

## **Chapter 5: The Early Iron Age** *By Chris Bell and Dan Stansbie*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the early Iron Age settlement, including its earliest features which may date from the end of the later Bronze Age. Much reliance has been put on the pottery assemblage for assigning features to broad chronological periods. Although there is much inter-cutting of pits and ditches there are no extensive stratigraphic sequences against which to evaluate the evidence. Traces of later Bronze Age activity was identified across Cresswell Field in the form of a sparse scatter of pits and at least two burnt mound features on the edge of the palaeochannel. A light scatter of Bronze Age pottery, flintwork and fired clay in the form of loomweights, spindlewhorls and structural fragments found across the excavated area, largely as residual finds in later features, are clear testimony to use of the second gravel terrace at this time. Four pits in particular were identified as later-Bronze Age to early Iron Age transitional. From the early Iron Age the second gravel terrace became the focus of a small settlement with all the attendant features typical of the period, in particular numerous pits and postholes.

The early Iron Age settlement consisted of dispersed clusters of occupation running east/west along the edge of the second gravel terrace for about 500 m (Fig. 5.4-6). To the west falling within the excavated area of Cresswell Field were two swathes of features, one running ESE/WNW along the gravel terrace, the other running north/south parallel to the eastern edge of a palaeochannel. These features continued to the east occupying a swathe of ground running across the north of the Yarnton site from SW to NE but showing a distinct focus towards the western end of the site. Some features extended beyond the trench limits to the north and west but the southern and eastern edges of the settlement appear to have been defined during the course of excavation. The northern limit was confirmed by a trial trench evaluation followed by excavation north of the Yarnton site in 1996-7 (YRP 96-97) which revealed no direct evidence of the occupation density seen the south but did expose a series of north-south linear features containing early Iron Age pottery.

The settlement comprised over 630 pits and at least 18 possible post-built structures. In addition seven four-post structures, two small enclosures: one ditched, one fenced; one recognisable fenceline, a small number of ditches and gullies, an isolated hearth, a midden and a myriad of postholes were located. In the following descriptive report the evidence is presented by feature type across the site integrating as far as possible the evidence from the two main excavated areas of Cresswell Field and Yarnton. The main defined feature types comprise structures (and associated features), enclosures, boundaries (fencelines, ditches), and pits.

#### **Late Bronze Age- Early Iron Age transitional features (Figs 5.1-3)**

Four pits were identified as particular early in the sequence and regarded as Late Bronze Age-early Iron Age transitional (pits 7412, 8084, 8091 and 8127). Three of

these pits (8084, 8091 and 8127) occur in an east-west line (Fig. 5.2), and this includes pit 8127 which contained the substantial part of three whole smashed pots including one in the All Cannings Cross style (Fig. 00.00) along with a minimum of 11 other vessels. The three pits in possible alignment are circular and fairly similar in size, ranging in diameter from 1.25 m to 1.5 m and are all flat-bottomed cylinders. Pit 8084, with a depth of 0.8 m, was the deepest of these pits, and was slightly undercut suggesting it may have originally been a grain storage pit. The eastern-most pit, 8091, is only 0.21 m deep, but unlike the other two pits this pit occurs in the area of the medieval ridge and furrow ploughsoil and may simply be more truncated than the other pits. The All Cannings Cross pit, 8127, would appear to represent a significant deliberate deposit and as this, with pit 000?, are the only features to contain this type of pottery, it heightens their possible significance. It is further possible that the alignment was once more extensive as many of the pits on the site were not excavated. A further interesting observation is that this alignment, if valid, approximately correlates with the southern limit of the swathe of pits and could be defining the area designated for pit digging. A late Bronze Age pit, 7543, also lies approximately on this line in the western half of the site and this contains large quantities of refuse including part of a loomweight.

The other feature of this date, pit 7412, is located quite some distance away, in the central part of the site and this was a slightly curious bath-shaped pit. However, it is also possible that the location of this feature was also of some significance as it is cut into the Neolithic barrow. An early Iron Age pit, 7365, also within the barrow contained an unusual assemblage of animal bone (see below p. 00) suggesting that the barrow was still visible and was perhaps treated as some sort of hallowed ground.

Apart from pottery, two of these pits, 7412 and 8084, also contained burnt stone and two, 7412 and 8127, contained animal bone. It is perhaps surprising that 8084 given its size contained no animal bone. Pit 8084 did contain a large deposit of charred cereal grain recovered from samples taken above and around the pots.

## **Early Iron Age structures**

### ***Summary***

Six post-built structures were identified from this phase of occupation at Cresswell Field (Fig. 5.5) and seventeen, including seven four-post structures, at Yarnton (Fig. 5.6). In Cresswell Field one structure was identified in the far north-east corner of the site (8202), one in the central southern area (8396) and two pairs' located in the north-west (8787/8399) and south-west corners (8788/8789). The three most easterly of these buildings (8202, 8396 and 8399) were recognised and excavated as structures on site. The other three (8787, 8788 and 8789) were identified during post-excavation analysis. Trying to identify structures in some parts of the site was made difficult by the sheer density of features, and this was further complicated in the central northern area by the numerous postholes associated with the Saxon occupation. Given that only a limited number of the features on the site could be excavated, it is therefore highly likely that further structures existed which were not recognised.

Five of the identified structures were represented by a similar 'D-shaped' arrangement of postholes, and four of these were almost identical in size, measuring 7 m across the longest axis, by between 5 and 5.5 m through the shortest axis. The fifth was slightly larger at 8 m x 6 m. The other structure found was sub-rectangular in shape and considerably smaller, with internal measurements of 5 m x 4 m.

However, because some or all of these arrangements of postholes almost certainly relate to the position of the inner 'ring' of load-bearing posts they does not necessarily represent the shape or size of the overall structures, which may have been oval or circular in plan. The orientation on which the straighter side of the D-shaped arrangement of posts occurred varied greatly. Although it would seem most likely that the entrances lay off this side of the buildings, there were no further sets of postholes set apart from the post-ring to indicate the position of the entrance or existence of a porch, and in some of the structures gaps in the post-ring occurred along the straight and curved sides.

The Yarnton site revealed seventeen early Iron Age structures, ten of which were post-built roundhouses, and seven of which were four-post structures. These structures were broadly divisible into three groups: a western group consisting of six circular structures (1482, 1511, 1752, 1754, 1760-1) and one four-post structure; a central group comprising a single roundhouse (1754) and a four-post structure, and an eastern group comprising three circular structures (2661, 2694, 1756), one of which, 1756, was defined on three sides by an oval gully, and five four-post structures (Fig. 5.6). However, the pattern is clearly somewhat distorted by the presence of several large Roman enclosures in the middle of the site, which effectively separate the eastern group from the western group. In fact it could be the case that the impression of three distinct groups has been created by the destruction of early Iron Age structures by Roman ditch construction. The presence of an isolated roundhouse within a centrally positioned Roman enclosure lends weight to this argument, by indicating that a group of buildings may have linked the eastern and western groups at one time.

The diameter of the roundhouses varied between 4.75 m and 10.9 m, and averaged 7.9 m. The four-post structures averaged 2.35 m by 2.27 m. The buildings formed a broadly linear arrangement, following a NE-SW axis and occupied the northern part of the excavation area. Within this distribution they tended to form clusters of between one and three buildings, associated with groups of pits, which were distributed around the buildings and in the gaps between them. By way of qualification it should perhaps be added that the pit distribution excludes some potentially early Iron Age, but undatable examples. Where entrances to the roundhouses could be discerned they faced south or south-east. In general the four-post structures were associated with individual buildings, although three of them clustered around the two easternmost roundhouses. Four of the four-post structures were actually situated within individual roundhouses, although the off-centre positioning of three of these indicates that they cannot have played structural roles (ie as supports for ring-beams). The other four-post structure was situated fairly centrally within roundhouse 1756, however, the small size of this structure means that it would not have required a ring-beam for support. In all cases the four-post structures and roundhouses were not contemporary.

### ***Structure 8202 and associated features*** (Fig. 5.7)

An arrangement of fifteen postholes at the east end of the site represented evidence of a sub-rectangular post-built structure with internal measurements of 5 m x 4 m. A small pit (8591), which lay to the 4 m to the south-west of the structure, contained a human skull, and a row of three large pits further to the west (7060, 7173 and 7307) contained significant quantities of domestic refuse, comprising early Iron pottery, animal bone and burnt stone.

The postholes which made up the structure mostly had steep sided, conical-shaped profiles, and ranged in size from between 0.22 m to 0.37 m in diameter and between 0.1 m to 0.23 m in depth. The spacing of these features suggested that the entrance lay in the north-east corner, and inter-cutting between four of the postholes on the east side of the post-ring (7292 and 8083, and 8060 and 8062) suggested that some of the posts had been replaced. Three of the postholes (7292, 8062 and 8188) produced early Iron Age pottery (comprising four sherds in total, weighing 25g), and another (8146), contained a single sherd of middle Iron Age pot, though this was almost certainly intrusive. Two separate postholes contained deposits of cremated animal bone (from 7018), and burnt stone (1.25 kg from 8083). Another posthole packed with burnt stone (8222) lay immediately to the south-west of the post-ring. Small pits or postholes filled, or partly filled, with burnt stone were also found on the line of, or adjacent to, the post-ring of all five of the other identified structures (see below).

Four postholes (8238, 8240, 8242 and 8254) which lay immediately to the south-west of the structure formed a north-west – south-east alignment and possibly represented part of an associated fence line. Three of these features also produced early Iron Age pottery (5 sherds, 31 g in total) and another six sherds were recovered from a shallow pit (7029) which lay just to the north. A further cluster of postholes (8075, 8077, 8079, 8081, 8142 and 8144), two of which were double postholes, lay within or immediately adjacent to the south-east corner of the building. Although none produced any finds it seemed likely that some or all of these features were also directly associated.

Three large pits (7060, 7307 and 7173) lay in a north - south row 10 m to west of structure 8202. All three features were slightly oval in plan and were also similar in size, but varied slightly in depth and profile (see Fig. 5.32). Pits 7060 and 7173 were fairly deep with undercut sides, whilst 7173 was shallower and bowl-shaped (see below).

### ***Structure 8396 and associated features*** (Fig. 5.8)

A clearly defined cluster of eighteen postholes, not all excavated, in the central southern area of the site formed a sub-oval or 'D-shaped' arrangement, which represented a post-built structure with internal measurements of 7 m x 5 m. The postholes along the southern edge of the post-ring appeared to indicate a flatter side. However, a series of inter-cutting middle Iron Age ditches lay immediately to the south which may have truncated further postholes on this edge of the building. In the northern half of the structure there were several double postholes suggesting that it had undergone remodelling or rebuilding at some point.

The postholes were mostly conical in profile and ranged in size from 0.3 m to 0.5 m in diameter and between 0.1 m to 0.4 m in depth. They contained only one or two fills and no postpipes were visible. Two small pits, possibly post-pits, (7334 and 8373) lay equidistant on either side toward the southern end of the post-ring and may also have been associated with a structural element of the building. These features measured 0.5 m in diameter and 0.4 m in depth and both had slightly irregular V-shaped profiles.

Five of the postholes and both of the post-pits contained early Iron Age pottery (totalling 11 sherds, weighing 73 g) and two fragments of a saddle quern were recovered from posthole 8371 in the south-east corner of the structure. Post-pit 7334 also produced a small quantity of charred grain and fragments of burnt bone.

Within the linear spread of inter-cutting middle Iron Age pits and ditches in the area immediately to the south of the structure there was also an earlier phase of truncated pits containing varying quantities of early Iron Age pottery, mostly comprising large unabraded sherds. The general paucity of other early Iron Age features in this area of the site suggested that they were directly associated with structure 8396. One of these pits, 7787, lay immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the post-ring (Fig. 5.8), and, if genuinely contemporary, appears to have been a storage pit which lay within the building.

#### **Structure 8399 and associated features (Fig. 5.9)**

A structure similar in size and shape to building 8396 was identified in the central northern area of the site. The numerous postholes and stakeholes associated with the Saxon occupation in this part of the site initially made it difficult to recognise this earlier structure. However, further investigation revealed that the Saxon postholes mostly occurred within linear alignments and contained distinctly sterile fills. In comparison, the postholes associated with structure 8399 were more substantial and often contained finds, including pottery, burnt stone and fragments of animal bone. There was also a cluster of small pits which lay within and adjacent to this structure, several of which also contained large unabraded sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

The structure was represented by a cluster of eight postholes. However, some of the postholes on its eastern side had been partially truncated by a medieval plough furrow and a gap in the post-ring on this side suggested a least one further feature may have been completely cut away. The south-west corner of the structure had also been partly truncated by one of the Saxon fence lines. The postholes ranged from 0.3 m to 0.6 m in diameter, and, where unaffected by the plough furrow, survived to a depth of between 0.3 m to 0.4 m. Only one of these features, (8213), contained a visible postpipe. Two more postholes (8310 and 7261) lay within the post-ring, one or both of which may have been associated with central supports.

Three of the postholes (8213, 8216 and 8219) produced sherds of early Iron Age pottery (four sherds in total) and small pieces of animal bone, and these same three features, and one other (8247), also contained significant quantities of burnt stone (0.75 kg, 2.5 kg, 1.5 kg and 1 kg respectively). The quantities of this material in these small features suggested that it may have been used for post-packing.

Clusters of further postholes and small pits lay within or immediately adjacent to the post-ring on the western edge and south-east corner of the structure. The features on the south-east corner, comprising three postholes (7302, 7263 and 8348) and a small pit (8289), all contained large sherds of early Iron Age pottery (fourteen sherds in total weighing 152g), along with small fragments of animal bone. A shallow pit (8161) lay on the western edge of the post-ring.

### **Structures 8787, 8788 and 8789 and associated features (Figs 5.10-12)**

These three structures were identified during post-excavation analysis and consequently only a limited number of their postholes had been excavated. However, they all appeared to be genuine, and, once recognised, the similarity between the ground plans of two of these buildings, 8787 and 8789, were striking. These two structures, which lay toward the north-west and south-west corners of the site, were both represented by a D-shaped arrangement of approximately 16 or 17 postholes with internal measurements of 7 m x 5.5 m, though their flat sides were orientated in exactly opposite directions (on structure 8787 facing south-west and on 8789 facing north-east). Each of these structures also had a small pit (7663 and 7850) containing burnt stone situated in a similar position on the back edge of the post-ring (ie the rounded end). In addition to the burnt stone, these two features each produced three large sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

Only three of the postholes from the actual post-ring of each of these two structures were excavated and the only finds comprised a single piece of animal bone. However, a large sherd of early Iron Age pottery had been collected from the top of one of the unexcavated postholes, 7037, in structure 8789.

The third structure identified during post-excavation analysis, 8788, lay 10 m directly south of building 8789, in the south-west corner of the site. It was slightly larger than 8787 and 8789, measuring 8 m x 6 m, and was represented by fewer postholes. However, it also had a small pit, 8473, packed with 2.5 kg of burnt stone lying adjacent to the back edge of the post-ring. Eight postholes formed the post-ring, five of which had been excavated. Two further postholes which lay in the centre of the structure had also been excavated and these appeared to be associated with central supports. Four of the postholes (7773, 8402, 8477 and 8483), and the burnt stone pit, 8473, produced early Iron Age pottery (12 sherds in total weighing 129 g) and two of these features (7773 and 8402) also contained small pieces of animal bone.

A fairly dense concentration of features, comprising numerous postholes and a row of four large finds-rich early Iron Age pits (7912, 7854, 8175 and 8251), lay in the area immediately to the west of structures 8788 and 8789, which may have been directly associated with these dwellings. The four pits, which lay in a north-west - south-east alignment, had similar profiles, consisting of vertical or slightly undercutting sides and flat bases, but varied slightly in size and shape (see Fig. 5.33 and discussion below).

The numerous postholes in this area mostly lay in a linear scatter on a similar alignment to the pits. No obvious structures or individual rows could be identified

and only a limited number of these features were excavated. The small quantity of pottery recovered from these features was early Iron Age in date.

### **The Western Group of Structures**

The western group of structures on the Yarnton site comprised six roundhouses, and one four-post structure (Fig. 5.6). These included three relatively large roundhouses, and three smaller structures. The four-post structure was situated within one of the buildings, and was not, therefore, contemporary with it, although it may have been contemporary with the building to its south. All of the buildings were associated with pits, which mainly lay to the north. The extant buildings appeared to have a linear distribution although the significance of this is uncertain.

#### ***Structure 1474*** (Fig. 5.13)

A circular post-built structure comprising two concentric rings of 27 postholes, spaced between 1 m and 2.75 m apart. The structure measured 9.5 m in diameter and had a south facing entrance 2 m in width, represented by four postholes the innermost of which were slightly smaller than the outermost. Two postholes external to the main body of the structure (1364 and one unexcavated) may have formed a porch. The postholes making up this structure were generally circular in plan, with diameters of between 0.3 m and 0.6 m and depths of between 0.1 m and 0.6 m. In profile they were predominantly steep sided with flat, round or bowl-shaped bases. Fills were grey, brown and orange silty sands containing 2-30% gravel. The fill of posthole 1479 contained occasional charcoal flecks, and a possible postpipe was recorded in the fill of posthole 1288. Postholes 1364 and 1466 showed signs of animal disturbance. Finds from the postholes include 16 sherds (170 g) of early Iron Age pottery, 15 fragments of animal bone and one vitrified clay fragment.

#### ***Structure 1760*** (Fig. 5.14)

An oval post-built structure in the north-west corner of the site, with external measurements of 10.9 m NW-SE by 10 m east - west. There is no clear indication of any entrance, and much of the interior is cut away by pits, postholes and gullies. The five excavated postholes of this structure were generally circular in plan, between 0.3 m and 0.7 m in diameter, and between 0.18 m and 0.3 m in depth. Recorded profiles were bowl-shaped, and fills comprised brown silty sands containing 1-20% gravel. Charcoal was recorded from the upper fills of 1662, 1665 and 1691. Finds associated with the postholes comprise three sherds of early Iron Age pottery and four fragments of bone.

#### ***Structure 1761*** (Fig. 5.15)

An oval post-built structure with external measurements of 8.3 m north-south by 9 m east-west. The validity of this structure is questionable, as only seven of the postholes which may belong to it were excavated. Postholes 1705 and 1708 were disturbed, and there was no clear indication of where the entrance was situated. The postholes

comprising this structure were generally circular in plan, between 0.45 m and 0.6 m in diameter, and between 0.2 m and 0.4 m in depth. Posthole profiles showed some variation but were mostly bowl-shaped. Fills consisted of brown sandy silty loams, containing 2-15% gravel. Finds were limited to three animal bone fragments.

#### ***Structure 1752*** (Fig. 5.16)

A small circular post-built structure comprising six postholes, with a diameter of approximately 5.8 m and no indication of an entrance. The surviving postholes were roughly circular in plan, measuring 0.3 m - 0.6 m in diameter and up to 0.3 m in depth. In profile they were steep sided with flat, round, or bowl-shaped bases. Fills were predominantly mid brown silty sands containing 5-15% gravel. Some contained charcoal flecks, pebbles and pea grit. A small early Iron Age pit (266) was situated close to the centre of the building, but in the absence of stratification it is impossible to say whether the pit and the building were contemporary. A single large sherd of shelly early Iron Age pottery came from posthole 1369.

#### ***Structure 1511*** (Fig. 5.17)

A circular post-built structure comprising eight postholes, with an approximate diameter of 9 m and no discernible entrance. The postholes making up this structure were generally circular in plan with diameters of between 0.25 m and 0.65 m, and depths ranging between 0.08 m and 0.42 m. Profiles were either bowl-shaped and shallow or steep-sided with flat/round bases, with the exception of one (720), which had a pointed profile. Fills mostly comprised brown and grey silty sands and contained 5-80% gravel/pea grit, with some charcoal flecking, and some clay or charcoal rich fills. Posthole 1306 had been affected by animal disturbance. A four-post structure, 1753, was situated in the north-west corner of the building, which may or may not be contemporary with the structure (see below). Finds from the postholes of structure 1511 include nine early Iron Age sherds (399 g) and eleven fragments of animal bone.

#### ***Structure 1482*** (Fig. 5.18)

A circular post-built structure comprising ten postholes with a diameter of 5.1 m and a south-east facing entrance 1.2 m in width. The postholes were generally circular in plan with diameters of 0.3 m - 0.6 m, and depths of 0.1 - 0.5 m. In profile they were steep-sided with flat or round bases, with the exceptions of 1226 and 1439, which were bowl-shaped. Fills comprised grey and brown silty sands containing 2 - 20% gravel. One, 1199, contained flecks of charcoal. Some animal disturbance had affected postholes 1199 and 1489. Given the small size of this structure, and its position relative to structure 1511, it may be interpreted as an ancillary building of some kind, rather than a house. Finds were limited to six sherds (65 g) of pottery and two animal bone fragments.

### **Four-Post Structures**

#### ***Structure 1753*** (Fig. 5.17)

A four-post structure measuring 2.2 m by 2 m, and situated towards the rear of circular structure 1511. Its postholes were circular in plan with diameters of between 0.4 m and 0.6 m, and depths of between 0.12 m and 0.24 m. Profiles were bowl shaped, and fills comprised brown silty sands containing 10-30% gravel. The fill of posthole 1298 contained charcoal flecks. Finds comprise four sherds of early Iron Age pottery (52 g) and five animal bone fragments

## **The Central Group of Structures**

### ***Summary***

A sizeable roundhouse and a four-post structure were found within a substantial early Roman ditched enclosure, and may therefore represent the surviving remains of a more extensive building group. The four-post structure was positioned approximately 4 m to the south-west of the roundhouse. A number of early Iron Age pits were also found within the early Roman enclosure, and these were mostly situated to the south-west of the roundhouse. A short length of ditch also situated to the south-west of the roundhouse, and lying at a right angle to it, may have been associated with the occupation of the building.

### ***Structure 1754*** (Fig. 5.19)

A circular post-built structure approximately 9.5 m in diameter, and comprising eight external and one internal posthole. Evidence for an entrance is lacking; however, probably obliterated by the many ditches in the area. The postholes constituting this structure were generally circular in plan, between 0.4 to 0.7 m in diameter and up to 0.38 m in depth. Profiles were either flat based and steep sided, or shallow and bowl-shaped. Fills comprised orange brown and brown sandy silts containing 1-50% gravel. Charcoal flecking was recorded in the fills of postholes 861, 874 and 999; and a possible postpipe was recorded in posthole 874. Finds were limited to four large sherds of shelly ware and four fragments of animal bone.

A clay-lined pit (833) located within the north-west part of the structure may have been contemporary with the use of the building.

## **Four-Post Structures**

### ***Structure 1766*** (Fig. 5.23)

A four-post structure measuring 2 m by 1.75 m, and situated to the south of structure 1754. The postholes making up this structure were circular in plan, measuring between 0.59 m and 0.41 m in diameter, and 0.1 m and 0.4 m in depth. Postholes 892 and 916 were substantial features with steep sides and flat, or slightly rounded bases; 919 and 980 were very shallow. Fills comprised orange brown sandy silty loams containing 1-5% gravel/pea grit. No finds were recovered from this structure.

## The Eastern Group of Structures

### *Summary*

The eastern group of structures consisted of three roundhouses and five four-post structures. Two of the roundhouses were of medium size, one situated to the south-east of the other. Both of these buildings had clearly discernible entrances orientated south-east and south respectively. The third roundhouse was situated further to the west, and was bounded by an oval ditched enclosure, which had been cut away to the south by later Roman enclosures. This building was smaller than either of the roundhouses to its east, and probably originally had an entrance to the south or south-east which was also destroyed by the later Roman ditches. A further stretch of ditch orientated NE-SW was situated to the south-west of this building; its function is difficult to interpret as only a short length survived, but it may have been part of the enclosure. Of the five four-post structures which were found in this area, three lay within roundhouses. One of these was situated fairly centrally within the smaller building, the other two lay within the northern building and could be seen to be superimposed in plan; they are very unlikely to have been contemporary with one another or with the structure within which they lay. The remaining four-post structures lay between the larger roundhouses.

These structures were associated with a group of pits, most of which lay to the east of the roundhouses, but two of which were found within the circumference of the southern building. The two larger roundhouses, with their associated pits and four-post structures were similar in layout to the western group, and may be assumed to have had the same function. However, the enclosure ditch surrounding the smaller roundhouse marks this structure out as different.

### *Structure 2661* (Fig. 5.20)

A circular post-built structure comprising 13 postholes, with a diameter of 7.5 m and a south-east facing entrance 3 m wide. The postholes making up this structure were circular in plan, measuring between 0.3 m and 0.9 m in diameter, and 0.2 m and 0.4 m in depth. Profiles were steep sided, with flat or rounded bases, or bowl-shaped. Fills consisted of brown and grey silty sands containing 5-10% gravel and postholes 2663, 2664 and 2666 contained charcoal flecks. Finds from the postholes comprise 31 sherds (467 g) of early Iron Age pottery.

An unexcavated clay-lined pit situated just outside the building to the west may have been contemporary with its occupation, and several unexcavated postholes inside the southern part of the structure may have been part of an inner roof support. Additionally two four-post structures, 2721 and 2722, were found within the circumference of the building, unfortunately neither had a stratigraphic relationship with the building itself.

### *Structure 2694* (Fig. 5.21)

An oval post-built structure with external measurements of 6.8 m north-south by 7.7 m east-west, and a south facing entrance 3 m wide. The entrance was defined by a porch comprising postholes 2706, 2695, 2697 and 2707. This structure comprised 14 postholes which were circular in plan, and measured between 0.25 m and 0.45 m in diameter and

0.06 m to 0.28 m in depth. Profiles were varied, 2695, 2696, 2702, 2704 and 2705 were steep-sided with flat or slightly rounded bases; the remainder were bowl-shaped. Fills consisted of brown and grey silty sands containing 5-50% gravel/pea grit. Like structure 1756 (p. 00), structure 2694 contained a central pit or large posthole, 2693, which may have been contemporary with the use of the building. Finds were restricted to 12 sherds (227 g) of early Iron Age pottery. A clay-lined pit lay immediately north of the structure.

#### ***Structure 1756*** (Fig. 5.22)

A small circular post-built structure 5.8 m in diameter, and comprising 10 extant postholes. Surrounding the structure to the north and west was a gully (26), and a cluster of pits and postholes to the south - east was a possible entrance. A central pit, with at least two recuts (1127/1128) may have been contemporary with the use life of the building. The postholes making up this structure were roughly circular in plan, measuring 0.3 m - 0.65 m in diameter, and 0.12 m - 0.42 m in depth. Profiles were varied, some were steep-sided with flat or rounded bases and others were bowl-shaped or shallow. Some postholes had been partially cut away by later features, a fact which obscured their shape in profile. Fills comprised brown sandy silts containing 5-20% gravel. Some charcoal and charcoal flecking was in evidence, particularly in the fills of 1109 and 1137. Animal disturbance had affected 1109, 1114 and 1208. Finds from the postholes include seven sherds of early Iron Age shelly ware and nineteen fragments of animal bone. The central pit 1127 contained large animal bones of \*\* (REF). Four-post structure 4000 also occurred within this structure.

#### **Four-Post Structures**

##### ***Structure 4000*** (Fig. 5.23)

A four post structure measuring 2.1 m by 2.5 m. The postholes were circular in plan with varied profiles; two were steep sided with flat bases, one was bowl-shaped and the other shallow. No recuts were apparent. Two of the postholes (1111 and 1126) contained two fills each, the other two both contained single fills. Fills consisted of brown silty sands containing 5-50% gravel. A single scrap of sandy ware and three animal bone fragments came from the fills.

##### ***Structure 2721*** (Fig. 5.23)

A four-post structure measuring 2.2 m by 2.4 m, situated within roundhouse 2661. The postholes were circular in plan, with diameters of between 0.3 m and 0.4 m and depths of between 0.16 m and 0.26 m. Profiles were bowl-shaped and fills consisted of brown silty sands containing approximately 5% gravel. A single sherd of early Iron Age shelly ware came from one of the postholes.

##### ***Structure 2722*** (Fig. 5.23)

A probable four-post structure measuring 2.3 m by 2.4 m, also found within roundhouse 2661. The postholes making up the structure were circular in plan and between 0.3 m and 0.4 m in diameter. The postholes were not excavated and thus no dating evidence or other finds were recovered to determine either the date or potential relationship with structure 2661 or adjacent four-post structure 2721.

***Structure 2723*** (Fig. 5.23)

A four-post structure measuring approximately 2.9 m by 2.9 m, and situated to the east of roundhouses 2661 and 2694. The postholes making up this structure were circular in plan with diameters of approximately 0.6 m. However the structure was not excavated and no further information was recovered. Two sherds of early Iron Age pottery were recovered from the surface of posthole 2514.

***Structure 2724*** (Fig. 5.23)

A four post structure with external measurements of 2.8 m by 2 m, situated to the south of circular structure 2661. The postholes were circular in plan and *c* 0.35-0.4 m in diameter. Posthole 2691 was bowl-shaped in profile, measured 0.24 m in depth, and was filled with dark brown loam. No finds were recovered from this structure.

**Enclosures, ditches and gullies**

***Possible fenced enclosure 8792*** (Fig. 5.24)

An oval arrangement of fourteen postholes enclosing an area approximately 10 m x 8 m in size was located in the central area of Cresswell Field. Eight of the postholes were excavated and all of these were well defined, and of similar size and character. They appeared to be too widely spaced in comparison to the size of the area they enclose for this to be a building, and it seems likely that it was a fenced enclosure, probably an animal pen. The only finds recovered from the postholes comprise a few small pieces of animal bone and burnt stone so the date remains uncertain. The enclosure lay just to the north of early Iron Age structure 8396 (see above), but was also in close proximity to a Saxon sunken featured building (7325), and could have been associated with either of these structures.

***Ditch Group 8790*** (Figs 5.25)

An arrangement of shallow discontinuous stretches of E - W and N - S aligned gullies situated toward the north-east corner of the Cresswell Field site appeared to form part of an enclosure, only the southern end of which lay within the area of excavation.

The gullies varied along their lengths between 0.45 m to 0.7 m in width and 0.04 m to 0.28 m in depth. The area of the enclosure which lay within the site measured approximately 20 m from east to west and 10 m from north to south. The gullies mostly contained a single uniform fill of greyish brown sandy silt. There was some suggestion of a recut along part of one of the gullies which formed the eastern side of the enclosure (gully 7234/7238, recut 7232/7236) and also along part of the gully which appeared to form the southern edge (gully 7115, recut 7113).

A small quantity (18 sherds) of fairly mixed pottery was recovered from the gullies on all three sides of the enclosure. Most of this material was early Iron Age in date (15 sherds), though this included two possibly earlier transitional late Bronze Age/early Iron Age sherds. In addition, two sherds middle Iron Age pottery were recovered

from one of the apparent recuts 7236 (7235) and a single sherd of Romano-British pottery came from the gully which formed the western side of the enclosure 7198 (7197). However, these three later sherds comprised only small scraps weighing a total of 9 g and were almost certainly intrusive. The spatial evidence also indicated that the enclosure was likely to be early Iron Age in date. The only other finds recovered apart from the pot consisted of a single small fragment of animal bone and a flint flake.

Although the gullies were discontinuous and slightly irregular they appear to have formed a genuine enclosure which was apparently respected by the dense east - west swathe of early Iron Age pits. Indeed, when observing the overall site plan (Fig. 5.4) the absence of features within the area of the enclosure is quite striking in comparison to the areas immediately to the east and west. It is also noticeably that there are very few features in the area to the south of the apparent southern limit of the enclosure. As some of the gullies forming its eastern boundary actually continue into this area it is possible that the enclosure may originally have extended further to the south, and that the east - west gully, which seemingly defines the southern limit, is merely a partition. It is even possible that this north - south tract devoid of features and partly defined by the gullies formed an access route through the settlement.

Although there has been some truncation of the gullies by later ploughing, the survival of posthole structures in the areas immediately to the east and west suggests that this has not been severe. The gullies forming this enclosure, therefore, originally appear to have been fairly shallow. Along with their discontinuous nature this implies that whatever they enclosed this was a visual boundary delineating a particular zone of activity rather than a physical boundary enclosing a compound.

#### ***Cluster of gullies in north-west corner of Cresswell Field*** (Fig. 5.26)

A cluster of three apparently associated gullies in the north-west corner of Cresswell Field appeared to be related to some form of enclosure, only a small part of which lay within the area of excavation. The gullies comprised a fairly straight north - south aligned segment (7582/7620), with a slightly curving segment (7574) running parallel immediately to the east, and another stretch of curving gully (7540/7585/7623/7527) running roughly east - west. The three features were very similar in size and character, varying along their lengths between 0.35 m to 0.5 m in width and 0.16 m to 0.32 m in depth and had a flat bottomed, bowl-shaped profiles. All three gullies also contained two fills of similar clay silt material through their lengths.

The east - west gully transected the southern end of the straight segment of north - south gully and appeared to cut it. However, their fills were so similar that this could not be uncertain and they may have been contemporary. The east - west gully was itself cut by two later ditches of probable Romano-British date and at its eastern end by an early Iron Age pit (7525). The only dating evidence recovered from the gullies comprised just five small sherds of early Iron Age pottery. The stratigraphic relationship with pit 7525 indicated that this possible enclosure was no later than this date and most probably broadly contemporary.

### ***Random ditches and gullies in Cresswell Field***

A 13.5 m segment of east - west ditch (7297/7474) lay close to the south edge of excavation toward to east end of Cresswell Field (Fig. 5.5). The ditch, which measured 0.8 m in width and up to 0.5 m in depth, produced 15 sherds of early Iron Age pottery, which was mostly concentrated toward the western terminal. It also contained a single sherd of Saxon pottery, though this had almost certainly been introduced as a result of some clearly visible animal burrowing. A small stretch of narrow linear (7503) extending from the west terminal of ditch 7297/7474 was appeared to be the continuation of one of the burrows, but it was less certain whether another short stretch of gully (7295) to the north of 7297/7474 was also an burrow or a genuine feature.

Three curvilinear tapering 'gullies' (7204, 7218 and 7322), which lay in the central area of the site, also appeared to be animal burrows. No finds were recovered from these features. A more substantial linear-irregular gravel filled feature (8606), and other similar features, which were also situated in the central area of the site turned out to be ice wedges. These features were later seen in section during gravel extraction where they could be seen tapering down several metres into the geology.

Three shallow slightly irregular segments of gully lay close to the south edge of excavation, adjacent to the central boundary ditch (Fig. 5.5). They comprised of two north-east - south-west segments (8385/8387 and 8413/8415), which appear to have originally been continuous, and a curving east - west segment (8409/8411) which intersected with the southern segment of north-east - south-west gully. The gullies varied along their lengths between 0.45 m to 0.6 m in width and up to 0.2 m in depth. A small quantity of early Iron Age pottery and slag were recovered from these features though their function remained unclear.

A 13 m long remnant of narrow curving gully (8021), measuring 0.3 m in width and up to 0.14 m in depth, was located towards the south-west corner of the site (Fig. 5.5). This feature was much truncated and it was uncertain whether this was its original extent or just all that survived. The only find recovered comprised a single, but large (55g), sherd of early Iron Age pottery.

Three other short stretches of gully which lay in the north-west corner of the site (8152, 8036 and 8131) were all irregular, and of uncertain function and may in fact have been animal burrows.

### ***Enclosure 26*** (Fig. 5.27)

An oval enclosure comprising a single curvilinear ditch 35 m in length, orientated NE-SW surrounded structure 1756. No entrance was apparent, but one may have lain to the south-west where the enclosure had been cut away by later ditches. This enclosure measured 10 m by 15 m, thus enclosing an area of approximately 150 m<sup>2</sup>. The ditch profile was very variable, and there was no evidence of recutting. Five sections were excavated through the enclosure ditch comprising 15 % of its total length. The average width of the ditch segments was 0.3 m and average depth 0.15 m. Fills were homogeneous and non-gravelly. Finds from the ditch comprised a single

sherd of early Iron Age pottery, two animal bones and preserved plant remains with cereal grains and weed seeds present (cross-ref.)

***Ditch 38*** (Fig. 5.6) (Fig. 00 ref. To general site plan but need to locate)

A short stretch of linear ditch 0.45 m in length and orientated NE-SW. A single segment was excavated through this ditch, representing 100% of its extant length. The base of the ditch was irregular and both sides had been cut away by later features, leaving no definable profile. The cut was 0.55 m wide and 0.2 m in depth. Fills consisted of non-gravelly material. No entrance was observed, and no recuts were apparent. Finds from the ditch fill were limited to a single cattle bone and a worked bone object (REF). This feature may have been contemporary with enclosure 26.

***Ditch 1018*** (Fig. 5.6)

A short stretch of linear ditch running NE-SW immediately west of structure 1754. The length of this ditch was 2.65 m, 36% of which was excavated, and its profile was U-shaped and open. There was no evidence of recutting. The average width of this ditch was 0.32 m, and its average depth 0.12 m. The ditch fills consisted of mixed material with some primary silting. Finds include three sherds of early Iron Age pottery and a single animal bone.

**Other features**

***Possible fence line*** (Fig. 5.28)

Four postholes (7146, 7380, 7382 and 7284) excavated in the area immediately to the north-east of fenced enclosure 8792 formed a very straight north - south alignment, and were evenly, but widely, spaced at around 5 m apart (Fig. 5.5). These features therefore appeared to be associated with a fence line constructed of larger posts interspersed by smaller posts, where only evidence of the larger posts survived, or a line of boundary markers. Two of the postholes (7380 and 7382) produced sherds of early Iron Age pottery, and although there were numerous fence lines associated with the Saxon occupation in the area further to the north, these all lay on a common ESE - WNW alignment.

***Random postholes in the central area of site*** (Fig. 5.5)

A sparse scatter of apparently random postholes were investigated in the central area of Cresswell Field. No structures or alignments could be identified and there were not even any pairs. Only five of the postholes produced any dating evidence and this all comprised small sherds of early Iron Age pottery. These features therefore appeared to be genuinely random and may have been related tethering or marker posts, associated with both the Iron Age and Saxon occupation.

***Hearth feature 7185*** (Fig. 5.29)

A shallow oval-irregular scoop (7185) containing large amounts of charcoal and burnt clay was located toward the northern edge of the site to the west of structure 8399. The feature appeared to be a sunken hearth, but its provenance was slightly uncertain. It measured 1.8 m in length by 1.1 m in width and 0.2 m in depth, and produced two small sherds of early Iron Age pottery, and small quantities of burnt stone, charred grain, and fragments of animal bone, three of which were burnt and another of which showed signs of gnawing. There were no postholes in close proximity to suggest any evidence of an associated structure and it lay within an area of fairly densely concentrated early Iron Age pits. Within the wider area there were also numerous fence lines associated with the Saxon occupation. It is possible that the pottery was redeposited, and that this feature was actually connected with this later phase of activity. Nevertheless, one of the adjacent early Iron Age pits (7149) also contained significant quantities of charcoal and charred grain and this feature could have been external hearth associated with the function of the adjacent pits.

### **Midden deposit 7003 (Fig. 5.30)**

A layer of silt loam (7003) containing large quantities of early Iron Age pottery and other domestic refuse extended over an area approximately 20 m square adjacent to the southern edge of Cresswell Field. This deposit appeared to be filling a slight hollow, and was at its thickest towards the edge of the excavation trench where it was up to 0.5 m in depth. A 1 m wide section was hand dug through it at this point and the resulting spoil was dry sieved to recover artefacts. This exercise produced 140 sherds of early Iron Age pottery (3 kg), 85 pieces of animal bone, including a worked bone object and part of a deer antler, and a small quantity of briquetage and slag. The olive colour and character of this deposit suggested that it may also originally have contained cess or other organic matter. Further assemblages of animal bone, including another bone object (a cheek piece from a horse harness) (REF) and early Iron Age pottery, were recovered from a pit, 8195, exposed beneath this layer.

During the machine stripping of the topsoil a large scatter comprising some 66 sherds (568 g) of handmade pottery was observed in the area of the field overlying layer 7003, and this was collected and numbered 7016. All of the pottery was also early Iron Age in date and was almost certainly material derived from the layer below brought to the surface by ploughing. The midden would, therefore, appear to have originally been fairly substantial, and may have been directly associated with one or more of the early Iron Age dwellings which lay only a short distance to the north (8396) and west (8788 and 8789).

## **Pits**

### ***Summary***

Pits clearly form a major component of the archaeology of the early Iron Age settlement. On Cresswell Field some 250 pits were excavated of which 139 (55.6%) have been assigned to the early Iron Age period. At Yarnton out of a total 384 pits, 63 (16.4%) were dated to the early Iron Age phase clearly demonstrating the westerly focus of activity at this time. At Yarnton only 75% of pits were excavated and of the remaining 25% a proportion were also probably early Iron Age in date.

Some the pits lay within groups or alignments which appeared to be directly associated with individual structures (house plots). There is also the impression that the rows or alignments of pits occur within the two main swathes along the northern and western borders of Cresswell Field, but the sheer number of pits, and the fact that only a percentage of these were excavated, meant that this could not be clarified. However, when features visible on the geophysical plot outside the limit of excavation are added the alignment suggests that the two bands are actually aligned NNE-SSW and ESE-WSW mirroring the line of the palaeochannel. On the Yarnton site the pits were distributed across the northern half of the site, on the same north-east to south-west axis as the roundhouses. Two distinct clusters may be seen in the distribution, but these may in part have been created by the construction of several substantial early Roman enclosures, which lie between them and may have been responsible for the complete removal of many other early Iron Age pits

Approximately 15% of the excavated pits contained no clear dating evidence. There were normally only between one to four fills within each pit and these were generally homogenous, consisting almost entirely of non-gravelly silt-loams. A few pits on Yarnton contained between five and nine fills and one exceptional example 0000 contained 18 defined fills. A small number of exceptions were noted as being clay-filled, at least two apparently associated with round-houses 2661 and 1754. The similarity between the fills overall made it difficult to establish stratigraphic relationships between pits where these were present.

Most of the pits were more-or-less circular in plan. A large majority were flat-bottomed cylinders, with a smaller number of concave features and just one or two from each phase which had V-shaped profiles. In addition there were a number of shallow scoops and a number of amorphous forms probably due to collapse of the gravel sides. Gravel tends to be a fairly unstable medium and erodes quite quickly on exposure. No evidence of recutting was observed in any of the pit sections. There were no traces of the excavated gravel from these features but evidence from better preserved sites elsewhere, such as Farmoor (Lambrick and Robinson 1979) and Watkins Farm (Allen 1990) suggests the gravel could have been used for floors, paths and tracks. It may also have been used to level off abandoned pits where the fills may have sunk.

The 63 pits assigned to the early Iron Age from Yarnton were divided into six categories based on their shape in profile: cylindrical, undercut, shallow saucer, bowl-shaped, large-shallow and amorphous (Table 5.1). Of the 63 pits, 24 could be defined as cylindrical, 5 as shallow saucer-shaped, 9 as bowl-shaped, 1 as large shallow and 1 as undercut. The remaining 20 were not classifiable. Pit diameters ranged between 0.4 m and 2.56 m averaging 1.19 m, and depth ranged between 0.14 m and 2 m averaging 0.53 m. Recorded original pit volume ranged between 0.03 m<sup>3</sup> and 1.8 m<sup>3</sup> and averaged 0.74 m<sup>3</sup>. Variation in pit size was, therefore, fairly substantial throughout the early Iron Age pit group. However, the pit scatter situated to the north-east of the site contained a higher proportion of larger features.

Table 5.1: Pit dimensions by type (range for those where dimensions were recorded)

Dimensions	Bowl-shaped	Cylindrical	Large Shallow	Shallow Saucer	Undercut	Other
Length	0.78-0.78	1.06-2.1	1-1.14	0.7-0.7	-	-

Breadth	0.5-1.5	0.5-2.56	0.6-2	0.7-1.2	1.65-1.65	0.4-1.8
Depth	0.24-0.45	0.24-0.45	0.21-0.45	0.14-0.25	0.9-0.9	0.15-0.92

The evidence from Yarnton suggests that there is no correlation between fill types and pit shape, and it seems more likely that the fill material relates to the underlying geology through which the pits were cut. Recuts were relatively rare, only two pits were recut more than once and only six had one recut. Thirteen of the pits contained identifiable evidence of primary silting, and nine had been deliberately backfilled; of these six were over 0.8 m<sup>3</sup> in volume.

Deliberate deposits were identified in nine pits. These pits aside many of the concentrations of finds (ie rubbish deposits) occurred within the upper fills, suggesting that the disposal of rubbish was very rarely the primary function of the pits. One notable exception to this was pit 7365. This feature was situated away from the main area of pits and lay at the entrance of a U-shaped barrow ditch of probable Neolithic date. It contained large quantities of domestic refuse comprising over 400 pieces of animal bone and 200 sherds of early Iron Age pottery. However, mixed in with the normal domestic refuse was a fox leg bone, a deer bone, a dog bone, a bone object and large quantities of frog and toad bones. The inclusion of this material may suggest that this deposit also incorporated elements of deliberate deposition. **Eleven** (CHECK YCF) pits contained substantial assemblages of pottery (over 28 sherds), and all of these contained animal bone of more than one species. Seventeen pits were identified as potential grain storage pits on the basis of their morphology.

Analysis of the Yarnton pits showed that 44 examples exhibited no signs of redeposition, eleven had a low level, six pits a medium level, and two had high levels of redeposition. Further details of the distribution of particular finds across the pits can be found in Chapter 00. A few of the more notable pits are briefly described below.

## **SELECTED PITS**

### **Grain storage pits**

Of the two hundred and fifty pits that were excavated on Cresswell Field only eleven appeared to be genuine grain storage pits, and even taking into account that only just under half of the total number of the pits could be excavated this still suggests a very low number. Apart from the one transitional late Bronze Age/early Iron Age example described above, all of the remaining grain storage pits were early Iron Age in date. These noticeably occurred in pairs or clusters of three, and even in the case of the one isolated feature (8005) this may also have been part of a pair or cluster where the other(s) were not excavated. On the Yarnton site the high proportion of cylindrical pits may well represent the remains of grain storage pits and eight examples were identified (544, 1465, 1529, 1531, 1716, 1695, 1163 and 371).

With one exception, pit 7057, there was nothing particularly remarkable about the fills or finds in these features compared to the other pits. Pit 7057 (Fig. 5.36) was the largest to be excavated on the site, measuring nearly 2 m in diameter and 1.15 m

in depth. Articulated cow leg bones lay in the bottom of the pit, overlain by a very large quantity of disarticulated mixed animal bone (though mostly cow), which included a number of butchered bones. Mixed in with this material were two antler and one bone object and a single piece of deer bone. This feature also produced over a hundred sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

**Pit 371** (Figs 5.6, 5.36)

A circular pit 1.25 m in diameter and 1.18 m deep located mid way between structures 1752 and 1474 and equidistant to structure 1760 to the north. The pit was dug with vertical sides and a flat, slightly bowled bottom and contained 18 fills. The upper fill contained a disturbed remains of a **articulated cow** (378) whilst further animal bone (432) came from the lower fill 371/A/17. Eighteen sherds of shell or limestone-tempered pottery (44 g) were recovered. The primary fill (371/A/18) comprised a yellow-brown silty clay with some charcoal and ash. The remaining fills comprise various sandy-silty loams with flecks of charcoal from layers 371/A/3 to 371/A/7.

**Pit 544** (Figs 5.6, 5.31)

Pit 544 is a large pit measuring approximately 1.2 m in diameter and 1 m in depth located near the northern limit of excavation on Yarnton. It has a flat bottom, rounded bulbous-shaped base and undercut sides. The pit contained three fills, the main fill 544/A/2 containing charcoal and burnt earth flecks. It is cut by late Roman ditches 542 and 543 and pit 545. Finds comprised 32 sherds of early Iron Age pottery .....  
**(FINDS?)**

**Pit 1163** (Figs 5.5, 5.36)

A circular pit partially cut away by early Roman ditch 591 and immediately south of structure 1756 containing four-post structure 4000 and within enclosure 26. The pit measured approximately 1.65 m across and 0.9 m deep. The north-east side was undercut but the north side was vertical. The base was rounded. The pit contained three fills. The lower fill comprised a light brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks. The middle fill consisted of a mid to dark brown sandy silt with some gravel with moderate amounts of charcoal and large quantities of **animal bone**. The upper fill was a sandy loam with some gravel and occasional charcoal. The pit cut posthole 1164 belonging to structure 1756. Nine sherds of pottery (100 g) ....

**Pit 1465** (Figs 5.5, 5.31)

A circular pit 0.7 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep located on the north-east edge of structure 1474 which it post-dates since it cut posthole 1463 belonging to this structure. It was in turn cut by Iron Age pit 1464 which contained no datable finds. The pit had almost vertical sides and a slightly rounded base. **The single fill contained** just three sherds of pottery ....?

**Pit 1529** (Figs 5.6, 5.31)

An oval pit, measuring 1.5m by 2.1 m and with a depth of 0.68 m located on the northern limit of excavation on Yarnton west of pit 544. The pit had almost vertical sides with a flat base and contained four fills, largely a sandy silty loam. Fill 1529/A/3 contained some charcoal. Small find 395 came from this feature along with a 10 sherds of pottery .....

**Pit 1531** (Figs 5.6, 5.31)

A circular flat-bottomed pit with almost vertical sides in the same area of the site as pits 1529 and 544. Pit 1531 measured 1.54 across and had a depth of 0.57 m. It was cut by late Roman ditch 332. Three fills were defined all of which contained charcoal flecking. Finds of animal bone and 17 sherds (271 g) of pottery were recovered.

**Pit 1695** (Figs 5.6, 5.31)

A circular pit 1.12 m in diameter and 0.72 m deep located on the northern edge of the excavated area east of structure 1760. The pit had near vertical sides and a slightly concave base. Three fills were defined, the lower fill (1695/3) containing a number of large bones. A total of 10 sherds of pottery with a mixture of sandy, quartzite, shell and calcareous fabrics present.

**Pit 1716** (Figs 5.6, 5.31)

A sub-rectangular pit with steep sides and a flat base. The maximum recorded length is 2.56 m with a depth of 1.2 m. The six fills, all sandy or silty loams had charcoal flecks throughout. The pit cut early Iron Age posthole 1717. Finds include 80 sherds (2 kg) of well preserved pottery, mainly sandy, shelly or limestone tempered wares....

**Pit 7049** (Figs 5.5, 5.32)

A circular pit with steep sides and a flat base measuring 1.64 m in diameter and 0.83 m in depth. The pit is cut by middle Iron Age pit 7137. The cut contains four fills, two of which may be the remnants of an original clay lining. The main fill, 7050, consisted of a dark grey brown clay silt with charcoal flecking containing 31 sherds (746 g) of mainly shelly pottery ....

**Pits 7060, 7307 and 7173** (Fig. 5.5)

Pits 7060, 7307 and 7173 formed a north/south alignment to the west of structure 8202. The two most northern pits, 7060 and 7307, measured approximately 1.5 m in length and 1.35 m in width, and 1 m, and 0.8 m, in depth respectively. Both of these features had slightly under-cutting sides and fairly flat bases, and their size and character suggested that they were originally grain storage pits which had subsequently been used as refuse pits.

Pit 7060 (Fig. 5.32) was predominantly filled by a homogeneous deposit of sandy silt containing frequent animal bones (74 in total), and a smaller quantity of early Iron Age pottery (22 sherds, weighing 350 g) and burnt stone. However, several lenses of gravelly silt (7444, 7450, 8296 and 8297) in the base of the pit suggested an

initial phase of natural silting, and one of these deposits (7444) was noticeably compacted, possibly as a result of trampling.

Pit 7307 contained an unusually complex sequence of fills (seven in all), representing a short phase of natural silting (7082), followed by several dumps of domestic refuse (7077, 7078, 7079, 7080 and 7081) and a final phase of silting (7309). These deposits produced just under 1 kg (87 sherds) of early Iron Age pottery, 159 pieces of animal bone and a small quantity of burnt stone.

Pit 7173 was considerably shallower than the other two pits measuring only 0.42 m in depth, and had a slightly more bowl-shaped profile, but produced a similar finds assemblage, consisting of 108 pieces of animal bone, 26 sherds (590 g) of early Iron Age pottery and just over a 1 kg of burnt stone. In addition to the finds, all three of the pits produced small quantities of charred grain

***Pit 7525*** (Figs 5.5, 5.32)

A large circular pit with a maximum diameter of 1.14m and a depth of 0.56 m. The sides are slightly undercut and the base is flat. The pit contained three fills. The primary fill (7524) contained flecks of charcoal and produced 00 fragments of animal bone and three sherds of pottery. Further finds came from the upper fill (7522) with 18 sherds of mainly shelly pottery and 00 animal bones.

***Pit 7603*** (Figs 5.5, 5.32)

An oval-shaped pit with undercut sides and bowled out base. The top diameter is approximately 1 m increasing to 1.5 m at the base with a depth of 00 m. The three fills (7604, 7762 and 7761) comprise light greyish-brown sandy loams. Pottery was recovered from all three layers, 18, 2 and 16 sherds respectively with a mixture of sandy, shelly and limestone-tempered sherds. AB?

***Pit 8467*** (Figs 5.5, 5.32)

A circular pit, approximately 00 m in diameter with vertical sides and a slightly concave base. The surviving depth was about 1 m. Despite the depth the pit appeared to have a single homogenous fill (8466), a mixed dark grey-brown silty loam with flecks of charcoal and occasional small fragments of burnt stone and fired clay. No finds were recovered.

### **Clay-lined pits**

At least three pits were identified with clay lining, all apparently associated with structures. Only one of these, 833, was excavated (Fig. 5.19). This was located within roundhouse structure 1754. The pit was circular, 0.53 m across, with a shallow bowl-shaped profile. The surviving depth was 0.18 m. The pit had a mottled light green/orange-brown clay lining 2-5 mm thick. The upper fill comprised an almost gravel-free clay-loam.

The second pit lay immediately west of structure 2661. Although unexcavated this pit similarly had a circular shape. Its position could suggest it may have been used to

collect water from the eaves. The third example, also unexcavated, lay immediately north of structure 2694. Similar clay lined pits of middle Iron Age date were observed at Gravelly Guy (Lambrick and Allen in press) also in close proximity to structures and suggested to be tanks for collecting water.

### **Pits with deliberate deposits**

#### ***Pit 7787*** (Figs 5.5, 5.8)

Pit 7787 lying immediately to the south of structure 8396 measured 1.5 m in diameter and 0.5 m in depth. It had very large sherds of an early Iron Age storage vessel placed around its northern edge and a complete iron adze head was recovered from its primary fill (8067) (see p.00, Fig.00.00). In total the upper fill (7788) produced 42 sherds of pottery (3,294 g in weight) of which 20 may have been from one vessel. One sherd has impressed decoration. The same fill also contained numerous fragments of burnt bone and the largest deposit of daub recovered from the site (360 g). The top and southern half of the pit had been partly truncated by one of the middle Iron Age ditches, and further fragments of burnt bone occurred within a number of the later ditches and also lay over the surface over this area of features. If, as it appeared, that most of this bone had derived from the disturbed pit, then this feature must have originally contained a significant quantity of this material.

#### ***Pits 8161 and 8318 (burnt stone)*** (Figs 5.5, 5.33)

Pit 8161 lay immediately to the west of structure 8399. It was a shallow, oval-shaped pit approximately 0.6 m by 0.75 m and 0.2 m deep. It was packed with burnt stone (4.75 kg) and showed signs of fire-reddening on its sides. A dense deposit of charcoal was recovered from near the base. A second pit, 8318, just to the north contained three large sherds of early Iron Age pottery and a piece of butchered cow bone. This was a round pit, 0.34 m across and 0.34 m deep with vertical sides and a concave base.

#### ***Pits 8251, 7854, 8175 and 7912 (rubbish rich)*** (Figs 5.5, 5.33)

Four pits lay to the west of structures 8788 and 8789. The most southerly pit (8251) measured 1.8 m in diameter and 0.8 m in depth. The two central pits (7854 and 8175) were broader at 2.2 m, but comparatively shallow, measuring 0.5 m in depth, and 7854 was also distinctly ovoid in shape. Pit 7912 to the north was smaller measuring 1.2 m in diameter and 0.4 m in depth. These features all produced similar finds assemblages, comprising large quantities of animal bone (totalling 475 pieces), early Iron Age pottery (totalling 253 sherds, weighing 2.540 kg) and burnt stone (over 10 kg from each feature). The bone in pit 7912 mostly lay in a dense layer (7913) in the bottom of the feature and this deposit included a high percentage of mandibles.

### **Pits with human bone** (7029, 8591, 276, 951)

#### ***Pit 7029*** (Fig. 5.5)

A circular pit measuring 1.18 m in diameter and 0.44 m deep with near vertical sides and a flat base. The pit contained four defined fills. The lower fills comprised dark brown sandy clays with no associated finds. The upper horizon, 7159, produced finds of pottery, animal bone and the distal half of a neonate humerus.

***Pit 8591*** (Figs 5.5, 5.34)

Pit 8591 lying to the south-west of structure 8202 contained a human skull. The skull, which lay upside down, was that of an adult female and the absence of the jaw indicated that it was defleshed when placed in the feature. The pit itself measured only 0.45 m in diameter and 0.2 m in depth, only just large enough to contain the skull, and the only other finds consisted of a few small scraps of early and middle Iron Age pottery, some or all of which were possibly intrusive.

***Pit 276*** (Figs 5.6, 5.34)

A roughly circular pit 1.6 m across and 1 m deep originally with vertical sides and a flat base. The fill contained fragments of human skull along with 37 sherds of mainly shelly pottery amongst which were eight jar rims, a handled bodysherd with a simple geometric incised decoration (Fig. 00. 150) and one miniature vessel (Fig. 00. 151).

***Pit 951*** (Fig. 5.6, 5.34)

A sub-rectangular pit 0.8 m by 1 m in size and 0.56 m in depth with convex sides and a flat base. The fill contains human bone (REF), slag and furnace lining (REF), and six sherds of pottery amongst which there are single examples of a grog-tempered and a quartzite-tempered sherd alongside shelly wares.

## **Pits with articulated animal bone remains**

### ***Dog burials***

Two pits (7598 and 7762) lying 25 m apart within the north - south swathe of early Iron Age pits on Cresswell Field contained the articulated remains of dogs. Both features also contained an articulated segment of cow or horse. One pit on the Yarrnton site, 2646, also contained the articulated remains of a dog alongside other animal bone and finds.

***Pit 2646*** (Figs 5.6, 5.35)

Pit 2646, a sub-circular, flat-bottomed pit, measuring 2 m across and 1.15 m in depth. Five distinct fills were identified in the pit which contained an articulated dog skeleton, alongside bones of cattle, horse, pig, sheep, and some unidentifiable material. Additionally, there were 69 sherds of pottery, several crucibles, some furnace debris, and several miscellaneous worked bone objects (SF 306, 308, 309, 310).

***Pit 7598*** (Figs 5.5, 5.35)

Pit 7598, another oval pit with steep sides and a flat base measured 1.49 m by 1.22 m and 0.4 m deep. The pit had been badly disturbed by animal burrowing. Three fills were defined containing a complete articulated dog skeleton overlain by part of an articulated cow skeleton. These deposits appeared to have been placed in the top of a pit which had already partially silted up with soil and refuse. The dog was laid out flat centrally in the pit and had clearly been placed. The pit also contained just over 10 kg of burnt stone, 50 sherds of early Iron Age pottery, some slag, a bone object (REF), a piece of wild pig bone (the only one recovered from the site), a piece of mallard duck bone and one fragment of human (adult) bone.

***Pit 7762 (Figs 5.5, 5.35)***

A circular pit. 2.1 m in diameter with vertical sides and a flat base. The cut survives to a depth of 0.34 m and contained five defined fills. The upper fill (7683) contained the disturbed remains of an articulated dog skeleton laid out on a bed of burnt stone. It could be seen from the remains of the skeleton that the dog had a healed fracture in one of its legs. Within the bed of burnt stone was part of an articulated horse leg. These deposits seem to have been placed in the top of an already partly filled pit. Apart from the apparently deliberately deposited material the pit also contained over a hundred sherds of pottery, and large quantities of disarticulated cow and horse bone and this comprised by far the largest concentration of horse bone on the site.

**Other pits with articulated animal skeletons**

***Pit 330 (Fig. 5.36)***

A circular pit approximately 2 m in diameter with vertical sides and a flat base 0.75 deep. Six fills were defined. The articulated skeleton of a sheep was found in the lower fill lying on its right-hand side and aligned east-west. One of the front legs had been replaced by the limb of another animal. In addition there were bones of cattle, goat, pig, cow/horse and some unidentifiable fragments. Fifty three sherds of pottery, a substantial amount of metalworking debris and a miscellaneous fired clay object (REF) were also recovered. (SF 144, 145).

***Pit 371 (Fig. 5. 36)***

A circular pit with vertical sides and a flattened but slightly concave base, measuring 1.25 m in diameter and 1.18 m in depth. Fourteen fills were defined. The articulated skeleton of a cow (432) was recovered from the lower fill, along with pig bone, cow bone, cow/horse size bone, sheep/pig size bone, and some unidentifiable material. There were also 18 fairly large sherds of pottery (mean sherd weight 23.8g), and a miscellaneous bone object (REF). (The remains of what may have been an articulated cow (378) lay within the upper fill although this had been considerably damaged by the machine stripping.)

***Pit 1163 (Fig. 5.36)***

A circular pit undercut on one side with a rounded base measuring 1.65 m across and 0.9 m deep. Three fills of sandy silty loam were defined. The pit contained the articulated remains of a cow, as well as other bones of cow, horse, sheep, rodent and some unidentifiable material. Alongside the animal bone were found 15 sherds of pottery, and some metalworking debris.

## **Artefact Distributions**

### ***Human Bone***

Two of the early Iron Age pits, (276, 951), contained human bone. The material from one of these (276) probably comprised skull fragments.

### ***Animal Bone***

Of the 63 pits assigned to the early Iron Age, 48 contained animal bone. The assemblage comprised mainly cattle and horse bones, with some sheep, pig, domestic fowl and dog. In addition to the remains of these mainstream domestic animals, a minority of pits contained the remains of wild animals such as red deer, wild bird, rabbit, and rodent. It may be assumed that the rabbit bones were intrusive, and derived from animals that died in their burrows. The origin of the rodent bones may be similar.

Patterning within the distribution is not very evident, as the majority of pits seem to contain a wide variety of different species. Of the 48 early Iron Age pits containing animal bone, 45 had bones of one of the major domestic species, and 22 contained bones of all of the major domestic species. It is clear that the same group of pits formed the focus for the deposition of bone from all the major species; and that these pits were fairly evenly distributed within the early Iron Age pit cluster. Additionally those pits with articulated animal bone frequently contained large assemblages comprising a mixture of species. However, some interesting patterns were evident, particularly a correlation between the presence of wild animal bones, horse bones and human bones. For example, a pit containing red deer remains (951) also contained human bone, and horse bone and the only other context with human bone (276) also yielded dog and horse bone. Overall, two of the nine contexts containing horse bones also contained dog bones. Although the contextual associations between bones of these species are clear, all these examples, including the human bone, came from pits containing a wide range of other species.

Table 00: Incidence of animal species within the pits

<i>Species</i>	<i>No. of Pits</i>
Cattle	35
Sheep/Pig size	29
Sheep/Goat size	25
Cow/Horse size	30
Pig	17
Sheep	8
Horse	9
Goat	1

Dog	4
Red deer	1
Wild bird	1
Rabbit	3
Domestic fowl	1
Rodent	1

### *Pits with articulated animal skeletons*

Four pits were found to contain whole or partial articulated animal skeletons. In addition to this they all contained disarticulated animal bone from at least four different species. They also contained fairly substantial deposits of pottery, which was, however, not remarkable in terms of decoration or sherd size. All but one contained small finds, and one contained a large deposit of metalworking debris.

Pit 330 contained the articulated skeleton of a sheep, one of whose front legs had been replaced by the limb of another animal. In addition there were bones of cattle, goat, pig, cow/horse and some unidentifiable fragments. Fifty three sherds of pottery, a substantial amount of metalworking debris and a miscellaneous fired clay object (REF) were also recovered.

Pit 371 contained the articulated skeleton of a cow, along with pig bone, cow bone, cow/horse size bone, sheep/pig size bone, and some unidentifiable material. There were also 18 fairly large sherds of pottery (mean sherd weight 23.8g), and a miscellaneous bone object (REF).

Pit 1163 also contained the articulated remains of a cow, as well as other bones of cow, horse, sheep, rodent and some unidentifiable material. Alongside the animal bone were found 15 sherds of pottery, and some metalworking debris.

Pit 2646 contained an articulated dog skeleton, alongside bones of cattle, horse, pig, sheep, and some unidentifiable material. Additionally, there were 69 sherds of pottery, several crucibles, some furnace debris, and several miscellaneous worked bone objects.

No spatial relationship was apparent between any of these features, in fact they were widely dispersed across the site. It is clear that these features contained structured deposits of some kind, and this is backed up not just by the articulated remains, but by the other bone, the metalworking debris and the fairly substantial if unremarkable deposits of pottery.

### *Pottery*

Of the 63 early Iron Age pits 54 contained pottery. The total assemblage comprised 827 sherds weighing 130.63 kg. Sherd weight and sherd count were calculated for each of the pits, and displayed graphically in the form of an XY scatter chart. This showed two distinct groups; a large group consisting of pits containing fewer than 20 sherds of pottery, and a smaller group comprising pits containing over 28 sherds of pottery. A second chart displaying mean sherd weight against sherd count revealed

that the majority of pits contained a small number of small abraded sherds. However, a small number contained larger or very large quantities of small sherds, and a few others contained small quantities of large sherds. There were two anomalous results, one pit had large numbers of fairly large sherds, and another contained medium numbers of very large sherds.

Sherd weight and count were analysed by pit type. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the most common pit types, cylindrical and amorphous contained the highest overall number of sherds and the greatest overall weight of pottery. However, it is also clear that the amorphous pits contained a disproportionately small amount of pottery in comparison to the cylindrical pits, given that the number of pits of both categories with pottery was fairly close. It also seems that the sherds derived from bowl-shaped pits were particularly large, with an average sherd weight of 19.7 g, slightly higher than those from cylindrical pits, and substantially higher than other types of pit.

Table 00: Pottery data by pit type

Pit Type	Cylindrical	Shallow Saucer	Large Shallow	Bowl Shaped	Other	Undercut
Count	556	3	25	30	197	15
Weight (g)	9228	44	327	592	2809	150
Aver sherd wt	16.5	14.6	13.8	19.7	14.25	10

After Hill (1995) it may be argued that the distinction between the two groups of pits indicated by the scatter charts, seemingly reflects a real distinction between pits containing deliberate deposits of material, and pits containing redeposited or casually discarded material. Additionally, when plotted on the site plan those pits containing over 28 sherds (contexts 276, 1540, 1716, 1729, 2646, 2647, 2649, 2650, 2658, 544, 330) were found to be largely the same as those pits containing dense concentrations of animal bone. It might, therefore, be expected that pits identified as containing articulated animal remains would contain over 28 sherds of pottery. However, this is not always the case, as only two out of four such deposits contained over 28 sherds. Despite this it is clear that the pits with articulated animal remains all contained at least relatively large pottery assemblages, and of the two that contained less than 28 sherds, one (371) had a high mean sherd weight.

Table 00: Sherd characteristics for early Iron Age pits containing articulated animal skeletons

Context	Sherd count	Sherd wt	Average sherd wt
1163	15	150	10
2646	69	1019	14.7
330	53	520	9.8
371	18	430	23.8

The pattern that emerges from this analysis, in terms of pottery distribution; is of a relatively small sample of pits which contained deposits of fairly substantial sherds, and a much larger sample comprising the vast majority of pits, which contained small collections of redeposited or casually discarded material.

### *Plant Remains*

Seventeen of the 63 early Iron Age pits contained plant remains. Ten of these were over 0.8 m<sup>3</sup> in volume, and their average original volume was 1.19 m<sup>3</sup>, (ie in the large size range). Additionally ten contained burnt charcoal and three contained deliberate deposits of articulated animal bone.

The spatial distribution of these pits was similar to the distribution of pits containing large amounts of pottery and animal bone. Particularly notable were pits 2649, 276, 1729, 1716, 1528, and 1529, which contained substantial amounts of plant remains, as well as concentrations of bone and pottery. The correlation between those features containing plant remains, and those containing over 28 sherds of pottery was particularly noticeable among pits associated with the two roundhouses situated in the north-east corner of the excavated area.

Of the pits containing plant remains, 11 were cylindrical in shape, one was undercut, two were large-shallow, one was bowl shaped and two were classified as amorphous. The cylindrical pits clearly contained the largest quantity of material, whereas the amounts found in other categories of pit were broadly comparable. The overall quantity of chaff and weed seeds was roughly equivalent, but there was significantly less cereal.

Table 00: Plant remains by pit type

<b>Pit type</b>	<b>Cereals</b>	<b>Chaff</b>	<b>Weed seeds</b>
Cylindrical	223	661	656
Undercut	5	18	14
Amorphous	32	62	44
Large Shallow	12	3	15
Bowl-shaped	13	4	45

Analysis of the spatial distribution and context of plant remains suggests that the bulk of the material derived from large pits, which were cylindrical in shape. These features probably represent the backfilled remains of grain storage pits, and given this fact it is tempting to infer that the plant remains were introduced into the pits during their use life, and were never recovered. However, as many of these same pits contained large amounts of pottery, animal bone and burnt charcoal it seems possible that the plant remains were introduced into the pits during the backfilling process, at the same time as the bone and pottery.

### ***Metalworking Debris***

Early Iron Age metalworking debris recovered from pits was not common. Fragments of slag were found in ten pits, but most of this was concentrated in just three pits (330, 951 and 952).

In spatial terms the assemblage of metalworking debris was widely dispersed, with pits containing slag being scattered throughout the pit group from east to west, and from north to south. However, it is notable that the three features containing the majority of the material were situated close together to the south of the pit group, and that 330 was away from any contemporary buildings.

The relative quantities of slag in different types of pit were examined. This revealed that over 90% of the slag assemblage came from cylindrical pits, and the majority of this came from a single feature (330).

### Other Finds

Other finds from early Iron Age pits were found in a fairly narrow range of features, and many of them were from the same pits as the metalworking assemblage. However, this pattern may simply be due to the general rarity of other finds.

Spatially the early Iron Age other finds from pits shared the same distribution as the metalworking debris; being found in pits which were scattered throughout the pit group from west to east and north to south. No pit contained a very heavy concentration of other finds, 2646 contained the most, and this was situated towards the east of the pit group.

The vast majority of other finds were found in cylindrical pits, however, this is probably a reflection of the fact that there were more cylindrical pits than other types of pit.

Table 00: Other finds from pits ( excluding residual flint)

<i>Pit</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Material</i>
268	Leaze rod (Fig/report ref)	Bone
330	Misc.	Fired Clay
371	Object	Bone
389	Loomweight	Fired Clay
951	Furnace lining	Fired Clay
952	Furnace debris	Fired Clay
952	Misc.	Stone
1512	Object	Bone
1540	Daub	Fired Clay
1716	Misc.	Slag
1749	Misc.	Fired Clay
2646	Crucible	Fired Clay
2646	Furnace debris	Fired Clay
2646	Object	Bone
2649	Crucible	Fired Clay
2649	Object	Bone

### The Distribution of Finds from Roundhouses (YWRF)

**[NEED TO ADD YCF]**

Finds recovered from the early Iron Age roundhouses comprised pottery and a range of animal bone fragments. The individual pottery assemblages were not very large, and were not very evenly spread. Two structures 1474 and 2661 had reasonably sized

collections of material, but the numbers of sherds found in the others were fairly minimal. Similarly the animal bone assemblage was not particularly large, and was not very evenly distributed amongst the different buildings. However, those buildings with larger quantities of bone were not necessarily the same as those with large quantities of pottery. The animal bone assemblage represented a range of domestic species; no wild animal bones were present. Most of the animal bone was undiagnostic, being classified as cow/horse size, pig/sheep size or sheep/goat size. A large proportion (22 out of 58 fragments) was unidentifiable. The overall quantity of material, and its generally undiagnostic state would suggest that the majority represents secondary deposition, which accrued in the postholes of these structures either during their construction or during their use.

Table 5.18 Early Iron Age Roundhouse Find Distributions

Structure	Sh	Cattle	C/H size	S/P size	S/G size	Pig	Un-id bone	Total AB
1474	16	3		1	3	2	6	15
1760	3			1	1	1	1	4
1752	1							
1511	9	1	3	2	2		3	11
1482	6						2	2
1754	4				2			2
2661	31							
2694	12							
1756	8	10	2		2		8	22
1761		2				1		3
Total	90	15	5	4	10	4	20	59

Table 5.19 Pottery From Roundhouses by Fabric type

Structure	Shell Tempered	Sand Tempered	Limestone Tempered	Flint Tempered	Grog Tempered	Indeterminate Voids	Rock Tempered
1474	11 (141g)	3 (21g)	1 (4g)		1 (4g)		
1760	3(24g)						
1752	1 (98g)						
1511	7(377g)			1 (5g)			
1482	5 (58g)						
1754	4 (157g)						
2661	22 (385g)	5 (40g)	3(32g)			1 (10g)	
2694	7 (195g)	3 (20g)		1 (5g)			1(7g)
1756	7 (59g)						

### **The Distribution of Finds From Four-Post Structures**

Very little pottery was recovered from the four-post structures, and this was not evenly distributed amongst the different structures. Similarly little animal bone was recovered, and this was found in the post-holes of two of the structures. The animal bone was mostly undiagnostic, about half of it being unidentifiable, and most of the rest belonging to cattle/horse size or sheep/pig size categories. The size and condition of this assemblage once again suggests mostly secondary deposition during the construction or use of the structures.

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