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CCC AFU Report Number 869

Early and Middle Saxon Remains at Queens Way, Oakington, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Mo Jones and Richard Mortimer

May 2006

Cambridgeshire County Council
Environment & Community Services

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Cover Images

Machine stripping, Soham	On-site surveying
Roman corn dryer, Duxford	Guided walk along Devil's Dyke
Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass	Medieval well, Soham
Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery	Timbers from a medieval well, Soham
Blue enamelled bead, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pits, Huntington Town Centre
Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hinchingbrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

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An Archaeological Evaluation

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Date of works: 21st to 24th March
Grid Ref: TL 1626 4572

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) from 21st March to 24th March 2006, in accordance with a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA Gdaneic 2006), supplemented by a Specification prepared by CCC AFU (Macaulay 2006).

The development area was located immediately south-east of the recreation area which underwent archaeological investigation by CCC AFU in 1994. The proposed development includes the demolition of an existing building on the west side of the playing field and its replacement with an new sports pavilion and multi-use games area in the eastern corner of the recreation ground (Macaulay 2006).

The evaluation sought to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

Four trenches were excavated in an area of known archaeological remains. Archaeological features were identified in each trench, consisting of ditches, postholes, buried soil and burials. Pottery was recovered from the majority of features excavated, though in small quantities, and indicated that the archaeological activity was mainly Middle Saxon with some potentially Roman/Early Saxon (ditches) and 12th-century activity (upper fills and buried soil layers). A series of north-east to south-west boundary ditches appear to post-date the 6th-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery to the west (Macaulay 1994) and there are large, deep boundary or enclosure ditches to the east. One important element of the archaeology of the site is the survival of an unploughed buried soil or land surface that covers the whole site area and lies just below turf level. The pottery assemblage from the buried soil is principally Middle Saxon. Although a relatively small pottery assemblage was recovered from the site, it contained a high proportion of Ipswich wares in good condition, and suggests that a Middle Saxon settlement may be located nearby. The location of this settlement has, however, not yet been identified.

In accordance with the Brief, the human remains encountered were identified but not excavated. These remains are almost certainly part of the 6th-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery which is known to be present on the site, part of which was excavated in 1994, immediately adjacent to the evaluation area (Macaulay 1994).

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

Limit of Excavation

Cut

Cut-Conjectured

Soil Horizon

Soil Horizon - Conjectured

Intrusion/Truncation

Top of Natural

Top Surface

Break in Section/
Limit of Section Drawing

Turf

Cut Number 118

Deposit Number 117

Ordnance Datum 18.45m OD N

Sample Number 102

Stone

Small Find

Gravel

Plans

Limit of Excavation

Deposit - Conjectured

Natural Features

Intrusion/Truncation

Sondages/Machine Strip

Illustrated Section S.14

Archaeological Feature

Excavated Slot

Grave

Cut Number 118

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaneic of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application No.S/2377/02/O), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU, Macaulay 2006).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

2 Geology and Topography

The development area lies on the Lower Greensand, which is overlain with sands, 2nd and 3rd terrace gravels and alluvium in places, themselves overlying the Gault clay (British Geological Survey 1975). Previous investigations in the area have recorded the geology contorted by periglacial activity. The land is low lying and generally flat, the result of market gardening and later deliberate levelling/rolling for modern playing fields (c.1950). However, the north-western part of the recreation ground, which includes the development area, lies on a plateau, falling away to the east and south down to a ditched stream. The stream is part of the Beck Brook which links to Cottenham Lode and the River Great Ouse to the north. The plateau lies between 9.00m OD at the west and 8.70m OD at the east, falling to *c.* 8.00mOD at the stream edge.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric and Roman

Few prehistoric finds are known from Oakington, although a possible Iron Age/Romano-British ring ditch, field system and earthwork site has been identified through crop marks immediately to the north-east of the site (MCB10744).

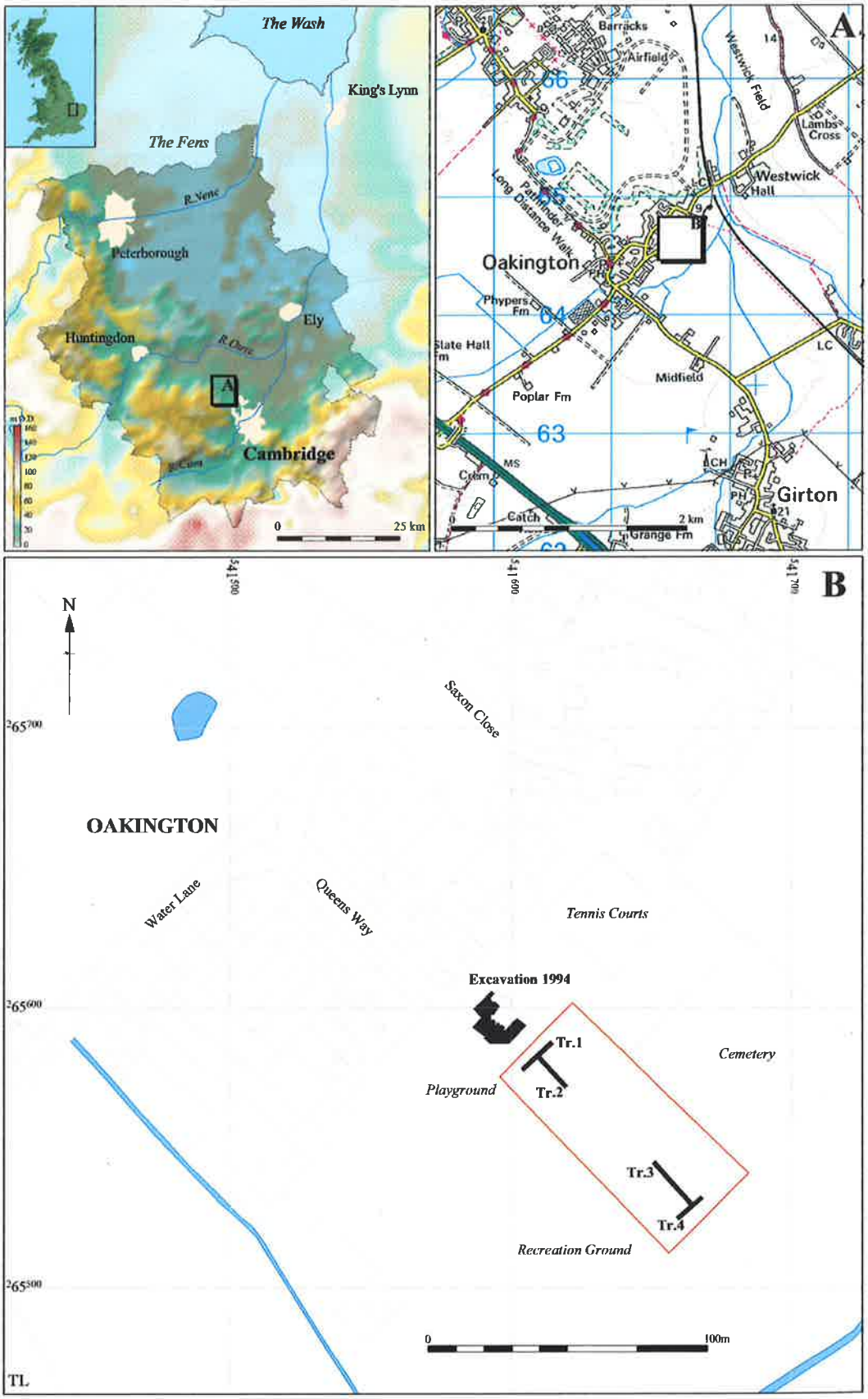

Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

Roman occupation has been recognised only from occasional pot sherds found in gardens and fields close to the village, apart from coins found near the Cambridge to Godmanchester road. This Roman road, known as the Via Devana, passes along the parish boundary just over a mile south of the village. A route from this road to the Fens, passing by the Anglo-Saxon cemetery, was in use by the 11th century at least (Taylor *et al* 1997).

3.2 Saxon

Saxon activity is represented by a 6th-century cemetery of unknown size located immediately to the north-west of the proposed development. It contained a minimum of 25 inhumations and one cremation burial (ECB1390 see section 3.4 below). The site lies south-east of St Andrews Church (MCB 6778).

3.3 Medieval

In 1086 there was a substantial population in Oakington, about 275 people in all, and a priest is recorded. Most land was held by the Abbot of Crowland, who had a manor house near to the church. In the Middle Ages, settlement was concentrated on the routeways slightly to the north of the cemetery. From the mid 14th century the population in Oakington was quite small and the cemetery site was undisturbed, the land probably being used for grazing (Taylor *et al* 1997).

3.4 Post-Medieval and Modern

In the 1920s the site was adapted to house nursery gardens and ploughing and digging disturbed several graves at this time. Finds reported to the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology consisted of a male skeleton with a spear and shield-boss over his head, three more skeletons and three coloured glass beads. Villagers also noted 'many bits of bone' on the field surface. The land was later purchased for use as a village recreation ground and there was no further disturbance to the subsoil until 1993. Then an area of about 15 x 18m was cleared for erection of swings and slides etc. and human bones were unearthed (Taylor *et al* 1997). The following year an excavation took place by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (Macaulay 1994) that uncovered part of a small 6th-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery (see section 3.2 above).

4 Methodology

The objectives of this evaluation were to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area and to provide an accurate evaluation of archaeological potential, whilst at the same time minimising disturbance to archaeological structures, features and deposits (Macaulay 2006).

Four trenches were excavated using a wheeled JCB excavator with a 1.52m wide ditching bucket. Trenches 1 and 2 were each 15m long, Trench 3 20.50m and Trench 4 11.50m. In total 94 square metres were opened up, an approximate 6% sample of the development area (Fig. 1)

All trial trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision. After removal of the topsoil, the underlying soil layers were machine excavated carefully (in order to retrieve additional diagnostic data such as pottery and animal bone) to expose the upper interface of archaeological features and deposits.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those that were obviously modern. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as necessary in order to clarify located features and deposits.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. The trench locations were surveyed using a Total Station Theodolite. Trench plans were drawn at 1:50 and sections were recorded at 1:20 and 1:10. Both trenches and features were tied in to the OS grid. Digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Nine bulk samples were taken by the excavators in consultation with the projects environmental specialist where practicable, to test for the presence and potential of micro- and macro-botanical environmental indicators. The results of the analysis are provided below (Appendix 4).

5 Results

Archaeological features were identified in all four trenches and consisted of ditches, burials, buried soils and postholes. The results will be discussed on a feature-by-feature basis, including a brief discussion of the artefacts recovered, with particular emphasis on the pottery.

The topsoil was the same across the whole site, a fine dark brown friable sandy loam. It varied in depth from 0.24 to 0.26m in Trenches 1 and 2, 0.15 to 0.24m in Trench 3 and from 0.22 to 0.36m above the deepest features in Trench 4.
The material referred to as 'buried soil' throughout this report would perhaps better be described as a 'preserved, accruing B horizon soil' as it is a *preserved* soil (unploughed) rather than a strictly *buried* soil. However, for brevity and clarity, the simpler term 'buried soil' is used.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 (Fig. 2) was oriented north-east to south-west and located at the north-west edge of the evaluation area, approximately parallel with the south-east boundary of the playground area. The archaeology in the trench can be divided into two areas: the south-west end contained an area 5.5m long of indistinct linear and non-linear features that were neither defined nor excavated but probably consist of a number of ditches and pits; the north-east end contained more clearly defined archaeology, with two (unexcavated) burials, two postholes and one ditch identified.

The whole area of the trench contained a layer of dark buried soil (201) that was machine-excavated to the level at which the underlying features became apparent. Artefacts and ecofacts were collected from this soil during machining but no controlled sampling of the material was possible.

Burials

Both burials (**263** and **264**) were oriented north-east to south-west, comparable to twenty three of the 25 inhumations excavated in 1994 (Taylor *et al* 1997). The southern burial (**264**) contained a pair of decorated Cu Alloy tweezers (SF1) that were recovered from the grave for security reasons (see Appendix 3, Metal Objects). The location of the tweezers in the grave suggests that they were not a grave item associated with this burial, but may have been disturbed from another burial and become incorporated in the fill. The proximity of these burials to the known 6th-century cemetery immediately to the west also suggests they were part of it. This serves to extend the limit of the cemetery at least 13m to the south-east.

Postholes

Posthole **204** (Section 50, Fig. 4) was located 0.6m north-east of burial **264** and measured 0.31m wide by 0.13m deep. It had a U-shaped profile with a slightly concave base and was filled by mid orange brown clay silt (203). No finds were recovered.

Posthole **220** (Section 51, Fig. 4) was located 3.3m south-west from **204** and was similar in size and form to **204**. It measured 0.45m wide by 0.14m deep and was filled by dark orange brown silty sand (219). A single unworked piece of burnt flint was recovered. Due to the limited area investigated it is difficult to state definitively the function of these postholes. Their relatively flat bases suggest that they were structural, but it is unknown whether they:

a) formed part of a fenceline associated with a ditch (possibly **255**)
b) formed a boundary to the cemetery or
c) represent part of a structure, such as a building.

Ditches

Ditch **218** (Section 51, Fig 4) lay on the same alignment as postholes **220** and **204** but may have turned to the south at the south-west end of the trench. It truncated posthole **220** 1.5m from its north-eastern end. It measured 0.54m wide by 0.1m deep and had a symmetrical, slightly concave profile. It was filled by dark brown silty sand (217) Due to the indistinct nature of the archaeology at the south-west end of the trench it is unclear whether the ditch terminated, forming a shallow arc approximately 9m long or continued beyond the limit of excavation for an unknown distance. It is likely that this was a boundary/enclosure ditch. The finds assemblage consisted of small quantities of stone, animal bone and fired clay, however, much of the material recovered from the buried soil layer came from immediately above this feature and may have lain within its upper fills. The assemblage from the base of the ditch, though small and undated, suggests the possibility of domestic activity nearby.

Buried soil

The buried soil lay just beneath the topsoil at a depth of approximately 0.24m. No controlled sampling of the material was possible here at this evaluation stage and it was removed by machine to the level at which the underlying archaeology could be recorded and excavated. Even without hand excavation of this soil, it produced almost the entire finds assemblage from the trench, including 100% of the pottery, CBM and quern assemblages and 98% (by weight) of the bone assemblage.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 (Fig. 2) was oriented north-west to south-east and formed a T-shape with Trench 1. It contained one burial, five ditches, one amorphous feature and a continuation of the buried soil seen in Trench 1.

Burial

Burial **250** (Section 52, Fig. 4) was identified during the excavation of ditches **248** and **246**. A small section of the grave cut was excavated, partially exposing the skull but was planned and backfilled immediately after identification in accordance with the Brief. It is notable that the head lay roughly to the south-west, the same direction as nineteen of the burials identified during the 1994 excavations immediately to the north-west. The orientation of this skeleton and its proximity to burials **263** and **264** in Trench 1 and the 26 burials to the north-west strongly suggest that it also belonged to the 6th-century cemetery. The location of this burial extends the limit of the cemetery a further 12m to the east.

Ditches

The burial was truncated on its western side by north-east to south-west aligned ditch **248** (Section 52, Fig. 4). Although not fully excavated it was possible to see (in section) that it had a shallow, concave profile. It measured 0.72m+ wide by 0.28m+ deep and was filled by dark orange brown silty clay (247). Although no finds were recovered from this feature its position in the stratigraphic sequence, i.e. truncating the burial, suggests a post-6th century date (see Section 52, Fig 4, Plate 1).

Ditch **246** (Section 52, Fig. 4) was a large linear feature oriented north-east to south-west that truncated ditch **248** on its western edge. It was partially excavated to a depth of 0.62m, but had a projected depth of 1.1m and was approximately 2.00m wide. A sequence of three fills was identified. The lower fill (245) was mid greyish brown silty clay with few inclusions. It comprised the main fill of the ditch and appears to represent an initial backfill event. Above this lay fill 244, light yellowish brown silty clay with a mixed/disturbed appearance, again with few inclusions. The angle of the tip of this deposit and its appearance suggest that it was bank material that had slumped back into the ditch. Both fills appear to represent the final phase of the ditch comprising mixed accretions of weathered soil and more deliberate backfills, followed by a period of neglect. During this time there were slumps of bank material (244), possibly after heavy rainfall, which almost entirely filled the ditch.

Fill 243, mid yellowish brown silty clay, was interpreted as the final fill of ditch **246**, and may have been a deliberate backfill comprised of mixed soils and bank material. It may have served to completely flatten the bank and level the ditch, ending its period of use.

Truncating ditch **246** was a second large ditch, **242**. It lay on the same alignment and may have been a direct replacement and/or re-instatement of the boundary ditch. It contained a similar sequence of fills to ditch **246**, suggesting the same type of abandonment/disuse had occurred here too. As with **246**, ditch **242** was not fully excavated, but was recorded as measuring 1.4m wide by 1.12m+ deep. It had an asymmetrical U-shaped profile with a lower section that tapered and became narrow and steep sided at approximately 0.8m deep.

Ditches **248**, **246** and **242** appear to show a sequence of use and disuse of a boundary that began as a small, shallow ditch that was twice replaced by a large ditch-and-bank system slightly to the west. This activity shows not only a physical shift of the boundary but also a change of emphasis to a more defensive type of boundary. It is not apparent why this change occurred.

Only a very small finds assemblage was recovered from these features, consisting of flint and animal bone only. Dating of these features at this stage is therefore problematic using artefacts, but stratigraphic evidence shows that, as they truncated burial **250** (see above), they probably post-dated the 6th century.

Two further boundary ditches were excavated at the north-west end of the trench, on approximate north-west to south-east alignments.

Ditch **258** (Section 53, Fig. 4) was only partially excavated but was wide and deep with a U-shaped profile. It measured 2.14m+ wide by 0.86m+ deep. The primary and mid fills were similar dark brown clay silts with no finds recovered. The upper fill, 228, was light yellow brown silty clay with mixed re-deposited natural and contained one sherd of abraded Middle Saxon pottery that may have been intrusive (from buried soil 216). All fills, with the exception of the basal fill 257, were probably backfill deposits (the latest of which may have been partially comprised of upcast material), representing the disuse phase of the ditch.

Ditch **255** truncated **258** on its eastern side and was similar in form and function, with a regular, U-shaped profile. It measured approximately 2m wide by 0.92m deep. It was unclear in section from which level this ditch was dug and it is entirely possible that the upper fill 229/230 (which appeared to also form a layer overlying an earlier buried soil, 201, and ditch **258**) had obscured the line of the cut.

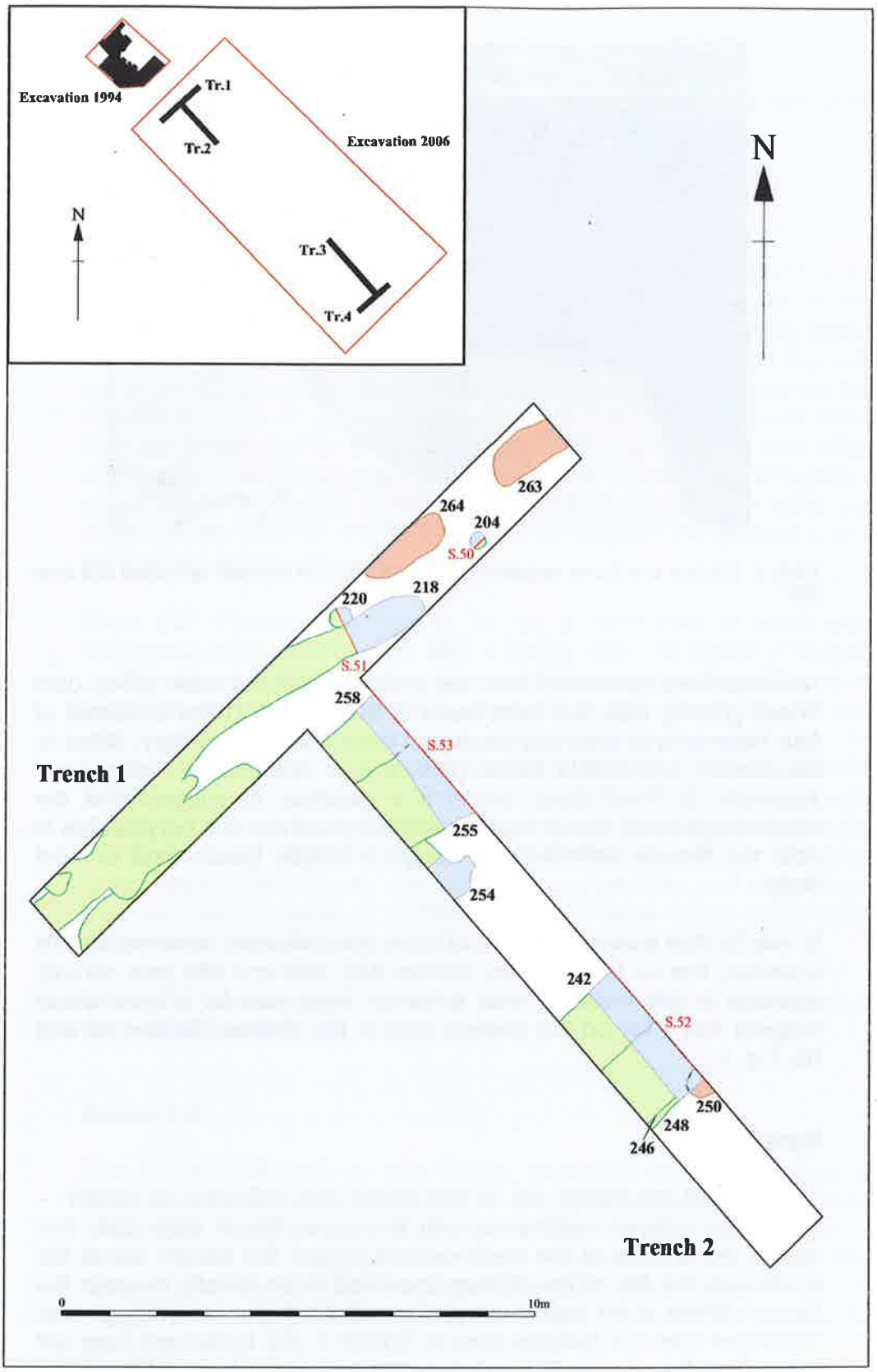

Figure 2: Trench plans (Trenches 1 and 2)

Plate 1: Ditches and burial sequence 246, 248 and 250 overlain by buried soil layer 201

No finds were recovered from the primary fill of the ditch (231), dark brown gravelly clay, but were found in fill 229/230. These consisted of four fragments of fired clay/daub and three sherds of pottery, dated to the Roman and Middle Saxon periods (see Appendix 1 Pottery, and Appendix 2, Fired Clay). Whilst it is possible to suggest that the assemblage could hint at nearby settlement activity, it is not possible to date the feature definitively, although a Middle Saxon date is most likely.

It may be that a similar pattern of ditch reinstatement occurred for this boundary line as for boundary ditches **242**, **246** and **248** (see above), although in this instance what evidence there was for a bank would suggest that it lay on the western side of the ditches (Section 52 and 53, Fig. 4).

Buried Soil

The level of the buried soil in this trench was not clear in section – there was a layer, continuous with the upper fills of ditch **255**, that sealed the ditches at the north-western end of the trench, but at the south-east the fills of the ditches appeared to lie directly beneath the topsoil. While a far higher proportion of the finds assemblage was recovered from cut features than in Trench 1, the buried soil here still accounted for almost 70% of the pottery assemblage, 63% of the worked flint and 36% of the bone assemblage (Fig. 4).

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Fig. 3) was oriented north-west to south-east and contained three features and the layer of buried soil.

Ditches

Ditch **234** (Section 54, Fig. 4) was located 2m from the west end of the trench and was oriented approximately north-northeast to south-southwest. It had a slightly asymmetrical flat-based V-shaped profile and measured 0.9m to 1m wide by a maximum 0.56m deep. The very top of the cut was unclear where the latest fill merged with a buried soil deposit (201) at a depth of approximately 0.27m from ground level. Both lower and middle fills (233 and 232, gritty grey brown clay silts), contained Roman, Early/Middle and Middle Saxon pottery, including a single sherd of possible Ipswich ware. There was nothing in either the shape of the ditch or the fill sequence to suggest the presence of a bank to either side (Plate 2).

Ditch **227** (Section 55, Fig. 4) lay on a north-east to south-west orientation 3.2m east of ditch **234**. It had a wide, flat-based V-shaped profile and measured 2.15m wide by 0.96m deep. Three fills were identified; the primary fill (226) being mid orange brown gritty silty clay with lenses of redeposited natural washed in from the west edge. No finds were recovered from this deposit. The central fill 225 was similar to 226 but with patches of iron staining. It contained a securely stratified sherd of Early Saxon pottery in good condition, dated to the 6th/7th century. Upper fill 224 was similar to buried soil layer 201 (pale grey brown slightly sandy clay silt) and was possibly part of the layer that sunk into the ditch as its fills settled over time. It also contained a single sherd of Saxon pottery, but of 7th/8th century date (Plate 3).

Ditch **236** appeared in Trench 3 and Trench 4 and is discussed in section 5.4, below.

Buried Soil

The buried soil layer in this trench appeared much paler than in Trenches 1 and 2 and was possibly at a greater distance from direct occupation. However, the finds assemblage within it was as large, or larger than in the trenches to the west. It contained more pottery than in any other trench and the second biggest bone assemblage (by weight). Over large parts of the trench the topsoil cover above the buried soil was only 0.15 to 0.20m and the buried soil itself was up to 0.26m deep.

Plate 2: Ditch 234 cutting from high within buried soil 201

Plate 3: Ditch 227 overlain by buried soil 201

5.4 Trench 4

Ditches

Four ditched features were recorded in this trench (and at the southern end of Trench 3) (Fig 3). Some of the relationships and orientations were unclear due to the size of the ditches, the narrowness of the trenches and the covering of buried soil.

Ditch **212** (Section 58, Fig. 4) was the largest of the ditches. It was oriented north-east to south-west and had a sinuous but linear shape in plan. The width of the ditch is uncertain but would be approximately 3.5m wide. Excavation ceased at 1.70m down, though the ditch was clearly deeper than this. Four fills were recorded; a basal weathering 215, a main fill of heavy yellow brown clay 211, a lens of burnt clay within this, 210, and an upper dumped mixed infill 209. Very little pottery was recovered from the feature – a single decorated Early/Middle Saxon sherd from the upper fill. The ditch was overlain by buried soil (235).

The interpretation of ditches **236** and **237** (Section 56 and 57, Fig. 4) is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the features lay at the intersection of Trenches 3 and 4 making excavation difficult and secondly, they were overlain by a 0.34m thick upper fill, 213, perhaps part of the buried soil layer 235 obscuring their relationship. As such, two interpretations can be applied. The first considers ditch **236**. Its western edge was located 4.5m from the eastern end of Trench 3 on a north to south alignment but its eastern edge (in Trench 4), had a north-east to south-west alignment. In plan (Fig. 3) this formed the terminus point of a very large ditch - at least 3.5 to 4m wide and 0.55m+ deep with an overall north to south orientation. The second interpretation concerns ditch **237** and again, the western edge of ditch **236** with which it shared a north to south alignment. In plan, these edges formed a regular linear shape and if associated, formed a north to south ditch that measured approximately 2m wide and 0.19m+ deep.

Whichever interpretation is correct, the stratigraphic relationship remains the same: a buried soil (213/235) covered both features and ditch **236** truncated **237** (Fig. 3).

The only datable finds recovered came from the overlying fill 213 – two handmade Middle Saxon sherds and two Maxey-type sherds. These sherds suggest the layer dated to the Middle Saxon period and since it clearly sealed ditches **236** and **237**, may date them to the Early or Middle Saxon period (see Appendix 1).

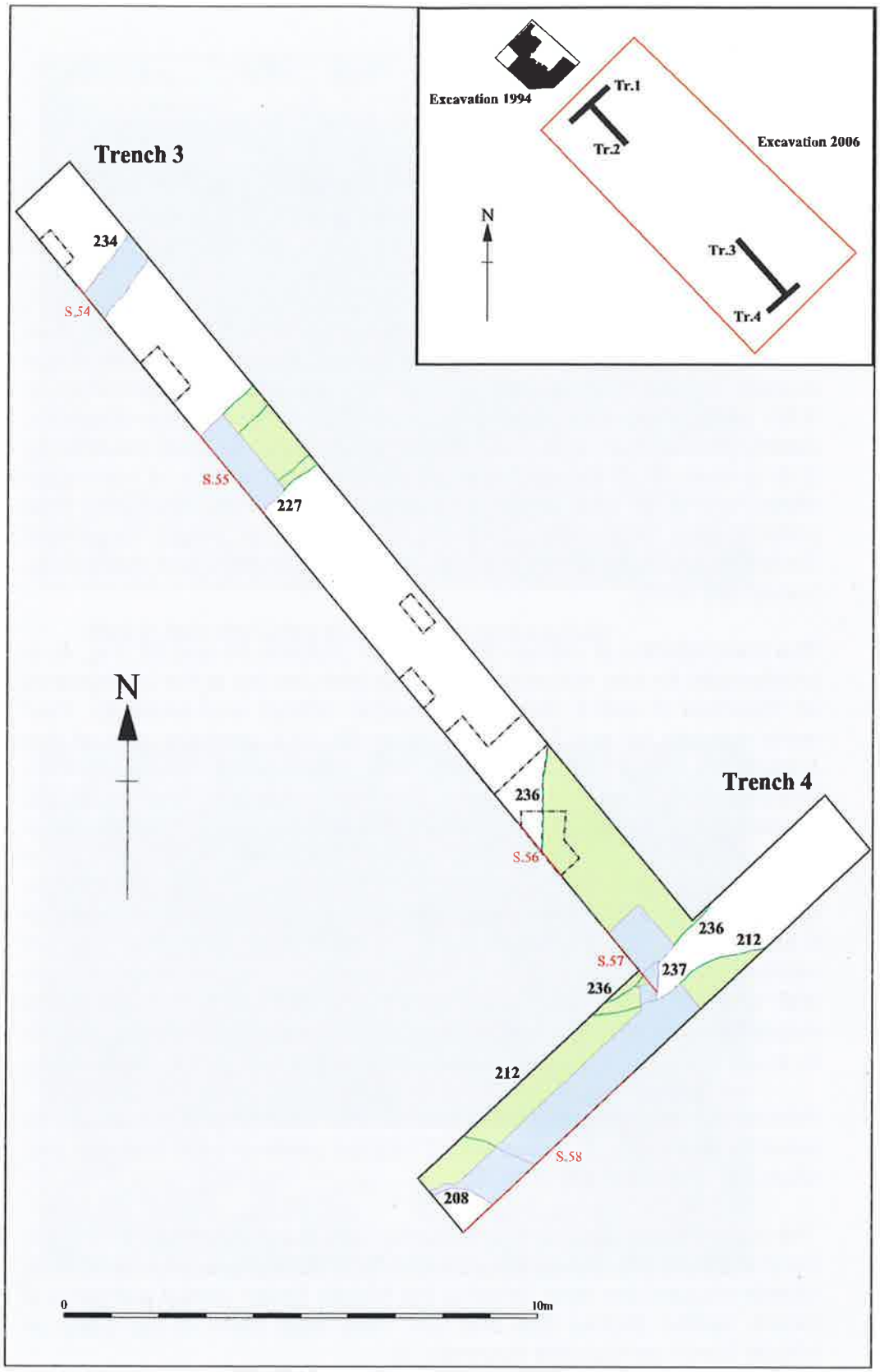

Figure 3: Trench plans (Trenches 3 and 4)

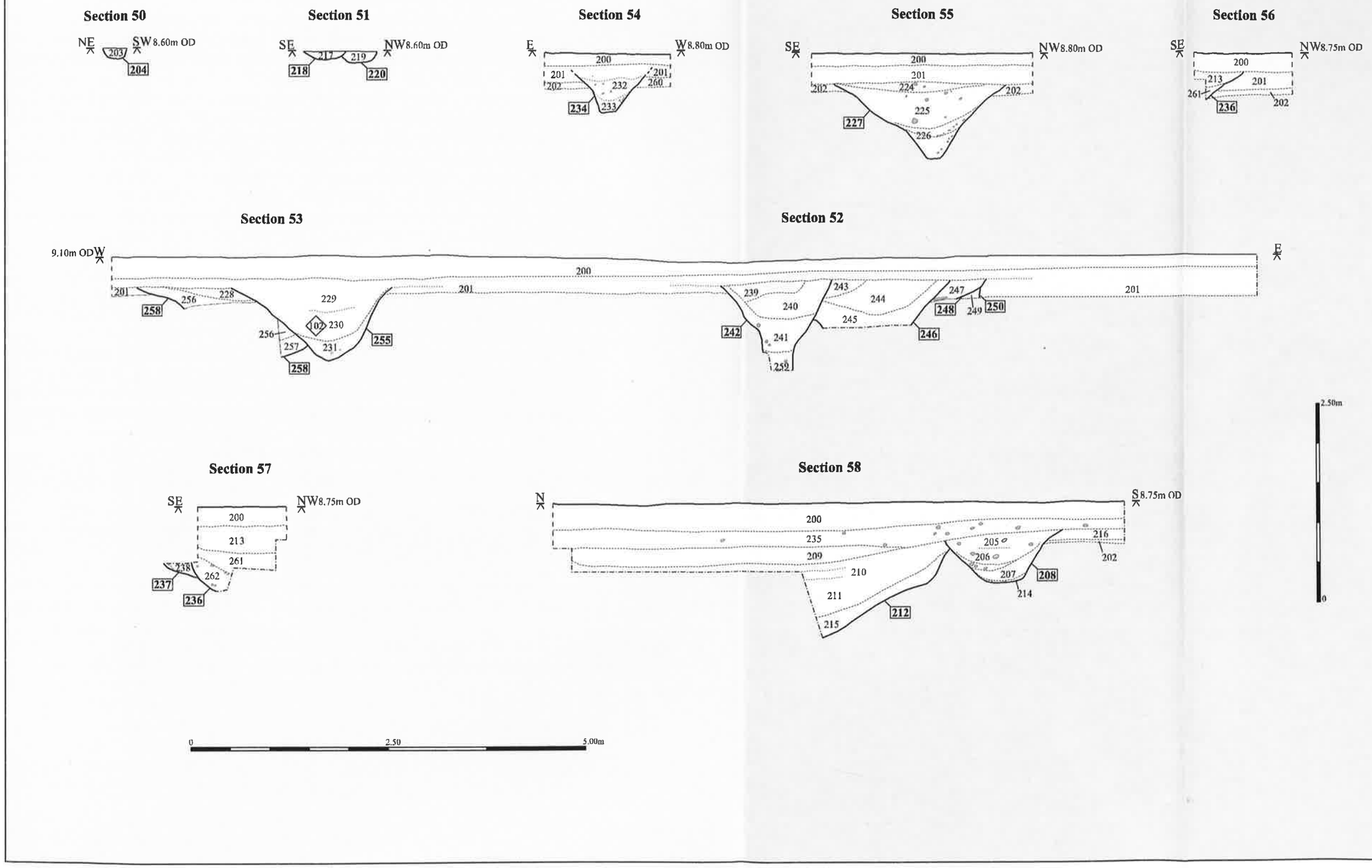

Figure 4: Section drawings

Finally, ditch **208** (Section 58, Fig. 4) lay at the south-western end of the trench and truncated the southern edge of ditch **212**. It had an east to west alignment and measured 1.5m wide by 0.64m deep. The pottery recovered from the fills demonstrated a good dating sequence, with handmade Middle Saxon in the primary fill (214), a small abraded Early/Middle Saxon rim in the middle fill (207) and a range of pottery types in the latest fill (205) including handmade Middle Saxon, St Neots ware, Maxey type wares and a sherd of Ely ware (see Appendix 1). The Ely ware sherd is small and abraded and probably intrusive and the date of the ditch was probably Middle Saxon, and adds credence to the suggested date of large boundary ditch **212** (Section 58, Fig 4).

Buried soil

The buried soil layer 213/235 was deeper here than in the other trenches at up to 0.35m, and of a more clayey consistency. This happened for two reasons; firstly because it overlay the deep ditches **212** and **236** and secondly because the land begins to fall away to the south-east. The upper fills of both these ditches, respectively 213 and 209, were just as much part of the buried soil layer as they were ditch fill. Above these, layer 235 was machine excavated but a considerable number of finds were recovered during machining and from section cleaning; seven sherds of pottery including handmade Middle Saxon and Ipswich ware, animal bone, lava quern, shell and slag.

6 Discussion

The results of the evaluation at Oakington are significant in that they add greatly to the information already existing from previous excavations and also raise questions regarding the development of the area prior to, during and after the Saxon period. The archaeology revealed falls into three main types; burials, ditches and the buried soil, and it would be tempting to see these as a simple chronological progression of Early Saxon cemetery, Middle Saxon enclosures and Middle/Late Saxon abandonment. However, the archaeology does not easily fit this simple pattern and there are a number of questions and problems posed by all three of the principal 'feature' types.

Burials

Three burials (**250**, **253** and **254**) were identified in Trenches 1 and 2 (Fig. 5). Although these were not excavated, their general alignment and proximity to the known 6th-century burials immediately to the north-west, suggest strongly that they are part of the cemetery excavated in 1993/4. Whilst this discovery has pushed the extent of the

cemetery 25m to the south-east, it has not been possible to establish a definite boundary. The known dimension of the cemetery excavated in 1994 was only 15m north-west to south-east – this has now increased to 40m. It is possible however, that as the density of graves appears to decrease towards the south-east, the edge of the cemetery is nearby. This edge may not be clearly defined, by a ditch or other boundary, but may simply be a thinning of the density of burials to the south-east (Fig 5).

There is a possibility that the easternmost burial recorded here (**250**) may not be Early Saxon in date, and that those recorded in Trench 1 may mark the approximate limit of the cemetery. The grave in Trench 2 is truncated by the earliest in a sequence of three ditches, none of which contained any datable finds material. The buried soil above and around these ditches contained a sizeable, principally Middle Saxon, finds assemblage – for the entire sequence of three ditches to have been dug and become infilled before the build-up of the buried soil and the finds assemblage within it may suggest that these are earlier features, either Roman or Early Saxon, and that the grave beneath them is therefore possibly Roman in date.

The Roman presence on the site, only clearly evident in the finds assemblage, is slight - just eight pottery sherds and five pieces of ceramic building material. While this does not indicate occupation in the immediate vicinity the area could lie at the edge of a Romano-British settlement, such as that tentatively identified through crop marks to the north-west (MCB10744) and it is in such locations that small cemeteries and isolated burials are frequently found. There are a number of undated ditches on the site that could be Romano-British in date and two ditches were recorded in the 1994 excavation immediately to the north- west that clearly predated the Early Saxon cemetery. While these could be prehistoric, perhaps Bronze Age, they could equally be Roman.

Ditches and other features

At least twelve ditches were identified across the evaluation area. Most appeared to be boundary ditches and form part of an enclosure system.

The dating of the ditches is clearly crucial to any interpretation. Very few of them contained an adequate finds assemblage for unambiguous dating, though the majority would appear to be Middle Saxon in date.

The sequence of three recutting ditches that truncate burial **250** is currently undatable – no datable material was recovered despite quite intensive excavation. They cut through the lower level of buried soil and appear to be completely sealed by the later, relatively more finds-rich buried soil. Such a sequence of three ditches, two of them large

and deep, would involve a considerable time-span. If the burial they truncate is seen, by close association with the rest of the cemetery, to be Early Saxon (perhaps 6th century), and the upper level of buried soil is principally Middle Saxon (of the 8th century), then this sequence of ditches must occupy a relatively narrow time frame within the 7th century.

The sequence of ditches to the north-west, **255** and **258**, is clearly both filled by and sealed by the buried soil, and both ditches contained, in their upper fills, small quantities of Middle Saxon pottery.

These two intercutting, or recutting ditch sequences appear to have had their associated banks on opposite sides, with that of **242/246** to the east and that of **255/258** to the west. This could suggest that if they were broadly contemporary the approximate 4m space between them may represent a throughway between enclosures. However, the two sets of ditches do not appear to be exactly aligned, and if they are not this becomes unlikely and they may instead be elements of separate and non-contemporary enclosures.

The dense area of features at the south of Trench 1 was not excavated. It can often be more destructive than informative to attempt to excavate complex archaeology within the confines of a narrow trench. This area, like the rest of the trench, appeared to be sealed by the buried soils.

The ditches at the east of the site in Trenches 3 and 4 are very different in nature to those at the west, and also quite different to each other. The pale sandy fill of ditch **227**, the single sherd of Early Saxon pottery in its central fill and the fact that it appears to be sealed by the buried soils, may suggest that this ditch is of an earlier phase than the majority of the ditches and may be part of the Early Saxon landscape contemporary with the cemetery. Conversely, the narrow ditch **234** some 10m to the west clearly cut from quite high within the buried soils and contained quite a sizeable Middle Saxon pottery assemblage. The assemblage includes a single sherd of possible Ipswich ware – the only sherd to have been recovered from within a feature rather than from the buried soil. This ditch clearly cuts through the buried soil and may well contain a chiefly residual assemblage from within it, perhaps putting it as part of a later, possibly even post-Middle Saxon phase.

The major ditches in these eastern trenches are **212** and **236** at the junction of Trenches 3 and 4. Ditch **212** was a very large, deep ditch, perhaps 3 – 4.00m wide and over 2.00m deep. It was water-filled towards its base and could not be fully excavated. It was unclear in the narrow trench exactly what alignment it followed but it ran approximately north-east to south-west and was located at the edge of the plateau that occupies the north-western part of the recreation ground, at the point where it drops away to the stream at the east. A ditch of this size would be at least semi-defensive (as much perhaps

against water and wildlife as against people) and probably enclosed the plateau area to its west. It seems likely that the ditch follows the contour around to the south and west, forming the south-eastern section of an enclosure of unknown size.

A second, large and deep ditch, **236**, again not fully excavated, terminated at the western edge of **212**, oriented north-west to south-east approximately perpendicular to it. This may form a large internal division within the larger enclosure. Both these ditches truncated an earlier ditch possibly on a similar alignment to **236**.

The dating of these large enclosure ditches is clearly crucial to the understanding of the site. The only datable material was recovered from the upper fills of the features and relates more to the overlying buried soils than to the infilling of the ditches themselves. There is little of this material but what there is dates to the Middle Saxon period. It is insufficient for definite dating however, and these ditches, while probably Middle Saxon in origin, could be earlier, Roman or even Iron Age. Ditch **212** is truncated along its outer edge by the smaller ditch **208** which itself would appear to be Middle or possibly Late Saxon in date.

The evaluation area contained no definite featured settlement evidence other than two postholes (**204** and **220**), located in Trench 1 that may form part of a structure. Due to the limited nature of the evaluation however, it is difficult to determine whether this is actually the case, or whether they represent a fenceline, possibly associated with ditch **255**. While featured settlement evidence is notable by its absence, finds evidence for settlement activity is present in some quantity, principally within the buried soils.

Buried soil

Key to the interpretation of all features is the buried soil layer (216 and 213/235). This layer directly underlay the topsoil and its dark colour and proportionally high pottery content suggest that it was a heavily utilised 'land surface'. To a certain extent the layer appeared to seal most features (though some could be seen to be cutting its lower levels) indicating that much of it may have been deposited after the main period of activity, i.e. the creation, use and disuse of the enclosure systems in the Early and Middle Saxon period. It is unclear what this layer represents, but it is crucial to the understanding of the development of the site during the Saxon period.

Points of note are:

• The buried soil occurred in every trench though it varied in colour (darker at the west and paler to the east) and in depth from c. 0.15m to 0.34m. The variation in colour, caused mainly by the amount of charcoal in the soil, does not appear to coincide with any change in the density of finds material. Far more material was recovered from the buried soil than the underlying features, and it was relatively evenly spread across all four trenches.

• It lies directly beneath a relatively thin layer of topsoil at a depth of *c.* 24cm. This suggests that this land has never been ploughed, at least not since the Saxon occupation of the area – a suggestion backed up by the complete lack of late medieval and post-medieval finds in the topsoil or buried soil.

• It contains a slightly later pottery (and therefore presumably all finds) assemblage than the features. Omitting clearly residual material, the features hold a pottery assemblage that is 73% handmade Early/Middle Saxon – material not precisely datable – and 23 % datable Middle and Late Saxon (Ipswich, Maxey and St Neots wares). By comparison the buried soil assemblage is only 51% handmade material and 40% datable later material.

This latter suggests that, in general, the features are likely to be Early and Middle Saxon, 6th and 7th century in date but that the build-up of buried soil occurred during the Middle to Late Saxon period, 8th and 9th century.

It appears that the soil and the artefacts within the buried soil were undisturbed and therefore provide a reasonably accurate date for its formation (Middle Saxon). Despite this information, it is unclear what the buried soil layer represents. For example, it must be a result of contemporary occupation and settlement activity but at what distance from the area evaluated? Was it formed after the associated settlement ceased to exist, as part of the process of its disuse and decay? Was it a deliberate, widespread deposition? Does it signify a marked change of land use?

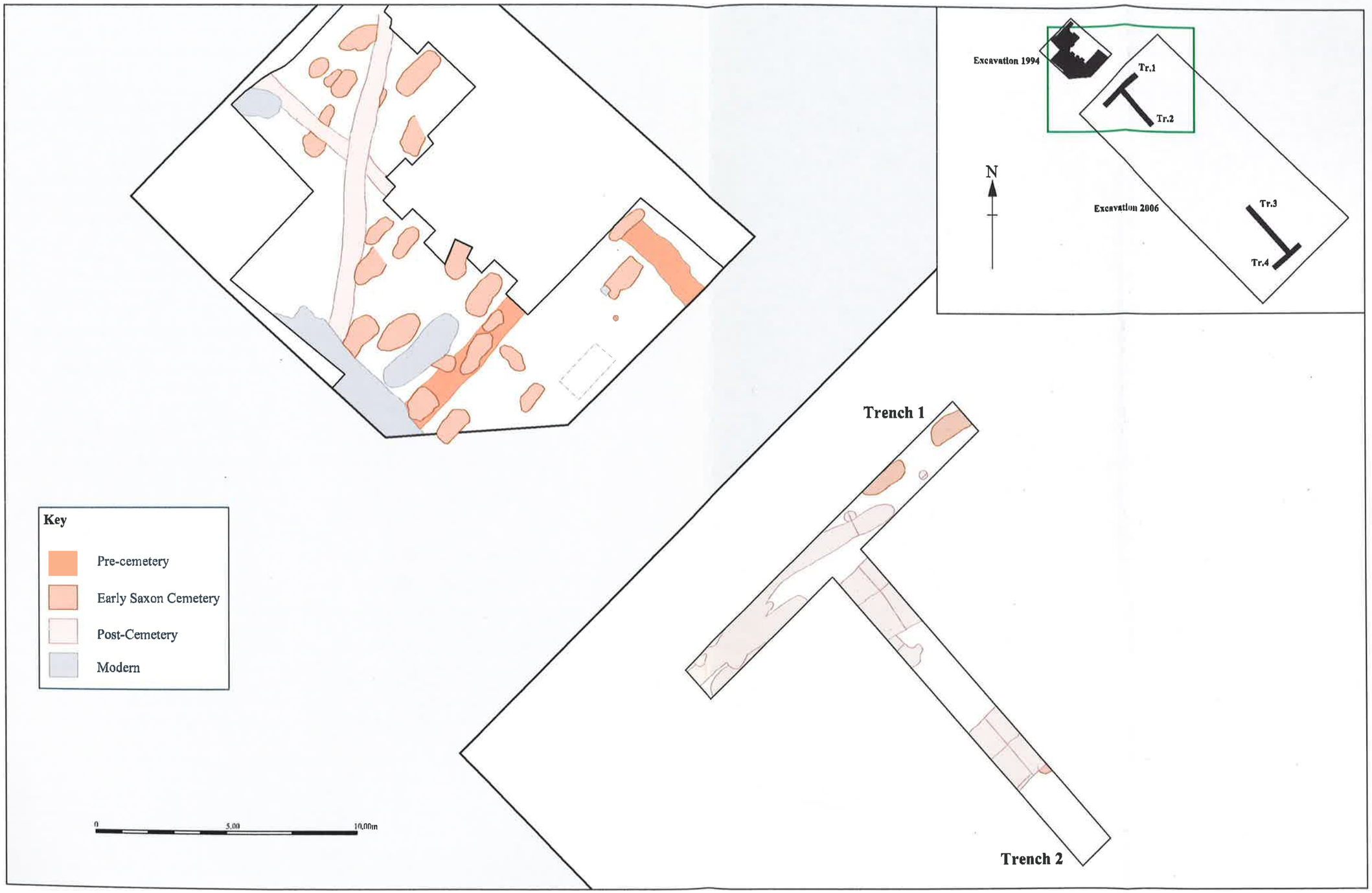

Figure 5: Phase plan

7 Conclusions

The evaluation at Oakington has shown that the 6th century cemetery to the north-west extends at least 40m to the south-east and that although there is evidence for enclosure systems there is no direct evidence for associated Early Saxon settlement. While the pottery assemblage from the evaluation is mostly of handmade Saxon material and therefore not precisely datable, that which is more definable is generally Middle Saxon in date, 7th century and later rather than 6th century and earlier.

The associated Early Saxon settlement therefore is not thought to have been in the immediate locality of the evaluation site and cemetery. This would not be unusual at this period; settlements would often be at some distance, perhaps 100 to 200m, from this kind of, possibly fairly large, open cemetery. It is not until the 7th century that small cemeteries begin to be seen set within contemporary settlements.

It is the presence of a Middle Saxon settlement that is of particular interest here. The majority of the features recorded would appear to date to the period between the end of use of the cemetery and the introduction of the datable Middle Saxon Ipswich ware to the site. This would give a time-scale of the 7th and early 8th century. The finds assemblage from the buried soil indicates that the occupation continued long after this into the 8th and 9th centuries. The distribution of Ipswich wares, with all bar a single sherd recovered from the buried soils, is of particular note here.

The density of the features encountered suggests that the site lies at the very least at the outskirts of the contemporary settlement and possibly more centrally within it. The density of finds material certainly suggests that the evaluation area lies within the settlement. Previous excavations on local, and densely occupied, Middle Saxon settlements suggests that the density of Ipswich ware recovered can be as low as a single sherd per 100 square metres (Mortimer *et al* 2004) – at Oakington the evaluated area was 94 square metres and 7 sherds were recovered.

There appeared to be a lack of settlement features within the evaluation, apart from the ditches, with just two shallow postholes recorded. It may simply be that the evaluation trenches have not crossed any areas of *in situ* occupation and that post buildings and pits etc. lie immediately to the north and/or south, within the evaluation area. It may equally be the case that something more complex is happening to do with the dispersal of artefactual and ecofactual material across the settlement site. If the high density of material did not extend right across the area evaluated it might be possible to see

this part of the settlement containing an area of middens, now dispersed. There do not, however, appear to be any particular concentrations within the finds and this seems relatively unlikely.

Several possibly comparative sites of this date have been excavated in the area recently (in the last ten years). Immediate comparisons should be sought with the excavations in the neighbouring villages of Cottenham *c.* 4km to the north-east and Willingham *c.* 5km to the north. At Cottenham an Early Saxon semi-enclosed settlement was seen to develop into a Middle and Late Saxon nucleated village. The major changes in the village layout came at the time of the introduction of Ipswich ware to the area in the second quarter of the 8th century, with large parts of the earlier ditched enclosures becoming in-field and out-field of the new settlement (Mortimer 2000). This may well be what is happening at Oakington.

At Willingham the picture is less clear but a shift in the focus of settlement is again seen between the Early and Middle Saxon settlements, with the main area excavated, at the centre of the village, predominantly Early Saxon with the Middle Saxon occupation an unseen presence close by (Connor pers. comm.).

The major excavations along West Fen Road in Ely, conducted by two separate archaeological units in 1999/2000 (Mortimer *et al* 2004; Mudd 2001), uncovered a very extensive Middle Saxon settlement site, large parts of which were abandoned in the 9th century while parts developed through into the Late Saxon and Medieval periods. This, however, was a *de novo* Middle Saxon settlement, or a major extension to a pre-existing and unseen earlier settlement, and as such is perhaps least comparable with what may be happening at Oakington.

Further afield, at Cherry Hinton to the south-east of Cambridge, recent excavations at Church End have revealed parts of an enclosed Middle Saxon manorial settlement (Mortimer 2003; Cessford and Mortimer 2004) that has many comparable features to the Oakington site. The enclosing ditches are equally wide, deep and extensive – they enclose an area of perhaps six hectares – and both sites front on to large deep-cut ditches or streams that could have been used for river access. The dating of the two sites however is different. While there is a Saxon presence on the site at Cherry Hinton from at least the 8th century, the enclosure does not appear to take place until the later 9th century. There is also an extensive cemetery within the Cherry Hinton enclosure but this too is later, dating to the 9th to 11th centuries.

Oakington has comparative elements to many of these sites but fits none of them completely. It has the Early to Middle Saxon continuity of Cottenham, the settlement shift of Willingham and the 'manorial' enclosure of Cherry Hinton. It is likely that every settlement had its own set of circumstances that produced its own settlement dynamic, and

that suggesting a 'typical' settlement progression for Early Saxon to medieval occupation, even within such a tight locality as this, is impossible.
Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

Acknowledgements

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The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay, the site was excavated by the authors and located by EDM by Rachel Clarke. The report was illustrated by Severine Bezie and edited by Stephen Macaulay and Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu. Paul Spoerry spot-dated the pottery and Chris Montague commented on the metal finds.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaneic, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Pottery

By Richard Mortimer with Paul Spoerry

1 The composition of the assemblage

The evaluation produced a relatively small assemblage of pottery - 69 sherds weighing 575g. The material is principally Middle Saxon in date with handmade sherds predominating but with a significant element of wheel turned Ipswich wares and Maxey wares. There is very little later Saxon material and it, along with the few medieval sherds, may well be intrusive, background material in what is fundamentally a Middle Saxon assemblage. Some of the handmade material is likely to be of earlier Saxon origin, either as an earlier element continuous with the later Middle Saxon activity or as residual material perhaps linked to the activities within the cemetery area.

Romano-British

Eight sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered; two sherds are Horningsea ware including part of the rim of a large storage jar and there is a single sherd of Nene Valley colour-coat. The other sherds are of unprovenanced sandy local East Anglian fabrics. All are abraded to varying degrees.

Early/Middle Saxon handmade wares

The bulk of the assemblage (thirty-seven sherds) is made up of Early to Middle Saxon handmade wares. This category contains a variety of handmade fabrics and the majority cannot either be provenanced or dated with any degree of accuracy. The majority come in rough gritty, sandy and micaceous fabrics, some of which could lie earlier within the date range and could extend back to the 6th century, though the bulk of the material is probably Middle Saxon and would date to the latter half of the 7th or first part of the 8th centuries. It is thought that with the introduction of Ipswich wares at *c.* 725-750 production and use of handmade pottery virtually ceased at East Anglian sites such as Oakington. A wide variety of fabric types have been identified, with fabrics tempered with sand, grit, mica, flint, sandstone, quartz, shell, chalk and crushed rock, and a variety of fabrics that combine two or more of these. There are no vegetable tempered sherds, and only one sherd with, triangular impressed, decoration.

Maxey-type Ware

Six sherds of Maxey-type wares were recovered. The exact chronology of Maxey ware is uncertain, but it is generally dated *c.* AD650-850 (eg. Hurst 1976), however, it is possible that its span is considerably shorter than this, perhaps as short as 650 – 750, predating Ipswich ware with a slight overlap (Blinkhorn pers. comm.). It is wet-hand finished and has reddish-orange to black surfaces. There are two main general sources, Northants and Lincolnshire. Both types are soft to fairly hard, with abundant fossil shell platelets. The Northants types contain Jurassic limestone. Vessels are usually straight sided bowls with simple rims, and/or upright triangular lugs.

Ipswich Ware

Seven sherds of Ipswich ware were recovered - a Middle Saxon, slow-wheel made ware, manufactured exclusively in Ipswich. Ipswich ware was probably not in circulation before *c.* AD 725-740 and continued in use until the mid 9th century at sites outside East Anglia (Blinkhorn in press). There are two principal fabric types: Group 1 sherds are hard and slightly sandy to the touch, with visible small quartz grains, some shreds of mica and frequent fairly well-sorted angular to sub-angular quartz grains. Group 2 sherds are hard, sandy and mostly dark grey in colour with a scatter of large quartz grains which protrude through the surfaces of the vessel, giving rise to the term "pimply" Ipswich ware (eg Hurst 1976). The majority of the sherds from the site are Group 2, pimply sherds.

St Neots wares (c. 850-1150)

Six sherds of St Neots type ware were recovered. St Neots wares are the most widespread Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman pottery type for the western part of East Anglia. The ware is well-made on a wheel, in a fabric full of white shells, and often coloured dark purple with a soapy feel to the surface. It has a smooth fabric, is low-fired, and varies in colour from pale brown to purple. The date range coincides with that of both Thetford and Stamford, however, there is less of a clear end-date to its production as it gradually merged with medieval forms and fabrics in the 12th century.

Thetford wares (c. 850 and 1150 AD)

A single Thetford ware sherd was recovered. Thetford ware is the most common pottery type for the Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman period in the east of the region. It is a wheel-made hard grey reduced ware, with thin sherds except for large storage vessels. Jar rims tend to be smaller and more finely made than St Neots Ware, the hardness making it

possible to craft smaller forms. Thetford ware and similar fabrics were produced in Ipswich, Norwich and Thetford itself along with country sites such as Langhale and Grimston.

Medieval (c. 12th – 14th century)

Four medieval sherds were recovered from the site, three Ely-type wares dating to the 12th or 13th century and one Sible Hedingham jug fragment of the 12th to14th.

	Tr1	Tr2	Tr3	Tr4	Total
Roman	2	4	1	1	**8**
Handmade Saxon	1	6	23	7	**37**
Maxey		1	4	1	**6**
Ipswich	3		2	2	**7**
St Neots	2	3		1	**6**
Thetford		1			**1**
Medieval		1		3	**4**
	8	**16**	**30**	**15**	**69**

Table 1: Pottery assemblage; pottery type by trench showing number of sherds

	Total sherds
Roman	**8**
Middle Saxon	**50**
Late Saxon	**7**
Medieval	**4**

Table 2: Pottery assemblage by period

2 Distribution of the assemblage

Pottery was recovered from all four trenches. The evaluation did not suggest any concentrations of activity or, conversely, of any areas of lesser activity. The buried soil contained pottery (and other artefacts and ecofacts) distributed across the whole area evaluated.

The assemblage can be divided into surface/ buried soil material and features (principally ditch) finds. The relationship between the buried soil and the features is a complex one and it cannot necessarily be seen as a simple stratigraphic relationship where one pre-dates the other. However, with these caveats, there are significant variations within the assemblages that may inform upon the dating and phasing of

the site. Tables 3 and 4 divide the pottery into buried soil or feature-related assemblages.

Table 3 details the percentage of each pottery type within the two assemblages, e.g. 75% of the medieval pottery was recovered from the buried soil; Table 4 details the percentage of each pottery type within a single assemblage, e.g. 7.5% of the buried soil assemblage was medieval.

	Buried Soil	Features	B Soil %	Features %
Roman	5	3	62.5	37.5
Handmade Saxon	18	19	48.5	51.5
Maxey	2	4	33	67
Ipswich	6	1	86	14
St Neots	5	1	83	17
Thetford	1	0	100	0
Medieval	3	1	75	25
	40	**29**		

Table 3: Pottery types, percentage by feature type

	Buried Soil	%	Features	%
Roman	5	12.5	3	10
Handmade Saxon	18	45	19	65.5
Maxey	2	5	4	14
Ipswich	6	15	1	3.5
St Neots	5	12.5	1	3.5
Thetford	1	2.5	0	0
Medieval	3	7.5	1	3.5
	40	100	**29**	100

Table 4: Percentage of pottery type within each assemblage

The total handmade Saxon assemblage is evenly distributed between the two groups but forms over 65% of the feature assemblage, whereas the only well-datable Middle Saxon material, the Ipswich ware, was recovered almost entirely from the buried soil (6 sherds, 86%). The single sherd found within the featured assemblage came from a ditch in Trench 3 that clearly cut the buried soil. This distribution bias may be an indication that the majority of the ditches were infilled prior to the introduction of Ipswich ware to the site. That the Late Saxon material is also almost exclusively found within the buried soil (St Neots ware 5 sherds, 83%; Thetford ware 1 sherd, 100%) adds to this interpretation. With Ipswich ware not entering the assemblage until

perhaps the second quarter of the 8th century it is possible that most of the ditches on the site were in use, and infilled within the 7th century.

3 Sherd weight and condition of the assemblage

On the whole the material is of small individual sherd size but in relatively good condition, with good surfaces and clean, unrolled edges. The Roman material shows, unsurprisingly, the greatest level of abrasion along with, incongruously, the medieval material. The Middle Saxon assemblage, and particularly the Ipswich and Maxey wares, are in by far the best condition. The poor condition of the later, medieval sherds may suggest that this material is intrusive within the buried soil whereas the Middle Saxon assemblage is *in situ*.

The average sherd weights between the buried soil and feature assemblages are very different. In the buried soils (excluding a single very large Roman storage jar fragment) the 39 sherds weigh a total of 431g, an average sherd weight of 11g; for the featured assemblage, the 29 sherds weigh only 139g, an average sherd weight of only 5g – less than half that for the buried soils. In general it might be expected that these figures would be reversed, and that the average weight of pottery sherds recovered from sealed contexts would be greater than that for surface contexts where the material is more likely to be affected by trampling and weathering.

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Appendix 2: Other Ceramic Materials

By Mo Jones

1 Ceramic Building Material

Context	Type	Cut	Trench	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Description
1	b soil		1	1	0.16	Roman box flue tile
3	b soil		3	1	0.10	Roman brick/tile
12	b soil		1	1	0.13	Roman roof tile (tegula)
34	b soil		3	1	0.17	Roman roof tile (tegula)
209	ditch	212	4	1	0.08	Roman brick/tile
Total				5	0.64	

Table 5: Ceramic building material by context

Five fragments of Roman Ceramic Building Material were recovered; one box flue tile, two roof tile and two brick/tile. Fragments from contexts 1 and 12 were in good condition with recognisable surfaces.

2 Fired Clay

Context	Type	Cut	Trench	Quantity	Weight (kg)
1	b soil		1	1	0.03
3	b soil		3	2	0.03
16	B soil		2	2	0.01
32	b soil		3	4	0.01
205	ditch	208	4	2	0.03
209	ditch	212	4	1	0.01
211	ditch	212	4	3	0.01
216	b soil		3	1	0.01
217	ditch	218	1	5	0.02
229	ditch	255	2	1	0.06
229	ditch	255	2	20+	0.09
230	ditch	255	2	20+	0.01
230	ditch	255	2	2	0.14
230	ditch	255	2	1	0.01
Total				**3**	**0.47**

Table 6: Fired clay by context

Most of the fired clay recovered was undiagnostic, but some pieces have either smooth, relatively flat surfaces or wattle/armature impressions (e.g. from 230 and 16).

Appendix 3: Other Non-organic Materials

1 Lava Quern

By Mo Jones

Context	Type	Cut	Trench	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Description
3	b soil		3	8	0.01	Fragments
6	b soil		1	1	0.65	SF6
7	b soil		1	1	0.59	SF5
22	b soil		2	1	0.15	SF7
28	b soil		4	6	0.09	Fragments
205	ditch	208	4	7	0.01	Fragments
Total				**24**	**1.5**	

Table 7: Lava Quern by context

In total, 24 fragments of lava quern stone were recovered from the evaluation; SF5 and SF6 re-fit to form a segment of rim from the top stone measuring 17cm. It has a projected diameter of 56cm. Together the fragments form a triangular shape and measure 15cm by 12cm and are a maximum 7cm in height. Both pieces display pecking on the upper surface. They are generally in good, sharp condition.

SF7 is less diagnostic and cannot be fitted with SF6 and/or SF7. It is a bottom stone fragment with a depth of 2.5cm.

The remaining pieces are too fragmentary for further description.

2 Metal Objects

By Chris Montague

Two metal objects were recovered from the excavations: A pair of Early Saxon (5th – 6th century) copper alloy decorated tweezers from grave **264** (SF 1), and a small, worn iron whittle and tang knife from ditch **208** (SF 2). The latter could date from anywhere between the 6th and 11th centuries.

The tweezers were almost certainly originally part of a group of grave goods but were recovered from the surface of the grave, at the edge of

the cut and at a steep angle where it is thought they may have been redeposited within the fill of the grave.

3 Flint

By Barry Bishop

3.1 Introduction

An Archaeological Evaluation at the above site recovered 29 struck flints and a small quantity of burnt flint fragments. This report quantifies and describes the material according to a simplified technological/typological scheme (see Table 8), offers some comments on its significance and recommends any further work required. The material was mostly recovered from a buried soil horizon of Saxon date.

3.2 Quantification

Context	Cut	Decortication/Core shaping	Flake	Flake Fragment	Trimming Flake	Blade-Like Flake	Cortical Blade	Blade	Core	Chunk	Arrowhead	Burnt Flint (no.)	Burnt Flint (wt.)	Comments
001					1	1				2	1			unfinished
002									1					Narrow disc like on flake – unfinished LSA???
004						1								
016			1		1									
019		1	2											
023		2												
024		1							1					A2 blade core
026			1											Poss sporadic edge-trimming
035						1								
209	212	1			1							1	15	
213	236			1			1							
219	220											2	8	
228	258		1					2						
230	255		1					2						
232	234							1						Poss thermal spall?

Table 8: Quantification of Lithic Material by Context

3.3 Burnt Flint

Three fragments of unworked burnt flint, two from context 219 and a single piece from context 209, were recovered. They had be burnt to the degree that they had changed colour and become 'fire-crazed', consistent with having been burnt in a hearth. The quantities present would suggest incidental background waste from hearth use.

3.4 Struck Flint

Condition

The struck flint was in a variable condition, ranging from heavily edge chipped and rounded to sharp, with the majority falling towards the later category. It had evidently been subjected to redeposition and some pieces had experienced severe shock, as may be expected from processes such as plough strikes. Nevertheless, the generally good condition of the assemblage would indicate that it had received minimal post-depositional damage, and was probably mostly recovered from close to where it was originally deposited. It had also recorticated to a variable degree, with pieces of similar technological characteristics showing a wide range of degrees of recortication. These differences may therefore be due to specific and localized soil variations, rather than having any chronological significance.

Raw Materials

The struck flint was manufactured from good quality translucent brown to dark grey flint with a few opaque light grey cherty flint pieces also present. Cortex, where present, consisted of either smooth rolled or thick but abraded chalky cortex. These differences would suggest that the raw materials were obtained from derived deposits, probably alluvial terrace gravels and would be easily obtainable in the vicinity of the site.

Technology / Typology

The only truly chronologically diagnostic piece consisted of a large but unfinished leaf-shaped arrowhead of Early Neolithic affinities from context 001. It measured 66mm X 35mm X 11mm and had been formed into a long, lanceolate shape. Subsequent attempts at thinning the piece had failed due to multiple small thermal flaws, resulting in a number of step fractures that probably led to its abandonment. Also present was a thin tablet-shaped core from context 002. This had numerous small invasive flakes removed from both sides and was probably manufactured on a flake. Although remaining unshaped, it may also have represented the initial attempts at arrowhead manufacture. The remaining core, from context 024, consisted of a single platform type A2 (Clark *et al.* 1960), made on a rounded pebble. Its striking platform consisted of a single flake scar and had been edge-trimmed. It had produced numerous small narrow flakes and blades and was probably abandoned due to the formation of hinge and step fractures.

The remainder of the assemblage consisted of knapping waste but included a number of blades and blade-like flakes of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic characteristics.

3.5 Discussion

The assemblage was characteristic of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic industries; the single positively identified retouched piece, a leaf-shaped arrowhead, being of Early Neolithic derivation (Green 1980). Although the assemblage was not found as a primary *in situ* deposit, it appeared technologically homogenous and represented primary lithic reduction activities, at least partly including arrowhead manufacture. The social implications of arrowhead manufacture during the Neolithic have been little explored although it mostly appears to have occurred within settlement locations, such as at Hurst Fen (Clark *et al.* 1960, 223), Tattershall Thorpe (Chowne 1993) or, further afield, at Eton Rowing Lake (Lamdin-Whymark 2001, 24 – 26; Allen *et al.* 2004). This may suggest that further evidence of Early Neolithic occupation may be present in the vicinity.

3.6 Recommendations

Due to the small size of the assemblage, this report is all that is required of the material for the purposes of the archive and no further analytical work is proposed. It does, however, contribute to the body of evidence for Early Neolithic activity in the area, particularly that related to arrowhead manufacture, and it is therefore recommended that a short description should be included in any published account of the fieldwork, alongside illustrations of relevant pieces.

Should further fieldwork be considered, attention should focus on obtaining as large and as closely contexted lithic assemblage as possible, in order to attempt to understand the nature, extent and chronology of any lithic-based activities. Should sufficient quantities of lithic artefacts be procured from any future work, full metrical, typological and technological analysis may be warranted and, through consideration of other recovered artefact groups and environmental based evidence, this information should be incorporated into establishing as detailed and complete an understanding as possible of the prehistoric exploitation of the area.

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4 Stone

By Mo Jones

Context	Type	Cut	Trench	Quantity	Weight (kg)
22	b soil		2	1	0.04
Total				**1**	**0.04**

Table 9: Worked stone, by Context

One angular fragment of worked stone was recovered. It has one smooth (external) surface that may have been polished.

5 Slag

Context	Type	Cut	Trench	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Description
3	b soil		3	1	0.03	Metal-working debris
13	b soil		1	2	0.39	Smithing hearth bottom
210	ditch	212	4	3	0.03	Metal-working debris
235	b soil		4	1	0	Slag
Total				**7**	**0.45**	

Table 10: Slag, by Context

A single, unabraded smithing hearth bottom was recovered from the buried soil of Trench 1 (13). It measures 11cm by 6cm and is 4cm

deep. The remainder of the material is undiagnostic metal-working slag.

Appendix 4: Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

1 Introduction

A total of 72 "countable" bones were recovered from the Oakington excavations (see "methods" below). The assemblage primarily derives from ditches and subsoil layers. The material derives from two linked sets of evaluation trenches: 1,2 and 3,4. The condition of the bone is generally good albeit extremely fragmented in some cases. All contexts containing animal remains were dated to the Anglo-Saxon period.

2 Methods

All of the bones from Oakington were collected by hand; hence a bias towards smaller fragments is to be expected. The bones were recorded on MS Access database. All elements identifiable to species and over 25% complete were included in the database. Those not identifiable were classed as being from medium/large mammals but not included in any quantification. Initially all elements were assessed in terms of siding (where appropriate), completeness tooth wear stages (also where appropriate) and epiphyseal fusion. In addition, any taphonomy, i.e. burning. gnawing etc. was recorded where necessary. Any butchery or evidence of pathology was also recorded using separate tables in the main database. Completeness was assessed by percentage and anatomical zones present (after Dobney & Reilly, 1988). Tooth wear was assessed using Grant (1982). The broad species distribution for the whole assemblage can be seen in table 1.

3 The Assemblage

In terms of species distribution the sample is dominated by cattle remains (some 66% of the total assemblage), with sheep/goat remains being the second most prevalent (28% of the assemblage). Some pig was also recovered along with isolated elements of smaller mammal such as dog, rabbit and bank vole. This distribution of domestic fauna is characteristic of Anglo Saxon sites such as West Stow (Crabtree, 1990, 6). The majority of remains are of long bones and are heavily butchered with few small cut marks, possibly indicating a meat-based husbandry strategy rather than tanning, for example. All but two elements were from adult animals. Unfortunately due the fragmented nature of much of the assemblage any metrical analysis or ageing via mandibles was not possible.

5 Shell

By Mo Jones

Context	Cut	Type	Trench	Quantity	Weight (g)	Description
31		b soil	4	1	1	Oyster
209	212	ditch	4	1	1	Oyster
Total				2	2	

Table13: Shell, by Context

Only two fragments of shell were recovered from the evaluation and were found in Trench 4. Both are oyster shell and are probably of Saxon origin as they were recovered from a Middle Saxon context (ditch fill 209).

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Appendix 5: Environmental Remains

by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

Nine bulk samples were taken from features within the evaluated areas of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations. Ten litres of each sample were processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains,

dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification.

2 Results

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature Type	Sample Size (L)	Comments	Cereals	Chaff	Legumes	Weed Seeds	Charcoal <2mm	Charcoal > 2mm	Small animal bones	Large animal bones	Residue comments
100	203	204	post hole	10	Near Saxon burials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No finds
101	219	220	post hole	10	truncated by 103	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	
102	229	255	ditch	10		++	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	
103	217	218	ditch	10	shallow gully	+	0	+	+	+	0	0	+	
104	215	212	ditch	10	near base of big ditch	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	no finds
105	214	208	ditch	10	base fill of 11c ditch	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	+	
106	216		buried soil	10		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	no finds
107	226	227	ditch	10	IA/R ditch	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	
108	232	234	ditch	10		++	0	+	0	+	0	0	+	

Table 14: Environmental samples

Key to Tables

+ = 1 – 10 specimens ++ = 10 – 100 specimens +++ = 100+ specimens

Preservation is by charring and is quite variable. Many cereal grains are fragmented and poorly preserved however there are some present that have preserved well. Charcoal fragments are present in all samples in low quantities. Weed seeds are mostly absent other than *Vicia* sp (vetches) which are found in several of the samples and *Rumex* sp (dock).

Modern contaminants in the form of rootlets and a few common seeds such as *Chenopodium* sp. (goosefoot) are present in most of the samples.

Most of the samples contain cereal grains. Wheat is predominant and rye and barley are fairly frequent. Two of the samples also contain legumes.

3 Conclusions

The charred remains present in these samples are predominantly cereal grains that probably originate from being accidentally burnt in cooking fires. Wheat, barley and rye were all common crops with barley being particularly favoured in the Saxon period. Barley was often used for animal fodder but may have been used for human consumption in the form of bread and soup and was also used for the brewing of beer. No germinated grains were recovered to suggest brewing activities. Different varieties of wheat grains are represented as suggested by their morphology; the smaller rounded and compact grains are likely to be bread wheat, the other elongated forms could not be identified due to lack of diagnostic chaff elements.

The lack of crop processing residues such as spikelet forks, glume bases and rachis fragments, as well as the general scarcity of crop weed seeds, suggests that no crop processing was occurring in the near vicinity. It is possible that such evidence may be present in an unexcavated area of the site that would only be determined by further sampling.

The range in preservation indicates that the different components of the charred assemblage may have arrived by a number of different depositional processes or events. The general lack of charcoal suggests that most of the samples represent general scatters of burnt debris rather than discrete purposeful deposits. The occurrence of fragments of animal bone in many of the residues substantiates that it is most likely that the assemblage represents the general scatter of domestic refuse suggesting nearby habitation.

If further work is planned, it is recommended that environmental sampling is included. This assemblage shows that there is potential for the recovery of plant remains that could aid interpretation of the history of the site.

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