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Introduction

Plate 1. The Black Horse Farm site under excavation

I. Introduction

Archaeological Solutions Ltd, in its former guise as the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust, first became involved in archaeological work at Black Horse Farm in Sawtry, Cambridgeshire in 2002, compiling an archaeological desk-based assessment as part of a planning application for development of the site. Since then, two phases of trial trench evaluation, two phases of archaeological excavation, and a programme of post-excavation analysis have been undertaken. This archaeological work has revealed settlement activity at this location beginning in the later part of the middle Iron Age and stretching into the early Romano-British period.

Black Horse Farm is located on the edge of Sawtry Fen. Although the extent of the fen has fluctuated over time, during the period of occupation represented by the archaeology it appears to have gradually drawn closer. A series of alluvial deposits, laid down mostly later in the history of the site, represent flooding events which appear to have led to changes in the way that the site was used, or at least that part of it viewed through the windows afforded by the areas subject to excavation. The significance of these deposits is, however, not just in their effect on the population who lived through the events that led to their deposition. These deposits, especially the later ones, have effectively sealed much of the site, contributing to its preservation and helping it to escape from the worst impacts of modern deep ploughing. French (1992, 730) has noted that alluviated fen-edge landscapes such as this are of notable importance due to the potential of the alluvial deposits to seal and protect the underlying archaeology and, as the landscapes are sealed relatively intact, they allow the best version of the complete picture of human land-use to be discovered in one area; waterlogging of such sites often provides an excellent degree of preservation of organic materials. The southern part of the site, and Roundhouse 3 in particular, was preserved, and therefore recorded, in notable detail providing detailed information about the way in which the building and its immediate surroundings developed. Black Horse Farm serves to highlight the significance of fenland archaeology and the potential for well-preserved sites to exist in this landscape.

This document serves to describe the archaeology recorded at Black Horse Farm and to characterise the activity that was taking place at the site during the later Iron Age and

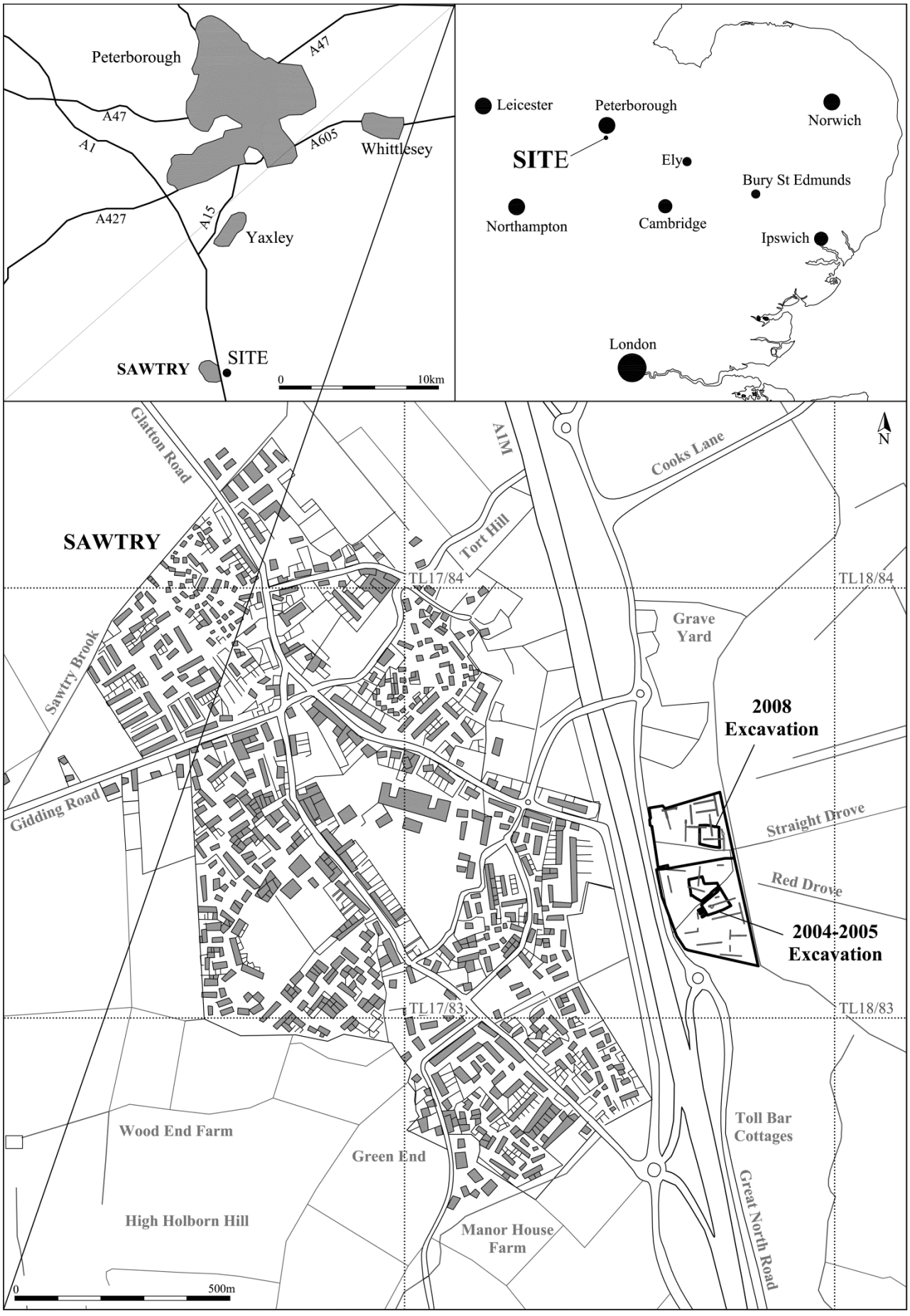

Figure 1. Site location plan

early Romano-British periods. The recorded archaeology is put into regional context and compared to relevant sites elsewhere in eastern England. The fen-edge location and the history of inundation at the site provide a major theme in the understanding of the site and, throughout, the relationship of the fenland environment and the prevailing damp conditions are considered in respect to the development, layout, and functioning of the settlement.

II. Background

Black Horse Farm lies just east of Sawtry, which is located about 25km south of Peterborough and 14km north-west of Huntingdon. The site lies 750m south-east of the present village of Sawtry, on low ground, that slopes away from the old Great North Road, towards Sawtry Fen to the east (see Figs. 1 & 2). The site occupies a position just east of the course of the old Great North Road (B1043 and A1(M)), formerly Roman Ermine Street. At the time of excavation, the site comprised 4.1ha of arable and vacant land. The central part of the site was crossed by a large open drain running south-west to north-east. Overhead power cables traversed the southern part of the site from south-east to north-west. It is bounded to the east by the Middle Level Catchwater Drain and to the south by a further drainage ditch, beyond which lies arable land and the A1 southbound access roundabout. To the north, the site is demarcated by Black Horse Drain, orientated west-south-west to east-north-east.

Archaeological work at this site comprised two separate areas of open-area excavation (Figs. 1 & 2). The more southerly of these areas (AS857) was excavated by AS between November 2004 and January 2005 and was focussed on an area of dense archaeological activity, identified within Trenches 2, 5, 5B and 11 of the evaluation which preceded it (Eddisford, O'Brien and Williamson 2004). The evaluation revealed significant archaeological features of later prehistoric date, sealed and well-preserved beneath thick layers of later alluvium. Evidence suggested occupation of a raised sand promontory or 'island' above the surrounding wetland (focussed in the central southern part of the area of proposed development; that part of the site which was later subject to excavation). More widespread evidence of ditched enclosures and possible field systems was also present in the areas surrounding this focus of occupation. Finds included direct evidence of occupation, including pottery sherds, daub, animal bone and burnt stone.

During the evaluation a dynamic fenland palaeoenvironment was recorded. Deeper deposits of alluvium indicative of a fen embayment were found in the lower-lying parts of the site away from the sandy rise. Evidence of the early form of the lower-lying parts of the site was suggested by a thin peaty layer of probable Neolithic or earlier date, indicative of a contemporary freshwater lagoon.

The northern area (AS1111) was excavated by AS between November 2007 and February 2008. It lay *c.* 80m to the north of the previous area of excavation. This followed an evaluation of this part of the site conducted in 2006 (Doyle and Weston 2006; Figs. 1 & 2). This evaluation mapped the northern extent of the former promontory of higher ground on which the Iron Age settlement activity was recorded to the south. Sparse activity of prehistoric date was recorded during the evaluation in the southern part of this area. This comprised traces of an Iron Age roundhouse not unlike those to the south, identified in Trench 10 at the point where the promontory began its northern descent, and linear features representing possible boundary ditches. Further north, at the northern edge of the promontory on which this activity was recorded, alluvial deposits associated with the fen were identified.

III. Archaeological and Historical Background

The known archaeology and history of the Sawtry area

Known prehistoric sites are scarce along this part of the fen edge. Many Mesolithic trees, or 'bog oaks', have been recovered from Sawtry Fen (Hall 1992, 33), indicating a wooded, dry-land landscape in this period. Flint concentrations indicate Mesolithic and Neolithic human activity in the area of Wood Walton, which lies on a glacial gravel-topped clay promontory *c.* 5km west of the Black Horse Farm site. Further Neolithic occupation of the area is represented by several stray flint implements of this date recorded by J R Garrood (1937a). Further examples of such items were recorded in the area by the Fenland Survey.

The Bronze Age fen edge in this area comprised a complex series of bays and promontories but at this time the Black Horse Farm site would have been located *c.* 900m west of the closest fen inlet, on the clay skirtland (Hall 1992, 33 and fig 18). The Bronze Age is rather poorly represented in the area surrounding the site. There is little evidence of Bronze Age activity on the major lithic-producing sites, and there are no concentrations of finds within the immediate area that might suggest occupation sites. Finds are restricted to chance discoveries but are known from both the upland and fen areas of Sawtry parish.

Although many Iron Age sites are known on the Boulder Clay plateau to the south, around, for example, Abbot's Ripton and King's Ripton, there is relatively little known evidence of contemporary activity in the Sawtry area. A settlement at Stocking Close, near Monks Wood, 4km to the south, was excavated by Garrood during the 1930s and produced evidence for activity from the La Téne period (3rd century BC) through to the Romano-British period (Garrood 1937b). Belgic material has been reported around Grange Farm, 3km to the south-east, but no site was encountered here in the course of the Fenland Survey. Late Iron Age finds have also been found on several sites where occupation continued into the Roman period.

Close to the line of the Great North Road, at Tort Hill, is a small ditched enclosure that has produced Iron Age and Roman pottery (Cambridgeshire HERs 11666; MCB13711). Excavations in the 1990s (Welsh 1994,

Roberts 1995) revealed further evidence of very late Iron Age occupation to the west of the A1 and Roman occupation either side of it. The Black Horse Farm site is situated to the east of Roman Ermine Street. The road appears to provide the focus for Roman settlement around Sawtry, although there is also a site *c.*4km east of the road around Wood Walton (Hall 1992). To the east of the A1, excavations revealed features which are thought to have marked the boundaries of plots fronting Ermine Street, as well as 2nd to 4th century pits, cobbled areas and a pottery kiln. This was a peripheral area of the Roman rural roadside settlement used for rubbish disposal and possibly used for the small scale industrial processing of metal and leather (Welsh 1994; Roberts 1995). The extent of this occupation along Ermine Street is unknown, but it may have been part of the same settlement as the Tort Hill site excavated in the 1940s (Garrood 1940, 1947).

Excavations in Sawtry at St Andrews Church (Pearson and Murray 2000) and St Andrews Way, found sparse Roman features as well as medieval features. Other evidence for Roman activity in the Sawtry area is mainly in the form of stray finds of pottery and coins, although antiquarian sources note that a number of cremation urns were found 'in Sautre-field, near Ermine Street, about a mile from the village' in 1722 (HER 1339; Page *et al*. 1932, 268). Two Barnack Stone coffins have also been discovered, possibly representing roadside burials (HER 1332).

Previous archaeological work at Black Horse Farm

Trial trench evaluation at the southern end of the site (under site code AS857) recorded a complex fen-edge and fenland depositional sequence (Eddisford, O'Brien and Williamson 2004). Beneath the topsoil was a thick alluvial layer, which was deepest at the edge of the promontory, particularly in Trench 8. Beneath this was a deposit into which several archaeological features were cut and this overlay what were identified at the evaluation stage as 'buried soils' but which in reality are likely to consist of both alluvial deposits and other elements. Some of these overlay a humic deposit considered to represent vegetation at the fen-edge.

This Phase of evaluation concluded that the site contained significant archaeological features of later prehistoric date, including occupation of a raised sand 'island' above the surrounding wetland. This occupation comprised 'at least one, and possibly two roundhouses or former barrows seen as ring ditches. Co-axial possible field boundaries, indicative of exploitation of the fen edge in the later prehistoric period'. Finds were considered to represent 'direct evidence of occupation, including pottery sherds, daub, animal bone and burnt stone' (Eddisford, O'Brien and Williamson 2004). Pottery evidence from the evaluation suggested that occupation ceased in the early Roman period

It was considered that the ditched enclosures and possible field systems could represent a further significant, and previously unknown, example of later prehistoric field systems as recorded over a wide area of the fen edge at Peterborough's 'Eastern Industry' (e.g. Nicholson 2012; Pryor 2001). It was suggested that the evaluation had revealed regionally significant evidence of fen edge exploitation during the later prehistoric period, with occupation and possible landscape division, and further important environmental evidence of landscape change with later inundation of the former dryland, before the intensive draining and farming of the fens from the end of the medieval period onwards.

Excavation, focussed on the areas of occupation identified during the evaluation, revealed a less variable deposit model but one which still betrayed the fen-edge location of the site. Immediately beneath the topsoil was an alluvial subsoil, possibly analogous to the stiff grey alluvium which is considered typical of the western fen margins. This is the result of rising sea-levels on a regional scale which caused increased waterlogging through ponding back of local river systems, a rising groundwater table and the deposition of alluvium. In general this is recorded overlying fen peat deposits but at this site it clearly only accumulated above the earlier ground surface. Beneath this was a ploughsoil of Romano-British date that sealed all of the earlier archaeological layers and features. Underlying this ploughsoil was the natural Oxford Clay, topped by a band of mottled grey and brown silty clay. Localised deposits were recorded stratified between the natural clay and this overlying ploughsoil. These have been variably identified as anthropogenic layers and alluvial deposits.

At the northern end of the site (within the Davies Street (Sawtry) site, site code AS1111), the evaluation (Doyle and Weston 2006) mapped the northern extent of the former promontory of higher ground that is present to the south of this site and at which the previous archaeological work (AS 875) demonstrated significant occupation remains of the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The stratigraphy recorded during evaluation in this northern part of the site was fairly uniform, with only limited variation. Beneath the topsoil was a layer of made ground consisting of mid-grey clay and orange sandy gravel which was identified as being of modern date. Apart from a localised sandy subsoil, across much of the site this made ground overlay a clay-rich alluvial deposit, similar to that identified beneath the topsoil at the southern end of the site. The nature of this layer suggests that it was deposited during wet, flooded conditions. Across the northern two thirds of the area subject to trial trench evaluation at the north of the site a sand-rich alluvial deposit, most likely formed by run-off from the 'island' or promontory to the south, was present. This deposit thinned out to nothing towards the promontory of higher ground upon which archaeological activity was situated and was at its thickest to the north of the site. Beneath this was the natural glacial till which, at this end of the site, comprised flint gravels in a silty sand matrix with pockets of clay, forming the area of higher ground upon which Iron Age occupation was identified.

The evidence for Iron Age occupation recorded during this phase of evaluation was sparse and comprised only evidence for boundary ditches and a ring-ditch. In light of the

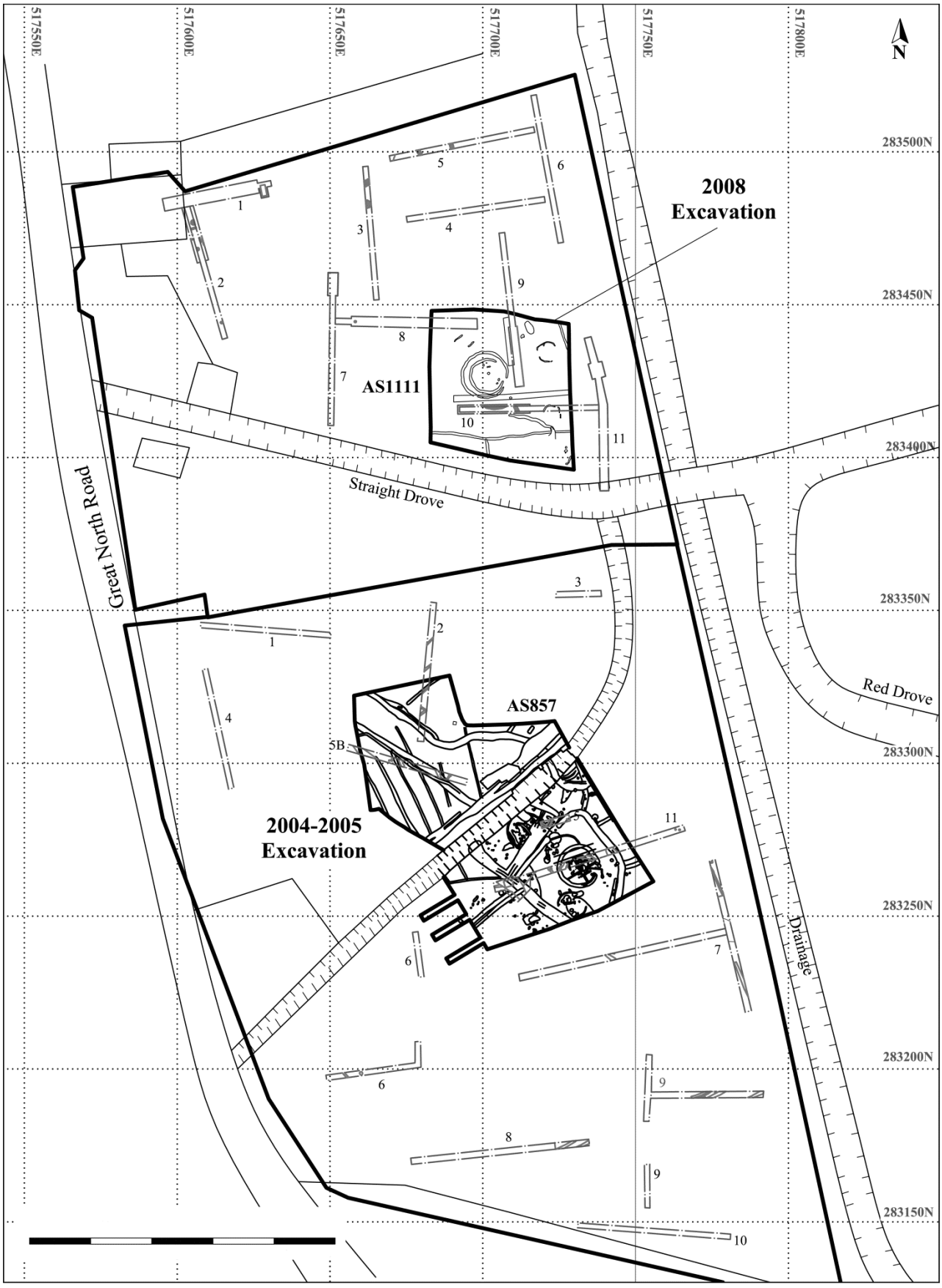

Figure 2. Detailed site location plan

evidence previously recorded under site code AS857, the significance of this archaeology was clear, potentially representing further elements of the settlement to the south.

IV. Topography, Geology, Soils and the Fenland Environment

The known topography, geology and soils of the Sawtry area

The village of Sawtry lies on the western edge of the fenlands, on low-lying ground beneath a scarp that rises sharply to the west. The modern land surface at the Black Horse Farm site is recorded at a little over 5m AOD, falling gently away to the east and south-east in the direction of Great Common and Sawtry Fen, parts of which lie below sea level. The land rises sharply to the west of Sawtry, which is separated from more westerly parishes by a ridge of higher land.

The site lies on the fen edge between the major watercourses of the Ouse and the Nene to the south and north respectively. Sawtry Brook runs past the western side of Sawtry, *c.*1.7km to the west of the site. The site is bounded by fen drains; Black Horse Drain lies to the north and Middle Level Catchwater Drain to the east. It was, at the time of excavation, traversed by an open field drain (Figs. 1 & 2). These drains flow into Monk's Lode, which empties into the Twenty Foot River, the river Nene and the Great Ouse. Although modern drainage systems and flood defences are in place, the site lies within an indicative fluvial floodplain (Anon. 2004).

The site lies in an area of Oxford Clay (SSEW 1983) which is overlain by deep and variable layers of alluvium and first river terrace gravels, which rise from the Great Ouse to the east and south of the site. On the high ground beyond the fen-edge scarp is a thick clayey till with occasional patches of glacial gravel. The scarp is deeply indented, forming a series of bays and promontories. Deep peat, containing large numbers of 'bog oaks', covers most of the fen area. Near the fen edge post-Roman alluvium spreads out from brooks issuing from the higher ground and covers earlier deposits. The majority of Sawtry Fen consists of this material at its surface (Hall 1992, 33).

The character of the fenland

The fenland basin of eastern England, in which the site lies, covers an area of approximately 4000km² (Wheeler and Waller 1995, 223). It extends some 120km from Lincoln in the north to Cambridge in the south. It is low lying, with little of the land surface exceeding 3.5m OD in height; through it flow the rivers draining the greater part of central England, an area more than five times the size of the fens themselves (Sly 2003).

To some, the fenland is 'one of the most distinctive landscapes in Britain' (Honnor and Lane 2002). To others it is 'an unendingly flat landscape of dark fields, sluggish rivers, dykes and banks, with infrequent scattered settlements'; a view which Coles and Hall (1998, 1) rail against, stating that the area contains 'wondrously rich and varied landscapes and ancient sites'. It is natural that those with a connection to the fenlands express romantic notions about its importance and uniqueness, the inhabitants of almost every landscape do likewise. These notions are perhaps best encapsulated by Coles and Hall's (1998, 1) retelling of an exchange between the Cambridge botanist Harry Godwin and a fenman who opined that 'it takes a man of discernment to appreciate the fens'. The fenland is, however, like any other landscape in the United Kingdom insomuch as it is the result of a combination of naturally occurring events and human intervention and because it has offered its inhabitants, both now and in the past, a variety of problems and benefits which they have had to overcome and to harness. Undoubtedly, though, the fenland contains a variety of well-preserved archaeological sites and environmental information (Hall 1987, 1) and the riverine and marine systems and events which characterise the history of the fens have bestowed upon the area a legacy of soils which are unique to the fens, comprising a variety of silts, clays, and peats (Sly 2003, 4).

The fenland basin comprises the largest area of Holocene deposits in Britain and has a complex palaeoenvironmental history (Smith *et al* 2012). At the commencement of the Postglacial interval, the Fen basin was dry land drained by a series of rivers flowing into a major outlet that ran out through the Wash. Early Mesolithic hunter-gatherers camped adjacent to ponds and lakes on the river terraces and probably used the river valleys as their main access routes. Rises in sea level have caused periodic incursion of water into the surrounding flat fen plains, resulting in the deposition of silts and estuarine clays. The environment created as a result was one of extensive salt-marshes with fresh water fens and large expanses of peat generated under waterlogged, anaerobic conditions (Seale 1975; Hall 1996).

The deposition of Holocene deposits began with the marine transgression that flooded 'Doggerland' at around 8000–6000BP (Ward *et al*. 2006; Weninger *et al*. 2008). During the Mesolithic, with sea-level rise, water tables rose *c.* 16m and consequently the Fenland Basin became flooded as the drainage systems ceased to be effective; early sites in the fen basin are likely to be deeply buried (Reynolds 2000). This allowed for the development of freshwater reed beds in some areas (Zalasiewicz 1986; Smith *et al*. 2010; Smith *et al*. 2012). Natural and Anthropogenic factors induced a changing environment in Neolithic Cambridgeshire. In the north of the county this is characterised by an encroachment of fen environments, creating varied landscapes of reedswamp, fen carr and patchy woodland. Elsewhere the mixed deciduous woodland landscape was broken by man-made clearance, intended to create areas of pasture and cultivation plots (Pollard 2000). By the later Neolithic, the Fenland was transformed by both fresh and marine waters, peat was forming in many riverine backwaters and in deeper channels, just as marine and brackish-based silts had encroached on much of the lowlands around the Wash. By this time vast amounts

of forested dry land had already begun to be lost to the swamping peats (Coles and Hall 1998, 15). A major phase of inundation in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age (occurring *c*. 2500-1800BC) led to the loss of dry land around March and Chatteris and the isolation of the two main fen islands (Last 2000). Marine-based deposition of silts dominated the whole of the Fenland area, overriding the peaty expanses and clogging the valleys. In the embayments, where rivers flowed, and along the margins of the fen, peat remained exposed and continued to form due to the severely impeded drainage. Fenland water levels peaked in the Iron Age, at approximately the time that the Black Horse Farm site was occupied. The main rivers of the region followed the courses that they had previously but a band of seaward marine deposits caused an increased expanse of peat-fen to accumulate. Extensive flooding in the central regions led to the deposition of coarse material that would become the silt fens and salt marshes, and mud flats encroached over peat and over areas that had previously been dry land. The southern fen became an immense expanse of freshwater wetland in which peat formed up to 2.5m above mean sea level (Coles and Hall 1998, 41). During the Roman period, it is considered that watertables were generally lower than in the Iron Age, at only 1.5m above mean sea level (Coles and Hall 1998, 49). The peat level fell somewhat and the fen edge is considered to have occurred at 2m OD (Hall 1992, 8). However, it has been noted in some parts of the fens that there is a mid 3rd century gap in occupation, attributed to changing climate conditions and a rise in the watertable (Upex 2008, 178). For several centuries in the immediate post-Roman period there was little change in fenland watertables and a period of some stability occurred. However, by 700AD conditions began to deteriorate and there followed periods of inundation by the sea and by inland waters, forming the extensive fens that were described by monastic writers of the 12th century (Coles and Hall 1998, 61). Post-Roman alluvial deposits are considered to cover much of the surface of Sawtry Fen (Hall 1992, 33). By the time that these monks were describing the fens, however, there had ceased to be any active marine phases as seabanks provided protection from inundation from the Wash. This allowed the siltlands in the north of the fens to be developed, leaving the peat fens as wetland (*ibid*. 68).

Brew *et al.* (2000, 270) offer a simplified version of the evolution of the fenland, suggesting that it was dominated by three main events. The first of these events was the initial post-glacial transgression over the pre-Holocene land surface. This was followed by a second phase comprising the sedimentary infilling of the embayment with rising sea-level; this was characterised by the deposition of clastic sediments alternating with peat accumulation, with the final stages dominated by peat formation. The third event comprised renewed expansion of tidal flat areas forming the final clastic fill, which mostly occur within the northern parts of the fens at the margins of the Wash. This is similar to the general, classic vertical stratigraphy of the fenland demonstrated by Waller (1994, 14), and which is broadly accurate for the southern fens, although localised complexities and variations do occur: Initial peat growth on the floor of the Fenland was overwhelmed by extensive 'marine' beds of clays and silts before renewed peat growth took place above the clays and silts.

The depositional sequence recorded during archaeological excavation at Black Horse Farm

Hall (1992, figs. 18 & 20) indicates that although the Black Horse Farm site lay at some distance from the fen edge in the Bronze Age, by the Roman period it was, although lying close to the fen edge, almost subsumed within the fen. This suggests that during the period represented by the archaeology recorded here, changing environmental conditions and the encroachment of the fen resulted in a notable effect on life in this area. These changes may be evident in the deposits recorded during the archaeological work carried out at Black Horse Farm.

Recorded overlying the natural Oxford Clay were deposits of brickearth. During the Iron Age, the brickearth and gravel areas formed a land surface with wet fen expanding from the east as a result of rising sea-levels and the local ground water table. The Iron Age archaeology was therefore cut into what was, at the time, a dry terrestrial landscape (Scaife 2006). Information recorded during the preceding trial trench evaluations indicates the presence of a humic layer, judged to be a remnant of prehistoric fenland reed beds lying at a height of 2.65m AOD. However, Ditch F1121, a feature identifiable as being of Iron Age date, was observed to cut a palaeochannel cut into the natural substrate at a height of 2.80m AOD. This indicates that the fen edge must have lain between 2.65m and slightly below 2.80m AOD during the Iron Age occupation of the site and is broadly consistent with Hall's (1992, 8) suggestion that the Iron Age fen edge occurred at approximately 2.5m (but contradicts information given by the same author (fig. 20) that the site would have been within the fen wetland during the Roman period). Using this information, in conjunction with the known topography of the area, has led to the development of a postulated model of the maximum extent of the Iron Age fen edge (Fig. 3) in the immediate vicinity of Black Horse Farm. This reveals the approximate form of the area of higher land upon which occupation occurred. It also suggests that a second area of higher land existed to the south upon which further archaeological features exist, cut in to alluvial deposits recorded in Trenches 8 and 9 of the 2004 evaluation (Eddisford, O'Brien and Williamson 2004).

The deposit model recorded during the excavation phases of archaeological work at Black Horse Farm was less complex than that recorded during the preceding evaluation phases. During the excavation of the southern area of excavation (AS857), the archaeology was recorded cutting the natural Oxford Clay, which was capped by a band of mottled grey and brown silty clay. Overlying this were a variety of localised deposits that appear to have been of alluvial origin (see below). The earliest of these was L2459 which covered the majority of the extent of the large Roundhouse 3 and appears to have been associated with its abandonment. In the south-eastern corner

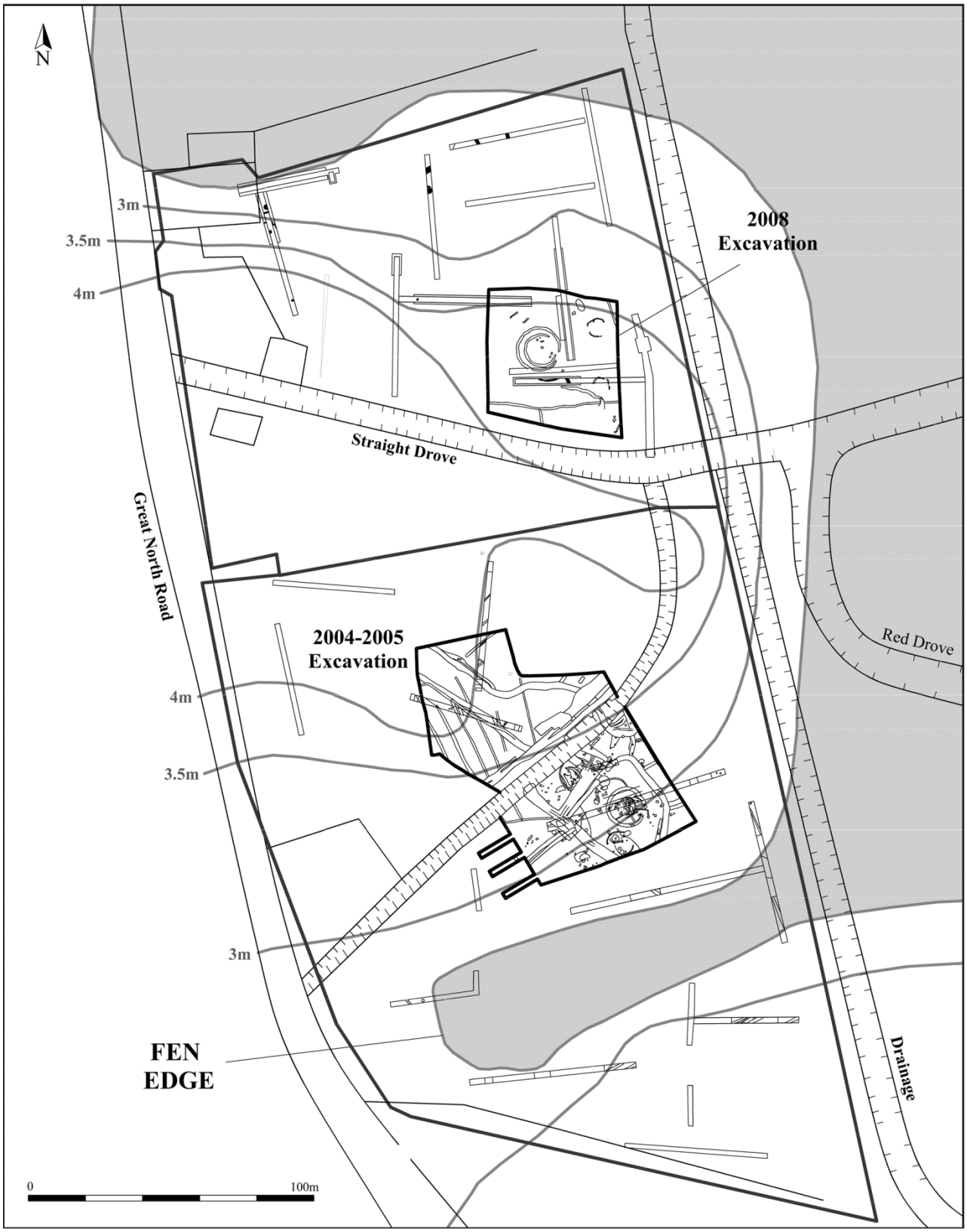

Figure 3. Iron Age land surface

of this excavation area deposit L2206 was identified covering a small area between Iron Age ditches; this coarse sandy silt was considered to represent some kind of flooding or alluvial event. These both appeared to be earlier in date than L2420, a silty clay layer which overlay L2459 and contained a variety of pottery. Overlying L2420 were L2060, a mid to light grey brown highly silty clay located within the enclosure formed by Ditches F2226 and F2152, and L2211, a very similar deposit identified in the south-western part of this excavation area. These both appear to

Table 1. Simplified deposit model for excavation area AS857

Layer	Description	Depth
L2000	Topsoil	0.32m
L2001	Alluvial subsoil	0.90m
L2002	Buried soil layer. Early Roman ploughsoil	0.26m
L2060	Localised alluvial deposit within late Iron Age enclosure	0.28m
L2420	Localised deposit associated with abandonment of roundhouse	*c*. 0.10m
L2459	Localised deposit associated with abandonment of roundhouse	*c*. 0.10m
L2494	Localised deposit. Thick floor or mound associate with roundhouse	0.22m
L2003	Natural Oxford Clay capped by a band of mottled grey and brown silty clay	-

Table 2. Simplified deposit model for excavation area AS1111

Layer	Description	Depth
L5000	Topsoil	0.25-0.50m
L5011	Modern made ground	0.45m
L5012	Alluvial layer	0.26m
L5010	Natural sandy gravel	0.28m

have been of later 1st century date and probably represent the same episode of alluvial activity. These deposits were overlain by L2002 which appeared to be a topsoil that had developed during or following the final phase of human activity. All archaeological layers and features were sealed by L2002. L2002 was subject to a test pit survey, designed specifically to date the deposit. Test pits were hand dug on a five-metre grid in the southern part of the excavation area and on a ten-metre grid in the northern part, where the deposit was less well developed. The test pits produced a large quantity of dateable material, the vast majority of which indicated that the deposit had developed towards the end of the mid 1st century BC to mid 1st or 2nd century AD. Deposit L2002 was overlain by L2001, a plastic, mid orange-brown silted clay which measured up to 0.90m in depth. L2001 appeared to be an alluvial deposit consistent with the layers of post-Roman alluvium considered to cover much of the surface of Sawtry Fen (Hall 1992, 33). The topsoil (L2000), a friable, mid to dark brown clayed silt which was up to 0.32m in depth, was present overlying L2001.

The natural substrate recorded during the excavation of the northern area (AS1111) was glacial till, seemingly consistent with that which Hall (1992, 33) states is found on the high ground beyond the fen-edge scarp. This deposit (L5010) comprised a moderately fine flint gravel in an orange silty sand matrix. During the evaluation that preceded this phase of excavation (Doyle and Weston 2006), the natural substrate observed in Trench 1 was Oxford Clay, revealed at a depth of *c*.2m below existing ground level. During the excavation phase of work at this northern area, it was observed that that this bluish grey clay was present throughout the site in small pockets within the natural substrate. Generally, L5010 sloped downwards in a northerly direction. A level of 4.03m AOD was taken at the top of F5074 Segment B, in the south-west corner of the excavated area. It was observed at 3.69m AOD in the vicinity of F5111 in the north-west corner. Looking beyond the boundaries of the excavated area into the larger evaluation area, L5010 was identified at 2.16m AOD at the northern end of Trench 6 and at 1.96m AOD at the western end of Trench 5. These levels underscore the position of the site on the northern slopes of a gently rising fen-edge promontory. All of the archaeological features within this excavation area cut L5010 and were sealed by L5012, which was a clay rich alluvial deposit. It appears that this deposit was consistent with L2001 recorded in the southern excavation area and is, therefore, representative of post-Roman alluvial deposition. Overlying L5012 was L5011, a mid grey clay and orange sandy gravel that contained occasional red, frogged bricks and plastic items. This, in turn, was overlain by a topsoil consistent with those of the Hanslope Association (SSEW 1983).

Plate 2. View north across the interior of the Iron Age enclosure during excavation of Roundhouse 3