

Chapter 5: A Review of Neolithic and Bronze Age Sites in the Devil's Quoits Area

by Alistair Barclay

INTRODUCTION

In the 1930s Major Allen's aerial photographs revealed a complex of cropmarks on the second gravel terrace surrounding and associated with the Devil's Quoits henge. The results were dramatic by the standards of any decade, the tally of cropmarks including over 60 ring ditches, Iron Age and Romano-British pits and enclosures, and the ditches of the henge.

It is now known from excavation that many of the earlier prehistoric sites were taken into cultivation during the 1st millennium BC, others surviving until later periods. Most survived as cropmarks under cultivation to be recorded by Allen and other pioneer aerial photographers, but shortly after their discovery serious destruction by gravel extraction began.

The history of this destruction up to the 1970s is outlined by Benson and Miles (1974, 81–4). Since then further quarrying has taken place. It is a sad reflection that a landscape recording 5000 years of history has been almost totally destroyed in less than 50.

The initial destruction began during the war with the airfield construction described in Chapter 2. In addition to the henge, sites XVI, 1, XXI, 1, 3 and 4, XXII, 2 and XXIII, 2 were excavated at this time (Grimes 1960, 154–62).

Extraction started in the Vicarage Field (II) at the northern edge of the cropmark complex. Quarrying began in 1944 in the NW of the field and was resumed in 1951; by 1953 the whole field was destroyed. It was possible to record only five ring ditches (II, 2, 4, 8, 9 and 10) with further pits and 'flat' graves.

Extraction started in the adjacent field (VI) in 1944 and continued until 1949, only two of the known ring ditches (VI, 2 and 4) being recorded. Benson and Miles (1974, 81) estimate that only 16% of this area was recorded at all, even less by archaeological excavation. In 1959 gravel extraction was extended northwards into the field XXIX and it was possible to excavate the three remaining ring ditches XXIX, 1, 3 and 4. The remaining ring ditch (XXIX, 2) lay under a runway and had been excavated during the war.

In October 1960 excavations were started in field XV in advance of commercial extraction and it was possible to excavate all five ring ditches (XV, 1–5). In the same area in 1961 a number of Beaker 'flat' graves and late Neolithic pits were recorded.

By 1970 gravel extraction had advanced N into field XXIII where conditions were unfavourable for archaeological work (Linnington 1982, 86). Of the

three known ring ditches it was only possible to excavate one (XXIII, 2). In September 1979 part of a runway was removed to the N of the Devil's Quoits henge revealing a previously unrecorded ring ditch (XXII, 6). The site was excavated later in the same year by John Taylor and members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society (Taylor, Ch. 2).

The Oxford Archaeological Unit started excavations in Gravelly Guy (field IX) in 1983. These continued until 1986 in advance of gravel extraction (Lambrick *et al.* in prep.). A small hengiform site (IX, 1) was excavated in the S corner of the field. In the middle of the field were found a Beaker 'flat' grave and scatters of late Neolithic and Beaker pits along with a penannular post circle (IX, 2). By 1986 quarrying had advanced N and what remained of a linear group of ring ditches (X, 6–8) was excavated in the top corner of the field. Fortunately extraction in the adjacent field X had only superficially damaged the central burials excavated in ring ditch X, 6.

A number of stray finds of stone axes, flintwork, prehistoric pottery and bronzes have also been recorded as coming from this area.

By 1990 the only substantial surviving remains of this prehistoric landscape were the ditches of the great henge. Less than 50% of the 'known' sites were investigated archaeologically, often under difficult conditions, and many potentially interesting sites went unrecorded. The results of the comprehensive excavation of the S half of Gravelly Guy field suggest that a significant number of other unidentified monuments and certainly many pits may also have been lost without record (Fig. 44).

The Stanton Harcourt cropmark complex was first plotted by Grimes (1943–44, fig. 8). The amended version which appeared in 1960 (Grimes 1960, fig. 57) remains one of the more accurate surveys of the area. Figure 39 is based on sketch plots, checked where possible for accuracy against excavation plans and original photographs. It is selective in showing only sites known or presumed on morphological grounds to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE SITES AT STANTON HARCOURT

Layout

The system of numeration instituted by Grimes (1960, fig. 58) and continued by Case (1982c, fig. 59)

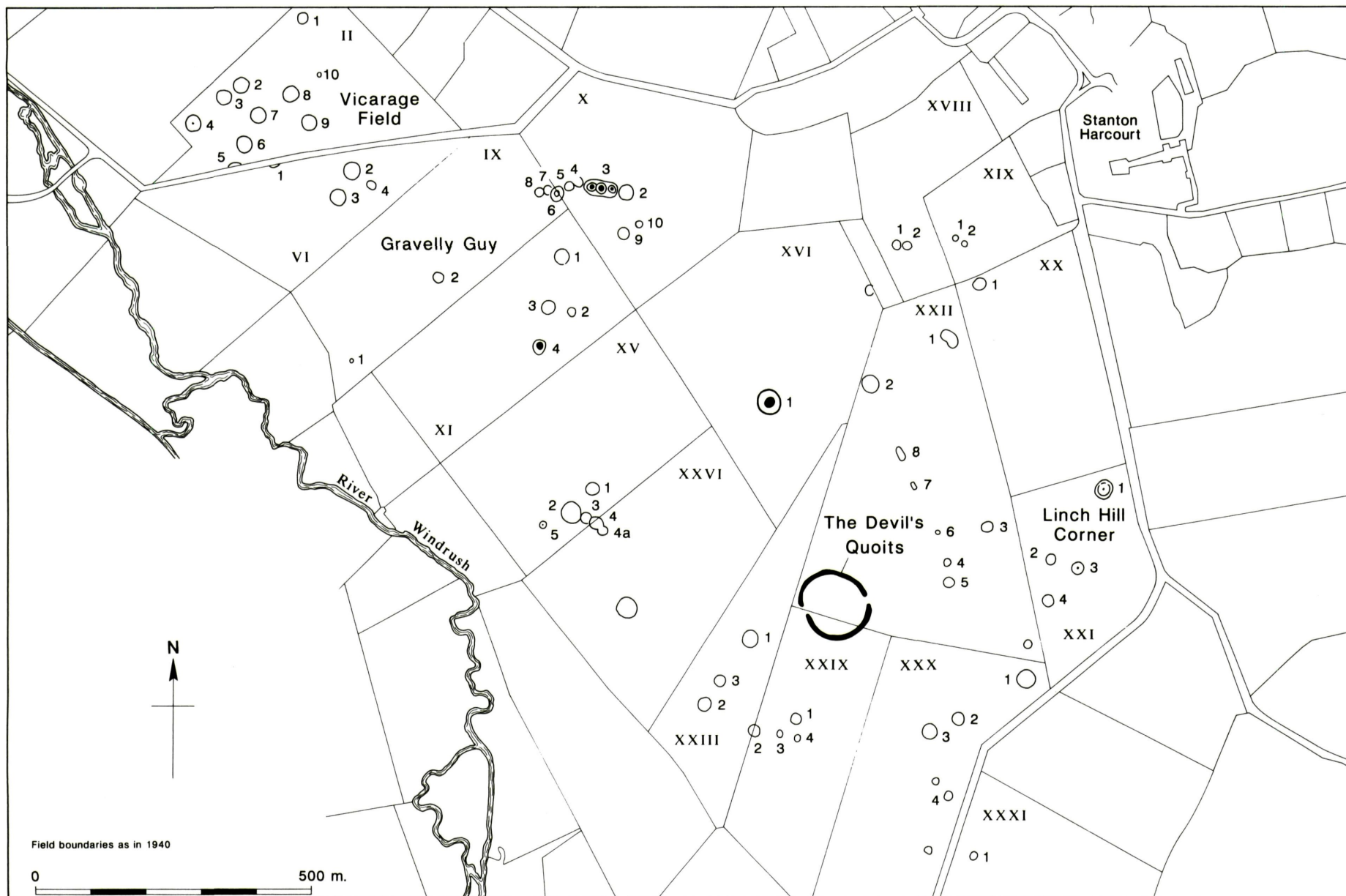


Figure 39 Stanton Harcourt: ring ditches and related cropmarks in the area of the Devil's Quoits, after Grimes (1960, fig. 57) with additions

and others is retained here. It allots a Roman numeral to each 1940 field and an arabic numeral to each site within that field, so that ring ditches to the SW of the henge, for example, are sites XXIII, 1 and XIII, 2. Upon subsequent excavation a number of sites originally plotted as ring ditches have proved to be later enclosures, among them that originally plotted as site IX, 1 in the field known as Gravelly Guy (Grimes 1960, fig. 58). Smaller features such as pits and 'flat' graves retain the rather diverse notations used in the original reports.

Sites are ordered by field, individual site names being followed by the relevant national grid reference. The 'AP Coverage' section which concludes many entries contains reference numbers for photographs by Allen, Riley and St Joseph held in the Ashmolean Museum.

Field II (the Vicarage Field)

Ring ditch II, 1. SP 40130586

Ring ditch in N corner of field, destroyed in the 1950s without excavation.

AP coverage: Allen 1146, GA 27, GA 28

Ring ditch II, 2. SP 40020573 (Case 1982c, 106)

The site was the subject of limited excavation in 1951–3. Three sections were dug to the NW, N and E through the ditch. Only one feature, a circular pit 1.52 m in diameter, was found in the interior. It contained no finds. The ring ditch was continuous and elliptical, 30.78–37.19 m in diameter and 1.83–2.44 m wide. The section to the E produced six Beaker sherds and two Romano-British grey ware sherds.

AP coverage: Allen 1146, GA 27, GA 28

Ring ditch II, 3. SP 39980571

This ring ditch was situated between II, 2 and II, 4 sharing the same SW-NE alignment. It was destroyed without excavation.

AP coverage: Allen 1146, GA 27, GA 28

Ring ditch II, 4, SP 39920566 (Fig. 40; Case 1943–4, 200–1; Case 1982c, 106)

The site was excavated in 1951–3 in advance of gravel extraction. Topsoil was removed mechanically and two diametrically opposed sections were cut across the ditch, to the E (section 1) and W (section 2). The ditch was circular and continuous, 27.43 m in diameter. Section 1 showed evidence for recutting and probable cleaning out which was not apparent in section 2. The pattern of initial silting within the ditches, with more material deposited nearer the inner edge, suggested an earthwork close to that edge, perhaps, on the evidence of the small quantity of material represented, the ring bank of a disc barrow rather than a full-scale mound.

At the centre of the interior a shallow pit was dug into the natural gravel. On the surface were the cremated remains of a middle-aged adult and the crushed remains of a miniature Food Vessel. The excavated gravel may have been used to form a small mound over the pit. The central position of the pit suggests contemporaneity with the ring ditch, with the Food Vessel indicating an early Bronze Age date for this monument.

The subsequent ditch fills were the product of cultivation including the ploughing out of the central earthwork. Iron Age occupation debris in the uppermost dates this episode of cultivation and destruction to the end of the 1st millennium BC.

AP coverage: Allen 1146, LW 53/4, GA 27/8

Ring ditches II, 5–7. SP 40000558, 40020562, 40050568

These three ring ditches formed an approximate alignment with the excavated ring ditch II, 8. All three were destroyed without excavation.

AP coverage: Allen 1146, LW53/4, GA 27/8

Ring ditch II, 8. SP 40100572 (Case and Kirk 1952–3, 218; Case 1982c, 106)

The site was excavated before gravel extraction in 1953. The ring ditch was elliptical, probably continuous, 21.3–22.8 m in diameter and 2.4–3.0 m wide. The ditch was sectioned to the W but produced only Romano-British sherds, probably from the tertiary fill, although their exact context is not clear. The interior was featureless.

AP coverage: Allen 1146

Beaker 'flat' graves 1 and 2 (Case 1956, 5–6; Case 1982c, 106)

Two Beaker 'flat' graves were found outside ring ditch II, 8 but had no direct association with it. Grave 1 lay 8 m to the SW and grave 2 14 m to the S.

Grave 1. An oval grave 2.44 m × 1.52 m, oriented NE-SW, was excavated in May 1953 by Miss Mary Cra'ster for the Oxford University Archaeological Society. The grave contained a loosely contracted burial, probably female, aged 18–20 years, lying on the left side with the head to the SW and facing NW. Two Beakers, one within the other (Fig. 40, 1–2), were placed upright behind the pelvis. Both Beakers (Clarke 1970, corpus nos 768–9) belong to Case's (1977) Middle style or Step 2 in the scheme of Lanting and van der Waals (1972, fig. 1). A flint fabricator and a core rejuvenation flake (Fig. 40, 3–4) lay behind the middle vertebrae.

Grave 2. An oval grave 1.6 m × 0.91 m, aligned NW–SE and 0.46 m deep, was excavated in June 1953 by Humphrey Case and his wife though partial excavation had taken place by workmen. The grave

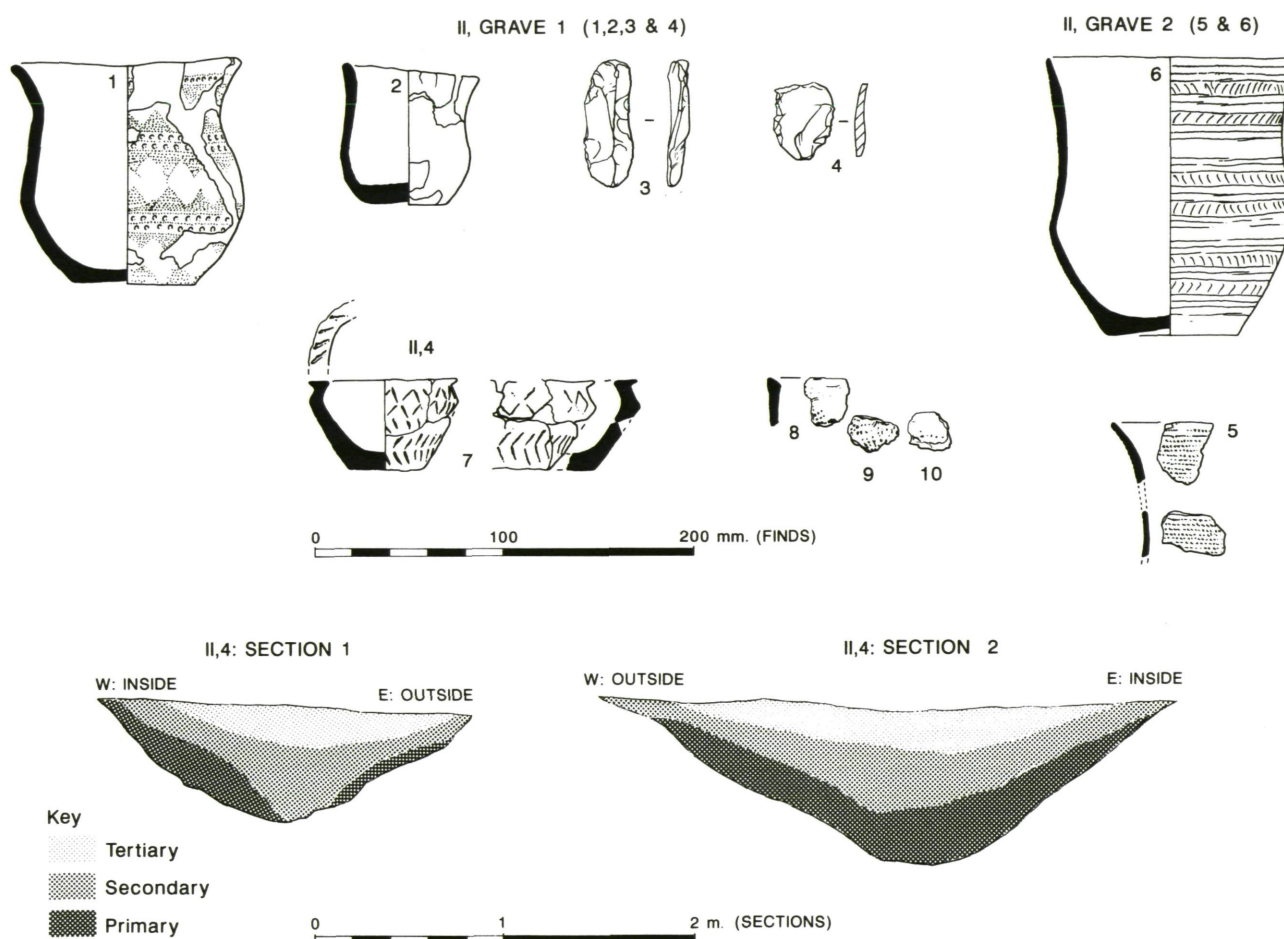


Figure 40 Vicarage Field (field II): finds from graves II/1 and 2; ditch sections and finds from ring ditch II, 4

contained a tightly contracted female skeleton, lying on the right side with the head to the SE and facing north-east. A Middle style Beaker (Fig. 40, 6; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 770) was found on its side between the feet and the pelvis. Two Early style Beaker sherds (Fig. 40, 5; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 771F) were found in the excavated grave fill.

Ring ditch II, 9. SP 40140564 (Case and Kirk 1952-3, 218; Case 1982c, 106)

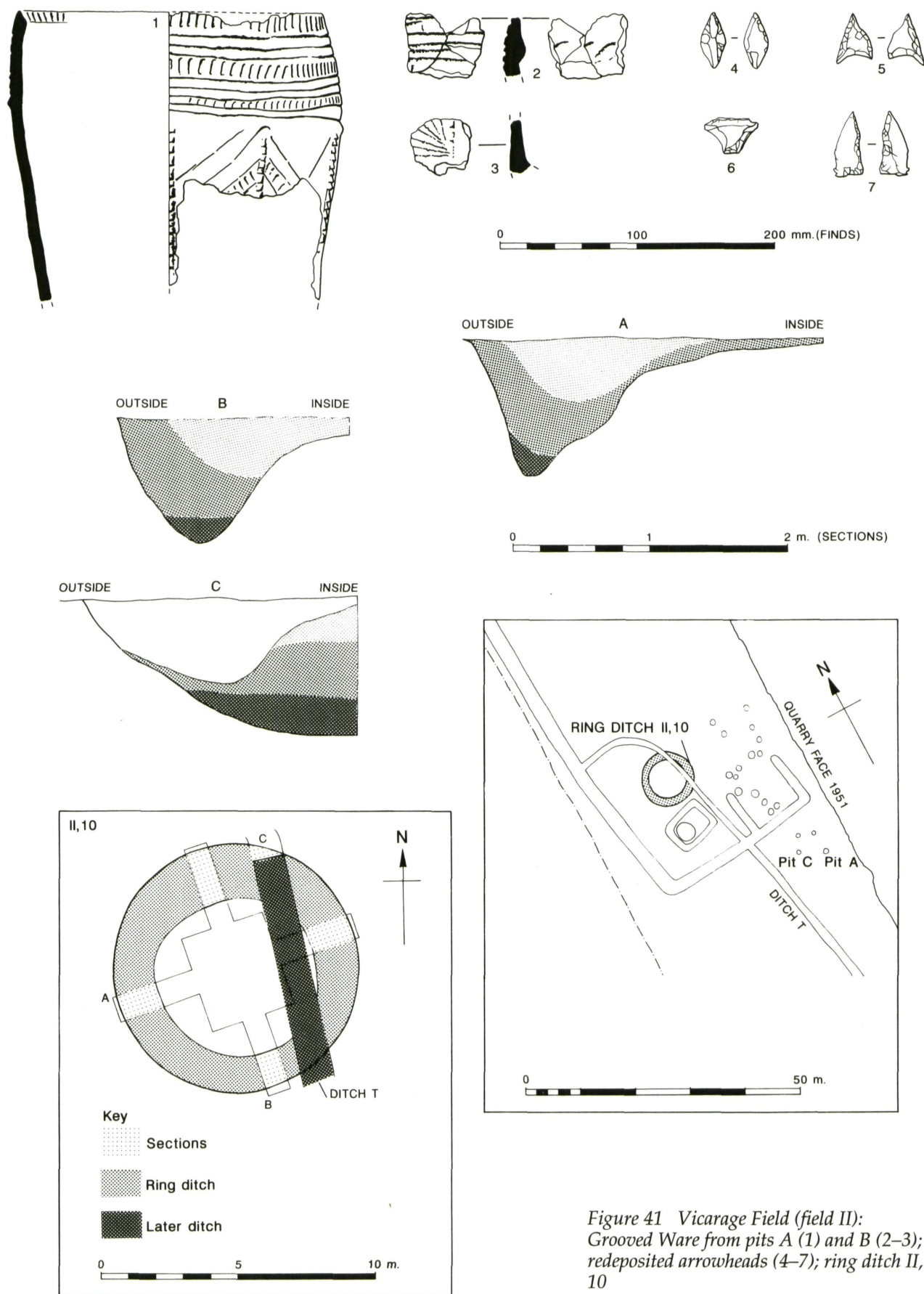
The Oxford University Archaeological Society excavated this site in advance of gravel extraction in 1952. The topsoil was removed mechanically and the interior searched for features. Only one feature was found, a circular pit containing indeterminate Romano-British sherds. A single section to the SE was dug through the ditch. The ring ditch was circular, continuous, 22.68 m in diameter and 2.44 m wide. A human skull, a sheep mandible and three indeterminate Romano-British sherds came from the surface

of tertiary silt.

AP coverage: Allen 1146

Ring ditch II, 10. SP 40150575 (Fig. 41; Thomas 1955, 1-29; Case 1982c, 103)

The site was excavated in September 1951 under rescue conditions by B de Seyssel and Nicholas Thomas prior to the enlargement of the Vicarage Field gravel pit. Four sections, approximately N, W, E and S, were dug across the ditch and extended into the centre where an area 3.05 m square was excavated (Fig. 41). The ditch was circular and continuous with a diameter of 9.14 m. Sections varied in width and profile. The outer edge of the ditch was generally steeper, which accounts for the unequal silting seen in the sections. However, it is probably that an outer bank also existed. the ring ditch was cut by a later ditch (T) and Romano-British sherds found in the interior may have been redeposited from this ditch. No prehistoric finds were found during the excavations but redeposited Neo-



lithic arrowheads (Fig. 41, 4–7) came from Iron Age features.

AP coverage: Allen 1146

Grooved Ware Pits (A, B and C). (Fig. 41; Thomas 1955, 22–23; Case 1982c, 103)

Thomas excavated three pits (A, B and C) in 1951, two of them (A and B) containing Grooved Ware, a third (C) perhaps contemporary by virtue of its proximity to A and the similarity of its fill to that of A. Pits A and C were found just E of ring ditch II, 10 (Fig. 41), and Pit B lay between ring ditches II, 1 and II, 8. They were all located within an area of later Iron Age pits and enclosures.

Pit A. The pit was 1.22 m square and 0.46 m deep and had been dug into natural gravel. It contained the upper half of a Grooved Ware vessel in the Durrington Walls substyle (Fig. 41, 1). The fill was black loam with some gravel.

Pit B. The pit was smaller than A (no precise measurements are recorded). It contained two sherds of Grooved Ware in the Woodlands substyle (Fig. 41, 2–3), a flint flake, pig incisors and quartzite fragments. The fill is not recorded.

Pit C. The pit was rectangular, 0.91 m by 0.3 m and 0.46 m deep. It contained black loam with flint flakes and a fragment of red deer antler.

Early Bronze Age pits (D and E) (Fig. 42; Case 1982c, 109–10).

Pit D. An unmarked cremation pit was noted in the face of the gravel pit in 1953 by E K Florey, who removed an almost complete Collared Urn (Fig. 42, 3). What remained of the pit was excavated by Case and Fenwick. The pit was circular, 1.45 m wide and 0.85 m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. Its fill was mostly reddish-brown with gravel lenses. Finds in addition to the urn included 40 other sherds, representing at least two other collared vessels, 32 fragments of fired clay, some with plant impressions (Fig. 42, 4–5), three pieces of struck flint including a scraper on a core rejuvenation flake, a flint pebble, cornbrash fragments, fossilized wood and a flake from a sandstone pebble, 64 g of cremated human bone and fragments of animal bone.

Other finds of Collared Urn from Stanton Harcourt include sherds from the Linch Hill area (Leeds 1940, pl. II, A–B; Longworth 1984, corpus nos 1388–90) and a vessel provenanced only to the parish (Fig. 42, 2; Longworth 1984, corpus no. 1387, pl. 46d).

Pit E. (Case 1951). Fragments of two vessels and cremated bone were found by workers while extracting gravel in the area between ring ditch II, 1 and Pit B. It is possible that they derive from a similar pit to D. Finds comprised a Biconical Urn (Fig. 42, 1),

sherds of another vessel and 333 g of cremated human bone representing a single individual.

Field VI

Ring ditch VI, 1. SP 40080560

This site was apparently half-destroyed by a road. The remaining half was destroyed without excavation in the 1950s.

AP coverage: Allen 1126

Ring ditch VI, 2. SP 40220557 (Fig. 43; Atkinson and Crouch 1945, 94–5; Case 1982c, 106)

The site was excavated before its destruction by the encroaching gravel pit. At the time of excavation half of the ring ditch was exposed to the E by topsoil stripping prior to gravel extraction, providing a section through the ring ditch. Two sections were excavated, A₁–B₁ to the N and E–F to the S.

The silting pattern suggested the erosion of an outer gravel bank and an inner earth bank or mound. The third layer from the top in section A₁–B₁ may represent the ploughing out or slighting of the outer bank. In the interior near the centre were three pits. Pit I, oval and elongated, was aligned E–W and contained an unaccompanied cremation. Pit II, which was shallower and smaller, produced no finds. A third feature, pit III, of irregular form was excavated to the E but again produced no finds. The site had been very disturbed by ploughing.

AP coverage: Allen 1126

Ring ditch VI, 3. SP 40250524

Destroyed by gravel extraction without archaeological excavation.

Ring ditch VI, 4. SP 40180553 (Fig. 43; Leeds and Atkinson 1943–4, 200–1; Case 1982c, 103, 106)

Excavated by Derek Riley prior to gravel digging. A single section A–B was dug through the ditch to the E. The second layer of ditch silting suggested the erosion of an outer bank, perhaps indicating a monument of disc barrow form. The ditch was circular and continuous, with an internal diameter of 36.58 m. A circular pit (4/1), 0.76 m in diameter and 0.3 m deep, was found in the SW quadrant. The pit contained 27 flints, fragments of quartzite, charcoal, a bone pin, and animal bone (Fig. 43, 1, 3–6). A sherd from a large Beaker storage jar (Fig. 43, 2) was found nearby.

AP coverage: Allen 1126

Field IX (Gravelly Guy; Fig. 44)

Ring ditch IX, 1. SP 40220521 (Fig. 45)

The site, already known from air photographs, was exposed by topsoil stripping, which reduced it to the

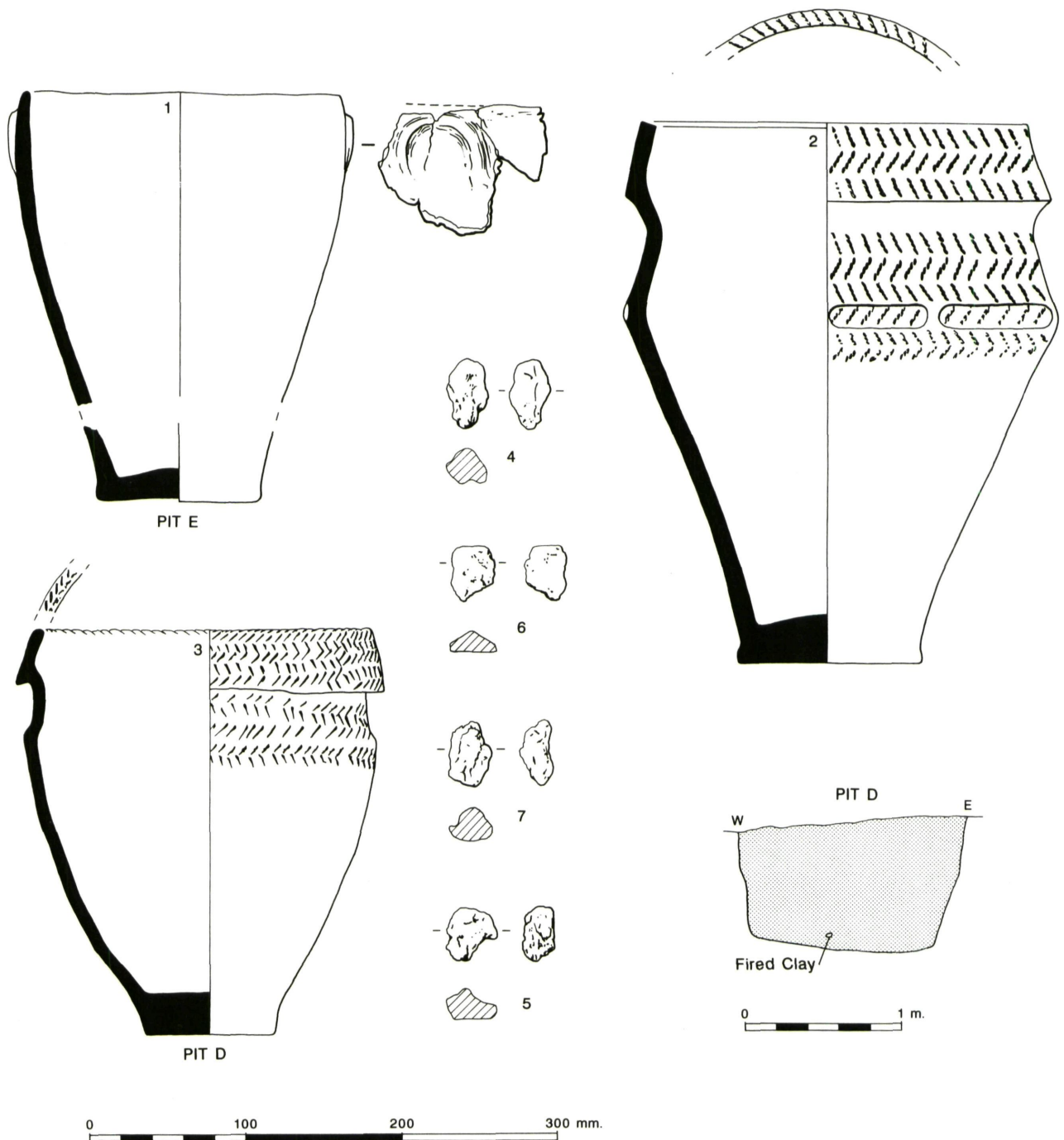


Figure 42 Vicarage Field (field II): early Bronze Age finds from pits D (3, 4-7) and E (1). Unlocated Collared Urn from Stanton Harcourt (2)

level of the natural gravel terrace. Unfortunately this took place before archaeological involvement and was unsupervised. The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook preliminary work in December 1982.

At gravel surface level the ditch appeared to be circular, 10 m in diameter and 3 m wide, enclosing a featureless interior 4 m in diameter. Two sections were dug diametrically to the E (A) and the W (B). They revealed a steep-sided, flat-bottomed ditch up

to 2.2 m in depth. In section B, within a deposit of slumped gravel, a post pipe was discernible leaning in from the base of the outer edge. Initially this was all the work that time permitted. The site suffered further damage when the surface was stripped again, this time to create a haul road and access ramp for the quarry.

In Spring 1984 excavation was resumed and the full site was investigated prior to its final destruction

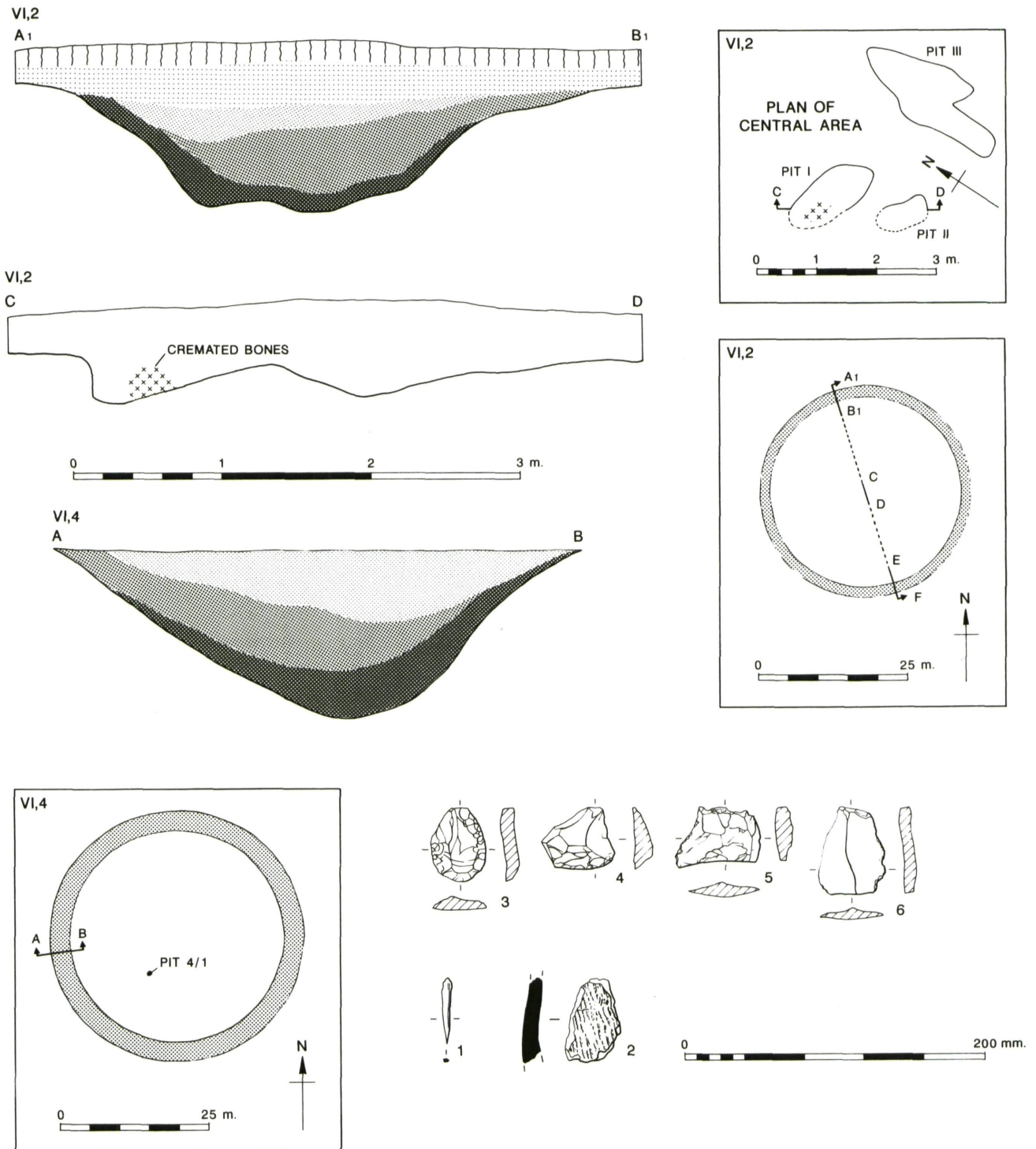


Figure 43 Field VI: ring ditches VI, 2 and VI, 4; finds from near pit 4/1 in VI, 4 (2) and from the pit itself (1, 3-6)

by quarrying. More detailed excavation was now possible and a further eight sections were dug across the ditches. A consistent pattern of postpipes was uncovered and it became clear that the ditch was a deep revetment trench. In one section the postpipe survived to the full height of the primary and second

dary ditch fills. The uprights were probably woven with horizontals to form a wattle revetment. This interpretation is supported by the pattern of silting observed in the sections.

Two ditch terminals were uncovered, showing the initial revetment trench to have been penannular

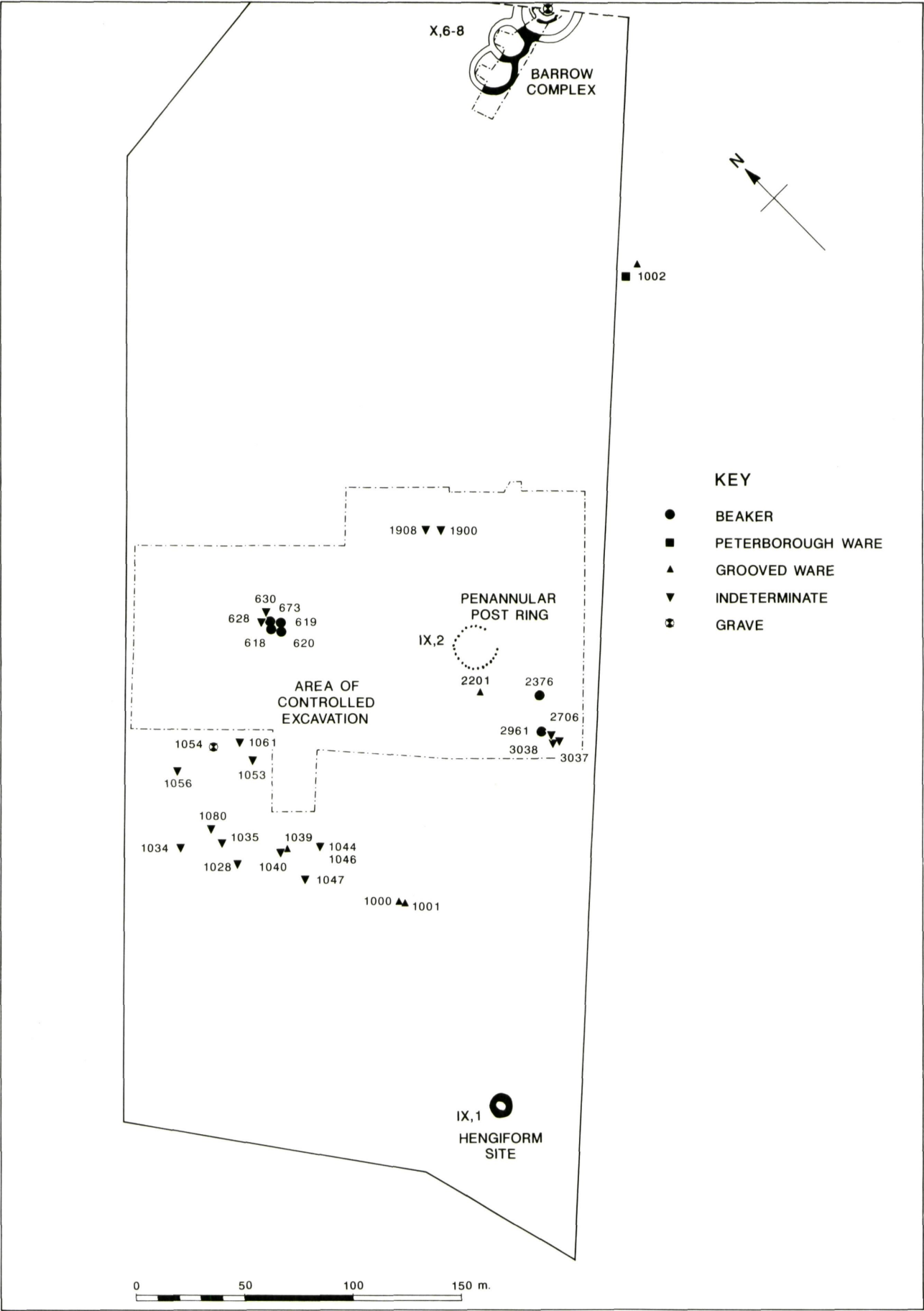


Figure 44 Gravelly Guy: pre-Iron Age features

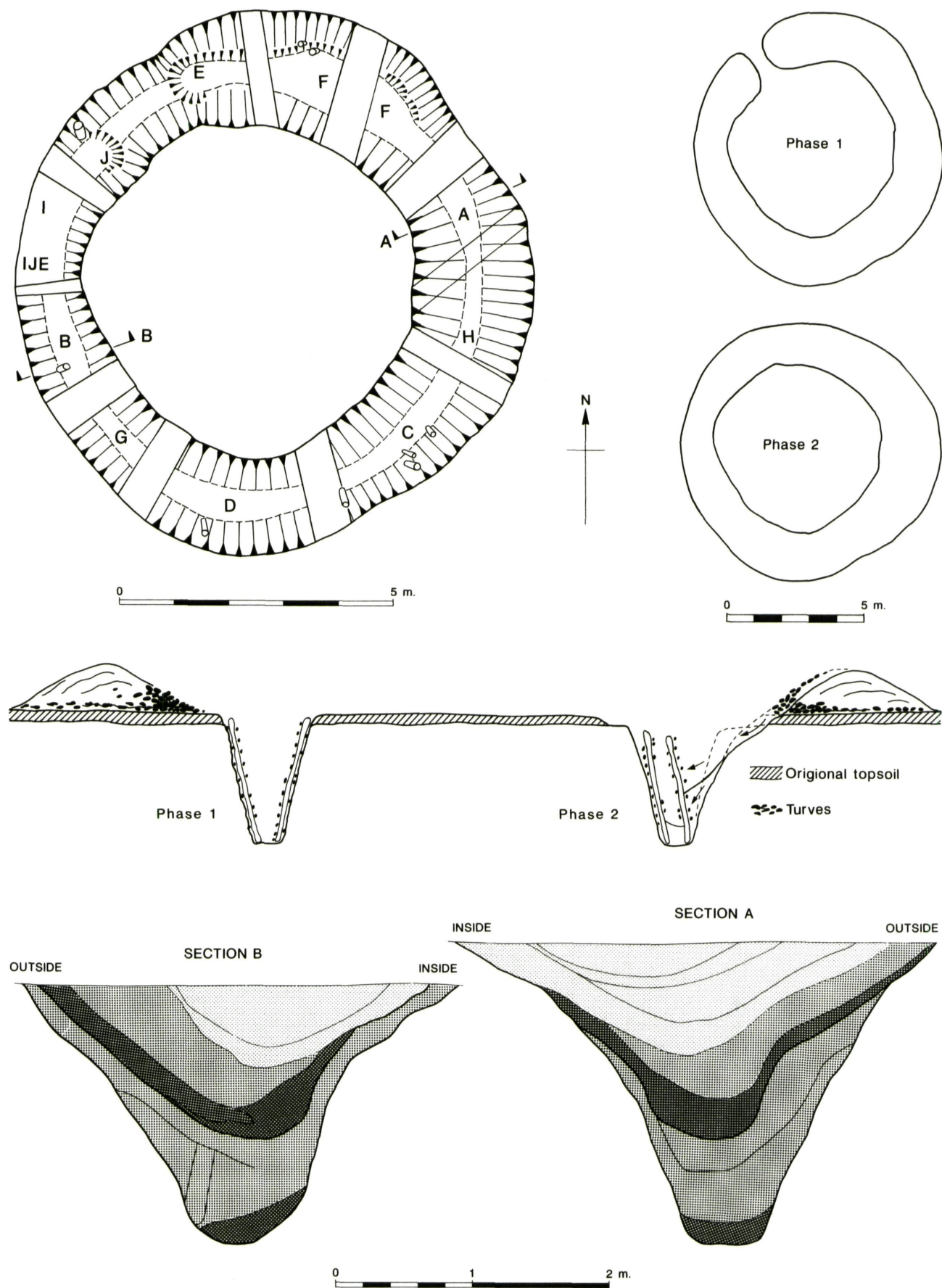


Figure 45 Gravelly Guy: plan, reconstruction and sections of hengiform ring ditch IX, 1

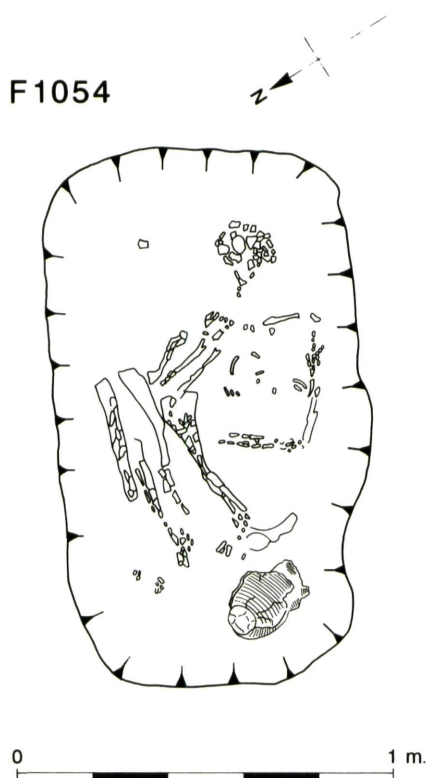


Figure 46 Gravelly Guy: Beaker flat grave F1054

with a causeway 1.8 m wide. The trench was recut, mostly to the bottom, but to a shallower depth across the causeway, to form a complete circle. On the N side the recut removed the eroded inner edge of the first ditch, reducing the interior space. The recut was also revetted.

The pattern of silting suggests the erosion of an outer bank. The material dug from the trench could have been used to construct this initially, being refurbished with the recutting. The apparent redesign of the monument may reflect no more than the erosion of the entrance causeway to an unviably narrow width at the ground surface.

Excavation produced a small amount of struck flint and pottery from the trench. 54 worked flints were identified, of Mesolithic, later Neolithic and Bronze Age date. Pottery was found in the fills of the recut: indeterminate later Neolithic/early Bronze Age material from the upper fill, and a worn Mortlake Ware sherd from lower down. A spread of charcoal in the stabilised upper silts of the recut ditch provided a *terminus ante quem* for the monument of 1870–1520 cal BC (3379 ± 40 BP; UB-3126). AP coverage: Riley VIII/14

Penannular post setting IX, 2. SP 40350535 (Fig. 44)

In 1985–6 a penannular setting of 23 postholes, 18.75 m in diameter, quite circular and open to the E, was excavated. The spacing of the postholes varied

between 1.6 m and 2.6 m, with most lying between 2.25 m and 2.4 m.

Eleven of the holes contained postpipes and in a few cases split timbers were discernible. The depth of these holes varied from 0.4 m to 0.1 m. Three Iron Age sherds came from the upper fills of two holes, but there is a good case for their having been intrusive. Stratigraphically the postholes predate Iron Age features, though there is no more precise evidence for their date.

Beaker 'flat' grave F1054 (Fig. 46)

Grave F1054 was found during salvage work just outside the main area of excavation (Fig. 44). Heavy machinery had severely crushed the contents.

The grave was subrectangular, measured 1.4 × 0.85 m and was aligned NW–SE. It contained a crouched inhumation lying on its right side with the head to the SE. It was accompanied by a flint flake and an All-Over-Comb impressed Middle style Beaker which was placed near the feet.

Later Neolithic and Beaker pits (Fig. 44, Tables 19–20)

At least 24 pits were recorded in the Gravelly Guy field. Only half were recorded under controlled excavation and many had suffered from truncation by topsoil stripping.

Most of the pits were recorded in the SW half of the field, where salvage observation was most assiduous.

Pit F1002 was an outlier, located in the face of the adjacent gravel pit 100 m S from ring ditch F4001 (see below, X, 6–8). It was circular, 1.25 m in diameter and 0.6 m deep, with near vertical sides. The upper fill contained a few flint flakes and a core. From the lower fill came 51 sherds of pottery, mainly of Mortlake Ware but also including a smaller amount of Clacton substyle Grooved Ware.

A tight cluster of six pits, F618–20, F628, F630 and F673, was found 80 m NW from the edge of penannular post setting IX, 2. They were of a uniform size, diameters 0.9–1.12 m, roughly circular, bowl-shaped with flattish bottoms, depth 0.15–0.26 m. Their fills consisted of dark brown loam over a layer of brown loam and gravel. Four pits, F618–620 and F628, contained Middle or Late style Beaker sherds, all worn. One pit, F619, contained All-Over-Cord Beaker as well as flint chips and flakes. Pit F630 contained the greatest range of material: 9 flint flakes, 81 chips, 2 scrapers, 4 knives, the barb from a barbed and tanged arrowhead, quern fragments, carbonized hazel nut and indeterminate cereal remains. Pit F673 in the same cluster, differed in that it was deeper, 0.4 m, but had a similar range of flint implements and debitage.

40 m to the S of site IX, 2 lay another pit group (F2376, F2706, F2961, F3037 and F3038). Three oval pits (F2706, F3037 and F3038) were intercutting and had similar fills of red-brown silt. Pit F2706 contained the widest range of material; Beaker sherds,

Table 19. Gravelly Guy (field IX): pits containing Peterborough Ware and Beaker and others grouped with them (Fig. 44)

n = number of pieces

Pit form: C = circular, bowl-shaped, V = circular, vertical-sided, O = oval, bowl-shaped

Pit fill: A = dark brown loam and gravel, B = red brown silt, C = grey brown silt, D = light brown loam, E = black silt, F = gravel and red brown silt

Pottery: GW/C = Grooved Ware/Clacton substyle, BKR = Beaker, BKR/FP = Fingernail-decorated Beaker,

PET/I/M = Peterborough Ware/indeterminate/Mortlake substyle, I = indeterminate LNEBA

Plant remains: Ci = cereal indeterminate, H = hazelnut, T = Triticum sp.

Pit	Form	Fill	Flint Debitage (n)	Flint Implements (n)	Pottery	Plant remains
F618	C	A	12	1	I	Ci, H
F619	C	A	9	1	BKR, I	-
F620	C	A	4	1	BKR	-
F628	C	A	7	-	I	-
F630	C	A	90	8	BKR	Ci, H
F673	C	A	5	1	BKR	-
F1002	V	B, D	4	1	PET/M, GW/C, I	-
F2376	O	B	7	-	BKR, I	T, H
F2706	O	C	2	3	I	-
F2961	O	B-E	478	7	BKR/FP, I	Ci, H
F3037	O	B	-	-	I	-
F3038	O	C	4	2	I	T, Ci, H

flintdebitage, charred hazelnut shell and carbonized cereals. Pit F2961 was slightly larger and of similar shape and fill. It produced 90 sherds most of which represented finger-nail decorated Beaker, 478 pieces of waste flint, 7 flint implements, pig bone and indeterminate cereal and hazel nut fragments. F2376 may have been a tree hole rather than a pit.

The remaining pits were widely scattered outside the area of controlled excavation (Fig. 44) and as a result had been truncated by machining. The pit forms varied from round to oval and from bowl-shaped to flatter-bottomed with steep sides. Most of the pits contained struck flint with F1000, F1001 and F1035 producing a significant amount ofdebitage. Some flint implements were recovered from the pits. Small sherds of indeterminate later Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery occurred in some of the pits, F1001 also producing Grooved Ware. In addition charred plant remains including indeterminate cereal and hazel nut shells were recovered from a few of these pits.

At least two possible postholes or small pits were recorded (F1039 and F1040). F1039 produced 73 sherds of Grooved Ware, most of them from a single vessel in the Durrington Walls substyle. The ar-

rangement of the sherds suggested that a complete rather than a broken pot had been placed in the pit. F1040 in comparison produced only a few small sherds of indeterminate pottery and one flint flake.

A further possible three pits F78, F79 and F81 were found 40 m E of site IX, 1.

Field X

Ring ditches X, 1–5. SP 40700554

Ring ditches X, 2–5 formed part of a linear group with excavated ring ditches X, 6–8, and included a rare example of a triple barrow (X, 3). X, 1 was an outlier. All of these sites and half of X, 6 were destroyed without excavation.

AP coverage: Allen 1127

Ring ditches X, 6–8. SP 40580554 (Figs 44, 47–48)

The Oxford Archaeological Unit excavated the ring ditches in advance of gravel extraction. The three contiguous ring ditches represented the western end of a linear barrow group known from aerial photographs.

Table 20. Gravelly Guy (field IX): pits containing Grooved Ware and others grouped with them (Fig. 44)

n = number of pieces

Pit form: C = circular, bowl-shaped, V = circular, vertical-sided, O = oval, bowl-shaped

Pit fill: A = dark brown loam and gravel, B = red brown silt, C = grey brown silt, D = light brown loam, E = black silt, F = gravel and red brown silt

Pottery: GW/I/D = Grooved Ware/indeterminate/Durrington Walls substyle, I = indeterminate LNEBA

Plant remains: Ci = cereal indeterminate, H = hazelnut, T = Triticum sp.

Pit	Form	Fill	Flint debitage (n)	Flint Implements (n)	Pottery	Plant remains
F1000	C/O	B	124	10	GW/I, I	H
F1001	C/O	B	127	13	GW/I, I	Ci, H
F1034	C/O	B	12	-	-	-
F1035	C/O	B	88	3	I	H
F1039	O	B	-	-	GW/D	-
F1040	O	B	1	-	I	-
F1047	V	F	-	-	-	-
F1053	V	F	21	1	-	H
F1056	V	F	7	-	I	H
F1061	V	F	2	-	-	H
F1080	C/O	B	-	-	I	-

Double ring ditch X, 6. Quarrying had destroyed most of the E half of the site, but had stopped short of the centre only slightly damaging the burial area (F4013). Excavation revealed a sequence of five successive burials. The primary burial in a large (2.15 m × 1.85 m) shallow grave aligned N-S can only be inferred as the later burials cut through it to a deeper level, leaving only parts of the fill.

The second burial (Fig. 47) had been placed in a relatively deep grave and contained a crouched inhumation in the remains of a wooden cist or mortuary chamber. The skeleton, male of 45+ years, was tightly crouched, lying on the left side head to the NE and facing SE. A radiocarbon determination of 2280–1990 cal BC (3709 ± 35 BP; UB-3122) was made on the skeleton. A number of grave goods had been placed in the cist. A fine antler-pommelled bronze dagger of Butterwick type (Gerloff forthcoming) with traces of a wooden hilt (Fig. 48, K–N) lay near the face, a crushed but complete Late style Beaker (Fig. 48, A) lay behind the pelvis and a group of finds tightly clustered and therefore probably deposited in a bag lay between the pelvis and the feet. This group included a slate wristguard (Fig. 48, E), a whetstone (Fig. 48, C), a copper alloy awl (Fig. 48, Q), a polished antler rod (Fig. 48, D), a flint scraper (Fig. 48, G) and two flint cutting flakes (Fig. 48, F, H). The cist survived as a thin 0.01 m layer of

charred wood (Fig. 47), part of the lid lying in a collapsed position above the gravel backfill. The lid was plank-built, suggesting that the wooden structure represented a lining to the grave rather than a coffin. In addition the wood had been deliberately charred to prevent decay prior to construction. Gravel had been backfilled behind the side lining and soily gravel and topsoil had been used to backfill the grave once the lid was in place. A discarded antler pick was found on the floor of the burial pit to the E of the cist.

A third grave was cut into the second at a higher level (Fig. 47). The grave was suboval, aligned almost N-S, and contained a loosely crouched skeleton of a female aged 20–25 years, lying on the left side, head to the NW and facing NE. A radiocarbon determination of 2180–1950 cal BC (3666 ± 35 BP; UB-3123) was made on the skeleton. A large Late style handled Beaker (Fig. 48, B) had been placed above the upper legs and in front of the waist. A copper alloy awl (Fig. 48, P) and a flint scraper (Fig. 48, J) were found behind the lower back. No evidence for a wooden lining was found but part of a disintegrated charred plank came from the upper backfill.

The short interval between the two burials indicated by the radiocarbon determinations accords with the observation that torso lay in a slight hollow,

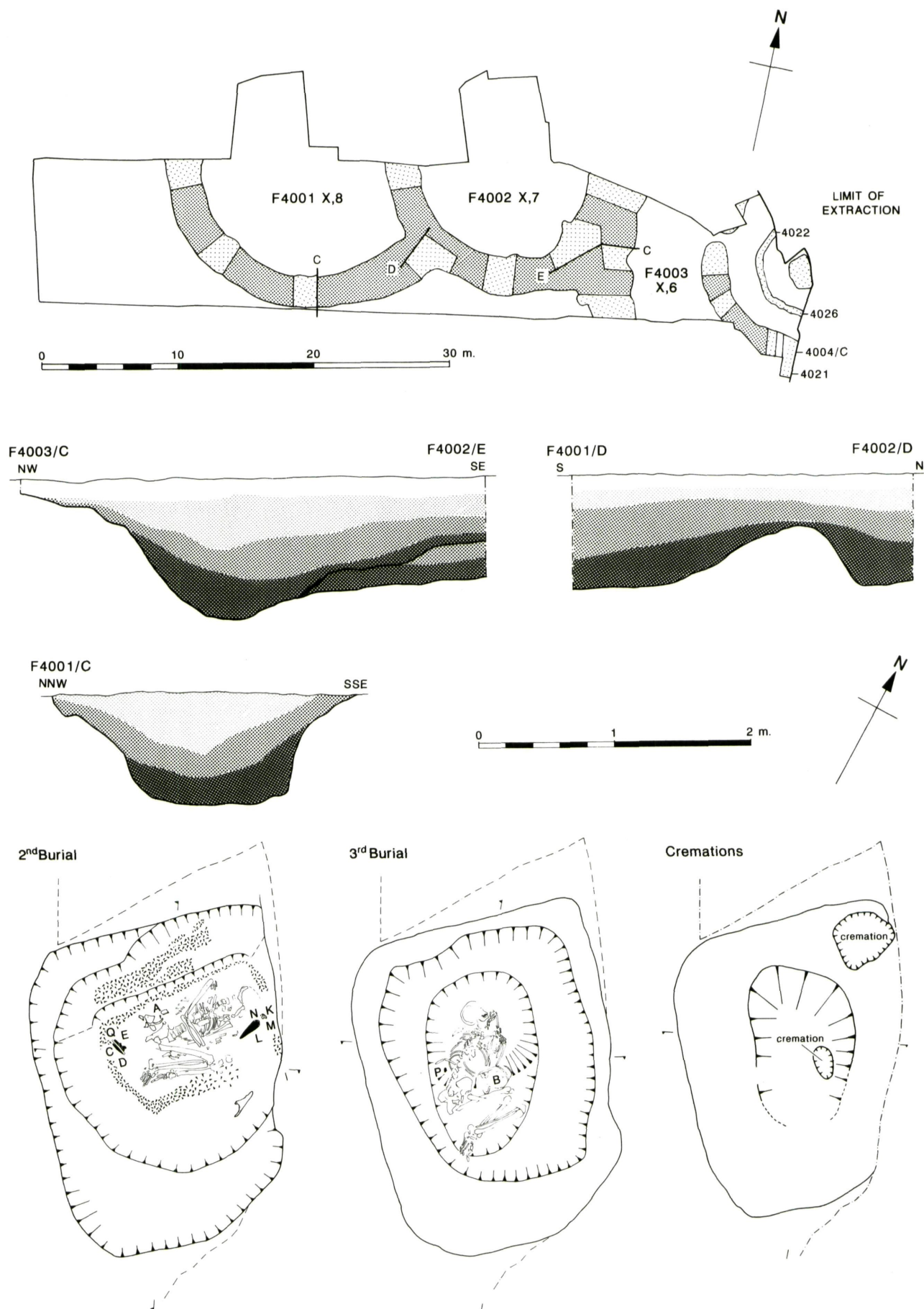


Figure 47 Gravelly Guy: ring ditches X, 6–8: plan, sections and burials

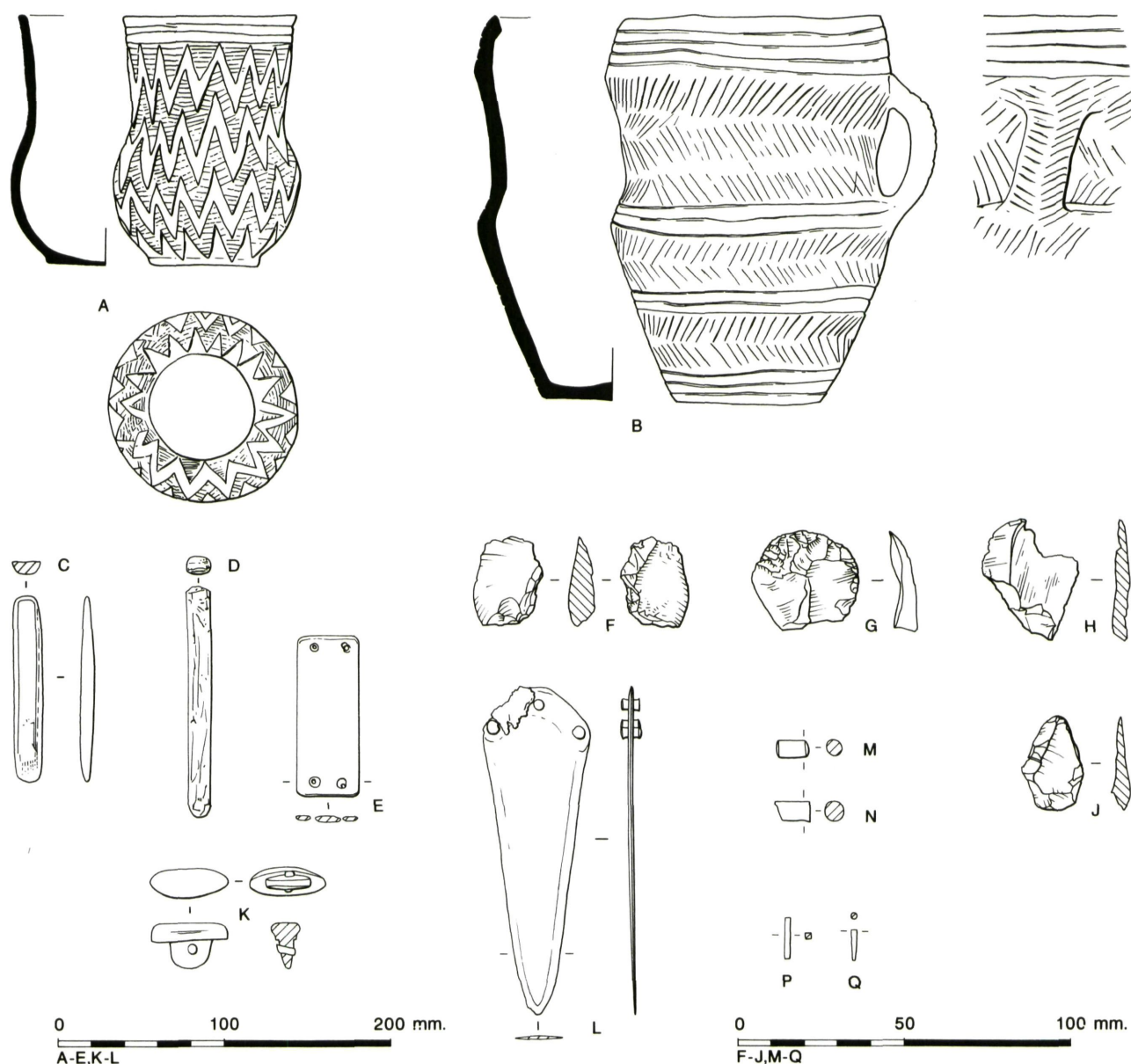


Figure 48 Gravelly Guy; ring ditch X, 6: grave goods

suggesting that the chamber or cist beneath had rotted *after* the upper burial had been made, causing it to subside.

Two cremation pits were dug into the top of the backfill (Fig. 47). One contained the unaccompanied cremation of an infant aged $2\frac{1}{2}$ – $3\frac{1}{2}$ years with a few unburnt, disarticulated bones from an adult. The second, more centrally placed, pit (F4013/4) contained the cremated bone of an adult female. A radiocarbon determination of 2280–1910 cal BC (3677 \pm 53 BP; UB-3125) was made on the cremations.

Surrounding the burial pit was a polygonal revetment trench c. 6.5 m in diameter (F4026) with regularly spaced postholes and postpipes. External to and concentric with this was the inner ditch F4004, diameter c. 15 m, with a flat U-shaped profile

and interrupted by a narrow causeway to the NW. The outer ditch (F4003) again was wider, U-profiled and 32 m in diameter. It contained a small amount of Peterborough Ware and later Neolithic flintwork.

The probable structural sequence is as follows: the original monument may have been double-ditched, though the inner ditch may have belonged to the second phase, and probably had a central pit, perhaps for burial. The secondary Beaker burial placed in a plank-built mortuary chamber was then cut, destroying most of the first pit. Probably contemporary with this burial was the revetment trench which was concentric with the second grave but not the first. This feature may be interpreted as part of a revetted barrow mound over the grave. The penannular ditch could have been cut at this stage,

providing the material for the mound. The mound was reopened and a third burial was placed above the second, respecting the previous grave. There are slight indications of ditch cutting at this stage suggesting refurbishment of the mound. Two pits were dug into the top of the grave fills and cremations and disarticulated human bones were deposited in them. It is not clear whether the two are contemporary.

Ring ditches X, 7 and 8. The interiors of the two adjoining ring ditches were also stripped in 1986 and found to be featureless. The ditches and their points of intersection were sectioned (Fig. 47). That of X, 7 was circular, continuous, approximate diameter 16 m and had a flat U-shaped profile. Its primary fill had been cut by the outermost ditch of X, 6 to the E, though the secondary silting was continuous across both (Fig. 47, section CE). The ditch of X, 8 was approximately 21.5 m in diameter and abutted ditch the ditch of X, 7. The section (D) suggested that the two ditches were probably cut at the same time, although that of X, 8 can be argued to be later on structural grounds. The greater accumulation of secondary silt towards the inner edge suggested that both surrounded internal banks or mounds. Both ditches contained small amounts of Peterborough Ware (Mortlake substyle) and Mesolithic and later Neolithic flintwork.

A later Neolithic origin could be suggested for the group, with X, 6 re-used in the early Bronze Age.
AP coverage: Allen 33 1135

Ring ditches X, 9–10. SP 40730546, 40760547

These two sites lay to the S of the linear group X, 2–8 and were destroyed without excavation.
AP coverage: Allen 1127

Field XI

Ring ditches XI, 1–4. SP 40610541, 40590532, 40570524

Field XI was completely quarried without any archaeological investigation. Three of the four ring ditches appeared to form a S–N row. Site XI, 2 was probably not a ring ditch.
AP coverage: Allen 1127

Field XV

Ring ditch XV, 1. SP 40670498 (Fig. 49; Hamlin 1963, 7–9)

The site was excavated in 1960 by the Oxford University Archaeological Society in advance of gravel extraction. Excavation took place before the commercial removal of topsoil and the area was surveyed by proton-magnetometer. The ring ditch was circular and continuous, 27.3 m in diameter. The ditches were sectioned diametrically to the W (I

and E (II). Section I revealed a flat, U-profiled ditch. The silting was even with no suggestion of an inner or outer earthwork. The tertiary fill represented a thick accumulation of red brown loam and contained early Iron Age pottery. The thick accumulation of this layer may be an indication of nearby cultivation. Layer 2, red-brown loam with pebbles and gravel, represented a cultivation horizon across the ring ditch and contained late Iron Age pottery. Section II was left unfinished but section I was extended across the interior to feature A, a shallow pit which the excavator interpreted as modern. The feature produced no finds.
AP coverage: St Joseph VL 38, DX 61

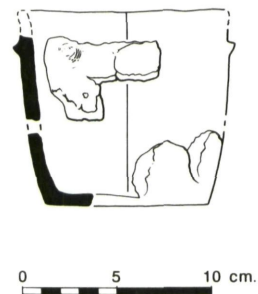
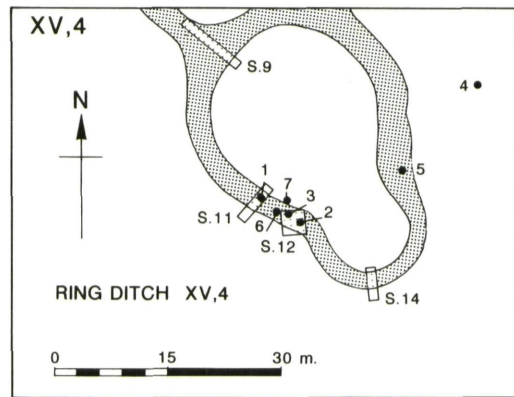
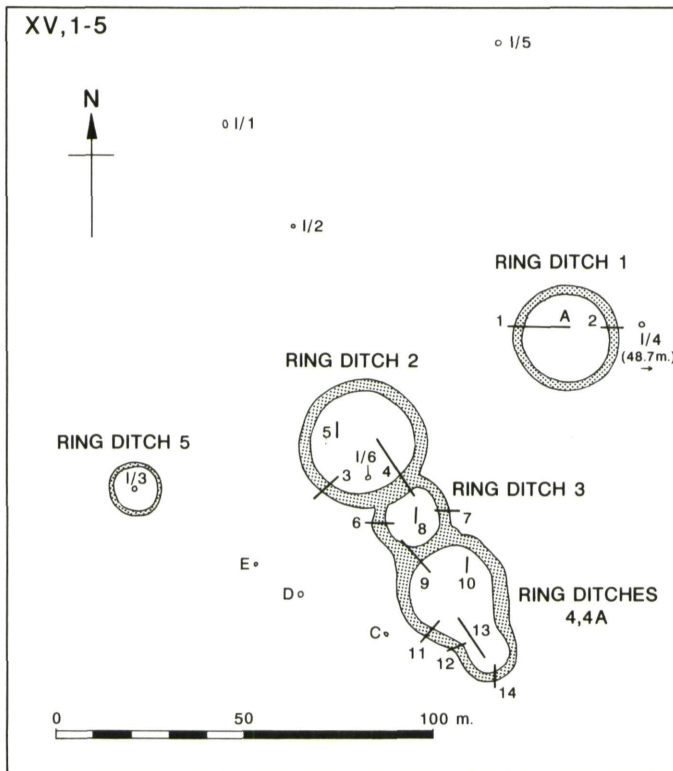
Ring ditches XV, 2–4a. SP 40650493 (Fig. 49; Hamlin 1963; Case 1963)

The ring ditches were recorded in aerial photographs in 1935 by Major Allen and again in 1949 by Dr St Joseph. They appeared to be contiguous, aligned NW–SE. The site was excavated in 1960–1 when it was threatened by gravel extraction. Excavations by the Oxford University Archaeological Society began in 1960 following a survey by proton-magnetometer which recorded the ditch positions and several anomalous features. The site comprised four ring ditches of which two formed a single circuit.

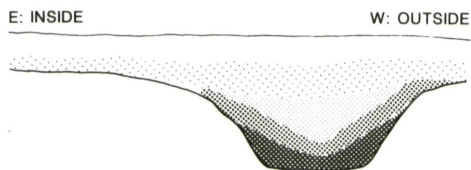
Excavation took place before the commercial stripping of the topsoil, with the ditches and their points of intersection being examined together with areas of anomalous readings.

Ring ditch XV, 2 was the most northerly and largest in the group. It was circular, continuous and 32 m in diameter. Two sections cuttings, 2 and 4, were placed across it, the latter was extended NW to investigate an anomaly which proved to be a solution hollow with mixed finds (clay pipe, struck flints, charcoal and daub). Another anomaly in the NW quadrant was sectioned and proved to be a patch of clayey topsoil containing 8 struck flints, Peterborough Ware, a Beaker sherd and a fragment of bone. When the topsoil was finally stripped a female inhumation accompanied by a flint flake (Fig. 50, 1a) was disturbed in the southern half.

Ring ditch XV, 3 was only 21 m in diameter. It was sectioned to the E and to the W, (cuttings 7 and 6), and to the N and S (cuttings 4 and 9). The central area was stripped (cutting 8) but proved featureless. Cutting 7 was placed where the magnetometer survey suggested the possible existence of a causeway but located none. A well-defined interface between the lowermost and subsequent silts in cutting 6 (Fig. 49) suggested to the excavator that the ditch had been cleaned out to this level or possibly recut. The subsequent accumulation of sandy loam and gravel against the inner edge of the ditch suggested an internal bank or mound.



RING DITCH 1 S.1



RING DITCH 3 S.6



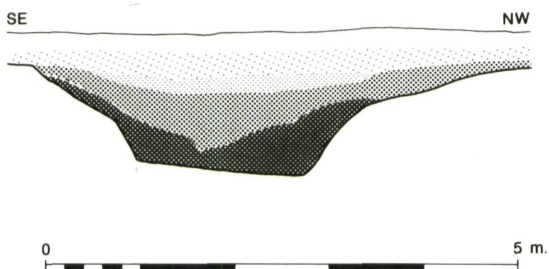
RING DITCH 2 S.3



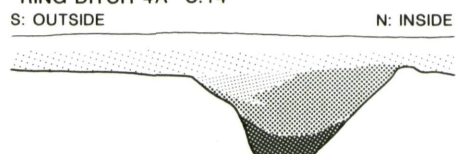
RING DITCH 4 S.11



INTERSECTION OF DITCHES 2 & 3 S.4



RING DITCH 4A S.14



RING DITCH 5 S.15



Figure 49 Field XV: ring ditches XV, 1-5, detail of cremations 1-7 in ditch of XV, 4, pits C, D, E, Bucket Urn from cremation 6, and graves 1/1-1/6

The relationship between *ring ditches XV, 3 and 4* was examined by cutting 9 (Fig. 49). No clear sequence was demonstrated; the two may have been contemporaneous. A greater amount of gravelly silt was found towards the NW, which suggested an inner earthwork for XV, 3 but not for XV, 4. A cultivation horizon probably represented Iron Age and later ploughsoil.

Ring ditch XV, 4-4a was pear-shaped and aligned NW-SE. Two cuttings were made to investigate the interior (10 and 13) and four sections were placed across the ditch (9, 11, 12 and 14). Cutting 10 was sited to investigate an anomalous reading but found only clayey topsoil and no finds. Cutting 13 was sited to determine whether either ring ditch continued across the area where the two joined, but found only topsoil. Section 12 showed that the fills of the two ditch cuts were continuous. However, there was a distinction between the fills of XV, 4 in cutting 11 and XV, 4a in cutting 14 (Fig. 49). In the former silting was uniform, whereas in the latter the greater accumulation of the secondary silt against the inner edge suggested the erosion of an internal earthwork. The tertiary silts produced Peterborough Ware, struck flint, early Iron Age and 'Belgic' pottery.

The tertiary silts also contained middle Bronze Age cremations (Fig. 49). Five (1-3, 6 and 7) came from the western sector of the ditch, one (5) was placed in the eastern sector, and another (4) lay outside the ditch 15 m NE of cremation 5. Excavation was limited and although the topsoil was removed before gravel extraction it is probable that others went unrecorded.

Cremations 1 and 2 were infant and child burials respectively. They were both found within the tertiary silt unaccompanied by ceramic vessels but covered or marked by slabs of conglomerate. Cremation 1 contained dark loam with charcoal and fire-cracked stones, possible debris from a funerary pyre.

Cremation 3 represented at least three adults, the remains being accompanied by a large cinerary urn. No. 6 was situated just to the W of 3 and consisted of a small Bucket Urn (Fig. 49) without bones. It is tempting to suggest that this is an accessory vessel associated with cremation 3 (*pace* Hamlin 1963, 13). Cremation 7 lay on the lip of the interior but close to the other cremations and represented a single individual unaccompanied by a vessel, though intrusive medieval pottery of 11-12th century date was found with it. Cremation 5 represented a single adult accompanied by sherds from an urn of similar fabric to those found with cremation 3. Cremation 4 was placed in a pit away from the ring ditch. The pit was circular, 0.46 m in diameter and had been truncated by machining. It contained the cremated remains of at least one adult accompanied by sherds from a bucket-shaped vessel.

The tertiary silts of the ring ditches were overlain by a cultivation horizon or ploughsoil containing a similar range of artefacts as well as Romano-British

grey ware. This suggests that the area was taken into cultivation during the early Iron Age.

AP coverage: Allen 1150, St Joseph VL 38, DX 61

Pits (Hamlin 1963, 2-4; Case 1963, 19-20)

Three pits (C, D and E) were recorded to the SW of ring ditches XV, 2-4a (Fig. 49), within a scatter of Iron Age pits. A total of 12 pits were examined out of at least 30. More probably existed.

Pit C. The finds from the pit were collected by the machine operator. No details were recorded. They comprise a quartzite rubbing or polishing stone and four flint flakes, one with a faceted butt (Fig. 50, 1-5).

Pit D. No details are published (Hamlin 1963, 4). The fill contained a flint flake and a rim and body sherd from a Fengate substyle Peterborough Ware vessel (Fig. 49, 6-7).

Pit E was circular, 1.04 m in diameter and 0.48 m deep, with a fill of red brown loam and much gravel containing a sherd of Peterborough Ware fabric, 11 fragments of fired clay, 23 pieces of struck flint including a core rejuvenation, a multi-platform core and two scrapers, one made on a flake from a polished implement (Fig. 50, 8-14), and animal bone.

Ring ditch XV, 5. SP 40570492 (Hamlin 1963, 6; Case 1963, 25-6)

The ring ditch was exposed by mechanical stripping of the topsoil which revealed a centrally placed inhumation which was salvaged by the machine operator. The ring ditch was continuous, circular, 14 m in diameter, flat-bottomed and U-profiled (Fig. 49). The ditch silting was uniform with no suggestion of an inner or outer earthwork. The burial was too disturbed for the exact burial position to be recorded. However it was possible to suggest that the skeleton was robust and male. It was accompanied by an All-Over-Cord Beaker (Fig. 51, 7; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 774) and a polished green slate wristguard (Fig. 51, 8). A comb-impressed Beaker body sherd (Fig. 51, 9) was found nearby.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 38

'Flat' graves (Figs 49, 51; Hamlin 1963, 4-7; Case 1963, 21-27)

Four 'flat' graves were recorded, 1/1, 1/2 and 1/5 near ring ditches XV, 1-4 (Fig. 49), and 1/4 some 50 m to the E of ring ditch XV, 1. Only grave 1/1 could be excavated and recorded (Fig. 51); the others could only be salvaged. Two (1/1 and 1/2) contained Beaker pottery.

Grave 1/1 was found in a cluster of Iron Age pits. The burial pit was aligned approximately N-S and cut into the natural gravel, 0.3 m deep. The grave was

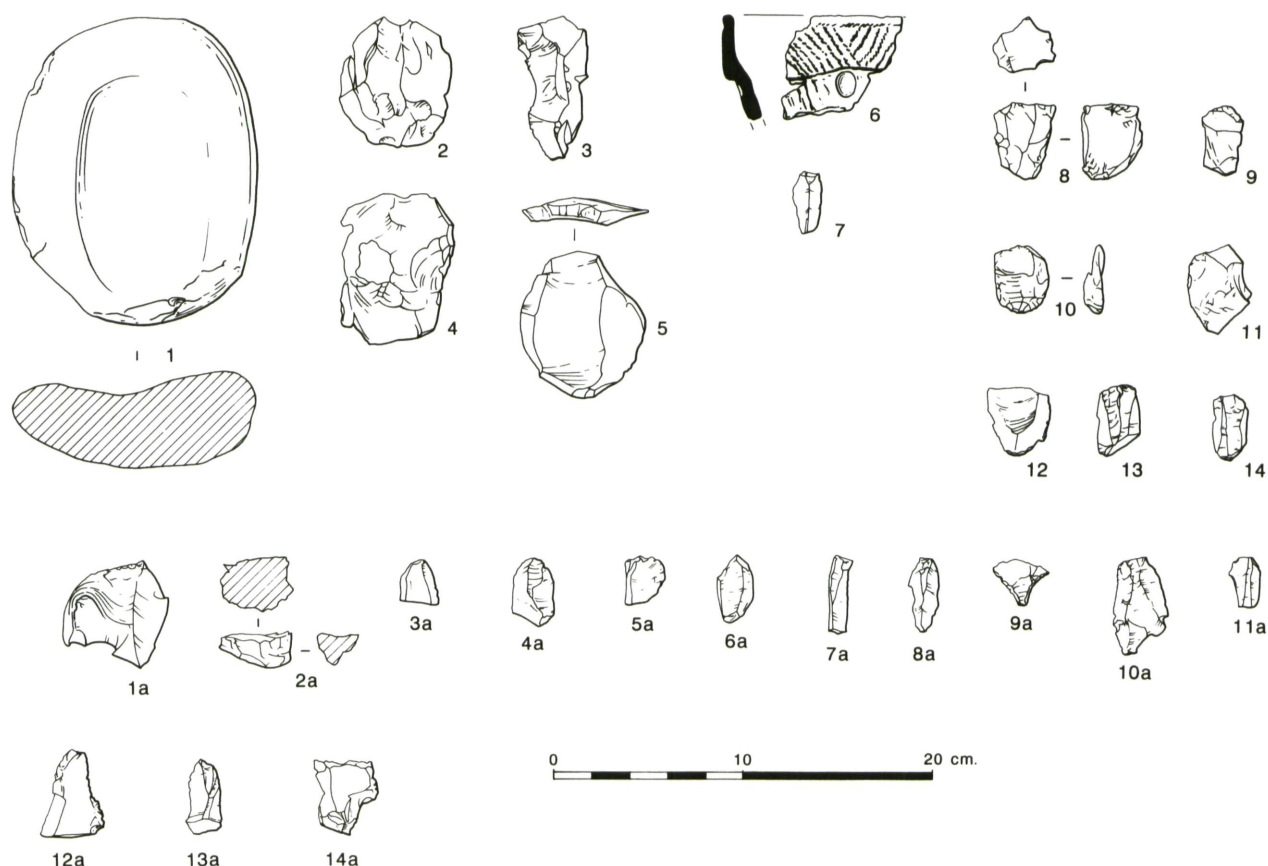


Figure 50 Field XV: finds from pits C (1-5), D (6-7) and E (8-14) and from ring ditches XV, 2 (1a-4a), XV, 3 (5a-9a), XV, 2/3 (10a), XV, 3/4 (11a, 14a) and XV, 4 (12a, 13a)

subrectangular (1.98 m × 1.44 m) with gently sloping sides. It contained a disarticulated inhumation, accompanied by a Middle style Beaker (Fig. 51, 1; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 773) set upright, a bone spatula (Fig. 51, 2) found near the N edge and a flint flake (Fig. 51, 3) positioned near the W edge. The mandible of an ox was found above the torso of the skeleton.

Sherds of three other Middle style Beakers were found in the area of the grave (including Fig. 51, 4-5).

The skeleton showed only partial articulation, some bones being completely absent (Fig. 51). The skull lay upside down in the centre toward the N. The mandible lay to the W of the grave on the opposite side of the torso, which lay in the NW quadrant. The torso, legs and arms gave the appearance of partial articulation; other bones such as the pelvis and ribs were obviously disturbed. The grave fill consisted of brown loam and gravel, containing early Iron Age sherds and animal bones above the burial.

The spatial arrangement of the bones and their incompleteness suggests that the body was in an advanced state of decay when interred. Case (1982c, 113) has suggested that the burial was robbed or disturbed. It is quite plausible that the grave was

unintentionally dug into during the Iron Age and this would explain the disturbed nature of the bones, though the idea was rejected in the original report (Hamlin 1963, 6).

Grave 1/2 was badly damaged by the machine, so disturbed that the burial form and grave cut could not be recorded. The burial contained a few infant bone fragments and a Middle style beaker with horizontal impressed finger-nail decoration (Fig. 51, 6).

Grave 1/4. Topsoil stripping to the E of ring ditch XV, 1 revealed a grave pit 1.37 m × 1.32 m aligned E-W. It contained a badly crushed inhumation. The grave fill was of red loam and when this was excavated eight irregularly spaced postholes were found in the pit floor.

Grave 1/5 was found by the machine operator c. 60 m N from ring ditch XV, 1. As with grave 4/1 the skeleton was unaccompanied though excavation conditions were far from ideal. Only the lower half of the skeleton was recovered. The burial probably belongs with the other 'flat' graves associated with Middle style beakers.

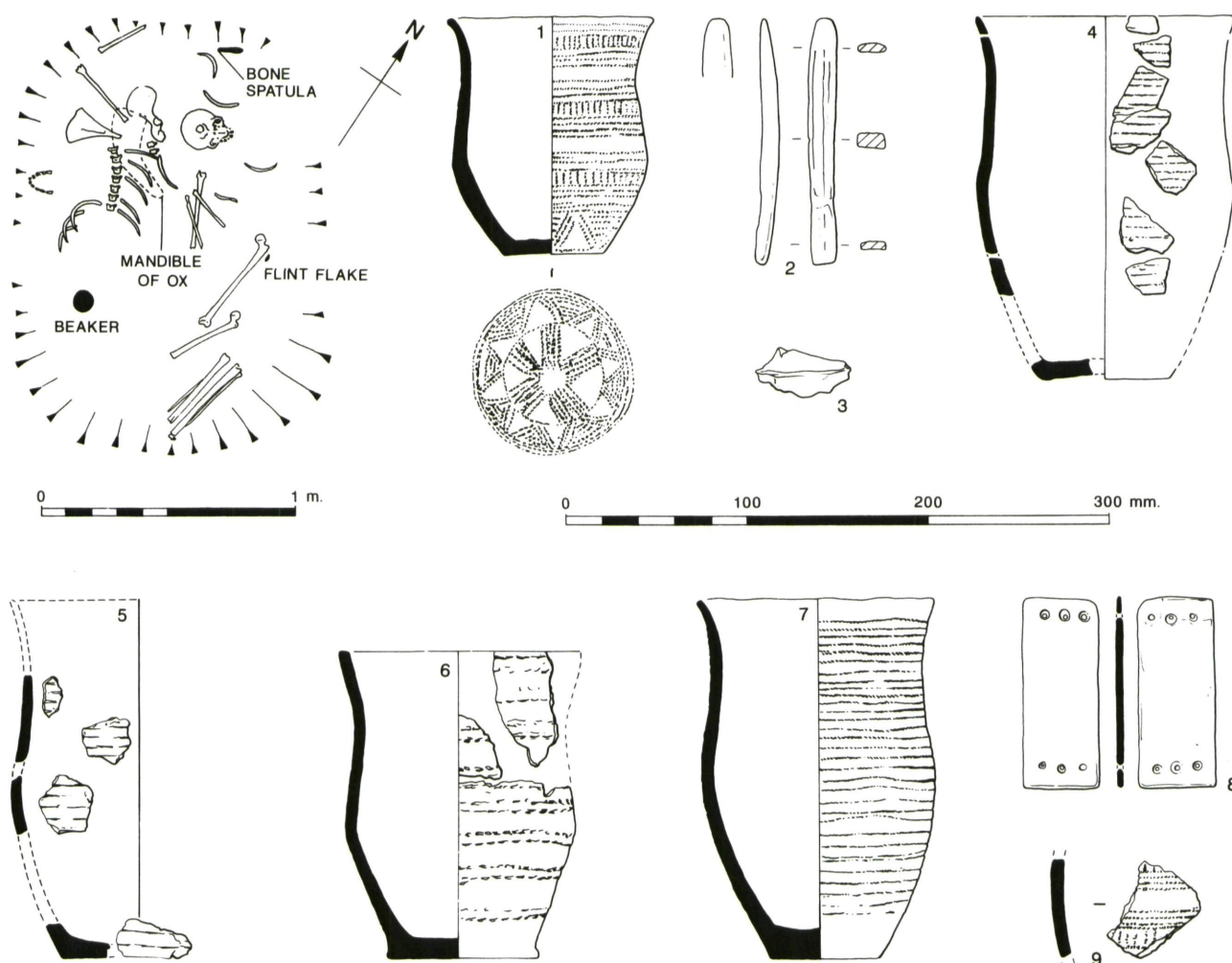


Figure 51 Field XV: grave 1/1, finds from the grave (1–3) and its immediate area (4–5), Beaker from grave 1/2 (6) and finds from grave 1/3 (7, 8) and its immediate area (9)

Field XVI

Ring ditch XVI, 1 (the Stanton Harcourt barrow).
SP 40990512 (Fig. 52; Harden and Treweek 1945,
19–41); Sturdy and Case 1961–2; Case 1963, 42)

The barrow was levelled in two phases during the 18th and 19th centuries, surviving to a height of 0.61 m before excavation in 1940. A trial section, A–A, and two radial sections B–B and C–C were initially dug (Fig. 52). B–B was extended to the centre of the ring ditch where an area 3.5 m square was excavated. The original excavation showed that the ditch was circular, internal diameter 52.6 m, and continuous with a flattened V-shaped section 1.67 m deep. Further salvage work in 1961 suggested that the true depth of the ditch had not been revealed in the initial excavations and that it was deeper and flatter-bottomed with more primary silt.

Beneath the mound a number of features associated with a cremation pyre and burial were discovered. In the centre above the preserved

Bronze Age land surface was an elliptical area 2.74 m × 3.35 m of black and reddish-brown burnt earth interpreted as the remains of a funeral pyre. Central to and contemporary with this pyre floor was a posthole 0.1 m in diameter filled with burnt earth, cremated bone and fragments of bronze. Covering the posthole and extending across the centre was a deposit of cremated bone, up to 0.1 m thick which was covered in burnt earth. The cremated bone was associated with a Camerton-Snowhill hybrid bronze dagger with the remains of the sheath, attributable to Wessex II (Fig. 52, 4; Gerloff 1975, 99, cat. no. 170), a polished fragment of bone, ivory or horn, perhaps from the dagger handle (Fig. 52, 6), a bronze awl (Fig. 52, 7); a biconical pygmy cup with slit perforations (Fig. 52, 1); a perforated shale whetstone (Fig. 52, 3); a flint fabricator (Fig. 52, 2) a ring-headed bone pin and amber, jet and fossil sponge beads (Fig. 52, 5). 0.84 m W of the cremated bone was a shallow circular pit cutting the pyre floor and containing ash and further cremated bone. This

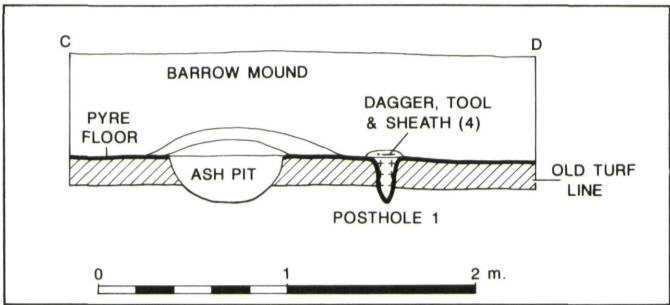
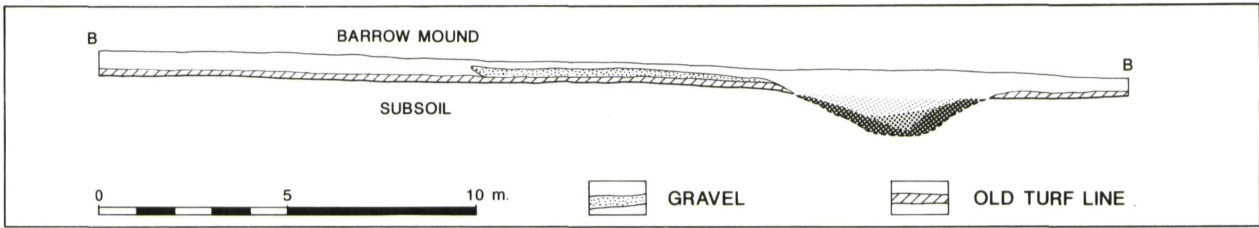
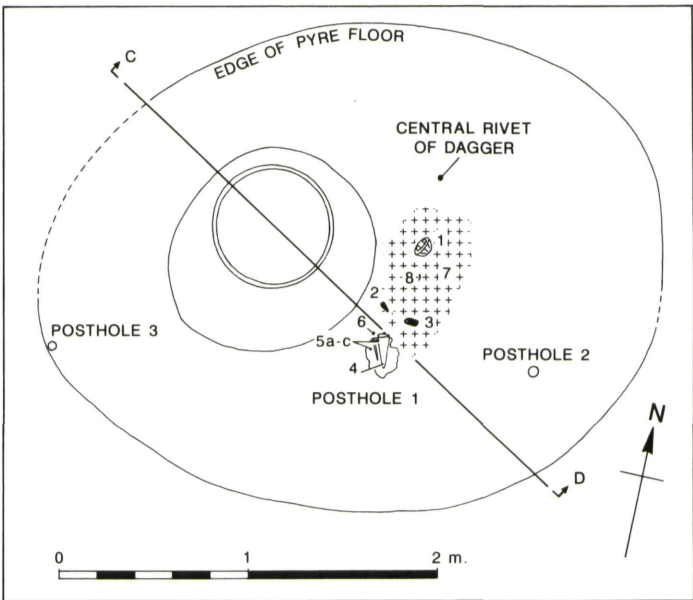
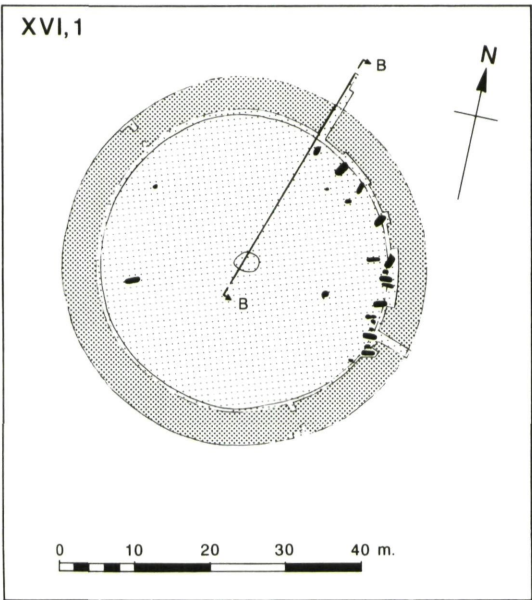
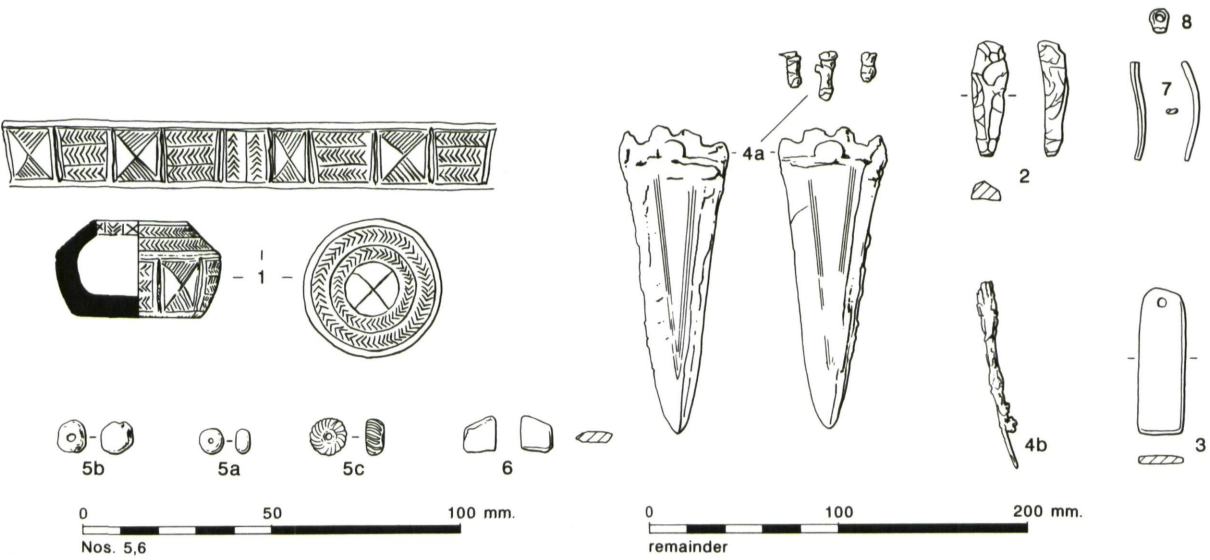


Figure 52 Field XVI: ring ditch XVI, 1: plan, sections and grave finds

was covered by a small mound of gravel and then earth with much charcoal.

The barrow had preserved much evidence for Bronze Age mortuary practice. It has been suggested (Harden and Treweek 1945, 24) that a marker post was erected in the centre of the ring ditch which acted as a focal point for the funerary ritual. The pyre was then constructed around the post which was subsequently destroyed. A circular pit was then dug and filled with ash which was separated from the cremated bone. The grave deposits were then placed within the spread of cremated bone and covered with reddened earth. The ash in the pit was covered by a small mound and the whole interior was buried beneath a large mound. The silting pattern indicates that the mound was separated from the ditch by a berm, so that the monument may have been a bell barrow.

The barrow was reused in the Saxon period when 23 inhumations were placed near the periphery of the NE section of the mound. Salvage excavations in 1961 found further Saxon burials beneath the topsoil and contracted skeletons, possibly Bronze Age or later, in the ditch fill (Sturdy and Case 1961–2, 338; Case 1963, 42).

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 38, Allen 1125

Field XVIII

Ring ditches XVIII, 1–2. SP 41250543

Two ring ditches in close association in the southern corner of field XVIII both of which are now destroyed.

AP coverage: Allen 1119

Field XIX

Ring ditches XIX, 1–2. SP 41350544 (Grimes 1960, fig. 57)

These are likely to represent post-Bronze Age enclosures.

AP coverage: Allen 1119

Field XX

Ring ditch XX, 1. SP 41390535

The most easterly site of a dispersed group N of the Devil's Quoits Henge, now destroyed.

AP coverage: Allen 1119

Field XXI (Linch Hill Corner)

Ring ditch XXI, 1 (Grimes' site 2). SP 41620497 (Fig. 53; Grimes 1943–4, 34–45; Grimes 1960, 154–64)

A double ring ditch with a smaller peripheral ring ditch was excavated in 1940 before the construction of the Stanton Harcourt Airfield.

Sections were placed across the ditches to the E, S and N. A central area was stripped around the grave

pit (burial 1) and the northern sector of the interior around the ditch causeways was stripped. A small ring ditch was discovered centred on the berm between the ditches and covering the eastern causeway.

The outer ditch was continuous, with an external diameter of 35.4 m. The inner ditch, external diameter 26.3 m, was interrupted twice to the N. The ditch silting was uniform with no indication of an inner or outer earthwork.

The central pit, burial 1, was subrectangular, 3 × 2.29 m, aligned N–S and 0.76 m deep. It had been cut into natural gravel, and had gently sloping sides and a flat base. The primary fill consisted of brown earth which spread across the bottom and partly up the sides covering the skeleton. Near the skeleton the deposit was redder and more firm. The skeleton lay half on its back and half on its right side with its head to the S. The legs were drawn up with the knees facing E. The condition of the bones was poor but identification as a young female was possible. Accompanying the burial were an edge-polished flint knife (Fig. 53, A) and a jet belt slider (Fig. 53, B). The grave was back-filled with clean gravel and soil presumably the material excavated in its construction.

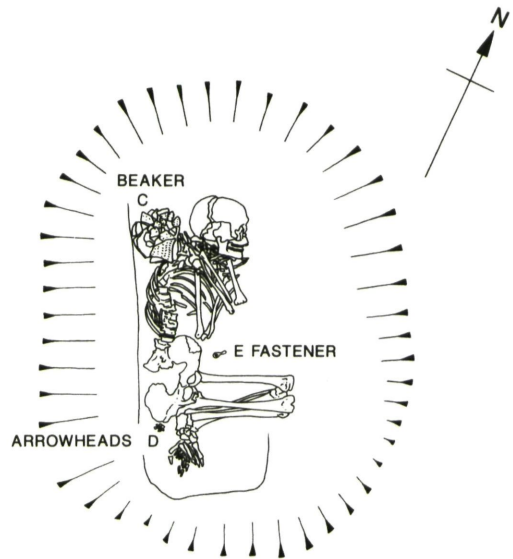
A second ring ditch was discovered with the stripping of the northern area. The ring ditch lay across the berm and the two ditches enclosing the eastern causeway. The ring ditch was oval and continuous, external diameter 7.6–8.2 m, enclosing a subrectangular (2.13 × 1.52 m) grave pit aligned NW–SE. The pit contained a crouched inhumation lying on its left side, legs contracted with the knees towards the NE. The feet were crossed as were the arms and the hands rested on the shoulders. It lay in the remains of a wooden coffin, accompanied by the crushed remains of a Middle style finger-nail impressed Beaker (Fig. 53, C; Clarke 1970, corpus no. 772) behind the head, a bone belt fastener or bow stringer (Fig. 53, E) between the elbows and upper legs, and seven barbed and tanged arrowheads (Fig. 53, D) tightly clustered below the pelvis. The coffin survived as a thin layer of carbonized wood which could be traced around the feet and along behind the pelvis up to the back of the head.

The relationship between the smaller ring ditch and the double ditch was examined by a number of sections. These revealed that primary silt but little secondary silt had accumulated in the double ring ditch before the cutting of the smaller ring ditch. To the E of the grave a shallow pit was discovered cutting into the primary fill of the outer ditch. The pit contained sheep-bones including part of the skull. The close proximity of the pit to the burial may suggest a ritual offering to the deceased (Grimes 1943–4, 40).
AP coverage: Allen 1120/1122

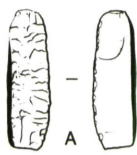
Ring ditch XXI, 2. SP 41530485

The site was situated to the W of ring ditch XXI, 3 but was not selected for excavation by Grimes.

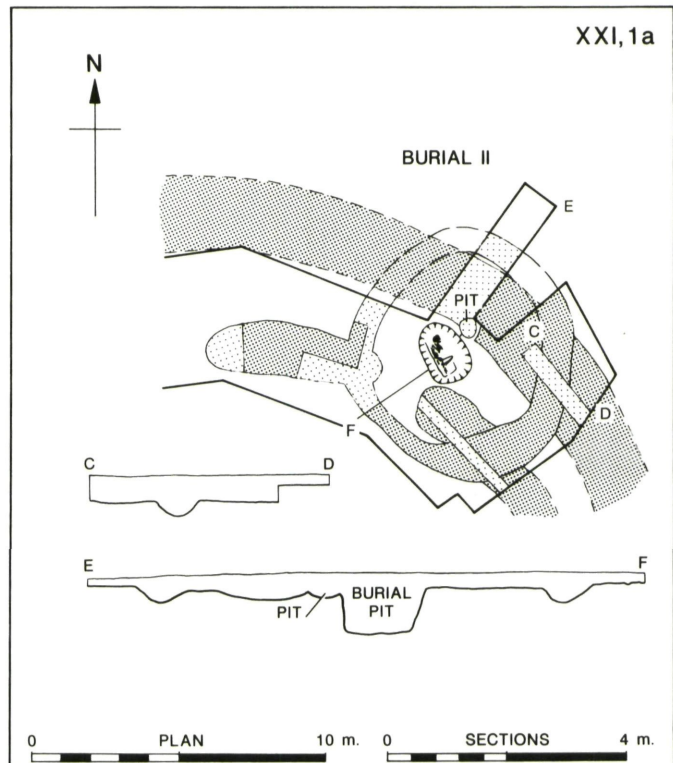
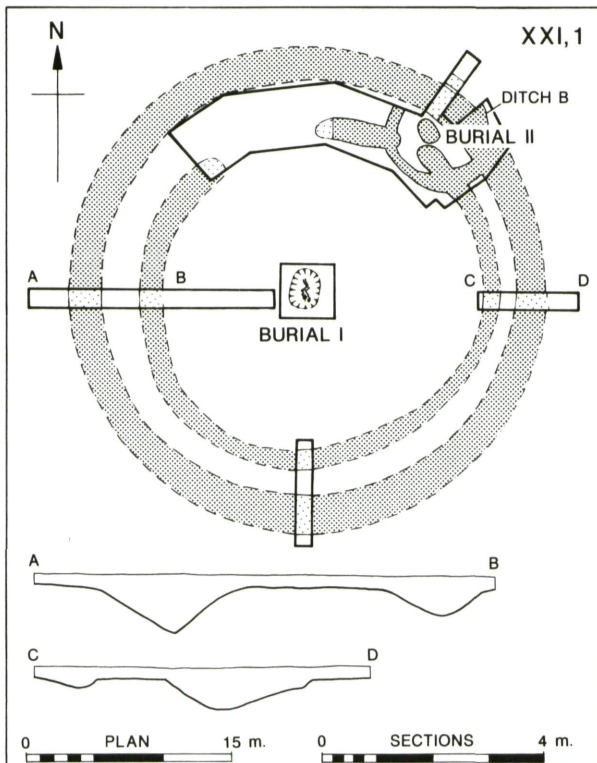
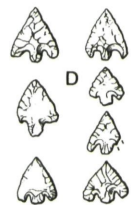
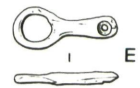
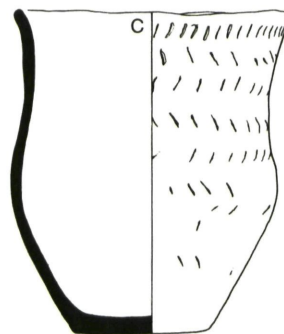
AP coverage: Allen 1120/1122



0 1 m. (BURIALS)



0 100 200 mm.(FINDS)



Ring ditch XXI, 3 (Grimes' site 6). SP 41570453 (Fig. 54; Grimes 1943–4, 45–6; Grimes 1960, 164–5)

The site was excavated prior to the construction of the Stanton Harcourt airfield at Linch Hill Corner. The ditch had already been destroyed by quarrying in the N and to the S. The surface was scraped by the extractor, removing topsoil to a depth of 0.15 m. This revealed a central cremation deposit. Though much was removed by the machine, an area of burnt material 0.61 m across and 51 mm deep was recorded and a few cremated bones were found nearby to the W.

The ditch was sectioned diametrically to the E and the W. The W section was extended to the centre. No trace of a mound or bank was visible, only plough-soil resting on natural gravel. The ditch had a flattened, U-shaped profile and varied in width from 2.44 m to 3.35 m. The fill comprised coarse primary silt then alternating bands of brown soil and gravel. The ditch was presumed to be continuous and circular and had an external diameter of 24.38 m.

AP coverage: Allen 1120/1122

Ring ditch XXI, 4 (Grimes' site 7). SP 41520478 (Fig. 54; Grimes 1943–4, 46–7; Grimes 1960, 164–5)

This site, like XXI, 3, was threatened with destruction by the airfield construction. Four sections were dug across the ditch and the central area was stripped. No features or artefacts were found in the interior. In the E section, late Bronze Age pottery (re-examined by the writer) was found above the primary silting.

AP coverage: Allen 1120/1122

Pits? (Leeds 1940, 6–8, pls II–III; Longworth 1984, 263–4)

Artefacts were collected by H Fisher in 1935 from men working in the gravel quarry at Linch Hill and presented to the Ashmolean Museum. The collection includes large sherds from Mortlake Ware bowls and Collared Urns. The contexts are not known but the finds are likely to have come from domestic features or pits rather than burials as no human bone was observed.

Field XXII

Ring ditch XXII, 1. SP 41340525

In the extreme NE corner of the field. The site was destroyed without excavation but possibly represented a twin ring ditch.

AP coverage: Allen 1119

Ring ditch XXII, 2. SP 41190517 (Fig. 55; Harden and Treweeks 1945, 19–20)

The ring ditch was destroyed by the construction of one of the wartime runways and unfortunately the contractors had already levelled two-thirds of the site before archaeological work could begin. Few details were recorded (Harden and Treweeks 1940, 17–20). The ring ditch, with an internal diameter of 31 m, appeared featureless. The ditch was flat-bottomed, 3.66 m wide and 1.22 m deep. The silting suggested the existence of an external bank. No finds were recorded from the excavations.

AP coverage: Allen 1119

Ring ditches XXII, 3–5. SP 41420490, 41340481, 41480469

These three sites were situated close to the Devil's Quoits henge and belonged to a SE scatter of ring ditches extending up to Linch Hill corner. All three were destroyed without excavation.

AP coverage: Allen SH21 (Grimes 1960, Plate XXXIII)

Ring ditch XXII, 6. SP 41290489 (Taylor, this volume Ch. 2; Fig. 29)

This site was discovered with the removal of a wartime runway and was excavated in November 1979 by John Taylor and the OUAS.

AP coverage: the site was obscured by the runway but is visible on Allen SH21 (Grimes 1960, pl. XXXIIIa).

Enclosures XXII, 7–8. SP 41270497, 41240504 (Fig. 55)

These two sites were both destroyed without excavation. They were noted by Grimes and are difficult to distinguish on Allen's photographs as they are half concealed by a field boundary. They were subsequently recorded by J K St Joseph after the construction of the airfield, when the field boundaries had been altered. Both appear to have been aligned with ring ditch XXII, 2 on the aerial photographs and may well have been associated with segmented ring ditch XXII, 6. What appears in Figure 55 as a possible pit or post alignment running through the middle of both sites could well be a recent fence line on the former field boundary.

Site XXII, 7 was rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 5 × 10 m, and may be compared with Neolithic mortuary enclosures excavated at Barford, Warwickshire, and phase 1 of the oval barrow at Barrow Hills, Radley (Bradley 1992, fig. 4).

The suboval plan of *site XXII, 8*, which measured approximately 8 × 20 m, is likewise suggestive of some Neolithic mortuary enclosures such as phases

Figure 53 (opposite) Field XXI (Linch Hill Corner): ring ditches XXI, 1 and 1a

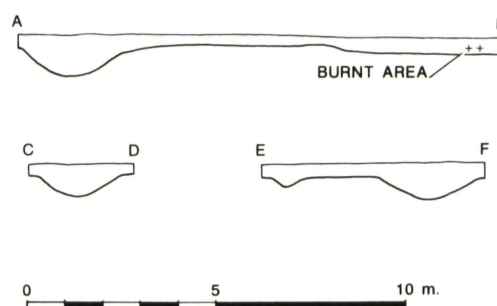
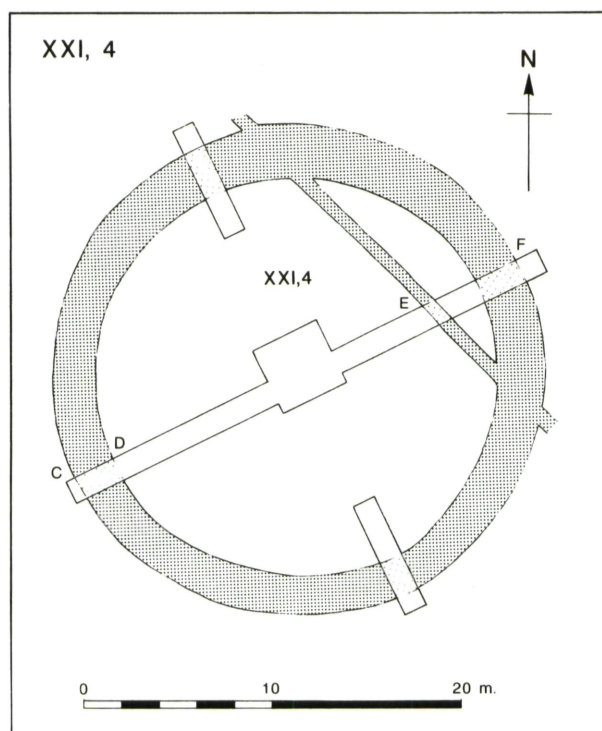
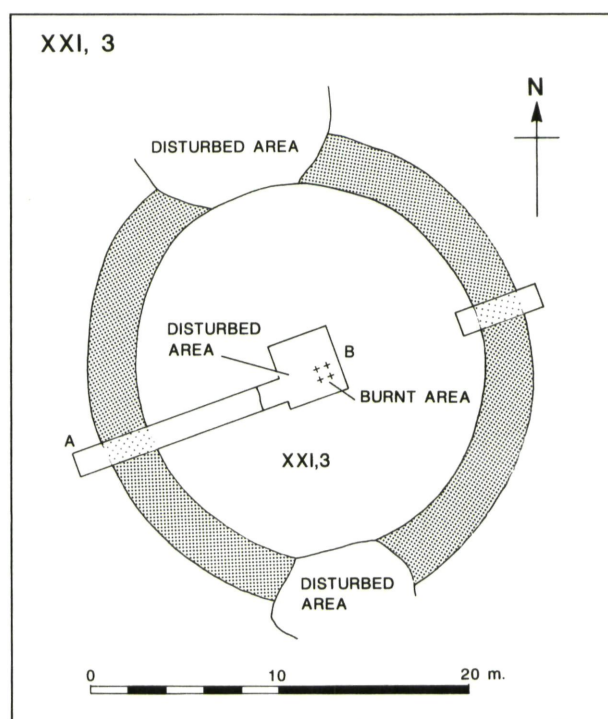
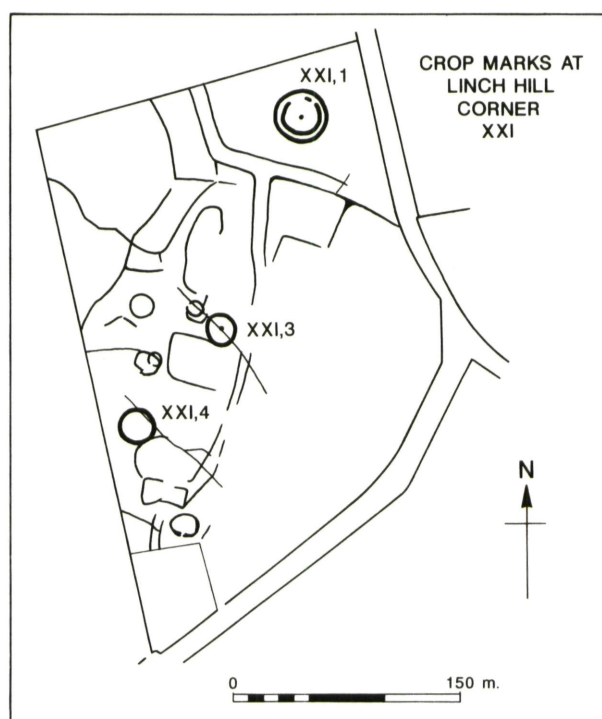


Figure 54 Field XXI (Linch Hill Corner): ring ditches XXI, 1, 3–4



Figure 55 Field XXII: sites XXII, 2, 7 and 8 from the NW. Photo Professor J K St Joseph (Ref. VG71). © British Crown Copyright 1993/MOD reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Britannic Majesty's Stationery Office

3 and 5 of the Barrow Hills, Radley, oval barrow (Bradley 1992, fig. 4) and the oval barrow in Maxey West Field, Cambridgeshire (Pryor *et al.* 1985, 63). The close juxtaposition of these sites and the fact that they occurred near to other excavated middle to late Neolithic sites strengthens the possibility of a similar or earlier date.

AP coverage: St Joseph VG70/71

Field XXIII

Ring ditch XXIII, 1. SP 40970470

This site was situated close to the Devil's Quoits henge and was destroyed in 1970 without excavation.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41, 68 and HP 83

Ring ditch XXIII, 2. SP 40880457 (Aston and Brown 1970, 104; Linington 1982, 86–7)

The site was excavated in 1970 by M Aston and D Benson prior to its destruction by gravel quarrying. It was excavated after partial commercial stripping of the topsoil. The ring ditch had an internal diame-

ter of 23 m and was circular and continuous, 2.74 m wide and 1 m deep. At the centre was a shallow circular pit, 0.46–0.51 m in diameter and 0.1 m deep. The pit contained cremated bone and the crushed remains of a Biconical Urn (Linington 1982, fig. 47). The pit fill was of reddish-brown loam with small pebbles and charcoal flecks. Within the interior towards the NW edge a hollow-based arrowhead and other worked flints were found.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41, 68 and HP 83

Ring ditch XXIII, 3. SP 40920562

This site lay to the S of the ring ditch XXII, 2, but was destroyed in 1970 without excavation.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41, 68 and 83

Field XXIV

Ring ditch XXIV, 1. SP 40730476

This site was located between ring ditches XV, 1–4, and the ring ditches to the SW of the Devil's Quoits henge. It was destroyed without excavation.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 38

Field XXIX

Ring ditch XXIX, 1. SP 41050454 (Fig. 56; Linington 1982, 81–3).

The site had already been partially destroyed by gravel extraction, though two-thirds remained in 1959–60. Excavations were conducted by R E Linington and the Oxford University Archaeological Society. The site had been recorded by aerial photography in 1928 by the RAF and again in 1933 by Allen.

Quarrying prior to excavation provided a section through the ring ditch. A further section was placed to the N, where a cremation was located, and extended SE to the centre of the interior. The ditch circuit was traced using a proton magnetometer and was probably continuous and 26.8 m in diameter. No interior features were found during the course of excavation.

The silting of the ditch suggested to the excavator that inner and outer earthworks may have existed. The ditch may have been recut and cleaned out before the deposition of the tertiary fill in the top of which the cremated remains of a young adult accompanied by two fragments of bronze had been cut. The tertiary silts contained Romano-British sherds, as did the cultivation horizon which overlay them.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41 and 68, LW 56

Ring ditch XXIX, 2 (Harden's and Treweeks' site 3). SP 40960452 (Fig. 56; Harden and Treweeks 1945, 16–19)

This site was salvaged in 1940 before its destruction by the building of the aerodrome at Stanton Harcourt. Three-quarters of the site was uncovered by

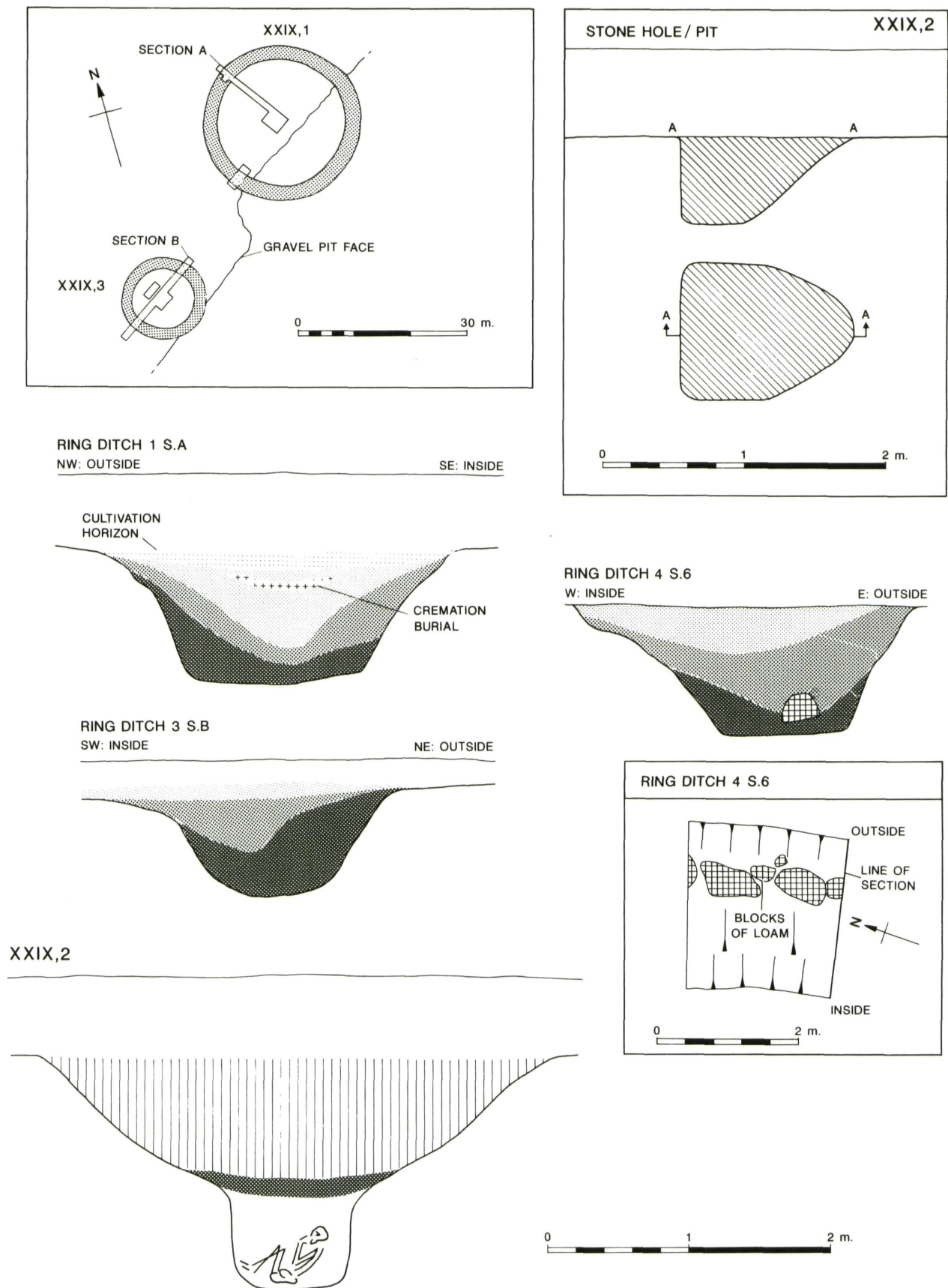


Figure 56 Field XXIX: ring ditches XXIX, 1-4

the contractors prior to excavation. The topsoil was removed almost down to the level of natural gravel. The dimensions of the ring ditch are not recorded in the report. A complete and a partial section were dug through the ditch, demonstrating it to be rounded in profile. Fortuitously, the complete section of the ditch contained an oval inhumation pit dug into its base. The pit had vertical sides and was 0.61 m deep and 1.22 m long by 0.84 m wide. It was dug shortly after the cutting of the ditch as the primary fill was undisturbed. The inhumation was of a young woman in her early twenties, laid on her right hand side, hands covering her face and legs flexed. The body was unaccompanied by grave goods. The grave fill consisted of a black deposit which was overlain by the gravelly primary silt of the ditch.

The rest of the ditch fill, the secondary and tertiary silting, were not differentiated, being described simply as brown earth. They contained sherds of early Iron Age pottery and a Roman-British olla rim. The ditch fill was overlain by 0.53 m of topsoil.

Two pits were found within the ring ditch interior. One turned out to be a natural feature, amorphous in shape and filled with compact brown earth. The other, lying 2.75 m inside the inner lip of the ditch on the E side of the circle, was D-shaped with one sloping side, similar in form to the stone-holes excavated at Devil's Quoits. The excavators suggested that the hole may have contained a small monolith, though no conclusive evidence was found.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41 and 68

Ring ditch XXIX, 3. SP 41020452 (Fig. 56; Linington 1982, 83–4)

Rescue excavations took place in winter 1959 and continued into the spring when the site was threatened by extraction. Part of the SE section of the ditch had already been destroyed through quarrying. A section was put across the ring ditch SW–NE and the

interior was searched but found to be featureless. Excavation revealed the ring ditch to be circular, 14.63 m in diameter with a width up to 2 m and a depth of 0.76 m. The ditch profile was a flattened U-shape.

The silting pattern suggested the existence and erosion of an outer bank. The top of the tertiary fill produced Romano-British sherds, scraps of bone and charcoal. Below the topsoil was a probable cultivation horizon of Romano-British date.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41 and 68, LW 56

Ring ditch XXIX, 4. SP 41050451 (Fig. 56; Linington 1982, 85–6)

The site was recorded under rescue conditions after the topsoil had been removed with little time available for excavation. With the stripping of the topsoil no interior or exterior features were visible. A single section to the W was recorded through the ditch. The ring ditch was circular, 17.68 m in diameter with a flattened U-shaped profile 2.42 m wide and 0.91 m deep.

Blocks of loam were found in the top of the primary silt and these have been interpreted as the remains of a collapsed turf-revetted outer bank (Linington 1982, 86). A greater accumulation of secondary silt occurred towards the outside edge suggesting an outer bank and a monument of disc barrow form.

AP coverage: St Joseph VL 41 and 68, LW 56

Fields XXX–XXXI

Ring ditches XXX, 1–4 and XXXI, 1. SP 41470462, 41350454, 41290452, 41310443, 41340438, 41290429, 41380428

Seven ring ditches, forming the southern part of a group extending from Neolithic ring ditch XXI, 1 at Linch Hill corner. The sites were destroyed without archaeological investigation.

AP coverage: Allen 1135, 1142–3