

Bury Spinney Houghton Regis Dunstable

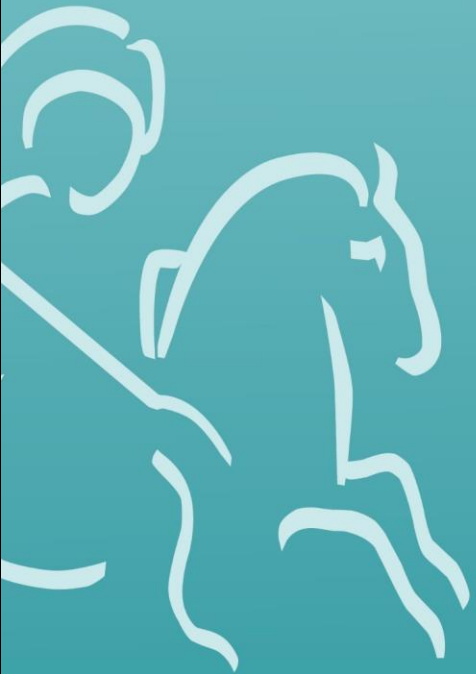
Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation



for:
Lagan Homes Ltd

CA Project: MK0687
CA Report: MK0687_1
Site Code: SPIN 22
Entry Number LTNMG: 1560
Accession No 2022/03

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Revision 2



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SUMMARY

Project name:	Bury Spinney
Location:	Houghton Regis, Dunstable
NGR:	500704 224716
Type:	Strip, Map and Sample Excavation
Date:	7–29 April 2022
Planning reference:	CB/19/04220/OUT
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the Culture Trust Luton and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)
Accession Number:	LUTNM 2022/03
Site Code:	SPIN 22

In April 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation on land at Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable. An area of 2.732m² was excavated within the 3.26ha development site.

Roman remains were found across the excavation area, mostly consisting of two parallel ditches truncated by the corner of a large, possibly rectilinear enclosure that extended beyond the limits of the excavation area. Located close to one of the Roman ditches was a cremation burial that contained a large quantity of cremated human bone. A small assemblage of predominantly broadly dated Roman pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) was retrieved from the site. A fragment of worn, disarticulated human bone was also recovered from one of the Roman ditches.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In April 2022, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation (SMS) on land at Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable (centred at NGR: 500704, 224716; Fig. 1). This SMS was undertaken for Lagan Homes Ltd.
- 1.2. Central Bedfordshire Council had granted outline planning permission for residential development of up to 100 dwellings with all other matters except access reserved (planning ref: CB/19/04220/OUT). The development is within the designated Houghton Regis North 2 (HRN2) site earmarked for development as part of the northern expansion of Houghton Regis. The planning permission was granted subject to conditions, one of which (Condition 16) required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation (WSI). The scope of the work, which comprised the SMS excavation of an area of 2.732m², was defined by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeological Advisor (CBC AA).
- 1.3. The SMS excavation was carried out in accordance with a detailed WSI prepared by CA (2022) and approved by the CBC A. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014a; updated October 2020), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE, Project Manager's Guide* (HE 2015). It was monitored throughout by the CBC AA, including a site visit on 22 April 2022.

The site

- 1.4. The development site is 3.26ha in extent and comprised a grassed storage area, a motorcycle scrambling track and a private dwelling. It lies on the north-western outskirts of Houghton Regis, bounded to the north by Thorn Road, to the south by the Ouzel Brook, and to the west and east by modern housing developments. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and is situated at approximately 100m aOD.
- 1.5. The bedrock geology of the area is mapped as West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation Chalk (BGS 2022). There are no recorded superficial deposits for the site but yellow sandy clay with gravel and patches of clay chalk was encountered during excavation, and is consistent with head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel) recorded along the course of the Ouzel Brook (BGS 2022) to the south of the site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The archaeological and historical background of Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable has been presented in detail in the Heritage Desk Based Assessment (DBA) prepared by Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS 2017). This has been supplemented by the results of numerous archaeological investigations undertaken on land to the north of Houghton Regis between 2014–2021. These investigations include work undertaken in the vicinity of the development site at Thorn Turn (AA 2018, 2019a), as part of the Bidwell West development (CA 2014c, 2018 and forthcoming) and in advance of the construction of the A5-M1 link road (Brown 2020). Further investigations have also been undertaken to the east and south-east of the development site in association with the Houghton Regis North 1 development (AA 2019b; Luke and Barker 2021). Collectively, this work has helped to identify extensive evidence of settlement and land-use spanning the early prehistoric to the post-medieval period, including early prehistoric pit and post-alignments, round barrows and human burials. dispersed Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement remains, Iron Age and Roman farmsteads and medieval and post-medieval field-systems. During the Roman period the development site formed part of the hinterlands of Roman Dunstable (*durocobrivae*) and the A5, situated approximately 1.2km to the west of the development site, follows the postulated course of Roman Watling Street that (HER 5508).
- 2.2. The closest investigations to the development site were those undertaken in advance of the construction of the A5-M1 Link Road (Brown 2020) and Bidwell West housing development (CA 2018). The following section provides a summary of this information and the archaeological background of the wider area.

A5-M1 link road archaeological works

- 2.3. In 2007 an archaeological evaluation comprising a geophysical survey (NA 2008a) and trial-trench evaluation (NA 2008b) was undertaken along the route of the A5-M1 link road, which runs broadly east-west between the M1 motorway and the A5 trunk road, passing 500m to the north-west of the development site (EBD666). Twenty-nine trenches were excavated along the scheme footprint followed by mitigation works undertaken in 2014 and 2015 in advance of construction of the road. The mitigation further investigated the remains identified by the evaluation. Of particular note was the archaeological excavation of sites D, G, M and Q situated at the east

end of the road corridor and approximately 460–600m to the north and north-west of the development site.

- 2.4. During excavations at site Q, situated approximately 460m to the north-west of the development site, several ditches were found that have been dated to the Late Iron Age. These were found to relate to enclosures, roundhouse gullies and boundary ditches (Brown 2020, 370–379; fig. 6.14). They fell out of use by at the least the early-middle part of the 1st century AD and the site became the focus of a group of enclosures c. AD70 (ibid). Features relating to a small medieval settlement and land-divisions were identified at the north-east end of site Q (Brown 2020, 472–484; fig. 7.15). Settlement features comprised pits, postholes and beamslots associated with a timber-framed building that is likely to be of Late Saxon date. The building represented settlement to the north of Thorn Spring that predated several ditches of 12th century date and was probably associated with the moated manor site (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) list entry: 1013519).
- 2.5. In the wider area, the largest concentration of archaeology was found approximately 1km to the west of the development site at sites D and G (Brown 2020, 60–103, fig. 3.3). At site D a series of Early Iron Age pits and Middle Iron Age ditches were revealed (Brown 2020, 86–88, 101–103; figs 3.29 and 3.42). The ditches formed a series of enclosures or fields to the south of a contemporary farming settlement identified at site G. North-west/south-east aligned furrows of medieval and post-medieval date overlaid the Late Iron Age to mid-1st-century features. On the north-east side of Watling Street (site G), excavations identified the remains of a Middle to Late Iron Age settlement that was initially defined by dispersed, unenclosed settlement-related features (roundhouses, pits and postholes) in the early part of the Middle Iron Age but developed in the later Middle Iron Age into an enclosed settlement comprising a linear arrangement of rectilinear enclosures and field boundaries (Brown 2020, 73–85, fig. 3.18). Within the enclosures, possible roundhouse eaves drip gullies and post-built structures were identified.
- 2.6. Archaeological excavations carried out at site M, on the south side of Thorn Road and approximately 900m south-west of the development site, revealed a Middle to Late Bronze Age boundary in the form of a pit alignment, comprising 22 north-west/south-east aligned pits (Brown 2020, 33–36; fig. 2.18). Circular, oval, and even sub-rectangular pits were recorded. The pit alignment did not continue into excavation area D to the north of Thorn Road (Brown 2020, 31, fig. 2.12).

Bidwell West – evaluation and AIW investigations

- 2.7. Between March and April 2014 Cotswold Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation of the greater Bidwell West development (CA 2014c). This was preceded by a geophysical survey that identified a range of anomalies pertaining to ditches, pits and enclosures (PCG 2014). The earliest evidence for human activity found during the trial trench evaluation was dated to the Early Neolithic and was located on the crest of a chalk scarp in the southern part of the Bidwell West development, situated approximately 800m to the south of the site. At the foot of the scarp further features were dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. Elements of these settlements have also been investigated as part of the archaeological works for the A5–M1 Link Road noted above (Brown 2020, site G). The location of a Roman settlement was confirmed just north of Thorn Road, east of Thorn Spring. The remains of a medieval open field system, comprising blocks of parallel furrows on varying alignments, were also encountered across the northern and central parts of the Bidwell West development. A sequence of ditches to the south of Thorn Road and running parallel to it, were recorded and mark the edge of an area of common land. This open landscape was subsequently enclosed by an act of parliament passed for the parish in 1802 (Page 1912).
- 2.8. Following on from the evaluation works, archaeological excavation has been undertaken in a number of areas within the Bidwell West development. Further evidence for early prehistoric activity in form of a Bronze Age pit alignment was recorded on the south side of Thorn Road, to the east of the development site, during the construction of the Bidwell West spine road, along with scattered Iron Age and Roman features to the west and southwest, including pits, ditches and an isolated cremation burial (CA 2018). Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries and the remains of a ridge and furrow field system were also investigated as part of these works. Excavations to the southeast of the site, adjacent to Bedford Road, including Bidwell West Plots H and I (CA in prep) and land adjacent to The Bungalow, Bedford Road, have produced further evidence for Iron Age, Roman and Medieval settlement, while excavation in 2021 of land to the north-west of the site again produced late prehistoric, Roman and medieval remains, including features of 11th to 14th century date immediately to the east of the Thorn Spring moated site (CA forthcoming). These remains included pits, enclosure ditches and at least one post-built building.

Bury Spinney evaluation

- 2.9. In August 2017 Icknield Archaeology (IA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Bury Spinney consisting of the excavation of 17 trenches (IA 2017). The evaluation identified a number of undated ditches, notably a more substantial ditch revealed in two of the trenches, which appeared to be a continuation of a ditch seen during archaeological investigation associated with the Bidwell West advanced infrastructure works (CA 2018; Area M, Fig. 2).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objectives of the archaeological SMS excavation were to:
- identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features at the site prior to their destruction by the proposed development;
 - recover and analyse any artefactual evidence;
 - sample and analyse environmental remains to create a better understanding of past land use and economy;
 - report on and publish the archaeological results at a level appropriate to their significance; and
 - compile a stable, ordered, accessible project archive.
- 3.2. The specific objective of the SMS was to further investigate and record the undated ditches recorded by the previous evaluation (IA 2017).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2022). The location of the excavation area was informed by the results of the trial trench evaluation (IA 2017) and targeted the undated ditches identified in trenches 1, 7, 9, 10 and 12 (Fig. 2). An existing underground cable runs through the middle of the excavation area and prior to the commencement of the fieldwork a buffer zone was established to avoid it. After agreement with the CBC AA, the excavation area was slightly extended to the south-east to further investigate some of the archaeological features. A total of 2.732m² of the development site was subject to SMS excavation.
- 4.2. The excavation area was set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual V. 5 Survey Manual (CA 2017b). The excavation area was scanned for live services by trained CA staff using

CAT and Genny equipment in accordance with the CA Safe System of Work for avoiding underground services.

- 4.3. Fieldwork commenced with the removal of topsoil and subsoil from the excavation area by mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was conducted under archaeological supervision and the stripped surface was systematically scanned with a metal-detector. Machine excavation ceased when natural substrate was revealed. The archaeological features thus exposed were hand-excavated to the bottom of archaeological stratigraphy. All features were planned and recorded in accordance with CA Technical Manual No. 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual (CA 2017c).
- 4.4. Examination of features concentrated on recovering the plan and structural sequences, with particular emphasis placed upon gaining a secure understanding of the stratigraphic and chronological development of the site, including the recovery of samples suitable for radiocarbon dating where appropriate, and on upon obtaining details of the phasing of the site.
- 4.5. The following sampling strategy was employed:
- All excavated sections through linear features will be at least 1m wide. Boundary ditches will be sample excavated to a minimum of 5% by length away from intersections and all intersections will be investigated unless a particular relationship between features has already been established. Linear features associated with settlement, industrial structures or areas of specific activity will be sample excavated to a minimum of 25% by length away from intersections and all intersections will be investigated. A further 25% by length will be excavated if significant patterns of deposition occur within linear features, namely dumps of industrial waste (pottery wasters etc.) or animal carcass waste (butchery, tanning etc.).
- 4.6. Deposits were assessed for their paleoenvironmental potential and samples were taken and processed in accordance with Historic England's environmental processing guidelines (HE 2011) and CA Technical Manual No. 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites (CA 2012). Two deposits were deemed suitable for environmental sampling (59 litres of soil) and were taken from a ditch and cremation burial that were considered to have potential for characterising the activity. All artefacts recovered from the excavation

were retained in accordance with CA Technical Manual No. 3: Treatment of finds immediately after excavation (CA 1995).

- 4.7. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix I, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the excavation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A. Details of the artefactual material recovered from the site are given in Section 6 and Appendices B to E. Details of the biological material are given in Section 7 and Appendices F–H.

- 5.2. The natural substrate was encountered at depths of 0.35m–0.75m below present ground level (bpgl) and consisted of chalk with patches of yellowish sandy clay and gravel. Across the excavation area a 0.2m–0.5m thick subsoil layer overlay the natural substrate. The subsoil consisted of mid-orange brown sandy silt and was found to be thicker in the south-eastern part of the excavation area. Across the site the subsoil was generally overlain by a dark-brown grey sandy silt topsoil, with a modern gravel and stone surface covering the central part of the area. The majority of the archaeological features were sealed by the subsoil, with only two ditches (Ditch 9 and 14) being cut through the subsoil.

- 5.3. The visibility of features was good across the area and stratigraphic sequences were established with a high degree of confidence. Artefactual dating evidence indicates that the majority of the archaeological activity on the site dates to the Roman and post-medieval/modern periods (Fig. 3). Stratigraphic analysis of the features indicates two main periods of activity, in addition to the natural geology and unphased features:

- Geology
- Period 1: Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)
- Period 2: Post-medieval/modern
- Unphased

Period 1: Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 5.4. Roman activity was identified across the excavation area and was represented by a series of intercutting, but similarly aligned ditches. A small pottery assemblage (16

sherds, 133g) was recovered from Period 1 ditches, but it was dominated by broadly dated Roman pottery wares that could not be precisely dated. Diagnostic elements of the pottery assemblage were limited to a sherd of Late Iron Age/Early Roman grog-tempered ware and a bead and flange rim sherd of possible 2nd to 3rd century date (Banks Appendix B). Stratigraphic relationships between some of these ditches indicate that they represented several episodes of broadly contemporary activity, with Ditches 1/3 and 2 probably representing the earliest in the sequence and Ditch 13 the latest Roman dated activity (Fig. 3).

Ditches 1/3 and 2 and pit 1039 (Figs 3 and 5)

- 5.5. Two almost parallel ditches (Ditches 1 and 2) extended across the excavation area on a north-east/south-west alignment. They were spaced approximately 4.8m apart on the north-east side of the site but the gap between them gradually narrowed towards the south-west side of the excavation area where they were positioned 2.9m apart. Ditch 1 was 0.75m–0.9m wide and 0.6m deep with steep sides and concave base. It contained a sequence of up to three sterile fills. A fragment of disarticulated human femur was recovered from the upper fill of Ditch 1 (Fig. 3). The weathering identified in this bone seems to indicate that the bone itself was exposed to the elements for a long period of time before being buried. Ditch 1 was recut on the same alignment and broadly the same course by Ditch 3 (Fig. 5, Section AA). Re-cut Ditch 3 was similar in width (0.85m) to Ditch 1 but shallower (0.25m–0.4m deep). A small quantity of broadly Roman dated pottery was retrieved from the upper fill of Ditch 3, as well as a bead and flange rim from a straight-sided bowl that is of possible 2nd to 3rd century date (Banks Appendix B).
- 5.6. Ditch 2 lay 3m–5m to the immediate north-west of Ditch 1 and measured 0.65m in width and 0.25m in depth, with moderate sloping sides and flat to concave base (Fig. 3). This ditch contained a sequence of up to two fills that represented gradual silting and from which two sherds of broadly dated Roman pottery and five fragments (20g) of animal bone, including cattle bone, were recovered.
- 5.7. A large cut feature (pit 1039) was revealed some 5m to the north of Ditch 2 (Fig. 3). Pit 1039 was sub-oval in plan and measured 3.3m in width and 0.45m in depth, featuring moderate sloping sides and a flat base (Fig. 5, Section BB). This pit contained two silty fills that yielded no artefactual material. Despite the lack of dating evidence from this feature, its location close to the parallel ditches described above

and the fact that all three features are truncated by Period 2 Ditch 4 suggests that pit 1039 could also be of Roman date.

Cremation burial 1003 (Figs 3 and 5)

- 5.8. Cremation burial 1003 was situated 3.5m to the north-west of Roman dated Ditch 2 (Fig. 3). The cremation pit was circular, 0.65m in diameter and 0.37m in depth. It had steep near vertical sides that sloped to a flat base (Fig. 5, Section CC). This cremation pit contained two fills, the lowest of which (1004) comprised a cremation deposit containing a substantial amount of charcoal, burnt wood and 751.1g of cremated human bone of younger adult age range. It was not possible to determine the sex of the individual due to an absence of sexually dimorphic bone elements. The cremation deposit was covered by upper fill 1005 that represented an intentional backfill event. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the two fills of cremation pit 1003 but it's proximity to Ditch 2 suggests that it was Roman in date.

Ditch 6 (Figs 3 and 6)

- 5.9. Ditch 1 and its recut Ditch 3 were truncated at the north-east end by a substantial ditch (Ditch 6). Ditch 6 was at least 82m long and predominantly aligned north-east/south-west. At its north-east end it changed direction and took a north-westerly course for a further 11m before extending beyond the excavation area. Ditch 6 had been detected during the previous evaluation of the site (IA 2017) but no finds had been recovered from it. During the current works the ditch was shown to have moderate sloping sides and a wide, flat base and was 3.15m–3.55m in width and 0.35m–0.9m in depth (Fig. 6, Section DD). The ditch mainly contained a single fill that consisted of light-grey silty clay that had accumulated from gradual silting. The fill yielded five sherds of broadly dated Roman pottery, a possible Roman dated copper-alloy toilet spoon/probe (Ra. 2) and 11 fragments (760g) of animal bone, including cattle and sheep/goat. Three sherds of tile, an iron nail (Ra. 5) and possible iron door knocker (Ra. 1) of post-medieval/modern date were also recovered from the south-west end of Ditch 6 and are considered to be intrusive finds.
- 5.10. Ditch 6 was recut on the south side by Ditch 7 that followed the same north-east/south-west course. Recut Ditch 7 was narrower (2.2m wide) than Ditch 6 but similar in depth (0.4m-0.75m) and yielded three sherds of broadly dated Roman pottery, four fragments of Roman tile and an undated copper-alloy object, possibly a pendant (Ra. 6). A fragment of post-medieval/modern tile and an iron nail were also recovered and are intrusive.

Ditch 13

- 5.11. Ditch 13 was revealed on the north-east side of the excavation area and cut across the corner of Ditch 6. It was 1.14m wide and 0.55m deep, with a V-shaped profile and concave base. This ditch contained a single fill that yielded four fragments (544g) of animal bone, including cattle and equid, and a single sherd of Late Iron Age/Early Roman grogged-tempered ware pottery.

Period 2: Post-medieval/modern

- 5.12. Two ditches (Ditch 9 and Ditch 14) were situated in the north-eastern half of the excavation area. They were situated parallel or perpendicular to Roman Period 1 ditches but were stratigraphically later and several fragments of modern brick were noted on the surface of Ditch 9. Both ditches had also been cut into the subsoil layer and it is probable that they represent the remains of field boundaries of post-medieval/modern date.
- 5.13. Ditch 9 was north-east/south-west aligned and at least 35m long. It terminated at the south-west end but extended beyond the excavation area to the north-east. It was up to 1.2m wide and 0.25m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 6, Section DD).
- 5.14. Ditch 14 north-west/south-east aligned and at least 35m long. It terminated at the south-east end, just north of Ditch 9 and extended beyond the excavation area to the north-west where it appeared to curve slightly to the north-east. It was 0.4–0.8m wide and 0.2m deep, with steeply sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a single, sterile fill.

Unphased

- 5.15. A number of ditches (Ditches 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12) and postholes (1022–1032) were revealed across the excavation area and due to their lack of artefactual material remain undated. Stratigraphically, most of the ditches truncated the Period 1 Roman ditches and it is likely that they represented post-medieval/modern ditches, but it is possible that some of them could be Roman in date.
- 5.16. Ditch 4 was north-east/south-west aligned, 1.2m wide and 0.3m deep. It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base and contained two sterile fills. Ditch 4 was observed to be truncating the parallel Roman Ditches 1/3 and 2 and pit 1039. During excavation it was interpreted as truncating Ditch 6 but further analysis has shown this relationship to be inconclusive

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- 5.17. Ditch 5 was approximately 32m long and aligned north-west/south-east. It truncated Period 1 Ditches 1/3, 2 and 4 and terminated just north of Ditch 6/7. At its north-west end it extended beyond the excavation area. Ditch 5 was 0.8–1m wide and 0.2m deep with moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave base.
- 5.18. A group of six circular and sub-circular shaped postholes (1022, 1024, 1026, 1028, 1030 and 1032) was recorded in the north-west corner of the excavation area, immediately east of Ditch 8. They were 0.2–0.3m in diameter and 0.1–0.2m deep with steeply sloping concave profiles. None of the postholes contained any artefactual material and they did not appear to form a readily identifiable structure. Ditch 8 was 14m long and was positioned on a similar north-west/south-east alignment to Ditch 5, situated 57m to the east. It truncated Period 1 Ditch 2 at the south-east end and terminated and at its north-west end it extended beyond the excavation area.
- 5.19. Ditch 12 was situated on the southern side of the excavation area and was broadly east/west aligned. It was recut as Ditch 11, on the same course and alignment, which in turn truncated part of Period 1 Ditch 6 and recut Ditch 7 (Fig. 6, Sect. DD). Recut Ditch 11 had a gradual curve and could represent part of an enclosure. It contained a single fill that produced a copper-alloy object that possibly derives from a modern car cigarette lighter (Ra. 4, Fig. 3). Undated Ditch 10 was situated just to the south of it and could represent contemporary activity, such as sub-division within the enclosure.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1. Finds recovered are listed in the table below. Details of the finds are to be found in Appendices B to E. All of the finds have been retained and will form part of the archive (see section 10).

Type	Category	Count	Weight (g)
Pottery	Late Iron Age/Roman	16	133
Ceramic building material	Tile	8	660
Metalwork	Iron	3	-
	Copper alloy	4	-
	<i>Total</i>	7	-
Flint	Flake	1	3

Pottery

- 6.2. A small assemblage of 16 sherds (133g) of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery was recovered from seven deposits. Overall, the condition of the assemblage is poor and most sherds exhibit signs of heavy wear and the assemblage is highly fragmented. The earliest material from the site is a single out-curved rim sherd of Late Iron Age/Early Roman transitional grog-tempered ware (SOB GT) from Ditch 13. The majority of the assemblage, however, (12 sherds, 89g) comprises sandy grey wares (UNS GW). Broadly these date to the Roman period, although a bead and flange rim from a straight-sided bowl is most likely of 2nd to 3rd century date (Ditch 3). Small quantities of both sandy oxidised wares (UNS OX) and shell-tempered wares (UNS SH) are also present. The origin of all these fabrics is not known, however, they were most likely locally produced.

Ceramic Building Material (CBM)

- 6.3. Eight fragments (660g) of CBM were recovered from four deposits. Four fragments of tile (Ditch 7) are possibly of Roman date based on their soft firing. A further four fragments of tile, recovered from Ditch 6 and Ditch 7, are most likely of post-medieval or modern date based on their fabrics, thickness and characteristics of firing.

Metalwork

- 6.4. The metalwork assemblage comprises seven objects, including three iron artefacts and four copper-alloy artefacts. The iron artefacts were all post-medieval/modern in date and comprised two nails and a ring/hoop of iron that probably represents a door

knocker. Artefacts of copper-alloy included a flat strip, rounded at one end, which is possibly a fragment of toilet spoon/probe from a Roman toiletry kit. A thin circular disc of copper alloy sheet with a perforated tab was recovered from Ditch 7 and could represent an item of personal adornment such as a pendant, although due to its poor condition it is not possible to determine its function or date with any certainty. Ditch 11 produced a twisted coil of copper alloy sheet with a thicker outer casing that is most likely a heating coil, probably from a car cigarette lighter and is of modern date.

Flint

- 6.5. Ditch 6 produced a single undiagnostic flint flake (3g) made in yellow-brown flint.

7. THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- 7.1. Biological evidence recovered is listed in the table below. Details are to be found in Appendices F and G.

Type	Category	Count	Weight (g)
Human bone	Cremation	1	751.1
	Disarticulated	1	-
Animal bone	Fragments	31	1598

Human remains

- 7.2. A single cremation burial (1003), comprising 751.1g of cremated human bone, and a fragment of a human right femur were recovered from the excavation area. The cremation burial was that of an individual in the younger adult age range individual but no dimorphic elements were present to determine sex.
- 7.3. The disarticulated fragment of bone is from the lower half of the femur from the shaft and has a prominent *linea aspera*. Evidence of weathering had on the external surface suggests that the bone was not immediately buried in the ground once defleshed and that it was exposed to the elements for long period of time. It has therefore only been deposited in the Roman ditch fill after these changes have occurred.

Animal bone

- 7.4. A small assemblage of animal bone amounting to 31 fragments (1598g) was recovered from 11 pit and ditch fill deposits. Artefactual material dating broadly to the Roman period was also recovered (See Table G1). The material was fragmentary and only moderately well preserved however, it was possible to identify the remains

of cattle (*Bos taurus*), sheep/goat (*Ovis aries*/*Capra hircus*) and horse (*Equus caballus*).

8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1. The archaeological strip, map and sample excavation identified Roman activity across the site that exceeded the results of the previous evaluation. The ceramic assemblage recovered was limited to 16 sherds from seven ditch fills and, although the stratigraphic relationships between features indicate some intercutting, the activity can only be assigned a broad Roman date.
- 8.2. The earliest remains comprised Ditches 1/3 and 2 that were positioned broadly parallel to one another. The narrowing of the gap between them suggests that they did not define a trackway but could represent a sequence of enclosure or field boundary maintenance. Ditch 6 and its recut Ditch 7 were positioned to the south of Ditches 1/3 and 2 but shared the same alignment and could represent a further episode of remodelling of the same field or enclosure boundary. This is similar to the arrangement of enclosures at (land at) Bidwell West where periodic maintenance of the enclosure boundaries resulted in shifting boundaries and alterations to the layout of the enclosure system (CA forthcoming).
- 8.3. Large pit 1039 located to the immediate north was artefactually undated but could be contemporary with Ditches 1 and 2. It was relatively shallow at 0.45m and did not contain any waterlogged material that would suggest it had been a water-pit. Based on its large size it could represent a quarry pit dug to exploit the underlying silty clay, sand and gravel deposits found in this location during excavation.
- 8.4. No datable evidence was recovered from cremation pit 1003 but based on its proximity to Ditch 2, and on the lack of prehistoric activity within the excavation area, a Roman date for the burial seems plausible. The isolation of the burial and location adjacent to boundary/enclosure ditches is consistent with Roman rural burials across England that are often found on the peripheries of settlement areas or dispersed across field-systems (Smith 2018, 231, 250). Examples of both Late Iron Age and Early Roman isolated cremation burials are known from sites in the vicinity, such as site Q of the A5-M1 link road (Brown 2020, 318–321) or site HRN3206 in the HRN1 development area (Luke and Barker 2021, 50). Three dispersed Early Roman cremation burials were also situated either side of a Roman ditch in parcel K of the Bidwell West development area (MOLA 2022, fig. 47, 66–70). The fragment of disarticulated human femur found in Ditch 1 was heavily weathered and could represent residual bone from a disturbed burial and could predate the Roman ditch it

was deposited in. However, the occurrence of disarticulated bone is a common theme across a range of settlement sites in the Central Belt of England, as defined by the *Rural Settlement of Britain* project (Smith 2016, 141, fig. 5.1), with over half of the known examples occurring on farmsteads. (Smith 2018, 276–77). These deposits are viewed as a continuation of the Iron Age practice of excarnation (ibid).

- 8.5. The Roman activity revealed at Bury Spinney was not directly associated with Roman settlement and appears to represent a continuation of enclosure- and field-systems identified during numerous archaeological excavations undertaken to the south and east of the development site (CA 2018) and to the north-west in Area 1 (CA forthcoming) and parcel K (MOLA 2022) of the (land at) Bidwell West development.
- 8.6. During the post-medieval/modern period the excavation area became the focus of two ditches (Ditches 9 and 14) possibly forming two sides of a field. Boundaries in a similar location as these ditches are marked on the 1879–1881 First Edition OS map (NLS; Bedfordshire sheet XXIX.SW) and suggest that Ditches 9 and 14 defined the southern and eastern sides of a wooded area labelled on the map as Bury Spinney.

9. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 9.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, assisted by CA site personnel. This report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The finds and biological evidence reports were written by Pete Banks and Sharon Clough, respectively. The report illustrations were prepared by Krissy Moore. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Molly Agnew-Henshaw. The project was managed for CA by Antoni Nowak.

10. STORAGE AND CURATION

- 10.1. The archive is currently held at CA offices, Milton Keynes, whilst post-excavation work proceeds. Upon completion of the project, CA will make arrangements with Culture Trust Luton (accession number: LUTNM 2022/03) for the deposition of the site archive and, subject to agreement with the legal landowner(s), the artefact collection. The Culture Trust Luton has agreed in principle to accept the archive upon completion of the project.
- 10.2. A digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). This archive will be compiled in accordance with the ADS Guidelines for Depositors (2021). The digital object identifier (DOI) for the archive will be sent to CBC's Historic Environment Record (HER) team after it has been deposited with the ADS.
- 10.3. The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (ClfA 2014b; updated October 2020).

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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Feature label	Period	Spot-date
1000	Layer		topsoil	dark brownish grey sandy silt			
1001	Layer		subsoil	mid orangey brown sandy silt			
1002	Layer		natural substrate	light chalk with patches of mid greyish yellow sandy clay and gravel			
1003	Cut		pit	circular in plan, steep sides, flat base		1	
1004	Fill	1003	1st fill of pit	dark black sandy silt with abundant charcoal and cremated bone		1	
1005	Fill	1003	2nd fill of pit	mid greyish orange silty clay		1	
1006	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, concave base	Ditch 1	1	
1007	Fill	1006	1st fill of ditch	light bluish grey silty clay		1	
1008	Fill	1006	2nd fill of ditch	light grey silty clay		1	
1009	Fill	1006	3rd fill of ditch	mid greyish brown silty clay		1	
1010	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, concave base	Ditch 3	1	
1011	Fill	1010	1st fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	
1012	Fill	1010	2nd fill of ditch	mid orangey brown silty clay		1	RB
1013	Cut		pit	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, concave base			
1014	Fill	1013	single fill of pit	dark grey silty clay			
1015	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, concave base	Ditch 2	1	
1016	Fill	1015	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey sandy silt		1	RB
1017	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 4		
1018	Fill	1017	1st fill of ditch	light bluish grey silty clay			
1019	Fill	1017	2nd fill of ditch	mid bluish grey and orange silty clay			
1020	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 5		
1021	Fill	1020	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey silty clay			
1022	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, flat base			
1023	Fill	1022	single fill of posthole	dark grey silty clay			
1024	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, concave base			
1025	Fill	1024	single fill of posthole	mid grey silty clay			
1026	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, concave base			
1027	Fill	1026	single fill of posthole	dark grey silty clay			
1028	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, concave base			
1029	Fill	1028	single fill of posthole	dark grey silty clay			
1030	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, moderate sloping sides, concave base			
1031	Fill	1030	single fill of posthole	dark grey silty clay			
1032	Cut		posthole	circular in plan, vertical sides, concave base			
1033	Fill	1032	single fill of posthole	dark grey silty clay			

Context	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Feature label	Period	Spot-date
1034	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate side, flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1035	Fill	1034	1st fill of ditch	light brownish grey silty clay		1	
1036	Fill	1034	2nd fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	
1037	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 5		
1038	Fill	1037	single fill of ditch	light bluish grey silty clay			
1039	Cut		pit	sub-oval in plan, moderate sloping sides, flat base		1	
1040	Fill	1039	1st fill of pit	mid yellowish brown silty clay		1	
1041	Fill	1039	2nd fill of pit	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	
1042	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, uneven base	Ditch 2	1	
1043	Fill	1042	1st fill of ditch	light bluish grey clay		1	
1044	Fill	1042	2nd fill of ditch	light brownish grey silty clay		1	
1045	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, base not reached	Ditch 4		
1046	Fill	1045	single fill of ditch	light brownish grey silty clay			
1047	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, flat base	Ditch 2	1	
1048	Fill	1047	1st fill of ditch	light grey and orangey silty clay		1	
1049	Fill	1047	2nd fill of ditch	mid greyish brown silty clay		1	
1050	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 4		
1051	Fill	1050	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey silty clay			
1052	Cut		pit	moderate sloping sides, flat base. Same as pit 1039		1	
1053	Fill	1052	single fill of pit	light yellowish grey silty clay		1	
1054	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides and flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1055	Fill	1054	single fill of ditch	light grey silty clay		1	RB
1056	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides and flat base	Ditch 7	1	
1057	Fill	1056	single fill of ditch	mid reddish brown silty clay		1	
1058	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides and flat base	Ditch 11		
1059	Fill	1058	single fill of ditch	mid greyish brown sandy silt			
1060	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides and flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1061	Fill	1060	1st fill of ditch	mid grey silty clay		1	
1062	Fill	1060	2nd fill of ditch	mid brown silty clay		1	
1063	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides and concave base	Ditch 7	1	
1064	Fill	1063	1st fill of ditch	mid brown silty clay		1	
1065	Fill	1063	2nd fill of ditch	dark brownish grey silty clay		1	
1066	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, concave base	Ditch 2	1	
1067	Fill	1066	single fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	
1068	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 5		
1069	Fill	1068	single fill of ditch	mid yellowish brown silty clay			
1070	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, steep sides, flat base	Ditch 2	1	
1071	Fill	1070	single fill of ditch	mid greyish brown silty clay			

Context	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Feature label	Period	Spot-date
1072	Cut		ditch terminus	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 8		
1073	Fill	1072	single fill of ditch terminus	mid yellowish grey silty clay			
1074	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 3	1	
1075	Fill	1074	single fill of ditch	mid yellowish brown silty clay		1	
1076	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 8		
1077	Fill	1076	single fill of ditch	mid greyish brown sandy clay			
1078	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 4		
1079	Fill	1078	single fill of ditch	mid yellowish brown silty clay			
1080	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1081	Fill	1080	single fill of ditch	mid greyish brown silty clay		1	
1082	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, base not reached	Ditch 1	1	
1083	Fill	1082	single fill of ditch	mid orangey brown silty clay		1	
1084	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, base not reached	Ditch 4		
1085	Fill	1084	single fill of ditch	light greyish brown			
1086	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 1	1	
1087	Fill	1086	single fill of ditch	light yellowish grey silty clay		1	
1088	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping side, flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1089	Fill	1088	single fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	
1090	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, V-shaped profile, concave base	Ditch 13	1	
1091	Fill	1090	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey silty clay		1	
1092	Cut		ditch terminus	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping side, flat base	Ditch 5		
1093	Fill	1092	single fill of ditch terminus	mid greyish brown silty clay			
1094	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping side, flat base	Ditch 14	2	
1095	Fill	1094	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey silty clay		2	
1096	Cut		ditch	N/S orientated, moderate sloping side, flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1097	Fill	1096	single fill of ditch	light grey silty clay		1	RB
1098	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, V-shaped profile, concave base	Ditch 1	1	
1099	Fill	1098	1st fill of ditch	mid orangey grey sandy clay		1	
1100	Fill	1098	2nd fill of ditch	light orangey grey silty clay		1	
1101	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 3	1	
1102	Fill	1101	single fill of ditch	light orangey grey silty clay		1	
1103	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 13	1	
1104	Fill	1103	single fill of ditch	mid brownish grey silty clay		1	
1105	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 2	1	
1106	Fill	1105	single fill of ditch	light yellowish grey silty clay		1	

Context	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Feature label	Period	Spot-date
1107	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 13	1	
1108	Fill	1107	single fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	LIA-ERB
1109	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 2	1	
1110	Fill	1109	1st fill of ditch	mid yellow silty clay		1	
1111	Fill	1109	2nd fill of ditch	light yellowish grey silty clay		1	
1112	Fill	1109	3rd fill of ditch	mid grey silty clay		1	
1114	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 13	1	
1115	Fill	1114	single fill of ditch	light greyish orange silty clay		1	
1116	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 10		
1117	Fill	1116	single fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay			
1118	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 6	1	
1119	Fill	1118	single fill of ditch	light bluish grey silty clay		1	
1120	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 7	1	
1121	Fill	1120	single fill of ditch	mid yellowish brown		1	
1122	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, concave base	Ditch 9	2	
1123	Fill	1121	single fill of ditch	dark yellowish brown silty clay		2	
1124	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 13	1	
1125	Fill	1124	single fill of ditch	mid bluish grey silty clay		1	RB
1126	Cut		ditch	NE/SW orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	Ditch 7	1	
1127	Fill	1126	single fill of ditch	light yellowish grey silty clay		1	RB
1128	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, steep sides, flat base	Ditch 12		
1129	Fill	1128	1st fill of ditch	mid grey silty clay			
1130	Fill	1128	2nd fill of ditch	mid greyish yellow silty clay			
1131	Cut		ditch	NW/SE orientated, steep sides, flat base	Ditch 11		
1132	Fill	1131	1st fill of ditch	light bluish grey silty clay			
1133	Fill	1131	2nd fill of ditch	mid yellowish silty clay			

APPENDIX B: POTTERY

By Pete Banks

A small assemblage of 16 sherds (133g) of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery was recovered from seven deposits. The material has been recorded to a basic level (Table B2) in accordance with the national guidelines (Barclay *et al.* 2016) and where appropriate a concordance with the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection has been provided (Tomber and Dore 1998). Quantification was by sherd count, weight and rim EVEs (Estimated Vessel Equivalent) by broad fabric group (e.g. sandy grey wares) in each context. Vessel form and any evidence for use have also been recorded where appropriate. Overall the condition of the assemblage is poor; the mean sherd weight (MSW) of the group is just 8.3g. The assemblage EVEs value is 0.2. Most sherds exhibit signs of heavy wear and the assemblage is highly fragmented.

Late Iron Age/Roman

The earliest material from the site is a single out-curved rim sherd of Late Iron Age/Early Roman transitional grog-tempered ware (**SOB GT**). The majority of the group (12 sherds, 89g) comprises sandy grey wares (UNS GW). Broadly these date to the Roman period, although a bead and flange rim from a straight-sided bowl is most likely of 2nd to 3rd century date (Ditch 3, cut 1010). Small quantities of both sandy oxidised wares (UNS OX) and shell-tempered wares (UNS SH) are also present. The origin of all these fabrics is not known, however, they were most likely locally produced.

Summary

Due to its small size it is not possible to provide further meaningful discussion on the assemblage.

References

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Table B1: Pottery totals by period and fabric.

Period	Fabric Description	Fabric Code*	Count	Weight (g)
LIA/Roman pottery	South British grog-tempered ware	SOB GT	1	11
	Unsourced sandy grey ware	UNS GW	12	89
	Unsourced sandy oxidised ware	UNS OX	1	1
	Unsourced shell-tempered ware	UNS SH	2	32
Grand Total			16	133

* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes in bold (Tomber and Dore 1998)

APPENDIX C: CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

By Pete Banks

Eight fragments (660g) of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from four deposits. The assemblage was visually scanned by context and quantified by count and weight. The material was made in oxidised medium sandy fabrics (ms), some with calcareous (c), ferrous (fe) or flint inclusions (f). Four fragments of tile, recorded from Ditch 7 (cut 1126), are, based on their soft firing, possibly of Roman date. Four fragments of tile recovered from Ditch 6 (cuts 1054 and 1060) and Ditch 7 (cut 1063) are, based on their fabrics, thickness and characteristics of firing, most likely of post-medieval or modern date.

APPENDIX D: METALWORK

By Pete Banks

The metalwork assemblage comprises seven objects, including three iron artefacts and four copper-alloy artefacts. The artefacts were collected by both hand excavation and through metal detecting and all derive from Roman (Period 1) and undated ditches.

Iron

Three fragments of iron (57g) were recorded from two deposits. Ditch 6 (cut 1060) contained a small, round shafted nail (Ra. 5). The nail is most likely machine manufactured and dates to the industrial era. Also from the same deposits was a ring/hoop of iron approximately 75mm in diameter (Ra. 1). The ring has a small bulge along its circumference and probably represents a door knocker. The object most likely dates to the post-medieval or modern period. A square sectioned rod of iron was recovered from Ditch 7 (cut 1063). Its function is uncertain, but it possibly represents a fragment of iron nail.

Copper Alloy

Four fragments of copper alloy (10g) were recovered from three deposits. Ditch 6 (cut 1060) produced a flat strip of copper alloy, rounded at one end, approximately 42mm long and 6mm wide (Ra. 2). The fragment is fractured at one end, as a result its function is uncertain. It is possibly a fragment of toilet spoon/probe from a Roman toiletry kit. Similar complete objects are known from sites such as Colchester, Essex (Crummy 1983, 61, fig.65, no.1927). Two copper alloy objects were recovered from Ditch 11 (cut 1058). The first is a twisted coil of copper alloy sheet with a thicker outer casing, approximately 20mm in diameter (Ra. 4). The fragment is most likely a heating coil, probably from a car cigarette lighter and is of modern date. The second object is a circular disc of copper alloy, approximately 26mm in diameter with an off-centre perforation 7mm across (Ra. 3). The function and date of this object is unclear. A thin circular disc of copper alloy sheet (approx. 20mm dia) with a perforated tab (Ra.6) is recorded from Ditch 7 (cut 1126). The object most likely represents an item of personal adornment such as a pendant, although due to its poor condition it is not possible to determine its function or date with any certainty.

References

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APPENDIX E: FLINT

By Pete Banks

Ditch 6 (cut 1054) produced a single flint flake (3g) made in yellow-brown flint. There is a small distal fracture, but otherwise the flake is in good condition.

APPENDIX F: HUMAN BONE

By Sharon Clough

Introduction

A single cremation burial was recovered from the site at Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis. Although not directly dated it probably dates to the Early Roman period (or even Late Iron Age) and is located adjacent to a Roman period ditch (Ditch 2). Over 750g of cremated bone was recovered which is a good quantity of bone and indicates there was little truncation or disturbance. In addition, a single fragment of human femur was recovered from Ditch 1. Although not directly dated it could be Late Iron Age in origin.

Methodology

Standard methodology and reporting followed McKinley 2004, Mays *et al.* 2018, Mitchell and Brickley 2017.

The cremation deposit was processed as environmental sample, which involved wet sieving using flotation and 0.5mm residue mesh. The dry bone was then removed from the sample and sieved through 10, 5 and 2mm mesh size. The weight of the bone retained in each fraction and spit was recorded and its percentage of the total weight of the cremation was calculated. This enabled the degree of fragmentation to be quantified in each cremation.

The bones retained from each sieve size were examined in detail and sorted into the following identifiable bone groups: skull (including mandible and dentition); axial (clavicle, scapula, ribs, vertebra and pelvic elements); upper limb and lower limb. The separation of the bone into these groups helps illuminate any deliberate bias in the skeletal elements collected for burial. Each sample was weighed on digital scales and details of colour and largest fragment were recorded. Where possible, the presence of individual bones within the defined bone groups was noted. Any unidentifiable fragments of long bone shafts or cancellous bone, which are often the majority recovered from cremations, were weighed and incorporated into any subsequent quantitative analysis. The prevalence of unidentifiable bone is largely dependent on the degree of fragmentation, whereby larger fragments are easier to identify than smaller ones.

It must also be taken into consideration that some skeletal elements are more diagnostic and more easily identifiable than others and, therefore, more often recorded. This may create bias in calculations of the relative quantities of skeletal elements collected for burial.

Fragments below a certain size are not distinguishable as to whether they are human or animal except microscopically or chemically.

Age estimations from cremated remains are dependent on the survival of particular age diagnostic elements, which did not occur in this instance. Sex estimation of adult burnt bone relies on the preservation of specific elements and is uncommon in cremated material. The quantity of warping and shrinkage of the bone during the cremation process must also be taken into consideration when estimating sex using the standard analytical techniques used on dry bone.

Results

Cremation burial 1003

The total weight of the cremated bone from burial 1003 was 751.1g. This is a good to high weight of bone recovered when compared to the potential total weight of bone for an adult from a modern crematorium which can vary from about 1000 to 3600g (McKinley 2000, 404). The total weight is therefore not the complete individual, but a good representative amount and it is frequently found that 50% or less of the bone available after cremation is included in the burial (McKinley 2000).

The edges of the cremated bone were fairly sharp which suggests that taphonomy was not a major factor in reducing the quantity of bone and spongy bone was present from the epiphyses of long bones (though not the vertebral bodies).

Most fragmentation occurs during and after excavation (McKinley 1994: 341) and the majority of bone was in the 10-5mm (Table F1) fraction size, though the >10mm was not much lower at 44%. The largest fragment was 54 x 13mm this is close to the average, 45.2mm (McKinley 1994, 340-1), and the same study found that on average 50% of the bone was over 10mm, which is not the case here. Despite one fragment being a good size, the deposit was reasonably fragmented and this affected identification of elements.

A third of the bone could be confidently identified to skeletal element. Cranial fragments are easy to identify and are often the highest quantity and these were found in almost equal quantity to the lower limb. The axial skeleton had the least and it was mostly rib bones which were identified. Trabecular or spongy bone was present, but only for epiphyses of long bones and not any of the vertebrae or pelvis. Small bones from the hands (distal phalanges) and 16 tooth roots were recovered, indicating that the smallest bones were collected from the pyre.

The bone was consistently fully white in colour which indicates full oxidation of the bone. There was some minor variation with grey occasionally. This is only achieved by temperatures of over (over 645°C is quoted, but probably over 800°C) for enough time, usually several hours. Roman period cremations have been noted to regularly not entirely combust the body efficiently, as the cremated bone is observed to have a wide variety of colours (McKinley 2008) and it is thought that in this period it was not deemed necessary to achieve an even burning. Rural remains though tend to have a greater proportion of well-cremated remains than those in urban locations (McKinley 2008, 173-4). There were ten small fragments in the 5-10mm fraction size that were black in colour. These have been identified as animal bone but were too small and undiagnostic to identify the species (Clarke, Appendix G).

The cranial fragments were thin and the sutures between the cranial bones were not fully closed or obliterated, both of which indicate a younger adult age range individual. There were no sexually dimorphic elements present, so it is not possible to estimate male or female. There were no repeated elements or different age/size parts to suggest more than one individual.

Disarticulated human bone

Recovered from fill 1100 of Ditch 1 (cut 1098) was a fragment from the right femur approximately 18cm long (Table F2). The fragment is from the lower half of the femur from the shaft and has a prominent *linea aspera*. What is particularly notable about the fragment though is the weathering which has affected the external surface. Linear cracking and a pale colour and also quite smooth at one end, the bone is also very solid and dense. This weathering suggests that the bone was not immediately buried in the ground once de-fleshed and that it was exposed to the elements for long period of time. It has therefore only been deposited in the ditch fill after these changes have occurred.

It is known in the Iron Age that parts of human bones are frequently found in pits and ditches, and in particular in the middle or upper fills. (Harding 2016, 105). It is also assumed that in order for there to be parts of human remains then there has likely been either a period of excarnation or some kind of interment and then disinterment. The evidence from the femoral fragment is that it was above ground for a period of time before it was deposited in the ditch.

Discussion

Rural burial in the Roman period is often located on the edge of cultivated land adjacent to a boundary (such as a ditch), sometimes as a single interment, or in small groups and probably relate to nearby farmsteads (Smith *et al.* 2018).

Other cremation burials have been excavated in the local area dating to the Late Iron Age and/or Early Roman period. These are from the Site Q on the M1-A4 link road (Brown 2020), on the Houghton Regis North 1 site HRN3206 (Luke and Barker 2021, 50) and a small cemetery at New Venue, Dunstable (Edwards 2010). This indicates that the cremation burial from Bury Spinney is typical for the area and period.

The femoral fragment was deposited in the ditch after a period of time above ground, and this is commonly observed in the Iron Age (Fitzpatrick 2007).

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Table F1: Cremated bone deposit total weight by fraction size

Context	Fill number	Total Weight of cremated bone	Fraction size <10mm	Fraction size 10-5mm	Fraction size 5-2mm
1003	1004 (sample 1)	751.1g	332.1g 44.2%	402g 53.5%	17g 2.3%

Table F2: Identified elements

Context	Cranial	Axial	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unidentified
1003	99g 13.2%	12.9g 1.7%	30.5g 4.1%	104.2g 13.9%	504.5g 67.2%

APPENDIX G: ANIMAL BONE

By Andrew Clarke

A small assemblage of animal bone amounting to 31 fragments (1598g) was recovered from 11 pit and ditch fill deposits. Artefactual material dating broadly to the Roman period was also recovered (See Table G1). The material was fragmentary and only moderately well preserved however, it was possible to identify the remains of cattle (*Bos taurus*), sheep/goat (*Ovis aries/Capra hircus*) and horse (*Equus caballus*).

Roman

A total of 30 fragments (1338g) were recovered from nine deposits. A limited amount of cattle, sheep/goat and horse bone was recovered. Each was identified from meat-poor skeletal elements, none of which displayed any damage indicative of butchery practice.

Undated

The remaining fragment (260g) was recovered from a single deposit that remains unphased. It was a horse bone and with no evidence of butchery.

Summary

The low recovery of animal remains severely limits what can be said in terms of site economy and animal husbandry. However, each species was a commonly exploited domestic animal so their inclusion in an assemblage of this period is to be expected.

Table G1: Identified animal species by fragment count (NISP) and weight and context.

Feature	Cut	Fill	BOS	O/C	EQ	LM	MM	Ind	Total	Weight (g)
Roman										
Ditch 6	1054	1055	1	1					2	38
Ditch 6	1096	1097	1			1			2	360
Ditch 13	1107	1108	1						1	13
Ditch 13	1124	1125			1				1	292
Cremation burial	1003	1004					10		10	14
Ditch 2	1042	1044	1					4	5	20
Ditch 6	1060	1062	1					2	3	40
Ditch 13	1103	1104	1						1	229
Ditch 13	1114	1115				1			1	10
Ditch 6	1118	1119			3	1			4	322
	Subtotal		6	1	4	3	10	6	30	1338
Undated										
Ditch 5	1020	1021			1				1	260
	Subtotal				1				1	260
	Total		6	1	5	3	10	6	31	
	Weight		549	10	863	140	14	22	1598	

BOS = cattle; O/C = sheep/goat; EQ = horse; LM = large size mammal; MM = medium size mammal; Ind = indeterminate

APPENDIX H: PLANT MACROFOSSILS

By Emma Aitken

Introduction

Analysis was conducted on two bulk samples from cremation pit 1003 and ditch 1096 from an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation. It was hoped that analysis on these samples would provide an indication of whether settlement or industrial activity was taking place on the site. It was also hoped that the environmental remains may aid in the dating of cremation pit 1003.

Methodology

The samples were processed by standard flotation procedures, using a 250µm sieve for the recovery of the flot and a 1mm sieve for the collection of the residue. All identifiable charred plant remains from these samples were identified using a stereo-binocular microscope. The identifications follow the nomenclature of Stace (2019) for wild plants, and traditional nomenclature, as provided by Zohary *et al.* (2012) for cereals. The charred material was counted and recorded to exact numbers (Table H1). The preservation of the charred plant remains from these periods are variable and noted in Table H1 using the key: p = poor, m = moderate, and g = good. Molluscan remains were also identified within all four samples and were recorded following an abundance scale of * = 1–4 items; ** = 5–19 items; *** = 20–49 items; **** = 50–99 items; ***** = >100 items. These results have been recorded in Table H2 and follow nomenclature according to Anderson (2005) and habitat preferences according to Kerney (1999) and Davies (2008).

Period 1: Roman (AD43 – AD410)

Sample 2 of Roman Ditch 6 (cut 1096) contained a single charred wheat grain (*Triticum* sp.) and no charcoal. A small number of terrestrial snail shells were identified alongside a moderately large number of freshwater/aquatic snail shells indicating that this area was made up of a well-established open landscape with areas of longer grass and scrub. The aquatic snail shells suggest that this area was also prone to bouts of seasonal flooding and desiccation and that, during this period, there was standing water at the bottom of the ditch. The aquatic species *Planorbis planorbis* is found 'in all kinds of well-vegetated aquatic habitats of lowland type but especially characteristic of shallow pools and swampy ditches that are liable to dry up in the summer months' (Kerney 1999).

Fill 1004 of cremation related deposit 1003 contained no charred plant remains. A large volume of charcoal was noted, including fragments of oak (*Quercus* sp.) wood. Oak is a

preferred wood used for cremation related activities due to its ability to burn at extremely high temperatures. A number of terrestrial snail shells were recorded from within the assemblage, alongside several shells of the aquatic species *Anisus leucostoma*, which is a species that favours areas of seasonal flooding and desiccation. The environmental remains recovered from this assemblage do not aid in providing a potential date for the feature.

Summary

The charred remains from Ditch 6 (cut 1096) suggest that the spare material is indicative of dispersed settlement waste material and do not indicate that it was deposited deliberately in the ditch. The molluscan assemblage suggests that this area was prone to flooding and likely had times where water would gather at the bottom of the ditch.

The charred remains from cremation pit 1003 do support that a burning event took place. No cremated bone was observed within the assemblage, but cremated bone was hand recovered from this deposit, indicating that this assemblage relates to cremation related activities. The molluscan assemblage indicates that the area surrounding cremation pit 1003 was made up of a well-established open landscape with areas of shrub and woodland that had seasonal flooding and desiccation.

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Table H1: Charred plant remains

Period		1	Unphased
Feature Type		Ditch	Cremation Pit
Cut Number		1096	1003
Context		1097	1004
Sample		2	1
Vol (L)		34	25
Flot size (ml)		50	250
%Roots		80	<1
% 0.5mm fraction analysed		100	100
Preservation level		p-m	m
Cereals	Common Name		
<i>Triticum sp.</i> (grain)	wheat	1	-
Charcoal >4mm/>2mm		-	****/****
Notes		-	oak

Key: * = 1–4 items; ** = 4–20 items; *** = 21–49 items; **** = 50–99 items; ***** = >100

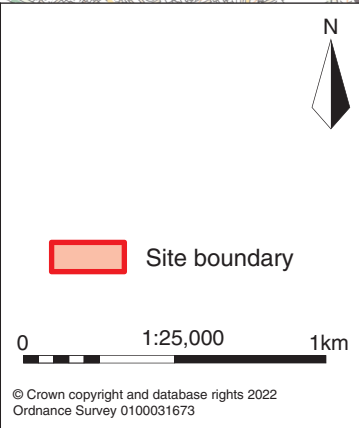
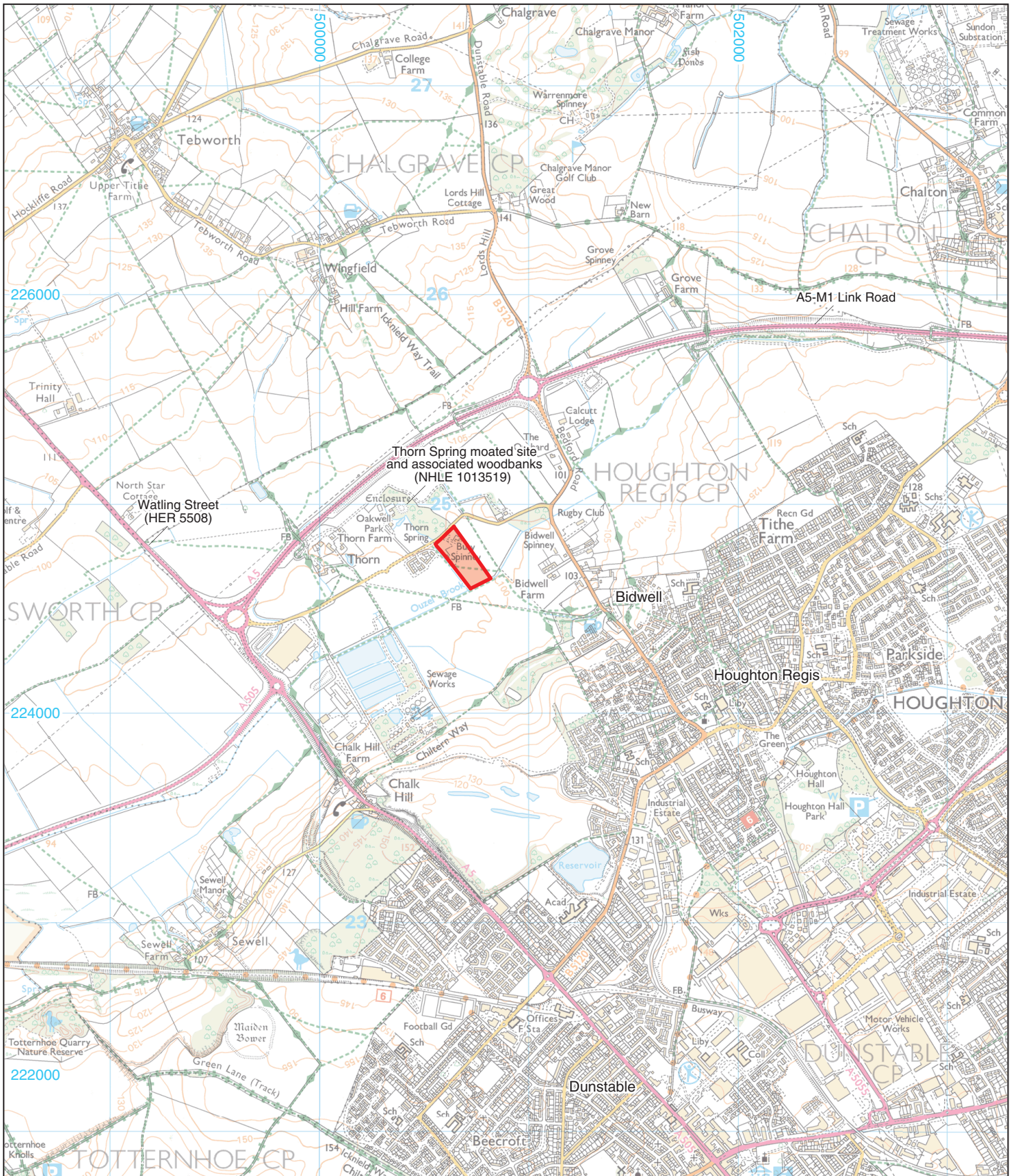
Table H2 Molluscan remains

Period	1	
Feature Type	Ditch	Cremation Pit
Cut Number	1096	1003
Context	1097	1004
Sample	2	1
Sample Type	bulk/mol	bulk
Processed vol (L)	34	25
Open Country Species		
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	X	X
<i>Vertigo</i> sp.	-	X
<i>Vallonia costata</i>	X	X
<i>Helicella itala</i>	X	X
Intermediate Species		
<i>Trochulus</i> sp.	-	X
<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp.	X	-
Shade-loving Species		
<i>Discus rotundatus</i>	X	-
<i>Aeogpinella</i> sp.	X	X
<i>Acanthinula aculeata</i>	-	X
Marsh species		
<i>Succinea/Oxyloma</i> sp.	X	X
<i>Carychium minimum</i>	X	X
Amphibious species		
<i>Anisus leucostoma</i>	X	X
<i>Galba truncatula</i>	X	-
Intermediate aquatic species		
<i>Pisidium</i> sp.	X	-
<i>Bathyomphalus contortus</i>	X	-
<i>Gyraulus crista</i>	X	-
Ditch species		
<i>Planorbis planorbis</i>	X	-
<i>Planorbis</i> sp.	X	-
<i>Valvata cristata</i>	X	-
Moving water		
<i>Bithynia leachii</i>	X	-
<i>Bithynia operculum</i>	X	-
Approx Total Moll-t	**	****
Approx Total Moll-a	****	*
Ostracods	X	-

Key: * = 1–4 items; ** = 5–19 items; *** = 20–49 items; **** = 50–99 items; ***** = >100 items, X = present

APPENDIX I: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable	
Short description	<p>In April 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation on land at Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable. An area of 2.732m² was excavated within the site.</p> <p>Roman remains were found across the excavation area, mainly consisting of two parallel ditches truncated by the corner of a large rectilinear enclosure that extended beyond the limits of the excavation area. A small assemblage of Roman pottery and CBM was retrieved from the site. A fragment of worn disarticulated human bone was retrieved from one of the Roman ditches. A single cremation burial that contained a high number of cremated human bone was also recorded. No artefactual material was recovered from the cremation.</p>	
Project dates	7–29 April 2022	
Project type	SMS excavation	
Previous work	Field evaluation (Icknield Archaeology 2017)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable	
Study area (m ² /ha)	c. 3.800m ²	
Site co-ordinates	500704, 224716	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Antoni Nowak	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	The Culture Trust Luton LUTNM 2022/03	Pottery, CBM, animal bone
Paper	The Culture Trust Luton LUTNM 2022/03	Context sheets, section drawings
Digital	The Culture Trust Luton LUTNM 2022/03	Digital survey, digital photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2022 <i>Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis, Dunstable: Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation</i> CA typescript report MK0687_1		



Cotswold Archaeology

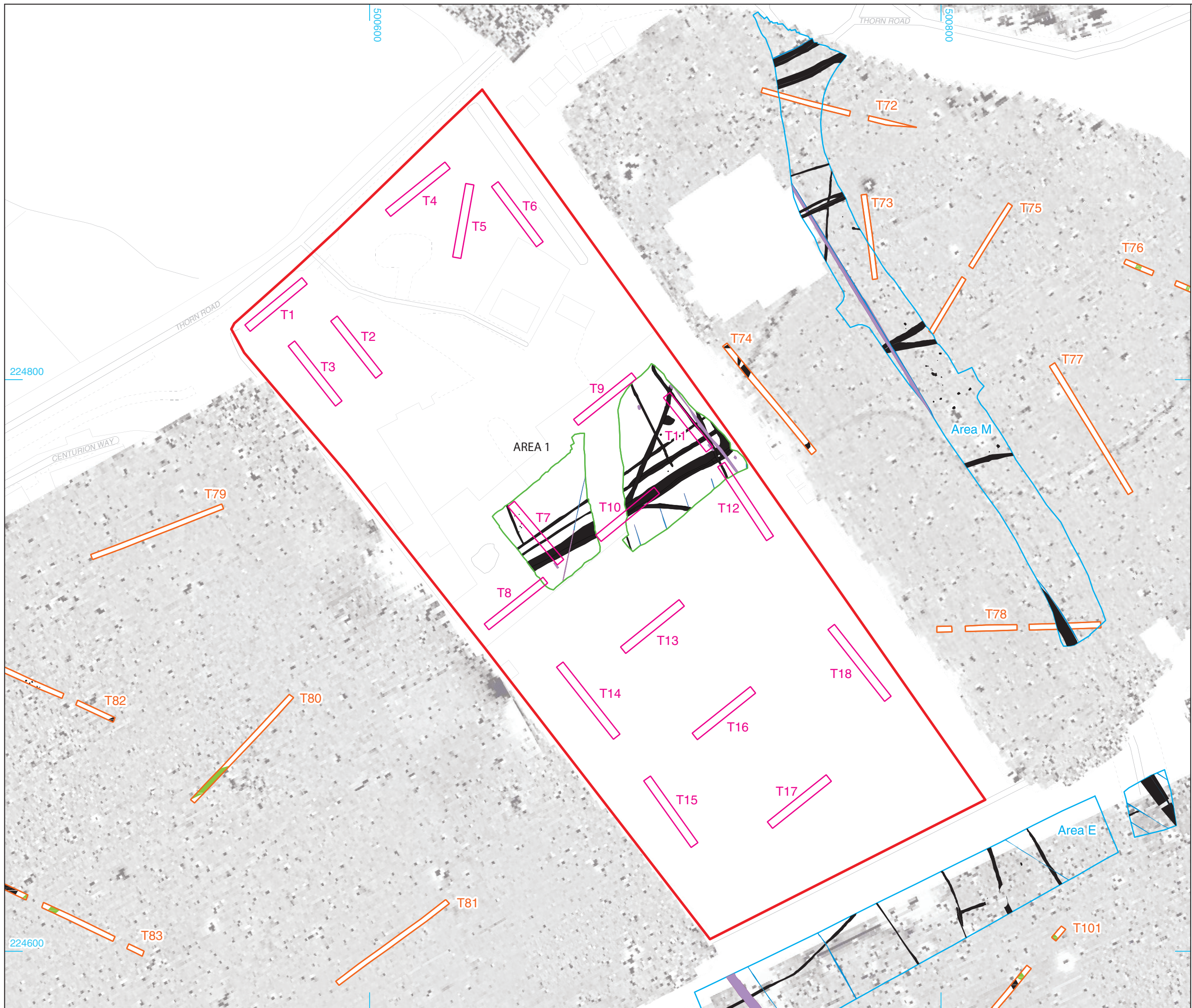
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PROJECT TITLE
 Bury Spinney, Houghton Regis,
 Dunstable, Bedfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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- Site boundary
- Excavated area
- Previous excavation areas (Cotswold Archaeology 2018)
- Previous evaluation trench (Icknield Archaeology 2017)
- Previous evaluation trench (Cotswold Archaeology 2014)
- Archaeological feature
- Modern
- Field drain
- Furrow

Geophysical survey results
(Pre-Construct Geophysics 2014)



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FIGURE TITLE
Site plan showing excavation area,
previous evaluation trenches, geophysical
survey results and archaeological features

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General view over the excavation area, looking north-west



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FIGURE TITLE

Photograph of excavation area

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FIGURE NO.

4



Ditches 1 and 3, looking south-west (scale 1m)

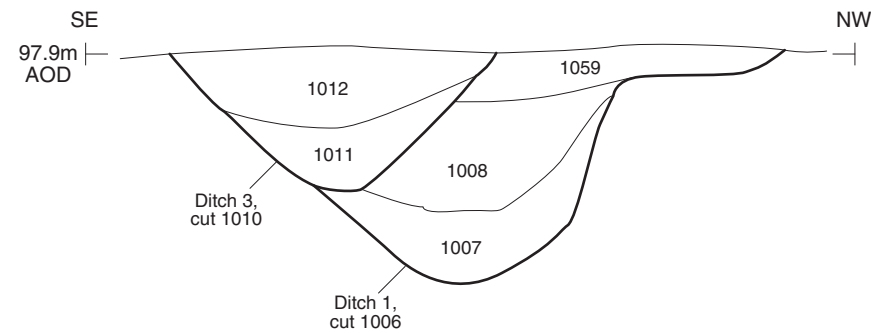


Pit 1039, looking north (scale 1m)

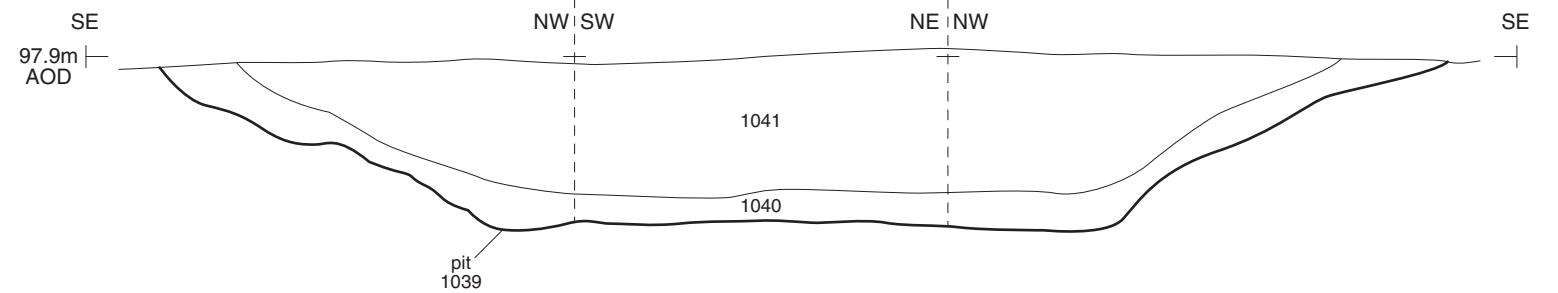


Cremation pit 1003, looking north-west (0.4m scale)

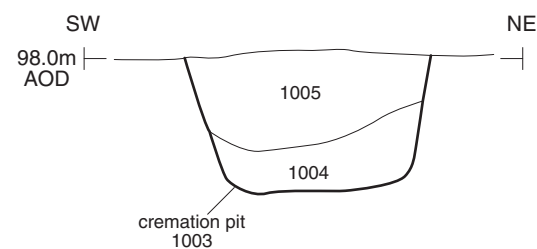
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Section BB



Section CC



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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 Sections AA, BB and CC, and
 photographs

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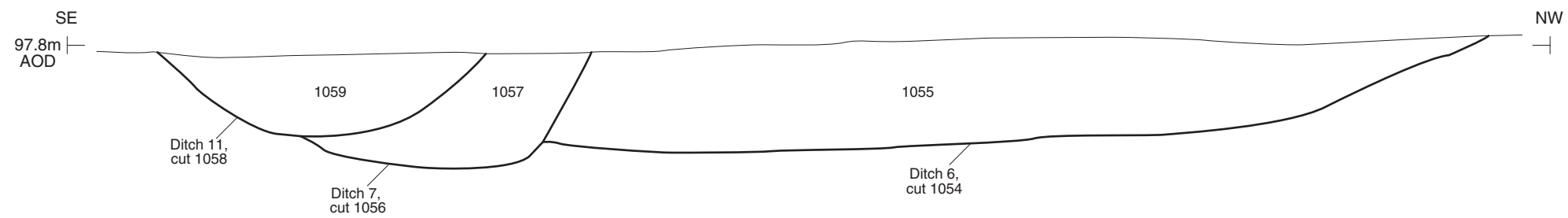


Ditches 6, 7 and 11, looking south-west (scale 2m)

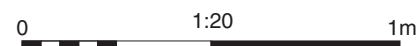
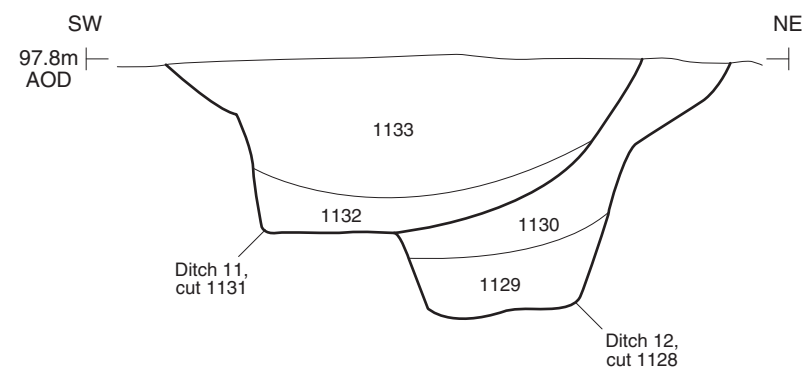


Ditches 11 and 12, looking north-west (scale 1m)

Section DD



Section EE




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 Sections DD and EE, and photographs

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