

Archaeological Field Unit

Iron Age Occupation off Ermine Street, Papworth Everard: An Archaeological Evaluation

Scott Kenney

February 2000

Cambridgeshire County Council

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Commissioned by Bidwells

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Editor Tim Malim
Illustrator Jon Cane

with contributions by Morag Woudhuysen



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©Archaeological Field Unit
Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946

Arch.Field.Unit@libraries.camcnty.gov.uk
<http://www.camcnty.gov.uk/library/afu/index.htm>

SUMMARY

Between 19th November and 15th December 1999 an archaeological field evaluation in advance of development on land off Ermine Street, Papworth Everard was carried out. Nineteen trenches were cut by machine. Trenches revealed evidence for pre-Roman settlement in the form of an eavesdrip gully, beam slot and postholes within a large circular enclosure. Artefactual finds consisted of Bronze Age or early Iron Age pottery, animal bone, a rubbing stone, smithing slag and a hearth bottom.

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**Iron Age Occupation off Ermine Street, Papworth Everard:
an archaeological evaluation
(TL 291 624)**

1 INTRODUCTION

This evaluation was carried out between 19th November and 15th December 1999 by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council. The work was commissioned by Bidwells in response to a brief prepared by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office (CAO). The object of the evaluation was to determine the archaeological potential of the site before the development of the land to the south of Ermine House Wood for employment purposes and to the north of Ermine House Wood for residential purposes.

Previous work in the area includes documentary studies (Cox 1996) and archaeological evaluation to the south-west of the current evaluation area. The previous evaluation revealed late Bronze Age/early Iron Age remains cut by medieval ridge and furrow (Alexander 1998).

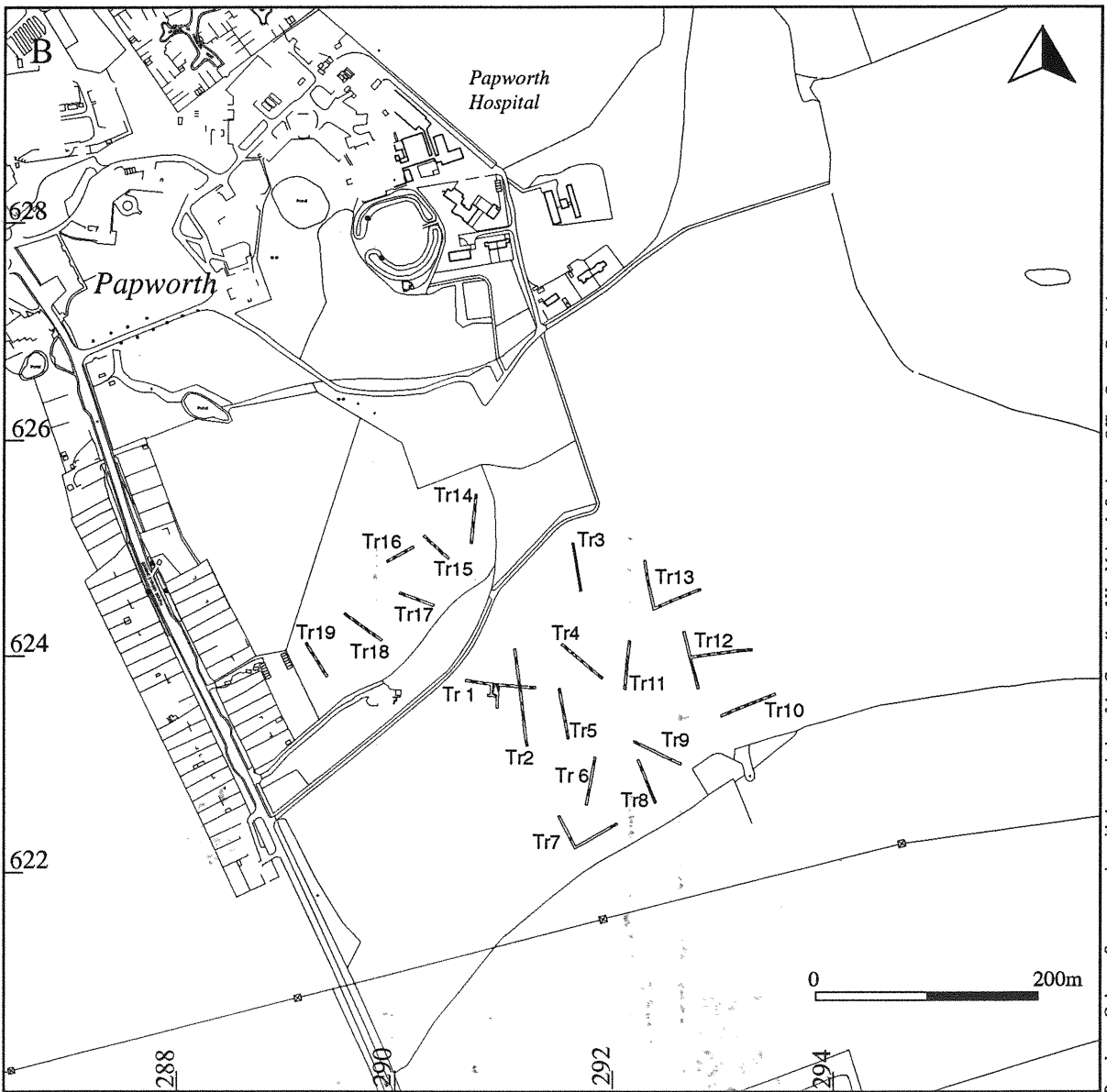
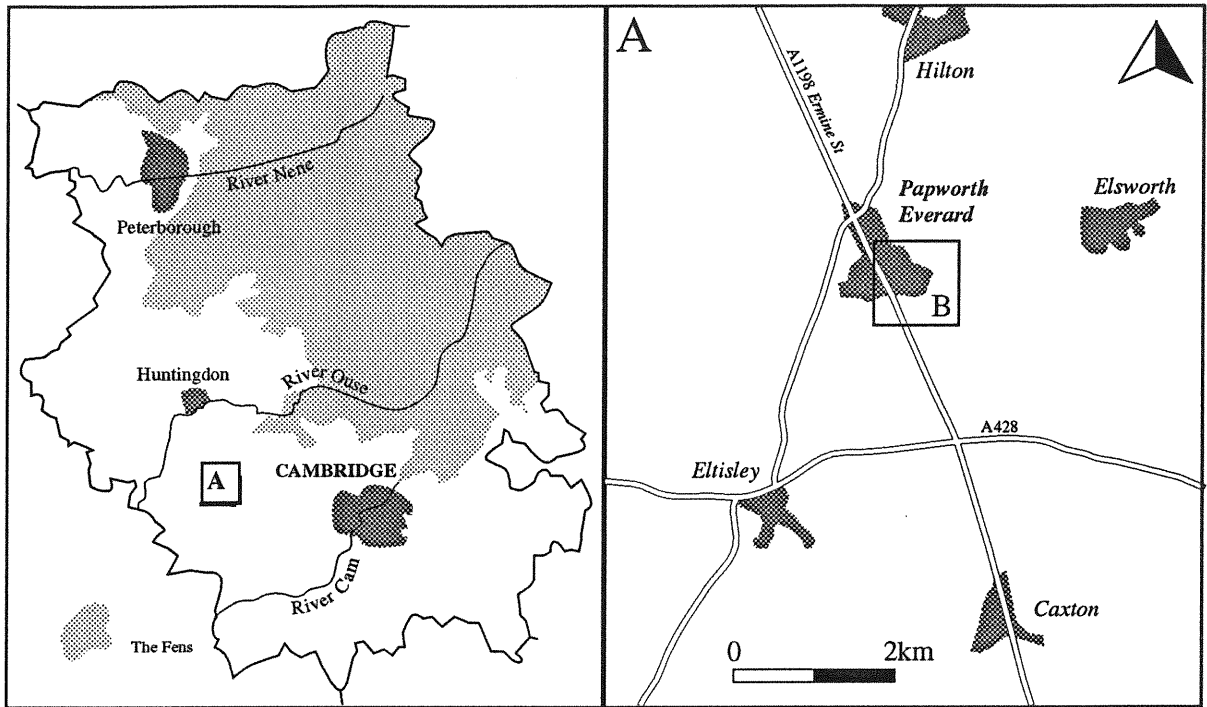
2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The village of Papworth Everard (Fig. 1) lies close to the former boundary between Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. The site falls from 57mOD in the south-east to 35mOD in the west. It is located on glacial deposits of Oxford Clay with Boulder Clay drift over Ampthill Clay with outcrops of ironshot fossiliferous limestone (Elsworth Rock) nearby (British Geological Survey, Sheet 187; Edmonds and Dinham, 1965). Drainage is poor over most of the parish, and the soils have been described as "exceptionally tenacious and slippery" (RCHM: 196).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Papworth Everard currently follows the line of the Roman Road, Ermine Street, but seems in medieval times to have had its centre along a small, fairly steep-sided valley to the west of the road, close to a spring.

Papworth Everard, and the nearby village of Papworth St Agnes, takes the first part of its name from "Pappa's Enclosure" and was first referred to in 1012 as *be Pappawyrde gemaera*, and in 1086 as *Pappeworda*. Papworth Everard was named after Everard de Beche, lord of the manor in the twelfth century, but was also known variously as *Parva*, *Over*, *Upper* and *Upper* from the dedication of the church (Reaney 1943: 171).



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Figure 1 Location plan

Prehistoric and Roman

Prehistoric remains from the area include seasonal/transient occupation suggested by pits containing burnt flint and residual pottery dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (Alexander 1998). Although Ermine Street runs through the middle of Papworth Everard parish, there is no known evidence of Roman or prehistoric occupation there. It should, however, be noted that to the south-east, on the Boulder Clay in Caldecote medieval activity had completely masked extensive earlier (mainly Roman) remains. This site contains complex cropmarks (identified through aerial photographic assessment, Cox 1996) and it has been suggested from their size and morphology that these are Iron Age or Romano-British.

Saxon and Medieval

The medieval village seems to have had its centre west of the Roman road, around the church of St Peter and close to a spring. Little now remains of this settlement, but it is known from earthworks (see below). It is possible that the original focus of the village was around the church.

Count Alan, lord of Richmond, held the manor at Papworth in 1086, and the land remained in honour of Richmond until 1700. The location of the manor house is not certain, but has been identified with the large moat in the grounds of Papworth Hall (SMR 0921), although no medieval finds were recovered from the site during digging in 1970 (VCH, IX: 361). A smaller moated site is known north of Rectory Road, close to the old centre of the village (SMR 1051). This is a second possible site for the manor, built opposite the church.

The church of St Peter was so-named from the early thirteenth century and belonged to the Richmond fee. Reconsecrated in the fourteenth century, it was only tiled in the mid-17th century. Major building repairs took place in the 1850s reusing medieval stone, funded by the Cheere family, then lords of the manor. The walls and buttresses are of 13th century origin and the east wall 17th century.

Records show a steady increase in population throughout the medieval period, from 15 peasants in 1086 to 111 in 1801, by which time the settlement had shifted to the main road.

There is a ridge or possible platform, running north-south in the front gardens of Papworth Hall, together with other amorphous earthworks. The garden slopes to the east towards a pond and drain, first shown on the 1887 OS map.

Ridge and furrow in a pasture south of Papworth Hall is still clearly visible through differential grass growth in the field. There are ridges (SMR 2525) running both east-west and north-south.

A second moat survives north-west of the church (SMR 1050). On the 1818 Inclosure map this is shown in the grounds of Fir Tree Farm. The moat forms a heavily wooded depression, with many small fir trees. The moat is shown on the 1818 Inclosure and 1824 Tithe maps as a semi-circular feature. Irregular earthworks are visible on the open pasture area in front of the church. These

include possible sections of ridge and furrow, and several small platforms. The area south of the church has many earthworks remaining from the deserted centre of the medieval village (SMR 2469), focused around the spring and the stream. The area is now under plough and few earthworks are visible. The 1818 Inclosure map shows scattered ancient closes, which were already combined in fewer, bigger units by 1824 (Tithe map). One side of a hollow way south and west of the church is still clearly visible in a scarp approximately 1 metre high behind the graveyard. Its other side seems to have been completely ploughed out.

A further moat is recorded in the south of the village (SMR 1051). It is shown on the 1818 Inclosure and the 1824 Tithe map as small ring with a single opening in the north-east.

Much of the development site is covered by the remains of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture.

Post-medieval

Few remaining houses in Papworth Everard, other than Papworth Hall, pre-date 1850. The establishment in 1918 of the Cambridgeshire Tuberculosis colony at Papworth Hall transformed the village. Renamed Papworth Village Settlement in 1927, it brought patients, their families and staff to the area. New accommodation was built. Workshops were established for such light industry as wood working, leather suitcase manufacture, and book binding, and amenities such as a village hall, theatre and sports ground provided.

4 METHODOLOGY

Nineteen trenches (a total length of nearly 1km) were opened by a mechanical excavator. The trenches were placed to test the cropmarks identified in aerial photographs, to trace where other cropmarks may continue into the area and to examine parts of the site where there is no previously known archaeology.

Archaeological features were recorded using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station. A digital base plan of the site was produced with Prosurveyor mapping software. A sample of archaeological features was partially excavated and recorded using the pro-forma recording sheets of the Archaeological Field Unit. Features were hand excavated and planned at a scale of 1:100. Sections and profiles across excavated features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A written record of all excavated features was made on single context recording sheets and the drawn and written record was supplemented by monochrome and colour photographs. In this report fill numbers are shown in plain text and cut numbers in bold. All site levels are above Ordnance Datum, based on the 56.93mOD benchmark on 76 Ermine St. South, Papworth Everard. Conditions for excavation and recording were variable, but being for the most part wet. Feature recognition was not affected but digging and recording were hampered by flooding of the trenches.

5 RESULTS

All trenches were sealed by between 0.2m and 0.4m of very dark grey clay silt topsoil/plough soil.

Trench 1 (see Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 1, 65m long, ran approximately east-west and was extended southward to investigate features noted in the middle of the trench. The trench was designed to investigate a subcircular cropmark and a possible entrance in a larger enclosure. Ditch 6 (1.5m wide and 0.8m deep), which ran north-south, extended approximately 6m south of the northern edge of trench 1. This ditch contained two fills, 4 and 5. The upper fill, 4, a dark olive brown, clay silt (0.5m deep) contained occasional chalk lumps and five sherds of pottery. The lower fill, 5, a very dark grey silty clay (0.3m deep) contained occasional small stones, one sherd of pottery and fragments of large and small mammal bone and teeth (one piece of bone had been burnt). A linear feature, 3 (0.3-0.5m wide and 0.2-0.3m deep) extended southwards from the northern edge of trench 1 and was cut into the top of ditch 6. Feature 3 extended beyond ditch 6 and terminates against ditch 10. Its relationship to ditch 10 is not clear but their fills were sufficiently similar to suggest they are contemporary and part of the same feature. Ditch 3 had steep, concave sides and a concave base. The fill, 2, was a black clay silt with occasional burnt stone fragments, pieces of slag and two sherds of pottery (one of which was pierced). Ditch 10 ran south-east-north-west from the southern end of ditch 3 for approximately 5m. The single fill, 9, was a black clay silt with occasional burnt stones. This fill also contained five potsherds and a hearth bottom with slag. Ditch 10 was cut at its western end by pit 12. This pit (1.1m long, 0.85m wide and 0.3m deep) had a very steep, almost vertical, southern side and a gently sloping convex northern side. The basal fill, 41, was an olive brown clay silt. The upper fill, 11, was a black clay silt with occasional stones and contained nine sherds of pottery and a rounded rubbing stone.

At the western end of trench 1 a linear feature crossed the trench from north-east-south-west. This ditch, 14, was over 2.4m long, 0.9m wide and over 0.4m deep. The sides were straight but the base was not reached because of flooding. The excavated fill, 13, was an olive brown silty clay with occasional small stones. No finds were recovered from this fill and it had no stratigraphic relationship with other features in the trench.

To the east of the central area a beam slot (8) crossed the trench on a north-north-west-south-south-east orientation. It was over 2m long, 0.35m wide and 0.2m deep and contained two fills, 7 and 42 (Fig. 4). The primary fill, 42, was a very dark grey/black clay silt. The secondary fill, 7, was a very dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional stones (some burnt), fragments of animal bone, daub and two potsherds.

Six other linear features crossed the trench. These were all oriented north-west-south-east, evenly spaced and parallel. These features had similar fills which differed from the fills of archaeological features. These have been interpreted as the remains of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture. All trenches except

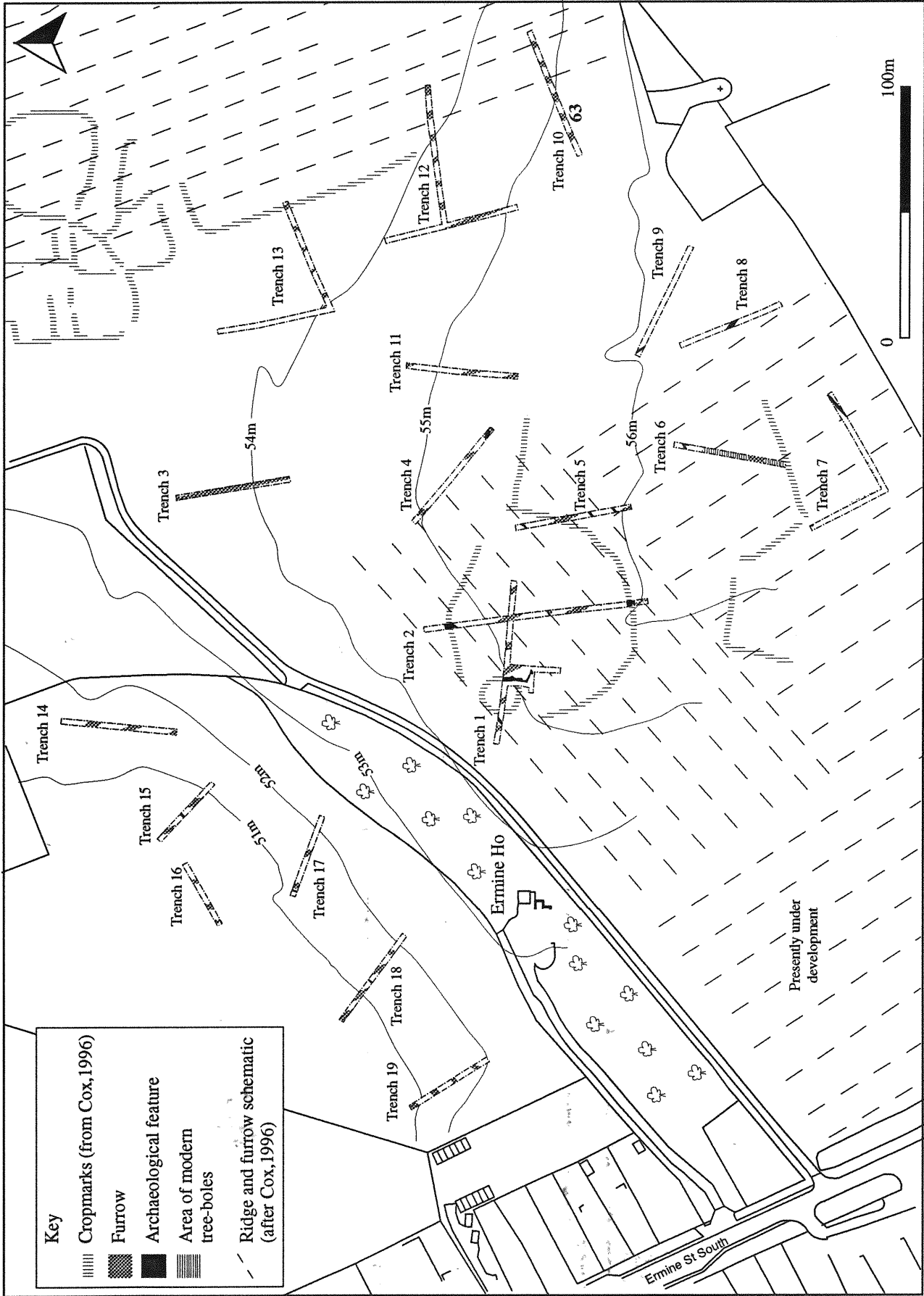


Figure 2 Trench plan

trenches 6, 7 and 8 contained similar furrows. These were noted in the plans and sections but were not excavated.

Trench 2 (see Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 2, 90m long, ran approximately north-south and crossed Trench 1. The apparently sub-circular enclosure seen in the aerial photographs was observed crossing trench 2 at its northern and southern ends. At the northern end of trench 2 two intercutting linear features were noted. The earliest ditch, **17** (over 2m long, 3.5m wide and 0.9m deep), was oriented approximately east-west. It had a shallow, slightly stepped southern side and a steep, even northern side. The base appeared to be flat but had been cut by the later ditch **46**. The single fill (16) of ditch **17** was a light olive brown silty clay with occasional chalk lumps and occasional small stones. Ditch **17** was cut by ditch, **46** which was on a north-east-south-west orientation. This ditch was over 2m long, 2.3m wide and 0.6m deep and contained a single fill, **15**. This fill was a dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional stones, nine sherds of pottery and fragments of animal bone. Crossing the top of this complex of ditches was the remnant of a furrow (**45**) containing a dark olive brown clay silt which was sealed by the overlying topsoil. No finds were recovered from this furrow.

To the south of the point where trench 2 crossed trench 1 a narrow, slightly curved linear feature crossed the trench. This shallow gully, **19** (0.6m wide and 0.26m deep with concave sides and base) contained two fills. The primary fill, **18**, was a very dark greyish brown clay silt which contained 1 large pottery sherd and a fragment of butchered bone. The secondary fill, **54**, was a dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional chalk lumps and flecks. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Immediately to the south of gully **19** was a small pit **21**. This pit (diameter 0.6m, 0.24m deep) had a vertical southern edge, a more gently sloping northern edge and the even base sloped to the south. The single fill (**20**) was a very dark greyish brown clay silt.

An isolated posthole was noted in the trench. This posthole, **23** (0.38m deep with a diameter of 0.4m), had steeply sloping, even sides and contained two fills. The lower fill, **66**, 0.3m deep was a dark greyish brown clay silt. This was sealed by the upper fill, **22**, an irregular layer of black clay silt with a moderate number of burnt stones and five very small and abraded sherds of pottery.

At the southern end of trench 2 the southern extension of the enclosure ditch was excavated. This section, **48**, was 3.2m wide 0.81m deep with a steep, even southern side and a more gently sloping northern side. The base appears flat but has been cut by ditch **38**. The fill (**47**) of ditch **48**, was a light olive brown silty clay with occasional chalk lumps and occasional stones. The enclosure ditch again appears to have been re-cut with a narrower, much steeper ditch replacing the earlier ditch. This re-cut ditch, **38**, 1.9m wide and 1m deep, contained fill **37** which was a dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional stones, two small abraded sherds of pottery and two pieces of slag.

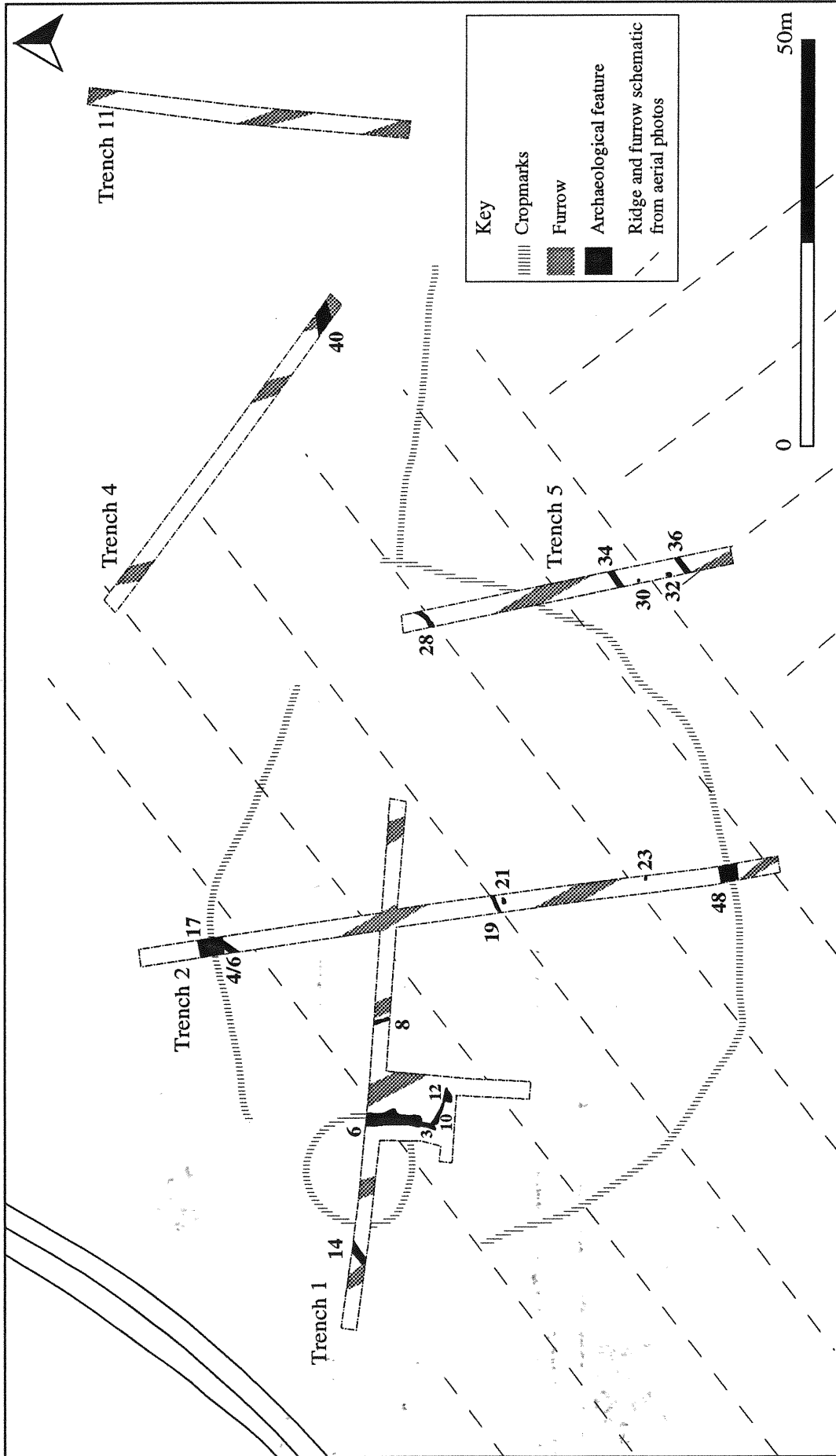


Figure 3 Detail of Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 11.

Trench 3

Trench 3, 45m long, was oriented approximately north-south and a furrow ran obliquely along the trench. No other archaeological features were noted in this trench.

Trench 4 (Figs 2 and 3)

Trench 4, 49m long, oriented north-west-south-east contained the remnants of three furrows and one archaeological feature. This ditch, **40**, was oriented approximately east-west, over 3m long and 2m wide and contained a single fill, **39**, (a very dark greyish brown clay silt) which contained two sherds of pottery, one of which was a Roman greyware.

Trench 5 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 5, 47m long, was parallel to trench 2 and just over 30m to the east. At the northern end of the trench a curvilinear gully, **28**, was excavated. This was 0.54m wide and 0.2m deep and contained two fills. The lower fill, **27**, was an olive brown clay silt and the upper fill was a very dark greyish brown clay silt with one sherd of pottery and a fragment of bone and four large stones. At the southern end of the trench two parallel ditches (**34** and **36**) were noted. These crossed the trench from north-east to south-west. Ditch **34** (0.8m wide, 0.45m deep) had almost vertical sides and a concave base. This ditch had one fill, **33**, a dark olive brown clay silt. Ditch **36** (0.8m wide and 0.5m deep) contained three fills. The primary fill, **44**, was a dark olive brown clay silt. The secondary fill, **43**, was a dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional chalk flecks. The upper fill, **35**, a dark olive brown clay silt with occasional chalk lumps. No finds were recovered from either of these features.

Between these two ditches were a posthole and a shallow pit (**30** and **32**) respectively. Again, neither of these features contained artefactual material. The posthole (0.4m wide and 0.35m deep) contained a single fill, **29**, which was a dark greyish brown clay silt. The shallow pit to the south, 0.6m wide and 0.16m deep, contained a similar dark greyish brown clay silt fill, **31**.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2)

Trench 6, 45m long, had been heavily disturbed by tree roots. One archaeological feature was excavated at the northern end of the trench. An east-west oriented ditch, **52** (0.8m wide and 0.3m deep) crossed the trench. It had concave sides and base and the fill, **51**, was a dark olive brown clay silt.

Trench 7 (Fig. 2)

Trench 7, was L-shaped (total length 79m) and contained only one archaeological feature, **61**. This ditch was oriented north-east-south-west and was visible at the eastern end of the trench. It had concave sides and base and contained a dark greyish brown clay silt with occasional small stones. No artefactual remains were recovered.

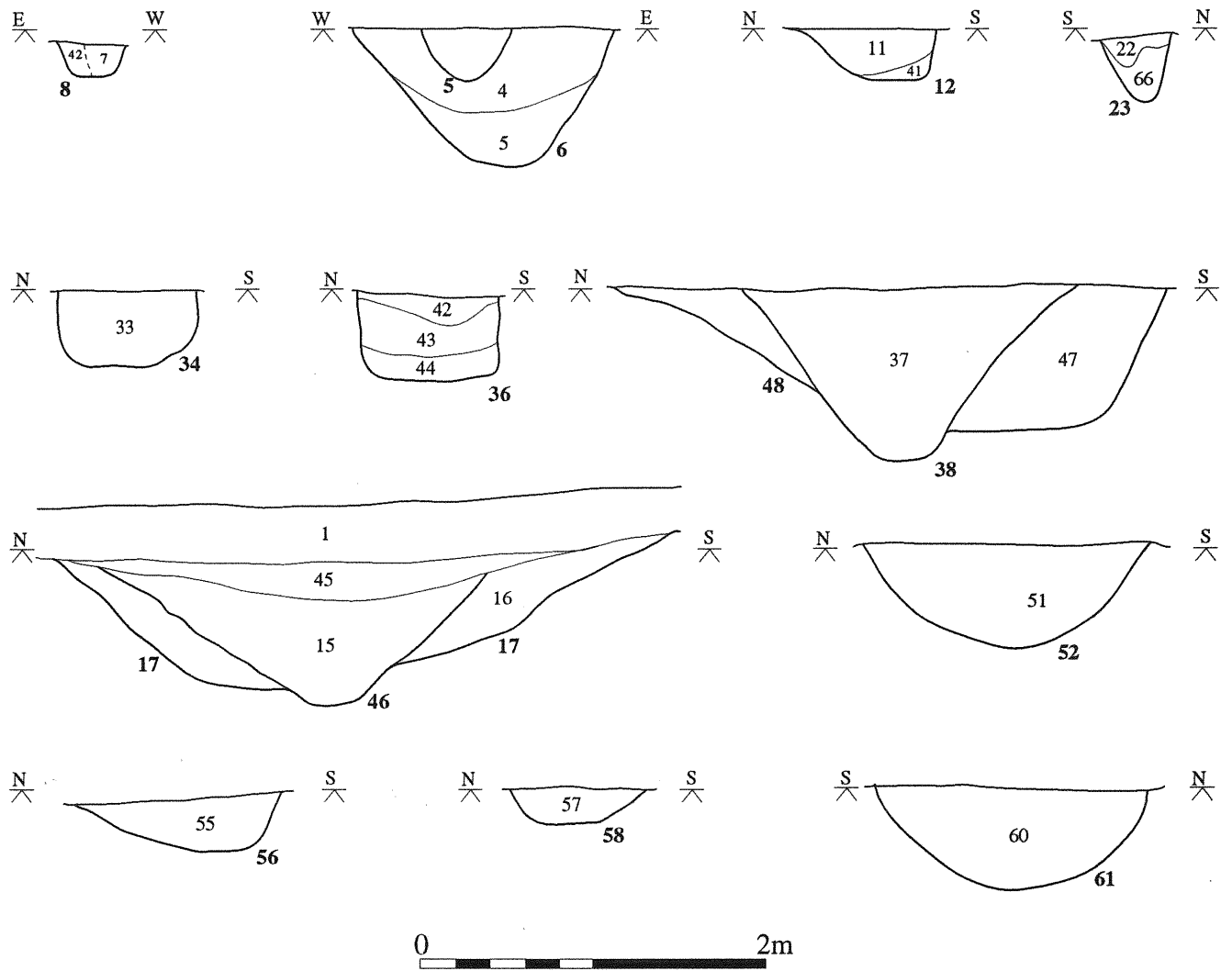


Figure 4 Sections

Trench 8

Trench 8, 43m long, contained remnants of ridge and furrow agriculture but no other archaeological features.

Trench 9 (Fig. 2)

Trench 9, 49m long contained only one archaeological feature and no evidence of ridge and furrow. Ditch **50** crossed the northern end of trench 9 in an approximately north-south direction. It was 0.8m wide and 0.4m deep with a very dark greyish brown fill.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2)

Trench 10, 53m long, contained the remnants of six furrows and one linear feature which had been cut by a furrow. This ditch, **63**, was not fully excavated. The uppermost fill was a dark olive brown clay silt with occasional chalk flecks.

Trenches 11, 12 and 13 (Fig. 2)

Trench 11, 45m long, contained the base of three furrows. The linear feature **40**, visible in trench 4, did not continue eastwards into trench 11. Similarly trench 12 (T-shaped, north-south 54m and east-west 56m long) contained the base of seven furrows. Trench 13 (L-shaped, with 48m and 47m long extensions) contained the base of five furrows which were continuations of some of those seen in trench 12.

North of Ermine House Wood

Trenches 14 to 19 were excavated in the field to the north of Ermine House and were located to test what appeared, from aerial photographs, to be a blank area.

Trench 14 (46m long), trench 16 (28m long) and trench 19 (37m long) contained no archaeological features other than the base of furrows.

Trench 15 (Fig. 2)

Trench 15 (31m long) contained the base of two furrows and one ditch, **56**, 1.12m wide and 0.3m deep. Its fill, **55**, was a dark greyish brown clay silt and contained no artefactual material.

Trench 17 (Fig. 2)

Trench 17 (34m long) also contained the base of two furrows and one narrow ditch. Ditch **65** (less than 1m wide) at the western end of the trench, oriented approximately north-south, had a steep southern edge and a more gradually sloping northern edge and a concave base. The ditch was not fully excavated but its upper fill, **64**, was an olive brown clay silt with occasional chalk flecks and small stones.

Trench 18 (Fig. 2)

Trench 18 (42m long) contained the base of four furrows and one narrow ditch which crossed the middle of the trench on a north-east–south-west orientation. This ditch, 58 (0.8m wide and 0.2m deep) had a steep northern edge, a shallow southern edge and a concave base. The fill, 57, was a dark olive brown clay silt with occasional small stones.

6 DISCUSSION

The area investigated by trenches 14 to 19 (to the north of Ermine House Wood) contained little apart from medieval furrows from strip cultivation. The ridges had been ploughed out and flattened but the width, orientation and spacing was visible on the ground surface in the growth pattern of the grass and weeds. The orientation was generally north–south except in trench 19 where it ran roughly north-east–south-west. Three of the trenches in this area contained shallow linear features running on different alignments. No dating evidence was recovered from them.

A prominent pattern of medieval furrows was evident in many of the trenches in the eastern part of the field to the south-east of Ermine House. In the western part of this area, where cropmarks were identified, significant archaeological remains were identified, particularly in trenches 1, 2, 4 and 5 (Fig. 3). The apparent discrepancy between cropmark ridge and furrow in a south-west–north-east direction with the archaeological evidence in these trenches for medieval furrows running north-west–south-east (continuing the alignment of ridge and furrow from the south-east part of the field) may be attributable to two phases of ploughing with the medieval visible as archaeology, and more recent transient cultivation visible still as cropmarks.

The apparent sub-circular enclosure seen in the aerial photographs was observed crossing trench 2 at either end. Excavation revealed two phases of ditch with significantly different profiles. A possible change of use has been suggested as the reason for the recutting of this ditch with a different profile. The shallow slope of the inner edge of the ditch may have been to allow animals access to water in the ditch. This was then recut with a steeper profile when the enclosure would have become more defensive in nature. Iron Age pottery was recovered from the excavated sections of these ditches along with small quantities of animal bone.

On the western side of the large enclosure a smaller, sub-circular, feature was identified in the aerial photographs. When exposed in trench 1 this seemed to be closer to sub-rectangular in plan. Three sides of the possible enclosure were identified and investigated. Iron Age pottery, animal bone and burnt stone were recovered from these features. This smaller enclosure appeared to be a later feature than the larger one but the pottery from their fills was very similar. Smithing slag was found in the fill of the southern side of the smaller enclosure.

In spite of its location to test for the eastern edge of the main enclosure no ditch was identified in trench 5. Other features in this trench were excavated

including a narrow curvilinear feature which may have formed part of a round house. Again Iron Age pottery and animal bone was recovered from this feature. The two parallel ditches at the southern end of trench 5 would have lain outside the main enclosure. These, along with the pair of parallel ditches in trench 11 are evidence of activity outside the enclosure. The ditch at the southern end of trench 4 may represent an eastern entrance to the enclosure, as it is approximately parallel to a cropmark ditch leading off from the enclosure (Fig. 3).

The enclosure itself appears to have been remodelled on at least one occasion, and internal features suggests it served as an area for domestic and industrial activity. It is also possible that for one period the enclosure may have been used for stock holding.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The site has revealed further evidence for pre-Roman settlement on the local clays. This settlement would appear to be more substantial and permanent than the archaeological evaluation to the south-east would suggest (Alexander 1998).

Great potential exists for further structural remains to survive within the large enclosure and this area should be considered for further investigation. Trenching to determine the route and function of parallel linear features outside the enclosure should also be considered.

Dating of the site depends on a sparse collection of pottery sherds. Rapid examination of the pottery revealed vessels with a variety of different fabrics, including shell tempered wares. Many of the sherds were abraded, probably as a result of the land having been ploughed since the medieval period. Most of the pottery appears to be Bronze Age or early Iron Age with abraded Roman greyware sherds coming from the fill of the enclosure ditch.

Metallurgical debris, probably a hearth base, and smithing slag was recovered from fills 2, 9 and 37. If contemporary with the features and pottery this activity must be Iron Age in date, and if so it is of considerable importance due to the rarity of known sites with such direct evidence for iron working.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Maps consulted

- OS map 1887, XXXVIII.7
Title map 1824
Inclosure map 1818, Q/RDC42

APPENDIX I

CONTEXT LIST

Trench	Context no	Description	Finds
1	1	Plough soil	
1	2	fill of 3	2 sherds, slag
1	3	narrow N-S linear	
1	4	upper fill of 6	4 sherds
1	5	lower fill of 6	1 sherd, animal bone
1	6	ditch butt-end	
1	7	fill of 8	2 sherds, animal bone, daub, stone
1	8	narrow segmented N-S linear	
1	9	fill of 10	5 sherds, hearth bottom, burnt stone
1	10	narrow E-W linear	
1	11	fill of 12	9 sherds, 'rubbing' stone
1	12	pit cutting linear 10	
1	13	fill of 14	
1	14	NE-SW linear	
2	15	upper fill of 17	9 small sherds, animal bone
2	16	lower fill of 17	
2	17	enclosure ditch	
2	18	fill of 19	1 sherd, large mammal bone
2	19	narrow, slightly curved linear	
2	20	fill of 21	
2	21	small pit adjacent to 19	
2	22	upper fill of 23	5 very small sherds
2	23	post hole	
5	24	fill of 25	
5	25	butt-end of narrow N-S linear	
5	26	upper fill of 28	1 sherd, animal bone, stone
5	27	lower fill of 28	
5	28	curvilinear ditch	
5	29	fill of 30	
5	30	post hole	
5	31	fill of 32	
5	32	shallow pit	
5	33	fill of 34	
5	34	ditch parallel to 36	
5	35	fill of 36	
5	36	ditch parallel to 34	
2	37	fill of 38	2 small sherds, slag
2	38	enclosure ditch	
4	39	fill of 40	2 sherds
4	40	ditch, possibly enclosure ditch	
1	41	lower fill of 12	
1	42	lower fill of 8	
5	43	middle fill of 36	
5	44	lower fill of 36	
2	45	furrow in top of 46	
2	46	re-cut of enclosure ditch	
1	47	fill of 48	

1	48	enclosure ditch
9	49	fill of 50
9	50	N-S ditch
6	51	fill of 52
6	52	E-W ditch
15	53	fill of 54
15	54	
15	55	fill of ditch 56
15	56	ditch
18	57	fill of 58
18	58	ditch
2	59	fill of 19
7	60	fill of 61
7	61	ditch
10	62	fill of 63
10	63	butt-ended linear
17	64	fill of 65
17	65	narrow linear
2	66	lower fill of 23



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Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
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