

EVIDENCE FOR LATE BRONZE AGE/EARLY IRON AGE ACTIVITY AT LAND TO THE REAR OF 36 AND 38 ETON ROAD, DATCHET

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with contributions by TOM MCDONALD, PETE THOMPSON, CARINA PHILIPS AND VAL FRYER.

SUMMARY

In 2000, an evaluation and small excavation were undertaken on land to the rear of 36 and 38 Eton Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire. The site is situated in the Thames Valley, an area known for its extensive evidence of prehistoric archaeology. The excavation revealed two ditches and a possible waterhole dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age period, and also undated shallow pits, postholes, linear features and tree hollows. The site is possibly part of a larger field system, associated with a settlement. The small quantity of finds recovered from the site suggests that any associated settlement was situated some distance away.

INTRODUCTION

Datchet is situated in the Thames Valley, which has there is evidence for almost continuous human activity from the early prehistoric period. Several layers of river terrace gravels in the Thames Valley were created throughout the earliest period of human activity (Lewis 2000) and isolated flint tools and antler picks dating to the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods have been found in and around Datchet, including a hoard consisting of 11 axes, five flakes, one roughout and a one retouched flake, approximately 2.9km to the north-west of the site, dated to the lower Palaeolithic. Evidence for Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity in the area is also attested by isolated finds of bronze and flint weapons, scatters of struck and burnt flint, isolated Bronze Age features on predominately later sites (such as the Old Windsor Sewage works, 2.6km south of the site) and cropmarks of ring ditches.

Figure 1 shows the extent of known prehistoric and Roman activity in Datchet: an Iron Age and Roman settlement was revealed during an evaluation at Riding Court Farm, 600m to the east of Eton Road (Roberts, 2000) and Iron Age pottery was found during fieldwalking near Southlea Farm, 1.7km south. This pottery appears to be clustered into three groups, with predominantly early Iron Age fragments in one, middle Iron Age in another and later Iron Age in the third. An excavation at the Old Windsor Sewage works revealed an Iron Age/Roman field system, along with a later Roman enclosure. A first century Roman fort is thought to have existed 3km to the north-west, although there is no evidence to support this claim, and a Roman site is recorded to the south of the possible fort. A number of isolated Iron Age and Roman metal finds have been recovered from the Thames.

Cropmarks and geophysical surveying around Southlea Farm have revealed enclosures, linear features and pits. An extensive area of cropmarks has also been recorded at Eton Wick, 3km west of the excavation, including a causewayed enclosure, another enclosure and a number of ring ditches. A further cropmark of an enclosure is located 1.8km to the east. While none of these cropmarks have yet been investigated it is likely that many of them represent prehistoric and Roman activity.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In December 2003, Archaeological Solutions (Contracts) Ltd (AS) carried out an excavation on land to the rear of

36 and 38 Eton Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire (NGR SU 9835 7769) (Figs. 1-2). The excavation was undertaken in advance of proposals to develop the land for residential use. The excavation followed an evaluation which revealed a large pit/water hole dating to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, two undated linear features and several modern features, probably associated with garden structures (Weston & Grant 2003a). The excavation revealed further features dating to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, along with additional undated features, principally pits, post holes and tree roots (Weston & Grant 2003b).

SITE DESCRIPTION AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

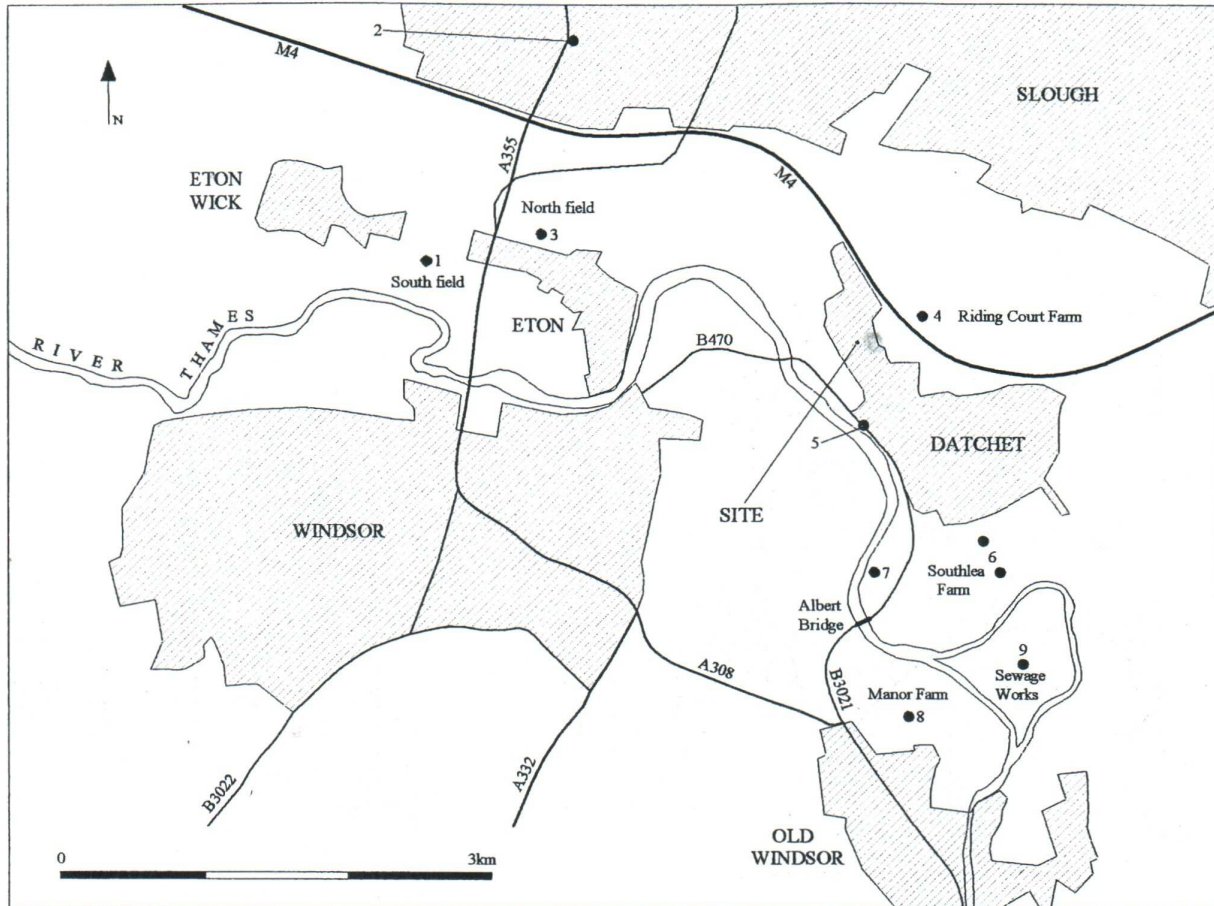
The site is situated in Datchet, 2km south of Slough and c. 400m north east of the River Thames. Windsor and Eton lie approximately 2.5km to the west (Fig. 1). It lies on the northern side of Datchet, fronting on to Eton Road to the south west, opposite the cul-de-sac of Eton Close. At the time of the excavation, the site comprised mature rear garden plots of the properties fronting Eton Road to the south west, with mature trees, hedges and lawned areas.

The site lies on the river terrace gravels overlaid by soil of Sutton 2 association. Sutton 2 soil is described as well drained fine and coarse loamy soils usually over gravel with a calcareous matrix. Typical land use for these types of soils are for cereals and short term grassland, potatoes and some field vegetables, along with gravel extraction (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

EXCAVATION BACKGROUND AND METHODS

Based on the results of the trial trenching, two areas were selected for a larger scale excavation in order to investigate features that were not obviously modern in date. In total, an area of 200m² was stripped. A further two evaluation trenches (8 and 9) were excavated at the south eastern end of the site (Fig. 2). The topsoil and subsoil overburden was removed mechanically under close archaeological supervision. The area was then cleaned and further excavation was undertaken by hand. Metal detecting was undertaken by members of the excavation team and both the stripped area and the spoil heaps were surveyed.

A programme of archaeological work and monitoring was undertaken whilst the footings of plot 1, which overlaid the area of trench 1 and part of trench 2, were



- 1 Extensive area of cropmarks, including a causewayed camp, mortuary enclosure, ring ditches and a trapezoid enclosure at Eton Wick South Field (SMR 00208)
- 2 1st century AD settlement, traditionally thought to be a fort (SMR 00202)
- 3 Late Neolithic or late Iron Age ring ditch cropmark (SMR 00256)
- 4 Iron Age activity noted during an evaluation at the western edge of the present site (SMR RW15165)
- 5 Mesolithic and Iron Age stray finds from the Thames at Datchet (SMR 00139)
- 6 Crop marks at Southlea Farm, including a possible settlement, field system, barrow cemetery and trackway (SMR 00217)
- 7 Bronze Age enclosure and ring ditch crop mark north of Albert Bridge (SMR 00250)
- 8 Cropmark of possible Bronze Age barrow, south west of Manor Farm (SMR 00216)
- 9 Iron Age/Roman field system excavated at Old Windsor Sewage Works. Mesolithic and Neolithic flint, Bronze Age pottery and pit, later Roman enclosure and well

Figure 1. Evidence for Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity around the site at Eton Road, Datchet

being excavated, as the latter revealed a significant number of archaeological features. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the monitoring.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Principal dated features

The earliest phase of activity on the site dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (LBA/EIA). The features that clearly belonged to this phase were two ditches (F2003 and F2025) and a large pit/waterhole (F2005) (Fig.2). Ditch F2003 was located in area 1 and was originally revealed in trenches 5 and 6. It ran on a north east/south west axis and was at least 24m in length. The ditch was not observed in evaluation trench 4, suggesting the western terminus was situated between trench 4 and trench 5. The ditch was filled with two silty clay deposits (L2004 and L2008) (Fig. 3) which

contained a few sherds of LBA/EIA pottery, some possibly belonging to the same vessel, burnt flint, daub and cattle bones.

Ditch F2025, first revealed in evaluation trench 3, was further exposed in area 2. It ran on a north north west/south south east axis for at least 10 metres, terminating in the northern end of area 2. The ditch was not seen in evaluation trench 4, suggesting it either terminates before the trench or changes direction. One further possibility is that it is an interrupted ditch which continues south of trench 4 (Weston & Grant 2003b). The ditch had six fills. Deposits L2026 and L2030 appear to have derived from slumped natural and they were present on both sides of the ditch (Fig. 3). L2027, L2028, L2029 and L2031 appear to have been the product of natural silting process. L2027 and L2031

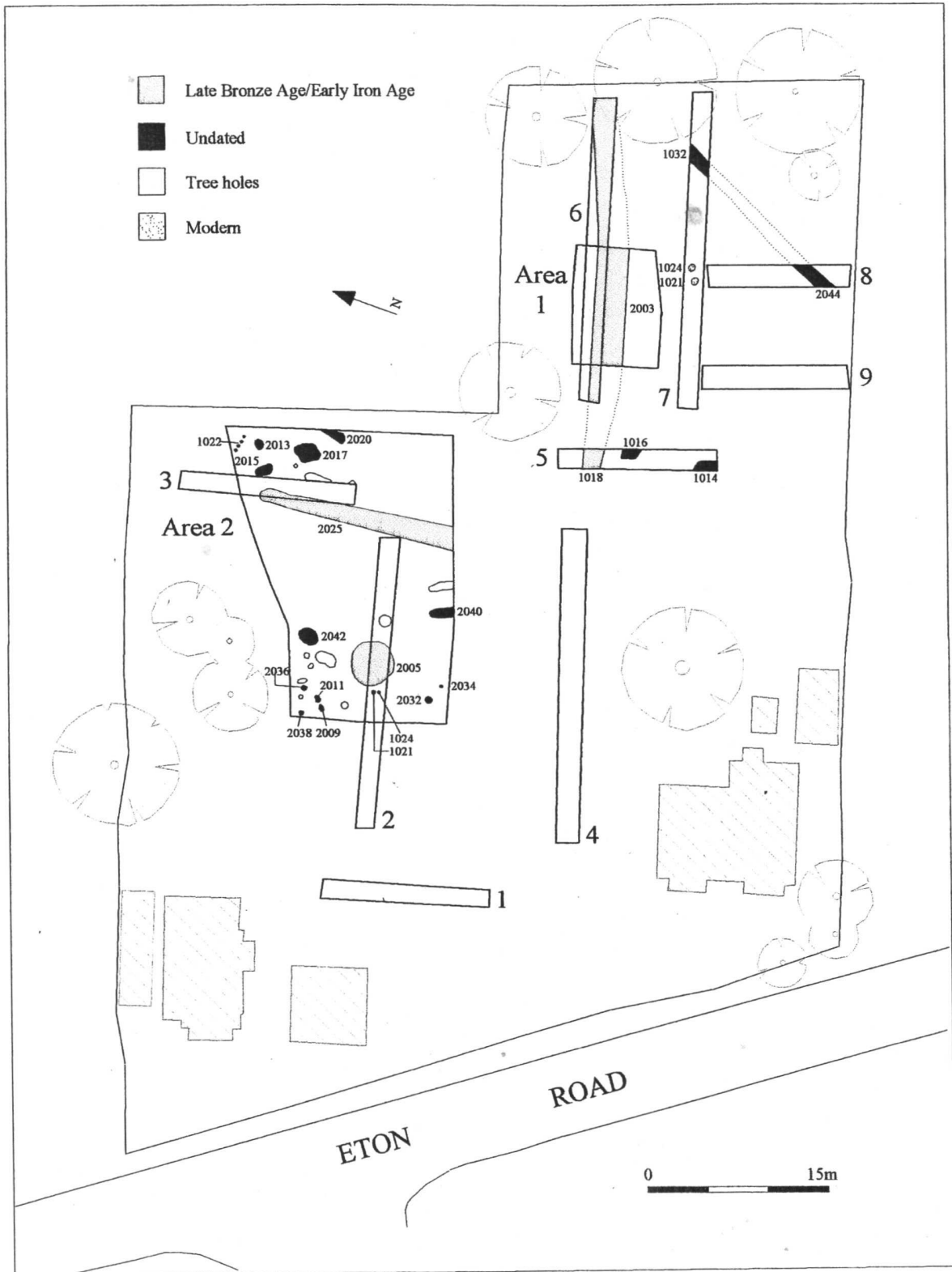


Figure 2. All features phase plan

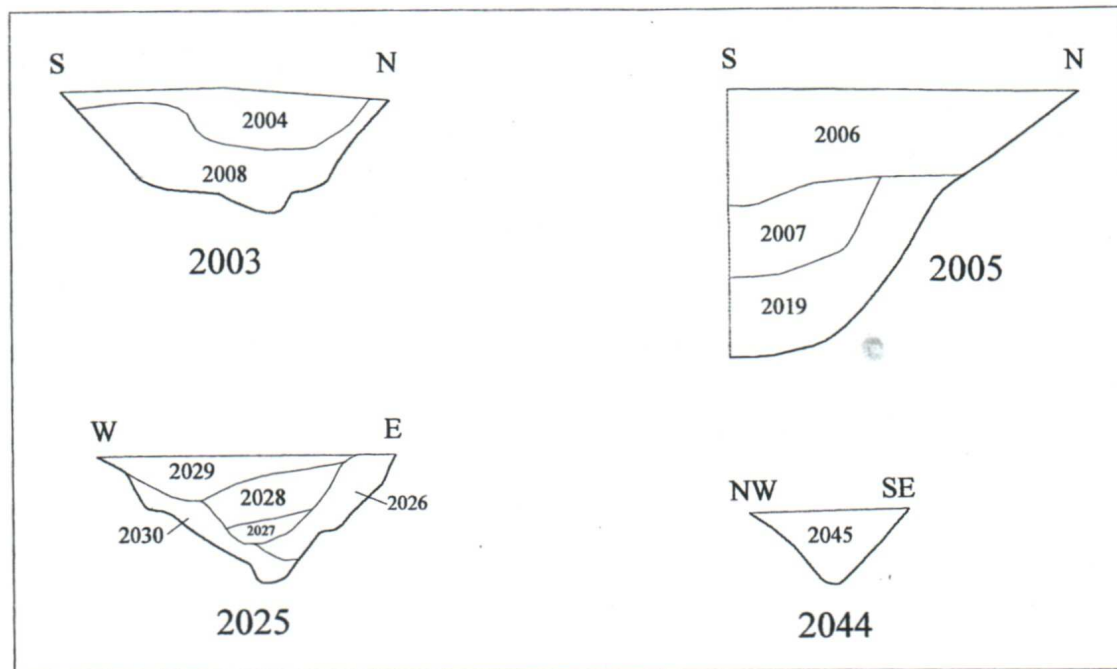


Figure 3. Sections

only appeared in segments A and B, respectively. The ditch yielded fragments of LBA/EIA pottery, including 51 sherds belonging to a single vessel along with fragments of bone from sheep/goat and cattle.

Also in area 2 was a large pit or waterhole F2005, situated to the west of ditch F2025 (Fig. 2). It was partially excavated during the evaluation. It was 3.4m in diameter, 1.4m deep and contained three fills, L2006, L2007 and L2019. L2007 appeared to be redeposited natural, which was not encountered when it was excavated during the evaluation (Fig. 3). The pit contained a comparatively large quantity of pottery and burnt flint, along with sheep/goat bones and daub, distributed across all the deposits.

Undated features

The majority of features on the site revealed diagnostic evidence. In area 2, the undated features consisted of six pits and ten post holes. These features appeared to be clustered into groups. Pits F2013, F2015, F2017, F2020 and F2022 were situated in the north-eastern sector of area 2. F2009, F2011, F2036, F2038 and F2042 were located to the west of ditch F2025, and F2032, F2034 and F2040 lay in the south-western sector of area 2 (Fig. 2).

Pit F2020 was an elongated feature which extended beyond the limits of the excavation on an approximate north-south axis, and may represent the terminus of a narrow ditch or gully. Pits F2013, F2015 and F2017 were possibly tree-hollows, and were filled with brown, loose, slightly clayey silt (L2014, L2016 and L2018 respectively). F2017 contained a light brown/grey clay lower deposit (L2024). Postholes F2022 were four small

circular features, representing a short fence line at least 1.5m long, aligned east-west.

F2025 and north of Pit F2042 was oval shaped and 1.65m x 1.20m in size and 0.30m deep and was situated to the west of ditch pit F2025. It contained a single deposit (L2043). West of pit F2042 was a group of three post holes, F2009, F2011 and F2036, along with stakehole F2038. The postholes were between 0.14m and 0.38m deep and were roughly aligned in an arc on a north-south axis. Stakehole F2038 lay to the west of the postholes and was 0.16m deep. All contained a single deposit described as a reddish brown sand and gravel mix.

Pit F2040 and postholes F2032 and F2034 lay south of the large pit F2005. F2040 was an elongated oval which lay on a north north west/south south east axis, the southern end running beyond the limits of the excavation, and 0.38m deep. It may be a ditch terminus, but it was not located in evaluation trench 4 so it is either an elongated pit or a short section of a ditch. It contained a single fill (L2041) described as rusty red/brown silty sand. Postholes F2032 and F2034 were situated to the south of pit F2040. F2032 was 0.45m by 0.4m and 0.35m deep while F2034 was smaller, being 0.25m in diameter and 0.23m deep. They contained a single fill, described as mid orange/brown silty sand.

Ditch F2044, revealed in trench 8, lay on a west west north/east east south alignment. It was possibly a continuation of the ditch found in evaluation trench 7. It contained a single deposit (L2045), described as a mid grey/brown clayed silt.

11 features on the site were recorded as tree hollows and were not excavated

STRUCK FLINT*Tom McDonald*

The 18 struck flakes/chips from F1003 L1004 are the most cohesive group, and they may be broadly contemporary. The one retouched piece, the point, is patinated and does not readily form part of the group.

The four pieces from the basal fill of the same feature, F1003 L1023, are not coherent. Excepting to note the predominance of flakes to blades, the assemblage is too small for detailed comment.

PREHISTORIC POTTERY*Peter Thompson*

The excavation produced 117 sherds weighing 1.5kg from a total of 9 contexts. The condition of the sherds is generally poor; the average sherd is 12.8 grams. However, the majority are actually much smaller and fragmented although there are also several large pieces in excess of 60 grams. The latter include one semi-complete vessel. The sherds show little evidence of erosion suggesting they were deposited in a primary context. The colour varied due to heating at low temperatures. Cores are usually reduced dark grey or dark to mid brown, but are occasionally black or wholly or partially oxidised orange. Surfaces, particularly inner ones are most frequently dark grey/brown or orange-brown to beige. Outer surfaces are sometimes mottled.

All the sherds are flint-tempered, in most cases the filler, which is mostly burnt and crushed, has been added in profusion. A small amount of sand is also present in most sherds. The fabrics can be divided into two wares. Coarse wares have larger angular pieces of flint that can reach 0.8cm across and give the surfaces a rough feel. The finer ware flint is more finely crushed and rarely exceeding 0.3cm across and surfaces are smoother. There are no complete profiles although the scant evidence suggests comparatively straight sided vessels with simple upright rims.

There are 5 rims all simple and upright or slightly outturned, with the exception of an example from context 2007 which is almost flattened.

There are 5 fragments of flat base. The sherds from the semi-complete vessel indicate a deep bowl with a rounded profile flaring out from a flat base that finishes with a straight side and slightly outturned, simple rim. A large body sherd and the decorated cordon indicate a minimum of two coarse ware jars, although it is probable most of the coarse fabrics present are from large jars. Sherd widths vary from 0.3cm on the finer ware to 1.2cm across on the coarse wares. Only 2 sherds show evidence of decoration, both from context 2006. The first is the applied cordon with fingertip decoration. The second, the sherd comprising at least 2 parallel incised grooves with a small ovoid tool making impressions between the motif, is probably part of a larger panel of decoration. Most sherds have been wiped while the finer wares are more carefully smoothed or polished on both sides.

Owing to the sparse nature of the assemblage, there are few diagnostic sherds. However, comparisons with the

chronology from a large-scale excavation at Reading Business Park (Moore & Jennings, 1992) can be made. Here, the main phase of occupation following the Deverel-Rimbury phase comprised a very varied plain ware assemblage of coarse through to very fine pottery. The forms can be bowls, jars and cups with profiles that can be angular, rounded, convex and straight sided. This phase lasted until the 8th century BC when a decorated phase emerges heralding the start of the Early Iron Age. Many of the plain ware forms were retained but the large element of decorated types includes finger tip or nail impressions to rim and or shoulder, and to shoulder cordons. Incised decoration, although rare, comprised the division of the surface of the shoulder into distinct panels (Hall 1992: 63-80, Gibson 2002: 114-115). The rounded bowl and probable straight jar forms from Datchet together with the finger impressed cordon and incised panel fit most closely with the decorated phase at Reading. In particular, the incised motif is closely paralleled with the design on a sherd from Cold Kitchen Hill, Brixton Deverel in Wiltshire (Barrett 305: Fig.6 no. 16). This places the pottery in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition between the 8th and the 7th/6th centuries BC.

Catalogue of the Pottery by Context

2004 2 sherds weighing 7g. Brown fabric and darker surfaces, flint inclusions. One fragment of an upright rim.

2004 Segment B – 1 sherd weighing 2g. Dark grey fabric with mottled orange-brown and dark brown surfaces.

2006 30 sherds weighing 250g. All but six sherds of 38g were from coarse wares with angular burnt flint filler up to 0.8cm across. Some sherds also contained sand. The sherds varied in colour through being fired at low temperatures. Some were completely oxidised, others completely reduced and some were half oxidised and half reduced. Surfaces were orange-brown or dark brown to almost black. The sherd thickness varied between 0.5 and 1.2cm. There was almost no diagnostic evidence for forms although decoration from one sherd comprised an applied cordon with finger decoration that would have come from a jar. The only other decorated sherd had two faintly incised parallel grooves with ovoid impressions made with a tool, such as the end of a small twig. This was probably part of a larger panel of decoration. The finer ware sherds, included two conjoining pieces to a flat base were similar in colour to the coarser wares. However, the flint was more finely crushed and rarely protrudes through the fabric surfaces that were generally smoother. Most sherds of both types showed evidence of careful wiping.

2007 20 sherds weighing 192g. All were profusely flint tempered and the colours as for context 2006. The thickest coarse ware sherd was 1.2cm across weighing 63g, and probably belonged to a large jar while there is one fragment of upright rim. The remaining 3 sherds, weighing 56g, were from finer ware vessels. These included 2 rims to upright vessels. The larger was 18-22cm diameter with a simple but flattened rim. The other had a simple rim. Some sherds had been wiped or smoothed.

2008 5 sherds weighing 105g. Common flint inclusions with sand. Dark grey core and inner

surface, with beige external surface. Possibly all sherds were from the same vessel, probably a jar.

- 2019** 3 sherds weighing 14g. Brown and dark grey fabrics with dark brown or orange-brown surfaces.
- 2026** Segment C produced 51 sherds weighing 766g, all from one vessel. The core was brown and the surfaces a dark grey inside and mottled dark grey, beige and patches of red. The inclusions comprised profuse, angular white flint up to 0.3cm across. The walls were 0.3-0.5cm across and the flat base 1cm. The rim was simple with the last 2cm of the neck slightly turned outwards. Both surfaces were smoothed and the outer surface showed areas of polishing, but not to the level of full burnishing.
- 2028** 3 sherds weighing 72g. Included a flat base sherd 66g with dark grey/black core and inner surface, and a mottled orange-beige-dark grey outer surface.
- 2028** Segment D - 2 sherds weighing 92g. Both coarse wares with dark grey cores and orange-brown exteriors and mottled beige and grey interior surfaces. A body sherd and a flat base sherd are both 1.2cm across.

ANIMAL BONE

Carina Phillips MA

Introduction

Only 27 fragments form the animal bone assemblage at Eton Road, Datchet. The bone was recovered from eight contexts, the fill of two ditches and one pit. The assemblage is highly fragmented and poorly preserved, with surface erosion occurring on a number of fragments. The poor preservation and fragmentation of the assemblage is likely to cause biases in the survival of larger bone, it will also affect the identification of butchery marks or gnawing present on the bone surface.

Method

When possible the material was identified and recorded to species and element. The separation of sheep and goats were impossible for most elements, so they were

recorded under the category of sheep/goat. Tooth wear was recorded using the method of Grant (1982) and was recorded using the method of Grant (1982) and where possible ages were assigned using the method of Hambleton (1999). Measurements were taken of the few bones complete enough following Driesch (1976); however due to the paucity of the data further consideration has not taken place.

Results

Feature	Context	Segment	Species
2003	2004	B	Cattle
2005	2006		Sheep/goat
2005	2007		Sheep/goat
2005	2007		Unidentified
2005	2019		Sheep/goat
2025	2028	B	Cattle sized
2025	2028	D	Sheep/goat
2025	2029	C	Cattle

Table 1. Summary of results

Due to the poor preservation of the assemblage the categories of 'cattle size', consisting of cattle, deer and horse sized fragments and 'sheep size' consisting of sheep, pig and dog sized bone fragments were used.

The unidentifiable bone fragments were recorded as so. Any evidence of taphonomy was scanned for, including burning, chopping, cutting, smashed and gnawed bone. The minimum number of individuals (MNI) of a species was calculated from most frequent element of a left or right bone

	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Cattle sized	Sheep sized	Unidentifiable
Teeth	1	1	-	-	-
Mandible	1	1	-	-	-
Humerus	1	3	-	-	-
Radius	1	2	-	-	-
Ulna	1	0			
Metapodial	1	0			
Pelvis	0	1	-	-	-
Femur	0	1	-	-	-
Tibia	1	1	-	-	-
Unidentifiable fragments	0	0	1	2	7
Total	7	10	1	2	7

Table 2. Animal bone details from Datchet

Sheep/goat were identified in the highest numbers (consisting of eight fragments), producing an MNI of two. A single mandible was recovered aged at 4-6 years.

Similar numbers of cattle bone were also identified however these produced an MNI of one. No bone fragments exhibited taphonomy.

Discussion

The data indicates that more sheep/goat than cattle was disposed of on the site. This is particularly evident considering the poor preservation of the bone which would usually indicate a bias towards the survival of larger animal bones. The lack of butchery marks is probably the result of poor preservation and restricts further discussion.

As found at Datchet, cattle and sheep have been commonly found to be present in roughly equal proportions in the Iron Age (Hambleton 1999). The lack of pigs at Datchet also correlates with the Iron Age faunal pattern where pigs were found in a low numbers (Hambleton 1999). Unfortunately the size and poor preservation of this assemblage causes all conclusions to be tentative.

CHARRED PLANT MACROFOSSILS AND OTHER REMAINS

Val Fryer

Introduction

Excavations at Eton Road were undertaken by Archaeological Solutions in winter 2003-2004. The work revealed a pit and ditch of Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age date, and three samples were taken for the extraction and assessment of the plant macrofossil assemblages.

Methods

The samples were bulk sieved by a member of the Archaeological Solutions team, and the flots collected in a 500 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x16. All plant remains were charred, and identifications were made by comparison with modern reference specimens. Modern contaminants including fibrous roots, seeds and arthropods were present throughout.

Results

Plant macrofossils

Cereal grains and/or weed seeds and tree/shrub macrofossils were present at low to moderate densities in all three samples. Preservation was good, although a proportion of the cereal grains was puffed and distorted (probably due to high temperatures during combustion), and many were not closely identifiable. However, barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were recorded, along with a grape (*Vitis vinifera*) seed, almost certainly being intrusive from overlying deposits.

A limited range of weed seeds was recovered from samples 2 and 3. Taxa noted included black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), goosegrass (*Galium aparine*), dock (*Rumex* sp.), stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and vetch/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.). Tree/shrub macrofossils were extremely rare, but a single elderberry

(*Sambucus nigra*) seed was recorded from sample 2 and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nutshell fragments were noted in sample 3. Charcoal fragments were abundant in all three samples.

Other materials

The fragments of black porous 'cokey' material and black tarry material are probably residues of the combustion of organic materials at extremely high temperatures. The small pieces of coal noted in samples 2 and 3 are probably derived from recent activity on or

Discussion

Samples 2 and 4 are from fills within pit 2005 (trench 2). Although the assemblages contain insufficient material for conclusive interpretation, the poor condition of the macrofossils within sample 2 may indicate that the material was subjected to considerable heat during combustion. Sample 3 is from a fill within ditch 2003 in area 1. The assemblage is limited, but the material may be derived from a small quantity of cereal processing debris or similar agricultural refuse, which was dumped within the ditch.

Conclusions

In summary, the assemblages from samples 2 and 4 are probably derived from scattered or wind-blown refuse, which accidentally became incorporated within the pit fills. The material within sample 3 may be indicative of the disposal of a small quantity of agricultural waste within the ditch. In both instances, the low density of material recovered may indicate that these features were peripheral to any main centres of settlement or other activity

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The area has long been recognised for its potential for prehistoric archaeology due to its proximity to the Thames, an important routeway in prehistory. Furthermore, many of the isolated finds recovered from the Thames, such as bronze swords, are likely to represent deliberate, votive offerings, like those excavated at Flag Fen, near Peterborough (Parker Pearson 1996). These finds demonstrate the presence of humans in the area from the early prehistoric period; however, few sites have been recognised in Datchet. Several potentially prehistoric sites have been identified around Datchet by cropmarks, however none have been excavated and the dates of these sites are only approximated. Many of the earlier prehistoric sites recognised appear to have had a funerary function, such as the late Neolithic/Bronze Age barrows, located 2.3km to the north west of Eton Road, 2.85km and 2.3km to the south (Fig 1) A possible cemetery, consisting of four barrows, is situated 1.65km to the south at Southlea Farm. 500m to the west of the cemetery (Fig. 1), north of Albert Bridge, a further ring ditch associated with a square enclosure, with potential evidence for internal pitting, has also been attributed to the late Neolithic and Bronze Age. It is possible that this series of cropmarks is directly associated with the cropmarks and geophysical evidence recorded around Southlea Farm, which suggests the presence of a number phases of settlement. The current evidence

suggests that the settlements at Southlea Farm may date to the Iron Age and Roman periods, and if the enclosure to the west is Bronze Age, it may be possible to track a shift eastwards away from Thames throughout the prehistoric period.

The only excavation in the area that has revealed direct settlement evidence is from Riding Court Farm, 600m east of the Eton Road. A number of evaluation trenches revealed a sequence of linear features on the western side of the site. It was not possible to determine the nature or phasing of these ditches, but they were thought to date to the Iron Age and Roman period. A further undated cropmark of an enclosure lies 1.8km to the east of Eton Road, but it is not dated. This suggests the features at Eton Road represent the earliest datable evidence for a settlement in the area. It is currently unclear how they are related to the settlement to the east; however it is possible that the slightly later date for the Ridings Court Farm demonstrates a shift eastwards in settlement, comparable to that suggested at Southlea Farm to the south.

The main features revealed during the excavation (F2003, F2005 and F2025) were probably part of a field system and the evidence of domestic activity recovered from them demonstrates the presence of a settlement site somewhere nearby (Moore & Jennings 1992; Bradley *et al* 1980). Currently, the exact location of this settlement cannot be determined. The relative lack of finds within the features either suggests the settlement was some distance away or was only used for a short period of time, perhaps seasonally. The tree hollows may represent the clearance of the landscape prior to its use for agriculture.

The relationship between ditches F2003 and F2025 was not established during the excavation, but they may have represented two sides of rectangular enclosure or two separate phases of land division. The deposits contained in each ditch are sufficiently different in nature to suggest they were abandoned on different occasions. The excavations at Reading Business Park revealed that field systems were frequently altered and varied in size and shape (Moore & Jennings 1992). The undated ditch F2044 revealed in evaluation trenches 7 and 8 ran on a north east / south west axis and was unlikely to be directly associated with either F2025 and F2003 since its alignment does not complement either. Similarly, it was not possible to establish the chronological relationship between the waterhole F2005 and the ditches, but, it can be judged that due to the material recovered from it, the waterhole is contemporary with one or both of the ditches. The majority of the features excavated on the site contained no finds, and therefore cannot be dated or phased. However, pits and postholes of this size and dimension have been excavated on later Bronze Age sites such as Reading Business Park (Moore & Jennings 1992), Aldermaston Wharf and Knight's Farm (Bradley *et al* 1980), so there is a possibility they may be associated with the dated features.

Even though the area available for excavation was limited, and only a few clear conclusions can be drawn

on the nature of the site, it did reveal important evidence about the use of land during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age in the area. Even though only three of the features on the site yielded dating evidence, it is possible that some of the other features may be of a similar date. It raises the potential for the discovery of further evidence of prehistoric settlements in the immediate vicinity.

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Illustrations by Kathren Henry

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