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Later prehistoric settlement above the River Avon: archaeological investigations at Kingston Farm, Bradford-on-Avon, 2015

by Jonathan Hart and E.R. McSloy

with contributions by Sarah Cobain, Matilda Holmes, Katie Marsden and Jacky Sommerville

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Excavation on a plateau overlooking the River Avon on the eastern edge of Bradford-on-Avon revealed prehistoric and Roman remains. The earliest feature was a pit associated with a Middle Bronze Age radiocarbon date. The majority of features related to an Iron Age settlement which originated as two or more post-built structures in the Earliest Iron Age, between the 9th–7th centuries BC, and developed through the Early to Middle Iron Age with a rectangular enclosure superseded by a settlement with roundhouses and a curved boundary ditch. The earliest phase of Iron Age activity revealed affinities with that at Budbury Hillfort, 1.2km to the west. An Early Roman ditch respected the alignment of the later Iron Age boundary, but Late Iron Age pottery was absent and it is unclear whether or not there was direct continuity from the Iron Age into the Roman period.

Introduction

During May 2015 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological excavation at Kingston Farm, Bradford-on-Avon (centred on NGR: ST 8350 6075; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken at the request of CGF Ltd in advance of housing development. Michael Heaton Heritage Consultants (MHHC) acted as archaeological consultant on behalf of CGF Ltd and the work was undertaken in accordance with a Brief prepared by Rachel Foster, Assistant County Archaeologist for Wiltshire Council, and a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by MHHC. The development area was located within fields on the eastern edge of Bradford-on-Avon and occupies a fairly level plateau above the northern valley side of the River Avon. East of the site, the river valley is broad and gentle as the river flows through the North Wiltshire Clay Vale but to the west, the valley steepens as the river cuts through the eastern edge of the Cotswolds. The development area comprises parts of five fields totalling 9.13ha, of which 0.96ha was excavated and forms the basis of this report (Fig. 1). The excavated area is henceforth referred to as ‘the site’.

The area around Bradford-on-Avon remains relatively unexplored compared to the chalk downs of Wiltshire or to the Cotswolds. The few earlier prehistoric discoveries in the vicinity comprise a small number of Mesolithic and Neolithic flints and Bronze Age axe heads (WCAS 2004, 7). An Iron Age presence has been known since the partial excavation of the Early Iron Age promontory hillfort at Budbury, 1.2km west of the site (Wainwright 1970; Fig. 1). Just 1km east of the site, later prehistoric occupation of the high ground is also attested by the Scheduled Monument of Great Bradford Wood Enclosure (SM 101973; Fig. 1), a sub-rectangular hilltop enclosure which survives as an earthwork. This enclosure has not been tested by excavation but has been provisionally interpreted as a Martin Down-type enclosure dating to the Late Bronze Age (HE 2016, SM
Roman remains have been recorded within the town, with part of a villa having been excavated at St Laurence School (Fig. 1) and burials recorded south of this (Corney 2003). Again, the nature of occupation in the area during this period is poorly understood but it has been suggested that the villa succeeded a Late Iron Age to Early Roman farmstead (Holbrook 2013, 47). Cropmarks, including ring ditches, at Woolley Green on the north-eastern edge of Bradford-on-Avon remain undated (WSHER references MWI 2019, 2042, 2043).

Prior to the current development, no archaeological remains had been recorded within the site. Remains were first recorded in 2011 by two geophysical surveys which covered the entire development area and two additional fields to the east (AS 2011a, 2011b; Fig. 1). Trial trench evaluations (CA 2012, 2013) across the development area confirmed the presence of ditched enclosures within and to the west of the site. The excavation was targeted on a sub-rectangular enclosure and curvilinear ditches within the site; the remainder of the development area will be the subject of a future watching brief. The results were initially assessed within a post-excavation assessment report which included an updated project design (CA 2015) and the findings have been fully detailed within a typescript report (CA 2016), which are available via the CA ‘Report Online’ website (http://reports.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk; report nos. 15702 and 16473).

Results

Period 1: Middle Bronze Age (1400–1050 BC)

A single shallow bowl-shaped pit, 40123, was dated to the Middle Bronze Age (Figs 2 and 3). Its fill produced fragments of cattle bone from meat-rich bones, one of which was radiocarbon dated to 1393–1132 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-68752). Bronze Age finds were also recovered as residual items, mostly from the area closest to pit 40123. These included flints, mostly from Period 2b Ditch A, and a cattle scapula, also from Ditch A, that was radiocarbon dated to 1266–1056 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-68751). A residual sherd from a Middle Bronze Age Deverel Rimbury vessel was the most southerly find of this date and came from Period 2b posthole 40134.

Period 2: Earliest Iron Age and Early to Middle Iron Age (900 BC–200 BC)

Iron Age remains comprised part of an unenclosed settlement dateable to the Earliest Iron Age, succeeded in the Early to Middle Iron Age by a rectilinear enclosure which was itself succeeded by an enclosed roundhouse settlement. Very few stratigraphic relationships were present between these features, and the ceramic assemblages from them were largely indistinguishable, with only a few sherds closely dateable. A phasing scheme dividing Period 2 into three phases (Periods 2a,
b and c) is suggested below but the attached date ranges are necessarily broad.

**Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age (900 BC–600BC)**

The earliest Iron Age radiocarbon date obtained from the site, 748–403 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-68754), came from a fill of posthole 40116, one of a cluster of postholes (Structure Group A; Figs 3 and 4) associated with pottery dateable to the Earliest Iron Age (sometimes referred to as the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age), and dateable to the 9th–7th centuries BC. A second group of postholes (Structure B), 30m to the north-east (Figs 3 and 5) was also associated with pottery belonging to the Earliest Iron Age. Uncertainty arises from attempting to reconstruct structural plans amongst these postholes. For Structure Group A, one interpretation is offered here, with the acceptance that other possibilities also exist. This envisages that the postholes represent two rectangular six-post structures, from which five postholes survived in each case (Fig. 4). Each structure would have had a ground plan 3m by 2m in extent. An alternative interpretation, of a roundhouse with an internal diameter of 8.5m appears much less likely with this group.

Structure B consisted of postholes and a layer (Figs 3 and 5) interpreted as the remains of a rectangular building. Layer 40244 extended beyond the edge of excavation and comprised small stones bedded within silty clay laid onto the natural substrate. The resulting layer was fairly rough and may have been a sub-floor. The postholes included alignments marking the western and southern walls of Structure B. Postholes 40243 and 40202 along the southern wall probably flanked an entrance, with external postholes 40241 and 40199 supporting a porch. Postholes 40253 and 40255 provided evidence for an internal division extending at least partially across the width of the structure from the entrance.

**Period 2b: Early to Middle Iron Age (600 BC–200 BC)**

During Period 2b, Enclosure A, a large sub-rectangular enclosure, was created at the northern end of the site (Figs 2 and 3); its eastern extent was not exposed and lay beyond the extent of the geophysical survey (Fig. 1). The Period 2a buildings were probably deliberately dismantled, since post packing stones within the postholes were all disturbed, suggesting that the posts had been pulled out, and this may have occurred during the construction of the enclosure. The exposed part of Enclosure A was 67m wide. It included an entrance at its north-western corner and was defined by steep-sided, flat-based ditches (A, B and C) up to 2m wide and 0.9m deep. Modification to Enclosure A was evident with the insertion of ditch 40125 within the north-western entrance.

Stony fills formed the bulk deposits filling the enclosure ditches, and these probably derived from slighted banks, although tip lines suggesting which side of the ditch these lay on were absent. Concentrations of pottery and animal bones were found along Ditch A, whilst the other ditches
produced fewer finds. Ditch E, parallel to and 1m south of Ditch A contained Iron Age pottery and animal bones, of which a cattle radius produced a Middle Iron Age radiocarbon date of 395–208 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-68747). Internally, the enclosure contained a few pits and postholes; most contained Iron Age pottery but none were certainly contemporary with the enclosure.

**Period 2c: Early to Middle Iron Age (600 BC–200 BC)**

Following the infilling of the Period 2b enclosure ditches, a roundhouse settlement was established within the southern part of the site (Fig. 6). The settlement was only partially exposed and lay beyond the extent of the geophysical survey, and so the interpretations below are limited. Ditch D formed the western boundary of the roundhouse settlement and it truncated Period 2b Ditch C. Roundhouse A was built close to the boundary ditch and comprised an oval ring-ditch with an internal diameter of 6m. The ring-ditch was a steep-sided, flat-based cut that was probably a wall foundation and concentric external postholes probably received rafters which extended to ground level. The entrance must have lain beyond the edge of excavation to face broadly eastwards. Roundhouse B was adjacent to Roundhouse A and comprised two concentric ring-ditches. The innermost was a flat-based wall foundation which would have provided an internal space 10m in diameter. The outer ditch was probably an eavesdrip and included a possible entrance gap, perhaps suggesting the area beneath the eaves was used for storage. Finds associated with the roundhouses included pottery, animal bone and fired clay, material suggestive of habitation debris. Further curvilinear ditches found close to the edge of excavation may also have been parts of roundhouses, but their limited exposure prevents meaningful interpretation.

Several pits were found, mostly to the rear of Roundhouse A. All were shallow, but most had flat bases and perhaps represent the remains of cylindrical sub-surface grain stores, although this interpretation is far from certain and no stored grains were found. A notable find came from pit 40141 in the form of an annular shale bracelet comparable to similar items recovered from other Iron Age sites (Fig. 7, no. 11). Evidence that this occupation extended into the Middle Iron Age was provided by a radiocarbon determination of 359–112 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-68753) from a mammal rib found within pit 40147.

**Period 3: Early Roman (AD 43–200)**

Late Iron Age pottery was absent from the site; a neckless barrel-shaped jar recovered from the subsoil and dateable to the Mid to Late Iron Age represents the latest pre-Roman find recovered. A single feature, Ditch F (Fig. 6), has been assigned to the Roman period based on small quantities of 1st–2nd-century AD pottery retrieved from several fills. Ditch F extended beyond the edge of excavation and also lay beyond the extent of the geophysical survey but was parallel to Iron Age Ditch D. Stony deposits within the ditch may have derived from a bank, but finds from its
fills were fairly sparse, and consisted of a few sherds of pottery as well as fired clay and animal bone.

Finds

The Pottery, by E. R. McSloy

Pottery amounting to 779 sherds (4363g) was recorded. The pottery is moderately well broken-up, and the mean sherd weight for hand-collected material is fairly low at 7.4g.

Assemblage composition: fabrics (Table 1)

Overwhelmingly the assemblage is composed of handmade calcareous (limestone or fossil shell-tempered) fabrics and compares to that from Budbury Hillfort (Wainwright 1970). Other types with grog, quartz, flint (or organic inclusions) as the primary inclusions are sparsely represented. With the possible exception of the flint-tempered vessels, the assemblage is likely local in origin. All of the fabrics exhibit variability in colour, although light brown/light red browns are most common compared to darker greys/grey browns. There is some correlation between fabric and sherd thicknesses, with thicker vessels (>10mm) largely confined to coarser fabrics. Comparisons across the stratigraphically-defined phases (Table 1) shows little clear patterning relating to fabric use, other than a tendency away from limestone-tempered types and greater use of finer shell-tempered types in Period 2c.

Calcareous

LI Limestone-tempered. Common moderately-sorted oolitic limestone (1-2mm). Thickness: 6–7mm (11); 8–9mm (24); 10–12mm (22); 13–15mm (1); flakes (10).

LIf Finer limestone-tempered. Common well sorted oolitic limestone (0.5-1mm). Thickness: 1–5mm (5); 6–7mm (13); 8–9mm (5); 10–12mm (10); 13–15mm (1).

LIc Coarser limestone-tempered. Common poorly-sorted oolitic limestone (1-4mm). Thickness: 8–9mm (5); 10–12mm (1).

LIs Sparse limestone. Sparse well-sorted oolitic limestone (0.5-1mm). Thickness: 6-7mm (15); 8–9mm (2); 10–12mm (1); flakes (1).

SH Shell/shelly limestone. Abundant or common, moderately-sorted fossil shell (1–3mm) and rare limestone (1–2mm). Thickness: 1–5mm (6); 6–7mm (77); 8–9mm (147); 10–12mm (68); 13–15mm (1); flakes (234).

SHf Finer shell. Common, well-sorted fossil shell (0.5–2mm). Thickness: 1–5mm (2); 6–7mm (31); 8–9mm (16); 10–12mm (7); flakes (6).

SHc Coarse shell. Common, poorly-sorted fossil shell (2–6mm). Thickness: 8–9mm (4); 10–12mm (11); 13–15mm (2); flakes (1).
SHs Sparse shell. Sparse or very sparse well-sorted fossil shell (0.5–2mm). Thickness: 6–7mm (4); 8–9mm (2); flakes (2).

Quartz

QZ Quartz-tempered. Common or sparse, sub-angular, quartz (0.3–0.5mm); may contain sparse limestone or shell (<1mm). Thickness: 1–5mm (3); 6–7mm (8); 8–9mm (3).

QZf Fine quartz-tempered. Abundant fine/silt-sized quartz (0.1–0.3mm). Can be lightly micaceous. Thickness: 1–5mm (7); 6–7mm (3).

QZo Quartz-tempered. Common, sub-angular, quartz (0.3–0.5mm) and common burnt-out organic inclusions (1–2mm). Thickness: 8–9mm (1).

Other

GR Grog-tempered. Common, moderately-sorted grog (1–2mm). Thickness: 10–12mm (2); 13–15mm (2).

FL Flint-tempered. Common, medium, moderately-sorted grog (1–3mm). Thickness: 6–7mm (2); 8–9mm (1).

Form and decoration/surface treatment

The assemblage includes rim sherds from only 21 vessels; amongst these, identification of vessel form/profile was possible only for a proportion (Table 2). In addition there are a number of sherds preserving the angular neck or girth portions of carinated (including furrowed) and round shouldered vessels. A distinction between fineware and coarseware classes is based on vessel size/profile and use of decoration. A minority in the assemblage (37 sherds representing 17 individual vessels) exhibits decoration (Table 2), most commonly rows of fingertip or fingernail impressions to the vessel’s shoulder or rim (Fig. 7; nos 4 and 6). Incised, ‘furrowed’ and ‘dimpled’ decoration also occurs among Early Iron Age fineware bowls (Fig. 7; nos 1–3 and 10). Instances of burnishing are rare; recorded on 11 sherds from six vessels from features relating to Period 2b/c. Two vessels, including furrowed bowl no. 2, exhibit red surfaces, probably resulting from the use of an iron-rich (haematite) slip.

Stylistic dating/stratigraphy (Table 1)

Period 1: Middle Bronze Age

Pottery of this period occurs as thick-walled grogged fabrics (Fig. 7; no. 5) and calcareous fabrics (Fig. 7; no. 7). Vessel no. 5 exhibits applied strip decoration below its rim which commonly characterises the Middle Bronze Age Deverel Rimbury style. Vessel 7 is undecorated, although its size and thickened rim also recall Middle Bronze Age ‘urn’ styles.
**Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age**

Moderately large quantities of pottery were associated with the post-built structures of Period 2a. The vessels illustrated from Structure B (Fig. 7; nos. 1–3) consist of fine ware bowls which can be placed within the Early Iron Age All Cannings Cross style (Cunliffe 2005, 613), a division common to central and northwest Wiltshire and characterising the large assemblage from Budbury Hillfort (Wainwright 1971). They are dateable to the 9th to 7th centuries BC, the transitional period between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (ibid; Gingell and Morris 2000, 157–66). Red-finished furrowed (carinated) bowls such as no. 2 are a distinctive element within this style and significantly are absent from the later All Cannings style dateable after the 5th century BC. Long-necked, carinated vessel no. 1 can similarly be paralleled from Early All Cannings groups including Potterne (Gingell and Morris 2000, 156, fig. 47). Although the stretched triangle motifs are somewhat idiosyncratic, the decoration to no. 1 can be best matched among vessels in the Early All Cannings style including from Budbury Hillfort (Wainwright 1970, 137, no. 116). Finewares of the type described from Structure B were absent from Structure Group A. An exception among the mainly unfeatured body sherds is vessel no. 6, for which earlier Iron Age dating would be appropriate.

**Period 2b: Early to Middle Iron Age**

The Period 2b assemblage appears little different to that from Period 2a (Table 1) except that decoration is scarcer: incised decoration is absent and a single finger-tipped vessel is included (Fig. 7; no. 4).

**Period 2c: Early to Middle Iron Age**

Period 2c produced the largest assemblage (Table 1), mostly from Ditch D (96 sherds) and the pits (229 sherds). The composition differs from earlier phases only in having fewer limestone-tempered types. The larger groups were heavily fragmented and few vessel forms could be identified. Those identified were simple rim sherds, probably from neckless barrel-shaped or ovoid forms. Similar forms are common in Middle Iron Age assemblages from the region. A group of 28 sherds from pit 40009 included a partially reconstructable, globular-bodied vessel (Fig. 7; no. 9). Similar forms can be seen from Budbury Hillfort (Wainwright 1970, 134; fig. nos 37–42) and an earlier or Middle Iron Age date might be applicable. This pit also produced a small fine ware bowl/cup of tripartite carinated form (Fig. 7; no. 10). It occurs in a black-firing sandy fabric and features impressed small dot or ‘dimple’ decoration. The carinated form of no. 10 implies Early Iron Age (or at least earlier Middle Iron Age) dating. The dimpled (impressed dot) decoration appears not to be a feature of styles succeeding the Early All Cannings tradition (Cunliffe’s All Cannings Cross-Meon Hill grouping; Cunliffe 2005, 619). It is however a feature of pottery from the Berkshire/southern Oxfordshire region (Cunliffe’s Chinnor-Wandlebury grouping), for which
dating in the 5th to 3rd centuries BC has been asserted (ibid., 623).

Illustration catalogue

1. Fineware bowl; carinated/long-necked. Decoration at neck is crudely lightly incised, geometric (in-filled triangles) scheme. Fabric LI. (cf. Wainwright 1970. 137, no. 116). Sherds from the same vessel found within fill 40254 of posthole 40253 and fill 40203 of posthole 40202, both of Structure B.


3. Fineware bowl; simple rim. Lightly incised decoration at neck. Fabric SH. Fill 40203 of posthole 40202 (Structure B).

4. Slack-shouldered jar(?); fingertip impressed decoration at shoulder. Fabric LIls. Fill of Ditch A.

5. Jar(?); applied and finger-impressed strip at neck; simple rim. Fabric SH. Fill of Ditch A.


7. Large jar; thickened rim. Fabric SH. Post-packing in posthole 40134.


9. Ovoid jar; rim upright/slightly everted and pointed. Fabric SH. Fill 40020 of Roundhouse A.


Roman

A small Roman assemblage (24 sherds; 192g) was recorded. Stratified material is limited to 13 sherds from the fills of Ditch F (13 sherds), mostly in reduced coarseware fabrics of local type. A flagon handle in a fine whiteware fabric suggests dating probably in the later 1st to 2nd centuries AD. Pottery from the subsoil includes Savernake ware unlikely to post-date the earlier 2nd century and southeast Dorset Black-burnished ware broadly dateable across the 2nd to 4th centuries AD.

The Lithics, by Jacky Sommerville

In total, 36 worked lithics (176g) were recovered along with six burnt, unworked flints (20g). The raw material was flint, probably from a mixture of sources: primary (e.g. chalk); secondary (e.g. river gravel pebbles); and the recycling of flints worked in earlier periods. The breakdown of the assemblage is presented in Table 4. Primary technology consisted of five cores and 29 items of débitage. Many of the flakes were small and irregular, but were generally undiagnostic. Of the 25 flakes which retained their terminations, four ended in a hinge fracture. Hinge terminations may be
a result of unskilled knapping (Whittaker 1994, 109) and a high proportion may be expected in a Bronze Age assemblage (Ford et al. 1984, 163), as is the case here. The only flint suggestive of earlier dating is a blade from Ditch B likely to be Mesolithic or Early Neolithic in date. Only two retouched tools were recorded: a spurred/retouched flake from the subsoil and an end scraper from Ditch A. Neither is more closely dateable than to the prehistoric period.

Both the overall assemblage and the lithics context groups were very small, and the only chronologically diagnostic item was the redeposited Mesolithic/Early Neolithic blade. This piece aside, several attributes of the Kingston Farm lithic assemblage are typical of Bronze Age flintworking technology, such as a length/breadth ratio of 1:1 for flakes (on this site the ratio was 0.98:1); unsystematic core reduction; few formal tool types; and the recycling of raw materials (Ford et al. 1984, 163–5; Edmonds 1995, 175–6). Overall the lithics are considered to have been residual within later features.

The Shale Object, by Katie Marsden

A single shale object, a fragment from a bracelet, was recovered from Period 2c pit 40141. The source for the shale is very likely Kimmeridge in Dorset, 100km to the south. There is abundant evidence for the exploitation of this material for bracelets and other personal ornaments from as early as the Late Bronze Age, and it is clear from the presence of roughouts from sources well away from Kimmeridge that the raw material was traded as well as finished objects (Wyles 2000, 211–213). The undecorated annular form is typical for the majority of Iron Age examples including finds from Maiden Castle (Sharples 1991) and Potterne (Wyles 2000).

11 Bracelet of plain annular form, approximately 50% complete. Oval in section. Internal diameter 47mm; width 8mm; thickness 14mm. Fill 40142 of pit 40141.

The Animal Bone, by Matilda Holmes

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered, the majority from Iron Age ditches and pits. The sample is too small for detailed analysis, but some observations are presented below. Cattle bones are the only taxa present from the Middle Bronze Age remains. All were from elderly animals and comprised meat-rich bones. A wider range is evident in the Iron Age assemblage, although cattle and sheep/goat predominate, with some pigs, dogs and horse. All parts of the cattle and sheep/goat carcasses were present, suggesting that these were culled, processed and consumed on the site. A few cattle and sheep/goat bones were identified from the Roman ditch, although some may have been residual from the Iron Age occupation as they were found alongside residual Iron Age pottery.
The Plant Macrofossil and Charcoal Remains, by Sarah Cobain

Plant macrofossils and charcoal were present in small quantities. The presence of a small number of emmer/spelt and spelt wheat and barley grains within posthole 40116 (Structure Group A) suggests crops were being utilised on site, although the small number of remains means it is not possible to discern whether this reflects crop processing or domestic food production. Charcoal was only present in small quantities but the identification of a mixed assemblage is suggestive of fuel for domestic use and would most likely have been sourced from local scrub woodland and hedgerows consisting of hawthorn/rowan/crab apple, alder/hazel, and cherry species. The presence of oak and maple reflects isolated stands of more mature woodland nearby.

The Radiocarbon Dating, by Sarah Cobain

Five samples were analysed during August 2016 at Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC). The uncalibrated dates are conventional radiocarbon ages. The radiocarbon ages were calibrated using the University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration programme OxCal 4.2 (Bronk Ramsey 2009) using the IntCal13 curve (Reimer et al. 2013). The dates confirm and refine the Middle Bronze Age and Early and Middle Iron Age dating indicated by the pottery.

Discussion

Earlier prehistoric

The single Mesolithic/Early Neolithic flint adds to the small corpus of such finds recovered from the local high ground and indicates transient use by hunter-gatherers who presumably also included the Avon valley within their range. The Middle Bronze Age remains are suggestive of occupation and, although the form, extent and duration of this are unknown, the cattle bones were selected from meat-rich parts animals, perhaps suggesting the remains of a feast.

Later prehistoric

The Iron Age remains at Kingston Farm would seem to relate to an agricultural settlement. The earliest phase produced a radiocarbon date range extending back to the mid 8th century cal. BC so there is no indication that this occupation immediately succeeded that of the Middle Bronze Age. This Earliest Iron Age occupation seems to have been unenclosed and is represented by two groups of postholes, 30m apart. The interpretation of Structure B as a building is by no means
certain and it could simply have been part of an open air working area. The British Iron Age is
generally seen as typified by roundhouse settlements, but on the continent, settlements were
based around longhouses which included byres and living/working areas and a small corpus of
rectangular Iron Age structures is also known from Britain (Moore 2003). Indeed, the closest
example to the site is that at Budbury Hillfort which comprised a rectilinear post-built structure
dating to the Early Iron Age (Wainright 1970, 120). This was sub-divided into two cells either side
of a narrow room, the latter of which contained a hearth. Interpreting the British rectangular
buildings has proved difficult: whilst some see them as having had specialist functions, as stores
or religious or communal buildings, the most recent survey suggests that many may have been
dwellings and the relationship of these to roundhouse structures remains to be investigated
(Moore 2003, 55). The groundplan of the Budbury Hillfort building is compared to that of Structure
B on Figure 8 and both may have been rectilinear structures with single cells either side of a
narrow room. If so, then they would have been comparable in size (7m long by at least 3.15m
wide for Structure B; 6.5m long by 3.1m–4.25m wide for the Budbury Hillfort building). The internal
surface within Structure B is an unusual survival but unfortunately evidence as to the building’s
function was not forthcoming. However, it is noteworthy that Structure B produced an assemblage
of fineware bowls comparable to those recovered from Budbury Hillfort. This stands in contrast to
the Early Iron Age pottery from Structure Group A, which lacked finewares and suggests that
Structure B was a dwelling or a communal or religious structure rather than a store.

Interpreting Structure Group A is problematic and the two suggestions advanced above are that
the postholes include the remains of six-post structures or of a roundhouse, neither altogether
convincing in this case, but both types recognised on other Early Iron Age sites in Wiltshire and
beyond. An Early Iron Age settlement at Latton included post-built roundhouses and four- and six-
post structures interpreted as granaries (Powell et al. 2009, 29–38 and 105) and similar features,
dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Middle Iron Age, have been found at South Marston (Reynolds
et al. 2014, 41–44). If Structure B is seen as a dwelling, then one interpretation of Structure Group
A is as either granaries or as a structure used as a workshop or store. However, alternative
possibilities exist: Structure B may have had a more specialised function (for example as a
religious or communal building) with Structure Group A having been the location of a dwelling or
granaries, or Structure B could have been a main dwelling, whilst Structure Group A could
represent the location of a dwelling for subsidiary members of the community. Whatever
interpretation is accepted, the remains indicate that a settlement was established on this plateau
overlooking the Avon some time between the 9th and 7th centuries cal. BC. This unenclosed
settlement, presumably a family-sized farmstead, was probably contemporary with Budbury Hillfort
and the possible presence of unusual rectangular buildings at both sites suggests that they were
linked in some way. It is worth noting that the limits of this occupation have not been defined and
that it extended beyond the eastern and southern limits of excavation.
There is no indication of a hiatus between any of the Iron Age phases and the evidence suggests that the Period 2a structures were demolished during the construction of the Period 2b enclosure. This large ditched and banked enclosure had notable concentrations of finds close to the north-eastern limit of excavation, suggesting that occupation occurred within this area. Structural features were absent, but may have lain outside the site or have been built in a form which has left no trace. The enclosing banks and ditches seem to have been deliberately levelled, most probably when the Period 2c roundhouse settlement was established. Again, occupation was probably continuous. Although little of the latest Iron Age settlement was exposed, some observations can be made. It was bounded to the west by a ditch and bank, the latter along the ditch’s outer (western edge). At least two roundhouses nestled almost up to this boundary. The largest of these, Roundhouse B, had a living space 10.5m in diameter. Roundhouse A, to the immediate south, was smaller (6.5m diameter) and of different construction. These architectural differences might suggest different dating but the structures could instead have been contemporaneous, with Roundhouse B having been a dwelling, and Roundhouse A a workshop or store, or the dwelling of subordinate members of the community. The few pits may have been grain stores. Clearer evidence of the economic basis of the settlement was provided by the remains of animals, mainly cattle and sheep/goat, which seem to have been culled on site. Evidence to assess whether these beasts were reared on site was absent but pastoralism may have formed a major part of the economy with livestock perhaps having been driven between the high ground and the more open sections of Avon Valley. In light of this supposition, the curvilinear ditches and enclosures recorded some 60m to the east by the geophysical survey (Fig. 1b) might be seen as a droveway leading to stock corrals, although all these features are currently undated.

Roman

The only Roman feature found, Ditch F, was notable in that it broadly respected the alignment of Iron Age Ditch D. This suggests that the latter persisted as an earthwork ditch and bank into the Early Roman period when Ditch F was laid out. The majority of Early Roman sites in the Cotswolds and the North Wiltshire Clay Vale have little evidence for continuation from the Iron Age (Holbrook 2013, 46). The absence of Late Iron Age pottery from Kingston Farm fits with this pattern and it is possible that the Iron Age ditch merely provided a useful reference point when laying out the Roman ditch. However, it is also possible that the Roman ditch respected the alignment of the Iron Age ditch because there was a continuation of land usage; it has been suggested (Holbrook 2013, 47) that the 2nd to 4th century AD Roman villa at St Laurence School may have been preceded without a break by a Late Iron Age to Early Roman farmstead.
The few finds collected from the Roman ditch suggest that any Roman occupation lay beyond the site, conceivably within the area of geophysical anomalies to the east, and it is possible that the Roman remains at Kingston Farm formed part of the agricultural land attached to the St Laurence School villa. Roman material post-dating AD 200 was absent, but it is unclear whether this is an accident of discovery, reflecting the limited exposure of the Roman remains, or suggests a mid Roman re-organisation of the land.

**Acknowledgements**

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**References**


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CA (COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY), 2016, *Kingston Farm, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire: Archaeological Excavation*. CA typescript report 16473

on-Avon: Ex Libris Press


Table 1: Prehistoric pottery fabrics by sherd count and quantification

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<th>Fabric</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b</th>
<th>2c</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Ct</th>
<th>Wt (g)</th>
<th>EVEs</th>
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<td>GR</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>QZo</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>779</td>
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Table 2: Prehistoric pottery. Vessel forms shown as no. of vessels/rim EVEs

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<th>Form</th>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>rim</th>
<th>Unph.</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b</th>
<th>2c</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Drawing</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>carinated; long neck</td>
<td>Out-curved, flat-top</td>
<td>1/03</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>carinated; furrowed</td>
<td>Everted, simple</td>
<td>1/07</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>carinated?</td>
<td>Upright/squared</td>
<td>1/08</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bowl/cup</td>
<td>carinated; tripartite</td>
<td>Upright, simple</td>
<td>1/07</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>No. 10</td>
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<td>Jar</td>
<td>straight-sided</td>
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<tr>
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<td>uncertain barrel/ovoid</td>
<td>Everted, flattened</td>
<td>1/05</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>(neckless) barrel/ovoid</td>
<td>squared</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(neckless) globular</td>
<td>simple</td>
<td>2/06</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>slack-shoulder</td>
<td>Short, everted</td>
<td>1/11</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nos. 4; 6; 8</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upright, simple</td>
<td>1/04</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>jar/bowl</td>
<td>carinated</td>
<td>Out-curved, thickened</td>
<td>2/00</td>
<td>1/0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out-curved/simple</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Upright, simple</td>
<td>1/03</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upright, squared</td>
<td>1/03</td>
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<td>1/03</td>
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<td>Short, everted</td>
<td>1/03</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7/41</td>
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<td>11/48</td>
<td>2/07</td>
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Table 3: Prehistoric pottery. Decoration quantification shown as no. sherds/vessels

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<th>Decoration</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>2b</th>
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<td>Applied strip</td>
<td>neck</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>No. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingernail/fingertip</td>
<td>Shoulder/girth</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>10/2</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>SH; SHc; Lis; QZf</td>
<td>Nos. 4 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingernail/fingertip</td>
<td>Rim exterior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressed (dimples)</td>
<td>shoulder</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>QZf</td>
<td>No. 10</td>
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<td>furrows</td>
<td>neck</td>
<td>5/2</td>
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<td>LIf, SH</td>
<td>No. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>incised</td>
<td>neck</td>
<td>10/2</td>
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<td>LI</td>
<td>Nos. 1 and 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>incised</td>
<td>uncertain</td>
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<td>1/1</td>
<td>1/1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LI; SH; SHf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>26/7</td>
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<td>4/4</td>
<td>1/1</td>
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Table 4: Breakdown of the lithics assemblage

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ditch A</th>
<th>Ditch B</th>
<th>Ditch C</th>
<th>Ditch D</th>
<th>Pits/postholes</th>
<th>Round House B</th>
<th>Subsoil</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>(Burnt unworked</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chip</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Flake</td>
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<td>Secondary technology</td>
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<td>Spurred/retouched flake</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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Table 5: Radiocarbon dating results

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<th>Feature</th>
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<th>Material</th>
<th>$\delta^{13}$C</th>
<th>$\delta^{15}$N</th>
<th>C/N</th>
<th>Radio carbon age</th>
<th>Calibrated radiocarbon age 95.4% probability</th>
<th>Calibrated radiocarbon age 68.2% probability</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ditch E</td>
<td>SUERC-68747</td>
<td>Cattle bone</td>
<td>-0.9‰</td>
<td>5.6‰</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2254 ± 29 yr BP</td>
<td>395–349 cal BC (34.6%)</td>
<td>385–356 cal BC (27.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>315–208 cal BC (60.8%)</td>
<td>286–234 cal BC (40.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditch A</td>
<td>SUERC-68751</td>
<td>Cattle bone</td>
<td>0.8‰</td>
<td>5.3‰</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2964 ± 29 yr BP</td>
<td>1266–1072 cal BC (94.2%)</td>
<td>1221–1127 cal BC (68.2%)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1066–1056 cal BC (1.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pit 40124</td>
<td>SUERC-68752</td>
<td>Cattle bone</td>
<td>21.7‰</td>
<td>5.4‰</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3022 ± 29 yr BP</td>
<td>1393–1336 cal BC (20.1%)</td>
<td>1371–1360 cal BC (6.8%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1323–1192 cal BC (73.2%)</td>
<td>1298–1220 cal BC (61.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>1173–1167 cal BC (0.5%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1143–1132 cal BC (1.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 40147</td>
<td>SUERC-68753</td>
<td>Mammal bone</td>
<td>22.5‰</td>
<td>11.7‰</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2163 ± 2 yr BP</td>
<td>359–277 cal BC (43.3%)</td>
<td>351–301 cal BC (37.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>260–112 cal BC (52.1%)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>210–171 cal BC (31.2%)</td>
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<td>Posthole</td>
<td>SUERC-68754</td>
<td>Carbonized grain</td>
<td>-24.1‰</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2424 ± 29 yr BP</td>
<td>748–685 cal BC (16.8%)</td>
<td>540–411 cal BC (68.2%)</td>
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<td>666–642 cal BC (5.1%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>587–581 cal BC (0.5%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>558–403 cal BC (73.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Period 1: Middle Bronze Age
Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age
Period 2b: Early to Middle Iron Age
Period 2c: Early to Middle Iron Age
Period 3: Early Roman
Period 4: Modern
Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age
Period 2b: Early to Middle Iron Age
Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age
Period 2b: Early to Middle Iron Age
Period 2c: Early to Middle Iron Age
Period 3: Early Roman
Structure B

Iron Age house from Budbury Hillfort

Period 2a: Earliest Iron Age
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