

Report 2370

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Archaeological Excavation on Land South-west of 3 Eastwood End, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire

ECB 3665

Prepared for Mrs Mary Forest 18 Sutton Park Sutton Cambridgeshire CB6 2RP

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Location:	Eastwood End, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire
District:	Fenland
Planning Ref.:	F/YR09/0140/F
Grid Ref.:	TL 4205 9272
HER No.:	ECB3665
OASIS Ref.:	113550
Client:	Mrs Mary Forest
Dates of Fieldwork:	12 – 14 September 2011

Summary

An archaeological excavation was conducted for Mrs Mary Forest ahead of the construction of two new houses on land south-west of 3 Eastwood Lane, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire.

The excavation resulted in the discovery of two medieval furrows associated with openfield type arable agriculture, two possibly earlier ditches and one later feature. The ditches were sealed by subsoil which appeared to have been created as part of ridge and furrow agriculture.

The two medieval furrows were parallel to each other and also to the surrounding field boundaries and were well-dated. The two ditches were undated, but one of them was found to be cut by one of the furrows and ran on exactly the same alignment, suggesting continuity of agricultural use between the two phases. Unfortunately the potentially earlier ditches could not be dated.

The evaluation trench excavated prior to this work was located on the northwestern edge of the excavation area, however none of the features recorded there could be traced through to the excavation area. Dating of finds was also at variance. The evaluation evidence contained features of Roman and Saxo-Norman date but neither of these periods were represented in the excavation.

No evidence of settlement or intense occupation was found, however the archaeological features encountered might suggest a changing pattern of agriculture in response to fluctuating population levels on the edge of a Fen island.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A small excavation took place within the footprints of two dwellings to be constructed in the hamlet of Eastwood End, to the east of Wimblington which has developed on a low island in the Fens. The site had been evaluated by Oxford Archaeology East in July 2009 (Bush 2009).

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Fenland District Council (Ref. F/YR09/0140/F) and a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (McConnell 2009). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2370/NP). This work was commissioned and funded by Mrs Mary Forest.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the appropriate county store, following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies within the hamlet of Eastwood End on the eastern side of Wimblington. It is located on a low island in the Fens at a height of c.6m OD situated $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of March. The course of the Old River Nene runs to the north and west.

The natural geology of the area consists of glacial and fluvial silts and clays (British Geological Survey 1991) above Jurassic clays of the West Walton Beds (British Geological Survey 1985).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Service, historic mapping and archaeological reports held by the author, NPS Archaeology and the client (Mrs Mary Forest) have been consulted during the preparation of this section.

Prehistoric

Stray finds of prehistoric material and occasionally possible features have been found in many of the archaeological interventions in this area - as might be expected of a Fen island.

An evaluation at Bridge Lane, recorded one Iron Age ditch (CHER 11416, Robinson 1994).

An evaluation in 2005 revealed a feature interpreted as a Mesolithic ditch (CHER MCB16492). Looking at the report (Emery 2005), a more realistic interpretation of the feature might be as a tree throw hole.

Roman

This area is rich in Roman occupation. Extensive salt workings have been found at March to the north and a Roman town and possibly imperial administrative centre at Stonea Grange to the east.

There are cropmarks (CHER 08984), interpreted as Roman, located 400m north of the development site. They appear to be of a road leading to Stonea Grange with associated enclosures and a possible settlement site.

Fieldwalking as revealed a dark occupation area with associated Roman pottery 150m north-east of the present development (CHER 10006).

An almost complete Roman flagon (CHER CB15647) was found by workmen in 2003 during building works at The Gables, 400m west of the present development.

An evaluation trench (part of the March to Chatteris Anglian Water pipeline (Jones 2006, CHER MCB17555)) located just to the south of the present development area produced three ditches, one of which may have been Roman.

Medieval

The medieval hamlet of Eastwood appears to have been located 150m to the north, while the rest of the area of the island was probably used for arable production.

An evaluation at Bridge Lane recovered late medieval and early post-medieval settlement remains 150m north of the present development site, was identified as the hamlet of Eastwood (CHER 11416, Robinson 1994).

An evaluation in 2005 (Hickling 2005, CHER MCB17215) produced two medieval furrows and an earlier ditch, 450m south-west of the present development.

Post-medieval

The hamlet of Eastwood and its neighbouring village of Wimblington grew during the post-medieval period. The surrounding fen was drained and initially put down to pasture, converting to arable in the 19th century. A farmyard appears to have existed close to the development area from the late 19th century onwards.

There was a post-medieval cornmill located 400m west of the development site on a map of 1775 (CHER 05913).

The parish church of Wimblington is a Victorian building (CHER CB14827) built by T.H. Wyatt after Wimblington parish split from Doddington parish in 1868.

Waste pits of 16th- and 17th-century date and ditches suggesting 17th-century colonisation were found during evaluation work some 350m south-west of the present development (CHER MCB16492).

An evaluation in 2005 found evidence of post-medieval ridge and furrow agriculture and later boundaries on the same alignment as those shown on a 17th-century map (CHER MCB16926).

The Wimblington Methodist church (CHER MCB17250), located 300m south-west of the present development was built in 1809.

An evaluation in 2006 (CHER MCB17376) produced three modern features and a recut post-medieval ditch, approximately 300m south-west of the development.

An evaluation in 2007 (CHER MCB17779), sited 350m south-west of the present development found features of 19th- to 20th-century date only.

The 1886 First Edition Ordnance Survey (1:2500) map shows the development site as a field, but with a small farmyard and farm house to the east and north. The remains of this farmyard are still present.

Unknown

There were cropmarks of incomplete enclosures (CHER 11646) seen on aerial photographs, 300m west of the development site.

Previous Archaeological Investigations

A single trench evaluation of land south-west of 3 Eastwood End, Wimblington (Bush 2009, CHER MCB18530) (the present development site) demonstrated the presence of two large parallel ditches, one dated to the Roman period, which were interpreted as roadside ditches. One Saxo-Norman ditch and one Saxo-Norman post-hole were also found, together with two undated ditches (thought to be the remains of a medieval field system).

Part of the evaluation trench was thought to have been found at the northern end of the northern excavation area during the open-area works.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this excavation was to recover further information relating to the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status and significance of the site.

The Brief required that the whole of the footprint of the two houses be excavated (Fig. 2).

Machine excavation was carried out with a 18 ton hydraulic 360° excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

The excavation areas were set out by the NPS Land Survey Team, who also established a temporary benchmark used during the course of this work.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather. The natural clay was extremely hard and stiff, making excavation of features difficult.

In agreement with Dan McConnell, the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice Officer assigned to this project, neither Assessment report nor Updated Project Design has been prepared as the number and complexity of archaeological remains encountered at the site was low.



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Figure 2. Location of trenches. Scale 1:250

5.0 RESULTS

The separate house footprints have been treated as a single site in order to better integrating the results.

The whole site was sealed by topsoil [11] and subsoil [12]. Topsoil [11] was 0.26m deep and contained two sherds of 16th- to 18th-century pottery. Subsoil [12] was a 0.26m deep mid brownish grey clayey silt with rare occurrences of flint gravel charcoal and chalk flecks.

The natural encountered at the site was a yellowish brown boulder clay with small patches of orange sand which was extremely hard and difficult to excavate.



Plate 1. The excavation areas, facing east

The site consists of a series of linear features that appear to be of three distinct phases – pre-medieval, medieval and post-medieval.

5.1 Pre-medieval

Two features, ditches [5] and [9], have been assigned to this phase, both sealed by subsoil [12].

Narrow ditch [5] (Fig. 3 and Fig. 3 Section 1) was aligned west-south-west to eastnorth-east and was 1m wide and 0.3m deep with a flat base and steeply sloping sides. Its fill [6] was a mid greenish grey clayey silt with frequent mottles of orange sand and rarely-occurring flint gravel, chalk and charcoal flecks. It contained cattle and pig bone and mussel shell.

This feature was cut by furrow [7] (part of a medieval ridge and furrow system) which appeared to follow the same alignment.



Figure 3. Trench plans and sections. Scale 1:200 and 1:25



Plate 2. Ditch [5] with furrow [7] above, facing west



Plate 3. Ditch [9], facing north-west

Ditch [9] appeared to be curvilinear in shape, but too small a portion of its length was visible to be absolutely sure of its overall shape (Fig. 3). It was 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep with a concave base and moderately sloping sides (Fig. 3 Sections 2 and 3). Its fill [10] was a pale brown clayey silt with moderate numbers of charcoal flecks and rare occurrences of flint gravel and chalk flecks. It contained no finds. It was sealed by subsoil [12].

5.2 Medieval

Parallel furrows ([3] and [7]) have been assigned to the medieval period. Subsoil [12] appears to have been created during this period during the establishment and use of the ridge and furrow field system. The nature of the soils that filled in the two furrows was very similar to the subsoil itself.

Furrow [3] was aligned west-south-west to east-north-east and was 2m wide and 0.14m deep with a concave base and gently sloping sides (Fig. 3 and Fig. 3 Section 4). Its fill [4] was a pale greyish brown silty clay with occasional pieces of flint gravel and rare occurrences of charcoal flecks. The ditch contained 19 sherds of pottery probably dating from the 14th century, along with cattle bone showing dog gnawing marks and mussel shell.



Plate 4. Furrow [3], facing west

Furrow [7] was parallel with furrow [3] and appeared to be a similar feature (Fig. 3). It measured 2.05m wide and 0.2m deep and had a concave base and gently sloping sides (Fig. 3 Section 1). Its fill [8] was a mid brownish-grey clayey silt with rare flint gravel charcoal and chalk flecks. It also contained 12th- to 14th-century pottery, 13th- to 15th-century brick and an iron horseshoe nail.

Furrow [7] cut ditch [5] which appeared to have been on the same alignment and was located along its mid-line.

5.3 Post-medieval

The only feature in this phase is a 'sausage'-shaped linear feature.

Linear feature [1] had straight sides and rounded ends and was aligned parallel with the modern street (Fig. 3). It measured 4m long, 0.8m wide and was 0.16m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 3 Section 5). Its fill [2] was a dark greyish brown clay with frequent charcoal lumps and flecks, moderate numbers of lumps of burnt earth, occasional pieces of flint gravel and rare occurrences of chalk flecks.

There were no finds from this feature however it was the only feature that cut through the subsoil, suggesting that it was of a relatively late date.



Plate 5. Feature [1], facing south-east

6.0 FINDS

All finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and an Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each material type has been considered separately and is included below organised by material. A list of all finds by context can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

by Sue Anderson

Twenty-four sherds of pottery weighing 218g were collected from three contexts. Quantification was carried out using sherd count and weight. A full quantification by fabric, context and feature is available in the archive. All fabric codes were assigned from the author's post-Roman fabric series, which includes East Anglian and Midlands fabrics, as well as imported wares. Form terminology follows MPRG (1998).

Context	Fabric	No.	Wt/g	Description	Spotdate
4	MCW	4	11	body sherds from 4 different vessels	12-14C
	MCW	1	9	jar/jug rim, upright thickened, diam 160mm, 8%	13-14C
	MCWG	9	62	thick handle, common calc, poss coarse version of Ely-type ware	12-13C
	GRIM	2	7	green-glazed with incised horizontal lines	13-14C
	BOUD	3	31	jug rim, diameter 110mm, 22%	14-16C
8	ELCW	2	5	body sherds	12-14C
	MCW	1	1	abraded body sherd	12-14C
11	GRE	1	27	base fragment, brown glaze int, worn ext	16-18C
	GRE	1	65	hollow handle of pipkin, orange-brown glaze	16-18C
Total		24	218		

Table 1 shows the quantification by context.

Table 1. Pottery quantification by context.

Key: MCW(G) – medieval coarseware (gritty); ELCW – Ely-type coarseware; GRIM – Grimston Ware; BOUD – Bourne D Ware; GRE – glazed red earthenware.

Furrow fill [4)] produced 19 sherds of eight vessels of high and late medieval date. These included medium sandy coarsewares of unknown source, a jug handle from a coarse sandy vessel similar to Ely Ware and other fenland wares, sherds from a Grimston glazed vessel, and the rim of a Bourne D jug.

Ditch fill [8] contained two small sherds of an Ely-type ware vessel and a tiny abraded sherd of medium sandy greyware. These were found in association with the bricks reported below and are likely to be residual.

Topsoil [11] produced two sherds of glazed red earthenware vessels of post

6.2 Ceramic building material

by Sue Anderson

Five fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 521g were collected from ditch fill [8]. Four abraded fragments (60g) were pieces of 'early brick' (Drury 1993) of 13th- to 15th-century date. The fifth fragment appears to be a white-firing gault clay brick. It is handmade with a struck surface but no sunken margins or straw impressions. It measures 47mm in thickness, and is likely to be of late medieval or early post-medieval date.

6.3 Iron

by Lucy Talbot

Ditch fill [8] produced a single, undated iron nail, weighing 2g. The size and shape suggests it is likely to be a horseshoe nail. Also recovered, from topsoil [11] and

weighing 302g is an incomplete large horseshoe. The horseshoe, of modern date, was recorded and discarded.

6.4 Lead

by Lucy Talbot

A single undated, amorphous piece of lead waste, weighing 21g, was recovered from topsoil [11]. The fragment was recorded and subsequently discarded.

6.5 Faunal Remains

by Julie Curl

6.5.1 Methodology

The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). All of the bone was examined to determine range of species and elements present. A note was also made of butchering or other modifications. When possible a record was made of age and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were noted for each context. As this is a very small assemblage and the information was input directly into a table in this report.

6.5.2 The assemblage

A total of 164g of faunal remains, consisting of sixteen pieces, was recovered from three contexts during excavations at Eastwood End. All of the remains are in good condition, although some butchering has occurred. Preservation for bone was good and has allowed the recovery of small, more fragile neonatal or prenatal bones. Some canid gnawing was noted on the bone from one fill.

Fragments of a butchered cattle metatarsal were seen in medieval furrow [3], fill [4], these pieces also show canid gnawing indicating they had been given to a domestic dog or simply available to scavengers prior to burial.

Medieval furrow [5], fill [6] produced a fragment of possibly cattle rib and eight bones of a neonatal or prenatal piglet. The piglet bones, if medieval, may be those of domestic pig or wild boar and these remains consist of two femurs, two ulnas, two tibias, one humerus and one radius; the size of the bones suggest they are all from one individual that had died at birth or had been an aborted foetus.

Ditch fill [8], from ditch [7], which underlies medieval furrow [5] produced three fragments of a butchered equid scapula, the size of the scapula, particularly the articular end, suggests a horse rather than a pony. The scapula had been heavily chopped at the rear of the neck of the bone, close to the articular surface. This type of butchering would suggest the horse had not simply been skinned prior to burial, but also dismembered for meat.

6.5.3 Conclusions

The faunal assemblage, despite its small size, shows a varied origin, with butchering and food waste and evidence of breeding on site in the medieval period.

The butchered equid in this assemblage may not have been for human consumption (although this cannot be ruled out), as horse were commonly

butchered for use in feeding working dogs, a practice certainly common in the post-medieval period (Wilson and Edwards, 1993). It is quite possible that the meat, and perhaps the better cuts of meat, were also used to provide meat for people at a time of shortage of other foods.

The neonatal or prenatal piglet is an indication of breeding at this site. Such young porcine remains are not unusual as pigs can often have large litters and the smaller individuals can die soon after birth from not being able to compete for milk with larger siblings. Pigs are also susceptible to many infections of the womb and to vitamin deficiencies that may cause them abort one or more foetuses (MAFF 1957). Such aborted animals are unlikely to be considered for food if disease or infection was suspected and the animal may have be discarded.

The assemblage from Eastwood End has similarities with another site in Wimblington (Hickling 2005) in that it appears to be butchering and food waste with juvenile remains suggesting on-site breeding.

6.6 Shell

by Lucy Talbot

Mussel shell, weighing 2g, was recovered from furrows [3] and [5]. After being recorded the shell was discarded.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The results of this project appear to contradict those of the previous evaluation at the site (Bush 2009). Unfortunately, from the information provided in the evaluation report it was not possible to accurately plot the location of the trench however it did appear to be just visible in the edge of the northern excavation area (Figs 2 and 3).

Combining the excavation and evaluation results

Two parallel ditches (evaluation numbers [12] and [6]) were identified in the evaluation trench and were anticipated to be present within the excavation area. These were reasonably substantial features, one of which ([12]) had been dated as Roman. Indeed the part of the evaluation trench that contained ditch [6] was re-exposed and no features were visible in the surrounding surface of the natural. Similarly, furrow [3] identified during the excavation should also have been visible within the evaluation trench, but there appears to be no evidence of it in the evaluation report.

There also appears to be some variance in the date of the finds recovered from the evaluation compared with those from the excavation. The pottery from the evaluation was predominantly of 10th- to 11th-century date, with a small amount of Roman, late medieval and post-medieval material. The pottery from the excavation however was overwhelmingly high medieval in date with a small amount of postmedieval material, and no residual Roman or Late Saxon/early medieval material.

As a result of this lack of consistency it has been difficult to combine the results from both phases of work in any meaningful way. It is not unusual for evaluation results (especially from single trenches) to be at variance with excavated evidence, especially as interpretations made from limited evidence can be misleading. However it is more unusual not to be able to trace the evidence of quite substantial linear features from evaluation trenches into excavation areas and vice versa. The dating of features, based on the ceramics evidence recovered can produce erroneous results, especially where the actual assemblage is very small.

The excavation results

The subsoil and furrows [3] and [7], dated as medieval, appear to be associated with medieval/post-medieval openfield-type arable agriculture and were formed both by intensive manuring and by farming in unenclosed strips within large common fields surrounding a village. The method of ploughing creates earthworks known as 'ridge and furrow', with a ridge along the centre of the strip and linear hollows known as furrows along the edges. Furrows [3] and [7] represent the buried remains of these earthworks which survive after they have been ploughed out. Similar features have been found before at Wimblington (Hickling 2005) suggesting that a large part of the island may have been covered in common fields in the high medieval and post-medieval periods. Strips were arranged into bundles known as 'furlongs', one of which may be preserved in the boundaries of the field within which this excavation took place. The furrows at this site were parallel to the boundaries of this field, which is to be expected. It is probable that openfield replaced an the earlier field system during the 13th century as the population level reached its zenith before the famine and plague of the first half of the 14th century.

Any features sealed by the subsoil or furrows are likely to be early medieval or earlier, and anything cutting through this layer will be later. Therefore although narrow ditches [5] and [9] are undated, they are both considered to be of an earlier date. Correspondingly, feature [1], which cuts through the subsoil, is most likely of post-medieval date.

Ditch [9] is stratigraphically early medieval at the latest, due to it being sealed by subsoil [12] but cannot be prescribed a more precise date however its shape and the pale, leached nature of its fill, suggest a possible prehistoric date.

Ditch [5], given its stratigraphic position below medieval furrow [7] must also be of early medieval date at the latest. Its position and orientation beneath the later furrow (on the same alignment) suggests that this feature could have been a boundary which was part of a pre-existing field system; the later openfield strips and furlongs being laid-out respecting the field system it replaced. This is not an unusual occurrence and the 'Fields of Britannia' research project at the University of Exeter (http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/title_84580 _en.html) is using archaeological reports to examine the relationship between Roman and medieval field systems. They use as an illustration an example excavated by the author (Hickling 2007) of a major Roman ditch with Saxon and 12th- to 14th-century recuts being replaced by openfield (identified by the furrows) on exactly the same alignment.

In conclusion, although no evidence of settlement or intense occupation was found, the archaeological features encountered can suggest a changing pattern of agriculture in response to fluctuating population levels on the edge of a Fen island.

Acknowledgements

The client, Mary Forest, must be thanked for commissioning and funding the work as well as by providing valuable background information.

The author would like to thank Mick Boyle for assisting with the fieldwork and Pete George of Bryn Williams Civil Engineering for so ably stripping the site of its overburden.

Dan McConnell of CAPCA monitored the fieldwork.

The finds were washed and recorded by Lucy Talbot. The post-Roman pottery and ceramic building material was analysed by Sue Anderson. The iron, lead and shell were reported on by Lucy Talbot and the faunal remains by Julie Curl.

This report was edited by Jayne Bown and the illustrations completed by David Dobson.

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Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Cut	Linear		Linear feature	Post-medieval
2	Deposit		1		Post-medieval
3	Cut	Linear		Furrow	Medieval
4	Deposit		3		Medieval
5	Cut	Linear		Ditch underlying [7]	Pre-medieval
6	Deposit		5		Pre-medieval
7	Cut	Linear		Furrow	Medieval
8	Deposit		7		Medieval
9	Cut	Linear		Curvilinear ditch	Pre-medieval
10	Deposit		9		Pre-medieval
11	Deposit			Topsoil	Modern
12	Deposit			Subsoil	Medieval

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature	Total
Medieval	Furrow	2
Post-medieval	Linear feature	1
Uncertain	ditch	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
4	Pottery	19	120g	Medieval	
4	Animal Bone	2	21g	Unknown	
4	Shell	1	1g	Unknown	Mussel; Discarded
6	Animal Bone	9	3g	Unknown	
6	Shell	1	1g	Unknown	Mussel; Discarded
8	Pottery	3	6g	Medieval	
8	Ceramic Building Material	5	60g	Medieval	Brick frags
8	Ceramic Building Material	1	461g	Med./Post-Med.	Brick frag
8	Iron	1	2g	Unknown	Nail; ?Horseshoe
8	Animal Bone	5	140g	Unknown	
11	Pottery	2	92g	Post-medieval	
11	Iron	1	302g	Post-medieval	Horseshoe frag; Discarded
11	Lead	1	21g	Unknown	Waste; Discarded

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Ceramic Building Material	5
	Pottery	22
Med./Post-Med.	Ceramic Building Material	1
Post-medieval	Iron	1
	Pottery	2
Unknown	Animal Bone	16
	Iron	1
	Lead	1
	Shell	2

Appendix 2b: Finds Oasis Summary

Appendix 3: Faunal Remains

Context	Ctxt Qty	Ctxt Weight	Species	Comments
4	2	21	Cattle	Metatarsal fragments x2. Cut/chopped. Canid gnawing at proximal end.
6	9	3	Pig	Neonatal or prenatal piglet bones x8, consisting of two femurs, two ulnas, two tibias, one humerus and one radius. No butchering.
			Mammal	Rib fragment x 1
8	5	140	Equid	Scapula fragments x 3. Large scapula (probably horse rather than pony). Heavily chopped at rear of neck, close to articular end.
			Mammal	Fragments of large mammal bone (equid or cattle), butchered.
Totals:	16	164		