

A SUMMARY REPORT ON BRONZE AGE TO POST-MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY AT FIELD HOUSE FARM, LADWELL, WINCHESTER

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ABSTRACT

Archaeological investigations were undertaken at Field House Farm, Ladwell, Hampshire between February and November 2014. Evidence for occupation dating from the Bronze Age to Post-medieval period was uncovered. This included several substantial ditches of a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date, suggesting prehistoric land division but there was limited evidence for corresponding settlement. A fragmentary, pegged, leaf-shaped copper-alloy spearhead of probable Late Bronze Age date was also recovered from the topsoil. Several fragmentary Iron Age ditches pre-dated a large sub-oval later prehistoric/Roman enclosure on an elevated position in the north of the site. Although there was limited dating evidence to provide a definitive date for the construction/use of the enclosure, features dating to the later Roman period suggest reoccupation of the site after a hiatus. A number of post-medieval features were also uncovered that correspond to a small farmstead present on 19th century maps.

INTRODUCTION

Cotswold Archaeology (CA) undertook a programme of archaeological mitigation for ReneSola UK Ltd with regard to the installation of a solar array at Field House Farm, Ladwell, Winchester (centred on SU 42770 23412; Fig. 1). A cropmark noted on aerial photographs in the south-eastern corner of the site was thought to be a late prehistoric or Romano-British enclosure indicative of settlement activity. The works were agreed following consultation by the Local Planning Authority with their archaeological advisor, Tracy Matthews, of the Winchester City Council Historic Environment Team. The work included a desk-based assess-

ment (CA 2014a), a geophysical survey (WYAS 2014), an evaluation undertaken in May–June 2014 (CA 2014b) and a watching brief carried out in November 2014 (CA 2015).

The site lies within the hamlet of Ladwell, 1.2km to the south of the village of Hursley and 240m to the north of the northern outskirts of Chandler's Ford. The site is bounded to the west by the B3043 (Hursley Road), to the south by Hocombe Plantation, and to the north and east by farmland and large tree copses. The site occupies an irregular parcel of land, comprising two fields of pasture covering an area of 15.31ha. It occupies the gentle south and south-east facing slopes of a hill that divides the valleys of two small watercourses feeding into Monks Brook 1.4km to the south. The land falls from 80m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north to 55m AOD in the south-east. The underlying geology comprises, to the west, sand and gravel of the Whitecliff Sand Member and, to the east, silt and sand of the Nursling Sand Member. Each deposit was formed approximately 23 to 66 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2016).

The full report, for this project can be found on the Cotswold Archaeology website: <http://reports.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/archaeological-reports/>. The archive will be deposited with the Hampshire Cultural Trust (Accession Number: WINCM: AY550).

SUMMARY RESULTS (Fig. 2)

The trial trench evaluation (CA 2014b) generally demonstrated a correlation between the linear anomalies identified in the geophysical survey (WYAS 2014) and archaeo-

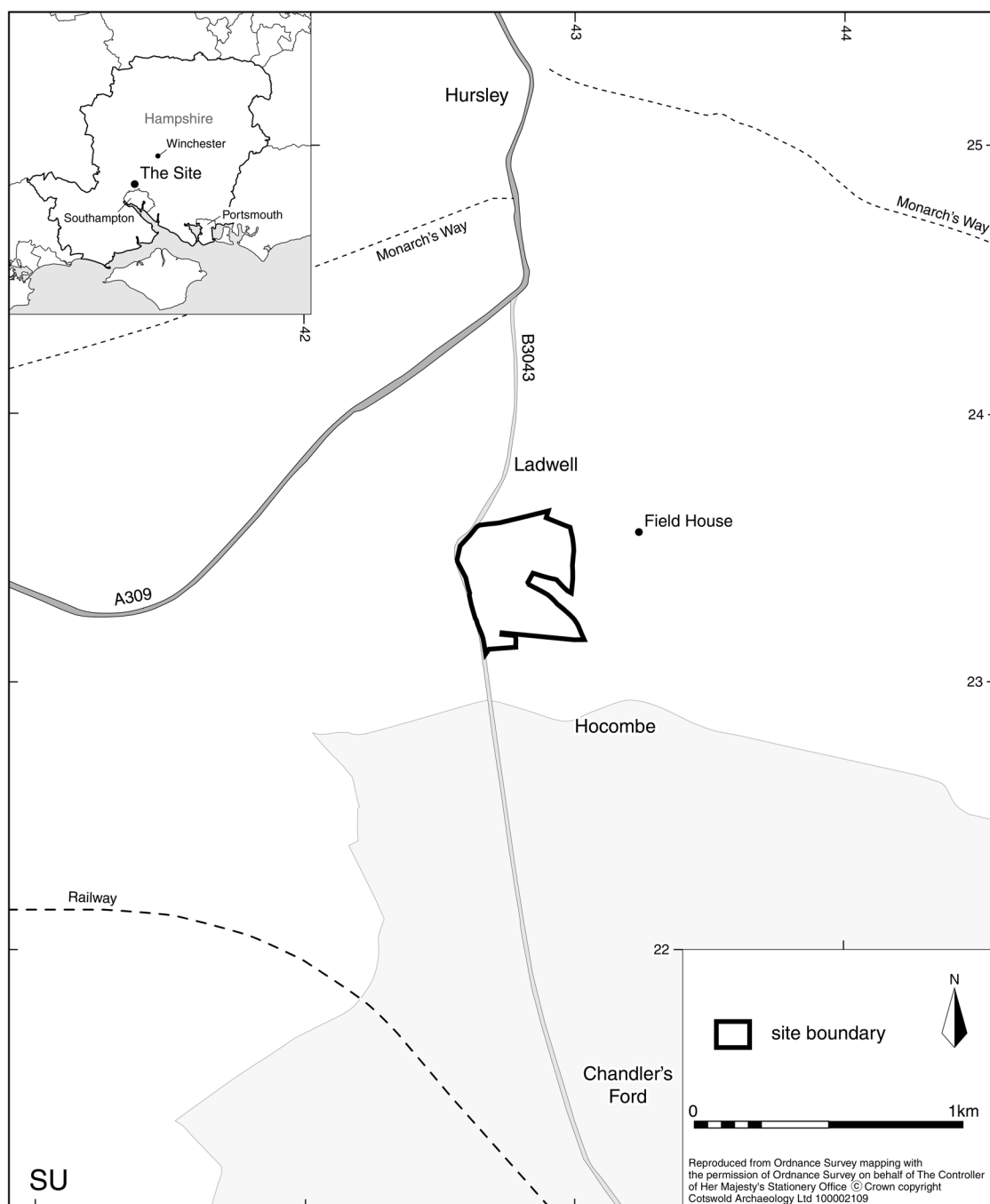


Fig. 1 Site location

logical features uncovered across the site, with a number of additional features not predicted by the geophysics. Colluvial deposits up to 1.3m in depth were encountered in these areas and may have masked archaeological features during the survey. Two evaluation trenches (T1 and 2) were targeted on the approximate location of the cropmark of a postulated late prehistoric or Roman period enclosure, however, no evidence for this feature was uncovered. A subsequent watching brief (CA 2015) revealed a number of features that corresponded with the results of the survey and evaluation, as well as a number of other features.

The earliest dateable feature was a substantial boundary ditch (1102), located on the northern edge of the site and not identified by the geophysical survey. The ditch was not fully excavated but the visible profile indicates that it measured 3m in width and had moderately steep and symmetrical sides. An upper ditch fill (1103) contained worked and burnt flint and 11 sherds of flint tempered pottery of Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age date (Table 1). The continuation of ditch 1102 was not identified in T20 and it is assumed that it turned in a northerly direction, closely following the contours of the hill. A second linear ditch (1105, 1303, 1402, 1503) was uncovered across a number of trenches to the south. The similar orientation and proximity of the excavated sections suggests that it represents a single ditch, approximately 20m in length. The ditch had steeply sloping sides with a concave base and contained a number of deposits. No finds were recovered from the ditch fills, however, the similar composition of these ditch deposits to that of ditch 1102 suggest it is of a broadly similar date.

The worked flints comprised a number of flakes, chips and cores that have been dated to the Bronze Age. Almost all of the flints represented were residual items, either from later features or the topsoil, however, the presence of these finds does further suggest occupation in this period. A fragmentary, pegged, leaf-shaped copper-alloy spearhead was recovered from the topsoil in T8 (see below) (Fig. 3). A fragment of the wooden shaft was preserved within the socket and is formed of a heartwood maple dowel. The presence of the wooden shaft,

along with the good surface condition of the spearhead, suggests it may have been recently disturbed from a sealed and waterlogged deposit. Socketed and pegged spearheads were manufactured during the Late Bronze Age (c. 1200–750 BC). A similar but complete find from Brockenhurst, Hampshire has been dated to 1150–800 BC (Portable Antiquities Scheme 2016).

A substantial north/south aligned ditch (303) was identified as a linear anomaly in the geophysical survey extending for 60m in length. Excavation of the ditch indicates it measured 3.5m in width and had a U-shaped profile, with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. No dateable evidence was identified from the basal fill of the ditch, however, a number of flint flakes, possibly debitage, recovered from a monolith sample of an upper fill were given a broad prehistoric date. A narrower north-east/south-west orientated ditch (917) uncovered in T9, had a U-shaped profile and measured 1.9m in width. A single worked flint recovered from the upper fill of the ditch suggested a broadly prehistoric date. Ditch 915, located to the north and perpendicular to ditch 917, was unexcavated, however, the similarity of the observable ditch fills suggests that they may be contemporary.

Evidence for Iron Age occupation was uncovered in the centre of the site within T5. Ditch 515 was aligned north-east/south-west and corresponded to an L-shaped anomaly identified in the geophysical survey. The ditch measured 1.7m in width and had a U-shaped profile. Burnt flint was recovered from a secondary fill of the ditch and seven sherds of possible Iron Age pottery were recovered from an upper fill.

A possible later prehistoric/Roman enclosure was identified on the northern side of the site in an elevated location. The geophysical survey suggested the presence of two stretches of enclosing earthwork, however, only a small percentage was sampled through excavation. Three sections (605 T6, 705 T7 and 917 T9) of what is believed to be the same north/south aligned substantial ditch were uncovered along a possible length of 130m. Two of three ditch sections were excavated, revealing a U-shaped profile and measuring between

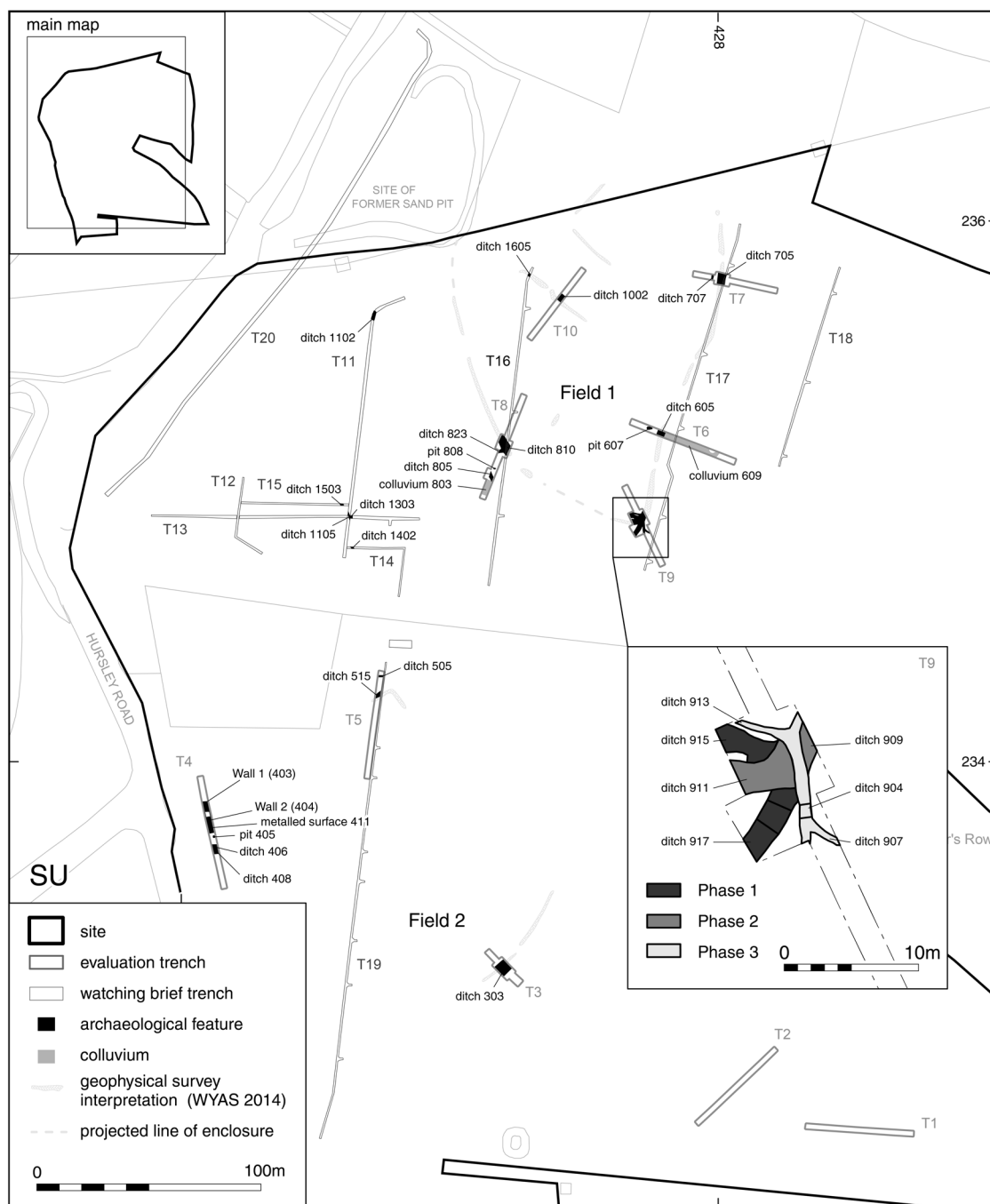


Fig. 2 Site plan showing all trenches and archaeological features

3.1–3.6m in width and 0.62–1.3m in depth. No dateable evidence was recovered from the basal fills of the ditch but a small assemblage of later prehistoric and Romano-British pottery was recovered from the upper fills of ditch 605 and 705. Fill 606 within ditch 605 contained two sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery and five sherds of pottery of a broad Romano-British date, while fill 706 within ditch 705 contained five sherds of later Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery and four sherds of broadly Romano-British pottery. Fill 713, also within ditch 705, also contained three sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery. Although the quantities of pottery recovered from these ditches do not definitively date these features, they suggest that the later fills were deposited at some point during the later prehistoric or Roman period. Furthermore, two sherds of Romano-British pottery, one of which dated to the Later Roman period, were recovered from the surface (912) of unexcavated ditch 911. It is possible that, based on the stratigraphic relationship of ditch 917 to the second phase of the enclosure ditch (909 and 911) that it may have formed an earlier boundary ditch, which was reused as part of the later prehistoric/Roman enclosure (Fig. 2, inset).

A second ditch, aligned broadly north-west/south-east, may represent a later addition to the enclosure and was identified in the geophysical survey as extending for possibly 170m. An excavated section of the ditch (810, T8) revealed it to measure 3.8m in width and 1.7m in depth and to have a sharp V-shaped profile. No dateable finds were identified within the basal fill, however, an upper fill (822) contained 28 sherds of broadly dated Romano-British pottery sherds including two joining sherds of a Bushe-Fox 26–30 mortaria, in a North-French/Southeast English ware, dated to the Flavian period. Roman ceramic building material consisting of tegula, box flue, tile and brick fragments and an iron nail were also recovered from upper fill 822. Environmental samples from the upper fills contained a small assemblage of moderately well-preserved oak charcoal (*Quercus spec*), which is often associated with activities that require high temperatures (e.g. metal working or cremation). In this case,

the absence of associated evidence indicates that the charcoal may simply represent a single oak branch that was burnt. Based upon the results of the geophysical survey it is believed that ditch 810 continued into T9 as features 909 and 911. Although these ditches were not excavated they have been interpreted as representing a later phase of construction, based upon observations of the features in plan.

Very little evidence for internal features was identified within the area of the enclosure. Two exceptions include an undated pit (607) located west of enclosure ditch 605 and a narrow linear ditch (707) located to the west of enclosure ditch 705. Eleven sherds of pottery, dated broadly to the Romano-British period were recovered from fill 708 within ditch 707. This lack of evidence is likely to have been due to the limited area investigated, however, the effects of extensive agricultural activity upon the high ground may have removed any traces of occupation. A small area of probable later prehistoric activity was also uncovered in T8, immediately outside the enclosure ditch. This included a small sub-oval pit 808 and two perpendicular ditches (805 and 823), which may represent a small enclosure abutting the main enclosure ditch. While no dating evidence was recovered from any of these features, ditch 805 truncated colluvial deposit 803, which contained two sherds of probable Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery. These features may therefore date to the later prehistoric period, contemporary with the occupation of the enclosure.

Artefacts associated with domestic activity dating broadly to the Romano-British period were recovered from the upper fills of enclosure ditches 810 and 911 and the large internal ditch (1002 – see below). They included a large assemblage of Roman ceramic building material consisting of brick, tegula and box-flue tile fragments, as well as a fragmentary copper-alloy bow brooch, of uncertain type recovered from topsoil across T7, but for which a later 1st to 2nd century AD date is probable.

A substantial ditch within the enclosure was uncovered within T10 and T16. Identified on the geophysical survey, the ditch was aligned north-west/south-west and was 35m in length.

Within T10 (1002) the ditch was unexcavated, however, a single sherd grog-tempered Roman pottery was recovered from the upper fill of the ditch. During the watching brief the ditch (1605) in T16 was excavated to a depth of 0.6m. It measured 1.75m in width, with moderately sloping sides, and contained two observable fills. A small assemblage (20 sherds) of late Romano-British pottery dated to the 3rd to 4th century AD and two fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from the fill. The pottery included one sherd of Central Gaulish samian, imported to Britain during the 2nd century AD (Webster 1996, 2–3), a small abraded sherd of New Forest (Fine) White ware 2 (NFO WH 2) and a plain-rimmed dish in an unoxidised grog-tempered fabric (Ham GT), indicative of a late Roman date (codes follow Tomber & Dore 1998). While the enclosure and associated features have only been dated broadly to the later prehistoric/Roman period, the presence of later Roman pottery within ditch 1605 indicates further occupation at Field House Farm in the later Roman period. Whether this occupation was continuous or intermittent cannot be demonstrated.

A number of post-medieval features were recorded at the western edge of the site (T4) including two parallel walls 403 and 404, demolition debris, a possible metallised surface (411) and a small charcoal-rich pit (405). These features were uncovered in the location of a building visible on the 1839 Hursley Tithe map and later Ordnance survey maps (CA 2014a). Two parallel east/west orientated ditches 406 and 408, were also uncovered in T4 and corresponded to an east/west orientated field boundary also depicted on historic maps.

Spearhead fragment by E R McSloy

Fragment from a cast copper alloy socketed and pegged spearhead (Fig. 3). Only the lower portion of the socket and inner portions of the blade are preserved and the damage appears recent. In the absence of most of the blade, further classification is not possible. The circular peg holes are in line with the blade, but at different height relative to the socket edge. The wooden shaft preserved within the socket is described below. Max. diam. 23.5mm;

surviving length 72mm. *Topsoil layer 800, from close to evaluation Trench 8.*

Socketed and pegged spearheads are associated with the final Penard, Wilburton and Ewart Park phases of the Late Bronze Age and the suggested dating is in the *c.* 1200–750 BC range. The survival of a portion of the wooden spear shaft and fixing pegs is noteworthy. The good surface condition and apparently post-depositional damage suggest that the spearhead may have been recently disturbed from a sealed and waterlogged deposit.

Spear shaft fragment by M Bamforth

The shaft fragment is formed of a heartwood ?maple dowel. This lightly fluted, well finished item tapers from a maximum diameter of 13 × 15mm to a fine point. Two small circular pegs holes are present, one of which contains a ?maple dowel peg. Heartwood dowels, often formed of ash, are the common form for Bronze Age spear shafts (e.g., Greenwell & Parker Brewis 1909; Hooper & O'Connor 1973; Taylor 2001). *Acer campestre* (field maple) is the only species of maple native to the UK. This tall, deciduous tree is found in both open and woodland habitats and the wood is used for a wide range of products, including tool handles (Gale & Cutler 2000).

DISCUSSION

Late Bronze to Early Iron Age occupation at Field Farm House is illustrated by the presence of a number of large ditches visible in a small number of archaeological interventions. The substantial nature of ditch 1102 suggests that it may have acted as a boundary ditch in this period, while the smaller ditch to the south (1105, 1303, 1402 and 1503) may have formed a minor boundary for a field or small enclosure. The lack of corresponding information for these features from the geophysical survey makes further interpretation difficult, however, the evidence does correspond with a major transition in Hampshire in the Middle to Late Bronze Age from a largely open to enclosed landscape (Lambrick 2014, 125). The establishment of co-axial field systems, trackways

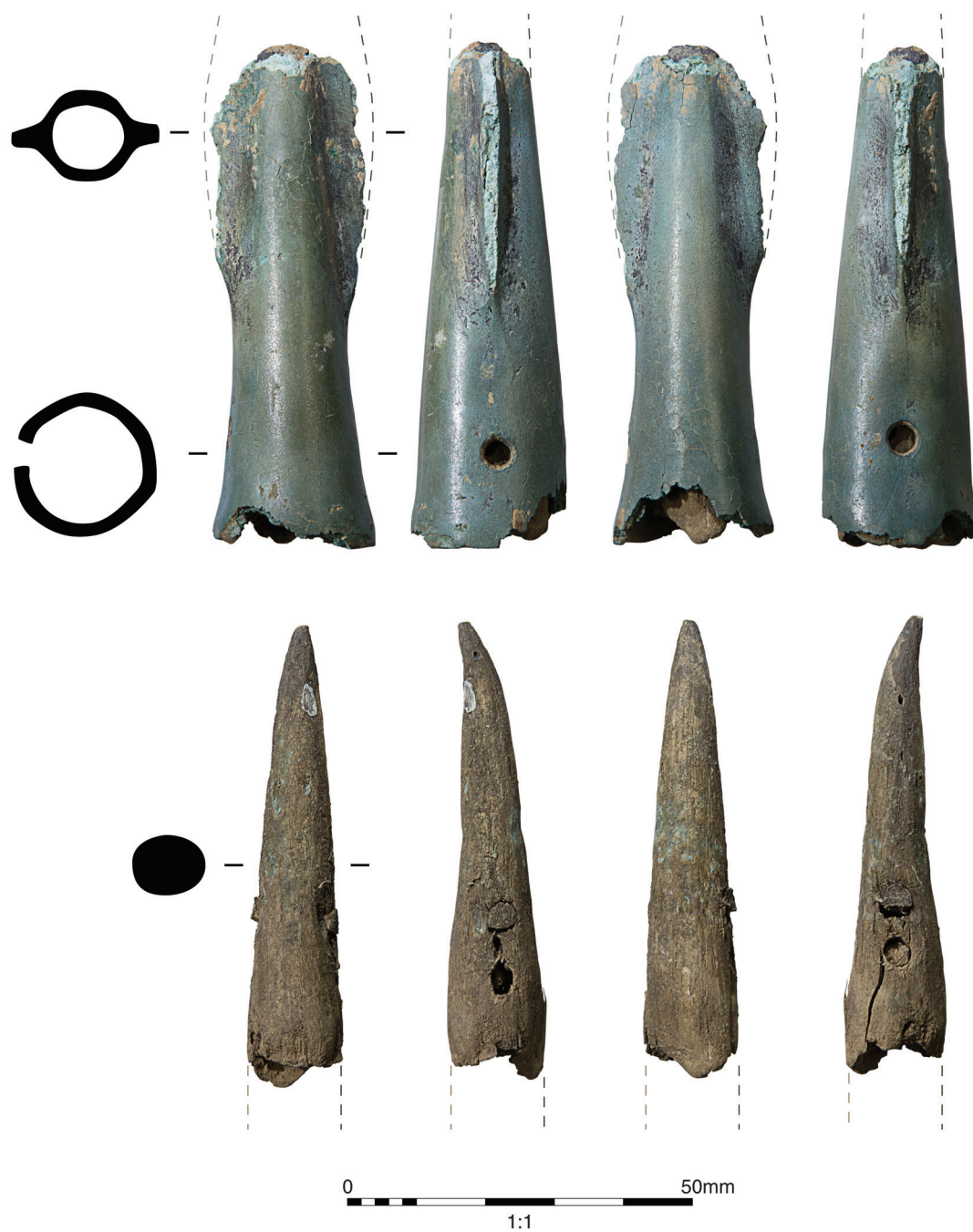


Fig. 3 Late Bronze Age socketed cast copper alloy socketed and pegged spearhead with surviving portion of a wooden spear shaft and fixing pegs

and enclosures in this period may provide an explanation for the substantial size of these features. While Late Bronze Age settlement sites have been uncovered in the area, particularly at Winnall Down (Fasham 1985, 126), further occupation at Field House Farm is illustrated only by the presence of residual flintwork in later features and an unstratified Late Bronze Age pegged spearhead. Ditch 303 has, based on the available evidence, been attributed a broad prehistoric date and may either represent additional elements of Bronze Age land division or later occupation of the site.

Part of a possible later prehistoric/Roman enclosure dominated the elevated position to the north of the site, and bounded an area of approximately 1.25 ha, probably two thirds of its original size. The extent of the enclosure is based on the interpretation of the geophysics results and the small percentage (5%) of the enclosure ditch that was excavated. The evaluation illustrated the accuracy of the geophysical survey results, however, it provided limited dating evidence to provide a definitive date for the construction and use of the enclosure. Furthermore, it is impossible to determine, based on the current evidence, whether the ditches formed a single feature, incorporating an earlier boundary, or represented several phases of construction/occupation. The possible stratigraphic relationship of features in T9 suggest several phases of construction, however, further investigation of these features is required. There are few identified features within the enclosure to indicate its function or use, however, this is probably due to the limited investigation of the interior. The contemporary features abutting the enclosure ditch (T8) suggest the presence of further, as yet unidentified, features. Occupation of the enclosure in the 3rd or 4th centuries AD is represented by a single ditch (1605) and later pottery deposited into the final fills of ditch 911, which probably represented reoccupation of the hilltop following a hiatus.

The construction of the enclosure at Field House farm may, based on a similar morphology and position, date to the Iron Age or Roman period. As such, the enclosure may coincide with the establishment and occupation of Oram's Arbour (Winchester) in the Middle

to Late Iron Age. This enclosure, located 5km to the north-east, marked a strategic point in the surrounding Iron Age landscape, which by that period was occupied by a number of settlement sites (Ford & Teague 2011, 175–6). The enclosure at Field House farm likely represents an agricultural enclosure, forming part of the wider development of the rural landscape surrounding Oram's Arbour, and later the Roman town of *Venta Belgarum*. The presence of CBM in the upper fills of the enclosure ditches suggests the location of a building with a sophisticated heating system in the vicinity. Further evidence for the presence of a building, whether a villa or otherwise, is limited and further interpretation remains speculative. Two similar enclosed settlements of potential Iron Age or Romano-British date have been identified as cropmarks to the east of the site and possibly represent further elements of the rural occupation of the area. While there is limited evidence as to the function of these sites, they may have been established to provide agricultural resources to serve the needs of the growing population of the Iron Age and Roman centre at modern day Winchester. The 3rd to 4th century reoccupation of Field House farm overlaps with the zenith of occupation at *Venta Belgarum* and may represent the continued success of the town and its locality.

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Table 1 Quantification of pottery, by fabric

<i>Fabric code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>
<i>Later prehistoric</i>			
F1	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	7	61
F2	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	1	10
F3	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	8	29
F4	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	2	6
F5	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	6	39
F6	Flint-tempered (LBA/EIA)	10	81
F7	Flint-tempered (MBA)	1	28
FI1	Flint and iron-gritted (LBA/EIA)	1	19
Q1	Sandy ware (IA)	3	6
Q2	Sandy ware (IA)	2	9
Q3	Sandy ware (IA)	1	6
<i>Roman</i>			
CE SAM	Samian, Central Gaul	1	33
NFSE	North-French/southeast English (Davies <i>et al.</i> 1994)	2	93
G100	Grog-tempered, oxidised	23	317
G101	Grog-tempered, unoxidised; HAM GT	16	435
NFO WH 2	New Forest (Fine) White ware 2	1	4
Q100		24	280
Q101		17	35
Q102		2	55
<i>Post-medieval/modern</i>			
Flowerpot		1	12
Refined white ware		1	5
Total		130	1563

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