Surrey Archaeological Collections, **102,** 227–242, 2019

Archaeological investigations at the former George Payne Ltd site, 57 Croydon Road, Beddington

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Archaeological investigations comprising evaluation, excavation and watching brief, were undertaken by Archaeology South-East during 2007 and 2008 at the former George Payne Ltd (Payne's Poppets) site, 57 Croydon Road, Beddington. The work revealed evidence of multiple phases of archaeological activity. A scatter of worked flint of Mesolithic date indicates early land use with small quantities of Neolithic flint as evidence of continued prehistoric occupation in the vicinity of the site. Late Bronze Age features, including a possible enclosure or barrow ditches and pits, were also uncovered. Following an apparent hiatus in land use, a 5th–7th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found overlying the Bronze Age features. Although skeletal remains proved to be badly preserved an interesting assemblage of grave goods was recovered. The archaeological investigations have revealed important evidence of early medieval activity in the area and added to the understanding of the prehistoric landscape of Beddington.

Introduction (fig 1)

Archaeology South-East (UCL Institute of Archaeology) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of their client, Equity Estates plc, and their solicitors, Innes Mackay, to undertake a programme of archaeological investigations within an Archaeological Priority Zone at the former George Payne Ltd (Payne's Poppets) chocolate factory, 57 Croydon Road, Beddington (TQ 30675 64616; fig 1). The excavations occurred prior to the redevelopment of the land as a car dealership and light industrial units. The site, which slopes gently from north to south, covers an area of *c* 3.8ha and prior to the archaeological works the land was occupied by the factory buildings. The construction work associated with the factory buildings had truncated the deposits along the western edge of the monitored and excavated area. The underlying geology is chalk overlain by Thanet Sand, part of the Woolwich and Reading Beds (BGS 2016). The site is situated close to the valley of the river Wandle, *c* 400m upslope, to the south of the stream (Archaeoscape 2008).

An archaeological evaluation consisting of seven trial trenches identified remains of prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon date concentrated in the north of the site, while truncation of archaeological deposits had occurred in the south and west (ASE 2007). Further archaeological works were agreed by CgMs Consulting Ltd and the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS). These involved archaeological excavation of the northern portion and a watching brief to be maintained during stripping of the disturbed southern part of the site. The excavation revealed prehistoric remains and further burials of 5th–7th AD century date.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A desk-based assessment was carried out (CgMs 2007), which identified a number of archaeological sites and findspots in the nearby area. Palaeolithic and Mesolithic activity is represented by a large number of casual finds including worked flint tools and flakes, burnt flints and a stone axe (Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) nos 020336, 020521, 030206–7, 023156). A possible occupation site of Mesolithic date has been identified 200m to the north (GLHER no 020052). Neolithic activity is also known

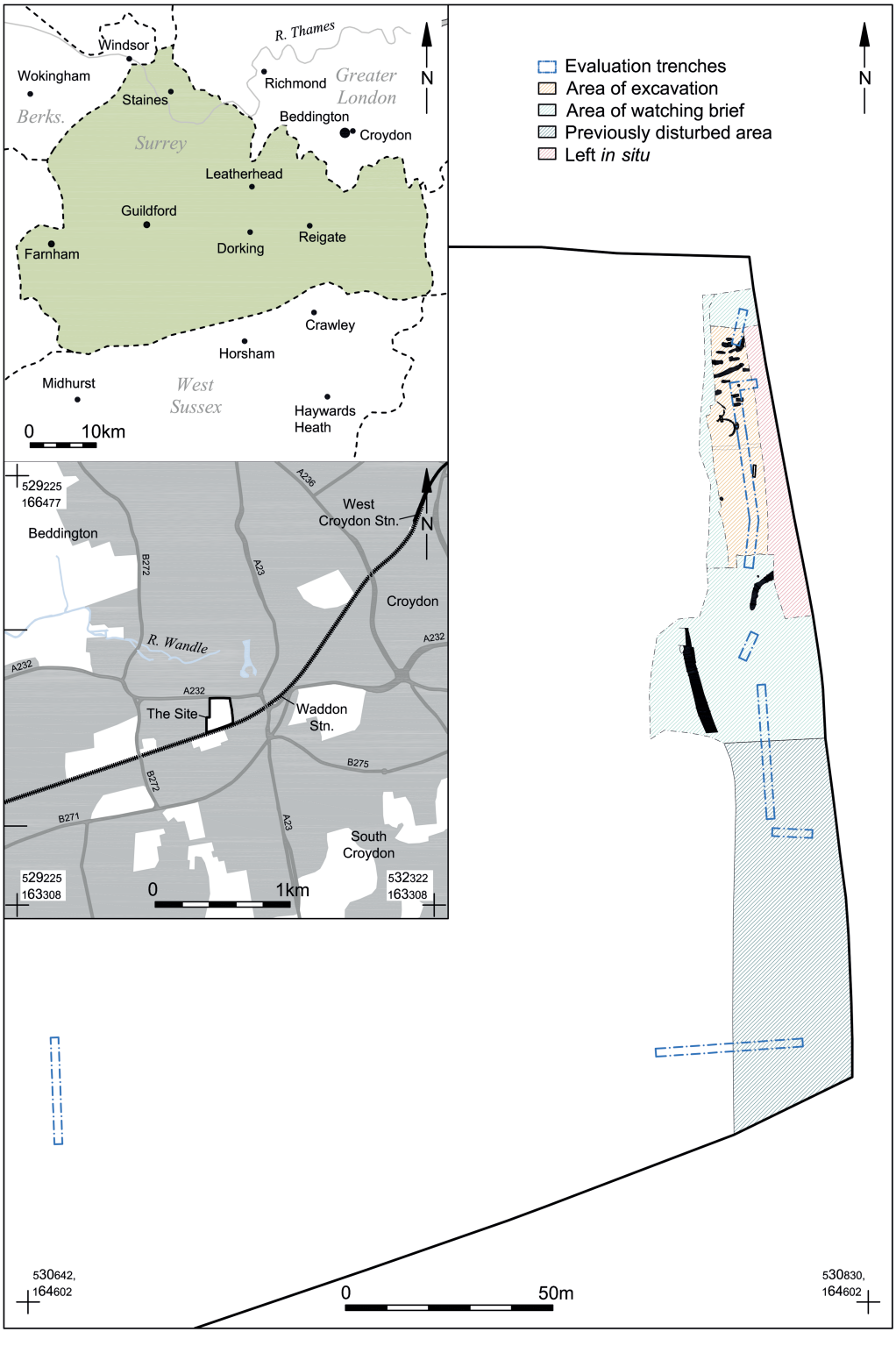

Fig 1 George Payne Ltd site, Croydon Road, Beddington. Site location.

from the local area with occasional finds of worked flint, axes and an awl (GLHER nos 020524, 020160, 020162, 020163, 020164, 021226). A later Neolithic pit and postholes with pottery fragments and flint tools has also been identified to the north of the site and occupation within the area appears to have continued into the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (GLHER nos 02191 and LO76763). This is suggested by a site of Bronze Age date with a finds assemblage including worked flint, pottery, a bronze awl, spindle whorl, and possible saddle quern (GLHER no 030232). Iron Age settlement was encountered nearby with finds of pottery, a hearth, worked flints and a burial (GLHER no 030250). The area around Croydon Road appears to have been a highly developed agrarian landscape with widespread prehistoric activity and settlement (CgMs 2007).

Roman and early medieval evidence from the vicinity is limited to a few abraded pot sherds (GLHER no 021654, 021655). It is thought the area was occupied by agricultural fields during the medieval and post-medieval periods before being developed for use as the Payne's chocolate factory in 1933 (*ibid*).

Results (figs 2 and 3)

GEOLOGY, OVERBURDEN AND RESIDUAL EARLY PREHISTORIC MATERIAL

Over much of the site the archaeological horizon was marked by the Thanet Sand geology. However, in the northern portion, a layer of colluvium measuring up to 0.5m thick was found to overlie the archaeological features. The entire area was covered with layers of made-ground overburden relating to the demolition of the factory. Additionally, terracing for the former factory had greatly truncated or removed deposits towards the western and northern boundaries of the excavated area.

Although no Mesolithic, Neolithic or Early Bronze Age features were uncovered during the works, the presence of residual early prehistoric flints indicates activity of this date in the vicinity. The majority of the assemblage was recovered from subsoil and topsoil layers (a maximum total of 0.8m thick), although some flints were found in ditch and grave fills and are discussed in more detail below.

LATE BRONZE AGE ACTIVITY

Ditches

Several features were dated to this phase based on artefactual and stratigraphic evidence, including three ditches located within the northern part of the site. Ditch [105] was aligned *c* north-east/south-west. It continued beyond the limit of excavation with a terminus identified 7.50m to the east. The fill [106] contained residual Neolithic flintwork (including an arrowhead; fig 4B) and abraded Late Bronze Age pottery fragments as well as an iron knife (RF<15>; fig 5D) and a copper-alloy buckle (RF<17>, fig 5C) thought to be related to an unrecognised early medieval burial (see below). Two further ditches [108] and [111] were identified just to the north of [105]. Although no datable artefacts were retrieved from the fills of either ditch, a Late Bronze Age date seems likely considering the activity in the area and the fact that [108] was cut by an Anglo-Saxon burial (Grave 4). Given the alignment and possible date of the ditches they may represent termini of a circular enclosure with a south-facing entrance or perhaps the remains of a barrow.

Ditch [408] contained Late Bronze Age pottery and prehistoric flintwork. It was aligned north–south and was considerably more substantial than the linear features found elsewhere within the site (fig 3, section 1). Originally it is likely that the ditch was even deeper as the investigations showed this part of the site had been subject to truncation. Numerous fills were recorded along the length of the ditch, several of which appeared to have slumped in from banks on either side. It is worth noting that this ditch appears to follow the projected

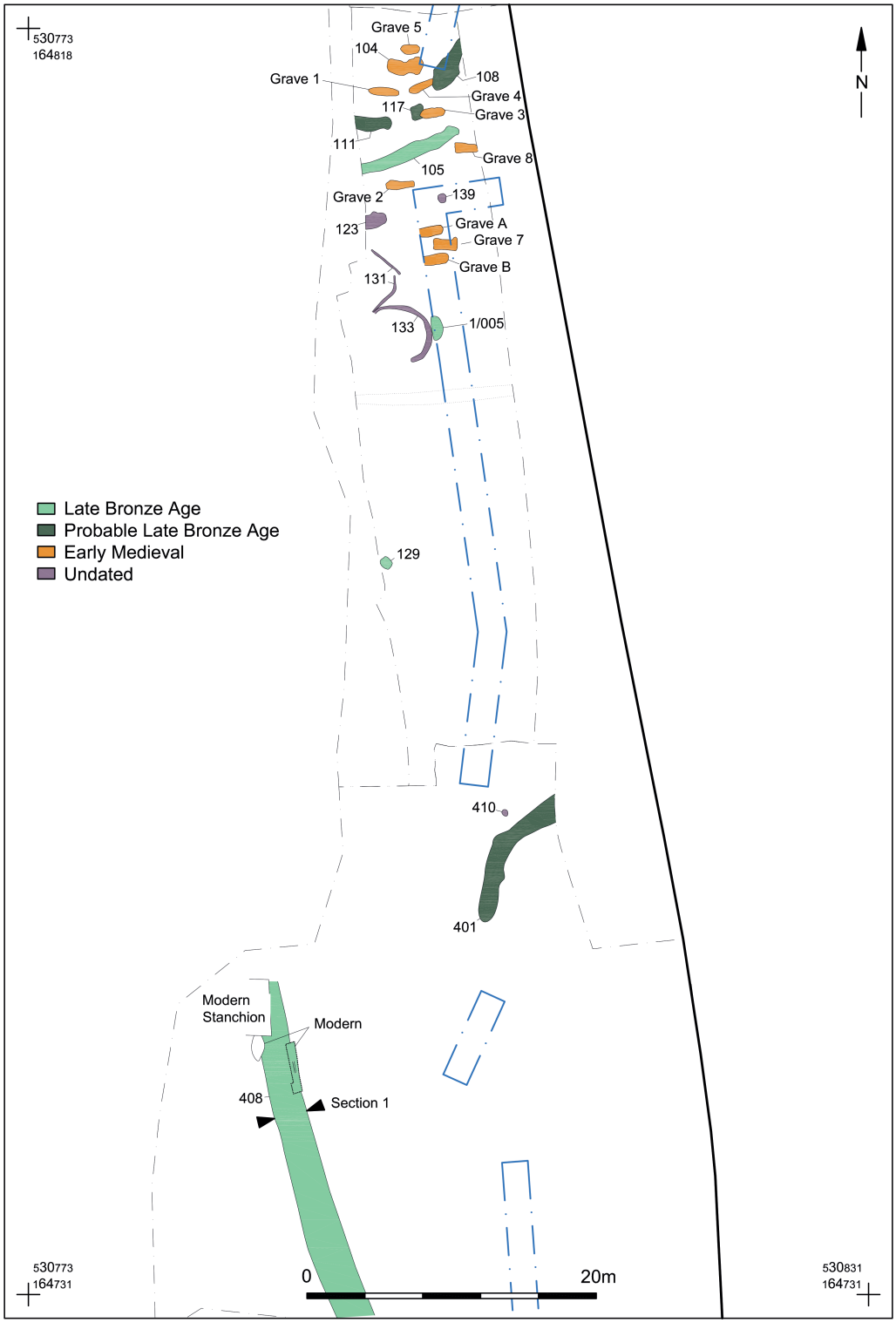

Fig 2 George Payne Ltd site, Croydon Road, Beddington. Site plan.

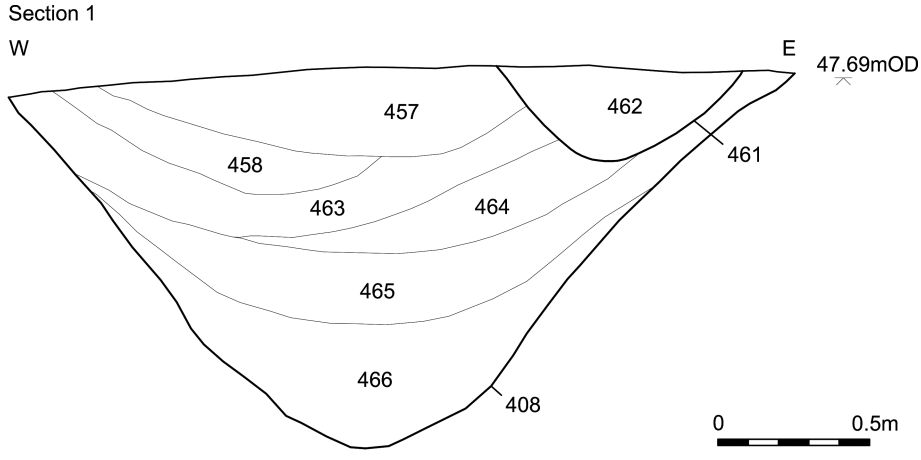

Fig 3 George Payne Ltd site, Croydon Road, Beddington. South-facing section of ditch [408].

alignment of the Mere Bank, *c* 35m to the east, the origins and history of which remain uncertain (Adams 2006).

One further ditch [401] was located roughly in the centre of the site. It extended north from a terminus for *c* 5m before it curved to the north-east for a further 5m to the edge of the excavation area. The ditch was filled by a series of four deposits, two of which appear to represent slumping from a possible bank on the north-western side. The only datable material recovered was worked flint of probable Neolithic date from fill [403]. It seems likely that this flint was residual and that the ditch was contemporary with the others encountered on site.

Pits

The Late Bronze Age activity also included three pits. It is possible that they were used for rubbish disposal but none was greater than 0.20m in depth. One, [117], was located between the termini of the possible enclosure or barrow ditches to the north. This feature did not produce any dating evidence but was assigned to this phase as it was cut by an Anglo-Saxon burial (Grave 3). A second pit [129] was located in apparent isolation further south. This feature also produced Late Bronze Age pottery and flintwork as well as badly degraded animal bone. The largest of the three pits [1/005] was located to the south of the possible enclosure ditches and contained six sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery and 30 prehistoric flints, the majority of which were flakes. It also produced a fragment of quern (RF<11>), which constitutes the only worked stone from the site. The stone is oval in plan and D-sectioned so that it fits neatly in the hand. No rotary wear is visible on the grinding face suggesting the piece may be from a simple 'grain-rubber' of probable prehistoric date (Barber 2008).

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CEMETERY

Graves

A total of nine graves were identified within and around the Bronze Age ditches in the north of the site: Graves A and B and Graves 1–5 and 7–8. All graves were aligned on an approximate east–west orientation and had single fills of light to mid-grey/brown sandy silt. Owing to the acidic soil, the cortical and trabecular integrity of the bone was extremely poor, resulting in very fragmented and partial skeletal remains. Four graves had articulated,

identifiable human remains (Graves 1, 2, 5 and 8); the environmental sample from Grave 4 produced human teeth and highly degraded fragments of human bone were recovered from Graves A and B. No bone survived in Graves 3 and 7. The finds from the grave fills have been included in the grave descriptions below but are discussed fully in the Registered Finds section.

Grave A

This grave [1/007] was identified during the evaluation but contained only two fragments of unidentifiable degraded human bone. Also recovered were fragments of iron strips with rivet holes and the decayed fragments of a probable 5th–7th century wooden box (RF<12>).

Grave B

Grave B [1/009] was also encountered during the evaluation and produced degraded fragments of human bone as well as an *in-situ* fragment of occipital (cranial) bone at the west end of the grave. Recovered from the grave were a cast copper-alloy buckle RF<1> (fig 5A), an iron knife RF<2>, and other corroded iron objects (possibly nails) situated to the west of the grave arranged around the cranium. The buckle is of late 5th–late 6th century date (Marzinzik 2003, 19; type I.2)

Grave 1

The skeletal remains excavated from Grave 1 [109] were the best preserved and *c* 25% of the skeleton was present. This included a fragmented right maxilla with dentition, the distal portion of the right humerus, left and right ilium and pubis and fragmented mesial and proximal portions of the left and right femur. Sex estimation proved inconclusive but by observing the stages of epiphyseal fusion it was possible to classify the individual as an adult (Bass 1987; Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994). There was evidence of wear on the left femoral head that might indicate general joint disease. Dental attrition according to the Smith scoring system (Smith 1984) ranged from 2 to 4 and the CEJ-AC measurement was greater than 2mm. These traits are fairly common in older individuals due to age and general tooth wear. No finds other than residual prehistoric flintwork were recovered from the fill [110].

Grave 2

The skeleton in Grave 2 [113] was poorly preserved but fragments of cranium, right humerus and radius and left femur and fibula were recovered. The individual was identified as an adult of unknown sex. No finds were recovered from the fill [114].

Grave 3

No skeletal remains survived in Grave 3 [115] and no finds were recovered from the fill [116]. The western end of the grave cut through pit [117] (see above).

Grave 4

Although no skeletal remains were recovered during the excavation of Grave 4 [119], an environmental sample contained a number of human teeth, preserved only as the enamel shells of the crowns; two second molars, two first molars, two first and second premolars, one lower second incisor and one canine (possibly the upper left). One crown was too fragmented for identification. There was virtually no attrition (scored 0-1, Smith 1984, 46) and no signs of caries, which would be consistent with a younger adult. The fill [120] contained a probable knife tang (RF<13>) and several fragments of corroded and unidentifiable iron surviving apparently *in situ* towards the centre of the cut (RF<14>).

Grave 5

Grave 5 [121] contained badly degraded cranial fragments from an adult individual but no other skeletal remains were recovered. No finds were recovered from the fill [122].

Grave 7

No skeletal remains survived in Grave 7 [125] and the only finds produced by the fill [126] were a few residual pot sherds of Late Bronze Age date.

Grave 8

The only surviving skeletal remains in Grave 8 [127] were badly degraded fragments of both femora and tibiae. No finds were recovered from the fill [128].

Pit

A single pit was dated to this period; an amorphous 'kidney'-shaped feature [104] that contained a fragment of copper-alloy disc brooch of Anglo-Saxon date (RF<16>), recovered from an environmental sample.

UNDATED FEATURES

Gullies

With a depth of only 0.10m, shallow, undated curvilinear gullies [131] and [133] were identified in close proximity to each other, towards the northern end of the site; their truncation to the west was a result of modern disturbance associated with the factory. Unfortunately, the

relationship between these features and Late Bronze Pit [1/005] could not be established as the excavation area was stripped to a slightly lower level than the evaluation.

Ditch

Just to the north of [131] and [133] was the eastern terminus of ditch [123]. The fill [124] did not produce any dating evidence.

Pit

A circular pit [139] was located to the east of ditch [123] at the northern end of the site. Unfortunately, the fill lacked any form of dating evidence.

Posthole

A single posthole [410] was identified at the southern end of the site, just to the north of probable Late Bronze Age ditch [401]. No datable material was recovered from its fill.

THE FLINTWORK, by Karine Le Hégarat

Introduction

In total, 365 pieces of struck flint were recovered during the excavation. A further 823 fragments of unworked burnt flint weighing just over 26kg were retrieved from 24 contexts. The flint assemblage can be largely dated to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age but there is also evidence for activity during the Mesolithic as well as Middle/Late Bronze Age periods. This is based on technological and typological aspects of the assemblage.

Methodology

The flintwork was originally assessed by Chris Butler (ASE 2008). The assemblage of struck flints has been re-examined and fully recorded. The artefacts were classified using standard sets of codes and morphological descriptions (Butler 2005; Ford 1987; Inizan *et al* 1999). Basic technological details as well as further information regarding the condition of the artefacts were recorded and dating was attempted where possible. The assemblage was catalogued directly onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and is summarised by period and feature in table 1. It was impossible to re-examine the burnt unworked flint fragments because they were discarded after the initial quantification.

Raw material

Two types of raw material were selected for the manufacture of the lithics. The main raw material is characterised by a light to dark grey or light brown flint with mottled inclusions, although the latter are uncommon on the pieces made of very dark grey (almost black) flint. No frost or thermal fractures were noticed. Where present, the outer surface is mostly abraded to a thin, stained, smooth surface. This material, which appeared to be of varying flaking quality, has the characteristics of chalk-derived flint, and would have been available locally from surface deposits. The second raw material consists of Bullhead flint. This is characterised by an orange band below a thin dark green cortex. Pieces manufactured using Bullhead flint account for 13.18% of the total assemblage of struck flint (n=48), but a further sixteen pieces displaying a dark green cortex with no underlying band could also represent Bullhead flint. This raw material can be obtained from the base of the Thanet Sand formation and would have been available locally. It is interesting to note that Bullhead flint appears to have been favoured during the early prehistoric period.

Table 1 Summary of the struck flint by period and category type

	Possible Neolithic	Late Bronze Age	Late Bronze Age	Late Bronze Age	Remaining material		Total	%
Feature – deposit	Ditch [401]	Ditch [408]	Ditch [105]	Pits [1/005] and [129]	Saxon and unphased features	Topsoil, subsoil and unstratified deposits		
Context	[403]	[409], [453], [455], [463], [465] and [466]	[106]	[1/006] and [130]				
Flake	14	91	33	24	35	69	266	73.08
Blade-like flake	1	11	–	1	–	2	15	4.12
Blade	–	1	2	1	–	7	11	3.02
Bladelet	–	6	2	1	1	2	12	3.30
Core face edge rejuvenation flake	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	0.27
Chip	–	2	–	1	–	–	3	0.82
Irregular waste	–	3	–	–	–	2	5	1.37
Single platform blade core	–	1	–	–	1	–	2	0.55
Blade core	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	0.27
Multiplatform flake core	2	3	–	2	–	11	18	4.95
Single-platform flake core	–	2	–	–	–	–	2	0.55
Unclassifiable/ fragmentary core	–	1	–	–	–	11	12	3.30
End-scraper	–	1	–	–	1	2	4	1.10
Side-scraper	–	–	1	–	–	1	2	0.55
End- and side-scraper	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	0.27
Oblique arrowhead	–	–	1			–	1	0.27
Pick/adze	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	0.27
Retouched flake	1	–	–	1	–	1	3	0.82
Misc. retouch	–	–	–	1	–	–	1	0.27
Hammerstone	–	1	–	–	–	2	3	0.82
Total	18	123	39	32	39	113	364	100.00
%	4.95%	33.79%	10.71%	8.79%	10.71%	31.04%	100.00%	

Condition

In general, the flintwork exhibits fresh-edge condition, implying that the material has undergone negligible post-depositional disturbance or that it was not exposed for a long period before burial. Nonetheless, 204 pieces were recorded as broken. A total of ten pieces were burnt and 36 were recorticated to varying degrees. Most pieces display incipient traces of light blue surface discoloration, but a few pieces were entirely re-corticated pale grey to white.

Provenance

Almost one-third of the assemblage (31.23%, n=114) derives from topsoil, subsoil and unstratified deposits (table 1). A total of 194 pieces (53.15% of the total assemblage) came from four Late Bronze Age features including two ditches and two pits. One further ditch produced eighteen pieces of struck flint and 39 pieces came from nine Anglo-Saxon or unphased features. Despite the fresh appearance of the material, the chronological traits of the flints present in the features indicate that this assemblage is mostly residual, with possibly a small quantity of flints being contemporary with the Late Bronze Age ditches. It is more likely that the majority of the flints represent material caught up in the fills of later features. The flints could have been incorporated from surface scatters and some pieces may be colluvial in origin.

The assemblage

Mesolithic or Early Neolithic

A small quantity of regular blades and bladelets (*c* ten) as well as blade-like flakes and flakes with blade scar removals were recovered from various contexts, as part of a chronologically mixed assemblage. These artefacts probably date from the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic periods. Only three blade cores were present; two single-platform blade cores (Late Bronze Age ditch [408], fill [455] and grave [1/007], fill [1/008]) and a blade core from a topsoil context. No evidence for the manufacture or use of microliths was found, but a pick was recovered from the topsoil (fig 4A). The tool is sub-rectangular in section and measures 116mm in length, displaying a pointed working edge. Lateral abrasions suggest that the tool may have been hafted. Although picks/adzes are frequently associated with Mesolithic activity, their manufacture and use may have continued into the Neolithic period (Care 1979; Gardiner 1988). The material indicates an early presence in the landscape, but the low density of Mesolithic/Early Neolithic material suggests only minimal activity at the site.

Neolithic–Early Bronze Age

Flakes dominate the flint assemblage as a whole. While it is impossible to determine the relative proportions of Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and later Bronze Age material, it is clear that the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age material was more abundant and it was mostly found mixed with earlier or later material. The flakes were struck using both hard and soft hammers. Platforms were not systematically prepared, but platform edges were occasionally abraded for the controlled removal of thin flakes. Plain narrow platforms appeared to predominate, and a few winged platforms were also recorded. A large proportion of the cores were aimed at the production of small, thin flakes. They were often well maintained and systematically worked. Overall, modified pieces were uncommon, representing 3.5% of the total assemblage of struck flint (n=13), but Late Bronze Age ditch [105], fill [106] did produce an oblique Late Neolithic arrowhead (fig 4B). Seven scrapers were recovered in total. Scrapers are difficult to date precisely, but two of the end-scrapers recovered from Grave 1 and the surface of Late Bronze Age ditch [408] ([453]) are likely to belong to this period.

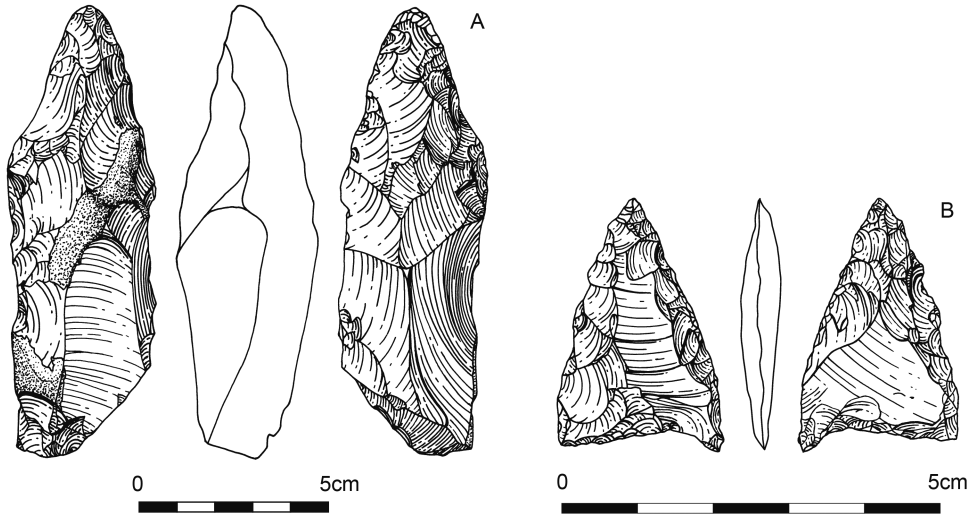

Fig 4 George Payne Ltd site, Croydon Road, Beddington. Mesolithic flint pick (A) and Middle to Late Neolithic oblique arrowhead (B).

Late Bronze Age

The assemblage also comprised flakes and modified pieces that were more crudely worked, displaying characteristics of later prehistoric hard-hammer reduction strategy, including larger butts with incipient cones of percussion and pronounced bulbs of percussion. Also present were fragmentary cores and single-platform flake cores with cones of percussions suggesting miss-hits and a simple and relatively expedient reduction. A few crudely produced tools are likely to belong to this period; however, it is difficult to quantify the Late Bronze Age assemblage precisely because of the overall mixed nature of the flintwork retrieved from the site and the lack of diagnostic pieces. Although ditches [105], [408] and pits [1/005] and [129] contained pieces characteristic of later prehistoric flake-based industry, these features also produced pieces suggestive of a blade-orientated industry. The low proportion of waste pieces may simply relate to the collection strategy on site.

Discussion

The flint assemblage demonstrates use of the site during the prehistoric period. The majority of the flintwork probably dates to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. This is based on the technological and typological aspects of the material. A small earlier Mesolithic/Early Neolithic component was also present as were a few pieces that are likely to be contemporary with the later prehistoric features.

It seems that the majority of the flintwork was deposited on the surface rather than within archaeological features, subsequently becoming incorporated as residual finds in later features. Although chips and irregular waste pieces were uncommon, the presence of 33 cores and three flint hammerstones (all consisting of reused cores) provides evidence for flint-working and consequently the low occurrence of chips and irregular waste is more likely to reflect a recovery bias. The quantity and range of retouched tools were limited. The latter are possibly associated with intermittent activities.

Although the Mesolithic assemblage is small, it almost certainly forms part of a much more extensive prehistoric 'spread' across the wider area. A Mesolithic tranchet axe was found at 2–14 Whitgift Street, Croydon (Askew 2010, 262). Also, in addition to scattered findspots, a more important late Mesolithic flint knapping site has been found *c* 1km to

the north-east of the site (Bagwell *et al* 2001). The three Mesolithic pits found at London Road have been interpreted as extraction pits. The same site produced a Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flint scatter providing evidence for initial core reduction. The assemblage from the Payne's Factory site provides further insight into the choice of raw material, with the use of Bullhead flint.

THE POTTERY, by Anna Doherty

A total of 74 sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery, weighing 612g, was recovered from the site, of which 38 sherds, weighing 358g, were considered well stratified in ditch [105] and pits [129] and [1/005]. Feature sherds amount to four partial rims, all but one unstratified. The coarseness of the flint-tempered fabrics seems to suggest that the assemblage belongs largely to the plain ware phase of the post-Deverel-Rimbury tradition (dated *c* 1150–800 BC). However, the use of fingernail impressions on a partial rim from pit [129] together with another body sherd with possible finger-tipping may indicate that this feature is marginally later in date. A number of sherds were also residual in later deposits: Graves A, B, 3 and 7 as well as subsoil [101]. Full details of the assessment can be found in the archive report (Doherty 2008).

THE REGISTERED FINDS, by Trista Clifford

Brooch

A single copper-alloy disc brooch (RF<16>, fig 5B), was recovered from pit fill [103]. The brooch is in a poor state of preservation; *c* 70% of the disc remains, broken into two pieces. The pin integrally cast lugs are present, but the pin is missing. It is decorated with a series of three, paired concentric grooves around a central perforation (Dickinson type 3.1). The diameter of 27.4mm places the brooch towards the lower end of the range. Disc brooches are rare in continental Europe and are thought to be an insular tradition deriving from Roman plate brooch forms (Dickinson 1976, 130) with the main concentration occurring in Cambridgeshire, and the upper Thames Valley, where they may have been produced (Leeds 1945, 49–52; Macgregor & Bolick 1993, 57). As such they are of early 5th to mid-6th century date and those within later contexts are often broken or incomplete, suggesting heirloom status. The nearby cemetery at Mitcham produced seven examples with varying ring-and-dot decorative motifs, one of which is almost identical (Bidder & Morris 1959, pl 11, 196) and dated to the 6th century; no brooches of this type were recovered from the other significant cemetery at Croydon or by Flower (1894) at Beddington.

Buckles

Buckles are among the most numerous objects to be found in Anglo-Saxon graves. Two were recovered during the excavations, although only one (RF<1>; fig 5A) was located within a grave, the other was recovered from ditch [105] (RF<17> fig 5C). Buckles occur within both male and female graves, as do knives, therefore the association of the latter buckle here with a knife (RF<15> fig 5D) is of little use in determining the sex of the grave occupants.

A large cast 'shield-on-tongue' buckle (RF<1>) of Marzinzik's (2003, 19) Type I.2 (fig 5A) was recovered from Grave B, an adult burial of unknown sex, overlying knife RF<2> (fragment, not illustrated). It is decorated with eight groups of two transverse grooves around the circumference of the frame, and two across the shield-shaped pin boss. 'Shield-on-tongue' buckles originated on the Continent in the late 5th century. An increase in size is generally interpreted as a diachronic development with examples of this size dating to the later 6th century (Martin 1989, 133ff, note 105). Recent analysis of objects from 6th and 7th century graves in England suggests this type, BU2-d, come into use in England

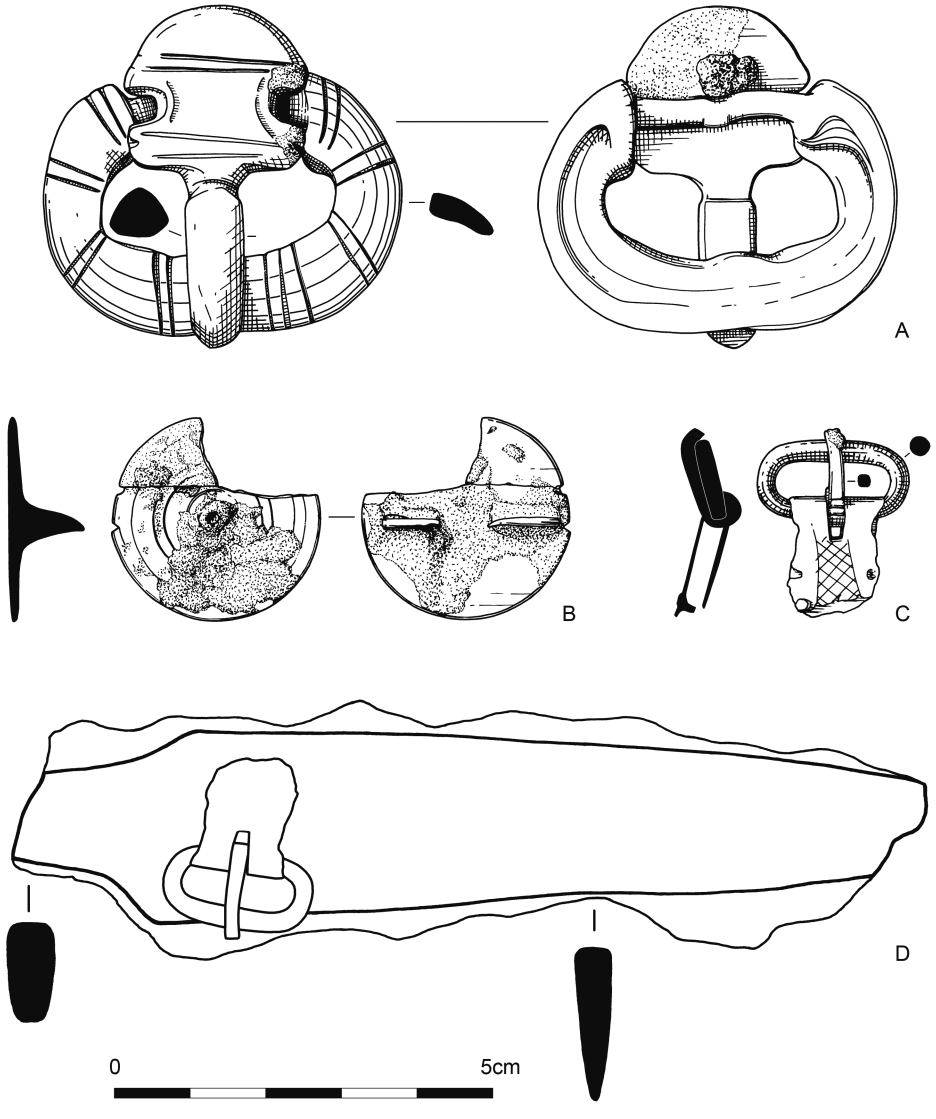

Fig 5 George Payne Ltd site, Croydon Road, Beddington. The registered finds: (A) RF<1> buckle, (B) RF <16> brooch, (C) RF <17> buckle and (D) RF <15> knife.

around AD 510, and are assigned to Phase AS-FB (*c* AD 510–85/ASM-B (*c* 525–65) (Hines & Bayliss 2013, 368, 485, table 10.1) The type is found in both male and female graves, often together with 'shoe-shaped' rivets in male graves (*ibid*, 368), and Marzinzik (2003, 81) notes that burial of this type is slightly more common with females than males; the reverse is true of Continental burials. Organic material within the corrosion product suggests the buckle was resting against a pelt.

The buckle is comparable in style with an example from grave 94 at Mill Hill, Deal (Parfitt & Brugmann 1997, fig 51c), and a white metal example from Soham, Cambridgeshire (Clifford, in prep) with a similar 'swallowtail' pin boss form that has parallels on the Continent (Bohner 1958, taf.35.14a). A large buckle from Dover Buckland (grave D) has very similar transverse mouldings on the frame, with a differently shaped tongue (Evison 1987, fig 3). No

buckles of type I.2 are recorded by Marzinzik (2003) in the Surrey area; however, the type is common in the south-east of England with the densest concentration in Kent.

The second buckle, RF<17> (fig 5C), was originally identified from the x-radiograph of RF<15>, a knife recovered from fill [106] of ditch [105]. It is a small D-shaped to oval copper-alloy loop with copper-alloy pin attached to a rectangular plate, folded around the strap bar, with one of two rivets remaining at the rear edge. The plate is decorated with a central panel of incised cross-hatched lines flanked by punched dots along the margins. The pin is decorated with two transverse, incised lines. Buckles of this type (Marzinzik 2003, typegroup II.24a) are thought to be later in date than typegroup I (Marzinzik 2003, 51); although a small number do appear in the 5–6th centuries (Geake 1997, 79) the bulk appear around the mid-6th century and continue into the 7th to early 8th centuries. They are included within the national analysis as type BU-7, where the late dating is confirmed (Phase AS-MCDE *c* AD 565–645; AS-FDE *c* AD 580–685) (Hines & Bayliss 2013, 146, table 10.1).

Although only one of the buckles was excavated from a grave context, the association of both buckles with a knife is suggestive of a strap or belt from which the knife may have been suspended at the waist.

Knives

Knives appear commonly in Anglo-Saxon burial contexts, occurring in burials of both men and women of all ages. Three iron knives were recovered from this site; one consisted of just the tang, one blade, and one almost complete example. In all cases the knives were in an advanced state of corrosion and identification was therefore confined to x-ray analysis. The knives are classified by reference to Evison (1987) and Böhner (1958). Where the diagnostic characteristics could be discerned, two types are represented:

RF<2> (not illustrated) from the waist area of burial [1/009] Grave B conforms to Evison's Type 6 (Böhner type D), which has a straight back and incurved blade tip. At Dover Buckland (Evison 1987), this type was found in Phase 7 graves, dated to AD 675–700, although a single example also occurred in a grave of Phase 1 (6th century). The cemetery at Park Lane, Croydon produced a single possible example (McKinley 2003, 86).

RF<15> (fig 5D) was recovered from ditch fill [106]. It bears some characteristics of Evison's Type 2, straight backed with a curved cutting edge. This classification is by no means certain as both the tip of the blade, and the tang, are now missing. Type 2 knives were found in graves spanning Phases 1–6 at Dover Buckland (Evison 1987), and the type is equivalent to Böhners Type B, which dates from AD 450 to 600 and into the 7th century. A small area of poorly preserved wood covering the tang and hilt suggests a wooden handle, while an area of compact, smoothed corrosion on the surface of the blade may indicate a leather scabbard or covering. Two small areas of mineralised textile near the tip of the blade were identified as ZZ tabby weave. It was not possible to identify the fibre although tabby is usually made in linen. The textile is probably the remains of a burial wrapping, although it could possibly be a bag or purse.

RF<13> (not illustrated) was recovered from Grave 4 and has been identified as a probable knife tang. However, it was not possible to comment more precisely on form because of the fragment size and poor state of preservation.

Containers

Thirteen iron fragments from the fill of Grave A [1/007] may represent the remains of a wooden box or casket (RF<12>). Six incomplete rectangular strips and strip fragments were recovered. The most complete measures 43+mm in length and 14mm in width and has a flat, narrow section. A complete iron nail with a flat head and square-sectioned shank remains within nail holes on two of the strips; in one case the nail is clenched. Four other strips also have holes for nails. The remaining pieces consist of nail fragments and possible rivets. In

the absence of any evidence for securing the box (lock plate, hinge) or other diagnostic parts such as handles, the remains are not sufficient to reconstruct the form such a box may have taken. Therefore, the collection could also be interpreted as repair plates or reinforcements for any wooden object, or even as coffin fittings since the location of the fragments was not recorded. According to Geake's survey (1997, 82) wooden boxes are most commonly found within female graves dating from the 6th to 8th centuries. This is borne out by the national analysis, in which the ratio of wooden boxes was 40:3 female:male graves, with a date range of AD 510–685 (Hines & Bayliss 2013, 229, table 10.1). Therefore, if the fittings do indeed derive from a wooden box, there is a strong possibility that the burial was of an adult female, during the 6th–7th centuries.

Discussion

The excavations uncovered evidence of activity of both prehistoric and early medieval (Anglo-Saxon) date. The earliest activity was evidenced by a small Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint assemblage recovered from unstratified overburden deposits or as residual finds in later features. This is consistent with the picture for the wider area with similar assemblages recorded nearby, as well as a more significant Mesolithic knapping site to the north-east (GLHER no 020052).

The earliest features encountered on the site date to the Late Bronze Age and their presence suggests a period of more intensive activity. All the ditches at the northern end of the site appear to be of this date and include a possible enclosure or barrow. A more substantial Bronze Age feature is ditch [408], which probably represents a prehistoric field boundary and appears to have had banks to either side. It is possible that this feature remained visible for a considerable time following the Bronze Age as there is little evidence for occupation of the site until Anglo-Saxon times. The ditch is on the same alignment as Mere Bank, the projected line of which runs *c* 35m to the east. This may not be a coincidence, but with uncertainty surrounding the date of the Mere Bank (Adams 2006) any possible relationship between the two cannot be established.

Following the Bronze Age, no activity is apparent on site until the 5th–7th centuries when it was used as a cemetery. The excavations uncovered nine Anglo-Saxon graves, all in a poor state of preservation with little human bone surviving. However, the knife (RF<15>) and buckle (RF<17>) recovered from the fill of ditch [105] suggests there may have been a tenth grave, unidentified during the excavations. Assuming that the feature is correctly dated to the Bronze Age, the early medieval finds cannot be residual and given their association with each other, in the same relative position as the knife and buckle from Grave 1, they are likely to have been grave goods. Cut into the ditch, the grave fill would have been difficult to discern, and given the poor preservation conditions proven elsewhere within the site any bone may not have survived. The 5th–7th century date of the cemetery is consistent with other Anglo-Saxon burials in the area, for example Beddington (Flower 1874), Mitcham (Bidder & Morris 1959) and Park Lane, Croydon (McKinley 2003).

A large proportion of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries lies on or very close to prehistoric earthwork features; approximately one-quarter of all such cemeteries are located within or around sites of Bronze Age date (Williams 1998, 92). The present site appears to be another such example with graves concentrated in the north of the site close to the Bronze Age ditches and possible enclosure or barrow. It has also been noted that cemeteries of this date sometimes use linear earthworks as boundaries (Lucy 2000, 128–30) and perhaps ditch [408] served such a purpose.

The identification of the cemetery also suggests the presence of an undiscovered contemporary settlement near to Croydon Road with which the burials would have been associated.

Undated features included the gullies located towards the centre of the site. Although the southernmost gully appears circular in shape, the northernmost gullies appear to be

more square or rectangular. Both were shallow with internal dimensions of between 4.5 and 5.0m. One possible explanation is that they represent drip-gullies associated with structures; however, there were no associated postholes to confirm the presence of buildings. A possible Late Bronze Age rectangular or oval structure with a width of 6.0m was recorded at London Road, Beddington but instead of gullies, this was represented by a series of large postholes (Bagwell *et al* 2001, 293).

Alternatively, they may be associated with the Anglo-Saxon cemetery itself. The presence of ring ditches within flat cemeteries of 6th century date has been noted in Kent, and the phenomenon appears to have spread westwards (McKinley 2003, 35). While some have a central burial, others have been recorded with no associated graves and their apparent location at the edge of cemeteries suggests that they may have been a later, perhaps 7th century practice (*ibid,* 35–6). The ditches on the present site do appear to be located at the edge of the cemetery, to the south of the identified graves and similar penannular ditches with a 4.5m diameter were also recorded at nearby Park Lane, Croydon (*ibid*). The apparent square formation of the northernmost gully makes the comparison slightly problematic, although it is acknowledged that gullies associated with Anglo-Saxon cemeteries on many sites are in fact irregular or polygonal in shape (Dinwiddy 2011, 80–1). A possible square formation of gullies was recorded on an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site in Lyminge, Kent (Warhurst 1955, 6) but their precise nature and date was uncertain.

Unfortunately, given the small number of graves uncovered and their poor state of preservation, the excavation results add little to any discussion about the wealth of Anglo-Saxon communities in the area or associations between grave goods and the sexes. Nevertheless, the presence of an early medieval cemetery at this location, together with the finds data recovered add to the overall picture of early Anglo-Saxon activity in Surrey.

Archive

The archive is deposited at the Museum of London Archaeological Archive (MoLAA; site code PCY07).

Endnote

For further details on the site and finds assemblages, the reader should refer to ASE 2008. This is available from Archaeology South-East upon request and will be available online in due course via the Archaeology Data Service reports library (https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology South-East gratefully acknowledges the assistance of CgMs Consulting Ltd and their client Equity Estates plc who funded the work. Thanks are due to Mark Stevenson of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) for his guidance and monitoring. Thanks are also due to the onsite staff: David Atkins, Lesley Davidson, David Fallon, Liane Peyre, Greg Priestley-Bell, Paul Riccoboni, Justin Russell, Shaiful Idzwan Shahidan, Jim Stevenson, Kayleigh Whiting, David Yates, and Lauren Gibson who produced the figures.

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