

## IRON AGE TO ROMAN LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND A SAXON BUILDING AT LONDON ROAD, OVERTON, HAMPSHIRE

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### ABSTRACT

*Excavations prior to development of the site for housing revealed Late Iron Age to Early Roman occupation, a Saxon sunken-featured building and a medieval pit. Small collections of pottery, animal bone and charred plant remains are described.*

### INTRODUCTION

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd carried out an archaeological excavation in advance of housing development at London Road, Overton, Hampshire (SU 5191 4979) (Fig. 1). Field evaluation had revealed a modest number of archaeological features dating to the late prehistoric, Roman and Saxon periods and as a result, excavation was required to satisfy a planning condition, and was targeted on six areas on the western portion of the site (Fig. 2; A–F).

The development area comprised a c. 6ha parcel of land on the north side of London Road on the eastern side of Overton. The River Test flows to the north of the site. There is a slope from c. 114m above Ordnance Datum at the eastern edge of the site down to c. 95m AOD at its western margin. The underlying geology is clay with flints and tertiary debris (BGS 1975), which was observed in Areas A, B, D and E, although chalk and gravel were also evident in areas C, E and F.

Prior to the field evaluation no archaeological finds or deposits had been recorded for the site, although several sites and finds have been noted in the vicinity. These include Iron Age and Roman pottery to the north and south of the site as well as Roman building remains. A cremation burial with pottery dated to the

3rd or 4th century and several Late Roman coins were identified in the mid 19th century, although their precise location is unknown (EH 2002). An evaluation on the northern margins of the village (Saunders 2000) identified field boundaries of possible Roman and medieval dates.

There has previously been no archaeological evidence for Saxon settlement despite Overton's being considered a royal manor from the 8th century. Similarly there is no archaeological evidence for medieval remains in the town but it is listed in Domesday Book, when it was assessed at forty hides, with land for 32 ploughs, with two churches, four mills and 94 villagers, making it a substantial settlement (Williams & Martin 2002, 96). It is known as a borough from an account of AD1217–18 and from the medieval period it underwent several periods of decline until the 16th century. There are also a large number of shrunken or deserted villages surrounding Overton.

### THE EVALUATION

An evaluation was carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in July 2004 (Taylor 2004). Of the 60 trenches dug, 12 contained archaeological features: ditches, gullies, pits and postholes. Most of the pottery recovered came from the Late Iron Age to Early Roman period, with three Saxon sherds. Several medieval sherds came from one pit, dating from the 13th or 14th century.

### THE EXCAVATION

Based on the evaluation results, six areas (A–F) were identified as having archaeological

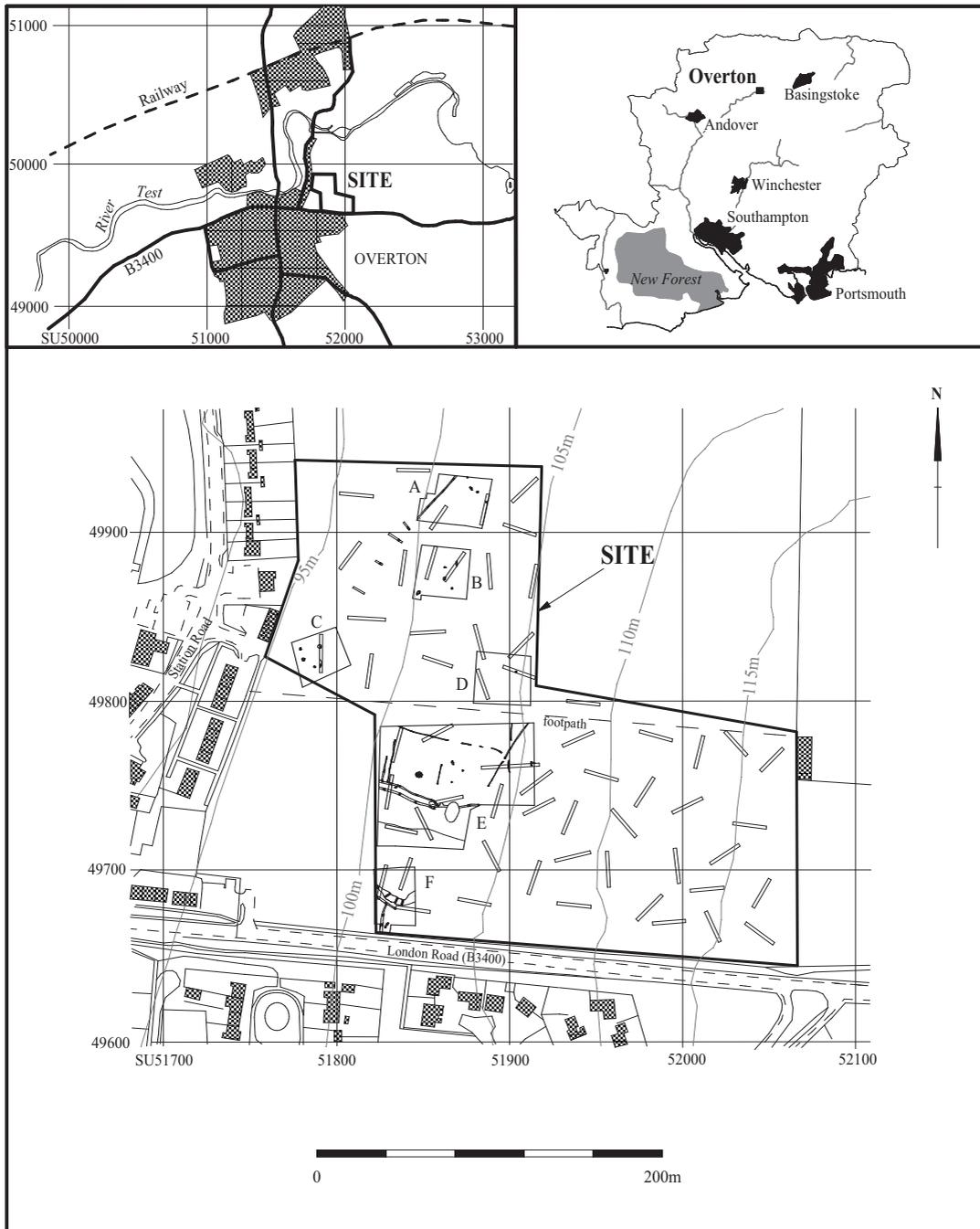


Fig. 1 Location of site, with evaluation trenches and areas excavated

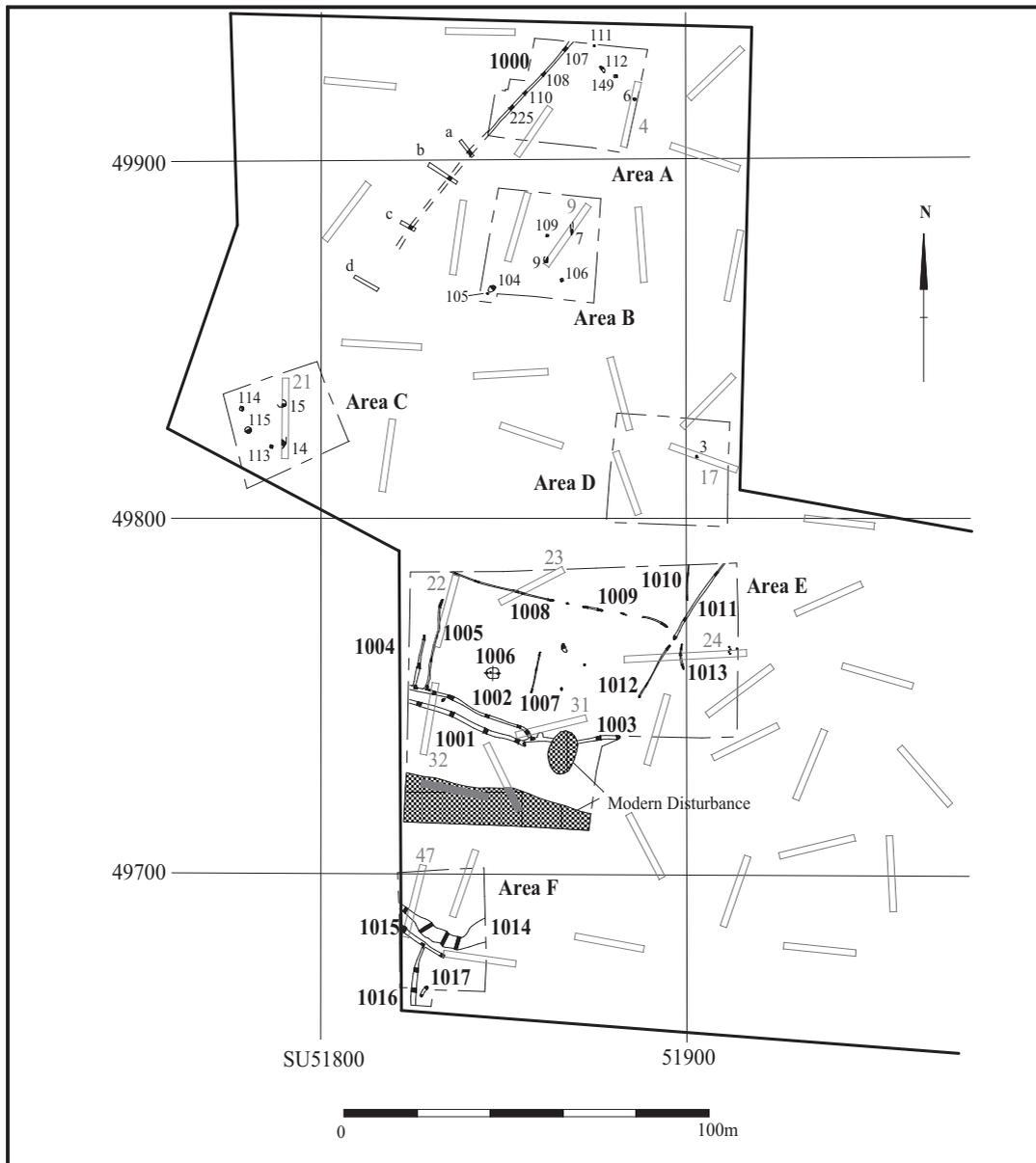


Fig. 2 Plan of Excavation Areas

potential (Fig. 2): the remainder of the site was considered to have little or no archaeological potential, or was not directly threatened by the development. In the six areas to be excavated, topsoil and overburden were removed by a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless

ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, to expose the uppermost surface of the archaeological features. All archaeological features were cleaned and excavated by hand: discrete features were half-sectioned as a minimum, and some fully excavated to retrieve

further dating evidence. Ditches and gullies were excavated to a minimum of 10% in slots. Four additional trenches (A, B, C and D) were excavated to clarify the extent and alignment of ditch 1000.

#### *Area A*

Area A (40m × 30m) was located at the northern end of the site around evaluation Trench 4. Besides undated pits, it contained Early Roman ditch 1000, aligned NE–SW. This was up to 0.38m deep and contained a uniform pale brown silty clay fill. Five pieces of 1st-century AD pottery were retrieved as well as a single nail. It continued in a south-westerly direction through the additional trenches A–C but terminated before Trench D.

#### *Area B*

Area B (30m × 30m) situated south of Area A, contained three pits, an undated posthole and a plough scar. Pit 104 measured 1.30m wide and 0.10m deep and provides something of a puzzle. It contained 57 sherds of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, animal bone, eleven fragments of tile and a 4th-century coin. A radiocarbon date from bone from this pit (see below and Table 7) provided a most probable date between AD 130–261 (with other possible dates extending to the early 4th century). It is possible that all of the pottery was residual and the coin intrusive, and that the bone provides the dating for the pit, but it is simpler to assume everything post-dates the coin and both the pottery and bone were redeposited from somewhere else. Pit 106 measured 0.60m in diameter and 0.25m deep. It contained three sherds of medieval pottery and four pieces of tile. Pit 109 was post-medieval.

#### *Area C*

Area C (30m × 24m) contained one Saxon pit, two medieval pits and a circular deposit of burnt bone (113), 0.50m wide and 0.08m deep. This last was fully excavated and, apart from unidentified burnt animal bone, produced five tiny sherds of mid 1st-century pottery, and some charred seeds.

Pit 15, identified in the evaluation, contained three fills, only the top one of which produced dating evidence: thirteen sherds of Late Saxon pottery.

Pit 114 was 0.80m by 0.50m, and 0.52m deep. It contained 41 pieces of medieval pottery, animal bone and a single piece of struck flint. Pit 115 measured 1.60m in diameter and 0.64m deep. Its mid grey silty clay fill (165) produced 22 sherds of pottery dated to AD1250–1350.

#### *Area D*

Area D (32m × 30m) was situated towards the centre of the site. The only feature identified was a small pit (3). This was fully excavated and a total of 28 pieces of burnt flint were recovered.

#### *Area E (Figs 3 - 6)*

This L-shaped area covered *c.* 0.5ha. The features identified consisted of a rectangular enclosure, other gullies and ditches, eight isolated postholes and a sunken-featured building. The southern section of this area was highly disturbed and had been backfilled with modern rubbish. According to local sources this was where an offshoot of the London Road came through the field before entering the village. This was removed in the mid 20th century.

A rectangular enclosure at least 60m by 36m was defined by gullies 1001–5, 1008–9 and 1012, with an extension to the north implied by gully 1011, and internal subdivisions in the form of gullies 1007 and 1010. All of these features appear to have been filled in the 1st century AD, and probably cut not much earlier. The south side of the enclosure, marked by gully 1001, measured 33.00m in length, between 0.85m and 1.70m wide and 0.28m and 0.49m deep. Of the five slots excavated, only slot 130 contained any dating evidence, 41 sherds of Late Iron Age to Early Roman pottery. This gully joined ditch 1003 although no relationship was evident between the two features.

Gully 1002, paralleling 1001, was 36m long, between 0.55m and 0.84m wide and between 0.17m and 0.31m deep. This gully also joined

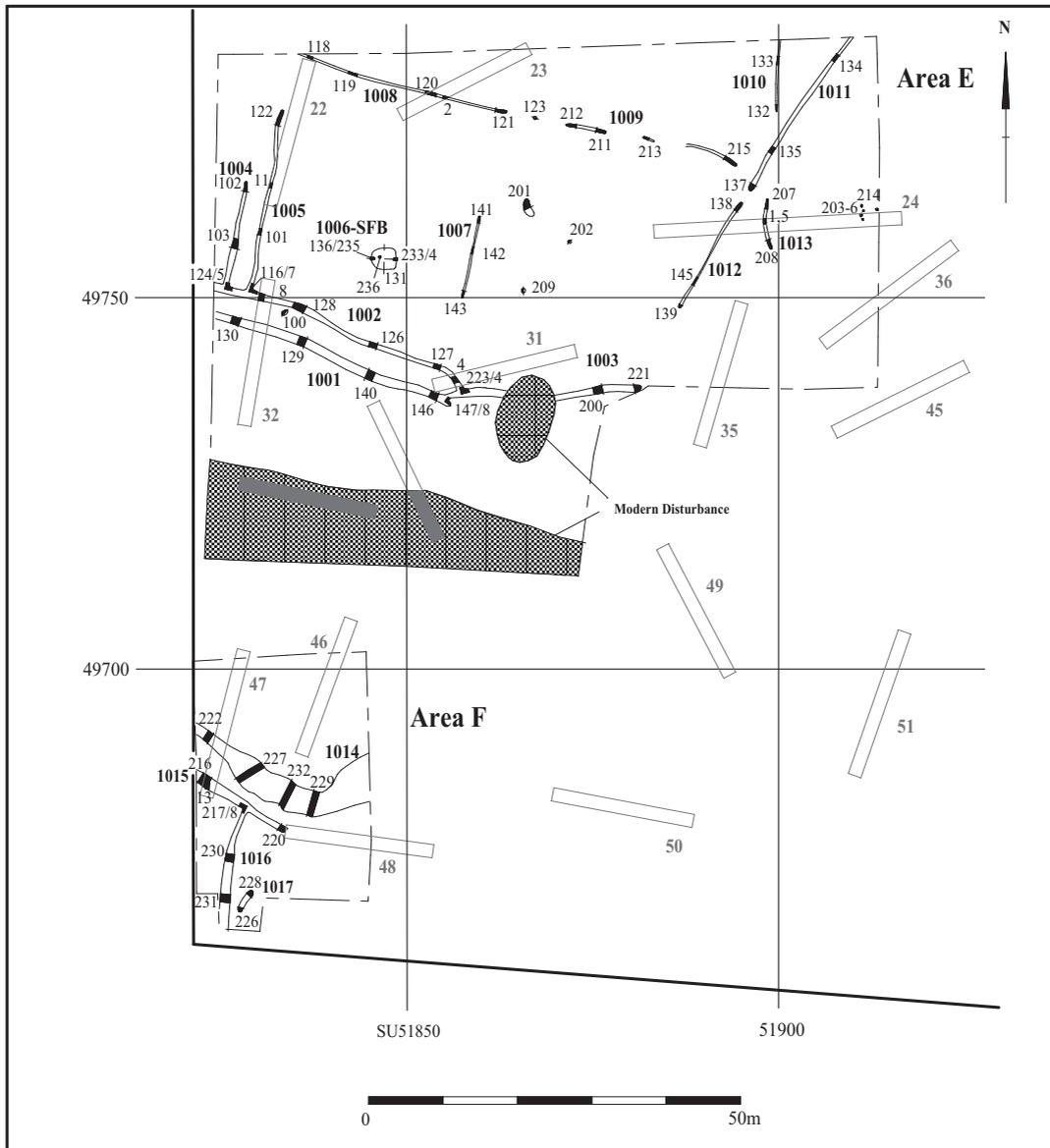


Fig. 3 Plan of Areas E and F showing all features

ditch 1003 but again no relationship was evident between them. This was also the case with the relationship between 1003 and gullies 1004 and 1005, suggesting that all these gullies were contemporary. Of the six slots through 1002, only slot 223 did not contain dating evidence, the gully as a whole yielding a total of

257 sherds of Early Roman pottery (including 161 from the surface). It is possible there was a bank, or perhaps a hedge, between gullies 1001 and 1002, although for the other sides of the enclosure, a single gully sufficed. Perhaps this suggests any occupation lay south of the enclosure.



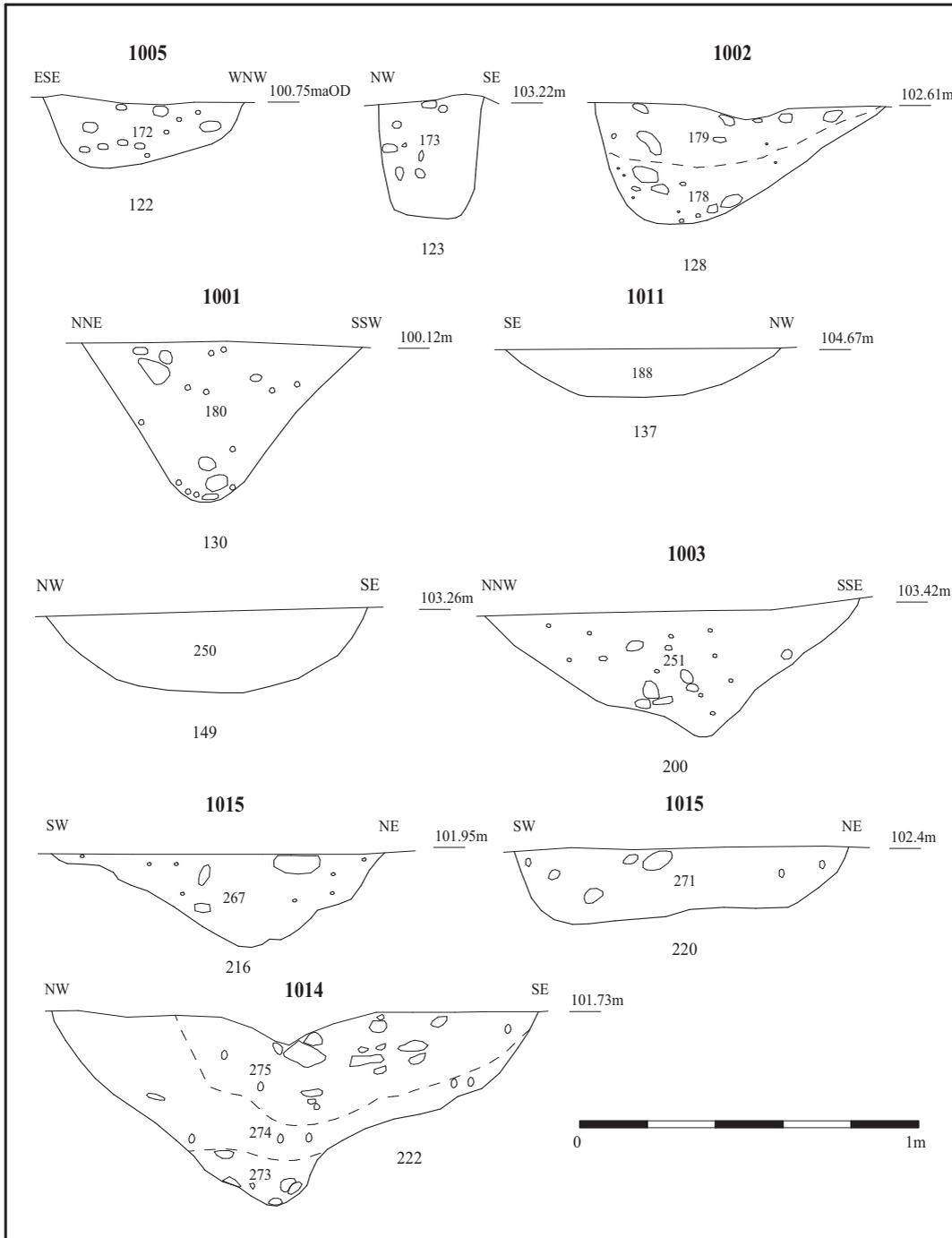


Fig. 5 Selected Sections

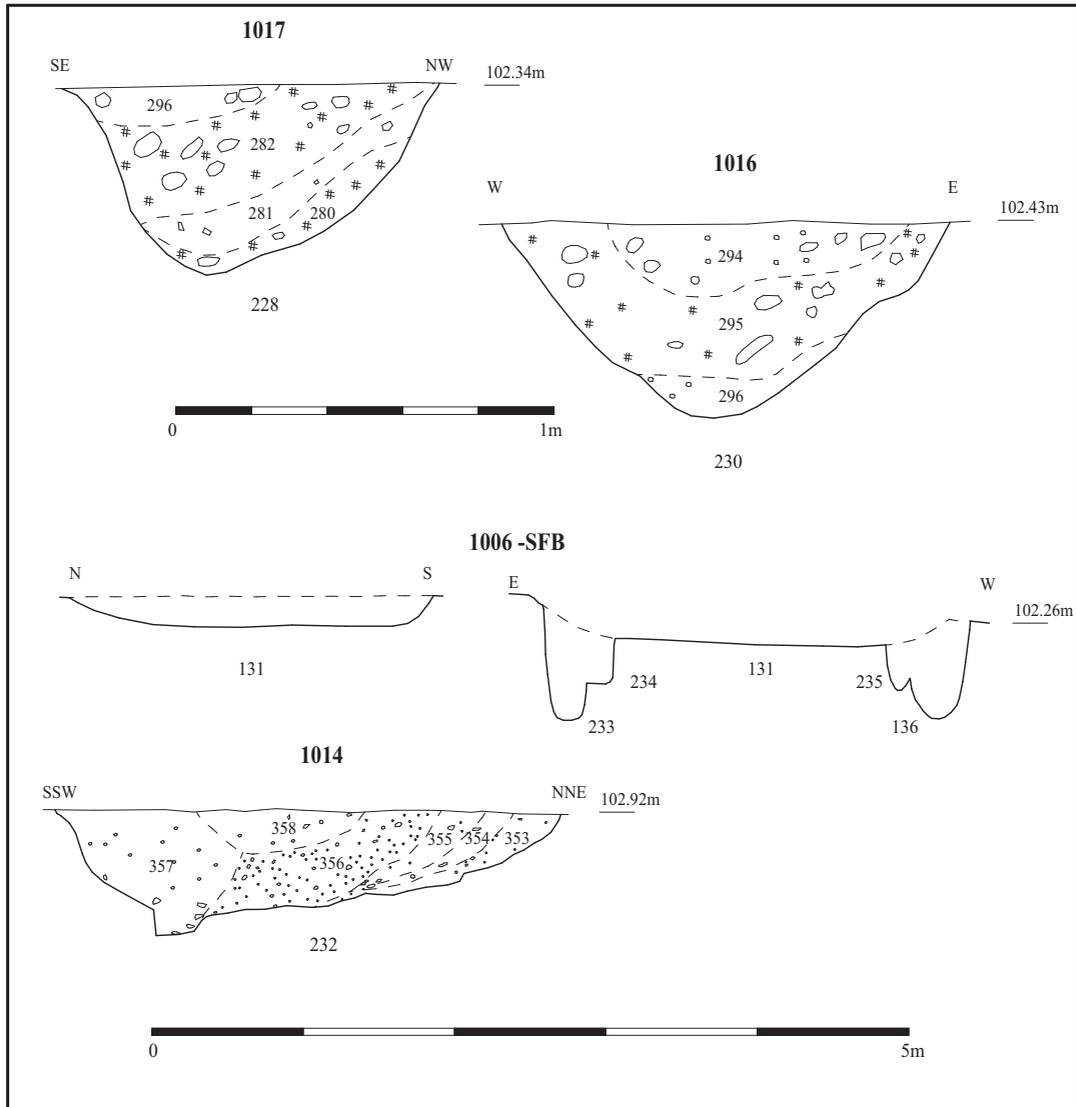


Fig. 6 Selected sections

Ditch 1003 was *c.* 26m long aligned east-west, uniformly 1.10m wide and up to 0.38m deep and terminated at its eastern end. Four slots (147, 200, 221 and 224) were excavated through it, with slot 221 producing three sherds of Early Roman pottery. Cut through the middle of this ditch was a large relatively modern pit, most likely a flint extraction pit, as these are common throughout the village.

Gully 1004 measured 14.50m in length and was aligned approximately north-south, with a clear terminal at its northern end. The gully was *c.* 0.45m wide and never more than 0.19m deep. It produced 55 sherds of Early Roman pottery from its brownish red silty clay fill. Similarly gully 1005 extended *c.* 25m north-south, parallel to 1004. It was uniformly 0.55m wide, only 0.22m deep and, again, terminated

at its northern end. Two sherds of pottery including one dating to the 4th century were retrieved from its reddish brown silty clay fill, however, this would be the only feature of this date on the site and it is likely the sherd is intrusive: it is assumed that this gully is contemporary with the others forming the enclosure. Again no relationship was visible between this gully and ditch 1002 suggesting they filled at the same time.

Gully 1007 extended approximately north-south for 11m, terminating at both ends; it is presumably an internal division of the enclosure. It varied from 0.32m to 0.44m wide and was only 0.02 and 0.08m deep. No dating evidence was retrieved.

Gully 1008/1009 consisted of several discontinuous segments most likely all parts of the same feature, which has been damaged by ploughing. In total nine slots (2, 118–121, 211–213, 215) were excavated through it, which produced a total of just 27 sherds of Early Roman pottery. An entranceway was evident between slots 121 and 212 with a posthole (123) between the two. This measured 0.30m in diameter and 0.35m deep. Its dark brown/black clayey silt fill (173) contained a single sherd of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery and animal bone.

Gully 1010 was 10m long, aligned north-south, out of alignment with the rest of the enclosure, but still probably related. It was 0.25m wide and just 0.04m deep. Gully 1013 could be its continuation. No finds were recovered from either of these shallow features during the excavation phase, but 1013 produced Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery during the evaluation.

Gully 1011 measured 25.00m in length and was aligned approximately NE–SW, forming part of the east side of the enclosure but extending further north. It measured between 0.54m and 0.82m wide and was no more than 0.17m deep. This was broadly parallel to ditch 100 (further north and west) and may have been part of a larger system of continuous land divisions. Slot 137 produced three sherds of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery. This gully terminated and a 2m wide entranceway was evident. It then continued as gully 1012. This measured *c.*17m in length and followed

the alignment of 1011. No dating evidence was retrieved from three slots.

A Saxon sunken-featured building (1006) consisted of the large hollow (131) 3.42m across and 0.50m deep, with postholes (135, 136) at either end. These showed obvious re-cuts (232, 234). A further posthole (236) was evident in the middle of the cut of the hollow. The hollow contained 316 sherds of pottery, 15 of which were Late Roman, with the remainder Early Saxon, making this a relatively large assemblage for the period. The internal postholes all contained Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, which must originate from elsewhere on the site, perhaps brought in as packing material. This feature also contained animal bone, a spindle whorl, two pieces of Roman glass and a bone pin, several iron nails and two fragments of iron blade. Radiocarbon dating (below) on bone from the hollow (131) confirms a likeliest date in the 6th century AD, probably in the middle third of the century.

Of the handful of isolated postholes in this area (202–9, 214), only 209 produced any dating evidence, a piece of post-medieval tile. A single undated pit/tree throw (201) was also present.

#### *Area F (Figs 3–6)*

This area (21.00m × 27.00m), at the southern end of the site, just south of Area E, contained three ditches and a small stretch of gully. Ditch 1014 was aligned approximately east–west. It was irregular in shape across the whole of its length, being 1.58m wide at its western end and 3.40m wide at its eastern end. Its depth was between 0.58m and 0.90m. Five slots were excavated across the ditch (13, 222, 227, 229 and 232), which produced 572 sherds of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery. It had between three and six fills and its varying profile showed evidence of irregular re-cutting. The geology of this area of the site comprised both chalk and gravel, with chalk evident in the area of the irregular ditch. It is possible that this feature may represent a natural fissure in the chalk, which was utilized as a boundary feature or as a rubbish dump. This may account for the feature's unevenness.

Ditch 1015 was aligned along the south side of 1014 and terminated at its eastern end after

c.14m. It was between 1.00m and 1.16m wide and between 0.23m and 0.33m deep. Five sherds of Early Roman pottery were retrieved from slot 216. No relationship was evident between this ditch and ditch 1016. Ditch 1016 was aligned approximately north-south and joined up with ditch 1015. It measured c.17m in length and between 0.56 and 0.81m deep and continued into the baulk at the southern end of the area. It was not possible to extend this area further due to the presence of a live water pipe and the London Road running adjacent to this area. Three slots produced 23 pieces of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, and some animal bone.

A small irregular stretch of gully (1017) next to ditch 1016 was c.3.50m long and was aligned approximately NE-SW. Both terminal ends (226 and 228) were investigated: 226 was 0.60m wide and 0.21m deep. Its dark grey/black silty clay fill (279) produced animal bone and eight pieces of burnt flint. Slot 228 measured 1.00m wide and 0.45m deep. This end of the gully contained four separate fills (280, 281, 282 and 296), showing evidence of tip lines. Eighteen pieces of Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery were retrieved as well as pieces of bone.

#### THE POTTERY by Malcolm Lyne

The site yielded 1844 sherds (19kg) of pottery: a further 48 sherds (155g) were retrieved from sieved samples. Most of this pottery is of Late Iron Age and pre-Flavian Roman in date but SFB 1006 yielded a large Early Saxon assemblage with a few residual Late Roman sherds. Pits 114 and 115 yielded small amounts of medieval pottery.

All of the assemblages were quantified by numbers of sherds and weight per fabric. The fabrics were classified using a ×8 magnification lens with inbuilt metric graticule for determining the natures, forms, sizes and frequencies of added inclusions. Four numbered fabric series were then drawn up with the prefixes IA, R, ES and M for Iron Age, Roman, Early Saxon and Medieval respectively. None of the assemblages is large enough for further quantification by Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs) based on rim sherds (Orton 1975).

#### *Fabrics*

#### *Iron Age*

- IA.1A. Handmade polished black with profuse ill-sorted 0.10 to 2.00mm calcined flint filler
- IA.1B. Handmade polished black fabric with profuse 0.50 to 1.00mm calcined flint filler
- IA.2. Handmade fabric with profuse 1.00mm calcined flint and 0.50mm quartz filler
- IA.3. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 0.30mm quartz and sparse ill-sorted 0.10 to 2.00mm calcined flint filler fired polished brown-black
- IA.4A. Handmade fabric with profuse 0.10mm quartz and sparse up to 2.00mm red-brown sandstone filler
- IA.4B. Handmade oxidized cream fabric with sparse up to 3.00mm reddish-brown sandstone, flint and white grog.
- IA.5A. Handmade fabric with profuse 0.10 to 0.20mm quartz filler
- IA.5B. Handmade smooth-surfaced fabric with profuse up to 0.50mm quartz filler
- IA.5C. Sandy handmade fabric with profuse up to 1.00mm quartz fired rough brown-black. Occasional chalk inclusions are sometimes present.
- IA.5D. Sandy handmade fabric with profuse up to 2.00mm multi-coloured quartz filler
- IA.6. Sandy handmade fabric with profuse silt and sparse irregular up to 2.00mm white quartz filler
- IA.7. Polished black fabric with profuse irregular 1.00mm rose quartz filler
- IA.8. Handmade silt-tempered black fabric with additional occasional to moderate grog
- IA.9. Handmade and wheel-turned silt-sized up to 0.20mm quartz tempered black fabric with additional occasional to moderate 0.50mm calcined flint and chalk
- IA.10A. Very-fine 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware
- IA.10B. Coarse lumpy 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware
- IA.10C. Coarse 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware with additional sparse flint
- IA.11. Handmade with profuse up to 3.00mm cream grog filler
- IA.12. Handmade fabric with silt-sized to 0.20mm quartz and cream grog filler
- IA.13. Handmade oxidized fabric with glauconitic-sand filler

#### *Roman*

- R.1. Handmade oxidized Silchester ware with profuse ill-sorted 0.10 to 3.00mm calcined flint filler
- R.2A. Coarse Alice Holt fabric
- R.2B. Fine Alice Holt fabric
- R.2C. Alice Holt/Farnham greyware

- R.2D. Overwey/Portchester D fabric  
 R.3. Rough grey-black with profuse up to 2.00mm multi-coloured quartz filler  
 R.4. Very-fine-sanded grey fabric with profuse up to 0.30mm quartz filler fired smooth black with orange-brown margins  
 R.5. Handmade cream to buff fabric with profuse 2.00mm black and white grog and sparse ironstone filler. Similar to Oare Fabric I (Swan 1975).  
 R.6. Wheel-turned silt-tempered fabric.  
 R.7. Sand-free polished grey fabric  
 R.8. Gallo-Belgic Whiteware  
 R.9. Sandfree wheel-turned pink fabric with sparse 0.30 to 0.50 cream and red grog filler, patchy thin white slip and fuming. British imitation of TR 3  
 R.10. Pale wheel-turned grey fabric with profuse up to 0.20mm quartz filler fired rough buff-yellow  
 R.11. Rough grey-black fabric with profuse up to 0.50mm quartz filler and 'scorched' surfaces  
 R.12. Wheel-turned greyware with profuse 0.20mm quartz  
 R.13. Central Gaulish Samian  
 R.14. New Forest purple colour-coat  
 R.15. Oxfordshire Red Colour-coat  
 R.16. Baetican Dressel 20 (*amphora*) fabric  
 R.17. Pink *amphora* fabric with profuse up to 0.50mm crushed white limestone and igneous inclusions with external scumming  
 R.18. Miscellaneous Roman wares  
 R.19. Miscellaneous *amphora* fabrics

#### Saxon

- ES.1. Handmade silt tempered fabric fired patchy black/brown/red with additional sparse 0.50 to 1.00mm quartz and calcareous inclusions  
 ES.2. Handmade fabric with profuse 0.50 to 1.00mm quartz filler.  
 ES.3A. Handmade hard grey fabric with moderate up to 0.50mm crushed flint, rounded black ironstone and quartz filler  
 ES.3B. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 0.50mm both angular and rounded black ironstone and sub-angular iron-stained quartz filler.  
 ES.4. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 1.50mm multi-coloured quartz filler and occasional irregular up to 3.00mm red sandstone inclusions.

#### Medieval

- M.1. Silt-tempered smooth buff-grey fabric with stamped decoration  
 M.2. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 1.00mm alluvial flint, 0.50mm multi-coloured quartz and up to 2.00mm leached-out chalk filler  
 M.3. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 0.50mm multi-coloured quartz and up to 1.00mm leached-out chalk filler

- M.4. Similar but with sparse quartz and flint; includes cooking-pot sherd with internal glaze  
 M.5. Sandy grey fabric; sometimes with splashes of external green glaze  
 M.6. Silt tempered pale grey fabric fired cream to grey-buff; sometimes with external dappled apple-green glaze  
 M.7. Silt-tempered pink fabric with external brown/black glaze

#### Late Iron Age to c.AD60/70

Assemblage 1. From Ditch 1014. The various fills of this wide, irregular ditch yielded 574 sherds (8672g) of pottery (Table 1). The most significant element in this assemblage is the 'Belgic' grog-tempered group of fabrics (IA.10A, 10B and 10C) which together make up one third of the material by sherd count. Sherds in calcined-flint tempered fabrics IA.1A and 1B, mixed-grit tempered fabric IA.9 and sand-tempered fabrics IA.5A and 5B make up 18%, 12% and 14% of the sherds respectively.

A small group of both handmade and wheel-turned sherds in fabrics IA.11, IA.12, R.5 and R.9 all include cream grog in their fillers, appear to belong to the transition between the Late Iron Age and Roman periods and make up nearly 10% of the assemblage between them. The fillers have much in common with those of Fabric I at Oare (Swan 1975) and later Savernake wares from Wiltshire (Anderson 1979) and a source or sources in that direction seems likely. The high percentage of 'Belgic' grog-tempered wares and the presence of at least one Silchester ware storage-jar in fabric R.1 suggest, however, that the bulk of the pottery traded to the site came from *Calleva*, 17km to the north-east.

An absence of saucapan-pot sherds and the small percentage of early Romanized fragments (6%) suggest that rubbish deposition in the ditch started after 25BC and ended c. AD60/70.

#### Illustrated sherds (Fig. 7)

- Fig. 7:1 Everted-rim jar in lumpy calcined-flint tempered fabric IA.1A fired patchy brown/black with vertical burnished-line on its exterior surface. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. Context 289.

Table 1 Pottery assemblage 1, summary quantification of pottery by fabric (ditch 1014)

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No of sherds</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>	<i>%</i>
IA.1A	98	17.1	1361	15.7
IA.1B	2	0.3	68	0.8
IA.4B	26	4.5	162	1.9
IA.5A	1	0.2	3	0.1
IA.5B	77	13.4	785	9.1
IA.7	1	0.2	5	0.1
IA.9	69	12.0	937	10.7
IA.10A	40	7.0	242	2.8
IA.10B	78	13.6	2341	26.9
IA.10C	66	11.5	1312	15.0
IA.11	14	2.4	317	3.7
IA.12	29	5.0	414	4.8
IA.13	9	1.6	50	0.6
R.1	23	4.0	390	4.5
R.5	7	1.2	97	1.1
R.9	3	0.5	6	0.1
R.17	2	0.3	114	1.3
MISC	29	5.1	68	0.8
	574		8672g	

Fig. 7:2 Handmade necked-bowl in polished black sand-tempered fabric IA.5B with occasional calcareous inclusions. Ext. rim diameter 140mm. Paralleled at Danebury in similar fabric (Cunliffe 1984, fig.6.97–123). *c.* 50BC–AD50. Context 289.

Fig. 7:3 Necked-jar in similar fabric. Ext. rim diameter 120mm. *c.* 25BC–AD50. Context 290.

Fig. 7:4 ?Wheel-turned bead-rim jar in black fabric IA.9. Ext. rim diameter 170mm. Context 290.

Fig. 7:5 Another, handmade, example in calcined-flint tempered fabric IA.1A. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. Context 290.

Fig. 7:6 Bead-rim jar in buff fabric IA.9 fired patchy buff/pink/black externally with sparse crushed calcined-flint and

grog inclusions up to 1.00mm. Ext. rim diameter 180mm. Context 284.

Fig. 7:7 Necked jar in similar fabric fired black with external polish. Ext. rim diameter 140mm. Context 292/3.

Fig. 7:8 Neck-cordoned jar or bowl in fine grog-tempered fabric IA.11 fired black with polished orange-red exterior. Ext. rim diameter 200mm. Late Iron Age–AD60. Context 290.

Fig. 7:9 Everted-rim storage-jar in grog-tempered buff fabric R.5 with coarse black and white grog filler, fired patchy black/buff. Ext. rim diameter 260mm. Paralleled at Oare in similar fabric (Swan 1975, fig.4–52). *c.* AD40–60. Contexts 284 and 291.

Fig. 7:10 Bead-rim jar in black fabric IA.12 fired cream with orange and black patches

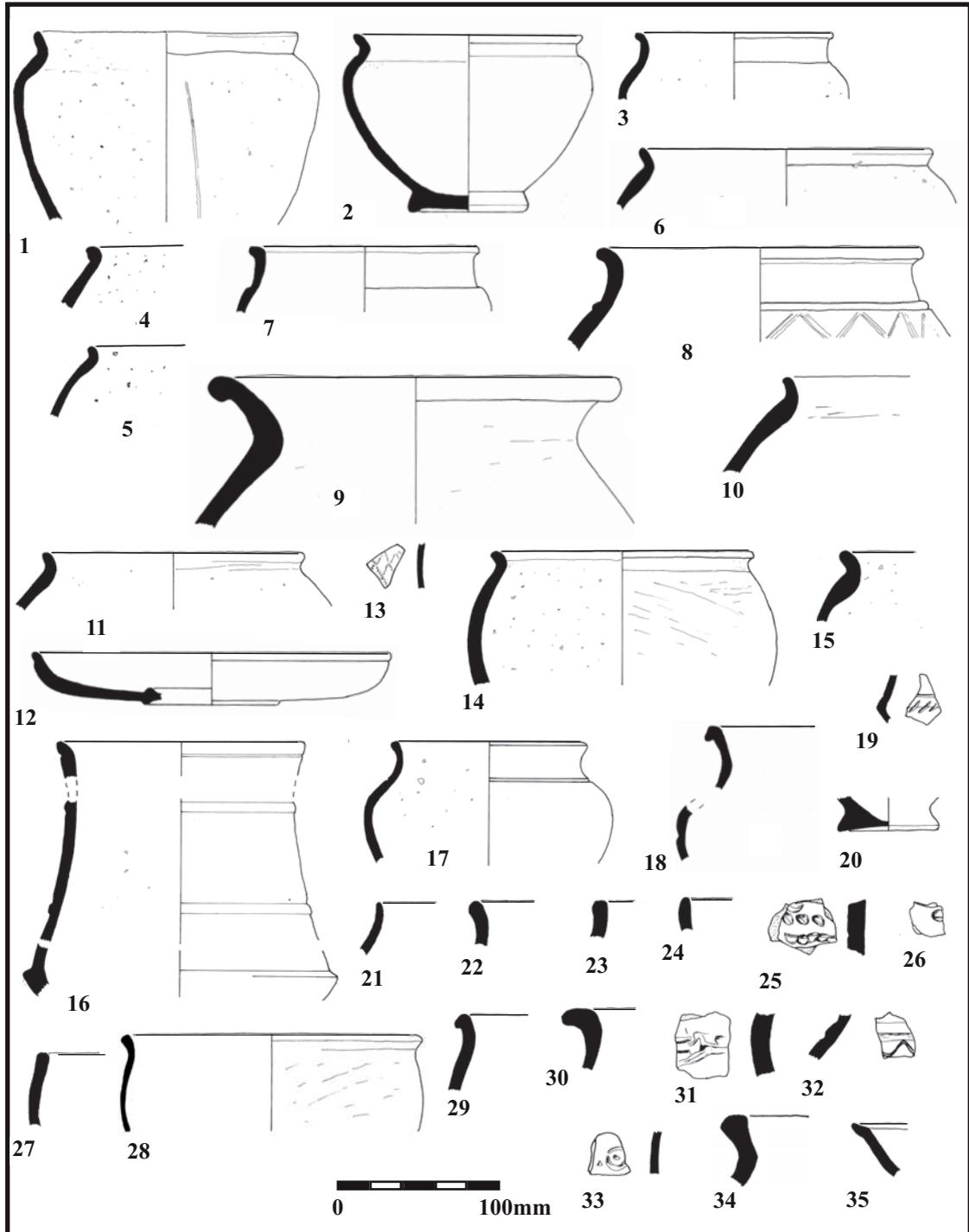


Fig. 7 Pottery (see text for details)

- externally. Ext. rim diameter 220mm. Context 289.
- Fig. 7:11 ?Butt-beaker in cream fabric R5 with sparse black ironstone and white grog and surface greying. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. Possibly an early Savernake industry product. *c.* AD40–70. Context 284.
- Fig. 7:12 Bead-rim platter with foot-ring in wheel-turned black fabric IA.12 with silt, black ferrous inclusions and cream grog filler, fired polished patchy orange-brown/black externally and similarly-polished orange-brown internally. Ext. rim diameter 220mm. Much of this vessel is present. *c.* AD43–60. Context 284.
- Fig. 7:13 Fragment from sand-free grey beaker in fabric R.9 fired pink-buff externally with rouletted acute-latticing. Paralleled at Oare (Swan 1975, fig.5–61). *c.* AD40–60. Context 284.

Assemblage 2. From Ditch 1002. The 121 sherds (964g) from this feature include the following:

- Fig. 7:14 Handmade bead-rim jar in brown fabric IA.1A with profuse calcined-flint filler fired smooth black externally. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. Context 176.
- Fig. 7:15 Another such vessel in similar fabric with similar surface treatment. Ext. rim diameter 200mm. Context 179.
- Fig. 7:16 Wheel-turned pedestalled bowl of Thompson Type F3–4 (Thompson 1982) in black fabric IA.9 with profuse silt and occasional 0.50mm flint inclusion. Ext. rim diameter 140mm. Twenty-seven sherds are present from this vessel. *c.* AD10–50. Context 167.
- Fig. 7:17 Neck-cordoned bowl in buff-pink fabric R.5 with ironstone, pale grog and finely crushed calcined-flint filler fired polished grey-brown externally. Ext. rim diameter 120mm. Paralleled at Oare in similar fabric (Swan 1975, fig.4–45). *c.* AD40–60. Context 176.
- Fig. 7:18 Wheel-turned necked jar in pale grey fabric R.10 with profuse up-to 0.20mm multi-coloured quartz filler, fired rough buff-yellow. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. Context 167.

A fragment from the base of a pedestal urn of Thompson (1982) Class A1 in ‘Belgic’ grog-

tempered fabric IA.10A is also present in an assemblage which is probably contemporary with Assemblage 1.

Assemblage 3. From pit 113 (fill 163). This pit yielded five small sherds (10g) of pottery, comprising one fragment in very-fine ‘Belgic’ grog-tempered ware (*c.* 25BC–AD60), two in Alice Holt/Surrey greyware (*c.* AD50–140) and two from a beaker in sand-free greyware (*c.* AD50–150). A pre-Flavian date *c.* AD50–60 is indicated.

#### *Early Saxon c. AD450–550*

Assemblage 4. From the SFB 1006 (fill 181). The 310 sherds (2346g) of pottery recovered from this feature are made up almost entirely of Early Saxon sherds in silt and sand-tempered fabrics ES1 and ES2. Fifteen residual Roman sherds include fragments from a hook-rim jar in Alice Holt/Farnham greyware (*c.* AD200–400), a Central Gaulish samian Dr. 45 *mortarium* (*c.* AD170–200), a beaker base in New Forest Purple Colour-coat fabric (*c.* AD260–400) and a bowl in Oxfordshire Red Colour-coat ware (*c.* AD240–400). There are also 8 unidentified crumbs of pottery. There is no other evidence for Late Roman occupation on this site, other than an abraded convex-sided dish fragment in Overwey/Portchester D fabric from gully 1005: it may be that the Saxon inhabitants acquired these sherds from another source.

The Early Saxon sherds comprise 125 in Fabric ES.1, 159 in Fabric ES.2 and one each in Fabrics ES.3A, 3B and 4: the first two fabrics roughly equate with Fabrics S2 and S1 respectively at the 7th-century site at Riverdene, Basingstoke (Timby 2003). This feature was probably in use *c.* AD450–550. The following fragments are present:

#### *Illustrated sherds*

- Fig. 7:1 Carination with band of stabbed decoration from ?pedestalled bowl in hard grey fabric ES.3A. Paralleled at Dorchester-upon-Thames (Myres 1977, fig. 201–1466) and Sutton Courtenay (Myres 1977, fig. 201–3439) in early-to-mid 5th century contexts.

- Fig. 7:20 Oxidized pedestal base fragment from ?similar form in fabric ES.3B
- Fig. 7:21 Hole-mouthed vessel in fabric ES.1 fired polished black. Paralleled in form at Old Down Farm, Andover (Davies 1980, fig. 7–36).
- Fig. 7:22–4 Rim fragments from three slack-profiled vessels in fabric ES.2
- Fig. 7:25 Cooking-pot bodysherd in black fabric ES.1 decorated with rusticated bands. *c.* AD450–650
- Fig. 7:26 Rusticated cooking-pot sherd in similar fabric. *c.* AD450–650
- Fig. 7:27 Straight-sided hole-mouthed vessel in profuse 0.50 to 1.00mm quartz sand tempered fabric ES.2 fired brown-black. Paralleled at Worthy Park, Hants (Myres 1977, fig. 71–1207). *c.* AD500–600.
- Fig. 7:28, 29 Two slack-profiled jars in similar fabric.
- Fig. 7:30 Necked jar in rough black fabric ES.4 with internal polish.
- Fig. 7:31 Fragment from jar with rusticated decoration in fabric ES.2
- Fig. 7:32 Corrugated shoulder fragment from ?biconical jar in black fabric ES.2 with scribed linear chevron decorated band. *c.* AD450–550.

#### *Late Saxon. c. AD750–950*

Assemblage 5. From pit 15 (fill 68). The assemblage from this pit is very small (13 sherds, 136g) and comprises seven handmade cooking-pot sherds in coarse fabric M3 with mixed alluvial-flint, quartz and chalk filler up to 1.00mm (*c.* AD750–1000), as well as six others in smooth silt-tempered fabric M1 fired patchy buff/buff-black. The latter include the following:

#### *Illustrated sherd*

- Fig. 7:33 Sherd with crude ring-and-dot and triangular stamps. Finewares decorated with similar, but better quality, ring-and-dot stamps and plain ring stamps appear on finewares at *Hamwic* and Portchester between AD750 and 800 and continue until *c.* AD950 (Andrews 1988, 106; Cunliffe 1976, 186)

A date range of *c.* AD750–950 seems indicated for this small assemblage.

#### *Medieval c. AD 1150–1350*

Assemblage 6. From pit 114. The 41 sherds (248g) of pottery from this feature dated *c.* AD1250–1350 include 19 fragments from cooking-pots in sand, chalk and flint tempered fabric M3, five from jugs with or without splashed green glaze in very-fine-sanded fabric M5 and 11 from jugs in silt-tempered pale grey fabric M6 fired cream to grey/buff, also with or without splashed green glaze.

#### *Illustrated sherds:*

- Fig. 7:34 Cooking-pot rim in very-fine-sanded fabric M3 with profuse quartz-sand and chalk filler and occasional flint inclusions. Paralleled at Foxcotte in similar fabric (Matthews 1985, fig. 9:1). *c.* AD1200–1350.
- Fig. 7:35 Pitcher rim in fabric M6 fired patchy grey/buff/reddish-brown. Also paralleled at Foxcotte (Matthews 1985, fig.11:57, 58). Two examples. *c.* AD1250–1350.

#### STRUCK FLINT by Steve Ford

A small collection of just fifteen struck flints (thirteen flakes, a spall and a narrow flake) was recovered. One of the flakes might have been retouched. None of the pieces is closely datable and they are likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The narrow flake might be earlier, i.e. Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic but is as likely to be a chance production in later times. The flints show varying degrees of freshness, patination and edge damage but are all residual finds.

#### ANIMAL BONE by Claire Ingrem

A relatively small assemblage of animal bone was recovered. The bones were identified in the Laboratory for Zooarchaeological Research (LAZOR) at the University of Southampton using the CAAA standard methodology (<http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/CAAA/Facilities/Methodology.htm>). The assemblage comprises 1,586 fragments recovered by hand collection, of which 46% is identifiable to

Table 2 Animal Bone Taxa representation (NISP)

*a) hand collected material*

	<i>Late Iron Age/ Early Roman</i>	<i>Early Saxon</i>	<i>Medieval</i>	<i>Undated</i>	<i>Total</i>
Horse	30	1		2	33
Cattle	114	27		9	150
Sheep	4	3			7
Sheep/goat	61	22	1	7	91
Pig	33	20		5	58
Dog	3				3
Cat	1				1
Bird	3				3
Corvid				1	1
?Raven	2				2
Amphibian				1	1
Lg mammal	175	87		72	334
Medium mammal	23	25		1	49
Sm mammal	4				4
Unidentifiable	435	297	5	112	849
Total	888	482	6	210	1586
Total identifiable	453	185	1	98	737
% identifiable	51	38	17	47	46

*b) sieved samples*

	<i>Late Iron Age/ Early Roman</i>	<i>Early Saxon</i>	<i>Undated</i>	<i>Total</i>
Horse	2			2
Cattle	1	4	1	6
Sheep/goat	5	2	5	12
Sheep			2	2
Pig	2			2
Bird	2			2
Toad	1			1
Amphibian	4			4
Lg mammal	4	1	2	7
Medium mammal	2	2	11	15
Sm mammal	1		6	7
Unidentifiable	192	21	1174	1387
Total	216	30	1201	1447
Total identifiable	24	9	27	60
% identifiable	11	30	2	4

Table 3 Late Iron Age/Early Roman: taxa representation according to feature type (NISP)

	<i>Ditch</i>	<i>Gully</i>	<i>Pit</i>	<i>Posthole</i>	<i>Total</i>
Horse	7	25			32
Cattle	96	18	1		115
Sheep/goat	59	3	7	1	70
Pig	32	2		1	35
Dog	1	2			3
Cat	1				1
Bird	5				5
?Raven	2				2
Toad		1			1
Amphibian		4			4
Lg mammal	153	26			179
Medium mammal	21	4			25
Sm mammal	4	1			5
Total	381	86	8	2	477

taxon or size category (Table 2a), and a further 1,447 fragments from sieved samples of which only 4% is identifiable (Table 2b). Most of the animal bone came from features dated either to the Late Iron Age/early Roman (56%) or Early Saxon (30%) periods. The archive contains detailed quantifications not presented here.

#### *Late Iron Age/early Roman*

Cattle appear to have been present in greater numbers than caprines but it is possible that sheep/goat were originally more numerous than their remains suggest. Cattle clearly dominate the material from ditches and gullies where they are almost twice as numerous as caprines (Table 3). Taxa frequency has been shown to reflect the types of deposits excavated as a result of differential butchery and disposal practices as well as preservation bias, related to animal size (Maltby 1985). It is likely that large animals, such as cattle and horse, were butchered on the periphery of settlements where the meat would be removed and the

bones discarded into a convenient ditch or gully. In contrast, the meat from caprines and pig is better suited to cooking on the bone and so the waste may have been discarded into pits in areas where cooking and consumption took place. Pits generally offer greater protection than ditches and therefore the bones of smaller animals have a greater chance of survival. This is illustrated at the nearby site of Winnall Down (Maltby 1985) where during both the Middle Iron Age and Romano-British periods overall, caprines outnumber cattle. However, cattle are more numerous than sheep/goat in the ditches and gullies whilst the opposite occurs in pits. At Overton, most of the animal bone came from linear features and consequently caprines may originally have been at least as numerous as cattle.

The presence of bones from all parts of the skeleton (for cattle, caprines and pig) (Table 4) suggests that the domestic food animals arrived at the site on the hoof, possibly having been raised at or close to the site, a hypothesis supported by the presence of immature

Table 4 Anatomical representation (NISP)

a) Late Iron Age–Early Roman

	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Dog</i>	<i>Cat</i>	<i>?Raven</i>	<i>Lg mammal</i>	<i>Med mammal</i>	<i>Sm mammal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Skull	1										1
Horncore		2									2
Zygomatic		7									7
Occipital condyle		1	2								3
Maxilla		1		2							3
Mandible		13	12	6	1			10			42
Incisor	1		2								3
Canine	1			1							2
Upper premolar	7	2	1	2							12
Upper molar	5	14	9	1							29
Lower premolar		5	4	3							12
Lower molar		4	9								13
Axis		3									3
Cervical vertebra									2		2
Scapula		7	2	2				8			19
Humerus		6		7			2	1			21
Radius	2	13	3	1	1						20
Ulna		2		1	1						5
Pelvis	3	9		2							14
Ilium											1
Femur		3		2				2	1		8
Tibia	1	5	8	1		1		5			21
Carpal	1										1
Astragalus		1									1
Calcaneum		1									1
Metacarpal	2	2	4								8
Metatarsal		4	3								7
Metapodial			1	2							3
Lateral Metapodial	1										1
1st phalanx		2									2
2nd phalanx			1								1
3rd phalanx		1									1
Skull fragment		4		1				22			36
Tooth fragment	7	3	7	1							18
Limb fragment								11	13		26
Vertebra fragment								5	1		8
Rib fragment								14	5	5	25
Total	32	115	68	35	3	1	2	78	22	5	382

Table 4 (cont.) Anatomical representation (NISP)

b) Early Saxon

	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Lg mammal</i>	<i>Med mammal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Maxilla					1			1
Mandible		3	2					5
Incisor		1	2		1			4
Canine					3			3
Upper premolar			1					1
Upper molar		1	1		1			3
Lower premolar		4	2		1			7
Lower molar		6	4					10
Axis		1						1
Hyoid		1						1
Scapula					2	6		8
Humerus			1		1	1		3
Radius			5	2				7
Pelvis			1		1			2
Femur			1					1
Tibia	1	1	3	1	1	1		8
Astragalus		1						1
Calcaneum		2			1			3
Navicular cuboid		1						1
Metacarpal		2						2
Metatarsal		1	1					2
Metapodial		1			6			7
Lateral Metapodial					1			1
1st phalanx		2						2
3rd phalanx		1						1
Cervical vertebra							4	4
Rib						1	1	2
Skull fragment						2		2
Tooth fragment		2						2
Limb fragment						7	9	16
Vertebra fragment						8	6	14
Rib fragment						18	7	25
Total	1	31	24	3	20	44	27	150

Table 5 Dental ageing data

## a) Late Iron Age/Early Roman horse (after Levine 1982)

<i>Taxa</i>	<i>Side</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>P3</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>Estimated age</i>
Horse	left	37.1	50	52.3	57	54	52.5	
Horse	right	37.2	49	51.5	57.4	53	54	6.5–10 years

## b) Late Iron Age/Early Roman cattle, sheep/goat &amp; pig (after Legge 1992; Payne 1973; O'Connor 1988)

<i>Taxa</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>Estimated age</i>
Cattle				b	26–36 months
Cattle	c		g	e	26–36 months
Cattle	c	k	j	g	3–6 years
Cattle	f	l	k		3–8 years
Cattle				h	6–8 years
Cattle	g	l	k	j	6–8 years
Sheep	(g)	d	V		6–12 months
Sheep	(h)	f	c		12–24 months
Sheep/goat				b	2–3 years
Sheep/goat	e	f	e	d	3–4 years
Sheep/goat	j	l	g	g	4–6 years
Sheep/goat				g	4–8 years
Pig			c	I/2	

## c) Early Saxon cattle &amp; sheep/goat (after Legge 1992; Payne 1973)

<i>Taxa</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>Estimated age</i>
Cattle	(j)				6–26 months
Cattle	(j)				6–26 months
Sheep/goat				e	26–36 months

animals. Evidence for the slaughter of both adult and immature cattle and caprines (Table 5) suggests that both meat production and secondary products (milk, wool, manure and traction) were important to the economy. The only secondary products provided by pigs are

bristles and so it is not surprising that most of these were slaughtered prior to reaching skeletal maturity, probably when they had reached their optimum meat weight.

Horse specimens are almost equal in number to pig. The presence of horse is not unusual

at sites of this period, their primary role was probably as transport and pack animals but it is likely that they would also have been valued for their meat once they reached the end of their working lives. The recovery of disarticulated horse bones, including a cut-marked tibia, from contexts containing more general animal bone waste suggests that after death, horses may have been treated in a similar manner to the major food animals. At Winnall Down (Maltby 1985), horse was more numerous than pig and there is also evidence for the consumption of horsemeat in both the Iron Age and Romano-British phases. The symbolic role that horses played is clearly evidenced at some contemporary sites (Grant 1991; Green 1992) particularly where their remains are found in pits. At Overton a number of skull fragments, almost certainly from one individual, were recovered from gully 1002. It was estimated to have died at between six and a half and ten years of age (Levine 1982). Gully 1002 also contained pelvis fragments representative of at least two individuals but there is nothing to suggest any symbolic association.

Dog, here represented by a mandible, radius and ulna, is commonly found on Late Iron Age/early Roman sites (Grant 1984), their remains may represent animals kept as working dogs or semi-feral animals living in close proximity to human habitation sites in order to take advantage of the rich pickings on offer. Disarticulation is indicated by the cut-marked ulna and it is quite likely that dogs too were exploited for meat and fur. There is evidence for butchery on dog bones from the late phases of occupation at both Winnall Down (Maltby 1985) and Danebury (Grant 1984).

A single proximally unfused tibia of a cat was recovered from an Early Roman ditch. It is not possible to determine if this was wild or domestic, but cats would have been valued for their pelts and for vermin control.

The only evidence for wild animals are two bird specimens that probably belong to raven (*Corvus corax*) and conceivably form part of the same humerus, and amphibians. The toad (*Bufo bufo*) ilium and few indeterminate amphibian bones are likely to represent natural fatalities. A scarcity of wild animals is usual for sites of this period (Grant 1984; Maltby 1996;

1985). As scavengers, raven would have been attracted to human occupation sites and these remains could represent a natural casualty. Alternatively, they may have been encouraged as a source of black feathers or for the symbolic meaning they hold in some pagan religions (Serjeantson pers. comm.).

A considerable proportion of the identifiable Late Iron Age-early Roman assemblage (4%) displays evidence for butchery in the form of cut marks. Almost all occur on cattle bones and are located on, or close to, articular surfaces and would have occurred during disarticulation. In addition to the major food animals (cattle, caprines and pig) there is evidence for horse and dog butchery. A horse tibia has transverse cuts on the anterior distal end of the diaphysis. A dog ulna has transverse cuts on the edge of the anterior medial articulation. A similar proportion (4%) of bones has been burnt. A few specimens possess gnaw marks.

Metrical data (in archive) are mostly comparable with those recorded at contemporary sites (data held on the ABMAP database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/resources.html?abmap>)), although there are a few exceptions. A cattle humerus with a trochlea breadth 5mm smaller than those listed on ABMAP indicates the presence of a smaller than average cow. Relatively small horse(s) are suggested by a radius with a proximal breadth 8.9mm smaller, and a tibia whose greatest length is 22mm shorter, than those held on ABMAP.

#### Early Saxon

The Early Saxon assemblage consists of 185 identifiable specimens recovered by hand collection and a further nine fragments from sieved material, and summarized in Tables 2a and 2b; 4b; 5c; full details are in the archive. The sample size is too small to warrant further discussion.

#### CARBONIZED PLANT REMAINS (identified) by Lucy Cramp

Thirty-four soil samples, of between 5–50 litres, were floated over a 0.25mm mesh. Flots were then examined and plant taxa were identified using a low-power ( $\times 7$ – $\times 45$ ) binocular microscope. Charcoal was identified using up to

Table 6 Carbonized plant remains and charcoal

Sample Group	14	5	25	7	17	32	33	31	8
Cut	1001	-	1017		1006	1006	1006	1006	-
Deposit	130	104	226	113	131	234	136	233	114
Type	180	154	279	163	181	360	187	359	164
Phase	gully	pit	gully	pit	Gribenhaus	posthole	posthole	posthole	pit
	Late Iron Age-Early Roman	Late Iron Age-Early Roman	Late Iron Age-Early Roman	Early Roman	Early Saxon	Early Saxon	Early Saxon	Early Saxon	Medieval
Sample volume (litres)	20	20	15		50	30	40	30	20
<b>Cereals</b>									
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	13		1						
spelt wheat									
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	1			3					
spelt wheat – glume base									
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i> - sprouted	1								
sprouted spelt wheat									
<i>Triticum dicoccum</i> or <i>spelta</i>	3		2						
spelt or emmer wheat									
Free-threshing <i>Triticum</i> sp. ( <i>aestivum</i> or <i>turgidum</i> )								1	6
free-threshing bread or rivet wheat									
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	9		4	1					2
wheat									
<i>Avena</i> sp.	6		3	3				1	
oat									
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. – hulled (lateral)	2					1	1	1	
hulled barley									
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. – hulled (median)	1							1	
hulled barley									
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. - hulled	9		1			3		1	
hulled barley									
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. (median)			1					1	
barley									



×400 magnification. Of the 34 flots, nine were considered worthy of more detailed analysis, as the remainder contained no more than isolated cereal grains, weed seeds or fragments of charcoal (Table 6).

The samples from the Late Iron Age/early Roman period contained a low scatter of grains of spelt wheat (*T. spelta*), oats (*Avena* sp.) and barley (*Hordeum* sp.). Some of the barley grains could be identified as hulled, and the presence of both twisted and straight grains indicates that 6-row barley was grown, although the low number of median and lateral grains means that it is not possible to infer whether 2-row barley was also grown. The cereal suggests that the grain was already clean since only a single fragment of chaff (a glume base of spelt wheat) was present. A single sloe fruit stone was recovered from Late Iron Age/early Roman gully 1017. This was a popular fruit eaten in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, but its presence here may simply reflect burning of blackthorn scrub for fuel. Early Roman deposit 113, which contained frequent fragments of burnt bone, also included three spelt wheat glume bases, a wheat grain, several oats and two arable weed seeds (*Bromus secalinus* (rye brome) and *Sherardia arvensis* (field madder)).

Cereals recovered from medieval pit 114 include grains of free-threshing bread or rivet wheat (*T. aestivum* or *turgidum*) and barley. These cereal grains were present in low abundance and, in the absence of cereal chaff or weed seeds, are again the likely result of accidental domestic charring rather than crop processing. Cultivated vetch (*Vicia sativa*) was also represented in pit 114. This was commonly grown during this period either for human consumption or for use as animal fodder.

Wood charcoal was present throughout the samples, and all phases showed the exploitation of a range of taxa, including oak, hazel and wood of the Pomoideae family.

#### METALWORK by Andy Taylor

##### *Iron*

The majority of iron metalwork came from the

Saxon SFB (1006) and comprised 17 nails, all of which were highly corroded. Two fragments, possibly from blades, were also recovered from this feature. A nail was recovered from ditch 1000.

##### *Copper*

The Saxon SFB also contained three copper objects. One was a flattened fragment, which was unidentifiable. The second may be from the clasp end of a brooch and the third is a copper pin, most likely from a brooch.

##### *Coin*

Pit 104, fill 154. Obverse: Constantius facing right, CONSTA...SPFAUG is all that is legible, exergue completely worn away. Reverse: two Victories, legend illegible. AD357–61, very corroded, clipped, possibly originally 17mm diameter, and neatly pierced for use as a pendant, so it was certainly deposited long after it went out of use (and probably long after it was useful as currency). The context of the deposition of the coin post-dates the Roman occupation of the site by so long that it was most probably brought in during the Saxon period, although a Late Roman cemetery is recorded from somewhere in Overton.

#### OTHER FINDS by Andy Taylor

Some 80 pieces of brick and tile (3026g) were recovered. All are Roman, none is distinctive. A total of 239 pieces of burnt flint was recovered weighing a total of 9305g. Six pieces of iron bloom slag weighed a total of 193g. A single piece of Greensand quern stone was retrieved from ditch 1016 (slot 230). This is most likely from Lodsworth, West Sussex. Among 155 pieces of fired clay (731g) the only piece of note was a spindle whorl, which came from the SFB (1006). Two pieces of glass were also recovered from the SFB (1006). A blue fragment seemed to be from the base of a vessel. The second was dark green with evidence of an impressed corded pattern, possibly from the neck of a vessel; both may be residual Roman glass.

## RADIOCARBON DATING

Two samples were submitted to the radiocarbon laboratory at the University of Kiel (Table 7). Details of methodology are in archive; in summary the results are considered reliable. Calibrated or calendar ages were calculated using 'CALIB rev 4.3' (Stuiver *et al.* 1998).

For KIA 28636 the age difference between collagen and the bone is  $162 \pm 43$  years (3.8 sigma). The collagen age should be reliable, but in view of the poor preservation of the bone (the collagen recovered amounts to only 0.4% of the sample instead of *c.* 20% for a fresh bone), this age should be interpreted with some caution.

Table 7 Radiocarbon dating

## KIA28636: Area B

Pit 104 (154)

bone, collagen, 2.3mg C

$1800 \pm 30$  BP

bone, rest, 1.0 mg C

$1640 \pm 30$  BP

Radiocarbon Age:

BP1800  $\pm$  32

Calibrated Age:

cal AD 238

Probability

One Sigma Range:

cal AD 135–157

12.3%

(Probability 68.3 %)

173–194

13.0%

210–256

34.2%

303–317

8.9%

Two Sigma Range:

**cal AD 130–261**

**76.5%**

(Probability 95.4 %)

278–295

4.7%

295–324

13.2%

332–335

0.9%

## KIA28637: SFB

Hollow 131 (181)

bone, collagen, 4.0mg C

$1535 \pm 20$  BP

bone, rest, 2.6 mg C

$1545 \pm 25$  BP

Radiocarbon Age:

BP1533  $\pm$  22

Calibrated Age:

cal AD 539

Probability

One Sigma Range:

cal AD 441–449

4.8%

(Probability 68.3 %)

467–483

10.9%

492–496

2.0%

513–515

1.4%

530–565

34.2%

566–582

8.2%

587–597

6.8%

Two Sigma Range:

cal AD 436–455

8.6%

(Probability 95.4 %)

455–521

32.4%

**527–599**

**54.4%**

## CONCLUSION

Excavation of six areas uncovered archaeological evidence relating to several different periods. Many of the features contained a moderate quantity of pottery. The range of features present was fairly accurately reflected during the evaluation, although the sporadic nature of the archaeology at the northern end of the site suggests this part of the site was further away from any settlement in all periods.

In the late 1st century BC or the first half of the 1st century AD, a rectilinear enclosure was created in Area E, along with further ditches in Area F, and may be associated with the ditch in Area A (around 110m apart). If these two boundaries are related, it implies land division on a scale that is impressive, but by no means uncommon for the period. The quantity of finds, especially in irregular ditch 1013, suggests the site was occupied, despite the lack of structural remains. Occupation comprising mostly ephemeral deposits, or structures that did not penetrate below topsoil depth, may have been ploughed away: the shallowness of some of the archaeological features and visible plough scars support this possibility. The faunal evidence suggests a strong presence of sheep/goats as well as cattle, including younger animals which may have been reared on the site or nearby, while the plant remains indicate a mixed economy.

That this use of the site appears to have been short-lived is also not uncommon in this area, there being no sign of it lasting much beyond the middle of the 1st century, but as the evidence here relates only to field boundaries, it may be dangerous to read too much into this apparent discontinuity.

Evidence for Saxon occupation has been expected for some time in Overton, which is mentioned in Domesday Book, but no archaeological evidence had previously been identified. A Saxon sunken-featured building (SFB) in Area E was orientated on an E–W axis. SFBs have been categorized since excavations at West Stow, Suffolk, according to the number of associated posts (West 1985, 113–4). The SFB identified in Overton is typical of the two-post-derivative category (Rahtz 1976), with the

posts at either end of the structure having been replaced at some point. The posts are usually interpreted as being gable ends supporting a simple ridge-pole. A single internal posthole may suggest a further roof support within the structure, but there was no indication of any internal arrangement such as stakeholes, which can be quite common. A variety of functions has been suggested (Rahtz 1976) for SFBs including spinning huts, weaving sheds, byres, store houses, pot making etc. In this case the finds included a spindle whorl, fragments of loomweights and a bone pin, all suggesting a role in textile production. The structure also contained relatively large quantities of pottery: Saxon and Late Roman from the hollow as well as Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery from the interior postholes. This might suggest the presence of an earlier structure on the same spot as the Saxon building, or simply redeposited material in the post-packing and the post-disuse backfill.

The radiocarbon date for the hollow of the SFB places its backfill in the 6th century, while the pottery also suggests a date before around AD550. Although such buildings are not uncommon, the significance of this example is enhanced as there is so little archaeological evidence for Early Saxon occupation in Overton. Similar features were observed, in a higher concentration, at Riverdene, near Basingstoke (Hall-Torrance & Weaver 2003), and at Old Down Farm, near Andover (Davies 1980). The Overton Saxon pottery has similarities to that from Riverdene, although there the majority of the site seems to be later. At Riverdene the settlement consisted of several SFBs presumed to be ancillary to more substantial post built structures, absent at Overton and Old Down Farm, suggesting the Riverdene settlement was more substantial. However, the same point about the possible loss of shallower features applies here as above.

This isolated structure may nonetheless be part of a wider landscape, and it is quite possible that further structures may exist in the vicinity, as it is not uncommon for dispersed settlements of this period to accommodate structures up to 50m apart, such as at Winsham, Oxfordshire (Briggs *et al.* 1986). However, a relatively large area surrounding this structure was stripped

or at least evaluated, with no further evidence from this period forthcoming, suggesting that this is indeed an isolated feature.

Northern Hampshire provides several Early Saxon settlements to parallel Overton: Cowdery's Down and Riverdene (both Basingstoke), Old Down Farm (Andover) and Bentley Green (Bentley) (Millett & James 1983; Hall-Torrance and Weaver 2003; Davies 1980; Ford 1997). Early Saxon settlements generally seem to be represented most usually by sunken-featured buildings (SFB), which appear to be less common on later sites. However, the sites listed above show how varied the evidence can be. Cowdery's Down, probably a higher-status site, consisted of large, complex halls. At Riverdene, both SFB and post-built halls co-existed. Bentley Green, if it really is Early Saxon, had one large and two smaller post-built structures. The structures excavated at Old Down Farm were all SFB. It remains possible, as almost all earlier commentators have noted, that post-built structures originally accompanied the SFB at all these sites but that evidence for them has been lost, or that the posts never penetrated deep enough to have left any trace to begin with. At Old Down Farm, hundreds of postholes were present, but these are all believed to be Iron Age. A paucity of artefacts is another persistent trait of settlement sites of the period, in contrast to the cemeteries. The notable sites at Abbots Worthy and Micheldever, which combine cemeteries and settlements (both consisting of SFB), remain rare (Russell 2002; Johnston 1998).

The medieval period is represented by pits in Areas B and C. These domestic rubbish pits

may reflect the outlying areas of the original medieval occupation area of the village, which has yet to be fully established.

The archaeology identified can be considered with regard to the wider landscape perspective. The presence of Iron Age and Roman occupation in Overton has been suspected for some time. This excavation has established evidence of activity from these periods, most probably field boundaries, and the quantity of pottery recovered suggests a substantial, if short-lived settlement. It is likely that further evidence should be located in the vicinity, given that some of the linear features continue outside the area of development.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was funded by Croudace Homes and was carried out between 8th March and 12th April 2005, to a specification approved by Mr Stephen Appleby, Senior Archaeologist with Hampshire County Council, and supervised by the author. The site code is LRO 04/62. The archive will be deposited in due course with Hampshire Museum Service with accession code A2004.58. The author wishes to thank all who participated on site and behind the scenes. The excavation team consisted of Niall Armstrong, Natasha Bennett, Simon Cass, Ceri Falys, Leon Fern, Steve Hammond, Katie Keefe and Jenny Ryder. The text was prepared for publication by Steve Preston. Pottery illustrations are by Malcolm Lyne, Figure 1 is by Andrew Mundin, the other illustrations are by the author.

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