

Notes

Iron Age sites at Wollaston, Northamptonshire

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During autumn 1966 a grader removed 9 in (23 cm) of topsoil in advance of quarrying for ironstone at the site (fig 1) (coded W17 on the system used *Beds. Arch. J.* 3 (1966) 1-6) (N.G.R. SP/909641) revealing the boundary ditch and living area of an early Iron Age enclosure, whose area, assuming the enclosure to have been rectangular, would have been at least 4.7 acres (fig. 3). The east limits were not exposed and the ditch did not continue the full length of the south side. It was approximately 10 ft (3 m) wide and very shallow, at 2 ft (60 cm) deep, (measured into the subsoil as are all depths), no doubt because of the 20 ft (6 m) thick stratum of solid limestone beneath.

The NW side had a complex series of cuts and a narrow parallel trench on the outside 14-18 in (35-45 cm) wide and 5 in (13 cm) deep, possibly for a palisade. The living area was on the S. side where several large hut circles were marked by post holes approximately 10 in (25.5 cm) diameter and 1-12 in (up to 30 cm) deep generally filled with black deposits. A patch of intensely burned pebbles marked the position of a hearth.

A rectangular set of post holes forming a building 20 ft by 16 ft was found outside the enclosure. The complex of holes at the SE, were presumably caused by superimposed dwellings which can not now be distinguished.

Little occupation refuse survived: none was visible in the ploughsoil before grading. All the finds came from the S side of the enclosure. Only 3 post holes contained sherds (marked P). The few rim sherds found are not instructive, but seem to be in the Iron Age A tradition, being from vessels with wide mouths rather than the smaller mouthed globular shapes of the B period. Few of the sherds were well fired, most did not have the usual 'sandwich' appearance in section; the colours of the

inside and outside penetrate the surface until they meet in the middle. The pottery closely resembles material from Irthlingborough, Northants, (*Beds. Arch. J.* 4 (1969) 1-5, figs. 1 and 2.10) and is therefore Iron Age A.

Since the area is not entirely closed in, and the ditch is so shallow, it cannot be a defensive encampment. This and the sparse nature of the occupation suggest an agricultural settlement of fairly short duration.

Discovered also were the furrows of the medieval strips in parts of two furlongs. It is interesting to note that the boundary between these furlongs (area with no furrows) is aligned along the Iron Age ditch. At the NW side were two mid-19th century lime kilns and the contemporary quarry. The kilns were 4 ft. diameter with about 3 ft. of walls surviving.

Housing development revealed the plan of a further Iron Age site (coded W18) (N.G.R. SP/913630), drawn in the inset, appears to be the fragmentary remains of part of a hut footing sleeper trench together with a few pits and post holes. The hut trench no 1, only 7 in (18 cm) deep, containing many burnt pebbles, widened at the west end in the manner of an entrance ditch. The 'pit' no 4 narrowed down to a post hole 14 in (35.5 cm) deep and is in line with post holes nos 2 and 3. These appear to make up the west side of a rectangular building. Pits 5 and 8 were shallow, only 14 in (35.5 cm) deep. Pit 6, vertical sided with a flat bottom at 33 in (84 cm) down, contained much occupation rubbish and limestone. Pit 7 was bottle-shaped (*Beds. Arch. J.* 4 (1969) 1 and 8, fig. 6.84-98). The ditch, no 9, was 5 ft (1.5 m) wide and 30 in (76 cm) deep. The pottery is in the A tradition but shows B influences. The site can only have been occupied for a very short time, perhaps by a single family.

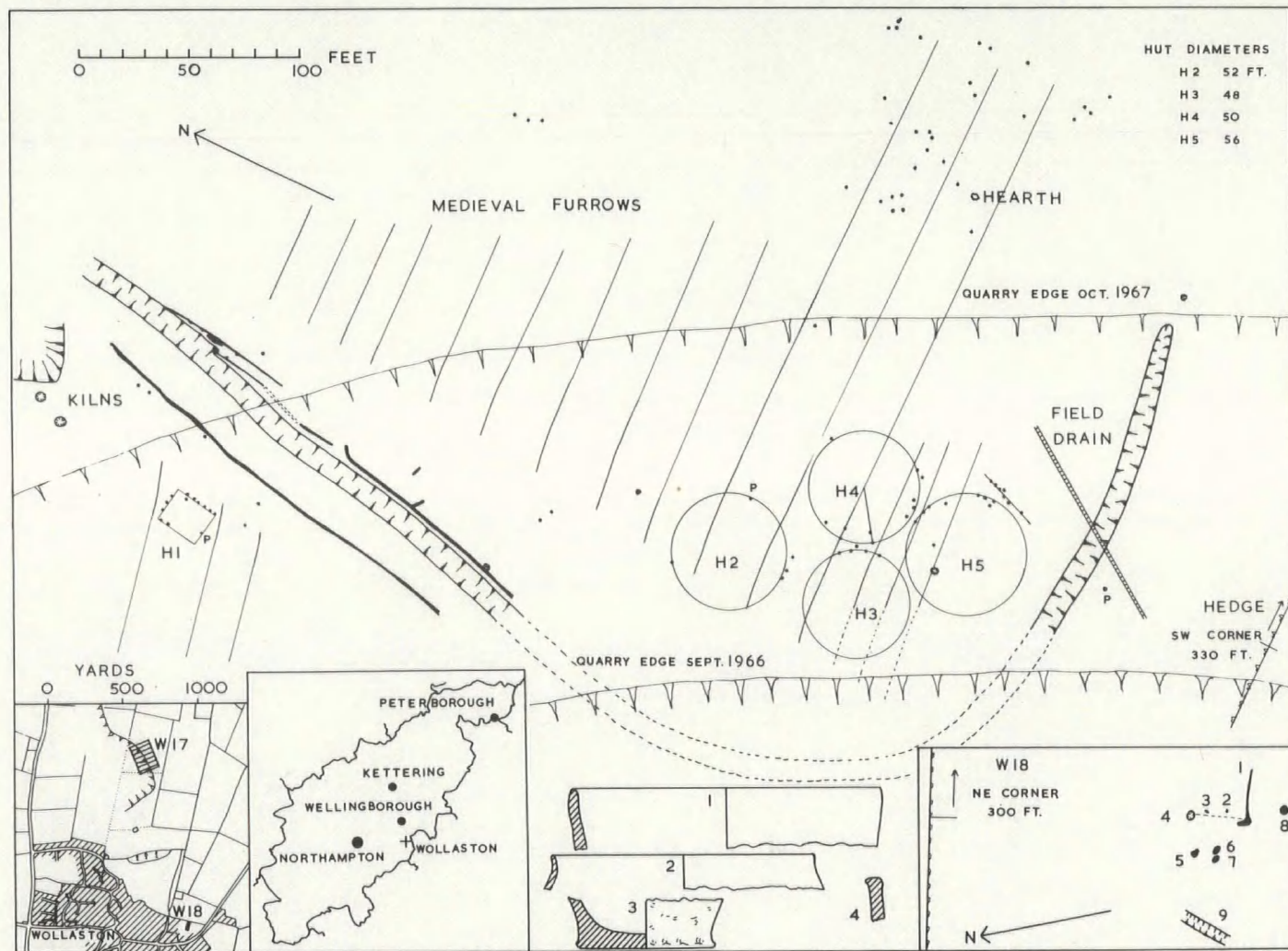


Fig 1 Iron Age Sites at Wollaston.