A SMALL EARLY–MIDDLE IRON AGE ENCLOSURE AT LAND OFF SEAGRAVE ROAD, SILEBY, LEICESTERSHIRE

Mike Luke and Ben Barker

with contributions from:
Corinne Duhig, Holly Duncan, John Giorgi, Mark Maltby and Jackie Wells; illustrations Joan Lightning

Open area excavation on land off Seagrave Road in Sileby revealed a small early–middle Iron Age enclosure, defined by a substantial ditch. Although the enclosure contained a possible roundhouse, the quantity of finds recovered was small, suggesting that the site was associated with seasonal or short-term occupation. The enclosure was situated next to an extensive boundary which, by the Roman period, was used as a trackway. It continued northwards for at least 450m, forming an integral part of an unexcavated Romano-British settlement. The latter appears to have been laid out around another, very similar early–middle Iron Age enclosure.

The excavation archive is held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under accession number X.A145.2011.

INTRODUCTION

Albion Archaeology carried out *c.*0.4ha of open area excavation at land off Seagrave Road, Sileby, Leicestershire (SK 606 163). The excavation and preceding evaluation were undertaken as a condition of planning permission for a Miller Homes (East Midlands) residential development. The archaeological project was commissioned and managed by CgMs Consulting.

Site description, topography and geology

The *c.*14ha development area was located on the north-west side of Seagrave Road on the northern fringes of the village (Fig. 1). It was former arable land. The open area excavation was located in the south-east corner of the development area where the land was relatively flat at a height of 82m OD. The solid geology is mudstone of the Scunthorpe formation, overlain by deposits of Oadby diamicton (Boulder Clay).

Background

The outline planning application (P/10/1660/2) was supported by a desk-based assessment (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2009). The development area was evaluated by geophysical survey (ArchaeoPhysica 2011) and trial trenching (Albion

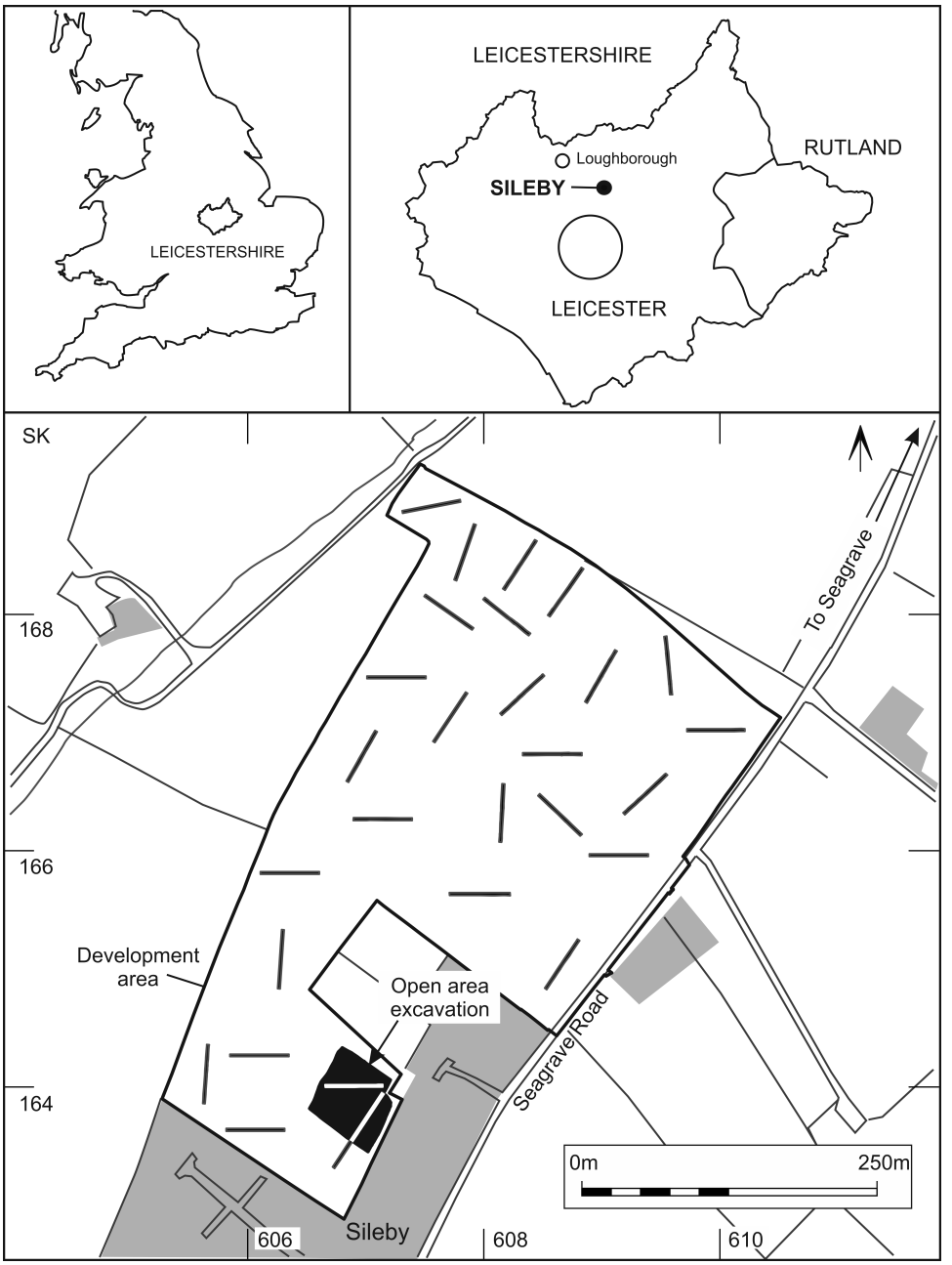

Fig. 1. Location of the site in its local and regional context (with evaluation trenches).

Archaeology 2011). Two areas of archaeological remains were identified – a small Iron Age enclosure to the south-east and a much larger Romano-British settlement to the north.

Project methodology

A design solution was proposed by CgMs Consulting to allow the Romano-British settlement to be preserved beneath sports pitches (CgMs 2012). However, no cost-effective design solution was possible for the Iron Age enclosure, which was, therefore, subject to open area excavation during June and July 2012 prior to the commencement of construction. This report presents the results of that investigation and only refers to the unexcavated Romano-British settlement where relevant.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

The results are presented within traditional chronological periods, represented by Phases, which are sub-divided into contemporary Landuse areas (L) and feature Groups (G) as necessary. With the exception of the furrows, the majority of the evidence was Iron Age in date. However, with few stratigraphical relationships between features (Fig. 2) and only a small pottery assemblage with no diagnostic forms or decoration (Wells, below), the assignment of features to a particular phase has largely been based on their spatial layout. The fills of the Phase 1–3 features were essentially mid-brown silty clays, which contained no charred plant remains or animal bone suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Phase 1 (early Iron Age)

The earliest firm evidence for human activity is probably early Iron Age in date. It comprised a possible enclosure L1 and, *c.*20m to the north, an activity focus L2 (Fig. 3). 20 sherds (139g) of early–middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from Phase 1 features.

Possible enclosure L1

The arrangement of two gullies, G11 to the north and G12 to the south, is suggestive of a partially defined enclosure. Gully G12 was 50m long and exhibited at least two changes in alignment. Gully G11 was only 20m long and parallel to one of the segments of G12. Both gullies were less than 0.3m deep, which may indicate that parts of the enclosure had been truncated by ploughing.

Evidence for activity within the enclosure comprised two shallow pits G20 and a small post-hole G21, both adjacent to gully G11; and a shallow gully G36, parallel to gully G12. To the south, another small pit G26 was truncated by gully G12, suggesting some activity prior to the creation of the possible enclosure.

A small quantity (22g) of fuel ash slag was recovered from gully G12. This material forms when earth or clay is exposed to temperatures of *c.*1,000ºC, fluxing with ash to create an alkali silicate slag (Bayley 1985, 41). Its presence in the gully is not indicative of a specific industrial process, but does demonstrate the presence of a fire in the vicinity (Duncan, archive report).

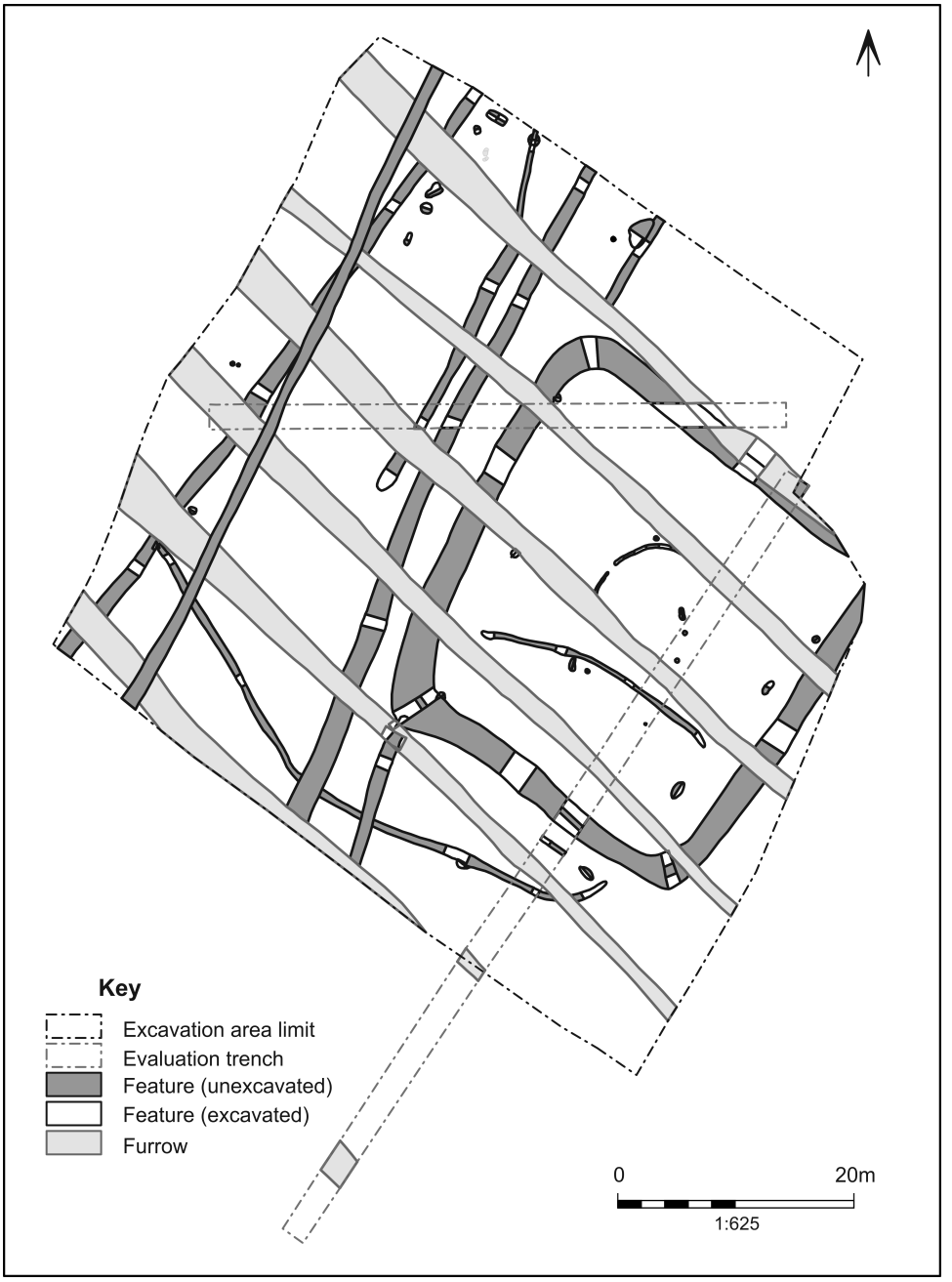

Fig. 2. All features plan.

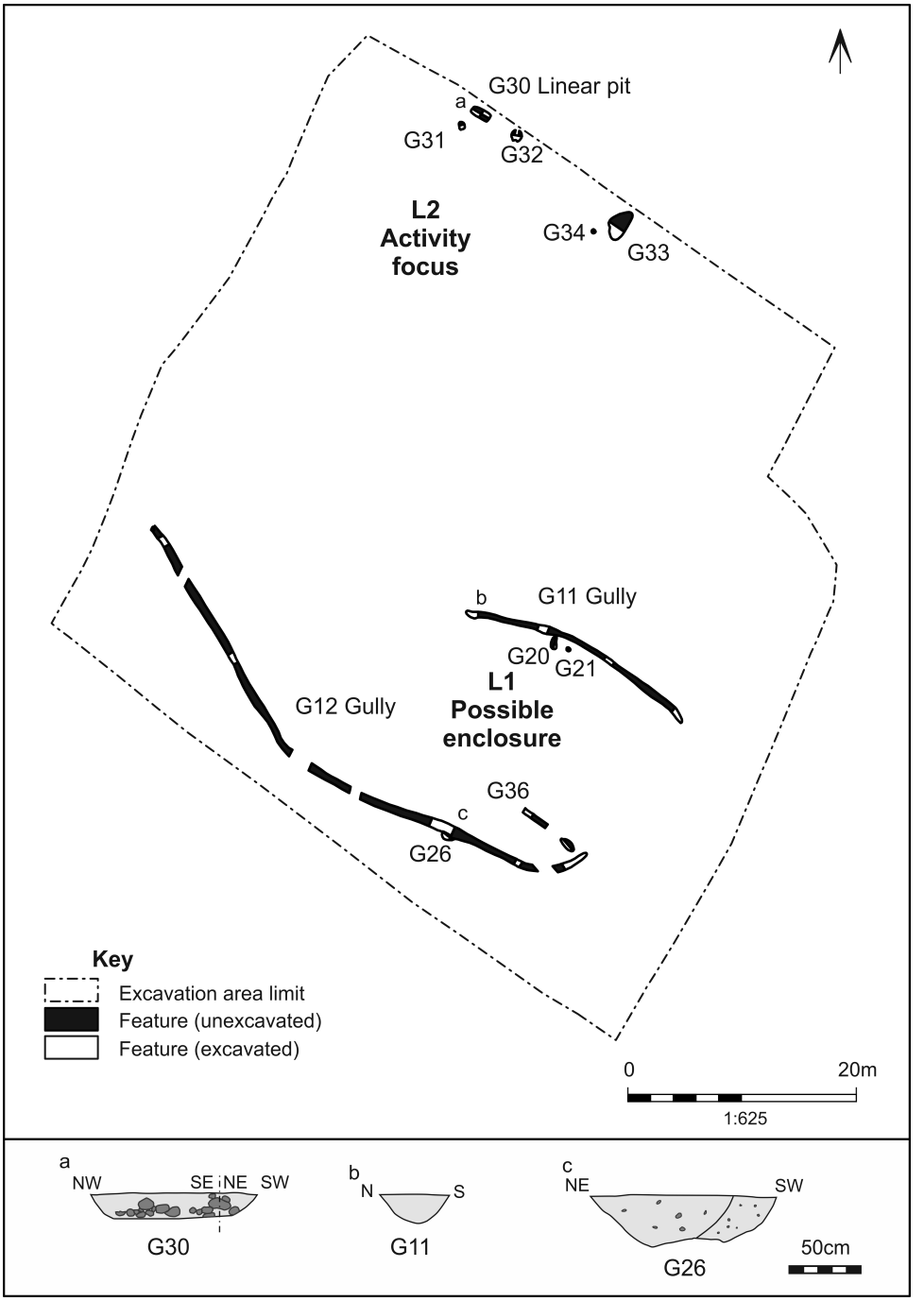

Fig. 3. Phase 1 (early Iron Age).

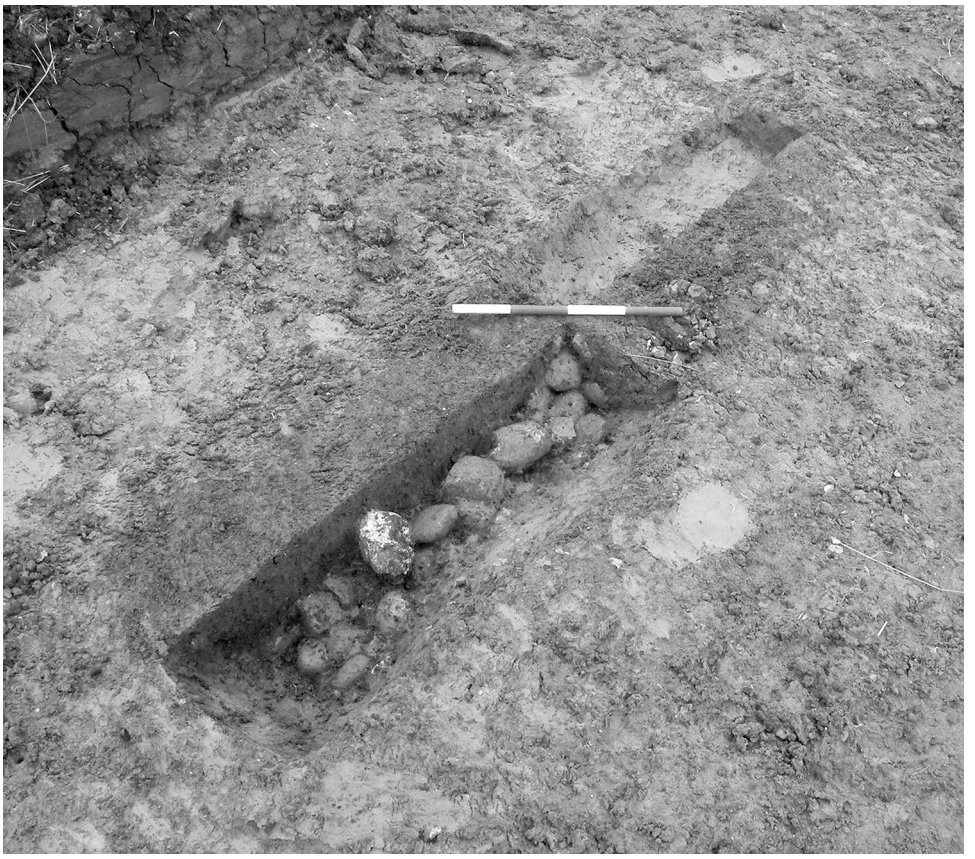

Fig. 4. Photograph of linear pit G30 with unburnt cobbles exposed (scale 0.4m).

Activity focus L2

Activity focus L2 comprised three small pits G30, G32 and G33; and post-holes G31 and G34. Pit G30 was unusual in that it was linear, *c.*1.7m by 0.7m, and contained a large number of cobbles towards its base (Fig. 4). None were fire-cracked or reddened, but the pit did contain a small quantity of unidentifiable charcoal (Giorgi, archive report). It also produced four sherds of early–middle Iron Age pottery (Wells, below). There was nothing noteworthy about the other features in this area.

Phase 2 (early–middle Iron Age)

The Phase 1 possible enclosure was replaced by a more substantial ditched enclosure L3. Two parallel ditches formed an adjacent possible trackway L4 (Fig. 5). A moderate quantity of early–middle Iron Age pottery was recovered (87 sherds, 627g), although most derived from a near complete vessel within the enclosure ditch (Wells, below).

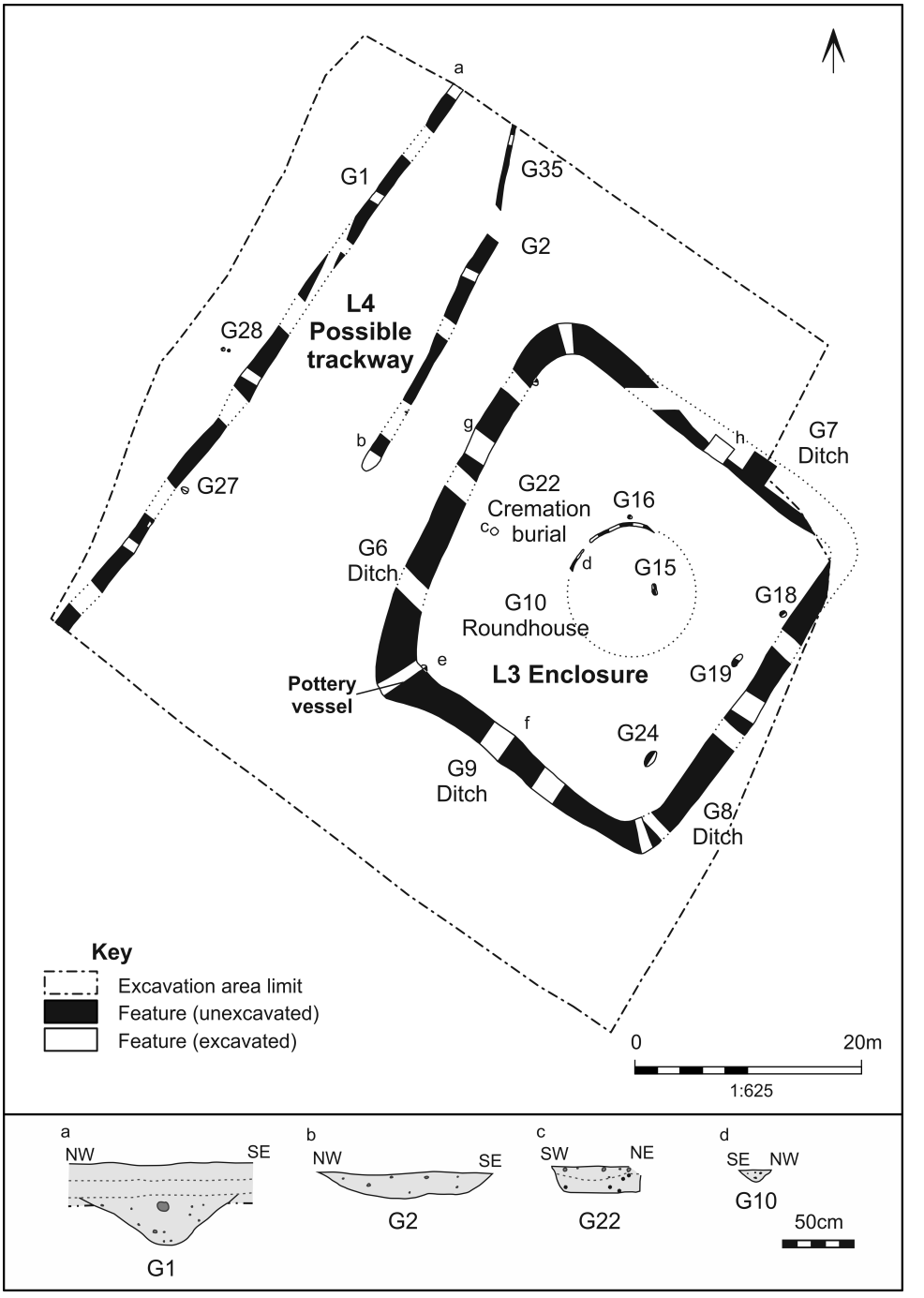

Fig. 5. Phase 2 (early–middle Iron Age).

Enclosure L3

Enclosure L3 was defined by a continuous ditch; its four sides have been designated G6, G7, G8 and G9. It contained a possible roundhouse G10; a cremation burial G22; five small pits G15, G18, G19, G23 and G24; and two post-holes G16 and G17.

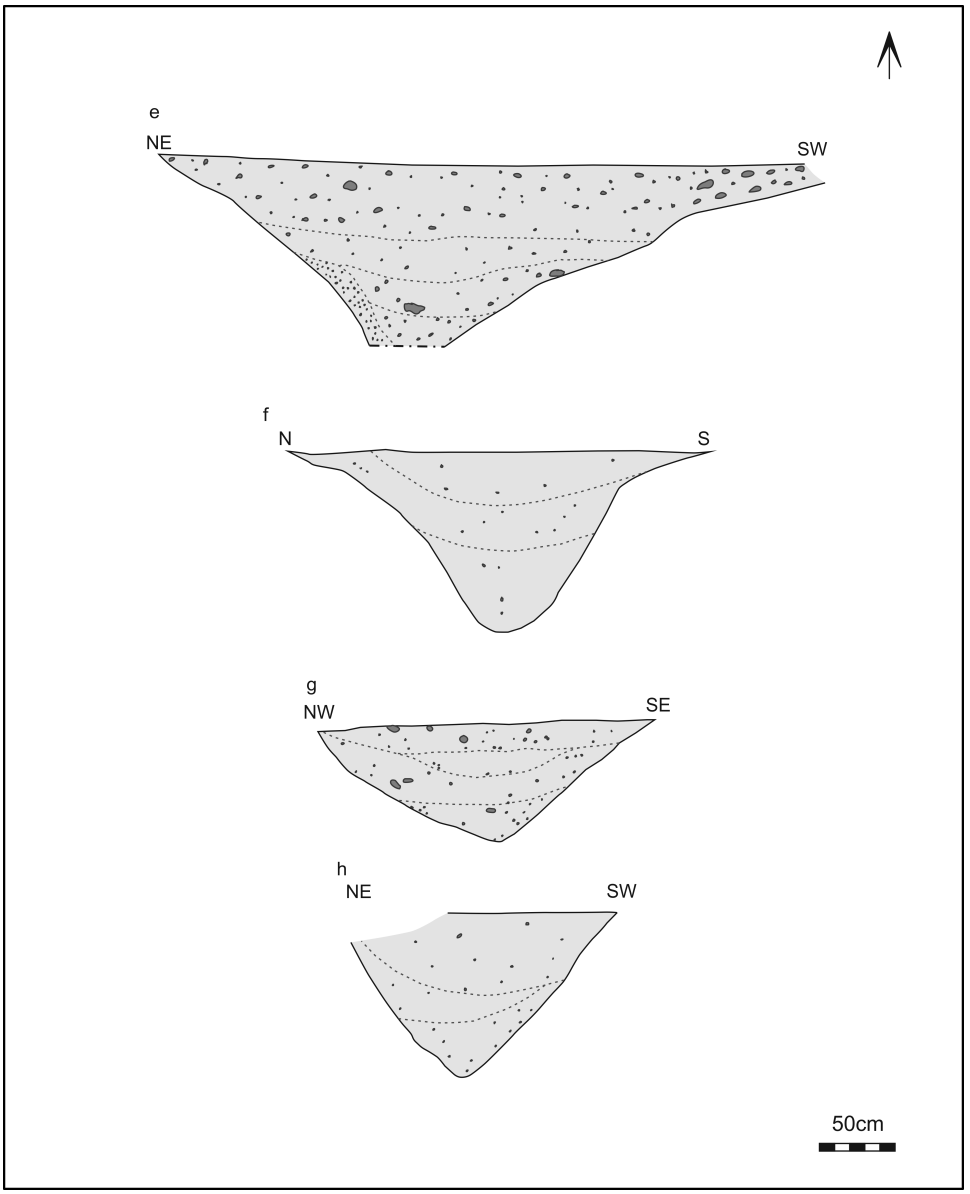

Fig. 6. Phase 2 enclosure ditch sections.

The enclosure was just off square in plan – three sides were 35m long; G9 to the south-west was *c.*30m long. Its ditches were *c.*2.5m wide and 1.2m deep, with V-shaped profiles (Fig. 6). No entrances were identified, although easy access would presumably have been needed to and from the trackway to the west. A near complete early–middle Iron Age pot (Wells, below) had been placed upside down towards the base of the secondary fill of ditch G6 at the enclosure's south-west corner (Fig. 7). It provides the best dating evidence for the enclosure and may represent a structured deposit. Three flint flakes (OA1–3) were also recovered from the same ditch (Duncan, archive report).

Possible roundhouse G10 was identified on the basis of a 9m-long curving gully in the centre of the enclosure. Although only a short length survived, it has a projected diameter of *c.*11m. The curvature of the gully, its size and its central location within the enclosure all suggest that it defined a roundhouse. Little can be said about pit G15, which, if contemporary, would have been located within the roundhouse; it was only 0.2m deep and had a sterile fill. The same is true of post-hole G16, located *c.*0.5m to the north of the roundhouse.

Un-urned cremation burial G22 was located *c.*3m from the inner edge of enclosure ditch G6 at its midway point. The symmetry of the grave location in relation to the enclosure and the possible roundhouse is striking. The grave was *c.*0.6m in diameter but only 0.25m deep. The charcoal-rich lower fill contained the cremated bone (Duhig, below); it was sealed by a sterile clay deposit (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7. Photograph of near-complete pottery vessel within secondary fill of ditch G6 (scale 0.4m).

Fig. 8. Photograph of un-urned cremation burial G22 at half section stage (scale 0.4m).

Little can be said about the other small pits and post-holes within the enclosure other than that they were usually located within 2m of the ditch. Only small pit G24 produced finds in the form of a flint awl (OA4) (Duncan, archive report). The proximity of these features to the enclosure ditch and the 6m-wide gap between it and trackway L4 may indicate the presence of an external bank. This is also hinted at by the position of the secondary fill within G7, although the fill sequences in all other sections of the enclosure ditch were symmetrical (Fig. 6).

Trackway L4

Trackway L4 was defined by two roughly parallel ditches G1 and G2, *c.*10m apart. It was adjacent to and on the same alignment as ditched enclosure L3. Trackside ditch G1 to the north-west was continuous; it was 1.8m wide and 0.55m deep. The opposing ditch G2 was smaller and only 25m long. It is unclear if gully G35 was contemporary; if it were, it might have been dug to provide drainage from the central part of the trackway. Three post-holes, G27 and a pair G28, were dug next to ditch G1; they are presumed to be contemporary and may relate to other boundary features, such as fences or hedges.

The trackway is not securely dated to this phase – only a single sherd of early–middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from ditch G1. However, it shares the alignment of the better-dated enclosure L3 and its eastern ditch was *c.*5m from the enclosure ditch as if it was respecting an external bank (as proposed above).

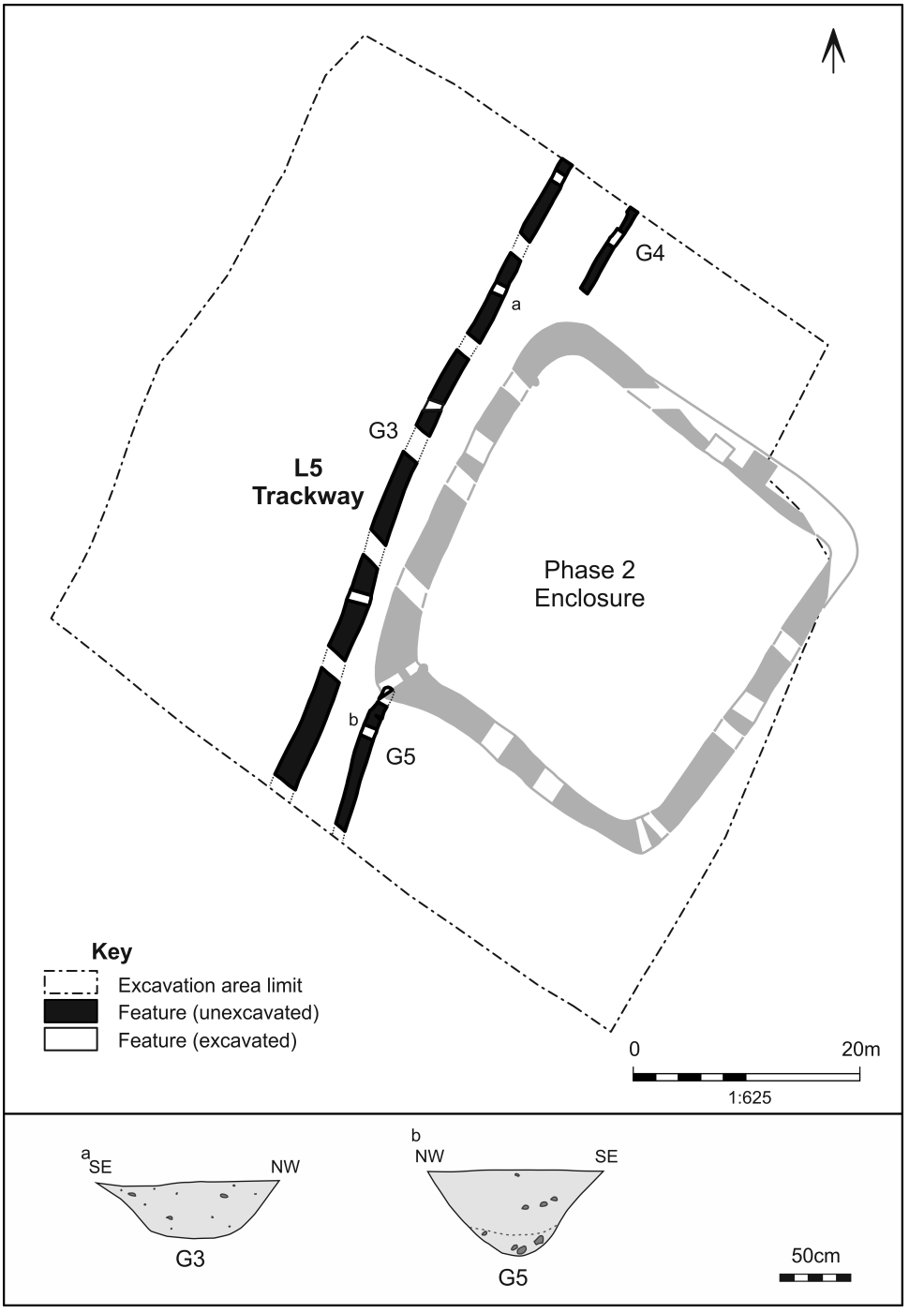

Fig. 9. Phase 3 (late Iron Age/Roman).

Phase 3 (late Iron Age/Romano-British)

The only firm evidence for activity during this period was restricted to ditches defining trackway L5 (Fig. 9), which followed the same course as the early–middle Iron Age trackway L4. One of the ditches produced six sherds of early Roman pottery and the other three sherds of late Iron Age pottery (Wells, below). Geophysical survey (ArchaeoPhysica 2011) demonstrates that the trackway continued for at least 450m to the north-east and was an integral part of the Romano-British settlement in the northern part of the development area (Albion Archaeology 2011, 12).

Trackway L5

Two parallel ditches, G3 and G4/G5, *c.*5m apart, defined the east side of the trackway. Trackside ditch G3 was continuous; it was *c.*1.4m wide and 0.5m deep. Ditch G4/5 had a similar profile, but was aligned on, and incorporated, one side of the early–middle Iron Age enclosure. There is no evidence to suggest that the enclosure ditch was recut at this time, so it is presumed that its ditches were still partially open.

Phase 4 (medieval) and Phase 5 (modern)

Six parallel NW–SE aligned furrows G14 were identified within the excavation area. The trial trenches contained additional furrows (Albion Archaeology 2011, 12) and it is clear that the development area had been part of an open field system during the medieval period. The only evidence for modern activity was boundary ditch G13 which, although parallel to one of the Roman ditches, had a distinctively modern-looking fill, which contained post-medieval brick. It cut across the furrows and is shown on maps predating the Second World War.

SPECIALIST REPORTS

The finds from the open area excavation have been examined by Jackie Wells (pottery), Holly Duncan (flint), Corinne Duhig (human bone), John Giorgi (charred plant remains) and Mark Maltby (animal bone). The small size of the assemblages makes them difficult to interpret with any certainty, and therefore only the pottery and human bone reports warrant detailed publication here. All other reports are available in the archive.

In summary, only the ecofact sample from the fill of cremation burial G22 contained any charred plant remains – a single grain of *Triticum aestivum* (free-threshing wheat), a cereal occasionally found in deposits of this period (Greig 1991, 306) (Giorgi, archive report). The excavations produced 37 animal bone fragments, of which only 13 were identifiable (Maltby, archive report). They comprised cattle, sheep/goat and horse – typical species of British Iron Age assemblages. The presence of immature horse bone is noteworthy as it is not often found on Iron Age sites: horses were valued as beasts of burden and possibly also as status symbols, so were rarely slaughtered before adulthood (Maltby 1996). Where appropriate, the flint assemblage (Duncan, archive report) is mentioned in the site narrative; it is also briefly discussed below in the context of whether it represents Iron Age flint working.

Pottery

Jackie Wells

Methodology

The pottery was examined by context and fabric types were identified in accordance with the Leicestershire Ceramic Type Series. Quantification was by minimum vessel and sherd count, and weight. The condition of the pottery from each context was noted, and attributes such as decoration, manufacture, levels of abrasion and evidence of function (residues, sooting and wear marks etc.) were recorded. No sherds suitable for illustration were recovered.

Pottery Type Series

Fabrics are listed below (Table 1) in chronological order.

Phase 1 early Iron Age

Six features assigned to Phase 1 (L1 gullies G11, G12, G36 and pit G26; L2 pits G30, G32) contained 12 vessels, represented by 20 sherds, weighing 139g. The pottery is generally abraded and fragmented, with an average sherd weight of 7g.

The hand-made sherds occur in a range of quartz-sand (Q1, Q4), granitic rock (R1, R2) and fossil shell fabrics (S1, S2), typical of Iron Age sites in Leicestershire (cf. Wanlip (Marsden 1998, 45); Elms Farm, Humberstone (Marsden 2000, 171); Beaumont Leys and Manor Farm, Humberstone (Marsden 2011, 61)). No diagnostic forms or decorated vessels occur, making close dating problematic; the only feature sherd is a simple everted rim. The pottery is considered to span the early to middle Iron Age. At its most simplistic, an absence of scored vessels may suggest an early date for the assemblage, although in an assemblage so small, this inference cannot be proven.

Two abraded, oxidised sandy coarse ware sherds (fabrics OW3, OW7), datable to the early Roman period (4g), occurred as intrusive finds in gully G12 defining possible enclosure L1.

Leicestershire CTS Code		Description	Sherd No.	Wt (g)
Iron Age (Marsden 2000)				
Grog	G2	Grog in sandy fabric	8	103
Sandy	Q1	Quartz sand	13	102
Quartz	Q4	Sandy fabric with quartz	15	69
Granitic	R1	Granitic rock	6	30
	R2	Sandy fabric with granitic rock	64	469
Shell	S1	Shell (moderate to very common)	2	6
	S2	Sandy fabric with shell	2	56
Roman (Pollard 1994)				
GW – Grey wares	GW3	Fine grey ware	1	3
OW – Oxidised wares	OW3	Coarse sandy	6	52
	OW7	Micaceous sandy	1	2
			118	**892**

Table 1. Pottery type series.

L No.	Group	Description	Sherd No.	Wt (g)
Enclosure L3	6	Ditch fills	68	488
	7	Ditch fills	4	46
	8	Ditch fills	3	33
	9	Ditch fills	7	52
	10	Gully fill	2	2
	18	Pit fill	1	2
	23	Pit fill	1	2
Trackway L4	1	Ditch fills	1	2
Total			87	627

Table 2. Phase 2 pottery quantification.

Phase 2 early–middle Iron Age

Eighteen pottery vessels, represented by 87 sherds (627g), were collected from eight features, the majority deriving from ditch G6 defining enclosure L3 (Table 2). The pottery survives in the same abraded condition as that of the preceding phase, and is similarly fragmented, with an average sherd weight of 7g.

The hand-made sherds occur in a comparable range of fabric types to Phase 1: quartz-sand (Q1, Q4), granitic rock (R1, R2) and fossil shell (S1). No diagnostic vessel forms or decorated vessels occur. Feature sherds are represented by two flat rims and two partial flat bases (cf. Knight 1984, 20–1). Vessel wall thicknesses vary from 3mm to 12mm, suggesting a range of vessel sizes. The largest single pottery deposit derived from a highly fragmentary but near complete vessel found in the secondary fill of ditch G6 (Fig. 7). It comprised 59 sherds (429g) from a granitic vessel (fabric R2).

Phase 3 Romano-British

Six abraded early Roman coarse ware sherds (fabrics GW3, OW3), representing two vessels (total weight 53g), derived from ditch G3, defining trackway L5. A worn base is the sole feature sherd. Residual pottery, recovered from the fills of adjacent ditch G5, comprises three late Iron Age base sherds (fabric G2), deriving from a single vessel (64g), and two undiagnostic early Iron Age sherds (fabric R1), weighing 9g.

Human remains

Corinne Duhig

Methodology

Methods followed are those of Mayne Correia (1997), Mays (1998) and McKinley (1989). Each sample, from different horizontal spits within G22, was weighed and assessed initially for colour and content. The only difference was that the tiny quantities from the two upper spits were almost completely white in colour, which will be discussed below. Otherwise, all spits contained a similar size and range of fragments, and appeared to be from the same individual. Therefore, samples were combined, sieved through 4mm and 2mm mesh, divided by body part and then by individual bone as far as possible.

The expected weight range for a whole body after burning is approximately 1,600–3,600g (McKinley 1989), and for ancient cremations is approximately 200–2,000g, average 800g. At 574g, this deposition is within the range, though well below the average.

Colour

In a cremation deposit, white bone has lost all its organic component through combustion and is almost pure mineral, having been burned at a temperature of at least 645°C over several hours with adequate oxygen access (McKinley 1989; Mays 1998, 216 and table 11.1). Poorer burning produces bone in shades ranging from a brightish blue-grey, grey, black and reddish-brown, the latter representing the least burning.

Apart from the two upper samples, this material is variable in colour between white, grey and grey-white patched. There are also some grey-black patched and a few purely black fragments. These represent areas that had been protected from burning, either because the fire was not adequate to produce complete combustion – lacking any component of time, temperature or air access – or because they fell outside the pyre during the burning process. Large amounts of white or grey bones with black centres show that burning was proceeding in a satisfactory way in at least part of the pyre, but it did not continue long enough to penetrate within the bones.

The six black fragments from the skull vault suggest that a part of the skull broke off, and either fell away from the pyre or part of the pyre fell away from it. Much of the skull continued to burn, however, because most vault and skull base/face fragments are white and grey. It has been remarked that the extremities, being further from the centre of the pyre, can fall away and consequently be less well burned. That is not the case here.

Overall, the colour of the material from the main deposit suggests that pyre technology was poor, and particularly, although not exclusively, indicates a short timespan for the burning, probably combined with poor maintenance when the pyre began to collapse and bones tumbled away from the area of combustion.

Fragment size

The largest fragments are rather small compared with many cremations: 58.2 × 14.9mm long-bone shaft (refitted from two fragments) and 38.5 × 28.2 mm skull vault, but most are considerably smaller. The small size of fragments, linked to the evidence of colour, above, suggests that there was much disturbance of the pyre while the bones were hot – when they are fragile – either due to poor construction and collapse or to human interference with the pyre.

Body-area representation and proportions

The body-area proportions of an average modern cremation are: skull 18.2 per cent, axial skeleton 23.1 per cent, limbs and extremities 58.7 per cent (McKinley 1989: 68).

Every body area is represented (Table 3), with pieces of the large long bones, teeth, very small fragments of rib shaft and tiny bones of the hands. When compared with McKinley's standard, however, the axial skeleton is severely under-represented. This is partly to be expected, because the fragility of most of the axial skeleton (vertebrae and ribs) causes these bones to disappear into the unidentified group,

	Weight (g)	% of whole	% of identified bone
Skull	132	23.0	31.7
Axial skeleton	24	4.2	5.8
Limbs	261	45.5	62.5
All identified bone	417	72.7	100.0
Unidentified	SF 0 + 157 = 157	27.8	
Total	574	100.0	

Table 3. Human bone by body area.

but there are robust areas of the pelvis which would be expected and are not found; equally, one would expect the survival of far more fragments of the large bones of the leg and certain other robust parts of the skeleton. There is, therefore, both a taphonomic and a selection component to the disproportion, the latter also shown by the low weight, but the reasoning behind the selection is inexplicable.

The bone from the upper fill was whiter than the main cremation deposit, suggesting that these were some of those that had been left longest in the pyre, perhaps recovered when the last remnants of the pyre were being cleared up and hence added on top of the main deposit.

Sex, age and pathological conditions

The lack of any epiphyses (the growing ends of bones), or areas with distinctive 'billowed' surfaces where the epiphyses would attach, suggests that this was an adult individual, though selection might have removed the epiphyses – there is a shortage of articular ends of bones. One definite portion of skull suture is present (probably the coronal suture which divides the back of the skull vault from the front) and appears largely open, showing an age no later than early adulthood. Five teeth are present, in the form of their dentine cores, one of which appears to be an adult premolar. The skeleton is of medium build, and no distinctive areas that are used for sex-determination are present, so the sex cannot be determined. No pathological conditions could be identified.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The open area excavation at land off Seagrave Road, Sileby, has investigated a small ditched enclosure first tentatively identified by geophysical survey (ArchaeoPhysica 2011). Dating evidence was restricted to a small pottery assemblage with no diagnostic forms or decoration. However, it was sufficient to indicate that both the ditched enclosure (Phase 2) and earlier activity (Phase 1) can be broadly dated to the early–middle Iron Age. A small worked flint assemblage was recovered from Iron Age features but, other than an awl, it comprised only flakes. The continuation of flint-working into the Iron Age is debated. Although the Seagrave Road assemblage exhibits some of the proposed characteristics of Iron Age flintworking (Young and Humphrey 1999, 232–3), like that from the contemporary site at Wanlip, Leicestershire (Cooper and Humphrey 1998, 69–71), it is too small to contribute to this debate. However, it could indicate an 'ad hoc' or expedient use of whatever material was at hand (Duncan, archive report).

The earliest firm evidence for use of the site (Phase 1) comprised an activity focus L2, containing small pits and post-holes, and a possible enclosure L1, defined by discontinuous gullies. The latter was replaced by a more substantial enclosure L3 (Phase 3), as was the case at Normanton le Heath, Leicestershire (Thorpe and Sharman 1994, 11). Perhaps the most significant feature was an elongated pit G30, the fill of which contained unburnt cobbles and unidentifiable charcoal. The feature has some similarities to one at Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leicester, although in that case areas of in-situ burning, burnt stones, charcoal and hammerscale were suggestive of a possible iron-working channel hearth (Thomas 2011, 28–9).

Enclosure L3 was established in roughly the same location as the earlier possible enclosure. However, although it was on the same alignment, it did not reuse the existing boundaries and was very different in nature. It was square in plan, 35 × 30m, and was defined by a substantial ditch. No entrance was identified, suggesting that the ditch was either crossed by some kind of bridge or that recutting, for which there was no clear evidence, had removed the original causeway. Located centrally within the enclosure was a possible roundhouse – the predominant position for the enclosures studied by Speed (2010b, 45). The only other evidence for activity comprised a few isolated post-holes and small pits. Trackway L4, adjacent to the enclosure, passed through the Phase 1 activity focus; it remained in use into the Roman period (Phase 3). The evaluation demonstrated that the trackway extends for over 450m to the north and is an integral part of the Romano-British settlement in the northern part of the development area (preserved beneath playing fields) (Fig. 10). The construction of enclosures and land boundaries is part of a broad trend observed in the Trent Valley and beyond during the later first millennium BC, 'implying a new concern with the stricter control of land resources' (Knight and Howard 2004, 90).

'Rectangular ditched enclosures, covering not more than *c.*0.5 hectares and containing one or two circular buildings, together with ancillary structures, are seen as the typical site type of the Middle and Late Iron Age in central Britain' (Willis 2006, 101). Amongst the small number investigated in the East Midlands there is considerable variation in both size and function, although in Leicestershire they are usually either curvilinear or D-shaped (Speed 2010a, 42; Speed 2010b, 37), not square as at Seagrave Road. Within Leicestershire, perhaps the most comparable in size to L3 is that at Wanlip, which measured *c.*20 × 17m. However, in contrast, it was D-shaped in plan; it had an entrance; the ditch had been redug; and it was devoid of internal evidence for occupation (Beamish 1998, fig. 4), although there was some externally. It was interpreted as a cattle/stock enclosure (Beamish 1998, 38). While a similar function is possible for the Seagrave Road enclosure, the absence of an entrance causeway, presence of a possible roundhouse and some domestic debris may suggest it was occupied at times, perhaps on a seasonal or short-term basis during the corralling of livestock.

As on so many early–middle Iron Age sites the actual evidence for the roundhouse is slight and incomplete – e.g. Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leicester (Thomas 2011, 23) – although on other sites where roundhouses would have been expected to survive, no evidence at all has been found – e.g. Warren Farm, Lockington (Thomas 2013, 113). In the case of the Seagrave Road roundhouse it is, therefore, unclear whether

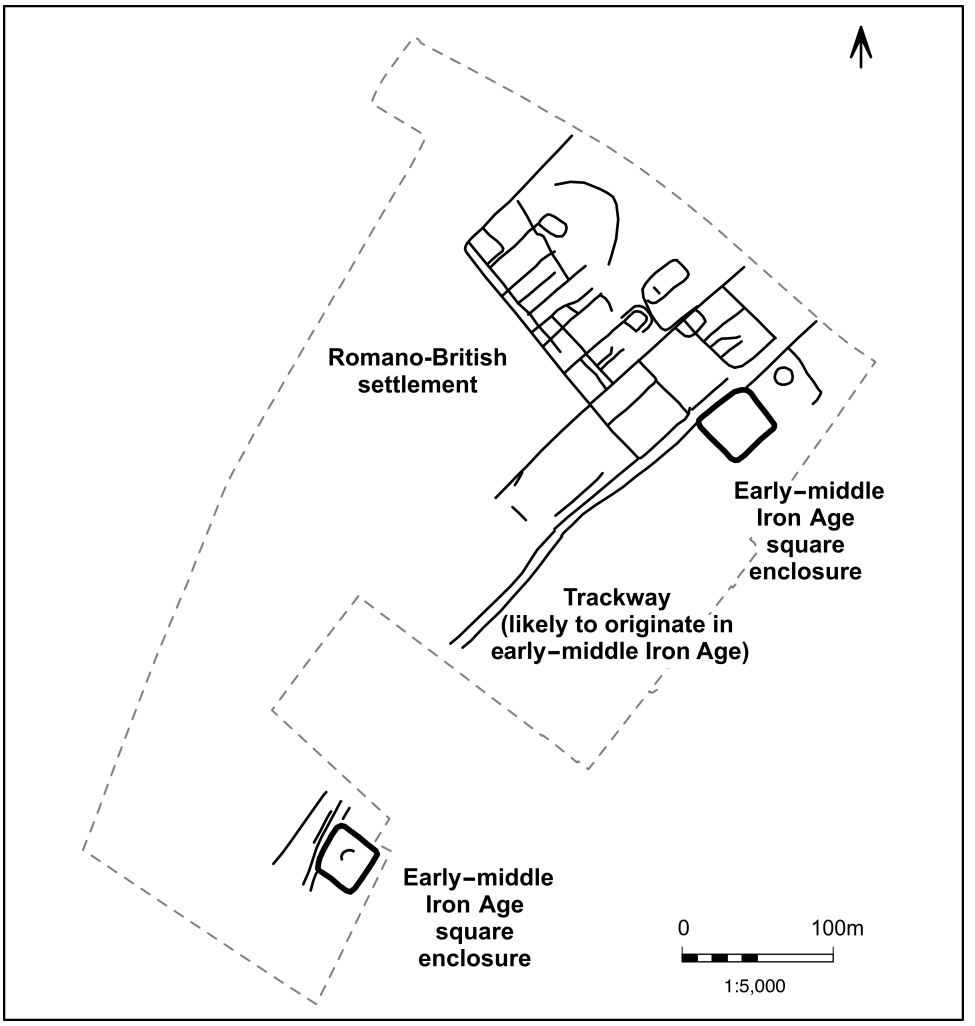

Fig. 10. The early–middle Iron Age enclosures, trackway and nearby Romano-British settlement.

the gully represents a wall construction slot or was dug for drainage, or whether pit G15 is contemporary. The projected diameter of the Seagrave Road roundhouse is 10–11m, which fits the norm for the region (Willis 2006, 105; Speed 2010b).

At *c.*2.5m wide by 1.2m deep the size of the enclosure ditch (and the resultant bank) would seem excessive had it been constructed for purely utilitarian purposes such as stock control or drainage. A similar observation has been made about the Trent Valley where enclosures of comparable size are defined by large ditches – e.g. Brough-on-Fosse, Nottinghamshire (Knight and Howard 2004, 93–3). The latter and others – e.g. Hingley (1990, 96) – have commented on the significance of boundaries to the people who created them. Speed notes that 'enclosure ditches were settlement

boundaries that had both practical and symbolic meanings' (2010b, 29). If the enclosure at Seagrove Road is seen as a symbol of group identity, its size becomes more understandable – as do phenomena seen at other sites, such as 'excessive' re-cutting and the placing of structured deposits. The evidence for the latter often comprises animal or human remains (Knight and Howard 2004, 93; Speed 2010b, 35–6). However, the deposition of pottery, like that within the Seagrave Road enclosure ditch, is not uncommon – e.g. the substantial pottery deposits (including near complete vessels) within an enclosure ditch at Elms Farm, Humberstone, Leicester (Charles *et al*. 2000, 159). (The latter may be slightly later in date than the Seagrave Road example.) The near-complete vessel at Seagrave Road was placed within the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch. It was unusual for a number of reasons. Overall, the pottery assemblage from the site was small, it was inverted, and it had been placed in the ditch on the trackway side of the enclosure, near the cremation burial. Accordingly, it should be seen as a deliberate deposit of material culture rather than casual discard – i.e. a special or structured deposit (as detailed by Hill 1995 and others). Its deposition may have been designed to commemorate an event such as the maintenance of the enclosure boundary, or even its abandonment.

The cremation burial is of a young adult of indeterminate sex. At 574g the amount of cremated bone is below the average weight for ancient cremations. However, given that the cremation deposit was sealed by a sterile clay deposit, this must represent the total amount of bone placed in the grave. Variation in bone colour suggests the pyre was poorly managed. By contrast, bone was selected for burial from all body areas. Cremation burials within contemporary settlements are rare and occur in small numbers – e.g. a single urned cremation burial at Wanlip, Leicestershire (Beamish 1998, 16); a single un-urned cremation burial at Elms Farm, Humberstone, Leicester (Charles *et al*. 2000, 159). At Wanlip, 318g of a cremated young adult of indeterminate sex was buried outside a D-shaped enclosure (Baxter 1998, 72). At Elms Farm, 796g of a cremated adult of indeterminate sex was buried in a small pit within a penannular ditch (Boyle 2000, 196–7). In contrast to Seagrave Road, all the bone from Wanlip was white in colour, suggesting that the pyre had been well-managed and relatively hot.

Although not the subject of this article, brief mention should be made of the Romano-British settlement located to the north (within the development area but preserved beneath playing fields). Its layout is aligned on a small ditched enclosure of Iron Age date (within the preservation area) which is very similar to enclosure L3 (Fig. 10). Also, excavated evidence for Romano-British rural settlements within the region is 'patchy' (Taylor 2006, 149).

The two enclosures share a number of characteristics – their square shape, their size (35 × 33m), the V-shaped profile of the ditch, the scale of the ditch (2.4m wide and 1.3m deep) and the presence of similar Iron Age pottery (Albion Archaeology 2011, 22). Both are also located on the east side of an extensive boundary/trackway.

The basic layout of the Romano-British settlement is known from geophysical survey (ArchaeoPhysica 2011) and confirmed by trial trenches, which also added further detail (Albion Archaeology 2011). The settlement covered an area of *c*.2.5ha. It comprised rectilinear ditched enclosures with a fairly symmetrical layout around a central access, positioned opposite the small Iron Age enclosure (Fig. 10). In plan

the settlement has similarities to that at Bottom Osiers, Gonalston, Nottinghamshire (Knight *et al*. 2004, fig. 6.14). Although some of the ditches defining the settlement enclosures had been redug, the overall settlement layout did not appear to have changed significantly, in contrast to the contemporary settlement at Stretton Road, Great Glen, Leicestershire (Luke *et al*. forthcoming). A number of possible buildings were identified within the Seagrave Road settlement; the most convincing of these was a roundhouse. In addition, a number of cobbled surfaces probably represent external yards. Pottery suggests that the settlement was occupied between the late first and fourth centuries AD.

The NE–SW boundary/trackway was an integral part of the Romano-British settlement Evidence from the open area excavation, *c*.450m to the south, suggests that it originated in the early–middle Iron Age. To its east, *c*.350m apart, were two small, square Iron Age ditched enclosures. The more northerly one appears to have become the focal point of the Romano-British settlement; while the other did not develop into a later settlement. The presence of Iron Age enclosures adjacent to extensive boundaries/trackways has been observed elsewhere in the region – e.g. Birstall, Leicestershire (Speed 2010a, fig. 10); Normanton le Heath, Leicestershire (Thorpe and Sharman 1994, fig. 20); Whitemoor Haye, Staffordshire (Knight *et al*. 2004, fig. 6.13). It, therefore, seems clear that many apparently isolated enclosures – whether a focus of settlement or not – are elements of a wider system of land management which originated in the Iron Age.

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