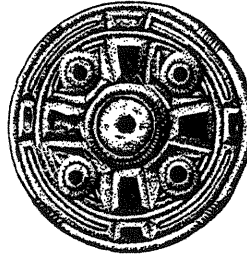


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Archaeological Field Unit

**A Middle and Late Iron Age Settlement at Foxburrow
Plantation, Chippenham. An Archaeological Evaluation.**

Aileen Connor & Scott Kenney

1998

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A131

Commissioned By G Miles Ltd.

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Chippenham**

Aileen Connor and Scott Kenney

1998

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Report No A131

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SUMMARY

In April 1998, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted a limited archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Foxburrow Plantation, Chippenham, Cambridgeshire (TL65806760). The work was commissioned by G Miles & Son Ltd, in response to a County Archaeology Office Brief requiring further information about the site of a proposed agricultural reservoir .

The evaluation undertook to determine the presence of archaeological remains their distribution and broad date within the limits of the proposed reservoir. Features were recorded in plan, but only rarely excavated due to the limited nature of the evaluation.

Twenty trenches were machine excavated within the area of the proposed reservoir. Archaeological features were observed to survive in all the trenches. Pottery was recovered from sixteen of the trenches and was dated as Middle and Late Iron Age. Animal bone was present in all except one trench and small quantities of worked flint, burnt daub and metalwork were recovered from several of the trenches.

The features present included roundhouse gullies, pits and rectilinear ditch systems which strongly suggest the presence of settlement. Ditches and gullies were on two alignments suggesting at least two phases of occupation and supporting the evidence from the finds..

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1 INTRODUCTION

Between 30th of March and 6th of April 1998, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out a basic archaeological evaluation in approximately 4 hectares of land to the south-east of Foxburrow Plantation, Chippenham (TL6580/6760). The work was carried out at the request of G Miles & Son Ltd., in advance of a proposed reservoir development, and was in response to a brief set by the County Archaeology Office (CAO/Kaner/Jan 26 1998). The proposed reservoir is intended for agricultural purposes and is intended to consist of a cut, approximately 150m by 150m within a landscaped area of approximately 220m by 220m.

The aim of the evaluation in the first instance was to assess the presence/absence of archaeology, its extent, density and character within the area of the proposed cut.

Visual inspection of the machined trenches was enough to determine that archaeological features were present in varying density in every trench. Pottery was abundant on the surface of many of the features, enough to suggest that settlement of at least two periods, Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age, was represented. The client, therefore, wished to reconsider the location of the reservoir, consequently only a minimal record of the opened trenches was made. A second area to the north-east was subsequently proposed for the reservoir (figs. 1 & 3), this area has not been evaluated.

The site lies on the south-western edge of Chippenham Parish on the border with Snailwell, south of the village and Chippenham Park. Foxburrow Plantation, in its original form, prior to truncation, appears on the draft OS map of 1820. It was probably created at the same time as the emparkment, or shortly after, as part of general landscaping.

The presence of archaeological remains was considered likely by the CAO on the basis of information contained in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). It records cropmarks to the south-west (SMR 09027) and north-east (SMR 10180) of the site. The former consists of apparent rectangular enclosures and other linear features. The latter was defined as two circular, or partially circular, enclosures.

Twenty linear trenches with a total length of c 600m were opened by machine, and archaeological features were subsequently planned using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station Theodolite.

Archaeology was observed in all of the trenches, and artefacts were recovered from the majority.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

The site lies on Second and Third Terrace Gravel, overlying Middle Chalk. The geology exposed in the evaluation trenches is soft sand and gravel with occasional outcrops of chalky gravel. The topsoil varies in depth from about 0.3m in the south-east to 0.6m in the north-west. The greater depth of soil is probably a woodland derived soil resulting from the tree plantation, now removed.

2.2 Topography

Chippenham largely stands on ground at around 15m above ordnance datum, gently rising to 20m above ordnance datum to the south, with the subject area on the slight ridge which runs towards Snailwell where the highest point is at around 40m above ordnance datum.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Background

Lying 5km north of Newmarket, Chippenham is mentioned in Domesday as "*Chipeham*", meaning '*Cippa's farm*' (Reaney, 1943). It lies between the valleys of the rivers Kennet and Snail, both of which give their names to neighbouring Parishes. Chippenham also contains the shrunken hamlet of Badlingham. The village is small and neat, consisting of little more than a single street and the expanse of Chippenham Park, which was enclosed between 1696 and 1702.

The site lies to the south-east of Foxburrow Plantation which is shown on the 1820 OS draft 1" and 1842 Tithe map (probably based on the 1791 Inclosure map). Foxburrow Plantation is not in existence on Spufford's map (fig.3), The Lordship of Chippenham 1544, based on the map of 1712 (Spufford, 1965). To the south of the site is the Icknield Way and close by to the north is the course of the Street Way (Spufford, 1965), one of the ancient routes into East Anglia, and particularly significant in relation to Iron Age settlement. The Medieval field in which Foxburrow Plantation sits was known as "*Thremhowe*", meaning "three barrows" (Reaney 1943).

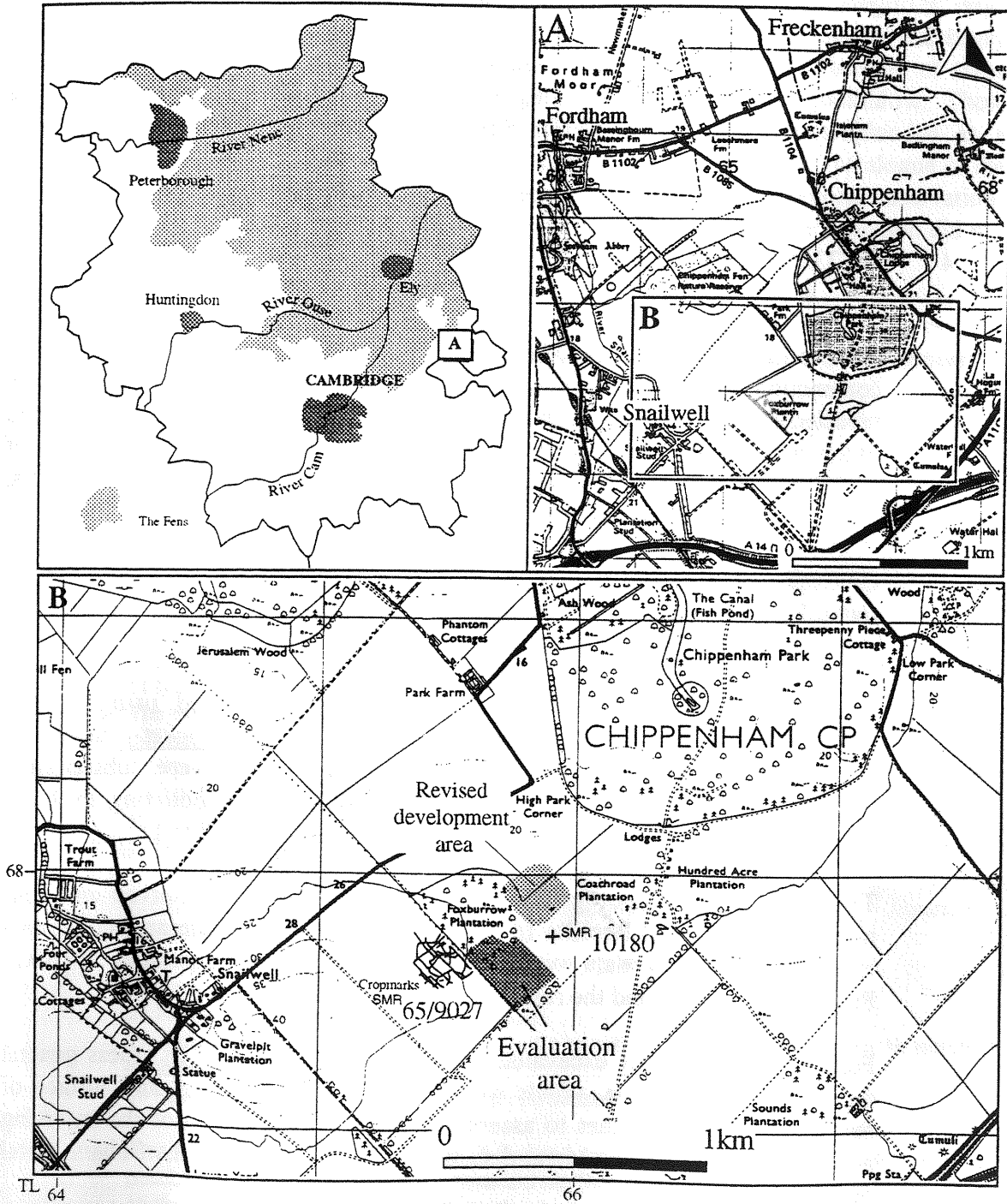
3.2 Archaeological Background

3.2.1 Palaeolithic and Mesolithic

No definitively Palaeolithic or Mesolithic finds have been attributed to the area around the site.

3.2.2 Neolithic and Bronze Age

No definitively Neolithic finds have been located nearby, but the Bronze Age is well-represented in the Chippenham Barrow Cemetery, located 1.4km ESE of the site. This consists of Scheduled Monuments numbers SM27177-SM27180.



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Figure 1 Location Maps

3.2.3 Iron Age

To the north of the village are several sites, some Early Iron Age, and some Late. Two sites in Snailwell are geographically closer, and include an impressive warrior burial (SMR 07420), and a possible Iron Age settlement (SMR07742).

3.2.4 Roman

No definitively Roman finds have been attributed to the area around the site.

3.2.5 Anglo-Saxon

No definitively Saxon finds have been attributed to the area around the site, although recent metal detecting finds from the Chippenham Estate include objects dating to this period (Dr. Reynolds pers comm.).

4 METHODOLOGY

Prior to the commencement of work on site, a desktop study was undertaken in conjunction with an assessment of the aerial survey data. The desktop study revealed limited information about the historical and archaeological background of the site, the results of which are detailed elsewhere in this report. A study of aerial photographic sources did not indicate any cropmarks, soilmarks, upstanding or sunken features within the development area (appendix 1).

Given the presence of cropmarks to the north-east of the site which may be round barrows, a trenching strategy was devised to ensure that features of this type would be found if present.

Nineteen 30m trenches and one 20m trench were opened using a 360° mechanical excavator with a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist. Trenches 12 and 13 were subsequently widened to approximately 3.8m. The total investigated amounting to 1,284 square metres, over 5% of the area of the proposed cut, (see fig. 1).

The trenches were photographed, tied in to the Ordnance Survey and base planned using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station Theodolite with an internal data logger. The survey data was downloaded to, and manipulated in AIC's ProSurveyor v3.35, and the resulting drawings plotted.

Features were partially excavated in trenches 11, 13 and 14 to assess general depths and preservation. Finds were collected from the spoil and surface of features in all the trenches to assess the date and distribution of the surviving archaeological deposits. Metal detecting was carried out by the Soham Metal detecting Society.

5 RESULTS

5.1 General Comments

Upon opening the first trench, it became clear that there was an unanticipated density of archaeological features in at least part of the site. By the time that the last trench was completed, a general picture emerged of a site with variable concentrations of features. The features fell into five broad categories: large ditches, small ditches, pits, possible house gullies, and spreads. Once the survey was completed, it became possible to allocate the trenches to one of three categories, dependent upon feature density: high, moderate or low. These categories do not produce concentric zones, and are only intended as a guideline. The following descriptions are intended as a general catalogue of the types of features present in each trench. Descriptions are general observations made about the surfaces of features, unless otherwise noted, excavation did not take place.

5.2 Trench Descriptions (context numbers are listed at the beginning of the descriptions).

Trench 1 contained a moderate density of features including four linears and three pits. Finds include Late Iron Age pottery.

1, 2, 3 Three narrow parallel linears on a south-west to north-east orientation.

4, 5, 6 Three small subcircular pits.

7 One narrow linear on a north-south orientation, pottery and animal bone from surface.

Trench 2 contained a low density of features, no finds observed on surface.

8 Narrow linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

9 Narrow linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

10 Small pit

11 Small pit

The two linears were adjacent but not quite parallel to each other. No finds recovered from this trench.

Trench 3 contained a low density of features, finds include Iron Age pottery.

12 4m wide N-S ditch

13 large pit, pot recovered from surface.

Trench 4 contained a moderate density of features consisting of three narrow linears, one broad linear and one small pit.

14 linear on north-west to south-east orientation, approximately 7.5m wide.

15 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.

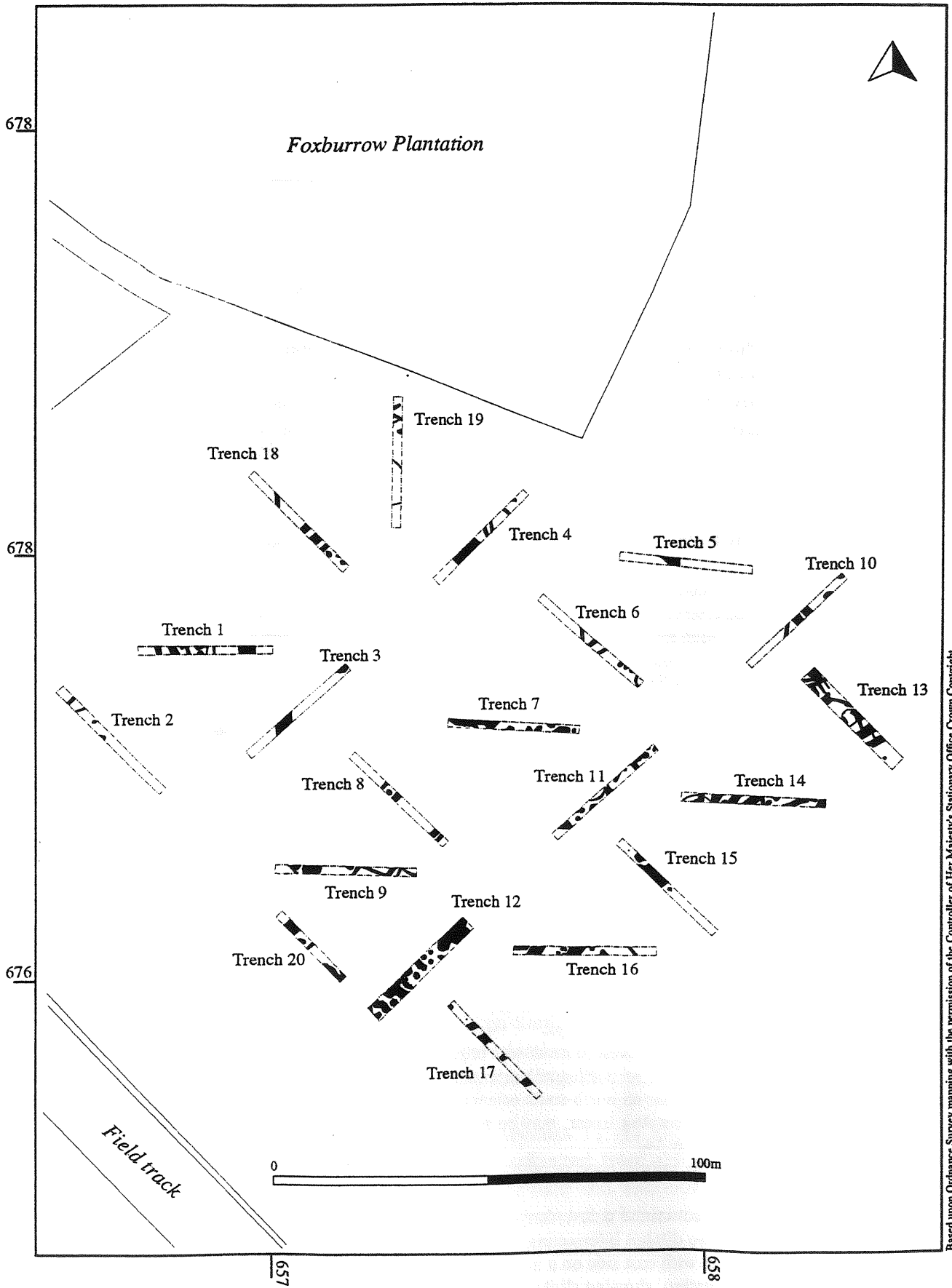
16 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.

17 Narrow ?curving linear, may be gully of a roundhouse, south-west side may be truncated or obscured by 14.

18 Small pit, animal bone recovered from its surface.

Trench 5 contained a low density of features consisting of a non-parallel sided ditch, or possibly two ditches intersecting. Finds include Iron Age pottery.

19 Feature with east side on a north-south orientation and west edge on a north-west to south-east orientation, showing slight curve. Pottery was recovered from its surface.



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Figure 2 Plan of Trenches and Archaeological Features

Trench 6 contained a moderate density of features consisting of three narrow linears, three small pits and one possible portion of a house gully. Finds recovered from the surface of this trench not attributed to context, but included Late Iron Age pottery.

20 Narrow linear on a north-south orientation.

21 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

22 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation

23 Small ?pit.

24 Small ?pit

25 Small ?pit

26 Curving linear, possibly the gully of a roundhouse.

Trench 7 contained a high density of features including at least six pits, and an irregular spread. Finds recovered from the surface of this trench were not attributed to a specific context, but included Late Iron Age pottery.

27 An irregular spread covering the western end of the trench.

28 ?pit

29 ?pit

30 ?pit

31 ?pit

32 ?pit

33 ?pit

Trench 8 contained a moderate density of features including four parallel linears, two narrow, two slightly broader, and a single pit. Finds recovered from the machined surface of this trench were not attributed to a specific context, but included Iron Age pottery.

34 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

35 ?pit

36 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

37 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

38 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

Trench 9 contained a high density of features including six narrow linears, one broad linear, and two pits. Finds recovered from the machined surface of this trench were not attributed to a specific context, but included burnt daub and Late Iron Age pottery.

39 Narrow linear on a north-west to south-east orientation. ?Truncates 40.

40 ?pit. ?Truncated by 39.

41 ?Pit or linear on a north-south orientation, 3.75m wide.

42 ?Pit.

43 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

44 Narrow linear on north-west to south-east orientation.

45 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation

46 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation

47 Narrow ?curving linear, possibly part of the gully of a roundhouse.

Trench 10 contained a moderate density of features including one narrow linear, two broader parallel linears, and two possible pits. Finds included Middle Iron Age pottery.

48 Narrow linear on north-south orientation. Pottery was recovered from its surface.

49 Linear on north-west to south-east orientation.

50 Linear on north-west to south-east orientation. Pottery was recovered from its surface.

51 ?Pit.

52 ?Pit.

Trench 11 contained a high density of features including at least seven pits, two narrow linears, one of which butt-ended, one broad linear, a section of possible house gully, and a possible spread. Finds included Iron Age pottery.

53 ?Pit

- 54 ?Pit
- 55 ?Pit
- 56 Linear on north-west to south-east orientation.
- 57 ?Pit.
- 58 ?Terminus of narrow linear on south-west to north-east orientation.
- 59 Linear on a north-west to south-east orientation. Pottery recovered from the surface of this feature. ?Truncated by 60.
- 60 Curving linear, possibly the gully of a roundhouse. ?Truncates 59.
- 61 ?Pit
- 62 ?Pit
- 63 ?Pit
- 64 ?Pit
- 65 Feature with north-east side on north-west to south-east orientation and south-west, slightly curving side on east-west orientation.

Trench 12 contained a high density of features including at least nine pits, at least three possible linears, and a large irregular spread. Middle and Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the machined surface of the trench from contexts 67-70 and 77-78.

- 66 Spread or series of intercutting pits?
- 67 ?Pit
- 68 ?Pit
- 69 ?Pit
- 70 ?Pit
- 71 Irregular pit or terminal of linear, may be more than one feature.
- 72 ?Pit
- 73 ?Pit
- 74 ?Pit
- 75 ?Pit
- 76 ?Linear
- 77 Irregular spread or intercutting features.
- 78 ?Pit
- 79 Irregular linear on north-west to south-east orientation.
- 80 ?Linear on north-south orientation.
- 81 ?Pit

Trench 13 contained a high density of features including at least three broad linears, at least six narrow linears, at least three pits of various sizes, and two possible house gullies. Finds included Middle Iron Age pottery.

- 82 Spread or pit?.
- 83 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.
- 84 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation. ?Truncates 85, 86, 87.
- 85 Narrow ?curving linear, possible gully for a roundhouse. Truncated by 84.
- 86 Narrow linear on north-west to south-east orientation.
- 87 Narrow linear on north-west to south-east orientation.
- 88 Terminal of linear on north-east to south-west orientation, may be more than one feature.
- 89 Narrow linear on east-west orientation, there may be a second linear terminal adjacent.
- 90 Narrow curving linear, possible gully for a roundhouse.
- 91 Narrow linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.
- 92 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation. ?Truncates 97 and 98.
- 93 ?Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation. ?Truncates 98.
- 94 ?Terminal of linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.
- 95 Small pit or post hole.
- 96 ?Pit or spread.
- 97 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.
- 98 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.

Trench 14 contained a high density of features including four broad linears, one narrow linear, at least four pits, and a section of possible house gully. Finds included Middle and Late Iron Age pottery.

99 Narrow curving linear, possible the gully for a roundhouse. ?Truncated by 101 and 102.

100 ?Pit. ?Truncated by 101.

101 Linear on a north-south orientation. Pottery recovered from its surface. ?Truncates 99 and 100.

102 Linear on a north-east to south-west orientation. Pottery recovered from its surface. ?Truncates 99.

103 Pit, circular, 1.5m in diameter, partially excavated to a depth of 0.30m filled by soft grey brown sandy loam, contained pottery and animal bone. Truncates 104.

104 Linear on a north-east to south-west orientation. ?Truncated by 103.

105 Linear on a north-east to south-west orientation. Partially excavated to a depth of 0.50m. V shaped profile contained two fills, the upper was soft yellowish brown redeposited sand overlying dark greyish brown sandy loam. Possibly representing a bank. ?Truncates 106.

106 Narrow linear on a north-south orientation. ?Truncated by 105.

107 ?Pit, pottery recovered from its surface.

108 ?Pit

109 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation. Pottery recovered from its surface.

110 ?Pit

111 Linear on a north-south orientation, possibly slightly curving. Could be part of a ring ditch? Pottery recovered from its surface.

Trench 15 contained a low density of features including a single broad ditch, a large pit, a small pit, and one possible post-hole. Finds included Late Iron Age pottery.

112 ?Post hole.

113 ?Pit.

114 Wide ?linear on south-west to north-east orientation, possibly more than one feature.

115 ?Pit

Trench 16 contained a high density of features including two broad linears, one narrow linear, at least four pits, and an irregular spread. Finds included Late Iron Age pottery.

116 ?Spread or pit.

117 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

118 ?Pit

119 ?Pit. ?Truncates 120.

120 Linear on a south-west to north-east orientation.

121 ?Two pits.

122 ?Pit

123 ?Pit

124 Narrow linear on a north-west to south-east orientation.

Trench 17 contained a moderate density of features including four ?linears and four pits. Finds included Late Iron Age pottery.

125 ?Pit.

126 Small pit or post hole.

127 Linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

128 Linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

129 Linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

130 Small pit or post hole.

131 ?Pit

132 Linear on south-west to north-east orientation.

Trench 18 contained a high density of features including two broad linears, at least five narrower linears, and three pits. Finds included Middle Iron Age pottery.

133 Linear on north-south orientation.

134 Linear on north-south orientation.

135 ?Pit

- 136 Linear on north-south orientation.
- 137 ?Pit
- 138 ?Pit
- 139 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.
- 140 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.
- 141 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.
- 142 Narrow linear on north-south orientation.

Trench 19 contained a moderate density of features including five narrow linears, one with a butt-end, and a single pit.

- 143 Linear on south-west to north-east orientation, appears to terminate.
- 144 Linear on east-west orientation. ?Truncated by 145.
- 145 Linear on south-west to north-east alignment. ?Truncates 144.
- 146 ?Pit
- 147 Linear on east-west alignment.
- 148 Linear on south-west to north-east alignment.

Trench 20 contained a moderate density of features including one narrow linear, one broad linear, a single pit, and an irregular spread. Finds include Iron Age pottery.

- 149 Wide linear on south-west to north-east orientation.
- 150 ?Pit
- 151 Narrow linear on south-west to north-east orientation.
- 152 Spread of dark greyish brown sandy loam, possible, midden, buried soil or pits

5.3 The Finds

Preliminary observations made in the field and confirmed by Dr. JD Hill of Southampton University suggest that two periods of occupation are represented by the pottery, a Middle Iron Age and a Late Iron Age phase. Pottery was collected from the surface of features in Trenches 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 20

Worked flint found in 9 trenches suggests that the site was probably also occupied at an earlier period.

Animal bone was observed in all the trenches (except trench 2), which is in good condition.

Burnt daub found in trench 9 suggests the presence of nearby buildings, both round and rectangular buildings are suspected as present in trench 9.

One iron object, possibly a nail was collected from trench 14 and a small quantity of slag (possibly copper) was found in trench 5.

Preliminary study of the finds distribution reveals widespread animal bone within the deposits, often in association with sherds of coarse and sooted cooking pot.

6 DISCUSSION

Only very broad generalisations can be made about this site based on the limited evaluation undertaken. The feature density across the site appeared to be variable, but the range and character of the features and the density of features in certain trenches strongly suggests that a settlement of considerable size and

duration was present on this site. There are at least two linear alignments; one north-south and one north-east to south-west, these alignments are mirrored by cropmarks to the south-west (SMR09027). Intercutting ditches in trench 19 supports the hypothesis that varying alignments belong to different phases, and trenches 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 18 all contained intercutting features to a greater or lesser extent. Initial spot dating of pottery seems to bear this out, showing Middle and Late Iron Age components.

This limited evaluation hints at possible zones of activity; pits are concentrated in trenches 7, 11, and 12, although individual pits and small clusters occur across the site. The largest number of linears were revealed in trench 13, which also displayed the greatest complexity, along with trenches 14 and 9. Linears can be broadly categorised as narrow and wide. Partial excavation of one of the wide ditches in trench 14 showed it to be at least 0.6m deep with evidence of a bank which had collapsed back into the ditch. The narrower ditches may represent paddocks or sub rectangular buildings, especially those observed in trench 9. The narrow curvilinears which have been interpreted as house gullies, when extrapolated as circles, are between 8 and 10m in diameter. They cluster in a fairly narrow band running roughly east-west across the site from the east end of trench 9 to the middle of trench 13, varying in height from 25.1m above ordnance datum to 24.3m above ordnance datum.

Trenches 12 and 20 contained large areas of dark greyish brown, charcoal rich soil which may be the remnant of buried soil, midden or intense pitting

Within each feature type there are subtypes which may hint at differences in function or date, for example there are distinct circular and subrectangular pits.

What can be said with certainty is that a substantial Iron Age settlement, either long-lived, or in two phases, has been identified, and that further work would be needed which is beyond the scope of this investigation in order to place it in its proper context within the landscape of the time.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Basic observations of the area strongly suggest that an intensively occupied settlement existed here in the middle and late Iron Age, and that occupation was likely to have begun much earlier. The location of the site, towards the top of a south-east facing slope near to water and on light, easily farmed sandy soil is ideal for settlement of the period. The proximity of possible ring ditches to the north-east (SMR10180), with known barrow cemeteries to the south-east (SAM's 27177-27180) and a late Iron Age high status burial found in Snailwell to the south-west (Lethbridge, 1953) indicate that the site is in an important archaeological landscape. Such a concentration is unsurprising given the close proximity of Street Way, an ancient routeway to East Anglia. A series of cropmark enclosures (SMR09027) immediately to the south-west of the area were initially thought to be recent given their alignment with the present field boundaries, however, this new evidence casts doubt on this interpretation and suggests the possibility that the cropmarks indicate early settlement, and may be associated with at least one of the phases of occupation observed on the proposed reservoir site.

The distribution of finds and features suggests a focus of activity along the south-eastern edge of the site of the proposed reservoir. Ditches along this south-eastern edge may suggest some sort of settlement boundary running through trenches 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17. These trenches also showed a high density of archaeological features and since no trenches were located to the south-east of this possible boundary it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions on the presence or absence of archaeological features beyond it. The density of archaeological activity at the north-western edge of the proposed reservoir site appears to tail off, although this may simply indicate a different zone of activity since trench 18, for example has a high density of features.

This limited evaluation has shown that a potentially important settlement existed here in the middle and late Iron Age. Its location within the archaeologically rich Chippenham and Snailwell area adds to its potential importance. If destruction of the site should become unavoidable then full excavation, that is preservation by record, is to be highly recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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British Geological Survey 1:50000, sheet 188, Cambridge, Solid and Drift Edition, 1974

Appendix 1 Aerial Photographs by Tim Malim

An assessment of air photographic evidence available in the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography's Collection was conducted in March 1998 and the photographs consulted are listed below.

Although there are a range of oblique and vertical photographs of the area in question archaeological features are not apparent within the area of the field under investigation.

Computer rectification and interpretation of cropmarks from SMR1050 and SMR9027 would be a useful exercise as part of a staged approach in the event of further work being necessary as a consequence of the field evaluation, as the results from this replotting could then help in giving a general context to the present site. There was no advantage in undertaking such a costly exercise prior to evaluation as the absence of cropmark features within the development area precluded any benefits in using Aerial Photographs to help in siting trenches. The mere proximity of cropmark sites has already proved sufficient to demonstrate the need for archaeological evaluation in this apparently barren area and the results from trial trenching will clarify the way forward.

Verticals

RC8 EA 22, 23, 24, 49, 50, 51 (1982)

RC8 CK 196 (1977)

RC8 HW 156, 157 (1985) [Source of SMR 09027]

Obliques

BX 85, 86 (1974) [Source of SMR 10180]

NG 75, 76, 77 (1954)



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