

Introduction

Circumstances of the project

Barton Seagrave is a large village in north Northamptonshire, approximately 1.5km to the south-east of Kettering. It lies some 20km north-east of Northampton and c. 36km to the south-east of Peterborough. The historic market town of Huntingdon lies 38km to the east, while Leicester and Coventry are located c. 38km and c. 53km to the north-west and west, respectively. The majority of modern Kettering sits to the west of the river Ise, a tributary of the river Nene which passes some 12km to the south-east. The existing extent of Barton Seagrave is located to the east of the Ise (Fig. 1).

During the mid-2000s, Redrow Homes sought to develop a site of approximately 40ha. on the western side of Polwell Lane, a north to south aligned route running through the southern half of Barton Seagrave. The majority of the eastern boundary of the site is formed by the back gardens of the Drury Estate, built in the 1960s. A few buildings along Polwell Lane are earlier, one possibly being of early 19th century date. The southern boundary is formed by the steep, tree-covered bank of a disused railway line while the western boundary follows the bank of the river Ise, beyond which lie pasture meadows and Wicksteed Park. The northern boundary is formed by an allotment garden and an arable field.

Archaeological investigation of this site began in 2007 with the preparation of an archaeological desk-based assessment as part of the planning application for residential development. This initial desk-based assessment was followed by a further desk-based assessment (Richmond 2009), a geophysical survey (Bartlett 2009), and a trial trench evaluation (Coates 2009).

The trial trench evaluation (Coates 2009) identified two areas of archaeology: the northern extent of Field 2 and the central and western portions of Field 3. These trenches clearly identified previous settlement in the form of archaeological features (ditched enclosures, ring gullies, pits and other linear ditches). The pottery and finds recovered from the excavated features suggested rural domestic occupation in both areas dating from the Iron Age through to the mid Roman period. It was considered that there was a possibility of earlier activity dating to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, indicated by the recovery of flints, in Field 2. Outside of Fields 2 and 3 very little in the form of archaeology was identified, which was consistent with the results of the geophysical survey.

Based on the results of the evaluation, the excavation of two discrete portions of Site 1 (Field 2), to the north of

the excavation area discussed in this volume, was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now Museum of London Archaeology; Simmonds and Walker 2014; Fig. 2). Archaeology dating from the middle Iron Age to the present day with earlier, less tangible elements, including Neolithic flint and a middle Bronze Age pit, was recorded during this excavation. The middle Iron Age settlement, consisting of thirteen ring ditches considered to represent the locations of roundhouses, and other features, was initially unenclosed. Later its extent was defined by a large, ditched enclosure with a number of ancillary enclosures positioned around it. The settlement also contained over 300 pits, some of which were likely to have been used for storage. The sheep-based agricultural economy of the middle Iron Age was replaced in the late Iron Age by one dominated by cattle. Dateable artefactual evidence suggested that the use of the settlement spanned the 2nd-1st centuries BC, with a probable continuation into the early 1st century AD (Simmonds and Walker 2014).

By the early 1st century AD settlement activity had shifted away and the area was in use as a network of outfield paddocks and enclosures with associated quarry pits, wells and a kiln (Simmonds and Walker 2014). It appears that, in addition to agricultural practices, this part of the Polwell Lane site was utilised for cereal processing, the extraction of sand or ironstone, and pottery making.

No further occupation appears to have occurred within Field 2 until the 5th to 6th centuries AD when activity is represented by four early Anglo-Saxon period sunken-featured buildings. The late Anglo-Saxon to medieval settlement core is thought to have been located to the north-east of the site, in the vicinity of St Botolph's Church. From this period onwards the Field 2 site was in use as farmland. Ridge and furrow was recorded during the geophysical survey (Bartlett 2009), and traces of furrows were found during excavation (Simmonds and Walker 2014).

Subsequently, between October 2013 and October 2016, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS; now Wardell Armstrong LLP) conducted a programme of archaeological excavation, complemented by archaeological 'investigation and recording', on land to the west of Polwell Lane, in an area to the immediate south of the most southerly part of the Field 2 excavation, referred to as Field 3 (NGR SP 884 764; Figs. 1–2 and 4). In addition to the main excavation area, eight areas of archaeological 'investigation and recording' were monitored between October 2013 and October 2016 (Fig. 2). These areas were found to contain comparatively little archaeology. This work was carried out in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission

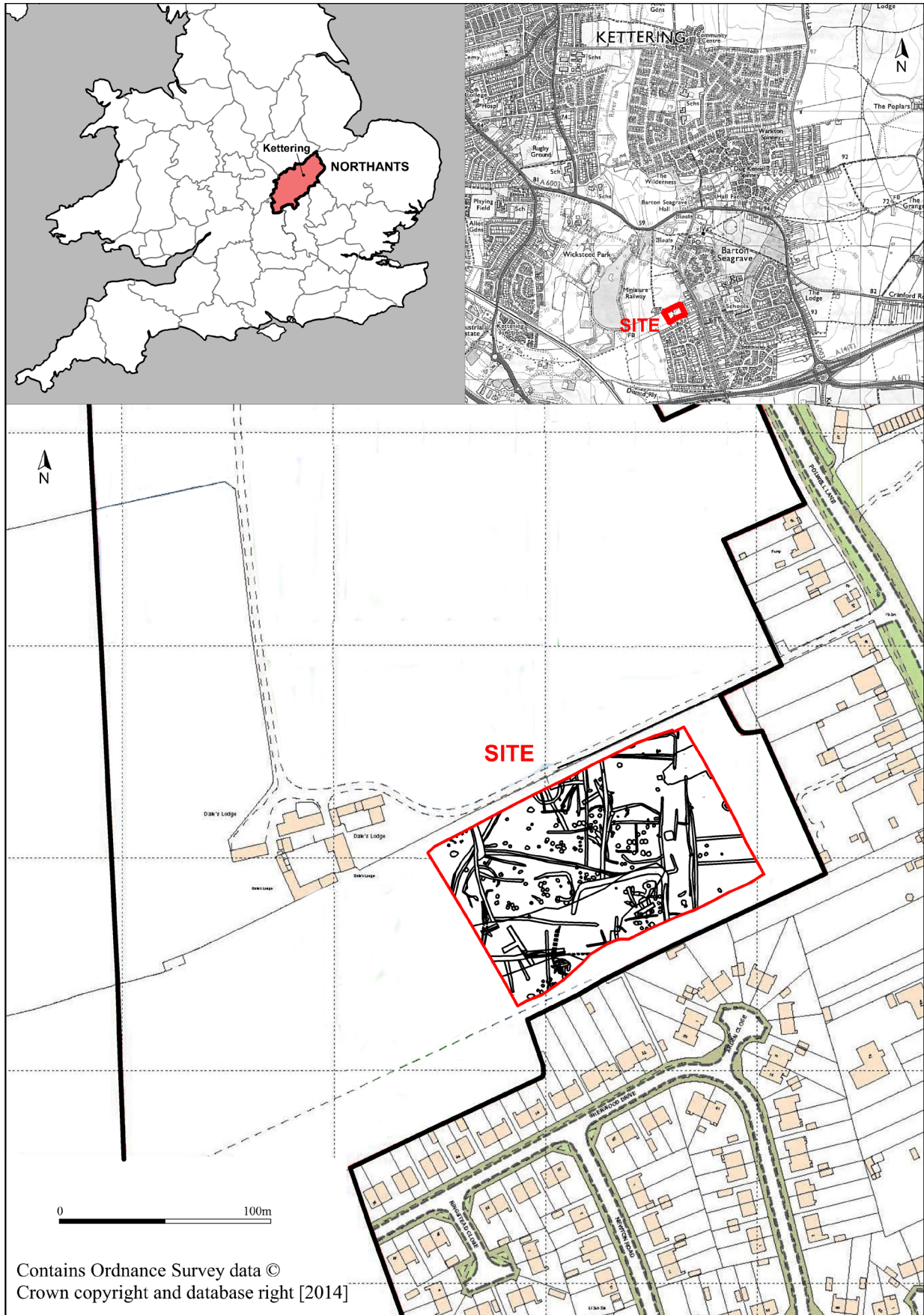


Figure 1. Site Location Plan.



Figure 2. Areas of archaeological investigation.

for the residential development of the site and associated works. It is the results of the archaeological works in Field 3 which are described in this volume.

The excavation of the Field 3 site recorded activity of similar date to that identified in the adjacent Field 2 site. Within this area to the south of the Field 2 excavation, the earliest evidence for significant settlement was dated to the late pre-Roman Iron Age, broadly contemporary with the second phase of activity in Field 2. This occupation continued into the earlier part of the Romano-British period and, as in Field 2, settlement appears to have reoccurred in the middle Anglo-Saxon period. The Field 3 site clearly represents part of the same landscape and part of the same settlement as Field 2 and helps to place the findings of that excavation into context, further helping to characterise the nature of settlement at this location and demonstrating the nature of the perceived shifts in settlement focus to the south. Nonetheless, the Field 3 excavation is not just an adjunct to the archaeology recorded in Field 2. It recorded the presence of an archaeological site that is of significance in its own right and one which contained significant and intrinsically interesting features, not least the regionally unique Structure S2338 and the unusual deposition of quernstones that it contained.

The Site

The Field 3 excavation site, consisting of a sub-rectangular area of some 1.1ha, is located on the south-western edge of Barton Seagrave, to the immediate west of Polwell Lane (Figs. 1–2). At the time of excavation, the site was surrounded on almost all sides by established or recent residential development, with associated works ongoing to the south-west. Prior to development, the site and adjacent land (to the north and west) had been part of a mixed agricultural landscape, including the 18th/19th century farm buildings of Dale's Lodge (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 2).

Topography, Geology and Soils

The local topography is generally flat at around 75m AOD¹, sloping gently away to the west and the floodplain of the Ise. The underlying geology is the Jurassic sedimentary bedrock of the Northampton Sand Ironstone Formation (ironstone, Ooidal) (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The Field 3 excavation recorded a drift geology of firm, mid orange ironstone and clay with only small pockets of sand (L2003). However, within the Field 2 excavation area, pale sandy silts and sands of the non-marine Rutland Formation Stamford Member were recorded overlying the Northampton Sand Ironstone Formation with, downslope of this, deposits of the Northampton Sand Formation overlying mudstones

of the Lower Jurassic Lias Group Whitby Mudstones Formation (Critchley 2014, 5). The site's soils are those of the Moreton Formation, described as 'well drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone with some deeper slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils' (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983, 7).

The known archaeology and history of the surrounding area

Prehistory

Evidence for human activity prior to the Iron Age is not as well represented as evidence for later periods in the vicinity of the site. Nevertheless, extensive remains spanning the Neolithic to Iron Age have been recorded to the south of the site. Artefacts of Neolithic date have been recovered within a 1.5km radius (Historic Environment Record (HER) 9783²). The Bronze Age is represented by a Barrow cemetery located to the south-west of the current site (HER 3794/1), immediately east of a large, enclosed prehistoric settlement, which included pits, ring-ditches and trackways (HERs 3795, 5893 and 1504/0/1).

Iron Age

At the time of the Roman Conquest, the site sat at the confluence of two major tribal territories, that of the *Corieltauvi* located between the rivers Trent and Nene, and that of the *Catuvellauni* spreading north of the Thames (Cunliffe 2010, 193 and fig. 8.13; Upex 2008, 24 and fig. 5). The territories of the *Iceni* and *Dobunni* were located to the east and west, respectively (Upex 2008, 24). Although the exact locations of these tribal boundaries have been much debated (*ibid.*), a number of significant Iron Age sites are known to the south/south-east of the site, along the Nene Valley, and to the north-west at Leicester (Upex 2008, fig. 5). Leicester was a large, nucleated settlement that may have reached urban status, later developing into a fortified Roman town (Cunliffe 2010, 195 and fig. 8.13).

The regional pattern of late Iron Age settlement activity is characterised by more visible remains and material culture compared with earlier periods (Willis 2006, 91). This area of Britain enjoys a comparatively warm, dry climate and is understood to have been attractive to Iron Age settlement, not least because of its relative proximity to continental Europe (Haselgrove 2001, 38–39, fig. 3.1). The majority of late Iron Age sites are individual farmsteads associated with single enclosures or enclosure systems (Willis 2006, 107), with a notable continuity of settlement locations from the middle Iron Age (Willis 2006, 107 and 109). It is also the case that many regional Romano-British settlements had late Iron Age antecedents, with good

¹ Above Ordnance Datum

² The locations of HER data cited in the text are shown on Figure 3

evidence for continuous occupation at many sites (*ibid.* 110). Larger aggregated settlements comprising ‘spatially discrete enclosures and settlement/activity foci’ are also characteristic of late Iron Age settlement, particularly in Northamptonshire (*ibid.* 109).

The economy at this time was predominantly agricultural, with cereals regularly recovered from excavated sites (Willis 2006, 113). Iron Age and Romano-British enclosures near Higham Ferrers have produced evidence of mixed animal husbandry, dominated by sheep and cattle (Deighton 2004, 84) and evidence for the consumption of spelt wheat and barley, reflecting the general arable economy of south-eastern and central England (Carruthers 2004, 86 and 88). Iron production was probably also a key facet of the region’s economy, with Northamptonshire producing strong evidence of smelting (Kidd 2000; Willis 2006, 115). The late Iron Age emergence of coinage is regionally represented by the predominant occurrence of coins of the *Corieltavi* and *Catuvellauni* (Willis 2006, 113). The distribution of coinage is fundamental to our understanding of late Iron Age tribal boundaries (Cunliffe 2010, 178ff). The Portable Antiquities Scheme database (<https://finds.org/database/>) includes four coins of the *Corieltavi* from Northamptonshire and 16 of the *Catuvellauni*, including two from Titchmarsh (Record IDs RAH1201 and RAH1203) and one from Islip (Record ID CAM-825902), respectively 14km and 10.5km to the east of the current site.

Iron Age evidence from the Barton Seagrave area includes a pit alignment (HER 3772/0/6), ring-ditch (HER 3773/0/5) and further ditches (HERs 7157 and 8077). Iron Age features and possibly associated ditches/enclosures are recorded to the east of the site (HERs 1953, 1955/0/1, 1955/0/2 and 8456/2/3) in the area that was developed as the Drury Estate in the 1960s. Further ditches of possible prehistoric date are noted within the immediate environs (HERs 3772/0/3 and 7208/0/1). Iron Age pits also formed part of a large site encountered during residential development immediately to the south of the site (Brown 1969; HERs 3795, 5893 and 1504/0/1). Excavation of the adjacent Field 2 at Polwell Lane, produced more substantive settlement evidence, consisting of a middle Iron Age and later settlement that included evidence for domestic structures, a four-post structure, storage pits, and a number of enclosures (Simmonds and Walker 2014). The site appears to have practised a mixed agricultural economy, with a notable shift in emphasis from sheep to cattle husbandry between the middle and later Iron Age (Armitage 2014, 77).

Romano-British

Historically, there has been a relative dearth of Romano-British settlement evidence from the immediate area. This is particularly notable when compared to the extensive sites and industries of the Nene Valley. However, a minor,

unenclosed Roman settlement is recorded on the northern edge of Kettering (Dix 1988; Taylor 2002). Much of this has been destroyed or lies beneath modern housing. Development during the 1960s and 1970s led to the identification of another substantial settlement to the east of the current site. This included evidence of industrial/agricultural activity and possible high-status building remains, as evidenced by finds of box flue and roof tiles (HER 3780). The pottery assemblage associated with this settlement included late Belgic sherds and examples of Nene Valley Colour-coated ware. Modest building evidence and a possible cemetery are also reported along the conjectured line of a Roman road linking the Nene and Welland Valleys (HER 3141/1), the route of which passes to the east of the site (Fig. 3). Roman material was also found during the same residential development, during which Iron Age activity was identified to the south of the site (Brown 1969).

The preceding work within Polwell Lane Field 2 encountered part of an extensive farming landscape of enclosures and paddocks or working areas, including a kiln, well, and small quarries (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 29–31). Lazy bed cultivation trenches and a single unurned cremation burial were also recorded (*ibid.* 32). Roman material culture from Field 2 is characterised by locally produced pottery, with only limited incidences of imported wares (Perrin 2014, 47–48), while small finds of this date are scarce and unstratified (Hylton and Meadows 2014, 66). This would seem to suggest that the site was economically marginal, despite its location in respect to possible trade routes and the more affluent settlements and industries of the region.

Anglo-Saxon

The *Cytringan* township boundary of Kettering was defined in a property charter of AD 956, granted by King Eadwig (Foard and Ballinger 2002; HER 7427), while the local centre of power was the royal estate at Rothwell (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 8). Prior to the Norman Conquest, the manor of Barton Seagrave was held by Burred and later granted to the Abbey of Peterborough (Foard and Ballinger 2002).

Find spots and scatters of Anglo-Saxon date are numerous and well documented across Northamptonshire (Foard and Deegan 2007, 125). Although structural evidence is comparatively scarce (Hawkes 2007, 150), rural settlements have been excavated across the county, with particular concentrations noted along the Nene Valley (Foard and Deegan 2007, 126; Hawkes 2007, 150). Indeed, a widespread pattern of settlement on lighter, easily tilled soils is prevalent between the 5th and 7th centuries (Hamerow 2012, 3). A settlement at Briar Hill, for example, was situated on Northampton sand and ironstone, similar to the current site (Bamford 1985, 55;

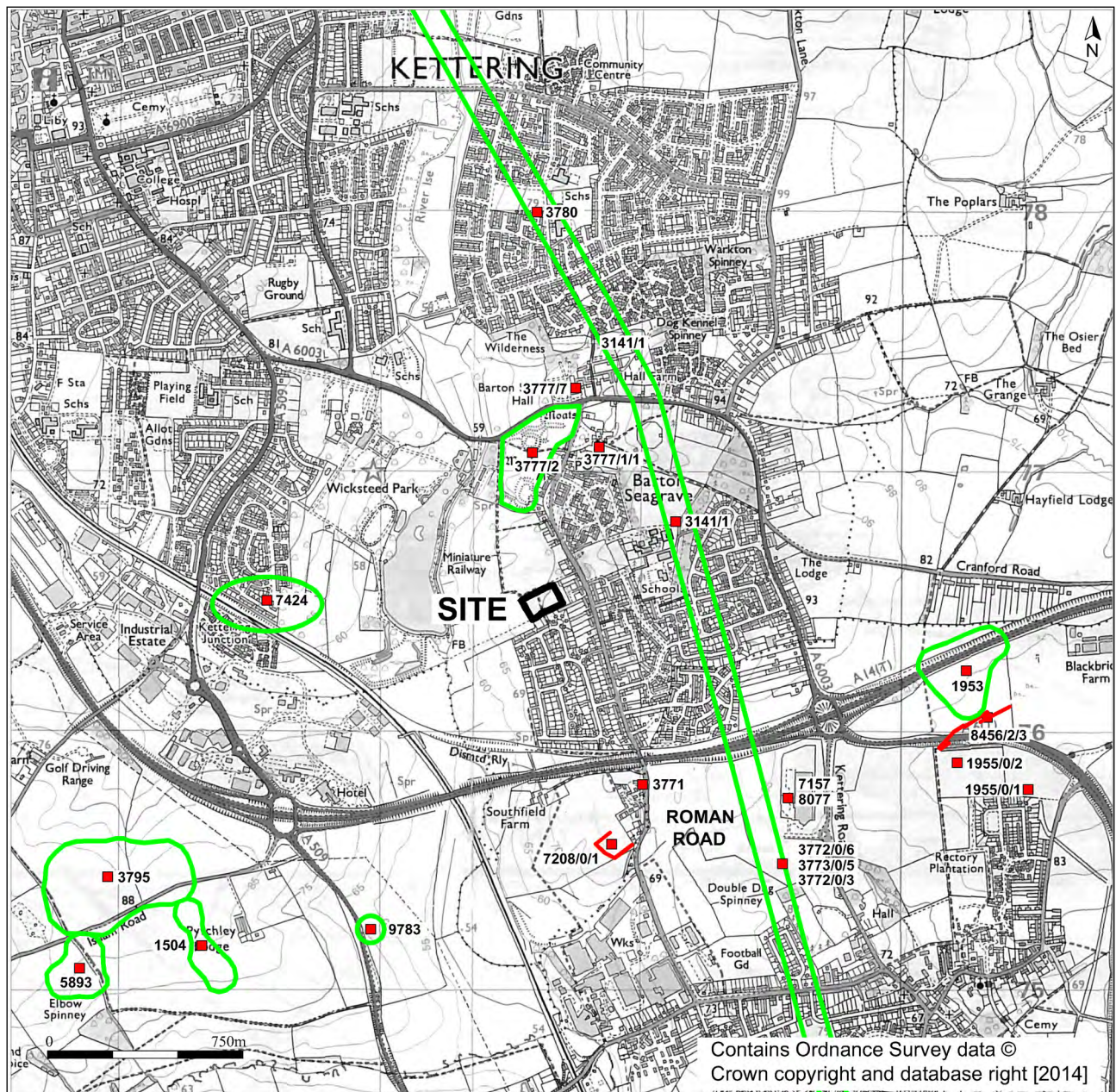


Figure 3. Historic Environment Record Data.

Foard and Deegan 2007, 129–130). The layout of early settlements appears rather dispersed, with little evidence of associated enclosures or formal boundaries. Eye Kettleby in Leicestershire (Hamerow 2012, 70–71) is one such example, while nucleation is evident in Northamptonshire from the middle Anglo-Saxon period (Rippon 2010, 56). The wider region also boasts a number of sizable cemeteries, with each probably serving a number of different settlements (Hamerow 2012, 122).

Two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are recorded in the area. A cemetery at Southfields Farm (HER 3771) contained at least 150 urned burials and additional artefacts. A second cemetery, at Stamford Road, Kettering, was found to contain ‘80 or 90 urns’ and six inhumations with associated

grave goods. This was identified during excavation ahead of house building in 1903. Subsequently, a further 16 burial urns were found in the same area during archaeological excavations conducted in 1929. Artefactual evidence suggests that this cemetery was used over a prolonged period (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol2/pp101-105>). Two isolated inhumations have also been reported in the area (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 8). The local extent of Anglo-Saxon occupation is less well understood, however. Suggestions of early settlement, including finds of pottery, are recorded to the south-east of the site (HER 3903) and to the west at Sharlecotes (HER 7424). Four sunken-featured buildings (SFBs) and a possible post-built structure were recorded during the excavation of Polwell Lane Field 2 (Simmonds and

Walker 2014, 34). SFBs have been excavated on a number of Northamptonshire sites, while cropmark evidence of SFBs is also well attested (Foard and Deegan 2007, 126, 129).

Medieval and later

At Domesday the manor of Barton Seagrave was held by the Bishop of Coutances (Page 1930). During the 12th century it was divided into the manors of Barton Hanred and Barton Seagrave. The centre of the historic village may have been centred on the church of St Botolph (HER 3777/1/1), the earliest part of which dates from the 12th century (Page 1930). Earthworks, including house platforms, clearly represent occupation to the north and west of the church (HER 3777/2). By the 13th century Kettering was a prosperous village but it began to expand following the grant of its Friday Market charter in 1227. By the 14th century, the manor of Barton Hanred boasted a crenelated manor house which was built on the orders of Nicholas Segrave. It is last mentioned in 1433 by which time it is thought to have been a ruin. The current site was probably in use as farmland during this period, although records are ‘fragmentary’ (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 8). However, extensive geophysical survey has revealed a pattern of open fields, particularly to the east of Kettering (Butler 2010).

The parish of Barton Seagrave may have been subject to 17th century enclosure (Phoenix Consulting 2007, appendix 7.4). By 1842, however, the village footprint was much reduced from its medieval form, being centred on Barton Seagrave Hall (HER 3777/7), and consisting only of a cluster of houses and church buildings to the west of the church and rectory and on the southern and western side of the village green (Munn 2019, 148). The current residential area is the result of rapid expansion dating from the 1960s.

The Field 2 Excavation

Excavation of the Field 2 site, which occurred in two parts, one to the immediate north of the Field 3 excavation and one approximately 100m further to the north, was undertaken between August and December 2012 (Fig. 2). The earliest archaeological feature recorded during this excavation was a moderately sized, but fairly shallow, pit dated to the middle Bronze Age by the 1.3kg of Deverel-Rimbury pottery recovered from its upper fill. Despite the lack of cut features, earlier human activity was attested by the presence of 874 pieces of worked flint recovered as residual material and dated variously as late Mesolithic to early Bronze Age (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 15).

Significant settlement within the Field 2 site appeared in the middle Iron Age, probably during the 2nd century BC. The settlement developed on the upper side of the south-west facing slope of the site with the structures positioned on the sandy geology above the natural dry valley that

was present here. The settlement consisted of at least thirteen ring ditches, that appear to represent the locations of domestic dwellings, as well as a number of small paddocks or livestock enclosures and ancillary structures, all set within a sub-rectangular enclosure which exploited the natural contours and geological features of the site. Associated evidence suggested a mixed agricultural economy based on sheep and a variety of arable crops. Small-scale pottery production was suggested by pits containing fired clay and waster vessels (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 15).

The settlement continued in use into the later Iron Age with activity in this period dateable to the 1st century BC to the early 1st century AD. The enclosure was modified but remained largely the same in layout with a number of smaller ancillary enclosures constructed. Faunal evidence suggests that cattle replaced sheep as the primary focus of the pastoral regime and Simmonds and Walker (2014, 22) suggest that this might have necessitated construction of a number of substantial ditched enclosures. The mixed agricultural regime continued with grain being processed and stored on site, predominantly in storage pits. At least three of the middle Iron Age ring ditches, considered to define the locations of roundhouses, appear to have continued in use into the late Iron Age. However, several others were either truncated by late Iron Age pits or their entrances were obscured by later features and therefore could not have continued in use (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 24).

Following excavation of the Field 2 site, Simmonds and Walker (2014, 29) asserted that between the 1st century AD and the middle part of the 2nd century AD, the main focus of occupation shifted to the south, just beyond the limits of the area that they investigated. Certainly, the late Iron Age settlement and enclosures were replaced by an extensive farming landscape defined by paddocks which contained evidence for cereal processing and low-level industry comprising the manufacture of ceramics in addition to sand or ironstone extraction.

The Field 2 excavation recorded no further activity until an unenclosed Anglo-Saxon settlement, consisting of four Sunken-Featured Buildings (SFBs), a possible post-built structure, and a small number of pits, was established in the 5th or 6th century AD. Environmental evidence suggests that the Anglo-Saxon period inhabitants of the site were engaged in a mixed agricultural economy with the pastoral focus being on cattle with sheep and pig kept to lesser extents (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 34). As is often observed at small settlements of this date, the representative features were widely distributed around the site. Following the middle Anglo-Saxon period, activity within the Field 2 excavation area became limited. This broadly coincides with the establishment of a more nucleated settlement around St Botolph’s church to the north (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 38).

The Excavation

Introduction

The excavation of Field 3 revealed a multi-period settlement landscape spanning the late Iron Age to Anglo-Saxon periods. The Iron Age to early Romano-British transitional period (Phase 1) was defined by a semi-enclosed landscape including a number of discrete pit clusters, including characteristic grain storage pits. Of particular note was a well-preserved stone-lined semi-subterranean structure, perhaps originally associated with an above-ground superstructure. No regional parallels for this structure exist. The Romano-British site, dating to between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Phase 2), was defined by a number of rectilinear ditched enclosures, characteristic of Roman rural settlement across lowland Britain. Pit digging continued into this phase of occupation and several wells were also encountered, one of which had been excavated through the fills of the earlier Phase 1 stone-lined structure. The latest phase of archaeological activity was dated to the early to middle Anglo-Saxon period (Phase 3) and was represented by the remains of three sunken-featured buildings.

In addition to the main excavated area, eight areas of archaeological ‘investigation and recording’ were monitored between October 2013 and October 2016 (Figs. 2 & 4). These areas were found to contain comparatively little archaeology. The area of a new road corridor contained a single ditch (F1003 (L1004)), dating to the late medieval/early post-medieval period, and an undated feature that may have been a pond and which was not excavated (Fig. 2). An unexcavated length of gully (F1009 (L1010)) was present in the area of the new community centre, while a substantial ditch (F1021 (L1022)) was identified immediately adjacent to the south-western edge of the main excavation area. Although unexcavated, F1021 undoubtedly formed a south-western continuation of a significant Phase 1 boundary. Five of the areas subject to ‘investigation and recording’ were devoid of archaeology (Fig. 2).

Chronological Phasing

Based upon diagnostic artefactual evidence and associated stratigraphic evidence, three separate phases of archaeological activity were identified (Fig. 5). These were dated to the late Iron Age/early Romano-British

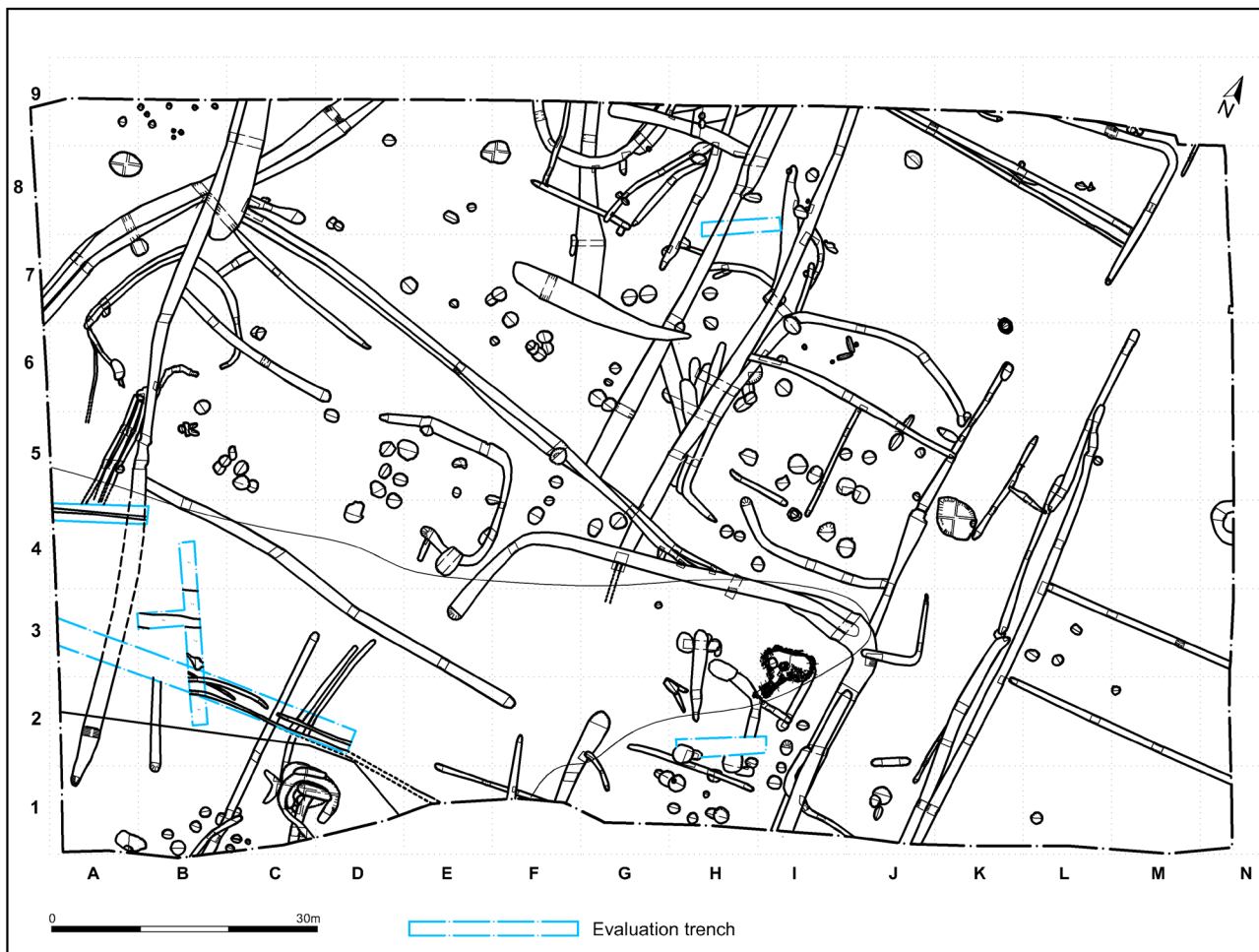


Figure 4. All Features Plan.

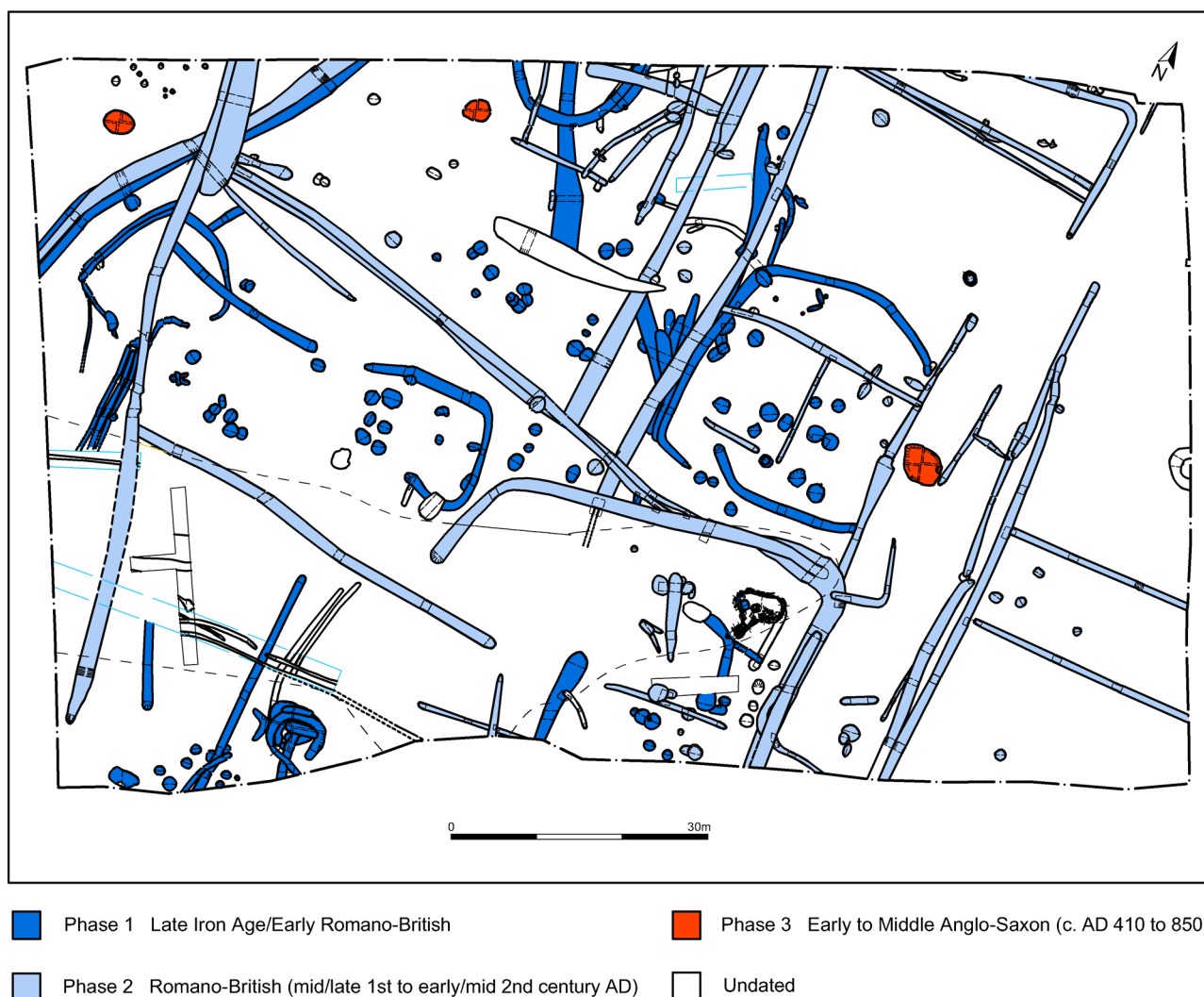


Figure 5. Phase Plan.

Table 1. Comparison of chronological phasing between Polwell Lane Field 2 (Simmonds and Walker 2014) and Polwell Lane Field 3 (this volume).

Field 2 Chronology*		Field 3 Chronology		Phase No.
Period	Date Range	Period	DateRange	
Early Prehistoric	Up to middle Bronze Age	Early Neolithic	4300-3300 BC	-
Middle Iron Age	2 nd century BC	-	-	-
Late Iron Age	1 st century BC to 1 st century AD	Late Iron Age/early Romano-British transition	1 st century BC to 1 st century AD	1
Roman	Mid 1 st to 2 nd century AD	Romano-British	Mid/late 1 st to early/mid 2 nd century AD	2
Early Anglo-Saxon	5 th to 6 th century AD	Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon	Mid-5 th to 6 th /early 7 th century	3
Medieval and post-medieval	-	-	-	-

transitional period (Phase 1), the Romano-British period (Phase 2), and the early to middle Anglo-Saxon period (Phase 3). Table 1 summarises this chronology in relation to dated activity identified in Field 2 of the project (Simmonds and Walker 2014, 12, table 1).

A small assemblage of struck flint, indicative of early Neolithic activity, was also recovered, although no

features of this date were present. Some features that did not yield diagnostic material were phased based on their stratigraphic or spatial relationships with dated features, while a number of undated features/deposits were also encountered. The following chapters describe the recorded archaeology by phase.

