

Chapter 3: The Later Prehistoric Period

by Tim Allen, Alan Lupton and Andrew Mudd

with Jeff Muir and Simon Mortimer

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the Iron Age (c. 700 BC–AD 50). A total of 12 sites dating to this period was investigated along the route of the road scheme (Fig. 3.1). Most of these sites fall within the middle and late Iron Age (400 BC onwards), with very little earlier material identified.

The field evaluations (Stage 2) had suggested that middle-late Iron Age sites existed at Highgate House, Middle Duntisbourne and Duntisbourne Grove. A later prehistoric/Roman settlement was also thought to exist at Lower Street Furlong.

The present excavations led to some revisions of the dating by demonstrating that the material from Highgate House was largely middle Iron Age in date, while the sites at Middle Duntisbourne and Duntisbourne Grove were occupied at the very end of the late Iron Age. In addition, the segmented ditches at St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane, which were found in association with the earlier Bronze Age ring ditches (Chapter 2), are considered to be almost certainly Iron Age on the basis of radiocarbon dating. Iron Age pottery was also recovered from a small number of the features identified at Lower Street Furlong and Cherry Tree Lane/Burford Road South and Court Farm. The latter are described with the Roman features in chapter 4. Iron Age pottery sherds were recovered from Lynch's Trackway.

In addition to these discoveries, two unexpected sites on the road scheme - Preston Enclosure and Ermin Farm - proved to be of Iron Age date. The polygonal cropmark at Preston Enclosure was identified from aerial photographs in the vicinity of St Augustine's Lane. The Ermin Farm enclosures lay concealed beneath colluvial deposits and were discovered during the course of the scheme-wide watching brief. Another discovery was an isolated inhumation found near Lynch's Trackway, Baunton, which was radiocarbon dated to the Iron Age.

The results of these discoveries will be presented in this chapter. The sites are examined, as far as possible, in chronological order, while an assessment of the regional significance of the later prehistoric evidence from the road scheme appears in Chapter 9.

THE MIDDLE IRON AGE

St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane
by Andrew Mudd and Jeff Muir

Excavation and watching brief carried out along a 450 m length of the road north and south of St

Augustine's Lane, Preston, revealed a complex of segmented ditches, which formed a linear boundary, with pits and postholes to the south. The complex ran between a pair of excavated Bronze Age ring ditches (see Chapter 2) and a group of cropmark ring ditches to the north (Fig. 2.11). Four excavations were carried out with watching brief areas in between.

The sites spanned four fields on level ground. All had been heavily ploughed with traces of ridge-and-furrow indicating ploughing dated from at least the medieval period (Chapter 6). The modern ploughsoil truncated the earlier furrows and directly overlay the cornbrash.

St Augustine's Farm South

The site lay to the south of St Augustine's Lane (Fig. 2.11). The main linear ditch alignment was traced for a distance of 210 m through Areas Na (110 m) and O (60 m), and can be identified as a cropmark for a at least a further 50 m south of that (NMR 148/177). Overall, the alignment runs south-east and curves south and then south-west around the ring ditches in Area O.

Area O (Figs 3.2–3.3)

Segmented ditch system 3123

Ditch system 3123 consisted of twelve discrete segments: 3182, 3153, 3084, 3114, 3105, 3155, 3134, 3130, 3148, 3139, 3169 and 3122. Although sharing a common orientation, these were not all in one line, but lay on at least two parallel alignments. The ditch segments were 0.20–0.65 m deep and most had been excavated through the limestone bedrock into underlying clay. Segment lengths varied considerably from 1.50 m to over 10 m in length. In almost every case one end of each segment, usually the northern end, was wider and deeper than the other. The segment profiles appear to have been dictated by the local nature of the bedrock, but in general the majority were steep-sided with a rounded or irregular base. The gap between the ditch segments varied considerably from 0.10–3.75 m.

The fills of the ditch segments tended to be mid to dark brown or greyish brown silts with varying quantities of limestone. There was a reddish cast to some of the fills which made them similar to some of the natural features on the site. The basal fills were usually very stony. Infilling probably occurred

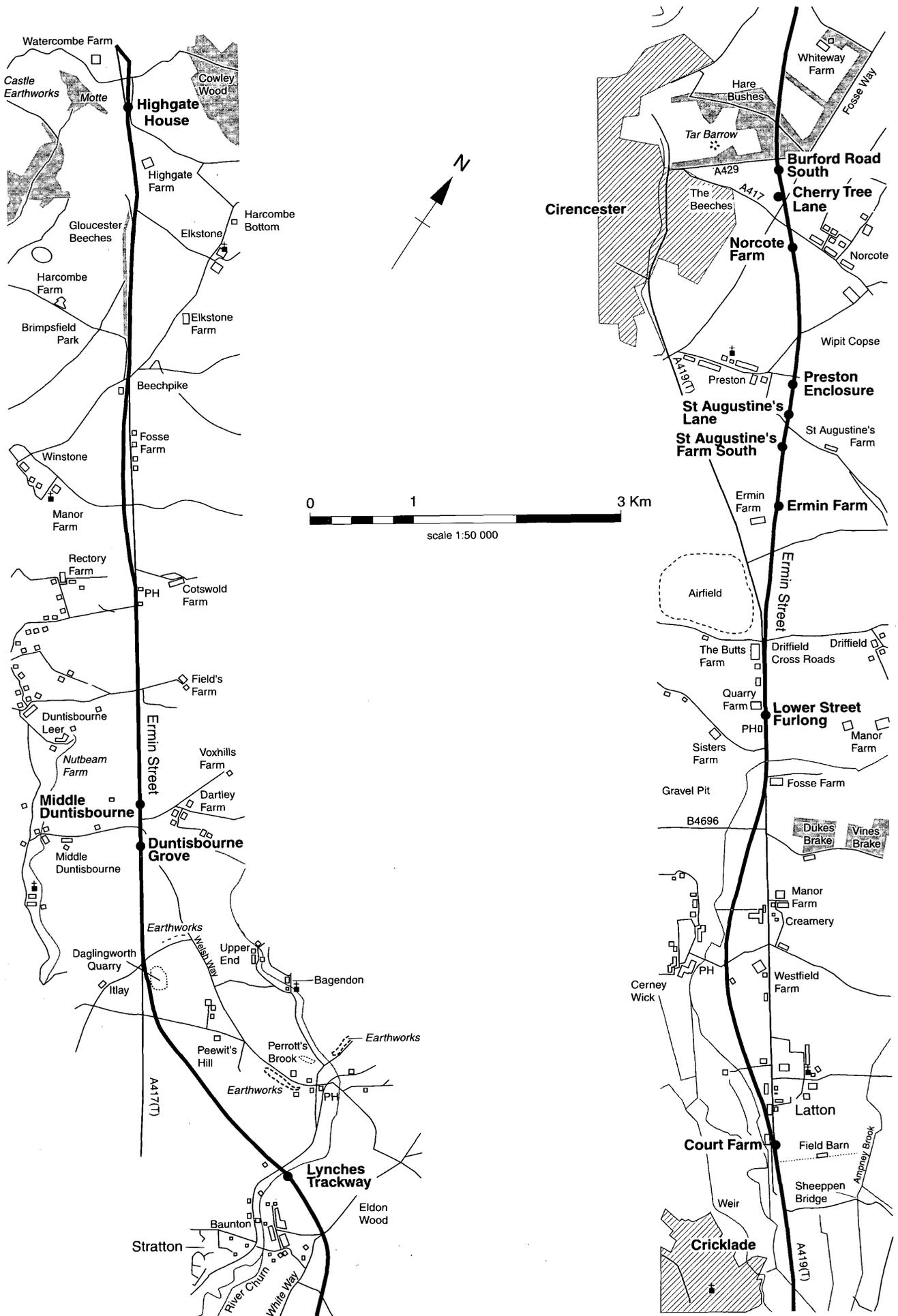
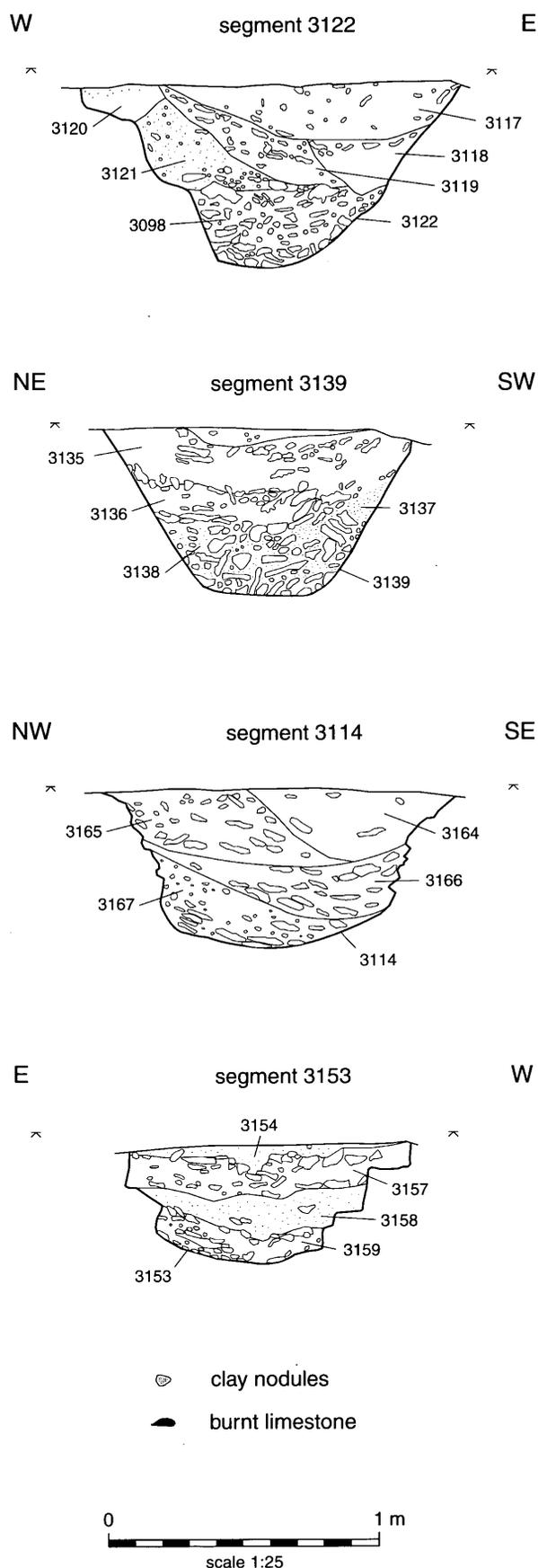


Figure 3.1 Locations of later prehistoric sites.



Although ditch 2005 terminated just short of the southern baulk, a new segment of ditch continuing the same alignment was revealed in the watching brief. It appears that it would have joined up with the segmented ditch in Area O (Fig. 2.11).

Ditch 2004

Though forming part of the same land boundary, ditch 2004 was of a slightly different character. Some 63 m long and wider than either 2003 or ditch 2005, the ditch was much more irregular and sinuous in plan, with more variable silt/clay fills. It ranged from 1.5–2.10 m wide and up to 0.4 m deep. Cut through cornbrash into a band of heavily jointed limestone, it appeared that the depth of the ditch depended largely on the local solidity of the bedrock. It was clear that as far as possible, the original excavators had followed the natural jointing in the limestone, making excavation easier and perhaps accounting for a marked kink in the centre of the ditch. The southern terminal of 2004 cut the terminal of 2005, the northern terminal stopped just short of that of ditch 2003.

Ditch 2003

Ditch 2003, some 18 m in length, was the most northerly of the three linear ditches. The ditch, which contained two main sandy silt fills, was relatively constant in its orientation, width (1.20 m) and depth (c. 0.30 m), except at the south end where it narrowed slightly before terminating. At the terminal a possible posthole (2017 – Fig. 3.6, section 38) was found. This was truncated by medieval ploughing and no definite relationship with the ditch could be established, but 2017 may have been contemporary with ditch 2003.

Watching brief: undated ditch

During groundworks a rectilinear ditch, 1.4 m wide and 0.38 m deep, was recorded running north-east – south-west between Area N(a) and Area N(b) (Fig. 2.11). There were no finds. Its uniform, straight character suggests that it was not connected with the segmented ditch system and it is considered likely to be later, although it appears to be unrelated to the modern topography. It does not appear as a cropmark although there are other linear cropmarks in the neighbourhood, one of which, on approximately this alignment, bisects the larger of the ring ditches to the north-east (Plate 2.2).

Area N(b)

Further north, Area N(b) lay immediately to the south of St Augustine's Lane. Here a linear gully (1005) about 1 m wide and just 0.13 m deep was the only archaeological feature present. There were no finds. This gully was approximately parallel to the ditch just described some 50 m to the south.

Figure 3.3 St Augustine's Farm South, Area O, sections.

naturally in all the segments. Variations in the fills and profiles of some of the sections suggested that some of the segments may have been recut, but there was no conclusive evidence of this. Finds from the ditches were scarce and comprised a single sherd of probable Iron Age pottery from context 3121 (the middle fill of 3122 – Fig. 3.3), and two flint flakes and three indeterminate prehistoric sherds from 3102, the main fill of 3105.

The pits (Fig. 3.4)

Some 20 m south-east of the segmented ditch at the south end of the area two circular pits were found and were half-excavated.

Pit 3011 was 1.1 m in diameter and survived to a depth of 0.75 m. It contained four fills (3007–3010), all of which appeared to represent natural silting. The uppermost fills consisted of the typical reddish brown silt found elsewhere on the site as a natural deposit, gradually giving way to dark more clay-rich deposits towards the bottom of the pit.

Eleven sherds of pottery of probable Iron Age date were recovered from layer (3008). A single, fragmented bone was found in the primary fill of the pit (3010) which provided a radiocarbon date of 403–96 cal BC (95% confidence) (2237±68 BP; NZA-8615, R24151/13) indicating a middle Iron Age date for the feature. A few pieces of burnt limestone were recovered from each of the four fills.

Pit 3083 was located 14 m to the south-west of pit 3011. It was 1.2 m in diameter and nearly 1 m deep, and contained a sequence of seven fills, which, like the deposits in pit 3011, became darker and increased in clay content with depth. Fill 3078 formed a mound in the centre of the pit and appears to represent a deliberate dump. It contained lumps of green clay which appeared to be redeposited natural, and without particular significance, although confirming the deliberate origin of the fill.

No pottery was recovered, but fragments of two animal long bones came from fill 3080, and, from the upper fill 3076, a single fragment of cremated bone together with a flint flake. A radiocarbon date of 396–125 cal BC (95% confidence) (2234±56 BP; NZA-8619, R24151/14) was obtained from one of the long bones.

Postholes (*not illustrated*)

During the watching brief, a cluster of seven postholes were discovered about 150 m south-east of Area O. They fell within an area of about 20 m x 15 m but formed no recognisable pattern. Four of them yielded a total of 58 g of Iron Age pottery.

Area N(a) (Figs 3.5–6)

A further 110 m of the segmented ditch system was uncovered to the north of Area O in Area N(a). In this area the segmented ditch system consisted of three ditches (2003, 2004 and 2005) which formed a near continuous boundary running north-west.

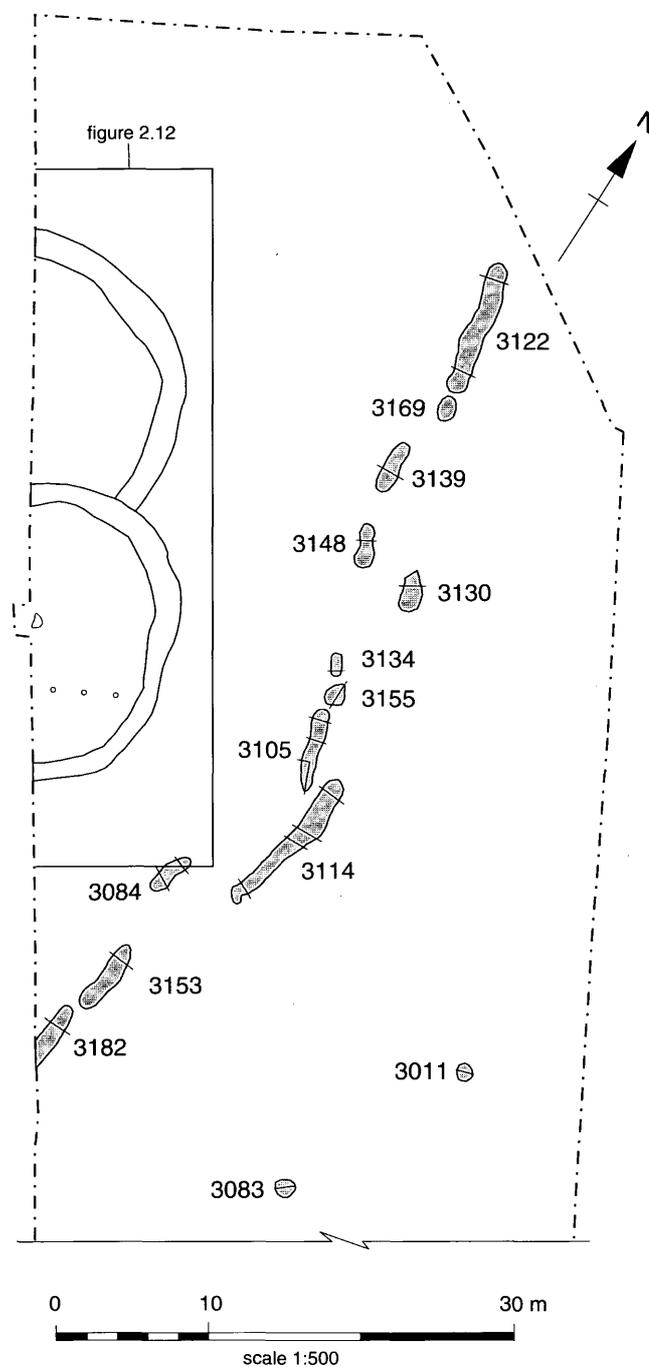


Figure 3.2 St Augustine's Farm South, Area O, plan of segmented ditch system 3123 and pits 3011 and 3083.

Ditch 2005

The most southerly segment, ditch 2005, was straight and of fairly constant width (0.8–0.9 m), but varied in depth according to the solidity of the bedrock. The northern terminal overlapped with ditch 2004 and was apparently cut by it. A radiocarbon date of 409–193 cal BC (95% confidence) (2294±59 BP; NZA-8766, R24151/11) was obtained from bone fragments from 2024, the primary fill of the ditch.

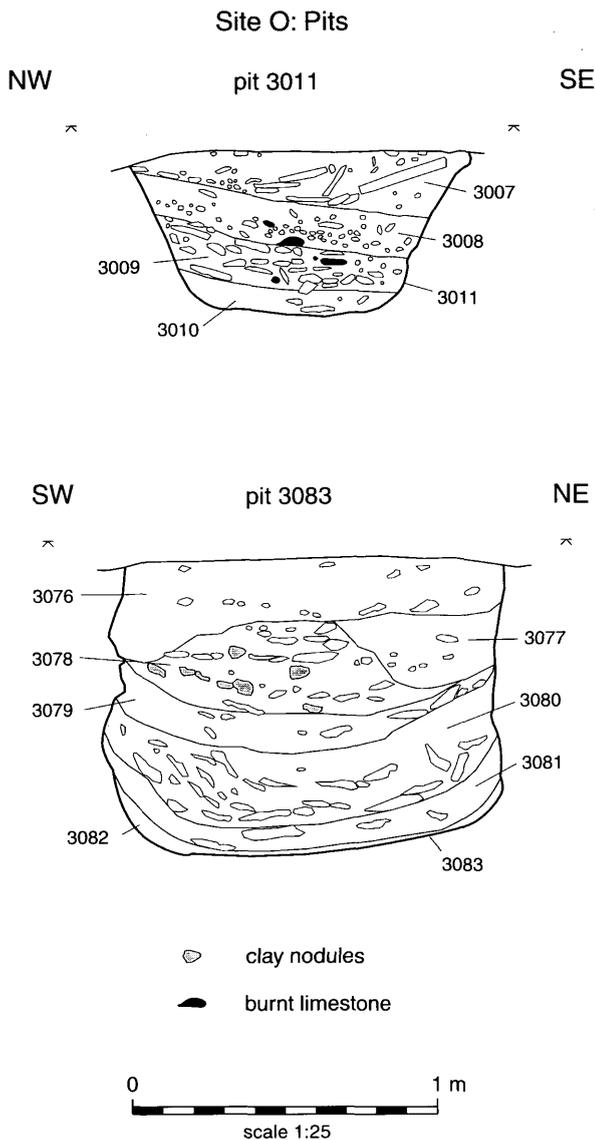


Figure 3.4 St Augustine's Farm South, Area O, sections.

St Augustine's Lane (Figs 3.7–8)
by Andrew Mudd and Jeff Muir

A rectangular area, 135 x 40 m in extent was stripped immediately to the north of St Augustine's Farm South to examine a possible rectangular enclosure interpreted from aerial photographs (RCHME 1976, 95). Instead, a complex of segmented ditches at the southern end of the site in the shape of an irregular H was revealed. The complex was interpreted as an alignment of north-south ditch lengths cut by two approximately parallel groups of ditches running north-west to south-east. There was also a small ditch segment or pit (90) which was not part of either of these alignments. The ditches were separated by narrow causeways, in some cases no wider than 0.1–0.2 m. The segments appeared to follow fissures in the limestone bedrock and in most cases they were only dug as deep as the underlying natural clay 0.3 m below. All the ditch segments contained a similar

sequence of fills, which normally comprised a very stony lower/main fill overlain by a largely stone-free light brown silt loam.

Ditches 19, 24 and 56

The earliest alignment was that of ditches 19, 24 and possibly 56. Ditch 19 was clearly cut by ditch 35 which formed part of the south-western ditch group 19 (Fig. 3.8, section 9). Ditch 56 may be associated, as it was similarly aligned and appeared to be cut by ditch 149 of the north-eastern group (Fig. 3.8, section 28, segment 58), though the intrusion of a modern land drain made this uncertain. The ditch segments were generally a little over 1 m wide and varied in depth between 0.10 m and 0.28 m.

South-west ditches 39, 46 and 153

The south-western ditch group was made up of three segments. The segments varied in width from 1.4–1.7 m. Ditches 39 and 153 were cut to a depth of over 0.4 m through the limestone and into the underlying clay; the northernmost ditch segment, 46, which followed a fissure in the rock for part of its length, did not penetrate through the limestone. The north-western terminals of ditches 46 and 149 (below) ended opposite one another.

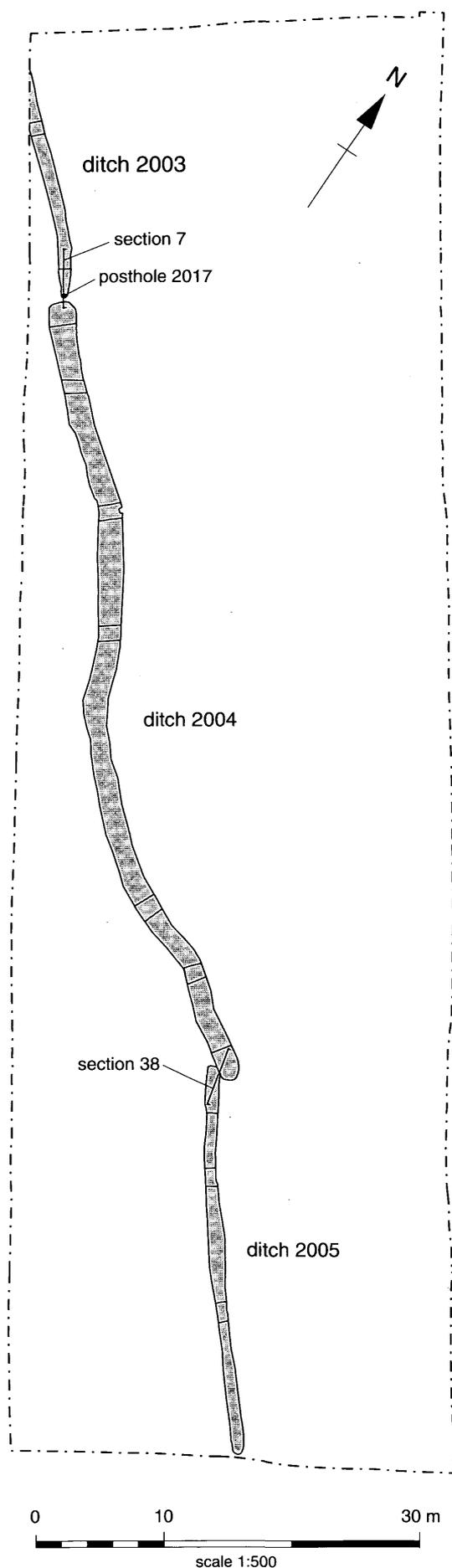
North-east ditches 25, 148 and 149

The north-eastern ditch was made up of three separate segments similar in character to those of the south-west group. In many places the ditch segments followed natural fissures in the limestone. Though varying in length and width, the three segments were all dug through the limestone to the top of the underlying clay. Twelve sherds of shell-tempered pottery were recovered from the bottom of these ditches, and another 67 sherds from the upper fills. The pottery is probably Iron Age.

Discussion

Dating

The segmented ditch complexes at St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane are similar both in character and alignment, although it appears they would not have joined. The pottery from St Augustine's Farm South was limited and undiagnostic in date. However, the radiocarbon determination from the primary fill of ditch 2005 would suggest that the complex is Iron Age, rather than earlier. Virtually identical radiocarbon dates were obtained from samples in pits 3011 and 3083 in Area O indicating a middle Iron Age date for these features. Although their position does not necessarily mean that they were part of the ditch system, they lie isolated from contemporary settlements and, like the ditches, can be seen as defining boundaries. They did, however, contain more occupation material than the



ditch segments, and it is possible that the pits were slightly later additions to the complex. The dating evidence for the complex of three intercutting alignments at St Augustine's Lane was sparse. The 79 sherds of shell tempered pottery were not reliable as dating evidence, but most likely to be Iron Age, an interpretation which is compatible with the radiocarbon dating from St Augustine's Farm South.

The purpose of the segmented ditches

The segmented linear ditches varied considerably within the area of the excavations. In Area N(a) the segments were long and the boundary virtually continuous, whereas elsewhere the segments were shorter, more irregular and the gaps wider. It is possible that the boundary was originally continuous, and that truncation is responsible for the gaps between segments, though in Area O some of the gaps were considerable. In this case the boundary may simply reflect the way in which the digging was organised, either by large numbers of people each excavating individual or group lengths, or by a smaller number of people working intermittently.

Equally, most of the ditch segments were shallow and few were dug below the limestone. The segments may simply have been quarries for limestone along the line of a pre-existing boundary, or have been dug to construct an upstanding wall alongside, which formed the boundary proper. It was argued that short lengths of similar segmented ditch alignments at Mingies Ditch, Hardwick, Oxon. were dug as gravel pits alongside an existing boundary, and others showed evidence of an adjacent hedge (Allen and Robinson 1993, 91). The sequence of ditches in Area O cannot be determined stratigraphically. In Area N(a), however, it seems that ditch 2004 may have been dug later. If so, a gap some 63 m in length would have existed in the original land boundary which was subsequently plugged by the excavation of 2004.

The intercutting alignments at St Augustine's Lane show a change of alignment from north-south to north-west to south-east. The segments of the earlier alignment had at least partly silted up by the time the parallel north-west - south-east alignments were dug, but the new segmented ditches appear to have been aligned upon the ends of the earlier alignment, and they were presumably still visible. It is therefore possible that all three alignments were in contemporary use, and that adjacent walls or banks surrounded three sides of one or more enclosures.

The linear boundary seemed to respect the southern pair of excavated ring ditches, apparently using them as an axis or marker around which to change direction slightly. This suggests that these were still upstanding at the time. The alignment of the boundary divides these ring ditches from the pair of cropmark ring ditches 300 m further north, which appear to represent

Figure 3.5 St Augustine's Farm South, Area Na, plan of segmented ditches.

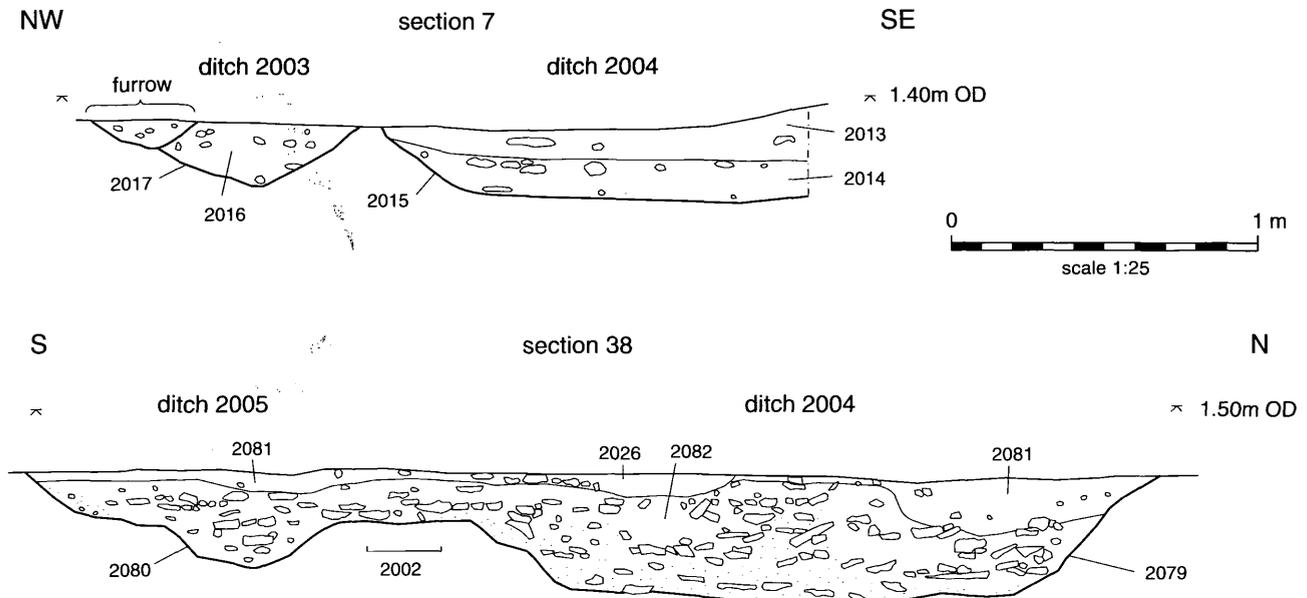


Figure 3.6 St Augustine's Farm South, area Na, segmented ditch sections.

a separate cemetery. It is possible that this boundary marks a continuing territorial division between local population groups in this area.

There was little environmental evidence from the site as few plant remains survived in the excavated deposits. Of the 39 soil samples taken from the ditches and pits at St Augustine's Farm South, only three contained charred plant remains other than charcoal and these consisted of very occasional weeds, *Hordeum* sp. (barley) grain or indeterminate cereal grain. Two further deposits produced some charcoal of identifiable size, all of *Quercus* sp. (oak). The identifiable animal bones consisted of two fragments of a horse radius and one cattle bone, though large limb bone fragments were frequent in the remaining 96 bones of the poorly preserved assemblage. The animal bone assemblage from St Augustine's Lane was also small (54 bones from the prehistoric contexts). The charred plant remains provided little information beyond indicating a general background of poorly preserved cereals. The samples cannot be taken as indicators of the immediate environment, though they do reflect the consumption of cereals and meat by the local inhabitants.

The quantity of finds was small, and the excavated areas appear to be peripheral to settlement. The pits at the southern edge of the excavations, together with the posthole group found 150 m to the south, could indicate that a settlement lay in this direction. Pits are known in association with Iron Age linear boundaries on the gravel terraces at Lechlade, Glos. (Allen *et al.* 1993, 36–7; King in Boyle *et al.* 1998, 272–3; Thomas and Holbrook in Boyle *et al.* 1998, 282–3), but not always in close association with settlement foci. In Iron Age domestic contexts, short alignments of segmented ditches have been mentioned (above)

at Mingies Ditch in Oxfordshire, and segmented ditches and pits appear to have defined a settlement 'enclosure' at The Park, Guiting Power, in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds (Marshall 1990).

Segmented ditches or pit alignments stretching over long distances are well known as cropmarks in parts of Iron Age Britain, for instance in the Nene and Great Ouse basin, where Knight listed 114 examples (Knight 1984, 259) and in North Yorkshire (eg. Powlesland 1985), but are not particularly common in the Upper Thames region or the Cotswolds. Two long alignments of circular pits are known from cropmarks at Binsey (Benson and Miles 1974, 52–4) and at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham (Benson and Miles 1974, 36–7), both in Oxfordshire. Excavated examples are much fewer. A late Iron Age alignment of circular pits was excavated near Lechlade at Langford Downs, Oxon. (Williams 1947, 47 fig. 14), and this particular expression of boundary definition appears to have been long-lived. The Lechlade area provides a further comparison with this part of Preston in that the segmented ditches and pit alignments formed part of an early Iron Age system of land division within which earlier Bronze Age barrow groups were incorporated.

The excavations have established that the cropmark plot of a rectangular enclosure on this site (RCHME 1976, 95) can be dismissed. The possible polygonal enclosure to the north-east (which lies outside the road corridor) is unclear on cropmark evidence and remains unsubstantiated. The Stage 2 evaluation (CAT 1991; Trench 532 and magnetometer survey in this area) yielded inconclusive results although a 0.65 m-deep, undated ditch was encountered somewhere in this locality. It may belong to a third ring ditch or other feature aligned on the two clear ring ditches in this field (Fig. 2.11).

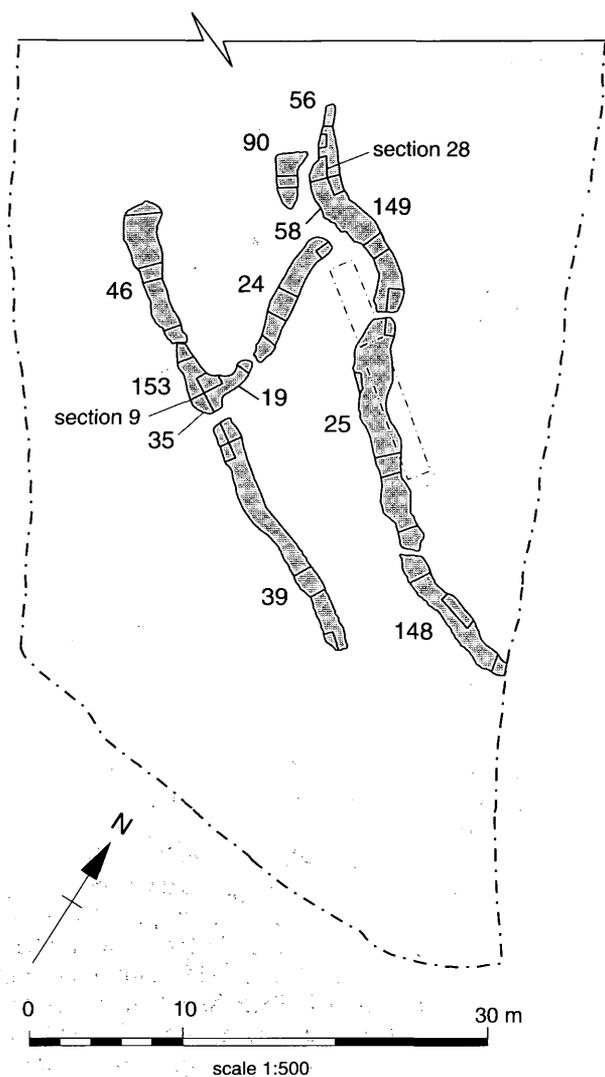


Figure 3.7 St Augustine's Lane, plan of segmented ditches.

Preston Enclosure

by Andrew Mudd and Simon Mortimer

An aerial photograph (Plate 3.1) revealed a polygonal cropmark which had not been identified in the earlier assessments, lying partly concealed by a modern hedgerow, some 400 m north of St Augustine's Lane. The site therefore came to light very late in the project. It lay on a similar level or gently undulating topography to the sites at St Augustine's Lane and St Augustine's Farm South, with an underlying geology of cornbrash. About 25% of the enclosure lay in the path of the new road and was excavated.

An area of 30 x 116 m was stripped of topsoil. A series of east-west aligned medieval/post-medieval plough furrows measuring 2–3 m in width ran across the earlier enclosure, and were removed. Hand-cleaning revealed the enclosure ditch and entrance and a number of internal features (Figs 3.9–10). Two complete arms of the enclosure ditch were revealed, the southern one a little over 40 m long and the northern one terminating after a little over 30 m. The eastern terminal and the angle of the southernmost

length of ditch were also revealed. The enclosure measured about 65 m north-south.

The cropmark indicates that the ditches enclosed an area of about 0.38 ha. The hexagon was not geometrically precise, having notably shorter lengths of ditch on the eastern and western sides. However, opposed sides of the hexagon appear to have been parallel and approximately the same length.

Enclosure ditch 1

(segments 3, 59, 86, terminals 41 and 66)

Three complete sections were excavated through the enclosure ditch and both terminals were also half sectioned (Figs 3.11–13). The ditch had a splayed V-shaped profile, which narrowed from a maximum width of c. 4 m to a flattish bottom which was approximately 0.5 m wide. The ditch was from 1.0 m to 1.4 m deep.

Ditch segment 3 (Fig. 3.11)

The initial compact silty clay fill of the ditch (135) contained a few fragments of bone and burnt stone. An enhanced precision AMS date on animal bone from this context gave a date of 396–188 cal BC (95% confidence level) (NZA 8573, R24151/5). The secondary fill (134) was a compact mid orange-brown silty clay deposit, similar to the natural material into which the ditch was cut. There were no finds.

The subsequent dark brown compacted clayey silt deposit (4) appears to have been the result of natural silting of the partially filled ditch. A small number of undated pottery sherds, bone fragments and pieces of burnt stone were recovered, and a radiometric sample of horse skull and teeth gave a date of 385–199 cal. BC (95% confidence level) (R24151/7).

Fill 4 was overlain by a loose silty clay deposit mixed with large amounts of small-medium limestone rubble (5). This material was thicker towards the north-western side of the ditch section, suggesting that it may have derived from an internal bank. A single sherd of middle Iron Age pottery weighing 10 g was recovered from this fill. The uppermost layers were 6 and 7, both compacted mid-brown silty clays (which were probably both parts of a single deposit). These appear to have accumulated through natural silting within the weathering cone of the ditch. Four small sherds of Roman pottery (2 sherds of samian and 2 of Severn Valley ware, weighing only 4 g) were found with a single middle Iron Age sherd in layer 6. This shows that a hollow in the top of the enclosure ditch was open into the early Roman period.

Ditch segment 59 (Fig. 3.11)

The dimensions and shape of the ditch profile and the stratigraphic sequence seen in the second ditch section c. 20 m to the north-west were essentially similar to those in segment 3 outlined above. Two sherds of middle Iron Age pottery (weighing 6 g) were found within the primary silting deposit (60).



Plate 3.1 Hexagonal middle Iron Age enclosure at Preston. The entrance faces north-west. Reproduced by permission of Neil Thomas (PES ref. 4846/21).

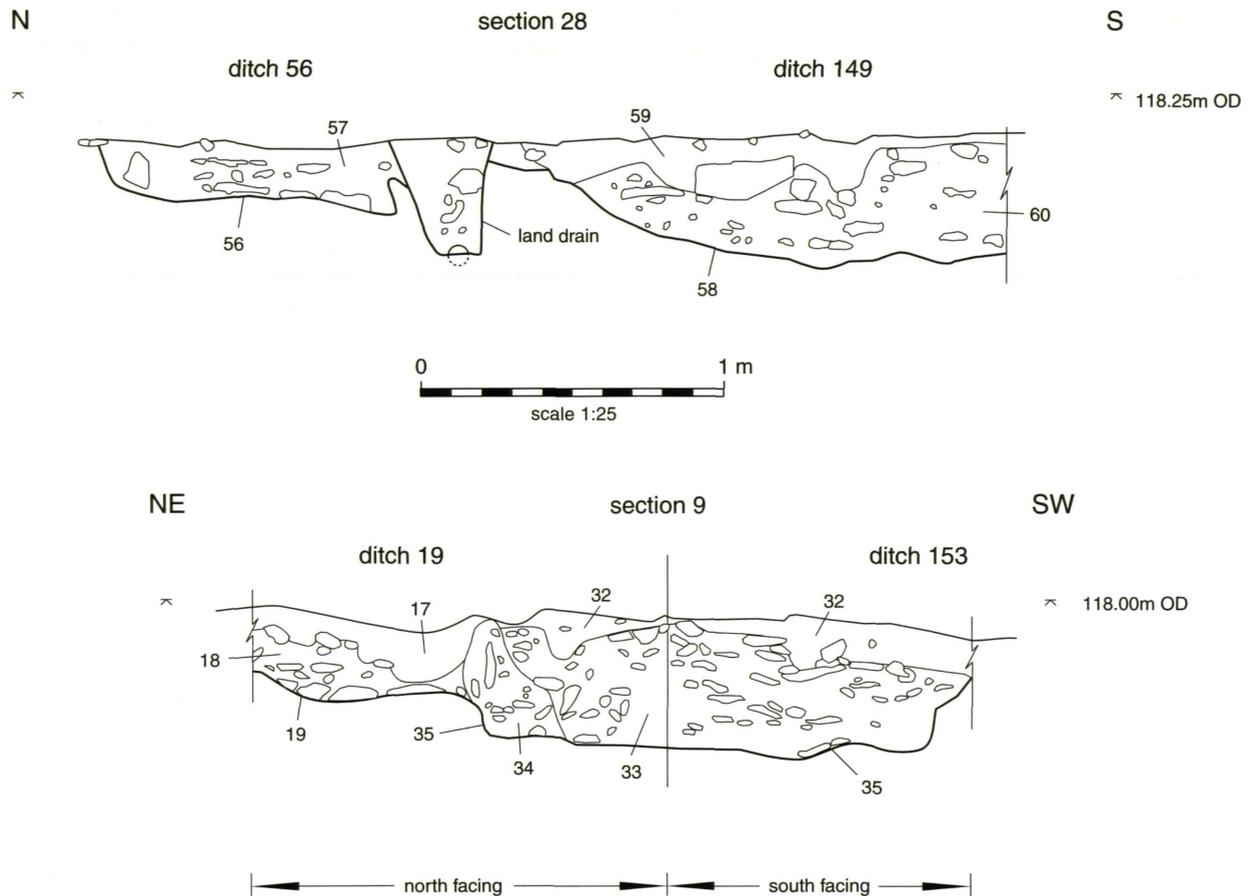


Figure 3.8 St Augustine's Lane, segmented ditch sections.

The second and third fills, 61 and 62 respectively were both mid orange-brown silty clay (like fill 134). A large sherd of middle Iron Age pottery (weighing 28 g) was found within fill 61. Layer 62 was overlain by fill 63, a compact mid to dark brown silty clay equivalent to layer 4, and this was followed by similar compacted silty clay deposits (64 and 65). These last deposits incorporated 54 large sherds (785 g) of middle Iron Age pottery in association with animal bones and a saddle quern fragment of May Hill Sandstone (cat. 687).

Ditch segment 86 (Fig. 3.12)

Owing to a change in the sub-surface geology to a much stonier natural, enclosure ditch segment 86, located c. 28 m to the north-west of segment 59, had a more angular profile than those seen in either the first or the second segments. The primary fill, 122, was a compact yellowish-brown silty clay mixed with small pieces of abraded limestone, which was probably the result of natural silting. This was sealed by a thicker and stonier band of greyish-brown clayey silt, 123 which derived from both sides of the enclosure. The third fill was an equally stony mid brown clayey silt deposit 124 that contained a sherd of limestone-

tempered pottery. Fills 123 and 124 appear to have been deliberately dumped into the enclosure ditch, but the final fill, 125, was more likely to have resulted from the natural infilling of the shallow hollow left in the top of the ditch.

Segment of western terminus 66 (Fig. 3.12)

Excavation of the western terminus identified a sequence of seven fills. Primary silting (85) was devoid of finds, and was overlain by a much thicker stonier band of reddish-brown silty clay (84), which contained two tiny sherds of pottery and several pieces of bone. Unlike the primary deposit, this secondary fill appears to have been deliberately dumped into the enclosure ditch terminus. The subsequent fill, 83, was a largely stone-free silty clay deposit, probably the result of natural deposition, which did not contain any finds. The fourth and sixth fills (82 and 80) were composed of limestone rubble, while the intervening fifth and final seventh fills (81 and 79) were silty clay deposits. None of these later layers contained any finds. The western terminus was cut by a series of gullies 191, 192, 193 and 194, which also appeared to date to the middle Iron Age.

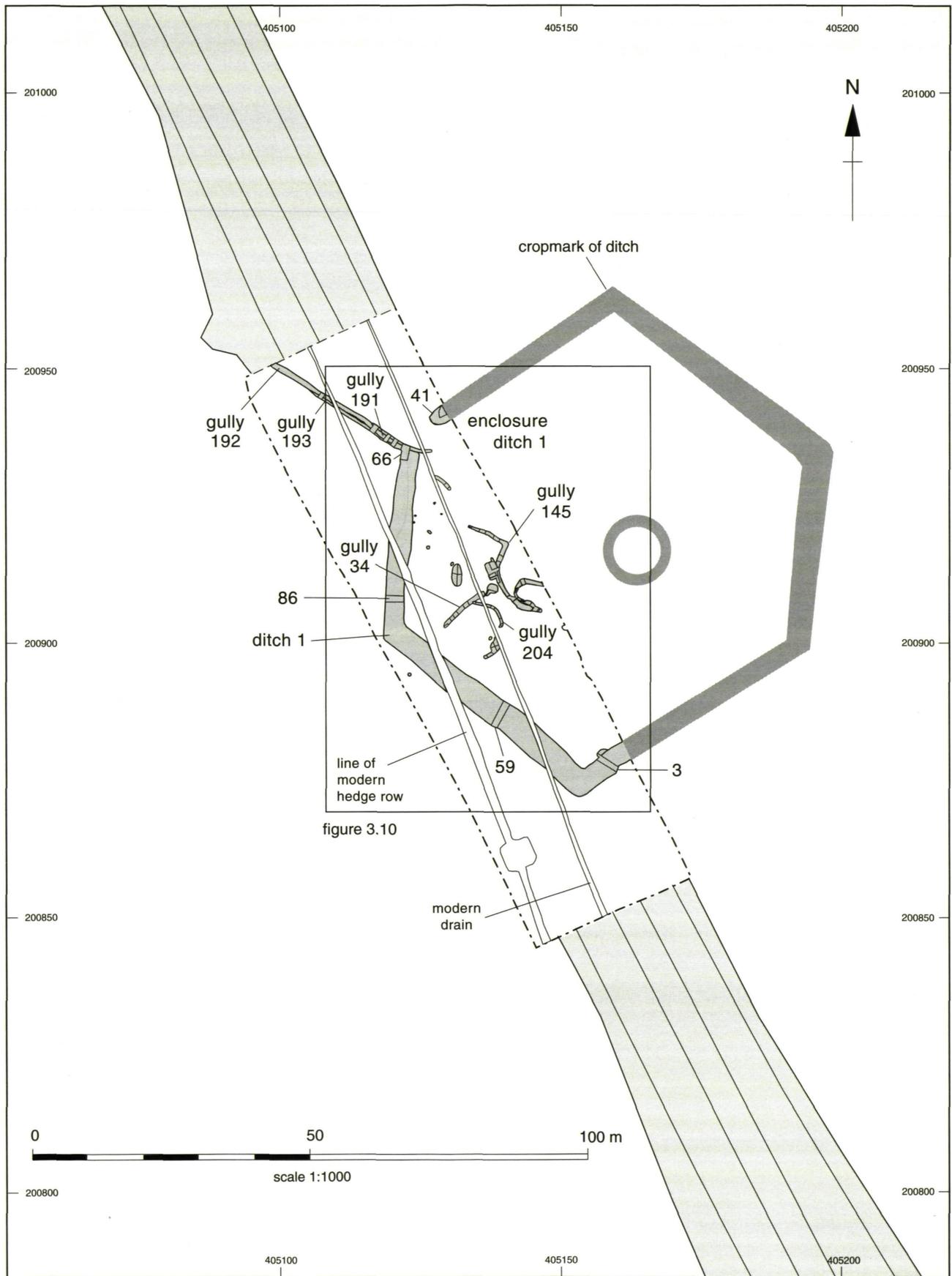


Figure 3.9 Preston Enclosure, plan and cropmark of site.

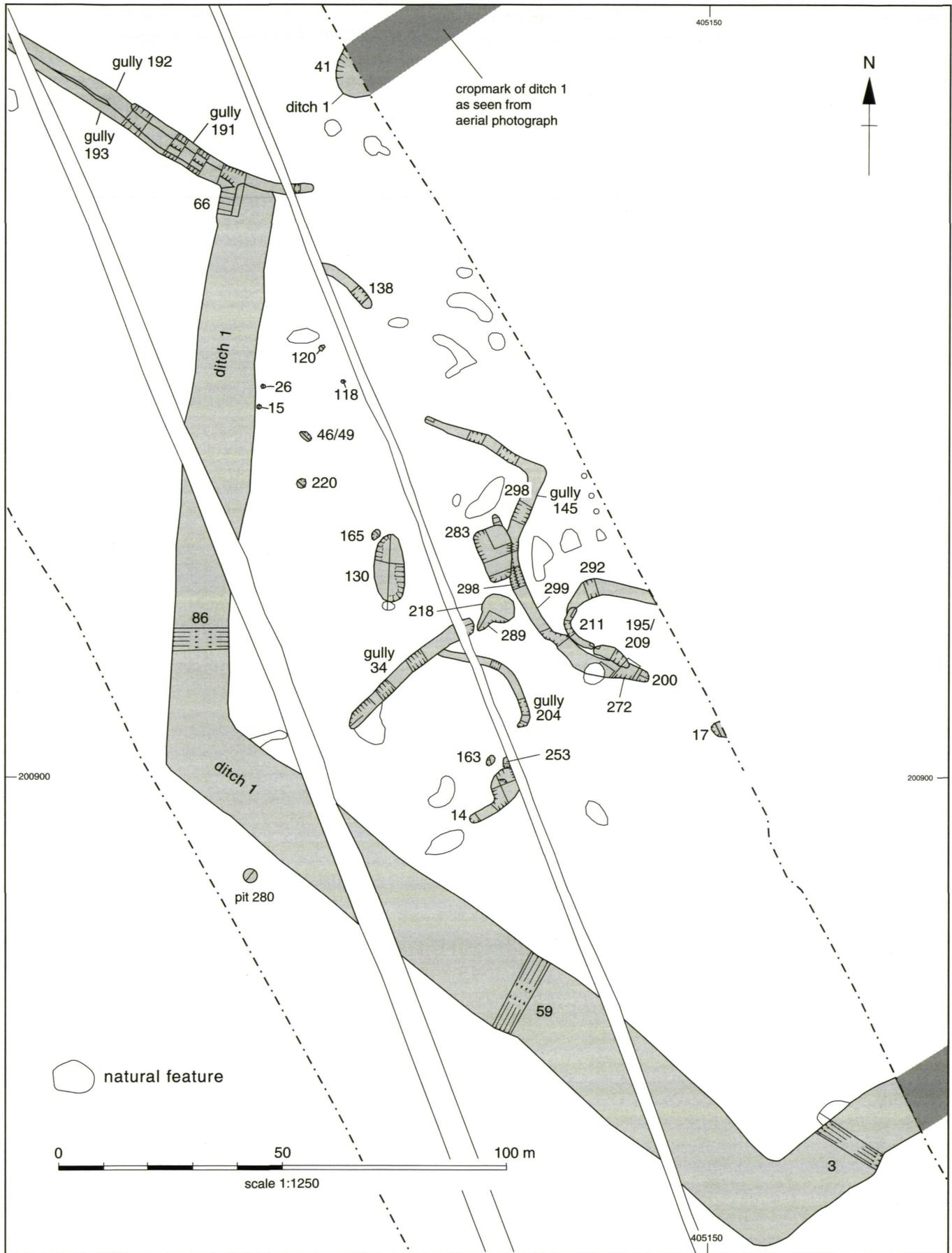


Figure 3.10 Preston Enclosure, detailed plan of internal features.

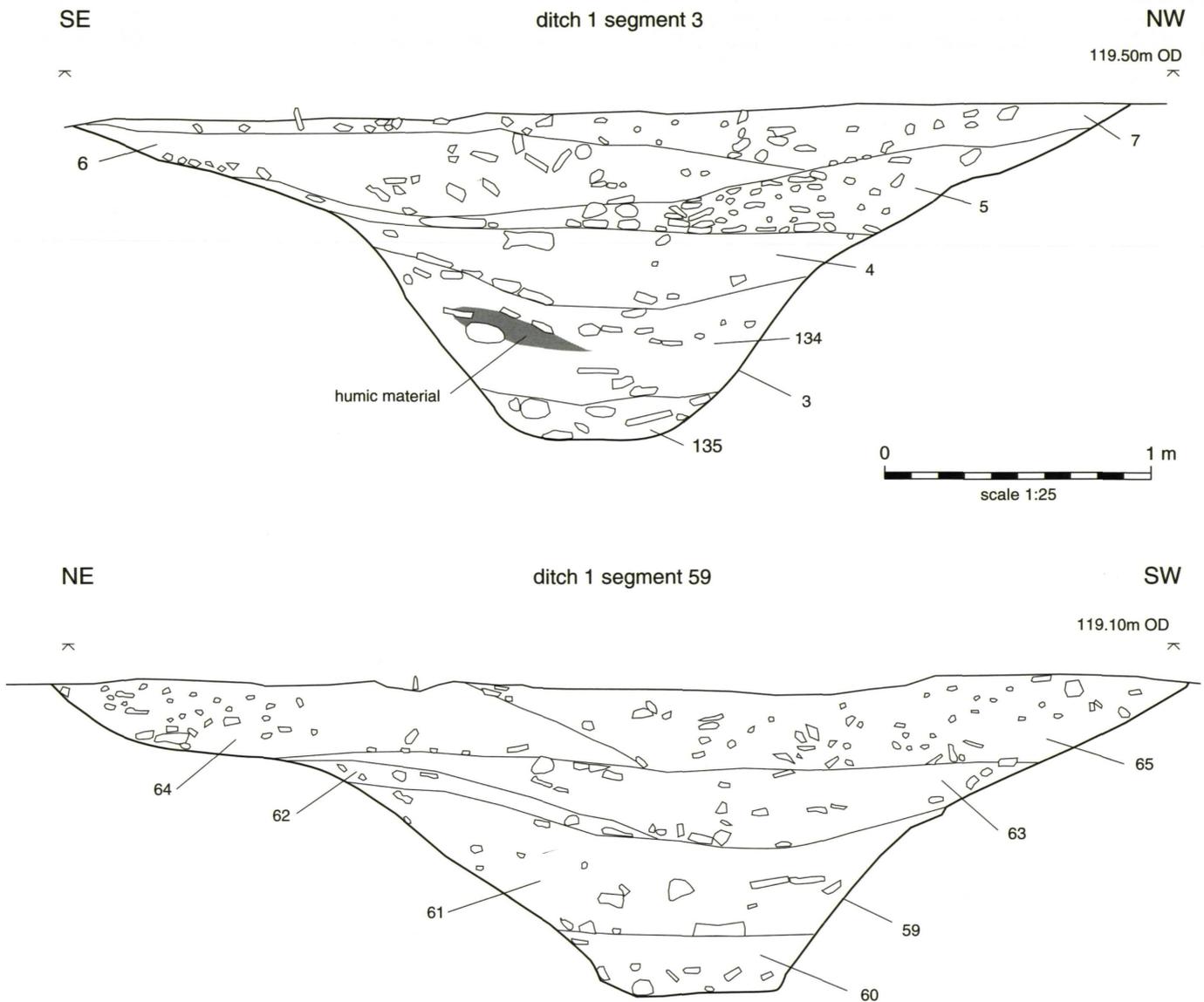


Figure 3.11 Preston Enclosure, ditch 1 sections.

Segment of eastern terminus 41 (Fig. 3.13)

A short section of the eastern terminus was identified against the eastern baulk, giving an entrance *c.* 7 m wide. Examination of this feature demonstrated that while both termini were equally steep-sided and roughly flat-bottomed, the eastern terminus was significantly deeper; 1.4 m as opposed to 1 m. Though only *c.* 7 m from the western terminus, the sequence of deposits in the eastern terminus was quite different. Four superimposed approximately horizontal bands of compacted clay silt material were revealed, (45–42). The uniformity of these deposits strongly suggests that they were derived from natural silting. All except the uppermost layer (42) produced occasional finds of bone and burnt stone.

No traces of any pits or post settings were found in the immediate vicinity of either terminus. A pair of irregular features due south of the eastern terminus

proved on examination to be natural. The enclosure entrance therefore does not seem to have been provided with a gate.

Features within the interior of enclosure ditch 1 (Fig. 3.10)

Features within the enclosure comprised a system of gullies (145, 299, 298, 272, 195/209, 211, 34, 204) apparently demarcating different zones within the interior, six pits (130, 283, 165, 218, 289 and 14) and a group of small postholes (15, 26, 120, 118, 46/49, 220). Numerous other features were sample-excavated but proved to be shallow and amorphous, and were most probably natural solution hollows and root disturbances.

With the exception of two small postholes (15 and 26) none of the features lay within 2.5 m of the enclosure



Plate 3.2 Preston Enclosure, entrance in foreground.

ditch. This suggests that there may have been an internal bank, perhaps revetted internally over a short length by three postholes (120, 46/49 and 220) in line. Gully 191 may mark the limit of the bank at the entrance. The two small postholes 15 and 26 both lie very close to the edge of the ditch, and may have formed an external revetment for the bank at this point. The presence of an internal bank was also suggested by fill 5 within enclosure ditch segment 3, and perhaps by the limestone layers 82 and 80 within the western ditch terminal 66 (see above).

Gullies 204, 253, 211 and 195/209

The earliest phase of activity appears to have consisted of a group of slight gullies in a band across the middle of the enclosure. Curving gullies 204 and 253 formed a semicircular enclosure just south of the south-western angle of the enclosure. Gully 204 was 0.2 m deep and filled with a dark yellow-brown silty clay fill. Fragments of bone, flint flakes and burnt stone were recovered but no pottery. Gully 253 was deeper and filled by silty clays 12 and 11 (Fig. 3.14). At the north-west end gully 204 was removed by a later gully 34 (below). Arcs of gully 204 and 253 formed a semicircle of 8–9 m diameter, which, when projected to complete the circle, would have reached the suggested internal bank. There was a smaller gap or entrance 2 m wide on the south-east. On the southern side of the entrance gap was an irregular silt-filled

feature (13) of uncertain significance which had been disturbed by a land drain, and a small posthole (163), 0.13 m deep.

It is possible that the gullies were eaves drainage features marking the site of a roundhouse, one of whose doorposts was represented by posthole 163. Later gully 34 follows the projected continuation of the arc of gully 204, and may have recut a continuation of that gully.

North-east of gully 204 was a narrow curving gully 211, which was not fully cleared and was therefore only planned approximately. This formed a U-shaped crook c. 3 m wide, which was later extended by a short c. 2.5 m long gully, 195/209. No finds were recovered from any of these features, which were subsequently cut by a later set of boundary gullies (see below).

Gullies 145, 299, 298 and 272

Gullies 145, 299, 298 and 272 formed a straight length of gully oriented approximately towards the north-west entrance, and a curving arc. The straight length, numbered 145, was narrow (c. 0.75 m), steep-sided and relatively deep (c. 0.5 m), becoming progressively shallower towards its northern terminus. The gradual fall suggests that drainage may have been one of its original functions. It was filled with compact dark yellow-brown silty clay mixed with small abraded stones and flecks of charcoal (fills 29, 33, 93, 284, 137, 288). Finds from these deposits included a residual

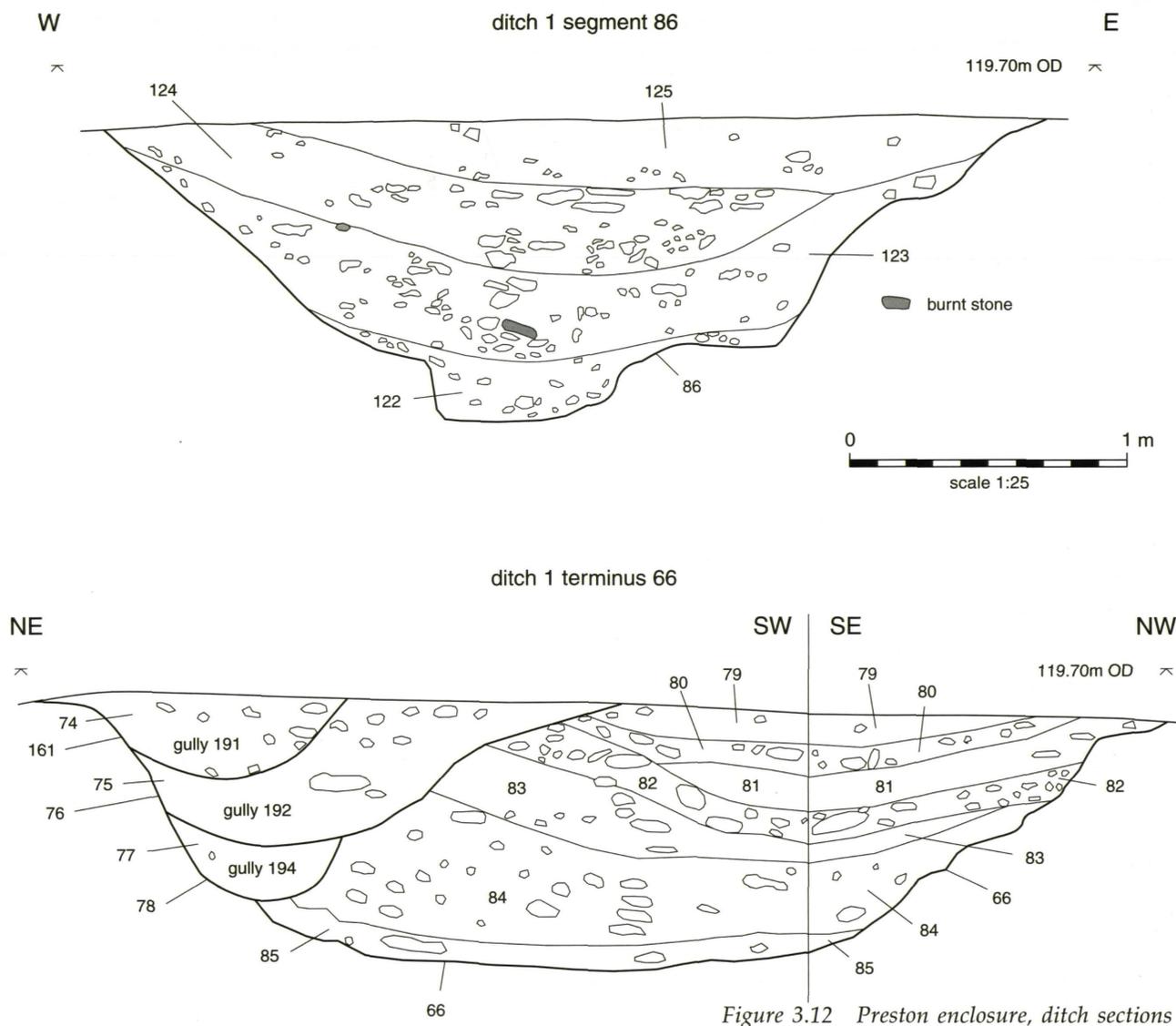


Figure 3.12 Preston enclosure, ditch sections

early Bronze Age flint arrowhead (Fig. 7.13.19) together with 15 sherds (80 g) of limestone-tempered pottery and 10 sherds (27 g) of shell-tempered ware. Other finds included bone and burnt stone.

The curving arc continuing from 145 was numbered 299. This had an uncertain relationship with another similar but slightly deeper cut 298 on its west side. Both had shallow U-shaped profiles and contained similar largely stone-free silty fills. Gully 298 was aligned due north and was cut by pit 283, terminating just north of it. At the south end both gullies merged imperceptibly, and the stratigraphic relationship between them could not be ascertained. Continuing south-east the curving gully widened towards the south terminal, and was numbered 272. This cut earlier lengths of gully 195/209.

At both ends the curving gully ended less than 2.5 m from the eastern edge of the excavation. If projected, the arc described by gullies 299 and 272 would form a circle some 14 m in diameter, and the arc may have been part of a circular enclosure with

opposing entrances, one towards the main enclosure entrance on the north-west, the other on the south-east. The fact that 272 cut earlier lengths of gully along much the same line suggests that gully 299-272 was redefining an earlier enclosure of some sort in the same location.

Gully 34

South-west of gully 299-272 was another gully 34. This was of very similar character to 299, and the two gullies may have formed two sides of an enclosure on the west side of the interior, with an entrance some 3 m wide between them on the south-east giving access to the area of enclosure 204/253.

Pits 130, 283, 165, 218, 289 and 17

All of the pits were oval or sub-rectangular rather than circular, all had sloping sides, and all were much wider and longer than they were deep. Where the pits

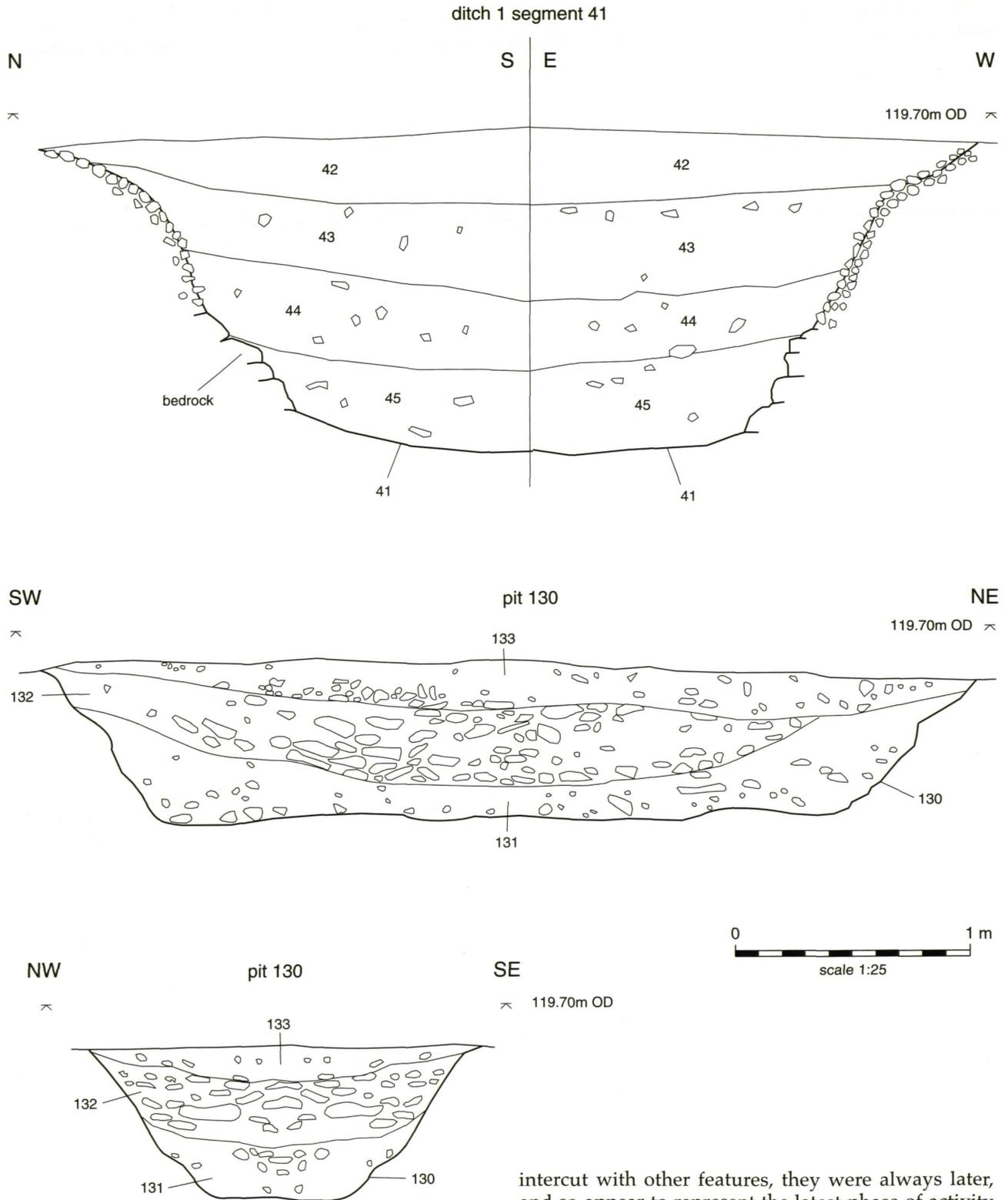


Figure 3.13 Preston Enclosure, ditch 1 and pit 130, sections.

intercut with other features, they were always later, and so appear to represent the latest phase of activity identified.

Pit 130 (Fig. 3.13) measured 4 m north-south by 1.7 m east-west. It was located approximately 22 m south of the eastern terminus of the enclosure ditch. Excavation of the north-western and south-eastern quadrants of the feature showed that it was 0.65 m deep, steep-sided and flat-bottomed and contained three fills. The primary deposit, 131 was an orange-

brown silty clay. It yielded 6 sherds (45 g) of pottery together with several pieces of animal bone. The next fill (132) was much stonier, and contained a large number of finds, including 8 sherds (11g) of pottery, animal bones, burnt stone and part of a shale bracelet (Fig. 7.40.675). The tertiary fill, a grey brown clayey silt 133, contained 15 sherds (36g) of pottery of a mixture of fabrics. This probably accumulated through natural silting.

A single small oval pit or posthole (165), measuring 0.40 x 0.60 m and 0.18 m deep, was found adjacent to pit 130 on the north-west. The two features did not intercut, and it is not clear if they were associated.

A second sub-rectangular pit, 283 (Fig. 3.14) was found approximately 5 m to the east of pit 130. It was slightly smaller (2 x 3.2 m), and deeper (0.7 m) than pit 130, but equally steep-sided and flat-bottomed. Pit 283 contained two silty clay fills, 285, 286; the upper fill 285 produced 15 sherds (34 g) of pottery, together with bone and pieces of burnt stone. The pit was cut into two narrow gullies, 298 and 299, and an earlier L-shaped gully, 145.

Two shallow intercutting pits, 218 and 289 (Fig. 3.14), were found less than 1 m south of pit 283. Both pits were oval and varied in width between 1.28 m and 1.5 m, but were only 0.2 m deep. Both were filled with mid brown silty clay.

South-east of gully 272, feature 17 was found in the edge of the excavation and only partly revealed. It was probably the edge of another shallow pit.

Feature 14 (Fig. 3.14)

Feature 14 was located approximately 10 m to the south of pits 218 and 289. It was oval, with a maximum width of 1.95 m and a maximum depth of 0.50 m. The sides and base were irregular and for this reason it was recorded on site as a tree-throw hole. However, it is perhaps more likely to have been a pit cutting across earlier gully 253. The bottom fill of the pit was 10, a yellow-brown silty clay with a thin band of limestone rubble; the upper fills (8 and 9) were both dark grey brown silty clays. This feature appears to have been used for disposing of rubbish, as it contained 224 sherds of Iron Age pottery weighing 639 g, representing the largest assemblage from the site (Fig. 7.7.55–57). Other finds included significant quantities of bone and burnt stone, together with a small number of flint flakes and a saddle quern fragment of Upper Old Red Sandstone (cat. 686).

Postholes 15, 26, 120, 118, 46/49 and 220 (Figs 3.14–15)

Postholes in the excavated part of the interior were few. A group of six postholes was found clustered south of the western terminal of enclosure ditch 1. The only find from any of these features was a small frit bead from posthole 26. The group did not form any kind of coherent plan, though from their size and relative positions they can be grouped into three pairs, 15 and 26, 220 and 46/49, and 118 and 120, respectively 1.5 m, 3 m and 2.5 m apart. Pairs of

postholes such as these have been interpreted, usually without good evidence, as holding posts used for agricultural purposes, for instance as drying racks. In this case, however, five of the six postholes may have held posts supporting revetments for a bank.

Features external to enclosure 1

External features comprised a series of narrow gullies leading from the western terminus of the enclosure ditch and a small pit.

Gullies 194, 193, 192 and 191

A series of recut gullies cut the western terminus of enclosure ditch 1. The earliest gully (194) was up to 0.75 m deep, nearly as deep as the main enclosure ditch, (Fig. 3.12, segment 66) but extended only 7.5 m north-west. It cut at least the lower fills of the ditch terminal. Gully 194 was replaced by a shallower gully 193 (0.55 m deep) which was at least 30 m long, continuing into the northern edge of the excavation. This was recut by a slightly more sinuous gully 192 (Fig. 3.16, section 43, segment 169), which cut through all of the surviving fills of the main enclosure ditch. Finally 192 was replaced by gully 191, which was only 12 m long, extending nearly 10 m outside the enclosure and 2.5 m into the interior. The gullies were filled with reddish and greyish brown silt loams containing varying quantities of limestone.

All but the last of these gullies started within the western terminal of the main enclosure ditch, suggesting that the enclosure was still in active use although the ditch was partially or completely infilled. The latest gully also respected the entrance to the enclosure, and it has been suggested that it may have marked the extent of the internal bank (see above). These features contained only Iron Age pottery, and are therefore likely to have been associated with the main phase of use of the enclosure.

Pit 280 (Fig. 3.16)

A small, shallow pit, 280, was found south of the westernmost external angle of the enclosure ditch. Sixty-five sherds (113 g) of predominantly early to middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill making it roughly contemporary with enclosure ditch 1. Charred grain from the fabric of a shell-tempered vessel (Fabric H2) from this feature (Appendix 1, sample 8) yielded an AMS date of 2309 +/- 57 BP (471–466 BC plus 416–199 BC at the 95% confidence level; NZA 8670, R24151/8).

Discussion

Dating and sequence

The excavation yielded a small assemblage of pottery in fabrics typical of the middle Iron Age, although containing little which could be closely dated (see Timby, Chapter 7). Three radiocarbon dates corroborate this, and centre around the 4th and 3rd centuries cal.

Excavations alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire

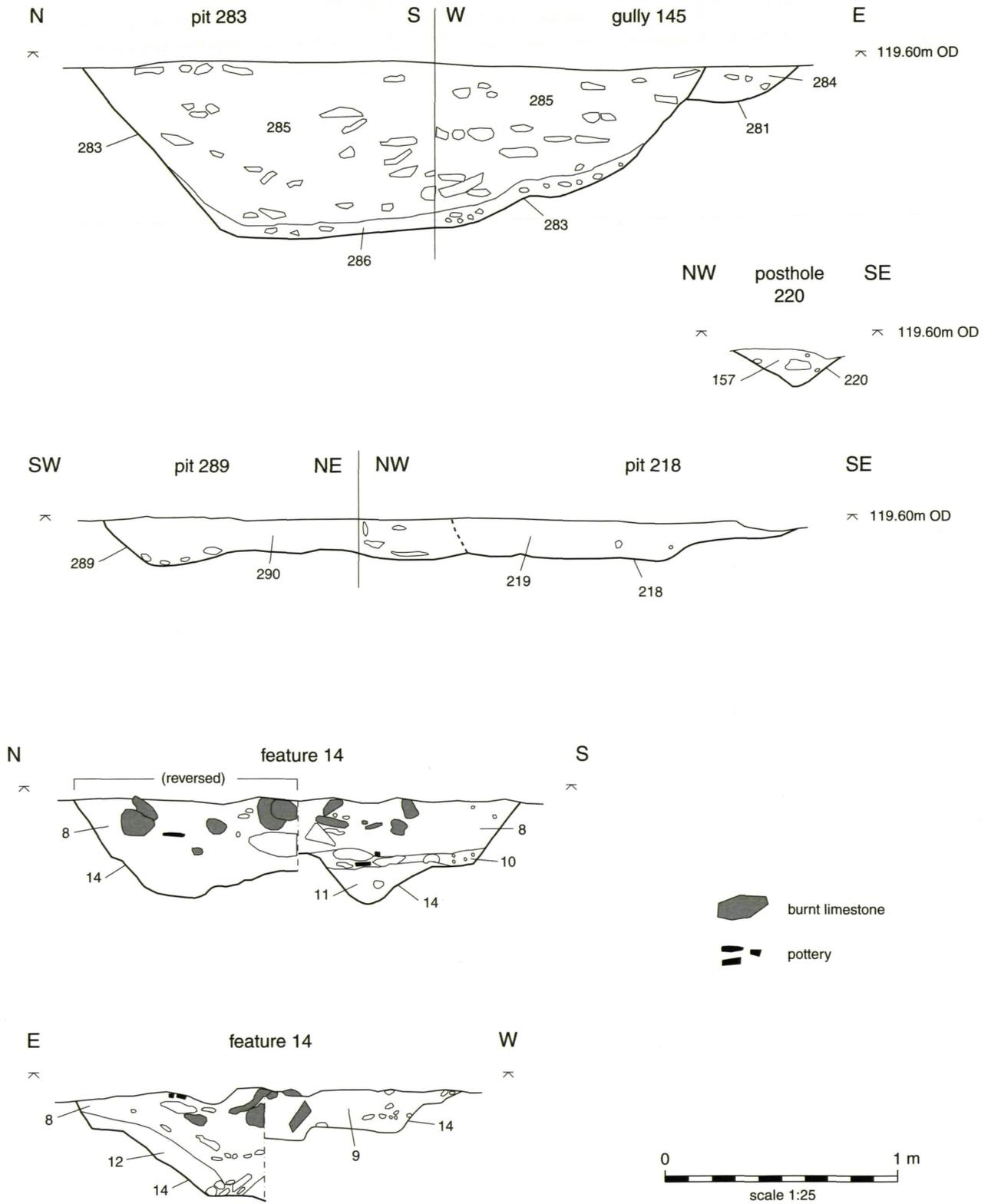


Figure 3.14 Preston Enclosure, pits and other features, sections.

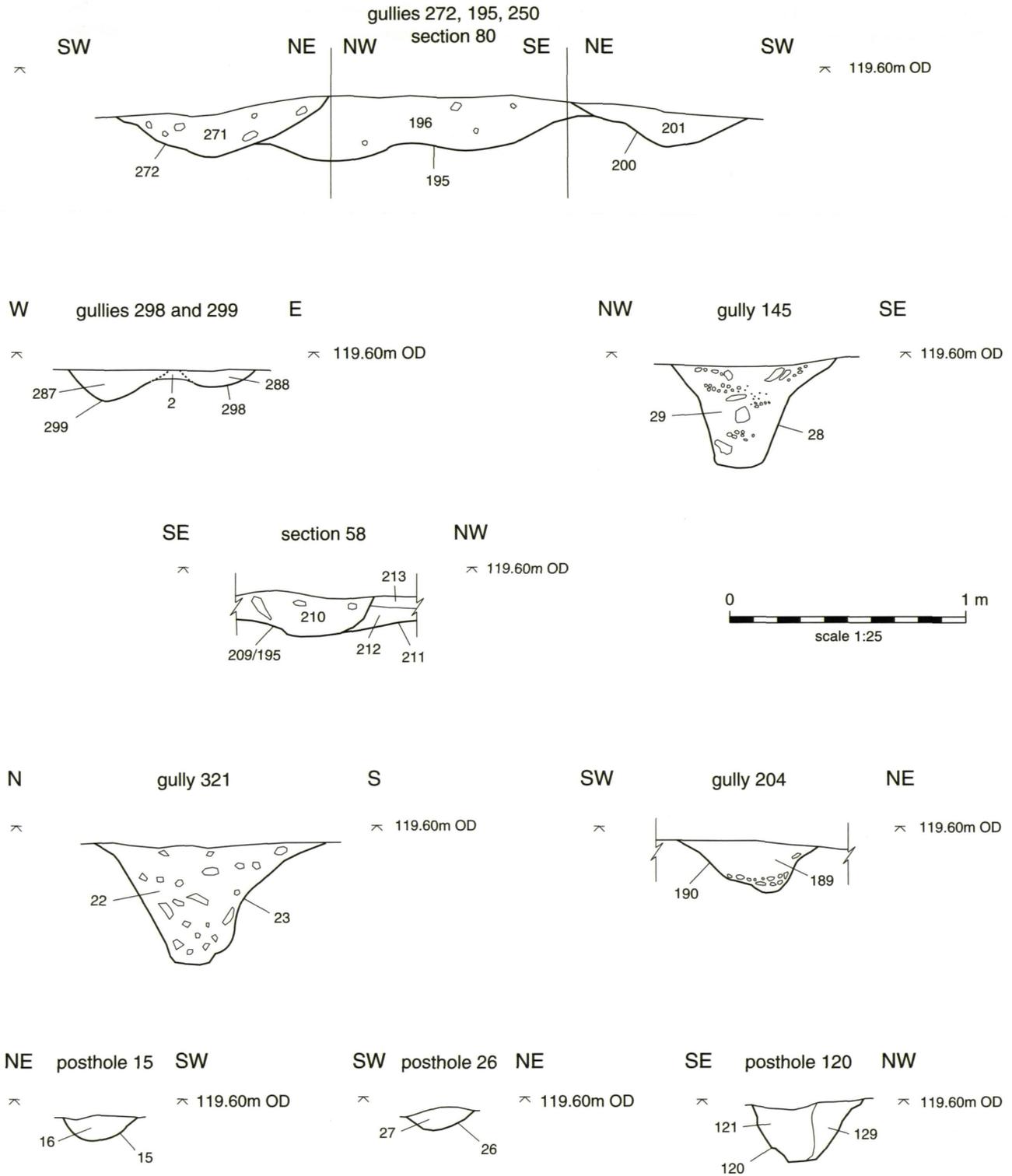


Figure 3.15 Preston Enclosure, gullies and postholes, sections.

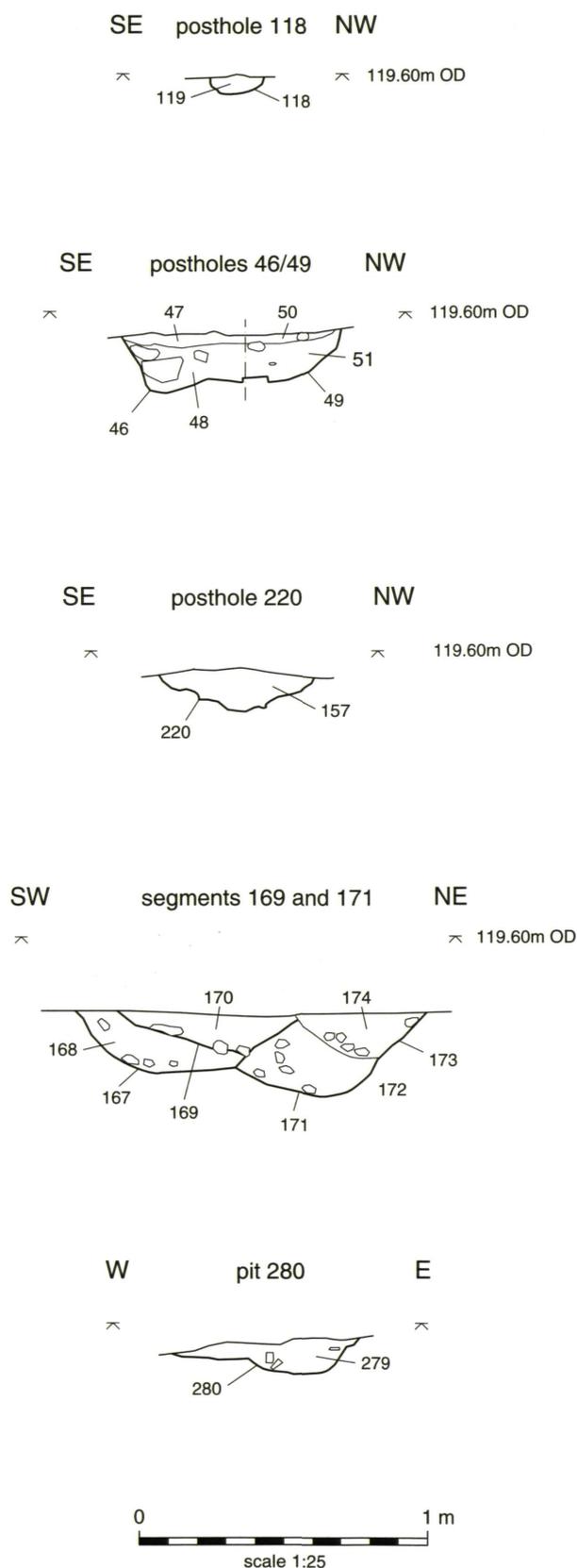


Figure 3.16 Preston Enclosure, gullies and postholes, sections.

BC (Appendix 1). The pottery included one or two forms diagnostic of the early Iron Age; these come from one of the stratigraphically latest ditches, and would appear to have been redeposited. The stratigraphic development within the enclosure seems to represent modifications to a layout of a single phase rather than a discrete early Iron Age phase to the settlement. The early Iron Age sherds may therefore derive either from an isolated earlier feature, or may indicate that the origins of the enclosed settlement lay at the transition between the early and middle Iron Age, at the beginning of the 4th century BC. The small number of Roman sherds from upper ditch fills and superficial contexts are insufficient to suggest occupation of the site in the Roman period.

The excavated ditch segments showed no evidence of recutting. The sequence of ditch fills suggests natural silting, represented by primary spills followed by thick deposits of redeposited natural in all the excavated segments. The eastern terminal (41) had very uniform silt fills. Where the ditch cut natural silt (segments 3 and 59) an upper weathering cone was formed, the effect of prolonged erosion, and the wide profile of segment 86 in the stonier northern part of the site may be interpreted in the same way (Fig. 3.12). Most of the upper fills of the enclosure ditch can be attributed to natural silting, with occasional inclusions of domestic refuse, within a more stable ditch profile. This would appear to indicate that the ditch was not maintained during the occupation. An internal bank is suggested by the distribution of features within the enclosure, and the collapse of an internal bank is suggested by stony layer 5 in segment 3 (Fig. 3.11). This may also be the explanation for stony layers 82 and 80 in the western ditch terminal 66 (Fig. 3.12). A similar interpretation may be placed upon the upper part of layer 124 in segment 86 (Fig. 3.12). There is no particular reason to suggest the deliberate slighting of the bank rather than infilling through natural erosion, although this is a possibility.

It is a matter of debate how long such ditches took to silt up, but this may have occurred in less than 100 years. The rubbish dumping in the top of the silted ditch (fills 64 and/or 65, segment 59), and the recut ditches leading out from the north-west entrance, however, suggest that the use of the enclosure continued for some time after the ditch had silted up.

Form and function

The cropmarks indicate that the Preston Enclosure is hexagonal. While not quite a regular hexagon, it can be seen to be more or less symmetrical about the east-west and north-south axes. Polygonal enclosures are common in this period, but these tend to be far more irregular than Preston Enclosure. Other hexagonal enclosures include the large enclosure at Farley Mount (Cunliffe 1991, fig. 12.1), and the 'banjo' enclosure at Preshaw House (*ibid.*, fig. 12.5), both in Hampshire. A number of the excavated examples from the Upper Thames Valley are irregular polygons, including the inner and outer enclosures at Mingies Ditch,

Oxfordshire (Allen and Robinson 1993) and the enclosure at Watkins Farm, Northmoor, Oxfordshire (Allen 1990, 74, fig. 34). In the Cotswolds excavations have been more limited. Allen (1990, 73) argued prosaically that the shape of these enclosures derives from their being dug between marker posts around the perimeter, and recognised a degree of symmetry in their layout. Preston Enclosure may simply represent one extreme within the spectrum of Iron Age polygonal enclosures, although the precision with which it was laid out makes it unusual. It is possible that this was of particular significance, although there is nothing from the associated features and finds that indicate that the settlement was of special character.

The depth of the enclosure ditch (averaging 1.2 m) is similar to that of the excavated enclosures at Rollright (1.5 m) (Lambrick 1988, 82), Watkins Farm (1.1 m) (Allen and Robinson 1993) and Mingies Ditch (just under 1 m) (Allen 1990). It is argued above that Preston Enclosure had an internal bank some 2–3 m wide just inside the enclosure ditch. A bank or wall was identified from a slump of limestones within the ditch at Rollright (Lambrick 1988, 82–3, fig. 57), and suggestions of an upcast mound with a hedge upon it at Mingies Ditch and a probable hedge at Watkins Farm.

Both the enclosure at Watkins Farm and that at Rollright enclose a very similar area to Preston Enclosure (0.42 ha, 0.38 ha and 0.38 ha respectively). The outer enclosure at Mingies Ditch was slightly larger, at 0.48 ha, but this broad similarity perhaps suggests that this order of size was optimal for farmsteads of a certain type. The evidence from the more extensively excavated enclosures suggested that they had been occupied by a relatively small group of people such as a nuclear or extended family, and Preston Enclosure may have been similar.

The recut ditch extending north-west from the enclosure entrance may belong to the class of antennae ditches known from Wessex early Iron Age enclosures such as Little Woodbury, Wilts. and Gussage All Saints, Dorset (Cunliffe 1991, 217–218). More locally, a pair of antennae were found just outside the entrance at Mingies Ditch (Allen and Robinson 1993, 22, figs 8 and 29), and a single ditch attached to the enclosure ditch terminal at Watkins Farm (Allen 1990, 5, figs 3 and 7). Such ditches are believed to have been connected with the funnelling of livestock into their respective enclosures, suggesting that livestock were corralled within the Preston Enclosure on occasions.

As only 25% of the interior was excavated, the conclusions that can be reached about the site as a whole are inevitably tentative. No direct evidence of structures survived, but it is likely that the curvilinear gullies in the central part of the site defined the positions of circular or partly circular buildings. It is possible that a line of such structures ran across the middle of the enclosure, as another annular gully is visible on the cropmark photograph on this alignment (Plate 3.1). One of the excavated gully complexes (145/299/272) had entrances facing both the main enclosure entrance and the area to the south,

while gullies 204/253 appear to have faced onto the south area.

There may have been an enclosure on the western side in front of the buildings, in which some of the pits and postholes were dug, but the area to the rear seems to have been devoid of features. The interior therefore seems to show signs of zoning. Such internal organisation of farmsteads is common, being evident in the Upper Thames at Mingies Ditch (Allen and Robinson 1993) and Watkins Farm (Allen 1990), and in Northamptonshire at sites such as Aldwincle and Blackthorn (Knight 1984, 228, figs 49, 60 and 203).

The pits that were found are not typical grain storage pits. The three larger pits all contained sizeable assemblages of domestic rubbish, suggesting that they lay close to domestic foci. None of them impinged significantly upon the areas defined by the curving gullies, and this may indicate that the houses within these gullies remained standing after their surrounding gullies had silted up.

There is insufficient evidence to establish the basis of the economy of the settlement. There was a low density of charred cereal remains which consisted of wheat and barley, with fewer than half the 19 samples assessed containing any charred material at all (see Pelling, Chapter 8). This may be due to taphonomic factors rather than a lack of crop processing on the site. The absence of typical grain storage pits within the excavated area is of uncertain significance. It is possible that the water table was relatively high, making underground grain storage impracticable, as was the case at Mingies Ditch (Allen and Robinson 1993) and Groundwell Farm (Gingell 1992). Alternatively, pits may have been zoned in a different part of the site, although none appear as cropmarks (Plate 3.1) as surely they would if they approached the depth of the enclosure ditch. Raised grain stores may have been used instead. Grain was certainly consumed, as two fragments of saddle quern were recovered (cat. 686–687). Animal bones were relatively plentiful although bone was poorly preserved and only 23% were identifiable (see Powell, Chapter 8). Cattle and sheep/goat predominated, as is usual in the farming settlements in the region.

It has been suggested that the 'banjo' enclosures of Wessex, to which Preston Enclosure is superficially similar, occupied marginal land and may have formed a specialised component of a wider settlement system (Cunliffe 1991, 223). This has also been suggested for Mingies Ditch, occupying a low-lying site in the Upper Thames Valley which would have been suitable for exploiting floodplain pasture (Allen and Robinson 1993, 143). However, it is unclear whether sites of broadly similar form in the Cotswolds can be interpreted in these terms, or whether they are more likely to be relatively independent, mixed farming settlements (Hingley 1984a, 80; Allen and Robinson 1993, 149). There was insufficient evidence to establish whether or not the settlement at Preston Enclosure was based on some kind of specialism and its position in the overall settlement pattern in the Iron Age remains unclear.

Ermin Farm

by Andrew Mudd and Simon Mortimer

The enclosure complex at Ermin Farm was not identified in either the Stage 1 or Stage 2 assessments of the Cirencester and Stratton bypass. A watching brief of the road corridor between the excavation at St Augustine's Farm South and the Harnhill road identified two ditch termini. The area, which had been partially sealed by colluvium, was archaeologically stripped to reveal an approximately square enclosure, part of a parallel enclosure to the west and a number of ancillary linear features (Fig. 3.17). The underlying cornbrash limestone was overlain by a mid brown silty subsoil, averaging around 0.3 m thick but deepening towards a small valley to the north. The stripped area was peppered with tree-throw holes, showing that this had been wooded at one time.

Enclosure 49 (segments 6, 10, 28, 29, 43, 54)

Enclosure 49 was sub-rectangular and measured 24 m north-south by 21 m east-west. A single entrance 2.5 m wide was found west of centre on the southern side. The enclosure ditch, which had a 'V-shaped' profile with fairly steep, unbroken sides, was from 1.7–2.2 m wide and between 0.55 m and 1.06 m deep (Fig. 3.18, segments 6 and 43).

Finds were sparse within all the excavated segments except the eastern terminal (segment 6). Here the lower fills (5 and 4) contained rich assemblages of bone, charcoal and pottery (Fig. 7.8.58–59). Fill 5 also contained two iron strips and a fragment of a bronze-working crucible (see McDonnell, Chapter 8). These two contexts yielded over a third of all the pottery from the site by sherd count and about 60% by weight. The other ditch sections, including the opposite terminal (10) yielded only occasional and usually small fragments of pottery from the middle and upper fills. Three of the excavated sections (including terminal segment 6) had a thick stony fill spilling down the inner side of the enclosure, suggesting that there may have been an internal upcast bank which had slipped (or had been pushed) into the ditch.

Features extending from enclosure 49 (Figs 3.17–3.18)

Ditch 85 ran south-west from the south-eastern corner of enclosure 49 and continued beyond the southern edge of the excavation. The relationship between this ditch and the main enclosure was not established by excavation, but in plan the uppermost fill of both was the same, and they are assumed to have been contemporary. Where sectioned the ditch measured 0.95 m wide and 0.30 m deep. No finds were recovered from the primary silting (layer 84), but the secondary fill (83) contained fragments of bone, a small piece of daub and pottery (Fig. 7.8.62) contemporary with that found in the enclosure ditch. It is not clear whether this ditch is part of a second enclosure south of 49, or part of an associated field system.

Just outside the south-west corner of the enclosure an east-west ditch (segment 15) was recorded in the drainage ditching. This appears to be a continuation of the southern arm of the enclosure ditch westwards. Five metres to the east of enclosure 49 the terminal of another probable ditch, 42, was visible. It measured 1.1 m wide and 0.55 m deep. The short length of ditch that lay within the excavation ran north-south parallel to enclosure 49. No finds were recovered, but its proximity to the main enclosure and similar alignment suggests that it may be Iron Age.

Pits associated with enclosure 49 (Fig. 3.18)

The interior of the enclosure contained only three small, shallow probable pits (51, 53 and 61) in the south-east corner. The probable pits produced no finds, but are considered likely to be archaeological features because they were comparatively regular, and because of their proximity to another small and shallow pit 59 (similar to feature 61), which lay just south of the enclosure east of the entrance. This pit contained four sherds of limestone-tempered pottery, probably Iron Age, and some burnt limestone. The three pits inside the enclosure all lay only 2 m from the edge of the ditch, and may therefore have been sealed by the proposed internal bank, part of a group of four pits predating the digging of the enclosure. Alternatively, they may all have been dug up against the inner edge of the bank.

Enclosure 48 (segments 19, 39, 63 and 68)

Five metres to the west of enclosure 49 was an L-shaped ditch 48, one arm of which ran parallel to enclosure 49, the other turned westwards and continued the line of the northern side of 49. This ditch may well have formed the north-eastern corner of a second enclosure parallel to the first. Two sections were excavated through the ditch in the main site, and two others were recorded in the drainage ditching for the new road. The enclosure ditch measured between 1.8 m and 2.5 m wide and varied in depth between 0.7 m and 1 m. One hundred and twelve sherds, (415g) of pottery were recovered from the lowest fill (57) of segment 63 (Fig. 7.8.60–61), and indicated a date broadly contemporaneous with enclosure 49. A replicated AMS radiocarbon date of 363–111 cal BC (95% confidence) was obtained from bone from fill 57 (NZA 8579, R24151/9). As with enclosure 49, stony deposits were seen to overlie the lower fills of the enclosure ditch, but in contrast to the eastern enclosure, these suggested an external, rather than internal, bank. The upper part of the ditch silted up naturally, and contained few finds. A replicated AMS radiocarbon date of 403–357 cal. BC and 287–250 cal BC (95% confidence) was obtained from a bone in fill 71, segment 68 (NZA 8616, R24151/10). Only a small area of this putative enclosure lay within the road corridor, and no features were found within it.

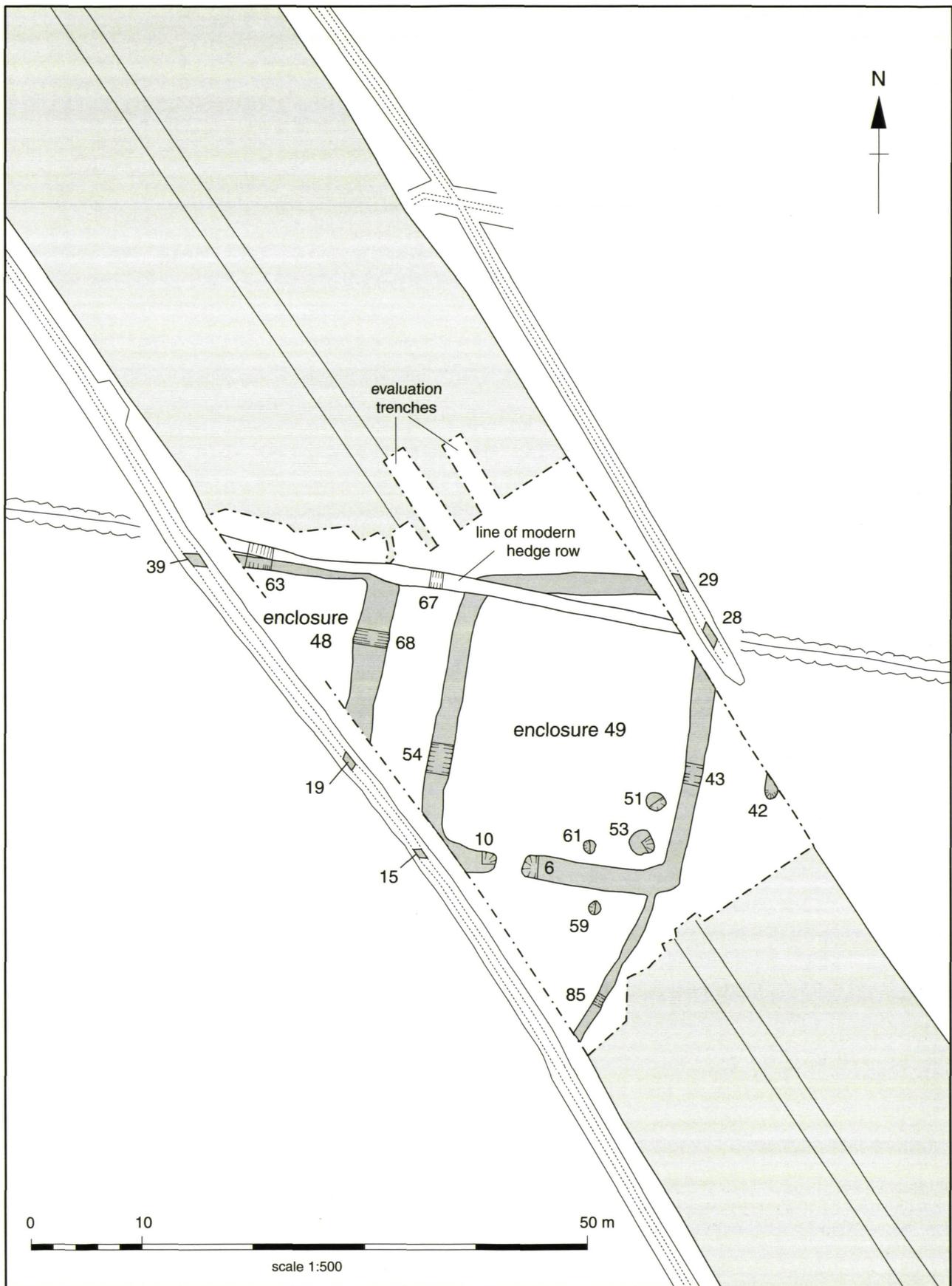


Figure 3.17 Ermin Farm, plan of excavated features.

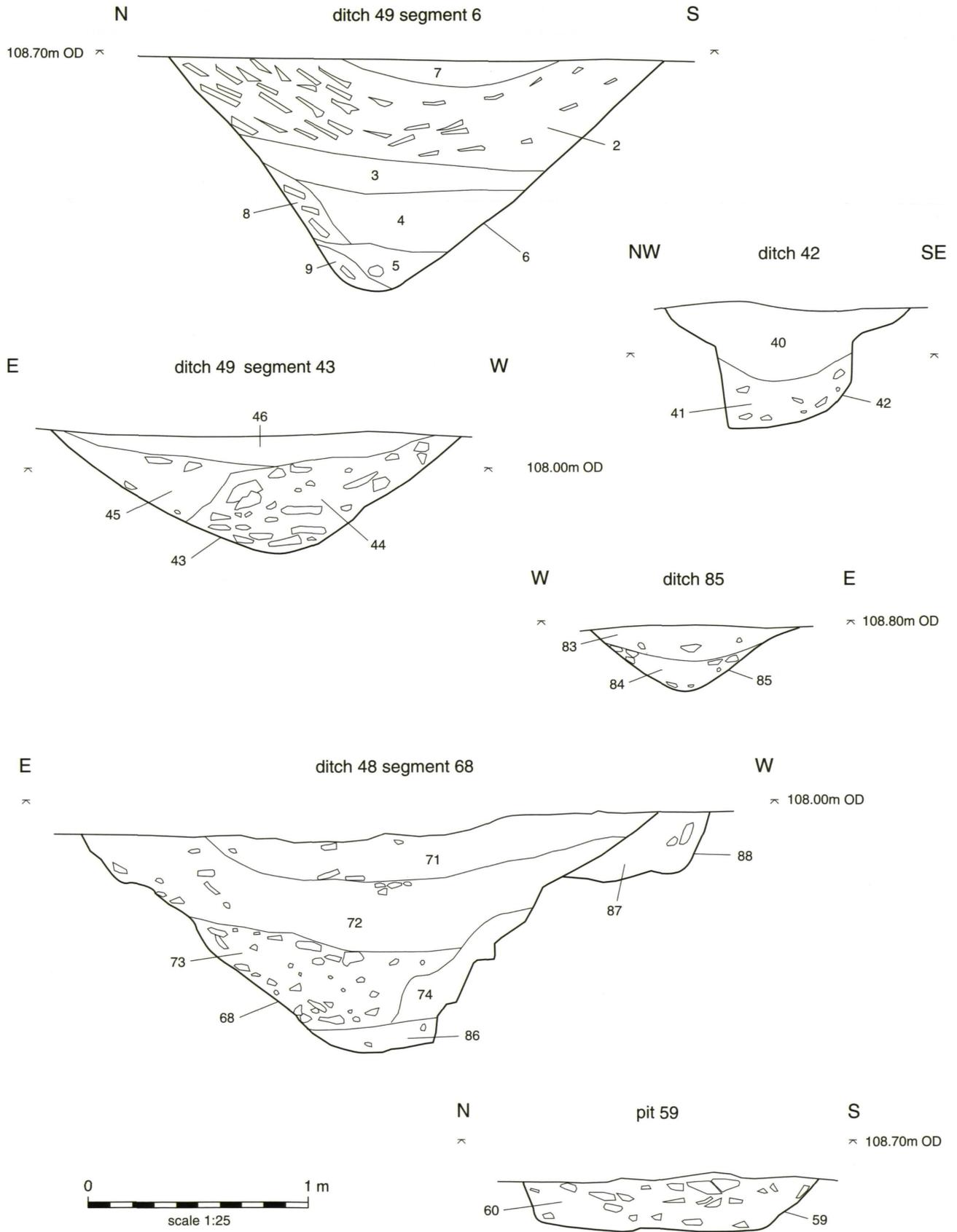


Figure 3.18 Ermin Farm, enclosure ditches and other features, sections.

Discussion

Date and sequence

The groups of pottery from the enclosure ditches 48 and 49 and from associated gully 85 are securely middle Iron Age. Two replicated AMS radiocarbon dates were obtained from bone within ditch 48. These came out at 363–111 cal BC (sample 9) and 403–357 plus 287–250 cal BC (sample 10) at the 2-sigma ranges and confirm the middle Iron Age date (c. 400–150 BC). The 1-sigma calibrated range for sample 10 (395–371 cal BC) may suggest that the occupation lay within the earlier part of the range. The 1-sigma calibrated range for sample 9, which came from the bottom of enclosure ditch 48, was slightly later (339–309 cal BC plus 210–173 cal BC) but still supports a date in the 3rd or 4th century BC, rather than later. The saucepan pot (Fig. 7.8.61) from this ditch is a form most usually dated to the 3rd century BC or later, and the combined evidence perhaps suggests that a date in the 3rd century BC is to be preferred. Although there are differences in the proportions of pottery fabric types between enclosures 49 and 48, the samples of pottery are too small to place any significance on this, and the enclosures may well have been coeval.

The sequence of enclosure ditch silts suggests that the occupation may have been short-lived. No recutting of the ditch was evident and there was little sign that the ditch sides had been heavily weathered. After the accumulation of the initial deposits, which contained almost all the finds, the ditches appear to have been deliberately filled with material which may have been the original upcast spoil, and later natural silting filled the remaining void. There were few finds from the upper fills and all could have been redeposited from the earlier occupation.

Form and function

The excavation suggested that the site was of ordered form with two enclosures – one small sub-rectangular enclosure and another of undetermined though possibly similar form – aligned side by side. The only internal features were three possible pits, which may in fact have been covered by the suggested internal bank. Enclosure 49 would have been of a size suitable for at most two buildings, although there was no trace of any. The site was not cut by plough furrows and the fact that it had been covered by up to 0.3 m of colluvium might suggest that plough truncation had not been severe and that the absence of internal features was genuine. There was, however, no surviving Iron Age ground surface, and it is not certain at what date the colluvium sealed the site, so some truncation may have occurred before that.

Relatively little of the ditches of either enclosure was dug. In enclosure 49 finds were sparse except in the eastern ditch terminal. Finds were in general most prolific at the entrance, and the presence of an internal bank may have discouraged rubbish dumping elsewhere around the enclosure ditch. Most of the pottery from enclosure 48 came from the north arm of

the ditch, putatively at the back of the enclosure, and this is consistent with the limited evidence for an external, rather than an internal bank. The environmental evidence was limited. A low presence of cereals was registered from four of the seven samples assessed (see Pelling, Chapter 8), while animal (particularly sheep) bones were present, though the site assemblage is small (see Powell, Chapter 8). Given the small sample excavated, the refuse overall is consistent with domestic occupation either within or close to these enclosures.

Sub-rectangular enclosures of this order of size are listed by Knight (1984) at sites such as Pennyland (enclosures 1, 2, 3 and 4), Milton Keynes (enclosure 3), and occur on a number of sites in the Upper Thames Valley, including Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes, near Cirencester (Newman 1994, fig. 24.2). They are found both with and without evidence of an internal roundhouse. The extent of the settlement at Ermin Farm remains unclear and the enclosures may have been components of a larger site, such as at Pennyland (Williams 1993) and probably Cleveland Farm (Newman 1994). However, small and relatively isolated groups of enclosures are known from the Upper Thames Valley in Oxfordshire, for instance at Farmoor (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 26, fig. 33) and (probably) at Gill Mill, Ducklington (Lambrick 1992b, 96, fig. 33), and from Claydon Pike, Fairford in Gloucestershire (Hingley and Miles 1984, fig. 4.4). The middle Iron Age settlement at the latter site is interpreted as a shifting residence of a relatively small group of people, rather than a larger agglomeration (*ibid.*, 63). A nearby site lies south of Driffield some 2 km away where a pair of small cropmark enclosures, possibly of Iron Age date, back on to a boundary ditch (RCHME SU0798/1). They appear to represent a small, isolated settlement in a well-ordered landscape, and the Ermin Farm enclosures may have been similar.

The back of the Ermin Farm enclosures coincided with the line of the present field boundary, two cuts of which were recorded in the section through segment 63. It is conceivable that this boundary represents continuity from middle Iron Age land division, but far more likely that the common line and alignment is coincidental and related to the local topography, particularly the small stream which runs parallel to the north.

Highgate House

by Andrew Mudd and Alan Lupton

The excavation at Highgate House investigated a clear L-shaped cropmark (Gloucester SMR no. 4698) identified in the Stage 2 evaluation as a partially enclosed Iron Age site (Fig. 3.19). A substantial area of the site was to be preserved *in situ*. Consequently, the excavation comprised two trenches; a 4 x 70 m trench (Trench 1) focused on the enclosure ditch and its northern terminus and a 15–18 x 60 m area excavation (Trench 2) centred partly on the enclosure ditch and on the enclosed settlement area (Fig. 3.19). In addition, a third 5–6 x 19 m trench, Trench 3, was excavated in

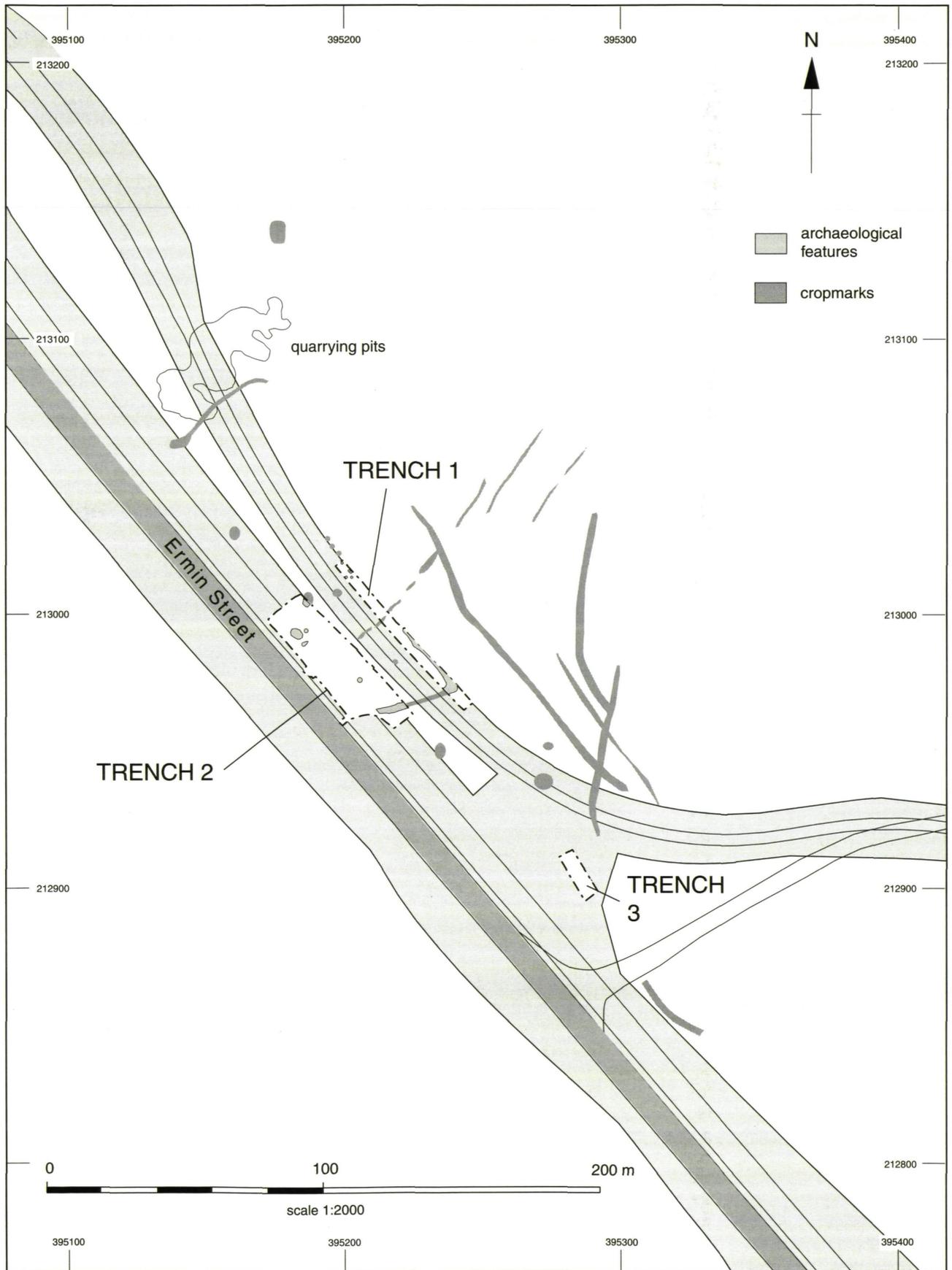


Figure 3.19 Highgate House, site plan and cropmarks.



Plate 3.3 Highgate House, enclosure ditch 144.

the area of a proposed balancing pond to the south (Fig. 3.19) in order to investigate possible *in situ* Iron Age occupation deposits sealed by a thick layer of colluvium at the head of a dry valley.

Enclosure ditch 144 (Fig. 3.20)

Following stripping of the topsoil and hand-cleaning of Trench 1 some 29 m of enclosure ditch 144 was revealed against the northern baulk, with a square-ended terminal at the north-west end. At the south-east end the ditch returned west-south-west across both Trenches 1 and 2. Within Trench 2 the ditch had been removed on the south by a massive linear quarry (see below, Chapter 5). Three sections, (103/112, 209 and 222) were excavated through the west-south-west arm, and the terminal of the north-western arm (131) was half-sectioned (Figs 3.21–3.22). In all but the terminal the sequence of fills was much the same: fine silt with decayed limestone fragments at the edges of the ditch, and layers of loose limestones infilling the middle right to the bottom. The latter were interpreted on site as sitting within a recut that closely followed the line of the original ditch, and had almost completely cleaned it out. The loose limestones were interpreted as deriving either from slipping or deliberate slighting of an adjacent upcast bank. The section examined in the evaluation had suggested that the bank had been an internal one (GCC 1990, 38), although this was not particularly evident from the sections examined in the current work. Above the limestone layers the upper

part of the ditch appeared to have silted up naturally, interspersed with occasional dumps of domestic debris.

Segment 103 (Fig. 3.21) revealed a c. 3 m wide and 1.40 m deep V-shaped rock-cut ditch with a compacted mixture of decayed limestone fragments and silty brownish yellow soil (104) at the sides. This was without finds. The lower central part of the ditch was filled with layers 105 and 106, almost exclusively comprised of loose limestone fragments, which may have lain within a recut (112). These fills contained very few finds. Above 106 the subsequent deposits 108, 109, 110 and 111 were relatively stone-free greyish brown silts which appear to represent natural silting in the ditch top. However, 24 sherds (87 g) of Malvernian limestone ware (fabric MALVL1) (Fig. 7.8.63) and a fragment of briquetage (see Barclay, Chapter 7) were recovered from layers 109, 110, 111, suggesting continuing occupation of the site.

The sequence of deposits in segment 209 was similar (Fig. 3.22). The ditch (209) was V-shaped and rock-cut. Like 103, it had a light reddish-brown clayey silt (208) at the sides, and a well compacted mixture of small-medium limestone fragments and greyish-brown clayey silt (220) in the middle, again described as lying within a recut, 212. Layer 220 was sealed by a thick deposit of loose small-large limestone rubble (210), the upper part of which contained nine sherds (23 g) of Malvernian limestone ware and bone. Two radiocarbon dates from cattle bone gave the following results; 395–44 cal BC (sample 2) and 389–49 cal BC

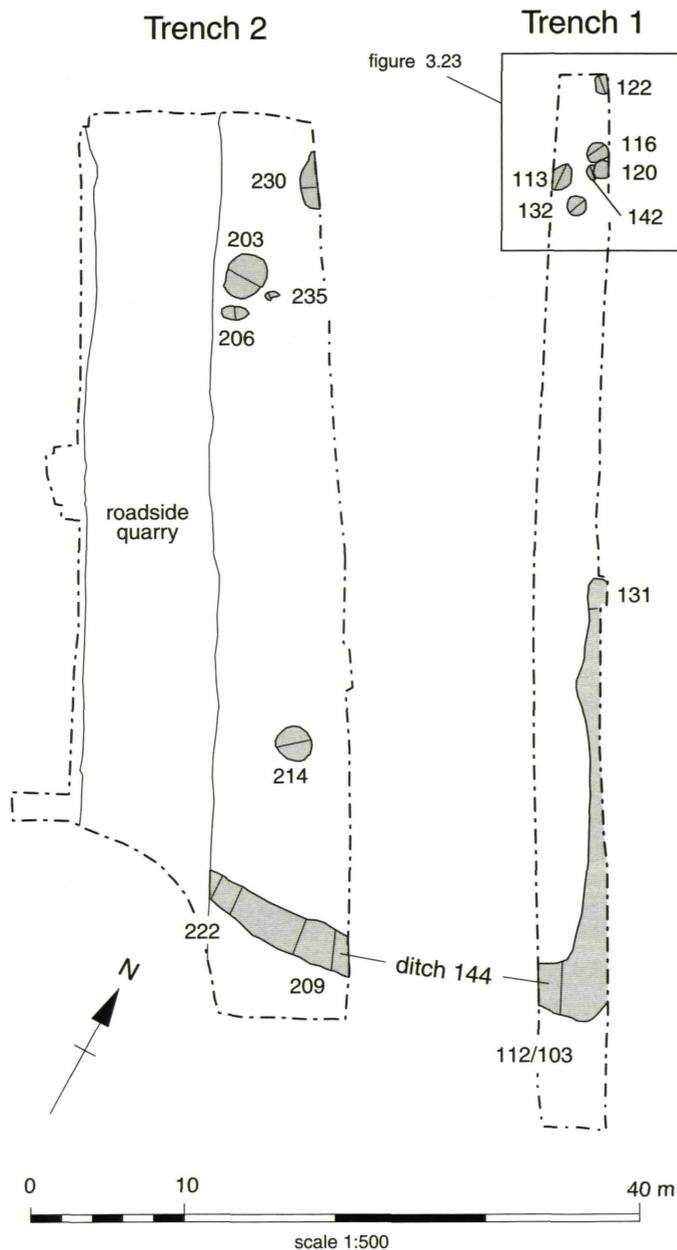


Figure 3.20 Highgate House, plan of trenches 1 and 2.

(Appendix 1), indicating a backfilling within the middle Iron Age. Deposit 210 is equivalent to deposits 105 and 106 in Trench 1, and may derive from an upcast bank. This deposit was followed by a compacted pale brown silt 213, which like 211 and 221 resulted from periodic silting in the top of the ditch. Sixty-nine sherds (260 g) of mixed Iron Age pottery, mostly Malvernian limestone wares, were found within layer 211, indicating domestic activity close by (Fig. 7.8.64–67).

Segment 222 had a sequence of fine silts against the sides (Fig. 3.22 and Plate 3.4). Above a 0.60–0.70 m thick band of primary silting material (224) was a layer of compacted yellowish-brown silty clay (225). This was sealed by a similar deposit (226), which in turn

lay beneath a thin layer of compacted orange-brown clayey silt (227). In the middle of the ditch was loose limestone rubble (228), described as lying within recut 223. This contained four sherds (3 g) of Malvernian pottery, a fragment of briquetage (see Barclay, Chapter 7), and a few fragments of bone. The bone gave a radiocarbon date very similar to those from 210 (391–57 cal BC (95% confidence) (R24151/4). The overlying compacted silty clay deposit (229) probably represents the subsequent natural infilling of the ditch. A single sherd (29 g) of possible late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery was recovered from fill 229.

Both the profile and the filling sequence revealed in the section across the ditch terminus, 131, were different (Fig. 3.21). Although similarly steep-sided the ditch had a flat bottom and was only 1 m deep. The primary silt (130) included animal bones, from one of which a radiocarbon date was obtained, giving two-sigma ranges of 402–360 cal BC and 281–256 cal BC (Appendix 1, sample 1). Layer 130 was overlain by a predominantly stony deposit incorporating burnt stone and flecks of charcoal (129). Stratified above this was a red-brown silty clay (128), which contained nine sherds (33 g) of Malvernian limestone ware, bone, flint and burnt stone. This was sealed by another stony layer (127) similar to 129; the relationship between the stony fills 129 and 127 and deposits 105 and 106 in ditch segment 131 is uncertain. Stony layer 127 was overlain by 126, a dark grey-brown clayey silt containing large amounts of Iron Age pottery (79 sherds, 501 g including most of the local limestone wares from the site), bone and burnt stone. The quantity of cultural material in the terminal of enclosure ditch 144 suggests that it was used for the deposition of domestic refuse.

Pits located within Trench 1 (113, 116, 120, 122, 132, 142) (Figs 3.20, 3.23–4)

A group of six pits was discovered: most were shallow (c. 0.20–0.40 m) and all (except pit 132 which was circular) were oval-shaped, with vertical sides and flat or flattish bottoms. The cluster was located c. 20 m to the north of the excavated terminus of enclosure ditch 144. Most of the pits had a regular form, with their well-cut sides and flat bottoms. They may have been dug as storage pits although most were rather shallow to be typical Iron Age grain stores.

The northernmost pit in this group, 122, had three fills; a reddish-brown primary silting deposit (125), an intermediate stonier, dark grey-brown clayey silt layer (124) and a final deposit made up largely of limestone fragments (123) which may represent the deliberate backfilling of the pit after it had fallen out of use. Fill 125 contained eight tiny sherds (7 g) of middle Iron Age pottery and pieces of burnt stone.

Pit 142 also had a sequence of three fills; a brown silty clay primary deposit, 135 an intermediate stonier

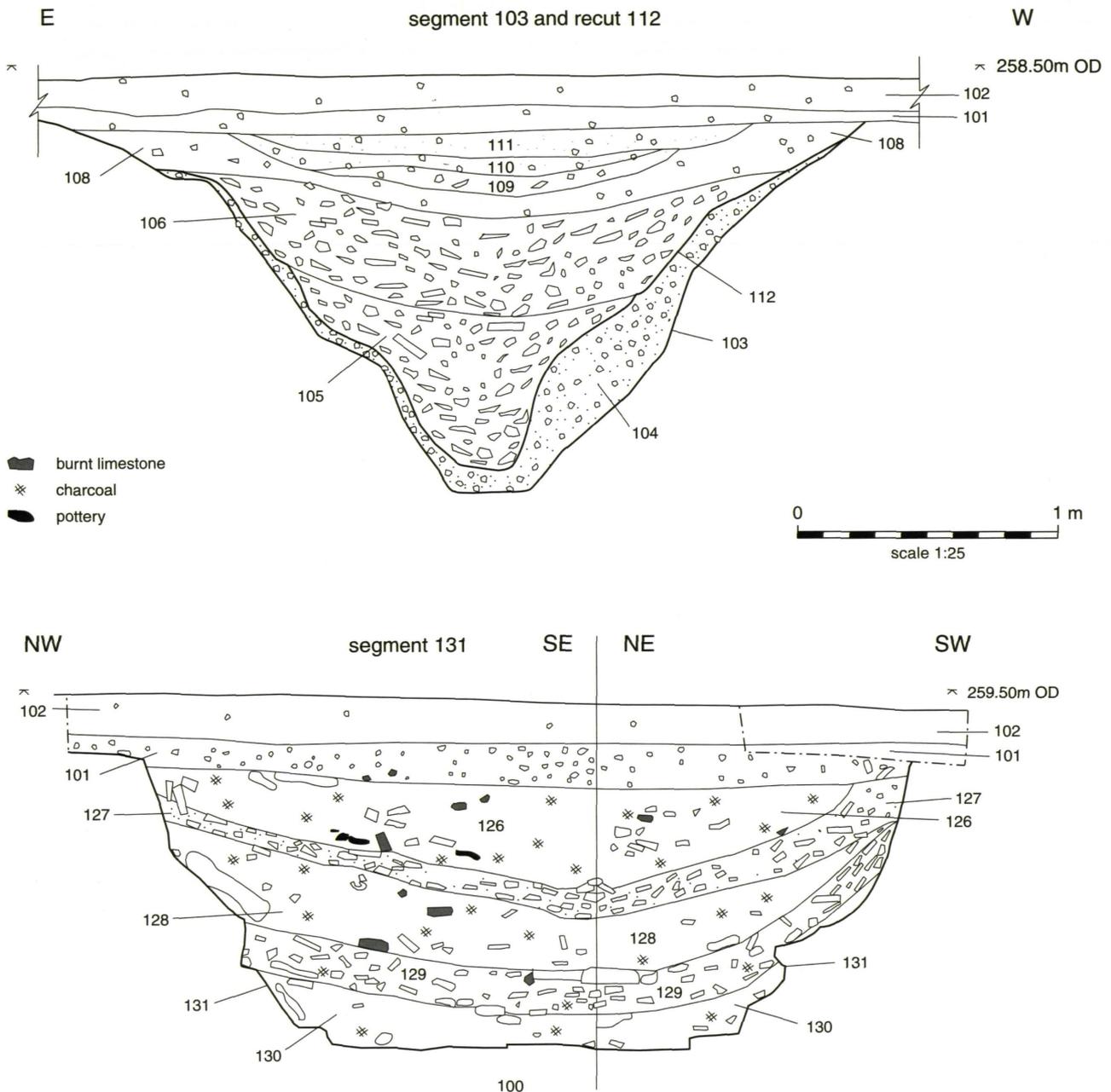


Figure 3.21 Highgate House, enclosure ditch sections in trench 1.

layer, 134 and a final reddish brown silty clay deposit, 143, which contained five fragments (3 g) of Malvernian limestone ware and bone. Pit 142 was cut by pit 120.

Pit 116 contained a similar sequence of fills to that seen in pit 142 and likewise was also cut by pit 120. In this case, however, the secondary and tertiary fills, 118 and 117 respectively, contained 3 sherds (18 g) of limestone-tempered pottery and burnt stone.

Pit 120 was 0.90 m deep; considerably deeper than any of the other pits in the group. It had four fills, consisting of a thin primary silting deposit, 141, a 0.45 m-thick band of yellowish-brown silty clay mixed with limestone fragments (140), another thin reddish-brown silty clay layer (139), and a final stony deposit,

138. The basal fill, 141, contained three sherds (20 g) of Iron Age pottery. A further 15 sherds (30 g) of similar pottery were recovered from the upper fills, 138 and 139.

Pit 132 had a single fill comprising a mixture of brown silty clay soil and numerous small-large limestone fragments (133), which contained a scrap (1 g) of Malvernian limestone ware in association with a few pieces of bone and burnt stone.

To the west of these pits lay a possible pit, 113, which was somewhat more irregular in plan than the others. No finds were recovered from either of the feature's two fills, 114 and 115. Although it had a reasonably flat bottom, it did not have the vertical sides

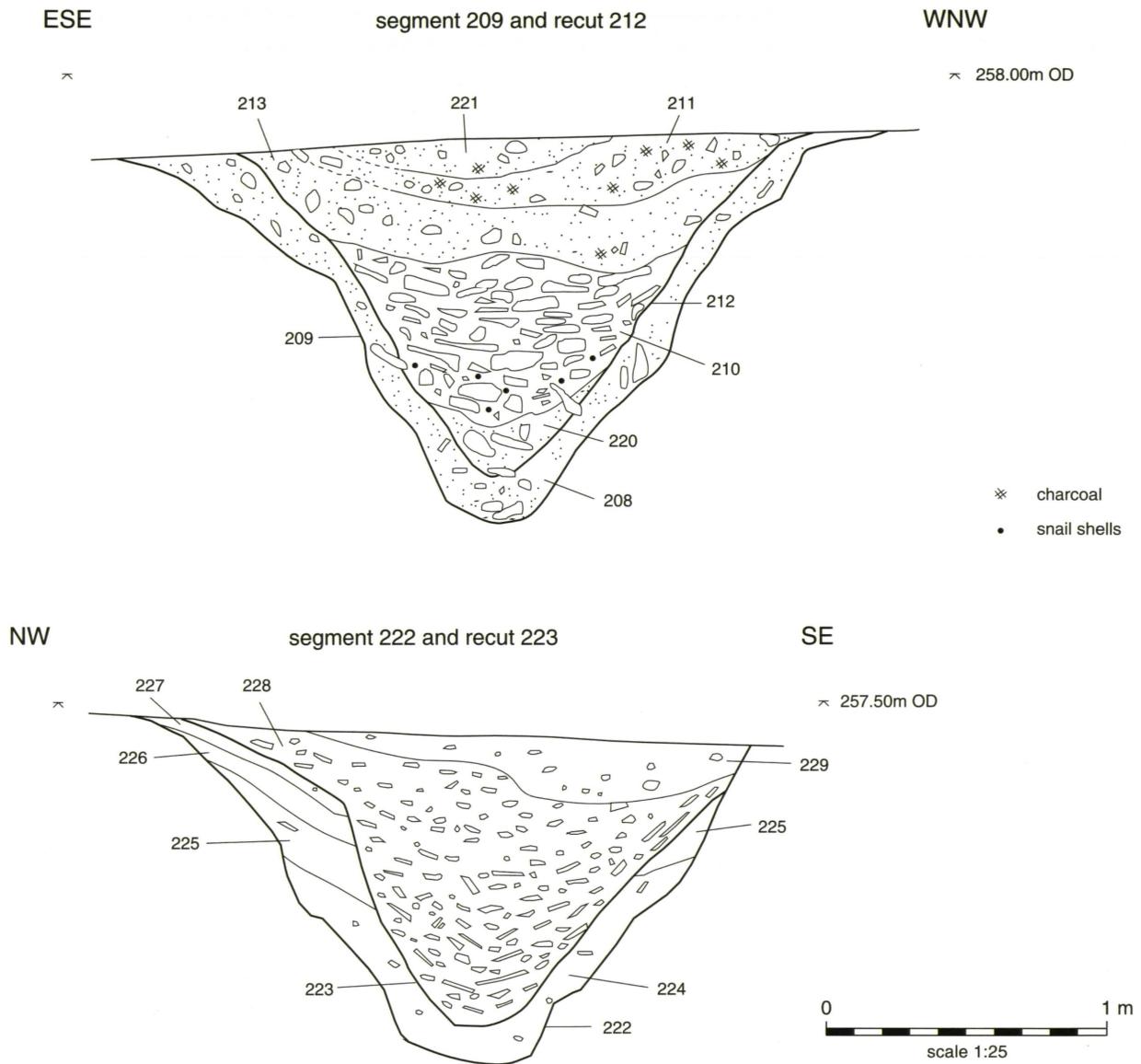


Figure 3.22 Highgate House, enclosure ditch sections in trench 2.

seen in all the other pits in this group and may have been a tree-throw hole.

Three further pits, similar in size and profile to those mentioned above, were discovered just to the north of Trench 1 during the watching brief in the sides of the 'V-ditching'. These were not observed in plan, but were approximately 0.6 m, 0.5 m and 0.4 m deep with fills of mid to greyish brown silt. Several sherds of Iron Age limestone-tempered pottery were retrieved from the middle fill of one of them.

Pits located within Trench 2 (203, 206, 214, 230, 235) (Fig. 3.25)

As with Trench 1, a number of pits were found, clustered west of enclosure ditch 144. The northern-

most pit, 230, extended beneath the northern baulk (Fig. 3.20). It was a substantial oval-shaped steep-sided feature, cut to a depth of c. 1.05 m, which contained a total of five fills (205, 230-232, 234). These were essentially yellowish or reddish brown silts with varying quantities of decayed and platy limestone and all appeared to have been the result of natural infilling of the pit as the sides collapsed. There was a marked lack of cultural material. Only the uppermost layer, 233, contained any finds of archaeological interest; a sherd of possible Roman pottery and three small iron nails (more likely Roman than Iron Age in date).

South of pit 230 lay a group of three pits; 203, 206 and 235. All three were oval-shaped, shallow and contained a single fill. Only the largest pit in this

group, 203, produced any finds; a sherd (2 g) of middle Iron Age pottery, an oxidised Roman sherd (5g) and several pieces of bone. The Roman sherd may be intrusive as the site was heavily rutted in this area. Whether the pits were for storage is unclear, but they appear to be part of a zone of pits to the north-west of the enclosure.

In addition to these pits, a 1.20 m-deep circular pit, 214, was discovered within the enclosure in a more isolated position. Its form was more typical of a storage pit. It may have had a thin lining of blue clay (219) on the base. The sides of the pit appear to have collapsed while the feature was open (218) before it was deliberately backfilled with loose limestone rubble (217) to a depth of 0.70 m. The subsequent clayey silt deposits, 216 and 215, appear to have been the result of natural infilling. No finds were recovered from any of these fills.

The dry valley and colluvium in Trench 3 (Fig. 3.26)

Trench 3 was situated over a partially infilled dry valley and was designed to further investigate possible *in situ* Iron Age deposits identified in the evaluation. Beneath the modern topsoil (300) was a sequence of four reddish brown silt loams (up to 1 m thick altogether), all of which were excavated by machine, and were sterile. The latest of these colluvial layers, 301, overlay a fine, stonier deposit (302). Below this layer, 303, which contained very few inclusions, was the most substantial, increasing from 0.10 m thick at the northern end to 0.40 m across most of the trench. The underlying deposit, 304, only appeared in the northern third of the trench, thinning out towards the south-east. Very few molluscs were preserved in the colluvial sequence (see Robinson, Chapter 8). A probable Roman sherd was recovered from layer 306 just below 303, perhaps indicating that the colluvial sequence derived from post-Roman ploughing.

Beneath 304 lay a thin band of stonier colluvium, 305, which contained some charcoal flecks, burnt clay and bone. This overlay 306, which was a very pale reddish brown silt containing water snails (*Anisus leucostoma*). This may suggest local water seepage. The underlying reddish brown silt loams (307, 308 and 312) showed mineral staining. Layers 307 and 308 contained most of the Iron Age pottery from this trench (20 sherds, 42 g) as well as some bone. The assemblage was dominated by Malvernian limestone wares. There was also a single curved bodysherd of possible late Iron Age or early Roman date from 308. The average size of sherds from the colluvium was under 2 g, compared with over 4 g for those from the ditches and pits, and it is therefore unlikely that the Iron Age pottery was *in situ*. It is more likely to have derived from the adjacent settlement, perhaps from a surface midden, through post-Iron Age ploughing.

A single flint associated with a small patch of burnt clay and charcoal was found within the lowest colluvial deposit excavated, 312. This perhaps attests human activity of earlier prehistoric date within the dry valley itself.

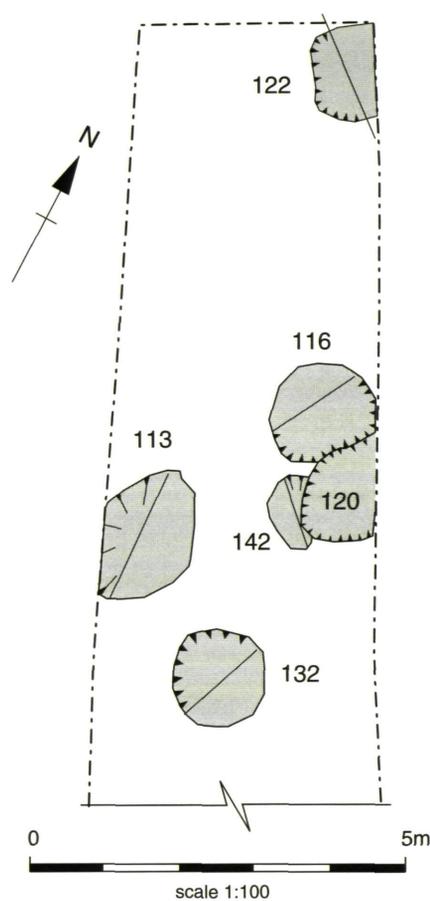


Figure 3.23 Highgate House, plan of pits in trench 1.

A 0.10–0.15 m thick band of dark reddish-brown clay was found below 312 in the northern part of the trench. This sterile layer appears to have been deposited naturally. Below this material lay the natural weathered limestone substrate which fell away gradually towards the south-east (i.e. towards the lowest point of the dry valley).

Discussion

Dating and sequence

The quantity of pottery from the excavations (293 sherds) was meagre and the material fragmentary, although the fabrics indicate a middle Iron Age date. The presence of Malvernian limestone-tempered ware throughout the fills of the enclosure ditch may suggest a date in the later part of the middle Iron Age (see Timby, Chapter 7). Four radiocarbon dates were obtained from the lower fills of the enclosure ditch (Appendix 1, samples 1–4) all of which are middle Iron Age. The dates can tentatively be placed in sequence, that from the primary silting at the terminus being first, the three dates from the limestone fills a little later. This suggests a date as early as the 4th century BC for the start of occupation, with the limestone fills falling between c. 350 BC and c. 150 BC. Occupation material continued to be deposited in the

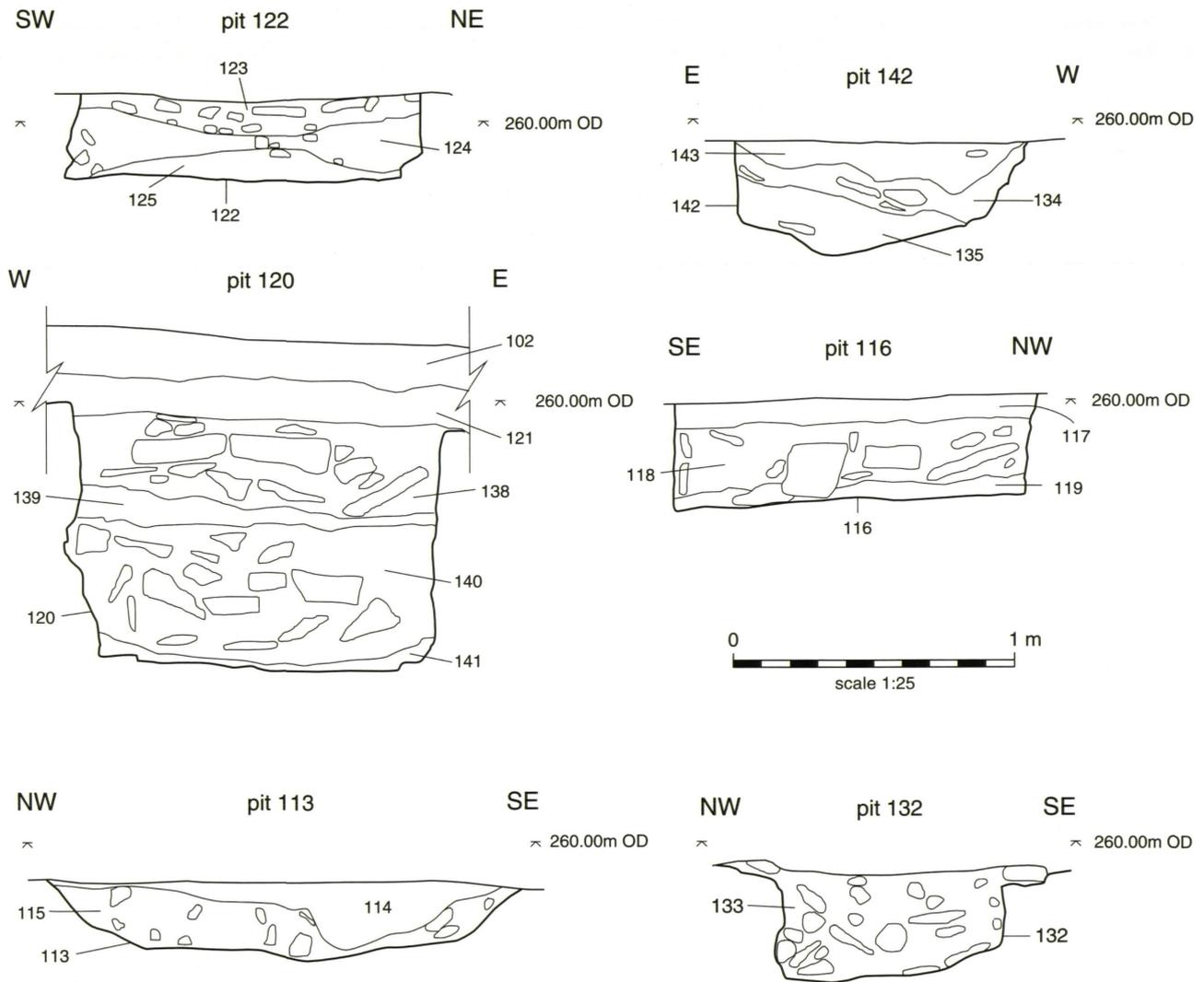


Figure 3.24 Highgate House, pits in trench 1, sections.

top of the ditch, and a single grog-tempered sherd from the top of segment 223 (fill 229) may suggest that the site was occupied as late as the 1st century BC.

The sequence of fills within the enclosure ditch is open to alternative interpretations. The excavators believed that the ditch had been recut almost completely on the same alignment, but alternatively the fine silt fills of the 'early' cut, contrasting with the stony fill of the later one, may simply represent the pattern of natural silting within a ditch of a single phase. No finds were retrieved from the primary silts of the ditch, except at the ditch terminal (segment 131), but these were of the same character as the pottery found in the 'later' cuts. The 4th-century BC radiocarbon date (sample 1) from the primary fill of the ditch terminal also argues against a yet earlier phase of ditch, for which no artefactual evidence was obtained. This re-assessment suggests the whole of the fill sequence can be interpreted as belonging to one phase, either through natural silting of the ditch edges and adjacent

bank, or by deliberate infilling. The latter interpretation may be favoured (as it was in the initial evaluation – GCC 1990, 38) in view of the depth of the rubble fill, which cannot have entirely derived from the weathered edges of the ditch, and also appears too dense and uniformly distributed to have been the result of the slippage of a bank (Plate 3.4).

The finds from the pits were fewer although the pottery showed the same range of fabrics as that from the ditch. A phasing sequence based on ceramics is not generally possible. The Roman sherd from pit 203 is not considered reliably provenanced, but even if it were it need indicate no more than that the pit was left open and accumulated later material in its top. The stepped profile of pit 230 is unusual on the site, and may in fact indicate that it was a quarry (if so, most probably Roman). Alternatively it may have been stepped for functional reasons (for instance to gain access) or that the profile resulted from the collapse of the pit walls. The sides of pit 214 appear to have

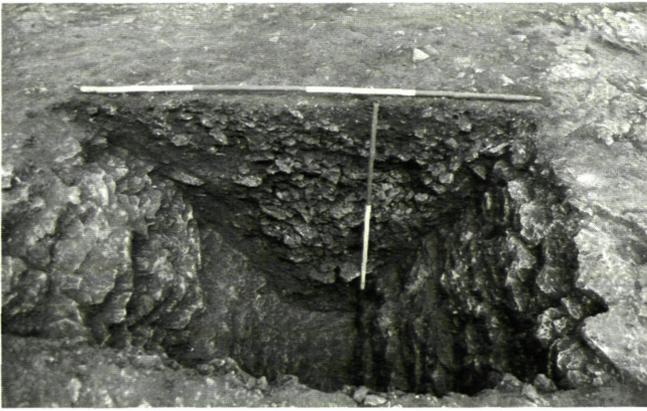


Plate 3.4 Highgate House, ditch 144, segment 222, looking north-east. Showing rubble infill and fill of possible earlier ditch (left).

collapsed before the pit was partly backfilled and then left to fill in. In contrast, the pits in Trench 1 and those in the watching brief seem to have been substantially, if not entirely, backfilled when they went out of use, with pit 120 plausibly capped with stone. This may indicate a pattern of functionally distinct pits in different areas of the site, or there may be a chronological factor whereby the location of pits shifted westward and the later pits were left open when the site was abandoned.

This latter interpretation is tenuous on the limited evidence but accords with the sequence interpreted at the middle Iron Age site at Birdlip Bypass, where the majority of pits appear to have been only partially filled at the end of their use before the site was abandoned, and final infilling was only completed in the 1st century AD when the site was re-occupied (Parry 1998). Hints of a similar pattern of occupation and abandonment have been noted from The Bowsings Guiting Power, and The Beeches, Cirencester (op. cit.).

Form and function

The excavations were limited in extent and the overall form of the settlement remains undefined. The L-shaped ditch, while shown to be fairly substantial, appears on present evidence to be only one element in a wider spread of settlement features and cannot necessarily be considered as the focus of occupation. The arms of the ditch were shown to be about 27 m and 27–35 m long, since the east-west arm did not appear on the other side of the much later roadside quarry and must have terminated somewhere within it. It is possible that another ditch was obliterated by the roadside quarry turning the L into three sides of a rectangular enclosure. A section through the quarry showed that it had been dug to a depth of 1.7 m and would have removed the enclosure ditch had it existed here. The cropmarks of the site (Fig. 3.19), which are restricted to the field on the eastern side of the A417, appear to indicate at least one other large ditch and several smaller linear features, but these do not form enclosures either. Possibly the ditch was simply a

quarry from which the drystone walls of more functional enclosures were built, but its V-shaped profile, and its regular and continuous dimensions around two sides, suggest not. Alternatively the wider landscape was enclosed by walls or hedges, and the ditches demarcated particularly strong boundaries within this, or formed a convenient angle into which to drive livestock for temporary corralling.

No house sites were identified, although this may be due to the relatively small scale of the excavation, or to plough truncation, rather than genuine absence. Pits were located to the north both inside and outside this partial enclosure and the pottery from Trench 3, over 50 m to the south, suggests that occupation originally also extended some way in this direction. The cropmarks to the east also show a number of other ditches, pits and probable quarries, but it is not known how many (if any) belong to the Iron Age settlement. A substantial linear ditch running for over 100 m appears to be of a similar size to enclosure ditch 144 and may mark the eastern boundary of the settlement. If this were to be the case, the area of settlement would have been extensive, but it remains unclear whether this forms part of an enclosure and it is not possible to be sure that the settlement can be classified as an 'enclosed' rather than an 'open' one.

Little light can be thrown on the economy of the Highgate House settlement. The range of artefacts was very limited. Animal bones were fairly common but were poorly preserved, and only a small proportion (17%) were identifiable (see Powell, Chapter 8). Most were of cattle, although this dominance may simply reflect the better preservation of larger bones. Pits of the type usually interpreted as grain stores were present, but only in small numbers within the excavated area. There was a low concentration of charred plant remains (present in only 16 of the 28 samples assessed) but this did include spelt wheat and barley, both typical Iron Age crops (see Pelling, Chapter 8). Overall it is difficult to gauge the significance of arable agriculture in the economy.

Though limited, the evidence from Highgate House is similar to that from other middle Iron Age settlements in the Cotswolds (see Parry 1998 for a discussion of some of the Cotswold sites). Generally, there is little clear indication of the form or nature of these sites, principally because of the limited nature of excavations undertaken. The shortage of evidence for house structures is typical, with domestic foci possibly only identified at The Park, Guiting Power and Guiting Manor Farm (Parry op. cit., 54–55). Pits are often common, although not particularly densely distributed, and sometimes appear to occur in discrete clusters or zones both inside (eg. The Bowsings, The Park, Guiting Manor Farm) and outside (eg. Birdlip Bypass, Rollright, Huntsman's Quarry) ditched enclosures. There is therefore some indication of functionally distinct areas within these settlements, although their overall spatial organisation is still far from clear.

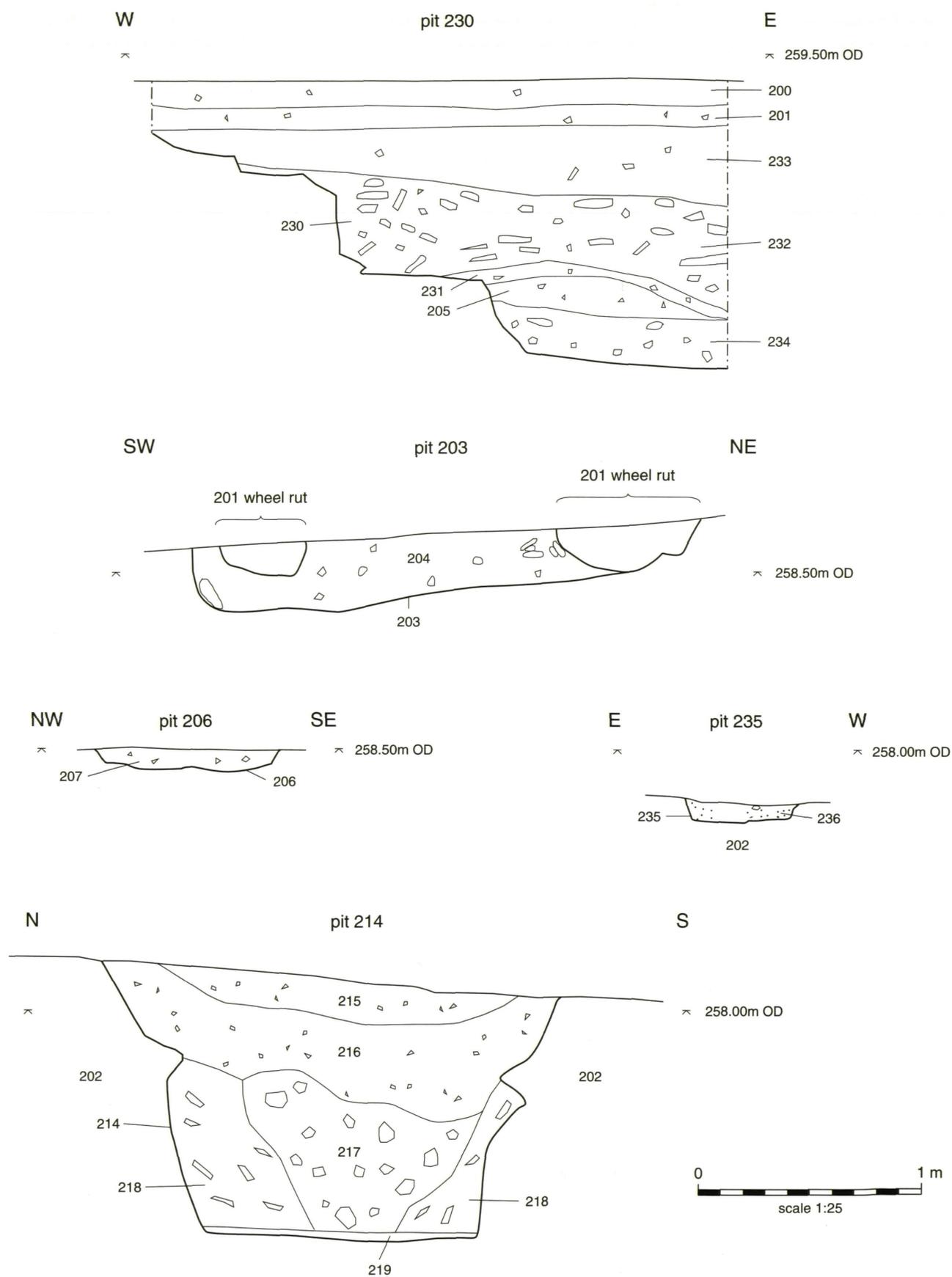


Figure 3.25 Highgate House, pits in trench 2, sections.

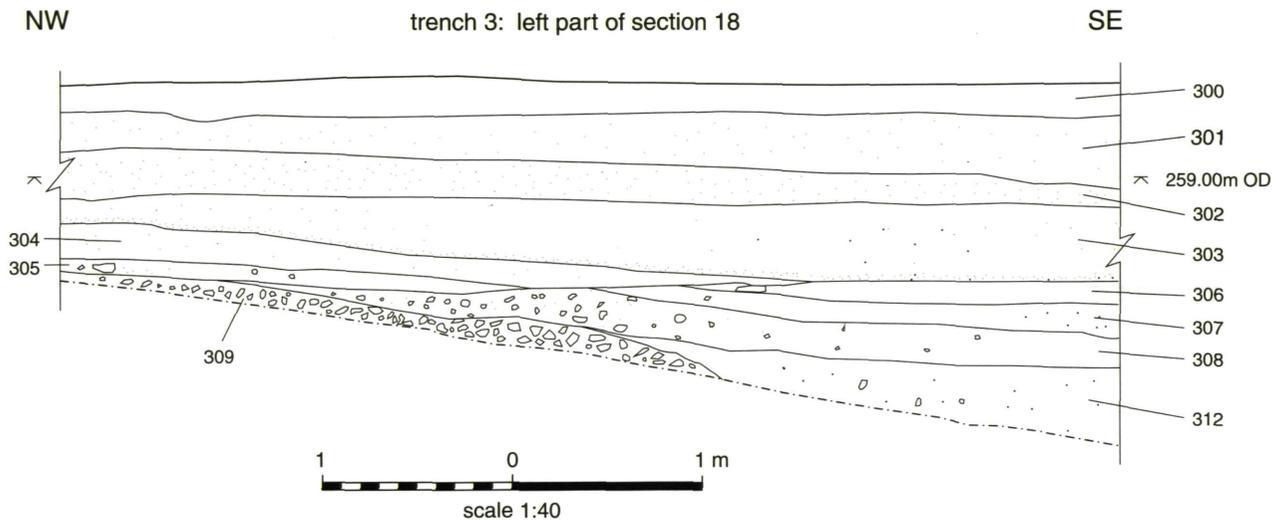


Figure 3.26 Highgate House, trench 3, section through colluvium (part).

One aspect of the site which deserves mentioning is the high proportion of Malvernian pottery on the site (see Timby, Chapter 7), amounting to 59% of the entire assemblage (42% by weight). This compares with 10% by weight from the middle Iron Age occupation at Birdlip Bypass, 15% from Guiting Power and 8% from Salmonsbury (Parry 1998). The ware was not present at Preston Enclosure or Ermin Farm. The proportion from Highgate House is similar to that in the handmade assemblages from the 1st-century AD occupations at Birdlip Bypass, Ditches hillfort and West Hill Uley. Guiting Manor Farm produced an assemblage which comprised 40% Malvernian Ware (Parry pers. comm.). A small quantity of briquetage also came from Highgate House (see Barclay, Chapter 8). Unless the radiocarbon dating can be discounted, it is possible that this site was importing Malvernian ware in large quantities significantly earlier than other sites examined in the region. The reason behind this and its implication for the nature of the site here cannot be explored without a bigger sample of excavated sites and better definition of the systems of production and exchange in the middle Iron Age.

MISCELLANEOUS LATER PREHISTORIC FEATURES

By Andrew Mudd, Jeff Muir and Andrew Parkinson

Lower Street Furlong (Fig. 3.27)

The majority of the features found at Lower Street Furlong were the result of medieval or post-medieval activity and are dealt with in Chapter 6. However, a small number, comprising a curvilinear ditch, a narrow gully and a linear ditch, probably all date to the later prehistoric period. A large number of tree-throw holes were also revealed. These were undated.

Tree-throw holes

A large number of features on this site proved to be tree-throw holes, some of which showed signs of burning. Their distribution is shown on Fig. 3.27. A hearth-like feature (CAT 1991a, 113) found in the Stage 2 evaluation (Trench 546) was probably a similar feature. Although no dating evidence was recovered from any of the excavated examples, the pits may relate to earlier prehistoric land clearance in the area. One was shown to pre-date ditch 27 (below). The light scatter of worked flints identified in the Stage 1 assessment, which may be taken together with the three redeposited pieces from ditches 27 and 55 of the excavation, are not directly associated with any of the excavated features and may derive from unrelated prehistoric activity.

Ditches 27, 45 and 55

A 32 m length of curving ditch (27) was discovered against the southern baulk in the central part of the excavation. Sections excavated through the feature revealed a shallow U-shaped profile, approximately 0.6 m wide and 0.3 m deep. Finds were rare but included a few crumbs of limestone-tempered Iron Age pottery. A late prehistoric date seems quite likely for the curvilinear ditch, since its course in both directions would intercept Roman Ermin Street lying only 10 m or so to the south-west, and so it is likely to pre-date that road.

A short distance to the north of the curving ditch was a c. 1 m section of narrow ditch (45), which also ran into the southern baulk. No finds were recovered from this shallow feature, but the associated single orange-brown silty-clay fill (44) was very similar to that seen in the curvilinear feature.

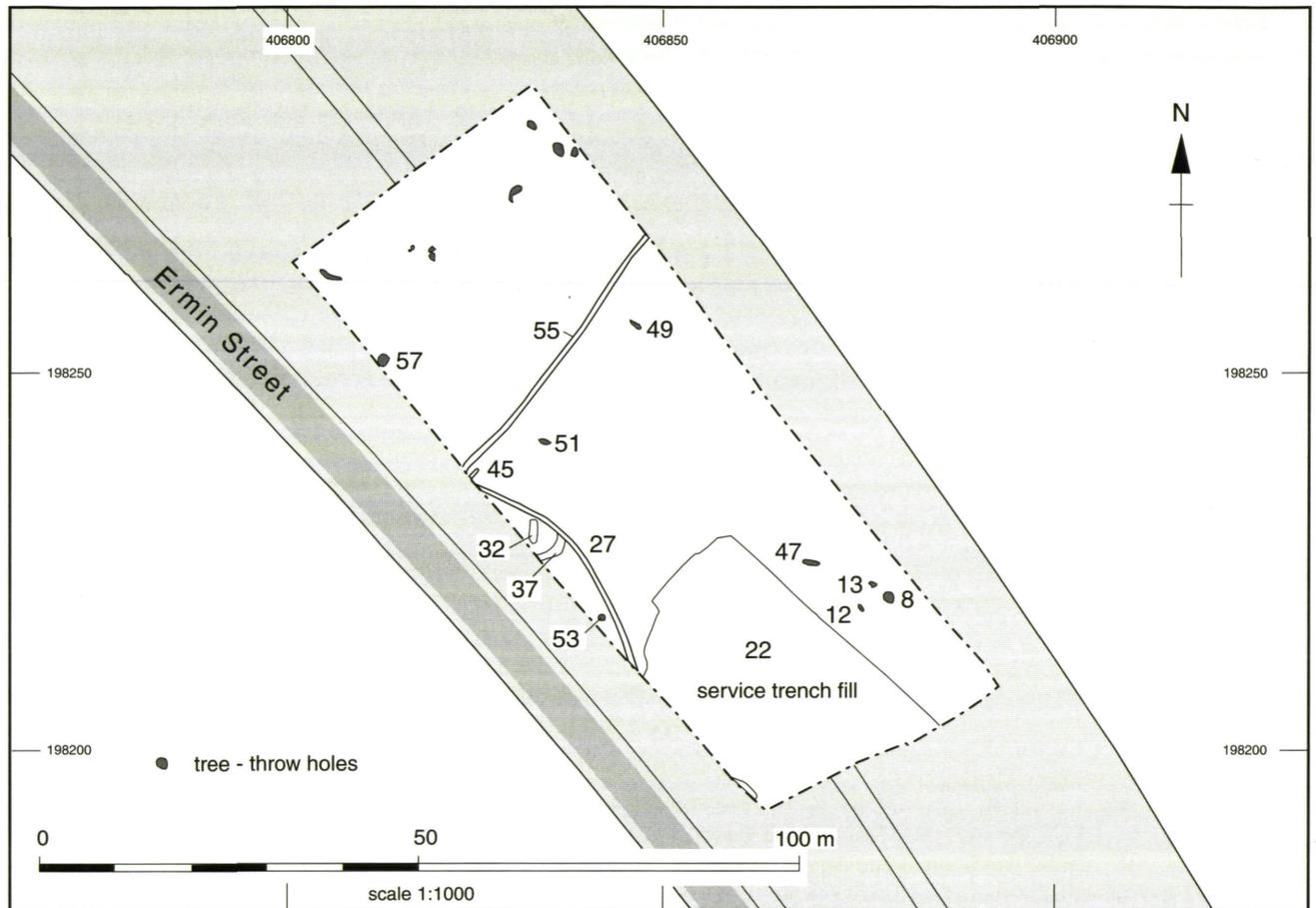


Figure 3.27 Lower Street Furlong, plan of later prehistoric gullies and earlier tree-throw holes and pits.

Equally, a shallow linear ditch (55) running approximately north-south across the full width of the site, may have been an Iron Age feature, as its fill was similar in character to that of the curvilinear ditch but was devoid of finds.

These features are all likely to have been field boundaries as there was no indication of nearby settlement.

Cherry Tree Lane and Burford Road South (Fig. 3.28)

Construction of the RMG compound and the associated temporary accommodation area provided the opportunity to examine the area close to the junction of Burford Road and Cherry Tree Lane alongside the road corridor itself. The road trenches are described in chapter 5. The work took place in three stages leading to the investigation of three separate areas.

Cherry Tree Lane Area 1

The first stage of the work, involved the stripping of topsoil over the main compound area. This area was located over a natural undulation in the landscape which formed a relatively shallow, elongated depression running north-east to south-

west across the site. The soil was stripped to formation level and bedrock was exposed only on the ridges at the northern end of the site. The upper slopes of the depression were covered by a layer of relatively modern colluvium containing medieval and post-medieval pottery and tile. The base of the depression was occupied by a more substantial layer of fine orange colluvium containing medieval pottery. These deposits were not removed. Two possible hearths located within this earlier hillwash, and a post-medieval ditch, are described in Chapter 6. Two circular pits (12 and 13) were revealed in the area just above the natural depression and are described below.

Cherry Tree Lane Area 2

The second stage of the work involved a watching brief during topsoil stripping to the south of the compound, over an area which was to be used for contractors' temporary accommodation. Much of the site proved to be devoid of archaeological features, but a sequence of two intercutting pits (35 and 47) and a later ditch (40) were revealed close to the north-east corner adjacent to Cherry Tree Lane. The extent of the pits and the ditch was never fully defined due to the presence of a heavy layer of plough-disturbed grey clay which sealed most of the features.

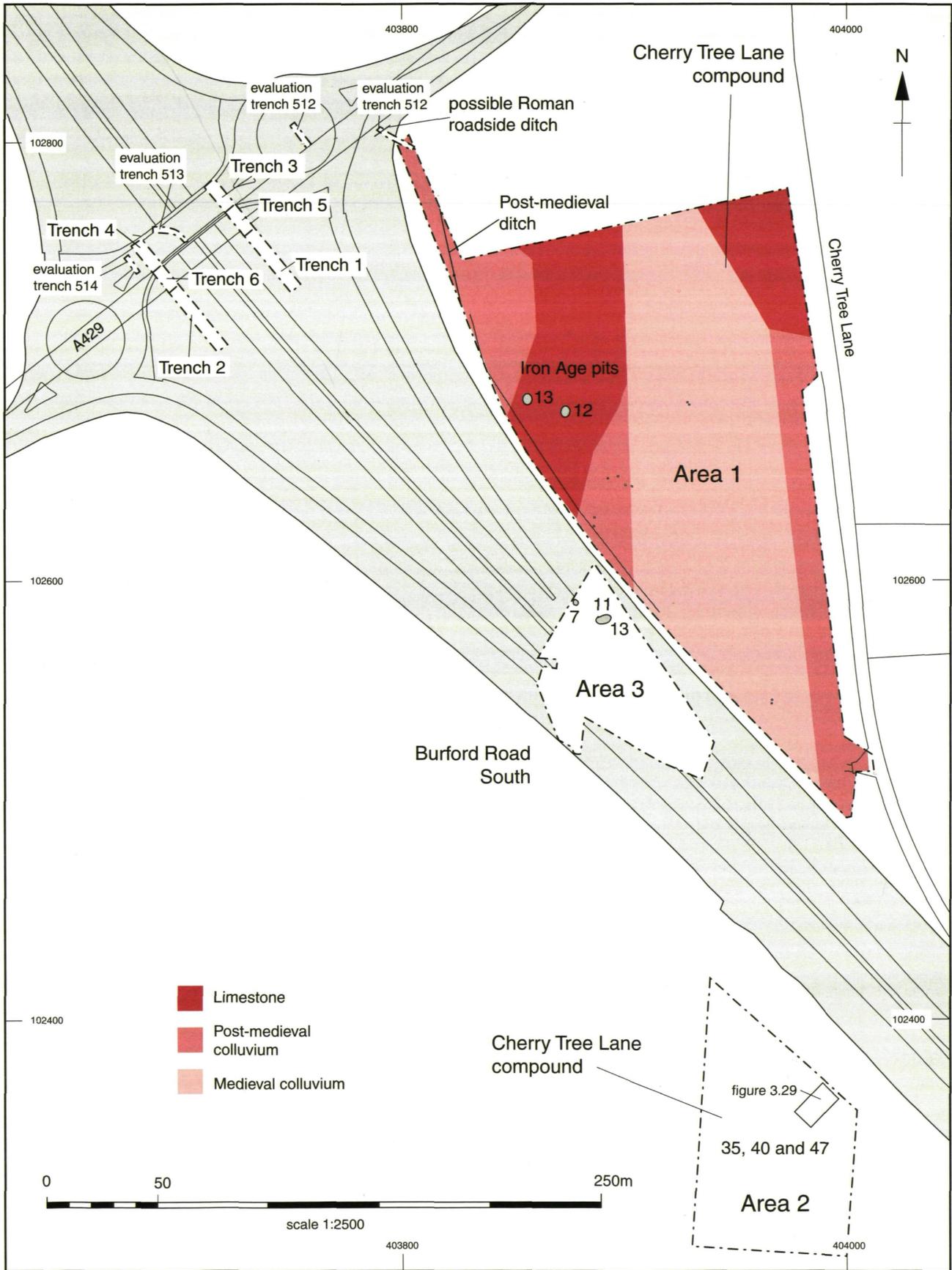


Figure 3.28 Plan of area south of Burford Road, showing Cherry Tree Lane Sites 1 and 2, Burford Road South and the trenches through Burford Road (chapter 5).

Burford Road South Area 3

This area was located within the road corridor to the south-west of the main compound area. The site was on the crest of a natural rise in the bedrock where a light scatter of flintwork had been identified in the Stage 1 assessment. However, stripping revealed no features of interest apart from a small cluster of three circular/oval pits (7, 11, 13) located in the northern corner of the excavated area. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these pits and their interpretation is uncertain.

Pit 12 (Figs 3.28 and 3.30)

Pit 12, 2.80 m in diameter and 0.27 m deep, was cut into the solid limestone bedrock. It contained a single stony fill (17) from which several sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered. No other finds were discovered and the original function of the feature is unclear.

Pit 13 (Figs 3.28 and 3.30)

Located a few metres to the west of pit 12, pit 13 was of a similar character but rather broader (4.4 m). Again, this feature was rock-cut and contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery. The dating is supported by the discovery of spelt wheat in a sample of charred remains (see Pelling, Chapter 8). A post-medieval sherd found on the surface of the feature was probably derived from the topsoil. As with pit 12, no other finds were recovered and the original function of pit 13 remains unclear.

Pit 35 (Figs 3.29–30, section 16)

The earliest feature in the southern area, 35, was a large sub-rectangular pit truncated by a later pit, 47 on the north side. Pit 35 contained heavily burnt deposits of wood charcoal and limestone fragments in a silty clay matrix. These were interleaved with thin, charcoal-rich layers. An area of 6.0 x 5.60 m was hand cleaned over the feature, which exposed its approximate surviving extent. An L-shaped slot was excavated as far as the water table would allow (0.75 m). The upper fills of the feature contained a large number of fragments (about 80 g) of friable shell-tempered pottery, suggesting a later prehistoric date (see Barclay, Chapter 7). The pottery is not closely dateable but may be early Iron Age.

Pit 47 (Fig. 3.30)

At the north end, pit 35 was cut by a second large feature, 47. This extended at least 5 m north-south, but was not entirely cleared in plan and its full extent is uncertain. Like pit 35 it extended below the water table. A sequence of six fills were recorded in section consisting of light to dark greyish brown silts. No dating evidence was recovered and the interpretation of the feature remains unclear.

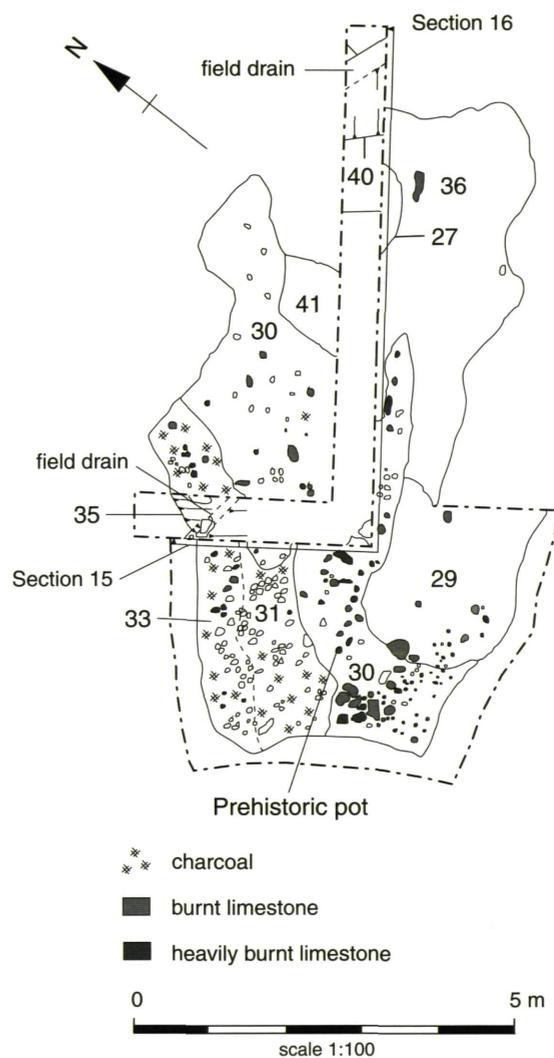


Figure 3.29 Cherry Tree Lane site 2, plan of pit 35, pit 47, and ditch 40.

Ditch 40 (Fig. 3.30)

Examination of the section revealed a V-shaped feature, possibly a ditch, cut into the top of pit 47. This feature had a width of 1.0 m and a maximum depth of 0.44 m, and contained three very similar fills, all sterile. The feature was overlain by two spreads, 36 and 27, which were not removed, and hence the ditch was not traced in plan. A small quantity of prehistoric pottery, recovered from layers 27 and 36 may have been residual since a post-medieval sherd also came from 27. Conversely, this sherd may have been intrusive from later plough activity or from a modern field drain which was also cut ditch 40. The date of the feature therefore remains unresolved.

Discussion

The scattered nature of the features precludes a satisfactory synthesis of the archaeology in the Cherry Tree Lane/Burford Road South area. This problem is

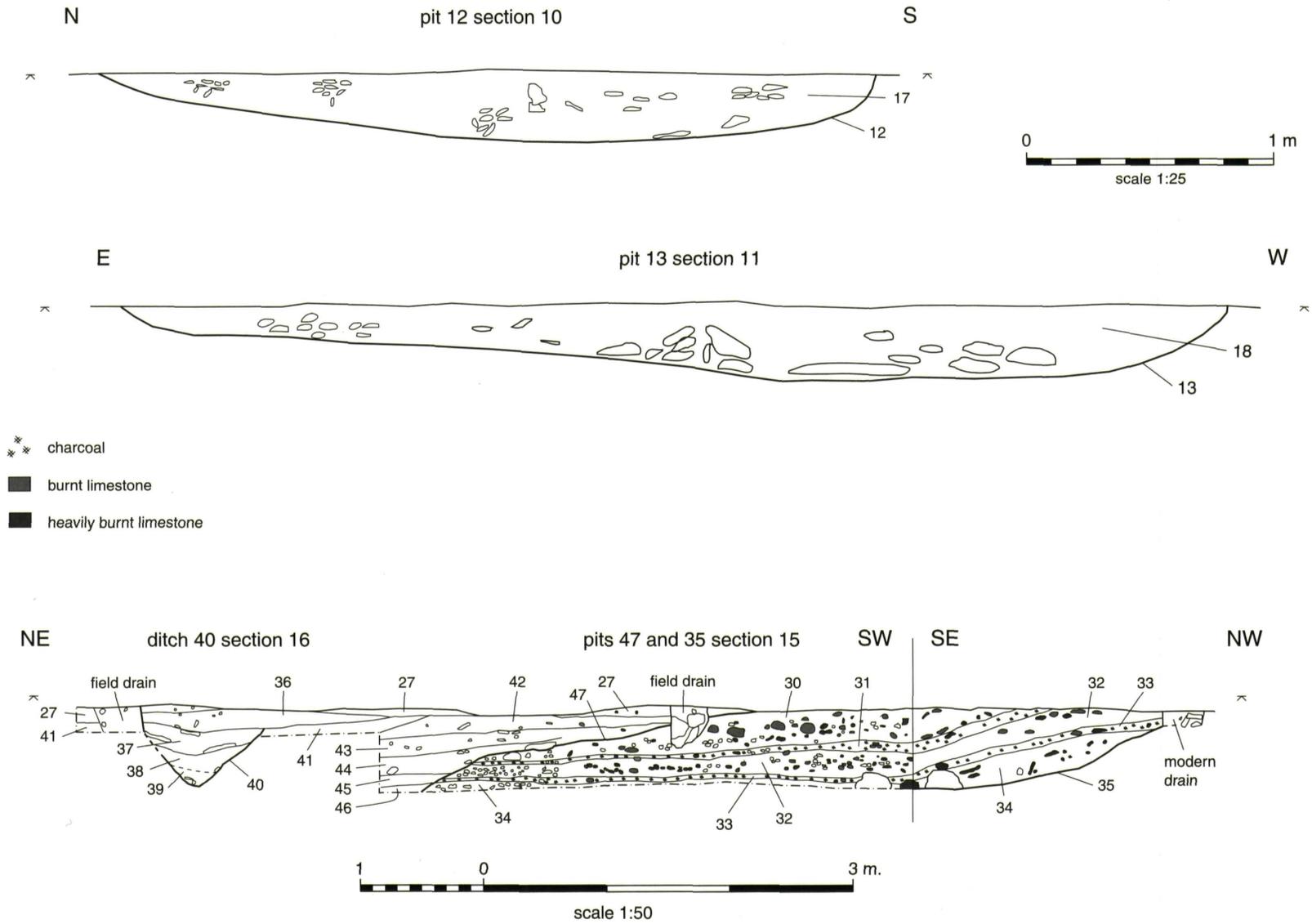


Figure 3.30 Cherry Tree Lane, pits 12, 13 35 and 47, ditch 40, sections.

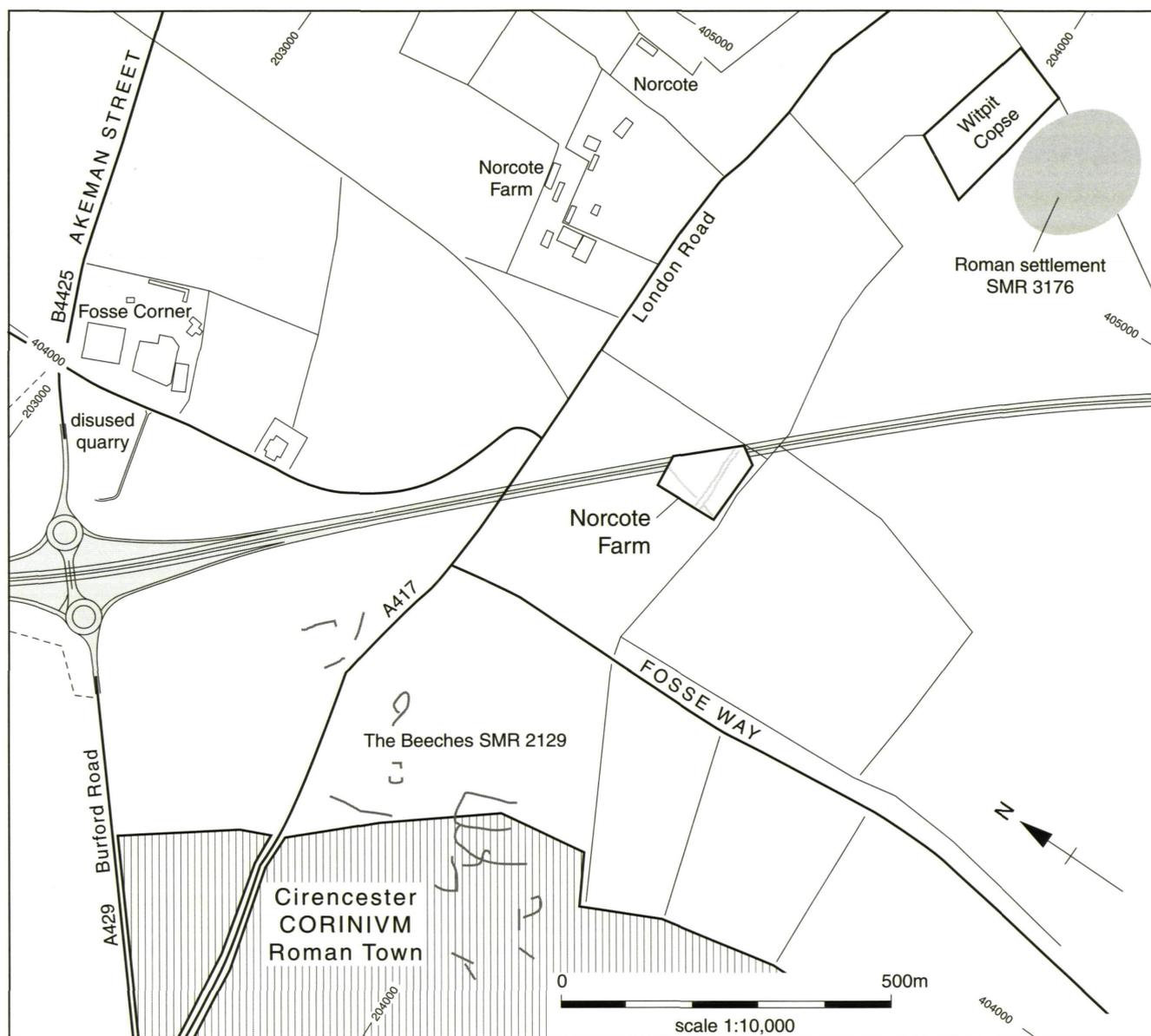


Figure 3.31 Norcote Farm, trench location and nearby sites.

compounded by the fact that many of the features are either undated or are associated with small quantities of undiagnostic and possibly residual pottery. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a low level of later prehistoric activity in the area and it is possible that more extensive remains are sealed within the colluvium. Pit 35 contained material of the character of later prehistoric 'burnt mound' deposits. The specific function of this type of site has been much debated (Buckley 1990; Hodder and Barfield 1990) and no conclusions can be drawn from the evidence from this particular feature.

Norcote Farm (Figs 3.31–32)

An area of about 0.7 ha was stripped primarily to identify any subsoil features associated with a scatter

of worked flint (see Chapter 2). No associated features were found although an alignment of two sinuous ditches (235 and 239) were revealed, and four later and slighter cross-ditches (240, 241, 242 and 243). The latter are likely to be Roman in date (Chapter 4) and the former probably later prehistoric.

Ditches 235, 239 and gully 206

A sinuous ditch (235) ran south-south-west across the site for 58 m and terminated within the excavation area. The Stage 1 geophysical survey indicated that it extended at least 30 m further north. Six sections were excavated across this ditch which had a broad U-shaped profile throughout its length and was typically 1.80 m wide and 0.70 m deep. The ditch was cut through a substrate of clay and bottomed onto

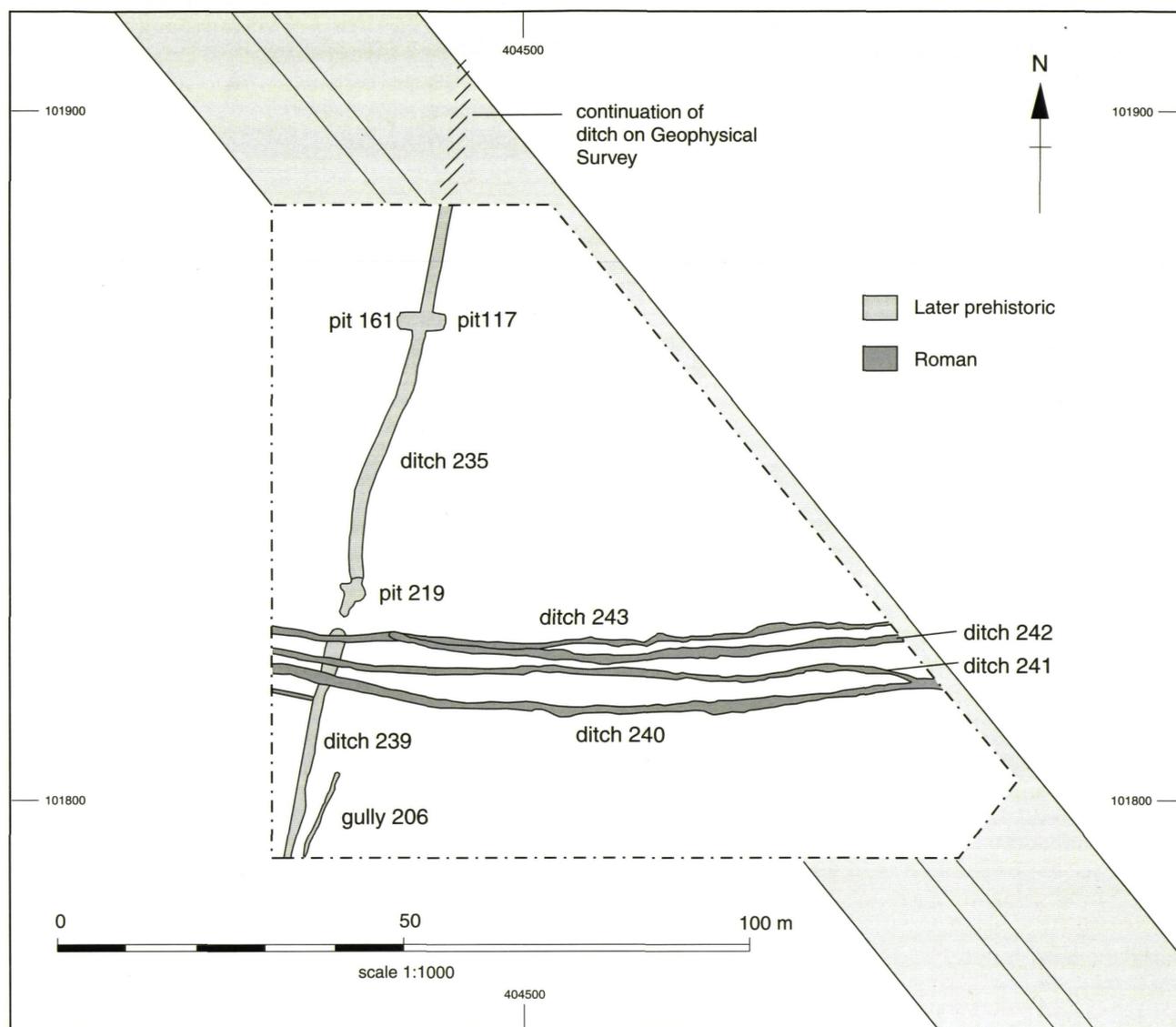


Figure 3.32 Norcote Farm, plan of excavated features.

limestone bedrock. It contained three distinct clay fills, which broadly comprised a mottled, partly gleyed orange-brown primary fill, a dark greyish brown middle fill and a mid brown upper fill. Limestone slabs came from the primary fill in the section with pits 117 and 161.

Another substantial ditch (239) continued on the same alignment as ditch 235 after a gap of 1.75 m. Although slightly wider at the northern end (2 m), the ditch decreased in size towards the south where the ground rises. At the south-western end of the site ditch 239 was 0.78 m wide and 0.20 m in depth. The fills generally consisted of a greyish brown clay with some gleying towards the base.

In the south-western corner of the site, gully 206 ran approximately parallel to ditch 239 for a short distance. It was about 0.6 m wide and 0.2 m deep with a similar light greyish brown clayey silt fill.

Pits 219, 117 and 161

At the terminal of ditch 235 a large pit, 219, (about 3.8 m in diameter) had been cut to the same depth as the ditch. Although the ditch had almost completely silted up it probably formed a hollow (or was marked by a bank or hedge alongside) as the pit lay astride the ditch.

Pits 117 and 161 were cut into either side of ditch 235 towards the northern edge of the site. They were both sub-circular, about 2.5 m in diameter and about 0.4 m deep. Pit 117 was partly backfilled with slabs of limestone, but otherwise the fills of these features were very similar to those of ditch 235. These features are undated.

Discussion

Both ditches were undated by artefactual evidence. However, ditch 239 was cut by a series of shallow

east-west ditches which probably date to the Roman period (Chapter 4). The earlier ditches are reminiscent of the sinuous ditches at St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane and a later prehistoric date appears to be the most likely. They did not follow any topographic features although both the termini ended in a hollow forming the lowest part of the field. The lack of finds in the ditches suggests no occupation in the immediate vicinity. The nearest Iron Age site appears to be that at The Beeches (Glos. SMR 2129), about 0.5 km to the west (Fig. 3.31), and the Norcote Farm ditches may represent land division associated with that settlement. The pits appeared to be later than the ditches although they may have been associated with this boundary.

The Lynches Trackway Iron Age Burial (Fig. 3.33)

This burial was discovered by workmen during the course of construction work on the east scarp of the Churn valley (Fig. 8.23). Subsequent excavation revealed a human skeleton lying in a tightly crouched position on its left side, facing the east, in an oval pit 1.2 x 0.8 m in extent. The area immediately surrounding the burial pit was cleaned but no other burials or traces of associated features were found.

Though slightly disturbed by machine, the bones were in excellent condition and virtually complete. The skeleton was identified as the remains of a young, adult male, approximately 17–25 years old who may have suffered from iron deficiency in childhood (see Boyle, Chapter 8). The tightly crouched position of the body may indicate that it had been bound.

No dating evidence was recovered from the grave fill. However, a series of three AMS dates on a femur strongly indicate that the burial is of middle Iron Age date, with calibration at the 95% confidence level to 355 BC to 289 BC and 235 BC to 33 BC (NZA 8620, R24151/22). The 68% confidence level indicates a preferred date in the early 1st or 2nd century BC. There seems no reason to doubt this date despite its unexpected lateness. The form of the burial in a tightly crouched position within a flat grave is reminiscent of the later Bronze Age tradition. Iron Age burials in purpose-dug graves are uncommon, or not commonly recognised, in Gloucestershire and the Upper Thames region. One of middle to late Iron Age date is known from Roughground Farm, and another from the same site is undated (Allen *et al.* 1993, 45, fig. 32 burials 1275 and 1215). At Yarnton, just north of Oxford, a middle Iron Age cemetery has recently been identified by radiocarbon dating (Hey *et al.*, 1999). Elsewhere, Iron Age burials tend to be found in settlement features, but are not generally common. Three found at West Lane, Kemble, have been reported recently (King *et al.* 1996). In two cases the skeletons were complete and had apparently been inserted into already partially filled pits containing middle Iron Age pottery. Both were crouched; one on its right side facing north-west, and the other prone possibly with the wrists tied to the ankles. The other burial comprised only two bones but may originally have been more complete and

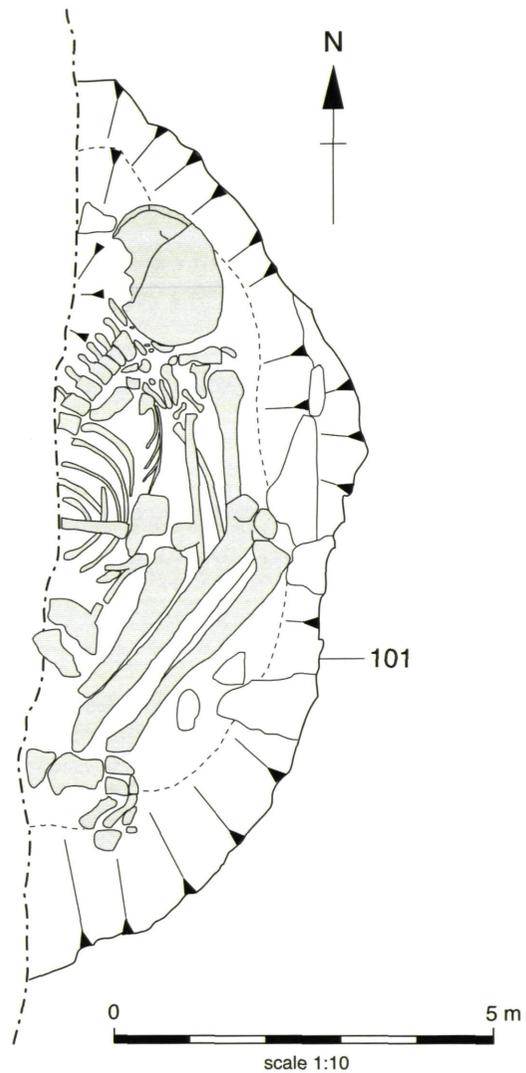


Figure 3.33 Lynches Trackway, plan of isolated Iron Age inhumation.

disturbed by the later insertion. There were other pits present but it is unclear whether this was part of a settlement. A number of middle Iron Age pit burials were also found at Salmonsbury (Dunning 1976). Three of these were adults in crouched positions and two were infants. Adult body parts were also found in other pits. To judge by the tiny area of the enclosure examined, it is possible that human burial was relatively common at this site. Other examples from the region include one from Shipton Oliffe, one from Shorcote. There are also late Iron Age inhumations from Barrow Wake, Birdlip, Cowley (RCHME 1976, 39).

The Lynches Trackway burial was not apparently associated with a settlement, although the presence of some Iron Age pottery from the trackway itself suggests that one lay nearby. In her dissertation, Wilson (1981) argued that in the early Iron Age inhumations tended to be located at boundaries away from settlement, but that by the middle Iron Age some burials took place in settlement contexts (Wilson 1981). The burial from The



Plate 3.5 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 121.

Lynches trackway may perhaps be interpreted as showing aspects of both boundary and domestic character.

THE LATE IRON AGE

Middle Duntisbourne

by Andrew Mudd and Alan Lupton

Cropmark enclosures

Prior to the 1990 evaluation this site was known as a series of undated superimposed rectilinear cropmarks aligned obliquely to Ermin Street (Fig. 3.34). The Stage 2 field evaluation examined three of these, establishing two of the features as possible settlement boundary ditches dating to the late Iron Age/early Roman period. A third ditch was undated. The pottery assemblage had affinities with those from excavations at Bagendon and Ditches hillfort (GCC 1990, 61).

A rectangular area of *c.* 7300 m² was stripped to expose the whole area of the ditched enclosure cropmark situated within the road corridor. No features other than the ditches were identified except an irregular linear silty clay spread running along the north-eastern side of the excavation. On investigation this feature proved to be the remains of a medieval/post-medieval hollow way (see Chapter 6).

The features consisted of an east-west ditch (4), two approximately north-south ditches (310 and 121),

both with northern terminals within the excavation area and a fourth ditch (140) just east of ditch 310 (Fig. 3.35). The cropmark shows that ditch 310 runs south for about 70 m to join ditch 4 forming the south-western corner of a large enclosure (Fig. 3.35). The eastern ditch (121) appears from the cropmark to continue beyond the intersection with ditch 4 and then turn west-south-west. Ditch 140 also appears to turn west-south-west some 10 m south of the stripped area.

Ditch 121 (Figs 3.34–7)

Nine sections were excavated at regular intervals along this feature and a further segment (320) examined the relationship with ditch 4. The ditch generally had a rounded V-shaped profile and was about 1.3 m deep, shallowing to 0.6 m at the terminal (segment 311). The terminal was also relatively narrow (1.4 m) with the ditch widening towards the south to about 2.2 m. In some sections the ditch was even wider with a shallower upper slope suggesting some recutting or other disturbance (segments 148 and 285) while segment 272 (Fig. 3.37, section 41) had suffered some truncation across the top of the ditch.

The primary silting was a thin reddish brown basal and edge silting which nowhere contained any finds. The main fills of the ditch consisted of one or two limestone rubble deposits with an average depth of 0.6–0.8 m. In segments 182 (Fig. 3.36, section 31) and 205 (not illustrated) deposits of charcoal and burnt

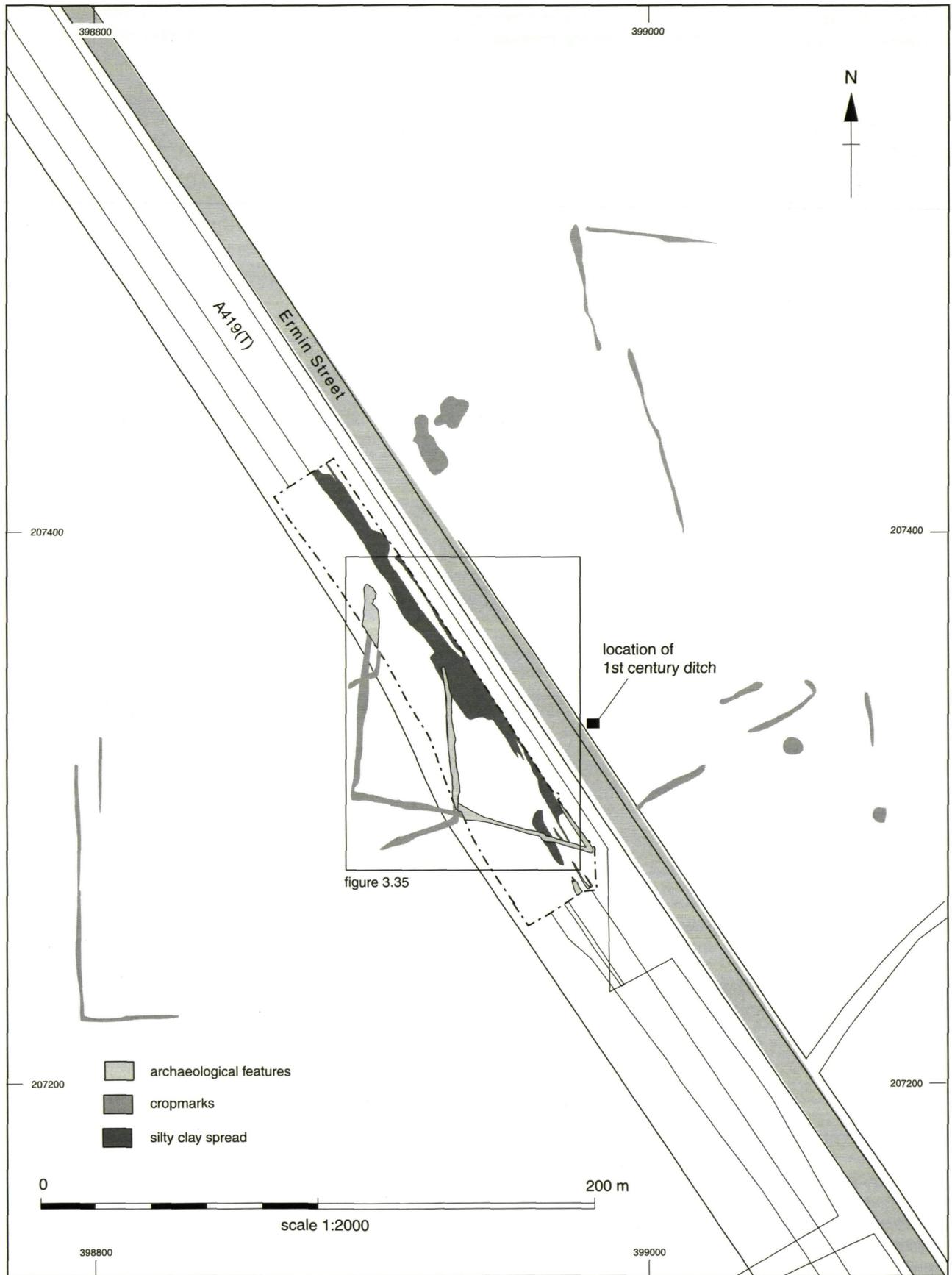


Figure 3.34 Middle Duntisbourne, site location, adjacent cropmarks and ditch found in watching brief.

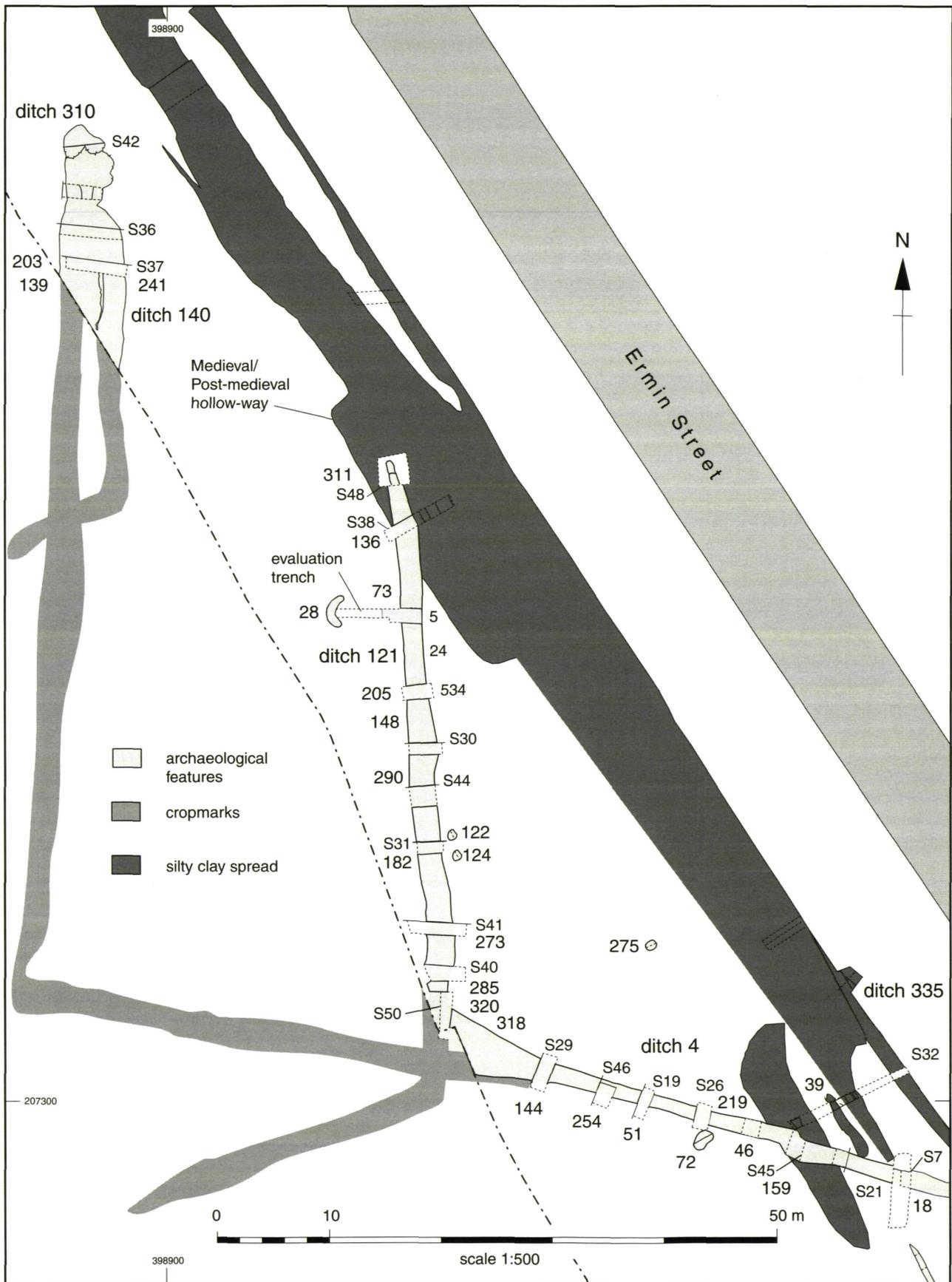


Figure 3.35 Middle Duntisbourne, plan of excavated features (part) and cropmarks.

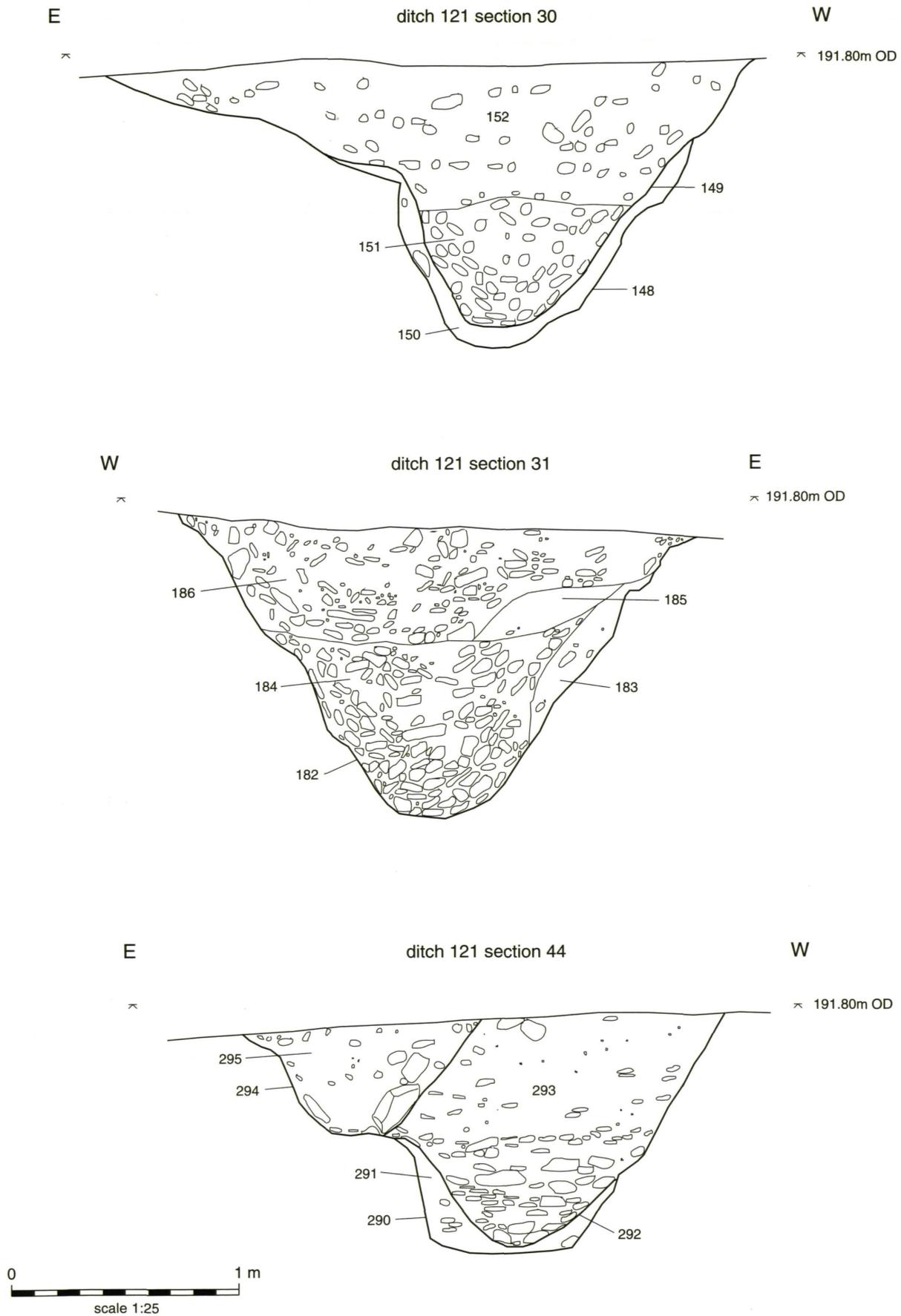


Figure 3.36 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 121, sections 30, 31 and 44.

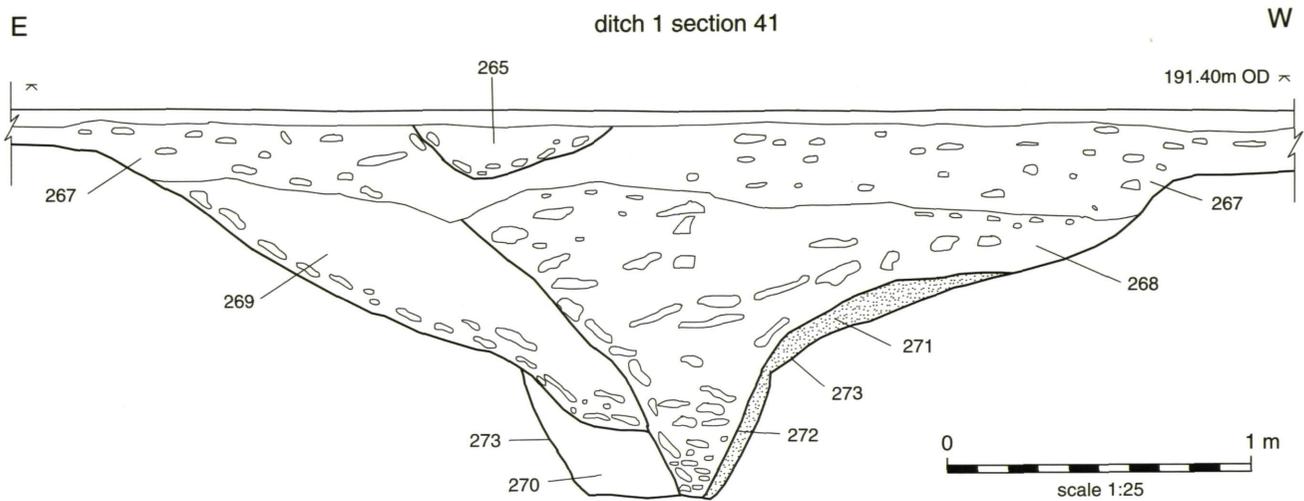


Figure 3.37 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 121, section 41.

stone (185 in section 31) lay sandwiched between rubble deposits, perhaps suggesting two episodes of infilling. However, it is possible that these merely reflect an individual dumping event. At the terminal (not illustrated) limestone rubble 312 was overlain by fill 313, from which a copper alloy pin (SF 34) was recovered. This was overlain by a further rubble layer, 314.

The limestone fills appear to represent a quick backfilling of the feature, probably from the original upcast bank. There was no indication from which side the rubble 148 (fill 152) was noted to be layered, as if deliberately laid, and the limestone deposits were interpreted on site as representing the deliberate backfilling of the ditch.

The distinction between the basal silts and the later rubble infill was quite marked except at the northern end of the ditch, and it is possible that two distinct cuts were represented for most of the ditch's length. However, the fine silts of the 'early' cut, contrasting with the stony later fills, may simply represent the pattern of natural silting within a ditch of a single phase. Some of the sections showed anomalies which were atypical of the ditch as a whole. In segment 290 (Fig. 3.36, section 44) a later cut (294) on the eastern side of the ditch was quite clear. This was filled with a less stony deposit and was not evident in any of the other ditch segments, so it was most probably a pit. Segments 148 (Fig. 3.36, section 30) and 285 (not illustrated) showed broad, shallow extensions on the eastern side making their profiles asymmetrical. It is possible that these represented recuts, but they were not traceable in the intervening sections. Segment 272 (Fig. 3.37, section 41) was anomalous in its broad composite profile, and the fact that it had a comparatively stone-free silt on the eastern side which appeared to represent the fill of an earlier feature. The difficulty of tracing a recut through the length of the

ditch makes the interpretation of these sections problematic, but the evidence seems to point to variations in the original cut and backfill or possible local recutting.

Excavation of the intersection with ditch 4 (segment 320) showed ditch 121 to be the earlier. The dating of ditch 121 is, however, imprecise. There were no finds from the primary fills, and pottery from the rubble infilling was sparse and quite undiagnostic, comprising mostly early Severn Valley Wares and variants thereof. Most of the pottery came from the upper fill (152) of segment 148 (Fig. 3.36, section 30) which represents the final infilling. The pottery included a single sherd of Savernake Ware which is conventionally dated relatively late.

Ditch 4 (Figs 3.38–39)

Seven cross-sections were excavated through ditch 4 and a further two partial sections at the western and eastern ends to examine its relationship with ditches 121 and 335 respectively. Ditch 4 consisted of a single steep-sided V-shaped cut with an average depth of 1–1.2 m in most of the excavated sections, slightly shallower at the eastern end. Though the exact sequence of fills varied between the excavated sections, most of the profiles exhibited a similar succession of four or five fills. Above a thin, orange-brown primary silting was a deposit of stone with occupation material. (Fig. 3.39, section 46, fill 289; Fig. 3.38, section 19, fill 84; section 20, fill 68). This only infilled the ditch up to halfway. Mollusc samples from segment 144 (section 29) showed a large number of shade-loving species within the rubble fill (57), including true woodland (rather than rock-rubble) species (see Robinson, Chapter 8). This would suggest that the rubble accumulated gradually, probably through natural erosion, rather than being a deliberate infilling. The rubble was succeeded by deposits of greyish silt, often

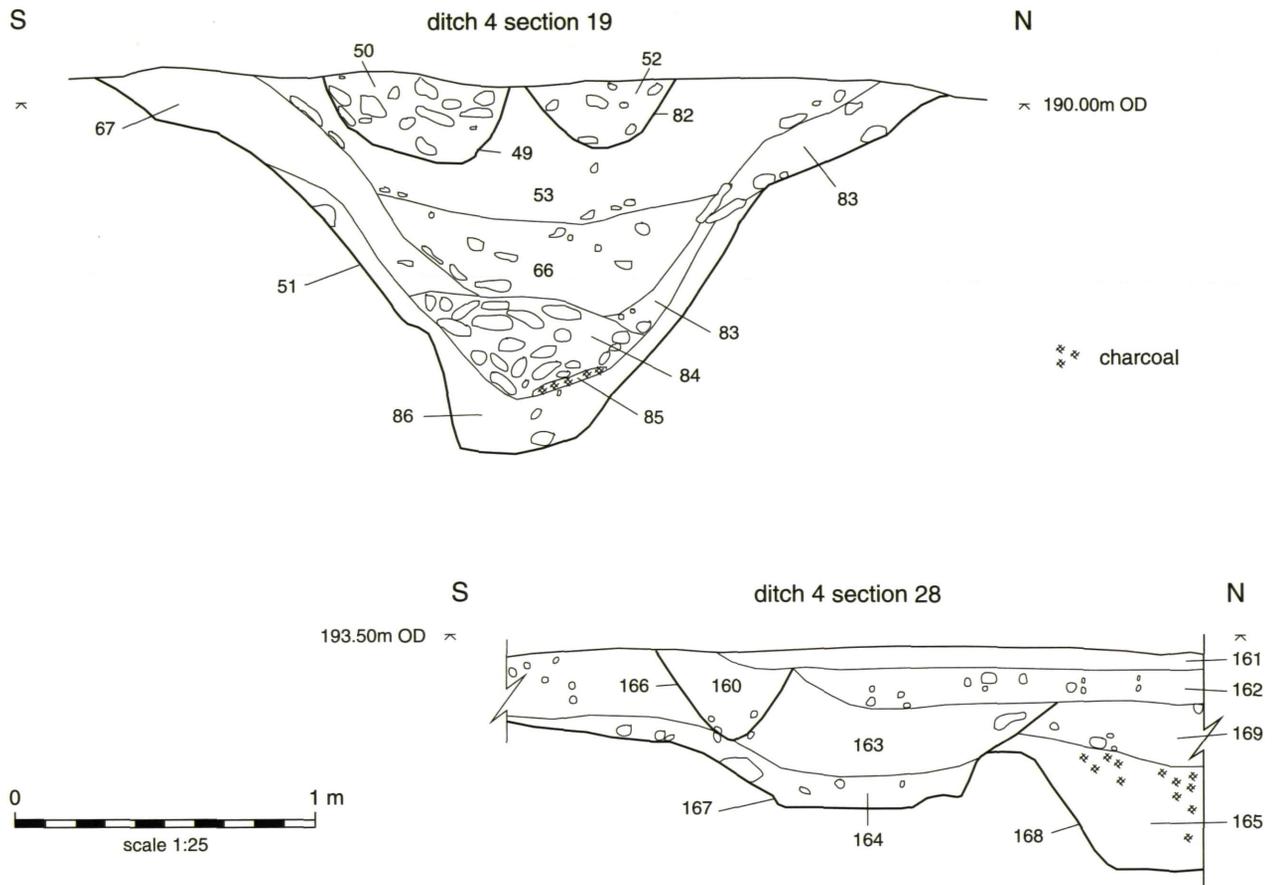


Figure 3.38 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 4, sections 19 and 28.

with abundant charcoal and other occupation-related deposits, representing accumulations within a more stable environment. The later fills tended to be lighter greyish or reddish brown silts with fine limestone which probably mostly accumulated naturally. The mollusc evidence from fills 56 and 153 indicated that woodland was still present, but higher up fills 54 and 55 contained mostly open country species. These upper deposits were up to 0.5 m thick at the western end of the ditch (eg. Fig. 3.39, section 46, fills 287?, 256 and 255) but became very shallow at the eastern end.

The ditch sections yielded a large quantity of finds including about 90% of the pottery from the site (see Timby, Chapter 7). The pottery is of particular interest as it included several continental imports, including a sherd of Arretine ware (unstratified) of possible Tiberian date (Fig. 7.9.69), Gallo-Belgic *terra nigra*, *terra rubra* wares and whiteware butt beakers (Camulodunum type 113, eg. Fig. 7.9.77). The assemblage was dominated by early Severn Valley wares, with Savernake Ware jars and Malvernian limestone-tempered jars and hammer-rim bowls of the late Iron Age tradition also common. Among the other finds present were six brooches (five of copper alloy and one of iron) of Late La Tène, Colchester, and Penannular types (Figs 7.20.507, 508, 511, Fig. 7.22.521–2). None of these need date later than

around AD 60–65 (see Mackreth, Chapter 7), supporting a mid-1st century date for the occupation.

The sequence of finds within the ditch does not help refine the chronology. There were few finds from the primary silts, although these included early Severn Valley ware from 48 (segment 46), Malvernian ware from 157 (segment 159) and fine white-slipped Gallo-Belgic ware (FWWSOX) from both these deposits. The subsequent accumulation of rubble and domestic refuse contained most of the finds, including Savernake ware. There is some suggestion that Savernake Ware became more common later on since 57% of sherds (40% by weight) came from the upper silting deposits, compared with 32% of all other pottery. By contrast, only 5% (18% by weight) of Savernake Ware came from the lower rubble fill, which contained 50% (44% by weight) of all the other pottery. It is possible that this distribution has chronological significance.

Close to the eastern baulk, ditch 4 was truncated by ditch 335 (Fig. 3.38, section 28 – not shown on plan) which ran parallel to the line of the A417. It could well be a Roman roadside ditch and is discussed below (Chapter 5). Though no clear continuation of ditch 4 to the east beyond Ermin Street is evident from the aerial photographs, a steep-sided ditch was observed during the drainage works along the eastern edge of

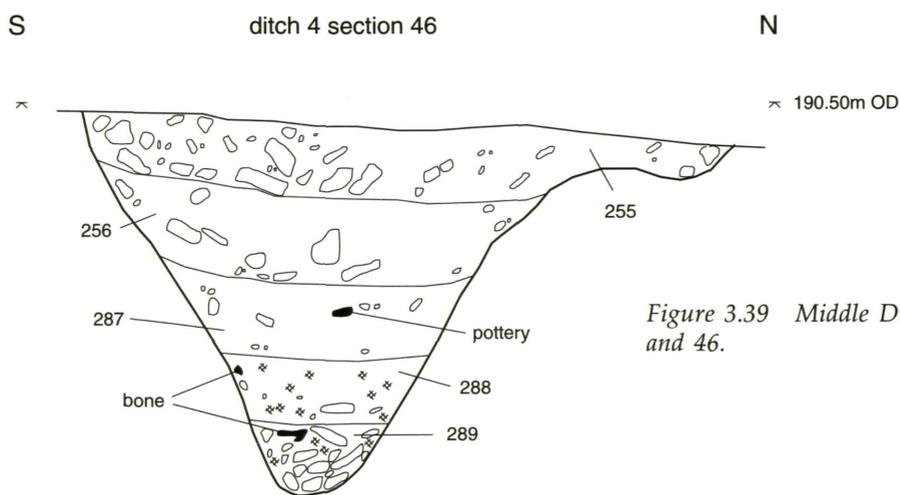
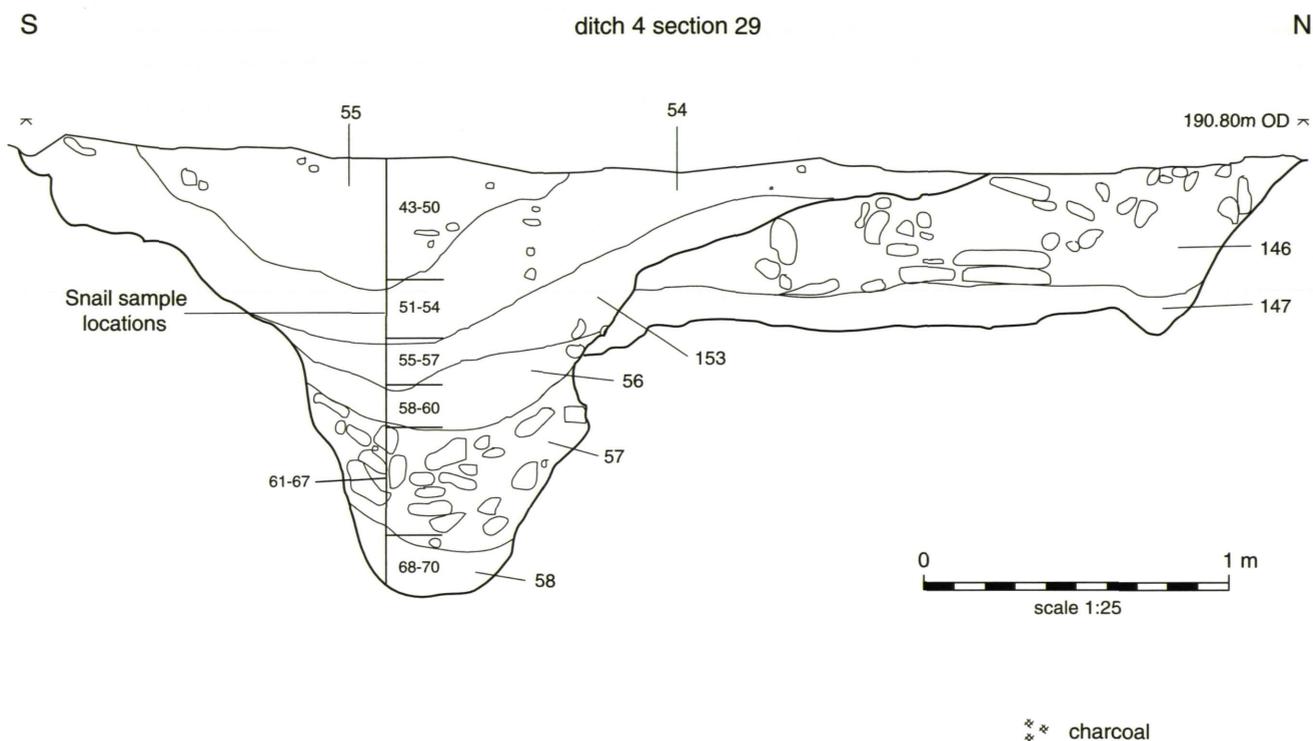


Figure 3.39 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 4, sections 29 and 46.

the road corridor (Fig. 3.34). This feature (chainage 9652, feature 3) was about 1.4 m wide and 0.7 m deep and contained Savernake ware, pre-Flavian South Gaulish samian and Malvernian hand-made limestone ware. The direction in which the ditch ran was not clear, but it could represent a return to ditch 4 forming the third side of an enclosure which would therefore have been about 90 m east to west. Alternatively, the feature may have been unrelated to the enclosure.

Ditch 310 (Fig. 3.40)

Four sections excavated through the westernmost cropmark feature revealed a north-south oriented ditch (310) with another shallower ditch (140) on its eastern

side, both ditches truncated by later features. These later features consisted of a complex of ill-defined hollows which appear to have been quarries.

Ditch 310 was about 1.2 m deep with steep sides and a rounded base. Like ditch 4 it had a thin primary silt overlain by limestone rubble layers which largely filled the ditch. The abrupt terminal (Fig. 3.40, section 42, segment 250) probably finally silted up naturally, but elsewhere the upper fills had been truncated. Only a small number of sherds and animal bones were recovered from any of the ditch fills, but the pottery included two fragments of *terra nigra* from fill 210 (Fig. 3.40, segment 139, section 37), suggesting a similar date to the deposits in ditch 4. The form of the two ditches was also similar and may support the conclusion, arrived in the evaluation stage, that ditches 310 and 4 formed two arms of a large enclosure, or partial enclosure open to the north.

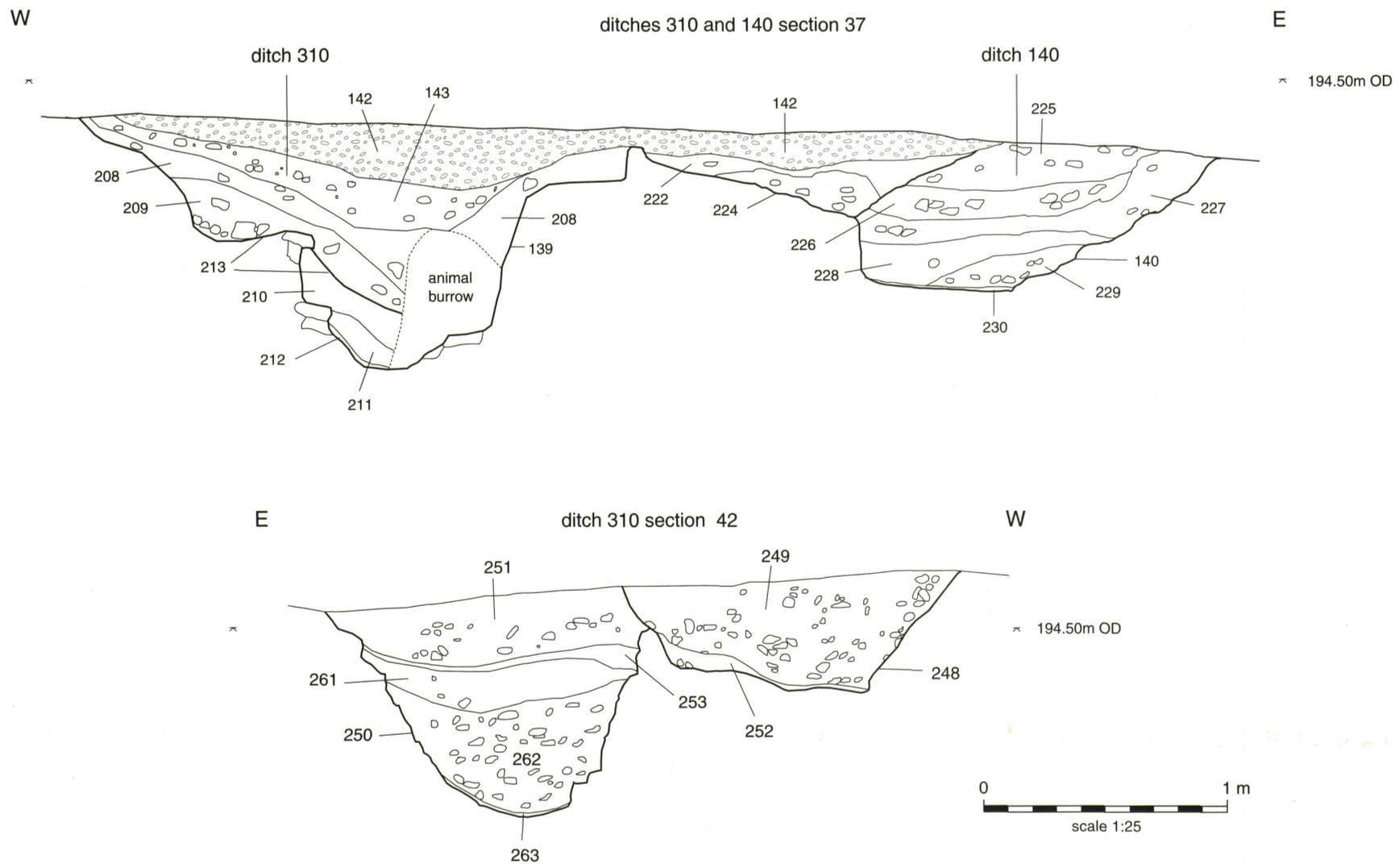


Figure 3.40 Middle Duntisbourne, ditch 310, sections 37 and 42.

Ditch 140 (Fig. 3.40, section 37)

To the east of 310, and running approximately parallel, a ditch was tentatively identified in section 37. It was about 0.8 m deep with a broad flat base. Its western edge was truncated by quarrying, but it would have been about 2 m wide. There were also signs of this ditch in segment 241 (not illustrated) but the amount of later quarrying made this identification uncertain. It would have terminated approximately 7 m south of the end of ditch 310. The sequence of deposits was broadly similar to that seen in ditch 310, with a thin layer of primary silting sealed beneath a series of superimposed silty clay fills mixed with varying proportions of limestone. There were few finds of any sort. The excavations were unable to demonstrate the relationship between ditches 140 and 310 directly, but the interpretation of section 37 (Fig. 3.40) shows that ditch 140 was completely filled when cut by quarry pit 224, while ditch 310 was still partly open. This would suggest that ditch 140 was the earlier. In the evaluation (Field 40 Trench 1, GCC 1990, 57–61, fig. 20), a large ditch was recorded as cutting the eastern side of the 1st-century enclosure ditch. However, the dimensions of this feature, which was about 5 m wide at the top with a flat, 2.6 m-wide base, suggest that the feature was a quarry pit rather than ditch 140.

The cropmark evidence suggests that, while ditch 310 represents the return of ditch 4, ditch 140 belongs to another L-shaped, or sub-rectangular feature lying to the west. It follows a course approximately parallel to ditch 121 to the east perhaps indicating that, despite some difference in form, the two ditches could be coeval, and the stratigraphic relationships of these ditches, both of which appear to be earlier than the linked ditches 4 and 310, does not contradict this. There were too few finds to date these ditches closely, but the close proximity of the terminals of ditches 310 and 140, their similar alignments, and the evidence for the deliberate infilling of ditch 121, perhaps indicates that ditches 4 and 310 immediately followed the abandonment of the earlier ditches.

Later quarries

The uppermost fills of both ditches 310 and 140 were truncated by later pitting which had apparently quarried the ditch sides (Fig. 3.40, section 37, cuts 231 and 224; section 42, cut 224). Most of the deposits associated with this activity produced few finds other than small scraps of bone, though a small number of early Severn Valley ware sherds, most probably redeposited, were recovered from the upper quarry fills. It is possible that the quarrying was related to the construction of nearby Ermin Street.

*Discussion**Date and sequence*

The excavations indicated two phases of occupation, the first represented by ditches 121 and (probably) 140, and the second by the partial enclosure formed by

ditches 4 and 310. There was very little dating evidence for the first phase. The rubble in ditch 121 suggested that it had been deliberately infilled before the second phase ditches were dug. Ditch 310 was, however, on a similar alignment to the earlier ditches perhaps suggesting continuity of some landscape boundaries within a reorientation of the land parcels at this location.

The second phase of occupation can be dated to the end of the Iron Age or very early Roman period on the basis of the pottery from ditch 4. The sequence of deposits and dating evidence has been described in some detail (above). Most of the finds came from the lower rubble fills and subsequent dark silts. This material includes some large sherds, including four sherds (297 g) of Savernake Ware from rubble deposit 57 (Fig. 3.39, section 29), and 18 joining sherds of a White Ware butt beaker from the equivalent context (fill 69) in segment 40. Indeed, the average sherd weight of Savernake Ware from the lower rubble deposits was 87 g, compared with 30 g overall. It seems clear that material was being deposited while the ditch was infilling, rather than being rubbish which accumulated after abandonment.

Occupation continued throughout the filling of the ditch. Although pottery from the uppermost 0.5 m was generally sparser (with the exception of Savernake Ware), it still contributed about 30% of the pottery from the site. Sherd sizes were not notably smaller (with the exception, again, of Savernake Ware) and twenty-four sherds from a Black Micaceous fineware jar came from the upper fill of segment 40 (Fig. 7.9.81).

The indications that the site was not abandoned until late in the sedimentary sequence has implications for the nature of the occupation. There is clear evidence for a wooded environment from the mollusca in the lower fills – not only in the primary rubble but also in the occupation-rich silts which accumulated immediately above them (Fig. 3.39, section 29, fills 56 and 153). It is evident that there was woodland in very close proximity to the ditch and it is possible that it was regenerating over the ditch during the occupation. The mollusc evidence indicates that site abandonment may have coincided with the clearance of the woodland, and a hiatus in the molluscan sequence, which was evident at the top of fill 153 (Fig. 3.39, section 29), after which open country mollusca predominated (see Robinson, Chapter 8).

Form and function

There was little evidence as to the overall nature of the site which comprised solely ditches forming rectilinear partial enclosures. Ditches 4 and 310, together with ditch 3 in the watching brief, may have defined an area of about 0.6 ha. The cropmarks present a wider but still very incomplete picture, suggesting that the pattern of ditches may have extended over a broad area on both sides of the A417, although the picture is very incomplete (Fig. 3.34).

On the basis of the quantity and variety of finds recovered, it appears reasonable to regard this as a



Plate 3.6 The enclosure at Duntisbourne Grove.

settlement, although there were no features within the enclosed area and there was no identifiable focus of occupation. The absence of evidence for structures may be attributable to plough erosion, although the lack of pits is probably real. An appraisal of this site is hampered somewhat by the shortage of area excavations on sites of this date in the region to establish what features might be expected to have survived. Ditch 4 contained most of the finds, which were sparse elsewhere, perhaps suggesting that the associated occupation was quite limited in extent.

The character of the settlement is made more enigmatic by the fact that it was sited in woodland or in a woodland clearing. Woodland may also have been allowed to regenerate over the ditches while the site was still occupied. While, from a site-specific viewpoint, it is possible that the woodland molluscs in the ditches may have been related to local overgrown hedges, the same environmental evidence from Duntisbourne Grove and from under Ermin Street at Dartley Bottom, strongly suggests a local background of woodland in the late Iron Age. This may account for the high percentage of pig bones in the domestic faunal assemblage. Pigs were the most numerous species individually (38%) and accounted for 29% of animals present based on a calculation of the minimum number of individuals (MNI) (see Powell, Chapter 8), although they may still be

under-represented in the assemblage due to poor preservation. There was a very low level of charred plant remains from the site with some cereal grains present. As far as it goes, the evidence suggests that animal husbandry was a more important component of the economy of the site than cereal production.

Duntisbourne Grove

By Andrew Mudd and Steve Lawrence

Enclosure ditches and later quarrying

The excavation at Duntisbourne Grove was undertaken to investigate a rectilinear cropmark identified on aerial photographs. The cropmark appears to indicate three sides of a substantial sub-rectangular enclosure up to 180 m across (north-south) and at least 110 m east-west, which was truncated on the north-east corner by the A417 (Plate 3.6). Trial-trenching in 1990 suggested that the cropmark was a late Iron Age enclosure with later Romano-British quarrying along the upper profile of each ditch (GCC 1990, 56).

An area of c. 25 x 130 m was stripped of topsoil, revealing the two anticipated linear cropmarks (Fig. 3.41): the northern arm of the enclosure ditch (114) oriented approximately east-west and the eastern arm (8) approximately north-south. In addition, a small number of other ditches (9, 10 and 11) and pits were identified. As the evaluation had suggested, there was no surviving evidence of structures or occupation within the enclosure, and only a thin modern ploughsoil directly overlying the limestone bedrock. A group of Neolithic pits and postholes was found in the south-west corner of the site; these have already been discussed in Chapter 2.

The excavation of the enclosure ditches indicated that both had been used as quarries, most probably while they were still open. It proved difficult during the excavation and post-excavation stages to differentiate deposits associated with the enclosure ditches themselves from those redeposited from later quarrying. Feature numbers often relate both to the ditches and the quarry cuts, with fill numbers used to differentiate deposits associated with each phase of activity. The origin of some of these deposits is still equivocal, and the evidence is open to different interpretations. For this reason the ditches and quarries are described together in this report, although the quarrying clearly indicates a radically different form of land use, which may relate to the construction of Ermin Street (see Chapter 9 below).

Northern ditch 114 (segments 68, 117 and 202) (Figs 3.42–43, sections 29, 30 and 49)

Three sections were excavated across the northern arm of the enclosure ditch, and revealed a ditch 1.4 m deep cut into the tabular limestone. Varying little in profile the broad U-shaped ditch gradually increased in width east to west from 2 m to 3.8 m with a c. 0.5 m wide ledge along its southern edge (the interior side of the enclosure). The north (exterior) side of the ditch

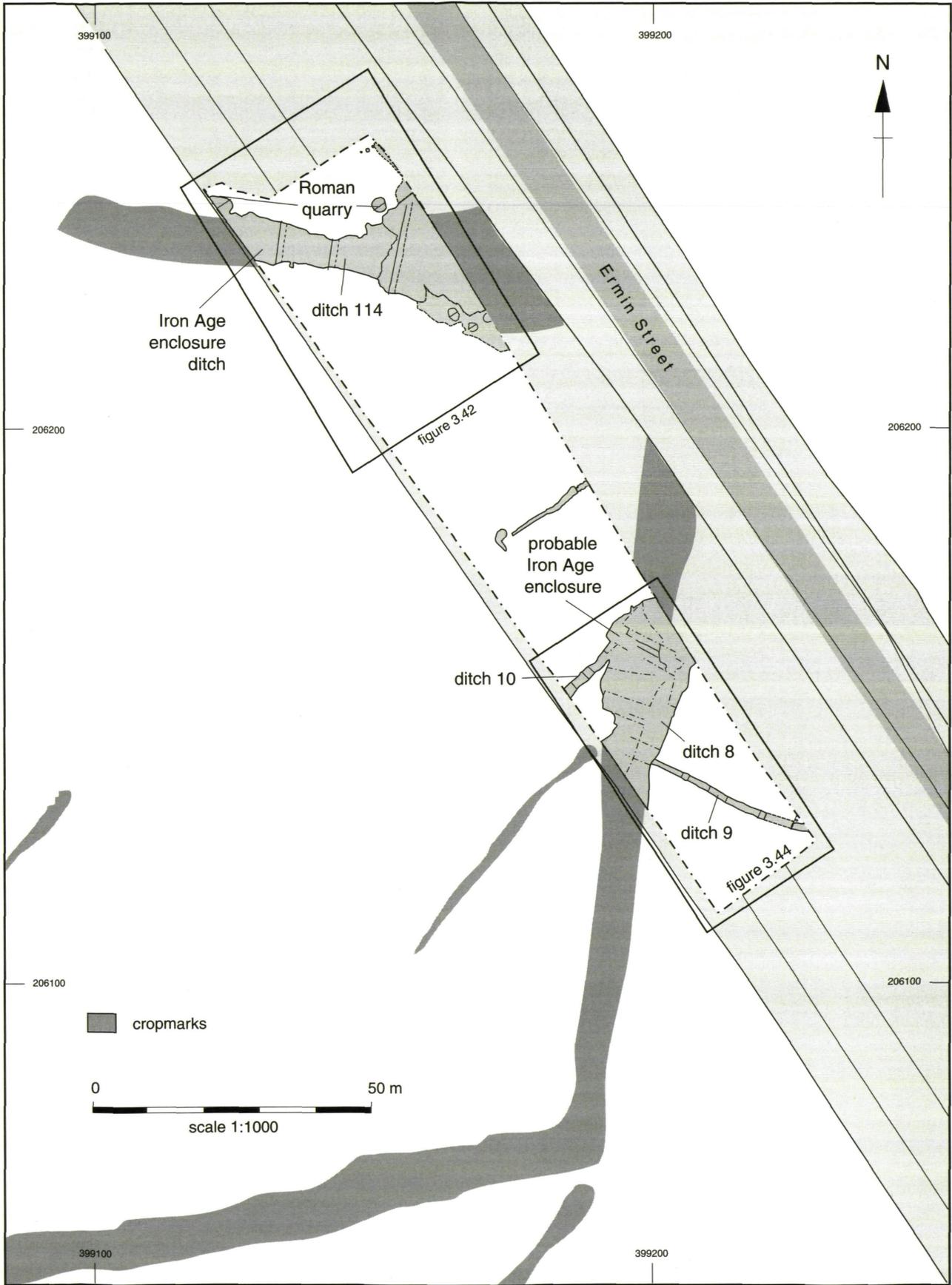


Figure 3.41 Duntisbourne Grove, general site plan with cropmark plot.

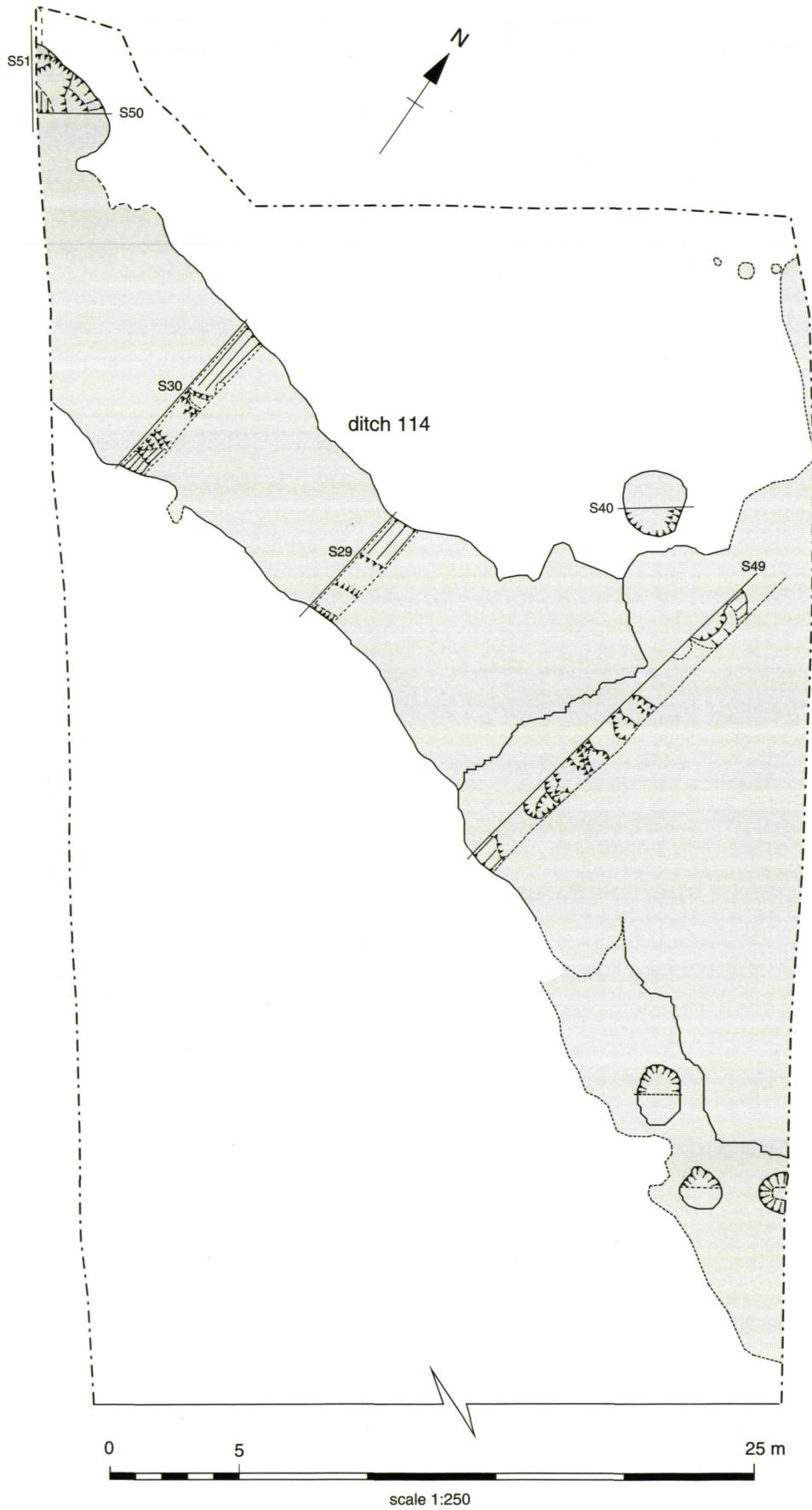


Figure 3.42 Duntisbourne Grove, site plan north.

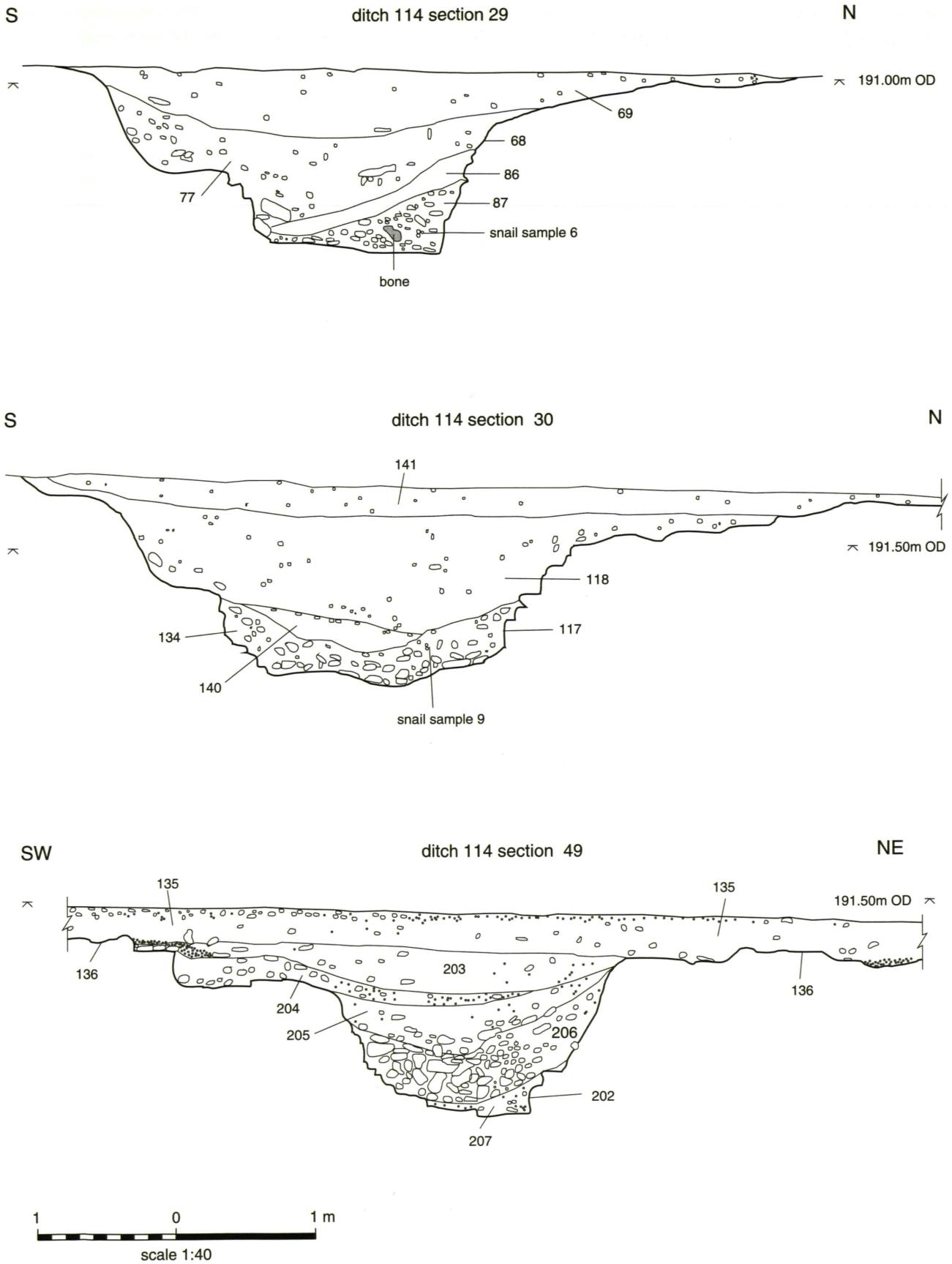


Figure 3.43 Duntisbourne Grove, ditch 114, sections 29, 30 and 49.

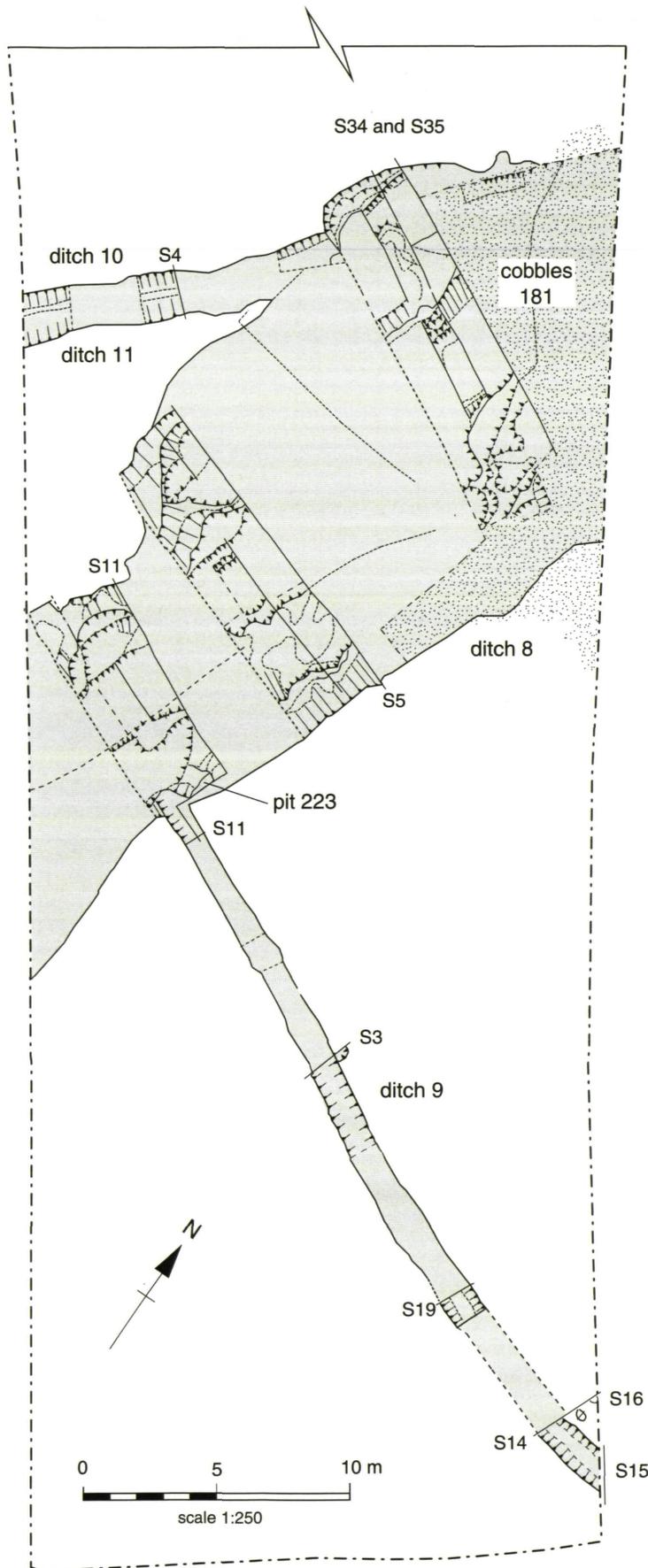


Figure 3.44 Duntisbourne Grove, site plan south.

also splayed out at the top, forming a very shallow slope a further 2.2 to 2.8 m wide, making the surviving ditch more than 6 m wide at the top. Quarrying of the surface limestone (Fig. 3.43, section 49, fill 135) had removed this part of the ditch as it approached the line of Ermin Street.

An identical sequence of fills was identified in the two western sections (cuts 68 and 117) with a broadly similar sequence in the eastern section (Fig. 3.43, sections 29 and 30). To the west an unevenly deposited and loosely compacted limestone rubble and silt primary fill (87 and 134) covered the base of the ditch. Two snail samples (samples 6 and 9) from these deposits indicated a woodland environment (see Robinson, Chapter 8). This was followed by natural silting (fills 86 and 140). The next deposit, limestone rubble within a matrix of silty clay (layers 77 and 118), was interpreted on site as deliberate backfill. This left a shallow undulating hollow 0.2 to 0.45 m deep, which silted up gradually (layers 69 and 141).

Virtually the same sequence was represented in the section closest to the line of Ermin Street (cut 202). Here, however, there was a discrete primary fill (207) before the mixed limestone and silt fill (206) equivalent to the primary fill in the other cut sections. Fill 206 was more stony and also contained larger pieces of limestone than the corresponding deposits, possibly because the ditch was narrower, and thus the limestone was more concentrated. As in the other cuts across the ditch, the rubble is likely to have been a natural accumulation, though perhaps derived in part from a collapsed bank or drystone wall. If so, this section would suggest that it derived from the inside, as would be expected. The silting which followed (layer 205), which appears to represent a horizon of stability throughout the length of the ditch, was also more substantial here. The subsequent backfilling was represented by a thin layer of limestone gravel (204) overlain by silts with less limestone (203).

The top of the ditch was filled with silt 135, which also filled the shallow quarry voids (136) either side of the ditch. This was overlain in cut 202 along the north-eastern limit of the site by an intermittent layer of limestone cobbles, similar to layer 181 which was present across the surface of ditch 8.

The lower part of the ditch profile is probably not modified by later quarrying, and the lower rubble fills (134, 87 and 207/206) are interpreted as silting (and perhaps slipping of a bank) during its early use. The subsequent, largely stone-free silts (140, 86

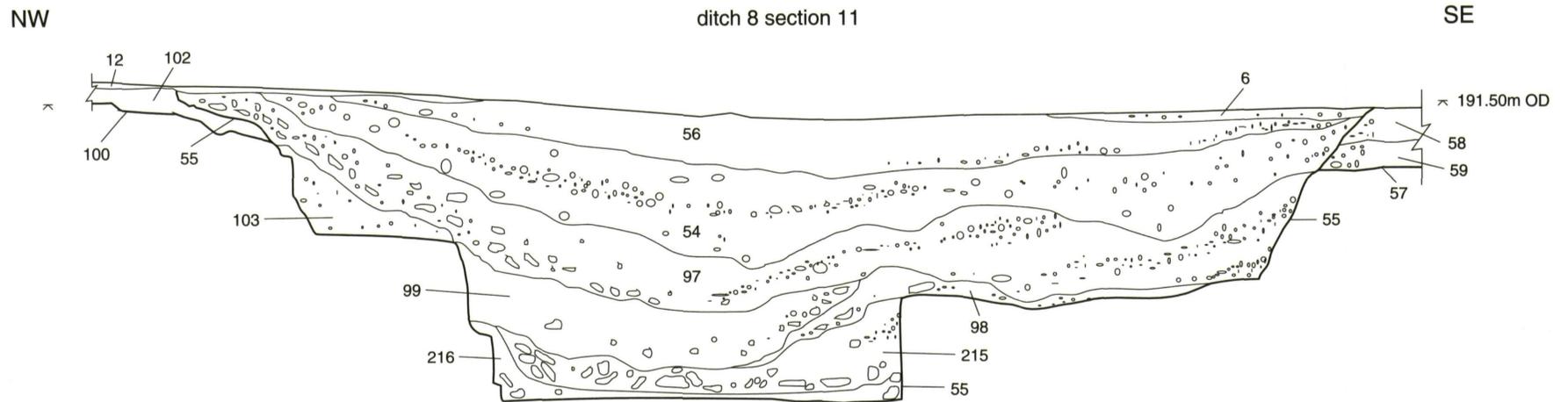
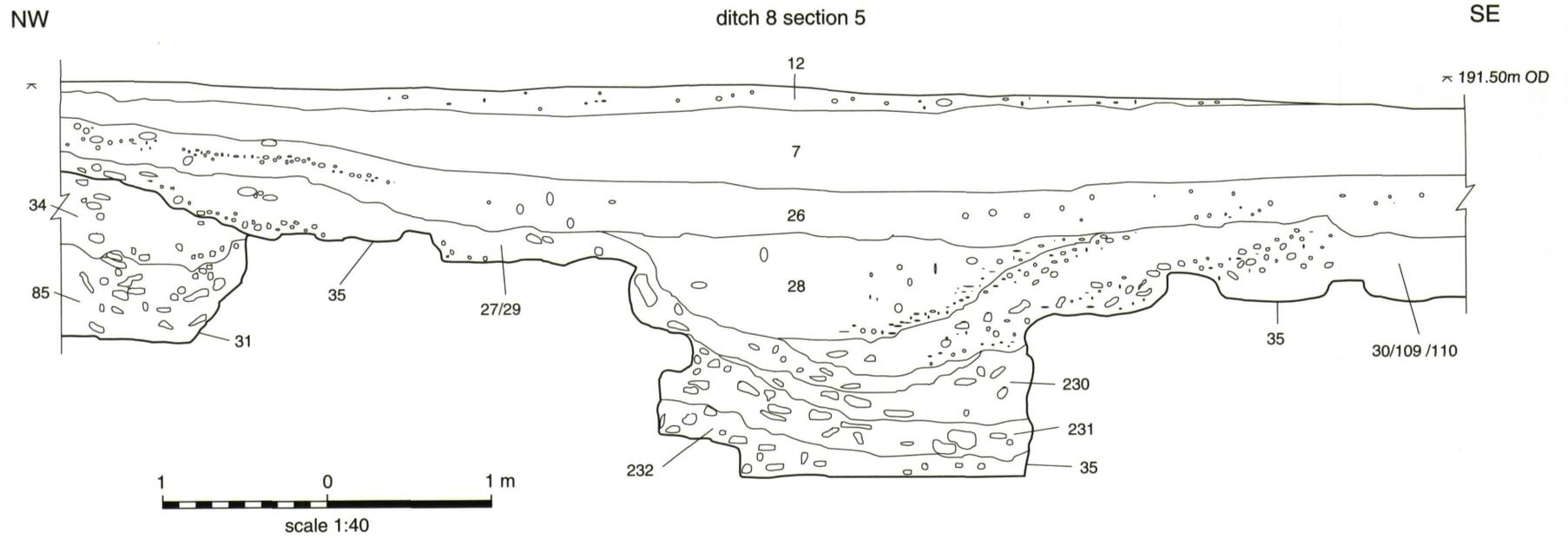


Figure 3.45 Duntisbourne Grove, ditch 8, sections 5 and 11 (part).

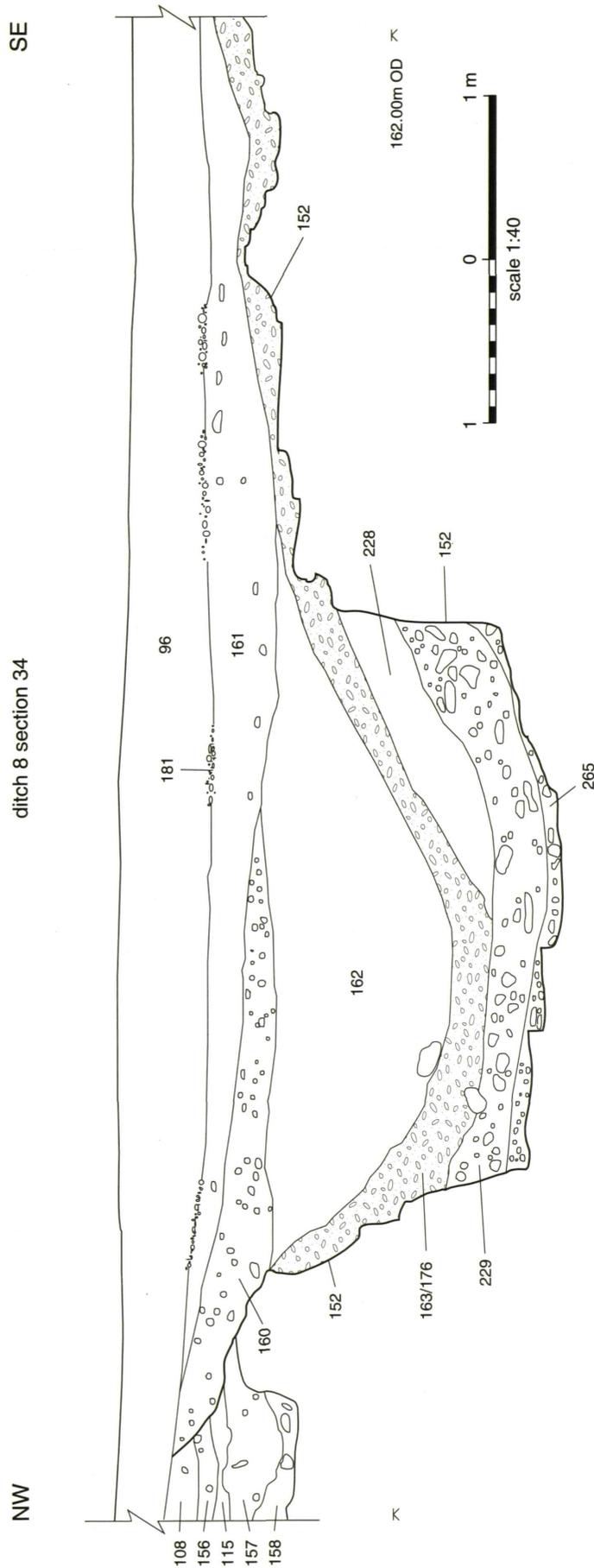


Figure 3.46 Duntisbourne Grove, ditch 8, section 34.

and 205) can be seen as an episode of gradual silting once the ditch sides had stabilised, again during the use of the ditch. There were, however, few finds from these deposits.

It is unclear whether the infilling of the ditch (represented by layers 118, 77 and 204/203) occurred before the quarrying into the ditch sides or after it. Much depends on the interpretation of the shallow ledge on the internal side of the ditch. If this was an original feature, there is no particular difficulty in seeing the ditch filled before the quarrying, represented here by feature 136, which would then have been restricted to the upper edges of the largely filled ditch. The ledge might have been for ease of access into the ditch whilst it was being dug; a similar possible step was found on one side of the innermost defensive late Iron Age ditch at Abingdon in Oxfordshire (Allen 1993).

Alternatively, it is possible that the ditch was still largely open when the enclosure was abandoned, and that the internal ledge was the result of post-abandonment quarrying. This interpretation of later quarrying within a largely open feature appears to be supported by the sequence in ditch 8 (see below).

There were relatively few finds from ditch 114. The vessels represented in the assemblage suggest occupation in the 1st century AD, beginning in the very late Iron Age and continuing through the Claudio-Neronian period and into, but not beyond, the Flavian period. The date of the final infilling of ditch (and quarry) is not clear, but there are no diagnostically later sherds and it is possible that it took place in the early post-conquest period.

Southern ditch 8 (segments 35, 55 and 152) (Figs 3.44–46)

The eastern side of the enclosure ditch differed on the surface from the northern ditch, having a very broad soilmark (up to 15 m wide) with slightly irregular edges. Three sections were excavated across this, revealing a ditch with vertical sides and a flat base becoming larger towards the north-east corner. The depth increased from 1.7 m to 2.65 m as the ditch ran north, and the width from 2.2 m to a maximum of 3.5 m (Fig. 3.46, section 34). The upper part of the ditch had been extensively quarried, accounting in part for its enlarged dimensions and irregular appearance.

Unlike the northern arm of the ditch (114) the base of ditch 8 was sealed by a more substantial primary silting deposit up



Plate 3.7 Duntisbourne Grove, the southern enclosure ditch 8.

to 0.3 m thick (216/232/265.). This was succeeded by a limestone rubble deposit (215, 231, 229), probably equivalent to the limestone and silt fills (87/134/206) in ditch 114, but which was not so deep here as it spread across a much broader ditch. This contained several small sherds of pottery, including Malvernian Ware, early Severn Valley Wares and Savernake Ware. In sections 34 and 5 the next deposit was a far siltier sediment with fewer stones (228, 230), which may perhaps be equated with the phase of stable silting in ditch 114 represented by layers 86/140/205. It was followed by dumps of stony material (163/176, 27/29, 30/109/110) which may represent quarry waste. The limestone dumps spilling off the quarried ledges into the lower part of the ditch clearly demonstrate that the enclosure existed as a substantially open ditch when the quarrying commenced. This interpretation would therefore see the primary silts, the rubble fill and the overlying silts as fills of the original ditch, and everything above as relating to infilling the quarry hollow. With the extensive quarrying along both edges of the ditch, these stony deposits that follow indicate backfilling using the resultant quarry waste as well as nearby occupation material.

In section 11 the sequence may have been different, with quarry waste fill 98 apparently underlying a thick silty clay deposit 99 (Fig. 3.45). This could indicate a substantial gap between quarrying and backfilling in some places. The upper levels of the ditch and quarry were filled with dumped layers with a higher silt

content (162, 54, 28); deposit 162 (Fig. 3.46, section 34) was particularly deep due to the thinner layer of underlying quarry waste (163/176). The variation in the quantity of quarry waste was largely due to the fact that quarrying did not take place all along the edge of the ditch, but was concentrated in larger pit-like quarries adjacent to it. Where more of the ditch profile remained intact less rubble and overburden was deposited or spilled into it, and more deliberate infilling with material like silty soil 162 was required to level this to the same height as the remainder of the ditch. The latest closely datable pottery from the site, a sherd of South Gaulish samian manufactured between AD 60–75, came from this deposit (Fig. 7.10.96).

Further backfill followed, consisting of limestone rubble (160) and another more silty layer (in cut 35) equivalent to layer 26. This left an undulating hollow 0.4–0.6 m deep along the top of the combined ditch and quarry, now 12–15 m wide. Limestone cobbles (181) were placed across the surface of the infilled ditch and quarry in cut 152, and this horizon was overlain by a homogenous relatively rubble-free silting layer (7, 56, 96) which levelled up the remainder of the enclosure ditch and quarry to the surface of the surrounding geology.

The sequence of fills in ditch 8 appears to represent a rapid infilling of the enclosure after abandonment. The interpretation offered would suggest that there was an episode of relative stability between the initial rubble fill of the lower part of the ditch and the later

quarrying, represented by deposits of relatively stone-free silts. This correlates with the interpreted sequence in ditch 114. There was far more pottery from ditch 8 than from ditch 114 (including fineware imports), but it does not help refine the chronology, nor aid much in the interpretation of the fills. The lower fills contained Savernake Ware, Malvernian Ware and early Severn Valley Wares, which were present throughout the profile. There were no notable primary deposits of occupation material within the ditch, most sherds being small and potentially redeposited.

The smaller ditches 9, 10 and 11

In addition to the large enclosure ditches three smaller ditches were found within the excavation. Ditches 10 and 11 lay west of enclosure ditch 8, ditch 9 lay immediately east of it. Ditches 10 and 11 ran parallel north-east to south-west, while ditch 9 ran east-south-east.

Ditch 9 (cuts 44, 13, 81 and 45)

Ditch 9 ran from the edge of enclosure ditch 8 on an east-south-easterly alignment for 30 m and continued beyond the east edge of the excavation. On the west it did not reappear beyond the enclosure ditch. Subsequent quarrying (55) along the east edge of the enclosure ditch resulted in a ledge 1.2 m deep and cut 2.4 m into the side of the ditch. This quarrying cut through the fills of ditch 9, removing any potential relationship between the enclosure and smaller ditch.

Ditch 9 possessed an uneven profile. The sides varied between near-vertical and sloping, though for most of its length it was 1–1.2 m wide and had a flat base c. 0.5 m wide. The ditch widened to 1.6 m towards the south-east due to the greater weathering of the upper ditch sides. Ditch 9 survived up to 0.5 m deep.

The sequence of fills remained relatively consistent throughout the length of the ditch. The lower half of the ditch contained two or three silts (73, 74 and 89) with differing proportions of small limestones, except at the west end where there was only a single such fill (59). A heavily burnt layer (64) 0.2 m thick sealed the lower silts; this had been dumped in two main concentrations, with a thin water-eroded ashy layer between, the whole deposit extending for more than 18 m along the ditch. A variety of artefacts was mixed into the burnt debris including a quern fragment (cat. 683), a brooch (Fig. 7.21.518), a spindlewhorl (SF 5) and the largest assemblage of pottery from the site (Fig. 7.10.110, 113–115). The pottery showed some differences from the assemblage from ditch 8 (see Timby, Chapter 7), perhaps indicating that ditch 9 was infilled slightly earlier. The imported fine wares and fragments of amphorae are consistent with a date very late in the Iron Age or in the mid-1st century AD. Savernake Ware was present, albeit in low proportions (6% by number and 20% by weight), and this should indicate an immediately post-conquest date.

A final layer of silting (47/58) levelled the redundant ditch hollow. This soil was cut by the

quarrying that took place in the sides of enclosure ditch 8 while it was still open, supporting the ceramic indications that ditch 9 was earlier.

Although scarce, the charred remains from burnt deposit 64 were consistent with those of similar date from the enclosure ditch fills at Middle Duntisbourne. These primarily consisted of hazelnut shells and charcoal of *Prunus* and *Pomoideae* (Hawthorn etc.) each suggestive of hedge-like habitats or open woodland with shrub cover. The molluscan assemblage recovered from cut 45 (section 15) was without woodland fauna (see Robinson, Chapter 8), in contrast to the wooded environment indicated by snails from the northern enclosure ditch (114).

Ditch 10 (segments 16, 24 and 48)

An 11 m length of ditch (10) was found running south-west from the edge of enclosure ditch 8, and continued into the western edge of the excavation area. As with ditch 9, the silted and infilled ditch had subsequently been truncated by quarrying activity (150) along the edge of the enclosure ditch, and no relationship with the enclosure ditch survived.

The character of the ditch was regular throughout its length. It was 1.8 m wide, with a more pronounced and angular V-shaped, flat-based profile than that of ditch 9. The ditch reduced in depth from 0.8 m to 0.5 m where it joined the enclosure, but this was a result of the undulating surface of the natural limestone, as the comparative level along the base of ditch 10 varied very little.

The sequence of soils in the ditch was consistent, but the thickness of the fills reflected the varying depth of the ditch. Two episodes of silting (first 22 and later 19, both 0.1 m thick) were separated by a loose limestone and silt deposit 0.2 m thick (21). The upper silt was overlain by a charcoal-rich layer (18), probably deliberately dumped. This may correspond to layer 64 in ditch 9. The top of the ditch was filled by a reddish silt (17).

A variety of sherds was recovered from all but the primary silting fill. These consisted of a mixture of native Malvernian wares and proto/early Severn Valley forms with Savernake wares. The mixture of wares is consistent with the pottery from the other ditches, including those of the enclosure, dating to the mid 1st century AD. As with ditch 9, however, that fact that ditch 10 had completely silted up prior to the quarrying activity, may suggest that it was earlier than ditch 8, which had remained open.

Ditch 11 (segments 172, 221 and 51)

Ditch 11 ran approximately parallel to ditch 10 on a north-east to south-west alignment, some 27 m to the north-west. The orientation of both ditches was also perpendicular to the line of Ermin Street. Ditch 11 was the least substantial of all the ditches on the site, surviving only 0.2 m and 0.8 m wide on the north-east (cut 51), and gradually petering out to the south-west, fading out after c. 16 m within the excavated area.

The ditch had only one fill, a homogenous reddish-brown stone free silt (52). This contained only four sherds of abraded pottery. Towards the north-east edge of the excavation the ditch fill was overlain by an intermittent spread of cobbling, possibly a continuation of layer 181 (see below).

Later cobbled surface 181 (Fig. 3.44)

Towards the northern end of the exposed length of ditch 8 (in cut 152) a distinctive layer of worn limestone cobbles (181) ran across the surface of both ditch 8 and the quarries either side. The cobbled layer consisted of small, tightly packed rounded limestone pieces and slabs compacted into the surface of upper silty fill (161) of the enclosure ditch and quarries, and was most substantial along the north-eastern baulk of the excavation parallel to the line of Ermin Street. The layer was generally only the thickness of a single stone, but was 0.1 m deep towards either edge of the ditch where it was best preserved. Across the centre of the ditch the surface had settled into the underlying ditch fills, and in the process the cobbles had been loosened and displaced, so preservation was poorer.

The tightly-packed *in situ* cobbles were confined to the limits of cut 152 (ditch 8), those over the south-east side of the quarry being sporadic. Similar patches of sporadic cobbling were found across the surface of ditch 11 and the northern enclosure ditch 114 and its adjacent quarries in cut 202. These suggest the cobbles extended across the site on a north-west to south-east alignment parallel to the line of Ermin Street.

An assemblage of 48 sherds was recovered from the cobbling layer mostly consisting of Malvernian wares. This was a similar assemblage to those from the ditches and quarries and may be entirely re-deposited. The absence of later wares, however, may suggest that the cobbling was also of the 1st-century pre-Flavian period. There was no evidence of wheel ruts, later repairs/re-surfacing or 'road' wash silts upon the cobbling, perhaps suggesting that it had a short period of use. A single thick silting layer (96) containing further 1st-century sherds sealed the surface, levelling the remaining 0.55 m deep hollow across the ditch and quarries. A complete hipposandal was recovered from the lower levels of the later silting although this was to the side of the surface (Fig. 7.33.630).

Although only the south-western edge of the surface was revealed within the limit of the excavation, this lay some 20 m from the edge of the modern Ermin Street. At Dartley Bottom only 150 m to the north-west of the site, excavation showed that the Roman road lay directly underneath the modern road (Ermin Street Trench 8). The cobbled surface at Duntisbourne Grove is therefore unlikely to be a continuation of this, but could represent a second 1st-century carriageway alongside the Roman road. A similar surface of cobbles parallel to Ermin Street was also present at Birdlip Quarry and one may also have existed within the line of the roadside ditch at Field's Farm (both on the opposite side of the road to that at Duntisbourne

Grove). These, however, were both dated to the 4th century and not at such a distance from the line of the main road surface.

Discussion

Date and sequence

Analysis of the ditch sequences and fills suggests that there were two phases of occupation followed by abandonment. The partly open enclosure ditches were subsequently used as stone quarries which were later filled in. The dating evidence indicates that this sequence of events occupied a relatively brief period within the 1st century AD.

The pottery and stratigraphic evidence suggest that ditches 9 and 10 were filled in earlier than the main enclosure ditches 8 and 114, and may represent a distinct phase of activity on the site. Ditch 11 was parallel to ditch 10, and may also have belonged with this early pair of ditches, though it may have been later. The cropmark evidence suggests that there was another ditch of similar dimensions to ditch 9 just west of enclosure ditch 8, which ran south-west approximately parallel to ditches 10 and 11. Yet another cropmark ditch on the same alignment is visible some 70 m to the south-west (Fig. 3.41). These ditches may represent a system of late Iron Age land boundaries predating the main enclosure.

Within the enclosure ditches (8 and 114) the lower sequence of fills have been interpreted as the primary accumulation of primary silt and rubble, followed by relatively stone-free silting once the ditch profile had stabilised. This is supported by the woodland molluscan assemblage from rubble layers in the northern enclosure ditch 114, which indicate a gradual accumulation of sediment within a ditch which had become overgrown. An identical picture came from ditch 4 at Middle Duntisbourne. The interpretation of the fills in the eastern enclosure ditch 8 is less clear, but a similar sequence seems likely.

The pottery from the enclosure ditches indicates a very similar date to that from ditches 9 and 10, mostly mid-1st century AD. The size of sherds in the ditches is not very large, and this, together with the lack of chronological change in the pottery throughout the stratigraphic sequence, has raised doubts whether the material might not be redeposited. There are, however, numbers of sherds from single vessels in the lower ditch fills, and there is a clear difference in ditch 8 between the average size of the sherds from the lower fills and those from the clearly redeposited fills of the upper part of the ditch and the quarries; the average weight of Savernake Ware sherds being 17.5 g as opposed to 8.1 g, and the weight of the other wares 4.8 g as opposed to 3.1 g. The size and weight of sherds from ditch 4 at Middle Duntisbourne were heavier still; 30 g for Savernake ware and 5.5 g for the rest, so the pottery from the lower enclosure ditch fills is clearly not freshly deposited rubbish, but is not as comminuted as the material in the backfill of the quarries. The general absence of greywares from the lower deposits may also be chronologically significant. Of the 49

sherds (150 g) from ditch 8, all but one (1 g) came from the upper quarry infills; the single tiny sherd from silt deposit 228 (cut 152) may be intrusive. A similar view may be taken of a small greyware sherd (1 g) from layer 87 in ditch 114. A single sherd of Dorset Black Burnished Ware, which is clearly later than the rest of the pottery, came from quarry fill.

There are three possible interpretations of the pottery evidence. The first proposes that the occupation was contemporary with the small ditches 9 and 10, and that this ended when the large enclosure ditch was dug. The second takes the large and small ditches to be contemporary, despite their odd orientations in relation to one another, though the smaller ditches (which contained a much lower proportion of greywares) were infilled first. The third possibility is that the early ditches predated the occupation, which began when the large enclosure ditch was dug.

Despite their smaller size, ditches 9 and 10 contained about 50% of all the pottery from the site (most coming from ditch 9). Sherds of the same whiteware vessel were found in both ditches 9 and 10, strengthening the suggestion that they were contemporary. There is, however, no trace of any other features associated with the dumped material in the ditches. The lack of finds in the lower fills of ditches 9 and 10, contrasted with the concentration of finds in the upper burnt soil fill, shows that the occupation occurred late in the life of these ditches, indeed the extent of this deposit may indicate that this was deliberate infilling when the ditch was no longer needed. Alternatively, these ditches may have been contemporary with the main enclosure, but were simply filled in before the main enclosure ditches. Further sherds of the whiteware vessel, for instance, came from the eastern enclosure ditch.

On balance, the most plausible interpretation of the evidence is to envisage the smaller ditches as a system of field or enclosure boundaries without domestic occupation, which were then infilled with domestic material shortly after the main enclosure ditch was dug. The lower fills of the main enclosure contain finds from the occupation, but the excavated parts of the ditch were not immediately adjacent to domestic activity, and were not used routinely for rubbish dumping. The date of the occupation was brief, centred in the mid-1st century AD. Some chronological progression is indicated by the increasing proportions of greywares from the lower to upper enclosure fills, suggesting that pottery was still arriving on site during or after the quarrying phase, probably in the later 1st century AD.

The quarrying of the open enclosure ditches may have been for the construction of Ermin Street which overlies the north-east corner of the cropmark enclosure. This hypothesis, while reasonable on circumstantial grounds, is difficult to envisage if the traditional dating of Savernake Ware as post-conquest is accepted, since the ware was present in the primary fills of both enclosure ditches, as well as in the earlier ditch, ditch 9. These must pre-date the quarrying which, according to the accepted dating of Ermin

Street, would have taken place within a decade or so of the conquest.

Apart from the consideration of the site's relationship to Ermin Street, the quantity, size and frequency of Savernake Ware throughout the enclosure ditches, alongside the more typical late Iron Age and early Roman transitional industries such as Malvernian and proto-early Severn Valley wares, suggests that the conventional view of this pottery as a post-conquest 'marker' needs reconsideration. However, it should however be borne in mind that the relationship of Ermin Street to the enclosure ditches was not established directly by the excavation, and that there is no direct evidence that the quarrying was related to the construction of the original road. The quarrying may have related to the resurfacing of the road, or indeed to operations unconnected with it. This would allow the occupation to be of early Roman date, as suggested by the received dating of the pottery, although the alignment of the ditches in relation to the existing Roman road would be odd to say the least.

Form and function

The enclosure at Duntisbourne Grove was sited on a gentle north-facing slope within 0.5 km of the contemporaneous site at Middle Duntisbourne and would have overlooked it across the col at Dartley Bottom. Cropmarks of the site are very clear and show what appears to be three sides of a roughly square enclosure, a little over 2 ha in area. The absence of a cropmark on the western side may mean that the enclosure was open here. Another, rectilinear, cropmark approaches the enclosure from the south-west, although it is not entirely clear that this is an archaeological feature. Both the enclosure ditches examined were larger than those at Middle Duntisbourne, although the eastern one (ditch 8), which was 2-4 m wide and up to 2.6 m deep, was consistently larger than the northern one (ditch 114). There was no clear indication of the presence or location of an accompanying bank.

The size of the ditches varied, being only 1.4 m deep on the downhill side, but up to 2.6 m deep on the eastern side. The effort involved in the construction of these ditches suggests that the enclosure was intended to be defensible, though it cannot be classed as a major fortification. There was no surviving indication of a bank; the 'enclosure' occupied an elevated but not eminently defensible position with higher ground to the south and south-east, perhaps making it unlikely that it was constructed primarily for strategic purposes.

The original dimensions of the eastern ditch were similar to those of the outer enclosure at Ditches (Trow 1988), and the enclosure ditch at The Bowsings (Marshall 1991). Ditches has been defined as a 'hillfort' (RCHME 1976, 85) but the recent excavations have questioned this status and a clear distinction between 'hillforts' and 'enclosures' is acknowledged to be difficult to maintain (Trow *op. cit.*, 38). The Bowsings has been interpreted as a defensive stronghold based on the size of the ditch and the siting

of the enclosure (Marshall *op. cit.*, 14). The dimensions of the defensive ditches at Salmonsbury and Abingdon are not dissimilar, the latter being no more than 2.7 m deep, though considerably wider, and occurring in series (Allen 1993). It is perhaps more instructive to compare Lower Duntisbourne with enclosures such as Gorhambury, Hertfordshire, where a rectangular enclosure dating to the first half of the 1st century AD was surrounded by ditches which grew in size from only 2–3 m wide and 1.2 m deep to 4 m wide and up to 2.5 m deep (Neal *et al.* 1990, 12–13). The ditches varied in depth around the enclosure, and the excavators interpreted this as being due to the desire to heighten the bank to give the impression of greater strength around some parts of the perimeter.

Like Middle Duntisbourne there was no trace of structures within the enclosure at Duntisbourne Grove and no obvious focus for occupation. It must, however, be remembered that only *c.* 10% of the interior was investigated; at Gorhambury the late Iron Age occupation was not spread evenly throughout the enclosed area, and indeed large areas were blank. The large quantity of finds from ditch 9 may suggest that occupation was focussed outside the enclosure initially; perhaps this part of the interior was largely for stock. The molluscan assemblage from the northern ditch showed that, as with Middle Duntisbourne, the ditch had become overgrown with woodland or scrub while it was silting up. This situation is at variance with the generally open country fauna from ditch 9 to the south, which may be due to chronological differences between these features, but may imply that the site was on the southern margin of the woodland. This appears to be supported by the animal bone assemblage, which shows a greater proportion of cattle (50% MNI) than Middle Duntisbourne, although the percentage of pig (30% MNI) was still high. There were few cereal remains. Hazelnuts were present in the samples from ditch 9. These sample compositions were similar to those from the Neolithic pits in this part of the site, leading to the suggestion that there may have been redeposition in the ditch (see Pelling, Chapter 8). However, there were no redeposited Neolithic artefacts from this ditch and the contextual integrity of the samples themselves appears sound. Accepting this, it is possible to suggest that the charred remains could have come from woodland margins or hedgerows.

An assessment of the function and status of the sites at Duntisbourne Grove and Middle Duntisbourne in the context of the settlement pattern in the 1st century AD is problematic since so few sites have been defined, and even basic forms and classifications are either lacking or controversial (Darvill 1987, 159–169). It therefore remains unclear whether the Duntisbournes can be considered to be ‘types’ of site on morphological or other grounds. Since these sites were broadly coeval they can perhaps be interpreted as two parts of the same settlement unit, with the ditches at Middle Duntisbourne essentially outliers of the main enclosure at Duntisbourne Grove. On the basis of the range of fine ware imports the sites can be defined as of ‘high status’. Enclosures such as Gorhambury were

elite residences of the late Iron Age, which would certainly fit the limited evidence from Duntisbourne Grove. Given the proximity of Bagendon and Ditches lying about 2.5 km to the south-east and north-east respectively, it is, however, unclear whether this status would have been relative to surrounding sites, or whether it was purely an indication of proximity to the centre of regional power. Other contemporaneous sites are also poorly understood. The status of Salmonsbury in the late Iron Age is unclear (Darvill 1987, 164) although some imported items were found as well as two Dobunnic silver coins. It may have been a regional centre like Bagendon, but this is by no means certain (*ibid.*). Frocester Court, some 10 miles south of Gloucester, also yielded some *terra nigra* imports and two Dobunnic coins (Price 1983). The Bowsings Enclosure, Guiting Power, interpreted as a local stronghold, was without ‘Belgic’ wares or other finds indicative of high status (Marshall 1991), although this might be a reflection of an earlier date or distance from Bagendon, rather than its status as such.

The Duntisbourne sites can certainly be seen to be lying within the sphere of influence of Bagendon, and may, like Ditches, be seen as part of the ‘Bagendon complex’ (Trow 1988, 39), although, unlike Bagendon and Ditches, there was no evidence for coin manufacture from the excavations at the Duntisbourne sites and this may be a significant distinction. Elsewhere contemporaneous sites of presumed lower status have been found at Birdlip Bypass (Parry 1998), although this occupation was poorly defined.

Whether the Duntisbourne sites had a particular role in the regional political economy is impossible to be sure of at present. The pronounced woodland environment is intriguing and probably accounts for the woodland aspect to the animal husbandry. This may mean that the sites were a distinctive and relatively specialised element in the settlement system, the exploitation of woodland products being an obvious possibility. It is worth noting that pigs are reported to be relatively common on high-status sites in eastern England, where they account for 20–50% of the three main food species (King 1991, 16–17). It has been suggested that pork was a high status, possibly ‘gallicised’ food in the late Iron Age. There are clearly problems with using animal bone assemblages as an indication of status, since for significant variation to be present the particular status food would need to be dominant in the assemblage, implying that the status applied to most consumers on the site rather than a minor elite. Neither Bagendon nor Ditches yielded particularly large numbers of pig bones and an ecological rather than status-related explanation of animal husbandry may be preferred at the Duntisbournes. However, the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Pliny the Elder’s remark that the Druids of Britain worshipped in oaktree groves (Pliny NH, XVI, 249) indicates that woodland sites may have had a specifically religious role and concomitant political importance. The initial, late Iron Age, ditches of the Uley Shrines were apparently dug in woodland (Meddens 1993, 253–4).

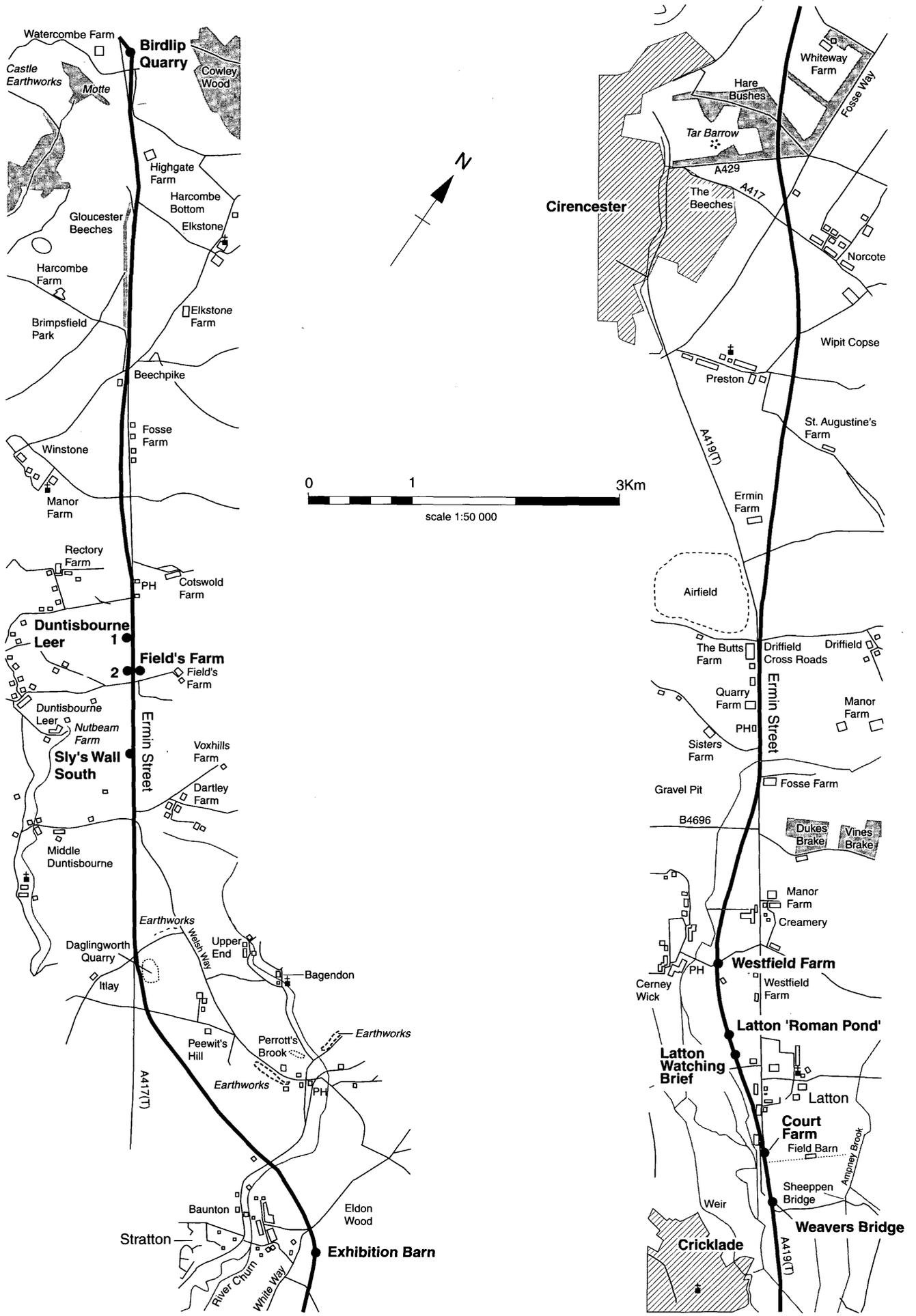


Figure 4.1 Locations of Roman sites.