

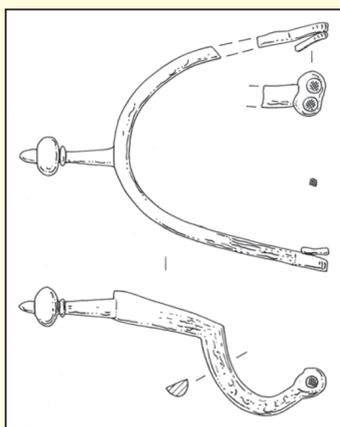
ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Chicheley Hall Medieval Settlement and Cemetery



Medieval inhumation under excavation



*Late 12th-early
13th-century spur*



*Small fragment of shroud
fabric preserved in a grave*



Work took place within the coach house



Chicheley Hall

Archaeological investigations were undertaken by Albion Archaeology at Chicheley Hall during a programme of building refurbishment and alteration by the Royal Society to convert the former private residence into a conference centre. During works to convert the Coach House into a lecture theatre remains dated to the 12th and 13th centuries were revealed. The remains included part of the cemetery of the adjacent church of St Lawrence and pits and ditches which may have been associated with the medieval manor. Six burials were excavated of which three were radiocarbon dated to between the 11th and 13th centuries. Unusually a small fragment of a linen shroud was preserved and recovered from one of the burials. Finds from one of the pits included wall plaster and a spur, suggesting high status occupation. A small number of features indicated continued use throughout the medieval period. A number of the pits and ditches appear to form part of an area of the medieval settlement that had fallen out of use by the later 16th century.

Documentary evidence suggests that these remains formed part of a grange belonging to Tickford Priory. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries Chicheley manor was granted to Cardinal Wolsey; by 1545 it was in the ownership of Anthony Cave who had built a new house there by 1550. In 1645 the house was plundered by Parliamentary soldiers. The current buildings and gardens, constructed by Sir John Chester, date from the early 18th century. The excavation works uncovered post-medieval and later remains relating to the development of the site as a stately home during the 18th century.



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Calverton Quarry

A Roman Mausoleum



The Roman mausoleum during excavation



The excavated mausoleum showing the pit that contained the pottery burial urn



The large pottery urn at the centre of the mausoleum



A small selection of the iron nails both unused and used

Excavation by Northamptonshire Archaeology ahead of gravel extraction at Calverton Quarry, adjacent to the River Great Ouse, had previously examined the prehistoric landscape of Bronze Age round barrows, a pit alignment and a small late Iron Age enclosure. It was known that there was a Roman settlement on slightly higher ground beyond the current quarry, but work in 2009 provided an unexpected bonus with the discovery of a small circular Roman mausoleum, built just beyond the settlement.

The central area, enclosed by a limestone wall, was only 3m in diameter. The person honoured by the monument had been cremated, and most of their bones, along with some charcoal and burnt soil from the pyre, had been placed in an exceptionally large pottery urn, 500mm in diameter, buried in a pit at the centre of the mausoleum.

At the bottom of the urn a worn Roman coin, dated to the mid-2nd century AD; was perhaps the fee for entering the underworld. Further bone and pyre debris came from the pit containing the urn, and there were also small deposits within both the wall foundations and the soil used to fill the interior of the monument. Most of the cremated bone is human and the quantity recovered suggests it came from a single person, but there were also bones from wood pigeon, woodcock, duck and chicken.

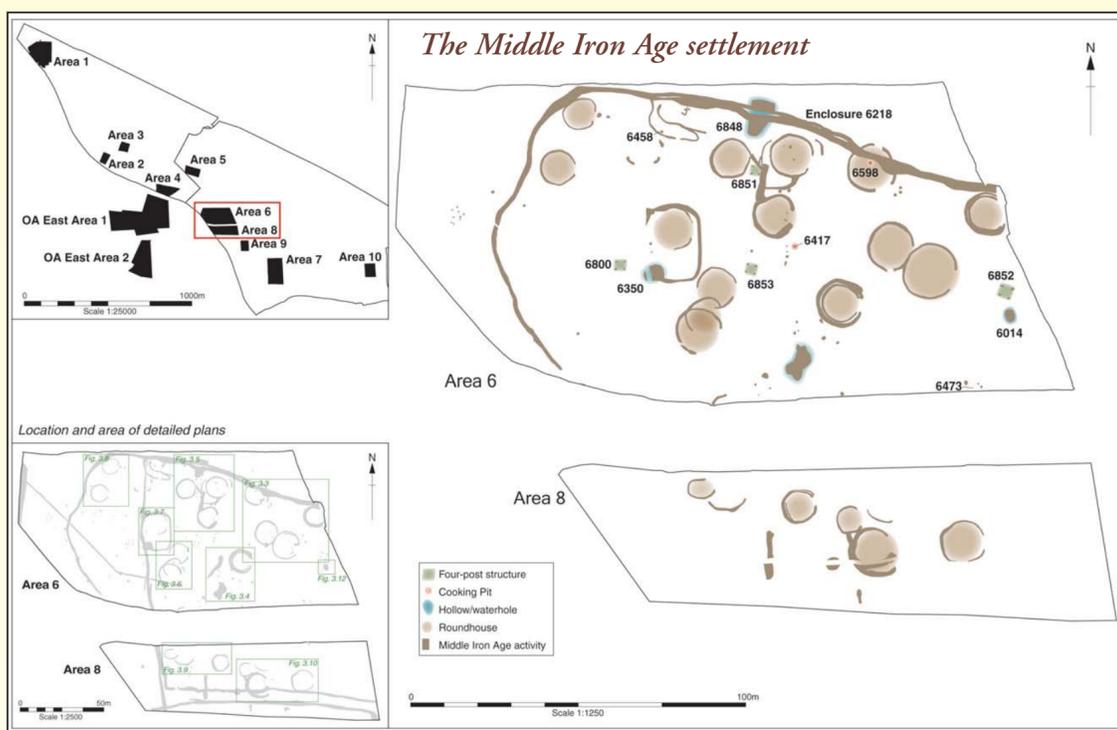
The urn also contained over 600 iron nails with more from around and above the urn, to a total of nearly 1400. They were of various sizes and while many were unused others had been clenched over, and these may have come from a coffin or a bier that had held the body within the pyre.



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Broughton Iron Age to Mid-Roman Settlements

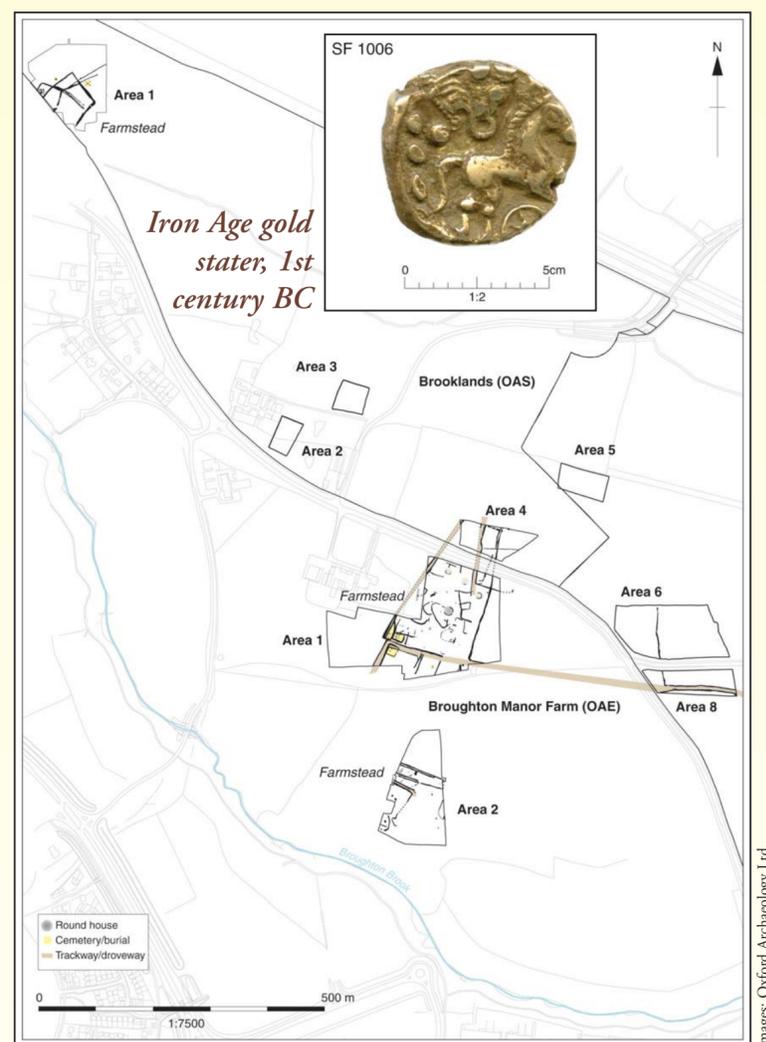


One of the many cremation burials

Reconstructed cremation burial which contained remains of a wooden casket decorated with lions' heads. The casket contained a possible scroll fitting



Illustration: Peter Froese



The Late pre-Roman Iron Age Farmsteads

Images: Oxford Archaeology Ltd

Extensive excavations were undertaken by teams from Oxford Archaeology East and Oxford Archaeology South at Broughton, just outside Milton Keynes, between 2006 and 2009. Analysis of the sites is now complete and the publication is nearly ready for release as an Oxford Archaeology Monograph.

The opportunity to examine a swathe of the local landscape allowed us to investigate settlement patterns over time. Although evidence for early prehistoric activity was found, it was in the middle Iron Age that a farmstead or hamlet consisting of 19 roundhouses was established.

By the late Iron Age, settlement had shifted to a central farmstead, close to which were two subsidiary settlements.

Associated with two of these farms were cremation cemeteries of Aylesford-Swarling type dating to the Lexden period (after c. 15-10 BC). These provide the largest group of such burials yet found in this part of the country and reflect the position of Broughton within the territory of the Catuvellauni. The presence of these often richly furnished graves has allowed us to explore various issues such as trends in burial custom, pottery supply, ethnicity and social status.

All three of the excavated settlements were at their height in the early Roman period. Cremation burial ceased during the mid 2nd century and, although the main farmstead remained in use, the two secondary farmsteads were apparently abandoned simultaneously in the late 2nd century.



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

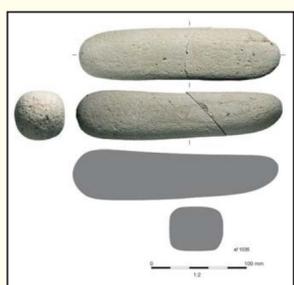
Broughton Late Roman and Beyond



The late Roman corn drier



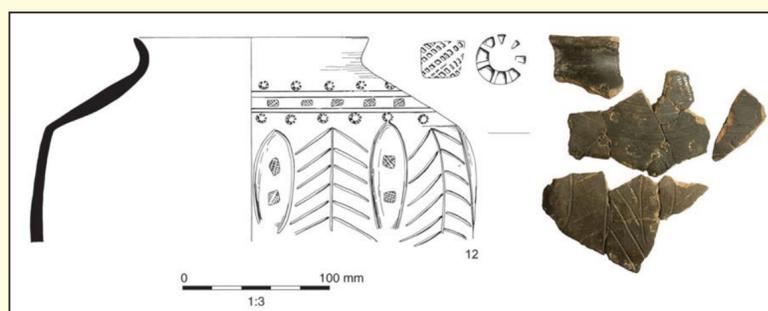
Bone comb from the sunken-featured building



Pestle from the sunken-featured building



Pottery from the medieval farm's well



Pottery from the sunken-featured building, possibly associated with feasting waste



Images: Oxford Archaeology Ltd

The main farmstead survived and by the late Roman period had developed into a cluster of stone-footed buildings and a possible granary, associated with a substantial corn drier. Nearby, a new farmstead was created which continued in use into the Anglo-Saxon period. One of the abandoned Roman farmsteads was resettled, and now housed a cluster of sunken-featured buildings.

One of these structures contained important evidence for what appears to be feasting waste and notably included Anglo-Saxon pottery in Roman form. The animal bone included at least five semi-articulated carcasses of young pigs, along with numerous

fish bones (dominated by pike). Other objects found in the fill include a complete bone comb, a bone pin beater and various other items. It is possible that these finds represent the remains of a feast associated with the demolition or dismantling of the building.

This settlement was in turn abandoned, to be replaced after the Norman conquest by a farmstead and surrounding ridge and furrow field system, forming an outlying part of the village that had, by the time of Domesday, taken the name of Broughton – the farm or settlement by the brook.

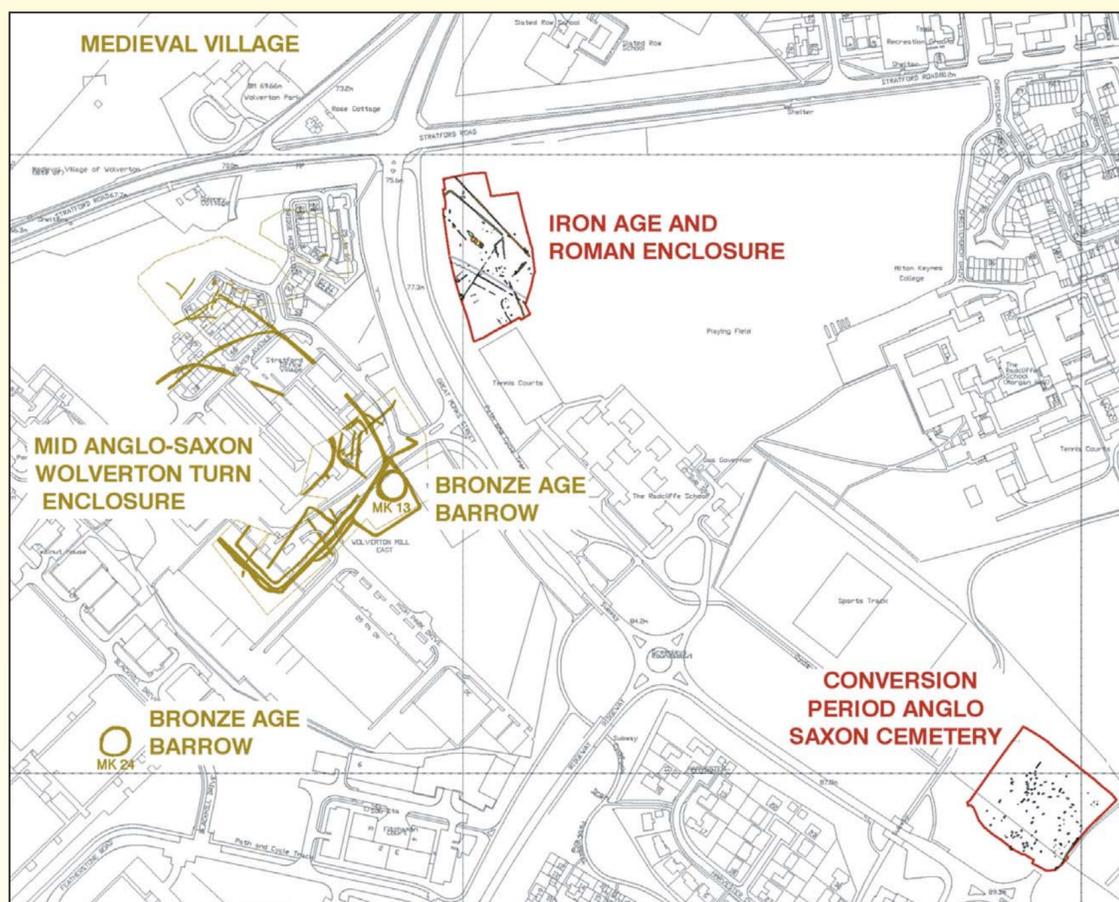


ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Wolverton

Iron Age to Roman activity and an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery



Female burial SK2359 under excavation



One of three short swords recovered from high status male burials



Spearhead from female burial SK2359

During 2007 and 2008 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd was commissioned to complete archaeological excavation in advance of development near Radcliffe School, Wolverton, Milton Keynes. The work was commissioned by NJL Consulting on behalf of Milton Keynes Council and The Radcliffe School.

At the north of the development area were Late Iron Age and early Romano-British enclosures plus a few Anglo-Saxon pits contemporary with the mid Anglo-Saxon Wolverton Turn enclosure. At the south of the development area an extensive mid Anglo Saxon cemetery was discovered.

The Anglo Saxon cemetery at Wolverton is the largest Conversion Period cemetery excavated in Buckinghamshire to date. It was the burial ground of the last pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons who occupied the Wolverton area. Many, if not all, probably lived c.500m to the northwest at the mid Anglo Saxon Wolverton Turn enclosure.



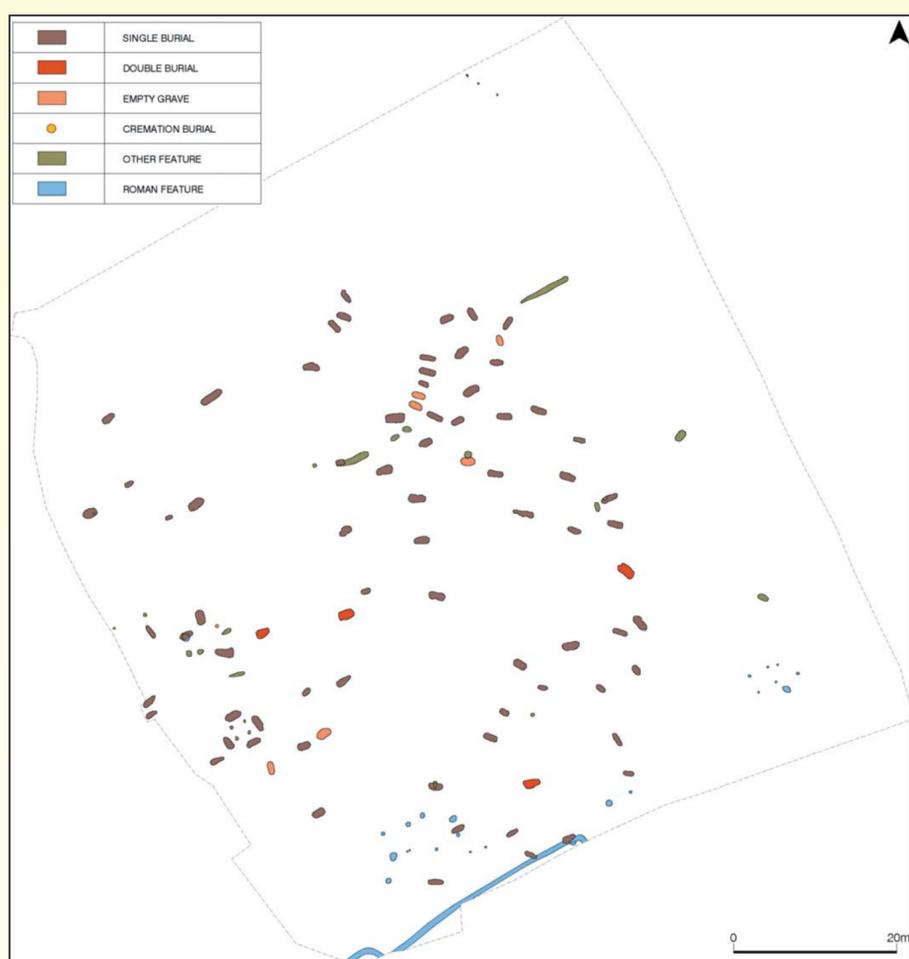
Silver necklace with glass, amethyst and shell beads from female burial SK2359



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

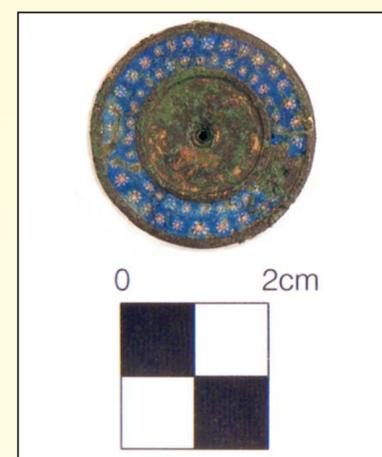
Wolverton The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery



Cemetery Plan



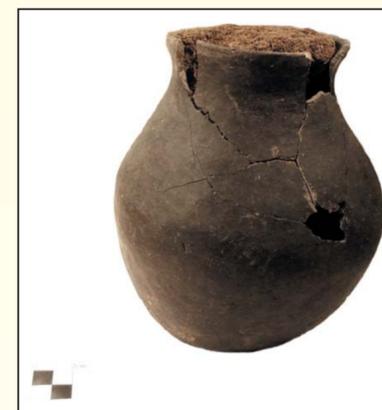
Workbox with runic inscription from female burial



Decorative disc from the base of a hanging bowl



One of five antler combs found with male and female burials



One of four pots recovered from male burials

The cemetery contained 83 burials and 2 urned cremations. Three graves contained the remains of 2 individuals and one grave contained the remains of 3 individuals. It dates to the 7th century AD, a time known as the “Conversion Period”.

Most were buried with only a small knife but a few burials located at the centre and north of the cemetery contained a greater number of objects suggesting that they were of higher status.

The higher status individuals comprised seven males buried with a small selection of weapons and three females buried with jewellery and other objects.

The most richly furnished burial comprised that of a 42-50 year old female (SK2359); who wore a necklace of silver wire rings,

glass, amethyst and shell beads. A small leather bag containing miniature tweezers was placed under her right elbow; and a padlocked leather bound wooden box was located above her head. A small spearhead with a blunted point had been placed on the box.

One of the other high status females was an adolescent (SK2167) who had been buried with a small cylindrical container known as a work box. It is uncertain what work boxes were used for, but the example buried with SK2359 is particularly interesting as it had been inscribed with at least seven runes. The inscription is one off less than twenty pre-8th century examples recorded in the UK. Translation of the runes has proved difficult, although they may form part of a name “BUGI”.

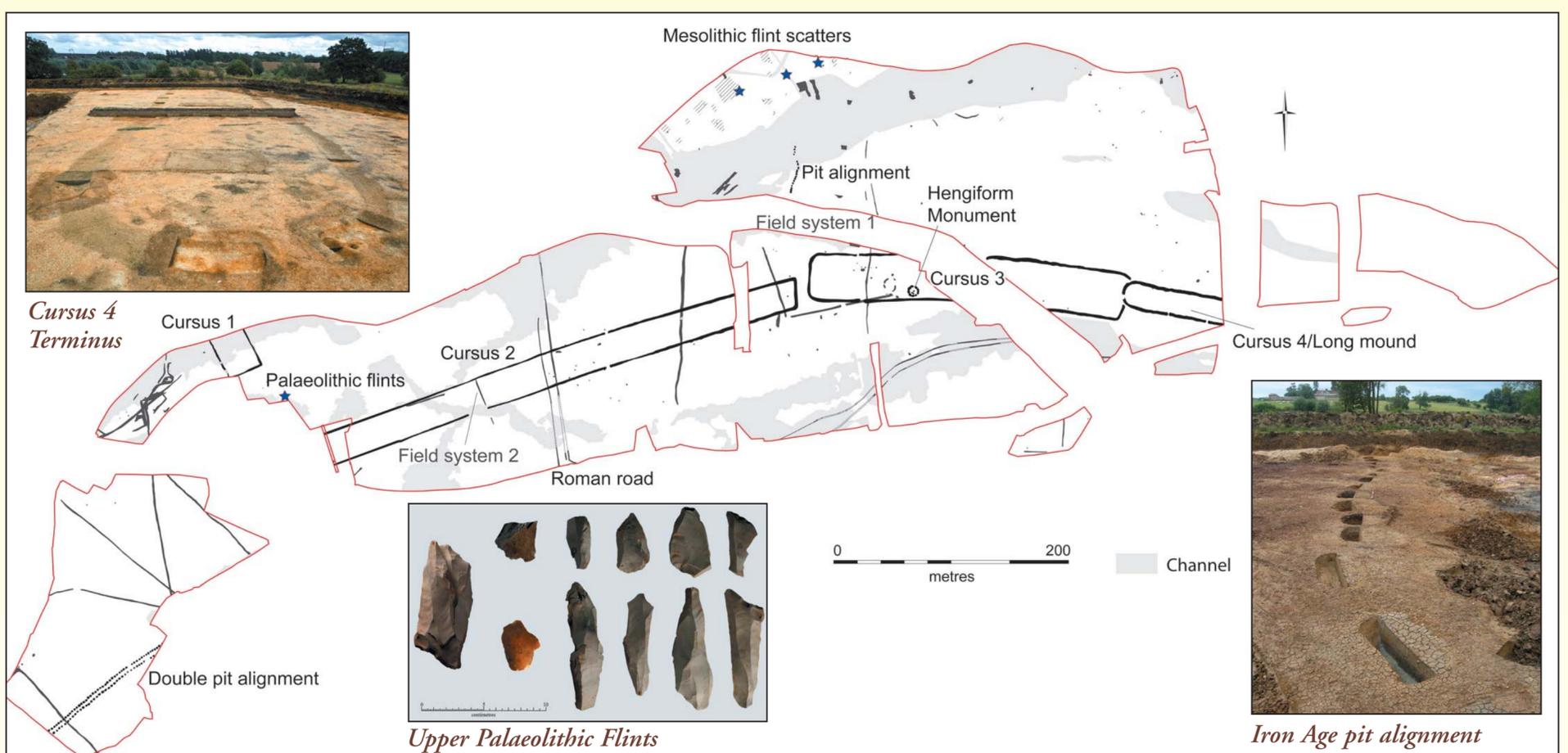


ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Manor Farm Quarry, Old Wolverton

Early Prehistory and the First Humans in Milton Keynes



During 2012 and 2013, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit continued excavations at Manor Farm, Old Wolverton on behalf of Hanson Aggregates and Phoenix Consulting. Previous investigations between 2007 and 2011 revealed significant archaeological remains across the floodplain of the River Great Ouse spanning the Upper Palaeolithic through to the Roman period. A peak of activity occurred during the Neolithic period, when the floodplain was transformed into a ceremonial space through the construction of cursus features and a hengiform monument. The recent excavations have revealed a fourth Neolithic cursus/long mound monument and a double pit alignment of probable Iron Age date.

The quarry area is bordered by a complex braided river system to the north (earlier courses of the Great Ouse), spanning the early

Holocene through to the early Medieval period (approx. 10,000 to 1,000 years ago). Bones from humans, aurochs (an extinct form of cattle) and red deer were recovered from the ancient channels. Later artefacts included wooden posts, possibly associated with fish weirs, and a wooden bucket of probable Iron Age date.

Activity during the Terminal Upper Palaeolithic and Late Mesolithic periods was highlighted during the 2010 and 2011 excavations, when in situ flint scatters were found adjacent to ancient river courses. The small Upper Palaeolithic assemblage is characteristic of the Federmesser industry (approx. 14,000 years old). The larger assemblage of Late Mesolithic material may represent seasonal occupation.



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Manor Farm Quarry, Old Wolverton

A Prehistoric Monumental Landscape



Causeway in cursus 4



Antler pick



Red deer skull in situ



Wooden bucket of probable iron age date

The three Neolithic cursus monuments (long, square-ended rectilinear ditch and bank enclosures) previously excavated on the site were entered by narrow causeways and displayed evidence for internal banks. The monuments were numbered in order of discovery (1, 2 and 3), although their form and relationships to each other suggests they were constructed in sequence from east to west. The fourth cursus/long mound monument, discovered in 2012, differed from the previous three in that its western terminal was rounded not square. A slight gravel bank and buried soil layer within this fourth monument suggested the presence of a low-lying internal mound or platform rather than linear banks. Several pits cutting the monument ditches contained Durrington Walls style Grooved Ware pottery (4900 to 4200 years old), similar to the material recovered from the Late Neolithic hengiform monument just 200m away. This suggests that the fourth monument was completely infilled by the Late Neolithic period. The morphological differences of this fourth monument and its relationship to Cursus 3 imply that it is the earliest monument discovered on the site so far. Two poorly preserved red deer antler picks were also found in the lower fills of this fourth monument and are awaiting radiocarbon dating.

Cursus monuments are broadly dated to the middle Neolithic (approx. 5,500 to 5,000 years ago). The builders of these enigmatic monuments regularly disregarded natural contours in the landscape although the monuments are often found in riverine locations, either respecting or even 'crossing' river courses, as seen at Manor Farm. Although their precise function may never be understood, the monuments seem to enclose and preserve a space in the landscape, a space often cleared of trees. The internal banks and few entrances seem to restrict and control access and movement, whilst contemporary activity within the monuments themselves has left very little trace.

Bronze Age activity is represented by scattered settlement remains including field system ditches, burnt stone pits and a ring-gully excavated between 2009 and 2011. A single pit alignment of probable Iron Age date was excavated in 2011. In 2012, a second pit alignment comprising two parallel rows of pits was excavated. Despite extensive excavation of both alignments few finds were recovered.



ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

The Portable Antiquities Scheme

Portable Antiquities in Milton Keynes



▲ These silver coins were minted between 1260-80AD. The largest two are pennies. There was a shortage of smaller change at this time so halfpennies and farthings were often made by cutting a full penny in half or quarters. These were lost near Tyringham and found by Bryan Robinson.



◀ Quoit-headed pins like this one made between 1500 and 1200BC are unusual finds in this area. The originally straight shaft has been bent during centuries in the soil. This was found by Ivan Clark in the Haversham area.



▲ This gilded mount dating to between 600-700AD features strange creatures with round eyes and three claws. Their beaks hook round the one ahead. Discovered by Ivan Clark in the Lt Linford area.

In recent years archaeology has been popularised by television programmes and as a result more people are visiting the countryside to search for archaeological finds. There are two metal detecting clubs in Milton Keynes, as well as a number of independent detectorists.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme is a national, voluntary scheme to record archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year thousands of objects are discovered, many by metal detectorists, but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work. All these discoveries offer an important source for understanding our past.

The scheme has been operating in the county since 2003 and so far over 11,781 finds have been reported to the County's Finds Liaison Officer, with the number rising all the time. These finds are recorded and the details put onto a national online database www.finds.org.uk

If you have any finds that you would like to record you can contact the Finds Liaison Officer, Ros Tyrrell, on 01296 624519 or rtyrrell@buckscc.gov.uk who is usually available, by appointment, on Wednesdays in the Civic Offices (next to the Library) or bring them to the County Museum in Aylesbury.



◀ Many people do not realise that gold, silver and bronze coins were being struck before the Romans made Britannia their northern province. This one from the Cold Brayfield area has a spiral snake and a dog on one side and a horse and a leaf on the other. Found by Barrie Plasom.



◀ Some time around 100-200AD a Roman craftsman made and enamelled this brooch. In the 1800 years in the soil the gold coloured metal has turned green and the enamel has lost a little of its colour. It was found near Ravenstone by Emily Baker

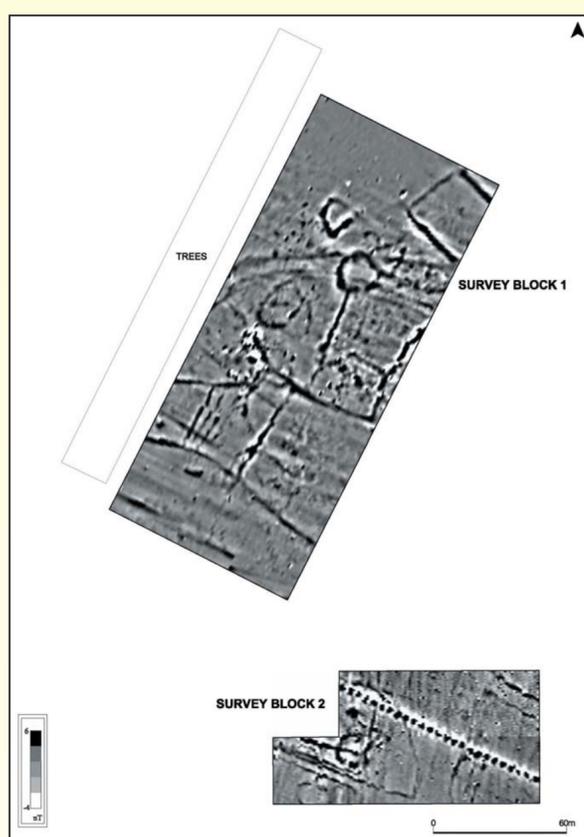


ARCHAEOLOGY

in Milton Keynes

Bury Field Common, Newport Pagnell

An Iron Age and Roman Settlement



Greyscale plot of the survey results



Interpretive plot of the survey results



The CLASP and ASC Ltd Magnetometers



Pottery from the settlement site

In May 2012 a team of archaeologists including members of the CLASP Community Landscape Archaeology Project group and local archaeological contractors Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd and Cotswold Archaeology carried out a geophysical and contour survey of an area of Bury Field Common, Newport Pagnell. The geophysical survey coordinated by Milton Keynes Council's Conservation & Archaeology Team targeted the site of a lost tumulus or barrow destroyed by ploughing during World War II and also recent finds suggesting a late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement on the common. The survey was carried with the co-operation and support of the Bury Field Commoners Association.

The survey used a magnetometer or more correctly a gradiometer which measures and records variations in the magnetic field of the ground beneath. When plotted, the measurements can be interpreted to reveal buried archaeological features such as ditches and pits and also areas of burning or brickwork and iron or other ferrous metal objects.

The results of the survey show that previously unknown and extensive archaeological remains are present. Strong magnetic anomalies identify infilled ditches forming a pattern of enclosures and trackways characteristic of Iron Age and Romano-British rural settlement activity.

The largest of the enclosures probably formed part of the settlements agricultural infield, whilst smaller enclosures may define the areas where people were living or would have been used as stock pens. The survey results suggest that the settlement was relatively long lived as there are indications that its layout underwent a number of phases of reorganisation.

The aim of the initial exploratory survey was to determine whether archaeological remains were present at Bury Field and in this the survey has been successful. It is hoped that further phases of survey will be undertaken to define the extent of the settlement, helping to inform the future management of this valuable public open space.

