A SELECTION OF ARTICLES ON ASPECTS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PREHISTORY, PUBLISHED RECENTLY IN *RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE*

A4146 Stoke Hammond and Linslade Western Bypass; archaeological investigations 2005. Moore R, Byard A, Mounce S, Thorpe S. *Recs Bucks* 47 (2007) Part 1, 1–62

Archaeological investigations were carried out by Network Archaeology Ltd in 2005 on the route of the Stoke Hammond and Linslade Western Bypass. A large Iron Age occupation site, with some Roman remains, and a smaller middle to late Iron Age site towards the southern end of the bypass were excavated. The area of a moat-like earthwork shown on early Ordnance Survey maps near Chelmscote Manor Farm was investigated. This feature was shown to be of nineteenth century origin, but two small sites with concentrations of medieval pottery were discovered in the same area and excavated.

There were two concentrations of activity on the large Iron Age site, here called Site ABC, near the southern end of the bypass. The more southerly of these concentrations had the remains of six early to middle Iron Age roundhouse ring gullies. In the middle to late Iron Age, activity shifted north: the second concentration of features had the poorly preserved remains of up to five roundhouses. These were superseded by linear features, which defined a small rectilinear enclosure and possible drove-ways. A Roman phase of activity in the northern part of the site included a series of parallel cultivation trenches and a cremation burial in an urn with two accessory vessels. A further five cremation deposits were identified, including one at a smaller Iron Age site, Site E. These were undated, but their association with the ring gullies suggested that at least some of them were of Iron Age date.

A number of crucible fragments recovered from Site F provide evidence for non-ferrous Iron Age metal working.

An existing field boundary crossing Site ABC is believed to correspond to a boundary described in an Anglo-Saxon charter. Excavation revealed a ditch beneath this boundary. This ditch cut an Iron Age feature, but was otherwise undated.

An extensive programme of bulk soil-sampling and sieving was carried out, but the environmental evidence was inconclusive as the samples yielded only small quantities of charred plant remains.

An Iron Age pit alignment and burial at Aspreys, Olney. Webley, L. *Recs Bucks* 47 (2007) Part 1, 63–80.

Oxford Archaeology carried out an excavation and watching brief at Aspreys, Olney, on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd. This revealed a pit alignment dating to the early Iron Age. Environmental evidence indicates that the pits had been left to fill gradually within a largely open landscape. The silting deposits from the pits suggest that the alignment was not flanked by an earthwork bank. During the middle Iron Age, one of the pits – by then just a shallow hollow – was selected for the interment of a crouched inhumation burial. This burial provides an illustration of the long-term significance of pit alignments. Later activity was limited to medieval and post-medieval agriculture and quarrying. The concluding discussion considers the Olney pit alignment with reference to other similar monuments in the region.

Bronze Age occupation and Saxon features at the Wolverton Turn enclosure, near Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes; investigations by Tim Schadla-Hall, Phillip Carstairs, Jo Lawson, Hugh Beamish, Andrew Hunn, Ben Ford and Tess Durden. Preston S. *Recs Bucks* 47 (2007) Part 1, 81–117

The Wolverton Turn enclosure has been subject to a number of archaeological investigations since the early 1970s. This large sub-rectangular enclosure was identified initially from aerial photographs in 1969, and a part of it was first excavated in advance of construction in 1972 by Tim Schadla-Hall while an adjacent Bronze Age ring-ditch (MK13), and associated burials were excavated by Stephen Green of the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit. To date, only the ring ditch excavation had been published. Initially it was thought that the enclosure ditches were of Roman date.

In 1991 Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeology Service evaluated a large area in advance of construction, and excavated a number of trenches across the line of the enclosure ditches. This led to an excavation the following year which indicated a middle Saxon date for the main enclosure ditches, which seem to have been backed by a palisade. Except for one sunken-featured building well to the north, however, there was no evidence for structures which might have represented settlement. A geophysical survey of part of the site in 1992 proved inconclusive. Excavation by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in 1994 extended the 1992 excavation area and exposed the southern corner of the enclosure, and revealed structures of a Bronze Age settlement. The main period of use for the enclosure ditches was Saxon but the possibility of a Roman origin cannot be ruled out. The animal bones include a high proportion of horse, perhaps suggesting a specialist breeding or training centre.

Excavation of a prehistoric stream-side site at Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire. Richmond A, Rackham J, Scaife R. *Recs Bucks* 46 (2006), 65–101

Excavations were carried out in advance of sand and gravel extraction at Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire. The principal site identified consisted of a large expanse of black earth and 'burnt stone' on both sides of a small stream tributary of the River Thames. A possible lake/river-side activity area was identified which showed phased evidence of burnt mound construction together with the excavation of a ditch and several post-holes. Worked flint and ceramics were recovered, but the general low level of occupation debris suggested of a non-domestic role for the site. A full palynological analysis of the context of the site was possible due to the presence of deep peat horizons and several radiocarbon determinations were obtained. The lower peats related to the early Mesolithic environment; the upper peats were of late prehistoric date with evidence of human activity and cereal cultivation. The study provides the first pollen analysis for South Buckinghamshire. To the north of the present day stream, radiocarbon dates showed activities to have taken place during the Middle and Late Bronze Age; to the south the activities were clearly of earliest Bronze Age date. It appears likely that the positioning of the activities were dictated by the nature of the migrating stream course and the changing water-table. The dispersed character of the archaeological evidence combined with the broad date range indicated by the radiocarbon dates suggest the intermittent use of a favourable location for an activity apparently not associated with contemporary household activities. The site is discussed in its local and regional context.

Changes in the landscape: archaeological investigation of an Iron Age enclosure on the Stoke Hammond Bypass. Edgeworth, M. *Recs Bucks* 46 (2006), 119–184

An early-middle Iron Age enclosure was investigated during the construction of the northern link of the Stoke Hammond Bypass, just south of Bletchley, Milton Keynes. It had been identified as a significant archaeological site by a geophysical survey and its early-middle Iron Age date confirmed by trial-trench evaluation.

In 2002 an open-area excavation was conducted by Albion Archaeology on behalf of Babtie Group. This uncovered the northern part of an enclosure and the ditches of an associated droveway. The main function of these features was probably to facilitate the movement and control of animals, perhaps indicating a fairly organised landscape with a pastoral economy. There was also evidence of a change in the use of land later in the early-middle Iron Age: the enclosure went out of use and there was a phase of settlement on the site, with at least two roundhouses, a burial and related features. At some point (perhaps many centuries) after the small farmstead was abandoned, the land became wooded. The tree cover was probably cleared when field systems of ridge and furrow were laid out at some point from the middle to late Saxon period onwards.

The excavation and metallographic analysis of a Bronze Age sword recovered from Ivinghoe Beacon. Marshall G and Northover P. *Recs Bucks* 43 (2003), 27–37

The circumstances under which a Late Bronze Age sword was found within the hillfort on Ivinghoe Beacon are described. The sword, which probably dates to the end of the eleventh century BC, was the subject of analysis and a metallographic study.

Iron Age settlement at Cranborne Avenue, Westcroft, Milton Keynes. Anthony, S. *Recs Bucks* 43 (2003), 39–46

A Late Iron Age farm, represented by a ring gully, a small enclosure and a series of pits, was excavated during a watching brief at Cranborne Avenue, Westcroft, Milton Keynes, Bucks. The pottery assemblage suggests occupation from around 100 BC to AD 50. The excavated animal bones were predominantly of cattle and sheep.

Excavation of a Medieval settlement, late Saxon features and a Bronze Age cremation cemetery at Loughton, Milton Keynes. Pine, J. *Recs Bucks* 43 (2003), 77–126

An earthwork survey at Loughton, Milton Keynes, suggested the presence of house platforms, ridge and furrow and a hollow way, in addition to other features. The subsequent evaluation confirmed the archaeological significance of the earthworks and revealed numerous deposits. As a result, nine excavation trenches were dug prior to the development of the site for housing. Several phases of activity were identified, the earliest of which was a small middle Bronze Age cremation cemetery. Roman and early Saxon evidence was restricted to small numbers of pottery sherds residual in later features. Ditched field boundaries, pits and postholes of late Saxon and early medieval date, and elements of medieval settlement, including remains of up to six buildings, are described. Specialist reports are included on the prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery, and cremated human remains, with shorter notes on metalwork, worked stone, iron slag and hearth lining, animal bones and charred plant remains.

A Late Bronze Age to Roman site at the former Nurses Home, Oxford Road, Stone, Buckinghamshire. Gibson C. *Recs Bucks* 41 (2001), 47–62

An evaluation and excavation of the former Nurses Home, on the north side of Oxford Road, Stone, Buckinghamshire, was undertaken during 1999. These investigations revealed Late Bronze Age activity that included a possible hut gully, a large number of pits and post holes, and two lengths of a field boundary. An unurned cremation was also present. Later Iron Age features were also noted in areas not coincident with the Late Bronze Age features. They included two sides of a ditch, which may have constituted a rectangular stock enclosure, two gullies and three pits. A re-cut ditch of Roman date was also found.

Late Iron Age features at Reserve Site 5, Downs Barn, Milton Keynes. Last, J. *Recs Bucks* 41 (2001), 63–77

An archaeological excavation in Milton Keynes revealed a system of linear and curvilinear ditches of Late Iron Age date, one in particular containing substantial quantities of 'Belgic' pottery. Although no evidence for houses was recovered, the ditches appear to represent domestic enclosures. Post-dating some of the ditches was a small structure of carefully-laid limestone slabs, close to two areas of burning and a deposit of burnt animal bone. These features may be evidence for ritual activity. The remains of a structure of 'Belgic bricks' were also present.

Iron Age and Roman settlement, with prehistoric and Saxon features, at Fenny Lock, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. Ford, S and Taylor,K. *Recs Bucks* 41 (2001), 79–123

Small-scale fieldwalking and limited trial-trenching in 1975/6, carried out in the search for a suspected Roman road, located a quantity of Roman finds and subsoil deposits suggesting the presence of a settlement. Subsequently, an evaluation was conducted in June 1996 as a part of proposals to develop the site. This revealed extensive deposits of earlier prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman date and subsequent excavation took place between September and November 1996. The excavation revealed limited evidence for Mesolithic, earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age activity, together with more extensive late Bronze Age through to middle Iron Age occupation. The latter consisted of post-built structures, small ring-gully enclosures and a pit alignment. Roman occupation was found at two locations. On one site early Roman occupation consisted of ring-gully structures, field systems, and paddocks that went out of use by the end of the 2nd century AD. On the other a large early Roman enclosure was succeeded by later Roman ring-gully enclosures, ditched field boundaries, enclosures, and a structure that had been rebuilt in stone. Later ploughing had badly damaged a number of human cremations and inhumations. Post-Roman activity included one, possibly two, Saxon sunken-featured buildings. Medieval ridge and furrow overlay the site. There are reports on the pottery, struck flint, quernstones, metalwork, glass, burials and animal bone.

A prehistoric ditch and other features at Princes Risborough swimming pool, Buckinghamshire. Ford, S .*Recs Bucks* (1998–2000), 1–22

An evaluation and excavation on a small site to the west of the medieval manor known to belong to the Black Prince led to the discovery of a prehistoric ditch which contained Iron Age pottery and a human skull. Four other undated features were also discovered. A shallow linear depression to the west of the manorial complex was also investigated but this did not provide enough evidence to confirm whether it was part of the manorial earthworks.

An evaluation and rescue excavation at the Westcroft District Centre, Milton Keynes. Ford, S. *Recs Bucks* 40 (1998–2000) 23–33.

The unexpected discovery of archaeological finds and deposits by metal detector users during groundworks for a superstore led to a hurried rescue excavation. This resulted in the discovery of a large nucleated pit group and outlying features, apparently mainly of Iron Age date. Late Neolithic, late Bronze Age, Roman, Saxon and Medieval pottery was also recovered. An area of the site that had not been reduced by the time the excavation was mounted was evaluated by machine-dug trenches but did not reveal additional deposits. A short note on the Saxon finds previously discovered in the area is included.

Investigations at the prehistoric site at Coldharbour Farm, Aylesbury in 1996. Bonner D, Parkhouse J. *Recs Bucks* 39 (1997), 73–139

Excavations undertaken in advance of housing development on a low-lying area adjacent to the Southcourt Brook, a tributary of the River Thame, produced evidence of five main phases of activity.

Phase 1: A small Neolithic pit, containing pottery, struck flint and an amber bead, was apparently contemporary with a period of tree clearance. Palaeoenvironmental evidence suggests predominantly open conditions, perhaps with a background presence of scrub.

Phases 2 and 3: Abundant evidence for a least two phases of Early Iron Age occupation. In Phase 2 hundreds of intercutting pits were dug between an earlier course of the Southcourt Brook and a possible boundary ditch to its west. In Phase 3 four possible roundhouses were constructed, together with two small enclosures (perhaps to control stock) within a larger rectilinear enclosure, and an associated droveway. Several four-post structures and short lengths of associated fence-lines and drainage gullies also probably belong to Phase 3.

There appears to have been a hiatus between Phases 3 and 4, although evidence from other sites in the vicinity indicates sporadic activity along the Southcourt Brook during the first millennium BC.

Phase 4: In the Belgic period there was occupation in the form of a roundhouse and field systems to its north and south.

Phase 5: A single ditch of Early Roman date may represent a slight shift in activity towards the northern end of the site. Alluviation, perhaps commencing during earlier phases, took place during the first millennium AD, but it is not known what influence this may have had upon the abandonment of the site; despite the low-lying position of the site, and evidence indicative of stagnant water in some of the gullies, there was no evidence that flooding was a problem whilst the site was in use. There may have been some form of activity to the northwest of the excavated area during the early/mid Saxon period.

A part of the site was retained undisturbed within the development area.

There are reports on pottery (ME Farley and NJ Smith) flints (D Bonner), the Neolithic amber bead (ME Farley), metal and other artefacts (J Parkhouse and A-M Cromarty), vertebrate remains (C Johnstone) and palaeoenvironmental studies (M Robinson). The concluding discussion places the site in its wider context.

A searchable index for volumes 11 to 46 of the *Records of Buckinghamshire* can be found at www.bucksas.org.uk.

Whiteleaf Hill:
The archaeological investigation of a Neolithic barrow.

In addition to being a well-known Chilterns beauty spot, Whiteleaf Hill is famous for its Neolithic oval barrow which was excavated by Sir William Lindsay Scott in the 1930s, and brought to publication by Gordon Childe and Isobel Smith in 1954. Many questions remained unanswered about the character of this monument, however, and of the burial of the man found within it. Grants to restore and improve the conservation and interpretation of the hill, provided the opportunity for Oxford Archaeology to re-investigate the barrow and the excavation records, and to examine other archaeological remains on the site.

The recent work demonstrated a c 500 year sequence of activity associated with the Neolithic barrow, beginning in the first part of the 37th century cal BC. A natural knoll exploited for flint in the late Neolithic, a later prehistoric cross-ridge dyke, a post-medieval windmill mound from which Roman material, including a copper-alloy votive leaf, was recovered, the chalk-cut cross, a World War I practice trench, and other banks and ditches were also investigated. Significant data relevant to the environment of the hill from the Neolithic to the post-medieval period were also recovered.

The Gayhurst barrow cemetery:
Reconstructing the burial rite of an Early Bronze Age lord.

A group of seven Bronze Age ring ditches, three pit alignments and three Iron Age enclosures on the floodplain of the River Great Ouse, near Newport Pagnell were excavated by Northamptonshire Archaeology in advance of gravel extraction. The earliest monument was a double ring ditch that survived as a low earthwork. It contained a sequence of five central burials. The primary inhumation had lain within an oak-lined chamber, and was followed by a further inhumation and three cremation deposits, the final one within a Collared Urn. However, what makes this barrow unique is that its construction was marked by the deposition of the partial skeletal remains of some 300 cattle, spread across the gravel mound and later raked down into the ditch and buried. There was a preference for limb bones, the prime meats joints, but the lack of butchery marks suggests that they may have formed a symbolic feast for the dead rather than an actual feast for the living. The preservation of mound material above and around the inner ditch has allowed the sequence of mound construction and enlargement to be described in exceptional detail.

Front cover: Aerial photograph of excavations and environs of Whiteleaf Hill (M.Farley). Excavations of the barrow at Gayhurst Quarry.
Back cover: Excavation of the barrow at Whiteleaf Hill. Excavation of the cattle bones in the ditch of the barrow at Gayhurst Quarry.

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