
7 Excavations

7.1 Areas 1 & 2

These areas measured approximately 30m by 25m and formed a rectangle aligned north-east/south-west. Its south-east side was somewhat irregular and limited by the quarry face and access road ([Illus 5](#)).

7.1.1 Topsoil (context 001), subsoil (context 002) and natural (context 004)

The topsoil (context 001) is only alluded to as being black, dark or dark brown. This overlay is a more compacted, sticky, red-brown subsoil (context 002). These two layers are described together as being of varying thickness. Together they appear to have been mostly between 0.3m and 0.4m depth, and up to 0.6m deep on the western edge of the trench with the greatest variation in depth affecting the topsoil. Both layers contained inclusions of charcoal and burnt bone, which was particularly abundant from 0.15m below the ground surface to some 0.05m above the natural gravel (context 004). The subsoil (context 002) is the horizon between the plough soil and the natural gravel, which through ploughing, root intrusion, animal and human disturbance has become contaminated with charcoal and burnt bone. The features identified within these areas were cut into the subsoil (context 002).

7.1.2 Occupation layer (context 003)

Extending across the central part of Area 1 was a layer of burnt soil, sand, gravel with burnt bone and charcoal (context 003). This lay between the topsoil (context 001) and the subsoil (context 002). This was an occupation layer about 0.15m in depth, but was much thinner over the east area of Area 1 as if it had been truncated or cleared away. It was recognized during the excavation due to greater quantities of burnt bone, charcoal and blackened soil associated with reddened stones and patches of burning. These were more abundant within Area 2, but no differentiation in the finds from the two areas was made until later in the excavation. In general, context 003 was excavated in Areas 1 and 2 as a single layer but its full extent is not known. However, it did not extend as far as the ditch edge in the north and it petered out to the south. It seems likely that this horizon represented more than one phase of activity, but the lack of detailed context recording means that there is no possibility of reconstructing the stratigraphical relationships. A radiocarbon sample from

this layer (GU-11092) produced a date of the fourth to second centuries BC.

7.1.3 Area 1 ([Illus 6](#), [Illus 7](#))

The features excavated in Area 1 extended over an area measuring 12m by 12m. Although severe disturbance from ploughing was evident, a number of discontinuous and amorphous stone features were found cut into the subsoil (context 002), which probably represented paving ([Illus 6](#)). These are contexts 101 (a large flat slab), 102 and 103. A complex of post-holes were also encountered below the occupation layer (context 003), which had cut the natural gravel (context 004) ([Illus 7](#)). A series of shallow, charcoal-filled pits and hollows were also located.

Work bench (context 101)

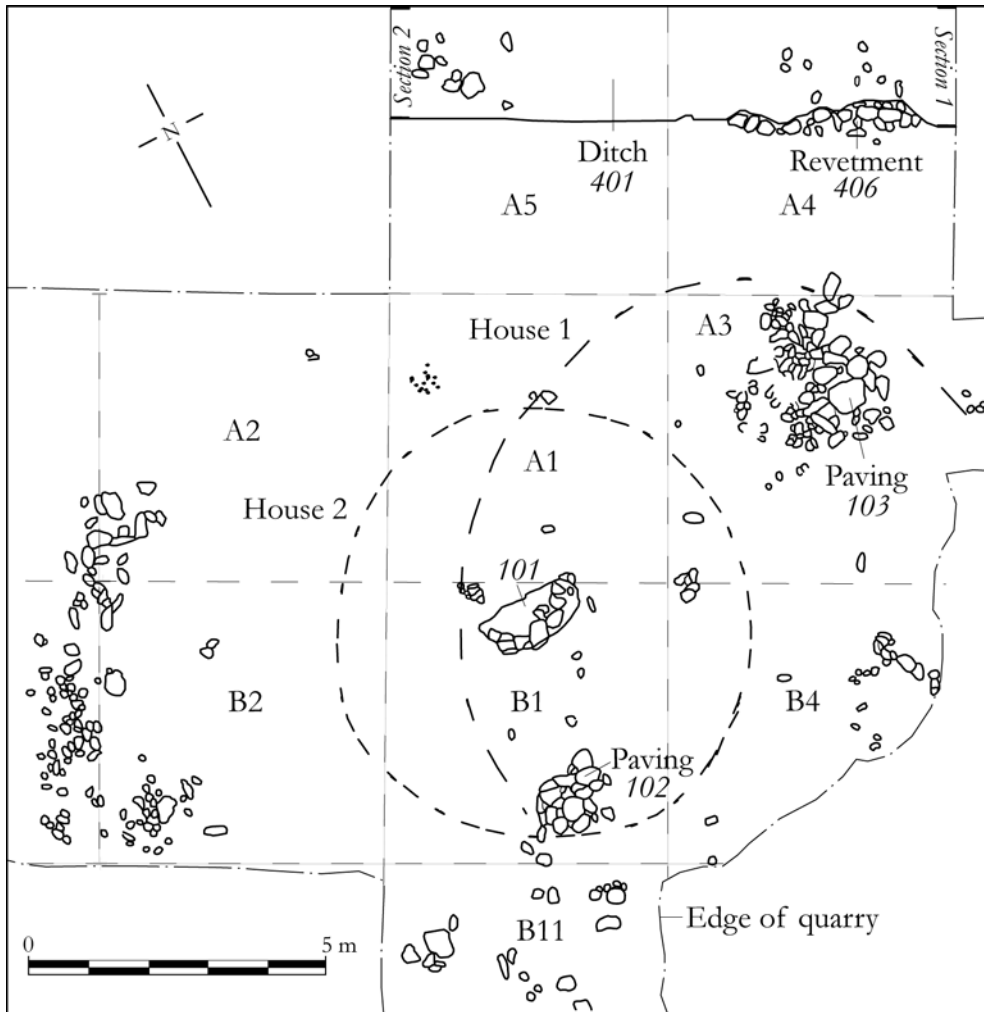
A large, flat, slate-grey stone (context 101) measuring 1.8m x 0.75m x 0.1m thick was encountered 0.1m below the topsoil. Its long axis was aligned east/west and when lifted it appeared to rest on a D-shaped arrangement of flat chocking stones. These lay on a layer of brown soil and clay 0.15–0.2m thick on top of natural gravel (context 004). The stone was not decorated or worked and nothing of archaeological significance was encountered in the soil and clay beneath it. Cregeen interpreted it as a possible work bench.

Paving (context 102)

Two metres south of the stone (context 101) was an arrangement of flat stones of various sizes, laid to form an area of paving 1.5m by 1.2m, and delineated on the north and east by vertically set stones. The stones overlay a 0.1–0.15m depth of reddish soil (context 002), which in turn sealed the burnt and charcoal-rich surface of the natural gravel (context 004). This paved area was interpreted as the floor of a structure that was late in the sequence of occupation in this area. The only artefact associated with it was one fragment of flint (SF 234) found at the base of the paving on top of the subsoil (context 004).

Paving (context 103)

About 4.2m east of Stone 101, another area of paving measuring 3m by 2.1m was encountered below the



Illus 6 Area 1, upper contexts

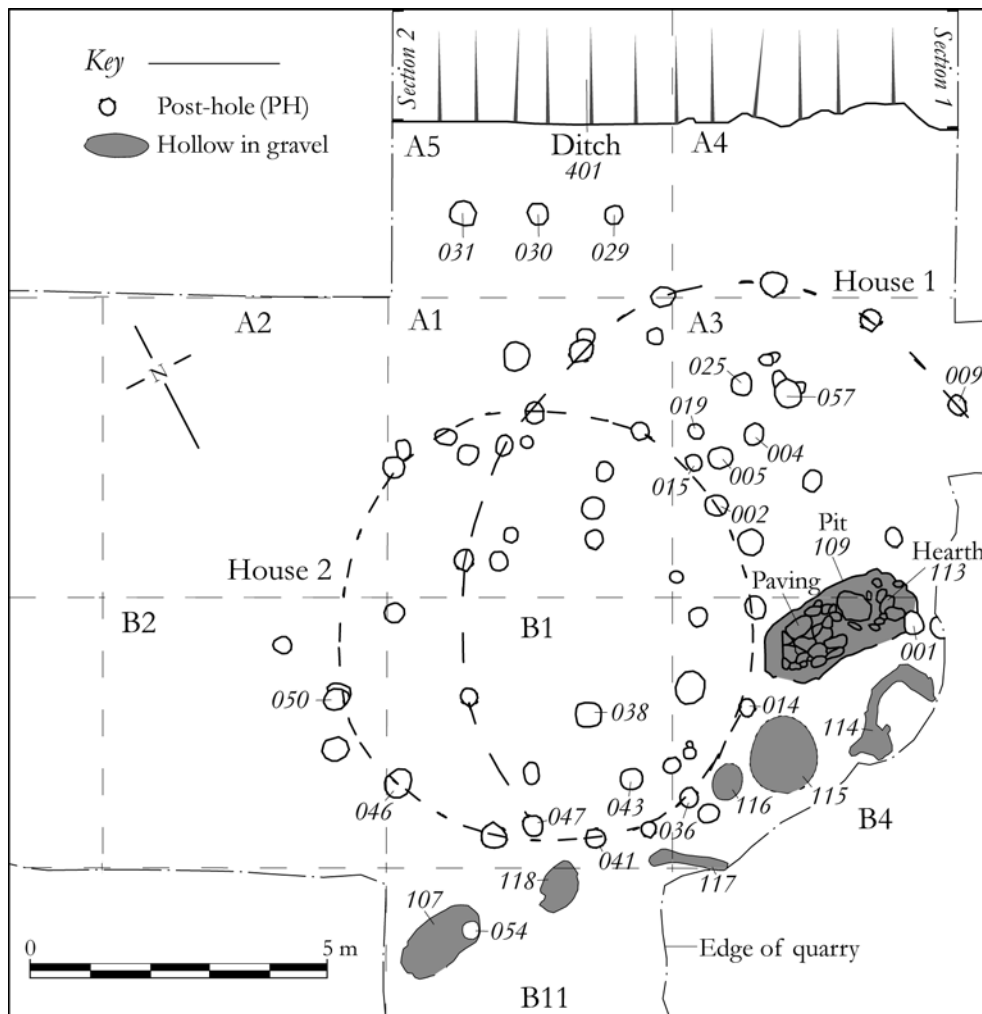
topsoil. The archaeological records indicate that the subsoil (context 002) was not present, so it is assumed that both the topsoil and the subsoil in this part of the site had been severely disturbed. Some of the paving stones had been burnt and there was abundant charcoal both between and below them. Beneath the stones were several post-holes with abundant burnt charcoal in and around them. Where charcoal was not present the paving lay directly on natural gravel.

Post-holes (Illus 8)

Almost 60 post-holes were recorded in Area 1 within an area measuring approximately 12m by 12m. Where a relationship could be identified the post-holes were sealed by both the occupation layer (context 003) and by paving (context 102). Post-hole 047 was partially overlain by the vertical slabs of paving (context 102). Some post-holes overlay a series of charcoal-filled pits, eg Post-hole 001 overlay Pit 109, and Post-hole 054 overlay Pit 107 (see below).

The post-holes ranged from small shallow depressions, such as Post-holes 018 and 019, to much larger features like Post-holes 030, 031, 038 and 057, which had diameters of 0.4m and depths of 0.5m. Most of the post-holes were circular in plan and although they penetrated the natural gravel, they contained fills of soil. They also contained chocking stones, which varied from large boulders to thin slabs. In a number of cases (Post-holes 004, 005, 016 and 037) the structure of the stone settings survived, with thin slabs set vertically against the sides of the hole. Many of the post-holes, especially in the north and north-east of this area, were approximately 0.3m in diameter with vertical sides and flat bases.

In spite of variations in size, structure, fills and preservation, Cregeen proposed two main phases of post-hole construction forming two overlapping roundhouses. This interpretation relied on the fact that the rings overlapped the other, and also on the tendency for the post-holes to fall into two characteristic groups. Cregeen named one ring of post-holes 'House 1' and the other 'House 2', but there is no archaeological evidence for this chronological distinction.



Illus 7 Area 1, lower contexts, showing roundhouses defined by post-holes

House 1

The possible House 1 structure had a diameter of 10.5m. However, a large portion of the ring's southern half was destroyed by the construction of the quarry access road in 1959. The structure was therefore only represented by a semi-circle of post-holes which were irregularly spaced but of similar size, straight-sided and flat-bottomed. They were filled with sticky brown soil, identical to the natural subsoil (context 002) in this area. Large blocks of light grey stone, sometimes split were used as chocking stones wedged against the side of the post-holes. A piece of worked flint (SF 108, flint report no 73) was found in Post-hole 009.

House 2

This possible structure comprised what would have been 13 evenly spaced post-holes forming a circle 7.5m diameter. The post-holes were typically 0.3–0.38m in diameter, 0.23–0.30m in depth, with

sloping sides and rounded bases. Their fills contained substantial amounts of charcoal but their chocking stones were usually small, thin, flat and sometimes burnt. Around the post-holes were reddened, split stones. Three adjacent post-holes (014, 036 and 041) contained the burnt stumps of posts. A sample of charcoal from Post-hole 036 produced a radiocarbon date of the fourth to second centuries BC (GU-11094). This possible structure was sealed by the occupation layer (context 003).

The majority of the other post-holes encountered lay within the perimeters of the two possible houses. As no coherent pattern was discernible, they were interpreted as possible internal posts associated with the roundhouse architecture. Some of the post-holes also exhibited evidence of burning (Post-holes 004, 005, 025, 057) and contained charcoal, but no burnt bone, when compared with the occupation layer (context 003).

Two of the post-holes cut charcoal-filled pits (see below). One (Post-hole 001) cut the upper layers of the fill of Pit 109. West of House 2 was one of the smaller, shallower pits (Pit 107); it was cut by Post-hole 054.



Illus 8 Area 1 post-holes

Line of Post-holes 029, 030 & 031

North of House 1 were three evenly spaced post-holes (Post-holes 029, 030 and 031) forming a line some 2.5m long and aligned parallel with the edge of Ditch 401 at a distance of 1.5m. They differed in character from the other post-holes in that two of them were particularly large, at 0.4m in diameter, and all three had adjoining shallow depressions. They were cut into the natural gravel. Cregeen thought they might represent a gateway or a palisade following the inside edge of the ditch; however, the line of post-holes could not be traced any further in either direction. These features are therefore open to reinterpretation, an alternative being that they could have been the posts for a possible bridge crossing the ditch.

Cooking Pits 109, 107, 114, 115, 116 & 117

In the south corner of Area 1 was a series of six relatively small, shallow hollows all in close proximity to each other and cut into natural gravel. In plan they were either round or oval in shape and in section tended to be round-bottomed with steep, straight sides. Five of them ranged between 0.6m and 1.5m across and between 0.1m and 0.32m deep. Their fills were similar and consisted of dark, charcoal-rich soil with reddened, broken stones similar to occu-

pation layer (context 003). The bases of the hollows (except for Pit 109) appeared to be lined with clayey gravelly. Cregeen interpreted these lower fills as part of the original construction, possibly a lining, and postulated that each of these pits would have served the same function a cooking pit complex or perhaps tanning pits. A number of worked flints and stone tools (SF 51; SF 54; SF 101; SF 224; SF 237), mostly from contexts 002 and 003, were found in the vicinity of these pits, which may be suggestive of pre-Iron Age activity. One of the pits (Pit 114) had a channel leading to or from it, suggesting to Cregeen that it may have been associated with water storage as it may have been lined with wood or hide.

Pit 109

The interpretation of this feature from the site records is particularly problematic as it was dug over several seasons and no proper section drawing exists, only a rough partial sketch. However, the feature clearly had several phases of use. It was a sub-rectangular pit with straight sides and a flat base, measuring 2.8m by 1.2m by 0.6m deep. The fills can be described as follows:

- 1 The hard gravel floor at the base of the pit was covered in patches of charcoal and calcined

bone. Half filling the pit was an accumulation of sticky, reddish-brown soil (context 108) containing cracked pebbles, flecks of charcoal and fragments of calcined bone.

- 2 The pit had then been re-floored and the sides lined with clay to above half way. A charcoal-rich layer lay above this sealed by large flat-bottomed stones, suggesting a hearth. The rest of the pit was filled with a charcoal-rich soil (context 112), which incorporated several large rounded stones, possibly pot-boilers. A sample of charcoal from this layer produced a radiocarbon date of the fourth to third centuries BC (GU-11095).
- 3 The uppermost fills consisted of a small hearth (context 113) at the north-east end, formed of small upright stones. This was at the same level as Paving 118, which occupied the south-west half of the pit. The upper layer of Paving 118 and the charcoal-rich soil with pot-boilers was cut by Post-hole 001.

Two small pieces of daub (SF 100; SF 104) were found in this pit. One was found under a stone at the top of Post-hole 001, and the other was found next to it in the upper charcoal-rich soil (context 112).

The fact that the pits were sealed by the occupation layer (context 003), and that two of them were cut by post-holes associated with the possible Iron Age roundhouses, led Cregeen to interpret them as the earliest phase of the site. While Pit 109 was cut by Post-hole 001, and Pit 107 was cut by Post-hole 054, neither of these post-holes formed part of Cregeen's possible houses.

The archaeological layers in Area 1 were generally shallow and disturbed, with few identifiable stratigraphical relationships, which could help phase the site. The cooking pits are possibly earlier than the houses, although the Iron Age radiocarbon date from the fill of Pit 109 could indicate that the later use of this pit was broadly contemporary with the houses. However, it was clear that the paving overlay the occupation layer (context 003), which in turn sealed the post-holes.

7.1.4 Area 2 (*Illus 9*)

To the immediate north-west of Area 1, another complex of features was identified in an area some 10m square, but these were not fully excavated. In some parts of Area 2 only the topsoil was removed, while in others it was only excavated into the subsoil (context 002) and only two test pits were excavated down to the natural gravel. It was also apparent that this area was severely disturbed by ploughing.

The topsoil comprised a mass of disturbed small angular stones mixed with dark soil that contained small finds. At a depth of 0.15 m, a layer of cobbling (context 201) was encountered (not illustrated). These consisted of small, angular stones, some burnt, that was littered with charcoal and burnt

bone. This horizon of cobbles was detected right across Area 2, but it was intermittent, suggesting that it had been disturbed by ploughing. Immediately below the cobbling was an occupation layer (context 003), which was not as thick as it was in Area 1. Below the cobbling on the west side of Area 2 was a reddish subsoil (context 002) with no evidence of burning.

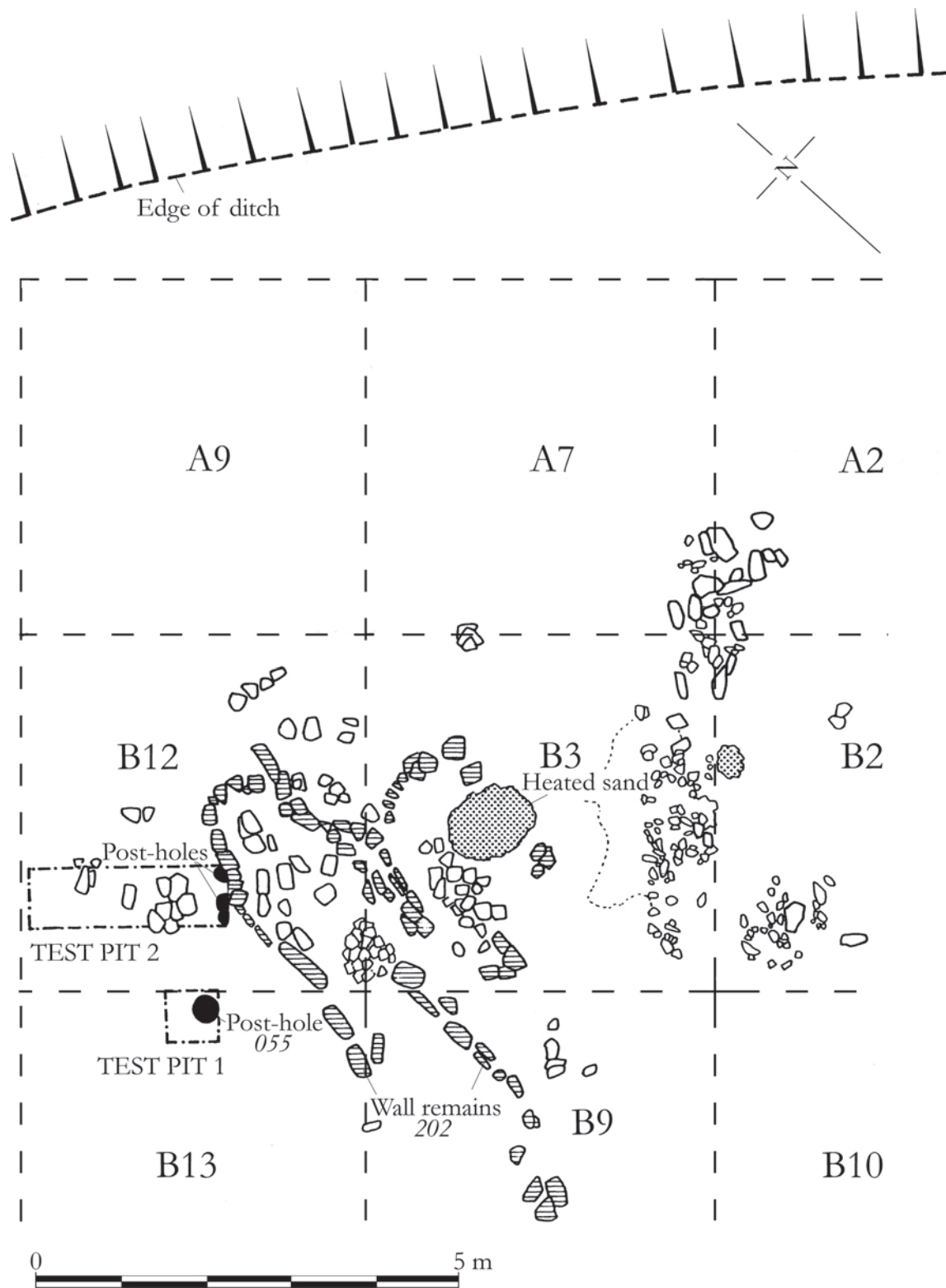
Foundation stones (context 202)

Set into subsoil (context 002) were a number of unmortared foundation stones (context 202) of a wall, the bases of which were about 0.3m below the ground surface but there was no mention in the records of a foundation trench (*Illus 10*). These stones were sealed by the cobbles (context 201) and by occupation layer (context 003) and dense patches of charcoal had collected around some of the stones. Both the cobbling and foundation stones had been affected by burning, but this appears not to have affected the subsoil. The pattern of the foundation stones was not fully apparent but Cregeen suggested that it represented the foundations of two oval shaped buildings, one of them with an oval-shaped annexe (not specified by Cregeen).

A sketch plan in the site archive shows that some of the wall foundation stones (context 202) formed an almost circular feature about 3m in diameter within which was a lump of what Cregeen described as ironstone some 1.2m in diameter that had been, 'partly reduced by fire'. This was subsequently identified as a heated patch of silica, which did not contain any metallic iron (Dr Payne, Glasgow University, pers comm.). A U-shaped setting of stones about 5m long, with the opening to the south, adjoined this patch. These features were not fully excavated.

Test Pit 1

A test pit measuring about 0.5m square was excavated some 2.0m west of the structure. This revealed some undisturbed stratigraphy not seen elsewhere in Area 2. Beneath the topsoil was the area of cobbling (context 201), which continued outside the wall foundations (context 202). Below the cobbling (context 201) was the occupation deposit (context 003) sealing context 002, which overlay a thin layer of yellow sandy-clay (context 005) which itself overlay natural gravel (context 004). Post-hole 055 was cut into the clay (context 005) and natural gravel (context 004) and was sealed by subsoil (context 002). The post-hole measured about 0.5m in diameter at the top, narrowing towards its base, and was 0.45m deep. Its fill comprised red-brown sticky soil with a number of flat stones near the top. While a fragment of charcoal was found below the stones, the post-hole did not show evidence of burning.



Illus 9 Area 2, showing insubstantial stone structures

Test Pit 2

A slightly larger test pit (Illus 4) was excavated some 2.0m north-east of Post-hole 055. Similar layers were encountered to those in Test Pit 1, except that the clay layer (context 005) was not noted. Cut into subsoil (context 002) was part of a feature (context

203) that resembled a post-hole, 0.2m deep, in section. In its base was a layer of iron pan and its fill was the same as the occupation layer (context 003). Two further possible features were seen in the section and sketched. These features were sealed by a burnt soil, possibly the occupation layer (context 003). No further excavation was carried out here.



Illus 10 Area 2 structures

Finds from Areas 1 & 2

Of the total 241 recorded finds from the site, 6% were retrieved from Area 1 or what was described as Area 1/2, and 45% were from Area 2, despite Area 1 being excavated more comprehensively down to natural. Within both areas the vast majority of finds were allocated to contexts 001 or 003, with only a few from context 002, and only 10 from features cut into the natural gravel (see below). In particular, the majority of the finds were found within grid squares B9, B3 and B12, which are all located in Area 2 to the south-west of the post circles and in the area of the stone structures described above. The lithic artefacts were found in greater numbers in grid squares A2, B2 and B12 in Area 1, and also in B3 and B9, and also predominantly from contexts 001 and 003.

Small finds from Area 1 were sparse but included iron, pottery, baked clay, flint and stone tools. The only ones from secure contexts were daub (SF 100 and 104) from Post-hole 001 and context 112, flint (SF 234) from below Paving 102, and (SF 108) from Post-hole 009.

In Area 2 the assemblage contained considerably more metal and pottery and included iron and stone tools, lumps of fused iron, beads and flint. The finds were from the disturbed contexts of 001, 002 and 003. The only find to have certain association with a

feature was an iron droplet (SF 113), which was found inside Feature 203. There does not appear to be any finds suggestive of a date for the cobbling (context 201), but pottery from the topsoil in its vicinity (and context 202) included SF 117, SF 136 and SF 175, which were green-glazed medieval sherds, suggesting the cobbling was relatively modern. Other finds from the vicinity of contexts 201 and 202, but from occupation layer context 003, include an early medieval bead (SF 201), pottery (SF 215) and an iron knife (SF 13). Cregeen interpreted this complex of features and finds as evidence of an area where metalworking was conducted, perhaps a medieval smithy or bloomery. However, as discussed below, it is noticeable that all the finds of early medieval date cluster in this area, suggesting an earlier origin for the structures.

7.2 The ditch complex & Area 3

A large, multi-phase ditch traversed the promontory (*Illus 2*), cutting off the southern end containing the possible roundhouses and metalworking area. It ran east/west from immediately above the steep slope on the east of the site in the direction of the standing stone. After passing below the stone it curved toward the south-west slope of the terrace. It was traceable for over 70 m, but further investi-



Illus 11 Ditch Section 1, showing 'revetment' 406

gation of its course was made impossible by quarry spoil heaps. In general, the ditch was up to 7m wide and 2m deep.

The route of the ditch was traced by exploratory trenches because the presence of spoil from the quarrying prevented larger area topsoil stripping. Not all of the ditch sections were fully excavated and, of those that were, not all sections were fully recorded. Only a small sample of this feature was therefore investigated archaeologically. Despite this, the occurrence of a series of ditches running almost parallel is consistent in each of the sections that were fully revealed. Within most sections the series of ditch cuts and backfills are in approximately the same location. However, towards the west end, the line of the ditch diverged, giving Cregeen the impression that there were two major ditches.

7.2.1 Ditch Section 1

The ditch was first noted in a section cut by the access road as it traversed the south-east side of the site. The remains of a possible wall (context 406) within the ditch was noted along the south-west (inner) side, but no convincing remains were recorded (Illus 11). A radiocarbon sample from the upper fill (context 407), produced a date of fourth to second centuries BC (GU-11093).

7.2.2 Ditch Section 2

A trench was cut across the ditch at a point approximately 10m north-west of Ditch Section 1. Ditch Section 2 measured 1.35m in width and was excavated for a distance of some 6m across the ditch and was up to 1.2m deep. It revealed that Wall 406 continued along the inside of the south-west side of the ditch at a depth of 0.3m below the surface. Immediately below Wall 406 were two layers of charcoal and burnt bone (context 405) that suggested the ditch had been initially backfilled by material that had derived from the occupation layer (context 003). Artefacts recovered from this ditch section included iron (SF 218, context 406), pottery (SF 72 & SF 83 from topsoil; SF 216, context 407), flint (SF 86 topsoil; SF 217, context 407) and pieces of a crucible (SF 85) from the topsoil.

7.2.3 Ditch Section 3

Another section was excavated 15.5m to the north-west of Ditch Section 2, which revealed the curved nature of the features. The trench measured approximately 12m by 1.2m but was widened to 2.4m in the centre to allow for the investigation of a well-preserved, stone-built structure (context 409) found within the fill of the ditch. Ditch Section 3 had



Illus 12 Ditch Section 3, showing recuts and dumped burnt material

evidence of several recuts all in approximately the same location (**Illus 12**).

Feature 409 lay 0.5m below the ground surface and comprised a domed chamber up to 0.75m in diameter, with corbelled walls and large flat stones sealing the opening at the top. Below the chamber was a succession of long, narrow cavities that penetrated deep into the gravel. Initially a hole in the gravel 0.25m in diameter led into a clay-lined cylinder 0.6m long. This abruptly narrowed to a diameter of 0.09m for 0.45m when it widened again to a chamber filled with loose sand. Cregeen tentatively interpreted this as an oven, although he was fully aware that the domed chamber had no obvious access route or evidence of heating. He also considered that it may have been connected with water collection from the gravel or was perhaps even a borehole. The feature was cut into the final backfill (context 407) of the ditch and the top of it was level with the top of the Revetment Wall 406. It is possibly a fairly modern feature.

Topsoil stripping later revealed an area of paving (context 408) overlying the fill of the ditch and immediately west of this ditch section. The paving incorporated a line of heavy stone blocks, 0.3m by 0.38m, set close together, running south-east/north-west and traceable for about 9m. They were laid into soil and Cregeen interpreted them as a deliberately laid stone path over the back-filled Ditch 407. There was no further investigation of this feature and only

two small finds were recovered in this area: pottery (SF 170) from context 408 and flint (SF 172) from the topsoil.

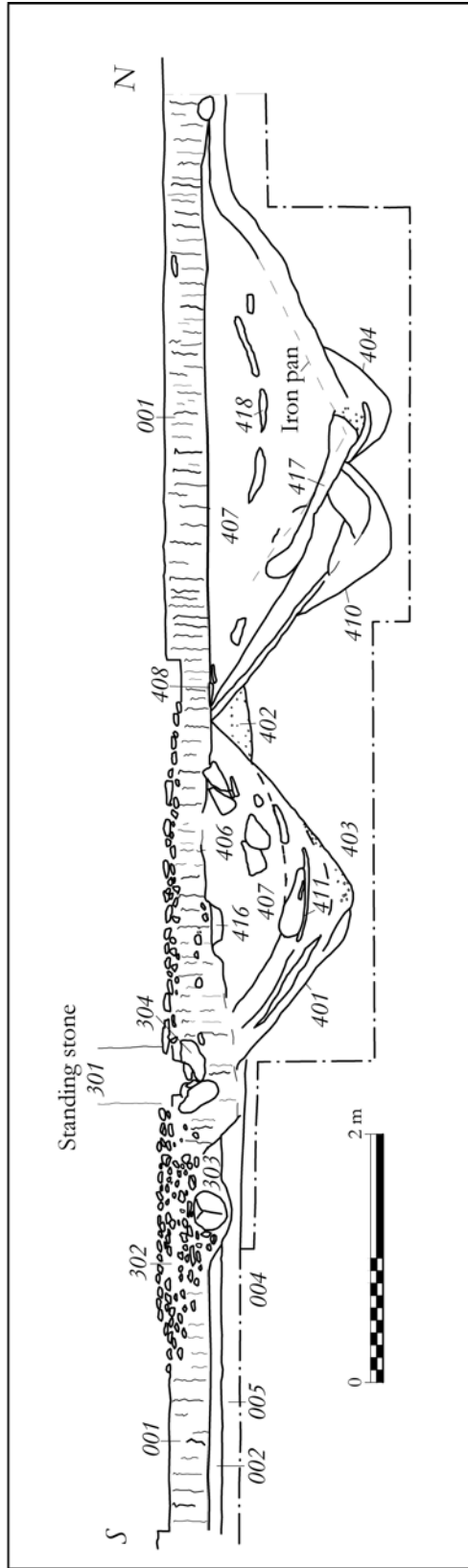
7.2.4 Ditch Section 4

The line of the ditch was confirmed by the excavation of another trench, between Ditch Section 3 and the standing stone. The trench measured 7.5m by 1.2m by 1m deep. The upper backfilled layers (context 407) were again noted. The revetment wall on the inner face of Ditch 406 had collapsed and was noted 0.6m below the ground surface. Various lenses of charcoal and layers of stone (context 405) lay beneath the collapsed Wall 406. No finds are recorded from this section and it was not excavated to the full depth of the Ditch 401.

7.2.5 Ditch Section 5 (Illus 13**)**

The ditch section was first excavated to examine the cobbled area (context 302) surrounding the standing stone setting and the inner face of Ditch 401. It was later enlarged and the trench finally measured 7.2m in length, up to 2.4m in width and was 1.8m deep.

This section revealed at least five ditch re-cuts (context 401, 410, 404, & 2 unnumbered). The inner



Illus 13 Ditch Section 5



Illus 14 'Standing stone' under excavation

Ditch 401 was V-shaped and measured 3.0m in width by 1.5m in depth. The basal layers and lenses were a result of natural silting (context 403) to a depth of 0.4 m. The tip lines indicate that these deposits derived from the south side of the ditch, possibly a bank. Overlying these layers was a probable turf line (context 411), which was sealed by further naturally silted deposits. The upper fill of the ditch was reddish to yellow-brown sticky soil containing charcoal (context 407); its homogenous consistency indicates it to be deliberate backfilling. This deposit incorporated collapsed stones from a low revetting Wall 406. A dark, cultivated soil overlay the backfilled ditch and this in turn was sealed by the cobbling (context 302) surrounding the standing stone.

Two further ditch re-cuttings (contexts 410 and 404) were seen to the north of the inner face of Ditch 401. They had rounded bases with steep sides. The basal layers of both ditches consisted of natural silting. Ditch 410 had been re-cut and filled with naturally silting deposits.

A subsequent re-digging of the ditch with a wide V-shaped profile had cut both earlier re-cuts (contexts 410 and 404). Its basal fill was a dark organic layer (context 417), 0.1m thick, probably representing turf. Further naturally silting layers continued to

fill the ditch. At about 0.5m from the surface there was a thin, orange clay lens (context 418). This was sealed by the homogenous backfill (context 407).

7.2.6 Area 3 & Ditch 5

Excavation of an area between Ditch Sections 5 & 6 (see below) revealed more of the deposits in the vicinity of the standing stone. Area 3 measured approximately 14.5m by 9.5m. To the south of the Ditch Cut 401 was the remnant of a cut though Layer 002. This cut was filled with a layer of red soil containing large stones, representing both natural rounded boulders and angular quarried stone (context 303). The stratigraphical relationship between this cut and Ditch 401 was unfortunately removed by the cut for the standing stone setting.

Within the upper fill of Ditch 401 was a patch of charcoal 0.75m across and 0.1m thick with a flat, round stone at its base. Burnt bone and barley were also noted. Below the stone and adhering to its underside were lumps of iron clinker. This feature was interpreted as a hearth (context 416). This feature was at the same level as Paving 408. Fill 303 and Hearth 416 had been truncated by the cut for the standing stone setting.

7.2.7 Standing stone (*Illus 14*)

The standing stone was tapered and dressed, measuring 1.65m by 0.6m by 0.45m. It was surrounded by a cobbled platform of small stones (context 302) extended c 2.5m in all directions. The platform was almost square in plan but with rounded corners, and was between 0.15m and 0.3m in depth. Immediately below the cobbling, a sherd of thick green post-medieval glass was found (SF 221). These cobbles sealed the dark cultivated deposit 001.

7.2.8 Post-hole 063

Almost 1.0m south of the standing stone, a cross-section through a probable post-hole (063) was discovered in the face of Ditch Section 5. It was 0.3m below the ground surface and cut through a shallow layer of red/brown subsoil (context 002). The post-hole was almost 1.0m across, 0.6m deep and had steep sides and a flat base. The fill was a yellow/brown sticky soil and the presence of large packing stones prompted the interpretation as a post-hole. The top of the fill comprised small broken pebbles and there was no evidence of burning. No other post-holes were encountered below the cobbling. Cregeen thought that this was further evidence for a palisade on the inner side of the ditch.

Apart from the debris associated with Hearth 416, no artefacts were recovered from Area 3 or Ditch

Section 5. This may be attributed to the absence of the burnt Layer 003 re-deposited in the ditch sections further west as Layer 405.

7.2.9 Ditch Section 6

This was located 2.5m west of the standing stone, which aimed to trace the route of the ditch. After excavation of the standing stone revealed it to lie over the fill of the ditch, attention was turned to Ditch Section 5, so this ditch section was never completed.

7.3 Discussion of the ditches

Cregeen originally thought that Ditch Section 5 indicated the presence of two contemporary ditches (401 and 410), separated by a bank, but this has been re-interpreted by the author as a series of at least five ditch cuts, the lines of which have diverged in Section 5 to give the impression of separate ditches. There is no evidence for a bank between the ditches. The line of the ditches is broadly followed by a bank about 0.45m high that was identified by J H Craw in the late 1920s (Craw 1929). During Cregeen's excavations he noted that the bank was no longer visible but Craw's plan of the bank followed the line of the ditch system on its northern side (Illus 1).

As the course of the ditches was tracked from east to west, the extent of the first and second ditch that survived in each of the sections is variable. Where the course of the ditch was investigated adjacent to the standing stone (Ditch Section 5), the earliest and latest ditch lie side by side with only the bottom and part of the inner edge of the second ditch surviving between them. This led Cregeen to postulate the existence of the promontory being cut off by a double ditch system. Although this is not the case from the other sections, in Ditch Section 5 this is somewhat problematical particularly as the main section drawing from this trench is of the east-facing section but with stratigraphy transposed from the west-facing section due to a section collapse after a night of heavy rain. However, the stratigraphy of fills in Ditch 401 and Ditch 404 differ so were not open at the same time, and Ditch 401 was probably backfilled by the excavation of Ditch 410. The occurrence of the remains of a stone wall in Ditch 401 being visible in all of the sections and partially overlaid by backfilling from Ditch 410 suggests that this wall/revetment was in a state of disrepair when Ditch 401 was backfilled. The slight variations in ditch profiles and the greater degree of survival of Ditch 401 in Ditch Section 5 could be explicable by a slight deviation in the line of Ditch 410 as it was excavated partially overlying Ditch 401. To add further confusion to the relationship of the ditches it is apparent that not all of the sections were excavated perpendicular

to the course of the ditch, probably as a result of being unable to trace the course of the ditch through topsoil stripping.

The inner Ditch 401 is the earliest, and after natural silting undergoes a series of restructuring involving the deposition of burnt material (context 405), essentially the same in character to the burnt occupation layer (context 003) across the site, and the construction of a revetment or Wall 406 along part of its inner edge. This ditch is then cut by the excavation of a second ditch (Ditch 410), which leaves the inner edge, bottom and part of the fill of the first ditch. After a period of natural silting the second ditch is cut by a third (Ditch 404), leaving only part of the bottom and inner face of the second ditch for the entire length that it was traced. The third ditch undergoes natural silting before finally being deliberately backfilled (Ditch 407). The radiocarbon date from the inner Ditch 401 appears to confirm a Iron Age date contemporary with the main occupation. The later ditches can be presumed to belong to the early medieval or later periods, but there is no confirmation of this in the finds.

Three other large ditches termed 'tributary ditches' were encountered at different locations outside of the excavation area. They may have intersected the main ditch system, but only underwent minimal investigation. Two of them (Ditches 412 & 413) were noted in the northern face of the quarry and some 5m outside of the ditch enclosing the site, which actually places them on the recorded route of the Craw Bank. Some 30m north-west of the standing stone, another ditch (Ditch 415) was encountered. In the short section that was examined, its western face was lined with a stone wall and the ditch was running north-west/south-east. In contrast to the enclosing ditch system, the two tributary ditches on the north were recorded as having U-shaped cuts (context 412 & 413) and filled with sticky red soil (context 414). No finds were retrieved from these ditches. Cregeen suggested these ditches may have bounded cultivated fields and were constructed when the double ditch system underwent modification, but the possibility remains that they were natural palaeochannels.

7.4 Debris Pits 1 & 2

The pits were encountered just before the main excavations started. To the north-east of Area 1, about 9.5m on the other side of the ditch complex, two large pits (Debris Pit 1, context 501; and Debris Pit 2, context 503), c 6m apart, were destroyed by a bulldozer. Their fills (contexts 502 & 504) aroused suspicion and were dumped separately in order that they could be examined. They were found to contain large quantities of grain and pieces of wattle and daub (Illus 15). Descriptions from workmen indicated that, after topsoil had been removed, one of the pits was conspicuous as a black spread of soil and charred grain, surrounded by large stones defining

an area about 1.8m by 1.05m by 1.2m deep. Part of one pit survived as a round-bottomed pit (context 503), cut into natural gravel, 1.35m deep, filled with brown clay and signs of charcoal (context 504).

Stratification of the fills was still visible within the dumped fill (context 504). Two layers of grain, charcoal and burnt bone were visible, separated by lenses of sand and gravel. The general fill was rich in clay and soil that had been burnt and contained charcoal and burnt bone.

In the surviving section, Pit 501 contained red clay (context 502) that was concentrated in the lower part. This fill was rich in charcoal but contained less burnt grain and bone than Fill 504. Burnt barley grains from context 502 produced a date of second to first centuries BC (GU-11096), confirming general contemporaneity with the main occupation of the site in the Middle Iron Age, though slightly younger than the other radiocarbon dates.

Debris Pit 2 contained pieces of wattle and daub (SF 12) and orange-baked clay bearing impressions (SF 1, SF 3, SF 4, SF 5, SF 7), some of which still contained the burnt remains of wooden stakes. Burnt barley from this material gave a radiocarbon date of the fourth to first centuries BC (GU-11097), statistically indistinguishable from the dates from the occupation contexts.

The burnt material in the fill of the pits was identical in appearance to Layer 003 and so Cregeen

assumed that the fill of these pits was comprised of debris that had been cleared from Area 1 after a major fire. This would also account for the presence of the burnt Layer 405 within the nearby ditch sections. He suggested that the function of the pits had originally been for storage of grain or as grain drying ovens.

7.5 Radiocarbon dates

The radiocarbon dates (Table 1) were submitted to the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre and were determined by the University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit. The dates are calibrated using OxCal v 3.9.

The dates form a very coherent set of results, spanning the last part of the first millennium BC. The strong correlation between the dates suggests that most of the activity in Area 1 is contemporary and can be related to an Early to Middle Iron Age settlement. In particular, GU-11094, from a burnt post in one of the post-holes associated with House 2, seems solid evidence that the postulated circular structure was Iron Age in date. Pit 109 was early in the stratigraphic sequence, being cut by a post-hole, though not one forming part of the putative circular structures. The close correspondence of the dates between the pit and the post-hole of House 2



Illus 15 Debris Pit 1 in situ showing large quantities of charred barley

Table 1 Radiocarbon dates

Lab no	Context	Description	Sample	Dates BP \pm 1-sigma	Calibrated dates \pm 2-sigma
GU-11092	103	Square A3	<i>Alnus</i> sp charcoal	2160 \pm 45 BP	370–50 cal BC
GU-11093	407	Ditch section 1, upper fill	<i>Quercus</i> sp charcoal	2185 \pm 50 BP	390–90 cal BC
GU-11094	PH36	House 2 post-hole	<i>Corylus</i> sp charcoal	2195 \pm 50 BP	390–110 cal BC
GU-11095	112	Pit 109	<i>Corylus</i> sp charcoal	2245 \pm 45 BP	400–200 cal BC
GU-11096	502	Debris pit 1	Carbonized grain: <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> var <i>vulgare</i>	2065 \pm 50 BP	210 cal BC–cal AD 60
GU-11097	504	Debris pit 2	Carbonized grain: <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> var <i>vulgare</i>	2140 \pm 50 BP	360–40 cal BC

suggests there was not a large chronological depth to the Iron Age occupation. While statistically all the dates could refer to one event, GU-11096 is sufficiently younger than the other dates to suggest that the occupation did last for some time.

Cregeen had tentatively suggested a chronological scheme for occupation of the site. The earliest habitation was attested by a lithic assemblage and cooking pits, which he suggested dated from the Mesolithic period. In the Iron Age, a defensive ditch containing a settlement of timber roundhouses was constructed, which was then destroyed by a fire. Debris was then cleared from the site and dumped

in the ditch and Dark Age occupation was concentrated in Settlement Area 2. During the medieval period, the ditch was backfilled and paving was laid over the site. The standing stone was then erected. One of the problems raised by Cregeen was to correlate the features in Area 1, which was fully excavated, with the above tentative conclusions and the rest of the site that was only partially excavated. He also emphasized that the above conclusions were only provisional and subject to modification after study of the small finds. This tentative sequence is supported by the radiocarbon dates, and the artefactual material discussed in the following sections.