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Late Iron Age to early Roman and Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement at Darsdale Farm, Raunds

by

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With contributions by Andy Chapman, Paul Blinkhorn, Chris Chinnock Steve Critchley, Nina Crummey, Rob Perrin, and Val Fryer

Summary

A late Iron Age to early Roman rectilinear enclosure, boundary ditch and field system produced pottery and animal bone suggesting that the settlement was of average status. Evidence for craft production included two triangular loomweights. The postholes of a small timber hall and other probable timber structures have been radiocarbon dated to the middle Anglo-Saxon period (mid to late 7th to 8th centuries AD). The settlement had been abandoned before the late Saxon period, but it may have been a precursor to medieval settlement at nearby Thorpe End.

Introduction

In 2015 MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey East Midlands, to undertake archaeological mitigation work on a proposed development site at Darsdale Farm, Raunds (Fig 1, NGR SP 9934 7195).

The development site is located on the southern edge of Raunds, and is 16.4ha in extent. It comprised areas of agricultural land, light industrial units, residential dwellings and gardens, and bounded to the north and west by residential dwellings and to the south and east by agricultural land.

The excavation comprised two main areas of investigation: Areas 1 and 2, to the south-west encompassing a late Iron Age to early Roman settlement; and Area 5, at the extreme north-east of the development area, containing middle Anglo-Saxon settlement (Fig 1). This published report is a condensed version of the full client report (Reid 2016), which will be available online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

Acknowledgements

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Topography and geology
by Steve Critchley

The site, situated between 54m and 58m above Ordnance Datum, lay to both the west and east of a tributary of the Raunds/Cotton Brook stream system, which runs westward to join the Nene near the Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of West Cotton (Chapman 2010).

The geology belongs to the Middle Jurassic Great Oolite Group comprising the Blisworth Limestone, Blisworth Clay and Cornbrash Formations (BGS online). The latter is overlain in some areas by glacial tills belonging to the Pleistocene Oadby Till. Only the Blisworth Limestone and Cornbrash was exposed during the excavations, along with areas of periglacial Head and glacial till.

Historical and archaeological background

A Scheduled Monument (SM 11508) identified as a univallate Iron Age hillfort lies directly to the north of the proposed development area (Fig 1). However, this suggestion may need to be questioned as an evaluation trench through this monument as part of the Raunds Area Survey Project in the 1980s found its ditch was less than 2m wide and 1m deep and therefore seems to have just been an enclosure (Parry 2006, fig 6.50). In addition to the Iron Age enclosure, the evaluation identified Saxon settlement remains with the medieval settlement at Thorpe End further to the north.

Directly to the north of the southern extent of the development site, the desk-based assessment (Waterman 2007) noted an enclosure recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER) (HER 5937/0/1).

A geophysical survey was carried out within the development area in 2005 by GSB (not illustrated). Several

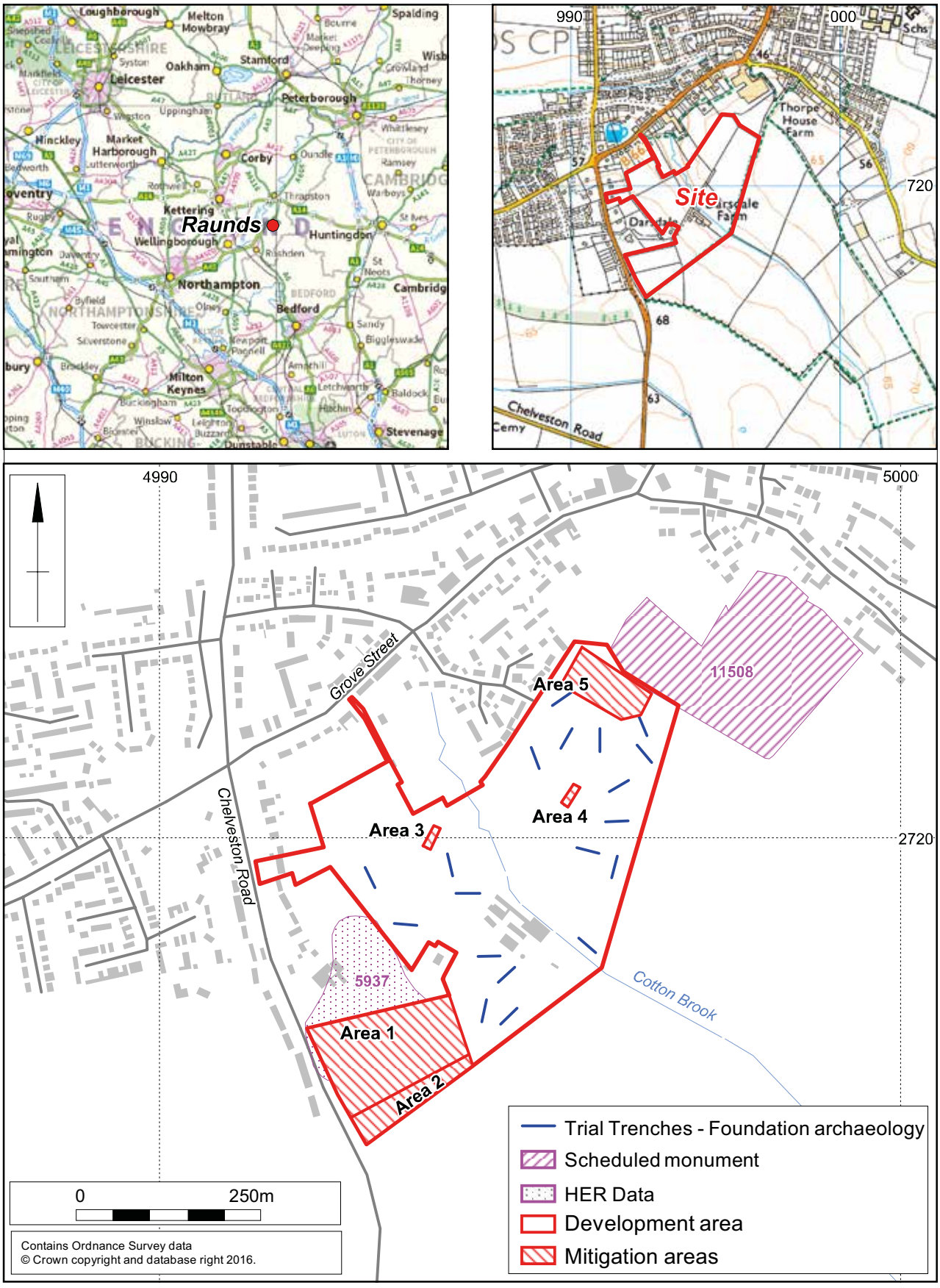

Fig 1: Site location

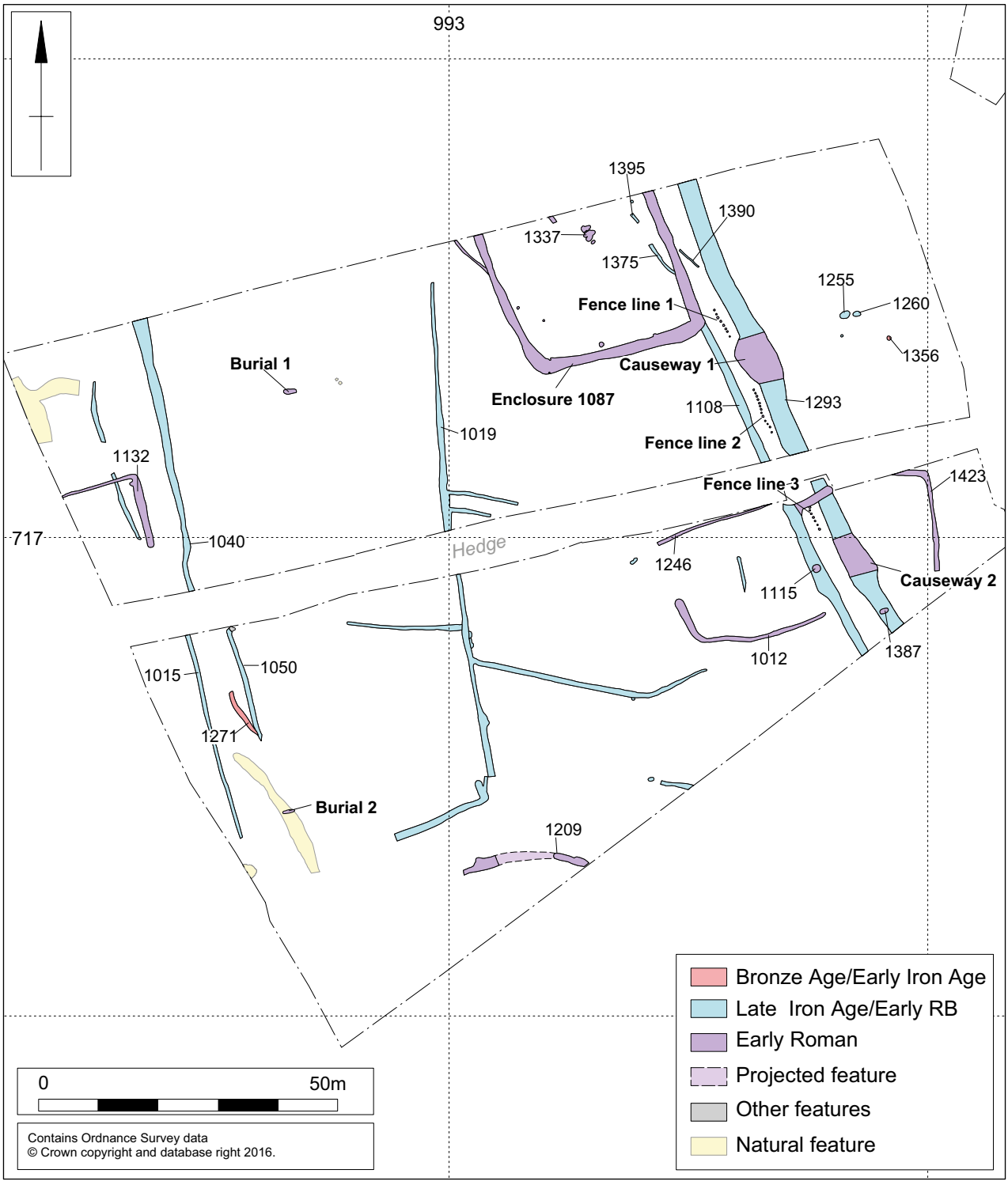

Fig 2: Area 1: the late Iron Age to early Roman settlement

pit-like anomalies and linear responses were suggested at the northern side of the proposed development. In the southern part of the development area, two parallel fragmentary an omalies were thought to be a continuation of a possible trackway also identified as a cropmark (HER 5937/0/1).

In a trial trench evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in 2009 (Hood 2009), thirty-two trenches were excavated and the results broadly correlated with the identified geophysical anomalies. An early Roman settlement was identified, as well as activity dating to the Anglo-Saxon period. A few post-medieval features were also uncovered.

Summary of site chronology

There was activity dating to four periods:

Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age (*c.*1000 to 450 BC)
Late Iron Age to early Roman (1st century BC to 2nd century AD)
Early to middle Anglo-Saxon (5th to 9th centuries AD)
Medieval to modern (11th century AD to present)

Late Bronze Age to early Iron Age activity (*c.*1000 to 450 BC)

A late Bronze Age/early Iron Age presence was indicated by a small quantity of pottery, but only tentatively allocated to this period, which was recovered from a pit 1356 and a gully 1271 within the Iron Age/early Roman settlement (Fig 2).

Late Iron Age to Early Roman (1st century BC to early 2nd century AD)

Across the western half of Areas 1 & 2 were the remains of a linear boundary ditch a settlement enclosure and rectilinear field boundary ditches, which may have been part of a more extensive co-axial field system. The multiple recuts of the linear boundary ditch indicate that this was a long-lived landscape feature, which at one stage incorporated lines of posts. Quantities of stone in the upper fills of parts of the boundary ditch may denote causeways crossing this boundary.

The linear boundary ditches

The major landscape feature was a pair of linear boundary ditches, 1293 and 1108, running parallel and *c.*10m apart (Fig 2). Ditch 1293 was *c.*3.0m wide and up to 1.2m deep, with fills of silty clay. Pottery dated to the mid to late 1st century AD was recovered from the upper fill immediately below the metalled surface. Ditch 1108 had a V-shaped profile, 1.26–2.00m wide and 0.55–1.08m deep. It appeared to have been re-cut at least once and contained a small quantity of pottery dated to the early to middle 1st century AD, suggesting that it had fallen out of use by the mid-1st century, leaving ditch 1293 as the sole boundary ditch in the later 1st century AD.

The field system

The field system comprised rectilinear boundary ditches 1040, 1050, 1015 and 1019 (Fig 2), up to 1.3m wide and between 0.14m and 0.60m deep. All had fills of silty clays and contained pottery dated to the mid to late 1st century AD. Four further lengths of ditch extended eastwards and westwards from ditch 1019, and were presumably the remains of sub-divisions within larger fields. The two parallel boundaries lay 40-45m apart, and this field was in excess of 90m long. They did not run parallel to the boundary ditch system, although this does not necessarily mean that they were not parts of a contemporary landscape.

The early Roman enclosure

Of three linear gullies, 1375, 1390 and 1395, aligned north-west to south-east in the northern part of Area 1, two were truncated by the enclosure ditch 1087 and the third, 1390, contained fragments of pottery dating to the early 1st century AD, suggesting that all three pre-dated the appearance of the enclosure.

Fig 3: Enclosure ditch 1087, at south-west corner, looking west

Three arms of a probable rectangular enclosure, 1087, lay within the excavated area. It was 27m wide and in excess of 35m long. The ditch, which was recut, was 1.20–1.80m wide and 0.60–0.98m deep (Fig 3). The eastern arm followed the same line as the inner of the two boundary ditches, which probably became redundant at this time.

The upper fills of the enclosure ditch, which comprised loose mid red-grey silty ash, up to 0.30m thick, contained a large quantity of pottery, 40% of the total Iron Age and Roman pottery from the whole excavation. Most of this pottery dated to the late 1st century AD or early 2nd century AD, including five sherds of samian ware.

A possible oven 1337 was of "figure of eight" form, 1.8m long comprising two lobes measuring 0.7m and 0.8m wide and up to 0.25m deep. The base of the northern lobe had a floor of heat-affected natural limestone overlain by a clay lining. A triangular fired clay loomweight (SF38) was recovered from the centre of the clay lining. The southern lobe was elliptical with a fill of dark, ashy silt, which also contained a triangular loomweight (SF42). The upper fill contained patches of fired clay, which could have been part of a collapsed superstructure. A sample taken from the ashy deposit contained a few cereal grains (including wheat) and herbs.

Three scattered postholes (not numbered) lay within the southern corner of the enclosure.

Fence line and causeways

An intermittent fence line, with 28 postholes identified, lay *c.*2.0m to the east of the backfilled boundary ditch 1108. Three lengths of postholes spanned a total distance

of *c*.50m (Fig 2, Fence lines 1–3). The postholes were located *c*.0.50m apart, with an average diameter of 0.35m, and 0.05–0.24m deep with U-shaped profiles. All of the postholes had fills of grey-brown clayey silt. A few sherds of pottery dating to the early to middle 1st century AD were recovered from one of the postholes in the northernmost section.

In the gap between Fence lines 1 and 2, the adjacent 20m-long stretch of boundary ditch, 1293, had been reinforced with stone to create a causeway, Causeway 1. The hard cobbled surface comprised medium to large pieces of sub-angular limestone and was 0.14m thick. A small quantity of early to middle 1st century AD pottery was recovered from within the surface but this is likely residual as middle to late 1st century pottery was recovered from the layer below. The southern end of Fence line 3 also coincided with another section of metalled surface in the top of the filled ditch, Causeway 2. This layer of compacted limestone was *c*.5.0m long by 0.20m thick.

The presence of the interrupted fence lines and the causeways indicates that the boundary was still respected, but in its final form it was defined by a fence, with openings to provide access.

Human burials

An isolated inhumation burial lay 40m to the west of the Roman enclosure, Burial 1, and another, Burial 2, lay 80m to the south of Burial 1. Both burials were aligned roughly east-west, and were poorly preserved and plough damaged. A single sherd of pottery dating to the 2nd century was recovered from the grave fill of Burial 1.

Other features

To the south of the main enclosure, ditches 1246 and 1012 may formed an ancillary enclosure, *c*.20m square,with the boundary ditch forming the eastern arm. To the east, ditch 1423 may have created a similar enclosure abutting the eastern side of the boundary system. In places, the ditches were shallow, 0.65–2.00m wide and 0.14–0.28m deep, with fills of red-brown sandy or clayey silt. Pottery dating from the early to late 1st century AD came from the ditches.

A sub-circular pit, 1115, 2.25m wide and 1.30m deep, cut into filled boundary ditch 1108, with the lower fills reaching the present water level. Pit 1387, to the south of Causeway 2, cut the backfill of former eastern boundary ditch 1293.

A gully 1132, possibly part of another rectilinear enclosure, lay at the western edge of the site, while a curvilinear ditch 1209 lay at the southern edge of the site.

To the east of the boundary ditches were two elliptical pits, 1255 and 1260, with both having complex sequences of fills, producing pottery dating to the early-middle 1st century AD, as well as animal bone. Pit 1255 was 2.20m long and 0.52m deep and pit 1260 was 1.02m long and 0.34m deep.

The Iron Age and Roman pottery
by Rob Perrin

An assemblage of 1758 sherds weighing a little over 14.25kg and with an estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), based on rims, of just under eight was recovered from 106 contexts in 81 features, together with two topsoil layers and five other layers. Only 13 features produced more than 250g of pottery; Enclosure ditch 1087 produced nearly half the pottery (707 sherds weighing 6.65kg). Fragments of daub occurred in some features and a few sherds in grog-tempered and grog, shell and limestone fabrics may be from kiln or oven furniture.

Fabrics

The pottery occurs in four main fabric groups, grog-tempered, shell-gritted, reduced and oxidised, together with a few sherds in other fabrics and imported samian ware from South Gaul (LGFSA). There are also a number of sub-categories within the four main fabric groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Fabric quantification, Roman pottery

Fabric	No of Sherds	Weight (g)	Rim EVE
Organic	5	19	–
Dark brown, open texture, limestone	5	20	–
Black, open texture	3	3	–
Grog	594	5792	2.14
Grog and sand	5	34	–
Grog and shell	48	359	0.22
Grog, shell, limestone	1	19	–
Shell	725	5207	2.54
Shell and ironstone	2	9	–
Grey	77	769	0.60
Greyish-brown	42	410	0.36
Dark grey	157	912	1.04
Brown	3	27	0.10
Reddish-brown	1	8	–
Reddish-yellow	36	338	0.45
Buff	41	295	0.39
Pink, buff core	1	29	–
Cream	5	24	–
LGFSA	7	18	–
Total	**1758**	**14291**	**7.84**

The grog-tempered wares vary in colour with cream, buff, pink, brown, reddish-yellow, reddish-brown and dark brown shades all occurring; pieces of black grog are visible in the matrix of some of the lighter-coloured sherds. The shell-gritted wares occur in a similar range of colours and all bar a few sherds have mainly small-sized shell inclusions. The various reduced grey wares and oxidised wares are all sand-tempered and vary in coarseness. The dark brown and black open-textured fabrics are also mainly sand-tempered but the matrix appears ill sorted and the sherds low fired.

Forms

Only 134 of the sherds are from rims and 55 from bases and most are small fragments, but it was possible to identify a possible minimum number of 100 vessels (Table 2).

Sources and date

The grog-tempered, shell-gritted, organic, dark brown and black wares are almost certainly produced locally, although exactly where is uncertain as the nature of their manufacture and firing would mean that few traces of the production sites would remain. Some kilns producing shell-gritted ware and large numbers of kilns producing reduced and oxidised wares are known, lying to the west and to the north and south of the Nene Valley (Swan 1984, map 14). Pottery may have been transported along the valley or on the River Nene itself, or been obtained from local markets, especially in major settlements such as Irchester.

The mixed grog, sand, shell and limestone fabrics are likely to date to the Iron Age but most of the grog-tempered and shell-gritted sherds will date to the late Iron Age to early Roman period. The reduced and oxidised wares and the LGFSA sherds are of Roman date, with most dating to the mid to late 1st century, though some could belong to the 2nd century.

The low average sherd weight of around 8g suggests that the pottery had been lying around for a considerable time before it was deposited in the various features and that the features were away from the main areas of activity or occupation

Other Roman finds
by Nina Crummy

The earliest item is a small fragment from a Langton Down brooch. Spring-cover brooches of this type and others were imported from Gaul into the east of England in considerable numbers during the reign of Cunobelin, *c.*AD 9-*c.*41, with trade ceasing either at his death or at the conquest; examples still in use in AD 43 would probably have been discarded or lost by *c.*AD 50 (Crummy 2007, 315–16). Langton Downs brooches occur in several late Iron Age to early Romano-British burials at King Harry Lane, Verulamium (Mackreth 2011, 33–4; Stead and Rigby 1989, 91–3).

A brooch pin with part of the spring and external chord may be from a British-made late-small Colchester brooch, again an Iron Age form but dating to the second quarter of the 1st century AD. While this identification is not certain, it is worth noting that Northamptonshire is one of the chief areas where brooches of this form have been found (Mackreth 2011, 44–5).

A worn *as* dating to the early Roman period is the only coin. It is probably contemporary with two post-conquest British-made brooches, both of types that ceased to be used by the end of the 1st century AD. One is of Mackreth's double-lugged Colchester derivative Nene Group, examples of which, as the name suggests, are concentrated within the Nene Valley area although they are also found as far west as Gloucestershire and Shropshire (2011, 56–7, form CD Ha 2.e). The other is a Polden Hill brooch of a form that, although more numerous and widespread than the Nene Group, again has a concentration of examples along the Nene Valley (*ibid*, 79, form CD PH 6.a8). Whereas the Langton Down brooch points to access to continental trade goods in the late Iron Age, the early Romano-British focus is upon brooches that were easily available in the region, and points to limited trade activity in the later 1st century AD.

Among the other Romano-British objects are a blue glass bead and a fragment of a pierced pottery disc that is too large to be a spindlewhorl and may have been used as a cover or lid, perhaps for liquids as the central hole militates against use with dry goods. Other items stratified in Romano-British contexts are small iron and copper alloy scraps.

The loomweights
by Andy Chapman

There are two near complete fired clay loomweights, each weighing a little less than 2kg, SF38 and SF42 from two parts of an oven 1337/1338, dated to the late 1st century or early 2nd century AD (Figs 4 & 5).

Table 2: Roman vessels per fabric type

Fabric/Form	Jar	J/B	J/BKR	B	D	D/B	BKR	F	Total
Grog	29	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	30
Grog and shell	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
Shell, small shell	25	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	26
Grey	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6
Greyish-brown	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
Dark grey	8	–	1	1	1	1	–	–	12
Brown	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Reddish-yellow	3	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	5
Buff	2	–	–	–	2	1	1	2	8
Cream	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
Pink	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
LGFSA	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	2
Total	**81**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**100**

KEY: J/B = Jar/Bowl; J/BKR = Jar/Beaker; B = Bowl; D = Dish; BKR = Beaker; F = Flagon

Fig 4: The triangular fired clay loomweights (Scale 50mm)

Fig 5: The loomweights showing the single perforated sides and the double-perforated end, SF38 left and SF42 right (Scale 50mm)

They are both triangular, with perforations across only two of the three corners. The perforated corners are also rounded and have a deep central curving groove, while the third, unperforated corner is more pointed. If suspended from an upright warp-weighted loom it would make most sense if they hung point downwards, as pendant triangles.

The weights stand 150mm high, measuring to the pointed, unperforated corner, with the sides, which contain a single perforation slightly longer, so that the loomweights were elongated along a central axis, measuring 140mm across to the rounded corners. The thickness varies from 65mm to 75mm for SF38, which weighs 1.925kg, and from 65mm to 80mm thick for SF42, which weighs 1.820kg. The perforations are typically 15mm in diameter, although elongated considerably as they emerge obliquely from the edges. The curving corner grooves are 50mm long, 25mm wide and up to 8mm deep, It is difficult to determine if they are purely a product of wear or had been pre-formed.

Loomweight SF42 was quite evenly fired, with the surface largely pale red, with some lighter or darker patches. One face and the three edges of loomweight SF38 are similar, but the other face is largely grey with a central area, 80mm in diameter, of partially fired clay, indicating that this surface had lain downwards preventing the heat of the fire from reaching it. The under firing of this weight supports the interpretation of these as loomweights, rather than the proposed alternative that they are thatch weights, as if used outside these poorly-fired weights would not have lasted long under exposure to the elements.

Iron Age loomweights are characteristically triangular with a perforation across each corner, while Roman fired clay loomweights are typically elongated pyramids, with a single perforation near the top.

The general form and size of these two loomweights therefore conforms to the standard Iron Age pattern rather than the Roman, but with the two perforations and the corner grooves forming a variation on both the standard forms of Iron Age and Roman loomweights.

The human bone
by Chris Chinnock

Human remains comprise two inhumations (Burials 1 and 2), and a fragment of human cranium in a ditch. The inhumations were significantly disturbed by later agricultural activity and, as a result, the human skeletal remains are highly fragmented. A single sherd of early Roman period pottery was recovered from the fill of Burial 1. However, the relationship of the burials to the rest of the archaeological remains is unclear due to the paucity of dateable evidence.

The skeleton in Burial 2 is categorised as 'probable male' and is assigned to an osteological age category of 26–35 years, based on dental wear (Brothwell 1981). The other two individuals in the assemblage could not be categorised further than adult, aas a result of the poor survival of the relevant skeletal elements.

The Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement

The Anglo-Saxon settlement lay at the north-eastern margin of the development area, adjacent to a known area of early medieval settlement, now a Scheduled Monument (Fig 1 and 6)

The only earlier feature in this area was a pit or tree hole 5194, which contained possible late Iron Age pottery (Fig 6). The middle Saxon remains comprised 130 postholes, grouped into a minimum of four structures, six gully or beamslot features and four pits.

Timber hall

The incomplete remains of a timber hall comprised 12 postholes. The building was aligned north-east to south-west and measured *c.*5.0m wide and in excess of 6m long, with its eastern end beyond the limit of excavation (Figs 7 & 8). The postholes were spaced *c.*0.5m apart and had near vertical sides and flat bases, between 0.28–0.45m in diameter and 0.05–0.45m deep. All of the postholes had fills of dark grey-brown clayey silt. At least two of the postholes had been recut, and one had a post pipe. If the double posthole at the east end of the southern wall marked the western side of a central doorway, the building would have been *c.*11-12m long.

There were three internal features: a gully and two postholes (not numbered). A small quantity of animal bone was recovered from the features and a fragment from posthole 5034 has been radiocarbon dated to 665–775 Cal AD (95% confidence, 1280+/-30 BP, Beta-438008, see Table 3).

Structure 1 and possible related features

Approximately 20m to the south-west of the hall there was a cluster of more than 40 postholes in an area measuring 15m by 10m (Fig 9). Many of them were cut into a spread of clayey silts that had accumulated in a natural hollow, 0.20m deep. A clear line of eight postholes (some with recuts), aligned north-east to south-west, measuring 15m and cut into the limestone geology was identified, but it is not clear how they related to the other postholes in the spread. The postholes in this group ranged from 0.31m to 0.57m diameter and 0.14m to 0.34m deep and had fills of either grey-brown clayey silt or orange-grey silty clay. The postholes all had similar profiles, which comprised moderately steep sides and flat or slightly concave bases. Small sherds of early to middle Saxon pottery were recovered from four of them and a fragment of antler comb (SF48) was found in one posthole.

The postholes that were cut into the spread formed no clear structure but may have been related to the line of postholes, which lay *c*10m to the north. They were generally cut to a greater width than the other postholes (the largest was 0.70m wide) and many of them appear to have been recut, some on more than one occasion. Early/middle Saxon pottery was recovered from five of the postholes from this area. Animal bone fragments were recovered from five of the postholes and a radio-

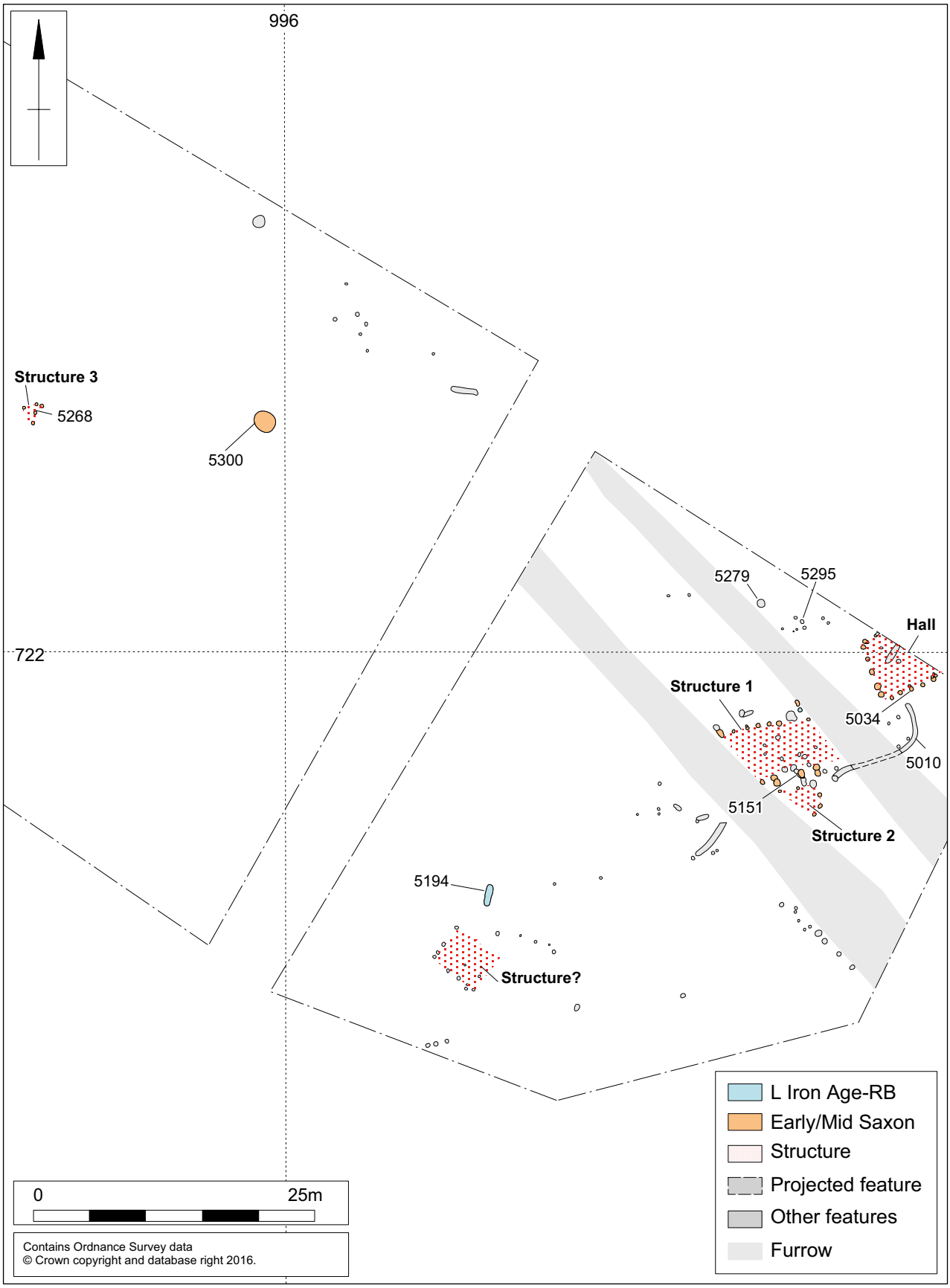

Fig 6: General plan of the Anglo-Saxon settlement

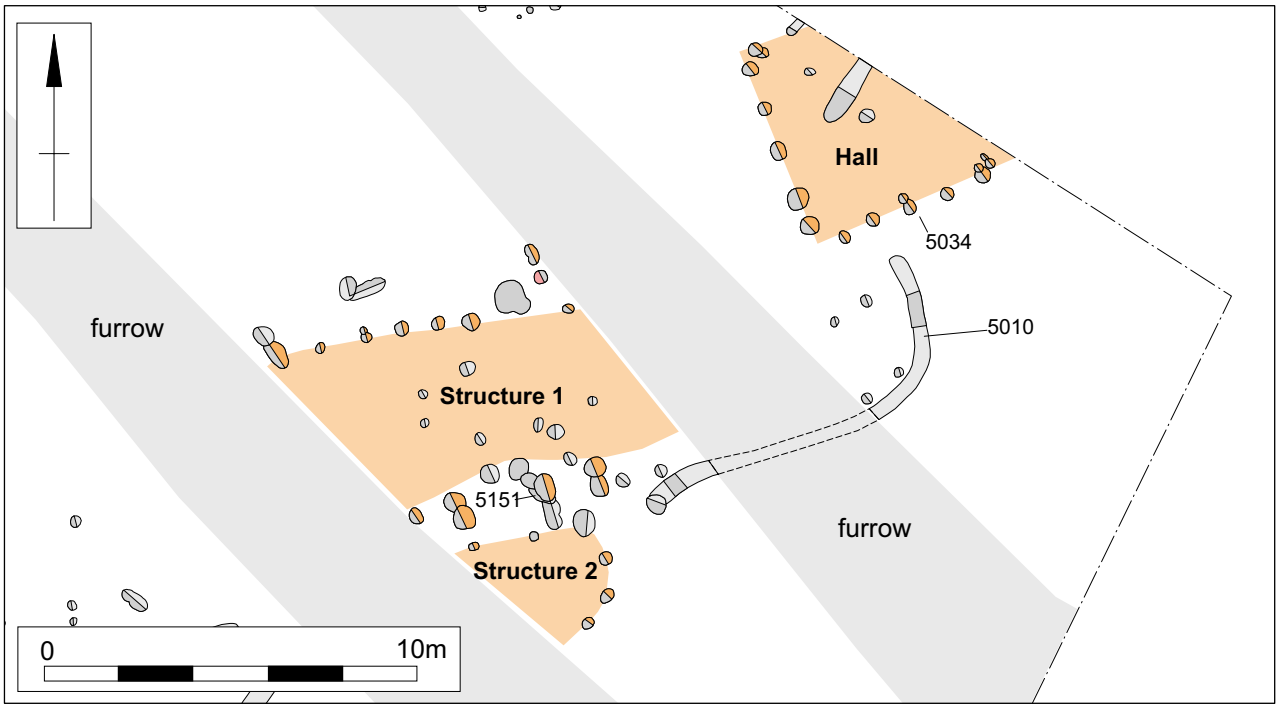

Fig 7: The hall and Structures 1 and 2

Fig 8: The timber hall, looking south-west

Fig 9: Structure 1, looking north-east

carbon date of 655–725/740–770 Cal AD (95% confidence, Beta-438009) was obtained from a fragment from posthole 5151.

Two stretches of a curvilinear gully 5010, measuring 10m long, 0.35m wide and 0.15m deep, were identified either side of a furrow directly to the east of the structure. There was a posthole cut into the south-western terminal but no finds were recovered from either, so it is unclear if it was a structural element, a boundary or a feature from an earlier phase of activity.

Structure 2

Five postholes directly to the south of Structure 1 appeared to form part of a possibly sub-circular structure, which measured 5m across and was truncated by a furrow to the south-west. The postholes measured 0.11–0.27m in diameter and 0.06–0.20m deep and had variable profiles. The fills comprised mid grey-brown clayey silt or silty clay. A small quantity of early to middle Saxon pottery was recovered from one of the postholes.

Structure 3

A group of five postholes lay 70m to the west of the other structures, in an area that was largely devoid of archaeological features. The postholes were 0.18–0.54m in diameter and 0.07–0.23m deep and had similar steep-sided profiles with flat or slightly rounded bases. All had fills of mid brown or yellow-brown silty sandy clay. The most central posthole of the cluster, 5268, contained a small sherd of pottery dated to the early/middle Saxon period. It is possible that the features comprise the remains of an ancillary structure, measuring approximately 2m x 2m.

Possible structures, other postholes and pits 5297 and 5300

Postholes lay in clusters across the site, but whether these were the remains of structures or fence lines was uncertain. A possible structure, 25m south-west of Structure 1, was defined by an L-shape of surviving postholes, 10m long by 6m wide (Fig 6). A small cluster of eight postholes and a pit west of the timber hall, included posthole 5295 and undated pit 5279. The former contained a large sherd of early/middle Saxon pottery whilst the later had dark to black silty clay fills, a few burnt stones and possible hearth waste (see Fryer below). Directly south-west of

Structures 1 and 2, there were eight undated postholes, two pits and a 10m length of curvilinear gully, but it is uncertain what they represented.

A circular pit (or well) 5300, measured 1.76m in diameter and 0.95m deep, lay approximately 20m to the east of Structure 3. Several sherds of early/middle Saxon period pottery were recovered from the upper fill and an early/middle Saxon iron knife blade (SF47) was found directly above the base of the feature.

The Anglo-Saxon pottery
by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprises 19 sherds with a total weight of 212g, mostly assignable only to a broad early/middle Anglo-Saxon date (5th – 9th centuries AD).

Early/middle Anglo-Saxon fabrics

F1: Sandstone. Sub-angular calcite-cemented sandstone up to 2mm, some ferruginous, many free sub-angular and sub-rounded grains up to 2mm, most 0.5mm or less. 8 sherds, 133g;

F2: Coarse Quartz. Moderate to sub-angular quartz grains up to 2mm. 3 sherds, 8g;

F3: Sandstone and Organic. As F1, with sparse to moderate fine organic voids up to 5mm. 2 sherds, 4g;

F4: Fine Quartz. As F2, but with grains of 0.5mm or less. 2 sherds, 36g;

F5: Sandstone and Limestone. As F1, with rare to sparse angular shelly limestone fragments up to 3mm. 2 sherds, 8g;

F6: Granite and Ironstone. Sparse to moderate angular granite up to 2mm, rare to sparse rounded iron ore up to 1mm. 1 sherd, 3g.

The range of fabric types is typical of early/middle Anglo-Saxon pottery in the Raunds area (eg. Blinkhorn 2009). The dating of early Anglo-Saxon hand-built pottery is mainly reliant on the presence of decorated sherds, which are largely of 5th-6th century date, as such wares generally ceased to be decorated in the 7th century (Myres 1977, 1). However, it cannot be said with certainty that an assemblage which produced only plain sherds is of 7th century date. Usually, decorated hand-built pottery comprises just 5% or less of domestic assemblages, as was the case at Mucking, Essex (Hamerow 1993, 51). Thus, fairly small assemblages of plain pottery can only usually be given a broad period date of the 5th-9th centuries.

The assemblage mainly consists of small, plain bodysherds that are undoubtedly the product of secondary deposition, and could easily be residual. The only feature sherds are a fairly large fragment of a rimsherd from a jar (original diameter 180mm, 12% complete) from posthole 5295, and another, from a smaller vessel (160mm diameter, 9% complete), in Structure 1, posthole 5151.

Other Anglo-Saxon finds
by Nina Crummy

The earliest item from this area of the site is a late Roman coin found in topsoil.

A small part of the toothplate from a composite double-sided antler comb (SF48) found in posthole 5104 of Structure 1 dates to the early/middle Anglo-Saxon period. Early Anglo-Saxon combs are generally narrower than late Romano-British combs, with little overlap between the two groups. At 38mm wide when complete, this comb falls at the narrow end of early Anglo-Saxon combs of this type, which are concentrated within a range of 45-50mm wide. At West Stow, for example, the narrowest comb was 38mm, the widest 52mm, with only three combs out of seventeen narrower than 45mm (data taken from illustrations in West 1985).

A knife from pit/well 5300 is also typical of the early/middle Anglo-Saxon period (SF 47). With a blade only slightly longer than 45mm, it falls at the very end of Härke's Group 1 (small), which has a range of 45-99mm (1989, table 1). There is no correlation between blade length and date for this group, nor between blade length and the age of the user (*ibid*, table 2, figs 1–2).

The radiocarbon dates

Animal bone from postholes 5034 (possible Hall) and 5151 (Structure 1) was submitted for radiocarbon dating and has produced consistent results indicating a date in the middle Anglo-Saxon period, Cal AD 665–770, spanning the mid-7th to late 8th centuries (Table 3). The earlier part of this range, Cal AD 660–725, the mid-7th to early 8th centuries has the higher statistical probability.

The Roman and Anglo-Saxon animal bone
by Adam Reid

A total of 1,557 animal bone fragments were hand collected from 103 different contexts and a further 908 fragments were recovered from environmental samples after wet-sieving. This material was assessed to determine the level of preservation and to identify the taxa.

Positive identification to genus level was possible for 381 (24%) of the fragments. The results of the identifications are presented below (Table 4). The majority of identified remains (82%) were recovered from contexts relating to the late Iron Age/early Roman settlement. It was not possible to make any viable comparisons with other phases due to the small sample size.

A small quantity of horse and dog remains were present but the most frequently occurring taxa were the three main domestic animals (cattle, sheep/goat and pig), which accounted for 90% of the identified species. Cattle remains were the most abundant of the fragments identified to species (51%), followed by sheep/goat (30%), pig (8%), horse (6%) and dog (3%).

Although the sample size is small, the representation of body parts indicates a low frequency of identifiable long bones, which comprised only 22% of identified specimens. There seems to have been a trend towards cranial and lower limb elements, however, this may be a reflection of the fragmented state of the assemblage, as teeth are often easier to identify than long bone fragments.

Butchery marks were noted on 12 specimens from nine different contexts. Five instances of butchery were

Table 3: The radiocarbon determinations

Laboratory & Sample No	Context	Sample Details	C13/ C12	Conventional Radiocarbon Age BP	Calibrated AD Intercept *68% confidence* **95% confidence**
Beta-438008 RDF14/5033	Fill 5033 Posthole 5034	Animal bone	–21.6	1280+/-30	Cal AD 690, 750, 760 *Cal AD 675–725/740–770* (39%/29%) **Cal AD 665-775**
Beta-438009 RDF14/5150	Fill 5150 Posthole 5151	Animal bone	–20.6	1310+/-30	Cal AD 675 *Cal AD 665-690/750–760 (49%/19%)* **Cal AD 655-725/740-770**

Laboratory: Beta Analytic, Miami, Florida, USA
Calibration: INTCAL13 Radiocarbon Age Calibration

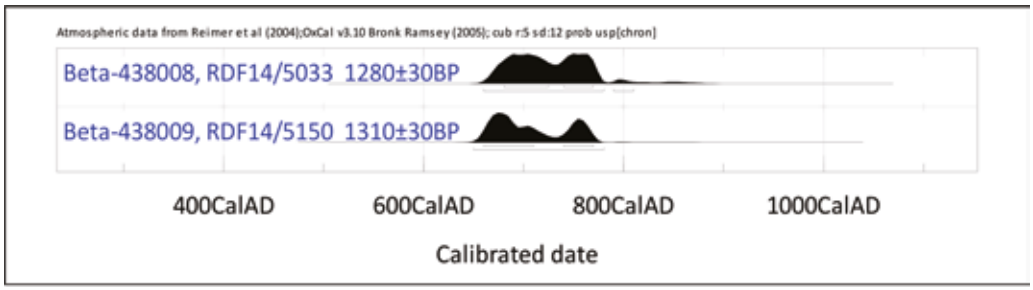

Table 4: The identified animal taxa

Taxon	LIA-ERB	A-S	Total
Cattle	115	9	**124**
Sheep/goat	65	9	**74**
Pig	18	2	**20**
Horse	15	–	**15**
Dog	6	1	**7**
Red Deer	1	–	**1**
Roe Deer	2	–	**2**
Goose	–	1	**1**
Amphibian	–	4	**4**
Small Mam	3	1	**4**
Med Mam	199	29	**228**
Large Mam	374	38	**412**
Indet.	479	49	**528**
Total	**1277**	**143**	**1420**

recorded on fragments recovered from Roman Enclosure ditch 1087 including one horse metacarpal. Other instances of butchery from Enclosure ditch 1087 included a cattle horncore, which had several heavy cut or cleave marks at its base, suggesting it had been intentionally removed from the rest of the cranium.

The amount of material recovered from Anglo-Saxon features in Area 5 was very small and provides no clear indication of the purpose or status of the site. The finds of amphibian (frog or toad) bones in several of the postholes potentially suggests that they were left open for some time subsequent to the removal of the posts.

The charred plant macrofossils and other remains
by Val Fryer

Seven samples were taken from seven fills within Roman pits, postholes, graves and an oven, and a single sample (8) was from Anglo-Saxon pit 5279.

Roman deposits

Cereal grains, chaff and seeds of common segetal weeds/ grassland herbs are present at a low to moderate density within all but one sample. Preservation is mostly quite poor; many of the grains are puffed and distorted (probably as a result of combustion at very high temperatures) whilst much of the chaff is very fragmented and abraded.

Barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains are recorded along with one possible fragment of oat (*Avena* sp.). Few cereals are sufficiently intact to allow close identification, but individual elongated wheat grains of possible spelt (*T. spelta*) type are noted and spelt chaff is also recorded.

Seeds are exceedingly scarce, occurring within only three of the assemblages studied. Taxa noted include goosegrass (*Galium aparine*), medick/clover/trefoil (*Medicago/ Trifolium/Lotus* sp.), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), small grasses (Poaceae) and dock (*Rumex* sp.). Onion-couch (*Arrhenatherum* sp.) type tubers are present within the assemblage from oven 1337 (Sample 7), and the same sample also includes a single sedge (*Carex* sp.) nutlet. The highest densities of material occur within oven 1337 and water hole 1115 (Sample 3), and it is tentatively suggested that the latter may be derived from rake out

waste from the oven. However, it is unclear whether the material was deliberately placed or whether it accidentally accumulated as wind-blown detritus.

Charcoal/charred wood fragments are present throughout. Although most are highly comminuted, the assemblage oven 1337 contained numerous fragments which are large and robust. Other plant macrofossils occur very infrequently.

The posthole and pit assemblages may also be derived from scattered oven or midden waste, with the comminuted nature of the material suggesting that the remains were exposed to the elements for some considerable period prior to incorporation within the feature fills. It is currently impossible to ascertain exactly what the oven may have been used for (although the presence of burnt bone and eggshell may suggest a domestic function), but it would appear that cereal processing waste, dried herbage and possibly turf were being utilised as tinder/kindling or fuel within the structure along with wood/charcoal.

Middle Saxon deposits

The sample from middle Saxon pit 5279 is charcoal dominant, it is suggested that the remains may be derived from a small deposit of hearth waste.

Discussion

The late Iron Age to early Roman field system and enclosure

Rural settlement patterns and landscapes

The archaeological evidence from Areas 1 & 2 indicates that there were at least two phases of activity at the site during the late Iron Age to early Roman period. In the adjacent field to the north, the remainder of the settlement has been recorded as a cropmark (HER 5937/0/1; Waterman 2007). The DBA stated that in this northern field there was an enclosure, with an adjoining trackway (*ibid* 2007).

In Areas 1 and 2, the earlier phase comprised a double boundary ditch and a series of field boundaries of a co-axial field system, with smaller-scale sub-divisions. The feature layout, artefacts and environmental assemblages recovered from the features, indicated a basic agricultural landscape, which is likely to have contained a mixture of pastoral and arable fields.

In the later 1st century AD to early 2nd century AD, domestic activity focussed on a rectangular or square enclosure, abutting the main boundary ditch. Rectilinear enclosures are the most common type of site for the period (Knight *et al* 2012,107) and there are many published examples in the region (*eg.* Chapman 2015; Jackson and Dix 1987; Mackreth 1988; Mudd 2007), and also at Werrington, Cambridgeshire (Mackreth 1988). At Darsdale Farm the enclosure measured in excess of 30m long by 30m wide, while the enclosure at Werrington measured *c.*50m across, with enclosure ditches of similar width and profile.

It appears that lengths of the adjacent backfilled ditch were surfaced with stone at this time in order to provide causeways set opposite breaks in an adjacent timber fence, which may have aided the movement of cattle between elements of the field system. A parallel to this was identified at Weekly, Northamptonshire, where a metalled causeway was laid over a partially silted enclosure ditch from an earlier phase (Jackson and Dix 1987, 53). At DIRFT, Long Dole, gravel causeways over former ditches also provided new entranceways to domestic Iron Age enclosures (Chapman 2015 figs 2.10, 2.15 and 2.19).

There would presumably have been a roundhouse or houses within the Darsdale Farm enclosure or even a Roman rectangular sill-beam timber house, but no trace of either type of building survived. Roundhouses, for example, were recorded within the sub-rectangular enclosures at DIRFT, Long Dole (Chapman 2015 fig 2.4). There was evidence for at least two roundhouses, with associated ring gullies, within the enclosure at Werrington, one of which contained a complete triangular loomweight of similar form and weight to the ones recovered at Darsdale Farm, but in the typical Iron Age form with perforation across all three corners. Additional fragments of loomweight were recovered from features surrounding the houses at Werrington (Mackreth 1988, 74).

Status

The pottery and animal bone assemblages indicated that activity from this period was mostly low status. There was a limited number of fabrics and forms other than jars. It was noticeable that there was an absence of any obvious regionally-traded wares and only a small amount of imported continental pottery (less than 1% of the assemblage originating from outside of the local area). The pottery was primarily derived from basic agricultural and utilitarian activity or occupation.

The flagons and the samian bowl do, however, suggest that there was some higher 'status' goods were available. There are also two small brooches, recovered as topsoil finds, a Langton Down brooch, imported from Gaul into the east of England in considerable numbers during the reign of Cunobelin, *c.*AD 9-*c*41, and part of a British-made late-small Colchester brooch dating to the second quarter of the 1st century AD. A worn coin, an *as,* dating to the early Roman period was the only coin from the Roman settlement, and is probably contemporary with the brooches.

The animal bone assemblage comprised domestic animals, with a tendency towards cattle and sheep/goat, which has also been observed at other rural sites in Northamptonshire (Orr 1974; Jones 1978; Maltby 2003) and indicates that the site at Darsdale was probably a rural pastoral settlement, with no indications of trade or any specialist craft and industrial activity. The environmental analysis also indicated that the site fulfilled a primarily domestic function.

The presence of the loomweights in an oven within the enclosure indicates that small-scale textile manufacture took place at the site. Their presence in a feature and enclosure of potentially early Roman date is not unparalleled (Mackreth 1988, 99) and there is evidence to suggest that loomweights of this native form were preferred to the continental forms in the 2nd century, and may still have been manufactured at this time (Wild 2002,10), although

the provision of perforations across only two corners shows a development of the typical Iron Age form.

Burials

The two isolated burials found within the field system are likely to have been related to this settlement. For a farmstead in use for at least 200 years there would have been many more deaths. From the 2nd century AD, inhumation, rather than cremation, became the primary funerary rite in Rome, with inhumation becoming commonplace throughout the provinces by the mid-3rd century (Toynbee 1971, 40; Philpott 1991, 53). The lack of many Roman burials uncovered in the excavation is not unusual; most Roman excavated sites produce few human remains, and often these are damaged by later ploughing, indicating that other burials had been totally lost. It shows only a small percentage of the Roman population chose to be buried in a way that archaeologists can later uncover/excavate (mostly as inhumations or cremations). The majority of Roman people were presumably disposed of in other ways.

The middle Anglo-Saxon settlement

Raunds has had many different archaeological projects within the parish including widespread fieldwalking and large-scale excavations. Several Saxon settlements have been found in the parish (*eg.* Parry 2006; Audouy and Chapman 2009; Chapman 2010), which has given some indication of settlement movement, expansion and contraction through this period. This discussion tries to understand both the Saxon settlement found at Darsdale Farm but also places it with contemporary settlements in the wider parish and county landscape.

Overview of the settlement

The present excavation has added to our knowledge of one of the Anglo-Saxon settlements in Raunds. This settlement had previously been partly examined during the Raunds Area Survey in the 1980s through magnetometer, fieldwalking and trial trenching. This work was located to the north-east of Darsdale Farm area (between *c.*100m and *c.*300m), up to the present Thorpe End itself (Figs 10 and 11; Parry 2006, 234–42 including figs 6.48 and 6.49). It is likely these areas were part of a single settlement, which shifted over time.

The Saxon settlement at Darsdale Farm may have started in the middle Saxon period (mid 7th or 8th centuries AD). Two radiocarbon dates from a possible hall and Structure 1 produced dates of Cal AD 665–775 (Beta-438008) and Cal AD 665–770 (Beta-438009) at 95% confidence, spanning the mid-7th to late 8th century date most likely. Other possible posthole structures and a few pits were found, but pottery and small finds recovered from these could not be closely dated apart from a generic early to middle Saxon date (AD 450–850). The excavation found no evidence that the settlement at Darsdale Farm continued into the late Saxon period.

The 1980s Raunds Area Survey excavation areas to the north of Darsdale Farm uncovered early/middle Saxon features and pottery concentrations (amongst other periods) (Figs 10 and 11). It is uncertain whether the features from the excavation area at Darsdale Farm and the Raunds Area Survey work were contemporary, but it certainly is possible and we may be seeing a fluid settlement. The fieldwalking and trial trenching between *c.*100m and *c.*200m to the north-east found features and pottery concentration dating to the early to middle, late Saxon and medieval periods (continuing towards Thorpe end).

In addition to these two sites, a small archaeological excavation at Smiths Containers, directly to the north of Area 5, may have found 20 early to middle Saxon pits (Parry 2006, 240–242 including fig 6.52). The dating rests on 58 small pieces of pottery recovered (weighing 3.4g on average per sherd). This small size may suggest they were in fact residual. Other nearby pits and gullies contained late Saxon and medieval pottery sherds.

The south-western limit of the middle Saxon settlement may have been found in the Darsdale Farm excavation, but none of the other boundaries. Collectively the evidence suggests that the early to middle Saxon settlement covered an area of at least c.250m by 200m. The Cotton Brook may have demarked the settlement's boundary on the western and northern side and may have been a causal reason for founding the settlement at this location (Fig 11). The Brook surrounds it on three sides with the Darsdale Farm site lying directly to the north-east of the brook's south-eastern arm, whilst the Raunds Survey site was situated to the south of the brook's northern arm. This suggested occupation area is conjecture as most of the land between these watercourses have not yet been archaeologically surveyed. The present Area 5 excavation area has added new evidence, but the settlement size is not yet proven.

At Darsdale Farm there was no earlier activity, whereas in the Raunds Survey area the early/middle Saxon remains were located within a former Iron Age enclosure (Scheduled Monument 11508). The Scheduled Monument notice describes the enclosure as a univallate Iron Age hillfort, although this suggestion is unlikely (Waterman 2007, 5).

Concentrations of Iron Age and Saxon pottery were collected from outside and within the enclosure during fieldwalking, and seem to indicate that it had been abandoned and saw limited use during the Roman period. Re-occupation occurred during the early/middle Saxon and late Saxon periods. The presence of Saxon features within the enclosure was later confirmed by trial excavation, but the limited nature of the trenching has meant the density and type of features across the area are unknown (Parry 2006, 237).

Structural forms and finds

The hall and the possible Structure 1 at Darsdale Farm have been dated by radiocarbon dating to the middle Saxon period. The shape and form of the structures is similar to other early/middle Saxon sites in the area, including the sites at Langham Road and Furnells (Audouy and Chapman 2009, 63–115). The partial remains of a possible circular/sub-circular structure (Structure 2) has similarities to a feature located between rectangular buildings at Langham Road, and likely formed an ancillary structure

of uncertain purpose. Unlike West Cotton and Burystead, no sunken-featured buildings were identified at Darsdale Farm or the Raunds Survey site to the north-east, but this may not be significant as only a small fraction of the settlement has been examined.

The postholes of Structure 1 demonstrated multiple examples of recutting, possibly indicating that it was a long-lived structure. The rebuilding or replacement of structures on the same spot has been highlighted as a trend more commonly identified in the middle Saxon era than the early Anglo-Saxon period (Hamerow 2012, 34).

A knife blade and a small part of the toothplate from a composite double-sided antler comb, both of early/middle Saxon date, were the only non-pottery artefacts to be recovered from the area. This lack of artefacts is not unusual for an early-middle Saxon settlement, especially as the vast majority of features within the Darsdale Farm excavations were postholes.

Anglo-Saxon settlement and medieval farming at Darsdale Farm, Raunds Area Survey site and Thorpe End

Parry, in his fieldwalking survey of the parish, uncovered 22 early/middle Saxon sites and manure scatters (2006, 92 and fig 4.14). Although the actual density was probably less, as the settlement pattern is likely to have changed and developed over 400 years, the number of farmsteads

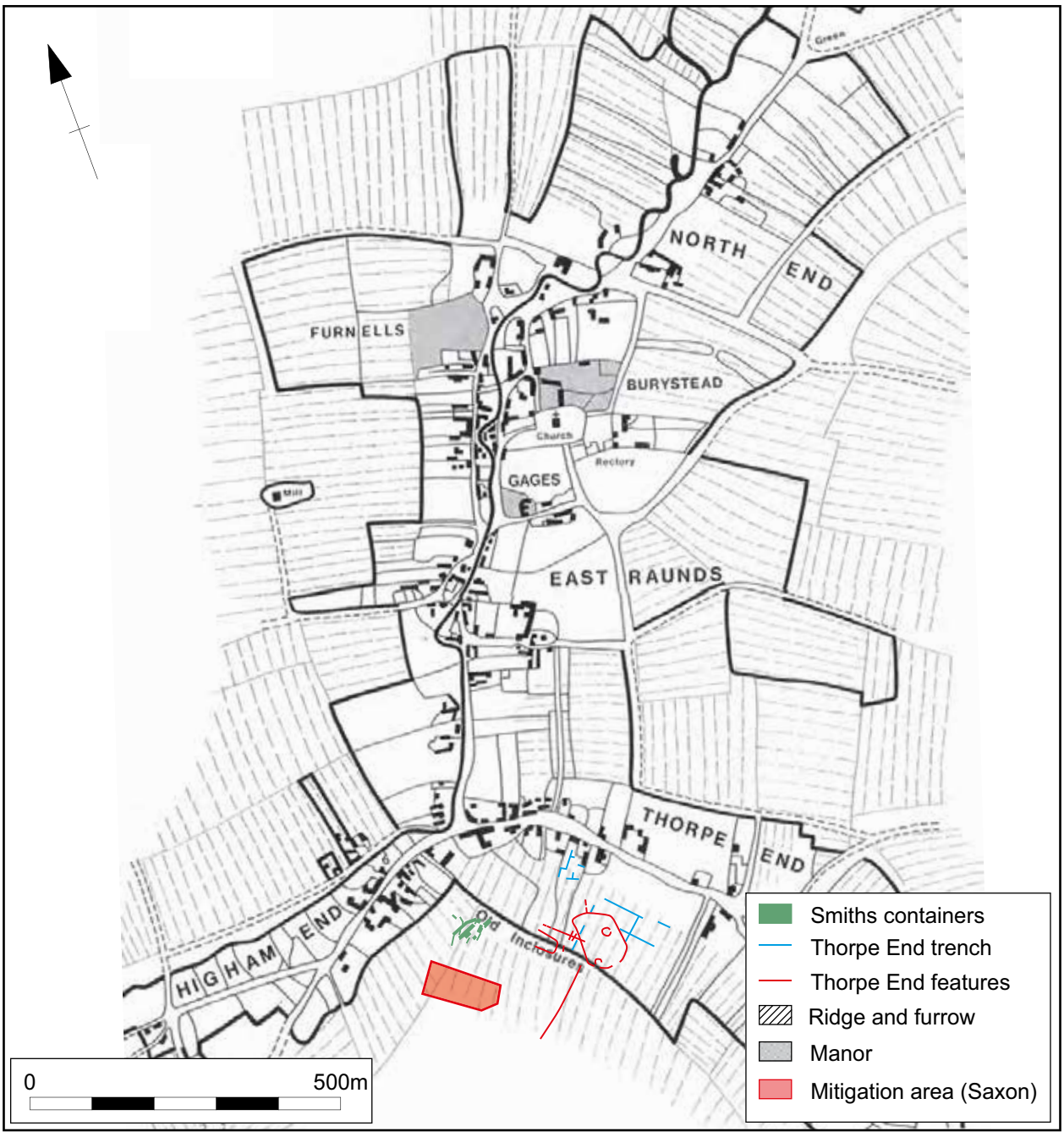

Fig 10: Raunds estate map 1779 (after Audouy and Chapman 2009)

Fig 11: Thorpe End pottery distributions (after Parry 2006)

overall is likely to have been high (*ibid*, 2006, 92–7). The early/middle Saxon farmsteads (and some may have been larger settlements) had largely been abandoned in the late middle Saxon period, when the settlement populations seemed to have moved mostly to the area of the present villages of Raunds, Ringstead, Hargrave and Stanwick.

Parry argued that the origin of the Raunds settlement appears to be 'bi-focal' with early/middle Saxon occupation in two separate pairs of sites, north Raunds and Thorpe End (*ibid*, 223 and fig 4.14). The Thorpe End area was presumably made up of population from Darsdale Farm/Raunds Area Survey site. The Darsdale Farm site had been abandoned, but part of the adjacent Raunds Area Survey site was still in use (Fig 7). For the Thorpe End settlement there appears to have been a relocation of activity during the 9th century to the area within the enclosure, which then formed the southern end of the elongated village of Raunds (*ibid*, 223), but could have been the focus of a separate nucleated settlement. The late Saxon pottery from the fieldwalking in the Raunds Area Survey site was concentrated in the north-eastern half of the area, nearest to the modern Thorpe End suggesting occupation had shifted to the north-east. By the medieval period even this part of the Raunds Survey site had been abandoned, shifting to the street in Thorpe End.

The place names also reflect this, as the element 'End' indicates that the settlement became a focal point of a larger village and *Thorp*, a word of Scandinavian origin indicating a peripheral settlement, also suggests that the settlement functioned as a farm or small hamlet within

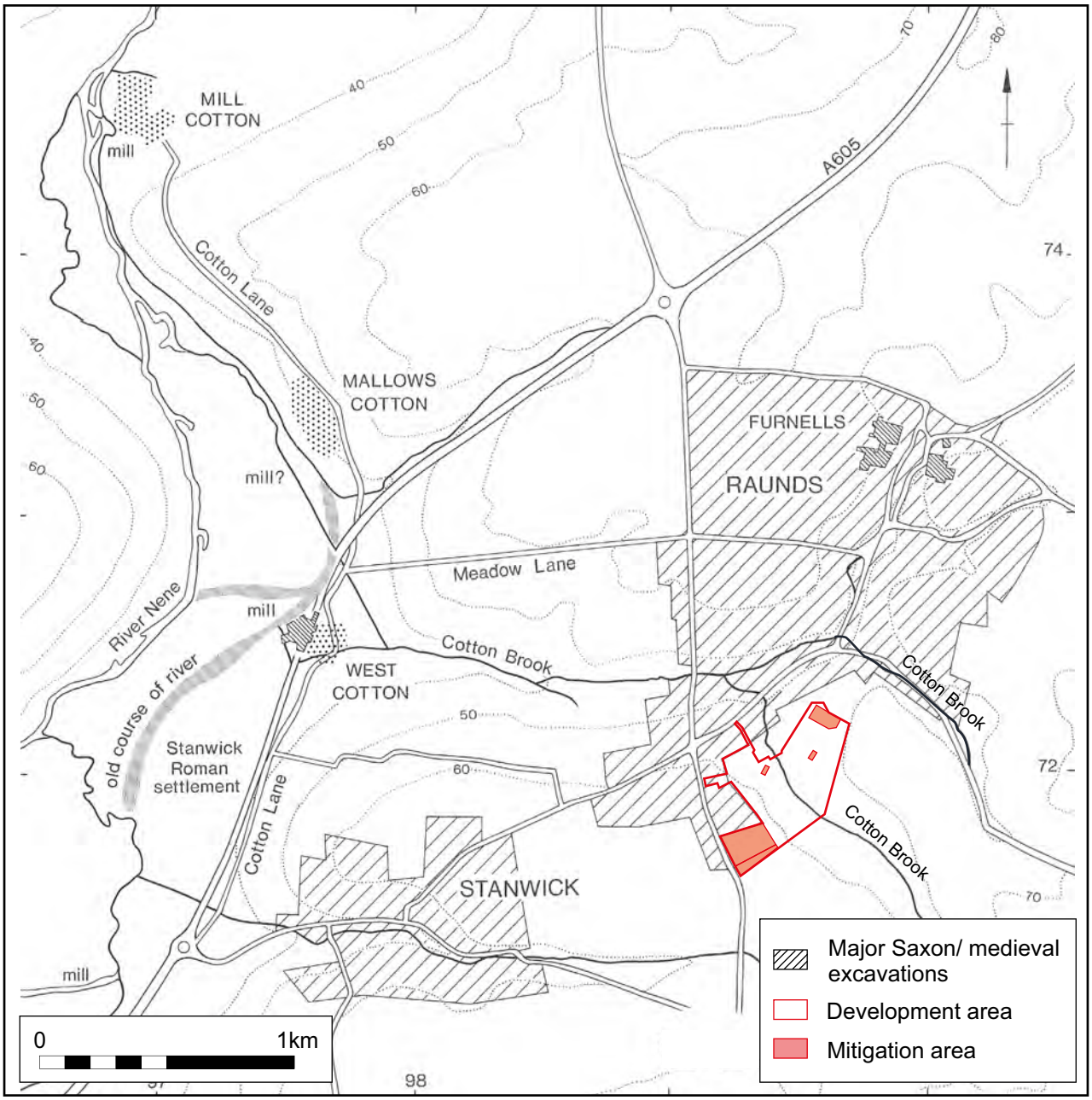

Fig 12: The location of Darsdale Farm excavations in relation to other excavations in Raunds (after Audouy and Chapman 2009)

a larger estate (Williamson *et al* 2013, 63). These *Thorp* settlements often seem to have an early/middle Saxon origin (*ibid*, 63).

The apparent abandonment or relocation of middle Saxon settlements in the late Saxon period is a recognised trend across the East Midlands in locations where nucleated villages formed (Lewis *et al* 2001, 82). The reasons behind this process appear to be complex, and they varied between locations, but the event was often accompanied by a reordering and restructuring of settlements and their associated field systems (Jones and Page 2006, 81–82). Darsdale Farm area presumably became part of the field system after the settlement was abandoned, and certainly so in the medieval period it, along with the Raunds Area Survey site, when they were part of the field system of medieval Raunds (Fig 7).

The name Darsdale Farm itself is an important name, albeit probably medieval in origin, and may indicate land ownership of this area in this period. The name Darsdale is known to have been in use from at least 1315 when it was listed as being the home of Gilbert de Deresdale (Gover *et al* 1975, 195).

Overview of Anglo-Saxon Raunds

Elsewhere in Raunds, West Cotton, adjacent to the floodplain of the river Nene to the west of Raunds, was a new foundation in the mid-10th century, but there had been limited usage of the same area in the early and middle Anglo-Saxon periods. Early Saxon occupation consisted of a sunken-featured building and another structure some 45m distance from it (Chapman 2010, 28). In the middle Saxon period the adjacent river channel was being utilised for flax retting, possibly a short-lived phase centred on the mid-8th century (*ibid*, 29). The use of the channel for this purpose suggests that the site was not a centre of domestic occupation at this time.

At Raunds, Furnells there was an early Saxon settlement including two sunken-featured buildings and postholes of a number of small timber structures occupying an area of 1ha (Fig 7; Audouy and Chapman 2009, 26–7). Iron working was being carried out in this early settlelment.

At Burystead there was a separate early Saxon settlement and a nearby cemetery (Fig 7; Audouy and Chapman 2009, 27; Parry 2006, 225–229). While the Furnells area was largely deserted in the middle Saxon period, a middle Saxon farmstead lay to the south, with Furnells reoccupied at around 850AD, with the construction of the Anglo-Scandinavian farm. All of these changes may represent no more than one, or perhaps two, farmsteads shifting location over time (Audouy and Chapman 2009, 27).

The evidence of settlement shifting and abandonment at Darsdale Farm and in the north Raunds area in the middle Saxon period can also be seen in other parts of Northamptonshire. In the Whittlewood Project area, around Towcester, excavations found that farmsteads in areas that were later fields had been deserted before AD850 and this was seen by the authors as a critical event marking the moment of nucleation (Jones and Page 2006, 82 and 87).

There is a case that Raunds was a polyfocal village. It is important to note that the 1779 map records Higham End to the south-east of Thorpe End (Fig 7). Raunds had five, possibly six 'Ends' (Parry 2006, 222). No substantial excavation has taken place at Higham End or some of the other ends to prove whether these had possibly separate settlements in the early, middle or late Anglo-Saxon periods, or to establish when Raunds itself nucleated. Polyfocal villages are a settlement type found in many parts of the midlands and East Anglia (Taylor 1977, 189).

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