Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Excavation of early Roman settlement at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire May 2011

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological excavation at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire	
Short description	Although located in an area of known late Iron Age occupation, features of this period were restricted to a group of small pits and postholes. The main focus of activity was early Roman, comprising a rectilinear system of boundary ditches, with multiple recuts, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Limited evidence for iron smithing, cereal processing and animal husbandry was recovered. The excavated features were peripheral to a probable focus of occupation lying to the south, beneath an existing industrial unit, where construction workers had noted the presence of numerous features and had collected a substantial quantity of Roman pottery.	
Project type	Trial excavation and strip, map and record	
Site status	Rural	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Construction site	
Future work	N/A	
Monument type/ period	Iron Age and Roman	
Significant finds	Pottery and worked flint, metalwork	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely	
Study area		
OS Easting & Northing	TL 5183 7878	
Height OD	*c* 16mOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Paul Mason	
Sponsor or funding body	JJS Construction Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date/end date	May 2011	
ARCHIVES (ECB 3588)	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Pottery, flint, metalwork, animal bone, flots
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Site records, photographic, drawings
Digital	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Mapinfo GIS data, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological excavation of early Roman settlement at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire	
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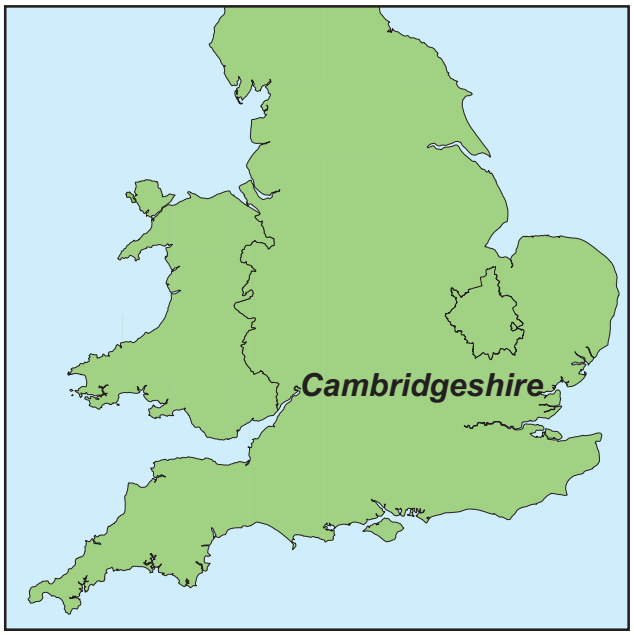
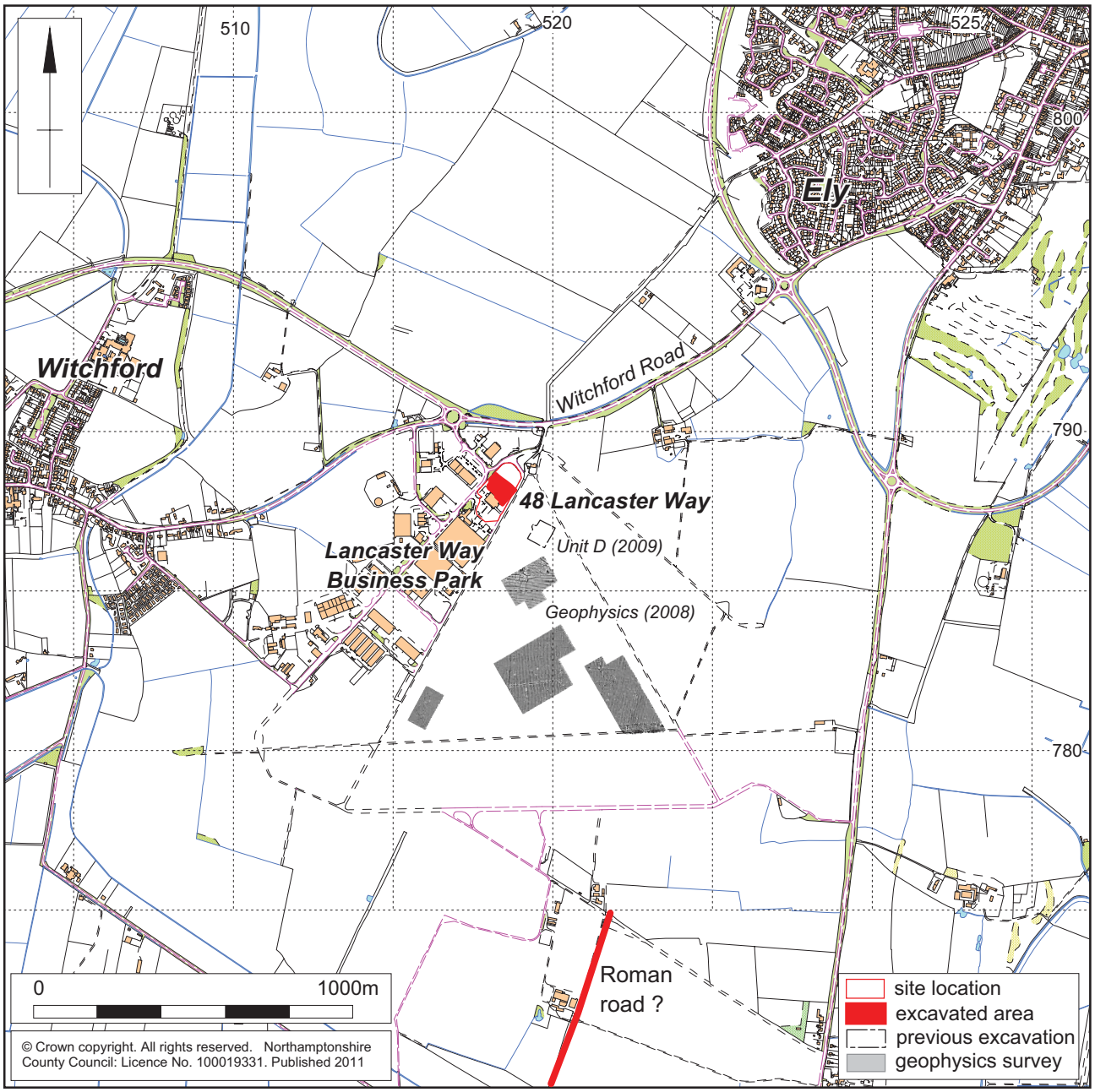




Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF EARLY ROMAN SETTLEMENT AT

48 LANCASTER WAY BUSINESS PARK, ELY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

MAY 2011

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook archaeological evaluation followed by a strip, map and record exercise at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely. Although located in an area of known late Iron Age occupation, features of this period were restricted to a group of small pits and postholes. The main focus of activity was early Roman; comprising a rectilinear system of boundary ditches, with multiple recuts, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Limited evidence for iron smithing, cereal processing and animal husbandry was recovered. The excavated features were probably peripheral to a focus of occupation lying to the south, beneath an existing industrial unit, where construction workers had noted the presence of numerous features and had collected a substantial quantity of Roman pottery.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Dalkin Scotton Partnership Architects Ltd, on behalf of their client JJS Construction Ltd, to undertake a trial trench evaluation of land at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 5183 7878; Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in fulfilment of an archaeological condition attached to planning permission for an industrial unit (Application No 10/00974/FUL). As archaeological remains were discovered during the evaluation, work proceeded directly to a strip, map and record exercise of an area measuring 80m long by 50-60m wide (0.41ha), undertaken at the request of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA) (Figs 2 & 3).

Both stages of archaeological work complied with a Written Scheme of Investigation formulated by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011) and approved by CAPCA. The evaluation was undertaken between the 3rd and 5th May 2011 and the strip, map and record exercise began on 6th May and was completed on 27th May.

The site code ELW11 was allocated to the project and the accession number ECB3588 has been issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology. The site archive will be deposited at Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Office.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The Lancaster Way Business Park lies 2km to the south-west of Ely, but within the parish of Ely, although historically the area was split between the parishes of Ely St Mary and Witchford (Fig 1). The development site comprises a parcel of land on the north-eastern periphery of the business park, bounded by Lancaster Way to the west and Wellington Road to the east (Fig 2). The site is flat and has an elevation of *c*16mOD.

The site lies on the 'Isle' of Ely, a ridge of higher ground extending from Sutton in the west to Ely in the north-east, rising above the southern Cambridgeshire Fens with the

ground falling away towards fenland basins to the south, Grunty Fen, and the east, Cawdle Fen/Hall Fen. The site is separated from Witchford village by a tongue of fen draining north from Grunty Fen, a course now formalised by the Grunty Fen Drain (Flitcroft 2008).

The underlying bedrock of the site and the surrounding area is almost entirely Kimmeridge Clay, capped at this point by glacial till and Boulder Clay deposits (http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm) (Flitcroft 2008). The Soil Survey of England and Wales has mapped the soils in the area of the development site as those of the Hanslope Association, comprising calcareous clayey soils (SSEW 1983; Hodge *et al* 1984).

2.2 Archaeological background

While no previous archaeological work has been undertaken on the development site itself, there have been numerous episodes of fieldwork undertaken on areas of previous and potential future development to both the south and east.

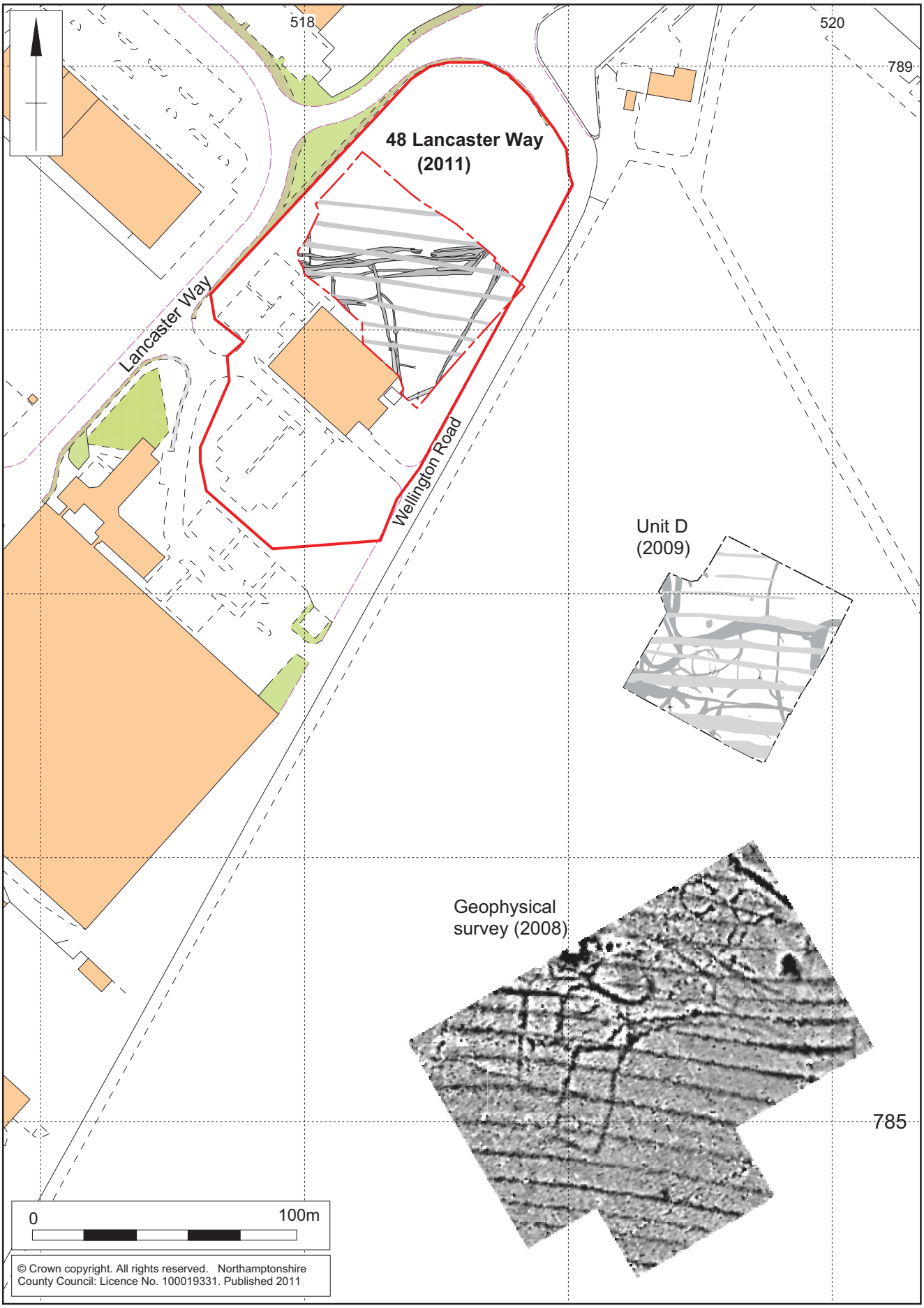
The local context for Roman settlement is provided by the presence of a major Roman road running between Cambridge and Ely, a route partially followed by the present A10 (Flitcroft 2008). Immediately south the Ely, the course of the Roman road is lost but it would have lain to the east of Lancaster Way Business Park and west of the present A10, running roughly parallel to the A10 (Fig 1).

The have been a number of archaeological assessments (Leith 1995), evaluations (Leith 1996 and Crank 2000) and excavations (Ralph 2003) on developments within the business park to the south of the current site. These established the presence of Roman agricultural remains comprising boundary ditches and enclosures. More recent work during the construction of a water pipeline along the route of Wellington Road, in part to the immediate east of the current site, recovered evidence for mid-late Iron Age and early Roman activity (Hancock 2006).

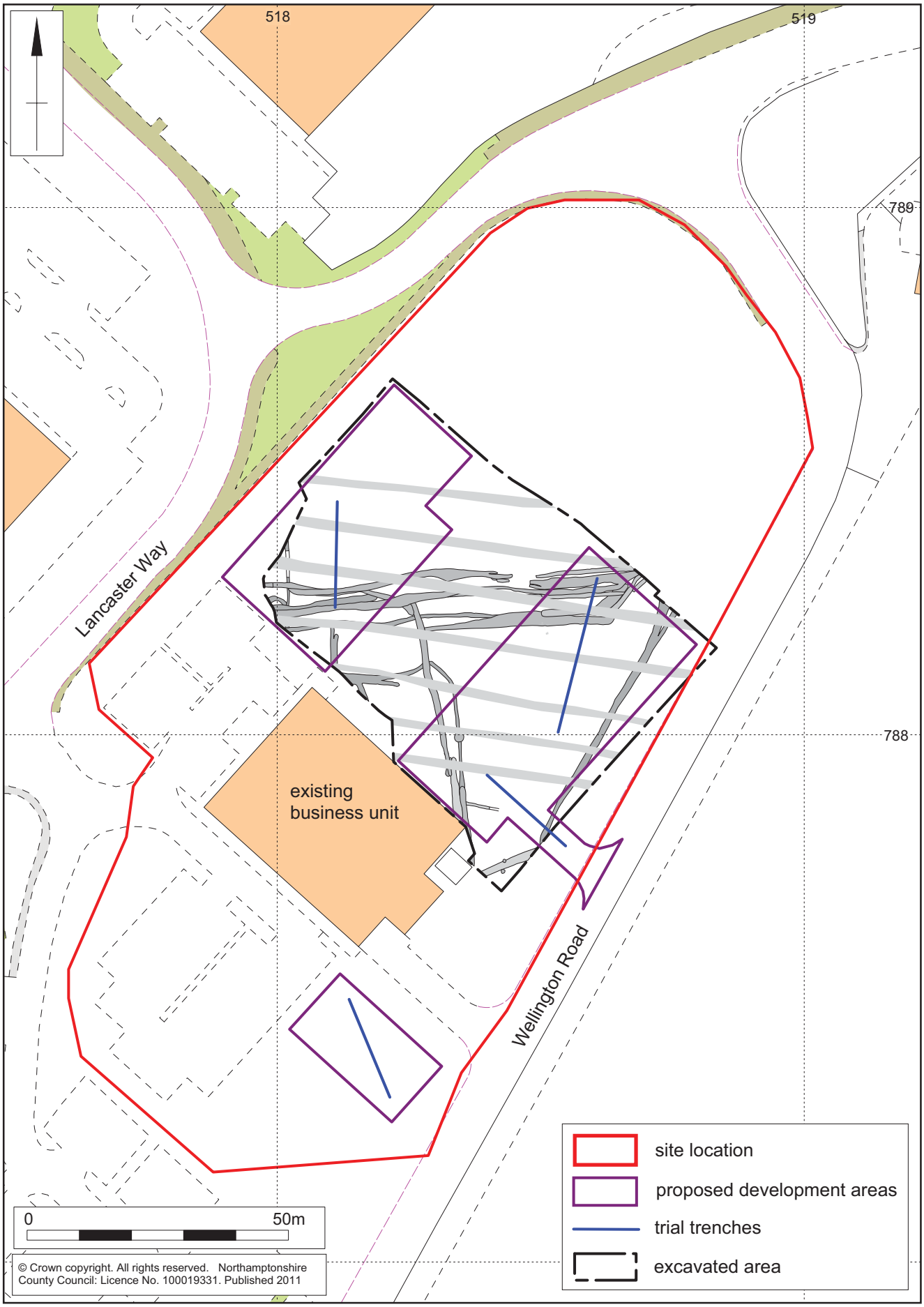
More recently, geophysical surveys, fieldwalking, trial trenching and open area excavation undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on the former World War II RAF base to the east of Wellington Road have revealed further Iron Age and Roman enclosures and occupation (Fig 2).

The extensive triangular block of ground to the east of the Business Park was subject to fieldwalking and geophysical survey in 2008 (Fisher 2008), which showed the presence of an area of probably Iron Age and Roman settlement to the north (Fig 2). Further south, evidence of settlement was sparse.

The area of Unit D, Lancaster Way was subject to archaeological evaluation in August 2008 (Simmonds and Mason 2008). Excavation later the same year revealed a sequence of enclosures and boundary ditches dating from the middle to late Iron Age through to the first half of the 1st century AD (Holmes and Simmonds 2009) (Fig 2). The results of the geophysical survey and the excavation of Unit D to the east of Wellington Road indicated the presence of an extensive area of Iron Age and Roman settlement spanning several hectares. It is possible that the settlement evidence at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park lies on the northern margin of a single extensive area of settlement.



Scale 1:2000 (A4) General plan showing site, previous excavations and geophysical survey Fig 2



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Development areas, trial trenches and excavated area Fig 3

General view of site, looking south Fig 4

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2011) defined the aims of the archaeological investigation as follows:

The objective of the work was to gather information regarding the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological deposits/features within the site in order to appraise the impact of development proposals.

The specific aims were:

- To record and characterise below ground deposits and the archaeological topography of the site;
- To create full and proper records of all observed archaeological material;
- To collect artefactual and ecofactual material as appropriate;
- To prepare a report/archive of the results of the archaeological work and any consequent analytical work;
- To further understand the history and development of activity at the site and its immediate environs.

Furthermore, the site has the potential to address the following regional research topics contained in *Research and archaeology: A framework for the Eastern Counties: 2 Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000):

- To characterise activities associated with crop processing on rural sites;
- To shed light upon the use of the countryside as indicated by faunal assemblages;
- To assess the Iron Age to Roman transition in order to comment upon the degree to which the conquest affected patterns of production;
- To investigate of the origins of relict landscape systems of fields.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 Methodology

At the evaluation stage three 20m-long trenches and one 30m-long trench were excavated in pre-agreed positions, surveyed in using a Leica System 1200 GPS (Fig 3). These were sited on three proposed development areas.

As a result of the evaluation, an area of archaeological interest was defined, lying to the north of the existing industrial unit, and a strip map and record exercise was undertaken in the northern part of the development area where a building, access road and car park were to be sited.

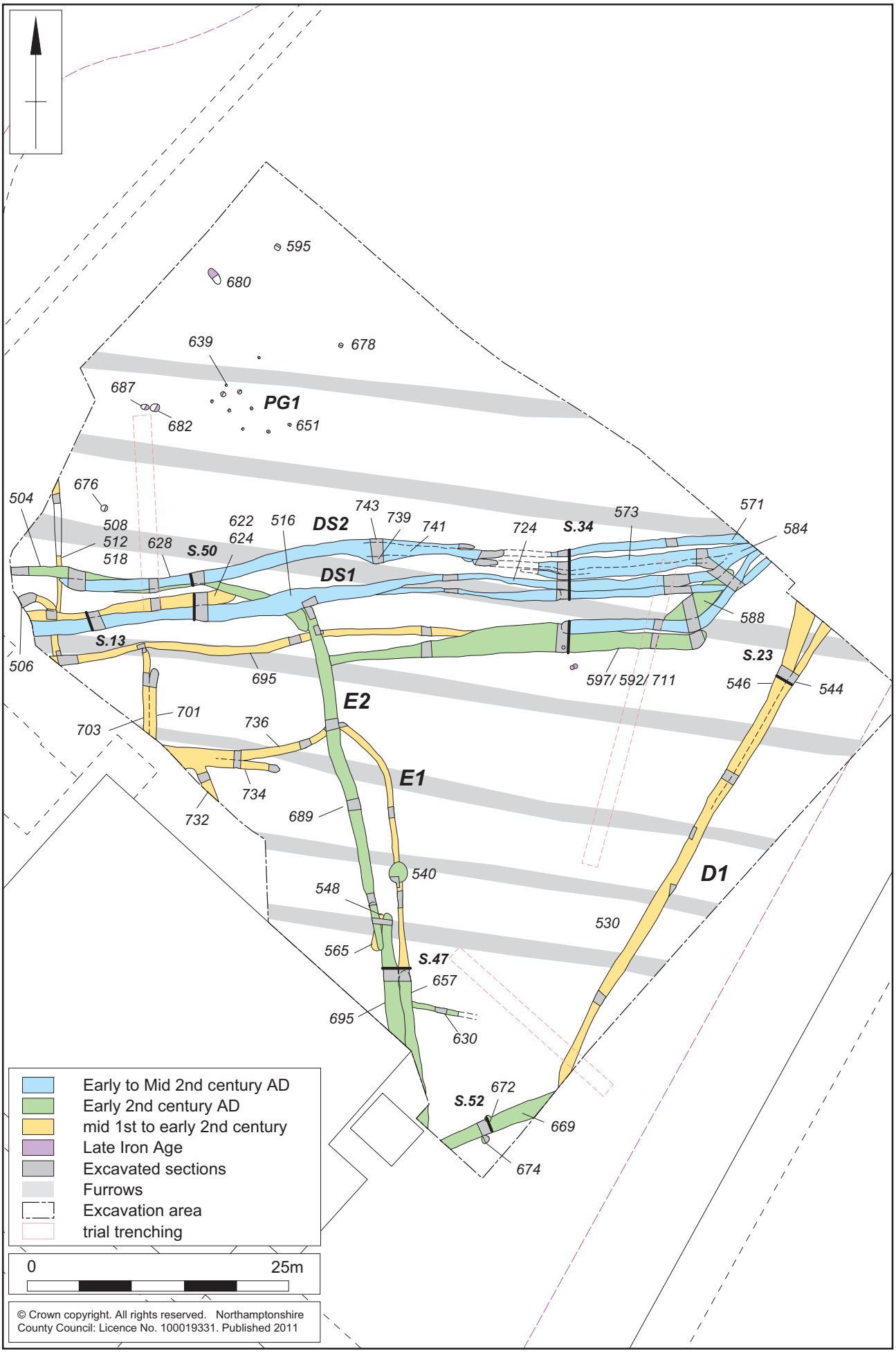
Topsoil and subsoil in this area were removed under archaeological supervision by tracked mechanical digger fitted with toothless ditching bucket (1.8m) to expose the first significant archaeological level, or in the absence of archaeology, the geology (Fig 4). Cleaning of exposed surfaces, hand excavation and recording progressed in accordance with the methodologies set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2011) and in fulfilment of the standards set by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (IfA 2008) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2006).

4.2 General comments

The geology of chalk-flecked, yellow/orange-brown/grey sandy clay typically lay 0.50m below the existing ground level, at *c*16mOD. It was overlain by orange-brown sandy clay subsoil, typically 0.20m thick, except in the south-east corner of the site where it had been truncated by previous groundworks. The topsoil was mid greyish-brown sandy loam, *c*0.30m thick.

To the north of the Roman boundary ditch system, there were a cluster of small pits or postholes which date to the late Iron Age. Further Iron Age features probably extended southward to be truncated by the later ditches, as residual sherds of Iron Age pottery were found in the fills of the northernmost of the Roman ditch system.

The principal archaeological features were a series of intercutting ditches that crossed the site on a near east to west alignment (Fig 5). To the south there may have been parts of two successive ditched enclosures. The ditch systems all date to the early Roman period, mid 1st to mid 2nd centuries AD. They appear to form the northern end of a settlement that may have had its focal point to the immediate south, beneath the existing Michell Instruments building. A site engineer present when foundations were dug collected a significant quantity of fresh sherds of Roman pottery, including parts of decorated Samian vessels. He also reported observing archaeological features that can be interpreted as probable enclosure ditches, curvilinear gullies and hearths/ovens (P Mason pers comm).



Scale 1:500 (A4)

Phased plan of the archaeological features Fig 5

Broad medieval/post-medieval furrows of a ridge and furrow field system, with later ceramic field drains along their bases, were aligned west to east, truncating the underlying archaeology. This truncation was particularly pronounced in the vicinity of the northern ditch systems which, like the later furrows, followed the natural fall of the land.

4.3 An Iron Age pit group

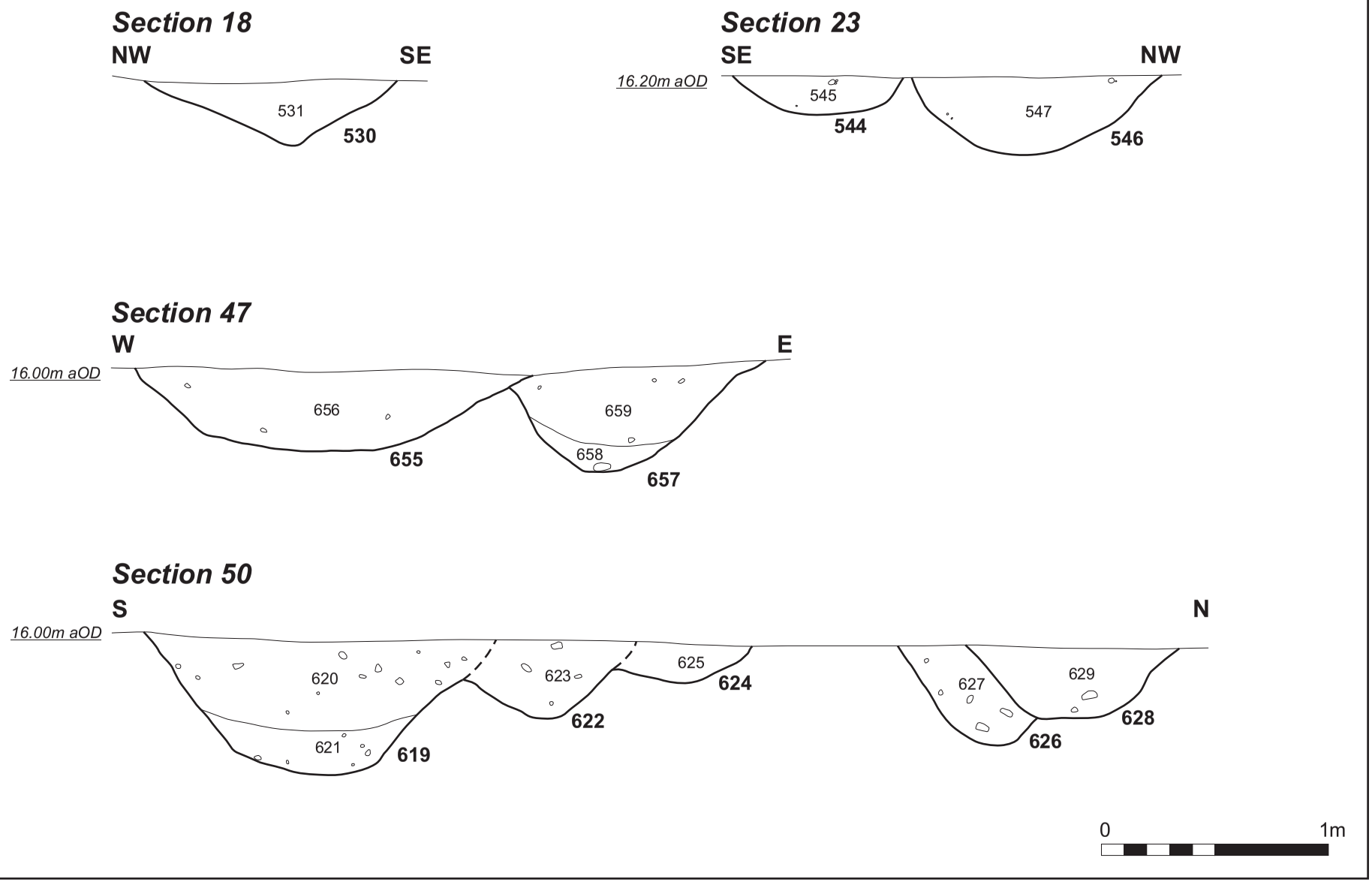
A group of small circular pits/postholes in the northern part of the site date to the 2nd to 1st centuries BC (Fig 5). Ten features were grouped closely together (PG1), however, their seemingly random configuration gave little clue to function. They ranged from 0.22m-0.50m diameter and from 0.04-0.15m deep, and had fills of sandy clay. Late Iron Age pottery was found in the fills of postholes [639] and [651].

To the north of this group there was a small oval pit [680] and two isolated postholes [678] and [595]; the latter also containing Iron Age pottery. A pair of small pits [682] and [687] located to the west of PG1 and a single circular pit or posthole [676] to south of these were undated but are tenuously assigned to the Iron Age by association.

A modest assemblage of residual late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill of the northernmost of the Roman ditches (DS2). The majority of these sherds came from the fill (742) of ditch [741], to the south-east of PG1. Here, the ditch exhibited a conspicuous 'bulge' which upon investigation revealed two earlier features truncated by the ditch (Fig 6). Whilst the most northerly of these, ditch [743], was probably a precursor to the Roman ditch, the other, pit [739], may belong to the Iron Age and be the source of the residual pottery.

Iron Age pit [739] (left) cut by Roman ditch [741], looking west Fig 6

Scale 1:25



Sections of Roman ditch systems (S18, 23, 47 & 50) Fig 7

4.4 Roman enclosures and ditch systems

Enclosure 1 and associated ditches

In the southern part of the site were a series of ditches and gullies associated with a probable enclosure set beside a linear boundary ditch with multiple recuts. The enclosure was defined by a ditch (E1), up to 1.20m wide and 0.45m deep (Figs 5 & 7, Section 47). It had a primary fill of orange-brown sandy clay probably deriving from the weathering of the open ditch edges; sherds of Roman pottery were recovered. The secondary fill was mid-dark greyish-brown silty clay, containing pockets of charcoal and Roman pottery and, from one excavated section [736], a fragment of iron slag.

Internal features were sparse, but the majority of the enclosed area lay beyond the southern limit of excavation. Just inside the enclosure's north-eastern perimeter was an oval pit [565], 3.5m long, 0.70m wide and 0.60m deep and with a primary fill of charcoal-flecked dark greyish-brown silty clay (566) containing animal bone and Roman pottery. This was overlain with a similar fill (567); however, no charcoal or finds were present in this deposit, suggesting that it had accumulated naturally or that the pit had been deliberately sealed with sterile soil.

Two internal ditches [732] and [734], intersected close to the north-western perimeter of the enclosure. Ditch [732] was 1.0m wide by 0.23m deep, with a fill of mid greyish-brown sandy clay (733) containing early Roman pottery. Ditch [734] was aligned with the enclosure ditch before diverging and terminating. It was 0.70m wide by 0.10m deep, with a fill of orange-brown sandy clay (735) containing fragments of lead (SF16).

To the north of the enclosure there were linear boundary ditches. The southernmost ditch, [695], was up to 0.80m wide and 0.25m deep. It had a fill of brown sandy clay containing Roman pottery; a single bone object (SF5) was also recovered from this feature (511). The northern ditch was heavily truncated by later re-cuts but appeared to have comprised sections of both single [106] and re-cut [622/624] ditch (Fig 7, Section 50 and Fig 8). The re-cut ditches, 0.65-0.75m wide and up to 0.35m deep, had fills of charcoal-flecked greyish-brown silty clay. The fill (623) of the later ditch [622] contained Roman pottery and animal bone.

Multiple boundary ditches in the west of the site, looking north-west Fig 8

In the western corner of the site were further features which can be assigned to the earlier phase of activity. Gully [508/512/518] was aligned north-west to south-east. It was heavily truncated for most of its length, but survived up to 0.70m wide and 0.23m deep in the extreme western corner of the site, where its fill of mid-brown sandy clay (513), contained Roman pottery and animal bone. A short distance to the north the gully intersected with a curvilinear gully [506], 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep, with a fill of greyish-brown sandy clay (507) containing animal bone.

Close to the eastern periphery of the site was a double ditch (D1) which also dates to the early Roman period. Aligned north-north-east to south-south-west, to the north it was visible as two distinct shallow ditches [544] and [546], measuring 0.75m wide and 1.10m wide respectively (Figs 5 & 7, Section 23). Both had fills of light greyish-brown silty clay (545/547) containing Roman pottery.

To the south they merged into a single ditch [530], 1.1m wide by 0.30m deep, with a fill of charcoal-flecked light greyish-brown silty clay (541) (Fig 7, Section 18). This too contained Roman pottery; a small quantity of iron slag was also recovered.

Enclosure 2 and associated ditches

In the late 1st/early 2nd century AD a second enclosure (E2) and a new boundary ditch system were superimposed over the earlier regime (Fig 5). The new enclosure ditch was more substantial than its predecessor, typically measuring 1.20m wide and 0.40m deep (Fig 9, Section 28). The range of pottery types retrieved from its fill was almost indistinguishable from the earlier enclosure, however, to the south the ditch [655] produced a large group of moderately well-preserved Roman sherds including a stamped samian base provisionally dated AD 130-60. Hereabouts, the ditch appeared to have been modified or re-cut, perhaps to block an entrance.

To the immediate south, two ditches [630] and [669] appeared to form a funnel-like approach to the enclosure before intersecting with its perimeter ditch. The southernmost of these ditches [669] was the larger, measuring 1.10m wide and 0.45m deep (Fig 9, Section 52). A large quantity of pottery was found in its sandy clay fills (670/671) and two postholes [672] and [674] cut the uppermost fill (670).

No internal features were present, however, a large circular pit, [540], was located close to the eastern arm of the enclosure. It had a diameter of 1.80m and a fill of sandy clay (541) containing early 2nd-century pottery.

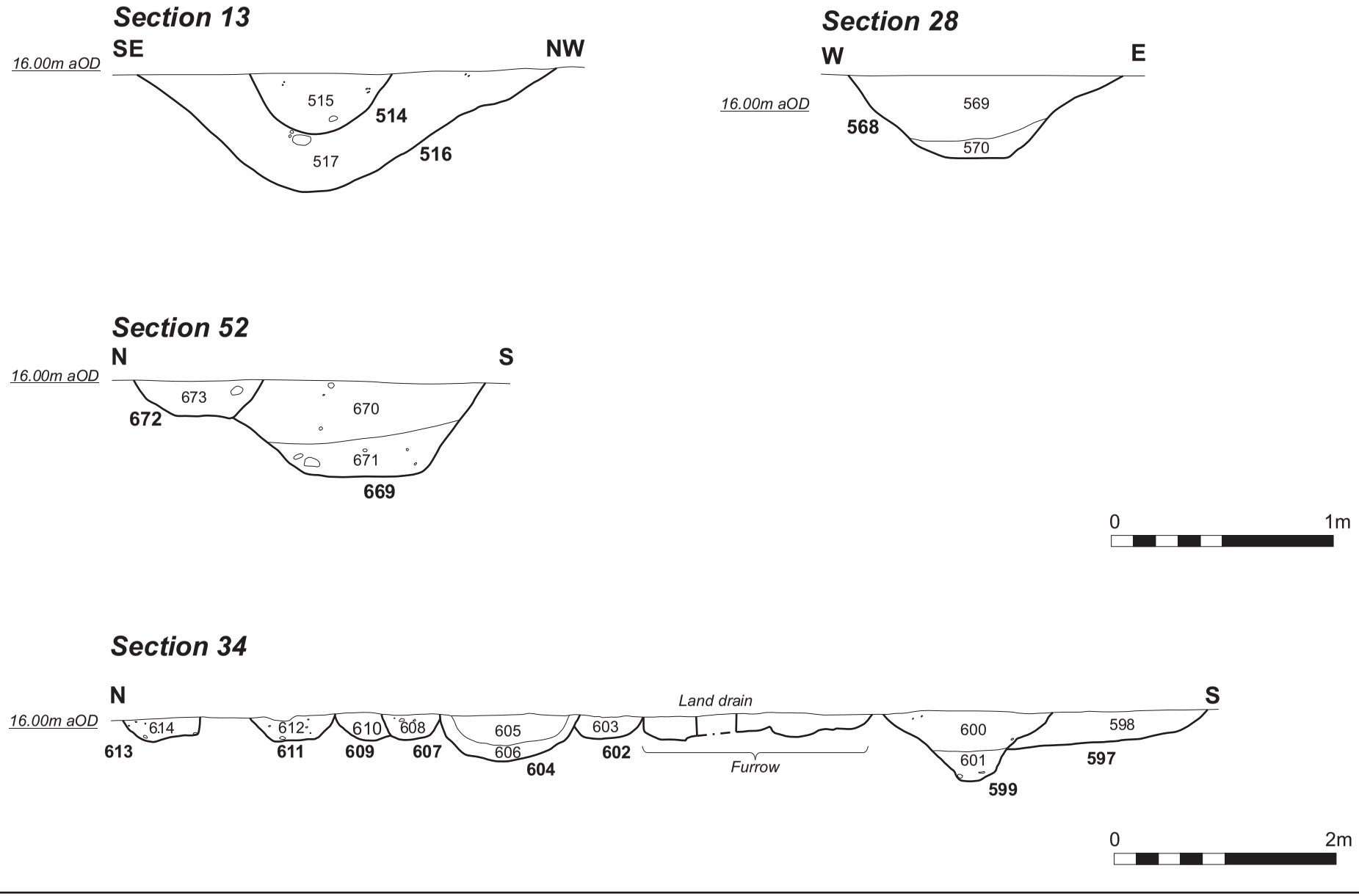
Adjoining the north-eastern corner of the enclosure was a ditch [597/592/711], aligned east to west with a width of up to 2.75m (Fig 9, Section 34). It cut the eastern end of the boundary ditch associated with E1 and terminated towards the eastern corner of the site, although a branch of this feature may have turned to the north-east where an associated ditch [588] was detected among the confused mass of later intercutting features (Fig 5).

Later ditch systems

A series of sinuous, intercutting Roman ditches and gullies aligned east to west across the centre of the site, appeared to represent the successive re-cutting of a boundary ditch system, which followed the natural fall of the land. (Figs 5 & 9, Section 34). Their alignment was mirrored, and often truncated by later furrows and field drains – probably the origin of the few intrusive sherds of medieval pottery found in the Roman features.

Scales 1:25 and 1:50

Sections of Roman ditch systems (S13, 28, 34 & 52) Fig 9



Roman boundary ditches (DS1 and DS2), looking east Fig 10

Two distinct ditch systems were identified (DS1 and DS2) each comprising varying lengths of both ditch and gully (Fig 10). Towards the western edge of the site the principal ditch [516] of southernmost alignment (DS1) was 1.85m wide 0.55m deep and had a fill of sandy clay (517) (Fig 9, Section 13). A much smaller gully [514], 0.65m wide and 0.25m deep, had been cut into this fill. However, to the east the main ditch [619] did not appear to have been re-cut (Fig 7, Section 50). Pottery spanning the 1st and 2nd centuries was recovered from the ditch fills. Further to the east the principal ditch had split into two narrower gullies [602/604] (Fig 9, Section 34).

Several sections were excavated through the principal ditch of the northern ditch series (DS2) whose width was typically 0.95m wide and depth 0.30m (Figs 5 and 7, Section 50). As previously mentioned, sherds of residual Iron Age pottery were present in the fills of this ditch, along with Roman fabrics and intrusive medieval wares. Like DS1, the line of the main ditch sub-divided into numerous smaller gullies [607/609/611/613] at its eastern end (Fig 9, Section 34).

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Worked flint by Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

Nine pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from Roman features. The flint comprised six flakes, of which two were broken and two blades. Additionally an end scraper fashioned on a flake was found. It had abrupt retouch on the concave distal end. The worked flint is listed in Table 1.

The condition of the assemblage was good. The flints showed little post-depositional edge damage, comprising the occasional edge nicks. Patination was present on a small proportion of the assemblage apparent as a mottled white discolouration of the surface.

The raw material is a vitreous flint of light to dark coloured greys and browns. There is also a small component of a more opaque brown flint. Cortex is present on the dorsal surface on four pieces and typically off-white or light brown in colour with a generally smooth, rolled and weathered surface. The raw material was likely to have been derived from local gravel deposits.

The technological characteristics of the assemblage are broadly Neolithic to Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

Table 1: Summary of worked flint

Fill/cut	Sf	Type	Portion	Tool	Period	Patination	Comments
623/		Flake	Whole			slight	edge damage
549/		Flake	Proximal				broad striking platform
545/		Flake	Medial			slight	overshot termination
549/	2	Flake	Proximal				debitage
661/	4	Flake	Whole				wide striking platform, hinge termination
539/		Blade	Whole				
594/	10	Flake	Whole	Scraper, end	Neolithic	medium	abrupt retouch on convex distal end
713/	14	Flake	Whole				debitage
591/	9	Blade	Whole			slight	post-depositional edge damage

5.2 Iron Age and Roman pottery by Jane Timby

Introduction and methodology

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 1045 sherds of pottery weighing *c*7.77kg, with 5.4 estimated vessel equivalents (EVEs) dating to the Iron Age and Roman periods. A small quantity of medieval and post-medieval pottery is not discussed further, other than for dating evidence.

Overall the assemblage is quite poorly preserved with well-fragmented sherds, many with abraded edges. The overall average sherd weight is just 7.4g which is low. Despite this is it clear that there are several instances of multiple sherds from single vessels. The number of featured sherds is also limited which means that diagnostic sherds to enable close dating are very sparse. Most of the pottery was recovered from the sequence of ditches crossing the site.

The assemblage was sorted macroscopically into fabric groups based on the principal inclusions present in the clay, the frequency and grade of the inclusions and the firing

colour. The fabric codes adopted follow the system recommended by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research group (PCRG 1997). For the Roman wares, named or known regional or continental types are classified using the National Roman fabric reference collection (Tomber and Dore 1998); other more local wares are coded more generically. The entire assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces where joins could be made. In addition rims were measured for diameter and percentage present for the estimation of vessel equivalents (EVE). The resulting data was entered onto an MS Excel spreadsheet a copy of which is deposited with the site archive. A quantified summary of the wares present is held in archive. In the following report the assemblage is described by fabric and form for each main defined period followed by a discussion of the assemblage in terms of the site.

Description of fabrics and form

The assemblage comprises a mixture of handmade and wheelmade forms largely recovered from a series of ditches and a small number of other negative features on the site. Most of the individual cuts produced quite small assemblages of material but cumulatively some 10 features produced in excess of 50 sherds. The assemblage is quite a diverse one with a large range of fabrics and firing colours typical of the transitional period from the later prehistoric period into the early Roman period before wares started to become more standardised in terms of fabrics, forms and firing technology.

Mid-later Iron Age

Eleven fabrics of potential mid-late Iron Age date were defined on the basis of the main inclusions present which fall into five main groups: organic, flint, calcareous, sandy and grog. There are only 75 sherds in total, weighing 511 g and within these only three rims, two from the same feature. Many of the pieces are quite small and all the sherds are plain with most showing little evidence of a detectable surface finish. Organic-tempered wares dominate the group variously occurring with quartz sand, grog and limestone and collectively accounting for 45.9% by count. Ditch [741] produced 13 sherds of a fine sandy ware containing sparse limestone and organic material from a single vessel with a smoothed surface. Also present are a few calcined flint-tempered sherds and single sherds with flint and grog and flint, limestone and sandstone. Four sherds have a calcareous paste with inclusions of fossil shell and other fossiliferous detritus and limestone. This group includes one rim with shallow fingertip impressions around the outer edge of the rim. The sandy wares account for 27% overall. The second rim fragment came from the sandy ware group and is a simple rounded undifferentiated rim with a finger-tipped top surface.

Flint-tempering is probably typical of the pre- and earlier Iron Age in the area and three of the four sherds recorded came from a furrow. Sandy fabrics show an increased presence in the middle-late Iron Age. Similarly shelly and organic-tempered fabrics seem to be more common from this time (3rd-1st century BC) with broadly comparable fabrics groups being recorded from Wardy Hill (Hill and Horne 2003) and West Fen Road, Ely (Percival 2005). The range of fabrics recorded here is also encapsulated in the much larger group of Iron Age material from the nearby site at Unit D of the Business Park, Lancaster Way (McSloy 2009). At this latter site organic wares account for 41.5% by count compared with 45.9% from the present assemblage here with the flint and calcareous wares similarly forming minor components. It is suggested that the latter comes from a source from outside the immediate locality (ibid, 9). The group here does not include any scored ware; a feature of many East Midlands later Iron Age assembles but this may be a reflection of the small size. Finger-tipping of rims an be paralleled with the assemblage from Haddenham V dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC where

middle Iron Age styles continue in use throughout the later Iron Age and in some cases into the early Roman period (Hill and Braddock 2006, 190).

The grog-tempered wares, which account for just over half the group, could date from the end of the 1st century BC through into the early Roman period. The only featured sherd is a jar rim in grey grogged ware.

Description of later prehistoric fabrics

Flint-tempered (FL): Hard sandy ware, mid to dark brown in colour with a black core. Sparse to common frequency of well-sorted rounded quartz and a sparse scatter of angular calcined flint up to 3 mm and finer.

Flint and grog / clay pellets (FLGR): Single sherd with calcined flint and sub-angular grog / clay pellets.

Flint and limestone (FLLI): A single small sherd with inclusions of flint and limestone and rare sandstone.

Organic and grog / clay pellets (ORGR): Sand textured ware with sparse organic inclusion and rare grog.

Organic and limestone (ORLI): Sandy with sparse organic and rare limestone.

Sandy wares (SA): Red-brown with a black core. A sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted, mainly iron-stained quartz; the larger grains up to 0.5 mm in size, mainly finer.

Sandy with organic (SAOR): Fine sandy ware with a smooth surface and a sparse frequency of linear voids from organic matter and rare limestone.

Fossil shell and limestone (SHLI): Brown or black with a smooth soapy feel. Moderate to common frequency of crushed fossil shell and other fossiliferous detritus and variable amounts of limestone. Inclusions up to 2-3 mm often set quite randomly.

Grog-tempered (GR): Light brown, brown or black ware with a waxy feel, The paste contains a sparse to common frequency of sub-angular grog, sparse sand and rare flint.

Sandy with grog (GRSA): Red-brown surfaces ware with a dark grey core, Sandy textured with rare grog and white calcareous inclusions 1 mm and less in size. A moderate frequency of well-sorted, rounded quartz, several iron-stained. Variants black ware with grog (BWGR); grey ware with grog (GYGR)

Oxidised with grog (OXGR): Thin walled orange ware with a grey inner core. Smooth soapy texture with sparse fine grog.

Roman

The Roman assemblage comprises some 957 sherds weighing 8273g. Continental imports are limited to sherds of South Gaulish and Central Gaulish samian and the only recognisable regional import is a single Dorset black-burnished ware bowl (Fig 11, 6). Many of the fabrics are represented by bodysherds only. Overall jars dominate the assemblage accounting for 79.3% eves. The remaining assemblage comprises 3.1% cups; 4% bowls. 1.5% platter and 12% beakers. There are no specialist wares such as mortaria or transport containers such as amphorae present.

Description of fabrics and associated forms

South Gaulish samian (LGF SA) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 28). A single small sherd from a cup from ditch [524].

Central Gaulish samian (Lezoux) (LEZ SA) (ibid, 32). Nine sherds from four contexts. Vessels include a sherd of a decorated bowl Drag 37, and three stamps from cups or small bowls. Two sherds from a heavily burnt Drag 27 cup, probably Lezoux, came from

ditch [689]. This has a complete but illegible stamp. A second incomplete stamp from ditch [736] reads...]ALV; whilst a third stamp from ditch [655], probably a Drag 35/36 reads AT…IVS FE. This may be the potter ATTIUS ii who probably worked at Lezoux in the period AD 135-60 (Hartley and Dickinson 2008, 319).

Central Gaulish samian (Les Martres de Veyre) (LMV SA) (ibid 30). A single sherd from a Drag 27 cup probably of this fabric came from pit [540].

Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1) (ibid 127). A rim and bodysherd from a flat rim bowl with a burnished line lattice decoration came from ditch [669] (Fig 11, 6). This form is typical of the mid-late 2nd century.

Local wares

Grey sandy ware with flint (GYSAFL): Grey-black ware with a red-brown or grey core. Sparse to moderate frequency of fine quartz and rare white flint 0.5mm and less in size.

Oxidised sandy with flint (OXSAFL). Oxidised version of GYSAFL. Later Iron Age or early Roman.

Buff- coloured sandy ware (BUFF): Just two sherds one very fine-textured; the other with a powdery, sandy texture. The finer one is a three-rib handle from a flagon.

Black ware (BW1): Black surfaces ware with a red or sandwich grey-brown core. Sparse to moderate frequency of fine quartz sand. Featured sherds are largely from wheel-made everted rim jars with simple, rolled (Fig 11, 2) or folded-over rims. Handmade storage jars also occur as do beakers and one platter copying the imported Cam 14 form. Decoration includes rouletted chevrons, comb-impressed chevrons and incised wavy lines. This is the commonest fabric in the group accounting for 32.6% of the Roman assemblage intimating a moderately local source.

Black ware (BW2): Black with a brown-orange interior. Very sandy texture. Moderate to common frequency of fine well-sorted rounded quartz and occasional fine calcareous grains and iron.

Fine black ware (BWF): Black surfaces ware with a grey core. Laminar fracture. Very smooth, fine fabric with no visible inclusions. The only sherds appear to come from a single bowl from pit [660] with rouletted ‘London style’ decoration. Such vessels were probably produced in the Lower Nene Valley production centres (cf Perrin 1999, 106) in the second quarter of the 2nd century.

Fine brown ware (BWNF): A fine, smooth pale brown ware. No visible inclusions.

Sandy micaceous black ware (BWSYMIC): A sandy textured micaceous black ware.

Grey-brown sandy (GY1): Variable grey, grey-brown to orange ware often with a grey core. The paste contains a moderate frequency of fine mainly iron-stained quartz with rare rounded calcareous pellets up to 4 mm, very occasional flint and some fine mica. Hard sandy texture. Used to make handmade and wheel-made vessels, this is the second commonest ware present accounting for 28.6% by sherd count. The handmade vessels are largely storage jars and occasionally bowls (Fig 11, 4) whilst the wheel made vessels are largely everted or flared rim jars (Fig 11, 5). One base from ditch [660] has a post-firing hole drilled through from the exterior.

Fine grey sandy (GY2): Well fired, light textured fabric, grey sometimes with orange mottling. Sandy feel but few visible inclusions.

Grey sandy (GY3): Grey fired ware with a common frequency of well-sorted fine quartz with facets catching the light and comprising clear and opaque grains. Occasional iron and calcareous grains.

Blue-grey fine sandy (GY4): Blue-grey, hard, fine sandy ware with no visible inclusions. At x20 sparse fine rounded quartz and mica are visible.

Light blue-grey, hard, sandy (GY5): A light blue grey ware with darker margins. Well fired with a very sandy texture with some grains erupting from the surface. A sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted, rounded quartz, mainly white or colourless grains up to 1 mm and rare clay pellets.

Fine grey ware (GYF): Very fine, slightly powdery ware. No visible inclusions.

Fine grey micaceous (GYFMIC): Fine textured very finely micaceous grey sandy ware. The sherds come from a beaker with a short everted rim and decorated with panels of barbotine dots (Fig 11, 3). Similar forms have been found associated with the Cherry Hinton kilns (cf Evans 1990, fig 4.6) but the fabric is more likely to be from another source.

Oxidised sandy with argillaceous grains (OX1): Brownish orange with a grey core. The paste contains a moderate frequency of ill-sorted, dark coloured quartz sand with a light scatter of rounded brown argillaceous inclusions 1-2 mm in size and rare white calcareous grains.

Oxidised sandy with iron (OX2): Oxidised orange to orange-brown with a grey core. The paste contains a common frequency of ill-sorted, rounded quartz sand with a scatter of rounded iron grains. Rare inclusions of flint and shell / calcareous grains also occur. Used to make handmade vessels mainly large storage jars sometime with a single line of impressed or rouletted decoration. Some sherds are finished with horizontal combing.

Oxidised sandy (OX3). As GY3 but with a brown or orange surface and a grey inner core.

Micaceous oxidised ware (OXMIC): Fine sandy ware with frequent mica. Featured sherds include a beaker with barbotine ring decoration.

White-slipped oxidised ware (WSOX): Single fine oxidised sandy ware with traces of a white slip.

White sandy ware (WW): Single white sandy ware.

Discussion

Three postholes in the northern corner of the site yielded sherds of Iron Age pottery, [595], [639] and [651]. The ditch nearest to this area, ditch D1, although stratigraphically later in the overall site sequence, produced some 22 handmade, residual Iron Age sherds. Fabrics present include SA, SHLI, SAORLI and GRSA. The two finger-tipped rims came from this ditch which probably broadly dates to the 2nd-1st century BC. This suggests that the focus of the pre-Roman settlement may lie to the north.

The features identified as stratigraphically the earliest, (E1 and associated), have all produced assemblages comprising a mixture of handmade and wheel-made wares of early Roman date. Ditch [508/512/518] produced 11 unfeatured sherds with fabrics OXIDF, GY1, OXID, SA and OXGR. Similar wares came from [701/703] with the addition of BW1 and OX2. Ditch [107/623] contained 37 sherds amongst which was a short everted rim, micaceous, oxidised, beaker and a white-slipped oxidised sherd. The former suggests a Flavio-Trajanic date. A further small group of seven sherds came from [695]. Gully [736] yielded a moderately large group of 237 sherds which includes a single sherd of Central Gaulish samian, several sherds from a BW1 jar (Fig. 00.3) and from decorated black fine ware bowl and sherds of a barbotine dot decorated fine grey ware beaker (Fig 11, 4) all suggesting in the early 2nd century.

The second phase of ditches (E2 and associated) produced 90 sherds from the north-south arm [534/552/568/689/689/699/707] and 16 sherds from the east-west arm [206/592/597/711]. The average sherd weight of the latter was just 5.5g compared to 15g for the former. The range of fabrics and forms are almost indistinguishable from the first phase ditches with a mixture of wheel-made and handmade sherds and the only

featured sherds coming from jars including storage jar. A burnt Drag 27 stamped samian cup came from [689] of 2nd-century date. Pit [540] also attributed to this phase produced 36 sherds amongst which was a further sherd of early 2nd century samian and an everted rim beaker.

Ditch [560/655] produced a large group of 99 moderately well-preserved sherds with an average sherd weight of 14.7g. Within this group is a stamped samian base provisionally dated AD 130-60.

The sequence of parallel ditches crossing the north end of the site on an east-west axis (DS1 and DS2) also produced very similar pottery to the earlier ditch fills suggesting a moderately rapid change in the landscape layout in the later 1st and 2nd centuries AD with a fair amount of residual material incorporated into the fills. The outermost ditch as noted above produced later prehistoric pottery only. Ditch [611] contained just seven sherds include a grey ware storage jar with a cordon at the base of the neck. Ditch [573] produced a very small crumb of pot/fired clay. Ditches [724], [584] and [590/599] were similarly low in finds with just four very small sherds, one of Iron Age date from the former, two sherds from [584] and nine small sherds from the latter. At the western end of these linears substantially more material was recovered with some 152 sherds from [514/516/520/619/709] with a slightly higher average weight of 9.2g. This includes Roman wheel-made wares, 1st-century handmade wares, two sherds of 2nd-century Central Gaulish samian (and two glazed medieval pieces).

The ditch on the eastern edge of the site (D1) produced 52 unfeatured sherds with an average sherd weight of 3g. This includes a small scrap of South Gaulish samian which is probably residual. Ditch [669] (Phase 4) in the southern corner produced a large assemblage of 153 sherds but well fragmented with an average sherd weight of just 3.5g. This includes the only imported DOR BB1 vessel (Fig 11, 6), three sherds of Central Gaulish samian and a grey ware jar with a carinated shoulder (Fig 11, 4) which all suggest an abandonment date in the second half of the 2nd century.

In conclusion, the pottery suggests ongoing activity in the area from the mid-later Iron Age through to the mid to later 2nd century. Most of the features excavated appear to date to the early Roman period and indicate a rapid reorganisation of the landscape. The nature of the pottery does not allow these to be separated chronologically and it has to be assumed that there is a fair level of residual material present. The Iron Age wares suggest a focus of activity to the north with the later settlement to the south. The site excavated at Unit D also showed a higher percentage of Iron Age wares over Roman (McSloy 2009). Although there are a small number of sherds of samian present, this only account for just over 1.1% of the assemblage, a typical figure for a rural settlement. The absence of other specialist wares and fine wares indicate a moderately low status. Similarly the limited vessel repertoire and the dominance of jars with a number of storage jars would be typical of such a site. The absence of Nene Valley colour-coated wares also emphasises the likelihood that the area had fallen out of use in the second half of the 2nd century.

Catalogue of illustrated Roman pottery (Fig 11)

1 Handmade flaring rim storage jar. Fabric: OXSAFL. Ditch [552]/(553). Phase 1

2 Several joining sherds from a wheel-made cordoned necked jar. Fabric: BW1. Ditch [736]/(737). Phase 1

3 Everted rim globular beaker decorated with panels of barbotine dots. Fabric: GYFMIC. Ditch [660]/(661). Phase 1

4 Black to grey-brown, wheel-made everted rim carinated bowl. Fabric: BW1. Ditch [619]/(620). Phase 3

5 Everted rim jar with a high shoulder carination. Fabric: GY1. Primary fill ditch [669]/(671). Phase 4

6 Rim and joining bodysherd from a flat-rim bowl. Decorated with a burnished line lattice on the exterior. Fabric: DOR BB1. Ditch [669]/(670). Phase 4

5.3 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

A tile body sherd, 13mm thick and weighing 12g, made from a fine silty pink fabric, came from furrow (213).

A possible tessera, measuring 12x12x12mm, is made from a white stone, perhaps limestone, from fill (696) ditch [695].

The fired clay comprises 23 fragments, weighing 300g. Fourteen fragments of very hard fine white and pink clay, consisting of rounded lumps with sharp irregular breakages, come from fill (505) of gully [504], fill (511) of ditch [510/695] and one fragment from fill (629) of ditch [628]. These have been subject to intense heat. From fill (662), ditch [660] come three fragments of dark red-brown sandy clay with frequent small calcareous inclusions and a smooth brown surface. These could be structural debris. Six small irregularly-shaped fragments, fill (549) from pit [548], are made from fine hard brown but friable clay.

5.4 Other Roman finds by Pat Chapman

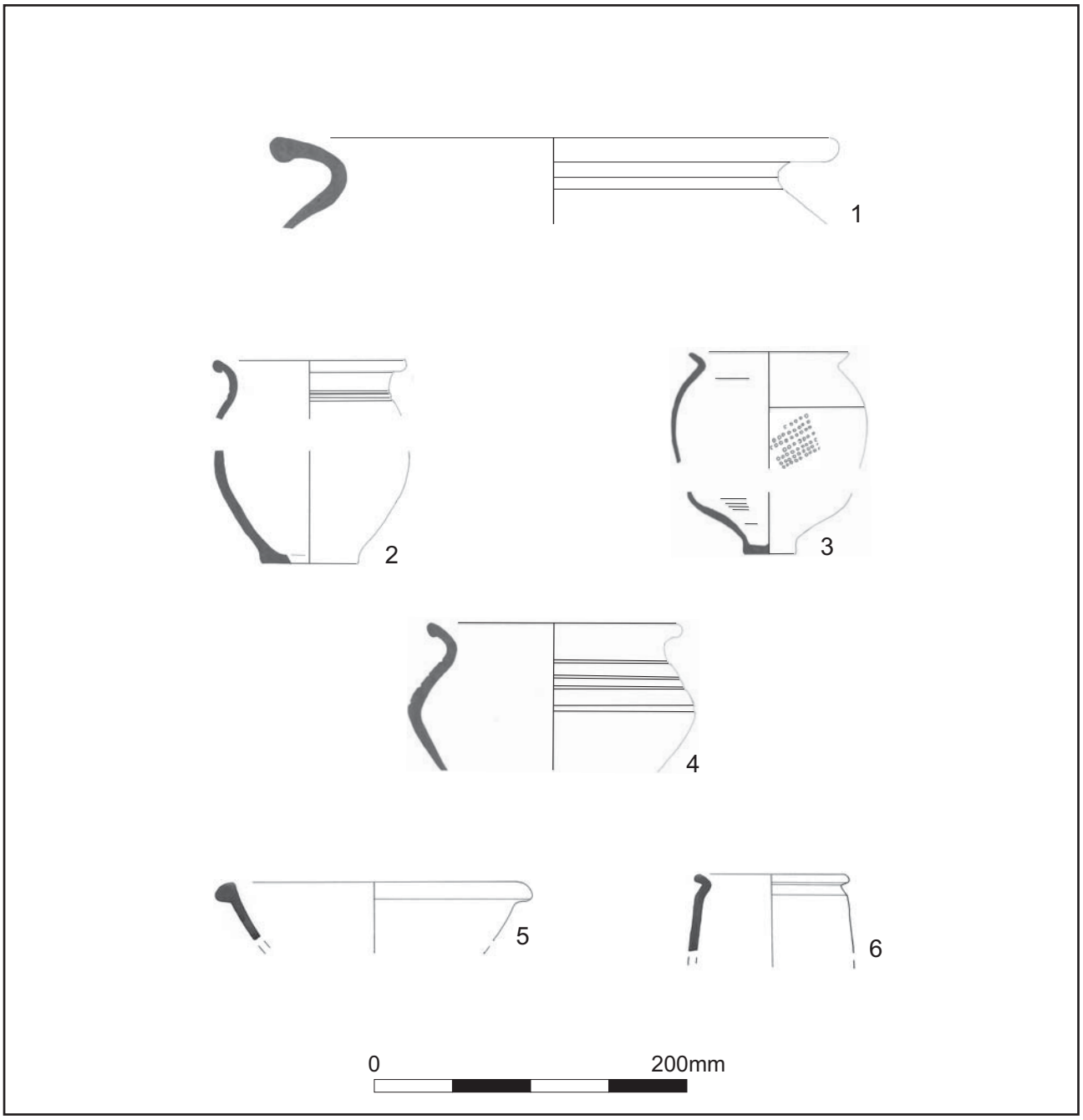
There are eight individual finds comprising six nails, lead sheet and worked bone (Table 2). The six iron nails are incomplete, of differing sizes, but all with a square section. The four incomplete nails from fill (515) of ditch [517] are small and were probably for furniture and general household use. A larger nail, from fill (690) of ditch [689] which had had the head hammered over at right angles, and a shank from fill (725), gully [724], would have been for structural use.

There are four small twisted fragments of lead sheet, less than 1mm thick, from fill (735) of ditch [734].

The worked bone is a small ring, 3mm wide, with an external diameter of 9mm and an internal diameter of 6mm. The outer surface is abraded and the ends show no signs of wear. It is possibly from the tibia of an ovicaprid (sheep/goat) (Karen Deighton pers comm).

Table 2: Roman finds

Context/feature, type	SF no	Description
511 / 510, ditch	5	Bone ring, 9mm external diameter
515 / 517, ditch	6	Iron nail, 25mm long, end missing Iron nail, 13mm long, head missing
	7	Iron nail, 27mm long, head missing Iron tack, 13mm long, end curved
690 / 689, ditch	11	Iron nail, 53mm long, head bent
725 / 724, ditch	15	Iron nail, 45mm long, head missing
735 / 734, ditch	16	Lead, less than 1mm thick



Scale 1:4 (A4)

Roman pottery Fig 11

5.5 Metalworking debris by Andy Chapman

There is a small quantity, 422g, of ferrous slags from ironworking. Small quantities of undiagnostic ferrous slag came from the fills of ditch [530], 2g; ditch [655], 55g and ditch [736], 45g, quite widely scattered across the site. The only item of interest is a large piece of vitrified smelting furnace or smithing hearth lining, weighing 320g, from the fill (690) of ditch [689]. It has a fluid, concave internal surface and had formed against a curving furnace/hearth wall immediately below the blowing hole. This piece alone indicates that ironworking was being carried out on the site, and the low level of material recovered would suggest that this was secondary smithing rather than smelting.

5.6 Medieval and post-medieval finds by Pat Chapman

One sherd of roof tile, at least 10mm thick and weighing 10g, made from very hard fine orange-brown clay with calcareous inclusions, came from a furrow.

There are three thimbles from the car park area. They are all domed and made of copper alloy. Thimble 1, 19mm high, has large slightly oval indentations, or holes, and has a turned rim, indicating that it is no earlier than *c*1800AD. The other two thimbles have no rim; Thimble 2 is 21mm high with a diameter of *c*15mm, and is very worn, with the holes barely visible. Thimble 3, also 21mm high, has very fine holes on the top 11mm. All the holes are machine made, so thimbles 2 and 3 are no earlier than the 17th century in date (Holmes 1988).

The finds from metal detecting comprised modern copper alloy and iron debris such as nails, bolts, nuts, washers, wire fragments, a hook, and shotgun remains. These were noted but not retained.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 Animal bone by Karen Deighton

A total of 4.6kg (1 archive box) of animal bone was collected by hand from a range of contexts during the course of excavation.

This material was analysed to determine the level of preservation and the taxa present. The contribution to the understanding of the economy, status and function of the site was also considered.

Method

The material was sorted into recordable and non-recordable fragments, with quantification following Halstead after Watson (1979) and using minimum anatomical element (Min AU). The following were recorded for each element: context, anatomical element, taxa, proximal fusion, distal fusion, side, preservation, fragmentation, modification, butchery evidence and sex (where appropriate). Vertebra and ribs (with articulating ends) were counted and noted as small or large ungulate but not included in quantification.

Epiphyseal fusion follows Silver (1969); ovicaprid teeth were aged after Payne (1973), cattle after Halstead (1985) and pigs after Bull and Payne (1982). Recognition of butchery is after Binford (1981).

Bone from sieved samples was also examined. Sieve mesh sizes were1mm, 2mm and 3.4mm.

Results

Preservation
Fragmentation, mostly the result of old breaks, varied from moderate to heavy with context as did abrasion. Five bone fragments showed evidence of canid gnawing which attests to the presence of dogs/foxes at the site. No examples of butchery were noted. The absence of burning suggests that it was not a preferred method of disposal.

Taxa
The taxa present are listed in Table 3 and toothwear and fusion are catalogued in Tables 4 & 5. Unfortunately the tooth data (which is more reliable and more exact than epiphyseal fusion data) is too sparse to draw any conclusions about husbandry patterns. Fusion data is also too limited for any valid statements to be made.

Sieved material

A total of 20.4g of bone fragments were collected from 4 sieved samples (contexts 549,621,661 and 671). Unfortunately none of this material could be identified due to heavy fragmentation.

Table 3: Taxa by context

Cut/fill	Feature	Cattle	Sheep/ goat	Pig	Dog	Horse	Large ungulate	Total
106/107	ditch	--	--	1	--	--	--	**1**
113	furrow	--	--	--	--	1	--	**1**
407/408	Pit	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
409/410	ditch	1	--	--	--	1	--	**2**
409/411	ditch	-	--	--	--	1	--	**1**
512/513	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
514/515	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
516/517	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
334/535	ditch	--	1	--	--	--	--	**1**
548/549	pit	--		--	--	--	1	**1**
560/562	ditch	--	1	--	--	1	--	**2**
565/566	pit	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
588/589	ditch	--	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
597/598	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
599/600	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
619/620	ditch	--	--	--	--	1	--	**1**
619/621	ditch	--	1	--	--	1	--	**2**
655/656	ditch	1	1	--	1	--	--	**3**
660/662	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
669/671	ditch	1	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
711/713	ditch	--	--	1	--	1	--	**2**
Total		**11**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**8**	**1**	**27**

Ageing data

Table 4: Toothwear

Fill /cut	Taxon	Element	Side	Stage	Age
410/	cattle	mandible	left	I	senile
535/	Sheep/goat	mandible	left	E	2-3years
598/	cattle	Mandible	left	C	8-18mths
662/	cattle	Mandible	left	C	8-18mths

Table 5: Fusion

Fill/cut	Taxon	Element	Fused/unfused	Age approx
408/	cattle	scapula	fused	Over 7-10mths
410/	horse	Radius(proximal)	fused	Over 15-18mths
411/	horse	Radius(distal)	fused	Over 3 years
656/	cattle	Humerus(proximal)	fusing	Over 3.5-4years
656/	Dog	Humerus(distal)	fused	Over 8-9mths
713/	horse	Radius (complete)	fused	0ver 3.5years

Discussion

The assemblage consists of a small range of common domesticates and cattle appears to be the dominant species followed by horse. The taxa are those expected for the Iron Age and Roman periods. Cattle were used for meat, milk, traction, horn and hides during these periods. Sheep were used for meat, wool and sometimes milk. Pig was used for meat only but all body parts could be eaten and the animals could be fed on domestic waste. Horses were used for transport, meat and served as status symbols. Dogs had many uses such as hunting, guarding, herding, pest control and could have also been present as feral animals and dog fur was utilised. Although dog bone is scarce (only 1 element) their presence is also attested by canid gnawing.

The mixed nature of the material involved, in terms of both taxa and anatomical elements present, suggests the genesis of the assemblage to be kitchen or butchery waste. Unfortunately body part analysis could not be undertaken, due to the paucity of suitable material, to distinguish between the two.

Comparisons with earlier work at Lancaster Way Business Park are tentative and inconclusive due to the small amount of data involved. A similar range of taxa is seen but dog is absent. Cattle are again the dominant taxa but horse is replaced with sheep/goat as the second most abundant. Comparisons with other sites are of very limited value due to the scarcity of material.

6.2 Charred plant remains and molluscs by Karen Deighton

Four bulk soil samples were collected. These were analysed to determine the presence, nature and preservation of ecofacts (Table 6). Their contribution to the understanding of the environment and economy of the site was also considered

Method

The samples were processed using a siraf tank fitted with a 250micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots and residues were dried. The flots were sorted with the aid of a binocular microscope (10x magnification). Residues were dry sieved (3.4mm, 1mm) and the 3.4mm retent sorted by eye. The 1mm retent was scanned using a microscope.

Charred seeds and grains were identified with the aid of the author's small reference collection and Jacomet (2006). Molluscs were identified with the aid of Kerney and Cameron (1994).

Results

Preservation

Preservation of plant remains was solely by charring. Fragmentation was fairly high as was surface abrasion which adversely affected identification.

Discussion

Assessment has shown a small range of ecofacts to be present which provide limited information on the environment and economy of the site.

The presence of charred plant material in samples 3 and 4 seems to be "background" that is material which is washed or blown into features from activities taking place elsewhere. The dominance of charred cereal grain in sample 5 suggests its origin to be material accidently burned during final preparation for consumption or storage. In turn this suggests a small range of cereals were processed and used at the site. Environmental information from molluscs is limited due to the fact only one sample

produced enough data for any statements to be made. Information is therefore restricted to the fact that the dominance of freshwater molluscs in sample 3 suggests ditch 619 to have contained standing water for most of the year. Comparisons with other sites are difficult due to the small amount of material available. However it can be noted that a similar range of cereal taxa were seen from previous work at Lancaster Way Business Park.

Table 6: Ecofacts by sample and context

Cut/fill	548/549	619/621	660/661	669/671
Sample	2	3	4	5
Feature type	Pit	ditch	ditch	ditch
Date	Roman	Roman	Roman	Roman
Volume (litres)	40	40	40	40
Charcoal (no. of fragments)	100	30	30	--
Spelt(grains) *T. spelta*	9	--	1	--
Spelt(chaff) *T. spelta*	17	--	3	--
Hulled barley *H. vulgare*	7	--	5	--
Naked barley *H. vulgare* var.nudum	10	--	--	--
Wheat/barley Triticum/Hordeum	153	4	31	--
Cereal indet		5	--	--
pulse	2	--	--	--
Sheep sorrel *Rumex acetocella*	1	--	--	--
Dock family Rumex sp	1	--	**--**	--
indet	1	--	--	--
Total charred grain	**200**	**9**	**40**	**--**
Terrestrial Molluscs				
Cepaea nemoralis	--	15	2	--
Vallonia excentrica	9			--
Vallonia costarta	--	97	20	--
Cochiopa lubrica	--	8	1	--
Vertigo pygmaea	3	9	--	**--**
Clausilla bidentata	--	2	--	--
Carychium sp	--	1	--	--
indet	--	150	21	3
Freshwater molluscs	**--**	--	--	--
Galba truncatula	*1*	*121*	*7*	--
Radix sp	--	10	--	--
Planorbis sp	1	105	3	**--**
Total molluscs	**14**	**518**	**54**	**3**

7 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the recent archaeological investigation at 48 Lancaster Way Business Park add to the growing body of evidence for prehistoric and Roman exploitation of the Isle of Ely. Late Iron Age activity was represented by a small group of pits, although other features of this date could have been truncated by the later, more substantial Roman features. Context for these features is provided by the Iron Age settlement discovered a short distance to the east of the current site, at Unit D (Fig 2). Mid to late Iron Age features were also investigated adjacent to the site when a service trench was excavated along Wellington Road (Hancock 2006).

The main focus of activity, however, falls within the early Roman period. The successive enclosures and associated boundary ditches span the 1st and first half of the 2nd centuries AD. The elements revealed by the excavation are peripheral to a focus of activity lying to the immediate south, beneath the existing Michell Instruments building. Large quantities of pottery were collected by a site engineer and he also compiled a sketch plan showing the numerous features revealed by the groundworks, which included linear ditches, curvilinear ditches (perhaps ring ditches surrounding roundhouses), and also possible ovens or kilns.

The pottery distribution for the current site also suggests that the focal point of activity lies to the south; the majority of the material, and most of the larger, less abraded sherds, came from features in the southern part of the site, close to the existing building.

However, despite the peripheral and partial nature of the site, evidence for some of the activities taking place in the early Roman period was produced. This includes evidence for small scale iron smithing, cereal processing and the exploitation of cattle and horses.

The site appears to have been abandoned by the second half of the 2nd century AD.

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General view of the Lancaster Way Business park, looking north
(from http://www.cheffins.co.uk)

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