

Chapter 2 Phasing Summary

INTRODUCTION

The problematical nature of the stratigraphy at Thornhill Farm has been highlighted in the previous chapter, along with the methodology used to establish a phasing sequence. This chapter presents a summary of the phasing established for the site, while a detailed archaeological narrative can be found in Chapter 3. It must be reiterated that features have been assigned to specific phases with varying levels of confidence, with all strands of evidence being combined to produce a 'best fit'. In attempting to phase the site the evidence from cropmarks, the salvage areas and excavation trenches has been considered in an attempt to reconstruct the development of the landscape. As a result, certain features can only be integrated into the phasing at a less certain level, and in some cases it is impossible to be certain to which of several phases particular features belonged. As a consequence, the phasing diagrams presented throughout the volume display two different levels of confidence in the placement of features in specific periods. Those features which can only be phased with a lower level of confidence are shown as a grey tint in the figures, and several features occur on more than one period plan in this form. Nevertheless, the overall phase sequence is clear, and a sound chronological framework has been established for the site, ranging from the middle Iron Age to the later Roman period.

PERIOD A: MIDDLE IRON AGE *c* 300–50 BC (Fig. 2.1)

The main features belonging to this period were found in Trench 8 and consisted of a house gully and associated features including pits, an enclosure and ditches. In the salvage areas two more potential house gullies were located, as well as an area of pits. One pit in Trench 22 contained an entire pot and may represent a 'special deposit'. The pottery which dates to this period (Group 1) was found widely distributed across the site predominantly as redeposited material in later contexts. It is argued that the quantity of redeposited material attests to generalised activity in this period. Analysis of the redeposited material in an attempt to identify foci of Period A activity proved inconclusive.

PERIOD B: LATE IRON AGE *c* 50 BC–AD 1

There are few features which can be ascribed to this period, which is defined on the basis of the Group 2 pottery. Indeed the limited quantities of Group 2 material (Table 3.6) would suggest that activity during

this period was relatively insubstantial in comparison with subsequent periods, and was probably more similar in character to the Period A occupation than to the activity which followed it. No settlement focus can be defined and there is only minimal evidence for a single structure and none for coherent enclosures. The only features which might belong to this period are relatively isolated from each other, and as a consequence it is difficult to understand their context.

PERIOD C: LATE IRON AGE *c* AD 1–50 (Fig. 2.2)

This period sees a radical change from the dispersed deposits and perhaps ephemeral occupation which characterised Periods A and B. In the northern part of the site (Trenches 9 and 22) large rectilinear enclosures were laid out on the gravel terrace, which were associated with roundhouses and a long linear boundary. To the south-west there was another potential boundary cutting across the terrace and a loosely gridded enclosure system. The period is dated by the Group 3 pottery.

PERIOD D: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD *c* AD 50–100 (Fig. 2.3)

Period D was largely dominated by a tightly knit group of enclosures in the Northern Area (Trenches 9 and 22). The enclosures seem to have been arranged around a central enclosure, E58. To the north-west of the enclosures a major driveway suggests that the movement of livestock may have been undertaken on a relatively large scale. The western boundary ditch recorded in Trench 8 was elaborated and recut on numerous occasions.

PERIOD E: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD *c* AD 75–120 (Fig. 2.4)

Period E was characterised by two separate groups of enclosures centred within Trench 7 and Trenches 9 and 22. The apparent two-fold concentration of northern and southern enclosures may be more apparent than real, however, as the positioning of open area trenches inevitably distorts the true picture. The southern enclosures (Trench 7) were broadly oriented NW–SE, with a large, subrectangular enclosure (E26) perhaps providing the central point of the group. The northern group of enclosures (Trenches 9 and 22) were dominated by a large double celled enclosure (E62/E75). A number of smaller, subrectangular enclosures quite different in character to E62/E75 were also recorded.

Thornhill Farm, Fairford

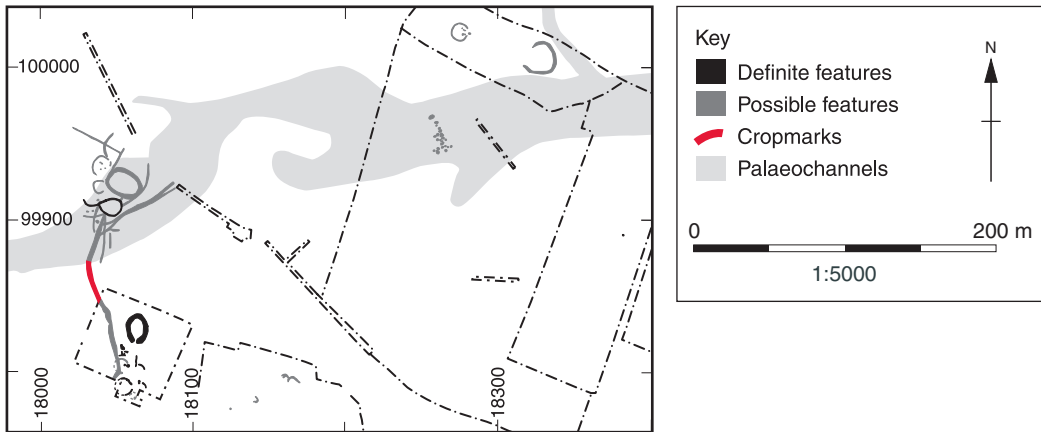


Fig. 2.1

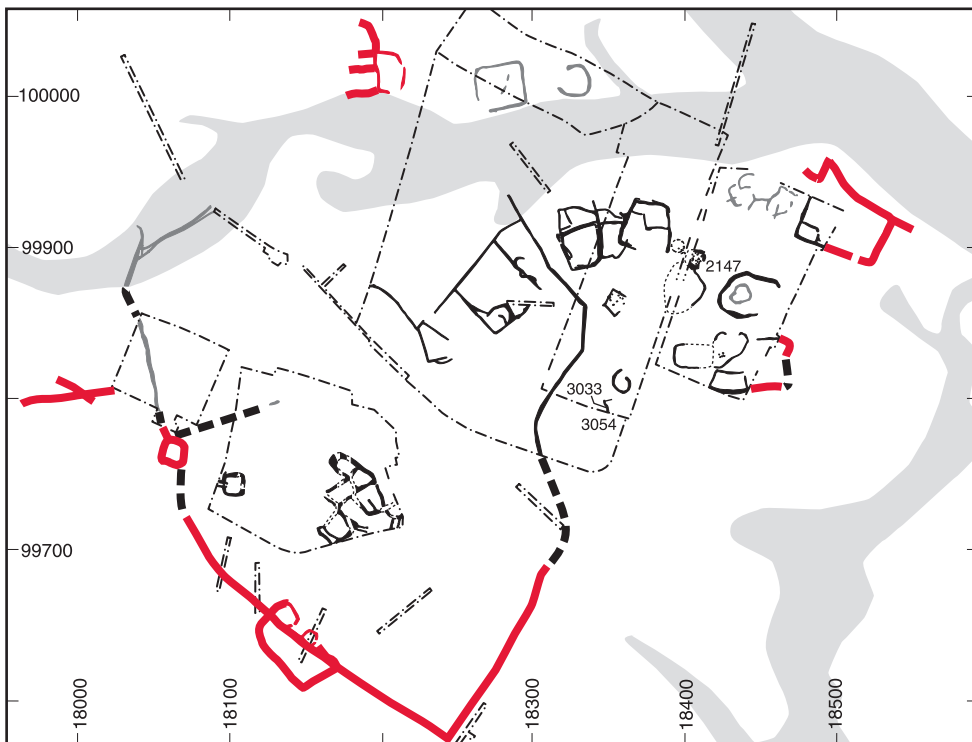


Fig. 2.2

Fig. 2.1 (above): Period A – middle Iron Age, c 300–50 BC

Fig. 2.2 (below) Period C – late Iron Age, c AD 1–50

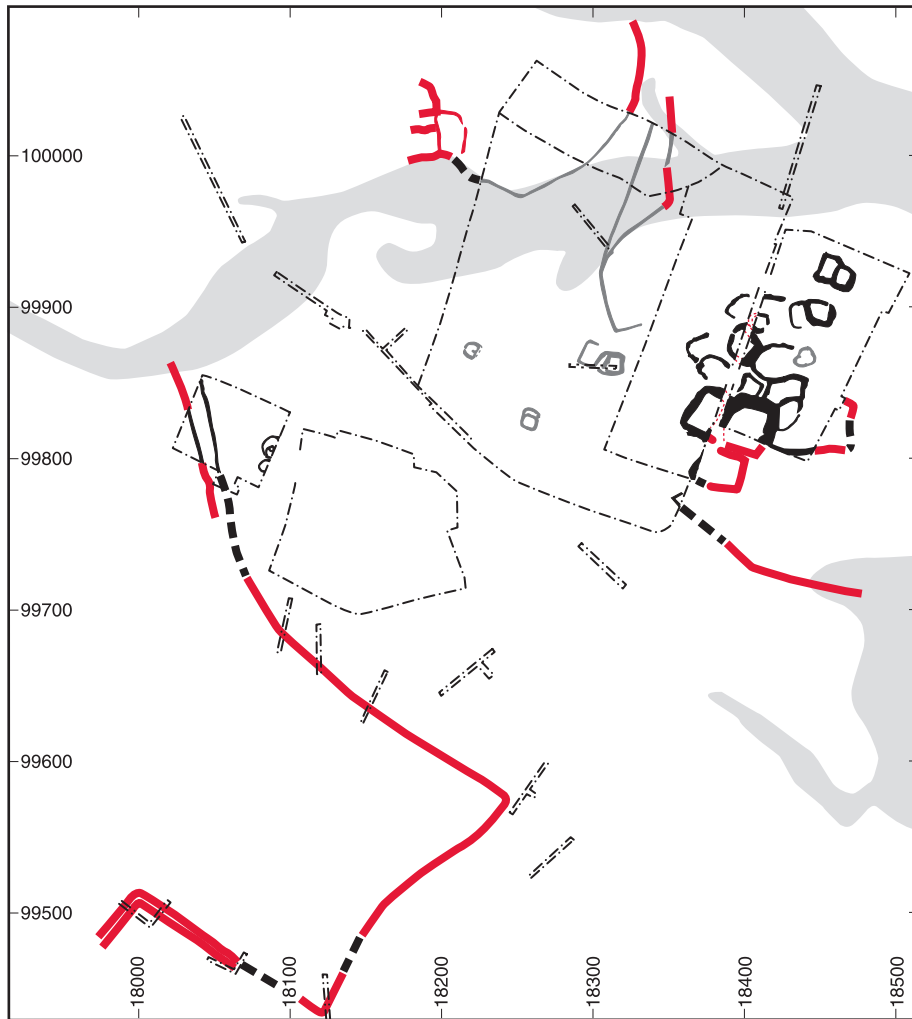


Fig. 2.3



Fig. 2.4

Fig. 2.3 (above) Period D – early Roman Period, c AD 50–100

Fig. 2.4 (below) Period E – early Roman Period, c AD 75–120

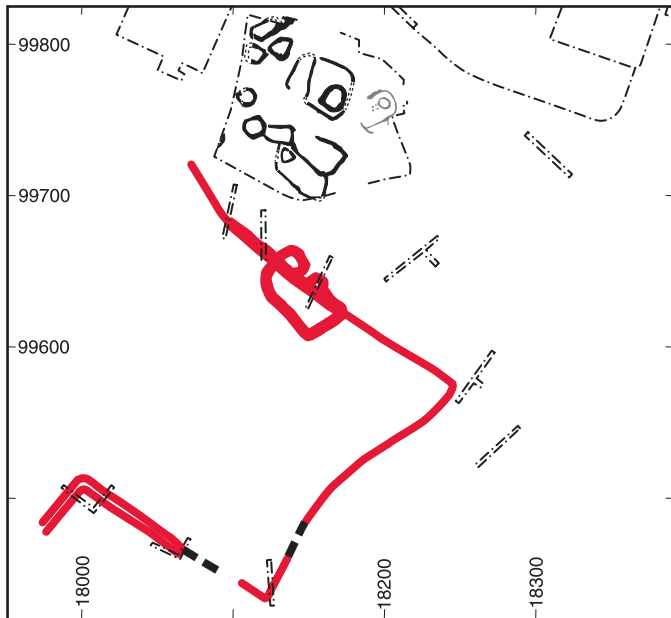


Fig. 2.5

Fig. 2.5 (above) Period F – early Roman Period, c AD 75–120

Fig. 2.6 (below) Period G – early Roman Period, c 2nd Century AD

Fig. 2.7 (opposite) Period H – late Roman Period, c 3rd–4th Century AD

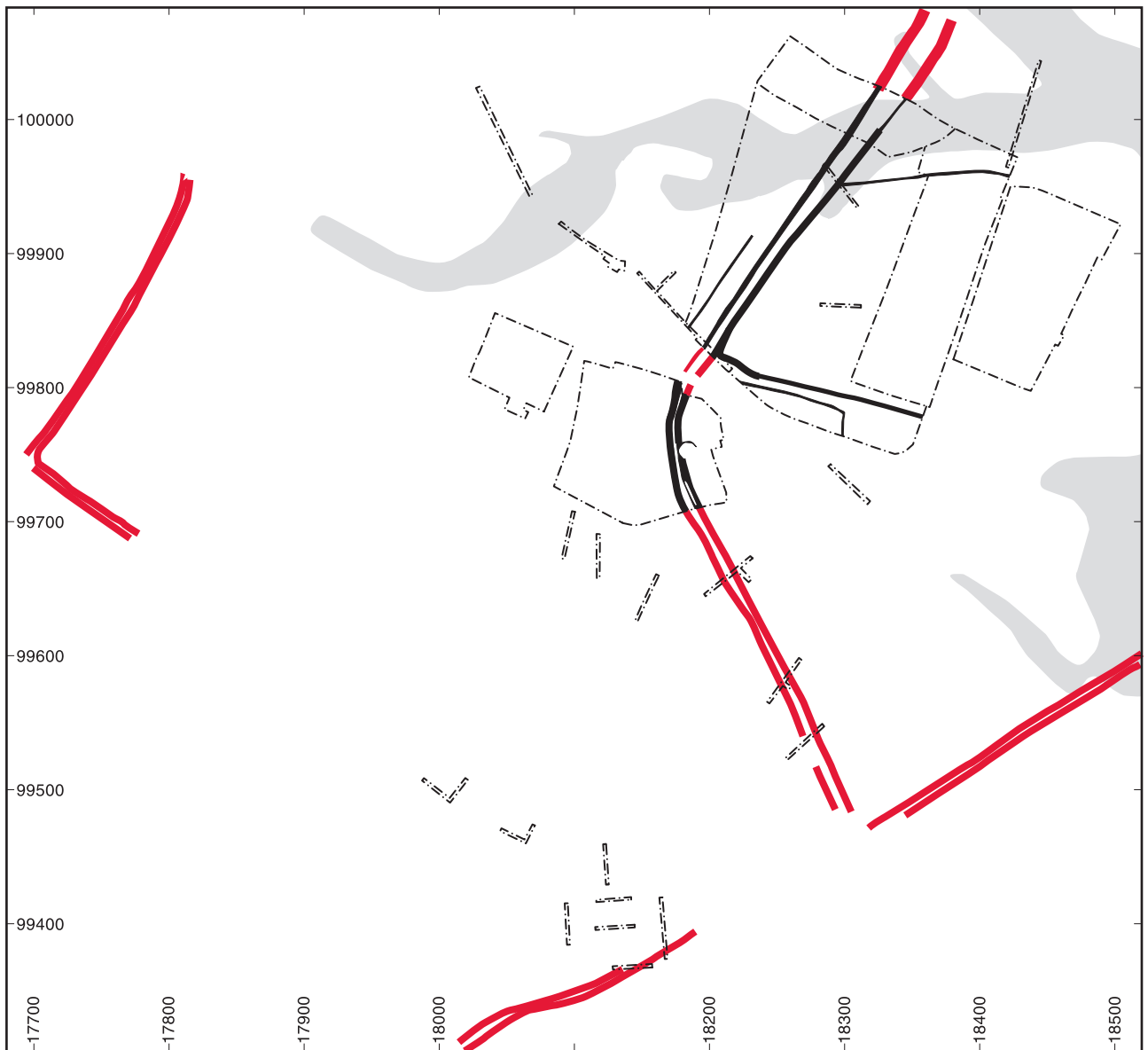
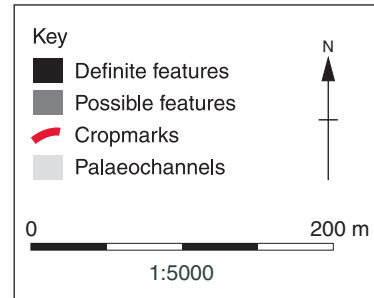


Fig. 2.6

PERIOD F: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD
c AD 75–120 (Fig. 2.5)

This period was characterised by small clusters of enclosures loosely arranged around a large subrectangular enclosure (E29) in Trench 7. The enclosures within individual clusters shared similar characteristics and may have served particular functions as a group. Chronologically, Period F could not be distinguished from Period E.

PERIOD G: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD
 2nd CENTURY AD (Fig. 2.6)

Period G saw a radical change in the character of the archaeology at Thornhill Farm. The numerous groups of intensively recut enclosures, which were so typical of earlier periods, appear to have gone out of use, and the landscape was reorganised on a considerable scale. The most significant features

were newly constructed trackways, which crossed the site and divided up the landscape, seemingly without any regard for earlier activity. There is no evidence for actual occupation at the site from this period. Instead it seems to have formed part of an outlying field and trackway system. There was thus a shift of emphasis from the movement of animals within the site, to movement through its former area, with it now being tied into a wider landscape of exploitation.

PERIOD H: LATE ROMAN PERIOD
 3rd–4th CENTURY AD (Fig. 2.7)

In the late Roman period modifications were made to the landscape which suggest that the major trackway 301 was no longer in use. The period was dominated by a number of linear boundaries, which stretched over the landscape for considerable distances.

