



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Iron Age and Roman Occupation  
at Deeping St. James Road, Northborough,  
Peterborough  
October-November 2006



Jason Clarke

April 2007

Report 07/05

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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## OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>									
Project title	Iron Age and Roman occupation at Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough								
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out excavations on land just to the north of Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough, on behalf of Parker and Sons Ltd. Two areas were excavated and revealed evidence of occupation from the Neolithic to the Roman period including polished stone axe from Cumbria, flints, a pit group and a Romano-British field system.								
Project type	Excavation								
Previous work	Desk- based assessment, aerial photograph interpretation and trial evaluation, Northamptonshire Archaeology 2006.								
Future work	None								
Monument type and period	Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman								
Significant finds	Group VI stone polished Axe, Neolithic flint work Iron Age and Roman Pottery.								
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>									
County	Peterborough								
Site address	Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough								
Easting Northing	SP72080 59240								
Area	1214 sqm								
Height OD	6.25 m AOD								
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>									
Project brief originator	Historic and Natural Environment Team, Environment and Heritage Services, Peterborough City Council								
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology								
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke								
Project Manager	Adam Yates								
Sponsor or funding body	Parker and Sons Ltd								
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>									
Start date	01/10/06								
End date	22/11/06								
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Location (Accession no.)</th> <th>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc) Pottery, flint, animal bone, metalwork</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Physical</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Paper</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Digital</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Location (Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc) Pottery, flint, animal bone, metalwork	Physical		Paper		Digital	
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Paper									
Digital									
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>									
Title	Iron Age and Roman occupation at Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough.								
Serial title & volume	07/05								
Author(s)	Jason Clarke								
Page numbers									
Date	March 2007								

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# IRON AGE AND ROMAN OCCUPATION AT DEEPING ST. JAMES ROAD, NORTHBOROUGH, PETERBOROUGH

## *Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological mitigation, comprising two open areas of excavation on land at Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough, on behalf of M. Parker & Sons Ltd. Trial trenching had revealed the presence of ditches and postholes of Roman date. Neolithic activity comprised a pit containing a Group VI polished stone axe from the Cumbrian fells. A possible droveway and rows of large but shallow pits cut into the gravels, which may reflect industrial activity in the Iron Age. A series of intercutting ditches and post holes of Roman date and postholes were revealed confirming the presence of Roman field systems and settlement activity. These were overlain by a buried soil of Roman date. A ring ditch cutting a Roman buried soil level, is probably a Romano-British agricultural structure such as a hay or corn stack.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) undertook an archaeological excavation on behalf of M. Parker and Sons Ltd on land proposed for housing at Deeping St. James Road, Northborough, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (Fig 1; NGF TF 1499 0856). Earlier trial trenching on the site by NA (Jones and Foard-Colby 2006) had confirmed the presence Roman features. The excavation was undertaken according to a specification (Yates 2006), approved by Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (PCCAS).

The work was undertaken as to mitigate the impact of development on the site comprising of the construction of 23 house plots and associated infrastructure (06/000431/FUL). Ben Robinson on behalf of PCCAS monitored the work.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Archaeological Background**

The site is located within the historic ‘delta’ of the River Welland, an area rich in archaeological data (Pryor *et al* 1985, Simpson *et al* 1993, Pryor 1998, French and Pryor 2005). This has been summarised in the evaluation brief prepared by Peterborough City

Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS 2006).

### ***Neolithic***

To the east of the village field evaluation has identified a large causewayed enclosure (HER 51320), which is considered contemporary with the nearby Etton causewayed enclosure. Other causewayed enclosures are also located within the area at Uffington and Barholm in the Lincolnshire Welland Valley (Pryor 1998), making the area unusually dense with this kind of Neolithic monument. Recent excavation at the Northborough-Market Deeping Bypass, situated to the north-west identified Neolithic midden activity and a pit alignment. (Pryor and French 2005) (HER 50698) (Fig 2).

### ***Bronze Age-Iron Age***

A system of fields and drove-ways was laid out in the Bronze Age around the Neolithic causewayed enclosure monument. The system of land use extended into the Iron Age and Roman periods, where settlements had been established (HER 08536). To the north of Northborough a ring ditch, together with a field system incorporating two parallel sets of triple ditches, which appear to have a prehistoric origin, have been identified (HER 51138, 51139). To the south-west aerial photos have identified Bronze Age round barrows, droveways, a pit alignment, enclosures and Iron Age farmsteads (HER 08536) (Fig 2). To the west there has been identified a series of ring ditches, lanes and enclosures dating to either the Bronze or Iron Age (HER 8540, 8541 and 10017). The Northborough-Market Deeping Bypass excavations found multi-phased Bronze Age barrows, including beaker burials with one individual buried with an early bronze dagger, enclosures, gullies and a waterlogged well containing preserved wooden uprights and horizontal shoring timbers. Late Iron Age roundhouses were also identified (Pryor and French 2005).

### ***Romano-British***

Aerial photographs have identified crop-marks of settlement patterns that surround the village of Northborough. To the north-west of the site are Iron Age and Roman enclosures (HER 8539). To the south-west aerial photographs have also identified Romano-British farmsteads (HER 08536). To the south-east enclosures and ditches are located (HER 50095) (Fig 2). Car Dyke, a large ditch and bank feature that links the river Nene at Peterborough to Lincoln, which was probably part of an extensive Roman water management system to manage the Fenland, acting as a catch-water and not a canal that has been suggested. The Car Dyke cuts across the centre of the causewayed enclosure at Northborough, indicating that the monument had long since disappeared from the

landscape during the Roman period. Other Roman features within the area include a villa at the village of Helpston, located 3 km to the south-west, as well as a Romano-British field system at Maxey, 2 km to the west of Northborough (Meadows pers com). Market Deeping, located 2 km to the north, where the site of Priors Meadow is located, this site appears to extend over 9ha and has an abundant amount of Roman material including coin hoards, fragments of three ritual crowns and Roman harness. The site may show continuity from the Iron Age as pottery from this date was found on the site and may also be the access point by water to the Iron Age and Roman salt-making area of Cowbit wash and thence to the sea (Hayes and Lane 1992). Roman roads within the area include the Ermine Street, which links London with Lincoln and the Baston Outgang, which crossed Deeping fen. The Roman Vexillation Fortress at Longthorpe, which was established between 48-50 AD represents military activity in the area and is located 10 km to the south (TL 158 977) (Malim 2005).

### ***Anglo-Saxon***

Saxon remains were identified during a watching brief on groundworks to the churchyard wall. A pit containing locally produced early to middle Saxon pottery was discovered along with two undated ditches and a possible grave cut (HER 51289) (Fig 2).

### ***Medieval-post-medieval***

The site is located at the north of the village, some distance from the medieval village core, which contains a number of medieval stone buildings. These include the manor house, originally built between 1330-40, which survives with early 17th century alterations (HER 50723) and a 17th century or possibly earlier stone house (HER 50723). Extensive ridge and furrow remains have been identified from aerial photographs, to the north-east of the site (HER 50699, 50700, 50701 and 50702) (Fig 2).

It appears that the village of Northborough and its surrounding environs has been the focus for human settlement activity from the Neolithic through to modern times making the area rich in archaeological potential and history.

## **2.2 Aims and Objectives**

The objectives of the archaeological excavation, as set out in the specification (Yatea 2006) were to ensure the preservation by record of the archaeological remains that will impacted by the development through record. General objectives include:

- To determine the nature, character and date of any archaeological remains



present on the site

- To place the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context
- To reconstruct the history of Human activity on the site and place it within its paleo- ecological contexts

The specific research priorities of the project are based on the research frameworks for the Eastern Counties (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000) and are summarised as follows:

#### ***Iron Age***

- To investigate the nature and morphology of Iron Age activity on the site and contribute to an understanding of the character of Iron Age settlement
- To use the material evidence in the form of artefact and faunal assemblages, supplemented with environmental samples, to contribute to an understanding of the Iron Age economy

#### ***Iron Age to Roman transition***

- To examine evidence for continuity of land use from the Iron Age to the Roman period

#### ***Roman***

- To examine the impact of Romanisation on existing patterns of land use
- To investigate the nature and morphology of Roman settlement and contribute to the understanding of the character of Roman rural settlement with particular attention to Roman building materials and the location of potentially plough damaged structures
- To use the material evidence in the form of artefact and faunal assemblages, supplemented with environmental samples, to contribute to an understanding of the economy of Roman rural settlement

### **2.3 Topography and geology**

The proposed development site lies in a field to the north of the village of Northborough. The B1162 Deeping St. James Road, to the west by the Lincoln Road and to the north bound the site on the south and east by the Maxey Outgang drain and fields. The site

currently consists of rough grassland and scrub, with one small area of hard standing at the far west corner. The ground averages 6.25m OD.

The geology of the site consisted of well-drained river terrace gravel, which rises to shallow easily cultivable soil (Soil Survey of England and Wales [SSEW] classification 511i) in the wider environs this gravel is overlain by alluvium adjacent to watercourses (SSEW 813b).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

All works will be conducted in accordance with the IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (1995), the Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and Practises of Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003).

The site was divided into two areas, Area 1 in the western part, measuring 606 sq m, and Area 2 in the eastern part of the site, measuring 607 sq m. The areas were targeted on the areas of maximum development impact (house foundations) and features seen during the evaluation (Jones and Foard-Colby 2006). This was then adapted on site with meetings between Ben Robinson of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services and the excavator to determine the best results from the archaeology encountered and the limits of the site. A significant problem encountered during the excavation was the high water table. This was more of a problem in the lower ground in Area 1, which caused the abandonment of part of that area.

A mechanical excavator with a 2m flat ditching bucket was used to excavate to archaeological levels. All archaeological features were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard Northampton Archaeology procedures (NA 2003). All archaeological features were given a separate context number, features were described on pro-forma context sheets, which included details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and associated finds. A photographic record was kept using monochrome and colour slide film.

### **4 RESULTS ON EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

The natural geology was a sandy clay overlying gravels and was located at a depth between 1m and 0.3m, the archaeology cut this layer. An area of buried soil overlying the natural was seen in Area 2 (Fig 5); this soil contained Roman material and probably

dates to this period. The subsoil is seen in patches and was grey sandy clay with a maximum depth of 0.5 m and overlies the archaeological deposits. A table of contexts is given in Appendix 2.

#### **4.1 Palaeochannel**

In the south of Area 1, aligned north-west to south-east and parallel and to the south of gully [10024] = [10057] was a palaeochannel (Fig 4) (Plates 3). This channel appears to have been active during the time the higher ground was being used as a droveway or trackway, even being used as a natural boundary. It appears to have begun to silt up during the early Roman period as the pottery assemblage ranged from middle Iron Age until the Romano-British period, along with animal bone, was found within the primary deposits. A raised natural bank of gravel was seen within the channel (Fig 4) and may have acted as a natural fording point. The paleo-channel appears to act as a boundary to the droveway on the higher ground and may have even seasonally flooded the higher ground making the area impassable at times.

The recent land use of the excavation area was a tree nursery and this is reflected in the stratigraphic sequence by the mixed topsoil and subsoil caused by tree root action and the construction of hard surfaces.

#### **4.2 Neolithic**

The sole Neolithic feature was pit [10106] (Fig 4), which contained a (Group VI) polished stone axe from the Langdale Cumbrian fells (Plate 4), an axe flake, possibly from the same axe, flint flakes and animal bone. The axe was damaged in antiquity, in which it appears flakes have been struck off and the axe may have been used as a core before being deposited within the pit.

There are also residual flints scattered across the site, including scrapers, blades and retouched flakes; a detailed description of the flint and axe is outlined in a report seen below.

#### **4.3 Iron Age**

The development of the landscape appears to begin on a more intense level in the mid to late Iron Age. The digging of the pits described below suggests some form of industrial

activity was taking place; this pit group appears to act as a boundary to a droveway located along a ridge of higher ground, which suggests the movement of livestock along this route. The lack of structures on site suggests the area was rural and away from the main occupation. The landscape appears to be located on the fen edge and would have been subjected to seasonal flooding and therefore the occupation would have been located on the higher ground.

### ***Industrial pit group***

To the north in Area 1 was a series of large, regularly spaced shallow rectilinear pits or tanks (Plates 1 and 5) (Fig 4). They were aligned north-east to south-west and were regularly spaced both in rows and columns, each pit measures 5m long, 3m wide and had a maximum depth of 1m. The pit group continued in both north-east and south-west directions beyond the limit of excavation. One pit [10108] (Plate 5) was completely excavated and revealed two fills. The primary deposit comprised water washed organic rich silty clay (10106), overlain by sandy clay (10107). The pit had both undulating base and sides due to the loose nature of the gravels and waterlogging. A second pit [10060] was partly excavated, until waterlogging problems caused the excavation to be abandoned. The pit contained similar fills as [10108], but in the secondary deposit Iron Age pottery was found. The pits cut silty gravels and are located at a lower ground level where the water table is high, not only today but in the Iron Age (Coles and Hall 1994) and may have been subjected to seasonal flooding when the pits were dug and in use. The form and density of the pits and the high water table makes the function of these pits difficult to assess but may be part of some industrial process such as salt production or gravel quarrying.

A large shallow ditch [10080], was aligned north-east to south-west, and had been re-cut. The ditch was aligned parallel to the long axis of the pit group described above and may be a boundary for the pit group. The primary deposit of the ditch had organic deposits within it, suggesting that it was waterlogged at some point and may have been subjected to seasonal flooding events. Small amounts of abraded late Iron Age and 1st century Roman pottery were recovered from its upper deposits. This ditch continued into Area 2 as [10148] (Fig 5 and 7, section 5).

### ***Droveway or Trackway***

Located on a gravel ridge of higher ground, to the south of the pit group and to the north of a palaeochannel were a number of features of Iron Age date. It would seem that this terrace would have been an area of dry land between two wet areas to the south and

north. The main features in this area are a series of shallow gullies that appear to form a possible droveway or trackway. Two parallel gullies [10024] and [10002] (Figs 4 and 8) 5m apart and aligned north-west south-east formed a possible droveway or trackway. Gully [10024] was 0.3m in depth and 0.4m in width late Iron Age pottery was recovered from its primary fill. Gully [10002] was 0.11m in depth and 0.3m in width. Residual late Bronze Age pottery (Collared Urn tradition) was found within its fill. Pit [10017] appears to have been associated with the droveway as it was located on the edge of the paleo-channel, which would have been active when the pit was dug, and the southern droveway gully, [10030] and appears to have been used as a watering hole. The use of a watering hole dug alongside a droveway or trackway suggests the movement of livestock along this route.

#### ***Four post structure***

A group of five postholes between ditches [10275] and [10309] appear to make up a four-post structure (Fig 5). Postholes [10325], [10327], [10324] and [10319] are the corners of a 2m square. Four post structures have been interpreted to be grain or hay stores with the floor level elevated from the ground to keep the grain or hay dry, with access by a ladder.

#### ***Other features***

A further nine postholes were located 1-5m to the north-east of ditch [10309], but there appears to be no obvious pattern. Three postholes, [10004], [10021] and [10049] were also recorded within Area 1 (Fig 4); late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill of [10004]. The postholes formed no obvious structure or alignment.

A small number of pits are likely to be Iron Age in date as Roman features truncate them. Iron Age pottery was recovered from pits [10012], [10025], [10038], [10060] in Area 1 and [10303] in Area 2. A possible well or large pit [10344], 2m in diameter and 1.2m deep in Area 2 was truncated by ditches [10254] and [10237]. The pit had a U-shaped profile with a concave base, the primary fill comprised waterlogged clay, the secondary fill comprises sandy clay containing mollusc shells, the upper fill was sandy clay, with each deposit having distinct boundaries, and this feature is truncated by Roman ditches and therefore predates the Roman field system. The pits appear to form no obvious pattern.

#### **4.4 Roman**

A late Iron Age field system continued through the Roman period until the mid 4th century AD. The area appears to have been exploited more during the Roman period and this may reflect the Roman expansion into the fens and the lowering of the water level from the Iron Age. No structures were recorded on the site, suggesting the site is located away from the main occupation.

##### ***Late Iron Age and 1st century AD***

Ditches [10275] and [10261] were aligned in the same north-west to south-east position seems to form a rectilinear field system (Fig 5).

Ditch [10241] had a flat base U-shaped profile, measuring 0.18 metres in depth and 0.8m in width, late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill; ditch [10261] had a concave base U-shaped profile, measuring 0.16m in depth and 0.6m in width. Pottery dating to the 1st century (pre Flavian) AD pottery was recovered from both features. Ditch [10275] to the north-east of ditch [10261], also had a U-shaped profile with Roman pottery and animal bone recovered within its deposit. These ditches may correspond to the same aligned linear features seen in the cropmarks to the north of the site (Fig 3).

Roman activity appeared to be limited in Area 1 (Fig 4). Gully [10008], ran on a slightly different north-east to south-west alignment to the gullies [10024] and [10002] that formed a possible droveway or trackway. Gully [10008], which butt-ended within Area 1 and may be the realignment of either a droveway or field system in the Roman period. Shallow gully [10019] aligned north to south truncated gully [10002].

##### ***Early to mid 2nd century AD***

Ditch [10311] measured 3m in wide and 0.7m in deep, and had a U-shaped profile with a concave base. The primary deposit was waterlogged and contained later 1st and early 2nd century samian from South Gaul and Les Martes de Veyre, Lower Nene Valley greyware and animal bone. The ditch is truncated by ditch [10252], which removed the butt-end of the ditch.

##### ***Late 2nd to mid/late 3rd century AD***

Linear features [10335] and [10339] were in the far east of Area 2 where the land drops sharply onto wetter deposits. The pottery recovered from the ditches upper deposits date from the late 2nd century to 3rd century AD, although this area had been subjected to root and animal disturbance.

Ditches [10268] and [10237] appeared to make a square enclosure, which cuts earlier

phases of ditches. The ditches contained a single deposit of silty clay, which suggests the features were filled in one single event or they were not recut. The corner of [10268] contained a complete cow skull (Plate 6) and pottery from the Lower Nene Valley colour-coated beaker forms, which date from mid or later 3rd century AD. Ditch [10237] was aligned north-west to south-east and seemed to cut ditch [10268], although pottery recovered would suggest that they were contemporary. The profile was U-shaped with a flat base, with the secondary fill containing mid or later 3rd century AD pottery and animal bone. Ditch [10237] may correspond with a linear feature seen in the cropmarks in the area located to the north of the site (Fig 3).

It appears that the field system was altered during the late Roman period and this is demonstrated by the re-alignment of ditch [10296]. The ditch was slightly curved along an almost east-west alignment and truncated a pit or possible well [10344] and ditch [10237]. The ditch measured 1m wide and 0.2m deep with a U-shaped profile and flat base, Roman pottery was found within the fill.

### ***Buried Soil***

An area of buried soil [10119] in south-west of Area 2 covered approximately 5 sq m of the area and overlaid ditches [10129], [10207], [10214] (Fig 5). The soil consisted of mid brown grey sandy clay and contained an abundant amount of Roman pottery (18% of the total assemblage). Amongst the pottery assemblage a complete unguent bottle vessel and Samian sherds were found, along with two iron knives and a copper object. The buried soil contained a mixed pottery assemblage dating from 2nd-4th century AD. The only feature to cut the buried soil was the Roman ring ditch, described below, which contained mid to later 3rd century pottery that gives a general date to the buried soil.

### ***Roman Ring Ditch***

The ring ditch cut the buried soil and measured 2m in diameter [10184] (Plate 7). Five sections were excavated establishing that a shallow gully had been cut into the buried soil but not into the underlying natural. The gully had a U-shaped profile with a concave based and measured between 0.1m and 0.4m deep and 0.3m and 0.5m wide (Fig 7, sections 6-12). The fill contained pottery including Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware, which dates the feature to mid or later 3rd century. The buried soil [10191] within the centre of the ring ditch was excavated by hand to establish if there were any internal features.

A posthole [10305] and a possible posthole [10332] were found beneath the buried soil and ditch circumference, which may be associated with the ring ditch but were probably a

result of earlier activity. Similar features have been interpreted as agricultural features enclosing hay stack or similar features. Its small size would make a roundhouse ring ditch unlikely (Coles and Hall 1994).

***Late 3rd to (mid) 4th century AD***

Ditch [10309] was in the north-east of Area 2 (Fig 5). Aligned north to south, it measured 1.04m in width, 0.38m in depth and had a U-shaped profile with a flat base. This feature contained the highest volume of Roman material from any cut feature on site, with pottery found in all of its three recorded deposits. The assemblage included domestic Roman pottery, dating from the late 3rd century, provided by the Lower Nene Valley colour-coated coarseware, as well samian and mortaria, tile and metalwork. The ditch was dug into a natural hollow in the landscape and the alluvial clay deposit (10306) covering the ditch was the result of a flooding episode, although it appears this happen when the ditch had backfilled through natural silting. The alluvial deposit contained Roman material, which may be the result of residual activity. The absence of common 4th century wares suggests the ditch had gone out of use by this stage and may have not been an active boundary. The flooding episode happened in the late Roman period and could have played a role in the abandonment of the site.



## 5 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Worked Flint by Y B Wolfram-Murray

Forty-three pieces of worked flint, three natural pieces and two items of worked stone were recovered. Nearly a third of the worked flints and the stone pieces come from Area 1. Nine pieces are from an unstratified context, the remaining pieces are residual in Iron Age and Roman contexts. The two pieces of Neolithic polished stone axe were from the same pit, which may have been of Neolithic date; the only other material recovered from this feature was two flint flakes. A general overview of the composition of the flint and stone assemblage is given in Table 1.

*Table 1: Quantification of worked flint and stone*

Flint and stone	Area 1	Area 2	Total
Cores		1	1
Flakes	9	13	22
Miscellaneous retouched flakes	3	3	6
Miscellaneous retouched blades	1	1	2
Scraper (end/side)	1	1	2
Scraper (end)	1	1	2
Scraper (discoidal)	1		1
Scraper (side)	2		2
Scraper (double ended)	1		1
Scraper (disc)	1		1
Flint fragments	2		2
Natural flint	3		3
Stone axe	2		2
Total	27	20	48

The raw material utilised is mostly a good quality grey/brown vitreous flint with a light brown cortex. In a few cases, a honey-coloured vitreous flint was used.

There is one core, which has multiple platforms. Almost half of the assemblage is made up from waste flakes, and only a few show signs of having been utilised. The flakes are largely between 20mm and 50mm long, with a majority 20-30mm long. They are both soft and hard hammer struck. There are six miscellaneous retouched flakes and two miscellaneous retouched blades. One of the miscellaneous retouched blades could have been a serrated blade, but not enough of the retouched edge survives to be certain.

Nine scrapers were recovered; seven from Area 1 and two from Area 2. The scrapers include a wide range of types end/side scrapers, end scrapers, a discoidal scraper, side scraper, double ended scrapers and a disc scraper, suggesting a broad date range.

From Area 1, there is a small fragment of polished flint, 39mm long, 16mm wide and 6mm thick, with parts of two polished surfaces nearly at right angles to each other. The

polished surface is slightly patinated, and some non-patinated removals can be seen. The piece is too small to be certain, but it may have come from either a polished flint axe or adze, with the latter perhaps the more likely option.

The composition of the assemblage; core, flakes and scrapers, indicates that the flint work is broadly early Neolithic to late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, but perhaps predominantly Neolithic.

It is worth noting that in the evaluation, carried out in July 2006 (Jones and Foard-Colby 2006); a single item of worked flint was recovered, from Trench 5, context 5112. This was a large flake, 67mm long by up to 32mm wide, in a grey to brown opaque flint. One edge is recut for its entire length while the opposite edge has not been recut, and it has clearly been used as a knife.

## **5.2 The Neolithic polished stone axe by Y B Wolfram-Murray and A Chapman**

There are two fragments of polished stone axe from context 10105, the fill of pit [10106]. There is the butt end of an axe, 59mm wide by around 30mm thick (small find SF 14) (Plate 4). The stone has a transverse break, either near or short of, the point of greatest thickness. The butt end has a polished surface and the scars of the original shaping flakes are still partly visible.

The undamaged parts of the two edges still retain remnants of flattened facets, but these have been partly rounded off, apparently as a result of erosion caused by long-term usage.

The stone may be characterised as an epidotised tuff (Group VI), from the Langdale area of the Cumbrian fells. It is dark green-grey in colour, with sparse small flecks of a white mineral inclusion.

The butt end of the axe has been utilised as a single-platform core, with the surface of the transverse break utilised as the platform for the striking of numerous flakes from around the circumference of the stone. A single small flake from the same context, was 22mm long and 23 mm wide, and retained a polished surface (SF 15). It was probably struck from the same axe, but did not join.

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**5.3 The Pottery** by E R. McSloy (with samian identifications by Geoff Dannell)***Introduction***

Pottery amounting to 1888 sherds, weighing 39.7kg (29.80 estimated vessel equivalents) was recovered from evaluation and excavation. The large majority of material dates to the Roman period, with small groups of Middle and Late Iron Age and earlier prehistoric pottery also present. Pottery was recovered from 86 separate contexts, with the bulk of material from the fills of linear features (76.4%) and layers, principally Roman buried soil 10119 (18.2%). Pits and natural features (a palaeochannel) account for the remainder.

***Methodology***

The pottery was sorted into fabrics primarily by macroscopic observation, with sherd count and weight recorded for each context. Where this could be determined, vessel form and rim EVEs (Estimated Vessel Equivalents) was recorded. The assemblage was recorded using an MS Access database, a copy of which will be submitted with the archive.

Prehistoric fabrics are described individually (below). Fabric coding for Roman types is based on that utilised for the large Orton Hall Farm assemblage (Perrin 1996). In addition Roman fabrics, which are listed in Table 2, have been matched against the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes (Tomber and Dore 1998).

***Prehistoric pottery***

Pottery amounting to 128 sherds (2519g) is of prehistoric date, with most material considered as of probable Iron Age date. The larger part of the prehistoric group relates to pits and gullies from Area 1, with 14 sherds from palaeochannel feature 10053. With few exceptions the condition of the prehistoric pottery is highly fragmented, a factor making assessment of dating frequently problematical. Other aspects of condition are also poor with calcareous inclusions for presumed fossil-shell-tempered fabrics, leached.

***Fabrics******Early prehistoric***

EPF Coarse flint. Sparse calcined flint inclusions 1–3mm. Dark grey mid-brown outer surface. Harsh feel. Quantity: 1sh (5g); Handmade. Forms: na.

EPG Grog. Common grey-coloured medium grog, 0.5–1.5mm. Red-brown or buff outer surface, dark grey inner. Soapy feel. Quantity: 2sh (9g); Forms: ?Collared Urn (Fig 9, 1).

***Late prehistoric***

Q Quartz. Common, clear quartz inclusions 0.3–0.5mm. Rare red-brown iron-rich pellets. Dark grey throughout. Sandy feel. Quantity: 4sh (22g); Forms: na.

G Grog-tempered. Common self-coloured medium grog 0.5–1.5mm. Dark grey throughout. Soapy feel. Quantity: 40sh (964g); Forms: Carinated bowl with elaborately cordoned neck (Fig 9, 4).

Gq Grog-tempered with quartz. Common self-coloured fine/medium grog 0.5–1mm. Rare clear quartz, 0.3–0.5mm. Dark grey core with red-brown surfaces. Wheel-thrown. Quantity: 3sh (96g); Forms: Carinated bowl with neck cordon.

Gsh Grog-tempered with shell. Common self-coloured medium grog 0.5–1.5mm. Common or rare fossil shell, 1–3mm. Dark grey throughout or with red-brown surfaces. ?Handmade. Quantity: 4sh (115g); Forms: na.

SH Shell-tempered. Sparse to common poorly sorted fossil shell 1–4mm. Typically shell inclusions are leached. Dark grey throughout. Smooth feel. Handmade. Quantity: 56sh (892g); Forms: round-shouldered jar (Fig. 9, no. 2); ovoid jar.

SHf Shell-tempered, ferruginous type. Inclusions typically leached to leave plate-like voids. Fabric is characteristically red-brown from iron content. Smooth feel. Handmade. Quantity: 11sh (55g); Forms: na.

SHc Coarse shell-tempered type. Abundant, well-sorted medium fossil shell 1–3mm. Rare limestone fragments up to 5mm. Soapy feel. Handmade. Quantity: 7sh (260g); Forms: slack-shouldered or globular jars with short, upright rims, scored decoration (Fig 9, 3).

***Early Bronze Age***

Sherds in grog-tempered fabric (EP GROG) from Area 1, are regarded as being of probable Early Bronze Age date. Both are heavily abraded and seemingly residual, occurring with Iron Age or Roman pottery types. Dating is suggested on the basis of fabric and decoration which consists of ?round-toothed comb impressions below the rim (Fig 9, 1) and probable twisted cord impressions on a sherd from gully fill 1007 (not illust). Both vessels are probably of the Collared Urn tradition, most likely dating to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. Quantities of comparable pottery, with a suggestion of domestic use, were recovered from the area of Fengate, Peterborough (Pryor 1980, 87–106).

### ***Late prehistoric***

The larger part of this group, which comprises material from Area 1, small quantities from Area 2 and Evaluation Trenches consists of body sherds in handmade fabrics SH 1. Pottery fabrics (above) compare with those characterising other, larger groups from the area (Pryor 1984).

Few diagnostic featured sherds occur among this group, however, the presence from Areas 1 and 2 of stray sherds with fingertip or fingernail impressions, would seem to be indicative of Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age or Early Iron Age activity. Decoration of any sort is rare and absent on vessels from the largest group from Area 1 pit 10035. Here vessels consist of undecorated round shouldered jars, with high, plain rims and a neckless, 'ovoid' jar. Forms from this feature and from palaeochannel fill 10050 compare with 'pre-Scored wares' at Cat's Water, Fengate (Pryor 1984, 141–2). Dating, broadly similar to the early part of the Middle Iron Age indicated by radiocarbon determinations for the Fengate group, is suggested for this group.

Scored ware sherds, representative of a south Midlands style centring on the Trent and Nene valleys and current from the 4th/3rd century BC (Elsdon 1992) occur in three contexts from Area 1 and from Evaluation Trench 2 (Fig 9, 4). Significantly, the scored ware sherds occur in a coarser (and better-preserved) shelly fabric and are likely represent a separate and later tradition. Illustrated vessel no. 3 exhibits repeated scoring which typically is characteristic of later Middle Iron Age assemblages.

Late Iron Age pottery of the wheel-thrown 'Belgic' tradition (Thompson 1982) was largely restricted to the fill of Evaluation Trench 2, ditch fill 6033, where it included carinated bowls with multiple-cordons in grog-tempered fabrics. Included is a substantially complete vessel (Fig 9, 4). Similar forms, equivalent to Thompson's cup/bowl form E3–7 (Thompson 1982, 408) occurred at with frequency at Fengate (Pryor 1984, fig. 104) and across the Nene and Great Ouse Valleys. Dating not before AD 25 and extending into the 40s to 60s is suggested with reference to recent reappraisals of 'Belgic' pottery from the region (Friendship-Taylor 1999, 25–9).

### ***Roman Pottery***

A total of 1760 sherds of Roman pottery weighing 37.6kg (28.60 rim EVEs) were recovered (Table 2). The condition of the pottery is generally good, and this is reflected in an average sherd weight of 21.4g, which is high for a Roman assemblage. Selected feature or layer groups from among the Roman assemblage (evaluation ditch 5104, 10309 and buried soil 10119), produced a number of substantially complete vessels.

More typically pottery groups from the enclosure ditch fills or other linear features, tended to be small in quantity and well broken-up.

The large majority of pottery is of local origin, from the well-known kilns of the Lower Nene Valley, centred on the small town at Water Newton, Cambridgeshire approximately 7km to the south. The bulk of pottery dates to the earlier Roman period, with large groups, fairly closely attributable to the mid-2nd century AD. No material which, with certainty, post-dates *c.* AD 325–50, was recovered.

### *Fabrics*

The composition of the Roman assemblage is shown in Tables 2-3. By count 97.5% of the pottery is likely to be of local origin, most being products of the Lower Nene Valley industry (Table 3). Similar dominance of Lower Nene Valley fabrics is a feature of Fenland sites including Orton Hall Farm (Perrin 1996) and Grandford, March (Potter and Potter 1982). Reduced types, not exhibiting the firing characteristics typical for Lower Nene fabrics, in particular black-sandy type LOC BS, may be representative of local wares, produced at local centres throughout the area prior to the establishment of the major industry in the first half of the 2nd century (Perrin 1996, 120). Most abundant among reduced fabrics, is the ‘standard’, pale-firing Lower Nene greyware type (LNVGW).

Shell-tempered wares are abundant throughout the assemblage, occurring with few exceptions as jars of various types. Products of the Bourne-Greetham ware kilns may be present among the shell-tempered ware; however, identification is hindered by the poor condition of this material. Represented forms, mostly jars, compare closely with 2nd and 3rd century vessels from Chesterton and thought to be local in origin (Perrin 1999, 116–20). Harrold (North Bedfordshire) shell-tempered wares, which are readily identifiable by form, are absent and this is likely to be chronologically significant (below).

‘Hard cream grogged’ fabric (HCC) is an Upper Nene Valley type, produced in the Northampton area and common in 2nd century contexts at sites including Ashton (Aird and MacRobert forthcoming), and Stanwick (McSloy *et al.* forthcoming). Verulamium region products include a flagon sherd in Ditch group 5105 and, more unusually, unguent bottle (Fig 9, 6) in layer 40119. Further regional imports are restricted to sherds of Dorset Black-Burnished ware occurring in later Roman (CP 3) contexts.

Excepting sigillata types, finewares are present as Lower Nene Valley colour-coated wares (LNVCC) and Creamwares (LNVK), with a single Oxfordshire colour-coated ware sherd (Table 2). Imported continental wares consist of samian from three identifiable

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centres (Table 4) and sherds of Baetican (Southern Spanish) olive oil amphorae.

### *Forms*

Vessel forms are, to a marked degree dominated by jars (Table 3), occurring principally among the local reduced and shell-tempered wares. Lid-seated jars, more typical of the Upper Nene area are poorly represented.

Jars in reduced wares are mainly of the medium or wide-mouthed, necked forms typical of the Lower Nene industry (Howe *et al.* 1980, fig. 1). Wide-mouthed jars occur also in colour-coated ware, characteristic of late-style 'coarseware' forms (*ibid.*, fig 7). Greater diversity of form is evident among earlier (CP 1), reduced wares including material associated with ditch fill 5105 and buried soil layer 60119. Forms include globular and bag-shaped beakers with foot-ring bases, carinated jars/bowls and shouldered jars with deep necks (Fig 9: 7, 9 and 13). Use of neck and shoulder cordons is also a feature of these groups. Shell-tempered frequently necked medium-mouthed types with curving rims and shoulder grooves. The range of rim types compares with groups from Chesterton (Perrin 1999, 116–20).

Beaker forms occur primarily as colour-coated products, although a few, including slashed-cordon type (Fig 9: 12) occur in greyware. Such forms are characteristic of early production of Lower Nene greywares (Howe *et al.* 1980, fig. 1, no. 2). Among colour-coated ware vessels 'bag-shaped' cornice-rimmed vessel no. 10 is typologically the earliest, perhaps as early as *c.* AD 140/60. The majority of the beaker types are later. Most common are indented, scale-decorated, funnel-neck types (Howe *et al.* nos. 38–9).

Open forms in reduced ware consist of vessels following BB1 types and including plain and bead-rimmed dishes and flat rim bowls. Illustrated vessel (Fig 9, 5) occurs in standard greyware fabric LNVGW; it features decoration in the London ware style, executed with a roulette wheel. Further samian derived forms occur in later (CP 3) groups and include Drag. 36 copies in LNVGW and LNVCC and Drag. 31 copies in LNVCC. Hemispherical flanged bowl (Fig 9, 11), which occurs in creamware fabric LNVC is of a type well-known from the area, and in use over a long period (Perrin 1996, 111).

Mortaria are present only as Nene Valley white/cream fabrics. A vessel from layer 10119 (Fig 9, 8), is close to an example from Chesterton (Perrin 1999, fig. 79, M57), described as Nene Valley of Midlands manufacture. Other forms match known types, with reeded-rim and wall-sided types (Perrin 1999, figs. 77-80, forms M28, M29, M70).

Two vessels meriting individual comment are unguent bottle vessel (Fig 9, 6) and large

slab-built vessel (Fig 9, 14): Verulamium region whiteware vessel no. 6 belongs to a type sometimes referred to as 'amphora stoppers' (Davies *et al.* 1993, 59). This example has been adapted for use, following breakage by grinding its neck. Examples from Verulamium occur in deposits mainly dating to the middle years of the 2nd century (Frere 1972, 328). The exact function of vessels such as no. 14 is unclear. Similar, large-diameter vessels are known from Chesterton, where use as oven covers or hoods is proposed. Vessel 10 exhibits, a knife-cut vent, a feature not recorded with the Chesterton examples.

### *Chronology and Ceramic Phases*

The ceramic chronology of the Nene Valley is by comparison with other areas of the country reasonably well understood, largely the result of work undertaken on LNVCC and other products from well-dated sequences, including kilns from the region of Chesterton (Howe *et al.* 1980; Perrin 1999). With the exception of the samian, chronological markers used for the establishing of Ceramic Phases, are largely based on Lower Nene Valley vessel forms. Two major ceramic phases are apparent with a further group of material which is diagnostic material is absent and closer dating not possible.

#### *CP1: between early to mid/late 2nd centuries AD*

There is limited evidence for later 1st and early 2nd century activity in the form of samian from South Gaul and Les Martres de Veyre, although most, if not all of this material is demonstrably residual. The earliest stratified material includes large ditch groups 10314 and 5105. Material of comparable date, including a group of Hadrianic/Antonine samian, was present in buried soil horizon 10119, although in association with later material. CP1 groups each include substantial Lower Nene Valley greyware components, suggesting Trajanic/Hadrianic dating at the earliest. Forms in greyware are representative of the more diverse early production phase and include carinated bowls (Fig 9, 7), globular, bag-shaped (Fig 9, 13) or 'slashed-cordon' beakers/jars (Fig 9, 12). Bowl no. 5 is decorated in the London ware style, common in the region in the second quarter of the 2nd century AD (Perrin 1999).

Large ditch group 5105 (Jones and Foard-Colby 2006) would seem to be towards the later end of the range suggested for CP1. A terminus post quem of *c.* AD 140 is provided by Antonine samian and a date between *c.* AD 150 and *c.* AD 170 is most likely on the basis of Lower Nene colour-coated ware and cream ware vessels. Colour-coated ware forms comprise a substantially complete bag-shaped roughcast decorated beaker, no. 10, and a fragment of a beaker of waisted form (Perrin 1999, 94–5). The execution of the



cornice rim on vessel no. 10 is accomplished and characteristic of the earliest production phase, perhaps involving migrant potters.

*CP2: Late 2nd to mid/late 3rd century AD*

Numerous small or mid-sized groups, primarily from ditches in Area 2 and including Ring Gully feature 10154, can be ascribed to this Ceramic Phase. The largest group of this date is associated with Area 2 Ditch 10268 (Table 5). Mid or later 3rd century is indicated in this instance by LNVCC beaker forms which include funnel-necked indented forms with applied clay pads (Howe *et al.* 1980, no. 39). A Dorset BB1, dish (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, fig. 32, Type 59.3) also occurs in this context and supports this dating. 'Standard' LNVGW fabric is abundant; occurring in a narrow range of forms typical for this period, mainly jars and open forms derived from current Black-Burnished ware types. One 'fineware' form an imitation Drag. 36 bowl with barbotine trails is present from Ring-gully fill 10177. The evidence from Chesterton suggests that such vessels were produced between the Late 2nd and 3rd centuries (Perrin 1999, 86).

*CP3 Late 3rd to (mid) 4th century*

A restricted number of groups in Area 2, including material associated with Ditch 10309 and 10168, are of this date. Further late material including 'coarseware' forms in LNVCC and one sherd of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware was present in mixed date group associated with buried soil 10119.

Dating, after *c.* AD 270 for Ditch 10309 is provided by LNVCC 'coarseware' forms, including wide-mouthed jars and plain-rimmed dishes. Occurrence of beaker types, which consist of scale-decorated indented types and samian derived forms, (Drag. 31 and Drag. 36 related types), suggest dating before the mid-4th century (Howe *et al.* 1980). This is also suggested by absence of Harrold shell-tempered and other common 4th century wares, and by the continued high incidence of LNV greywares (Table 5).

*Summary*

Compositionally the Roman assemblage compares closely with previously published material from the area Peterborough area (Perrin 1996), with very marked reliance of wares supplied locally. A number of large and well-preserved 2nd century groups are indicative of settlement at this time. The earlier groups, in particular, are dominated by jar forms, reflective of a basic utilitarian character to the assemblage. Levels of samian use and of specialist types such as amphorae and mortaria are very low within these groups (Table 3). Presence of South Gaulish samian may imply some higher status

activity in the vicinity in the mid/late 1st century AD; however stratified deposits of this date appear to be absent. The low levels of samian within the CP1–2 groups, together with the dominance of plain samian forms (Table 4), probably indicate activity at the lower end of rural society.

Evidence is limited for activity stretching into the Late Roman period and there is no evidence for this extending beyond c. AD 350.

#### Catalogue of illustrated pottery (Fig 9)

##### *Early Bronze Age*

- 1 ?Collared Urn type with round-toothed comb impressions. Gully fill 10001 Fabric EPG.

##### *Iron Age*

- 2 Round-shouldered jar. Handmade. Pit fill 10035 Fabric SH.
- 3 Globular jar. Scored ware type. Handmade. Ditch 5018 Fabric SHc.

##### *Late Iron Age/Early Roman and Roman (wheel-thrown unless otherwise stated)*

- 4 Carinated bowl (with elaborately cordoned neck). Wheel-thrown. Ditch fill 6133 Fabric G.
- 5 Bowl, imitating samian type Drag. 37. London ware style decoration. Buried soil layer 10119 (with joining sherds from ditch 10314). Fabric LNVGW.
- 6 Unguent bottle/amphora stopper. Broken at neck and ground for 'makeshift' use. Buried soil layer 10119. Fabric VRW.
- 7 Carinated bowl with neck cordon. Buried soil layer 10119. Fabric LNVGW.
- 8 Square-flanged mortarium. Buried soil layer 10119. Fabric LNVm.
- 9 Shouldered-jar. Ditch fill 10314. Fabric LOC BS.
- 10 Bag-shaped beaker with cornice rim and clay roughcast decoration. Ditch fill 5105. Fabric LNVCC.
- 11 Hemispherical flanged bowl. Ditch fill 5105. Fabric LNVC.
- 12 Beaker with slashed cordon. Everted rim. Ditch fill 5105. Fabric LNVGW.
- 13 Globular/bag-shaped beaker with everted rim. Ditch fill 5105. Fabric LNVGW.

- 14 Applied strip below rim. Knife-cut opening to lower part of vessel. Hand-made.  
Ditch fill 5105. Fabric RB SH. Slab-built vessel.
- 15 Bowl in imitation of samian form Drag. 36. Ditch Fill 10306. Fabric LNVCC.

Table 2: Summary quantification of Roman fabrics

Description	Code	NRFRC*	No.	%Ct.	Wt.(g)	Rim EVEs
LNV cream	LNVC	LNV WH	29	1.6	618	0.78
LNV colour-coated	LNVCC	LNV CC	184	10.5	3185	3.36
LNV mortaria	LNVM	LNV WH	10	0.6	370	0.24
LNV grey	LNVGW	-	649	36.9	12821	11.3
Local black sandy	LOC BS	-	65	3.7	1247	1.44
Local, self-coloured grey	LOC GW	-	148	8.4	2147	0.75
?local grey with grog	LOC GW grog	-	10	0.6	95	0.20
?LNV shell-tempered	RSG	-	617	35.1	15878	7.66
Miscellaneous oxidised	LOC OX	-	3	0.2	13	-
Miscellaneous white	LOC WH	-	1	0.1	10	-
Sub-total (LNV/Local)			1716	97.5	36384	25.73
Dorset BB1	BB1	DOR BB1	10	0.6	68	0.16
UNV hard cream grogged	HCG	-	5	0.3	116	-
Oxfordshire colour-coated	OXCC	OXF RS	1	0.1	3	-
Verulamium region white	VR	VER WH	1	0.1	139	-
Sub-total (Regional)			17	1.0	326	-
Baetican amphora.	BAT AM	BAT AM	8	0.5	438	-
South Gaulish samian	SG Sam	LGF SA	6	0.3	43	0.20
Les Martres de Veyre samian	LMdV	LMV SA	2	0.1	31	0.10
Cent. Gaul samian	CG Sam	LEZ SA	11	0.6	402	0.39
Sub-total (Continental)			27	1.5		
Total			1760		37624	28.58

\* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998)

Table 3: Forms summary by total EVEs (coarsewares)

Form (generic)	LNVC	LNVCC	LNVGW/ LOC GW	LN mort.	RSG	BB1	Total	%Total
Flagon		0.20	0.12				0.32	1.1
Beaker		0.57	0.20				0.77	2.8
Jar		1.22	8.68		9.38		19.28	69.1
Jar, lid-seated			0.12		0.10		0.22	0.8
Bowl	0.65		0.84		0.05		1.54	5.5
Bowl (samian derived)		0.90	1.16				2.06	7.4
Box		0.12					0.12	0.4
Dish		0.35	2.40	0	0	0.16	2.91	10.4
Mortaria				0.37			0.37	1.3
Lid			0.17				0.17	0.6
'Slab-built'					0.15		0.15	0.5

Table 4: Samian fabrics/forms summary

Form	SG Sam	LMdV	CG Sam	Total
33 cup			1	1
31bowl			3	3
36 bowl			2	2
37 bowl	1			1
Bowl		1	1	2
18 dish	2			2
18 or 18R dish	1			1
18/31 dish		1	2	3
Unid.	2		2	3
Total	6	2	11	18

Table 5: Selected groups. Fabrics quantification

	CP 1: Ditch 5106			CP 2: Ditch 10266			CP 3: Ditch 10309			Buried soil 10119		
Fabric	No.	Wt.	EVEs.	No.	Wt.(g)	EVEs	No.	Wt.(g)	EVEs	No.	Wt.(g)	EVEs
LNVC	25	369	0.65	1	14					3	235	0.13
LNVC	13	182	0.35	17	114	0.32	66	1716	1.79	17	408	0.69
LNVM							1	118				
LNVC	129	2053	2.14	14	333	0.14	80	1755	1.22	176	3959	4.71
LOC BS	38	687					4	50		20	442	0.04
LOC GW	45	609	0.18	3	24					32	517	0.31
LOC GWg	10	95	0.20									
RSG	272	6181	2.02	22	605	0.21	17	1382	3.45	83	2680	1.44
LOC WH	1	10										
BB1				7	45	0.10						
HCG	2	52										
VR										1	139	
OXCC										1	3	
BAT AM				1	10					5	219	
LMdV							1	16		1	15	0.10
SGS							1	19	8			
CGS	1	77				0	1	3	4	5	266	0.09
	536	10315	5.54	65	1145	0.77	171	5059	18.46	344	8883	7.51

#### 5.4 Rubbing Stones by A Chapman

A small fragment of fine-grained sandstone (SF 43), from the fill (10276) of pit [10277], is 50mm thick. The fragments comes from the rounded corner of a domed piece of stone with a slightly convex lower surfaces, well-smoothed through use, probably as a rubbing or grinding stone.

A piece of slightly coarser sandstone (SF 44) retained from (10191) the Roman buried soil, had two slightly worn adjacent surfaces, but was not part of a quern. It was burnt, and may have been a fragment of a large rubbing or sharpening stone.

## 5.5 Roman Finds by Tora Hylton

The excavations produced a small group of finds dating from the Roman to the post-medieval period. In total there are 19 individually recorded small finds in three material types, copper alloy (7), iron (10) and glass (2). With the exception of five objects recovered from topsoil deposits and therefore unstratified, all the finds were recovered from the series of ditches and the buried soil layer which covered the site. Six objects stylistically date to the Roman period, while the remainder are undiagnostic pieces of iron and finds of post-medieval date.

### *Roman*

The Roman finds are represented by items of jewellery (a brooch, ?strap-end/pendant and a pin), two knives and a drop hinge staple.

There are two knives, both were recovered from a buried soil layer (10119) and both are sufficiently complete to enable comparison with Manning's Typology (1985, 108 ff). Although both knives are incomplete (the tips of the blades are missing), they measure in excess of 100mm in length and 30mm wide and both examples have tangs which are in line with the back of the blade and horizontal cutting edges. The main difference is the alignment of the back of the blade, on one example the back of the blade gently curves towards the tip, Manning's Type 13 (ibid, fig 28), and the other it is horizontal and curves to the tip, Manning's Type 17 (ibid, fig 29).

There is one object which may be classed as a structural fitting. A drop hinge staple was recovered from buried soil layer 10119; it comprises a square-sectioned shank tapered to a point and a circular-sectioned pivot. Such items would have been used to hang doors, shutters etc. Similar examples have been recovered from Gadebridge Park Roman Villa (Manning 1974, fig 75, 524, 526).

Finally a small undiagnostic fragment (18 x 13 x 7mm) of cobalt blue glass was recovered from Ditch 10268. The piece appears to be part of a base sherd from a glass bottle.

### **The Brooch** by Don Mackreth and Ian Meadows

A copper alloy brooch was recovered from buried soil [10191]. It is an example of a Colchester derivative type with a rearhook fixing. A ridge flanked by a groove on either side extends down the ridge of the bow and an incised line on either side of the bow arches up to join the median ridge. A slight lenticular boss lies on either side of the bow

just above the junction with the wings. Two incised lines lie around the end of each wing. This type of brooch has a distribution predominantly in the northern parts of East Anglia. It is most common in the tribal area of the Iceni and it disappears soon after the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt. A period of use for this type of brooch is 40-60/65 AD.

The ?strap-end/pendant and the pin were recovered from topsoil deposits. The former is incomplete, only the lower section survives; it comprises a cast 'heart-shaped' fragment with a terminal knop. The piece displays features which may be observed on the lower half of 'leaf-shaped' pendants (cf. Bishop 1998, fig 25, 290, 295), or a type of strap-end which stylistically resembles amphorae (Simpson 1976, fig 4, 7-8). The presence of a single shallow recess (representing the lower part of the 'handle') on each side of the piece suggests that the latter interpretation may be the correct one. As a strap-end it would have been used to reinforce the ends of leather belts, but because the upper section is missing, it is not possible to determine how the strap-end would have been attached to the strap. For a discussion on amphora-shaped strap-ends see Simpson 1976 (192-223).

The pin is incomplete, much of the shaft is missing, and the head is 'bi-conical' with a cordon below. The form displays similarities to Cools Group 2 pins (1990, 154), a type which would have been in use throughout the Roman period.

## **5.6 Post-medieval by Tora Hylton**

Finds of post-medieval date include a buckle with D-shaped frame and for use with a ?harness, a possible horseshoe and two copper alloy coins. The latter are represented by George III penny and a Victorian halfpenny.

# **6 THE FAUNAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

## **6.1 An Assessment of the Plant Macrofossils and Mollusc Shells by Val Fryer**

### ***Introduction and method statement***

Samples for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken, and five were submitted for assessment.

The samples were bulk floated by Northamptonshire Archaeology and the flots were collected in a 500 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains

noted are listed on Table 6. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997) for the plant macrofossils and Macan (1977) and Kerney and Cameron (1979) for the molluscs. Both waterlogged and charred plant remains were recorded and within the table the waterlogged macrofossils are suffixed with a lower case 'w'. A small number of modern contaminants including fibrous roots, seeds and arthropods were present.

### **Results**

Plant macrofossils were present throughout, although samples 7 and 9 only contained single charcoal fragments. Preservation of the remains within samples 3, 5 and 6 was reasonably good, although some seeds had distorted and fragmented during drying.

Charred cereal grains, including two specimens of wheat (*Triticum* sp.), were recorded from samples 5 and 6 (ring ditch 10189 and ditch 10308, respectively). The remaining macrofossils would all appear to be derived from plants growing on or near the site during the Roman period. Ruderal weeds and grassland herbs including fool's parsley (*Aethusa cynapium*), musk thistle (*Carduus* sp.), nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*), hawkweed (*Leontodon* sp.), buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp.), dock (*Rumex* sp.) and dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.) were predominant. Wetland and aquatic plant remains were also noted and included seeds/fruits of wild celery (*Apium graveolens*), sedge (*Carex* sp.) and water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* subg. *Batrachium*). Charcoal/charred wood fragments were present throughout, but at a very low density.

Although specific sieving for molluscan remains was not undertaken, small shell assemblages were recorded from samples 3, 5 and 6 and sample 9 (Pit 10344) was largely composed of mollusc shells. Terrestrial species were present but rare, and the assemblages were dominated by freshwater obligate taxa including *Anisus leucostoma*, *Armiger crista*, *Lymnaea truncatula*, *Pisidium* sp., *Planorbis planorbis* and *Valvata cristata*.

Other materials were exceedingly scarce, although waterlogged arthropods were recorded within samples 3 and 6.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for further work**

In summary, although some charred macrofossils are recorded, there are insufficient to indicate that human activity was widespread within the local area. It would appear far more likely that the few remains recovered were accidentally blown or washed into the features from which the samples were taken. As both the plant macrofossil and mollusc assemblages suggest that the site was very wet and at least partly overgrown with weeds

it is, perhaps, most likely that the recovered material is indicative of the post-settlement dereliction of the site.

Although samples 3 (10141) and 6 (10308) do contain sufficient material for quantification (i.e. 100+ specimens), analysis of these assemblages would contribute little additional data to that contained within this assessment. Therefore, no further work is recommended.

*Table 6: Analysis of macrofossils and other material from Northborough*

Sample No.	3	5	6	7	9
Context No.	10141	10187	10308	10304	10342
Feature No.					10344
Feature type		R.ditch		ph	Pit
Cereals					
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (grain)		x	x		
Cereal indet. (grain)			x		
Herbs					
<i>Aethusa cynapium</i> L.			xw		
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.			xw		
<i>Carduus</i> sp.	xxw				
<i>Chenopodium glaucum</i> L.	xcfw				
Chenopodiaceae indet.		xw			
<i>Cirsium</i> sp.	xw				
Lamiaceae indet.	xw		xw		
<i>Lapsana communis</i> L.	xw				
<i>Leontodon</i> sp.	xw				
<i>Medicago/Trifolium/Lotus</i> sp.			xcf		
<i>Persicaria maculosa/lapathifoila</i>	x				
Small Poaceae indet.			xw		
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> L.	xw				
<i>Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus</i>	xw		xw		
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	xw		xw		
<i>Taraxacum</i> sp.			xw		
Wetland/aquatic plants					
<i>Apium graveolens</i> L.	xw				
<i>Carex</i> sp.	xw		xw		
<i>Eleocharis</i> sp.			x		
<i>Oenanthe aquatica</i> (L.)Poirot	xw				
<i>Ranunculus</i> subg. <i>Batrachium</i> (DC)A.Gray	xxxw		xw		
<i>Typha</i> sp.			xw		
Tree/shrub macrofossils					
<i>Rubus</i> sect. <i>Glandulosus</i> Wimmer & Grab		xw			
Other plant macrofossils					
Charcoal <2mm	x	x	xx	x	x
Charcoal >2mm		x	x		
Waterlogged root/stem	xxxx	xx	xxx		
Indet.seeds		x	xw		



Sample No.	3	5	6	7	9
Context No.	10141	10187	10308	10304	10342
Feature No.					10344
Feature type		R.ditch		ph	Pit
Molluscs					
Terrestrial species					
Carychium sp.		x	x		
Cochlicopa sp.					x
Vallonia sp.			x		x
V. pulchella					x
Freshwater obligate species					
Anisus leucostoma	x	x	x		xxxx
Aplexa hypnorum					x
Armiger crista			x		x
Lymnaea sp.	x				x
L. palustris	x				xcf
L. truncatula					xx
Pisidium sp.					xx
Planorbis sp.	x				
P. carinatus					x
P. planorbis					xx
Planorbarius corneus	x				
Valvata cristata	x				x
Other materials					
Black porous 'cokey' material		x			
Caddis larval cases	x				
Charred arthropods			x		
Waterlogged arthropods	xxx		x		
Cledoceran ephippia	x				
Sample volume (litres)	20	20		20	20
Volume of flot (litres)	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	0.1
% flot sorted	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Key to Table

x = 1-10 specimens xx = 10-50 specimens xxx = 50-100 specimens xxxx = 100+ specimens

R.ditch = ring ditch ph = post hole w = waterlogged cf = compare

## 6.2 Animal Bone by Karen Deighton

### *Method*

Three archive boxes of animal bone were collected by hand from a range of features during the course of excavation. This material was washed and then analysed using standard zooarchaeological methods (see references).

### *Preservation*

Very little difference was noted in the standard and nature of preservation though time.

Fragmentation was high with only 8.2% of long bones complete and most fragments falling into the category of “splinter” or “cylinder”. Fresh breaks accounted for only 4.1% of fragmentation and as evidence for butchery was limited to 5.6% of bones, this suggests fragmentation was probably largely the result of compaction or trampling. The incidence of bone surface abrasion was fairly high and one example of “flaking” was noted. Canid gnawing was fairly frequent at 33% which along with the high incidence of abrasion suggests bones were left exposed on the ground surface for a time. Evidence for burning was restricted to 0.5% of bone which implies that it was not a favoured method of disposal.

### ***Taxonomic Distribution***

See appendix for number of each species and species by bone element

*Table:7 relative percentages of species by phase*

Phase	Neolithic	Iron age	IA-RB	Early/lateC2nd	LateC2nd-mid 3rd	LateC3rd-4th
Equus		4	3.7		6.2	5.1
Bos	81.6	30	22	53	46.9	64
Ovicaprid		32	44	41	46.9	25.6
Sus	18.4	4		6		5.1
Cervid		30				
Ovic/cap*			7.3			
Gallus			22			

\*Ovicaprid/Capreolous capreolous

### ***Ageing***

Only four ovicaprid mandibles and two loose third molars were available for ageing and suggested animals of twenty-two months plus.

Two Bos mandibles could also be analysed and suggested elderly animals

### ***Sexing***

Two male sus canines were present both from Iron Age contexts

### ***Pathologies***

A single example of exotosis (excess bone growth) was noted on a Bos proximal phalanx from a late 2<sup>nd</sup>/early 3<sup>rd</sup> century context. This condition can be indicative of arthritis.

### ***Discussion***

The major domesticates were exploited at site for all the phases under consideration, although the absence of ovicaprid for the Neolithic and the absence of Sus for the Iron

Age is unusual. However these apparent anomalies could be an artefact of the sample assemblage sizes seen for each phase.

Little can be said of the age and sex structure of herds, bodypart analysis (and subsequently the nature of the assemblage i.e. was it butchery or consumption waste), temporal change in species composition or comparability with other contemporary sites due to the limited amount of material available.

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## 7 DISCUSSION

The excavated evidence shows human activity within the Northborough area from the Neolithic to the Roman periods. The period is Roman, and this is seen through a series of ditches that formed a field system.

### **Neolithic**

The only Neolithic feature that was present on site was a pit, which contained flint flakes, animal bones, polished axe flake and a damaged polished stone axe (Plate 4), from the Langdale fells, in Cumbria, some 200km from Northborough. The axe appeared to have been damaged in antiquity by flakes being struck off; the axe may have been used as a core before deposition into the pit. Group VI axes are the most commonly found stone axes in the region, with examples being found at nearby Maxey and Etton causewayed enclosure. There seems to be a clustering of axe finds along the fen edge, especially along the edge of the Car Dyke (Moore, see website in bibliography) with concentrations of axes found near fording sites. The pit at Northborough containing the axe corresponds with the pattern, located close to a palaeochannel that was an active watercourse in the Neolithic, which had a possible natural fording point (Fig 4). The location of axes close to fording points may be a Neolithic tradition of deposition of items of value into or close to water that carried on and evolved into the Bronze Age and beyond.

### **Bronze Age**

Bronze Age activity on site appeared to be limited. A small amount of mid to late Bronze Age pottery was recovered from site in the form of the Collared Urn type. The evidence from previous excavations, HER data and cropmarks shows that the surrounding area was being utilised in the Bronze Age and it is possible that any Bronze Age features at Northborough have been truncated away by later features but may reflect a dispersed settlement pattern, which does not leave obvious archaeological traces.

### **Iron Age**

The clustering and large sub-rectangular shape of the pit group in Area 1 would suggest that they were not part of a pit alignment but part of an industrial process, such as salterns, tanks used in the process of extracting salt from brackish water. The pits were located on the fen edge and may be at such a low level that they were subjected to brackish water. They were close to an active water source and had good communication links in the form of a droveway or trackway. No briquetage, a straw tempered friable fabric used as saltpans and their supports, was found within the pottery assemblage on site. Iron Age salt making was well attested on the fen edge sites, with the nearest

confirmed site at Frognall, Market Deeping, some 3 km away (Coles and Hall 1994). The main centre of industry was in Lincolnshire, with sites such as Deeping St James, which is a fen edge site and evidence of salt-making sites at nearby Langtoft and Tetney (website in bibliography).

Many sites have cropmarks associated with them, which form droves and paddocks, consistent with stock-based economies, which may be the case at Northborough; salt making was practised alongside agriculture. Salt making was also a major part of the Roman fen economy. The pits could also represent another industrial process being undertaken at Northborough, such as gravel extraction, as they are cut into the gravel. However, it appeared from the depth of alluvium (over 1m) that covered that the pits the area was subjected to regular flooding, which would have made gravel quarrying difficult and there being easier gravel sites to quarry within the vicinity.

Parallel gullies in Area 1 appeared to form a droveway or trackway and the pottery recovered would suggest an Iron Age date. The droveway or trackway was located on an area of raised ground and situated between an active watercourse and the pit group, and would probably have been the only demarcated dry route across an area of seasonal wet ground. The feature may give a hint at the Iron Age economy for the area. A droveway or trackway suggests the movement of livestock from one pasture to another, possibly due to seasonal flooding events but it can also indicate both mobile and static elements with cleared cultivation in fixed places and pasturing of animals in seasonal places. The area of excavation was relatively small to plot an exact course of the droveway but the projected alignment to the west would suggest the northern gully would truncate the projected alignment of the pit group but due as this was beyond the limit of excavation this relationship could not be established.

Possible evidence for settlement in the area is seen at the north-eastern part of Area 2 where a four-post structure was seen, these are usually used in the Bronze or Iron Age for the dry storage of grain or other crops (Fig 5). No other prehistoric structures were seen on site, this might be due to the area sampled as a large amount of crop-marks are seen to the north.

## **Roman**

The majority of the features are from the Roman period and appear to form a shifting field system from the 2nd century, which matches the date of the Roman expansion into the fens.

The presence of Roman ditches indicated an increase of agricultural activity within the

area around Northborough compared to the Iron Age, which may be due to a number of factors. Firstly the area of excavation was limited, cropmark evidence shows field systems to the north of the excavation area which if excavated could be Iron Age, or the ground conditions in the Iron Age may have been unsuitable for farming or settlement, as the water table was lower in the Roman period (Coles and Hall 1994), therefore land that would have been unsuitable in the Iron Age was utilised in the Roman period with their expansion into the fens. Roman settlements are widely scattered along the fen margin and it is suggested (Hayes and Lane 1992) that many Roman sites extended onto land used as meadows in medieval times suggesting that Roman settlements specialised in pastoral farming, rather than arable. This could be the case at Northborough with the use of the droveway seen in Area 1, which may have originated in the Iron Age. Evidence for the animal husbandry may be seen in Area 2 in the form of a ring ditch (Plate 7).

Evidence for land use at the Northborough site may be seen in the fill of the features. Analysis of the fill of features by Charlie French on the A15 bypass project (French and Pryor 2005), located a kilometre to the west of Northborough, shows the formation of feature deposits and the environment in which they form. In the Iron Age the land was subjected to alluvial and freshwater influence, the land may only have been used for early summer pasture and would have remained unenclosed because of its propensity to flooding. The Roman features at Northborough were infilled by the same grey silty clay that French describes as filling the Roman ditches found on the A15 bypass and describes them as being the result of run-off water containing locally derived eroded soil originating from the higher parts of the terrace to the north, it also suggests there was an increased activity of arable activity on the higher ground during this period (French and Pryor 2005).

The presence of pre Flavian 1st century AD pottery as well as late Iron Age pottery recovered from what appears to be a rectilinear field system may be evidence of Roman activity impacting on the late Iron Age community. The area Iron Age tribe that occupied Northborough area was the Coritani (Corieltavi) who surrendered to Aulus Plautius in his midlands campaigns during AD 43-46, without much resistance. A Roman Vexillation fort was established at Longthorpe, 10km to the south of Northborough, between AD 44 and AD48 (<http://www.roman-org/places/longthorpe>). The fort could have been the local contact to the early interaction between the local Iron Age communities and the Roman occupiers and this is how the early Roman pottery got into the local community.

The late 2nd-3rd century AD saw a change in the field system and appearance of locally

produced Roman wares and the establishment of what appears to be a square enclosure. It is unclear what was within the enclosure as half was outside the excavation area but a possible haystack to the east may suggest it was for livestock and a continuation of the Iron Age economy. This corresponds with the Roman expansion into the fens and the construction of the nearby Car Dyke, when the fens were exploited as an Imperial estate. It appears that the landuse remained agricultural and rural from the Iron Age through the Roman period; this is reflected with the lack of Iron Age or Roman structures on site, although Roman floor tile recovered from the upper deposits of ditch suggests a stone Roman structure was located within the vicinity.

The land was occupied from the Neolithic until the late Roman period but the evidence suggests that from the late Iron Age until the late 3rd century AD the land was used as for both industrial use, as seen by the pit group and for agriculture, probably livestock based. This is suggested by droveway and haystack. The land may have been seasonally affected by rising water level and it is probably this that caused the abandonment of the site in the mid 4th century AD. The lack of coins and high status pottery, with most of the pottery from local potteries would suggest a rural society, which did not experience the wealth from Roman Britain as other parts of the country.

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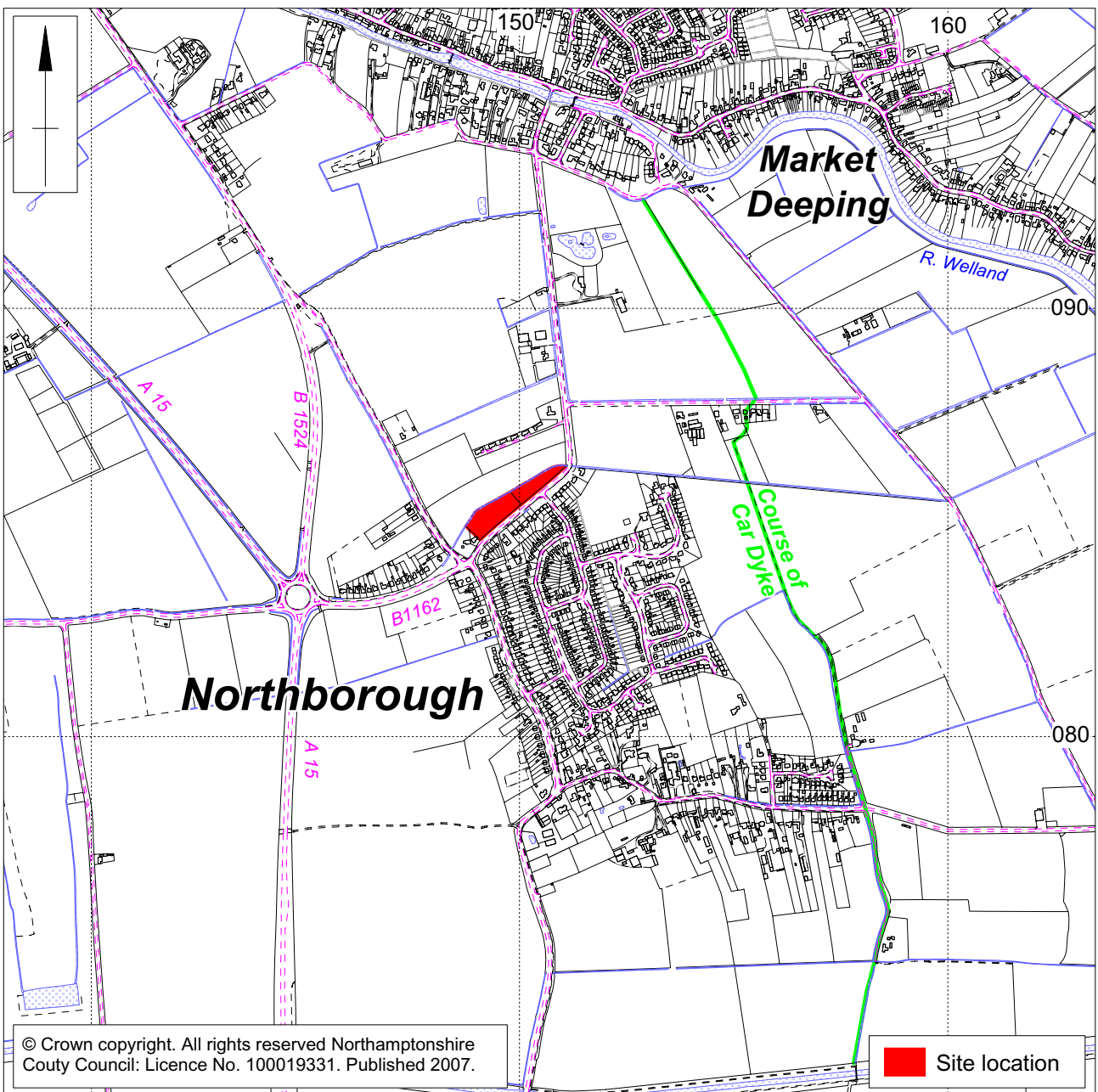
C N Moore, Stone Axes from the East Midlands in:

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/cbaresrep/pdf/023/02308001.pdf>

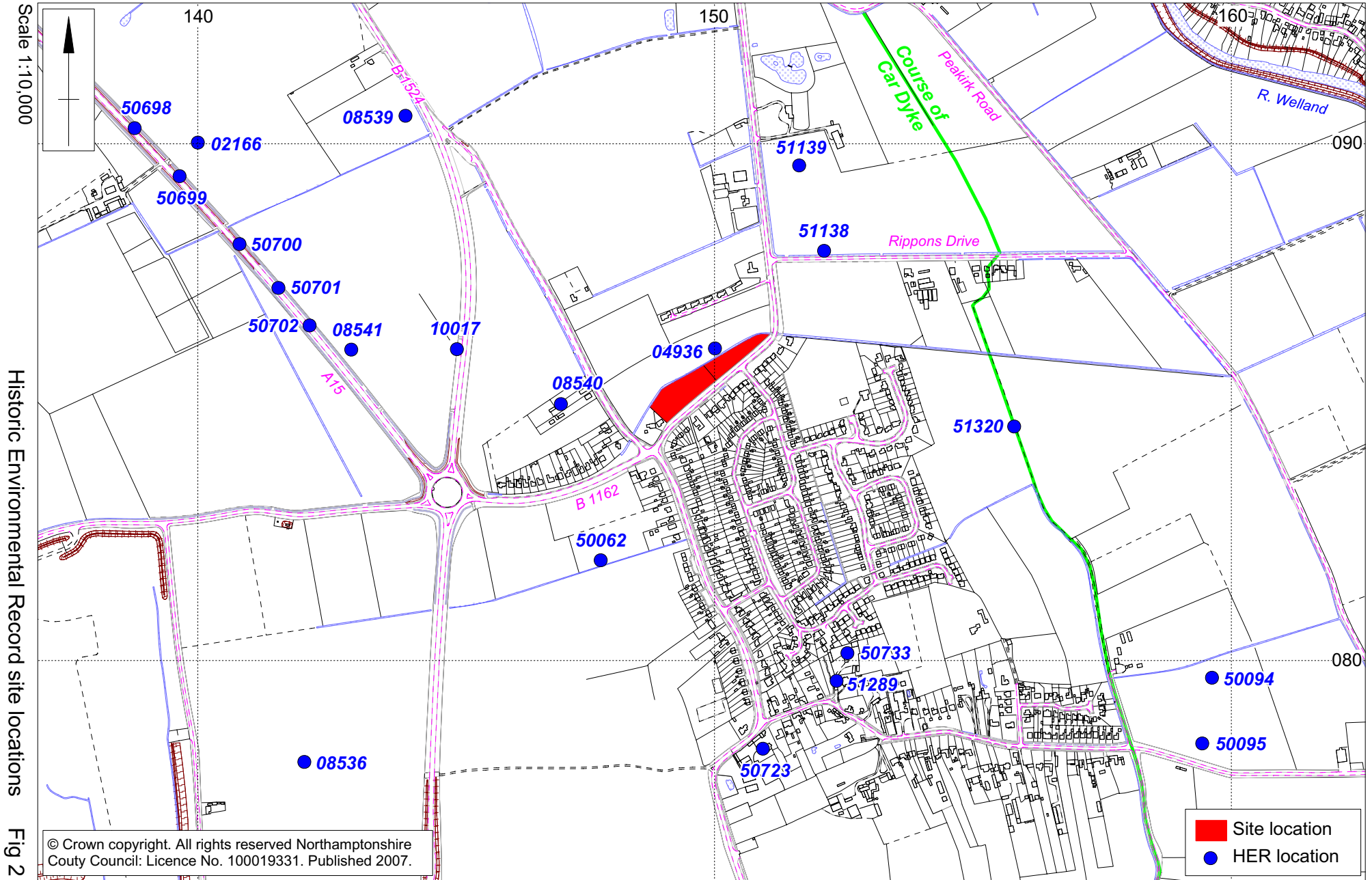
Prehistoric salt-making village found in Fens, in:

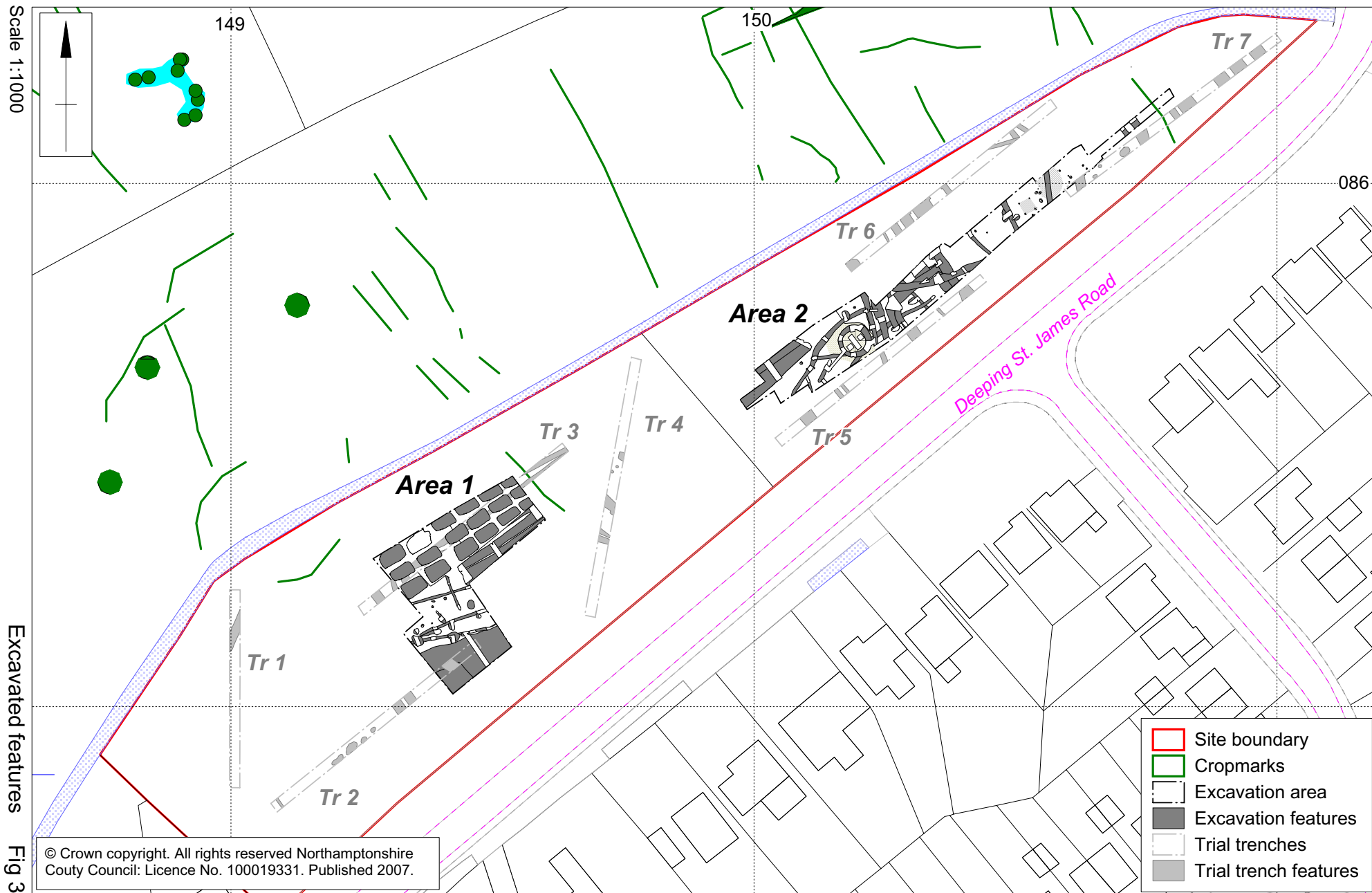
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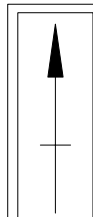
<http://www.roman-britain.org/places/longthorpe.htm>



Site location Fig 1







## Area 1



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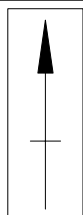
0

20m

Scale 1:200

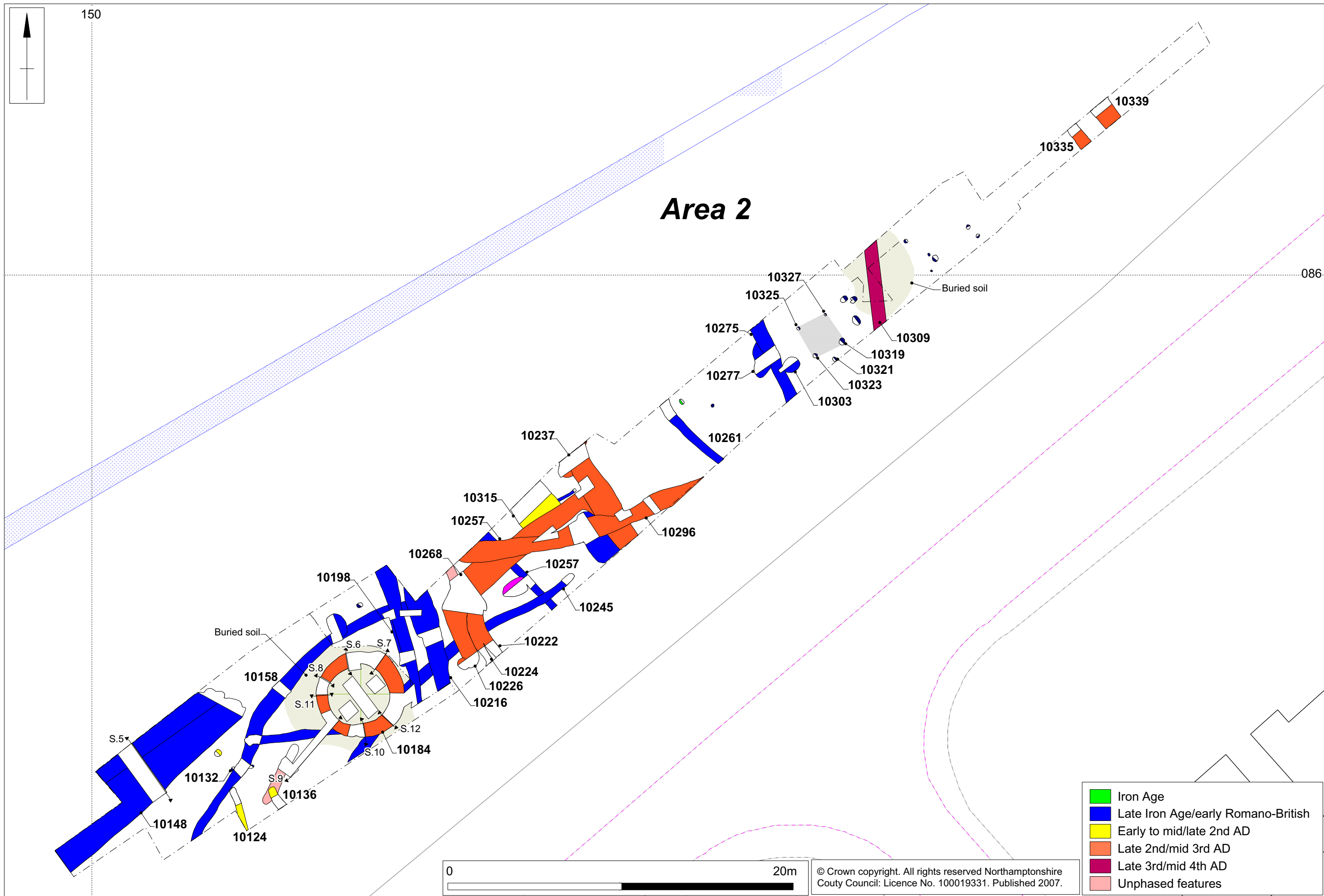
Phase plan of Area 1 Fig 4





150

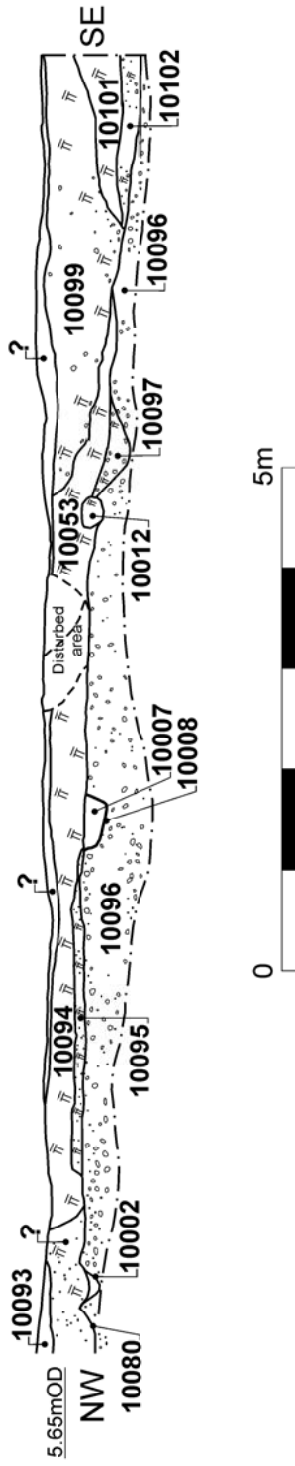
## Area 2



Scale 1:250

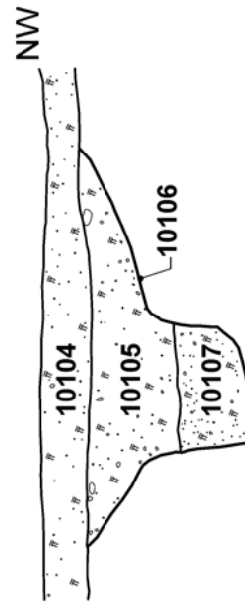
Phase plan of Area 2 Fig 5

### Section 1 - Palaeochannel



### Section 2 - Neolithic pit

5.65mOD  
SE



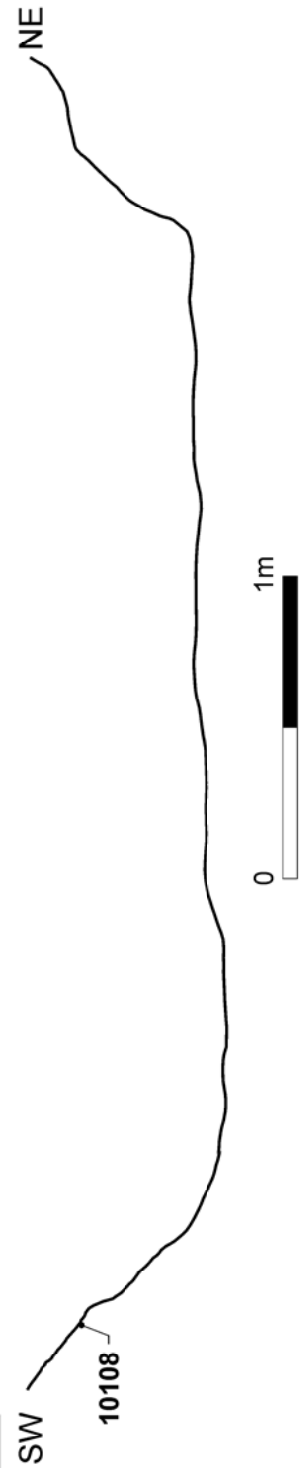
### Section 3 - Iron Age pit group

5.35mOD



### Section 4 - Iron Age pit group

5.35mOD

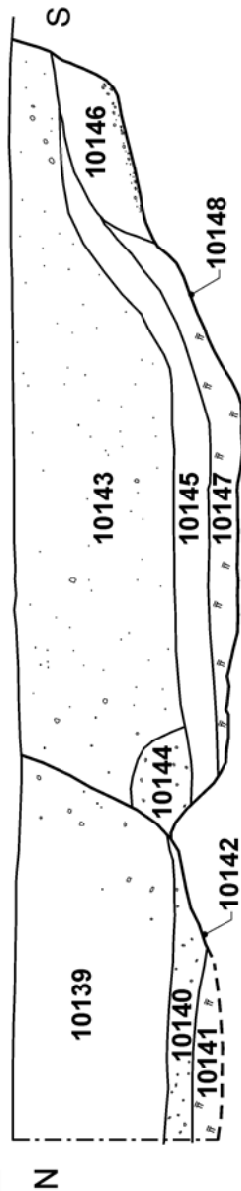


Sections of features in Area 1 Fig 6



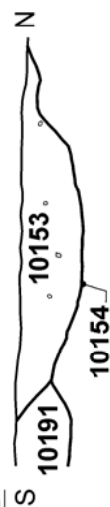
# **Section 5 - Romano-British enclosure ditch**

5.75mOD



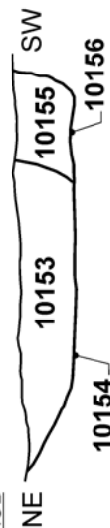
# **Section 6 - Roman ring ditch**

5.93mOD



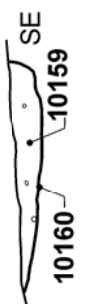
# **Section 7 - Roman ring ditch**

5.93mOD



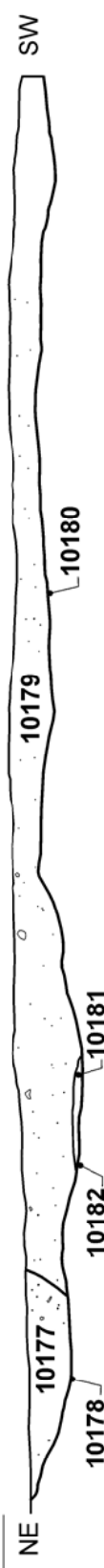
# **Section 8 - Roman ring ditch**

5.82mOD



# **Section 9 - Roman ring ditch**

5.92mOD



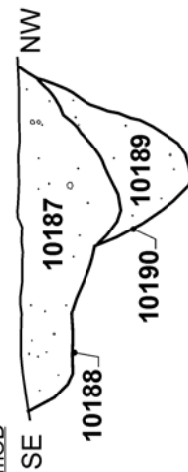
# **Section 10 - Roman ring ditch**

6.24mOD



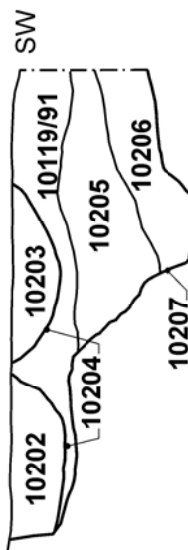
# **Section 11 - Roman ring ditch**

6.18mOD



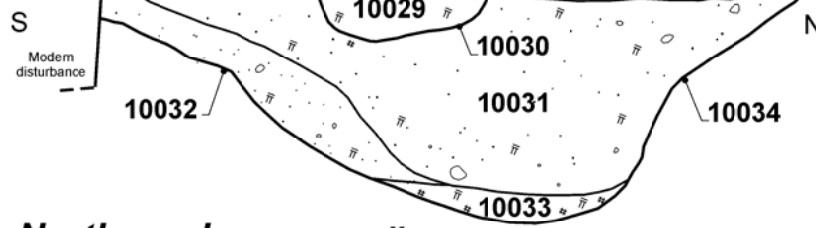
# **Section 12 - Roman ring ditch**

5.86mOD



### ***Section 13 - Pit cut by southern driveway gully***

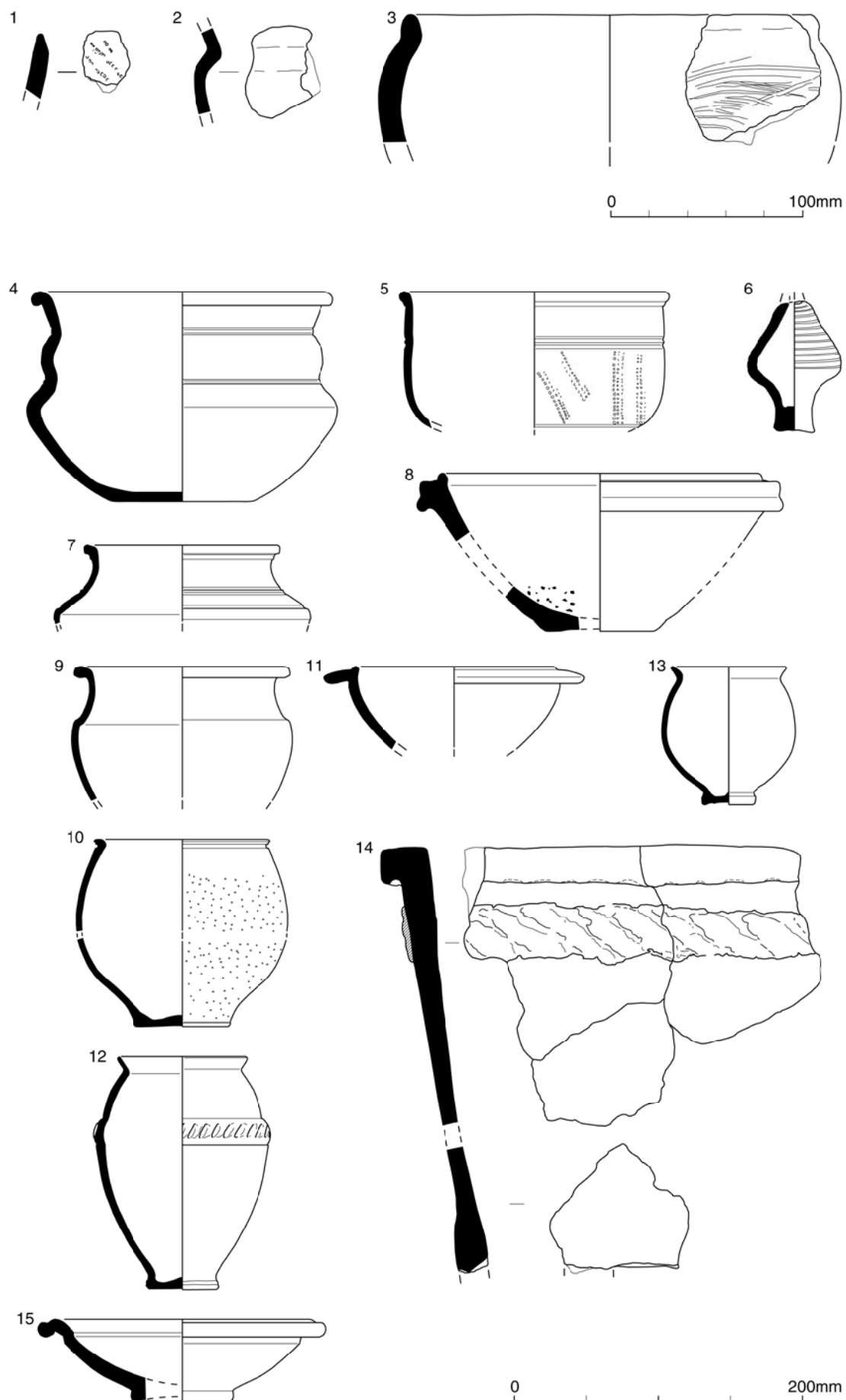
5.69mOD



### ***Section 14 - Northern driveway gully***

5.88mOD





Prehistoric (1-3) and late Iron Age /Roman (4-15) pottery Fig 9





Plate 1: Pit group, looking south-west.



Plate 2: Area 1; under excavation, looking north-east.





Plate 3: Area 1, palaeochannel, looking south-west.



Plate 4: Group VI polished stone axe, recovered from pit [10106] (Scale 1:1).





Plate 5: Area 1; excavated pit [10108], part of pit group.

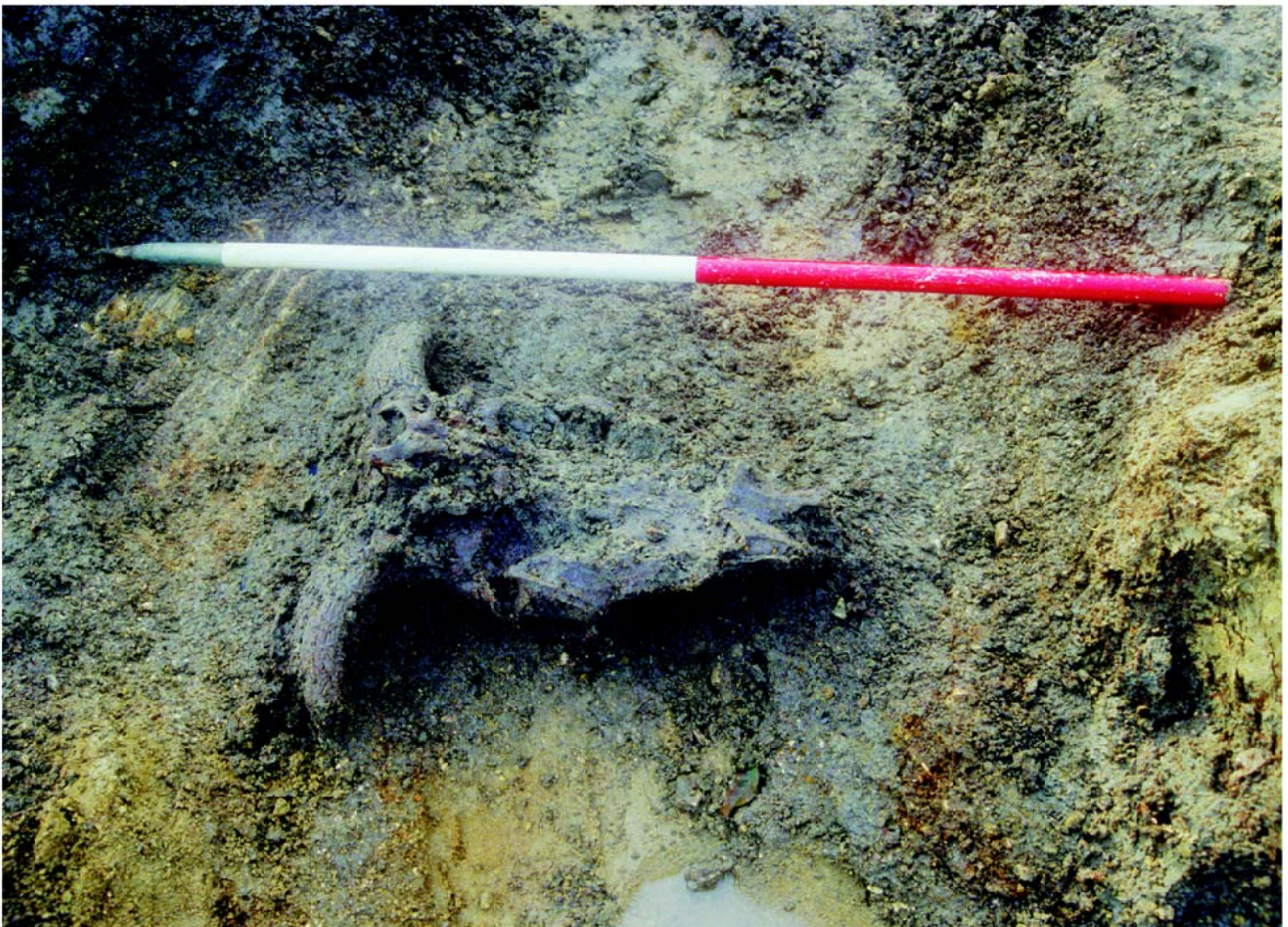


Plate 6: Area 2; cow skull within ditch [10268].





Plate 7: Area 2; Roman ring ditch, pre-excavation, looking south-east.