

**NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE MONUMENTS
AND MIDDLE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT
AT LODGE FARM, ST OSYTH, ESSEX**

SUMMARY



Essex County Council

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

November 2007

**NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE MONUMENTS
AND MIDDLE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT
AT LODGE FARM, ST OSYTH, ESSEX:
EXCAVATIONS 2000-3**

SUMMARY

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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I. Introduction

The archaeological excavation of a large multi-period site at Lodge Farm, St Osyth was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit from May to November 2000 and from August 2001 to February 2003. The work was undertaken in advance of gravel extraction and the construction of an agricultural reservoir. The project was funded by Sewells Reservoir Construction Ltd, Essex County Council, and English Heritage via the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. The work was monitored by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team and English Heritage. The site archive is held at Colchester Museum. The work was preceded by trial-trenching and an analysis of the crop mark evidence.

A more detailed account of the site's prehistoric remains has been published as Germany, M. 2007 *Neolithic and Bronze Age Monuments and Middle Iron Age Settlement at Lodge Farm, St Osyth, Essex: Excavations 2000-3*, East Anglian Archaeology **117** (ISBN 978 184194 070 0). An account of the post-prehistoric remains will be published in the county journal *Essex Archaeology and History*.

The site covers 4.5ha and is located in the Tendring peninsula of north-east Essex, 4.5km west of Clacton-on-Sea (NGR: TM 1355 1545) (Figs 1 and 2). It sits on a spur of 'high ground' in an arable setting, c. 15m above sea-level. St Osyth Creek borders the north side of the spur. The village of St Osyth lies 1km to the north-west. The sea is 3km to the south and Brightlingsea Creek and the estuary of the river Colne are 5.5km to the west.

The underlying geology, glaciofluvial drift over Eocene clay, comprises glacial sands and gravels interspersed with occasional bands and large areas of silt sand and clay. Palaeochannels of silt sand and clay run down the north side of the spur towards deposits of hillwash and/or alluvium along St Osyth Creek. The overlying silt-sand topsoil is c. 0.3m thick. It is fertile, well-drained and easy to plough, and is used to grow a wide range of crops. Deposits of marine alluvium, indicating former areas of salt marsh, begin 1km south of the site.

The excavation discovered an Early Neolithic causewayed enclosure, an Early Bronze Age pond barrow, a Middle Bronze Age barrow group, and a Middle Iron Age settlement. It also discovered Late Iron Age and Roman ditches, Early Saxon pits, and a 13th-century farmstead. Ploughing had truncated all of the archaeological remains by approximately 0.3m. There was no upstanding or layered stratigraphy (e.g. layers, banks, walls, floors etc.) The

excavation found no prehistoric organic material, apart from charred plant remains and cremated bone. This was due to the sand and gravel subsoil, which is very acidic.

The spur contains many archaeological cropmarks, although these show little trace of the causewayed enclosure. Included amongst the cropmarks are a small cursus (Fig. 3, A), a henge or a medieval windmill (Fig. 3, B), and ring-ditches/ploughed-out barrows (Fig 3, C to E).

II. Early Neolithic

Three lines of interrupted ditches belonging to a causewayed enclosure were discovered in the east part of the site, with a single line of ditches in the south-west (Fig. 4). Part of the inside course was defined by interrupted ditches 13920 to 13925 and possibly 13915 to 13919. The middle course was represented by 13926 to 13931 and the outside course by 13932 to 13934. The ditches were irregular in plan, and unevenly spaced. The excavation found no direct evidence for related constructional elements such as palisades and gateways or for ditch-side banks or mounds.

More than 100 Early Neolithic pits had been dug within the area of the causewayed enclosure, mostly within the western half of the excavation area. Early Neolithic features cut two ditches, which were possibly in use at some point during this period (13893 to the west and 14126 to the east).

Radiocarbon dates from charred plant remains from one of the interrupted ditches and ten of the pits indicate that the digging of the pits had taken place in c. 3600 BC. They also suggest that the pitting had been of short duration – 40 years or less – and that it had been contemporary with at least one small part of the causewayed enclosure.

The Early Neolithic finds from the site largely comprised worked flint and pottery associated with the Mildenhall style, although fragments of saddle quern and baked clay were also recovered. Most of the finds came from the pits. The excavation found no finds in ditches 13893 and 14126, and relatively few in the causewayed enclosure ditches. The larger groups probably represent ritual deposits.

The environmental evidence from the site suggests that grassland predominated in the surrounding area of the monument during this period. Crop production probably took place locally, but did not infringe upon the causewayed enclosure.

Causewayed enclosure

The causewayed enclosure had an irregular appearance (Fig. 4). The ditches in each of its courses did not keep to a regular line, and the distance between them varied from 1m to 35m. The distance between the inside course and the middle course, and the middle course and the outside course was c. 27m and 40m respectively.

The majority of the interrupted ditches had been constructed from end-to-end pits. Three of them consisted of single pits (13916, 13920 and 13924). Where investigated, it was found that the constituent pits had either been separated by sunken causeways or that they had overlapped and had shared deposits and had been in use at the same time.

The pits that made up the interrupted ditches were elongated or oval. They ranged in depth from 0.4m to 1.5m, and varied in width from 1.0m to 6.4m. Most of the pits shared a distinctive profile, consisting of steep sides, and a broad, flat, or slightly undulating or concave base. The pits, which formed the inside course, were generally wider and deeper. The constituent pits in interrupted ditch 13926, which appeared to consist of the largest number, were atypically small.

The constituent pits' fills sequences provide indirect evidence for the former presence of banks alongside the inside perimeter edges of the causewayed enclosure (Figs 5 and 6). In the lower two-thirds of the pits were deposits of sand and silt-sand similar to the surrounding natural. Many of these deposits lay slumped against the sides of the pit, and were often interleaved. The deposits that lay slumped against the side that faced outward from the centre of the causewayed enclosure were generally the most extensive. Fills which were generally more silty and darker occurred in the topmost third of most pits by contrast, usually in gradual-sided, often slightly off-centre 'depressions'.

Approximately one in seven of the constituent pits showed evidence for recuts. All of these recuts were identified in section, none in plan. Some of the sections contained evidence for more than one recut, and most appear to have been cut whilst the underlying pit was still partly open. The recuts varied from small pits dug within half filled-up earlier pits, to almost-total 'clear outs'. The majority, like most of the Early Neolithic cuts in general, had steep sides and roughly flat or slightly concave bases. There was no clear evidence for the recutting of an entire ditch or course.

Radiocarbon dating provided absolute dates from two fragments of hazel nutshell from a flint-rich, charcoal-rich deposit - the third fill of a possible recut in the north end of causewayed enclosure ditch 13930. Both fragments produced the same two possible dates: 3660 to 3620 cal BC (61%) or 3560 to 3530 cal BC (34%). It was not possible to radiocarbon date any of the other causewayed enclosure ditches because none of them contained clearly non-residual organic remains.

Nearly 90% of the constituent pits of the causewayed enclosure ditches produced few or no finds. Those that were present were widely dispersed throughout the deposit sequence. Only in seven instances were large amounts of worked flint and/or pottery found in the constituent pits of the causewayed enclosure ditches. One group lay at the west end of ditch 13918, in the south-west part of the site, and one in ditch 13920 at the south end of the inside course. The other five groups occurred in the north-east corner of the site; three in ditch 13929 and two in neighbouring ditch 13930.

Early Neolithic pits

The excavation identified 117 Early Neolithic pits. Eleven of the pits contained none or very few finds, but were cut by Early Neolithic features. The pits were found in all parts of the site, although most lay in the west half and towards the south-west corner. Pits were discovered between the courses and in the gaps between the ends of the interrupted ditches. There were no pits within 8m of the inside edge of a causewayed enclosure ditch. Some of the pits appeared to be paired or clustered together in small groups of four or more (Fig. 4, A to F).

The majority of the pits were circular or slightly oval, although a small minority were either irregular or elongated with rounded ends. The 'typical' pit (central 50% in terms of size) was between 0.77m to 1.16m long, 0.65m to 0.98m wide, and 0.25m to 0.42m deep. No pit was deeper than 0.9m.

Most of the pits had the same distinctive profile as the causewayed enclosure ditches, albeit on a smaller scale (Fig. 7). Their sides were generally moderate to steep and the bases roughly flat or slightly concave. Some of their bases were stepped or irregular, however, and some of their sides were long and gradual.

Approximately 40% of the pits contained single deposits, 35% two deposits and 25% three or more deposits. Nine was the maximum number of deposits in any one pit; pits with more than four or five deposits were rare.

Two types of deposit appeared to be present in the pits. One of these was charcoal-rich with frequent to abundant flecks and fragments of charcoal and infrequent small fragments of burnt stone. It was distinctively very dark in colour and occasionally quite silty. The other type of deposit contained very little charcoal and was usually similar to the surrounding natural. The charcoal-rich deposits tended to occur less frequently in the top-most parts of the fill sequences. Just below 50% of the pits contained one charcoal-rich deposit and only one pit contained more than one. The charred plant material in the sampled charcoal-rich deposits largely comprised hazel nutshells and fragments of hazel, oak, hawthorn and ash.

Evidence in section suggested that 8% of Early Neolithic pits had been recut or re-opened. The recuts were usually centrally placed, although one or two were slightly off-centre. In a few cases, it was not possible to distinguish if a pit had been recut or reopened or had been inadvertently cut by a subsequent pit.

Radiocarbon dating of carbonised hazel nutshell fragments and carbonised residues on pot sherds from ten different pits produced the same two sets of alternative dates as those obtained from the causewayed enclosure ditch: 3660 to 3620 cal BC (61%) or 3560 to 3530 cal BC (34%).

The charcoal-rich deposits tended to contain the most finds. Typically, in comparison with a charcoal-poor deposit, a deposit black with charcoal held twice as much pottery and six times as much worked flint. In all cases it appeared that the finds in each fill had been randomly distributed. In no instance was it possible to determine if a find or a group of finds in an Early Neolithic pit had been deliberately arranged and placed. However, a disproportionate amount of the pottery appeared to consist of rim and upper body sherds. A large proportion of the worked flint was found in ditch 13930 and two of the pits next to it in the north-east corner of the site. The presence of so much flint in such a small area suggested that that part of the site may have been reserved for the manufacture of flint artefacts.

Interpretation

The radiocarbon dates indicate that direct use was made of the causewayed enclosure for forty years or less. This use began in either 3670 to 3630 BC or 3570 to 3540 BC and was over by either 3640 to 3610 BC or 3560 to 3530 BC. The full form of the monument cannot be established from the existing evidence, although it is possible to speculate that the inside and south-west lines of interrupted ditches had been part of an inside oval circuit, c. 200m wide and 300m long. A 'guesstimate' suggests that the archaeological investigation investigated nearly 40% of the monument, although this assumes that the outside course

forms a complete circle/oval, and that the area covered by the causewayed enclosure is roughly 12ha.

The size of the causewayed enclosure, and the human effort that is likely to have been needed for its construction, imply that it was a communal operation, possibly built and used for organised gatherings by small scattered communities from across the Tendring peninsula. It is likely that ceremony and the practising of religion were significant elements in the use of the monument, since the identified evidence is dominated by ritual deposits, and by features associated with them.

The fill sequences and surviving profiles of the constituent pits in the causewayed enclosure ditches provide indirect evidence for former banks or mounds alongside part or all of the inside perimeters of the enclosure ditch circuits. Large volumes of sand slumping and weathering into the ditches from inside perimeter banks or mounds probably account for the extensive fill deposits slumped against their outward-facing sides, the more eroded condition of the opposite (inward-facing) edges, and the locations of the shallow off-centre 'depressions' that characterise the topmost elements of many of the features' fill sequences. The absence of Early Neolithic pits within 8m of the inside perimeter edge of any causewayed enclosure ditch also suggests the former existence of ditch-side banks or mounds.

The precise sequence of events that gave the monument its recorded form cannot be discerned from the evidence available. It remains impossible to determine if the construction and use of the ditches and enclosure courses took place successively, or if at any time they were all in use and open at the same time. The stratigraphic evidence suggests that the majority of the constituent pits in each individual ditch were open at the same time, and that they filled up together. If the pits in each ditch were not all cut at the same time, then the existing pits in each must have been kept open until the last pit had been dug.

Specially placed deposits of artefacts, each including one or more (probably incomplete) pottery vessels, are implied by the clusters of sherds within constituent pits within causewayed enclosure ditches 13918, 13929 and 13930. These deposits are likely to have been disturbed and fragmented during antiquity, because in some cases the associated sherds were spread across adjacent deposits. Four of these five deposits came from non-primary fills, suggesting that before the finds had been placed the pits that received them had been open for some time. A clustering of special deposits in the north-east corner of the site, all within ditches of the middle course, appears significant.

The very large groups of worked flint in pits 96 and 103 and the north terminal of interrupted ditch 13930 indicate a flint-working focus in the north-east part of the site. The occurrence of this material in the three features probably relates to the disposal of scrap and the deliberate burial of finished and unfinished work for temporary safe-keeping. A ritual explanation for the deposition of this material cannot be discounted, although this is not unequivocal.

The Early Neolithic pits, with their generally steep sides and broadly flat bases, can be seen as small-scale versions of the constituent pits that make up the causewayed enclosure ditches. The location of pit group B implies a degree of relation between the two types of feature as it appears to have been a loosely-spaced continuation of the slightly larger constituent pits of causewayed enclosure ditch 13926..

The large groups of finds from the Early Neolithic pits probably represent structured or special deposits of some kind. A preponderance of rim and upper body sherds in the pottery assemblage implies that the composition of each deposit was considered carefully prior to deposition. The high proportion of large groups of finds from primary and secondary fills indicates that most of these deposits were placed in the pits immediately or soon after the pits had been cut. Once cut, each pit may then have been left open as a small number of them are known to contain more than one large group of finds.

The presence of the charcoal-rich fills, and the fact that each one of them tended to contain more finds than its lighter-coloured counterparts probably implies that when it came to the pits there were at least two different procedures for the placing of special deposits. Some association with fires seems undeniable; although it is possible that some finds were purified through fire before deposition, it is unlikely that this was a common occurrence as few of the finds are charred or scorched.

The pits and the ditches appear to have been used differently when it came to the placing of special deposits; considerably more finds come from the pits than the ditches and only one deposit in the ditches was charcoal-rich. The reason for this is not known, although it is possible to suggest that whereas the placing of the special deposits in the pits happened in a domestic context, the placing of the ones in the ditches were perhaps carried out under circumstances which were more communal and public.

The repeated use of favoured pits and places within the interior area of the causewayed enclosure probably accounts for the groupings of pits and their associated recuts. The latter may relate either to the deliberate uncovering of an earlier deposit, or to the insertion of a

subsequent one. Pit Group A contains a very large amount of worked flint, and represents a chosen site for the knapping of flint.

III. Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age

Nine pits containing Grooved Ware and/or Beaker pottery form part of the evidence for the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age phase of the site (Fig. 8). Pieces of Grooved Ware were also discovered in some of the topmost deposits of the constituent pits of the causewayed enclosure ditches (870, 12440 and 13685) and it is assumed that these and perhaps their associated banks were still a visible part of the landscape, even if they were much degraded after c. 1500 years.

Four ring-ditches were also recorded. While none of these were closely datable, stratigraphy indicated that two of them at least were created prior to the Middle Iron Age. Three of these lay within the northern part of the excavated area; two were more square than round (2151, 2256 and 13857). The fourth ring-ditch was situated towards the eastern end of the excavated area (13868).

IV. Early Bronze Age

The Early Bronze Age saw the construction of a pond barrow (3890) in the centre of the site, c. 50m south of the group of the possible Late Neolithic/Bronze Age ring-ditches (Figs 8 and 9A). Inside the pond barrow were an irregular-shaped area of scorched ground (4504), two cremation burials (3979 and 4260), one pit (3975), and four post-holes (4004, 4244, 4262 and 4272). Close to but outside the north-west and south-east edges of the monument were burial pits containing cremations in collared urns (3136 and 3914). A structured deposit in the form of a collared urn was discovered in pit 4270, on the south-west edge of the monument.

Pond barrow

The pond barrow had very gradual sides and a broad, slightly undulating base, measuring 8.4m north-south, 7.6m east-west and 0.35m deep (Fig. 9A). Running east-west underneath the middle of the feature was a 4m wide band of natural silt clay. The scorching inside the pond barrow lay within the area of the natural silt clay and had a firm upper surface and was

orange-red in colour. There was no charcoal lying on top of the scorching. The excavation found no direct or indirect evidence to indicate if the monument had ever been surrounded by a bank or a berm and a bank.

The base and sides of pit 3975 had been scorched by fire. The feature was 0.15m deep and held a single deposit containing frequent lumps and flecks of charcoal. Also scorched by fire had been the mouth of post-hole 4004 at the north end of the scorching. Inside the single fill of that feature were large fragments of charcoal from a carbonised post, 0.38m long, 0.28m wide and 0.26m deep. Post-hole 4262, near the opposite end of the scorched area, had vertical sides and a diameter of 0.4m. It contained two deposits and was nearly 0.5m deep. The primary fill of that feature comprised black silt sand with frequent flecks of charcoal and 1g of cremated bone. Pieces of charcoal also occurred in post-holes 4244 and 4272, to either side of cremation burial 3979. Both features had steep sides and were less than 0.16m deep.

Cremation burials

The base and sides of cremation burial pit 3979 had been scorched by fire. It contained two deposits and was 0.23m deep. The primary fill of the feature, a very dark reddish brown sand-silt with frequent pieces of charcoal, was capped by an un-scorched deposit of sand-silt. It contained the cremated remains of what may have been a young man, and some very large pieces of charred wood.

Frequent pieces of charcoal and cremated bone from an infant human were found in burial pit 4260, in the north-east part of the pond barrow. The feature had a depth of 0.1m.

Cremation burial pit 3136, close to the north-west side of the pond barrow, was 0.25m deep. The collared urn inside the pit was upright and near complete. The cremated remains of a mature man were found inside this vessel.

The collared urn in cremation pit 3914, near the south-east side of the pond barrow, had been placed in the feature upside down. The urn was intact and had not been truncated by later features or ploughing. Inside the vessel were the cremated remains of a mature person, probably a man.

Radiocarbon dates produced from samples of charred wood and cremated bone from 3136, 3914 and 3979 revealed that the Early Bronze Age use of the site for cremation burials began in 2100 to 1810 cal BC (95%) and ended in 1760 to 1450 cal BC (95%). The likely

span of activity was 180 to 390 years. 3979 is probably the latest of the three C14 dated Early Bronze Age cremations.

Interpretation

It is likely that the Early Bronze Age phase of the pond barrow saw two or more phase of activity (Fig. 9A). The first of these was represented by pit 4270 and cremation burial pits 3136 and 3914 on the outside perimeter edge of the monument, and the second by post-holes 4004 and 4262, pit 3975, cremation burial pit 3979 and scorched ground 4504. Cremation burial pit 4260 and post-holes 4244 and 4272 might have been part of the second episode, but this is less certain. In the first episode the pond barrow appears to have been used as a focal point for cremation burials and ritual activity, and in the second as the site for a pyre. The calibrated radiocarbon dates obtained from three of the Early Bronze Age cremations suggest that the use of the monument as the site for a pyre was the later of the two episodes. What took place inside the monument during the first episode is not known.

The use of the pond barrow as a pyre site during the later of the two episodes is suggested by the close association between cremation burial pit 3979 and the area of scorching. The burial pit, containing large pieces of carbonised wood and the partial remains of a cremated young man, has also been scorched.

While the use of the pond barrow as a site for pyres for other individuals cannot be ruled out, any such use must have occurred before that of the interment of the person in 3979 as the top fill of that burial pit is un-scorched. Since the excavation found no charcoal on top of the scorched ground it seems likely that the pyre site was swept clean after the fire.

Post-holes 4262 and 4004 both contained carbonised wood, and the lip of 4004 had been scorched by fire, which suggests that alongside the pyre was a two-post structure. The purpose of the structure is not known, although it is possible that it was either part of the pyre or that its presence was not directly related to it and that its function was largely symbolic. It cannot be ruled out that the structure predates the second episode, or spans the two episodes, and that the cremation that took place alongside it represented an act of termination or closure.

Pit 3975 within the main area of scorching was also scorched, but contained no bone or other finds. The purpose of the pit - which must have been present beneath the pyre because of the scorching - is not known; perhaps it was used as a receptacle for grave goods or offerings.

V. Middle Bronze Age

To the south and east of the pond barrow lay twenty-two Middle Bronze Age ring-ditches arranged in an arc (Figs 10 and 11). The ring-ditches occurred in two groups of thirteen (3069, 3173, 3175, 3176, 3177, 4123, 5644, 5702, 5703, 5750, 5806, 5807 and 13859) and eight respectively (3336, 4933, 4934, 4975, 5000, 5353, 5354 and 13858). Penannular and concentric examples were present. One ring-ditch lay north of the east group in a slightly isolated position (5035).

Eleven Middle Bronze Age cremation burials were interred in pits and one (2820) in the single fill of segment 2818 on the western side of ring-ditch 3177. Most of them existed within and around the eastern group (3226, 3230, 4284, 4867, 4877, 4967, 5057, 5137 and 5141). One (3647) lay near the pond barrow, and two within and to the north-west of the southern group (2820 and 3367). Bucket urns contained the cremated bone in six or seven of the pits and in segment 2818. Radiocarbon dates obtained from cremated bone and charcoal taken from most of the burial pits reveal that the Middle Bronze Age cremation cemetery began in 1430 to 1300 cal BC (95%) and ended in 1370 to 1200 cal BC (95%).

Cut into the top-most deposit of the pond barrow were four pits containing ceramic vessels (Fig. 9C). Pits containing pottery vessels were also found between the two groups of ring-ditches and in the south-east part of the site (Fig. 11, 5419 and 5426; Fig. 10, 12811). In the western part of the site, and near the south group of ring-ditches, and near the north side of the pond barrow were pits and a short ditch containing sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery (Fig. 10, 14052; Fig. 11, 2461, 3152 and 3237).

The radiocarbon dates indicate that the Early and Middle Bronze Age use of the pond barrow were separated by a c. 200 year hiatus.

Pond barrow

Two shallow pits (4014 and 4100) and two small post-holes (3981 and 4143) were discovered at an intermediate level inside the pond barrow (Fig. 9B). The features contained no closely datable finds, although the stratigraphy indicated that they must have been cut at some point between the Early and Middle Bronze Age.

Ring-ditches

The ring-ditches were closely spaced and arranged in two groups, forming an arc to the south and east of the pond barrow. The majority were circular or slightly oval; one was elongated with rounded ends (3177). Some circuits were incomplete due to truncation (e.g.

3069, 5000 and 5354). Four were concentric (4933 and 4934, and 5806 and 5807) and several at least probably genuinely penannular (3175 and 4123). One ring-ditch (3173) had been recut around its entire circuit. The diameters of the monuments ranged from 3.8m to 7.8m. Four sub-groups indicated by ring-ditches of similar size appeared to be present (A to D):

- A. Three evenly spaced ring-ditches of a similar size arranged in a straight line (4934, 5353 and 13858)
- B. Two small ring-ditches opposing each other to either side of group A (4975 and 5000)
- C. Three evenly-spaced ring-ditches with broad ditches (5644, 5702 and 5703)
- D. Three small ring-ditches clustered together (4123, 5750 and 13859)

The profile, width and depth of the ring-ditches were generally dissimilar. Most of the ring-ditches were shallow, and few contained more than one or two deposits per segment. No indirect evidence was evident in the fill sequences for associated banks or mounds. The excavation found few finds in the ring-ditches and most of the finds that were discovered were not closely datable. Eighteen pieces of Bucket urn lay divided between the two segments across the south part of ring-ditch 13858.

Cremation burials

Finds and/or radiocarbon dates were used to date all but two of the Middle Bronze Age burial pits. The two undatable cremation burials are assumed to be Middle Bronze Age because of their apparent association with the adjacent ring-ditches.

Bucket urns contained the cremated bone in seven or eight of the features. Four urns were upright, and three were inverted. All of the burial pits were only slightly larger than the pots they contained and were rounded in plan, and steep-sided in profile. Four of the burials had been severely truncated (4260, 4284, 4877 and 5057). Charcoal selected for analysis from three of the burial pits consisted of alder, ash, oak and blackthorn. Six burial groups (A to F) appeared to be present because of their association with the pond barrow or one or more specific ring-ditches.

Burial group	Burial pits	Location
A	3226, 3230	Within ring-ditch 3336
B	4867, 4877	Within ring-ditch 4975
C	4967, 5057	Between ring-ditches 4934, 5353 and 13858, aligned on east-west axis
D	5137, 5141	South of ring-ditch 5354, aligned on north-south axis
E	2820	Within west segment across ring-ditch 3177
F	3647	Near pond barrow
-	3367, 4284	Isolated

Pits

Single pottery vessels were found in seven Middle Bronze Age or possible Middle Bronze Age pits. None of the pits contained cremated bone and most of them were only slightly larger than the pots they contained.

Four of the pits cut the top fill of the pond barrow (Fig. 9C; 3884, 3940, 3941 and 4237). Bucket urns were discovered in pits 3884 and 4237. The vessel in 3884 was upright and the one in 4237 inverted. In 3940 and 3941 the pots lay in primary deposits containing frequent flecks and pieces of charcoal. Both pots were prehistoric, but not closely datable. The vessel in 3940 had been charred by fire before burial; the orientation of the pot was not recorded. The one in 3941 was upside down.

Two of the seven pits were discovered close together, in the area between the two groups of ring-ditches (5419 and 5462). Inside 5419 was a Bucket urn, which lay on its side. 5462 contained an upright vessel, possibly a Bucket urn.

One pit was situated in the south-east corner of the excavation, distant from the other Middle Bronze Age features (12811). It contained an upright pot, possibly a Bucket urn, the top half of which was no longer present because of truncation.

One short ditch and three other pits were associated with sherds of Middle Bronze Age or probable Middle Bronze Age pottery. The ditch and two of the pits occurred near the south cluster of Middle Bronze Age ring-ditches (Fig. 10, 14052; Fig. 11, 2461 and 3152), and one of the pits near the north edge of the pond barrow (Figs 9C and 11, 3237). Pieces of Bucket urn or urns were found in 2461, 3237 and 14052. A crushed, possibly Middle Bronze Age, vessel lay on the surface of pit 3152. Infrequent pieces of burnt flint occurred in the top two of the three fills in 2461. In the secondary fill of that pit were frequent flecks and fragments of charcoal.

Interpretation

The evidence suggests that the pond barrow saw reuse as a focal point for ritual activity in the Middle Bronze Age; the ring-ditches appear to have been deliberately arranged in an arc to one side of it, and the pits with the pots cut into the top fill of it appear to have been intentionally placed. The stratigraphic evidence and the radiocarbon dates suggest that the pond barrow continued to be regarded as a sacred place - one which was still closely associated with the interment of the dead - despite the c. 200 year hiatus in activity within the recorded limits of the site.

The ring-ditches represent the remains of barrows which were subsequently levelled in antiquity by erosion and ploughing. Small mounds were probably present in the middle of each barrow, constructed from the spoil from each ring-ditch. Since the majority of them were closely spaced, it is unlikely that they had been encircled by banks. The concentric examples represent either elaborate single constructions or the elaboration of existing monuments.

Each burial group and each ring-ditch group and sub-group may correspond to a social unit based on kinship or status. Burial group D contained individuals from most age groups and both sexes (5137 and 5141) and this suggests that neither age nor gender were factors when it came to their interment. Burial group D was perhaps atypical as it is the only one of the burial groups to have contained burial pits holding more than one individual. The presence of more than one set of cremated remains in each vessel suggests either that the people interred all died at the same time, or that the burying of each pot and its contents was deferred until the death of the last individual.

VI. Middle Iron Age

Two main periods of activity took place within the area of the site during the Middle Iron Age (Period VI.1 and VI.2). Field boundaries and trackways covered the site in Period VI.1 and an extensive settlement in Period VI.2 (Figs 12 and 13). Neither period is closely datable.

Period VI.1

In this period shallow ditches defined field boundaries and trackways (Fig. 12). The boundary ditches formed long narrow fields and were arranged at approximately 90 degrees to St Osyth Creek. Ditch 13895 cut a Middle Iron Age pit (4592). At an unknown point in

time during this period an open-ended enclosure (13948) was constructed against the west side of one of the ditched trackways (13935 and 13936). A replacement open-ended ditched enclosure (13945) recut the east side of the first and overlaid the trackway. In the middle of the east side of this second enclosure was a 3m wide break for an entranceway.

Period VI.2

In Period VI.2 a settlement developed to either side of an east-west trackway (Fig. 13). The trackway was very broad and formed a T-junction with a smaller trackway, which entered the site from the south. North of the point where the trackways met was a large open area, containing round-houses. All of the trackway ditches lay above and/or below Period VI.1 and Middle/Late Iron Age ditches respectively.

In the north-east part of the settlement were nine round-houses in a ditched enclosure (Fig. 15, 13861 to 13867, 13869 and 14039). Six round-houses lay among smaller enclosures in the south-east part of the site (Fig. 18, 13871 to 13875 and 13939) and four in the open area north of the T-junction (Fig. 14, 6677, 13860, 13969 and 14038). Up to three small open-ended enclosures were present in the mid-east part of the site (Fig. 14, 13898, 14060 and 14077), although only parts of the latter two lay within the excavated area.

Groups of four, five, six and nine post-holes representing post-built structures occurred alongside the round-houses in the north-east and south-east enclosures. In the north-east enclosure, one lay in the far north corner (13955), three near round-house 13861 (10185, 13961 and 13963), and eight to either side of round-house 13865 (13956 to 13959 and 13982, 13983, 13998 and 13999) (Fig. 33). In the south-east enclosures, post-built structures (14016 and 14019) were found within the footprints of round-houses 13872 and 13874, and two (14008 and 14009) next to round-house 13871 (Fig. 18). Charred plant remains indicated that post-built structure 14016 had been used as a granary.

The excavation identified separate sequences of development in the north-east and south-east parts of the settlement (Figs. 15 and 17 A to C). The absence of close dating evidence and the non-existence of shared stratigraphic relationships between these two areas meant that it was not possible to link the two sequences. In order to provide room for more round-houses the north-east enclosure had been increased in size; a previously extended corridor-like south-west entranceway had been removed, and the west side of the enclosure had been extended outward (Fig. 15 A to C). In the south-east part of the site, trackway ditch 13937 cut several roundhouses (13874 and 13875), which cut Period VI.1 ditches, which suggested that the east-west trackway had not been defined by ditches from the outset (Fig.

17 A to C). Some of the roundhouses had probably been present in individual enclosures towards the end of the sequence.

Elsewhere, pits and post-holes containing fragments of Middle Iron Age loomweights and pottery were found to either side of the east-west trackway. In the north-east enclosure were pits (60) containing cremated fragments of human skull (60), and truncated vessels (12190 and 10915) (Fig. 16).

North-east enclosure

Stratigraphic evidence indicates the enlargement and the modification of the north-east enclosure (Figs 15 A to C, and 16). Four different ditches defined its initial form (A), when it had a corridor-like south-west entranceway (13943, 14106, 14121 and 14123). The entranceway was lengthened in the following phase (B), and an internal enclosure was constructed in the south-west corner; one ditch was removed (14123), one added (14127), and one curved and extended (14121/13949). The sharp corner of ditch 13949 cut the south-east end of ditch 14122, which revealed that the north-east side of the internal enclosure had originally been straight. Towards the end of the sequence (C), more room was obtained for further roundhouses (13862, 13863, 13869 and 14039) by increasing the area of the north-east enclosure. The internal enclosure and the south-west entranceway were removed, and ditch 14121/13949 was replaced with ditch 13912. A 4m gap between ditches 14127 and 13943 was possibly used as an entranceway into the enclosure during that time. Inside the north-east enclosure were two ditches (13944 and 14111), which implied that it had been sub-divided during one or more of the sub-phases (Figs 32 C and 33).

South-east enclosures

In the south-east part of the site, it appeared that some of the round-houses predated the east-west trackway, or the defining of the trackway by ditches, because two of them (13874 and 13875) had been cut during the second (B) of the three phases in that area by trackway ditch 13937 (Figs. 17 A to C and 18). During the second phase of the sequence (B), two small enclosures were defined by three ditches to the south of the trackway ditch (14101, 14095 and 14096). From the final phase came evidence which suggested that some of the round-houses at that time had been sited in individual enclosures; round-house 13872 was discovered in a square enclosure defined by ditches 14102 and 14097 to 14099, and round-house 13871 in a rectangular enclosure partly revealed by cropmarks, and partly by ditches 14136 and 14102 to 14104.

In the central part of the site were one certain and two possible open-ended enclosures, defined by shallow ditches with right-angled corners (Fig. 14, 13898, 14060 and 14077). Enclosure 13898 was the only one of three to be fully exposed. It had an unidentifiable stratigraphic relationship with trackway ditch 13894, but cut Period VI.1 ditch 13895. The open-ended form of the enclosures was akin to that of enclosures 13948 and 13945 in Period VI.1, albeit on a slightly smaller scale (Fig. 12).

Round-houses

Complete and incomplete circular gullies defined nine round-houses in the north-east enclosure, six in the south-east corner, and four in the middle of the site, north of the east-west trackway (Figs 13 to 18). The gullies had diameters measuring from 6m to 13.6m, and depths and widths from 0.05m to 0.6m and 0.21m to 1.6m respectively. Five of the gullies were generally shallow and narrow (13866, 13869, 13872, 13873 and 13969), two (13865 and 13874) were deeper towards the east entranceway, and twelve varied in depth and width from section to section. In three cases, recutting on a piecemeal basis had been partly responsible for the variable width and depth of the gully (6677, 13866 and 13867).

It is likely that not all of the breaks between the gullies were due to truncation because some of them ended abruptly. Some of the breaks formed east-facing entranceways (e.g. 13865, 13866 and 13874). One gully formed a complete circuit (6677). Where they were well-defined, the entranceway breaks ranged in width from 1.6 to 5.5m.

Shallow post-holes, representing roof or doorway supports, were evident in seven of the nineteen round-houses (6677, 13865, 13869, 13873, 13874 and 13969). The post-holes for the doorway supports occurred in pairs and were 1.8m to 2.6m apart, and 1m to 1.6m back from the entranceways. In round-houses 6677 and 13873, post-holes for roof supports formed regular shapes measuring 2.2m by 3m and 3m by 3m respectively. Two of the post-holes in round-house 6677 contained square and circular post-pipes, c. 0.4m wide.

Sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery occurred in all of the round-house gullies apart from 13866, which was dated from its apparent association with the surrounding enclosure and buildings. The amounts of pottery were generally low, although large amounts were found in the gully entranceway terminals of 13874 and 13865. Stratigraphic relationships indicated that the maximum number of round-houses that could have been present at any one time was fourteen.

The excavation discovered fragments of structural daub and triangular-shaped loomweight in some of the round-house gullies, although not as much as in some of the nearby pits and ditches. Pieces of loomweight were relatively common in the gully entranceway terminals of round-house 13874.

Post-built structures

The excavation identified thirteen four-post structures, one four- or five post structure, one six-post structure and one nine-post structure. All lay alongside the round-houses in the north-east and south-east enclosures (Figs 16 and 18).

The four- and five-post structures were approximately square, and occurred in two size ranges; 1.7m to 2.5m long and 1.7m to 2.1m wide (13959, 13982, 13983, 13999 and 14008), and 2.7m to 3.1m long and 2.5m to 3.1m wide (13955 to 13958, 13963, 13998, 14009, 14019 and 13961) respectively. This difference in size extended to the dimensions of the constituent post-holes, which were generally larger and deeper in the bigger structures. Post-pipes or post-removal cuts were found in three of the post-holes in structure 14019.

The six post-holes which defined structure 14016, which was 3.6m square, were up to 0.38m deep, and between 0.68m to 0.87 wide, and 0.8m to 1.02m long. Oval and irregular-shaped post-pipes or post-removal cuts were found in each of the six post-holes.

Nine evenly-spaced post-holes defined structure 10185, which was 5m long and 4.9m wide. The post-holes were up to 0.3m deep, and between 0.64m to 0.9m wide, and 0.7m to 1m long.

Some of the post-built structures appeared to be grouped. It was also evident from the stratigraphy that not all of the structures had been in use at the same time. In two cases, it looked as if an earlier structure had been replaced by a subsequent structure in the same location (13958 and 13959, and 13982 and 13983).

Pieces of charcoal and charred grain in the post-pipes or post-removal cuts in structure 14016 and in the post-holes of structure 13957 suggested that both had been used as granaries, and that both had been destroyed by fire. Charred wheat and oak fragments were present in the south-east post-hole of 13957, and charred wheat and brome in all of the post-pipes or post-removal cuts in 14016.

Small amounts of Iron Age or Middle Iron Age pottery were found in some of the constituent features of structures 13957, 13958, 14016 and 14019. Within the constituent features of the other structures were no finds or pieces of prehistoric pottery, which were not closely datable. The attribution of the not so well-dated structures is based on their apparent close association with the surrounding settlement.

Other features

Middle Iron Age pits and post-holes were discovered close to the round-houses and along both sides of the east-west trackway (Figs 13, 14, 16 and 18). Pottery occurred in all of these features, along with pieces of baked clay and loomweight.

Located among the pits and post-holes in the north-east enclosure were pits containing the cremated remains of a human skull (60), and the remnants of truncated single vessels (10915 and 12190) (Fig. 16). Pit 10915 occurred near the entranceway in round-house 13869, and 12190 north-west of round-house 13866. The vessel in pit 10915 had been placed in the feature upright. The orientation of the one in 12190 was not recorded. Pit 60 was present next to the south-west post-hole of post-built structure 13955. It contained no finds, but was dated by radiocarbon dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries BC.

Interpretation

The Period VI.2 settlement probably grew from small beginnings, despite the fairly dramatic changes from Period VI.1 to VI.2 apparent at first sight (Figs 12 and 13). Perhaps the Periods VI.1b and VI.1c open-ended enclosures 13948 and 13945 represent an early stage in the development of the VI.2 settlement, as 13945 terminates one of the VI.1 trackways. Subsequent development of the VI.2 enclosures may have been concurrent with the establishment of the east-west route across the remaining VI.1 fields. Although the round-houses outside the north-east enclosure may have related to subsequent episodes of expansion, stratigraphic relationships indicated that some of those must have been constructed prior to the formalisation of the VI.2 trackway (Fig. 17A).

It is likely that a mixed-farming economy lay behind the VI.2 settlement. While the non-survival of animal bone deprives us of any evidence of animal husbandry, crop production was represented by probable granaries and carbonised plant remains. Whereas the site evidence for the participation of livestock in that economy is entirely indirect, largely due to the non-survival of animal bone, the evidence for crop production is much more certain, and comes in the form of granaries and carbonised plant remains. The east-west trackway appears, at first glance, to be unnecessarily broad; perhaps it was deliberately built in this

form to facilitate the movement of livestock. Few VI.2 features lay within the route of the trackway and this suggests that it was maintained and respected. The trackway opened out on to two large open areas to either side of the north-east enclosure. Perhaps these open areas and the trackway were associated both with the safekeeping of sheep and/or cattle and the transfer of livestock for regular episodes of care, milking and feeding. The charred plant remains imply that two of the post-built structures at least were used as granaries, and that the importance of cereal production to the economy of the settlement rested on the well-drained local soils. Indeed, productive use of the geology of the immediate area is likely to have extended beyond these well-drained soils. While it appears that the inhabitants of the settlement were growing their crops on the sandier soils close to the site, perhaps they were grazing their livestock further afield in the areas of salt marsh to the west and south, or along the length of St Osyth Creek on the areas of hillwash.

The nineteen round-houses represent the dwellings of the settlement's inhabitants, and were mainly recorded in the north- and south-east enclosures (Fig. 13). In round-houses 13865 and 13874, the preponderance of finds close to the entranceway terminals is suggestive of the causal discarding of household waste, and gives support to the hypothesis that these buildings were essentially domestic. The ring-gullies of the nineteen round-houses varied in depth, width, and diameter, and some of the buildings displayed evidence for internal structures. East-facing entranceways appear to have been common, and round-house 13869 showed clear evidence of modification and/or reconstruction. The round-houses were of broadly similar form but vary in points of detail, suggesting that although the essentials may have been prescribed or traditional, the construction method of the buildings still left room for informality and improvisation.

The evidence of the charred plant remains suggests that some, if not all, of the post-built structures were used as granaries. Each granary may have been elevated on wooden posts in order to increase surrounding air flow, and to minimise the likelihood of damp and fungal infestation.

The post-built structures all lay close to the round-houses in the north- and south-east enclosures. Within those enclosures, however, the distribution of the structures was not even, as most were recorded in small clusters. One cluster was sited north of round-house 13861, one to each side of round-house 13865, and one immediately west of round-house 13865 (Figs 16 and 18). Convenience and a desire to manage and safeguard harvested crops may be partially responsible for the occurrence of these two types of structure together. If the use of the granaries was not communal, then the apparent one-to-one relationship between specific round-houses and individual clusters of post-built structures

may represent a proprietary relationship, suggesting unequal levels of access, authority, wealth and/or status among the inhabitants.

The few types of Middle Iron Age find recorded, and the Middle Iron Age pottery assemblage, which is characterised by a small range of forms, suggest that the inhabitants of the settlement were conservatively minded. The many fragments of loomweight imply that weaving featured in day-to-day life and that much of that weaving is likely to have taken place close to the round-houses in a domestic context. The single piece of Middle Iron Age metalwork, a probable awl, may indicate either that metal was little used, or was too rare and valuable to be thoughtlessly discarded.

VII. Middle/Late Iron Age and later

Ditched enclosures and trackways covered the site in the Middle/Late Iron Age and Roman periods. The probable retention of the east and south arms of the Middle Iron Age trackway system was the only clear evidence for continuity between the Middle Iron Age and the Middle/Late Iron Age. In the Roman period the west arm of the Middle Iron Age trackway system was reinstated, albeit on a slightly different alignment. The evidence for onsite activity during the Early Saxon period consisted of pottery and a small number of pits.

The excavation uncovered part of what was probably the 'backyard' of a 13th-century farmstead, including a small number of unusual features which possibly indicated that it had been engaged in some form of cottage industry, possibly tanning. Among the features were a group of inter-cutting box-like pits, and a very large rectangular pit. A pond, which was attached to the pit and had been in use at the same time, contained pottery and other finds from the first half of the 13th century. Inside the pit was the imprint of what could have been a rectangular container or platform. Two timber-built buildings respectively pre- and post-dated the use of the farmstead. The function of both structures is not known. Field ditches crossed the site in the post-medieval and modern periods.