

Chapter 11

Archaeological Investigations at Stubbs Farm, Kempford, Gloucestershire, 1991-1995

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INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological investigations was carried out in an area known as Stubbs Farm, to the east of the village of Kempford in south-eastern Gloucestershire (Fig. 11.1). Oxford Archaeology carried out the work between June 1991 and July 1995, on behalf of the developer, Multi-Agg Ltd, in advance of gravel extraction. This work included evaluation trenching, watching briefs and limited open area excavations targeted on the two enclosures known from cropmark and evaluation evidence. Further archaeological evaluations were carried out in areas adjoining to the north (Manor Farm, OAU 1992) and west (Multi-Agg Quarry extension, Booth and Stansbie forthcoming; see Digital section 8.4; Fig. 11.1). Together, these sites revealed part of a Roman landscape incorporating large field systems, trackways, multi-ditched enclosures, and a masonry-footed building.

Location and physical characteristics of the site (Fig. 11.1)

The site lies less than 1 km to the north of the River Thames in the parish of Kempford, east of the village and on the northern side of the course of the old canal, at grid reference SU 167 970. It is situated on the first gravel terrace of the River Thames at a height of around 75 m OD. The ground is fairly level but does slope gently down towards the river to the south. The underlying geology is composed of Oolitic Limestone of Middle Jurassic date. Most of the site is overlain by the gravels of the first terrace, although along the southern part of the eastern boundary there is an area of alluvium. A slight hill to the east of the site is formed of an outcrop of Oxford Clay (see Fig. 1.3).

A series of shallow palaeochannels formed a drainage system throughout the area. One group of these features began at the eastern end of the Manor Farm site and extended in the direction of Stubbs Farm, almost certainly forming part of the palaeochannel observed along the eastern side of the current site. This part of the channel was traceable as a ribbon of alluvium cutting through the first terrace river gravel that underlay the rest of the site. Together these palaeochannels formed a series of braided streams running along the western side of a

slight ridge on the eastern side of Manor Farm and down along the eastern side of the current site to the River Thames. The ridge was also flanked on the eastern side by a similar series of palaeochannels draining to the east. It is unknown when any these streams originated, but they may not have been very ancient.

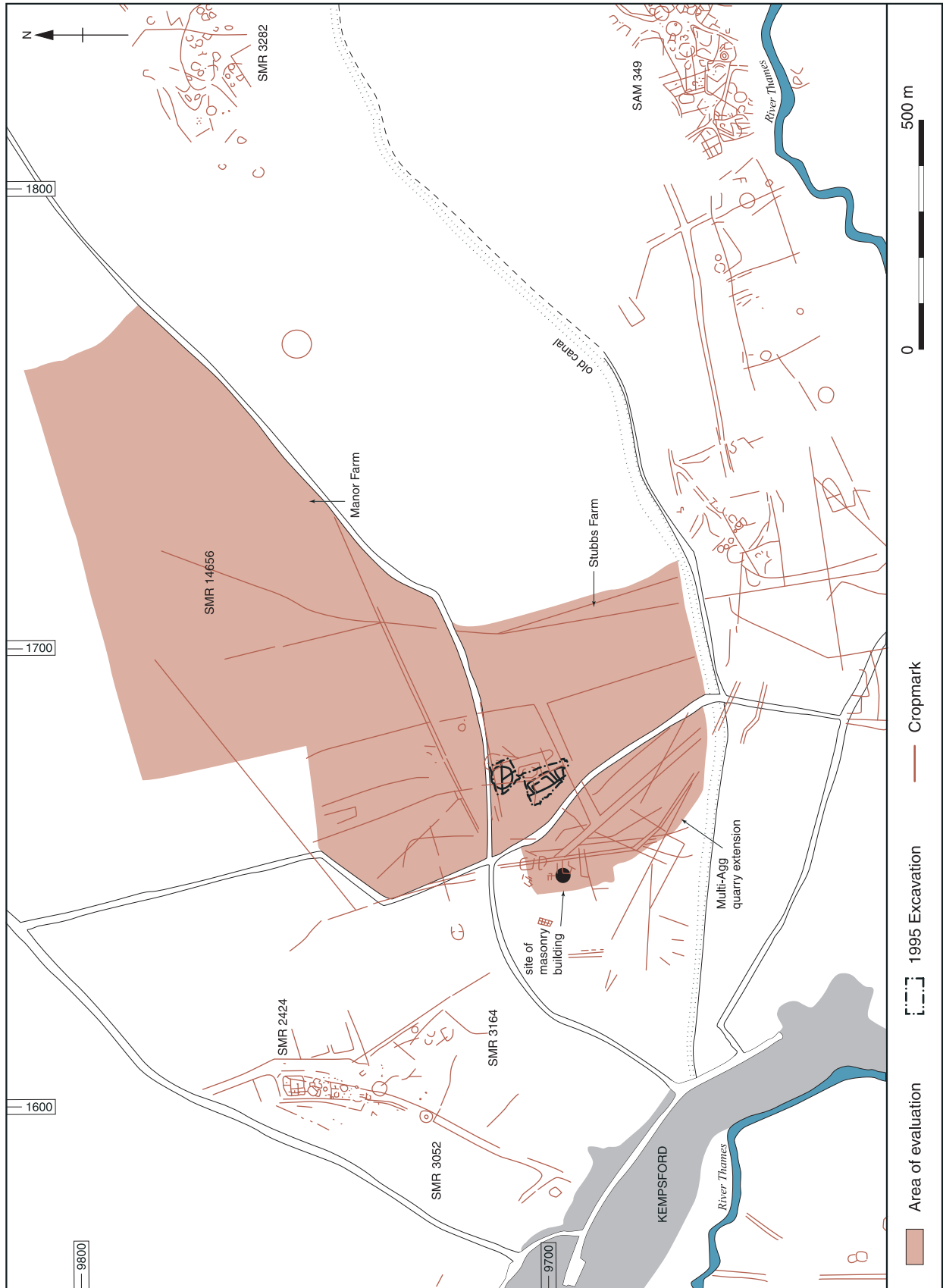
The fields that made up the site had been ploughed in recent times. The ploughsoil ranged from 0.21 to 0.25 m deep and directly overlay the natural subsoil.

Archaeological background (Fig. 11.1)

Most of what was known of the archaeology in the vicinity prior to initial investigations in 1991, came from aerial photography and fieldwalking. Cropmarks of linear features were revealed crossing the site (Fig. 11.1), forming large fields aligned approximately north-south by east-west. The rectangular and circular enclosures discussed in the present report were particularly clear features. Immediately to the north of the site the cropmark system continued at Manor Farm (SMR 14656). There, another rectangular enclosure was visible alongside the same north-south linear boundary, and was of a similar size to that on the Stubbs Farm site. Evaluation of the Manor Farm site in 1991 dated the field system to the Roman period (OAU 1992).

A pair of parallel linear cropmarks, probably a trackway, ran west from the Stubbs Farm site across the adjacent field to intersect with another trackway running NW-SE. Spreads of stone rubble and Roman roof tile in the area around and to the north of this intersection suggested a masonry building. An archaeological evaluation of this area (covering 8 ha) in 1997 confirmed the presence of at least two buildings, one with stone foundations, interpreted as being part of a modest Romanised farmstead (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming; see Digital section 8.4). These structures and their immediate environs were preserved *in situ*, while gravel extraction of an area covering 6 ha to the south was preceded by a series of archaeological investigations in 2000 and 2001 (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming; see Digital section 8.4). These excavations revealed a late Iron Age/early Roman ditched field system, which was

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superseded in the early 2nd century AD by a very regular layout of trackways, probably linking the local settlements (Stubbs Farm and the masonry farmstead) with wider field systems (see Discussion below). Less than 1 km to the north-west of this site lay a further series of cropmarks, which include substantial parts of a Bronze Age settlement (SMR 3052, 3164) in addition to Roman enclosures and ditches (SMR 2424).

Some of the north-south aligned cropmarks at Stubbs Farm continue to the south of the site, towards an area of linear and oval cropmarks. These in turn link into an extensive area of cropmarks further east, covering approximately 30 ha north of the River Thames. The whole of this cropmark area is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 349; Fig. 11.1), and includes elements of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date.

To the north and north-east of Stubbs Farm lay the excavated Iron Age and Roman settlements at Whelford Bowmoor, Thornhill Farm and Claydon Pike. The Stubbs Farm cropmarks appeared to form part of the planned agricultural landscape associated with these settlements.

Within this system prehistoric elements can be discerned. Part of a large sub-circular enclosure was visible to the west of the Manor Farm rectangular enclosure and was tentatively dated to the Iron Age. Another complex of cropmarks (SMR 3282), which includes circular ditched enclosures, lying 1.5 km to the north-east of Stubbs Farm, has been dated by fieldwalking to the Iron Age.

Excavation methodology

Archaeological investigations at Stubbs Farm began in June 1991 after a programme of mineral extraction and subsequent ground restoration was proposed by Multi-Agg Ltd. Gravel was to be extracted from an area of 19.08 hectares, in an area where cropmark evidence suggested the presence of archaeological remains. In response to conditions placed on the planning consent to record archaeological remains on site in advance of the work, OAU was commissioned to investigate the archaeology of the area. Investigation of the site was carried out in a number of phases over the next four years.

Field evaluation

The initial two phases of the investigation in June and September 1991 took the form of field evaluations. The first of these involved excavation of five trenches in the south-western part of the site, while a further 35 similar trenches were excavated across the rest of the site in the second phase of evaluation, adding up to a one percent sample of the site (see

Digital section 7 for plan). In each trench the topsoil was stripped by machine to reveal any archaeological features cut into the natural gravel. Any features located in this manner were then sampled by hand to determine their nature and depth and to recover dating evidence. The larger ditches were excavated by machine. Excavated features were recorded in plan and section. The machine stripped ploughsoil and machine excavated ditch fill was monitored to recover finds.

This work revealed a regular Roman field system incorporating a rectangular enclosure as suggested by the cropmark evidence. The field system was shown to cut across a circular enclosure, but the character and relationships of the other features were not fully established. A further phase of work was required in order to do this. This was to involve two complementary elements: strict archaeological monitoring of the stripping of the whole site and area excavation around both the rectangular and circular enclosures.

Watching brief

The planning condition for the gravel extraction specified a watching brief to be carried out over the entire area. The topsoil was to be stripped over areas rather than having a working face. This was done using a 360° excavator with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision.

Excavation

The 1995 excavation was aimed at elucidating the chronology and nature of the two multi-ditched enclosures. An area of approximately 60 x 90 m around the rectangular enclosure and 60 x 50 m around the circular enclosure was machine stripped under archaeological supervision (Fig. 11.2). All discrete features were hand excavated by a minimum volume of 50%. Approximately 10% by volume of the ditches were hand excavated to determine their character, form, and stratigraphic sequence and to recover datable artefacts. When the circular enclosure could not be clearly dated using this strategy a different approach was tried. The entire volume of the ditches was machine excavated and the spoil hand sorted to recover datable artefacts. Only 14 sherds of pottery were recovered in this way. The surface of the site was examined by Mark Maillard using a metal detector, and several metal objects (SF 1027, 1023, 1024 and 1025) and half a dozen pieces of lead were located by this means. Unfortunately, vandals removed many of the latter before they were archaeologically recorded. Significantly, nothing was recovered from the surface of the field prior to the excavation by local detectorists.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE (Fig. 11.2)

Due to extensive damage from animal disturbance, the preservation of features and stratigraphy on the site was not good, and most of the ditches had spatial rather than stratigraphic relationships. This disturbance may also have contaminated some deposits with later pottery, although nearly all recovered dating evidence suggested that activity was largely confined to the 2nd century AD.

Full archaeological descriptions can be found in Digital section 7.2

Natural features and early tree clearance

The general soil type was a silty clay loam with small inclusions of gravel. Natural features were filled by very clean silty clay with no gravel content, implying that they predated man-made disturbance of the soil. This included the fills of tree-throw holes and the palaeochannels identified during the evaluation stages of the project, and contrasted with the archaeological features which were filled by grey silty clay with varying proportions of gravel.

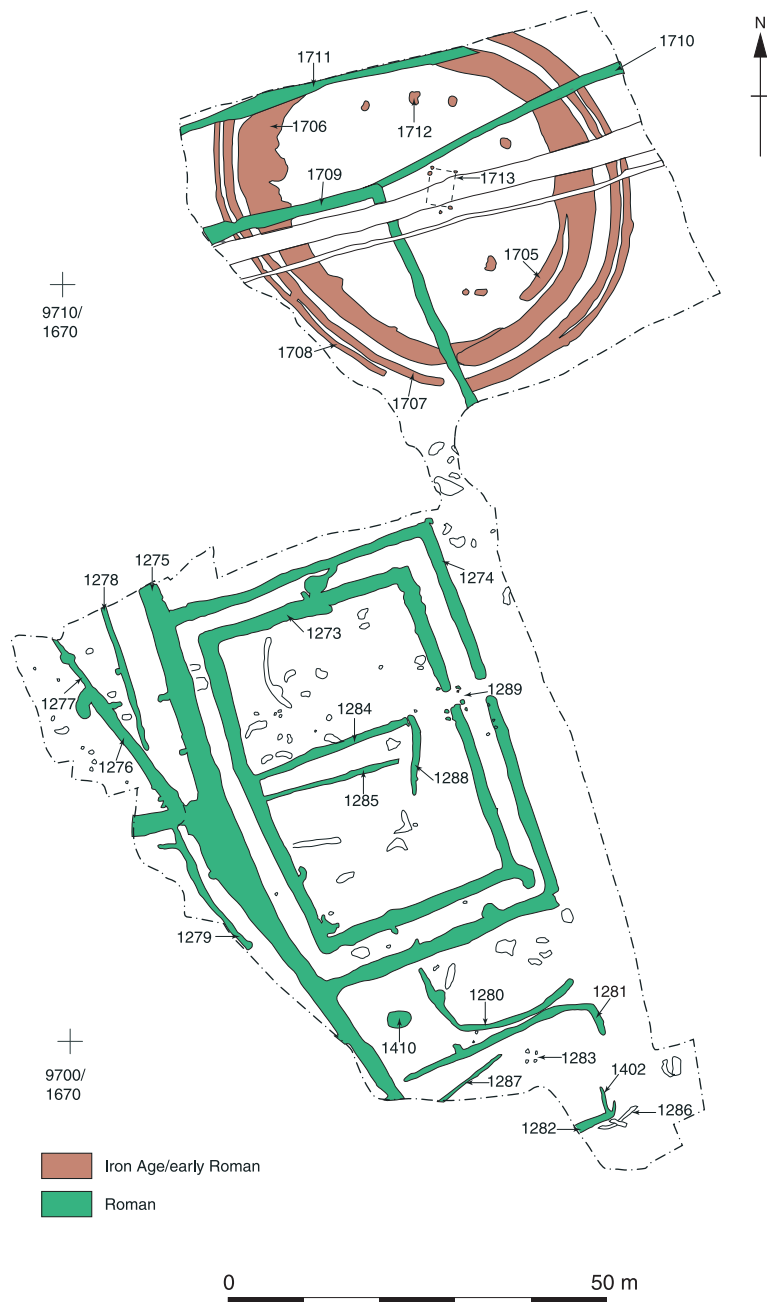


Fig. 11.2 Plan of excavated site

The palaeochannels observed during the stripping of eastern parts of the Stubbs Farm site were comparable with those located during archaeological investigation of the Manor Farm site (OAU 1992) to the north and east (Fig. 11.1), and are likely to form parts of the same drainage system (see above).

The tree-throw holes contained material that showed signs of burning. This may be evidence for deliberate land clearance, though it is unclear when this took place. It may be that the land was cleared earlier in the prehistoric period but no other traces of the use of the area during earlier periods remained, possibly indicating use was at most very light and sporadic before the occupation of the ditched enclosures.

The multi-ditched circular enclosure (Fig. 11.2)

The circular enclosure measured up to approximately 55 m in diameter externally and 35-40 m internally. It was formed of three concentric sets of ditches, which need not all have been contemporary.

Inner ditches

The innermost of these ditches (1705 and 1706) had been recut repeatedly and not always on exactly the same alignment. Around most of the circumference of the enclosure the innermost ditch (1706) was found to be composed of three cuts. This included two shallow cuts, approximately 0.8 m wide and 0.2 m deep with a wide U-shaped profile, and a larger cut 1.2 m wide and 0.5 m deep, also with a U-shaped profile, in the centre. The two most northerly sections showed additional cuts, including what appeared to be a terminus. Although unfortunately the ditch was cut by part of the later field system, which destroyed any stratigraphic relationships. A further cut (1705) could be traced around the eastern side of the enclosure on the inner side of 1706. This ditch was 1.2 m wide and 0.4 m deep with a broad U-shaped profile. Where observable, the sequence of fills was fairly uniform; an initial gravelly slip was overlain by clean clay silting, while a gravelly layer over this may indicate the slighting of bank material. This was overlain by clean clay silt indicating disuse. Second-century pottery came from the upper silts of the ditch on the west side of the enclosure, but a single middle Iron Age sherd was found in the lowest silt of the larger cut on the west side. Very few other finds were retrieved from this enclosure ditch, with only a few fragments of animal bone from the fills of the latest recuts of 1706 and two flints from 1705.

Outer ditches

Beyond these innermost ditches were two further concentric ditches (1707 and 1708). These features were fairly similar and had not been recut. The

middle ditch (1707) lay around 0.25-0.6 m beyond the innermost ditch and was represented by a single cut with a U-shaped profile, 1 m wide and 0.3 m deep. The outermost ditch (1708) lay up to 0.5 m beyond this and also had a U-shaped profile. It was slightly smaller than the middle ditch at 0.8 m wide and 0.15 m deep. Both ditches had very similar fills; friable, mid brown silty clay with gravel, which yielded some pottery sherds of 2nd-century AD date. These two ditches appeared to merge in the north-eastern and southern parts of the circuit, although this may have been a result of plough damage. and it is possible that they were contemporary.

It was not entirely clear where the entrance or entrances to the enclosure were located. It may have varied with the successive renovations, as represented by the recutting of the innermost ditch. A well-defined terminus to 1705 may indicate the entrance at one time was orientated to the SSE. A terminus of ditch 1706 is evident on the southern side of the enclosure around 12.5 m further west of the 1705 terminus. The later field boundary ditch (1709) cutting through the enclosure immediately to the west of this terminus has destroyed the other half of this entrance, but a fairly narrow opening, perhaps only around 2 m wide is indicated. A 2m wide entrance through the middle ditch (1707) corresponded to this one exactly.

The interior of the circular enclosure

Six postholes (1713) lay at the centre of this enclosure. These postholes averaged 0.3 m wide and 0.25 m deep with a U-shaped profile. All were filled with deposits of mid grey brown silty clay with gravel; no finds were recovered from any of these features. The large 18th-century ditch which cut east-west across the centre of the enclosure may have destroyed other similar features, but enough survived to very tentatively suggest a rectangular structure 3 m x 5 m.

Along the eastern edges of the interior an alignment of probable pits (1712) was located, lying concentric with the circular gullies, 3-4 m distant. One of these features was a well defined pit (1 m wide and 0.8 m deep), while the others were shallower and somewhat less regular in plan and profile. They may have been plough damaged shallow pits or possibly tree-throw holes. No finds were recovered from any of these features to give any hint of the date or function.

Field ditches

Two 2nd-century field ditches cut across the circular enclosure. A slight gully (1710) 0.8 m wide and 0.2 m deep was aligned east-west, while a larger ditch (1709), 1.3 m wide and 0.4 m deep, entered the circular enclosure through the southern entrance and cut 1710 in the centre. Ditch 1709 then turned to follow the east-west line of 1710.

Double-ditched rectangular enclosure

(Figs 11.2 and 11.3)

The rectangular enclosure measured 53 m x 42 m externally, and was formed of two parallel ditches (1274, 1273; Fig. 11.2). An entrance through both ditches was seen on the eastern side (1289; Fig. 11.3), and two parallel gullies (1284, 1285) subdivided its interior. The enclosure ditches were cut away by a large north-south field ditch (1275) to the west.

Inner ditch

The inner ditch (1273) had two cuts visible in section around the north-east, north, north-west and southern sides. The earlier cuts were 0.5 m deep and 1.7 m wide and V-shaped in profile. They formed a ditch which had completely filled in before the later cut was excavated. The later cut was 1.5 m wide and 0.6 m deep. The fills of the ditch suggested that once the sides had stabilised, it had slowly silted up. In the north-east side of the enclosure, a considerable quantity of domestic debris had been dumped in the ditch, including 250 sherds of pottery dating to the early 2nd to mid 3rd century AD. A gravelly layer was seen in the top of the ditch and probably represents the slighting of the bank by ploughing (see below). This gravelly layer was overlain by clean silts which indicate abandonment of the site.

Outer ditch

The outer ditch (1274) was 0.8 m wide and 0.3 m deep, and appeared to have completely silted up before being recut on the southern and western sides. The recut was 1.2 m wide, 0.5 m deep and V-shaped in profile. The fills of the ditch suggested a similar pattern to that of the inner ditch; a period of stabilisation followed by slow silting, with the bank material then being slighted into the ditch. The site was left as the slight earthwork hollow and filled slowly with clean silt. A considerable quantity of domestic material was dumped in the earthwork along the northern side. This dump included a coin and almost 500 sherds of pottery.

Bank

The fills of the inner and outer ditches had gravelly layers in their upper fills, and from the way these tipped into the ditch cuts from the area between the ditches it is likely that a gravel bank lay between them. Modern ploughing had removed evidence for this.

Gate (Fig. 11.3)

A posthole group was seen around the terminals of the inner and outer ditches on the eastern side, and may have formed a gate structure (1289). The

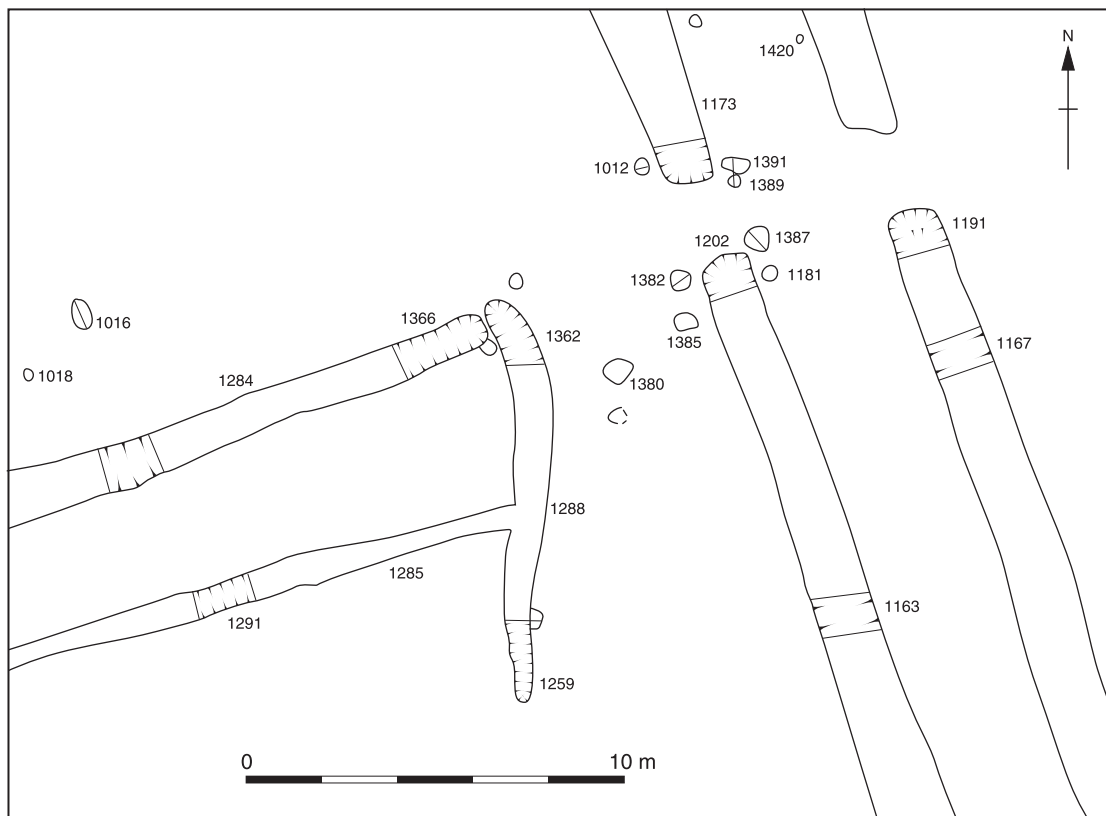


Fig. 11.3 Plan of enclosure gateway

postholes ranged in size from 0.2 to 0.4 m in diameter and were up to 0.3 m deep. One posthole (1420) lay to the north of the entrance. Outside the inner enclosure ditch were two pairs of postholes, one pair each side of the entrance. One of each pair (1387, 1391) were large, 0.4 m diameter, while the others (1389, 1181) were smaller at around half the size. Three postholes lay inside the inner entrance on the edge of the ditch. One posthole (1012) lay to the north of the entrance and two (1382, 1385) lay to the south. It is likely that this arrangement formed a timber gateway structure around the inner enclosure.

One large posthole (1380) lay between the gate and gullies 1284, 1285 which sub-divided the interior of the enclosure, and may have restricted access between the two areas.

Inner gullies

Two roughly parallel gullies were traced for 18-21 m in an east-west direction, sub-dividing the interior of the enclosure. The northern (1284) was 1 m wide and 0.20 m deep, and the southern (1285) was 0.7 m wide and 0.1 m deep. The profiles of these gullies were not clear as they had been extensively truncated by deep ploughing. A north-south gully (1288) lay at the east end of these features. It was 0.62 m wide, 0.32 m deep and 10 m long. As it was slightly deeper the profile was observed as U-shaped with a flat bottom. It contained metal-working slag and 2nd-century pottery.

Features to the south (Fig. 11.2)

Immediately to the south of the rectangular enclosure was a semi-circular gully (1280). It was 0.5 m wide and 0.35 m deep with a vertical sided and flat bottomed profile. Its northern end began *c* 0.3 m from the southern side of 1274, and its deep vertical sided profile suggested that it was a palisade trench for holding upright timbers. To the west of this gully lay a large pit (1410), 2.3 m across and 0.86 m deep. Two parallel gullies (1281 and 1282) were aligned east-west to the south of 1280, on the same axis at the main rectangular enclosure. They were 0.8 m wide and 0.3 m deep with a U-shaped profile, and formed an enclosure (*c* 26 x 15 m) with an entrance to the east. An extra gully 1402 had been cut into the east end of 1282, reducing the entrance width to 10 m. Within this enclosure were 1287, a 10 m length of shallow gully, and 1283, a structure formed of four-postholes. Gully 1287 was 0.57 m wide and 0.23 m deep.

No finds were recovered from these features, but they are presumed to be contemporary with the rectangular enclosure on spatial grounds.

Field ditches (Fig 11.1 and 11.2)

Along the western boundary of the excavated area were a series of linear ditches, probably belonging

to a larger field system shown in aerial photos, dating approximately to the 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD. Half way down the western side of the rectangular enclosure the north-south field ditches (1275, 1277) changed direction slightly, and this area seems to have been a nodal point where several sets of field enclosures met (Fig. 11.2). It is likely that the earliest component of this nodal point was formed by a NNW-SSE gully (1277), which was 0.8 m wide and 0.32 m deep; it was traced for a distance of 10 m from the north-west corner of the trench, until it was cut by a larger ditch (1276), 1 m wide and 0.44 m deep.

The large north-south ditch 1275 (1.6 m wide, 0.4 m deep) cut through the western outer ditch of the rectangular enclosure 1274, although both features were probably broadly contemporary. A shallow gully (1278), was aligned parallel to 1275 and terminated before 1276, suggesting that it was part of the Roman field system. A similarly aligned gully (1279), 0.6 m wide and 0.1 m deep, was seen further to the south and may have been contemporary.

THE FINDS

Full finds reports can be found in Digital section 7.3.

Pottery (Fig. 11.4) by Paul Booth

The excavations produced some 907 sherds of pottery weighing 9120 g. The material was all of the Roman period apart from a single flint-tempered sherd which may be assignable to the Iron Age. The bulk of the pottery was probably of 2nd-century date. The sherds are generally in moderate to poor condition. Much of the material is quite badly fragmented, though recent breaks were discounted as far as was possible, and surfaces were often heavily eroded, making identification of fabrics difficult in some cases and removing much evidence for decoration.

Fabrics

The two principal components of the assemblage were reduced coarse wares (R) and black-burnished ware (B), with oxidised wares (O) of lesser importance and the combined 'fine and specialist' wares (samian, fine wares, amphorae, mortaria, white and white-slipped wares) totalling only 3.3% of sherds (7.7% of weight). As would be expected, the coarse ware fabrics for the most part indicate domination of the assemblage by local production sources, particularly the North Wiltshire industries. The principal non-local fabric was Dorset black-burnished ware (fabric B11), which formed a significant part of the assemblage. However, the similarity between B11 and some probable sherds of R35 raises the possibility that there were local attempts to copy black-burnished ware. In some cases it could be seen that the similarity extended not only to characteristics of the fabric, but also to

its finish and decoration and the range of forms, particularly the occurrence of jars of 'cooking pot' type.

The 'fine and specialist' wares require little comment. The small samian assemblage, almost entirely of Central Gaulish origin, included no decorated sherds. Fine wares were notably absent, with the single identified example being a rim of a small beaker of 2nd-century type but of uncertain

source. It is just possible that this sherd was of fabric F65, originating in the Upper Thames region and with a 2nd- to 4th-century date range. Mortaria were from the Oxford region and (almost certainly) from the Verulamium region, though the sherds in this fabric were very worn and the grits distinctive of this source were therefore absent. The sole white ware sherd was a large part of an Oxford parchment ware bowl of the common type P24.

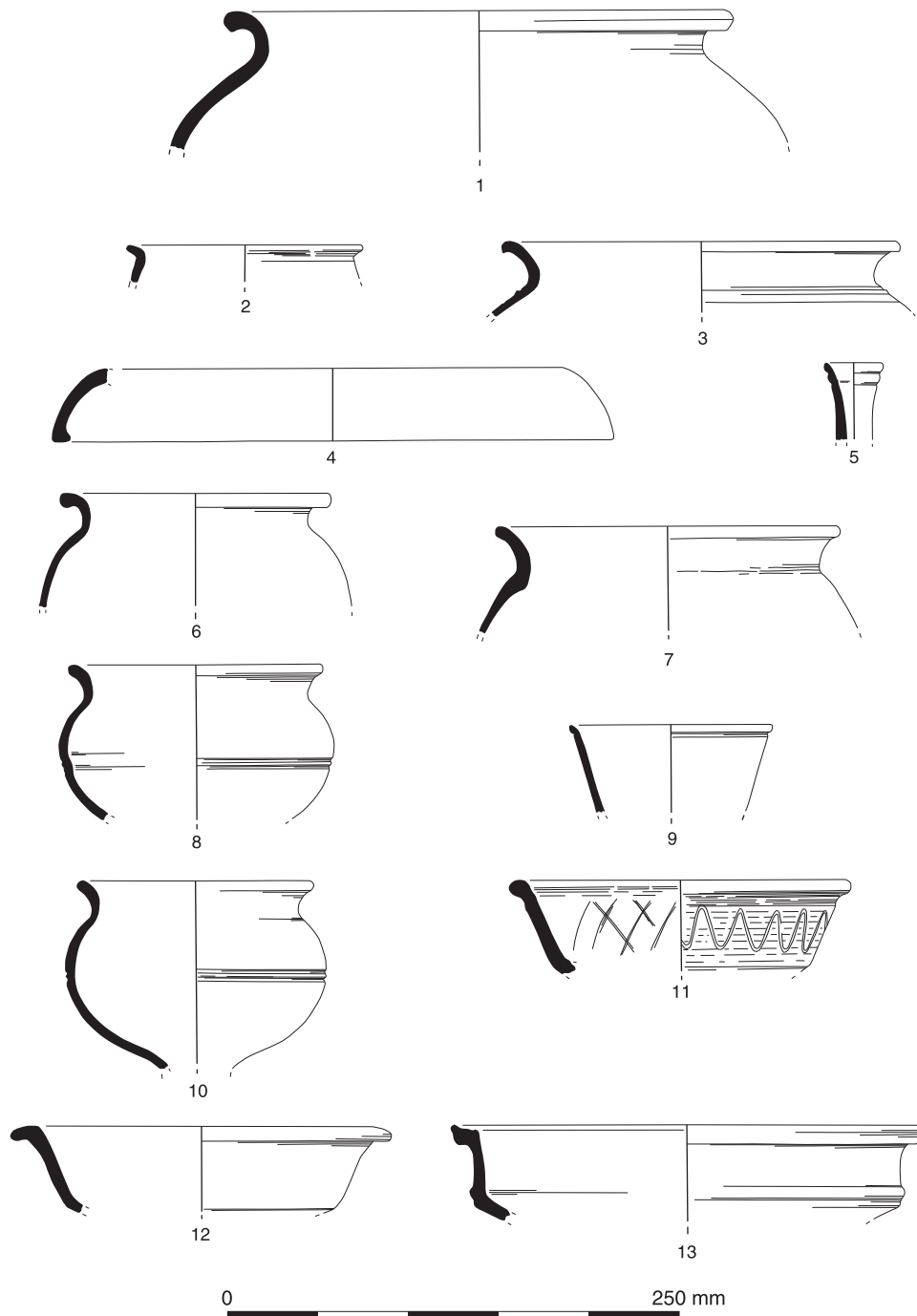


Fig. 11.4 Pottery

Table 11.1: Correlation of vessel types with fabric, quantification by EVEs at Stubbs Farm, Kempsford

Type	Description	Fabric												Total	%
		S30	F60	M22	W11	O30	O51	R30	R35	R38	R95	B10	B11		
BA	Flagon					0.52								0.52	6.1
CD	Medium mouthed jar					0.41		0.80	1.06	0.11				2.38	27.7
CK	'Cooking pot type' jar								0.38				1.46	1.84	21.4
C	Jar, general category					0.55		0.01	0.89		0.28			1.73	20.2
D	Jar/bowl					0.04		0.08	0.12					0.24	2.8
E	Beaker		0.05			0.31								0.36	4.2
GA	Tankard							0.21						0.21	2.4
HA	Carinated bowl				0.22								0.11	0.22	2.6
HB	Straight sided bowl													0.11	1.3
I	Bowl/dish	0.12				0.02			0.05					0.19	2.2
JA	Straight sided dish								0.20			0.13	0.27	0.60	7.0
K	Mortarium			0.18										0.18	2.1
Total		0.12	0.05	0.18	0.22	1.85	0.21	0.89	2.70	0.11	0.28	0.13	1.84	8.58	
	%	1.4	0.6	2.1	2.6	21.6	2.4	10.4	31.5	1.3	3.3	1.5	21.4		

Vessel types

The assemblage was dominated by jars (vessel class C, CD, CK), which constituted over 69% of the total EVEs, with uncertain jar or bowl types (class D) a further 2.8% of the assemblage (Table 11.1). Jars occurred in oxidised, reduced and black-burnished fabrics. Straight sided dishes (class JA) were the second most common type, at 7% of the total EVEs. Bowl forms, which in most assemblages in this region are second only to jars in importance, amounted only to 3.9% (classes HA and HB together), although uncertain bowl/dish forms (class I) were a further 2.2% of the assemblage. Bowls and dishes, with the exception of the carinated bowl (Young P24) in Oxford parchment ware, were mostly in black-burnished ware and the reduced fabric R35, though the only rim fragments of samian ware were in the indeterminate bowl/dish category. A single ring-necked flagon rim (class BA) in fabric O30 constituted 6.1% of the total EVEs and beakers (class E) amounted to 4.2%. These types, and the only tankard represented, occurred mostly or entirely in oxidised fabrics. Specialist forms were generally not represented by rims. The sole mortarium rim was of Young type M3, of 2nd-century date (Young 1977, 68-70).

Chronology

A number of aspects of the character of the assemblage suggest that it is largely of 2nd-century date. The ubiquitous grog-tempered and related 'Belgic type' fabrics so characteristic of the late Iron Age-early Roman period in the region are completely absent, and the only possible pre-Roman sherd is the single fragment in the flint-tempered fabric FN4. The regularity of the inclusions in this fabric might suggest a date in the late Iron Age rather than

earlier, but this is by no means certain. This isolated sherd apart, the absence of 'unromanised' fabrics precludes a start date for the assemblage before the Flavian period at the very earliest. As indicated above, the principal fabrics in the assemblage are probably North Wiltshire products and Dorset black-burnished ware. The North Wiltshire kiln sites in the Swindon area, including that at Purton, are thought to have developed in the Hadrianic period (Anderson 1979, 9). Similarly, the large-scale advent of black-burnished in the region is unlikely to be earlier than about AD 120, the 'traditional' date for the expansion of this industry (Gillam 1976, 57), though some pieces may have arrived before this date. The Kempsford black-burnished ware, as far as can be seen, occurs entirely as common 2nd-century (and occasionally later) forms, and there is no reason to believe that any of this material is significantly earlier than *c* AD 120. There are also a few examples of later black-burnished ware, including a single bowl with a crude bead and flange rim unlikely to date before the later 3rd century.

The few examples of fine and specialist ware types all suggest, or are consistent with, a 2nd-century date for the bulk of the assemblage. This is also indicated by the balance of the vessel types. The relatively high representation of jars, at about 69% of the total vessels, is broadly comparable to figures for the early/mid 2nd to 3rd-century phases in Area A at Asthall (between 62.4% and 71.2%, unpublished), whereas earlier and later representations of jars at the same site are respectively higher and lower. Cumulatively the evidence suggests that the most intensive activity on the site was probably in the period from the early/mid 2nd century to the late 2nd/early 3rd century. The absence of characteristic late Oxfordshire products (with the sole exception of the single example of type P24) and

other typical later Roman fabrics and forms, suggest that activity of later 3rd-4th-century date was on a much reduced scale. The ceramic evidence is insufficient to indicate if this later activity was continuous.

Discussion

In terms of the fabrics and sources represented the assemblage appears typical of sites in the region, although because of its small size and relatively restricted date span the range of fabrics is quite limited. This may also have been a function of socio-economic status. A survey of assemblages from the region (Henig and Booth 2000, 173) indicates that low status sites (expressed in archaeological terms, ie of site layout, structures and artefactual evidence) of 1st- and 2nd-century date have fine and specialist ware representations below 5% (of sherd numbers), and that contemporary sites with a higher level of fine and specialist ware are villas or related rural sites and roadside settlements and towns. The Kempford assemblage falls squarely in the low status bracket, with a fine and specialist ware representation of 3.9% of sherd count, contrasting for example with figures of 7.5% for the villa at Roughground Farm (Green and Booth 1993, 141) and 7% for Asthall. Nearby Thornhill Farm had only 0.7% fine and specialist wares, but this very low figure is only characteristic of sites with intensive 1st-century activity, many of which terminate in the early-mid 2nd century (cf Lambrick 1992, 82). The position of Kempford within the low status group is emphasised, however, by the fact that the base level of fine and specialist wares increases significantly in the later Roman period and any site, even of low status, occupied through the 3rd century would be expected to have a fine and specialist ware level above 5%. The fact that this is not the case at Kempford seems to confirm its relatively low status.

The most distinctive features of the Kempford assemblage relate to its chronological range, in that it starts in the early 2nd century AD but does not continue to the end of the Roman period. In this respect it is comparable to an assemblage of c 50 kg of pottery from Whelford Bowmoor (see Chapter 10), only c 2 km distant, which is also dated largely to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD.

A limited number of representative vessels were selected for illustration in Figure 11.4. All were from ditch fills. They are presented as context groups where possible. In each entry the details of the vessel are followed by the context information.

Illustrated catalogue: Pottery (Fig. 11.4)

1. Fabric R38, type CD, medium mouthed jar. 1603, ?top fill of middle ditch of circular enclosure
2. Fabric F60, type E, beaker. 1055, fill of inner ditch of rectilinear enclosure
3. Fabric R35, type C, jar. 1112, fill as above

4. Fabric M22, type K, mortarium (Young 1977 type M3). 1047, fill as above
5. Fabric O30, type BA, narrow ring-necked flagon. 1047 as above
6. Fabric R30, type CD, medium mouthed jar. 1047 as above
7. Fabric B11, type CK, 'cooking pot type' jar. 1047 as above
8. Fabric R30, type CD, medium mouthed jar. 1098, fill of outer ditch of rectilinear enclosure
9. Fabric O51, type GA, tankard. 1095, fill as above
10. Fabric R30, type CD, medium mouthed jar. 1095 as above
11. Fabric B10, type JA, straight sided dish. 1095 as above
12. Fabric B11, type JA, straight sided dish. 1320, fill of N-S ditch on W side of rectilinear enclosure
13. Fabric W11, type HA, carinated bowl (Young 1977 type P24). 1198, fill as above

Coins by Paul Booth

(SF1023) Sestertius of Trajan (AD 98-117). Obverse IMJP TRAIANO AVG[. The reverse has a standing figure facing left; the legend is illegible

(SF 1013) Dupondius of Antoninus Pius (AD 138-61). Obverse JNVS AVG [. Reverse, libertas standing left, LIBERTAS C[.

Coin 1023 was found in the evaluation backfill of the large north-south field ditch 1275. The second coin (1013) was found by metal detecting adjacent to the domestic dump in the north side of enclosure 1274. Both of these coins are in poor condition but neither was very heavily worn when lost. This suggests that they were lost within the 2nd century.

Small finds (Fig. 11.5) by Hilary Cool

All of the stratified finds were found in the fills of ditches 1273 and 1274 of the double-ditched rectangular enclosure. If the obviously modern and the undiagnostic material from the topsoil is excluded from consideration, there are 17 items that that could relate to the Roman occupation. Nine of these are iron nails (quantified by numbers of heads) and two are undiagnostic iron fragments. Of the remaining material the only relatively closely dateable item is the foot of a T-shaped brooch (1025; Fig. 11.5) found unstratified. The hollow back and

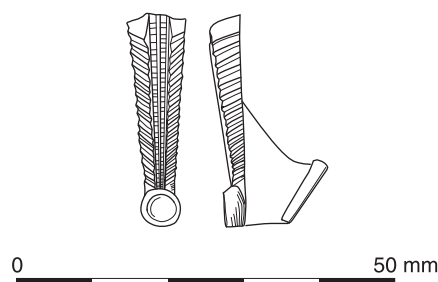


Fig. 11.5 Brooch

forward facing foot knob cell identify it as coming from a Hull Type 132 or Nor'Nour brooch (Hull 1967, Type 17). This example is more elaborate than the type normally is but side mouldings as here are occasionally noted (eg Hull 1967, 38 no. 85, fig. 16). The form belongs to the Lower Severn tradition of T-shaped brooches, though the majority of examples still come from the site of Nor'Nour on the Scilly Isles. It is not closely dated but a later 1st to 2nd-century date is appropriate. The other items consist of a lead pottery repair clamp (1019) retaining a fragment of reduced pottery and three iron shoe cleats (1010).

Illustrated catalogue: Brooch (Fig. 11.5)

1001 SF 1025. *T-shaped brooch*. Copper alloy. Later C1-C2.
Present length 27 mm

Table 11.2: *Ceramic building material from Stubbs Farm*

Type	Context	No	Weight (g)
Tegulae	1031	1	20
	1047	1	27
	1060	1	20
	1095	1	269
	1117	1	225
	1198	1	10
Tegulae total		6	571
Imbrices	1198	1	72
Imbrices total		1	72
Box-flue	1032	1	185
	1095	1	179
	1117	1	401
Box-flue total		3	765
Flat tile	1047	1	15
	1060	1	23
	1096	1	12
	1110	1	238
Flat tile total		4	288
Miscellaneous	1021	3	2
	1031	2	11
	1056	1	18
	1060	3	147
	1060	1	15
	1082	1	97
	1092	1	53
	1095	7	45
	1096	3	10
	1110	1	36
	1169	1	31
	1198	6	84
	1376	1	87
Misc. total		31	636
Total		45	2332

Ceramic building material by *Kate Atherton*

The excavation produced an assemblage of 45 pieces of Roman ceramic building material with a total weight of 23.32 kg (Table 11.2). Six fragments of tegulae (total weight 571 g) were identified in two different fabrics. Only one fragment (72 mm) of imbrex was found although it is possible that there are other examples among the flat tile and miscellaneous fragments that are too small for the profile to be apparent. This fragment was made from the same white/pink fabric as the majority of the tegulae, suggesting that both forms of roof tile were from the same source. Three pieces of box-flue tile were found (765 g), all worn and abraded with no combing visible. Two pieces showed traces of burning. One appeared to be made from a similar fabric to the tegulae and imbrex but was slightly more orange. There are four pieces of flat tile (288 g), two of which are probably tegulae fragments, and two possibly box-flue fragments. The remaining 31 pieces (636 g) have no surviving dimensions and can only be classified as miscellaneous fragments.

The assemblage is not a large one but few fabrics are represented and it is likely that there was only one, local, source for the tile fragments. The fabrics are all similar with the main difference being one of colour. The majority of the fragments are worn and there are relatively few surviving dimensions. This is partly because of the soft nature of the fabrics but it may also be partly due to subsequent disturbance of the tile. The presence of box-flue tile, as well as the more usual tegulae and imbrices, suggests a substantial building of some status in the vicinity of the site.

The evaluation by OA at the Multi-Agg quarry site in 1997 uncovered a sample of Roman ceramic building material that was made from a similar fabric to the ones represented at Stubbs Farm (see Digital section 8.4). It is, therefore, a reasonable hypothesis that the tile from Stubbs Farm came from the same source as the tile from masonry building, if not from the structure itself.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Animal bone by *Nicola Scott*

A total of 1077 bone fragments were recovered of which 59 were identified to species and anatomical part. The low rate of identification is due mainly to the highly fragmented nature of the bones and their poor surface condition. The bone fragments include cattle, sheep/goat, horse and pig but cattle and horse fragments predominate. Two unidentified fragments from ditch 1275 show bone callous either caused by disease or injury to the animal. The poor preservation of the bones prevented the identification of any butchery marks.

Charred plant remains by Mark Robinson

During the excavation of the early Roman settlement at Stubbs Farm, Kempford, bulk samples were floated from 14 contexts to recover biological remains. Much charcoal was found in a tree-throw hole of uncertain date. Small quantities of charred remains, probably including cereals, were present in some of the flots of Roman date. The flots from the primary fills of the Roman ditches contained shells of species of stagnant and temporary bodies of water, such as *Aplexa hypnorum* and *Anisus leucostoma*, which probably lived in the bottom of these features. Terrestrial species, such as *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia pulchella*, probably reflected damp grassland conditions around the edge of the features. In contrast, the upper fills of some of the ditches contained a much wider range of aquatic molluscs including the flowing-water snail, *Bithynia* sp., which would suggest the impact of floodwaters, perhaps with alluviation, on the deposits. It is likely that this flooding occurred after the end of the settlement on the site although it is uncertain whether the flooding was of late Roman or post-Roman date.

DISCUSSION by Alex Smith

The Stubbs Farm enclosures clearly relate to a wider system of field boundaries, trackways and settlements in the local area (Fig. 11.1), although their exact form and function remain somewhat uncertain. Nevertheless, it does seem that occupation of a relatively low status was associated with the features, and that the rectangular enclosure at least was linked with the 2nd-century settlement just to the west at the Multi-Agg quarry site (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4). There is only very limited evidence to suggest activity prior to the early Roman period, and this is also matched at the Multi-Agg site.

Settlement development

Enclosures (Fig. 11.2)

The two enclosures excavated at Stubbs Farm would seem to relate to separate phases of activity. However, no direct stratigraphic evidence remained to suggest how the two features related to one another, and although it is most probable that the circular one predated the rectangular, this is by no means certain.

The main inner and outer ditches of the circular enclosure are likely to have been contemporary, possibly with a gravel bank between them. They were clearly recut several times, which suggests that the enclosure was in use for a reasonable period. During this time, it seems that the entrance shifted position on a number of occasions, but always facing a southerly direction. Internally, there is little of archaeological note, except for a possible rectangular posthole structure in the centre, and an

arc of pits/tree-throw holes inside the northern inner ditch. The function of these features – and indeed the enclosure as a whole – is uncertain, as finds were very scarce. Domestic activity is not indicated, and it may be that the enclosure was used for livestock control. The small amount of pottery suggests that the enclosure was at least partially open until the 2nd century AD, although the 2nd-century linear ditches clearly cut the feature and these would appear to have been contemporary with the rectangular enclosure to the south.

The rectangular enclosure also comprised an inner and outer ditch, with evidence for a gravel bank in-between. It appears that the ditches had largely silted up prior to being recut, which may indicate a brief period of abandonment or at least reduced activity. A clear entrance gap of 2 m was located in the middle of the eastern side, with a series of postholes around the terminals of the inner enclosure indicating the presence of a gate structure in this area. Such a double ditch and gate arrangement suggests a concern for privacy and/or security. Internally the enclosure is clearly divided into a northern and southern area by two east-west shallow gullies (1284, 1265), which may not have been contemporary. A north-south ditch (1259) appears to have been associated with the northern gully (1284), acting as a passageway into the southern half of the enclosure. Ironworking slag from this feature may give some indication as to one of the activities occurring in this area (see below). The northern area contained a larger number of pits, tree-throw holes and gullies than in the southern zone, although none of these features could be dated. Nevertheless, most of the pottery from the site came from the northern section of enclosure ditches, which may suggest domestic occupation in this area.

To the south of the rectangular enclosure lay a number of ditches, pits and a four-post structure which are presumed to have been approximately contemporary. There are no finds to indicate function.

Larger field systems (Fig. 11.1)

Extending throughout the Stubbs Farm site and the surrounding evaluation areas was a series of linear ditches and gullies which seemed to form part of major field boundaries. Dating evidence was sparse although generally indicated a 2nd- to 3rd-century date. Many of the undated boundaries may be much later, although they do not align with known post-medieval field systems as shown on enclosure maps.

The earliest elements in the field system would seem to be the circular enclosure at Stubbs farm and a curving ditch forming a similar, larger enclosure at Manor Farm to the north (Fig. 11.1). The latter ditch, which was located in the westernmost field was cut by one of the linear Roman ditches, and may have been of Iron Age or early Roman date. A

single sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from ploughsoil in the trench cutting through the feature (OAU 1992).

Within the main Roman field system, there were three substantial ditches aligned approximately north-south through the evaluation areas. The eastern ditch (1.5 m wide, 0.5 m deep) bifurcated at two points and continued southwards towards the cropmark complex to the north of the Thames (SAM 349; Fig. 11.1). The central ditch lay *c.* 130 m east of the Stubbs Farm excavations, and appeared to be connected with the WSW trackway to the south of Stubbs Farm (see below). The western ditch had several recuts where it was examined, and was associated not only with the Stubbs Farm enclosures, but also possibly with a similar feature to the north at Manor Farm, measuring 50 m wide and over 100 m long (no north side was located by trenching). Between the western and eastern ditches were several sets of smaller ditches which subdivided the larger fields.

Excavations at the Multi-Agg quarry site to the west revealed part of an early Roman field system which preceded the 2nd-3rd-century trackway (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4). It is possible that the circular enclosure at the Stubbs Farm site may relate to this early Roman phase of activity, as both were overlain by the system of mid Roman ditches.

Trackways (Fig. 11.1)

To the south of the main area of excavation, a pair of parallel ditches was located in an evaluation trench, running WSW. These are shown on aerial photos to have been part of a trackway leading towards the NNW-SSE trackway near to the masonry-footed rectangular building in the Multi-Agg quarry extension site (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4). The trackway ditches at the Multi-Agg site were dated to the 2nd century AD, and seemingly redefined by the middle of the 3rd century (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4).

Another trackway dating to the Roman period was seen aligned ENE-WSW at Manor Farm (Fig. 11.1), leading off from the central north-south field boundary ditch. The southern ditch was shown to have terminated where the ground became wetter because of the old stream courses. Parts of another possible north-south trackway appeared in the east of the Manor Farm evaluation area running north-south, although no dating evidence was recovered.

Site economy and material culture

The environmental evidence from Stubbs Farm was very poor, and as a result very little is known of the economy and surrounds of the site. The presence of charred cereal grains is typical of most Roman-British rural sites, but it does not necessarily indicate that arable land lay in the immediate

vicinity. Indeed, if the community living at the Stubbs farm did operate a mixed agricultural economy, then it is likely that the crops were grown on the higher ground to the north and east. The environmental evidence from the Multi-Agg site just 200 m to the west indicated a large open grassland area (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4), and this is also likely to have been case around the Stubbs Farm site. At both sites there is evidence for flooding in the upper fills of the ditches, suggesting that the water table was rising throughout the Roman period leading to wetter conditions in the lower lying areas. This may have been a contributing factor in the abandonment of both sites before the later Roman period, although socio-political and economic factors were probably more important (see wider discussion, Chapter 16).

The very small animal bone assemblage demonstrates a fairly typical range for Roman rural sites in the Upper Thames Valley, and suggests that the surrounding grassland was largely utilised for the grazing of cattle and horses. The smallness of the assemblage probably indicates that most of the faunal refuse was removed from the main area of occupation.

The finds assemblage from Stubbs Farm indicates nothing other than a low status farmstead, with mostly local coarseware pottery and no finds to suggest Roman style appearance. Limited metal-working appears to have been practised, possibly restricted to the southern part of the enclosure which may well have been a working yard of some kind.

The nature of activity at the site

The earliest activity at Stubbs Farm appears to have been associated with the circular enclosure, although only a very tentative Iron Age/early Roman date can be assigned. The scarcity of finds associated with the use of the feature suggests a non-domestic function, possibly the corralling of animals.

The rectangular enclosure clearly belongs to a later phase of activity, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The overall character of this phase is indicative of a low status rural farmstead operating a largely pastoral economic regime amidst the grasslands of the lower gravel terrace and floodplain. Despite the paucity of what may be termed high status material culture, the rectangular enclosure itself represents a considerable investment of labour. Such a construction, which featured a very prominent boundary and post-built entranceway (Fig. 11.3), was probably not only concerned with security, but may also acted as a symbol of social exclusion and status (Hingley 1990a). There is no real evidence for house structures at the site, and in this respect it is very different from the Multi-Agg quarry settlement, which featured at least two stone foundationed buildings, but with no evidence for an outer enclosure. Furthermore this site contained a much higher

percentage of fine and specialist ware pottery, in addition to a reasonable quantity of ceramic tile including box-flue, suggesting the presence of a bath house in the vicinity (Booth and Stansbie forthcoming, see Digital section 8.4). The relationship between these two sites is of crucial importance in understanding the local landscape, as they were both occupied contemporaneously, would have been inter-visible, and were linked via trackways. The Multi-Agg site is characterised by Roman style buildings (ie tiled roof and possible bath house), along with a greater emphasis on Roman style eating and drinking. It is still uncertain as to whether the site can be termed a villa as so little has been investigated, but the inhabitants of the settlement were clearly operating a different social strategy to those at Stubbs Farm. This does not necessarily mean that the Stubbs Farm site was a

lower status dependent settlement, as both could have been operating an independent economy with defined territories. On a wider scale, it is possible that both sites were connected in the some way to the large Roman settlement known from cropmarks (SAM 349) about 1 to 1.5 km to the south-east, on the northern bank of the River Thames (Fig. 11.1). Certainly the field boundary ditch east of Stubbs Farm heads towards this area, as does the trackway at the Multi-Agg Quarry site.

Both the Stubbs Farm and Multi-Agg Quarry settlements appear to have gone out of use by the second half of the 3rd century, with the latter probably lasting slightly longer. It is possible that this resulted from an increasingly centralised control of agricultural land in the later Roman period, with more marginal areas being subsumed into larger estates (see Discussion, Chapter 17).