 85, 2047), but its origins are earlier (Frere 1972, 285).
Context 243, ditch 242, southern ditches (terminal).

16. Bowl, sandy, but not dense. Fired in reducing conditions to give the dark grey core, then a brief oxidising phase

and finally fumed. The rim has a slight curve on top and projects both inside and out. The inside is a slight lip, the outside has a rounded edge with a small cavetto underneath rising from a small cordon. There is a slight neck and body has a smaller diameter than the rim. The form is not easy to parallel, a version at Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986, 316, fig 130, 318) was with a mass of other material given a later first-early second century date. The firing characteristics probably suit that period rather than a later one, and there is nothing here to put it any earlier. However, other pottery from this context has been dated to the mid- to late first century, catalogue numbers 11 and 12 Context 31, ditch 289, eastern boundary ditch.

17. "London Ware" bowl. Very fine sandy ware with burnished surfaces fired black. Imitating a samian form 30, there is a bead rim and a groove at the base of what would have been a pulvinated frieze, the lower art is largely missing but displays the typical decoration of the type: incised arcs around dots from which depend combed columns. A useful summary of dating around Durobrivae is given by Perrin (1999, 106 & fig 65) and the general conclusion was that local, in the broad sense, may have been concentrated on the second quarter of the second century, and he gives a useful view of the forms and decoration. Contexts 44, 108 & 109, soil matrix within wall 107 and soils over and around levelled wall 107.

ROMAN 3: 3rd CENTURY TO LATER 4th CENTURY

18. Pie dish, sandy fabric reminiscent of Black-Burnished, but wheel-thrown. The triangular rim projects strongly and has a rounded top. The wall tapers in and is deep in proportion to its diameter. Begins in the middle 2nd century (Frere 1972, 315, fig.120, 725-7) and runs on. Context 377, ditch 376, south-eastern ditches.

19. Flanged pie dish, sandy with a little grey grog, fired grey roughly finished beneath the rim outside, the rest smoothed. The form begins to appear in the middle of the 2nd century and persists into the 4th century, but in this instance in a sandy fabric, not likely to be later than the middle 3rd century. Context 108, soils overlying levelled wall 107.

20. Flanged pie dish, fired a uniform mid grey. The rim is well finished and the bead rim is not very prominent. The outside is irregularly burnished. The same dating as that for D29 applies here, possibly not even in the 3rd century. Context 186, soils abutting wall 107.

21. Pottery from fills of T-shaped oven, 389. (Fig 16, 16) Olla, grey sandy ware, fumed exterior and with burnished lines. The cavetto rim has a slight thickening at the top of the neck, a cordon at its base and two grooves at the base of the shoulder. The form is ovoid with a plain flat base. A standard long-lived form, deriving from grog-tempered types in the middle of the first century and occurring towards the end of the first century (Stead and Rigby 1986, 326, fig 135, 407) but in a simpler form runs on to the end of the second century (*ibid*, 357, fig 149, 645) and on into the third, possibly to near the end (Frere 1984, 230, fig 94, 2273-4). Large parts of three vessels recovered.

Mortaria (by Kay Hartley) (Fig 16, 17)

Hard fabric, originally cream with buff-cream slip. Inclusions of very ill-sorted, small to large (up to 4mm), angular, fairly frequent; mostly quartz and red-brown with some opaque black. Trituration grit: almost all worn away, but some black slag grits survive. The slag may have been mixed with other materials or may have been the sole type of grit, but only one other mortarium of his is recorded where slag was the only material used. The spout has been made by adding small cylinders of clay to the bead, which were turned out at the distal end. Diameter 370mm, very heavily worn and very heavily burnt. The partially impressed, two-line, right-facing stamp reads [.]IIDIΛ[…] on the upper line with, in smaller letters on the lower line, five apparent verticals followed by T. Clearer impressions of this stamp read VIIDIACVS on the upper line (A sometimes blind as in this example and sometimes with diagonal dash), with IIICIT in smaller letters on the lower line (initial I for F, II for E on both lines), for Vediacus fecit (made it). His mortaria are now known from Baldock (2); Benwell; Braughing (2); Earl's Barton; Godmanchester; Great Chesterford; Great Weldon; Higham Ferrars (3); Odell, Beds; Piddington (3-4, possibly more); Rushden, Northants; Sandy, Beds. (2); Stanground South, Cambs; Stanwick, Northants; Stonea (2); Verulamium (4); Wallsend; Wellingborough; Wood Burcote Farm, near Towcester; and Wyboston, Beds. (There is another in the Cole Ambrose Collection in Cambridge Museum, which may be from near Ely). The only two recorded from the north are both from Hadrian's Wall. The distribution of his work indicates activity in the upper Nene valley, probably in Northamptonshire. He was the only stamping potter working in the upper Nene valley whose products reached a more than strictly local market. His rim-profiles and spouts, which are very distinctive, best fit a date within the period AD150-180. For some interesting details of his work see Rollo (1994, 18-20, fig 16, ST5a, ST5b, ST4).

22. Nene Valley Colour Coat beaker, bag-shaped with a plain bead rim, the pot is decorated with barbotine under a near black coat. The design is an elaborate three strand *rinceau*, between a line of dots or pimples above and below. One fragment near the base survives and has two deep grooves. The date range is given by Perrin as generally from the later second century to perhaps the middle of the third century (1999, 93, fig 60,143-6). Context 166, fill of well shaft.

23. Flanged pie dish, fine sandy ware fired pale brown with a reduced end-firing to give a dark grey skin. The rim has a bead and a small step outside and the flange slopes down from there. The form appears in the third century at Orton Hall Farm (Mackreth 1996, 146, fig 92,300). However, the earliest one from Baldock came from a context dated 170-200 (Stead and Rigby 1986, 343, fig 142, 540) and because of this was thought to be intrusive. At Verulamium the earliest had a very shallow bead and came from a context dated 105-130 (Frere 1972, 298, fig 113,488), then one with a groove on the rim was dated 130-150 (*ibid*., 312, fig 119,719), but their real appearance was in the late third century (*ibid*., 346, fig 132,1101-1103, and so on). In other words, the date-

range is from the earlier third century, however catalogue entry 21 may be at the beginning of this *floruit*. The sloped flange is relatively common, especially amongst those made from shell-tempered ware. Context 38, ditch 37/137, west-east ditch south of Iron Age enclosure.

24. Pie dish in a shell-tempered fabric. The rim is dished on top and has an incised wavy line along it. It has proved difficult to find an adequate parallel. However, a noticeable feature at Orton Hall Farm was the appearance of late and relatively large flanged or thick-rimmed bowls, some with decoration along the top of the rims, from Period 4 beginning c.300/325 (Mackreth 1996, 163: RSG, note parallels cited) into Period 5 which runs to the end of the fourth century and beyond, the flat topped type being specific to this period (*ibid*, 174: RSG). The impression is, however, that the thick-walled examples which are truly late and that those whose walls are as this as this are likely not to be late fourth century. Context 7, ditch 8, north-eastern ditches.

25. (Fig 17 & Plate 8) Flagon top with female head, Oxford ware dating c.350-400 AD (pers comm. Charmian Woodfield). This is a high status object and seems to have vague religious connotations, for example, two were recovered from the temple of Nodens, at Lydney, Gloucestershire. Context 186, soils abutting wall 107

OTHER ROMAN FINDS
by Ian Meadows and Andy Chapman, with Steve Critchley

The site was systematically metal detected by Steve Critchley and most of the Roman metal items were recovered in this way. Roman items include a copper alloy bangle, a bone comb and an enamelled copper alloy circular disc brooch, dated by Donald Mackreth as 2nd century into 3rd century AD. Three pieces of Roman equipment comprised an iron rod with loop end, possibly a bucket handle, a tip of a possible awl and a joiners-dog. Six iron nails came from Roman contexts and there are two small fragments of probable Roman glass. There were three possible fragments of Roman roof slate, two could originate from the Collyweston Slate facies and the third originates from the Northampton Sand ironstone beds, as exposed on site.

The two querns from Roman deposits comprise a small fragment, identified by its sandstone geology, and part of a conglomerate, hemispherical upper stone (Watts 2002; beehive querns type-e).

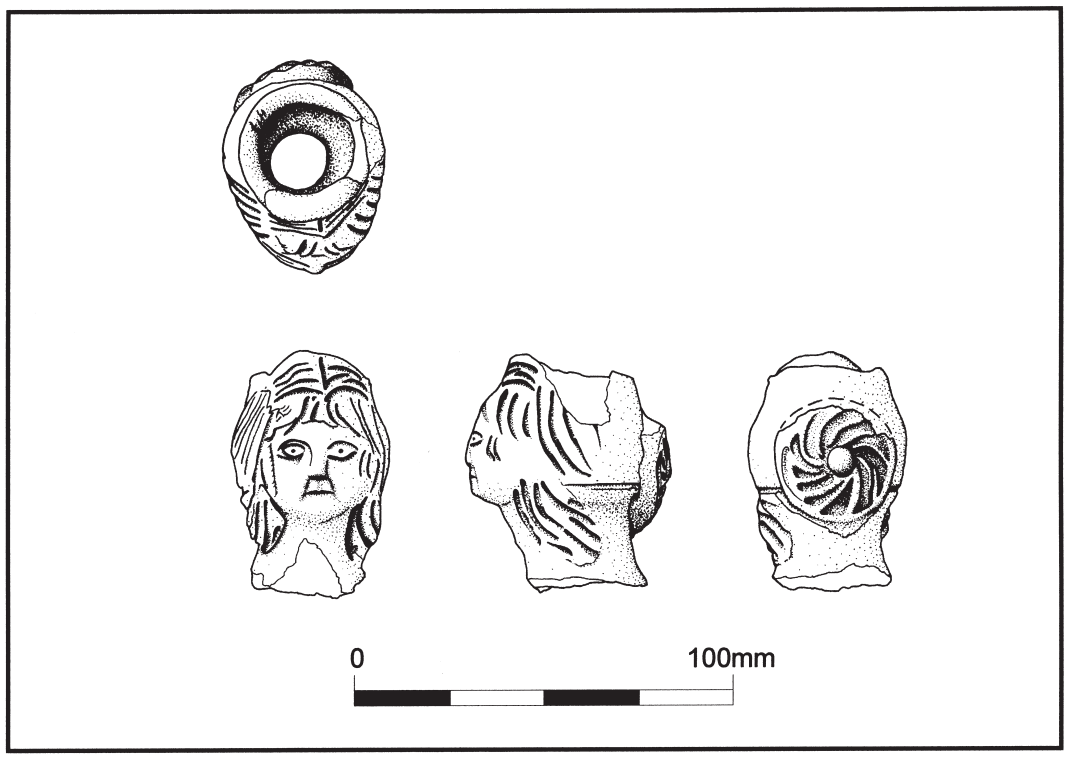

Fig 17 The pottery head

Plate 8 The pottery head, front and back views

COINS

There are seven bronze coins dated between *c*AD260-AD350.
AE antonianus mid to late 3rd century, possibly Postumus (259-68)
Obv. Radiate head to right: Rev illegible
SF 3, context U/S

AE4 Barbarous radiate late 3rd century, prototype unclear
SF22, context 186, soils abutting wall 107

AE3/4 Constantine (307-337)
Obv. Laureate head to right: Rev. GLORIA EXERCITUS 2 soldiers 1 standard.
Mintmark (probably) TRS (Trier), SF2, context U/S

AE 3/4 House of Constantine
Obv. Illegible: Rev. GLORIA EXERCITUS 2 soldiers 1 standard
SF6, context U/S

AE4 Constans (337-348).
Obv. Laureate head to right:
Rev. VICTORIAE DD AVGG Q NN two victories facing
Mintmark TRP (Trier). Small find (SF) 1, context U/S

AE4 Barbarous copy of a GLORIA EXERCITUS
2 soldiers 1 standard probably mid 4th century.
SF8, context 184, ditch 183, running east from eastern boundary
Blank flan cut to AE32 size and shape.
SF15, context U/S

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

THE ANIMAL BONE
by Karen Deighton

Animal bone weighing 27.2kg, recovered from 111 contexts, was scanned to gain an overview of species present and approximately 20% derived from a range of features and phases across the site was examined more closely.

Preservation was fairly good with many elements identifiable to species level. Fragmentation was variable across the site. On the whole surface abrasion was low rendering butchery highly detectable. This, along with the incidence of canid gnawing, suggests that the bone remained on the surface for a while before burial. A small amount of burning was noted.

The species represented are those expected from a late Iron Age /Roman site in the area. They comprise cow, sheep/goat, pig and horse. Equal numbers of cattle and sheep/goat would be expected for the late Iron Age with a growing reliance on cattle in the Roman period, but the assemblage is too fragmentary and mixed to provide reliable quantifications. The low incidence of wild species, as typically seen on middle and late Iron Age domestic settlement sites, indicates a reliance on domesticates. The one exception to this is the presence of a complete shed red deer antler and the recovery of cut antler tines as antler working debris in the pits within the Iron Age enclosure. But this collected antler resource used for craft exploitation is not accompanied by any other deer bone exploited as a food resource.

There appeared to be no particular dominance of body part. Cut marks were seen on cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse. Evidence for butchery suggests dismembering and filleting were the dominant techniques.

THE PLANT REMAINS
by Karen Deighton

Twenty-two 10 litre soil samples were floated using a siraf tank fitted with a 500micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots were dried and examined with a microscope at 10x magnification to establish the species present and the potential for further analysis.

Preservation was average. Approximately 50% of the charred grain was fragmented and showed signs of abrasion. All the samples had a high incidence of root material, which suggests that the contemporary surface was colonised by vegetation.

The assemblage consists of typical crops and their associated weeds in the final stages of processing. The Chenopodiums, used for flour in times of need, are usually indicative of nitrogen rich soil. Spelt was common during the Late Iron Age/Belgic and Roman periods, as was hulled barley. The presence of pulses, a cheap source of protein, in samples containing cereal could suggest the two were being intentionally grown together as a maslin crop or harvested and stored together. The relative absence of chaff could suggest initial processing (i.e. threshing and winnowing) was taking place elsewhere. The samples appear to represent storage crops or the waste generated by the final cleaning before use.

DISCUSSION

The sub-square Iron Age enclosure is securely dated to a period of no more than *c.*100-150 years between the late 2nd or early 1st century BC to the early 1st century AD. Given the consistent nature of the pit fills and the lack of intercutting, it is further suggested that the actual duration of the occupation may have been considerably less than this, perhaps a period of no more than 50 years, or even only a single generation, from the mid- to late-1st century BC and into the early 1st century AD. The deep enclosure ditch places the enclosure in the Wootton Hill style, which has been defined as "small enclosures…surrounded by an exceptionally deep ditch" (Dix and Jackson 1989, 158). However, in this from the enclosure is also "additionally strengthened by banks, stockades and elaborate gateways". The Mallard Close enclosure may have had an internal bank or even a stone wall, as indicated by the quantities of large stone rubble filling parts of the ditch system and even as a final fill in some of the pits, but there was no elaborate gateway, unless this too had been stone built.

The levelling of the enclosure at the time of the late Iron Age-early Roman transition is true of all other examples of Wootton Hill type enclosures (Taylor 1999, 3). Excavation and aerial photography has recorded 16 Wootton Hill type enclosures in the county (Kidd 1999, 7) but these do not seem to be just a Northamptonshire phenomena, as similar sites have been recorded by aerial photography in Nottinghamshire (Willis 2001, 14-16). These enclosures are normally situated on higher ground and may be associated with high status sites such as hillforts and/or villas (Kidd 1999, 7). While the evidence for the broader context of the Mallard Close enclosure is lacking, there is reasonable evidence for the presence of a high-status Roman site, perhaps a villa. The Iron Age context is not defined, but it is possible that the excavated enclosure, which appears to have no available internal space for a roundhouse, may have been part of a larger settlement. One possibility is that the Roman walled enclosure partly uncovered at the southern edge of the excavation had supplanted an Iron Age and early Roman domestic focus.

The enclosure clearly functioned within a mixed farming regime typical of the time. The deep pits were presumably used for grain storage, and crop processing is indicated by the querns. The animal bone assemblage shows that the usual range of domesticated species, cattle, sheep/goat and pig, were kept, along with horses, and the only appearance of a non-domesticated species is as shed red deer antler and antler working debris, showing that this material was being collected as a craft resource. This is all typical of the late Iron Age in Northamptonshire when most of the landscape was densely populated and intensively utilised by a mixed farming regime (Kidd 1999, 8).

The presence of antler in Iron Age contexts suggests the proximity of woodland. Nearby excavations seem to show extensive open landscapes by the middle Iron Age. On high ground overlooking the Nene valley at Doddington and Northampton, open landscapes have been demonstrated by mollusc assemblages (Enright and Thomas 1998, and Williams 1974). Nearby, on lower ground in the valley bottom at Wollaston there was Bronze Age woodland clearance followed by an open pastoral landscape in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age then the development of a mixed agricultural regime in the middle/late Iron Age (Brown and Meadows 1996; Meadows 1995). However, given the need for timber from woodland resources to provide building

materials, other equipment and as fuel there must obviously still have been extensive wooded areas.

The antler working debris ties in with the evidence that craft industries were small-scale operations of fashioning and repairing domestic/everyday tools (Willis 2001, 21). It has been suggested that antler may have been a status possession as excavation on low status sites in Northamptonshire has produced only a handful of red deer/antler pieces while the high status site at Hunsbury Hill fort produced many antler and horn tools including 14 horn cheek pieces from bridles-bits, several toggles, knife handles and other tools (Fell 1936, 71-3). The 12 antler pieces from Mallard Close appear to be the largest assemblage after Hunsbury in the county. However, as this material appears in the fill of the storage pits as probable special deposits, see below, it may only be the particular circumstances of deposition that mark out this deposit as exceptional. A similarly large deposit has come from a middle Iron Age settlement at Coton Park, Rugby, Warwickshire (Chapman forthcoming). In this instance the antler had been deposited in association with copper alloy casting debris, crucibles and mould fragments, but otherwise the site does not appear to be of especially high status.

Three types of finds have been classified as occurring in special deposits; iron objects, worked bone/antler and querns (Hill 1995, 67). At Mallard Close two of these are represented. The sawn antler pieces, the antler objects and the complete antler were all deposited in the fills of two large storage pits, 69 and 91, and a small pit, 57. The complete antler was deposited in pit 69 above the loose clean primary fill and on top of a thin layer of charcoal rich soil, and further sawn antler tines were in the secondary fill above this. A small fragment of quern from this pit may have been just a casual discard. The secondary fills of pit 91 also contained scattered lengths of sawn antler tine and there was half of a beehive quern in the final fill, perhaps as a termination deposit. Another half of a separate beehive quern was found in the secondary fills of the northern entrance terminal of the enclosure ditch. A complete saddle quern was found in a much smaller pit, 57, which contained an exceptional concentration of finds, including a primary pottery assemblage of thick-walled sherds from a large storage vessel or vessels, a piece of worked antler and most of the fired clay recovered from the site. A single lump of iron slag was possibly from the lining of a smithing hearth. The lack of apparent selection within the broad range of material in this small pit may suggest that this was truly the disposal of domestic debris, and it certainly contrasts with the more limited selected deposition occurring during the filling of the two large storage pits.

The evidence indicates that the deep-ditched enclosure and the internal pits were abandoned in the early 1st century AD, and an internal bank or wall may have been pushed back into these features to level the site. However, the western and eastern boundaries of the new enclosure system show a clear respect for the Iron Age enclosure, indicating that there was no significant, if any, break in occupation of the site. The new system was quite different in appearance, with the deep-ditched enclosure replaced by shallow ditches that were recut on a number of occasions. The new ditches are therefore doing nothing more than acting to define a series of enclosed spaces presumably serving varying functions within the daily life of the settlement. The creation of this enclosure system is associated with Belgic-style pottery, indicating its origin in the middle of the 1st century AD in the decades immediately preceding the Roman conquest. The settlement was to continue in use in this form through the rest of the 1st century and into the early decades of the 2nd century. It would have served much the same mixed farming regime as was practiced in the late Iron Age. A scatter of postholes in the southern part of the enclosure may have been a rectangular timber building with a cluster of shallow pits beside it. However, it is likely that the excavated enclosure was only the northern part of a more extensive settlement, and the main domestic focus may well have lain to the south, beneath the walled Roman enclosure.

The walled enclosure had been created by the mid-2nd century and it clearly denotes that this was a prosperous settlement generating a sufficient surplus to enable the owners to create a walled domestic enclosure probably at least some 50m square. With the loss of most of this area to quarrying, it will never be possible to define the nature of the Roman domestic buildings. However, given the use of stone for the walled enclosure, which to the north may have had a recessed façade containing a gateway with a stone-flagged threshold, it is possible that it contained a small stone-built villa serving as the domestic centre for the agricultural estate. Whatever the earlier status of the late Iron Age and

early Roman settlement, they had clearly either maintained their earlier wealth or had prospered particularly well in the growing Roman economy of the late 1st and early 2nd centuries.

The continuing agricultural basis of the settlement is seen in the provision of a T-shaped drying oven, traditionally called corn drying ovens but now seen to have served perhaps a wider range of functions, including functioning as malting ovens. As the process of malting involves steeping barley in water before spreading it out to sprout, the nearby presence of a stone-lined well may suggest that this area had served as a specialised crop processing zone.

The Roman establishment appears to have continued to prosper through the 3rd century and into the 4th century. While the pottery assemblage is poor for this period, the background scatter of coins recovered by metal detecting run through to the mid-4th century, suggesting that the settlement may have been abandoned at around 350AD or shortly after. At this time, or later, the enclosure wall, and perhaps the villa as well, was systematically dismantled and levelled to the ground, with the better quality facing stones being carted away for reuse elsewhere. Whether this happened in the late Roman period or even in the late Saxon/medieval period is unknown.

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