

# Late Iron Age to early Roman settlement and medieval settlement at Harley Way, Benefield

by

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with contributions from Paul Blinkhorn, Andy Chapman, Pat Chapman, Steve Critchley, Val Fryer, Tora Hylton, Rob Perrin, Imogen van Bergen Poole, Yvonne Wolframmm-Murray and Stephanie Vann

## Summary

*An area of late Iron Age and Roman settlement, dated 1st–2nd century AD, comprised three large ditched enclosures constructed in two phases, as well as other features including at least one T-shaped corn-drying oven. There was also some activity in the 4th century AD. A second area contained parts of four plots that would have lain at the eastern end of the deserted medieval hamlet of Churchfield. Initial boundary ditches were constructed in the later 12th century. Two plots contained partially surviving building ranges in limestone, dated to the 13th to mid-14th centuries. A further plot inserted between the other two in the second half of the 14th century, contained a single building. The settlement had been abandoned by the end of the 14th century.*

## Introduction

In 2012 Northamptonshire Archaeology, now MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) Northampton, uncovered an area of late Iron Age and Roman settlement, and part of a deserted medieval village, at Harley Road, Benefield, Northamptonshire (TL 0061 8790; Fig 1). The fieldwork comprised geophysical survey (Butler and Walford 2011), desk-based assessment (Dawson 2011), trial trench evaluation (Walker 2011) and open area excavation (Finn 2016). The archaeology has been recorded under site codes BHW11 and BHW12, and the archive will be deposited in the proposed county archive.

The site of the proposed quarry expansion was a 6.4ha area contained within a single arable field in the Lyveden Valley. The northern boundary is formed by Harley Way, the eastern boundary by the existing quarry, the southern boundary by Churchfield Coppice and the western boundary by Churchfield Farm. Topographically, the study area is situated on the north side of the Lyveden Valley, with the ground sloping sharply down towards the River Nene, from approximately 54m aOD in the north-west, to c.46m on the south-east of the site.

The underlying geology is divided across the site, comprising Blisworth Oolitic limestone formation to the east, and Blisworth Clay to the west, overlain by superficial deposits of clay (BGS 2016).

## Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of PGR Construction. The project was managed by Anthony Maull and Stephen Parry for Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA Northampton) and by Michael Dawson for CgMs Consulting. The fieldwork was directed by Anthony Maull and Edmund Taylor and was undertaken by Paul Clements, Garreth Davey, Oliver Dindol, Graham Dixon, Ian Fisher, Peter Haynes and Amy Sinclair, and. Editing and proofreading of the client report (Finn 2016) and the published report was undertaken by Andy Chapman, Pat Chapman, Rob Atkins, Mark Holmes, Anthony Maull, and Stephen Parry. The published report is an edited and condensed version of the client report (Finn 2016), which will be available online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). X-rays of selected finds were undertaken by Beth Werret of Wiltshire Conservation Service, Wiltshire County Council. The illustrations are by Claire Finn, James Ladocha, Oliver Dindol and Izabela Jurkiewicz.

## Background

There are numerous records of Iron Age and Roman remains in and around the Lyveden Valley. The Historic Environment Record records a possible Romano-British farmstead within the proposed development area to the east on the basis of a number of finds that had previously been retrieved, along with a possible late Saxon settlement to the north-east of the site.

The medieval village is first mentioned in the Oundle Charter of AD963, and it is recorded that half of the Churchfield manor was taken into the forest soon after 1066 (Foard 1991). A chapel was in existence at least by 1189 when it formed the subject of a grant to the Abbey of Peterborough (Gover *et al* 1975), although the etymological evidence suggests there may have been a Saxon chapel here earlier, from *ciric* – church and *feld* – field (Birch 1885; Murray and Clegg 1961). Harley Way, which lies the north of the development area, was recorded in 1223 as *Hareleia* and as *Harleymere* in 1337. The origins of this name probably derive from *har* and *leah* for ‘boundary wood’, indicating that the road lay along the boundary

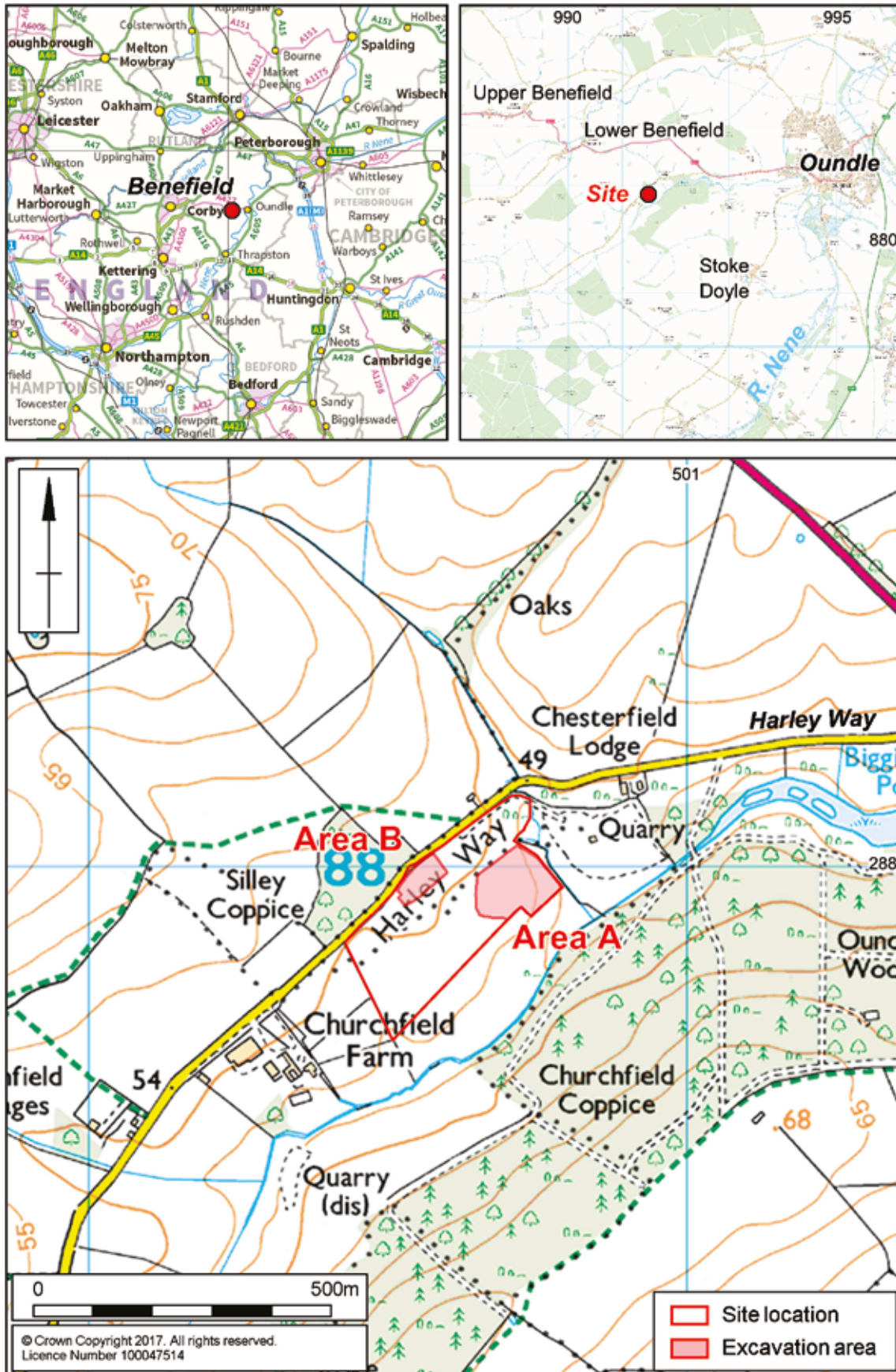


Fig 1: Site location

between Brigstock parish and Rockingham Forest. The *mere* element may refer to a nearby pond (Gover *et al* 1975). Silley Coppice, which stands just to the north of the excavation area, appears in its earliest recording in 1570 as *Sallowe (willow) Coppice (ib id)*.

Churchfield is recorded as being held by the Angevin family in the 12th century, from whom it passed to Hugh de Gorham in 1289 (Brown and Taylor 1975). In the 13th century, part of the hamlet was contained within the Oundle township. The Churchfield fee included tenants of Oundle, although fees in Stoke Doyle also included Churchfield holdings. The medieval occupation remains are recorded as straddling the Oundle township boundary, the larger portion to the south being a separate township with its own separate, self-contained field system (Brown and Taylor 1975; Foard 1991, fig 2). In 1301, nine taxpayers were listed under Churchfield (RCHME 1975), and both Oundle and Biggin manors had tenants in Churchfield at this time (Foard 1991). The Churchfield lands were sold to Robert Wyvill, bishop of Salisbury in 1332 (Brown and Taylor 1975). Account rolls of 1372–3 for Biggin include 11 cottages in Churchfield, two of which were vacant (Foard *et al* 2009). Tenants at Churchfield were last mentioned in a roll of 1403, and the lands were under sheep-pasture in the 1540s, indicating the date of abandonment fell somewhere during the 15th century (Brown and Taylor 1975).

Excavations of surviving earthworks adjacent to Churchfield Farm to the west took place in the 1960s, identifying a number of significant stone structures as well as finds of 12th–14th/15th-century pottery, a 12th-century window head, and evidence for ironworking (Bryant and Steane 1969; 1971; and Steane and Bryant 1975).

### Worked flint

by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Twenty pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from later contexts. The flint comprised 18 flakes, one core, and one core fragment. The worked flints are not directly dateable but their technological characteristics suggest a broadly Neolithic/early Bronze Age date. There are no features or other finds pre-dating the late Iron Age.

### The late Iron Age and Roman enclosures

Area A encompassed three large rectilinear enclosures, pits, a trackway, and features for crop processing and industrial activity (Fig 3). The pottery assemblage indicates a probable origin in the late Iron Age, with sub-square enclosure E1 perhaps appearing as early as the late 1st century BC and certainly in use through the early 1st century AD. It may have been replaced by the more rectilinear enclosures E2 and E3 in the mid–1st century AD following the Roman Conquest, with these enclosures in use into the 2nd century AD. A single ditch produced most of the mid to late Roman pottery.

### The late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure (late 1st century BC to mid/late 1st century AD)

#### Enclosure E1

A large sub-square ditched enclosure was around 42m long by 41m wide, although the southern arm lay beyond beyond the edge of the excavation. The ditch was steep-sided V- or U- shaped in profile, and was over 1.0m wide and around 0.5m deep. The enclosure had opposed entrances: one to the east at *c.*7.5m wide and one to the west *c.*1.0m wide. The northern terminal at the western entrance was the only part that appeared to have been recut, or possibly realigned, and was later cut by a pit. The pottery assemblage is almost entirely dark brown and red-brown shell-gritted ware in forms of the 1st century AD, together with a very small amount of grogged ware.

#### Pits within Enclosure E1

Twelve pits lying within the enclosure may be contemporary. They varied from 0.7m to 2.5m long and 0.2m to 1.1m deep. Several pits contained dumped deposits including frequent large limestone pieces, pottery and animal bone, or burnt fills comprising dark red clay, with frequent burnt stone and burnt pottery. The remaining fills contained small-large limestone chunks. Three pits in the south-eastern corner of Enclosure E1 contained large flat limestone slabs, possibly discarded building material, as pit bases.

#### Other probable early features

A cluster of features situated in the north-east of the area, beyond the enclosures, were broadly contemporary with the early phase of Roman activity, but cannot be associated with any of the enclosures with certainty.

Several narrow linear and curvilinear gullies may have been used for boundary marking or drainage, particularly as several seemed to pass beyond the edge of the excavation north-eastwards towards a stream just beyond the excavation area (Fig 2), and generally contained silt fills with a small quantity of material culture. Several of the features were waterlogged. Two pits on the eastern edge of the site contained fills of burnt material comprising dark grey-brown silty clay with abundant charcoal as well as pottery, animal bone and burnt stones. Both pits seemed to have been filled with burnt material from low temperate burning.

### Early Roman enclosures E2 and E3 (mid/late 1st to 2nd century AD)

#### Enclosure E2

Enclosure E2 was a large rectangular enclosure, *c.*56m long by *c.*48m wide, without any observable breaks for entranceways. A ditch to the south, on a different alignment to the southern arm, contained a similar range of pottery types and was therefore broadly contemporaneous. The ditch varied from 0.79m to 1.46m wide and 0.20m to 0.30m deep. The fills contained grog-tempered, shell-gritted and grey ware Roman pottery (208 sherds

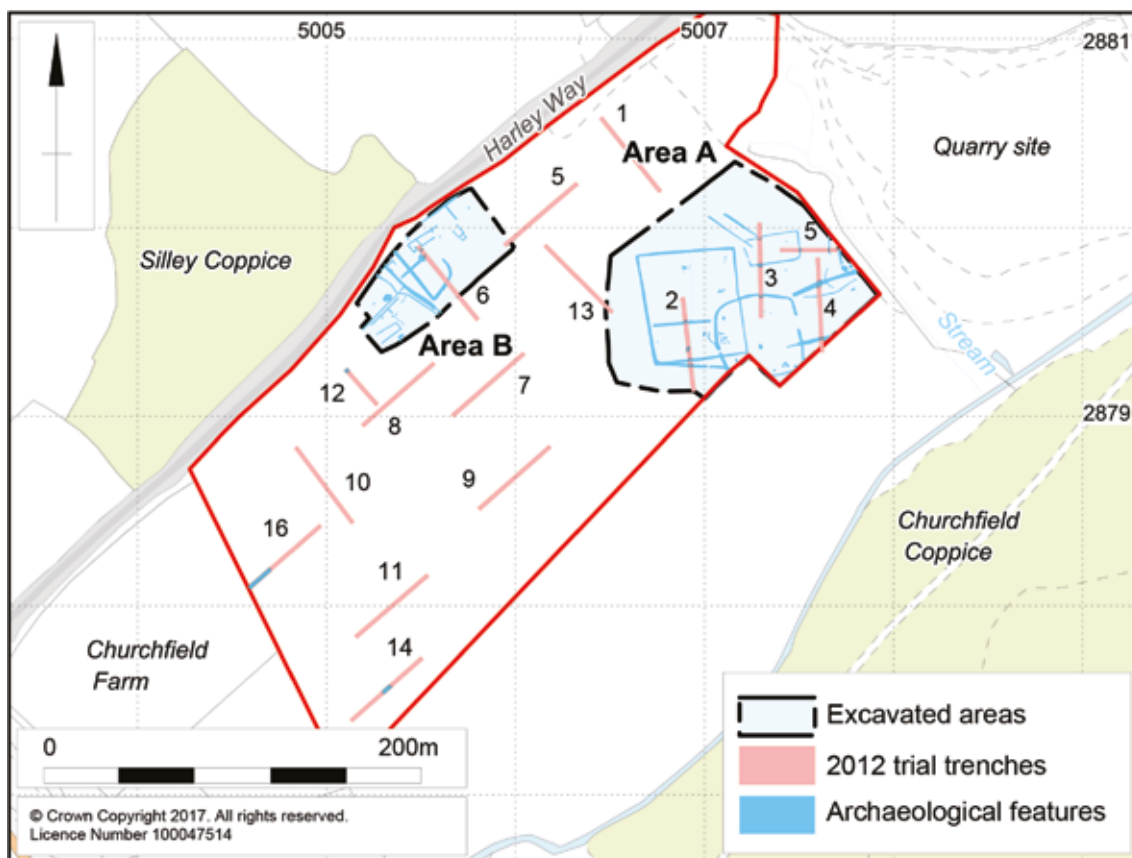


Fig 2: Location of mitigation areas

weighing 2.103kg), as well as other finds such as a copper-alloy hinged pin-type brooch dated to the late 1st to 2nd century AD.

### **Corn dryer 5101**

In the south-east corner of the enclosure there was a T-shaped corn dryer, lined with roughly-faced unbonded limestone (Figs 4 & 5). The flue was 2.15m long by 0.45m wide, although only a few stones from the former lining survived. The base of the drying chamber was 1.95m long by 0.28m wide, with most of the stone lining surviving. The fire would have been set in the stokehole to the south-east, although no burnt surfaces had survived. The fills of mid-orange-brown and grey-brown silty clay contained quantities of charcoal as well as 28 sherds of pottery (0.177kg), predominantly grey-brown wares, and a moderate density charred of cereal grains and chaff. The low densities of charcoal recovered may indicate that structure was cleaned regularly, possibly to prevent accidental fires.

### **Other pits or ovens**

Several pits were situated in the south-east corner of Enclosure E2, immediately to the south of corn dryer 5101. Pits or ovens 5098 and 5071 are thought to be associated with the corn dryer as they contained quantities of burnt material including charcoal fragments which had been subject to high temperatures, possibly in excess of 600°C. Pit 5071 was 2.90m long, 1.20m wide and 0.22m

deep, and had gently sloping, eroded sides and a flat base. The charcoal-rich fill contained limestone, animal bone and six sherds of pottery (0.13kg) including sherds of grey 'London ware' type imitation samian, probably dated to the second quarter of the 2nd century AD. Pit 5098 was 3.95m long, 1.80m wide and 0.30m deep.

Further north, a group of adjoining pits included another possible oven or hearth, 5206, 0.90m long by 0.77m wide and 0.38m deep. The oven contained animal bone and seven sherds of pottery, including a piece of Les Martres de Veyre samian ware, dated to the early 2nd century AD. The fill contained charcoal burnt at high temperatures, and a black tarry and cokey material, the probable residue of the high temperature combustion of organic remains, including cereal grains, which supports the supposition that this feature was a hearth or oven, or contained debris from such a feature.

In the centre of Enclosure E2 to the north was a pit 5150, surrounded by seven associated postholes or small pits. The pit was sub-square and contained what may have been a clay lining. Overlying this was a fill of burnt material, including oak charcoal. The surrounding pits and postholes also produced large quantities of charcoal, some of which may be the result of burnt posts. Two pieces of furnace/hearth slag and a possible smithing hearth bottom were recovered from one posthole in the group. Given the highly burnt nature of the pit fill and the indications of a superstructure given by the postholes and the recovered slag, it is possible that secondary iron

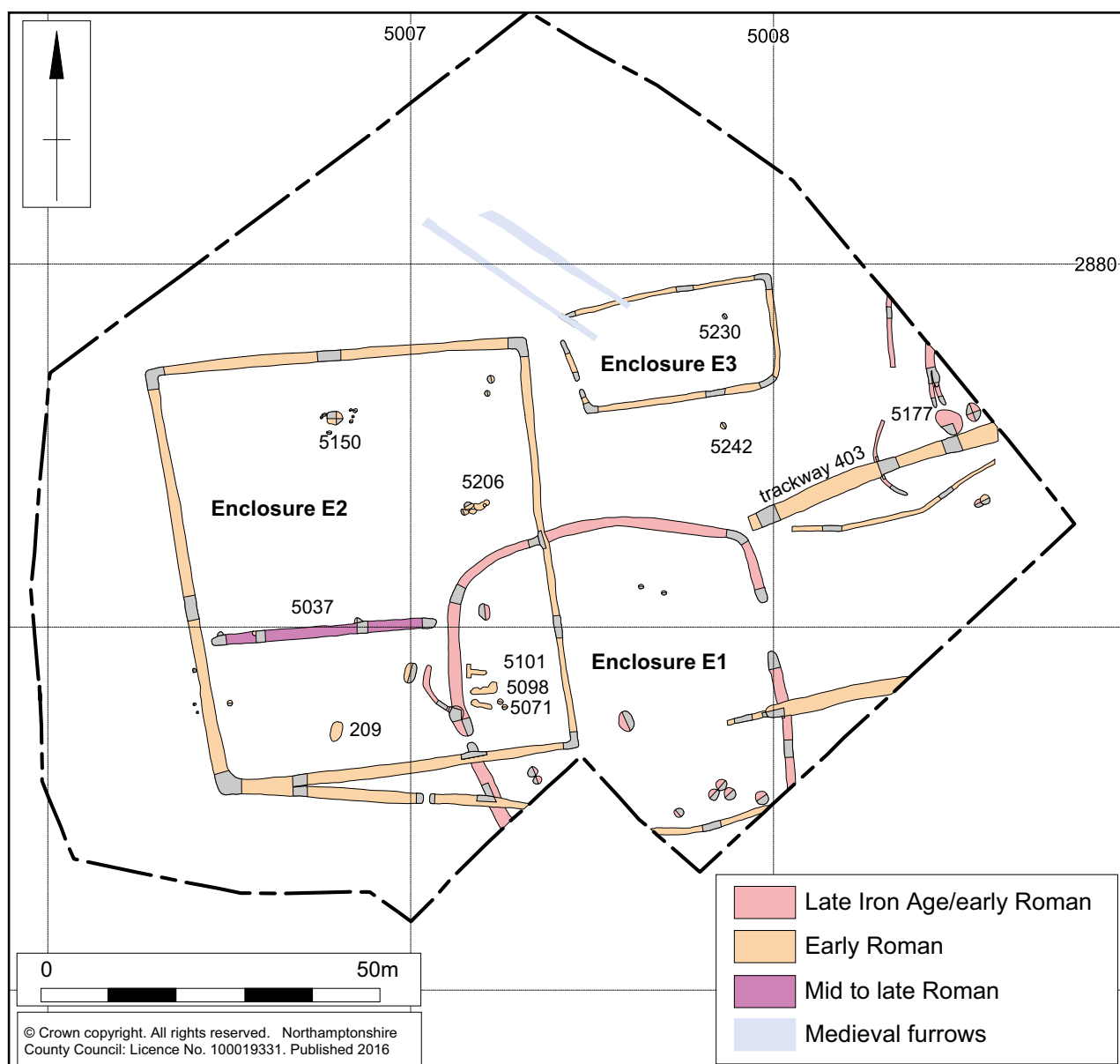


Fig 3: The Roman enclosures

smithing had taken place at this location, or it may be associated with the corn dryer and other possible oven features to the south-east.

Other pits and postholes within Enclosure E2 are undated or produced material of a similar early Roman date. Some postholes may have supported small structures although this is not clear. Burnt post material and a small quantity of fired clay/daub were identified. In the south of Enclosure E2 a large sub-rectangular pit or possible well, 209, c.2.70m long and 1.20m deep, possibly floored with limestone slabs, was investigated during the trial trench evaluation. The upper fill contained seven sherds of pottery and animal bone, and also the fragmentary skeleton of a human infant, probably neonatal (Walker 2011). No further human remains were identified on the site.

### **Enclosure E3**

This small rectangular enclosure was 28m long by 14m wide, with the ditch varying from 0.40m to 0.73m wide and 0.18m to 0.30m deep, largely with a U-shaped profile. There were two breaks in the ditch at the western end, c.3.5m and c.1.0m wide. The pottery from the enclosure ditches comprised 56 sherds weighing 0.80kg. There was a range of forms and fabrics, including shell-gritted and grog-tempered wares and grey ware. This is similar to the profile of pottery recovered from enclosure E2, indicating these enclosures were contemporary.

Enclosure E3 contained a single pit, 5230, which contained a moderate quantity of burnt stones and some charcoal, possibly dumped waste from a hearth. A pit 5242 outside Enclosure E3 to the south was circular, and contained a compact clay lining, into which were set burnt stone cobbles.

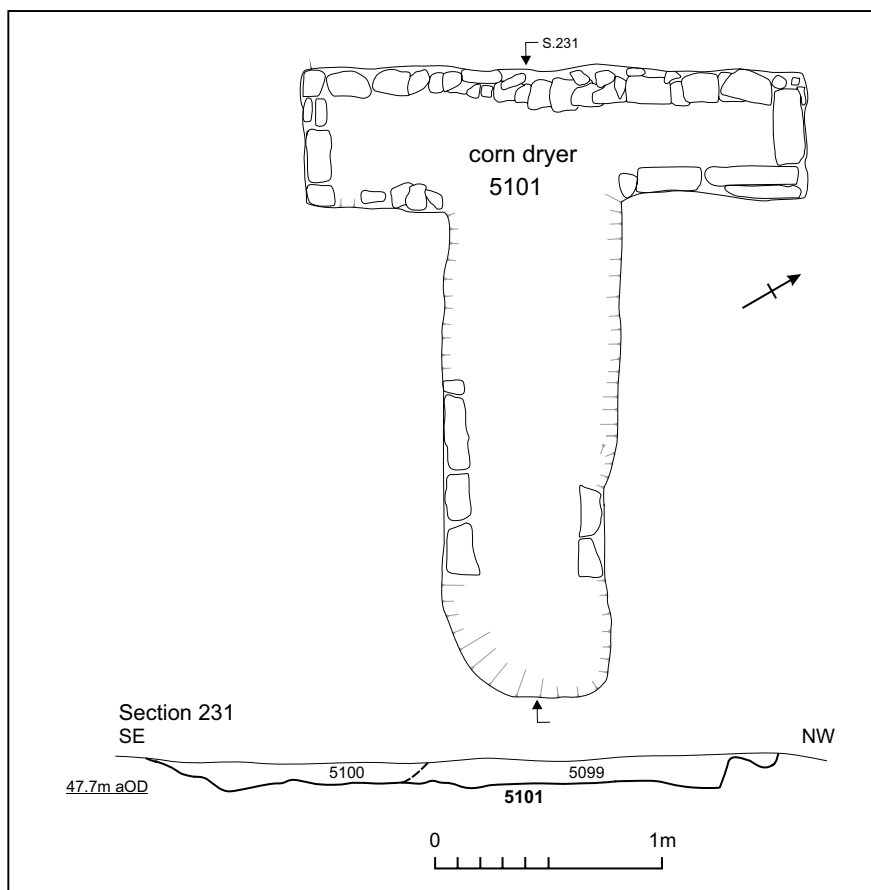


Fig 4: Plan and section of corn dryer 5101



Fig 5: The T-shaped corn dryer, looking south towards pit 5098

### Other pits, ditches and a trackway

To the south-east, cutting Enclosure E1, was a gully, aligned north-east by south-west, later replaced by a wider ditch. To the north and parallel to this ditch, was a section of sunken trackway 403 which had a metallised surface formed of worn small to medium limestone pieces set into a yellow-brown clay matrix. After its abandonment, the hollow above the trackway surface filled with grey-brown clay silt. The trackway extended beyond the limits of the excavation to the north-east, running down the steepest part of the slope towards the stream. To the east, immediately to the north of the trackway, was a surface, 5177, of 3.0m by 3.0m, made of limestone blocks. Incorporated into the surface were two fragments of sandstone rotary quern (Fig 6).



Fig 6: Limestone surface 5177, looking north-west, with partial quern in the centre

### Late Roman activity

Within Enclosure E2, ditch 5037 was a possible internal sub-division, with steep sides and a flat base. The fill contained 90 sherds of pottery, weighing 0.80kg, including 20 sherds of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware, of the 3rd or 4th centuries AD, the latest Roman pottery from the site. A pit at the west end of this ditch contained charcoal from woods burnt at around 600–800°C, probably indicative of industrial processes rather than a domestic hearth waste.

### Roman Finds and Environmental Evidence

#### The late Iron Age and Roman pottery by Rob Perrin

An assemblage of some 807 sherds, weighing just under 9kg and with an estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), based on rims, of just over seven, was recovered.

### Fabrics

The fabrics represented are various grogged, shell-grittied, reduced and oxidised wares, together with colour-coated

ware from the Lower Nene Valley (LNVV) and imported samian ware from production sites in South (SGS) and Central Gaul (CGS). Over three quarters of the pottery comprises shell gritted wares and reduced grey wares (Table 1).

A number of sub-types occur in the grogged wares, defined by colour – buff, browns, pink, hard cream and red-brown – rather than noticeable variations in the grog temper; a fabric with a mixture of grog and shell inclusions also occurs. The variations in the shell-grittied ware relate to both colour and the size of the shell inclusions, which are small, medium and large. The different-sized inclusions occur in fabrics in all of the colours.

The reduced grey and dark grey wares are all sand tempered with variations in the coarseness of the fabric, core or core-edge colour and surface finish. Two sherds have incised and stamp decoration akin to that found on so-called ‘London ware’. The oxidised wares comprise a range of sand tempered buff, cream, pink and reddish-yellow fabrics

Table 1: Quantification of Roman pottery fabrics

Fabric	Sherds	%	Weight (g)	%	Rims	%
Grogs	58	7.2	752	8.4	39	5.5
Shelly	402	49.8	5565	62	258	36
Grey	153	19	1193	13.3	192	27
Dark grey	116	14.4	866	9.6	101	14
Oxidised	51	6.3	335	3.7	69	9.7
LNVCC	20	2.5	234	2.6	36	5
SGS	2	–	26	–	12	–
CGS	5	–	26	–	7	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>8997</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>–</b>

### Forms

Approximately 72 vessels were noted, based on a count of separate rims, comprising 48 jars or possible jars, six jars or bowls, five bowls, one beaker, two beakers or jars, two dishes, two bowls or dishes, one cup, three flagons or possible flagons, one flagon or jar and one colander. Twenty-seven occur in reduced grey wares, another 27 in shell-grittied wares, six in grogged wares, two in mixed grog and shell wares, six in oxidised wares, one each in South Gaulish (SGS) and Central Gaulish (CGS) samian ware and two in Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LNVCC).

Seven of the jars or bowls in the shell-grittied wares are globular in shape and neckless and another four have short necks. Four have a slight lid-seating and others have curved, square or everted rims; one vessel is of storage jar size. Of the three bowls in shell-grittied wares, one has an intumed flat rim, another an intumed flange and the other has external grooves high up on the rim. One jar has external vertical scoring. The two vessels in fabrics with a mixture of shell and grog temper are also globular in shape and neckless and comprise a jar and a jar or bowl. Five of the six vessels in grogged wares are jars, including two lid-seated jars in a pink grogged ware; the other vessel is a wide mouthed bowl in a hard cream grogged ware.

The reduced grey wares have the widest range of forms. There are 18 jars or possible jars: two possibly narrow-mouthed jars; one jar with nodular rustication; one wide-mouthed bowl or jar with neck grooves above a burnished wavy line; one beaker or jar with a cornice rim; one dish with a plain rim, an internal ledge and a raised central kick reminiscent of gallo-belgic forms; two dishes or bowls, one with a bead rim and the other carinated with a grooved rim; one possible flagon; one collander and a decorated 'London ware' imitation samian ware form 37 bowl. The jars mainly have curved or everted rims, though one has a lid-seated rim and another is neckless with a plain rim. Three of the jars are globular in shape and three have short necks; two have neck grooves, another girth grooves.

There are three jars, one beaker or jar, one flagon and another possible flagon in oxidised wares. Of the three jars, one has a square rim and one a bead rim, and two are globular in shape with short necks; the beaker or jar has rouletted decoration. The vessels in LNVCC comprise a single-handle flagon or jug with a grey colour coat and a beaker. The samian ware vessels comprise a SGS form 33 cup and a CGS form 18/31 dish.

### Sources

It is likely that most of the pottery was locally produced. There are a number of known kiln sites within a 15km radius of Benefield including Oundle, Ashton, Warmington, Bulwick, Southwick, Corby and Gretton (Swan 1984, 144–6) and Fineshade (Turland 1991, 89–92). Early Roman kilns producing shell gritted ware were found at Haddon to the east (Rollo 1994, 96; Evans 2003, 73).

The major production centre of the Lower Nene Valley is less than 20km to the north-east, though little of the Benefield pottery, other than the colour-coated ware, seems to be from this source. The River Nene and the Roman road from Irchester to Durobrivae (Margary 570) both pass a few kilometres to the south of the site, so the inhabitants may have had access via these routes to pottery produced in the many known kiln sites further to the west.

### Dating

The globular, neckless vessels with simple plain or bead rims are essentially Iron Age in form though the type continues in use into the Roman period. Much of the grogged wares and some of the shell-gritted wares and grey ware vessels are of 1st-century AD date, as are the South Gaulish Samian vessels and the gallo-belgic-type grey ware dish. Much of the rest of the pottery would fit a 2nd-century AD date, with the LNVCC flagon or jug and the shell gritted ware bowl with an in-turned flange hinting at some later 4th-century activity.

### Site function and status

The range of wares and vessel forms, together with the small amount of regionally traded and imported conti-

mental wares, suggests that most of the activity within the enclosures and the associated or other features was basic utilitarian agricultural, with possibly some domestic. The presence of a very small quantity of roof tile suggests that a roofed building lay somewhere nearby.

### Other Roman finds by Tora Hylton

The small group of Roman finds include a Roman coin and an armlet recovered as residual finds on the medieval site.

### Metal finds

Items associated with dress include a brooch (SF42) recovered from the western arm of Enclosure E2. It is a complete example of Mackreth's Type CD H 6.bc (2011, plate 58, 11560), referred as 'The Nene Group', because its distribution area mainly covers the Anglian region from Norfolk to Leicester. This brooch dates to the late 1st–2nd century (Fig 7a). There is also an armlet fragment (SF57), from topsoil on the medieval site. It represents a wide, flat-sectioned pen-annular form which flairs out slightly towards a straight-edged terminal (Fig 7b) and it displays similarities to 1st-century examples from the Verulamium (Waugh and Goodburn 1972; fig 32, 30 and 31) and Colchester (Crummy 1983; fig 40, 1586). A rod fragment came from the north-east corner of Enclosure E3.

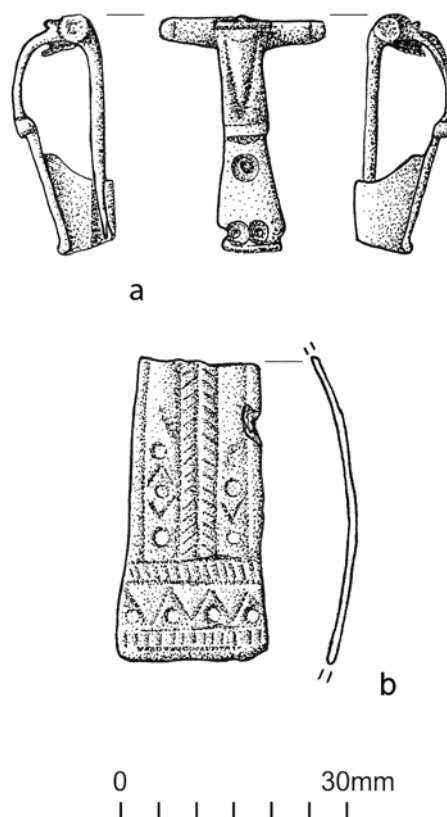


Fig 7: Roman finds: a) copper-alloy brooch (SF42), b) copper-alloy armlet fragment (SF57)



**Catalogue of illustrated finds (Fig 7)**

- a. Colchester derivative, hinged pin type. Complete. Head of pin pierced and mounted on an axis bar housed in the wings of the brooch. Wings decorated with terminal grooves; bow decorated with two zones of ornamentation separated by a cross-moulding. The upper section of the bow is decorated with a triangle, curved in section and bordered by a groove. The lower section, a fantail foot, is decorated with three ring and dots motifs. Length: 30mm. SF42, Enclosure 2
- b. Armlet, copper alloy. Incomplete, one terminal only. Decorated with marginal grooves and a central panel of opposing oblique incisions forming a horizontal line of close set chevrons, flanked by crudely executed lozenges and stamped circles. L: 40mm; W: 17–20mm. SF57, Topsoil

**Quern by Andy Chapman**

From limestone surface (5177) there are two fragments, probably of Millstone Grit (SF54), from the same upper stone of a typical Roman flat rotary quern. The larger fragment forms some 10% of an upper stone 600mm in diameter and up to 65mm thick. The upper surface is smooth, with faint traces of dimpled tool marks with an incised groove at a radius of 120mm. The smaller piece has a remnant of a central eye 100mm in diameter. The grinding surface is dimpled, with a plain, slightly raised, band around the circumference, 35mm wide. At 600mm diameter this stone is near the upper end of the size range for hand rotary querns.

**Metalworking debris by Andy Chapman**

From the fill of enclosure ditch, E2, there is a small lump of dense slag, weighing 50g. From a posthole there are three pieces of slag, weighing 290g, including a circular disk of dense slag with a concave upper surface and a convex lower surface, which may be a smithing hearth bottom, but at only 50mm diameter it would be an unusually small example. This small group of material is consistent with secondary iron smithing being carried out somewhere nearby.

**Ceramic building materials by Pat Chapman**

Three tile sherds and one possible tile sherd, weighing 758g, come from three ditches and a pit, including part of a *tegula* roof tile from ditch 5015 in the south-west of Enclosure E2. A sherd of curved *imbrex* roof tile was recovered as a residual find from layer (2141) in the medieval settlement. They suggest the presence of a roofed building somewhere in the vicinity of the excavated enclosures.

**The animal bone  
by Stephanie Vann**

An assemblage of 475 fragments of animal bone was recovered from pits, ditches and gullies on the Roman site, of which 217 (45%) were identifiable. Of this identi-

fiable number, 18% were cattle, 13% were sheep and an additional 6% were ovicaprid. The remainder of the bones comprised pig, horse, dog, small mammal, medium mammal and large mammal. There was no evidence of fish remains.

**Discussion**

The small size of the assemblage makes it difficult to draw any significant conclusions, although it seems that there is nothing about it that is in any way extraordinary for a domestic assemblage of the Roman period. Cattle are regularly exploited throughout the Iron Age and Roman periods, along with other domestic species such as ovicaprids (sheep/goat) and pigs (Maltby 1981) and this continues to be the case into later periods. The dominance of such remains within the assemblage from Benefield 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, as this dominance may be a reflection of preservation rather than husbandry practices at this site.

The skeletal elements represent a variety of parts of the body, including the axial skeleton (cranium, pelvis, scapula and vertebrae), the feet (metapodials, tarsals and phalanges) and the limbs (humerus, radius, ulna, femur, and tibia). This distribution pattern, combined with the presence of several cut and chop marks on some elements, may indicate that this is normal butchery waste, rather than the result of some other industrial process. Eight elements of ox, ovicaprid, horse, medium mammal and large mammal of Roman date show evidence of butchery. Bones were chopped through midshaft or broken open to extract the marrow.

Analysis of bone fusing elements and tooth wear data suggests that ovicaprids at the site may have been slaughtered at a younger age than cattle. The cattle withers height range of 1092–1204mm (or 1.09–1.20m) at Benefield is comparable to the mean cattle withers height of 1.09m of the early Roman phases at Causeway Lane in Leicester, which had a range of 1.00–1.21m (Gidney 1999, 313). The mean in the later Roman phases of the same site is slightly greater at 1.14m (Gidney 1999, 313), but still within the range exhibited at Benefield. The animals from this site are, therefore, comparable with animals from other sites dated to the Roman period.

Canids were present on the site throughout the Roman period, as indicated by both the presence of dog bones from three contexts, and from the evidence for canid gnawing on a number of bones from Roman contexts. The withers height range of the dog skeleton in pit 5191 was 457mm. These are comparable to the withers heights of Roman dogs given by Clark (1995), which had a range of 240–800mm. It is also comparable to the withers height of the modern spaniel (459–484mm) as used by Clark (1995).

An example of possible pathology is given by a cattle metacarpal from a spread. The bone exhibits shallow depressions on the proximal lateral articulation, 7mm by 4.5mm in size. The bone is shallow and with a porous, woven-bone appearance. Similar depressions in the

proximal articulation have been seen at other sites such as the Roman site of Alchester (Vann 2008), and are thought to represent either osteochondritic lesions or inherited (or epigenetic) traits.

### Plant macrofossils by Val Fryer

Cereal grains/chaff and seeds of common weeds were present at a low to moderate density within all but one of the Roman assemblages. Preservation was variable; some plant macrofossils were well preserved, but other grains and seeds were puffed and distorted, probably as a result of combustion at very high temperatures. Oat (*Avena* sp.), barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were recorded, within wheat being predominant throughout. Most of the recorded wheat grains were of an elongated ‘drop’ form typical of spelt (*T. spelta*), although occasional more rounded hexaploid type forms were also noted. Spelt glume bases were present within nine assemblages, whilst bread wheat (*T. aestivum/compactum*) type rachis nodes were noted within only three samples. Detached sprouts from germinated cereal grains were noted within three assemblages.

Weed seeds were very scarce, with most occurring as single specimens within an assemblage. Charcoal/charred wood fragments were present throughout, although rarely at a high density.

### Corn dryer and ovens

One sample was taken from pit 5071 and two from corn-dryer 5101. All contain moderate densities of cereal grains and chaff but, perhaps a little surprisingly, charcoal fragments are very scarce.

### Charcoal wood samples by Imogen van Bergen Poole

A summary of the taxonomic finds from all the contexts is provided in Table 2. Unless the number of fragments dictated otherwise, a random selection of at least 100 fragments were studied to determine the taxonomic identity and the state of preservation for each context.

The majority of the wood is considered to be round wood, probably originating from a relatively small diameter

axis such as branch material based on growth ring curvature. The fragments all showed evidence of rounding which indicates that they may have been subject to some weathering or abrasion. Preservation was relatively good with some fragments exhibiting well-preserved anatomy whilst others showed evidence of distorted anatomy and homogenised cell walls.

Charcoal fragments from the Roman phase indicate the presence of hazel, oak, ash, cherry, willow, ?poplar and field maple. These taxa are all native to British woodlands. Hazel, oak, ash, willow and field maple can all be coppiced and provide abundant material in a short rotation and indeed it is known that the Romans were familiar with this system and planted mixed coppices (Rackham 1990). The overlap in the taxa in a number of different contexts examined provides an indication these taxa were probably used expressly as fuel woods, as opposed to the casual burning of random woody material, and therefore would have been grown locally. This in turn provides an indication of the taxonomic composition of the local woodland bearing in mind that cultural selection and preservational differences can, and does, bias the archaeobotanical record.

Estimated burning temperatures in excess of 500°C from at least three contexts suggest that the fires were of high temperature, which might infer an industrial use as opposed to domestic use.

### The medieval settlement

The area of medieval settlement, Area B, comprised a number of stone buildings within plots defined by ditches or stone walls (Figs 8 and 9). At least one re-arrangement of the boundaries to insert a new plot took place. Interpretation was hampered by the small area excavated and the incompleteness of the evidence, with many walls and some boundaries no longer surviving. This left the nature of the buildings and the boundaries unclear, although some interpretation has been attempted. The activity in Area B is dated by the pottery assemblage to AD 1150–1400.

The topography of the site slopes down to the south-east towards the Lyveden Brook. In this part of the site, conditions were extremely wet with high ground water levels. The waterlogged condition of the soil hindered interpretation of the relationship between features, particularly in areas of intercutting.

Table 2: Summary of the taxonomic identity of the charcoal

Family	Genus and species	Common name
Betulaceae	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazel
	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	oak
	<i>Quercus/Castanea</i> sp.	oak/sweet chestnut
Oleaceae	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash
Rosaceae	<i>Prunus</i> sp.	(probably) cherry
Salicaceae	<i>Populus/Salix</i>	poplar/willow
	<i>Salix</i> sp.	willow
Sapindaceae	<i>Acer campestre</i>	field maple



Fig 8: Aerial view of the medieval settlement, looking south-west, with building B2 in the foreground and buildings B1, B4 and B3 behind

### **Geology and general stratigraphy** *by Steve Critchley*

This area was underlain by dark grey to blue clays and mudstones of the estuarine deposited Blisworth Clay formation, confined to the lower to mid-point of the excavation area and overlain by the Cornbrash Formation in the remainder. The mudstones weather to an intractable sticky clay. The overlying Cornbrash exposures were observed to be composed of irregularly bedded bioclastic pale yellow-brown limestones rich in fossil remains.

#### **The early ditched boundaries (AD 1150–1250)**

The first phase of activity comprised the digging of several boundary ditches to form a series of roughly rectangular plots extending back from the road. Ditch 2010, which formed the northern and eastern boundaries of Plot 3, contained pottery dated AD 1150–1200, and a probable late 13th-century copper-alloy annular brooch was also recovered.

A large ditch 2091 aligned north-west by south-east, may have formed the primary southern boundary of Plot 1. The ditch silts contained pottery dating from the 13th to mid-14th centuries as well as a piece of metalworking tap

slag. A short length of ditch 2086, to the north probably defined the northern edge of Plot 1.

#### **Stone buildings in Plot 1, ditches and pits (AD 1250–1400)**

After the construction of the early ditched boundaries, a number of stone buildings were constructed, and the plots further defined by ditches. The northernmost plot, Plot 1, contained two buildings, B1 and B2, set at right angles and probably parts of a single farmstead, as well as ditches and pits.

##### ***Building B1***

Building B1 was aligned north-east by south-west. The rooms were 3.8–4.2m wide, and the full length of the buildings is estimated at around 22m, probably comprising four bays each around 4.0m long. The walls were 0.55m–0.65m wide and comprised roughly-faced limestone blocks with no bonding material, surviving between one and two courses high. Pottery associated with the walls was dated from the 13th to mid-14th centuries.

The western room was c.4.25m wide by 4.40m long, with the dividing wall surviving mainly as a stone scatter.

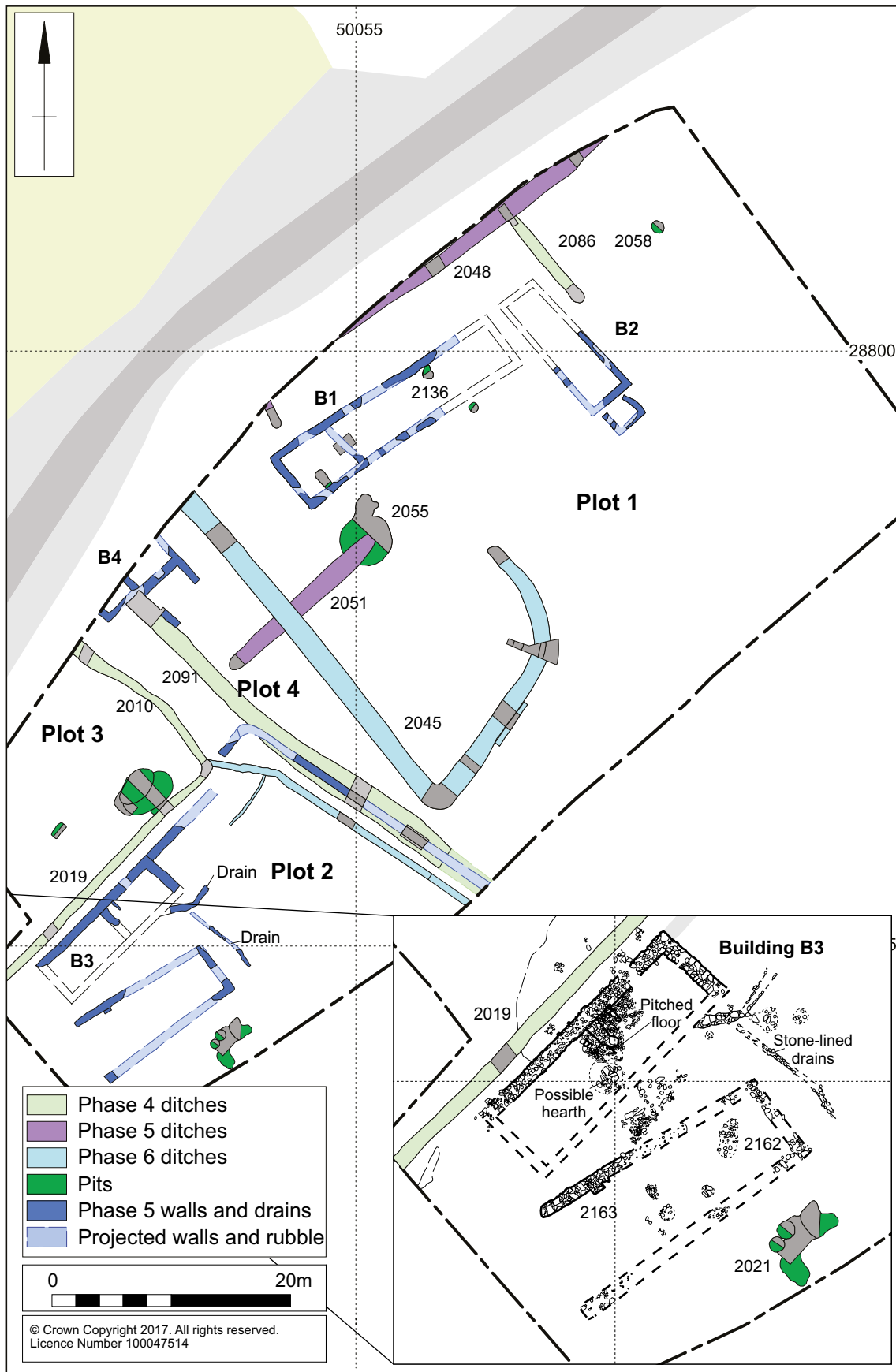


Fig 9: The medieval settlement

Although no further partition walls survived, medieval buildings of this length typically have around four bays, perhaps with square end chambers and double length central room. At the eastern end of the central room there was a possible hearth, 2136.

### **Building B2**

This building was at least 7.0m long, comprising two bays, and it may have extended to 11m long, with three bays. The walls were *c.*0.50m wide, surviving as only a single course of roughly-faced unbonded limestone blocks. At *c.*3.10m wide, it was narrower than Building B1, and may have been an ancillary building. A small chamber, 2.0m wide, defined by at least an L-shaped wall, and either fully enclosed or open onto the courtyard to the south-west abutted the end of this range.

### **Ditches and pits**

Pit 2058, to the north-east of Building B2, was circular, 1.0m in diameter by 0.17m deep, with steep sides and a concave base. The primary fill comprised very dark grey-brown silty clay, rare burnt stone and large pieces of oak heartwood, which had been burnt at around 400–600°C, indicating that this was hearth waste. A single sherd of late 12th-century Lyveden/Stanian A ware pottery was recovered from the fill.

To the south of Building B1, a large pit, 2055, 4.10m wide by 0.83m deep, had contained a stone-lined pit, with remnants of parallel walls, 1.0m apart, disturbed by later activity. The pit contained several fills of silty clay mixed with degraded sandstone and limestone, as well as 40 sherds of pottery dated 1200–1350, and four iron nails. This pit was cut by a linear ditch, 2051, which ran to original plot boundary, 2091, probably to provide drainage.

Against the western limit of excavation, alongside the road, there was a western boundary ditch, 2048.

### **Plot 2, Building B3, pits and other walled features (AD 1250–1400)**

Plot 2 was initially bounded by ditch 2091 to the north and ditch 2019 to the west. Later, both ditches were replaced by boundary walls, with the wall to the west abutting the walls of Building B3, while the northern boundary wall sat above the filled ditch.

### **Walls 2162 and 2163**

To the east of Building B3, there were partial remnants of a long wall, 2163, and poorly preserved scatters of stone to the east were interpreted as a second long wall, which was not parallel to wall 2163, and as a possible connecting wall 2162, at the northern end. Associated pottery is dated 1200–1350 indicating that this is a remnant of an early phase of stone building, but too heavily disturbed to enable a more convincing interpretation to be offered.

### **Building B3**

Building B3 was defined by the surviving long wall, 0.60m wide, parallel with boundary ditch 2019 and formed of roughly-faced limestone blocks with a core of

smaller stone, constructed without mortar and surviving up to one course high (Fig 10), and by a broad gable end wall to the north, 0.80–0.88m wide. No traces of the southern and western walls had survived, but the building was at least 3.0m wide, similar to Building 2, and probably had an internal length of at least 12–13m, and may have comprised four bays, as suggested by a fragment of surviving partition wall which formed two rooms of slightly unequal lengths. The presence of a stone-lined drain suggests that the northern room may have been an animal byre. The early drain ran directly south-eastwards. The later, and better preserved, drain ran obliquely beneath the wall, where the original capping stones were still in-situ and beyond the wall it turned to the north-east, and was lost.

Within the southern room there was an area of pitched stone surface, at least 2.0m square, but disturbed (Fig 10), from which a medieval copper-alloy buckle was recovered (SF25). An area of larger flat-lying stones around 1.0m square, some of which were burned, lying to the south-west of the pitched-stone surface may have been a hearth. Pottery from surfaces inside the structure and the demolition layers around the building have been dated to the second half of the 14th century.

To the south-east of the building remains, there was a cluster of intercut pits, one of which, 2021 contained a dump of hearth waste, while others contained a large quantity of animal bone and 82 sherds of Lyveden/Stanian A ware pottery, weighing 1.3kg, dating from the 13th to mid-14th centuries.



Fig 10: North wall of Building B3, looking north-east with remnant floor levels to the south (right)

### Pits in Plot 3 (AD 1250–1400)

Plot 3 was defined by boundary ditches 2010 and 2019. Unlike the other plots, no evidence of former stone-built structures was present (Fig 10). A group of intercutting quarry pits on the eastern edge of the plot are dated between the 13th and later 14th centuries. Overlying the pits was a spread of domestic debris containing pottery dating 1350–1400, iron nails and a staple (SF39), a 14th–15th-century copper-alloy buckle (SF40), and an iron buckle (SF41). A layer of demolition rubble, from Building B3 in Plot 2, overlay the eastern plot boundary, and is dated to the second half of the 14th century.

### Re-organisation of the plot boundaries, Building B4 (AD 1350–1400)

#### *Reorganisation of boundaries and ditch 2045*

The plot boundaries were reorganised to allow for the creation of a new narrow plot, inserted between Plots 1 and 3, largely by encroachment onto the southern end of Plot 1, to allow sufficient width for the construction of a single building fronting onto the road (Fig 11).

The northern boundary ditch, 2045, encroached onto Plot 1. At its eastern end the ditch turned sharply north-eastwards, possibly to form the rear of Plot 1, and turned again north-westwards before terminating. Sections through this ditch suggest it may have been recut a number of times, possibly due to wet ground conditions on this part of the site, but this was not fully explored due to the wet ground conditions. The majority of the pottery recovered from the ditch is dated between 1350 and 1400.

#### *Building B4*

Building B4 was situated on the western edge of the site, with much of it beyond the excavated area (Figs 11 and 12). It was constructed in limestone without any obvious bonding material, with the walls surviving as much as five or six courses high in places, roughly-faced on the exterior and interior surfaces. It comprised a range of at least two bays, 3.65m wide and end-on to the road, with a smaller abutting chamber to the south-west. The long walls were 0.65m wide, with a broader gable end, 0.85m wide. The walls of the attached room to the south were narrower, at 0.45–0.58m wide. Within the main range, flat-laid slabs of limestone with burnt surfaces in the eastern corner of the northern room may have been the base of a corner hearth or oven (Fig 13). A remnant of pitched external surface in limestone lay immediately to the east.

### Medieval finds and environmental evidence

#### **The medieval pottery** *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage from the medieval site comprises 1,587 sherds with a total weight of 30,368g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference is 12.11. It was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the

Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS) (Tables 3 and 4).

The range of fabric types is largely typical of sites in the north of Northamptonshire, being dominated by the products of the nearby Lyveden and Stanion industries. The sherd of Surrey Whiteware is the exception. Such pottery is very rare in the county (eg. McCarthy 1979, 229), and this appears to be one of the most northerly finds of the material in England (Pearce and Vince 1988, figs 2–4), although a single sherd is known from Lincoln (Young and Vince 2005, 172). However, an iron-working site at nearby Deene End, Weldon, also produced some unusual pottery (Blinkhorn 2003) including some very rare (in the region) early medieval continental imports, indicating that it was part of an extensive trading network, and perhaps monastic. The presence of the Surrey White Ware at Benefield suggests that it is likely that the occupants were also in contact with this network, and perhaps demonstrates that the medieval Northamptonshire iron industry was of far more than local importance.

### Chronology

The range of pottery types present suggests that there was very little activity before the beginning of the 13th century, and that the site was probably abandoned in the second half of the 14th century.

There is, notably, a complete lack of Stamford Ware (*c.*AD850–1200) and just a single sherd of St Neots Ware. Such pottery is common on 10th- and 11th-century sites in Northamptonshire, such as West Cotton, Raunds (Blinkhorn 2010), and given that this site is closer to the Stamford Ware production centre, it would be expected to be present if there was any significant late Saxon or Saxo-Norman activity. Stamford Ware and St Neots Ware were also present at nearby sites to the west (Blinkhorn 2003), and north-east (Blinkhorn 2001), so its absence here can only be due to chronological factors. Significant activity at the site did not start until around the beginning of the 13th century.

In the case of the end of the life of the site, the absence of pottery types such as Late Medieval Reduced Ware (LMR – CTS fabric F365, *c.*AD1400–1550) and Late Medieval Oxidized Ware (CTS fabric F401, *c.*AD1450–1550) indicate that activity at the site had ceased before these common pottery types came into circulation. There were manufactories for both of these wares relatively close, at Higham Ferrers, *c.*20km to the south (Blinkhorn 2007) and at Glapthorn, 4km to the east. Both pottery types were present at Deene End and Southwick, and LMR was also noted at Warmington, *c.*8km to the north-east of the site (Blinkhorn 2002). As with the Stamford Ware, the lack of 15th-century pottery at this site would appear to be chronological, as so it would appear that the settlement was abandoned sometime in the second half of the 14th century.

There is some typological evidence which offers further refinement to this. A pit in Plot 3 produced a rimsherd from a bowl with multiple pouring lips: such vessels occurred amongst the large assemblage of kiln

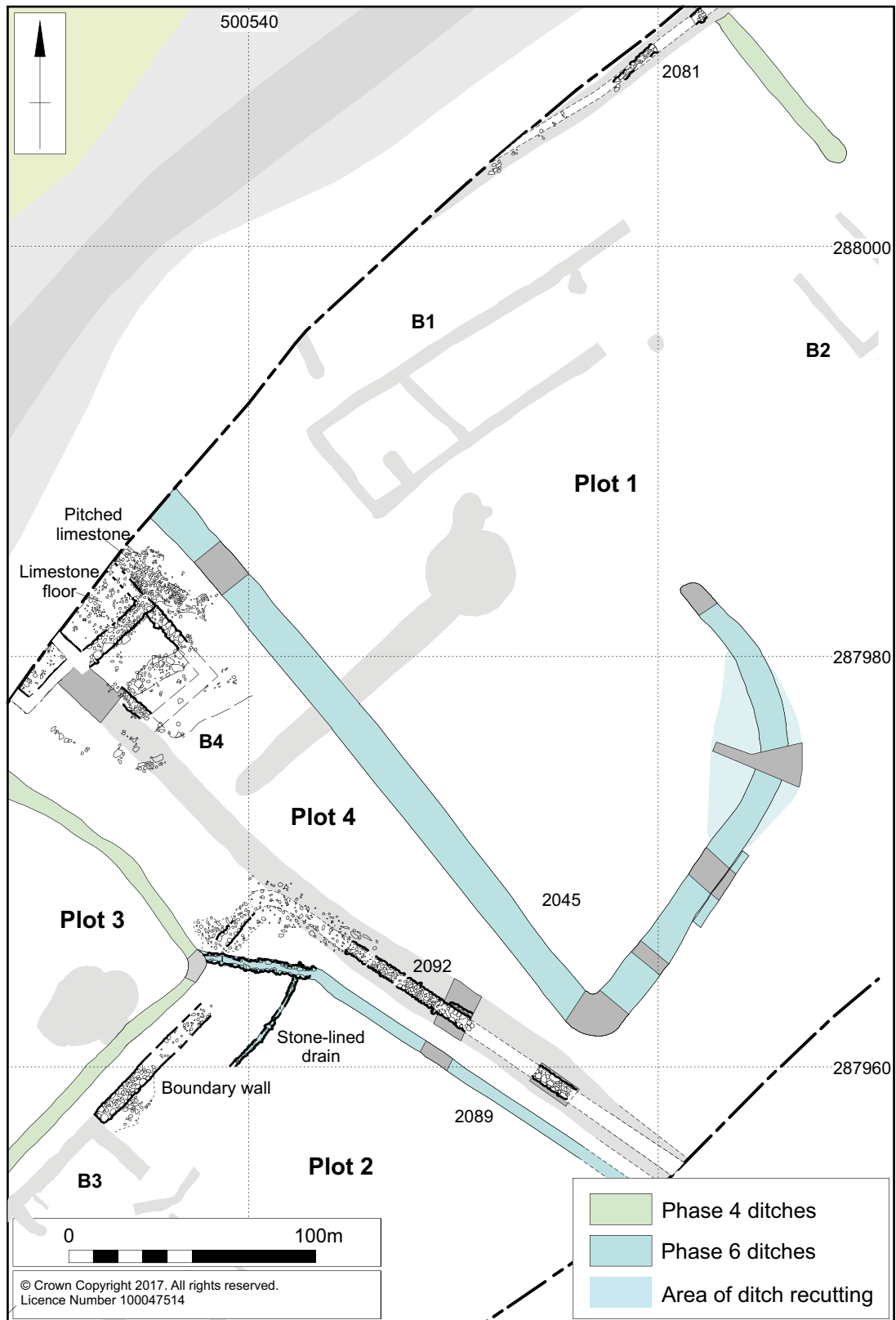


Fig 11: Plan of plot 4

waste at Corby Road, Stanion, where they were dated to *c.*AD1350–1400 (Blinkhorn 2008, 239). Glazed B Ware jars also occurred at that site, and start to occur at a similar date. Their absence here, coupled with the fact that only

a single lipped bowl was noted, offers further support for the suggestion that the site fell from use in the second half of the 14th century.



Fig 12: Building B4, looking north.



Fig 13: Flat-laid hearth stones within Building B4, looking south-east

### Vessel occurrence

The general pattern of vessel occurrence per ceramic phase, by type is fairly typical of sites in the region. Basic spatial analysis indicated that there is no particular concentration of vessel types at the site, other than the few

fragments of storage jars in CP2 contexts all occurring around Building B1 in Plot 1.

### The pottery

#### ***Ceramic Phase 1 (c.AD1150–1200)***

All pottery from this phase comprises Lyveden/Stanian A ware, which is a fairly typical pattern for this area of the county, given the proximity of the production centres. All the context-specific groups of this date were small, with the largest group comprising just six sherds, and almost entirely from stratigraphically isolated features. Given that F319 made up over 85% of the pottery from 13th-century phases, the small assemblage size of the CP1 makes it entirely possible that they are of such date, and lack the defining 13th-century wares, although activity could have begun right at the end of the 12th century, after the end of Stamford Ware production, and just before the introduction of Lyveden/Stanian B Ware.

The assemblage consists entirely of bodysherds, other than a single small rimsherd from a bowl.

#### ***Ceramic Phase 2 (c.AD1200–1350)***

The large assemblage from this phase is dominated by the products of the Lyveden/Stanian industries, along with a



Table 3: *Quantification of medieval pottery*

CTS No		Date	Sherds	Weight (g)	EVE
F200	T1 (2) St. Neots Ware	AD1000–1200	1	15	–
F209	South Lincs Oolitic ware	AD975–1350	1	14	–
F319	Lyveden/Stanion A ware	AD1150–1400	1272	23700	10.61
F320	Lyveden/Stanion B ware	AD1200–1400	221	4496	1.10
F322	Lyveden/Stanion D ware	AD1350–?1500	36	1438	0.20
F324	Brill/Boarstall ware	1200–16th century	24	267	–
F328	Grimston Ware	12th–14th centuries	1	7	–
F329	Potterspurry Ware	AD1250–1600	1	5	–
F330	Shelly Coarseware	AD1100–1400	1	9	0.08
F332	Surrey White ware	Mid-13th to mid-15th centuries	1	6	–
F346	Bourne A Ware	13th–14th centuries	2	250	0.12
F1000	Misc. modern pottery	19th–20th centuries	24	187	–
F1001	All Roman wares		2	19	–

Table 4: *Ceramic phase-dating scheme and medieval pottery occurrence per phase*

Ceramic Phase & date	Defining Wares	Sherds	Weight (g)	EVE
CP1 (1150–1200)	Lyveden/Stanion A ware	17	285	0.04
CP2 (1200–1350)	Lyveden/Stanion B ware Brill/Boarstall ware Grimston Ware Bourne A Ware	891	17203	7.33
CP2a (1250–1350)	Potterspurry Ware, Surrey White ware	61	1454	0.56
CP3 (1350–1400)	Lyveden/Stanion D ware	594	11239	4.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>1563</b>	<b>30181</b>	<b>12.11</b>

few sherds from more distant sources, a typical pattern for the area. The unglazed A wares make up the bulk of the assemblage (85.3%) by weight, with the bulk of the rest (12.5%) comprising glazed B wares. Most of the other ware types are represented by single sherds; two sherds of Bourne A Ware were noted, one of which is a large fragment of a glazed jug.

Jars (67.9% by EVE) dominate the assemblage, along with smaller quantities of bowls (16.3%) and jugs (16.0%). The only other vessel type noted is a skillet, represented by a single handle. Some of the jars are very large, with one from ditch 2086 having a rim diameter of 460mm, and another from the fill of a hearth-waste pit from Plot 1 having a rim diameter of 500mm, compared to the average rim diameter for the jars from this phase of 246.9mm. These were probably storage vessels, as was a large bodysherd from an extremely large vessel with applied strip decoration which occurred in ditch 2051. Both this and the large rimsherds all came from features in the vicinity of building B1.

The glazed Lyveden/Stanion B jugs, as is usually the case, also had slip decoration, including stamped pads. It is worthy of note that all the sherds with stamped slip-pads from the site occurred in this phase; the assemblage from the manufactory at Corby Road dated *c.*AD1350–1400 did not include any sherds with stamped decoration (Blinkhorn 2008, 242) which suggested very strongly

that such vessels date to before the mid-14th century. The evidence from this site would appear to support this, and, given their absence in Ceramic Phase 3 contexts, suggests that there is very little residual B Ware material in contexts dated to that phase.

### **Ceramic Phase 3 (c.AD1350–1400?)**

This ceramic phase is also dominated by Lyveden/Stanion products. The unglazed A Wares are still dominant, but their proportion (66.3% by weight) is considerably lower than in the previous phase. This is in part due to the introduction of Lyveden/Stanion D ware (12.8%), but the B ware also forms a higher proportion (19.3%) than in the previous phase. The main products of the B and D ware traditions are glazed jugs, along with a smaller number of glazed bowls and jars (Blinkhorn 2008, table 26). Bowls and jugs usually become more common during the passage of the medieval period, but in this phase jugs actually drop slightly as a proportion of the vessel assemblage. Given that glazed wares, mainly in the form of bodysherds from jugs, are more common, this seems likely to be the result of the vagaries of archaeological sampling, although functional considerations may be the reason.

As noted above, a multi-lipped B Ware bowl, datable to the second half of the 14th century, occurred in this phase, as did a fragment of an A Ware curfew handle and a fairly large sherd from a burnt and obviously used D Ware

dripping-dish. Dripping dishes were not noted amongst the wasters from Corby Road, Stanion, other than a single horizontal handle from a mid-late 15th-century group which could have been from another vessel type such as a skillet. A Lyveden/Stanion D-ware dripping-dish was noted at Lyveden (Webster 1975, fig 39), as were A Ware curfews (*ibid*, fig 27), although they were dated purely on typological grounds.

### **Other medieval pottery**

Additional to the data above, two sherds of medieval pottery, a sherd of Bourne A Ware and a sherd of of Lyveden/Stanion B ware, were recovered from the Roman site.

## **Other medieval finds**

*by Tora Hylton*

There are 38 individual or group recorded small finds providing a total number of 53 individual objects in four material types: 28x copper alloy (including a post-medieval coin), 6x iron, 2x lead and 2x stone. This was a predominantly residual assemblage with 13 items recovered from a silty spread which covered parts of the site, seven from demolition/rubble spreads and 18 from topsoil.

The assemblage comprises a small range of finds and is by no means representative of the full range that would have been in use during the lifetime of the settlement. There is a dearth of items for domestic use, structural equipment, nails and tools and this suggests that much of the metal work had been removed, presumably for recycling, prior to abandonment.

The assemblage is, however, dominated by small portable items which may have been casually lost and these include a range of dress accessories. Other finds include whetstones for the sharpening of metal blades and a barrel padlock attests to the need for security. Some of the finds recovered may be compared typologically to those recovered from the nearby deserted medieval settlement at Lyveden (Bryant and Steane 1971, Steane and Bryant 1975). In tandem with the pottery evidence, the stylistic traits observed suggest a 12th–14th/15th century date for the assemblage.

### **Personal possessions**

This category comprises small portable items which would have formed part of a person's clothing or worn as jewellery. The assemblage comprises eight buckles, seven buckle-plates, three strap-ends, one mount and one brooch.

#### **Buckles frames and buckle-plates**

There are a variety of buckle forms and the types represented span the late 12th to 14th centuries. The majority are single looped buckles with oval frames and they include ornate examples with decorative knops or mouldings on the outside edge (Fig 14, a; cf. Fingerlin 1971, 68; Margeson 1993, fig 13, 132); lipped-frames (Egan and Pritchard 1991, fig 45, 306–310), or frames with a shallow recess for the pin (cf. *ibid*, fig 42, 271, 274). Other forms include, a circular frame (cf. *ibid*, fig 36, 28) and a trape-

zoidal frame ornamented with three small equidistant cast knops (Fig 14, b; cf. Whitehead 1996, 110); finally there is an example of a buckle with an integral forked spacer, to which two sheets would have been soldered to form a buckle plate (Fig 14, c; cf. Steane and Bryant 1975, fig 42, 21).

There are seven plates for connecting buckles to straps of leather or textile. All represent one piece types made from a rectangular-shaped sheet which has been folded widthways and then attached to the buckle by folding the end around the frame and securing it to the strap or belt by one or more rivets. With the exception of one example, all are recessed for the frame and have a slot for the pin. Five buckle-plates retain vestiges of a non-ferrous coating and on one badly corroded example it is just possible to determine the presence of a simple incised linear motif.

#### **Strap-ends**

There are three copper alloy strap-ends, all are tongue-shaped with terminal knops and they represent examples of types which have been manufactured from two or more individual pieces. The smallest example measures 29mm in length and it is not dissimilar to an example from York (Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 1475, 14362). The larger strap-ends both measure 48mm in length and they are furnished with concave attachment edges. One complete example has a forked spacer between the plates and is secured by two rivets; the front plate is furnished with a round aperture and groove (Fig 14, d), like a late 13th and early 14th century example from London (cf. Egan and Pritchard 1991, fig 93, 664).

#### **Mount**

A strap-loop in the form of a five-sided arched frame with a single internal rivet on the attachment edge was recovered. Mounts of this type would have been used to secure the loose ends of straps, like that seen on an archer's wrist guard from Billingsgate, London (Egan and Pritchard 1991, fig 143). A similar example was recovered from Lyveden (Steane and Bryant 1975, fig 42, 31).

#### **Jewellery**

The only item of jewellery is a cast annular brooch. It is simple in appearance and it is furnished with a crudely executed motif of three equidistant panels of oblique, regularly spaced grooves sited close to the outside edge and extending for just half the width of the ring (Fig 14, e). A brooch with a similar motif was recovered from a late 13th-century deposit at the medieval settlement of West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire (Hylton 2010, fig 11.7, 35).

#### **Illustrated costume fittings (Fig 14)**

- Buckle frame/pin, copper alloy. Length: 18mm Width: 25mm, SF23, Context 2000, Topsoil
- Trapezoidal buckle frame, copper alloy. L: 25mm W: 32mm, SF46, Context 2000, Topsoil
- Buckle, copper alloy. Frame – L: 14mm W: 14mm Plate – L: 23mm W: 8mm, SF62, Context 2000, Topsoil
- Strap-end, copper alloy. L: 48mm W: 18mm, SF 24, Context 2164, Spread

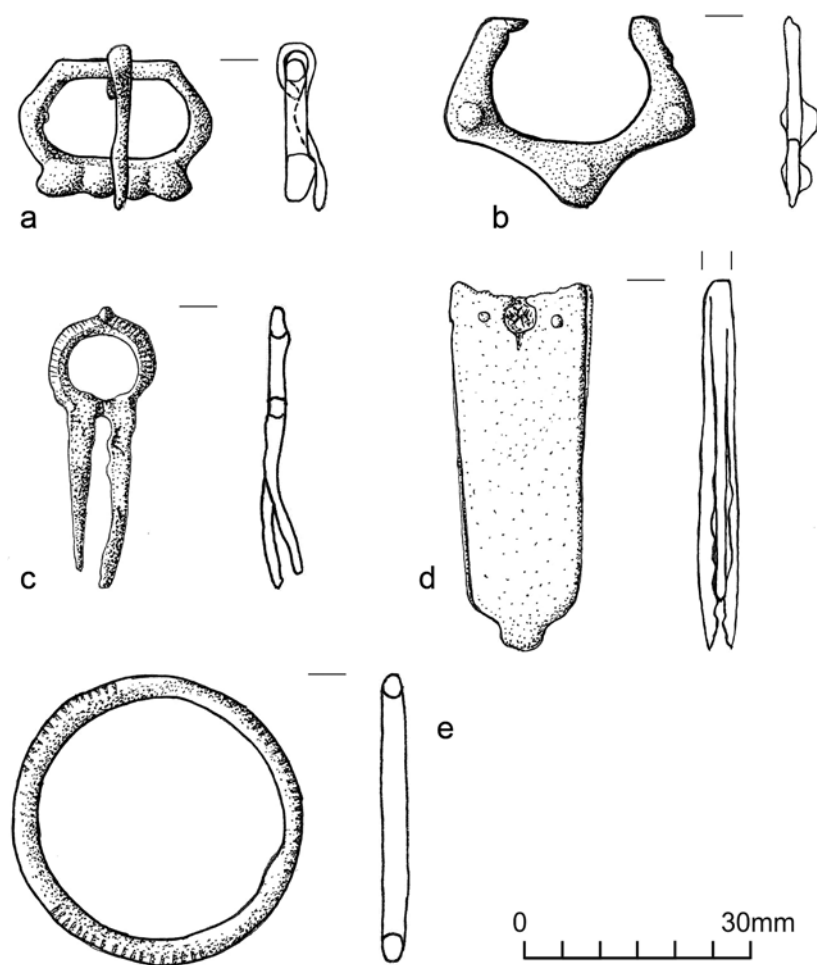


Fig 14: Medieval buckles, a strap-end and a brooch (a-e)

- e. Brooch, copper alloy. Incomplete, pin missing. Ext. Diam: 38mm Int. Diam: 32mm, SF44, Context 2018, Ditch 2019

### Building equipment

There is a dearth of items which may have formed part of or been attached to permanent structures. The only objects identified are two staples, a fragment of a binding strap, an iron ring and 17 nails.

### General iron work

Two types of staple are represented, U-shaped and rectangular. The former is manufactured from a rectangular-sectioned rod which has been forged into a U-shape measuring c.80mm in length. The terminals are tapered enabling it to be driven into timbers leaving the protruding end to form a fixing point for hasps, chains and rings (cf. Bryant and Steane 1971, fig 17Q). The rectangular staple is made from copper alloy plate and unlike the previously example, it is wide with short tapered arms turned in at right angles rather like examples from Norwich (Margeson 1993, fig 104, 944) and York (Ottaway and Rogers 2002, fig 1408, 15161). This type is less robust than iron examples and their function is uncertain. Other pieces of general iron

work include a parallel-sided binding strip with curved profile and an annular iron ring with a circular cross-section. The latter would have had any number of uses from attaching chains or being used for suspension.

### Household/general equipment

The excavations produced very few items for use in a domestic setting and those that were recovered could also have been used elsewhere within the settlement. They include parts of two barrel padlocks, their presence attesting to the need for security, and two hones for sharpening tools.

### Locks

Lock furniture is represented by a barrel padlock case (Figs 15a and 16) and a bolt for a barrel padlock (Fig 15b).

Barrel padlocks comprise three main elements, a hollow cylindrical case, within which fits a bolt with attached spines and leaf springs. The bolt mechanism is attached to a U-shaped free arm and it is the position and the form of the housing for securing the free arm which identifies the type of padlock. According to Goodall's typology for Winchester (1990, 1001 ff) this padlock represents Goodall's Type B, where the tube for retaining the free arm is located away from the case by means of an integral rectangular fin. The case is formed from rolled

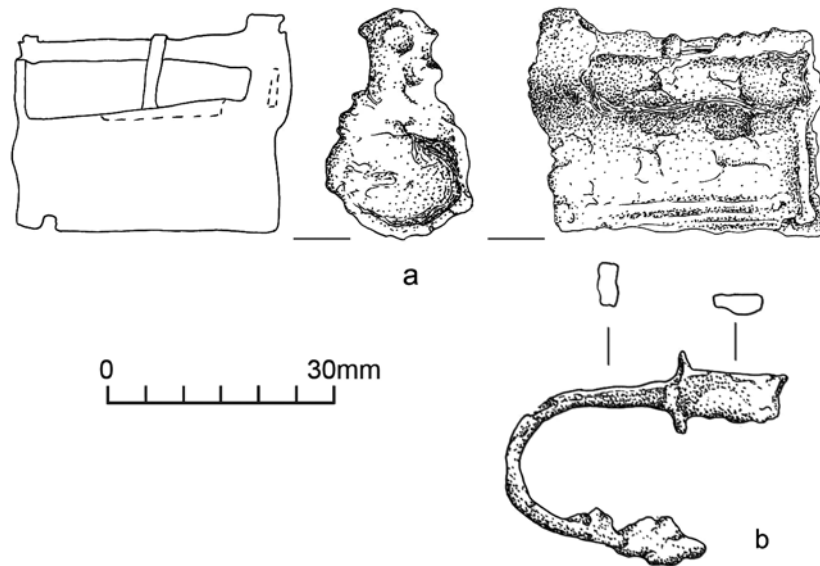


Fig 15: a) Medieval padlock (SF30) and b) U-shaped padlock bolt

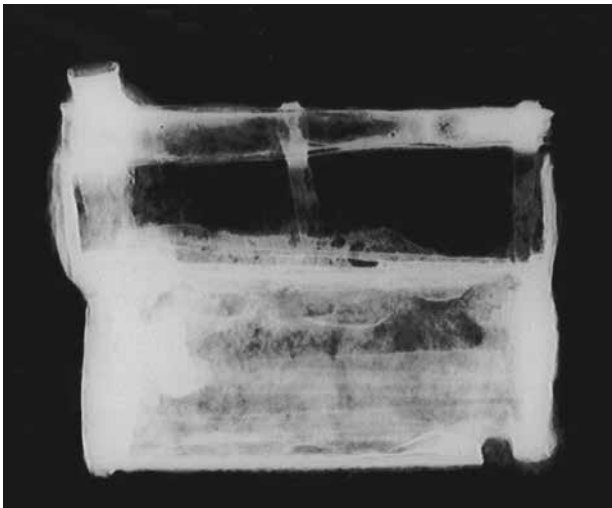


Fig 16: X-ray of padlock case (SF30), from layer 2014

ferrous metal sheet. The tube is tapered and it is bound to the fin by three straps, a wide strap (*c.* 7mm) is sited at the entrance to the tube and two narrow straps (*c.* 4mm), one at the centre and the other at the opposing end. Close set horizontal rods, probably twisted, are visible on the underside of the padlock, the x-ray also reveals the presence of horizontal straps on the side of the case, rather like an example from the medieval settlement at West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire (Hylton 2010, fig 11.18, 39). On the underside of the case, at one end, there is a transverse rectangular keyhole slot and this too has been reinforced with straps to protect the entrance. The x-ray suggests that the case is coated externally with a non-ferrous metal, this acts as a braze to fix the rods and straps and preserve the lock. Although the bolt is missing from the padlock case, an example of a padlock bolt with a U-shaped free arm was recovered from elsewhere on the site.

### **Illustrated medieval locks (Fig 15)**

- a. Padlock case, iron. Length: 70mm, Height: 60mm, SF30, layer 2014
- b. Padlock bolt, iron. U-shaped free arm with vestige of circular closing plate and one spine, leaf springs missing. L: 74mm, SF51, Spread 2093

### **Hones**

There are two hones for sharpening ferrous metal knives and tools. They are fashioned from elongated sub-rectangular sectioned rods of micaceous schist (quartz-muscovite schist) which originated from quarries in Eidsborg, Telemark, Norway. Both are examples of unperforated hones, they measure 111mm and 125mm in length and presumably they would have been for general purpose use, since they are longer, thicker and less well made than the smaller perforated hones which would have been for personal use and suspended from the waist. Numerous examples were recovered from domestic contexts at Lyveden (Bryant and Steane 1971, fig 20; Steane and Bryant 1975, fig 53).

### **Horse furniture**

The use of horses is represented by two buckles and a complete rumbler bell. The buckles represent types that date to the late 13th and early 14th centuries and they would have been used to secure leather straps etc. One buckle would have been for heavy duty use, it is made from iron and it has been manufactured in two pieces, it comprises a C-shaped frame with looped terminal ends, which hold in place a separate solid circular-sectioned roller (cf. Clark 1995, fig 42, 29). The solid roller would have decreased friction, resulting in less wear on harness straps. The x-ray reveals that the outer surface of the frame retains the vestiges of a non-ferrous coating. The other buckle is made from copper alloy, it has a rectangular double frame with off-centre bar and the edges and sides of frame are bevelled; the remains of an iron pin survive as a corroded mass coiled around the bar (cf. Egan and Pritchard, 1991, fig 62, 442).

### **Metalworking debris by Andy Chapman**

Five small pieces of tap slag come from a slag-tapping iron smelting furnace. There is too little material to indicate that iron working was being carried out within the excavated part of the site, but as this lies at the margins of a larger medieval settlement, it is likely that it has come from somewhere within the larger settlement.

### **Medieval ceramic tile by Pat Chapman**

The paucity of material suggests buildings were mainly roofed with thatch or wooden shingles, or that ceramic or stone tile had been removed for use elsewhere. A ridge tile sherd from ditch 2065 is green glazed with rows of stabbing points. The fabric is similar to local Lyveden/Stanion pottery D ware, dated around 1350–1500 (P Chapman *et al* 2008, 255–257). There is also a plain flat tile sherd.

### **A 16th-century coin by Paul Clements**

A coin recovered from the topsoil by metal detector is a silver half-groat of Elizabeth I struck at the tower mint, London. Despite both faces being heavily worn the partial tun or hand mint mark is visible on the reverse. These marks were used between 1590 and 1595.

### **The animal bone by Stephanie Vann**

An assemblage of 328 fragments of animal bone was recovered from pits, ditches and gullies on the medieval site, of which 139 fragments (42%) were identifiable. Of this identifiable number, 11% were cattle, 6% sheep, 6% ovicaprid, 7% horse and 3% pig. The other remains comprised red deer, vole, frog, domestic fowl, bird, small mammal, medium mammal and large mammal.

### **Discussion**

The small size of the assemblage prevents any significant conclusions to be drawn. The frequency of cattle remains, along with other domestic species such as ovicaprids (sheep/goat) and pigs (Maltby 1981) demonstrates their common exploitation throughout the medieval periods and is not unusual. The preferential preservation of these larger bones again should be taken into account.

The skeletal elements represent a variety of bones, including the axial skeleton (cranium, pelvis, scapula and vertebrae), the feet (metapodials, tarsals and phalanges) and the limbs (humerus, radius, ulna, femur, and tibia). The evidence of cut and chop marks combined with this distribution pattern may indicate that this is normal butchery waste. Four skeletal elements of ox, ovicaprid, horse, medium mammal and large mammal show chopping in the medieval phase. In addition, one medieval cattle humerus exhibited cut marks on the distal condyle, which may be indicative of dismemberment and filleting

(Binford 1981).

Canids were present on the site throughout medieval periods. This is indicated by the evidence for canid gnawing on a number of bones from medieval contexts.

One example of possible pathology is given by a medieval ovicaprid metacarpal from pit (2055). The bone exhibits shallow depressions on the proximal lateral articulation measuring 6.5mm by 5.5mm in size. The bone is shallow with a porous, woven-bone appearance. Similar depressions in the proximal articulation have been seen at other sites such as medieval and post-medieval Dudley Castle (Thomas 2005) and post-medieval Tumbling Fields in Devon (Vann and Grimm 2010). They may represent either osteochondritic lesions or inherited (or epigenetic) traits.

### **Charcoal wood samples by Imogen van Bergen Poole**

The majority of the wood is considered to be round wood, probably originating from a relatively small diameter axis such as branch material based on growth ring curvature. Some fragments revealed evidence of being heart wood. The fragments all showed evidence of rounding which indicates that they may have been subject to some weathering or abrasion. Preservation was relatively good with some fragments exhibiting well-preserved anatomy whilst others showed evidence of distorted anatomy and homogenised cell walls.

### **Pit 2058**

The sample from pit 2058 comprised fragments of oak heartwood >3mm diameter. There was a range in the maturity of the fragments preserved although no twig wood was evident. The temperatures to which they were exposed were probably in the region of 400–600°C, which is at the high end for a normal domestic fire.

Most woodland during the medieval times comprised coppice-with-standards, ie. standard trees for timber that was taken infrequently and an underwood where coppiced wood, including oak, was taken on a short rotation, probably annually, which was then used for fuel and fencing. Moreover, as hedgerows increased so too did the occurrence of oak and it became perhaps the most common hedgerow tree at this time (Rackham 1990).

Oak wood is characterised by its high density and high calorific value relative to other European woods (Gale and Cutler 2000) which makes it difficult to burn but once established provides a long-lasting, steady and (with adequate ventilation) even heat. Often a ‘companion’ wood is used in the initial stages of starting an oak wood fire. However, since no companion wood was found in this context this suggests that perhaps this fire was the end remains of a more long-term, established fire for a purpose that required a slow steady heat (hence the use of oak), where any companion wood would have undergone complete charring, resulting in ash. This would contrast to a domestic fire utilised for relatively short duration which would increase the chances of a companion wood being preserved.

## Discussion

The development area contained remains across two spatially and chronological distinct sites; a rural Roman settlement and medieval tenement plots at one end of a former medieval village.

### Late Iron Age and Roman settlement

The Roman site corresponds with a site recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER 9433) as a possible Roman farmstead. The original sub-square enclosure of the late Iron Age was replaced by a rectangular enclosure, E2, a pattern observed at similar Roman sites within the region (Parry 2006). A small number of features within Enclosure E2, including a T-shaped corn dryer, were associated with agricultural processing. It is possible that a domestic house within Enclosure E2 had left no below ground traces, with only a small group of ceramic roof tile surviving.

### Status

Most of the pottery recovered was locally produced, together with the small amount of regionally traded and imported continental wares. This suggests that most of the activity had a utilitarian agricultural function, but accompanied by domestic activity. The quality and quantity of metal objects was also low, indicating that this was a small farmstead of low status.

### Corn dryers, ovens and pits

Where corn-drying ovens have been examined, the majority have contained the remains of spelt wheat, although mixed spelt and emmer wheat or barley have also been occasionally noted (Pelling 2013). The corn drying oven at Benefield produced a mixture of cereal types, primarily emmer wheat but also with quantities of spelt, bread wheat and a small amount of barley.

Over a hundred Roman corn dryers have been recorded in England, probably due to their easily identifiable structure. They are generally located in a broad scatter across southern England on land under 100m aOD, and are particularly common in the area between Northampton and Peterborough (Taylor 2007, fig 7.3). Ovens with a T-shaped flue plan are the most commonly found, comprising a stoking area, the flue, and a drying floor. A comparable contemporary example was excavated at Earls Barton, around 25km to the south-west (Chapman and Atkins 2004). Corn-drying ovens were used throughout the Roman period, but they are primarily associated with the increased scale of cereal production and processing during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD; later than the proposed 2nd-century date for this example (Van der Veen 1989).

Although these T-shaped structures are commonly known as corn dryers, a number of archaeobotanical and experimental papers have suggested they may have had a multifunctional use, also being used as malt drying ovens (Pelling 2013; Reynolds and Langley 1979; Van der Veen 1989).

Charcoal fragments derived from the Roman phase of this site indicate the presence of hazel, oak, ash, cherry,

willow, ?poplar and field maple. These taxa are all native to British woodlands. Hazel, oak, ash, willow and field maple can all be coppiced and provide abundant (fuel) material in a short rotation and indeed it is known that the Romans were familiar with this system and planted mixed coppices (Rackham 1990). The overlap in the taxa recovered from the charcoaled remains found in a number of different contexts provides an indication these taxa were probably used expressly as fuel woods (as opposed to the casual burning of random woody material) and therefore would have been grown locally. This in turn provides an indication of the taxonomic composition of the local woodland.

Estimated temperatures of exposure >500°C suggest that the fires were of high temperature which might infer an industrial use as opposed to domestic use (cf Braadbaart and Poole 2008): it is possible that metal working occurred near the excavation as small quantities of slag included a smithing hearth bottom.

### The medieval village

Part of Churchfield medieval village was excavated, comprising three plots bounded by ditched boundaries, with two containing stone-built rectangular houses dating from the 13th century. At least one process of reorganisation of the plot boundaries took place, to enable the insertion of another building, fronting onto the road, and some of the ditched boundaries were moved or replaced with stone walls before the site was abandoned at the end of the 14th century.

The plots lay adjacent to a road (now Harley Way), which was recorded as early as AD1223. They are situated around 350m to the north-east of the main area of earthworks remains of Churchfield village. Some of the earthworks at Churchfield Farm at or near the postulated church were subject to excavation in the 1960s and produced contemporary evidence for stone buildings and finds dating from the 12th to 14th centuries. Churchfield is recorded in historic documents from the mid-10th century until the 14th century, although no finds from this earlier period were identified during the 1960s excavations (RCHME 1975; Foard 1991) or in the present excavation.

The reason for the division between the present excavation site and the main Churchfield hamlet probably lies in the position of medieval township boundaries. The boundary of Churchfield township passed between the two settlement areas to the south of the Harley Way settlement following a change in geology, while the Biggin township boundary passed around Silley Coppice and along Harley Way to the north (Foard 1991, fig 2). The current County Parish boundaries follow these routes (Fig 17). The Harley Way settlement therefore occupied a narrow spit of land in the Oundle township, and was probably therefore the settlement for Oundle tenants recorded in the 1301 Churchfield fee (Foard 1991).

During the current excavations, the earliest medieval remains date from 1150, although the main period of activity falls between AD1200–1350 and tailing off towards the abandonment of the settlement at the end of the 14th century. From this, it can be inferred that the

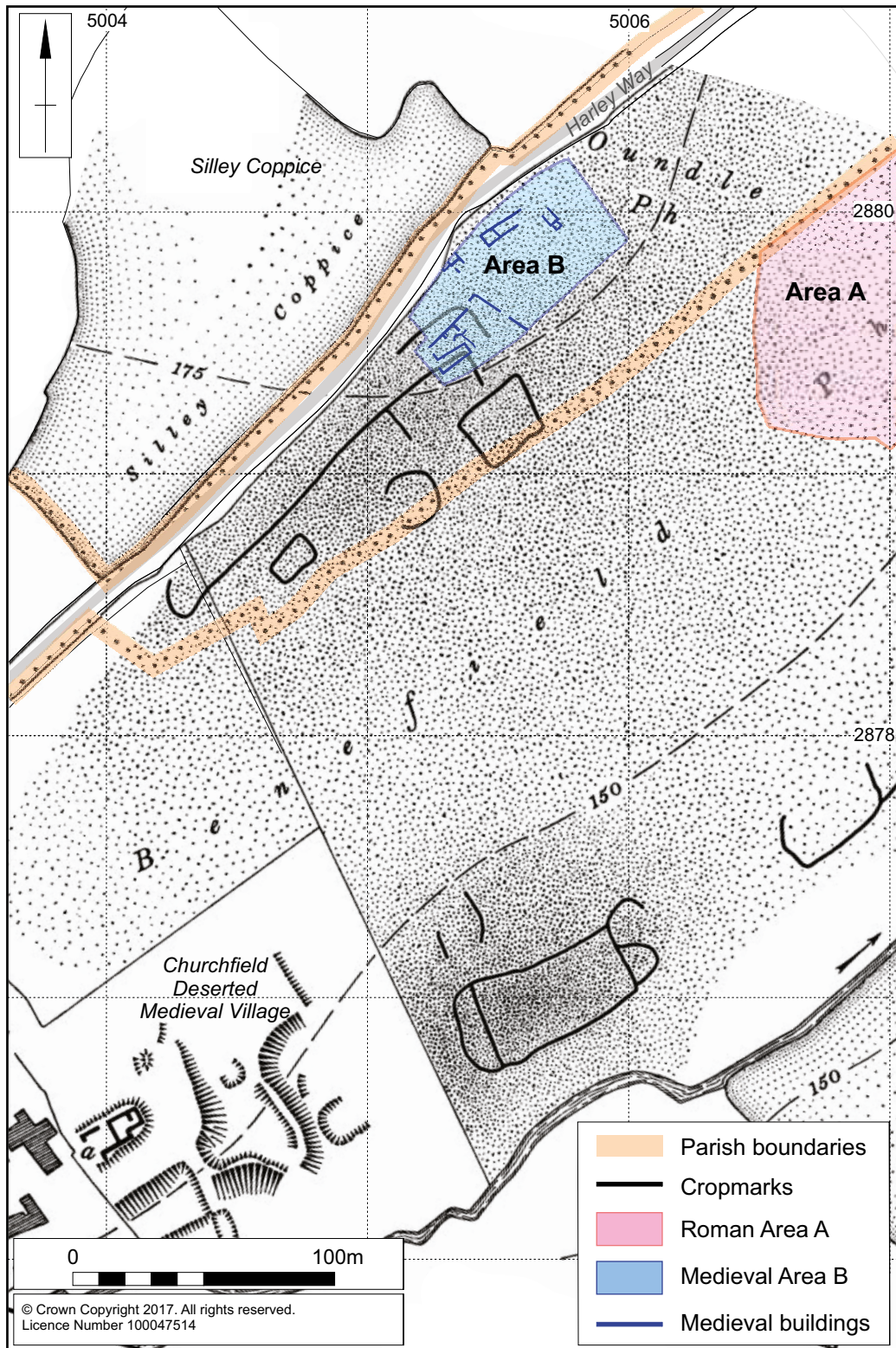


Fig 17: Mitigation areas in relation to the Churchfield DMV earthworks (after RCHME 1975)

settlement represents a short-lived expansion or relocation of the original Churchfield settlement before its eventual abandonment. This is a pattern observed in other studies of medieval landscape. An examination of four villages near Raunds (Parry 2006) and seven villages further afield (Page and Jones 2007) have identified a period of

expansion during 1000–1350 AD, followed by a period of population decline and settlement contraction between 1350 and 1550.

Plot 1 contained two long rectangular limestone structures, aligned perpendicular to each other. Both buildings contained small internal walls subdividing the space.

Building B1 contained a possible hearth and was probably domestic. Pottery from the structures dated from the 13th to mid-14th centuries. Building B2 was narrower, and at the end there was a small abutting chamber, similar to the open-ended and open-sided shelter sheds recorded at the ends of ranges at West Cotton, Raunds (Chapman 2010, 219, fig 9.67).

Plot 2 contained two different phases of stone building on differing alignments. Only small sections of the earlier structure, dated from the 13th century, survived, preventing its reconstruction. The later building B3, had demolition layers which are dated to the second half of the 14th century. The central room contained a pitched stone surface and a possible hearth, features consistent in form with the kitchens seen at West Cotton, Raunds (Chapman 2010, 232–236).

Plot 3 was an open plot, perhaps utilised for animal enclosure or horticulture.

Plot 4 was a later creation, dated 1350–1400, inserted between Plots 1 and 3 by relocating the southern boundary of Plot 1 northwards. Building B4 could not be fully excavated, but comprised a building end-on to the road with at least two rooms, with a smaller room attached. One room contained a corner stone hearth or oven base. After the late 12th century, boundary ditches were often replaced by walls; a pattern also observed at West Cotton, Raunds (Chapman 2010).

Only three pieces of ceramic building material were recovered, comprising two roof tile sherds and a ridge tile sherd, in a fabric similar to local Lyveden/Stanion pottery D ware, dated around 1350–1500 (Chapman 2008, 255–257). The paucity of roofing material suggests buildings were mainly roofed with thatch or wooden shingles, or that tiles had been removed at the end of the buildings' life for use elsewhere.

### **Churchfield in the Lyveden valley**

Churchfield was a small settlement in the Lyveden valley. This valley is the only area within Rockingham Forest which developed an extensive dispersed settlement pattern during the medieval period, comprising an unusually high concentration of isolated farms and hamlets that is a pattern more typical elsewhere (Foard 2001). In general, Saxon and medieval woodland occupied extensive areas of boulder clay, while medieval villages and open fields were concentrated on permeable or mixed geologies. In Northamptonshire, and particularly the Rockingham Forest area, this meant that woodland, settlement and open-field areas were in close proximity, with the open-field arable land lying along the mixed geology of the Nene Valley. Tributary valleys, such as the Lyveden valley which lay within the woodland zone, were occupied by lesser 'felds', which typically each contained one or occasionally paired hamlets across a stream (*ibid*). Benefield and Churchfield are both examples of medieval settlements associated with 'felds' from the late Saxon period, along with other probable single farms in the valley. Benefield grew into a substantial settlement by the 14th century due to clearance area of medieval forest allowing for expansion, while at Churchfield there was little woodland which could be cleared for arable purposes, and the settlement therefore remained a small

hamlet (*ibid*). The dispersed settlement pattern may be related to the high degree of fragmentation in medieval manorial structure in the valley. At least seven separate small manors had holdings in Churchfield and Lyveden (*ibid*).

Throughout the medieval period, industrial production including ironworking, charcoal production and pottery, grew within the forest. This led to the expansion of some villages and hamlets, like Stanion and Potters Lyveden, and in the Lyveden valley this may also have led to the establishment of new permanent settlements. This may be relevant as it is likely that metalworking was taking place nearby as five small pieces of tap slag were recovered from ditches on the south of Plot 1. These originated from a slag-tapping iron smelting furnace, probably situated elsewhere in the larger medieval settlement to the south-west.

Very little can be said concerning the agriculture taking place at the medieval site. Cereal grains/chaff and seeds of common weeds were present at a low density within one of the two medieval samples, and were entirely absent in the other. No weed seeds were recovered from either context. Charcoal/charred wood fragments were present throughout, although not at a high density.

The reasons for the abandonment of the Harley Way settlement and of Churchfield hamlet are not clear. Villages in the Rockingham Forest area of Northamptonshire suffered major depopulation in the 14th century due to famine and plague (Foard *et al* 2009). A small number of hamlets and settlements were entirely abandoned, and many showed major shrinkage.

The Lyveden Valley underwent significant desertion at this time, with settlements of Potters Lyveden, Upper Lyveden, Churchfield and other farms being abandoned (*ibid*). Only two sites in the valley have produced 15th-century pottery suggesting occupation into the later period. It has been estimated that as many as 20,000 medieval villages and hamlets in England shrank to a single farm or disappeared entirely (Jones and Page 2006), of which 82 disappeared from Northamptonshire (Brown and Taylor 1975). It is worth noting that this abandonment was not necessarily due to the immediate effect of the plagues, but may instead be the result of the re-organisation of land in its aftermath (Parry 2006).

The Lyveden Valley in particular underwent significant desertion at this time, due to its dispersed nature (Foard *et al* 2009), as well as probably the small size of its settlements, and their subordinate nature (Parry 2006). An additional factor at the Harley Way settlement may be very wet ground conditions, which were observed in the present day. The frequent recutting of some medieval ditches on the site may indicate similar conditions were present during the 14th century, which might have also made occupation of the site difficult.

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