

Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement at Newtown Park, Langport

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BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE SETTLEMENT AT NEWTOWN PARK, LANGPORT

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with contributions by Cheryl Green, Clare Randall and Alys Vaughan-Williams

SUMMARY

A Middle Bronze Age enclosure and a group of Middle Iron Age post-built rectangular structures were identified on land to the north of Langport during an archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation. A linear ditch and pairs of postholes which may have held door jambs for stake-framed wattle structures may also date to the Middle Iron Age.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation through trial trenching was carried out at Newtown Park, Langport in 2010 followed by a programme of open area excavation in 2012. The investigations were undertaken by Context One Heritage & Archaeology (C1) prior to residential development.

The site, centred on ST 42415 27681, comprised an area measuring approximately 0.35ha of scrubby pasture c. 800m to the north of the centre of Langport, immediately north of the existing Newtown Park housing estate and to the west of the A372 road at Swallowhill (Fig. 1). The site was level at around 24m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), overlooked by a ridge 700m to the north which rises to about 60m aOD.

The underlying geology comprises Quaternary undifferentiated River Terrace Deposits of sand and gravel overlying bedrock of Mercia Mudstone Group Triassic sedimentary mudstone and halite stone (BGS 2012). The soils are lime-rich, clayey loams with impeded drainage but high fertility (NSRI 2012).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Until recently there has been a dearth of evidence for prehistoric settlement in the vicinity of Langport. For the Middle Bronze Age in particular, except for the Levels and the hilltop enclosure at Norton Fitzwarren (Ellis 1990), there was little known settlement across much of Somerset, leading to a presumed contrast with neighbouring Devon (Fleming 1988; Fitzpatrick *et al.*

1999), Dorset and Wiltshire where the known settlement pattern was denser (Barrett *et al.* 1991, fig. 5.1). Recent development-led investigations and research projects however now necessitate a revision of this view, following the discovery of several enclosures of the period (Leach 2009; Mason 2010; Tabor 2008a; Trevarthen 2008).

Despite the significant distribution of Iron Age settlement recorded on the Somerset Levels to the north and west (Miles and Miles 1969; Morris 1989) and sites of international importance at Glastonbury, Ham Hill and Cadbury Castle, no contemporary activity was previously known within 5km of Langport (Webster 2008, 130). However, recent archaeological work has identified continuous open settlement from the early Iron Age to the late Roman period at Bowden's Lane quarry set on a ridge overlooking Newtown Park from c. 1km to the north-west (Hollinrake and Hollinrake 2005; Pine and Weale 2012; Socha-Paszkiwicz in prep).

Finds of pottery, *tesserae* and graves suggest that a Romano-British settlement was centred between 200m and 300m east of the site (Leech 1976) at Wearne. Documentary evidence indicates settlement in that area during the medieval period (Ellison 1983). Significant undated features recorded in the local landscape include cropmark enclosures observed from aerial photographs in the Wearne area and the arc of an earthen bank at Swallowcliff Hill, located to the north-west, and within 180m of the site. Any projection of the bank would necessarily have enclosed the site.

THE EVALUATION AND EXCAVATION

The initial evaluation in 2010 comprised the machine stripping and hand excavation of thirteen 22m long by 1.60m wide trenches, all but one of which revealed features of potential archaeological significance. They included a probable Bronze Age ditch with other ditches, gullies and postholes. In 2012 a particularly marked concentration of features was targeted for excavation as a single open area in the west part of the site, incorporating

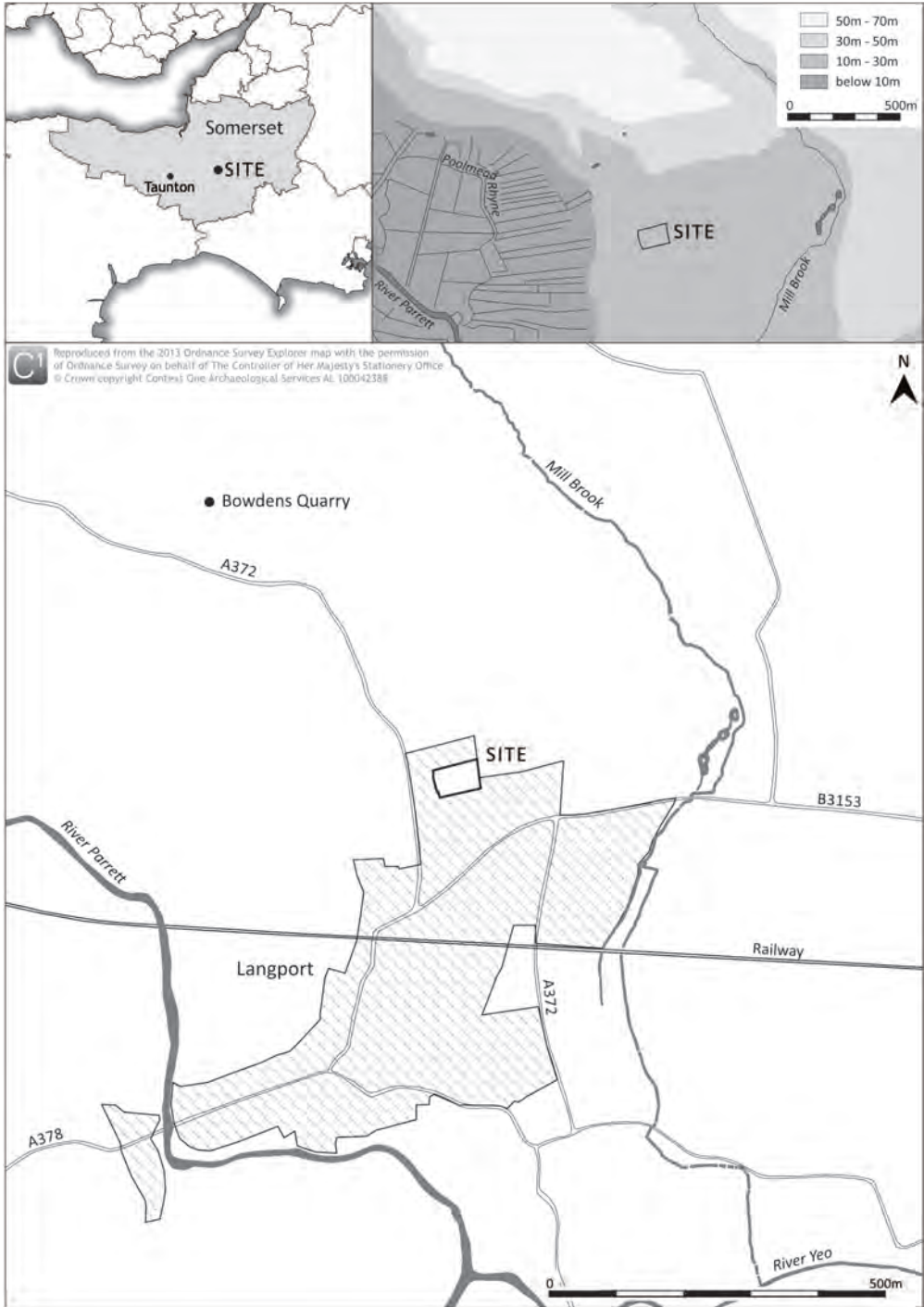


Fig. 1 Location of site and Bowdens Quarry

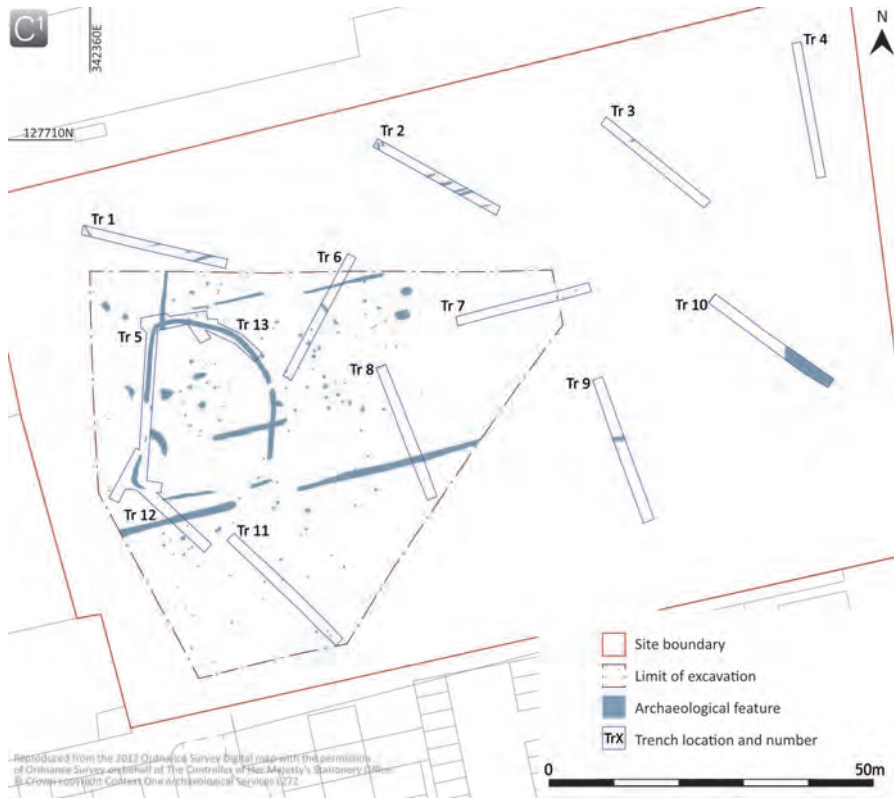


Fig. 2 Evaluation and open area trenches showing archaeology

evaluation trenches 5 to 8 and 11 to 13 (Fig. 2). This exposed what appeared to be the full extent of a Bronze Age partial enclosure ditch, up to 142 postholes and a small number of shallow pits, all of later Bronze Age or Iron Age date, except for a possible Early Bronze Age pit.

A number of features identified as natural or modern were either not excavated or partially investigated to verify their origins. The depth of features implied variable degrees of truncation. The shallowest cuts tended to be in the southern part of the site.

Neolithic/Early Bronze Age

Early Neolithic activity was demonstrated by the presence of an unstratified leaf-shaped arrowhead. A 0.60m diameter, 0.20m deep, bowl-shaped scoop [606] (Fig. 3), possibly a posthole, included a very fragmentary decorated Beaker rim sherd. The backfill (607) was probably deliberate and moderately rich in charcoal inclusions. Given the lack of later finds within it and the friability of the pottery it seems likely that the feature is of Early Bronze Age date.

Middle Bronze Age, Phases 2 and 3

The excavation identified what appears to have been the full extent of a partial enclosure ditch, D1 (Fig. 3), cut into the natural terrace deposits. The cut was of a continuous truncated 'V' form of up to 0.60m wide at the present natural surface, narrowing to 0.22m at the base. In general, it was c. 0.40m deep, although it was markedly shallower at its north-west corner. It extended northwards for 12m from a terminus on the west side, turning eastwards in a continuous 'D'-like arc then straightening southwards, reaching a second terminus around 8m south of that on the west side. The internal width of the enclosure was 19.80m at its maximum and its length from north to south was a minimum of 21.20m.

There was no evidence for silting in the D1 enclosure ditch which appears to have been infilled deliberately with angular gravelly limestone set in a reddish-brown silty clay (Fig. 4, sections D1/2; fills (242), (249), (288) and (434)), probably derived from upcast which had formed an internal bank. No finds were recovered from that particular fill, although pottery and bone were found

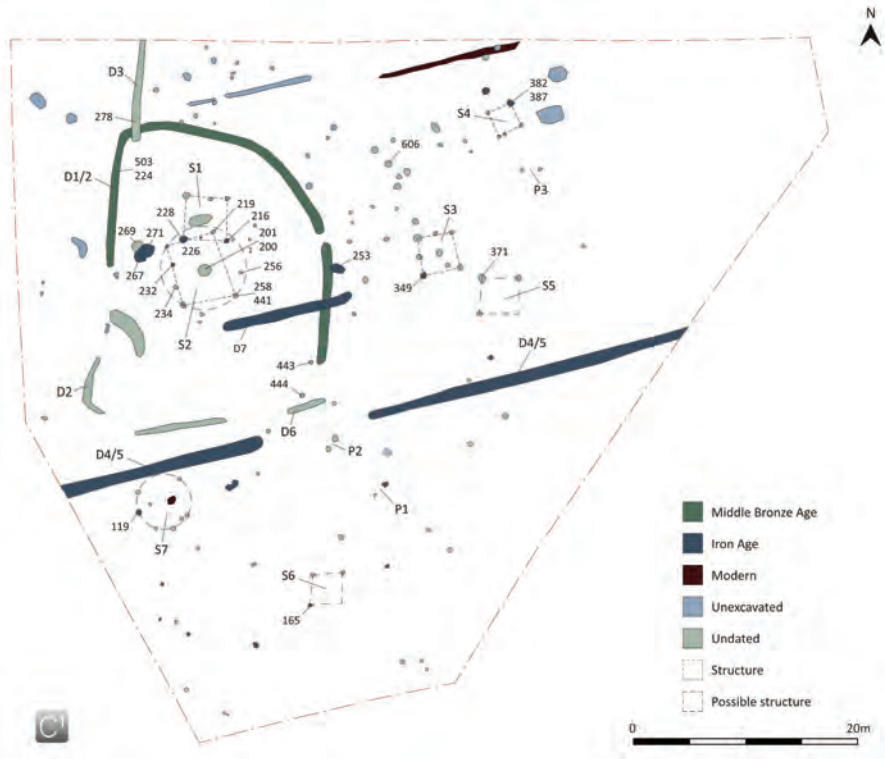


Fig. 3 Phased plan of the site showing proposed structures

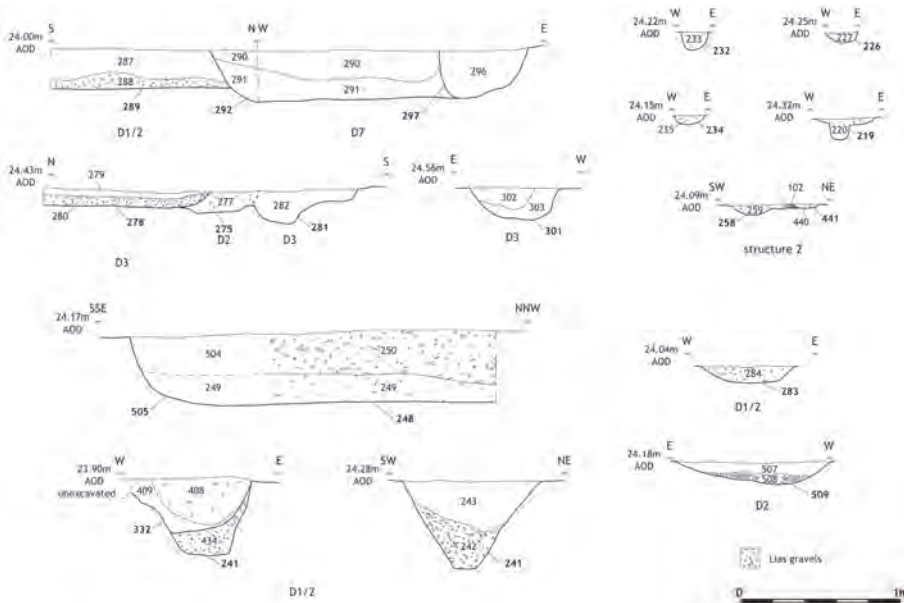


Fig. 4 Sections of Middle Bronze Age features

within fills immediately above an interface created by a re-cut, D2 ([332]; Fig. 4, sections D1/2; fills (243), (250), (277), (287), (409)).

The re-cutting extended along the whole of its length and was filled slowly with a reddish-brown silt. A shallow 'L'-shaped ditch [505] may represent a southward extension of D2's west side. After the initial silting within the main ditch, gravelly material (408) (Fig. 4, sections D1/2) was added on the east side forming a 1.60m wide causeway across the ditch, sloping downwards from the level surface on the north-west and south sides. A dog mandible lying directly on the gravel was sealed by sandy silt. The majority of the finds within the ditch occurred slightly above the D2 re-cut in a thin but fairly even horizontal distribution.

No other features were demonstrably contemporary with the enclosure ditch although a pair of unexcavated possible postholes set c. 2.60m apart and immediately south of the terminal on the east side [443] and [444], were well placed to support an entrance structure (Fig. 3). Two irregular depressions recorded in Trench 5 are in a comparable location south of the terminal on the west side, although with a wide spacing of c. 4.20m.

Slot [278] of a north to south flattened U-profiled linear, D3, cut the upper silt of the west end of the north ditch of D2 (Fig. 4, section D3). Although stratigraphically later than the north ditch, its orientation is incompatible with that prevailing during the main Iron Age occupation suggesting that it may have been a continuation of the west enclosure ditch, with which it was aligned. A Middle Bronze Age pottery sherd provided the only other dating evidence.

Initial excavation appeared to show a possible roughly circular structure surrounding a hearth [201], indicated by deeply fire-parched soil. However, the distinct characteristics of the post settings enabled identification of two rectangular structures. The larger of the two was a 4.90m by 5.60m post-built structure (Fig. 4, S2) with the hearth slightly east of its centre. Postholes [232] and [234] may have framed a door facing directly towards the west access to the enclosure. The shallow depth and small diameters of the postholes supports the possibility that they belong to a single episode of construction (Fig. 4, structure 2). Posthole [226] was similar in scale and may have reinforced the north wall.

The dating of structure S2 depends on the relationship with S1, with which it cannot be contemporary. No flint was recovered from the five excavated postholes [219], [258], [441], [234] and [232], and a very small fragment of pottery from [232] was Iron Age. The form of posthole [226], which falls within the south wall of S1, is morphologically similar to those of S2 and included a single Bronze Age sherd. The close proximity of [258] to [441] may indicate that a post was replaced, hence the structure was of some longevity.

No clear patterning was evident in the postholes east of the structure although, with one exception [256], they are of similar scale and form. One other posthole, forming the south-west corner of the tentative structure S6, included a substantial unabraded Middle Bronze Age decorated rim sherd and two small fragments, one of which was in a characteristically Iron Age fabric.

Middle to Later Iron Age, Phases 4 and 5

The bulk of the pottery from discrete features and the remaining linears dated from the Middle to later Iron Age, probably reflecting the chronological range of the majority of features from which no finds were recovered. Due to the lack of horizontal stratigraphy and relationships between most of the Iron Age features, reliable observations of sequence were only possible within discrete features.

A west-south-west to east-north-east, truncated V-profiled boundary ditch appears to have determined the general orientation for shorter linear features on the site, the influence of which can be seen in maps of the modern landscape. The dimensions of the first cut of the ditch, D4, varied from 1.18m wide and 0.64m deep, on the west side to 0.86m and 0.43m deep, on the east (Fig. 6, sections D4/5; cuts [181], [188] and [353]).

Ditches of 3m and 12m lengths, D6 and D7, were set respectively 1m and 10m north of, and parallel to, a 10m wide breach in D4 (Fig. 3). A distinct episode of re-cutting, D5 (Fig. 6, sections D4/5; interfaces between (185) and (184) and (195) and (194)), was discernible in sections either side of the breach in D4 but there was no compelling evidence for re-cutting of the shorter linears. Four Iron Age and one Bronze Age sherds were collected from D7, which cut the east ditch of the Bronze Age enclosure, but no finds were recovered from D6. It seems likely that both were in use with at least one phase of the long linear. One of three less substantial, roughly parallel, linears in the north of the trench was found to include modern material during the evaluation and at the time of excavation it was assumed that the other two were contemporary.

A 1.30m by 0.60m and 0.18m deep lozenge-shaped pit or scoop [253] also cut the fill (254) of the enclosure ditch re-cut, D2 (Fig. 6). A gravelly, primary weathering deposit (252) was sealed by a silty clay (251) from which twelve Iron Age sherds and an unusually long, narrow saddle quern were recovered (Figs 6, 8). Two circular, basin-shaped pits [267] and [271], both c. 0.20m deep, and a smaller third cut [269], which was interpreted as a posthole (Fig. 3), were all set within a slight hollow filled with a trample layer (306) and were probably the component features of a particular activity. By far the greater part of the small carbonised plant macrofossil assemblage from the site was recovered from the middle

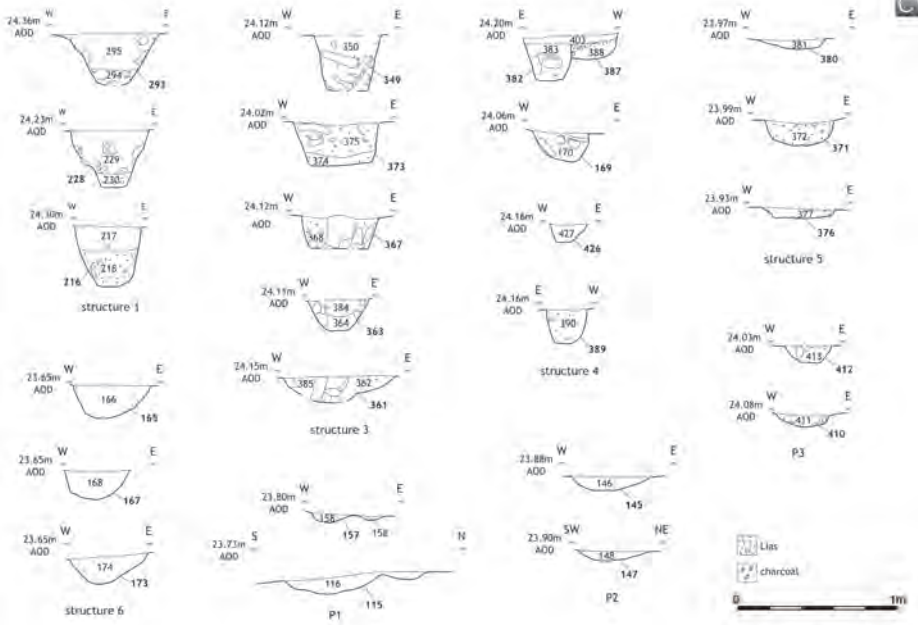


Fig. 5 Sections of Iron Age structures

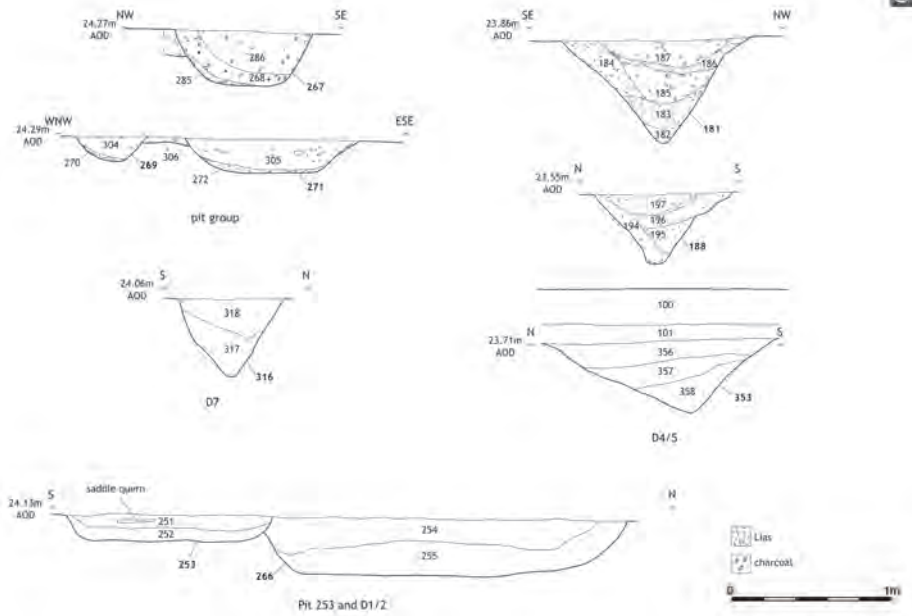


Fig. 6 Sections of Iron Age features

fill (268) of pit [267], and a total of 62 Iron Age sherds from the two pits represented the greatest concentration of pottery from the site.

Iron Age pottery was recovered from 22 of 80 postholes which were half-sectioned, providing dating evidence for structures S1 [228] and [216], S3 [349], S4 [387] and S6 [165], although unabraded Middle Bronze Age pottery was also present in the fill (166) of the latter. A group of postholes immediately south of the west end of ditch D4/D5 has been assigned to a poorly defined circular structure, S7 (Fig. 3), which may be dated by Iron Age pottery recovered from posthole [119]. The postholes forming structures S1 and S3 and three from S4 were packed with substantial lias slabs (Fig. 5). The consistency of the manner of their construction suggests that they were contemporary.

Structure S5 lacks dating evidence and the variation in depth between the features implies local truncation which may account for the lack of a fourth posthole. The deepest posthole [371] retained a large lias stone (Fig. 5) whilst cultivation may have removed additional stones. Their diameters were comparable with those of the S1 and S3 postholes.

The remaining postholes varied in character and were irregularly spaced. However, several may have existed as pairs. This is most apparent in instances where the two postholes are set apart from others. In the cases of P1, P2 and P3 (Fig. 5), the distances between each setting vary from 1.70m to 2m (Fig. 3), typical of those for Iron Age roundhouse entrances. At Danebury hillfort, Hampshire, there were many examples of circular structures set in quarry scoops behind the inner bank which comprised two entrance posts set within occupation hollows (Cunliffe 1995, 138-92). In some instances, other features survived, including internal hearths and stakeholes which had provided the framework for wattle and daub walls. In several cases, stakeholes survived in the lea of the deepest part of the hollow (*ibid.*, fig. 189). Alternatively, pairs of postholes may have served as fodder racks.

THE FINDS

The prehistoric pottery

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A total of 234 sherds (1062g) were collected from the site, ranging in date from Early Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age and representing a small amount of material relative to the number of features excavated. The overall mean sherd weight (4.5g) has been biased by the fragmentation of several sherds during recovery, particularly in the case of the earlier material which was frequently very friable. The mean weights for the later

material are more likely to be a fair reflection of sherd condition at the time of deposition.

Most sherd surfaces were fresh or moderately abraded but there were instances of loss of inclusions, probably through solution whilst *in situ*. The moderately good condition of the material is implied by the general lack of flaked sherds.

The Fabrics

Twelve fabric types were spread across six general fabric groups, three of which were dominant: grog, mud/siltstone and probable feldspathic tuff mixtures. Most sherds were from sealed contexts, grog dominating in Middle Bronze Age contexts, notably the fills of the re-cut D-shaped enclosure ditch. Those with calcite inclusions implied the possibility of Late Bronze activity, and the remaining material reflect Middle and Later Iron Age activity (Table 1).

Grog mixtures

- | | |
|-----|--|
| Gr1 | Silty fabric including sparse to moderate grey and/or pink grog pellets, rare reddish-brown iron (2mm) and rare possible tuff fragments (<3mm). Pinkish orange exterior, grey interior surfaces, grey core. Moderately well fired, biscuity. |
| Gr2 | Silty fabric including sparse to moderate buff grog pellets, rare to sparse fine to medium subangular quartz and lightish brown iron oxides (<2mm). Oxidised surfaces, grey core. Moderately fired. |
| Gr3 | Silty fabric including moderate grey grog pellets, rare to sparse fine to medium iron and sparse subrounded voids (4mm). Oxidised surfaces, grey core. Moderately fired. |
| Gr4 | Silty fabric including sparse grey grog pellets, coarse (<4mm) subangular flint. Moderately well fired. |

Calcite mixtures

- | | |
|-----|---|
| Ca2 | Blocky, silty fabric with abundant subangular voids (<3mm) and very fine quartz. A decaying white substance filling several of the voids is likely to be either shell or, noting the form of the voids, calcite in the process of dissolving. |
|-----|---|

Late Bronze Age

- | | |
|-----|--|
| Ca1 | Sandy silt fabric including small to moderate (<2mm) calcite (possibly Aragonite) and sparse |
|-----|--|

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF FABRIC BY CONTEXT TYPE

Fabric	D enc		unpacked ph		packed ph		linear ditch		pits / scoops		other		Totals		MSW In gm
	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	
<i>Early Bronze Age</i>															
Gr3									6	4			6	4	
											Sub tot		6	4	
<i>Middle Bronze Age</i>															
Gr1			1	22			1	.5	1	3			3	25.5	8.5
Gr2	10	27	1	.5			1	.5	6	11	1	26	19	65	3.4
Gr3	24	143	7	4.5			1	2			1	4	33	154	4.7
Gr4							1	2					1	2	2
Ca2	6	15											6	15	2.5
											Sub tot		62	261	1
<i>Late Bronze Age</i>															
Ca1							1	1					1	1	1
											Sub tot		1	1	1
<i>Middle to Late Iron Age</i>															
L1	1	8	7	13	2	1	18	66	31	176	4	18	63	282	4.5
Fel1	3	18	15	54			13	68	3	13			34	153	4.5
Fel2			1	2	6	16	1	10	39	270			47	298	6.3
Q1			7	5.5	1	21			5	5			13	31.5	2.4
Q2							1	2					1	2	2
S1			2	4			1	.5					3	4.5	1.5
S2	2	2					2	23					4	25	6.3
											Sub tot		165	796	4.8
Totals	46	213	41	105.5	9	38	41	175.5	91	482	6	48	234	1062	
Mean wt		4.6		2.6		4.2		4.3		5.3		8		4.5	

flint (<3mm), fine to medium subrounded quartz, grey grog and traces of carbonised organics. Dark reddish-brown exterior, grey to buff interior and dark grey core.

Middle to Late Iron Age

Conglomerate mixtures

Fel1 Silty fabric including moderate quartzitic feldspathic tuff fragments (<8mm), sparse subangular quartz and reddish-brown iron. Buff exterior, grey or buff interior surfaces, grey core. Moderately well fired.

Fel2 Silty fabric including moderate to abundant crushed (<1mm) and rare large quartzitic feldspathic tuff fragments (<5mm) and crushed mud/siltstone, sparse grey grog and rare to sparse reddish brown iron. Buff exterior, grey or buff interior surfaces, grey core. Moderately well fired.

Limestone mixtures

L1 Silty fabric including moderate to abundant crushed subangular mud/siltstone, rarely large (<8mm), rare to sparse iron, rare feldspathic tuff fragments. Moderately well fired, rough surface.

Quartz mixtures

Q1 Silty sand fabric including abundant medium subangular quartz, sparse iron and rare conglomerate. Possible traces of burnishing on some sherds. Well fired.

Q2 Sandy fabric including abundant fine subangular quartz, rare to sparse flint. Burnished exterior, wheel-thrown. Well fired.

Sand

S1 Fine sand, slightly micaceous. Well fired.

S2 Sandy fabric including sparse to moderate, small to medium, subrounded clear quartz

with grains of reddish-brown iron found in the South Cadbury environs (Tabor in prep.).

Fabrics Gr1 and Gr4 were rare. Traces of a white, striated, material noted in a single group of sherds in a blocky fabric with frequent subangular voids, were interpreted as dissolving calcite. Calcite as an inclusion was widespread in the Late Bronze Age (Alcock 1980; Morris 2009, 36; Woodward 1990a; 1990b; 2000) but has been recorded in a substantial number of Middle Bronze Age sherds at Sigwells, Charlton Horethorne and Milsoms Corner, South Cadbury (Tabor and Darvill 2020).

A small haematite-coated Q1 sherd may derive from a furrowed vessel and is securely dateable to the Early Iron Age but other sherds of similar composition lack the coat and may be later.

The bulk of the pottery dates to the Middle Iron Age. The principal groups within the assemblage are those including mud/siltstone and those with feldspathic tuff. Both are likely to relate to the broadly categorised 'Rock-tempered ware' which included 'laminar, micaceous' and igneous rock identified as Middle to Late Iron Age at Huntworth, North Petherton (Mepham 2009, 76). At Langport it seems likely that the similarly laminar material is *lilas* whilst feldspathic tuff has been identified in Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (with unspecified grits; Fabric 7) and Middle Iron Age 'Glastonbury ware' sherds (Fabric 9) at Norton Fitzwarren (Woodward 1990a, 41-2). The latter was considered similar to the quartz-including Fabric 16 at Maidenbrook Farm (Bevan 1994, 22) and hence has similarities to Fel1.

Vessels forms and decoration

Bronze Age and Iron Age sherds with diagnostic forms have been described within period specific classifications. The earlier sherds were recorded in a descriptive manner whilst the later sherds have been given an alphanumeric code following a system of classification adopted at Danebury, Cadbury Castle and elsewhere (Brown 2000; Woodward 2000). Decoration was sparse, occurring only on Beaker and Bronze Age sherds.

Early Bronze Age pottery

(607) Fragments, probably from a single sherd, including a gently intumed flat rim over a fine horizontal incision on the exterior, below which are traces of other incised decoration, possibly in a chevron pattern. The exterior is smoother than the interior and may have been burnished. Poor to moderate firing, slightly soapy to touch. Fabric Gr3.

The Middle Bronze Age pottery was dominated by silty fabrics with grog temper. In the case of Gr2 comparison may be made with earlier Beaker sherds at Brean Down, Somerset, where limonite was a noted inclusion (Harrison 1990). Fine and coarser quartz was noted in grog-tempered sherds of Early to Middle Bronze Age date at Norton Fitzwarren (Williams 1990, 52). Fabric Gr3 may have affinity with sherds including grog

Later Bronze Age pottery (Fig. 7)

1. (166) Slightly inturned, flattened rim. Vertical arrangement of 3mm by 3mm, 4mm deep sub cubic over a 5mm diameter, 6mm deep cylindrical over a 5mm by 2mm, 4mm deep linear impressions made prior to firing, causing swelling of interior surface. Traces of other possible decorative motifs. Deverel-Rimbury biconical vessel. Buff orange exterior, dark grey to black interior surface and core. Fabric Gr1.
2. (286) Slightly inturned, flattened rim with deep 'V'-shaped impression slanting from outer edge across the outer 80% of the rim top. Deverel-Rimbury biconical vessel. Buff red exterior, buff interior and light grey core. Moderately well-fired. Fabric Gr2.
3. (418) Simple base angle from upright, possibly biconical, vessel. Oxidised buff orange exterior, dark grey interior and core. Moderately well-fired. Fabric Gr2.
4. (504) Upper body sherd with 8mm wide, 2mm deep sub-triangular profiled cordon, apparently moulded rather than applied, decorated with fingertip impressions. Probably from a biconical vessel (ApSimon 1962, 315-6). Moderately well fired. Fabric Gr3.

Middle to Late Iron Age pottery

5. (126) Slightly inturned simple, rounded, rim. Possible PA1 type vessel. Dark grey surfaces, grey core. Fabric L1.
6. (183) Proto-bead rim with slight internal bevel. From a high, round-shouldered jar, type JC2.2 (Brown 2000, 87; fig. 3.21). Dark grey smooth exterior, possibly burnished, oxidised buff red interior, buff grey brown core. Fabric L1.
7. (268) Slightly expanded base type BS5.3 from upright jar. Pale buff and grey exterior, dark grey interior and core. Hard, well-fired. Fabric Fel2.
8. (268) Upright base angle type BS5.5 from ovate or globular vessel. Buff grey brown exterior, reddish grey interior and dark grey core. Hard, well-fired. Fabric L1.
9. (286) Slightly expanded base type BS5.5 from ovate vessel. Grey exterior and core, dark grey interior. Rough, well-fired. Fabric Fel 2.
10. (286) Simple base angle type BS5.1 from upright vessel. Grey surfaces and core. Fabric L1.

Discussion

Neolithic to Early Bronze Age

A group of sherds from a single context, probably from the upper part of the same vessel, were of uniform fabric

similar to the Middle Bronze Age grog mixture Gr3 but less well fired and lacking oxidised surfaces. The material resembles sherds found in an Early Neolithic pit at Milsoms Corner, South Cadbury but traces of decoration appear to be of Beaker type.

The sherds were exclusive to the single fill (607) of a small pit or scoop which also included two pieces of burnt flint but no other pottery.

Middle Bronze Age

The two inturned, horizontally-flattened rim sherds (Fig. 7, 1 and 2) belong to a distinct class of simple biconical vessels recorded at Castle Hill, near Honiton, Devon (Laidlaw and Mephram 1999, 49-50; fig. 24, nos 12, 15 and 16) and Brean Down, Unit 6 (Woodward 1990b, 123-6; fig. 88, no. 4). They may be contrasted with the broad and expanded, upright, rims typical of the Trevisker-related assemblage from Unit 5b on the latter site (Woodward 1990b, 126-33; figs 89-92) and prominent at Norton Fitzwarren (Woodward 1990a, 42-46; fig. 18) and with the tapered inturned rims at Field Farm, Shepton Mallet (Morris 2009, 42; fig. 43).

Cylindrical perforations rather than deep impressions have been found on globular and bucket urns at Kimpton, Hampshire (Dacre and Ellison 1981, 175-7) and on a bucket Urn at Shearplace (ApSimon 1962, 317-8) for which dating within the third quarter of the second millennium is likely.

The thick base-angle and cordoned sherds (Fig. 7, 3 and 4) are also likely to derive from biconical vessels but neither are strongly diagnostic. Fingertip decoration on cordons was a long-lived motif, although the shallow V-profile of the cordon resembles an example from Brean Down Unit 6 (Woodward 1990b, fig. 18, no. 3).

The Unit 6 assemblage was stratigraphically earlier than Unit 5b (Bell 1990, fig. 158) but the radiocarbon dates were inconsistent, ranging from the Early Middle to Late Bronze Age, suggesting a lack of stratigraphic integrity (Walker 1990, 108). The earliest date was 1610 BC - 1135 BC, similar to determinations from the Castle Hill enclosure ditch which ranged from 1510 BC - 1130 BC (Allen 1999, table 17). The prevalence of grog mixtures coupled with lack of calcitic material in Bronze Age contexts might also imply a date in the third quarter of the second millennium BC.

Iron Age

On present knowledge it may be argued that distribution of feldspathic tuff tempered pottery of the period is restricted to low ground in the vicinities of the Rivers Parrett and Tone. It appears absent from assemblages north of the Parrett (Westonzoyland; Miles and Miles 1969, 24-6), and

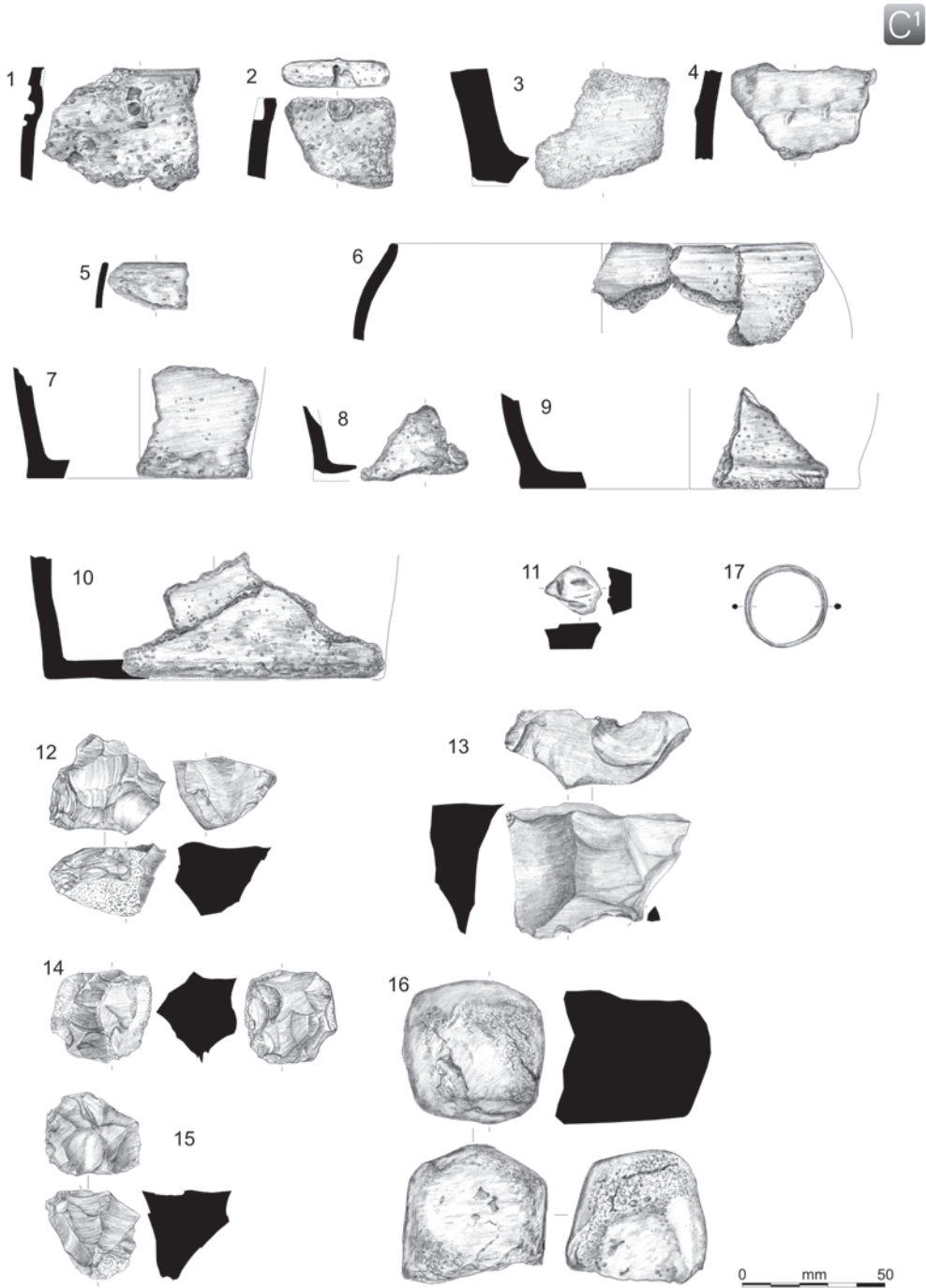


Fig. 7 Illustrated finds

along the River Brue (West Huntspill; Miles and Miles 1969, 47-9 and Meare; Rouillard 1987) and to the east in the South Cadbury area (Alcock 1980; Williams and Woodward 2000), implying a local source. This is likely to be true of the laminar grits of fabrics L1 and FeL2.

Sherds with diagnostic form include the rim from an ovoid jar (PA1; Fig. 7, 5), in currency from the Late Bronze Age to the later Middle Iron Age at Cadbury Castle (Woodward 2000, 336-9). The high shouldered jar (JC2.2; Fig. 7, 6) may be placed with confidence in the Middle Iron Age and the base angles (Fig. 7, 7-10) are all consistent with a similar or slightly earlier date.

The total of 14 sherds with quartz inclusions lacked diagnostic formal traits but the single example in Fabric Q2 is a variant of South East Dorset Black Burnished ware (BB1). The lack of any other potentially Romano-British pottery allows the possibility that it is from a Late Iron Age vessel. This is counter to the suggestion that BB1 was not in circulation in the Somerset Levels or at Cadbury Castle prior to the Roman occupation (Miles and Miles 1969, 51; Barrett *et al.* 2000, 218, 261). More recently carbon dates associated with large quantities of BB1 recovered at Sigwells, Charlton Horethorne, have pushed back its distribution in south Somerset to at least the middle of the 1st century BC (Tabor and Jones in prep.; OxA-23730 to OxA-23735).

Other ceramic material

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A total of 21 fragments (161g) of fired clay other than pottery were recovered, the bulk of it (135g) from the fills of the D-shaped enclosure re-cut. Of the latter, three fragments in a well fired, oxidised, sandy fabric (58g)

including sparse fine quartz appeared to have a curved exterior surface and may have been part of a cylindrical loomweight deposited close to the south terminal on the east side. Much of the remaining material was either daub-like or may have derived from a hearth base. A fragment from the west enclosure ditch had a cylindrical impression, possibly of a twig.

A single mould fragment (2g) from a posthole (126) in a darkish grey, fine micaceous silty sand retained partial facets and a lip (Fig 7, 11). The stepped profile suggested that the object cast had been tanged, and a shallow groove inside and parallel to the lip, implied that it had a ridge or rib close to an outer edge. A single 6mm long narrow and several small sub-rounded voids penetrated the surface. The outer surface was slightly dished. Limescale-like concretions adhered to parts of all surfaces.

The flint and chert

Richard Tabor

The assemblage of flint and chert comprised a total of 33 fragments (373g, mean piece weight 11g), a small amount of material considering the periods of activity and extent of the site. The material has been analysed according to its manner of production, tool types and treatments. The term 'primary' is used to indicate that at least the whole of one side retains cortex, hence that it derives from the initial stage of core reduction. Where cortex covers less than 50% of the surface, flakes were designated 'secondary' because more of the underlying flint has been exposed by previous removals. The term 'tertiary' denotes flakes without any cortex. The site assemblage is summarised in Tables 2 and 3 but further analysis is limited to the material from Middle Bronze Age phases 2 and 3, all of it from the enclosure ditch. The analysis of the whole

TABLE 2 GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE FLINT ASSEMBLAGE

primary		secondary		tertiary		burnt		Total	Weight
no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%		(gms)
Phase 1: Neolithic / Early Bronze Age									
				3	100	2	67	3	3
Phases 2-3: Middle Bronze Age									
1	6	13	81	2	13	7	44	16	321
Phases 4-5: Middle to Late Iron Age									
1	9	3	27	7	64	2	18	11	25
Undated									
				3	100			3	25

TABLE 3 WORKED FLINT FORMS

Cores	Nodules	Blades	Flakes	Rejuv	Scrapers	Piercers	A/h	Debit
Phase 1: Neolithic / Early Bronze Age								
			1			1	1	
Phases 2-3: Middle Bronze Age								
5	1		7			2		2
Phases 4-5: Middle to Late Iron Age								
		1	6	1	2			1
Undated								
		1	1			1		

assemblage is included in the archive report and has been integrated into the discussion section.

Cores

All of five cores (196g) and a single flint nodule (102g) from the site were recovered from the upper or re-cut fills of the 'D'-shaped enclosure ditch. Several primary flakes had been removed from the nodule, suggesting that it was a core in preparation. One of the cores, from (273) (Fig. 7, 12) had a pyramidal shape, suggestive of an Early Neolithic or Mesolithic date. However, the form was probably deceptive as there was evidence for a second platform and the flakes scars were proportionally broad. Broad flakes had been removed from the single platform of a large core from (337). At the distal edge, a point fashioned by spall removal and pressure flaking showed that it had been adapted for use as a piercer (Fig. 7, 13). Two smaller cores, one from the same context (heavily recorticated prior to re-use; Fig. 7, 14) and one from (420) (Fig. 7, 15), had flakes removed at various angles from an indeterminate number of platforms. The form of a single burnt core (320) was not determined. As a group the cores are likely to be of Middle to Late Bronze Age date. A similar date would be appropriate for a flake with coarse unilateral denticulation from (420) but one of two piercers was probably a residual Neolithic piece.

A quartzitic hammerstone fragment (195g) was recovered from the lower fill (320) of the re-cut enclosure ditch. It comprised a pebble which had been faceted on three sides to isolate a hammer face which had been pitted by impact (Fig. 7, 16).

A leaf-shaped arrowhead (Butler 2005, 122-5) found on the surface of fill (336) prior to its excavation is of the Early Neolithic Green Type 1C.

Discussion

The general character of the site assemblage shows a marked bias in favour of secondary material (58%), as against tertiary (36%) and, particularly, primary (6%). A total of 11 pieces (33%) of the assemblages exhibited signs of heat damage, six of which were from the 'D'-shaped enclosure ditch (Table 2).

At least two piercers, a blade, a knife/piercer and the leaf-shaped arrowhead may be assigned a Neolithic date with confidence (Table 3). There are no distinctively Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age forms and it is possible that there was a hiatus or reduction in activity on the site until the mid- to late 2nd millennium BC.

The most significant patterns within the data are associated with the enclosure ditch, which accounted for 45% of the entire site assemblage. This, in part, reflects the proportionally greater extent of this feature's excavation but the distribution of particular classes of material was significantly weighted. Cores occur exclusively in the ditch and all maybe of Middle to Late Bronze Age date. This is consistent with the overall proportion of secondary (80%) to tertiary (13.3%) flakes, as in very general terms secondary flakes tend to become dominant in later prehistory, reflecting a narrower range of uses as other materials played a greater role and the quality of core preparation declined. On the other hand, the small assemblage from later features is dominated by tertiary material.

The flint assemblage is too small for fuller statistical analysis but it is supportive of the proposed dating for the enclosure ditch and in demonstrating earlier activity in the area.

The copper alloy

Richard Tabor

A copper-alloy subcircular ring varied in diameter from 28mm to 30mm (Fig. 7, 17). The section was oval, measuring c. 2.5mm from top to bottom and c. 2mm from outside to inside. A horizontal line visible on the entire exterior is indicative of casting in a bivalve mould. The ring was unstratified and undated.

The stone

Cheryl Green

Introduction

A single quern (SF2) weighing 12.5kg was recovered from the secondary fill (251) of a pit or scoop [253] containing twelve sherds of pottery dated to the Middle Iron Age and one fragment of animal bone. The following report is based on recommendations for recording stone objects as detailed in Table 7.2 'The Archaeology of Stone' (Peacock 1998).

Description

The stone is rectangular, with rounded ends and slightly rounded sides, measuring 0.56m in length and 0.20m wide at the widest point. The primary rubbing surface is smooth and slightly concave measuring 0.07m thick for one half of the stone and thickening to 0.09m for the other half, indicating that one side was more intensely used than the other (Fig. 8, A). An approximately straight line is incised near one edge which may relate to secondary use. The opposing surface of the quern is slightly convex with shallow, curved diagonal grooves indicating some use-wear (Fig. 8, B). One side has been worked creating a sloping, flat surface with thin vertical lines indicating where this has been rubbed (Fig. 8, C). The stone has been damaged in antiquity along both of the long edges and at one of the rounded ends; an almost square profile of one missing area perhaps relating to secondary use. A small fragment of the quern weighing 0.64kg was also recovered from context (251) possibly indicating some breakage at the time of deposition as no fresh breaks are evident on the quern. Oxidization is evident on the broken surfaces and on the sloping surface. The fabric was examined using a x10 hand lens and comprises pale red to pink coloured, medium sized quartz grains. This pale red sandstone is not indigenous to the Langport area.

Discussion

The saddle quern is almost complete, the damage either having occurred in antiquity through secondary usage

or deliberate breaking at the end of the object's life. In addition to the primary rubbing surface, two other areas of rubbing indicate that the object was intensively used during its lifetime. The lack of other querns or quern fragments from the site suggests that few were in circulation. With rotary querns generally superseding saddle querns from the Middle Iron Age, the date of the pit is consistent with a Middle Iron Age date for the saddle quern. The quern was found with the primary rubbing surface facing upwards perhaps suggesting that the object had been placed as opposed to dropped within the secondary fill.

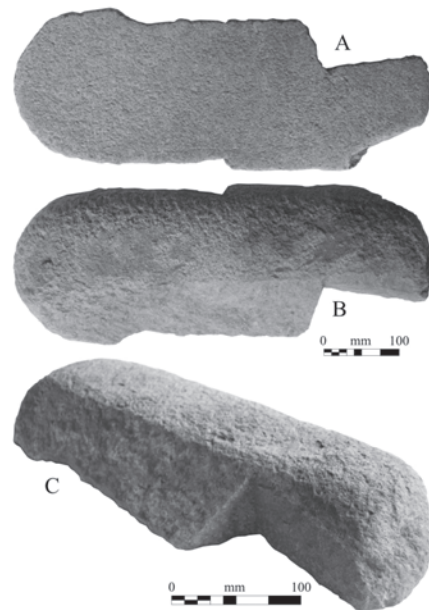


Fig. 8 The quern

The animal bone

Clare Randall

Each bone fragment was identified where possible to element and species, and where this was not possible, ascribed as Large Mammal (e.g. cattle sized), Medium Mammal (e.g. sheep sized) and Unidentified mammal categories. Each fragment was also examined for butchery, breakage patterns, burning, gnawing and weathering indicators, as well as potential for measurement, pathological change and ageing information. A full description of methods is included in the archive report.

Results

Whilst the general preservation was fair, the assemblage was highly fragmented and much of the material had been subject to sub-aerial weathering. A total of 63 fragments were recorded, 51 of these assigned to Phases 2-5 (Table 4). All identified fragments relate to domestic animals, predominantly cattle and sheep/goat. No wild mammal (including small mammal), bird, or fish bone was noted.

This is not surprising due to the size and condition of the assemblage. No fragments were positively identified as goat, but a single Phase 3 fragment was positively identified as sheep. Cattle and sheep/goat were present in all periods, but there was no evidence for pigs, which may be a function of the small sample. There is a hint of an increase in importance of sheep/goat in Phase 4, with an increase in smaller sheep-sized mammal fragments. Dog was present in Phases 2-4, and two fragments of horse

TABLE 4 SPECIES REPRESENTATION BY FEATURE/CONTEXT. NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED SPECIMENS (NISP) AND MINIMUM NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS (MNI) FOR FRAGMENTS IDENTIFIED TO SPECIES, AND NUMBER FOR NON-IDENTIFIED FRAGMENTS, BY PHASE.

	Bronze Age				Iron Age				Total
	Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		
	NISP	MNI	NISP	MNI	NISP	MNI	NISP	MNI	
Species									
Cattle	3	1	5	1	5	1	0		13
Sheep/Goat	0		3		5	1	3	1	11
Pig	0		0		0		0		0
Dog	1	1	1	1	2	1	0		4
Horse	0		0		2	1	0		2
Identified total	4		9		14		3		30
	No		No		No		No		
Large mammal	1		3		2		0		6
Medium mammal	0		2		11		0		13
Unidentified mammal	0		0		2		0		2
Main total	5		14		29		3		51
Small mammal	0		0		0		0		0
Bird	0		0		0		0		0
Fish	0		0		0		0		0
Total	5		14		29		3		51

bone occurred in Phase 4. However, the assemblage is too small to provide reliable comparison across periods or with other assemblages.

All of the Middle Bronze Age material was associated with the enclosure ditch and its re-cut. The material in the re-cut may have been re-deposited, but the bone in these contexts is in the best condition on the site, and is not weathered, which might argue against this. The Middle Iron Age (Phase 4) material came from a variety of features including a number of postholes, ditch fills and pits, whilst the Late Iron Age material occurred in two features. This implies that bone was distributed across the site during Phase 4. It is not possible to determine any species or element pattern between the feature types, but the greatest concentration appears to occur in pit fills, most likely relating to the volume of fill. Gnawed fragments were present in a number of contexts comprising the Phase 2 ditch and the Phase 3 re-cut, but not in Iron Age contexts. This may imply something about the relative speed of the incorporation of material, or availability of material between the two periods. The Bronze Age material all came from ditch contexts, which may have been more accessible to scavenging dogs, whilst the majority of the Iron Age material came from pits. The five burned fragments of bone all came from one Middle Iron Age pit (cut 267).

There is virtually no ageing data available to provide information on herd profiles or husbandry. An undated fragment of porous bone from a young sheep/goat indicates young animals were present at some point, and that juvenile bone, more susceptible to adverse conditions, could potentially have been preserved. No cut marks were observed, but a number of fragments in Phases 2-4 displayed features indicative of breakage of fresh bone. Most of these were of cattle or large mammal bone, and probably relates to processing for marrow which is more likely to occur with larger species. No cases of pathological change were noted. No measurements were taken apart from one from the dog mandible from context (357). Further details are contained in the archive report.

Interpretation and discussion

Bronze Age animal bone assemblages are in general terms small and dominated by domestic livestock. Wild species are generally scarce throughout later prehistoric assemblages (Hambleton 2008, 15, 28, 31, 37-9). The material from Newtown Park fits well with this backdrop. Middle Bronze Age faunal assemblages from the South West of Britain tend to contain relatively even proportions of cattle and sheep/goat with a few pigs (Randall 2010, 220-1), as can be seen at Milsoms Corner, South Cadbury. However, variation is demonstrated at Sigwells, Charlton Horethorne where there was a greater proportion of sheep/goat

(*ibid.*, 145). The very poorly preserved 'Bronze Age' assemblage from the enclosure at Norton Fitzwarren was dominated by cattle and cattle-sized fragments (Levitan 1990, 61), but this may be taphonomic bias due to the hostile ground conditions. Field Farm, Shepton Mallet, produced a small faunal assemblage dominated by cattle and sheep/goat (Higbee 2009, 57-8), whilst at Hillfarrance, a Middle Bronze Age rectilinear field on the floodplain produced four fragments of sheep/goat and one cattle fragment (Higbee 2007). The Middle/Late Bronze Age animal bone from part of a ditch and a large pit at Cannard's Grave, Shepton Mallet, comprised 21 fragments, of which three related to large mammal (Hamilton-Dyer 2002, 103), demonstrating the general limitation of Bronze Age assemblages in this area. Such small assemblages most likely fail to reflect particular practices occurring at individual sites.

During the course of the first millennium BC there tends in general terms to be a shift away from cattle to greater proportions of sheep/goat (Hambleton 2008, 49) which holds true for Somerset (Randall 2010, 223). This assemblage is too small to reflect this phenomenon which was notable at Cadbury Castle and the sites in its environs (Randall 2010, 165-6), despite the hint of an increase in medium mammal sized fragments. There is nothing however to contradict the general picture of relative species abundance, and the distribution of material around the Middle Iron Age occupation area is in keeping with other later Iron Age Somerset sites (*ibid.*, 224).

Human remains

Clare Randall

A single fragment of human skull was identified, from the fill of an undated posthole [307]. The vault fragment is c. 30mm (greatest length) and most likely parietal or possibly frontal. The fragment is from a skeletally adult individual, and there is evidence that the sutures of the skull had begun to close internally. The table of the skull is not particularly thick, potentially indicating a gracile individual, but it is not possible to determine the sex or age. The incorporation of fragmentary human remains in later prehistoric domestic sites is a frequent occurrence and would not be out of place in either the Bronze or Iron Age phases.

Assessment of the archaeobotanical remains

Alys Vaughan-Williams

Methods

The bulk sample was processed by the wash-over system using a 250-micron mesh sieve. The flots were scanned using a low power zoom-stereo microscope. Identifications were made with reference to the author's

TABLE 5 ARCHAEOBOTANICAL ASSESSMENT

Sample	Context	Cut	Period	Feature	Sample vol. (l)	Flot vol. (ml)	Content		Wood		Mollusc	Details
							Chd	Des.	Chd	Des.		
2	200	201		Hearth	40	68					O	
3	268	267	IA	Pit	40	60	**	*	O			<i>Triticum, Hordeum, cf. Avena; Rubus</i>
4	251	253	IA	Pit	40	75	*	**	F			<i>Avena, Triticum; Atriplex, Rubus</i>
5	296	297	IA	Posthole	20	55	*					<i>Triticum</i>
6	323	322	BA	Ditch	40	8	*		O		O	<i>Hordeum, anthracite</i>
7	324	322	BA	Ditch	40	25	*	*	F			<i>Triticum, Rubus</i>
8	326	325	BA	Ditch	40	8	*		O			Anthracite
9	327	325	BA	Ditch	40	70	*	*	F		O	<i>Fumaria, Fabaceae, Chenopodiaceae; anthracite</i>
10	319	332	BA	Ditch	20	39	*	*	O		O	<i>Hordeum, Atriplex, Rubus</i>
11	320	332	BA	Ditch	20	10			O		O	Anthracite
12	334	301	BA	Ditch	40	25		**			O	<i>Rubus, Chenopodium, anthracite</i>
13	335	301	BA	Ditch	40	100		**	O		O	<i>Rubus, Chenopodiaceae</i>

Key:

O = Occasional
F = Frequent

* <11
** 11-25

Chd = charred
Des. = desiccated

BA = Bronze Age
IA = Iron Age

modern seed reference collection, and Berggren (1981) and Anderberg (1994). Plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997). The results are summarised in Table 5.

Results

Bronze Age

Ditches

Occasional charred grains of barley (*Hordeum*) and wheat (*Triticum*) were present in contexts (323) and (324) from ditch [322], and context (319) from ditch [332]. Desiccated seeds were present in contexts (319), (324), (327), (334) and (335) with taxa including brambles (*Rubus sp.*), orache (*Atriplex*) and fat hen (*Chenopodium album*). The majority of the ditch fills contained occasional charcoal and anthracite alongside occasional molluscs.

Iron Age

Pits

Context (268) from pit [267] contained occasional charred grains of wheat, barley and a possible oat (cf. *Avena*). Desiccated bramble seeds were occasional. Charcoal was also occasional.

Context (251) from pit [253] presented a similar assemblage with occasional grains of wheat and oat, plus frequent charcoal. Desiccated seeds were more frequent and included orache and brambles.

Postholes

Context (296) from posthole [297] contained occasional wheat grains.

Undated

Hearth

Context (200) from hearth [201] contained no archaeobotanical material but occasional molluscs.

Interpretation and discussion

All of the samples were contaminated by abundant modern grass. Given that the site has not been permanently waterlogged it is highly probable that the desiccated seeds, brambles, orache and fat hen, which are common on waste ground and ruderal land, have been introduced through modern root and burrowing activity.

Wheat and barley are ubiquitous across Bronze and Iron Age sites. Their scarce presence on this site

is only sufficient to indicate the presence of domestic and agricultural activity. In the absence of chaff it is impossible to differentiate between wild (*Avena fatua*) and cultivated oat (*Avena sativa*) grain, hence it is unclear if oat was cultivated near the site, although it is known to have been so elsewhere during the Iron Age.

The assemblages provide limited evidence about the activities at this site during the Bronze Age and Iron Age, only confirming that small scale arable farming was occurring.

DISCUSSION

Archaeological work in advance of recent development schemes over the past decade has for the first time provided substantial evidence of prehistoric activity in the landscape around Langport, filling a notable gap in the record close to a navigable section of the Parrett, one of Somerset's most important rivers.

The Bronze Age enclosure

A leaf-shaped arrowhead and fragment of Beaker pottery offer tantalising glimpses of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age occupation, but the Bronze Age enclosure is one of the first in Somerset to have its full ground plan exposed during excavation. Until recently the investigations of Units 6 and 5B, Brean Down, were the most extensive for a settlement site of the period in the county (Fitzpatrick 2008, 118; Bell 1990, 28-62). A chronology was established for the enclosure at Norton Fitzwarren but the interior was not sufficiently explored to characterise the settlement implied by a substantial assemblage of residual pottery (Ellis 1990, 64). There is however now an opportunity to make comparisons between the data from Somerset and its neighbouring counties (Fig. 9). Radiocarbon dates referred to here are all calibrated at 2 sigma (95% probability).

The dimensions of the Newtown Park enclosure of 20m by c. 21m are commensurate with roughly square enclosures at Cannington bypass (32m square; Saunders 2011, 8, fig. 3). Elsewhere in the county, smaller examples include a 16m square at Lady Field, Woolston (Tabor 2008b, 88) and an irregular segmented enclosure at Field Farm, Shepton Mallet (17m by 22m; Leach 2009, 21-5) whilst larger rectangular enclosures include Sigwells, Charlton Horethorne (20m by 60m; Needham *et al.* 2012, 474-5) and site 48a, East Lambrook (44m by 16m; Brett *et al.* 2009, 19, figs 4, 5 and 14). Two ditches in a right angle relationship to each other at Hartnells Farm, Taunton, may form part of a second enclosure there of a minimum of 73m square (Trevarthen 2008, 10-11, figs 1 and 2).

The lack of securely datable features within the Newtown Park enclosure limits the potential for

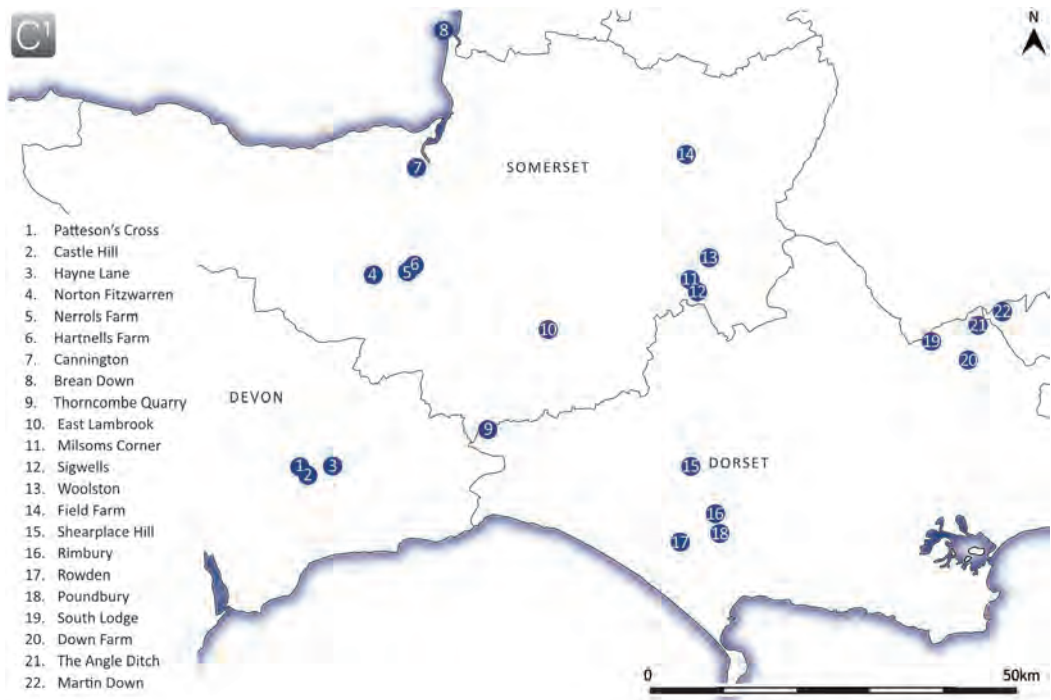


Fig. 9 Middle Bronze Age settlement sites in Somerset, Dorset and neighbouring areas of Devon

understanding of its internal organisation. It seems likely that rectangular structure S2 belongs to the Bronze Age and that the hearth [201] was within it. The group of postholes immediately to the east of the structure may have formed part of an annexe, a separate building or a small pen. Similarly shaped, four post structures have been recorded at Chard Junction Quarry, Thorncombe (Taylor and Preston 2004, fig. 2), Castle Hill (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, figs 19 and 20) and may have been present at Shearplace Hill, Sydling St. Nicholas, Dorset (Rahtz 1962, fig. 5). However, all of these examples appear to be smaller and ancillary to circular structures. Much larger rectangular structures occur in Dorset in later Middle Bronze Age sequences at Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley on Cranborne Chase (Barrett *et al.* 1991, fig. 5.28) and, most comparable in scale, Poundbury (Sparey Green 1987, 30-1).

The well-known enclosures on Cranborne Chase have attracted varying structural and functional interpretations. The rhomboid South Lodge example was a late element in a landscape of existing agriculture and settlement, but paucity of finds suggested that settlement had ceased by the time the enclosure was constructed (Barrett *et al.* 1991, 182-3). At Down Farm two buildings predated the enclosure and were replaced with similar structures when an L-shaped ditch and

bank with inner fence were constructed as part of an evolving scheme including animal husbandry (Barrett *et al.* 1991, 186-211). Both were linked to cemeteries. At Shearplace Hill structures occupied the north of a multiperiod, north-south oriented, rectangular enclosure with an associated work hollow (Rahtz 1962, 295-305), apparently meshed within a wider system of boundaries.

The enclosures at Shepton Mallet (Leach 2009, 62) and Woolston (Tabor 2008b, 88), Somerset, were both set within probably contemporary field systems, whereas the enclosure at Sigwells (Tabor 2008a, 62-3) respected an Early Bronze Age ditch, but otherwise appears to have been a discrete unit. The location of the East Lambrook enclosure was probably determined by an Early Neolithic causewayed enclosure, Middle Neolithic mortuary enclosure, and a group of ring ditches but does not appear to be set within a field system (Mudd and Brett 2012).

At Newtown Park there was no evidence for large scale earlier remains although the ditch D3 may indicate subsequent integration into a wider bounded landscape during Phase 3. The archaeobotanical and faunal evidence, albeit slender, indicates nearby local agricultural production while the possible loomweight implies secondary industry. However, this is not sufficient to demonstrate that the enclosure itself had a

domestic character. The single episode of ditch infilling and lack of associated finds, suggests that the initial life of the enclosure was brief. It seems likely that the fill derived from a bank formed from the original upcast from the digging of the ditch. The accurate re-cutting of the ditch suggests that infilling had not reached the original ground level. The extension of the enclosure ditch, and slightly later creation of a new access on its east side, suggest that the enclosure remained a significant landmark for some time.

The strong bias towards the deposition of cores and a hammerstone in the fills above the re-cut of the enclosure ditch on a site with few primary flakes suggests selection of items for deposition. The impression is reinforced by the occurrence of the possible loomweight at a terminal and the dog mandible sealed by the gravelly causeway. Possibly analogous deposits of singular cattle mandibles have been noted in the Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age in the environs of Cadbury Castle (Tabor 2008a, 59-61, 178). Examples from the base and middle fills of enclosure ditches at Sigwells and Milsoms Corner produced respectively carbon dates of 1495 BC - 1321 BC (OxA-23501; Tabor 2002, 74, pl. 5.2) and 1400 BC - 1130 BC (Tabor 2008a, 59-61; BM-3154), both corresponding well with the date proposed for the Newtown Park enclosure. The deposition of these items and the construction of the causeway itself may signify a conscious episode of closure and abandonment. Four small Iron Age sherds in the uppermost fills of D2 indicate that the enclosure survived as at least a residual channel during a hiatus between phases of occupation, even if it no longer served as a boundary in the later period.

The small pottery assemblage allows only speculative dating to the early third quarter of the second millennium BC. The character of the flint cores supports a date later than the Early Bronze Age. It should also be noted that over the course of the Bronze Age enclosure forms seem to change from regular circles and ovals (Castle Hill), through irregular forms (Shepton Mallet) to increasingly regular rectangles and squares (Sigwells, Woolston, South Lodge). Newtown Park would fall well in the middle of such a sequence.

Iron Age activity

The longevity of Iron Age activity on the site may best be inferred from the persistence of its prevalent orientation rather than the re-cutting of the most prominent feature of the period, ditch D4. It cannot be ruled out that it may have an earlier origin as the passage controlled by D4/5 and D6 between two areas, possibly fields, bears a striking resemblance to the arrangement between the Middle Bronze Age fields 4 and 5 at Castle Hill (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, figs 12 and 13).

The small assemblages of pottery, bone and plant macrofossils imply only low-intensity occupation, despite the confident attribution of at least three of the rectangular structures to the period. It contrasts sharply with the prolific finds and environmental evidence clearly associated with a midden, multiple rectangular and circular structures, pits and ditches from occupation spanning the period at Bowden's Lane (Socha-Paszkievicz in prep.). At Danebury there were areas where rectangular structures appeared to be associated with one or more roundhouses but there were also zones where they appeared to occur in groups without them (Cunliffe 1995, fig. 9).

There have been recent discoveries of small, post-built, rectangular structures in lowland Somerset at Huntworth, associated with Late Iron Age or Early Romano-British pottery (structure 7442; Powell *et al.* 2009, 73), and at Bowden's Quarry, only 1km from Newtown Park (Fig. 1). The size and Lias stone packing of the postholes at the latter were similar in character to those of structures S1, S3 and S4 at Newton Park (structure 1008; Pine and Weale 2012, 7). Pottery from one of the postholes was of probably Early Iron Age date (Timby, J., 'Pottery', in Pine and Weale 2012, 12).

If these structures were for storage of fodder or, more especially grain, it seems unlikely that they would have been sited far from those who needed to use and protect such resources. This would strengthen the argument that some pairs of postholes were roundhouse entrances, and it is notable that P1 and P3 occupy spaces which are relatively free of other features.

The presence of a few carbonised grains does not necessarily indicate drying for storage or cooking. It has been shown that it may result from thatch preparation (Reynolds 1980, 15) although the range of grains from the pit and post group associated with the largest number of grains surely makes one of the former uses more likely. The single saddle quern might be cited in support, although its unusual form may indicate other or secondary use.

Once again only a loose chronology is possible for the period. The most readily datable vessel form was from the secondary fill of the initial cut of ditch D4 (Fig. 7, 6). The burnishing of its exterior is usually a characteristic of the later part of the period; however, three carbon dates from a ditch deposit in South Cadbury which included vessels closely comparable in form and finish produced a range of 367 BC to 182 BC (OxA-23722 to OxA-23725, Tabor 2008a, plate 24; Tabor and Jones in prep., fig. 6, 218). A similar range of 396 BC to 205 BC, obtained from residues on a sherd from a pit (Pine and Weale 2012, 12), was treated as representative of the main period of occupation at Bowden's Quarry. It seems highly likely that the settlement there at least overlapped with activity at Newtown Park.

Discoveries following the recent north-eastward expansion of Langport suggest that further development is likely to encounter more significant remains from later prehistory onwards. The recent evidence is from areas set back from the slightly raised ground on either side of the River Parrett which form a natural neck overlooking and offering control over an arterial route into the heart of the county. Newtown Park may be regarded as part of the hinterland of a sequence of significant settlement long buried under the buildings which occupy the prime ground by the river or of the equally advantageous site overlooking it from Bowden's Quarry.

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