

South Leigh
Gill Mill
(Tar Farm and
Rushy Common)
Oxfordshire



**Interim Summary of
Archaeological Works 2001-2005**



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**SOUTH LEIGH, GILL MILL (TAR FARM AND RUSHY COMMON),
OXFORDSHIRE: INTERIM SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS,
2001-2005**

Summary

Monitoring and archaeological recording of topsoil and subsoil stripping of almost 25 hectares of land at Tar Farm and Rushy Common from 2001-2005 in advance of gravel quarrying revealed important evidence for the environs of the major Roman roadside settlement located west and south-west of Gill Mill House. No evidence for prehistoric activity was recovered. The earliest Roman occupation was a small enclosed settlement identified in the south-east corner of Area 2, which may have developed from about the middle of the 1st century AD. It was associated with a major north-south boundary and with field systems. Elsewhere occupation may not have commenced before the early 2nd century, the likely time of the establishment of the roadside settlement. Ditches flanking this road, on a north-east to south-west alignment, were located in the northern part of the examined area. A roughly east-west aligned trackway was located in Area 3, south of the early settlement in Area 2, and another road, with surviving metalling, was found in Area 5, some 600 m east of, and roughly parallel to, the axial Roman road running through the major settlement. The Area 5 road was associated with field boundaries and limited evidence for adjacent settlement. Further west, closer to the major settlement, more intensive settlement in the form of enclosures was located adjacent to the south side of the east-west trackway in Area 3 and in the western part of Area 4. These enclosures were roughly rectilinear, in contrast to the earlier oval enclosure recorded in Area 2. In both cases they were associated with other boundary systems, probably of fields or paddocks, and these and other features may suggest an economic emphasis on stock rearing. In Area 4 certainly, and perhaps also in Area 3, the enclosures were principally of 2nd century date. In Area 4 their location was later used for widespread pit digging, mainly of 3rd-4th century date. The east-west trackway in Area 3 may also have continued in use into the late Roman period. Scattered inhumation burials, one in Area 5 and two in Area 4, were probably of 4th century date (while three poorly-preserved cremation burials from the Working Area south-west of Cogges Lane were probably early Roman). In the access areas west of Area 3 further groups of linear boundaries and pits were probably mostly of 2nd century date, but because of the limited scale of examination formed a less coherent plan. A few post-Roman features were revealed. These, mostly ditches, related almost entirely to the development of the recent landscape.

Introduction

From the summer of 2001 to the summer of 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a programme of archaeological work relating to the development of the Tar Farm and Rushy Common area of Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd gravel quarry at Gill Mill. The quarry works originated in the parish of Ducklington, but the recent works have taken place entirely in the parish of South Leigh. The work forms part of an ongoing programme of recording the archaeology of the Windrush valley in advance of gravel extraction, in line with the requirement for a scheme of work defined by a negative condition attached to the planning permission. A Design Brief for an

archaeological recording action was prepared by Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council and a corresponding Written Scheme of Investigation was submitted to him by OA and approved in May 2001. The present report provides a brief summary of all the work carried out to date on the Tar Farm/Rushy Common phase of the quarry development. It is important to note that the finds from the 2004 and 2005 work have yet to be examined in any detail, so preliminary discussion of the archaeological phasing of these areas is largely dependent upon the stratigraphic information alone. A programme of comprehensive analysis and reporting of these and earlier works at Gill Mill remains to be established.

Location, geology and topography (Figs 1 and 2)

The area examined, covering in total *c* 248800 sq m, centred at *c* SP 383 071, lies on the northern side of the Windrush valley, north of the more northerly of the two main channels of the Windrush and both north and south of Cogges Lane. It is situated on natural gravel, in places overlain by alluvial deposits, at *c* 73 m above OD. The topography is essentially flat, much of the area comprising part of the floodplain of the Windrush, dissected by a number of minor streams.

Archaeological and historical background

Archaeological work has been undertaken within the gravel quarry since 1988, when a number of areas of the quarry were subject to trench evaluation. Archaeological sites are very commonly encountered in this kind of topographical setting, but the evidence from aerial photographs, characteristically a very good guide to the presence of archaeological sites in the valleys of the Thames and its tributaries, is poor for the Gill Mill area. Since this was explained at least in part by the likely presence of alluvial deposits, which could mask archaeological features cut into the gravels, the archaeological potential of the area before the evaluation was carried was uncertain, although the presence of a carved stone relief of Roman date, built into one of the extant structures at Gill Mill, was suggestive of activity of that date in the area.

Extensive evaluation was therefore undertaken in 1988 (Wallis and Lambrick 1988a; 1988b). Between the two streams of the Windrush and south of Gill Mill House (originally designated as quarry Areas 2 and 3) a previously unidentified Roman road, areas of limestone rubble, gravel surfaces and spreads of pottery were revealed. These indicated the presence of a large settlement abutting both sides of the Roman road which crosses the Windrush valley at Gill Mill, running NNE-SSW across the floodplain. The pottery recovered from this evaluation dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries. Two blocks of land west of Gill Mill House were also examined. South of the northern channel of the Windrush (Areas 1 and Silt Pond 17) few significant features were revealed. North of the river (Areas 10 and Plant Area 16), however, enclosure ditches of a later middle Iron Age (*c* 200-50 BC) farmstead were located in Area 10, and this site was examined further in 1989-1990. Also in 1990 an area north of Area 2 identified the western limits of the Roman settlement, which consisted of a series of ditches, some of which were waterlogged, that probably defined small fields and paddocks. Nine cremations and three inhumation burials were also uncovered and an additional area excavation revealed further burials and cremations (Booth 1990).

In 1993 an area north of the Windrush adjacent to the 1988 Silt Pond 17 was evaluated, but with few significant results (OAU 1993). In 1995 fields to the west of

the present site were evaluated. This uncovered a pattern of ditches that probably represent small fields and paddocks dating to the 1st-2nd centuries and a small amount of occupation dating to the 3rd-4th centuries imposed upon them. Four inhumations were recorded and these probably represent scattered burials similar to those identified in the 1990 salvage excavation. A system of palaeochannels uncovered to the west consisted mainly of shallow, undated, braided streams, which contained only occasional bone fragments (OAU 1995).

In November 1997 further evaluation was undertaken south-east of this site. It revealed a Roman ditched enclosure system originating in the 1st to 2nd century AD. Quarrying activity within the enclosures was overlain by extensive spreads of late Roman occupation debris. Limestone surfaces were located within former shallow channels in trenches at the southern edge of the site. These were thought to be parts of Roman possible fording points in an area liable to occasional flooding. A single poorly preserved cremation burial was also found. Relatively large quantities of finds, particularly pottery, were recovered (OAU 1997).

From 1997 to 1999 a watching brief on the area of the 1997 evaluation identified extensive Romano-British activity, comprising field systems, probable trackways, quarrying activity and pit workings, wells and a limestone and pebble surface indicating a former stream crossing. Seven inhumations were also recorded and removed during continuing quarrying operations. An exceptional discovery amongst the artefacts from the site was part of a wooden cart wheel.

In 2000 and early 2001, a watching brief was carried out by OA at fields south-west of Cogges Bridge Cottage near Gill Mill House, Ducklington, Oxon. The watching brief revealed a number of undated linear features possibly associated with the prehistoric site identified in 1990 to the south-east (Area 10). These features included a possible enclosure, a sequence of ditch segments including a possible gateway/entrance providing access between two fields, and a few undated ?domestic rubbish pits. A number of features relating to former water channels across the site were investigated. Areas of tree throw holes and root disturbance were also noted (OA 2003).

Project Aims and Methodology

The aim of the work was to establish the character and relationships of any evidence for past activity on the site. The principal emphasis was on defining the extent of the known Roman roadside settlement at its probable north-west and north-east margins, particularly in the light of the work carried out from 1997-1999, but attention was also to be paid to features of all periods, where present. Complementary aims were:

To date and establish the sequence of the main features and contexts and to identify evidence for the character and development of the site in terms of function, settlement history (e.g. shifting or static) and occupation history (e.g. continuous or sporadic).

To determine the nature and status of the various periods of occupation.
to obtain evidence for the economy and environment in any phase of settlement or other activity

To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

The work was characterised as a 'strip and record' exercise. Supervised removal of topsoil and subsoil/alluvium was carried out by Smith and Sons' earthmoving

contractor, usually using a 360° excavator and dumpers, although a bladed dozer was used at one point. The excavator was equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, in order to allow archaeological features to be observed. The stripping operation was monitored by archaeological staff and took place under their direct supervision when appropriate. Where present, alluvial deposits were removed separately from the modern topsoil and the top of the alluvium was inspected for archaeological features, prior to its removal to expose the underlying natural gravel. This was particularly important in the 2001 Working Area.

Archaeological recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual*; features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20 and 1:10. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Written records were made, artefacts and ecofacts collected and soil samples for environmental data were taken where appropriate (e.g from waterlogged or burnt feature fills). It should be noted that the written records for part of Rushy Common Area 2, made in May 2003, were lost at the end of that phase of work and could not be reconstructed, but the plan of this area does survive.

*Table **: Summary of main phases of work and associated records (see also Fig 2)*

Date	Area of work	Approximate area examined	Site code	Main staff	Context numbers	Plan numbers
June 2001	Rushy Common & Tar Farm Working Area & Area 1	32520 sq m	DUGM01	D Bashford R Bashford B Matthews	200-253	1-12
Aug/Sept 2001	Rushy Common Area 1	19340 sq m		R Bashford	254-265	1
July 2002	Rushy Common Area 2	112270 sq m	SLGM02	B Matthews M Ridley G Laws	1-177	1-30
May 2003	Rushy Common Area 2		SLGM03	M Ridley	**not known	1-15
Aug 2003	Rushy Common Area 2		SLGM03	G Laws	1000-1061	500-505
May 2004	Tar Farm enabling works & Area 3	34720 sq m	SLGM04	M Sims	4000-4349	4001-4014
May 2005	Tar Farm Area 8 west	28020 sq m	SLGM05	W Perkins	4350-4380	4015-4019
Aug/Sept 2005	Tar Farm Area 4 west	21930 sq m	SLGM05	M Sims	4381-4834	4020-4032

Principal Results: Area Summaries

The principal archaeological features from all the areas examined in 2001-2205 are shown on Fig 3, and more detailed illustrations are provided for each of the component areas.

2001: Working Area west of Cogges Lane (Fig 4)

Features sealed beneath alluvium (208)

Natural gravel was exposed across the site following investigation of a number of features that had been cut into a layer of alluvium above the gravel (see below). Irregular features noted across the site were partly investigated and it was concluded on site that they represented tree holes or natural features (Group No. 200 - tree holes, 242, 244, 246, 250, 252). In the area of tree hole group 200, a large irregular feature (201) was identified adjacent to the north-east edge of the area. The feature was filled with a grey clay deposit and was interpreted on site as a possible pond or water hole. A narrow channel was observed leading to the feature (204); both features were undated.

Ephemeral traces of a possible ditch (202) extending from the south-east baulk of the site were noted in plan during the stripping, but upon further investigation the feature was quite ephemeral and more precise characterisation was not possible.

A pit feature (248) pit was 2.1 m long and 0.8 m wide and had a depth of 0.25 m. The lower fill (250) consisted of a dark grey clay 0.07 m thick, sealed beneath a 0.14 m thick deposit of reddish-brown clay (249) containing frequent animal bones. The quantity of bones suggests that this was a deliberate deposit of material, though it is unclear if it represents rubbish disposal or a ritual deposit. No pottery was recovered from the feature fills to aid further interpretation.

Alluvial layer 208

The features cutting the gravel were overlain by a layer of clay alluvium up to 0.25 m thick that extended across the area of the watching brief. Careful machining at the early stages revealed that a number of features were cut into the clay, indicating that there site could be divided into at least two phases of activity.

Ditch features cutting alluvium (208)

A single east-west aligned ditch was traced extending fully across the site, cutting the alluvium (208). The ditch (206) was 1.5 m wide and up to 0.38 m deep. The fills of the ditch comprised mainly grey and brown clays (207=240, 205=238, and 209 =237). The upper fill (239) was a red-brown silty clay. A single sherd of Roman pottery was observed on the surface of fill 239, but was lost before formal recovery.

Two further ditches (210 and 229), aligned north-east/south-west, converged towards the south-west baulk of the site and cut the fills of ditch 206. Ditch 210 was 1.55 m wide and 0.4 m deep. The lower fill (211=228) was a red-brown gravelly clay overlain by a red-brown silty clay (212=227). At one point the upper fill of the ditch (226) consisted of a 0.28 m thick deposit of brown loam. Ditch 229 was 2 m wide and 0.62 m deep and filled with clay deposits 230-233 inclusive. Traces of organic silt were noted in fill 232. No finds were recovered from the fills of ditches 210 and 229 and because of their converging alignments (the distance between the two narrowing from 12 m to 4 m at the south-west baulk) it is unclear whether the two features were contemporary, or whether one represents a redefinition of the other. Nevertheless, a Roman date for both is quite possible.

Cremations

The most notable features cut into the alluvium were three cremation burial pits and a further possible cremation burial. Two of the cremation pits were located within the area defined by ditches 210 and 229 towards the south-west side of the area. Pit 216 was oval shaped with a rounded base; the northern edge of the feature had been partially removed by ?plough action. The feature was 0.09 m deep, 0.2 m wide and 0.34 m in length. The fill of the pit (217) comprised a loose brown silty loam containing pottery probably of 2nd century date (no rim survived) mixed with a quantity of burnt human bone.

Pit 218 to the north was oval shaped with irregular sides and base and had a depth of 0.06 m. The feature was 0.18 m wide and 0.24 m long and was filled with a brown clay deposit (219) containing fragments of burnt bone. No pottery was associated with the feature, though its proximity to burial 216 suggests a similar Roman date.

South-east of ditch 210 was a third cremation burial, in pit 222. The cut was oval with a narrow extension at one side, and was 0.14 m in depth, 0.62 m wide and up to 1 m long. The fill (223) was a grey clay becoming darker towards the base of the deposit. Frequent charcoal flecks were noted in the fill, with quantities of burnt human bone increasing in density towards the base of the feature. No pottery was associated with the feature, though on analogy with the cremations to the west, a Roman date is probable.

Towards the north-east baulk of the site was a fourth feature thought to be a cremation. Pit 224 had irregular sides and base and was 0.25 m deep, 0.6 m wide and 0.87 m in length. Excavation of the feature identified root holes at the base of the feature and undercut edges, suggesting that it had been disturbed by vegetation. The fill of the feature (225) comprised a grey-black clay with frequent charcoal inclusions, burnt limestone pieces and towards the base of the deposit several pieces of burnt human bone.

Limestone spreads

Several spreads of limestone were noted across the site (220/221, 235 and 236). It is unclear what function these could have had, and investigation suggested that they were probably natural outcrops that had been disturbed by plough action.

The cremations and ditch fills were sealed by the topsoil/ploughsoil that was typically *c* 0.3 m thick.

Finds Reference 215

During the course of this phase of work a chance find was made at the entrance to the site in the area of the watching brief undertaken to the south from 1997-99. A possible pit or ditch segment was exposed by machine and from it a leather shoe with hobnails and other finds were recovered.

2001: Rushy Common Area 1, East of Cogges Lane (Fig 4)

Only three significant archaeological features, all linear, were recorded in this area after the stripping of the topsoil (258) and underlying alluvium (257). The earliest of

the three was ditch 263, which was 2 m wide and 0.45 m deep, and filled with a dark grey and brown clay deposits 263, 264 and 265. This feature was aligned east-west and is clearly a continuation of ditch 206 recorded in the Working Area (see above). Three tiny scraps of animal bone, seven sherds (76 g) of Roman pottery and a few fragments of burnt stone came from the upper fill (265).

Roadside ditches 254 and 259

The fills of ditch 263 were cut by two parallel ditches (254 and 259) which extended approximately south-west to north-east across the site. The ditches were spaced 10 m apart and at the south-west baulk of the machined area, traces of a possible limestone metalled surface were observed in the section. Ditch 254 was 1.8 m wide and 0.5 m deep; ditch 259 had similar dimensions. Both were filled with brown and grey clay deposits (255, 256 in 254 and 260, 261 and 262 in 259) none of which contained dating evidence. The ditches extended towards the site of the Roman settlement identified south of Gill Mill in 1988 and their continuation north-eastwards was observed in Area 2. Their alignment and position suggest that they represent the line of the axial road through the settlement.

The objects from context 265 were the only finds recovered from this area.

2002-3: Rushy Common Area 2 (Figs 5 and 6)

This substantial area was examined in three separate stages. The first of these involved stripping of the margins of the area (in 2002), while subsequent work in 2003 dealt with the interior of the area, first the northern and south-eastern thirds and finally the south-western part. The distribution of archaeological features, excluding those of recent date, was very variable across the area. There was a fairly uniform spread of irregular marks that were either of geological origin or represented features such as tree throw holes. These are not described or discussed further. Scattered (principally linear) features were encountered in the central southern part of the area and to a lesser extent along the eastern side. The principal concentration of features was towards the south-east corner, where there was a small enclosure of several successive phases. Dating evidence from the whole area was very limited in quantity and in chronological range - all the datable material was assigned to the early Roman period (see further below).

Roadside ditches 170 and 172

The roadside ditches identified in Area 1 continued on a south-west to north-east alignment across the north-west corner of the area. Curiously they were not located at the northern margin of the area in the part stripped in 2002 for a drainage channel, but this absence is likely to be a localised aberration. The spacing and dimensions of the ditches were quite uniform and consistent with the observations in Area 1. No finds were recovered from the ditches, nor were any traces of surface metallurgy observed.

Major boundary 16/44/78/110 and related features

A sinuous ditch (16, also numbered 44, 78 and 110) on a general north-south alignment extended the full length of the area adjacent its eastern margin, a distance of approximately 340 m. It was up to 3.4 m wide but not more than c 0.5 m deep. Localised evidence suggests that this boundary may have been of several phases - short lengths of parallel or slightly converging ditches were noted in at least three places, all on the west side of the main ditch. In the one instance where a relationship could be seen clearly ditch 16 was the later feature. There was a break in the feature just north of the area of enclosure 28 (see below). A stone causeway c 2.5 m wide appeared to reinforce a gap between two terminals (at the north end of 16 and the south end of 44), although the terminals themselves were not examined in detail.

There was only one certain instance where ditch 16 cut an earlier feature. This was towards the south-east corner of the area, where a short length of north-west to south-east aligned ditch (20) was cut by 16 and by another ditch 24, just to the west. Three other slighter linear features all seemed to have relationships with ditch 16. In the south-east corner of the area gully 18 was roughly perpendicular to the ditch line on its east side, while further north gully 74 ran up to the ditch from the west. In both cases the gully fills appear to have been cut by 16 but the features did not extend beyond the ditch line and it is likely that they were contemporary with one phase of its existence. A similar relationship is likely in the case of east-west gully 82, further north again on the east side of ditch 16. The point of potential junction with the ditch was obscured by an irregular patch of silty clay (91) which probably represented a tree hollow.

Enclosure 28 and other features

The most intensive activity in Area 2 was concentrated in its south-east corner. At the south-east extremity of the site were two curving gullies (10 and 12), lying respectively east and west of ditch 16. These features may have been related, although they were not identical in character, but this is not certain as the fill of feature 16 was machined out at this point, immediately adjacent to the site entrance, and potential relationships are unknown. It is clear, however, that gully 10 and ditch 16 cannot have been contemporary and it is most likely (but not demonstrable) that the substantial ditch was the later feature. The curvature of gully 10 suggests association with a roundhouse, but this is speculative; no other features lay between the gully and ditch 16.

A roughly north-south aligned ditch (24) ran for some 54 m just west of ditch 16, terminating close to the line of that feature at the north end and diverging slightly to the south. Like 16, this feature cut the earlier north-west to south-east aligned ditch 20 (see above). It may have been associated with a further stretch of ditch (54) which ran in a south-westerly direction from a terminal adjacent to the south end of ditch 24. The full extent of ditch 54 is unknown, however.

Immediately west of ditch 24 was a series of curving ditches/gullies defining a small oval enclosure of several phases. The first phase may have been formed by gully 58, running roughly east to west before turning sharply to the south and terminating. It is quite possible that a continuation of this gully, defining east and south sides of the putative enclosure, lay on the same alignment as the later feature 28 (see below). A second, more clearly-defined phase of enclosure was represented by gully 30, defining an oval area roughly 23 m north-south by 17 m east-west. The gully

was poorly preserved on the southern side, but was probably continuous here, and there is clearer evidence for a break defining an entrance some 3 m wide in the west side. The position of the northern terminal of this entrance was replicated by the rather more substantial third phase enclosure ditch, feature 28. This enclosed a slightly larger area, with maximum internal dimensions of 31.5 m (north-south) x 20 m (east-west). There was a clearly defined terminal just north of the south-west 'corner' of the enclosure. This suggests an opening some 15 m wide on the west side, but it seems more likely that part of the west side of the second phase ditch (28) was retained, perhaps giving two entrances in the west side, each c 2-3 m across.

There were no significant internal features associated with any phase of the enclosure. A small group of irregular pits (36, 40, 50, 134 and 136) lay just to the north. Two of these (40 and 134) were cut by ditch 28 and may therefore have been contemporary with the first and/or second phase of the enclosure. All were interpreted as probably 'quarry pits', presumably for gravel, on the basis that their irregular form did not suggest any other specific function. All except 136 produced small quantities of early Roman pottery and a few fragments of animal bone from their fills. A short gully (64) ran north-westwards from the enclosure ditch (28) before turning back very sharply eastwards to approach the group of pits and terminating adjacent to feature 50.

A single small pit or (less likely) a posthole (34) lay immediately east of enclosure ditch 28, between it and north-south gully 24. This produced a rather larger group of pottery but the sherds may all have been from a single vessel.

Rectilinear gullies west of enclosure 28

The area just to the west of enclosure 28 and its predecessors was occupied by a less dense arrangement of gullies, the layout of which appeared to more regular and rectilinear than that of the enclosures. Nevertheless, the general alignment of these features seems to have related broadly to the alignment of the major north-south boundary (16 etc) and other features. It is notable that many of the gullies in this area were quite slight and their preservation was therefore variable. There was thus not a complete correlation between features recorded in 2002 and 2003.

The principal alignments were approximately north-south and east-west. Gullies 62 and 162 formed the north-east, north and west sides of a large 'enclosure' with minimum dimensions of c 130 m east-west and 120 m north-south. An area in the north-east corner of this 'enclosure', roughly 55 m x 60 m, was defined by further gullies, 158 on the west side (its northern part was not seen in 2003, but is presumed to have run as far as feature 62) and 150 on the south. Gully 158 also extended south of its junction with 150 for at least another 20 m, paralleled by a similar gully 160 immediately to the east. Both features faded out close to the line of a recent east-west field boundary ditch (164) - but the fact that they did not continue south of that ditch may be a result of preservation factors rather than indicating a genuine terminus.

A number of slightly anomalous gully features were associated with the north-eastern 'sub-enclosure'. Gully 152, apparently earlier than 150, diverged from its line and then turned southwards through a right angle. A second L-shaped gully, 145, was linked to the southern terminus of 'enclosure' gully 62, and had a separate northward continuation that had the effect of defining a triangular area in the north-east corner of the 'sub-enclosure'. A further narrow gully, 48, ran from the east side of enclosure gully 62 towards the group of pits north of oval enclosure 28, terminating c 4.5 m north of the ?associated gully 64 (see above) is indicated by area and NNE-SSW. Adjacent to the open south-east corner of the 'sub-enclosure' a small square enclosure

was contained by gully 147. This was a continuous feature, up to 0.75 m wide and 0.32 m deep, defining an area c 8 m north-south by 7.5 m east-west. The gravel in the enclosed area was noted as being a little darker than elsewhere, but there were no internal features of any kind.

'Outer' linear features

The alignment of the 'enclosure' gullies 62 and 162 was mirrored further west and north by further linear features. Some 45 m north of gully 62 was a 50 m length of east-west gully (74) running westwards from the line of the major north-south boundary (16 etc) (see above). Gully 74 faded out in the area examined in May 2003, but a feature on a very similar alignment was located 100 m further west in the second phase of work in 2003. This feature (1037), was 0.65-0.95 m wide and 0.12-0.35 m deep, and was traced for some 77 m westwards to the point where it had an angled junction with feature 1061, aligned NNE-SSW (there were exiguous traces of a westward continuation of 1037 for at least 10 m beyond the point of junction with 1061). Gully 1061, only 0.10-0.18 m deep, ran as far as the southern limit of work in 2003. Its line was continued further south as gully 168, located at the southern edge of the area (identified over a distance of 50 m when examined in 2002), with a gap of some 40 m between the two. Again this was almost certainly a result of preservation factors rather than an indication that the feature had never been present at this point. If originally continuous, these features would have defined an area with an east-west dimension of 230 m and a north-south dimension of at least 120 m.

Further gullies were identified in 2003 between the features just described and the 'enclosure' gully 62/162 discussed earlier. These features concentrated adjacent to the north-west corner of the 'enclosure'. They may comprise part of a further small enclosure, the east end and part of the north side of which were formed by an L-shaped gully (1040), with the remainder of the north side and part of the west side formed by a longer gully, 1038. This possible enclosure would probably have joined, or had its south-east corner very close to, 'enclosure' 62/162, but no evidence of a south-west corner or a south side was recovered during the stripping of the southern part of the area in 2002.

This interpretation of these features is complicated, however, by the presence of a length of north-east to south-west aligned ditch (1039). This cut across the line of the L shaped gully 1040, which apparently did not extend west of 1039, and the two features were considered to be potentially contemporary. In this case it does not seem possible that 1040 and 1038 represented the same event, despite the similarity of their alignments. No dating material was recovered from any of these features to assist in determining their relative sequence.

Other features

There were very few archaeological features north and west of the linear boundaries (168, 1061, 1037 and 74) just described. A very poorly preserved westward extension of 1037 has already been mentioned. Some 65 m west of the corner formed by features 1061 and 1037 was a pit (1041), 1.35 m in diameter and 0.33 m deep. This had four fills of clay and silty clay, but was undated. The line of ditch 1037 was paralleled just to the north by a stretch of ditch/gully c 22 m long, perhaps indicating the existence of more than one phase of this boundary. Further north-east, a few relatively short lengths of unassociated gully were recorded in the area just west of the

main north-south linear feature (16) in the first phase of work in 2003. None of these features was dated, neither do they relate clearly to any of the general feature alignments already described. Their significance is therefore unclear.

Recent features

The most significant recent feature was a ditch (numbered 164 in the southern part of the site) which ran roughly east to west from the south-east corner of the area before turning northwards and running the length of the site up to its northern margin. Here there was a pond (125), the fills of which were removed by machine, and running from it a northward continuation of the ditch line extending to the north baulk of the area. The feature was defined as of modern date both on the basis of the character of its fills and by virtue of its appearance on recent mapping.

Summary of finds from Area 2

The quantities of material recovered from this area were very small in proportion to the size of the area examined. Four categories of material were recorded, as follows:

Category	Fragments	Weight (g)	Number of contexts producing material
Pottery	213	5070	22
Stone	2	712	2
Animal bone	67	1097	13
Human bone	40	195	1

The pottery consists entirely of fragments of vessels of early Roman date, most if not all of which were locally produced. There are no imported wares and, remarkably, only a single possible sherd of 'fine and specialist' wares. The assemblage is therefore indicative of low status rural settlement. In the absence of more precisely dated fine and specialist wares the date range of the pottery is not absolutely certain, but with the exception of a single intrusive sherd it should all lie within the period AD 50-150 and the terminal date of the assemblage might be a little earlier, perhaps as early as *c* AD 120. The pottery came almost entirely from features in the south-eastern part of the site.

The stone fragments are possible worked pieces, of uncertain function but probably of early Roman date. The animal bone also comes mostly from contexts (particularly the fills of ditches) which have produced Roman pottery. This association indicates an early Roman date for this material and suggests that domestic rubbish, of which pottery and animal bone are typically the most common components, was being deposited in these features, although the total quantities, particularly of animal bone, are small. The occurrence of human bone is less usual, but not particularly remarkable. All the fragments come from a single adult skull, apparently unassociated with other skeletal remains, placed in the fill of the latest oval enclosure ditch (28). The practice of deposition of selected individual skeletal parts is widely known in southern Britain in the Iron Age and increasingly in the Roman period as well.

Overall the finds are characteristic of low status settlement. This is indicated most clearly by the pottery, but is also suggested by other characteristics such as a complete absence of metal objects and building materials.

Discussion

Interpretation is constrained by two main factors; variation in preservation and/or the degree of visibility of archaeological features both overall and between the different phases of work, and the scarcity of artefacts, which restricts the extent to which features can be dated independently of their place in the stratigraphic sequence, where the latter exists. The available evidence, however, indicates that identifiable features are confined to the early Roman period. It is just possible that activity may have originated slightly earlier, in the late Iron Age, but the pottery does not particularly support this view.

An important element in the landscape was represented by the roughly north-south aligned linear feature, ditch 16 (etc). The character of this ditch is distinctly different from that of most of the other linear boundaries recorded. Like the clearly recent ditch 164, feature 16 was broadly comparable in alignment to a relatively recent ditch line shown on large-scale mapping running through the eastern part of the field occupied by Area 2. Despite this similarity, however, there seems to be little doubt that ditch 16 was an ancient feature. This appears to be indicated by the character of its fill, which was consistent with those of demonstrably early features, and by the fact that it cuts relatively few such features, even in the quite densely occupied south-east corner of the area. Most features in this area appear to either respect or reflect the alignment of ditch 16, suggesting a degree of contemporaneity between them. In view of the relationship of this ditch with some of the linear features it is likely that the ditch as recorded represented the latest of a number of phases of development, with successive features on the same alignment, but it is also likely that even the earliest of these was not a primary feature in the local landscape. This is suggested by the fact that the ditch must have cut gully 20, the alignment of which in turn appears to respect the position of the oval enclosures in the south-east corner of the area. The implication of this is that the oval enclosure had already been in existence, at least for one phase, before the major north-south ditch was established, and it is possible that the ditch was broadly contemporary with the latest phase of the enclosure (ditch 28). Access to the settlement area from the east, through the gap between ditch length 16 and 44, could have been directed round the north side of the enclosure, and perhaps constrained by gullies 64 and 48.

The entrance into the second and third phase oval enclosures was certainly from the west side. This is likely to have been the case in the earliest phase also, but the evidence for the form of the enclosure at this time is less clear. There was no indication of internal features within the enclosure in any phase, but this is not unusual for late Iron Age and early Roman settlements in the region. This is particularly true when, as in the present case, preservation of features was poor; ephemeral features could easily have been removed by agricultural activity as well as by vigorous stripping of subsoil. Be that as it may, structural evidence in this period is very scarce in the region, probably because the period saw a change in the character of domestic architecture to a construction technique (perhaps such as cob walling) that did not involve below-ground structural elements such as posts. Although limited, the quantities of pottery and animal bone are sufficient to suggest domestic activity, and it seems most likely that this would have focussed on the oval enclosure

The difference in character between the oval enclosure and the rather more rectilinear features to the west has already been noted. This might reflect a distinction in chronology, but the plan suggests that the 'sub-enclosure' was laid out in relation to the oval enclosure (particularly if gully 158 extended as far north as gully 62, so that

the 'sub-enclosure' had to be entered opposite the oval enclosure); the two seem to 'work' much better together than separately. They were presumably functionally complementary, but there is no evidence to define the function of the 'sub-enclosure' area. Its entrance seems too broad to have been effective for stock control, but such a function might be likely; although an economic emphasis on pastoralism cannot be demonstrated directly on the basis of evidence from Rushy Common, it has been suggested for a number of sites in similar topographic zones in the region, such as Mingies Ditch (Allen and Robinson 1993) and the small settlement from Gill Mill Area 10 (west of the present area) in the middle Iron Age and Watkins Farm (Allen 1990) in the early Roman period.

It is presumed that the more extensive linear features formed field boundaries. These were presumably ditches associated with hedges, and as such would have been suitable for either arable or pastoral purposes. The field system seems to have concentrated around the settlement nucleus and the area north and west of the 'outer' boundary (74/1037/1061/168) produced little evidence of subdivision or of other features. It may be that this was an area of undivided pasture, ultimately cut through by the line of the Roman road. The builders of the latter is unlikely to have taken much account of pre-existing features, but equally there was little in this area that would have represented any constraint to the road's planning and construction.

The roadside ditches are not dated in Area 2, but evidence from further south has suggested that the major settlement that grew up alongside the road may not have started to develop before the early 2nd century. If the road itself was not constructed before this time it is possible that its appearance was broadly coeval with the latest stages of use of the settlement in the south-eastern corner of Area 2. There is no evidence whatever that sheds light on the use of the area in the middle and later Roman periods and beyond, before the visible traces of the recent landscape.

2004: Tar Farm enabling works and Area 3 (Figs 7-10)

The work carried out from May to July 2004 covered an area of *c* 3.5 ha. The north-west margin of the areas examined was the line of Gill Mill House Drive, which at this point equates approximately to the north-east to south-west aligned road that forms the axis of the major Roman settlement at Gill Mill (see above). It was therefore expected that features lying within the north-eastern periphery of the settlement would be encountered. The areas closest to the line of the Roman road and extending some 150 m south-eastwards from it were only subject to limited examination of the lines stripped for haul roads and conveyor access. These contained a moderate to low density of ditches and pits dating from the 2nd century onwards. Beyond this, in Area 3, there was a much lower density of features, while some 500-600 m south-east of the Roman road line stripping of a working area revealed a secondary minor concentration of Roman features.

The north-west field (Fig 7)

Only two narrow strips were examined across the north-west field, but a number of features, mainly gullies and ditches, were revealed. At the north-west extremity of the area was a ditch (4044), ranging from 1.2 m up to 2.5 m in width, on a roughly north-east to south-west alignment approximately parallel to the line of the Roman road which at this point may have lain some 10-15 m further north-west. There were no other Roman linear features in the immediate vicinity; those most nearly adjacent

were more than 30 m distant and aligned approximately WNW-ESE, ie not at right angles to feature 4044. A group of such gullies (4054, 4056, 4058, 4062 and 4064) was located on the conveyor belt line. In the haul road line to the north a pair of parallel gullies (4010 and 4017), 3 m apart, ran eastwards towards a more substantial ditch feature (4022), up to *c* 3 m wide but only *c* 0.45 m deep with a shallow, gently rounded profile. Only gully 4010 met the line of 4022 within the examined area; the two features were considered to be contemporary. Gully 4010 had a recorded length of 21 m, but as both it and 4017 were shallow it is possible that they had originally extended further to the west. On the conveyor line a further ditch (4042) on the same orientation as 4022 lay a little to the west of its line and it is possible that the northern end of this feature was represented by a terminal (4008) which projected from the south baulk of the haul road strip 10 m west of 4022. The latter feature did not extend as far as the position of the other trench (at this point the conveyor line and the haul road were some 20 m apart). East of ditch 4022 in the haul road area two further parallel gullies (4050 and 4052) lay some 7 m apart on a north-east to south-west alignment which, if projected, would have run into the line of 4022 some 6 m south of the haul road line, but again these features were not seen in the strip for the conveyor. Their appearance was reminiscent of that of trackway ditches, but as only a 9.5 m length of each was seen it is not possible to confirm this interpretation. The overall plan of this area suggests that there must have been considerable changes in feature alignments between the haul road and conveyor strips.

A number of pits were located in the area. In the haul road line three pits (4005, 4013 and 4015), all 0.90 to 1.10 m across, lay in the vicinity of the parallel gullies 4010 and 4017, the latter being cut by pit 4015, while a slightly smaller pit (4019) was found east of the possible trackway ditches. In the conveyor strip were four further pits, all lying between the cluster of gullies (4054 etc) and ditch 4042. Pits 4060 and 4079 were rounded in plan and comparable with the pits already mentioned. Feature 4081, adjacent to 4079, was larger and subrectangular, 0.9 m x 1.5 m, but still only 0.35 m deep and therefore comparable with the other pits, which generally ranged from 0.30-0.60 m in depth. A rather more substantial feature, 4066, was 'teardrop shaped' in plan, 3.0 x 1.5 m across and 0.7 m deep, and may have been a waterhole before being used, like the other features, for rubbish disposal. Although not deep, the very dark silty clay fills of some of the pits were partly waterlogged in their lower parts. Important finds from these included part of a wooden bucket, other wooden fragments and a leather shoe.

Area 3 western half (Figs 7 and 8)

The western part of Area 3 produced evidence for a fairly complex layout of linear features including trackways, field boundaries and a probable enclosure. While these represent several phases of activity that involve development of the plan, the fundamental layout seems to have remained relatively consistent.

Northern trackway

A trackway (group 4084) across the northern side of the area may have been a fairly long-lived component of the overall plan. Its general alignment was roughly east-west, but its course was slightly sinuous. The earliest identified element was a length of ditch (4114) along the south side of the trackway. This extended from a western terminal for *c* 55 m, at which point it was lost beneath the line of 4094, a substantial ditch up to 3.1 m wide that also had a western terminal, whence it curved very slightly

southwards before bending to the north and disappearing beneath the north baulk of the site just over 100 m from its point of origin. Fill 4092 of this feature produced a small group of 2nd century pottery. North of these features ditch 4100 defined the north side of trackway 4084. It could have been contemporary with either 4114 or 4094, or indeed with both, but it was not a primary feature in the site sequence as it cut a small pit (4105). It also seems to have related to the latest version of the southern boundary of the trackway, 4116, which was confined to the western part of the area, running east to a point close to the junction of ditches 4114 and 4094, at which point it turned almost a right angle southwards for a length of some 39 m before terminating in line with the south side of an enclosure (see below). In its western stretch, where it ran straightest, the trackway was 4.5-5 m wide between ditches 4116 (here 4070) and 4100 (here 4072). A point in favour of the suggestion that 4100 was at least in part contemporary with 4116 is the fact that a ditch (4090) on a rather anomalous north-east to south-west alignment ran away from both 4100 and 4116 at points exactly opposite each other on either side of the track. In the former case 4090 disappeared beneath the north baulk, in the latter it ran south-westwards for 18 m before apparently terminating, although a short length of ditch/gully (?4046) was observed on much the same alignment rather further south and it is just possible that the feature was originally continuous.

Enclosure

A probable enclosure was situated immediately south of the northern trackway. The enclosure appears to have respected the line of the trackway, but there was no direct relationship between the two and it is just possible that the enclosure was primary in some form and that the trackway curved slightly to the south to bring its line closer to the position of the enclosure. On balance, however, it is likely that the enclosure postdated the trackway as one component of it respected a ditch alignment which was directly linked to ditch 4084 on the south side of the trackway.

Be that as it may, the enclosure itself was a slightly irregular pentagon, with approximate maximum internal dimensions of 32 m east-west x 33 m north-south. There were entrances in the south and east sides, but instead of having a single defining ditch the western boundary wrapped around the northern boundary at the north-west corner, producing the effect of a long narrow entrance passage or trackway, roughly 2.5 m wide, along the north side and running round the north-west corner. The 'outer' northern boundary line (4128), in places less than 1 m from the adjacent trackside ditch 4084, was discontinuous, and appeared to end in a row of five discrete pits (4118, 4120, 4122, 4124 and 4126). These ranged from 1.2 x 0.8 m to 0.8 m square in plan. All were steep sided and flat bottomed, and only 0.15 m deep. The adjacent 'inner' north side of the enclosure was defined by a regular ditch, typically *c* 1 m wide (4130) with a short southward aligned length at its west end and an 8 m long stretch at its end running at an oblique angle to form the northern side of the east entrance. This was 2 m wide and the ditch (4135) defining the 'east' side of the enclosure ran *c* NNE-SSW from it for a distance of roughly 28 m to the south-east corner of the enclosure. At this point 4135 seems to have been continuous with ditch 4167. This feature formed part of the southern side of the enclosure, but extended 18 m eastward from the corner to terminate just short of boundary ditch 4110 (see below), while to the west it turned southwards from the position of the south entrance into the enclosure, rather in the form of an inverted capital F. From the west side the entrance, some 2.9 m wide, the remainder of the south side and the west side was

formed by ditch 4128. This, and therefore perhaps some of the other lengths of enclosure ditch, recut a short length of ditch (4145) on the west side of the enclosure.

There were few internal features within the enclosure. A 13 m length of north-east to south-west aligned gully (4143) lay some little distance inside the east entrance. North of this, just inside the northern enclosure ditch, was a pit (4133), 1.4 m across and 0.8 m deep, while south of 4143 was another pit (4149) with very similar dimensions. A further 'pit' (4156) was situated in the south-west corner of the enclosure. Oval in plan, 1.4 m x 2.0 m and 1 m deep, this was interpreted as a possible waterhole. The relationship of any of these features to the use of the enclosure is uncertain, they could have been earlier, contemporary or later. One pit, 4152, certainly postdated the enclosure as it cut the east ditch (4135). This feature, 1.5 m across and 0.75 m deep, was similar in dimensions and character to pits 4133 and 4149, and it is possible that all postdated the use of the enclosure. Other pits outside the enclosure are referred to below.

Field boundaries etc

The enclosure was surrounded by features which seem to have been parts of a field system or systems. The most important of these was a feature (4110) that ran in a NNE-SSW direction across the entire area (ie a minimum distance of *c* 118 m) from its junction with the south trackway ditch 4094). It may be the same as feature 4191, observed in the conveyor strip some 50 m further south, giving this boundary a minimum length of *c* 180 m. Ditch 4110 was up to *c* 1.9 m wide. It had at least two phases because there was limited evidence for an earlier feature (4137) on the same alignment a little to the south of the trackway. As recorded, the fill of ditch 4110 appeared to be contemporary with that of the trackway ditch. Certainly 4110 cannot have been earlier than that feature. Close to the point at which ditch 4110 ran beneath the south baulk of Area 3 was another relatively substantial ditch (4181), up to 1.8 m across but narrowing towards its terminus, which extended some 28 m into the site on a NNW-SSE alignment not shared by any other features in this area.

The area between ditch 4110 and the enclosure to the west was subdivided by gullies which seem to have been laid out with respect to both features. One of these was the easterly continuation of the south ditch of the enclosure itself, 4167, mentioned above. North of this was an (unnumbered) gully and north again a further gully (4139) in line with the south terminal of the east entrance into the enclosure.

The alignment of the west side of the enclosure was mirrored by two north-south ditches, both of which terminated more or less in line with the south-west corner of the enclosure. The inner feature, from 1.3-2.5 m from the enclosure ditch, was the southward return of the third phase trackway ditch (4116) mentioned above. Between 1.6 m and 2.5 m further west was another, discrete ditch (4141), *c* 32 m long and up to 2.25 m wide at its north end. This appears to have been laid out in relation to the second phase trackway ditch 4094 and may therefore have been earlier than 4116, but this is not certain. The function of these multiple ditches on the west side of the enclosure is not clear.

To the south was a 76 m length of ditch (4158/4034) aligned *c* WNW-ESE which approached the area of the south entrance of the enclosure and may have been intended to help define the approach to that entrance, although it terminated some 6 m short of the 'inverted-F' feature associated with the entrance. Close to the west end of this feature and roughly parallel to it were three, short gullies (from north to south 4048, 4036 and 4038). To the north, between 4158/4034 and the south side of the trackway, were gullies, presumably field boundaries, running parallel to the line of the

major NNE-SSW ditch 4110 (and parallel to the east side of the enclosure). These features (4186 and a shorter gully 4188 adjacent) had no relationships with other features but 4186 seems to have been laid out in relation to the trackway ditch 4116, terminating about 1.6 m short of its line. West of these features and on a similar alignment was 4068, of which an 11 m length was observed. Adjacent to the north terminal of this feature was the east terminal of 4074, at right angles to 4068 and running roughly parallel to the line of the trackway, the south ditch of which (4116/4070) was only 4.5-5.5 m distant.

Other features

A number of pits were scattered across Area 3. At the western side of the area were three adjacent pits, 4026, 4028 and 4030. The last of these was a possible waterhole *c* 1.75 m across and 1 m deep with a partly waterlogged fill while 4026, 3.2 m x 2.3 m in plan and 0.9 m deep, may have had a similar function.

A further slight concentration of pits occurred adjacent to the south-east corner of the enclosure. Pit 4165 lay close to this corner, with 4172 and 4175 a little to the south and 4179 over 20 m further distant. These ranged from 1 m to 1.3 m in diameter; 4165 and 4172 were 0.7-0.8 m deep, while the other two were only 0.3-0.4 m deep. Just east of 4172 was a much larger pit (4177), *c* 2.7 m across and 0.75 m deep. This may have been a waterhole, while the other features were perhaps rubbish pits. 4172, 4177 and 4179 all produced groups of pottery of late 3rd-4th century date. A certain waterhole was located in the partly enclosed area outside the south entrance of the enclosure. This feature (4161) was *c* 1.8 m in diameter and had a circular lining of limestone, with an internal diameter of 0.9 m and every appearance of being a well shaft. Upon excavation, however, this proved to be a shallow feature, only *c* 0.75 m deep, with large limestone slabs at the base. The single fill of the shaft, 4159, was a dark grey clayey silt with no surviving indications of waterlogging. Such a structure would have ensured a supply of relatively clean water, which would not have been possible with the apparently unlined waterholes if these were intensively used.

Area 3 eastern half and Area 8 north-west part

This area, bounded on the north side by Cogges Lane and on the south-west by a rerouted drain, was partly examined in 2004 and partly in May 2005 (when an area of *c* 3 ha was examined). It was generally devoid of archaeological features. For the most part the NNE-SSW aligned ditch 4110, described above, seems to have formed a very distinct eastern boundary to the distribution of archaeological features. The only significant exception to this was a curvilinear feature (4069/4112) located at the northern margin of the eastern part of Area 3.

Feature 4069/4112

The feature consisted of two ditches on the same alignment. The width of the earlier, 4112, was up to 1.7 m at one point, very similar to its successor, 4069, which varied from *c* 1 m to 1.8 m in width. There can be no doubt that both ditches represented successive phases of use of the same feature as they followed the same curving alignment over a distance of roughly 70 m. Within the stripped area the ditches described part of an ovate form with (minimum) internal dimensions of 48 m (east-west) by 17 m (north-south). At its closest observed point the south ditch of trackway 4084 was 13 m distant to the west and it seems very likely that there would have been a relationship between the trackway ditches and feature 4069/4112, although what this

was can only be guessed. Unfortunately, none of the fills produced finds, so dating is speculative. The character of the fills, though not necessarily the form of the feature, is consistent with a Roman date, however.

Other features

The predecessor of the modern drain defining the south boundary of the area, (the Hardwick Stream), followed an extremely sinuous course through the centre of the area, where its infilled bed was revealed during the stripping. The heavily truncated base of the Hardwick Stream was recorded at one point as feature 4356. A shallow curvilinear feature (4366) adjacent to the north side of the Hardwick Stream at its most northerly point may also have been related to it. A single fragmentary iron object came from the fill of this feature. Elsewhere a short length of a NNW-SSE aligned trackway - some 5.5 m wide and with a minimum length of 13.4 m - was exposed. This was composed of flat limestone slabs and cobbles (4350) on a bedding layer of clayey sand and gravel (4351) and formed a ford or causeway across the Hardwick Stream. Beneath the bedding layer were two stone packed post-holes (4353 and 4355), respectively *c* 0.45 m and 0.60 m across and 0.33 m and 0.43 m deep. Neither contained dating material or other finds.

The only other features noted were two small pits, 4359 (0.82 m across and 0.28 m deep) and 4364 (up to 0.42 m across and 0.44 m deep). Both of these produced small quantities of animal bone but no other finds. It was suggested on site that these might have been natural features, but this is uncertain.

Across the whole of the site except the line of the Hardwick Stream the natural gravel was overlain by a mid brown to yellowish silty clay subsoil (4371) up to *c* 0.22 m thick. This was sealed in turn by the modern topsoil, a darker (dark brown) clayey silt, generally *c* 0.20-0.24 m thick.

Area 5 and south-east part of conveyor strip (Figs 9 and 10)

This area lies between the north arm of the Windrush and Rushy Common Ditch. Some 500-600 m south-east of the Roman road line stripping of a working area revealed a secondary minor concentration of Roman features. For the most part these consisted of boundary ditches approximately on a NNE-SSW alignment and at right angles to this line. There was clear evidence of heavy truncation by post-Roman ploughing in this area, as well as evidence for relatively recent desiccation of once waterlogged deposits.

Road

The most substantial of these features was a NNE-SSW aligned road (group 4341), approximately (but not precisely) parallel to the line of the known road at Gill Mill and about 600 m distant from it. This was defined by two phases of ditches on each side (4224/4325 and 4322 on the east side and 4215/4315 and 4313 on the west), with combined widths of up to 3.7 m and 2.4 m respectively. These extended almost the full width of the stripped area (which was 55 m north-east to south-west at this point) but just short of the south-west baulk both sets of ditches turned through a right angle away from both side of the road line, leaving the latter undefined. It is notable that, despite the generally poor preservation of features in this area, a road surface survived *in situ*. The road structure was of several phases. At the base of the sequence a ridge of very compacted orange-yellow sandy silt (4339), with iron panning, may represent a surviving fragment of the primary road, or a subsoil used for the road surface,

overlying the natural gravel. This survived to a width of about 1.0-1.4 m in the centre of the road line. In the lower part of the hollow to each side of 4339 (perhaps caused by traffic erosion), was a compacted layer of worn limestone cobbles (4340), c 1.65 m wide on each side, with a suggestion that the kerbs were indicated by larger stones. Together with 4339 the stones indicate a width of c 4.3-4.5 m for the road. The two parts of layer 4340 were overlaid by a deposit of sandy silt with small gravel (4338) which filled the hollows to the level of the top of the central 'ridge' 4339. These deposits may represent a phase of use of the road, but not apparently one during which the surface was repaired. Layer 4338 sealed the fill of an early roadside ditch (4226) on the east side.

Above 4338 was an upper road surface (4218), composed of worn limestone blocks and cobbles in a matrix of light grey silt, the latter probably including a component of limestone degraded through wear of the road surface. This surface ranged from 5 m up to 6.5 m in width and was up to c 0.24 m thick. The upper part of this surface was directly overlaid by a ploughsoil (4086) and had clearly been damaged by agricultural activity. The majority of the roadside ditches on the east must have been contemporary with the later surface. This may also have been the case on the west, but the relationship with most of the ditches (for example 4217 and 4215) was removed by a late ditch (4211) which almost certainly was contemporary with 4218. Fragments of desiccated wood were seen in the upper fill of *this ditch. The road line continued straight to the south-west margin of the excavated area beyond the point where the roadside ditches diverged to east and west.

Field system

West of the road were ditches probably forming part of a system of fields or smaller enclosures. There were two alignments, one roughly parallel to the road some 40 m from its western ditches, and one at right angles to this. Most of the components of these alignments had been recut several times and they formed a complex + junction in the middle of the examined area - individual ditches were generally dug up to this point but did not continue through it. The boundary running to this point from the roadside ditch had been particularly intensively redefined. At least five cuts (from north to south 4253/4301, 4304, 4276/4299, 4281/4306 and 4308) were recorded in the main length of this boundary, while on its northern edge a further three (4349, 4343 and 4347) terminated at the same point just west of the halfway point between the roadside and the western field boundary.

Taking account of the westward return of the west roadside ditch the slightly trapezoidal 'field' in the south-east angle of the + had maximum dimensions of 42 m (WNW-ESE) x 46.5 m (NNE-SSW). This field contained five pits of varying size in its southern half. The largest (4271) was subrectangular, 2.9 x 2.6 m and 0.7 m deep; the smallest (4257) was c 1.5 m in diameter and 0.6 m deep.

The 'field' in the south-west angle of the +, bounded to the east by ditch 4293, recut as 4274/4289, also contained pits, 4320 and 4328, and two lengths of gully which may have formed subdivisions of the area. Gully 4311 was aligned WNW-ESE and if this field was of the same length as the one to east could have divided it into equal north and south halves. A pit (4295) cut by the eastern field ditch 4293 was exactly in line with the end of gully 4311 and it is possible that the two features, only 1.4 m apart, were associated. North of gully 4311 another gully, 4283, was only 3.8 m long and set at right angles to the line of 4311.

North-west of the + boundary junction there was little sign of subdivision, except for a single gully (4285) lying close to the western margin of the examined

area. Aligned more nearly north-east to south-west than NNE-SSW, this feature lay c 50 m west of the eastern boundary of this field (ditch 4249). It is uncertain how far northwards this feature ran - it faded out within the examined area. The only other feature in this area was a burial.

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate whether the area east of the road was divided in a manner similar to that seen to the west. Two pits (4232 and 4239) were located in the limited part of this area that was examined.

Burial

The burial (group 4262) was quite unusual. It took the form of a single inhumation aligned parallel to the NNE-SSW field boundary 4249, and positioned almost centrally within a small square ditched enclosure with rounded corners. This part of the site was particularly heavily truncated by ploughing. The surviving width of the surrounding gully (4264/4266/4268) was from 0.28-0.45 m and it was no more than 0.10 m deep. The grave cut (4261) was 2.15 m long, 0.58 m wide and only 0.04 m deep. It lay at a slight angle to the alignment of the surrounding gully. Within the grave was a 0.52 m long fragment of extremely desiccated wood which had clearly formed part of the west side of the coffin. No other traces of wood were present (for example in the base of the grave) nor were there any coffin nails. The human remains were equally poorly preserved. A few teeth and fragments of long bones indicate that the extended supine burial was of an adult, but nothing more can be determined from the surviving remains. The character of the burial, as well as its alignment in relation to the field system, indicates a Roman date, but no dating evidence was recovered from any part of group 4262 itself.

Finds

Categories of material recorded, with quantities, are as follows:

Category	Fragments	Weight (g)	Number of contexts producing material
Iron	14		7
Leather waterlogged	12		8
Wood waterlogged	14		8
Pottery	1225	44987	67
Ceramic building material	8	728	7
Fired clay	8	155	1
Stone	13	2016	9
Slag	85	1548	13
Animal bone	1211	44135	76
Shell	26	333	9
Human bone			1

In addition the following finds from the May 2005 work should be noted. The only finds here, apart from occasional fragments of post-medieval ceramic material from the topsoil, which were not retained, were an uncertain iron object from gully or channel fill 4366, and fragments of animal bone from three fills of features 4359 and 4364. The iron object may be of relatively recent date.

No systematic assessment of this material has yet been undertaken, so the scale of work required to achieve reporting on it has yet to be determined.

Discussion of Areas 3 and 5

The activity in these areas falls into three main groups; the western area adjacent to the axial Roman Road, the trackway and enclosures in the northern part of Area 3, and the road and other features in Area 5. A very limited scan of the pottery suggests that the dating of all these areas is comparable to present understanding of the major nucleated settlement to the west and south-west, ie that there is no activity assignable to the 1st century AD and that the earliest features can be dated to some time in the first half of the 2nd century AD. In all three areas there was probably some activity thereafter until a point, as yet undefined precisely, in the 4th century. There is at present no material that suggests occupation or other activity in any of these areas at the very end of the 4th century.

The areas examined in the western part of the site were too small to allow coherent interpretation, Linear boundaries and pits of various kinds suggest a low to moderate density of activity, but this is not characterised more precisely at this stage (more detailed examination of finds and environmental evidence will be required to achieve this). In Area 3, however, a much clearer picture emerges, although again detailed work is required to refine this. An enclosure, which appears to have undergone several phases of development, lay alongside a trackway which itself seems to have been a long-lived feature in the landscape. The precise relationship between the two remains to be established, but it is likely that, regardless of which appeared first, both were in contemporary existence for an extended period. The question of the function of the enclosure requires more attention. The absence of structural evidence does not preclude domestic occupation (see also below) and the quantities of finds are probably sufficient to indicate at least some activity of this type. The layout of the enclosure, its entrances and adjacent linear features may suggest, as elsewhere in the Gill Mill area, a preoccupation with the movement of animals, but this is not certain.

The main feature of Area 5, a paved road, was a rather unexpected find. Given the generally poor survival of 'above ground' features across the Gill Mill quarry, the survival of an *in situ* surface was notable, and it is a testimony to the quality of its original construction that it had withstood post-Roman agricultural activities which appear to have been quite destructive elsewhere. The alignment of the road is roughly parallel to that of the previously known road which formed the axis of the major settlement to the west. The surface may have been necessary to make the road, which was presumably only for local access, viable in wet conditions. The site had clearly been partly waterlogged until quite recently. The significance of the layout of the roadside ditches at their south-west end is uncertain as so little of it could be seen, but the arrangement is reminiscent of that at Farmoor (Lambrick and Robinson 1979), where trackside ditches ran down to the edge of the gravel terrace and then turned away from the track alignment to form a boundary along the edge of the floodplain. Here the area adjacent to the road, at least on the west side, was subdivided into small fields or paddocks with frequently-renewed boundaries. A scatter of pits within these enclosed areas suggest some domestic activity in the vicinity, but not within the area exposed. The area was also used for marginal activities such as burial. It is curious, however, that the burial here, potentially (despite its very poor preservation) of relatively high status as the rite, involving enclosure within a ditched feature, is very

rare (but not unknown) in the region, was not obviously related to other nearby features, except insofar as it shared the general alignment of the road and field boundaries. The rite suggests, but does not prove, a late Roman (particularly 4th century) date. There is, however, considerable variation in depth in late Roman burials, probably partly related to status, with a general correlation between higher status burials and deeper graves. This raises the worrying possibility that other more shallow graves in the same general area could have been completely removed by post Roman activity. As it is, a single episode of slightly deeper ploughing, for example, would have served to remove all remaining traces of the burial recovered.

2005: Tar Farm Area 4 west (Figs 11 and 12)

This area, of approximately 2 hectares, was examined in August and September 2005. Of all the areas discussed in this summary it lies closest to the focal area of the major Gill Mill settlement, centred some 300-500 m to the west and south-west. In view of this it is unsurprising that archaeological features were encountered, but as with other parts of the Tar Farm/Rushy Common area the occurrence of these features was patchy and there was a clear break between a concentration of features in the southern part of the area examined and a much more open area to the north. The most significant features were pits and boundary ditches. The principal alignment of the latter was roughly NNE-SSW and WNW-ESE, and thus comparable to the main alignment of the axial Roman road through the nucleated settlement and to the main alignments seen in adjacent areas described in outline above. There were frequently minor (and occasionally more significant) variations from these alignments, however. They represent a general trend in the layout of the settlement, but do not suggest that this was rigidly planned. A superficial scan of the pottery suggests that the activity in this area spanned the 2nd-4th centuries, with no indication of 1st century activity.

Primary south-east enclosure

Examination of the plan indicates that the primary focus of activity was located in the south corner of the area. Here was a subrectangular enclosure with a minimum NNE-SSW dimension of 55 m. The south and west sides were fairly regular, but the north side was rather erratically curved and the putative east side lay outside the limit of excavation. The principal enclosure ditch was of at least two main phases (on the north side 4396 followed by 4394, the fills of both producing 2nd century pottery), and there were indications of three separate cuts along the south side of the ditch (successively 4428, 4426 and 4392). The terminus of 4396 and 4394 was substantial and well-defined, with a short south-facing inturn. It presumably marked one side of a north or north-eastern entrance into the enclosure. There was no obvious corresponding feature within the excavated area, but two slighter, curving ditches/gullies (4751 and 4835 coincided at a point some 5 m south and could indicate the position of the south side of a broad entrance. A third ditch (4744), projecting straight from the south-east baulk of the site, cut across these features and then bifurcated, with a north-east terminal *c* 5 m beyond the intersection point just mentioned and an arm extending 10 m south-south-westward from the same point before turning almost through a right angle and running roughly west (as 4470) for a further 21 m. The exact relationship of this feature to the main primary enclosure ditch is uncertain, but both predated the principal second phase of the enclosure and

they must have been broadly contemporary. No internal features can be certainly assigned to this phase.

Secondary south-east enclosure

The primary enclosure was overlaid in part by a slightly more regularly rectilinear layout of linear features. The main one of these, ditch 4417, entered the site from the south-west baulk and ran NNE to the south-west corner of the primary enclosure. Cutting across the enclosure ditches it then turned sharply ESE, running along the inner edge of the primary enclosure ditch for almost 45 m before turning a right angle at the very edge of the site and heading NNE for *c* 40 m, forming the east side of the secondary enclosure (now numbered 4401). Cutting ditch 4470 (see above) a new north-east corner position was defined and 4401 returned to the WNW, perhaps with evidence of two phases (although only one cut was defined in section) running back as far as the original west side of the primary enclosure. At this point (feature 4443) the ditch doubled back on itself to define a sub-enclosure in the northern corner, with a broad entrance adjacent to the north side of the secondary enclosure. A SSW projection from the south-west corner of 4443 (also of two phases, 4413 and 4415) redefined the remainder of the west side of the original enclosure, albeit with a few small gaps. It is not clear if the ditch was genuinely discontinuous at this point, or was simply very poorly preserved, but other aspects of the plan suggest that the entrance was now probably located in this area. Overall, therefore, the ditches 4417, 4401, 4443 and 4413/4415 defined a sub-square enclosure *c* 37-39 m NNE-SSW by 38-41 m WNW-ESE, with a well-defined sub-enclosure, with maximum internal dimensions of 13.5 m x 20 m in the northern corner. Two gullies may have been internal features in this phase. Gully 4731, 17 m long, may perhaps have served as a drain running out through the entrance of the sub-enclosure into the larger enclosure space, while 4537, aligned NNE-SSW, served to subdivide the southern part of the main enclosure.

South of the secondary enclosure two ditches (4837 and 4419) ran up towards its south side, both stopping a little short. It is possible that both features were of this phase, although the earlier (4837) could have been contemporary with the primary enclosure (its relationship with the primary enclosure ditch being obscured by 4419), while it is also possible that 4419 belonged to a subsequent phase.

The pottery evidence for these features (reviewed very rapidly) consistently suggests a 2nd century date, with the exception of one vessel from fill 4442 of the north-western sub-enclosure ditch 4443, which is dated AD 240-300. It is not yet clear if this vessel was intrusive (as is possible) or reflects continuing use of the secondary enclosure well into the 3rd century. On balance, the former possibility seems more likely.

Secondary south-central enclosure

East of the enclosure just described was a smaller sub-square enclosure. This could have been later in date than the secondary south-east enclosure, but the interrelation of their plans suggests that the two enclosures were at least broadly contemporary. The south-central enclosure had maximum internal dimensions of *c* 30 m NNE-SSW x 29 m WNW-ESE. It was defined on south, west and north sides by a single continuous ditch/gully, of which there were at least two phases on the south side. The primary southern boundary (4630) was evident all along this side, but did not survive beyond the south-west corner, although two cuts (4433 and 4431) were recorded at one point

on the north side of the enclosure. The later boundary (4627 on the south side, 4450 on the west and 4431 on the north) narrowed from *c* 1.7 m wide on the south to only 0.6 m wide at the north-east corner, where it terminated. After a very small break the east side of the enclosure was defined by a very narrow gully (4419), only 0.3-0.45 m wide. This lay some 3.7-4 m west of the west side of the primary enclosure, but *c* 7 m from the more probably contemporary west side of the secondary south-east enclosure. It terminated 13 m short of the south-east corner of the enclosure.

An 11.5 m length of ditch (4496) project NNE from close to the north-west corner of the enclosure. This appeared to be cut by the enclosure ditch 4450 but did not extend beyond its line. It is therefore likely that the feature was in origin contemporary with the initial phase of the enclosure ditch, which did not survive at this point.

A shallow well/waterhole (4558) was located immediately north of the south-east terminal of the south enclosure boundary ditch. This feature consisted of a roughly square pit, 1.8 x 1.8 m, vertical sided but only 0.7 m deep. A limestone slab base was partly overlaid by a single square frame of roughly shaped oak, the timbers crudely lap jointed. The largest timber was *c* 0.2 m square in section. Above this was the limestone lining of the shaft, *c* 0.7 x 0.8 m. The upper fill (4556), contained much stone, representing the destroyed upper part of the lining, and pottery of late 3rd-4th century date.

Burials

Two human burials (4633 and 4659) were cut into the fill of the south ditch (4627/4633) placed close to its southern margin. Both seem to have been placed in shallow, poorly defined graves. Grave 4633 was only *c* 1 m long and contained the crouched remains of a juvenile (4632), buried on its right side with the head to the north-west. SF 24. Close by to the north-west was burial 4659. There was no clear trace of a cut in the fill of the underlying ditch. The human remains, this time of an adult (4660) were better preserved than those of 4632, but again the burial had its legs flexed. This time the head was to the south-east, and the right arm was bent up above the top of the skull.

Other linear features in southern part of area

A number of other linear features lay south, west and north of the central southern enclosure. Many of these probably related to that enclosure chronologically as well as spatially, but it is possible that at least some represent later developments in the layout of the site.

Immediately south of the south side of the central southern enclosure was ditch 4528, 13 m long, terminating in line with the south-east corner of the enclosure. West of the enclosure a larger more irregular area was defined on the south and west sides by two angled ditches, 4480 and 4478/4461, with a gap of 1.5 m between their terminals. The east end of 4480 terminated in line with the south-west corner of the enclosure and 7.5 m south of it. In a similar manner, the north terminal of 4478/4461 lay 4 m south of a WNW-ESE aligned ditch 4467/4498 which marked the northern limit of this area. This feature extended some 62.5 m into the site from the west baulk. It was relatively narrow, ranging from *c* 0.6-0.9 m in width. A localised recut (4463) was identified at the west end, while its east end clearly related to the spur ditch 4496 which extended from the north-west corner of the enclosure, terminating just beyond the line of 4496 leaving a gap *c* 2.7 m wide between them. Some 8-9 m further south-

east a short length of ditch (4438) ran roughly parallel to 4496 and is likely to have belonged to the same general scheme of layout.

In the extreme western corner of the site a north-west to south-east aligned ditch (4482) projected 12 m into the excavated area before terminating in line with the south-western side of the irregular area defined by features 4480 and 4478/4461.

Towards the east side of the area another gully (4539), at least 54 m long (its north-east end was not defined), ran perpendicular to the line of the northern boundary ditch/gully 4467/4498. 4539 and a smaller, related gully (4398) cut features of both the primary and secondary phases of the south-eastern enclosure.

The fills of these features consistently contained pottery of 2nd century date, with the exception of a single (quite large) sherd of 12th-13th century date from the upper fill (4459) of ditch 4461. This piece was presumably intrusive.

Linear features to east and north

A curving gully (4387/4830) lay adjacent to the east baulk of the excavated area north-east of the enclosure group. Running north-eastwards, it may have been the same feature as a straight length of gully (4184) recorded in the strip for the conveyor line in 2004, less than 10 m distant.

A single linear feature (4542) was recorded in the north-western corner of the area. This ditch, up to 2.5 m wide and 0.8 m deep, ran WNW-ESE for a distance of c 73 m before terminating, and lay roughly 80 m north of, and parallel to, ditch/gully 4467/4498. In addition, its terminus was approximately in line with the northward projection of the line of gully 4539, suggesting a possible association with these features. The character of the fills (the primary fill, 4541, was an organic silty loam), however, was very different from that of the Roman features and despite an absence of finds a medieval or later date is possible.

Pits

Numerous pits were located in the southern part of the excavated area. These were widely scattered, both within and without the enclosures and related linear features. A rapid review of the (ceramic) dating evidence suggests that the great majority of the dated pits can be assigned to the late 3rd-4th centuries (only one was almost certainly earlier). In the admittedly very rare cases where there was a physical relationship between ditches and pits the latter were always later. On this basis the pits appear generally to postdate the fills of the enclosure ditches, so as there is no clear association (except spatially) between the two the pits are discussed separately here rather than in association with the various enclosures to which they most probably did not relate. Nevertheless, the substantial lack of evidence for ditches being cut by pits, and the fact that such relationships, where observed, could be marginal, suggests that the alignments of most of the ditches were still visible, even if mostly silted up, when the pits were being dug.

South-east enclosure and area to the south

Only five pits (4404, 4729, 4740, 4750 and 4756) were located within the enclosure. All had fills dated to the late Roman (late 3rd-4th century) period. South of the enclosure were a further ten pits (4474, 4585, 4673, 4685, 4690, 4699, 4708, 4732, 4741 and 4764). These included two intercutting pits (4685 cut by 4690), a rare occurrence, and the only instance of a pit fairly certainly dated to the 2nd century

rather than later. This was feature 4774, lying adjacent to the south-east site baulk. The pits varied considerably in size: the smallest (eg 4404) were roughly circular in plan and just over 1 m in diameter but could be relatively deep (4404 was vertical-sided and 0.8 m deep). The larger pits were more commonly ovoid in plan and could be quite substantial, being quite commonly more than 3 m long. Pit 4699, for example, was 3.5 x 1.8 m in plan, but only 0.55 m deep, while pit 4690 was 3.5 x 2.5 m and 1.2 m deep. A step in the profile on one side of this feature might suggest that it was originally a waterhole, but the character of the fills did not support this interpretation.

South-centre enclosure and areas north and south

Five pits (4441, 4501, 4774, 4777 and 4785) lay north of the south-central enclosure. They showed considerable variation in size, from 4501 (0.75 m across and 0.45 m deep) up to 4785 (2.7 x 1.9 m and 1 m deep). Along the east side of the enclosure were three pits (4408, 4436 and 4546), of which 4408 cut the east boundary gully (4410) of the enclosure. Within the enclosure were a further thirteen pits (4543, 4551, 4553, 4560, 4568, 4578, 4592 cut by 4596, 4602, 4643, 4647, 4662 and 4667). Of these 4592 and 4596 might have been natural features, but their fills did contain some finds. Pit 4560, adjacent to these, was another of the very few pits for which a 2nd century date seems likely. South of the enclosure were six more pits (4453, 4531, 4567, 4642, 4658 and 4765). The dating evidence from a sample of six pits was reviewed. Five were of probable late 3rd-4th century date, with 4560 of 2nd century date.

Defined area west of south-central enclosure

Some 22 probable pits were located in this area. These included a cluster of fairly small pits (4618, 4621, 4634, 4674, 4677 and 4721) close to the south-east corner of the south central enclosure and another cluster towards the north-west side of the area (4458, 4511, 4691 and 4693 (intercutting), 4700, 4773, 4784, 4799, 4802 and 4805, these last three all intercutting). Other pits in this general area were 4446, 4522, 4524, 4526 and 4711. Adjacent to ditch 4461 was another stone-lined well/waterhole. The pit containing this feature (cut 4535) was c 1.9 m in diameter and 0.75 m deep. It had a lining of dry-built limestone blocks (4534) defining a shaft c 1.2 m across at ground level but tapering towards the base of the feature. Within the shaft was a single fill (4532) containing much stone, fallen or pushed in from the upper part of the sides. Associated pottery was dated to the late 3rd-4th century, a date shared by the fills of four other pits examined in this area.

Western edge of site

In the area south and west of ditch 4461 were a further ten pits (4455, 4487, 4489, 4491, 4504, 4506, 4508, 4516, 4504 and 4520). Of these, 4520 was particularly instructive as it lay partly beneath the west baulk of the site, allowing the full sequence of deposits above its fill to be examined. The pit was 2.7 m across and 1 m deep beneath the base of the subsoil/post-Roman ploughsoil layer (4382) which sealed the uppermost of three fills (4517). Unfortunately, neither this nor the underlying fills (4518 and 4519) produced any finds.

A small pit (4806) lay immediately north of the WNW-ESE boundary ditch 4467/4498. Apart from this the only feature north of the ditch was a large subrectangular pit (4514), 3.2 x 1.9 in plan and only 0.35 m deep, some 9 m north of the ditch and close to the west baulk of the site. This main fill (4512) of this feature

produced an assemblage of ten unabraded pottery sherds (268 g) entirely in medieval fabric OXAC and datable to the 12th-13th centuries. In contrast with the similar sherd which was almost certainly intrusive in ditch 4461 further south, there is no doubt that this feature was of medieval date.

Overall, pottery from a sample of 24 out of the 56 pits and waterholes/wells was examined. Apart from the medieval pit 4514 (above), two features produced 2nd century assemblages, while the remainder were of late 3rd-4th century date.

Finds

Categories of material recorded, with quantities, are as follows:

Category	Fragments	Weight (g)	Number of contexts producing material
Iron	12		11
Lead	1		1
Glass	5	25	5
Leather waterlogged			
Wood waterlogged			
Pottery	2566	54992	170
Ceramic building material	8	1094	7
Fired clay	24	373	8
Stone	33	1926	18
Animal bone	1677	53539	168
Shell	46	1076	22
Human bone			2

Discussion

The principal Roman features revealed were a succession of enclosures which show spatial and perhaps also chronological development from east to west. Unfortunately their extent to the east and to the south is not known. It is possible that the features examined comprise the majority of the components of this area of the Gill Mill settlement, but this cannot be certain. The sequence began probably in the early part of the 2nd century AD. As is so common in the Upper Thames region, there are no structural traces. It is impossible to say whether or not the most substantially defined enclosure, that in the south-east corner of the excavated area, was a domestic focus. In its second phase, with a sub-enclosure defined in one corner, the plan is loosely reminiscent of that of sites like Old Shifford (Hey 1996), where it was suggested that such a sub-enclosure did indeed house a domestic building. 'Domestic' rubbish, principally in the form of pottery and animal bone, was present in sufficient quantity to demonstrate that such activity did take place in the area both in the 2nd century and later.

All the enclosure areas have characteristics such as the form of entrances that suggest an association with movement and penning of stock. Such activities could have been combined with domestic functions in the south-eastern enclosure, for example, and the presence of a stone-lined well/waterhole associated with both the

south central enclosure and the western outer 'enclosure' also suggests provision for animals, although domestic use of these features would have been possible.

The dating evidence suggests very strongly that there was a major shift in the use of the site in the later Roman period. The enclosure ditches were largely, but not entirely, infilled by this point, although other enclosure components such as fences, the archaeological traces of which are unlikely to have survived a combination of post-Roman ploughing and topsoil/subsoil stripping, could have remained in use, maintaining definition of enclosures. Instead, widespread pit digging is in evidence. The proportions of some of these features suggested that they may have been intended to be used as waterholes, but most of these and the pits of other forms seem to have contained some domestic rubbish, whether or not this was their primary function. It is possible that they related to an adjacent focus of contemporary (late Roman) activity, for example just to the south of the present site, or that they served the inhabitants of the core area of the nucleated settlement several hundred metres distant.

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APPENDIX 1: FINDS FROM 2001 (Working Area and Area 1)

Pottery and fired clay by Paul Booth

Some 70 sherds of pottery (1124 g) were recovered from the site. This material was mostly of Roman date, but 4 sherds (32 g) of prehistoric pottery were also found. The assemblage includes a group of pottery from a feature fill (215) examined in the northern margin of an area previously examined immediately south of the present site and thus not strictly part of it. The material was recorded using the established OA recording system for Iron Age and Roman pottery. Sherds were examined by context and recorded by fabric, with details of form and decoration noted where these could be determined and other characteristics recorded as necessary. Quantification was by sherd count and weight, with quantification of vessels by rim count and EVEs.

The pottery was divided initially into major ware groups, defined on the basis of significant common characteristics (for a more detailed account of this aspect of the recording system see Booth et al. 1994, 135-6). Sherds were then assigned either to the principal subdivisions of the ware groups or to individual fabrics/wares. Prehistoric fabrics were defined on the basis of their principal inclusions.

A single sherd (7 g) from context 225 was in a leached fine shell-tempered fabric. This was a slightly expanded and everted rim with two small indentations just below the top of the rim. The other three sherds (25 g), from context 235, were in a coarse limestone, sand and ?grog-tempered fabric with no diagnostic features. A mid to late Bronze Age date is thought likely for both fabrics (Alistair Barclay pers comm). The fabrics present are quantified under two headings, the material from the main part of the site and that from the isolated pit fill 215.

Table 1: Pottery by Fabric and Area

Fabric	Description	Main area		Feature 215	
		No. sherds	Weight (g)	No. sherds	Weight (g)
S30	Central Gaulish samian ware			2	46
F60	Red-brown colour-coated ware, uncertain (?British) source	1	4		
F65	?North Oxfordshire red-brown colour-coated ware			2	9
O10	Fine oxidised 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products	2	2		
O30	Fine sandy oxidised coarse wares	1	1	1	4
O81	Pink grogged ware	1	38		
R10	Fine reduced 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products	1	1		
R30	Moderately sandy reduced coarse wares	29	312	6	114
R37	Fine sandy reduced coarse ware	2	30	4	184
B11	Dorset black-burnished ware (BB1)	1	1	2	72
B30	Wheel-thrown black-burnished type wares			2	19
C11	Shell-tempered wares			9	255
Total		38	389	28	703

The range of fabrics is characteristic of this part of Oxfordshire. Of note is the absence of Oxford mortaria and colour-coated wares. Instead, regional fine wares are represented by fabric F65, for which a relatively local source is possible, and it is quite likely that the sherd assigned to the general fine ware category F60 was from the same (unknown) source. It is thought that this might be the same as that of fabric R37, which is extremely well-represented at sites in the area such as Asthall and Wilcote (Booth 1997, 133). Non-local fabrics were Central Gaulish samian ware (S30), Dorset black-burnished ware (B11) and pink grogged ware (O81) from Buckinghamshire (Booth 1999). The shell-tempered fabric C11 may have included local material as well as sherds in the Midlands late Roman tradition with a known source at Harrold in Bedfordshire (Brown 1994), since macroscopically these two traditions cannot be distinguished readily. A rim sherd in this fabric was perhaps of Harrold type.

The assemblage from the main 2001 area was unremarkable. Dominated by reduced coarse wares, it contained very few datable pieces. Most of the sherds in this group (29 out of 38) came from context 217 and represented the remains of a cremation urn in fabric R30. The lower part of this vessel was present, together with a single rim fragment that probably also belonged to it. The rim form was not chronologically diagnostic and can only be dated broadly to the 2nd century or later. The only other group of any significance was from context 265, with five sherds including jar and bowl rims in fabric R37, the fragment of F60 and the sole occurrence of fabric O81 on the site. These characteristics suggest a date in the later 2nd century or later - fabric O81, for example, is always more common in later Roman groups than in the 2nd century.

The ?pit group 215 is characterised by large sherds (average weight 25.1 g). Despite the presence of samian ware the occurrence of two black-burnished ware dishes (one each in Dorset and local imitation fabrics) and a jar in fabric C11 indicates a late 3rd century date at the earliest. In view of this the absence of Oxford products may be surprising, but the group size is too small for such arguments to be firmly based.

Fired Clay

Three pieces of fired clay were recovered from context 223. These require no further comment.

Human Remains by Angela Boyle

A total of four deposits of cremated human bone were assessed to determine their potential for further analysis. The results are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 2: Summary of cremated human bone deposits

Context	Fill of	Weight	Identifiable fragments	Colour	Age	Sex	Comments
217	216	36 g plus 207 g unsorted residue	skull vault, long bone	mixed	adult	?	within pottery vessel, plough damaged
219	218	4 g plus 8 g unsorted residue	long bone shaft	mixed	adult	?	
223	222	122 g plus 1169 g unsorted residue	skull vault, femur, miscellaneous long bone shaft	mixed	adult	M?	burnt flint present

225	224	2 g plus 1024 g	long bone	mixed	?	?	considerable quantities of charcoal present
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Cremation deposit 217 appears to have been originally contained within a Roman pottery vessel and it is assumed that the other three are of comparable date. All are insubstantial and appear to have been plough damaged.

It is unlikely that further information will be gained by sorting and examining the currently unsorted residue. Residues should however be scanned in order to identify the charcoal which is present. No further analysis of the human bone is recommended. A summary discussion of burial practice to place the deposits in context will required at a later date.

Animal Bone by Emma-Jayne Evans

A total of 70 (2766 g) bones were excavated by hand from the site. Fresh breaks were noted on many of the bones, and the re-assembly of some of the elements reduced the fragment count to 46. From this number, 32 (69.5%) bones and teeth (2722 g) could be identified to species.

Identification of the bone was undertaken with access to the reference collection and published guides. All the animal bones were counted, and where possible the bones were identified to species, element, side and zone (Serjeantson 1996). Also, fusion data, butchery marks, gnawing and burning were noted. Undiagnostic bones were recorded as small (small mammal size), medium (sheep size) or large (cattle size). The separation of sheep and goat bones was done using the criteria of Boessneck (1969) and Prummel and Frisch (1986), in addition to the use of the reference material housed at OA. Where distinctions could not be made, the bone was recorded as sheep/goat.

The condition of the bone was graded using the criteria stipulated by Lyman, (1996). Grade 0 being the best preserved bone and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable. Measurements were taken according to the methods of Von Den Driesch (1976). The animal remains excavated were in good condition, with the all the bone graded at 1 or 2 according to Lyman's system. A list of all the species identified is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 3 Total number of bones and teeth according to species and phase

Context	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Hare	Unidentified	Total
209	1	0	0	3	4
212	0	0	6	0	6
215	4	0	0	0	4
225	0	1	0	0	1
249	20*	0	0	9	29
265	0	0	0	2	2
Total	25	1	6	14	46

*19 bones likely to be from one animal

As noted above, the bones and teeth from this site have survived in good condition. That has enabled butchery marks and gnawing marks to be noted on several bones, and the measurement of suitable bones.

The bones from context 249 came from one animal, suggesting a deliberate rubbish or ritual disposal deposit.

Leather items by Leigh Allen (additional comments Quita Mould)

The bottom unit from a shoe of nailed construction was recovered from Context 215. The unit is from a left shoe and has 36 perforations through the sole, twelve of which still have hob nails *in situ*. The shoe is in very poor condition: it has completely dried out and has probably shrunk by at least 10% from its original size. In its present condition it measures 170mm in length and 65mm across the widest section of the sole and is equivalent to a child's size 10 shoe. The leather has separated into three layers, on the upper face the bent tips of the hob nail shanks are visible, so no doubt there would have been at least one other layer in the original shoe to cover these and afford some comfort to the wearer. The shoe is almost certainly of Roman date.

Palaeo-environmental remains

Samples were taken from the three cremation burials and the one potential burial and have been reported above. No further deposits suitable for sampling were identified in the course of the watching brief.

APPENDIX 2: FINDS FROM 2002-3 (Area 2)

Pottery by Paul Booth

The pottery was recorded in the same way as the material from the 2001 excavation. The material derived from a limited number of contexts mostly located in the vicinity of the enclosure and associated field system in the south-east corner of Area 2. Quantities of pottery by fabric are presented below.

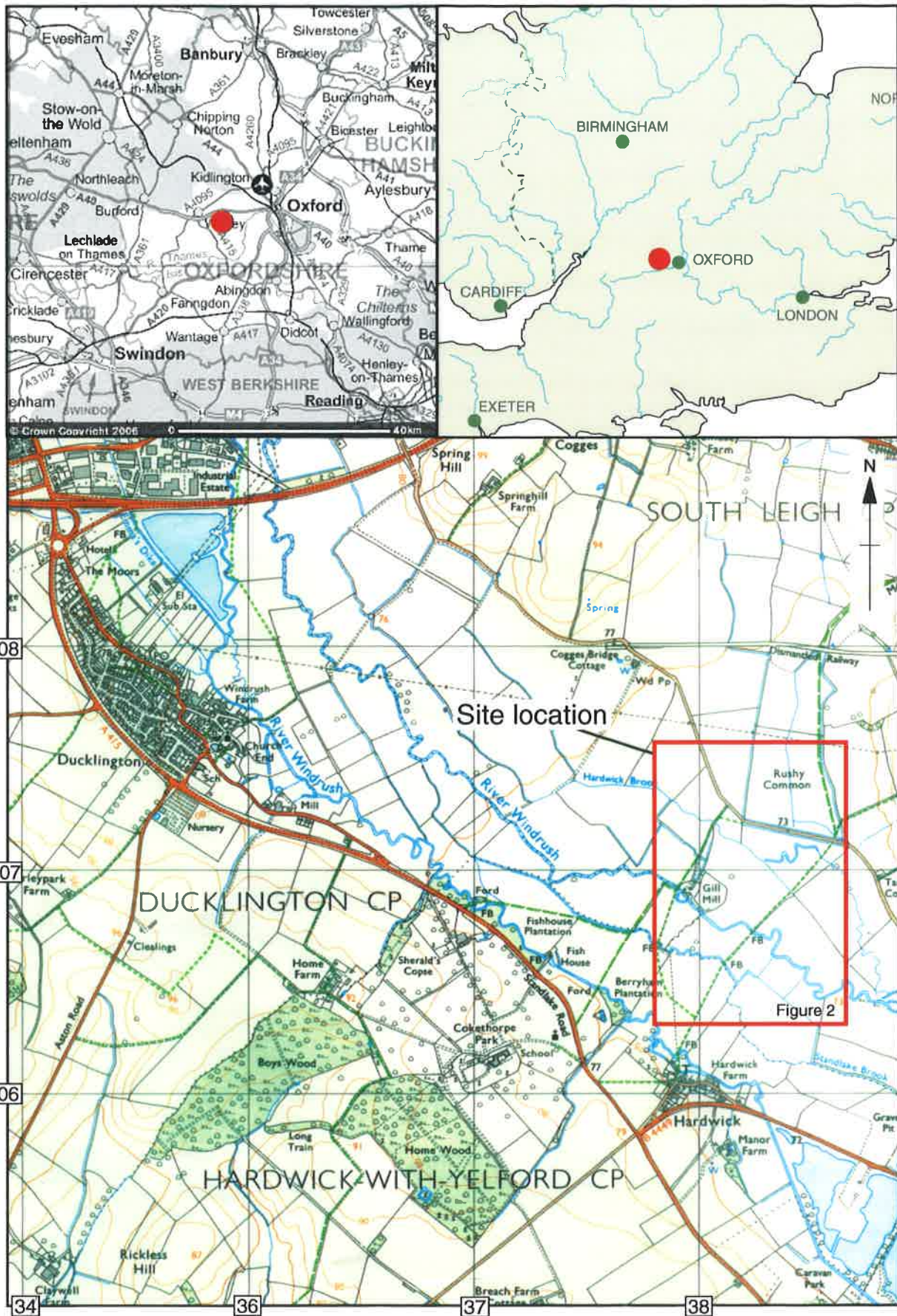
Fabric	Description	No. sherds	Weight (g)
W20	Coarse sandy white ware	1	9
E20	Fine sand-tempered 'Belgic type' wares	9	162
E30	Coarse sand-tempered 'Belgic type' wares	13	230
E40	Shell-tempered 'Belgic type' wares	4	47
E50	Limestone-tempered 'Belgic type' wares	3	91
E80	Grog-tempered 'Belgic type' wares	34	1006
O10	Fine oxidised 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products	3	53
O30	Fine sandy oxidised coarse wares	3	14
O37	Fine sandy oxidised coarse ware, local	7	45
O80	Coarse grog-tempered oxidised wares	8	147
O81	Pink grogged ware	1	26
R10	Fine reduced 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products	1	3
R20	Coarse sandy reduced wares	8	92
R30	Moderately sandy reduced coarse wares	2	12
R37	Fine sandy reduced coarse ware	67	1656
R38	As R37 with additional grog-tempering	40	1107
R90	Coarse grog-tempered reduced wares	8	366
C10	Shell-tempered wares	1	4
Total		213	5070

The assemblage, although small, is nevertheless remarkable for the absence of fine and specialist wares. The only exception to this was a single sherd of fabric W20, a relatively coarse sandy white ware. In effect the assemblage consists of material in three coarse ware groups, 'Belgic type' (E) wares and oxidised (O) and reduced (R) coarse wares. Most of not all the component fabrics in these ware groups were of local or at least relatively local origin, although specific sources are not known for most of them. The dominant fabrics, R37 and R38, are commonly found in the area and may originate in the vicinity of Wilcote, a little to the north of Witney. These fabrics were in production from the second half of the 1st century AD at least through to the end of the 3rd century and thus are the most important individual coarse wares in most groups at Gill Mill. Fabric O37 is the oxidised equivalent of R37. Collectively E wares comprised almost exactly 30% of the pottery (by both sherd count and weight). This relatively high proportion is consistent with activity in the second half of the 1st century AD, and might just suggest a pre-conquest origin for the settlement enclosure (these wares completely dominated assemblages of the early 1st century), but the character of the more diagnostic vessel forms in these fabrics did not suggest that they belonged to the early stages of the regional 'Belgic' tradition.

Eighteen vessels were represented by rim sherds. Fifteen of these were jars of various types, mostly in E and R ware fabrics, and another was from a vessel which might have been either a jar or a bowl. The only other vessels were a single beaker in oxidised fabric O37, and a lid. Few of the jar types were very closely datable. In the

absence of more chronologically diagnostic vessels in fine ware fabrics, dating of the assemblage is difficult. There are, however, no vessels which could be assigned with confidence to the second half of the 2nd century AD (or later). Activity in this area therefore seems to have ended by about AD 150, and it is quite possible that it came to an end earlier than that. Arguments based on negative evidence have little statistical validity in a group of this size, so greater precision is not possible. On balance a terminal date in the range AD 120-150 seems likely for activity in Area 2 on the basis of the pottery. The only sherd which is almost certain to be later in date than this is in fabric O81. Although in production in the 2nd century this fabric, from a source in Buckinghamshire, is most common in the region in the 3rd-4th centuries. The single sherd, in an otherwise 1st century group from context 148, seems almost certain to have been intrusive.

The narrow range of both fabrics (in particular the absence of fine and specialist wares) and vessel forms indicates that the settlement in this area was of low status.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

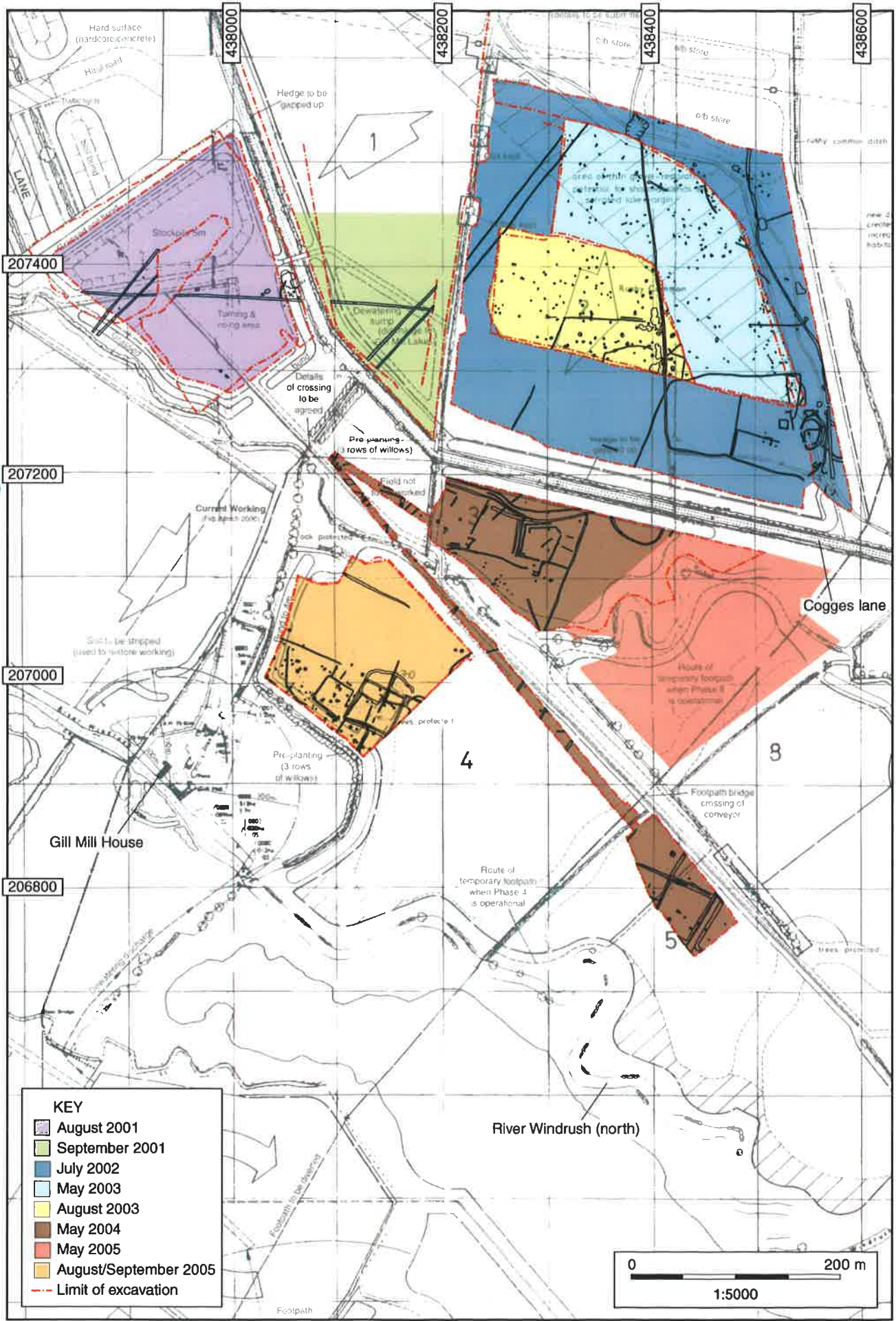


Figure 2: Location of Areas examined 2001-2005

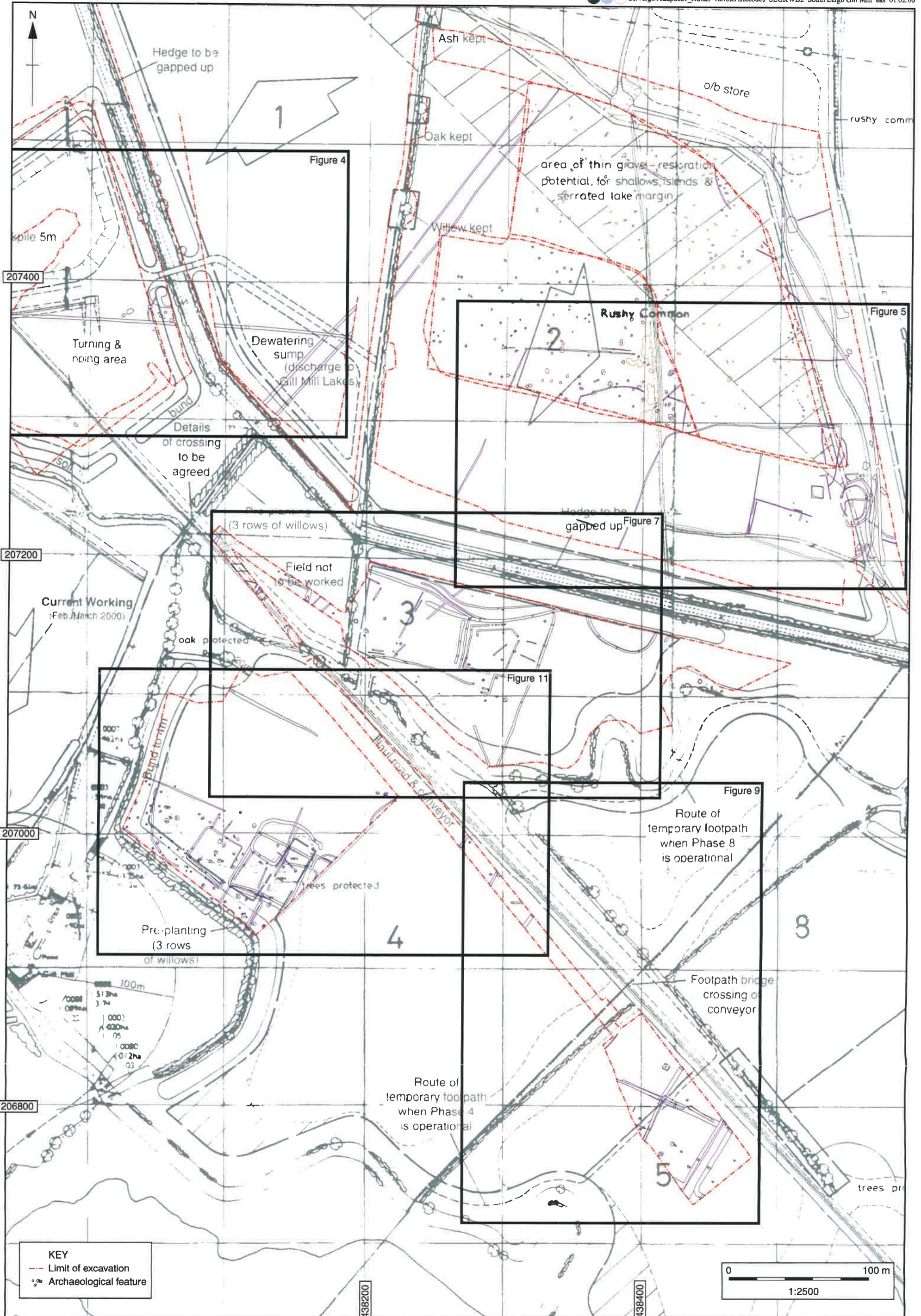


Figure 3: Overall plan of archaeological features

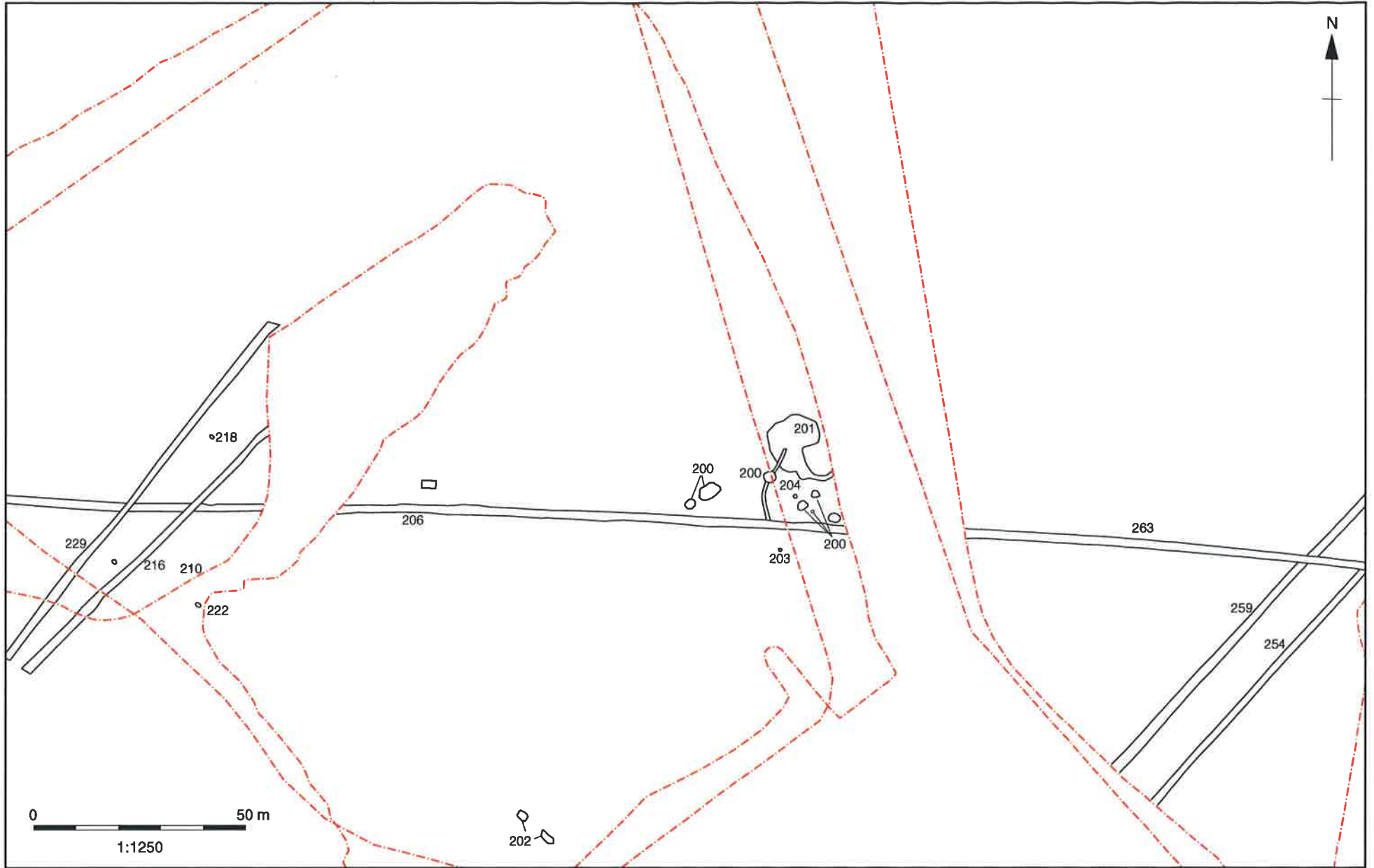


Figure 4: Working Area overall plan

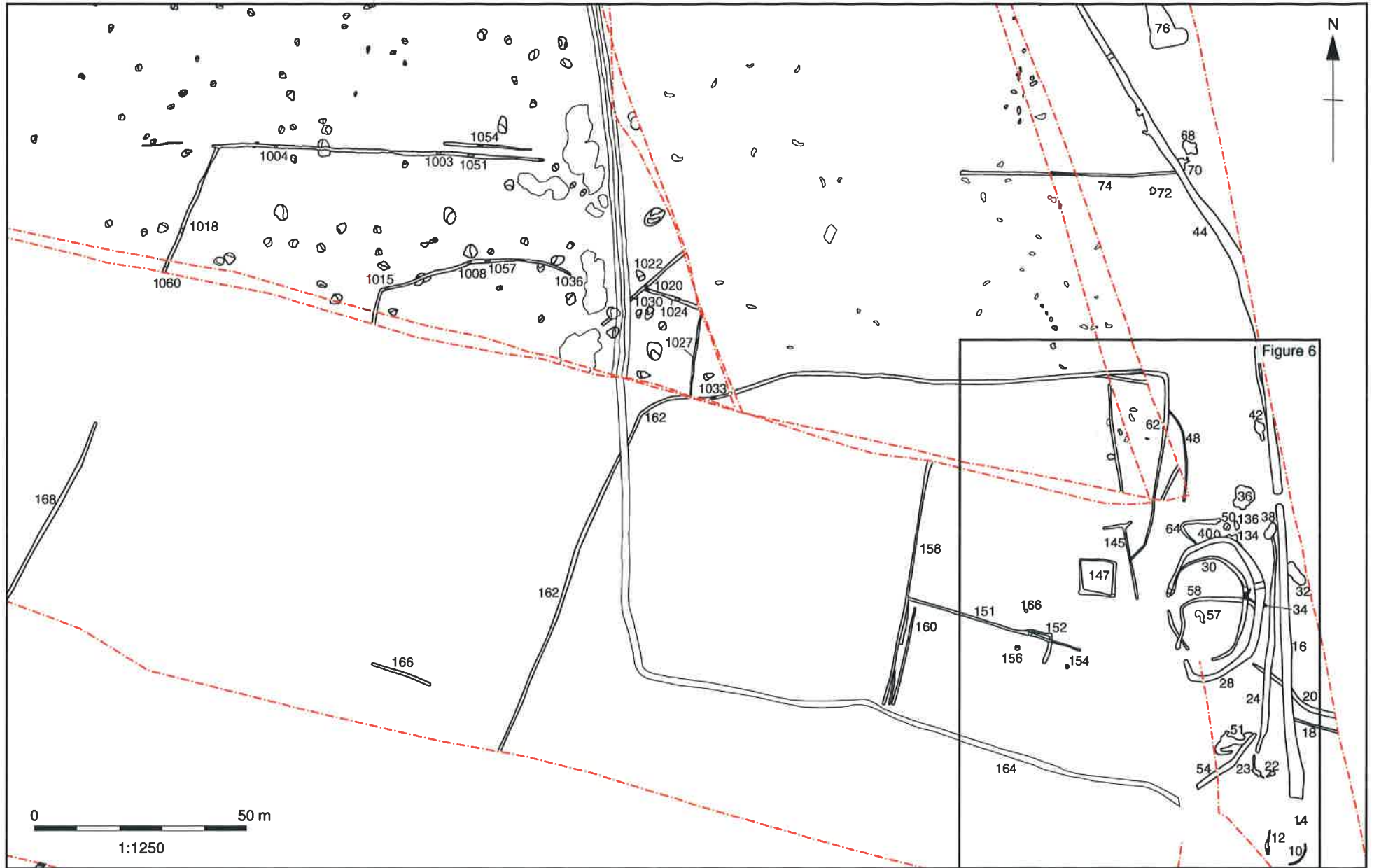


Figure 5: Part of Area 2, overall plan

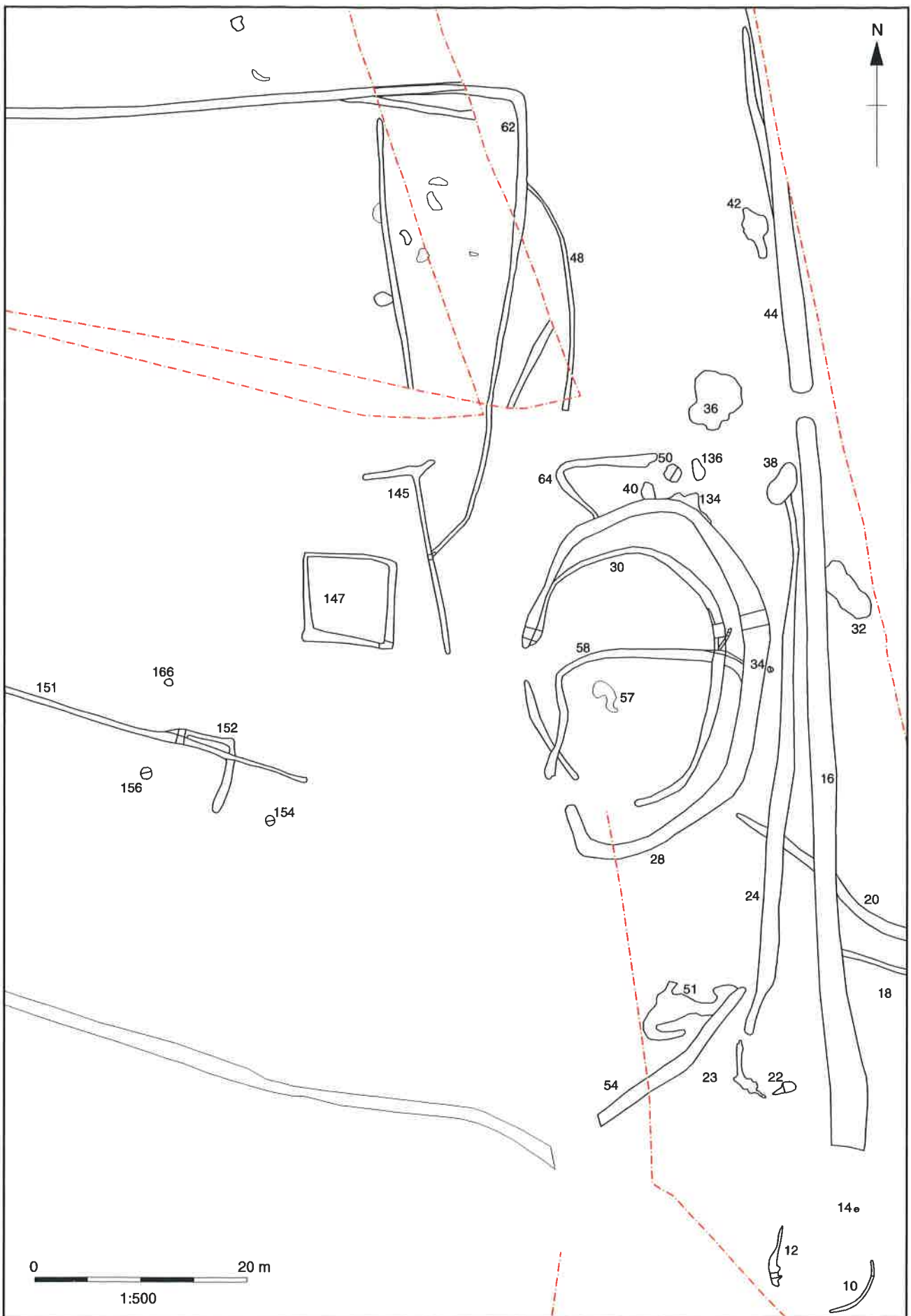


Figure 6: Detail of south-east corner of figure 5

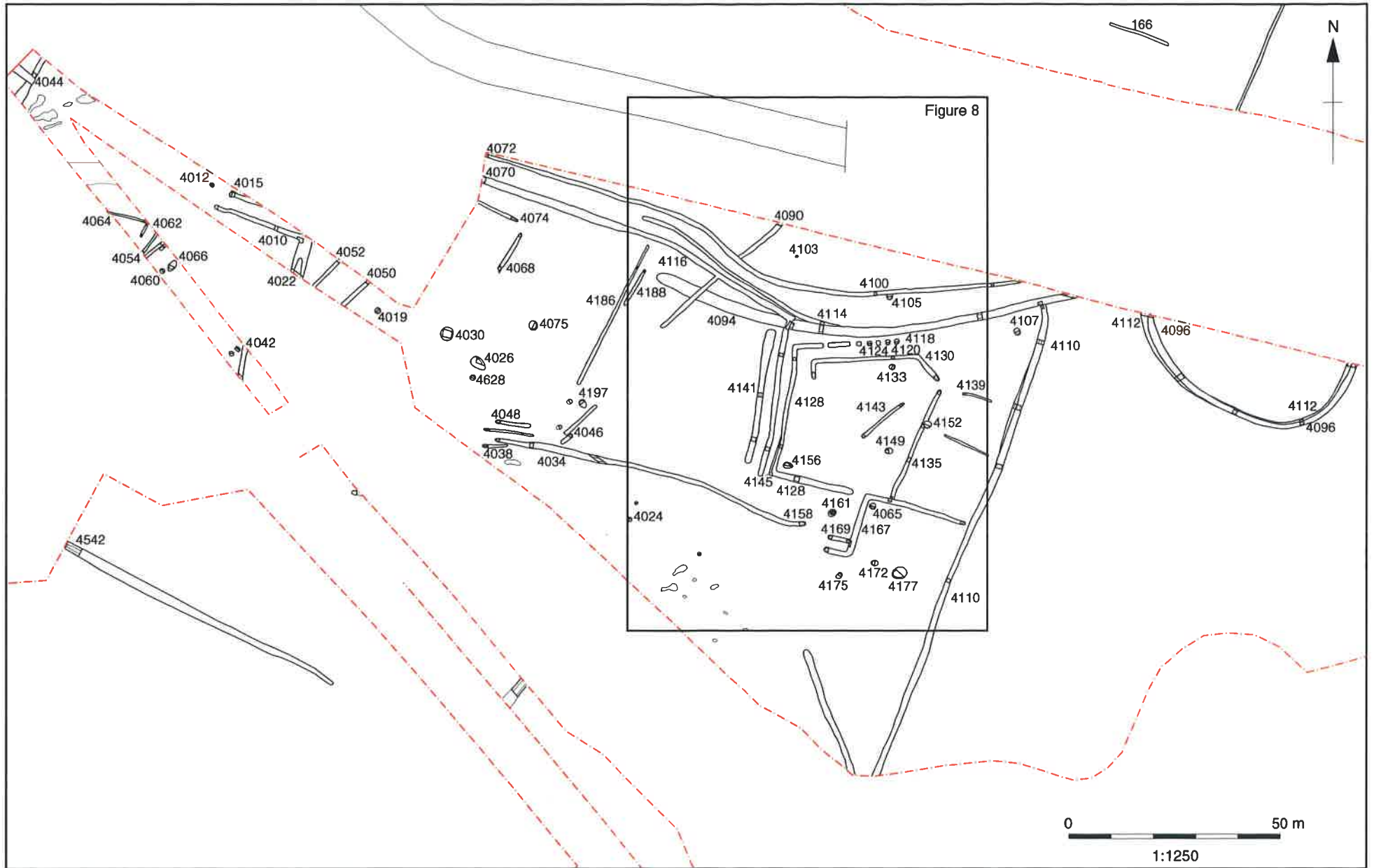


Figure 7: Access routes and Area 3 overall plan

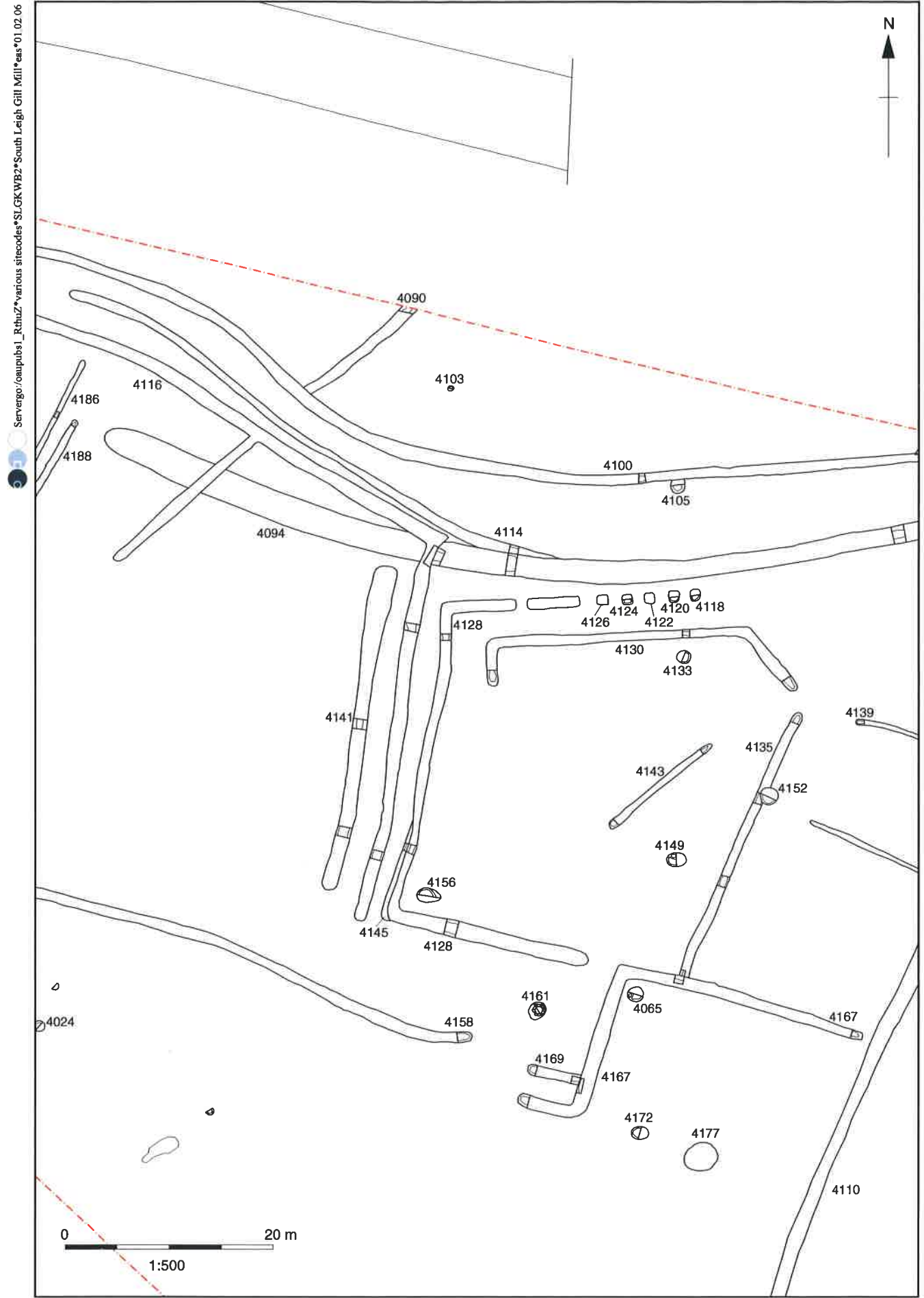


Figure 8: Detail of enclosures in area 3

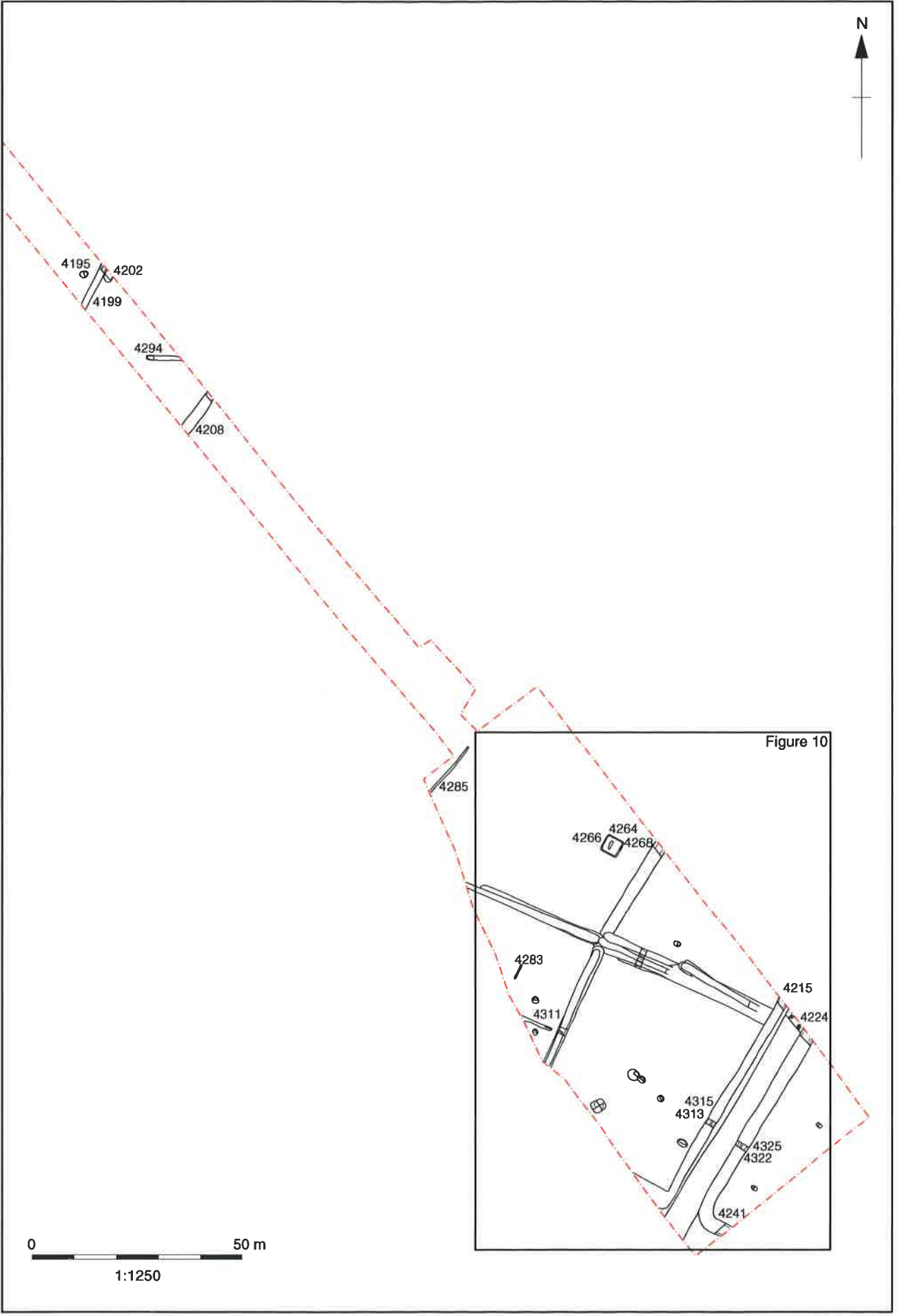


Figure 9: Conveyor line and Area 5 overall plan

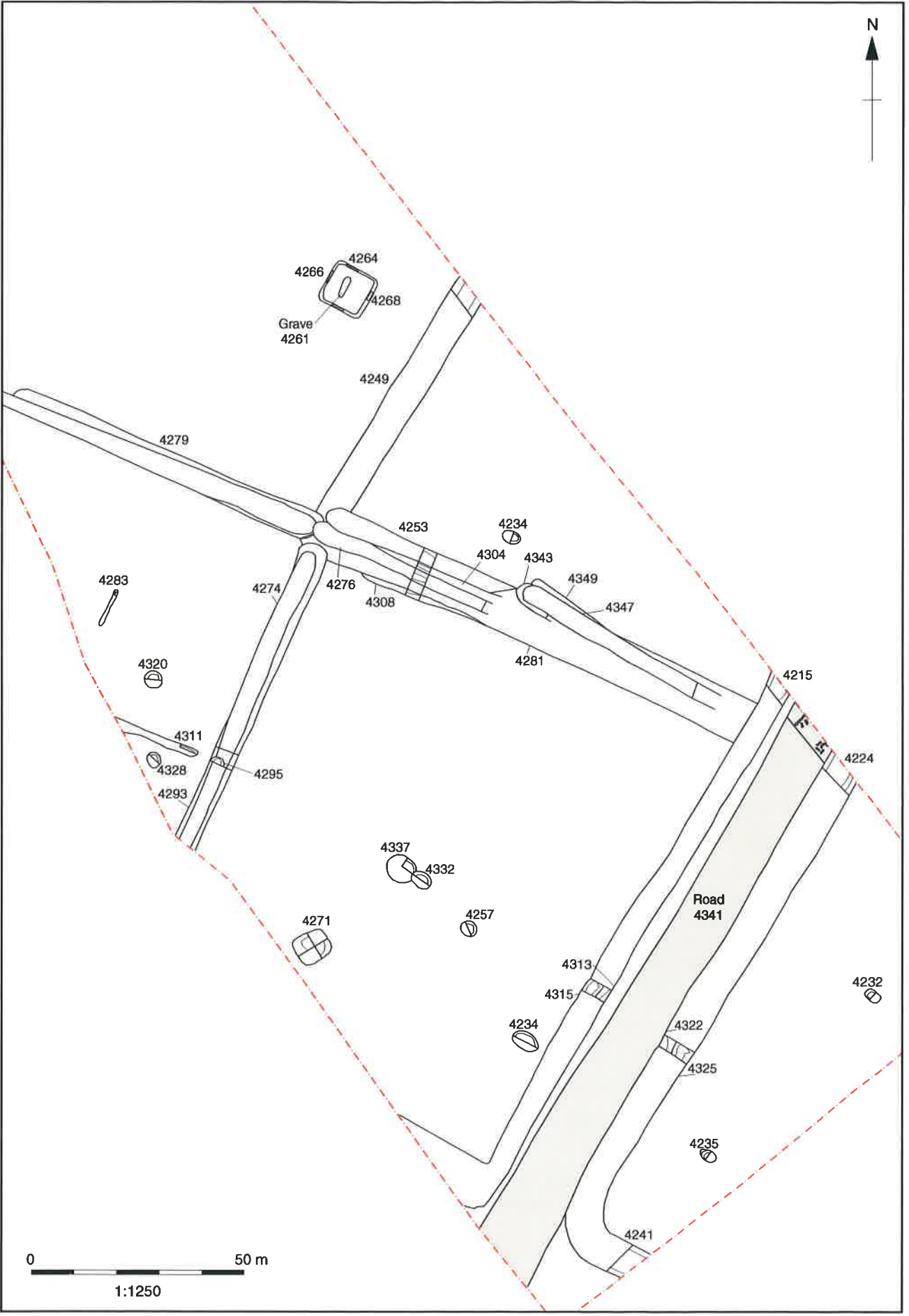


Figure 10: Detail of area 5

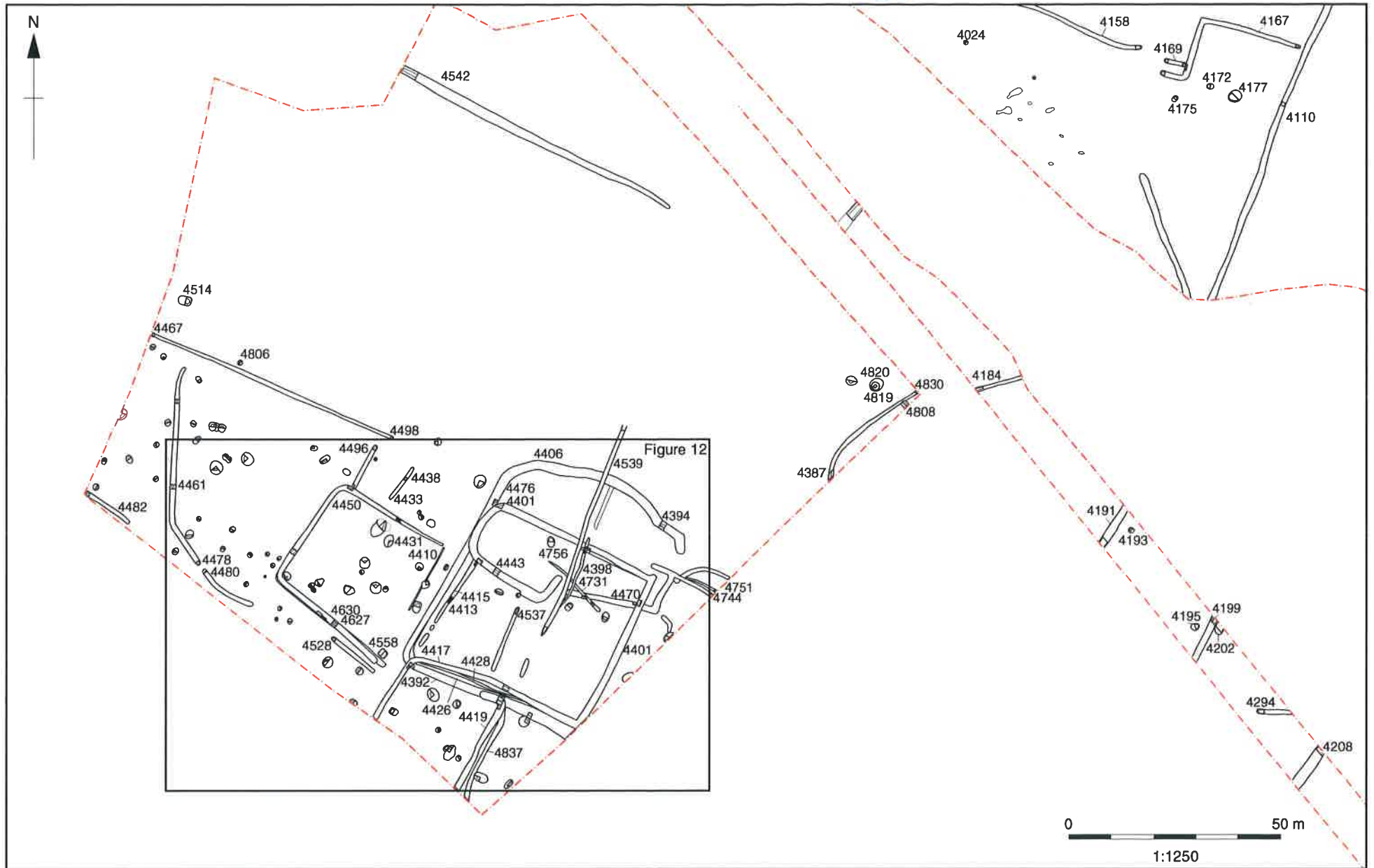


Figure 11: Area 4 west overall plan

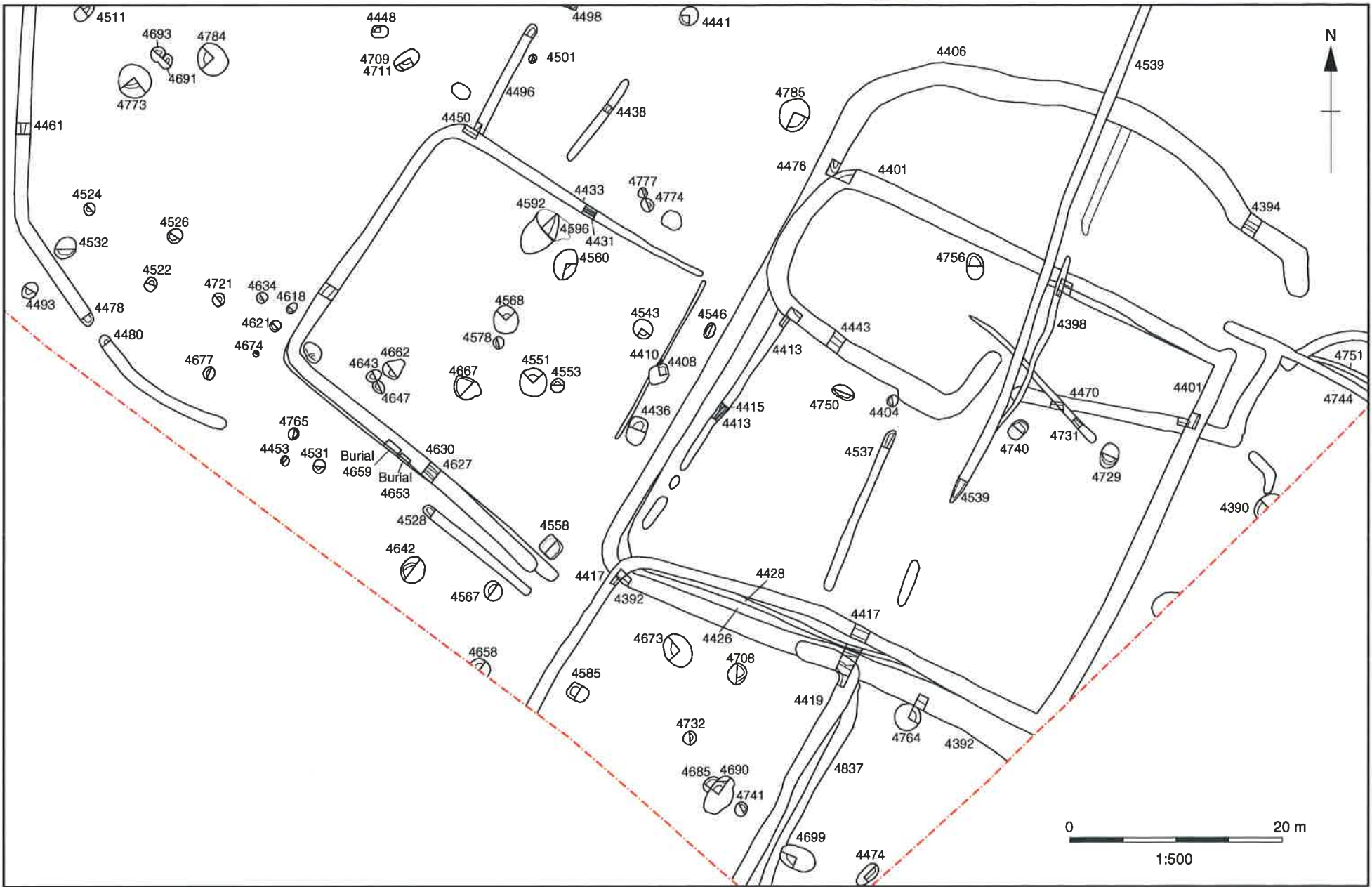


Figure 12: Detail of Area 4, west enclosures



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