Archaeological Field Unit

NEOLITHIC, BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE ACTIVITY ON LAND ADJACENT TO HAUXTON ROAD, TRUMPINGTON, CAMBRIDGE

The Proposed Magistrates Court Site

Mark Hinman

March 2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 708

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SUMMARY

The subject site was located on the south-western edge of Trumpington adjacent to the Park and Ride facility. Archaeological excavation on the proposed site of the new Magistrates Courts was undertaken during June and July 2001. This excavation forms one part of an integrated site archive covering the remains of an extensive and highly significant prehistoric site that is now known to extend southwards across the site of the Park and Ride and westwards towards the Cam into land currently occupied by the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) and Monsanto.

Excavations at the Magistrates Court site revealed archaeological evidence of human activity from earlier prehistory to the post-medieval period. Significant archaeological remains on this part of the site consisted of a series of small pits and postholes dateable to the Eary to Middle Iron Age. Ceramics from these features were made and deposited between the 6th and 2nd centuries BC. The presence of human skull fragments and other items such as fragments of grinding stones and loomweights is indicative of selective, ritual deposition within certain features.

Similar types of features were investigated during related excavations at the Park and Ride site where almost 600 pits dateable predominantly to the Early and Middle Iron Age (c.700-300 BC and c.300-100 BC respectively) were excavated. Five enclosures were sample excavated and a number of specific foci were identified, including mortuary enclosures, four post structures, clusters of pits and at least two possible shrines. The presence of a few sherds of pottery possibly dateable to the Roman period was noted although further work is required before a definitive end date for activity on the site can be firmly established.

The Trumpington site has yielded one of the largest assemblages of Early to Middle Iron Age pottery in the region and a considerable quantity of well preserved animal bone. Furthermore the site has produced an unusually large assemblage of pins, brooches and other objects of metalwork and worked bone compared to known domestic sites. The unusual character of the site is further emphasised by the presence of what appears to be a unique concentration of special and unusual deposits of human and animal remains which, it is currently thought, occurred in greater frequency than on any other sites in the region. The combined evidence from the enclosures (including their date and alignment) and those of related features (such as four post structures, shrines and mortuary enclosures) and the spatial patterning of the associated pit clusters is not yet known on any other Early to Middle Iron Age sites in eastern England (J.D. Hill pers. comm.).

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TL 4380/5400

1 INTRODUCTION

The site of the proposed Magistrates Court was located on the south-western edge of Trumpington, adjacent to Hauxton Road to the east and the Park and Ride facility to the south. The site, which covered an area of *c*.0.25ha (Fig. 1) was centred upon TL 4380/5400.

The purpose of the work was to preserve by record those archaeological remains present prior to the development of the site, which at the time of excavation was the intended location of new Magistrates Courts for the city (Area D) (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council in response to a brief set by Andy Thomas of the County Archaeology Office (CAO) and in accordance with a specification drawn up by Mark Hinman of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU).

The condition placed on the planning consent required the investigation of the whole area effected by development due to the presence of known an highly significant archaeological remains immediately adjacent and to the south and west of the subject site. The excavation was conducted by the AFU in June and July 2001.

Additional stages of work which ran consecutively and occasionally concurrently between January 16th and August 3rd 2001 were carried out on land immediately adjacent to the southern limit of the development at the Park and Ride site (Areas A, B, C, F and G), and on the John Lewis Partnership development (Area E) 100m to the west where fieldwork was finally concluded in February 2003.

These additional works were undertaken as part of an integrated programme of investigation relating to the underlying archaeological site rather than individual development proposals. The same site code (CAMPBI) and recording system were employed throughout the project.

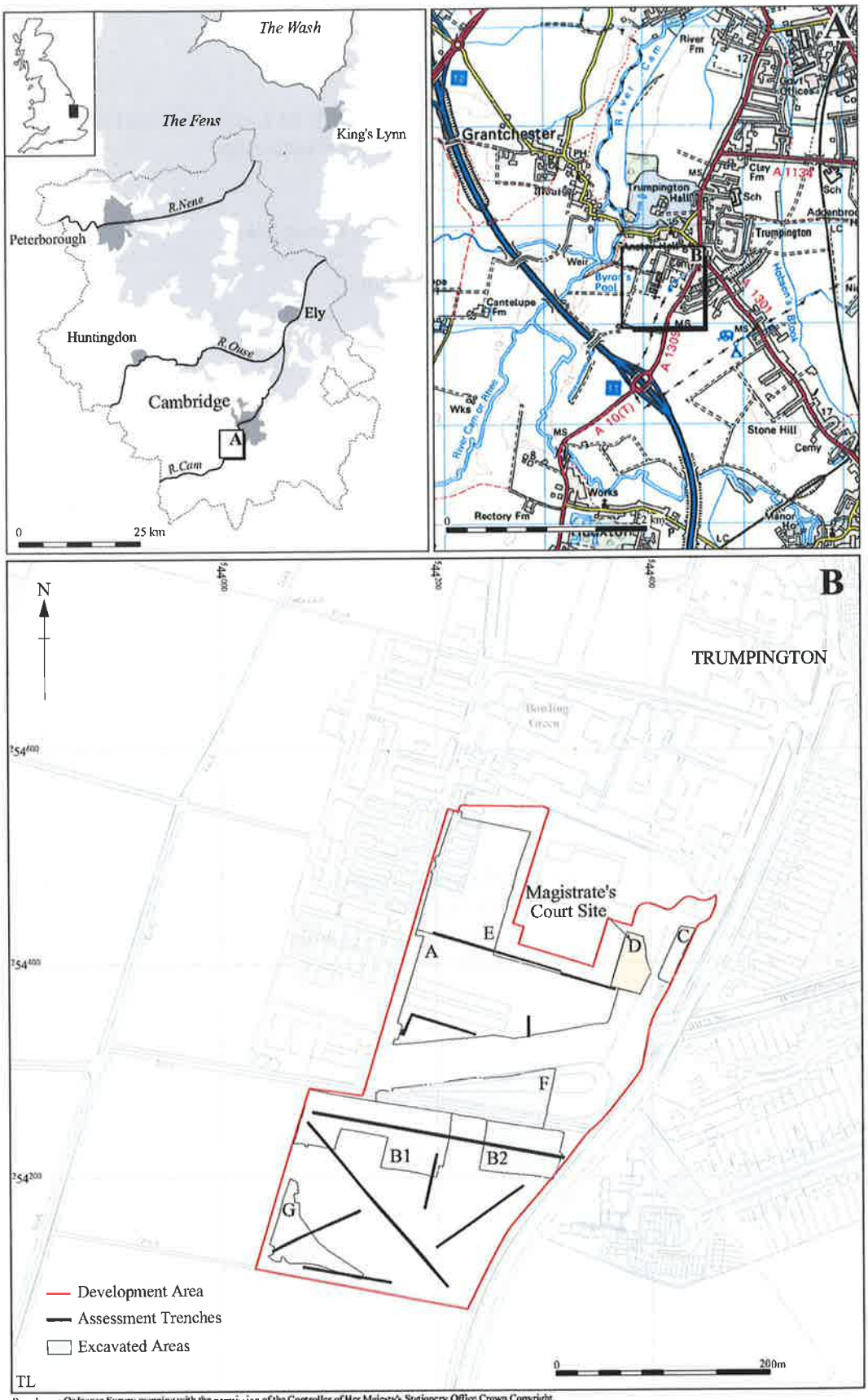

Figure 1 *Site location showing development area, location of trenches and excavation areas with Magistrate's Court site (orange).*

This report details the specific findings of the excavations within the bounds of the Magistrates Court site and includes a consideration of these results with reference to the interpretation of the highly important archaeological site of which they form an integral part. This report will also consider the implications of recent findings at this location for current understanding of the Trumpington site and its situation within the local landscape. The results from this area have been fully integrated with the rest of the CAMPBI project archive which will form the basis for further analytical study as defined within the post-excavation assessment for the site (Hinman 2004a).

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The Natural Landscape

The Magistrates Court development lies on the Pleistocene Third Terrace gravels, although the archaeological site incorporating the Trumpington Park and Ride site straddles a geological boundary. The underlying Cretaceous Lower Chalk reaches the surface in the south-west corner of the area.

The site was situated on the north-eastern extent of a spur of relatively flat land that lies above the 15m contour extending westwards towards the River Cam (Fig. 2). This spur appears to be raised slightly higher than the surrounding landscape. From at least as early as the Bronze Age, topography seems to have been a significant factor in determining the types of activity taking place in the vicinity and in defining the limits of activity on the site during the Iron Age.

The landscape to the west of the Gog Magog hills owes its current appearance to events at the end of the last Ice Age. To the east of the site, at the foot of the hills, a depression was formed by the thawing of a shallow ice lake *c.*12,000 BP (Steve Boreham pers. comm.). The melt waters from this lake exited through a newly formed break in the encircling hills, creating a broad but shallow linear depression or erosion channel, aligned east-west and terminating perpendicular to the current course of the River Cam adjacent to the site.

As a result of this thaw the aquifer at the base of the middle chalk was exposed forming springs at intervals around the base of the Gog Magog Hills. A number of these springs remain active today, the best known being located at Nine Wells.

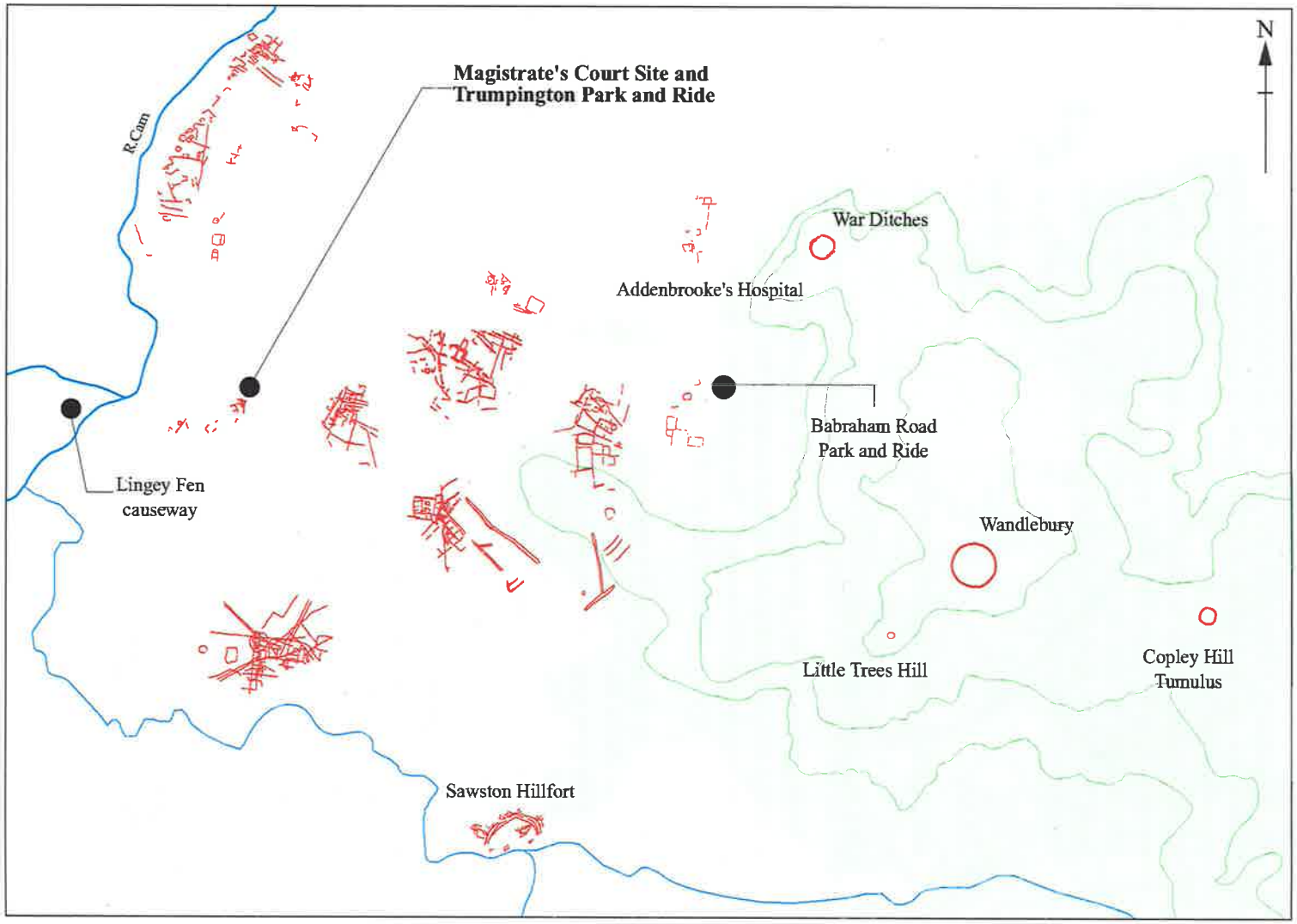

Figure 2 *The archaeological landscape*

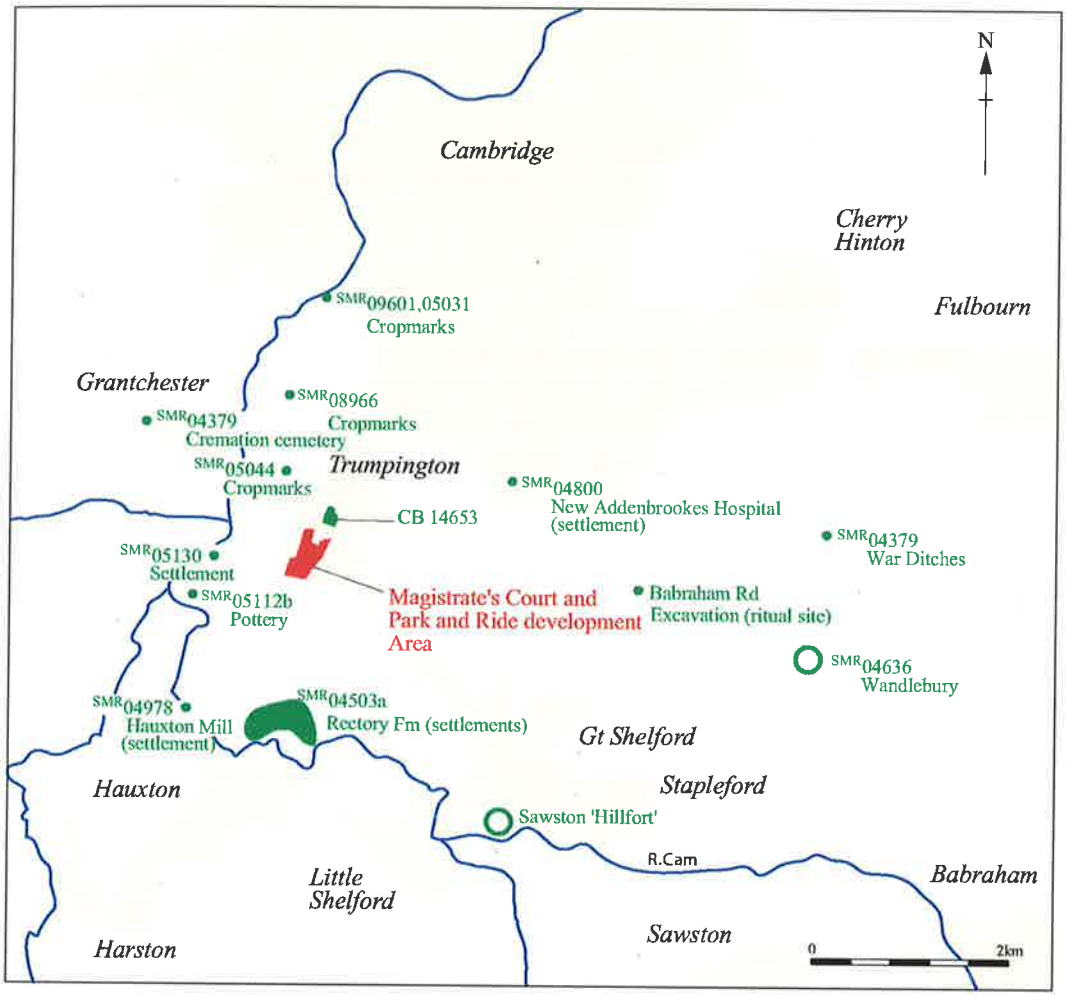

Figure 3 *Site location showing known sites in the local area*

This lies at the tip of the southern crescent of enclosing hills, due east of the subject site at Trumpington, adjacent to the naturally formed 'holloway' noted above.

2.2 The Archaeological Landscape

The major features of this landscape have remained largely unaltered since the end of the last Ice Age and would therefore have been familiar to our prehistoric forbears providing the template upon which they once played out their lives and sought to interpret their world. Due to the combined effect of tree clearance and subtle climatic change from the end of the Neolithic period onwards this landscape was covered by open grasslands with occasional stands of trees.

By the later Iron Age the picture that emerges is of occasional farmsteads and small settlements set within an increasingly static managed agricultural environment, populated by domesticated species dominated by cattle. This is by no means the full picture, however, and any consideration of site specific events must be undertaken with reference to activities at the known monuments that overlook this landscape as well as other special places with histories and associations that stretch back into earlier prehistory.

On the Gog Magog hills to the south-east stands Wandlebury (Figs 2 & 3), a ring monument, and immediately to the north the equally enigmatic 'War Ditches' the former site of which has now been almost entirely destroyed by chalk extraction. Limited excavation of both sites since the 1890s has indicated significant levels of earlier prehistoric activity. The functional interpretation of these Iron Age monuments as hill forts is increasingly being questioned (Evans 1991; Hill 1995; Hinman 2001) and the potential of these locations as foci for more esoteric, perhaps ceremonial activities may be seen to be supported by the results of recent evaluations and excavations in the vicinity.

Evidence from previous excavation and evaluation projects in the vicinity indicates that physical characteristics of the local landscape exerted a profound influence on land use and it was this link that informed or perhaps dictated the usage of specific points or perception of appropriate places in the landscape throughout the prehistoric period. The results of excavation on the site of the Babraham Road Park and Ride (Hinman 2001 and forthcoming) combined with the findings of the current project suggest that the space enclosed by the western arm of the Gog Magog hills and the naturally formed avenue leading from the river towards the base of the hills held a special significance for these earlier populations. This point is emphasised by the absence of recognisable evidence for 'everyday' activities from both these sites and the discovery of a range of highly significant stone and metal items from the river (Crummy in Hinman 2004a). In contrast, the results of extensive trial trenching within the surrounding area (Kemp 1993; Hinman 1999; Hatton and Hinman 2000) have produced considerable evidence of domestic, settlement-related activity and agricultural

practice. Data available from aerial photographs showing cropmarks (Palmer 1997, 1999) emphasises the extensive pattern of settlement and land use within the environs, making the recent discoveries all the more remarkable and important.

3 THE SITE IN CONTEXT

In order to appreciate more fully the remains of what appears to be a highly significant and unusual site at the Magistrates Court/JLP/Trumpington Park and Ride detailed consideration of the surrounding landscape is essential. The area on the south side of modern Cambridge is rich with archaeological finds and sites dating from the Mesolithic onwards (Fig. 3). Early sites in the area include a possible causewayed camp and bowl barrow at Littletrees Hill, 5km east-south-east of the subject area (SMR 24422, SMR 05056).

It is notable that there is a distinct blank on the SMR map covering approximately 500m north and north-west of Maris Lane/Grantchester Road. This area is parkland surrounding Trumpington Hall, with wooded areas which have therefore shown nothing on aerial photographs, whilst the lack of development has precluded chance finds which might be expected from fields under ploughing.

3.1 The Archaeological Context

3.1.1 Prehistoric

Palaeolithic flints were found in a gravel quarry on the opposite side of Hauxton Road to the study area (SMR 04415). Flint scatters have been found within 2km of the subject site to the north-west (SMR 04738) and to the south-west (SMR 04376, a, b). Further away to the south-east, numerous flint scatters and stray finds, including polished axes, have been found along the chalk below Clarke's Hill, and to the north of Granham's Farm, towards Littletrees Hill, Wandlebury and onto the Gog Magog Golf Course (SMR 04882, 04880, 04893, 04791, 04891, 04892, 05058, 00969, 05059, 05016, 04851, 05012, 05011, 10944, 05088, 05052, 05017).

Mesolithic and later axes were found 800m west of the study area (SMR 05112a). Prehistoric pottery was found in 1970 adjacent to Hauxton Road (SMR 04879) while in the same year pottery and bone were found in a pit 100m to the south-west (SMR 04414).

During 1977, rescue excavation along the route of the M11 construction corridor *c.* 1.5km south of the subject site within Lingey Fen identified evidence for two

wooden causeways dated by dendrochronology to 1000–900BC (Pullinger *et al* 1981).

The Metal Detector Assemblage
A highly significant assemblage of metalwork dateable to the Bronze Age was brought to the attention of the excavation team. This collection had been amassed by a local detectorist over a period of many years and adds significantly to the background information available for the local area (see Crummy in Hinman, 2004a, Section II, 1.3). This material had not been noted previously on the SMR but was of such significance both in its own right and as contextual background to these excavations that a full drawn record was included in the post-excavation assessment report (Hinman, 2004a, Section II, Figs 19-21).

3.1.2 Iron Age

Of particular interest is the distribution of sites spanning the Iron Age. War Ditches (Hughes 1903; Lethbridge 1948; White 1963-4; SMR 04963) and Wandlebury (Hartley 1957; French and Gdaniac 1995; French 2003; SM 24406; SMR 04636) lie in the eastern part of this landscape, some 4km east of the study area. To the west of these sites is the recently discovered ritual site at Babraham Road, which has its origins in the Neolithic, with further evidence of use in the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods (Hinman 1999, 2001 and forthcoming). Further west are the Rectory Farm (Alexander, Legge and Trump, 1975, 1975-6, 1978, SMR 04503a) and Hauxton Mill (SMR 04978) 'settlement' sites. To the north of these, two further probable settlement sites lie south-west of Trumpington itself (SMR 05112, 05130). About 2km to the north-west, a cremation cemetery of the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age was found on the edge of Grantchester (SMR 04379), while the traces of postholes, pits, ring gullies and ditches containing Iron Age ceramics were revealed as a result of evaluation at Barton Road, Godmanchester (SMR CB15026) and a further settlement site (SMR 04800) lies 2km to the north-east of the subject area, beneath the modern hospital of New Addenbrookes (Cra'ster 1969).

A hundred metres west of the subject area, an excavation was carried out in 1969 on an Iron Age site seen as a cropmark in aerial photographs since 1954 (SMR 05130). Iain Davidson of Selwyn College, Cambridge and Godfrey J. Curtis of the then PBI jointly conducted the excavation, with the stated aim of assessing the economic potential of an area during the Iron Age (Davidson and Curtis 1973). They targeted the large ring feature seen in aerial photographs, and area excavation subsequently revealed three phases of ditched enclosure, the earliest of which cut a narrow linear ditch on a different alignment. The dating of the earliest phase of the circular enclosure is based upon a single undiagnostic sherd of Iron Age pottery, the date of which could not be refined further due to its size. The final phase of the circular enclosure contained Roman pottery of the 1st century AD, as well as handmade Iron Age wares.

Iron Age pottery was also found in a gravel pit opposite the modern cemetery in Trumpington in 1907 to which a brooch of Halstatt II type is thought to be related (SMR 05143). A kilometre to the west of the study area, Iron Age pottery was found at SMR 05112b.

3.1.3 Roman

There are extensive cropmarks across a swathe of landscape to the north of Hauxton and Great Shelford, and south-west of Trumpington, some of which have been positively dated to the Roman period (SAMs 57, 58, 74 and 75) and others of which remain undated (SMR 08357, 08339, 08349). The Roman cropmarks differ in their alignments to other undated cropmarks in the same area, which have a similar alignment to the modern field boundaries. The implication of a later origin for these undated cropmarks may be misleading, however, as many of these boundaries betray ancient beginnings in their association with nearby prehistoric monuments and finds scatters.

Roman remains were found just north of the site (SMR 04878) in the grounds of Anstey Hall. At Edmonsoles, *c.*800m–1000m west of the present site, the foundations of at least two Roman buildings were found: a circular structure of the 2nd century and a winged corridor structure of the 4th century (SMR 05112).

3.1.4 Anglo-Saxon

A silver Anglo-Saxon penny of Edward the Confessor was found 300m east of the site, just south of the railway bridge on Shelford Road (SMR 05157). Recent excavations *c.*350m north of the subject site revealed the western extent of a series of ditched enclosures (CB 14653). Artefactual material from these enclosures was limited to several sherds of heavily abraded Roman pottery found in association with relatively well preserved fragments of Niedermendig lava-quern. An Early to Middle Saxon date has been suggested for these enclosures (Hatton & Hinman 2000).

3.1.5 Medieval

The 13th and 14th century church of SS Mary and Michael, Trumpington lies 500m north of the study area (SMR 04883). A medieval coin was found 300m west of the site, on the east side of Shelford Road (SMR 04874). A silver long cross farthing (Edward IV, 1461–1483, minted in Waterford, Ireland) was recovered from excavations (CB 14653) *c.*350m north of the subject site (Hatton & Hinman 2000).

Figure 4 *The development areas showing cropmarks (shown in red) and positions of SMR sites in the immediate area.*

3.1.6 Post-medieval

The Old House on the south-east side of Church Lane, which lies 500m north of the subject site, has its origins in the 16th century (SMR 05091) and Anstey Hall itself dates from the late 17th century (SMR 05174).

3.1.7 Undated

Undated burials were also found immediately north of the site in the grounds of Anstey Hall (SMR 04878a).

3.2 Archaeology on the Subject Site

In 1978, during soil improvement operations, a series of archaeological features was briefly exposed and rapidly recorded (SMR 09716) adjacent to the western limit of the Magistrates Court site. Three pits containing varying quantities of flint-tempered Iron Age pottery, animal bone, burnt clay and burnt stones were uncovered, adjacent to four linear features, several metres apart, all running north to south. One of the pits contained several burnt stones around the edge, one of which was probably a rubbing stone for a saddle quern. This feature was interpreted as a hearth.

Three of the linear features were approximately 0.5m wide, while the fourth was 1.5m wide and turned a right angle to the west within the exposed area. Possible traces of a marl floor were also observed, and stray finds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery were made across the area.

Also mentioned under the same SMR entry is an Iron Age pit found in a glasshouse just to the west of the finds mentioned above, and pits containing burnt stones found just to the east when a tennis court was built in the 1970s. Subsequently, in 1989, the large grain-processing building was erected in the same location, although no further features were uncovered.

4 METHODOLOGY

All soil above the archaeological horizon (natural geology) was removed with a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features were excavated by hand. All features/deposits were recorded using the AFU single context system. Each distinct cut, fill and layer were allocated individual numbers. Cross-checking of the written and drawn record was conducted on a regular basis throughout the project. A system of block allocation

for context and sample numbers was adopted in order to define the findings of individual areas. The environmental and artefactual sampling strategies were necessarily reactive given the extensive nature of the remains encountered. Bulk samples for environmental processing were taken from all Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age features throughout the excavation.

The whole ground surface of the development area and the spoil heaps generated through machine stripping and feature excavation were repeatedly swept by a local metal detector user throughout the duration of the fieldwork project.

Due to the proven presence of highly significant archaeological remains within the area of the Park and Ride development, trial trenching was deemed unnecessary within the area of the Magistrates Court site which was stripped and prepared for open area excavation.

Where possible, individual features have been sorted by period, phase and group, although analysis may highlight some amendments at this level. Details of each individual cut and fill by feature is included.

During the post-excavation programme the site record was checked for internal consistency and preliminary interpretation, and has been fully cross referenced. Drawn records in pencil have been fully checked and cross referenced with the context record. The drawn record has also been combined with electronic survey data to produce a definitive site plan using AutoCAD and Adobe Illustrator software. The photographic record has been labelled and fully cross referenced with the context record.

The full written record has been entered onto a relational database constructed using Microsoft Access. Broad period and group names and interpretative information have been added to the context archive and re-checked for internal consistency prior to the production of this report.

All site records are held currently at the AFU headquarters at Fulbourn, the artefacts are currently held by the relevant artefact specialists and stored under the site code CAM PBI 01.

All categories of finds and samples recovered from the excavations were processed by the AFU's finds and environmental staff prior to dispatch to the relevant member of the specialist team.

5 FIELDWORK RESULTS

5.1 Terminology and Nomenclature

The history of the site is detailed and discussed within a series of six broad chronological periods:

Period 1: Mesolithic	10000-4000BC
Period 2: Neolithic	4000BC-2350BC
Period 3: Bronze Age	2350BC-700BC
Period 4: Iron Age	800BC-AD43
Period 5: Medieval	1066-1539
Period 6: Post-Medieval/Modern	1540-1900/1900+

Each period varies in duration as determined by the date ranges attributed to the artefactual assemblages recovered from stratigraphically and morphologically coherent episodes evident from the surviving record.

The profiles or cut numbers allocated to excavated negative features such as pits or ditch segments are highlighted in bold type *e.g.* **123**. The fills of excavated features such as pits or ditch segments are presented in plain type *e.g.* 456. Surfaces and spreads of material or layers are enclosed within brackets *e.g.* (789). Ditches that had been re-cut but contained either no dateable materials or contemporary ceramic assemblages may be described together but contexts from each cut are separated thus: **123/456**.

5.2 Fieldwork Summary

Features recorded consisted predominantly of pits, postholes and post-medieval furrows. The relative density of features and the types of features present on the Magistrates Court site was directly comparable to those associated remains present within the north-eastern corner of the adjacent Park and Ride development area. These results also provided contrast to the associated excavations on the John Lewis Warehouse development (Hinman 2004b) where feature density and frequency of artefactual remains were both markedly reduced. Those remains present on both the Magistrates Court and JLP warehouse developments represent peripheral activity to the site identified at the Trumpington Park and Ride facility where elements of at least five enclosures were sample excavated and a number of specific foci were identified, including mortuary enclosures, four post structures, clusters of pits, at least two possible shrines in addition to over 600 pits and more than 300 postholes.

The overall excavation generated over 3,300 context records (of which 69 were recorded at the Magistrates Court site) and more than 800 plans and section drawings. Considerable artefactual assemblages were recovered including over 244kg of animal bone and almost 15,000 sherds of pottery weighing over 150kg. Further highly significant assemblages included human skeletal remains, metalwork (particularly pins and brooches), clay weights, bone pins and awls and quern fragments. Details of the artefactual and ecofactual assemblages from the Magistrates Court site are included in the post-excavation assessment (Hinman 2004a).

Artefactual preservation was generally excellent and carbonised organic matter also survived well. The ground conditions did not support the preservation of non-carbonised deposits or pollen.

The results of the Magistrates Court excavations will be further analysed and published as part of the broader Trumpington project.

5.3 Fieldwork Results by Period

5.3.1 Period 1: Mesolithic (10000-4000BC)

Evidence for activity from the Magistrates Court site during this period was limited to residual lithic material (see Bishop in Hinman 2004a) which serves to confirm a limited human presence in the area at this time.

5.3.2 Period 2: Neolithic (4000-2350BC)

No tree root bowls were excavated within the bounds of the Magistrates Court site despite the well documented presence of these features on both the JLP and Park and Ride sites. This may be due to a higher degree of truncation on the Magistrates Court site. Truncation was likely to have been as a result of later agricultural practice and was evidenced by the surviving traces of a ridge and furrow field system at this location.

5.3.3 Period 3: Bronze Age (2350-700BC)

No features from the period were specifically identified within the Magistrates Court site. Pit **4505** contained un-diagnostic pottery indicative of deposition in the earlier prehistoric period but due to similarities in terms of feature fills and morphology this pit has been grouped with other pits containing ceramics dateable to the Iron Age.

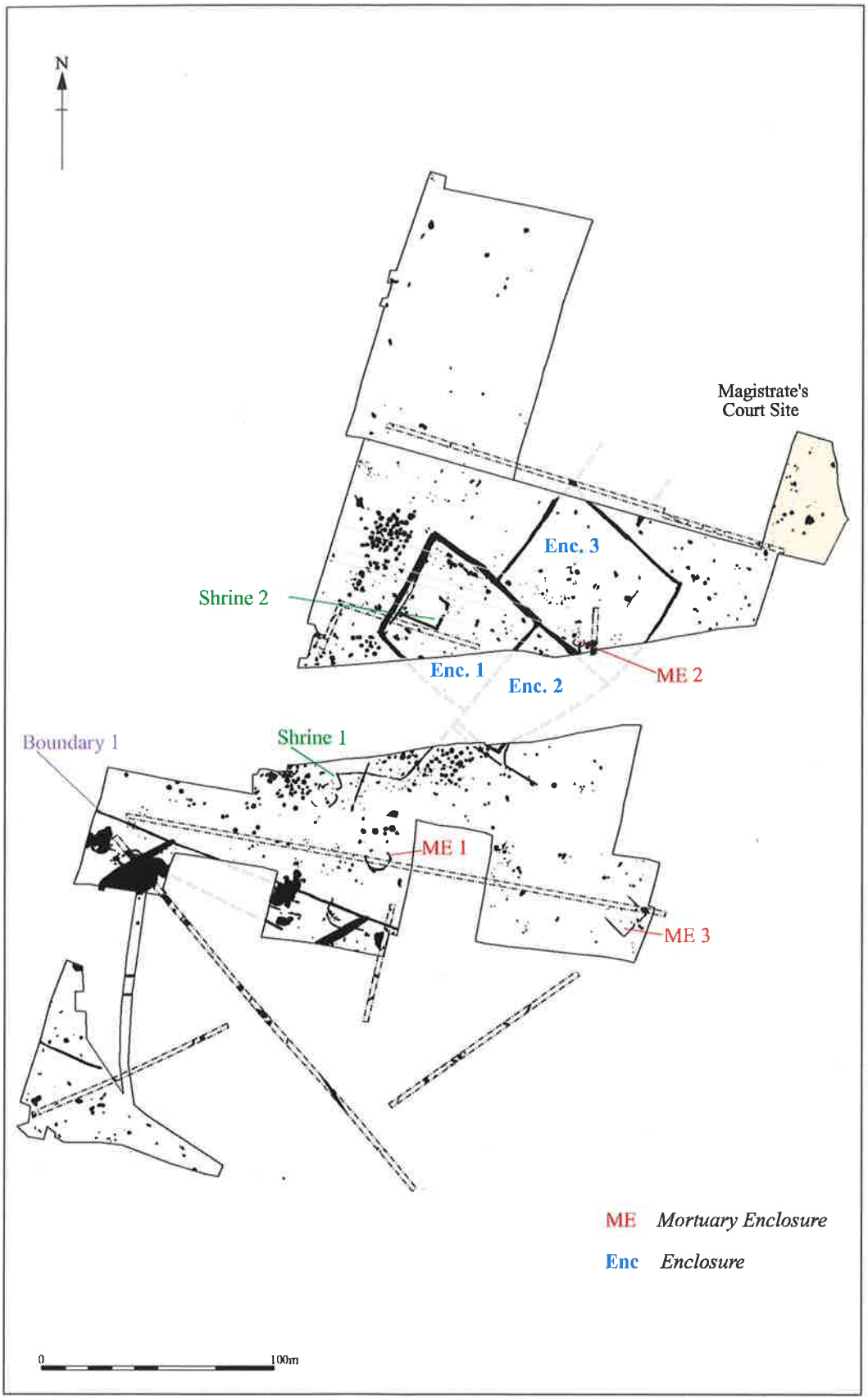

Figure 5 *Site plan*

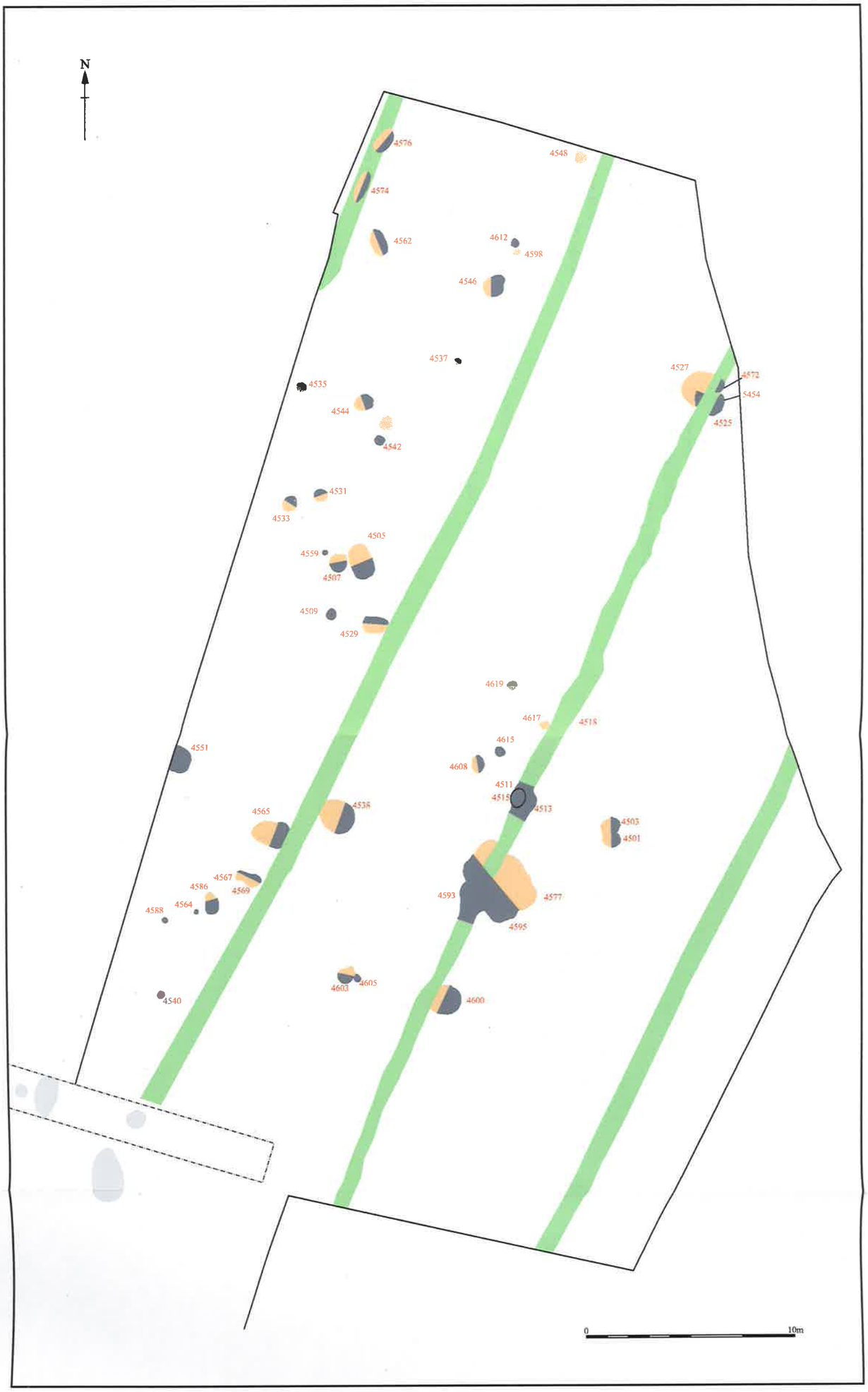

***Figure 6** Site plan*

Features dateable to the Bronze Age were identified across the Park and Ride and JLP excavations. These features tended to be small pits and did not display any currently identifiable spatial patterning. The absence of such features on the Magistrates Court site may yet prove to be significant but as evidence from the period is difficult to detect without extensive open area stripping their absence here may simply be a function of the relatively small size of the development area.

5.3.4 Earlier Prehistoric Features

Thirteen features have currently been ascribed to the earlier prehistoric period based solely on morphology and similarity of fills with features dateable to either the Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age periods. Features within this category consisted primarily of pits.

Pit **4515**, sub-circular in plan, 0.85m wide. Filled by:
4514, a mid-light yellow brown with orange brown and brownish orange mottles silty sands, with occasional small gravel stones.

Pit **4525**, circular in plan 1.53m in diameter. Filled by:
4523, a mid reddish brown sandy clay silt with occasional small-medium stones and frequent root action.
4524, a mid reddish-orange brown sandy silt with frequent small-medium flints and stones.

Pit **4527**, sub-circular in plan, 0.5m wide. Filled by:
4526, a light-mid reddish-pinkish brown sandy clay silt, with occasional small stone-flint.

Posthole **4533**, circular in plan, 0.7m in diameter. Filled by:
4532, a mid yellow grey silty sand.

Posthole **4535**, circular in plan, 0.31m in diameter. Filled by:
4534, a mid yellow brown silty sand.

Pit/posthole **4548**, circular in plan, 0.5m in diameter. Filled by:
4547, a greyish brown clay sandy silt, occasional sub-angular flints.

Posthole **4564**, circular in plan, 0.26m in diameter. Filled by:
4563, a mid brown grey silty sand.

Posthole **4572**, circular in plan, 0.5m in diameter. Filled by:
4571, a mid grey brown sandy silt, with moderate -occasional small flints.

Posthole **4586**, irregular in plan, 0.63m wide. Filled by:
4587, a orange mid brown silt, with frequent sub-angular flint, occasional chalk and charcoal flecks.

Posthole **4588**, square in plan, 0.28m wide. Filled by:
4589, a orange mid brown silt with moderate sub-angular - angular flint, occasional chalk flecks, charcoal flecks.

Pit **4593**, irregular in plan, 1.4m wide. Filled by:

4592, a mid greyish brown with dark grey brown and light yellow brown mottling silty sand, with occasional gravel stones, rare charcoal flecks.

Pit **4600**, circular in plan 1.59m in diameter. Filled by:
4599, a mid orange-grey silty sand with occasional gravel.
Pit **4600** was originally recorded as a posthole **4590** filled by 4591. This was due to the exceptionally dry conditions during the first weeks of excavation and the feature was re-numbered following further excavation.

Posthole **4605**, sub-circular in plan, 0.25m wide. Filled by:
4606, a lightly reddish mid brown silt, with frequent angular flint, occasional small gravel.

5.3.5 *Period 4: Iron Age (700 BC-AD 43)*

Despite detailed quantification and assessment it has not yet been possible to place many of the features of the period into distinctly dateable phases. Broadly speaking, earlier Iron Age forms predominated within the ceramic assemblage from the site although later wheel made pottery and metalwork were also present, sometimes within contemporary contexts. The present lack of definition is due in part to continuing problems relating to the definition of chronologically based ceramic typologies, particularly within Cambridgeshire. In relation to the current project this problem has been exacerbated at assessment stage due to the atypical nature of the Iron Age ceramic assemblage recovered at the Trumpington site (see Braddock in Hinman 2004a, Section II, 1.8). Resolving this issue by examining pottery groups in relation to feature, deposit and associated artefactual types will form one of the key strands of the forthcoming analysis.

a) Pits

The underlying geology and the local topography both appear to have influenced the positioning and usage of certain clusters of pits.

The majority of the pits were roughly circular in plan and varied in diameter from between 0.20m to over 1.5m. Although none of the pits present within the Magistrates Court development area contained assemblages that were either obviously selected for burial or placed within pits this was not the case on the Park and Ride excavations (Hinman 2004 a). Certain of the smaller 'posthole sized' pits (<0.65m) on the Park and Ride and Magistrates Court sites sometimes contained specific artefactual assemblages such as human skull fragments, high densities of animal bone or collections of loomweights. The presence of these features serves to highlight the potentially non-functional motivation for the digging of these features (see Discussion, Section 6). It was apparent that associations between human remains, animal remains, particular bones, pottery sherds and specific items such as loom weights, bone needles, and awls were being repeated within separate pits. Furthermore the fill sequences of many pits appeared to contain recognisable elements such as preparation or capping deposits suggesting deliberate and structured approaches to infilling. At times these fill

sequences seemed to have been related to the nature of the artefactual remains deposited therein. This structured repetition of selection and placement patterns suggested that objects were specially chosen for their symbolic value and has been taken as an indication that some form of ceremonial activity was taking place on the site throughout the Iron Age. It is important therefore to consider those remains present at the Magistrates Court site within the broader context of the excavations as a whole.

Pit **4501**, circular in plan, 0.7, in diameter. Filled by:
4500, a mid grey with faint orange grey mottling ,silty sand, with occasional small gravel stones/grits, very rare larger stones, charcoal flecks and occasional sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4503**, sub-circular in plan, 0.8m wide. Filled by:
4502, a light orange brown with faint greyish mottling silty sand, with moderate gravel stones and 1 sherd of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4505**, sub-circular in plan, 1.5m wide. Filled by:
4504, a light red grey silty sand, with occasional gravel stones, pottery, bone. (7 sherds of earlier prehistoric pot.) Due to the similar size and shape of this pit to other features in the vicinity that contain Iron Age ceramics pit **4505** is currently considered to be of likely Iron Age origin. Pit **4577** located *c.*30m to the south east contained earlier prehistoric pottery in association with diagnostic sherds of earlier Iron Age ceramics.

Pit **4507**, sub-circular in plan, 0.8m wide. Filled by:
4506, a light yellow-grey silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions, 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 1 flint blade.

Pit **4529**, irregular in plan, 1.06m wide. Filled by:
4528, a mid grey brown silty sand, with occasional sherds of Iron Age pottery.

4537 circular in plan, diameter 0.25m. Filled by:
4536, a mid yellow grey silty sand containing occasional small gravel and Iron Age pottery sherds.

Pit **4538**, sub-circular in plan, 1.55m wide. Filled by:
4557, a natural mid-light orange brown with patches of mid to light grey brown silty sand, occasional small gravel stones and occasional patches of very frequent pea grit and 13 sherds of Iron Age pottery.
4556, a natural brownish orange very faintly silty sand with occasional to frequent gravel stones.
4555, a natural light brownish orange sand with frequent small gravel/grits.
4554, a mid-pale brown silty sand with occasional to moderate gravel stones.
4553, a mid-dark brownish grey sandy silt with light grey-brown mottling, occasional small gravel stones, occasional charcoal flecks and very occasional burnt stones and 4 sherds of Iron Age pottery.
4552, a natural mid yellow brown silty sand with grey brown mottling and moderate small gravel stones, 2 used flint flakes and 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Posthole **4542**, sub-circular in plan, diameter 0.45m. Filled by:
4541, a mid greyish brown clayey sandy silt with occasional sub angular flint gravel and 3 sherds of pottery.

Pit **4544**, sub-circular in plan, 0.7m wide. Filled by:
4543, a brownish grey slay sandy silt, with occasional sub angular flints, 4 sherds of Iron Age

pottery, bone.

Pit **4546**, sub-circular in plan, 0.9m wide. Filled by:
4545, a greyish brown clay sandy silt, with occasional sub-angular flints and 4 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4551**, sub-circular in plan, 1.35m wide. Filled by:
4550, a mid yellow brown silty sand, with occasional gravel.
4549, a dark brown silty sand, with occasional gravel, 3 sherds of Iron Age pot, and bone.

Posthole **4559**, circular in plan, diameter 0.29m. Filled by:
4558, a mid grey brown clayey sandy silt containing moderate inclusions of flint gravel and occasional pottery and bone.

Pit **4562**, irregular in plan, 0.3m wide. Filled by:
4561, a mid brown sandy silt, with rare medium angular-sub-angular pebbles, rare-occasional fine angular-sub-angular pebbles and 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4565**, circular in plan, 1.2m in diameter. Filled by:
4566,a mid brown clayey silt, with occasional sub angular flint, charcoal flecks, small gravel and 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4577**, irregular in plan, 2.5m wide. Filled by:
4583, a light yellow and orange with mid-light brown mottles sand and silty sand, with occasional gravel stones and moderate grits and 4 sherds of Iron Age pottery.
4582, a mid brown with light yellowish brown mottles silty sand, with occasional gravel stones and 3 sherds of pottery.
4581, a mid -light brownish orange some dark reddish brown mottling faintly silty sand, with occasional -moderate gravel stones/grits.
4580, a mid greyish brown with patches of dark greyish brown silty sand, with occasional stones, very occasional burnt stones, occasional charcoal flecks, worked flint 46 sherds of pottery and 2 fragments of burnt quernstones
4579, a mid greyish brown with dark grey brown and light yellow brown silty sand, with occasional gravel stones, rare charcoal flecks and 28 sherds of pottery dating to the 6th to 2nd centuries BC.

Pit **4595**, irregular in plan, 1m wide. Filled by:
4594, a mid greyish brown with dark grey brown and light yellow brown mottling silty sand, with occasional gravel stones, rare charcoal flecks and 2 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Pit **4603**, irregular in plan, 0.93m wide. Filled by:
4604, a reddish mid brown silt, frequent angular broken flint, burnt flint, with occasional small gravel and 1 sherd of Iron Age pottery.

b) Small pits and possible postholes

A number of small 'posthole sized features' (usually <0.60m diameter) were present across the excavation area. Few postholes preserved good evidence in terms of post-pipes/packing to support this interpretation and some contained placed deposits suggesting a non-functional/non-structural votive interpretation. Where placed or apparently votive deposits were present without any structural

evidence for posts, it may be necessary during analysis to consider these features alongside other small pits.

Posthole **4509**, circular in plan, 0.4m in diameter. Filled by:
4516, a white very fine chalk.
4508, a light reddish grey silty sand, with occasional gravel/stone, bone, moderate Iron Age pottery dating to the 5th to 3rd centuries BC.

Posthole **4531**, circular in plan, ,0.58m in diameter. Filled by:
4530, a light yellow brown silty clay, with occasional gravel stones, six sherds of Iron Age pottery (5th century BC), bone.

Posthole **4540**, sub-circular in plan, 0.32m wide. Filled by:
4539, a brownish grey slay sandy silt, with moderate sub-angular flints, occasional bone.

Posthole **4567**, sub-circular in plan, 0.6m wide. Filled by:
4568, a mid brown clayey silt, with occasional sub-angular flint, gravel flecks, chalk flecks and 1 sherd of Iron Age pottery.

Posthole **4569**, circular in plan, 0.48m in diameter. Filled by:
4570, a mid brown clayey silt, with occasional angular flint, small gravel, moderate sub-angular-angular flint.

Posthole **4598**, circular in plan, 0.33m in diameter. Filled by:
4597, a brown sandy silt with occasional rounded flint. This fill represents disuse and was not fully excavated from the feature.

Posthole **4608**, circular in plan, 0.9m in diameter. Filled by:
4607, a mid brown sandy silt, with rare fine pebbles. Near to **4615**

Posthole **4612**, circular in plan, 0.32m in diameter. Filled by:
4611, a mid grey orange brown sandy silt with moderate angular gravel stones, occasional pottery bone and burnt bone, one loom weight fragment and charcoal.

Cut **4615** 0.43m in diameter was filled by 4613 and 4614 containing human cranial fragments in a 'nested' arrangement. A depth of 0.10m of fill had already been put into the base of the cut before three cranial fragments were placed one on top of the other with the external surface of the skull facing downwards, the fourth piece placed vertically to one side. A small fragment of a possible rubbing stone (SF 467) was also recovered from this feature.

Pit/posthole **4617**, irregular in plan, 0.0.65m long and 0.45m wide. Filled by:
4616, a mid grey brown sandy silt, occasional angular flint gravel.

Pit/posthole **4619**, circular in plan, 0.37m in diameter. Filled by:
4618, a mid grey brown sandy silt, occasional angular flint gravel.

5.3.6 Periods 5 and 6: Medieval and Post-Medieval

A series of furrows extended across the Magistrates Court site, traces of which were present across the northern limit of the Park and Ride excavations. The furrows were aligned north to south, evenly spaced at roughly 6m intervals. The ridge and furrow system was extensively investigated within this Area where it was best preserved. A single furrow on the same alignment was also noted during the excavation of the JLP site (Area E) (see Hinman 2004b). It is assumed that these furrows represent evidence for farming practices associated with the Anstey Hall estate of which the development area was once a part.

a) Furrow 1

Furrow 1 was located adjacent to the western limit of excavation and was excavated in two segments.

Furrow **4574**, irregular in plan, 0.33m wide. Filled by:
4573, a mid brown sandy silt, with rare fine pebbles, rare charcoal flecks and a nail SF 466.

Furrow **4576**, irregular in plan, 0.36m wide. Filled by:
4575, a mid brown silty sand, with rare fine pebbles.

b) Furrow 2

Furrow 2 was located to the west of centre within the area of excavation and was not excavated due to the masking presence of modern sub-soil layer (4578) which was removed by machine following sample excavation.

c) Furrow 3

Furrow 3 was located to the east of centre within the area of excavation and eight segments through this feature were excavated prior to removal by machine.

Furrow **4511**, linear in plan, 0.9m wide. Filled by:
4510, a mid-light yellowish brown with some orange mottling silty sand, with occasional - moderate gravel.

Furrow **4513**, linear in plan, with a possible rounded butt end, 0.95m wide. Filled by:
4512, a mid-light yellowish brown with some range mottling silty sand, occasional-moderate gravel.

Furrow **4518**, linear in plan, 1.1m wide. Filled by:
4517, a mid-light yellowish brown with some orange mottling silty sand, with occasional - moderate gravel.

Furrow **4520**, linear in plan, 0.85m wide. Filled by:
4519, a mid grey brown sandy clay silt, with moderate small stones and flints, occasional Iron Age pottery and 1 nail. SF 465.

Furrow **4522**, curvilinear in plan, 0.5m wide. Filled by:
4521, a mid-reddish grey brown sandy clay silt, with occasional stone, flint.

Furrow **4585**, 0.85m wide. Filled by:
4584, same fill as 4512 but containing SF 460 an iron nail shank, SF 461 an iron nail, SF 462, a narrow curved iron object, with the stump of a ?triangular projection at the centre, which is pierced of medieval or later date.

Furrow **4602**, linear in plan, 0.76m wide. Filled by:
4601, a light-mid grey silty sand, with occasional gravel, 1 piece tile.

Furrow **4610**, linear in plan, 0.75m wide. Filled by:
4609, a mid grey brown sandy clay silt, with moderate small stones and flints, occasional pottery and SF 464, a lead-alloy button dateable to the post-medieval to modern period.

d) Furrow 4

Furrow 4 was located adjacent to the eastern limit of excavation but was only visible within the south and north facing sections of the area.

e) Modern sub-soil

Modern layer **4578** was 9m wide and 0.1m deep and consisted of a silty sands and gravels, occasional pottery, nails (SF 450, SF 451, SF 454, SF 455, SF 458), and other iron objects including SF 453, a straight length of fine modern iron wire, SF 456 an iron bolt (fragment) and SF 457 an iron bar all of probable modern date.

Once the modern date of this layer was established through sample excavation it was removed by machine to reveal the underlying archaeological features.

6 DISCUSSION

Excavations at the Magistrates Court site revealed archaeological evidence of human activity from earlier prehistory to the post-medieval period. The site was situated on the north-eastern extent of a spur of relatively flat land that lies above the 15m contour extending westwards towards the River Cam (Fig. 2). This spur appears to be raised slightly higher than the surrounding landscape. From at least as early as the Bronze Age, topography seems to have been a significant factor in determining the types of activity taking place in the vicinity and in defining the limits of activity on the site during the Iron Age. The only features on the Magistrates Court site containing diagnostic artefactual assemblages of any antiquity were a series of small pits and postholes dateable to the Early to Middle Iron Age. Ceramics from these features are currently considered to have been made and deposited between the 6th and 2nd centuries BC. This accords well with the results of the associated excavations on the adjacent Trumpington Park and Ride site although in contrast to these excavations and excavations on the John Lewis site no readily dateable features of earlier prehistoric date were

present. This is probably due to the relatively small size of the Magistrates Court site rather than any localised variation in either the topography or underlying geology.

At the Park and Ride site the earliest features present were tree root holes, interpreted as evidence for tree clearance (currently assumed to date from *c.*4000 BC onwards), as well as Early Neolithic pits containing placed or selected materials (*c.*4000-2350 BC) pits of Bronze Age origin (*c.*2350-700 BC) and almost 600 pits dateable predominantly to the Early and Middle Iron Age (*c.*700-300 BC and *c.*300-100 BC respectively) were excavated. Five enclosures were sample excavated and a number of specific foci were identified, including mortuary enclosures, four post structures, clusters of pits and at least two possible shrines.

The combined results of the Trumpington excavations have revealed the remains of a highly unusual site. Activity from each period seems to have been concentrated on the high ground overlooking the River Cam. The types of features present, the artefactual assemblages preserved within them, associations between artefact and fill types and spatial patterning seem to suggest that it may be possible to identify aspects of continuity of use and evolution in terms of specific non-functional practices from at least the Neolithic Period through to the end of the Iron Age at this location. Although other examples of each separate aspect of the site are known from other excavations no clear parallels are currently available when considering the evidence from the site as a whole to help illustrate and interpret those remains dateable to the Iron Age.

The basic form and layout of the enclosures on the site appear superficially similar to cropmarks identified from air photos in the local area and may suggest a functional interpretation of settlement and agriculture of later Iron Age origin if considered without evidence gathered through excavation. No evidence for roundhouses or other types of dwelling was present within the excavation areas and other evidence for domestic occupation such as hearths and the burnt debris from ovens were also notably absent. The layout of these enclosures is similar to examples recently identified at Hinxton (Kenney in prep.) and perhaps recall the ground plan at Stanway in Essex, where evidence of possible Middle Iron Age settlement (enclosed but without evidence for roundhouses) was superseded by later Iron Age and Conquest Period funerary enclosures (Crummy 1997). In terms of size, the Late Iron Age burial enclosure at Maldon Hall Farm has some superficial similarity (Lavender 1991). Other sites which require further examination during analysis include Old Sleaford, Lincs. and the enigmatic Fisons Way site, Thetford (Gregory 1991). The association of the enclosures at the Trumpington site, their date, the alignment of these enclosures, four post structures and associated pit clusters are not yet known on any other Early to Middle Iron Age sites in eastern England (J.D. Hill pers. comm.). The site has yielded one of the largest assemblages of Early to Middle Iron Age pottery in the region and a considerable quantity of well preserved animal bone. Furthermore

the site has produced an unusually large assemblage of pins, brooches and other objects of metalwork and worked bone compared to known domestic sites. The unusual character of the site is further emphasised by the presence of what appears to be a unique concentration of special and unusual deposits of human and animal remains which, it is currently thought, occurred in greater frequency than on any other sites in the region. This remains to be proven through analysis.

A major issue facing excavators of Iron Age and earlier sites is the identification of 'normal' or 'functional' activities as opposed to 'ritual' or 'symbolic' acts. The value and the need to consider how material entered into and has survived within the archaeological record during the Iron Age has been clearly demonstrated (Hill 1995; albeit with reference to Wessex). Even the most mundane everyday domestic activities seem to have been undertaken with a degree of care and forethought which may imply that the fulfilment of these tasks required adherence to a complex series of beliefs, superstitions and 'ritual' actions with no quantifiable effect (to the contemporary observer) on the final functional product of those activities. Definition of the everyday and the esoteric can become blurred as a result.

The apparently non-functional nature of the deposits at Trumpington suggests that ritual was a major activity on the site. It seems likely that certain acts of deposition were intended to portray associated meanings or resonances on a range of levels which preclude generalisation. The interpretation of the surviving remains of such acts can only be approached holistically and this requires the consideration of the specific location of features and associated artefacts within their local space, the site as a whole and their placement in relation to key aspects of the surrounding landscape.

The relative frequency of human remains on the site during the Iron Age appears to suggest that it may have been dedicated to aspects of mortuary practice, with pits being dug for use in rites associated with death and the dead. The burial of human remains as tokens at what may have been deemed appropriate locations in Britain can be traced back as far as the Early Neolithic period. The placement of human bones either in isolation or in association with other intentionally selected materials such as animal bones, pottery, worked flint or polished stone axes also dates from this time. There was limited evidence to suggest that these traditions may have been associated with the Park and Ride location as early as the Neolithic period. Cropmarks indicative of the presence of large burial? mounds adjacent to the edge of excavation could indicate that associations with the treatment of the dead lie rooted in the Bronze Age. The Trumpington site presents us with an opportunity to examine aspects of continuity and evolution of rites involving old bones and other selected materials at what seems to have been a 'special' place in the minds of the local population for perhaps thousands of years until the arrival of Romanisation.

In comparison to the Park and Ride site the range of feature types and the density of those features present within the bounds of the Magistrates Court site was lower and the dateable ceramics restricted to the Iron Age examples of deposition within features that could not be readily interpreted as casual discard or disposal of domestic rubbish. The majority of the pits in this area tended to be sub-circular in plan with steeply sloping sides and concave bases and varied in diameter from between 0.20m to over 2.00m, although the majority measured between 0.65m and 1.50m. Certain of the smaller 'posthole sized' pits (<0.65m) contained specific artefactual assemblages such as human skull fragments or specific artefact types and similar features were noted on the Park and Ride site. The majority of the features on the Magistrates Court site contained only the occasional sherd of pottery or animal bone and further work is required to determine whether this material has survived as the result of chance or is further evidence for deliberate selection and burial.

Two large and two small 'posthole sized' pits stand out from the rest of the features on this area by virtue of their contents.

Pit **4577** was irregular in plan and measured 2.5m wide by 0.90m deep and contained 71 sherds of pottery dateable to the Early to Middle Iron Age. This was by far the largest feature with the largest assemblage of pottery on this part of the site and was located to the south of centre within the area. The infill sequence within this pit suggests episodic weathering interspersed with fills containing a mixture of pottery, burnt stone, occasional quern stone fragments and animal bone.

Pit **4538**, was sub-circular in plan, 1.70m long by 1.55m wide by 0.88m deep and contained 19 sherds of pottery, the second largest assemblage from the area. The profile of the pit was slightly undercut on the eastern side and the infill sequence was similar to that within pit **4577** roughly 6m to the east.

Certain categories of artefactual material are often assumed to have represented evidence of domestic debris (such as ash, burnt stone *etc.*) and therefore imply (given a range of contemporary assumptions regarding a functional need for disposal and a rational need for a convenient point of disposal) the presence of settlement within the immediate vicinity. The infilling of both of these features appears to have been gradual and to have occurred in part due to natural weathering and in part due to the deliberate inclusion or discard of a range of materials which could in this case be reasonably interpreted as domestic debris.

In reality the spatial relationship of pits/pit groups to settlements and 'domestic' settlement-related activity during the Iron Age within the county remains at best ambiguous. Part of the value of pits **4538** and **4577** in terms of further study, is that given their location at the periphery of the activity focused towards the south western side of the Park and Ride site these features may provide a contrast to the greater concentration of special and unusual deposits at that location.

The functional interpretation of the smaller features on the site as evidence of postholes is problematic. Apart from a lack of evidence for post packing or post impressions or pipes the contents of these features were occasionally quite unusual.

Cut **4615** measured 0.43m in diameter, 0.33m deep and was filled by 4613 and 4614 containing human skull fragments. It was located within the central area of the excavation. A depth of 0.10m of fill had already been put into the base of the cut before three cranial fragments were placed one on top of the other in a 'nested' arrangement with the external surface of the skull facing downwards, the fourth piece placed vertically to one side. A small fragment of a possible rubbing stone (SF 467) and a single sheep tooth were also recovered from this feature.

This small feature when considered in greater detail provides a good example of the complex nature of the site as a whole. Cut **4615** is one of a number of similarly sized features within the limits of the Magistrates Court and Park and Ride sites which raises the question: what were they used for? The presence of several fragments of human skull within the fill would not seem to be an obvious form of packing for a post and may be an indicator that the feature was either excavated to place the skull in or, given the presence of fill beneath the bones, that it once held a post and the subsequent placement was opportunistic. The presence of a weathering fill at the base of the cut may suggest that a post had been removed from the hole thus providing and opportunistic void for the depostion of human and other remains although the choice of items does appear to be deliberate with parallels both on the site itself and on other contemporary sites.

Wait (1985, 120) suggests that the final deposition of human skulls 'is probably less a mortuary ritual than a votive or apotropaic treatment of the symbolically potent skulls of enemy dead'. The question as to whether the careful placement of the skull fragments within **4615** represented the symbolic vanquishing of some ancient enemy, a charm or warding spell, a reverential act of ancestor worship or some other long forgotten rite is not something that can be addressed archaeologically. The selection of the human skull and the placement of broken fragments does however remain evocative and presumably was intended to convey totemic meaning.

The presence of a small, worn fragment of a rubbing stone placed over the top of the skull fragments appears to have been a conscious and deliberate act. The choice of a quern fragment is interesting and recalls a pattern now being increasingly recognised of the use of these objects to portray a range of symbolic meanings linked by the theme of transformation.

Seen in isolation one small fragment of a rubbing stone with a few fragments of a human skull are interesting but the association between quernstones and human remains and the condition of both classes of material is repeated elsewhere within

the Park and Ride excavations and seems to support the use of the former in mortuary rites when in a used and broken state.

Perhaps the most explicit example of the co-incidence of human remains and broken fragments of rubbing stones was found on the Park and Ride site. Pit **996** contained a series of quern and/or rubbing stone fragments and a larger boulder of the same dark reddish purple haematite rich sandstone which exhibited some evidence of possible burning (see Bishop in Hinman 2004a, Section II). These stones had been arranged in a rough circle prior to the deposition of a disarticulated human skeleton. The remains were from an adult of roughly 17 years (see Duhig in Hinman, 2004a, Section II) and were probably female. The long bones had been collected and paired in a bundle before being propped up on one of the quern fragments. The skull was then put on the bottom of the bundle in the centre of the pit facing up along the long bones towards the jaw placed at the top of that bundle. The rib of a second adult was incorporated amongst the disarticulated remains of the young woman and a meat bearing joint from a cow had been placed within the pit before it was backfilled and capped with a deposit of chalk.

A total of 57 fragments of rubbing stones and querns were recovered during the Trumpington excavations. All had been used and one strand of the forthcoming analysis will focus on the interrelationships or associations between object types such as quern stones and human remains within individual contexts, within individual features and across the site as a whole.

Saddle querns are definitely in evidence and it seems likely that rotary querns are also present (Bishop in Hinman 2004a). Such objects have increasingly been shown to occur in contexts that indicate that they were imbued with a degree of symbolic association by past societies, a view reinforced by the findings of anthropological studies (Hill 1995, p.19, 3.4, p.55, 7.2.3; Bruck 2001, 152-155).

Whilst considering the elements of a 'ritual tradition' Hill states: 'There are other elements within an Iron Age ritual tradition that can be interpreted as evidence for offerings/sacrifice. Items produced and used in specific fields of social practice especially those associated with field and home, became objectified, identified with particular sets of ideas and associations during rituals. In general only certain types of small finds were offered' (Hill 1995, 108). Hill goes on to highlight querns as one type of domestic processing tool that was singled out for special treatment.

Loomweights were another item singled out for 'special' treatment and these also occurred within similar sized features on the site.

At the Magistrates Court site, cut **4612**, 0.32m in diameter and 0.35m deep was located towards the northern limit of excavation. Fill 4611, contained occasional pottery bone and burnt bone as well as one loom weight fragment. Seen in

isolation this feature appears unremarkable and it is quite possible to suggest that upon the removal of a post from the ground a range of debris from associated settlement became incorporated into the feature fill. The placed skull fragments within cut **4615** to the south within the Magistrates Court site and other more unusual fills seen within similarly sized features on the adjacent Park and Ride site suggest that this may not be the only available interpretation.

Two examples highlighted within the post excavation assessment for the Trumpington site were:

Cut **784** was circular in plan, 0.5m in diameter and had been originally interpreted as a posthole. The fill 783, contained frequent large chunks of burnt clay and four large loom or thatch weights (see Braddock, Section II, 1.9) which had been stacked up in a pyramid formation within the centre of the cut.

Cut **2103**, 0.47m in diameter was filled by 2102, an eroded clay object (SF201), possibly a loomweight, and a neonate. It appeared that the weight may have been used to crush the skull of the infant.

This again reinforces the importance of examining the results of the work on the Magistrates Court site within the context of the broader Trumpington excavations. More work is clearly required to enable the identification, definition, interpretation and illustration of the presence of special or *exceptional* deposits (*cf* Hill 1995, 40), structured deposition and symbolic representation versus more functional considerations of debris disposal. Further work is needed to illustrate fully the diverse range of pits and their contents, whilst also identifying the conspicuous absence of artefacts and defining 'average' assemblages and greater definintion of the date range for these activities will need to be sought through the detailed examination of these complex assemblages supported by absolute dating of targeted materials.

The challenge will be to establish the appropriate means by which the key characteristics of the Trumpington site can be defined through time and support or deny the various facets of the interpretation of these remains. Whether the site can be shown to have been dedicated to specific mortuary activities or was an example of the extent to which the day to day routine of settlement was bound up with symbolism and ritual will be shown through analysis. Whatever the results, it is clear that this work should represent an important addition to the study of the area with specific reference to the Iron Age period.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

The archive is currently held at the AFU's headquarters at Fulbourn. The bulk of the material archive is to be prepared for storage at Landbeach. Organic remains will be held in controlled environment stores.

8 CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s there has been a significant increase in fieldwork in Cambridgeshire. The impact of PPG16 combined with a rapid increase in new construction programmes has highlighted the presence of a wide variety of sites with significant Iron Age and earlier prehistoric remains. The implications of these new discoveries on our understanding of the period at both the local and regional level have yet to be formally assimilated. Within Cambridgeshire each new fieldwork project seems to increase the range and diversity of the archaeological record and it is clear that the type, range and character of those remains revealed are complex and certain sites cannot readily be categorised within existing site types such as hillfort, settlement or farmstead.

Detailed quantification and analysis along with a co-ordinated programme of absolute dating of the record from the Trumpington sites, including the Magistrates Court site, will represent a significant step forward in our understanding.

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