NEOLITHIC, BRONZE AGE, IRON AGE, EARLY SAXON AND MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY IN THE NORFOLK BRECKLAND: EXCAVATIONS AT GRANGE FARM, SNETTERTON, 2002

by David Robertson

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SUMMARY

Archaeological excavations were carried out at Grange Farm Borrow Pit, Snetterton, in advance of mineral extraction associated with improvements to the A11 Norwich-Thetford trunk road. Evidence of occasional Later Neolithic-Early Bronze Age and Mid-Late Iron Age activity lay close to the site of Ashby Mere, a now-vanished area of open water. An Early Saxon settlement was represented by several sunken-featured buildings, and produced evidence of iron smithing. Probable Roman, medieval and post-medieval field systems were found, as was evidence for medieval crop processing/storage, medieval light industry and post-medieval metalworking.

Introduction

(Figs 1, 2 and 3)

Background to the project

The dualling of the A11 trunk road between Attleborough and Roudham, which also involved the cutting of underpasses, the construction of flyovers and mineral extraction, necessitated a number of archaeological projects in the vicinity during 2001–2. In February 2002 the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) was commissioned by May Gurney & Co. Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of a proposed borrow pit site at Grange Farm, Snetterton, Historic Environment Record (HER) Site 36802. Although no archaeological work had previously been carried out at the site, it was selected for evaluation because past intensive fieldwalking close by had resulted in finds dating from the Bronze Age onwards (Davison and Cushion 1999). Archaeological works ahead of these highway improvements led to the discovery of important prehistoric and Roman evidence at other locations nearby (Birks 2001a; Birks 2002; Birks forthcoming).

Within an area of about 6.8ha 34 trial trenches were excavated, nineteen of which produced archaeological evidence. The features discovered during this phase of works included Iron Age pits, a possible Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building, a number of waterlogged pits possibly associated with industrial activity, and ditches of Roman, medieval and later date (Robertson and Warsop 2003).

The NAU was subsequently commissioned to undertake an archaeological excavation, which took place between late February and early April 2002. Two areas (Figs 2 and 3) incorporating the whole of the extraction area (which had been reduced in size to 3.9ha) were systematically stripped of topsoil and subsoil to a maximum depth of 0.9m. The north-western area measured 185m north-west to south-east by 100m north-east to south-west and the south-western area measured 415m north-to-south and was 80m wide at its widest point. They were separated by a north-east to south-west aligned drainage ditch.

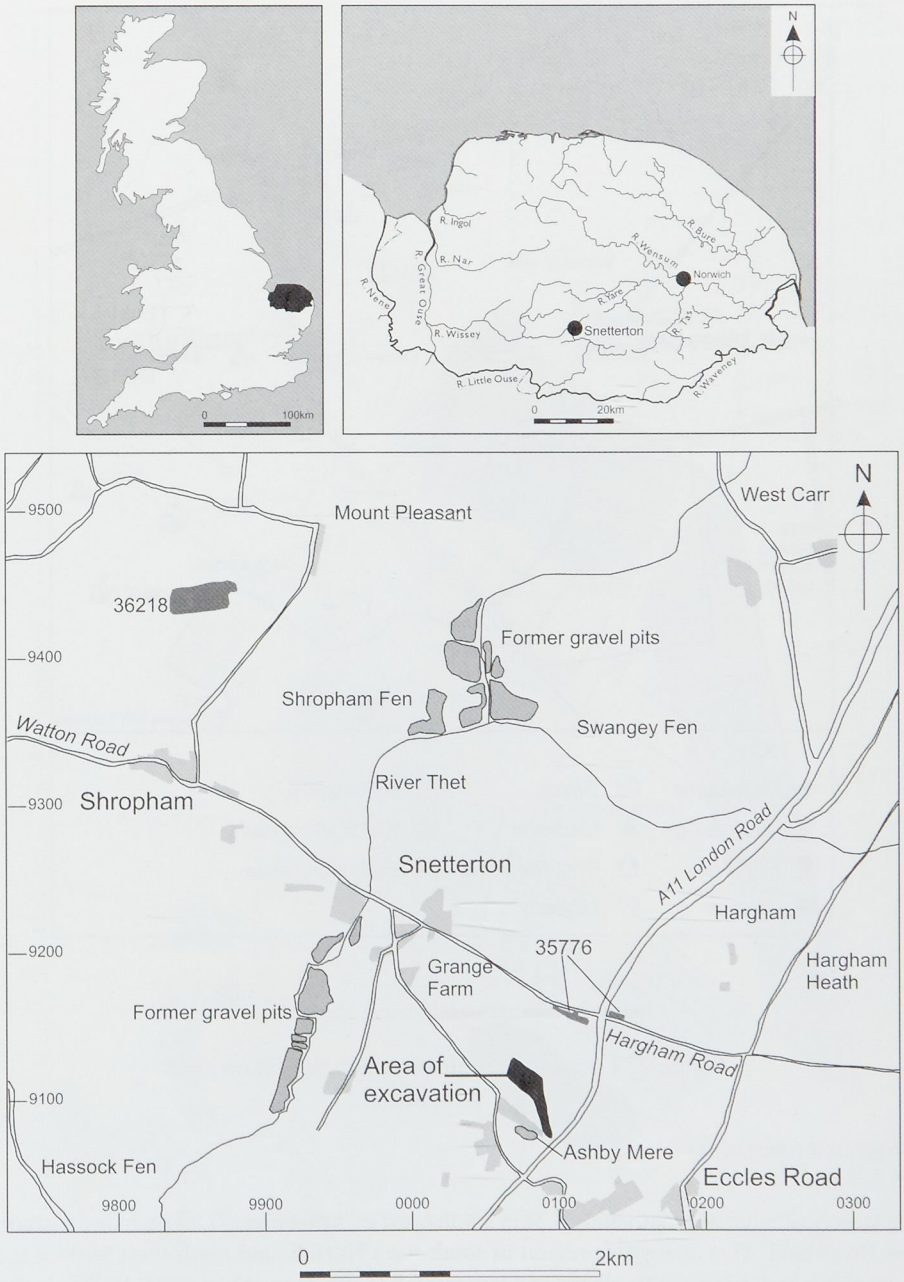


Figure 1. Location of Snetterton and of Grange Farm excavation site

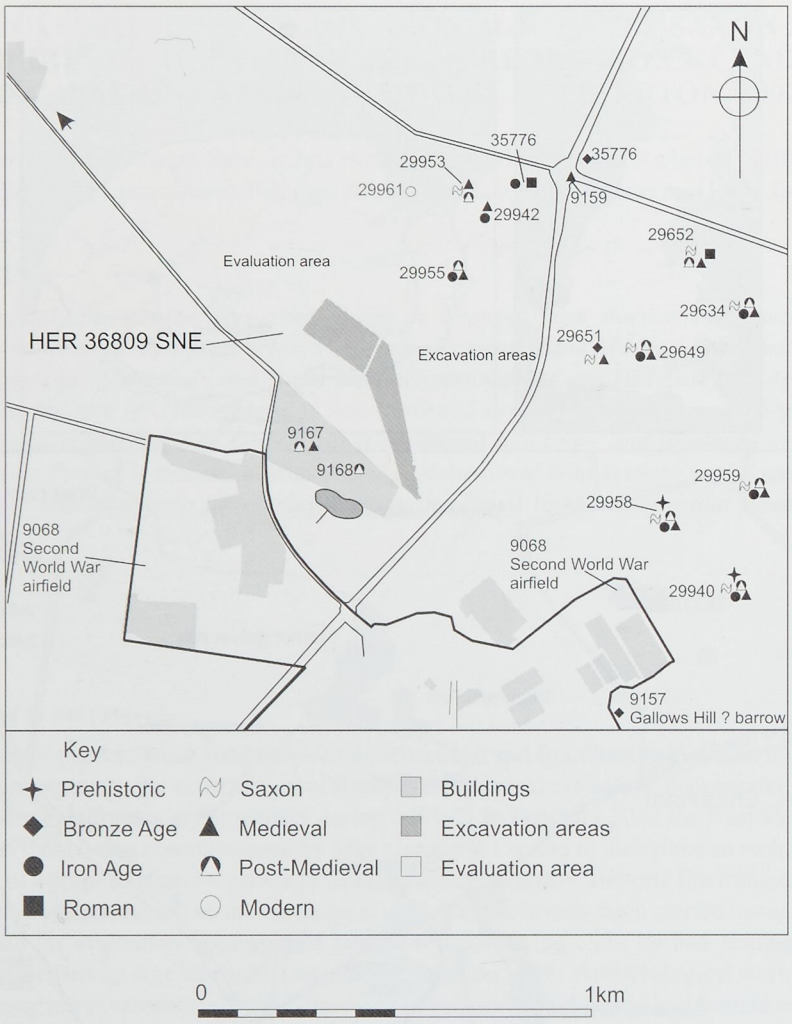


Figure 2. Location of evaluation and excavation areas

Geology and topography
(Figs 1, 2 and 3)

Snetterton is situated approximately 3.5km south-west of Attleborough, close to the eastern edge of the Breckland. This distinctive region of south-west Norfolk and north-west Suffolk is a low plateau characterised by gentle slopes and low rainfall (Corbett and Dent 1994; Williamson 1993, 11). The site (centred on TM 0065 9105) is located to the south and east of Snetterton village, to the west of the A11 trunk road and just to the north of the Snetterton Racing Circuit. The area lies within a broad arc in the River Thet, with the river itself situated 1.2km to the west and 2.2km to the north; a minor tributary of the Thet lies to the east. Directly to the south was the site of the former Ashby Mere. Formerly a large area of open water, this has disappeared in recent centuries as a result of drainage, silting and a lowering water table.

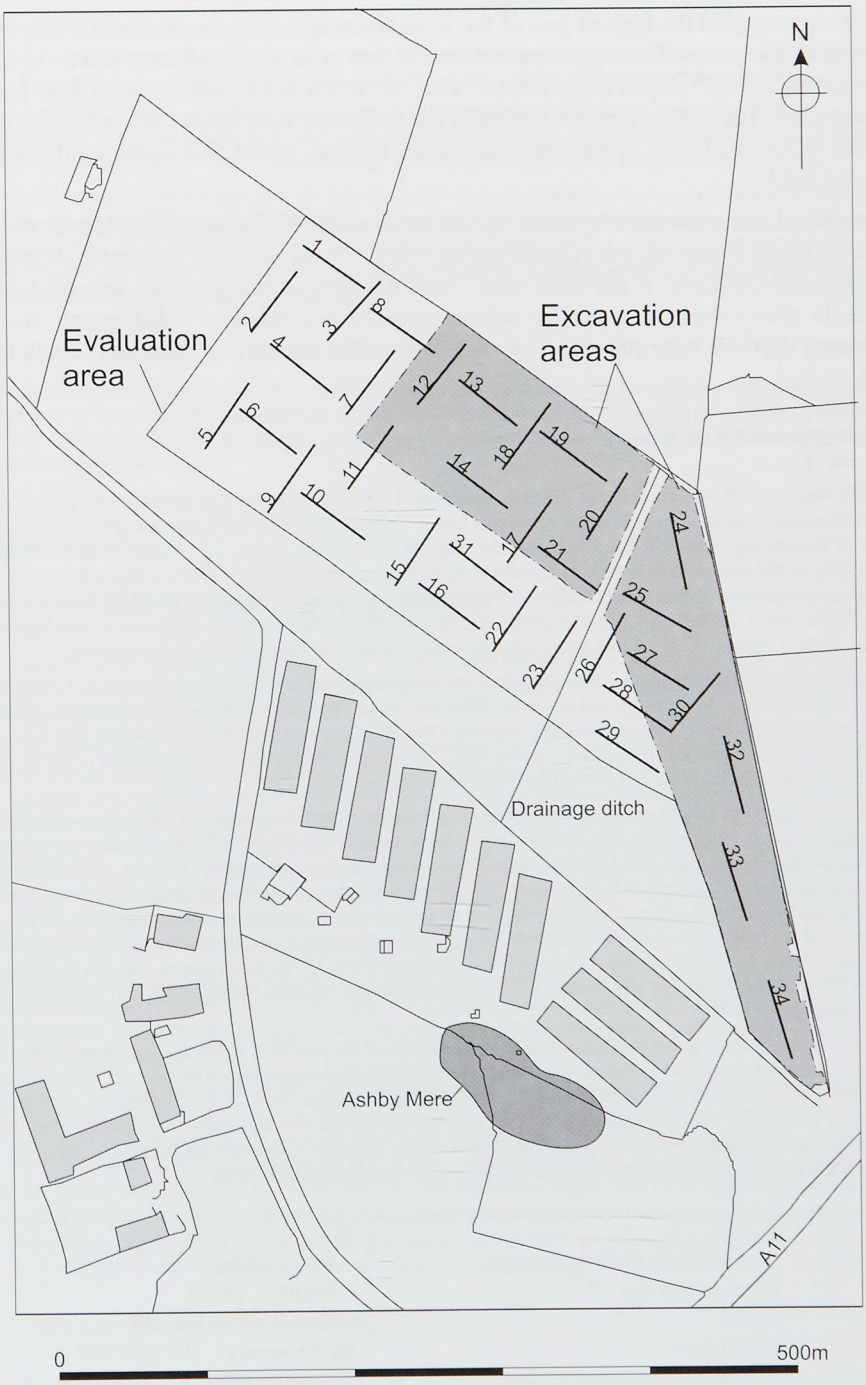


Figure 3. Location of excavation area, showing evaluation trenches (numbered)

The site occupies the highest part of the local landscape, with the land gently sloping away from it in all directions. The highest part of the site was in its north-east area, where the land was south-east facing and sloped down from *c.* 45m OD in the north-west to about 42m beside the drainage ditch. The eastern part was generally flat with a few undulations. At the time of the work the land to the south-east of the ditch was under stubble, whilst that to the north-west was a ploughed field.

Breckland is characterised by infertile, acid sandy soils (Williamson 1993, 11). On the site the combined depth of topsoil and subsoils varied from *c.* 0.4m to 0.9m. They were deepest in the south-east and shallowest in the north-west. These deposits overlay glacially deposited sands and gravels. In places these were grey in colour, possibly as a result of waterlogging. No clay or windblown deposits were present. The underlying solid geology is cretaceous chalk (Funnell 1994).

Archaeological and historical background
(Figs 1 and 2)

A possible barrow (HER 9157) at Gallows Hill to the south-east may indicate Bronze Age activity in the vicinity of the site. An archaeological evaluation in 2001 to the north-east beside the A11–Hargham Road junction (HER 35776) revealed a number of Bronze Age pits, post-holes and possible linear features (Birks 2001a, 4–5, 8 and 17; Birks forthcoming). Fieldwalking to the east of the site has produced a Bronze Age pottery find (HER 29651), found during an intensive fieldwalking programme (Davison and Cushion 1999) conducted to the east, north-east and north of the site (HER 29634, 29649, 29651, 29652, 29940, 29942, 29953, 29955, 29958 and 29959). This work also produced a considerable amount Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery, along with flint artefacts and metalwork.

Evaluation and excavation to the north-east of the site at Quidenham (HER 35776), close to the A11–Hargham Road junction, revealed a later Iron Age pit and a system of Roman ditches. One ditch contained two (probably residual) Iceni coins. A possible corn drier, pits (one of which contained Roman glass, iron nails and a prehistoric flint hand-axe) and post-holes were also examined (Birks 2001a; Birks 2002; Birks forthcoming). These features were probably associated with a Roman farmstead that lay just beyond the excavation area.

Davison suggests that the Domesday vill of Ashby (Essebei) was located to the north of Ashby Mere. Its presence here is suggested by documentary evidence and by the discovery of a well in 1970 (HER 9167). Since Ashby was not mentioned in the *Nomina Villarum* of 1316, it had probably been abandoned by the late 13th century (Davison 1973, 340–3). A medieval stone cross at the A11–Hargham Road junction (HER 9159) was a parish boundary marker, one of three known to have existed for Snetterton parish, although it is no longer in its original site. A number of possible medieval house sites have been identified in a field to the east of the site (HER 29634). Medieval pottery was collected in a field to the south of the site during fieldwalking associated with the A11 Improvement Scheme (HER 36198, not shown on Figs 1 or 2: Albion Archaeology 2001), while medieval and later ditches were excavated during evaluation (Birks 2001a, 18) at the A11–Hargham Road junction (HER 35776).

Remnants of a post-medieval field system lie to the south-west of the site (HER 9168). Records from 1804 suggest that much of the area to the south, if not the site itself, had reverted to bracken-covered heath by the early 19th century (Young 1804, 386). By the time of the publication of the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" mapping in 1905 the site and surrounding areas were wholly occupied by fields. Two Second World War monuments are located close by. A gun emplacement survives to the north of the site (HER 29961) while a large area to the south and south-east, now the site of the Snetterton Racing Circuit and an industrial estate, was used as an airfield (HER 9068).

Period	*Name*	*Date*
I	Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age	*c.* 2600–1800 BC
II	Mid–Late Iron Age	*c.* 300 BC–*c.* AD 60
III	Roman	Mid 1st–early 5th century
IV	Early Saxon	5th–7th century
V	Late Saxon	10th–11th century
VI	Medieval	Late 11th–mid 16th century
VII	Post-medieval	Mid 16th–20th century

Table 1. Chronological periods defined during analysis

Structure of the report

The aim of this document is to summarise the evidence for human activity spanning the period between the Later Neolithic-Early Bronze Age and the 20th century. Seven broad chronological periods have been identified (Table 1).

The information from the sixteen evaluation trenches within the area eventually excavated (Fig. 3) has been presented, where appropriate, alongside the details from the subsequent area excavation. Full information on the evaluation can be found in Robertson and Warsop 2003. No field survey was carried out prior to the evaluation or excavation.

Aerial photographs of the site taken by the RAF during 1946, by the Ordnance Survey in 1970 and by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) during the 1980s were consulted, but none show features that can be definitely be regarded as archaeological (RAF 1946 TM09/TM0091/A and B; OS 1970 TM0090 70-281-022; NLA 1989 TM0090/C/DHR5). Historical maps held by the Norfolk Heritage Centre were examined but it was not possible to see those held by the Norfolk Record Office (as a result of its closure during 2003).

Method

Topsoil and subsoil was stripped using two tracked 360° excavators fitted with 1.8m toothless buckets; stripping was monitored and the topsoil and subsoil metal-detected. All archaeological features were identified after stripping and excavated by hand. All work took place in accordance with the County Standards for Field Archaeology in Norfolk (Norfolk Landscape Archaeology 1998).

Excavation results

Period I: Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age (*c.* 2600–1800 BC)

(Figs 4A and 5)

The fills of six features (*547, 553, 597, 599, 601* and *606*) contained Beaker pottery dating to the Later Neolithic to Early Bronze Age era. All were located in the south-eastern area of the site, with four pits close to the eastern edge and a post-hole and gully near the western boundary.

A group of three pits (*597, 599* and *601*) located within an area of 6m^2 beside the eastern edge of site were organised in an L-shaped arrangement; they were shallow (no more than 0.25m deep), probably as a result of truncation. All three were roughly the same size, measuring about 0.9m long by 0.6m–0.8m wide. Each was filled with a dark brown sandy silt that contained concentrations of charcoal and redeposited burnt material. The two northernmost pits (*597* and *599*) were only 0.18m apart. One (*597*) contained a Beaker sherd whilst from the other (*599*) held six Beaker sherds, a sharpening stone (SF107), three flint flakes and a piece of a probable Later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age arrowhead, along with hazelnut shells and charcoal collected from an environmental sample. Pit *601* 2m to the south contained a Beaker sherd, along with charcoal, hazelnut shells and an elderberry seed from an environmental sample. No evidence for careful or patterned placement of the finds themselves was recorded in any of the features.

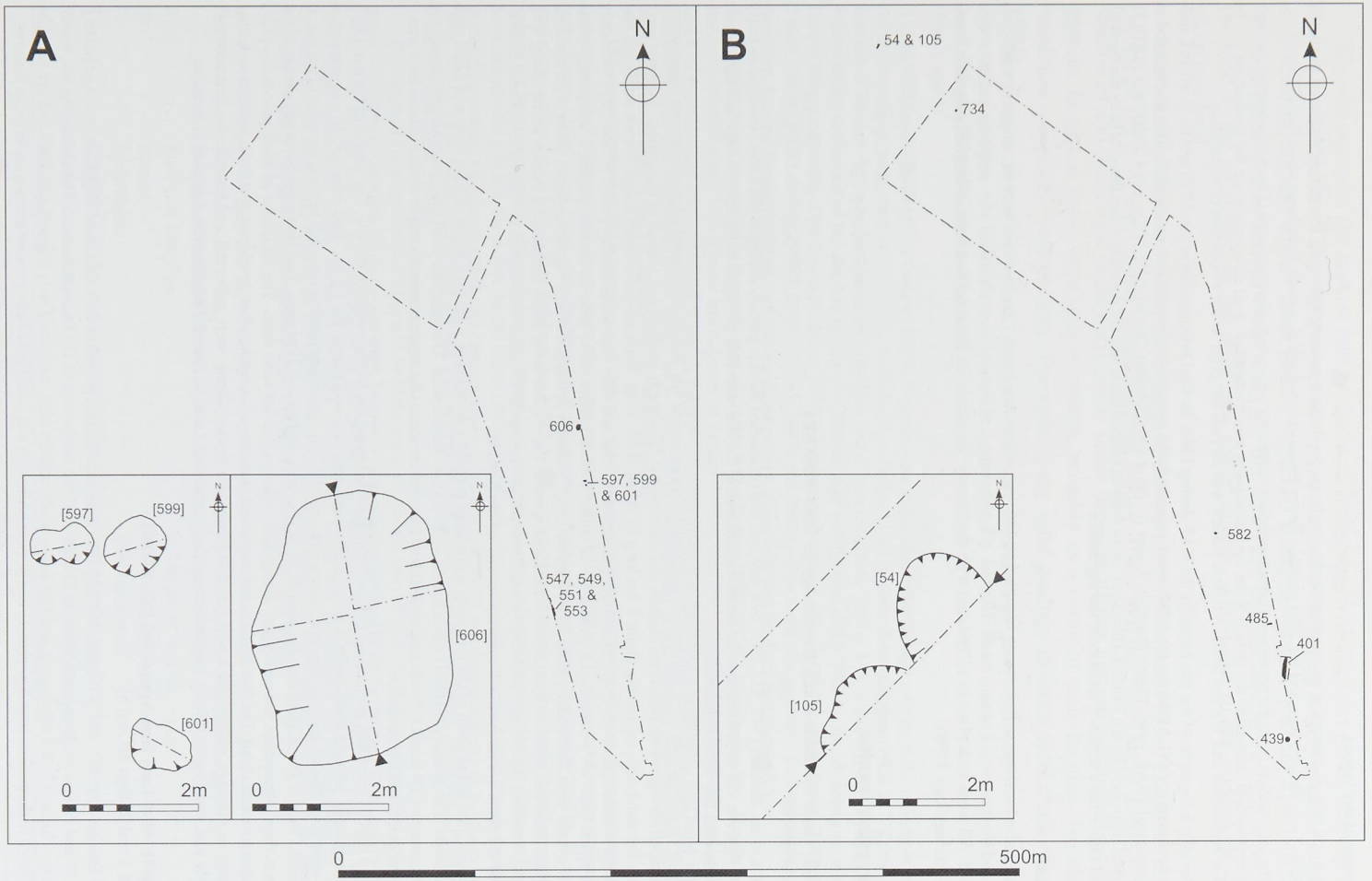
About 35m to the north of the pit group was a large pit (*606*), measuring 3.7m by 2.8m by 0.32m deep and filled with two deposits. The primary fill (*861*) was a barren, light yellow-brown sand. The uppermost fill (*607*) was a brown sandy silt which contained 26 Beaker sherds and an intrusive Late Saxon sherd. An environmental sample contained too little material to produce conclusive results.

Two heavily truncated intercutting gullies were identified along the western edge of the site. The longer of the two (*547*) was intermittent, aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and was traced for 12.8m. The other (*553*) was orientated north-west to south-east and was observed over a distance of 0.7m; continuing north-westwards beyond the edge of the site, it contained a Beaker sherd. Both features were 0.20–0.35m wide and up to 0.12m deep. Two later post-holes had damaged the gullies at their intersection, obscuring any stratigraphic relationship between them. The fill of one of these post-holes (*551*) contained a Beaker sherd. The four features may represent elements of a complex that developed over time, perhaps including boundary or drainage gullies and a post-fence. As only two Beaker sherds were collected, and because the features were spatially and stratigraphically an isolated group, their suggested Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age date is tentative.

Period II: Mid–Late Iron Age (*c.* 300 BC–AD 60)

(Plates 1 and 2; Figs 4B and 5)

Seven features (*54, 105, 401, 439, 485, 582* and *734*) were dated to this period as they contained Mid-Late Iron Age pottery. Two (*54* and *105*) were found in evaluation Trench 3, to the north-west of the excavation area. The remaining six, one of which was located in the north-west and five in the south-eastern area, contained only a few sherds each and are speculatively dated to the period. Iron Age pottery can be highly durable and could have been present intrusively in these features.



Figire 4. Plans of Period I (**A**) and Period II (**B**) features

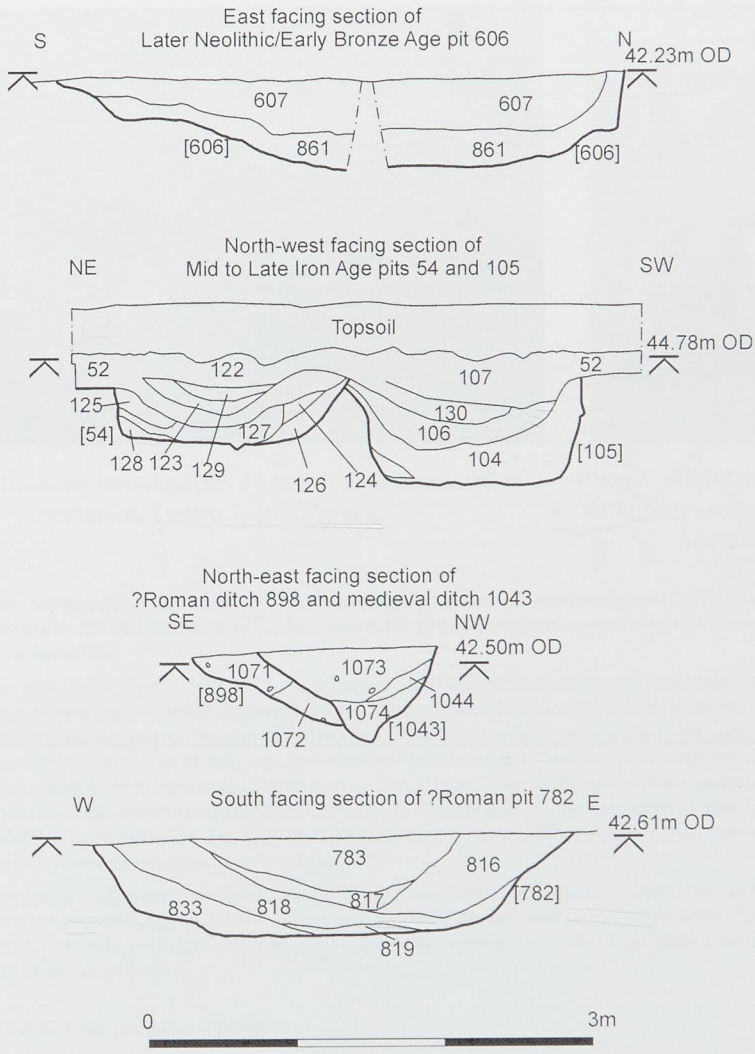


Figure 5. Sections through features of Periods I, II and III

Pits *105* and *54* in Trench 3 lay adjacent to each other and extended beyond the southern edge of the trench (Plate 1). The south-westernmost (*105*) contained three charcoal rich silty sands overlain by the subsoil *107* (Fig. 5). This subsoil contained 175 fragments of well-preserved pottery made from four different fabrics: of these, 167 sherds came from a single vessel in a fabric not commonly found in Norfolk. Associated with the pottery were a socketed stone implement (SF8), a possible iron suspension loop (SF7), nineteen pieces of fired clay and a fragment of burnt flint, all which (along with the pottery) probably originated from pit *105*. Its uppermost fill had been cut by the second pit (*54*). The latter contained a series of silty sand and sand deposits, two of which contained a high concentration of charcoal and frequent burnt flints (*123* and *127*). One (*123*) contained 277 well-preserved Iron Age pottery sherds (in five fabrics: all but nine sherds were in three fabrics with quartz-sand inclusions), two pieces of fired clay and an iron artefact (SF5). The object-rich deposits were probably dumps of domestic refuse. To the south-east of the two pits was an undated pit (*219*). Although the stratigraphic relationship between this pit and a Roman-period ditch (*188*) to the north-east was unclear the fill of the ditch did overlap that of the pit, and the latter may therefore have been of Iron Age date.

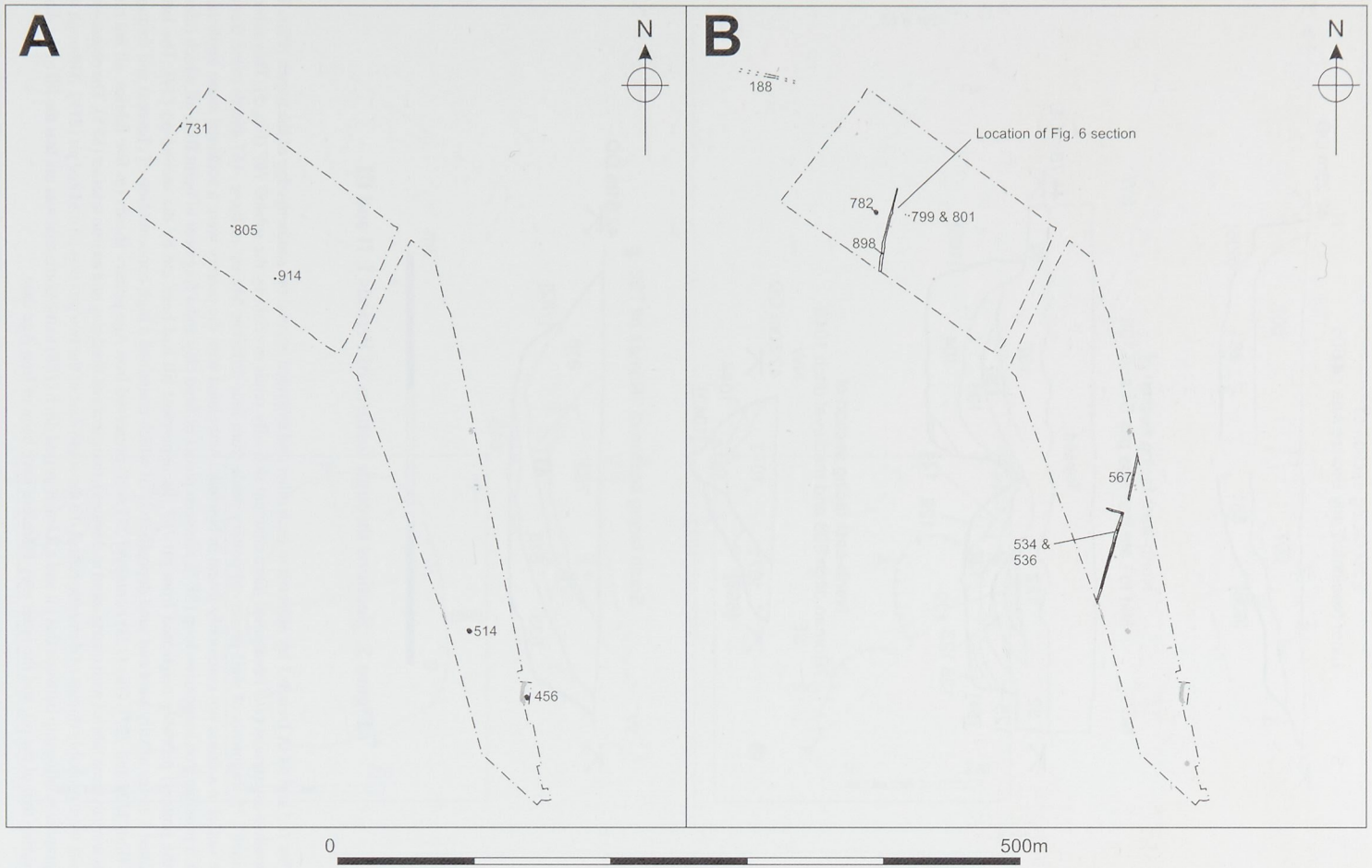


Figure 6. Plans of unassigned Period I/II features (**A**) and Period III features (**B**)

Plate 1. Mid–Late Iron Age pits *54* and *105*, as sectioned in evaluation Trench 3, looking east

Plate 2. Mid–Late Iron Age pit *439* under excavation, looking north-west

In the north-western area, approximately 70m from the pits in Trench 3, was another pit (*734*). It may have been of comparable size to pits *105* and *54*, measuring 1.3m x 1m x 0.3m deep, and its charcoal-rich single fill contained five sherds and a quantity of burnt flint.

A large pit (*439*), 3.3m x 3m x 1.5m deep, close to the southern edge of the south-eastern area (Plate 2), was filled with sands of varying colours, many of which appeared to have eroded in from the sides of the feature. From the latest deposit but one (*448*), three Iron Age sherds were recovered. About 41m to the north, a slightly curved ditch (*401*) was observed. While the curve suggested that it may have been a ring-ditch or an enclosure boundary, since both ends continued beyond the edge of the site it was not possible to be certain. Traced over *c.* 15m, it was 2.15m wide, up to 0.9m deep and had a V-shaped profile with a rounded base. It contained a series of naturally accumulating sands, the uppermost of which (*402*) contained two Iron Age sherds. A post-hole (*456*, Fig. 6A) located within the area encircled by the curving ditch contained fifty-seven burnt flints, and may have been contemporary with it.

A 3.6m-long section of an east-to-west aligned ditch (*485*) was found 25m to the north-east. This was the only part of a once larger ditch to have survived truncation by ploughing; its single fill contained one Iron Age sherd. Possibly of similar date but located *c.* 75m to the north-east was a pit (*582*) which measured 1.6m by 1.3m. A sherd and a piece of animal bone were recovered from its sandy fill.

Period I/II: Undated late prehistoric features
(Fig. 6A)

Four features were probably pre-Roman in date but produced no conclusive dating evidence. One was a pit (*731*) located close to the western edge of the north-western area which contained one undiagnostic prehistoric sherd. This was comparable in size to ?Iron Age pit *734* situated 12m to the east. Two pits, located *c.* 45m apart in the north-western area, contained worked flints dating to between the Late Neolithic and the Iron Age. In the southern part of the south-eastern area, a large oval pit (*514*) measuring 3.5m x 2.7m x 0.35m deep was comparable in shape and to two nearby Period IV Early Saxon sunken-featured buildings (SFBs *574* and *740*; Fig. 7). However, a prehistoric pottery sherd, a fragment of burnt flint, a flint flake and knapping debris recovered from its sandy fill suggested a prehistoric date.

Period III: Roman (mid 1st–early 5th century AD)
(Figs 5 and 6B)

A number of field boundary ditches of probable Roman date were observed. Although the dating evidence was sparse, the combination of a few pottery sherds, a few stratigraphic relationships, shared alignments and differences in orientation when compared to later ditches combine to suggest their contemporaneity and a Roman date.

A sherd of Roman pottery was found in one of four sections excavated through a north-east to south-west aligned ditch (*536*). This feature was traced for 55m from the western edge of the south-eastern area, with a maximum width of 0.9m and depth of 0.4m. Immediately to the west was a similarly aligned ditch (*534*) with similar proportions, it was observed for

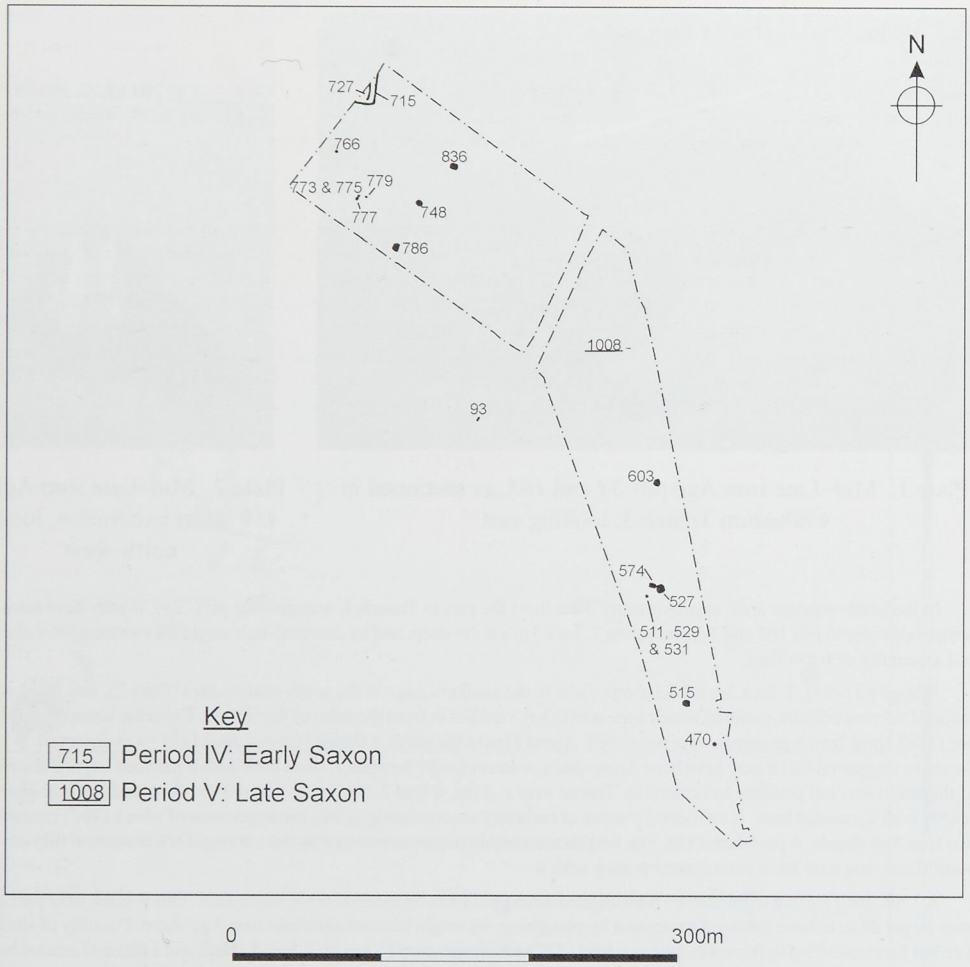


Figure 7. Plan of features from Period IV and V

66m before it turned westwards. As both ditches were filled with brown silty sands it was not possible to determine the stratigraphic relationship between them, however, it is likely that one replaced the other. To the north a possible continuation (*567*) contained no dating evidence.

A north-east to south-west orientated ditch in the north-western area (*898*; section Fig. 5) contained no Roman material. On account of its similar alignment to ditches *534* and *536,* and because it had been truncated by an Early Saxon SFB (*786*), it is suggested that it formed part of the same field system. Although part of it had been infilled by the Early Saxon period, the line of the feature survived — either partly open or marked by a landscape feature such as a low bank or hedge — to be re-cut in the medieval period (below: Period VI, *898*). In addition, a ditch (*188*) excavated in Trench 3 contained burnt flints, twelve pieces of Iron Age pottery, a fragment of later Iron Age or Roman pottery and three sherds of 1st-4th century pottery. It had a broad U-shaped profile, was about 2m wide by 0.55m deep, was aligned roughly north-west to south-east and may have formed part of the same field system as the other ditches.

A large pit and two post-holes near the centre of the north-western area may have formed a structure of some kind, but their dating is very tentative. The pit (*782*; section Fig. 5) was located 9m west of ditch *898*, measured 3.2m x 2.8m x 0.7m deep and contained a series of silty sand fills, the uppermost producing a Roman sherd. A post-hole 19m to the east (*799*) contained a piece of Roman tile; post-hole *801* 2m further east was undated.

Period IV: Early Saxon (5th–7th century)
(Plate 3; Figs 7–9)

During the Early Saxon period there were two discrete areas of activity within the excavated area (Fig. 9), one in the north-west and one in central south-east. Seven sunken-featured buildings (SFBs; Fig. 10) were firmly identified, three located in the north-west and four in the south-east. Six contained pottery dating between the 5th and 7th centuries.

North-western area

The southernmost SFB (*786*; Fig. 9 for section) cut through the backfill of ?Roman ditch *898*. Roughly rectangular with sloping sides and a gently undulating base, it measured 5.17m x 4.26m x 0.22m deep. Seven post-holes were present within its perimeter, with one located centrally along each of the shorter sides, two close to western side and three internally within its eastern half. The two post-holes (*889* and *907*) against the shorter sides were deeper than the rest (0.50–0.65m as opposed to 0.10–0.22m); both contained a post-pipe and post-packing. Sealing these deposits, and within the five other post-holes and the SFB as a whole, was a grey-brown silty sand (*787*). This contained thirteen Early Saxon sherds, 77 pieces of animal bone, an undiagnostic piece of slag, seven fragments of burnt flint, a flint flake and a piece of residual Roman pottery. Samples yielded cereal grains, hazelnut shells, animal bone fragments and fuel residues.

About 28m to the north-east was the roughly rectangular truncated remnant of an SFB (*748*), 3.8m x 3.1m and up to 0.2m deep, with an undulating base. The feature contained four post-holes of 0.1–0.3m depth, two towards the north-western corner and two close to the north-eastern edge. All were filled with deposits similar to the grey-brown silty sand (*749*) found within the SFB, from which one Early Saxon sherd and three animal bones were collected.

A rectangular, flat-based SFB base (*836*) with sloping sides *c.* 30m to the north-east measured 4.6m x 3.25m x 0.27m deep. Its brown-grey silty sand fill (*837*) yielded a 5th–7th century sherd, a fragment of lava quern stone (SF96) and seven animal bones. Environmental samples proved negative. Two shallow depressions (no more than 0.05m deep), one located centrally along each of the shorter sides, represented post-pads.

Two oval pits containing Early Saxon pottery lay *c.* 30m to the west of the north-western SFBs. The larger of the two (*777*) measured 1.5m x 1.28m x 0.22m deep and contained an ash, charcoal and silty sand fill, from which four sherds were collected. Measuring 0.6m x 0.57m x 0.15m deep, the smaller pit (*779*) was filled with similar material and contained one 5th–7th century sherd. A pit (*773*) and post-hole (*775*) located between the two may have been contemporary but yielded no dating evidence. A further pit (*766*) 31m to the north-west, 1.4m x 1.08m x 0.35m deep, was also filled with ash and silty sand, from which thirty-six sherds, five animal bones were retrieved. Sampling recovered cereal grains, fired clay and animal bone fragments.

A gently curved, north-to-south aligned ditch (*727*), in the north-western corner of the north-western area, was traced for 10.5m from a southern terminus to the site limit. A sherd of probable Early Saxon pottery from its fill provides tentative dating evidence. The feature fitted neatly within the arc of an adjacent L-shaped ditch (*715*) running to the east and south.

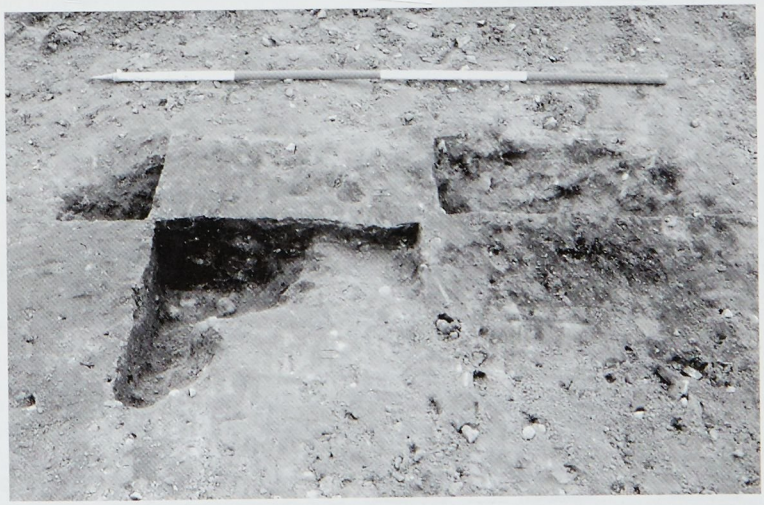


Plate 3. Early Saxon pits *531*, *529* and *511* (left to right); charcoal-filled pit *511* contained metalworking debris. Looking north-west.

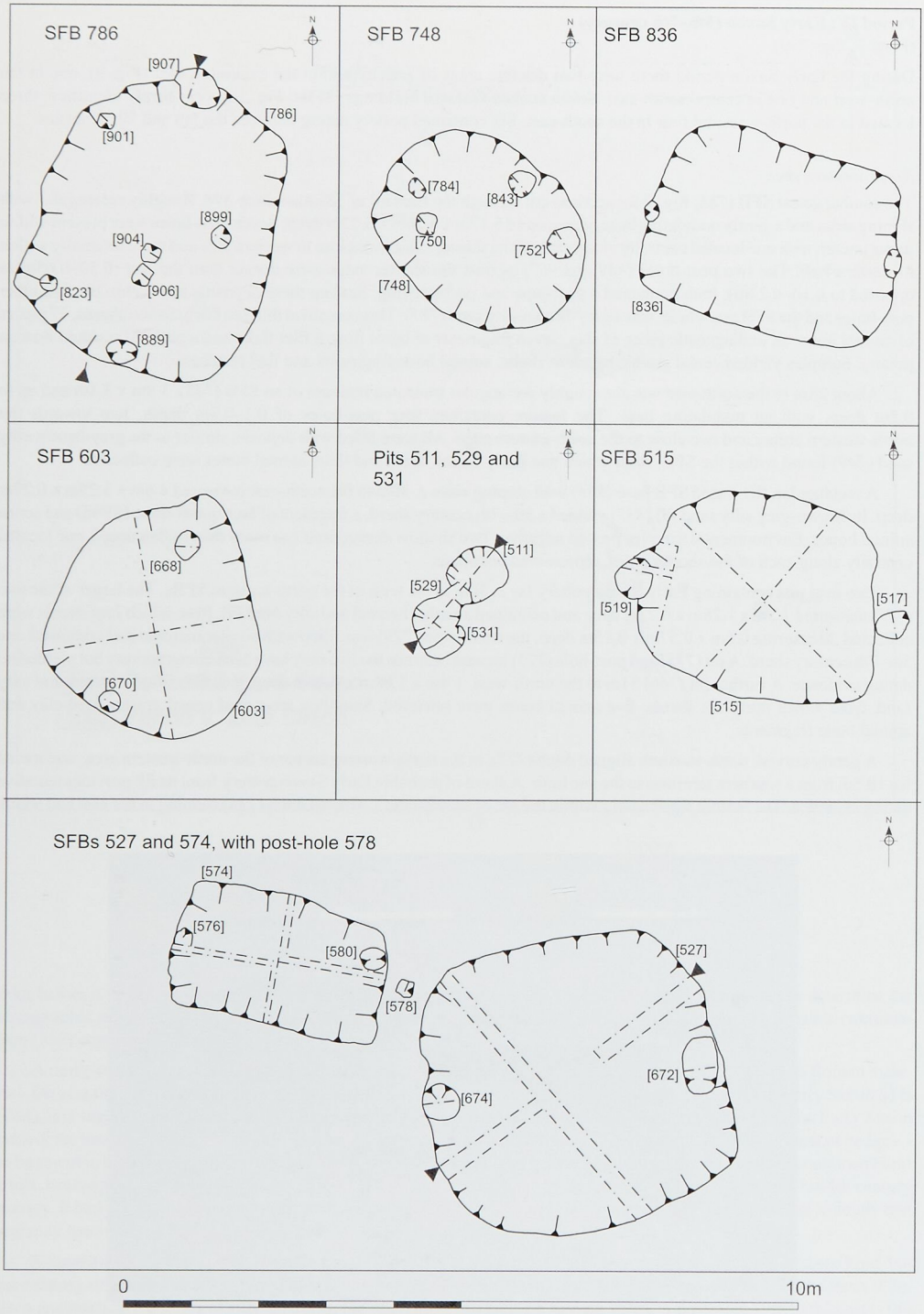


Figure 8. Detail plans of selected Period IV features

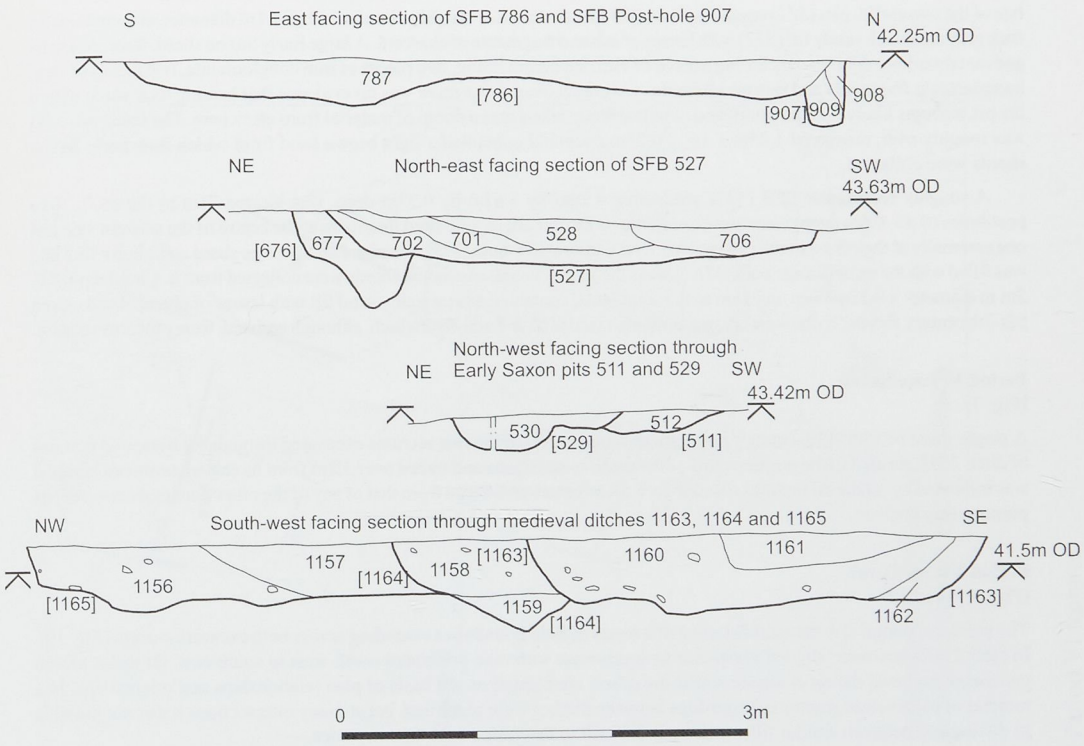


Figure 9. Sections across features of Periods IV and VI

The plan relationship between the ditches suggests that they were contemporary, and that they representing enclosures that were in use at the same time or developed over time.

A little to the south of the north-western area, a possible SFB (*93*) was identified in Trench 23. Only the northernmost part of the feature (2.5m by 0.75m) was visible in the trench. Its waterlogged fill contained a sherd of Early Saxon date and a piece of Saxon or medieval pottery.

South-eastern area

Early Saxon features were concentrated in the central-southern part of this excavation area. The northernmost SFB (*603*) was an irregular oval in shape, with a flat base, and measured 4.3m x 3.68m x 0.37m deep. Aligned north-east to south-west, a 0.5m-deep post-hole lay halfway along each of the shorter sides. The lower of the two fills within the SFB was a mid-brown silty sand, containing 22 Early Saxon sherds and eight fragments of animal bone. The upper fill was a dark brown-black silty sand with charcoal, twelve Early Saxon sherds, 22 pieces of lava quern stone (including SF95 and SF104), 30 animal bone fragments and three pieces of burnt sandstone. Domestic food refuse, including cereal grains and hazelnut shells, was recovered from an environmental sample.

A cluster of features lay c. 65m further to the south. The largest was a roughly square SFB (*527*; Fig. 9 for section) measuring *c.* 5.20m across x 0.35m deep and cut an earlier undated pit (*676*). Within its confines lay two post-holes (depths of 0.35m and 0.7m), one each located centrally along both the western and eastern sides. The SFB contained four brown silty sand deposits, of which the uppermost at least appeared to be a deliberate backfill. The penultimate fill (*528*) yielded an Early Saxon whittle-tang knife, three residual prehistoric sherds and 46 animal bone fragments. Directly to the west lay a roughly rectangular SFB (*574*), 3.76m x 2.28m x 0.12m deep, that featured two 0.4m-deep post-holes, one on each of the short sides. The feature contained a grey-brown sand (*575*) from which four Early Saxon sherds, an Early Saxon whittle-tang knife (SF62) and a residual flint were recovered.

Between SFBs *527* and *574* was a post-hole (*578*) that may have been related to one, or both, of them. Just over 5m to the south-west of these features lay a group of three pits (Plate 3; Figs 8 and 9); pit *529* cut the other two (*511* and *531*). Only

one of the two earlier pits (*511*) contained dating evidence; this was roughly circular and of *c.* 1m diameter, and contained a dark grey and black sandy fill (*512*) with lenses of ash and fragments of charcoal. A large Early Saxon sherd, three iron nails and metalworking debris — including a piece of vitrified hearth lining, two pieces of iron conglomerate, two pieces of slag, hammerscale fragments and ferrous globules — were recovered. As there was no evidence that heating took place within the pit, it seems likely that the pit fill and metalworking debris was a dump of material from elsewhere. The latest pit (*529*) was roughly oval, measured 1.25m x 1m x 0.25m deep and contained a light brown sand from which four Early Saxon sherds were collected.

A roughly rectangular SFB (*515*), measuring 4.26m by 3.61m by 0.23m deep, was located 71m to the south. Two post-holes (0.45–0.6m deep) were associated with its shorter edges, one sited internally at the centre of the western side and one externally at the centre of the eastern side. The western post-hole (*519*) contained an Iron Age sherd and a burnt flint and was filled with the same orange sand (*516/520*) as the SFB. Three Early Saxon sherds were collected from it. Circular pit *470*, 2m in diameter x 0.32m deep and 28m to the south-east, contained a brown silty sand fill with lenses of charcoal and eleven 5th-7th century sherds. To the west lay two similarly sized pits (*466* and *468*) which, although undated, were probably related.

Period V: Late Saxon
(Fig. 7)

A single sherd of 10th–11th century pottery was found in one of the two sections excavated through the truncated remains of ditch *1008*, located in the northern part of the south-eastern area and traced over 3.1m from its eastern terminus before it was truncated by medieval features. Its east-to-west orientation differed from that of any of the other ditches discovered; its purpose was unclear.

Period VI: medieval
(Figs 5, 9 and 10)

The medieval period saw the establishment of a series of field boundaries extending across both excavation areas (Fig. 10). In total 25 ditches were aligned north-east to south-west with nine orientated north-west to south-east. Of these, eleven contained medieval dating evidence whilst the others were dated on the basis of plan relationships and orientations. In a number of places stratigraphic relationships between ditches were identified, but at many intersections it was not possible to distinguish between similar fills, making it difficult to determine a feature sequence.

Phase 1
(Fig. 10A)

Although no dating evidence was collected from ditches of this phase, their common alignment with dated features suggested that they were medieval. Stratigraphic relationships suggested they were the earliest medieval ditches encountered. Finds were very sparse. A residual flint flake was collected from a primary fill of a ditch *892*, in the north-western area, whilst a little animal bone came from the lowest fill of ditch *1165*, to the south-east.

Ditches *950*, *1051*, *1110*, *1251*, *1265* and *1299* in the north-western area formed a single north-east to south-west aligned field boundary, broken by at least four entranceways, which was orientated parallel to the surviving line of ?Roman ditch *898* (which persisted as a landscape feature to the north and south of Period IV SFB *786*). About 18m further to the east two similarly aligned ditches (*892* and *47/120/920*) probably represented a small field or trackway.

If comparably orientated ditches *744*, *747*, *927*, *931*, *1295*, *1154* and *1165* were open at the same time in the south-eastern area, the site would have been occupied by a series of three fields, each with a width between 44m and 54m. A 20m-wide minor enclosure or trackway between ditches *1154* and *1165* was comparable to that recorded in the north-western area. Two east-to-west aligned ditches (*740* and *866*) identified just to the south of the entrance gap between ditches *744* and *984* may also have been integral to the system.

Phase 2
(Fig. 10B)

At least four of the ditches showed evidence for re-cutting on one or more occasions (*1165* as *1164* — Fig. 9 for section; *1251* and *1265* as *1249*, *1247*, *1245* and *1243*, and *1299* as *1294*), probably in the context of general cleaning-out. Two medieval sherds and a nail were found in the upper fill of one of the re-cuts (*1164*). In the north-western area an angled ditch (*954*) to the north-east of the entrance between ditches *1245/1243* and *950* may have channelled traffic towards the entrance, with ditch *1202* to its south-east serving a similar purpose. Changes in the organisation of the landscape in the south-eastern area are suggested by the replacement of ditches *927* and *947* with a fence on their western edge (evidenced by thirteen post-holes *883*).

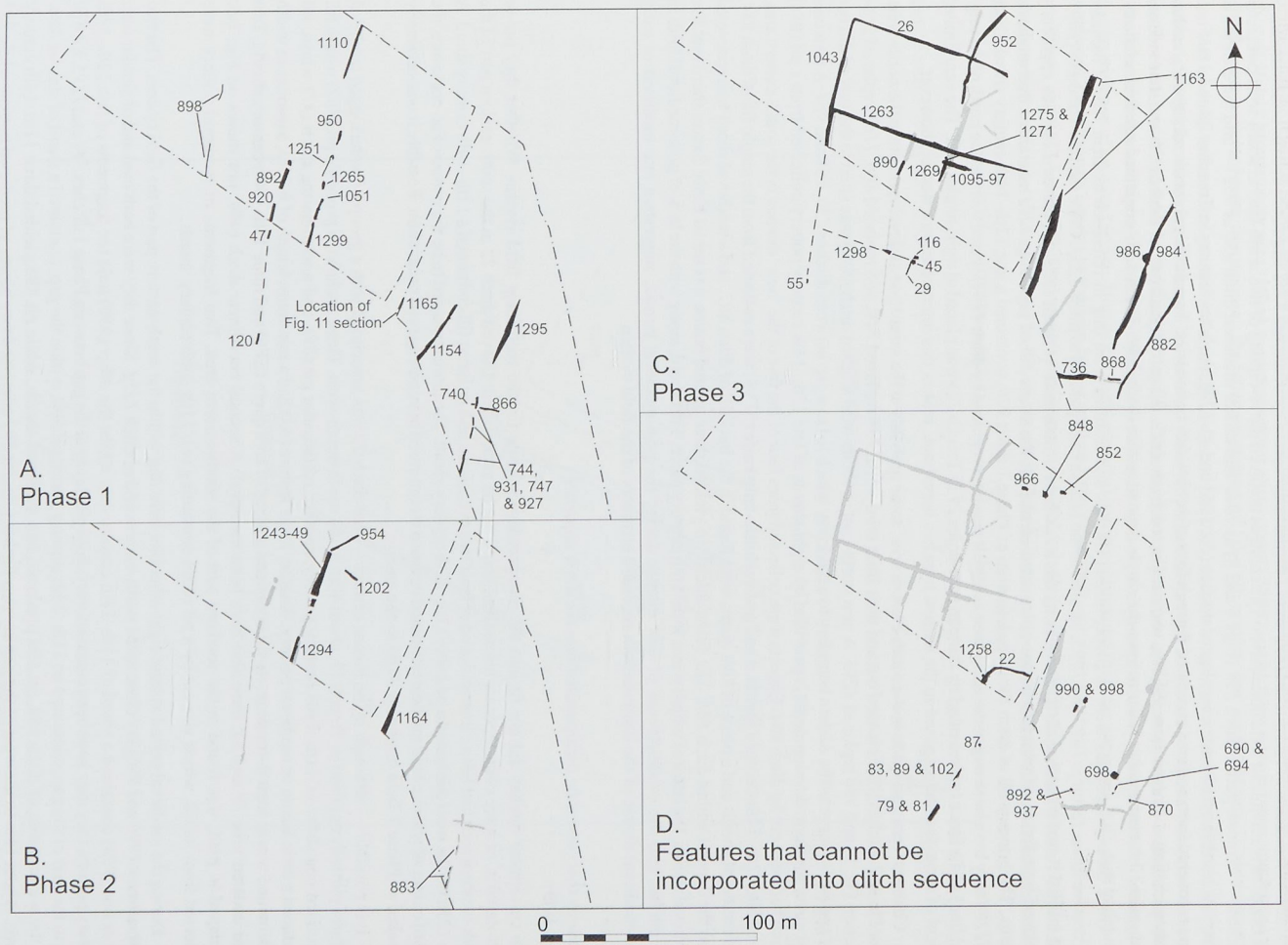


Figure 10. Plans of Period VI features

Phase 3
(Fig. 10C)

At some point during the medieval period the field system was remodelled. In the north-west area, the remodelling was signified by the disuse of two ditches (*892* and *1243*, the latest successor of ditches *1251* and *1265*) and the establishment of a series of new rectilinear field boundaries. The changes involved the re-cutting of two north-east to south-west orientated ditches — ?Roman-period ditch *898* (Figs 4 and 5) as *1043* and earlier medieval ditch *950* as *952* — and the creation of three new north-west to south-east aligned ditches (*26*, *1263* and *45/1298*, the latter features in Trenches 22 and 31). Finds were recovered from sections excavated through four of the five new boundaries. Two medieval sherds, along with residual finds including a Roman coin (SF79), were collected from ditch fill at the junction of ditches *26* and *1043*. Three 11th–mid-13th century sherds came from the single deposit within ditch *1298*. Ditch *1263* contained residual artefacts.

Once these boundaries were in place, further ditches and features were dug in reference to them. These included successive linear features *1097* and *1095*, located to the south of and parallel to ditch *1263*. Once the latest of these (*1095*) had infilled it was truncated at right-angles by ditch *1269*, a reinstatement of ditch *1051*. On disuse *1269* was apparently replaced by a fence, of which two post-holes were identified: the single fill of post-hole *1271* contained two medieval sherds. The primary fill of ditch *890*, a redefinition of Phase 1 ditch *920*, contained a late 12th–14th century sherd. Ditch *45/1298* may have been dug at the same time as *890*. It was later replaced by ditch *116* (located 0.9m to the north of the original line) and a fence (represented by thirteen post-holes *29* in Trench 22) was placed at right-angles to it. The very limited extent of these features exposed in the narrow trenches hereabouts makes this interpretation tentative, however.

Changes were also made in the south-eastern area, some probably at the same time as developments in the north-west. Four Phase 2 ditches were cleaned out and their lines reinforced: *736* replaced *740*, *868* replaced *866*, *1163* replaced *1164* (section Fig. 9) and *984* replaced *1295*. A new north-east to south-west aligned ditch (*882*) was sited to the east of ditches *984* and *868* to serve as the eastern boundary to a trackway which led to a gap between ditches *736*, *868* and *984*. A *terminus post quem* for these developments is provided by eight sherds of late 12th–14th century pottery collected from a pit (*986*) which had been cut by ditch *984*. Objects were collected from four of the five of the 'new' ditches in the south-eastern area. Seven late 12th–14th-century sherds, a nail and a whittle-tang knife (SF98) were collected from the single fill of ditch *984*, two medieval sherds and a piece of lava quern were found in the backfill of ditch *882*, and a medieval sherd was recovered from the deposit within ditch *868*. The fill of ditch *736* yielded three animal bones, a residual Early Saxon sherd and five medieval sherds, the latest of which was a 15th–16th century piece. This sherd, along with the lack of post-medieval finds in the ditches and the establishment of new ditches during the post-medieval period, suggests a late medieval or early post-medieval disuse of the south-eastern recorded elements of the field system.

Features that cannot be incorporated into the ditch sequence
(Fig. 10D)

Two curvilinear ditches did not fit into the interpretative scheme for the rectilinear field system. Whether they pre-or post-dated it, or were contemporary anomalies, could not be established. Curved ditch *22* in the south-eastern part of the north-western area had been cleaned-out on at least two occasions, and its latest fill contained a 11th–14th century sherd. A pit (*1258*) to the west contained a possible 11th–12th century sherd. The ditch appeared to be the corner of an enclosure, the full of extent of which could not be determined because it continued beyond edges of excavation. Possibly it was originally attached to Phase 1 field boundary *1165* to the east.

It is possible — although by no means certain — that ditch *22* was associated with a group of waterlogged medieval features partially exposed in Trench 23, about 40m to the south-south-west. These included a probable pit (*102*) whose fill contained one sherd of 11th–14th century pottery, another rectangular pit (*89*), and a terminating ditch (*87*) whose fill produced a little Saxon or medieval pottery. Another large feature (*83*) had a minimum length of 6.75m, a minimum width of 0.7m and was at least 0.4m deep; its fill contained a piece of lava quern (SF6) and three 13th–14th century sherds. Two large undated pits, *79* and *81*, may also have been medieval. A second curvilinear ditch (*404*; not shown on Fig. 10), C-shaped in plan, was found in the southern part of the south-eastern area. Two fragments of medieval pottery were collected from its fill, which was cut by a pit (*406*) containing two 11th–14th century sherds.

During the medieval period at least eight other pits were dug within the south-eastern part of the field system. The two northernmost (*990* and *998*) lay close to the north-eastern end of ditch *1154*. Since they were both oval and of similar size, and as one (*998*) contained a sherd of 11th–14th century date whilst the other (*990*) held ten fragments of late 12th–14th century pottery, they may have been contemporary. Four pits lay near the gap between Phase 1 ditches *744* and *1295*. Pit *870* just to the east of the gap, contained an 11th–14th century sherd; pit *690*, within the gap, contained a sherd of similar date. On the western side of ditch *984*, pit *694* produced two medieval sherds, while pit *698* yielded three 11th–14th century sherds. About 15m to the west of the gap lay two further pits. Pit *892* contained two pieces of medieval pottery while *937* yielded a 13th–14th century sherd. Approximately 190m to the south, and apparently outside the field system, isolated pit *495* (not shown on Fig. 10) contained a medieval whittle-tang knife blade (SF60) and a little animal bone.

An unusual irregular pit (*848*) in the north-eastern part of the north-western area measured 3.78m x 2.82m x 0.23m deep. A 0.15m-deep hollow (*848*) in its centre held a post (*957*), while flint cobbles had been used to line the pit base to the south and east. Two layers of clay had been deposited, perhaps as trample or as deliberately laid surfaces, above the cobbles and against the post. On disuse, the post above the clay was removed, leaving the lower part to be sealed by an abandonment deposit of dark brown sandy silt (*849*). A medieval copper alloy mount (SF80), a nail, three animal bones and four pottery sherds were collected from this material, the latter suggesting a 15th-16th century date for the feature.

About 5.6m to the east of pit *848* was an irregular shaped pit (*852*), the base of which was also lined with cobbles (*854*). Although a 0.55m wide ring of orange brown clay (*963*/*965*) marked its edge it did not contain a post, and no dating evidence was collected from its two backfill deposits. This feature was probably contemporary with and related to pit *848*. Their functions are unclear, although it possible they were used in cereal storage or processing. This possibility is suggested by the presence of an oven (*966*) *c.* 10m to the north-west that was probably used for these purposes. Although undated, it contained clay deposits similar to those in *848* as well as lying close by.

Oven *966* was an ovate pit with a teardrop-shaped extension on its eastern side which measured 2.95m x 1.7m x 0.28m deep. Before it was used a lining of light brown clay had been laid in the base; during its first use its upper surface had been

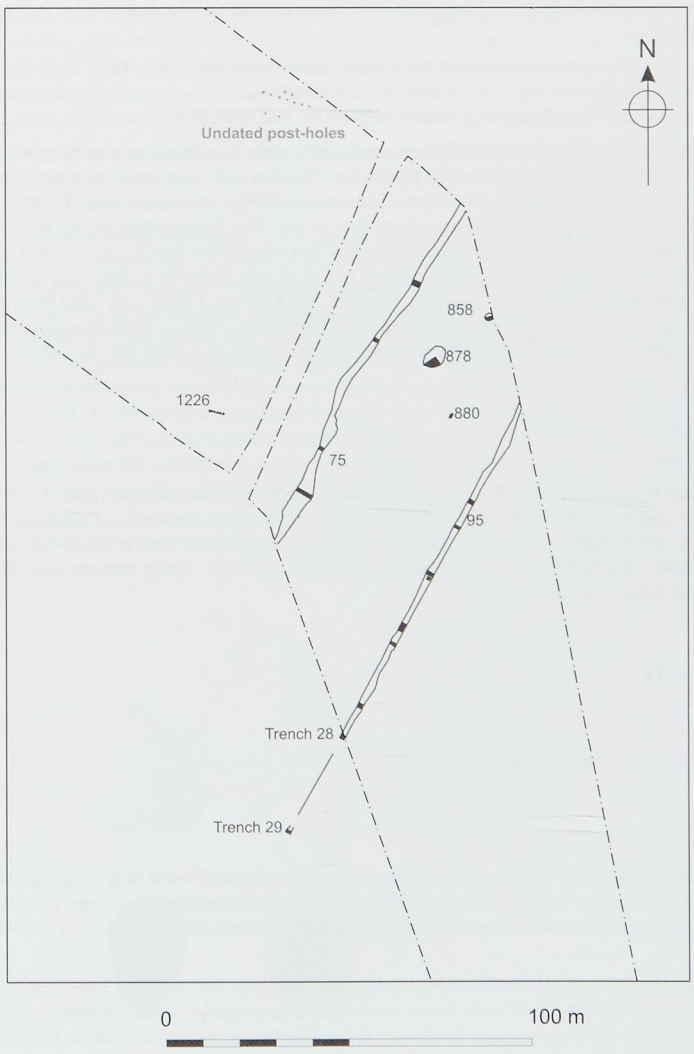


Figure 11. Plan of Period VII features, showing selected undated post-holes

heat-scorched red. The oven was then cleaned and a small patch of green brown clay was laid in the western part, perhaps as a repair to the lining, before it was used again. The charcoal debris *971* from this firing (which did not reach high enough temperatures to scorch the later clay layer) was left *in situ* and the oven abandoned. An environmental sample collected from *971* produced debris from cereal processing and storage, including cereal grains, spoiled grains and weed seeds. Once the oven was abandoned four successive dumps of material were placed within it. The uppermost of these was a sandy clay which contained charcoal flecks and patches of light brown clay. Although none of the clay patches were scorched, they may have originally been part of the oven's superstructure.

Period VII: post-medieval
(Fig.11)

The main orientation and the rectilinear form of the field system in the south-eastern area was reinforced by the cutting of two parallel north-east to south-west aligned ditches. Both crossed the width of the excavation area unbroken. Ditch *75* was the most northerly; the four sections excavated through it yielded a Charles I coin (SF63), an iron swivel (SF73), fragments of lava quern (SF99) and five animal bones, as well as residual items. Ten sections across ditch *95*, *c.* 40m to the south-east, produced a fragment of clay pipe with rib moulded decoration, an iron object (SF101), a nail, animal bone and two pieces of burnt sandstone, along with residual items. There was no evidence to indicate what happened to the Period VI field system in the north-western area.

It is worthy of note that a piece of unfused distal sheep femur collected from a fill of ditch *75* appears to join with another bone recovered from post-hole *1226*, located 63m to the north-west. This suggests that the post-hole, along with the five others associated with it, are elements of a fence built on the line of medieval curvilinear ditch *22*.

Three pits located between ditches *75* and *95* contained post-medieval material and may have been contemporary. The largest (*878*) measured 7m x 4.6m and produced a piece of post-medieval ceramic building material, a piece of 15th–16th century pottery, sixteen medieval sherds, a fragment of lava quern (SF97) and animal bone. Located 13.5m to the south, irregular pit *880* produced a post-medieval button and residual sherds. Pit *858* was situated to the north of pit *878*. Although it continued beyond the eastern edge of site, it was oval in shape and measured at least 2.1m x 2.05m x 0.32m deep. Its lower fill (*859*) was a yellow clayey sand which contained three pieces of post-medieval ceramic building material, three nails, two animal bones and two residual medieval sherds. Its upper fill (*858*) was a black silty sand from which metalworking debris — a possible tuyere, two pieces of vitrified material and four pieces of slag — and two residual medieval sherds were recovered. As no evidence for heating or burning was found within the pit, it is likely this deposit was a dump of smithing material.

Undated features
(Fig. 11)

Over 80 features, mostly pits and post-holes, produced no dating evidence and could be not placed within the site sequence. Of these, eleven post-holes located in the north-east of the north-western area are worthy of mention. Two post-holes were located about 3.6m apart. Approximately 5m further to the north lay a north-west to south-east aligned row of seven post-holes, and about 1.2m to the north again were two further post-holes. These features may all have been related, forming elements of fence lines or structures.

Specialist reports

Lithics
by Sarah Bates *with* Sarah Percival *and* Peter Robins

The assemblage
(Fig. 12)

Seventy-one pieces of struck flint were recovered, along with 143 fragments of burnt flint weighing a total of 1.695kg. The struck flint is mid to dark grey in colour, with cream-coloured cortex of varying thickness. Some pieces have abraded and/or patinated cortical surfaces. About half of the struck flint is sharp in condition and only one piece exhibits post-depositional patination.

Only six of the struck flints came from features of prehistoric date (pits *599* and *805*). The majority were either residual in later features (65 pieces in features of Early Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date) or from the ploughsoil (48). Burnt flints were found in both prehistoric and later features. It is possible that the burnt fragments in Early Saxon, medieval and post-medieval features may have been the result of burning during these later periods.

Most of the assemblage consists of unmodified flakes. Since quite a few pieces have pronounced bulbs of percussion and are broad in shape they clearly have been struck by a hard-hammer.

Three cores, from which small flakes have been struck, are present. One (from medieval ditch *1263*) has been slightly burnt. Part of a probable arrowhead was found in Beaker pit *599*. It has bifacial retouch along both edges to its distal point, but the proximal end is missing so its original form is unclear. Three pieces (from medieval ditch *1299*) are classified as piercer-type tools. One of these is a flake with a slightly utilised distal point; the other two have retouch forming spurred points. Three pieces have been classified as scrapers due to the steep (although minimal) retouch of their edges. A few, mostly small, miscellaneous retouched and utilised pieces are also present.

Part of a ground stone shaft-holed implement (SF8) was recovered from Iron Age pit *105*. The surviving fragment is 0.065m wide and 0.038m thick; probably less than half of the original implement's length is present, while part of one face is also missing. About half of the perforation survives. This gives a diameter of 0.018m for the shaft-hole, which has an hourglass profile resulting from the use of a solid drill or pecking (Pitts 1980, 27). The piece has been severely burnt, which has caused cracking and prevented the identification of rock type. Figure 12 suggests alternative 'reconstructions' as a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age macehead (A) or 'battleaxe' (B).

A dense, water-rounded, utilised pebble (SF107) was found in Beaker pit *599*. A clast of fine to medium grained feldspar rich basic igneous rock with ferrous mineralogy, it probably represents a glacial erratic. It weighs 0.227kg and is 0.070m in length, 0.056m wide and 0.033m thick, with two naturally flattened surfaces and a rounded profile. There is a break or chip on one edge. The flat surfaces on both sides show multiple incisions or scratches.

Discussion

Most of this small assemblage is undiagnostic. Many of the flakes are broad, hard-hammer-struck pieces, and this suggests a Late Neolithic to Iron Age date range. The bifacially retouched fragment may be from an oblique arrowhead (later Neolithic), or possibly from a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (Early Bronze Age).

The ground stone shaft-holed implement is a fragment either of a typologically early 'battleaxe' or of an ovoid macehead. Perforated stone maceheads — ground implements without a cutting edge (Fig. 10A) — first appeared in the Late Neolithic period (although simple perforated pebbles have been found in Mesolithic contexts). However, although no part of a cutting edge survives on this fragment, its shape is also suggestive of an axe-hammer or battleaxe (Fig. 10B). These types are usually dated to the Early Bronze Age, although they have been found in Beaker contexts also (Edmonds 1995, 159–65). Axe-hammers are generally slightly larger than battleaxes and were probably used as tools; battleaxes are often more refined in shape and the cutting edge may flare out slightly. They were probably used in warfare and have often been found in funerary contexts. The broken nature of the present piece means that the original complete size and the position of any cutting edge cannot be identified, so the precise type remains uncertain. As it was found in an Iron Age pit alongside other burnt debris it may have had a secondary use as a 'potboiler', or it might have been a discarded broken item.

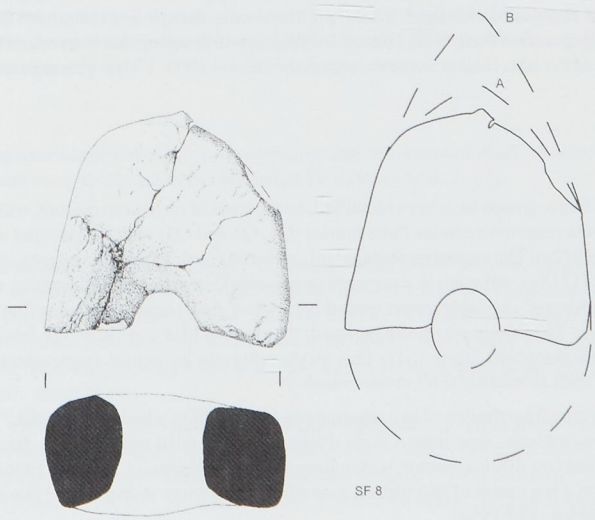


Figure 12. Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age macehead (A) or battleaxe (B) SF8. Scale 1:2.

The utilised pebble fits neatly within the hand and was small enough to be carried around as part of a tool kit. The multiple incisions or scratches on both of the smooth sides indicate where an implement — possibly a bronze point — has been sharpened. Its presence in a pit alongside Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pottery may suggest that an Early Bronze Age date is more probable for the feature.

Prehistoric pottery
by Sarah Percival

The work produced an assemblage of 519 sherds of prehistoric pottery weighing 6084g. Four hundred and seventy-eight sherds (5789g) date to the Mid–Late Iron Age, and these represent the majority of the assemblage. Thirty-six sherds of Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker, weighing 277g, were also found. The remaining five sherds (18g) were of indeterminate prehistoric type.

Later Neolithic-Early Bronze Age
(Fig. 13)

Fragments of at least ten Beakers were recovered from six features. Two fabrics are present (Table 2), of which the most common (G3: 91% of weight, 253g) contains common grog inclusions and small quantities of crushed flint. The other fabric (G2: 9%, 24g) contains only grog inclusions. Grog-tempered fabrics are highly characteristic of Beaker pottery from the East Anglian region (Healy 1988, fig. 78). The assemblage came from the fills of six features. Isolated pit *606* contained twenty-six sherds (216g) from a single bird-bone-impressed Beaker. The remaining sherds were found within a group of associated features. Six sherds (37g) came from one pit (*599*), whilst single sherds were found in two other pits (*597* and *601*), a post-hole (*551*) and a gully (*553*).

Vessel forms are difficult to assess, as the assemblage is highly fragmentary, but the partially reconstructable forms appear to be globular. Four rim sherds are present, two with upright necks and simple rounded rim ends, one with upright neck and beaded rim, and one with an inturned neck and pointed rim forming a slight internal bevel. No base sherds were found.

All but one of the sherds is decorated, most commonly with square-tooth comb and fingernail impressed decoration, which is present all over the body and neck of each vessel. Motifs include geometric patterns, such as continuous horizontal bands (Fig. 13A) and closed lattices or triangles. One vessel features horizontal bands with vertical infilling (Fig. 13B; *cf.* Percival 2000, fig. 169, P136). Numerous examples of comb-impressed decoration have been found on Beaker domestic sites on the Fen-edge, such as in some of the Hockwold assemblages (Bamford 1982, figs 15 and 16). Less common forms of decoration were also present. One semi-complete vessel (found in pit *606*) has a simple beaded rim and upright neck covered with impressed decoration all over the body executed with a bird bone or similar tool (Fig. 13C; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 801). Associated with this was a second sherd with indistinct tool impressions (Fig. 13D). Single lenticular fingernail impressions appear on one sherd and another has incised linear decoration (*cf.* Bamford 1982, figs 12 and 26, 63.004 and 63.203). Two sherds have horizontal comb-impressed bands with fingernail impressions infilling them (Fig. 13E and F; *cf.* Bamford 1982, fig. 1, 93.007). These forms, though less ubiquitous than others, are also found within domestic assemblages (Bamford 1982; Gibson 1982). It is worth noting that rusticated Beaker, which often forms the coarseware element of the later Beaker domestic repertoire (Healy 1995, 176) is absent from the Grange Farm assemblage.

Mid–Late Iron Age
(Fig. 14)

Four Mid-Late Iron Age fabric groups have been identified, on the basis of inclusions present, within the assemblage of 478 sherds (Table 3). The most common contains three fabrics (Q1, Q2 and Q3) with quartz-sand inclusions, and comprises 78% of the assemblage (4522g). The second most abundant group (S1) contained shell and grog inclusions and accounts for 21% of the assemblage (1218g), although it represents only a single vessel. A small number of sherds (V1) contained organic inclusions in the form of vegetable matter (possibly chopped chaff) or crushed burnt flint (F1). These made up less than 1% of the assemblage. The fabrics are mostly typical of the range of Mid–Late Iron Age fabrics found in Norfolk, with the exception of the shell-tempered fabric (S1). This might represent an import from outside the county — perhaps Cambridgeshire, where shell tempering is relatively common.

Most of the pottery came from the fills of two adjacent pits (*54* and *105*), which contributed 277 and 175 sherds respectively. The rest of the assemblage came from a three ditches, three isolated pits, an Early Saxon SFB and the subsoil. Deposition of pottery within pit fills is common within Iron Age assemblages (*cf.* Percival 1996). The function of the pits themselves is unclear, and it is a matter of speculation as to why some pottery is disposed of in pits whilst the majority was thrown onto surface middens (Hill 1994).

The 34 rims found represent a minimum of eleven vessels. These comprise a range of jar forms, suggesting a domestic assemblage. The majority has short upright necks, rounded rim endings and slight rounded shoulders (Fig. 14A and B). One

Fabric Code	*Description*	*Quantity*	*Weight (g)*
G2	Common, medium, sub-rounded *grog*. Outer surfaces pale buff-orange; inner surfaces and core pale buff.	4	24
G3	Common, medium, sub-rounded *grog*; occasional, medium, angular *calcined flint*. Outer surfaces pale buff-orange brown; inner surfaces and core pale buff.	32	253
Total		**36**	**277**

Table 2. Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pottery fabrics

Fabric Code	*Description*	*Quantity*	*Weight (g)*
F1	Common, small angular, *calcined flint*; moderate small *quartz-sand*. Outer surfaces dark-grey brown, inner surfaces and core orange.	5	33
Q1	Common, small *quartz-sand*, moderate small angular, *calcined flint*. Outer surfaces dark-grey brown, inner surfaces and core orange.	149	1645
Q2	Common, small *quartz-sand*. Outer surface dark grey brown, inner surface dark brown and core dark grey.	99	704
Q3	Common, small *quartz-sand*, moderate small angular, *calcined flint*. Some vegetable inclusions Outer surface and inner surface dark grey, core brown grey	147	2173
S1	Common, platey voids with some shell surviving moderate sub-rounded grog. Outer surface dark grey brown, inner surface dark brown and core dark grey	73	1218
V1	Elongated voids in surface, common, small *quartz-sand*, moderate small angular, *calcined flint*. Outer surface and inner surface dark grey-brown; core light brown to grey.	5	16
Total		**478**	**5789**

Table 3. Mid–Late Iron Age pottery fabrics

example is finished with fingertip impressions to the rim top. The large bucket-shaped vessel (Fig. 14C and D) found in pit *105* is without parallel amongst published assemblages from Norfolk. It is made of shell-tempered fabric and has vertical walls, a plain right-angled base, a thickened rim and an applied cordon decorated with diagonal slashes. Above the cordon the vessel walls are decorated with shallow incised diagonal lines. The rim diameter of 0.26m suggests a large vessel which was probably used for storage.

Undiagnostic

Five sherds weighing 18g were identified as being of prehistoric date but were too small, abraded and formless to be dated more closely. Four of these were recovered from two Period IV SFBs (*514* and *527*).

Dating and affinities

The Grange Farm Beaker resembles the contemporary assemblage from nearby at Overa Heath, Quidenham. At the latter site, a number of Beaker sherds with 'early'-style impressed and incised decoration came from a burnt mound associated with water-filled pools (Bamford 1982, 136; Gibson 1982, fig. O.H.1). A Beaker of indeterminate style with impressed decoration was also recovered from the Iron Age earthworks at Thetford Castle (Clarke 1970, corpus no. 619). The Overa Heath and Thetford Castle Beaker assemblages, like that from Grange Farm, lack the fingertip-impressed rusticated styles common to many domestic assemblages.

The Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age assemblage probably represents the refuse from domestic cooking, eating and storage. A selection of sherds, representing the fragmentary remains of a partially complete vessel, was placed in an isolated pit. Such isolated and ephemeral features containing the fragmentary remains of semi-complete vessels are highly characteristic of Beaker living sites (Healy 1988, 109; Ashwin 2001, 29). The reasons behind this characteristic form of deposition are unclear, but it may represent episodic use of 'favoured' sites on a seasonal or other cyclical basis. During this period the majority of waste pottery was probably disposed of on the surface (Healy 1995, 176). This second form of deposition is represented by single abraded sherds dispersed within a number of features.

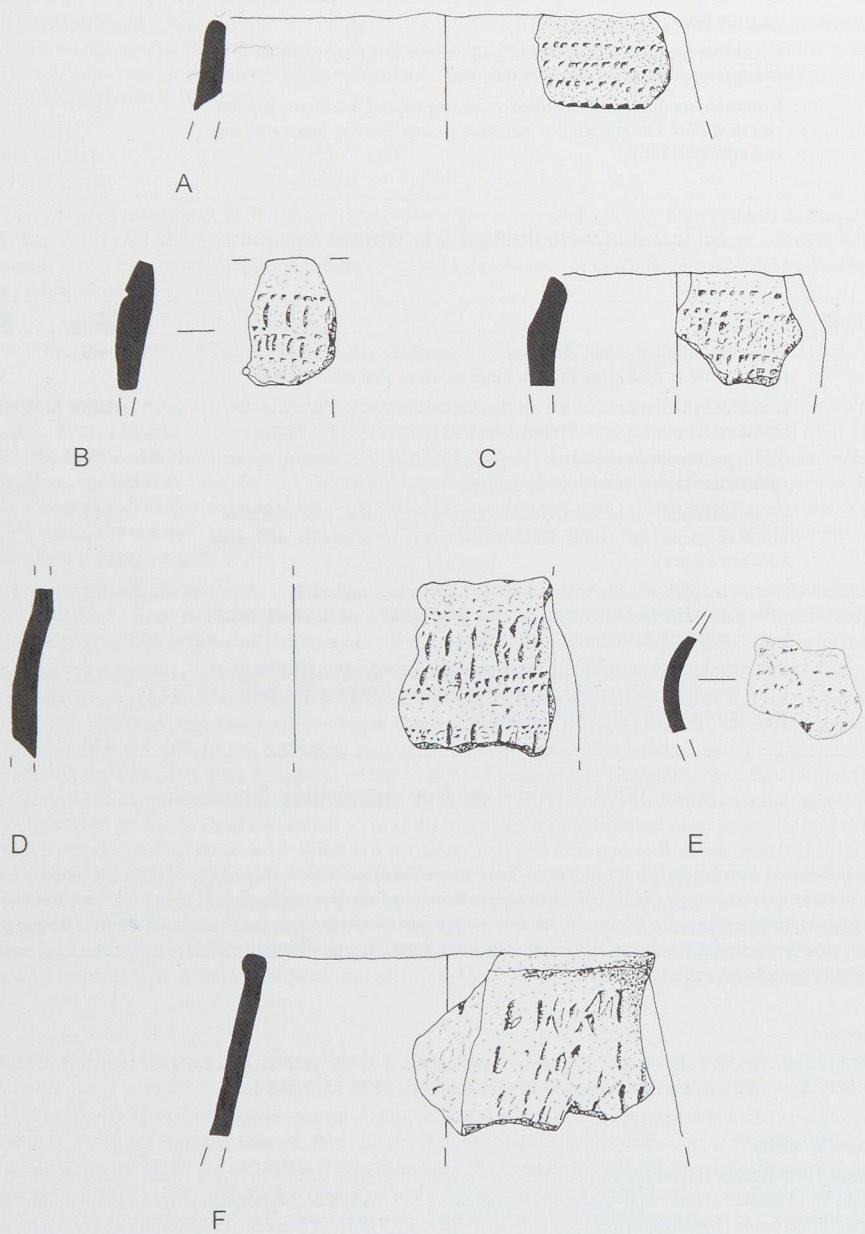


Figure 13. Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pottery. Scale 1:2.

A broad chronology for Beaker currency was proposed by the British Museum radiocarbon dating programme, which dated the style to *c.* 2600–1800 BC. The programme results suggested that, while the detailed typological chronology previously favoured by archaeologists was flawed, the broad stylistic trends identified still have some validity and meaning (Kinnes *et al.* 1991). The Beaker sherds from Grange Farm feature open bands of decoration using comb- and, more rarely,

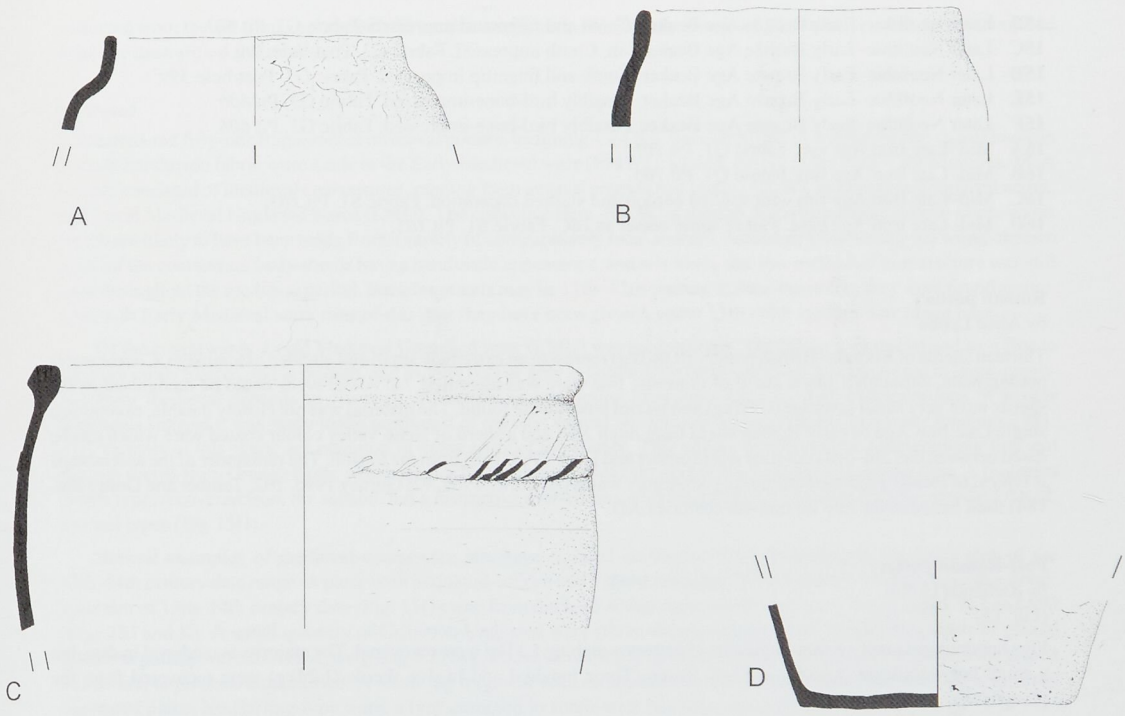


Figure 14. Mid–Late Iron Age pottery. Scales 1:2 (**A** and **B**) and 1:4 (**C** and **D**).

fingernail-impressed designs characteristic of earlier East Anglian style Beakers (Healy 1986) and lack the more complex closed motifs and fingertip plastic rustication that typify later Beaker styles. This suggests that the Grange Farm Beakers might date to the earlier period of Beaker currency.

The Mid–Late Iron Age pottery represents a utilitarian, domestic assemblage similar to contemporary collections found all over Norfolk, Suffolk and northern Cambridgeshire. It contains a limited range of undecorated slack, slightly round-shouldered, jar forms, mostly in sandy fabrics. Where decoration does occur it is limited to the top of the rim. Within the Breckland area the sandy slack-shouldered jars are comparable with examples from the Phase I pottery from Fison Way, Thetford, which has a date range of between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC (Gregory 1992, fig. 140). Similar examples were also found at Thetford Castle and Ford Place, Thetford (Davies 1992, fig. 25). Outside Breckland, comparable assemblages have been excavated at Park Farm, Silfield, probably dating from the 3rd to the mid-1st centuries BC (Percival 1996). The pottery differs from other assemblages including sherds decorated with a variety of incised and impressed decoration, such as that from nearby in Breckland at Lynford (Birks and Robertson forthcoming). The Lynford and Grange Farm sites are likely to be broadly contemporary. Iron Age pottery dating is problematic, however, and it is unclear whether the differences in the style and form of the pots from these two sites are of chronological significance or the result of some other factor, perhaps site location or function.

The large barrel-shaped shell-tempered jar (pit *105*; Fig. 14C and D) with applied cordon and slashed decoration is unusual. The shell-tempered fabric is uncommon in Norfolk and perhaps suggests a trade link with sites in Cambridgeshire or Lincolnshire, where shell is a commonly used temper in pottery throughout the Iron Age.

Catalogue of illustrated sherds
(Figs 13 and 14)

15A Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker rim. Comb impressed. Fabric G3. Post-hole *599*.

15B Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker. Comb and fingernail impressed. Fabric G3. Pit *601*.
15C Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker rim. Comb impressed. Fabric G2. Post-hole *599*.
15D Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker. Comb and fingertip impressed. Fabric G3. Post-hole *599*.
15E Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker. Possibly bird-bone-impressed. Fabric G3. Pit *606*.
15F Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age Beaker. Possibly bird-bone-impressed. Fabric G3. Pit *606*.
16A Mid–Late Iron Age rim. Fabric Q1. Pit *105*.
16B Mid–Late Iron Age rim. Fabric Q1. Pit *105*.
16C Mid–Late Iron Age rim with applied cordon and slashed decoration. Fabric S1. Pit *105*.
16D Mid–Late Iron Age base. Part of same vessel as 16C. Fabric S1. Pit *105*.

Roman pottery
by Alice Lyons

Thirteen sherds of Romano-British pottery (0.063kg) represent an extremely small and abraded assemblage. Coarse wares predominate, although a single sherd of domestic fine ware was identified. No vessel types could be recognised as the sherds were very small (average 0.005kg) and no rim pieces were found. The material was not closely datable, excepting a single Late Iron Age or early Roman sherd from ditch *188*, and a sherd of Nene Valley colour coated ware which can be dated between the 2nd–3rd centuries AD (Tomber and Dore 1998, 118) from the topsoil. The remainder of the assemblage is typical of locally produced utilitarian coarse grey wares (Andrews 1985, 92; Gurney 1995, 102; Tomber and Dore 1998, 184) used between the late 1st and 4th centuries AD.

Post-Roman pottery
by Richenda Goffin
(Fig. 15)

Five hundred and ninety-seven fragments of pottery weighing 5.11kg were recovered. The majority is medieval in date, but a small but significant quantity is Early Saxon. Three hundred and twelve sherds (1.24kg) were recovered from the ploughsoil.

Early Saxon

One hundred and twenty fragments of pottery of Early Saxon date were recovered, weighing 1.629kg. Sherds were retrieved from Period IV/Early Saxon features (including SFBs, pits and a ditch) and from a number of later features. The sherds are described feature by feature below.

Forty-nine fragments of Early Saxon pottery from an estimated minimum number of twenty different vessels were identified in the fills of seven SFBs (0.329kg). Sixty-one fragments recovered from pit fills represent a further ten vessels (1.084kg). Many of the wares have a predominantly sandy matrix with the addition of small quantities of organic material, mica, grog, fine flint and even shell. A second distinctive fabric group is characterised by an abundance of grass inclusions, which can be seen as clear impressions on the surfaces of the pot and as voids within the fabric where they have been burnt out during the firing. Although a number of these handmade wares are thick-walled and comparatively crudely made, others are more finely potted. Often the external surfaces of the vessels are tooled, and this is occasionally carried out on the interior surface just inside the rim.

The forms represented are a range of jars and bowls of different sizes, some of which show evidence of use through sooting. Many are small vessels with simple, nearly upright rounded or tapered rims. One vessel from the fill of SFB *786* tapers inwards to form an upright slightly pointed rim (Fig. 15A), whilst a second pot from the same feature has a simple upright rounded rim (Fig. 15B). A well-made vessel with a simple squared upright rim came from pit *766* (Fig. 15C); a second vessel made from a coarse sandy fabric has a slightly more everted rim (Fig. 15D). Twenty-two fragments, probably all from the same vessel, were present in the lower fill of SFB *603*. Most of these sherds were in poor condition, but a simple, nearly upright rounded rim sherd survived (Fig. 15E). Several fragments of grass-tempered ware from a baggy vessel with a large, simple, slightly everted rim and a diameter of 0.26m (Fig. 15F) were found in later pit *529* (also Period IV). A second crudely-made cooking vessel with coarse quartz inclusions and some organic material was also identified (Fig. 15G).

Eight 5th–7th century sherds were residual in later deposits. These were in similar fabrics to the stratified material and were mainly sandy variants with organic inclusions. One from the ploughsoil has an oxidised rusticated external surface with nail-impression decoration.

Late Saxon

Very little Late Saxon pottery was identified. A single fragment of a very thick-walled vessel dating to the 10th–11th centuries was recovered from the fill of ?Late Saxon ditch *1008*. A fragment of a jar with diamond rouletting on the outer edge of the rim was intrusive in Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pit *606*. A residual piece of a small Thetford-type ware jar was

collected from the fill of medieval ditch *58* (evaluation Trench 16). Twenty sherds of Thetford-type ware were identified from the unstratified material.

Medieval

A hundred and fifty-one fragments of medieval pottery, weighing 1.747kg, were stratified. A number of rim sherds made in a sandy handmade fabric were made in the Early Medieval ware (EMW) tradition, dating to the 11th–12th centuries. Most pottery consisted of medieval coarsewares, ranging from general unspecified wares (MCW), to Grimston Unglazed wares, and Local Medieval Unglazed wares (LMU). The collective term 'MCW' is used to describe medium-coarse sandy wares which are likely to have been made from a variety of comparatively local sources. Although most vessels are wheel-thrown some of the coarseware body sherds have a handmade appearance, and it is likely that this method of manufacture was still used throughout the medieval period. Such fragments may be 11th–12th century in date, but unless they were found associated with Early Medieval ware rims of this date they have been given a wider 11th–14th century date range here.

Of the coarsewares, Local Medieval Unglazed ware (LMU) was predominant. The fabric is characterised by a fine to medium sandy matrix, and is smooth, and usually buff or grey in colour with darker patches. It is recovered in large quantities from medieval deposits in Norwich. Although no production sites have been located, concentrations of waster fragments suggest it was made to the north-east of the city, around Woodbastwick and Pottery Heigham (Jennings 1981, 41). Variants of this fabric are common in many parts of the county. This variety is reflected in comparatively fine and smooth sherds from Grange Farm, which are not Norwich-type LMU sherds but are no doubt of a similar date. A fragment of this type, recovered from the subsoil, has a distinctive everted rim, which may be of a later date than the standard flared, everted types (Fig 15H).

Several examples of medieval coarseware jars have squared developed rims, belonging to the latter part of the 11th-14th century date range. A piece with a squared-off rim and a sherd of a large LMU cooking vessel or jar with a developed rim of 13th–14th century date (Fig. 15I) came from ditch *75*. Other squared-off rims were found in pits *962* and *990* (Figs 15J and K). A small quantity of Grimston Unglazed ware (three sherds) was present. Twenty fragments of glazed medieval pottery were collected, weighing 0.210kg. These were mostly Grimston ware with a plain lead glaze. Two glazed sherds are, at present, unidentified. A small jug fragment with an applied strip, a residual sherd from pit *878*, is the only decorated piece. No Harling-type ware, a type common in south-west Norfolk, was present.

Two hundred and eighty sherds were recovered from unstratified contexts. The majority are coarsewares (256 including 81 LMU); Grimston ware (eighteen), unglazed Grimston ware (two) and Early Medieval ware (four) account for the rest.

Post-medieval

Five stratified sherds of Late Medieval and Transitional ware (0.68kg) dated to the 15th–16th centuries. Fifteen pieces of post-medieval pottery were unstratified. These comprise six sherds of Late Medieval and Transitional ware, two pieces of Frechen stoneware, four fragments of Glazed Red earthenware and three sherds of English stoneware.

Discussion

The stratified post-Roman pottery covers a wide date range from the Early Saxon period through to the 15th and 16th centuries. The 5th–7th century assemblage recovered from the SFBs and pits forms the most significant part of the assemblage, and provides a small but useful supplement to our understanding of Early Saxon pottery in south-western Norfolk and north-western Suffolk. It can be compared to the much larger assemblage of pottery recovered from West Stow (West 1985), as well as a few other groups identified in southern Norfolk. The assemblage is primarily domestic and utilitarian in nature, and includes some crudely-made vessels. The most common fabric is sandy with some organic material (ESO2), but also there are smaller quantities of much coarser grass-tempered ware (ESO1). None of the stratified pottery is decorated, the only decorated sherd being a rusticated fragment recovered from the ploughsoil. The forms of the vessels are typically Early Saxon in their shape, with a range of rims which are slightly inturned, upright or slightly everted.

Although other finds were collected from the SFBs and the pits, none of these can be dated more closely than to the 5th–7th centuries. In view of this, and because of the absence of stamped pottery, the pottery can only be dated within this broad range. It has been suggested that grass-tempered pottery tends to be 'late' in Suffolk, and this is borne out by the material from sites at Eriswell (30km to the south-west of Snetterton). Here grass-tempered vessels occur with the greatest frequency in a 6th–7th century cemetery (ERL 104) and a probable 'late' settlement area (ERL 101) which also produced Ipswich ware (S. Anderson, *pers. comm.*).

Five sherds made from a similar range of fabrics were collected during a watching brief at Wash Lane, Snetterton (Underdown 2001). However, the Grange Farm assemblage shows marked differences with the larger group of pottery of similar date recently recovered from a settlement site at Broome in south-eastern Norfolk. A hundred and twenty Early Saxon sherds were recovered from this site where the predominant fabrics were sand and organic variants, with grog and possibly granite also present (Goffin 2003). There was a noticeable lack of the grass-tempered fabric present at Grange

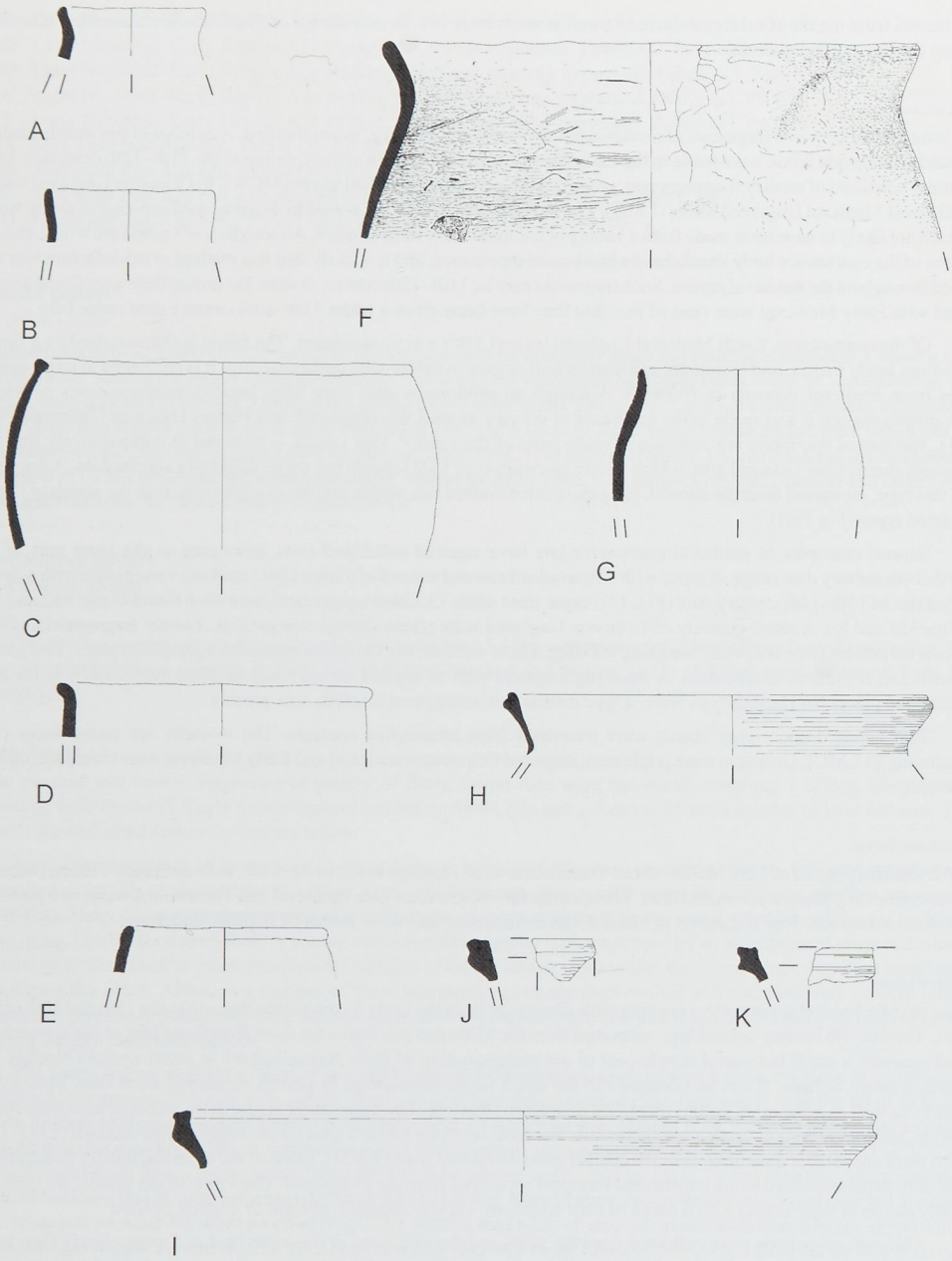


Figure 15. Post-Roman pottery. All scale 1:2 except I (1:4)

Farm. The Broome assemblage also contained several vessels with stamped decoration, a feature entirely lacking in the Grange Farm pottery.

Catalogue of illustrated sherds

(Fig. 15)

A Upright slight pointed rim. Sandy fabric with organic inclusions (ESO2). *787*, SFB *786*.
B Upright rounded rim. Sandy fabric with organic inclusions (ESO2). *787*, SFB *786*.
C Squared upright rim from jar. Sandy fabric with organic inclusions (ESO2). *765*, pit *766*.
D Everted rim from jar. Coarse sandy fabric (ESCQ). *765*, pit *766*.
E Rounded nearly upright rim from cup/jar. Sandy fabric (ESO2). *604*, SFB *603*.
F Simple slight everted rim from baggy jar. Grass tempered fabric (ESO1). *530*, pit *529*.
G Rim from cooking jar. Coarse fabric with some organic material (ESQZ). *530*, pit *529*.
H Everted rim from cooking vessel or jar. LMU-V fabric. Subsoil *70*.
I Developed rim from cooking vessel or jar. LMU fabric. *1148*, ditch *75*.
J Developed rim of cooking vessel or jar. Medieval coarseware fabric. *849*, pit *962*.
K Developed rim of cooking vessel or jar. Medieval coarseware fabric. *991*, pit *990*.

Metal objects

by Julia Huddle *and* Adrian Popescu *with* David Robertson

(Fig. 16)

A hundred and seventy-seven metal objects were collected, of which 25 were recovered from features and 152 came from metal-detecting ploughsoil and subsoil. Seventy-three are made from copper alloy, 42 are iron, 31 are lead, seventeen are copper and tin alloy, six are zinc alloy and two each are made from silver, tin and tin alloy. There is one object with lead and ceramic elements and one is made from a combination of lead and iron. The material has been dated, where possible, using object parallels and associated dating evidence. Forty percent of the material is undated. Many of the items are described below by object type (following that used in Margeson 1993), with a catalogue entry given for the more important pieces. The objects not described include nails, off-cuts, rods, rivets, sheets, metal waste and unidentified objects (including one artefact (SF5) recovered from an Iron Age deposit).

Coins

Twelve coins were collected, of which five are Roman, two medieval and five (four not listed below) post-medieval. One Roman coin came from a medieval ditch (SF 79), a silver coin of king Charles I (SF 63) was recovered from a post-medieval ditch, whilst ten were found in unstratified contexts.

SF26 (unstratified *158*). Marcus Aurelius, copper alloy *as*, Rome mint, 161–180. Obverse: illegible legend, laureate head right. Reverse: illegible.

SF42 (unstratified *331*). Tetricus I, copper alloy radiate, uncertain mint, 271–274. Obverse: illegible legend, radiate, draped and cuirassed bust, right. Reverse: illegible legend, standing female figure, probably Pax, left.

SF38 (unstratified *305*). Constantius I as Caesar, copper alloy *nummus*, London mint, *c.* 300–305. Obverse: [...] CONSTANTIVS NOB C, laureate and cuirassed bust, right. Reverse: GENIO POPVLI ROMANI, Genius standing left, no mintmark.

SF79 (medieval *739*, ditch *26/1043*). Constantine I, copper alloy *nummus*, Trier mint, RIC 423, 321–323. Obverse: illegible legend, laureate bust right. Reverse: BEATA TRANQVILLITAS, globe on altar, mintmark PTR⌣.

SF69 (unstratified *615*). Constans, copper alloy *nummus*, Trier mint, RIC 198 or 199, 347–348. Obverse: D N CONSTANS P F AVG, diademed, draped and cuirassed bust, right. Reverse: VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN, two Victories facing each other, mintmark E//TRP

SF65 (unstratified *612*). Henry III, cut farthing, illegible mint, 1251–1272. Obverse: [...]SRE[...], lower part of facing bust. Reverse: [...]LEM[...], quarter of long voided cross, within three pellets. Moneyer, probably, Willem of Canterury, class 5.

SF68 (unstratified *614*). Edward I/II, fragmentary silver farthing, London mint, North 1058, *c.* 1301–1310. Obverse: EDWARDVS REX, facing bust. Reverse: CIVITAS LONDON, long cross with three pellets in each quarter.

SF63 (post-medieval *602*, ditch *75*). Charles I, silver half crown, Tower mint, North 2214, initial mark, triangle in circle, 1641–1643. Obverse: CAROLVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX, king on horseback, left. Reverse: CHRISTO AVSPICE REGNO, ornamented shield.

Dress fittings and household equipment

Dress fittings recovered include two brooches — one Anglo-Saxon (SF30; Fig. 16) and one modern (SF29) — a medieval belt-stiffener (SF88), five medieval buckles (SFs 12, 19, 39, 43 and 82), a medieval buckle pin (SF56), a possible medieval buckle-plate (SF18), two post-medieval buckles (SFs 15 and 55), a post-medieval belt mount (SF84) and 25 post-medieval buttons. Three medieval strap-ends (SFs 21, 22 and 34), two medieval mounts (SFs 33 and 80), a post-medieval shoe buckle (SF13) and a piece of modern jewellery were also collected.

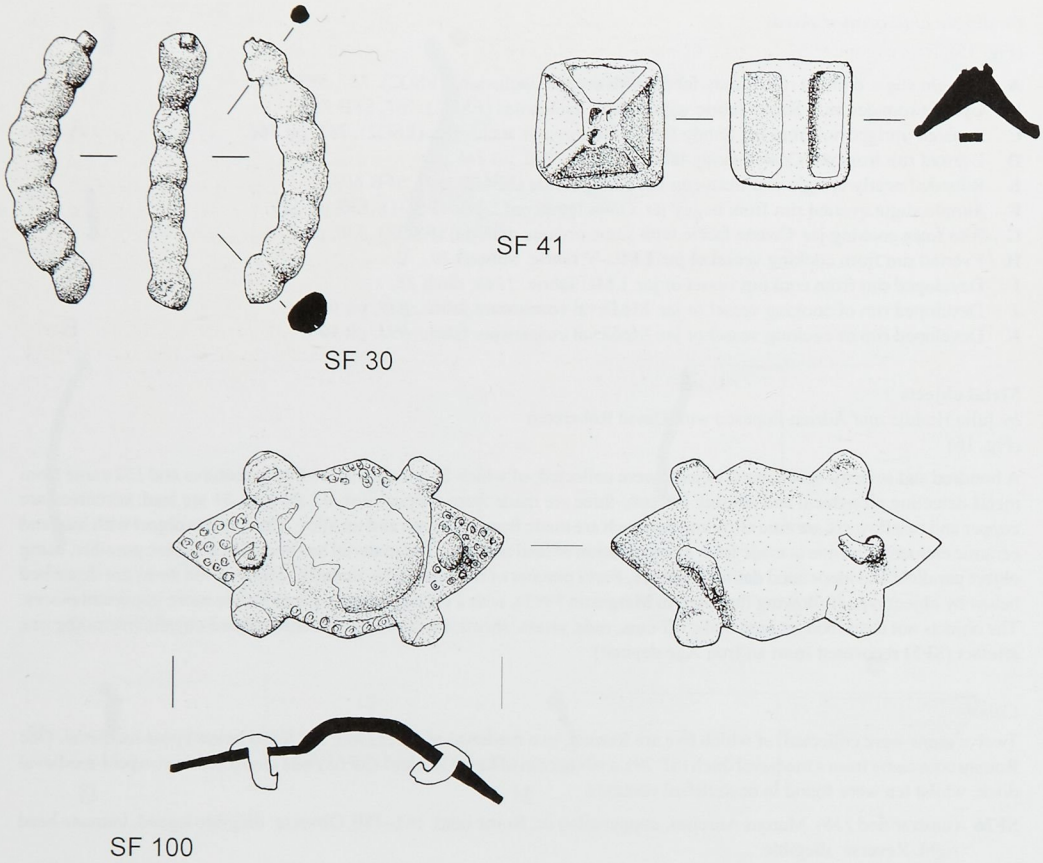


Figure 16. Early Saxon brooch fragment (SF30), Early Saxon pyramid mount (SF41) and medieval harness mount (SF100). Scale 1:1.

Household equipment is represented by a possible Iron Age suspension loop (SF7), six whittle-tang knife blades, fragments from two copper alloy vessels (SF48 and 50), a medieval lead and ceramic pot-repair plug (SF86), an undated lead pot mender (SF24), two lead weights (SFs 23 and 85), a medieval or post-medieval copper-alloy ferrule (SF44) and a post-medieval furniture handle. Whittle-tang knives have been found on sites as early as the 7th century and in Middle-Late Saxon and medieval contexts. Their longevity has been discussed by Rogers (1993, 1275). Two of the Grange Farm examples are Early Saxon (SFs 61 and 62), three are medieval (SFs 60, 71 and 98) and one has a broad date range (SF81; Early Saxon-medieval).

SF30 (unstratified *179*; Fig. 16). Brooch fragment with beaded decoration and construction for (missing) pin, 6th century. An almost identical brooch was collected from grave *359* at Morningthorpe Early Saxon Cemetery (Green *et al.* 1987).

SF61 (fill *528*, Early Saxon SFB *527*). Iron knife, blade with whittle-tang, back form C1 (following Ottaway 1992). Blade back straight, curving down to tip; cutting edge shallow elongated S-shape. The tang is set central to the blade, with an irregular shoulder to the back slightly out of line with the beginning of the cutting edge. Length 131mm; blade length 86mm; tang 45mm.

SF62 (fill *575*, Early Saxon SFB *574*). Iron knife blade with whittle-tang, back form C1 (following Ottaway 1992). Smaller and with whittle tang broken off at end, but otherwise same as SF61 (above). Length 103mm; blade length 63mm; tang 40mm.

SF81 (unstratified *1109*). Iron knife blade, back form C1 (following Ottaway 1992). Blade back straight, curving down towards missing tip; cutting edge shallow elongated S-shape. The tang is set central to the blade, with an irregular

shoulder to the back slightly out of line with the beginning of the cutting edge. Length incomplete 128mm; blade length incomplete 80mm; tang 48mm. Early Saxon-medieval.

Horse fittings and weapons

A medieval copper alloy harness mount (SF100; Fig. 16) and four undated horseshoes (SFs 1, 2, 64 and 66) make up the horse equipment assemblage. Weapons are represented an Early Saxon pyramid mount (SF41; Fig. 16); this would have been attached to a strap that held a sword in a scabbard. Perhaps the most famous parallels for this object are the two bejewelled gold pyramidal mounts from the cemetery at Sutton Hoo (Bruce-Mitford 1978, 2 and 300; Carver 1998, 126). Others from Suffolk include two from Coddenham, one from Tuddenham St Mary and one from Barham (West 1998, 7, 22 and 100). A few examples are known from Norfolk and include pieces from Quidenham (HER 30380), Field Dalling (HER 31558) and Narford (HER 32309).

SF41 (unstratified *318*; Fig. 16). Early Saxon copper alloy pyramid mount. It has a truncated top (which is slightly damaged), the reverse is hollow with a cross bar for attachment. The recessed faces of the four sides are very slightly pitted and the truncated top has four recessed dots perhaps to form a key for the (missing) inlay of ?enamel. 17mm x 16mm square.

SF100 (unstratified *301*; Fig. 16). Medieval copper alloy harness mount. Gilded, lozenge-shaped mount decorated with punched circles and domed boss in centre and four knobs around the edge; two rivets. Probably 13th century (S. Ashley, *pers. comm.*).

Discussion

The majority of the metal objects were recovered from unstratified contexts. This part of the assemblage provides useful information about activity on the site between the Iron Age and the medieval period. A number of the objects are important as they can be compared with similar examples found elsewhere (such as the Early Saxon brooch and the medieval harness mount). The Early Saxon pyramid mount is of particular significance because few objects of its type have been found in Norfolk to date.

Of the twenty-five items collected from features, seven provided useful dating evidence for the features and only one was clearly residual. The two Early Saxon whittle-tang knives from Early Saxon features are an important addition to the corpus of these objects.

Metalworking debris

by Lucy Talbot *and* Val Fryer

Twenty-seven fragments of metalworking debris weighing 2.232kg were hand-collected. Although the majority of the material is undiagnostic several pieces show evidence of vitrified hearth or furnace lining, and hammerscale is present.

Material of Early Saxon date weighing 0.245kg was recovered by hand from Period IV pit *511*, consisting of undiagnostic slag, conglomerate and vitrified hearth lining. Ferrous globules, hammer-scale and vitrified material were recovered from a sample. Undiagnostic slag was also found in SFB *786*. Material from medieval gully *404* consists of undiagnostic slag and conglomerate. Most of the assemblage, weighing 2.105kg, was recovered from a post-medieval pit (*857*) which contained a tuyere, undiagnostic slag and vitrified hearth lining. A piece of undiagnostic slag was recovered during metal-detecting of the subsoil.

Although the assemblage is small, the tuyere and vitrified material recovered from pits *511* and *857* suggest that light metalworking — possibly smithing — was taking place either on or around the site during the Early Saxon and post-medieval periods. The material from other contexts may be redeposited. Despite its small size, the Early Saxon assemblage is important because smithing assemblages of this date are not common (McDonnell 1989, 373–5). The two published examples from Norfolk come from Spong Hill and Witton (Rickett 1995, 82–4; Lawson 1983, 58), with further material known from Brandon Road, Thetford (HER 37158). The two published collections are broadly comparable to that from Grange Farm in that they are also small and contain slag, with that from Witton including hearth lining as well.

Faunal remains

by Julie Curl

A total of 440 pieces of faunal remains, weighing 3.723kg, was recovered. Four species were identified (cattle, sheep, equid and pig), all of which were probably domesticated animals. The majority of bone is in fairly poor condition. Surfaces are eroded, due to acidic soil conditions, and there has been differentially better preservation of teeth.

Bone was recovered principally from fills of SFBs, pits and ditches. A total of 0.945kg of bone was retrieved from deposits within the Period IV SFBs. The most frequent species is cattle, with mature adult and very young juvenile and

butchered examples present. Other pieces include a chopped leg bone from a sheep, a chopped proximal phalange belonging to large pony or small horse and fragments of butchered large mammal bone that could not be identified to species. The remains from SFBs are more fragmentary than from other context types, with much of the bone showing varying degrees of burning.

All of the bone probably came from domestic butchering and food waste. The presence of a butchered equine foot bone in SFB *786* is unusual as equids were not often butchered for food use. It is possible that the animal had been skinned and that the phalange had remained with the skin for a time; it is also possible that the animal had been eaten when supplies of other meat were low. The frequent remains of burnt bone in the SFB contexts could be simply the burnt remains of food, but it may be that the bones were actually being used as fuel for the fires in the buildings. Bone is known to have been used for fuel and reasonably fresh bones burn very well, largely due to their high fat content.

Other finds

by Lucy Talbot, Julia Huddle *and* David Robertson

Thirty-three pieces of ceramic building material weighing 1.971kg were collected, and consist of Roman, post-medieval and modern pieces. They came from ?Roman, Saxon and post-medieval contexts, and from the ploughsoil (25 pieces). Forty-six fragments of lava quern were recovered from SFBs *603* and *836* and from medieval and post-medieval pits and ditches, with six also collected from the ploughsoil. Thirty-two unstratified fragments of burnt stone may represent part of a quern.

Environmental evidence

by Val Fryer

Fourteen samples were collected for the extraction of plant macrofossils. Plant remains, all of them preserved by charring, survived at varying densities. Preservation was moderate to good although a proportion of the cereal grains had become puffed and distorted during charring. Modern contaminants including fibrous roots and seeds/fruits were present at a low density in all samples.

Results

Cereal grains/chaff were noted in samples from Early Saxon SFBs *603*, *748*, *786* and *836*, Early Saxon pits *511* and *766*, medieval pit *698* and oven *966*. Oat (*Avena* sp.), barley (*Hordeum* sp.), rye (*Secale cereale*) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were recorded, with barley being predominant. With the exception of barley/rye type rachis nodes, chaff elements were rare, but cereal sprouts and detached embryos were noted in SFB *603*, medieval pit *698* and oven *966*.

Seeds/fruits of common weed species were present in seven samples and were common in oven *966*. Segetal taxa predominanted, including fat hen (*Chenopodium album*), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), dock (*Rumex* sp.), sheep's sorrel (*R. acetosella*) and corn spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*). Wetland plant macrofossils, including sedge (*Carex* sp.) and spike-rush (*Eleocharis* sp.) nutlets, were only present at a very low density in SFB *786*. Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nutshell fragments were common in Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age pits *599* and *601* and were present in SFBs *605* and *786*. Other tree/shrub macrofossils included elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) seeds and a single bramble (*Rubus* sect. *Glandulosus*) pip.

Charcoal fragments were common or abundant throughout. Other plant macrofossils included pieces of charred root, rhizome or stem and indeterminate buds, seeds and thorns. Possible small fragments of heather (Ericaceae) stem were recovered from SFB *749*, Early Saxon pit *766* and medieval pit *698*, and a single fragment of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) pinnule was present in oven *966*.

The fragments of black porous 'cokey' material and black tarry material present in Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age pit *607* and SFBs *515* and *521* are probably residues of the combustion of organic materials, including cereal grains, at very high temperatures. Small bone fragments, including burnt specimens, were sometimes abundant in the Saxon pit assemblages, the oven fill and all but one of the samples from the SFBs. The fragments of burnt or fired clay may be derived from hearth material.

Discussion

The assemblages from the fills of the three pits containing Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pottery were small. Charcoal and hazel nutshell fragments predominated, although a single elderberry seed came from pit *601*. Although there is insufficient material for a full interpretation of the features, the macrofossils suggest that wild foods were an important part of the contemporary diet.

Although four of the seven samples taken from the fills of six SFBs could not be analysed, the assemblages from SFBs *605*, *698* and *786* are broadly similar in composition and may possibly have a common source, for example domestic refuse. The cereal grains and bone fragments may be derived from food preparation waste, although the bone fragments are gener-

ally very small and may be indicative of the crushing of bones for industrial processes. Some fuel residues may also be present. Although the assemblage from Early Saxon pit *766* is very small, it appears similar to the assemblages from the SFBs, containing both cereal grains and bone fragments.

The sample from oven *966* is almost certainly derived from a burnt deposit of cereal processing and/or storage waste. It is possibly significant that several of the weed seeds — for example, corn cockle (*Agrostemma githago*), brome (*Bromus* sp.), black bindweed, corn gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*) and wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) — are of similar size to the grains. Other seeds, including fat hen and corn spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*), may originally have been present as intact seed heads. While much of the chaff would have been removed by winnowing, these larger elements could only have been separated from the grains by hand picking at an advanced stage during processing. The sprouted grains may represent cereals that germinated accidentally due to inappropriate storage conditions. The combined refuse of weed seeds and spoiled grains may have subsequently been used as fuel for the oven in which they were found. The presence of sheep's sorrel and corn spurrey seeds within the assemblage may indicate that some cereals were being grown on light acid sand soils. Although there are similarities between the Early Saxon assemblages and the sample from the oven (seen, for example, in the predominance of barley and the presence of burnt bone), there is insufficient to prove that the oven is of Early Saxon date. Plan relationships suggest that a medieval date is more probable.

Discussion and conclusions

It is probable that the site has seen agricultural use, if not continuously, ever since the Roman period. A consequence of this is that many of the observed archaeological features and deposits had been truncated by ploughing, with their original depths and profiles not surviving. This places many restrictions on interpretation, particularly of the prehistoric pits and the Early Saxon SFBs.

Period I: Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age activity

The earliest identifiable use of the site was by people using Beaker pottery. Three different types of occupation evidence were found containing these ceramics: a pit group, an isolated pit and a collection of gullies and post-holes. The pottery dates the pits reasonably firmly, whereas the limited number of sherds from the gullies and post-holes makes their assignment to this period tentative.

Very few occupation features dating to the 2nd and 3rd millennia BC have been found in Breckland, and the discoveries at Grange Farm are important. In East Anglia in general, features of this kind are found only in exceptional circumstances (Ashwin 1996b, 52–3; Brown and Murphy 1997, 14; Sussams 1996, 55–65); when they are pit groups and isolated pits are typical of the evidence discovered. For example, pit groups broadly comparable to that at Grange Farm have been recorded in East Anglia at Witton (Lawson 1983, 13–28), West Row Fen, Mildenhall (Martin and Murphy 1988), Hunstanton (Healy *et al.* 1993), Longham–Bittering (Wymer and Healy 1996; Ashwin 1998; Ashwin 2001), Gorleston (Timms and Ashwin 1999), during the Norwich Southern Bypass project (Ashwin and Bates 2000) and at Bowthorpe (Percival 2002). Some apparently isolated features at these sites may once have been members of groups that had seen heavy plough destruction.

Many Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age pits have been interpreted as domestic features, one of their functions being waste disposal. It has also been suggested that some may also represent ritual or ceremonial activity (for example Healy *et al.* 1993, 75–6; Ashwin 1998, 26). Recent work on the Neolithic and Bronze Age (*e.g.* Barrett 1994) has demonstrated that domestic and ritual activities need not have been mutually exclusive but may in fact have been inseparable strands of life. The presence of fresh and unabraded Beaker sherds in two of the pits raises this issue regarding Grange Farm. Pottery, flint flakes and a sharpening stone may have been deliberately

placed with a specific purpose in mind, rather than casually discarded as rubbish, but there was no direct evidence for the careful arrangement of the finds within the features.

Most Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age occupation evidence from Breckland and from East Anglia more generally comes from surface and ploughsoil artefact spreads. Breckland itself has some of the highest densities of flint scatters in the region (Sussams 1996, 57). It has been suggested that these most commonly originate from the surface disposal of waste (Healy 1995, 176, Ashwin 1996b, 52; Ashwin 2001). As no formal fieldwalking was conducted prior to evaluation and excavation at Grange Farm there is no direct evidence for surface artefact spreads at the site. However, some of the 48 pieces of worked flint (of Late Neolithic–Iron Age date) collected from the overburden may have been deposited in such a way, as may the abraded sherds from features. However, since no Beaker sherds — which are relatively durable and distinctive items (Ashwin 2001) — were collected from the ploughsoil/subsoil there is some doubt about this.

Pollen evidence from Hockham Mere suggests that during the Earlier Neolithic period, from *c.* 3800 BC onwards, there was widespread woodland clearance in Breckland, probably as a consequence of a reliance on stock-grazing rather than cultivation. It has been suggested that, as a result, Breckland would have characterised by open, dry and sandy environments broken by rivers and isolated meres (Sussams 1996, xi and 55). In such a landscape, water sources were probably foci for activity and occupation, and the activity at Grange Farm should be viewed in this context. Ashby Mere to the south would have acted as a focal point, with the bend of the River Thet and the source of its Swangey tributary close by also influencing site selection. The presence of sandy free-draining soils and of some of the highest land in the vicinity may also have played a part. At Overa Heath, Quidenham, *c.* 2km south of Grange Farm, Beaker pottery and a burnt mound have been found beside a series of natural shallow water filled pools which appear to have been artificially embanked (Bamford 1982, 38).

The apparent sparsity of Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age features at Grange Farm suggests that the occupation they represent was intermittent, cyclical and/or seasonal. It is even possible that site was used intermittently by people who also visited Overa Heath, and who grazed stock and collected wild foods. If Gallows Hill (HER 9157) were a Bronze Age barrow, it is also possible that the people who were involved in its construction may have visited both Grange Farm and Overa Heath.

If the gullies and post-holes do indeed date to the Later Neolithic–Early Bronze Age, they are of interest. Only a few comparable examples are known to date from East Anglia: they include a possible drainage gully from Hockwold (Bamford 1982, 9–12), land division boundaries at Sutton Hoo (Brown and Murphy 1997; Hummler 1993, 20–3) and possibly gullies at Little Plumstead (Trimble 2003). The Grange Farm examples could represent drainage and/or land division, but were not well enough preserved for further comment.

Period II: Mid–Late Iron Age

Isolated pits and pit groups are commonly found on Iron Age sites in Northern East Anglia that have seen excavation (Davies 1996; Sussams 1996, 68). Examples of Mid-Late Iron Age date have been recorded in Breckland at Lynford, Thetford, Quidenham and Shropham (Birks 2000; Birks 2001b; Birks forthcoming; Birks and Robertson forthcoming; Davies 1993; Whitmore 2002). Other examples from Norfolk have been found at Methwold, Fincham, Spong Hill, Silfield and Longham-Bittering, and during the Norwich Southern Bypass project (Ashwin 1996a; Ashwin

and Bates 2000; Ashwin and Flitcroft 1999; Percival 1995; Rickett 1995, 5–12 and 147–51; Silvester and Northover 1991).

Iron Age pits — like Neolithic and Bronze Age ones — have been linked with both domestic and ritual activities (*eg.* Davies 1996; Hill 1995). At least three of the Grange Farm pits contained much burnt flint and charcoal alongside pottery, suggesting the presence of domestic refuse, yet care, deliberation and ceremony may have been involved in the formation of these deposits too. The fact that pit *439* was probably left open for a considerable period of time may be of interest in this regard.

While the pits might represent a settlement site, this seems unlikely given the low density of features and their widespread distribution. Pit digging may only have taken place occasionally and/or seasonally (Davies 1996, 68). Furthermore, no Iron Age structural features were found, although some might well have been lost to ploughing. The Grange Farm evidence contrasts with that from the recently excavated settlement at Honeypots gravel pit, Shropham, 3.5km to the north-west, where ditched enclosures, ditches, a trackway, two roundhouses, at least eight four-post structures and numerous pits were found (HER 36218: Whitmore 2002). It is possible that people living at Shropham frequented the site at Grange Farm. It is also possible the Roman farmstead hinted at by excavations at Quidenham may have had an Iron Age predecessor (HER 35776: Birks 2001a; Birks 2002; Birks forthcoming).

As in earlier periods, and in accordance with the recorded distribution of Breckland Iron Age artefact scatters, the water sources of Ashby Mere and the River Thet and its tributary were probably of key significance. If pastoral farming was important the mere might have been a convenient water-hole, with the pits dug during visits to it.

As only a short stretch of the curving ditch (*401*) tentatively assigned to the Iron Age was seen, its function is far from clear. It may have been a fragment of a field or enclosure boundary, as recorded during recent excavations at Shropham (Whitmore 2002); alternatively, perhaps it represented part of a ring-ditch. An Iron Age ring-ditch excavated at Ellingham (Hobbs 2001, 3–5, 7–9, fig. 2) and four others at Shropham (Whitmore 2002, 9–10) have been interpreted as possible barrow ditches.

Period III: Roman

The putative Roman field system seems to indicate a more formal division of the landscape than any seen before and also a change in land-use, perhaps from occasional visits and pastoral activity in the Late Iron Age to arable farming in the Roman period. Possibly they were dug and maintained by people who lived at the farmstead located to the north-east (HER 35776; Birks 2001; Birks 2002; Birks forthcoming). Pottery found within two of the ditches suggest they were infilled between the late 1st and 4th centuries. Whether or not they were all disused by the end of the Roman period at least one survived in part, or was partly marked by another landscape feature, enabling it to be re-cut during the medieval period.

Period IV: the Early Saxon settlement

Seven SFBs and six pits comprised the Early Saxon settlement evidence. No associated post-hole structures were identified. The features were located in two discrete areas, one in the north-west and one in the central south-east. As a number were identified close to the edges of the site, more may survive beyond its limits.

SFBs and pits have been excavated at a number of other Early Saxon settlements in Norfolk. These include examples at Aldeby, Bowthorpe, Broome, Spong Hill, Thetford and Witton. The number of SFBs found during individual excavations in Norfolk ranges from one at Broome to at least thirteen at Brandon Road, Thetford (Andrews 1995, 11–21; Dallas 1993; Lawson 1983, 50–8; Rickett 1995, 50–8; Robertson 2003; Trimble 2001, 9–10; Trimble 2004; Trimble forthcoming). In comparison seventy were found at West Stow, Suffolk (West 1985, 10–53), though neither this site nor the Norfolk settlements have been fully excavated.

Although each of the Grange Farm SFBs was different in terms of shape, size and plan, the seven can be divided into two broad types on the basis of the arrangement of post-holes (Fig. 10). The first type includes the SFBs with a post-hole at the centre of each of the shorter sides (*515*, *574*, *603* and *836* with post-pads) and variations on this (square-shaped *527* and *786* with five additional internal post-holes). The second type includes only SFB *748* and features four irregularly placed post-holes. In his work on the SFBs at West Stow, West undertook similar analysis: the Grange Farm two-post type corresponds with West's Type A, and the four-post SFB his Type C. The Grange Farm Type A examples fall within the upper half of the length range of the corresponding ones at West Stow (2.7–5.5m). Out of the seventy SFBs recorded at West Stow only one was of Type C; it was of similar size to that at Grange Farm (4m x 3.1m) and also had irregularly placed post-holes (West 1985, 24 and 113–15).

Five of the SFBs (*515, 574, 748, 786* and *836*) contained a single fill. In at least two cases the same fill was also found in the post-holes, suggesting that the superstructure of the building was dismantled and removed before the feature was infilled. This also seemed to be the case with SFB *786*, where the upper parts of two posts were broken off before it was filled up. These pieces of evidence, along with the presence of at least some domestic refuse in all of the five, suggest deliberate backfilling. Many of the SFBs at West Stow had two fills: West interpreted the upper fills as post-abandonment deposits and suggested that the lower fills accumulated during the use of the building (West 1985, 117–21). These explanations probably apply to the upper and lower fills respectively within SFB *603* at Grange Farm. At least the lower two fills within SFB *527* were probable accumulations, whereas the upper deposit was a deliberate backfill after disuse. The two-phase filling of SFBs at West Stow was taken as evidence — along with the absence of pit linings, untrampled bases of pits and a lack of slumping — for planked floors at the level of the top of the pit (West 1985, 116–21). As some or all of these factors apply to the Grange Farm examples, they too may have originally had raised floors. At both West Stow and at Bishee Barnabee Way, Bowthorpe (West 1985, 116–18; Trimble 2004) hearth material was found in contexts suggesting that they sat on raised floors. No evidence for hearths was found at Grange Farm.

Four of the six pits contained domestic refuse similar to that from the SFBs. This, combined with the fact that they were located away from the SFBs, implies that their primary function was as rubbish pits. The finds from pit *511* however, and its location close to two SFBs, indicate a very different purpose — an assemblage of metalworking debris suggests iron smithing took place on the site. Although small, this collection is an important one because Early Saxon iron smithing assemblages are not common (McDonnell 1989, 373–5). The few examples from Norfolk come from SFBs at Witton (Lawson 1983, 58), from burials, pits, and SFBs at Spong Hill (Rickett 1995, 82–4) and from the Brandon Road settlement at Thetford (HER 37158). No evidence was found for the location of a workshop associated with the dump. This would have probably included a ground or waist-level hearth (Cowgill 2001; Tylecote 1981, 42–5), a feature that would not have survived later ploughing.

The possible survival of a Roman ditch line, either as a partly open feature or marked by another landscape feature, suggests that the settlement may have been located within pre-existing fields. The settlement as a whole seems to have been unenclosed, with no surrounding ditch observed. This fact is emphasised by the presence of possible Early Saxon enclosures (*715* and *727*) in the north-west, close to the highest point of the site. As these features were located on the western edge of the site, the extent of any enclosures could not be identified. Comparisons with other sites are difficult, as Early Saxon settlements in East Anglia are rarely associated with enclosures.

As it is difficult to date the Early Saxon pottery from the site more closely than broadly to the 5th–7th centuries, it is not possible to offer a more refined date for the activity. The concentration of the features into two discrete areas, however, suggests that occupation could have had shifted over time or that there may have been more than one phase of activity. The location of the features containing Early Saxon whittle-tang knives (which may have appeared in the 7th century: Rogers 1993, 1275) and the presence of grass-tempered pottery (which may date to the 6th–7th century at Eriswell, Suffolk: S. Anderson *pers. comm.*) may support suggestions that settlement shift or discrete activity phases are represented. These finds were discovered in three features, all clustered together in the south-eastern part of the excavated area; the knives were found in SFBs *527* and *574*, whilst the grass-tempered pottery was discovered in SFB *574* and pit *511*. Perhaps some of the Early Saxon activity here was 'later' than that to the north-west, but this remains uncertain. The fact that the knives were found in SFBs close to the metalworking pit and therefore could be pieces discarded by a metalworker, and the possibility that the two 'areas' of activity could represent social (*eg.* family) or functional (agricultural or industrial) divisions, both argue for caution in assuming that the spatial division is necessarily a chronological one. The absence of Middle Saxon Ipswich wares, however, first produced in the 720s (D. Gurney *pers comm., cf.* Jennings 1981, 12), does suggest that the Early Saxon occupation at Grange Farm had ceased by that time.

As in earlier periods, the location's proximity to water, the light soils and the site's prominent position would all have made the site attractive during the Early Saxon period. The continuing importance of water supply in the Breckland region in this period is shown by the manner in which settlement sites appear concentrated in river valleys (Sussams 1996). The immediate settlement context of the Snetterton site at this time is unclear, although Early Saxon pottery has been collected from a site to the east of the site (HER 29958). The nearest known cemeteries are at Kenninghall, Shropham (an uncertain location) and Rocklands (Clarke 1940, 223–4 and 239; Penn 2000).

Period V–VII: medieval and post-medieval land-use

The possible survival of a probable Roman boundary and the cutting of at least one ditch in the Late Saxon period suggest that the earliest medieval field system was not imposed on an entirely open landscape. The alignment of fourteen ditches parallel to the probable Roman boundary implies that the new ditches, to some extent, reflected former land divisions. Nonetheless, the digging of sixteen boundaries across the site does symbolise systematic re-planning of the local area. The re-cutting of some of the ditches in slightly different locations, followed by major re-instatement of the associated boundaries, indicates that the field system remained significant throughout the medieval period.

The manner in which field boundaries clustered in the centre of the excavated area, with none identified in the north-westernmost and southern parts, might reflect feature survival but could have other significance. Davison has suggested that an infield-outfield system of agriculture could have been practised in the Snetterton area (Davison 1973, 350). If so, the area of the field system

may have formed the 'infield', with the areas beyond the 'outfield'. Alternatively, the clustering of the medieval field boundaries may signify that an open field system was used. Williamson (1993, 172–3) has noted how restricted areas of arable land are typical of this form of organisation.

Ditch *22*, located within or to the south of the field system, appeared to be part of an enclosure and may have been associated with the waterlogged features found during the evaluation. Several medieval industrial processes, including dying and fulling, tanning and retting (Blair and Ramsey 1991, 295–9, 330–7; Greig 1988, 122), required access to water. The features might have been deliberately dug as reservoirs, as elsewhere in Norfolk at Corpusty/Saxthorpe and Repps with Bastwick (Bates 2003). The two unusual features lined with cobbles and the oven to the north of the enclosure may have been associated with cereal processing and storage.

Davison's suggestion that the vill of Ashby was located in an area to the north of Ashby Mere (Davison 1973, 340–3) implies that the fields, waterlogged pits and possible cereal processing features encountered were associated with the settlement. As no medieval structural evidence was found, it is unlikely that the village itself was located within the excavation area but the settlement may have been sited close by, perhaps directly adjacent to Ashby Mere and close to the site of a well discovered in 1970 (HER 9167). The collection of over 200 unstratified sherds of medieval pottery may represent a spread which formed around the settlement site.

The two post-medieval field boundary ditches were on similar north-east to south-west alignments to the medieval ones, but in different locations. Three similarly aligned trackways appear within the area of the site on a map of 1681, along with one at right-angles to them labelled Field Way (Davison 1973, 344). Although no evidence for these survived, the map shows that one of the north-east to south-west orientated tracks lay between the two excavated ditches, with another directly to the west of the western ditch. Documentation associated with the map indicates the land east of the easternmost track had been enclosed by 1681 (Davison 1973, 344). The cutting of the two boundaries may have been associated with this enclosure process. Although it is uncertain when the post-medieval field system went out of use, it had clearly gone by the time the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map was published in 1905 (Ordnance Survey 1905, 25" Norfolk Sheets XCV.5 and XCV.6). This map shows the present boundaries and none of their predecessors.

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