4 Dating

Four radiocarbon dates (Table 1) were analysed for the site. Three of these were from main posts-pits of the post ring in the roundhouse (Post-pits 004A, 014B & 020A). The building had burnt down, charring the posts but not creating burnt post-pipes. When each of the unburnt post bases had rotted, burnt material from the post, and potentially from other burnt structural timbers such as roofing, had sunk into the top fill of the post-pits. Each of the three samples was taken from below the surface of this top fill in order to increase the likelihood that the charcoal derived from the post itself. Single-entity samples were taken from each context as it was felt that the three samples together should give a range of dates derived from a number of the structural timbers, or possibly from incidental timber such as firewood that was in the building when it burnt down.

The samples give a calibrated range of dates which extend from the late first century BC to the beginning of the third century AD, and suggest that the building was probably constructed and used in the first–second centuries AD. It is perhaps significant that the sample from Post-pit 020A gives a slightly later range of dates than the other two samples, as this was clearly a replacement post (see above).

Unfortunately, the charcoal samples were not identified to species prior to analysis. Identification of wood from the same sample contexts shows a predominance of oak, probably from the main structural timbers, with some birch and hazel, which may have derived from fallen wall or roof material. If split timber had been used, there is of course a possibility that a mixture of core and outer timber was dated, giving a spread of dates. However, although in the absence of carbonized post-pipes it is impossible to be certain, the four examples where clear post shadows survived, all appeared to have been round timbers *c* 150–300mm in diameter.

The fourth radiocarbon sample was from the charcoal-rich upper fill of Post-pit 071, the south-eastern post of the four-post structure. It yielded a date between the later first and early third centuries AD, comparable to the date from the replacement Post-pit 020A in the roundhouse. It is suggested that this may have derived from charcoal from timber associated with the destruction or use of the roundhouse, sunken in over the apparently dismantled and silted up post-pit of the four-post structure. It does not directly date the construction or use of the four-post structure but does indicate that it was out of use by the time the roundhouse was destroyed. No samples suitable for dating were recovered from the lower fills of any of the four post-pits.

The finds, while not closely datable, are consistent with a floruit in the first–second century AD.

Table 1 Radiocarbon dates

Lab code	Sample material	Years BP	$\delta^{13}C$ ‰	Calibrated dates	
				1-sigma	2-sigma
Beta-181169	Charcoal from top of post shadow (4/1) of main primary Post F4A	1940±40	–25.0	AD 30–100	30 BC–AD 130
Beta-181170	Charcoal from secondary (?) Post-pit F14B	1960±40	–26.0	AD 10–80	40 BC–AD 120
Beta-181171	Charcoal from secondary (?) Post-pit F20A	1830±40	–25.1	AD 130–240	AD 90–260
Beta-181172	Charcoal from F71/1, top fill of post-pit of four-poster	1870±40	–25.4	AD 90–220	AD 60–240