

Chapter 4: Area 3100

by John Moore

Trial trenching located an area of late Bronze Age activity. The overall development plan dictated that only part of this settlement could be excavated before Phase 1 of the development took place. Accordingly an area of some 7700 sq. m was stripped, revealing an apparently well ordered settlement beside a watercourse. The settlement overlay an earlier field system.

INTRODUCTION (Fig. 31)

Area 3100 lay approximately 500 m NW of Area 5 on a flat area at the foot of a slight rise to the W (Area 4000). The subsoil was gravel without a capping of loess material like that found in Area 4000. Ploughing and the subsequent use of Small Mead Farm as a sewage works resulted in the survival of only negative features cut into the gravel.

The western limits of the late Bronze Age settlement were exposed, although some activity, perhaps associated with the pre-settlement field system, was found to the W of the boundary ditch. The extent of the archaeological features appeared to have been reached to the N, where the watercourse was probably the limit of the settlement. To the S topsoil artefact densities and assessment trenches had indicated no activity and this area was designated for spoil storage. Unfortunately, it transpired that the settlement extended into this area and this part of it could not be examined. The occupation is known to extend at least for a further 70 m to the E, where excavation will be carried out before Phase 2 of the development.

PRE-SETTLEMENT FIELD SYSTEM

(Figs. 18–20)

A system of rectangular fields predated the late Bronze Age settlement. Most of the boundaries had been cleared out or redug on up to three occasions. After each redigging, the positions of most of the field entrances changed. The fact that most of the redigging took place in virtually the same position each time, often removing most of the evidence for earlier phases (eg Fig. 20, 3814/B), leaves us with an incomplete picture of development. The ditch depths were variable, with shallow recuts replacing deeper cuts (Fig. 20, 3657/E) and *vice versa* (Fig. 19, 3523/C and D/3). The profiles varied from wide shallow flat-bottomed (Fig. 20, 3657/E latest cut) through wide deeper cuts with rounded bottoms (Fig. 19, 3781/B) to narrow V-shaped profiles (Fig. 20, 3808/C).

The short length of gully 3956 projecting southwards from the SW corner of field A and the short lengths of gully along the W side of field D suggest that the original fields may have been marked by discontinuous lengths of ditch (similar to the field systems further to the N in Area 5000).

Field A may have been the original field with continuous ditches to which other fields were added. The E and S boundary ditches of field A appeared to have been continuous in the primary phase (Fig. 19, 3225/F/5, E/3; Fig. 20, 3225/H). The misalignment of the two parts of the S ditch of Field B in phase 4 can probably be attributed to the desire to create entrances between the fields; this involved the deliberate infilling of the boundary ditch 3523 (which in phase 3 was continuous) at the SE corner of field A and the redigging of a section of the ditch on a slightly different alignment in order to create gaps between fields A and B and A and C (Fig. 19, 3225/E/1–2, 3225/F/2–4).

In phase 4 the W boundary ditch of field C and the N ditch of field D were continuous, with a presumed opening between fields A and C. The southern ditch of field A in the SW corner ended in a sump during either phase 3 or phase 4 (Fig. 20, 3790/F/1–6).

There was no evidence to suggest that the field system continued to the W, but it continued to the N, E and S. The ditches of this field system had almost completely filled up before the digging of the pits associated with the later settlement (Fig. 20, pit 3656 cutting ditch 3657/A).

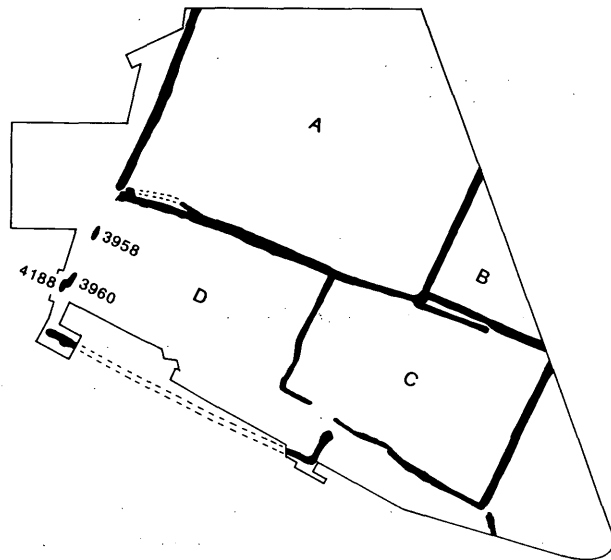
The position of the structure (Building 3110; Fig. 31) and the four post (3100X) may indicate that they were associated with this field system. Both lay outside the late Bronze Age settlement boundary. If they were contemporary with the settlement they must have had some specialised use. No dating evidence or artefacts were forthcoming from the features associated with these structures. For convenience they are described within the relevant sections of the 3100 settlement below.

In addition several postholes were found outside the boundary ditch, although they appear to be a continuation of a spread of similar features between the boundary ditch and the four post structures. There is no apparent patterning of these features and again they may be associated with the pre-settlement activity in the area.

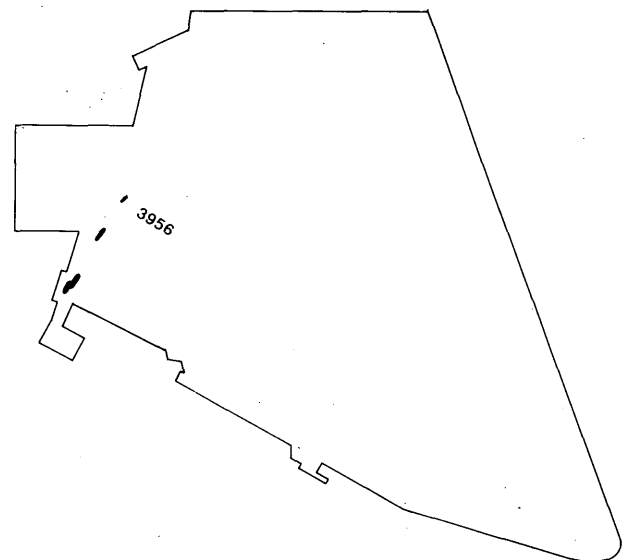
BOUNDARY DITCHES (Figs. 21 and 31)

The settlement area appeared originally to have been bounded on the W side by a shallow gully 3770, 3779 and later by a slightly deeper ditch 3779, 3780. The gully was

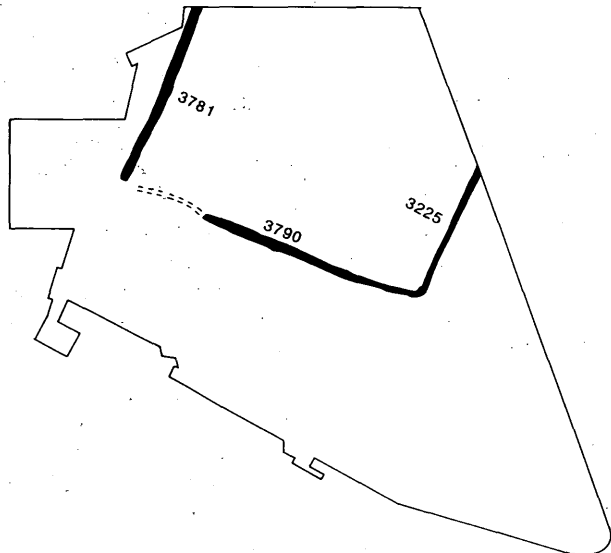
All field boundaries



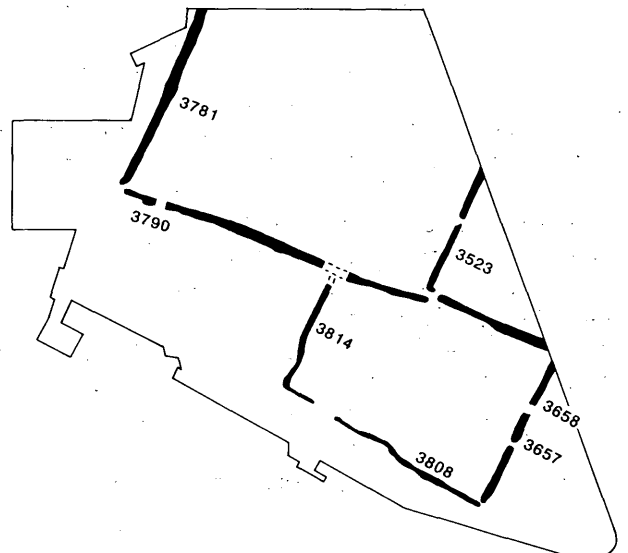
Phase 1



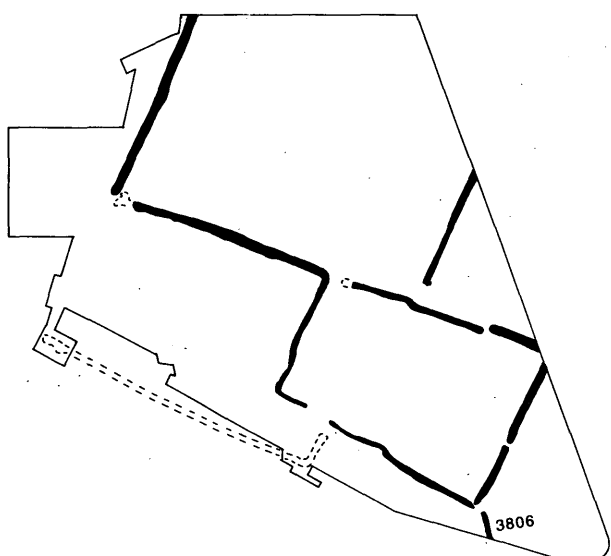
Phase 2



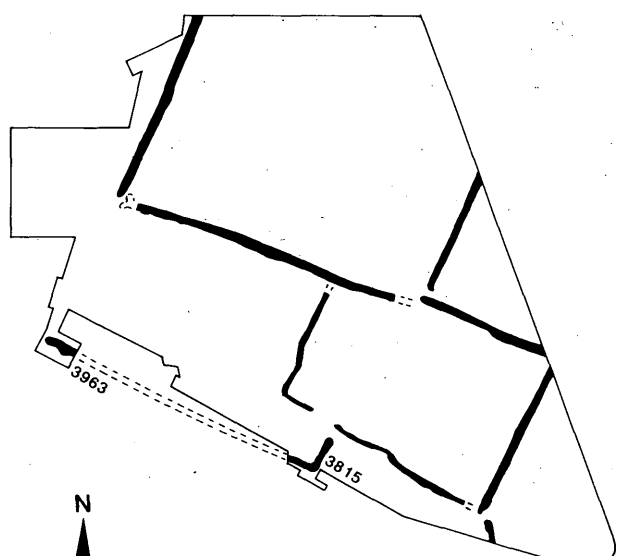
Phase 3



Phase 4



Phase 5



0 50 100 m.



Figure 18 Area 3100: pre-settlement field system

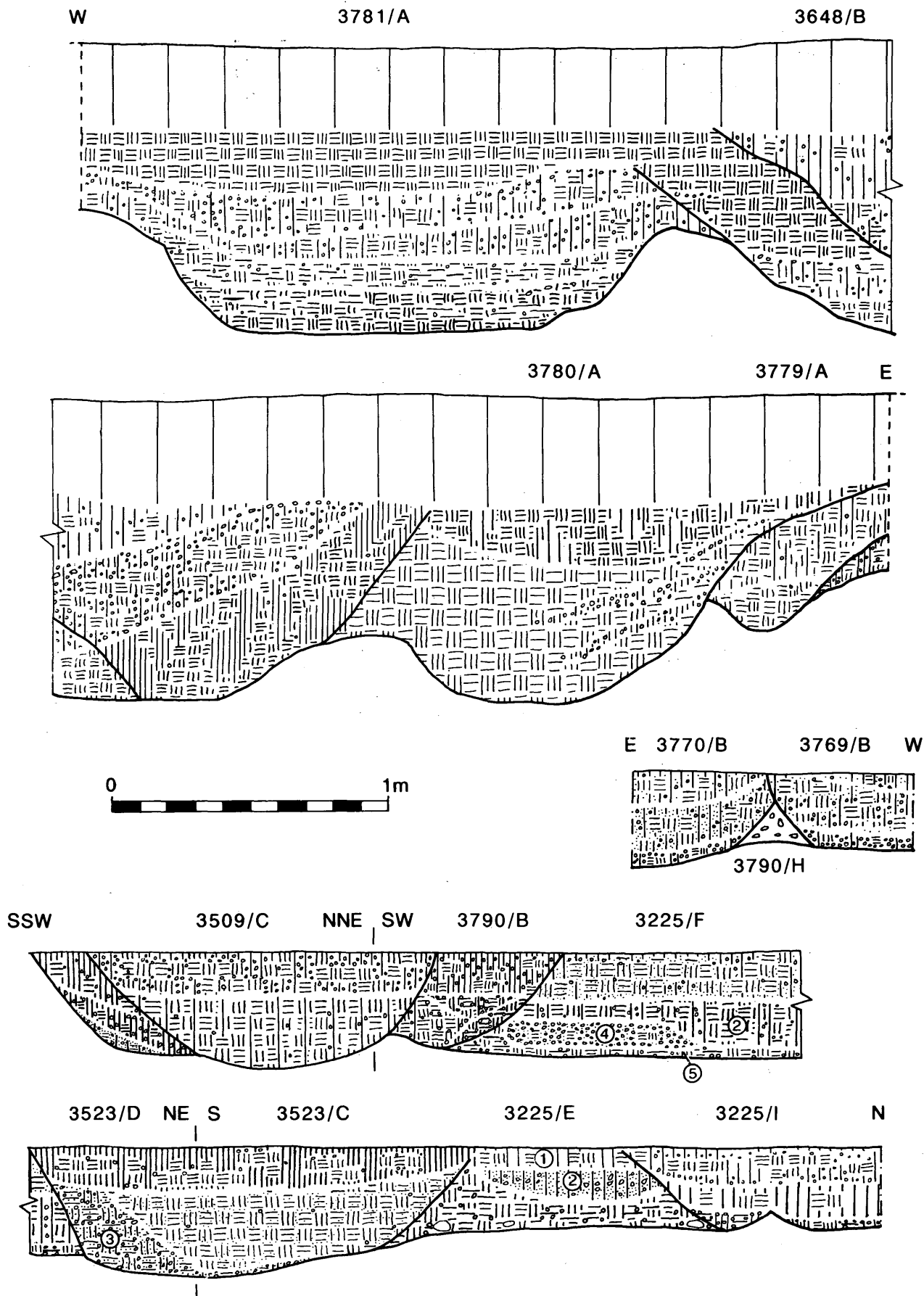


Figure 19 Area 3100: pre-settlement field system, sections

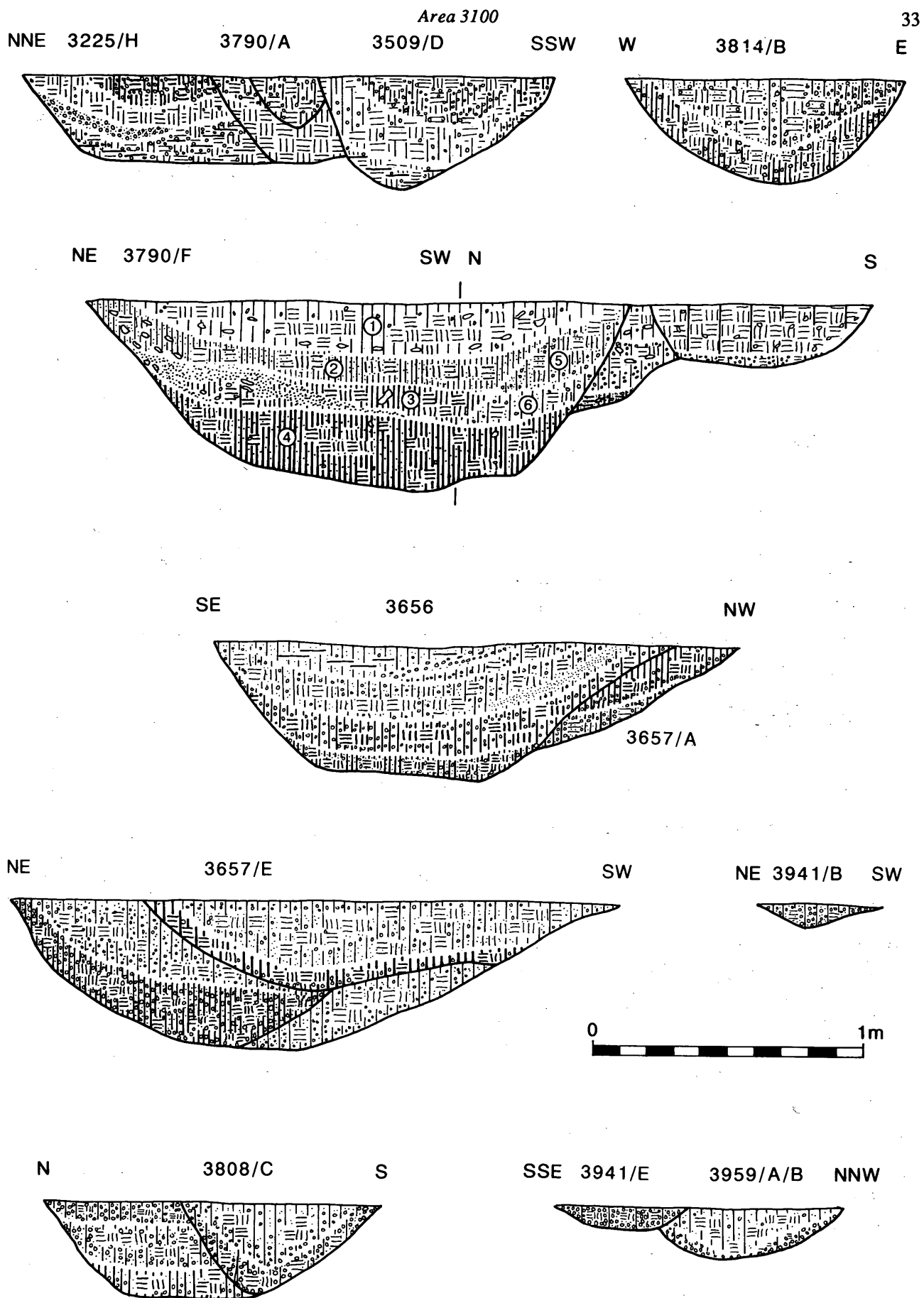


Figure 20 Area 3100: pre-settlement field system, sections



Figure 21 Area 3100: entrance through late Bronze Age boundary ditch with ring ditch in foreground

in two lengths with a 2.5 m gap opposite the small ring ditch 3941. The depth of the gully varied from 0.14 m to 0.38 m (at the N end where preservation was better) and its width from 0.54 m to 0.85 m, the greater width again being at the N end. The profile was variable, with some parts having a flat bottom while others were well rounded, and the angle of slope of the sides varied between 45° and 60°. The replacement ditch 3769, 3780, again had a causeway, 6.0 m long, opposite the small ring ditch. The depth of the ditch varied from 0.17 m to 0.7 m (at the N) and the width from 0.7 m to 1.80 m. The ditch profile was either flat-bottomed or slightly rounded with sides at 45° to 60°. In the TWA assessment trench the possible remains of a shallow earlier cut on the W side of 3780 were seen. These settlement boundary ditches partly cut through the silts of the old river channel 4179 at the N end of the area and in part were cut through by later courses of the waterway. Both the gully and the ditch were seen to cut through one of the ditches (3790/H) of the earlier field system (Fig. 19).

A post-medieval ditch (3648) like that in Area 5000 was found on the same alignment as the late Bronze Age settlement boundary ditches (see Chapter 5: Area 5000).

During the mechanical emptying of ditch fills a ditch at right-angles to the boundary ditch was found. Although the E end of this ditch (4204) had been cut away by the post-medieval ditch 3648 it is presumed that it joined with

the boundary ditch 3780, unless a very narrow causeway existed between them. It cut the earlier field system.

RING DITCH (Figs. 21 and 31)

A small ring ditch (3941) lay outside the enclosed settlement area. Its relationship to the settlement and earlier field system is unclear. It may have lain at the corner of an earlier field and the entrance to the later settlement may have been deliberately positioned opposite the ring ditch. Alternatively, the monument may have been built after the settlement was laid out and positioned just outside an entrance. The surviving gully was 0.48 m wide and very shallow at 0.06 – 0.08 m deep. It formed a complete circle of internal diameter 3.0 m. The circular gully cut an earlier pit 3959 (Fig. 20). This small circular pit, c 0.65 m in diameter and 0.18 m deep, did not produce any finds.

POSTHOLES (Fig. 31)

Area 3100 contained 928 postholes and stake holes, of which 139 have been assigned to roundhouses, 96 to four and six post structures and 78 to two post 'racks'. The 'assigned' postholes account for 33.7% of the total, much less than the 58.9% for Area 5. The reasons for this difference are discussed below (Chapter 9: Postholes).

More structures may well exist and some postholes assigned to structures may in fact belong to other buildings.

Table 5: Area 3100, doorway direction

House	Direction
3100	ESE
3102	SE*
3103	SE*
3105	SE
3106	ESE*
3108	ESE
3109	SE

* = possible doorway

As in Area 5 (see Chapter 3: Postholes), 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 differences in height of the various uprights. All measurements between postholes are given from centre to centre.

THE BUILDINGS (Fig. 31)

Ten circular buildings have been identified as well as a possible oval structure and two buildings whose plans were based on a segment of a circle. As in Area 5, the post circles which have been identified are interpreted as rings of roof support posts, with walls some distance outside them (Avery and Close Brooks 1969). Unlike the buildings in Area 5, however, the structures do not seem to have been rebuilt in the same position, the only case of wall lines overlapping being Buildings 3103, 3104 and 3111. Of the ten circular buildings four had central posts, but because the plans of several buildings were incomplete it is possible that others may originally have been constructed with a central support. Four doorways in the wall line have been identified and in another three cases possible entrance positions were indicated by the postholes on the post ring. One of the differences between Area 3100 and Area 5 is that in some buildings in Area 3100 internal porch posts could be identified by their greater size. This was not possible in Area 5, where in most

cases there was no difference between the size of the internal porch posts and those of the post ring, and in a number of buildings entrances cannot be identified.

Building 3100 (Figs. 22 and 23)

This is a 13 post structure of which ten original postholes on the post ring survived. The diameter of the post ring was 8.25 m. The posthole diameters ranged from 0.32 to 0.50 m and the depths from 0.16 to 0.34 m. The spacing between the posts varied between 1.60 and 2.65 m. The positions of the posts had been marked out accurately, only two postholes having their centres lying more than 100 mm from the circumference of the ring. Two porch posts (3601, 3370) on the wall line lay opposite posts 3944 and 3945 on the post ring. The outer porch postholes were considerably more substantial than those of the post ring (c 0.70 by 0.50 m). The inner porch posts may have been replaced, as two postholes (3602 and 3369) lie 0.60 m (centre to centre) N of 3944 and 3945 respectively. Two postholes were found inside the building. One (3952) was 0.50 x 0.40 m and 0.14 m deep while the other (4181) was c 0.31 m in diameter and 0.10 m deep. Three more postholes, 3953–5, lay in the area between the post ring and the suspected wall line. All five may have been contemporary with this building, as may pit 3964. This small pit was not excavated but its surviving surface dimensions were 0.63 x 0.54 m. It would have lain outside the building against the wall. The doorway was 1.80 m wide (from centre to centre of the porch posts) and the distance between the wall line and post ring was 1.7 m, giving overall dimensions for the building of 11.4 m.

Building 3101 (Fig. 22)

This building was originally a structure consisting of 12 or 13 posts on a roof support post ring. Unfortunately, evidence for only five posts survived. Any porch posts on a wall line on the SE side of the building would have been outside the excavation area. The maximum diameter of the surviving postholes ranged from 0.28 to 0.52 m and their depths from 0.10 to 0.24 m. The diameter of the post ring was 8.5 m.

Building 3102 (Fig. 22)

This is represented by an eight hole post ring (six postholes of which survive) 8.15 m in diameter, arranged around a central post. The circle was irregularly laid out, with two-

Table 6: Area 3100, house dimensions

House	Post ring diameter	Wall diameter	Doorway width	Central post?
3100	8.25 m	11.40 m	1.80 m	No
3101	8.50 m	-	-	No
3102	8.15 m	-	-	No
3103	8.15 m	-	-	Yes
3104	5.30 m	-	-	No
3105	7.90 m	10.80 m	1.85 m	Yes
3106	8.05 m	11.45 m	2.70 m	Yes
3107	6.25 m	-	-	No
3108	6.70 m	9.70 m	1.40 m	No
3109	8.30 m	11.50 m	2.40 m	No

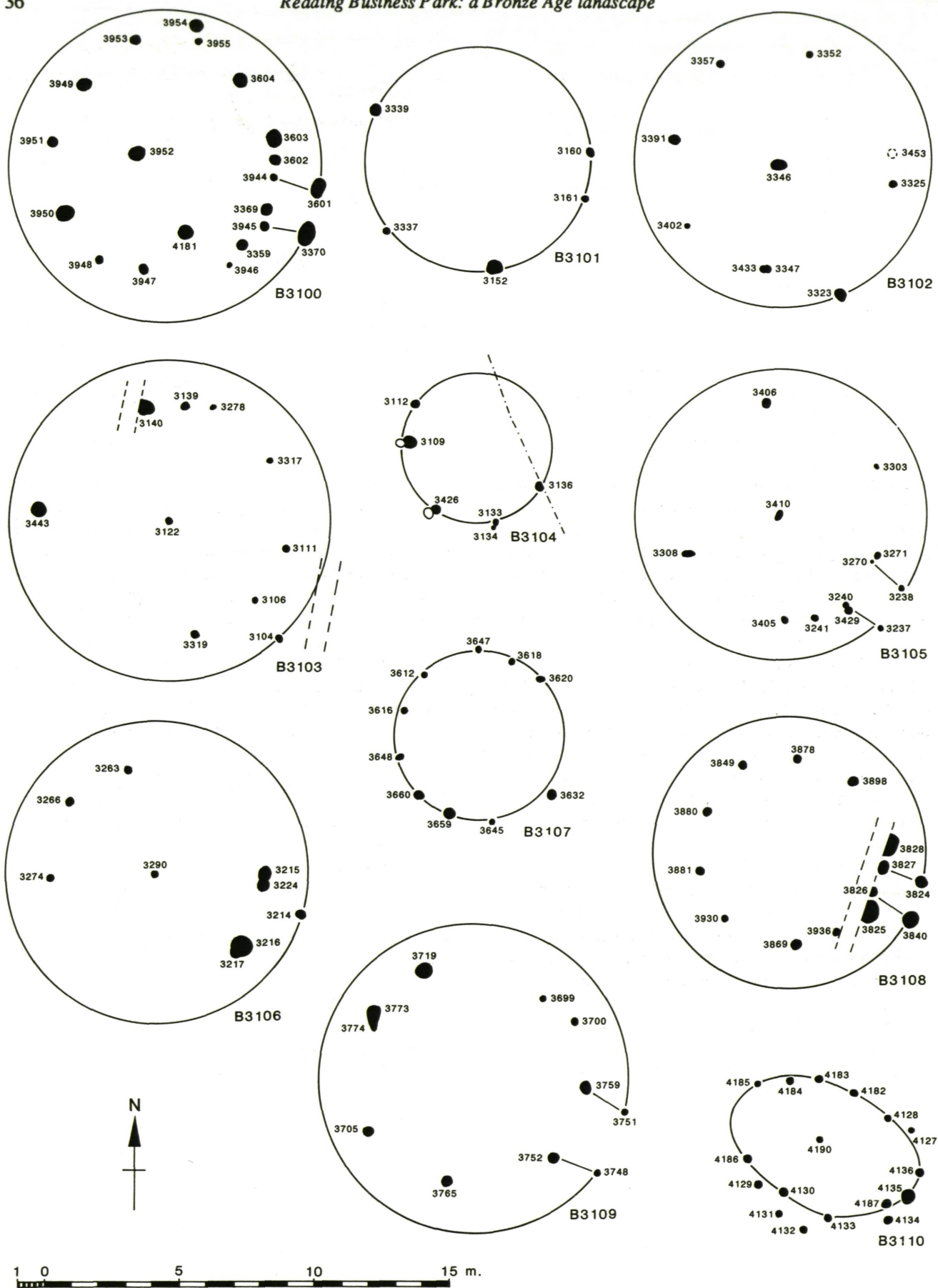


Figure 22 Area 3100: Buildings 3100-3110



Figure 23 Area 3100: Building 3100

thirds of the posts lying more than 100 mm from the circumference. Posthole 3453 lay on the post ring but may be unconnected with this structure. Posthole 3323 may have been a porch post on the wall line (see below).

Building 3103 (Fig. 22)

This was a probably an 11 post structure of which evidence for six to eight posts on the post ring survived. The post ring had a diameter of c 8.75 m and was arranged around a central post. Posthole 3104 is probably the position for a porch post on a wall line.

What may have been the rear post on the post ring appeared to have been more substantial, with the posthole 3443 having a diameter of 0.53 m as opposed to 0.25 to 0.30 m for the other posts. The possible posthole 3140 may not have belonged to this building as its size was atypical (0.7 x 0.6 m). The short distance between 3139 and 3278 suggests that only one of these postholes belonged to this structure.

Building 3104 (Fig. 22)

Part of the area covered by this building lay outside the excavated area. The diameter of the post ring represented by the five surviving postholes indicates that this was the smallest building on any of the sites in the Reading Business Park. The diameter of the post ring would have been 5.3 m. This structure was earlier than Building 3111 with postholes 3109 and 3426 cut by 3110 and 3427 respectively.

Building 3105 (Fig. 22)

This has a central post 3410 with a post ring 7.9 m in diameter and an overall diameter for the building of 10.8 m as indicated by porch posts (3238, 3237) on the wall lines. The close spacing of 3241 and the postholes on either side of it suggests either that this was a supplementary support or that it was unconnected with the building. The additional posts (3429 and 3271 or 3270) in the porch indicate that the internal porch posts were replaced as in Buildings 3100 and 3106. 3429 was a replacement for 3240 while 3271 was probably the replacement for 3270 (3270 is in a better position, immediately opposite outer porch post 3238, to be an original support). Again the inner porch posts were not much bigger than the outer posts; 3270 was the smallest post in the building. The outer porch posts were of comparable size to those of the post ring, unlike those in Building 3100 where they were much larger.

Building 3106 (Fig. 22)

The remains of this possible house were somewhat exiguous, surviving in the form of a pair of probable inner porch posts opposite an arc of three posts and a central post. The diameter of the post ring was 8.05 m. The probable porch postholes were the exception for this subsite as they were substantially larger than the three postholes at the rear of the building. The original porch postholes 3215 and 3217 were about 0.50 m in diameter and 0.20 to 0.34 m deep. The northern replacement 3224 was of the same size, but the southern one 3216 was even larger, 0.85 m in diameter. The

rear posts 3263, 3266 and 3274 were in the size range 0.30 – 0.35 m and 0.12 to 0.14 m deep, comparable with the central posthole. A possible outer porch post 3214 may indicate a wall line c 1.70 m from the post ring.

Building 3107 (Fig. 22)

This building probably comprised 11 posts arranged around a post ring 6.25 m in diameter. A probable posthole on the E side was not located. These posts were more irregularly laid out than some of the other buildings, with three postholes sited more than 100 mm from the mean circumference. The spacings of the postholes varied from 1.25 to 2.40 m, averaging 1.65 m. The maximum diameters of the postholes varied from 0.18 to 0.45 m and there was a difference in absolute level of the bases of 0.12 m, with surviving depths of between 0.04 and 0.12 m. The two features 3645 and 3647 were probably postholes.

Building 3108 (Fig. 22)

This is represented by ten posts on the post ring with one (between 3898 and 3828) presumably destroyed by the pipe trench for the 19th-century sewage works. The postholes are arranged symmetrically on either side of a line drawn through the centre of the entrance to the rear posthole 3880. The only difficulty in interpreting this building concerns the entrance. The outer porch posts 3824 and 3840 appear to be sited opposite postholes 3827 and 3825 but better spacing and symmetry are given by pairing the two large features 3828 and 3825 and pairing 3826 with 3827. If 3826 and 3827 are paired, however, either as original or replacement porch posts, the distance between them is rather too small to be convenient as an entrance.

Building 3109 (Fig. 22)

This comprised seven surviving postholes on the post ring with two porch posts on the SE side of the building. The diameter of the post ring was 8.3 m while the overall diameter of the building would have been c 11.5 m. The porch posts (3751, 3748 – probable postholes) were set 2.40 m (centre to centre) apart. Posthole 3774 is preferred above 3773 because it is more directly opposite the doorway and was a more accurate fit for the proposed wall line.

Building 3110 (Fig. 22)

This is a possible oval or boat-shaped structure arranged around a central post 4190. The best interpretation for this collection of postholes is perhaps one in which 4136 was originally the rear post with 4187 and 4127 positioned equidistant from 4136 and from a line passing through the rear post and central post. 4182 and 4133 are approximately equal distances from the last pair although 4133 was set 0.50 m further away from the axis of the building. The slightly unequal spacing is balanced by the pair 4183 and 4130, which were exactly the same distance along the axis from the rear post and were the same distance away from the axis as the previous pair. The northern side then appears

to have been continued by the two postholes 4184 and 4185 and there was only one other post on the S side, 4186. Rebuilding is indicated by the additional post 4128 on the N side and the southern row of postholes 4129, 4131, 4132, 4134 and 4135. The new S side was built 0.30 to 0.80 m away from the original row of roof supports.

Building 3111 (Fig. 24)

This structure appears to have been built using the principles of a round house but as a segment instead of a complete circle. Four postholes lay on a post ring c 4.15 m from what would have been the central point of the building if it had been a complete circle, posthole 3121. Midway between the central point and the middle two posts (3316, 3110) on the post ring were two more supports, 3118 and 3108. All these supports were symmetrically arranged. Behind the arc of posts were another three postholes which may have been connected with this structure. The middle posthole, 3670, lay some 0.60 m from an axis drawn from 3121 between the posthole pairs 3108–3118 and 3110–3316. The southernmost support was 3427, cutting 3426 of Building 3104. Similarly, 3110 of the arc cuts 3109 of Building 3104.

Building 3112 (Fig. 25)

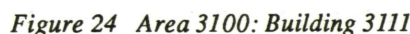
This structure also appears to have been built as a segment of a complete round house, like Building 3111. The construction principles, however, differ in respect of the two supports (3653, 3713) which lie between the central point and the arc. These lay on a line between the middle postholes on the straight sides and the two middle postholes on the arc, and also on a line with the two outer supports on the arc. As in Building 3111 three postholes behind the arc could have been associated with the structure.

Building arrangement (Fig. 31)

A certain amount of overlapping of buildings suggests a minimum of three phases of occupation. Buildings 3111 and 3103 lay in exactly the same place with 3104 impinging on them and 3104 was stratigraphically earlier than 3111.

The distribution of the buildings in this subsite suggests that the majority of the buildings were paired, although some reservations must be stated. Occupation is known to continue E of the excavated site, where the existence of more buildings is suspected. The southern edge of the site was not reached and more buildings may yet be found here. However, it does seem probable that buildings 3100 – 3101, 3102 – 3103, 3105 – 3106 and possibly 3108 – 3109 and 3107 – 3112 were all paired.

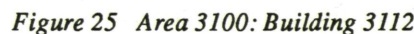
If Building 3101 had a similar aisle width between post ring and wall line as Building 3100 (1.80 m), the eaves of the two buildings would almost have touched each other. The doorway to Building 3100 is positioned so that it is in the shelter of Building 3101. If the relative positions of Buildings 3103 and 3102 were similar to the preceding pair then their walls would have been positioned c 1.60 m from the



The pottery is of little help in defining the chronological development of the settlement within the excavated area (Chapter 7: Prehistoric pottery). Additional excavation to the E may be of help in the future.

(Figs. 26 and 31)

Twenty-three four and six post structures were found on this subsite. The size of the four posters varied from 1.00 x 1.15 m (3100 V) to 2.30 x 2.40 m (3100 S). Excluding structure 3100K, which was probably a reinforced four post struc-



The two postholes 3716 and 3777 may be associated with structure 3100 K, while 3430 and 3247 appear to have been replacement posts for structure 3100 D. Drainage pipes for the sewage works have destroyed posts from structures 3100 P and 3100 X. The posts in structures 3100 H and 3100 L appear to have rotted *in situ*.

Several probable pairs of posts could be identified by similarity of form and relative positions. The 38 pairs of posts range from 0.45 m (centre to centre of post) to 2.95 m apart. Some clustering of sizes appears, comparable to that in Area 5. Clusters appear between 0.45 and 0.55 m, around 1.10 m, between 1.50 and 1.65 m and around 1.80 m and 2.10 m. One pair spaced 0.50 m and one spaced 1.50 m apart consisted of stakeholes. Thirteen of the two post structures were orientated approximately N-S, eleven NW-SE, seven NE-SW and six E-W. The main difference between this site and Area 5 is that many more two post structures were orientated N-S as opposed to NE-SW, whereas the proportions of the other two orientations are comparable between the two sites.

There were no obvious fence lines although various patterns can be made with the large number of unassigned postholes.

A total of 95 pits were identified and excavated. These can be divided into two categories: scoops and those with a basin-like profile. There were 24 scoops and 70 more definite

pits; one pit had been disturbed by later features and could not be assigned to a particular group. The scoops ranged in size from 0.60 to 1.30 m (maximum dimensions) and were 0.16 to 0.30 m deep. The pits varied in size from 0.70 to 2.80 m and had a wider range of depths, 0.24 to 0.42 m. Of the 70 basin-like pits only six had very steep sides, often approaching the vertical. This was probably a function of the natural gravel which was relatively loose, the sides eroding easily (eg pit 3469, Fig. 29).

A similar distinction was made between the different types of filling sequence to that already described in Area 5. Thirty-two examples (33.76%) had been left open long enough for silts to accumulate in the bottom before they had been refilled with settlement rubbish (Fig. 28, pits 3475, 3514, 3585, 3663, 3517, 3468). Thirteen (13.7%) had been completely refilled with occupation debris (Figs. 28 and 29, pits 3469, 3631, 3661) while 25 (26.3%) had silted up naturally (Figs. 28 and 29, pits 3664 3338, 3762). A further 25 had been refilled deliberately without using midden material (Figs. 29 and 30, 3371, 3420, 3508). The relationship between pit type and filling sequence is given in Table 8.

The function of the basin-like pits associated with the buildings was probably grain storage, although there was no direct evidence in the form of carbonised remains to confirm this. Their size in comparison to those at other sites would tend to favour this interpretation. The subsequent reuse of storage pits for disposal of rubbish is attested at

other sites, but the function of the scoops is unknown. At Aldermaston (Bradley *et al.* 1980, 227) a use as gravel quarries is suggested for their scoops but this use has been ruled out for Area 5 (see Chapter 3: Pits). One pit, 3514, had a lining of green clay over the bottom part where it had cut into the gravel (the top part had cut through as localised natural patch of silty clay). The lining varied in thickness from 10 to 70 mm (Fig. 28).

Several of the large pits (Figs. 28 and 29, 3469, 3516, 3585, 3631 and 3643, 3644, 3651, 3663, 3810) had been deliberately levelled with clean gravel. In one case this levelling occurred after a later posthole (3676) had gone out of use; the fill of the pit (Fig. 28, 3663) had presumably settled, making levelling necessary. In some of these cases (3516, 3631, 3643, 3651) the upper layers of pit fill were formed by domestic rubbish which appear to have been burnt *in situ*. Several other large pits (3470, 3473, 3515, 3667, 3679) demonstrated signs of *in situ* burning of domestic refuse. Several of these pits contained fired clay slabs which appear to be oven fragments (Chapter 7: Oven fragments or pit liner). None of these were found *in situ*; they had been deposited in the upper fills of the pits along with other domestic rubbish. About half of the fill of 3468 was made up of spoil from digging an adjacent feature; silts in the bottom were covered by material from the old ground surface under a layer of gravel before the rest of the pit was filled by domestic refuse (Fig. 28). The upper part of pit 3517 may

Table 7: Area 3100, four and six post structures, overall dimensions and depth of postholes

Structure	Dimensions	Depth of postholes	Area in sq. m
3100 A	1.90 x 1.30	0.24, 0.17, 0.13**	2.47
3100 B	1.50 x 2.60 max.*	0.15, 0.20, 0.24, 0.23	3.90
3100 C	2.20 x 2.50 max.	0.16, 0.20, 0.15, 0.20	5.50
3100 D	1.20 x 1.50 max.	0.15, 0.06, 0.14, 0.27	1.80
3100 E	1.80 x 1.30 max.	0.25, 0.18, 0.16, 0.10	2.34
3100 F	1.95 x 1.80 max.	0.17, 0.20, 0.28, 0.30	3.51
3100 G	1.90 x 2.60 max.	0.38, 0.12, 0.14, 0.10	4.94
3100 H	1.70 x 1.60 max.	0.25, 0.14, 0.15, 0.14	2.72
3100 I	1.20 x 1.65 max.	0.12, 0.16, 0.15, 0.15	1.98
3100 J	1.30 x 1.60 max.	0.14, 0.11, 0.06, 0.11	2.08
3100 K	1.20 x 1.50 max.	0.07, 0.16, 0.16, 0.10	1.80
3100 L	1.60 x 2.00 max.	0.20, 0.20, 0.11, 0.15, 0.16, 0.08	3.20
3100 M	1.35 x 1.60 max.	not excavated	2.40
3100 N	1.60 x 3.00 max.	0.15, 0.08, 0.21, 0.18, 0.04, 0.10	4.30
3100 P	2.00 x 2.10	0.16, 0.18, 0.19, 0.22, 0.20	4.20
3100 Q	2.00 x 2.15 max.	0.18, 0.18, 0.14, 0.17	4.30
3100 R	1.70 x 2.10 max.	0.20, 0.15, 0.19, 0.29	3.57
3100 S	2.30 x 2.40 max.	0.19, 0.13, 0.15, 0.13	5.52
3100 T	1.60 x 1.50	not excavated	2.40
3100 U	1.10 x 1.70 max.	0.11, 0.12, 0.12, 0.10	1.87
3100 V	1.00 x 1.15 max.	0.10, 0.10, 0.08, 0.15	1.15
3100 W	1.60 x 1.80	0.22, 0.37, 0.11, 0.31	2.88
3100 X	1.80 x 2.10	0.18, 0.21, 0.17	3.78

* Maximum dimensions apply to irregular structure
 ** dimensions proceed regularly about the rectangle

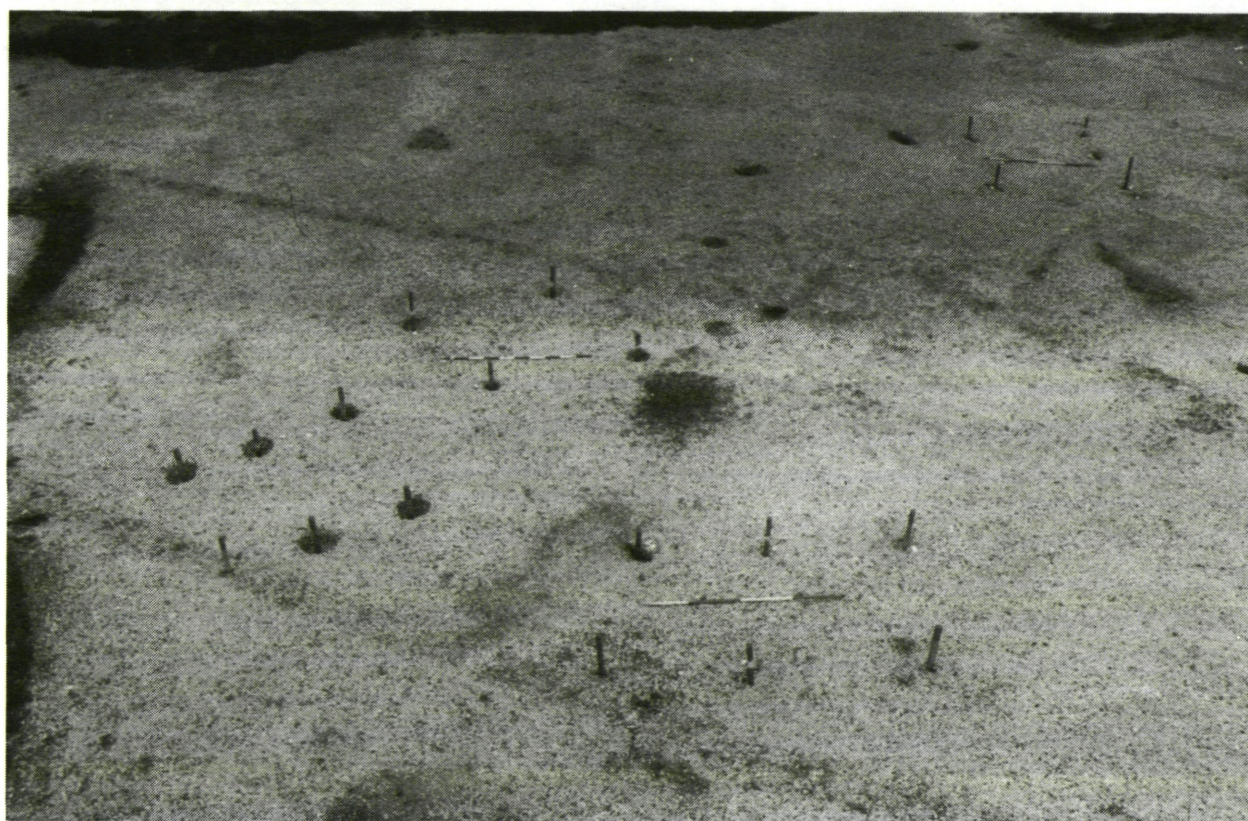


Figure 26 Area 3100: four and six post structures

have been deliberately refilled with material from a spoil heap (of the original upcast) lying to the S (Fig. 28).

Associating pit clusters with particular buildings or paired buildings is not as easy as at, for example, Aldermaston Wharf. It would appear that in Area 3100 at Reading Business Park houses were associated with a few isolated pits and not with clusters of several pits as at Aldermaston. This may be due to a difference in land use and the exploitation of resources at these two sites. At Reading there was a linear arrangement of pits along the southern side of the thoroughfare which seems to have had a specialised use. The environmental evidence (Chapter 8: Bronze Age plant remains) suggests that these pits were used for flax retting. Their size sets them apart from the other pits on the Reading Business Park sites; not only are they larger in plan but they are substantially deeper. The fact that the only Bronze Age waterlogged deposits found in the excavations apart from

those in the pond near Area 5 came from these pits suggests that they had been dug to a depth below the level of the water table. Examination of the spatial patterning of the flint implements for Area 3100 shows that a particular type of flint scraper is found associated with the linear arrangement of pits. One possible explanation for the edge damage on this type of implement is its use for flax stripping (Chapter 7: Worked flint, late Bronze Age). In addition, cutting/whittling flakes necessary in other stages of flax processing were found only in this linear pit cluster.

The settlement has not been excavated completely and pits along the extreme eastern and southern edge of the site may belong to as yet undiscovered buildings, but an attempt is made here to associate pits with individual buildings.

Pit 3964 has already been mentioned as lying against the wall line of Building 3100 and pit 3961 to the NW was probably also associated with this building. If Building

Table 8: Area 3100, relationship between pit type and filling sequence

	Scoops Number	% of scoops	% of total	Other pits Number	% of other pits	% of total
Silts and occupation debris	3	12.5	3.2	29	41.4	30.9%
Occupation debris	2	8.3%	2.1%	11	15.7%	11.7%
Natural silting	11	45.8%	11.7%	14	20.0%	14.9%
Clean deliberate fill	8	33.3%	8.5%	16	22.9	17.%



Figure 27 Area 3100: line of retting pits cutting pre-settlement field boundary

3101 was not paired with Building 3100 then pits 3157/3164, 3158 and 3345 may have been associated with Building 3100 on the E side or alternatively with a building outside the excavated area. Pits 3367 and 3155 may have been inside Building 3101 while 3313, 3334 and 3147 to the S could have been external pits associated with this structure.

The small pits 3321 and 3338 could have been internal features in Building 3102 and 3371 to the W and 3386–8 to the SW could have been external. Building 3105 may have been contemporary with pits 3314–5, 3310 (group on Fig. 30 between 3315 and 3330), 3330–1, 3333 to the NW and 3304 to the S. Five pits could have been internal features within Building 3103 (3113, 3123, 3129, 3296 and 3432) and the external pit 3420 could have been associated with Buildings 3103 or 3106. Pit 3228 (not shown on plan) may have been an internal feature inside Building 3106 and pits 3275 to the N and 3320 (mislabelled 3380 on Fig. 31) to the W may have been external features associated with this building. The collection of pits to the E may either have been associated with Building 3106 or with another building lying outside the excavated area.

Further S, 3962 lay close to and NW of Building 3108 and Building 3109 had pits 3762 to the SE and 3791 to the S. A small pit, 3845, may have been an internal feature within Building 3108.

With one exception the fills of the internal pits, more properly termed scoops, were devoid of occupation debris. The exception was 3845, possibly associated with Building

3108, a small basin-like pit containing a large sherd of decorated ware.

Pit 3475 was no different in appearance or in its subsequent use for rubbish disposal, but the rubbish was of unusual interest. A fine burnished bowl and other fine wares (Chapter 7: Prehistoric pottery and Fig. 48, 143–150) came from this feature. They were deposited in the lower fill. In the uppermost fill was a copper alloy pin (see Appendix 1: Analysis of a bronze pin). From another pit (3887) c 4.5 m to the W came one of the finest jars from the site.

GRAVE 3376

An undated burial was found c 4.0 m S of Building 3100. The grave was an oval pit 1.00 by 0.83 m and 0.21 m deep (Fig. 30). The inhumation was crouched with head to the SW, lying on its right side. The right arm was bent with the hand resting on the shoulder and the head was lying face upwards. The left hand rested on the chest.

LAYOUT (Fig. 31)

The excavation of Area 3100 covers part of a late Bronze Age settlement. The assessment trench 70 m to the E showed occupation deposits dipping down into the palaeochannel with associated postholes, pits and ditches to the S of the stream. Large numbers of artefacts including significant quantities of burnt flint indicate a high level of activity in this area. This activity to the E allied with the continuation of the settlement further to the S suggests that Area 3100 represents less than half of the overall extent of the settlement.

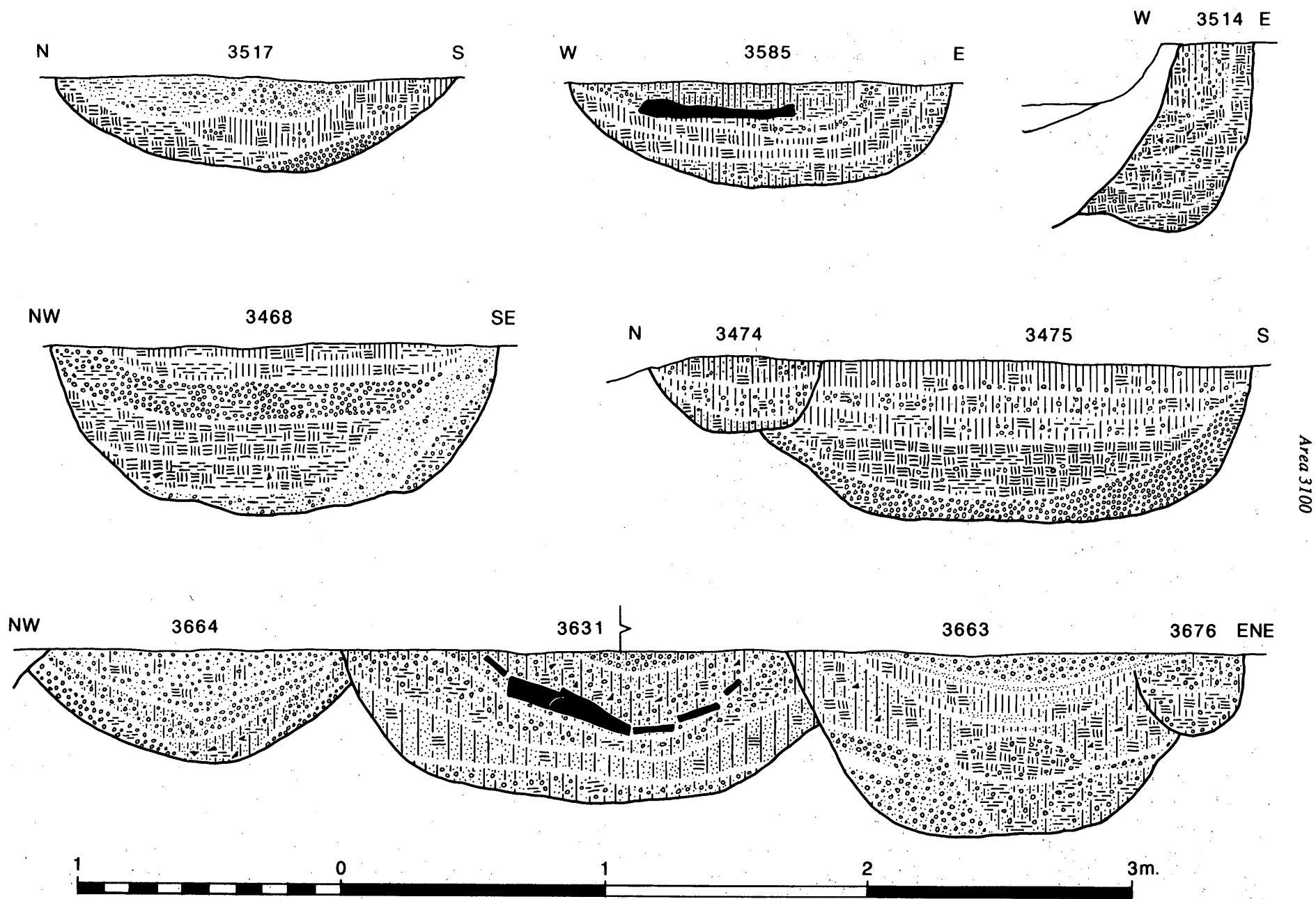


Figure 28 Area 3100: pits 3468, 3474, 3475, 3514, 3517, 3585, 3631, 3663, 3664, 3676

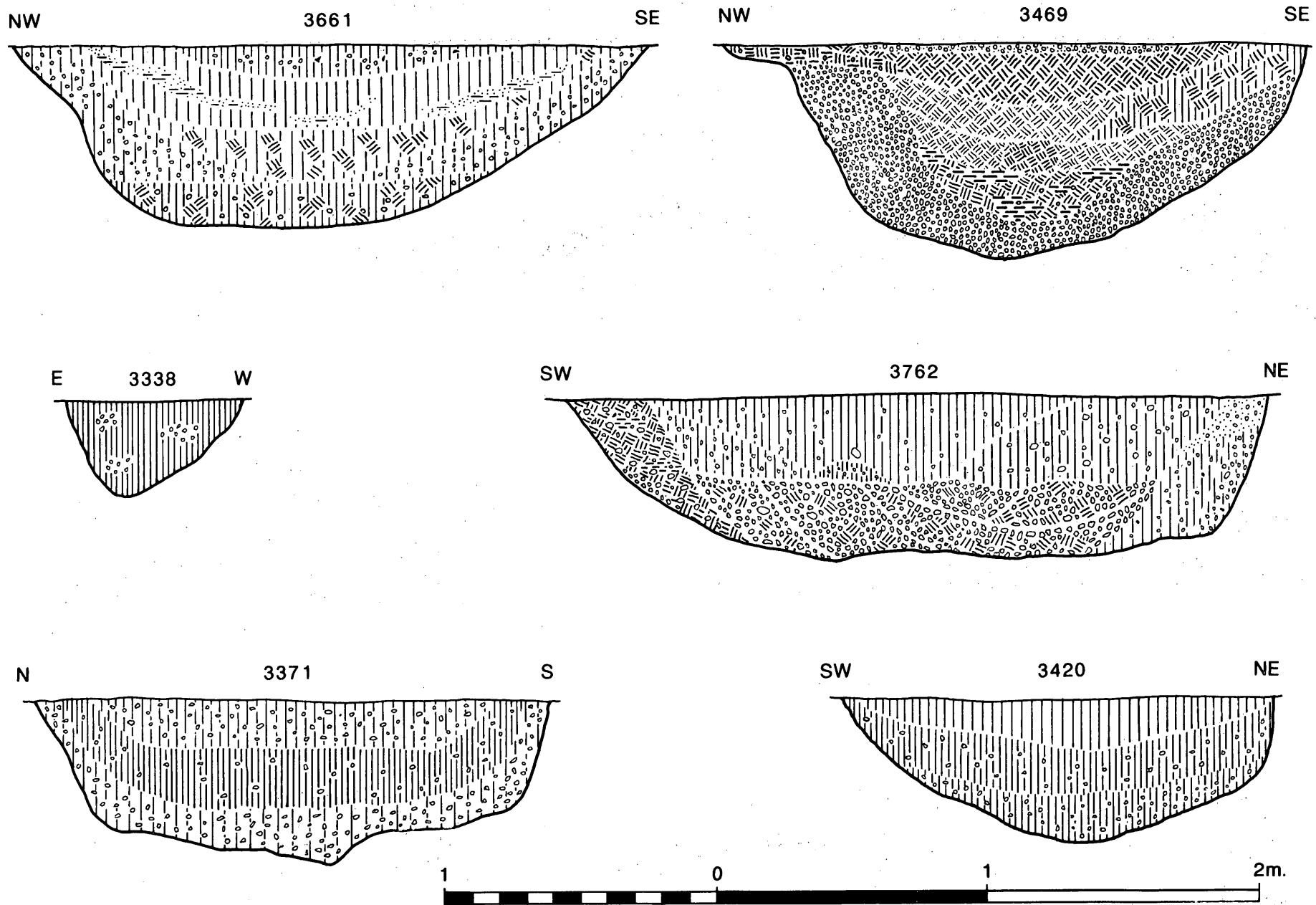


Figure 29 Area 3100: pits 3338, 3371, 3420, 3469, 3661, 3762

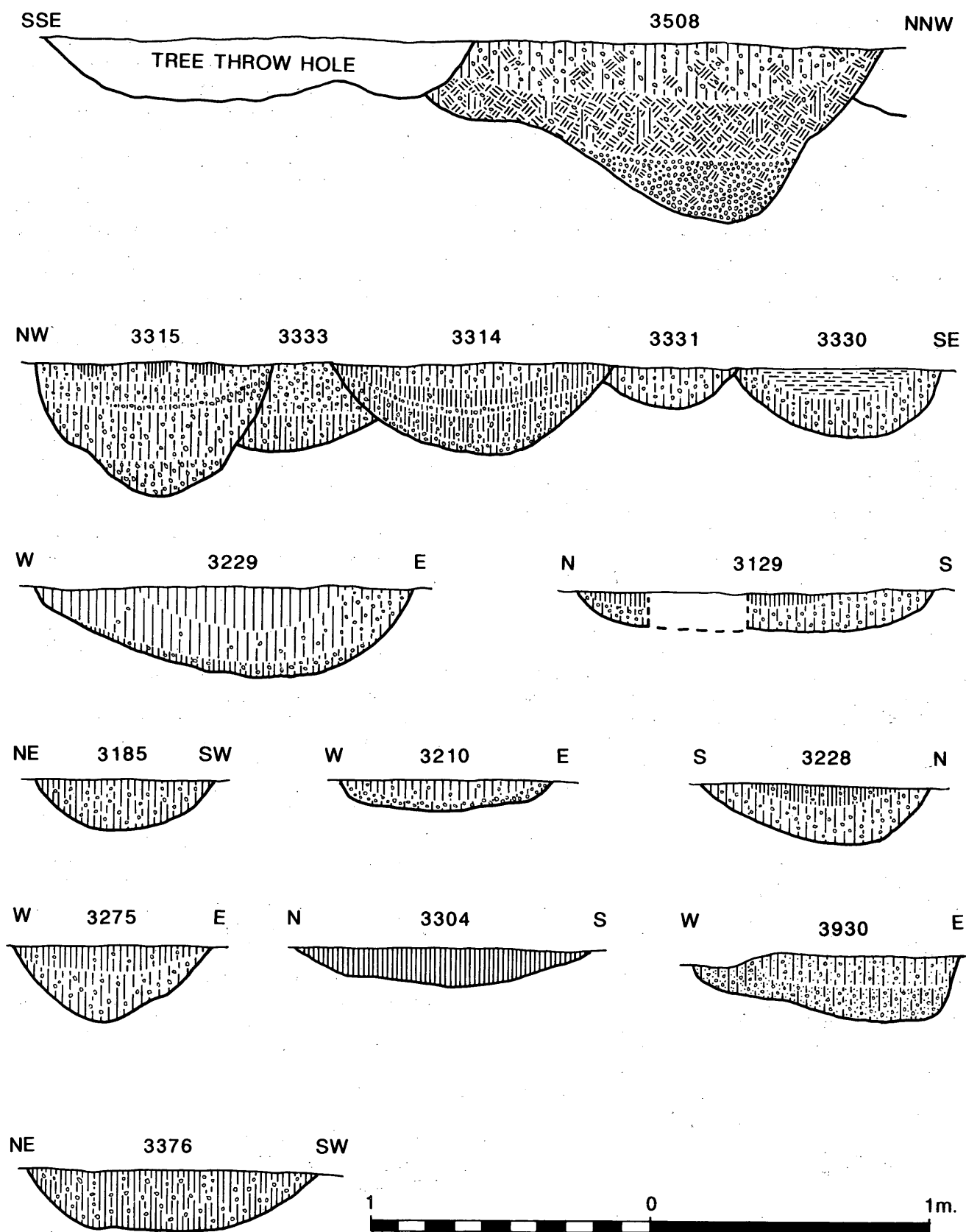


Figure 30 Area 3100: pits 3129, 3185, 3210, 3228, 3275, 3304, 3314, 3315, 3229, 3330, 3331, 3333, 3376, 3508, 3930

It seems probable that the relic stream course was a focus of the settlement, since the evidence in the assessment trench to the E indicated that the stream was open at this time. However, this was not confirmed in Area 3100, where the earlier field boundary ditches and the settlement boundary ditch partly overlay the silts and were truncated (along with the post-medieval ditch) by later use of the stream. There was no surviving evidence either for the ends of the ditches or for an outflow into the stream. From the general lie of the land it may be that the stream started as a spring just to the W of Area 3100 (changes in the level of the water table would have resulted in differing locations for the spring's source). Until the rest of the settlement is excavated in advance of the next stage of development of the Business Park little can be made of the overall layout of the settlement, but a few tentative remarks can be made at this stage.

From the entrance into the settlement area on the W side was a trackway proceeding south-eastwards, c 70 m S of the stream and roughly parallel to it (Fig. 31). The S side of this track was marked by a row of large pits which were ultimately used for rubbish disposal. An occasional pit and several postholes were found along the length of the thoroughfare but it was generally free of obstructions. The northern edge of the thoroughfare was respected by the round houses 3105 and 3106.

The linear arrangement of houses or paired houses left a large area between the buildings and the boundary ditch. N of the trackway this area is largely devoid of features, with only very occasional pits and postholes, and one possible use for an area such as this could have been for overnight quartering of livestock. The animals may have been driven home and penned only at milking times, and it is possible to imagine the livestock being herded in through the entrance into this clear space and each family separating its stock for milking – assuming that ownership was not communal. The shallowness of the boundary ditch would have required a bank and hedge to retain the animals overnight, although no evidence of this survived, and some form of fencing would have been necessary to keep livestock out of the processing/storage area S of the trackway. The postholes W of the linear pit cluster may be the remains of such a fence.

The area to the S of the trackway and W of the houses seems to have been the threshing ground for cereal crops, a use suggested by the numbers of four and six post structures, probably for above-ground storage of seed grain, found in this part of the site. The position of the large pits for flax retting suggests that flax processing was also carried out in this area. It is suggested that cereal was grown on slightly higher ground away from the settlement. The fields adjacent to the settlement areas in this fairly low-lying, damp environment may have been used for growing flax.

The four and six post structures presumably have more than one function. Some occur away from the houses, such as the six structures in the 'threshing area' in the SW part of the site, but others are sited in close proximity to the round-houses, like the eight in the north-eastern area. This may be

evidence of a distinction between long-term storage and storage for more immediate, perhaps daily, use. Recognition of this possible distinction does not help in the interpretation of the development of the area to the S of the linear pit cluster. Building 3107 is too close to pit 3515 to be contemporary with it and structure 3112 overlaps with some of the pits associated with flax retting and is stratigraphically later than one of them. The site has been only partially excavated, but there is an indication that there is a higher ratio of four and six post structures per building S of the trackway than to the N of it. It is therefore possible that the threshing ground/possible flax processing area originally extended across the whole of the area to the S of the trackway, and some of the four post structures belong to this period of use. Pressure on space as a result of the expansion or reorganisation of the settlement may have made it necessary for buildings and associated four post structures to be built in the E part of the threshing ground. Certainly buildings 3107 and 3109 overlapped with the four post structures 3100H and 3100K, although in the absence of dating evidence the chronological development could not be explored.

One four poster lay outside the settlement boundary and may have been associated with the earlier field system; it was just outside the entrance to field A, NW of Building 3110.

The houses appear to have been arranged in a line from N to S, certainly N of the trackway and possibly continuing southwards. This will have to await confirmation from subsequent excavations in advance of development.

Reservations must be stated about the linear arrangement of paired buildings when considered with the four post structures. Four of these structures overlap with two of the paired buildings (Buildings 3102 and 3103, 3105 and 3106). 3100 E and 3100 F may have been associated with Buildings 3105 and 3106, but it is difficult to imagine which houses 3100 B, 3100 C, 3100 D and 3100 U were associated with, unless the buildings were single. The other possibility is that the majority of the four post structures in this area either predate the expansion of the settlement or postdate a contraction when this area was used for storage or threshing. The lack of dating evidence from these structures prevents this from being established.

The blank area in the extreme SE corner of the excavated area E of the pre-settlement field is unexplained at this stage of the excavation. The assessment trench 50 m due E indicated an area devoid of buildings and pits and no features were located.

TREE THROW HOLES

Numerous features from clearance and natural wastage of trees were identified. Only one (3512) was found to be later than an archaeological feature (pit 3508, Fig. 30). Of the 118 only 16 had been burnt either for clearance or by natural causes. As very few of these features were excavated only evidence of scorching or burning on the undisturbed surface was available. Evidence from excavations at the Drayton

cursus (Lambrick and Moore, forthcoming) suggest that burning may only appear fairly low down in the fill of the tree throw holes and so more of the Reading trees may have been burnt than was apparent. The main direction from which the trees fell (identified for 88) was between N and

E (51%), while 36.4% fell from between NW and SW. This is very different from Drayton, where 46% fell from between S and SW. The hills in the area S of Aldermaston and Burghfield may have caused a local variation in the main storm wind direction.