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Excavation of an Extensive Late Bronze-Age Settlement at Shorncote Quarry, near Cirencester, 1995–6

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Introduction

Following its excavations at Shorncote Quarry, Somerford Keynes, in 1992, Wessex Archaeology undertook a trial trenching evaluation of a proposed extension to the quarry in January 1994. The extension area, centred on O.S. Nat. Grid SU 03109685, covered approximately nine hectares. It formed a single, sub-rectangular field parcel, *c.* 450 m long and from 150 to 275 m wide (Fig. 1), with a very gentle slope from north (93.2 m above O.D.) to south (92.2 m above O.D.). The extension area lay north of the Late Bronze-Age settlement remains excavated in 1992 (Hearne and Heaton 1994) and east of the Late Neolithic and Bronze-Age ring-ditches and the Middle Bronze-Age cremation cemetery excavated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1990 (Barclay and Glass with Parry 1995). The evaluation identified subsoil remains including postholes, ditches and pits over a significant part of the extension area and the associated artefactual evidence suggested a Late Bronze-Age date for most of the features (Wessex Archaeology 1994, Site Ref. W660).

As part of the archaeological mitigation for the quarry extension, a methodology for Stage 2 archaeological works was drawn up in consultation with the Gloucestershire County Archaeological Officer (Wessex Archaeology 1995). The strategy made provision for controlled stripping of the topsoil/humic overburden under full-time archaeological supervision followed by a review of the nature of archaeological evidence exposed and implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological recording and excavation. The mitigation strategy laid much emphasis on the recovery of total plan information from the site. Excavation itself was targetted on agreed structures and features. Detailed excavation of the numerous stray scoops and postholes on the site was, for example, deemed of lesser priority.

The fieldwork was carried out in four phases (Areas 1 to 4) working from north to south (Fig. 1), coinciding with the programme of mineral extraction (Fig. 2). The overall period of excavation was from February 1995 to April 1996 (Site Ref. W5645). In July 1995 two fossilised mammoth's teeth were discovered during mineral extraction in Area 1 at O.S. Nat. Grid SU 030970 *c.* 3 m below the surface of the gravel. Both teeth were well preserved; one was complete and measured 250 mm long. The site lies on Pleistocene calcareous gravels (First Terrace) and such finds are apparently not uncommonly at Shorncote Quarry. The teeth have been donated to the Donald Baden-Powell Quaternary Research Centre, Oxford.

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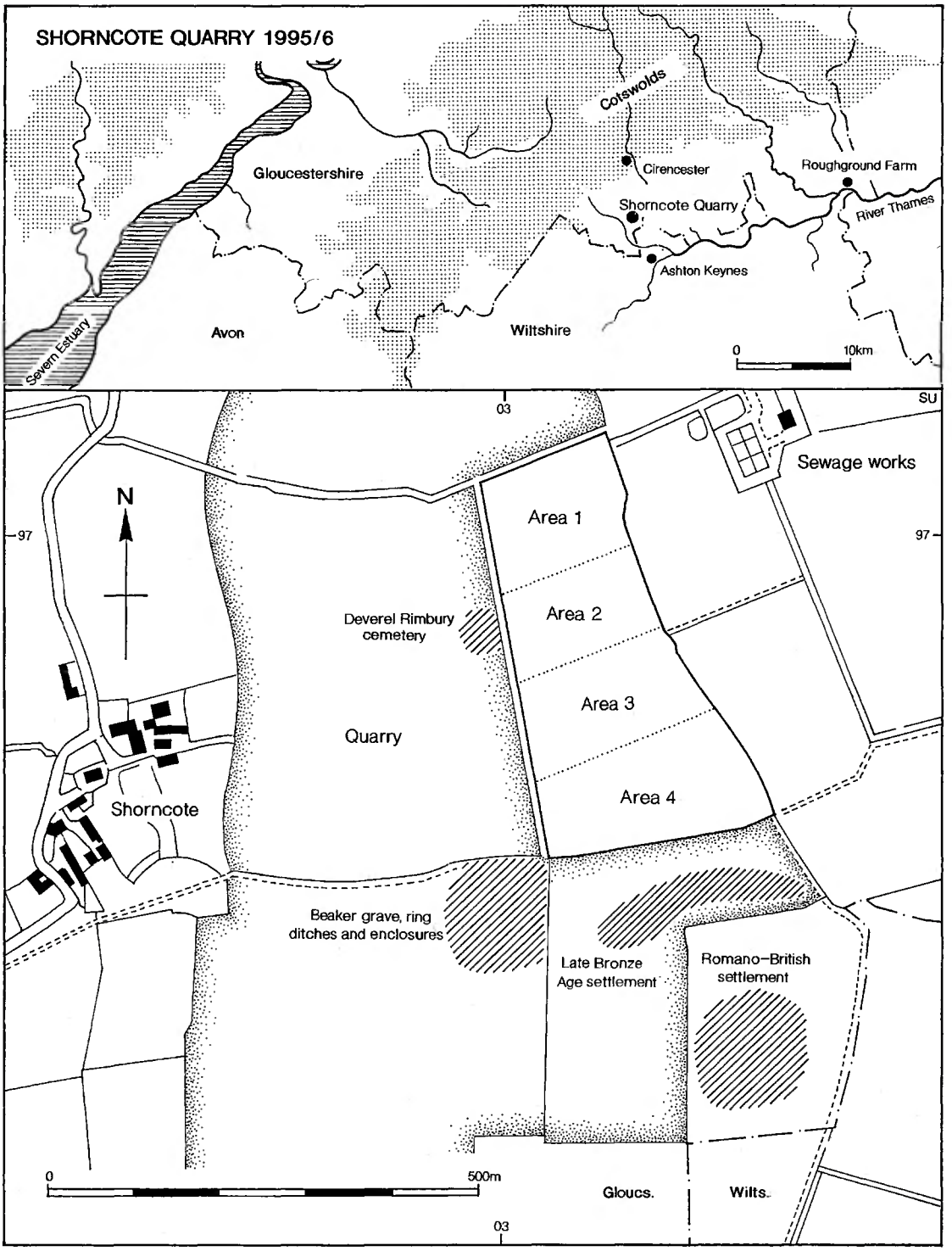

Fig. 1. Site location.

Fig. 2. Excavations in progress—Area 1, looking east.

An overall plan of the archaeological features exposed is provided by Fig. 3*. This drawing has been produced from detailed 1:100 plans produced for all areas of the site and subsequently digitised. Not included on the plan are features originating from medieval and later cultivation (ridge and furrow), localised areas of modern/recent disturbance, features associated with a former sewage works and features interpreted as of natural origin. Details of all such features are included on archive drawings.

Stratigraphy and the Preservation of Features

All archaeological deposits observed were cut into the underlying calcareous gravels and were sealed by topsoil and humic overburden of variable depth (0.20—0.35 m) which had evidently been disturbed, both by cultivation and the sewage works. There was no evidence for *in-situ* stratigraphy within the subsoil. Very limited evidence for intercutting subsoil features was recorded. Three main stratigraphic aspects were observed:

1. A sequence within features/structures interpreted as broadly contemporaneous (Late Bronze Age). It includes the superimposition of circular post-built structures at the junction of Areas 2 and 3 (structures 2313, 2485, 2497); the superimposition of a large pit and a circular post-built structure in Area 1 (features 196 and 1066); and the intercutting of two large pits in Area 3 (pits 2133 and 2256).
2. The superimposition of a ditch aligned NW–SE (206 = 1400 = 2025) on features and structures of Late Bronze-Age date. The ditch ran virtually the entire length of the excavation area and was generally parallel to the extant eastern field boundary. This ditch was also

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

recorded further south in the 1992 excavation and is dated to the later Iron Age and/or Romano-British period.

3. The superimposition of medieval or later agricultural features. Remnant furrows from ridge and furrow cultivation were recorded across all parts of the site (details in archive).

Most, if not all, subsoil features on the site may be assumed to have suffered truncation and erosion as a result of prolonged arable agriculture and of activity associated with the sewage works. The survival of minor features such as postholes was variable across the site and is considered in more detail in the discussion at the end of the report.

FEATURE TYPES AND DATING

The pre-medieval features recorded may be grouped into thirteen main categories (summarised on Table 1). Most of the feature types are consistent with those recorded from the 1992 excavation, in particular the circular post-built and gully structures, four-post and other rectilinear structures, large pits and ovoid scoops. These feature types produced the bulk of the Late Bronze-Age ceramic evidence from the site (9th/8th centuries B.C.). The dimensions of the circular post-built structures and the large pits are also generally consistent with the previously excavated examples, although it may be noted that many of the former include examples with rectilinear porches (generally south-east facing), an attribute not recorded in the 1992 excavation. As in 1992, there is a distinct lack of Bronze-Age linear features.

Feature types *not* previously associated with the Late Bronze-Age settlement at Shorncote Quarry are represented by six features: a hengiform ring-ditch, two small circular ring-ditches (less than 10 m diameter), two small penannular ditches and a group of small pits. None of these features produced finds in any great quantity. Pottery and worked flint from the hengiform ring-ditch, however, suggest that the feature was constructed in the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age period (*c.* 2500–1500 B.C.). The other features may also pre- or post-date the main period of Late Bronze-Age activity and it may be noted that two of the five (a small circular ring-ditch and a penannular enclosure) lie close to the hengiform ring-ditch in Area 3. This may indicate that the hengiform ring-ditch, small ring-ditches and penannular ditches are contemporaneous, although this cannot be proven. One of the two penannular ditches (2841, Area 4) produced two sherds of pottery, one Roman and the other the only organic-tempered sherd from the site (dated early/middle Saxon). Penannular ditch 2841 also produced part of a small iron blade and a small quantity of animal bone, but as the ditch was poorly preserved the small collection of finds from the feature may be intrusive. Both penannular ditches are interpreted as of pre-Late Bronze-Age date.

The features are described below by suggested date and category. Reference to Areas 1 to 4 of the site has been retained to facilitate locating features on the overall site plan (Fig. 3)*. The descriptive section below aims to characterise feature types, to provide individual descriptions on significant features, and not to provide a commentary on each feature and structure.

Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age Hengiform Ring-Ditch

This substantial feature (2607) was the most striking and enigmatic of all those excavated during the 1995–6 excavations. It was located in the central part of the site (Area 3) away

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

Table 1. Summary of main features, by type.

Feature Type	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Hengiform ring-ditch	—	—	2607	—
Small circular ring-ditches	—	—	2623	2806
Penannular ditches	—	—	2567	2841
Circular post-built structures (34 examples)	1005, 1055, 1066, 1216	1420, 1437, 1565, 1566, 1597, 1711, 1744, 1913	2000, 2037, 2040, 2084, 2313, 2430, 2485, 2497, 2539, 2675, 2778, 2779, 2780	2853, 2869, 2890, 2891, 2892, 2895, 2896, 2897, 2898
Circular gully structures	368	1550, (1745)	—	—
Four-post structures: square and rectangular (33 examples)	1208, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1213, 1214	1408, 1556, 1563, 1594, 1743, 1912	2235, 2456, 2781, 2782, 2783, 2784, 2785	2899, 2901 2903, 2904, 2905, 2906, 2907, 2908, 2910, 2911, 2912, 2913, 2915
Other rectilinear post-built structures (5 examples excavated)	—	—	—	2868, 2900, 2902, 2909, 2914
Large pits (13 examples excavated)	129, 162, 196, 483, 846, 870	1728	2029, 2133, 2256, 2281, 2334	2842
Small pit groups	1215	—	—	—
Linear features—field system	4, 200, 206, 207 (recut)	1400 (=206), 1564	2025 (=206), 2410	2025 (=206)
Linear features—other	75	—	—	2800, 2812
Ovoid scoops	*passim*	*passim*	*passim*	*passim*
Stray postholes	*passim*	*passim*	*passim*	*passim*

from the main Late Bronze-Age settlement areas but near other rare feature types on the site, namely penannular enclosure 2567 and ring-ditch 2623.

The feature comprised an unbroken ring-ditch with an external diameter 9 m by 8 m. The ditch itself was from 2.6 to 3.0 m wide and 1.3 m deep with steep sides and a flat base, generally 1.2 m wide. The profile of the ditch (Fig. 4) was consistent around its perimeter. The dimensions of the ditch left a central 'hub' of gravel measuring only 3.4 m by 2.6 m at the upper gravel surface (Fig. 5).

Approximately 75% of the ring-ditch was excavated and revealed a generally consistent sequence of infilling with minor variations between the individual sections of the ditch. Sections across the eastern half of the feature revealed a thin primary deposit of loose clean gravel up to 0.20 m deep with no humic content; no doubt it represented minor collapses

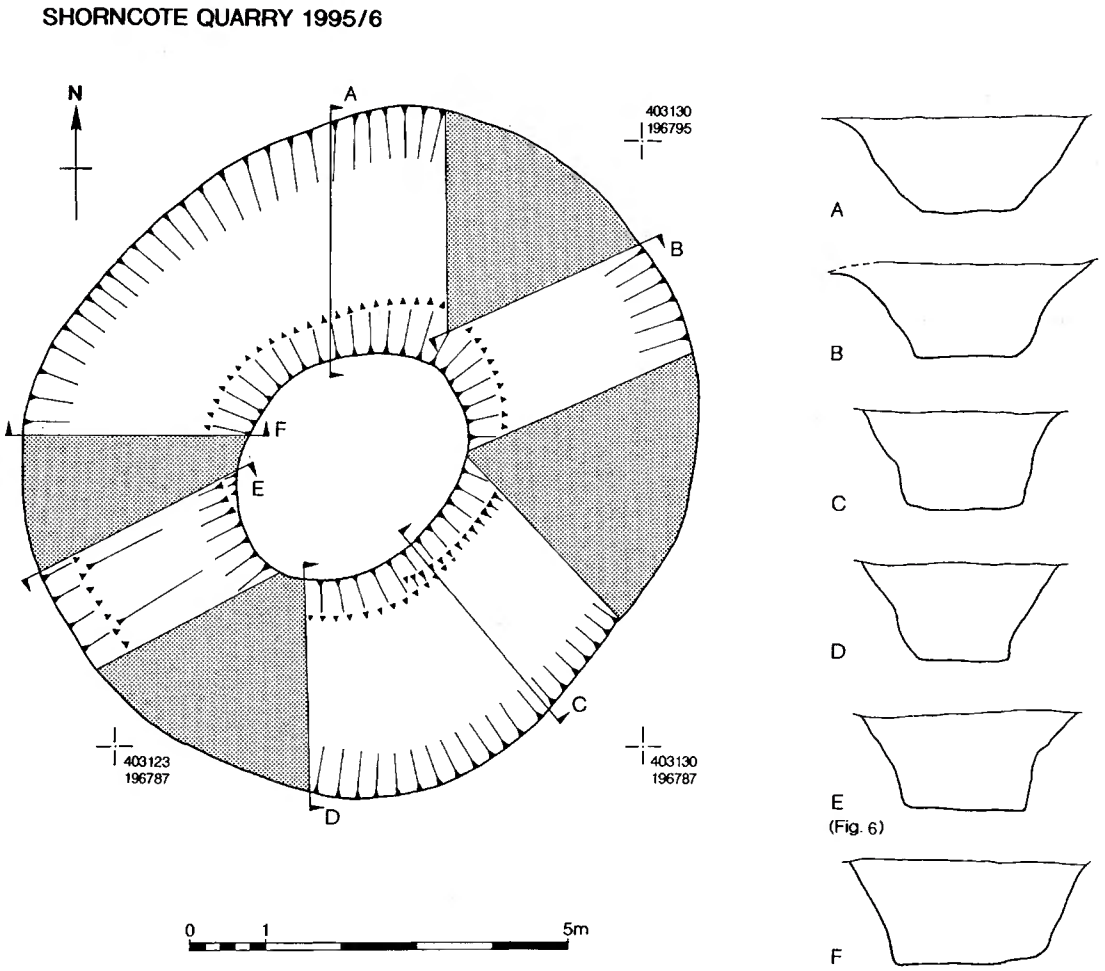

Fig. 4. Hengiform ring-ditch 2607: plan and profiles.

of the ditch edges soon after its construction. The gravel was sealed by a series of secondary deposits made up of interleaving layers of loose gravel and soil between 0.05 and 0.20 m thick (Fig. 6). The proportion of the ditch infilled by these secondary deposits varied from less than 50% in a section dug across the north-eastern side of the feature to 75% along its southern side. The secondary lenses appear to represent alternating periods of weathering and silting.

The upper fills consisted of generally much thicker layers (0.20–0.40 m deep) of silty clay with gravel inclusions. These fills appeared to have derived, in the main, from the outer edges of the ring-ditch and indicate the former presence of an outer encircling bank. The upper fills also incorporated discrete humic lenses at various points around the outer sides of the ditch, most notably on the north-eastern and western sides of the feature (Fig. 6, layer 2731). These lenses were up to 65 mm long and generally 150 mm thick and represent turves slumped into the ditch, again from the outer side. The turves are consistent in size

Fig. 5. Hengiform ring-ditch 2607, looking east (scales 2 m).

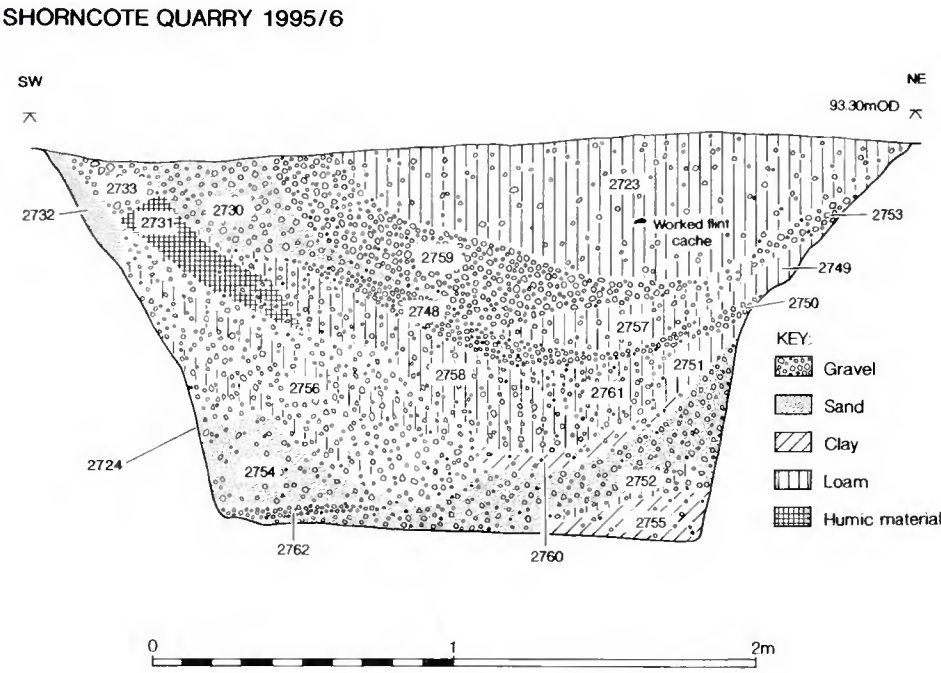

Fig. 6. Hengiform ring-ditch 2607: section.

and location with those identified from the Overton Down (Wiltshire) experimental earthworks (Bell, Fowler and Hillson 1996). These turves could be clearly seen to have collapsed into the ditch from the contemporaneous ground surface and/or an associated outer bank. Several of the turves from feature 2607 were sampled for pollen and mollusca.

Finds from the hengiform ring-ditch comprised a collection of worked flint, three sherds of Beaker pottery and some animal bone. No finds were recovered from the primary fill. The Beaker sherds, which came from the uppermost fill (context 2649), provide the only close dating evidence. The uppermost fill on the western side of the feature (Fig. 6, context 2723) also produced a cache of 38 large flint flakes in mint condition. They appear to represent flakes selected as tool blanks, probably contemporaneous with the Beaker sherds. Other finds comprised a flint blade from the uppermost fill (not associated with the flint cache), a scraper and flake from middle/lower fills and a small collection of animal bone (154 gm) also from a middle/lower fill. Environmental samples from the ditch infilling produced no charred plant remains or charcoal and insignificant pollen levels. Mollusc preservation in samples from the ditch fill and fallen turf was poor but the species present indicate a pre-existing open environment and a lack of dense woodland.

On the basis of the associated finds hengiform ring-ditch 2607 is interpreted as pre-dating the main phase of Late Bronze-Age settlement and is assigned to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age period (*c.* 2500–1500 B.C.). Further discussion and parallels for the feature are given in the overall discussion below.

Earlier Bronze-Age Small Circular Ring-Ditches

Two small circular ring-ditches (2623 and 2806) of similar nature were revealed on the site, both in the southern part but some 140 m apart (Areas 3 and 4).

Ring-ditch 2623 (Fig. 7) was located in the area of hengiform ring-ditch 2607 and penannular enclosure 2567 and lay 42 m WSW and 28 m south-west of these features respectively (Area 3). It consisted of a near complete circle, 5.4 m in diameter, incorporating a north-west facing gap 2.3 m wide. The ditch was between 0.40 and 0.64 m wide and from 0.05 to 0.19 m deep with near vertical sides and a gently undulating base. A small pit (2624), 1.1 m in diameter and 0.42 m in depth, was situated slightly off-centre within the ring-ditch. The pit also had steep sides and a concave base. It cannot be proven that pit and ring-ditch were contemporaneous but it seems likely that they were components of the same feature.

Ring-ditch 2806 (Fig. 8) was located further south, away from hengiform ring-ditch 2607 and within a general area of Late Bronze-Age activity and structural remains (Area 4). As with ring-ditch 2623 it formed a near complete circle 5.7 m in diameter with a single south-east facing gap 0.5 m wide within its circuit. The ditch itself varied in width from 0.16 to 0.50 m and in depth from 0.01 to 0.24 m, the variations the result of truncation through plough damage and modern disturbances. The ditch profile incorporated steep sides and a generally flat base. No features were observed within the area delimited by the ring-ditch.

Neither ring-ditch produced finds and they therefore remain undated. They may be of prehistoric date, possibly either contemporaneous with the hengiform ring-ditch or they could represent Later Bronze-Age circular structures.

Small Penannular Ditches

This category of feature was not observed in the 1992 excavations. Two examples (2567 and 2841) were recorded in 1995–6. Both were located in the southern half of the site, 120 m apart and away from circular and four-post timber structures. Both ditches had suffered severe

Fig. 7. Small ring-ditch 2623 and internal pit 2624, looking east (scales 2 m).

Fig. 8. Small ring-ditch 2806, looking north-east (scales 2 m).

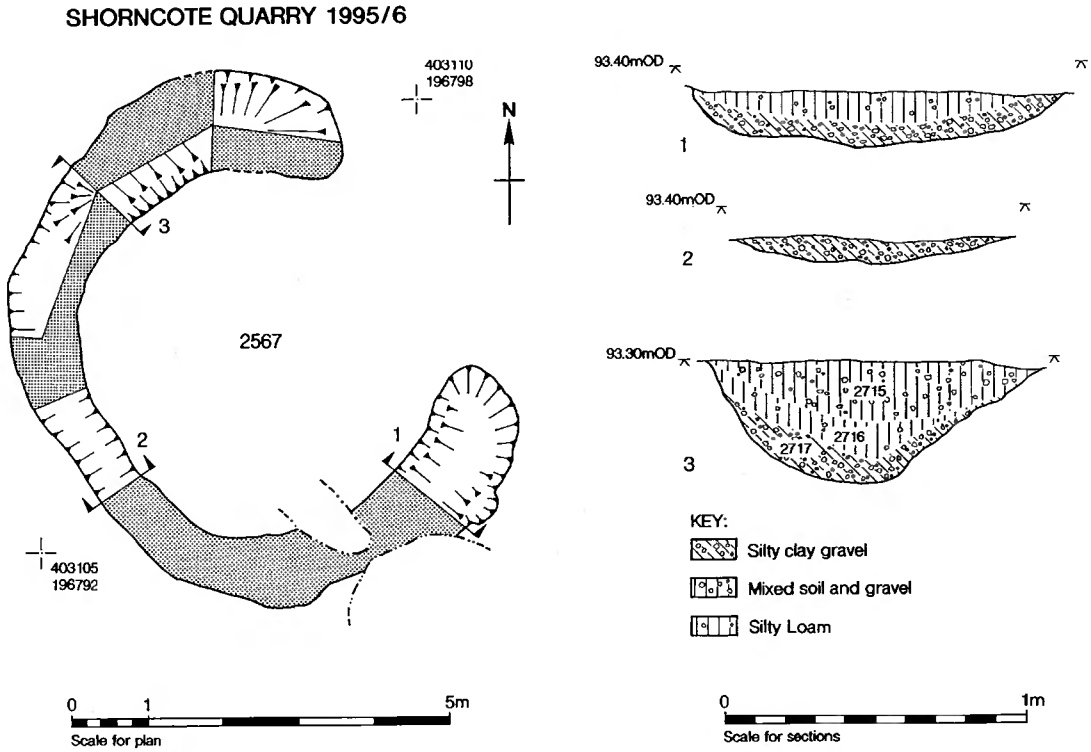

Fig. 9. Penannular ditch 2567: plan and sections.

erosion and damage from later features (including ridge and furrow) and were consequently in a poor state of preservation with large variations in their width and depth.

Penannular ditch 2567 (Fig. 9) was the better preserved. It lay 11 m north-west of hengiform ring-ditch 2607 and 24 m north-east of small ring-ditch 2623 (Area 3). It consisted of a 'C'-shaped ditch, the overall dimensions of which were 7 × 6 m with a gap 3 m wide facing north-east. The ditch was shallow and irregularly-sided varying in width from a maximum of 1.20 m at each terminal to 0.62 m at its midway point and in depth from 0.07 to 0.40 m. At its deepest point (Fig. 9, section 3) the ditch was filled with three distinct deposits consisting of a primary fill of mixed silty clay and gravel (2717), sealed by a relatively stone-free silty loam (2716), in turn overlain by a mixed soil and gravel deposit (2715). There were no internal features but the ditch was cut by two features—a medium-sized ovoid depression and a larger pit—neither of which appears to be directly related to the penannular ditch. No finds were recovered from the ditch.

Penannular ditch 2841 lay apparently isolated in the south-western corner of the site (Area 4). It was very poorly preserved; the southern half of the feature in particular had been heavily truncated and only survived as a slight stain in the gravel natural. Overall the feature was of similar shape and dimension to 2567, consisting of a 'C'-shaped ditch with overall dimensions of 9 × 5 m. The northern terminal was clearly defined but the southern was not and the west-facing gap can only be estimated, *c.* 6 m. The northern half of the feature survived to a depth of between 0.30 and 0.37 m with a 'U'-shaped profile and steep sides.

On the southern side the ditch was only between 0.01 and 0.10 m deep. The northern terminal contained three distinct fills, a 0.14-m thick mixed primary fill of silty clay, sealed by a 0.27-m thick layer of gravel in a loamy clay matrix, in turn overlain by a 0.17-m thick loamy clay. There were no internal features. Excavation produced two sherds of pottery, one Roman and the other probably early/middle Saxon (the only organic-tempered sherd from the site). Other finds were fragments from a poorly preserved small iron blade or tool (Obj. 7010) and animal bone (61 gm). Given the poor preservation of the feature the finds may not be reliable for dating purposes.

Late Bronze-Age Settlement

Circular post-built structures

Thirty four clearly defined circular post-built structures were located. Various postholes and other features can be linked directly with these structures, but no associated occupation levels or deposits were preserved. The structures have been divided into three main groups according to size: 4.5 to 6.5 m in diameter (15 examples); 7.0 to 8.6 m in diameter (15 examples); diameter greater than 10 m (4 examples). The preservation of the structures was variable but generally good with 30 circuits complete or more than 50% complete. Thirteen structures included the complete or partial remains of porch arrangements and at least two contained the identifiable remains of internal roof supports. It is very likely that further examples of incomplete circular structures exist among the very many postholes on the site (see below). For the purposes of this report, however, it was considered more worthwhile to focus description and discussion on clearly defined structures. The structures are summarised on Table 2 and are all shown on Fig. 3*.

Structures of diameter 4.5–6.5 m (Type 1)

There were no clear groupings of small circular structures on the site and the 15 examples were generally dispersed across all areas. The majority observed were within the corridor along the eastern edge of the site (the area of the later prehistoric trackway) but this reflects enhanced preservation under a former agricultural headland. Half of the structures of this size had complete circuits and three of these incorporated the remains of porch structures. Despite their similarity in overall size there was considerable variation in the detail of their layout and construction. Four varying examples are shown in Fig. 10 and are described here.

Structure 2539 (Area 3) was one of the smallest circular structures on the site, being only 4.6 m in diameter. It consisted of seven postholes spaced 1.7 m apart. The postholes were very consistent in terms of diameter (0.25–0.30 m) and depth (0.17–0.22 m). A SSE-facing entrance was evident and appeared to have originally been formed by two postholes (2588 and 2591) with similar dimensions to the main circuit. These particular postholes were superseded by two larger ovoid post pits (2589 and 2590) which seem to represent evidence for a rebuild (or strengthening) of the doorway.

Structure 1590 (Area 2) was formed from nine postholes spaced between 1.4 and 3.3 m apart and was 6.2 m in diameter. A south-east facing porch structure, formed by an additional four postholes, enclosed an area *c.* 4 m^2. The postholes themselves were generally well preserved and varied between 0.25 and 0.30 m in diameter and 0.11 and 0.30 m in depth. A shallow, irregularly-shaped feature (1494) 1.00 m long and 0.70 m wide lay within the structure, slightly off-centre, and may represent the remains of a hearth. One other small posthole (1484) lay within the circuit, in the western side of the building.

Structure 1744 (Area 2) comprised a simple circuit 5.5 m in diameter. The structure contained two postholes (1378 and 1379). It was of most interest for an apparently associated enclosure (1745) which lay on the south-west side of the building. The enclosure consisted of two opposed curving gullies (1434 and 1798) which enclosed an area some 12 × 10 m. The gullies were of very similar dimensions,

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

up to 0.51 m deep and 0.60 m wide. The terminals of both were well defined and suggested that they had not originally been part of a single circular feature but had formed a pincer-shaped enclosure with two opposing gaps/entrances, one facing to the south-west and the other to the north-east. The south-western gap was just over 4.0 m wide, while the north-eastern was more than double that at 10.0 m. The circular post-built structure was located centrally within the north-eastern gap; this strongly suggests that the gullies were directly associated with the structure and formed a small paddock or enclosure of some sort. Although the entrance to the structure itself was not clearly defined, two slightly more substantial postholes on the south-east side of the circuit suggest it was probably there (as would be expected). This would make the associated enclosure a side one, entered immediately left of the entrance to the building. Enclosure 1745 produced few finds but they did include a pierced copper-alloy sheet fragment. The enclosure contained a small number of internal postholes and also evidence for a fenceline on its north side linking it to the rear of structure 1744 (see Fig. 10, C).

Structure 2675 (Area 3) was of incomplete plan but notable for incorporating a double, concentric circuit of posts. Unfortunately the eastern half of the structure was truncated and removed by the later Iron-Age/Roman trackway.

Three of the remaining 11 small circular structures were located fairly close together in the northern part of the site (Area 1). The others were more dispersed across the south-eastern part of the site (Area 4).

Structures of diameter 7.0–8.6 m (Type 2)

All but one of the 15 examples in this category were located in the central and southern parts of the site. Three of the best-preserved were found in close proximity on the western edge of the site (Area 2/3) in association with two larger round-houses (Fig. 11). The form of these three is typical of those on the site and they are therefore described here.

Structure 2037 was 7.9 m in diameter and was formed by 16 postholes spaced between 0.7 and 1.4 m apart. A south-east facing entrance porch was also evident consisting of postholes 2306 and 2308. There was also, unusually, evidence for an opposing rear (north-west facing) entrance in the form of double post settings. The postholes in the main circuit ranged from 0.28 to 0.40 m in diameter and from 0.16 to 0.35 m in depth. Those of the porch were larger, up to 0.68 m in diameter and up to 0.47 m deep. Two further postholes were found within the area delimited by the main circle. Both were of similar depth and diameter to the structural postholes. Structure 2037 produced ten sandy and shelly fabric sherds.

Structure 2485 lay 15 m north-east of structure 2037 and was similar to it, being 7.5 m in diameter and composed of 15 similar-sized postholes set slightly further apart from each other (1.8–1.9 m). The building incorporated a south-east facing porch but no rear entrance arrangement. One internal feature was recorded. The front of structure 2485 intersected with a similar structure, 2313.

Structure 2313 was slightly larger than 2485 being 8.5 m in diameter and composed of 13 postholes, spaced 1.7 m apart. Again, the building incorporated a south-east facing porch, formed originally by two pits (2414 and 2416) 0.85 m in diameter. These were subsequently replaced by two smaller post settings in virtually the same locations (2446 and 2432) and of similar dimensions to those in the main circuit of the building. Five features identified within the building consisted of two postholes of similar dimensions to the main structure and three shallow, irregular scoops. The internal features did not appear to form an obvious internal structure. There was no direct stratigraphic evidence to indicate which was the earlier of the overlapping buildings 2485 and 2313. Each produced small amounts of pottery; that from 2313 consisted of three Beaker sherds which may suggest it was the earlier building.

The three further examples of Type 2 circular structures with complete ground plans including porches were structure 1566 (*c.* 50 m north of structure 2485 in Area 2), structure 2853 (*c.* 120 m south of structure 2485 in Area 4) and structure 2000 in the south-eastern part of the site (Area 4). Structure 2000 produced 40 sherds of grog and sandy fabric pottery, one of the larger groups of pottery from a building. All three of these structures were formed from postholes very similar to those already described. Structure 2853 lay in the environs of three other similar sized round-houses with incomplete porches (structures 2040, 2084 and 2778). Structure 2040 in this group was of note since it contained 21 ephemeral stakeholes, probably representing internal structures and/or divisions, perhaps from

Table 2. Summary of circular structures.

TYPE	DIAMETER
1	4.5 m to 6.5 m
2	7.0 m to 8.6 m
3	> 10.0 m

Post-built Structure	Diameter	Size Type	Circuit	Porch Present?	Entr. Locn Evident?	Number of Postholes
1005	4.5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	6
1055	5.5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	6
1066	7 m	2	Complete	No	Yes	8
1216	6.4 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	4
1590	6.2 m	1	Complete	Yes	Yes	11
1437	4.5 m	1	Incomplete	Yes	Yes	8
1565	7.5 m	2	Incomplete	Yes	Yes	13
1566	7.2 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	17
1597	10 m	3	Complete	No	No	15
1711	5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	4
1744	5.5 m	1	Complete	No	No	11
1913	5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	5
2000	7.2 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	14
2037	7.9 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	25
2040	7.9 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	9
2084	8 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	16
2313	8.5 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	13
2430	10 m	3	Complete	Yes	Yes	26
2485	7.5 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	17
2497	10 m	3	Complete	Yes	Yes	15
2539	4.6 m	1	Complete	No	Yes	8
2675	5.7 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	4
2778	8.6 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	13
2779	8.6 m	2	Incomplete	No	No	8
2780	5 m	1	Complete	Yes	Yes	7
2853	7.5 m	2	Complete	Yes	Yes	14
2869	7 m	2	Incomplete	No	No	13
2890	10.7 m	3	Complete	No	No	11
2891	5.7 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	5
2892	5 m	1	Complete	No	Yes	6
2895	7 m	2	Incomplete	No	No	9
2896	8.5 m	2	Incomplete	No	No	7
2897	5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	4
2898	5 m	1	Incomplete	No	No	5
Gully Structure						
368	11.3 m	3	Complete	No	Yes	n/a
1550	11.5 m	3	Complete	No	No	n/a

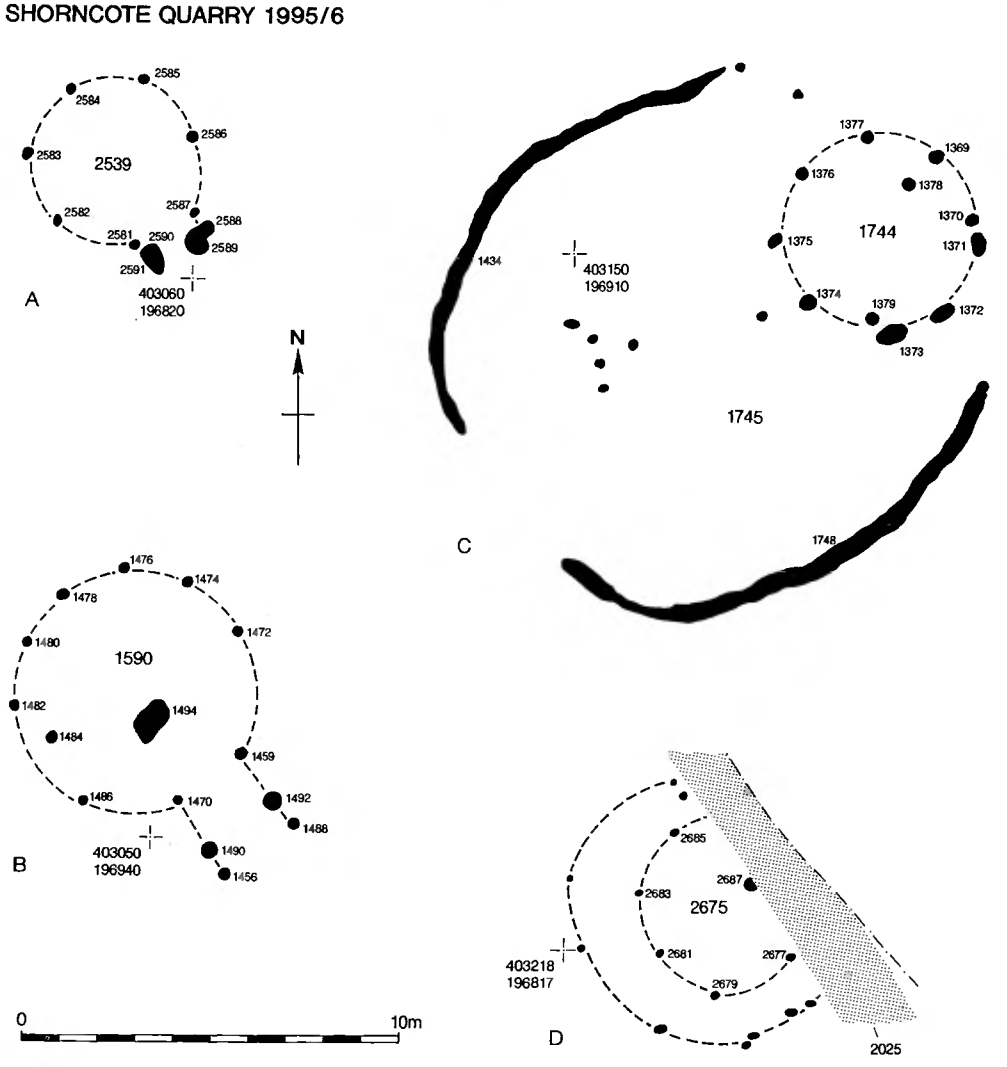

Fig. 10. Plans of circular structures: (A) 2539; (B) 1590; (C) 1744 and enclosure 1745; (D) 2675.

hurdles. Nearly all of these features lay in the northern half of the building and seven of them appeared to form an interrupted arc concentric with part of the outer wall (see Fig. 3*).

Structure 1066 was the only building in this category in the northernmost part of the site (Area 1). Its western half was intersected by a large pit (196, see below), a rare example of horizontal stratigraphy on the site. The lack of postholes on the western part of the circuit suggests the pit was the later feature. This sequence would also be the logical one if there was no great chronological separation between the two features (i.e. that the building had not been constructed over the site of a large infilled pit). However, a lack of datable material from either the pit or the structure means that the close dating of both features cannot be determined.

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

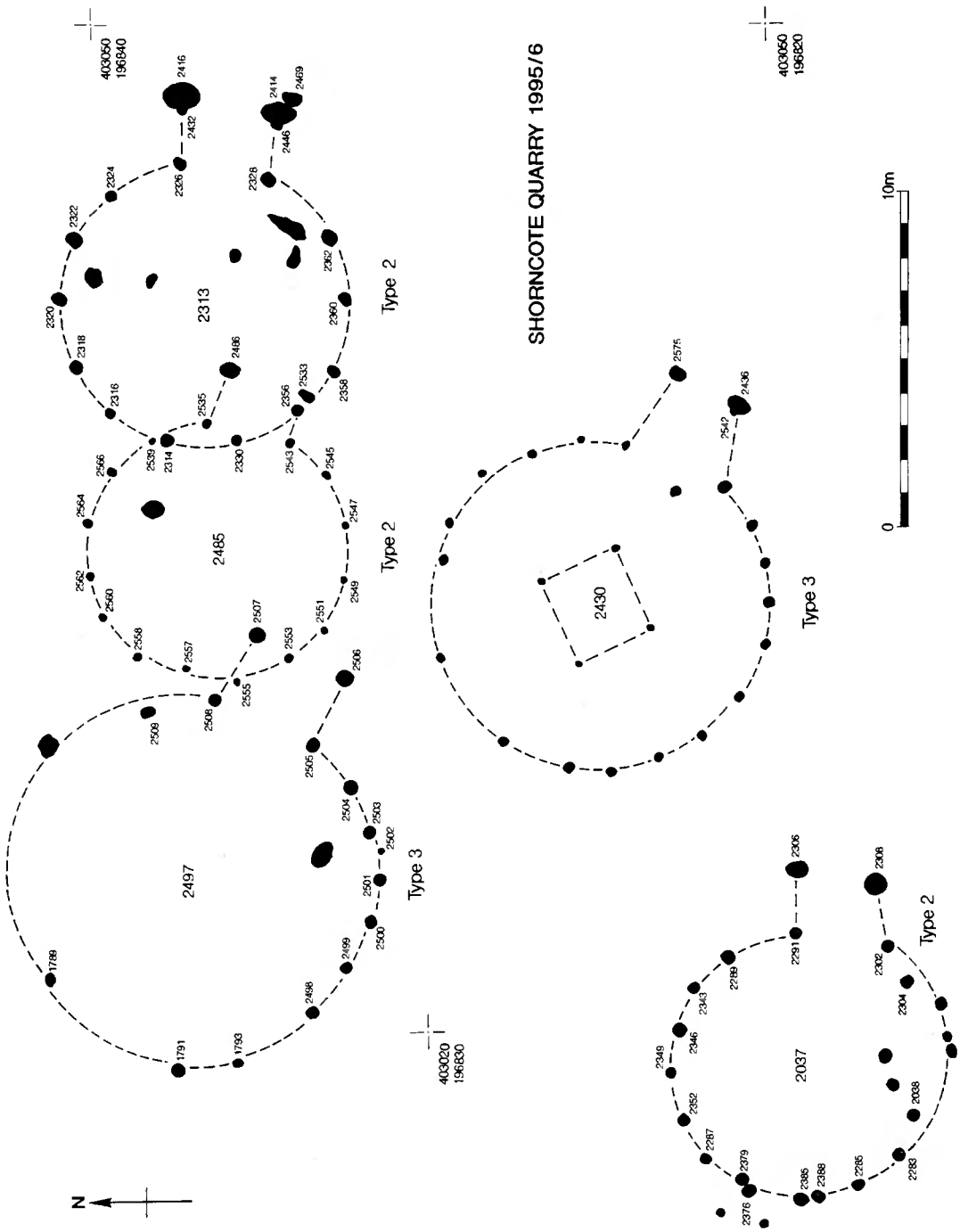

Fig. 11. Plan of round-house group: 2497, 2485, 2313, 2037, 2430.

The remaining Type 2 circular structures were incomplete examples in various parts of the site (see Fig. 3*; Table 2). Structure 2858 in the south-eastern corner was noteworthy in that it contained evidence for some form of internal roof support, in the form of three central postholes. It is highly likely that a fourth internal posthole in the north-western corner has not survived and that this arrangement originally formed a square internal roof support as in the case of larger structure 2430 (see below).

Structures of diameter greater than 10 m (Type 3)
Only four examples of this size of building were identified, three 10 m in diameter and one 10.7 m. Two of the structures (2430 and 2497) were located close together in the same area as three of the smaller structures described above (see Fig. 11). Both had porches. The other two buildings (1597 and 2890) were located 100 m north (Area 2) and 210 m south-east (Area 4) of this group respectively (see Fig. 3*).

Structure 2430 was 10 m in diameter and consisted of 18 postholes, spaced between 0.7 and 2.3 m apart. Two larger post pits (2436 and 2575) 0.65 m in diameter and 0.33 m in depth formed a south-east facing porch; 2436 cut an earlier, smaller posthole (2542) which was similar in dimensions to the postholes in the main circuit. Four postholes were located centrally within the building, 2.5 m apart, forming a regular square which was aligned diagonally in relation to the porchway. No other internal feature was noted. The postholes of the main circuit and the central four postholes were not excavated.

Structure 2497 lay only 5 m north of 2430. It was also 10 m in diameter and was formed of 13 postholes spaced between 1.0 and 1.8 m apart and ranging from 0.28 to 0.46 m in diameter and from 0.02 to 0.23 m in depth. Again, two larger post pits (2506 and 2507), 0.52 m across and 0.16 m deep, formed a south-east facing porch. A single ovoid-shaped internal feature was also recorded. Part of the porch of this structure was intersected by smaller building 2485 (described above) but again there was a lack of direct stratigraphic evidence to identify the sequence. Structure 2497 produced one of the larger groups of pottery from a building, 40 sherds in shelly and sandy fabrics.

Neither of the two other large structures, 1597 and 2890, yielded clear (preserved) evidence for porches. Both, however, contained internal features although none could be identified with any certainty as an internal structure. The dimensions of the postholes which made up structure 1597 were generally comparable with those from 2497.

Circular gully structures
Two examples of circular gully structures greater than 10 m in diameter were recorded on the site. Both lay along the eastern side within the area of later prehistoric/Romano-British trackway 206 (see below).

Structure 368 (Figs. 12–13) was located in the north-eastern part of the site (Area 1). It was composed of a circular gully 11.3 m in diameter with an entrance gap 3.5 m wide facing ENE. The gully was 0.45 m wide and 0.15 m deep and was cut by linear features associated with the Iron-Age/Romano-British trackway and by several furrows. The gully enclosed 15 postholes/scoops and the remains of a central hearth (374). The postholes had an average diameter of 0.27 m and an average depth of 0.13 m and most were situated within 1.5 m of the gully circuit. Although the postholes did not form an obvious pattern, they were probably associated with the gully, probably forming internal roof supports and/or partitions. The structure produced a moderate group (63 sherds) of shell-tempered pottery.

The central hearth (374) was ovoid and measured 1.10 m long, 0.90 m wide and 0.23 m deep. It was infilled with five identifiable deposits (1037–1041). The primary fill was a 6-mm thick lump of limestone gravel in a sandy matrix situated at the centre of the cut, which was sealed by a 7-mm deep layer of gravel completely filling the feature. Above this

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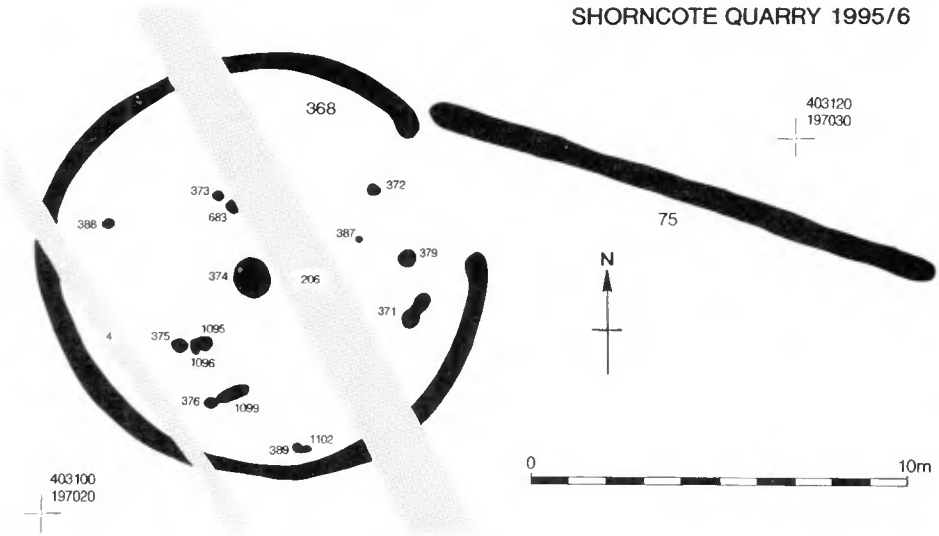

Fig. 12. Plan of circular gully structure 368.

Fig. 13. Gully structure 368 and Romano-British track 206, looking north (scales 2 m).

was a 3-mm thick lens of crushed burnt limestone gravel located in the southern half of the hearth. The feature was capped by two 0.15-m thick lenses of yellowish grey silty clay with inclusions of reddish clay, charcoal and large fragments of burnt limestone rubble. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the hearth, and soil samples did not contain any palaeo-environmental remains.

Outside structure 368 on its east side was a linear feature (75). This ditch was 14 m long and aligned WNW–ESE. It virtually joined the northern terminal of the gully circuit. It was 0.59 m in width and 0.36 m in depth with a clayey sand fill containing occasional pockets of gravel. This ditch does not appear to be associated with any other linear feature on the site and its location suggests that it was associated with the entrance to structure 368, probably forming a hedge or fenceline. Sample excavation of this feature during the evaluation stage produced 21 pieces of grog-tempered Late Bronze-Age pottery (W660, gully 125).

Structure/Enclosure 1550 (not illustrated) was located *c.* 42 m south-east of enclosure 368 (Area 2). It consisted of a partially surviving circuit with a projected diameter of 11.5 m. The north-eastern side of this feature had been lost through truncation and the ditch circuit was also cut by trackway 206 = 1400 and by modern disturbances. The gully was 0.38 m wide and 0.14 m deep. It enclosed two postholes (1405 and 1559) and an undiagnostic linear feature (1561), none of which appears to form recognisably structural remains.

Four-post and other rectilinear structures

A total of 33 four-post structures were identified during the excavations (see Fig. 3*). Most formed square arrangements but five were rectangular in plan. Four-post structures coincided with the main activity areas of the site; nearly half (15 examples) were located in the south-eastern corner and twelve occurred in the north-eastern zone. The square structures enclosed areas measuring between 1.85 and 6.60 m^2. The sub-rectangular structures were generally larger covering areas between 4.1 and 16.4 m^2. Many of the four-post structures were recorded in plan but not examined further. Only one of those excavated (2456) produced pottery (two Beaker sherds).

Although some of the four-post structures occurred in close proximity to circular structures, it was observed that more often they tended to occur in specific groups of their own, albeit the arrangement of the groups showing no obvious pattern or layout (see Fig. 3*). The features may have supported structures such as grain driers or have been drying racks in textile production, as was suggested in the previous publication (Hearne and Heaton 1994). Another interpretation which the 1995–6 excavation offers is that some of the square four-post structures may have formed the central roof supports for larger circular structures. This arrangement was observed in the case of structure 2430 (see above). The implication would be that the outside circuit was formed of less substantial postholes than those for the central four supports and has not survived. This suggestion is perhaps supported by the observation that many of the four-post structures occur away from defined circular buildings. The four-post structures may also relate to porches of buildings.

Five other rectilinear post-built structures were identified on the site. All were found in the south-eastern corner, although they were not concentrated together in a group. Four (2900, 2902, 2909 and 2914) were sub-rectangular in shape and made up of five or six postholes. They were of similar dimension to the four-post sub-rectangular structures described above. These structures were recorded in plan but not investigated further.

The fifth structure (2868) was rather more elaborate (Fig. 14), being composed of nine postholes arranged in a grid of three lines of three with an additional posthole (2831) extending one of the central lines northwards. The postholes were generally regularly spaced (1.3 m apart N–S and from 1.25 to 1.45 m E–W). Together these postholes created a square with an area of 16 m^2. The average diameter of the postholes was 0.44 m and the postholes

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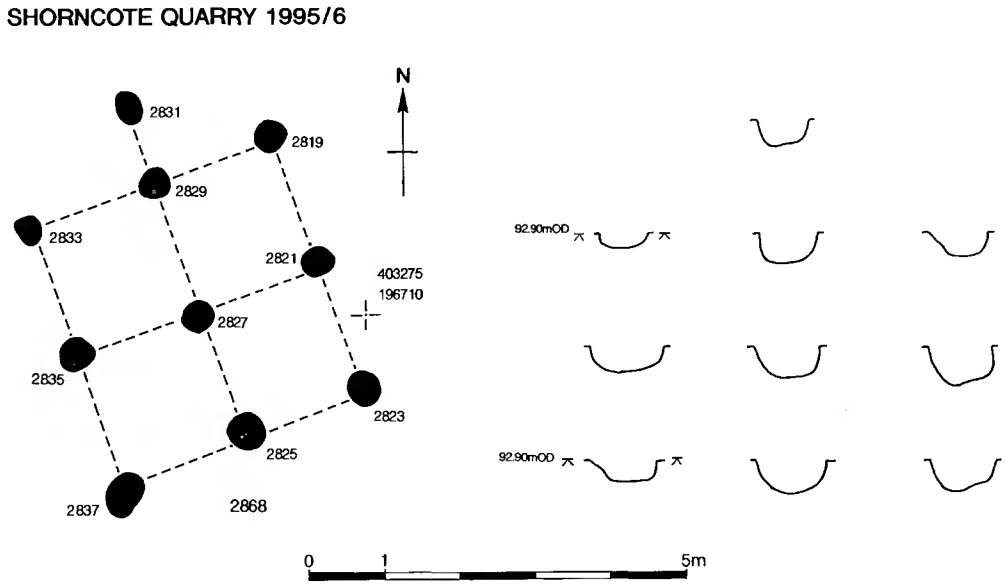

Fig. 14. Plan and sections of ten-post structure 2868.

in the eastern half of the structure were slightly deeper (0.22 m average depth) than those in the western half (0.13 m average). The structure formed by the ten posts may have supported some form of raised platform but the lack of directly associated finds or environmental evidence means that its actual function is unknown. The structure lies in a somewhat isolated location in the south-eastern part of the site, away from circular structures and other small features but close to large rectilinear structure 2914 (see Fig. 3*). Given its location, structure 2868 may have formed the focus of non-domestic activity.

Large pits

As in the 1992 excavations, the presence of large, deep pits (generally defined as those greater than 1.5 m in diameter and over 1.0 m in depth) was a characteristic of the Late Bronze-Age settlement. A minimum of 32 such features was identified and recorded in plan. Thirteen of these pits were 50% excavated (see Table 1). The location of large pits across the site did not form an obvious pattern or discrete correlation(s) in relation to other feature types. In general terms, however, the pits occurred in two main groups. One group, located in the north-west part of the site to the north of circular structures 1420 and 1597 and to the west of structure 1066, comprised ten pits within an area approximately 100 × 80 m. The second group (*c.* 20 pits) was more dispersed in the southern half of the site.

The excavated pits were very similar to those examined in 1992 in terms of their overall dimensions and profiles (Hearne and Heaton 1994, 21–31, figs. 6–9). Full details of the excavated pits are held in the archive and in view of the pits' general similarity to those previously excavated detailed individual descriptions are not given here. Profiles of the excavated pits are given in Fig. 15. Pit 2334 was the largest, being 2.7 m in diameter and 2.3 m in depth. The pits demonstrated complex sequences of fillings, nearly always indicative

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of natural erosion and weathering. In a few cases, however, there was evidence of deliberate backfilling and recutting and these pits are described below.

Pit 2029 was of interest in providing evidence for deliberate, apparently wholesale refilling. It lay in the southern part of the site (Area 4) about 30 m west of circular post-built structure 2000 and near four-post structure 2235 and intercutting pits 2133/2256 (see below). Pit 2029 was slightly ovoid in plan, measuring 2.70 × 2.10 m and with a maximum depth of 1.46 m. The primary fill consisted of a layer of calcareous gravel in a fine silty loam 0.15 m deep. This fill was sealed by a single 1.38-m deep homogenous deposit of relatively gravel free fine sandy loam containing approximately 28 kg of burnt limestone as well as occasional fragments of limestone rubble. This main deposit within the pit evidently represents a single episode of infilling, an attribute not generally associated with the large Late Bronze-Age pits. The proximity of large pits and four-post structures was noted during the 1992 excavation and it is possible that the huge quantity of burnt stone used to backfill pit 2029 derived from activities associated with the nearby four-post structure (2235). The stone may also have been selected to help consolidate the backfilled pit.

Pits 2133 and 2256 are the only examples of intercutting pits from the site. They lay in the southern half of the site (Area 3) some 12 m north-west of circular post-built structure 2000 and 12 m north-east of large pit 2029. The pits were similar in size and profile with broad flat bases (Fig. 15). The earlier pit (2133) was 2.90 m in diameter (estimated) and 1.42 m in depth. It had a gently sloping 'shelf' which was *c.* 0.7 m wide around its southern and eastern edge and widened out to 1.0 m along the northern edge. The main sides of the pit were steeply sloping. The feature was filled with six identifiable deposits comprising gravels and silty clays and loams, all tipping from the eastern side of the pit feature. One of the main lower fills, a mixture of silty clay and gravel, contained nearly 11 kg of burnt limestone fragments.

Pit 2256 cut through the eastern edge of pit 2133 and was 2.70 m in diameter and 1.29 m deep. It also had a 0.70-m wide shelf along its eastern edge, associated with a slightly undercut and vertical lower side. The western side of the pit was of a quite different profile and the base of the pit itself sloped down quite markedly from east to west. The sequence of infilling of the lower levels of the pit was similar to that of pit 2133. The main difference was the presence of a 0.98-m deep deposit of mixed silty clay and gravel which filled more than a third of the entire pit, including most of the eastern half from the surface of the primary deposit upwards. This deposit itself could represent a third phase of re-establishment or recleaning of the pit.

The largest pit (2334) lay in a somewhat isolated location in the central-southern part of the site (Area 3). It was 2.7 m in diameter and had a maximum depth of 2.3 m. The sequence of deposits infilling the pit suggests that it was re-established and/or re-cleaned in the same location at least twice (see Fig. 15). Each of these later recuts was progressively shallower (1.7 m and 1.08 m respectively).

In the group of large pits in the north-west part of the site (Area 1), pit 196 is notable because it lay partly within the circuit of circular post-built structure 1066. This was one of the very few examples of horizontal stratigraphy within the Late Bronze-Age features. Pit 2842 (Area 4) is also notable for incorporating an arc of five postholes around half of its circumference, probably representing a barrier or fence.

Small pits

A group of closely-spaced small pits (1215) was located in the north-west part of the site *c.* 30 m from the western site boundary (Area 1). The group (Fig. 16) lay 0.5 m south of

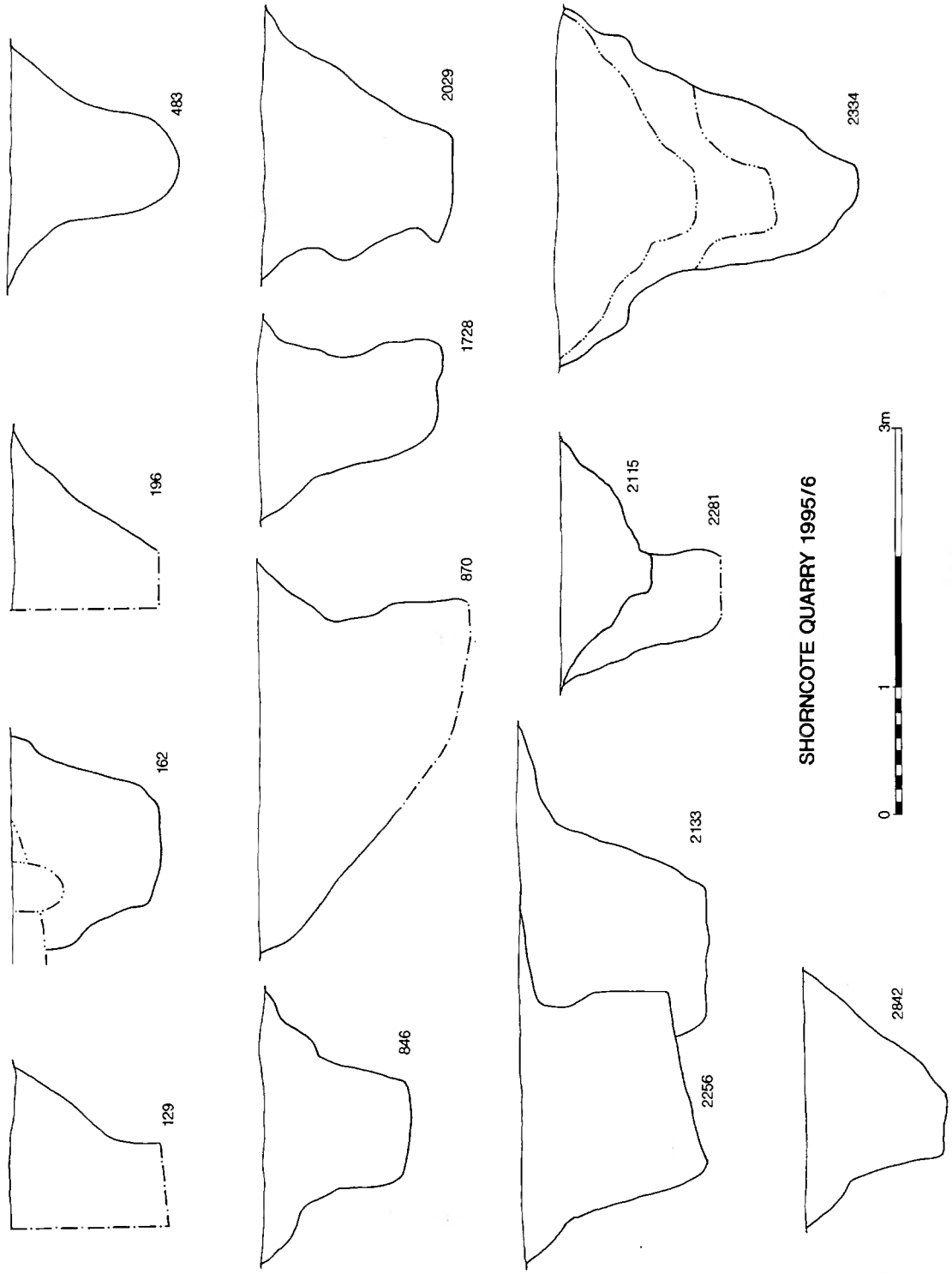

Fig. 15. Profiles of large pits.

Fig. 16. Small pit group 1215, looking north-west.

large pit 846 and consisted of 17 identifiable features (829–844 and 927—full details in archive), which together occupied a sub-rectangular area measuring 5.00 m from east to west and 6.25 m from north to south. All of the pits were fully excavated and were found to be shallow bowl-shaped features with gentle 'U'-shaped profiles and with between one and three fills. Twelve of the pits were ovoid in plan with an average length of 0.84 m and an average width of 0.78 m. The five circular pits had an average diameter of 0.87 m. The depth of the pits ranged from 0.16 to 0.44 m (average depth 0.28 m). No finds were recovered from any of the pits. Only two of the pits, 833 and 834, were intercutting. No other pit group of this type was encountered elsewhere on the site but the pits were considered unlikely to be of natural origin.

Ovoid scoops

The site contained more than 100 undiagnostic, shallow, ovoid features. Present across most parts of the site, they appeared to be of archaeological origin and were clearly differentiated from various natural irregular features which also occurred on the site. The scoops were recorded on the overall site plans and a number were sample excavated in an attempt to determine their nature, date and function (e.g. features 62, 80 and 146). Excavation demonstrated that the features were on average *c.* 1.5 m long, 0.5 m wide and 1.5 m deep with irregular bases and edges. They invariably had shallow 'U'-shaped profiles and sometimes a double 'U'-shaped section. The scoops tended to be filled with a mixture of intervening layers of gravel and soil, which were usually capped with lenses of reddish brown burnt clay with inclusions of burnt limestone rubble. In terms of distribution, most of the ovoid scoops occurred in disparate patches. They were often away from the main concentrations of structures and stray postholes, for example in an area south of ditch 2410 and in the

south-west part of the site. As with the stray postholes (see below) most ovoid features tended to occur in the northern part of the site.

Stray postholes

Several hundred postholes of varying dimensions were uncovered during the excavations. Little can be said specifically about them although it was noted that they tended to coincide with the main areas of activity on the site. The only exception to this was in the south-western part around circular structures 2040, 2084, 2778 and 2853 where stray postholes were noticeably lacking (see Fig. 3*). Most of the stray postholes were recorded in plan and they were not excavated except where possible structural patterns were discerned. Excavation typically demonstrated 'U'-shaped profiles and two distinct fills consisting of a primary fill of weathered gravel capped with a relatively stone free silty clay. Depths were highly variable, no doubt due to erosion of the natural surface of the gravel and disturbance by later phase features such as cultivation furrows. There are undoubtedly further circular post-built structures represented among the stray postholes, perhaps even as many again as were recognised (i.e. another thirty or so buildings).

Later Iron-Age/Romano-British Linear Features

As in the 1992 excavations, linear features were notable by their absence. Excluding remnant ridge and furrow and modern linear features associated with the sewage works, two main linear components to the site were exposed, one aligned NW–SE and the other perpendicular to it. All of these features were relatively shallow with 'U'-shaped profiles and variable widths. Little datable material was recovered from them.

The ditch aligned NW–SE ran almost the entire length of the excavation area, *c.* 400 m (see Fig. 3*). Along most of its length the ditch (206 = 1400 = 2025) was roughly parallel to the extant eastern field boundary, lying some 10 m west of it. At the southern end of the site the ditch turned south-eastwards out of the excavation area. At its northern end (206 and 207) the ditch incorporated one double bend (apparently around small pit 569 which contained a relatively large amount of Bronze-Age pottery, 81 sherds). As a result of the bend the ditch diverged from the field boundary and was *c.* 60 m from it at the extreme northern limit of the excavation area, where it appeared to be recut (ditch 207).

Sections excavated across the ditch at various points along its length showed it to be consistently shallow with steep sides and a flat base, generally *c.* 2.00 m wide and 0.40 m deep. It was filled with a dark grey silty clay with only occasional inclusions of gravel. Along its length the ditch cut various post-built and gully structures including 368 (Figs. 12–13), 1550 and the central posthole element of circular structure 2875 (Fig. 10). Finds from the ditch included Romano-British pottery and a Roman coin dated late 4th century A.D.; the latter was recovered during the evaluation stage (Ref. W660, ditch 201).

The northern section of ditch 206 was associated with a parallel ditch (4), *c.* 6 m to its west, which ran for a total length of 74 m. As with ditch 206 it was stratigraphically later than circular gully enclosure 368 (Figs. 12–13). Two sections excavated across it showed it to be 0.55 m in width and 0.22 m in depth with steep sides and a concave base. It was filled with a greyish brown silty clay with few gravel inclusions.

Three insubstantial ditches aligned NE–SW (200, 1564 and 2410) appear to be associated with ditch 206/1400. The northern of these ditches (200) was 0.95 m wide and only 0.15 m

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

deep and converged with ditch 206 and/or its recut 207. Further south, in the central part of the site, two parallel ditches (1564 and 2410) lay at right angles to ditch 206/1400. Ditch 1564 was an intermittent, shallow and ephemeral feature 167 m long in total, 0.35 m wide and between 0.05 and 0.15 m deep. It intersected the circuit of circular structure 1566 at its western end and appeared to be cut by ditch 206 at its far eastern end. Linear ditch 2410 lay *c.* 73 m south of feature 1564. It emerged from the eastern edge of the site and ran for *c.* 68 m before petering out completely, probably as a result of truncation. The ditch itself was 1.00 m wide and 0.30 m deep and excavation showed that it cut ditch 1400.

Although stratigraphic relationships were therefore evident between some of the linear ditches they appear to form part of one broadly contemporaneous field system post-dating the Late Bronze-Age settlement. The main axis of this system was aligned on the extant NW–SE field boundary which appears to have formed the east side of a track or droveway. This track was recorded further south in 1992 (Hearne and Heaton 1994, ditch 1018) and was suggested then to be of later prehistoric date or Roman date. The new data supports this interpretation and the finds from it suggest the track was still in use during the later Roman period.

THE FINDS

ROMAN COIN by Nicholas Wells

A copper-alloy Roman coin was recovered from trackway ditch 2025 during the evaluation stage (W660, ditch 201). It has been identified as a late 4th-century A.D. issue.

AE 3/4; poor copy of VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET CAE type; A.D. 351-80.
Obverse: diademed bust facing right
Reverse: one victory facing right, holding a shield.

METALWORK by Lorraine Mepham

Four iron objects and one copper-alloy object were recovered from various subsoil features. The copper-alloy object, from ditch 1745 (forming part of the enclosure associated with Late Bronze-Age structure 1744), comprises a small sheet fragment with part of what appears to be a circular perforation on one edge. It is of unknown date and function. Three joining, but poorly preserved, fragments of a small iron blade or tool were recovered from the terminal of penannular ditch 2841 (Context 2808, Obj. No. 7010). The only other finds from the ditch were a Romano-British and a possible Saxon sherd. The other iron objects from the site consisted of two nails (one from the primary fill of Romano-British boundary ditch 1400 and one from undated pit 817) and a tiny unidentifiable object from a possible tree bole (1451).

POTTERY by Lorraine Mepham

The pottery assemblage comprises 836 sherds (3805 gm). It is mainly of Late Bronze-Age date, with a few Early Bronze-Age, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval sherds. There is also a single sherd of possible Saxon date. Only the prehistoric material is considered in detail here. The assemblage derives from stratified contexts across all areas of the excavation (W5645), as well as trial trenches excavated during the preceding evaluation (Ref. W660).

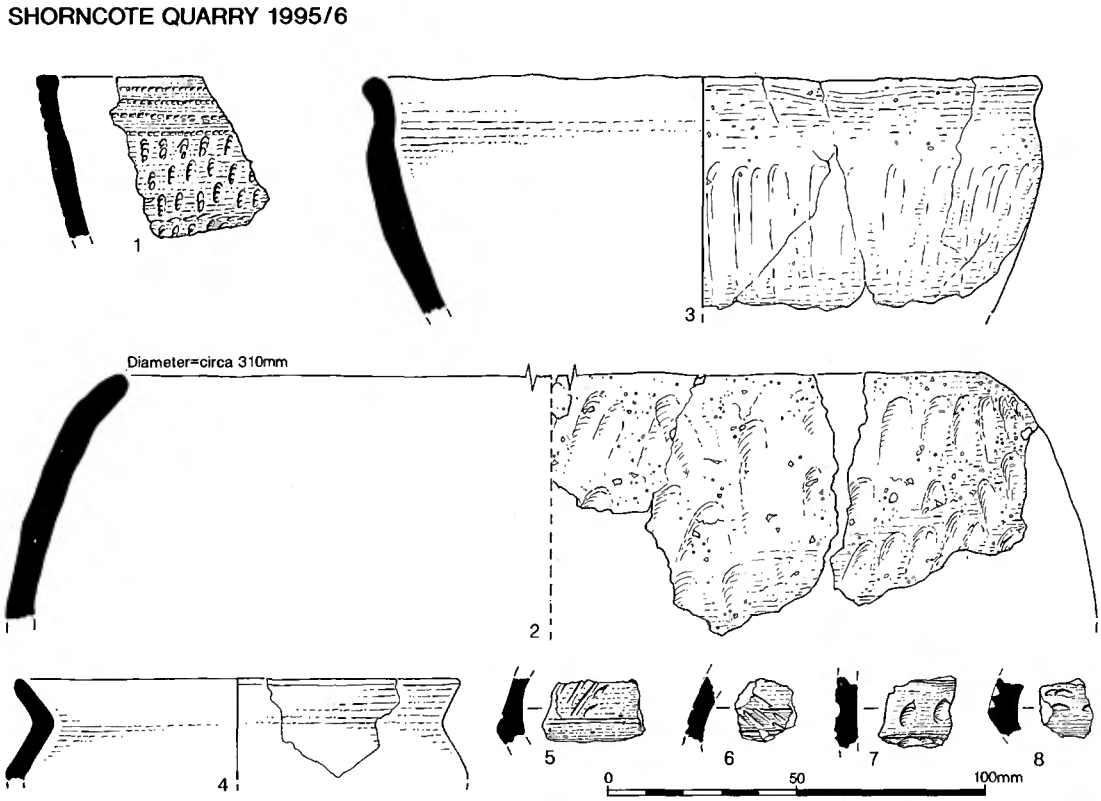

Fig. 17. Beaker pottery (1) and Late Bronze-Age pottery (2–8).

Beaker Pottery

Seven sherds were identified as Beaker on the basis of fabric type and decoration. The group comprises one rim sherd (Fig. 17.1), three decorated body sherds and three base sherds. All the sherds are in a soft, grog-tempered fabric comparable to that described for the single sherd recovered during previous excavations (Morris 1994, 34–5). The rim and one base sherd are decorated with square-toothed comb impressions; three body sherds have rusticated decoration consisting of finger-pinching. The Beaker sherds were recovered from the uppermost fill of hengiform ring-ditch 2607 (three decorated body sherds), a posthole associated with roundhouse 2313 (one rim and one base sherd) and four-post structure 2456 (two base sherds).

Late Bronze-Age Pottery

The Late Bronze-Age assemblage has been analysed as far as possible within the framework of fabric and form type series established for the pottery from the 1992 excavation (Morris 1994) and following the same methodology (PCRG 1992). Overall the newly recovered assemblage is of a very similar character to that from 1992 with a similar range of fabrics and forms. The emphasis in this report lies in the presentation of new evidence to complement the 1992 assemblage rather than the repetition of existing information.

Table 3. Pottery fabric totals.

Fabric	No. sherds	Wt. (gm)	% of period
Beaker	7	44	
Late Bronze Age			
C2	10	147	4.1
C3†	34	97	2.7
F2†	1	11	0.3
G1	177	893	25
G2	9	47	1.3
Q2†	1	15	0.4
Q3†	26	56	1.6
Q4†	15	73	2.1
S2	171	473	13.3
S3	252	1405	39.3
S4	64	228	6.4
S5†	32	110	3.1
V1†	2	15	0.4
Sub-total	*794*	*3570*	
Romano-British			
C100	5	70	
C101	1	2	
E170	2	4	
G100	2	26	
Q100	20	39	
Q101	1	4	
Sub-total	*31*	*145*	
Saxon	1	6	
Med/Pmed	3	40	
Total	*836*	*3805*	

† Newly identified fabric types

Fabrics

The type series established in 1992 consists of ten fabrics in five groups: calcareous fabrics (C1–C2), flint-tempered fabric (F1), grog-tempered fabrics (G1–G2), sandy fabric (Q1) and shelly fabrics (S1–S4). To these may be added seven 'new' fabrics identified from the present assemblage (†): one calcareous (C3), one flint-tempered (F2), three sandy (Q2–Q4), one shelly (S5) and one organic-tempered (V1). No further petrological analysis was undertaken on these fabrics. Full description of the 'new' fabrics and abbreviated descriptions of those identified in 1992 are given below. Fabric totals are presented in Table 3.

CALCAREOUS FABRICS

C2 Moderately-sorted, calcite-tempered fabric; common calcite < 3 mm.

C3† Soft, moderately coarse matrix, containing common, poorly sorted, crushed oolitic limestone < 5 mm; rare mica or fine quartz.

FLINT-TEMPERED FABRIC

F2† Soft, moderately coarse matrix, containing moderate, poorly-sorted, angular flint < 36 mm; rare subrounded quartz < 0.5 mm.

GROG-TEMPERED FABRICS

G1 Fine, grog-tempered fabric; moderate grog < 3 mm with some sand and shell.

G2 Coarse, grog-tempered fabric; common grog < 5 mm, sometimes with flint.

QUARTZ SAND FABRICS

Q2† Soft, moderately fine matrix with a powdery feel, containing common, well-sorted, subrounded fine quartz; sparse ?glauconite < 0.25 mm; rare iron oxides and mica.

Q3† Soft, fine sandy matrix with a slightly powdery feel, containing common, well-sorted, subrounded fine quartz; rare iron oxides and rare organic inclusions < 2 mm.

Q4† Soft, fine matrix with a powdery feel, containing sparse fine quartz or mica; rare subangular limestone < 1 mm; rare iron oxides.

SHELLY FABRICS

S2 Fossil shell fabric with possible ooliths; moderate to common shell and ooliths < 2 mm.

S3 Coarse shell-tempered fabric; common to abundant fossil shell < 10 mm.

S4 Crushed shell-tempered fabric; common to very common fossil shell < 5 mm.

S5† Soft, fine matrix with a slightly soapy feel, containing rare to sparse, poorly-sorted, crushed shelly limestone < 5 mm; rare iron oxides.

FABRIC CONTAINING ORGANIC INCLUSIONS

V1† Soft, fine matrix with a slightly soapy feel, containing sparse to moderate linear organic inclusions < 4 mm; rare shell fragments < 1 mm; rare fine quartz and iron oxides.

All of the seven 'new' fabrics contain inclusions which could have been obtained locally (i.e. within 10 km of the site), with the exception of the flint-tempered fabric F2, which is represented by a single sherd. The range of fabric groups is extended by the organic fabric V1, again a rare occurrence. The proportion of sandy fabrics is significantly higher than was previously identified (4.10% of the total as opposed to 0.01% from the previous assemblage: see Morris 1994, table 2), as is the grog-tempered group, although the latter is dominated by sherds of what may be a single vessel in fabric G1. The dominant fabric group is, as before, the shell-tempered fabrics (62.1%).

Forms

The fragmentary nature of the assemblage (average sherd weight 4.6 gm) has prevented the definition of complete vessel profiles. Twenty rim sherds are present. They have been fitted into the existing form series (R1–R3) as far as possible, although several were too small to identify to form. Two new forms (‡) were identified (R10–R11), but R11 rims as defined here may in fact derive from vessels of types R4 (shouldered jar) or R8 (small tripartite jar or bowl).

R1 Vertical or slightly everted rim, thickened and flattened, on vessel of unknown form.

R2 Everted rim, thickened and flattened, on vessel of unknown form.

R3 Ovoid jar, convex profile, no neck zone (Fig. 17.2).

R4– R9 No rim sherds represented in 1995–6 assemblage.

R10‡ Convex bowl with slightly everted, rounded rim (Fig. 17.3).

R11‡ Short, everted rim, rounded, on jar of unknown form (Fig. 17.4).

In addition, the presence of small, fineware bowls of tripartite form (R8?) and of at least one

bipartite or tripartite jar (R7?) may be inferred from the occurrence of decorated sherds (see below). The correlation of vessel form to fabric is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Late Bronze-Age pottery vessel forms by fabric.

Fabric	R1	R2	R3	R10	R11	Unident.	Base	Angle	Dec.
C2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
G1	—	1	—	1	2	3	2	—	1
G2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
G3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Q3	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1
Q4	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1
S2	—	—	2	2	1	—	1	—	4
S3	—	—	2	—	—	—	4	1	—
S4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	*1*	*1*	*5*	*3*	*3*	7	*10*	*1*	*8*

Decoration and Surface Treatment

There are only eight decorated sherds: two with incised diagonal/linear motifs from the upper part of tripartite bowls (S2; Fig. 17.5–6), one with impressed dots probably also from a tripartite vessel (Q4; Fig. 17.7), one stabbed (Q3; Fig. 17.8), two vertically scored body sherds (fabrics S2 and G1), one applied cordon in fabric S2 and one impressed shoulder from a bipartite or tripartite jar in fabric S4. Surface treatment is restricted to finger-smearing or wiping, visible mainly on sherds in the coarser fabrics such as S3.

Discussion

The Late Bronze-Age pottery from the 1995–6 excavations effectively doubles the total assemblage from Wessex Archaeology's excavations at Shorncote Quarry (1992–745 sherds; 1995–6–794 sherds). The 1995–6 assemblage certainly complements that already published (Morris 1994). The overall range of the type series has been extended by the addition of seven new fabric types (C3, F2, Q2–Q4, S5 and V1) and two new vessel forms (R10 and R11). It should be observed, however, that the pottery described here includes *less* diagnostic material and that the identifiable range amongst the material is more restricted. This is particularly apparent in the vessel type series, where rims can rarely be assigned to specific vessel forms; of the five rim forms identified, for only two—R3 and R10—is the overall vessel form known or inferred. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to confirm the conclusions on chronology discussed by Morris (1994, 40–1), that is that the Shorncote Quarry assemblage belongs to the end of the plainware phase of the post Deverel-Rimbury ceramic tradition as defined by Barrett (1980), with a probable date range in the 9th to 8th centuries B.C. and possibly starting slightly earlier (Needham 1996, Period 7, 950–750 cal. B.C.). The dating is based on the small proportion of sandy fabrics, the rarity of decoration, and the range of identifiable vessel forms, with an emphasis on Class I coarseware jars. The affinities of the assemblage have already been thoroughly documented; parallels for the Shorncote assemblage may be found at a number of sites across Wessex and the West Country, including Brean Down, Somerset (Woodward 1990), the Marlborough Downs, Wiltshire (Gingell 1992), and Aldermaston Wharf and Knight's Farm, both in Berkshire (Bradley *et al.* 1980).

Distribution of Pottery on Site

The consistently small quantities of pottery recovered from the various features give a very low density distribution over a wide area. Pottery was recovered from all the main types of features:

Table 5. Late Bronze-Age pottery by feature type (by no./wt.).

	Fabric group						
Feature type	**C**	**F**	**G**	**Q**	**S**	**V**	**Total**
Hengiform ring-ditch 2607	1/4 gm	—	—	—	—	—	1/4 gm
Circular post-built structures	2/12 gm	—	10/36 gm	15/68 gm	146/539 gm	—	173/655 gm
Circular gully structures	1/3 gm	—	3/1 gm	—	72/521 gm	—	76/525 gm
Other post-built structures	—	—	—	—	15/27 gm	—	15/27 gm
Large pits	5/116 gm	—	23/92 gm	8/37 gm	62/344 gm	—	98/589 gm
Other pits/Scoops	7/33 gm	—	145/790 gm	—	104/314 gm	—	256/1137 gm
Stray postholes	—	—	1/2 gm	17/28 gm	101/312 gm	—	119/342 gm
Linear features	28/76 gm	1/11 gm	4/19 gm	2/11 gm	19/159 gm	2/15 gm	56/291 gm
Total	**44/244 gm**	**1/11 gm**	**186/940 gm**	**42/144 gm**	**519/2216 gm**	**2/15 gm**	**794/3570 gm**

circular post-built and gully structures, posthole structures and groups, linear features, pits and postholes, and the hengiform ring-ditch (Table 5). Just under one half of the assemblage by weight (48.3%) derived from pits and about one third (33.1%) from the circular post-built and gully structures. The proportion from the pits, however, is biased by what appear to be sherds of a single grog-tempered vessel from pit 234 (recorded during the evaluation Ref. W660). Without these the pits produced a similar proportion of the assemblage as the circular structures (35.4%). Only eight features produced more than 100 gm of pottery: circular post-built structures 2000 and 2497; pits 569, 2029, 2133 and 234; ditch 75; and circular gully 368. The largest quantities came from gully 368 (499 gm), pit 234 (489 gm) and pit 569 (388 gm). The distribution by feature type can be contrasted with the pattern observed during previous excavations, where a very small proportion of the assemblage (less than 1% by weight of the total) derived from circular structures (see Morris 1994, table 4).

Table 5 gives a breakdown of the pottery fabric groups by feature type (full details in archive), but given the small size of the assemblage overall, it would not be appropriate to place too much emphasis on the patterns observed. It may merely be noted that there is a higher proportion of sandy wares within the circular post-built structures (contrary to the overall observation of the relative proportions of fabric groups). Also, the proportion of grog-tempered fabrics in pits is also relatively high, although again the latter is biased by the total from evaluation pit 234 (see above).

Turning to the spatial distribution, the location of decorated sherds is of interest. Of the eight occurrences of decoration, five are from stray postholes (four within close proximity: 600, 605, 610 and 611), two from pits (1617 and 1710) and only one from a post-built structure (1711). All therefore came from features within the northern half of the excavation area. This may have a chronological explanation; alternatively it might be explained by the variation of types of activity across the site. It may be significant, however, that the bulk of the grog-tempered fabrics also occurs within the northern half of the site, including the material from evaluation pit 234. It has been tentatively suggested that decorated sherds and the grog-tempered fabrics represent a slightly later component within the Late Bronze-Age assemblage from the previous excavations (Morris 1994, 42). On this basis it might be possible to postulate a gradual shift or expansion of activity on the site from the southern half of the 1995–6 excavation area to both north and south (the latter being the 1992 excavation area). It may be noted that excavations in the area immediately to the west by the Oxford Archaeological Unit produced only very small quantities of Late Bronze-Age pottery (Barclay 1995). Conversely, it is also interesting to note that apart from a few Beaker sherds there is no evidence amongst the 1995–6 ceramic assemblage for an extension eastwards of the Neolithic and Early to Middle Bronze-Age activity recorded by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (Barclay *et al.* 1995).

Romano-British Pottery

Romano-British material comprises 31 sherds in six fabric types (see Table 3), five coarsewares (limestone-tempered, grog-tempered and sandy) and one fineware (Oxford colour coat). These sherds occurred in several features across the site: pits 658, 818 and 988, furrows 677 and 678, ditches 1400, 2800 and (evaluation) 201, and pennanular ditch 2841. The last feature also produced a single sherd of possible Saxon pottery (see below).

More than half of the Romano-British assemblage (17 sherds) came from a posthole (2356) apparently part of the Late Bronze-Age circular post-built structure 2313. When examined more closely, however, it appears that this posthole falls just off the projected circumference of the structure; moreover, the fill was distinctly different to that of other postholes within the structure. This particular posthole might safely be considered a stray Romano-British feature coincidentally located within an earlier structure.

Saxon Pottery

One sherd (6 gm) in a coarse, grass-tempered fabric was recovered from the fill of penannular ditch 2841. While organic temper is not unknown in Late Bronze-Age/Early Iron-Age pottery in central southern England, and indeed one such fabric has been identified amongst the Late Bronze-Age assemblage (fabric V1), the frequency of organic inclusions in this particular sherd would suggest rather that it is of early to middle Saxon date. It may be noted that a small quantity of grass-tempered pottery, identified as early to middle Saxon, was found during excavations in an adjacent part of the site by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (Barclay *et al.* 1995, 43).

Catalogue of Illustrated Pottery (Fig. 17)

1. Beaker rim sherd; context 2446, round-house 2313 (W5645).
2. Rim of ovoid jar (R3), fabric S3; context 2132, pit 2133 (W5645).
3. Rim of convex bowl (R10), fabric G1; context 239, pit 234 (W660).
4. Short, everted rim (R11), from jar of unknown form, fabric S2; context 2520, circular post-built structure 2497 (W5645).
5. Body sherd with incised decoration, fabric S2; context 1618, pit 1617 (W5645).
6. Body sherd with incised decoration, fabric S2; context 917, posthole 605 (W5645).
7. Body sherd with impressed decoration, fabric Q4; context 1764, circular post-built structure 1711 (W5645).
8. Body sherd with stabbed decoration, fabric Q3; context 914, posthole 610 (W5645).

WORKED FLINT by Phil Harding

A total of 38 features produced 105 pieces of worked flint (mean 3 pieces per feature, details in archive). Only two features, hengiform ring-ditch 2607 and ditch 206, exceeded nine pieces (40 and 10 respectively). The flint is generally in mint condition and most has a mixed patinated and/or stained surface. Cortical remnants suggest that most raw material has been acquired directly from the chalk outcrop, the nearest source being the Marlborough Downs 24 km away.

The composition of the worked flint is 2 cores, 64 flakes, 18 broken flakes, 5 burnt worked flints, 5 retouched flakes and 11 tools. The scarcity of cores is notable although manufacturing waste, represented by two faceting and abrasion chips, indicate that blank production was undertaken. One burnt fragment probably derives from a core made on a flake, a technique more usually associated with Mesolithic industries and may attest to the value of flint in the area. There are no diagnostic flakes, although deliberate blade fragments are present. Most flakes are unprepared although occasionally abraded butts are present.

The 16 retouched flakes and tools (15% of the total group) are a larger number than might be expected and again may indicate the value of flint in the area. The tools include seven scrapers made on flakes. All are end scrapers but two extend to the side and one is a double end scraper. They are generally well made with direct, regular, semi-abrupt retouch. There are also two probable chisel arrowheads, a probable knife and a microdenticulate. Overall, the technology and typology of the tools is consistent with a Late Neolithic date and as such provide additional evidence for the earliest phases of activity on the site.

The 40 pieces from hengiform ring-ditch 2607 include a cache of 38 large flakes in mint condition from the uppermost ditch fill (Fig. 6, layer 2723). The pieces show no diagnostic attributes and, although they appear to be from a single nodule, they do not refit. The group includes cortical flakes but only five broken flakes and no knapping waste. The composition suggests that they represent flakes selected as tool blanks but they show no evidence of predetermination. The hengiform ring-ditch also produced a scraper from a lower (but not primary) fill.

OTHER FINDS by Natasha Hutcheson

Fired Clay

In total 56 pieces of fired clay, weighing 243 gm, were recovered from a number of features across the site. The few contexts that produced pottery in association with fired clay all date to the Late Bronze Age. The fired clay mainly comprises very small abraded featureless fragments, some of which may be structural in origin. About 50% of the fragments have a shelly temper similar to much of the pottery recovered from the site. In addition to shell-tempered pieces there are a number of fragments of poorly-wedged unprepared clay, some of which have possible wattle impressions, best interpreted as daub. These fragments were all found in association with Late Bronze-Age pottery and derive from posthole 1543, a component of round-house 1566 (9 fragments) and curvilinear ditch 1798 (22 fragments).

Ceramic Building Material

Eleven fragments of ceramic building material, weighing 242 gm, were recovered, all in a similar coarse, poorly-wedged fabric. They derive from one unstratified and four stratified contexts: pit 673, ditch 2800 and natural features 817 and 818. Only three pieces have any diagnostic features; one from 817 appears to be a small tile fragment and two unstratified pieces appear to be conjoining fragments of Romano-British flue tile. The remainder of the ceramic building material comprises small abraded fragments which are also likely to be Romano-British in date on the basis of similarity of fabric type.

Burnt Stone

As in 1992, large quantities of burnt, unworked stone were recovered (a total of 262 kg). The vast majority of this material was quantified and discarded on site and no detailed identifications of stone type were attempted. Observations in the field suggested that the bulk, if not all, comprised limestone of various types, all of which could have been obtained locally.

In terms of distribution, burnt limestone was recovered from the postholes of round-houses, other structures, ditches and other feature types across the site, but most fragments, approximately 80% by weight, came from pits. The largest concentration was from intercutting pits 2213 and 2256, in the southern part of the site. These two pits contained 45% by weight of all

the burnt stone recovered, and pit 2029 in close proximity to them also contained a large quantity of burnt stone. All three pits produced Late Bronze-Age pottery and 2213 and 2256 also contained small amounts of animal bone. These pits occur in the area where there appears to be the largest concentration of four-post structures.

The origin and function of the burnt stone remains unclear. The quantities and spatial distribution are closely comparable to the pattern observed for the area to the south, where it was suggested that some material at least could have been associated with metalworking activities (Hearne and Heaton 1994, 51). No metalworking evidence was recovered from the 1995–6 excavations.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

LAND SNAILS FROM HENGIFORM RING-DITCH 2607 by Michael J. Allen

A series of spot bulk samples was taken through the main fills of hengiform ring-ditch 2607 (similar sequence of fills to Fig. 6). Large samples of 10 to 20 litres (*c.* 10,000–20,000 gm) were processed for land snails following standard methods (Evans 1972). Although assessment of the samples determined that shell numbers were low (maximum 40 per kg), extraction and analysis were pursued in view of the paucity of landscape evidence for the Neolithic/Bronze-Age period in the Upper Thames Valley. Full quantification of the identified species is held in the archive report and the results are summarised below.

The lower fills of the ditch (2704) contained no shells. Shells were similarly absent from a sample from a finer-grained layer slumped from the inner edge of the feature (2701/2702). The fallen turf (2668), assumed to have derived from the land surface broadly contemporaneous with the use of the ring-ditch, contained only ten shells, largely those of open country and catholic species. It can be suggested tentatively that this represents open, dense grassland which had not been intensively grazed. This conclusion appears to be supported by the assemblage from the main fill of the ditch (2700) which produced 81 shells. Here a mixed assemblage was dominated by the *Vallonia* species (39 in total), but the presence of *Punctum pygmaeum* (two shells) and Zonitidae (*Nesovitrea hammonis*, *Vitrina pellucida* and *Aegopinella nitidula*, totalling 5 shells) suggests some local shading-over of the ditch environment. It may be suggested that this is probably due to initial vegetation colonisation in the ditch, probably mainly longer grasses and herbaceous species.

The lack of evidence for former woodland is a notable aspect of the mollusc assemblages, depauperate as they are. None of the assemblages contains a strong woodland element, and the very robust rupestral species (Clausiliidae) was not even present as non-apical fragments in the primary fills. It can therefore be concluded that the ring-ditch was constructed in an open landscape and that the woodland had been cleared, locally at least, some considerable time prior to its construction. Although the excavated area itself produced only limited evidence for activity before the Late Bronze Age, nearby occupation during the Neolithic and earlier Bronze-Age period is attested from the 1990 excavations at Shorncote (Barclay *et al.* 1995). A spot sample from a monolith column taken through the fallen turf (2668) was assessed by Dr. R. Scaife for pollen preservation. Despite rigorous analysis only very occasional pollen was noted, not sufficient for counting.

FAUNAL REMAINS by R. Symmons

As in 1992 animal bone was scarce, a total of only 575 fragments (2814 gm) being recovered. The bones were in a poor state of preservation, generally fragmentary, slightly to highly

weathered, and in some cases partly mineralised. Over 90% of the assemblage (530 fragments) was unidentifiable to species. The identifiable bones consisted largely of meat-yielding cattle bones (36 fragments) and represent domestic refuse. A lack of small mammal, sheep/goat (4 fragments), pig (1 fragment) and horse (3 fragments) remains was noted. The low representation of small mammals, sheep/goat and pig remains is undoubtedly due to the poor preservation of smaller elements; the comparative absence of horse is likely to be the result of a cultural bias against their consumption. A single deer bone was also identified. There was an even, random spread of animal bones across the site, with no preference towards any specific areas or feature types. Detailed records of the location and identification of the bones are held in the archive. No measurable bones have survived, and the poor preservation conditions on the site have prohibited further analysis of butchery or pathology. Worthy of brief note is the material recovered from context 1088, a fill of pit 483, which produced 1316 gm of bone representing 47% of the entire assemblage. The group comprised largely cattle bones and unidentifiable fragments. Hengiform ring-ditch 2607 produced 22 bone fragments (155 gm), including a cattle radius.

PLANT REMAINS

In view of the extremely limited data recovered from the 1992 excavations a representative selection of samples from Area 1 was processed and formally assessed to determine whether the material appeared to be of any greater potential than that from the 1992 excavation and to aid formulation of an appropriate sampling strategy for Areas 2–4. The assessment concluded that charred material was present but in low quantities and it also noted that the occurrence of grain was minimal and that chaff appeared to be absent. Further, selective samples taken from Areas 2 and 3 were also assessed. No samples were taken from Area 4. A total of 59 samples was assessed (Wessex Archaeology 1996, details in archive).

Eight samples from various feature types were selected for detailed identification of carbonised plant remains and charcoal on the basis of their archaeological significance and the apparent presence of a range of charred material including grain. The samples included those from a possible Early Bronze-Age ring-ditch (2623), postholes associated with two Late Bronze-Age circular post-built structures in different parts of the site (2000 and 2037), large pit 846, other postholes and pennanular ditch 2567. Full details of the samples, the methodologies adopted by the specialists and the results (tabulated by context) are held in the archive.

Carbonised Plant Remains by Joy Ede

Three samples only contained miscellaneous unidentified carbonised pieces. The other five produced a limited range of cereals and weed seeds in very small quantities. Small ring-ditch 2623 produced a single fragment of barley and a weed, *Polygonum* sp. (knotweeds). The Polygonum family has several members which enjoy disturbed habitats such as arable fields and rubbish. Two samples from postholes 2009 and 2143 associated with circular post-built structure 2000 produced less than 100 cereal remains, mostly unidentified but including wheat (*Triticum* sp., 16 occurrences) and barley (*Hordeum* sp., 11 occurrences), indicating that these crops were at least consumed on the site in this period if not actually processed. The two postholes also produced 44 unidentifiable cereal grain fragments. Late Bronze-Age large pit 846 produced no cereal remains at all, only single occurrences of round legume, forget-me-not (cf. *Myostis*), cleaver (Galiuim aperine) and a tuber fragment from onion couch grass (cf. *Arrhenatherum elatius*), the last of which can be a persistent weed of arable land.

Pennanular ditch 2567, of possible Saxon date, produced only one miscellaneous carbonised fragment plus one possible cereal fragment (unidentified).

These samples allow very little comment. They suggest limited burning on the site. It may be noted that one of the circular structures (2000) produced most of the cereal remains present (albeit in small numbers) and that these were most probably derived from domestic cooking within the building. At the same time it may be noted that seven samples from a similar structure elsewhere on the site (2037) only produced small pieces of charcoal and a few miscellaneous, unidentifiable carbonised fragments. This might conceivably suggest that the post-built circular structures had differing functions, some not involving the preparation of food. Overall the plant remains are similar to those from the 1992 excavations with wheat and barley both represented. The total lack of evidence for crop processing may be contrasted with the previous excavations which produced some wheat chaff (Ede 1994, 47).

Charcoal by Rowena Gale

The samples from structure 2037 (posthole 2287) and pennanular ditch 2567 produced insufficient diagnostic information to enable identification. In the other six samples charcoal was relatively sparse (sometimes less than 10 fragments per sample) and many fragments were very small (< 3 mm in radial cross-section) and poorly preserved. In most instances the charcoal was too fragmented to assess the maturity of the wood (i.e. sapwood/heartwood). It was hoped, however, that the samples would provide some data on the character and economy of the local woodland given the limited information (at present) available on the prehistoric environment in the Upper Thames valley.

The sample from small ring-ditch 2623 contained small pieces of charcoal which included hazel *(Corylus)*. Samples from large pit 846 produced the widest range of taxa of any of the samples: maple *(Acer)*, spindle *(Euonymus)*, ash *(Fraxinus)*, hawthorn group *(Pomoideae)*, blackthorn *(P. spinosa)* and oak *(Quercus)*. Other samples associated with Late Bronze-Age circular structures produced smaller quantities of some of these and also a single occurrence of possible alder *(Alnus)*; the latter was very degraded and heavily contaminated with extraneous deposits.

Limited conclusions can be drawn from these results. The samples from Late Bronze-Age contexts identified several taxa characteristic of calcareous soils. Mixed deciduous woodland probably included oak *(Quercus)*, ash *(Fraxinus)*, maple *(Acer)* and hazel *(Corylus)*. Shrubbier and small tree species such as blackthorn *(P. spinosa)*, hawthorn (and possibly other members of the *Pomoideae* such as whitebeam, wild service, apple and pear) and spindle *(Euonymus)* are more likely to have grown in marginal woodland, woodland glades or more open sites. The charcoal was insufficient to indicate any particular selection patterns and timber may have been gathered fairly randomly from the environment. The absence of charred cereal chaff suggests that the charcoal originated from domestic fires rather than from crop-processing. Overall, the wood represented by the charcoal is unlikely to include the complete range of arboreal species growing in the area in the Late Bronze Age. Nonetheless it provides evidence of wooded areas and more open land or glades.

DISCUSSION

By Carrie M. Hearne

Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age Activity

The excavations at Shorncote Quarry in 1990 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit provided evidence for a 'ritual-funerary landscape' during the Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age (Barclay

et al. 1995). This landscape was characterised by the presence of Beaker burials, ring-ditches and a Deverel-Rimbury cremation cemetery (Fig. 1). No evidence for actual burials was forthcoming from the 1995–6 excavations but the data do suggest further nearby activity of a non-domestic nature during these periods.

The hengiform ring-ditch 2607 and the small circular ring-ditches 2623 and 2806 pre-date the Late Bronze-Age settlement and appear to date from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age period. The penannular ditches 2567 and 2841 may also be contemporaneous but this is less certain. As already noted, three of these five features lie in close proximity in the central part of the site. This apparent focus of activity seems to be genuine since the location correlates with a slightly raised area in the gravel sub-surface. It is very likely therefore that the area provided a visual focus in a generally very flat landscape.

Although the feature type represented by hengiform ring-ditch 2607 is unparalleled at Shorncote Quarry itself, similar features dating to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age have been recorded in the Upper Thames Valley. At Gravelly Guy (near Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire) the Phase 2 monument of hengiform enclosure IX, 1 was of a similar overall size to that at Shorncote Quarry but had deeper ditches. The enclosure at Gravelly Guy was out of use by the early second millennium cal. B.C. (Barclay, Gray and Lambrick 1995, 107, fig. 45). At Barrow Hills (Radley, Oxfordshire) the hengiform ring-ditch 611 was very comparable in size to feature 2607 at Shorncote Quarry, being 6.5 m in diameter and enclosing an area of only 2.0 × 1.5 m. At Barrow Hills the feature contained placed deposits of articulated cattle limbs and antlers along the floor of the ditch (Barclay and Halpin forthcoming).

Artefactual evidence for the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age period at Shorncote Quarry is restricted to only seven (40 gm) Beaker sherds and a small quantity of worked flint. Three of the Beaker sherds were recovered from the uppermost fill of hengiform ring-ditch 2607. The same context also produced a small cache of 38 worked flints in mint condition which appear to represent flakes selected as tool blanks. A lower fill of the hengiform ring-ditch also produced a flint scraper.

Late Bronze-Age Settlement

The 1995–6 excavations have revealed evidence for extensive unenclosed Late Bronze-Age settlement extending over approximately nine hectares. This is a very significant addition to the 1992 data which did not suggest such a widespread level of activity on the site. The settlement is dated by the pottery and by fragments from a metalworking mould from a Ewart Park socketed axe which was recovered from the 1992 excavation (Morris 1994, 44–5, fig. 14). This artefactual evidence places the site in Period 7 (950–750 cal. B.C.) of Needham's recent periodisation for the British Bronze Age (Needham 1996). The presence of both plain and decorated ceramics suggests that occupation was focused on, or at least continued into, the latter part of this period. Unfortunately the assemblage contains too little diagnostic material to determine, with any confidence, the development of the settlement over time. This said, the distribution of decorated and grog-tempered ceramics may suggest a general shift or expansion of activity from the southern half of the 1995–6 excavation area northwards and southwards (the latter area represented by the 1992 excavation). Overall, it is unlikely that the whole area was occupied at any one time.

The range of material evidence from the settlement is very limited, in fact even more limited than that recovered in 1992, despite the much larger area investigated. There is no artefactual evidence, for example, for grain-processing, textile-working or metalworking, evidence for all of which was present in the 1992 excavation, albeit in small quantities. As in 1992, the occurrence of charred plant remains was very low. Wheat and barley were apparently consumed on the

settlement but the total lack of chaff from the samples suggests that such cereals were not processed on the site. What little environmental evidence was recovered is indicative of the use of material from the local mixed woodland in domestic fires and hearths. Moreover, the evidence suggests that at least some of the round-houses were not used for the processing of food. Given the lack of evidence for arable agriculture it might reasonably be suggested that animals were the basis of the farming economy at Shorncote Quarry during the Late Bronze Age. Unfortunately this cannot be proven from the available evidence due to the extremely poor preservation of animal bones. Cattle and smaller mammals are present in the faunal assemblage. The latter are certainly under-represented and it is possible that animals were far more important than their scant remains in the archaeological record suggest.

The excavation methodology adopted in 1995–6 has provided a rare opportunity to record the overall configuration of archaeological features across the whole area of the quarry extension. The resulting plan (Fig. 3*) is undoubtedly one of the most important contributions of the project. The value of such a plan depends partly on whether it is regarded as a true (or near) reflection of areas of former activity or merely as a representation of areas of archaeological survival. This question is pertinent for Shorncote Quarry since the site lies in an area which has witnessed prolonged arable cultivation and has more recently been part of a sewage works. As a result, it is generally assumed that subsoil features have been reduced and/or removed across most of the site by erosion and truncation.

One part of the site which has suffered less in terms of erosion of subsoil features is the strip of land adjacent to the eastern field boundary. This area contains large numbers of features including insubstantial elements such as small postholes. This zone has certainly benefited from enhanced preservation, due to the presence of a substantial thickness of humic overburden (typically 1 m +) associated with a medieval cultivation headland. It may also be noted that the line of the eastern field boundary pre-dates the medieval period since it was associated with a north–south track of later Iron-Age or Roman date.

A contour plot of the upper surface of the calcareous gravel was produced during the post-excavation analysis. This demonstrated a very gradual downwards slope from north to south, reflecting the topography of the field prior to gravel extraction. Within this general trend, several localised undulations were evident across the gravel surface. These undulations, however, do not correlate with the apparently 'blank' or 'quiet' parts of the site. The differing densities of features recorded across the site are, therefore, interpreted as having real relevance to the extent and layout of Late Bronze-Age settlement and associated activity areas.

There appear to be three major zones of activity present on the site, separated by broad swathes which are largely devoid of features. It is possible that these three zones represent shifts in the settlement focus over time. The whole of the northern part of the site (Area 1 and most of Area 2) is fairly evenly covered with features, including large pits, circular structures and a small number of postholes. The south-eastern part of the site reflects a striking concentration of activity (parts of Areas 3 and 4) and contains a large number of both circular and four-post structures and many other postholes. Finally, a more dispersed zone of activity seems to be present across the south-western area (western parts of Areas 3 and 4). Interestingly this third zone contains a large number of circular buildings but very few other defined structures. The second and third zones are separated by a wide central, north–south strip containing relatively few features but *including* the group of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze-Age features. This might indicate that the hengiform ring-ditch (2607) continued to be visible or at least that its location was respected during the Late Bronze Age. Elsewhere, other open spaces within the settlement

* Folded plan kept loose in this volume.

may also have been significant. For example, the ten-post structure 2868 (Area 4) is located in a seemingly blank area within the south-east part of the site. This might indicate a non-domestic function for the structure. Similarly, large pit 2842 with its encircling ring of postholes (Area 4) lies in an area almost completely devoid of other archaeological features.

Within the three zones of Late Bronze-Age settlement various other correlations may be identifiable; for example between different types of circular buildings and/or between buildings and other types of structure and features. Detailed assessment of this type is beyond the scope of this report but it is hoped that publication of the overall site plan will provide data for wider-ranging archaeological studies on the nature and layout of Late Bronze-Age settlement.

Turning to the Late Bronze-Age buildings themselves, the 1995–6 excavations produced evidence of 34 well-defined post-built circular structures and two circular gully structures (see Table 1). This is an important 'assemblage' of Late Bronze-Age domestic buildings for the Upper Thames Valley. The buildings provide interesting data on both the detail of individual structures and the overall range of buildings present in the settlement.

Several of the buildings (e.g. 2313, 2430 and 2539) provided evidence for rebuilding of entrances and entrance porches. This might reflect remodelling of an entrance and/or rebuilding or re-strengthening over time. Structure 2037 incorporated opposing entrances, one evidently secondary, effectively providing a back door to the building. Internal roof supports were evident in buildings 2430 and 2869. Central hearths were recorded in buildings 368 and 1590. Structure 2040 contained the largest number of internal features in the form of 21 small postholes or stakeholes, all in the northern half of the building. Some of these features appear to form internal divisions to the building including a line concentric with part of the outer wall.

Two of the Late Bronze-Age circular structures provided unusual and interesting evidence of areas lying outside buildings but apparently associated with them. The location of structure 1744 within enclosure 1745 is unlikely to be purely fortuitous. The evidence indicates that a sub-circular paddock or enclosure, *c.* 14 m in diameter, was attached to the western side of the building. This enclosure incorporated three access points. A 2-m wide entrance immediately adjoined the doorway to the building itself. A 3-m wide entrance lay to the rear of the building and contained evidence of a fenceline across it. The widest entrance to the enclosure was 4 m across and faced to the south-west. Approximately 120 m further north, the small ditch outside large gully structure 368 appears to delimit an extended entrance area for the building.

The group of five buildings in close proximity in Area 2/3 (Fig. 11) represents the most intensive concentration of circular structures anywhere on the site. The group represents a minimum of two phases of buildings. Although the replacement of a single structure on five occasions cannot be ruled out, the presence and replacement of a pair of houses is considered more likely given that paired buildings are common in Late Bronze-Age settlements. From their size, orientation and location, structures 2430 and 2497 seem a well-matched pair as do buildings 2037 and 2313. The absence of direct stratigraphy within the buildings and the small amount of cultural material recovered from them means that the precise sequence and phasing of construction within the group remains unknown. No other groups of such closely-spaced buildings are evident on the site; elsewhere circular buildings appear to be at least 20 m apart.

The limited artefactual and environmental evidence from the site prevents a detailed assessment of the actual nature of Late Bronze-Age settlement at Shorncote. The surviving archaeological evidence is not sufficient to answer some of the basic questions which the settlement generates. For example, how did the settlement develop over time? How many buildings did it accommodate in any one period of occupation? What was the relative importance of different activities to its inhabitants? The archaeological evidence from Reading Business Park in the Middle Thames Valley (Moore and Jennings 1992) may provide further insights into the nature

of the settlement at Shorncote since both sites are of a similar date, extent and form. Nevertheless the limitations in the data from Shorncote do not diminish its overall importance as one of the very few excavated Late Bronze-Age settlements in the Upper Thames Valley. The results from the 1995–6 excavations are an important addition to the sizeable new body of data for the later Bronze Age which recent major archaeological projects in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley have generated, for example the Yarnton-Cassington and the Eton College Rowing Lake projects in the Upper and Middle Thames respectively (see Allen, Hey and Miles 1997). The overall plan of the settlement at Shorncote is also of significance for wider studies of the later Bronze Age in southern England. It may be used to generate discussion on the layout and organisation of settlement, particularly when viewed (in the future) alongside the results from other recent and ongoing projects where large-scale excavations (prompted by PPG16 as at Shorncote) are providing similar opportunities to examine the layout and scale of unenclosed Late Bronze-Age settlements.

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The project archive comprises that from both the evaluation and excavation stages (Wessex Archaeology Site Codes W660 and W5645 respectively). The archive and finds have been deposited with the Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

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