

Chapter 3 Archaeological Description

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INTRODUCTION

The discussion of post-excavation methodology (Chapter 1) should make it apparent that the phasing presented is not considered definitive. Rather, it represents the 'best fit' which could be achieved within the time constraints of the analytical phase. The site has been broken down into eight periods, with features phased at a lower level of confidence shown in grey (see Chapter 2 for phasing summary).

PERIOD A: MIDDLE IRON AGE c 300–50 BC (Fig. 3.1)

Summary

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, and an area of pits. A 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.

Distribution of redeposited Group 1 pottery

This period was dated by Group 1 pottery, which was distributed widely across all of the trenches and occurred in 17% of the contexts. In the majority of cases the pottery was clearly redeposited (Table 3.1), being found in conjunction with Group 2–5 pottery, often in the stratigraphically later stages of the site. Except in Trench 8, contexts which contained only Period 1 pottery were rare and their date was extremely difficult to assess. The high incidence of redeposition meant that an isolated feature with a limited Group 1 assemblage in Trenches 7, 9 and 22 could not be placed with a large degree of confidence within this period. The decision to assign some of these features to this period has therefore been made with caution, and the details of the argument are presented below.

Regardless of the lack of features in Trenches 7, 9 and 22 which could be ascribed to this period, the widespread distribution of Group 1 material in later contexts indicated that activity had probably taken place in these areas during Period A. An attempt to

map previous foci of Period A activity, on the basis that they might be reflected in higher densities of redeposited Group 1 pottery in later contexts, was undertaken but the results were equivocal.

Trench 7 was selected for mapping on the basis that observations during post-excavation suggested that it might contain a focus of Period A activity, particularly in the south-eastern corner of the trench. Assessment of the number of contexts with Group 1 pottery by trench seemed to support this observation (see percentages of contexts with Group 1 pot, Table 3.1), suggesting that Trench 8 was a clear focus of Period A activity, and that Trench 7 may have been a focus, with progressively less activity being noticeable in Trenches 9 and 22 in the northern half of the site.

A rapid appraisal of the potential for mapping was undertaken by breaking down the core of Trench 7 into a series of eleven 30 x 30 m boxes. The numbers of contexts, sections, pottery sherds, and their weights were calculated for each box and are shown in Table 3.2. While the data does reveal some patterning (Fig. 3.2), the numbers of variables and pottery sample sizes make interpretation difficult.

The excavation strategy of selective sampling (see Chapter 1, 'Excavation methods') in conjunction with the high levels of redeposition means that the percentage of sections with Group 1 pottery provides a more reliable index of variable density than counting pottery by context, as variation in sampling intensity would affect the retrieval of Group 1 pottery from each context. It can be seen in Figure 3.2 that there seems to be a higher incidence of Group 1 pottery in the eastern and south-eastern fringe of Trench 7 on the basis of percentages of sections.

However, several factors mean that this result needs to be treated with extreme caution. First, the pottery assemblages from each box are relatively small, as are the average quantities of material per section (Table 3.2), bringing into question the statistical validity of the results. Indeed the size of the assemblage for the entire trench is so small that it is questionable whether the resulting patterns could be seen as providing a representative sample. For instance, comparisons with the assemblage from Trench 8, a definite focus of Period A activity which produced 34% of the Group 1 pottery from 8% of the contexts, or with assemblages from middle Iron Age farmsteads in the Upper Thames Valley (Table 3.3) demonstrate that the assemblages from Trench 7 (and more particularly Trenches 9 and 22) are relatively insubstantial when the area of excavation is considered.

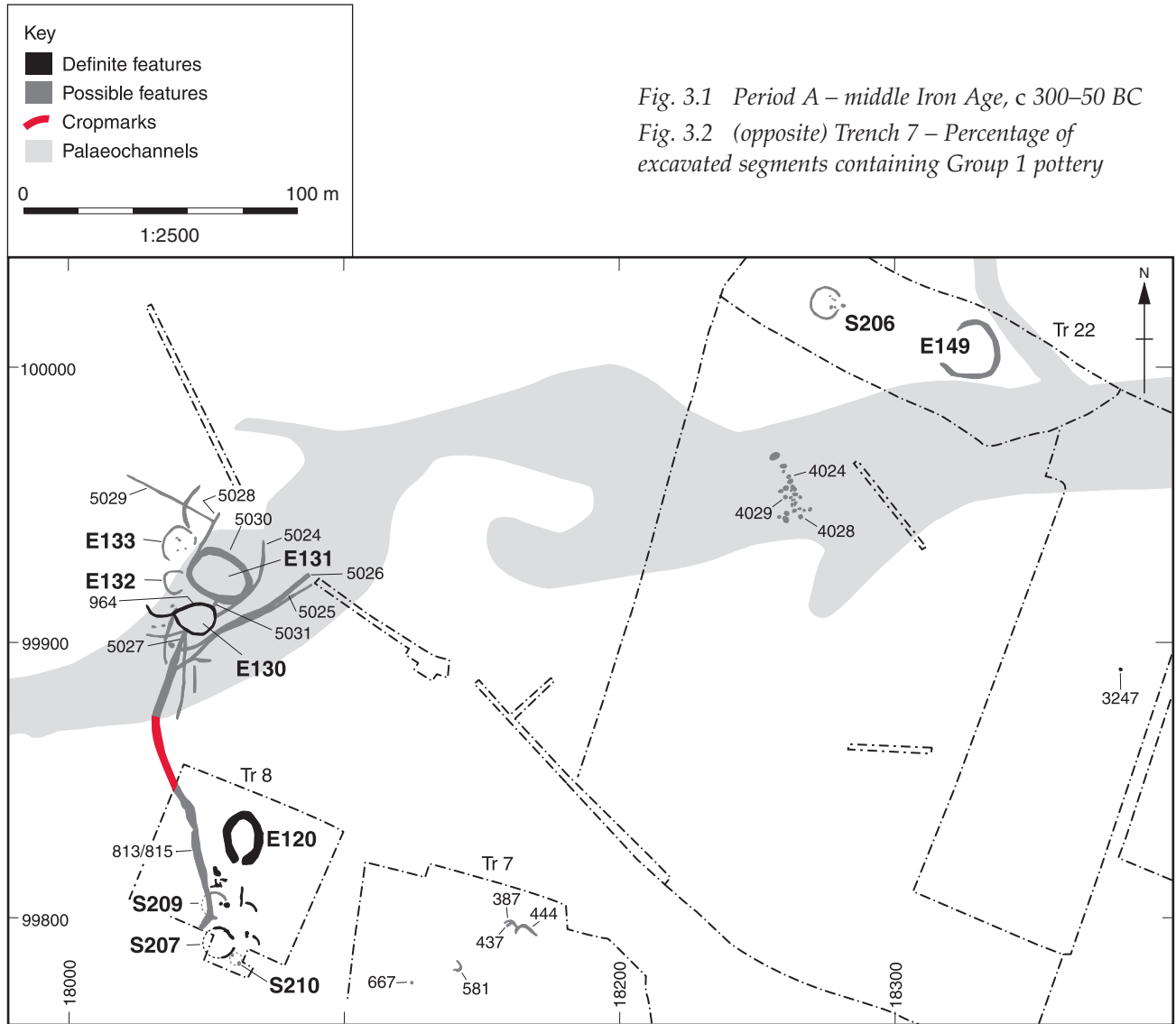


Fig. 3.1 Period A – middle Iron Age, c 300–50 BC

Fig. 3.2 (opposite) Trench 7 – Percentage of excavated segments containing Group 1 pottery

Secondly, the incidence of middle Iron Age sherds in later contexts is likely to be affected by the intensity of activity in each area during the late Iron Age/early Roman periods. Several mechanisms may have influenced the dispersal and fragmentation of the pottery: if the sherds were on or near the ground surface they may have been exposed to different degrees of trampling, and the constant recutting of features may have increased the earlier pottery's subsequent dispersal. It might

be countered that the most accurate method of mapping previous foci of Period A activity requires the calculation of the volume of soil from which the sherds were derived, in order to assess the distributions in terms of densities rather than incidences. (The investment of time required to undertake this task would have been unsustainable within the constraints of the project design and funding.) While this point is valid, it is probable, given the relatively limited range of

Table 3.1 Group 1 pottery statistics

| Trench | Total no. of contexts | All contexts with Group 1 pot | % of contexts with Group 1 pot | Contexts with only Group 1 pot | % of contexts with Group 1 pot containing only Group 1 pot |
|--------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 7 | 867 | 170 | 20 | 20 | 12 |
| 8 | 166 | 51 | 31 | 33 | 65 |
| 9 | 511 | 68 | 13 | 13 | 19 |
| 22 | 395 | 33 | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| Total | 1939 | 322 | | 70 | |

Table 3.2 Distribution of Group 1 pottery in Trench 7

| | Total sections | Total contexts | Sections Group 1 | Total sherd no. | Total pot weight (g) | Sherds/section | Weight/section | % sections Group 1 pot |
|--------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Box 1 | 178 | 51 | 13 | 42 | 232 | 3.23 | 17.84 | 7.30 |
| Box 2 | 212 | 67 | 25 | 145 | 981 | 5.80 | 39.24 | 11.79 |
| Box 3 | 79 | 26 | 9 | 18 | 73 | 2.00 | 8.11 | 11.39 |
| Box 4 | 229 | 76 | 34 | 154 | 1018 | 4.52 | 29.94 | 14.85 |
| Box 5 | 200 | 80 | 20 | 69 | 314 | 3.45 | 15.70 | 10.00 |
| Box 6 | 225 | 76 | 11 | 21 | 180 | 1.90 | 16.36 | 4.89 |
| Box 7 | 121 | 46 | 11 | 21 | 139 | 1.90 | 12.63 | 9.09 |
| Box 8 | 349 | 149 | 14 | 32 | 232 | 2.28 | 16.57 | 4.01 |
| Box 9 | 333 | 103 | 22 | 46 | 250 | 2.09 | 11.36 | 6.60 |
| Box 10 | 232 | 72 | 19 | 64 | 674 | 3.37 | 35.47 | 8.19 |
| Box 11 | 163 | 52 | 17 | 27 | 158 | 1.60 | 9.29 | 10.42 |

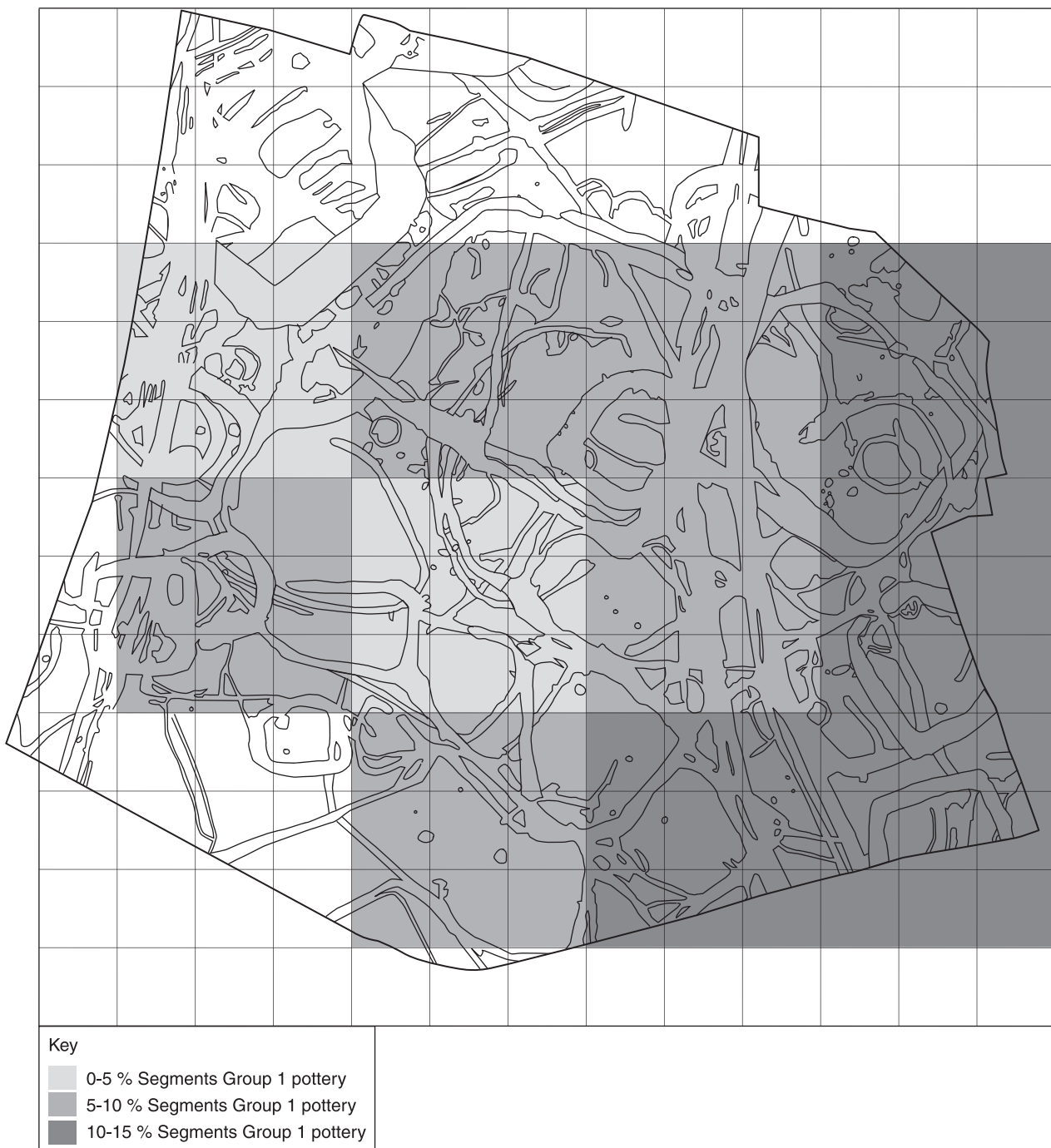


Table 3.3 Group 1 pottery by trench with comparanda

| Location | No. of sherds | Weight (g) |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Trench 7 | 786 | 5448 |
| Trench 8 | 635 | 5833 |
| Trench 9 | 421 | 3488 |
| Trench 22 | 271 | 2486 |
| Subtotal | 2113 | 17255 |
| Watkins Farm | 1450 | 30500 |
| Mingies Ditch | 3098 | - |

dimensions of the features (see burnt limestone distributions below), that the figures derived from using the percentages of sections are coarsely comparable. However, in the context of this qualification, given that the percentages of sections for the eleven boxes have a limited range from 4.01–14.85%, one might question whether the distinctions in zoning are valid, especially when the average percentage for the whole of Trench 7 is 10% (Table 3.4). Finally calculations of the percentages of sections with Group 1 pottery on a trench by trench basis (Table 3.4) show that pottery occurs in 10% of the sections within Trenches 7, 9, and 22, which would suggest that the limited variability seen in Trench 7 is insufficiently enhanced beyond the levels of background noise to be significant.

In the context of these variables the pattern presented in Figure 3.2 is extremely difficult to interpret; if, however, it is taken to reflect a previous focus of activity in the eastern/south-eastern part of Trench 7, then some of the cropmarks defined beyond the adjacent limits of the trench may belong to this period (End Plan).

In general, as stated above, there was an absence of features in Trenches 7, 9 and 22 which contained solely Group 1 pottery (this applies equally to the eastern/south-eastern part of Trench 7), and which could, therefore, be ascribed to Period A. On this basis it must be assumed that either the Period A activity represented by the residual Group 1 pottery did not involve the digging of negative features into the gravel, or that any features dug into the gravel in Period A were sufficiently infrequent to be destroyed by later activity. This would suggest that it is unlikely that there were domestic foci within the other trenches of the type found in Trench 8, as the evidence this would have left behind would probably have been detectable despite the later activity.

It is possible that the Group 1 pottery in Trenches 7, 9 and 22 is rubbish dispersed from the known occupation site in Trench 8 and the potential occupation sites identified in the salvage areas. In which case it might be viewed as background noise to the settlements. This is impossible to substantiate given the lack of any analogous data with which Thornhill might be compared.

Table 3.4 Numbers of sections with Group 1 pottery

| Trench | Total no. of sections excavated | No. of sections with Group 1 pottery | % of sections with Group 1 pottery |
|--------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 7 | 2935 | 302 | 10 |
| 8 | 324 | 55 | 17 |
| 9 | 1062 | 105 | 10 |
| 22 | 745 | 56 | 8 |

Given the opacity of the results for Trench 7, no spatial analysis of the Group 1 pottery was undertaken for the northern trenches, where the quantities of pottery were substantially less (Table 3.3), and where consequently the levels of uncertainty surrounding any resulting pattern would have been even greater.

In summation, the evidence for spatial patterning in the Group 1 pottery is equivocal and difficult to handle; there are a large number of unknowns and the quality of the evidence is poor. There is a pattern in the data from Trench 7, but its interpretation must remain uncertain.

Southern Area and Western Salvage Area

Trench 8: roundhouse and associated features (Figs 3.1 and 3.3) (S207, S209, S210, E120)

In Trench 8 a focus of Period A activity was found consisting of three potential roundhouses with an associated enclosure (E120), pits and several lengths of ditch or gully.

Structure 207 (Fig. 3.3)

Part of the arc of a gully (861, 862, 921) was found at the southern edge of Trench 8, and the subsequent extension of the trench to the south (Trench 21) located another gully (5013) on the same circumference, defining a roundhouse gully with a diameter of *c* 13 m, and an east-facing entrance 2.8 m wide. The gully was relatively shallow (0.3 m) and was most probably the drip gully, rather than the wall trench of the structure. This is a characteristic of middle Iron Age roundhouses in the Upper Thames Valley (Allen *et al.* 1984, 91–93), although this interpretation cannot be conclusive given our lack of knowledge of the degree of truncation of the Iron Age ground surface. The majority of the gully had been destroyed by the digging of the extensive N–S ditch which ran through the western part of the trench. Only two potential internal features were located: a posthole (865) located inside gully 862, adjacent to its eastern terminal, which might have been associated with a door structure for the building; and a posthole (5014) only defined as a soilmark, located just inside gully 5013 (although see below, ‘Structure 210’). The building was dated by

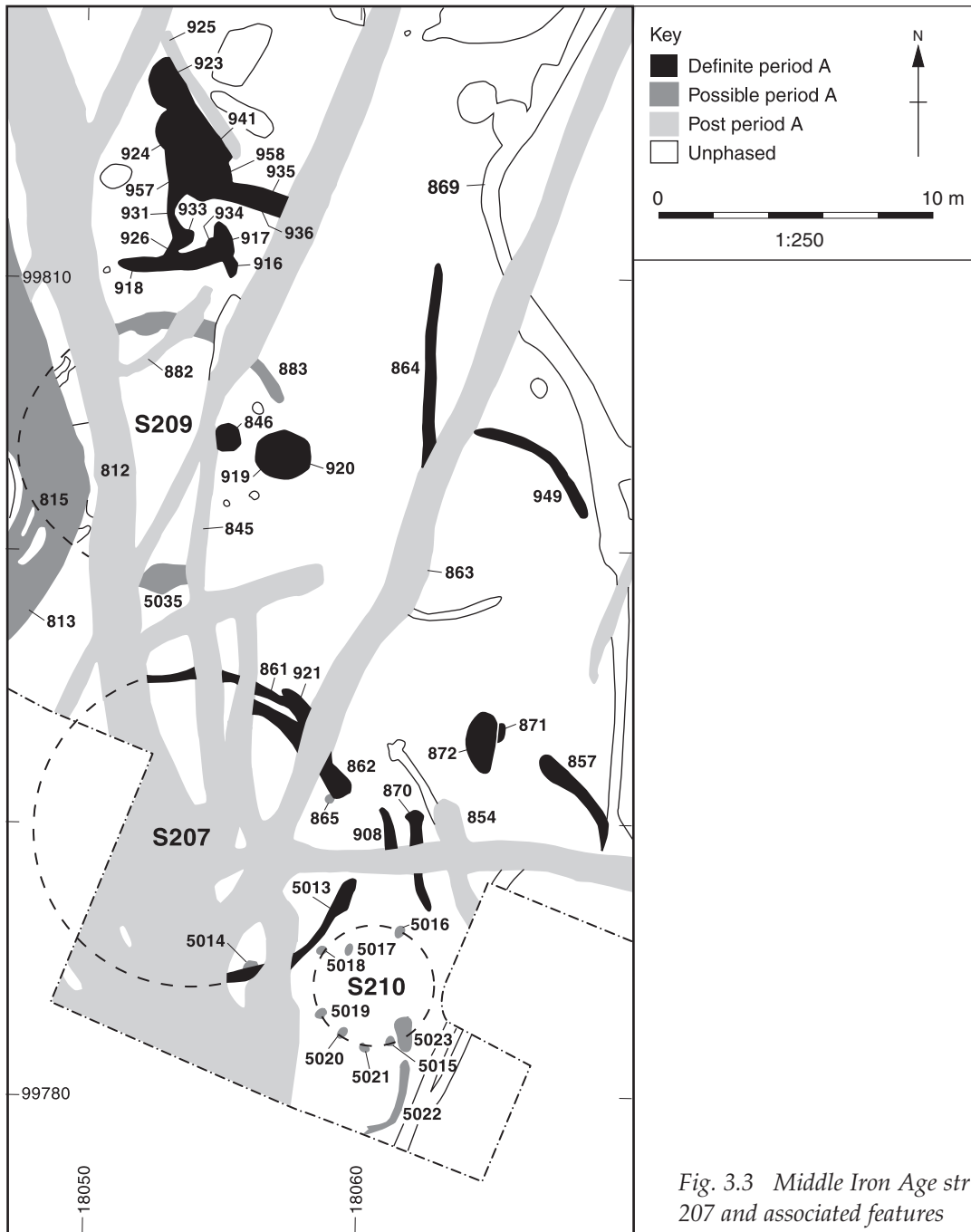


Fig. 3.3 Middle Iron Age structure 207 and associated features

the Group 1 pottery recovered from gullies 861, 862, and 921. One sherd of Group 3 pottery and three sherds of Group 4 pottery were recovered from the outermost gully recut, 921. These are interpreted as being intrusive, being introduced by a medieval furrow (863) which cut through the feature.

Two short gullies 908 and 870 were located *c* 2 m outside of the building's entrance, and may have been functionally related to the structure. Parallels for these features are, however, unknown in the Upper Thames Valley, and their interpretation is unclear. They may have been bedding trenches for windbreaks sheltering the door, although, as the

prevailing winds in the area are south-westerly/westerly (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 69), the placement of the entrance facing the east would tend to obviate the need for such a feature. Alternately it might be argued that they were unrelated to the building and were associated with the parallel, larger gully, 854, to the east which is dated by a sherd of Group 4 pottery to the second half of the 1st century AD. However, both features contained solely Group 1 pottery which would have to be interpreted as being redeposited if the gullies were to be associated with this later feature. On balance, this interpretation seems less plausible.

Structure 209 (Fig. 3.3)

A second potential structure was defined to the north of structure 207, although the evidence is weak and inconclusive. A ring gully around a building may have been defined by gullies 883 and 5035. There was no dating evidence from either of the two gullies, although gully 883 was cut by the Period B gully 882, and if the two features were related the majority of the gully arc had been destroyed by the linear boundary 812 and its associated recuts. In addition the lack of a satisfactory terminal to the southern arm of the ring gully, which would have been represented by a continuation of gully 5035 to the east of ditch 845, means that the interpretation of these features as a roundhouse remains exceptionally speculative. A further qualification to the interpretation of these two features as elements of a ring-gully is that the arc of the building would probably intercut with the linear boundary 813/815 discussed below (Fig. 3.1). This linear boundary seems to respect structure 207, and so if these gullies are part of a roundhouse it suggests that it must have preceded or succeeded the period during which the boundary was in existence.

Finally, if the roundhouse interpretation is accepted then pits 846, 919 and 920 may have been internal features within the structure. These pits were shallow and had no evidence of intentional backfilling. Pits 846 and 920 contained quantities of pottery, animal bone and burnt limestone, which might be thought to be representative of domestic debris.

Structure 210

A cluster of postholes and several gullies to the south of 209 were not excavated but were planned as soilmarks (Fig. 3.3). As a result no dating evidence was recovered from these features and their attribution to Period A is dependent on their spatial relationship with the roundhouse.

Six of the postholes in this area (5015, 5016, 5018–5021) can be placed on a circle with a diameter of 4.4 m, possibly forming a small building or pen. Circular structures of this size and method of construction are not unknown but they are considerably below the average diameters for roundhouses in the region which seems to be approximately 8–10 m. A potential late Iron Age parallel was found at Barton Court Farm, Oxon., where a structure with a diameter of *c* 5 m was located in a subsidiary enclosure within the main rectilinear enclosure (Structure I; Miles 1986, 4, fig. 6). Structures of similar dimensions have also been located at two other sites in the Upper Thames Valley: at Yarnton, Oxon., two structures, probably of middle Iron Age date, have diameters of 4.5 and 5 m (Hey and Timby forthcoming); while at Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon., a middle Iron Age structure (structure AA) with a diameter of 5.5 m was constructed adjacent to a larger round-

house (Lambrick and Allen forthcoming). The location of this last example in relation to the larger roundhouse would seem to replicate that for this putative structure and its relationship with structure 207 to the north. Even if this reconstruction is accepted, the form and function of the structure, and in particular whether it was roofed or not, remains unclear.

However, the irregularity of the spacing of the postholes ought to introduce caution in our acceptance of this reconstruction, and other arrangements of the postholes also require consideration. In particular, the postholes could be taken to form two separate fencelines. One potential fenceline could consist of postholes 5014, 5018 and 5016, which are spaced at intervals of *c* 3 m. The second fenceline comprises 5014, 5019, 5020 and 5021, and might have consisted of posts equidistantly spaced at 1 m intervals, with two postholes between posthole 5014 and the other three posts in the alignment (5019–5021) being removed by the later ditches cutting across the site (Fig. 3.3). In both these cases, the incorporation of posthole 5014 within the post alignments suggests that these postholes may not have been contemporary with the roundhouse, as any structures would have traversed the ring-gully around the building.

Given the limitations of the evidence for this part of the site, it is not possible to decide conclusively between these alternative interpretations and both possibilities should be entertained.

At an equally, if not slightly higher, speculative level, two gully lengths in this area, 5022 and 5023 (Fig. 3.3), may belong to this period, forming some form of subsidiary enclosure attached to the ring gully of roundhouse 207. Enclosures of this kind are known from a large number of Iron Age sites in the Upper Thames Valley, for instance Ashville, Abingdon, Oxon. (Parrington 1978, fig. 12), and Farmoor, Oxon. (Lambrick and Robinson 1979).

Enclosure 120 (Figs 3.1 and 3.4)

Enclosure 120 was located in the northern part of Trench 8 (Fig. 3.1), and while eight sherds were from other Ceramic Groups, the majority of the pottery (92%) consisted of Group 1 fabrics. Consequently the feature has been placed in Period A. In addition, the structured distribution of the pottery, animal bone and burnt limestone around the ditch, with material clustering in the ditch terminals (Fig. 3.4, Table 3.5), suggests that the pottery was contemporary with the period during which the enclosure was in use. The sections of the feature revealed that the substantial ditch defining the enclosure, 803 (*c* 1 m deep and 3 m wide), probably silted gradually, and it is possible that later pottery may have been incorporated in the uppermost fills of the ditch, when it may have appeared as a residual hollow on the ground surface. Alternately, in the instance of the Group 5 sherd (*c* AD 75–120), found in section 803G (Fig.

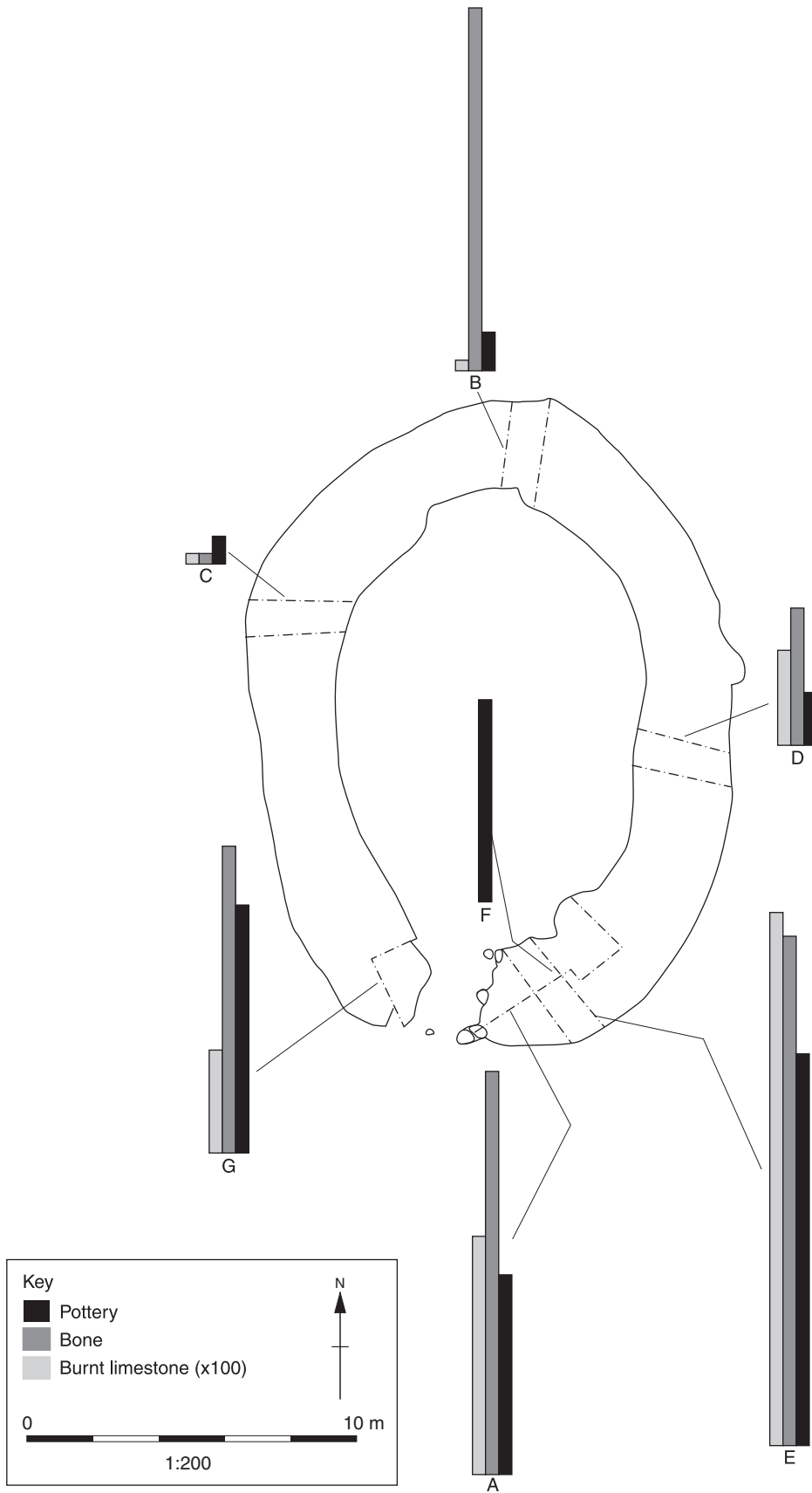


Fig. 3.4 Enclosure 120 – density of finds per m³

Table 3.5 Enclosure 120: density of finds per m³

| Section | Pot | Quantity (g) | | Volume (m ³) | Pot | Density (g/m ³) | |
|---------|------|--------------|-------|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-------|
| | | Bone | Stone | | | Bone | Stone |
| A | 325 | 550 | 27250 | 0.9 | 361 | 611 | 30277 |
| B | 25 | 825 | 8750 | 1.05 | 16 | 550 | 5833 |
| C | 25 | 25 | 6500 | 1.54 | 16 | 16 | 4220 |
| D | 225 | 325 | 12500 | 1.56 | 144 | 208 | 8013 |
| E | 1100 | 1050 | 80750 | 1.36 | 808 | 772 | 59375 |
| F | 0 | 0 | 28500 | 0.93 | 0 | 0 | 30645 |
| G | 225 | 675 | 54500 | 1.45 | 155 | 465 | 37586 |

3.4), this was probably incorporated in the ditch fill when the ditch was disturbed by a later medieval furrow (907).

The proliferation of postholes around the eastern terminal of the ditch may form part of a gate structure, while any corresponding postholes adjacent to the western ditch terminal would have been destroyed by the later medieval furrow 907.

There is no structural evidence for a building within the enclosure ditch, although this does not preclude the possibility of a building constructed using either mass-wall techniques (ie turf walls) or stake walls, which may have left no trace in the gravel. This must be considered as a possibility given the evidence from the rest of the site, which indicates variable preservation and possibly different construction techniques, although this is difficult to demonstrate definitively given our lack of detailed knowledge of the degrees of truncation of the Iron Age ground surface. For instance structure 200 (Fig. 3.6) was constructed using a post ring, while in the case of structure 207 (Fig. 3.3), only a drip gully remained. The artefactual evidence is equivocal. The concentration and relatively high densities of finds in conjunction with the high average sherd weight (16 g) intimate that there may have been a structure within the enclosure. However, this is insufficiently conclusive, and the presence of a domestic focus in the form of structure 207 to the south may provide a context for the high levels of material in the ditches of this enclosure.

Potential parallels for this enclosure from other sites suggest that, as one might anticipate, there was a diversity of potential functions for this kind of feature. At Claydon Pike, located *c* 850 m to the east, a larger ovoid middle Iron Age enclosure, 24 x 22 m (Island 1, Enclosure 2; Allen *et al.* 1984, 97, fig. 6.6/1), which might be considered broadly comparable, contained a roundhouse within a ring-gully. However, at Farmoor, Oxon., where two enclosures of more comparable form and dimensions were located, evidence for internal structures was not found. In one instance at Farmoor the lack of evidence has the same equivocal status as that for the enclosure at Thornhill Farm (Main enclosure Area II; Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 9–11,

66–68), while in the second case (Area III, enclosure 3; *ibid.* 25–26, 70–72) the close examination of the stratigraphy suggested that the enclosure could not have been used for domestic occupation, and may have functioned as either an occasional animal pen, or for the storage of materials like timber and/or hay.

Other features in Trench 8 (Figs 3.1 and 3.3)

Other features which can be assigned to Period A within Trench 8 consisted of: a pit cluster to the south of enclosure 120; three pits to the north of structure 207 (846, 919, 920); two pits, one cutting the other, to the east of the building (871 and 872); three gullies (857, 864, 949), and possibly an early phase of the much recut boundary in the western part of the trench (813, 815).

The pit cluster comprised 14 features: eight pits (916, 917, 923, 924, 933, 941, 958, 959), five gullies (918, 926, 931, 935, 936) and a posthole (934) (Fig. 3.3). The features were heavily intercutting suggesting that the location rather than the material derived from the cuts was more significant. These features were predominantly shallow (Pit Class 1; see 'Pits' below), and contained considerable quantities of pottery, animal bone and burnt limestone, which is possibly suggestive of domestic debris. There was no evidence of intentional backfilling, most of the features having only one or two fills. Given the short lengths of the gullies it is possible that they served the same function as the pits. Cremated human bone was recovered from gully 931, although the quantity was so insubstantial that it is probable that the material was redeposited.

The three pits (846, 919, 920) in between the cluster of features just described and structure 207, and the two intercutting pits to the east of the building (871 and 872) were also shallow and had no evidence of intentional backfilling (Fig. 3.3). Pits 846, 871, 872 and 920 contained quantities of pottery, animal bone, and burnt limestone, which again might be considered domestic debris.

The three gullies 857, 864 and 949 (Fig. 3.3) have been placed in this period on the slender basis of the pottery from the fills and limited stratigraphic

evidence. In no instance can any convincing interpretation be presented for the form and location of these gullies. Gully 949 might be considered to be part of the arc of a drip gully, although not enough of the feature is preserved to argue this convincingly. Additionally, the limited quantity of finds recovered makes this interpretation less likely, as one might anticipate large amounts of domestic debris from house gullies. A fragment of human bone was recovered from gully 869, to the north of 864, and may belong to period A.

Two of the stratigraphically earliest elements (813 and 815) in the complex sequence of ditches which cut across the western half of the site contained only Group 1 pottery, and these ditches have therefore been assigned to this period (Figs 3.1 and 3.3). The ditches extended beyond the northern limits of the trench and may be related to linear features found in salvage work to the north (see below, 'Western salvage'). The exact alignment and extent of the ditches at the southern end of the trench is difficult to establish with certainty as only limited sampling of the features took place. However it seems most likely that just to the north of structure 207 the alignment of the ditches changed from NNE–SSW to a NE–SW orientation, respecting the roundhouse, and then possibly extended beyond the southern limits of the trench.

Trench 7

(444/385, 581, 667, 387, 437)

In Trench 7 three contexts, 444/385, 581 and 667, were tentatively identified as potential Period A features on the basis of their pottery assemblages and their positions as the stratigraphically earliest features within the matrix (Fig. 3.1). Two of the gullies, 444/385 and 581, were the partial arcs of curvilinear gullies, while feature 667 was a pit. As the gullies 387 and 437 were of similar form and cut gully 444/385, they have also been identified as potential Period A features.

Western Salvage Area, to the north of Trench 8

(Fig. 3.1) (E130, E131, E132, E133, 964, 5024–5031)

A series of soilmarks were planned in this area, c 100 x 80 m, after the topsoil had been removed by a boxscraper. The plan revealed a series of curvilinear gullies, linear features and parts of a palaeochannel. Since it is apparent from the plan that some of these features cut others, they must be of several phases, although on spatial grounds the curvilinear elements (E130–E133) could be of a single phase. Only one ditch, 964 (E130), was sampled for dating evidence, as it was noted that it contained large quantities of finds, and Group 1 pottery was recovered. Therefore, with varying degrees of confidence, on the basis of the pottery dating and the spatial layout of the curvilinear enclosures, the curvilinear features planned in this area have been ascribed to Period A.

As stated above, it is apparent that several of the linear features (5024 and 5027) are not contemporary with enclosure 130, given that they have cut or been cut by the enclosure's boundary ditch, 964. However, it is tentatively suggested on spatial grounds that these features may have a Period A date. The basis for this argument is that a short ditch, 5031, seems to respect the boundary ditches of the enclosures 130 and 131 (964, 5030), suggesting that these features were at least partly contemporary. However, ditch 5024, which cuts across or is cut by enclosure 130, seems to respect the boundary ditch, 5030, of enclosure 131, suggesting that ditch 5024 and enclosure 131 were also at least partially contemporary, at a phase either preceding or succeeding enclosure 130. Likewise the ditches 5025 and 5026 partly follow the alignment of ditch 5024, and seem to be associated at their southern end with the north-south ditch 5027. The western side of enclosure 131 also has a linear feature, ditch 5028, which in turn seems to be associated with ditch 5029.

Although it does suggest that enclosure 131 and a large number of the linear features are broadly contemporary during a phase which either precedes or succeeds enclosure 130, this evidence is far from conclusive. Given the supposed partial contemporaneity of enclosures 130 and 131 as well, therefore, it might be suggested that all of the activity in this area is Period A in date. In terms of function, given the quantities of finds from enclosure 130 noted above, the curvilinear form and dimensions (c 14 m) of the ditch suggest that it might have been a gully around a structure.

At a more speculative level, it might be suggested that enclosure 131 had a function similar to that of enclosure 120 in Trench 8 (see above). It is broadly comparable in terms of dimensions and plan, while its relationship with the putative roundhouse, enclosure 131, is similar to that of enclosure 120 and structure 207.

The existence of a modern field boundary meant it was not possible to examine the area between Trench 8 and this area of salvage. However, it is possible that the N–S ditch, 813–815, identified in Trench 8, may have continued in this area in the form of ditch 5027. Furthermore, it is notable that several of the features in the trench overlay the palaeochannel, suggesting that by this date at least, the channel was largely filled in.

Northern Area

Pit cluster, Northern Salvage Area (Fig. 3.1)
(4024, 4028, 4029)

A cluster of 30 pits was located and planned in the middle of the old palaeochannel. Three of the pits were sampled (4024, 4028, 4029) and middle Iron Age sherds were recovered from two of them (4024 and 4028). On this basis the cluster of pits has been ascribed to Period A.

Table 3.6 Group 2 pottery statistics

| Trench | Total no. sections | Sections with Group 2 pot (%) | Total no. of contexts | No. of contexts with Group 2 pot (%) | No. of contexts with only Group 2 pot | % sections with Group 2 and later pot | No. sherds | Pot weight (g) | Average sherd weight (g) |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 7 | 2935 | 103 (3.5) | 867 | 84 (9.7) | 10 | 90.2 | 307 | 2051 | 6.7 |
| 8 | 324 | 12 (3.7) | 165 | 9 (5.5) | 2 | 76.9 | 104 | 1194 | 11.4 |
| 9 | 1062 | 73 (6.9) | 511 | 56 (10.9) | 9 | 87.7 | 581 | 2531 | 4.3 |
| 22 | 745 | 44 (5.9) | 395 | 32 (8.1) | 3 | 93.2 | 431 | 2594 | 6.0 |
| Salvage | - | - | - | 3 | - | - | 10 | 61 | 6.1 |
| Total | 5067 | 233 | 1939 | 185 | 25 | - | 1434 | 8433 | - |

Potential Period A features, Northern Salvage Area (Fig. 3.1) (S206, E149)

Structure 206

In the extreme northern part of the Northern Salvage Area a ring gully was found, planned and the terminals sectioned. Although it was noted in the field records that middle Iron Age sherds were recovered, these have since been lost during processing, and therefore our identification of this house as being of Period A date needs to be treated with considerable caution. However, it is similar in form to other middle Iron Age houses not only on this site (ie structure 207) but also within the region, and on this basis it is postulated that the structure might belong to this period.

Enclosure 149

The placement of this feature on Figure 3.1 as a possible feature of Period A date is extremely speculative. The bases for this argument are that the enclosure is stratigraphically the earliest feature in this area, and the possibility that there is a modular form to the middle Iron Age settlement on the site, consisting of a roundhouse in conjunction with a larger enclosure and possibly a pit cluster (see below). As such this enclosure would replicate the functions of enclosures 120 and 131, to which it is similar in terms of form and size.

Trenches 9 and 22 (Fig. 3.1) (3247, 3133, 3198, 3203)

In Trench 9 it was not felt that any features could be ascribed confidently to Period A as there did not seem to be any focus to the very limited number of features which did contain only Group 1 material, and the quantities of material in each feature were insubstantial.

In Trench 22, by contrast, one pit (3247) contained an almost complete, but broken, Malvernian pottery vessel which had been inverted in the pit. The feature contained no other finds and had only a single fill of silty loam with frequent gravel inclusions. While a Period A date for this feature would seem relatively secure, the vessel could well be

earlier than previously thought (see Timby, Chapter 4), and given the seemingly isolated context of the feature it is difficult to interpret the character of the deposit.

The only other features in Trench 22 which solely contained Group 1 pottery, were three pits, 3133, 3198 and 3203. In none of these instances, however, was the material of sufficient quantity for the possibility that the material was all redeposited to be discounted (3133 = 1 sherd, 3198 = 3 sherds, 3203 = 6 sherds).

PERIOD B: LATE IRON AGE C 50 BC–AD 1

Summary

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 the Group 2 material (see Appendix 2 Table A2.1), would suggest that activity during this period was relatively insubstantial in comparison with subsequent periods, and was probably more of the character of the Period A occupation than 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 potential features which might belong to this period are relatively isolated from other putative Period B features (Table 3.7), and as a consequence it is difficult to understand their context.

Distribution of Group 2 pottery

A rapid appraisal was undertaken of the spatial distribution of the Group 2 pottery in Trench 7 simultaneously with that undertaken for the Group 1 pottery from the same trench (see above 'Distribution of redeposited Group 1 pottery'). However, no pattern was discernible in the material and given the large number of qualifications which applied to the interpretation of the Group 1 material, in conjunction with the more limited occurrence of the Group 2 pottery, it was not considered profitable to pursue this form of analysis further. The plot of the results of this exercise has been deposited in the archive.

The statistics of the Group 2 pottery are presented on a trench by trench basis in Table 3.6.

Table 3.7 Potential Period B features

| Context | Type | Trench | Pottery Sherd nos | Weight (g) | Bone (g) | Burnt limestone (g) | Dimensions (m) | |
|---------|-------|--------|----------------------|------------|----------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| | | | | | | | depth | width |
| 882 | gully | 8 | 50 (26) | 690 (112) | 150 | 31000 | 0.30 | 0.20 |
| 925 | gully | 8 | 3 (61) | 78 (346) | 100 | 8750 | - | 0.40 |
| 2070 | pit | 9 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 1750 | 0.44 | 0.66 |
| 2117 | pit | 9 | 9 (1) | 5 (2) | 0 | 1250 | 0.24 | 0.72 |
| 2392 | pit | 9 | 11 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0.54 | 0.72 |
| 3088 | pit | 22 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 6600 | 0.53 | 0.40 |

- = information not recorded

Pottery data in brackets = Group 1 pottery found in features (redeposited)

By comparison with the other Ceramic Groups (see Appendix 2, Table A2.1), it can be seen that Group 2 material occurred in smaller quantities than that of other phases, and that in most instances it was clearly redeposited, occurring in contexts which contained pottery of later Ceramic Groups (Table 3.6: % contexts with Group 2 and later pot). The percentage of contexts in which the Group 2 material occurred is similar for all of the trenches, suggesting that no clear focus of activity can be defined within any of the trenches on the basis of the redeposited material.

Potential Period B Features

(882, 925)

Only 25 contexts were found which solely contained Group 2 material (Table 3.6). In only seven of these instances was a Period B date possible for the feature (Table 3.7), as in the other 18 cases the features were either elements of later enclosures or were stratigraphically later than contexts containing pottery of Groups 3–5.

The seven contexts were so scattered that it is difficult to argue for a Period B date with a large degree of conviction. The best evidence for Period B features is perhaps in Trench 8. In this trench two features were found, one of which, a curvilinear gully 882 (Fig. 3.3), cut by the large linear ditch 812, contained substantial quantities of pottery and burnt limestone and a limited amount of animal bone in its terminal (Table 3.7). This concentration of material in the gully terminal is a feature noted at other house gullies in the Upper Thames Valley (ie Claydon Pike, Allen *et al.* 1984, 90, 94, fig. 6.3; Mingies Ditch, Allen and Robinson 1993, 90). This observation, and its location, in the immediate vicinity of Period A structures (?209 and 207), suggests that gully 882 might be a section of a Period B house gully, representing a direct replacement of the Period A structures, and therefore suggesting continuity of occupation. However, given the lack of a complete arc this identification must be seen as tentative.

A short length of gully, 925, in Trench 8, just to the north of the gully 882 may also have been a Period

B feature. It only contained three sherds of Group 2 pottery, and cut the cluster of Period A pits (see above, 'Other features in Trench 8').

PERIOD C: LATE IRON AGE C AD 1–50

(Fig. 3.5)

Summary

This period sees a radical change from the dispersed deposits and even 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 Group 3 pottery.

Northern Area

Rectilinear enclosures, structures and associated boundary

(E53, E65, E74, E102, E135, E139, E143, E150, 3077)

In the northern trenches, 9 and 22, and the Northern Salvage Area a series of rectilinear enclosures were uncovered (Fig. 3.5). Although the ceramic dating evidence is limited (Table 3.8), this, in conjunction with the apparently structured layout of these enclosures, suggests that a Period C date is likely.

The sequence of development is complex and can only be partially reconstructed. Enclosure 53 seems to have been one of the earliest elements of the new layout, and up to five phases have been identified within this enclosure. In plan, the enclosure appears to be double-celled with a small pen in the north-western corner of the northern cell. It is unclear, however, during which stages the enclosure existed in this form or whether it was a simple rectilinear feature for most of its existence. Enclosure 102 seems to have been contemporary with either the first or second phase of the enclosure, with its north and south ditches butting E53's eastern ditch (3262).

Enclosure 102 went out of use with the construction of the first phase of E65, which cut the north and south ditches of E102. Whether E65 was a replace-

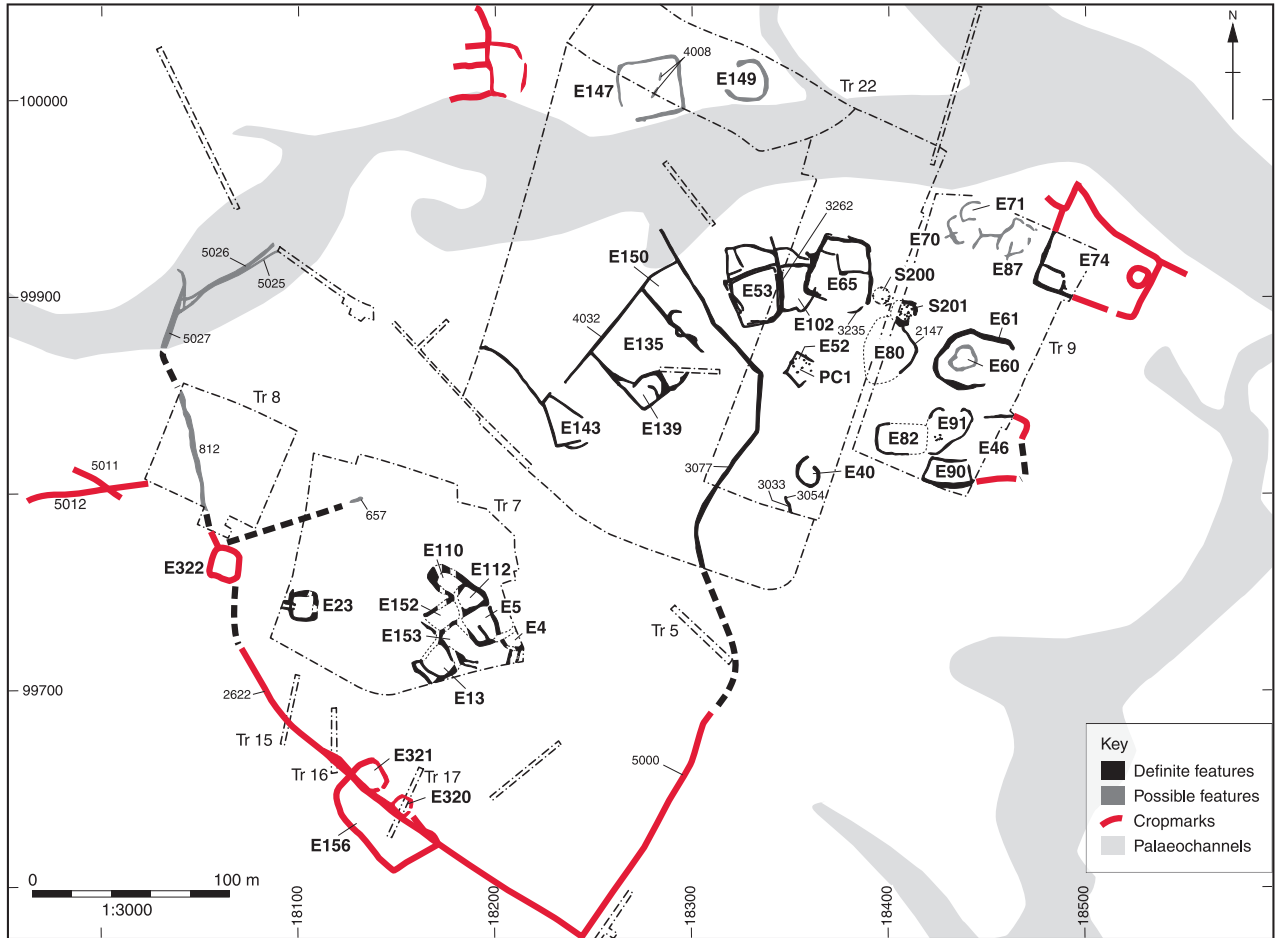


Fig. 3.5 Period C – late Iron Age, c AD 1–50

ment of E53 or whether the later stages of E53 were contemporary with E65 cannot be established.

To the west of these three enclosures, a large rectangular enclosure, E135, was uncovered in the Northern Salvage Area. The north-western boundary ditch of this enclosure (4032) extended beyond the limits of the enclosure. To the north-east, it defined E150 in conjunction with ditch 3077, while to the south-east it extended towards E143. It is uncertain whether ditch 4032 stopped before E143's western boundary, as shown on the plan, and

therefore demarcated an entrance c 9 m wide or whether the southern section of the ditch had been excessively truncated by soil stripping. Enclosure 139 has been tentatively ascribed to this period on the basis of its spatial relationship with E135 and the minimal dating evidence recovered from the single section cut across its ditch.

The placement of the linear boundary 3077 in this period is dependent on its spatial relationship with ditch 4032 of E135, and its relationship with E53, which it seems to respect. In addition, both ditch

Table 3.8 Group 3 enclosures, Trench 22 and Northern Salvage Area

| Enclosure | Pottery No. sherds | Weight (g) | Bone (g) | Burnt limestone | No. of sections |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 53 | 1 (6) | 12 (14) | 25 | 2700 | 13 |
| 65 | 14 (47) | 17 (228) | 290 | 7700 | 34 |
| 74 | 48 | 101 | 10 | 2750 | 7 |
| 102 | 14 | 32 | 75 | 800 | 14 |
| 135 | 29 | 58 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 150 | - | - | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 139 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 143 | 117 | 241 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 52 | 4 | 270 | 20 | 2000 | 7 |

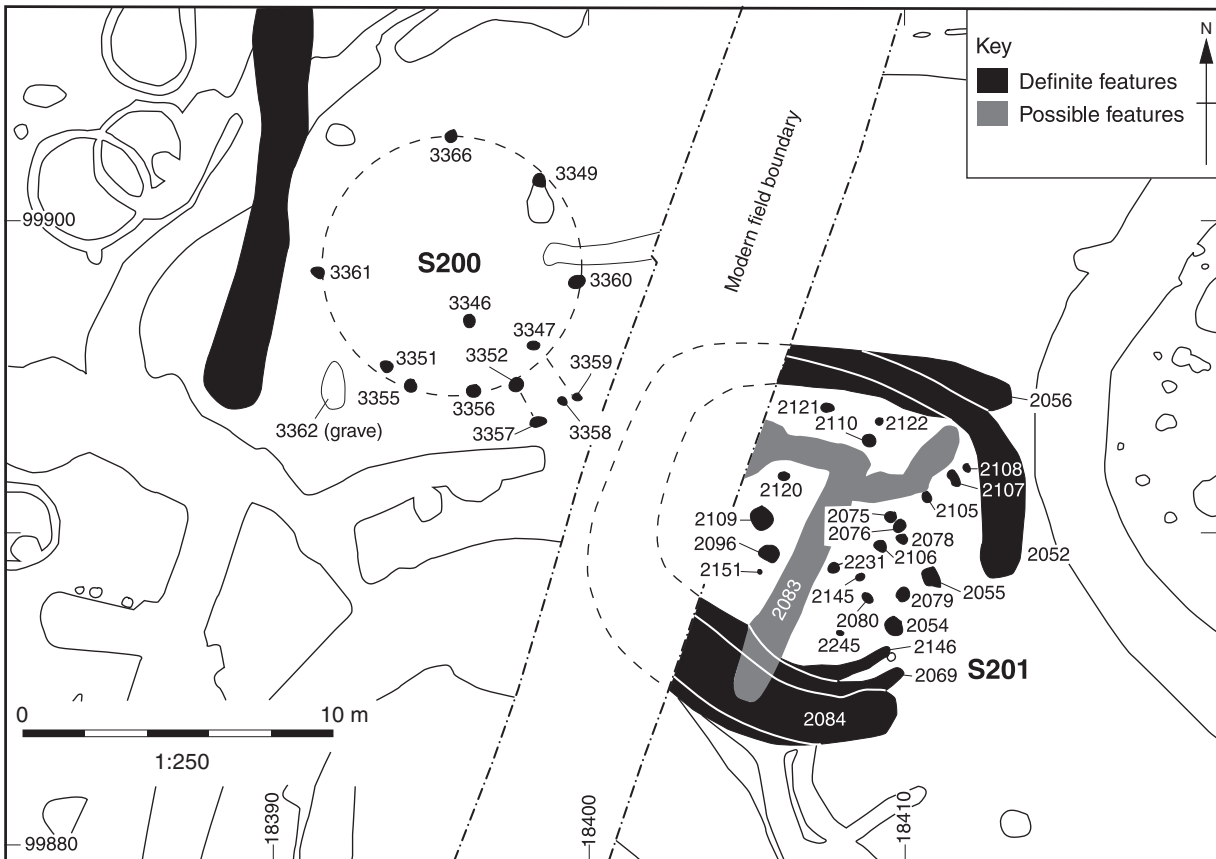


Fig. 3.6 Structures 200 and 201

3077 and E53 are cut by ditch 5006 (Fig. 3.10), demonstrating their stratigraphically equivalent location within the matrix. The dating evidence for ditch 3077 is minimal, consisting of two sherds of pottery: a sherd of Group 2 and a sherd of later, Group 4 pottery. The Group 4 sherd came from a section within pit 3096, which cut the ditch. Therefore, it is conceivable that the sherd was misassigned and was derived from the pit. Alternately, it needs to be borne in mind that the sherd dates the filling rather than the cutting of the feature, suggesting that the ditch may have survived in some form as a feature for a longer period than the Period C enclosures discussed above, but may nevertheless have been contemporary with the enclosures.

Ditch 3077 terminated to the north on the margins of the main east-west palaeochannel, and it was detected in the salvage area to the south of Trench 22. It is possible that it may have continued further to the south in the form of ditch 5000, which was only detected as a cropmark to the south of Trench 5. As no ditch of similar proportions or orientation was detected in Trench 5, it might be thought that the equation of ditch 3077 with the cropmark 5000 requires special pleading. However, given the radical alterations in orientation noted in the exposed length of ditch 3077 it is not inconceivable that the ditch's course could have been beyond the limits of Trench 5. On this basis, a potential link between these ditches has been shown on Figure

3.5. Further support for the interpretation of ditch 5000 as a Period C feature, and therefore a potential continuation of 3077, can be sought in the spatial relationship of ditch 5000 with ditch 2622 (Fig. 3.5).

To the east of E65 there was some of the best evidence for buildings from any of the late Iron Age and early Roman periods at Thornhill Farm. Structure 200 was immediately to the east of E65 (Figs 3.5 and 3.6). It had been constructed using a post-ring which had a diameter of 8.2 m. Three postholes to the south-east possibly demarcated a porch/entrance, with a width of *c* 1 m. It could not be established whether the wall of the building was on the circumference of the post-ring or the putative porch. If the latter possibility is considered, the diameter of the building would be *c* 11.4 m. The dating evidence was extremely sparse, consisting of a single sherd of Group 3 pottery. However, this, in addition to its location with respect to E65, has been taken as a tentative basis for assigning a Period C date to this structure. A grave (3362) containing an inhumation burial (3363) was located just to the south-west of S200, though could not be assigned to any particular period (Fig. 3.6).

Structure 201 (Fig. 3.6) was found immediately to the east of S200 on the western edge of Trench 9. It consisted of a multiply recut penannular gully, within which there was a comparatively dense cluster of pits and postholes. The postholes did not appear to form a coherent building pattern, but it is

possible that some postholes had been destroyed by the later feature 2083 which cut across the interior. The gully had a diameter of approximately 9 m, while two postholes, 2054 and 2055, may have held doorposts to a structure, demarcating an entrance *c* 1.4 m wide. The earliest phase of the ring-gully, 2056 and 2146, has been dated to Period C on the basis of the six sherds of Group 3 pottery recovered from 2056. It is not possible to phase any of the internal features in relation to the gullies given the lack of datable material from the postholes.

In the north-eastern corner of Trench 9, approximately 100 m to the east of this complex of rectilinear enclosures and structures, a segment of another large enclosure (E74) was detected, which extended beyond the trench and was visible as a cropmark (Fig. 3.5). Its subsidiary enclosure reflected that found in E53, while a ring-gully was detected as a cropmark in the eastern part of the enclosure. The ring-gully may have belonged to a roundhouse. Its diameter, *c* 8 m, would be commensurate with a roundhouse, although given the lack of investigation this identification must obviously remain speculative.

Other enclosures in the Northern Area

(E40, E46, E52, E60, E61, E80, E82, E90, E91, 3033)

To the south of the rectilinear enclosures a series of isolated enclosures were laid out on the apparently open gravel terrace. They have been ascribed to this period on the basis of the often minimal ceramic dating evidence and the enclosures' stratigraphic relationships with other dated features.

The subrectangular enclosure 52, had a single-phase boundary (3113) which contained four sherds of Group 3 pot weighing 270 g (Fig. 3.7). A cluster of postholes was found inside the boundary ditch, which may have been elements of a roundhouse (Posthole Cluster (PC) 1, Appendix A1.1). Several reconstructions are possible although three are considered as more likely on the basis of the limited evidence (Fig. 3.7). In the cases of rings PC1.1 and PC1.3 it is possible that the postulated structures may have been contemporary with E52, and the break in the enclosure's eastern side would have been commensurate with the recognised trend for south-eastern entrances to roundhouses. As posthole 3114 cut the enclosure ditch 3113, PC1.2 would have been later than the enclosure, and if the structure existed, it may not have belonged to Period C. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the postholes to assist with phasing. As regards size, all of the postulated rings would fall within the normal range for roundhouses in the Upper Thames Valley: PC1.3 has a diameter of 8.5 m, while the diameter of both PC1.1 and PC1.2 is 10 m.

In terms of discriminating between the three possibilities, the other traditional lines of enquiry are of limited assistance: fill descriptions do not radically vary and all of the features have almost vertical sides, suggesting that they would have been

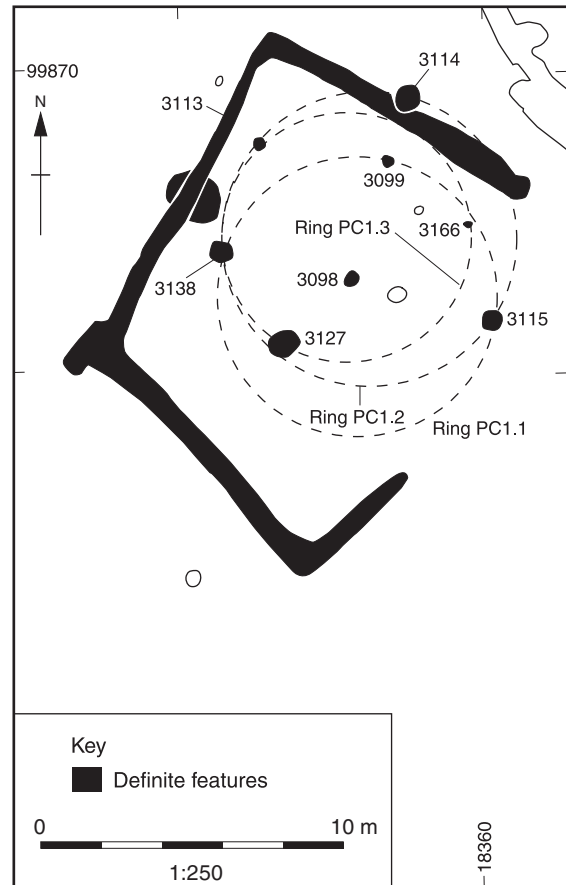


Fig. 3.7 Enclosure 52 and posthole cluster 1

suitable as postholes. However, feature 3127, an element of rings PC1.2 and PC1.3 was exceptionally deep, 0.94 m, and this would tend to suggest that it was a pit or free-standing post rather than an element of a post-ring. In addition, the unnumbered posthole located between 3138 and 3114 in PC1.2 and PC1.3 was not excavated, or numbered during the excavations, only appearing on the site plan. It is, therefore, possible that it was judged as less credible than the other features and hence was not further investigated. Regardless of the weight one gives to these various factors, the evidence is not conclusive, although it does deserve consideration. We would not like to make a definitive claim for any of these post-rings; in all cases the rings are largely incomplete, and, while the cluster is probably related to E52, the postholes could relate to a broad range of other functions.

Approximately 20 m to the east of E52 there was a long and complex sequence of ditches which centred around the later, Period D, E57 (Fig. 3.10). The stratigraphically earliest ditches in this area can be interpreted with a reasonable degree of confidence as forming a large ovoid enclosure, E80 (Fig. 3.5). Consideration of the enclosure's stratigraphic position is the principal reason for placing it within Period C, as only one sherd of pottery was recovered. This belongs to Group 5 and was therefore

clearly intrusive. Due to the density of other features and the relative shallowness of E80's ditches, the form of this enclosure can only be partially reconstructed. However, from the everted north-western terminal of ditch 2147 it would seem that the enclosure may have had an entrance facing towards structure 200, while there may also have been an entrance in the south-eastern side of the enclosure. The enclosure's stratigraphic relationship with the penannular gully of structure 201 demonstrates that E80 predated the construction of that building.

Approximately 10 m to the east of E80, two enclosures E60 and E61 had apparently been laid out with respect to each other. Their placement in Period C is open to doubt as a limited number of later pot sherds were recovered (E60: 2 sherds Group 4; E61: 2 sherds Group 4 and 1 sherd Group 5). However, on balance, it would seem more appropriate to consider this pottery intrusive, given the larger quantities of Group 3 pottery (E60: 11 sherds; E61: 17 sherds) and the enclosures' early positions in the stratigraphic sequence. The recovery of a Nauheim Derivative brooch (SF3) from E61, an early type often associated with pre-conquest deposits, may be taken as corroborative evidence, although it could easily be redeposited.

E60 seemed to be associated with a cluster of postholes and pits (Appendix A1.2, PC3), although no coherent building plan can be reconstructed, and the balance of evidence makes a structural interpretation unlikely. Enclosure 61 may initially have had an entrance in its north-western corner which was closed by the later recutting of the boundary.

A number of features at the southern end of Trench 9 may have belonged to this period. However, the precise forms of the enclosures are difficult to define, and the uneven character of the evidence needs to be openly acknowledged.

The most securely dated enclosure within this area is E82, located to the south of E80, which can be disentangled from the large number of recuts which formed the later E45 (Fig. 3.11). Its southern and western boundaries can be seen clearly cutting across the interior of E45, while its northern and eastern sides are less visible. It is probable that ditch 2377 formed its eastern boundary while the northern boundary cannot be discerned from the multiple recuts of E45. The Period C date for this enclosure is relatively secure: it is stratigraphically early and its pottery assemblage is dominated by Group 3 material (64 sherds), while the single sherd of Group 4 pottery can be considered as intrusive.

To the east of E82 accurate reconstruction of the phasing is more difficult. This is in part a consequence of the intensively recut eastern boundary of E45, the limited number of sections and recovered finds, and in some cases the poor quality of the excavation record (Appendix A1.3). In essence, we can understand the activity in relation to the large rectilinear enclosure, E46, which had been subdivided at various points by smaller subenclosures

(Fig. 3.8). On balance it would seem reasonable to suppose that E46 as presented in Figure 3.8 was a Period C feature, although areas of uncertainty remain concerning the full form of all of its boundaries and indeed the status of its subenclosures (Appendix A1.3).

The eastern boundary is only known from aerial photography (Fig. 3.5). The ascription of a Period C origin is therefore dependent on its relationship with the northern and southern boundaries. The continuation of the northern boundary ditch 2288 beyond the limits of the excavation can be detected clearly in the aerial photographs, and it has been argued that this feature had a Period C phase (Fig. 3.8). On this basis, a Period C date is postulated as the eastern boundary clearly forms a right-angled corner with ditch 2288. It is open to debate whether this boundary enclosed all of the eastern side, as the cropmark could only be traced for *c* 10 m from the end of the northern ditch 2288. It is possible that different subsoil conditions affected the visibility of the ditch, which may have continued but did not form a cropmark. Alternately the eastern side may have been partially open.

The most secure element of the (Period C) E46 is the subenclosure E90 and the associated southern boundary, 2374, of the main enclosure. If the western boundary of E46 was formed from elements other than the east side of E82 and the west side of E90, it must remain a matter of conjecture, as it could not be disentangled from the very high number of recuts of the eastern side of E45 given the minimal investigation of that boundary. The phasing of the northern boundary cannot be definitive either. Dating evidence was scarce, excavation was too limited, and, in some cases, it is apparent that the archaeology was misinterpreted on site.

E91 occupied the north-western corner of E46, and its placement in this period is relatively secure, as long as it is accepted that the eastern boundary formed by ditch 2325 was a continuation of the curvilinear ditch 2319. Only a partial reconstruction can be made of this enclosure given the number of later features; in particular, the location of any entrances are unknown. Inside E91 was a group of postholes (PC2) which may have formed a structure. Phasing is uncertain, however, and it is possible that the cluster belonged to either Period C or D (Fig. 3.8; Appendix A1.3).

Standing in relative isolation midway between the linear boundary 3077 and E82 the penannular E40 was assigned to Period C on the basis of a minimal amount of Group 3 pottery (Fig. 3.5). The enclosure had a north-north-east facing entrance, the western terminal of which divided into two. A small quantity of cremated human bone came from the ditch fill. Two shallow postholes (3017 and 3026) were located around the eastern terminal but proved to be stratigraphically earlier.

To the south-west of E40 was a length of slightly curved ditch (3033) which only partially fell

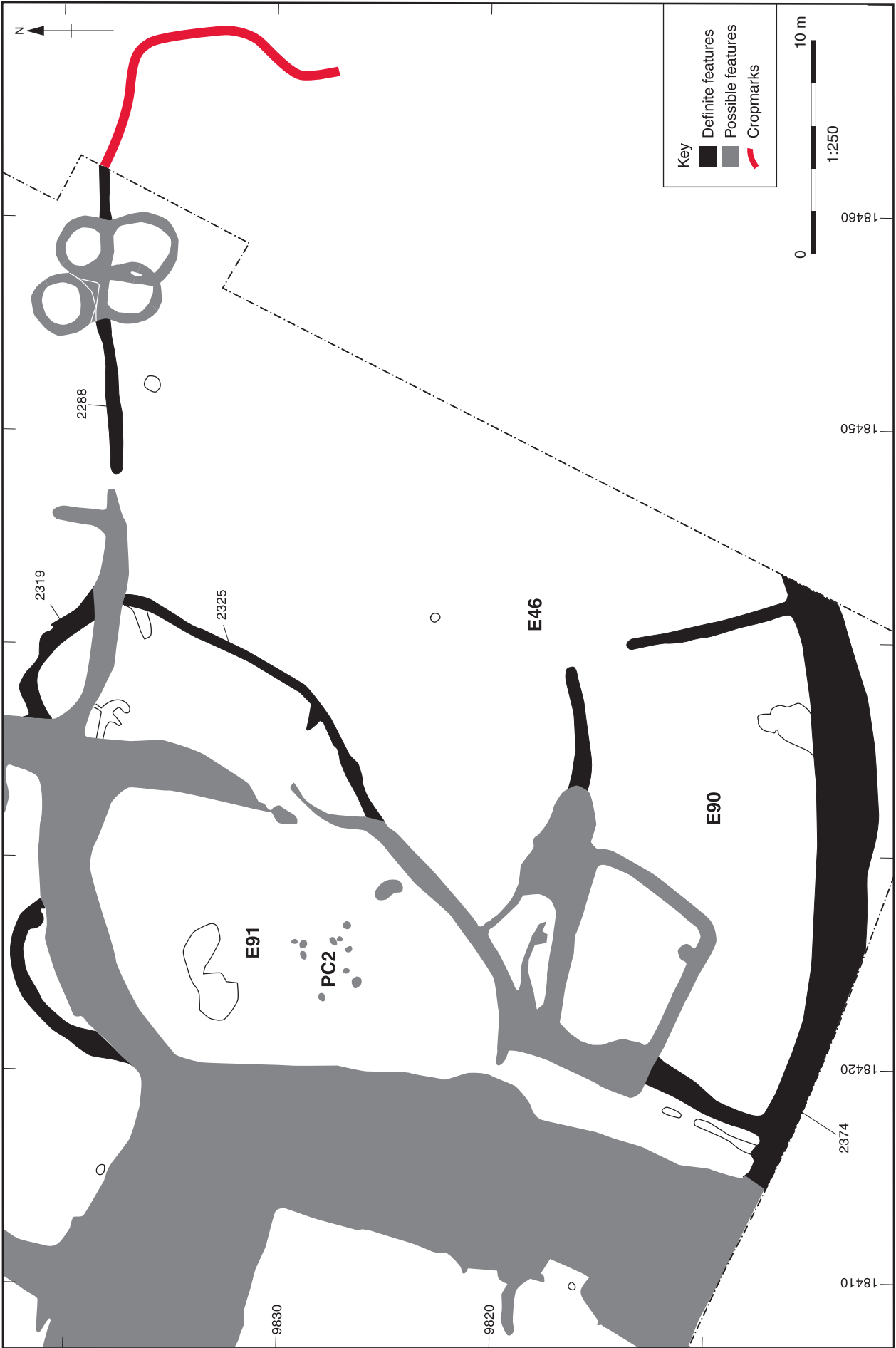


Fig. 3.8 Enclosure 46 and associated subenclosures

within the excavation area (Fig. 3.5). The ditch contained a single sherd of Group 3 pottery as well as sherds of Groups 1 and 2. Immediately to the north of the ditch was a subcircular posthole (3054) which contained a considerable quantity of Group 3 pot (30 sherds), suggesting a date contemporary with ditch 3033. Although there were other gullies and potential postholes in the area, a lack of dating evidence means they remain unphased (End Plan).

Potential Period C features – Northern Area (E70, E71, E87)

In the northern end of Trench 9, a loose enclosure group of uncertain phase was demarcated by a series of apparently discontinuous ditches (Figs 3.5 and A1.3). Phasing of the enclosures is extremely tentative due to the relatively small quantities of ceramics recovered and the lack of a clear stratigraphic sequence (Appendix A1.4). The enclosure group clearly underwent some remodelling during use, and although it originated in Period C it was still in use in Period D. The most securely dated enclosure in the group was E87. This enclosure was firmly placed in Period C on the basis of both its pottery assemblage, which was dominated by Group 3 sherds, and its stratigraphic relationship with the later, Period D double celled enclosure E72 and E73 (Fig. 3.11).

Enclosure 87 was roughly triangular in shape with a south-west facing entrance *c* 4.5 m wide (Fig. A1.3). A clay-filled circular hollow adjacent to the south-eastern terminal 2518 may have been part of an entrance structure, although there were no other postholes in the vicinity. The north-eastern boundary 2528 was discontinuous, and appears to have been replaced at a later date by ditch 2515. This ditch contained a few droplets of molten copper alloy together with a small quantity of iron slag, suggesting that at some point metalworking had taken place in the vicinity. Attached to the western arm of the enclosure was a small, subrectangular annex (2484) which appears to have been added after the main enclosure was constructed, and has tentatively been dated to Period D by the presence of Group 4 and Group 5 sherds.

An irregularly shaped area adjacent to E87 was demarcated by the curvilinear ditch 2512 to the north-west and by E87 to the south-east (Fig. A1.3). Although no northern boundary was detected, the area has nevertheless been interpreted as an enclosure (E71). Although it is possible that the enclosure was open to the north, its close proximity to the edge of excavation leaves this issue uncertain. The enclosure had a 5 m wide south-west facing entrance flanked by 2512 to the north-west and by the L-shaped ditch 2483 to the south-east. As no pottery was recovered from the enclosure, the phasing of E71 is uncertain. If it is accepted that ditch 2483 formed part of the enclosure, then the truncation of 2483 by the Period D ditch 2484 would

suggest that the enclosure was begun in Period C or earlier. Given the proximity of E87 and the similarity of ditch character, a Period C date would seem to be the most likely.

To the south-west of E71 was a second irregularly shaped enclosure (E70). The north and eastern side of the enclosure was bounded by elements of E71 while the south-eastern edge was demarcated by a series of intercutting gullies which proved impossible to securely reconstruct. It is possible that gully 2460, which forms the majority of E70's south-eastern boundary, is the same as gully 2479 which hooks around towards E71 leaving a 2 m wide north-west facing entrance (Fig. A1.3). It is uncertain if gully 2460 was begun in Period C or D. Although the ceramic assemblage is dominated by Group 3 sherds, a single sherd of Group 5 pottery could be interpreted as evidence for a later date given the large scale redeposition of pottery over the site. On balance, however, it is probably better to consider 2460 and E70 with it as belonging to Period C. As a group, enclosures 70, 71 and 87 seem to work together well. Although a degree of uncertainty must remain as to their exact chronology (Period C or D), the available evidence is such that a definitive reconstruction is not possible.

Further to the north-west, in the salvage area, enclosures E147 and E149 were noted but only very selectively excavated (Fig. 3.5). The enclosures may have belonged to Period C, but in the absence of any dating evidence this is pure speculation. E147 had a probable entrance, *c* 1 m wide, in the south-western corner. Although one of its terminals was excavated, no ceramic evidence was recovered. The interior of the enclosure was dotted with a number of possible postholes and two short lengths of gully (4008). The postholes did not appear to form any coherent structure, however, and it is unclear if they were associated with the enclosure. A number of similar features were recorded to the north. Similarly, gully 4008 contained no dating evidence, and its association with E147 must remain speculative.

To the west of E147 was a cropmark which may define a further series of rectilinear enclosures. The cropmark was not sampled through excavation, however, and in the absence of more direct evidence should merely be noted.

Southern Area

'Co-Axial' enclosure system

(E4, E5, E13, E23, E110, E112, E152, E153)

Approximately 200 m to the south-west of the large enclosure complex described above, a small network of loosely gridded enclosures was uncovered in the south-eastern corner of Trench 7. They were often the earliest features in stratigraphic terms and as a result they can only be partially reconstructed due to the density of later features and the frequent recutting of a number of the ditches. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the enclosures in Trench 7 were of a

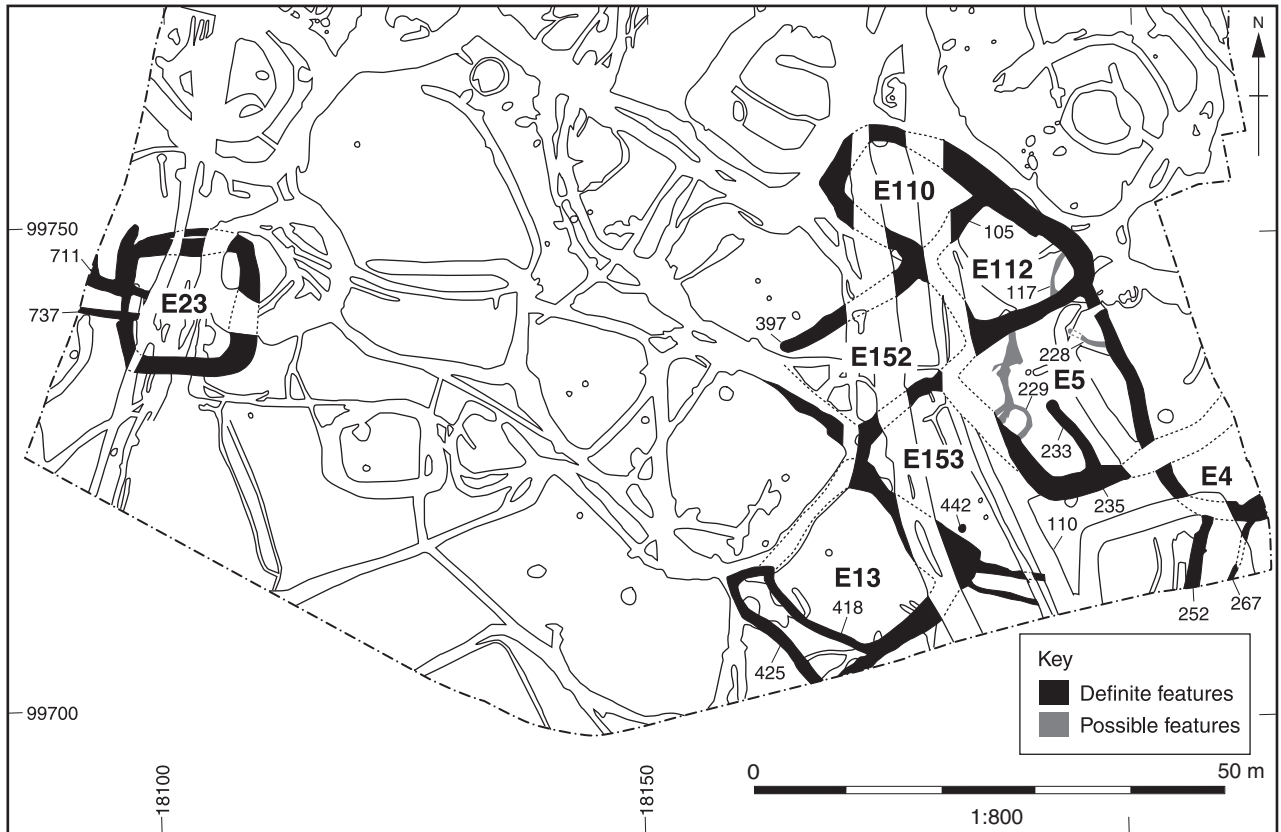


Fig. 3.9 Co-axial enclosure system – Trench 7

quite different character to those in the Northern Area. Although slightly irregular in plan they were generally similarly aligned and had a far more organised appearance (Fig. 3.9).

Before evidence relating to this enclosure system is presented in more detail, it is necessary to mention a number of features which were located underneath the enclosure system. These have been placed in this period on the basis of the minimal pottery evidence, the latest of which belongs to Group 3, and the absence of any convincing evidence of earlier occupation in this part of the site. In general, these features do not form a recognisably structured plan (Fig. 3.9), although some contexts can be given a coherent interpretation. Gully 229, which was cut by E5 (ditch 230), seems to be part of a small annular ditch. On a much more speculative level, two curvilinear gullies, 117 and 228, could be interpreted as components of a roundhouse (Appendix A1.5; Fig A1.4). Although this interpretation cannot be pressed with conviction, the possibility should be considered, given the general difficulty of detecting structures on late Iron Age and early Roman sites in the Upper Thames Valley. If this hypothesis is entertained, the building would have had a diameter of *c* 13 m. However, as evidence against this hypothesis, it should be acknowledged that the putative ring-gully is incomplete, that a west-facing entrance would be atypical for this type of building, and that the low density of

finds does not support a structural interpretation. Given the lack of apparent structure, none of the other pre-enclosure system features merits further consideration.

Although of a more readily identifiable form, the system or group of enclosures which overlay these features was similarly difficult to phase. Despite the difficulties, they have been assigned to Period C on the basis of ceramic and stratigraphic evidence (Appendix A1.6). The group consisted of a network of seven or more sub-rectangular enclosures (E4, E5, E13, E110, E112, E152 and E153) defined by a series of shared gullies and ditches (Fig. 3.9). The majority of the enclosures were orientated NW–SE, and, although each had a slightly different plan, they were of broadly comparable size.

Enclosure 4 (*c* 7 x 7 m) was partially obscured by the eastern edge of excavation. Although its southern corner had been largely cut away by the later E1, enough survived to suggest the possibility of an entrance at this point which may have been associated with a pair of parallel gullies (252 and 267; Appendix A1.6, 'Enclosure entrances'). To the north-west, enclosure 5 (*c* 16 x 18 m) appeared to be subdivided by the NW–SE ditch 233, which terminated near to the centre of the enclosure. None of the other enclosures within this group had such an internal division, however, and it may be that 233 belonged to an earlier phase. Although there were no obvious entrances to E5, the south-eastern corner

was largely cut away by the later E2, and ditch 235 did appear to be narrowing at that point. Similarly, the north-western corner of the enclosure was destroyed by the later Roman trackway 301 (End Plan). An entrance in either corner, therefore, could have been obscured by later activity.

To the north and west of E5 (and sharing its north-western ditch), a pair of slightly smaller enclosures, E110 and E112 (both *c* 10 x 12 m), were separated by the shared NE–SW ditch 105. Neither enclosure appeared to have an entrance, although both had been heavily truncated by the Roman trackway 301 to the south-west.

Enclosure 152, to the south-west of E112, was the only enclosure in the group which had an obvious 2 m wide entrance in its north-west corner (Fig. 3.9). Although the eastern terminal (397) had escaped truncation by later activity, almost all trace of a ditch to the south-west had been cut away by E14 (Fig. 3.15). Enough survived, however, to indicate that E152 did originally have four sides. Slightly more elongated than most, E152 had a ditch in common with E5 and E153 to the south-east and E112 to the north-east.

Enclosure 153 was the only three-sided enclosure within the group. Although it shared a ditch with E152 to the north-west, E13 to the south-west and E5 to the north-east, the south-eastern end appeared to be open. It is possible that pit 442 demarcated a timber structure which closed, or partially closed off the south-eastern end of E153, but the later, Roman trackway 301 (End Plan) would have destroyed any corresponding return, and the possibility must remain speculative.

To the south-west of E153, enclosure 13 had an unusual double ditched arrangement on its south-western side (418 and 425; Fig. 3.9). It is possible that 425 was cut in order to enlarge the original enclosure. A possible entrance in its south-eastern corner appeared to be flanked by parallel gullies, creating an extended gate or 'mini driveway' (Appendix A1.6). Evidence of any ditch to the north-west had been obliterated by the later enclosure 14 (Fig. 3.15).

A sixth enclosure, E23, lay *c* 55 m to the west of the main group. Although physically separated from the others, it was of similar form, if slightly more regular, and of comparable dimensions (11 x 12 m). The enclosure had an obvious west facing entrance flanked by a pair of parallel gullies similar to those detected outside E4 and E13 (Fig. 3.9; Appendix A1.6, 'Enclosure entrances'). It was clear from stratigraphic evidence that E23 was cut by the Period F E22, and on that basis and the evidence of 23 sherds of Group 3 ceramics, E23 was placed in Period C. A single sherd of Group 5 pottery was thought to be intrusive from the linear Roman boundary 302 (ditch 715), which cut through the enclosure (End Plan).

The overall impression of the enclosure group is one of organic growth rather than any deliberate planning. Perhaps starting from just one or two

enclosures, existing ditches were cleaned out and re-used as new enclosures were added. Since there does not appear to have been any obvious pressure on space, the tightly focused nature of the system is perhaps best explained in terms of function. The corralling and nurture of livestock would be entirely consistent both with the relatively modest size of the enclosures and the piecemeal growth, the number of enclosures necessarily fluctuating along with the size of the herd. Such intensive management of livestock would have been particularly necessary during birthing or through the winter months.

Potential Period C features – Southern Area and Western Salvage

(E320, E321, E322, 812, 2622, 5000, 5011, 5012, 5025, 5026, 5027)

To the west of the co-axial enclosure group described above were a series of linear cropmarks and possible enclosures (Fig. 3.5). The cropmarks were tentatively ascribed to Period C on the basis of their spatial fit with other known Period C features (linear boundary 3077 and the enclosure group described above) and on their spatial coherency relative to each other. It should be noted, however, that a case can be made which would ascribe some of the cropmarks to either Period D or F.

In Trench 8, the complex boundary in the western part of the trench probably originated in Period C. The most easterly recut (812) contained fabric C24 pottery (16 sherds) which has a wide date range from the middle Iron Age through to the beginning of the 1st century AD (see Appendix 3). The ditch also cut Period A and Period B features (S209 and gully 882 respectively; Fig. 3.3). Although already described as a potential Period A feature, it is equally possible that ditch 5027, to the north of Trench 8, was a continuation of 812. If this were the case then the Period A date ascribed to 5025 and 5026 would also be called into question. The levels of uncertainty in phasing linear boundaries on purely spatial evidence are clearly considerable. Nevertheless, it is suggested that 812 may also have extended to the south of Trench 8 where it was detected in Trenches 15, 16 and 17, and given the context number 2622 (Fig. 3.5 and End Plan). In Trench 15, 2622 was described as flat-bottomed, with a number of visible recuts. Its dimensions were similar to 812 (2622: *c* 1.9m wide x 0.5 m deep; 812: *c* 1.5–2 m wide and 0.5 m deep), and it would seem reasonable to surmise that 812 and 2622 were the same ditch.

At the southern end of 2622 was the linear ditch 5000 described above. Although the boundary has been ascribed very tentatively to Period C, the phasing is far from certain.

Immediately to the west of Trench 8 was a pair of linear ditches visible only as cropmarks (5011 and 5012; Fig. 3.5). The ditches were not excavated, and could be tentatively ascribed to either Period C or

Period D on the basis of their proximity to, and spatial coherency with, 812 and its later recuts.

To the south-east of 5011, a subrectangular cropmark on the line of 2622 has been interpreted as a small enclosure (E322). The linear boundary does not appear to cut across the enclosure and it is possible that the two were contemporary. No entrances were visible, but if the enclosure was contemporary with 2622, then its location apparently straddling the boundary could mean that the enclosure had access to both east and west. Approximately 100 m to the east of E322, ditch 657 appeared to be aligned on the junction of the enclosure with 2622. Although no dating evidence was recovered from the ditch, its alignment may suggest a possible association with 2622, and thus a Period C date.

To the south of E322, approximately in the centre of 2622, a further series of cropmarks have been interpreted as two subcircular enclosures (E320: 6 x 8 m and E321: 12 x 14 m) apparently set within a larger (c 50 x 30 m), subrectangular enclosure (E156; Fig. 3.5). Little can be said about the enclosures, however, as only one assessment trench was placed in the area and none of the features were excavated. The enclosures could be equally ascribed to Periods C, D or F on the basis of their possible association with 2622.

PERIOD D: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD c AD 50–100 (Fig. 3.10)

Summary

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 droveway 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.

Northern Area

Rectilinear enclosures (E44, E45, E41)

In the Northern Area, a pair of large rectilinear enclosures, E44 and E45, were revealed underlying the division between Trenches 9 and 22 (Fig. 3.11). The enclosures were oriented NE–SW and had been shaped by a bewildering sequence of cuts and recuts of such complexity that a full reconstruction was not possible. On the basis of ceramic evidence and the stratigraphic relationship between E45 and the earlier E82 (Period C), both enclosures were placed in Period D. The presence of Group 5 ceramics suggested that the latest ditches might have remained open into Period E.

The relationship between E44 and E45 was difficult to establish, partly because much of the crucial area was obscured by the boundary between the

two trenches, and partly because of insufficient trenching in that area. It seems probable that the two were contemporary for much of their functional lives. Because of the frequent recutting of ditches, the enclosures shifted slightly so that the soil mark demarcating E45 eventually became over 8 m wide. Although recut and even shared ditches were a common feature of the Thornhill Farm enclosures, such extensive remodelling of either a single or a pair of enclosures was quite unusual. It was obvious that E44 and E45 were of a different character to other enclosures in Trenches 9 and 22. Their regularity and lack of curvilinear aspects was striking in comparison to adjacent enclosures thought to be of the same phase (Fig. 3.10: E48, E49, E51, E57 and E58).

Although the enclosures were too complex to wholly unravel, certain aspects can be reconstructed. One of the earlier recuts of E45 incorporated a carefully constructed south-east facing entrance. This consisted of two circular postholes (2379 and 2381) set immediately adjacent to opposing ditch terminals. If the postholes held timber uprights, the entrance gap could have been no wider than 1 m. In the absence of ‘antennae’ ditches or any other means of channelling animals into the enclosure, it seems unlikely that such a narrow entrance was used as an access for livestock. In the north-west corner of E45, a mass of intercutting features may have obscured a second entrance, but despite extensive trenching, the area was never properly understood on site and remains unresolved. Although the interior of E45 revealed no evidence of a post-built structure, the presumably easy availability of turf would make mass walled construction an economic and therefore potentially attractive option. Since mass walled structures need not leave any negative impression on a site, there is no reason why E45 could not have contained such a structure.

Although similar to E45, enclosure E44 had not been as intensively recut as E45 and was perhaps not as long-lived. Although no definite evidence of an entrance was revealed, a significant narrowing of the enclosure ditch in its south-west corner might have merited further investigation. A group of postholes and two pits were revealed immediately to the south of the enclosure’s north-eastern ditch (Fig. 3.11). Ceramic evidence was lacking for the majority of features, but two of the postholes, 3065 and 3066, contained Group 3 and Group 4 pottery respectively. A third posthole, 3078, seemed to be associated, the three postholes forming a triangle in plan. The other postholes, 3082, 3083, 3084 and 3139, were smaller and could be interpreted as a fence-line, although the gap between 3083 and 3139 was over 6 m. The shallow, elongated scoop 3116, adjacent to 3139, is best interpreted as a posthole. The scoop might have been cut deliberately as a means of raising a long post or have been formed accidentally by a levering action, during the removal of a post.

As a group, the postholes do not appear to form a coherent structural plan, but given the possibility of mass walled construction on the site this cannot be precluded. The presence of the two pits, 3007 and 3141, could be interpreted as evidence for domestic activity, but neither pit contained ceramics or any other obvious domestic by-product.

The pits and postholes cannot be phased with any certainty. The conflicting ceramic evidence of postholes 3065 and 3066 might suggest that the group of features were not all of the same phase, although from a purely spatial point of view they do seem to have a certain coherency as a group. As possible internal features of a mass walled struc-

ture, the group would appear to be too close to the enclosure ditch to be of the same phase as E44.

Immediately to the south of E44 a large, multiply recut ditch was revealed in the south-east corner of Trench 22. It would appear that the ditch was the western edge of a subrectangular enclosure (E41), the majority of which lay outside of the area of excavation. The extent of the enclosure was plotted from aerial photographs, and was of comparable size to E44 and E45. No ceramic evidence was obtained from the western ditch, but the enclosure has been ascribed to Period D on the basis of its similarity to E44 and E45.

The south-eastern corner of Trench 9 was subdi-

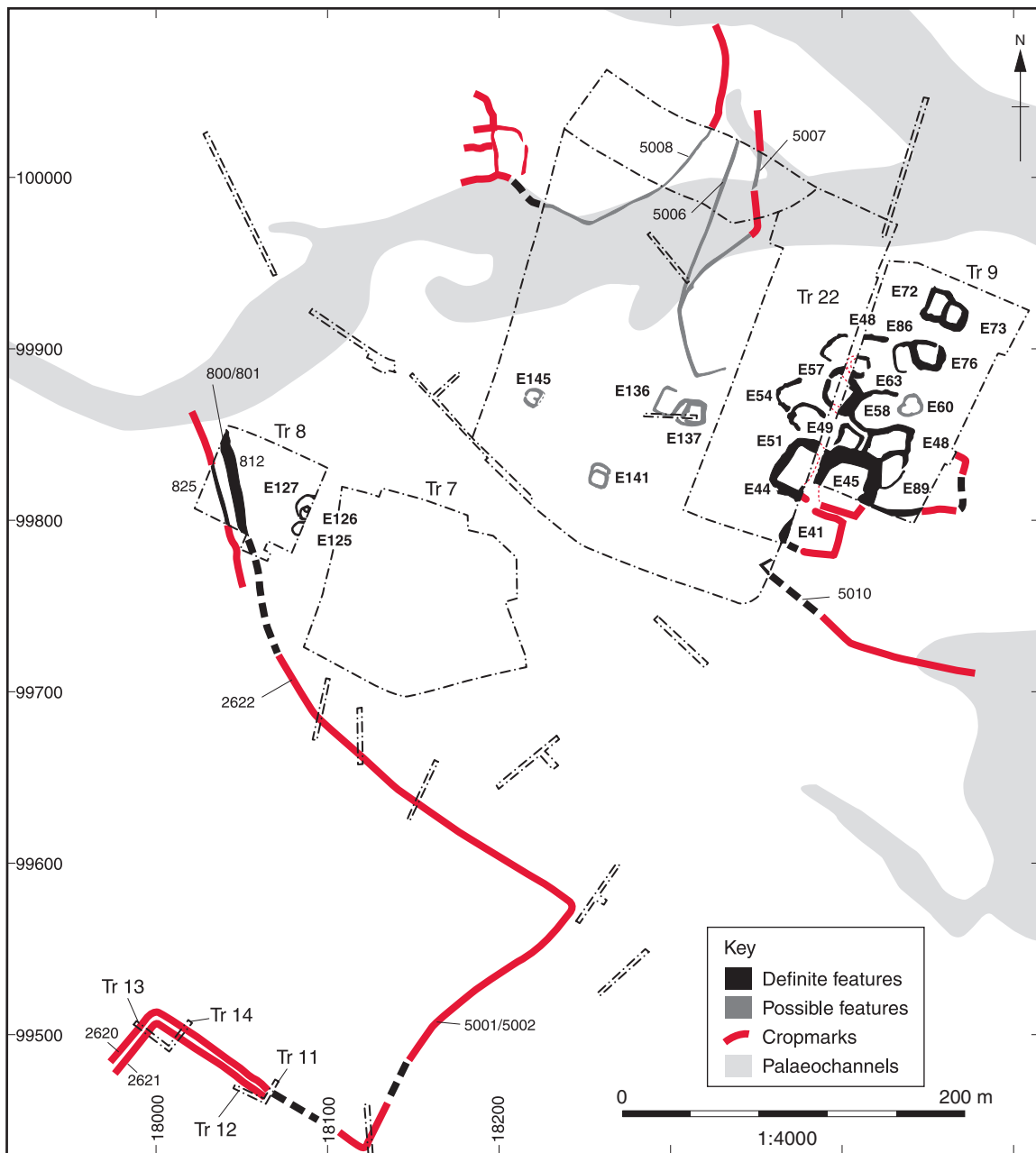


Fig. 3.10 Period D – early Roman Period, c AD 50–100

vided by a complex series of enclosures, which spanned Periods C to E (Appendix A1.3). Overlying the northern and western half of the Period C features (E46, E90 and E91; Fig. 3.8) was E89 (Figs 3.11 and A1.2). Enclosure 89 was bounded to the west by E45 and defined to the north by the hooked ditch 2320. A possible structure (PC2) might also have belonged to this period (Appendix A1.3: Fig. A1.2).

Enclosure group – Trenches 9 and 22

(E48, E49, E51, E54, E57, E58, E60, E63, E72, E73, E76, E86, E98)

Immediately to the north-east of E44 and E45 was a group of smaller enclosures loosely arranged around a central, penannular enclosure E58 (Figs 3.10 and 3.11). Although it is clear from stratigraphic relationships that not all of the enclosures (or recuts of enclosures) could have been contemporary, the group was very coherent in plan, giving the impression of an organised system.

One of the smallest enclosures (E60) has already been attributed to Period C, but the recovery of a number of later pottery sherds introduces the possibility that the later phases may have stretched into Period D.

Enclosures 72 and 73 were isolated to the north-east of the main enclosure group. In plan, the enclosures had a double celled arrangement. Although the stratigraphic relationship shows that E73 was cut or recut later than E72, the likelihood is that the two enclosures were broadly contemporary and functioned as a single unit. There were no obvious signs of an entrance to either enclosure, although the narrowing of the north-western ditch of E72 might indicate that there was a break there at some point. The ceramic assemblage was typical of many at Thornhill with a high percentage of redeposited material, particularly from Group 3. The majority of Group 3 sherds probably came from the stratigraphically earlier enclosure E87 (Fig. 3.6) into which E72 and E73 were cut. Enough Group 4 pottery was recovered to make the Period D phasing relatively secure. The double celled arrangement of the enclosures raises questions of function. The enclosures were relatively small (E72: 8 x 13 m; E73: 8 x 10 m) and may have been used as a form of temporary pen, perhaps during pregnancy or the nurture of recently born animals.

The remaining Period D enclosures were more closely arranged around E58. The subrectangular enclosures 76 and 86 appeared to form a similar double celled arrangement to that of E72 and E73 just to the north. Reconstruction of the two enclosures is problematic, however, and the phasing of E76 is uncertain. On the basis of ceramic evidence the enclosure has been placed in Period D, but its stratigraphic relationship with later features (ditch 2072; Fig. A1.5; Appendix A1.8) suggest that it may be early Period D and may even have originated in Period C. The enclosure had been intensively recut

so that the soil mark which demarcated its ditch had widened to 4 m. A break in ditch 2071, in the north-east corner of the enclosure, marked a 1.75 m wide entrance (Fig. 3.11). The western terminal was flanked internally by a group of three postholes, 2153, 2154 and 2424, and externally by two postholes, 2155 and 2156. A sixth posthole, 2160, lay at the centre of the entrance, midway between the terminals. Although none of the postholes contained any pottery, it is highly likely that the postholes were contemporary with the enclosure, and marked the location of an entrance structure.

The western arm of the enclosure was cut by a shallow gully (2095) which followed the outer edge of the enclosure before turning east and terminating part of the way along its southern boundary. It is unclear whether 2095 formed part of E76 or was a component of enclosure 86.

Enclosure 86 was more securely dated to Period D. The enclosure was clearly cut by the later Period E enclosure 62 (Fig. 3.16). In addition, its ceramic assemblage was dominated by Group 4 pottery, although two Group 5 sherds also present must be seen as intrusive. The enclosure was much slighter than E76, consisting of a single-phase ditch or gully, 2020 (possibly the same as 2095). The enclosure was subrectangular in plan with a south-east facing entrance, c 1.75 m wide between 2095 and the terminal of 2020. A group of pits (2021–2027) and a circular gully (2039) were revealed in the western half of the enclosure (Fig. 3.16). Group 4 pottery was recovered from pit 2021 but it is possible that it was redeposited, and it is not clear if the features were associated with E86 or with the later, Phase E structure 202 (E62) to west.

To the south-west of E86 was the enclosure which is perceived as being spatially central to the enclosure group. Although the precise form of E58 was impossible to reconstruct, we can say that it was penannular in plan with a north-east facing entrance. The enclosure was largely defined by ditches 2016 to the north and 2240 to the south. Although numbered separately for practical reasons during the excavation, sections through each of the ditches were of very similar profile and dimensions, and it seems reasonable to assume that the two were actually one. This would give the enclosure a width of approximately 20 m. The exact positions of the terminals remain uncertain due to heavy truncation by later features and the confusing soil marks left by earlier features.

Immediately to the south of E58 were two irregular rectangular enclosures, E48 and E49 (Fig. 3.11). Their careful layout with respect to E58 suggests that the three enclosures were contemporary and part of a working complex. Enclosure 48, which was roughly orientated north-east by south-west, lay immediately to the south-east of E58. Before excavation it appeared that E48 shared its northern ditch with E58. On further investigation, however, it became apparent that the two enclosures actually lay side by side, separated by a narrow ridge of

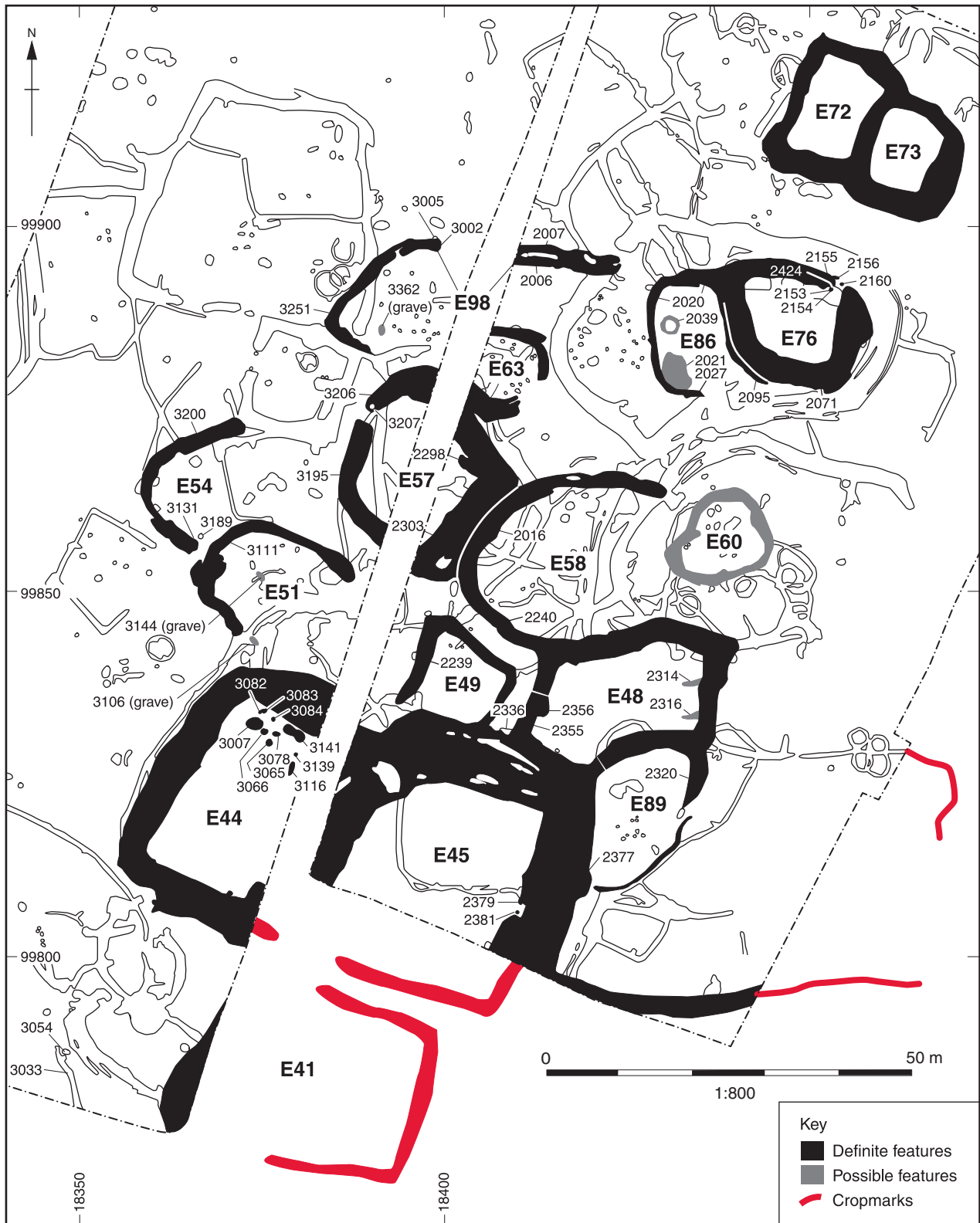


Fig. 3.11 Central enclosure group – Trenches 9 and 22

gravel. Ceramic evidence suggests that the two enclosures were contemporary. If that is accepted, then the decision to cut a second ditch rather than scour out and share the original (E58) ditch is difficult to explain, given the obvious extra effort required, and particularly since shared ditches were not uncommon elsewhere over the site. The simplest explanation is that the ceramic evidence is misleading and the two enclosures were not contemporary. The ditches follow each other so exactly, however, that it is difficult to believe that the original ditch was not still open when the second was cut. If this was the case then it is probable that the spoil from the second ditch was dumped on the inside edge of E48.

The question of whether the banks were internal or external is potentially crucial to understanding this area. In plan, E49 appears to have been separated from the other two enclosures (E48 and E58) by a 3 m wide gap (Fig. 3.11). This gap could have been illusory, however, if the space was occupied by upcast from the digging of the three enclosure ditches. If the banks were internal to the enclosures, however, the gap may have been used as a droveway or as access between the enclosures. Examination of the relevant sections does not provide definitive evidence either way.

Because of the multiple recutting of E45, it was not always clear of which enclosure a particular ditch or gully was part. If contemporary, the ditch terminals 2336 and 2356 would have formed an entrance *c* 3 m wide in the south-western corner of the enclosure. It is unclear whether E49 existed at this date, so that such an entrance would either have faced a relatively open area or into a narrow gap between the two enclosures. It may be significant that both the entrance and the gap between the enclosures were of approximately the same width (*c* 3 m). Whatever the case, the entrance to E48 was clearly blocked at a later date by the cutting of 2355. The narrow gullies 2314 and 2316 on the eastern side of E48 may have marked the location of a second entrance.

E49 was smaller than E48, and, although the multiple recutting of E45 once again made interpretation difficult, the enclosure appears to have been roughly rectangular in plan. It was believed by the excavators that the western ditch, 2239, terminated in the south-western corner of the enclosure, although this was not verified on site. If this was the case, then an entrance in the south-western corner would seem likely, but is unproven.

The western extent of the enclosure group was defined by two enclosures, E51 and E54 (Fig. 3.11). Enclosure 51, which was subrectangular in plan, was originally defined on three sides by ditch 3111. Although recut on its southern side, 3111 remained largely unaltered throughout the period that the enclosure was in use. The eastern side of E51 appears to have been open, although a barrier such as light wattling or a turf wall might have been archaeologically undetectable.

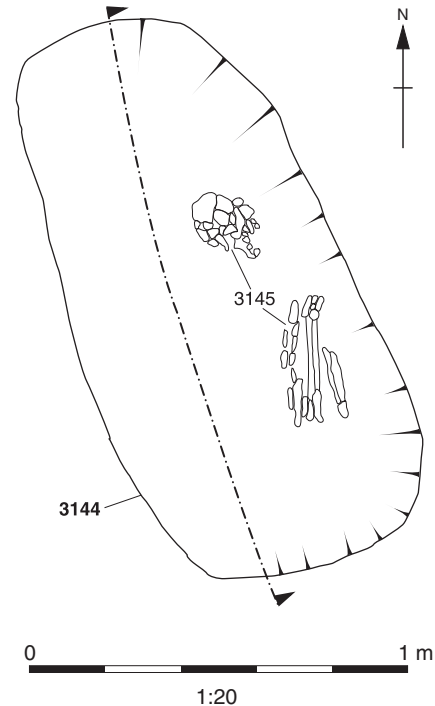


Fig. 3.12 Grave 3144 containing child skeleton 3145

A grave (3144) containing the poorly preserved bones of a young human male marked the centre of enclosure 51 (3145; Fig. 3.12; see below, Chapter 4). Although no datable evidence was recovered from the grave, its position, central to the enclosure, suggests that it may have been associated. Another crouched human skeleton (3106) lay within an oval grave just 10 m to the south, and may be contemporary. Based on comparable ceramic evidence and the high degree of spatial coherency displayed between E51 and E54, it is reasonable to suggest that the two enclosures were contemporary. Enclosure 54 was defined on its south-western and north-western sides by the curvilinear ditch 3200, and in the south-east by ditch 3111 (E51). Underlying ditch 3200 was a series of five slightly irregular pits (see below, 'Pits'; Fig. 3.11). The pits appeared to pre-empt the line of 3200 and could either be markers for the excavation of 3200 or an earlier, discontinuous form of enclosure. Only one pit contained any dating evidence (six sherds of Group 1 pottery from 3203), and as a group the pits could not be reliably phased. The north-eastern side of E54 appears to have been open, although as with E51, it is possible that the gap was closed by a light barrier which has left no trace.

The south-western corner of the enclosure was breached by a 1.5 m break in the ditch, which may have served as an entrance. Early silting of 3111 (E51), however, suggests the existence of an external gravel bank (Figs 3.11 and 3.13) which could have plugged the gap and completed the enclosure. Against such a suggestion, the terminal of 3200 was recut on at least two occasions, perhaps lending weight to the entrance theory. That stated, a

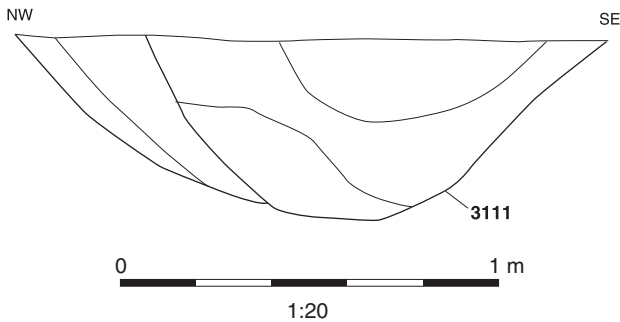


Fig. 3.13 Section 1615 showing early silting of 3111 from the north-west

terminal dug adjacent to a gravel bank would have needed a higher level of maintenance than other sections of the ditch. Although the matter remains unresolved, on balance, a south-west facing entrance to the enclosure does seem plausible. Postholes 3131 and 3189 may have been part of an entrance structure, but neither contained any dating evidence. It is uncertain if E52 (Period C; Fig. 3.5) was still extant at this time. If not, then the entrance to E54 would have faced an open field probably still bounded by 3077 to the south-west.

Enclosure 57 was located immediately to the west of E58 (Fig. 3.11). It exhibited the characteristic wide soil mark of a long-lived enclosure, its northern and south-eastern sides in particular having been intensively recut. Although the sequence is difficult to reconstruct, a later recut of the south-eastern ditch (2303) clearly cut the upper fills of E58 (2016), suggesting that the two enclosures may not have been exactly contemporary. On the other side of E57 the terminals 3195 and 3206 defined a north-west facing entrance, *c.* 1.70 m wide. The existence of a possible gateway structure was indicated by a posthole (3207) set into the northern terminal (3206). No corresponding posthole was found in terminal 3195, however, and it may be that posthole 3207 was unrelated to the enclosure.

Ditch 2298, which appears to be one of the earliest phases of E57, terminated approximately half way along the north-eastern side of the enclosure, and could mark the position of an early entrance. It is possible that E57 was the antecedent of the square enclosure E64 to the west which, although of a later phase (Period E; Fig. 3.15), is similar in many ways. The north-eastern ditch of E57 conjoined with that of another smaller enclosure (E63), although the relationship between them could not be established. E63 was *c.* 9 m internally with a 4 m wide entrance facing south-east.

To the north of E57 and E63 the north-western extent of the enclosure group was demarcated by a curvilinear boundary (E98; Fig. 3.11). Although not strictly an enclosure, in the sense that it has only one true side, for the purpose of descriptive convenience the boundary has been given an enclosure number. The boundary was divided into two sections by a gap in the centre which was presum-

ably used as an entrance. Although the exact width of the entrance is unknown (its eastern terminal was obscured by the division between Trenches 9 and 22), it must have been approximately 4–6 m wide. The boundary to the west of the entrance was discontinuous, consisting of two ditches of unequal length, laid end to end (3002 and 3251). Ditch 3251 curved away to the south-west before turning sharply to the east under the corner of the later enclosure 64 (Period E). It is uncertain precisely where 3251 terminated, although it was believed during excavation that it stopped short of 3206 (E57). Ditch 3002 formed the western terminal of the entrance to E98. Immediately adjacent to the terminal, a circular posthole, 3005, may have marked one side of a timber entrance structure. If a corresponding posthole on the other side of the entrance existed, it was obscured by the division between Trenches 9 and 22.

The boundary to the east of the entrance consisted of two parallel ditches, 2006 and 2007 (*c.* 14 m in length). Their eastern limit terminated 6 m short of E86 creating a second gap or entrance to the enclosed area, assuming that the ditch and enclosure 86 were contemporary.

An inhumation grave (3362) was positioned within enclosure 98, and although undated, there are parallels with grave 3144 and E51 to the south.

Potential Period D features – Northern Salvage Area (Fig. 3.10)

(5006, 5007, 5008, E136, E137, E141, E145)

Approximately 80 m to the west of the central enclosure group described above, a smaller group of enclosures and other features were recorded under salvage conditions. Perhaps the most significant feature was a funnel shaped track or droveway, which was oriented NE–SW. The droveway consisted of two main ditches 5008 (northern) and 5006 (southern). The south-western end of the droveway splayed out onto what would have been a largely open area during this period. To the east of 5006 was a third ditch 5007. It is unclear what function 5007 would have had but its spatial coherency with 5006 suggests that they were contemporary. Ditch 5010, *c.* 120 m to the south-east of 5006, is likely to have been the continuation of the droveway ditch. It had similar characteristics to 5006 and shared its alignment. In addition, both 5006 and 5010 had a small spur-like ditch that protruded towards the enclosure ditch to the east. Although of unknown significance, the two spur ditches provide a certain coherency between the enclosure group and the droveway.

The droveway as a whole has been ascribed to Period D on stratigraphic evidence. The southern ditch 5006 cut across enclosure 149 (Period A or C; Figs 3.1 and 3.5), and at its south-eastern end, boundary ditch 3077 (Period C; Fig. 3.5). The northern ditch 5008 clipped the edge of the subrectangular (Period C) enclosure 147 (Fig. 3.5). It is

possible that the droveway was still open and in use during Period E. Certainly, the orientation of the droveway was still important in Period G when trackway 301 was constructed along the same line towards the north-east (Fig. 3.21). The continuity is striking, and provides the only link between the earlier periods, characterised by the mass of organic enclosures, and the new, more formalised landscape of later periods.

To the south of the droveway were a small number of relatively isolated enclosures (E136, E137, E141 and E145 (Fig. 3.10)). Analysis of the plan suggests that enclosures 136 and 137 may have been separate components of a single double-celled structure, not unlike those in the northern end of Trench 9 (E72, E73, E76 and E86). The subrectangular E136 was cut into the south-eastern corner of the (Period C) E135 (Fig. 3.5). A single section was cut through the north-western ditch but no ceramic evidence was recovered. On the basis of soil mark observations, it is suggested that an entrance might have existed in the south-western corner of the enclosure. The enclosure itself appeared to cut E135, which has been assigned to Period C on the evidence of two sherds of Group 3 pottery.

The subrectangular enclosure 137 appears to have consisted of two phases, though no sections were dug to test this inference. An obvious west facing entrance was maintained in both versions of the enclosure. Although the evidence is clearly very weak, enclosures E136 and E137 have been tentatively placed in Period D.

A smaller double celled enclosure was located 50 m to the south-west (E141). Its components consisted of a subrectangular enclosure (*c* 7 x 10 m) with an annex of approximately half the size to the north (Fig. 3.10). Although one section was excavated through the enclosure ditch no ceramics were recovered. The enclosure has been assigned to Period D entirely on the basis of its similarity to E136 and E137, and the fact that it appears in the same local group of enclosures.

Enclosure 145 was isolated, approximately 50 m to the north-west of E141 (Fig. 3.10). The enclosure was smaller than the others (*c* 6 x 7 m), with a clear, north-west facing entrance. The interior was partially divided by a short length of ditch on a NW-SE axis. The south-eastern enclosure ditch was cut by the later Roman trackway 301 (Fig. 3.21).

Southern Area

Curvilinear features and linear boundary (E125, E126, E127, circular gully 897 and 825)

On the eastern side of Trench 8 were a series of three subcircular enclosures (E125, E126 and E127) and a circular gully (Fig. 3.14). All three of the enclosures fell partly outside the excavation area so that their precise form and dimensions are unknown. They have been tentatively ascribed to Period D on the basis of minimal pottery evidence.

Enclosure 125 was the most southerly of the three. It consisted of a U-shaped gully (877) which enclosed an area approximately 8 m in width. Although there were no apparent breaks in the ditch, it is possible that there was an east facing entrance beyond the area of excavation. No internal features contemporary with the enclosure were recorded. Immediately to the west of the enclosure, three circular postholes were arranged in a triangular pattern (888, 889 and 890). No ceramic evidence was recovered from any of the features, however, and any possible association with E125 is speculative.

Immediately to the north-east of E125 was a small, apparently subcircular feature (E126), which had been cut by E127 and the circular gully 897. Only the western ditch of E126 was visible, and, although the feature is presumed to have been subcircular (its eastern side being obscured by the edge of excavation), it is possible that it consisted of a single arc of curved gully. Although stratigraphically earlier than E127 and 897, two sherds of Group 4 pottery were recovered from E126 suggesting a Period D date. Although it is possible that the pottery was intrusive, the general character of E126 was consistent with the other Period D enclosures in this area.

Enclosure 127 was the largest (*c* 16 m wide) and most regular of the subcircular features revealed. The western ditch (899) was extremely regular in

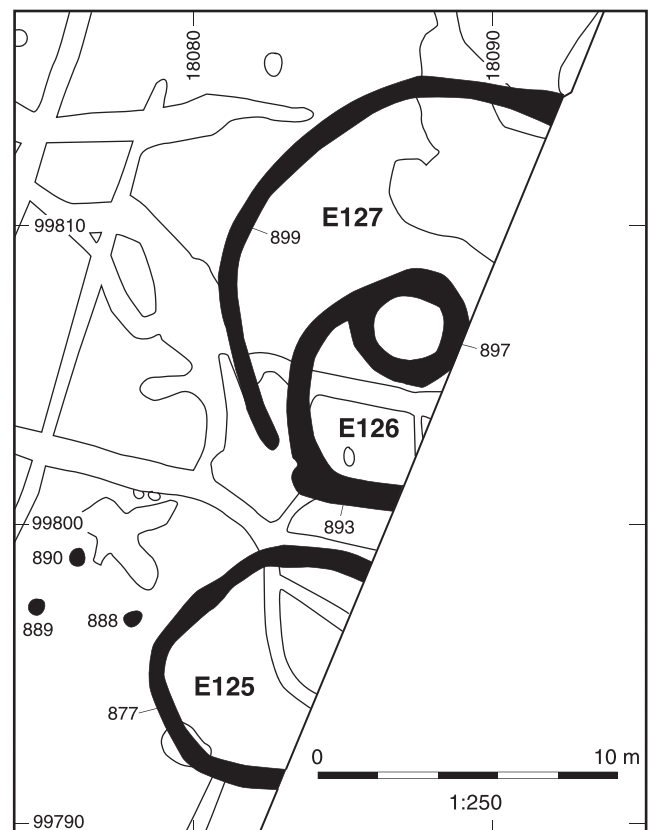


Fig. 3.14 Enclosures 125, 126 and 127 – Trench 8

terms of width and depth but also in the near perfect arc it defined. Its south-western extent terminated 4 m from the edge of excavation, probably defining an entrance. It is uncertain if gully 893 (to the south-east of 899) was a part of E127 or an unassociated feature. Two sherds of Group 2 pottery were recovered from the gully, but its stratigraphic position relative to E126 proves that the pottery must have been redeposited. The gully was wider than 899, and its execution somewhat cruder, raising the possibility that it was a later recut of the terminal. If contemporary with 899, the entrance gap would have been *c* 1 m wide.

The circular gully 897 contained a mixed ceramic assemblage, the latest pottery being a single sherd of Group 4 material. The feature's position within E127 hints that the two may have been contemporary, but the association remains uncertain.

The linear boundary ditch that was revealed in the western half of Trench 8 (812; Period C) appears to have been much elaborated in this period (Fig. 3.10). It consisted of a complex series of linear gullies. Within Trench 8, the resulting soilmark was fourteen metres wide. The majority of the gullies were relatively shallow (0.04–0.30 m), however, so that only the deepest (probably 812) showed as a cropmark to the south-east. The number of times that the boundary was recut suggests that it was quite long-lived. The easternmost ditch, 812, seems to have been one of the earliest cuts (see above, 'Period C'). Although very little ceramic evidence was recovered from any of the gullies, the westernmost gully (825) contained five sherds of Group 4 pottery, suggesting that the boundary was still in use within Period D. Although the precise sequence of gullies and ditches could not be reconstructed, it is possible that the general chronological trend may have been from east to west. From three of the cuts lying in the middle of this sequence (800, 801/A, 801B) was recovered a small amount of cremated human bone (Fig. 3.10). Two of these deposits (801/A, 801/B) were associated with quantities of G4 pottery, suggesting that they belonged to period D (mid-later 1st century AD).

Potential Period D features – Southern Area (2620/2621, 2622 and 5001/5002)

Although described above as the probable continuation of the Period C ditch 812, it is possible, although perhaps less likely, that linear ditch 2622 (Fig. 3.5) may have been the continuation of one of the later boundary ditches such as 825. At the southern extent of 2622 was a second linear boundary 5001/5002, which could equally have been ascribed to Periods D or F. For the most part, the ditch was only visible as a cropmark, although it was traced but not excavated in Trench 13 (ditch 6) of the Kempford, Bowmoor evaluation (OAU 1989, 3). At its north-eastern end the ditch appeared to split into two but the relationship was not investigated in the field.

Approximately 250 m to the south-west of Trench 8 was a large double ditched feature (2620 and 2621) which appeared as an L-shaped cropmark on aerial photographs (Fig. 3.10). Only the north-eastern corner of the feature was visible on the photographs, and it remains uncertain if the cropmark was a trackway similar to 301 and 5036, or one corner of a large, subrectangular enclosure. In order to further investigate the nature of the cropmark, and to recover dating evidence, two L-shaped assessment trenches were excavated across the ditches (Trenches 11/12 and 13/14). Despite careful excavation, only one sherd of Group 4 pottery was recovered from ditch 2620. On the basis of that very minimal ceramic evidence, the feature has been tentatively ascribed to Period D. A similar double-ditched enclosure was located during an evaluation at Stubbs Farm, Kempford, which proved to be of 2nd century AD date (OAU 1993, fig. 3, plate 1).

PERIOD E: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD *c* AD 75–120 (Fig. 3.15)

Summary

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 have been 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 the large subrectangular enclosure 26 perhaps providing the central point of the group. The northern group of enclosures (Trenches 9 and 22) was dominated by the large double celled enclosure E62/E75. A number of smaller subrectangular enclosures quite different in character to E62/E75 were also recorded.

Northern Area

Enclosures – Trenches 9 and 22
(E50, E62, E64, E75, E77, E81)

In Period E, the Northern Area was dominated by a large pair of enclosures, E62 and E75 (Fig. 3.16). Both enclosures had been intensively recut, so that the original relationship between the two had been obliterated. It is likely, however, given their spatial cohesion and similar ceramic assemblages, that the enclosures were originally contemporary. Site records indicate that at least one of the recuts of E75 cut the fills of E62, but the overall sequence was complex and not fully understood. It is difficult to say, therefore, if the shifting pattern of recuts reflects significant changes in the relative importance of the two enclosures or simply a response to localised conditions. The double-celled arrangement of the enclosures is reflected in the earlier (Period D) pairs of enclosures E72/73 and E76/E86 (Fig. 3.11).

In the north-west corner of E62, an entrance, *c* 1–2 m wide, was defined by multiply recut ditch

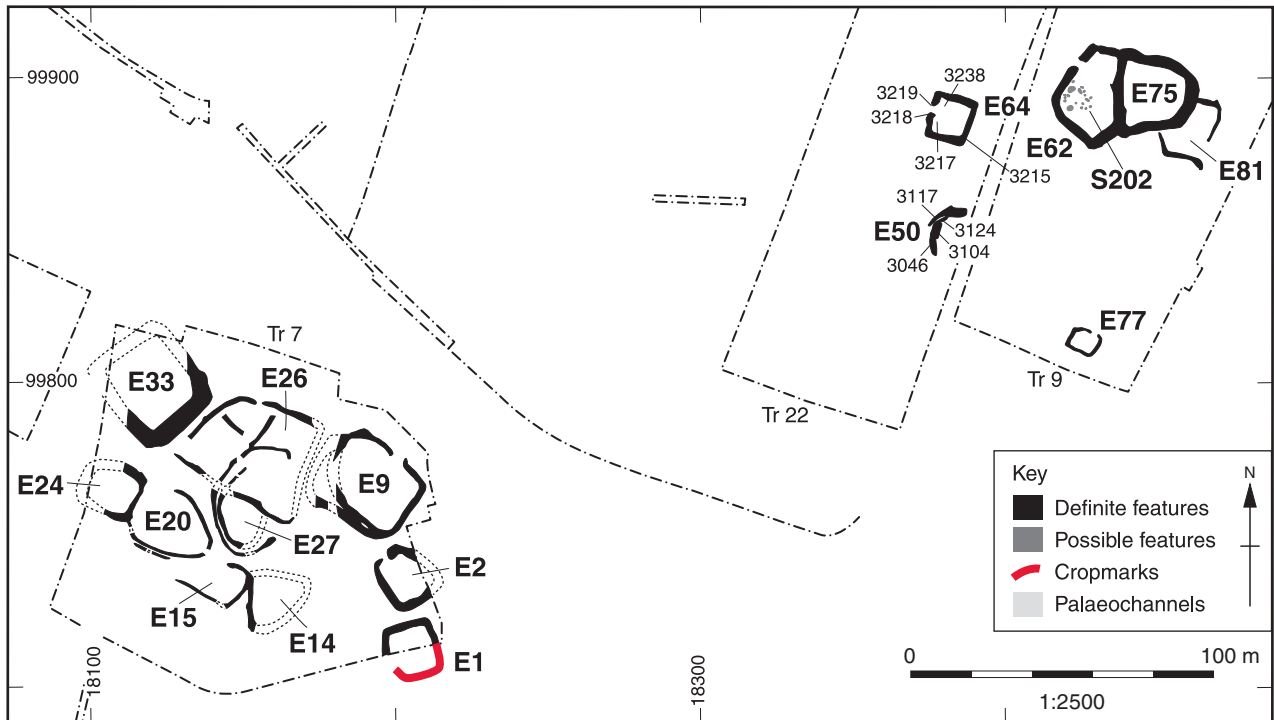


Fig. 3.15 Period E – early Roman Period, c AD 75–120

terminals, 2082 (north) and 2090 (south). To the south of the entrance, in the western corner of E62, was a discrete group of postholes and pits (structure 202; Fig. 3.16). Although immediately to the north-east of structures 200 and 201 (Period C; Figs 3.5 and 3.6), the structure was divided from them by the western edge of E62. Although a coherent circular structure could not be reconstructed, the posthole group had a sufficient degree of symmetry to suggest that some form of structure was present. The triangle formed by postholes 2218, 2219 and 2247, appears to be mirrored by postholes 2223, 2249 and 2250. Whilst this arrangement could be purely coincidental, it might also be interpreted as a symmetrical framework for an entranceway between 2223 and 2247. It is possible that the walls of such a structure were constructed using turf or stakes, neither of which would necessarily have left any trace in the gravel. The group of postholes to the west might have been part of a NE–SW fence-line although they were of widely differing dimensions. Pits 2257 and 2195 may have been inside 202 but could equally have marked the extent of the structure’s walls. The structure has been placed in Period E on the basis of its spatial relationship with E62, but it is acknowledged that an equally strong case can be made for a Period C date (Appendix A1.7).

The group of pits to the south-east of 202 (2021–2027 and 2049; Fig. 3.16) is of uncertain phase. Although the ceramic assemblage was no later than Group 4 (Period D), it is possible that the pottery was redeposited allowing for a Period E date and association with structure 202. The circular gully to

the north of the pit group (2039) contained no ceramics and is similarly unphased (Fig. 3.16).

Enclosure 75 was more complex than E62 in that it had been more intensively recut (Fig. 3.16). It was roughly rectangular in plan, although its eastern end was curved. A 1.30 m wide entrance in its north-eastern corner was flanked by terminals 2142 and 2148. Immediately outside the entrance was a group of five undated postholes which may have demarcated an entrance structure (2185–2189). No entrance was visible between E62 and E75. Both E62 and E75 were dated to Period E mainly on the basis of stratigraphic relationships with the earlier enclosures E76 and E86 and with ditch 2072 (Appendix A1.8).

Immediately to the south-east of E75 was the subrectangular enclosure E81 (Fig. 3.16). The northern ditch 2118 apparently cut an early phase of E75 (2141) but could not be traced across the later ditch 2142. This would suggest that E81 was contemporary with the recut of E75 (2142) and was probably used as an annex to the main enclosure. An east facing entrance, c 6 m wide, was clearly visible in the south-eastern corner of the enclosure, suggesting that a portion of E61 (perhaps 2235) had been recut to form the southern edge of E81. Later still, the short ditch 2237 was excavated, although for what purpose is unclear.

Enclosure E64 was located approximately 25 m to the south-west of E62 (Fig. 3.15; Plate 3.1). The enclosure was subrectangular in shape, c 11 x 12 m, with a very clearly defined ditch (3215). The western and southern sides of the enclosure were of a single phase, clearly cutting through the earlier,

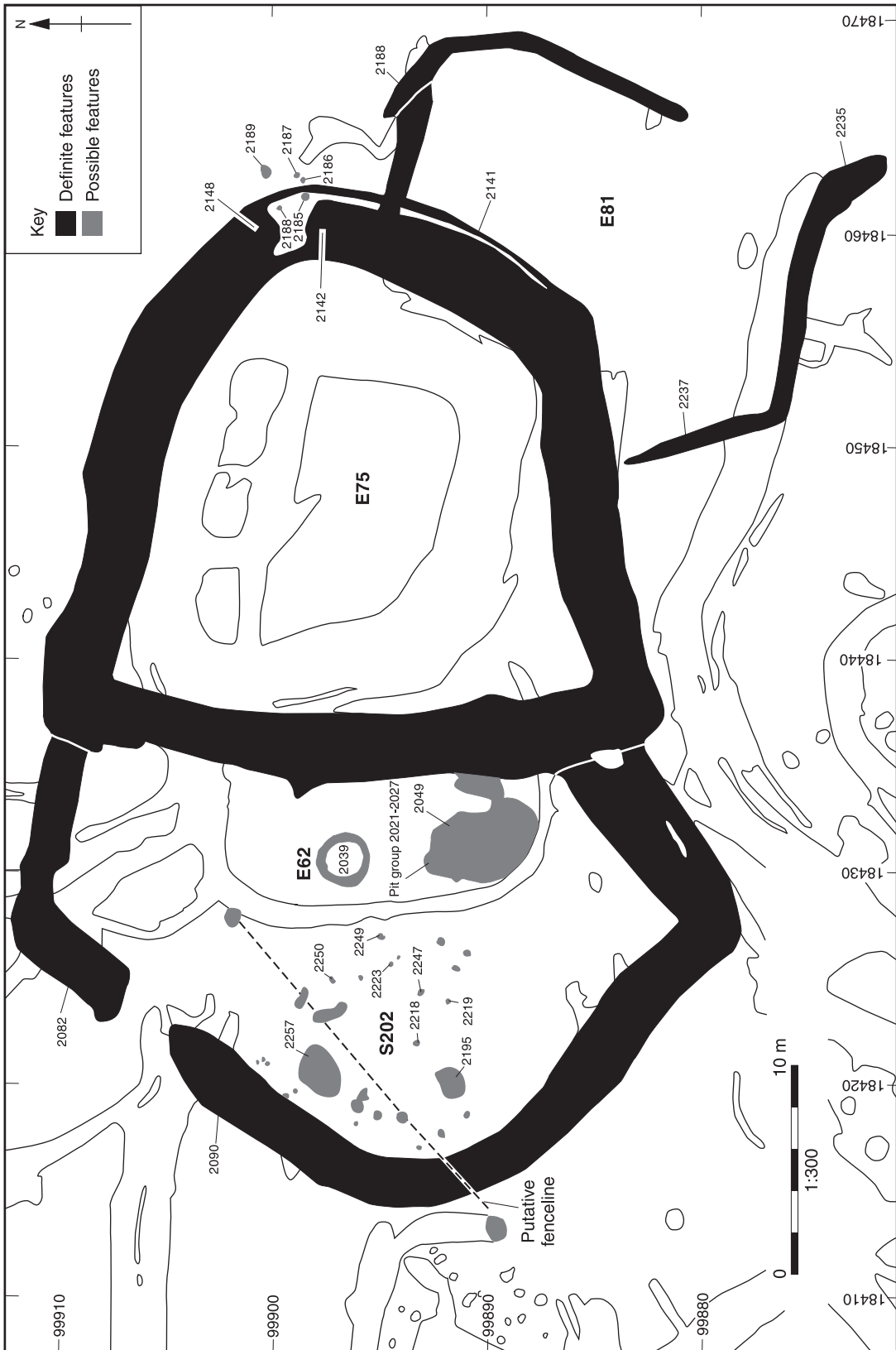


Fig. 3.16 Structure 202 within double celled enclosure E62/75



Plate 3.1 Subrectangular enclosure 64 in Trench 22

Period D E54 (Fig. 3.11). The northern and eastern sides of the enclosure recut the earlier ditches 3235 and 3348 which may have been associated with E65 (Period C; Fig. 3.5). A very clearly defined entrance consisting of two circular postholes (3218 and 3219) adjacent to the opposing ditch terminals, was located close to the centre of the western enclosure ditch. The gap between the postholes was approximately 2 m wide. Two further postholes or small pits were located inside the enclosure, close to the entrance (3217 and 3238). Neither feature contained dating evidence, however, and it is uncertain if they were contemporary with the enclosure. Other features internal to E64 were thought to be earlier in date or were unphased (End Plan).

The ceramic assemblage within the main enclosure ditch of E64 consisted of a mixture of redeposited material which characterised many of the deposits analysed at Thornhill Farm. The majority of the pottery was of Group 2 origin (51 sherds) with Group 3 also being well represented (38 sherds). Three sherds were of Group 4 origin and one of Group 5. The enclosure was placed within Period E partly on the basis of the ceramic evidence, but mainly on stratigraphic grounds. The enclosure ditch 3215 cut every feature it crossed, including the Period D enclosure E54. Furthermore, the enclosure was located immediately in front of the Period D enclosure E57 (Fig. 3.11), further adding to the likelihood of a Period E date.

Approximately 20 m to the south of E64, multiply recut sections of curved gullies constituted E50 (Fig. 3.15). It is uncertain whether the gullies that constituted E50 formed a discrete enclosure or if they were a later addition to the Period D E51 to the west (Fig. 3.11). Although it was not possible to reconstruct the precise stratigraphic sequence which formed the enclosure, the western and southern extent of E50 was largely defined by two relatively shallow ditches, 3117 and 3124. It was unclear if 3117 and 3124 were contemporary or if one was dug to replace the other. Since they never crossed, and ran roughly parallel to each other, it is perhaps more likely that they were contemporary.

At its southern end, 3124 seems to have been replaced by 3046, although no stratigraphic relationship was established. Gully 3046 curved southward and clearly cut the upper fills of Period D E44, providing the main evidence for the Period E date of E50. Immediately adjacent to 3046 to the east was a short length of gully, 3104. Although 3104 contained only a single sherd of (Group 2) pottery, its close association with 3046 suggests that it was broadly contemporary.

The northern ends of 3117 and 3124 were lost in a large soil mark which was never properly understood despite extensive trenching. No obvious eastern side to E50 existed although it is possible that E49 (Period D; Fig. 3.11) survived long enough to provide a suitable barrier. Similarly, there was no

obvious northern end to the enclosure, and it may be that that side remained open.

To the east of 3124 were a number of unphased pits and postholes which may have been associated with E50, but the only pottery recovered was six sherds of Group 3 pottery from posthole or pit 3173, perhaps suggesting a Period C date for at least some of the features (End Plan).

Enclosure 77 was located in the south-east corner of Trench 9 (Figs 3.15 and A1.2). The enclosure was subrectangular in form with a probable entrance in its north-eastern corner, between terminals 2376 and 2383. The eastern side of the enclosure (2383) seemed to cut the Period C ditch 2354, although the excavation records were unclear on this point. The western extent of 2383 was apparently cut by the north-south ditch 2382, although again the site records are vague and uncertain. No relationship was recorded between the northern arm of the enclosure and ditch 2334. The enclosure has been tentatively assigned to Period E largely on the basis of the minimal ceramic evidence which consisted of a mixture of Groups 1–3, two sherds of Group 4 material and a single sherd of Group 5.

Rectilinear enclosure group – Trench 7

(E1, E2, E9, E14, E15, E20, E24, E26, E27 and E33)

Covering most of the area of Trench 7 was a group of loosely co-axial, rectilinear enclosures (Fig. 3.17). Although parts of the enclosure group continued into Period F, the majority of the enclosures had their origins in Period E. The group was dominated by two large rectilinear enclosures, 9 and 26, behind which were located a number of smaller enclosures.

Enclosure 1 was located in the south-eastern corner of Trench 7. Although only half of the enclosure fell within the excavated area, aerial photographs are sufficiently clear to show that the enclosure was subrectangular in plan. Site records show that the enclosure ditch (250) had been recut once. As there was no sign of a break in the enclosure ditch, any entrance must have fallen outside of the excavated area to the south.

The enclosure clearly cut the earlier (Period C) E4 and its associated gullies 252 and 267 (Fig. 3.9). The ceramic assemblage contained seven sherds of Group 1 pottery as well as seven sherds of Group 3 and five sherds of Group 4. Although E1 could have had its origins in Period D, it was thought more likely that it belonged to the enclosure group outlined below rather than standing in complete isolation as it would have done in Period D.

A few metres to the north of E1 was a second subrectangular enclosure of similar form and dimensions (E2; Fig. 3.17). The northern end of this enclosure was slightly narrower than the southern end, and was breached by a complex entrance which was not fully understood (Appendix A1.9). The southern end of the enclosure cut through the earlier (Period C) enclosures 4 and 5 (Fig. 3.9). The main enclosure ditch 235, seems to have been recut

on at least one occasion. Most of its eastern extent lay outside the excavation area apart from a small portion at the north-eastern corner of the enclosure. A mandible from a human female was recovered from this ditch, while a pit (320) just to the north contained the cremated remains of another human (Fig. 3.17). This could not be phased either stratigraphically or ceramically.

A substantially larger subrectangular enclosure, E9, lay *c* 4 m to the north-west of E2. Enclosure 9 had two major phases. Its south-western boundary was demarcated by two separate ditches (113 and 116), both of which had been recut on at least one occasion. It was not established stratigraphically which of the ditches was the earlier, and both ditches contained pottery of a similar date. At its north-western end, ditch 116 curved markedly, while ditch 113 continued on a straight line until it reached the edge of E26. Here the ditch was cut by the Roman trackway 301 (End Plan) so that a relationship with E26 was never established. The north-eastern enclosure ditch (101) was breached just to the south-east of its centre by an entrance. Although the south-eastern terminal was clearly defined, the north-western terminal was lost in a soil mark making the width of the entrance difficult to determine precisely. It must, however, have been *c* 2 m wide.

Gullies 100 and 104, which protruded from the south-western corner of E9, may have defined the site of a roundhouse or other structure (Fig. 3.17). If so, no trace of any structure survived, apart from a pair of postholes, 277 and 278. A number of other postholes (261–266, 268 and 269) and a pit (194) were revealed in the north-western corner of the enclosure. None of the postholes contained any dating evidence, and their association with E9 is uncertain. Three of the postholes (261, 262 and 263) formed a tight triangle, an arrangement reminiscent of postholes 3065, 3066 and 3078 located within E44 (Fig. 3.11). Although the remaining postholes did not form a coherent structural plan, the timber uprights might have been supplemented by turf walls, and a structural interpretation cannot be ruled out. In the north-eastern corner of the enclosure, *c* 6 m from the entrance, was a pair of irregular pits, 176 and 188. Although phasing was uncertain, pit 176 contained three sherds of Group 4 pottery, and on that basis, both pits were tentatively ascribed to Period D. A possible four-post structure in the south-west corner of the enclosure (153, 154, 157 and 285) was thought to be of a later phase (Period F) and to be related to E6 (Fig. 3.19).

Approximately 30 m to the south-west of E9, a roughly triangular enclosure, E14, had been badly truncated by the Period F enclosure 154 (Figs 3.17 and 3.19). The northern and south-eastern sides of E14 had been almost totally cut away during the construction of the new enclosure so that only its western ditch, 462/490, had survived. Of a group of pits and postholes in the south-eastern corner of E14 only pit 485, and a single posthole, 484, contained

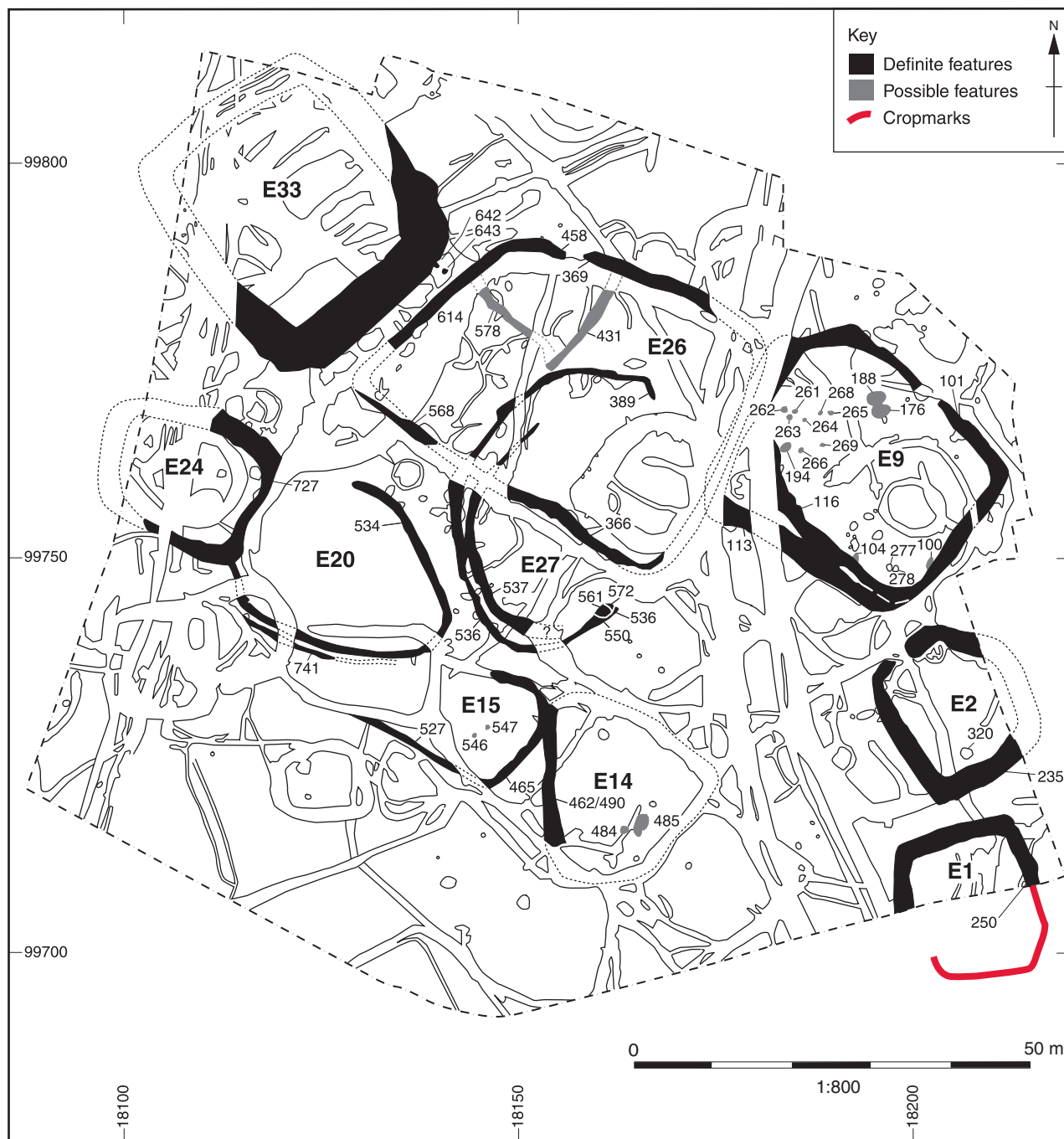


Fig. 3.17 Rectilinear enclosure group – Trench 7

evidence of a possible Period E date (Appendix A1.10; Fig A1.7).

Immediately to the north-west of E14 was a subrectangular enclosure, E15 (Fig. 3.17). The main component of E15 was the enclosure ditch 465 which defined the whole of its south-eastern side and part of its north-eastern side. Half way along the north-eastern boundary the ditch terminated, leaving a 7 m gap between the terminal and E20 to the north-west, which may have been used as an entrance. Enclosure 15's south-western boundary

was demarcated by a linear ditch 527. At its north-western end the ditch was cut by the later, Period F enclosure 16 (Fig. 3.19). A pair of postholes, 546 and 547, were revealed near the centre of the enclosure. The postholes were 1.5 m apart, and contained pottery which was contemporary with E15. No other pits or postholes were found within E15, suggesting that the pair of postholes did not form part of a larger structure. One possible interpretation is that they supported a fodder rack. Their central location within E15 might suggest they were

contemporary with the enclosure, but definitive evidence is lacking.

Enclosure 15 was ascribed to Period E because of its stratigraphic relationship with the later, Period F enclosures E154 and E16 (Fig. 3.19), and because of its ceramic assemblage, which contained 36 sherds of Group 5 pottery. It also formed a very coherent spatial group with the contemporary enclosures E20 and E27 (Fig. 3.17).

Enclosure 20 was located 7 m to the north-west of E15. It was U-shaped in plan, with a wide north-west facing entrance. The enclosure was defined by ditch 534 (534=545=744=746), which, although recut once, did not exhibit the high degree of reworking found in many of the other enclosure ditches. The western end of the enclosure was defined by the ditch of E24. Approximately 1 m outside the southern enclosure ditch was a shallow gully, 741. This gully was clearly related to the main ditch, closely following its curved outline for a distance of almost 20 m. It is possible that the gully had originally been longer, but machine truncation caused it to fade out to the east, and its western end was lost in the ditches of the Period F enclosure 22 (Fig. 3.19). The interior of E20 was unusually blank, with no recorded features.

No ceramics were recovered from E20, and its phasing is uncertain. The enclosure was cut to the south by the Period F enclosures E22 and E16 (Fig. 3.19), and to the west by Period E enclosure E24 (Fig. 3.17). The latter relationship is likely to reflect nothing more than a late recut of E24. Nevertheless, it remains possible that E20 was earlier than Period E, although it cannot be any later. Its spatial coherency with surrounding Period E enclosures, however, strongly suggests a contemporary, Period E date.

Enclosure 24 was a subrectangular enclosure to the west of E20. The western enclosure ditch was extremely complex, particularly in the north-west corner, where despite extensive trenching no clear understanding of the area was obtained. The south-western corner of the enclosure lay outside the excavation area and so added nothing to the level of understanding. The eastern half of the enclosure was defined by ditch 727, which was partly cut away in its south-eastern corner by unphased, later activity. The interior of the enclosure had largely been destroyed by the Period F enclosure 155 (Fig. 3.19) and by the later, Period H boundary 302 (Fig. 3.23; Plate 3.3). No entrances were apparent, although the complex nature of parts of the enclosure meant that an entrance might easily have been missed by the excavators or destroyed by later activity.

Enclosure 27, to the east of E24, was a C-shaped, double-ditched enclosure with an open eastern side (Fig. 3.17). The enclosure consisted of an outer ditch (536=574=389) and an inner ditch or gully (537=607=577). The outer ditch was the more extensive, ending in terminals 389 (north) and 536 (south), separated by a gap of 29 m. The eastern side

of the enclosure appeared to be entirely open, although it is possible that a light fence or turf wall might have existed. The southern terminal was intensively recut by a series of small pits or postholes (550, 561 and 572) which may have acted as the terminal point of such a structure.

The inner ditch followed a similar course to the outer, although the two were not exactly parallel. The inner ditch was shorter, terminating 9 and 15 m from the outer southern and northern terminals respectively. Both ditches of the enclosure were cut through by E26 (Period E; Fig. 3.17) and E29 (Period F; Fig. 3.19). The ceramic evidence suggests that E27 began to silt up in Period E. Given its stratigraphic relationship with E26, an early Period E date seems more likely. No contemporary features were revealed within the interior of the enclosure.

Enclosure 26 was a large, subrectangular enclosure, which, although of the same Period, directly overlay E27. The enclosure was complex and of several phases (Periods E and F). For the sake of descriptive ease, it has been separated into three major components: E26 (Period E), E29 and E30 (see below, 'Period F'). Although the stratigraphic sequence was very poorly understood (Appendix A1.11), E26 seems to have been the most extensive phase, defining an area approximately 30 x 40 m (Fig. 3.17). A ditched entrance, *c* 4 m wide was cut into the north-western corner of the enclosure, allowing access to what was presumably open grassland. The entrance was clearly defined by terminal 458 to the west and less certainly by 369 to the east (Appendix A1.11).

From its western terminal the enclosure turned towards the south-west and ran parallel to E33 as ditch 614. It is unclear what happened to 614 at the south-western corner of the enclosure, but presumably it turned towards the south-east, becoming 568 and eventually 366. Defining the eastern enclosure ditch was also problematic. This was largely due to the fact that much of it had been cut away by E30 and the later Roman trackway 301 (Fig. 3.19 and End Plan). It would seem that ditch 366 was cut away by E29 (Fig. 3.19) at its eastern extent, emerging only in the north-east corner of the enclosure where it turned to the north-west before terminating at the entrance as 369.

To the south of the enclosure entrance was an L-shaped ditch 431/578. Although the ceramic and stratigraphic evidence both point to a Period E date for the ditch, the fact that much of it was cut away by E29 makes it uncertain if the ditch was precisely contemporary with E26. If contemporary, the ditch may have formed a holding area, or controlled access to the enclosure.

Immediately to the north-west of E26 was the final enclosure in the group. Enclosure 33 was an extremely complex feature which had been recut on at least four occasions, resulting in a soilmark *c* 6 m wide (Fig. 3.17). The enclosure was subrectangular, but its full extent was difficult to define precisely. The western half of the enclosure had been severely

truncated by later gullies and ditches and was never properly understood (Appendix A1.12). The intensively recut nature of the enclosure, together with its size and shape, is very reminiscent of the Period D enclosures E44 and E45 (Fig. 3.11). Enclosure 33 and E26 appear to have been contemporary with each other. The enclosures were parallel, creating a narrow corridor or trackway between the two, c 2 m wide. At the northern end of the trackway two oval shaped postholes were revealed (642 and 643), suggesting that access was controlled by a gate. The southern end of the trackway led to an open area in front of the entrance to E20.

Although little can be said about the mass of gullies which obscured a large part of E33, it is clear that both those gullies and E33 itself were cut through by the later Roman boundary 302 (End Plan). The ceramic assemblage, and E33's close spatial relationship with the other enclosures of the group (E26 and E24 in particular), was consistent with a Period E date.

PERIOD F: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD
c AD 75–120 (Fig. 3.18)

Summary

This period was characterised by small clusters of enclosures loosely arranged around the large subrectangular E29 in Trench 7. The enclosures within individual clusters shared similar characteristics and may have served particular functions as groups.

Southern Area

Enclosure group – Trench 7
(E11, E16, E17, E22, E29, E30, E35, E36, E37, E104, E105, E113, E154, E155 and circular gully 630)

The most isolated enclosure, E11, consisted of a recut penannular ditch located to the north-east of E29 (Fig. 3.19). The enclosure only partially lay within the excavated area so that its north-eastern half was obscured by the edge of excavation. The original penannular ditch 220/173 had a west facing entrance c 1.25 m wide. At a later date both ditch and entrance were recut, the entrance gap narrowing to 0.50 m. Enclosure 11 was significantly different from the other small enclosures in the vicinity. It was quite regular, had a very obvious entrance, and both the original enclosure ditch and its recut contained significant amounts of burnt limestone and animal bone (Table 3.9).

The diameter of the enclosure was approximately 7 m, which is commensurate with the possibility that E11 was a house enclosure. A similar penannular gully, though of slightly larger diameter, surrounded the post-built structure 201 in Trench 9 (Fig. 3.6). Although no features were found within E11 that might indicate the presence of a round-house, construction using a massed wall technique such as turf would not necessarily leave any trace.

Table 3.9 E11 bone and stone weight

| Phase | Context | Total bone weight (g) | Total stone weight (g) |
|-------|---------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A | 173 | 30 | 7504 |
| A | 193 | 250 | 8400 |
| A | 220 | 615 | 8736 |
| B | 192 | 305 | 11872 |
| B | 221 | 1575 | 10556 |

Enclosure 29 was essentially a second phase of the original E26 (Figs 3.17 and 3.19). The enclosure was subrectangular with an entrance in its north-western corner, and an irregularly shaped western annex. Located in its south-eastern corner was a smaller subrectangular enclosure (E30, below). The southern enclosure ditch (346) was approximately half the length of the original ditch of E26. The entrance to E29 was maintained in the same position as it had been for E26 (c 3–4 m wide). Its eastern side was defined by the terminal of 334. It is unclear if the western ditch of the main enclosure (454) also terminated at this point (thus allowing access to the western annex), or if it turned to the west and continued as 459 and 601. The annex was roughly wedge shaped, widening gradually towards the south. The southern end appears to have been open, framed between the terminal of 601 to the west and 454 to the east, although all of the previously mentioned difficulties in recognising light or mobile barriers apply once again. Just to the west of 459 lay the vertical-sided circular gully 630, which probably belonged to this phase (Fig. 3.19).

Enclosure 30 (Fig. 3.19) was thought to be of the same phase as E29 (although see Appendix A1.11). Although insufficient sections were cut to obtain a definitive reconstruction, the original enclosure ditch (323) appears to have been recut once (322). All internal features proved to be earlier than the enclosure. A layer of churned up ditch fill (311) on the eastern side of E30 has been interpreted as animal trample (Fig. 3.19). The animal trample contained nine sherds of Group 5 pottery, but must post-date the filling of E30's ditches

Enclosure 30 was unusual in that the outer lip of its western ditch (322) was marked by a series of shallow postholes (352–361; Fig. 3.19). The postholes were evenly spaced in some places and uneven in others, raising the possibility that some may have been missed during excavation. The postholes seem to have been limited to the western ditch only, although any corresponding eastern series would have been cut away by the later Roman trackway 301 (End Plan). It is uncertain if the postholes were associated with the original enclosure ditch (323) or with its recut (322; Appendix A1.11).

The function of the postholes is open to interpretation. One possibility is that they were part of a structure designed to prevent the slippage of an (assumed) gravel bank to the west of E30. If this was

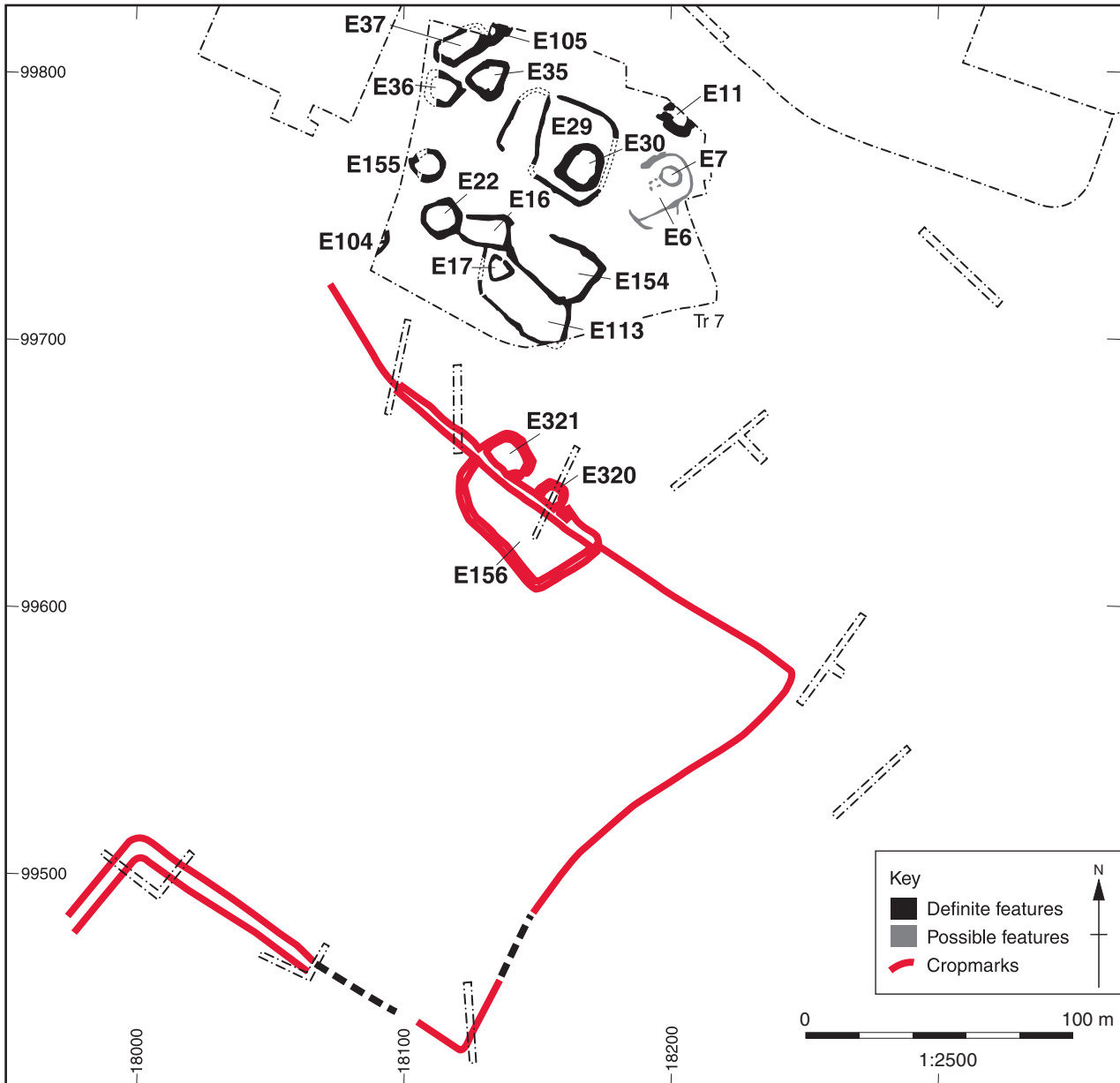


Fig. 3.18 Period F – early Roman Period, c AD 75–120

the case, however, the structure was the only recorded example at Thornhill Farm. The location of the postholes on the western edge of the enclosure suggests a specific relationship with E29, and a perhaps more likely interpretation is that they supported a light fence or screen, perhaps made from wattle panels. The function of such panelling seems to have been to separate or screen the contents of E30 from E29 or *vice versa*. Segregation of livestock would have been desirable during pregnancy or birthing and perhaps to prevent mature calves from reaching their mothers' milk (Lucas 1989). In the latter case it may have been necessary not only to physically separate the calves from their mothers, but also to remove them from their sight in order to prevent distress.

To the south of E30 were three subrectangular enclosures of a more elongated form (E154, E16 and E113; Fig. 3.19). Enclosure 154 directly overlay the Period E enclosure 14 (Fig. 3.17). Its northern and eastern ditches were largely recuts of the earlier enclosure, which presumably must have been still visible when the new enclosure was cut. Enclosure 154 was essentially three-sided, with a broad entrance in the north-western corner (c 15 m wide) defined by terminal 477 to the east and E16 to the west. The centre of the enclosure was traversed by a pair of unphased NE-SW ditches whose relationship with E154 was never understood (End Plan).

Although smaller than E154, enclosure 16 to the west shared many characteristics of the larger enclo-

features were identified. Although it is possible that the enclosure contained a modest structure, its relatively small dimensions (c 7 m x 7 m) make it unlikely that it ever contained a roundhouse. It has been placed in Period F partly because it was stratigraphically late, but mainly because of its spatial fit within E113.

This same spatial coherency that E113 shared with E154 and E16 strongly suggests that the enclosures were contemporary. Their broadly similar elongated form also points toward a shared function.

To the north and west of this group, a series of enclosures were revealed whose characteristics were quite different (Fig. 3.19). The intensive, inter-cutting nature of the archaeology and lack of time for a thorough archaeological investigation has meant that this area remains poorly understood (Appendix A1.13). As a result, the majority of the enclosures featured below are described only at the most basic level.

The enclosures were arranged loosely along a north-south axis, and were divided into two subgroups. The southern group consisted of three enclosures, E22, E155 and E104 (Fig. 3.19). Enclosure 22 was a subcircular enclosure defined for the most part by the relatively substantial ditch 698. It appears to have been a recut of an earlier, equally substantial ditch (699), which could only be traced along the south-eastern side of the enclosure. In plan, ditch 699 appeared to terminate in the south-western corner of the enclosure, but this was not verified through excavation. Gully 701, which traversed the centre of E22, was of uncertain phase, but probably did not form part of the enclosure (Appendix A1.14; Fig A1.8). Enclosure 22 has been assigned to Period F on the basis of its stratigraphically later position relative to E23 (Period C; Fig. 3.9) and its similarity in form with other enclosures in the group. The enclosure also seems to have formed the western ditch of E16.

To the north-west of E22 was a second subcircular enclosure, E155. For the most part the enclosure consisted of a continuous ditch (723), which had been recut on one occasion (722). A possible third ditch (749), and an earlier pit (751), of uncertain phase (Appendix A1.14), complicated the western edge. The enclosure was located almost

wholly within the slightly larger E24 (Fig. 3.17) so that consideration of their stratigraphic relationship was limited to the north-western corner of E155. Here, there was clear evidence that E155 was the later of the two enclosures (Fig. 3.20). The interior of the enclosure was largely cut away by the Period H linear boundary 302 (Fig. 3.23).

The third enclosure in the subgroup, E104, was revealed in the south-western corner of Trench 7 (Fig. 3.19). Only its eastern extent fell within the excavation area. This consisted of a slightly curved ditch 720, which ended in a multiply recut terminal (720, 739 and 740). Immediately to the west of the ditch was a circular posthole (721), which is presumed to be of the same phase. E104 has been ascribed to Period F on the basis of a single sherd of Group 5 pottery which was recovered from 740, and because what was revealed of the enclosure was similar to other subcircular enclosures in that area.

The northern subgroup consisted of four enclosures, E35, E36, E37 and E105 (Fig. 3.19), which were also very poorly understood (Appendix A1.15). Enclosure 35 defined a small, irregular area approximately 12 x 12 m. The enclosure consisted of an apparently continuous ditch which had been recut on at least one occasion and possibly twice. The enclosure's south-eastern and north-eastern sides were cut into the upper fills of E33 (Phase E), making a more precise definition difficult. The enclosure's south-western and north-western sides were more clearly defined. Although no definite entrances were revealed, a bulbous shape in the south-eastern corner of the enclosure (687) may have defined a former access (Fig. 3.19).

Enclosure 36 lay c 2 m to the west of E35. Its precise dimensions are unknown because its western side was largely cut away by the later, Roman boundary 302 (End Plan). From what remains, however, the enclosure would appear to be slightly smaller than E35, but of similar plan. No entrances were located and all internal features predated the enclosure.

Enclosure 37 lay c 2 m to the north-east of E36. Although more elongated than both E35 and E36, the enclosure was of a similar character. The long

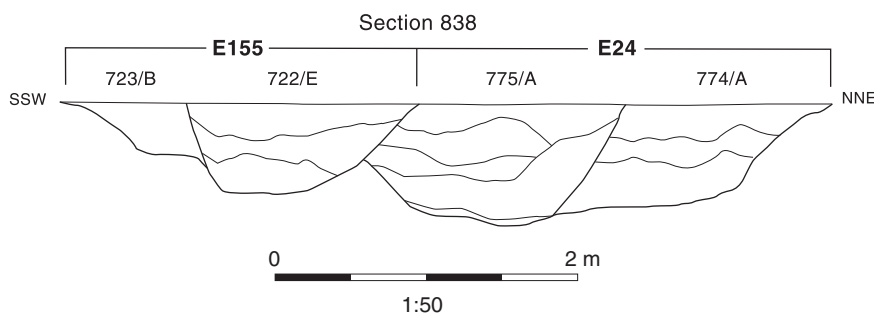


Fig. 3.20 Section 838 showing the relationship between E24 and E155

axis of the enclosure was oriented NE–SW, making the enclosure parallel with E35. Although the enclosure ditch had very few sections cut through it, those recorded show that it had been recut as many as four or five times.

Enclosure 105 lay immediately to the north-east of E37. The majority of the enclosure lay outside the excavation area so that only a very partial reconstruction was possible. The visible portion of the enclosure ditch was oriented NE–SW. At its northern extent it appears to have turned to the north-west where it was lost under the edge of excavation (Fig. 3.19). Though little can be said about the enclosure, its ditch had been recut on several occasions, leaving a soilmark considerably wider than the actual ditch would have been at any one time. The relationship between E105 and E37 was never fully understood. Although both enclosures had a pottery assemblage appropriate to a Period F date, it is possible that E105 was earlier in the stratigraphic sequence than E37.

Potential Period F features – Southern Area

Enclosures, pits and linear features

(E6, E7, E156, E320, E321, 2620/2621, 2622, 5001/5002)

To the east of E29 was a subrectangular enclosure, E6 (Fig. 3.19). The enclosure, which was distinctly regular in plan, was oriented NE–SW, with a possible entrance in the north-west corner. The eastern terminal of the entrance was recut several times (111, 147 and 152) with a posthole at its tip (170), which may have been part of an entrance structure. The western entrance terminal had been cut away by the (Period G) linear boundary 301 (End Plan), so that the actual width of the entrance is uncertain. It must have been approximately 5–10 m, however, if the south-western enclosure ditch carried on to the north-west, closing the rectangle. The main enclosure ditch (111/119) was relatively shallow (c 0.20–0.30 m deep), but well defined. A possible annex, immediately to the south of the main enclosure ditch was defined by the gully 107. The gully began at the western end of the enclosure and looped to the south before turning eastward. Although the gully was then lost in a complex of features, its eastern extent may have been defined by 102 which rejoined the main enclosure ditch (111) approximately 10 m from its north-eastern end. Although site records record E6 as cutting 107, the annex contained pottery of the same period as the main enclosure, suggesting that if they were not exactly contemporary then they were at least of a similar phase.

Wholly within E6, at its north-eastern end, was a subcircular enclosure, E7. The enclosure consisted of an annular ditch (108), which defined an area c 6 x 7 m across, with no apparent internal features. Although small for the site of a roundhouse, it is possible that E7 marked the location of

some kind of storage building or temporary night shelter. Immediately to the south-west was a possible posthole structure (153, 154, 157 and 285) which measured c 2.5 x 2.5 m. A number of much smaller postholes (279, 280, 281 and 282) may have been associated with the main structure. Although the structure seems to be quite well defined in plan, two of the main postholes (157 and 285) were thought to be natural features by the excavators. The structure does seem to be coherent, however, and appears to be influenced by the alignment of E6. The level of recording precluded any analysis of the fills, and the validity of the structure as a four-poster must remain open. It should be noted, however, that a second potential posthole structure of similar dimensions was located within Posthole Cluster 2 (see above, 'Period C'; Fig. 3.8).

A group of pits arrayed in a series of three semicircular arcs or pit zones was revealed approximately 30 m to the south-west of E6. The pits appear to have been clustered around apparently blank areas, which may have housed structures or have been used as open working areas (see below, 'Pits'). Ceramics recovered from the pits ranged in date from Period A to Period F, but the majority of the pits could have been contemporary with each other. Several of the pits clearly cut enclosures dated to Period E, and on that basis, the group has been tentatively assigned to Period F.

It is possible that the linear boundary 2622 and its associated enclosures E156, E320 and E321 belonged to this period (Fig. 3.5). Although described above as a possible Period C or D feature, the boundary does appear to be respected by the Period F enclosure group described above. It is possible, therefore, that 2622 was a long lived feature which endured through several periods. If that was the case for 2622, the same could be argued for the other related boundaries 5001/5002 and the enclosure/trackway ditches 2620 and 2621. The degree of uncertainty highlights the difficulty in phasing linear boundaries, many of which were only visible as cropmarks or were subjected to very limited excavation.

PERIOD G: EARLY ROMAN PERIOD c 2nd CENTURY AD (Fig. 3.21)

Summary

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, seemingly without any regard for earlier activity. The trackways not only divided up the landscape but, for the first time at Thornhill, give the impression that human (as opposed to animal) traffic had become important.

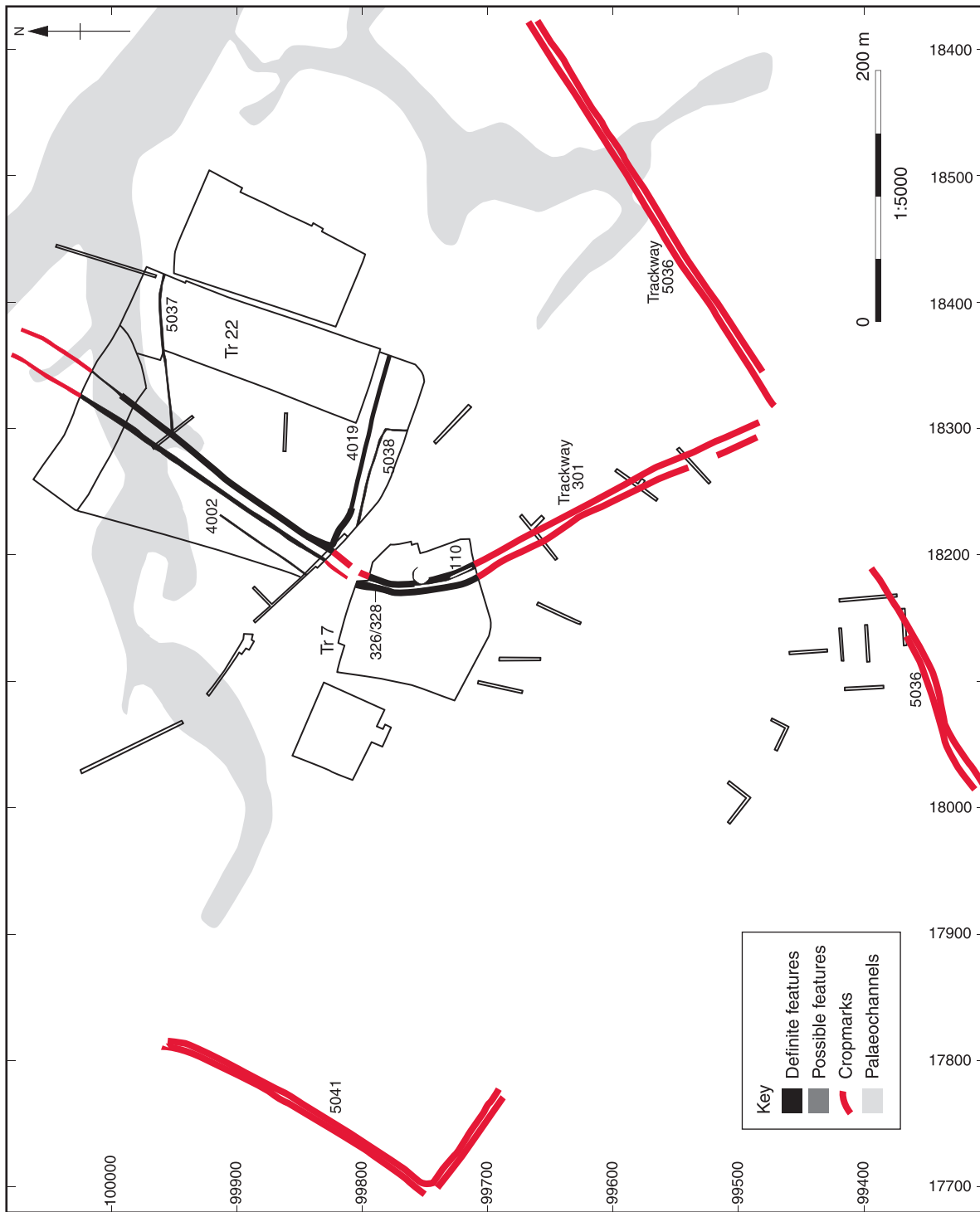


Fig. 3.21 Period G – early Roman Period, 2nd Century AD



Plate 3.2 View looking north from southern end of Trench 7 showing ditches of Roman trackway 301 cutting through earlier enclosures

Southern Area and Northern Salvage Area

Trackways and associated field boundaries
(301, 4019, 4022, 5036, 5037 and 5038)

Linear trackway 301 was traced for almost 600 m across the low gravel terrace and floodplain through a combination of targeted excavation and the plotting of cropmarks from aerial photographs (Plate 3.2). The trackway crossed the Northern Salvage Area on a NE–SW alignment before gradually turning towards the south-east within Trench 7. At its southern end, it almost certainly conjoined with trackway 5036 (see below), although the actual junction was not visible on the aerial photographs. The trackway (301) was most thoroughly understood in Trench 7 where it was defined by two relatively shallow gullies which had been recut on numerous occasions (329/331 and 109/110; Fig. 3.22). In the northern half of the trench the terminal of western gully 326 was revealed slightly to the west of a larger gully 328. No relationship was recovered between the two ditches, and it is possible that 326 was part of an early, possibly discontinuous ditch. The eastern trackway ditch was largely defined by gully 110 which had been multiply recut. Two fragments of adult human skull were recovered from the fill of this ditch.

At both the northern and southern end of Trench 7 the western and eastern trackway ditches visibly divided, giving the appearance of a double ditch on either side of the track. This double ditched arrangement is less obvious in the centre of the trench, however, and it seems probable that the trackway was of more than one phase.

In the salvage area to the north of Trench 7 three linear gullies were revealed projecting from the eastern side of 301 (5037, 4019 and 5038). Gully 5037 was *c.* 0.90 m in length, and has been tentatively ascribed to period G on the basis of its apparent spatial coherency with Roman trackway 301 (Fig. 3.21).

Gullies 4019 and 5038 were located *c.* 180 m to the south-west of 5037. The gullies were positioned parallel to each other and almost perpendicular to 301, defining a secondary track or droveway which opened to the east. The relationship between 301 and this secondary droveway is uncertain, but given that ditch 4019 appeared to connect with 301, the two may be assumed to be contemporary.

A linear gully (4022) was revealed *c.* 15 m to the west of trackway 301. The gully ran parallel to 301, and a Period G date is suggested by its pottery assemblage, which was dominated by Group 5 material.

Trackway 5036 was located at the southern end of 301. Its orientation (NE–SW) suggests that it may have been associated with the reorganised Claydon Pike settlement to the east. The track was largely traced through aerial photographs but was planned and partially excavated during a separate OAU evaluation at Kempsford, Bowmoor (End Plan; OAU 1989, 2–3 and fig. 4), where it was found to be associated with a 2nd century AD Roman settlement. It has been ascribed a Period G date on the

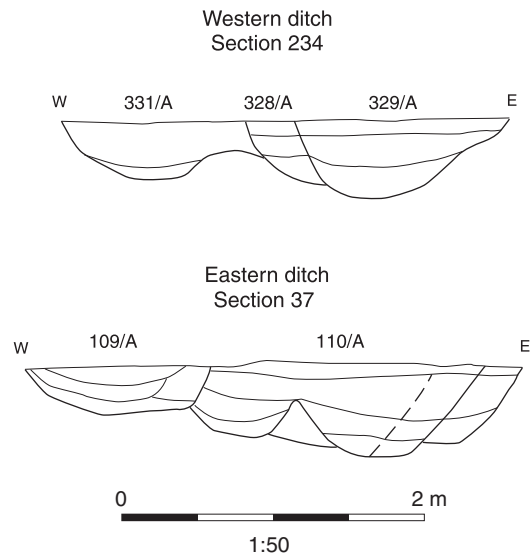


Fig. 3.22 Sections 37 and 234 of trackway 301 – Trench 7

strength of the Bowmoor evidence and because of its presumed association with trackway 301.

Approximately 600 m to the north-west of 5036 was an L-shaped cropmark of similar width and character (5041). Although the cropmark was never sampled through excavation, its orientation and general appearance (probably double-ditched) suggest that it may have been another trackway. Its shorter axis was roughly aligned upon the north-eastern limit of the Kempsford, Bowmoor settlement (Fig. 3.21), and may have redefined an earlier boundary.

PERIOD H: LATE ROMAN PERIOD 3rd–4th CENTURY AD (Fig. 3.23)

Summary

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.

Southern Area and Northern Salvage Area

Linear boundaries and possible trackway
(302, 5039 and 5040)

Linear boundary 302 was the most significant feature dated to Period H (Fig. 3.23, Plate 3.3). The ditch was visible on aerial photographs for just over 600 m, snaking gently from the north, through Trench 7 and on towards the south-west. In Trench 2 and parts of Trench 7 the boundary consisted of two individual ditches *c.* 2 m apart. The double-ditched arrangement is reminiscent of 301 and 5036 (Period G), and it is likely that the boundary was a trackway, although in places only one ditch was visible.

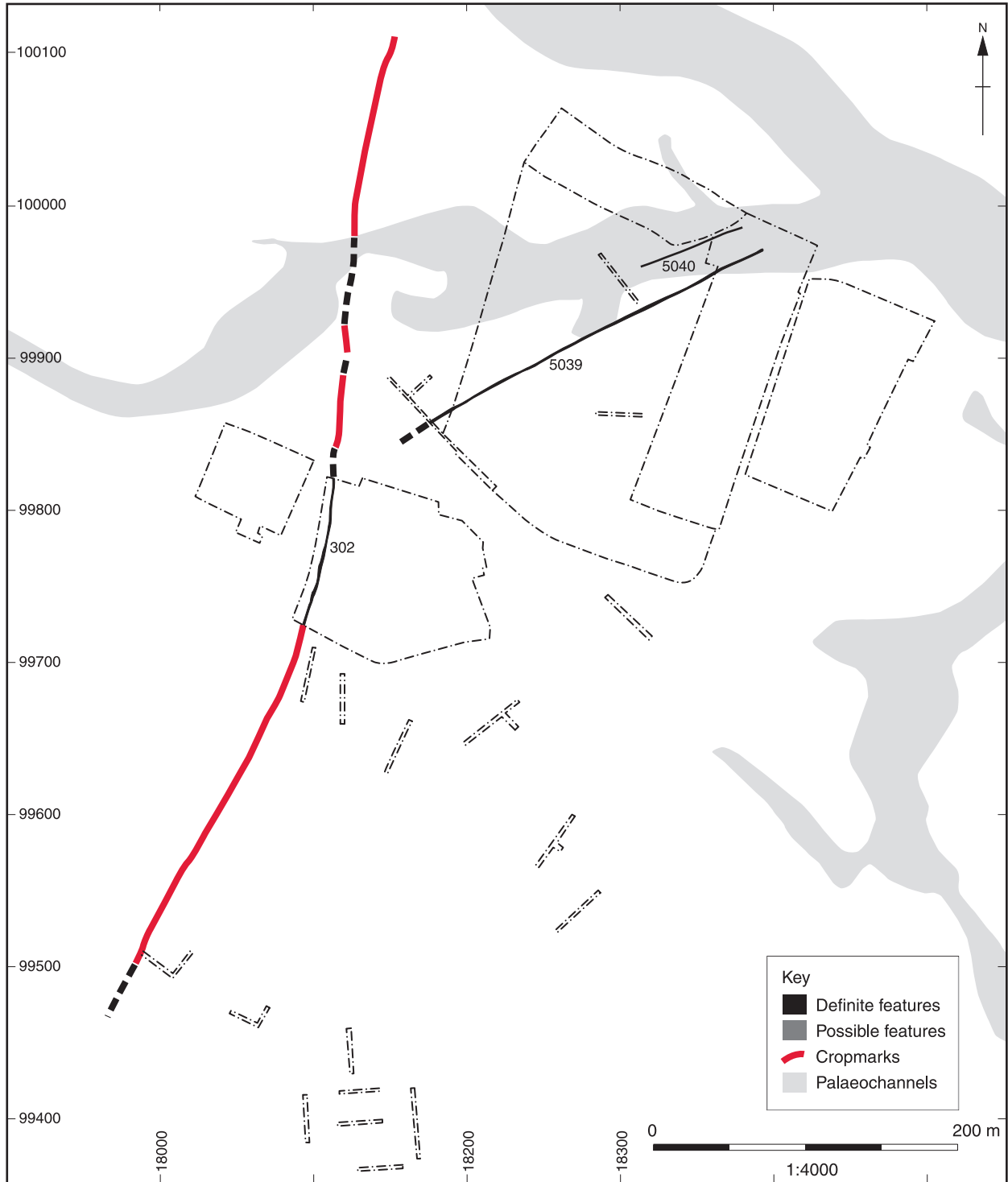


Fig. 3.23 Period H – late Roman Period, 3rd – 4th Century AD

A secondary ditch (5039) which may have been associated with 302 was revealed in the salvage area *c* 50 m to the east. The ditch was linear (250 m in length), with a SW–NE alignment, and was recorded in the north-west corner of Trench 22. If the ditch continued beyond the trench it was not visible on aerial photographs. Towards its south-western end the ditch cut straight across the double-ditched trackway 301 and the parallel ditch 4022,

suggesting that both had been out of use for some time (Fig. 3.21 and End Plan).

A second linear ditch, which ran nearly parallel to 5039, was revealed *c* 35 m to the north (5040). The ditch was considerably shorter than 5039 (*c* 70 m) but shared similar characteristics. Both ditches have been ascribed to Period H on the basis of their spatial coherency with 302 and their unusual alignment relative to features of other periods.



Plate 3.3 View looking south across the western part of Trench 7 showing the late Roman boundary ditch 302 cutting earlier enclosures

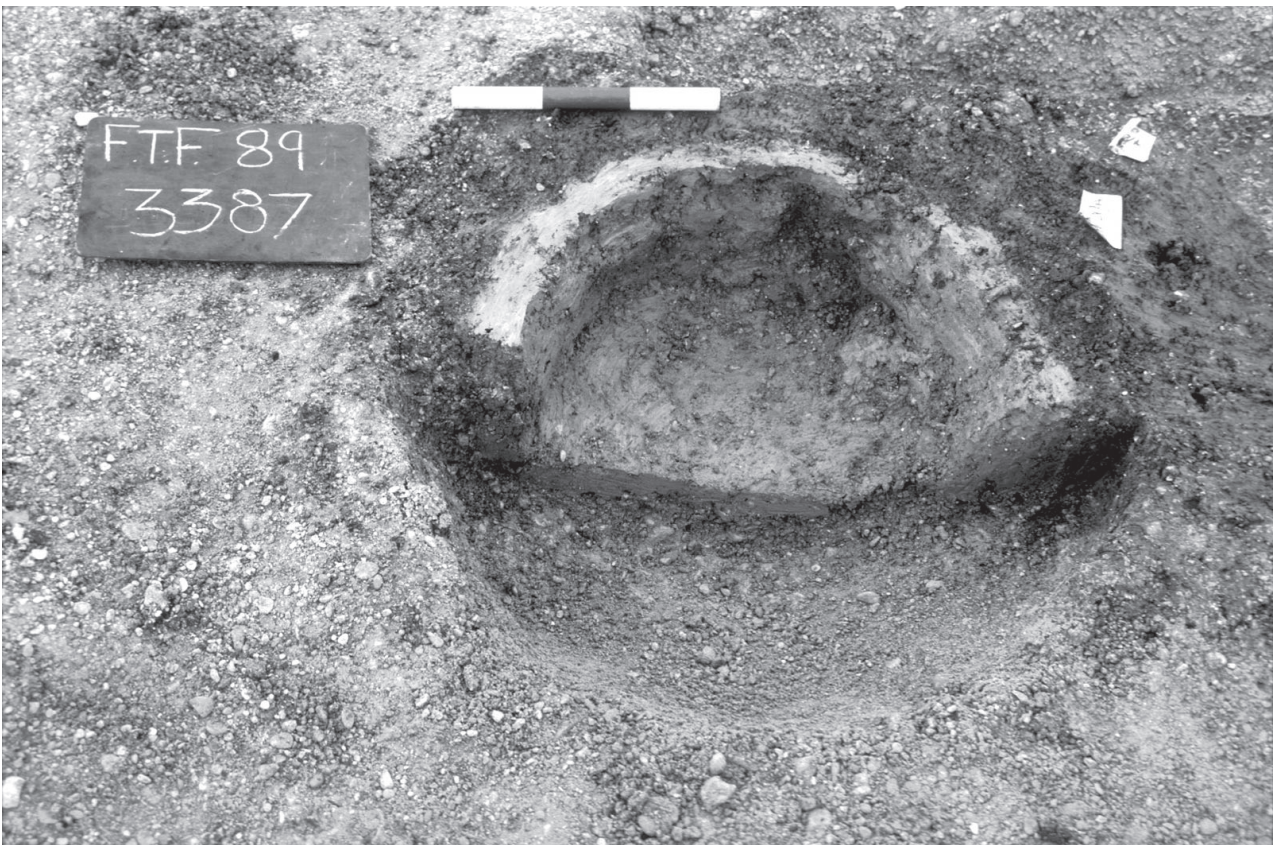


Plate 3.4 Clay lined pit 3387 in Trench 22

PITS

Quantity and classification

A total of 465 pits were recorded at Thornhill Farm. The quality of recording was variable across the site, and in many cases either the breadth or depth of the pits was not noted. Pit depth and profile were the most consistently recorded variables and were, therefore, chosen as the basis for a limited statistical analysis. The pit depths were not normally distributed, but could be separated into a shallow group (Class 1, up to 0.28 m in depth) and a deep group (Class 2, those deeper than 0.28 m).

Class 1

Of the 218 Class 1 pits, 65 had no breadth recorded. Where it was recorded, however, it was always greater than the pit depth. Breadth was more than twice the depth for over half (137) of this group. Class 1, therefore, can be described as shallow scoops.

Class 2

There were 247 pits in Class 2, of which 21 had no recorded breadth. The majority of the pits were broader than their depth, while slightly less than half of the group (115) had a breadth more than twice their depth. Broad, shallow profiles, though present, were not as characteristic of this class as they were for Class 1.

Function

The majority of the pits were subcircular with either flattish or more rounded bases, and in most cases exhibited no clear evidence as to their function. The low-lying nature of the site would seem to preclude the presence of grain storage pits, but otherwise function is open to speculation. Some of the deeper pits may have been used as waterholes (eg 3152, Trench 22), but the majority would have been too shallow for this purpose. The pits may have been for rubbish disposal, but if so, relatively little pottery was deposited. Another possibility is that some of the pits were quarried in order to obtain gravel. Environmental evidence suggests that parts of the site were churned up (probably by animal trampling), and were also likely to be wet in the winter months. It is possible, therefore, that gravel was used to infill some of the boggy areas.

Clay lined pits (Table 3.10)

Thirteen of the pits were lined with distinctive, thick yellow clay (Plate 3.4). All but one of the pits were located within Trenches 9 and 22, within which, however, they were widely dispersed. The presumed function of the lined pits was to hold liquid of some kind, probably water. Only one pit contained evidence of burning, and this was probably derived from secondary use. Small, clay

lined pits were also revealed at Claydon Pike where they were associated with middle Iron Age circular structures. The lined pits at Thornhill Farm were not obviously associated with structures although the difficulty in locating potential roundhouses has been noted.

Dating and distribution

Although a limited spatial analysis was carried out with reference to pit class, no obvious pattern emerged. Clusters or arrays of pits were noted, however.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3.24)

In the central-southern area of Trench 7, a number of 'blank' areas were defined by curvilinear pit zones (see above 'Potential Period F features'). Stratigraphic and artefactual analysis suggests that the majority of pits could have been contemporary, a conclusion which the unusual shape of the clustering tends to support. Although there is no positive evidence to suggest that the blank areas were ever covered by buildings, the pits did avoid the central areas, and the potential difficulties in identifying structures are discussed in Chapter 5. Excavation of pits around any standing structure would have produced curvilinear pit zones similar to those in Trench 7. Alternatively the pits may have defined open working areas. A reason for digging the pits might have been to obtain gravel in order to raise or repair floor levels within the structures. However, no evidence for floor levels survived.

A series of pits appeared to be arrayed around the edge of the C-shaped enclosure E27 (Period E: Fig. 3.17 and Fig. 3.24). One pit (549) was cut by the enclosure ditch and another (681/682) contained the only dating evidence (two sherds of Group 4 material). Although the evidence is meagre, this would suggest that the pits might be the result of activity before the enclosure was formalised by the digging of its ditch (see E54, Trench 22 below).

Trench 8 (Fig. 3.24)

The majority of the pits in Trench 8 were located in the south-eastern quadrant of the trench in the general vicinity of structures 207 and 209. Pit clusters are relatively unusual at Thornhill Farm, and appear to occur only near to structures. Two examples were noted in Trench 8 (Fig. 3.24: 872/873 and 923/924), which were immediately adjacent to structures 207 and 209 respectively (for a third example see below, Trench 9). Function is difficult to assess. Some of the pits appear to be quite shallow while others are quite deep. It is possible the pits were used for rubbish disposal although why they would need to be redug on or near the same spot is unclear.

Trenches 9 and 22 (Fig. 3.25)

Pits within Trenches 9 and 22 appeared within discrete clusters, the majority of which appeared to

Table 3.10 Clay lined pits

| Context | Profile | Plan | Width | Depth | Layer Details | Clay Lining |
|---------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|---|--|
| 2032 | Round bottom, steep sides | Oval | 0.30 | 0.18 | 3 layers; 3 is predominantly clay, covering base and part of sides, incorporates organic material | Thick deposit of yellow clay at base, less thick up the sides |
| 2134 | Round bottom, sloping sides | Oval | 0.54 | 0.22 | 3 layers | Thick yellow clay covering base and part of sides |
| 2152 | Round bottom, sloping sides | Circular | 1.00 | 0.23 | 2 layers | Red/orange burnt clay covering base of pit. Lump of burnt clay in upper fill |
| 2167 | Flat bottom, sloping sides | Sub-circ. | 0.78 | 0.38 | 3 layers. Clay layer comprises half of fill | Fairly thick, yellow clay lining over base and up most of sides |
| 2305 | Rounded bottom, steep, sloping sides | Sub-circ. | 0.72 | 0.18 | 2 layers. Clay layer comprises half of fill. Large burnt limestone fragments in upper fill | Thick, yellow clay lining base and sides. Incorporates fired, sandy clay fragments |
| 2384 | Flat bottom, steep sides | Sub-circ. | 0.92 | 0.34 | 2 layers. Frequent med/large burnt limestone frags in upper fill | Thick yellow clay lining covering base only |
| 2440 | Flat bottom, one steep, sloping side | Sub-circ. | 0.34 | 0.20 | 2 layers | Clay lump in base does not appear to have functioned as a lining |
| 2457 | Rounded bottom, sloping sides | Oval | 0.52 | 0.13 | 2 layers | Possibly clay lined but very thick; fills most of pit |
| 2482 | Flat bottom, sloping sides | ? | 0.64 | 0.22 | 2 layers | Yellow clay lining covering base and sides |
| 2519 | Flat bottomed, steep sloping sides | ? | 0.70 | 0.30 | 2 layers Upper contains slag. | Orange brown clay covers most of bottom and sides |
| 3152 | Flat bottom, sloping sides | ? | 2.10 | 0.46 | 7 layers | Dark grey, black sticky clay. Covers bottom but not sides. Probably not a lining, possible waterhole |
| 3263 | Round bottom, sloping sides | ? | 1.06 | 0.28 | 2 layers | Med dark green-brown clay covering base and side. Thick if a lining |
| 3387 | Flat bottom, steep sides | Circular | 0.63 | 0.25 | 4 layers | Yellow/grey clay layer covering bottom and sides completely |

be associated either with structures or individual enclosures. The pit cluster located within E62, for example, lay immediately adjacent to structure 202 and is likely to have been contemporary (Fig. 3.16). Similar clusters of pits were noted in Trench 8 adjacent to structure 207 and 209 (above). As with the pit clusters in Trench 8, function is uncertain, although the excavators thought that the central pit (2049) was deep enough to be a waterhole.

POSTHOLES

Approximately 246 postholes were recorded across the site, of which some 79 (32 %) formed part of a recognised structure or posthole cluster (Tables 3.11 and 3.12). Three quarters of the postholes were located in Trenches 9 and 22, which also included most of the structures. In most cases the postholes contained little or no dating evidence and where

phasing was possible, it was usually based upon their associations with enclosures.

BURIALS AND OTHER DEPOSITS OF HUMAN REMAINS

Human remains were quite scarce at Thornhill Farm, although they did include three inhumations and four deposits of cremated human bone (Boyle, Chapter 4). The inhumations (3106, 3145, 3363) were all located within Trench 22, and although phasing is far from certain, it is quite probable that all belong to period D, with two of them being surrounded by enclosures (Fig. 3.11). The cremation deposits (320, 800, 801, 3008) were far more dispersed chronologically and spatially, ranging from a possible period E or F pit in Trench 7 (320) to period C enclosure E40 (3008) in Trench 22. Most of the remaining deposits of unburnt human bone could not be phased.



Fig. 3.24 Distribution of pits within Trenches 7 and 8

Table 3.11 Number of postholes by trench

| Trench No. | Number of postholes |
|------------|---------------------|
| 7 | 47 |
| 8 | 15 |
| 9 | 104 |
| 22 | 80 |
| Total | 246 |

Table 3.12 Structures containing postholes and posthole clusters

| Structure | Number of postholes |
|---------------|---------------------|
| PC1 | 6 |
| PC2 | 10 |
| PC3 | 11 |
| Structure 200 | 13 |
| Structure 201 | 20 |
| Structure 202 | 18 |
| Structure 207 | 1 |

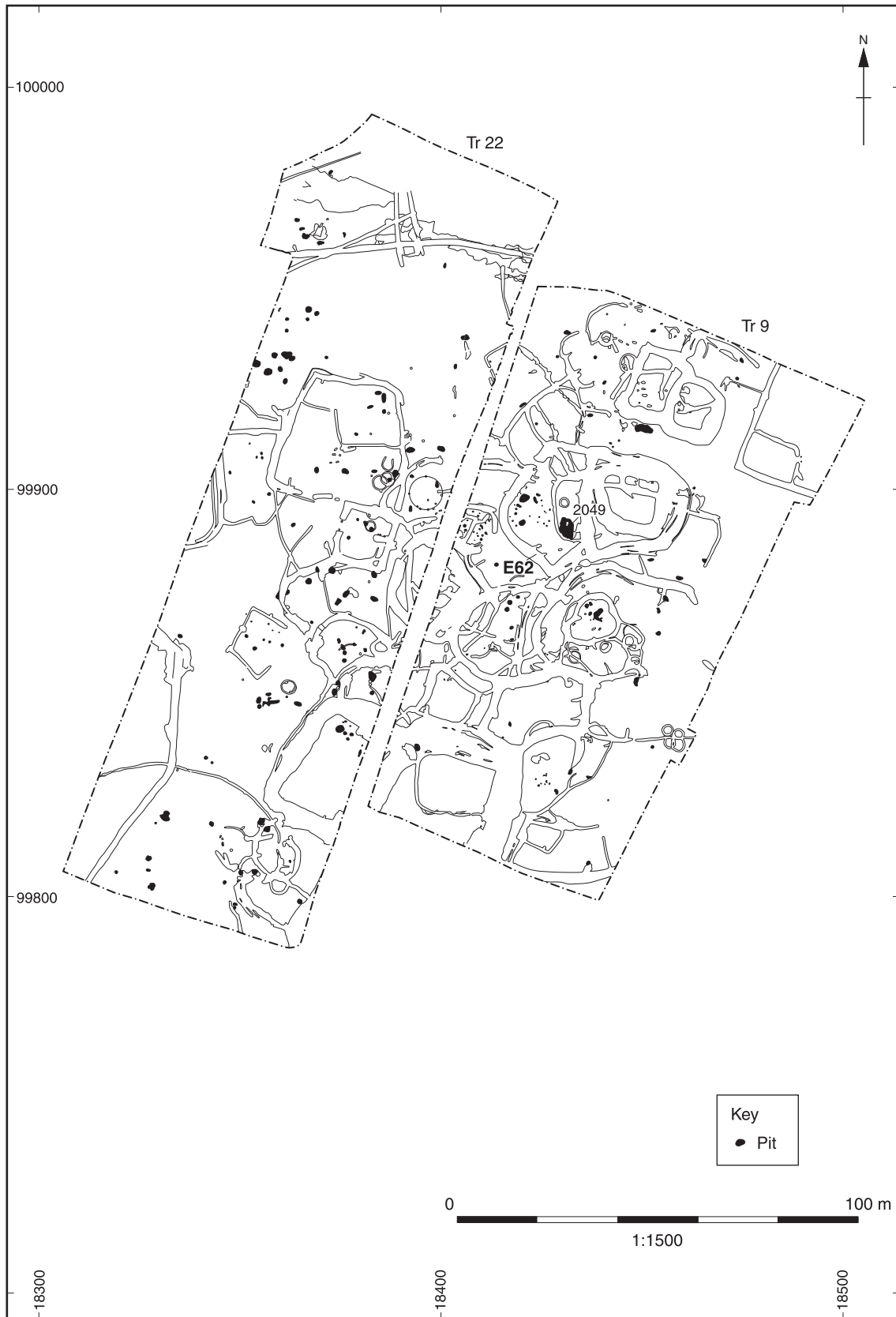


Fig. 3.25 Distribution of pits within trenches 9 and 22

