

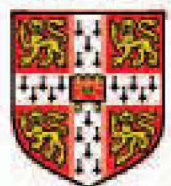
# Spong Drove, Willingham.

An Archaeological Evaluation.



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# **Spong Drove, Willingham**

**- An Archaeological Evaluation -**

(TL 4150 7150)

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July 2009/Report No. 890  
Event Number: ECB3200/2009

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## Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land off of Spong Drove, Willingham, Cambridgeshire (TL 4150 7150) on a Proposed Development Area/site (PDA) located approximately 1.75km northeast of Willingham (Fig. 1). The programme of evaluation trenching took place between 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009 with the aim to establish the presence, extent and nature of archaeological features highlighted from aerial photographs, in addition to assessing the degree of preservation of any possible upstanding features (such as banks) and environmental remains.

Six trenches were initially machine excavated with a further judgemental trench opened towards the end of the excavation programme. Numerous archaeological features in the form of postholes, pits and linears were cut into a preserved buried soil and recorded in Trenches 1-6, and midden-type deposits survived. Pottery recovered from across the site indicated occupation of the locale from the Late Bronze Age through to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Building material, in the form of roof tiles, may indicate the presence of a Romano-British structure within the immediate vicinity.

### *Topography, Geology and Archaeological Background*

The natural topography evident at the present time closely resembles the original land surface during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, with the exception of the rise around Trench 4. This knoll has been emphasised slightly by a layer of clayey subsoil overlying the peat formation (see Appendix for soil sequence and trench depths). At the base of the peat layer a thin horizon of peaty gravel was evident throughout the excavation, probably representing an interface of buried soil between archaeological features and the peat. A buried soil horizon below this layer had archaeological features cut into it, in addition to having cultural strata overlying it. Discussed in the text below, to summarise, the land falls away towards the south and east, whereas a natural ridge-type rise continues towards the west. The archaeological features recorded were concentrated on this higher western ground. The underlying geology comprises of Second Terrace River Gravels with Ampthill Clay along its eastern side (see British Geological Survey Sheet No. 188).

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential for the prehistoric and Roman periods. Aerial photographs of the area show a dense network of cropmarks (the 'Queensholme Complex'), with the PDA falling alongside a major 'strip compound' system and includes a small sub-rectangular enclosure coming off its side. A trial trench investigation centred on some of the cropmarks was excavated by the W.E.A in the early 1980s, and recorded features pertaining to the later Iron Age and Romano-British occupation (Lucas in Evans & Hodder 2006). This is one of a series of Iron Age/Romano-British settlements located along the fen-edge, south of the Old West River. A series of ring-ditches, also registering on the cropmark plot, were evidently encroached upon by the enclosure system..

The site lies approximately 1.25km to the north-northwest of Belsar's Hill, a probable Iron Age ring-work consisting of a single bank and ditch. Artefacts previously uncovered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are thought to related to an un-located Romano-British shrine within the area.

## Excavation Results

The site sampling strategy consisted of positioning trenches in relationship to the proposed buildings' foundations, and to assess the cropmarks previously recorded in aerial photographs. The relationship of features recorded in the trenches to the cropmarks did not, though, correspond with their original rectified placement. However, when the cropmarks were shifted approximately 15m eastwards, the features matched the results (see Fig. 2).

Evidence of a prehistoric buried soil was prevalent throughout the evaluation which was overlain by peat deposits. This resulted in the preservation of upstanding banks and plough-marks beneath the buried soil, especially in Trenches 2 and 3. All of the archaeological features encountered were cut through this buried soil. To clarify the various archaeological features encountered, the trenches were stripped closer to the natural geology, which aided with the recording of the depths of the buried soil and other deposits.

The majority of substantial archaeological features were concentrated towards the western part of the evaluation area, especially in Trenches 2 and 3, and predominantly dated to the Romano-British period. Underlying/earlier features dating from the Early/Middle Iron Age were also found within this area. The extent of archaeological features began to decline towards the south and east of the area, with only an isolated posthole in Trench 6 and no archaeological remains in Trench 7.

### *Trench 1*

The trench was 35.00m in length and orientated northeast-southwest and contained ten features: five linears, two pits, one posthole and a gully terminal. The buried soil horizon in the northern part of the trench lay at 2.52m OD and sloped southward down to 2.16m OD. The terminal of a potential ring-gully (**F. 19**) was recorded in the south end of the trench and, to the north of this, two inter-cutting linears and a pit (**F. 6**, **F. 7** and **F. 8**). A wide and shallow linear (**F. 22**) could potentially have been a furrow. No diagnostic artefacts were recovered from these features. The inter-cutting features at the northern end of the trench (**F. 16**, **F. 17** and **F. 18**) produced pottery dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (**F. 16**) and Middle Iron Age (**F. 17**).

**F. 3** - A shallow feature, partly exposed, that possibly represented a ditch terminal or square-shaped pit. The cut, [008], had moderately sloping concave sides with moderate break of slope and flat base (2.50m+ x 1.85m+ wide and 0.08m deep). It contained a single fill: [007], a firm mottled mid brown/grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Finds included bone.

**F. 6** - A linear that was east-west orientated and associated with **F. 7** and **F. 8**. The terminal cut, ([017]), was round in plan and had moderately steep straight sides with gradual to moderate break of slope and concave base (1.28m wide and 0.57m deep). It contained four fills: [013], a compact and dried black peat with no inclusions; [014], a compact dark grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel and chalk inclusions; [015], a very compact mid grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal with moderate to frequent gravel inclusions and occasional chalk inclusions; [016], a firm mid to dark grey clayey silt with occasional orange sand mottles with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Finds included bone.



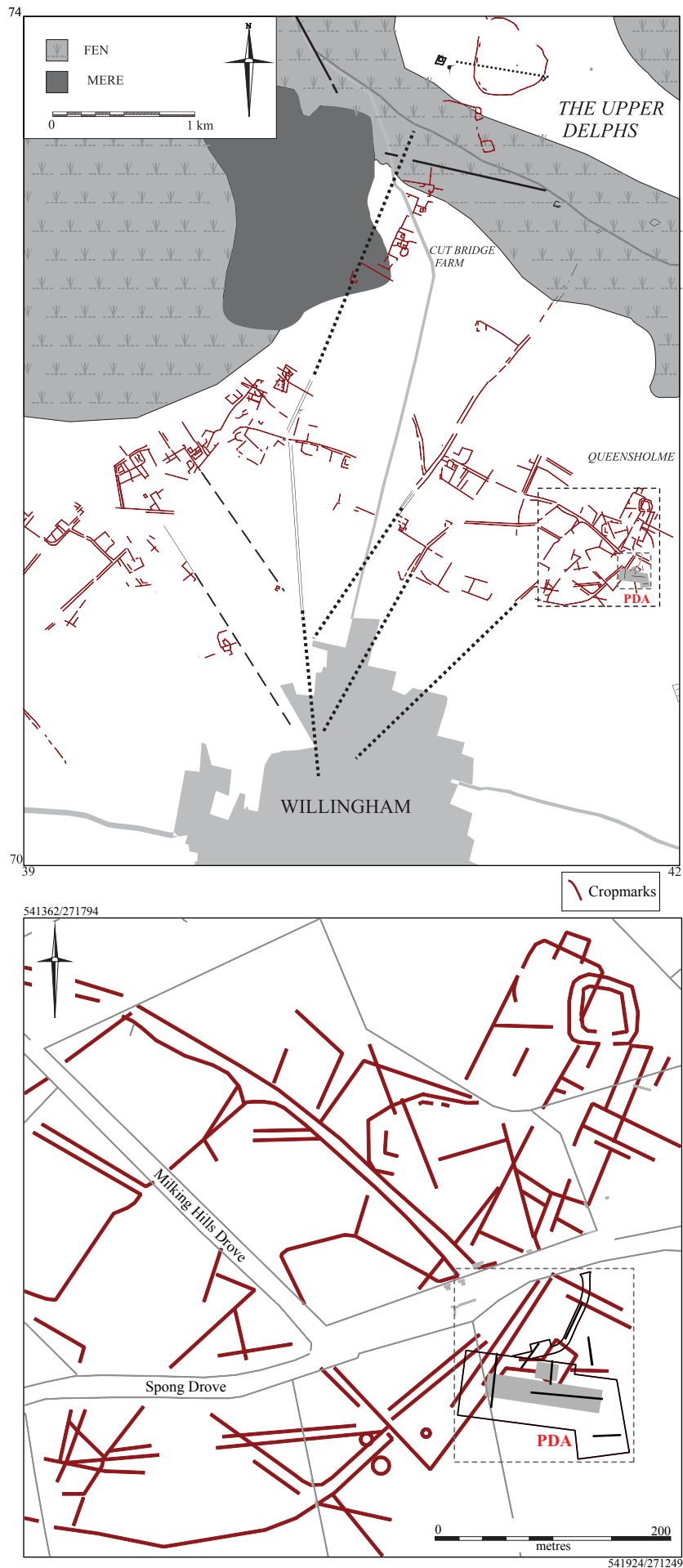


Figure 1. Location Plan.

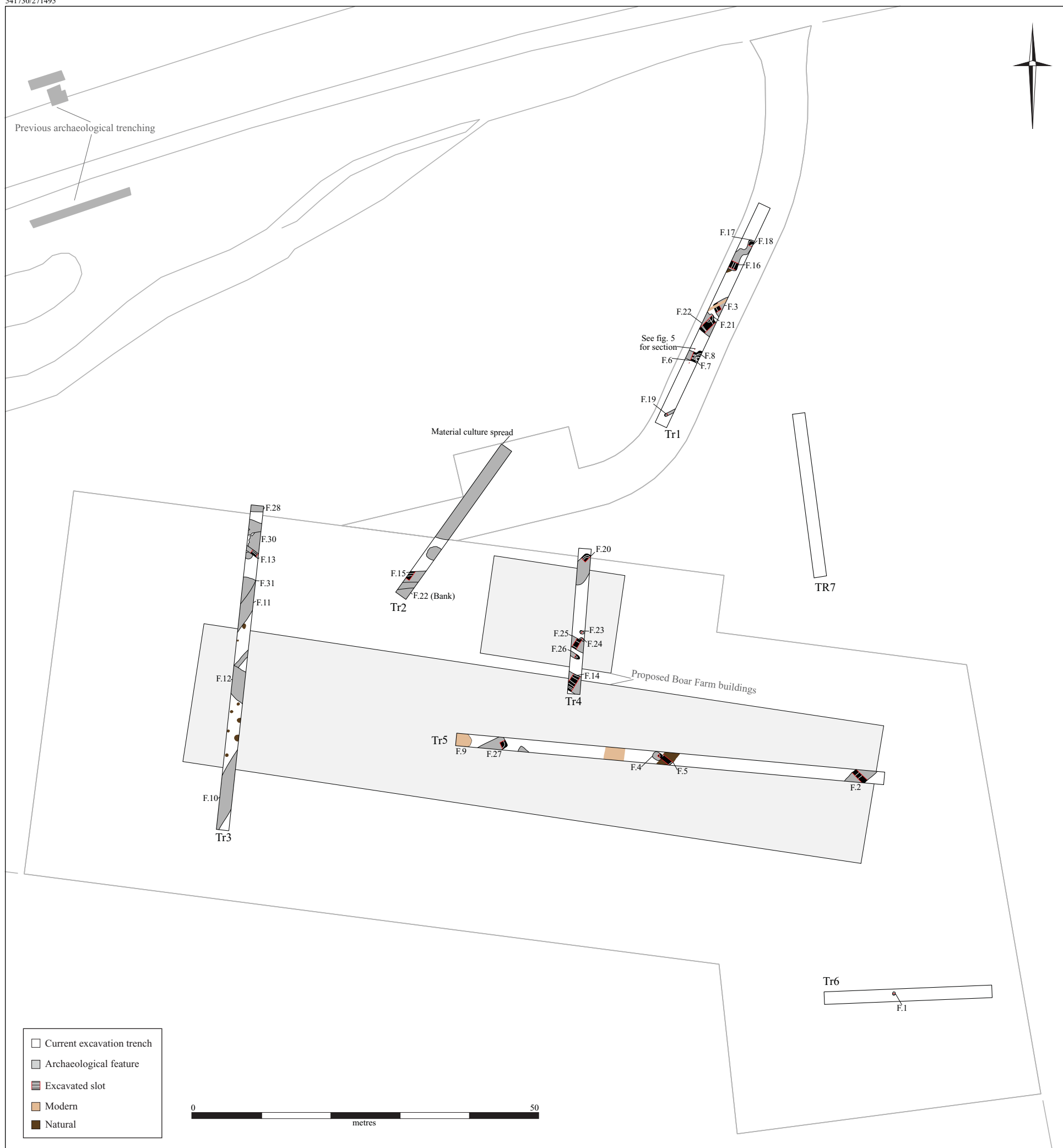


Figure 2. Trench Plan.



**F. 7** - A linear that was east-west orientated and associated with F. 6 and F. 8. The terminal cut, ([023]), was round in plan and had moderately steep concave sides with convex step on north sides with moderate break of slope and shallow concave base (1.68m wide and 0.58m deep). It contained three fills that were overlain by layers of peat and topsoil: [018] was a layer of topsoil and subsoil of dark brown clayey silt; [019] was a layer of black and cracked peat; [020], a compact dark grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal, gravel and chalk inclusions and represented the eroded bank from the south side; [021], a very compact mid grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and moderate to frequent gravel inclusions and occasional chalk inclusions; [022], a firm mid to dark grey clayey silt with occasional sand mottled with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Context [026] was the buried soil: a firm mid brown clayey silt with moderate gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

**F. 8** - Either a pit or ditch terminus cut by linear F. 7. The cut, [025], was square with round edges in plan and had moderate sloping concave sides (1.96m wide and approx. 0.36m deep). It contained a single fill: [024], a firm mottled mid grey/orange silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds.

**F. 16** - A shallow linear. The cut was round in plan with gently sloping concave sides with gradual break of slope and concave base (1.00m wide and 0.19m deep). It contained two fills: [035], a soft dark blue/grey clayey silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and rare gravel inclusions; [036], a firm light yellow/grey silty clay with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery and bone.

**F. 17** - A shallow linear that truncated earlier pit F. 18. The cut, [039], had gently sloping concave sides with gradual break of slope and flat base (0.75m wide and 0.10m deep). It contained a single fill: [038], a soft dark blue/grey clayey silt with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery.

**F. 18** - A small pit that was cut by linear F. 17. The cut [041] was circular in plan with moderately sloping straight sides with moderate break of slope and flat base (0.37m x 0.36m wide and 0.11m deep). It contained a single fill: [040], a firm mid grey/blue silty clay with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds.

**F. 19** - A shallow potential drip gully terminal. The cut, [043], was round in plan with gentle sloping concave sides and flat base (0.33m wide and 0.03m deep). It contained a single fill: [042], a soft mid yellow/grey silty clay with rare flecks of charcoal and frequent gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

**F. 21** - A small pit that was cut by linear F. 22. The cut [076] was circular in plan with moderately sloping concave sides (0.75m wide and approx 0.25m deep). It contained a single fill the same as in F. 22: [075], a firm mottled light to mid orange/brown/grey clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and occasional to moderate gravel inclusions. No finds.

**F. 22** - A linear that was orientated northwest-southeast and truncated pit F. 21. The cut, [076], had moderately sloping sides with convex step on the southern side with gradual break of slope and shallow concave base (2.64m wide and 0.33m deep). It contained two fills: [074], a firm mid to dark grey/brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [075], a firm mottled light to mid orange/brown/grey clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and occasional to moderate gravel inclusions. Finds included bone.

## *Trench 2*

This was 21.00m in length, orientated northeast-southwest and contained at least two features. The buried soil horizon to the north part of the trench lay at 2.15m OD and rose to 2.59m OD to the south. Linear (**F. 15**), had been re-cut at least once and had an associated bank (**F. 32**) on the southern side.

The linear contained artefacts dated to the Romano-British period (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) from the upper fills, and mid/Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the lower deposits. The northern part of the trench had evidence of a midden spread [044] on top of the buried soil and which contained material culture such as Middle Iron Age pottery, bone

and burnt stone. These deposits were in thin layers, indicating a continuous dumping cycle rather than a single episodic event. Beneath the buried soil there was evidence of plough-marks cut into the natural geology, probably pertaining to the prehistoric period.

**F. 15** - A large re-cut linear that was orientated east-west with evidence of a bank on the southern side. The main cut, [070], had moderately steep concave sides with moderate break of slope and flat base (2.35m wide and 0.78m deep). It contained eight fills and one re-cut: [061], a firm black sandy silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [063], a firm mottled dark brown/black and orange sandy silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [064], a firm dark grey/brown clayey silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [062], a layer of organic material, dark green/brown waterlogged plant material with frequent flecks of charcoal and charred cereal chaff; [065], a re-cut moderately steep convex sides with sharp break of slope and sharp concave base (1.55m wide and 0.54m deep); [066], a gravel slumping, firm light yellow/brown silty sand with occasional flecks of charcoal and frequent gravel inclusions; [067], a firm mid brown/grey clayey silt with moderate to frequent flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [068], a firm mid brown/orange silty sand with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [069], a soft black sandy silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery, bone, tile and worked wood that was possibly part of an oak or ash plank [071].

**F. 32** - A bank associated with F. 15, a re-cut linear, that was recorded at the southern end of the trench. It consisted of a mixture of orange/buff clayey gravel and mid grey silt patches. No finds were recovered.

### *Trench 3*

The trench was 47.50m in length, orientated north-south and contained at least twenty features: seven linears, eight postholes and four pits and a cluster of intercutting features. The buried soil to the northern part of the trench lay at 2.99m OD and sloped down to 2.56m OD to the south. The majority of the features had material culture recovered from them, primarily of Romano-British date. One feature was sampled (**F. 11**) and had Romano-British pottery ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Linear **F. 10** produced Romano-British pottery dated 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD in addition to large fragments of stone, concrete and tile. Linear **F. 12** produced pottery from the Middle Iron Age through to the mid 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Linear **F. 13** contained pottery ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Pit **F. 29** that was recorded in the section of the trench, contained Middle Iron Age pottery. Linears **F. 30** and **F. 31** yielded Romano-British pottery dated from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Evidence of plough scars were observed during the machining at the interface of the buried soil and natural geology and probably pertained to ard-marks.

**F. 10** - A linear that was orientated northeast-southwest. While this feature was not sampled, numerous finds were recovered from the surface, including pottery, bone and worked stone; its fills were black-burnt.

**F. 11** - A linear that was orientated northeast-southwest. This feature was not sampled although numerous finds were recovered from the surface that included pottery and bone.

**F. 12** - A linear that was orientated northwest-southeast. This feature was not sampled although numerous finds were recovered from the surface, including pottery and bone.

**F. 13** - A narrow linear that orientated northwest-southeast that was cut into an un-recorded feature. The cut, [088], had sloping concave sides with gradual break of slope and concave base (0.61m wide and 0.12m deep). It contained a single fill: [088], a soft black clayey silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and moderate gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery, bone, tile and slag.

**F. 29** - A small pit that was observed in the section of the trench that was cut into the buried soil but not the natural. The cut, [091], had gradual sloping concave sides with concave base (0.70m wide and 0.20m deep).

It had a single fill: [090], a firm mid grey clayey silt with moderate flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery.

**F. 30** - A feature that could possibly represent a series of intercutting pits that was cut by linear F.13. Finds included pottery.

**F. 31** - A potential pit/linear that was cut by linear F. 12. Finds included pottery.

#### *Trench 4*

This was 21.00m in length and orientated north-south. It was moved to the west of its original position to assess the nature of a sub-circular rise in the area and to ascertain whether it was naturally derived or a man-made feature (i.e. a barrow). The southern end of the trench was much deeper and it was shallower at the northern end. Upon examination it was ascertained to be a naturally-formed rise in the geology. The buried soil had evidence of modern plough scars and lay at 3.00m OD to the north and 2.25m OD to the south. Six features were exposed within the trench: three linears, two postholes and a pit. The linear (**F. 14**) contained rich organic deposits and evidence of hillwash (from the north) and eroded bank (from the south) and contained Romano-British pottery dating from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and was rich in organic remains. This linear could have possibly represented the southern side of the small square enclosure evident from the cropmark survey. The sub-rectangular pit (**F. 20**) produced Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British pottery and a fragment of lead. **F. 25** could have possibly represented a furrow.

**F. 14** - A large linear that was northwest-southeast orientated. The cut, [060], had moderately sloping convex sides with gradual break of slope and concave base (2.55m wide and 0.42m deep). It contained seven fills: [053], a very firm light brown/orange clay with rare gravel inclusions; [054], a very firm dark blue/grey clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions (possible hillwash); [055], a black organic layer, very soft compaction with very frequent flecks of charcoal and rare gravel inclusions; [056], a soft mid blue/grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [057], a firm dark blue/grey clay with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [058], a firm light grey/blue sandy clay with frequent flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [059], a black organic layer very soft compaction with very frequent flecks of charcoal and rare gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery and bone.

**F. 20** - A large shallow pit or tree bole. The cut, [073], was sub-rectangular in plan with gradual sloping convex sides with a moderate break of slope and uneven base (0.82m+ x 1.16m+ wide and 0.22m deep). It contained a single fill: [072], a firm mid orange/grey clay with rare gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery and lead.

**F. 23** - was a posthole adjacent to another posthole F. 24. The cut was sub-circular in plan with moderately sloping concave sides and concave base (0.62m x 0.43m wide and 0.13m deep). It contained two fills: [077], a soft mid grey/orange clayey sand with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [078], a soft mid blue/grey clayey sand with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

**F. 24** - A posthole adjacent to F. 23. The cut was sub-circular in plan with sloping concave sides and moderate break of slope and shallow concave base (0.52m x 0.33m wide and 0.10m deep). It contained a single fill: [080], a soft mid orange/grey clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

**F. 25** - A shallow linear that orientated northwest-southeast. The cut, [083], had gently sloping concave sides with moderate break of slope and flat base (1.50m wide and 0.08m deep). It contained a single fill: [082], a soft dark red/grey sandy silt with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. Finds included bone.

**F. 26** - A linear that was orientated northwest-southeast. The cut, [085], of the terminal was round in plan with moderately steep straight sides with moderate break of slope and concave base (0.50m wide and 0.15m

deep). It contained a single fill: [084], a soft mid blue/grey sandy silt with rare flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

### *Trench 5*

The trench was 62.00m in length and orientated east-west. The buried soil lay at 2.16m OD to the east, rising up to 2.50m towards the west. It had five features: two pits, one linear and two features that either represented terminals of furrows or sub-rectangular features. Linear **F. 2** produced pottery dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, whereas pit **F. 9** had Romano-British pottery.

**F. 2** - A wide shallow linear that was orientated northeast-southwest. The cut, [006], had moderately sloping concave sides with gradual break of slope and concave base (1.85m wide and 0.42m deep). It contained three fills: [003], a firm dark brown/black sandy silt with high organic content and occasional gravel inclusions; [004], a firm mottled dark grey/brown and red/orange with moderate flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [005], a firm mottled mid orange/grey/brown and red/orange sandy silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and moderate gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery.

**F. 4** - A pit. The cut, [011], was moderately steep concave sides with moderate break of slope and concave base (1.40m+ x 1.10m+ wide and 0.36m deep). It contained two fills: [009], a firm mid grey/orange clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions; [010], a firm mid orange/grey sandy silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

**F. 5** - A layer of occupational debris [012] infilling a natural hollow that contained bone.

**F. 9** - A pit. The cut, [034], was oval in plan with moderately steep convex sides with moderate break of slope; base was not reached (2.15m+ x 1.80m+ wide and 0.63m+ deep). It contained six fills: [027], a peat accumulation; [028], a mottled mid grey/brown and orange silty clay with moderate to frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [029], a mottled mid orange/grey/brown silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and frequent gravel inclusions; [031], a dark grey/brown silty clay with moderate to frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions; [032], a black slightly silty waterlogged organic deposit; [033], a mottled mid red/brown sandy clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and frequent gravel inclusions. Finds included pottery, bone flint and wood.

**F. 27** - A shallow feature possibly representing either a pit or a ditch terminal. The cut, [087], had moderately steep concave sides with moderate break of slope and flat base. It contained a single fill: [086], a firm mid brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and moderate gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

### *Trench 6*

This was 23.25m in length and oriented east-west. The buried soil lay at c. 2.10m OD. A single posthole was recorded, which had no diagnostic artefacts.

**F. 1** - A posthole. The cut, [002], was oval in plan with sloping concave sides with gentle break of slope and concave base (0.46m x 0.34m wide and 0.10m deep). It contained a single fill: [001], a firm mottled light orange/brown and grey sandy silt with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered.

### *Trench 7*

Twenty metres in length (north-south), this contained no archaeological features.

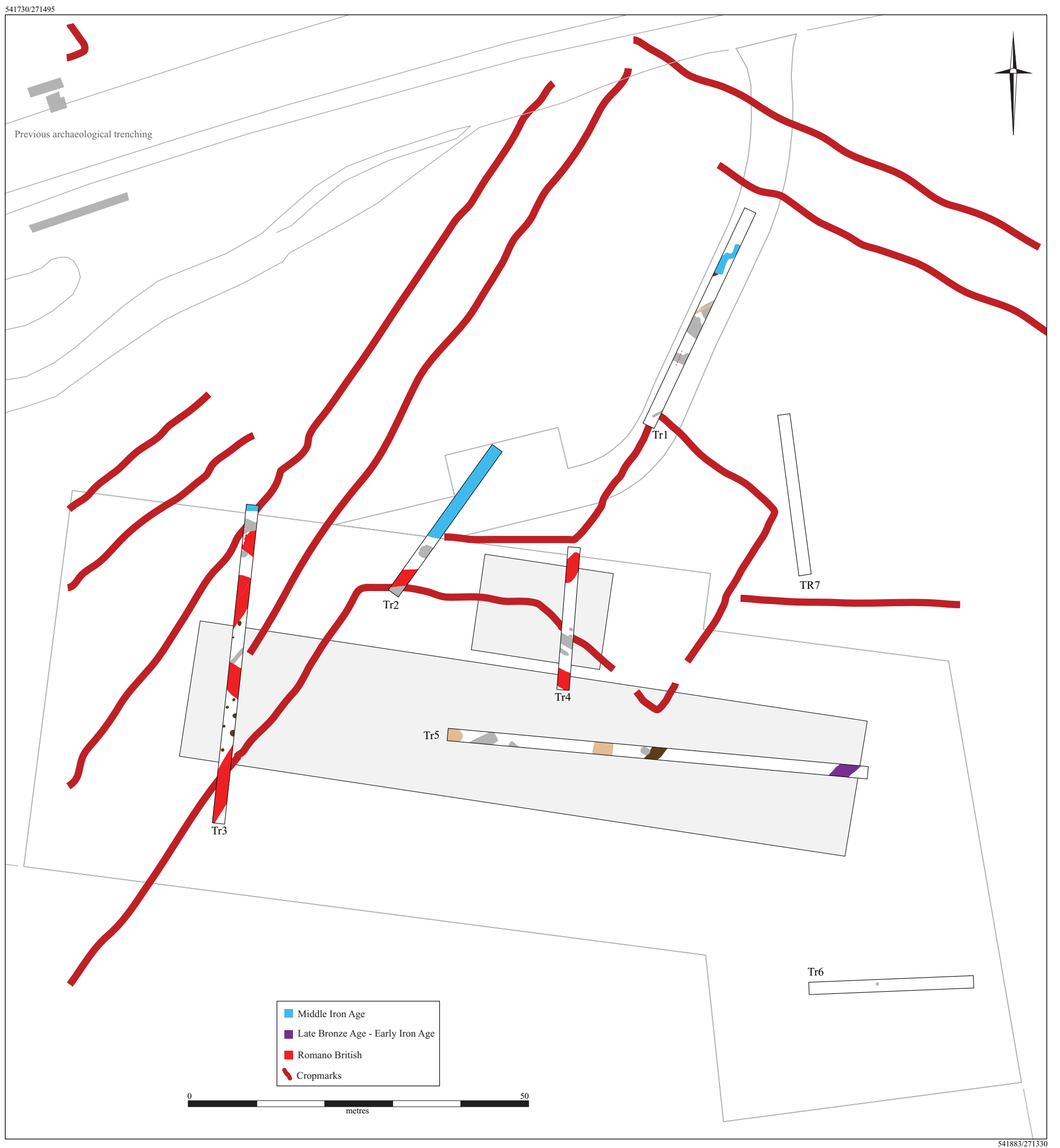


Figure 3. Phase Plan.





Figure 4. Photograph of ditches F. 15 (top) and F. 14 (below).



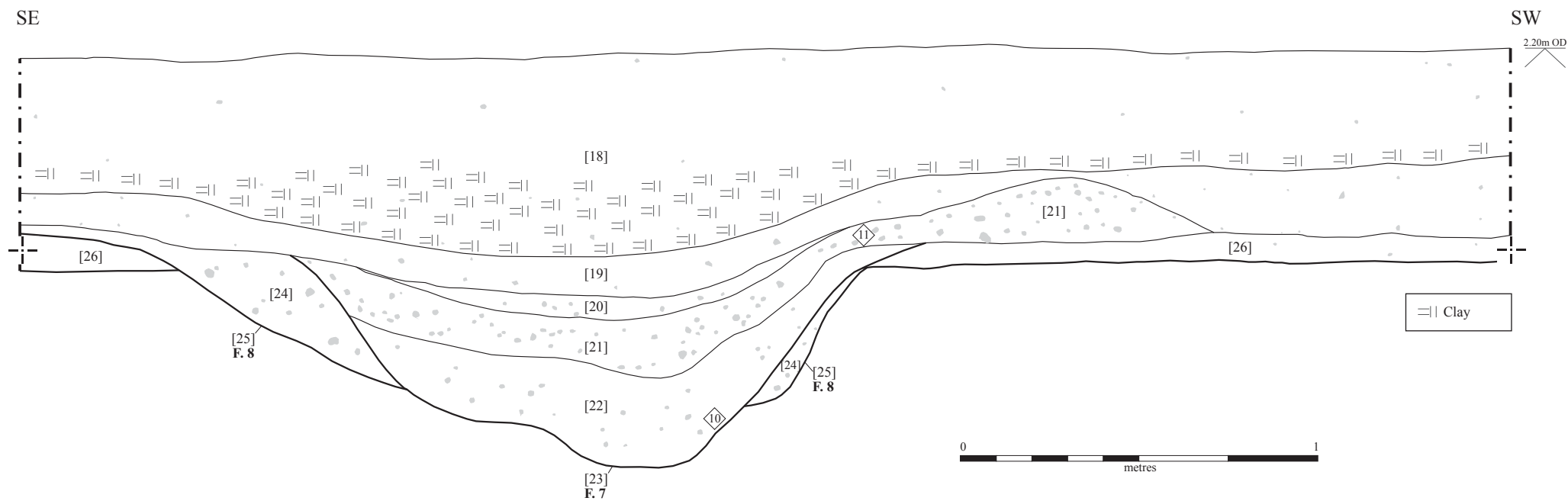


Figure 5. Section of F. 7 and F. 8.

## Specialist Appraisal

### *Pottery* Katie Anderson

An assemblage comprising 205 sherds, weighing 2858g and representing 2.36 EVEs was recovered. All of the material was examined and details of fabric, form and decoration were recorded along with any other information considered important.

Pottery from a range of different periods was identified, in varying quantities (see Table 1). All small quantity of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age material, totalling ten sherds, was recovered, characterised by flint-tempered body sherds. Eight of the sherds were recovered from a single feature (F. 16), with one further sherd from Feature 2, and one from the surface of Feature 10.

Date	No.	Wt. (g)
Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age	10	107
Middle Iron Age	19	342
Middle Iron Age/Late Iron Age	15	312
Late Iron Age/Early Roman	6	36
Early Roman (mid 1st-2nd AD)	57	630
2nd-4th Century AD	38	870
Romano-British	60	561
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>2858</b>

**Table 1:** All pottery by date

A total of 40 sherds of later prehistoric pottery were collected. Of these, most were sandy handmade sherds in the Middle Iron Age tradition, although there were several which were dated Middle-Late Iron Age. The only forms identified were four slack-shouldered jars. Three sherds had scored decoration, while one had fingerprint decoration on the top of the rim. Due to the small size and general poor condition of many of the sherds, dating this pottery more accurately is problematic; however, there were a small number of features where the Middle Iron Age material was found alongside Late Iron Age sherds, thus suggesting a 0-50 AD date. The lack of grog-tempered sherds within this assemblage is a further indicator of date, since in this area grog-tempered sherds are more typically a component of earlier, Middle Iron Age assemblages (100-50BC), while assemblages dominated by sand-tempered sherds are more common in the later groups dating *c.* 50 BC - 50 AD (Brudenell pers comm.). There was a paucity of definite Late Iron Age sherds, although the presence of Middle Iron Age/Late Iron Age and Late Iron Age/Early Roman sherds suggests a continuation rather than a break in occupation.

Most of the pottery was Roman in date, and included Early and later Roman vessels, although there was no definite late material (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD). Due to condition of the assemblage, much of this material could only be dated 'Romano-British'. The early material comprised several greyware jars, a small number of whiteware sherds, including one bowl and one possible Verulamium whiteware bowl. There was also one South Gaulish Samian base sherd with the last part of a stamp, reading '.....VLI', as well as a black-slipped platter. The later dating material included a small number of Nene Valley colour-coated sherds (mid 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD), several Horningsea greyware sherds, including a large bifid rim jar, and two small Central Gaulish Samian body sherds. The lack of any of the usual Late Roman pottery suggests a decline in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Jars were the most commonly occurring vessel form, as is typical of Roman assemblages, with nine different vessels identified. Two bowls and two dishes were noted, along with one mortaria sherd. Although only a relatively small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered, the assemblage does seem fairly typical of a small rural site, which although having access to imported wares, received most material from the local area.

Form	No.	Wt. (g)
Beaker	1	2
Bk/Jar	1	8
Bowl	2	56
Bowl/dish	2	36
Dish	2	22
Jar	14	573
Mortaria	1	29
Platter	1	18
Unknown	181	2114
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>2858</b>

**Table 2:** All pottery by form

### *Feature Analysis*

Due to the nature of the evaluation, much of the pottery was recovered from the surface of features (138 sherds, 1848g), with further sherds coming from the spoil heaps (18 sherds, 294g), totalling 76% of the assemblage. This material highlights the potential of the unexcavated features, and suggests the site could yield a sizable pottery assemblage.

Three features contained Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age material, which in the case of Feature 16, seems unlikely to be residual, given that eight sherds of this date were recovered. Single sherds were recovered from Feature 2 and the surface of Feature 10.

Feature 10 produced the largest quantity of material, all of which was collected from the surface of the feature. This totalled 40 sherds, weighing 623g, of mixed date. Most of the sherds were dated 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD, including a large Horningsea greyware jar and two small Central Gaulish Samian sherds. There were also a small number of residual sherds, including one of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age attribution.

A similar quantity of material was recovered from the surface of Feature 11, totalling 36 sherds, weighing 623g. As with Feature 10, the pottery was mixed in date and included Middle Iron Age, Middle Iron Age/Late Iron Age and Early Roman pottery. This included a small base sherd from a South Gaulish Samian vessel with a partial stamp dating mid-late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and a large Middle Iron Age rim sherd with fingerprint decoration; however, the latest dating sherds were 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD, suggesting the earlier sherds are residual.

31 sherds weighing 266g were recovered from Feature 12, including some material from the surface of the feature. Unlike the previous features, this material all dated to the same period, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD, with no residual pottery. The sherds included one greyware jar, the rest being body sherds. Ten sherds were recovered from Feature 15, which included a Middle Iron Age body sherd, although the remaining sherds were 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD in date, which included four small Nene Valley colour-coated sherds.

A total of 27 sherds were collected from Feature 13, from the upper fill [088] and the surface. The material from the upper fill was Early Roman in date, while the pottery from the surface was slightly later in date, at 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. The remaining features contained small quantities of pottery (between 1-5 sherds), which suggest some Middle Iron Age/Late Iron Age features (Features 17, 28, 29 and 31), with the rest being Romano-British.

The pottery assemblage shows evidence of occupation from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age to the mid Roman period, although it is unclear to what extent the Middle Iron Age to the Roman period was a continuation of activity. The mixed nature of the pottery from many of the features suggests a degree of re-cutting was taking place. Since many of these features were not excavated, the exact nature of the stratigraphy is unclear, for example, whether the earlier sherds are a direct result of the recutting of earlier features, or whether there is another explanation for the mix date of pottery. The exception to this is Feature 13, which does show chronological change in the stratigraphy.

Overall, the evaluation assemblage indicates potential for a much larger assemblage, especially considering so much of the material was from the surface of features. The Roman pottery suggests a fairly typical rural site, which was dominated by coarsewares, but with a small number of fineware vessels.

### *Other Finds*

A total of 28 non-ceramic or faunal objects were recovered, nine from spoil from Trench 2 and 15 from the exposed surface in Trench 3. Finds recovered from features are listed in Table 3. All, with the exception of the quern fragment described below, were unremarkable; however, the large pieces of stone recovered implies this was imported to the site for use in construction or consolidation. The three pieces of worked flint (cat no.s <022>, <043>, <071>) are residual, dating from the Neolithic to Bronze Age and are indicative of blade and scrapper production (Billington pers.com). Two pieces of tile, probably Romano-British, were also recovered.

Trench	Feature	Burnt Clay	Burnt Flint	Flint	Glass	Shell	Stone	Quern	Tile	Total
2	15						2			2
	Spoil	2		2	1		2		1	10
3	10		1	1		2	8	1		13
	11						1			1
	13	1							1	2
	28									1
5	2					2				2
	9			1						1
	15						1			1
Total		3	1	4	1	4	14	1	2	30

**Table 3:** Finds quantities by trench and feature

### *Worked Stone*

<075> F. 10 - Large, triangular fragment of a millstone top-stone. The underside is smooth. A rounded, angled groove is present on the surface, indicating the insertion point for a handle to drive the stone. The outer planar surface survives, providing an estimated diameter of 340mm. Similar to examples found at the Camp Ground and Langdale Hale, Earith, and to Shaffrey's Types 2-4 (Shaffrey 2006).

### *Bulk Environmental Samples* Dawn Elise Mooney

Of the bulk soil samples taken on site, two were processed using an Ankara-type flotation machine. The flots were collected in a 300µm mesh and the remaining heavy residues washed over a 1mm mesh. The flots were dried indoors and were examined to assess the

presence of charred plant remains and other ecofacts. The flots were scanned by eye and remain to be comprehensively sorted under a low power microscope. A small sub-sample (approximately 0.05 litres) of a waterlogged sample (Sample 15) was scanned by eye for the presence of plant macrofossils. The >4mm fraction of the heavy residues are yet to be sorted by eye to determine the presence of artefacts, animal bone and other ecofacts.

All of the archaeological plant remains recovered were preserved through carbonisation. All samples contained intrusive modern rootlets, indicating some bioturbation with the possible mixing of contexts and loss of plant remains. Plant macro remains were noted in all of the samples analysed:

- Sample 13 (6 Litres), F. 14 ([059]) - This contained large amounts of charred plant macrofossils. Moderate to large quantities of wheat (*Triticum* species) and oat (*Avena* species) grain were present, along with large numbers of Spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) glume bases. Large amounts of wild seeds of various sizes were also present, including *Bromus* and *Festuca* species. The sample also contained large amounts of small charcoal fragments. Charred plant material was also present in large quantities in the heavy residue; this remains to be sorted.
- Sample 14 (14 Litres), F. 15 ([060]) - This also contained large amounts of charred plant material, both in the flot and the heavy residue. Barley (*Hordeum* species), wheat (*Triticum* species) and oat (*Avena* species) grains were all present in moderate to large quantities. Large numbers of Spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) glume bases were also present. Moderate to large quantities of wild seeds of various sizes, again including Brome and Fescue, were visible in the flot. The sample also contained large quantities of small charcoal fragments, along with four or five larger pieces which could be identified to genus level under a high-power microscope.
- Sample 15 (0.05 Litres), F. 15 ([061]) - This was waterlogged, hence the very small sub-sample taken for preliminary analysis. Despite the waterlogged nature of the sample, all the plant macrofossils recovered from the sub-sample were preserved through carbonisation. Again, large amounts of *Triticum spelta* glume bases were present. Along with various weed seeds of various sizes, and large amounts of small charcoal fragments.

The large amount of carbonised plant macrofossils recovered from the site indicate that cooking activity was taking place in close proximity to the features analysed, with waste from hearths or fires probably being disposed of in the ditches. The charred grain and cereal chaff recovered indicate that crop processing was taking place in the close vicinity of the features analysed here. The presence of glume bases and grain-sized weed seeds such as *Bromus* and *Festuca* species suggests that the remains might originate from the coarse-sieveing stage of cereal crop processing. However, a more thorough analysis of these samples under a low-power microscope will most likely reveal the presence of smaller weed seeds and light chaff such as awn fragments. The fact that wheat, barley and oats were all recovered from the samples reveals that various cereals were being processed and consumed at the site. The presence of Brome and Fescue seeds along with cultivated cereal grains suggests an arable landscape with meadow areas. There was no significant difference in the botanical remains from F. 14 and F. 15, suggesting a continuity of agricultural activities throughout the use of the site.

The preservation of botanical remains on this site is excellent, and provides great potential for both environmental reconstruction and the reconstruction of human activities. Considering the excellent preservation of botanical material, It would be productive to continue sampling from all features in any future phases of work at the site.

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SPECIES	NISP	% NISP	MNI
Cow	8	50	1
Ovicaprids	5	31	1
Pig	2	13	1
Horse	1	6	1
ULM	21	13 ( $\Sigma=51$ )	-
UMM	21	21 ( $\Sigma=51$ )	-
UUM	5	1 ( $\Sigma=63$ )	-

Key: UMM & ULM = Unid. Medium and Large Mammal / UUM = Unid. Fragment. NB: Species percentages are out of 63. These differ from the unidentified counts as these are calculated on the basis of element identification (for UMM & ULM) and total fragments (for UUM) (corresponding to  $\Sigma$  in brackets).

**Table 5:** NISP and MNI counts for material recovered from spoil heap

#### *Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age Contexts*

A shallow linear feature (F. 16) dated to Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age (Trench 1) produced three fragments of bone, one of which showed signs of gnawing and none of which were possible to assign to species (Table 6). In addition to this, another shallow linear feature (F. 2) recorded in Trench 5 produced pottery of the same date as well as four fragments of animal bone, none of which were identifiable to species. One chop mark was recorded on an unidentified medium mammal radius, probably implying disarticulation. Preservation of the material ranged from moderate to poor.

SPECIES	NISP
ULM	1
UMM	5
UUM	1

Key: UMM & ULM = Unid. Medium and Large Mammal / UUM = Unid. Fragment. These differ from the unidentified counts as these are calculated on the basis of element identification (for UMM & ULM) and total fragments (for UUM) (corresponding to  $\Sigma$  in brackets).

**Table 6:** NISP and MNI counts for Late Bronze Age- Early Iron Age contexts

#### *Middle Iron Age Contexts*

Five fragments of animal bone were found in contexts dated to the Middle Iron Age, two of which were possible to assign to species (Table 7). One worked bone was noted and that was an ovicaprid metatarsal that was axially split and worked into a point. The surface of the bone point was slightly polished (<009>; F. 28). The material was moderately preserved.

SPECIES	NISP
Cow	1
Ovicaprid	1
ULM	1
UMM	2

Key: UMM & ULM = Unid. Medium and Large Mammal / UUM = Unid. Fragment. These differ from the unidentified counts as these are calculated on the basis of element identification (for UMM & ULM) and total fragments (for UUM) (corresponding to  $\Sigma$  in brackets).

**Table 7:** NISP and MNI counts for Middle Iron Age contexts

#### *Romano-British Contexts*

The Romano-British component of the assemblage predominates with 59 fragments, 51 (86.4%) of which were identifiable to element and further 24 (40%) to species. Cattle are the predominant species, with

NISP=15 and MNI count of two individual animals on site (Table 8). This is followed by other domestic ‘food species’ and a dog. Moderately preserved animal bone material was recovered from features found in Trenches 1-5. Two examples of butchery marks were noted in this sub set. One unidentified large mammal metapodial bone has been axially split for marrow extraction and one unidentified large mammal skull fragment had four fine and shallow cut marks. There is a slight under-representation of meat bearing bones for all three main ‘food species’. This could be the result of the animals being locally slaughtered and meat exported from the site after the initial dismemberment of the carcass; however, it has to be taken into account that this interpretation is based on a small number of bones.

SPECIES	NISP	%NISP	MNI
Cow	15	62.5	2
Ovicaprids	4	16.7	1
Pig	3	12.5	1
Dog	2	8.3	1
ULM	16	16 ( $\Sigma=47$ )	-
UMM	10	10 ( $\Sigma=47$ )	-
UUM	9	1 ( $\Sigma=55$ )	-

Key: UMM & ULM = Unid. Medium and Large Mammal / UUM = Unid. Fragment. NB: Species percentages are out of 24. These differ from the unidentified counts as these are calculated on the basis of element identification (for UMM & ULM) and total fragments (for UUM) (corresponding to  $\Sigma$  in brackets).

**Table 8:** NISP and MNI counts for Romano-British contexts

The age information in this-sub set was only available from mandibular tooth eruption (Grant 1982) and wear. One ovicaprid mandible gave an age at death of 1-2 years (Grant 1982). The pig mandible was aged to 14-21 months and one cow mandible was recorded as a young adult. Sheep was positively identified based on a complete metatarsal (Boessneck 1969: 354). Biometrical data for sheep has been drawn from the same complete specimen. Withers calculations follow the conversion factors of Teichert for sheep and they were at the middle of the range at 65 cm (Von den Driesch 1974).

#### *Undated*

Several features were not possible to date and they yielded a small amount of animal bone (Table 9). The only evidence for exploiting wild faunal resources was noted in this sub-set and it was a Red deer second phalanx. Material was moderately preserved and of 11 fragments, three were possible to assign to species.

SPECIES	NISP
Cow	1
Ovicaprid	1
Red deer	1
ULM	4
UMM	4

Key: UMM & ULM = Unid. Medium and Large Mammal / UUM = Unid. Fragment. These differ from the unidentified counts as these are calculated on the basis of element identification (for UMM & ULM) and total fragments (for UUM) (corresponding to  $\Sigma$  in brackets).

**Table 9:** NISP and MNI counts for undated contexts

In common with most archaeologically recovered animal bone assemblages from Britain, the majority of identified fragments from the site belong to livestock species (Table 10). Taking overall NISP values as the most accurate indication of relative frequency, cattle is the most common species in three phases. This is followed by two other main livestock species and horse and dog. Red deer was represented by one specimen. The general trend that emerges is fairly consistent pattern of animal husbandry, with an emphasis on cattle and a very well preserved ovicaprid portion of the assemblage.

Assemblages	Cow %	Ovicaprid %	Pig %	Horse %	Dog%	Red deer%
Material recovered from the spoil heap- Trench 2	50	31	13	6	-	-
Late Bronze Age- Early Iron Age	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle Iron Age	1	1	-	-	-	-
Romano-British	15	4	3	-	2	-
Undated features	1	1	-	-	-	1

**Table 10:** Overall species relative proportions changes through periods

The pattern of relative frequency shows that cattle husbandry was an important element of the economies in this part of the Fenlands for a long time. This could reflect the importance of cattle as a multi-purpose animal as well as dietary preference for beef. The Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age sub-set was highly fragmented and bone material was not possible to assign to species. A similar situation was noted in the small Middle Iron Age sub-set and, apart from stating species representation, nothing can be said about the husbandry regimes or the site's economy in that period. Clear predominance of cattle on this site in the Romano-British period within both NISP and MNI counts is typical, as it is believed that the preference for beef had come from the Continent with Roman legions arriving Britain (King 1999: 180). Animal bone material from the undated features is far too small to provide us with useful data, regarding body part distribution, ageing and butchery. It has to be noted however that it has produced some evidence for exploiting wild faunal resources (Red deer).

Many aspects of this site have a distinct Roman character, such as the predominance of cattle and ovicaprids. The exploitation of fenland resources has not been as extensive as recorded at some of the other sites in the region. The results from this site suggest that there was little time or inclination for hunting in the community that was probably engaged in raising crops and animal husbandry.

However small this assemblage, several potentially important things were hinted in these results and have to be noted for future research: 1) ageable and measurable material is much needed for the studies of the economy and husbandry; 2) remains of wild species as well as the ageing data will be useful in reconstructing the environment; 3) detailed analysis of butchery practices and complete contextual information would be of great importance for the studies of food sharing and consumption.

## Discussion (with Christopher Evans)

Based on the results of the earlier W.E.A. investigations within the immediate area (Lucas in Evans & Hodder 2006), the density of the archaeology recovered did not come as a particular surprise. Noteworthy, however, was the extent of its topographic/geological determination: the settlement features being largely confined to the higher gravel terrace deposits across the western half of the area, with there being a marked fall-off within the lower eastern 'clayland' swathe. Indeed, it is clear that the overall, long-arcing layout of the greater 'Queensholme Complex' related to the distribution of *The Milking Hills* gravels. Given this, what was equally unexpected in the light of the area's agricultural history, was the degree of horizontal preservation. Not only did this extend to a buried soil horizon throughout, but locally ditch-associated upcast banks and even a dark earth-like midden-type spread in Trench 2. Moreover, as noted by Mooney above, to this should also be added the preservation of environmental remains of evidently charred fill deposits of Roman-British features within Trenches 2, 3 and 4.

The recovery of one Later Bronze/Early Iron Age dated ditch at end of Trench 5 is intriguing (though residual-status pottery of this attribution also occurred elsewhere). The ditch appears to delineate the edge of the higher, westward gravel terrace from the lower eastern clays. Equally, its recovery and alignment suggests that components of the broader landscape's great 'strip compound' system might, in fact, be of later Bronze Age date and possibly relate to the ring-ditches visible on the cropmark plot just southwest of the PDA.

Otherwise, the immediate site's archaeology is of Middle Iron Age to later Romano-British date, with the Middle Iron Age features concentrating throughout the north of the PDA (northern end of Trenches 1-3). Consistent with the earlier W.E.A. investigation results, it would seem that the bulk of the site's many occupation features relate to its Romano-British-phase usage and confirms that, in the main, this is date of the larger cropmark system's layout, with individual components probably being of later prehistoric attribution: the ring-ditch circles, Bronze Age; the double-ditch square at its northern end, Middle/late Iron Age.

Two aspects of the immediate area's Romano-British occupation warrant comment. The first is black-burnt features fills that were common to ditches in Trenches 2-4 (F. 10, F. 15 & F. 14 respectively). Aside from indicating their contemporaneity, this suggests the occurrence of substantial fire, but whose date cannot as yet be tied down with precision. The other point to be made concerns the manner in which the small, sub-square cropmark enclosure (with funnelling ditches linking it to the main 'strip compound' system) appears to box around the marked, almost barrow-like knoll-rise in the terrace's gravels. Although not detailed in anyway through the evaluation results, this could indicate that they may have thought it was an earlier barrow they were so-delineating. Accordingly, in comparison to the Snow's Farm complex on the Upper Delphs (Evans & Hodder 2006), it is conceivable that this enclosure might relate to some manner of shrine and, in which case, by extension it is possible that the dark earth-like deposit within Trench 2 could also be associated (though the Middle Iron Age-dated pottery therein would then have to of been residual).

Finally, it should be noted that, given the density of archaeology throughout the western half of the PDA, the final, judgmental trench (No. 7) was situated to confirm the paucity of features along the area's lower eastern margin. This was done with the express aim that it

could allow the developers to potentially relocate their buildings to that swathe and, thereby, incur minimal damage to the site's archaeology; to the extent that no features whatsoever were present within it, this can be considered a successful exercise.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Project was managed by Chris Evans, FSA, and monitored on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council by Andy Thomas. The machine excavation was conducted with great care by Mark from Lattenbury Services. The archaeology was excavated and interpreted by Frankie Cox and Dawn Mooney. The area was surveyed by Donald Horne and digitised by Bryan Crossan. Jason Hawkes and Jennifer Wills sorted and catalogued the finds and Bryan Crossan produced the illustrations.



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### Appendix: Soil Sequence and Trench Depths

Trench No.	Orientation	Length	Archaeological features?*	Location	Topsoil	Clay Subsoil	Peat	Midden Layer	Buried Soil	Overall depth	Geology
1	NE-SW	35.00m	Linears	0m (SW)	0.23m	0.15m	0.21m	x	0.27m	0.86m	Compact mixed orange/buff clayey gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
1	NE-SW	35.00m	Linears	15m	0.37m	x	0.12m	x	0.12m	0.61m	Compact mixed orange/buff clayey gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
1	NE-SW	35.00m	Linears	32m (NE)	0.36m	x	0.09m	x	0.14m	0.59m	Compact mixed orange/buff clayey gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
2	NE-SW	25.30m	Linears, Midden	0m (SW)	0.28m	0.13m	0.15m	x	0.17m	0.73m	Orange gravel
2	NE-SW	25.30m	Linears, Midden	12m	0.29m	0.17m	0.18m	0.16m	0.10m	0.90m	Orange gravel
2	NE-SW	25.30m	Linears, Midden	25m (NE)	0.28m	0.22m	0.07m	0.23m	x	0.80m	Orange gravel
3	N-S	47.50m	Linears, Pts, PHs	0m (S)	0.23m	x	0.13m	x	x	0.36m	Compact orange/buff gravel
3	N-S	47.50m	Linears, Pts, PHs	25m	0.34m	x	0.11m	x	0.16m	0.61m	Compact orange/buff gravel
3	N-S	47.50m	Linears, Pts, PHs	47m (N)	0.28m	0.14m	0.06m	x	0.27m	0.75m	Compact orange/buff gravel
4	N-S	21.00m	Linears, Pts, PHs	0m (S)	0.26m	0.16m	0.16m	x	0.13m	0.71m	Compact orange gravel with pockets of grey clay
4	N-S	21.00m	Linears, Pts, PHs	10m	0.22m	x	x	x	0.11m	0.33m	Compact orange gravel with pockets of grey clay
4	N-S	21.00m	Linears, Pts, PHs	21m (N)	0.26m	x	x	x	0.11m	0.37m	Compact orange gravel with pockets of grey clay
5	E-W	62.00m	Linears, Pits	0m (E)	0.24m	x	0.09m	x	0.18m	0.51m	Compact orange/buff gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
5	E-W	62.00m	Linears, Pits	25m	0.28m	0.21m	0.15m	x	0.19m	0.83m	Compact orange/buff gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
5	E-W	62.00m	Linears, Pits	50m	0.25m	x	0.10m	x	0.19m	0.54m	Compact orange/buff gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
5	E-W	62.00m	Linears, Pits	62m (W)	0.32m	x	0.12m	x	0.18m	0.62m	Compact orange/buff gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
6	E-W	23.75m	Posthole	0m (E)	0.30m	x	0.16m	x	0.11m	0.57m	Compact orange/buff clayey gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
6	E-W	23.75m	Posthole	23m (W)	0.30m	x	0.15m	x	0.12m	0.57m	Compact orange/buff clayey gravel with pockets of compact grey clay
7	N-S		None	0m (S)	0.23m	x	0.12m	x	0.13m	0.48m	Compact orange clayey gravel with pockets of grey clay
7	N-S		None	Mid	0.16m	0.15m	0.13m	x	0.09m	0.53m	Compact orange clayey gravel with pockets of grey clay
7	N-S		None	Top	0.20m	0.14m	0.12m	x	0.14m	0.60m	Compact orange clayey gravel with pockets of grey clay

\*Pts, PHs = pits and postholes