

Archaeological Field Unit

**Iron Age Occupation at  
14 Parkhall Road, Somersham**

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**Cambridgeshire County Council**

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**Iron Age Occupation at  
14 Parkhall Road, Somersham**  
(TL 3610 7815)

Judith Roberts

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## *SUMMARY*

*Archaeological excavation of the development site at 14 Parkhall Road, Somersham (TL 3610 7815) revealed medieval activity in the eastern part of the site, close to Parkhall Road, whilst the western part of the site contained evidence of Iron Age occupation. This included early and mid-later Iron Age features. In the early Iron Age a 'four post' structure and a possible 'eavesdrip gully' were found, together with some major north-south boundary ditches and a series of isolated pits and postholes. In the mid to later Iron Age two further possible round-houses were found and a rectangular post-built structure. There seems to be continuity in the location and activities from the previous period and this is reflected in the ditch system.*

*The nature of the remains suggests the site was peripheral to the Iron Age settlement and comprised mainly ditches and pits with some evidence of structures. Monitoring of foundation digging and service trenches showed post-medieval structures and quarrying close to Parkhall Road.*

*The excavation has highlighted the lack of refined dating typology for Iron Age pottery. Using present typologies Iron Age pottery from period 1 is dated between 800-500 BC and period 2 between 300-100 BC. Stratigraphic and distributional evidence, however, shows continuity between periods.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>RESEARCH AIMS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	
	<b>Appendix 1 Prehistoric pottery</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>Appendix 2 Animal bones</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>Appendix 3 Lithics</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>Appendix 4 Small finds and metal detector survey</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>Appendix 5 Environmental remains</b>	<b>37</b>
	<b>Appendix 6 Context list</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	
	<b>Figure 1 Site location plan</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Figure 2 Excavation area</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Figure 3 Period 1 - Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Figure 4 Period 2 - Middle/Late Iron Age</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Figure 5 Period 3 - Medieval</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>Figure 6 Period 4 - Post-medieval/modern</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Figure 7 Phase plans of excavated features</b>	<b>22</b>



**Iron Age and Medieval Occupation at  
14 Parkhall Road, Somersham  
(TL 3610 7815)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

During May 2000 excavation and monitoring of foundation trenches on the development site at 14 Parkhall Road, Somersham (Fig. 1) was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of T. W. Lumley Ltd. The proposed development includes the construction of ten houses and associated groundworks in an area of 0.64 hectares. The investigation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief for Archaeological Investigation produced by Andy Thomas of the County Archaeology Office and to a specification approved by that office.

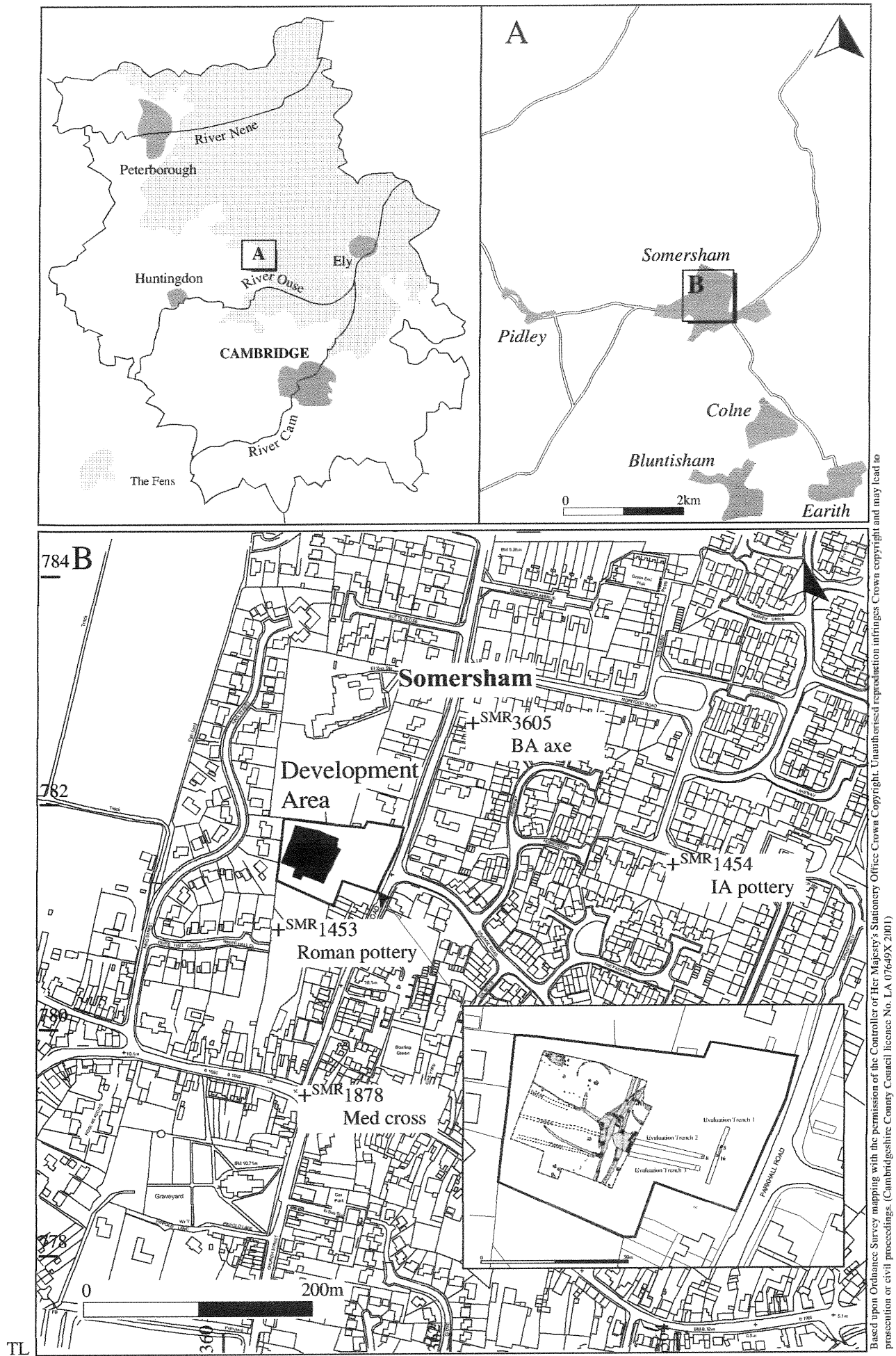
The site lies 500m to the north of the historic core of the village and until recently comprised a private house and gardens. The house (with access road, associated hard standing and outbuildings), close to the northern boundary of the site, and a group of poplar trees and hedge across the site had caused considerable disturbance in the recent past. Iron Age and medieval remains were revealed during evaluation trenching (Cooper, 2000). Most of the site appears to have been under grass since the end of the nineteenth century and probably for much longer.

Further post-medieval, medieval and prehistoric remains were noted during monitoring of foundation digging and excavation.

**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The northern and eastern part of the parish is low-lying fenland (at or near sea level), rising towards the south and west to over 25m OD. The soils are clays and gravels overlying a bed of Oxford Clay. There are gravel pits and brickworks to the north of the village. Much of the land in the parish is arable with pasture. Formerly there was a considerable amount of woodland and orchard in the area but this has been reduced in recent years.

Early Ordnance Survey maps show buildings (sheds/barns) on the northern part of the site. The development site was gardens in the second half of the twentieth century with periods of vegetation clearance and levelling. Most of the site lies at approximately 10m OD, rising slightly towards the east and Parkhall Road.



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Figure 1 Site Location Plan showing excavation area in black

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is to the north of the medieval core of Somersham. A large mesolithic site is recorded to the north-west and prehistoric settlement is known from the Figure 1 Site location

surrounding area (Hall and Coles, 1994) and Bronze Age and Neolithic axes have been found to the north-east (SMR 3605 and 1750). Bronze Age pottery has been found to the north along Parkhall Road (SMR 1344). Iron Age pottery was found during construction to the east of Parkhall Road (SMR 1454) and Roman pottery has been found just to the south of the site (SMR 1453).

Iron Age pottery and Roman settlement remains have been noted to the north (SMR 1447, 3759 and 3763). Iron Age pottery and an iron knife blade were found during gravel quarrying off Parkhall Road. (SMR 1789).

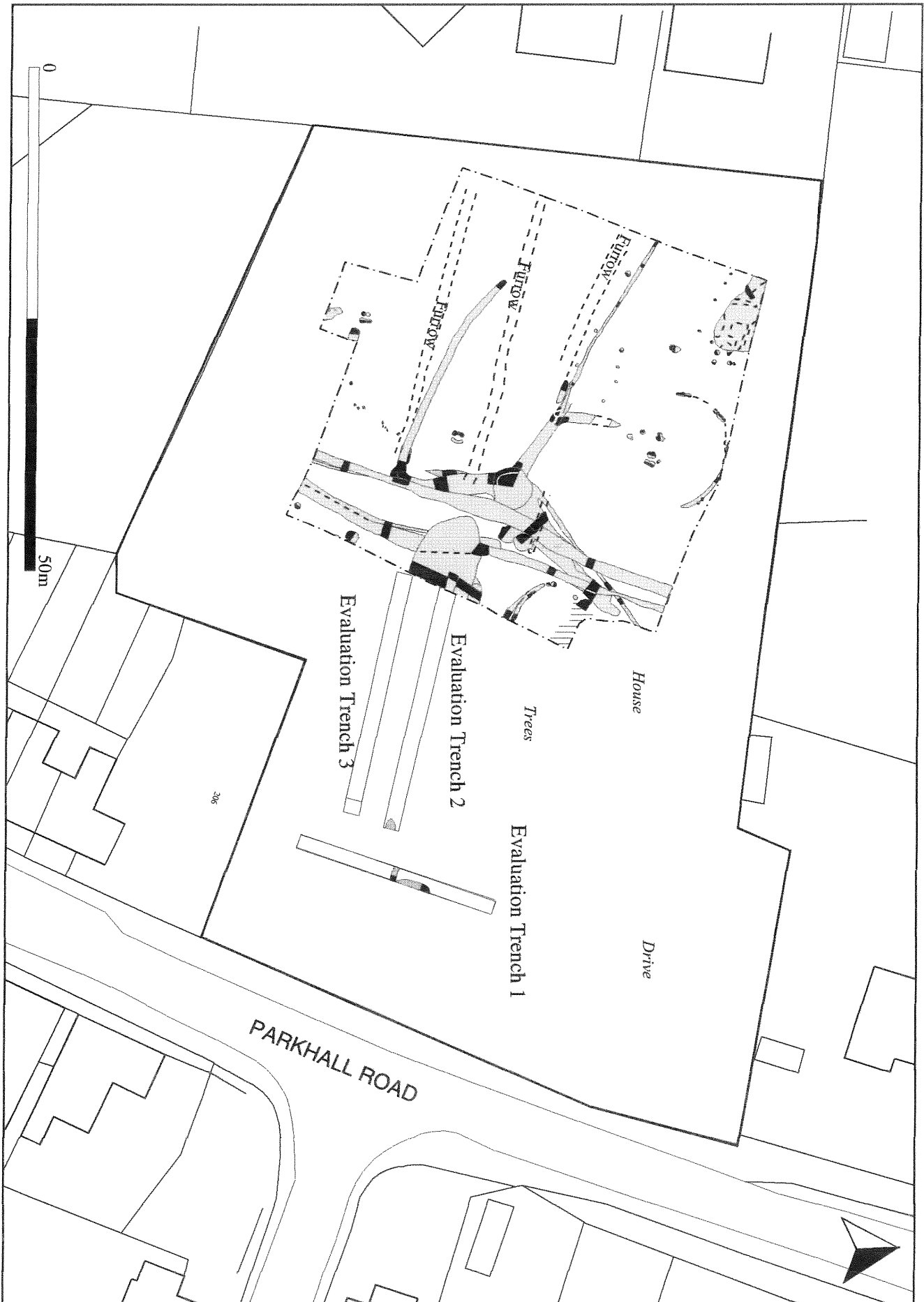
The name of the village may derive either from a personal name (Sumor's homestead), or from a 'homestead of the south mere' (Mawer and Stenton, 1969) and can be traced back to approximately the tenth century. The manor of Somersham was acquired by the abbey of Ely in 991, and became part of the bishop's endowment in 1109 (Page *et al*, 1974). On the southern edge of the village lies the site of the medieval bishop's palace and associated moat, fishponds and deer park (SAM 199). The medieval church and site of the medieval rectory lie to the south of the development site (SMR Nos. 0609 and 3565).

The village stands on higher ground, rising from the fen edge in the north, and extends along the high road from Huntingdon and St. Ives to Chatteris. The High Street is crossed in the middle of the village by a road from the south, which now only leads to the former site of the palace of the bishops of Ely, but which formerly joined Bluntisham Heath Road, forming the approach to the bishop's palace from the south (Page, *ibid*). A medieval market was held at the crossing. Taylor (1989) suggests that the village was relocated and the High Street moved northwards, possibly between 1109 and 1190. The church was rebuilt in the mid-thirteenth century and Taylor considers all the relocation and building was completed by 1279. The development site lies to the west of Parkhall Road and to the north of the medieval market place and the present High Street. Parkhall Road leads north from the market place towards Parkhall Farm and on to Somersham Fen and becomes a track which formerly led to Chatteris.

On the eastern side of Parkhall Road (opposite the development site) is Manor Hall (SMR 2309), built in the early part of the eighteenth century which has two chimney stacks which form the remains of an earlier (probably sixteenth century) house (Page *et al*, 1974).

A number of small archaeological investigations have taken place in Somersham in recent years. In March 1996 an evaluation was carried out at 100 High Street, Somersham (TL3585 7788) by the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council (Roberts, 1996). Trenching revealed medieval property boundaries and a rubbish pit. In 1998 the AFU undertook archaeological monitoring at 100 High Street to coincide with the excavation of two sewer trenches (Connor, 1998). The trenches showed that the ground had been made up

Figure 2 Excavation area.



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in the later post-medieval period by up to 1.50m. Sealed beneath the make-up was evidence for a ditch adjacent and parallel to the High Street. Pits and possible beam slot were found but no dating evidence relating to these features was recovered.

Medieval ridge and furrow agriculture on the Parkhall Road development site masked earlier activity and nothing was noted from aerial photographs apart from these medieval and post-medieval features.

Evaluation trenches on the site revealed one feature, close to Parkhall Road, which contained two sherds of thirteenth to fifteenth century pottery and two further features which contained thirteen sherds of Iron Age pottery. Evidence of a middle to later Iron Age ditch system underlined the potential for Iron Age occupation close to the site. The presence of prehistoric features in the western part of the site lead to a requirement for full excavation.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

On the western part of the site an area approximately 40m x 50m was cleared of topsoil and subsoil under archaeological supervision. After cleaning a pre-excavation plan was drawn at 1:50 (Fig. 2). Modern intrusive features were recorded in plan and investigated but not excavated. Excavated features were recorded using the AFU standard archaeological recording system. In this report deposit numbers are shown in plain text and cut numbers in bold text.

Where possible a 20 litre bulk sample was retained from discrete excavated contexts. Samples were processed for remains by flotation, sorted and examined in consultation with an environmental specialist.

Metal detector surveys were carried out over the exposed surface of the site and the spoil heaps by AFU staff.

The eastern part of the site was monitored when house foundations were excavated. The route of services and the access road were also monitored. Features were noted, recorded and photographed where possible. Artefact retrieval was mainly from excavated contexts

#### **5 RESULTS**

Work on site revealed two main periods of activity: late Bronze Age/early Iron Age and middle/late Iron Age. Small quantities of neolithic, Bronze Age, medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from the site, but only from intrusive or residual positions.

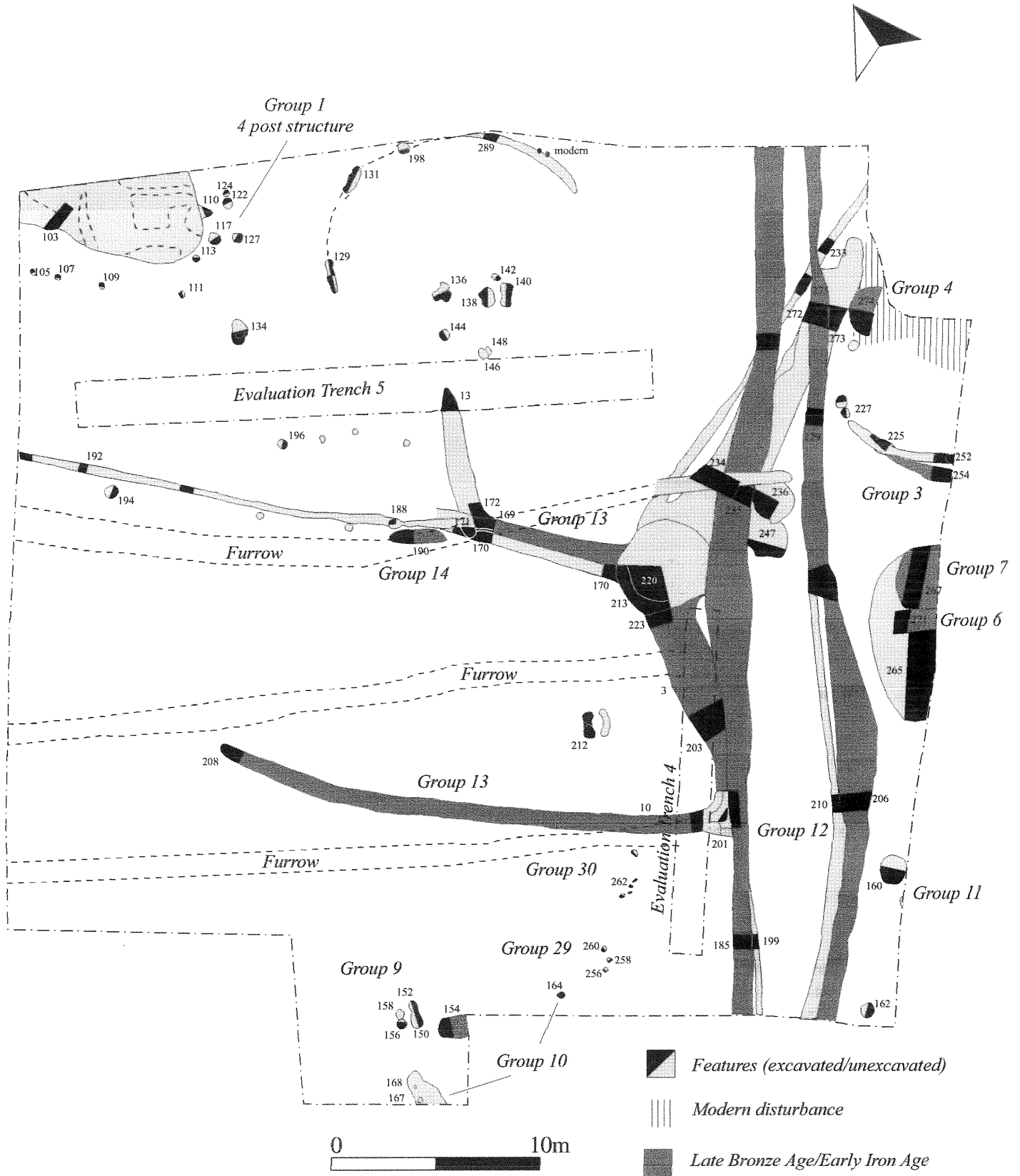


Figure 3 Period 1 Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age

All context numbers relating to excavated deposits and cuts have been grouped on the basis of their stratigraphic and interpretative associations. In some instances the process of grouping was straightforward and it was evident that a number of features were contemporary and shared a related function. In other cases the association of features was harder to establish. In these cases features have been grouped together so that they can be described. Most of the pottery was either late Bronze Age/early Iron Age or mid/late Iron Age.

The context groups have been assigned to one of four periods in order to provide a basic site narrative. Because of the difficulty in determining precise dates for features these phases each span long time periods (two to three hundred years at least). None of the features contained pottery from more than one phase (other than single residual sherds) and there were no contexts with combinations of pottery from the Bronze Age/early Iron Age and mid/late Iron Age. In contrast there may have been continuity between some structures assigned to different periods on pottery evidence. Roundhouse gully - Group 15 (dated to the later Iron Age) is in approximately the same position as a similar structure (Group 3) which is dated by its pottery to an early Iron Age date (800-500 BC, see Appendix 1). This example demonstrates the limited understanding of chronological development of Iron Age ceramics in Cambridgeshire.

Features have been assigned to phases on the basis of stratigraphy alone as it was not possible to produce more accurate dating through the finds. Where no stratigraphic relationship is clear the groups have been assigned to a general period.

## **PERIOD 1: Early Iron Age**

Features assigned to Period 1 include groups of postholes, a curvilinear gully extending beyond the eastern edge of the excavation area, ditches oriented approximately east-west and north-south, and several pits.

### **Group 1**

A small (approximately 2m x 2m) four-post, rectangular, structure. One of the postholes (119) was cut by a post-medieval rubbish pit (103) but, apart from the recent truncation, there was no stratigraphic relationship with other features in this part of the site.

Posthole 117 (0.63m long, 0.54m wide and 0.37m deep) was sub-circular with steep sides, slightly stepped on the western edge. The base was flat with a sharp break of slope. This posthole contained three fills. The basal fill, 116 (0.2m thick), was a mid-pale brown grey slightly silty sand with orange sandy mottles and occasional grit. There were no finds from this primary fill. The secondary fill, 115 (0.2m thick), was a mid brown grey silty sand with very occasional grit and gravel. The upper fill, 114 (0.25m thick), was a mid dark grey, silty sand with moderate gravel and contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery.

Posthole 119 had been cut by the modern rubbish pit in the north-western part of the site. It was 0.73m long, 0.66m wide and 0.24m deep with steep sides, slightly stepped on the eastern edge. The base was uneven with a tightly rounded break of slope. This posthole contained a single fill, 118, which was a mid-dark brownish grey silty sand with moderate gravel and a fragment of early Iron Age pottery.

Posthole 122 (0.51m long, 0.48m wide and 0.38m deep) was sub-circular with very steep sides, slightly stepped on the western edge. The base was flat with a tightly rounded break of slope. This posthole contained two fills, 120 and 121. The primary fill, 121 (0.38m deep), was a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with moderate gravel and contained no finds. The upper fill, 120 (0.26m deep and 0.25m wide) was a dark mottled grey silty sand with occasional gravel and charcoal flecks and contained fragments of animal bone.

The final posthole in this group, 127 (0.5m long, 0.46m wide and 0.47m deep), was sub-circular with very steep sides, widening slightly to the west near the surface. The base was very slightly concave with a tight break of slope. This posthole also contained two fills, 125 and 126. The primary fill, 126 (0.47m thick), was a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with moderate small gravels and contained no artefactual material. The upper fill, 125 (0.3m deep and 0.3m wide) was a dark mottled grey silty sand with occasional gravel and charcoal flecks and contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery.

### **Group 3**

Curving gully, 254 (extending beyond the eastern edge of the excavated area), was associated with posthole 225 and may be the remains of an enclosure or round house (see also 227, below).

Gully 254 (>5m long, 0.7m wide and 0.17m deep) had gradually sloping, concave sides and a flat base. The fill, 253, was a dark grey silty sand with occasional gravel and a sherd of early Iron Age pottery. This was cut, to the north-west by gully 252 (see below). It is possible that the posthole 225 marked the end of this gully and formed part of an entrance. Posthole 225 (diameter 0.95m, depth 0.58m), had vertical sides and a flat base. The lower fill, 246 (0.12m thick), was an olive grey brown silty clay with occasional gravel and contained no artefacts. The upper fill, 224 (0.5m thick), was a light grey silty, sandy clay with occasional gravel. This fill contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone.

### **Group 4**

Pit 274, cut by ditch 273 on its western edge, was found just to the north-west of feature 254 (above), and appears to be of similar date.

Pit 274 (4m long, >1.6m wide and 0.82m deep) was oval, oriented approximately north-south with steep sides in the upper portion, then sloping more gently before dropping at approximately 40°. The base was not fully revealed as the feature was truncated by modern foundation trenches. The lower fill, 283 (0.3m thick), was a mid-pale grey sand with brown silty mottles and occasional gravel inclusions. This fill contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone. The upper fill, 282 (0.48m thick) was a mid grey brown slightly silty sand with very occasional small gravels which also contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery.

### **Group 9**

A shallow pit (154) extended beyond the eastern edge of the southern extension of the area has been assigned to Period 1 because of the similarity of its fills to nearby postholes and spread 168 and the absence of artefactual material.

Pit 154 (1.3m wide and 0.2m deep) had gradually sloping concave sides and a flat base. The fill, 153, was a light brown sandy silt with occasional gravel and contained no artefactual material.

### **Group 11**

Pit 160, similar to 154, above, was found close to the eastern edge of the site.



Pit **160** (1.33m wide and 0.15m deep) was circular with a gradually sloping eastern side and a steeper, concave western edge. The base was concave with no obvious break of slope. The fill, 159, was a grey brown slightly clay sandy silt with occasional gravel.

### **Group 10**

Three features (**164**, **167** and **168**) contained burnt, ashy material and small fragments of burnt animal bone. Very little dating evidence was recovered from these deposits although a single, residual, sherd of neolithic pottery was found in spread **168**.

Pit **164** (0.35m long, 0.3m wide and 0.12m deep) was square with rounded corners and steep, straight sides and a flat base. The fill, 163, was a very dark grey ashy sandy silt with rare grit and small gravel inclusions. There were no finds apart from small fragments of burnt bone.

Pit **167** (diameter 0.35m, 0.10m deep) was circular with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, 166, was a brown sandy silt with black ashy/charcoal patches and rare gravel inclusions. The fill contained small fragments of burnt bone.

Close to pit **167** in a pale sandy patch was a further spread **168** (diameter 0.15m and 0.05m deep) which was similar, with burnt bone fragments and a single small, abraded, sherd of pottery (possibly of neolithic date).

### **Group 12**

Two approximately parallel ditches (**185** and **206**) crossed the eastern part of the site from north to south. These appear to have been dug during the earlier phase of use of the site and re-cut at a later date.

At its southern end ditch **185** (1.1m wide and 0.47m deep) had gradually sloping (45-50°), straight, sides with a sharp break to a flat base. Its lower fill, 204 (0.15m thick and 0.65m wide) was an olive grey silty clay with occasional gravel. The upper fill, 184 (0.32m thick) was a dark grey sandy silt with occasional gravel which contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery, animal bone and burnt flint. Also at the southern end there appeared to be a narrow gully along its eastern edge. The excavated section failed to show this as a separate feature and it was given the same cut number. The fill, 199 (0.45m wide and 0.07m thick) was a dark grey sandy silt with occasional gravel. In section it appears that fill 199 was cut by ditch **185**. Four metres from the southern edge of the excavated area the two features merged.

Ditch **206** (1.55m wide and 0.26m deep) with gradually sloping sides and a gently concave base contained two fills. The lower fill was a very gritty/gravel sand, 0.05m deep across the base of the feature. The upper fill, 205 (0.2m thick) was a dark grey sandy silt with occasional gravel and contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery.

### **Group 13**

Two ditches **208** and **169/220** crossed the site from east-west. Both ditches ended in the central part of the site. Ditch **208** had a clear butt end but the end of **169** had been removed by the later cutting of ditch **192/170**.

The western end of **208** (0.8m wide and 0.28m deep) was excavated, it had steep concave sides and a concave base, sloping down to the east. The fill (207) was a very dark grey very slightly clay sandy silt with occasional gravel and sand mottles and contained early Iron Age pottery and animal bone fragments.

Further east the ditch section, **203** (1.2m wide and 0.5m deep) had concave sides and a flat base. The fill, 202, was a mid brown grey sandy silt with occasional gravel containing fragments of early

Iron Age pottery and animal bone. This feature turned the corner and continued northwards and was identified in the evaluation trench (features 3 and 10)..

The northern extension of this ditch appears to have ended some 7–8m north where it was truncated by pit **213**. Its northern extension was sectioned, **223** (0.52m deep) and had two fills. The lower fill, **222** (0.12m thick) was a bright brown/orange slightly clay sand with mid brown grey silty sand mottles with patches of moderately frequent gravel. The upper fill, **221** (0.4m thick), was a mid brown grey silty sand with occasional gravel.

Ditch **169** (0.95m wide and 0.5m deep), had steep sides and a gently rounded base sloping from east to west. The lower fill, **179** (0.15m deep) was a mid dark brown grey silty sand with sandy clay mottles and occasional gravel. Over this was a lens, **178** (<0.06m thick), of silty sand with very occasional small gravel stones, thickest close to the northern side. Sealing this lens was fill **177** (numbered **176** in the opposite section) (0.28m thick), a mid-dark brown grey silty sand with occasional gravel and very occasional burnt stones, charcoal flecks and burnt red flecks. This fill contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery, animal bone and daub and was cut by a medieval furrow.

This ditch was sectioned further east where it was cut by pit **213**. This section, **220**, revealed the southern edge of the ditch only. The profile appears to be similar to **169**, and the upper fill is equivalent to **177**, i.e. a dark brown grey silty sand with orange brown sandy mottles and occasional gravel. Towards the base of the ditch the fill more closely resembled **178**.

## **Group 14**

Pit **190** was discrete but next to ditch **169** (above) suggesting they may have been contemporary.

South of ditch **169** was pit **190** (2.2m long, 0.62m long and 0.25m deep), an oval oriented east–west with straight sides and rounded ends. The southern side was steep and the northern edge less steep. The base was concave and level. The fill, **189**, was brown grey silty sand with pale and dark sandy mottles and occasional gravel and grit inclusions. A single, residual, sherd of pottery (possibly dating from the Bronze Age) was found in this pit.

## **Group 29**

A group of postholes in the southern part of the site, **256**, **258** and **260** had broadly similar dimensions but did not form any recognisable pattern. No dating material was recovered from any of these features.

Posthole **256** (diameter 0.24, depth 0.12m) was sub-circular with steep sides and a concave base. The fill, **255**, was a very dark greyish brown sandy silty clay with occasional gravel.

Posthole **258** (diameter 0.33m, depth 0.16m) was sub-circular with a similar profile and fill (**257**) to **256** (**255**) above.

Posthole **260** (diameter 0.29m, depth 0.12m) had slightly less steeply sloping sides but its fill (**259**) was the same as the two postholes described above.

## **Group 30**

Two postholes **262** and **264**, to the north of **256**, **258** and **260** had been disturbed by root action. No dating material was recovered from any of these features and no pattern could be discerned in plan.

Posthole **262** (diameter 0.2m, depth 0.14m) sub-circular with steep sides and a concave base contained a fill (**261**) similar to those from postholes **256**, **258** and **260**.

Posthole 264 (diameter 0.34m, depth 0.18m) had a similar profile to 262 and similar fill, 263.

## **Phase 1**

### **Group 6**

Two pits (270 and 271) containing a considerable quantity of early Iron Age material were found to the south of feature 254. This had been sealed by a large spread of dark grey sandy silt (see Group 5, deposits 265 and 266, below).

Pit 271 (>2m long, 1.5m wide and 0.72m deep) appeared to be oval (or possibly the butt end of a linear feature extending eastwards). Its fill, 269, was an olive grey brown slightly clay sandy silt with occasional gravels and contained several fragments of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone. This pit was cut on its northern edge by pit 270.

## **Phase 2**

### **Group 7**

The second of these pits contained a relatively large quantity of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone but could only be distinguished chronologically on stratigraphic relationship rather than pottery typology.

Pit 270 (>2m long, >1.5m wide and 0.56m deep) had concave, gently sloping sides and a flat/slightly concave base. The lower fill, 268 (0.34m thick), was a mid grey brown slightly sandy silt with clay patches and frequent gravel towards the base containing fragments of pottery and bone. The upper fill, 267 (0.08m thick), was a very dark grey slightly sandy silt with fragments of charcoal and rare stones. This pit contained numerous fragments of early Iron Age pottery (see Appendix 1) and animal bone (cattle, horse, pig and sheep/goat).

## **PERIOD 2: Middle/Later Iron Age**

Where practical the features have been assigned to phases within the period. It has not been possible to assign all isolated and discrete features to phases because of the wide date range given by the pottery spot dates. Features dating generally to Period 2 are listed first and the remaining features have been divided into three phases.

### **Group 5**

To the south of feature 254 was a large spread (consisting of two layers, 266 and 267) of dark grey sandy silt which sealed two pits containing early Iron Age material.

Extending beyond the eastern edge of the excavated area was a spread of very dark grey sandy silt (265) with occasional gravel fragments and fragments of animal bone. This layer sealed a layer (266) of larger pebbles and angular stones, up to 0.06m, which may have formed a surface or area of levelling to reduce the effects of poaching.

Sealed beneath layers 265 and 266 were two pits – 270 and 271, see above (Groups 6 and 7).

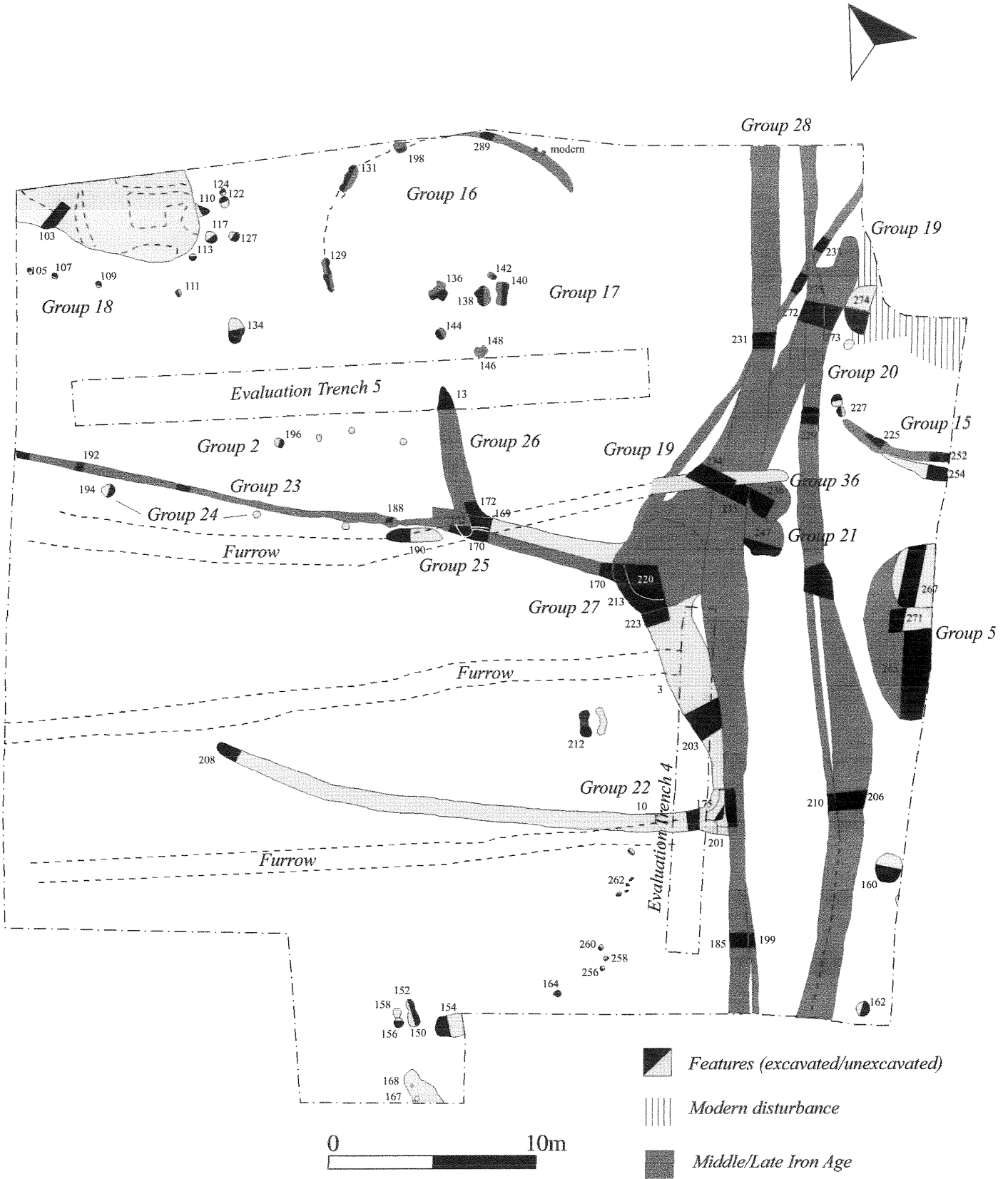


Figure 4 Period 2 Middle/Late Iron Age

## Group 15

A shallow curvilinear gully (**227/252**) extended beyond the eastern edge of the excavated area. Two sections were dug through this feature. These sections suggest the gully was shallower towards the west. Cleaning revealed two postholes – possibly an entrance or circular post built structure associated with the gully. This appears to be a reinstatement of the earlier structure (see gully **254** above) or re-use of this area for structures.

Gully **227** (over 5m long, 0.3m wide and 0.08m deep) had gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, **226**, was a light brown sandy silt with occasional gravel. This gully cut through the top of posthole **225** and gully **254**.

The eastern section, **252** (0.3m wide and 0.08m deep) had at least two postholes visible in the base that were not noted during excavation of the fill. The fill, **251**, was the same as **226** (above). No artefacts were recovered from this feature.

## Group 16

Extending beyond the northern edge of the excavated area was a shallow semi-circular gully (**129**, **131**, **198** and **289**), diameter approximately 12.5m. This gully may represent the heavily truncated northern part of a circular structure, the southern part of which has been removed by later disturbance. A group of postholes to the south may form part of the structure but there was no obvious relationship.

Section **129** (1.65m long, max. 0.45m wide and 0.08m deep), on a north–south orientation had very gently sloping concave sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill, **128**, a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with brown/orange sandy mottles. This fill contained no artefacts.

Section **131** (1.4m long, 0.5m wide, 0.07m deep) was on a north-east–south-west orientation with shallow, gently concave sides and an undulating base. Two fills are recorded for this section of the gully although it was cut into sand at this point and the lower fill (**132**) may be the result of over-cutting. The upper fill, **130**, was a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with brown/orange sandy mottles. This fill contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery. The lower fill was a bright brown orange sand with very occasional small gravels and contained no artefacts.

Section **198** (0.5m long, 0.4m wide and 0.05m deep) on a north-east–south-west alignment had shallow sloping sides to a flat base. The fill, **197**, was a grey brown silty sand with occasional gravel. A single sherd of medieval pottery was found during surface cleaning of this feature.

Section **289** (0.75m long, 0.35m wide and 0.06m deep) was oriented approximately east– west with very gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, **288** was a grey brown silty sand with occasional gravel and a fragment of burnt clay.

Two modern postholes cut the northern edge of the eastern arm of this feature.

## Group 17

Postholes **136**, **138**, **142**, **144**, **146**, **148** to the south of the curvilinear gully formed no recognisable pattern. The only dating material from these features was mid/late Iron Age pottery. Much of this area had been disturbed by the removal of fruit trees and poplars in the late twentieth century.

Feature **136** appeared, after cleaning, to be a double post setting. It had been heavily disturbed by root activity. Excavation revealed it to be 0.85m wide with a

very irregular base, up to 0.22m deep. The fill, 135, was a mottled mid to dark grey silty sand with orange/brown sandy mottles with occasional small gravels.

Feature 138 (0.9m long, 0.75m wide and 0.22m deep), was an irregular oval with concave sides and a rounded base. The single fill, 137, was a mottled mid to dark grey silty sand with orange/brown sandy mottles with occasional small gravels and contained no artefacts.

Posthole 142 (0.45m long, 0.3m wide and 0.1m deep), was sub-circular with moderately sloping sides and a gentle concave base. The fill, 141, was a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with occasional small gravels but no artefacts.

Posthole 144 (0.5m long, 0.48m wide and 0.16m deep) was sub-circular with a steep north-west and western edge and less steep southern and eastern edge and a gently concave base. This feature contained two fills, 143 and 165. The lower fill, 165 (0.1m deep) was a mid grey slightly silty sand with frequent grit and gravel. The upper fill, 143, was a mid brown grey silty sand with sandy mottles and very occasional grit. No artefacts were recovered from either fill.

Posthole 146 (0.78m long, 0.62m wide and 0.33m deep) was sub-circular with steep, uneven sides and a gently concave base. The fill, 145, was a mid brown grey silty sand with occasional small fragments of gravel.

The western edge of posthole 148 was cut by posthole 146. The remaining portion was 0.43m long, at least 0.15m wide and 0.11m deep and appeared sub-circular with steep sides and a gently concave base. The fill, 147, was a mid brown grey slightly silty sand with moderate gravels.

## **Group 18**

A group of postholes in the north-western corner of the site (105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 124) appears to form two sides of an approximately rectangular structure oriented on an east-west alignment. This varies slightly from that of the Group 1 structure but is on a similar orientation to a later Iron Age ditch (170 and 192) to the south.

Posthole 105 (0.32m long, 0.19m wide and 0.1m deep) was approximately oval with steep sides and a slightly concave base. The single fill, 104, was a brown grey, with occasional darker grey mottles, soft, silty sand with occasional small gravels which contained pieces of non-metallic slag and daub (or possibly burnt clay).

Posthole 107 (0.27m wide and 0.28m deep) was circular with vertical sides and a gently concave base. The fill, 106, was a mid-dark brown grey, soft, silty sand with occasional to moderate gravel and contained fragments of middle to later Iron Age pottery.

Posthole 109 (0.3m long, 0.25m wide and 0.12m deep) had a steep western edge, a gently sloping eastern edge and an irregular base. The fill, 108, was a mid brown grey slightly soft silty sand with occasional gravel. There were no finds from this context.

Posthole 111 (0.35m long, 0.3m wide and 0.11m deep) was sub-circular with a steep northern edge and a gentle southern edge and a gently concave base. Fill 110 was a mid grey brown slightly silty sand with occasional gravel and contained small, abraded, residual sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

Posthole 113 (0.38m wide and 0.06m deep) was circular with steep sides and a flat base. The fill, 112, mid brown grey, soft, silty sand with a moderate amount of gravel. There were no finds from this context.

The final posthole in the alignment, 124, was 0.3m long, 0.27m wide and 0.13m deep. The sides were steep and the base gently concave. The fill 123 was a mid brown grey soft silty sand with small quantities of gravel. There were no finds from this feature.

## **Phase 1**

### **Group 19**

The earliest of the ditches from Period 2 was a 'palisade' trench (233) and associated ditch (234/272) running in a north-east–south-west direction with its south-western end is obscured by pit 213. Despite the rather anomalous direction of this ditch nothing earlier than mid/late Iron Age pottery was found in any of the fills.

Gully 233 (0.45m wide and 0.10m deep) had concave sides (45°) with a flat base. The fill, 232, was a light brown silty sand with occasional gravels and fragments of flaked flint and animal bone. There was no evidence of a palisade in the excavated section of this gully.

Ditch 234 (>1.8m wide and 0.95m deep) had slightly uneven sides, sloping at approximately 50° to a flat base. The primary fill, 241 (0.22m thick), was a mid pale grey sand. Above this fill, on the western edge, was fill 239 (0.1m thick) a pale orange brown very slightly silty sand with moderate to frequent gravel and fragments of bone. Overlying this was fill 240 (0.3m thick), a mid brown grey silty sand with moderate small gravel and fragments of bone. Fill 238 (0.3m thick) occurred over fills 239 and 240 along the western edge of the ditch. It was a dark brown grey very silty sand with occasional small gravel and rare fragments of larger burnt stones, fragments of pottery and bone. In the top of the ditch (and truncated by ditch 235) was fill 237 (0.5m thick), a mid pale yellow brown slightly silty sand with moderate to frequent gravel and fragments of later Iron Age pottery and animal bone.

Ditch 272 (equivalent to 234 to the south-west) was >0.9m wide and 0.75m deep steep sides and a gently concave base, even along its length. The primary fill, 279 (0.1m thick), was a pale orange brown sand with moderate grit and gravel and contained a fragment of pottery and bone. This was sealed by fill 278 (0.25m thick), a dark brown silty sand with very occasional gravel and fragments of larger burnt stones, which contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery, animal bone and a non-metallic residue of a heating process. On the western edge of the ditch was fill 277 (0.2m thick), a mid grey brown faintly silty sand with occasional small gravel inclusions. This fill was truncated by ditch 229/275 (see below).

### **Group 21**

To the east of ditch 273 and cut by pit 236, was the shallow pit 247

This shallow irregular feature (2.4m long, >1.6m wide and 0.06m deep) had extremely gently sloping sides and an uneven base with a slightly higher patch of natural sandy gravel in the middle. The fill, 248, was a mid-pale olive brown sand with moderate to frequent gravel and contained fragments of undated pottery and animal bone.

## **Phase 2**

### **Group 36**

To the south-east of the above ditch and cutting pit 247 (above) was pit 236.

Pit 236 (2.10m wide and 0.18m deep) was sub-circular with gently sloping sides and a slightly uneven base. The single fill was a mid grey brown silty sand with occasional to moderate gravel, and contained fragments of undated pottery and bone.

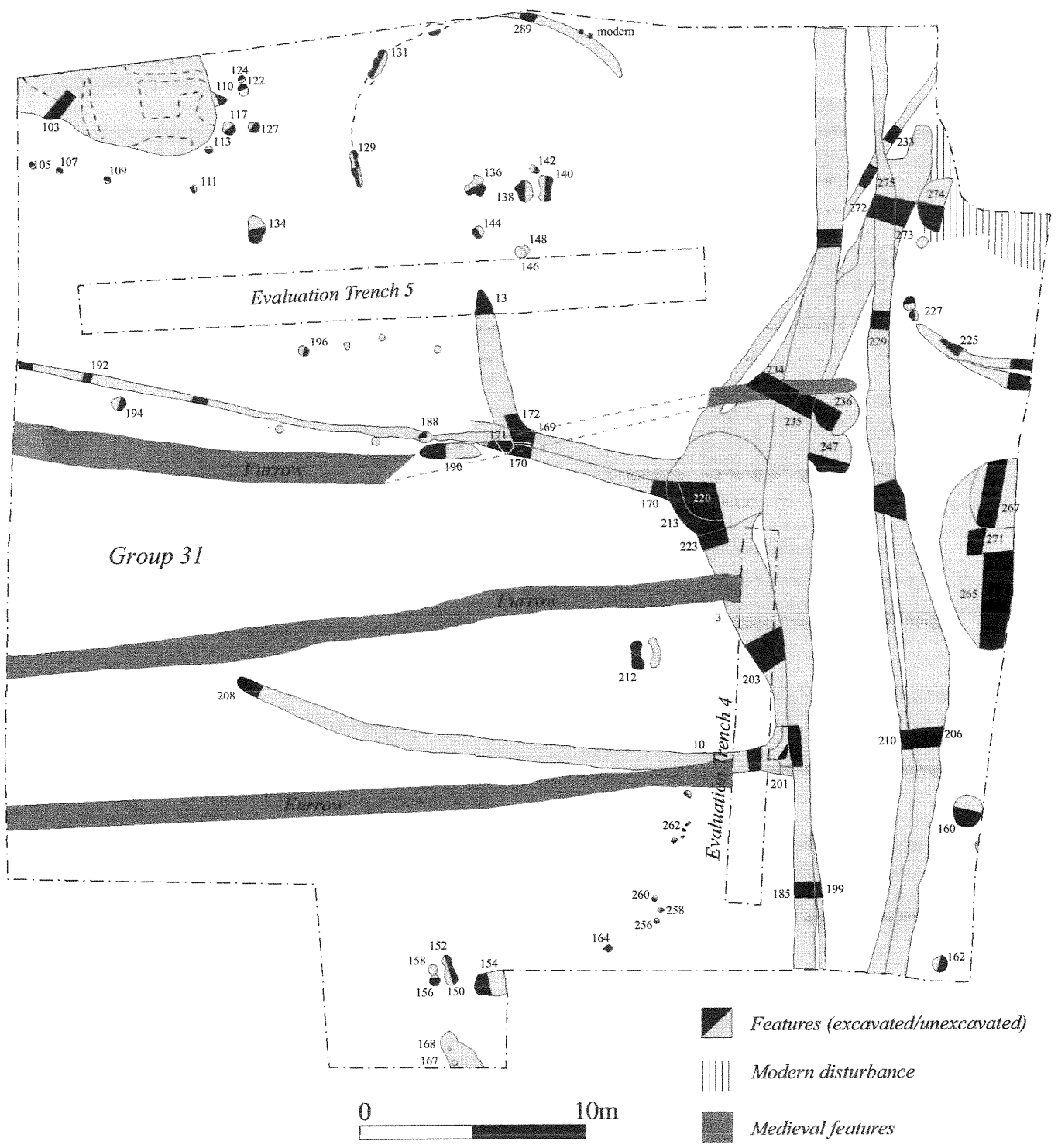
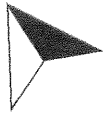


Figure 5 Period 3 Medieval



## Group 20

Cutting the eastern edge of ditch **272** was ditch **273**

Ditch **273** (>0.85m wide and between 0.55-0.72m deep) had steep sides and a concave base, sloping down from north–south. The basal fill, **281** (0.2m thick) was a mid orange brown slightly silty sand with sandy mottles and moderate gravel which contained fragments of undated pottery and bone. The upper fill, **280** (0.4m deep) was a mid-dark brown grey silty sand with occasional small gravel and fragments of later Iron Age pottery. This fill was truncated by ditch **275**.

## Group 22

Cutting the southern edge of ditch **208** (above) and truncated by a medieval furrow was ditch **175**.

Ditch **175** (1.55m wide and 0.45m deep) had slightly concave sides, sloping at approximately 45° to a flat base. The lower fill, **174** (0.45m thick) was a light grey sandy silt with moderate gravel and was concentrated along the southern edge of the feature. It contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery. The upper fill, **173** (0.45m thick) was a light brown sandy silt with occasional gravel.

## Group 23

East-west ditch **170/188** and continuation gully **192**.

Ditch **170** (>0.5m wide and 0.45m deep) had a stepped southern edge with a steep lower edge on both sides. The base was narrow and flat with a sharp break of slope. The lower fill, **181** (0.24m thick), was a mid yellowish grey brown silty clay sand with occasional small gravel containing fragments of later Iron Age pottery. The upper fill, **180** (0.25m thick) was a mid dark brown grey silty sand with mottles of brown/yellow clay sand with small gravel and fragments of undated pottery and bone. At the eastern end it was a cut by pit **213**.

The western end of this feature was excavated and numbered **188** in this part. The cut was 0.42m wide and 0.11m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave, level, base. The gully contained a posthole at the western end of the excavated section. The fill, **187**, was a mid-dark brown grey slightly clay silty sand with occasional gravel. The fill was truncated by gully **192** and the furrow crossing this part of the site.

The gully **192** extended westwards and several further sections were excavated. In all sections it was no more than 0.4m wide and 0.08m deep with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, **191**, was a dark grey brown silty sand with rare to occasional gravel inclusions and fragments of later Iron Age pottery. This feature had been severely truncated by later (medieval) agriculture and only a remnant of the base was visible in some parts. This feature cut less deeply into the natural geology towards the west.

## Group 24

A line of postholes to the south of gully **192** may represent a fence line running parallel to this boundary.

To the south of gully **192** were three postholes. Posthole **194** (diameter 0.5, depth 0.16m) was sub-circular with steep sides and a flat base and contained a single fill, **193**. This was a very dark grey sandy silt with rare gravel inclusions. The postholes to the east were of similar dimensions and the fills were similar but no artefacts were recovered from them.

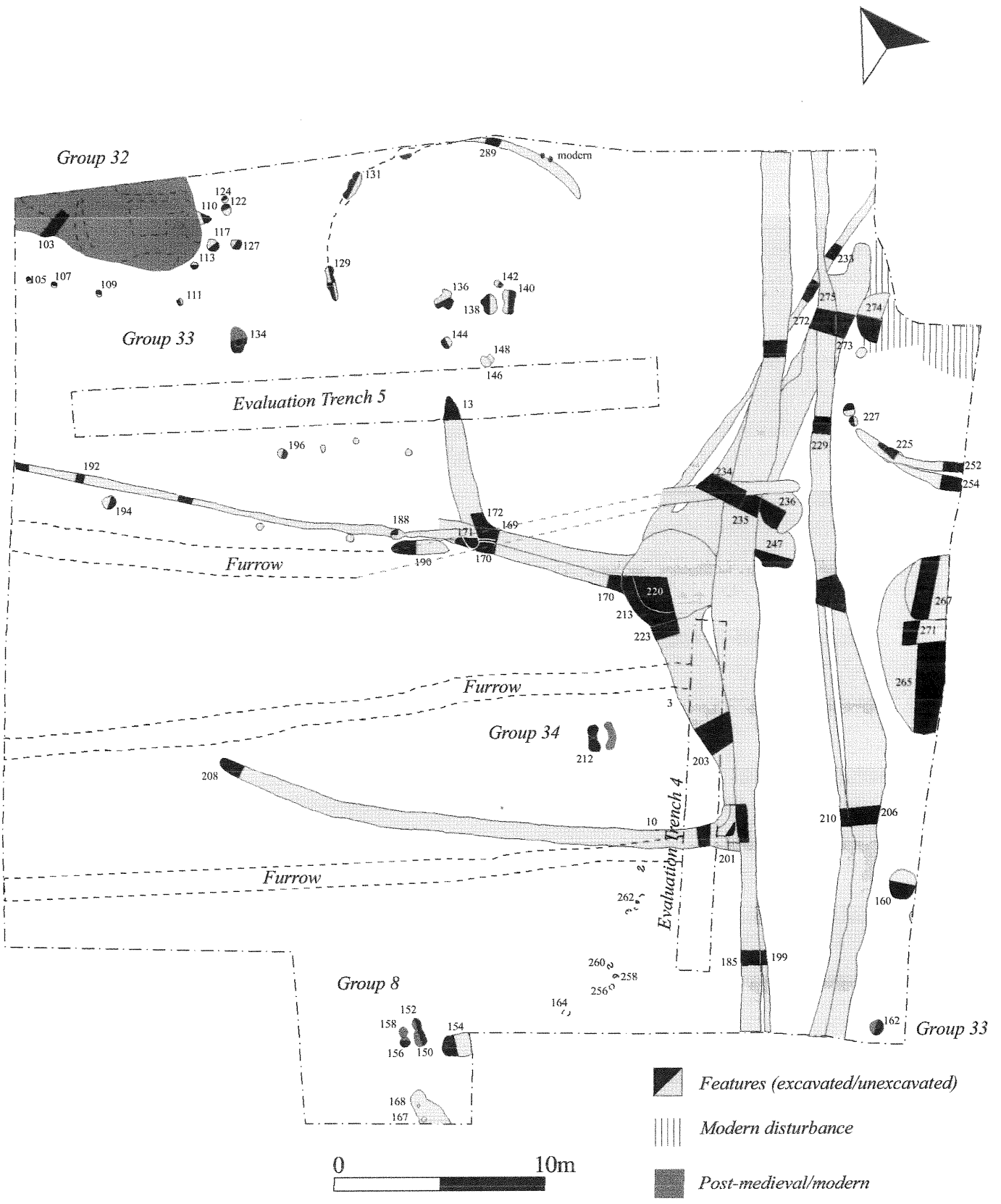


Figure 6 Period 4 Post Medieval/Modern

## Group 2

To the north of the gully (192) was a further posthole, 196 (0.3m wide and 0.9m deep), it was circular with steeply sloping sides and a concave base. The fill, 195, was a grey brown sandy silt with rare gravel and fragments of later Iron Age pottery.

## Group 25

Cut through gully 188 and visible in the base of 169 was an oval pit.

Pit 171 (>1.2m long, >0.6m wide and 0.75m deep) was sub-circular/oval with steep sides and a concave base. The lower fill, 182 (0.15m thick), was a mid-dark brown grey very silty sand with occasional gravel. The upper fill, 186 (0.3m deep) was a mid brown grey silty sand with occasional small gravel with fragments of undated pottery and bone.

## Group 26

Ditch 172 (equivalent to feature 13 in evaluation trench 5) was 0.75m wide and 0.38m deep and extended south to a point where it was cut by ditch 169. It had moderately steep sides (40-50°) and a slightly uneven base. The fill, 183, was a mid dark grey brown silty sand with occasional small gravel and contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery and animal bone

## Phase 3

The latest phase in the later Iron Age occupation sequence is represented by the recutting of the two parallel north–south oriented ditches and the adjacent pit 213

## Group 27

Pit 213 (4.3m long, >4m wide and 1.2m deep) cut all the features in this area but was cut by the medieval furrow. It was sub-circular with a gently sloping (20°) upper part and more steeply sloping (80°) lower part. The base was uneven. The basal fill, 217 (0.45m thick) was a very pale brown yellow to mid grey brown slightly silty clay sand with moderate gravel. Overlying this was fill 216 (which may be derived from ditch 220) a mid grey brown silty sand with occasional gravel. Over this was fill 215 (0.35m thick), a pale olive grey silty sand, with moderate gravel, which contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery and animal bone. The upper fill, 214 (0.4m thick) was a very dark grey very silty sand with occasional gravel and larger burnt stones and fragments of cobbles, a relatively large quantity of later Iron Age pottery and the bone of cattle and sheep/goat. A fragment of iron was also found in fill 214.

## Group 28

Two parallel ditches, 229/275 and 231/235 ran north–south across the eastern part of the site and appear to be a re-instatement of the earlier features 185 and 206.

The section through the northern part of the eastern ditch (cut 229) was 0.29m deep and 1.0m wide. It had gradually sloping (45°) sides and a gently concave base. The fill, 228, was a dark grey sandy silt with occasional gravel with and bone fragments.

The section through the central part of this ditch (cut 275) was 0.41m deep and 0.93m wide with moderately steep sides and a gently concave base. The single fill, 276, was a dark brown grey silty sand with occasional gravel and fragments of later Iron Age pottery and bone. At this point the ditch cut an earlier feature (273, see above).

Various sections were dug across the western ditch along its length (over 40m). The profile varied considerably. Towards the northern end of the site the excavated section (cut 231) the ditch was

1.05m wide and 0.4m deep with gradually sloping (45-50°) sides and a narrow flat base. The lower fill, 245 (0.2m thick and 0.6m wide) was an olive grey sandy silt with occasional to moderate gravel. The upper fill, 230 (0.2 m thick) was a dark grey sandy silt with less frequent gravel and contained fragments of later Iron Age pottery and bone.

A further section, 235, was excavated. At this point the ditch cut an earlier ditch (234) and was 0.6m deep with more gently sloping sides and a slightly concave base. The lower fill, 243 (0.18m thick) was a mid brown grey silty sand with occasional to moderate gravel. The upper fill, 242 (0.48m thick) was a dark brown very silty sand with occasional gravel and contained fragments of undated pottery and bone. At this point the ditch was cut by a medieval furrow.

Gully 210 (0.2m wide and 0.06m deep) had concave sides and a gently concave base. The fill, 209, a dark grey sandy silt with very occasional gravel. This merged with ditch 206 to the south and was visible as a distinct feature in the central section but could not be distinguished further north. It was not possible to track its course in plan or section further north. It is possibly a later re-instatement of this boundary.

### **PERIOD 3 – Medieval**

At least three furrows were visible crossing the site in an approximately east–west direction. These were faintly visible in aerial photographs and appear to continue in the adjacent school playing field. Only two sherds of medieval pottery were found during the excavation and it must be assumed that activity on the site during the medieval period was limited to agriculture.

**Group 31** The remnants of two furrow bases were excavated.

Furrow 250 (1.2m wide and 0.08m deep) was oriented east–west with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, 249, was a light brown sandy silt with occasional gravel.

Furrow 286 was 2.3m wide in the excavated section and 0.07m deep with gradually sloping sides and a flat base and the fill was a light brown sandy silt with moderate gravel.

### **PERIOD 4 – Post-medieval and modern**

Considerable disturbance has been caused in recent years by building and horticulture. Rubbish pits and post-medieval structural remains were noted during the watching brief on house foundations, particularly those close to the street front, along Parkhall Road.

#### **Group 8**

In the southern part of the site were a group of postholes in no distinguishable pattern and with no stratigraphic relationship with other features in the area.

Posthole 150 (diameter 0.58m, 0.24m deep) was circular with gradual, concave sides and base and contained a light grey clay silt with occasional gravel. The finds included brick/tile, shell and fragments of iron.

This posthole cut an earlier posthole, 152 (diameter 0.65m, 0.27m deep) which was circular with concave sides and a flat base. The single fill, 151, was a light brown sandy clay silt with moderate gravel and contained fragments of coal and metal.

To the west of these intercutting postholes were two further postholes. Feature **156** (diameter 0.5m, 0.15m deep) was circular with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The fill, 155, was a light brown clay silt with occasional gravel.

The final posthole in this group, **158**, was of similar dimensions and contained a fill (157) similar to that in posthole **156**.

### **Group 32**

Modern (twentieth century) rubbish from this pit meant that excavation was limited to areas where it cut earlier features and a small exploratory sondage.

Pit **103** (>9m long, >5m wide and >0.3m deep) was sub-rectangular, and extended beyond the north-western corner of the excavated area. The sides were steep and the bottom was not reached. The fill, 102, was a very mixed sandy silt with patches of sand, ash and modern rubbish (glass, ceramic and metal).

### **Group 33**

Pit **134** (1.15m long, 0.75 wide and 0.15m deep) was oval with moderately steep sides and a flat base, oriented north-south. The fill, 133, was a mid grey very sandy clay with rare gravels. No finds were recovered but the fill appeared loose and modern in comparison with the fill of other features in the area.

Pit **162** (diameter 0.6m and 0.14 deep) was approximately circular with a steep southern edge and a less steep northern edge and a flat base rising to the north. The fill, 161, was a dark grey brown slightly clay sandy silt with very rare gravels. The fill contained several iron nails and small abraded fragments of undated pottery.

### **Group 34**

Unassociated with any other features were two 'B' shaped pits. The western one, **212**, was fully excavated.

Pit **212** (1.2m long, 0.48m wide and 0.2m deep) had a straight western edge with almost vertical sides. The southern and eastern sides were slightly less steep. A ridge of natural sand ran across the centre forming two sub-circular hollows with flat bases. The fill, 211, was a very dark grey very slightly clay sandy silt with occasional small pebbles and gravel and contained a nail, fragments of Romano-British pottery and brick.

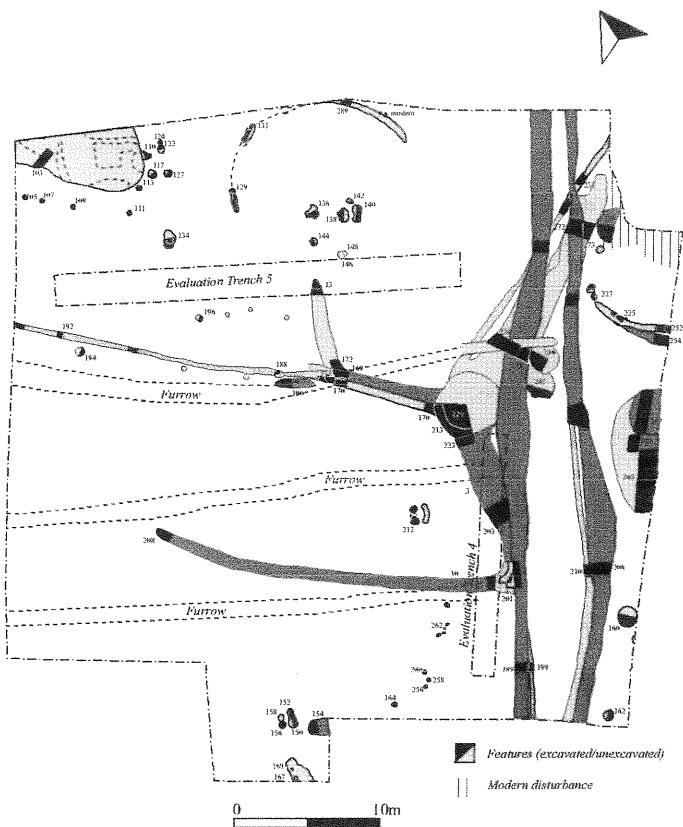
### **Group 35**

An alignment of postholes in the northern part of the site contained fragments of decayed wood, suggesting a relatively recent fence. Only one posthole in this group was excavated.

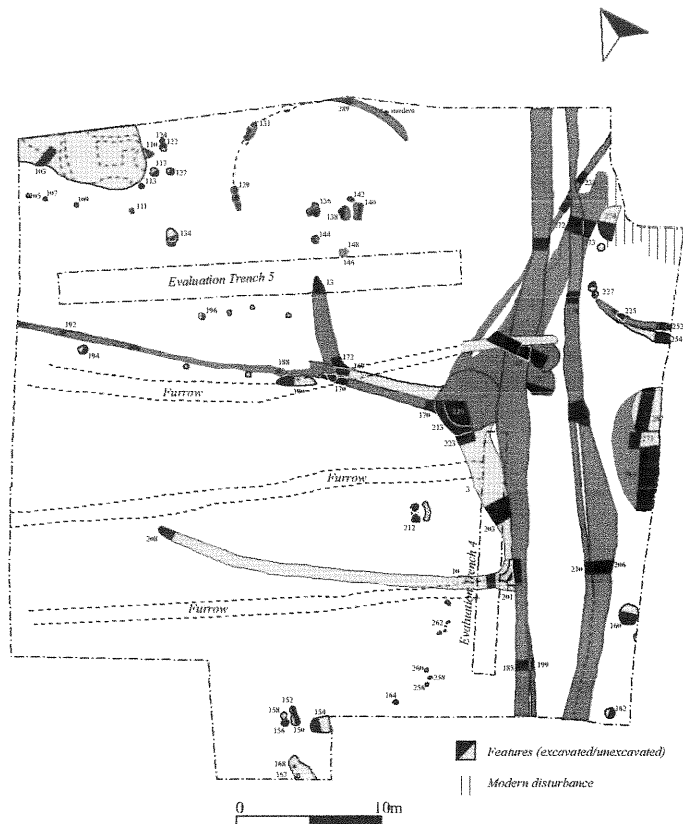
Posthole **285** (diameter 0.5m, depth 0.16m), had sides sloping at 45° to a flat base. The basal fill, 287 (0.04 m thick) was an olive brown silty clay with occasional fragments of gravel. The upper fill, 284 (0.11m thick) was a dark grey sandy silt with occasional gravel which contained fragments of coal.

### **Group 37**

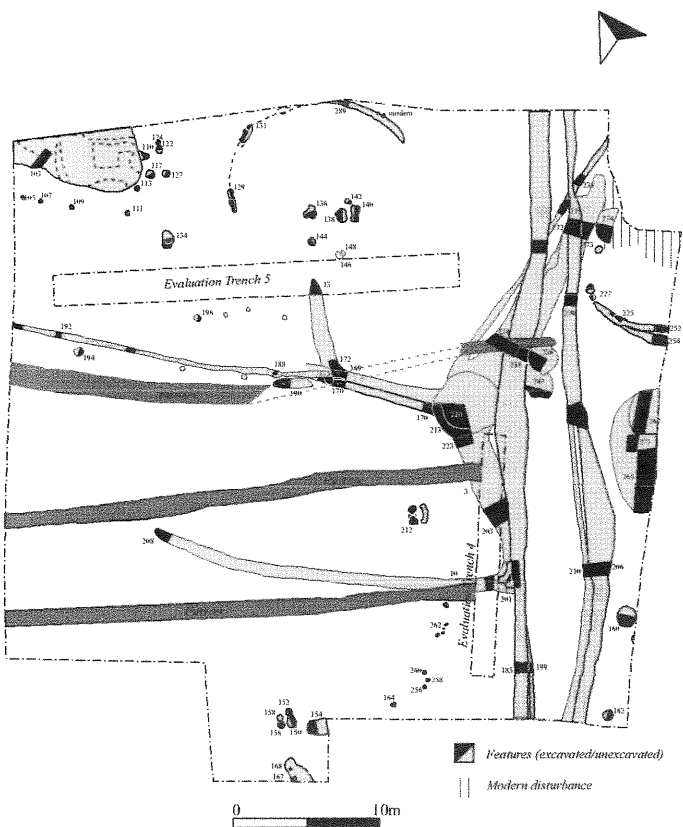
Feature **140** (1.10m long, 0.55m wide and 0.11m deep) was sub-rectangular with steep sides and an uneven, flat, base. The fill, 139, was a mottled mid to dark grey silty sand with orange/brown sandy mottles with occasional small gravels and contained later Iron Age pottery.



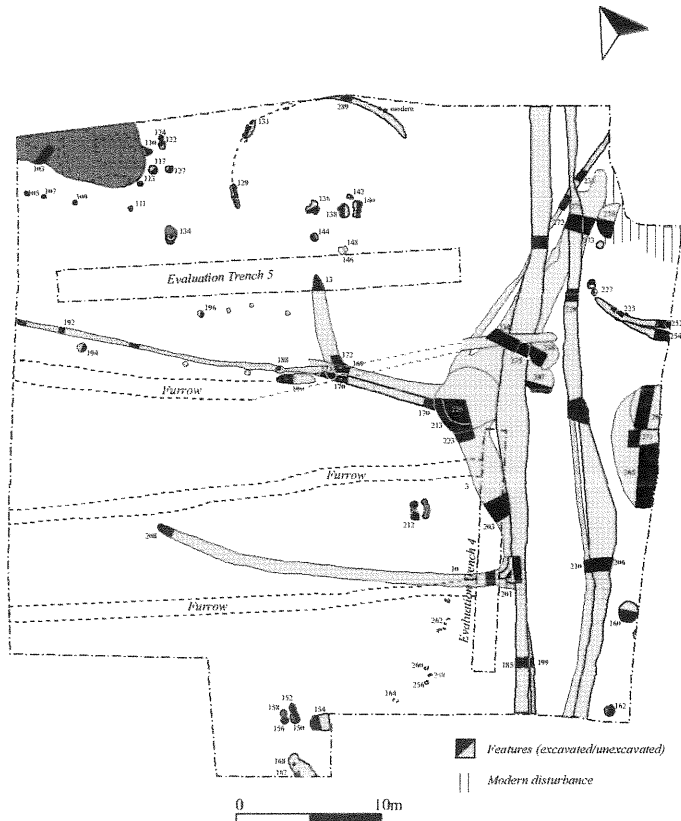
*Period 1 Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age*



*Period 2 Middle/Late Iron Age*



*Period 3 Medieval*



*Period 4 Post-medieval/Modern*

**Figure 7** Phase plans of excavated features

## 6 DISCUSSION

The excavation revealed a shifting alignment of ditches with an early ditch system oriented approximately north–south (Group 12, period 1). The course of these ditches is obscured by pit **213** which appeared to have been cut in the later Iron Age, at the junction of several features.

Many of the linear features in the eastern part of the site were then cut by north–south running parallel ditches (**231/235** and **229/275**) with their associated gullies (**199** and **210**, period 2). This alignment appears to be a reinstatement of the earlier boundaries. In spite of being parallel there was nothing to suggest they were ditches beside a track or drove. They had similar fills to one another and contained later Iron Age pottery. It is possible that if there was a track between the two ditches it has been truncated by later activity. The presence of a stony surface (Group 5, period 2) to the east of the ditch system may indicate an entrance to a field or enclosure.

Three possible 'round-houses' or sub-circular gullies (Groups 3, period 1, 15 and 16, period 2) were identified but these had been heavily truncated and there was no evidence of an internal floor or surface which would indicate a function. No hearths or areas of burning were found on the site although some charred plant material was noted during excavation and recovered during processing of environmental samples.

The east–west running ditches from period 1 and 2 (in the centre of the site) do not appear to be part of an enclosure system as they both curve and end in a rather peculiar manner. There was no evidence of truncation or a posthole (or anything placed) in the ditch terminals and no sign of continuation to the north or west. However, there is a clear relationship between the south-east corner and the western edge of ditch **185** and also the north-eastern corner was used as the end of a later ditch (Group 19, period 2).

Posthole alignments indicate a square structure (Group 1, period 1) and a rectangular structure (Group 18, period 2) in the north-western corner (severely truncated by a rubbish pit) of the site. A further group of postholes (Group 17, period 2) to the south of the sub-circular gully may be structural but there is no good evidence for the nature of the structure. Postholes in other parts of the site do not form any clear alignments or structures (apart from the modern ones) and several have been severely disturbed by roots and/or animals.

An area of poaching (Group 5, period 2) around and over pits **270** and **271** is indicative of animal husbandry in a later Iron Age ditched enclosure. Not enough of the site (to the east of the area excavated) was available for full excavation and this limited the information available.

Pottery from the site is typical of contemporary assemblages from the region with angular situlate forms and incised or burnished geometric decoration (Appendix 1). The early Iron Age assemblage contains burnished fine jars/bowls with incised

pony-sized animals, probably used for riding or as pack horses. No fish or fowl bones were reported or bones from other wild species. Charred seed remains from the environmental samples suggest cereals were being processed and possibly consumed on site. Sooting on some of the vessels is indicative of their use for food preparation and the pottery types are both cooking and serving forms. No large, coarse, storage vessels were recovered from the site.

Ditches on the site must have been important for drainage as well as land divisions/property boundaries during both phases of occupation. The area is generally low lying, sloping down to the fen with a marked thinning of the gravel deposit over the underlying clays, especially towards the west. It may be that the ditches formed part of a field system (bordering the settlement and running down to the fen) which remained in use over several centuries.

There is no evidence of occupation of the site during the Roman period and immediate post-Roman period and the Roman finds (a single coin and fragments of Nene Valley colour coated wares) were residual. There was a single sherd of Maxey-type ware (produced between 650 and 850), which must also be considered residual, from ditch 272.

Medieval pits, possibly quarrying, close to Parkhall Road may have been dug to provide gravel to surface an early route across the fen, north to Chatteris. The route is visible in a 1706 edition of Moore's 1685 map. The precise extent of settlement along the road is not clear from this map. Jeffrey's 1768 map of Huntingdonshire shows a road and track, with houses along it, extending north from the market place. Manor Hall, on the eastern side of Parkhall Road was built in the early part of the eighteenth century, possibly on the site of a former house and may have outbuildings, on both sides of the road, associated with it. Brick foundations were noted during monitoring of foundation trenches in the south-eastern part of the site and these may be related to the settlement expansion along Parkhall Road from the post-medieval period.



decoration and coarse tempered jars with flat rim tops and fall within a date range c. 800-500BC. The later middle Iron Age material (300-100BC) includes a limited range of slack shouldered jar forms in small to medium sizes. Some vessels are smoothed and burnished and there were small quantities of scored wares.

Environmental remains include domesticated animal species (Appendix 2) and some charred cereals and weed seeds. The pottery and environmental evidence supports the interpretation of the site as a small farmstead using locally produced goods.

## 7 RESEARCH AIMS

Evaluation at Parkhall Road resulted in the formulation of a series of aims and objectives to be addressed through area excavation:

- To investigate the nature of the Iron Age activity on the site and its significance in a wider landscape context.
- To investigate the nature of the medieval activity within the area and its relationship to medieval development of Somersham.

### **Early prehistoric:**

- *Early prehistoric remains:* the small quantity of earlier prehistoric (neolithic and early Bronze Age) material (pottery and worked stone) appears to be residual and no further work was recommended on either category (see Appendices 2 and 3).

### **Iron Age:**

- *Occupation of the site may be related to variability in the level of the water-table:* the site appears to be peripheral to the main settlement in both the early and later Iron Age, probably as a result of its position close to the fen edge.
- *Economic development:* analysis of environmental evidence aimed to identify activities being carried out on and around the site.

### **Medieval:**

- *Peripheral nature of the site:* study of the features and remains will aim to develop understanding of the spread of the settlement from the nucleus around the High Street and market place.

The variable success of the investigation in achieving these broad aims is discussed in the Conclusion.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Evidence of neolithic and Bronze Age activity on the site was sparse. The residual nature of the finds suggests limited activity in the area, perhaps seasonal activity or small scale occupation whilst exploiting the wide range of resources available from the nearby fen.

The site at Parkhall Road represents the edge of a small Iron Age rural settlement dated by pottery to two periods: the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (*c.* 800-500 BC) and also the mid-later Iron Age (*c.* 300-100 BC) with an intervening period when this part of the site did not appear to be in use. Although none of the excavated features contained finds from both periods of occupation (supporting the view that there was a period of abandonment of this part of the settlement) the stratigraphic and spatial distribution of features suggests continuity between the two periods. Given this apparently conflicting evidence it may be concluded that the present understanding of typological development of Iron Age ceramics is too crude to provide useful means with which to phase the site. More refined techniques may prove useful in providing a chronology for the production of pottery from the site.

Early Iron Age occupation of the site appears to be peripheral to a larger settlement. There were few structural remains and a ditch system, which may be part of a field system or enclosure, extended beyond the northern and eastern part of the site. The bulk of early Iron Age pottery (197 sherds, 1347g) came from pits, especially pit **270** (in the eastern part of the site). The concentration of early Iron Age pottery in this feature may indicate that specific sherds have been deliberately deposited during backfilling. A relatively high proportion (1208g) of the animal bone from the site came from this feature and all species (cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse) were represented.

Most of the features that were in use in the early Iron Age appear to have silted up or been deliberately backfilled, with domestic debris incorporated in their fills. The pottery from this period is mainly open coarse-ware jars used for cooking and food preparation and some small, finely made, decorated/burnished open bowls or jars. Some of the features must have remained visible (probably as earthworks) as later Iron Age occupation on the site re-instated the north-south alignment of the ditches and may have used a similar enclosure system. The later Iron Age features cut earlier features but there appears to have been little mixing of material from the two phases. Ceramic forms from the later Iron Age tended to be medium sized, slack-shouldered open jars with upright flat-topped rims again used for food preparation rather than storage.

Environmental remains from the site were sparse but suggest debris from processing and consumption or use of domesticated animals and cereals rather than consumption of wild resources available from the nearby fen. It is likely that the cattle and sheep/goat grazed on the fen during the drier summer months and those animals to be 'over-wintered' were moved on to the higher gravels close to the settlement during the wetter months. All the major domestic food species are represented ("Celtic" small horned cattle of both sexes – 52%; sheep/goat – 33%; pig – 15%). Horse remains represent 11% of the identified bone. These were from

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The work was carried out in response to a brief for archaeological investigation issued by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office (Development Control), who visited the site and monitored the excavation.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Prehistoric Pottery

by Sarah Percival

#### Introduction

Excavations at Somersham, Parkhall Road, Cambridgeshire, produced a pottery assemblage consisting of 357 sherds weighing 3524g. The majority of the assemblage (276 sherds) was dated to the early Iron Age and 63 to the mid to late Iron Age date. A possible neolithic sherd, Bronze Age, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval sherds were also found (see Table 1 below). The pottery was collected during two archaeological interventions, SOMPH00 the evaluation, and SOMPR00 the full excavation that followed. Pottery from both excavations was analysed and the results are presented here as one assemblage. The assemblage was retrieved from forty-four excavated contexts consisting of ditch sections, pits, postholes, a gully, a furrow and a quarry feature, a small quantity of sherds were collected from surface cleaning. The preservation of the sherds was mixed, although some were moderately large and well preserved, a number were too small to be properly identified. No complete vessel profiles were recovered.

Table 1: Quantity and weight of pottery by date

Pottery date	Quantity	Weight (g)
?Neolithic	1	1
Bronze Age	1	4
Early Iron Age	276	2205
Later Iron Age	63	1079
Romano-British	6	117
Medieval	4	22
Post-medieval	7	94
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>3524</b>

#### Methodology

The assemblage was analysed in accordance with the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group Guidelines for the Analysis and Publication (PCRG 1992). The total assemblage was assessed and a full catalogue was produced. The sherds were examined using a binocular microscope (x10 magnification) and divided into fabric groups defined on the basis of inclusion types present. Fabric codes were prefixed by a letter code representing the main inclusion present (F representing flint, G grog and Q quartz, SL shelly limestone). Vessel form was recorded (R representing rim sherds, B base sherds, D decorated sherds and U undecorated body sherds) and the sherds were counted and weighed to the nearest whole gram. Decoration and abrasion were also noted. The pottery and archive are curated by Cambridgeshire County Council, Archaeological Field Unit.

#### The Neolithic and Bronze Age Pottery

A single sherd of possible Neolithic date was retrieved from the fill of a pit (context 168). The sherd was made of quartz sand tempered fabric and was very small and abraded and therefore could not be closely identified. No other pottery was found within the feature.

A single sherd of possible Bronze Age pottery was found in the fill of a pit (context 190). The sherd was made of grog tempered fabric and was soft and poorly fired. The sherd could not be closely identified.

#### The Iron Age Pottery

Three hundred and thirty-eight sherds of pottery weighing 3,285g were identified as being of Iron Age date. Iron Age pottery was recovered from twenty-nine features including pits, ditches and furrows and post-holes and two gullies associated with possible structures. The majority of the assemblage (276 sherds) was dated to the early Iron Age c. 800-500 BC and comprised angular, 'situlate', forms with flint tempered and coarse, quartz-sand, tempered fabrics. Sixty-three sherds were of mid to late Iron Age date. These later sherds were

predominantly of dense sandy fabrics in slack-shouldered forms with upright rims, this suggests that the assemblage broadly dates to *c.* 300-100 BC.

### Fabric

Twelve fabric types were identified. These could be split into broad groups based on dominant inclusion type. Of these groups quartz-sand tempered fabrics predominate representing 56% of the total assemblage by weight (1824g). Calcined flint (19% 616g), grog (13%, 419g) and fossil shell (10% 313g) are also present. 2% of the assemblage consists of sherds too small to assign to a fabric type. No petrological examination of the fabrics was undertaken.

Table 2: Quantity and weight of pottery by fabric type.

	Fabric description	Quantity	Weight (g)	% of total weight
F1	Common, medium to coarse calcined flint; moderate to common quartz sand. Coarse, hard	47	596	18.0
F2	Common, medium to coarse calcined flint; moderate to common quartz sand, rare, medium red iron oxide. Coarse, hard	1	20	0.6
G1	Common, medium grog; moderate to common quartz sand. Coarse, moderately hard	5	15	0.5
G2	Common, medium grog; moderate to common quartz sand. Coarse, moderately hard	48	404	12.3
Q1	Common, quartz sand, occasional red iron oxide, rare calcined flint. Coarse, hard	10	102	3.1
Q2	Common, quartz sand, occasional small flint pebbles, rare red iron oxide, rare fossil shell, moderate to rare organic voids. Coarse, hard	43	772	23.5
Q4	Common, quartz sand, occasional medium to fine flint, moderate to rare organic voids. Fine, hard	31	325	9.9
Q5	Common quartz sand. Fine, hard	1	12	0.4
Q6	Common quartz sand, occasional coarse ?sand stone. Fine, hard	2	14	0.5
QS1	Common quartz sand, moderate, medium to coarse fossil shell (or shelly voids). Coarse, hard.	25	143	4.4
QS2	Common quartz sand, moderate to coarse fossil shell (or shelly voids) occasional medium to coarse calcined flint. Coarse, hard	33	456	13.9
SL1	Abundant fossil shell (or shelly voids) common medium quartz sand, occasional medium to coarse calcined flint. Coarse, hard	13	313	9.5
U	undiagnostic, mostly very small fragments	79	113	3.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>338</b>	<b>3285</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of the fabrics are almost certainly representative of clays being collected from a local source, though without petrological analysis this cannot be confirmed. The clay sources probably do not differ greatly over time and therefore it is difficult to construct a meaningful chronology based on fabric types alone. It appears however that certain fabrics can be used as a dating tool. The calcined flint and quartz-sand fabrics F1 and F2 may represent later Bronze Age/early Iron Age activity. Flint tempered wares are used throughout the Iron Age in Norfolk and north Suffolk where they appear in both earlier and later vessel forms. At Parkhall Road the flint fabrics are only found in forms characteristic of an earlier Iron Age date. These include a rim with fingertip impressions to the rim top and shoulder (form R4, posthole 127), an angular body sherd with incised decoration (pit 270) and a vessel with a long neck and slight, angular shoulder combined with an upright rim (rim R23, pit 270). Flint tempered fabrics are used exclusively for coarse wares. An early date is indicated for flint fabrics found at sites close by such as Wardy Hill, Coveney (Hill and Horne forthcoming). At Parkhall Road quartz-sand tempered fabrics are also found in early forms such as the 'fine' thin walled, well made and carefully finished situlate vessels from pit 270 (rim R22, R24, R25, R26-R29).

Fossil shell (SL1) fabrics are rare at Parkhall Road and are only found in an earlier form (Rim R25, pit 270). Fossil shell tempered fabrics are also used exclusively for coarse wares.

Dense sandy fabrics are particularly characteristic of mid to later Iron Age sites on the southern fen (Braddock and Hill forthcoming; Hill and Horne forthcoming). The sandy fabrics Q1-Q6 from Parkhall Road are found in slack-shouldered, coarse, jar forms (R17, R21 pit 213) and less coarse burnished jars (R18, R19, pit 213), forms which indicate a mid to later Iron Age date. The Parkhall Road assemblage contains a number of quartz-sand fabrics which contain small quantities of shelly limestone (fabrics QS1, QS2) or voids representing relics of shelly inclusions. Quartz-sand fabrics are often found in combination with smaller quantities of shell-tempered wares on mid Iron Age sites (J.D. Hill, pers comm). It has been suggested that the fossil shell fabrics may represent imports brought onto the site through exchange (Braddock and Hill forthcoming), though here this cannot be proved without petrological analysis.

Grog tempered fabrics (G1, G2) are found exclusively in later forms at Parkhall Road (R13 ditch 234 master 4). No classic Aylesford-Swarling forms were present.

### **Form, Surface Treatment and Function**

The assemblage contained a limited range of forms, almost exclusively open jar forms. No complete or semi-complete profiles were found. Of the twenty-nine rim sherds present twenty-three were from medium sized coarse-ware jars. The remaining rims were from small, finely made open jar/bowls with burnished or closely finished surfaces. The assemblage was considered too small for rim diameter and percentage of rim survival to be recorded.

A small number of vessels exhibited an angular or situlate profile, a trademark form indicative of later Bronze Age/ Earlier Iron Age assemblages such as Harling (Clarke and Fell 1953). At Parkhall Road all the earlier vessels appear to be concentrated within one feature, the large pit feature 270. The sherds are from small, finely made open bowls or jars which are decorated with incised geometric designs and burnishing applied to define the area of the vessel below the rim and above the shoulder (rim R22, R24, R25, pit 270). This suggests that they belong to the decorated Ware tradition dating to c. 800-500 BC (Barrett, 1980). Five flat-topped, everted rim sherds from small, undecorated jars were found in pit 270, along with bases from two much larger vessels. The bases were simple and undecorated.

The later Iron Age pottery is characterised by slack shouldered vessels with upright flat-topped rims in a range of dense, hand-made, sandy fabrics. The medium sized, open jar forms probably represent domestic wares for use in cooking and food preparation. No large, coarse storage vessels were identified within the assemblage. Later Iron Age forms were less finely decorated, featuring limited use of fingertip impressions or slashes to the rim top (R1, R7, R14) and shoulder (R4). Scoring is present on a small number of vessels (four rim sherds and 13 body sherds). All but two of the scored sherds are in quartz-sand and shell or fossil shell-tempered fabrics. Scored wares were the dominant coarse wares used throughout the East Midlands from 600BC until the mid-first century AD (Elsdon 1989). In Cambridgeshire the use of scored ware was restricted to an area around the Ouse, only occurring in a limited numbers in peripheral areas such as the southern fens. Here the tradition was to use sandy plain wares (J.D. Hill, pers comm).

### **Distribution and Deposition**

Study of the quantity and size of sherds retrieved from the excavated features shows a markedly uneven distribution. This is a common feature of many contemporary sites and suggests that the pottery became incorporated within the features by differing methods.

The ditches, pits, postholes, furrow and gully contained small quantities of small sherds (see Appendix 1 of Archive Report). This may indicate that the sherds in these features were incorporated as the result of natural infilling from material originally discarded on the surface either casually or within middens.

Of the six pits which contained pottery three contained assemblages of less than 10g. The remaining three pits (213, 270 and 274) contributed 67% of the total Iron Age assemblage (2,215g). Pit 270 is of particular interest. This pit alone contained 40 % of the total Iron Age assemblage (1,343g) and also produced a large number of rims (10 rim sherds R22-R29) and the complete base of a vessel. The pit appeared to be ceramically early, containing angular forms indicative of an early Iron Age date. Pit 270 was situated at the eastern edge of the site and was over 2m long, 1.5m wide and 0.72m deep, the upper fill contained charcoal

and bone as well as pottery. The quantity and quality of the assemblage from pit 270 may suggest that certain specifically chosen pottery sherds may have been deliberately placed within the feature during backfilling. Such deposits may have a ritual dimension (Hill 1995).

Pit 213, a similar large circular pit, contained a 616g of pottery including eight rim sherds (R18-R21) and two base sherds, one of which was scored. The assemblage also contained a number of burnished sherds. The forms suggest that pit date to the later Iron Age. Pit 213 also contained dark grey fills with burnt stones and animal bone. Again this may suggest a ritual element to the deposits within the pit.

### **Conclusion**

The later Bronze Age /early Iron Age material from Parkhall Road exhibits the angular situlate forms and incised or burnished geometric decoration typical of contemporary assemblages from the region (Hill 1996, Clarke and Fell 1953, Martin 1993) and beyond (Barrett 1980, Brewster 1973, Cunnington, 1923). Calcined flint fabrics and less coarse sandy quartz wares are both present. The assemblage contains both burnished, fine jars/bowls with incised decoration and the coarse tempered jars with flat rim tops which fall easily into the decorated ware tradition (Barrett 1980) which dates to c. 800 - 500 BC.

The mid to later Iron Age pottery assemblage consists of a limited range of slack shouldered jar forms in small to medium sizes. The use of decoration is restricted to occasional incisions or impressions on the rim top. Rims are slightly everted and have flattened ends. Burnishing and smoothing is present on some vessels. Scored wares are also present in small quantities. Larger contemporary assemblages found at Watson's Lane, Little Thetford, Ely (Braddock and Hill, forthcoming) and at Wardy Hill, Coveney (Hill and Horne forthcoming) exhibit a similar range of small jars with both unfinished surfaces and finer, burnished and closed surfaces. These may represent distinct cooking and serving forms. Plain ware assemblages are characteristic of pottery in use in the southern fens during the period c.300 to 100BC before the introduction of wheel-made pottery to the area in the first century AD.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Faunal Remains by Ian L. Baxter BA, MIFA

#### Introduction

Animal bone with a total weight of 4kg was recovered from the site. Of this total, 44.5 'countable' (see below) fragments have been identified to species or a higher taxonomic category (Table 1). All bones forming the subject of this report are assumed to date from the Iron Age. The bone was very variable in its preservation with condition ranging from poor to good. Most of the unidentified material is highly fragmented. All identified and 'countable' fragments are recorded on an Access database. This is a tiny assemblage precluding any detailed analysis.

#### Methods

All of the animal bones from Parkhall Road were hand-collected and an under-representation of smaller species and body parts is to be expected from this site.

The mammal bones were recorded following a modified version of the method described in Davis (1992) and Albarella *et al* (1997). In brief, all teeth (lower and upper) and a restricted suite of parts of the postcranial skeleton were recorded and used in counts. These are: horn cores with a complete basal cross section, skull (zygomaticus), atlas, axis, scapula (glenoid articulation), distal humerus, distal radius, proximal ulna, carpal 2+3, radial carpal, distal metacarpal, pelvis (ischial part of acetabulum), distal femur, distal tibia, calcaneum (sustenaculum), astragalus (lateral side), centrotarsale, distal metatarsal, proximal parts of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd phalanges. At least 50% of a given part had to be present for it to be counted. The presence of large (cattle/horse size) and medium (sheep/pig size) vertebrae and ribs was recorded for each context, although these were not counted.

The separation of sheep and goat was attempted on the following elements: dP3, dP4, distal humerus, distal metapodials (both fused and unfused), distal tibia, astragalus, and calcaneum using criteria described in Boessneck (1969), Kratochvil (1969) and Payne (1969 and 1985). The shape of the enamel folds (Davis 1980; Eisenmann 1981) was used for identifying equid teeth to species. Horse ages are estimated from the crown height of the grinding teeth following Levine (1982)

Wear stages were recorded for all P4s and dP4s as well as for the lower molars of cattle, sheep/goat and pig, both isolated and in mandibles. Tooth wear stages follow Grant (1982). Bone measurements in general follow von den Driesch (1976). All pig measurements follow Payne and Bull (1988). Humerus HTC and BT and tibia Bd measurements were taken for all species as suggested by Payne and Bull (1988) for pigs. Measurements taken on equid teeth follow Payne (1991). The width of sheep/goat teeth represents the 'maximum' width.

Withers heights were calculated for horse, cattle and sheep/goat using the multiplication factors of Kiesewalter (1888), Matolcsi (1970) and Teichert (1975) respectively.

#### Discussion and conclusion

This is a very small assemblage and little can be said regarding age profiles or husbandry practices at the site. However, the main domestic food species are represented in the following proportions: cattle 52%, sheep/goat 33% and pig 15%.

The cattle are of the so-called 'Celtic' small horned type typical of the Iron Age. Both sexes are represented, and the withers height of an individual represented by a metacarpal found in Pit [247] (248) was approximately 114 cm. Amongst the sheep/goats only sheep could be identified to species. A metatarsal found in Pit [213] (214) derived from an animal around 59 cm high at the shoulder. Pig remains include the mandible of a young male with M3 coming into wear aged approximately 1.5 years found in Pit [270] (268) and the mandible of a juvenile found in Pit [274] (283).

Horse remains are relatively frequent accounting for 11% of the total. They include teeth from individuals aged around nine and eight years from Pits [247] (248) and [270] (267) respectively. A metacarpal from Pit [213] (218) came from an animal 131 cm (13 hands) high at the shoulder and a metatarsal from a second

individual 128 cm (12.5 hands) at the withers was found in Ditch [234] (237). These were pony-sized animals and would have been used as mounts and pack horses.

**Table 1** Number of hand-collected mammal bones (NISP)

<b>Taxon</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cattle ( <i>Bos f. domestic</i> )	20.5
Sheep/Goat ( <i>Ovis/Capra f. domestic</i> )	13
Sheep ( <i>Ovis f. domestic</i> )	(3)
Pig ( <i>Sus f. domestic</i> )	6
Horse ( <i>Equus caballus</i> L.)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>44.5</b>

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## APPENDIX 3 Lithics by Steve Kemp

The nature of the pieces suggests the quality of flint available was not very good. It is likely that all of these materials would have been available within the local gravels and certainly most occur in a rolled form within the assemblage. Mostly undiagnostic late prehistoric pieces Bronze Age/iron Age.

Eight flint artefacts were recovered from four contexts. These are mainly knapped flakes made from grey brown flint, which was readily available in small cobbles within the local environment. One of the scrapers is manufactured on either a natural or very crudely struck flake of the same flint raw material.

The flakes are short and broad, with the minimum of preparation and therefore little control over the resultant form. The fine, uniform and restricted edge damage on some of these flakes indicates that these artefacts which are usually the waste products of the manufacturing process have been used as tools without any additional preparation. Their condition also suggests that they probably functioned as tools for short periods and were easily replaced.

Two scrapers were present within the excavated assemblage. One is an end scraper from a small river cobble the other a side scraper, both were made on flakes.

None of the artefacts are type fossils and therefore dateable to a specific period. The ease of manufacture and the crude forms, the lack of preparation and control, the use of natural flakes and the condition in which these artefacts have been disposed suggests a readily available raw materials and an almost fortuitous use of knapping products for the manufacture of formal tools and usable pieces.

Given the small assemblage and the lack of type fossils it is difficult to be specific about the date of these artefacts. Given the knapping attributes it is likely that the assemblage is Bronze Age/early Iron Age in date and as has been stated before is based on small river cobbles which were readily available within the vicinity of the site.

The gravels around the fens are rich in neolithic and Bronze Age activity sites and it is likely that this assemblage is part of this intense prehistoric use of the variable environment provided by the fen. As there are so few artefacts in a residual position within the archaeological sequence and unless additional material is made available further analysis or recording of this assemblage would not be a valuable exercise.

### Context Worked flint

176	flake
214	notched scraper, 2 flakes, from cleaning over pit 213 – 1 fragment of worked out core, 1 flake and an end/side scraper
232	poor quality flint nodule, possibly used for hammering?

### Context Unworked stone

2	one piece of gravel
12	six pieces of gravel
176	undiagnostic, unworked stone
184	four fragments of burnt flint
202	undiagnostic flake

The above stones were collected on site as they appeared to be worked but were discarded after washing and confirmatory examination by Steve Kemp.

#### **APPENDIX 4 Small finds and metal detector survey**

A systematic metal detector survey was carried out across the site and over spoil heaps on several separate occasions, to determine the presence and concentrations of ferrous and non-ferrous objects. Only two items were found, a very worn Roman coin and a medieval jetton and neither was from a secure context, one was found in the spoil and the other on the surface of the site.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Artefact</b>	<b>Description</b>
151	Iron	Mole trap	3 fragments
161	Iron	Nails	6 + fragments
211	Iron	Nails	2
214	Iron	Fragments	
surface	Copper alloy	Coin	Roman
surface of 207	Copper alloy	Jetton	German

## APPENDIX 5 Environmental remains

Bulk soil samples (generally 10 or 20 litres) were taken from excavated archaeological features to obtain economic data from charred plant remains. It was intended that environmental sampling would provide information relating to changes in local environmental conditions on the fen edge.

Samples were processed using the standard AFU flotation machine. Flots were collected in 5mm meshes and heavy residues retained in 1mm meshes.

Assessment was made using a low magnification binocular microscope. The aim was to ascertain the quality and types of preservation and the range and relative quantities of plant species represented.

Most samples contained charred plant remains but the quantities involved varied between features. Ground conditions have not been consistently or sufficiently wet for waterlogged preservation to have occurred. Preservation of charred seeds was variable. In addition to cereal grains a variety of weed seeds were present.

Sample no.	Context no.	Fauna		Flora		Ceramic	Comments
		Bones	Shell	Seeds	Charcoal		
1	120	+	+	++	++		Grain
2	125	+	+	++	++		Grain
3	177	-	-	+	++		Grain
4	214	+	-	++	++		Grain + burnt bone
5	238	+	-	+	+	+	Pea + burnt bone
6	163	++	-	-	-		Burnt bone
7	166	++	-	++	Sp		Burnt bone
8	168	+	-	Sp	+		

## Appendix 6 Context List

Context	Feature Category	Type	Shape	Orient.	Depth	Width	Length	Fills	Fine	Coarse	Colour	Pot	WT	Bone	Bone wt.	Date	Finds
1	deposit	topsoil			0.8												
2	3	deposit	ditch	linear	0.3	0.8		silty clay	occasional pebbles	dark brown	3	60	animal	149		IA/RB	
3	3	cut	ditch	linear	N - S	0.3	0.8	1									
4	5	deposit	pit		0.5			silty clay	occasional pebbles	brown	3	14	animal			medieval	
5	5	cut	pit		0.5			1									
6		deposit	topsoil		0.9			clay silt		dark brown							
7	8	deposit	pit		0.5			silty clay		brown							
8	8	cut	pit	oval?	0.5												brick
9	10	deposit	ditch		0.4			1	silty clay	dark brown							none
10	10	cut	ditch	linear	E - W	0.4	0.8	1									
11		deposit	topsoil		0.8												
12	13	deposit	ditch		0.35	0.7		1	silty clay	occasional pebbles	light brown	10	40	horse/cattl	253	LJA	
13	13	cut	ditch	linear	N - S	0.35	0.7	1									
14		deposit	topsoil		0.8				silty clay		dark brown						
15	16	deposit	ditch		0.25			1	silty clay	occasional pebbles	dark brown						none
16	16	cut	ditch	linear	E - W	0.25		1									
100		deposit	topsoil														
101		deposit	subsoil														
102	103	deposit	quarry		>0.3				sand and			3	42			post-med	modern
103	103	cut	quarry	sub-rect	E - W	>0.3	>5m	>9m	1								
104	105	deposit	posthole		0.1	0.19	0.32		silty sand	occ. small gravel	brown grey						yes















Context	Feature	Category	Type	Shape	Orient.	Depth	Width	Length	Fills	Fine	Coarse	Colour	Pot	WT	Bone	Bone wt.	Date	Finds
237	234	deposit	ditch			0.5				silty sand	mod-freq. gravel	mid-pale yellow brown	4	92	horse shee	330	LJA	metallic sla
238	234	deposit	ditch			0.3				v. silty s	occ. small gravel	dark brown grey	4	78	animal	237	LJA	
239	234	deposit	ditch			0.1				silty sand	mod-freq. gravel	pale orange brown			cattle	39		
240	234	deposit	ditch			0.3				silty sand	mod. small gravel	mid brown grey			animal	20		
241	234	deposit	ditch			0.22				sand	mod. grit	mid pale grey						none
242	235	deposit	ditch			0.48				silty sand	occ. grit	dark brown grey	4	50	animal	95		
243	235	deposit	ditch			0.18				silty sand	occ. small gravel	mid-dark brown grey						none
244	236	deposit	ditch			0.18				silty sand	occe-mod. gravel	mid grey brown	2	15	animal	186		
245	231	deposit	ditch			0.2	0.6	>10m		sandy silt	occ. gravel	olive grey						none
246	225	deposit	posthole			0.12	0.5			silty clay	occ. gravel	olive grey brown						none
247	247	cut	pit	sub-circ	N - S?	0.06	>1.6	2.4	1									
248	247	deposit	pit			0.06				sand	mod. gravel	mid-pale olive brown	1	4	cattle hors	204		undiagnost
249	250	deposit	furrow			0.08	1.2	>10m		sandy silt	occ. gravel	light brown						none
250	250	cut	furrow	linear	E - W	0.08	1.2	>10m	1									
251	252	deposit	gully			0.08	0.3	>5m		sandy silt	occ. gravel	light brown						none
252	252	cut	gully	curvilinear	E - W	0.08	0.3	>5m	1									
253	254	deposit	ditch			0.17	0.7	>5m		silty sand	occ. gravel	dark grey	1	6				EIA









Context Feature Category Type Shape Orient. Depth Width Length Fills Fine Coarse Colour Pot WT Bone Bone wt. Date Finds

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**Cambridgeshire  
County Council**

Education, Libraries  
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