# Chapter 7: Discussion

**Archaeology and topography** *Edward Biddulph*

An examination of the distribution of archaeological features at Kingshill North suggests that to a great extent the topography of the site determined the location of features. Overall, features were located across the gentler-sloping central part of the site, with the flatter and higher area to the north and the steeper and lower ground to the south remaining largely unoccupied throughout the prehistoric and Roman periods (see Fig. 5). The Grooved Ware pits (Phase 1) extended in a band that occupied the relatively gentle slope and broadly followed the contours of the slope. The pits appeared to be contemporaneous in terms of their radiocarbon dating, but were not necessarily dug at the same time. If people were returning the site on a regular basis, possibly to take part in a midwinter gathering or ceremony (see Roe, Chapter 3 above, and Mullin below), then some years, potentially up to 60 years, may have separated the first and last pits. The first Neolithic people would have carefully considered the topography, but subsequent visitors needed only to copy their predecessors, as the work of establishing the best location for the pits had already been done. Eventually tradition, rather than topography alone, dictated where new pits were dug.

As Mullin argues below, the location of the Beaker burials (Phase 2) may have been influenced by the presence of the Neolithic pits, and generally there seems to be a good case for the co-occurrence of Grooved Ware pits and round barrows in the Upper Thames Valley. At Kingshill North, the co-occurrence reinforced the apparent correlation between features and the topography, although it is notable that round barrow 8454 overlooked the steeper slope to the south, undoubtedly giving the monument prominence. Beaker burial 1402 was positioned further north on the gentler slope, but middle Bronze Age grave, like the round barrow, was on the break of slope and had the steeper part of the hillside below it.

The distribution of pits assigned to the middle Iron Age (Phase 3) is similar to that of the Grooved Ware pits in that the pits occupied the southern part of the site, but a number of the features were dug into the steeper ground a few metres to the south of the earlier prehistoric pits. Habit and tradition may have brought the Iron Age inhabitants to the same area time after time to dig their pits, although pits were also situated on the gentler slope to the north. The late Iron Age and Roman settlement (Phase 4) was concentrated in the centre of the excavated area and occupied the gentle slope. The Iron Age and Roman farmers were presumably attracted by the benefits of a south-facing slope brought by increased sunlight, although the settlement's proximity to the round barrow, if still a visible monument by the late 1st-century BC, may have provided a further inducement to settle there.

**Neolithic to Bronze Age** (Fig. 43) *David Mullin*

***The Late Neolithic***

Seventeen pits were assigned a late Neolithic date: 11 contained Grooved Ware of the Woodlands sub-style and worked flint, a further three contained Neolithic worked flint. All the pits containing either Grooved Ware or worked flint also contained animal bone and ten of these contained charred plant remains or charcoal (see Table 1). A further three pits had similar morphology and occurred in close proximity to definite late Neolithic pits and were therefore grouped with them.

The pits occupy a roughly linear zone across the centre of the site, and they appear to be broadly contemporary. The radiocarbon dates overlap and all fall within a relatively short period spanning 2900 to 2550 cal BC. This is well within the range for Grooved Ware in Britain and contemporary with the main period of Clacton and Durrington Walls sub-styles (Garwood 1999). The dates conform well with those from the Upper Thames Valley, which appear to relate to a coherent tradition of material deposition (Garwood 1999), but are early within the sequence for the Woodlands sub-style. It is a possibility that the Woodlands and the Clacton sub-styles of pottery are actually part of one tradition. Garwood (1999) suggests a degree of chronological patterning, with Clacton tending to be earlier in date than the Woodlands sub-style. The dates from Kingshill North do not support this, however, and it should be noted that the chronology for the Clacton and Woodlands sub-styles proposed by Garwood is based only on a total sample of eight dates from six sites.

The 'lattice lozenge' motif on the Grooved Ware from Kingshill North is exceptionally rare; indeed Cleal (1999) goes as far as to suggest that the known examples may be the work of a single potter. The material has been recovered from sites in the Upper Thames Valley, at Barrow Hills, Radley; Roughground Farm, Lechlade and Tolleys Pit, Cassington, and the material from Kingshill North adds to this limited distribution, extending it out of the Thames Valley and onto the Cotswolds, where Grooved Ware is infrequently found. The 'mesh' design is

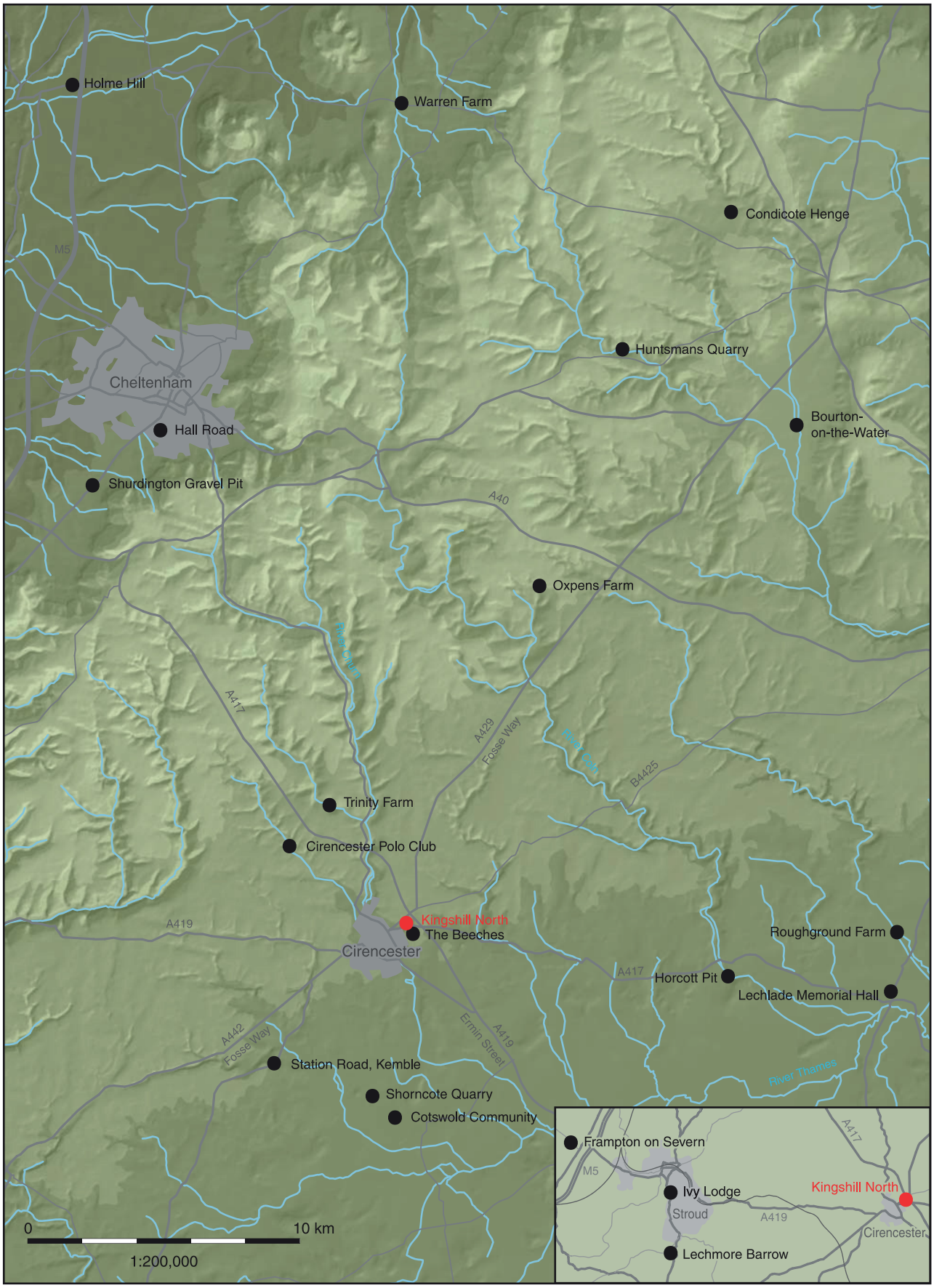


*Fig. 43 Phases 1 and 2 – locations of sites mentioned in discussion*

also found on other items of material culture, such as late Neolithic 'Maesmore' style maceheads, but also occurs on Grooved Ware of the Clacton sub-style (Cleal 1999, 4), further strengthening the links between the two styles. This distinctive design has variously been described as referring to fishing nets (Garwood 1999) and to basketry (Cleal 1999), but it also bears a striking resemblance to the bark of ash and willow trees (see Fig. 28), which have particular properties. Ash is an excellent fuel wood, while the willow can be used for basketry. It may also be noted that willow bark has traditionally been used for pain relief, and indeed the active ingredient, *salicin*, is used in modified form in aspirin (Singh and Ernst 2009, 238). The design of this particular style of Grooved Ware may, then, go beyond skeuomorphism and potentially refer to qualities of particular kinds of tree. Specific parts of the landscape may also be referred to in the use of limestone containing large amounts of fossil shell in the fabric of the pottery. While this may occur relatively locally, in particular to the south of Cirencester, the choice of this material appears to have been deliberate and not related to mechanical or technical properties of the rock. Indeed, this material is used in the fabric of Grooved Ware vessels in the Upper Thames Valley (Barclay 1999) and Worcestershire (Edwards 2007) where it is not immediately available locally, and the extensive use of shelly fabrics in Woodlands sub-style Grooved Ware also suggests that it carried symbolic meaning.

The Grooved Ware pit containing the largest amount of material at Kingshill North was 8813, which contained a complete stone axe and the fragment of an axe made of flint, a total of 505 worked flints (including 21 flint scrapers), five bone pins, a worked rib fragment and the rounded-end of a bone spatula. An antler was also recovered from the fill, alongside pig, cattle and deer bone, and burnt hazelnuts. While this is a fairly standard repertoire for Grooved Ware pits, the richness and treatment of the objects is unusual; although most of the items are fragmentary, there is no sign of deliberate breakage or burning. The pit can best be paralleled with pit 3196 at Barrow Hills, Radley, which also contained large amounts of worked flint, bone awls, animal bone, utilised antler and fragments of three Woodlands sub-style Grooved Ware vessels, including one with lattice lozenge decoration (Barclay and Halpin 1999).

The occurrence of spatulae in Grooved Ware contexts at Kingshill North is noteworthy, as these objects usually occur in Beaker graves. Fragmentary spatulae were recovered from two pits (8813 and 8064), where they occurred alongside Grooved Ware, worked flint, other worked bone and charred plant remains. The nearest site where spatulae were present is again Barrow Hills, Radley (Barclay and Halpin 1999), where two spatulae were recovered, although both came from Beaker graves. All the other local examples summarised by Barclay *et al*. (1999, 235) were recovered from Beaker graves and none is recorded in the most up-to-date gazetteer of Grooved Ware associated finds in Britain (Longworth and Cleal 1999). While it is tempting to suggest that the spatulae were later additions to the pits, this is unlikely since there was no evidence for recutting and all were found securely stratified with other late Neolithic material.

While the animal and plant remains in the Grooved Ware pits occurred in relatively modest quantities, an articulated neonatal pig was recovered from pit 8455 and the remains of a dog from pit 8392. Bird bone was also identified in pit 8930. The majority of the assemblage was, however, dominated by cattle and pig remains, with a fairly high incidence of deer bone and antler. The plant remains included small amounts of cereal, crab apple and hazelnut shells. The most striking aspect of the animal and plant remains recovered from the pits is the occurrence of both wild and domestic species in the same contexts. Again, this is a fairly common occurrence and has been explained as the retention of a semi-nomadic lifestyle through into the later Neolithic, although Thomas (2010, 11) has recently drawn attention to the possibility that Grooved Ware pit assemblages relate to the preparation, presentation and consumption of food. This argument may receive support from the presence of a large number of scrapers within the worked flint assemblage, as well as from the evidence for butchery at Kingshill North.

The predominance of young pig within the animal bone assemblage is also suggestive of feasting, pig being commonly found associated with Grooved Ware, although this is more common at sites such as henges, rather than within pits (Mukherjee *et al*. 2008). The faunal and plant remains point to the continued exploitation of wild resources in the late Neolithic, alongside domesticated species.

The special nature of the deposits should not be overlooked, however, and the material is strongly suggestive of the bringing together of both wild and domestic species in the context of conspicuous consumption, potentially bringing to mind the management and control of the landscape to the participants. This may have more commonly occurred within a monumental context, such as within a henge, but recent work at Durrington Walls (M Parker Pearson, pers. comm.) is demonstrating the presence of pits containing 'special deposits' of Grooved Ware, worked flint and animal bone prior to the construction of such monuments.

The consumption of 'exotic' items can also be seen at Kingshill North in the deposition of fragments of Cornish axe heads and the high quality and quantity of the bone pins and awls recovered from the pits. The worked flint is also imported, as it does not occur naturally on the limestone of the Cotswolds and was probably brought from the chalk around the Avebury area, although it is not possible to be certain of its precise

origins. The consumption of 'exotics' again appears to relate to the ability of the community which dug the pits to mobilise a wide range of resources from a variety of locations both local and distant and to dispose of them in a highly visible way.

***Beaker/Bronze Age***

Beaker burials are rare in Gloucestershire and the two examples from Kingshill North add significant new information for this part of Britain. It is worthy of note that, where skeletal remains from Beaker burials have been examined and the sex of the buried body has been determined, only one other Beaker burial in Gloucestershire has contained female remains. This is a common pattern; Clarke (1970) records nearly twice as many men as women from Beaker burials and the Gloucestershire examples fit into this pattern well. The reasons why males appear to have been selected over females remains unclear, however, but may be related to status or social roles in life.

Neither of the individuals buried at Kingshill North were locals. Both originated from the chalk areas, but one was from the south or east, the other from the south-west (see Lamb and Evans, above). The earliest individual was a female, buried within a pit enclosed by a ring ditch and the Beaker which accompanied her was mostly complete and tempered with grog and limestone. This fabric is more commonly found within Gloucestershire and Somerset and is almost certainly of local manufacture. It is tempting to suggest that the woman buried within the ring ditch may have been 'assimilated' into local society, were it not for the remarkable grave in which she was buried. Although there were no other grave goods apart from the Beaker and a worked bone object, the body was deposited within a deep rectangular grave, above which was deposited cattle head and hooves. The most obvious parallel for this practice is the burial from Hemp Knoll, near Avebury, Wiltshire (Robertson Mackay 1980), where an adult male was buried in a wooden coffin within a deep, rectangular pit below a round barrow. This burial was accompanied by a Langdale stone bracer and a bone belt ring and a Beaker was placed by the body's feet. An ox skull and hooves had been placed outside the coffin, but within the burial pit. The coffin was radiocarbon dated to 2190-1620 cal BC and 2860-1640 cal BC, but given that the material dated was oak and the large margin of error in the dates, these are not helpful in assessing the relative dates of this site and that at Kingshill North. The Beaker from Hemp Knoll was classified by Needham (2005, 192) as belonging to the 'Short-Necked' class, which has its origins in or before the 23rd century BC, but which appears to overlap with the S-profile Beakers, of which that from Kingshill North is an example. The 'head and hooves' burial rite occurs across northern Europe and has been noted in Britain in at least nine long barrows, all within Wessex (Robertson Mackay 1980, 147). The practice has also been found with Beaker burials, notably at Amesbury, Wiltshire, where a crouched inhumation may have been accompanied by an ox skull and hooves (Ashbee 1978). It is also noteworthy that a cattle skull was recovered from a grave at Barrow Hills, Radley (Barclay and Halpin 1999, 122), although this grave was of early Bronze Age date and also contained unshed antler tines. The presence of a head and hooves burial outside Wessex is unusual and it is perhaps significant that the person to whom this rite was afforded at Kingshill North was non-local and probably came from the chalklands of southern England.

The second burial (1404) was very different. It was deposited within an apparently unmarked flat grave and accompanied by a Beaker which had inclusions of flint and grog, inclusions which are more common in Beakers from Wiltshire and southern England than in those from the Midlands and South West. As noted above, flint does not occur naturally on the Cotswold limestone and the inclusion of flint within the fabric of this Beaker suggests either the importation of raw materials or the use of waste from flint knapping. Although Beakers with flint in their fabrics have been found elsewhere in Gloucestershire, notably at Roughground Farm (Allen *et al*. 1993) and Cirencester Polo Club (Nichols 2004), these are rare. The presence at Kingshill North of a flint-tempered Beaker with an individual from the chalklands is at the very least suggestive of a deliberate referencing of their geographical origin in the fabric of the pot. This vessel also contained grog-in-grog which is was also flint tempered and likely to represent the recycling of fabric from a flint tempered Beaker. The vessel was deposited in the grave as worn sherds, again suggesting that it had had an extended life, perhaps the fragments which were not deposited going on to be incorporated as grog in yet another Beaker.

The radiocarbon dates from the site suggest a period of at least a hundred years between the deposition of the Grooved Ware and the Beaker burials, although a period of 400 or more years may be more likely. It does not appear that the Grooved Ware pits were marked by posts, and it is not certain that they were visible above ground after this period, but the positioning of the Beaker ring ditch between two groups of pits may be more than mere coincidence. Cleal (1999) has previously noted the co-occurrence of Grooved Ware pits and round barrows, but this has not previously been observed in Gloucestershire, despite a degree of barrow excavation (Grinsell 1961). The probable reason for this is that these excavations were undertaken, on the whole, by antiquarians more interested in the contents of the barrows than their local environs and setting. The relative lack of Grooved Ware pits in the county may, then, be more apparent than real and due to the lack of detailed examination of the spaces between round barrows. The co-occurrence of pits containing Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery has been noted at other sites in the county such as

Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993) and Horcott Pit (Lamdin-Whymark *et al*. 2009), but the question of why this pattern is so common – sites previously used for one purpose being reused several hundred years later in a different way, while apparently respecting the original site plan – has not be addressed. It is tempting to suggest that the activities which took place here in the late Neolithic were somehow remembered, or that they made an impact on the landscape which was still visible many years later, but neither of these interpretations are particularly satisfying.

Needham (2005) suggests that the Beaker phenomenon in Britain started around 2500 cal BC. Only seven radiocarbon dates for Beaker contexts are known from sites other than Kingshill North in Gloucestershire, all but one from sites in the Upper Thames Valley (Table 41). The one date from the Cotswolds from a henge at Condicote (Saville 1983) is from mature wood and should be regarded as unreliable. The other dates are from samples from short-lived species or human bone in direct association with Beakers. Although the dates for the Beakers from Trinity Farm (Mudd *et al.* 1999) and Roughground Farm (Allen *et al*. 1993) fall relatively early within the Beaker sequence, the remaining dates are late and overlap with the period of use of Food Vessels and Collared Urns elsewhere in Britain. The dates from Kingshill North fall between these earlier and later dates. The Beaker from Shorncote (Hearne and Heaton 1994) was placed by Needham (2005) in his 'Weak Carinated Beaker' class, which spans the period 2200 to 1900 cal BC, although, again, this particular vessel seems to be very late in the sequence. The later dated Beaker from the Memorial Hall, Lechlade (Thomas and Holbrook 1998) falls into Needham's 'Long Necked Beaker' classification, which occurs early in the Beaker sequence, but is also associated with late dates, between 3520 and 3360 BP. The earlier dated Beaker from Memorial Hall is classed as an 'S-profile Beaker'. Needham (2005, 200) suggested that this Beaker may have been old when placed in the burial. This draws attention to one of the major problems with Beaker chronology and the general failure of dating schemes to confirm models of Beaker development based on stylistic traits. As Ann Woodward (2002) has pointed out, Beakers may have circulated as heirlooms before finally being deposited, leading to a confusion of late dates for stylistically early Beakers.

As can be seen in Table 41, the dates from Kingshill North and from Gloucestershire in general are not particularly early, those from Kingshill North falling within the 'Fission Horizon' between the 'pioneer' use of Beakers and their more widespread acceptance (Needham 2005). The date of the Beaker within the ring ditch is identical to the date from a 'mass grave' containing seven individuals and Beaker pottery from Boscombe Down, Wiltshire. Some of the individuals in the grave were not local to Wiltshire and probably originated in the west of Britain (Needham 2005; Evans *et al*. 2006). The Beakers from Boscombe Down are very different to those from Kingshill North, however, and have more in common with European All Over Cord Beakers. The date from the flat grave at Kingshill North is identical to that from a burial at Radley, Oxfordshire, which was accompanied by a tall, mid-carinated Beaker (Needham 2005, 187) and to a series of Beaker burials from Scotland, including skeleton 1 at Thurston Mains, East Lothian and cist 1 at Broomend of Critchie (Needham 2005).

The isotopes from the individuals buried at Kingshill North indicate that they were not local, and probably originated from chalkland regions of England. As such they fit within an emerging picture of population mobility in the later Neolithic, with an individual from continental Europe found in the Stonehenge environs and good evidence now available for the movement of individuals at a regional and national level (Jay *et al*. forthcoming). Needham (2007) has suggested that mobility was part of the Beaker way of life and that after initial movement of small groups from the Continent, the budding-off of groups who then moved into new areas was responsible for the widespread uptake of Beakers and the collapse of the Grooved Ware 'culture' in the 22nd century BC. Kingshill North finds fit within this pattern of the movement of individuals over relatively short distances into an area already known to Grooved Ware using groups. These sorts of connections were already present in

*Table 41: Radiocarbon dates from contexts associated with Beakers in Gloucestershire*

| *Site* | *Radiocarbon date* | *Calibrated date* | *Material dated* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trinity Farm | 3876 + 57BP | 2490 to 2150 cal BC | hazelnut shells |
| Trinity Farm | 3836 + 58BP | 2470 to 2140 cal BC | hazelnut shells |
| Roughground Farm | 3710 + 100BP | 2460 to 1880 cal BC | bone |
| Condicote Henge | 3720 + 80BP | 2430 to 1890 cal BC | mature wood |
| Kingshill North skeleton 8656 | 3830 ± 29BP | 2351 to 2198 cal BC | human bone |
| Kingshill North skeleton 1403 | 3718 ± 29BP | 2201 to 2031 cal BC | human bone |
| Lechlade Memorial Hall | 3530 + 50BP | 2020 to 1740 cal BC | human bone |
| Shorncote | 3480 + 60 BP | 1950 to 1640 cal BC | human bone |
| Lechlade Memorial Hall | 3460 + 50BP | 1920 to 1630 cal BC | human bone |

the late Neolithic and are clear from the exchange between the Cotswolds and regions beyond, as seen in the presence of flint and Cornish axe heads in the Grooved Ware pits. Indeed, although Beaker burial practices appear to represent a 'clean break' from the practices of the later part of the Neolithic, when formal burial was relatively rare, deposits continued to be made in pits and these are, in fact, more common and include more Beaker vessels than burials, especially in the western part of Britain (see Lewis and Mullin forthcoming). Two examples close to Cirencester illustrate the point. At Cirencester Polo Club, to the north of Cirencester at Daglingworth, a single pit contained sherds of Beaker, representing a minimum of eight vessels, alongside animal bone, including cattle and possible wild boar (Nichols 2004). At Trinity Farm, Bagendon (Mudd *et al*. 1999), a total of three pits contained 164 sherds of Beaker pottery, from at least 14 vessels, alongside worked flint, hazelnut shells and burnt stone. The contents of the pits, and the treatment of this material, often deliberately broken and burnt, has much in common with the material from pits containing Grooved Ware. Alex Gibson (2007) has argued that the change in burial practices seen in the Beaker period has its origins in the later Neolithic and is not such a clean break as has previously been thought. When the evidence from pits is considered, the division between Grooved Ware and Beaker practices is even less clear-cut.

### *Middle Bronze Age*

The single feature of middle Bronze Age date from the site was burial 1905. Such inhumations are rare, with few other recorded examples dating to this period. The usual rite in the middle Bronze Age is cremation, usually with a Deverel-Rimbury vessel, or local variant. Examples of this rite have been recorded in Gloucestershire at Bevans Quarry, Temple Guiting (O'Neil 1967) and also at Shorncote Quarry (Barclay and Glass 1995), but is generally rarer in the west of Britain than in the south and east. A middle Bronze Age inhumation is known from Cotswold Community (Powell *et al*. 2010, 41-42), where an adult female buried in a rectangular grave was radiocarbon dated to 1510 to 1400 cal BC (95%; SUERC-18831), contemporary with the date of 1502 to 1415 cal BC (95%; OxA-20188) from Kingshill North. The burials were in different positions, however: that from Kingshill North being on its back with its legs crossed, and the burial from Cotswold Community being tightly crouched on its right side. Other burials placed on their backs are known from Appleford Sidings, Oxfordshire (Booth and Simmonds 2009), where a young woman was buried in a roughly oval grave pit in a tightly crouched position, on her back with arms folded across her stomach, and knees drawn up to her chest. Although the burial was not scientifically dated, a middle Bronze Age globular urn had been placed at the left side of her body. At Mount Farm near Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (Lambrick 2010), the latest burial on the site was the inhumation of a young woman dated to 1680-1220 cal BC, while at Watkins Farm, Oxfordshire (Allen 1990), a body was placed in an extended position at the bottom of a ramped well which contained wood radiocarbon dated to 1400-1250 cal BC (HAR-8253).

The burial from Kingshill North was also accompanied by a joint of meat. At the Beeches, immediately to the south of the site (Young 2001), an animal burial was found in a pit inside an enclosure, the burial was dated to 1400 to 1120 cal BC (NZA-12281) and further animal bone from this area was dated to 1510 to 1310 cal BC (NZA-12282). Significantly, a piece of human skull, associated with fragments of Globular Urn, also gave a middle Bronze Age date of 1400 to 1130 cal BC (NZA-12280). All these dates overlap with that from Kingshill North and possibly indicate that the main focus of middle Bronze Age activity was in this area, where, incidentally, there was little evidence for earlier occupation.

Within the wider area, there is evidence for middle Bronze Age occupation at Roughground Farm (Allen *et al*. 1993) and Horcott Pit (Lamdin-Whymark *et al*. 2009), where Middle Bronze Age pottery appears to be associated with domestic activity. Deverel Rimbury pottery was also present at Cotswold Community (Powell *et al*. 2010), where a relatively large assemblage was recovered from a series of pits and a waterhole. These sites appear to represent the first 'organised' agricultural settlements and belong to the period when the first field systems and land divisions emerge (Yates 2007). However, Gloucestershire lies at the edge of the distribution of field systems: they are focused in the Upper Thames Valley and there is a paucity of evidence from the Cotswolds. Quite why this is the case is open to question, but may represent a difference in land use – the high Cotswold being used for summer pasture, while the valleys were exploited for arable and seasonal grazing.

## **Iron Age to Roman** (Fig. 44) *Edward Biddulph*

### *The middle Iron Age activity*

There was a gap of at least 1000 years after the middle Bronze Age burial (1905) was interred. The absence of early Iron Age activity at Kingshill North is unsurprising, as evidence for early Iron Age settlement around Cirencester is sparse. Residual early Iron Age pottery was recovered from a section across the Lynches trackway, a route of Roman origin that extended alongside the River Churn from Cirencester. The pottery from the section, located about 4 km north-west of Kingshill North, pointed to a settlement in the vicinity, though no features were detected (Mudd 1999, 517). At the Beeches, about 500 m south of Kingshill North, excavation revealed an enclosure ditch, whose filling was dated by pottery to the early Iron Age. Its width and depth led the excavator to speculate on a possible defensive

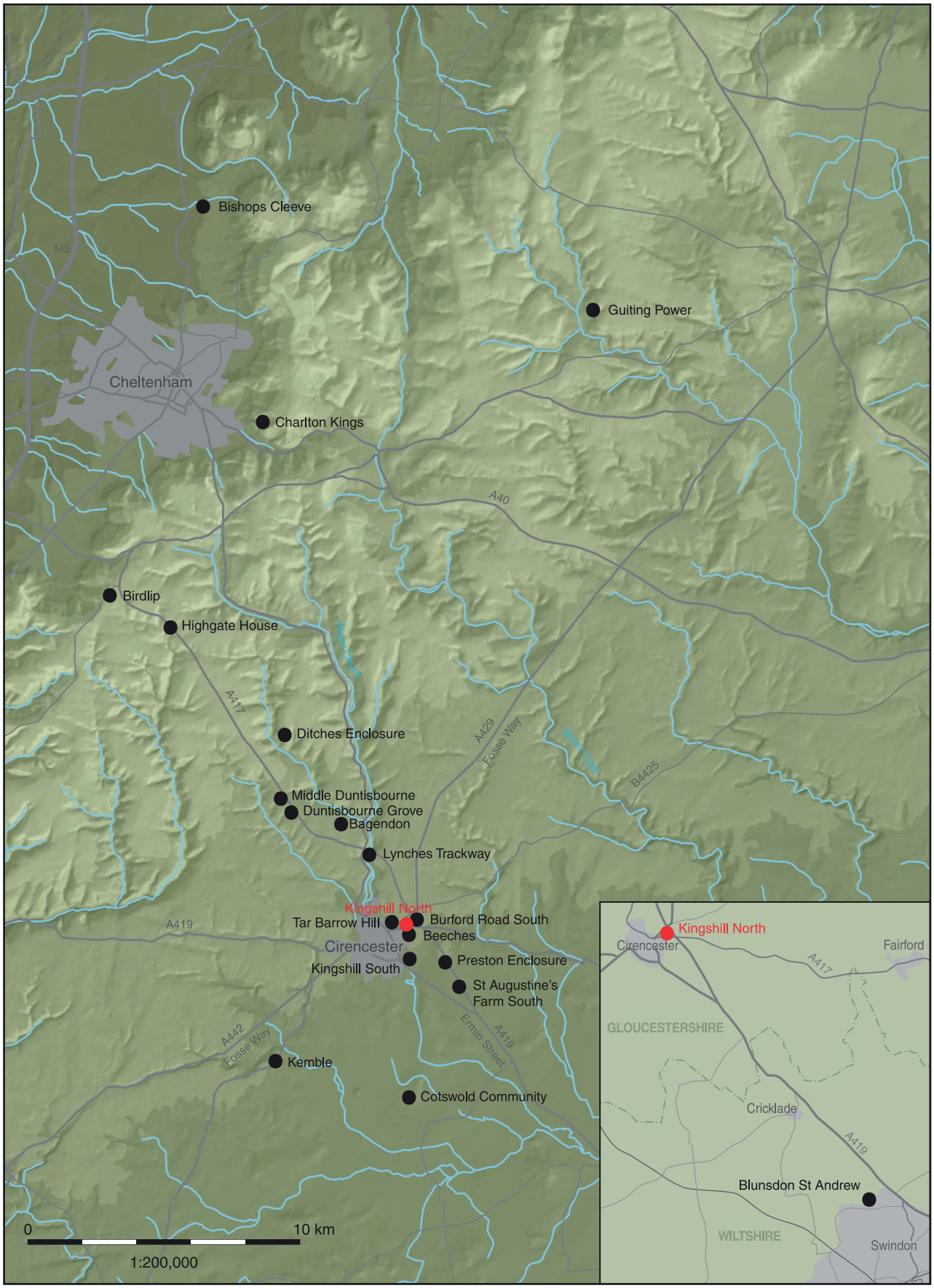


*Fig. 44 Phases 3 and 4 – locations of sites mentioned in discussion*

function, though without further evidence, the matter remained unresolved. Postholes nearby suggested the presence of associated structures, although the features were undated (Young 2001, 38). Further afield, extensive settlement evidence broadly dated to the late Bronze/early Iron Age was recorded at the Cotswold Community site, 5 km south of Kingshill North. Excavations uncovered dispersed areas of unenclosed settlement set within a pastoral and agricultural landscape (Powell *et al.* 2010, 71, fig. 2.31). Further east, at Roughground Farm, Lechlade, a roundhouse, pits and boundary ditches were assigned to the early Iron Age (Allen *et al.* 1993, 36-40).

The next phase of activity at Kingshill North began in the middle Iron Age (Phase 3). The phase is characterised by pits dug across the southern part of the site. The frequency, form and distribution of the pits appear to be a curious repetition of the late Neolithic phase, but the pits can be placed in the Iron Age with certainty. Radiocarbon dates the filling of two pits between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC (for example, 394-209 cal BC – 95%; NZA-33476), and all pits contained pottery that dated to the middle Iron Age, or was at least consistent with that period. Additionally, the range of animal bones recovered from the Iron Age pits, with its emphasis on sheep or goat, was different from the cattle and pig profile of the Neolithic assemblage. As for function, the profiles of the pits – generally vertical-sided, flat-based and, in some cases, undercut – are consistent with Iron Age features typically identified as storage pits, with grain being the likely primary content (cf. Bersu 1940; Reynolds 1979; Whittle 1984, 128-37; Lambrick 2009, 274-77). A relatively rich sample of charred plant remains recovered from the bottom fill of pit 9083 may represent the remains of the final use of the pit for storage, in this case the storage of fodder (see W Smith, above), although the assemblage also contained elements that suggested secondary deposition of crop-processing waste. The shallower pits, such as 8143 and 8138, are less easily identified as storage pits. Some of these may originally have been deeper, being located at the top of the hillside and therefore more prone to truncation than those further down the slope, although shallow pits were found there too. These pits may alternatively be viewed as water-storage pits (cf. Parry 1998, 45). Where shallow pits were cut into or lined with clay, Parry (1998, 45) also suggests a possible role in pottery production, potentially serving as clay-puddling tanks.

Other middle Iron Age sites in the region were similarly characterised by groups of storage pits. A group of 19 pits set within two principal enclosures, were recorded at Birdlip, Cowley, some 20 km north-west of Cirencester. The pits there were largely cylindrical, with barrel-shaped pits also represented. Overall the pits were deeper and narrower than those at Kingshill North, measuring on average 1.3 m across and 0.93 m deep, although there was overlap in the ranges (Parry 1998, 39). A middle Iron Age date was ascribed to most of them, but pottery suggested that some pits were filled or dug as late as the 1st-century AD (Parry 1998, 44). A mass of pits, dated to the middle Iron Age and associated with postholes, was excavated at Guiting Power, located on the higher hills of the Cotswolds some 25 km north of Cirencester. The pits there, however, were generally shallower than those at Kingshill North and Birdlip, with the range extending to 0.6 m in depth, and a water-storage function, rather than grain storage, was preferred (Saville 1979, 127, 136). Two pits, one of middle to late Iron Age in date, the other dating to the 1st century AD, were uncovered in excavations at Vineyards Farm, Charlton Kings (Rawes 1991). At Bishop's Cleeve, seven pits, associated with roundhouses and spreads of occupation soil, were recorded. These measured on average 1.6 m in diameter and 0.8 m deep (Lovell *et al.* 2007, 99). Thirteen middle Iron Age pits, along with soil-marks, were excavated at Gilder's Paddock, another site in Bishop's Cleeve. The pits formed two clusters; the pits in one group were cylindrical, measuring up to 1.48 m wide and 0.57 m deep (Parry 1999, 93), while those in the second group were shallower and wider – up to 1.64 m in diameter and 0.35 m deep (Parry 1999, 96). The difference, recalling the separation of shallow and deep pits at Kingshill North, may have been one of function. An investigation at a site at Kemble, *c* 5 km south-west of Cirencester, produced five steep-sided pits with an average diameter of 1.1 m and depth of 0.6 m (King *et al.* 1996, 19). Closer still to Kingshill North, investigation of an area at Burford Road South just a few hundred metres east of the site revealed four pits broadly dated to the later prehistoric period (Mudd *et al.* 1999a, 72). Two of the pits were relatively large at over 4 m wide, but shallow at up to 0.3 m deep, and they are unlikely to have functioned as grain-storage pits. Material characteristic of 'burnt mound' deposits were recovered from them (Mudd *et al.* 1999a, 74), and the pits, like those at Kingshill North, appear to have been peripheral to, even isolated from, roundhouses and the focus of habitation. Where more extensive remains of middle Iron Age settlement are known, the evidence points to enclosed nucleated settlements with associated field systems (Moore 2006, 85). A number of such sites have been recorded in the Cotswolds and the Upper Thames Valley. The enclosed settlement at Birdlip comprised a roughly square enclosure that surrounded a ten-metre wide ring-gully. This enclosure was connected by ditches to a boundary ditch that was semi-circular in plan and enclosed the pits alluded to above (Parry 1998, fig. 3). An enclosure with associated pits was seen at Highgate House, close to Birdlip and *c* 13 km north of Cirencester (Mudd and Lupton 1999, 59-64), while a segmented ditch system was recorded at St Augustine's Farm South, 2 km south of Kingshill North (Mudd and Muir 1999, 35-8). A hexagonal enclosure uncovered at Preston, a short distance north of St Augustine's

Farm South, contained pits and ditches and the curving gully segments of roundhouses (Mudd and Mortimer 1999, fig. 3.9). A cluster of roundhouses attached to an enclosure was recorded at Cotswold Community (Powell *et al.* 2010, 74-82), and similar evidence – roundhouses and associated pits and ditches – was uncovered at Thornhill Farm, Fairford (Jennings *et al.* 2004, 21-30).

Once the middle Iron Age pits at Kingshill North were abandoned, they were available for further deposition. Much of the material recovered from the pits, typically pottery and animal bone, is likely to derive from domestic waste, with the level of fragmentation suggesting that the finds had undergone episodes of disturbance and weathering, for example from exposure on a midden or through ploughing, before final deposition. There was, however, evidence of deliberate, structured deposits in the form of the skeletons of a crow or rook and dog in pit 8851. The skeletons were deposited along with limestone rubble and stony soil into an essentially empty pit – there had been a degree of erosion at the side of the pit before deposition. The deposit therefore represents an event enacted after the pit had served its primary storage function. An antler comb, retrieved from pit 8114, is also of interest. Though a single item, the deposit may be of the same tradition that induced the middle Iron Age inhabitants of Bishop's Cleeve to place a group of weaving equipment – an antler comb, up to three antler needles, a triangular loomweight and a spindle whorl – into a storage pit (Lovell 2007, 99).

### *Chronological overview of the late Iron Age and Roman settlement*

The archaeology assigned to phases 4a to 4c essentially falls into a single period, the late Iron Age. Potentially this spans the 1st century BC to first half of the 1st century AD, although the pottery and radiocarbon determinations from features in this period lean towards the later part of this range. There is virtually nothing among the pottery and other datable artefacts to separate the remains into sub-phases. Division was possible, however, on stratigraphic and spatial grounds. Ditch 8563, which partially enclosed a group of postholes that formed the outline of a roughly rectangular building some 10 m long by 5 m wide, was attributed to Phase 4a. A radiocarbon date (90 cal BC-cal AD 64 – 95%; NZA-33149) obtained from charred grain from the ditch, along with pottery including grog-tempered pedestal vessels and high-shouldered necked jars, suggests that the ditch was filled at the end of the 1st century BC or the early 1st century AD. A burial (1104) was interred within the fill of the enclosure ditch probably during the first half of the 1st century; the skeleton gave a radiocarbon date of 41 cal BC to 75 cal AD (95%; OxA-20187). Though the ditch had been filled, the burial suggests that it remained visible, perhaps as a slight dip or area of taller vegetation.

Pottery collected from features assigned to Phase 4b was identical in form and fabric to that from phase 4a features – but in stratigraphical terms represents a development of the landscape. Ditch 8918 cut the termini of the infilled ditch, 8563, and extended through the structure, now abandoned, that 8563 enclosed. Ditch 8918 was not designed to enclose. It defines a boundary, but its shape, in plan resembling the shape of an archer's composite bow, may also have facilitated the herding of livestock or allowed temporary enclosures to be erected. Postholes cut into the fill of ditch 8563 may have been positioned with reference to ditch 8918, creating a small enclosure or palisade. Like 8563, ditch 8918 was associated with a structure; postholes at its northern end loosely defined a roundhouse that overlay the northern part of 8563. The dating of a burial (8723) inserted into the northern terminus of ditch 8918 is problematic. That it post-dated the ditch is certain. A radiocarbon determination obtained from the skeleton, however, provided a date of 181 to 41 cal BC (95%; OxA-20185), potentially making it earlier than the Phase 4a features. This is a matter not easily resolved. We could suggest that the skeleton of an individual alive in the first half of the 1st century BC or earlier was re-buried at the end of the 1st century BC or early 1st century AD, or that the dating of the skeleton and phases 4a and 4b all coincide in the narrowest of chronological overlaps, but both suggestions have the signs of special pleading. The radiocarbon date could, of course, be at fault, although there was no obvious means of contamination.

Ditch 8918 was in turn replaced by ditch 8413, which was substantially larger in width and length (Phase 4c). Ditch 8413 formed a significant boundary, and its semi-circular form in plan, enhanced further by recuts and extensions. A possible roundhouse was erected close to the southern terminus of 8413, while two slots (9028 and 9076/8) may mark the position of a rectangular structure. Internal sub-division is suggested by two rows of postholes; one extends ENE-WSE immediately south of the roundhouse, while another, orientated NNW-SSE, was located nearer the northern end of the ditch. A narrower boundary ditch (8255) extended along the southern edge of the excavation area. The pottery recovered from ditch 8413 included Severn Valley ware and Savernake ware, suggesting that the ditch received material after the mid-1st century AD. The other features assigned to this phase – ditch 8255, the structures, postholes, and extensions and recuts to 8413 – in contrast lacked the post-conquest wares, comprising instead wares of late Iron Age type, suggesting that deposition was confined to the first half of the 1st century AD. If these were indeed associated with ditch 8413, as seems reasonable on spatial grounds, then ditch 8413 may well have been dug during the final decades of the late Iron Age but continued to receive material into the Roman period.

In Phase 4d, ditch 8413 was extended at its northern end, and two short gullies or ditches defined a small enclosure extending from the southern end of the ditch. An intercutting sequence of probable quarry pits, and other, larger, pits were dug within the area enclosed by 8413 to extract clay and limestone. Pottery retrieved from a number of these features usually comprised late Iron Age wares – typically limestone-tempered and grog-tempered pottery – associated with Roman-period material, such as grey wares, Savernake ware and Severn Valley ware. How far into the second half of the 1st century such assemblages can be pushed is a matter of debate. Comparison with the earliest (military) phase of Roman Cirencester is potentially misleading, since the pottery supply to the fort was shaped by the specific requirements of the soldiers, which depended to a larger extent than neighbouring settlements on regional and continental sources (cf. Cooper 1998, 327; for discussion, see Biddulph, late Iron Age and Roman pottery, Chapter 4, above). However, on the basis of assemblages from nearby sites, for instance Ditches (Moore 2009, 114), a date for deposition within the third quarter of the 1st century is not unreasonable.

The site saw very little activity from the late 1st century onwards (phases 4e and 4f). A cremation grave (8227), radiocarbon dated to cal AD 86-247 (95%; NZA-33144), was inserted into the fill of ditch 8918. A ditch (8203) in the southern part of the site, containing late Roman pottery and a coin of Constantine, was filled during the 4th century. Pottery of 2nd-century date, including Central Gaulish samian, was also recovered, though this is likely to have been incorporated as residual occurrences in later deposits through agricultural activity. The site remained available for farming into modern times.

### *Production and economy*

The evidence of land snails indicates that the landscape around the settlement was largely open (see Champness, Chapter 6, above). The grassland environment, though with some provision for woodland and arable land, provided pasture and harvested fodder for livestock. The animal bone evidence and the composition of the plant assemblage are also consistent with an economy based predominantly on livestock (see Strid and Nicholson, Chapter 6, above). Sheep (or goat) made the largest contribution to the assemblage recovered from middle Iron Age pits. Cattle were also represented in this phase, but were less important than sheep, and remained so throughout the Iron Age and early Roman period, except in Phase 4a/b, when the species briefly made a larger contribution to the animal bone assemblage than sheep.

This predominance of sheep is typical of 'native' British settlements, rather than those with a Roman character, which are weighted more towards pigs and cattle (King 1991, 17). The open countryside, albeit with tree cover to the north of the site, is unlikely to have suited pigs, which were appropriately kept in small numbers. The dominance of pig bones in the Neolithic phase is notable, given that the environment was similarly open and dry, although, as noted by D Mullin above, this is likely to reflect a specialised feasting function associated with the Neolithic pits, rather than being representative of subsistence farming strategies. The late Iron Age and Roman landscape was good for horses. None of the horse bones from the site was found to have had evidence of butchery, and so were kept for uses other than food.

Data relating to age point to a trend for older sheep and younger cattle, suggesting that sheep were kept mainly for wool, but also meat, while cattle were reared for meat. Sheep and cattle also provided milk for human consumption. There was less importance placed on the use of cattle for traction, hinting that the communities living at the site were mainly pastoral.

Nevertheless, arable farming was practised (see Smith, Chapter 6, above), and the molluscan evidence, at least in the later Roman period, has identified fields set aside from crops to the south of the settlement (see Champness, Chapter 6, above). Wheat and barley were identified in middle and late Iron Age samples, and the recovery of a near-complete upper rotary quern from pit 8806 points to the processing of grain presumably grown locally at a subsistence level. The deposition of the quern itself was no doubt a special act for the late Iron Age inhabitants, resonating with the symbolism of food production and, ultimately, survival (Moore 2006, 123). But while cereals were grown, they were not the main crops. The abundance of wild species and grasses in the environmental samples raises the intriguing possibility that grasses, including brome and rye grass and species such as wild oat, were deliberately cultivated to provide animal fodder. To this list we may add the barley, which is well-known as an animal feed.

The evidence paints a picture of a pastoral landscape, with fields populated mainly by sheep, but also cattle and horses, with areas set aside for grassland and hay meadows and for crops to a lesser extent. The description of 16th-century Cirencester by the Tudor antiquary, John Leland, provides an interesting footnote. In observing that the stony fields around the town were more suitable for barley than wheat, and that there was not a great supply of wood (Chandler 1998, 190), Leland could equally have been describing the land around Kingshill North in the 1st century AD.

There was little evidence for other forms of economic activity. Hammerscale, the residue of iron smithing, and tiny spheres produced by high-temperature welding indicate that there was a small amount of ironworking on the site. A significant proportion of the material was recovered as intrusive occurrences in Neolithic pits and the ring-ditch of Beaker burial 8454, but otherwise was collected

from features that dated almost exclusively to Phase 4c. However, the find-spots – within ditches 8413 and 8255 – give little focus to the location of the activity. Most of the pottery, particularly the calcareous and grog-tempered wares, would have been made locally, but there were no wasters or other forms of production waste to indicate manufacture on or close to the site.

### *Settlement and landscape*

Taken together, the late Iron Age evidence represents successive phases of a farmstead set within an enclosure or field system. While the area encompassed by the ditches expanded with each phase, only one principal structure per phase, its position shifting with each development, was identified. The rectangular building of Phase 4a stands in obvious contrast to the roundhouses that replaced it, and, if occupied as a domestic structure, is unusual in the region. Six-poster rectangular structures are reasonably common, but these are likely to have served as storage buildings (Lambrick 2009, 271-2). Given the larger size of the Phase 4a building, this interpretation can be discounted. Rectangular structures of possible domestic function and late Iron Age date are known on sites along the Thames, but are confined to the lower and middle Thames Valley (Lambrick 2009, 151). While a structural function is favoured here, the possibility that the postholes represent parallel fence lines might also be considered. This seems especially pertinent given the five-metre gap at the west end of the structure and slight narrowing of the building's width towards the east end. If the west end were open, then we could envisage some sort of pen for livestock, holding sheep, perhaps, during wool clipping. If so, where the inhabitants of the Phase 4a settlement lived is not known, although the circular spread of occupation soil (8844) below the roundhouse of Phase 4b hints at earlier buildings existing on that site.

In broad terms, the site resembles other farming settlements in the region, although notably the closest parallels belong to the earlier Iron Age. A mid to late Iron Age settlement at Cotswold Community consisted of a large rectilinear enclosure – internally sparse in terms of features – and a small unenclosed area of domestic activity outside, comprising two roundhouses (Powell *et al.* 2010, fig. 3.5). Enclosures dating to the mid 1st century AD were recorded at Middle Duntisbourne (Mudd and Lupton 1999, fig. 3.34) and Duntisbourne Grove (Mudd and Lawrence 1999, fig. 3.41). None was associated with structures, but like Kingshill North was open on one or two sides and sparsely occupied within. The curving plan of the ditches at Kingshill North is obviously different from the rectangular enclosures of the Duntisbournes, but their function may have been similar. Parts of the middle to late Iron Age settlement complex at Mount Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, particularly a curving enclosure ditch with possible roundhouses along its length at the north-eastern end of the site, provide a better match for Kingshill North (Lambrick 2010, fig. 43b). The curving boundary ditch at Birdlip, potentially of middle Iron Age date (Parry 1998, fig. 3), recalls the form of ditch 8413 at Kingshill North. Another useful parallel was the early to middle Iron Age settlement at Groundwell Farm, Blunsdon St Andrew near Swindon, Wiltshire, which comprised a curvilinear enclosure which surrounded successive phases of a roundhouse. The excavator suggested that the farmstead was occupied by a single household (Gingell 1981, 73), an interpretation which might reasonably be applied to Kingshill North. Excavation at Groundwell Farm also uncovered parallel pairs or triplets of slots, usually with postholes inside, that represented structures up to 5 m square (Gingell 1981, 49). These are likely to be equivalent to the four-poster structures commonly recorded in the Thames Valley and typically interpreted as raised granaries or fodder storage (Lambrick 2009, 271; Powell *et al.* 2010, 72). The Phase 4c parallel slots at Kingshill North (9028 and 9076/8) lack the postholes, but can be viewed in similar terms. It is clear, therefore, that the late Iron Age settlement at Kingshill North is redolent of earlier Iron Age settlements, and takes the chronology of the settlement type into the 1st-century AD and beyond the Roman invasion of AD 43.

It is worth noting the sets of cropmarks that aerial photography has recorded to the south of Kingshill North (Fig. 1). Some of these have been investigated. The excavation by the Avon Archaeological Unit at the Beeches (Young 2001) has already been touched upon. An earlier excavation at the Beeches uncovered an enclosure and pits probably relating to a farmstead. Dating evidence was limited, but pointed to an Iron Age date (Reece 1990, 9-19). Cropmarks to the south-east of the town at Kingshill uncovered shallow ditches that were attributed to the 1st, and possibly the 2nd, century AD (Reece 1990, 39-40). How all these relate to each other and Kingshill North – it is possible, for example, that the cropmarks represent a sequence of settlement and relocation from the Bronze Age to the Roman period – cannot be addressed at present, and much of the investigation of the cropmarks is still to do. However, it is safe to assume that quite extensive areas of prehistoric and Roman land division, enclosures and settlement lay across the eastern side of Cirencester.

### *Funerary practice*

What links the three burials belonging to Phase 4 is the fact that all were interred within ditches. Late Iron Age infant burial 1104 was deposited in ditch 8563. Inhumation 8724, though radiocarbon dated to the middle or late Iron Age, was placed in late Iron Age ditch 8918. This ditch also took early or mid Roman cremation burial 8227. The rites varied, but the type of burial location was unchanged for at

least 100 years. While this is unsurprising in the context of the Iron Age – boundary locations are well known among archaeologically visible forms of burial – the continuity evident at Kingshill North, the use of boundaries extending well into the Roman period, adds to the perceived significance of ditches as landscape markers and liminal spaces separating the living and the dead (Moore 2006, 70).

This role of separating the realms seems particularly relevant at Kingshill North. Ditch 8563 not only formed an enclosure, but also surrounded and protected a home. A roundhouse was built next to ditch 8918. Here, then, the dead inhabited the same space as the living. Such treatment cannot have been accorded to all individuals, since the burials recorded here are unlikely to have represented the entire population of the farmstead, even if accommodating a single household. We might tentatively suggest that individuals 1104 and 8724 were deemed to be special. Potentially this presents a way of explaining the discrepant middle Iron Age date of 8724. If belonging to a socially high-ranking individual in life – a community leader, perhaps – the skeleton may have been re-buried to mark, say, the relocation of the farmstead. This does not explain the nature of the bones, which had a level of articulation consistent with a single episode of burial, but other mortuary rites before reburial – careful curation of the remains or a form of mummification – might be considered. However, the means by which preservation could have been achieved at the site cannot yet be suggested, returning us to the simpler explanation that the radiocarbon date was inaccurate. The association between infant burial 1104 and the structure enclosed by ditch 8563 might also identify the infant as special, and Eleanor Scott's discussion of the role of neonate and infant burials, which, she argues, serves to link life and death, the earthly world and domain of the gods and ancestors (Scott 1999), has its merits. Nevertheless, there is generally little to separate the treatment of children and adults in death in the Upper Thames Valley, as can be seen at Kingshill North, and that given infant burials in settlements was quite usual (Lambrick 2009, 321). The meanings imposed on both the adult and child burials need not be so different either.

Grave 8227 maintained the tradition of boundary burial into the Roman period. The choice of location, at a time when the settlement had been abandoned and formal cemeteries were established around Corinium – for example to the south of the town along Ermin Street immediately beyond Silchester Gate (Holbrook 1994, 83) – is curious. But if, as Moore (2006, 70) argues, boundary burials expressed the relationship between the land and its inhabitants, for instance defining territory and establishing or renewing ancestral tenure, then burial within ditch 8918 during a period of social and political upheaval and uncertainty is plausible. The former inhabitants of Kingshill North had moved into the town, but the land remained theirs, at least in spirit if not the law. However, other interpretations are possible. The burial of the individual, otherwise unconnected with the Iron Age activity at the site, may have been a propitiatory act in prime farmland. What is less likely, though, is that the individual was a criminal or outcast, as his isolated position might suggest. The accompanying grave goods indicate that great care was taken with the cremation and the interment, and suggest that, like inhumation 8724, the individual was special, possibly a leader or otherwise of some social standing. The most obvious expression of that status is the deposition of over 1000 small nails within the grave. These belonged to a light structure, probably a litter or bier, which was used to carry the individual to the pyre. The structure was probably plain – there was no evidence for the sort of decorated and upholstered biers recorded, for example, in the Roman cemetery at Brougham, Cumbria (Cool 2004, 439-40) – but it brings a formality to the mortuary rite and, with its destruction on the pyre, implies relatively high expenditure by the estate of the deceased or through the contributions of the mourners. We can imagine the funeral procession or *pompa* winding its way from the town through Verulamium Gate and along Fosse Way before turning into the farmland exposed at Kingshill North.

If the body was cremated at the site, then there is no evidence for it. The grass or turves burnt as fuel in the pyre could have come from the meadowland around the site, but were not diagnostic of the site specifically. A shoe or pair of shoes was placed with the deceased on the pyre. Shoes were commonly deposited in graves (Philpott 1991, 168) and tend to be interpreted as an item necessary for the journey to the afterlife. The explanation is not altogether satisfactory when we consider the variation in the practice, for example the burial of one shoe or more than two in a single grave, and instead we might prefer to view the selection of shoes as a product of behaviours inherited from earlier generations or society more generally. The deceased in grave 8227 was accompanied by shoes because other individuals before him were accompanied with shoes; there need be no recourse to original meaning. Nevertheless, the shoes conform to standard Roman practice, and the deceased, carried on a litter, cremated, and wearing shoes, was for all appearances a Roman. But the location of the grave was Iron Age, and provides evidence for the survival of British burial traditions beyond the Roman conquest.

### *Status, function and identity*

The farmstead at Kingshill North was established at the time that the enclosure at Ditches, some 8 km north of the site, was first occupied (Trow *et al.* 2009, 45). This enclosure appeared to represent the earliest activity of an extended 'oppidum' that was augmented in the mid 1st century by the earthworks

at nearby Bagendon (Fig. 44). The oppidum was a sprawling complex that can be likened to Camulodunum (Colchester) and Verulamium (St Albans), whose earthworks define territory covering many square kilometres (Trow *et al.* 2009, 73). The territory of the Ditches/Bagendon complex encompassed settlements and farmsteads, among them Duntisbourne Grove and Middle Duntisbourne. This was the land of the Dobunni, and the Ditches/Bagendon complex served as a tribal centre. The distribution of Dobunnic coinage, some of it minted in the oppidum (Trow *et al.* 2009, 72), allows Kingshill North to be placed firmly within the tribal territory, which extended across Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, reaching areas south of the Thames, along the Avon Valley and west of the Severn (Jones and Mattingly 1990, 50; map 3.10).

Despite its proximity to the tribal centre, Kingshill North does not seem to have benefited materially. While the settlement may have supplied wool, meat, milk, fodder and, to a lesser extent, cereals, to neighbouring settlements, its catchment was limited, probably little more than a few kilometres around the site. It may have included an occupation site pre-dating the Leaholme fort, as represented by a stake circle (Wacher and McWhirr 1982, 28), but is unlikely to have included Ditches or Bagendon. Those sites saw to their own needs (Rielly 2009, 205-6). The absence of high-status goods, such as Gallo-Belgic finewares, which the inhabitants of Kingshill North might have received in exchange for agricultural produce, is telling. By contrast the Duntisbournes had similar ceramic assemblages to the site at the Ditches and benefited from closer contact or trade with the elite centre (see Figs 35 and 36). The Roman fort established during the third quarter of the 1st century (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 53) was potentially another market for the farmers of Kingshill North. There is some support for this in the animal bone assemblage. It is evident from ageing data that wool production became more important after AD 43 (Phase 4d), and the relatively paucity of adult cattle (albeit based on a small sample) in the Phase 4c/4d assemblage hints at the trade of live animals (see Strid and Nicholson, above). Another potential product was the hay grown in the fields, which would have been a useful source of fodder for the horses stabled in the fort. But even the extent of this trade must have been limited. A measure of this is again provided by the pottery. The composition of the ceramic assemblage dating to the mid to late 1st century lacked the sorts of pottery, such as flagons, platters and imported finewares, attributed to the military levels (Cooper 1998, 325). If the farmers of Kingshill North were supplying the fort, then one might expect them to have received such goods in exchange or use the opportunity of the trade to acquire some choice pieces. This does not necessarily bring us to a deliberate rejection of, or resistance to, Roman culture on the part of Kingshill's inhabitants, simply that the farmers' cultural environment was not susceptible to influence from the fort. Limited social contact and the ten years or so that the fort was occupied (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 53) may not have been enough to create appreciable changes in the Iron Age lifestyles among the population of Kingshill North. However, we cannot dismiss the possibility that the site was abandoned when the Fosse Way was laid out and before the fort was established in *c* AD 55. This may explain the absence of a trackway to link Kingshill North with the Roman road.

If not by *c* AD 50/55, Kingshill North was certainly abandoned as a place of domestic occupation by *c* AD 75, the time when the fort was vacated and the civilian town of *Corinium Dobunnorum* established. The absence of occupation at the site from that time onwards indicates that the area was rural, and probably for the most part it provided pasture and arable land. There was some activity; a field ditch (8203) was cut in the 4th century, and the presence of highly fragmented and chronologically mixed animal bone and pottery is a product of agricultural activity such as manuring and ploughing. It is not clear whether this work was managed from Corinium or, say, a villa estate that had incorporated the land at Kingshill North, although the burial of cremated human remains in ditch 8913, as suggested above, could be cited as evidence that the inhabitants of Kingshill North or their descendants retained a degree of ownership over the site. Occupation immediately beyond the eastern side of the town did not cease altogether. Excavation of cropmarks on the Cirencester ring-road to the south-east of the town revealed an enclosure, possibly a farmstead dating to the 1st and 2nd century (see Fig. 1; Reece 1990, 39-40). What connection this had with the rectangular building and associated farm estate uncovered during excavations at Kingshill South by Oxford Archaeology in 2009-10 remains to be seen, but it is becoming clear that the extra-mural area continued to support a rural, if relatively high-ranking, population.

**Building memories**

It is worth considering the settlement's relationship with Beaker burial and ring-ditch 8454, which may have been visible to the late Iron Age inhabitants as a round barrow. If the barrow, whose location, as Mullin suggests (above), was determined by the late Neolithic pits, in turn served to locate the late Iron Age settlement, then the buried individuals may have been absorbed into the ancestry of the late Iron Age inhabitants and used to confer legal and spiritual ownership of the land. As discussed above, the later boundary burials may have maintained those rights. With the burial of cremation 8227, the inhabitants of Corinium who worked the land renewed a history that extended back almost 2500 years.

Potentially a connection exists between the late Iron Age settlement and the Tar Barrows, situated approximately 400 m to the west. The barrows may

have reflected on the inhabitants of Kingshill North, strengthening their legitimacy as occupiers of the land. Unfortunately, the dating of the barrows is inconclusive, although it seems likely that the barrows were erected in the late Iron Age or early Roman period. One of the barrows has a conical profile more typical of Roman, rather than prehistoric date, and Roman coins, stonework and a 'pre-Roman cinerary pot' have been recorded during various openings of the barrows from the 18th century onwards (Holbrook 1994, 83; 2008c, 308). Reece (2003, 280) notes that Corinium, sited on a flood-prone gravel island surrounded by a marshy area, avoided, surely deliberately, the better ground occupied by the barrows, and suggests that the barrows marked an area of deep significance for the Dobunni, akin to the religious and high-status burial complexes of Stanway and Folly Lane in the Catuvellaunian centres of Camulodumum and Verulamium respectively (Crummy *et al.* 2007; Niblett 1999; Creighton 2006). Further support for Reece's view is provided by cropmarks immediately adjacent to the barrows that take the form of a rectangular enclosure containing a masonry structure, and two conjoined enclosures that bring to mind the burial enclosures at Stanway (see Fig. 1; Holbrook 2008c, 310-11). This brings us back to the paucity of early Roman fine wares and other relatively high-status objects at Kingshill North. Just as the inhabitants derived no material benefit from military occupation in early Cirencester, they gained nothing from the special place on their doorstep. This suggests, as with the fort, that the settlement had been abandoned, and the Fosse Way laid out, before the Tar Barrow Hill site developed as an elite funerary or religious complex.