

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION ON LAND ADJACENT TO SNOWY FIELDER WAYE, ISLEWORTH, LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW, MIDDLESEX

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation, followed by a small area excavation, was carried out in connection with a development of a nursing home on land adjacent to Snowy Fielder Waye, Isleworth in the London Borough of Hounslow. Archaeological deposits representing evidence of later prehistoric occupation were revealed. This occupation was characterised by two ditches, one of which was associated with a buried bank and early soil horizon, a large Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age midden pit, a Middle Iron Age gully and a probable Early or Middle Iron Age cremation. A significant assemblage of transitional Late Bronze/Early Iron Age pottery was recovered, along with smaller quantities of Middle Iron Age pottery, fragments of loomweights, animal bone, flints and charred plant remains. The excavation also established the existence of a relict stream course running under the western boundary of the site. This revealed that the site once comprised one of the gravel islands close to the river which are known to have been a favoured location for prehistoric occupation throughout the Thames Valley. Although only a small number of features survived on this site these deposits provide direct evidence of prehistoric riverside settlement which is suggested by the many artefacts recovered from this stretch of the Thames, but which has rarely been found by excavations in this area.

INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of an excavation undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on an area of wasteland between Snowy Fielder Waye and Hepple Close, Isleworth, London Borough of Hounslow, Middlesex (NGR TQ 1662 7620) in February 1996. The archaeological work was commissioned by Prestoplan Design and Build Ltd as part of the conditions of planning to develop the site as a nursing home. The excavation was preceded by an evaluation (incorporating a desktop assessment) which was carried out in January 1996. The evaluation established the existence of significant, and well-preserved archaeological deposits on the site, representing later prehistoric occupation. An excavation proposal was subsequently prepared by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in consultation with English Heritage, and the excavation took place over a period of 13 days the following month, immediately prior to the construction of the new building.

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is situated to the NE of the village of Isleworth and lies close to the River Thames

which borders Isleworth to the E (Fig 1). At the time of excavation the site was a small strip of flattish waste ground, measuring 80m in length and 40m in width, which until recently had been an orchard and was not known to have been disturbed by any previous developments. The level of the ground surface in the central area of the site is situated at 4.7m OD, sloping away gradually towards the eastern and western boundaries. The underlying geology of the site comprises river sands and gravel.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. Wain

The area of investigation at Snowy Fielder Way, Isleworth lies on the first gravel terrace just to the N of the historic centre of Isleworth village, a Domesday village which historically clustered along the Thames.

Syon House, a 16th-century manor house built upon the site of a 15th-century Bridgetine abbey, and its Grade II-listed park lie immediately to the NW. Mill River lies to the S of the development area and to the S of Mill River is the site of Isleworth Manor House, a 13th-century moated manor house. Little is known about the development site in the medieval period although it may have formed part of the lands of Isleworth manor and may in turn have passed, along with the other lands of the manor, to the Bridgetine abbey on its foundation in 1414. On the 17th and 18th-century maps consulted the development site lies in the open fields of Isleworth immediately outside the boundary of Syon Park.

As marked on the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) the site contains no recorded archaeological remains and there is very little recorded archaeology in its immediate area. However there is evidence of multi-period archaeological activity in the area around the river and to the N of the site. In addition evidence of multi-period activity ranging from Palaeolithic to early medieval has been recovered from the river in the vicinity of the site, mostly in the form of chance finds from the foreshore, or material dredged from the Thames. Much of the surrounding area is now built up and largely residential so excavation in the vicinity of the site has been limited. However a concerted

programme of excavations in the late 1960s and 1970s at Brentford, which lies just over 1km to the N of the site, uncovered evidence for the Roman and medieval settlement of the area (Canham 1978).

No prehistoric settlement sites have hitherto been recognised in the area although the quantity of prehistoric finds from the river, and the presence of unstratified prehistoric finds on sites in the area, did indicate the general prehistoric potential of the development site. With the exception of the large quantity of Mesolithic and Bronze Age finds from the river, the evidence of prehistoric activity in the area has hitherto been dominated by Neolithic material: both the large concentrations of prehistoric material recovered from excavations in the area in the last 20 years have been ascribed Neolithic dates. A Department of Greater London Archaeology (DGLA) excavation in 1975 (GLSMR No. 050608, NGR TQ 1664 7690) recovered unstratified material including 144 flint flakes or implements and 97 Neolithic flint-tempered potsherds during excavations at a site close to the London Road. An excavation just to the north of Brentford High Street (Canham 1978, Site 4) revealed 181 struck flints and 105 sherds of flint-tempered Neolithic pottery contained within the brickearth deposits. This excavation also revealed one small prehistoric gully. Unstratified prehistoric material has also been recovered from recent excavations at the London Road Filling Station site (GLSMR No. 052322) to the NW and during the excavation of Isleworth Manor House (GLSMR No. 052685) to the S of Snowy Fielder Way. Iron Age activity is suggested by the discovery of Late Iron Age pottery (GLSMR No. 050234) in deposits sealed by a Roman wattle hut on the edge of the Thames foreshore.

Considerable Mesolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age activity in the area as a whole is suggested by the large quantity of prehistoric artefacts which have been discovered during periodic dredging of the river or recovered from the Thames foreshore. These include quantities of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint implements and a large number of high-quality Bronze Age and Iron Age objects, such as swords, daggers, horse equipment, axes and bronze buckets. Although many of these may have been votive deposits of communities situated away from the river, the quantity of multi-period finds from this stretch of the Thames does suggest a scale of prehistoric activity higher than that suggested by excavation

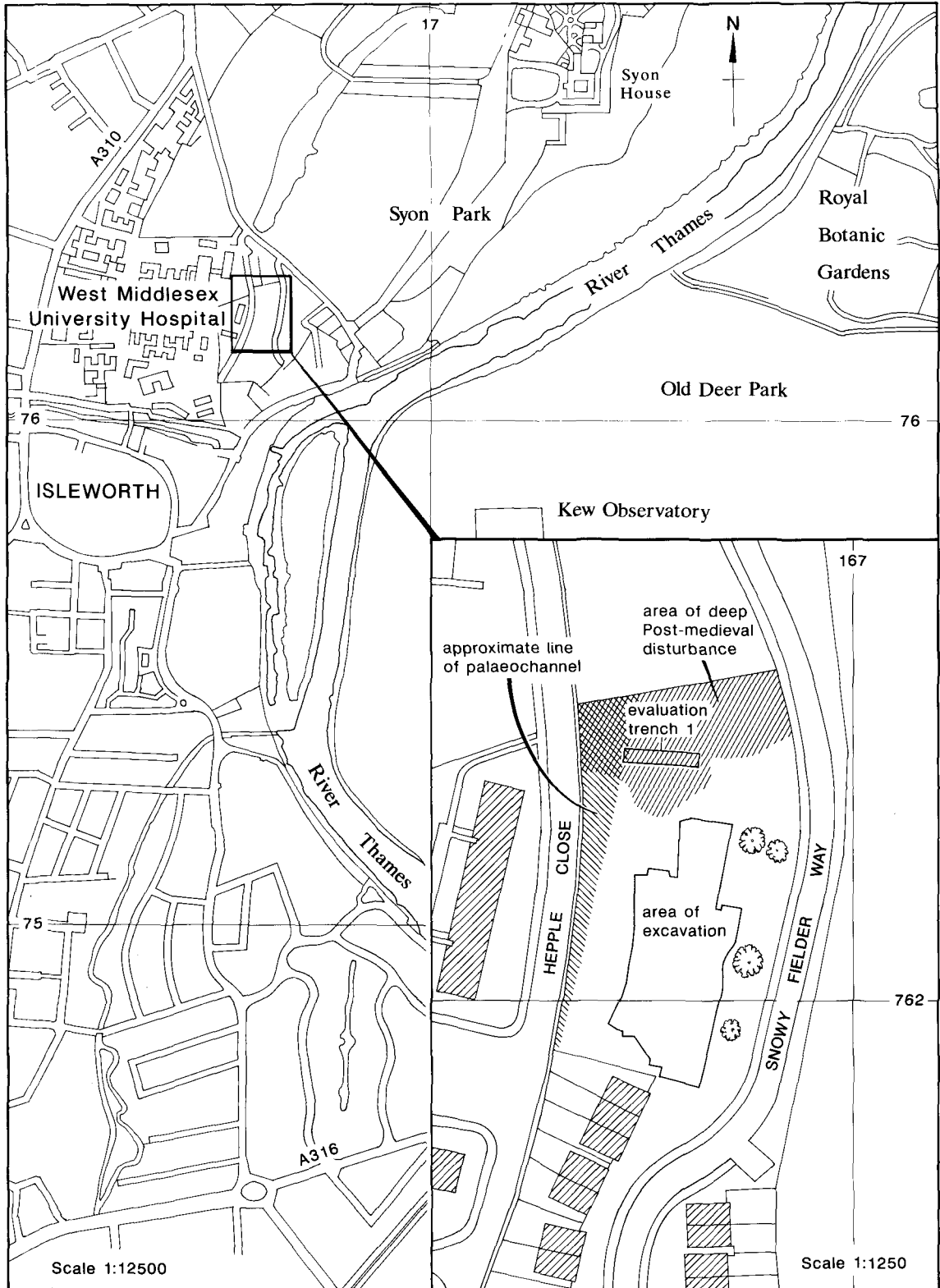


Fig 1. Site location, with inset showing area of excavation and approximate line of palaeochannel

alone. The apparent absence of archaeological sites may be attributable to the generally residential nature of, and the consequent low level of archaeological investigation in, the area around the development site. In addition, Canham (1978, 147) has suggested that the absence of prehistoric evidence in the archaeological sites of the area may be attributable to the substantial rise in the water table since the later prehistoric period. This would have had the effect of either burying sites beneath layers of alluvium or washing away all evidence of riverside settlement.

THE EVALUATION

The evaluation, which took place over a period of four days in January 1996, comprised three machine-excavated trial trenches measuring 15m in length and 1m in width which were positioned within the footprint of the proposed new building.

A fairly uniform layer of greyish brown sandy silt [204/314] was observed in all three trenches at a depth of between 0.6–1m below the present ground surface and this directly overlay the natural sand. This deposit appeared to represent a buried soil horizon extending in a strip measuring 20–25m in width through the central area of the site. The only finds recovered from the buried soil were two very small fragments of late prehistoric pottery, and although these were too small to provide positive dating, the dating of the subsequent deposits in the stratified sequence indicated that this soil horizon was no later than Iron Age in date. Part of a deep clay-filled feature [118], fills [113] and [114] was discovered in the evaluation trench located at the N end of the site (Trench 1). It appeared to be the edge of a palaeochannel (old river or stream course) running underneath the western boundary of the site (Fig 1 and Fig 3, section 1).

A small ditch [207] (Fig 3, section 11) was located, running parallel 25m E of the palaeochannel and this appeared to form the eastern boundary of the early soil horizon. This ditch was undated; however, the fact that the buried soil material had eroded into the ditch fill [211] indicated that the early soil horizon and the ditch were broadly contemporary.

The early soil horizon and ditch had later become buried beneath extensive deposits of what appeared to be redeposited natural subsoil [203/302/112/116] and [237] to [242], Fig 3,

sections 11 and 12). These deposits seemed to represent upcast or levelled-out bank material which had derived from the creation of a large earthwork cut into the subsoil. An extension was therefore made to the evaluation trench extending toward the eastern boundary of the site in order to try to locate this possible earthwork, and this indeed revealed the existence of a large, N-S aligned ditch [217].

Part of a wide gully [305] was discovered at the southern end of the site, cut into the top of the levelled-out upcast material. A quantity of Middle Iron Age pottery sherds, fragments of triangular loomweights and fragments of animal bone were recovered from the gully, which lay only 0.3m below the present ground surface and was directly overlain by the present topsoil. The finds recovered from the Iron Age gully were in a good state of preservation and the pottery assemblage consisted of large unabraded sherds.

Some shallow disturbance had been caused by tree-root action and post-medieval ploughing throughout the site. However, only the northern end of the site had been seriously affected by deep post-medieval disturbance.

THE EXCAVATION

Methodology

The excavation trench was largely confined to the central area of the site where the proposed building was to be situated, as the areas along the western boundary and at the front of the site would not be affected by the development. The trees in these areas were also to be retained, and the shape of the excavation trench was partly dictated by the need to avoid these existing trees and their root systems (Fig 1). The area of excavation was stripped of topsoil using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision and the resulting surface was cleaned by hand. All exposed archaeological features at this level were then completely excavated. The area of deep post-medieval disturbance at the northern end of the site and the area next to the western boundary where the trees were to be retained were used to store the excavated soil.

Deeper excavation was then limited to the areas where extensive disturbance would be caused by the foundations of the proposed building, thus leaving the deeper archaeological

deposits in the unaffected areas of the site preserved *in situ*.

The deeper areas of excavation that were undertaken consisted of two trenches across the line of the two ditches partially exposed in the evaluation, and a 2m wide trench along the line of the western foundation of the proposed building which was excavated to expose the early buried soil horizon (Fig 2). This trench was machine excavated down to the top of the buried soil horizon, and then alternate 2m squares were excavated by hand through the soil and the resulting spoil was dry-sieved to recover artefacts. The areas of natural subsoil exposed underneath the buried soil were carefully cleaned by hand to observe whether any ard marks were visible.

Soil samples for environmental analysis were taken from all of the archaeological features that were discovered on the site and also from the buried soil horizon. In addition column samples for molluscan analysis were taken through the backfill of the two ditches and also through the buried soil horizon and overlying bank material.

Archaeological description (Figs 2-4)

The Iron Age gully [305], partially exposed during the evaluation, turned out to be a wide gully measuring 3m in length. It contained a dense concentration of Iron Age pottery, fragments of loomweights and animal bone throughout its length. It was uncertain whether a shallow feature [344] which cut the gully was a tree-throw hole or the remains of a pit. The only find recovered from this feature was a fragment of animal bone. A large irregular pit [227], partly disturbed by tree-root action was discovered towards the eastern boundary of the site, cut into the top of natural subsoil. This feature, measuring approximately 3m in width and 0.80m in depth, produced an assemblage of over 1,600 sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery, along with a smaller number of loomweight fragments, fragments of animal bone and burnt flint. A single human infant long bone was also recovered from this feature. A small feature [229] containing the partial remains of an Iron Age pot, apparently buried whole in an upright position, was found just to the N of the large pit. A small number of burnt bone fragments lay within the surviving base of the pot, and were also scattered in the immediate vicinity. This feature therefore appeared to be the remains of a cremation burial

in situ, which had been much truncated by later ploughing. A number of other shallow features excavated at this level were of a post-medieval date, consisting of recent cultivation furrows [270, 271, 337] and [339] small pits [311] and [335] and a fence line [312].

In the deeper trench excavated across the N end of the site (section 11), what appeared to be the remains of a small bank [206] could be observed overlying the early soil horizon [204] in the area along the W of the earlier ditch [207], located in the evaluation. A distinctive deposit of greyish clay silt [209] which formed part of the backfill along the W edge of the ditch was very similar material to that which formed the bank, and this deposit therefore appeared to represent bank material which had slumped or been washed back into the ditch. The remaining layers of backfill in the ditch consisted of sterile deposits of sand and silt [210], [212] and [245]. No finds were recovered from the ditch. The deeper section excavated across the S end of the site (section 12) revealed that this earlier ditch did not extend through to this half of the site.

The larger ditch [217/306], also partially exposed in the evaluation, could be observed running continuously through the entire length of the site in a N-S alignment and measured 3m in width and 1.1m in depth. Although two large sections were excavated by hand through this ditch the only finds recovered from it were two small sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery, two fragments of tile and a fragment of lava quernstone, all of which came from the upper fills of the ditch and may have been intrusive due to the heavy tree-root disturbance at this level. A small irregular feature [236] was located on the W edge of the ditch, which was cut into the lower layers of backfill but overlain by the later fills. This feature appeared to be a tree-throw pit, apparently belonging to a tree which must have been growing in the hollow of the partially filled ditch.

Ten 2m square test pits were excavated by hand through the buried soil [204/314], and all of the resulting spoil was dry-sieved. However, the only finds to be recovered from this process were two small fragments of human bone. A small number of flints that were recovered from the sieving were later identified as natural. No ard marks or other evidence of cultivation could be observed in any of the areas exposed beneath the buried soil, but a number of tree-throw pits could be observed in the top of the soil horizon.

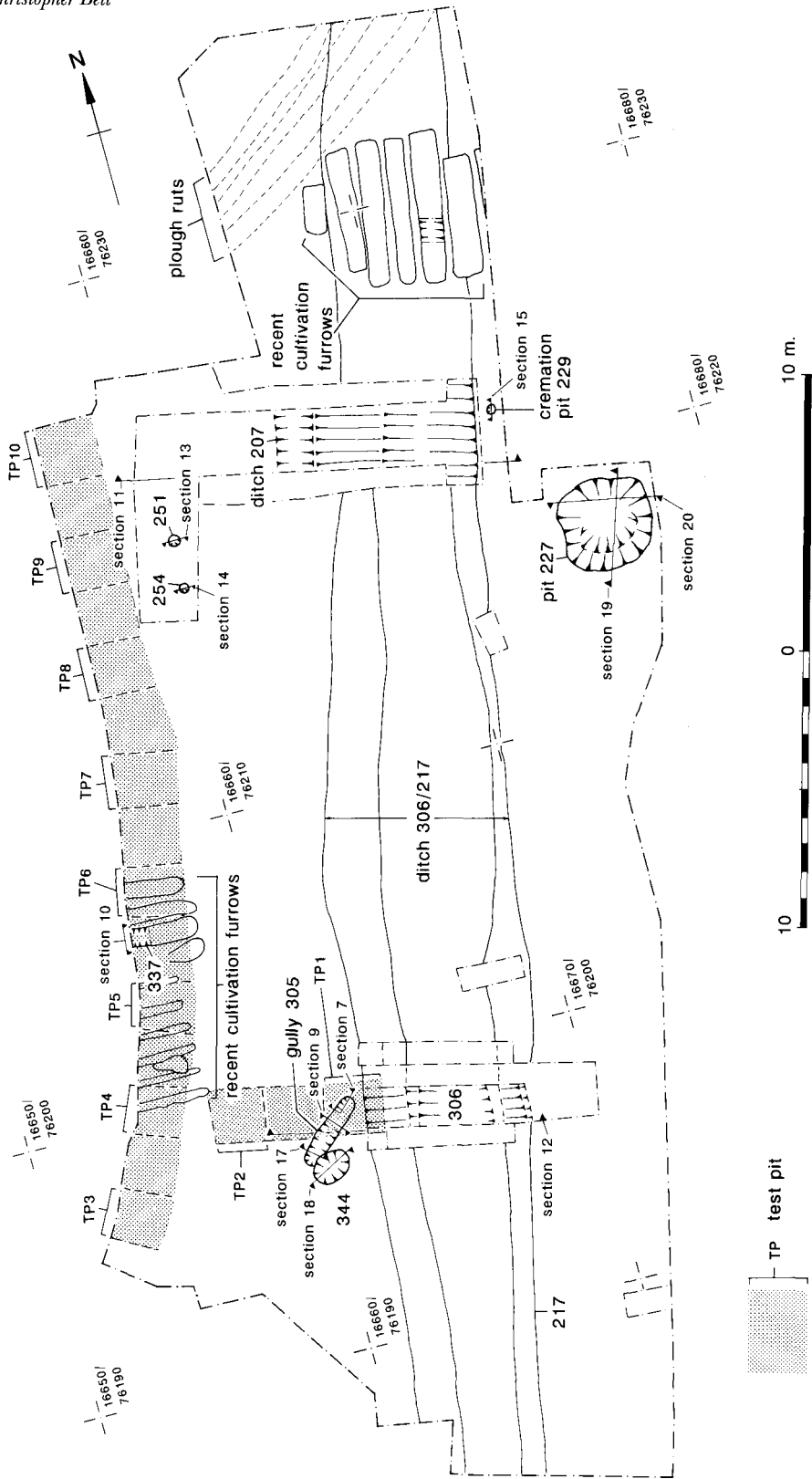


Fig 2. Plan of excavated features

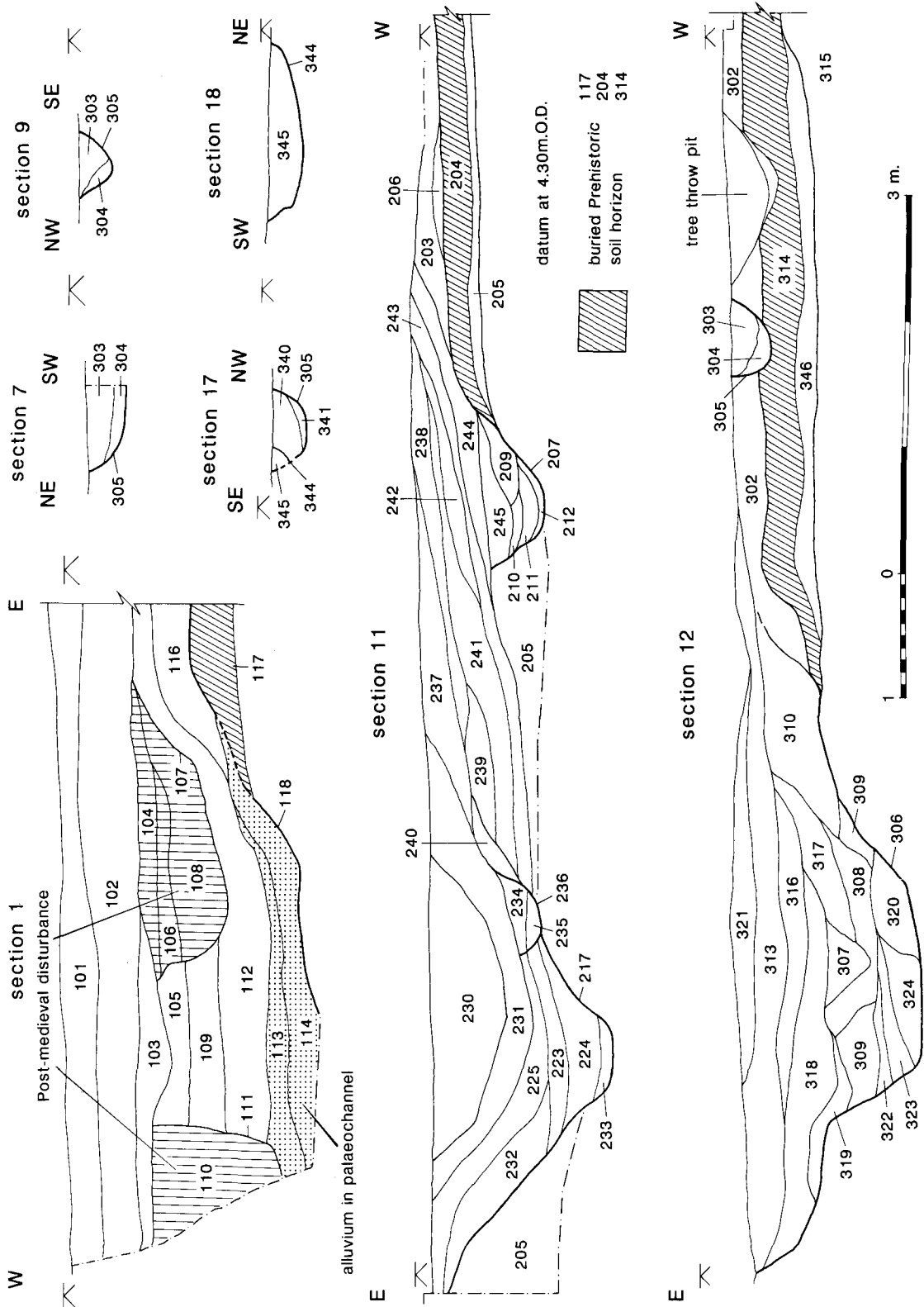


Fig 3. Sections through excavated features

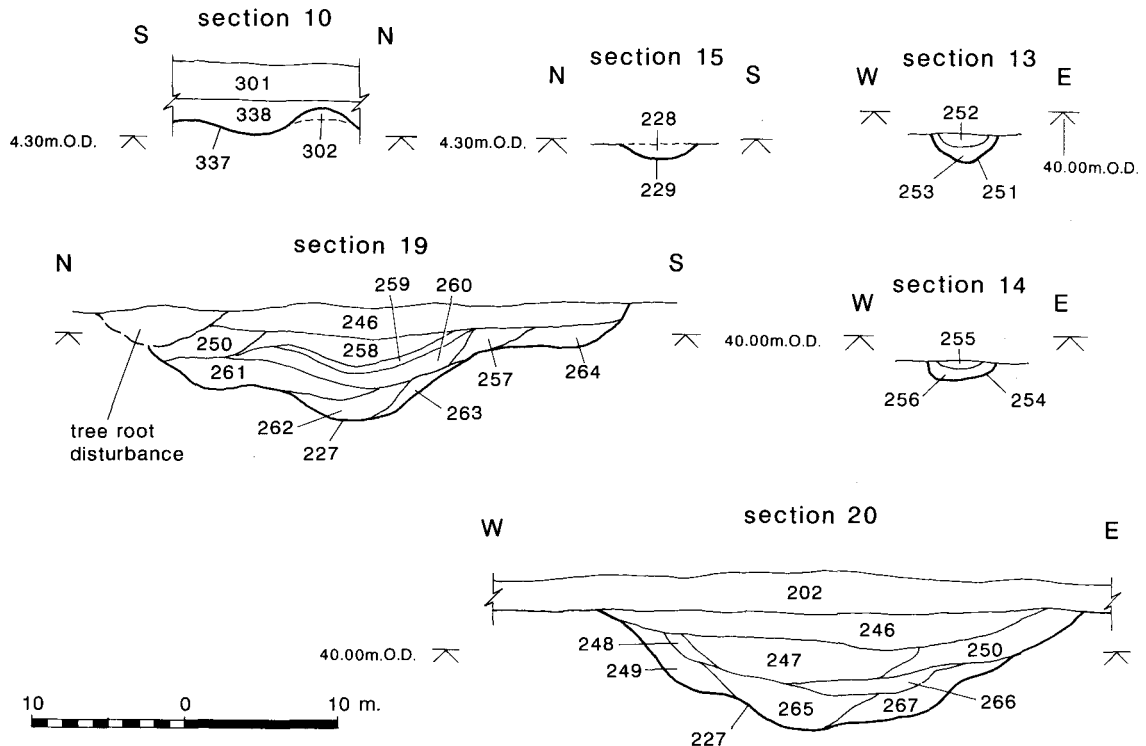


Fig. 4. Sections through excavated features

Two slightly more regular features [251 and 254] cut into the buried soil, were excavated in the central area of the site, but these contained very sterile fills and may also have been tree-throw pits.

The depth of the palaeochannel [118] discovered in evaluation trench 1, and its location along the western boundary of the site, meant that no further excavation of this feature was undertaken. However, 'a substantial peaty layer' was observed during an archaeological watching brief undertaken by the West London Archaeological Field Group during the construction of houses in Hepple Close in the area to the south of the site. This almost certainly represented the continuation of the channel and appears to confirm its N-S alignment.

THE ARTEFACTS

The pottery

J. R. Timby

Introduction

The excavations produced a pottery assemblage of some 1,783 sherds, 2.1 kg in weight, 514

EVEs. With the exception of a small number of post-medieval sherds, the entire group dates to the later prehistoric period. The bulk of the assemblage, 93.5% by sherd count, came from a single large pit [227] dating to the later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition period. A small quantity of Middle Iron Age pottery was also recovered, mainly from gully [305].

The material was of variable condition with a number of large unabraded sherds, some joining. The overall average sherd size of just 12g is a consequence of a large quantity of very small pieces resulting from more friable fabrics. Most of the forms and fabrics can be paralleled with material from adjacent sites suggesting fairly localised manufacture. However, the presence of fossil-shell tempered wares may indicate the movement of clays, or finished goods, from slightly further afield.

Methodology

The assemblage was sorted into fabric types based on the principal inclusions present, and quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalent for each excavated context.

Details of form, decoration, surface finish and the presence of any residues were noted in accordance with the guidelines suggested by the PCRG (1992). Sherds falling into the size category of 4–10mm were broadly counted and weighed but not sorted into fabrics. In the following report the fabrics and forms are discussed first, followed by a description of the two main groups. The report concludes with a discussion of the assemblage in broader regional terms.

Fabrics

The sherds were sorted macroscopically with the aid of a binocular microscope ($\times 20$) on the basis of the principal inclusions present in the clay. Wares were then further sub-divided according to particle frequency and size range. The parameters chosen to define individual fabrics were by necessity fairly broad to encapsulate the diverse range of minor variations typical in prehistoric pottery.

In total 23 separate fabrics were identified which fall into seven main ware groups: flint (fabrics F1–3); flint with ferruginous inclusions (FI1–2); wares containing marked organic material (SO, SO1, FO, O1, O2); ferruginous wares (I1, SI); sandy wares (S1–7); limestone/chalk (L1) and fossil-shell (H1–3). The commonest fabric by far (see Table 1) is the flint with ferruginous inclusions which accounts for 49% by weight of the total assemblage and 53% by weight of the material from the pit. The ferruginous grains probably occur naturally in the clay rather than selected as deliberate tempering material. Some confusion of identification with this material and grog may have

Table 1. Quantities and relative percentages of the main fabric groups

Fabric group	No	%	Wt	%	EVE	%
Flint	231	18	3,184	15	89	18
Flint/iron	608	47	10,146	49	134	26.5
Organic	45	3	593	3	64	12.5
Sandy	170	13	2,151	10	135	7
Sand/iron	101	8	2,024	10	35	7
Limestone	1	*	15	*	0	0
Shell	148	11	2,549	12	48	9.5
TOTAL	1,304	100	20,662	100	505	100

* = less than 1%

occurred in the past. Thin-section analysis of comparable fabrics from Caesar's Camp, Heathrow, reinforce the likelihood of the natural origin of the iron (Williams 1993, 351). A similar fabric is also noted in the assemblage from Weston Wood, Albury (Russell 1989, 18).

The second commonest group is the flint-tempered group accounting for 15% by weight followed by the sandy, iron and shell groups accounting for 10–12% each.

Whilst some overlap is apparent between some of the earlier and later groups the Middle Iron Age assemblage includes a number of fabrics not represented in the earlier material and vice-versa. Fabrics which specifically appear to belong to the later Bronze Age-Early Iron Age include the flint, limestone/chalk and fossil shell-tempered wares. The Middle Iron Age group sees a greater diversity of sandy wares, more widespread of the use, or inclusion of, organic matter and the continued exploitation of the ferruginous clays.

Forms

Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age

The range of forms present in the assemblage is surprisingly limited. There are only 92 rim sherds present, just 5% of the group. The majority of these come from carinated bowls in both fineware and slightly coarser wares. The most frequent examples occurred in the finer fabrics F1 and S3. The form typically shows a flaring neck above a carination and a rounded body (Figs 5 and 6, 3, 6, 9–10, 12, 21, 23–4, and 26). The carination varies from sharply defined angular examples to more poorly defined types (eg Fig 5.16).

Approximately 9% of the assemblage by count comprised finewares. Of the 92 rim sherds, 28 (30%) have some form of finger, or stick, impressions on the outer lip, which occasionally gives a cabled effect to the thinner walled vessels (eg Fig 6.36). Similarly 22 body sherds show similar depressions around the girth of the vessels on the carination. Only six sherds display any form of incised decoration (eg Fig 5.7, 6.28, 6.20, 6.30); three sherds have both incised lines and finger depressions (Fig 5.1, 5.12, 6.20), and two

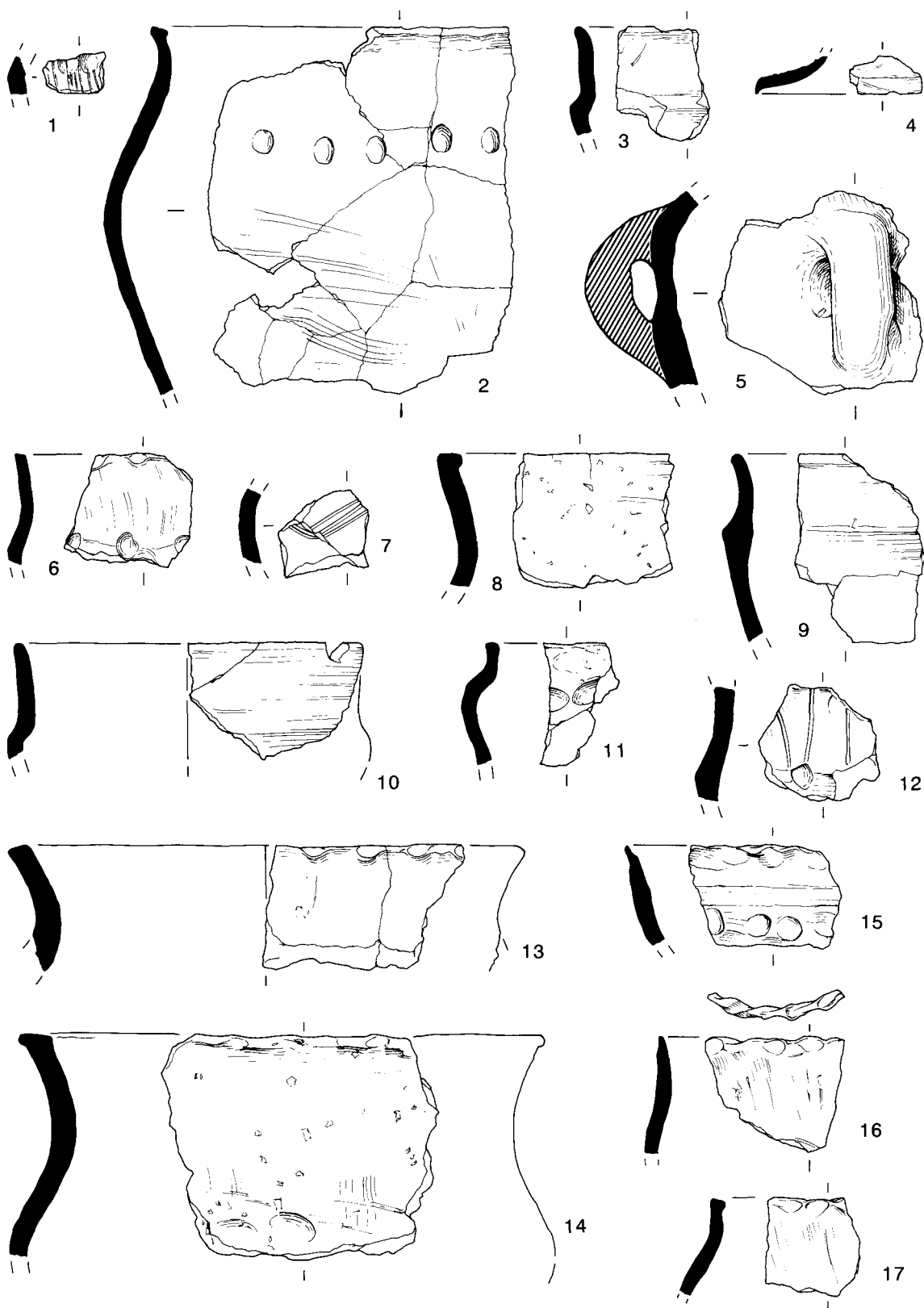


Fig 5. Pottery illustrations

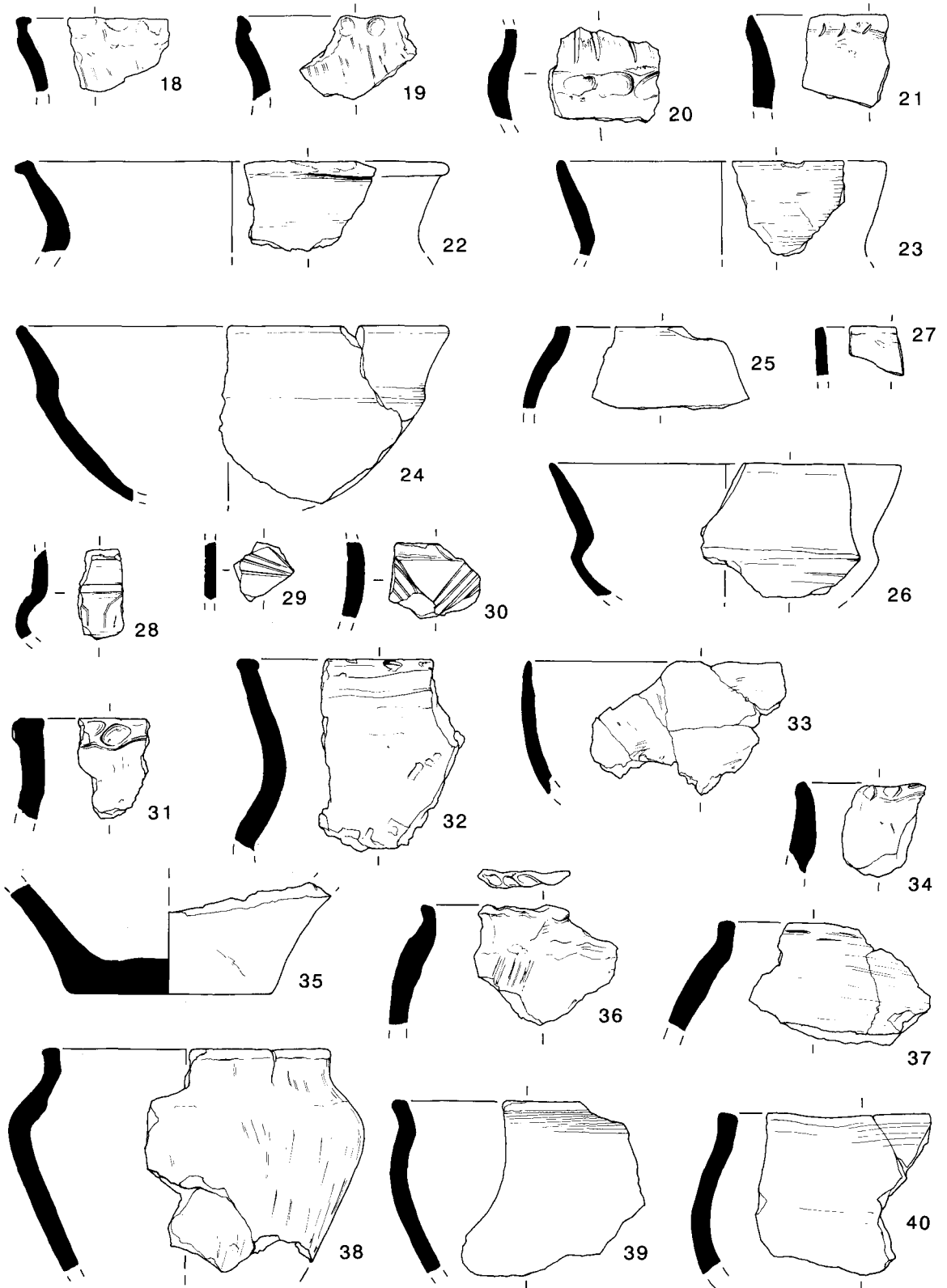


Fig 6. Pottery illustrations

sherds (Fig 6.21, 6.34) have finger-nail impressions below the rim.

A large number of thicker-walled, roughly finished, body sherds suggest large plain, slack-sided, unfeathered jars. A few rims showed slightly flattened, expanded tops, often with finger or stick depressions on the outer lip. Some of these appear to belong to globular bodied, high shouldered vessels, with everted rims, often with a slight internal lip. At least three bases from closed forms are present with heavily flint gritted undersides, a feature seen elsewhere on material of similar date, for example Stanwell (O'Connell 1990, 50).

Other vessels present include curved wall or convex-sided bowls (Fig 6.33-4) with simple rims usually with finger depressions. A single lid was noted (Fig 5.4). Only one handled vessel could be recognised (Fig 5.5), although a thickening on a sherd from [248] might also suggest the beginnings of a handle springing.

Middle Iron Age

Vessels are almost exclusively restricted to bowl forms with simple everted rims and ovoid or globular bodies (Fig 6.36-9). The distinction between fine and coarsewares is no longer so apparent although a number of the vessels have a burnished finish.

Description of fabrics and forms

In the following descriptions the fabrics are divided into those exclusively of Late Bronze/Early Iron Age date; those which appear to span the Early to Middle Iron Age, and those exclusively of Middle Iron Age date.

Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age

FLINT

F1: A dark brown to black fine ware. The smooth, finely sandy, paste contains a sparse scatter of very finely crushed, white flint. No. 98; wt 1,439g; EVE 57.

Forms: The fabric mainly was mainly used for finewares. Forms include angular carinated bowls (Fig 6.24-5), shouldered jars (Fig 6.25) and a lid (Fig 5.4). Wall thickness 6-8mm. Smooth burnished finish. One sherd from [248] has a red haematite finish, another from [247] has incised decoration applied possibly after firing (Fig 6.28), two sherds from [260] and [247] show incised chevron decoration (Figs 5.7, 6.29). One body sherd from [247] shows finger depressions.

F2: Moderately hard, reddish-brown, brown or black coarse ware. The paste contains a sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted angular calcined flint up to 4mm in size. Sparse rounded grains of iron. No. 131; wt 1,715g; EVE 28.

Forms: Bipartite vessels with finger depressions on the carination (Fig 5.6) and necked, globular-bodied bowls (Fig 5.11, 5.15). Decoration includes both impressed and incised types (Figs 5.1, 6.20). Larger thicker walled (11mm) vessels. One from [247] has a lime deposit on the interior surface. Some of the vessels show wipe marks but otherwise the surfaces are plain.

F3: A dark grey-brown, hard fabric with a reddish-brown core. Sparse to moderate occurrence of fine white angular flint not more than 1mm in size intermixed with occasional round quartz sand grains. No. 2; wt 30g; EVE 4.

Forms: Vessels with a matt finish.

FLINT AND IRON

F11: A hard ware, generally with orange-brown surfaces, dark brown interior and grey core. The paste contains a sparse frequency of white angular flint not more than 2mm across in size, and occasional rounded grains of iron up to 1.5mm across. No. 84; wt 1,151g; EVE 58.

Forms: Simple flared rims from carinated bowls (Fig 5.9, 5.16). Finger-tip impressed slightly expanded rims (Fig 5.17). Carinated body sherds with finger depressions on the carination. Surfaces are vertically smoothed with visible wipe-marks. Two vessels from [247] show blackened residue on the interior surface.

F12: A black to brown moderately hard ware with a marked ferruginous content. The paste contains a sparse frequency of white angular calcined flint, up to 7mm, but mainly finer and occasional rounded grains of quartz sand. No. 524; wt 8,995g; EVE 76.

Forms: Slightly flaring rim, ovoid jars with finger depressed outer edges (Figs 5.2, 6.18), a handled jar (Fig 5.5) and concave-rim shouldered jars (Fig 6.19). Surfaces tend to be matt and slightly rough. Decoration includes the use of finger depressions and incised lines (Fig 5.12).

SHELL

H1: Red-brown ware with a dark grey core. The fabric is characterised by frequent coarse fossil shell, some fragments up to 10mm. No. 96; wt 1,781g; EVE 29.

Forms: Large flared wall vessels with a matt surface finish (Fig 5.8) and large jars with externally expanded finger-tipped rims (Figs 5.14, 6.31).

H2: A reddish-brown ware with a grey core. Fine sandy textured paste with sparse shell and red-brown iron. The shell often occurs as voids on the surfaces. No. 52; wt 768g; EVE 19.

Forms: Flared rim jars with finger-tipped rims (Figs 5.13, 6.32).

ORGANIC

O1: Hard grey, brown, or orange ware distinguished by a hackley fracture and the presence of variable amounts of organic matter in the clay. Other inclusions include iron, quartz sand and rare calcareous inclusions/voids. No. 34; wt 191g; EVE 28.

Forms: Small hemispherical bowls (Fig 6.33).

FO: A dark brown ware with a fine sandy texture. The slightly micaceous clay contains a sparse scatter of fine, white, angular, flint and occasional organic impressions. No. 2; wt 40g; EVE 15.

Forms: Carinated bowls (Fig 5.3). The surfaces often show wiping marks suggesting the use of straw or twigs.

LIMESTONE/CHALK

Lr: A very hard, dark brown well-fired ware. The paste contains sparse quartz sand, and a moderate frequency of ferruginous grains and a sparse scatter of rounded calcareous inclusions up to 3–4mm across. Smooth burnished finish. No. 1; wt 15g; EVE o.
No featured sherds.

Early Iron Age-Middle Iron Age

IRON

Ir: A generally thick-walled ware with a fine sandy texture characterised by frequent ferruginous inclusions probably naturally occurring in the clays, and no visible added temper. Rare sub-angular quartz grains up to 5mm in size and occasional organic impressions. No. 94; wt 1,806g; EVE 35.
Forms: Shouldered bowls and flared rim carinated bowls (Fig 6.23) and flared rim closed forms (Fig 6.22). Vessels are roughly trimmed and wiped multi-directionally. A globular-bodied bowl with a finger cabled rim featured amongst the Middle Iron Age assemblage (Fig 6.36). The vessel used as a cremation urn from [228] (Fig 6.35) occurred in this fabric.

SAND

Si: A mid-orange to dark brown ware with a dark grey core. A hard fabric with a sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted fine quartz sand. Various other inclusions occur in variable amounts, notably angular white, grey or red flint, organic matter and sparse iron grains. No. 68; wt 853g; EVE 24.

Forms: Flat bases. Simple rims with finger-nail impressions below the rim (Fig 6.34). Matt, roughly smoothed off surfaces. Other vessels include flared rim carinated bowls (Fig 6.21) and a plain rim from a small bowl or cup came from [247] (Fig 6.27).

S2: Compact medium fine sandy ware, brown or black in colour. The paste contains a common frequency of fine ill-sorted sub-angular quartz sand. Rare angular flint and rounded red-brown iron. No. 28; wt 340g; EVE 6.

Forms: Closed vessels with smooth burnished surfaces.

S3: A fine dark brown or black ware, with a reddish brown or black core. The paste is finely sandy with fine mica. No. 60; wt 718g; EVE 88.

Forms: Flaring simple rim carinated bowls (Fig 5.10, 6.26). Includes bowl body sherd with incised quadruple line pendants (Fig 6.30). Very smooth finish with traces of a fine burnish on both internal and external surfaces.

Middle Iron Age

SAND

S4: Orange-brown ware with a dark brown core. Fine sandy, slightly micaceous paste with only occasional visible quartz grains visible. Sparse grains of iron, angular flint and organic matter. No. 6; wt 24g; EVE o. No featured sherds.

S5: A hard, medium sandy ware. Reddish brown exterior and black core and interior surface. The paste shows a sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted rounded to sub-angular quartz with sparse rounded grains of red-brown iron and occasional flint. No. 3; wt 21g; EVE o. No featured sherds.

S6: A hard, fine, dense sandy ware. The paste shows a slightly ill-sorted common frequency of fine, rounded to sub-angular quartz sand, individual grains visible at $\times 20$ magnification and a moderate frequency of orange brown ferruginous grains. Rare angular fragments of flint also occur. The fine grains give a slightly sparkling quality to the ware possibly aided by the presence of fine mica although not macroscopically detectable. No. 3; wt 112g; EVE 5.

Forms: Globular bowls (Fig 6.39).

SIr: A hard, dark brown ware with a sandy texture. At $\times 20$ sparse fine rounded grains of quartz are visible in a finer sandy background along with larger rounded grains of red-brown iron. No. 7; wt 218g; EVE o.

Forms: Ovoid bowl with a burnished finish (Fig 6.37).

ORGANIC

O2: Moderately soft (can scratch with finger-nail) fine sandy micaceous fabric. Under the microscope occasional rounded grains of quartz sand and red-brown iron are visible along with blackened voids from organic material. No. 4; wt 55g; EVE 9.

Forms: High shouldered bowls with small everted rims (Fig 6.38).

Discussion of groups

Pit 227 (Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age)

Pit 227 accounted for 93.5% by sherd number of the entire assemblage; 91% by weight. A summary of the individual ware groups is shown in Table 2. Out of the total of 22 fabrics identified above, 16 featured amongst the assemblage from this feature. The missing fabrics, probably all of later date are O2, SI and S5–7. The commonest fabric is the ferruginous flint tempered ware (FI) accounting for 38% by count followed by flint tempered ware (14% by count). A moderately high proportion of small unclassified sherds accounted for 25% by count of the group but only 1.5% by weight. These also affect the average sherd size of 12g. If these sherds are

Table 2. Relative proportions of main fabric groups from pit 227

Fabric group	No	%	Wt	%	EVE	%
Flint	227	14	3,164	17	6	2
Flint/iron	607	38	10,144	53	134	43
Organic	34	2	223	1	43	14
Sandy	138	9	1,724	9	109	35
Iron/sand	48	3	938	5	18	6
Limestone	1	*	15	*	0	0
Shell	148	9	2,549	13	1	*
Not classified	404	25	294	1.5	0	0
TOTAL	1,607	100	19,051	100	311	100

* = less than 1%

removed from the equation the average sherd size rises to 16g.

The pit contained a slightly diverse and curious mix of wares. Joins were evident both within and between layers, for example [247] and [258] reinforcing the excavator's interpretation of the single period fill. However, the wares show a mixture of archaic later Bronze Age elements, for example the flint-tempered wares, mixed with traits more typical of the Early Iron Age. A single post-medieval sherd from [246/(226)] indicates some contamination of the upper fill but other sherds from this context are consistent with material from below.

Of the 1,645 sherds, 80 were rims and approximately 30 were base sherds. A small proportion of the wares, c.50, 3% by count, are decorated, mainly with finger impressed or finger-tip depression, but two show impressed finger-nail decoration and four have incised decoration. A sherd from [247] appears to have been incised after firing. A single haematite-coated sherd was present in [248]. Forms are moderately diverse including both coarse and finewares; largely carinated bowls, shouldered jars and also a single lid. Three base sherds show flint gritting on the underside. Evidence of use is indicated by exterior sooting on a vessel in fabric O1 [262] and internal lime deposits on a vessels from [268] fabric FI2, and [247], fabric F2.

The only other contexts producing comparable material to pit [227] include the early buried soil horizon [204] which had two very small pieces of fabric S3.

Gully [305] (Middle Iron Age)

A much smaller group of material typified, by the group from gully [305], dates to the Middle Iron Age. The assemblage comprises 96 sherds in mainly sandy, ferruginous, or sand and organic-tempered fabrics. New fabrics not found in the earlier material include O2, S5-7 and SI. Some overlap with fabrics I1, S2, S3, which also occur in pit [227], may reflect continued use of the same clay sources. Sandy wares account for 24% by weight of the gully group, organic wares for 28% and ferruginous wares for 46%. The shelly wares do not feature here.

Many of the vessels display a burnished finish. The commonest forms are plain high shouldered ovoid bowls and jars.

Further Middle Iron Age sherds were recovered

from [317] and [318]. A single vessel from [228] had been used as a cremation urn. Unfortunately only the base survived and the fabric, I1, is one that features in both Pit [227] and the Middle Iron Age gully [305]. Its date, therefore, cannot be categorically proven either way on ceramic grounds alone.

General discussion

In conclusion, it is suggested that the assemblage from the large pit [227] belongs to the later stages of the later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transitional phase, moving from Barrett's (1980) plain ware phase into his 'decorated' phase. Elements of both traditions are present here from a single pit deposit. The plain ware phase considered to extend down to the 8th century BC (Barrett 1980, 306-9) is characterised amongst other things by angular bowls, cups and large angular, or rounded, jars. Many of the forms continued into the next phase but with increased use of decoration.

Evidence from sites elsewhere in the locality indicate a general progression from flint tempered wares typical of the later Bronze Age through to sandy wares in the Iron Age period (Longley 1980, 65; O'Connell 1986, 72). Curiously although most of the fabric traditions (*ie* the tempering agents used) can be paralleled on all the Late Bronze Age sites in the general locality, in particular the use of flint, sand and organic matter, for example Jewson's Yard, Uxbridge (Barclay 1995), Weston Wood, Albury (Russell 1989, 18-20), Heathrow 1969 (Canham 1978), Caesar's Camp, Heathrow (Grimes and Close-Brooks 1993, 350), and slightly further afield, Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks (Waugh 1968, 219), the heavily shell-tempered fabrics and the single limestone-tempered sherd found at Snowy Fielder Waye are less easy to parallel. A shell with flint fabric was present amongst the material from Stanwell, although very rare (O'Connell 1990, 50, fabric 11). The use of ferruginous clays has been noted in the vessels from Caesar's Camp (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993, 350). Shell-gritted wares are better documented from Early Iron Age sites like Wittenham Clumps (Hingley 1979-80, 33) and Ashville, Abingdon (De Roche 1978, 40-74) to the W. Petrological analysis, however, would be required to assess whether the Berkshire/Oxfordshire fabrics share a similar source to the Middlesex sherds or whether the

latter have a Tertiary, rather than a Jurassic, source.

Several other Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age sites are known in the locality although there are few settlement sites in Surrey to the S which show continuity from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age (Needham 1987, 134). Comparisons with sites like Stanwell (O'Connell 1990), Caesar's Camp (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993), and Heathrow 1969 (Canham 1978) which are regarded as dating to this transitional period, that is the 10th–8th centuries BC, show many similarities with the Snowy Fielder Waye group. Approximately 5.6% of the comparably sized assemblage from Stanwell was decorated compared to 3% at Snowy Fielder Waye. Several of these sites are dated by metalwork associations or radio-carbon dates (see Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993, 355–6 for recent review). It has been noted that in the Middle Thames the later Bronze Age repertoire as typified by Runnymede Bridge (Longley 1980, 73) and Petters Sports Field, Egham (O'Connell 1986) are succeeded by vessels characterised by taller, sometimes flaring, rims to jars and bowls with greater use of finger-tip decoration and perhaps some incised decoration (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993, 355). Such vessels can be found at both the Heathrow sites (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993; Canham 1978) which are suggested to date to the 9th or 8th centuries BC. The fabric repertoire however, seems considerably more limited with just flint and flint and 'grog' noted at Heathrow 1969; flint, ironstone and flint and a fine micaceous fabric at the Late Bronze Age enclosure at Carshalton (Adkins & Needham 1985, 18ff). The assemblage from Carshalton also suggested to date to the 10th–8th centuries similarly shows some overlap with Snowy Fielder Waye, notably in the presence of loop-handled jars, slack-sided and slightly ovoid jars, but lacks the sharply carinated bowls, the use of finger-pressed shoulders or bodies and sherds with incised decoration, and has instead greater emphasis on bucket and barrel-shaped vessels perhaps suggesting it is slightly earlier in date. The emphasis on the flint based fabrics support this hypothesis. The introduction of the shell tempered wares, various decorative elements and triangular loomweights (see below) in the Snowy Fielder Waye group suggest it is slightly later than sites like Carshalton and Stanwell, but contemporary with Caesar's Camp and the Runnymede Bridge

settlement giving pit [227] a *terminus post quem* around the 8th century BC.

Gully [305] which contained most of the remaining wares, showed a different spectrum of fabrics and forms characteristic of the Middle Iron Age period. Flint and shell tempered wares are almost completely absent. The trend suggests an increase in sandy wares and to this extent the middle Iron Age material from Snowy Fielder Waye is also similar to that from Caesar's Camp, Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993, 356–7). Further fragments of triangular loomweight were also associated with this material.

Catalogue of illustrated sherds

Nos 1–34 Pit 227

1. Small carinated bodysherd decorated with finger depressions followed by scratched vertical parallel lines. Fabric F2. [262].
2. Large slightly globular-bodied bowl with a slightly expanded, roughly finished rim. The upper body is decorated with fairly deep finger depressions. Dark reddish brown to dark grey with a grey core. Fabric FI2. [257].
3. Carinated bowl in a dark brown ware with a dark grey core. Traces of burnt residue on the exterior. Fabric FO1. [261].
4. Lid. Dark grey-brown. Smoothed interior, exterior surface discoloured and slightly pocked. Fabric F1. [261].
5. Bodysherd from a moderately large vessel with a loop handle. Dark orange to dark grey exterior, dark grey interior and core. Sparse scatter angular flint, common frequency red-brown ferruginous inclusions. The body of the vessel has been horizontally scraped smooth. Fabric FI2. [260].
6. Rim from a carinated bowl with finger tipping on the rim exterior and carination. Roughly smoothed exterior. Dark brown to black ware. Fabric F2. [260].
7. Two joining bodysherds decorated with incised line decoration, probably part of a three-line chevron. Fabric F1. [260].
8. Bowl with a flared upper wall and a slightly expanded rim. Fabric H1. [259].
9. Rim and bodysherd from a carinated bowl. Dark grey-brown surfaces and core. Burnished exterior and interior surfaces. Fabric F9. [259].
10. Carinated bowl with smooth black surfaces marked by slightly haphazard tooled burnishing lines. Fabric S3. [259].
11. Necked bowl with a globular body decorated with finger depressions on the upper zone. Dark brown ware with a dark grey core. Fabric F2. [259].
12. Bodysherd from a carinated vessel with finger depressions on the carination and decorated with vertical incised lines on the upper zone. Brown-orange exterior, dark grey core and interior. Fabric FI2. [258].
13. Two joining rimsherds from a wide-mouthed bowl decorated with intermittent finger-tipping on the exterior lip of the rim. Dark orange fabric with a dark grey-brown core. Fabric H2. [258] and [247].
14. Large diameter flared wall, slackly-carinated bowl with an expanded flattened rim. Decorated with finger-tipping on

the rim edge and on the zone immediately above the carination. Reddish-brown to grey exterior, dark grey interior and core. Fabric H1. [247].

15. Bowl decorated with finger depressions immediately below the rim and mid way down the body. Dark reddish-brown to grey fabric with a dark grey core. Fabric F2. [247]

16. Flared rim with finger-tip decoration from a slackly-carinated bowl. Blackened residue on the interior surface. The exterior has been roughly smoothed leaving irregular striations. Fabric F2. [247].

17. Rim with a finger-tipped decoration. Blackened residue on the interior face. Fabric FI1. [247].

18. Flared rim vessel with a finger-pinched rim. Fabric FI2. [247].

19. Concave rim with a finger pinched rim. The surface has been roughly smoothed vertically. Fabric FI2. [247].

20. Bodysherd decorated with finger depressions on the carination and irregular incised vertical lines on the upper zone. Mid brown to dark black-brown exterior, dark grey core and interior. Fabric F2. [247].

21. Slightly flared rim from a carinated vessel. Decorated with finger-nail impressions immediately below the rim. Mid brown to grey surfaces, dark grey core. Fabric S1. [247].

22. Flared rim vessel with a slightly expanded rim. Dark grey brown smooth surfaces and dark grey brown core. Very ferruginous clay with a sparse scatter of very fine flint. Fabric I1. [247].

23. Plain flared rim from a tripartite bowl. Pale brown burnished surfaces, dark grey core. Fabric I1. [247].

24. Carinated bowl. Dark grey brown ware. Smoothed exterior and interior surfaces but no trace of burnish. Fabric F1. [247].

25. Ovoid-shaped vessel with a slightly squared rim. Smoothed dark grey surfaces. Fabric F1. [247].

26. Flared rim carinated bowl. Smoothed, burnished surfaces. Black surfaces with a dark grey inner core with a brown exterior rind. Fabric S3. [247].

27. Simple, vertical rim from a small bowl or cup. Dark brown surfaces with a dark grey core. Fabric S1. [247].

28. Bodysherd from a necked, round-bodied bowl. The body is decorated with incised lines which appear to be scratched in after the vessel had dried but possibly before firing. Pale brown burnished exterior, dark grey core and interior. Fabric F1. [247].

29. Bodysherd decorated with three slightly diverging incised lines probably from a chevron-style decorative scheme. Fabric F1. [247].

30. Bodysherd from a fineware bowl with incised chevron-style decoration. Fabric S3. [248].

31. Rimsherd in a dark orange vesicular fabric. Slightly expanded top with finger depressions on the outer lip. Fabric H1. [246].

32. Rimsherd. Flaring rim with a flat, slightly expanded top from a slackly-carinated bowl. Dark orange exterior/interior, dark grey core. Fabric H2. [226].

33. Small hemispherical bowl in a thin-walled, dark brown ware with a dark grey core. The surfaces are only roughly finished. Fabric O1. [226].

34. Simple rim bowl decorated with finger-nail impressions on the exterior rim edge. Dark black-brown ware. Fabric S1. [268].

Pottery from other selected contexts

35. Two joining baseshersds from a closed vessel used as a cremation urn. Dark brown very ferruginous clay with a dark

grey core. Fabric I1 with a small amount of organic matter. [228].

36. Finger-tipped cabled rim from a globular bodied bowl, Dark brown to black in colour. Fabric I1. [303].

37. Ovoid bowl with a small everted rim with a slightly bevelled internal face. Fine smooth black ware burnished on both the interior and exterior walls. Fabric S1. [303].

38. High shouldered jar with a simple rim. Dark brown sandy ware. The exterior surface shows fine vertical striations where the walls have been smoothed off. Fabric SO1. [303].

39. Bowl in a dark grey-black fine sandy ware. The exterior shows slightly uneven firing. Fabric S6. [340].

40. Globular bowl in a dark brown sandy ware with a black core. Very smooth surfaces. Fabric S6. [317].

The fired clay

J. R. Timby

Approximately 300 pieces of fired clay weighing 4.9kg were recovered from the site. At least 81% of this by weight could be identified as belonging to triangular perforated loomweights, the remainder were too fragmentary to identify to form.

Loomweights

At least four fabrics could be discerned amongst the loomweight fragments:

LW1 Light brown surfaces with a black poorly fired core. The sandy texture clay contains a sparse scatter of coarse, angular calcined flint pebbles up to 20mm across and sparse iron.

LW2 Orange-brown in colour with a black interior. A very fine textured sandy clay with a scatter of red-orange ferruginous inclusions and elongated blackened voids from vegetative matter.

LW3 Orange-brown exterior with a black core. The sandy fabric is characterised by frequent red-orange ferruginous inclusions and little else.

LW4 Dark reddish-orange with a reddish-black core. Hard ferruginous, slightly sandy clay with frequent organic impressions on the surfaces.

1. Fragment of a triangular loomweight. Fabric LW2. [317] (Fig 7).

The loomweight fragments were exceptionally fragmented but clearly belonged to a triangular form with perforations across the corners rather than the annular, or pyramidal types more commonly associated with Middle and later Bronze Age assemblages. Fabric LW1 accounted for 34% by weight of the identified fragments; fabric LW2 for 39%, fabric LW3 for 14% and LW4 for 13%. All four fabrics were present in pit [227] which accounted for 83% of all the loomweight fragments. It may be of some significance that all the fragments came from

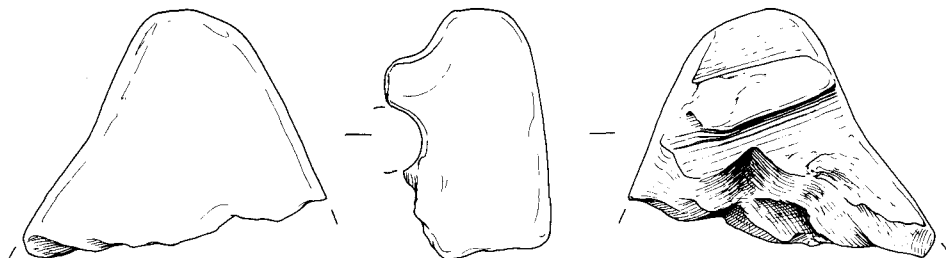


Fig 7. Triangular loomweight

layer [258] and above with no examples from the lower fills. The remaining fragments from [303] in gully [305] and layer [317] were in fabric LW2. The fragment from [317] had a groove across the apex (Fig 7).

Triangular loomweights of comparable type were present at Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993, fig 33), whilst later Bronze Age sites such as Weston Wood, Albury have annular or cylindrical weights (Russell 1989, 43).

The worked flint

P. Bradley

Fourteen pieces of worked flint and 141 pieces of burnt unworked flint were recovered (Table 3). The flint has the appearance of derived material, being dark brown or grey in colour with a worn pebble cortex. Burnt unworked flint is heavily calcined. The majority of the flint is hard-hammer struck. Hinge fractures and other accidents of debitage were noted. A Mid-Late

Table 3. Assemblage composition

Context	Flakes	Blades, blade-like flakes	Burnt unworked	Total
104	1	—	—	1
226	—	—	1	1
228	1	—	1	2
247	3	2	—	5
248	—	3	—	3
249	1	—	—	1
258	—	—	75	75
259	1	—	20	21
260	—	—	44	44
263	1	—	—	1
303	1	—	—	1
Total	9	5	141	155

Bronze Age date for this material would be consistent with these technological traits. A total of 8.9kg of burnt unworked flint was recovered and it consists of small to medium sized pebbles which show varying degrees of burning. Five blades and blade-like flakes were recovered from contexts [247] and [248]. Some of these pieces were soft-hammer struck and had previous parallel blade scars on their dorsal faces. One or two blades and blade-like flakes have used edges. This material would seem to belong to more careful reduction strategy, however given the quantity of material and lack of diagnostic retouched forms it would be unwise to speculate regarding the dating of this small group.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

The animal bone

R. Wilson

Bones from the excavation were examined and identified as for previous reports on other Thames Valley sites (Wilson 1978, 1993).

Slightly fewer than 500 fragments were recorded and the overall results of classification of bones from dated deposits are summarised in Table 4. Sieved and unsieved bone groups from the major features are presented separately, although group samples are small.

In Table 4 the sieved bones appear sufficiently numerous to indicate that small, unidentified and burnt fragments and possibly sheep and pig bones are under represented in the normally excavated assemblages. On the other hand, unidentifiable and small fragments amount to 74% of the normal bone groups and indicate a reasonable recovery of identifiable bones.

All the common Iron Age domestic species except dog were identified but this exception is

Table 4. Frequency of bone fragments

Period Feature	EIA Pit	MIA Gully	IA Pit	%	Sieved samples		Total
Number	247	303	226 +		247	303	
Cattle	13	5	1	26	—	—	—
Sheep	31	12	—	58	7	3	10
Pig	7	—	—	9	4	—	4
Horse	1	2	1	5	—	—	—
Deer	—	A	—	1	—	—	—
Identified total	52	19 + A	2		11	3	14
Unidentified	83	105	27		127	54	181
Total	135	124 + A	29		138	57	195
Burnt fragments	—	2	10		19	2	21

A = Antler fragment

almost certainly an outcome of the small-sized groups of bones collected. Nevertheless the absence of bird and fish bones in the sieved groups appears to be another example of the paucity of such material at most Iron Age sites.

All parts of the skeletons of the domestic species are represented in the bone groups yet no animal skulls or articulated bone groups are present. This and the species information suggest scattered debris which was domestic refuse and not involved with ritual processes. Typically such loose and fine debris is associated with Iron Age houses and hearths (Wilson 1994) so probably these structures once occurred adjacent to, or above the level of, the surviving pit and gully.

Five moderately complete mandibles of sheep, cattle and pig indicate that a mixture of young and older animals were slaughtered at the site. This conclusion and the percentages of species identified is typical of Iron Age sites in southern England. However, it would take larger samples of bones than the above to show up variability that could be accepted confidently as showing genuine differences in ecology and culture with sites elsewhere.

The human bone

A. Boyle

A small quantity of human bone was recovered from the remains of an Iron Age pottery vessel. This deposit comprised nine fragments of white and well calcined bone with a total weight of 2g. None of the fragments were certainly identified as human although a single fragment may represent tibia shaft. The largest fragment

measured 17mm. A single fragment of burnt flint was also contained within the deposit.

A single bone was recovered from the fill of pit [227]. It was broken and incomplete and has been identified as a portion of radius of a neonate.

Two fragments of unburnt bone were recovered from layer [204] during dry-sieving and have been identified as probable human long bone shaft.

The charred plant remains and molluscs

M. Robinson

Seventeen samples from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age contexts at Snowy Fielder Way were floated onto a 0.25mm mesh to recover charred plant remains. Significant quantities of charred remains were noted in five samples. These were sorted in detail and the charred material was identified. The results for charred seeds and chaff are listed in Table 5 and for charcoal in Table 6. The fragments of *Alnus/Corylus* sp. charcoal were too small to be identified more closely.

A column sample was taken for mollusc analysis through a buried pre-Iron Age soil [204]. Samples of 0.5kg were sieved down to 0.5mm and sorted for shells. The molluscs were identified and the results are listed in Table 7. *Cecilioides acicula* has been excluded from the totals because it is a burrowing mollusc. Shells were also identified from the flots for charred remains from two undated ditches and their presence recorded.

The only samples to contain charred seeds and chaff were from the fill of a large Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pit [227]. The only rich assemblage from this pit, Sample 27, was

Table 5. Charred plant remains (excluding charcoal)

			No. of Items			
			Pit 227			
			19 + 24	22	27	3
Sample Context			261	260	259	247
Sample Volume (litres)			11	10	10	40
Cereal Grain						
<i>Triticum spelta</i> L.		spelt wheat	—	—	6	1
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	- short grain	wheat	—	—	2	—
<i>Triticum</i> sp.		wheat	—	—	3	1
<i>Hordeum</i> sp.		barley	—	—	—	1
cereal indet.			—	3	21	5
Total Cereal Grain			0	3	32	8
Cereal Chaff						
<i>Triticum spelta</i> L.	- glume	spelt wheat	—	—	18	3
<i>T. dicoccum</i> Shubl. or <i>spelta</i> L.	- glume	emmer or spelt wheat	—	4	191	9
<i>Avena</i> sp.	- awn	oat	—	—	5	—
Total Chaff (excluding awns)			0	4	209	12
Weed Seeds						
<i>Stellaria media</i> sp.		chickweed	—	—	1	—
Caryophyllaceae indet.			1	—	—	—
<i>Chenopodium album</i> L.		fat hen	—	—	2	—
<i>Vicia</i> or <i>Lathyrus</i> sp.		vetch or tare	—	—	1	—
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> agg.		knotgrass	—	—	2	—
<i>P. persicaria</i> L.		redshank	1	—	1	—
<i>Rumex acetosella</i> agg.		sheep's sorrel	—	—	2	—
<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L.		henbane	—	—	—	1
<i>Valerianella dentata</i> (L.) Pol.		corn salad	—	—	—	1
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i> (L.) Sch.		scentless mayweed	—	—	1	—
<i>Bromus</i> cf. <i>secalinus</i> L.		brome	1	2	30	—
Gramineae indet.		grass	1	—	2	—
weed indet.			1	—	5	2
Total Weed Seeds			5	2	47	4
Total no. of items per litre (excluding awns)			0.5	0.9	28.8	0.6

Table 6. Charcoal

		Presence				
		Cremation 229		Pit 227		
Sample Context		28	19 + 24	22	27	3
		228	261	260	259	247
<i>Alnus/Corylus</i> sp.	alder/hazel	+	—	—	+	—
	tp.					
<i>Quercus</i> sp.	oak	+	+	+	+	+
Pomoideae indet.	hawthorn etc	—	+	—	—	+

dominated by the glumes of hulled wheat including *Triticum spelta* (spelt wheat). There were no certain remains of *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer wheat). Further upstream at Runnymede, spelt wheat chaff outnumbered emmer wheat chaff by a ratio of 3:1 in Late Bronze Age deposits (Greig 1991, 254). Spelt wheat might be expected

to have been the main wheat in the region throughout the Iron Age.

Cereal grain was also present in Sample 27. Some of the grain could be attributed to spelt wheat but there were also two short somewhat rounded wheat grains. It is not uncommon for a few short grains of wheat to be found in

Table 7. Mollusca

Sample Context	Column 12: Min No. Individ.					Presence			
	12.5 204	12.4 204	12.3 204	12.2 206	12.1 203	11 209	20 233	6 224	5 223
<i>Valvata cristata</i> (Müll.)	3	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>V. piscinalis</i> (Müll.)	1	1	—	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Bithynia tentaculata</i> (L.)	6	1	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Bithynia</i> sp.	11	1	—	6	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Carychium</i> sp.	3	13	20	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Physa fontinalis</i> (L.)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Lymnaea palustris</i> (Müll.)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+
<i>L. stagnalis</i> (L.)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>L. peregra</i> (Müll.)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Planorbis planorbis</i> (L.)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—
<i>Anisus leucostoma</i> (Milt.)	3	1	—	—	—	+	+	+	+
<i>Bathyomphalus contortus</i> (L.)	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Armiger crista</i> (L.)	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Succinea</i> or <i>Oxyloma</i> sp.	—	3	2	2	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp.	6	11	8	1	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Vertigo antivertigo</i> (Drap.)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i> (L.)	—	5	2	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Vallonia costata</i> (Müll.)	—	2	1	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>V. pulchella</i> (Müll.)	10	20	18	1	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Vallonia</i> sp.	15	16	23	1	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i> (Drap.)	—	1	2	—	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Discus rotundatus</i> (Müll.)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—
<i>Nesovirea hammonis</i> (Ström)	2	—	1	1	—	+	—	—	—
<i>Aegopinella nitidula</i> (Drap.)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—
<i>Limax</i> or <i>Deroceras</i> sp.	1	1	1	5	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Euconulus alderi</i> (Gray)	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Cecilioides acicula</i> (Müll.)	—	4	6	1	5	—	—	—	—
<i>Clausilia bidentata</i> (Ström)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—
<i>Trichia hispida</i> (L.) or <i>plebeia</i> (Drap.)	20	35	39	4	1	+	—	+	—
<i>Sphaerium</i> sp.	1	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Pisidium</i> sp.	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total excluding <i>Cecilioides acicula</i>	90	113	126	22	1				

assemblages of spelt wheat. They have tended to be regarded as being from a free-threshing wheat, probably bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), growing as a minor component of the crop. However, one of the grains showed evidence that it had been charred while tightly held within the spikelet. It had longitudinal impressions from the glumes and the tip had burst. This would suggest that the grain was from a hulled wheat, perhaps a short grained variety or mutant of spelt wheat.

The cereal grain in Sample 27 was outnumbered by weed seeds as well as by chaff. The seeds were all from plants which readily grow as arable weeds and have been recorded from Iron Age contexts, *Bromus cf. secalinus* (brome grass) being the most numerous. Allowing that chaff tends to be under-represented in comparison with grain in charred assemblages because it is more vulnerable to complete oxidation on burning, the charred material in Sample 27 was

probably debris from the final cleaning of a crop of spelt wheat following the de-husking of the grain.

The other charred assemblages from [227] were too small to say much about other than that their origin was also probably cereal processing. Sample 3, however, added *Hordeum* sp. (barley) to the crop record.

The charcoal from pit [227] was mostly *Quercus* sp. (oak) but Pomoideae indet. (hawthorn, apple etc) and a small quantity of *Alnus/Corylus* tp. (alder/hazel tp.) charcoal were also present. The cremation pit [229] contained small quantities of oak and hawthorn tp. charcoal.

The molluscs from the buried pre-Iron Age soil [204], confirmed it to have been a soil and suggested that it had been formed from alluvial sediment. Samples 12.5, 12.4 and 12.3 all contained shells of flowing aquatic molluscs, particularly *Bithynia tentaculata* but also *Valvata*

cristata, *V. piscinalis* and *Sphaerium* sp. These shells, however, were outnumbered by shells of terrestrial species, mostly *Vallonia pulchella*, *Trichia hispida* or *plebeia*, *Carychium* sp. and *Cochlicopa* sp. Such a fauna would be characteristic of damp grassland that is not being closely grazed. There was a slight dry ground element, represented by *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia costata*, but woodland species were absent. The open grassland conditions indicated by the terrestrial molluscs would suggest a Neolithic or more recent date for the soil. The assemblages from [204] were very similar to some which have been recorded from alluvial sediments on the floodplain of the Upper Thames Valley and have been interpreted as accumulating on seasonally inundated hay meadow (Robinson 1988). Such an assemblage could also have formed in a soil that had developed from an alluvial sediment after the cessation of flooding.

Samples 12.2 and 12.1 were from the deposits which sealed the buried soil [203 and 206]. The molluscs from them would be consistent with their interpretation as redeposited alluvial sediments, perhaps the upcast of a ditch.

The shells from Sample 11, from the fill of ditch [207], were similar to those from the buried soil which was cut by the ditch. It is possible that the shells had been derived from this soil. The molluscs from ditch [217] gave more interesting results. The samples from this ditch, Samples 20, 6 and 5 all contained shells of *Anisus leucostoma*, which probably reflected stagnant water in the ditch bottom. However, Sample 6 also contained shells of the shade-loving terrestrial species *Discus rotundatus*, *Aegopinella nitidula* and *Clausilia bidentata*. Open country species were absent. It is possible that there had been an episode of woodland regeneration on the site but similar results would also be expected if there had been a rather overgrown hedge alongside the ditch.

DISCUSSION

The small size of the area of excavation, and the very small number of features that survived on the site, means that interpretation of the probable function of the features and the nature of the occupation they represent is somewhat limited. Additionally, detailed comparison with other sites has not been possible. Nevertheless, the scarcity of any deposits relating to Bronze and Iron Age occupation in the London area generally makes these deposits a significant discovery and the size

of the pottery assemblage that was recovered enhances its importance. This is equally applicable on a national level as in general evidence relating to the transitional Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age period, and Early to Middle Iron Age funerary activity is uncommon.

The palaeochannel and the prehistoric topography

Ancient river and stream courses once bisected the lower-lying ground close to the Thames creating gravel islands, and these islands of fertile land are known to have been a favoured location for prehistoric occupation throughout the Thames Valley, *eg* at Runnymede (Needham 1991), Dorney (Allen & Welsh 1996), Wallingford (Lambrick 1992) and Yarnton (Hey & Bell 1996; Hey *in press*). It is possible that two lakes in Syon Park, to the N of the site, are exploiting a former oxbow of the river and the line of the southern lake correlates very closely to the line of the palaeochannel discovered along the western boundary of the site. However, this lake is an 18th-century creation (VCH 1962), and there is no evidence from earlier maps of the area (*eg* map of Isleworth hundred 1635 and Rocque's map of 1746) to suggest the existence of any previous topographical feature on this line. It therefore remains uncertain whether the site once lay on part of the larger island on which Syon House stands, or formed part of a separate, smaller island. In addition to the discovery of a palaeochannel running under the western boundary of this site, there is some suggestion from the topography that a palaeochannel also ran through the area to the E of the site. An allotment situated on the opposite side of Snowy Fielder Waye lies within a noticeable hollow which is prone to seasonal flooding and this could imply that the site once comprised a quite narrow island of land, or possibly lay at the tip of an island.

The rise in the water table in the late prehistoric and Roman period, seemingly due to a combination of climatic change, tree clearance, and the intensification of cultivation leading to soil erosion and the subsequent silting up of many of the river and stream channels (Lambrick 1992), resulted in periodic flooding and later alluviation over these lower-lying areas. This led to the abandonment or shift of many of these riverside settlements. This may also have been

the fate of prehistoric settlement in this area and, as will later be discussed, the character of some of the deposits discovered on this site may reflect the problem of a rising water table.

The buried soil horizon and early ditch

[207] (Fig 3, sections 1, 11 and 12)

The buried soil layer discovered throughout the western half of the site would appear to be an original prehistoric soil horizon. The evidence from the excavation and molluscan analysis suggests that this is an old ground surface as opposed to a ploughsoil and is of a Neolithic or later date. The only dateable finds recovered from the buried soil were two very small fragments of possible Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery, and although these are so small they could easily be intrusive, the lack of any flints from this layer would also appear to suggest that it is more likely to be later prehistoric. The two fragments of human bone recovered from sieving came from the top of this soil horizon. The date and origin of the fragments is uncertain but the fact that they are small and abraded may indicate that they lay on this ground surface for some time.

Little can be said about the function of ditch [207] other than it appears to be some form of boundary contemporary with the early soil horizon. Although the finds and the stratigraphic sequence suggest this ditch and the early soil horizon could be broadly contemporary with the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age midden pit [227], it is not known whether they represent an associated phase of activity, and, therefore, whether this ditch is associated with the occupation activity or formed part of an earlier field system remains uncertain. Although this N-S aligned ditch and bank is not very substantial, the continuity and enlargement of this boundary represented by the cutting of larger ditch [217], implies that the boundary itself was of some significance.

Midden pit [227] (Fig 4, sections 19 and 20)

The large pit discovered close to the E edge of the excavation trench which contained large quantities of domestic refuse, clearly represents midden activity associated with Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age occupation. However, the

very large assemblage of densely concentrated pottery which forms the bulk of the midden material within this pit would not appear to be representative of ordinary mixed domestic refuse, and there is therefore some suggestion that this material may have been deliberately selected and deposited. The character of the pit, and of the backfilling, also suggests that the deposition of this material represents the primary function of this feature (*ie* it is clearly not a grain storage pit or other such reused feature). It is often difficult to establish what constitutes deliberate or 'ritually' deposited material (currently a topic of much debate, *eg* Hill 1995 & Thomas 1991), as concentrations of artefacts or of a certain category of artefact could simply reflect the debris of a particular activity. It also remains uncertain whether this feature genuinely represents a deliberate deposit as there are no contemporary features on the site with which to compare it. Nevertheless, by any standards this is a very large assemblage of pottery from this period to be recovered from a single pit and there is no evidence to suggest that it is associated with pottery production or other specific activity. If this feature does represent a 'deliberate deposit' it is possible that its occurrence is connected to the boundary represented by the two ditches immediately to the W. However, Iron Age pit alignments containing apparently deliberately deposited material have also been discovered along the edge of natural boundaries, including river channels (*eg* Pollard 1996), so alternatively this feature may have been located in regard to the edge of the palaeochannel which, it is suggested, runs through the area to the E of the site (and it is even possible that this pit may also once have formed part of an alignment of such features).

Cremation [228] (Fig 4, section 15)

As only the very base of the cremation pot survived it could not be stated with certainty whether the pot is Early or Middle Iron Age in date and its spatial relationship to the other Iron Age features does not appear to provide any further evidence to resolve this issue. However, its position may suggest that this feature respected the boundary represented by the two ditches.

Although a small number of Early Iron Age cremations are known to have been buried below barrow mounds (Cunliffe 1991, 499) the majority

of Iron Age cremations are late in date and many belong to the 'Belgic' Aylesford-Swarling tradition which is largely confined to the SE of England (Wait 1981) and dates from around the beginning of the 1st century BC. Further Early and Middle Iron Age examples include a cremation from beneath the primary rampart at the Caburn hillfort in Sussex and a simple burial in a small pottery vessel from a shallow hollow at Park Brow, Sussex (Whimster 1981, 35).

At Yarnnton Cresswell Field small quantities of cremated bone were recovered from a small group of pits and postholes. There is some suggestion at this stage that the cremated bone may actually derive from Iron Age rather than Bronze Age contexts. If this proves to be the case then it would be very interesting as Iron Age cremations are largely unknown in the Thames valley. At least one fragment has already been identified as human (Boyle in preparation).

Gully [305] (Fig 2 and Fig 3, sections 7, 9, 11 and 12)

The Middle Iron Age 'gully segment' [305] is a slightly curious feature. When only part of this feature was exposed in the evaluation it was presumed from its character that it was part of a penannular house gully. However, when fully exposed it was revealed that it comprised a linear feature, measuring 3m in length, 0.70m in width and 0.40m in depth. It was at first thought that this was all that remained of a more extensive feature which had been partially ploughed out, but the surviving depth of the feature and its clearly defined terminus, appeared to indicate that this was not the case, and there were no other associated features discovered in the vicinity to suggest that it was part of any form of discontinuous ditched enclosure.

Although this feature does not appear to be part of a house gully, the dense concentration of domestic refuse in the backfill still suggests that it lay in close proximity to an Iron Age dwelling(s) and its function was therefore almost certainly related to some form of domestic activity. Similar types of features lying in close proximity to Iron Age structures have been recorded on a number of other settlement sites of this period throughout the Thames Valley, including the nearby site of Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993) where some of these features also contained a combination of pottery and loomweights. At Mingies

Ditch (Allen & Robinson 1993), an Iron Age settlement site excavated in the Upper Thames Valley, these features were referred to as 'bath-shaped pits' and molluscan and soil analysis of the fills suggested that they had been open and partly overgrown for some time before becoming backfilled. This would also appear to have been the case with the feature on this site [305], where the lower fill [304/341/343] contained very few finds and appeared to represent a period of natural silting. In marked contrast the upper fill [303/340] contained a large quantity of domestic refuse apparently representing later, deliberate, backfilling. Although a number of explanations have been suggested for these features, including sawing pits, clay-mixing pits and even some form of kiln, none of these interpretations seem entirely satisfactory and in many cases these suggestions reflect the nature of the backfill, which may in fact be secondary and unrelated to the original function of the feature.

Ditch [217/306] (Fig 2 and Fig 3, sections 11 and 12)

Both the dating and the interpretation of this ditch is somewhat problematic. The ditch clearly represents a phase of activity which is later than that represented by the early soil horizon [204] and smaller ditch [207], as these were buried beneath what appear to be the upcast material produced from the creation of this larger ditch. The interpretation of the deposits of silt and sand in the area to west of the ditch as upcast material appeared to be confirmed by the molluscan and soil analysis. Although it appears in section that the ditch is cut from the top of the upcast material, this impression would of course be created by the hollow above the ditch filling up to the height of the bank or upcast material to the side of the ditch. If, as seems most likely, this material does derive from the ditch, the existence of the Middle Iron Age feature [305] cut into this upcast material indicates that the ditch must also be later prehistoric in date. However, no dating evidence was recovered from the lower fills of the ditch to resolve this issue. Two sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from the upper fills, but these were associated with two fragments of medieval tile and a small fragment of lava quernstone. Although the presence of some or all of these finds could simply be due to contamination by the tree-root

action at this level, the loamy fills in the top of the ditch from which they were recovered were very different in character from the sterile silty fills towards the bottom. Therefore, these later layers may represent a much later infilling of the hollow above the ditch, which occurred only when the site was returned to cultivation in the medieval or post-medieval period. Further evidence of this occurrence would appear to be demonstrated by the existence of the tree-throw pit [236] which cut into the lower fills of the ditch, but was overlain by the later fills. This implies that a stable ground surface supporting vegetation formed in the hollow along the partially backfilled ditch and that the ditch therefore remained open as an earthwork for some time. An example of this type of action can be seen at the nearby site at Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993), where the prehistoric earthwork enclosure known as Caesar's Camp survived virtually undisturbed until it was levelled by ploughing at the beginning of the present century.

On balance the evidence appears to suggest that this ditch is contemporary with the Iron Age occupation, though whether it simply defined a linear boundary or formed part of an earthwork enclosure is unknown. It is possible that this feature was created as a response to the problem of the rising water table and served as a flood barrier and drainage ditch, protecting the area to the W of the ditch from the flooding river to the E. The spreading of the upcast material across the site burying the original soil horizon in the area to the W of the ditch (possibly within the enclosure) may also have been a deliberate measure aimed at raising the ground level in order to offset the effects of a rising water table. This interpretation correlates with the existence of the Middle Iron Age feature [305] associated with a dwelling located on this raised platform created to the W of the ditch. Although the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age midden pit [227] occurs on the opposite side of the ditch, this feature is clearly related to an earlier phase of the settlement, though in any event the midden activity represented by this feature may have been deliberately located outside any dwelling enclosure or boundary. This might also be true of the funerary activity represented by the cremation [228], and the existence of this feature apparently located adjacent to this boundary may also be significant in suggesting that the ditch is contemporary with the Iron Age

occupation. The lack of any artefacts at the bottom of the ditch may either be due to the ditch having been periodically cleaned out, or, more likely, that any material was simply flushed out whenever the ditch flooded.

CONCLUSIONS

Though only a small number of Late Bronze and Iron Age features were discovered during the excavation, a significant assemblage of pottery and other artefacts were recovered, and the character and quantity of the finds indicates that this activity is clearly related to occupation. Although no postholes, or other features, relating to Bronze or Iron Age structures were discovered this was almost certainly due to the truncation of shallower features, such as postholes, by post-medieval ploughing, as demonstrated by the depth of truncation of the *in situ* cremation pot, of which only the bottom 50–100mm survived.

The artefact assemblages and the charred plant remains recovered from the features provide evidence of crop production and cereal processing, animal husbandry and weaving, implying that this was a mixed farming community. However, it is unclear whether this represents a permanent settlement, or seasonal and periodic occupation on this site. Although the animal bone assemblages from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pit and the Middle Iron Age gully were fairly small, both contained a high percentage of sheep bones and large quantities of loomweight fragments. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that wool production and weaving played a particularly important part in the economy of this community, and appears to imply a continuity in the nature of this settlement from the Early to Middle Iron Age, which may also suggest a continuity in the settlement itself.

The discovery of these remains would appear to provide direct evidence of the prehistoric riverside settlement in this area which is suggested by the large number of artefacts recovered from this stretch of the Thames, but which previously has rarely been uncovered by excavation. Along with the many recent discoveries of Bronze Age activity close to the Thames and its tributaries in this region (Meddens 1996; Thomas & Rackham 1996), these remains represent increasing evidence for prehistoric occupation in the London area, and, as has previously been suspected (Merriman 1992), these gravel islands, or eyots,

may have formed the focus of this activity reflecting a pattern being increasingly established throughout much of the Thames Valley.

In addition to suggestions that many of the remains relating to prehistoric settlement in this area have been destroyed by continuous development or buried beneath alluvial sediments, the evidence from this site suggests that medieval and post-medieval ploughing in these areas of fertile land will also have played a major factor in the destruction of these deposits.

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