

## Chapter 6: The Middle Iron Age

*By Chris Bell and Dan Stansbie*

### INTRODUCTION

The middle Iron Age occupation extended along the edge of the second gravel terrace, lying just to the north of a silted up palaeochannel. The distribution and character of the middle Iron Age features suggested continuity in the settlement layout and land-use from the early to middle Iron Age. However, the later phase of occupation appears to have been most concentrated toward the south-west corner of Yarnton extending across to Cresswell Field in the area adjacent to the palaeochannel.

To the west in Cresswell Field was a right-angled ditch and an area of inter-cutting pits and ditches, as well as several gullies and a scatter of pits (Figs. 6.1; 6.2). Towards the middle northern half of the site is a curving line of pits perhaps defining an area of more intense earlier pitting whilst to the southern edge is a further concentration of inter-cutting pits and gullies. The main area of occupation appears to be to the east with least six circular or oval post-built structures surrounded by gullies, and with associated pits featuring on the western side of the Yarnton site (Fig. 6.1; 6.3). This part of the settlement also contained two parallel fence lines orientated NW/SE, several gullies and several penannular gullies situated further to the east, which did not appear to contain structures. The remains of this occupation can be divided into a western, a central and an eastern group. The western group consisted of three ring-gullies, six post-built structures, a substantial number of pits and three fence lines, two of which may have defined a trackway. The central group comprised a single post-built structure, a ring-ditch, several pits and several short stretches of ditch. The eastern group consisted of two ring-ditches, one of which ran beyond the northern limit of the excavation, and a few pits.

On the eastern edge of the archaeologically investigated area a small inhumation cemetery was found dating to this phase. The cemetery appears to comprise two distinct groups, northern and southern, of 15 and 10 individuals respectively. The gap between the two was only 20 m and this could partly be a result of poor retrieval in the intervening area, although it is possible that the two groups belong to different family units. A further 10 inhumations have been described as outliers and these were scattered along the southern and eastern edge of the settlement. Nine radiocarbon dates were obtained from the burials (see Chapter 12).

There was generally very little inter-cutting between the middle and early Iron Age features, and it could be observed that the small number of middle Iron Age pits scattered through the northern half of Cresswell Field appeared to respect the earlier swathe of features. The pits from this phase were almost identical in character to their early Iron Age counterparts, and, apart from the later pottery, contained similar quantities and categories of finds. However, there were fewer deep pits and no obvious grain storage pits.

The obvious continuity in the character and layout of the settlement, and the occurrence large quantities of early Iron Age pottery in virtually all of the middle Iron Age features, could suggest that this later phase is actually transitional early/middle

Iron Age. Much of the earlier pottery forms in these features may, therefore, not necessarily be redeposited.

## **DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURES**

### **The Western Group (Fig. 6.3)**

#### *Summary*

A D-shaped post-built structure, 803, was situated at the western edge of the Yarnton excavation, about halfway between the southern and northern limits of the site. It was surrounded by an interrupted ring-ditch, 267, comprising two curvilinear segments of ditch, with gaps to the north and south. Finds of metalworking debris from the ditches and pits surrounding this unusual structure, suggest that it may have been a smithy. To the north-east of the D-shaped structure was a post-built roundhouse, 1507, with an entrance to the south, also surrounded by an interrupted ring-ditch, 327, with gaps to the north-west and south-east. To the south-east of this structure was a second post-built roundhouse, 1762, with no observable ring-ditch although there were some irregular ditch arrangements to its south. It was cut away to the east by an early Roman enclosure.

To the south of these buildings was a substantial ring-ditch, 390, which had been recut on at least four occasions, and had several short stretches of ditch running from east to west across its entrance. A post-built roundhouse, 802, with a clearly defined entrance to the south-east lay in the enclosed space. Superimposed on this was a second post-built roundhouse, 801, which largely lay within the ring-ditch, but was cut by its latest recut. Abutting the second structure to the south was a north-south running fence line, 1758, which was cut away by later activity to its south. It is possible that this fence formed part of some kind of partition within the enclosure, the northern boundary of which was formed by the wall of the building itself. Directly to the east of the large ring-ditch was a small post-built roundhouse, 1764, with a small pit lying to its west. The form of this building suggests that it may have been an ancillary building, rather than a domestic structure. Directly to the north-east of the large ring-ditch was a track or drove-way, defined by two fence lines orientated NW/SE, and aligned on structure 1507. Immediately to the east of the eastern-most fence line were several irregularly shaped ditches of unknown function.

#### *Structure 803 / Enclosure 267 (Figs. 6.4-5)*

Structure 803 comprised an outer and inner concentric D-shaped arrangements of posts with a rectangular four-post structure in the centre, and an east facing entrance 1.5 m wide. It measured 9.8 m x 6.5 m. The 18 postholes comprising this structure were generally circular in plan, measuring 0.3 m - 0.6 m in diameter, and 0.12 m - 0.28 m in depth. When examined in section they exhibited flat, or slightly rounded, bases and steep sides. The fills of the postholes consisted of brown or orange silty sands containing 10-20% gravel. Several of the postholes (649, 650 and 651) were disturbed by animals. Finds from structure 803 comprised a single moderately large sherd of sandy ware.

Surrounding structure 803 was enclosure 267, an interrupted ring-ditch comprising two stretches of curvilinear gully, with a diameter of 11 m, which enclosed an area of 86.6 m<sup>2</sup>. There was no obvious entrance but there were substantial gaps to the north and the south-east, which could have served this purpose. Twelve sections were excavated through the enclosure ditches, representing 35% of its original length. In profile both ditches were an open U-shape, and neither showed any sign of recuts. On average the ditches were 0.4 m wide and 0.14 m deep, and the single fill consisted of gravel-free and non-gravelly material.

In contrast to the internal structure the gully was quite rich in finds yielding 22 sherds of pottery (748 g in weight), mainly sandy wares, 16 fragments of animal bone and some preserved plant remains including cereal grains.

#### ***Structure 1507 / Enclosure 327*** (Fig. 6.6-7)

Structure 1507 to the north-east of 803/267, was a circular post-built structure with a diameter of approximately 9.3 m and a south facing entrance. The 11 postholes comprising this structure were circular in plan, approximately 0.3 to 0.6 m in diameter, and ranged in depth between 0.07 m and 0.3 m. The profiles of the postholes varied, being either U-shaped or shallow, and their fills consisted of grey and brown silty sands containing 5-20% gravel. Flecks of charcoal were recorded in the fill of 1391. Finds from the postholes include eight sherds of pottery and fourteen fragments of animal bone.

Structure 1507 was surrounded by enclosure 327, an interrupted ring-ditch similar in form to the one that enclosed structure 803. It consisted of two sections of curvilinear ditch with a diameter of 10.5 m, enclosing an approximate area of 86.6 m<sup>2</sup>. Nine sections were excavated through these ditches, making up 11% of their original length. No entrance was immediately obvious, but there were gaps in the circuit to the north and south-east. In profile the ditches were an open U-shape, and no recuts were apparent in either. On average they were 0.55 m in width and 0.15 m deep. Both ditches contained a single fill comprising homogeneous non-gravelly material, with some primary silting.

As with ring ditch 267, the gullies of 327 were quite rich in artefactual material producing a total of 34 sherds of pottery weighing 396 g, 17 animal bone fragments and plant remains amongst which were cereal grains, chaff and weed seeds.

#### ***Structure 1762*** (Fig. 6.8)

Located to the south east of structure 1507, structure 1762 was a circular structure with a diameter of 9 m. Only part of this structure survived, as its eastern section was cut away by an early Roman enclosure ditch. It consisted of six postholes which were generally circular in plan, measuring between 0.4 m and 0.5 m in diameter, and 0.12 m and 0.48 m in depth. In profile they were either bowl-shaped, or steep-sided and flat-based. Their fills comprised brown silty sands containing 5-20% gravel. Finds from structure 1762 were limited to just five sherds of pottery, 44 g in weight, and two animal bones.

#### ***Structure 802*** (Fig. 6.9)

Lying to the south-east of structure 803, within enclosure 390 was structure 802. This was an oval post-built structure measuring 8.9 m by 9.8 m, with an entrance to the south-east. The entrance was approximately 1.8 m wide, and was indicated by a porch structure comprising two door posts (525 and 558), and two porch posts (794 and 524). The structure consisted of nine postholes, circular in plan and measuring between 0.11 m and 0.22 m in diameter, and 0.08 m and 0.2 m in depth. In general the postholes were steep-sided with flat or rounded bases, and their fills consisted of grey, brown and orange silty sands containing 5-20% gravel. Animal burrows had disturbed postholes 525, 557 and 558. Finds were sparse being limited to four small sherds of pottery and three animal bones.

### ***Structure 801*** (Fig. 6.10)

Superimposed on structure 802 was structure 801, an oval post-built structure measuring 7.3 m by approximately 9 m. There was no clear indication of an entrance, but the northern part of the building was cut away by the innermost recut of enclosure 390. The structure comprised six postholes which were roughly circular in plan, and measured between 0.25 m and 0.6 m in diameter, and 0.1 m and 0.3 m in depth. When examined in section these postholes exhibited flat or slightly rounded bases and steep sides. Their fills consisted of brown, grey and orange sandy silts; these were generally gravel free, or contained approximately 2-5% gravel. The exception to the rule was posthole 538 which contained 25% gravel. The only finds comprised seven sherds of pottery weighing 76 g.

### ***Structure 1764*** (Fig. 6.11)

Lying to the south of enclosure 390 was structure 1764, the most southerly of the buildings in the western group. It was oval in plan, consisted of nine postholes and measured 5.5 m by 4.7 m. The postholes were generally circular or slightly oval in plan, with diameters of between 0.3 m and 0.7 m, and depths of between 0.1 m and 0.34 m. In section these postholes were predominantly steep-sided and flat-based, but some examples were bowl-shaped or shallow. Their fills consisted of brown silty sands containing 5-40% gravel, with some charcoal flecking. Animal disturbance had affected postholes 1272 and 1250. Finds were limited to two small sherds of pottery and five animal bones.

## **The Central Group**

### ***Summary***

An oval post-built structure, 1755, was situated in the centre of the site, approximately 15 m from the northern limit of the excavation. North of this structure lay a short section of curvilinear ditch, 898, which may have been part of an enclosure ditch surrounding the structure. Immediately to the south-west of the structure was a penannular ring-ditch with an entrance to the east, 241, the northern entrance terminal of which had been cut away by a pit. Enclosed by the ring-ditch, and cut away by it at its southern end was a narrow section of curvilinear gully, 242, which was orientated NW/SE and ended in a terminal to the north-west. To the north of the ring-ditch was a fairly short section of ditch, 399, orientated NW/SE, which was cut on its eastern side by a small gully, 415, running parallel to it for most of its length but turning

north-east at its northern end. These features were surrounded by a substantial early Roman enclosure ditch, and some of the ditches were cut by later Roman enclosure ditches running north/south. This later activity clearly resulted in damage to some of the features and may have been responsible for the complete removal of middle Iron Age features which originally occupied this area of the site.

### ***Structure 1755 / ditch 898*** (Fig. 6.12)

Lying in the central area of the site structure 1755 was an oval post-built structure with a diameter of 9.2 m, and an east facing entrance measuring 1.7 m in width. It consisted of nine postholes which were generally circular in plan, with an average width of 0.47 m and an average depth of 0.3 m. In profile they were either bowl-shaped, or steep-sided and flat based. The posthole fills consisted of grey or brown sandy silts containing 1-60% gravel, with some charcoal flecking. Finds comprise seven sherds of pottery, two animal bones and a fragment of quern.

Lying immediately to the north of structure 1755, 898 was a short section of curvilinear ditch 8.5 m in length. It was orientated SW/NE along most of its length, but turned south-east at its northern end. There was no sign of any recut, and in profile the ditch was a narrow U-shape. On average it was 0.6 m wide and 0.35 m deep. Five sections excavated through the ditch, representing 20% of its extant length revealed a single fill of gravel free material, which was greenish in colour and contained charcoal flecks. The form and position of this feature relative to structure 1755 suggest that it may have been part of an enclosure ditch, which was subsequently cut away by Roman activity. The relatively few finds recovered from the ditch fill, thirteen potsherds, eight animal bones and a fragment of fired clay, suggest that if it was open contemporaneously with the use of structure 1755 it was not used for the dumping of material from that building.

### **Other possible structures: the Eastern Group**

#### ***Summary***

In the eastern area of the Yarnton site a group of curvilinear ditches indicated the presence of small sub-circular enclosures or ring-ditches, which were associated with several pits. The northernmost ditch, 2683, extended beyond the northern limit of the excavation, but the portion that was observed formed an arc with the apex to the south west. It was cut away by an amorphous group of pits and ditches to the east. To its south-west were several curvilinear ditches, which appeared to form a ring ditch, 97, with an entrance to the north-east.

### ***Ring ditch 2683*** (Fig. 6.3)

Ditch 2683 was a curvilinear ditch 14 m in length, the western end of which ran on beyond the northern limit of excavation, and the eastern end of which was cut away by a cluster of amorphous pits. It probably formed part of a ring ditch, most of which lay beyond the northern edge of the site. The ditch was not recut, and in profile it was a narrow U-shape. On average it was 0.62 m wide and 0.4 m deep. A section excavated through the ditch, representing 5% of its extant length revealed a single

homogeneous fill of non-gravelly material. Finds from the ditch fill were scarce, comprising seven sherds of Iron Age pottery.

### ***Ring ditch 97*** (Fig. 6.3)

A second, more certain ring-ditch lay approximately 8 m to the south west of ditch 2683. It was 35 m in circumference, 11 m in diameter and had an entrance to the north-east which was 4m wide. There was no evidence for recuts and the ditch was an open U-shape in profile. On average it was 0.5 m wide and 0.2 m deep. Four sections were excavated across the ditch, representing 4% of its extant length and revealing two fills of gravelly material, with some primary silting. The fills contained 18 sherds of pottery and six animal bones, suggesting rubbish disposal from a structure enclosed by the ditch.

### ***Double ring gully enclosure on the edge of channel*** (Figs 6.2; 6.13)

Three segments of curving gully (8182/8186/8230, 8037/8675/8014 and 8283) on the east edge of the palaeochannel in Cresswell Field appeared to be the remnants of a discontinuous oval enclosure, possibly representing a double house gully. The enclosure had been recut (8180/8184, 7994/8627), which in places gave the impression of it being double gully. The gullies varied along their lengths from between 0.35 m to 1.1 m in width and 0.06 to 0.56 m in depth, though this variation was mostly due to variable truncation by ploughing and other disturbance in this area of the site. The enclosure was also truncated by two Romano-British ditches.

The gullies enclosed an area of approximately 20 m by 10 m, with longest axis being aligned NE - SW, with a 6 m wide gap in the south-east segment apparently representing an entrance. However, although the gully at the south-west end of the entrance ended in a clearly defined terminal, the segment of gully at the north-east end was much truncated and petered out. The entrance could, therefore, have been narrower than it appeared. It is also possible that there was a small gap in the north-west segment of the enclosure. One section of gully (8230) appeared to terminate at the point where it was truncated by later ditch (8228). This possible terminal was directed toward the channel and could have been a run off point allowing rain water collecting in the gully to flow off into the adjacent water course.

The fill in the original gully consisted of a single homogenous layer of gravel free sandy silt. The recut contained mostly one to two fills of similar material, but where the gully survived to its greatest depth along the southern segment, it contained up to six fills. Both the original gully and the recut contained small quantities of middle Iron Age pottery, along with larger quantities of redeposited early Iron Age material. The gully also produced a small quantity of mixed animal bone and 2.35 kg of burnt stone.

No features survived within this enclosure to suggest evidence of any structures. However, the level of truncation by ploughing in this particular area, and the disturbance caused by the later ditches may simply have removed any traces. Nevertheless, the absence of this evidence leaves the question of its function slightly open to question.

### ***House gully in south-west corner of Cresswell Field*** (Fig. 6.14)

A 15 m stretch of curving gully (7966/7862/7886) containing dense concentrations of pottery and animal bone lay adjacent to the south-west edge of the Cresswell Field site. Though only part of this feature lay within the area of excavation its character suggested that it was almost certainly a penannular house gully, enclosing an area of 10 to 12 m in diameter. A small scatter of contemporary finds-rich pits lay in the area immediately to the east of this enclosure and one of these, 7988 (see Fig. 6.2), produced a jet earring.

The gully, which measured up to 0.8 m in width and 0.36 m in depth, had a slightly variable profile changing from an almost V-shape where it transected the west edge of excavation, to a more flat bottomed U-shaped profile toward its southern terminal. Although the immediate area around the house gully was relatively flat, the land generally sloped down from north to south toward the floodplain. The enclosure may, therefore, have been specifically designed with open ends to the south to allow rain water collecting in the gully to run off down slope.

The three sections excavated through the gully produced 1.5 kg of pottery, 5 kg of burnt stone and varying quantities of animal bone (almost entirely sheep and cow). However, a significant percentage of the pottery was redeposited early Iron Age material. Other finds included a fragment of briquetage and a copper-alloy ring (REF). Soil samples taken from these sections also produced charred grain.

Close to the southern terminal of the main gully was a 1.5 m segment of east - west gully, 7888, set at right angles to the main gully. This segment was the same size and character as the main gully and was clearly an associated feature, though its exact function was unclear. The remnants of a posthole, 7890, was discovered underneath the junction of the two segments of gully. The stratigraphic relationship between the three features was recorded that the main gully cut the posthole which was in turn cut by the short stretch of east - west gully. However, given the location of the posthole directly at the junction of these features it would seem likely that they are all broadly contemporary, representing some form of structural modifications.

Remnants of narrow gully (7970, 7991 and 7992) measuring only 0.2 m in width and up to 0.2 m in depth, survived in patches running parallel close to the inside the main gully. These features were possibly eaves gullies.

## **ENCLOSURES**

### ***Enclosure 390*** (Fig. 6.15)

Directly to the south of building 803 was enclosure 390, a substantial ring-ditch with a diameter of 21.2 m which delimited an area of 160.6 m<sup>2</sup>; and within which lay buildings 801 and 802. Building 802 lay entirely within the enclosure, whereas building 801 was cut by its innermost recut. It therefore seems likely that building 802 was later than building 801, despite the fact that they had no direct stratigraphic relationship. The enclosure itself was recut on four separate occasions, each of which is described below in stratigraphic order.

#### *Enclosure 390A*

Enclosure 390A was a slightly irregular sub-circular ditch 52 m in length, with a diameter of 17.5 m, enclosing an area of 240.5 m<sup>2</sup>. The entrance to the enclosure in this initial phase was approximately seven metres wide and orientated south. It was indicated by a single terminal to the east, but, the western terminal had been cut away by later activity. Nine percent of the total length of this ditch was excavated in five sections. In profile it had irregular sides and a flat base, and it averaged 0.57 m in width by 0.35 m in depth. The ditch contained a single fill, which consisted of non-gravelly material and silty-loams with gravel, with some greenish material. Finds comprise 11 sherds of pottery and 16 animal bones.

#### *Enclosure 390B*

Enclosure 390B was a circular ditch 56m in length which enclosed an area of 268.8 m<sup>2</sup>, and had a diameter of 20.7 m. The entrance to this phase of the enclosure was also orientated south, and was approximately six metres in width. Six sections were excavated through this ditch, representing 12% of its total length. In profile the ditch was varied, being an open u-shape in places, and irregular in others. On average it was 0.95 m wide and 0.57 m deep. The single fill consisted of gravel-free material, non-gravelly material and silty-loams with gravel. Finds were quite prolific and include 39 sherds of pottery (598 g), 42 animal bones and one fragment of slag lining. Plant remains were also abundant with a number of cereal grains, weed seeds and evidence of crop processing in the form of chaff.

#### *Enclosure 390C*

Enclosure 390C was represented by a curvilinear ditch 18.2 m in length, which recut the northern part of ditches A and B but could not be traced to the south. Two sections were excavated through this ditch, but these represented an unknown proportion of its original length. No entrance was observed in the extant part of the ditch. The two excavated segments of this ditch revealed two distinct profiles, one was an open u-shape and the other a narrow u-shape. On average the ditch was 1.15 m wide and 0.29 m deep. The single fill comprised non-gravelly material, and silty-loams with gravel, with some greenish material. Finds comprise 30 sherds of pottery (407 g) of which at least 21 are sandy wares, 55 animal bones and two fragments of fired clay.

#### *Enclosure 390D*

Enclosure 390D was a circular ditch 46 m in length, with a diameter of 16.2 m which enclosed an area of 160.6 m<sup>2</sup>. The entrance to this enclosure faced south, and was three metres in width. Four postholes (561A, 490A, 493A and 728A) found in the entrance area, may be interpreted as the remains of a gateway or similar structure. Eleven sections were excavated through the ditch, representing 20.2% of its original length. The ditch profile was varied, being U-shaped and open in places and irregular in others. On average the ditch cut was 1 m wide and 0.5 m deep. Its fill consisted of gravel-free material, non-gravelly material, silty-loams with gravel and gravelly fills; there was also some greenish material and ash.

Numerous finds were recovered from enclosure 390D including 120 sherds of pottery (1692 g) 59% of which are sandy wares, 101 animal bones of which 32% are cattle/horse size, one fragment of sub-tuyère plate, two crucible fragments and one copper

alloy brooch (REF). Plant remains were also recovered including several cereal grains and evidence of crop processing.

The pottery suggests a >??? Date. Copper alloy brooch?

#### *Ditches 425 and 450* (Fig. 6.3)

Lying across the entrances to enclosures 390 A, B and D were several short stretches of east/west oriented ditch (425 and 450). Ditch 425 was 4 m in length and cut by enclosure 390D. It was excavated in two sections, which represented 31% of its extant length. No recuts were observed, and the ditch profile was varied, being U-shaped and open in one section, and irregular in the other. On average the ditch was 0.55 m wide and 0.32 m deep. Its fill comprised gravel-free and non-gravelly material, with some primary silting and some greenish material. The fill contained no finds.

Ditch 450, lying to the north of 425 was 9.6 m in length and was cut by 390A and 390B. Five sections were excavated across this ditch, representing 30% of its original length. In profile it was generally an open U-shape, and there was no sign of any recuts. On average it was 0.6 m wide and 0.2 m deep. There was a single fill which consisted of gravel-free material, non-gravelly material, and silty-loams with gravel, with some burnt limestone and fragments of clay present near the bottom. Six sherds of pottery (130 g) and six animal bones were recovered.

#### *Ditched enclosure in south-west corner of Cresswell Field* (Fig. 6.17)

A number of inter-cutting ditches and gullies forming a right angle in the south-west corner of Cresswell Field appeared to be part of an enclosure, of which only the north-west corner lay within the area of excavation (Fig. 6.2).

Two sections were excavated through this feature, one at the point where the ditches transected the south edge of excavation and one close to the west edge of the site. In these sections the feature appeared to comprise of just two ditches running parallel. The outer ditch (8095/7925) measured 0.9 m in width and 0.45 m in depth in the south section, narrowing to 0.65 m in width in the west section. The inner ditch (8096/7870) was slightly larger, measuring up to 1.6 m in width and 0.8 m in depth. Both features had a slightly unusual steep-sided flat bottomed profile.

The fill within the ditches comprised an uncomplicated sequence of up to seven layers of clay silts and clay loams. There was no evidence in the formation of the fills to suggest the existence of an internal or external bank. In the upper fills observed in the southern section it was recorded that the inner ditch cut the outer ditch. However, only the very top of these features converged, and the fills comprised of almost exactly the same type of material, making this relationship tenuous.

The irregular segments of gully which appeared in plan to form part of this enclosure were not visible in either of the two sections and they therefore appeared to have been completely cut away by the two ditches at these points. This suggested that they may have represented an earlier, less substantial, version of the enclosure. One of these

gullies was partly excavated where it transected an early Iron Age pit (8251). It appeared to cut the pit and produced a small quantity of middle Iron Age pottery.

The date of this enclosure is slightly problematic. The pottery recovered from the lower fills comprised largely of early Iron Age material (120 sherds), along with just a few sherds (less than ten) of a middle Iron Age date (all from fill 8108). In addition, five sherds of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery were recovered from the latest fill and this was the only pottery of this date recovered from the site. The combination of this dating evidence appeared to suggest the enclosure was middle Iron Age in origin, but remained partly open into the late Iron Age/early Roman period.

However, the plot of pottery sherd size shows that all of the earlier material from the ditches comprised only small sherds, and it is therefore possible that all of the early and middle Iron Age pottery in these features was redeposited. The noticeable paucity of other domestic refuse such as bone and burnt stone from the ditches also seemed to suggest that the enclosure was not contemporary with the concentration of middle Iron Age occupation features located in the area immediately to the north. Enclosure 241 (Fig. 6.3).

To the south-west of post-built structure 1755 was enclosure 241, a penannular ring-ditch with a diameter of 7.5 m, which enclosed an area of 56.25 m<sup>2</sup>. The enclosure entrance faced east and was 4.5 m in width. It had only one clear terminal to the south, as the northern one was cut away by a pit. Eight sections were excavated through the ditch circuit, representing 23% of its extant length. The ditch had been recut one to two times, and in profile it was an open U-shape. On average it was 0.7 m wide and 0.25 m deep. There were one to two fills per cut which were mixed consisting of gravelly and non-gravelly material, with some burning. It appeared that this ditch did not enclose any structures although much of the interior had been cut away by later ditches. Charcoal and a fairly dense concentration of finds from the ditch fill suggest rubbish deposition, possibly from structure 1755. Amongst the finds were 42 (475 g) of pottery and 19 animal bones. Plant remains include weed seeds and cereal grains.

#### ***Ditch 242*** (Fig. 6.3)

Ditch 242 was enclosed by ring ditch 241, which cut it to the south. To the north-west it ended in a terminal just short of the western (inner) edge of the ring-ditch. It was 5 m in length, and orientated NW/SE. On average it was 0.3 m wide by 0.2 m deep, and showed no signs of recutting. In profile it was an open U-shape. Three ditch sections representing 28% of its extant length, revealed a single fill of homogeneous gravel-free material. Finds from the ditch fill were scarce, three potsherds and three animal bones, suggesting that it had not been used for rubbish disposal.

#### ***Ditch 399*** (Fig. 6.3)

Ditch 399 was a curvilinear stretch of ditch 5 m in length, which ran north-west from enclosure 241. It was cut away to the north by a late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure ditch, and to the south its relationship with enclosure 241 had been destroyed by a ditch of late Roman date. On average it was 0.6 m wide and 0.2 m deep. There was no sign of recuts, and the ditch profile was an open U-shape. There was a single fill

consisting of a homogeneous gravel free material. Three sections were excavated through the ditch, representing 17% of its extant length. A dense concentration of finds from the ditch fill, including 43 animal bones and 45 sherds of pottery, mainly shell-tempered, suggests rubbish deposition, possibly from the same source as the material from enclosure 241, (ie from structure 1755). Amongst the plant remains were cereal grains, weed seeds and chaff.

#### ***Ditch 415*** (Fig. 6.3)

Ditch 415 ran parallel to ditch 399, for most of its length but turned north-east at its northern end. It was approximately 3 m in length, and averaged 0.4 m wide by 0.1 m deep. There was no sign of any recut, and in profile the ditch was an open U-shape. A section excavated through the ditch, and representing 16% of its extant length revealed a single homogeneous fill of a non-gravelly material. The small number of finds, 10 animal bones, from the fill suggest secondary deposition, rather than the dumping of large quantities of rubbish.

### **FENCELINES**

#### ***Fence 1758*** (Fig. 6.18)

Abutting structure 802 to the south was fence 1758, which ran for 3.8 m on a north/south alignment before being cut away by a later ditch. It consisted of four postholes which were roughly circular in plan with diameters of between 0.2 and 0.4 m. The postholes were predominantly bowl-shaped in profile, but there was a single flat-based, steep-sided example (424). Their fills consisted of mid to dark brown silty sands containing 1% gravel. A single large sherd of shell-tempered pottery was recovered.

#### ***Fences 1499 and 1515*** (Fig. 6.19)

To the north-east of enclosure 390 were two fence lines, which may have defined a trackway running NW/SE and skirting structure 1764 to the north. The most westerly of these was fence 1499, which ran for a distance of approximately 25.5 m and comprised seven fairly evenly spaced post-holes averaging 0.42 m in diameter and 0.38 m in depth. The postholes were oval to circular in plan with steep sides and flat bases. Their fills comprised mid to dark brown silty sands containing 5-50% gravel, with the exception of posthole 1197 which contained flecks of charcoal. Posthole 1243 had suffered some animal disturbance. Finds comprised five sherds of pottery, six animal bones and one fragment of vitrified clay.

To the north-east of fence 1499 was fence 1515 which was approximately 14 m in length, and made up of five postholes spaced approximately 5 m apart. The postholes were generally circular in plan with an average diameter of 0.34 m, and an average depth of 0.78 m. In profile they were generally bowl-shaped with the exception of 1498, which was steep-sided and flat-based. Their fills comprised brown and grey silty sands containing 2-10% gravel. No finds were recovered from the fills.

### **OTHER FEATURES**

### *Ditches 1378 and 1382*

Located immediately to the north-east of fence-line 1515 and to the south of structure 1762 were several short stretches of irregular ditch, with no obvious function. The eastern-most of these was ditch 1378 which was 6.2 m in length and orientated NW/SE. It was cut away to the south, and had clearly formed part of a larger feature. In profile it was U-shaped-open and it had been recut four times. It was excavated in a single section, which represented 27% of its extant length. On average it was 0.7 m wide and 0.25 m deep. Each recut contained a single fill of mixed material comprising non-gravelly fills, silty loams with gravel and gravelly fills. There was also some primary silting in evidence. Finds from 1378 comprised 30 sherds of pottery, 230 g in weight, 35 animal bones and one fragment of fired clay.

Located to the north-west of ditch 1378 was ditch 1382, a highly irregular feature 7.5 m in length and orientated NW/SE. Ten sections were excavated through this ditch, representing 47% of its extant length. In profile it was an open U-shape, and there was no sign of any recuts. On average the ditch was 0.6 m wide and 0.14 m deep. Its fill consisted of gravel-free material, non-gravelly material and silty loams with gravel. Finds were sparser with just nine sherds of pottery, 121 g in weight, and three animal bones.

### *Area of inter-cutting pits and ditches adjacent to the central southern edge of Cresswell Field* (Figs. 6.20-2)

What at first appeared to be a single length of irregular north-west - south-east ditch in the central southern area of excavation was in fact a dense concentration of inter-cutting pits, postholes, ditches and gullies. The fills of all of these inter-cutting features was almost exactly the same type of material, consisting mostly of dark brown gravel free silt loams. This initially made it very difficult to establish the relationship between the various features, and may have lead to some errors in the stratigraphy and undoubtedly lead to some contamination of the finds between some of the features. However, the dating of the pottery assemblages suggests that this problem was fairly minimal, and once this sequence was dated and phased it could be broken down fairly simply into a phase of early Iron Age pits, truncated by a phase of several middle Iron Age ditches and gullies, inter-cut with a small number of contemporary pits and postholes.

Three sections were excavated across the linear spread made-up of these inter-cutting features. The first where it transected the south edge of excavation, the second half way along it, and the third at its north-west terminal.

In the section excavated next to the south edge of excavation (Fig. 6.7, sections (a) and (b)), the remains of a small pit, 7902, was truncated by what appeared to be a fairly large north-west - south-east aligned ditch, 7659, which was becoming shallower and apparently terminating toward the edge of excavation. The ditch measured 1.6 m in width and up to 1 m in depth. This terminal was partly truncated by the terminal of a smaller ditch, 7817, coming from the opposite direction, and by a cluster of five inter-cutting pits and postholes (7599, 7732, 7783, 7785 and 7856), all of which lay along the north edge of the large ditch. These features were cut by a

wide but shallow ditch, 7512, measuring 2.4 m in width and 0.6 m in depth, which was in turn cut by another smaller north-west - south-east ditch, 7637, running along the northern edge of this spread of features. All of the features excavated in this section produced middle Iron Age pottery, along with varying quantities of early Iron Age material. In addition ditch 7637 produced a worked bone toggle.

In the section excavated half way along the linear spread (Fig. 6.7, sections (c-d)) a cluster of four pits were located, the earliest of which, 8068, was undated. The other three pits (7869, 7787 and 8120), one of which, 7869, truncated the undated pit, were all early Iron Age in date and produced large quantities of finds including the iron adze head described above under structure 8396. The pits were truncated by a series of three ditches containing middle Iron Age pottery (7789, 7893, 7894), and two of these appeared to be the continuation of features 7512 and 7637 seen in the section excavated close to the south edge of excavation. Ditch 7789 is of particular note as it contained a concentration of cattle femora (see Mulville Chapter 15), along with a fragment of bone comb and a fragment of fired clay.

In the section excavated at the north-west end of the features (Fig. 6.7, section (e)) the sequence simply comprised of an undated posthole, 8444, truncated by an early Iron Age pit, 8427. All of the middle Iron Age ditches had therefore terminated before they reached this point.

The function of the series of inter-cutting ditches and was uncertain, and although this linear spread of features represented one of the most concentrated areas of middle Iron Age activity on the site, there was an almost complete absence of any contemporary features in the surrounding area. One possible explanation is that they formed the northern edge of a multi-phased enclosure, and, therefore, defined the limit of an area of activity situated just to the south of the site. The quantities of pottery and other refuse recovered from the ditches suggests this may have included a dwelling.

## **THE CEMETERY**

Machining on the eastern side of the excavated area exposed a number of burials apparently grouped around a pair of Roman trackway ditches. Six cremation burials and 46 inhumation burials were recorded, but only a single urned cremation burial within an early Roman vessel could be securely dated by conventional means. Fourteen skeletons were submitted for radiocarbon dating and of these nine were of middle Iron Age date (see Chapter 00). Of the inhumations 11 could be dated to the Roman or Saxon periods leaving 35, mainly crouched burials including the dated Iron Age examples. Analyses of the radiocarbon dates suggest that the cemetery was in use for only one or two generations. The burials lay in three groups on the site; one group on the south-east edge of the Iron Age settlement, and a northern and southern group in the salvage area to the east. The northern and southern group comprising 15 and 10 individuals respectively were only 20 m apart. The gap could be the result of poor retrieval in the intervening area, or it is possible that the two groups belonged to different family units. A further 10 inhumations have been described as outliers scattered along the southern and eastern edges of the settlement.

As many of the burials were recovered under salvage conditions and were in poor condition little information survived with regard grave cuts and other burial details. A catalogue of the individual graves can be found in Chapter 00 and a summary plan in Fig. 00.00.

## **PITS**

### *Description*

Some 132 pits were assigned to the middle Iron Age, 44 on Cresswell Field and 88 on the Yarnton site. The Yarnton examples were divided into six categories based on shape (see p.00 above). Like those assigned to the early Iron Age the majority were circular or oval in shape, with a very few amorphous or irregular examples.

The middle Iron Age pits were distributed in a band running north-east to south-west across the northern part of Yarnton and as a concentration on the western and southern sides of Cresswell Field (Fig. 6.1). They were more numerous than the early Iron Age pits, with a tendency to cluster in the west of the site, north of the middle Iron Age buildings. A curving line of pits on the northern central part of Cresswell Field appear to delimit a zone of earlier pitting.

Pit diameters ranged between 0.3 m and 2.75 m, averaging 1.28 m, and depth ranged between 0.1 m and 1.25 m averaging 0.45 m. Recorded original pit volumes ranged between 0.03 m<sup>3</sup> and 7.39 m<sup>3</sup>, and averaged 0.71 m<sup>3</sup>. The substantial variation in pit volume reflects a few anomalous examples, and in the case of the smaller examples probably results from the severe truncation of some originally very shallow pits by ploughing. The majority of pits were cylindrical in shape, although there were also a substantial proportion of large shallow examples, some amorphous, bowl-shaped and shallow-saucer shaped features and a very few undercut features. The quantity of fills per pit ranged between one and twenty-one, however the vast majority contained between one and four, with a substantial minority containing between five and ten. The average was three. Silty loams, non-gravelly and gravel-free fills predominated, although some gravelly-fills and fills classified as other were also observed. Recutting of middle Iron Age pits was rare with only eight pits on Yarnton exhibiting visible recuts. Of these eight, seven were recut only once and a single pit was recut twice. Seventeen out of the 88 Yarnton pits contained identifiable evidence of primary silting, and of these only two were over 0.8 m<sup>3</sup> in volume. Seven pits exhibited identifiable evidence of deliberate backfilling; of these two were bowl-shaped, three were cylindrical, one was undercut and one was large-shallow. Four of the deliberately backfilled pits were over 0.8 m<sup>3</sup> in volume. Only two pits contained deliberate deposits of articulated animal bones, one was shallow saucer-shaped and the other was bowl-shaped. However, the majority of middle Iron Age pits contained material culture residues of some kind, and these exhibited little differentiation between different pit types or sizes. Redeposition was apparently low, 59 of the 88 Yarnton pits exhibited no signs of redeposition, and a further 21 exhibited low levels; only six pits had medium levels of redeposition and just two showed high levels. Seventeen pits were identified as grain storage pits on the basis of their morphology.

Table 6.1: Middle Iron Age pit dimensions by type (range for those where dimensions were recorded)

Dimensions	Cylindrical	Bowl-shaped	Large Shallow	Shallow Saucer	Undercut	Amorphous
Total no.	34	8	22	9	3	12
Breadth	0.3-2.4	0.55-1.6	0.9-2.1	0.6-1.35	1.2-2.75	0.33-1.5
Depth	0.33-1.05	0.23-0.6	0.15-0.45	0.04-0.17	0.47-1.25	0.14-0.64
Length	1.3-2.1	1.1-1.4	1.4-2.4	0.92-1.2	1.2-1.2	1.3-1.7

### Finds distributions from Middle Iron Age post-built structures (YWRF)

[add in YCF]

Little pottery was recovered from the middle Iron Age roundhouses and the material that was recovered was fairly evenly spread between the different structures (Table 00). Similarly a small amount of animal bone was found, but this material was less evenly distributed, mostly concentrating in structure 1507. The majority of the animal bone was undiagnostic, and was identified as cow/horse size or sheep/pig size. Only one small find, a fragment of quernstone was recovered. The size and undiagnostic nature of the assemblage suggests that it represents secondary deposition during the construction or use of the building.

Table 6.2: Middle Iron Age structures, enclosures, fences and ditches: summary of finds

Structures	Pottery (no)	Animal bone	Other finds
801	7	0	
802	4	3	
803	1	0	
1507	8	14	
1755	7	2	1 quern fragment
1762	5	2	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Fence lines</b>			
1499	5	6	1 fired clay
1515	0	0	
1758	1	0	
1764	2	5	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Ditches</b>			
267	22	16	
327	34	34	
390A	12	16	
390B	39	42	
390C	30	55	2 fired clay
390D	120	74	3 metal working debris; 1 brooch
450	6	6	
1378	30	35	1 fired clay
1382	9	3	
898	13	8	1 fired clay
241	42	18	
242	3	1	
399	45	43	
415	0	10	
2683	7	0	

97	18	6	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>389</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>10</b>

### **Finds distributions from Middle Iron Age fence-lines**

Little pottery was recovered from the middle Iron Age fence-lines, and this was not evenly distributed (Table 00). Similarly little animal bone was found, and about half of this material was undiagnostic. Only one small find was recovered. Given the size of the assemblage it probably formed through secondary deposition, during the construction or use of the fence-lines.

### **Finds distributions from the Middle Iron Age Ditches**

All the ring-ditches contained relatively substantial assemblages of finds, mostly comprising animal bones and pottery (Table 00). Of the smaller ditches only 425, which lay across the entrances to enclosures 390 A, B and D contained no finds at all. The quantities of animal bone and pottery from the different ring-ditches were fairly evenly matched, with the exception of the eastern ring-ditches which contained little material, and 390 C and D which contained quite a lot. Metal-working debris and other finds were generally scarce, and plant remains were mostly confined to the larger ditches of the western and central groups. The quantities of material from the smaller ditches were generally in proportion to their size, with the exception of 399 which contained large mounts of pottery and bone and some plant remains, and 1378 which contained large amounts of pottery and bone. The finds from the ring-ditches all suggest deposition of rubbish, which presumably derived from the buildings which they enclosed.

### **Middle Iron Age pits: artefact distributions**

#### Human Bone

Three of the middle Iron Age pits contained human bone. (EXPAND)

#### Animal Bone

Of the 88 middle Iron Age pits 70 contained animal bone of some sort. This assemblage mostly consisted of undiagnostic bone of sheep, pig or goat size, however, there was also a substantial proportion of cattle bone, and bone of cow/horse size. Additionally there were small amounts of pig, sheep, horse, goat, dog and domestic fowl bones, as well as some remains of wild animals.

Once again patterning within this distribution is not very evident, and the majority of pits with animal bone contained a wide variety of different species. Of the 70 middle Iron Age pits containing animal bone, all had bone from at least one of the major domestic species, and 29 contained bone from all of these species. However, some interesting correlations were evident. All of the three pits containing human remains also contained horse remains, and the significance of this is strengthened by the fact that only 15 of 70 pits contained horse bone. However, the middle Iron Age pits

display a less strong association between dog and human remains than the early Iron Age pits, with only one pit containing both human and dog remains. Wild animal remains seem to be fairly randomly distributed; however, one pit (context 584) contained both wild bird and hare. Four middle Iron Age pits contained deliberate deposits of articulated animal bone (273, 511, 1744 and 8149). Pit 273 contained a partial sheep skeleton, pit 511 a cattle torso along with the only evidence for foals from the site, pit 1744 a partial dog burial and pit 8149 two groups of very young sheep bone (see Mulville (Chap. 15) for further detail). Like their early Iron Age counterparts, these contained assemblages comprising a mixture of species. In terms of the differential distribution of animal remains, the middle Iron Age pits appeared remarkably similar to the early Iron Age pits. Cattle bones and the remains of sheep/pig, sheep/goat and cattle/horse tended to be found together in the same pits. The spatial distribution of human bone, dog bone and the remains of wild animals showed no differentiation from the major domestic animal categories, and was again simply sparsely distributed.

Table 6.3: Middle Iron Age animal bone distributions

Species	No of Pits
Cattle	46
Sheep/pig size	49
Sheep/goat size	51
Cattle/horse size	43
Pig	15
Sheep	13
Horse	15
Goat	2
Dog	6
Domestic fowl	1
Hare	2
Rabbit	2
Badger	1
Wild bird	5
Deer	1
Lizard	1
Toad	2
Rodent	2

## Pottery

Of the 88 pits dating to the middle Iron Age period 81 contained pottery. The assemblage comprised 1112 sherds with a mean sherd weight of 26 g, and the average number of sherds per pit was 14. Following the procedure adopted for the early Iron Age mean sherd weight and sherd count were calculated for each of the middle Iron Age pits, and these were plotted on an XY scatter chart. This analysis showed that the majority of assemblages comprised small numbers of small abraded sherds, and that a minority comprised either large assemblages of small sherds, or small assemblages of large sherds. This pattern conforms to that seen among the early Iron Age assemblages. The spatial analysis of pottery distribution within the middle Iron Age pits looked for pits containing either pottery with a mean sherd weight of over 50 g, or

over 25 sherds, or both. Four pits made up a group containing pottery with a mean sherd weight of over 50 g, and these were all situated in the north western part of the site on a broadly east - west axis. Pits containing large numbers of smaller sherds were situated on either side of the major Roman enclosure system, four to the west and two to the east

All the pits with significant amounts of pottery also contained large amounts of animal bone, and the majority of them contained the bones of a wide range of species. Pits containing particularly substantial deposits of both bone and pottery were 577, 584, 746, 1142, 1189, 1368, 1373, 1504, 1586, 1696, 1732 and 1733. Although the deposition of large quantities of pottery shows no particular correlation with the deposition of particular domestic animal species, there does appear to be a correlation between such deposits and the deposition of wild animal remains. Out of the eight middle Iron Age pits which contained the remains of wild animals six also contained significant amounts of pottery.

### Plant Remains

Sixteen of the 88 middle Iron Age pits contained plant remains. Of these nine were over 0.8 m<sup>3</sup> in volume (their average original volume was 1.51 m<sup>3</sup>), which is a marginally lower proportion than that for the early Iron Age. The shape of pits containing plant remains showed some variation, however the majority were cylindrical and the others were either bowl-shaped, undercut or large-shallow. This pattern appears similar to that found in the early Iron Age pits, where cylindrical pits were also the most common type containing plant remains.

Table 6.4: Middle Iron Age pits containing plant remains by type

<b>Pit Type</b>	<b>No of Pits with Plant Remains</b>
Cylindrical	10
Large Shallow	4
Undercut	1
Bowl-Shaped	1

Pit volume and frequency clearly determined the relative amounts of material from each class of pit. The quantities of different types of plant remains within pits were roughly equal across different pit categories; cereal grains were least common and chaff most common. These findings are consistent with the picture which emerged for the early Iron Age pits. However, only one of the 16 middle Iron Age pits contained burnt charcoal, and this compares to 10 out of the 17 early Iron Age pits which had charred plants.

Analysis of the spatial distribution of pits containing plant remains, shows that they were concentrated in the north - western corner of the site, and generally correlated with those pits which contained large quantities of animal bone and pottery. This reinforces the interpretation that a number of pits were used for the deposition of all the different categories of material, and that there was little differentiation in the spatial distribution of different species of animal, classes of artefact or classes of ecofact. This pattern appears to be as true for the middle Iron Age as it is for the early Iron Age.

## Metalworking debris

There was little metalworking debris found in the middle Iron Age pits, and its distribution was fairly narrow. The vast majority of material came from the cylindrical pits, of which four contained metalworking debris; and half of this material came from one of these pits (887).

In spatial terms distribution of metalworking debris was confined to the far western part of the middle Iron Age pit group. Four of the pits containing metalworking debris, including 887, were clustered around the edge of a D-shaped post-built structure, 803, interpreted as a smithy. Another pit lay within ring-ditch 391. Middle Iron Age metalworking debris from pits may therefore be seen as fairly localised, and possibly associated with structures in which metal was being worked.

## Small Finds

The distribution of small finds within middle Iron Age pits was once more fairly narrow, as eleven pits contained the majority of the material. One of these pits (584) contained a particularly dense concentration of small finds, and notably this was also one of the few middle Iron Age pits to contain metalworking debris, albeit a single fragment. In addition pit 584 contained four fragments from two saddle querns (SF 194b, 201 and SF 194a and 199), a piece of worked bone (SF 464) and a fragment of bone comb.

The majority of the small finds derived from cylindrical or large shallow pits, of which there were nine and two respectively. This is probably a reflection of the fact that there were more cylindrical pits than other kinds of pit, and that one of the large-shallow pits contained a particularly large amount of material. There were a relatively large amount of flint flakes which were presumably residual, but also quernstones and loomweights.

The spatial distribution of middle Iron Age pits containing small finds was fairly wide ranging. However, they tended to be concentrated within the western half of the pit group. There also seems to have been a loose association between pits containing small finds and ring-ditches. Three of these pits lay within the ring-ditch surrounding the D-shaped metalworking structure.

*Draft*