

Chapter 6: Areas M, P and Junction 10

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AREA M

Site location and summary

Area M, centred on NGR TL 095 125, occupied a long narrow strip on the east side of the M1 about 1km north of The Aubreys (see Fig. 1.2). The underlying geology in this area is Upper Chalk, overlain by clay-with-flints (see Fig. 1.3). The ground sloped up to north and south from a low point in the centre, varying between 131m aOD at its lowest point and 134m aOD at its highest. The archaeological features consisted principally of ditches, possibly forming trackways and enclosures, and while these were clearly of more than one phase the pottery dated consistently to the late Iron Age-early Roman period, and there was no evidence for significant activity after the 1st century AD.

Phasing

Activity at Area M can be divided into two main phases. In the first phase, dating to the middle-late Iron Age, two ditches (3022 and 3008), with a posthole (3034) to their east, defined a NE-SW-aligned boundary running across the site. In the second phase, dating to the early Roman period, these were infilled and replaced by a series of ditches (3052, 3012, 3004 and 3006) on the same alignment as the Iron Age boundary. The ditches may have defined two trackways, the first (3052 and 3012) running SW-NE, before turning east across the line of the earlier boundary ditch, and the second (3004 and 3006) continuing to the north-east. Alternatively, these features may have comprised successive boundary ditches for enclosures located to their east. In addition, there were three short stretches of inter-cutting ditch (3057, 3061 and 3059), on an east-west alignment, close to the southern limit of the excavated area. A 3rd-4th-century coin came from the topsoil.

Middle-late Iron Age activity (Fig. 6.1)

Summary

Middle-late Iron Age activity comprised ditches 3008 and 3022, gully 3024 and pit 3034. Although the linear features cannot have been exactly of the same date, as they were inter-cutting, they appear to have been broadly contemporary.

Ditches 3008 and 3022, and gully 3024

Ditches 3008 and 3022 defined a single boundary, possibly the edge of an enclosure. The enclosure boundary was approximately 65m in length, aligned roughly north-south and turned a rounded corner to the west at its northern end. Here it ran beyond the limit of excavation, while to the south it petered out a few metres short of the edge of the site. Ditch 3008 formed the northern arm and north-east corner of the boundary, giving a minimum east-west dimension of c 15m for the possible enclosure. This ditch had a U-shaped profile and was up to 0.9m wide and 0.18m deep. The fills comprised silty clays, with frequent flint inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks. Ditch 3008 produced 12 sherds of Iron Age and late Iron Age-early Roman pottery, weighing 29g, along with 11 fragments of worked flint. Cutting ditch 3008 at its southern end was a short length of gully (3024), aligned roughly east-west and linking 3008 with the longer north-south-aligned ditch 3022. Gully 3024 was only 1.9m long, 0.34m wide and 0.15m deep, with a gently concave base and steeply sloping sides. Its fill comprised clay silt, with frequent flint inclusions. The gully was cut by ditch/gully 3022, which continued the line of ditch 3008 southwards, with a slight eastward kink in the alignment at the midpoint of the feature, which had a surviving length of 47 m. The ditch/gully was 0.4m wide and 0.12m deep, with a flat base and steeply sloping sides. The single fill consisted of a clay silt, with frequent inclusions of flint, and produced no finds aside from a single flint flake.

Pit 3034

A small pit (3034) lay approximately 7m to the east of ditch 3022, about halfway down its length. The pit was sub-circular in plan, U-shaped in profile and measured 0.7m in diameter with a 0.12m depth. Its fill comprised silty clay, with occasional inclusions of flint and charcoal flecks.

Early Roman activity (Fig. 6.1)

Summary

The early Roman activity comprised seven ditches, potentially defining two trackways together with the edge of an enclosure, or possibly representing successive boundaries of two enclosures. Together

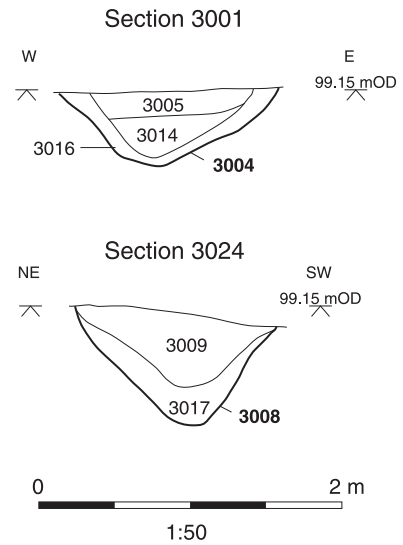
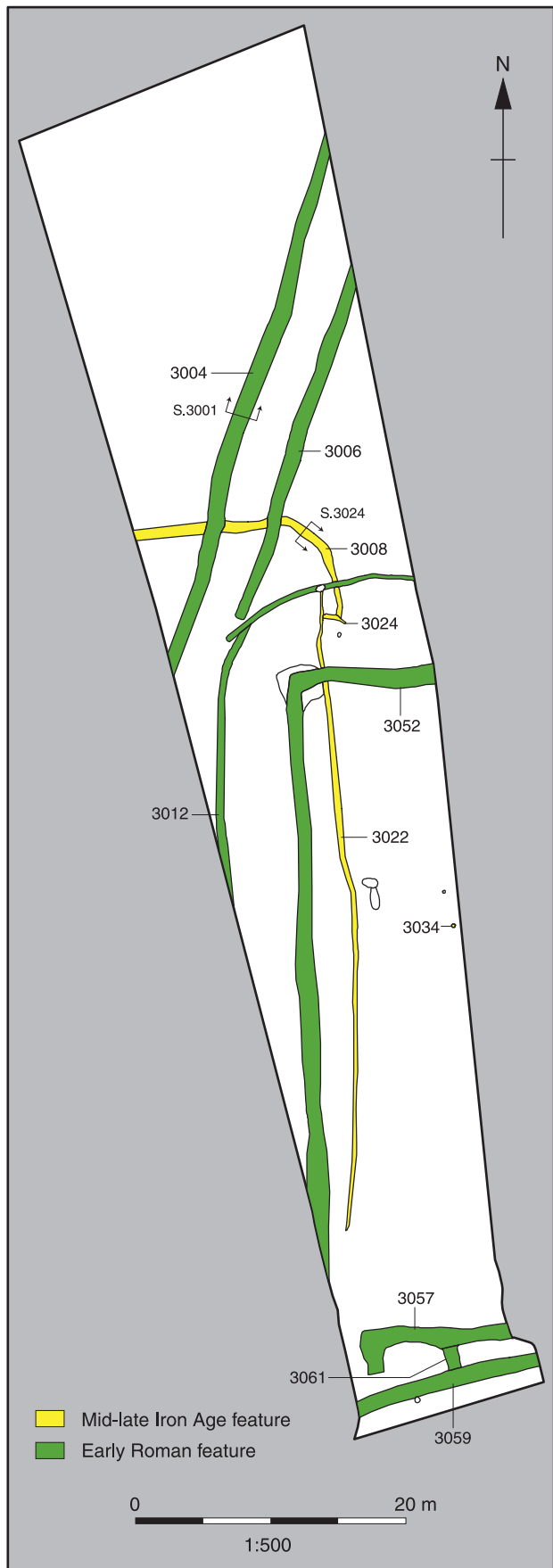


Fig. 6.1 (left and above) Site M, mid-late Roman activity, with sections

ditches 3012 and 3052 may have defined a narrow trackway, at least 49m in length and 5m wide, cutting across the line of middle-late Iron Age ditch 3022. Alternatively, they may have represented successive boundary ditches for an enclosure which lay predominantly to the east. To the north-east of ditches 3052 and 3012, ditches 3004 and 3006 continued on a NNE-SSW alignment. Together these ditches may have defined a second, narrow trackway, 3m in width, or may have formed successive boundary ditches for an enclosure, which again lay predominantly to the east.

At the southern limit of the excavation ditches 3057 and 3059, on an east-west alignment, may have defined the southern limit of the possible enclosure bounded by ditch 3052 to the north-west, but more likely related to a possible enclosure lying to the south, further components of which were not observed.

Ditch 3052 (Fig. 6.2)

A 45m length of the north-south arm of probable enclosure ditch 3052 lay within the excavated area. At its northern end it turned to the east, ran for 10m and then beyond the limit of excavation. The corner of this probable enclosure was therefore square. The ditch was 1.2m wide, 0.94m deep and was V-shaped in profile. It was filled with silty clay, with frequent flint inclusions, and produced 478 sherds of early Roman pottery, weighing 2746g, two fragments of tile and three flint flakes.

Ditch/gully 3012 (Fig. 6.2)

Feature 3012 lay north and west of ditch 3052, 4.5-5m distant and roughly parallel to it on the west

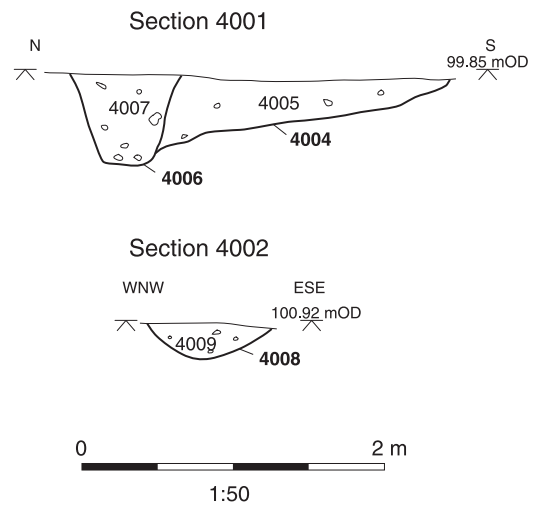
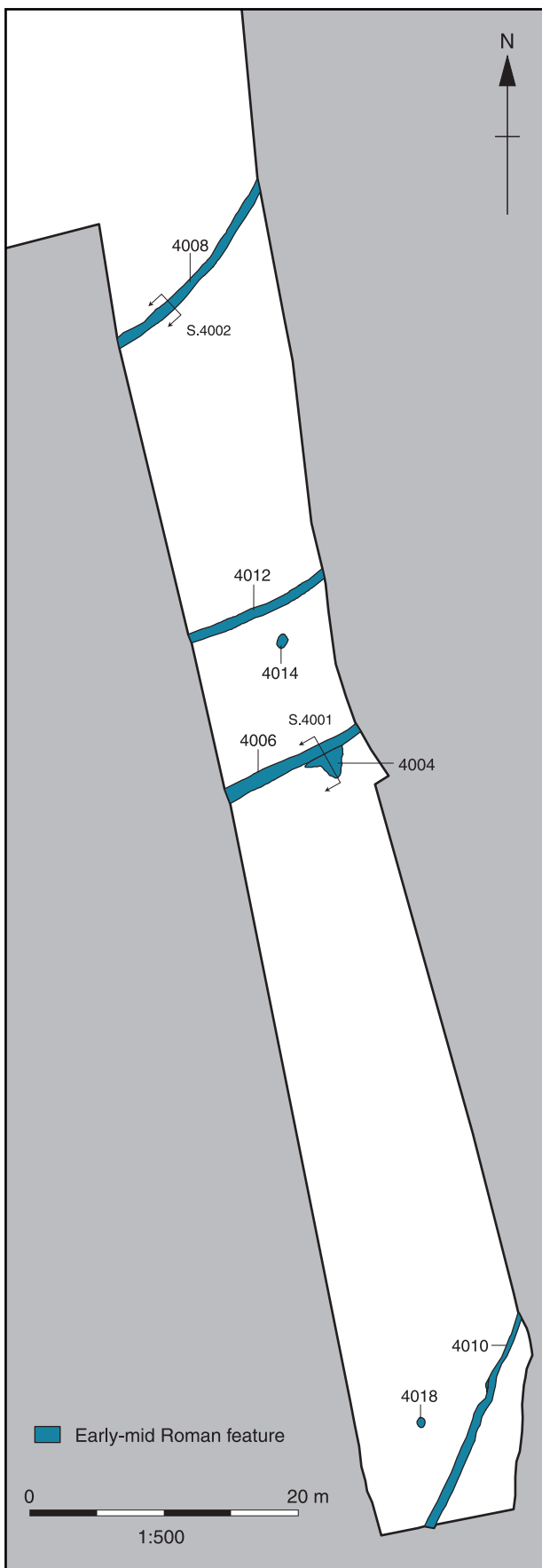


Fig. 6.2 (left and above) Site P, early-mid Roman activity, with sections

and up to 6.5m distant on the north side, where the correspondence of alignment was less precise and the gully was more curvilinear in plan. A length of approximately 37m lay within the excavated area. The gully ranged from c 0.35-0.7m wide and was up to 0.35m deep, with a V-shaped profile. It had been recut at least once. The fills comprised silty clay, with the upper fills partially consisting of flint cobbles. Inclusions consisted of frequent charcoal flecks and fragments of flint. In addition, the fills produced a single sherd of Roman pottery, along with four sherds of prehistoric material, weighing 13g, a single flint flake and a fragment of burnt unworked flint.

Trackway ditches 3004 and 3006 (Fig. 6.2)

Parallel ditches 3004 and 3006, set 3-3.5m apart, defined a probable trackway aligned NNE-SSW and contiguous gully 3012, which may have defined the outer boundary of an adjacent enclosure (see above). The easterly ditch (3006) had a surviving length of c 28m and terminated at the outer north-west corner of the possible enclosure, adjacent to gully 3012. The ditch was up to 1.1m wide and 0.3m deep, with a bowl-shaped profile. It was filled with deposits of silty clay, with moderate inclusions of flint and charcoal flecks, which produced four sherds of early Roman pottery, weighing 5g.

Ditch 3004 to the west was up to 1.2m wide and 0.5m deep and a 42m length lay within the excavated area. The ditch had a bowl-shaped profile. Its fills comprised silty clay with occasional stone inclusions and contained a single sherd (8g) of middle Iron Age pottery, five sherds (9g) of early Roman pottery and three flint flakes.

Ditches 3057, 3059 and 3061 (Fig. 6.2)

Of these three ditches, the most northerly, east-west-aligned ditch 3057, extended 12m from the east baulk of the site and was 1m wide and 0.34m deep. It appeared to turn sharply to the south at its western end, but the extent of the southward projection is unknown. The ditch had a flat base with steeply sloping sides and it contained a single fill, with occasional inclusions of flint and charcoal flecks. Ditch 3059 to the south extended the full width of the site (at this point 13.5m) on an ENE-WSW alignment. It was up to 1.4m wide, 0.3m deep and like 3057 was flat based with steeply sloping sides. The fill of ditch 3059 comprised silty clay, with occasional flint inclusions and charcoal flecks, and it produced two sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery, weighing 9g.

Lying between, and cut by, ditches 3057 and 3059 was a 1.7m-long, north-south-aligned ditch (3061). This feature had a flat base and was 1m wide and 0.16m deep. The single fill consisted of silty clay, with frequent inclusions of flint and occasional charcoal flecks. Feature 3061 was not traced either north of 3057 or south of 3059. The significance of this is uncertain, but excavation of the intersection of 3061 and 3057 suggested that there was a slightly curving junction in their eastern angle, which might imply that 3061 was originally continuous with an early phase of 3057. On this basis it can be tentatively suggested that 3061 and the eastern part of 3057 initially formed the north-west corner of an enclosure, which was later extended to the west (by a secondary phase of ditch 3057 incorporating the corner observed at the west end of that ditch). It might be further speculated that the north side of the enclosure was then subsequently redefined south of its original position by ditch 3059. However, the principal problem with this hypothesis is the lack of evidence for the southerly continuation (beyond 3059) of either 3061 or the extended version of 3057, but the poor definition of the southward arm of the latter suggests that there were difficulties with the identification of features in this area.

AREA P

Site location and summary

Area P, centred on NGR TL 093 136, was located on the east side of the M1 about 1km north of Area M and 2km north of The Aubreys (see Fig. 1.2). The underlying geology of the site comprises clay-with-flints overlying Upper Chalk (see Fig. 1.3) and it lies on relatively high ground (140m aOD), with slopes down to the north-east, east and south. The excavations revealed four ditches, two of which (4008 and 4010) were isolated features and two defined a possible trackway (4006 and 4012). Other features discovered in this area included a scatter of pits, all probably of early-middle Roman date.

Ditches 4006, 4008, 4010 and 4012 (Fig. 6.2)

The principal features in this area were four ditches. At the north end of the site ditch 4008 ran roughly NE-SW across the area on a slightly curving alignment. It measured 0.8m wide, 0.28m deep and had a bowl-shaped profile, with a fill comprising clay silt, with occasional flint inclusions. Ditch 4008 was roughly paralleled by a straighter NNE-SSW-aligned ditch (4010), located some 80-90m to the south at the southern extremity of the site. Ditch 4010 had a bowl-shaped profile and measured 0.6m wide by 0.16m deep. Its fill comprised clay silt with occasional inclusions of flint.

Between these two features was a further pair of ditches, 4012 to the north and 4006 to the south. These were 10m apart and aligned approximately ENE-WSW, both turning slightly more northerly at the eastern edge of the site. Ditch 4012 had a regular, shallow V-shaped profile and was 0.8m wide and up to 0.32m deep, with a fill comprising clay silt, with frequent flint inclusions. Ditch 4006 was more steeply V shaped and measured 0.72m wide by c 0.6m deep. It was filled with silty clay containing moderate flint inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks.

Pits 4014 and 4018 and tree-throw hole 4004 (Fig. 6.2)

A few scattered pits were present. Pit 4014, which was sub-circular and measured 1.2m in diameter by 0.33m deep, lay just south of ditch 4012 and an irregular feature (4004), measuring 2.98m long by 0.45m deep, which was probably a tree-throw hole, was cut by the southern edge of ditch 4006. Pit 4018, which was also sub-circular, up to 0.68m across and 0.3m deep, lay some 5m west of ditch 4010 at the south end of the site. All of these features were filled with single deposits of clay silt with inclusions of flint and charcoal flecks.

Chronology and phasing

Pottery was recovered from the fills of all the ditches and from pit 4014. The groups from ditches 4008 and 4012 contained very small sherds (respectively 15 sherds weighing 13g and 22 sherds weighing 82g) of late Iron Age-early Roman character. In contrast, ditches 4006 and 4010 produced larger groups (392 sherds weighing 3324g and 98 sherds weighing 762g) of more substantial sherds, both groups dated around the end of the 2nd-early 3rd century. The pottery from pit 4014 was less diagnostic but a similar date is very likely. Other finds comprised worked flints and fragments of animal bone from ditch 4008 and pit 4014, and brick and tile from ditches 4008 and 4012, and pit 4014.

Superficially the dating evidence indicates an early Roman date for the two northerly ditches and a middle Roman date for the two to the south.



Fig. 6.3 Junction 10, plan of all features

However, the parallel layout of ditches 4012 and 4006 suggests, notwithstanding their rather different sizes, that these were contemporary features, perhaps defining an ENE-WSW-aligned trackway. It is possible that all the features on the site were of the same date, but the presence of some late Iron Age-early Roman pottery indicates some activity of that period in the vicinity, and it can be suggested that ditch 4008 at the north end of the site was perhaps the earliest feature. In view of the absence of features, or deposits indicating domestic activity, the quantities of pottery deposited in ditch 4010 and, in particular, in 4006, are notable. The latter assemblage included samian ware and amphora sherds as well as locally and regionally produced coarse wares. If ditch 4006 did define the south edge of a trackway it may be that the pottery contained within it was brought from a nearby settlement located alongside the trackway. Whether this settlement lay to east or west of the present site is, however, unknown.

JUNCTION 10

Site Location and summary

The limited Junction 10 excavations took place within an irregularly shaped area of approximately 30ha centred on NGR TL 092179 lying south-east of Junction 10 of the M1 and bounded on the east by the A1081, and on the south by the minor road to Slip End (see Fig. 1.2). The underlying geology comprised clay-with-flints overlying Upper Chalk (see Fig. 1.3) and the site area sloped down from west to east (from *c* 150m aOD to *c* 132m aOD), lying on the west side of a shallow dry valley.

The excavations concentrated on two areas roughly measuring 138 x 110m and 158 x 130m. The westernmost area contained a scatter of quarry pits and a stretch of ditch (1046) orientated NW-SE, none of which contained any dating evidence. The eastern area contained a posthole alignment or possible fenceline (1017), also orientated NW-SE. Limited evidence suggests that the alignment may have dated to the late Iron Age-early Roman period.

Quarry pit group 1004 (Fig. 6.3)

The quarry pit group comprised five sub-circular

pits with flat bases and steeply sloping or stepped sides. The pits generally ranged between 0.7m and 1.4m in diameter and 0.43m and 1.73m in depth, although pit 1004 was much more substantial, being 12m long, 5.35m wide and 1.73m deep. All of the pits contained single fills of clay silt, with flint inclusions, apart from pit 1004, which held six fills.

Ditch 1046 (Fig. 6.3)

Ditch 1046 ran roughly north-west for a distance of *c* 62m from the south-east edge of the western area ending in a well-defined terminal. It was up to 0.8m wide and 0.45m deep and had a flat base with near-vertical sides. The ditch fills comprised clay silts with inclusions of flint fragments. A V-shaped recut with an identical fill was observed cutting the secondary ditch fill, but it is unclear whether or not this ran along the entire length of the ditch, as the ditch was only subjected to a single 1m-long archaeological intervention.

Fenceline 1017

Fenceline 1017 comprising 13 sub-circular postholes, was located towards the west edge of the eastern area. The alignment was almost north-south and extended for 32m, with no clear sign at either end that it continued further than this distance. The postholes were generally flat based with steeply sloping sides and typically measured 0.55m in diameter by 0.16m in depth. Their fills comprised silty clay with inclusions of moderate sub-angular flint and they were generally spaced between 2m and 3m apart, with a gap of 5m separating the two most northerly features from the rest. One of the postholes in this alignment produced two sherds of late Iron Age-early Roman grog-tempered pottery and a single sherd of sand and limestone-tempered material.

Other features

A thin scatter of possible pits and postholes was mapped across part of the Junction 10 area, including examples within the two areas given more detailed attention. None of these features was dated and their interpretation is uncertain.