

Early Bronze Age, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon landscapes at Apex Park, Daventry

by

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with contributions by

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Summary

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) investigated a multi-period site at Apex Park, Daventry, Northamptonshire. The earliest feature comprised a segmented circular enclosure, 25m in diameter; subsequently recut as an almost continuous ring with a narrow eastern entrance. It produced no artefacts but the recut is radiocarbon dated towards the end of the Early Bronze Age. A large polygonal enclosure and a rectilinear field system probable date to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and a pit alignment respected and terminated adjacent to the enclosure. On lower land to the north a Middle Iron Age open settlement, c.450–250 BC, a small family farmstead, comprised at least two and possibly four roundhouse ring ditches, several four-post structures and both smaller pits and some larger storage pits set beside a linear boundary ditch with a transverse boundary to the south. There was a possible Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building.

Introduction

Prologis UK was granted planning permission (DA/2013/0454) to develop a 11.7ha block of land at Apex Park, Daventry, Northamptonshire for the construction of warehouses forming an extension to the Apex Park Industrial Estate (NGR SP 55476 64346; Fig 1). The planning consent required archaeological works before development and these consisted of a desk-based assessment (UCA 2006), two geophysical surveys (GSB 2006 & Walford 2015), a trial trench evaluation (Muldowney and Egan 2015) and an archaeological excavation (Markus 2016).

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and the fieldwork was directed by Simon Markus. The fieldwork was conducted by Anja Borch-Nielsen, Laura Cogley, Chloe Cronogue-Freeman, Olly Dindol, Adam Douthwaite, George Everest-Dine, James Fairclough, Paulina Galewska, David Haynes, Gemma Hewitt, Luke Jenkins, Ben Kidd, Adam Meadows, Judyta Mlynarska, Ryszard Molenda, Mo Muldowney, Chris Pennell, Esther Poulus, Paul Sharrock, Andy Smith, Rob Smith, Tom Revell, Anna Rojek, James West and Harry Young. Metal detecting was undertaken by Steve Critchley. Geophysical survey had been undertaken by John Walford, James Ladocha, Konrad Lewek and Bartholomej Grzywniak.

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The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) list the site as Event Number: ENN107955. The client report is available from the HER and through the Archaeology Data Service Library of Unpublished Fieldwork Reports.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies directly to the north-west of Daventry, on a high escarpment that forms a ridge aligned north-east to south-west. At the time of excavation it was bounded by agricultural fields on its north-west and north-eastern sides. The A45 runs along the south-western boundary and the south-eastern area is bounded by a modern industrial development (Fig 1).

The ridge forms the head of a catchment area for several watercourses, flowing down the steeply-inclined terrain to the west and into the River Leam. To the east a former stream valley has been dammed to form the Drayton Reservoir, defining the eastern limit of this ridge. The pit alignment and associated polygonal enclosure lay on the highest ground at the south end of the site, Area A, at 165–168m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) (Fig 2). The Iron Age settlement and the segmented circular enclosure lay on the lower lying central and north parts of the site, Area B, on the west sloping side of the ridge, at 165–155m aOD.

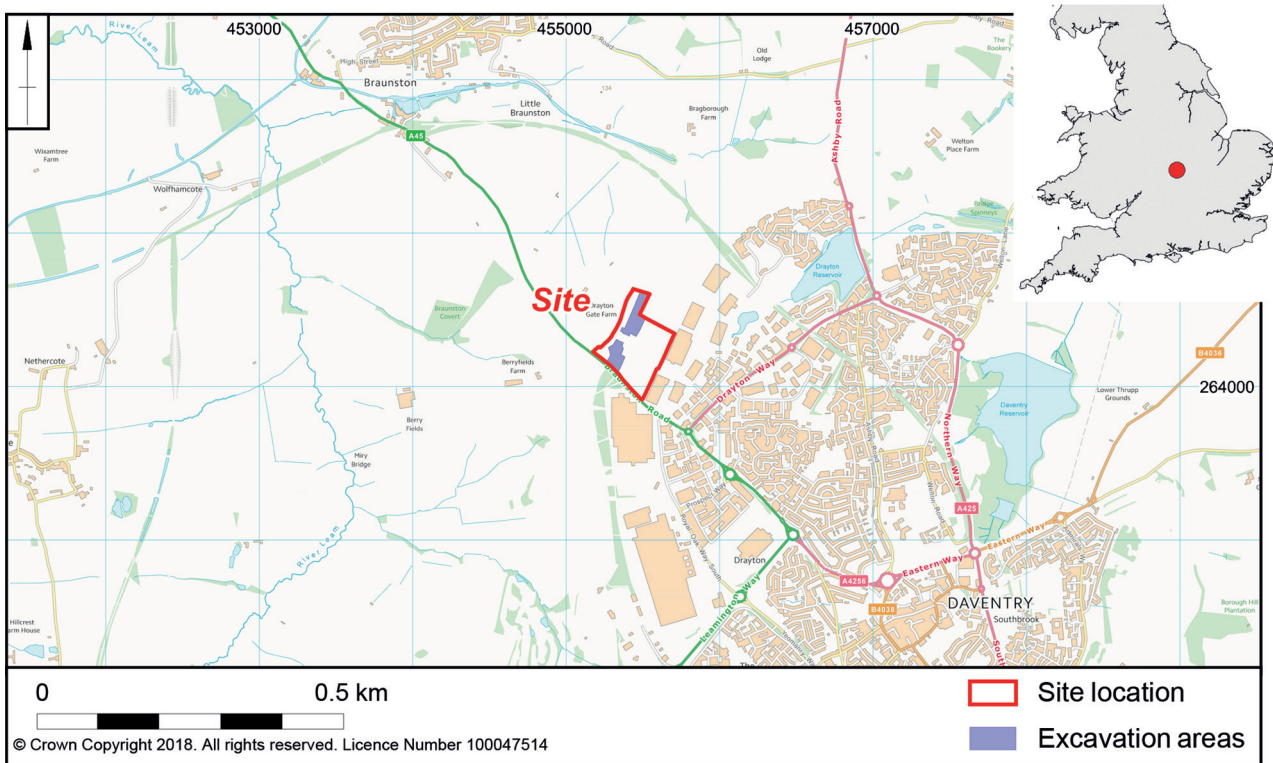


Fig 1: Site location

The underlying geology of the site was expected to consist of sedimentary rocks, Jurassic Lias and Oolites, overlain by boulder clay (BGS 2018). The natural strata observed comprised degraded ironstone and clay throughout, with the addition of limestone outcrops and boulder clay towards the south of the excavation area. It would seem likely that a spring line had formed around the edge of the ridge, below the impermeable boulder clay, possibly where outcrops of limestone or ironstone occurred close to, if not actually on, the excavation area.

Archaeological background

A detailed historical and archaeological background can be found in the desk-based assessment (UCA 2006). There had previously been no known evidence for early prehistoric activity within the site or its environs. Two undated but probable Iron Age cropmark sites had been identified to the north-west (Heritage Environment Record number 9823/0/1–4) and north-east (HER 658/0/1–3) of the site, both within 500m of its boundary. The find spot of an Iron Age/Romano-British coin (HER 9054) is known from within the site. The only evidence for medieval activity comprised ridge and furrow cultivation.

The present A45 road follows the line of the Old Stratford to Dunchurch Turnpike (HER 7376/1). A probable toll gate lay on the road just beyond the south-western corner of the site. The Windmill Inn (HER 9966/1), recorded in Bryant's map of 1827, was believed to lie on the turnpike to the north-west of Daventry and it has been speculated that it may have been within the site boundary, close to

the toll gate. A dog-leg in the western boundary of the site just north of the road, shown on the 1885 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map, may indicate the position of a former building.

Previous archaeological investigations

A geophysical survey had been undertaken by GSB Prospection (2006) partly within the development area. Largely weak responses were recorded indicating either potential archaeology or modern agricultural features. A few linear anomalies were found. In a few areas there were increased magnetic responses including a group of pit-type anomalies, which were thought to have archaeological potential. A second geophysical survey undertaken by MOLA Northampton completed the survey of the site (Walford 2015). It identified anomalies suggesting the presence of prehistoric features including a pit alignment, ring ditches, linear ditches and a probable sub-circular enclosure. Medieval to early post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and historic field boundaries were also detected (Walford 2015).

A programme of trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA in May 2015, targeting anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey (Muldowney and Egan 2015). The trenching confirmed the presence of two circular enclosures, a pit alignment, a ditch and a group of inter-cutting pits and ditches. Another possible pit alignment was identified as well as a small number of additional pits and ditches. The limited amount of pottery recovered indicated that the remains were probably Iron Age in date.

Remnant earthwork furrows of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were also present throughout the evaluation area, which covered the entire development site, and these had also been recorded by the geophysical survey.

Methodology

An open area excavation took place between 13 July and 23 October 2015 within the south-western, Area A, and north-western, Area B, parts of the development area (Fig 2). Initially these areas measured 75m by 25m, Area A, and 270m by 90m, Area B. Where features were identified at the edge of these areas they were, by agreement with the NCCAAA, extended to incorporate these. Two trenches, 27m and 25m long by 1.8m wide, were excavated between Area A and Area B to map a boundary ditch that passed between them (Fig 2).

Summary of the chronology

Five periods of activity are identified in the sequence of development summarised below (Table 1).

Early Bronze Age segmented enclosure

A segmented enclosure, at the north end of the site, was possibly constructed during the Early Bronze Age (Fig 2). The original monument consisted of a segmented ring with internal diameters of 24m east-west and 26m north-south (Fig 3). It comprised four lengths of curvilinear ditch, with the causeways at the four cardinal compass points. To the north, west and south, these entrances were between 1.2m and *c.*2.3m wide, although the eastern entrance was notably narrower, at only 0.40m wide. The ditch segments were between 15.2m and 23.3m long, as the western and eastern entrances were set to the north of an east-west centre line. To the south and west, machine-cut box sections were used to identify the ditch terminals and the entrances.

The ditches were 1.32–2.07m wide by up to 0.75m deep, with U-shaped profiles, steep sides and flat bases (Fig 3, Section 4132, ditch 4488 and Section 4166, ditch 4590). There were generally homogeneous fills of mainly silty-clay which displayed variable colouring from mid-yellow/orange/red/brown to dark blue-grey, with gravel, ironstone inclusions and sparse charcoal. Any overlying deposits would have been truncated by the recut of the near complete ring ditch. No material finds were recovered from the ditch fills to provide dating evidence.

After the ditches had undergone a period of silting, the ring was recut to form an almost complete enclosure, with only the narrow causewayed entrance on the eastern side retained (Figs 3–5). The recut ditch was narrower and shallower than the primary cut, between 0.86m and 1.61m wide, and up to 0.59m deep (Fig 3, S.4132, ditch 4486 and S.4166, ditch 4588). The recut ditch displayed an initial silting at its base, a deposit of orange-brown silty-clay, with gravel inclusions, and homogeneous secondary fills of predominately orange to grey-brown silty-clay with variable gravel content.

A moderate quantity of charcoal, not identified to species, was recovered in the homogeneous secondary fill (4558) of ditch 4559 closing the entrance on the north side of the enclosure (Figs 3 and 4). It produced a date in the later Early Bronze Age, 1680–1520 cal BC (Table 2).

Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age field system, enclosure and pit alignment

There was a large scale reorganisation of the landscape during the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. At the southern end of the site, Area A, this comprised a large polygonal enclosure adjacent to the northern end of a pit alignment (Fig 6). In the northern area, B, there were shallow remnants of ditches forming parts of a rectilinear field system (Fig 11). Unfortunately, the absence of good stratigraphic and spatial relationships associated with the low volume of artefacts hampered establishing a definitive sequence of development within the landscape in this period. The recovery of some charred cereal grains

Table 1: Summary of site chronology

Period	Description
Early Bronze Age (<i>c.</i> 1800BC – <i>c.</i> 1500BC)	Segmented circular enclosure with entrances at cardinal points. Recut forming nearly complete ring, entrance to east
Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age (<i>c.</i> 1000BC – <i>c.</i> 700BC)	Heavily truncated field system, with small sub-square enclosure Large polygonal enclosure, with single internal pit Pit alignment aligned north-south Small cluster of pits and a possible small segmented curvilinear enclosure
Earlier Middle Iron Age (<i>c.</i> 450/400 – <i>c.</i> 250BC)	Two ring ditches, curvilinear gullies and six four-post structures. Linear boundary ditches A moderate scatter of pits and four pit groups
Anglo-Saxon (AD450 – 850)	Possible sunken-featured building No finds recovered
Medieval/post-medieval to modern (AD1066 – present)	Ridge and furrow cultivation Post-medieval well and two fence lines

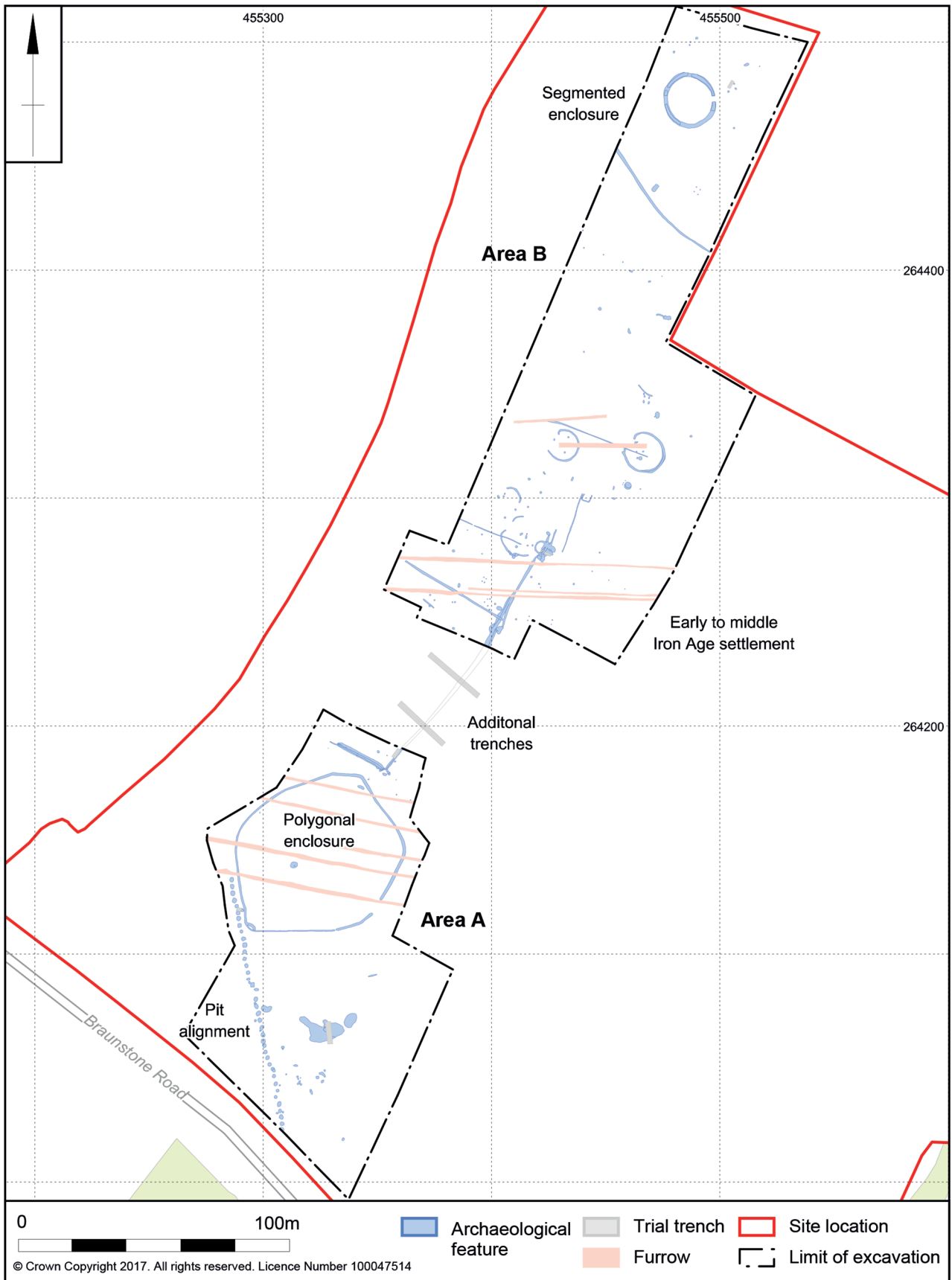


Fig 2: General site plan

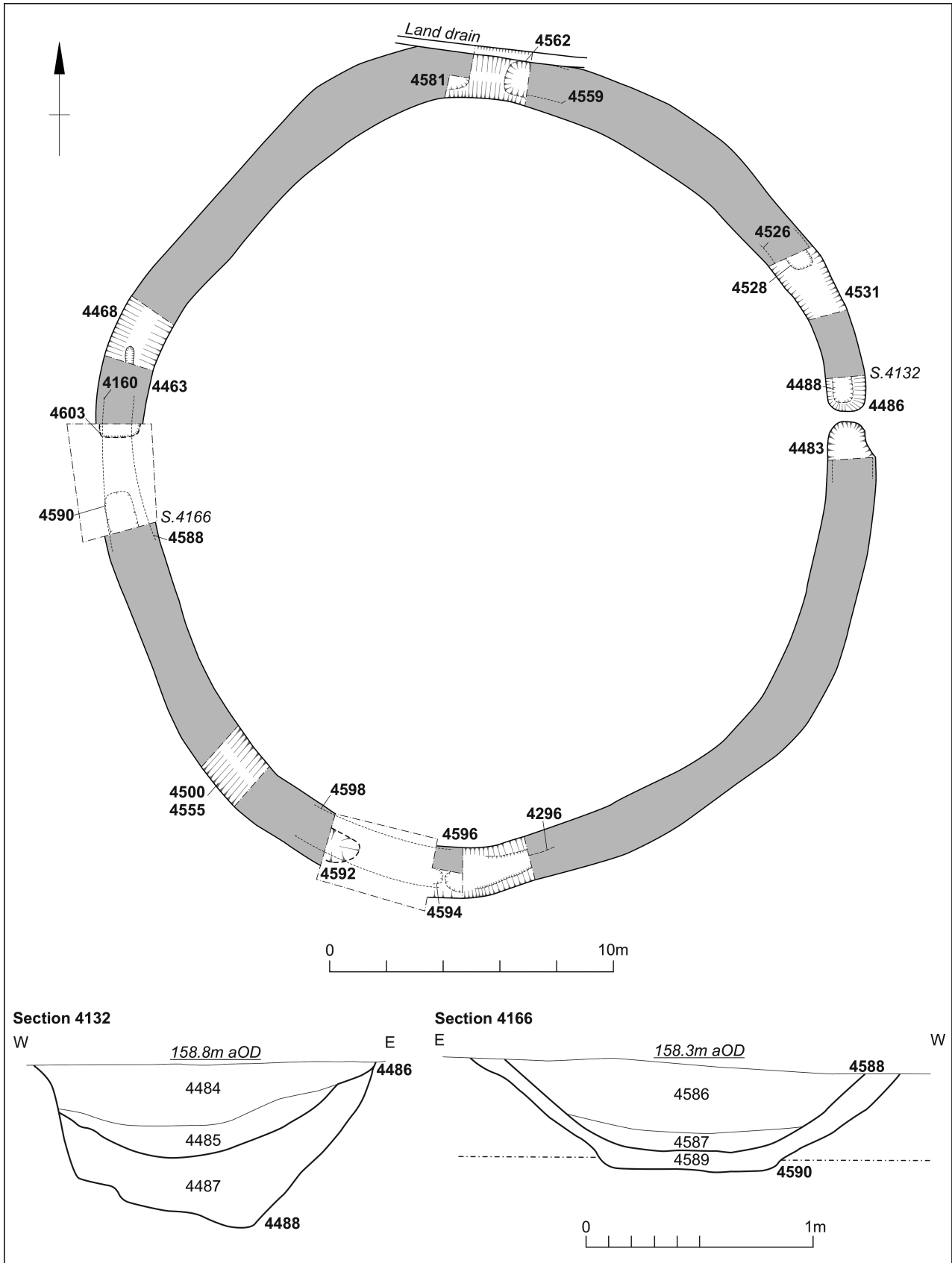
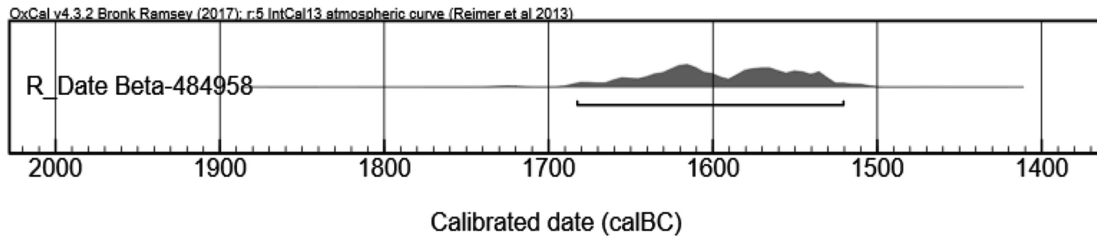


Fig 3: Bronze Age Enclosure 1

Table 2: The radiocarbon determination

Laboratory & Sample No.	Context	Sample Details	d13C	Conventional Radiocarbon Age BP	Cal BC 68.2% confidence 95.4% confidence
Beta-484958 ENN107955/4558	Fill 4558 ditch 4559	Charcoal	-23.9	3320 +/-30	1640–1600 (29.9%) 1590–1530 (38.3%) 1680–1520



Laboratory: Beta Analytic, Miami, Florida USA: Calibration OxCal v4.3.2



Fig 4: Segmented enclosure, showing the buried northern terminal, ditch 4562, looking east

from the ditch terminal of the polygonal enclosure may be indicative of food preparation or processing in or close to the enclosure.

On the basis of analogy to comparable landscape development elsewhere, it is possible to suggest that the rectilinear field system was likely to have originated in the later Bronze Age, perhaps at a similar time to the construction of the large polygonal enclosure although perhaps still in use, or at least still a landscape feature, when the pit alignment was created probably in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transitional period. This landscape has many similarities to the contemporary landscape on similar terrain at Harlestone Quarry, near Northampton (Chapman *et al* 2017).

Late Bronze Age field system (Enclosures 2 and 3)

In Area B, three discontinuous shallow linear ditches, cut by elements of the Middle Iron Age settlement, formed



Fig 5: Segmented enclosure, the eastern causeway, looking west

part of a rectilinear field system (see Fig 11, Enclosure 2). Two parallel ditches aligned west-east lay 55m apart, while only part of a single transverse ditch, aligned near north-south, survived. The surviving lengths of ditch were 0.18m-0.52m wide and up to 0.16m deep, with fills of light to mid-brown-grey and brown-yellow silty clays. The shallowness of the surviving ditches indicates that it is likely that further lengths had been lost to truncation of the natural surface.

Adjacent to the eastern arm of the ditch system was a small sub-square enclosure, with arms 3.5m long, but open to the north, perhaps an animal pen (see Fig 11, Enclosure 3). The ditch was between 0.28m to 0.40m wide and up to 0.14m deep, closely comparable to the boundary ditches. No finds were recovered from any of these features.

Polygonal enclosure (Enclosure 4)

The large polygonal enclosure lay at the edge of a hilltop plateau, at 165m aOD (Fig 6, Enclosure 4). The enclosure measured 66m north-west to south-east by 81m north-east to south-west, and was five-sided with three abruptly-rounded corners to the south-west, north-east and east,

and more gradually-rounded corners to the north-west and south-east. Here there was a broad entrance, 6.5m wide, although there was also another near break in the ditch a further 17m to the west.

The ditch profile varied from V- to U-shaped and was up to 1.38m wide and up to 0.66m deep, shallowing towards the western and southern sides (Fig 7, Sections 4088 and 4097). The fills varied between yellow-orange to grey silty clay and sandy clay deposits, with gravel and ironstone inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks, and appear to derive from natural silting.

The deeper northern and eastern sides of the enclosure showed possible recutting (Fig 7, Section 4097) and two small sherds (3g) of pottery were recovered from a first phase fill to north-east. There was also a recut in the south-west corner of Enclosure 4, with the crescent-shaped arc of ditch perhaps associated with the provision of an entrance.

Two pits lay within the enclosure. Pit 4286, to the north-east close to the enclosure ditch, was crescent-shaped and probably a tree hole. Central pit 4306 was oval, 3.0m wide and 0.60m deep. Cut into its base was a further small pit 4308, 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep. Following the filling of these features a further pit was cut, 4304, 2.10m wide and 0.40m deep. Overlying the initial silting (4303) was a layer (4302) of dark purple-red silt which had been discoloured by fire. On the north-western side of the enclosure was a single posthole 4354, 0.34m in diameter and 0.21m deep. None of these discrete features were dated but they are tentatively considered likely to be associated with the use of the enclosure due to their location and the absence of other discrete features.

The pit alignment

A sinuous line of forty pits were aligned slightly west of north-south and spanned an excavated length of 115m distance (Figs 6, 8–10). To the north the line terminated adjacent to the western arm of the polygonal enclosure, denoting mutual respect, with the pit alignment probably set parallel to the existing enclosure ditch. To the south the alignment continued beyond the excavation area. While the excavated length is linear on the large scale, on the small scale the line meanders side to side quite markedly (Figs 6 & 8). To the north the pits were evenly spaced, but south of the enclosure the spacing, the size and the shape of the pits was more variable and the meandering of the line more marked.

The pits were, on average, between 1.40m and 2.10m in diameter and generally between 0.40m and 0.78m deep, with steep sides, flattish bases and eroded upper edges. Erosion of the upper edges of the pits inevitable tends to round off the plan form, with variations in the local geology also influencing the degree of erosion, making it difficult to determine the original plan form of every pit, especially if they have not all been rigorously excavated at the base to true natural (Figs 9 & 10).

Some pits had certainly been square in plan initially, some slightly elongated roughly along the line of the alignment, as is typical for pit alignments. It would appear therefore that rectangular pits probably dominated this

alignment, but it may be that further south, as with the greater variations in spacing and size, conformity to a square plan form was also less strictly followed.

The general trend of the fill sequence can be characterised as primary natural silting from erosion of pit walls, with secondary fills showing little observable human intervention. A small number of pits contained quantities of limestone, such as pit 4085 (Fig 10) but as this pit cut natural limestone this can still be seen as a product of natural erosion and not human intervention.

This pit alignment may be unusual with regard to the number other small pits or postholes in apparent close association. Some of these may have actually been contemporary with the cluster of Iron Age pits to the south of Pit Group 5 (Fig 6: 4014 & 4018). However, small pits 4108/4110, 4089 and 4070 all cluster around pit alignment pit 4034, which is otherwise isolated from its nearest neighbours. The small pits may have been a deliberate partial infilling of this gap. Further south, an unusually small pit alignment pit, 4004, which may itself be filling a gap in the alignment, appears to be flanked by two smaller pits/postholes, 4008 and 4046.

As has proved to be typical of so many pit alignments, finds of any description were scarce. A total of seven sherds of pottery (21g) were recovered from pits 4034, 4045, 4065, 4079, which lay close together a little south of Enclosure 4, and pit 4115, to the west of Pit Group 5. These have been tentatively dated to the Early Iron Age, but as they are all abraded and most came from final fills, they may be residual pottery from nearby activity.

The Middle Iron Age settlement

During the earlier Middle Iron Age, occupation and activity largely shifted towards the north away from the polygonal enclosure and the pit alignment to the area of the former field system. Here the settlement was confined to just above the 160m contour area and comprised two and possibly three roundhouse ring ditches (RD1, RD2 and enclosure 5), three curvilinear ditches, a small ring ditch and up to six four-post structures (Granary 1–Granary 6), and two linear boundary ditches (Fig 11). An area of pits in the south, Pit Group 5, may have also been contemporary (Fig 6). The pottery assemblage and the querns suggests this site was in use for up to 200 years, spanning the earlier Middle Iron Age, but it was then abandoned and did not continue into the later Middle Iron Age.

Ring ditches and curvilinear ditches

Two roundhouse ring ditches, RD1 and RD2, were located on the better-drained ironstone natural (Fig 11). Both ring ditches had entrances facing north-westwards, contrary to the predominant easterly entrances of most Iron Age roundhouses, with three of the four ditch terminals turning inwards (Fig 12).

Ring ditch RD1 was the smaller, with an internal diameter of 12.5m and an 8m-wide entrance (Fig 13). The ditch was 0.56–0.76m wide and up to 0.26m deep, with a U-shaped profile and a flat base. The pit/posthole within

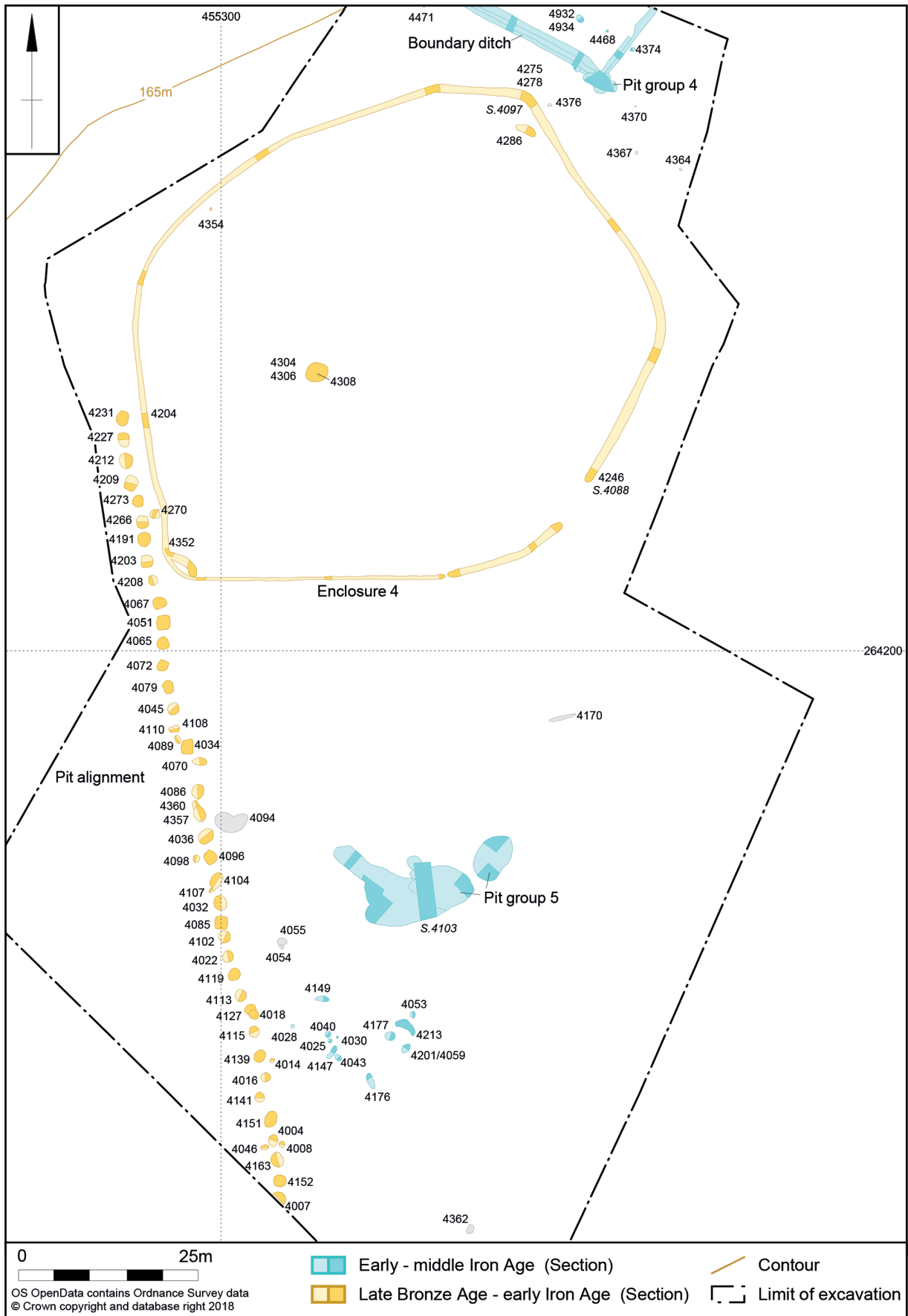


Fig 6: Area A showing the pit alignment, Enclosure 4 and Pit Group 5

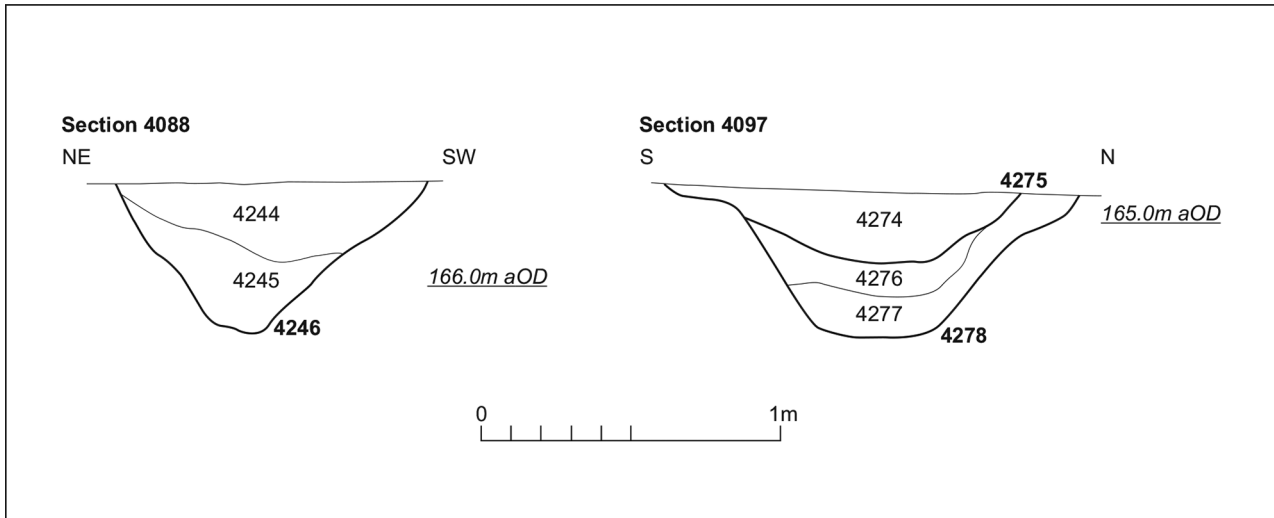


Fig 7: Ditch sections of Enclosure 4



Fig 8: (left) The pit alignment, looking south

the entrance, 4691, might have been one doorpost of the roundhouse, which would suggest a diameter of 9–10m. Pit 4694, near the centre, contained a quantity of stone and cobbles, some of which appeared burnt.

Ring ditch RD2, approximately 20m to the east, had an internal diameter of 15.5m and an entrance 3.4m wide, although an earlier terminal to the west suggests that the entrance may originally have been 7.0m wide, and of similar form to the entrance of RD1. The ditch was 0.55–1.30m wide and up to 0.43m deep. There were clear recuts to the south and east. Few artefacts were recovered from the ring ditch but there was a small quantity of fuel ash slag. Just inside the entrance, a pair of post-pits 4716 and 4712 would have held the door posts of the roundhouse, with the doorway *c.*1.5m wide. They suggest that the roundhouse was 12–13m in diameter. This is at the top end of roundhouse diameters in the Middle Iron Age, a size usually reserved for only one or two roundhouses within the typical settlement, often classified as the principal roundhouses in long-lived settlements where such large diameter houses often exhibit multiple recuts and maintenance of the ring ditch.

Within ring ditch RD2 there were a number of small pits/postholes and a single larger pit 4682 contained part of a saddle quern (SF4027), a near-complete rubbing stone (SF4028), and early Middle Iron Age pottery including fragments of a jar with fingertip impression on the shoulder (Fig 19.4). The contents of the pit also included charred cereal grain and some charcoal, further signifying the likelihood of food processing and preparation (Table 5).

A further large roundhouse or a small sub-circular enclosure lay to the south, Enclosure 5 (Fig 11). The ring ditch was incomplete, open to the east, but the two curvilinear ditch lengths indicate an internal diameter of *c.*16m, closely comparable to RD2 and there were again in-turned ditch terminals flanking an entrance, *c.*4m wide,



Fig 9: Pit 4141 in the pit alignment, looking south



Fig 10: Pit 4085 in the pit alignment, looking south

facing to the north-west. The surviving lengths of ditch were 0.18–0.51m wide and up to 0.20m deep. A sharpening stone was recovered from its terminal (SF4033). Within Enclosure 5 were seven pits or postholes of which three pits 4849, 4857 and 4859 contained Middle Iron Age pottery.

Ring ditch RD3, 40m to the south of RD1, comprised a sub-circular ditch, 4.5m in diameter, cutting the fills of the linear boundary ditches but cut by the pits of Pit Group 1 (Fig 13). At this small diameter it could only have enclosed a small structure, such as a four-poster, although no postholes were located.

Three curvilinear arcs of ditch: Ditch 1, 50m north of RD2; Ditch 2, 15m north of RD2, Ditch and Ditch 3, 20m south-west of RD1, may have been the remains of ring gullies of further roundhouses or other minor structures (Fig 11).

Boundary ditches

In the southern part of Area A (Fig 11) and continuing southwards into the northern part of Area B, (Fig 6) there was a linear main boundary ditch aligned north-north-east

to south-south-west and 165m long. Parts of the ditch system to the south had been recut at least twice. At the southern end of Area A, a linear ditch ran westwards for c.50m and in Area B the boundary ditch terminated at another ditch aligned east-west (Fig 6, Boundary ditch) which had multiple recuts. There may have been further transverse boundaries in the unexcavated area, 46m long, between Areas A and B (Fig 2). These boundaries may have defined an infield system related to the settlement. The northern end of the main boundary may have been contemporary with Enclosure 5, a possible large round-house, but was later abandoned and cut by small ring ditch RD3 and a cluster of large pits, Pit Group 1.

The boundary ditches were fairly uniform in size, between 0.40m and 1.20m wide and up to 0.50m deep. Artefacts from the ditches include a rubbing stone (SF4041) and two saddle querns (SFs 4042 and 4043).

Possible granary structures

There were six possible four-post structures, G1–G6, potentially granaries, although for structures G1 and G6 only three postholes were located (Fig 11). The two most northerly, G1 and G2, were isolated well to the north of the main domestic area, although G2 contained pottery broadly of the period. Another, G3, lay just north of round-house RD2, adjacent to the length of curvilinear gully, Ditch 2 (Fig 15), and the three southernmost, G4–G6, were more tightly clustered west of the main boundary ditch and both north and south of the transverse boundary ditch.

The structures were square to rectangular in plan, with the smallest measuring 1.5m by 2.25m and largest 3.0m by 4.0m. The postholes were predominantly circular to sub-circular, 0.3–0.4m in diameter and 0.15–0.25m deep. The fills varied little from mid to dark grey-brown silty-clay, with the exception of G1 that had frequent gravel and ironstone inclusions. The fills of G2, G3, G4 and G6 contained small quantities of later Early Iron Age to earlier Middle Iron Age pottery, including a shouldered and long-necked jar with fingertip impression on shoulder and neck (Fig 19.5) as well as some charcoal flecks.

Pits and pit groups

Pits

Isolated pits and three pit groups, 1–3, lay in the area of Iron Age settlement (Fig 11), with further pits and pit groups, 4 and 5, in Area A to the south (Fig 6). The isolated pits varied from circular, oval, sub-circular and sub-square in plan and the five pit groups comprised palimpsests of intercutting pits.

In Area B large circular vertical-sided storage pits 4633 and 4708, lay to the north and south of RD2 respectively. Pit 4633, to the north, was 1.80m in diameter and 0.67m deep and the fills contained a semi-complete neckless jar probably dating to the late 3rd or 2nd centuries BC (Fig 20, 6) and a complete saddle quern (Fig 21). Pit 4708 was 2.65m in diameter and 0.85m deep, and cut an earlier shallow pit 4710 of similar diameter (Fig 16). Pottery of



Fig 11: Plan of Area B showing Iron Age settlement and Enclosure 1

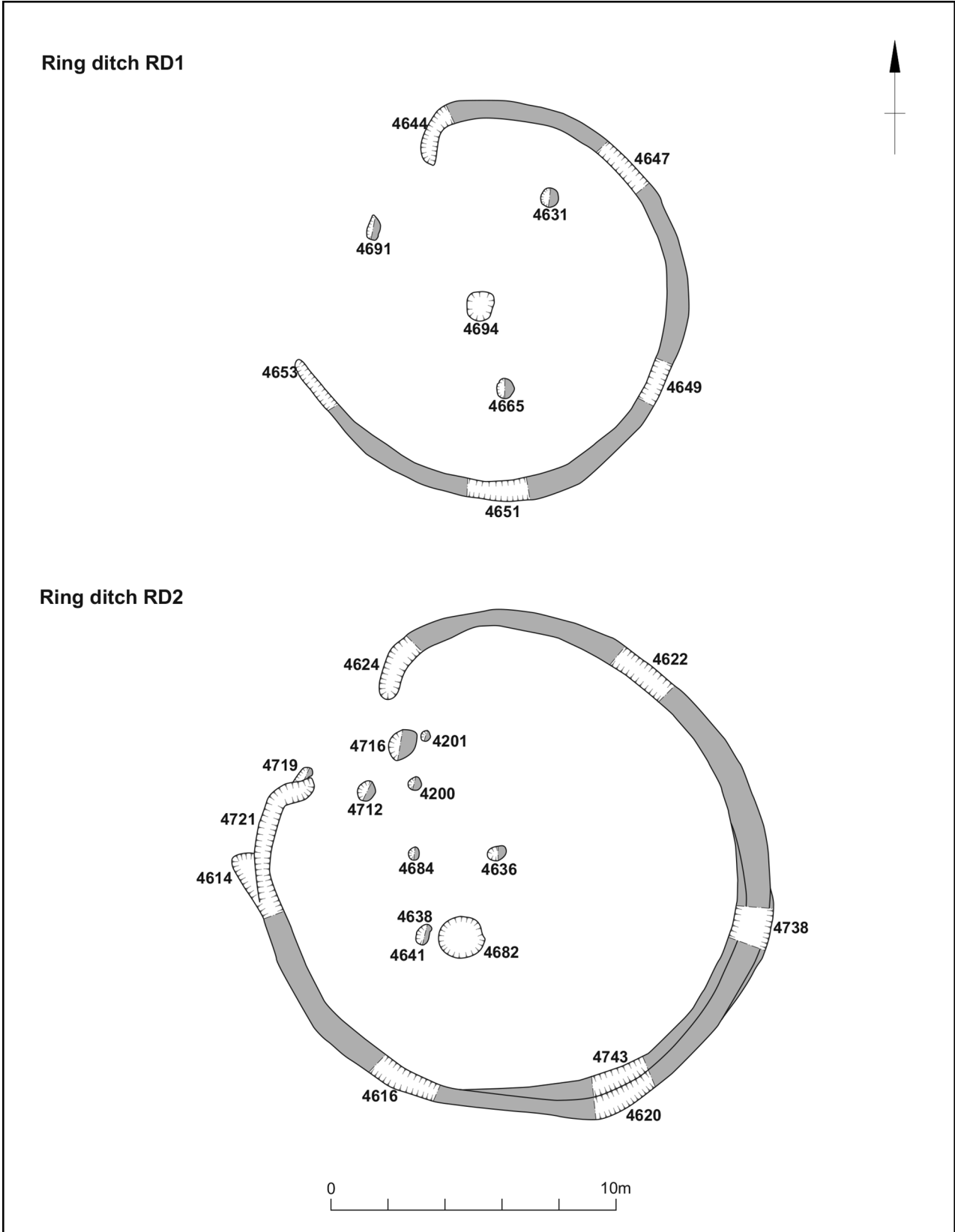


Fig 12: Iron Age ring ditches RD1 and RD2

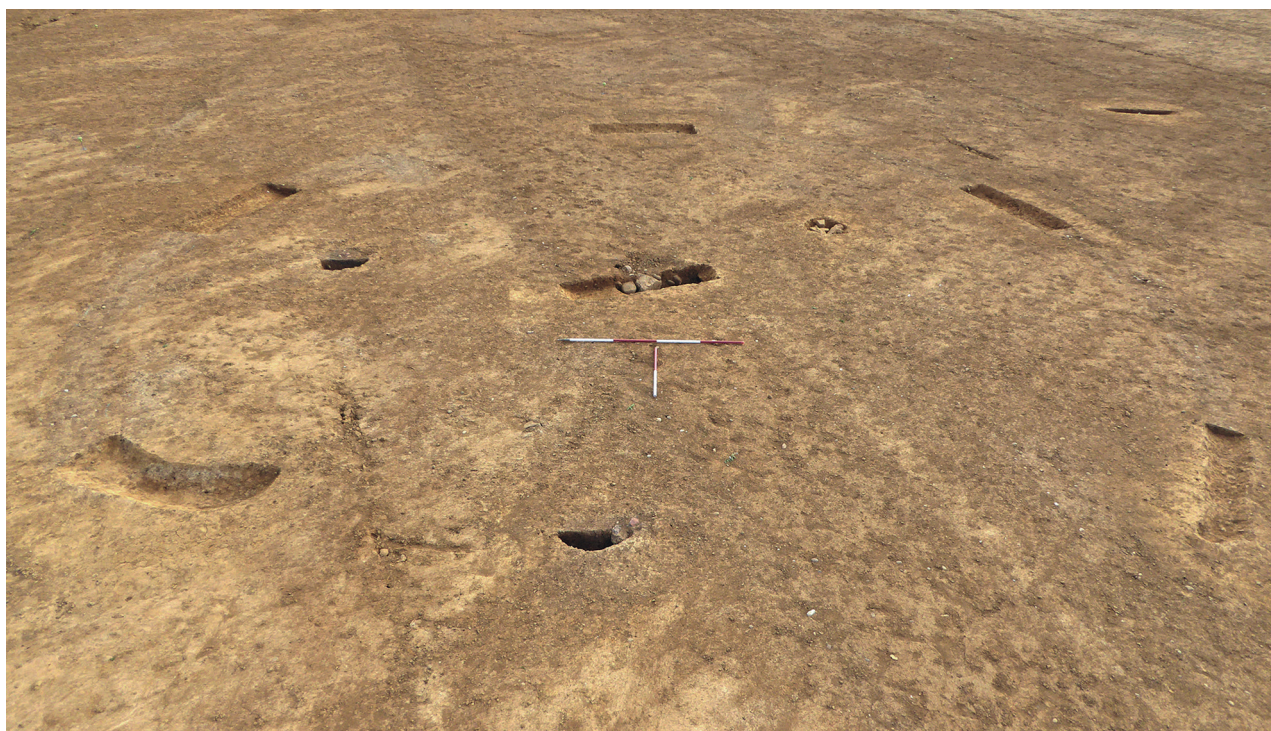


Fig 13: Iron Age roundhouse RD1, looking south-east

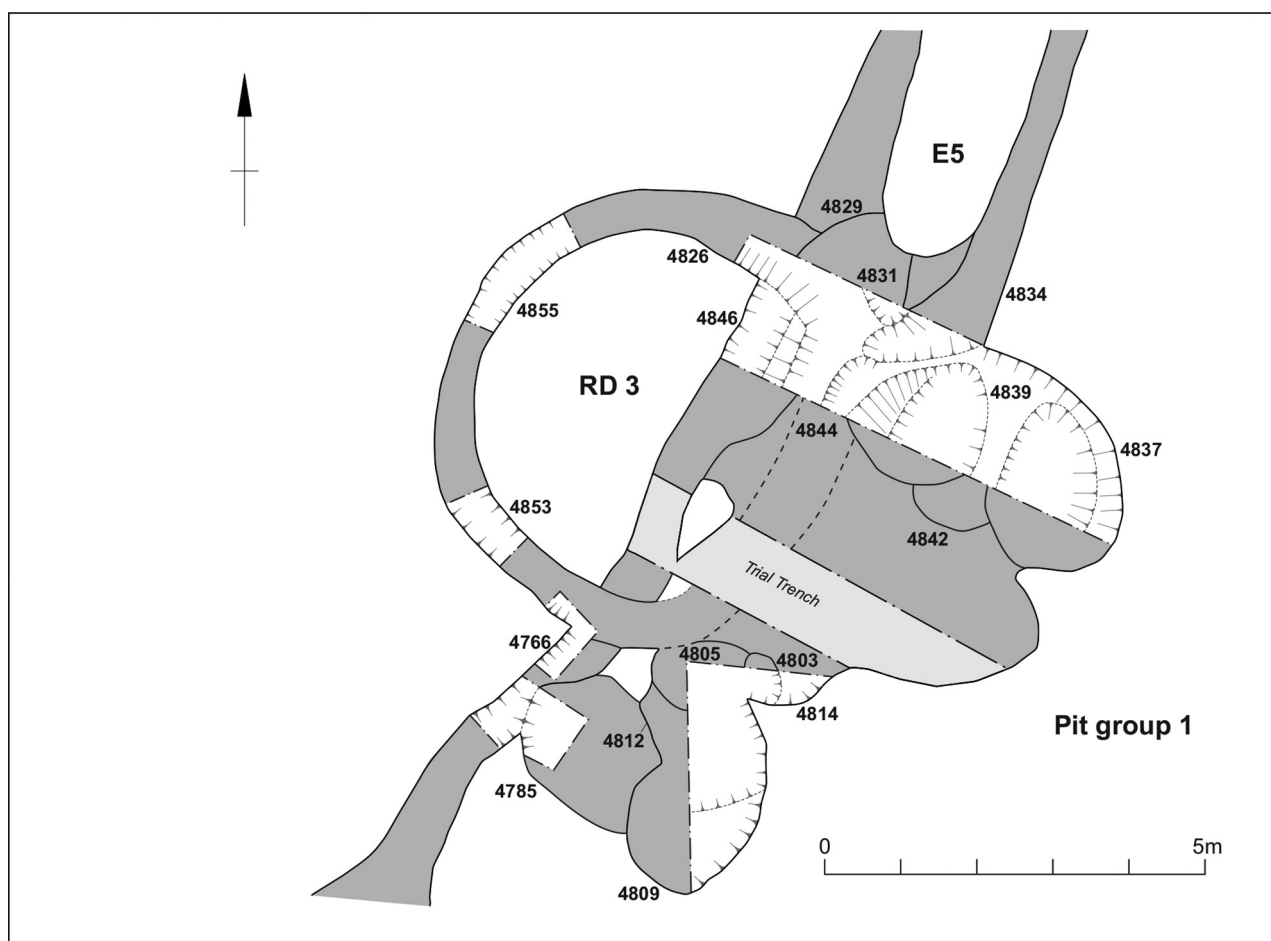


Fig 14: Iron Age ring ditch RD3, boundary ditch and Pit Group 1



Fig 15: Iron Age four-post structure, Granary 3, and ditch 2, looking west

the earlier Middle Iron Age, broadly dated to the earlier Middle Iron Age, 5th to 3rd centuries BC, came from the fills of pit 4708.

In Area A, to the east of the pit alignment, there was a scatter of small sub-circular pits (Fig 6). Three of these pits 4025, 4030 and 4040 contained burnt material, and pit 4030 had a clay lining. Only two features in this area contained finds; pit 4028 contained a flint flake, and pit 4201 contained a tiny fragment of pottery.

In Area B, three pits 4473, 4694 (RD1) and 4888 were packed with large amounts of stone and cobbles some of which were burnt. The smallest, pit 4473, c.0.7m in diameter and 0.3m deep, lay to the north, between four-posters G1 and G2 (Figs 11 and 17). It contained a moderate assemblage of Iron Age pottery (0.53kg) dating from the 5th to 3rd centuries BC, indicating that the activity here was probably contemporary with the settlement core to the south, and was either a northern outlier or perhaps the western fringe of another focus of activity largely to the west of the excavated area. Pit 4888, to the west of Enclosure 5 and RD3, contained cobbles and a moderate assemblage of Iron Age pottery (0.56kg) dating

Section 4208

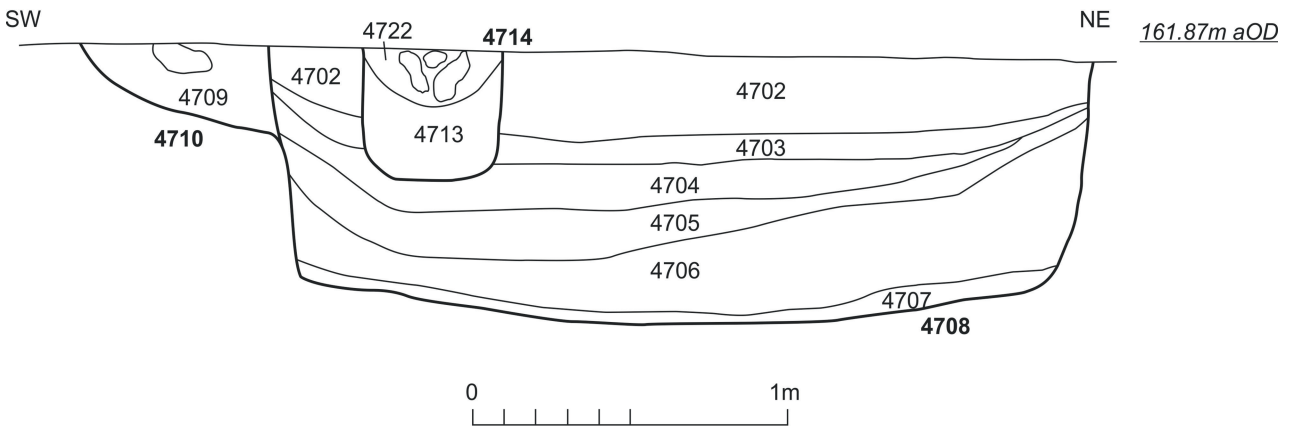


Fig 16: Plan and section of Iron Age pits 4708 and 4710 and posthole 4714

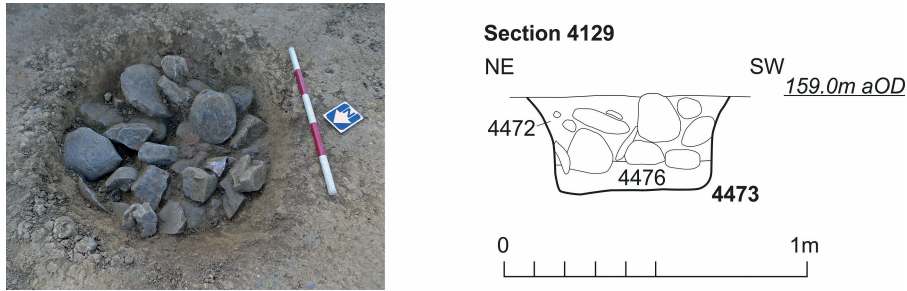


Fig 17: Iron Age pit 4473, looking south-east and section

from the 5th to 3rd centuries BC. Pit 4694 located in the centre of roundhouse ring ditch RD1 has already been described.

Pit 4656, between RD1 and Ditch 3, contained almost 1kg of Iron Age pottery, probably the primary deposition of a large storage jar, and also a probable sharpening stone (SF4040).

In addition, there were 54 isolated pits and postholes scattered across the site. These were predominately concentrated around the area of earlier Middle Iron Age activity, but only six contained pottery, to date them to the earlier Middle Iron Age, and pit 4903 to the south-east of RD3 contained a near-complete rubbing stone (SF4038). Pit 4899, to the south-east of Enclosure 5 and east of the linear boundary ditch, contained a shouldered and long-necked jar (Fig 19.1).

Pit Groups

Pit Groups 1, 2 and 3 lay within the domestic focus, at the southern end of Area B (Fig 11). Pit Group 4 lay at the northern end of Area A, over the junction of the two boundary ditches, while Pit Group 5 lay to the south of the earlier polygonal enclosure (Fig 6). Most of the individual pits were sub-circular to oval in plan, with U-shaped profiles and flat bases, mostly between 0.40–1.50m diameter and up to 0.70m deep.

In Pit Group 1, 13 pits were identified in excavation and a further six in the earlier evaluation. Eleven of these

pits contained Middle Iron Age pottery, including a rim of a flat shouldered jar dating to the 4th to 3rd centuries BC (Fig 19, 2) and a shouldered jar with fingertip decoration on the shoulder (Fig 19, 3). Other domestic waste included a sharpening stone, charcoal and food debris in the form of charred wheat grain and a plum stone.

Pit Group 2, which cut the southern arm of Enclosure 5, comprised seven pits, but no finds were recovered.

Pit Group 3 comprised four pits, with pit 4959 containing pottery that included part of a base. The pits of Pit Groups 1 and 3 post-dated the main boundary ditch, as did Pit Group 4, to the south in Area A. This group comprised eight pits of which only pit 4429 contained finds: 24 sherds of pottery, a small amount of slag (80g) and some charcoal.

Furthest south in Area A, Pit Group 5, showed a complex sequence of at least nine intercutting pits (Fig 18). The earliest pit was a large, steep-sided and flat-bottomed pit, 4327, 6.50m diameter and 1.40m deep. The later pits were smaller and shallower, at up to 1.8m diameter and up to 0.80m deep. At least nine separate pits were identified, seven of which contained a layer of burnt material, probably hearth debris, deposited after the pits had started silting naturally. Two examples showed the burnt material was deposited while still hot/smouldering as the layer below had become discoloured. A very small quantity of probable earlier Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the upper fills of these pits.

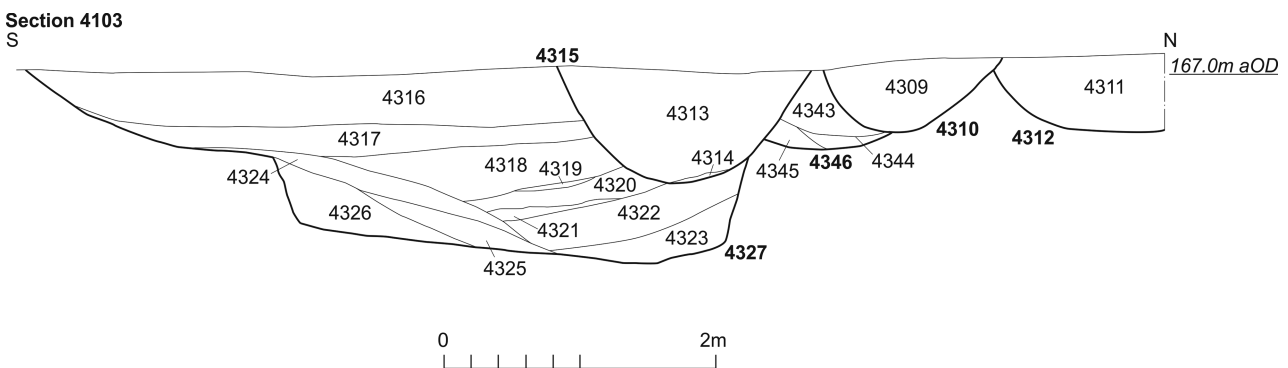


Fig 18: Section of Iron Age Pit Group 5

Prehistoric finds

The worked flint

by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Twenty-five pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pit alignment, Iron Age and undated features. The assemblage comprises 14 flakes and ten blades. Technological characteristics of the assemblage are not directly dateable.

The Iron Age pottery

by Andy Chapman

A total of 1257 sherds of prehistoric pottery, weighing 5.59kg, were recovered from the evaluation and the mitigation. The assemblage is in poor condition, as indicated by the average sherd weight of 4.4g, which would fall to 4.1g if the single vessel with a complete profile was excluded. The poor condition of the assemblage is due to the loss of shell inclusions through leaching. Given the poor state of so much of the material, the smaller groups have been scanned to identify diagnostic sherds and these, along with the few larger groups, have been analysed in detail and fully quantified. Pottery was recovered from 78 contexts, but only ten produced in excess of 100g, and the three largest groups are of little diagnostic value as they comprise multiple small sherds from single larger jars in the soft and eroded shelly fabric.

Fabrics

The assemblage is dominated by body sherds in shelly fabrics, typically dense large shell inclusions, which have been lost through leaching, leaving the sherds soft, pitted and eroding, with the original surfaces largely lost. These sherds are most often orange to orange-brown in colour externally, with a brown to grey-brown core, having been fired in oxidising conditions. They are typically from vessels with walls 10–14mm thick, probably large storage jars.

A smaller proportion comprises thinner-walled sherds that had contained sparser, more finely crushed shell, although this too has been lost to leaching. However, these sherds are generally in reasonable condition and come from smaller jars, often grey in colour and with smoothed surfaces.

There are also a small proportion of sherds in a hard sandy fabric, typically with grey to grey-brown surfaces, and a complete profile of a vessel in a fine sandy fabric contains small angular inclusions of the ironstone (Fig 20.6).

The pit alignment

Five pits in the pit alignment, 4034, 4045, 4065, 4079 and 4115, produced a total of seven small sherds, weighing 21g. From pit 4045 there is small rounded rim sherd in a sandy fabric containing small angular pieces of quartz, up to 3mm long, unlike the fabrics of the main Iron Age assemblage. From pit 4079 there is a flat-topped rim from a thin-walled vessel, and from the other features there are

plain, but thin-walled body sherds. There is far too little material to say much, except that this small group differs in fabric from the main assemblage, indicating that it is of a different date, and such small thin-walled vessels are more characteristic of Early Iron Age assemblages.

Pottery forms and chronology

The three largest context groups: 531g of pottery from the fill (4472) of pit 4473, 994g of pottery from the fill (4655) of pit 4656 and 560g of pottery from the fill (4889) of pit 4888, all comprise numerous small, thick-walled, soft and abraded sherds in leached shelly fabrics with orange external surfaces. These are all body sherds from large jars, and for the vessel in pit 4473 there are also some flat base sherds, but no rim sherds had survived for any of these contexts. These groups had all been deposited as large fragments of the original vessels, but had been crushed in the ground. This, and the leaching of the shell content, had made it impossible to recover these sherds intact.

The only diagnostic sherd in these three groups is a single thinner-walled body sherd, 6mm thick, from pit 4656 with a fingertip impression, closely similar to the fingertip decorated sherds that occur in a number of the pits, the only recurring diagnostic feature within the assemblage, as catalogued below.

A slightly smaller group, 297g from the fill (4702) of pit 4708, to the south of RD2, contains some larger sherds from a large jar with an orange outer surface, but it also contains two rims sherds. One is a simple upright, flattened rim and the other has a slightly concave neck and a flattened rim with a slight external lip, both in fabrics with grey-brown external surfaces. A small group of body sherds from the fill (4408) of pit 4413, part of Pit Group 4, also includes two rim sherds, one an upright flat rim and the other a slightly everted rounded rim above a shallow neck.

From the fill (4896) of pit 4899 there are sherds from a thin-walled vessel, 7mm thick, with a slight shoulder and shallowly concave neck, 28mm high and drawn up so that it is thinner, at 5mm, with a simple rounded rim (Fig 19.1). There is a similar vessel, slightly thicker-walled, with a neck 30mm high, from the fill (4835) of pit 4837 in Pit Group 1 (Fig 19.2), and another from the fill (4935) of pit 4937.

Vessels with elongated necks are most common through the late Early Iron Age to earlier Middle Iron Age, perhaps the 5th to 3rd centuries BC. This date is also supported by the presence of further vessels with elongated necks that are also decorated with fingertip impressions, usually including the fingernail impression, along the shoulder, with examples from the fill (2623) of pit 2624, excavated during the evaluation (Fig 19.3), from the fill (4680) of pit 4682 within ring ditch RD2, with bold fingernail impressions (Fig 19.4), and in a sherd from the fill (4604) of posthole 4605 (part of four-post structure G3) there is also a fingernail impression on the neck (Fig 19.5). There are further sherds with fingertip impressions from the fill (4655) of pit 4656 and the fill (4885) of isolated posthole 4887.

There are therefore eight examples of shouldered jars, with elongated necks, and five of these also have fingertip

impressions on the rim. Both of these characteristics are indicative of a date probably in the earlier Middle Iron Age, 4th to 3rd centuries BC.

From the fill (4958) of pit 4959, part of Pit Group 3, there is around half of a simple flat base, 80mm diameter, with a grey interior and a mottled orange-brown to grey exterior. The fill (2709) of ditch 2708, excavated during the evaluation, contains the usual assemblage of plain body sherds, but there is also a single sherd of classic scored ware, characteristic of the Middle Iron Age, certainly occurring between the 4th to 2nd centuries BC.

From the fill (4629) of storage pit 4633, there is a complete profile of a small jar, standing 125mm high with a rim diameter of 115mm, a maximum diameter of 130mm and a flat base 80mm in diameter (Fig 20.6). It is quite thick-walled, 10mm thick with the base up to 12mm thick. This is the only vessel in a fine sandy fabric containing ironstone, with a brown core and pale red-pink surfaces with patchy black soot marks from firing, known as fire clouding. Of particular interest is the clear survival in one section of the oblique surfaces between the four clay slabs or rings used in the manufacturing of the vessel. The base and lower sides were formed as one, the second slab forms the main body, the third is thinner and forms the high shoulder while the fourth, thinner again, forms the neck and rim (Fig 20.6). The other point of interest is that fire clouding is partly so clearly visible because of the light colour of the external surface, but also because there had been no subsequent colouring of the pot surfaces through use. It does in fact appear to be a new and unused pot and perhaps the clear visibility of the joins within the fabric indicates that it had been poorly made and fractured soon after firing. The shallow neck and simple rounded rim are characteristic of the later Middle Iron Age, probably the later 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.

The overall balance of the assemblage indicates that the main period of settlement was from the end of the Early Iron Age and through the earlier Middle Iron Age, with a date range of perhaps 450–250BC. While this date range can be determined for only a limited number of contexts containing diagnostic sherds, the rest of the assemblage is closely comparable and likely to share the same date range. The high-shouldered and fingertip-decorated jars belong to the early part of the range, while the single sherd of scored ware and the single high shouldered jar lie towards the end of the life of the settlement.

Catalogue of illustrated pottery

(Figs 19 & 20)

- 1 Shouldered and long-necked jar, pit 4899
- 2 Shouldered and long-necked jar, pit 4837
- 3 Shouldered jar with fingertip decoration around the shoulder, pit 2624 (evaluation)
- 4 Shouldered jar with fingertip/nail decoration around the shoulder, pit 4682
- 5 Shouldered jar with fingertip decoration on the shoulder and neck, posthole 4605
- 6 Neckless jar, with section to show the joins within the fabric, pit 4633

The querns and rubbing stones

by Andy Chapman

There are fragments from four saddle querns and three rubbing stones, as well as a further three stones with level or slightly undulating worn surfaces used as sharpening stones (Table 3). The raw material all appears to be water-worn cobbles of quartzite or sandstone and one of granite, which have been reworked, suggesting that they were utilising local stones from river gravel deposits or perhaps from boulder clays.

The saddle quern in granite, from the fill (4629) of pit 4633, is the only complete quern (Fig 21). At 300mm long by 215mm wide and up to 55mm thick, a very irregular tapering rectangle, weighing 7.6kg, with a slightly concave grinding surface. It is not particularly large and is closer in size to saddle querns more typical of the Bronze Age to Early Iron Age, with Middle Iron Age saddle querns often much bigger, at 450–500mm long. The other three stones, two in quartzite and one in fine-grained sandstone hardened by ironpanning, are all incomplete, but none are particularly large.

Of the three rubbing stones, two are in fine-grained sandstone and one in quartzite. They are all largely complete and range from 170–235mm long by 148–195mm wide, weighing between 2.3kg and 3.4kg. They are around half the weight of the matching saddle querns, and would have required considerable strength to operate.

The three sharpening stones are all much thinner than the saddle querns and rubbing stones, with flat or slightly undulating surfaces worn smooth through use. The most complete example is incomplete but would have been near square, 160mm long by 140mm wide.

Discussion

Local water-worn cobbles in a variety of geologies were being utilised to fashion saddle querns and rubbing stones, and also as large sharpening stones. The pottery assemblage has dated the occupation of the site to the earlier Middle Iron Age, perhaps 450–250BC.

The querns are of interest as both saddle querns and accompanying rubbing stones are present in number, but there is not a single fragment from a rotary quern. Rotary querns appear in the archaeological record at some point in the Middle Iron Age, and the indication from this site would be that they were certainly not in use here in the 4th century or the early to middle 3rd century BC.

The slags

by Andy Chapman

Seven features of the earlier Middle Iron Age settlement; one ditch, three pits and three lengths of gully, produced small quantities of light and highly vesicular fuel ash slag, either grey or pale buff-brown in colour in small irregular lumps. Fuel ash slag is indicative of general high temperature burning, but not necessarily any specific activity, such as iron smithing.



Fig 19: Earlier Middle Iron Age pottery, 1–5

The fired clay by Pat Chapman

The material is varied in type and found separately, not mixed. Fifteen small sub-rounded and irregular fragments, weighing 85g, typically made of sandy orange clay with tiny angular stones, come from three postholes and four pits, while 24 angular fragments, weighing 220g, of slightly soft silty orange clay come from fill (4890) of pit 4891. These are all probably the scattered fragmentary remains of structural debris.

Prehistoric environmental evidence

The archaeobotanical remains by Sander Aerts

Fifteen soil samples, with a combined volume of 490 litres, were processed and most yielded botanical evidence, including common weeds and some domesticated varieties of cereals. The results of nine samples, one from the polygonal enclosure (Enclosure 4) and eight from the Iron Age settlement are summarised (Table 5), while the results of a further six samples are not included as they each produced between zero and a single charred seed.



Fig 20: Middle Iron Age pottery, 6

A very small quantity of seeds was recovered with no sample having more than 15. Seeds recovered include wheat *Triticum aestivum/durum/turdigum* from fill (4836) of pit 4837 (Pit Group 1). Due to the similarities in the morphology of the grain kernels, the exact variety could not be established. Further cereal grains were observed in fill (4245) of ditch terminal 4246 of the early polygonal enclosure (Enclosure 4), and fill (4680) of pit 4682 in Iron Age ring ditch RD2. These grains were too distorted as a result of heating to identify to genus level. One charred fruit stone, possibly a plum pip (*Prunus* sp.), was identified from fill (4843) of pit 4844, Pit Group 1/RD3.

The animal bone by Adam Reid

A very small collection of animal bone fragments were recovered due to acidic soil conditions. Two small fragments of burnt bone of indeterminate taxa were recovered from Iron Age pit 4888 and two further indeterminate fragments were recovered from Iron Age posthole 4990.

Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building

A solitary possible Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building (SFB), 4520, lay at the north end of Area B (Fig 11). Aligned roughly north-east to south-west, it was 3.51m long by 1.85m wide and 0.37m deep, with steep sides and

a flattish base (Fig 22). Two postholes 4548 and 4550, at the north-eastern corners, were 0.40m diameter and up to 0.35m deep. No finds were recovered.

Medieval or post-medieval cultivation and a post-medieval well

Medieval to post-medieval activity comprised remnant furrows of ridge and furrow fields systems in parts of both excavation areas. The very faint traces of furrows across limited parts of the area suggest that the natural had been heavily truncated by modern ploughing. Two furrows were sectioned but no finds were recovered.

South of ring ditch RD1, the lower fill (4769) of an oval pit 4770 produced a large number of animal bones from the hind end of single sheep/goat. A single piece of post-medieval brick was also recovered.

Towards the northern end of Area B a line of five postholes, F1, spaced evenly 9.0m apart, were most likely the remnants of a fence line aligned approximately east-west (Fig 11). Pottery of 19th to 20th-century date was recovered from the westernmost posthole. About 130m to the south, three postholes formed another fence line, F2. The alignment, spacing and size matched fence line F1.

In the north-east corner of the development site, beyond the mitigation areas, a well 4159, lined irregularly-coursed limestone, was 1.4m in diameter and at least 5m deep. It had not been backfilled but was been capped with bricks.

Table 3: *Quantification of querns*

Fill/cut (SF)	Feature type	Stone	Dimensions	Description
4629/4633 (SF4025)	Storage pit	Granite	55mm thick 300 x 215mm (100%) 7.56kg	Saddle quern, sub-rectangular, grinding surface slightly concave
4655/4656 (SF4040)	Pit	Quartzite Water worn Cobble	46mm thick 160 x 140mm 3.15kg	Sharpening stone. Near level surface, but presence of two slightly raised areas, also worn, suggest this was a sharpening stone rather than a rubbing stone from a quern.
4680/4682 (SF4027)	Pit in RD2	Quartzite Water worn Cobble	82mm thick 225mm wide x 160mm long (broken) 4.85kg	Saddle quern (broken), grinding surface worn, slightly concave, with dimpled tool marks surviving.
4680/4682 (SF4028)	Pit in RD2	Fine-grained sandstone (ironstained crust)	45–55mm thick 235 x 195mm (c85%) 3.44kg	Rubbing stone, irregular, one corner missing. The surface is convex and worn, although dimpled tool marks survive.
4795/4796 (SF4033)	Enclosure 5 ditch terminal	Quartzite	29mm thick 175mm x 85mm (broken) 0.69kg	Sharpening stone, with slightly undulating surface, closely parallel faces
4838/4839	Pit; part of Pit Group 1	Quartzite	28mm thick Fragments 0.45kg	Sharpening stone, with parallel faces, similar to SF4043
4902/4903 (SF4038)	Pit	Fine-grained Sandstone (ironstained crust)	70mm thick, 170 x 160mm (90mm) 2.75kg	Rubbing stone, roughly square, largely complete. Convex grinding surface
4962/4963 (SF4041)	Boundary ditch of field system	Quartzite Water worn cobble	60mm thick 225 x 148mm (90%) 2.30kg	Rubbing stone. Oval, damaged at one end, with domed top surface and worn, very slightly convex, grinding surface.
4962/4963 SF4042)	Boundary ditch of field system	Fine-grained Sandstone	40mm thick 210 x 125 c20–25% 1.72kg	Saddle quern (broken and burnt). Concave grinding surface,
4981/4982 (SF4043)	Boundary ditch of field system	Quartzite Water worn Cobble	48mm thick 150 x 125mm (c15%) 1.63kg	Saddle quern (broken). Concave grinding surface. Base dimple tool marks from levelling

Table 4: *Quantification of slags*

Fill/cut	Feature type	Weight (g)
2709/2708	Ditch 2	15
4379/4381	Boundary ditch (field system)	4
4393/4394	Pit	3
4408/4413	Pit, Pit Group 4	10
4427/4429	Pit, Pit Group 4	70
4619/4620	Ring gully, RD2	4
4741/4743	Ring gully, RD2	30
Total		136



Fig 21: Iron Age saddle quern from pit 4633 (scale 50mm)

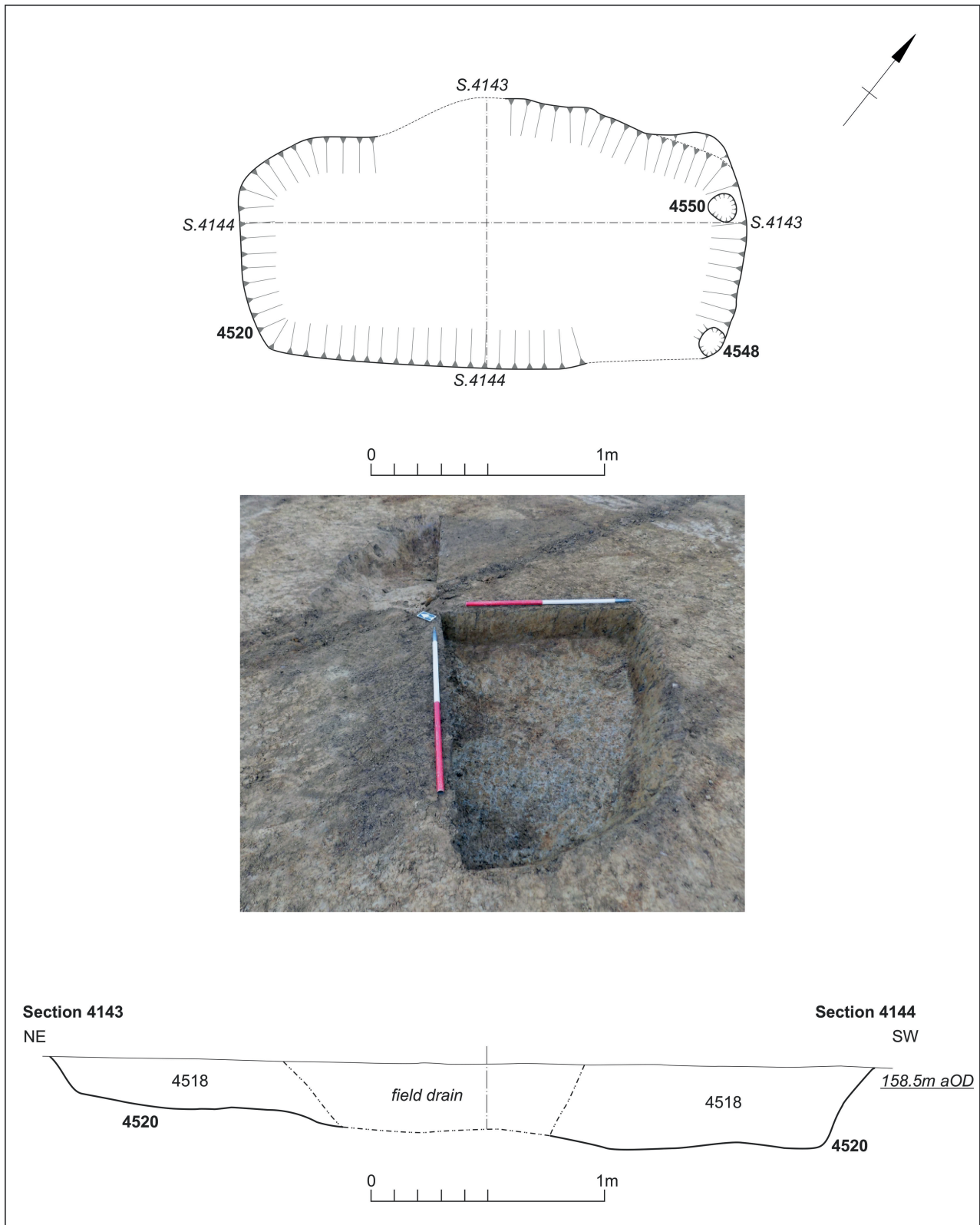


Fig 22: Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building (SFB) 4520, plan and section

Table 5: Summary of botanical taxa per environmental sample

		4245	4216	4427	4558	4560	4680	4977	4836	4843
Fill		4245	4216	4427	4558	4560	4680	4977	4836	4843
Cut		4246	4213	4429	4559	4562	4682	4978	4837	4844
Structure/Group		E4	PG5	PG4	RD2	RD1	RD2	G6	PG1	PG1
Feature type		P	P	P	D	D	P	PH	P	P
Volume (litre)		40	40	40	20	20	40	40	40	40
Latin name	Common name									
Amaranthaceae										
<i>Chenopodium/Atriplex</i> sp.	Goosefoot / orache	4	9	13	1	3	3	5	11	1
Apiaceae										
<i>Sium latifolium</i> L.	Great water-parsnip	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Brassicaceae										
Indet.	Crucifers	–	–	2	1	–	–	–	–	–
Convolvulaceae										
<i>Convolvulus</i> sp.	Bindweed	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
Poaceae										
<i>Triticum aestivum/durum/turdigum</i> L.	Wheat	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1*	–
Triticeae indet.	Cereals	3*	–	–	–	–	1*	–	–	–
Rosaceae										
<i>Prunus</i> sp.	Fruit stone	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1*
Unidentified		–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	1
Charcoal		C	C	D	D	B	D	D	D	C

Location: E=Enclosure, PG= Pit Group, RD=ring ditch, G=Granary

Feature type key: D= Ditch, DT= Ditch terminal, DG= Drip gully, G= Gully, P= Pit, PH= Posthole

Estimated quantification key: A= 1–3, B= 4–20, C=21–50, D=51+

Charred remains are marked with *

The post-medieval animal bone

by Adam Reid

Nineteen sheep/goat bones were recovered from post-medieval pit 4770 in addition to 19 fragments of medium-sized mammal and 13 indeterminate bone fragments. All of the identified fragments are hind limb elements and may represent the burial of part of a single animal.

Two pits, 4375 and 4798, produced fragments of burnt bone, but the material was too fragmentary for any further conclusions to be drawn.

Bricks

by Pat Chapman

The brick capping of the circular stone-lined well 4159 was three courses thick bonded with lime mortar. The bricks were probably 17th to 18th century and are good quality, in fine red sandy clay; two bricks have red-purple header ends, showing signs of incipient vitrification.

Undated activity

There were a small number of undated and unstratified features that could not be assigned to period; a linear ditch c.50m south of Enclosure 1 and a short length of gully south of Enclosure 4.

Discussion

by Rob Atkins, Andy Chapman, Simon Markus and Stephen Morris

Early Bronze Age segmented circular enclosure

An Early Bronze Age segmented circular enclosure was located on a small area of level ground just below the 160m contour. It was offset to the west side of the ridge, but it still provided a prominent aspect from the north-east to the south-west. This was also a well-drained location in the catchment area of several streams, although there was no watercourse within 200m of the site. The excavations

at Daventry have shown that this landscape, with prominent plateaux overlooking the wider landscape, contained multiple monument types, and the choice of this site is likely to be the result of its position within the landscape. Broadly contemporary with this segmented enclosure were Bronze Age round barrows formerly situated on top of Borough Hill, 3km south-east of the site at *c.* 190m aOD (RCHME 1981, 3, fig 54).

In the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age the available evidence is dominated by ritual monuments. These include burial sites such as Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows and communal sites such as Neolithic causewayed enclosures and Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age henges (Kidd 2004).

However, it must be noted that commercial archaeology throughout the Midlands is now locating a wider range of site types, many being variations of the ring-ditch theme, both with and without entrances, but not conforming to the conventional monument typologies. For instance, the so-called Cotton Henge at Raunds, a name applied with caution in the 1980s, has now been shown to date to the Early Neolithic, contemporary with causewayed enclosures and perhaps serving a similar function as a central place (Chapman 2017). And while the single demonstrable long barrow in the Nene valley at Stanwick (Harding and Healy 2007) has now been complemented by a pair on the uplands west of the Northampton (Brown 2019, this volume), the Nene has also produced its own distinctive Neolithic burial mound form in the oval barrows at Aldwinckle, Tansor and Grendon (Chapman 2004).

Many smaller ring ditch monuments, often provisionally classified as possible henges, or worse, the catchall term hengiform so widely used and abused for anything vaguely circular that does not quite fit in the henge or round barrow categories, now appear to be neither henges or round barrows.

A triple-ditch system at Banbury Lane, Northampton, with its pit containing a mass of disarticulated human bone, has been radiocarbon dated to the Middle Neolithic (Holmes *et al* 2012). Many seem to be contemporary with round barrows in the Early Bronze Age, *c.* 1900–1500 BC. A range of such monuments have been examined to the west and south of Bedford (Luke 2008 & 2016; A Chapman and P Chapman 2017) and the group can also include some of the smaller ring ditch monuments excavated at Dorchester, Oxfordshire in the late 1940s (Atkinson *et al* 1951).

The original ditch at Daventry Apex was divided into at least four arcs, with causeways to the north, south, east and west. However, as the rest of the circuit was not examined it is possible that there were other causeways, in which instance the significance of the causeways examined near the cardinal compass points would be lessened. The ditch silting also provides no indication of the former presence of a bank, either internal or external, and the multiple original entrances and the narrowness of the retained eastern entrance do not conform to the classic henge monument design, and even though the construction of the monument is undated, the date of the later reuse places this activity towards the end of the early Bronze Age, a little late if it had started life as henge monument in the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, prior to *c.* 2000BC.

For the time being at least, the Early Bronze Age henge at Priors Hall, Corby (Chapman and Jones 2015) remains the single excavated monument in the county that demonstrably fits the classic definition of a class I henge, in having an external bank and a single entrance (Atkinson 1951). At Dallington, on the outskirts of Northampton, a possible henge at the centre of the Dallington causewayed enclosure is *c.* 60m in diameter (RCHME 1985, 30–34, fig 2). However, recent geophysical survey has cast doubt on this (Chapman 2019, this volume).

The absence of any material evidence makes interpretation of the Daventry Apex segmented ditch even more problematic. While the excavated lengths of the ditch, two partly machine cut, produced no finds, these formed a small part of the total circuit, so the absence of artefacts may be largely a product of the limited excavation. Also, the ploughing away of even the medieval furrows across much of the site shows the depth of truncation, as this could certainly have removed associated shallow features, such as postholes or even cremation burials.

There was a similar but smaller monument at Raunds, where a segmented ditched circle with an internal diameter of just 7m, associated with three cremation burials, was positioned over a long-maintained ritual avenue (Harding and Healy 2007, 147 and 210). The radiocarbon date of 2020–1680 cal BC makes it only slightly earlier than the later use of the example at Daventry Apex.

Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age polygonal enclosure and pit alignment

A Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age polygonal enclosure and a pit alignment respected each other, and both were located in a prominent position on a plateau to the west side of the ridge, lying between 165m and 168m aOD.

The immediate environs went through significant changes in this period. An Iron Age hillfort, Borough Hill, was established *c.* 3km to the south-east of the site (RCHME 1981, 3, fig 54). Multivallate ditches enclose the large hillfort over a distance 1.5km north to south (Fig 23). The area was partly overlain by ditches of another smaller multivallate hillfort on the northern part of the hill. Archaeological sites of both earlier and later date lie within the two hillforts, including two Bronze Age barrows. Probably also contemporary were three separate pit alignments 3km to the east within the Daventry north-east site (Walford 2016).

The polygonal enclosure and a field system

The large polygonal enclosure contained few cut features and this, along with the broad 6m-wide entrance, may suggest use as a stock corral. However, a similar and broadly contemporary enclosure at Harlestone Quarry, near Northampton, a little less truncated as the bases of the medieval furrows survived right across the site, may be a more reliable indicator of what was probably happening at Daventry Apex (Chapman *et al* 2017). The interior of this enclosure contained only a scatter of small pits and postholes, some producing a little pottery

and suggesting only sparse activity across a period of some centuries spanning the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age. However, a single larger pit produced an assemblage of up to 12 loomweights and a smaller pit nearby produced a further example. As it seems unlikely that such a collection would have been carried for any great distance, they provide a clear indication that there was a resident household established in this area, no doubt occupying one or more roundhouses; structures that have left no recoverable traces in the natural. If these two pits had been shallower, the only evidence remaining would have been a largely empty enclosure. Daventry Apex is far from unique in this respect, and the problem of recognising even the presence, let alone the scale, of domestic settlement through the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age is problematic when much of that activity did not result in the deposition of material within holes that penetrated into the undisturbed natural.

It is possible that the shallow remnants of linear ditches in Area B to the north of the polygonal enclosure had defined parts of its contemporary field system, with the small enclosure abutting one of the ditches forming an animal pen.

Pit alignment

Long distance linear boundaries are one of the characteristic features of the first millennium BC in eastern England (Willis 2016). Whilst they are not unique to the region they are a comparatively well represented monument class, to the extent that they may be cast as one of its distinctive later prehistoric characteristics.

The Daventry Apex pit alignment consisted of forty pits along the exposed length of 115m. It is unusual among excavated examples in containing an end point, as to the north the pit alignment just stops abruptly adjacent to the mid-point of the western arm of the polygonal enclosure, to which it runs parallel. As is typically the case, how far it continues to the south is unknown.

The three pit alignments 3km to the east at the Daventry North-East development site were also extensive (Walford 2016, figs 11–12; Fig 23). Two of these pit alignments, aligned east-west, were traced over a distance of c.200–250m whilst the other, aligned north-south, was traced for c.100m.

It is noticeable that all these three local pit alignments, as well as the alignment at Apex, were aligned either broadly north-south or east-west and this suggest some broader planning of land divisions in the area. The Apex site may therefore be seen as part of a large scale reorganisation and land division in this period. Unlike other nearby areas Apex also had a polygonal enclosure associated with the pit alignment. In contrast, no other Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age sites were found in the widespread excavations at Middlemore Farm, 1km to the north-east (Hancock 2005a and b, 2006a and b; Wilson 2004) or Monksmoor Park, 2.5km to the east (Burke and Simmonds 2014; Preece 2019).

Pit alignments, it is generally accepted, date to the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age (Fearn 1993). The broad dating

can be demonstrated in the Northamptonshire area, where pit alignments are a relatively common feature type, many initially identified from aerial photography, but now a growing number of archaeological excavations are also revealing these monuments. Examples have been investigated across the county at Gretton (Jackson 1974), Ringstead (Jackson 1978). Briar Hill, Northampton (Jackson 1974 and Bamford 1985), Grendon (Jackson 1995), Wollaston bypass (Chapman and Jackson 1992), Wollaston Quarry (Meadows 1995), Raunds, Warth Park (McAree 2005), Cottisford Turn, Tusmore (Mudd 2007, 71–75), Crick Covert Farm: DIRFT (Hughes and Woodward 2015), Upton, Northampton (Speed 2015), Great Cranseley, Kettering (Harvey 2015), Harlestone Quarry (Chapman *et al* 2017), Dallington Gateway (Chinnock and Muldowney 2016), and, most recently, Pineham, Northampton (Simmonds *pers comm*).

The lack of datable artefacts from the Apex pit alignment is unsurprising as datable material is notable for its scarcity from such features. When sequences are discernible, it is clear that pit alignments precede settlements of Middle Iron Age date (Kidd 2004) and several have now produced radiocarbon dates spanning the Early Iron Age, with the final filling occurring at late as the 4th century BC or even later, with some examples recut as continuous ditches in the Late Iron Age/Early Roman (eg Wollaston Quarry).

This pit alignment lay on an approximately north-south orientation across the plateau on the top of the ridge, which aligned with a spring point and a stream course down the side of the escarpment. Other examples of alignments located in prominent positions within the landscape include the Dallington Gateway pit alignment was also located along the edge of a ridge with land dropping away to the north and west (Chinnock and Muldowney 2016). Others excavated during the mitigation work for the A5–M1 link road, which lay c.2.5km apart, were placed on a south facing valley side, with both following the valley slope towards a common water course at the valley bottom. It is most likely they were part of the same land division event, establishing boundaries along the north side of the River Ouzel (Brown forthcoming).

Boutwood (1998) notes a correlation between pit alignments and water courses in Lincolnshire; the explanation for this is unclear but she suggests that this may have both practical and ritual/symbolic elements relating to access to water (for pasture animals) and in emphasizing a natural boundary (Hingley 1989, 143–4).

The surface shape of the eroded pits at Apex were generally sub-rectangular to oval, but it is likely that the majority of the larger pits were originally square to rectangular with near vertical sides and flat bases, although some of the smaller, may have been later additions perhaps filling broader gaps in the original alignment. This record supported evidence found at other pit alignments in Northamptonshire, for example at Dallington Gateway, where pits were also shown to have sharply cut square to rectangular bases, elongated along the length of the alignment (Chinnock and Muldowney 2016).

The pits at Daventry Apex were evenly spaced at the northern end and became more erratic to the south. A

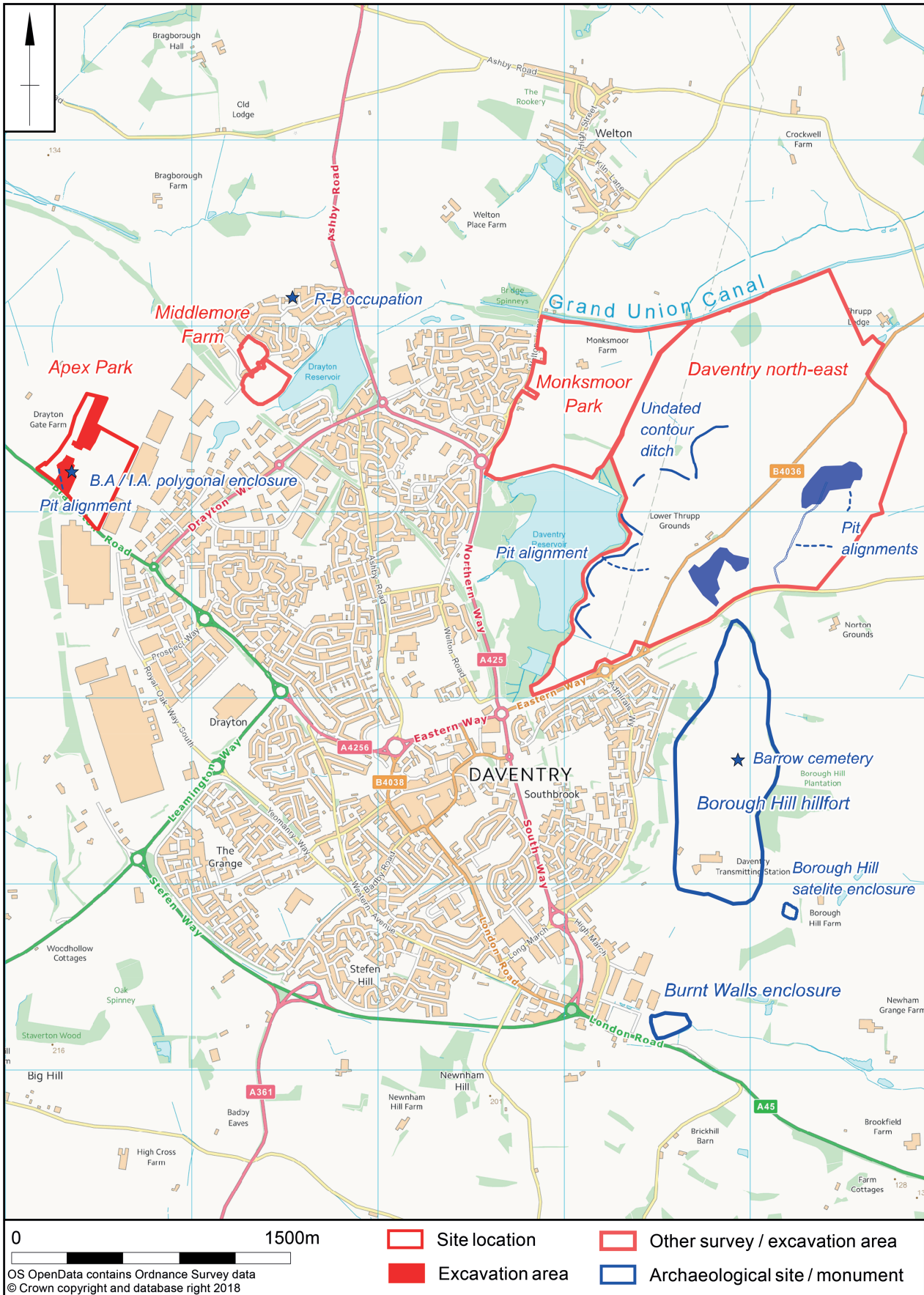


Fig 23: The Daventry area, highlighting Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age features

similar layout pattern to Apex has been observed with alignments at Pitsford Quarry (Hallam *et al* 2003) and Midway Park (Finn and Muldowney 2015). This was unlike other contemporary pit alignments, such as those excavated from Harlestone Quarry (Chapman *et al* 2017), Gretton (Jackson 1974), or Upton (Walker and Maull 2010) where pits were regularly positioned and followed a straight course. Variations in alignment, pit size and spacing have been considered on comparable sites to be the result of the construction sequence, whereby groups of pits were dug by teams of workers, leaving gaps which were later infilled with smaller pits (Field and Chapman 2007). Measuring from the centre of the pits showed that the average spacing between the pits was 3.17m, which is comparable with other pits in the area: the average spacing between the pits at Dallington Gateway was 2.80m (Chinnock and Muldowney 2016), 3.34m at Harlestone Quarry (Chapman *et al* 2017), and 3.00m at Upton (Walker and Maull 2010).

Pit alignments are commonly interpreted as territorial divisions or land-use boundaries and are sometimes found in combination with a fence, hedge or ditch. The spacing between the pits would suggest it was to allow access either for people and/or livestock, implying that the alignments were boundaries, but not an impediment to movement. At a later date they often became supplanted by the establishment of linear ditched boundaries, suggesting the boundary became a more formal feature, design to control movement.

Pit alignments often appear to have been constructed in relation to other places in the landscape, not least earlier prehistoric ceremonial monuments, between which they may extend (Taylor 1997), and as seen at Briar Hill Neolithic causewayed enclosure (Bamford 1985) Whether or not they were constructed with the intention of describing 'owned' territories, or for demarcating certain rights, the appearance of pit alignments marks a major reorganisation of landscape or at least a re-definition of existing boundaries previously expressed by other means. These developments may reflect intra-regional variations in the agricultural economy and/or variable pressures upon land resources, the origins of field systems, and on the developments landscape organisation over time (Willis 2016).

Middle Iron Age settlement

The Iron Age open settlement is dated to the earlier Middle Iron Age (*c.*450–*c.*250BC). Its origin may have lain at the end of the Early Iron Age, in terms of pottery chronology, and it was abandoned before the rise of large scored ware bowls and the introduction of the rotary quern at around *c.*250BC. The settlement extended at least *c.*300m north-south, including the outlying four-post structure to the north and the pit group and scattered pits to the south. However, the main focus of the settlement spanned a distance of no more than 150m north-south by *c.*100m east-west.

While the internal sequence is uncertain, the recut linear boundary ditch, aligned near north-south, was clearly a long-lived and perhaps a primary feature of the

settlement. The remnant of a possible large roundhouse abutting the west side of the boundary may have been the original principal house, with perhaps a smaller building to the north-west, marked only by an arc of gully. The similarly large roundhouse with a smaller roundhouse to the west, at the northern end of the settlement core may have replaced the earlier buildings, as these probably fell out of use, along with the linear boundary ditch system, which was later overlain by a small ring ditches and cut by a pit group. All the roundhouses had doorways facing to the north of west, which is contrary to the typical easterly doorways of Iron Age roundhouses, but in this location they would have faced down the natural slope of the land, perhaps overlooking their own fields and pasture.

The possible presence of only a single larger roundhouse at one time suggests that this was no more than a single farmstead, housing a single extended family group, and even if the two major roundhouses were contemporary, it would still be a small settlement. The only material evidence of domestic activity comprises a collection of saddle querns and rubbing stones, with the small size of the stones perhaps also related to the small size of the population to be fed.

There were six four-post structures, often referred to as granaries. Three lay close together near the original roundhouse, at the heart of the settlement; one lay to the north of the later principal roundhouse and, curiously, another two lay a further 100m and 150m to the north. Whatever their function, four-post structures often occur in far greater numbers, as at Stanwick (Crosby and Muldowney 2011), Brackley, Sawmills & Foxhills (Muldowney 2016 and Morris 2017). The relatively low density at Apex again reflects the small size of the settlement.

The large circular vertical-sided storage pit to the north of the large northern roundhouse was 1.80m in diameter and 0.67m deep, and produced both a complete saddle quern, perhaps a ritual deposition either when the pit fell out of use for grain storage or even at the abandonment of the settlement, as a semi-complete jar from this pit is probably one of the latest vessels from the site, dated no earlier than the late 3rd to 2nd centuries BC. To the south of the same roundhouse there was an even larger storage pit, 2.65m in diameter and 0.85m deep. Pits of this type, when capped properly, preserve seeds through winter with little damage to the crop, allowing for planting the following year, but do not allow constant access.

The presence of these pits alongside four-post structures may represent both long and short term usage of grain, four-posters to hold grain for consumption and the pits for over wintering seed corn. Alternatively, it might be that the storage pits associated with the northern, and possibly later, roundhouse mark a chronological shift from the use of above ground granaries to storage pits.

Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building

The site did not become reoccupied until possibly the Anglo-Saxon period, with limited activity comprising the construction of a single possible sunken-featured building. The structure was aligned north-east to south-west, and

has been dated typologically as no finds or material which could be dated were recovered. Its general size of 3.51m by 1.85m conforms to the majority of similar recorded structures that lie between 3m by 2m and 5m by 4m. Although it appears to be slightly narrower than normal for its length; the SFB at Apex bears comparison with the smallest structures recorded at Mucking, measuring 2.2m by 1.85m (Goring 1993, 64) and West Hestleton, where the smallest was 2.0m by 1.85m (Powlesland 1998, 64).

The presence of two postholes on the corners at the north-east end, and none at the other end is unusual, but there are dated examples where a single posthole survived at one end of a structure (Tipper 2004). It has been suggested that in some instances posts were free standing on the base of the pit, with the weight of the roof securing them in place, with others sitting in scoops or shallow pits, which may be the case of this structure.

To find buildings of this type beyond a primary focus of Saxon settlement is not uncommon, and similar isolated examples can be found at Wolverton (OA 2002), Booth Rise (Muldowney 2015), Victoria Park, Irchester (Meadows and Morris 2012) and small groups have been identified at Briar Hill, Northampton (Bamford 1985) and Barton Seagrave (Simmonds and Walker 2014), and others.

The nearest early Anglo-Saxon activity are the 5th-century burials at or close to Borough Hill and the remains of a 6th century settlement in the centre of Daventry (Soden 1997).

Medieval to post-medieval

The excavated area lies within the northern open field associated with the medieval settlement at Drayton, first recorded as a manor in 1531, but now incorporated into Daventry. The western site boundary runs along the eastern boundary between Drayton Fields and the fields of Braunston Parish. A hedge running east to west between the two most south-western fields may lie on a baulk of uncultivated land recorded in 1571 (Hall 1995). Drayton Parish fields were enclosed in 1752/53. The site's hedgerow boundaries appear to have fossilized the alignment of the earlier ridge and furrow cultivation.

The two excavated fence lines, both aligned approximately east-west, lay 130m apart and could have been in use at the same time. Neither appears to correlate with boundaries marked on historic mapping.

The well identified outside the excavation area was part of a farmyard enclosed by a small L-shaped collection of buildings adjoining an enclosure or paddock, visible on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map. These farm buildings probably represent an animal shelter or byre associated with Drayton Fields Farm, which lay down a track 250m to the south. The bricks capping the well after disuse were of 18th-century date at the latest.

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Maps

Bryant's Map of Northamptonshire 1827
1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1885

