

Chapter 3: Area 5

by John Moore

Trial trenching located an area of late Bronze Age activity. Stripping some 3500 sq. m revealed a settlement situated on a slightly raised area of ground. The settlement consisted of some 20 circular buildings, several four and six post structures and paired post supports. The results of limited trial trenching in the vicinity indicate that the settlement was associated with field systems.

INTRODUCTION (Fig. 9)

Area 5 was a late Bronze Age settlement situated on a discrete gravel island lying some 230–320 mm higher than the surrounding area. The gravel was overlain by a loess-like material some 300–600 mm thick in the S and W part of the island, thinning to 200–300 mm in the N and 5 mm in the central part of the eastern area. The thin loess covering may be the reason for the apparent lack of preserved features in this area.

The majority of the deeper features appeared to cut into the loess, stopping at the interface with the gravel. The top of the island was relatively flat and the settlement appeared to have utilised the whole of the top of the island.

Lack of time and finances prevented the complete clearance of the island, but the top was cleared in the SW, W and NW. The fence lines (see below) indicate that other features lay to the SE of the excavated area and certainly the pit complex continued to the NE. The presence of these pits suggests that there may have been more buildings to the E of the stripped area.

The settlement appears to have been defined by a boundary ditch on the N although further boundary ditches were not found to the W and S in the trenches extending down the slope of the island. The features were not totally confined to the island, as the pits in the extreme NE of the area show.

The lack of residual finds from other periods makes the finds, especially the flintwork, of added importance.

POSTHOLES

Area 5 contained 610 postholes of which 359 have been assigned to buildings, four and six post structures, two post 'racks' or fence lines. The density of postholes was such that it was not often immediately obvious to which structure a given posthole belonged. In assigning a posthole to one of the circular buildings found on this site, its position relative to the likely circumference of the post ring and the spacing of adjacent roof supports were taken more into account than its size. Depth in particular is an unreliable indicator of the building to which a posthole might belong, as it would have been relatively easy to tailor holes to accommodate the dif-

ferences in height of the various uprights. All measurements between postholes are given from centre to centre.

THE BUILDINGS (Figs. 9–16)

Twenty circular buildings have been identified as well as the apparent partial rebuild of Building 8 and the rebuilding of Building 7 in virtually the same position. Of these 20 buildings, 8 had central posts.

The post circles which have been identified are interpreted as the rings of posts which supported the roofs of the buildings (Avery and Close Brooks 1969). The solid wall of the building would have been some distance outside this ring of posts. The diameters of the post rings varied between 6.65 m and 10.0 m, and porch posts (which would have been positioned on the line of the wall) indicate that the overall diameters of the buildings from wall to wall ranged up to 13 m.

Nine doorways in the wall line have been identified and in two more cases possible doorways have been located. There was no difference between the size of the posts forming the internal supports of the porch and the other posts in the post ring, and without evidence for the external porch posts on the wall line entrances cannot be identified. Only Building 15 has a possible porch outside the wall line. The direction the doorways faced varied between due S and NE (see Table 2) and doorways varied in width from 1.4 m to 2.8 m (see Table 1).

Central posts were found in only eight cases; elsewhere, central posts may not have been located or may have rested on the ground surface leaving no trace. However, among possible pairs of buildings (see Chronology, below) there is no instance in which a central post occurs in both buildings of the pair. In addition, four of the five buildings considered to be single units (the exception is House 9) have central posts. It seems that the function of the buildings had a bearing on the construction technique. Central posts are present at both the beginning and end of the settlement's life and it cannot therefore be argued that they represent a development in building technique.

Because most of the buildings overlapped it has not been possible to identify internal features within the

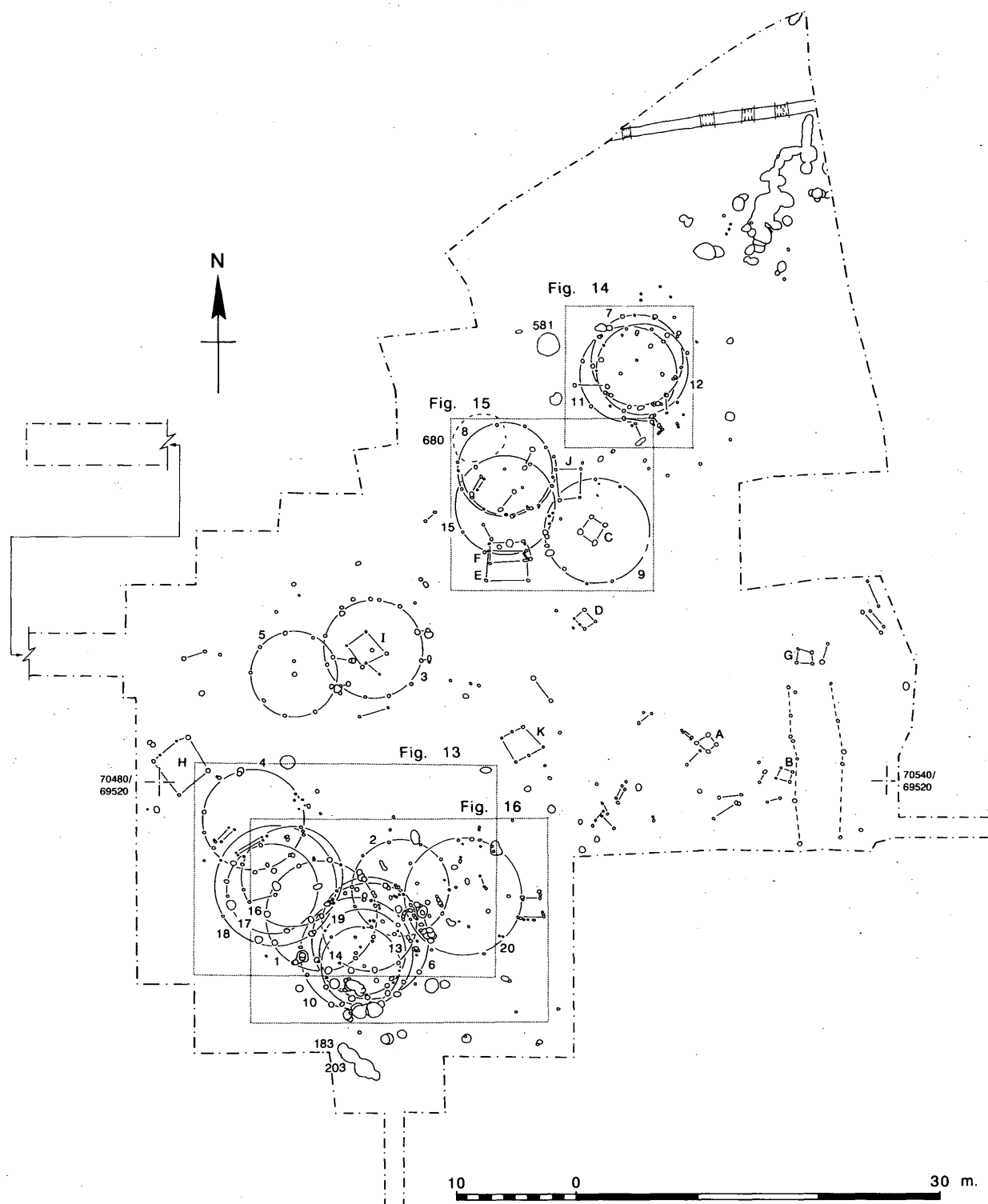


Figure 9 General plan of Area 5

majority of the buildings. No hearth structures were identified.

Building 1 (Figs. 10 and 13)

This is an 11 post structure with a central post. The post ring is 9.20 m in diameter and the postholes vary in diameter from 0.32 to 0.56 m excluding posthole 265 (0.72 m) which may also have been the position for a post in Building C

(see note on that building). The depths varied between 0.18 and 0.32 m. Seven postholes had evidence of post pipes varying in size from 0.14 to 0.25 m in diameter. The difference in spacing between the posts varied from 2.30 to 2.85 m with an average of 2.57 m. The posts had been marked out accurately, with only one posthole having its centre lying more than 100 mm from a circle drawn through the postholes.

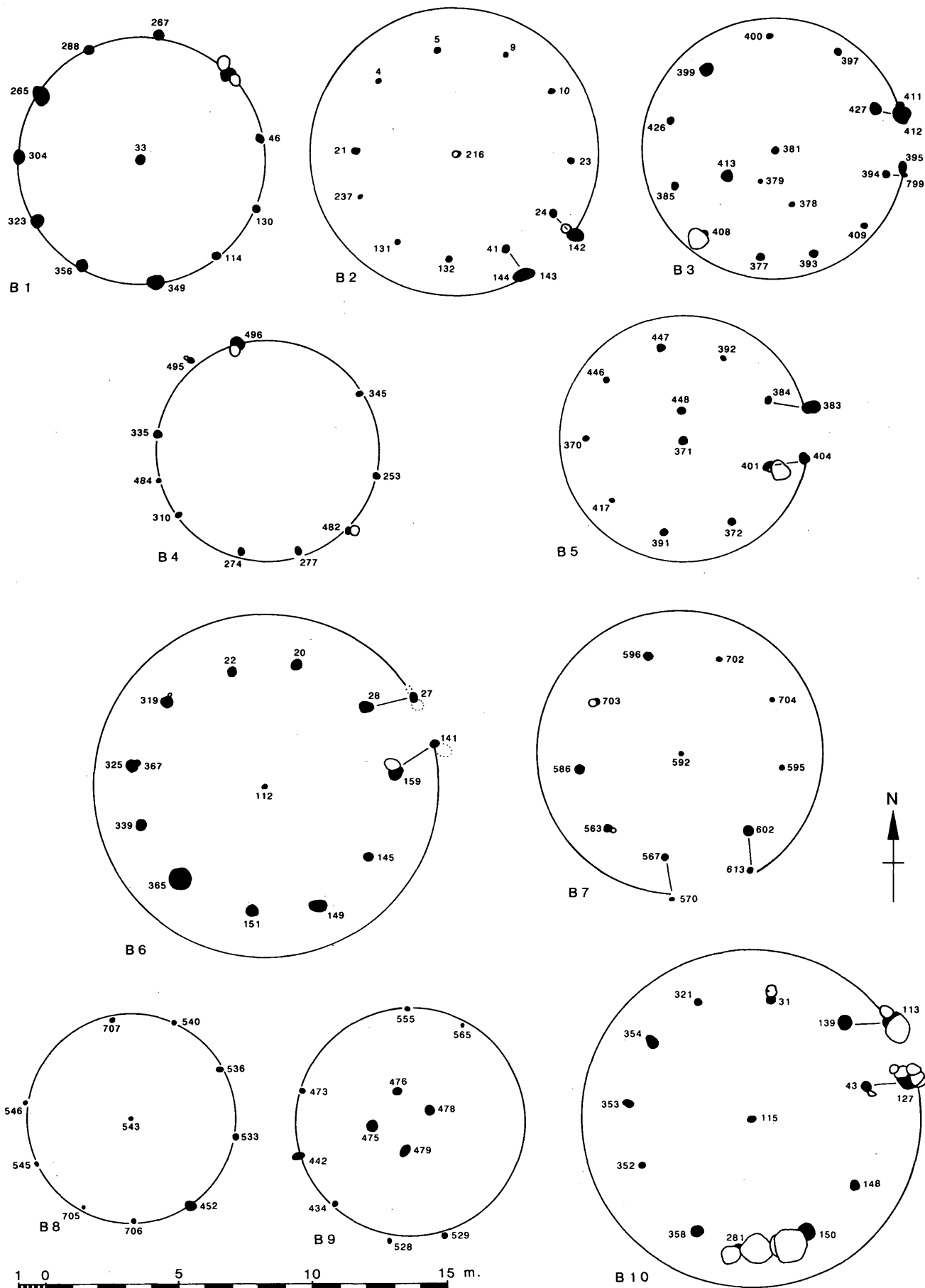


Figure 10 Area 5, Buildings 1-10

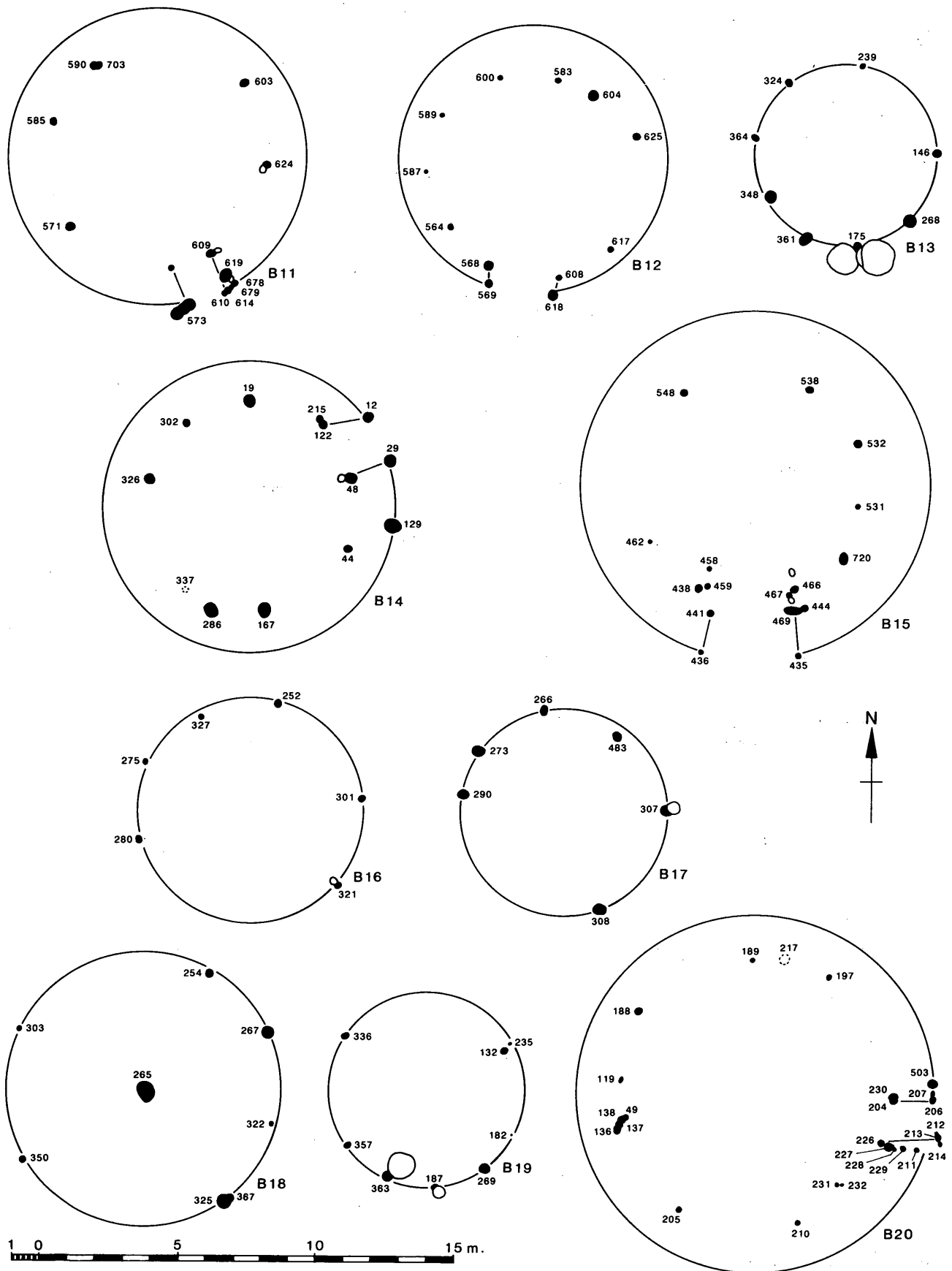
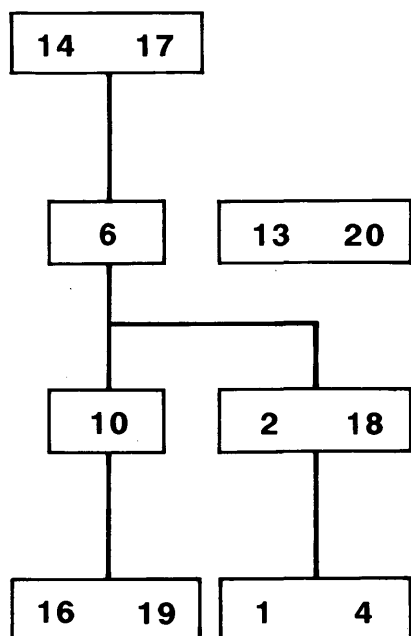
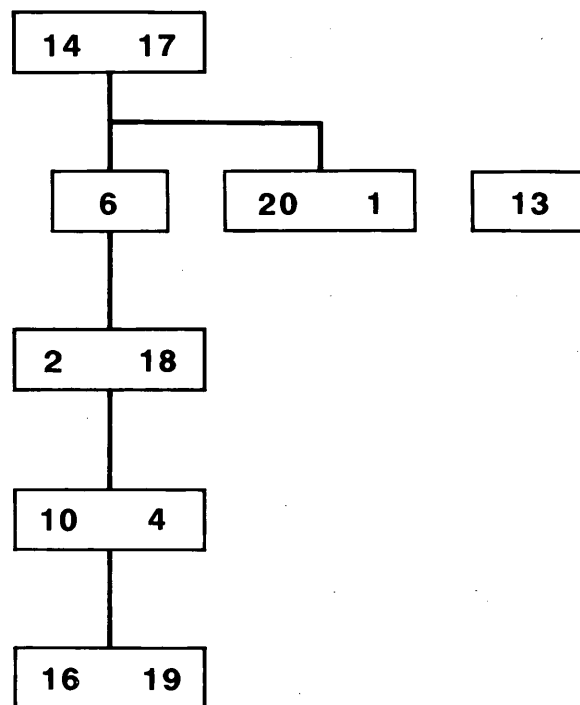


Figure 11. Area 5, Buildings 11-20

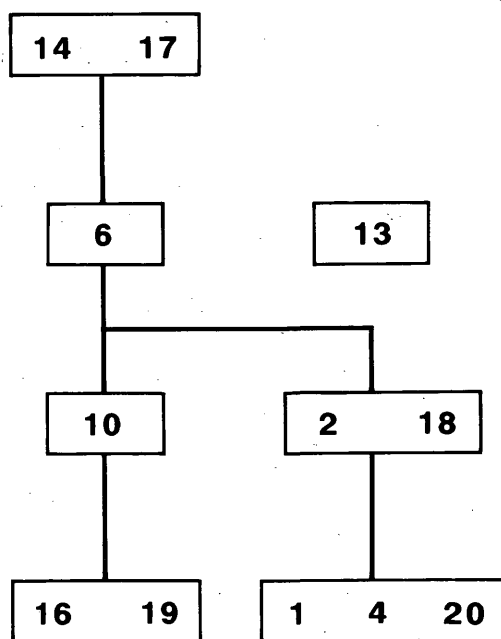
Scheme 1



Scheme 2



Scheme 3



Scheme 4

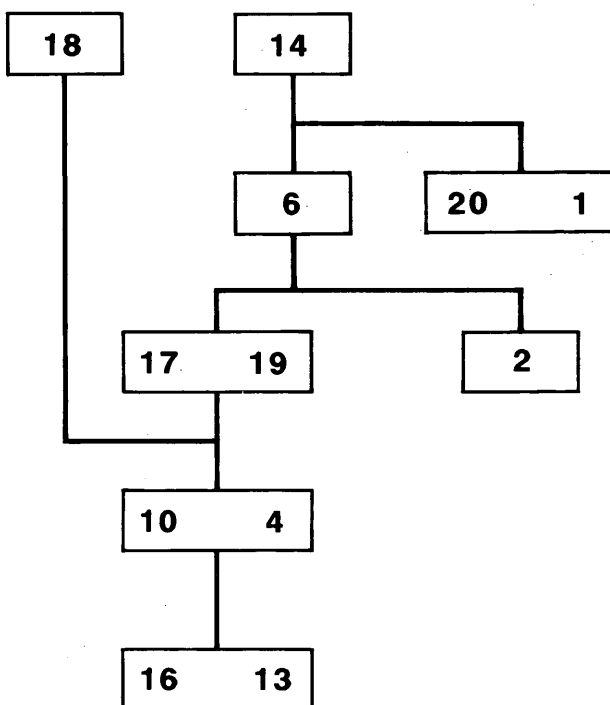


Figure 12 Area 5, possible contemporaneity of buildings, schemes 1-4

Table 1: Area 5, house dimensions

House	Post ring diameter	Wall diameter	Doorway width	Central post?
1	9.15	-	-	Yes
2	8.00	10.00	2.25	Yes
3	8.15	9.70	2.30	Yes
4	8.20	-	-	No
5	6.95	9.75	1.85	Yes
6	9.45	13.05	1.90	Yes
7	7.50	10.52	2.80	Yes
8	7.75	-	-	Yes
9	8.55	-	-	No
10	9.25	12.65	2.20	Yes
11	7.95	10.95	1.70	No
12	7.50	8.70	2.00	No
13	6.65	-	-	No
14	7.80	10.98	?1.4	No
15	8.26	*	-	No
16	8.15	-	-	No
17	7.40	-	-	No
18	9.95	-	-	No
19	6.90	-	-	No
20	9.75	12.56	1.7	No

* = see building description

Table 2: Area 5, doorway direction

House	Direction
2	SE
3	E
5	E
6	NE
7	SSE
10	NE
11	SE
12	S
14	NE*
15	S*
20	E

* = possible doorway

Building 2 (Figs. 10 and 13)

This is again an 11 post structure, 8.0 m in diameter, arranged around a central post. Like Building 1, it is well laid out, with only one post lying more than 100 mm from the probable circumference of the post ring. The diameter of the posts varied from 0.19 to 0.30 m, and their depths varied from 0.14 to 0.34 m (average 0.21 m). All the posts had been removed when the building was abandoned. The spacing between these posts varied from 1.90 to 2.85 m with an average of 2.28 m.

Porch postholes 2.25 m apart lay on a wall line which would have been 0.50 m outside the post ring. Posthole 143 may have been a replacement for an earlier posthole, 144. The diameters of these postholes are larger than those of

the post ring (0.62 and 0.63 m) but they were no deeper; 142 was only 60 mm deep. A line drawn across the diameter of the post ring from the back post 4 through the central post 216 would pass through the centre of the porch.

Building 3 (Fig. 10)

This is represented by an 11 hole post ring 8.20 m in diameter arranged around a central post. Again this structure was well laid out with only three posts 150 mm from the best-fit post circle. The postholes showed little variation in size with an average diameter of 0.30 m and average depth of 0.15 m and the spacing between them varied from 2.05 to 2.50 m with an average of 2.27 m. The largest post in the post ring was one of the porch posts, 427. The external porch posts 411 and 395 replaced earlier posts 412 and 799 and were 0.65 to 0.90 from the post ring, indicating the probable position of the wall line.

Possible internal features are represented by postholes 379 and 378, which were 0.13 and 0.14 m in diameter respectively and 0.06 m deep. They were 1.50 m apart and may have been associated. Another possible internal feature was posthole 413, which was 0.44 m in diameter and 0.38 m deep. If 413 was contemporary with Building 3 then Building 5 was later than this building, as the Building 5 porch posthole 383 was cut over the top of 413.

Building 4 (Figs. 10 and 13)

This is a probable 11 post structure. Extensive cleaning failed to reveal a posthole on the N side in the position where one might have been expected and there was no evidence for a central post. Although the dimensions of the postholes did not vary greatly the spacing of the posts

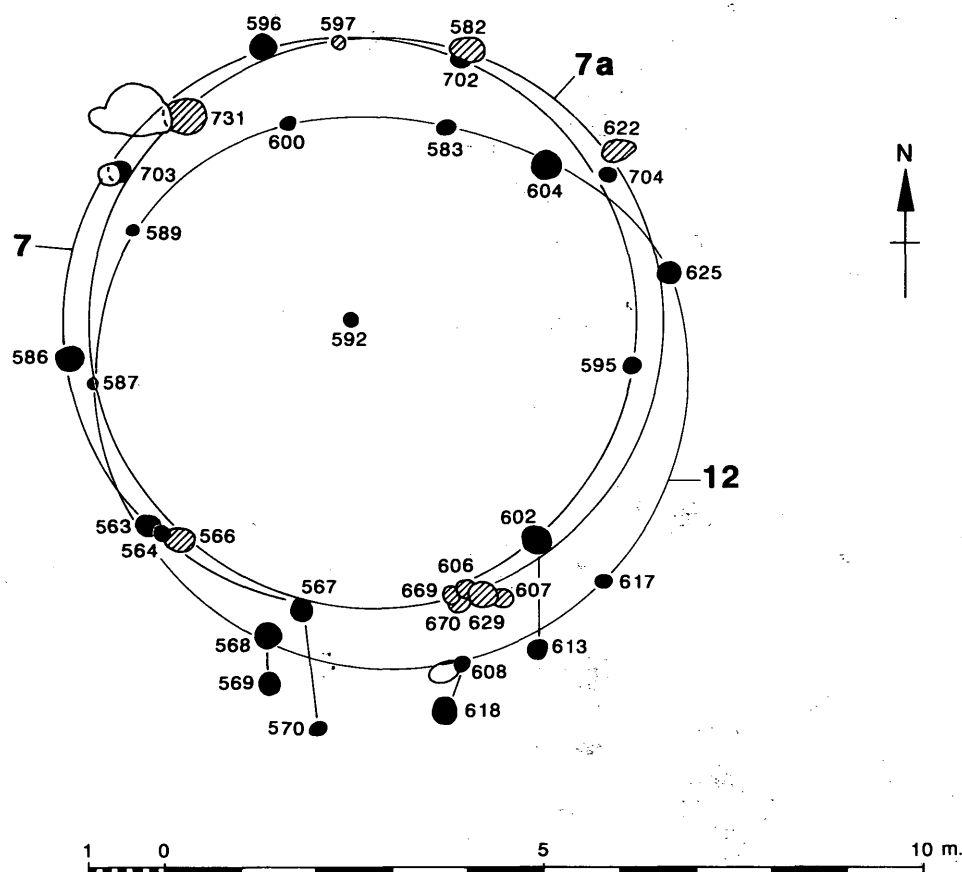


Figure 14 Area 5, Buildings 7 and 7a and 12

varied from 1.45 m between features 310 and 484 to 3.10 m between features 345 and 253. The diameter of this post ring was 8.20 m and there was no evidence for porch posts to indicate the wall line.

Building 5 (Fig. 10)

This is composed of nine posts arranged as a circle 7.0 m in diameter. These are flanked by two larger postholes set 1.85 m apart and projecting 1.30 to 1.50 m outside the circle. The post ring postholes were relatively evenly spaced, with an average spacing of 2.35 m and extremes of 2.20 m and 2.60 m. A line drawn through the centre of the doorway, central post 371 and the back post 370 almost exactly bisects the building. The lack of other features in this area suggests that the small posthole 448 just to the N of the central posthole may be contemporary with Building 5 and perhaps formed part of a feature within this building.

Building 6 (Figs. 10 and 16)

This had a central post 112 with a post ring 9.5 m in diameter. The 11 postholes of the post ring varied widely in size from 0.26 to 0.80 m in diameter. The depths varied from 0.14 to 0.34 m, but in terms of absolute level the bottoms of the postholes are very regular, with only one shallow example, 149 (0.14 m), and one deep one, 151 (0.28

m). The stratigraphic relationship between 325 of Building 18 and 367 of Building 6 could not be discerned. If 129 was a porch post for Building 14 then Building 14 postdated Building 6. The wall line was indicated by two porch postholes on the NE side of the building, 1.80 m from the post ring and 1.90 m apart.

Building 7 (Figs. 10 and 14)

This is represented by nine posts arranged around a central post 592. The post ring was 7.50 m in diameter. Posthole 703 is preferred for this building on the grounds of spacing, which would make Building 11 later than Building 7. Similarly, 563 is preferred over 564, making Building 12 later than Building 7. The two postholes 570 and 613 are interpreted as porch posts lying on a wall line giving an entrance on the S side of the building. The space between the wall line and post ring wall was 1.50 m and the doorway was 2.80 m wide. The building lies symmetrically on either side of a line passing from the back post through the central post and midway between the porch posts on the post ring. The outer porch posts are offset from this line. Building 7 was rebuilt in virtually the same position and is referred to as Building 7a. Five postholes—566, 731, 597, 582 and 622 and possibly one of the group 606, 607, 629, 669 and 670—are interpreted as belonging to this rebuild. The lack of additional postholes on the W and SE sides and the closer

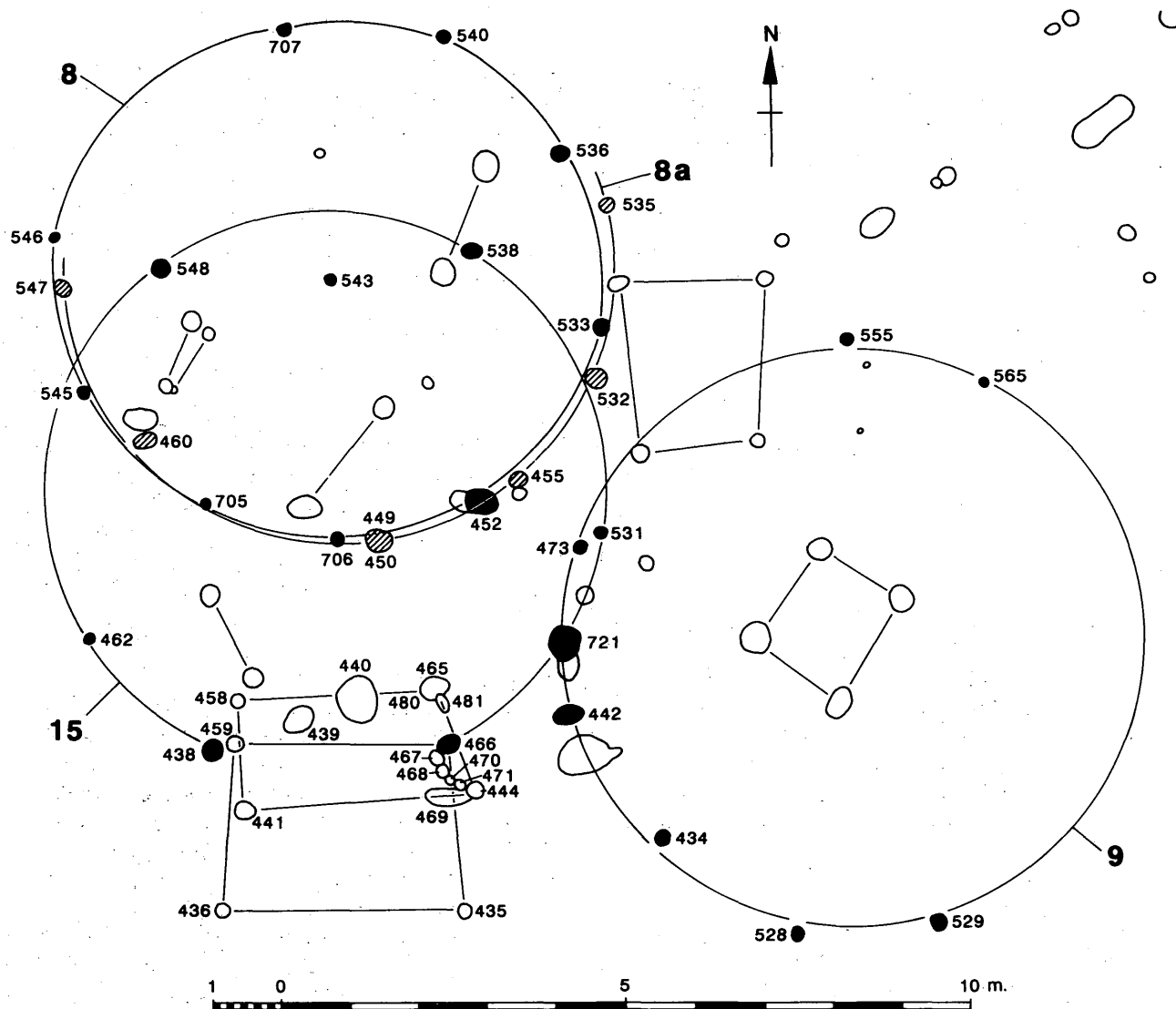


Figure 15 Area 5, Buildings 8 and 8a, 9 and 15

spacing of 731, 597, 582 and 622 may suggest that parts of Building 7 were replaced as it stood, with some posts being renewed (566, 582, 622) and extra posts inserted in other places (731 and 597). See Building 8.

Building 8 (Figs. 10 and 15)

This comprised nine postholes, probably representing the remains of a ring of ten posts around a central posthole. The postholes were relatively regular, 0.15 to 0.32 m in diameter and 0.03 to 0.19 m in depth. The spacing of the postholes was 2.40 m on average, ranging from 2.00 to 3.05 m.

The southern part of the building appears to have been reconstructed using six new postholes (547, 460, 449 or 450, 454, 532, 535) and is referred to as Building 8a.

In view of the spacing between the postholes to the N of 536 and 546 of the original building it seems plausible to suggest that posts in features 536, 540, 707, 546 remained in use in the reconstruction.

At some stage prior to the construction of Building 8a, a tree appears to have been cleared. Posthole 707 was cut

into a backfilled tree clearance hole (680). Within the backfill were deposits of settlement rubbish. The lack of an identifiable posthole between 707 and 546 is due to the impossibility of observing a feature cut into this backfill.

Building 9 (Figs. 10 and 15)

This is a probable eleven post structure represented by seven surviving postholes. Intensive cleaning failed to reveal any other postholes. The surviving postholes (0.02 to 0.11 m deep) were among the shallowest found in any of the buildings. In this part of Area 5 the subsoil was at its thinnest, and it was noticeable in all the features on this 'island' that little or no effort had been to dig through the subsoil into gravel. The position of the four post structure in the middle of Building 9 is probably coincidental; although it is only just off-centre no other building on this site has a construction involving a central arrangement of four posts. At Rams Hill (Bradley and Ellison 1975) the presence of the four post structure in Building C is also seen as coincidental.

Building 10 (Figs. 10 and 16)

This consists of a post ring of 11 posts encircling a central posthole. Porch posts 113 and 127 on the presumed wall line indicate an entrance on the NE side of the building. The post ring postholes varied in diameter from 0.25 to 0.50 m and their depths ranged from 0.13 to 0.36 m. The spacing of the posts averaged 2.60 m and varied enormously, from 1.80 m (between 281 and 358) to 3.60 m (between 43 and 148). The post ring was 9.25 m in diameter and the porch posts indicate that the wall line was 1.70 m outside the post ring. Pit 314 lay just inside the wall line and a pot, presumably for food storage, had been set into it (Fig. 46 no. 76). Building 6 was later than Building 10, as posthole 28 of its post ring cut posthole 113 of Building 10. No relationship between the other porch posthole 127 and posthole 159 of Building 6 was apparent. Similarly, Building 14 was later than Building 10 with posthole 44 cutting posthole 43.

Building 11 (Fig. 11)

This is represented by seven surviving postholes of the post ring. 590 is preferred to 703 on the grounds of spacing and post ring radius. This would mean that Building 11 was later than Building 7 and predates Building 12 (608 cut porch post 609). The wall line was indicated by the elongated porch posthole 573 to the W of the doorway and by a series of small replacement postholes (perhaps for a door swivel) outside the E porch post 609. The space between post ring and wall line was 1.5 m.

Building 12 (Fig. 11)

This consists of 9 or 10 postholes for a 10 or 11 post ring structure. The postholes were evenly spaced with the exceptions of 583 and 604. If 583 was not part of this structure then the span between 600 and 604 would have been 3.40 m. The only other instances of spans of this size occurred in Building 10 where there was one of 3.60 m and in Building 15 where the porch posts on the post ring were 3.30 m apart. It is possible that 583 was a later addition, as it was set 0.20 m inside the circle at this point. The building was not laid out as regularly as most of the others on the site. The distances between posts on the post ring and the central post varied from 3.45 m (583) to 3.95 m (625), averaging 3.75 m. Two probable porch posts on the wall line were found 0.60 m from the post ring and 2.0 m apart.

Building 13 (Figs. 11 and 16)

This is represented by eight postholes; there is a gap on the NE side where no posthole could be found. The diameter of the post ring was 6.65 m, the smallest of any building on this 'island' site and 0.30 m smaller than the post rings of Buildings 5 and 19. The diameters of the postholes varied from 0.14 m (239) to 0.53 m (361). There was no sign of porch posts to indicate the wall line.

Building 14 (Figs. 11 and 13)

A possible nine postholes on a post ring 7.80 m in diameter

were found. Posthole 337 may not belong to this building. A post equidistant between 286 and 326 would give a spacing of 2.65 m against an average of 2.6 m. Using 215 instead of 122 would give more regular spacing (2.65 m and 2.4 m for postholes 19–215 and 215–48 as opposed to 3.0 m and 2.2 m for postholes 19–122 and 122–48). If there was no additional post between 44 and 167 then the span between them of 3.70 m would be the largest on this site. See comments about Building 12.

If posthole 49 was part of Building 20 then Building 20 would be later than Building 14. There was a considerable variation in posthole size in Building 14, from 0.17 to 0.62 m (167) in diameter (or from 0.20 m if excluding 182) and from 0.06 (337) to 0.29 m (326) in depth. The doorway was probably on the NE side where there are three posts on a possible wall line. The positions of postholes 212 and 229 opposite 215/122 and 48 would favour an interpretation of these as the porch posts. The doorway would then have been 1.40 m wide with a gap of 1.60 m between the wall line and post ring.

Building 15 (Figs. 11 and 15)

Eight postholes of the post ring survived from this structure. The diameter of the post ring was 8.20 m and the spacing of the postholes suggests that three were probably not found. The porch posts on the post ring were probably 438 and either 466 or 467 with 468 as a possible replacement for 467. The postholes in the southern part of this roundhouse can be interpreted either as an elaborate porch structure or as two four post structures; postholes 458, 481, 441 and 444 could belong to one four post structure and 459, 466, 436 and 435 to another (Fig. 15). If this structure was a porch then 466 and 438 could be seen as the porch posts on the post ring, with two additional posts (459 and 467, with 468 as a possible replacement for the latter) also lying on the post ring. The two postholes (458 and 481) would mark the position of two posts set 0.80 m back from the post ring inside the building. Postholes 441, 444 and 469 would then lie on a wall line 0.80 m from the post ring and the postholes 436 and 435 could represent a porch extending outside the building, 1.50 m beyond the wall line. This would be the only case of a projecting porch on this 'island site'.

Building 16 (Figs. 11 and 13)

This is represented by six postholes lying on a post ring 8.15 m in diameter. The spacing of the surviving features suggests that the post ring probably consisted of ten posts.

Building 17 (Figs. 11 and 13)

Again this is represented by six postholes lying on a post ring with a 7.40 m diameter, and the spacing of the surviving features suggests that the post ring probably consisted of ten posts.

Reading Business Park: a Bronze Age landscape

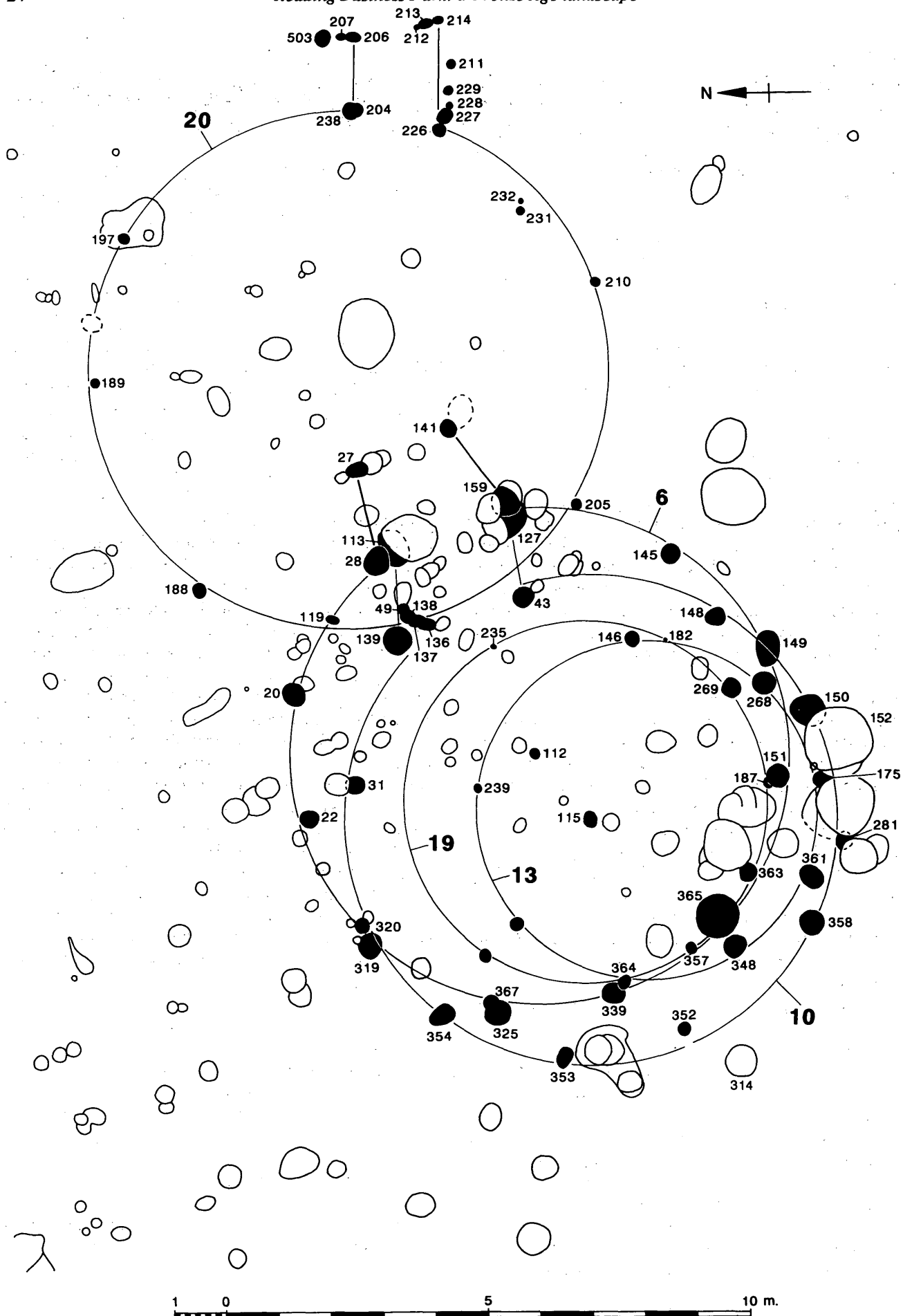


Figure 16 Area 5, Buildings 6, 10, 13, 19 and 20

Building 18 (Figs. 11 and 13)

This consists of five or six postholes lying on a post ring 9.95 m in diameter. This was one of the largest buildings on this site. Posthole 267 has already been included in the post ring for Building 1, but it is possible that what was originally interpreted as a post pipe for this feature is in fact a later posthole cut into the fill of an original post pit. No relationship between postholes 367 of Building 6 and 325 of Building 18 was discernible. Similarly, if what was originally interpreted a post pit in 265 is a later posthole this would have been the central post of Building 18.

Building 19 (Figs. 11 and 16)

Seven postholes of this building remained, although 182 as excavated was a stakehole 0.05 m in diameter and 0.07 m deep. Posthole 132 was of a more normal size but was inside the probable line of the post ring, whereas the stakehole 235, which was only 0.10 m in diameter and 0.06 m deep, would have lain almost exactly on it. 187 was cut by a posthole of Building 6.

Building 20 (Figs. 11 and 16)

This is represented by a minimum of ten postholes lying on a post ring. Either 231 or 232 or both (one replacing the other) could represent the position of a post although both lie 0.40 to 0.55 m inside the circumference of the post ring, which is 10.0 m in diameter. It was not clear which, if any, of the postholes 49 and 136–138 belonged to this building. Posthole 217 lies close to the line of the post ring and may have been part of the building. An entrance on the E side seems to be indicated by posts belonging to a porch structure. 230/204 and 226/227 may have been replacements for porch posts on the post ring; the southernmost porch post on the wall line could have been 211 or alternatively 212–4. On the northern side of the entrance, 503 or 206–7 may represent the porch post on the wall line. 228 and 229 may also have been part of the porch. Building 20 was the largest building found on this subsite and was probably represented by 13 posts on the post ring. With a distance of 1.40 m or 2.0 m between the post ring and wall ring the overall diameter of the building would have been 12.6 m or 13.2 m.

CHRONOLOGY (Fig. 12)

The large number of superimposed buildings in the southern area, 12 in all, suggests that there was probably more than one building in this area at any one time. Working on the premise that at any one time there are likely to have been two buildings standing, then two possible sequences can be found. Both sequences have seven elements of which four are the same; Buildings 14 and 17, 2 and 18 and 16 and 19 can be paired while Building 6 stands alone. In the first sequence Buildings 1 and 4, and 13 and 20 are paired while 10 is a single unit. In the second sequence 1 and 20, 10 and 4 are paired while 13 stands alone. It could be argued that Building 13 is too small in comparison with the other

buildings to have been a single unit, but it is comparable in size with Building 3 to the N. Relationships between postholes of the various buildings give an indication of the possible sequence of buildings in this area (see Fig. 12, Schemes 1 and 2).

If three buildings occupied the site at any one time then the only buildings which could have co-existed, given restrictions on space, would have been 4, 1 and 20 (Scheme 3, Fig. 12) or 16 and 20 with either 19 or 13. The minimum number of elements in the occupation of this part of the site is again seven.

It could be argued that the closeness of Buildings 16 and 19 (with a gap of only 0.90 m between post rings), 18 and 2 (1.20 m), 17 and 14 (0.90 m) or 4 and 1 (1.10 m) indicates the implausibility of Scheme 3, but an eight element scheme pairing Buildings 1 and 20 (2.30 m gap), 17 and 19 (2.00 m), 10 and 4 (4.20 m) and 16 and 13 (1.90 m) would leave a very incomplete chronological sequence (Fig. 12, Scheme 4). Again the spaces between the post rings are small. The average distance between post ring and wall line as indicated by porch posts for 11 of the 20 buildings on the 'island' site was 1.3 m while the average for the five buildings with porch posts in the southern part of this site was 1.5 m. The minimum average spacing between post rings is therefore 2.6 m. If this is accepted then the majority of the buildings on the part of the site must have been single structures. In Scheme 5 there could only have been a maximum of three paired buildings with six single buildings. Building 20 could have been paired with 16, 17 or 18 or building 2 with 17, while Building 4 could have co-existed with 10, 19, 14, 6 or 13, 2 and 20. This scheme would have involved too many permutations to be represented diagrammatically.

Given the long occupation span of the southern part of this site, the linear arrangement of buildings in the northern part is seen as consisting of single units with the possibility that more than one was standing at any one time. The distance between the buildings exceeds that necessary for Scheme 5 above.

If posthole 413 is seen as an internal feature to Building 3 than Building 5 postdates it. There were no relationships between Buildings 8, 15, 9, although 8a was seen as a partial rebuild of Building 8. The post rings of Building 8 and 9 were too close for contemporaneity.

If Building 7a is seen as being a rebuild of Building 7 (ie 7a postdates 7) then 7a was replaced by Building 11 (ie 11 is later than 7) which in turn was replaced by Building 12 (ie 12 is later than 11 and 7a).

The pottery helps to determine the development of the buildings over the 'island' through time and to define further some of the chronological schemes proposed above. Deverel Rimbury pottery was found in the positions occupied by Building 10 and 12, although the houses were probably of later date. This suggests that both the northern and southern parts of the island were being used at this time. The plain ware pottery came from the whole of the excavated area while the later decorated pottery was not found

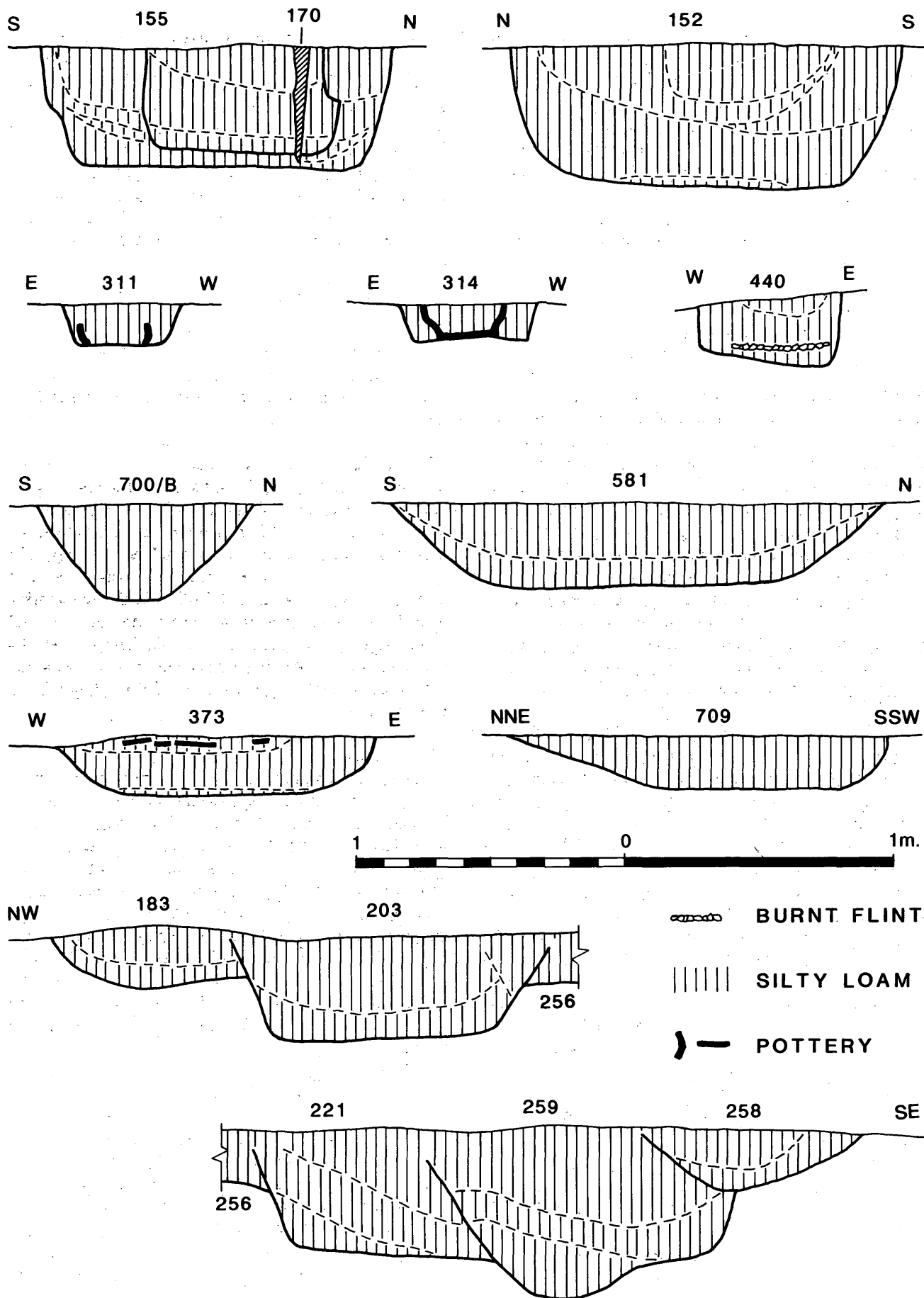


Figure 17 Area 5: pit sections

Table 3: Area 5, dimensions and posthole depths of four and six post structures

Structure	Dimensions	Depth of postholes	Area in sq. m
A	1.10 x 1.20 max.	0.23, 0.24, 0.27, 0.22	1.32
B	0.90 x 1.05	0.20, 0.16, 0.18, 0.19	0.95
C	1.50 x 1.75 max.	0.22, 0.30, 0.24, 0.21	2.63
D	1.10 x 1.30	0.15, 0.18, 0.15, 0.13, 0.12, 0.22	+1.43
E	2.45 x 3.15	0.09, 0.14, 0.25, 0.05	7.72
F	1.65 x 3.40 max.	0.29, 0.23, 0.20, 0.07	5.61
G	1.20 x 1.80 max.	0.09, 0.11, 0.11, 0.06	2.16
H	3.50 x 3.50 max.	0.07, 0.08, 0.10, 0.15, 0.014, 0.03	+ 12.25
I	2.10 x 2.45 max.	0.16, 0.13, 0.20, 0.07	5.15
J	2.10 x 2.50 max.	0.14, 0.18, 0.03, 0.12	5.25
K	2.35 x 2.65 max.	0.24, 0.29, 0.04, 0.19, 0.08, 0.09	6.23

Maximum dimensions apply to irregular structures

N of Building 15, where it occurred in one of the postholes. It was also found in two postholes of Building 5, confirming the suggestion made above that Building 5 is later than Building 3. The rest of the decorated pottery came from pits and postholes in the cluster of overlapping structures in the southern part of the area. The pairing of Building 14 and 17 suggested above, with Building 4, which contained decorated pottery, replacing Buildings 2 (plain ware) and 18, is upheld by the pottery. The decorated wares in Building 15 suggest that this was a replacement for Buildings 8a and 9, which were associated with plain wares. The location of features containing decorated wares and the number of replacement houses in the southern part of the site suggest that this part of the site was the last to be abandoned.

FOUR AND SIX POST STRUCTURES (Fig. 9)

Up to eleven four and six post structures were found on this gravel island. Two possible structures, E and F, have already been considered as a possible elaborate porch arrangement for Building 15 (see above). The size of the four post structures varied enormously from 0.90 x 1.05 m (structure B) to 2.45 x 3.15 m (structure E). If E is indeed part of the porch of Building 15 then the largest four post structure was J at 2.10 x 2.50 m.

It is possible that structure D was reinforced by the introduction of an additional support 525 midway along the southwestern side and perhaps an external brace 524. The six post structure H appeared to have four large corner posts reinforced by two smaller postholes 487 and 490 on the NW side. This structure is nearly 13 times as large as the smallest four post structure and 2.3 times as large as structure J. Structure K was represented by two parallel rows of three comparable-sized postholes and was about half the size of Structure H.

FENCE LINES (Fig. 9)

Two parallel fence lines were identified in the southeastern part of the site. The fences were 3.30 to 3.85 m apart. Their purpose is unknown but they may have led to a structure in the unexcavated part of the site to the S. It is likely that the

four post structure B is contemporary as it seems to have respected the line of the fence.

TWO POST STRUCTURES

Several pairs of posts could be identified because of similarities in shape and position. The 38 pairs of posts range in size from 0.45 m to 2.65 m apart (centre of post to centre of post). Several seem to cluster around the size range 0.95 m to 1.15 m. Other clusters appear in the range 1.50–1.65 m, at 1.85 m and between 2.30–2.45 m. Of the two smallest pairs, both of which were 0.45 m apart, one pair (341, 432) was represented by stakeholes 0.05 m in diameter and 0.04 m deep (surviving depth). Eighteen of the two post structures were orientated approximately NE/SW, 10 NW/SE, 9 E/W and 1 N/S.

PITS (Fig. 17)

At least 132 pits were excavated (of these 11 were unnumbered and unrecorded except on plan) on this gravel island. Pits can be divided into two categories; scoops, and those with a basin-like profile. Of those excavated, there were 50 scoops and 61 more definite pits, while 10 which were only partially preserved due to disturbance by later features could not be assigned to a particular group. The scoops ranged in size from 0.36 to 2.00 m (maximum dimensions), and had depths from 0.06 to 0.30 m (eg Fig. 17; 373, 709). The pits varied in size from 0.40 to 1.70 m and had a greater range of depths, from 0.09 to 0.51 m. Of the 61 basin-like pits 12 had very steep sides, often approaching the vertical (eg Fig. 17; 155, 152).

Some of the pits were discrete features, but redigging could result in strings of pits (eg S of Building 10 – Fig. 9; pits 183, 203 etc.) and pit complexes (eg NE of Building 7).

The subsoil of the site was such that distinguishing deliberate fill from natural layers within the backfill was not always easy. The vast majority of pits did not penetrate into the underlying gravel; indeed, many stopped when gravel was reached. Because the gravel was very compact it may have been easier to dig two small pits than one large one. As a result of the similarity between material used for

backfilling and the natural subsoil it was difficult to distinguish between silting of the bottoms of pits and deliberate backfilling. Some of the scoops may have originated as more typical basin-like profiles whose sides eroded after being left open for some time. During excavation it was observed that the sides of excavated pits were unstable after heavy rain and a misplaced foot too close to an edge could alter a profile drastically. It was also not uncommon to find 200 to 300 mm of sludge at the bottom of a small feature after each downpour.

With these factors in mind, an attempt has been made to distinguish between different types of filling sequence. Eleven examples (9.9%) had been left open long enough for silts to gather in the bottom before they had been refilled with settlement rubbish. Thirty-six (32.4%) had been completely refilled with occupation debris and nineteen (17.1%) had silted up naturally. Forty-five (40.5%) examples had either silted up naturally or had been refilled deliberately without using midden material. The relationship between pit type and filling sequence is given in Table 4.

The majority of pits filled either naturally by silting or deliberately with non-occupation debris occur mainly in the pit group in the northernmost part of the site. Here a great mass of intercutting scoops and other pits was found. Some of the pits were deliberately infilled with deposits of midden material, but many had either silted up naturally through erosion of the sides and/or from piles of upcast or had been backfilled with upcast from digging adjacent pits.

The function of the basin-like pits was probably grain storage although there was no direct evidence in the form of carbonised remains to confirm this. Their size in comparison with other sites would tend to favour this interpretation. There is additional evidence for the use of pits for food storage in the form of a very thin (c 1 mm) layer of clay on part of the side of pit 440. In this part of the pit the clay had been preserved from the ravages of worm action by the presence of a whole pot lying against the side of the pit, representing the reuse of the pit for rubbish disposal (Fig. 17). The reuse of storage pits for disposal of rubbish is attested at other sites (Bradley *et al.* 1980), but the function of the scoops is unknown. At Aldermaston it is suggested that they were gravel quarries (Bradley *et al.*

1980). This can be ruled out for this subsite at Reading Business Park, as the scoops stopped at or before the surface of the gravel. Two pits had pots set in them. One, pit 314, was probably associated with Building 10, where it would have lain just inside the wall line. The other, pit 311, c 3.0 m W of Building 5, contained an inverted pot whose base had been removed by later ploughing (Fig. 17). Nothing was found associated with this pot.

The large pit 581 lying W of Building 7 appeared to have had a specific function. It was 1.85–2.00 m in diameter and 0.30 m deep and had 45° sides and a flat bottom (Figs. 9 and 17). The lower third of the fill consisted of a silt containing frequent flecks of charcoal and a large quantity of burnt flint. The upper part of the pit appeared to have been used for domestic rubbish disposal. Within the lower part of the fill were six fragments of fired clay with two more pieces in the upper part. Close by was a tree throw hole 680 containing within its fill settlement rubbish including two identifiable fragments of clay mould (see Chapter 7: Mould fragments). It is probable that industrial activities were conducted in this part of the subsite. This activity predates, at least in part, the construction of Building 8.

Before pit 152 was used for rubbish disposal, flint knapping took place in it. It was large enough to squat in and it is possible to imagine someone sheltering from the wind at the bottom of the pit while creating a tool or tools. The small number of waste flakes (46) lying in the pit floor suggests a single occurrence of this activity.

The comparatively small numbers of pits at this site (compared with, for example, Aldermaston Wharf, where according to the author there were 49 pits and only 2 buildings (Bradley *et al.* 1980, but see Chapter 9) suggest that not all the pits were found. Certainly the pits continue to the NE just inside the boundary ditch, although the existence of more buildings in this area cannot be ruled out. The southernmost group of pits lay on the slope of the island and additional pits may have lain on the side of the island outside the excavation area, SE of Buildings 10, 13 and 19 and perhaps NW of Buildings 3, 5, 7 and 8.

Apart from the occasional pit already mentioned in the building descriptions, it is impossible to assign particular pits to individual or paired buildings because of the large

Table 4: Area 5, pit type and filling sequence

	Scoops		% of total	Other pits		
	Number	% of scoops		Number	% of other pits	% of total
Silts and occupation debris	1	2%	0.9%	10	16.4%	9.9%
Occupation debris	17	34%	15.3%	19	31.1%	17.1%
Natural silting	8	16%	7.2%	11	18.8%	9.9%
Silting or clean deliberate fill	24	48%	21.6%	21	24.4%	18.9%

number of buildings and the distribution of pits. This is particularly unfortunate in the case of pit 247, where it would have been of great interest to know from which building the pottery assemblage derived: it appears to have been the result of a single accident in which five pots were broken and disposed of simultaneously.

BOUNDARY DITCH

To the N of the settlement, at the bottom of the slope of the raised area, was boundary ditch 700. The ditch was 0.8–0.9 m wide and c 0.3 m deep. The profile varied from being V-shaped with 45° slopes to having slopes of 45–60° with a flat or rounded bottom (Fig. 17). Either the ditch was dug in segments or a recutting had cut through an earlier entrance. In the bottom of the eastern section the traces of a butt end were apparent. The western part was slightly deeper and wider than the eastern part. No traces of recuts were apparent in any of the excavated sections across the ditch.

FIELD SYSTEMS

Indications of an associated field system were located in

two areas 40 m and 200 m away from the settlement. To the SE of the settlement a 15 m length of ditch, orientated NE-SW, was found in three trenches (labelled as 6 in Fig. 2). This ditch 93 was 0.9–1.1 m wide and c 0.45 m deep, with sides of c 75° and a rounded bottom. It contained four sherds of LBA pottery. Approximately 200 m W of the settlement a short length of ditch 103, ending in a sump 102, was found in assessment trench 3 (Fig. 2). The ditch was 1.3 m wide and 0.37 m deep with 30–45° sides and a rounded base. The ditch widened to c 2.0 m for the final 3.0 m with an increased depth of c 0.5 m. Ditch 103 contained one sherd of late Bronze Age pottery.

A pond at least 3.5 m in diameter and 1.15 m deep was discovered 18 m to the N of the sump but was only partially excavated. The pond and the ditch to the S were sealed by a ploughsoil belonging to the early Roman period. This ploughing had occurred after slight alluviation, before the main alluvial deposits were laid down. The pond, although not directly dated by artefacts, is thought to belong to the late Bronze Age and to be associated with the field boundary to the S. Waterlogged deposits were present in its lower fills (see Chapter 8: Bronze Age plant remains).