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Excavation of Iron Age and Roman settlement at Upton, Northampton

by

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with contributions by
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SUMMARY

Excavation at Upton, Northampton prior to residential development located settlement from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age and continuing through the Iron Age and Roman periods. A small group of isolated pits, radiocarbon dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, contained a small pottery assemblage and a saddle quern. A short length of a pit alignment was examined. A number of pits contained early/middle Iron Age pottery, but a radiocarbon date centred on the 4th to 3rd centuries BC indicates that the pits, which were unusually deep, were still open into the middle Iron Age. Middle to late Iron Age settlement comprised several enclosures of varying sizes and plan forms, and a possible roundhouse, all set alongside a linear boundary ditch with the same orientation as the pit alignment but lying 50m to the south. The linear boundary was later reinstated slightly to the south of its original line, contemporary with a second phase of enclosure construction. The landscape was re-organised in the early Roman period, the late 1st/early 2nd centuries AD, with the introduction of a rectilinear ditch system and a patchwork of small enclosures, lying largely to the east of the Iron Age settlement and either a satellite of, or peripheral to the 'small town' at Duston. Settlement continued through the 3rd century and into the later 4th century. There was a complex palimpsest of rectilinear and more irregular ditched enclosures, and in the early phase there was a pottery kiln and possible workshop, a stone-lined well and two inhumation burials. The material finds are fairly typical for a small rural settlement, although the presence of some finewares and a range of building materials suggest that there was a well appointed household nearby.

INTRODUCTION

English Partnerships (now part of the Homes and Communities Agency) was granted planning permission to develop a 43.9ha block of land at Upton, in the Northampton South West District, for residential purposes (Fig 1; NGR SP 722 600). Geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation had defined areas of extant Iron Age and Roman occupation in the northern part of the development area (Shaw 1990 and Prentice 1999).

For the purpose of discharging the archaeological condition attached to the planning consent, Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological works comprising open area excavation of the identified cores of the Iron Age and Roman settlement areas between September and December 2000, in advance of any site groundworks. In addition, there was further evaluation in the form of geophysical survey and trial trenching in the southern part of the development area, where only remains of the medieval open field system were found (Hayward 2001).

An interim report summarising the results was produced immediately after completion of the excavations (Maull 2001), but as there were to be archaeological watching briefs during the initial phases of infrastructure development on the unexcavated parts of the development site (Jones 2002 and 2003; Leigh 2003), the results were not taken further towards analysis and publication at that time.

Watching briefs have also been conducted during the later 2000s on groundworks for several of the housing areas that lay close to the known areas of archaeology. This fieldwork and its analysis have been funded separately, but many of the results have been incorporated with those of the main excavations.

The published report is an edited version of the client report (Walker and Maull 2010), in which some of the detail from the specialist reports, particularly tabulated data, has been omitted. A copy of the client report is provided on the CD attached to this volume, and it is also available through the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record and online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was sponsored by English Partnerships (now part of the Homes and Communities Agency). The excavation was monitored by Myk Flitcroft for Northamptonshire Heritage. The project was managed by Andy Chapman and Chris Burgess, and the fieldwork was directed by Anthony Maull. The excavation was supervised by Michael Webster and Sarah Jane Haston, and the fieldwork was conducted by David Leigh, Theodora Anastasiadou, Charlotte Walker, Ian McGregor

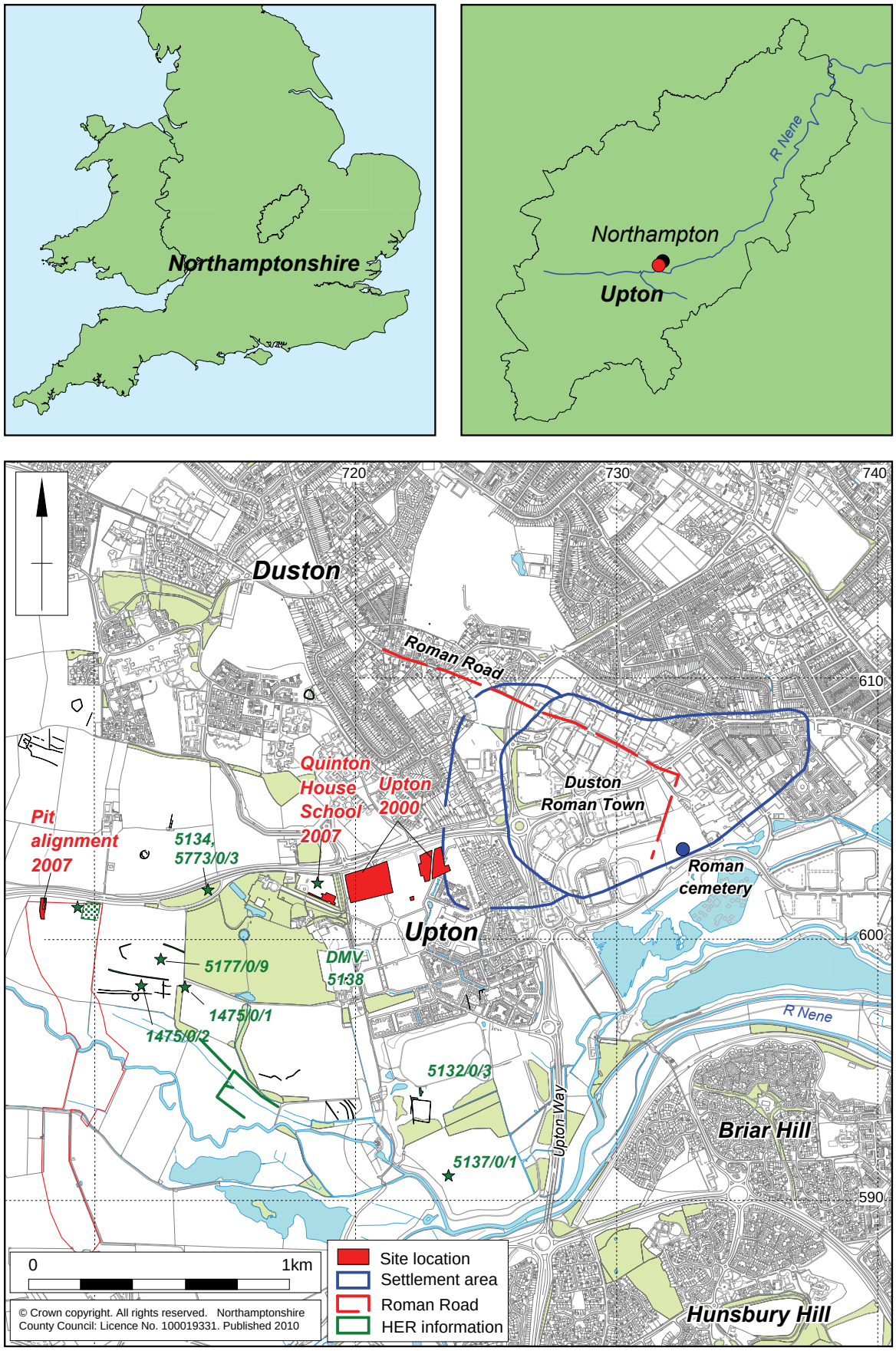


Fig 1 Site location and Historic Environment Record data

and Catriona Toms. Metal detecting was undertaken by Steve Critchley. Geophysical survey was by Peter Masters. The watching briefs through the later 2000s have been undertaken by David Leigh.

The report has been written by Charlotte Walker and Anthony Maull, based on the analysis of the site record prepared by Anthony Maull. Copyediting of the client report and preparation of the publication text has been carried out by Andy Chapman. The illustrations were compiled by Jacqueline Harding, Hale Moharramzadeh, Charlotte Walker and Amir Bassir. Northamptonshire Archaeology thanks all specialists named in the report for their contributions. The reports on the prehistoric pottery were compiled by Dennis Jackson with the sections on dating and the resultant discussions edited by Andy Chapman to take account of the implications of the radiocarbon dates.

Anthony Maull would like to thank the field staff for completing the excavation of the site on time despite appalling conditions during the wettest autumn since records began.

LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site was located about 4km to the south-west of central Northampton in the former parish of Upton. The site was bounded by the A45 to the north and Upton Way to the east (Fig 1). The main archaeological features in the northern part of the site lay at around 80-85m OD (Fig 2). The ground slopes gently to the south towards the River Nene, which is about 1.5km from the northern edge of the site and lies at *c*65m OD. To the north the ground rises more sharply to the north-east, up to 115m OD. This location provided fairly distant views to the south across the Nene valley towards Hunsbury hillfort, which lies to the south-east on the facing slopes south of the river.

There were no sources of water, other than the Nene, in the vicinity of the site, although the watertable was very high at the time of excavation and several springs spontaneously appeared on various parts of the site. A reconstruction of the probable topography and hydrology of the area shows the distribution of known Iron Age and Roman sites around Upton and the Hunsbury ridge. The sites are largely concentrated on the valley slopes and Hunsbury ridge, with little known activity to the west of the area.

The underlying geology of the site has been mapped as Northampton Sand with ironstone to the north of the site and as Glacial Lake Clays to the south. Although the excavation largely confirmed this, the interface between the differing geologies was situated further to the north, with the Iron Age boundary ditch approximately marking the division.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

The prehistoric and Roman settlements at Upton are part of a wider landscape of known sites situated on the valley slopes of the Upper Nene Basin (Figs 1 and 2).

MESOLITHIC TO EARLY IRON AGE ACTIVITY

Although present day fieldwalking on and around the site has recovered only a scattering of prehistoric flints, an estimated 25,000 implements and cores dating from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age were recovered from an area of around 50ha at Duston during ironstone extraction between 1904 and 1912. The Mesolithic site at Duston is only one of two in the county known in national literature; the other is at Honey Hill (Phillips 2004). Early Mesolithic material was also recovered during excavations at Chalk Lane, Northampton (Williams and Shaw 1981). There are also large amounts of Neolithic flintwork in the Duston assemblage, though there is little accompanying settlement evidence in the area. There is a putative Neolithic mortuary enclosure to the west of the site, although no corroborative dating was found (Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) 1475/0/2; Jackson 1993/1994; Fig 1). The Briar Hill causewayed enclosure, which was respected from the early Neolithic to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, lay on the facing slopes to the south of the river, below Hunsbury Hill (Bamford 1985).

A number of pit alignments, often dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age and interpreted as territorial boundary markers, have been recorded in the wider vicinity of the site. Recent excavation at Quinton House School, some 100m to the west of the site, has revealed a continuation of the pit alignment found at Upton (Foard-Colby and Walker this volume). A pit alignment located and partly excavated during the construction of the Cross Valley Link Way *c*1km to the west of the site may converge with the pit alignment at Upton as it runs towards the site on a similar east-west alignment (Carlyle this volume). Further afield, two separate pit alignments were recorded at Briar Hill, one running tangentially off the Neolithic causewayed enclosure and another some 300m to the south (Bamford 1985 and Jackson 1974). To the south-east, a pit alignment is known from geophysical survey at Wootton Fields. The precinct wall of a Roman villa ran closely parallel to the alignment, suggesting that the boundary persisted into the Roman period (Chapman *et al* 2005). Further pit alignments have been observed at Kings Heath/Dallington, again in the vicinity of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure.

MIDDLE TO LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

One of the most prominent Iron Age monuments in the area is that of Hunsbury hillfort, *c*2.5km to the south-east (Fig 2). The hillfort was built in the early-middle Iron Age and was probably abandoned at some time in the late Iron Age. Many unfinished iron objects found at the site suggest that it may have served as a centre for the local production of iron. However, there is no evidence of iron smelting having taken place at the hillfort itself, even though it is located on good sources of workable ironstone (Jackson 1993/4). A collection of 124 querns in Northampton Museum are thought to have come from the hillfort. The stones used come from many different places within England, indicating that Hunsbury had wide-ranging contacts and must have been a site of some importance (Ingle 1993/4). A number of possibly contemporary Iron Age sites also occupied the Hunsbury ridge, including enclosures examined during

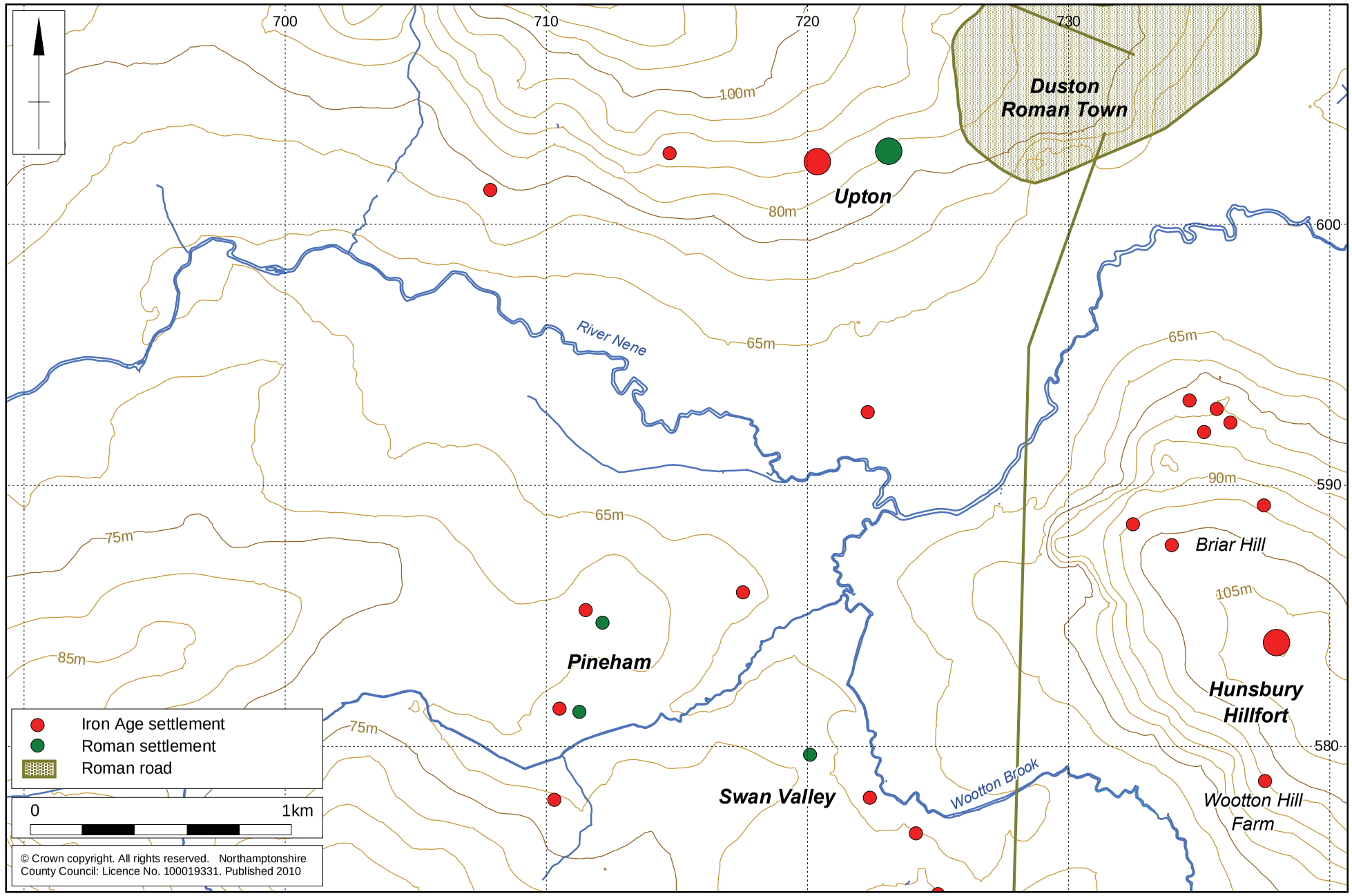


Fig 2 The topography and the distribution of Iron Age and Roman sites around Upton

the excavation of the causewayed enclosure at Briar Hill (Bamford 1985) and the distinctive enclosure at Wootton Hill Farm (Jackson 1988/9), with its exceptionally deep enclosure ditch, while there are also lower lying sites to the west of the Hunsbury ridge at Swan Valley, adjacent to Wootton Brook (Holmes and Chapman 2005).

A group of Iron Age pits recorded during the widening of the A45, 750m to the west of the site (HER 5134; Jackson *et al* 1969) were adjacent to, and probably associated with some ditches that seemed to have formed the north-eastern corner of an enclosure. There was a sub-square enclosure, visible as a cropmark and subsequently investigated, located to the south of the site on the Nene floodplain (HER 5132/0/3; Jackson 1993/4). There was no associated dating evidence but it is thought to have been Iron Age or Roman in origin. Linear ditches and possible trackways to the south-west of the site may also have been Iron Age or Roman in origin (HER 1475/0/1; Jackson 1993/4). Further linear features to the north have been interpreted as Saxon or medieval in origin, but may date to the same period (5177/0/9).

Since the excavation of the settlement at Upton, a large sub-square enclosure, dated to the middle Iron Age, has been excavated to the immediate west at Quinton House School (Foard-Colby and Butler 2006 and Foard-Colby and Walker this volume). Here there was a roundhouse within an enclosure also containing numerous pits and postholes. The Quinton House School enclosure respects the same linear boundary system as the Upton settlement, indicating that the Upton enclosures are no more than a half of the settlement area, which may extend even further westward.

A significant later Iron Age settlement focus at Duston probably replaced Hunsbury hillfort as a centre for social/economic activity in the area (Friendship-Taylor 1999). It was clearly an important economic centre, as evidenced by the comparatively large quantity of coins that have been found here. Unfortunately, most of the site has been destroyed, principally by ironstone quarrying in the 19th century.

Further afield, a middle to late Iron Age settlement has been located *c*2km to the south-west at Pineham Barn (Brown 2007; Fig 2) that, like the Swan Valley settlement, lies adjacent to a tributary stream flowing north to join the River Nene. It can be postulated that further settlement located downstream, to the east of Upton, has since been lost to the development of Northampton, As further east along the Nene valley there are known settlements at Ecton, Earls Barton, Wollaston and Wellingborough.

ROMAN SETTLEMENT

The Roman settlement at Duston developed during the 1st century AD and was focused on at least two roads, one from *Bannaventa* (Whilton Locks), *c*10km to the north-west, and one from *Lactodorum* (Towcester), *c*15km to the south (Figs 1 and 2). It eventually became one of the more significant undefended nucleated settlements in the county. The settlement was composed of a series of '*irregularly shaped ditched enclosures laid out to either side of the main roads within which stood first timber then stone buildings of simple form fronting on to the roads*' (Taylor 2002). The site is poorly understood due to the lack of targeted excavation and large-scale destruction by mining in the 19th century. It appears to have been in use up to the 4th century and seems to have functioned as an agricultural and commercial centre. The coin evidence from the site may suggest that it had a significant role in monetary exchange in the 1st century AD. There has been no specific evidence suggesting craft specialisation however.

SAXON AND MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

Early/middle Saxon settlement features have been found to the west of the current site (HER 5773/0/3). A sunken featured building (SFB) was found during the widening of the A45 in 1965. The building contained more than 60 loomweights and it was interpreted as a weaving shed, rather than a domestic building, which was eventually destroyed by fire (Jackson *et al* 1969). More evidence of SFBs and posthole buildings were found during evaluation about 200m further to the north (Shaw 1993/4). These features may form separate elements within a dispersed early/middle Saxon settlement pattern.

The Roman settlement at Duston does not seem to have continued into the Saxon period, and by the middle Saxon period the main core of settlement had migrated to the east, present day central Northampton.

To the immediate west of the site is Upton Park. The walled area of the park contains the remains of Upton deserted medieval village to the south, medieval fishponds and ridge and furrow to the west, as well as the still upstanding Upton Hall and St Michaels Church to the north (HER 5138). The medieval manor house probably stood on the same site as the present Hall, but no medieval fabric survives within it (RCHME 1985).

A ring ditch on the Nene floodplain to the south of the site was, as a result of trial trench evaluation, thought more likely to be the remains of a medieval post-mill than a Bronze Age round barrow (HER 5137/0/1; Jackson 1993/4).

THE EXCAVATION

METHODOLOGY

The areas to be excavated, which totalled 2.8ha, had been defined in the archaeological brief. To the west, Area 1, a rectangular area of 1.90ha measuring 170m east-west by 115m north south, took in the known core of the Iron Age settlement (Figs 3 and 4). To the east, Area 2, was a square area of 0.87ha, measuring 100m east-west by 100m north south. It had to be split in two by a 9m-wide baulk due to the presence of overhead cables. It should also have extended further to the east, but this could not be achieved due to the adverse weather conditions. Area 2 was designed to take in the more irregular elements of the Roman ditch system, while the more regular, ladder arrangement to the south was largely excluded from excavation; although part of this area was later recorded during a watching brief on access road construction.

The two areas were stripped of topsoil and overburden using a combination of box scrapers and 360° excavators

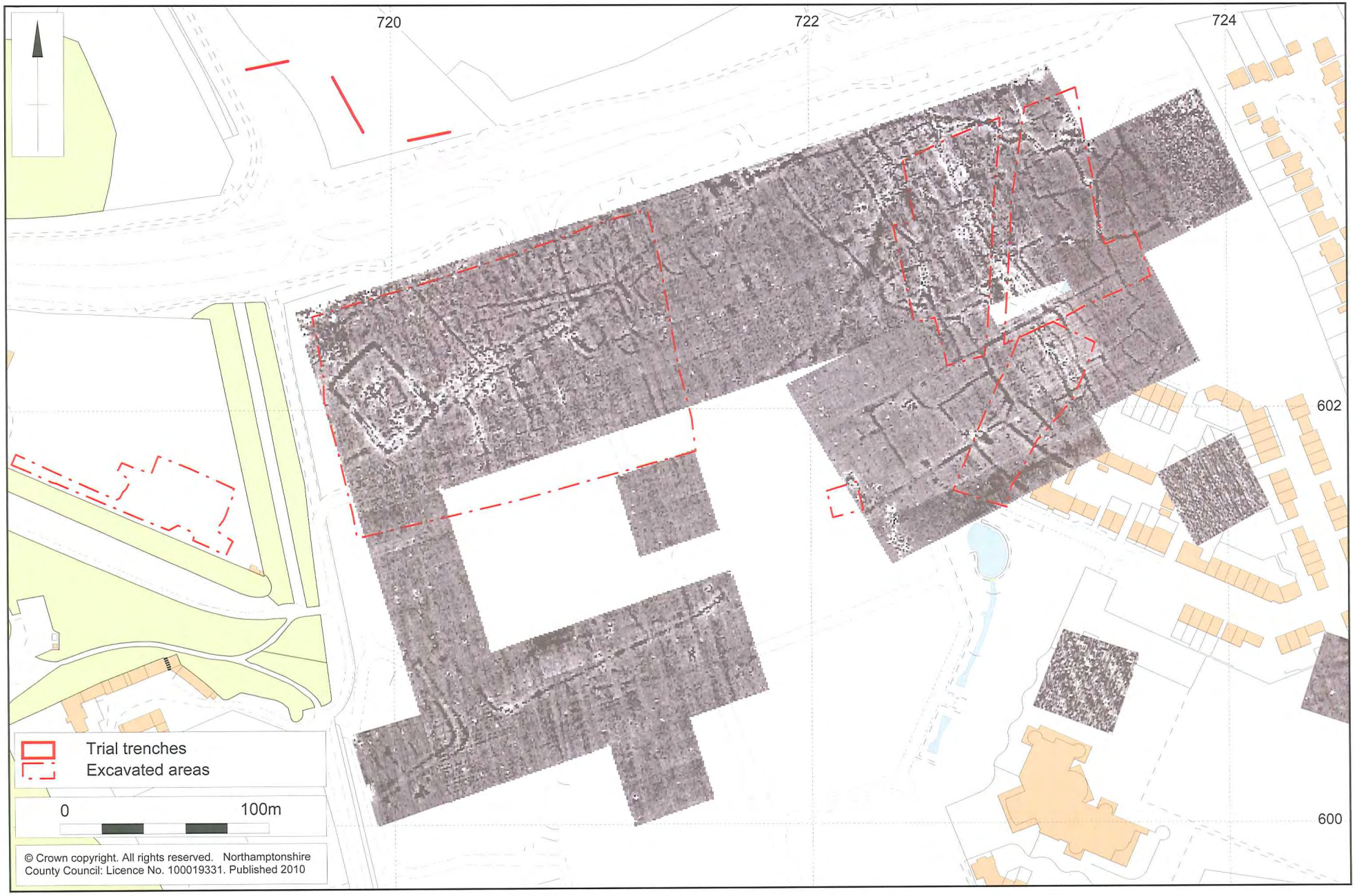


Fig 3 General site plan showing the geophysical survey

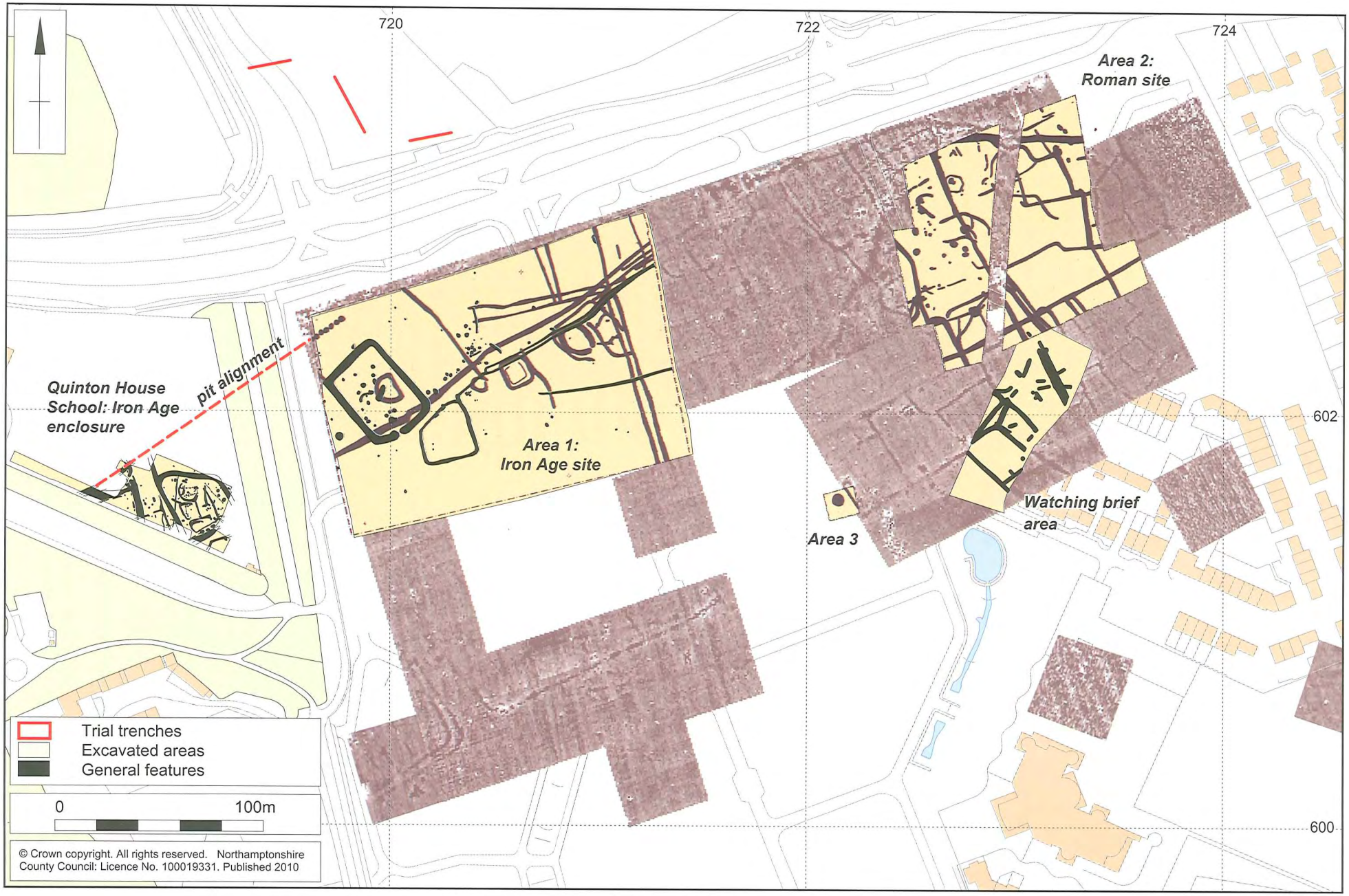


Fig 4 General site plan showing the geophysical survey and excavated features

fitted with toothless ditching buckets, to reveal the upper archaeological horizon. The incredibly heavy rainfall during the course of the excavation destroyed much of the integrity of the soil structure, effectively turning it into slurry, which brought machine stripping to a halt at one stage.

A separately funded watching brief, not reported here, has located several pits containing burnt debris and Roman pottery (David Leigh pers comm), located around the south-western limit of the geophysical survey, adjacent to the double-ditched boundary ditches (Figs 3 & 4).

SUMMARY OF SITE CHRONOLOGY

The sequence of development is summarised below (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of site chronology

Period/phase	Description
Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pits	
8th to mid-6th centuries BC	Small pit group and isolated pit
Early/middle Iron Age pit alignment	
Possibly 6th to 4th/3rd centuries BC	Suspected early Iron Age origin, but pits still open at beginning of middle Iron Age
Middle/late Iron Age Settlement	
2nd to early 1st century BC	Linear boundary with associated enclosures and a roundhouse
1st century BC to mid-1st century AD	Boundary redefined and new enclosures set out
Roman settlement	
2nd/3rd century AD	Kiln, well and associated activity.
3rd/4th century AD	Irregular enclosure systems.
3rd/4th century AD	Rectilinear enclosure system
Medieval activity	The site lies within the medieval field system of the deserted village of Upton

MESOLITHIC TO EARLY BRONZE AGE ACTIVITY

Struck flints, ranging in date from the Mesolithic to the Early Bronze Age, were recovered as residual finds.

Large amounts of Mesolithic flint have previously been found in Duston, indicating that the area may have been a favoured location for hunter gatherer groups. It is thought that Mesolithic sites are generally located on the permeable geologies with extensive views of the surrounding landscape, but also reasonably close to water. Many of the sites in Northamptonshire are situated on the Nene valley and the site at Upton fits this pattern.

THE WORKED FLINT
by Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

Seventy-five pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from Iron Age and Roman contexts, comprising 40 flakes, 17 blades, six cores, three core fragments, and eight retouched tool forms.

The raw material is vitreous flint ranging in colour from a light grey to a dark grey and from a light greyish-brown to a mid greyish-brown, with a small amount of a light brownish-grey opaque flint. The cortex ranges from a light brown to dark brown or to a thick, white patination. The appearance of the flint and cortex indicates the origin of the raw material to have been local gravel flints.

A single-platform bladelet core dates stylistically to the late Mesolithic, and was probably used to produce blanks for microliths. The single microlith is a geometric type of Late Mesolithic date; similar to examples from Honey Hill, Elkington (Saville 1981).

The four scrapers consist of one end/side scraper, one end scraper, a roughly-shaped discoidal scraper, and a burnt and patinated scraper fragment. The remaining tools comprise a proximal fragment of a serrated blade, a piercer fashioned on the proximal end of a blade fragment, and a flake notched near the proximal end.

The characteristics of the assemblage suggest a Neolithic date with late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic element. Examples of other local sites with a Mesolithic and Neolithic component are Duston and Chalk Lane, Northampton (RCHME 1985).

THE LATE BRONZE AGE/EARLY IRON AGE PITS

Three pits, 305, 377 and 383, formed a small group in the southern part of Area 1, while a fourth pit, 4, lay 105m to the west, near the edge of the excavated area (Fig 5). These pits were from 0.75m to 1.60m in diameter and from 0.24m to 0.38m deep. The fills of the cluster of three pits was largely grey-brown sandy silts with occasional small stones, some of which were burnt, and flecks of charcoal. Distinct lenses of material, indicating deliberate episodes of dumping, comprised pieces of charcoal and burnt stone. In two of the pits, 383 and 377 there were large amounts of pottery (Fig 6), and pit 383 also contained a near complete saddle quern (Fig 7). Plant macrofossils included barley and wheat, as well as onion couch, a tuber sometimes eaten in the Bronze Age, but this material could be intrusive from the overlying Iron Age settlement. Charcoal from pit 383 has been radiocarbon dated but, due to the nature of the calibration curve for this period, the calibrated range spans 250 years, the 8th to early 6th centuries BC (810-530 cal BC, 95% confidence, 2540 +/- 40 BP, Beta-215490).

LATE BRONZE/EARLY IRON AGE POTTERY
by Dennis Jackson with Andy Chapman

A total of 420 sherds, 2506g, came from pits 383 and 305, with only three small sherds from pit 377. In addition, there are approximately 130 fragments which are not included in the count. It is estimated that the sherds from the pits came from not less than 32 vessels.

FABRIC

The sherds are generally small and weathered and in many respects their fabric is similar to the sherds from the pit alignment. Shell had not survived but is likely to

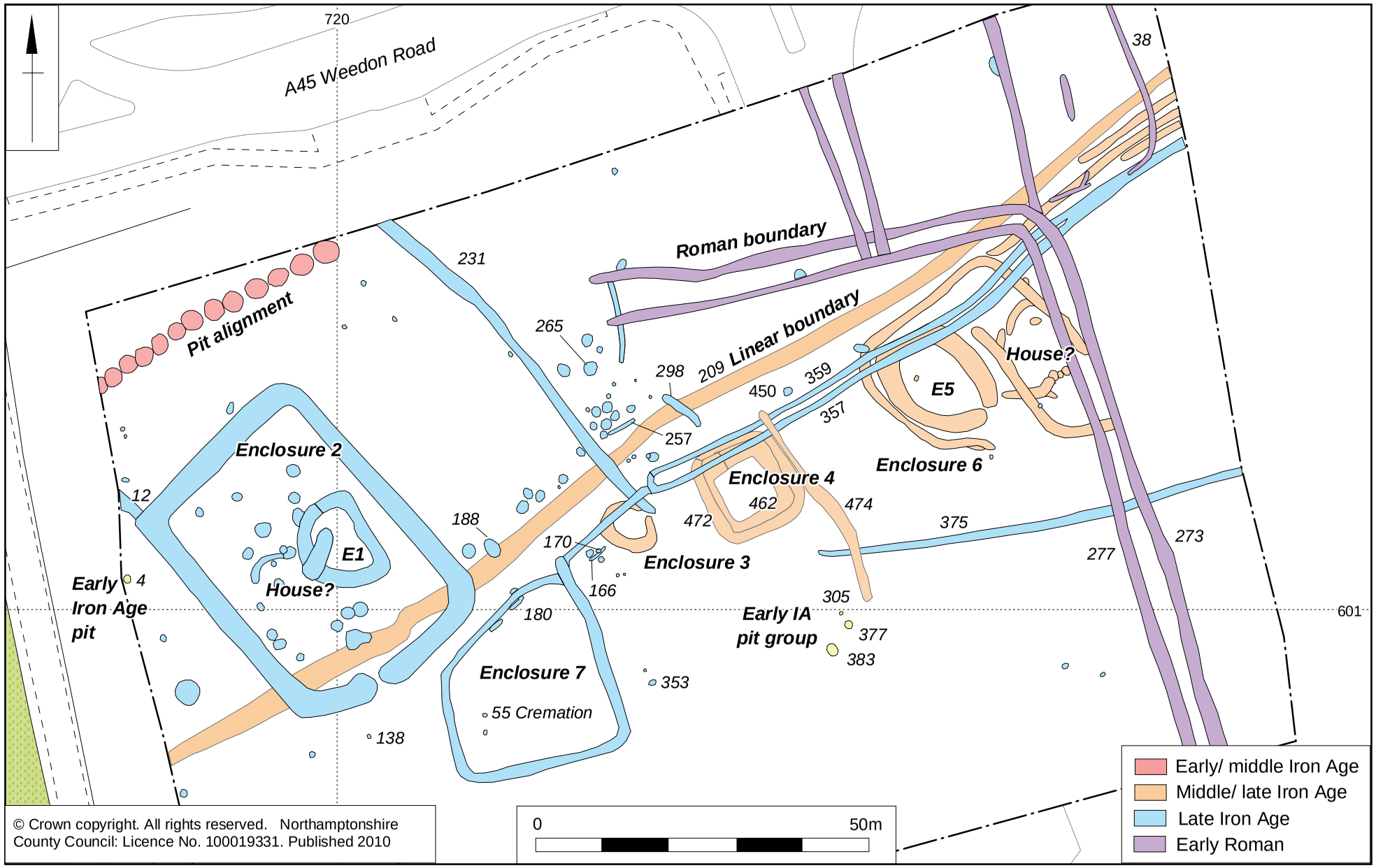


Fig 5 The Iron Age settlements

have been the dominant inclusion. The assemblage from the pits, however, contains more sherds where the voids are sparse or fine, and there are a small number of sherds, particularly from the rim and neck of the vessels, where the ware is extremely fine with few if any inclusions in the fabric.

The majority of the sherds from the pits are thin-walled, ranging from 5 to 10mm. Only 5% have walls more than 10mm thick. The fine ware rim and neck sherds are exceptionally thin-walled (2-5mm), and these are terracotta in colour throughout (Fig 6, 2 and 3). There are a higher percentage of sherds with an oxidised external surface from the pits than occurred in the pottery from the pit alignment, and more sherds in general were oxidised throughout (Table 2).

VESSEL FORM

There are over 400 body sherds from the two pits; 214 from pit 383 and 193 from pit 305, yet there are only eleven small rim sherds and two small base sherds. Eight of the rims sherds derive from vessels with the very thin rims, as described above. About 35% of the sherds from pit 305 derive from one vessel but there is still a variety of types in the assemblage from the two pits.

There are no diagnostic sherds from the shoulders of any vessel, and most are fairly flat suggesting they may have come from vessels with large diameters. A vessel with a diameter at the mouth of 510mm was recovered from the primary fill of the ring ditch at Thrapston (Hull 2000-1), and it may be that wide-mouthed or large diameter vessels were a feature of this period in the region. It is of interest that the fabric of the fine thin rim and neck sherds was not recognised in any of the body sherds and it is assumed that the main body of the vessels was in a coarser fabric.

DECORATION

There is one sherd from a small bowl with two horizontal grooves below the rim and short diagonal grooves on the outer edge of the rim (Fig 6, 1), and narrow incised lines occur below the rims of some of the fine wares (Fig 6, 3).

A decorated rim sherd from an isolated pit, 4, is the only sherd from it (Fig 6, 4). It has a very thin rim and neck similar to examples of fine ware from pits 383 and 305, but is black and not terracotta. The sherd is decorated on the shoulder with deep oval impressions with raised edges, made either with a piece of wood or bone or as small fingertip impressions. There is similar decoration on a sherd of late Bronze Age pottery from Borough Hill, Daventry (Jackson 1996-7).

DATE AND DISCUSSION

There is very little diagnostic pottery amongst the assemblage from these pits, but the colour and thickness of the sherds suggest it is closely comparable to the material recovered from a late Bronze Age ringwork at Thrapston (Hull 2000-1). Superficially, the assemblages look different because the shell, common in the fabric at Thrapston, had not survived at Upton.

Two radiocarbon dates from Thrapston suggest that the site was occupied between the 9th and 7th centuries BC. Similar pottery has also been recovered from sites at Briar Hill Farm, Northampton (Jackson 2003) and Oakley, Northants (Jackson 1982). Radiocarbon dates from two groups of pits at Oakley span the 10th to 7th centuries BC, but perhaps define a single period of occupation centred on 800BC. Wood charcoal from a short-lived species (hazel) in pit 385 at Upton, has been radiocarbon dated to 800-740 and 710-530cal BC (95% confidence, 2540+/-40 BP, Beta-215490), indicating a date in either the first half of the 8th century or within a wider range covering the 7th to early 6th century BC. This is in broad agreement with the dates for the sites at Thrapston and Oakley.

ILLUSTRATED POTTERY (Fig 6)

Pit 383

1 Vessel decorated with two horizontal grooves below the rim and incisions on the outer edge of the rim. Brown-grey-brown. Corky texture with common fine voids, 9mm thick.

2 Thin rim sherd (4mm thick) with a slight lip externally. Red-brown, Smooth faced with no visible inclusions. Very similar vessel from pit 305.

3 Thin rim sherd (4mm thick). Horizontal lines below the rim. Brown-grey-brown. Smooth faced with no inclusions.

Pit 4

4 Jar with a fine thin rim and decoration on the pronounced shoulder, dark grey-brown ware. Smooth faced. Medium voids and some grits.

THE SADDLE QUERN
by Andy Chapman

A saddle quern from pit 383 is of particular interest for its regular oval form (Fig 7). It comprises an oval block of fine-grained sandstone, 325mm long by 205mm wide and 25-55mm thick. The stone was probably *c*345mm long, but one end is lost and one side is damaged and reddened

Table 2: Colour variations in pottery from Thrapston and Upton

		Percentage occurrence		
Type	**Description**	**Thrapston**	**Upton Pits 383/305**	**Upton Pit Alignment**
1	Inner and outer face reduced (grey/brown to black)	22.3	26	59
2	Outer face oxidised (orange to red/brown)	56.6	57	38
3	Oxidised both faces	15.9	17	3

Fig 6 Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery (1-4)

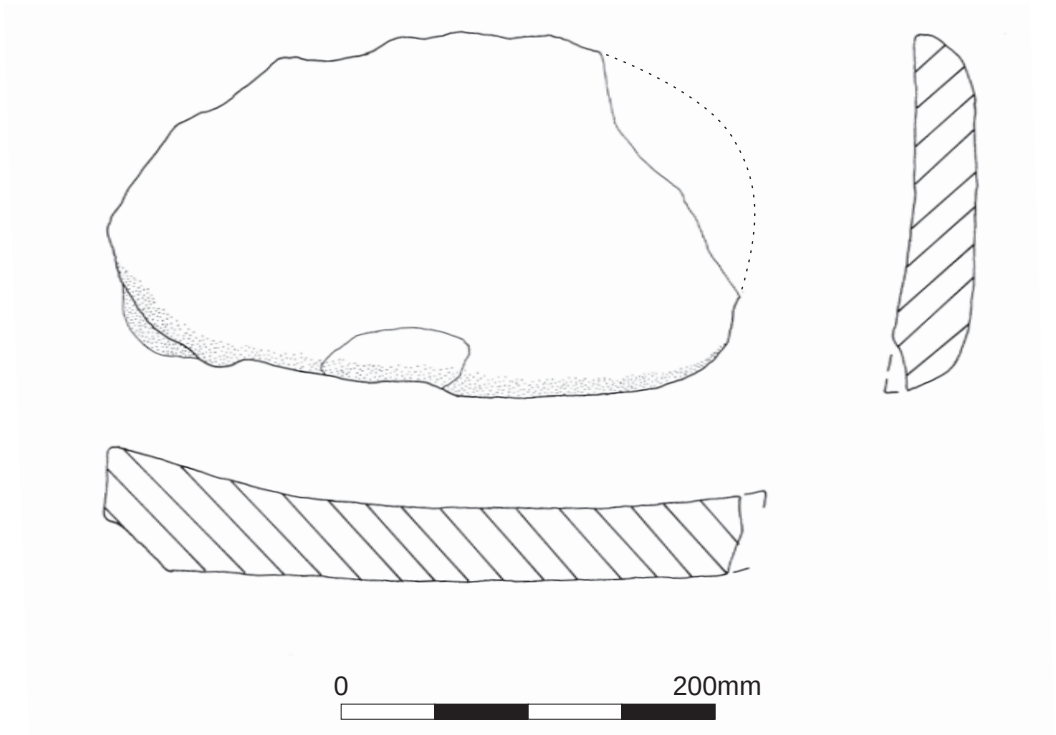


Fig 7 The late Bronze Age/early Iron Age quern

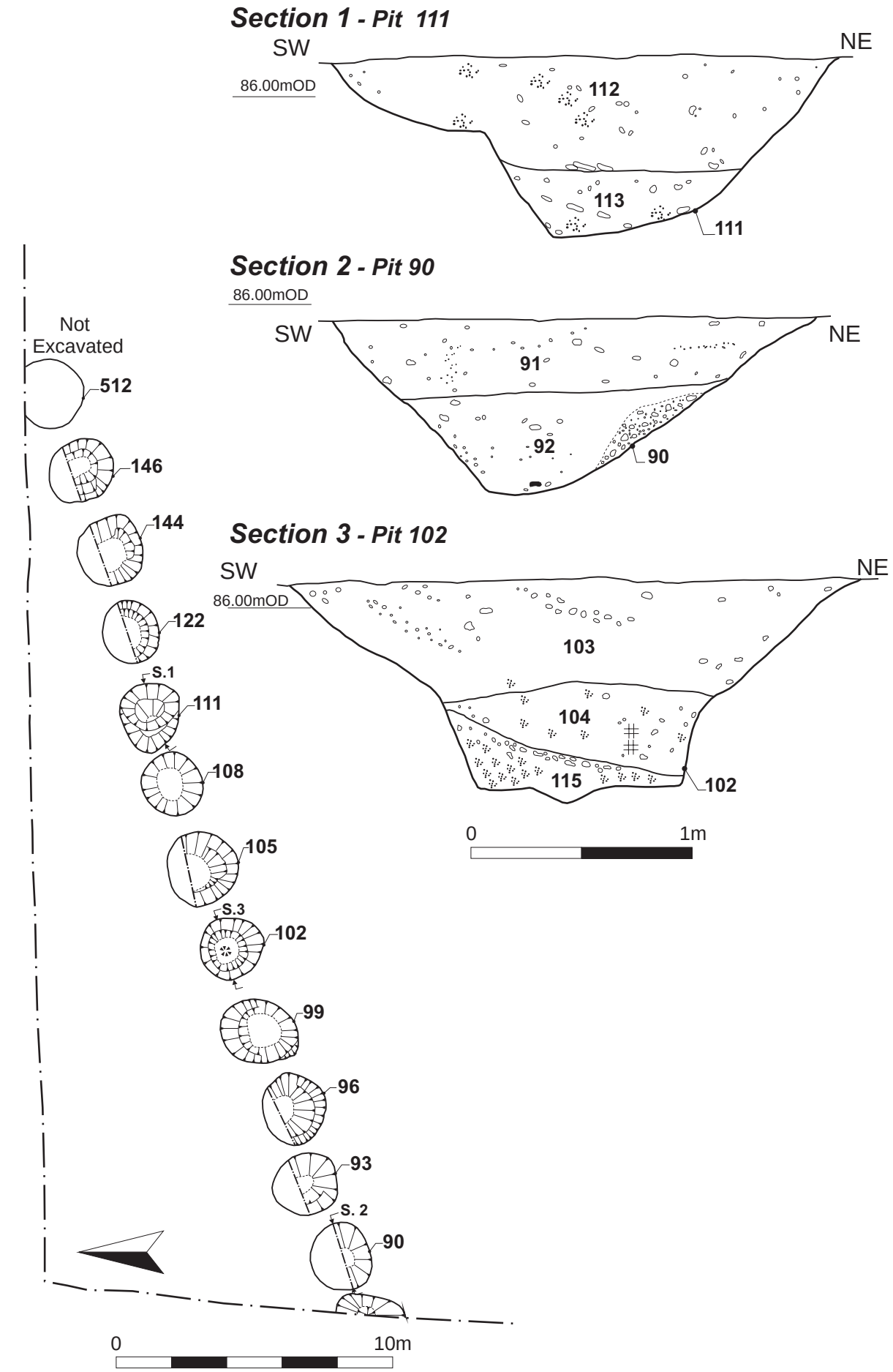


Fig 8 The pit alignment plan and sections 1-3

from burning. The stone tapers both longitudinally, so one end stands higher than the other, and transversely, so one edge stands higher than the other, which would have channelled the ground flour towards the centre and one edge of the stone. The underside is irregular but smoothed, and it is likely that this was a large water-worn cobble that had been split and had some marginal modification to make the shape more regular.

Carefully shaped saddle querns and rubbing stones are a feature of Neolithic and Bronze Age societies, indicating the symbolic importance of the quern, and there is a particularly fine example of a regular oval rubbing stone with chamfered edges, of Neolithic date, from the nearby causewayed enclosure at Briar Hill (Bamford 1985, 93 and fig 49, S16).

WOOD SPECIES IDENTIFICATIONS
by Rowena Gale

Pit 305
4 x ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), weight <1g
5 x hazel (*Corylus avellana*), weight 1g
1 x birch (*Betula* sp.), weight 1g
1 x oak (*Quercus* sp.), knotty
1 x oak (*Quercus* sp.) sapwood

Pit 383
4 x ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), weight <1g
1 x field maple (*Acer campestre*), weight <1g
2 x alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), weight <1g
10 x hazel (*Corylus avellana*), weight 1g
8 x oak (*Quercus* sp.) heartwood and unknown maturity

Fig 9 The pit alignment, looking north-east

EARLY/MIDDLE IRON AGE PIT ALIGNMENT

Part of a previously unknown pit alignment lay in the north-western part of Area 1 (Figs 8 and 9). It was aligned north-east to south-west, following the contour. Subsequent geophysical survey and excavation at Quinton House School, to the west, has located a further length of the same alignment (Foard-Colby and Butler 2006 and Foard-Colby and Walker this volume), indicating that it followed a closely linear course for at least 170m (Fig 4), and it may be part of or related to a pit alignment found even further to the west prior to road construction (Carlyle this volume), suggesting a possible length of at least 1.3km.

In a recorded length of 36m there were 13 pits, of which 12 were either sectioned or fully excavated (Figs 8 and 9). The pits were 2.00-2.60m in diameter, and between 0.30m and 0.8m apart, but with a regular spacing of 3.0m centre-to-centre. In plan the pits were irregularly sub-circular to sub-square in shape, but the surface plans were a product of prolonged erosion of the upper edges.

Three of the pits, 96, 122 and 144, were only 0.65-0.70m deep, but the others were all deeper, at 0.80-1.00m deep. Excavation showed that the bases and basal edges were generally sub-square in plan, with flat bases and steep sides where they were cut into the more stable and solid ironstone geology. This suggests that when newly cut the pits were square in plan, with sides some 1.5m long orientated along the line of the alignment.

At 1.5m square and a spacing of 3.0m centre-to-centre there would have been 1.5m between each pit. As with many pit alignments, it appears that the original layout was quite precise, but this had been blurred through time as a result of erosion.

Two of the pits, 144 and 146, had homogeneous fills of orange-brown sandy clay with ironstone fragments, indicating that they may have been deliberately back-filled. Both of these pits retained a more regular surface plan, indicating that they had been subject to less erosion due to being open for less time. The remainder of the pits showed a more complex sequence of silting. The accumulation of the primary fills to a depth of 0.30 to 0.60m (Fig 8, Sections 1-3) may have occurred quite rapidly, and these fills were generally brown-grey silty sands with frequent large pieces of ironstone and large cobbles. In one of the pits this was sealed by a 0.10m-thick layer of rammed ironstone, as if the pit had been partly backfilled by the natural upcast soon after excavation (Fig 8, Section 3, pit 102, top of 115). This pit was also the deepest excavated example.

The majority of the pits were open for some considerable time, as the upper edges had eroded into the less stable cornbrash of the surface geology. The sharply-angled shelf on the south-west side of pit 111 (Fig 8, Section 1) may even suggest that some of the pits had shallower recuts.

Pottery was found in some quantity in the central five

pits, 99 to 111, with smaller quantities in two others, 93 and 144. A total of 267 sherds was recovered but much of the material is small and abraded, indicating that it had probably been deposited as a result of edge erosion into surface scatters. The majority of the material was scattered through the upper fills, but some is recorded in the primary fills, which suggests that the pottery scatter may have pre-dated or been closely contemporary with the construction of the pit alignment. Unfortunately, there is a lack of diagnostic material, but the assemblage has been tentatively dated to the early Iron Age. A cylindrical tube of sheet copper alloy was recovered from pit 99.

It would be expected that the construction of the alignment would have occurred in the early Iron Age, and there is a body of radiocarbon dates from pits alignments in the region spanning the range 800-500 cal BC. However, a sample of wood charcoal from the lower fill of pit 108 has been radiocarbon dated to the 4th to 3rd centuries BC, the early middle Iron Age (400-200 cal BC, 95% confidence, 2270 +/- 40 BP, Beta-215489). This indicates that the pits were still substantially open at the beginning of the middle Iron Age, and either the origin of the alignment was quite late or the pits were open for around two centuries or more.

THE IRON AGE POTTERY FROM THE PIT ALIGNMENT

by Dennis Jackson with Andy Chapman

A total of 267 sherds of pottery, including 33 small fragments, weighing 1700g, was recovered from the pit alignment. Most of the sherds were small and very weathered. It is estimated that the pottery came from not less than 30 vessels.

FABRIC

Most of the sherds contain voids where shell and perhaps soft sandstone inclusions have not survived. Shell appears to be the dominant inclusion in Iron Age pottery, in all phases, around Northampton (*cf* Hunsbury, Jackson 2003), however, where ironstone or sandstone is the bedrock, as at Upton, ironstone inclusions are more common in the pottery. Stone grits commonly occur in the pottery from the pit alignment but these may have been naturally present in the clay used.

The majority of the sherds from the pit alignment are relatively thin walled (5-10mm), with only 6% in excess of 10mm thick. Although a majority of the sherds are grey-brown in colour some 38% have an oxidised external surface and a grey or grey-brown core and internal surface (see Table 2).

VESSEL FORM

The sherds are mostly too small to assess the vessel forms. There is one sherd from a probable round shouldered bowl, but no evidence of any carinated vessels. It may be significant that many of the sherds have little curvature and could derive from large diameter vessels. There are only six small rim sherds: five of these are flat-topped and two of these are lipped internally.

DECORATION

There is no obvious decoration on any of the sherds although lightly incised lines may have weathered away. On one sherd the surface has been brushed or wiped and, as a result, it superficially resembles early scored ware.

DATE AND DISCUSSION

Pit alignments appear to be mainly early Iron Age in date and complete vessels of this period have been found in pits at Gretton (Jackson 1974) and Ringstead (Jackson 1978). A pit alignment at Grendon, Northamptonshire (Last 2005), and the final filling of a pit alignment on the River Ouse at Gayhurst, near Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire (Chapman 2007), have been radiocarbon dated to the 8th to 6th centuries BC, and therefore within the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age transition.

In assessing the date of the pottery at Upton, the lack of decoration and the apparent lack of carinated vessels is seen as potentially significant. Carinated vessels are common in the early Iron Age (6th to 4th centuries BC), and their absence suggests that the pottery does not belong to this period. It was therefore tentatively suggested that the pottery might be of an earlier period, with the thin walls and typically oxidised external surfaces perhaps similar to material found on other late Bronze Age/early Iron Age sites such as the ringwork at Thrapston, Northamptonshire (Hull 2000-01), the pit alignment at Briar Hill (Jackson 1974), and settlement sites at Oakley and Corby (Jackson 1982). The flat-topped rim sherds might date to a period around the 7th century BC and would not be out of place in the assemblage from the Thrapston ringwork, or the earlier material from Rainsborough Camp (Avery *et al* 1967).

However, the radiocarbon date for the Upton pit alignment spans the 4th and 3rd centuries BC (400-210 cal BC, 95% confidence, 2270+/-40BP, Beta-215489). A similar radiocarbon date has come from a pit alignment at Cottisford Turn, near Silverstone, Northamptonshire (390-200 cal BC, 95% confidence, 2230+/-25 BP, NZA 16362) (Mudd 2007, 71-76). There is therefore good evidence for pit alignments continuing in use into at least the early Middle Iron Age.

The weathered nature of the pottery at Upton and its limited distribution within a cluster of pits, suggests that it is most likely to be residual material eroded from an existing surface scatter. It is therefore possible that the material came from a surface scatter considerably earlier in date than the wood charcoal, and the proposed 7th-century date may still be valid, with the assemblage perhaps only slightly later in date than the material from the pit group.

ILLUSTRATED POTTERY FROM THE PIT ALIGNMENT

(Fig 10)

5 Rim sherd expanded externally, brown-dark to grey-brown. Abundant medium sized voids. Pit 102

6 Rim, flat-topped, with a triangular internal expansion, dark grey-brown. Common fine to medium voids. Pit 102

7 Flat-topped rim, slightly expanded, dark grey-brown. No obvious inclusions. Pit 105

8 Flat-topped rim, slighfly expanded internally, uneven, brown-grey-light brown. Pit 105

Fig 10 Iron Age pottery from the pit alignment (5-8)

A COPPER ALLOY CYLINDER
by Tora Hylton

A copper alloy cylinder, heavily corroded, was found in pit 99. It is manufactured from sheet metal and is 22mm long by 3mm in diameter, with the longitudinal edges joining to form an edge to edge seam. Such fragmentary objects are difficult to identify with any certainty, but a similar object was recovered from an Iron Age hut circle ditch at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon (Parrington 1978, fig 59, 17).

WOOD SPECIES IDENTIFICATIONS
by Rowena Gale

LOWER FILL (110) OF PIT 108
4 x hazel (*Corylus avellana*), weight <1g

UPPER FILL (112) OF PIT 111
4 x hawthorn/ *Sorbus* group (Pomoideae)

THE RADIOCARBON DATES

Radiocarbon dates have been obtained from wood charcoal from one of the pits, 383, containing late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery, and from one of the pits, 108, of the pit alignment (Table 3).

These have confirmed the suspected late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age date for the pit group. Due to the nature of the calibration curve in this period, two date ranges are possible for the material from pit 385: a date within the first half of the 8th century BC or a broader span covering the 7th to early 6th century BC. The earlier date, firmly late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, would be preferred given the nature of the pottery.

The charcoal from the pit alignment also has two possible calibrated date ranges due to nature of the calibration curve: the first half of the 4th century BC or the late 4th to the end of the 3rd century BC, indicating the pit alignment was still open into the middle Iron Age.

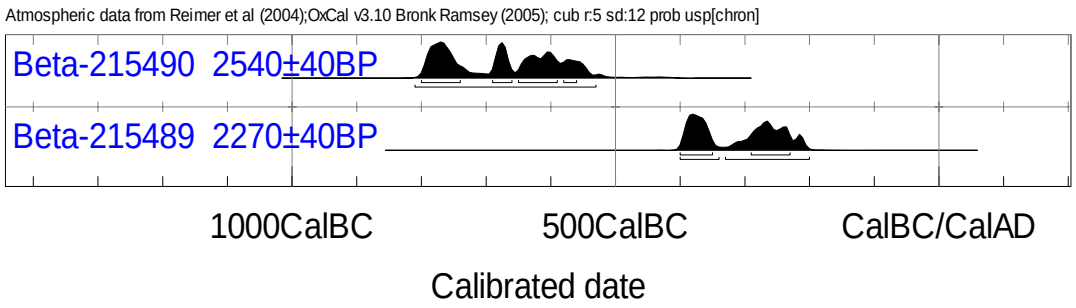


Table 3: The radiocarbon determinations

Lab. No. (Sample No)	Context details	Sample Details	d13C	Conventional radiocarbon age BP	Cal BC 68% confidence 95% confidence
Beta-215490 (UP00/385)	Fill of pit 383 Pit group	Wood charcoal (Hazel)	-24.8	2540 +/-40	790-760 & 620-590 800-740 & 710-530
Beta-215489 (UP00/110)	Fill of pit 108 Pit alignment	Wood charcoal (Hazel)	-24.6	2270 +/-40	390-360 & 280-240 400-340 & 320-210

Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory: Beta Analytic, Miami, Florida, USA.
Calibration: INTCAL 98

THE MIDDLE TO LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

A small settlement was probably established in the 2nd century BC. It comprised a group of small enclosures largely set along the southern edge of a linear boundary ditch (Fig 5). It seems likely that the settlement had been deliberately placed to take advantage of the transition between the permeable and clay geologies.

THE LINEAR BOUNDARY DITCH

The linear boundary ditch (Fig 5, 209) was aligned north-east to south-west and was visible as a continuous feature across the entire excavated area, about 182m. The geophysical survey records it further to the east and the location of an Iron Age enclosure at Quinton House School is consistent with a westward continuation, giving a recorded extent of at least 350m (Fig 4). This boundary runs closely parallel to the pit alignment but 50m to the south, suggesting a degree of continuity in the landscape boundaries through the Iron Age.

The boundary follows a sinuous linear course, although to the west there is an abrupt kink, perhaps where separately excavated lengths were slightly misaligned. Within the excavated area, the character of the ditch changed from east to west. To the east, at the highest elevation, the ditch was cut through clay geology and was fairly shallow, at 0.19m deep with a flat base. The fill of the ditch consisted of silty clays with occasional fragments of ironstone and small stones. To the west the ditch was cut through Northampton Sand and Ironstone and had stepped sides with a rounded base, and was much deeper, at around 0.70m. Here there was a primary fill of orange-brown silty clay that contained frequent ironstone fragments, probably reflecting the fact that the upper part of the ditch cut was less stable in the sand and ironstone than it was in the clay geology. The upper fill comprised orange-brown sandy clay.

At the eastern end of the boundary, there were a further three ditches to the south of the main boundary, all lying closely adjacent (Fig 5). Two of these terminated arbitrarily, while the central ditch terminated at the north-eastern corner of Enclosure 6 (Fig 12, 434), illustrating the close association between the setting out of the boundary system and the adjacent enclosures.

ENCLOSURE 3

Enclosure 3, the most westerly of the early enclosures, was oval in plan with internal dimensions of 6.5m north-south by 5.0m east-west, and an entrance 1.5m wide that faced to the north-east (Fig 5, Enclosure 3 and Fig 11). The ditch had a complicated sequence of re-cutting. The gullies were between 0.50-0.87m wide and 0.20-0.45m deep, with steep sides and a flat or concave base. The fills were fairly sterile dark brown clay silts with occasional ironstone fragments and large pebbles.

If the ditch had enclosed a roundhouse, the structure would have been no more than 4.0m in diameter, which is very small, so this seems unlikely.

ENCLOSURE 4

This was a square enclosure with no apparent entrance, which shared the same alignment as the linear boundary ditch (Fig 5, Enclosure 4). There were two phases of ditch. The outer ditch was the earliest, and would have enclosed an area around 11m square. After the ditch had been recut, the central area was 9.0m square.

The inner edge of the original ditch, 472, had been almost entirely truncated by the recut, but it was at least 1.00m wide and 0.20m deep, with fairly gently sloping sides leading onto an irregular, concave base. It was filled with dark brown clay silt with frequent ironstone. The recut was 1.75m wide and 0.58m deep, with a wide U-shaped profile. The fills contained no domestic debris. A sinuous gully which abutted the eastern side of the enclosure and continued a further 16m to the south may have formed a contemporary boundary (Fig 5, 474).

ENCLOSURE 6 AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITY

To the east, and aligned with the linear boundary ditch, there was a sub-square enclosure that enclosed a complex of structures, probably including a roundhouse (Figs 5 and 12). This outer enclosure measured 28m east-west by 24m north-south. The southern end of the south-western arm turned slightly inward, but otherwise the south-eastern side was open.

The north-eastern arm of the ditch was 0.59m deep, with steep sides and a fairly narrow rounded base, but elsewhere it was shallower with a wider, flatter base, and the terminal of the south-western terminal, which had been recut, was only 0.15m deep. It is possible that this outer enclosure was a later addition, enclosing pre-existing features

A ROUNDHOUSE?

At the north-eastern end of Enclosure 6 there was a complex of gullies (Fig 12). A curving gully, 414/424,

Fig 11 Enclosure 3, looking north-east

partly removed by a furrow, was up to 1.20m wide by 0.28m deep. Its curvature, at *c*11m diameter, would be appropriate to form a partial ring ditch surrounding the north-western side of a roundhouse. Within the area of the putative house, there was a pit, 416, with a fill containing burnt debris, and to the south of this the base of a pottery jar, 386, was embedded in the natural; it may have been the *in situ* remains of a storage jar set into the floor of a roundhouse.

The space between the possible roundhouse and Enclosure 5 had been sub-divided by an L-shaped length of gully, 406, which was cut by a shorter length of gully, 393, running west-east, which had relatively steep sides leading onto a narrow U-shaped base. There was a primary fill of yellow-brown silty sand and the upper fill was pale brown sandy silt that contained deposits of large stones throughout its length, as well as what appeared to be a 'structured' deposit of pottery, which was laid flat on top of large cobbles, in the eastern terminal.

A pit or posthole at the eastern end of the gully was packed with stones, some large and some burnt. Other nearby pits, including 387 and 410, were from 0.22m to 0.50m deep with steep sides and flat or slightly concave bases. The fills were brown clay silts with varying amounts of charcoal, stone (some of which was burnt) and pottery. Two of the pits contained fuel ash slag. Two postholes, 397 and 401, further to the south, had post-pipes visible within the fills. The marked concentration of burnt debris, burnt stones and pottery in these features supports the suggested presence of a roundhouse in this area.

ENCLOSURE 5

Enclosure 5 occupied the western half of Enclosure 6. It was oval in plan, measuring 13.5m north-south by 9.5m east-west (Fig 12, Enclosure 5). There was a narrow entrance, 1.3m wide, to the south-east, with a slightly sunken causeway filled with a deposit very similar to the uppermost fill of the ditch terminals. At least three phases of ditch, up to 1.75m wide and 0.84m deep, were recorded on the western side of the circuit, but elsewhere only a single phase was recognised (Fig 13, Section 4). Fuel ash slag was found in the primary fill of this ditch, as well as in three other contexts. The internal area was devoid of features.

LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

Either in the later 1st century BC or into the 1st century AD, the linear boundary ditch was replaced by a new ditch system that followed the same alignment but was relocated some 7.5-9.0m to the south. All of the earlier enclosures appear to have fallen out of use, as the new boundary ditches cut across them, and two new enclosures lay at the western end of the new boundary system.

THE BOUNDARY DITCHES

The boundary ditch was fairly consistent throughout its length, being a narrow U-shape in profile with a fill of grey-brown clay silt (Fig 5, 357). For much of its length there was a second ditch, 359, of similar dimensions to the immediate north, but to the west this ditch turned abruptly southward and terminated. It is possible that initially both ditches had terminated here, with a ditch, 231, at right angles to this line, running northward and forming a western boundary. A ditch to the south-east, 375, may have been a contemporary southern boundary. At a later date, the linear boundary was extended westward, cutting across the end of ditch 231, to meet the north-east corner

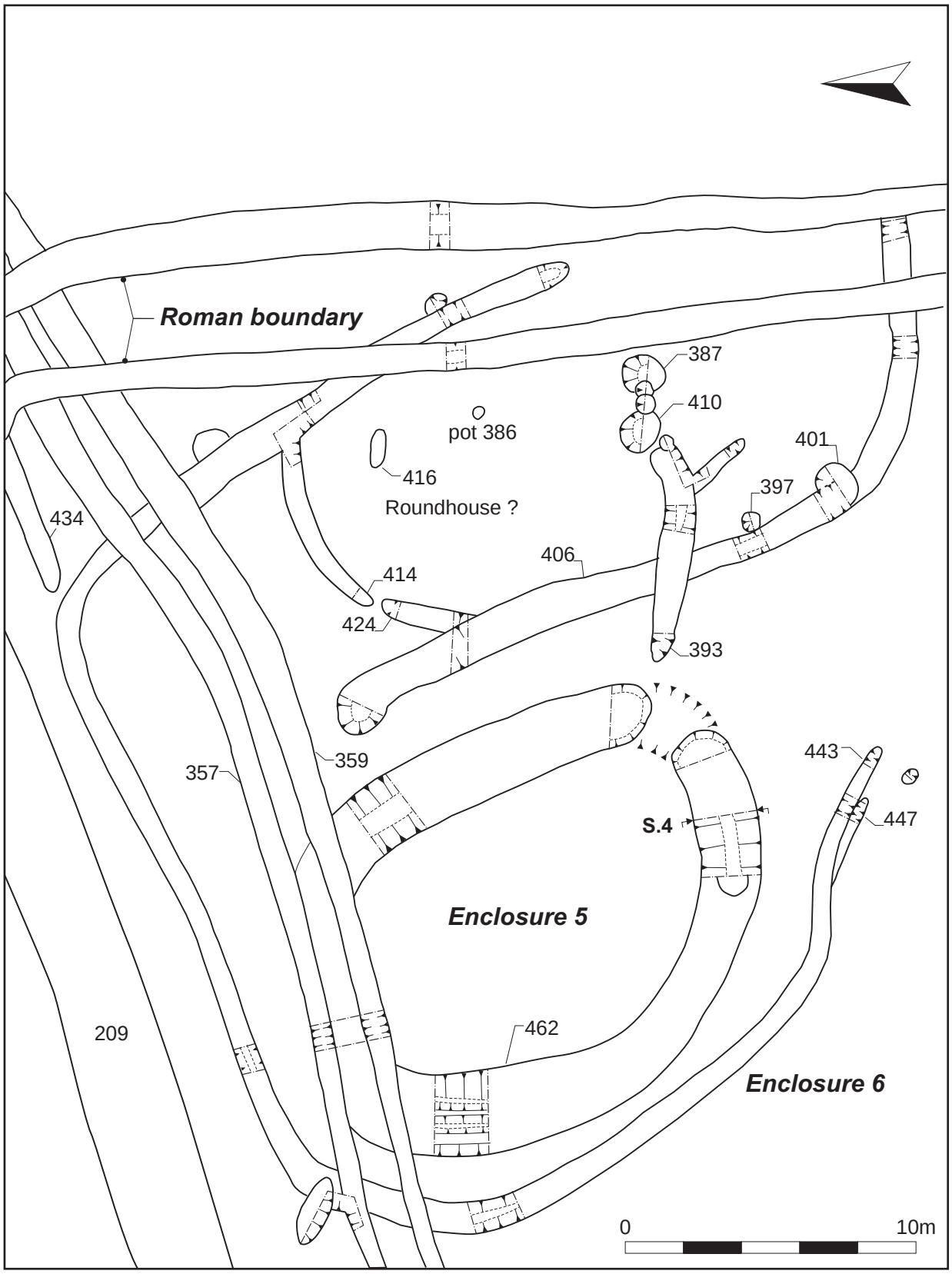
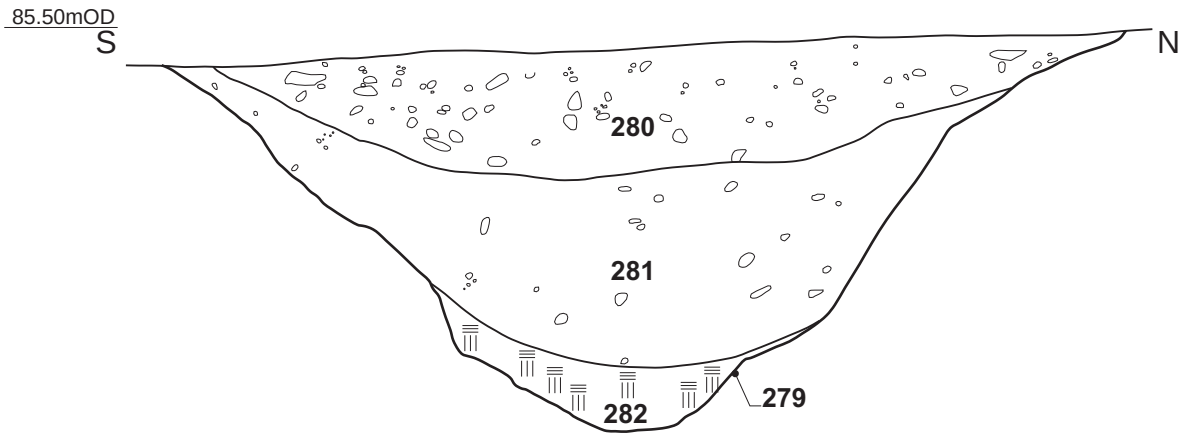
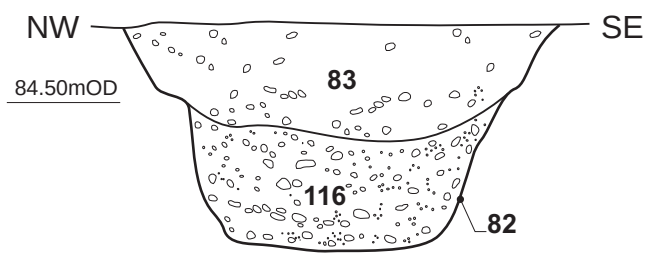


Fig 12 Plan of Iron Age enclosures 5 and 6

Section 5 - Enclosure 2



Section 6 - Pit in Enclosure 2



Section 4 - Enclosure 5

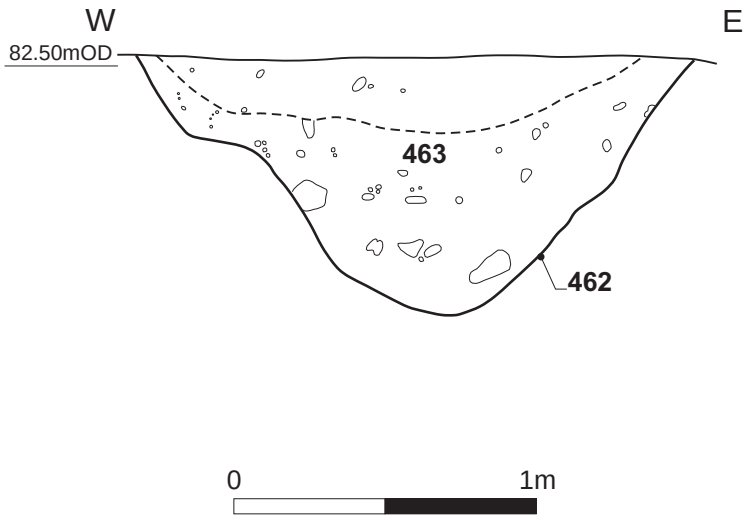


Fig 13 Sections of features in enclosures 2 and 5

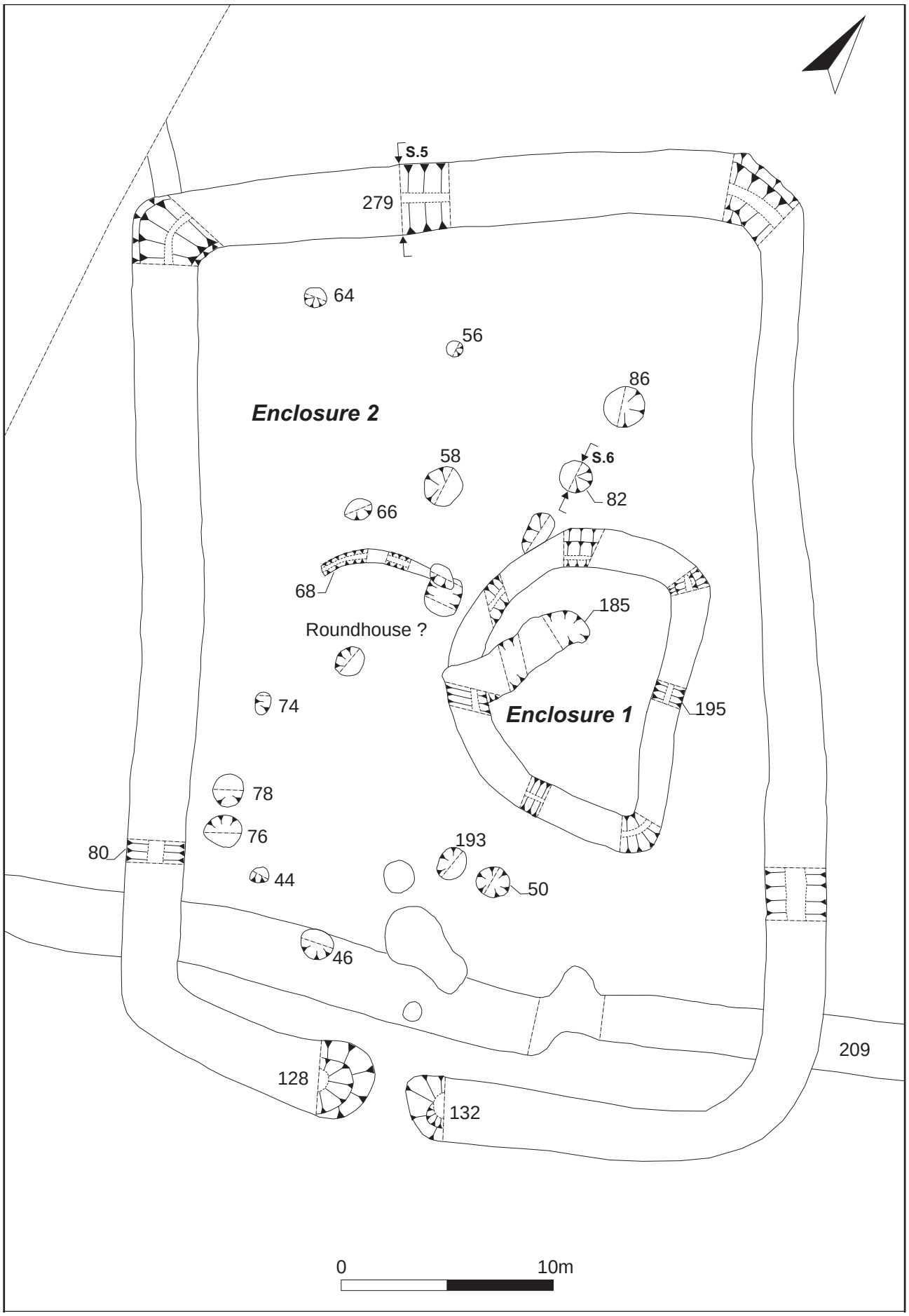


Fig 14 Plan of Iron Age enclosures 1 and 2

Fig 15 Enclosure 2, looking south towards Hunsbury Hill, pit alignment in foreground

of Enclosure 7. The arrangement of the outer boundaries, 231 and 375, and the western termination of the double ditches linear boundary all suggest there was a very clear distinction between the open area to the east and the area to the west occupied by the new enclosures.

ENCLOSURE 2

Enclosure 2 was rectangular, with internal dimensions of 39.0m north-south and 27.0m east-west, an area of 1000sq.m or 0.1ha (Figs 5, 14 and 15). Slightly west of centre on the southern arm there was a narrow, 1.6m wide, entrance causeway, although the width of this causeway had probably been considerably reduced through erosion of the soft upper edges of the ditch. The ditch was consistent in width, measuring 3.00-3.20m wide (Fig 13, Section 5). The ditch terminals were 0.65m and 0.90m deep, to the east and west respectively, but elsewhere the ditch was 1.20-1.46m deep. Some evidence of a recut was observed in a single excavated section to the west, 80, but this was not seen elsewhere.

The primary fills of the ditch were very variable ranging from orange-brown sandy clay in the north-western corner to light brown-grey silty clay in the north-eastern corner. The upper fills were equally variable being generally grey to orange-brown sandy or clay silts. Mottled areas and iron panning in the upper fills of the ditch indicate that it was probably seasonally waterlogged, even when the ditch had largely silted up. All the fills contained moderate amounts of ironstone and pebbles.

There was some evidence of structured deposition in the terminal on the eastern side of the entrance, where a number of large stones were recovered along with the greater part of a small saddle quern but few other finds were recovered from the fill of the ditch.

ENCLOSURE 1

This D-shaped enclosure had no apparent entrance, and internal dimensions of 10.80m north-south by up to 7.80m east-west (Fig 14). The ditch was 1.38-1.90m wide and 0.70m deep, with a stepped inner edge due to the erosion of the upper part of the ditch cut, suggesting that it was left open for some time. The fills were primarily dark brown-grey sandy silt, with an asymmetrical primary fill that may have been derived from either an external bank or dumping from the outer edges. There were no contemporary internal features.

A short length of curvilinear gully to the immediate west of Enclosure 1 was very shallow at 0.10m (Fig 14, 68). It is possible that it represents the very truncated remains of a ring ditch surrounding a roundhouse, perhaps 10m in diameter. A layer of stones filling a shallow hollow to the east, which cut across Enclosure 1, may have been a cobbled path leading to an eastern entrance (Fig 14, 185).

There were several pits within the enclosure, and the pit fills contained quantities of pottery, bone and daub (Fig 13, Section 6, pit 82). Fragments from several loomweights were recovered from pit 50, in the southern half of Enclosure 2, indicating that weaving was being undertaken nearby. Many of the pits contained small amounts of fuel ash slag, but the only evidence for metalworking was a smithing hearth-bottom also from pit, 50. Cereal processing waste was found in low densities in pits 50, 58, 74 and 188, with the richest assemblage from pit 66, which contained oat, barley, wheat, emmer and spelt.

ENCLOSURE 7

Enclosure 7 was probably contemporary with Enclosure 2, as they respected each other's circuits, with the western arm of Enclosure 7 not impeding access into the larger enclosure (Fig 5). To the south the ditch was up to 1.10m wide and 0.50m deep, but the western and northern arms were less substantial. The fill was brownish sandy silts containing occasional fragments of ironstone and pebbles. The only features within the enclosure were two

small pits, one of which, 55, 0.30m wide and 0.15m deep, contained the unurned cremation of a juvenile, aged 12-20 accompanied by about 40 hobnails. This cremation is likely to date to the 1st century AD or later, and may represent a post abandonment reuse of the enclosure. A nearby pit contained a charcoal-rich fill but no artefacts.

SCATTERED PITS

A number of pits lay to the east of Enclosure 2, and some of these truncated the earlier boundary ditch (Fig 5). They were exclusively on the Northampton sand and ironstone, and not the impermeable clay geology, perhaps suggesting that they were intended for grain storage. The size of the pits was very variable, between 0.40-2.70m wide and 0.10-0.90m deep. The profiles were equally diverse, ranging from vertical sides and flat bases, a type generally associated with storage pits, to shallow scoops with rounded bases.

Some of the pits had homogeneous fills of orange or grey-brown sandy or clay silts with frequent ironstone, pebbles and flint fragments, perhaps suggesting that they had been rapidly backfilled. Others had more stratified fills, indicating probable longer periods of filling. Pit 188 contained a number of burnt stones as well as blocks of ironstone and frequent charcoal. There was a moderate amount of cereal processing waste; barley, wheat and spelt were all represented. A possible sharpening or polishing stone was recovered from the upper fill of another pit, 265 (Fig 5). Within this area there was also a number of very shallow slots; 166, 180, 257 and 298, and associated shallow posthole bases.

Further to the east, adjacent to the double linear boundary, a shallow pit, 450, contained the remains of triangular loomweights, as well as burnt stones and daub. The clay around the pit appeared to be scorched, suggesting burning *in situ*.

THE MIDDLE TO LATE IRON AGE POTTERY
by Dennis Jackson with Andy Chapman

The 1816 sherds (26,039g) of pottery assigned to the later Iron Age phases at Upton came from a series of enclosure and boundary ditches, with a small amount from pits. The pottery is from 90 different contexts but on the whole it was only sparsely present. A relatively large amount of the pottery came from Enclosure 6, in comparison to the rest of the site, and it is possible that occupation was concentrated in this area, perhaps associated with a roundhouse.

FABRIC

Due to the acid nature of the soil many of the inclusions had weathered away. The inclusions that survived include ironstone and other stone grits, and there is some grog mainly in pottery of late Iron Age date. Due to the condition of the pottery no detailed analysis of the fabrics has been undertaken. Fabric analysis has been undertaken on pottery of this period from the nearby hillfort at Hunsbury (Jackson 2003) and other local sites, and the fabric of the pottery from Upton is unlikely to differ to any significant extent.

FORMS

Much of the pottery has derived from bipartite bowls or medium to small jars which are of globular or slack-sided form. It can be compared to the material from the Hunsbury hillfort (Fell 1936 and Jackson 2003), although the numerous large jars found on this site are not as common at Upton. The rim sherds in the Upton assemblage derive largely from bipartite vessels with direct rims and little or no neck.

DECORATION

Decoration is sparse and no pottery decorated in the La Tene or curvilinear style occurs in the assemblage. The few decorated sherds in the assemblage are on vessels of late Iron Age type.

DATE AND DISCUSSION

There is no early middle Iron Age pottery present in the assemblage. The slightly longer rim and neck profiles on pottery from Enclosures 1 and 6, as well as from pits to the north-west of Enclosure 1, suggest that these may be the earliest features, dating to the 2nd or early 1st century BC. After this date, it seems likely that activity continued through the 1st century BC, and up to and beyond the introduction of wheel-turned pottery and into the Roman period.

ILLUSTRATED IRON AGE POTTERY

(Figs 16 and 17)

9 Rim from a jar. Buff-brown/grey/buff-brown. Inner face sooted. Some ironstone and rounded grits. Context 443, Enclosure 6 ditch

10 Flat-topped rim. Dark grey. Uneven. Some grits. Context 443, Enclosure 6

11 Jar. Roughly made and uneven. Black neck and brown shoulder. Inner face and core grey-brown. Many grits. Context 394, gully 393, Enclosure 6

12 Globular bowl. Black-brown. Originally burnished. Some ironstone grits Context 171, posthole 170

13 Large, thick-walled Jar with a flat-topped rim. Orange-brown to grey-brown and orange-brown, ironstone and rounded grits. Context 77, pit 76, Enclosure 2

OTHER IRON AGE FINDS
by Tora Hylton, Andy Chapman and Pat Chapman

NAILS
by Tora Hytlon

The majority of the 42 iron nails recovered were from a cremation deposit, 55, within Enclosure 7. There are *c*40 individual examples, of which 14 are complete. They range from 20-35mm long, and all have flat sub-circular heads with square-sectioned shanks. They are probably from a small box/casket which was placed on the pyre when the body was cremated. In addition, a complete iron nail with square-sectioned shank, 67mm long, with a flat sub-circular head came from a posthole, 136.

Fig 16 Middle/late Iron Age pottery (9-12)

Fig 17 Middle/late Iron Age pottery (13)

QUERNS AND WORKED STONE
by Andy Chapman

A saddle quern and a sharpening/polishing stone came from features dating to the middle to late Iron Age.

An irregular block of medium-grained, quartz-rich sandstone, possibly Millstone Grit, 300mm long by 210-320mm wide, is 95mm thick at the broader end and 35mm thick at the narrower end, is probably the greater part of a small saddle quern, with a little of the narrower end lost. It comes from the fill of eastern terminal of Enclosure 2, ditch 132.

An irregular block of fine-grained, quartz-rich sandstone, 230mm long by 215mm wide and up to 70mm thick, has one surface worn smooth and near flat, but very slightly concave. It is most likely to be a water-worn cobble utilised as a sharpening or polishing stone. It comes from the upper fill of pit 265.

LOOMWEIGHTS
by Pat Chapman

This is a small assemblage, weighing 1108g, from 12 contexts. Nine of the contexts produced only a few fragments, while three contexts contained 822g, all probably fragments of triangular clay loomweights.

In particular, the fill of pit 50 in Enclosure 2, and the fill of pit 450 to the north-east of Enclosure 2, produced fragments with remnants of the characteristic corner perforations, together with the smoothed face and edge surfaces. The largest fragment, which still retains a partial triangular profile, has organic and stem impressions on the surviving face.

The fabrics are typically hard, light red-brown with a few creamy streaks, and containing occasional grog, ironstone or gravel inclusions. One large fragment has a dark grey core indicative of the rough mixing and uneven firing typical of these objects.

SLAG
by Andy Chapman

A total of 974g of fuel ash slag came from seven features of Iron Age date. This material comprises irregular lumps of light and vesicular slag, ranging from pale brown to dark grey in colour and is derived from high temperature burning of some description.

No ferrous slag was obtained from any features of Iron Age date, although a complete hearth bottom, denoting the presence of a smithing hearth, was recovered from pit 50 within Enclosure 2.

ROMAN SETTLEMENT

The Roman settlement may be either an outlying part or a satellite of the large settlement at Duston, 0.5km to the east. The geophysical survey provides a broad overview of the form of the Roman settlement in the eastern part of the site (Fig 3). To the north, it comprised an irregular area measuring 180m east-west by 100m north-south, bounded by sinuous outer boundaries and sub-divided into a complex patchwork of small enclosures. To the south, two linear boundaries ran north-east to south-west and there was a more regular system of abutting rectangular plots. Evident overlapping of ditch systems showed that this complex spanned an extended period of use, with modifications of the boundary systems occurring.

The excavation has gone some way to further defining this system and its development, but the results are limited by a number of factors (Fig 4). Firstly, the limits of excavation were set too tightly within the core area of the less regular ditch systems, which left too many features running out of the excavated area and therefore inexplicable as to function and associations. Secondly, the appalling weather conditions during the excavation severely hampered the basic processes of establishing relationships and of fully investigating the features themselves. However, the broad pattern of development has been established.

THE DOUBLE-DITCHED BOUNDARY SYSTEM (2ND CENTURY AD)

To the west, overlying the Iron Age settlement, there was an L-shaped double-ditch system, with ditches 1.50m to 3.50m apart, and associated linear ditches, which have been dated to the 2nd century AD (Fig 5). The relationship of the L-shaped ditches to another pair of broadly contemporary ditches along the northern arm, suggests that the inner ditch, 277, of the L-shaped system was earlier in date, with the outer ditch, 273, a later addition (Figs 4 and 5). Both ditches had wide V-shaped profiles, and were relatively shallow to the north, 0.25m deep, while to the south they were 0.58-0.70m deep.

The eastern arm continued to the south of the excavated area, but the geophysical survey did not show it extending any great distance southward. However, it is possible that the excavated ditch was associated with ditch systems further to the south, recorded on the geophysical survey, comprising a double-ditch system to the west and a single ditch to the east (Figs 3 & 4). Together, these ditch systems encompass an area measuring 170m north to south by in excess of 200m east to west, but they do not fully enclose it by themselves, as at least the northern and eastern arms were incomplete. On the southern arm, northward returns on a double ditch to the west and a single ditch to the east, may have formed a funnelled entrance passage, *c*50m long and tapering from 15m to 12m wide. If this had been centrally placed, the enclosed area would have been 260m wide, giving a total area of *c*4.4ha.

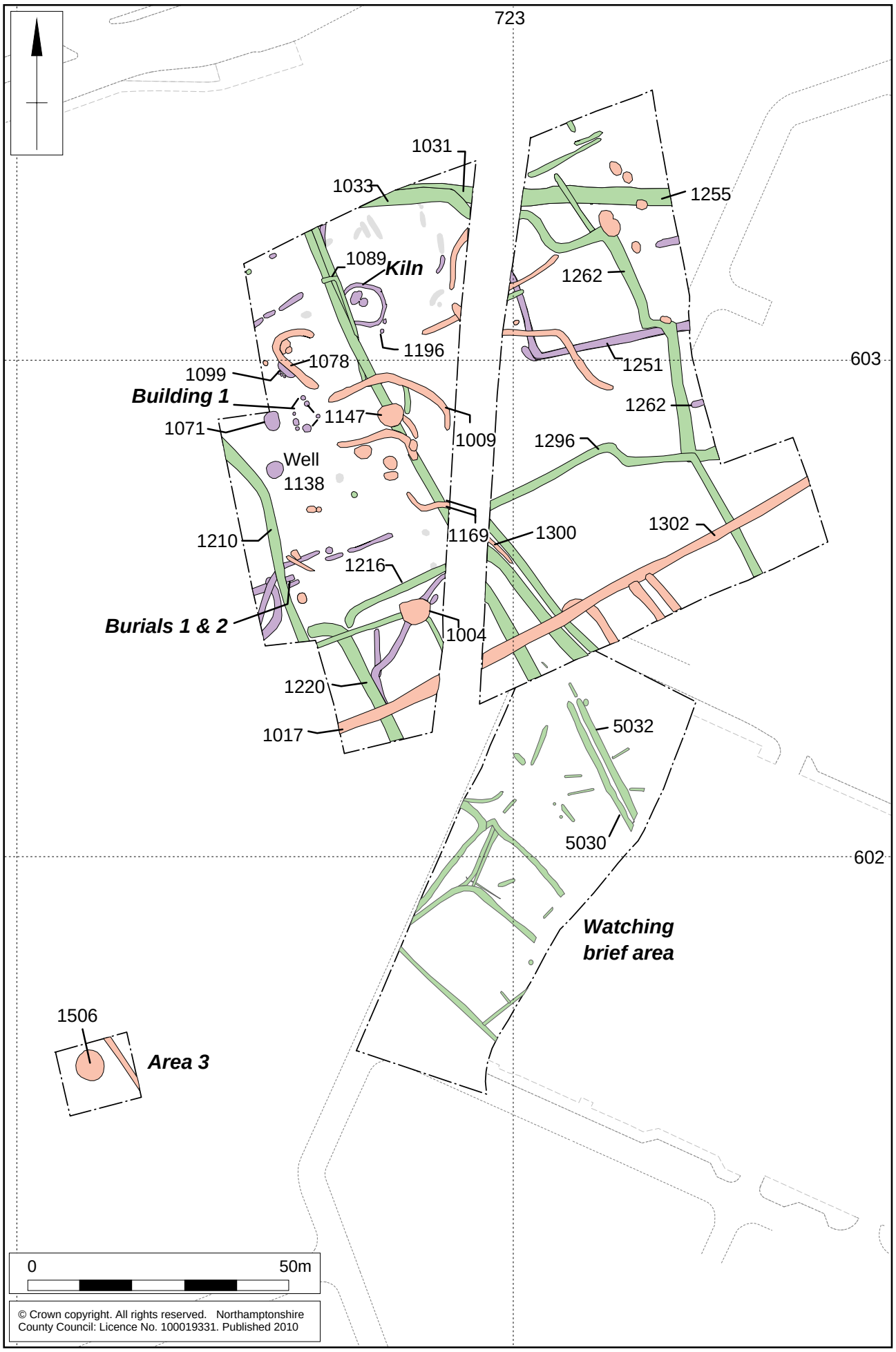
The alignment of the southern boundary line was also repeated or continued to the east, where it was respected by part of a regular system of small rectangular enclosures or plots. This suggests that the western ditch system may have been contemporary in origin with the Roman settlement to the east, but dating evidence was sparse to the west and profuse to the east, making comparison of the chronologies difficult.

The uniformity of these early Roman features suggests that a planned re-organisation was undertaken. There is no evident relationship to domestic occupation, so this enclosure system either formed part of a rectilinear field system or was, perhaps, part of single massive enclosure, perhaps a stock corral, lying to the west of contemporary domestic occupation.

THE KILN AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES (2ND–EARLY 3RD CENTURIES)

In Area 2, to the east, the earliest features comprised a pottery kiln and possible potter's workshop and a well (Figs 4 and 18). These features seem to have had a relatively short life-span. In addition, two burials were

Fig 18 (opposite) The Roman settlement


723
603
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1138
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1169
1300
1302
1216
Burials 1 & 2
1004
1220
1017
5032
5030
Watching
brief area
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Area 3
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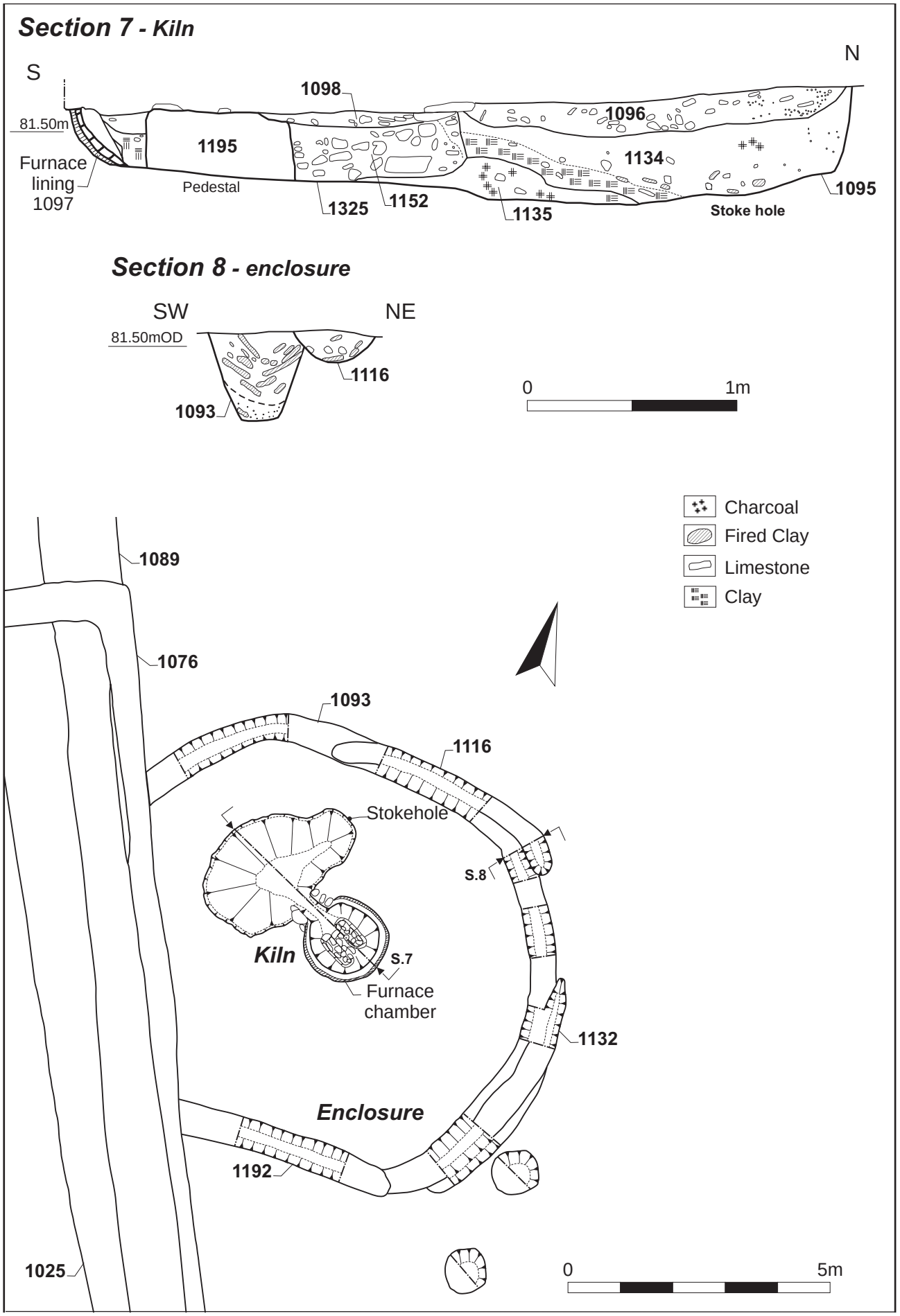

Fig 19 The 2nd-century kiln and enclosure plan and sections

Fig 20 The Roman kiln, looking north-west

placed here towards the western edge of the occupied ditched plots.

The kiln is a horizontal draught kiln, dated to the 2nd century. It corresponds in form to type IIIC of Woods' typology of early Roman kilns in the Nene Valley (Woods 1974).

The furnace chamber was bowl-shaped, 1.40m in diameter and 0.30m deep (Fig 19 & 20). The bowl had been lined with clay which had been fired to a blue-grey colour. The flue was 0.35m wide by 0.44m long, and was lined with clay onto three to four uneven courses of split limestone blocks set in a construction trench 0.86m wide. It appeared that the two pedestals had been set in the bowl after a first firing. The pedestals comprised a limestone core bonded with grey-yellow clay, and faced with further clay. Part of a circular kiln shelf was recovered from the enclosure ditch (Fig 30).

The stokehole lay on the north-western side. It was large and irregular, around 3.00m wide by 1.90m long and 0.46m deep. An ashy deposit found throughout the kiln and the part of the stokehole closest to the flue, was deepest at the entrance of the flue, suggesting that the last firing of the kiln had been set at the entrance of the flue. The main fill of the stokehole consisted of a clean sandy silt, indicating it was deliberately backfilled when the kiln was abandoned, although the upper fills of the kiln chamber and flue were dominated by pieces of collapsed superstructure.

Surrounding the kiln was a regular curvilinear gully, which had been recut a number of times, forming an enclosure up to 8.5m long by 7.0m wide. The earliest phase of ditch, 1093, was 0.52-0.90m wide and 0.30-0.60m deep and had steep sides and a flat base (Fig 19, Section 8 and Fig 21). The later recuts were all made up of short lengths of gully and were much the same in width and depth, but had shallower sides and rounded bases. All the gullies contained large amounts of burnt daub and charcoal, as well as some pottery. The daub, as

Fig 21 The kiln enclosure ditch [1093]

Fig 22 The stone-lined well [1138]

well as the depth of the gully, suggests that it was cut to hold some form of screen or wattle and daub structure that would have functioned as a windbreak around the kiln.

A possible small building lay to the south-west of the kiln (Fig 18, Building 1). There was a cluster of postholes in an area roughly 5-6m square. Some of the postholes contained large stones as probable post packing, but no post pipes were observed.

Closely associated with the postholes were two spreads of stone (Fig 18, 1099 and 1071). Both comprised limestone and ironstone pieces, most of which were laid flat, though some were pitched. These stone spreads may have been used to consolidate the ground over earlier features and provide a solid surface around the outside of the building. The head of a drill-bit, a piece of *tegula* roof tile with a nail-hole and a lead pot repair were found in a shallow pit beneath layer 1099, while part of a shale bracelet was incorporated into the layer.

To the south-west of the building was a stone-lined well. This was not bottomed, but it was over 2.50m deep (Fig 18, 1138 and Fig 22). The well cut was sub-circular in plan with very steep sides. It was 2.90m in diameter at the top, but tapered to 1.80m. The well lining was constructed in limestone. The fill of the shaft was fairly undifferentiated and made up of dark grey-brown sandy silt, with few inclusions.

It is possible that the building and the well constitute the remains of a potter's workshop associated with the kiln.

To the east of the kiln, an early L-shaped length of the ditch, 1251, may have formed a sub-square enclosure, measuring 30m north-south by in excess of 30m east-west. The ditch was 0.85m wide by 0.30m deep and the pottery, which included Black Burnished Ware, is dated to the late 2nd to 3rd centuries. The northern boundary was probably a linear ditch, 1255, which was retained into the later phase of occupation.

Two inhumations lay to the south of the kiln (Fig 23, 1199 and 1236 and Fig 24). Lying within a metre of each other, they were probably closely contemporary. Both were orientated east to west, with the heads at the eastern end. The grave cut for the northern burial had vertical sides leading onto a flat base and was 0.65m wide and 0.45m deep. The south-western end of the grave had been truncated by a ditch. The only surviving skeletal remains were eight fragments of a single limb bone, probably the femur. The individual had probably been an adult. The southern grave cut had similar dimensions. The burial was only slightly better preserved, with parts of the skull and the long bones represented. The skeleton was of an adult who was probably no more than 25-35 years old at death. The graves may have been located in the corner formed by the intersection of two gullies. Pottery from the grave fills is dated to the late 2nd to 3rd centuries.

THE LATE ROMAN DITCH SYSTEMS (3RD-4TH CENTURIES)

The industrial activity of the 2nd-early 3rd centuries appears to have been abandoned, and a new pattern of ditched boundaries was established. The relatively small size of the excavated area means it is difficult to understand how the landscape was being used, but the ditch systems appear to have formed small, sub-square plots or paddocks with little apparent uniformity or planning, resulting in an apparently haphazard development, although some major boundary lines are apparent within the excavated area.

At the northern end of the excavated area there was a ditch aligned east-west, which was seen in the geophysical survey to continue to the west for at least 90m beyond the area of excavation, forming the major northern boundary to the settlement area (1031 and 1255, Fig 18 and Figs 3 & 4). The ditch was 2.22m wide and 0.47m

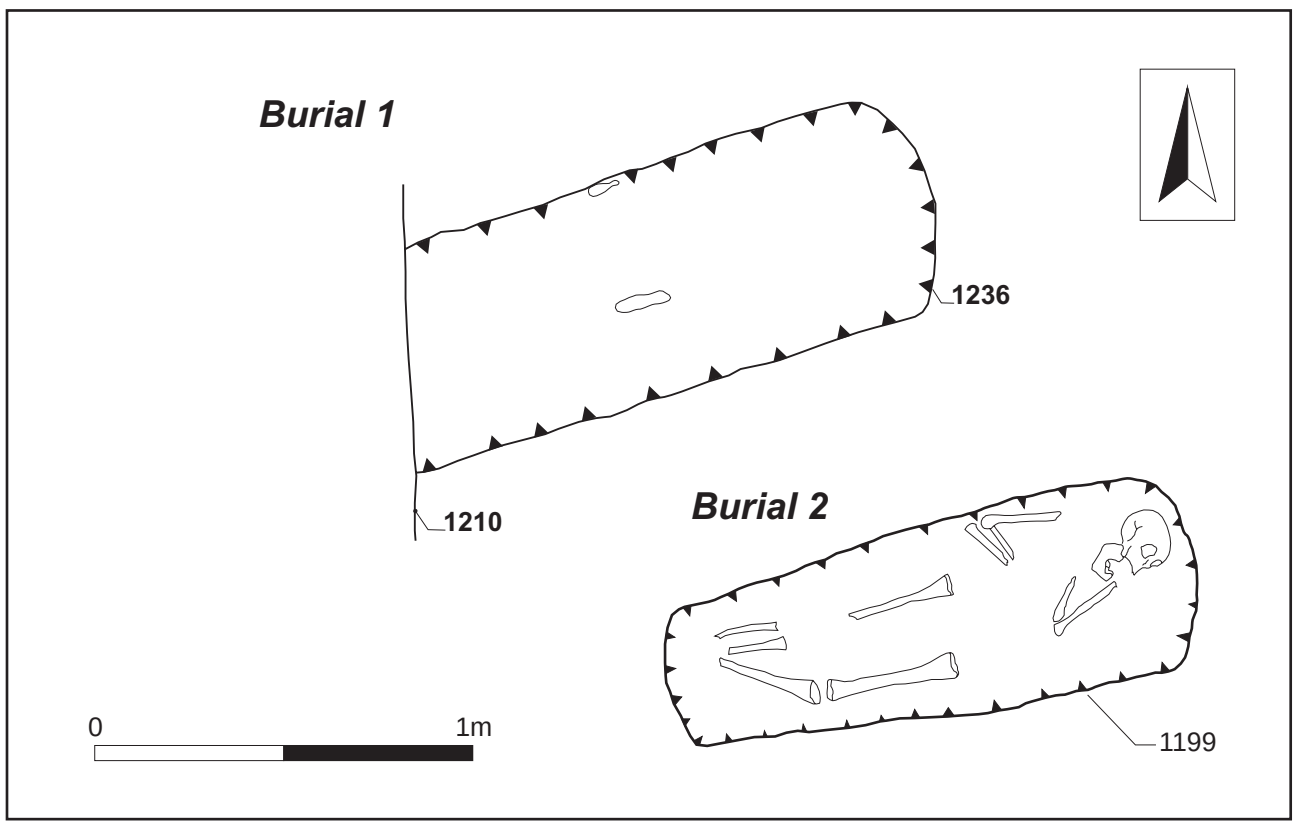

Fig 23 Roman inhumation burials

Fig 24 The southern Roman burial [1199]

deep, and was later partially truncated by a substantial ditch, 1033/1262, with an unusual, meandering north-south orientation, which may have been a drainage ditch rather than a boundary marker. Pottery from the ditch fills included decorated Samian stamped by the mould maker ADVOCISI (Fig 27).

A major north-south boundary ditch, 1089, recut several times, truncated the kiln enclosure ditch, but appeared to be only slightly later in date than the kiln. To the north the ditches were 0.90-2.00m wide and 0.41-0.68m deep, with steep sides and narrow concave bases, but to the south they were only 0.70-1.44m wide and 0.24-0.49m deep, suggesting, perhaps, that they had been truncated. This boundary also continued into the watching brief area, 5030/5032 (the dislocation in the line is a product of surveying errors between stages of archaeological work some years apart.

An AE3 House of Constantine issue coin, from ditch 1089 to the north, is dated to the early 4th century, suggesting that this north-south boundary was functioning into the late Roman period.

In the southern part of the excavated area and into the watching brief area there was a more regular system of small, rectangular enclosures. In the south-west corner of the excavated area, the northern, 1216, and eastern, 1312, arms of a sub-square enclosure produced quantities of pottery. The primary fill included the base of a Samian dish with a stamp of ROPPVOFF (Roppus) of Les Martres-de-Veyre, in the Auvergne region of central France, dated to the 2nd century (Fig 26). Large quantities of pottery recovered from the upper fills of

the ditch were generally dated to the late 2nd and 3rd centuries. A layer of pitched ironstone had been set into the upper fill, probably consolidating a particularly damp area. The western arm was formed by a similarly-sized gully, 1220, and coins from this gully are dated to the 3rd and later 4th centuries, suggesting it remained open until the latter stages of the settlement. The westernmost ditch within the excavated area, 1210, was recorded on the geophysical survey as another extensive, if sinuous boundary ditch.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATIONS

The latest Roman activity on the site comprised further modification of the ditch systems. A key change was the provision of a new linear boundary, lying in the southern part of the excavated area. This was formed by a large V-shaped ditch, 1.75m wide and 0.65m deep, 1017 and 1302 (Fig 18). More coins were recovered from this feature than any other on site; with the latest dating to the mid-late 4th century, the boundary ditch must have remained at least partially open until the end of the Roman period. A Roman steelyard weight was also recovered from this ditch. The geophysical survey shows this ditch continuing to the south-west, where it forms the northern boundary to several abutting rectangular enclosures.

To the north of the ditch there were a number of large pits. Some of them may have functioned as water holes while others may have been quarry pits for extracting clay for building material. The largest, 1004, 5.50m long 4.60m wide, was not excavated, but finds from the surface include pottery, bone and daub, some tile, and a coin dating to the middle of the 4th century. Another large pit, 1147, was 4.50m long, 3.65m wide and at least 0.95m deep (Fig 18). The high watertable at the time prevented deeper excavation. Finds included pottery, bone and daub as well as a fragment of thick tile, perhaps part of a *bipedalis* used to bridge the gaps between hypocaust pillars.

The finds of structural material indicate that there were buildings in the vicinity, but either they had left no below-ground evidence or had lain beyond the area of excavation. The possible *bipedalis* suggests a well-appointed house.

Within the excavated area, none of the other more extensive ditch systems can be shown to have been retained in the final phase of development, but there were a series of shallow, curving gullies,1078, 1169/1300 and 1009 (Fig 18).

Coins from the subsidence fill above a ditch dating to the 2nd-3rd century included an AE4 Valentinian II issue dating to 375-392, the latest coin found on site, indicating that activity continued until the late 4th century.

THE ROMAN POTTERY
by Jane Timby

The archaeological work at Upton resulted in the recovery of 3476 sherds of pottery weighing 72.6kg dating to the Romano-British period. Sherds were recovered from Areas 1-3 with most of the sherds, 91% by count, coming from Area 2. The pottery was generally in good condition, reflected in the overall average sherd weight of 20.9g, indicative of material that has undergone little ongoing disturbance. Roman pottery was recovered from 117 individual features including pits, ditches, gullies, wells and a kiln.

The pottery was sorted into fabrics based on firing colour and the main visible inclusions. Named or traded wares are coded using the National Roman reference series (Table 4). Other wares were coded according to their colour and fabric characteristics. The sorted material was quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalent (rim only). Rim sherds were coded according to vessel type and other features such as surface finish; decoration and evidence of use (eg sooting or calcareous coating) were also noted. The quantified data was entered onto an Excel spreadsheet, a copy of which is deposited with the site archive. A selection of material has been illustrated along with other pieces of intrinsic interest.

The full report containing the complete fabric discussion and a phased discussion of the assemblage is included in the client report (Walker and Maull 2010), which is available in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record and through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). A copy is also available on the CD attached to this journal. The fabric quantification and a more general discussion looking at the assemblage in its local and regional context are provided below.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Roman pottery assemblage from Upton appears to show modest activity from the later 1st-2nd century, increasing through the 2nd and 3rd centuries and continuing into the second half of the 4th century. The pottery trends appear to show a decrease from shelly and grog-tempered wares in the early-mid Roman period to products of the Nene Valley in the mid-later Roman phases accompanied by regional imports mainly from the Dorset black burnished ware kilns and the Oxfordshire industries. Although in some respects the Upton assemblage would appear to be fairly typical for a rural settlement site with a fairly limited range of continental and regional imports it has some slightly aberrant features to the norm. The moderately high percentage of samian at 4.6% by count is unusual as this is higher than might be expected from a site of this nature. It is also curious why a site which clearly had a demand for imported finewares from this date has negligible other imported wares. Unfortunately, the pottery from most of the contemporary sites in the locality has not been quantified to allow comparison. In recent work at Higham Ferrers, where the settlement appears to be much larger with religious foci, the samian accounts for 3.84% by count of the considerably larger assemblage (Timby 2009). At the Roman small town at Alcester, Oxon, samian accounted for 2.4% of the site assemblage (Evans 2002, 277), whereas at Stanwick, Northamptonshire, the samian accounted for *c* 2% by weight of the total assemblage (McSloy 2002). Upton therefore does not fit the expected pattern.

In terms of vessels present (Table 5) coarseware jars dominate accounting for just over half the assemblage

Table 4: Quantified summary of pottery fabrics (weight in g)

Fabric description	No	% No	Wt (g)	% Wt	EVE	% EVE
Imports						
Central Gaulish samian	160	4.6	2509	3.5	463	8.5
Central Gaulish black slip	1	0.0	8	0.0	0	0.0
Dressel 20 amphora	10	0.3	389	0.5	0	0.0
Regional						
Dorset black burnished ware	90	2.6	1213	1.7	162	3.0
Hadham ware	1	0.0	14	0.0	0	0.0
Oxon red slip	28	0.8	500	0.7	7	0.1
Oxon red slip mortaria	4	0.1	104	0.1	7	0.1
Oxon whiteware mortaria	10	0.3	540	0.7	31	0.6
?Verulamium type whiteware	5	0.1	206	0.3	37	0.7
Local: grog						
burnt oxidised grog-tempered	13	0.4	247	0.3	75	1.4
burnt whiteware grog-tempered	22	0.6	717	1.0	9	0.2
black sandy with grog (+/- sand)	1	0.0	12	0.0	7	0.1
grey sandy with grog (+/- sand)	47	1.4	2247	3.1	124	2.3
oxidised with grog (+/- sand)	198	5.7	5534	7.6	154	2.8
whiteware grog (+/- sand)	84	2.4	3399	4.7	73	1.3
Midlands grog-tempered	182	5.2	11811	16.3	185	3.4
LIA-ERO type grog-tempered	18	0.5	151	0.2	0	0.0
sandy with grog LIA-ERO	1	0.0	23	0.0	0	0.0
grog and shell-tempered	19	0.5	114	0.2	8	0.1
Local: sand						
burnt oxidised sandy	2	0.1	64	0.1	25	0.5
black pink sandy ware	42	1.2	1127	1.6	72	1.3
black whiteware sandy	27	0.8	554	0.8	37	0.7
black sandy ware	154	4.4	2747	3.8	410	7.6
micaceous black ware	1	0.0	10	0.0	0	0.0
BB1 black sandy imitation	6	0.2	70	0.1	12	0.2
brown/ buff sandy	13	0.4	275	0.4	15	0.3
cream sandy ware	5	0.1	23	0.0	0	0.0
grey sandy wares	19	0.5	376	0.5	20	0.4
fine grey sandy ware	7	0.2	69	0.1	36	0.7
pinklish grey micaceous	21	0.6	226	0.3	40	0.7
oxidised sandy wares	142	4.1	3260	4.5	207	3.8
fine oxidised sandy ware	51	1.5	401	0.6	24	0.4
micaceous oxidised ware	6	0.2	253	0.3	15	0.3
pink sandy	4	0.1	35	0.0	0	0.0
white-slipped grey ware	1	0.0	13	0.0	0	0.0
white ware	47	1.4	802	1.1	28	0.5
Lower Nene Valley grey ware	1210	34.8	20887	28.8	2063	38.0
Lower Nene Valley oxidisied ware	14	0.4	73	0.1	0	0.0
Lower Nene Valley parchment	2	0.1	8	0.0	0	0.0
Lower Nene Valley white ware	101	2.9	1798	2.5	85	1.6
LNV white ware mortaria	18	0.5	1297	1.8	83	1.5
LNV colour-coated ware	198	5.7	2946	4.1	482	8.9
Local: shell						
shell wares (hm/wm)	467	13.4	5288	7.3	397	7.3
sparse shelly ware	23	0.7	270	0.4	25	0.5
grey sandy with limestone	1	0.0	33	0.0	5	0.1
TOTALS	**3476**	100.0	**72643**	100.0	**5423**	100.0

(52.1% by EVE) followed by bowls/dishes (23.5%). The proportion of jars to bowls/dishes places the site almost at the boundary between typical rural and urban assemblages for the Midlands (see Evans 2002, fig 7.56). Rural sites generally speaking tend to display a higher proportion of jars, particularly large storage jars. At Upton storage jars account for *c*10% of the jar assemblage. Tablewares, including imported finewares and colour-coated wares, are quite well represented (21.9%), particularly drinking vessels (cups and beakers, 11.3%).

Table 5: Roman pottery, vessel forms

	Form	% EVE
Tableware	dish	3.5
	bowl	2.9
	cup	4.2
	box lid	0.9
	flagon	3.2
	beaker	7.1
	jar	0.1
Coarseware	jar	52.1
	bowl	13.8
	dish	9.7
	mortaria	2.2
	lid	0.3
TOTAL		**100.0**

Whilst there appears to be no extant traces of habitation on the site, the pottery from the mid 2nd century would suggest a fairly well-appointed household in the immediate locality.

CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED ROMAN POTTERY

Samian

Fig 25 Base of Central Gaulish samian dish with incised X. Kiln stokehole 1095 (1134).

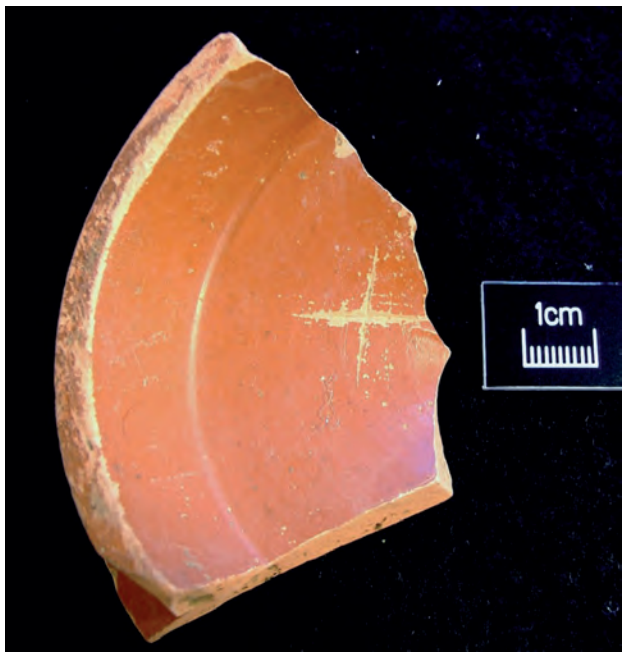

Fig 25 Base of central Gaulish samian dish with incised X

Fig 26 ROPPVOFF Roppus of Les Martres-de-Veyre. Base with central stamp within a rouletted wreath. Probably a dish 31R or 18/31R. Ditch 1312 (1315).

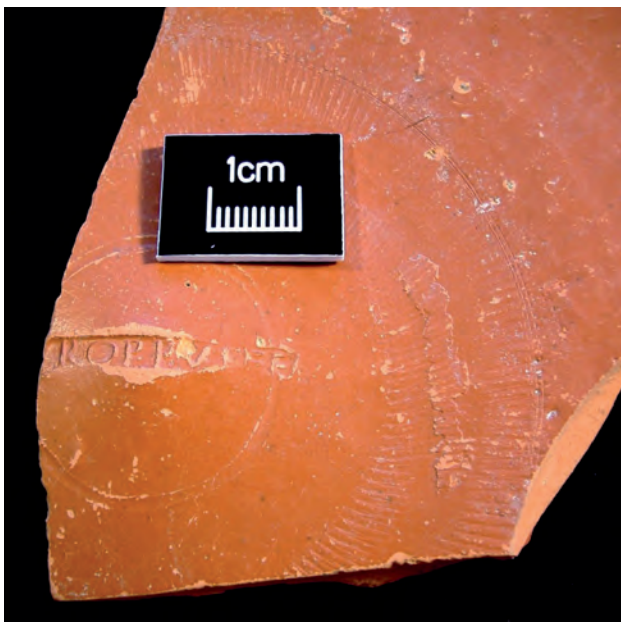

Fig 26 Base of samian dish with central stamp of ROPPVOFF, within a rouletted wreath

Fig 27 Decorated bowl, Drag. 37 stamped by the mould maker ADVOCISI. AD 160-190. Ditch 1264 (1263).

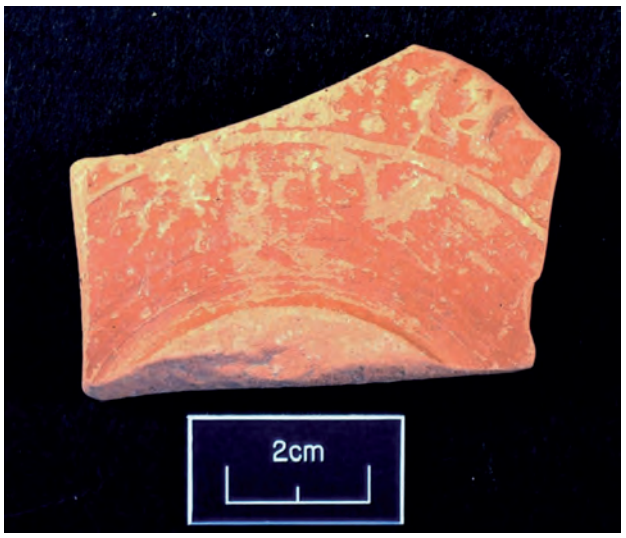

Fig 27 Decorated samian bowl marked by the mould maker ADVOCISI

Other wares: 4-13 Kiln stokehole 1095 (1096); 14-16 Kiln (1155).

Fig 28

4 Jar with slightly warped rim. Grey sandy ware with sparse grog.
Fabric: GYGR (sandier version).

5 Jar. Discoloured orange-grey. Fabric: GYGR (sandier version).

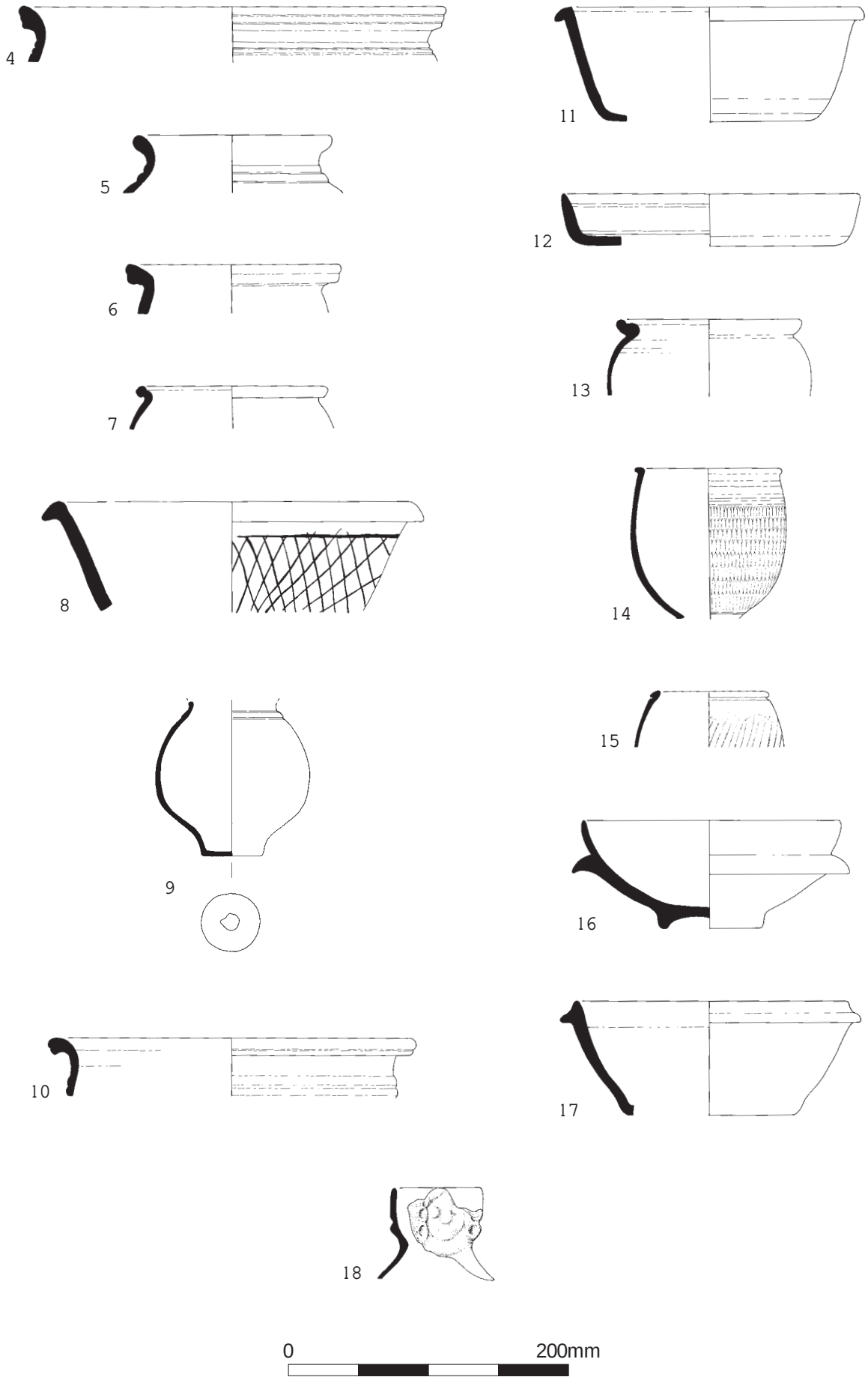

Fig 28 Roman pottery, 4-18

6 Jar. Discoloured black-orange. Spalling on interior. Fabric: GYGR (sandier version).
7 Lid-seated jar. Grey-black. Fabric: GYGR (sandier version).
8 Deep bowl with burnished lattice decoration. Fabric: LNVRE.
9 Complete body of a beaker missing the rim and with a deliberate hole through the base. Fabric: BW.
10 Bifid rim jar. Grey sandy with sparse grog. Fabric: GYGR (sandier version).
Kiln enclosure ditch 1093, (1094).

Other contexts

11 Grey ware bowl. Fabric: ?LNV RE. Gully 1154, (1156)
12 Plain-rimmed dish. Fabric: BW. Gully 1154, (1156)
13 Lid seated jar. Fabric: LNV RE. Gully 1154, (1156)
Gully 1154, (1156)
14 Several sherds from an ovoid beaker with rouletted decoration. Fabric as no, 39.
Gully 1154, (1156)
15 Black colour-coated beaker with applied scales diagonally ridged. Fabric: LNV CC. Gully 1154 (1156)
16 Flanged bowl, in brownish-red colour-coated ware. Fabric: LNV CC.
Gully 1169, (1170)
17 Flanged rim bowl. Fabric: SHELL. Pit/posthole 1119 (1120). Late Roman.
18 Face flagon. Orange micaceous ware, probably worn OXF RS (Young 2000, form C11). 2nd half 4th century AD. Gully 1249 (1250)

Fig 29 Hammer rim mortaria with red painted decoration. Fabric: LNV WHM.
Gully 10 23 (1024)

THE ROMAN FINDS

by Tora Hylton, with Ian Meadows, Pat Chapman and Andy Chapman

There are 122 Roman finds, of which 68 came from deposits in Area 2, particularly on the western side, and 59 were from unstratified topsoil and subsoil deposits. The assemblage is dominated by 88 coins.

JEWELLERY

Items of copper alloy jewellery include a plate brooch, a finger ring and an armlet, and there is a fragment from a shale armlet.

The plate brooch, which is incomplete, has been identified by Don Mackreth as a Type 2 British plate brooch, comprising two concentric annular zones of red and green enamel with a centrally placed empty circular cell, which dates to *c* AD125-200.

The finger ring is incomplete, but originally it would have been annular with a D-shaped cross-section. The hoop expands towards the bezel where there is a vestige of an oval recess, 1mm deep, containing a white paste to hold a glass setting in place, rather like an example from Stoney, Cambridgeshire (Johns 1996, fig 103, 13) which dates to the 2nd-3rd centuries.

There is a fragment from an armlet with D-shaped cross-section and a stylised devolved serpent's head terminal. It displays similarities to Johns Type Bii, which is flat and quite broad (1997, 36). It is heavily corroded and the patina has flaked off, so it is impossible to determine the presence of surface decoration. Serpent's heads are common on items of jewellery during the Roman period and represent health and healing, rebirth and the spirits of the departed (Johns 1998/2000, 7). Similar armlets have been recovered from 3rd/4th-century deposits at Gadebridge Park (Neal and Butcher 1974, fig 60, 158) and Magiovinium (Wardle 1989, fig 24, 25).

Part of a lathe-turned shale armlet was recovered from a stone spread 1099. Although only a small fragment survives, originally it would have been *c*70mm in diameter,

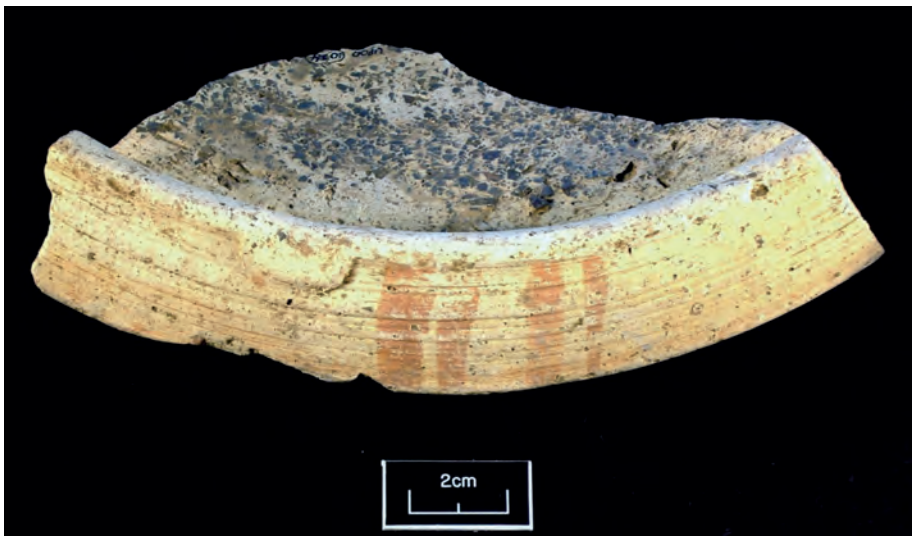

Fig 29 Roman mortaria with red painted decoration, 19

plain with a D-shaped cross-section, *c*11mm thick and *c*11-13mm high. Stylistically it displays similarities to a simply decorated example from Colchester (Crummy 1983, fig 38, 1554).

BUILDING EQUIPMENT

There is a dearth of structural related ironwork. There are seven nails from 3rd to 4th-century deposits. Three are incomplete, four are Manning's Type 1B (1985, 134ff), with flat sub-circular heads and 25-79mm long, and one is Type 3, which has a T-shaped head and is 53mm long.

HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENT

There are a small number of objects for domestic use. From pit 1277 there is part of the tapered circular-sectioned handle of a copper alloy spoon. The junction between the handle and bowl is off-set with two notched mouldings, like examples from Bancroft Villa, Milton Keynes which date to the mid 4th century (Hylton and Zeepvat 1994, fig 148, 128,129).

An iron hook from the subsoil in Area 2 comprises a circular-sectioned shank with a hooked terminal at one end and a conical knob at the other. It would have been used in conjunction with a swivel link for suspension.

There are five lead sub-circular 'patches' probably for repairing ceramic vessels, two from 2nd to 3rd century deposits and three from subsoil.

TOOLS

From a pit under stone layer 1099, there is the head of a drill-bit; lanceolate-shaped with a rectangular cross-section, rather like an example from Hod Hill, Dorset (Manning 1985, plate 12, B65). The x-ray shows the presence of marked shoulders at the junction of the head and shank, and the terminal appears to be burred.

MISCELLANEOUS FINDS

There are various undiagnostic fragments of sheet metal, rod fragments, and a suspension ring. The only item of note is a large steelyard weight, from boundary ditch 1017. The weight is sub-spherical (65mm x 55mm) with the corroded remains of an iron suspension loop visible at the top, it weighs 1.56kg, which, if converted to Roman units, would be a little under five Roman pounds or Libra (1 Libra = 327.45g).

THE COINS
by Ian Meadows

The assemblage of 87 coins spans almost the entire Roman period but, unfortunately, only 40 came from securely stratified contexts, the remainder being recovered from the topsoil, subsoil or machine spoil. The use of a metal detector throughout the project will have maximised the recovery of coins from the site so the examples should be seen as representative of the whole. The range of coins that could be dated reflects a fairly normal loss pattern for a site occupied from the 2nd to 4th centuries, with the bulk of the coins dated to the 4th century. The few recognisable mintmarks preclude any comments about money supply.

The coins of the 2nd century were all in an extremely worn condition reflecting their long circulation life and therefore even where they occur in stratified contexts they should be considered as residual. This may to a large degree also be true of most of the 3rd century coins in so far as they mostly occur in contexts that also contain 4th century issues. It is, perhaps, possible that this is a reflection of the long life of many of the open features spanning many years as a result of recutting and scouring. This process may also have contributed to the poor condition of the coins by exacerbating weathering; a large proportion of coins could only be identified to the 3rd/4th centuries on the grounds of flan size.

The occurrence of late coins in the upper part of gully 1251 and ditch 1220 probably indicates the presence of a hollow formed as the fills consolidated and settled in which later material collected. These coins are, however, a reflection that activity on or near the site continued until at least the last quarter of the 4th century.

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS
by Pat Chapman

ROOF TILE

The assemblage of tile comprises 34 fragments, weighing 4.18kg. These are most likely all roof tile sherds, as there are some flanges from *tegula* and a few curved *imbrex* fragments. The sherds are generally worn, a few shellyware tile sherds are friable.

The dominant fabric, by a small margin, is shellyware with the inclusions varying in density from a mass within one sherd to very sparse. The two other fabrics comprise either a hard or slightly soft fine silty orange with occasional fine shell or calcareous material, or a fine to coarse sandy fabric with occasional grog or ironstone inclusions. The sherds are between 15mm and 25mm thick, but typically 18-20mm thick.

Eight of the sherds have part of the flange surviving, indicating that they come from the *tegula* roof tile. The flanges are thin and 18-27mm higher than the body. Two of the flanges have top cutaway notches and two have lower notch cutaways, cut so the tiles can overlap on the roofs. The *tegula* from pit/waterhole 1004 has a vertical cutaway without an angle at the bottom, while the sherd from gully 1258 is angled at the bottom, but the top does not survive. These would suggest a 2nd to late 3rd century date for the tiles (Warry 2007). The only *imbrex* comes from pit 1267.

The thickness of the tile sherds, the shape of the lower cutaways and the presence of a nail, which may indicate a steeper pitch than early roofs, suggest a 2nd and 3rd century date.

FLOOR TILE

Two very similar fragments of floor tile, from the primary fills of pits 1147 and 1125, are 50-55mm thick and made from hard fine silty clay with occasional ironstone inclusions and fired to pinkish brown with a few buff streaks. One surface has been smoothed although it is slightly uneven, the other is rougher. The thickness of these fragments would suggest they were part of a *bipedalis*, the large tile used to bridge the gaps between the hypocaust pillars as a floor base, or as paving (Ward 1999, 43).

FIRED CLAY
by Pat Chapman

An assemblage, weighing 14.5kg, comprises structural debris found in and around the kiln 1097 from which it derives. The majority of the fragments comprise thin sheets, measuring up to 100mm by 90mm and either 8-10mm or 20-25mm thick, in a hard orange pink clay occasionally heated to pale grey or burnt black with occasional small gravel inclusions. They are covered on both sides in dense stem impressions. Similar fragments were found at kilns 18 and 22 at Camp Hill, Northampton, which were interpreted as collapsed roofing material (Shaw 1979, 24). There are also a few lumps with roughly smoothed surfaces and sharp angular impressions, made from orange or pale brown and black sandy clay with some flint and ironstone inclusions.

From fill (1096) of the kiln stokehole, 1095, there are fragments of fired clay and reddened roughly rectangular pieces of densely fossiliferous limestone, one fragment of clay still adhering to a piece of limestone. The large, relatively flat, fired clay fragments, up to 30mm thick, are in a hard smooth sandy fabric heated to pale grey with occasional large calcined inclusions. The presence of rectangular pieces of limestone may suggest the use of limestone bonded with clay in a flue arch.

From the same context there was also part of a clay pedestal base with a diameter of *c*80mm.

The kiln enclosure ditches, 1093, 1132 and 1192, contained the fragments of two circular clay kiln shelves with a straw marked surface (Fig 30). There is also a fragment of fired clay with what appears to be part of a sandal imprint, denoted by hob nail impressions.

ILLUSTRATED FIRED CLAY

(Fig 30) Circular kiln shelf. Diameter *c*340 mm. Well-fired, hard grey/orange sandy ware with grass/straw impressions on lower face. Kiln enclosure ditch 1093, (1094)

THE SLAG
by Andy Chapman

A total of 1.70kg of miscellaneous ferrous slag was recovered from Roman features in the eastern part of the site, indicating that some iron smithing was carried out in this area, but probably on a domestic rather than an industrial scale.

THE ANIMAL BONE
by Stephanie Vann

The animal bone from Upton was subjected to macroscopic examination and identifiable bone was noted and quantified by context. A summary of the results is presented in Table 6. Age was calculated where possible from bones where fusion was discernible, neonatal/juvenile bone and teeth.

The total number of fragments was 1639, of which 441 (27 %) were identifiable. This identifiable material was, with the exception of one fragment, all from the Iron Age and Roman phases. The species present were cattle, ovicaprid (sheep/goat), horse, pig and dog. No wild species were present, nor was there any evidence of bird or fish remains.

Preservation of the animal bone was poor to moderate.

Fig 30 Fragment of fired clay circular kiln shelf

Table 6: Total number of bone fragments per species

Phase	Bos Cattle	Ovicaprid Sheep/ Goat	Equus Horse	Sus Pig	Canid Dog	Large Mammal	Small Mammal	Unidentified
Late Bronze Age-middle Iron Age	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	43
Middle-late Iron Age	30	10	11	0	0	94	1	344
Early Roman	19	9	5	6	0	10	3	267
Later Roman	53	21	20	5	4	82	7	515
Medieval	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
TOTAL	**151**	**41**	**36**	**11**	**4**	**186**	**12**	**1198**

Fragmentation was moderate to high and surface abrasion was moderate to high with bone exhibiting signs of erosion, weathering and other taphonomic damage in many instances. Fragmentation six was the result of both old and fresh breaks. Evidence for butchery was low with six definite examples and two possible examples. These included both cut and chop marks. There was evidence of canid gnawing on 18 bones and 57 burned bone fragments were noted. There was no evidence of pathology.

Tooth wear was recorded for the few mandibles that were complete enough to permit it, to enable an age to be assigned to individual animals and age at death patterns to be undertaken.

DISCUSSION

Whilst it is true that the small size of the assemblage and its poor condition makes it difficult to draw any significant conclusions, there is nothing about the assemblage that is in any way extraordinary for one of this period. Sheep/goat and cattle are regularly exploited throughout the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, as is the horse and pig, albeit not generally in the same numbers as ovicaprids or cattle (Maltby 1981). The dominance of such remains within the assemblage from Upton is therefore not unusual. The good survivability of large, strong bones such as those of cattle and horse does also need to be taken into consideration. However, this dominance may be a reflection of preservation rather than husbandry practices at this site.

Whilst the only evidence of canids within the faunal assemblage itself came from teeth and a mandible in late Roman features, pit 1147 and boundary ditch 1302, the presence of gnawing upon several elements confirms the presence of dogs at the site at earlier dates, see below. Whilst incomplete, the canid mandible had an estimated mandibular cheektooth row length measurement of 90 mm. This suggests the individual was comparable in size to a modern greyhound (Clark 1996, fig 6).

The majority of the burnt material (79%) came from Iron Age contexts, whilst 9% came from early Roman contexts and 9% came from later Roman contexts. Several of these contexts also contained charcoal, suggesting that there may have been localised burning of some nature in the vicinity during this period.

Fifty percent of the evidence for butchery comes from early Roman contexts, whilst 25% comes from Iron Age contexts and 25% comes from later Roman contexts. However, 50% of the evidence for gnawing comes from later Roman contexts, whilst 28% comes from possible early Roman contexts and 22% comes from Iron Age contexts. The number of fragments exhibiting these is too low to draw any definitive conclusions. It is noteworthy though that the canid bones also come from later Roman contexts, permitting the tentative suggestion that there were higher numbers of canids on site during this period.

THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

by Val Fryer

The samples were bulk floated and the flots were collected in a 500 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were sorted under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16, and identifications were made by comparison with modern reference specimens. All plant remains were charred.

SAMPLE COMPOSITION

Cereal grains and chaff and/or seeds of common weed plants were recorded at a low to moderate density from all but four samples. Preservation was generally quite poor, with a high proportion of the grains being puffed and distorted, probably as a result of combustion at very high temperatures.

Both barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were noted. The wheat grains were predominantly of an elongated 'drop-form' shape typical of emmer (*T. dicoccum*) or spelt (*T. spelta*), although a small number of more rounded hexaploid type grains were also present. Double keeled spelt glume bases were recovered from a number of samples, but only one possible single keeled emmer glume base was noted. Oat (*Avena* sp.) awn fragments were recorded from two samples and a possible poorly preserved grain was found in another sample.

Weed seeds generally occurred at a very low density, and were frequently noted as single specimens. Most were of common segetal or grassland species including brome (*Bromus* sp.), goosegrass (*Galium aparine*), grasses (Poaceae), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*), dock (*Rumex* sp.) and scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*). Wetland plant macrofossils occurred infrequently (within

only six assemblages), but did include sedge (*Carex* sp.) and spike-rush (*Eleocharis* sp.) nutlets and seeds of blinks (*Montia fontana*). Somewhat surprisingly, tree/shrub macrofossils, most notably hazel nutshell fragments, did not appear within any of the assemblages studied.

Charcoal fragments were present throughout, but rarely at a high density. Other plant macrofossils occurred infrequently, but did include pieces of charred root stem and heather (Ericaceae) stem and floret fragments.

Other material types were particularly scarce. The fragments of black porous and tarry material were probable residues of the combustion of organic remains at very high temperatures, while the vitreous residues and ferrous globules may be indicative of small-scale industrial activity on or near the site.

DISCUSSION

PIT ALIGNMENT

A total of four pits were sampled from a early/middle Iron Age pit alignment at the north-west corner of Area A1. Of these, pits 99, 105 and 108, contain assemblages with small quantities of probable cereal processing waste including grains, chaff (including spelt glume bases) and segetal weed seeds. While none contain sufficient material to be indicative of primary deposition, there is probably sufficient to suggest that cereal processing was taking place somewhere nearby during this period of site use.

PITS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE ENCLOSURE 2

Of the seven assemblages studied, four (from pits 50, 66, 74 and 188) appear to contain low densities of cereal processing waste including grains, chaff (predominantly wheat) and weed seeds. As with the earlier assemblages from the pit alignment (see above), there is probably insufficient material to indicate primary deposition; it is perhaps more likely that the remains recovered are derived from either scattered or wind-blown refuse from nearby processing activities, or from material brought into the enclosure to be used as kindling/fuel. Whatever the source of the material, these assemblages may contain some indicators of contemporary agricultural practice. Although the composition of the weed assemblages appears to indicate that most cultivation was occurring on lighter soils or freshly ploughed grassland, the occurrence of wetland plant macrofossils may suggest that some more marginal areas of damp grassland were also coming into production for the first time.

OTHER IRON AGE PIT FILLS

Samples were taken from a further six pit fills. Of these, four contained individual cereal grains and/or weed seeds, while two contained only charcoal fragments. All remains are almost certainly accidental inclusions within the contexts.

IRON AGE DITCH FILLS

Eight samples were taken from fills within the ditches surrounding Enclosures 1, 2 and 6. Of these, two samples, from Enclosure 1, ditch 195 and Enclosure 2, ditch 80 respectively, appear to contain very small quantities of possible cereal processing waste. The remaining assemblages contain insufficient material for interpretation.

EARLIER ROMAN SAMPLES

Samples were taken from fills within a kiln in Area A2 and from a posthole, the well and grave fills. Although samples were taken from the kiln stoke-hole and from the ditch/gully surrounding the structure, plant macrofossils are extremely scarce, possibly indicating that the kiln was cleaned after its final firing. Assuming that the few remains recorded are derived from materials burnt within the kiln, it would appear that a variety of fuels were used including wood/charcoal, cereal processing waste, uprooted grasses and grassland herbs and possibly even heather, the latter perhaps being favoured as it burns at a high and even temperature. Similar fuel assemblages have been recorded from a number of other contemporary kilns including Postwick, Norfolk (Fryer 1997a) and Two Mile Bottom, Thetford (Fryer 1997b).

Although cereal processing waste again appears to be present within the assemblage from grave 1199, the macrofossils are all severely abraded, probably indicating that they were accidentally included within the grave fill after a long period of exposure within the surrounding soil horizon. The assemblages from posthole 1196 and well 1173 contain insufficient material for interpretation.

LATER ROMAN FEATURES

Two samples are from fills within pit/waterhole, 1506. The upper fill contained an assemblage very similar in composition to the fuel waste from the kiln (see above), with a particular abundance of heather stem fragments. It would, therefore, appear most likely that this material is derived from a small deposit of spent fuel, which either accumulated or was placed within the feature fill. The lower fill contained a very sparse assemblage, comprising a single indeterminate cereal grain and a small number of charcoal fragments.

CONCLUSIONS

The assemblages are all extremely small (most being considerably <0.1 litre in volume), and most are probably derived from accumulations of either scattered or wind-blown refuse. There is no evidence for primary deposition within any of the assemblages studied. Cereals were almost certainly of importance to the occupants of the site during the Iron Age period, although it is unclear whether the grain was being grown locally or imported to the site in a semi-cleaned state. Processing waste is present, and indeed it occurs in most features on the site, but the density of material recovered is low, possibly indicating that primary processing was not occurring in the immediate vicinity. Similar low densities of processing waste have now been recorded from a number of contemporary sites, for example Fison Way, Thetford (Murphy 1992) and Stansted Airport (Murphy 1990). In both of the latter, local soil conditions were not conducive to cereal production, and it is assumed that the occupants were following a largely pastoral regime,

relying on imported batches of semi-cleaned grain, which would be finally processed on site. Evidence from the current assemblages certainly suggests that the latter interpretation would be relevant to the present site.

The surrounding area appears to have consisted primarily of dry grassland, with only ephemeral indications of either heath or wetland, so a pastoral economy would certainly appear to be indicated. Habitation activity at Upton appears to have been centred on Enclosure 2. Although few samples were taken from the subsidiary enclosures, those that have been studied contain very little material, and it is tentatively suggested that some or all of these structures may have been used as stock pens.

By the Roman period, activity on the site appears to have been minimal, although a kiln utilising a mixture of fuels was in use.

THE MEDIEVAL FIELD SYSTEM

A series of regularly-spaced north-south aligned gullies are visible on the geophysical survey and were recorded across the excavated area (Figs 3 and 4). They are the truncated furrows of a former medieval ridge and furrow field system. The furlongs ran down the slope towards the river. There did not appear to be any correlation between the medieval open field system and any earlier landscape features.

The site would have been situated within the common fields of Upton village. The date of enclosure is unknown, but Bridges, reporting in about 1720, stated that part of the lordship 'hath been enclosed within these few years' but that the rest was old enclosure (RCHME 1985). It is thought that the earlier enclosure may date to when the Knightley family acquired Upton, in 1420.

MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS
by Tora Hylton

All finds of medieval and post-medieval date were recovered from topsoil, subsoil and furrow deposits. They include a penny of Edward I or II (1272-1307/1307-1327), Durham mint, a fragment of a long cross penny of Edward III (1327-77), a 14th-century French jetton, two 16th/17th-century Nuremburg jettons, a fragment of a silver pin head decorated with spiral wire filigree ornament like examples from Norwich in 17th and 18th-century deposits (Margeson 1993, fig 4, 26-28), an undecorated book clasp which dates to *c*1600-1800 (*cf* Ibid 1993, fig 40, 454) and a buckle.

DISCUSSION

THE LATE BRONZE AGE/EARLY IRON AGE PITS

The small group of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pits have been radiocarbon dated to a 250-year period between the 8th and mid-6th centuries BC, which may be considered to include the end of the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age transition and much of the early Iron Age.

Three postholes or small pits found at Quinton House School to the west may have formed a contemporary continuation of this settlement (Foard-Colby and Walker this volume). Such sparse scatters of pits and postholes are generally thought to be the remains of short-lived settlements indicative of a relatively mobile settlement pattern.

The pottery assemblage is typologically similar to pottery associated with a late Bronze Age ringwork at Thrapston, which has been interpreted as a possible aristocratic residence. Scattered post-built structures and pits have been found at various other sites across the region, including Sywell and Ecton (Atkins *et al* 2000-1), Gretton, Great Oakley and Weekley Wood (Kidd 2004). Unenclosed sites also seem to be the earliest phases of the long-lived settlements at Crick (Hughes 1998) and Wilby Way, Wellingborough (Thomas and Enright 1999).

THE PIT ALIGNMENT

The pit alignment is the earliest visible man-made division of the landscape at Upton (Fig 31). Although generally regarded as landscape boundaries dating to the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, the pit alignment at Upton has a radiocarbon date in the early middle Iron Age, indicating that these unusually large pits were still partially open features at this time, perhaps several generations after the formation of the alignment. A similar radiocarbon date has come from a pit alignment at Cottisford Turn, near Silverstone, Northamptonshire (Mudd 2007), and it is likely that some pit alignments were either still being created or were at least being maintained at the beginning of the middle Iron Age. Some pit alignment boundaries survived as landscape features until the Roman period, as at Wollaston (Meadows pers comm) and the alignment of the pit alignment at Upton certainly influenced the layout of the succeeding Iron Age linear boundary, which ran on a parallel alignment.

The slightly irregular shape of the pits at Upton appears to have been due to the unstable nature of the geology, where the sandy, upper edges of the pits were liable to cave in and erode more readily, while the solid ironstone towards the base retained what was probably the original square plan form. A pit alignment at Briar Hill also exhibited this effect (Jackson 1974).

Part of a pit alignment has been excavated *c*1km to the west during the construction of the Cross Valley Link Road (Carlyle 2008). There may have been a western terminal to this alignment, but it extended eastward beyond the limit of the geophysical survey and it may either have met up with or been part of the same alignment as that at Upton. If so, this would give a minimum length of 1.3km, with the alignment at Upton still continuing to the east.

Many excavated pit alignments exhibit slight displacements every five to eight pits or so. These slight changes of orientation in the alignment are thought to indicate that the pits were dug by gangs and have been noted locally at Briar Hill (Jackson 1974), Harlestone Quarry (Field and Chapman 2006) and Pitsford (Hallam *et al* 2003). There are two slight displacements in the line of the pits at Upton, occurring between pits 93 and 96 and 111 and 122, with a central group of six pits spanning a length of 17.5m.

It is not known what influenced the original alignment of

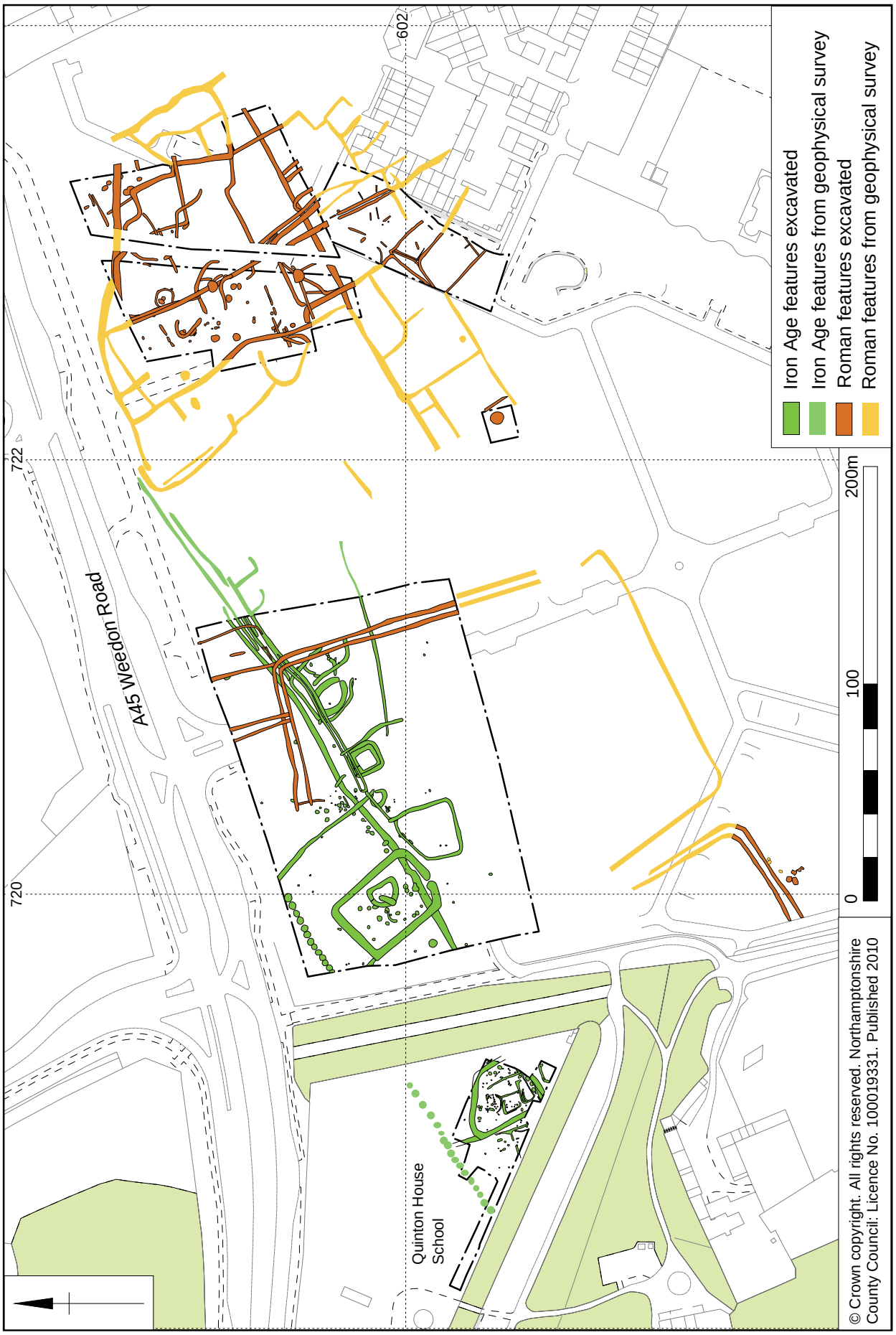

Fig 31 The Iron Age and Roman settlements at Upton

these boundaries, but Pollard (1996) argues that they may have served to re-instate existing divisions, delineating actual boundaries but also symbolic ones. Certainly the degree of care and precision used in excavating the pits is far more than would be required to merely create a physical boundary, where a ditch and bank would be far more effective in any case. Significantly the orientation of the pit alignment at Upton parallels the alignment between the sand and ironstone and clay geologies, though it is set 60 metres to the north. A pit alignment at Warth Park, Raunds was also orientated over the division between geological zones, in this case cornbrash and marl clay (McAree 2006).

IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

A number of enclosures were laid out alongside a linear boundary ditch during the middle Iron Age (Fig 31). The settlement commanded extensive views south across the Nene Valley towards Hunsbury Hill, in the near distance, and towards Blisworth and Gayton further to the south, although it did not sit on the highest point of the ridge (Fig 12). A small rise to the west of the settlement, currently occupied by Quinton House School, may have protected it somewhat from the prevailing westerly winds. Medieval and post-medieval ploughing of the site indicates that the settlement was located on agriculturally viable land; indeed, it was in an ideal situation to practice a mix of pastoral and arable farming because of its location on the interface between the permeable and impermeable geologies. However, the paucity of plant macrofossil evidence suggests that the inhabitants were not directly involved in arable farming and may have concentrated on a pastoral economy, perhaps utilising meadows below the site on the floodplain; although this paucity may at least partly be a product of poor preservation. The environment at the time appears to have consisted largely of open grassland, with very few trees or shrubs and smaller pockets of wetland. Cattle appeared to be the dominant species, followed by sheep/goat and horse. Similar biases towards cattle also occur at nearby Grange Park, Courteenhall and at Crick (Jones *et al* 2006). However, the comparative lack of animal bone on the site suggests that much of the stock was being slaughtered elsewhere. The absence of wild animal bones could suggest that there was no reliance on hunting, which is typical of middle Iron Age settlements.

The most prominent landscape feature was a boundary ditch that paralleled the alignment of the pit alignment, which was probably still a visible feature within the landscape when the settlement was created. The ditched boundary has been traced for at least 340m and associated ditches set at right angles, at both Upton and Quinton House School, and running northward from this boundary, suggest the presence of a series of larger plots or fields to the north, on higher ground. Linear ditch systems that stretch for several kilometres have been found at Ecton/Sywell, the Bramptons and near Rainsborough Hillfort (Kidd 2004) and there are middle Iron Age field systems at Wollaston (Meadows 1995).

Development of a series of enclosures along a linear boundary is also seen at an Iron Age and Roman site at Weekley, and is thought to have originated prior to the introduction of La Tene style pottery (Jackson and Dix 1986-7). There were four apparently contemporary early middle Iron Age sites situated in close proximity at Grange Park, Courteenhall. At one of these sites, Areas 9 and 10, a series of linear ditches associated with enclosures were interpreted as a droveway, but may have also functioned as a boundary. A further linear ditch, over 100m in length, was associated with later middle Iron Age enclosures in Area 6 at Grange Park (Jones *et al* 2006).

Enclosure 6 at Upton seems to have been a focus of domestic activity in the middle Iron Age, there may have been a roundhouse here, although only an arc of curvilinear gully survived. Some 210m to the west there may have been another, possibly contemporary, roundhouse within the enclosure at Quinton House School (Foard-Colby and Walker 2007).

Upton had been part of a larger agrarian landscape for many centuries by the late Iron Age, probably forming a component of a larger network of communities situated around the Upper Nene Valley with the large, nearby hub based at Hunsbury Hill to the south. By the middle of the 1st century AD, however, the large settlement at Duston had developed, perhaps even impinging on the land farmed by the occupants of the Upton site. The large amount of late Iron Age coinage recovered from the area around Duston would seem to indicate that it had a high status, whether social, political or religious.

The Iron Age finds, with no indication of any imported or 'exotic' goods, suggest that the status of the late Iron Age settlement at Upton does not appear to have been greatly influenced by the development of the 'small town' next to it, and the lifestyle of the inhabitants remained much the same as it had been during the previous centuries. This is mirrored at many other late Iron Age sites in the county, where there is generally little sign of the major social or economic change that is evident on sites in the South-East and South Midlands (Kidd 1999).

By the late Iron Age the settlement at Upton seems to have contracted; there is little evidence that it extended beyond the limit of excavation in any direction and it seems to have been centred on a single ditched enclosure, Enclosure 2. This small enclosure had a substantial ditch, up to 1.5m deep in places. There was no evidence for an internal bank, and the enclosure contained a scatter of pits, which produced some domestic debris, and a curvilinear gully may have marked the location of a near central roundhouse. Enclosure 7, which was enclosed by a shallow gully, was probably contemporary with Enclosure 2, although the cremation deposit within this enclosure, of a juvenile accompanied by about 40 hobnails, is likely to date to the 1st century AD or later.

ROMAN SETTLEMENT

At some point around the time of the Roman Conquest, the Iron Age settlement was abandoned. The old landscape divisions appear to have been fundamentally re-organised and the earliest Roman activity on the site was a series of single and double linear ditches that may have formed large rectangular enclosures (Fig 31). These

probably functioned as livestock enclosures, during the later 1st and 2nd centuries, overlapping with the growth in settlement activity to the east, which began in the 2nd century with the pottery kiln and associated ditch systems. All of this activity seems to have been peripheral to but associated with the Roman 'small town' at Duston.

The kiln and associated features were the earliest activity; industrial activity at the margins of the growing Roman town perhaps. Excavation behind the frontages and along smaller side tracks at Roman settlement in Northamptonshire, including Towcester and Ashton, has indicated that domestic occupation was scarce and dominated by ancillary buildings, structures and deposits associated with craft and agricultural activity, and rubbish disposal (Taylor 2000), and this corresponds with the evidence found during the excavations at Upton where, although no evidence for habitation was found, pottery production, and possibly ironsmithing, was taking place during the 2nd and into the 3rd centuries. However, recovery of a significant amount of imported pottery, including Samian, indicates the presence of a fairly well-appointed household somewhere in the vicinity.

The kiln at Upton is most like Woods type IIIC (1974). The kiln was in good condition and there were very few wasters in features surrounding the kiln, which may suggest that it wasn't in use for a long period of time. Fuel used in the kiln appears to have been a mixture of wood/charcoal, cereal processing waste and heather. The pottery produced by the kiln seems to have been white sandy and white grog-tempered wares, although too little was found to be sure. Most of the kiln bars, at least, were removed and possibly utilized in another kiln elsewhere. Clay for the pots was probably dug from nearby and prepared close to the kiln. A possible potter's workshop to the west of the kiln may have been where the pots were made and stored prior to firing. No other pottery kilns have been reported in Duston, the nearest being at Dallington, but it is believed that a further kiln was excavated during development of the housing estate to the immediate east (Paul Woodfield pers comm). Several 1st and 2nd century kilns were also excavated at Camp Hill, on the opposite side of the Nene Valley (Shaw 1979). Typologically, the kilns were not the same as the Upton example and they appeared to be in use at an earlier date. Early Roman kilns have also been excavated and in the grounds of Delapré Abbey (Woodfield 2010).

The two graves, probably dated to the same period as the kiln, appear to have been isolated burials, situated beyond any formal settlement and may be categorized as 'backland burials' (Esmonde-Cleary 2000). The location of rural Roman burials close to enclosure ditches, especially towards the entrances or to the rear of the enclosed area, has previously been discussed (Pearce 1999). The absence of any wood stains and nails suggest that the bodies were not interred in coffins but probably wrapped in shrouds before being buried.

Craft production ceased during the early 3rd century and there may have been a hiatus in activity until the late 3rd century, when a series of small enclosures were created. While to the south there was a series of small rectangular plots set along a common linear boundary, to the north the system seems to have expanded in an organic fashion, where the layout of the boundaries was haphazard and size of resulting plots irregular, with many realignments occurring. As previously, there was still no physical evidence for direct occupation, but high incidence of later coins and the pottery assemblage suggest that ditched plots were attached to a nearby building of some status.

Finds evidence from Duston itself, including malting/drying kilns, suggest that the whole community was involved in agricultural practices and the processing of arable crops and stock management (Taylor 2002). However, the poor environmental evidence does not help to define the exact economic base, although the area generally appears to have comprised open areas of grassland, indicating the importance of pastoral farming in the immediate vicinity.

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