

Chapter 8: Hill Farm Archaeological Sequence

INTRODUCTION

Hill Farm lies around 500 m to the west of Castle Hill (Fig. 1.1). The renovation of the farm buildings for the Northmoor Trust offices and Project Timescape involved below-ground disturbances that required archaeological mitigation. The scale of this work was originally intended to be limited, and a series of 1 m square test pits dug both to establish the depth of the foundations of the existing buildings and to test the stratigraphic sequence across Hill Farm found very little archaeology (OA 2004). The geophysical survey carried out around Hill Farm, however, showed dense archaeology running up to the farm on the south and east (Fig. 8.1). There appeared to be a much lower density of archaeological features on the north and west, and it was thought that the limit of the archaeology lay somewhere beneath the farm.

Changes in the design of the renovation resulted in a number of area excavations. The first was three irregular areas dug as linked ponds, some distance to the west of Hill Farm, which revealed Roman and earlier features. Two larger area excavations followed, the first west of the farm where the Visitors' Car Park was terraced into the hillside, and a second beneath the new offices of the Trust and a new boiler house. Both revealed considerable evidence of Iron Age occupation. Removal of topsoil for a Staff Car Park east of Hill Farm resulted in the uncovering of further archaeological features, but the limited depth of the clearance meant that only a plan and surface finds were recovered. These set piece archaeological investigations were followed by an archaeological watching brief upon foundation trenches associated with changes to the buildings in the courtyard, and various drainage and other service trenches that crossed the area (Fig. 8.2). The failure of the geophysical survey to pick up anything but the very largest features was probably due to the greater depth of topsoil and ploughsoil west of the farm.

The archaeology is described by trench and by feature, with chronological summaries given at the end of each section. The trenches are presented in approximate order of their location, from the Visitors' Car Park, Offices and Boiler House and Ponds areas on the north-west side of the site, to the Staff Car Park in the south-eastern area. This is followed by a description of the features revealed during the excavation of a series of service trenches that extended for some 300m across the site.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The earliest archaeological evidence came from the Visitors' Car Park, where an early Neolithic pit (135) containing flint and Plain Bowl pottery was revealed. Sherds of Middle Neolithic, Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery were also found, all in later features. A small number of early Iron Age features were exposed, including a scatter of pits and several ditches and lengths of gully around a probable roundhouse. Most of the revealed features belonged to the middle Iron Age, and included two further phases of the roundhouse enclosure with an attached annexe, parts of three other penannular ditches or gullies and a sub-rectangular enclosure, along with various associated pits and postholes, some of the latter forming four-post and six-post

structures. Roman features mostly consisted of enclosure and field boundary ditches, while a grave of probable Roman date was identified in the Visitors' Car Park. Post-medieval and modern features were also present, the most visible of which were a series of plough furrows that truncated the sites on a northeast-southwest trajectory.

PHASING METHODOLOGY

Wherever possible stratigraphic relationships were used to provide a relative chronology. Such relationships, however, only accounted for a small proportion of the archaeological features at Hill Farm. Dating was obtained using artefact chronology, and in a few cases radiocarbon dating as well. Given its relative abundance and chronological sensitivity, pottery provided the most suitable dating tool in the majority of cases, although other artefacts were used where appropriate. Individual pottery sherds were spot dated as closely as possible, and an overall date was assigned to each feature according to the date of the latest diagnostic sizeable sherd. This approach treated earlier material within a mixed deposit as residual, and gave precedence to the date provided by later artefacts where it could reasonably be demonstrated (from their large size, abundance and/or the stratigraphic integrity of the deposit, for example) that intrusive material was unlikely to be present. Thus, a middle Iron Age date would be assigned to an assemblage dominated by undiagnostic or early Iron Age sherds, but containing a significant number of large-sized middle Iron Age sherds (e.g. pit 625 in the Offices and Boiler House area). Stratigraphic relationships were used to test the validity of the artefact dating, and to gauge the level of residual material that was present.

In many cases, it was possible to use a combination of stratigraphic relationships and ceramic association to arrive at a date for a feature. Due to the use of common fabrics in both the early and middle Iron Age on this site, however, much of the pottery could only be described as Iron Age. Late Iron Age fabrics are more distinct, but did not occur on this site. In other cases, it was necessary to rely on independent dating methods (e.g. radiocarbon determinations) or on phasing by spatial association. A circular arrangement of postholes, for example, might be grouped as a single structure and dated together on the ceramic evidence only available from one or more of the constituent features (e.g. structure 532 in the Visitors' Car Park).

STRATIGRAPHIC NARRATIVE

Visitors' car park

The Visitors' Car Park is situated directly to the west of Hill Farm on greensand, which is weathered and consisted of a mix of areas of greensand lumps and of areas of very sandy clay. The car park excavation covered an area of 1845 m², sloping gently down from east to west (Figs 8.3 and 8.7). Most of this area was under grass when excavation began, but the north-eastern edge of the site (over penannular gully 174/175) was covered by a concrete track and agricultural buildings. The topsoil (31) and subsoil (32) were removed using a mechanical excavator under continuous archaeological supervision. Around the farm itself, these layers together reached up to

0.8 m deep, probably the result of artificial levelling when the farm was built. The overburden became shallower as it extended away from the farm buildings, gradually diminishing to *c.* 0.4 m deep at the western edge of the area. The natural slope of the ground was thus more gradual than appeared on the surface.

Two substantial medieval furrows (133 and 243) on a north-east to south-west alignment were also found, and were removed by machine. These furrows truncated some of the shallower archaeological features. The terrace excavated for the Visitors' Car Park was a maximum of 1.4 m deep adjacent to the farm, and was approximately level. It cut deeply into archaeological features close to Hill Farm, necessitating full archaeological excavation, but shallowed to the west, so that towards the west end the subsoil was left in place and the tops of archaeological features were not exposed. A small area where one edge of a north-south ditch was visible was stripped slightly deeper, revealing an early Neolithic pit (135) and a continuation of the Roman ditch (177) observed during the Ponds excavation (see below). The archaeology is summarised below.

Early Neolithic

Pit 135

A small, bowl-shaped pit (135) (Figs 8.3 and 8.4, Section 125) was situated close to the western perimeter of the excavated area. This feature, the only datable Neolithic feature on site, measured 0.7 m in diameter and 0.23 m deep despite slight truncation by a plough furrow. The pit had two fills. The lower fill (179) was a friable, dark greyish-brown clay loam 0.12 m thick, containing a small number of local greensand fragments and a high proportion of charcoal (*c.* 25%). This fill deposit appears to have been deposited in a single episode, and probably shortly after the pit was cut, as no primary silting was noted. Sixty sherds of Plain Bowl pottery (236 g) and 37 flints were spread throughout the fill. The pottery from the pit is comparable to material from the Abingdon causewayed enclosure (Avery 1982). A radiocarbon date of between 3770-3630 cal BC (Poz-14321: 4890±40BP) was provided by some *corylus avellana* charcoal fragments in the same deposit (see Chapter 10).

No cores were retrieved from the pit, and only three chips were present in the sieved residues, so the assemblage is unlikely to represent knapping waste. The composition of the flint assemblage instead suggests that the tools were brought individually to the location as parts of a tool-kit. Three serrated flakes/blades may reflect plant processing activities, for example. No animal bone was recovered, but given the generally poor preservation of Iron Age bone elsewhere, this perhaps reflects poor local preservation rather than a genuine absence.

The upper fill (134) was a friable, mid grey-brown clay silt 0.11 m deep, containing a small amount of charcoal (*c.* 5%) and occasional burnt stones. The upper deposit contained notably fewer finds than the lower fill, yielding only 21 sherds (69 g) of Plain Bowl pottery and five flints, including two chips.

Early Iron Age

Ditches 395, 400 and 534

A small number of features stratigraphically predate the middle Iron Age penannular gullies (174 and 175) and the attached enclosure ditch (80 and 100), but in general there appears to have been little early Iron Age activity in this area.

Shallow ditches 400 and 534 form opposing arcs that appear to represent the first phase of penannular enclosure 174/175 (Fig. 8.3). Ditch 395 appeared to have been fully silted before its terminal was cut by penannular enclosure gullies 174 and 175 and enclosure ditch 80, and ended beneath them, so may also be contemporary. All three may have been associated with the posthole structure later encircled by gullies 174/175, although there is nothing to suggest that the structure has early Iron Age origins.

Curving gully 534 was 3 m long, 0.2 m wide and 0.1 m deep. It lay to the north of structure 532 and was cut by gully 175. It contained a single fill of friable, mid brownish-grey clay silt. A second length of curving of gully (400) lay south of, and was cut by, the entrance to penannular gully 174/175. Gully 400 was 4.6 m long and up to 1.2 m wide. It contained a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt with charcoal flecking to a depth of 0.22 m. The gully contained 92 sherds (666 g) of Iron Age pottery, including one sherd (5 g) of diagnostically early Iron Age pottery. Cattle, horse, sheep/goat and butchered pig remains were recovered from the feature. These two gullies may represent the truncated remains of a penannular gully, predating gullies 174 and 175 which appear to share the same alignment and entrance.

Ditch 395 curved away to the north-west beyond the limits of the excavation. The ditch had a U-shaped profile and was 0.8 m wide and *c.* 0.5 m deep, rising to 0.28 m at the terminal. The ditch contained three fills (Fig. 8.4, Section 215), the lowest of which consisted of natural greensand fragments in a tenacious dark grey-brown silty clay matrix *c.* 0.1 m thick. This deposit was thicker on the eastern (outer) side. The secondary fill was *c.* 0.2 m thick and similar in composition, but contained only 25% greensand fragments. The silting suggests erosion from an external bank. The uppermost fill was a friable, dark brownish-grey clay silt with *c.* 10% greensand fragments. An assemblage of 12 sherds (83 g) of Iron Age pottery came from the ditch, mostly from the terminus, and included one sherd (22 g) of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery and one sherd (3 g) of early Iron Age pottery. The ditch terminal contained an assemblage of animal bone, including cattle; this collection probably represents general refuse rather than a placed terminal deposit. A pit (498) was cut into the upper fills of the ditch terminal, but this feature was largely truncated by penannular gully 175.

Early/middle Iron Age

Pits 315, 349 and 498

Pits 315, 349 and 498 clearly predate enclosure ditch 80/100 but, as they contained few finds, it is uncertain whether they belong to the early or the middle Iron Age.

Pits 315 and 349, which are among the largest examples revealed in the excavations, are both truncated by enclosure ditch 80 (Fig. 8.3). This is unlikely to be coincidental, and suggests that these pits not only remained visible in the middle Iron Age but also continued to have a significance that was worth referencing through the construction of later features. The surviving depressions of the infilled pits may still have been visible when the enclosure was dug, and may have been used to align the ditch.

Pit 315 (Figs 8.3 and 8.4, Section 163) measured 2.3 m in diameter and was circular in plan, with straight sides and a flat base. It measured 1.4 m deep and had nine fills (307-314) of friable clayey silt, ranging in colour from light grey-brown to mid brown-grey and containing some fragments of greensand. The majority of these fills were sterile, but three sherds (23 g) of Iron Age pottery and a few fragments of animal bone were recovered from deposits towards the bottom of the pit; one of the animal bones was charred. The large size of the pit and its deep cylindrical shape would have made it suitable for grain storage. Pit 349 measured 2.1 m in diameter and, with a depth of 0.5 m, was significantly shallower than pit 315. The pit contained two fills (350 and 351), both comprising a light brown silty clay with some greensand fragments. A single sherd (5 g) of Iron Age pottery was recovered from the upper fill (351).

Pit 498, which lay some 2 m to the east of pit 349, was cut into the terminal of ditch 395 and later truncated by enclosure ditch 80/100 and gully 175 (Fig. 8.3). The pit was roughly circular in plan, measuring 0.85 m by 1.15 m, and reached depths of 0.47 m. It contained three fills, the lowest of which (499) was 0.06 m deep and consisted of a tenacious, light yellow-grey silty clay containing 1% greensand fragments. The second fill (500) appeared to have slumped in from the northwestern edge, reaching depths of 0.12 m in places. This deposit was characterised by numerous greensand fragments within a compact, mid grey-brown silty clay. The uppermost and deepest fill (501) consisted of a mid grey-brown clay loam measuring 0.48 m thick, with occasional greensand and charcoal inclusions.

Middle Iron Age

Structure 532

Structure 532 consists of two concentric penannular gullies (174 and 175; Figs 8.3 and 8.4, Section 215) enclosing a number of postholes. The outer gully (175) was the more substantial of the two, measuring 0.6 m wide with an internal diameter of between 12 m and 12.6 m. It had a V-shaped profile and was up to 0.4 m deep. In plan, the gully was sub-circular but the circuit had several straighter lengths, perhaps reflecting the shape of the inner structure, or that the gully was dug between marker posts. The entrance to the outer gully, *c.* 4.5 m wide between the terminals, was oriented south-east. In most of the thirteen interventions, the gully was filled by a single deposit of firm, dark brown silty clay with frequent greensand inclusions. Intervention 143 had some primary slumping underlying the main fill, and the terminals (336 and 402) also contained two fills, an occupation deposit of friable dark brown sandy silt with some charcoal overlying the main fill. A small, machine-rolled object of modern date was recovered from the fill (477) of intervention 478 and was clearly intrusive.

The inner gully 174 was slightly more circular in shape. The gully measured between 0.3 and 0.6 m wide and had an internal diameter of 11.5 m, enclosing an area of approximately 104 m². The internal gully was generally much shallower than the external gully (e.g. Fig. 8.4, Section 215), ranging in depth from 0.1 m to 0.4 m. It had an U-shaped profile and a similar fill of compact, mid to dark greyish-brown silty clay throughout its length. An iron hobnail, probably Roman in date, was recovered from context 490 and represents an intrusive find. Longitudinal sections were cut to look for post-impressions, but none was detected. As in the outer gully, the entrance was

aligned south-east and was approximately 4 m wide. The northern terminal (423) was cut by a larger gully or ditch (533) that continued eastwards beyond the excavated area. This ditch had an uncertain relationship with the outer gully 175, as both were removed by a later grave.

Numerous features that were either postholes or small pits were excavated within the area defined by the gullies, but it proved difficult to define a clear structure (Fig. 8.3). Two substantial sub-circular postholes or pits (516 and 528) lay on the east side directly inside the gap in the penannular gullies, and may have held the posts to an entrance structure. Feature 516 was 0.85 m by 1.05 m and 0.4 m deep, while 528 was 1.15 m by 1 m across and 0.48 m deep. Both features contained three fills of friable, mid grey-brown clay silts with varying proportions of greensand; no visible evidence of the posts themselves had survived. A rough inner circle or oval of pits or postholes could be traced in the interior (368, 378, 380, 382, 398, 411, 434, 444; Fig. 8.5) perhaps indicating that this was an aisled structure. But while many of these features were quite substantial (up to 0.7 m in diameter) they were very shallow, the majority less than 0.2 m deep. If these features do represent a building, it is therefore possible that the plough furrow crossing the centre of the structure has entirely removed some of the structural postholes, and it can be seen from the section drawings that the postholes directly below the plough furrow were generally shallower than their companions (Fig. 8.5). Two small, irregular iron fragments and a small piece of iron plate with two possible rivets came from posthole 337 (context 338), while postholes 380 and 398 contained a small assemblage of Iron Age pottery (four sherds weighing 30 g).

Numerous small postholes were clustered in the south-east quadrant of the area defined by gullies 174 and 175 (Fig. 8.3). The majority of these features were relatively insubstantial, measuring between 0.1 m and 0.2 m wide with a similar depth. It is possible that some of these may be the survivors of an outer wall, but if so, only a small arc of this conjectured wall line has remained.

Pit 486 was located towards the centre of the area defined by gullies 174 and 175 (Fig. 8.3). The pit was circular in plan with near-vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 1.24 m diameter and 0.5 m deep. The primary fill (485) was a friable, dark greenish-grey clay silt, probably deriving from natural silting, which was overlain by a compact, dark grey-green silty clay containing 40% greensand lumps (428); this deposit probably represented an episode of deliberate backfilling and contained eleven fragments (1.864 kg) of burnt and/or unworked stone. A bowl-shaped pit (484), measuring 1.24 m diameter and 0.39 m deep, was cut into the top of pit 486. Pit 484 contained a single fill of redeposited greensand lumps (483), resulting from the rapid backfilling of the cut. A cattle metacarpal from the fill displays pathologies that suggest the animal was used for traction.

Enclosure 80 and recut 100

Enclosure 80 (recut 100) (Figs 8.3 and 8.4, Section 163) ran from just north of penannular enclosure ditch 175 and enclosed an elliptical area some 235 m² in area to the south-west. The enclosure ditch was 0.7 to 0.8 m wide, had steep sides (*c.* 70°) and a concave base, and was around 0.5 m deep. The north-eastern terminal, north of enclosure 175, was square in plan while the south-western terminal was more rounded. The ditch was filled with a series of friable, light to mid greyish-brown clay silts with variable proportions of natural greensand; in some of the sections, the

greensand inclusions were predominantly found on the inner side of the enclosure, perhaps indicating primary slumping from an internal bank.

The ditch was recut (100) on one occasion, the recut lying within the original ditch along most of its length. The recut ditch measured *c.* 0.75 m wide and *c.* 0.4 m deep, with a relatively flat base. It had steep sides in the lower half of the profile, opening to a broad cut at the top, probably the result of weathering affecting the upper sides of the ditch. The filling again provides some indication of an internal bank and natural silting. The upper deposits, particularly those close to south-west terminal, were darker and contained a higher proportion of charcoal and cultural debris. The largest group of middle Iron Age pottery (117 sherds), including fine B2 jars and D1 bowls, came from this feature.

Contained within the area of enclosure ditch 80/100, and probably associated, was a small gully, represented by two lengths of ditch (90 and 110). These lengths of gully were probably intended to form parts of a single barrier, but were cut short by two plough furrows running west-south-west across the site (Fig. 8.3). As the gully does not, however, appear in the small gap between these two furrows, it is likely that there was originally a gap between them on the east side. At the western end, the gully ran into ditch 80, which in section appeared to cut it. The gully ran eastwards from enclosure ditch 100 for *c.* 10 m, in line with the south edge of circular enclosure ditch 174, before turning south-east and terminating adjacent to pit 97 and the terminal of enclosure ditch 100. The gully was *c.* 0.3 m wide and 0.12 m deep. Gully 90/110 contained a single fill of friable, dark greenish-grey, clay silt containing occasional greensand fragments, but no pottery or other finds were recovered from it. It is possible that this gully was earlier than enclosure 80, perhaps terminating just short of pit 315 at its north-west end as it did just short of pit 97 in the south. But it is just as likely that the gully originally ran into ditch 80 and was contemporary with it, filling to its surviving depth with silt before ditch 80 silted to the same depth, and so when both were truncated it appeared to be earlier. Spatially, it is most likely to have formed part of the complex represented by structure 532 and enclosure ditch 80/100, and would not have formed an adequate barrier on its own, even in its original form.

A total of nine pits (41, 94, 97, 149, 180, 258, 292, 295 and 318) and eleven postholes (58, 61, 63, 65, 67, 120, 184, 285, 297, 299 and 301) were identified within the enclosure and around its entrance (Fig. 8.3). Pits 94 and 258 cut the enclosure ditch, along with its recut, while posthole 67 cut gully 90/110. It is possible, therefore, that the features represent more than one phase of activity, and it is uncertain exactly how many related to the use of the enclosure itself. Twelve pieces of copper alloy edge-binding were retrieved from the fill (68) of posthole 67, and are similar in form and appearance to another length of copper alloy strip from posthole 61 nearby (see below).

Pit 41 (Figs 8.3 and 8.4, Section 111) was the largest of this group, being nearly 1.5 m in diameter and 0.73 m deep, and lay just outside the entrance to the enclosure. It was flat-based with near-vertical sides, eroded back at the top, and contained a more complex sequence of seven fills. The lowest fill (73), a tenacious, dark greyish-brown silty clay, represents a period of natural silting. Overlying this deposit was a 0.04 m thick layer of charred material (72) and a 0.04 m thick layer of burnt clay (71), perhaps indicating an episode of *in situ* burning. The charred material included cereal grains, chaff, and a variety of wild plants, as well as charcoal. Eight sherds (16 g) of Iron Age pottery were recovered from this layer.

Overlying these layers was a tenacious, dark yellowish-brown silty clay (69), with charcoal (5%) and numerous fragments of burnt greensand. A few fragments of

animal bone and six sherds (31 g) of Iron Age pottery were recovered along with 15 fragments (2.377 kg) of the upper and lower stones of a Lodsworth Greensand rotary quern, which had been fractured by fire. Despite its fragmentary condition, three edge pieces from the upper stone can be refitted to allow the diameter to be estimated at c. 320 mm when complete (Fig. 9.2). The same deposit contained a large mammal metapodial, possibly from a horse, which had been sawn at one end and shaped and polished along the length. Some charred grains of *vicia* or *luthymus* from this deposit were dated to between 200 BC and 1 AD (Poz-14320: 2080±35BP).

This deposit was overlain by a tenacious, dark brown clay silt with a high proportion of charcoal (10%) and some greensand (49), which, like layer 69 above, was probably dumped in the pit. The deposit included several cattle bones and a horse pelvis. Some of the bones, including the horse bone, had been butchered; others had been burnt. Three sherds (12 g) of Iron Age pottery and one sherd (4 g) of residual late Bronze Age pottery were recorded from the fill. Charred plant remains were also recovered, including some cereal grain and chaff. A thick deposit of compact, dark grey-brown clay silt from slow natural silting (43) overlay deposit 49. This fill produced the largest quantity of Iron Age pottery from the pit, a total of sixteen pieces (54 g); one sherd (6 g) of late Bronze Age pottery was also present. The highest fill (42) in the pit was a friable, dark grey-brown clay silt with a high proportion of redeposited natural greensand, probably resulting from deliberate backfilling. In general, the pottery and animal bone came from the middle fills (43, 49, 69 and 72), and might suggest that the upper fill was dumped in order to cap the disused pit.

The majority of the pits (97, 94, 149, 180, 292 and 318) were of similar diameter (between 1.21 m and 1.64 m), although they ranged from 0.19 m to 0.64 m deep; these pits were significantly smaller than the earlier pits 315 and 349 that were cut by enclosure ditch 100.

Pits 97, 180, 292 and 318 had between one and three fills and contained only a few fragments of animal bone and (except for pit 318) some sherds of middle Iron Age pottery. Pit 318 however contained a large fragment (5 kg) of a Culham Greensand saddle quern (sf. 41) within its upper fill (316). Pit 292 contained a single sherd (5 g) of possibly middle Bronze Age pottery, along with five sherds (15 g) of middle Iron Age pottery. Nearly 70 fragments of animal bone were recovered from pit 97, including cattle and sheep/goat bones, but no burnt or butchered fragments. Most of these pits were probably filled over a short period of time, distinguishing them from pits 94 and 149, which contain more fills suggesting a longer and perhaps more varied use.

Pit 94 cut and therefore post-dates enclosure 80/100. The pit was 1.2 m in diameter and 0.6 m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a sequence of five fills, which were of similar depth ranging from 0.11 m to 0.19 m deep. The lowest fill (95) was a compact, dark greenish-brown silty clay with a high proportion of greensand fragments (40%), probably originating from side collapse. This deposit was overlain by a compact, dark yellow-brown silty clay (96), with 20% greensand fragments. The deposit also contained eight (19 g) Iron Age pottery sherds and several animal bone fragments. Overlying layer 96 was a deposit of tenacious, dark green-brown clay silt (75) that had probably accumulated from slow erosion into the pit, and contained three sherds (7 g) of early Iron Age pottery with eleven sherds (109 g) of middle Iron Age pottery. This deposit was overlain by two further silt layers (76 and 77) containing greensand fragments and charcoal flecking. Finds included seven sherds (46 g) of Iron Age pottery and one sherd (15 g) of middle Iron Age pottery. A

worked bone toggle was recovered from context 76, the penultimate fill (see Chapter 9). These upper fills also produced a large assemblage of 55 fragments of animal bone, including horse, sheep/goat and bird. The two upper fills, which contain the majority of finds, appear to represent the accumulation of occupational debris and silt in the top of a half-filled pit.

Pit 149 (Fig. 8.4, Section 134) was located near the centre of enclosure 100. The pit was oval-shaped with near-vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 1.64 m in diameter and 0.54 m deep. The frontal bone of an adult male (skeleton 319) lay directly on the base of the pit in the centre, and was surrounded and covered by the lowest pit fill (176), a friable, dark yellowish-green clay silt with degraded greensand fragments. The primary fill also contained significant deposits of animal bone, including horse and fish bone, along with a few sherds of pottery. A vole femur was hand collected from the same fill, along with additional vole elements and an eel vertebra from the sieved residues. Radiocarbon determinations of between 250-410 cal AD (Poz-14322: 1715±30BP) came from one grain of *hordeum sp.* and two grains of indeterminate cereal in pit 149 (deposit 176).

This deposit was overlain by a friable, dark yellow-brown clay silt (148) containing further pottery and animal bone, which was apparently tipped in from the south-western edge. The pit was subsequently backfilled and compacted with redeposited greensand (147), which contained worked section of sheep/goat metatarsal. The bone, which was burnt and very highly polished, had been thinned in two places. The pottery assemblage from this deposit included 13 sherds of early Iron Age pottery and two residual sherds (8 g) of middle Bronze Age 'bucket urn' type pottery, which consisted of thick, densely flint-tempered body sherds. Most of the ceramic assemblage from the pit dates to the middle Iron Age, however, and consists of 44 sherds (274 g). These were recovered from the primary fill (176) and from two secondary fills tipped in from the southwestern edge (147 and 148). The late radiocarbon date may have been obtained from intrusive charred plants remains, as it is unlikely that the assemblage of middle Iron Age pottery, which includes several large sherds, could all be residual and no Roman pottery was recovered from the pit.

The remaining hollow was partially filled with a friable, dark brown-black clay silt with distinct tip-lines from its gradual accumulation (145), before a final deposit of friable, dark brownish-grey clay silt and charcoal (144) was deposited. Both fills contained fragments of animal bone and sherds of pottery, while a fragment of a small iron blade (SF 42) was recovered from the upper fill (144). The blade fragment is slim, straight and double-edged, and cannot be precisely paralleled by known examples of Iron Age and Romano-British date. The pit was surrounded by three postholes (285, 299 and 301), which may have formed part of an associated structure.

Pits 258 and 295 were slightly smaller than the other pits in the general area. Pit 258 was oval, measuring 0.9 m by 0.7 m and 0.25 m deep. The pit cut through the fill of enclosure recut 100, and was clearly late in the sequence of activity. It contained a single deposit of friable, dark grey-brown silty clay (259) that was exceptionally rich in charcoal and contained seven sherds (26 g) of Iron Age pottery. Pit 295 measured 0.7 m diameter and was 0.35 m deep. The pit again contained a single fill (296), a friable, mid grey-brown clay silt with occasional greensand fragments, but no pottery. It has been dated by its stratigraphic position below middle Iron Age pit 297, but could still be earlier. Pit 94 also cut the recut and fills of enclosure 100. Pit 94 measured 1.21 m diameter and was 0.68 m deep. The pit, which contained five deposits, appears to have filled up with a mixture of material resulting

from slow natural silting interspersed with deliberate deposits that included pottery and bone. The primary fill, a dark green-brown silty clay 0.15 m deep, appeared to have formed fairly rapidly after the initial cut. It was overlain by a series of deposits, generally consisting of grey-, green- or yellow-brown silty clays reaching depths of up to 0.19 m. The pottery assemblage comprised 30 sherds (196 g), and mostly consisted of diagnostic middle Iron Age pottery (12 sherds weighing 124 g) and undifferentiated Iron Age pottery (15 sherds weighing 65 g).

Three postholes (63, 58 and 61) were positioned at 4 m intervals, forming a short row on an approximately east-west alignment, subdividing the northern area of the enclosure formed by gully 90/110. Posthole 61 (context 62) contained a piece of copper alloy strip, which had been rounded at one end and folded; similar fragments were recovered from posthole 67, some 2 m to the north of posthole 61. As posthole 67 cut gully 90/110, it is possible that these postholes represents a late division of the area within enclosure 100.

Penannular gully 60 and recut 70

A second penannular gully was partially revealed at the south edge of the Visitors' Car Park (Fig. 8.7). The gully showed two distinct phases of construction. The first cut (60) had largely been truncated by its recut (70), but measured in excess of 0.65 m wide and 0.2 m deep with an internal diameter in the region of 10.4 m. It had a flat base with gently sloping sides and contained a single fill of friable greyish-brown clay silt with some greensand fragments, probably gradual silting. The gully had an entrance to the east and a small (1 m wide) gap to the north. The recut (70) respected the eastern entrance, but continued across the northern opening. Recut 70 had a V-shaped profile, measuring up to 1.1 m wide and 0.46 m deep with an internal diameter of c. 11.1 m. Most excavated sections contained only one fill, a friable dark grey-brown silty clay with c. 25% greensand fragments. Excavation of the terminal (slots 262 and 50), however, revealed a sequence of three fills. The lower fills were similar to those elsewhere in the ditch, but also contained some charcoal. The uppermost layer was filled with greensand lumps that were probably deliberately dumped. The pottery assemblage comprised 181 sherds (1610 g) of pottery, including 85 sherds of diagnostically Middle Iron Age pottery came from the fills of the recut, while Iron Age pottery was found in all except two of the interventions. The terminals produced the largest quantity, a total of 103 sherds weighing 895 g.

Several features appeared to be associated with this enclosure (Fig. 8.7). Posthole 171 cut the fill of ditch 60, lying just beyond the outer edge of gully 70. Three postholes (44, 128 and 234) and a stakehole (47) were recorded within the ring gullies, but too little of the interior of the enclosure was excavated to discern a structure. Only one of the postholes (44) contained pottery, a total of 18 Iron Age sherds weighing 75 g. Pit 53 lay adjacent to the eastern terminals of gullies 60/70. This pit measured 1.5 m in diameter, was 1.3 m deep and had three fills. The primary fill (54/55) resulted from the natural erosion of sand and silt from the sides of the pit and produced an assemblage of four sherds (51 g) of early/middle and middle Iron Age pottery. The secondary fill (56), a compact yellowish-brown clay silt with a high proportion of greensand, may have resulted from further erosion or from deliberate backfilling. The uppermost surviving fill (57), a compact, mid grey-brown clay silt, contained a few pieces of greensand and 10 sizeable sherds (171 g) of middle Iron Age pottery; this fill may also represent deliberate backfilling of the feature.

Enclosure 610/871

Enclosure 871 (876, 879 and 895) lay to the east of ring gully 60/70 and, as it extends into the area of the Boiler House and New Office Building (as enclosure 610, [see Fig. 8.7](#)), will be described fully in that section.

Roman

Grave 333

Grave 333 was aligned northeast-southwest, and cut through the terminals of gully 175 (part of roundhouse 532) and gully 533 ([Figs 8.3 and 8.6](#)). The grave was sub-rectangular in shape, measuring 2.05 m by 0.75 m, with vertical sides surviving to a maximum depth of 0.2 m. The skeleton (320) lay on its left side with the skull to the north-east, facing south-east. The bones were poorly preserved, but could be identified as belonging to an adult, probably female. No grave goods were found and no evidence of a coffin was recorded. The backfill of the grave, a compact, dark grey-brown clay silt, contained middle Iron Age pottery, although it is likely that this is residual and derives from the truncation of the underlying middle Iron Age features. A total of 44 fragments of animal bone, including cattle, horse, pig and three unidentified calcined fragments, were recovered from the fill. The poor condition of the animal bone suggests that it had been redeposited in the grave fill from disturbed middle Iron Age features. Stratigraphically, the burial post-dates the middle Iron Age gullies surrounding structure 532, but is otherwise undated; the form of the grave and the burial rite suggest a Roman (or just possibly a Saxon) date.

Ditch 177

On the western edge of the excavated area, part of a ditch running approximately north-east was exposed ([Fig. 8.3](#)). This line followed that of Roman ditch 16090, found crossing Ponds 1-3, and was probably a continuation of the same ([see Fig. 8.2](#)). The ditch was not excavated, but a concentrated group of animal bones was recovered from the surface of the uppermost fill. This group included a crow radius, along with a further 54 fragments of large mammal bone. A small, spherical ball of marcasite (20 g) and two burnt fragments of quartzite (124 g) were recovered from the fill (176).

Unphased

A large tree-throw hole (250) lay some 4 m to the south of gully 80/100 ([Fig. 8.3](#)). This irregular feature measured 2.2 m in diameter and 0.6 m deep, and contained two fills. The lower fill (249) was a firm, mid grey-brown clay silt tipping in from the north-east; the upper fill (249) was similar but was up to 0.5 m deep in places. No datable finds were recovered.

Boiler House and New Office Building

The excavations undertaken in advance of the construction of the new Boiler House and New Office Building lay south-east of the Visitors' Car Park, on the site of the

Victorian farmhouse that formerly occupied the southern part of Hill Farm (Fig. 8.2). The excavations comprised the approximately square area of the Office Building, and a rectangular extension to the west where the Boiler House and accompanying services would be constructed. The total area covered *c.* 509 m² (Fig. 8.7). The topsoil (31) and subsoil (32) were removed by machine to reveal archaeological features cutting into the Upper Greensand natural. In the northern part of the site, where previous construction had truncated the archaeological features, the overburden was 0.65 m deep. To the south, in the former garden area, the topsoil and subsoil together reached depths of 0.5 m. The geological surface was cut by a few shallow east-west aligned plough furrows and scars.

Most of the archaeological features in this area date to the middle Iron Age. Features include pits and postholes (some of which formed four-post structures), a penannular gully with two phases of ditch, and an enclosure ditch that extended into the Visitors' Car Park. A Roman ditch, aligned east-west, was clipped by the southern limit of excavation and may represent the western continuation of a ditch seen during geophysical surveys and observed in the Staff Car Park to the east (see Figs 8.1 and 8.2).

The sequence of development in this area is not entirely clear due to limited stratigraphic relationships, small artefact assemblages and the largely undifferentiated ceramic types of the middle Iron Age. The surviving stratigraphic evidence demonstrates that pit 742 predates the construction of penannular gullies 690 and 700, but no relationships are available for the other pits. Likewise, four-post structure 546 must predate or post-date gullies 690 and 700, but no relationship was present to confirm the sequence. Spatially, however, the postholes, four-post structures and two small clusters of pits to the east and west of the four-post structures, could have coexisted prior to the construction of gullies 690 and 700.

Early Iron Age

Evidence for activity in the early Iron Age was limited to two pits (596 and 742) and two postholes (636 and 666). These features formed a disparate collection. Pit 596 was situated on the western edge of the site, adjacent to ditch 620 (Fig. 8.7). It contained an assemblage of early Iron Age pottery and may belong to a phase of occupation predating the later construction of the ring gullies and four-post structures. The pit, which was circular in plan with vertical sides and a flat base, measured 1.45 m diameter and 0.45 m deep. It contained three fills all probably resulting from deliberate backfilling. The lowest deposit (595) was a friable dark greyish-brown clay silt containing numerous (*c.* 20%) greensand lumps. The second and third fills (594 and 593) were similar in character, but the upper layers contained progressively fewer greensand lumps. A single, carnivore-gnawed medium mammal long bone fragment was recovered from the pit.

Pit 742 (Figs 8.7 and 8.8, Section 283) lay some 20 m to the east of pit 596, and was truncated by middle Iron Age gullies 690 and 700. It was a circular, vertical-sided and flat-based pit measuring 2.4 m diameter and 0.7 m deep. The pit contained a complex series of seven fills. The lower deposits appeared to result from natural silting (757, 762, 756, and 755), which was followed by an episode of deliberate backfilling with friable, mid greyish-brown clay silts containing varying proportions of greensand fragments (752, 753 and 754). A possible smoother of Lower Calcareous Grit (827 g) was recovered from the pit, along with a burnt fragment of chalky

Greensand. One residual untempered sherd (3 g) from the pit was decorated with a single whipped cord impression, and may be a fragment of middle Neolithic Peterborough Ware. The remaining assemblage, a total of 11 sherds (96 g) of Iron Age pottery, including a large early Iron Age sherd (37 g). The animal bone assemblage includes cattle and pig remains, several of which display butchery marks, probably the remains of a typical early Iron Age diet. All the cattle bones in the pit may have come from the same individual.

Two isolated postholes (636 and 666), neither with any clear relationship to existing features, were excavated in the north-eastern and southern areas of the site respectively (Fig. 8.7). These features each contained one large sherd of diagnostically early Iron Age pottery and may have belonged to ephemeral structures of this date. The pottery may, however, be residual from early Iron Age activity elsewhere on site.

Early/middle Iron Age

A number of features could not be dated within the Iron Age. These comprise ditch 620, four pits (575, 605, 698 and 803) and at least seven postholes (608, 634, 638, 640, 642, 671 and 673). Ditch 620 lay on the south-west of the excavation area, and ran for c. 3.25 m on an approximately north-east alignment before terminating (Fig. 8.7); no continuation of this ditch was observed in the service trench dug some 4 m to the west. The gully had an open U-shaped profile, 1.18 m wide and 0.42 m deep. It had three fills. A thin 0.14 m layer of compact greensand lumps in a light greyish-green clay silt can be interpreted as primary silting (581). Overlying this was a dump of daub and stone without charcoal; the daub derives from the interior of a curved structure (see Chapter 9 Prehistoric Fired Clay). A cattle right tibia fragment was recovered from the ditch, along with a fragment of horse scapula. The cattle bone had been broken while fresh, presumably to extract the marrow. In addition, 42 fragments (3.007 kg) of burnt and/or unworked stone were recovered from the uppermost fill (578). The fills contained 16 sherds (93 g) of undifferentiated Iron Age pottery, all from the terminal (580).

The pits can be divided into two distinct groups, divided spatially by the central area of four-post structures. Pits 575 and 605 were located on the western side (Fig. 8.7). Pit 575 was c. 1.4 m diameter, but only 0.22 m deep, and contained two fills (576 and 577) similar dark grey silty clays with a high proportion of charcoal; the upper fill (577) also contained some small fragments of greensand. Pit 605 was c. 1.6 m diameter by 0.78 m deep, and was filled with a layer of redeposited natural greensand (606) overlain by a compact, dark greyish-brown silty clay with occasional greensand fragments and charcoal flecks. Fourteen sherds (86 g) of Iron Age pottery several fragments of animal bone were also recovered from the feature. The animal bone assemblage includes a sheep/ goat metatarsal fragment and other medium and large mammal bones.

Pits 698 and 803 were found on the eastern side of the four-post structures (Fig. 8.7). Pit 698 measured 1.18 m by 0.9 m. It was oval in plan, with vertical sides and a flat base, and contained a single friable, dark brown sandy silt fill to a depth of 0.28 m. Five sherds (18 g) of Iron Age pottery and a cattle tooth were recovered from the fill. Pit 803 was 1 m wide and exceeded 1.2 m in length. The pit was 0.12 m deep and contained a single fill of friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt with occasional

greensand. No pottery was recovered from the feature, but its location in an area of similar pits implies an Iron Age date.

The postholes formed a relatively tight cluster in the central area of the site and it is possible that they originate from the same structure or structures. Postholes 608, 638 and 640, for example, may represent three corners of a four-post structure that surrounded pit 605 (Fig. 8.7). There may have been a line of four or five running east-south-east, including postholes 673, 671, either 732 or 726, 642 and possibly 597.

Middle Iron Age

Four-post structures 546, 547, 548, 549 and other postholes

Several structures (546-549; Fig. 8.7) were identified during excavation that may be loosely termed 'four-post structures', although strictly speaking most consisted of four main corner posts with a number of subsidiary posts in between.

Structure 546 measured 2.5 m by 2.5 m and comprised four postholes (695, 697, 795 and 797) with vertical sides and flat bases measuring between 0.2 m and 0.36 m in diameter and 0.11 m and 0.24 m in depth. The postholes were all filled with a compact, mid greyish-brown silty clay; no post-packing material or post-pipes were identified. The fill of posthole 695 contained a butchered distal cattle humerus weighing 121 g, which may have been used as packing material for the post.

Structure 547 consisted of four substantial postholes (644, 646, 701 and 737) in a rectangular arrangement measuring 4 m by 3.5 m; a multi-phase posthole on the west (732, 726 and 722) and a small pit (823) in the centre of this arrangement may have been associated. The postholes were all ovoid in plan, elongated along their east-west axis. The dimensions of the features varied from 0.67 m to 1.2 m in length, and from 0.5 m to 0.7 m in width. The depths were more consistent, ranging from 0.22 m to 0.3 m. The postholes all contained a single fill of compact, dark greyish-brown silty clay with frequent greensand inclusions; no post-pipes were observed. A succession of postholes on the western side, comprising a shallow posthole 732 cut by an oval pit or posthole 734, cut first by 726 and then by 722, is likely to have been related to the structure in one or more phases. Postholes 732 and 726 had had the posts removed and had been backfilled, but posthole 722 had a central post-pipe measuring 0.1 m across at the base and 0.34 m across at the top. The post was packed with a mid yellow-brown clay silt containing greensand lumps and 4 % gravel.

Structure 548 consisted of four postholes (599, 657, 660 and 668) arranged in a rectangle measuring 3 m by 2.75 m. The southern pair of postholes (599 and 657) measured between 0.56 and 0.58 m in diameter and between 0.18 m and 0.28 m deep. Both features were filled with a friable, mid greyish-brown silty clay. Postholes 660 and 668 to the north were significantly larger, measuring 0.7 m and 0.68 m diameter by 0.3 m and 0.28 m deep respectively. Postholes 660 and 668 also contained central post-pipes, which measured between 0.28 m and 0.36 m. The post-pipe fills (662 and 670) were friable, dark greyish-brown silty clays. The surrounding packing material (661 and 669) was a tenacious, mid greyish-yellow sandy clay containing a number of greensand fragments. Two intercutting postholes (686 and 688) were positioned between postholes 657 and 668 on the eastern side; these features probably belonged to same structure. Posthole 686 cut, and therefore replaced, posthole 688. These additional postholes measured between 0.5 m and 0.35 m in diameter, with depths of

between 0.8 m and 0.1 m; both were filled with tenacious, mid greyish-yellow sandy clay. The southern edge of the structure lay close to an area of modern disturbance and bioturbation (649, 651, 655 and 659).

Structure 549 consisted of four substantial posts (677, 710, 766 and 691) arranged in a rectangle measuring 3 m by 2.5 m. The western pair of postholes (677 and 710) measured *c.* 1.2 m by 0.4 m with a depth of 0.3 m and were ovoid in plan, elongated along the east-west axis. Both contained post-pipes towards their western edges, measuring 0.36 m and 0.31 m in diameter respectively. The post-pipes (675 and 708) contained a friable dark greenish-brown clay silt that was largely free from inclusions. The post-packing material (676 and 709) consisted of redeposited greensand fragments. The eastern pair of postholes (691 and 766) were sub-circular in plan. Posthole 691 measured 0.84 m by 0.65 m and had a depth of 0.25 m. It contained two fills and a post-pipe on its eastern side (693), measuring 0.44 m in diameter and filled with a friable, dark yellow-brown clay silt with charcoal flecks and greensand fragments. The post-pipe was surrounded by packing material (692), a tenacious, mid yellow-brown sandy clay with a higher proportion of greensand fragments. Posthole 766 was unusually large, measuring 1.12 m diameter and 0.44 m deep. It contained three fills, all of which were friable deposits of redeposited greensand tipping in from the northern edge and probably represented packing for a post. No post-pipe was observed in posthole 766, but it is likely to have been in the eastern side of the cut (as in posthole 691) and therefore may have been missed in the section.

Three supplementary postholes (707, 771 and 789) were located centrally between the main postholes on the western, northern and eastern sides of the structure. The postholes varied between 0.32 m and 0.52 m in diameter, and were between 0.18 m and 0.29 m deep. Posthole 707 contained a 0.15 m diameter post-pipe, which was filled with a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt (705) and surrounded by post packing (706) consisting of a mid greenish-grey friable deposit of greensand lumps. Posthole 771 contained a single fill of friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt (770), while posthole 789 contained a similar upper fill (788) overlying a thin primary fill of redeposited greensand (787).

To the north of structure 549, postholes 713, 716, 783 and 786 may have represented a fifth four-post structure that continued beyond the northern limit of the excavation area (Fig. 8.7). The dimensions and arrangement of postholes 716 and 783 compared closely to those of other postholes belonging to four-post structures on site. The postholes were circular in plan, measuring 0.54 m in diameter, and were spaced 2.75 m apart; their depth ranged from 0.18 m to 0.26 m. Posthole 783 was filled with a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt (782), which covered a thin primary layer of redeposited greensand (785). A single redeposited chert blade was recovered from the fill of this feature. Posthole 716 contained a single fill of compact greensand in a clay silt matrix (715). Postholes 716 and 783 were both partially truncated by postholes 713 and 786 respectively, which were cut slightly to the south. Posthole 713 was 0.36 m in diameter and 0.16 m deep. It contained two fills: a thin primary deposit of greensand (712), which was overlain by a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt (711). This uppermost deposit contained part of a large flint hammerstone (1.26 kg) that had been used as packing material. Posthole 783 was 0.54 m in diameter and 0.26 m deep; it was filled by a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt (782).

A number of isolated postholes were also present in this area, most of which lay close to the edge of the excavation area and may therefore have belonged to structures beyond the limits of the excavation (Fig. 8.7). Seven postholes within ring

gullies 690/700 (819, 791, 793, 799, 813, 815 and 817) may have been elements of a structure or multiple structures within this area, but did not form an obvious shape. Postholes 791, 815 and 817, for instance, may have belonged to another four-post structure, with the fourth posthole truncated by pit 759. Only one of the postholes (793) contained any Iron Age pottery, a total of four sherds or crumbs weighing 1 g.

Pits 597, 621, 625 and 808

Four pits were probably middle Iron Age in date. Pits 597, 621 and 625 were located on the western side of the four-post structures and formed a broadly linear arrangement following the alignment of ditch 620 (Fig. 8.7). These pits were essentially of the same character and profile, with sub-circular outlines, vertical sides and flat bases. Pit 808 was located some 10 m to the east, on the other side of the four-post structures, and had an oval-shape. It was significantly larger than the other pits.

Pit 621 (Fig. 8.7, Section 248) was oval in plan, measuring 1.3 m by 1 m with a depth of 0.48 m. It contained three fills, the lowest of which (622) was a moderately compact, dark grey clay silt with charcoal and greensand inclusions. Nine sherds of middle Iron Age pottery (44 g) were recovered from this deposit. The secondary fill (623), a compact mid grey clay silt with occasional charcoal flecking and some greensand, was deposited in the pit from the south-west. Three sherds (18 g) of middle Iron Age pottery came from this layer. The upper deposit (624) was similar to the secondary fill, but slightly darker and with a higher proportion of greensand. Pit 625 (Fig. 8.7, Section 248) was immediately adjacent to pit 621 and measured 0.68 m in diameter. It contained three fills with a total depth of 0.64 m. The primary fill (626) was thin layer of friable, dark black-grey silt rich including charcoal and small fragments of burnt bone (626). Above this deposit lay a moderately compact, mid brown silty clay with frequent greensand inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks (627). This deposit was probably deliberately backfilled into the feature. This was overlain by a deposit of pottery sherds representing approximately half of one middle Iron Age jar (Chapter 9 Fig. 6.4 No. 78), and this was followed by 0.4 m of compact, dark greyish-brown silty clay with some charcoal and greensand (628).

Pit 808 lay east of the four-post structures and immediately north of pit 742. It was oval, measuring 2.4 m by 1.16 m, had vertical sides and a flat base, but was only 0.26 m deep. The pit was filled with a series of dumps of redeposited greensand and clay silt tipped from the north-west side of the pit (807, 806 and 805). A thin layer of charcoal (809) overlay deposit 805. The upper fill 804 again represented deliberate backfilling, this time a friable, dark greyish-brown clay silt with only occasional greensand fragments.

Penannular gully 690/700

Gully 690/700 cut, and therefore post-dates, pit 742 (Figs 8.6 and 8.7, Section 283). The earlier gully (690) described a semicircle *c.* 13 m in diameter. It was 0.4 m wide and 0.35 m deep with steep sides and a profile that varied from U- to V-shaped. The feature contained a friable to compact, mid greyish-brown clay silt with occasional greensand? fragments and charcoal flecks; this fill probably derived from natural silting. Gully 690 was unbroken, but was later recut on the inner side by gully 700, which had a 2.5 m wide opening (presumably an entrance) on the north-west side. Gully 700 was slightly smaller in diameter (12.1 m) than gully 690. It had a broad,

open U-shaped profile and was more substantial than the original gully, being between 0.75 m and 1 m wide and from 0.3 m to 0.6 m deep. The fills in gully 700 were irregular in their distribution what does this mean?, and the total number of deposits per intervention varied between two and six. These may be broadly characterised as friable, mid brownish-grey clay silts with varying proportions of fine greensand and occasional charcoal flecking; most had probably accumulated gradually through natural erosion and silting. A roughly triangular block of iron came from intervention 828 (context 829).

Nine postholes and two pits were encircled by the penannular gullies (Fig. 8.6), but it was unclear how many were contemporary. Postholes 795 and 797 may be discounted, as these formed part of a four-post structure 546 that straddled the gully on two sides (see above); these features must therefore either predate or post-date the gully. Some of the other postholes within the gully interior may have belonged to additional four-post structures: postholes 791, 793, 813 and 815, for example, form a convenient sub-rectangular group. Or perhaps 791, 815 and 817 represent part of a four-post structure, the fourth post having been truncated by pit 759. Postholes 799 and 819 could be the north side of another. Alternatively some may have formed lines: 799, 791 and 813, for instance, or 819, 791 and 793.

Two pits lay within the ring gullies, at a distance of around 4 m from each other (Fig. 8.7). Pit 759 was circular with vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 0.9 m in diameter and 0.15 m deep. The pit contained a single fill (758) of friable, mid greyish-brown clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small greensand fragments; a single piece of animal bone was recovered from the fill.

Pit 769 was of similar form and size, measuring 1 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep. This feature contained two fills. The primary fill was a friable, dark brownish-black clay silt with charcoal flecking (761). The deposit contained numerous middle Iron Age pottery sherds, animal bones, a few pieces of slag and nine fragments (1.727 g) of a Culham Greensand saddle quern. The upper fill (760) was a compact, mid brownish-grey clay silt with occasional charcoal flecking. Several pieces of pottery and a large rubber (3.5 kg) of Culham greensand (Fig. 9.3 No. 2) were recovered from this deposit. This pit produced a total of 689 fragments (1.066 kg) of animal bone, nearly 40% of the total assemblage from Hill Farm. The collection includes cattle, horse, sheep and sheep/goat, as well as small mammal bones (possibly rabbit). Only two fragments of bone had been butchered; some had been burnt.

Enclosure 610/871

Enclosure 610 (Figs 8.6 and 8.7, Section 237; 582 and 604) represents a continuation of enclosure 871 (876, 879 and 895) that was excavated in the southern tip of the Visitors' Car Park and exposed in plan during the watching brief (12101). Its precise form is unclear, as only small elements of the ditch were revealed in either the Visitors' Car Park or the New Office Building sites. The enclosure appears to have been of sub-rectangular form, measuring c. 14 m from east to west; the north-south dimension is uncertain, but was in excess of 12 m. The ditch reached 2 m wide in places and was up to 1 m deep, although its dimensions varied considerably along its length. It was filled by one or more friable, mid brown to mid greyish-brown clay silts with varying proportions of gravel that resulted from natural silting. Most cuts across the ditch contained one or two fills, though cuts 895 and 582 contained five and eight fills respectively.

Within the New Office excavation area a small assemblage of Iron Age pottery (42 sherds weighing 281 g) was recovered from the ditch fills, along with seven sherds (21 g) of early Iron Age pottery. Elsewhere along the length of the ditch, intervention 895 contained a substantial assemblage of diagnostically middle Iron Age pottery, suggesting that the ditch post-dates the evidence for earlier Iron Age activity on the site and is more likely to belong to the middle Iron Age phase of occupation. Four irregular, flat iron fragments were recovered from the same intervention (context 890) and were probably contemporary with the fill. The presence of the distinctively early Iron Age sherds might be explained by the proximity of the ditch to pit 596, which contained a sizeable assemblage of early Iron Age pottery and may be the source of their residual presence in ditch 610/871. A quantity of small mammal (rabbit-sized) bones came from the same ditch.

In the drainage area between the main excavations, enclosure 610/871 cut pits 882 and 899 (Fig. 8.7). Pit 882 had vertical sides and a flat base and measured 2.6 m or more in diameter with a depth of 1.3 m. The pit was filled with a sequence of natural silts, interspersed with episodes of backfilling that produced 24 sherds (79 g) of Iron Age pottery and a single middle Bronze Age sherd (5 g). One sherd (17 g) of diagnostically early Iron Age pottery indicates a probable early Iron Age origin for the pit, which was the only pit from the site to produce any burnt animal bone. These bones include cattle remains, some of which display butchery marks, and a dump of burnt sheep/goat bones that may have been discarded in a fire prior to deposition.

Less than 2 m to the south lay pit 899 (Fig. 8.7). This feature had a flat base and steep sides, measuring 0.6 m diameter and 0.3 m deep. The fills of pit 899 were relatively sterile silts; no pottery or other dating evidence was recovered.

In the Office and Boiler House excavations, the upper fill of enclosure 610/871 was cut by two postholes (Figs 8.7 and 8.8, Section 237) that appear to have followed the alignment of the ditch. Posthole 584 measured 0.74 m in diameter and 0.24 m deep, while posthole 602 measured 0.5 m diameter and 0.2 m deep; both postholes were filled with sterile, friable dark grey-brown clay silts.

Penannular gully 12066

The terminal of 617 (Figs 8.6 and 8.7, Section 242; 617) was exposed in the north-west corner of the Boiler House and New Office excavation area. Subsequently an arc of curving gully (12066) was located in an area of drainage works to the north of the site. The gully arc suggested a penannular enclosure *c.* 8 m in diameter, and there was clearly an entrance on the south-east as the gully did not continue into the New Office excavation area. Gully 617 lay on this circle, and may plausibly be interpreted as the opposing entrance terminal (617). The gully measured *c.* 0.6 m wide and *c.* 0.3 m deep and contained two fills. The primary fill was a tenacious mid greyish-yellow sandy clay, that appeared to have eroded in from the southern edge. The upper fill was a friable, dark-brown silty clay with occasional limestone and charcoal inclusions. The upper fill in the terminal 617 (619) contained several large refitting sherds representing half of a middle Iron Age jar (Chapter 9 Fig. 6.4 No. 79); a few early/middle Iron Age sherds were also found. In the drainage works area, gully 12066 was cut by a shallow north-south oriented gully (12064) and a small, undated pit 12055 measuring 0.5 m in diameter.

Roman

Ditch 800

Ditch 800 followed an east-west alignment along the southern edge of the excavation area, cutting middle Iron Age ring gully 700 (Fig. 8.7). Ditch 800 had a V-shaped profile, measured 1.2 m wide and 0.4 m deep. It contained a compact mid to dark greyish-brown silty clay with occasional greensand fragments and charcoal flecking (801). The fill contained small quantities of animal bone and pottery, including one first or second century AD sherd. The animal bone assemblage included cattle, horse, sheep, goat, dog, large mammal and medium mammal fragments. An equid tibia was recovered from the ditch, and was sufficiently complete to estimate a withers height of just under 14 hands (1.31 m) (following May 1985; see animal bone report). The same feature also produced a large dog humerus, which may come from an animal standing 0.51 m tall.

Some 25 m west of the excavation area, a broad ditch (12097) was found crossing a pipe-trench on a similar alignment to ditch 800 and may have been a continuation of the same feature (Fig. 8.12). Ditch 800 was also broadly aligned with ditch 20 in the Staff Car Park (Fig. 8.11), which contained pottery of similar date. These ditches may have formed part of an enclosure, visible on the geophysical plot, adjacent to the trackway. Roman building materials were later recovered from the enclosed area, and a resistivity survey indicated the survival of possible walls.

Ponds

Three irregularly-shaped ponds were excavated to the west of Hill Farm (Figs 8.2 8.9). The ponds were orientated along a north-south axis, with Pond 1 at the southern end of the site, Pond 2 at the centre, and Pond 3 to the north. The ponds varied in size from approximately 100 m² to 170 m² (total area 392 m²). Stripping of the topsoil was continually monitored to the level of the archaeology.

The topsoil (16000) was a friable mid greyish-brown silty clay that had been ploughed until recent times. A single abraded fragment of Roman tegula was recovered from this deposit. In places, the topsoil was underlain by a subsoil (16001); the archaeology lay directly beneath the subsoil.

The archaeology dates to the pre-Roman, Roman and Medieval periods, with two possible modern features. A single curved gully 16083 was undated, but was cut by a Roman ditch. A pit (16066) and two possible ditches (16054 and 16057) were exposed in Pond 2. A substantial boundary ditch (group 16090), dating to the Roman period, was exposed crossing all three ponds. Additional undated features, possibly associated with the Roman archaeology, included ditch 16078 and five pits/postholes (16060, 16063, 16004, 16005 and 16087). Medieval or post-medieval furrows orientated southwest-northeast were observed in each of the three ponds, and those present in Pond 3 were also traced across the Visitors' Car Park.

Iron Age

In the south of the area covered by Pond 1, a shallow gully (16003) was partially exposed (Fig. 8.9). The feature was curvilinear in plan, perhaps representing the edge of a circular gully. The gully was filled with a friable, dark grey sandy clay (16082)

containing a high proportion of chalk inclusions (25%). The shallow gully was cut by a large ditch (16090), probably of Roman date (see below). No dating evidence was found in feature 16003, but two early/middle Iron Age pottery fragments recovered from the Roman boundary ditch at the intersection with 16003 may derive from this gully. An Iron Age date is therefore considered likely for this feature.

Roman

A large boundary ditch (16090) could be traced on a north-south trajectory across all three ponds (Fig. 8.9). The ditch varied from 2.3 m to 1.35 m in width, and from 0.74 m to 0.5 m in depth. A total of four interventions were excavated across the ditch, while two trenches in Pond 1 were located to investigate points of intersection with an earlier gully (16003) and another ditch (16002) running perpendicular to the first.

Ditch 16090 was flat-bottomed with a V-shaped profile. In Pond 2, a slight step in the side of the ditch was exposed in section, possibly as a result of recutting (Figs 8.9 and 8.10, Section 16000). The ditch contained three friable, grey-brown silty clay fills. The upper fill in each section (16053 and 16084) was distinguished by flecks of charcoal and little greensand; the middle fill (16071 and 16052) was darker brown in colour with up to 10% greensand, while the primary fill (16051 and 16070) contained a high proportion of greensand (30%). Roman building materials, including fragments of tegulae and an imbrex, were recovered from all three fills. Two fragments of Roman pottery were recovered from the primary fill (16051) in the south of Pond 2. Two sherds of early/middle Iron Age pottery were found in the top fill (16075) where the ditch intersects with gully 16003 in the south of Pond 1; these are probably residual finds originating in gully 16003.

A short section of ditch (177) was exposed on the western edge of the Visitors' Car Park (Fig. 8.3) and probably represents a continuation of boundary ditch 16090. The area was not stripped to a sufficient depth, however, to confirm whether or not the ditch continued further north.

A second linear ditch (16078), perpendicular to the boundary ditch (16090) and heading eastwards, was observed in Pond 1 (Fig. 8.9). This ditch was 0.7 m wide and 0.1 m deep towards the eastern edge of Pond 1, but deepened to 0.7 m as it approached the intersection. It curved slightly to the south as it met the ditch, joining it at an oblique angle. The upper fill of the ditch consisted of a friable, dark grey sandy clay, overlying a lighter primary fill of similar composition, discernible by an increased proportion of chalk inclusions (35%). At the intersection, the fills of both ditches were continuous, indicating their contemporaneity.

In the centre of Pond 3, a circular pit (16087) cut the Roman boundary ditch (Fig. 8.9). The pit, which measured 1.2 m in diameter, was half-sectioned but no datable finds were recovered. The ditch was filled (16088) by a dark grey sandy clay, similar in composition to the upper fill of the Roman boundary ditch.

Two small pits or postholes (16004 and 16005) were exposed to the north of ditch 16078 in Pond 1 (Fig. 8.9). Their surface fills (16010 and 16011) were comparable to that of the upper fill of the Roman boundary ditch 16090, but these features were not excavated and no dating evidence was recovered.

The western edge of the Roman boundary ditch in Pond 2 was difficult to define, the fill appearing to extend several metres further west even when the furrows that crossed in this area had been removed by machine and lowered by several machine-excavated spits. A hand-dug trench across the Roman boundary ditch and

into this soilmark revealed a number of possible features in section, including two postholes/pits (16060 and 16063), a third more definite pit (16066), and two possible ditches (16054 and 16057) (Figs 8.9 and 8.10, Section 16001).

Posthole/pit 16063 probably represented the recut of an earlier posthole/pit (16060). Both features appeared to post-date the Roman boundary ditch, as the earliest posthole truncated the western edge of the ditch in section and the later recut appeared to extend into the upper fill of the ditch (Fig. 8.9). The original posthole was 0.4 m in diameter and 0.3 m deep; the recut was 0.5 m in diameter and 0.3 m deep. Each feature was filled by a friable sandy clay with a small proportion of chalk inclusions. The upper (16061, 16064) and lower fills (16061, 16065) were distinguished by increased chalk inclusions and a darkening of the soil in the lower fills.

Pit 16066 truncated the recut posthole 16063 and measured 1.1 m in diameter and 0.3 m deep (Fig. 8.9). The only datable finds - three fragments of Roman tegulae - came from the lower fill (16068) of the pit. The upper and lower pit fills were similar in character to those in the adjacent postholes (16060 and 16063) and might suggest that the features were broadly contemporary.

Two possible ditches were excavated to the west of the pits/postholes in Pond 2 (Fig. 8.9). The first of these (16054) followed an alignment parallel to that of the Roman boundary ditch, and was partially cut by posthole 16060. The feature was bowl-shaped in profile, with a diameter of 1.2 m and a depth of 0.44 m. The second linear feature (16057) was also bowl-shaped, measuring 1.4 m wide and 0.44 m deep. The feature cut the western edge of ditch 16054. The upper fills (16056 and 16059) of both ditches comprised a mid-grey sandy clay containing a small amount of chalk. The lower fills (16055 and 16058) of each feature were also similar in composition, but contained a higher proportion of chalk. Roman building materials, including flanged tegula, an imbrex and a possible box flue tile, were recovered from upper and lower fills of both features.

Medieval

Medieval furrows were exposed in all three ponds (Fig. 8.9). The furrows followed a northeast-southwest alignment and appeared to be arranged in pairs. Two furrows were exposed in each pond, and a single furrow was uncovered in the southern area of Pond 1. The width of the furrows ranged from between 1.5 m and 2.8 m, with a 1 m to 2 m interval between each furrow, and an 8 m margin between each furrow pair.

Staff Car Park

The Staff Car Park to the south-east of Hill Farm covers a rectangular area of c. 480 m² (Fig. 8.11). The impact depth of the car park was 0.3 m. The topsoil strip was continuously monitored to the impact level, which coincided with the depth of the topsoil; archaeological features were therefore not excavated. The exposed surface was cleaned and all features planned and, where possible, finds were recovered from the surface of exposed features.

The topsoil (1) was a slightly tenacious mid greyish-brown silty clay with occasional bunter pebbles. The soil had been ploughed until recent years and contained a number of fragments of Roman ceramic building materials, including

tegulae, imbrices, and the occasional cube of tile tessera. Early and late Roman pottery sherds were also recovered. These finds were particularly concentrated to the southern side of the trench. Fieldwalking in the fields to the south of Hill Farm identified a concentration of Roman building materials, suggesting the existence of Roman settlement in this area.

A friable, mid yellowish-brown clay silt subsoil (2) extended for 17 m across the southern of the trench. This layer contained a redeposited fragment of a 'Nauheim derivative' brooch. This form of brooch, although found in pre-conquest contexts, becomes more common around the middle of the 1st century AD and continues in use until the Flavian period (Olivier 1988, 38; also Bayley and Butcher 2004; 147).

A 1.2 m by 2 m trial excavation in the south-west corner of the impact area established that the subsoil was 0.2 m deep. To the north of the trench, the subsoil thinned and over approximately half the trench the topsoil directly overlay the natural greensand (30) and archaeological features. The archaeological features in this area date to the Iron Age and Roman periods, with two possibly modern features. The Iron Age features comprise: a circular gully (6), two ditches possibly forming part of an enclosure (18 and 12), a gully (16) and five pits (10, 22, 24, 26 and 29). A single Roman ditch (20) was found to the north of the area. Two parallel gullies, 8.5 m apart, were probably part of a modern field drainage system. In addition, two undated postholes and two irregular features were recorded.

Early Iron Age

A small number of features may date to the early Iron Age. These include a ring gully (6) and two pits (26 and 537) (Fig. 8.11). The ring gully was partially exposed in the central western area of the trench. The circular gully was 0.6 m wide and had an internal diameter of c. 8.6 m. Approximately one quarter of the circuit was revealed; to the south, the gully was overlain by subsoil (2). The gully was filled with a friable dark black-brown clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks. In places, two fills were visible in plan. The upper fill contained a higher proportion of greensand pebbles. Seven sherds (57 g) of early/middle Iron Age pottery and a single sherd (3 g) of early Iron Age pottery were recovered from the surface of the feature. The gully was probably of early Iron Age date and may be contemporary with pit 537, which was filled with a tenacious, light greyish-brown silty clay (538) and contained a single sherd (2 g) of early Iron Age pottery.

Pit 26 was roughly circular in plan with a diameter of 1.15 m. It was filled with a tenacious mid greyish-brown silty clay (27) with occasional pebbles and three sherds of early/middle Iron Age pottery. The pit, which was cut by a Roman ditch (20), also intercut with pit 24 but it was not possible to establish a chronological sequence in plan.

Early/middle Iron Age

Two archaeological features were observed beneath the subsoil in the small trial trench excavated in the south-western corner of the area (Fig. 8.11). These features appeared to be substantial intercutting pits, although it was not possible to determine their stratigraphic relationship. Both features were filled with a dark black-brown clay silt containing frequent charcoal inclusions. The southern feature (pit 28) produced

two sherds (32 g) of early/middle Iron Age pottery, which may provide a broad date for the two features.

Pit 10 measured 0.9 m by 0.75 m and was oval in shape. It contained a friable mid greyish-brown clay silt with large greensand inclusions (11); a sherd of early/middle Iron Age pottery was recovered. Pits 24 and 26 were roughly circular features, with diameters of 1.5 m and 1.15 m respectively. Pit 24 was filled with a friable mid black-brown clay silt containing animal bone and six sherds (48 g) of pottery including one middle Iron Age sherd. Within the area of the gully (6) was the outline of a substantial 1.7 m diameter circular pit (29). The upper fill of the pit (4) was a tenacious dark black-brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking.

Middle Iron Age

Most of the features in the Staff Car Park can be assigned to the middle Iron Age period. An extension of the car park to the east revealed a sinuous, broadly north to south aligned gully (535) (Fig. 8.11), which was filled with a friable, dark greyish brown, silty clay (536). A large saddle quern fragment (2.82 kg) made from Lower Calcareous Grit and two sherds (9 g) of early/middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from this fill. A single sherd (6 g) of diagnostically middle Iron Age pottery provides a likely date for the feature. Gully 535, which was cut by a modern ditch, also cut curvilinear gully 6 and two pits (537 and 539). Pit 539 was filled with a tenacious mid greyish-brown silty clay (540). No finds were recovered from the pit. On stratigraphic grounds, it can be dated no later than the middle Iron Age and may be contemporary with nearby early Iron Age pit 537.

Gully 535 may have formed one corner of a rectangular enclosure with gully 16 to the north-east (Fig. 8.11). Gully 16 was 0.36 m wide and 4.7 m long, truncated to the west by ditch 18 and to the east by modern gully 14. The gully was filled with a slightly tenacious, dark greyish-brown silty clay with occasional greensand fragments and one sherd of middle Iron Age pottery.

Pit 22 was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.75 m, and was filled with a friable mid greyish-brown clay silt with inclusions of greensand (23); a sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the surface of the feature, but this find may be intrusive. Pit 22 was cut by ditch 12 which, with ditch 18, may have formed the corner of an enclosure ditch (Fig. 8.11). Ditch 12 was 2.8 m wide and filled with a relatively sterile friable mid brown silty clay containing very occasional greensand fragments. Sherds of early Iron Age pottery were recovered from the fill of ditch 12 (13) and six middle Iron Age sherds (85 g) were recovered from ditch 18 (fill 19).

Roman

Ditch 18 was cut by ditch 20 (Fig. 8.11), a slightly curving 1.8 m wide ditch filled with a tenacious dark brown clay silt with inclusions of charcoal and greensand (21); the four sherds of pottery provide a *terminal post quem* of early to mid second century for the filling of the ditch.

Modern

Gullies 7 and 14 are parallel features 8.5 m apart running east to west (Fig. 8.11). The gullies cut ditches 12/18 and gullies 16 and 6. Gullies 7 and 14 measured 0.8 m and 0.7 m wide respectively and gully 7 was less than 0.1 m deep. Both gullies contained fragments of greensand and mortar, in particular fill 9, in gully 7. The greensand in the features sat at a higher level than the archaeological surface, mainly within the base of the topsoil; these features are therefore considered to be modern, probably forming part of a field drainage system.

Watching Brief Areas

In addition to the main works, the watching brief monitored various areas of ground disturbance in and around Hill Farm. The work is described by area below.

Drainage works and foundation trenches within Hill Farm existing buildings

Middle Iron Age

Several trenches and areas were stripped or trenched for foundations, cables or drainage; the areas monitored are shown in Figure 8.12. The groundworks revealed a single pit (559) located beneath the foundation of barn to the north-west of the courtyard. Pit 559 was circular in plan with a bell-shaped profile, measuring c. 1.6 m in diameter and 1.1 m deep (1.4 m below the current ground surface); approximately one quarter of this feature lay within the trench. The pit contained a complex series of ten deposits representing initial deliberate backfilling (560, 561) followed by slower accumulation through natural silting with some deliberate dumps of charcoal (562-568). The pit contained six sherds (30 g) of early/middle Iron Age pottery and two sherds (24 g) of diagnostic middle Iron Age pottery.

Drainage and pipe trenches to the west of Hill Farm

To the west of Hill Farm, drainage work revealed two pits (555 and 12003) and three ditches/gullies (570, 12000 and 12007). These are mostly unphased, but pottery evidence from pit 12003 suggests that some early Iron Age activity was encountered.

Early Iron Age

A small vertical-sided pit (12003) (Figs 8.12 and 8.13, Section 315) was exposed in a drainage trench to the south of the Visitors' Car Park. The pit measured 0.8 m in diameter, 0.52 m deep, and was filled with three deposits (12004, 12005 and 12006). The primary and upper deposits were mid brown clay silts; the middle layer (12005) was a thin layer of charcoal. Two sherds of early Iron Age pottery (91 g) were recovered from the upper fill (12006).

Iron Age?

Pit 555, only observed in section, had a profile with vertical sides and a flat base measuring 0.7 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep. The pit contained two fills (556 and

557), both consisting of a mid greyish-brown silt with occasional greensand fragments; the upper fill 557 had a high proportion of charcoal. No finds were recovered from the pit, but its similarity to the form and fill of other Iron Age pits from Hill Farm make an Iron Age date most likely.

Unphased

To the south of pit 555, a shallow gully (570) aligned approximately northwest-southeast was recorded (Fig. 8.12). This gully, which measured 0.6 m wide and 0.1 m deep, did not extend into the excavations in the Visitors' Car Park to the west. No pottery or other datable finds were recovered from the gully.

In a drainage trench to the south of the Visitors' Car Park, a substantial northwest-southeast ditch (12000) was recorded (Fig. 8.12). The ditch had a V-shaped profile measuring 1.3 m wide and 0.56 m deep. It contained a silty clay primary fill containing numerous greensand fragments (12001), tipping from the north-east, perhaps indicating the location of the bank. A homogeneous mid brown silt clay with greensand fragments (12002) filled the remainder of the ditch.

Further south, a broad U-shaped ditch (12007) (Figs 8.12 and 8.13, Section 315) on a northwest-southeast alignment was exposed. The ditch, which cut early Iron Age pit 12003, was 2.14 m wide and 0.52 m deep. It contained three deposits of mid brown silty clay, with varying proportions of greensand, resulting from the natural silting of the ditch. No datable finds were recovered from these deposits.

A trench for a water pipe was also cut from Hill Farm to the Lambing Shed in the southwest area of the site (Fig. 8.12). The trench, which measured 0.3 m wide and up to 1 m deep, cut a section through the ditch (12101) of enclosure 610 between the Visitors' Car Park and Offices excavations. The trench became shallower 4 m north of ditch 12101, and so did not reach the natural greensand into which archaeological features were cut; no northern return for this enclosure was therefore observed. A pit (12099) was identified to the south of ditch 12101. Further south, an east-west aligned ditch (12097) was cut; this ditch may represent a continuation of ditch 800 in the Offices area. A northwest-southeast aligned ditch (12095) crossed the trench to the south of Hill Farm, and probably represents a continuation of ditch 12007.

The trench continued across a field to the south-west of Hill Farm, and here it exposed three ditches (12077, 12085 and 12091) and two gullies (12083 and 12089) (Fig. 8.12). Four pits (12079, 12081, 12085, 12087) were also identified, although only the tops of most features were examined and few finds were recovered. Ditch 12077 may represent a continuation of unphased ditch 12000, some 30 m to the north. Ditch 12085 appears to have been a continuation of Roman ditch 16090 that crossed the Ponds areas, while the geophysical survey shows that it continues further south across the field. Ditch 12091 was part of a substantial boundary ditch (also visible on the geophysical survey) running parallel to ditch 16090; a sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from its upper fill (12092), supporting the interpretation of these ditches as a Roman field system. The four pits were all located in the eastern half of the field, where the geophysical survey indicated additional Iron Age storage pits further north and east. A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from pit 12085; otherwise these pits are all unphased.

Cable trench to the east of Hill Farm

A narrow cable trench running from the south of Hill Farm to the new garages east of the Hill Farm Cottages revealed four pits, two ditches and a wall (Fig. 8.12). The majority of these features are unphased, with the exception of two possibly post-medieval features.

Pit 12016 was circular in plan with a bowl-shaped profile, measuring 0.66 m diameter and 0.24 m deep. It was filled with a dark grey clay silt (12015). Further to the east, a north-south aligned ditch (12020), probably of post-medieval date due to the recovery of brick from its fills (12018 and 12019), cut a circular bowl-shaped pit (12022). Pit 12022 measured 0.6 m in diameter and 0.25 m deep. It was filled with a light grey silty clay; no finds were recovered.

Further to the east, two more pits (12027 and 12030) were located. The pits were of similar bowl-shaped profile and dimensions (1.2 m diameter by 0.45 m deep), and possibly represent a contemporary pair. Each pit contained two fills of friable, mid grey silty clay with varying proportions of greensand. The cable trench encountered a wall (12034) as it crossed the boundary into the gardens of the Hill Farm Cottage, which was abutted by deposits containing post-medieval pottery and appeared to represent a recent property boundary. To the west of this, a north-south aligned V-shaped ditch (12037) was partly sectioned by the trench. The ditch measured 1.12 m wide and reached depths of more than 0.52 m. The ditch contained two fills of mid to dark grey-brown clay silts (12035 and 12036); no finds were recovered.

New garages at Hill Farm cottages

Unphased

A fragment of adult human skull was recovered beside the footings for the new garages to the west of the cottages at Hill Farm (Sf. 1). The skull appeared to have been disturbed during the excavation of the foundation trenches, but it was not possible to verify the context of the skull as the concrete footing had already been laid.