

Archaeological Field Unit

Late Iron Age, Roman, and Medieval Enclosures and
Settlement Features at Highfields, Caldecote:
An Archaeological Excavation

S Leith

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No 144

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SUMMARY

In November and December 1996, Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Field Unit undertook excavation in an arable field to the west of Highfields, south of Caldecote Community School, at TL 349 583. The work was commissioned by Wilcon Homes Anglia Ltd in advance of a proposed housing development. It represented the second phase of archaeological investigation of the site. Earlier evaluation (Oakey 1996) had highlighted the presence of archaeological remains here, as well as assessing the archaeological potential of two nearby fields (Figure 1).

Six open areas were excavated to investigate archaeological features revealed during the preceding evaluation. Evidence for four main periods of activity was recovered: Late Iron Age, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval. Late Iron Age activity had not been predicted from the evaluation results, yet rectilinear ditched enclosures were revealed in Area 1 belonging to at least three phases of activity. They probably had an agricultural function, perhaps control of livestock. A possible post-built structure in Area 2 appeared to predate a further Late Iron Age ditch. These features contained a small amount of pottery and animal bone.

A Roman field system identified during the evaluation was also investigated. Several phases of ditch were recorded, indicating that the field system remained in use over a considerable period of time. The pottery recovered from these ditches spanned the 2nd to 4th centuries AD, and was concentrated towards the north of the investigation area. There was little evidence of direct continuity between Late Iron Age and Roman use of the site, and it is suggested that the focus of occupation had shifted to an area immediately to the north of the investigation area by the Roman period.

An area of early medieval activity was located in the south-east corner of the site. This was represented by a boundary ditch, a possible fenceline running beside the ditch, several pits, and part of a timber structure constructed with post-in-trench foundations. These features produced pottery, some bone, daub fragments, and a few small fragments of lava quernstone. This evidence may suggest the presence of a small settlement of early medieval date, hitherto unknown, clustered on either side of the Highfields road. Post-medieval activity on the site was represented by postholes marking a fenceline.

Excavation of an Iron Age settlement revealed in Field B by the initial evaluation is scheduled to take place within the next three to four years.

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**LATE IRON AGE, ROMAN, AND MEDIEVAL ENCLOSURES AND
SETTLEMENT FEATURES AT HIGHFIELDS, CALDECOTE:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

1 INTRODUCTION

In November and December 1996, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological excavation at Highfields, Caldecote on behalf of Wilcon Homes Anglia Ltd. The excavation was limited to Field C, an area of *c* 8.8 hectares located to the west of Highfields, south of Caldecote Community School (TL 349 583, Figure 1). The excavation was intended to investigate archaeological features revealed during the evaluation undertaken in April 1996 by the AFU (Oakey 1996).

2 TOPOLOGY AND GEOLOGY

Field C was an arable field which had been left as set-aside since April 1996. The underlying geology was Boulder Clay. Field C sloped quite steeply from west to east, varying from about 68m OD to about 61m.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Desk-Based Assessment

A desk-based assessment of historical documentary evidence was undertaken as part of the evaluation. This is available for consultation in the evaluation report (Oakey 1996, 1-4).

3.2 Summary of the Results of the Evaluation

An assessment of aerial photographic evidence was undertaken as part of the evaluation. This showed that Field C, as well as the other evaluation areas, had been subject to ridge and furrow ploughing in the medieval and later periods. This had totally masked any earlier archaeological remains. In Field C, the strips of ridge and furrow ran from west to east across the area, parallel to the bridleway at the southern boundary of the field (Palmer in Oakey 1996).

The evaluation trenches in Field C revealed a number of ditches forming a field system of Romano-British date. These ditches produced pottery dating to the

second to fourth centuries AD. From the evidence of the evaluation, it was impossible to recreate the pattern of fields or enclosures, however a large ditch running north/south may have acted as a major land division and drain. The density of artefacts in the ditches towards the north part of the field suggested that the settlement associated with this system was probably located further north, on the site of the modern village.

Towards the south-east corner of the field, in Trench C18, two curvilinear ditches were revealed which were interpreted as arcs of a ring ditch c 15-20m in diameter. No conclusive dating evidence was associated with the ditches, and it could not be established whether they were associated with a ploughed-out round barrow or circular hut.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Priorities

The excavation in Field C was designed to further investigate the Romano-British field system and the possible ring ditch. The following research priorities were identified:

1) The definition of activity on the site before the creation of the field system and the influence (if any) that this activity had on the layout of the field boundaries. This would include further investigation of the possible ring ditch to establish its date and function.

2) The characterisation of the form, date of establishment and subsequent development of the Romano-British field system. Field systems of Romano-British date on the heavy clay soils are rare, therefore it was a priority to try to map and understand the ditches in Field C, and to confirm their date.

To these ends, the project comprised two phases: a geophysical survey and excavation of several open areas.

4.2 Geophysical Survey

This was completed by John Price of EAS Ltd. It was hoped that the survey would produce a plot of the ditch systems and other cut features thus enabling further investigation by soil stripping and excavation to be targeted specifically on areas which could provide the maximum amount of information. A rapid initial scan was undertaken adjacent to an evaluation trench which contained several large Roman ditches. This scan only revealed one anomaly, which upon excavation turned out to be part of a modern field drain. None of the ditches known to run across the area were detected during the scan. It was decided that

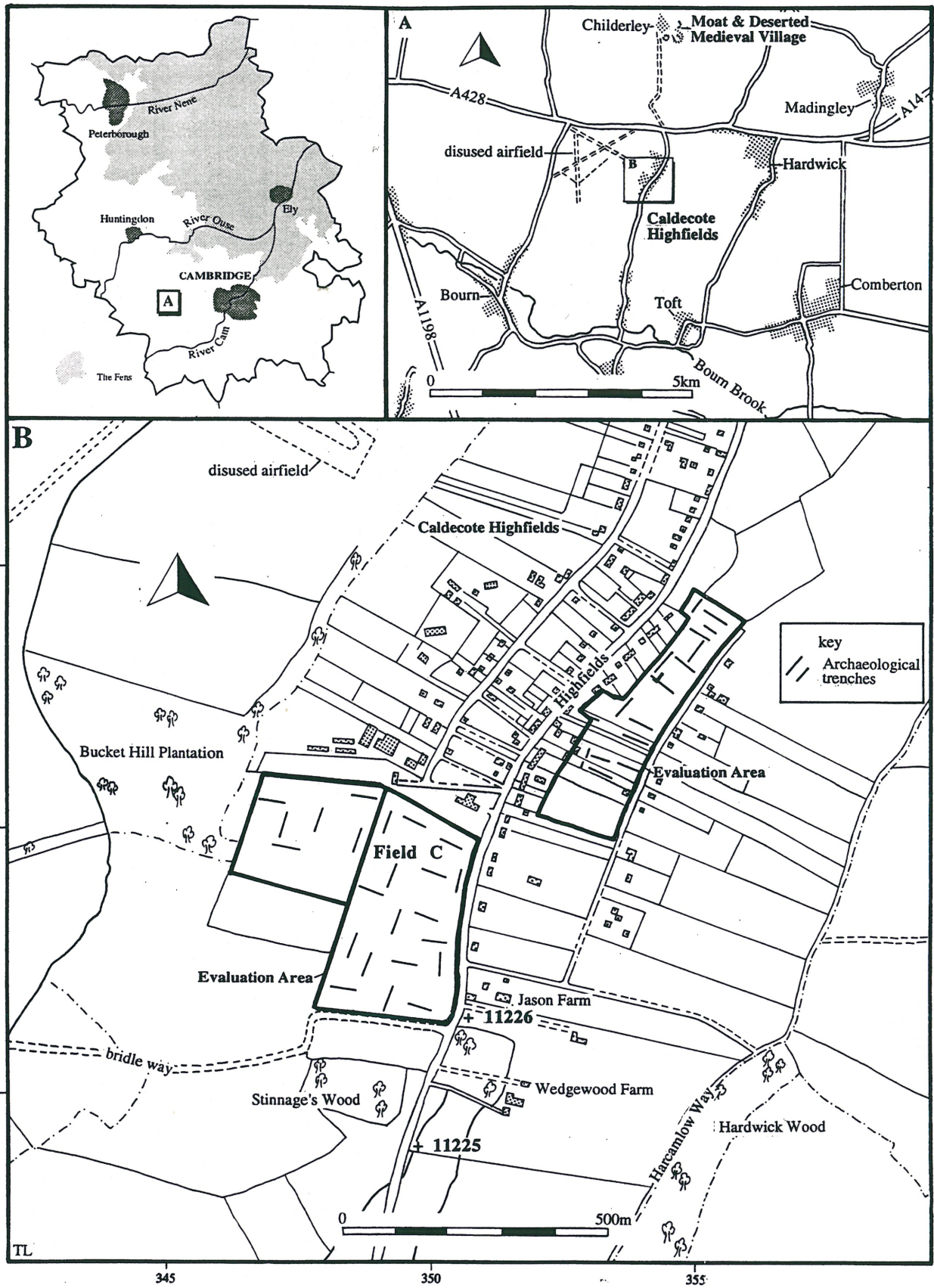


Figure 1 Site location plan, showing areas of previous evaluation

the heavy clay soil was entirely unresponsive to this form of investigation and the geophysical survey was therefore abandoned.

4.3 Open Area Excavation

Six open areas were excavated (Figure 2). Area 1 was centred on the possible ring ditch in the south-east corner of the site. With the absence of any results from the geophysical survey, it was decided to target areas where the evaluation trenches showed an intersection of ditches in order to further investigate the Romano-British field system. This included areas 2, 3, 5, and 6. Area 4 was intended to investigate the anomaly revealed by geophysical survey.

A total of 1950 square metres in the six areas were stripped using a tracked 360 degree excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The areas were then cleaned by hoe and trowel to define the archaeological features revealed. A base plan was produced for each area prior to excavation using a Total Station Surveying Instrument. The plan and site grid were tied in to Ordnance Survey co-ordinates.

A tracked 2-ton mini-digger was used to dig sections across the larger ditches, while the majority of archaeological features were sample excavated by hand. All excavated deposits were recorded using the AFU's single context recording system. Post-excavation plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20, and sections at 1:10. Photographs in monochrome and colour were taken to supplement the record. Environmental samples were taken from a variety of features (Appendix B).

The open areas and spoil heaps were scanned by metal detector at several points during the excavation, and a scan of transects across the field was undertaken by David Curry and John Sadler.

5 RESULTS

The excavation revealed four main periods of activity: later Iron Age, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval. The results are summarised below by period.

All context numbers assigned to excavated deposits have been grouped according to their stratigraphic and interpretative associations. Context numbers are shown in normal text except where they refer to cuts, in which case they are shown in bold. Some context groups include context numbers assigned in the evaluation phase; these context numbers are shown in *italics*, and ***bold italics*** where they refer to cuts. Where context groups are referred to in the text and on illustrations they are prefixed by the letter 'g'.

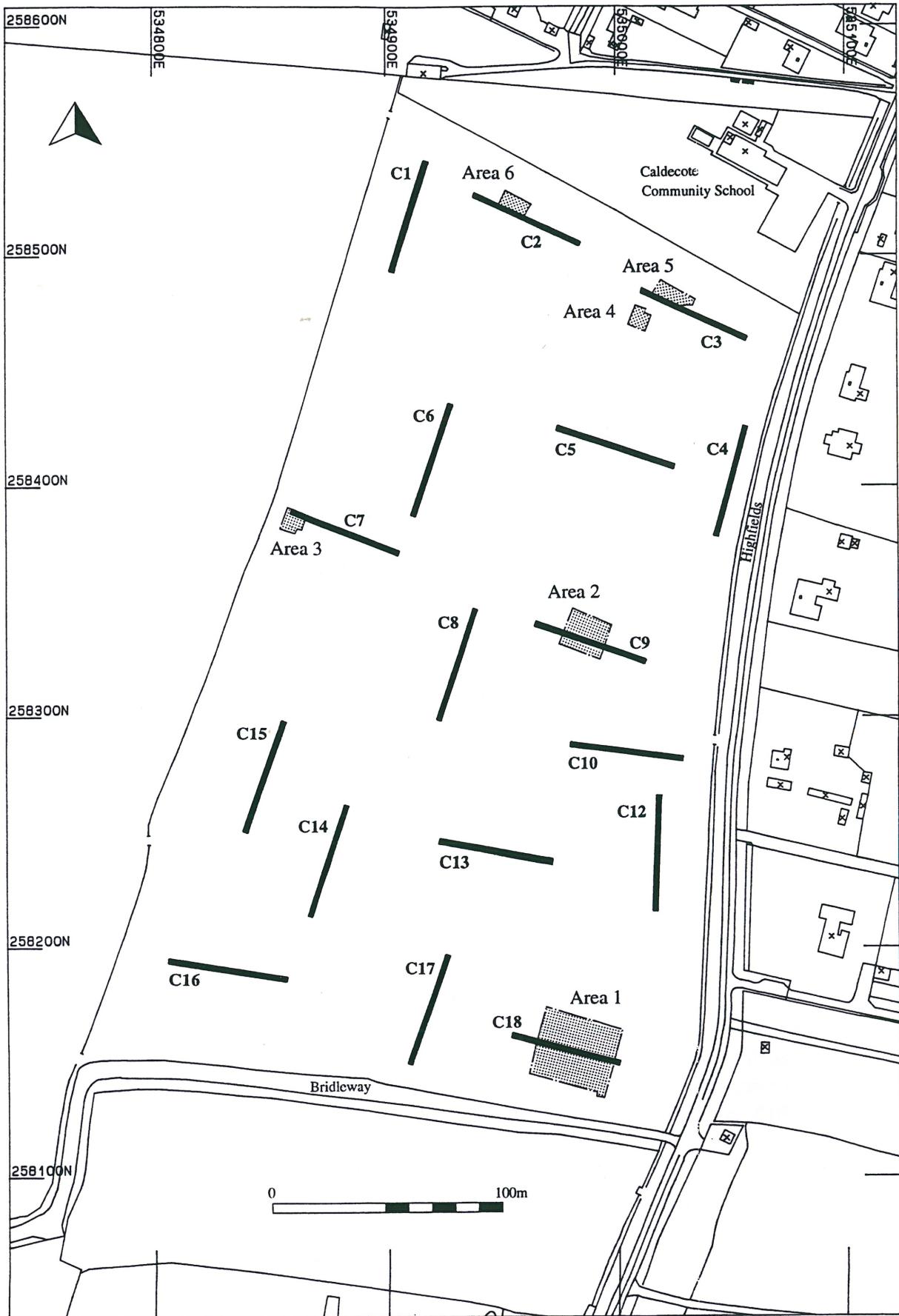


Figure 2 Location plan showing excavation areas

5.1 Late Iron Age (context groups 1 - 10)

5.1.1 Area 1 (Figure 3)

Area 1 was intended to investigate the possible ring ditch revealed in Trench C18. However, once the area was opened up around the evaluation trench, it became clear that the features interpreted as arcs of the ring ditch were in fact two separate and distinct features: a pit, 1135, and a linear ditch, 1136=2054. These features have both been attributed to the Late Iron Age, and are discussed below.

Area 1 revealed a series of Late Iron Age ditches.

Context group 1 (contexts: 2058 2057, 2158 2157)

An L-shaped linear, 2058=2158, was straight with a sharp right angle turn. It ran north/south for 10m and east/west for 2m, and was truncated to the south and east by later features. It had a wide, shallow U-shaped profile with a flat base, and measured 0.45m to 0.80m wide, and 0.12m to 0.18m deep. It contained one fill, 2057=2157, a light olive brown silty clay, with occasional small chalk fragments, flint, and flecks of charcoal. It contained one small sherd of pottery, hand-made with shell and grit temper, of uncertain date. Ditch 2058 was cut by linear 2054 and postholes 2004 and 2008.

Context group 2 (contexts: 2014 2013, 2031 2030)

Two narrow linears, 2014 and 2031, form the earliest phase of a possible enclosure and appear to flank either side of an entrance. 2014 was straight with a square end to the south, aligned nearly north/south, and 1.24m of its length was revealed. It had nearly vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 0.22m wide and 0.10m deep.

2031 was very similar to 2014, but became wider towards the south where it was truncated by later features. 2.20m of its length was revealed, and its profile was similar to 2014, with near vertical sides and a flat base, measuring up to 0.38m wide and 0.17m deep. The fills of 2014 and 2031, 2013 and 2030 respectively, were virtually identical, being greyish brown clays with occasional small pebbles and flint and flecks of charcoal. 2030 contained eight very small fragments of pottery dated to the Late Iron Age, and 2g of animal bone. 2014 was cut by 2012, and 2031 by 2054 and 2056.

An unexcavated linear, 2174, ran east/west at right angles to 2031, and may form part of the enclosure.

The enclosure was later recut by ditches 2012 and 2054=1136.

Context group 4 (contexts: 1136 1140, 2012 2011, 2054 2053 2143 2142)

2012 had a rounded butt end in plan, where it cut 2014. It was on the same alignment as the earlier linear, and 1.80m of its length was revealed. It had a wide, rounded V-shape profile, measuring 0.96m wide and 0.27m deep. The fill,

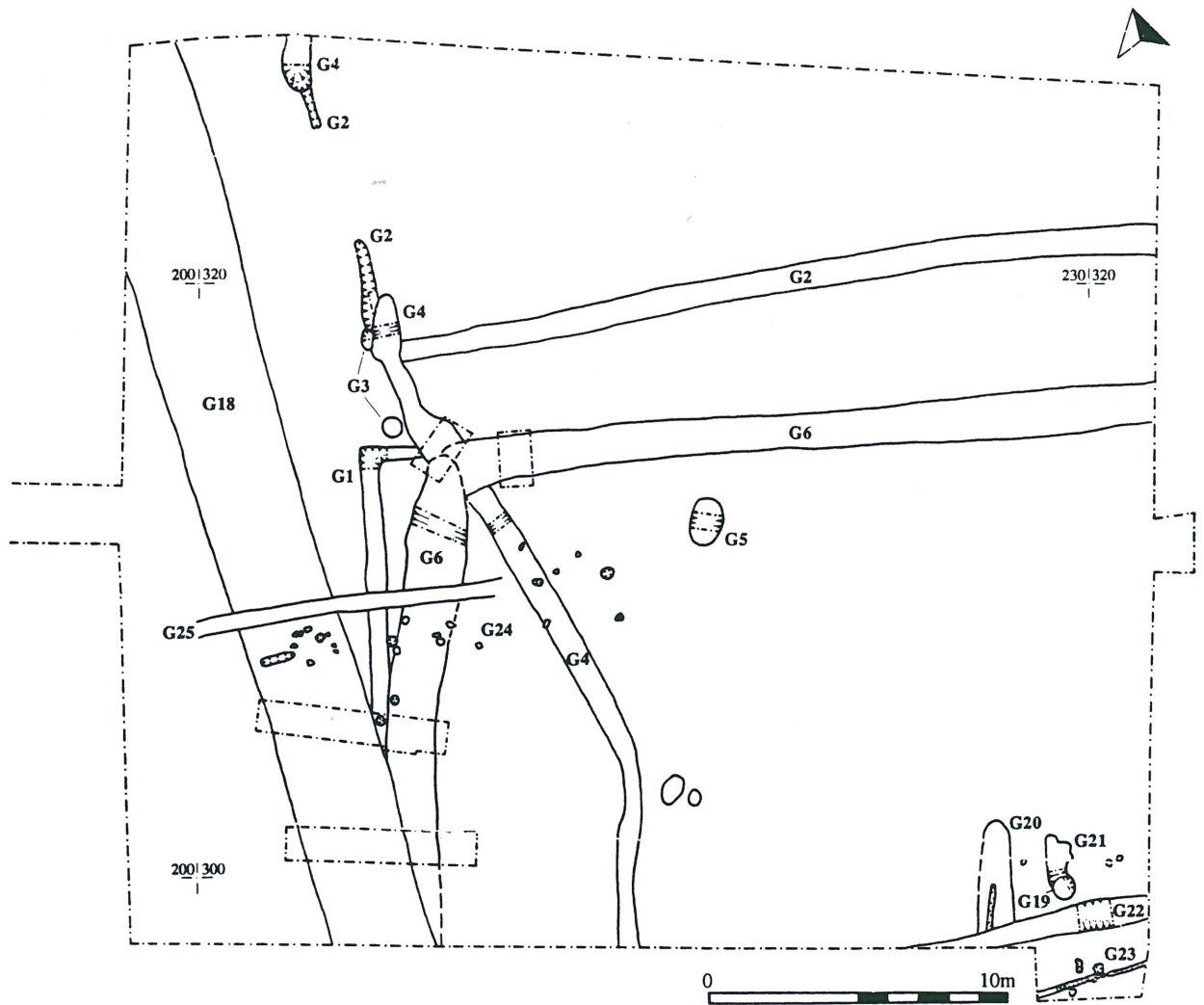


Figure 3 Plan of Area 3

2011, was an olive brown silty clay with occasional pebbles, flint, flecks of charcoal, and the rare small fragments of burnt clay. It contained one very small sherd of pottery.

Ditch 2054 extended from a rounded butt end to the north where it cut the earlier linear 2031, for 18m towards the south, and then turned south-south-west to continue for 6m more where it continued out of the area of excavation. It had a wide flat-based V-shape profile, and measured from 0.80m to 0.95m wide and 0.38m to 0.41m deep (Figure 6 section 222).

It contained three fills: 2053, 2143, and 2142. The upper fill, 2053, was a light brown silty clay with occasional small flint and some charcoal flecks. It contained more than 15 sherds of Late Iron Age pottery. The lower fills, 2142 and 2143, were both light brown silty clays with occasional small flint. Ditch 2054 was cut by ditch 2141 and postholes 2046 and 2062.

Context group 3 (contexts: 2056 2055, 2173)

Two postholes adjacent to ditch 2054 on its western edge may be related to the enclosure. 2173 was not excavated, and was circular in plan, 0.60m in diameter. 2056 was circular in plan, 0.30m in diameter, 0.13m deep with concave sides tapering to a rounded base. The fill 2055 was a light olive brown clay.

Context group 6 (contexts: 1137 1141, 2060 2059, 2141 2140, 2156 2155)

Ditch 2141 was aligned east/west, and may have been dug along the line of the earlier ditch 2058. 23.5m of its length was revealed. Its profile was somewhat irregular, with convex sides tapering to an irregular but basically flat base. It measured 1.60m wide and 0.54m deep. It contained one fill, 2140, a light olive brown silty clay with occasional flint pebbles and a few flecks of charcoal (Figure 6 section 223).

The western end of 2141 was cut by 2060=2156=1137, a ditch which extended from 2140 towards the south for 16.5m, forming a right angle with 2141. It had an irregular profile, being a wide flat-based U-shape about 0.45m deep, with a narrow deep U-shaped slot in the centre of the base. The maximum depth was 0.76m where sectioned, and about 2.25m wide. It was cut by ditch 2154 (Figure 6 section 225).

It contained one fill, 2059=2155=1141, a light olive brown silty clay, with occasional small pieces of chalk and small angular flints. It contained one small sherd of pottery, possibly Late Iron Age or Roman in date, and 2g of animal bone.

Context group 5 (contexts: 1135 1139)

A single pit of probable Late Iron Age date was revealed initially during the evaluation, 1135. It was oval in plan, 1.5m by 1.10m, and 0.30m deep with a concave profile. The fill, 1139, was a light olive brown silty clay.

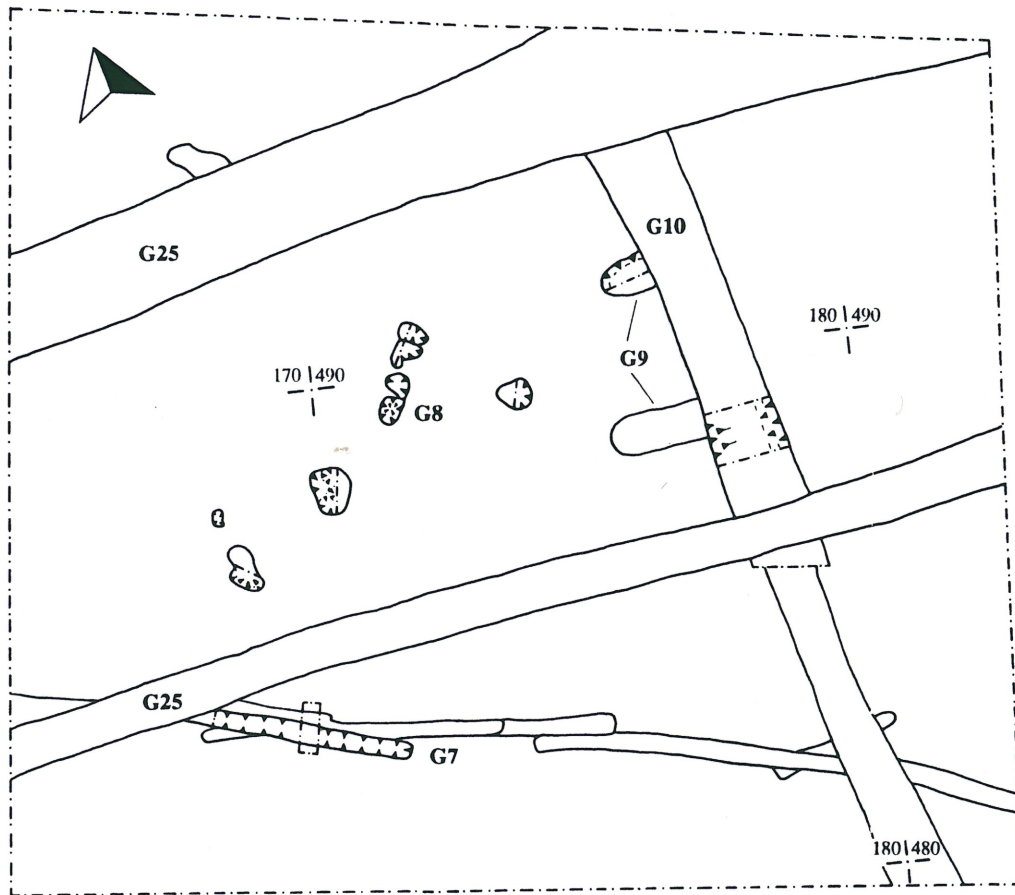


Figure 4 Plan of Area 2

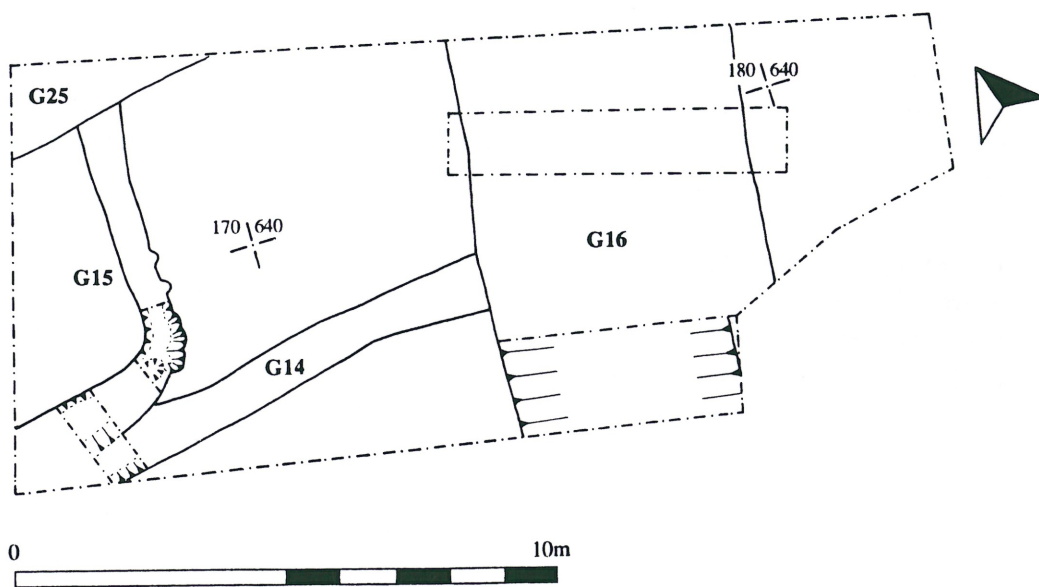


Figure 5 Plan of Area 5

5.1.2 Area 2 (Figure 4)

Area 2 contained four groups of features of probable Late Iron Age date.

Context group 7 (contexts: 2093 2088 2100, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169)

The first group was a series of straight linear slots which ran roughly east/west across the width of Area 2. These appeared to make up a boundary of some kind. There were at least two phases of construction, with 2166, 2167, and 2169 representing an earlier phase, and 2168 and 2093 the later phase. The gap between 2093 and 2168, about 2m wide, may represent an entrance. The slots ranged in length from 2.5m to 9m.

2093 was excavated, and showed a regular rounded V-shape profile, 0.40m wide and 0.26m deep. It contained 2 fills, 2088 and 2100. The fills were both light olive brown silty clays with occasional small angular flints and small fragments of chalk. The slot 2168 was cut by the Late Iron Age ditch 2095=1094.

Context group 8 (2081 2080, 2082 2083, 2085 2084, 2087 2086, 2111 2110, 2113 2112, 2115 2114, 2117 2116, 2119 2118, 2139)

A group of twelve postholes was located to the north of this boundary, and may represent part of a structure. The postholes were mostly sub-circular in plan, most ranging from 0.40m to 0.65m long and from 0.20m to 0.50m wide. 2087 and 2117 were much smaller measuring 0.20m by 0.16m and 0.15m by 0.07m. Their depths ranged from 0.09m to 0.28m, with the majority being *c* 0.10m.

The fills were all very similar, being dark yellowish brown clays with occasional small angular flints and small fragments of chalk.

Context group 9 (contexts: 2097 2096, 2099, 2098)

Two probable linear features were located adjacent to the group of postholes to the east, 2097 and 2099. Both were at right angles to and cut by the Late Iron Age ditch 2095. 2097 was 0.67m long and 0.64m wide, with a rounded end to the west. Its profile was a wide, shallow flat-based U, 0.11m deep. 2099 also had a rounded end to the west, and measured 1.80m long by 0.70m wide. It was 0.22m deep with a similar profile to 2097. The fills of both features were virtually identical to those of the postholes adjacent.

Context group 10 (contexts: 1095 1094, 2095 2094)

A straight linear ditch 2095=1094 ran north/south across Area 2. 14.5m of its length was revealed. It measured 1.36m wide and 0.52m deep, with an irregular profile. The west side was nearly vertical, the east side was slightly concave and sloping, becoming near vertical nearer the base which was flat (Figure 6 section 220).

It contained one fill, 2094, a dark brown clay with occasional small angular flints and chalk, and occasional charcoal flecks. 2094 contained some fragments of burnt clay or possible very degraded pottery, 176g of animal bone, and four

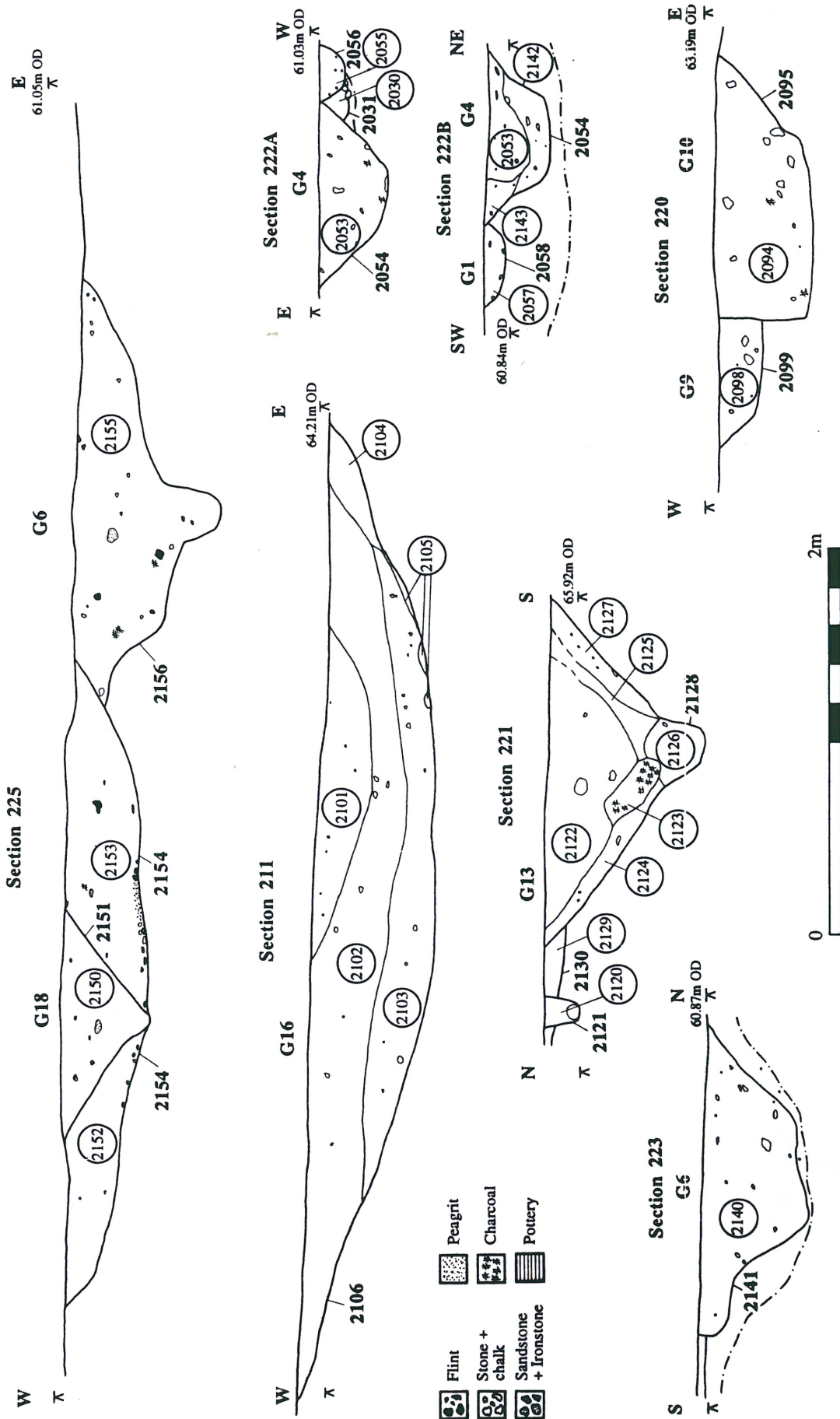


Figure 6 Sections across selected features

sherds of Late Iron Age pottery. Ditch 2094 was cut by two modern field drains running parallel across Area 2 from west to east (2144 and 1097).

5.2 Roman (context groups 11 - 18)

Boundary ditches of Romano-British date, forming part of a field system, were found in many of the evaluation trenches in Field C (Oakey 1996). These were investigated further in Areas 1, 3, 5, and 6.

5.2.1 Area 1 (Figure 3)

Context group 18 (contexts: 1138 1142, 2151 2150, 2154 2152 2153)

Two ditches of probable Roman date were revealed in Area 1. A very wide, straight ditch, 2154=1138, ran across the area from north to south, and cut the earlier ditch 2156. 32m of its length was revealed in Area 1, and it measured 3.4m wide and 0.45m deep. Its profile was a slightly irregular flat-based U-shape. Its two fills, 2152 and 2153, were light brown silty clays with occasional small angular flints and charcoal flecks (Figure 6 section 225).

A second ditch, not visible in plan, was cut down the centre of ditch 2154 (2151). It was 1.20m wide and 0.47m deep, with a V-shape profile. The fill, 2150, was an olive brown silty clay with occasional flint, pieces of chalk, and occasional charcoal flecks. These ditches were cut by several post-medieval postholes (g24) and by a modern field drain (g25).

5.2.2 Area 3

Context group 17 (contexts: 1082 1083, 1084 1085, 2090 2089, 2092 2091)

Area 3 revealed two straight ditches running roughly north / south which converged in the south part of the area (2090=1084 and 2092=1082). They both had very similar profiles, with concave sides and slightly rounded base. 2090 measured 1.05m wide and 0.30m deep, and 2092 was 1.20m wide and 0.31m deep. Their fills, 2089 and 2091, were very similar, both being brown silty clays. However, 2089 was marginally darker than 2091 and with less flecks of chalk.

In section, 2090 appeared to cut 2092, however this relationship is very tentative and is based on the slight differences in fills noted above. No dating evidence was recovered from these ditches.

5.2.3 Area 5 (Figure 5)

Three ditches of Roman date were revealed in Area 5.

Context group 14 (contexts: 2171 2170)

2171 was a straight ditch, running east / west for 8.5m across the area. It was truncated to the east by the later ditch 2106. 2171 measured 0.95m wide and 0.17m deep, with straight sloping sides and a flat base. It was cut by ditch 2109.

Context group 15 (contexts: 1050 1051, 2109 2107 2108 2138)

2109 was an L-shaped ditch, which ran north / south for c 5m, then turned a rounded 90 degree corner towards the west, continuing on the same line as the earlier ditch, 2171, and cut into the north side of the earlier ditch. 2109 measured 0.70m to 0.90m wide, and 0.20m to 0.35m deep. It had a flat base and slightly irregular sides. Postholes were cut into the edge of the ditch along the east side.

Ditch 2109 contained three fills: the two basal fills, 2108 and 2138, were both greyish brown silty clays with occasional lumps of redeposited natural clay and flecks of charcoal. The upper fill, 2107, was a dark grey to greyish brown silty clay with a moderate amount of small fragments and flecks of charcoal, and small fragments of burnt clay or soft abraded tile or daub. This fill appeared in patches throughout the upper part of the ditch. Fill 2108 contained four sherds of Roman pottery, while 2107 contained seven.

Context group 16 (contexts: 1056 1061 1062 1063, 2106 2101 2102 2103 2104 2105)

A very wide ditch, 2106, ran roughly north/south across Area 5. It was 4.60m wide and 0.65m deep, with a wide U-shape profile. The sides were shallow and concave, and the base was slightly concave (Figure 6 section 211).

The fills, 2101 - 2105, were silty clays ranging from dark greyish brown to dark olive brown in colour. The lower fills, 2104 and 2105, contained a high proportion of lumps of redeposited natural clay. The upper fills contained occasional fragments of burnt clay or soft abraded tile, and occasional charcoal flecks. Some animal bone, Roman pottery and tile were recovered from the fills of ditch 2106.

5.2.4 Area 6

Area 6 revealed the junction of three ditches. 2172 was not excavated, and appeared in plan to be earlier than the other ditches.

Context group 13 (1076 1077, 2128 2122 2123 2124 2125 2126 2127)

Two ditches appeared to meet at a right angle junction. 2128 ran east / west across the area and 1076, running south of 2128, met 2128 at a right angle junction. 2128 was wider to the east of this junction, suggesting that it was in place before 1076 was dug, then it was recut to the east of this junction.

1076 was 1.95m wide and 0.65m deep, with straight sides tapering to a flat base. The basal fill, 1078, appeared to be redeposited natural marly clay that had

probably accumulated while the ditch was open, before it was filled with 1077. One abraded sherd of a Romano-British jar was found in 1077.

2128, where sectioned, was 1.80m wide and 0.65m to 0.85m deep, with straight steep sides and a wide V-shape profile (Figure 6 section 221). A posthole was cut into the base about 0.20m deeper than the base of the ditch. Circular in plan, the posthole measured about 0.35m in diameter. The probable remains of the charred post were visible in section, within the fills of the ditch. This deposit, 2123, was a very dark greyish brown silty clay containing frequent small fragments and flecks of charcoal, and frequent flecks of burnt clay or daub. The angle of 2123 in section suggests that the post fell slightly during decomposition.

The other fills of 2128, 2122 - 2127, ranged from light olive brown to dark greyish brown silty clays, with occasional charcoal flecks, small stones, and small chalk fragments. The fills contained two sherds of Roman greyware and 20g of animal bone.

Context group 12 (contexts: 2130 2129)

2128 was cut into 2129, a deposit adjacent to the ditch on its north side. It covered an area about 2m wide, and extended from just to the west of the junction of ditches 1076 and 2128. It measured 0.12m thick, and was a light olive brown silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and chalk, and small stones. This deposit did not appear to fill a cut as such, but may represent an area of trample next to the ditch, or a path or track running along its north side.

5.3 Medieval (context groups 19 - 23)

Medieval remains were only found in Area 1, and these were concentrated in the south-east corner of the area (Figure 3).

Context group 22 (contexts: 2066 2065)

A straight linear ditch, 2066, ran roughly east / west across the south-east corner of the excavation area. 12m of its length was revealed, and it measured 0.95m wide and 0.22m to 0.31m deep where sectioned. The sides were slightly convex, tapering to a flat base. The base sloped down towards the west within the excavated section. The fill, 2065, was a greyish brown silty clay, with occasional flecks and small fragments of charcoal, flecks of daub or burnt clay, and small fragments of chalk. This fill contained 11 sherds of medieval pottery, and one fragment of Niedermendig lava quernstone.

Context group 21 (contexts: 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164)

A line of four postholes on the north side of ditch 2066 may represent a fenceline parallel with the ditch (2161 - 2164). They were not excavated, but were circular in plan, and from 0.18m to 0.20m in diameter. The fills were all light brown silty clays with moderate charcoal flecks and occasional charcoal flecks.

Context group 20 (contexts: 2149 2148, 2165 2161, 2160)

Two linear features were located adjacent to and at right angles to the ditch 2066. 2160 appeared to be a linear ditch with a rounded butt end to the north, but was not excavated. It measured 3.3m long and 1.4m wide. The second linear, 2165, was irregular in plan, 1.5m long by 0.60m wide. Its south end was cut by pit 2147, and to the north it ended in a rounded butt end. The sides were concave, with a shallow wide U-shape profile. It was only 0.05m deep, with a narrow linear slot cut into the base.

Context group 19 (contexts: 2147 2147)

Pit 2147 was located adjacent to ditch 2066 on its north side. It was circular in plan, 0.70m in diameter, and 0.32m deep. The sides were nearly vertical, stepped on the south side, with a flat base. The fill, 2146, was an olive brown silty clay with moderate charcoal fragments and occasional chalk fragments.

Context group 23 (contexts: 2017 2015, 2019 2018, 2021 2020, 2032 2016, 2034 2033, 2036 2035, 2038 2037, 2040 2039 2159, 2042 2041, 2069 2067 2068)

Part of a timber structure was located adjacent to the south of ditch 2066 and appeared to be aligned parallel with the ditch. It continued out of the area of excavation.

Two foundation trenches end to end made up the north wall of the building. These, 2040 and 2069, measured 0.11m and 0.13m wide, and 0.15m and 0.19m deep. Both were similar in profile, with a vertical south side and the north side sloping steeply to give a narrow U-shape profile, about 0.05m wide at the base. The fills of the two slots were fairly similar, with the basal fill being a light olive brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks, flecks of daub or burnt clay, and occasional small chalk fragments. The upper fills contained redeposited natural clay which was possibly used as packing around upright planks and posts within the foundation trench.

Within the fills of the foundation trenches, ghosts or stains of upright planks and posts were visible, indicating that post-in-trench construction was used. Ghosts of upright planks were on average 0.10m long by 0.06m wide, and about 0.10m deep. These were interspersed with ghosts of small circular posts or stakes, 0.10m in diameter and 0.15m deep, and larger square posts, the width of the foundation trench or slightly wider, 0.15m, and deeper than the foundation trench at about 0.20m deep.

Adjacent to the foundation slots were several postholes which are probably part of the structure. To the south, 2021, was sub-rectangular in plan, measuring 0.22m by 0.20m and 0.15m deep. It had vertical sides and a flat base.

To the north of the foundation trenches, two pairs of posts appeared to be part of the building structure: the double posthole 2042 and a pair of two postholes, 2017 and 2032. The double posthole 2042 appeared to be two attached oval postholes, and measured 0.37m by 0.28m and 0.08m deep. Both postholes were

angled slightly, with the south sides nearly vertical and the north sides concave and shallow. The bases were concave, being deepest towards the south.

The other pair of adjacent posts, 2017 was sub-circular, measuring 0.20m in diameter and 0.10m deep, with a wide U-shape profile. 2032 was oval, 0.22m by 0.20m, and 0.07m deep. It had a shallow wide U-shape profile.

5.4 Post-Medieval (Context groups 24 - 26)

Context group 24 (contexts: 2006 2005, 2008 2007, 2023 2022, 2025 2024, 2027 2026, 2029 2028, 2044 2043, 2062 2061, 2064 2063, 2071 2070, 2073 2072, 2075 2074, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2133 2132, 2135 2134, 2137 2136, 2004 2003, 2010 2009, 2046 2045, 2048 2047, 2050 2049, 2052 2051)

Post-medieval activity on the site was represented by postholes marking a fenceline within Area 1 (Figure 3). 24 postholes and one small linear slot were located in a group, forming a rough line from east to west. The postholes fell into two types: the first type were sub-circular to rectangular in plan, and ranged in size from 0.18m by 0.13m to 0.35m by 0.32m. They measured from 0.05m to 0.15m deep, and mostly had a U-shape profile.

The second category of posthole or stakehole were roughly triangular in plan, ranging from 0.10m by 0.09m to 0.23m by 0.17m. They ranged in depth from 0.05m to 0.15m, and had V-shaped profiles, tapering to a point.

Their fills were all very similar, being light olive brown silty clays with occasional small angular flint, small chalk fragments, charcoal flecks, and small fragments of burnt clay or decayed soft brick. A few fragments of post-medieval tile and pot were recovered from one or two postholes. Stratigraphically they were the latest features in the area, cut into the fills of a number of Roman and Late Iron Age ditches.

The fenceline ran parallel to the bridleway to the south of Area 1.

Context group 25

19th or 20th century land drains. Ceramic and pebble-filled field drains were encountered in Areas 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 and all were aligned roughly east/west.

Context group 26

Topsoil and subsoil.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Pottery

The pottery was spot-dated by Phil Copleston, Jonathan Last, and Paul Spoerry. A total of 91 sherds were examined, of which 53 dated to the Later Iron Age, 23 were Roman, 12 medieval, and three post-medieval (Appendix A).

The Later Iron Age sherds fell into two fabric types: the first was very coarse, with grog, shell, and organic temper. The second type had shell, flint, and sand temper. The sherds were generally small and abraded, and could not be dated more precisely within the Later Iron Age (Jonathan Last, pers. comm.).

The Roman fabrics were grey ware, an oxidised fabric with colour-coat, and a sandy tempered fabric, possibly Harrold ware. Various forms were represented (see Appendix A). The Roman pottery represents a date range from the 2nd to 4th centuries (Phil Copleston, pers. comm.)

The majority of the medieval sherds were from two Ely ware vessels, dating to the period 1200 - 1400. The other sherds were too small and abraded to date closely. The post-medieval sherds date from the 18th to 19th centuries (Paul Spoerry, pers. comm.).

The assemblage was too small to merit full analysis at this stage. However, it is intended that the Iron Age and Roman pottery in particular will be re-examined after the excavation in Field B has taken place.

6.2 Other Classes of Artefact

One small copper alloy coin was recovered from the topsoil by metal detecting 5m to the south-east of Area 5. It was too corroded to identify any inscription on either face.

A few fragments of Niedermendig lave quern were recovered from the medieval features in the south-east corner of Area 1. These were generally very small and abraded fragments.

A small amount of animal bone was recovered, but it was unfortunately in very poor condition (Appendix C).

7 INTERPRETATION

7.1 Late Iron Age

The Late Iron Age ditches in Area 1 represent at least three phases of activity (Figure 7). The first phase, G1 and G2, appear to demarcate two adjacent rectilinear enclosures. The northernmost enclosure had an entrance in its western side, about 3m wide. The parallel ditches aligned east/west were about 4m apart, and may flank either side of a trackway.

The second phase, G3 and G4, sees a boundary being recut, respecting the western edge of the earlier enclosure G2 and also respecting the same entrance. This ditch continues south across the possible trackway and into the earlier southern enclosure. The ditch narrows where it crosses the possible trackway, with two postholes on either side. It is possible that this might reflect some form of gate or entrance across the end of the track.

The third phase sees two ditches, G6, forming two sides of a possible rectilinear enclosure in roughly the same location as G1. This suggests that the track is still in use and that the boundary is being reiterated. The three phases of enclosures suggests continuity of use over some time. These enclosures were probably for agricultural use, perhaps for control of livestock. They are very similar in morphology to the Late Iron Age enclosures investigated at Madingley, 3 miles north-east of Highfields (Tipper 1994). This similarity is significant because the enclosures at Madingley were also located on heavy clay soils.

The Late Iron Age ditch in Area 2 may be part of the enclosure system revealed in Area 1. The possible structure, G8, appeared to predate this ditch, based on the relationship between G9 and the ditch. Although there was no dating evidence associated with the possible structure, the similarity in fills between it and G9 suggests that it also predates the Late Iron Age ditch.

7.2 Roman

The lack of results from the geophysical survey unfortunately means that it is impossible to reconstruct the layout of the Roman field system in Field C. However, the excavation has indicated that the field system was more complex than was thought after the evaluation, and that several phases of ditches were represented.

The ditches in Areas 5 and 6 produced the most pottery, reinforcing the results of the evaluation which suggested that an area of settlement might be located just to the north of Field C. The ditches in these areas were on the same alignment, either north/south or east/west, and two or three phases of ditch were represented in each area. The narrowness of ditches G14 and G15, and the possible fenceline along the edge of G15, could suggest boundaries around small

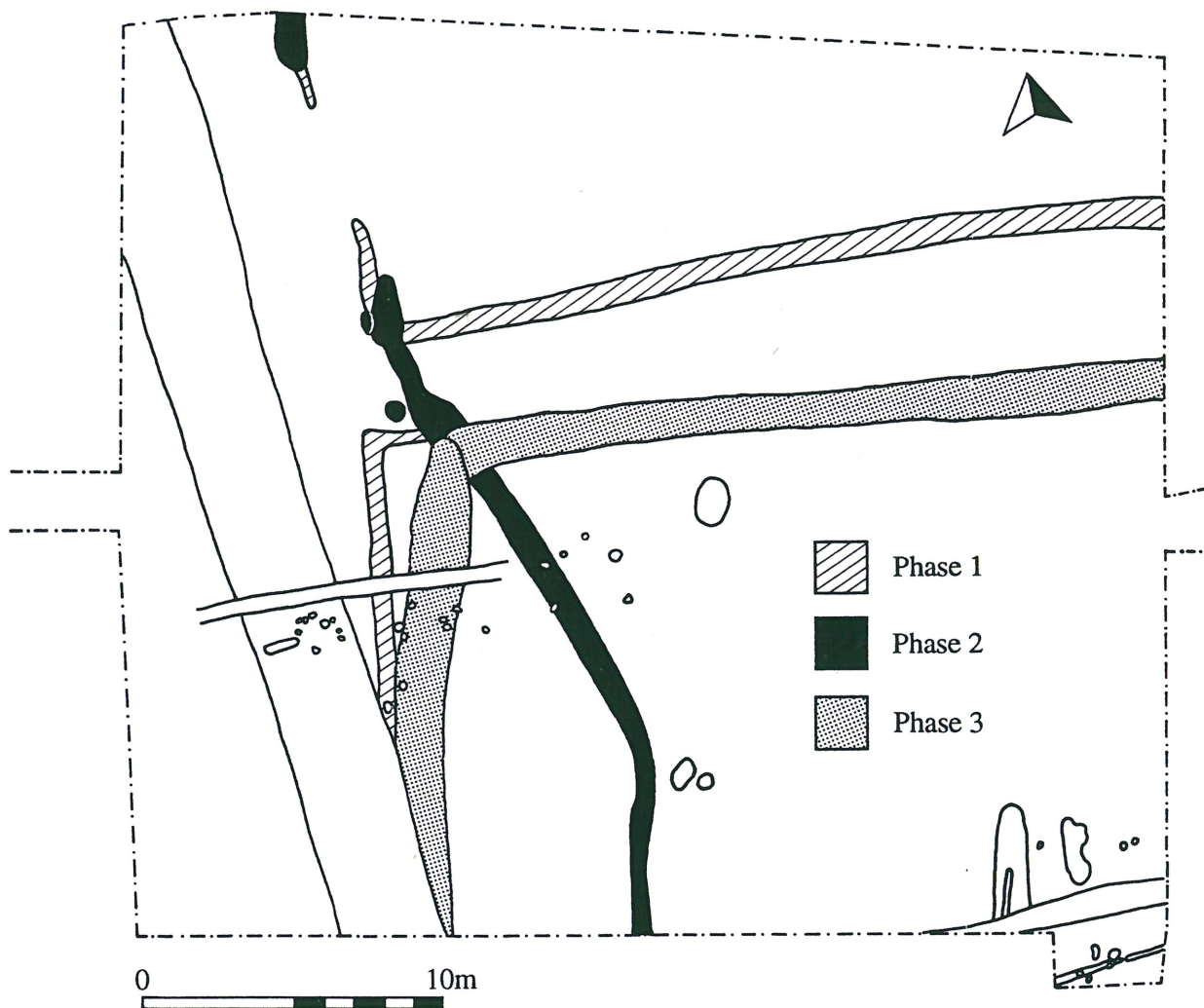


Figure 7 Interpretative plan of Areal showing phasing of Iron Age Ditches

closes rather than field boundaries. This would be typical of the small closes often located near settlements.

Although the large ditches in Area 1 and Area 5, G18 and G16, are clearly not the same continuous ditch as no ditch of this size appears in the intervening trenches or Area 2, they are still of a similar size and morphology. This may represent the line of a substantial, although intermittent, boundary.

The environmental data suggest that in the Roman period cereals were grown locally and stored at the site in a partially cleaned state (Appendix B). This suggests that the field system found at Highfields relates to arable fields and cereals in particular, rather than pasture for livestock.

7.3 Medieval

The remains in the south-east corner of Area 1 suggests an area of settlement in this corner of Field C, adjacent to the Highfields road. As the excavation area only clipped the edge of this area of settlement, it is impossible to estimate the extent of occupation in this period.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The excavations in Field C at Caldecote Highfields have revealed two periods of activity which were not expected from the evaluation results in this field: Late Iron Age and medieval. The Late Iron Age enclosures and settlement features suggest that the occupation revealed in the evaluation of Field B extends over a much greater area. The enclosures may indicate the exploitation of the heavy clay soils for agriculture in this period.

There is little evidence to suggest any direct continuity between the Iron Age enclosures and the Roman field system in Field C. In contrast, it is suggested that the centre of settlement shifted out of this area during the Roman period to somewhere to the north of Field C.

Hitherto, the absence of medieval finds and the presence of ridge and furrow remains over most of Highfields had suggested that occupation was concentrated to the south at Caldecote proper and that the area of investigation was part of the open fields in this period. However, the medieval settlement remains in the south-east corner of Area 1 indicate occupation in the period 1200-1400. Less than 100m away, on the other side of the road, the county Sites and Monuments Record records earthworks of a house platform (SMR 11226, Figure 1). Another earthwork of a house platform is recorded 250m to the south adjacent to the road (SMR 11225, Figure 1). Caldecote Tithe map, 1851 (CRO 296/P8) showed no buildings in these areas. The building platforms could be any date earlier than this, however it could be suggested that with the settlement remains

in the south-east corner of Area 1 they represent a small settlement of early medieval date clustered on either side of the Highfields road.

The excavation of the Iron Age settlement in Field B, due to take place in a few years, will provide a valuable opportunity to re-examine the results of the excavation in Field C.

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APPENDIX A POTTERY SPOT DATES

Philip Copleston, Jon Last, and Paul Sperry

Context	Period	No of sherds	Description
unstrat	Roman	2	reduced ware (1 jar) abraded
unstrat		3	tile / brick, hand-made sandy
unstrat	Post-medieval	1	pot
1140	Late Iron Age	5	v coarse grog, veg, & shell temper
2007	Post-medieval	1	stoneware, C18-19
2011		1	tile
2018	Roman	1	grey ware, v abraded
2030	Late Iron Age		
2039	Medieval	4	lava quem
2053	Late Iron Age	15	sim to 1140, shell, flint, sand, veg temper
2065	Medieval	1	daub
2065	Medieval	1	lava quem
2065	Medieval	8	1 vessel, calcareous version of Ely ware
2065	Medieval	1	rim, v abraded
2065	Medieval	2	rim, Ely ware rounded bowl, 1200-1350
2068	Medieval	1	tile
2070			daub
2094	Late Iron Age		v fragmentary, poss v degraded pot or burnt clay
2094	Late Iron Age	4	sandy fabric, organic temper, v sim to 2053
2101	Roman	4	jar, oxidized fabric with colour-coat
2101	Roman	1	small jar, oxidized fabric
2101	Roman	3	grey ware (1 large jar, 1 small jar)
2101	Roman	1	amphora
2107	Roman	1	shelly fabric, Harrold ware?
2107	Roman	3	oxidized ware
2107	Roman	1	pedestal bowl with internal decoration
2107	Roman	1	large grey ware storage jar, flange below rim, abraded
2108	Roman	1	colour coat, oxidized core, possible flagon, v abraded
2108	Roman	2	pot
2122	Roman	1	grey ware bowl
2122	Roman	1	grey ware, shell inclusions
2122	Post-medieval	1	v small pot sherd
2134	Post-medieval	1	tile
2155	Roman	1	sandy fabric, possibly late Iron Age or Roman
2157	Medieval	1	hand-made, shell & grit temper

APPENDIX B CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

Duncan Schlee

Thirteen samples, of between 10 and 30 litres, were taken from a variety of features for the recovery of charred plant remains. Features from which samples were taken have either been dated from directly associated pottery, or by group association with features that contained datable pottery.

Contextual details of the flotation samples:

Sample no.	fill no.	Feature no.	Feature type	Period
101	2015	2017	Post Hole	Medieval
102	2070	2071	Stake Hole	Post Medieval
103	2030	2031	Enclosure Ditch	Late Iron Age
104	2088	2093	Boundary Ditch	Late Iron Age
105	2080	2081	Post Hole	Late Iron Age
106	2100	2093	Boundary Ditch	Late Iron Age
107	2132	2133	Post Hole	Post Medieval
108	2134	2135	Post Hole	Post Medieval
109	2136	2137	Linear	Post Medieval
110	2107	2109	Ditch	Roman
111	Not Processed			
112	2146	2147	Pit	Medieval
113	148	2149	Linear	Medieval

Twelve of the samples were processed using a 'Siraf-type' flotation machine. Flots were collected in a 0.5 mm mesh, heavy residues in 1.0 mm mesh. Flots were sorted using a low magnification binocular microscope. Heavy residues were sorted for other inclusions.

Table of plant species present:

Sample no.	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113
Wood Charcoal	***	-	***	-	-	-	*	-	-	**		**	**
Emmer Wheat (<i>T. diccicum</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	*		-	-
Spelt Wheat (<i>T. Spelta</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	*		-	-
Bread Wheat (<i>T. aestivum</i>)	-	*	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	*		**	**
Barley (<i>Hordeum sp.</i>)	-	**	-	-	-	-		*	-	-		-	-
Oats (<i>Avena sp.</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	-			-
Glume bases	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	**		-	-

* Number of asterisks represent approximate relative proportions of species present

Results

Preservation was generally poor, with most cereal grains being puffed, distorted, and abraded. No weed seeds were recovered from the samples, but cereal 'glume-base fragments' were recovered from two samples. Other than root fibres (presumably relatively recent), no non-charred plant remains were recovered from the samples.

Although charred plant remains were not recovered in great quantities and were not very well preserved, in the light of the dating evidence, differences between the crop species in the different periods represented at the site are discernible.

Barley (*Hordeum cf. sativum*) grains, are only present in two features (2071 and 2135), dated to the Post Medieval period.

Bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), is most frequent in Medieval features (2147 and 2149), though also appears in small quantities in the Roman period sample (110).

Sample 110, from feature 2109, (dated to the Roman period), was found to contain Spelt (*Triticum spelta*), Emmer Wheat (*Triticum diccicum*), and some Bread Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) grains. In addition, glume base fragments of Spelt and Emmer were present.

Sample 107, from feature 2133 (assigned a Post Medieval date), contains a similar range of cereals and glume bases to that from the Roman period feature. It seems likely therefore that sample 107 contains residual plant material, presumably from the (probably) Roman period ditch fill into which the later feature is cut.

It is uncertain whether the two Oat grains (*Avena sp.*) recovered, represent cultivated crops or are present as weedy inclusions within the dominant cereal crops.

Interpretation

The crops represented in the different periods are not unusual. The absence of any weed flora associated with the cereal crops, makes discussion of agricultural and environmental conditions pertaining in each period impossible. It is, however, likely that the Medieval and Post Medieval cereals represent cleaned processed crops from which all weed and chaff inclusions have been removed prior to domestic usage.

The Roman period samples do, however, contain chaff (glume base) fragments from Spelt and Emmer Wheat. Chaff is present as a waste by-product from crop processing and cleaning. Although the lack of associated weed flora makes it impossible to ascertain for certain whether the crops were grown on the local clay soils, it is likely that the cereals were locally grown and stored at the site in a partially cleaned state. The presence of the chaff suggests that secondary cleaning (i.e. in a domestic context), was occurring on site prior to use.

APPENDIX C FAUNAL REMAINS

Lorraine Higbee

A small assemblage of 97 fragments (310g) all of which was calcified to some degree by soil conditions. Very few identifiable specimens. Those identified to species include 2 cattle molars, a horse incisor and the proximal end of a sheep/goat metatarsal. Several other specimens identified by size only (see below).

Context No	Weight	Comments
2030	1g	1 unidentifiable fragment c 3cm in length. Calcified due to soil conditions. Surface badly acid etched.
2094	177g	73 unidentifiable long bone fragments ranging in size from 1-8cm. All highly calcified. Possible humerus (upper fore limb) of large immature animal (ie cattle/horse sized). 1 cattle upper right molar (M ¹ or M ²). Enamel surface badly etched. All tissues completely calcified.
2101	9g	2 fragments of ?lower cattle molar. 1 horse incisor, unworn and incomplete root development, therefore c 3-4 years of age (Levine's, 1982).
2107	3g	1 proximal fragment of sheep/goat metatarsal. Calcified and iron stained.
2122	20g	16 unidentifiable fragments, all either long bone or rib. 1 articular end of a rib from a large mammal (cattle/horse). 1 fragment of a vertebral body, large mammal.
Total weight:	310g	



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