Trench MFP6 narrative

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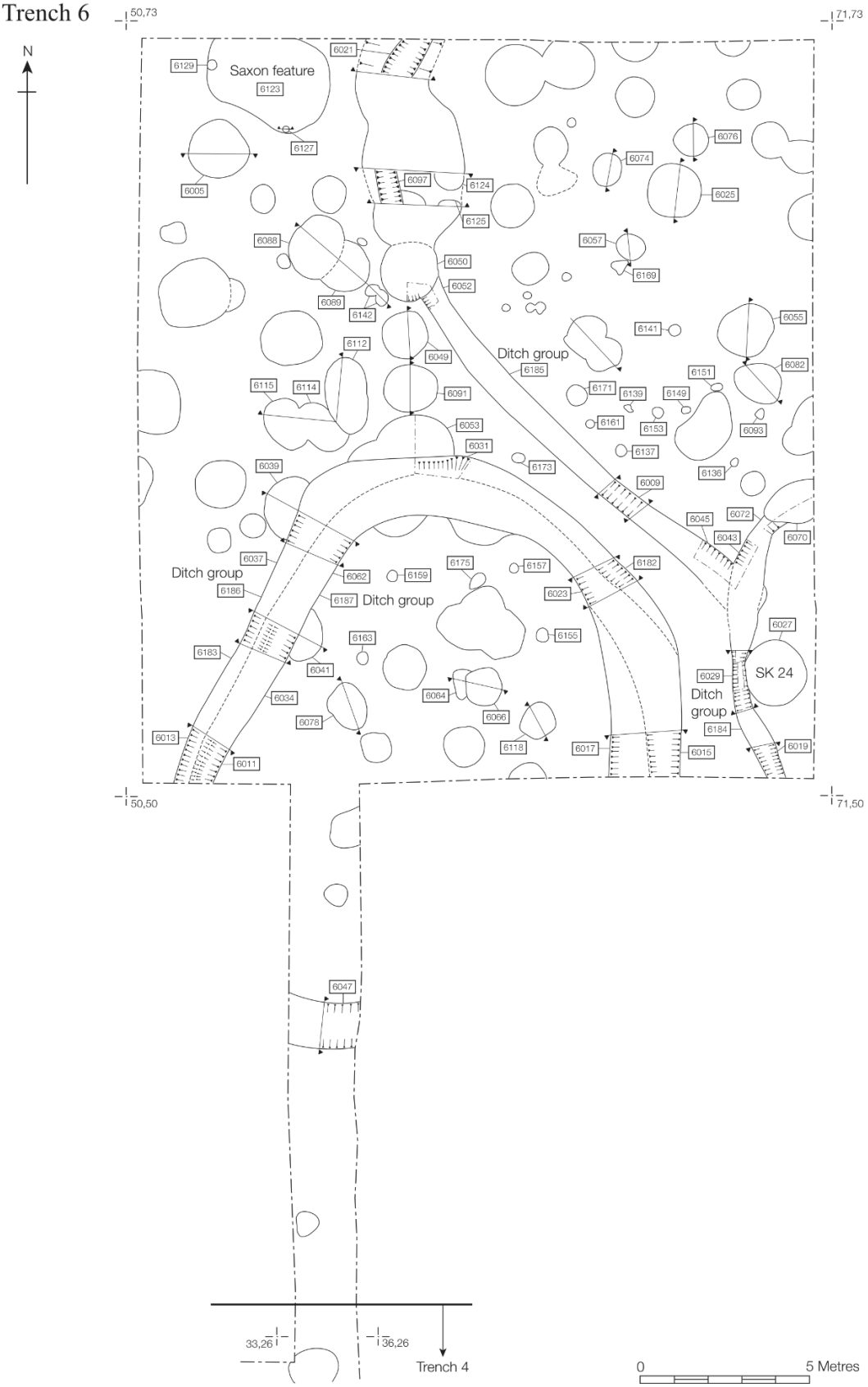
Introduction

Trench 6 was excavated in 2011 in the area of prehistoric enclosures on the eastern edge of the site. The purpose of this trench was to investigate several extensive ditch systems, including a large D-shaped enclosure, and a cluster of large and small pits revealed by the geophysical survey. The trench measured *c.* 23m by 21m with a long narrow 2m wide extension linking the southern edge of the trench with Trench MFP4 to the south. The main features in this trench were Ditch Group [6184] in the SE corner; Ditch Group [6185] running across the centre of the trench in a NW/SE trajectory; Ditch Group [6186], a D-shaped enclosure in the southern half of the trench; and Ditch Group [6187] which represents a later recut of D-shaped enclosure [6186]; and finally Saxon Hut Group [6003] a large oblong feature which turned out to be an early Saxon sunken floored hut. There were 32 pits excavated in all, of assorted sizes, and *c.* 20 postholes, a number of which were probably double postholes. However, there were at least another 28 pits of assorted sizes that were never excavated at all, due to time limits. Apart from the Saxon hut feature, most of the features in this trench were of Iron Age date.

A total of 2,717 sherds were found across the whole trench, the vast majority of which were Iron Age in date (2,417 sherds), accompanied by some early Saxon sherds (409) all either in or around the Saxon hut feature, and a handful of Roman sherds (24). The sample of Iron Age pottery that was analysed was early, 8th to 6th centuries BCE, with a small amount of middle Iron Age. The difference between the pottery dating and the radiocarbon date of a burial (see below), 361-167 cal BCE, suggests a long period of activity in this area.

This trench only produced 42 small finds. Because this area lacks any observable Roman features or substantial Roman layers, it is not surprising that there are only eight Roman coins from the area and only two copper alloy fragments. There were 12 worked bone or antler finds, mostly awls or probable domestic tool fragments. The star find was a decorated late Roman/Early Saxon single sided antler composite comb (SF 489 in context 6083), not surprisingly found in the fill of the Saxon hut feature. Also found were small amounts of worked stone objects; four worked flints; four iron small finds; two Roman glass fragments; one fragment of fired clay loom-weight (SF 363, context 6014), and two spindle whorls (SF 470, context (6083) which is a fired clay whorl and SF 506, context (6085) made from a cut down Roman pottery base).

MFP 11
Trench 6



Trench MFP6

Iron Age Phase

A total of 32 prehistoric pits were found in this trench, a number of them intercutting. Their size ranges from *c.* 1.75m diameter to *c.* 0.75 diameter, with an average depth of only *c.* 0.70m This depth represents only the lower fills of the features. Just as with the pits in Trench 4 to the south, the pits in this trench and the ditches were also heavily truncated by ploughing and also, as they were upslope from much of the site, the whole area suffered from some soil erosion/wash. As a result, we only have the basal or bottom fills of these pits, all the upper fills have been eroded or ploughed away. These surviving lower fills produced a surprising quantity of Iron Age pottery, considering that most of the pit fills (and indeed the ditch fills) were ploughed away and dispersed. Subsequently the average depth of soil in this trench above bedrock is *c.* 0.3m. Most of the pits were fairly well scattered and isolated, though there were some clusters. One pit, cut [6027], situated in the SE corner of the trench and partly cut by Ditch Group [6184], contained a crouched inhumation (SK24) radiocarbon dated to 361-167 cal BCE. The west edge of this burial pit was really only shaved by the later ditch cut [6184] and this west edge seems to have been redefined by a series of large stones. Interestingly the ditch is noticeably narrower at this point, as if to avoid damaging the burial pit, which might also explain why there were stones reinforcing the burial pit edge. So perhaps this was an important person and known burial site which the ditch constructors were at pains to respect and keep intact? It would imply this burial pit was earlier than Ditch Group [6184] and that there was no clear markers warning the makers of the ditch that there was a burial at this exact spot. How this isolated burial relates to the group of prehistoric burials just to the south in MFP Trench 4 is unknown. There are *c.* 20 postholes, most of which (apart from two situated in the Saxon hut feature), are within each of the two large enclosures and most of which are probably Iron Age in date. There are two definite clusters of postholes, one within the enclosure created by Ditch group [6185] on its western edge and the other within the Ditch Group [6186] enclosure in the northern end. Both of these clusters may represent some type of internal structures. There were at least six other postholes in this trench that were never excavated due to time limitations.

The most prominent prehistoric features in this trench are firstly the large D-shaped enclosure in the south of the trench, Ditch Group [6186], probably originally enclosing a space *c.* 17m by 15m, and secondly another large irregular shaped enclosure occupying most of the north-east sector of the trench, namely Ditch Group [6185], potentially enclosing an even larger area. If we postulate extending the trajectory of the ditches of [6185] beyond the trench edges, this enclosure may have been something like 20m x 30m. A smaller and later ditch, Ditch Group [6184], runs through the SE corner of the trench and cuts the southern part of Ditch Group [6185]. What these two large enclosures actually were, is open to speculation. They both cut some earlier pits in the area but also enclose a number of pits. The D-shaped enclosure was clearly in use for some time, as the enclosing ditch was recut at some point with Ditch Group [6187]. These features are situated in the NW edge of our site in the MFP zone of other large and small prehistoric enclosures and also just to the north of the Trench 4 collection of Iron Age pits, some with human burials, which appear to have been contained/marked out in some way in an oval area. The latter may even represent a

prehistoric ‘cemetery area’, with most of the burials being lost to ploughing. So, do our large enclosures, so close to this potential burial area, have some ritual rather than domestic function, as has been suggested for many of the other large prehistoric enclosures on this temple site?

CUTS

Pit [6005]/[6059] is a large heavily truncated pit, situated just to the south of Saxon structure [6123] in the NW corner of the trench. Fill (6004)/(6058) contained 108 Iron Age sherds, mainly EIA some EIA/MIA.

Ditch cut [6007]/[6021] Part of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] – see below

Ditch cut [6009] Part of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] - see below

Ditch cut [6011] Part of Recut Ditch Group [6187] – see below

Ditch cut [6013] Part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] – see below

Ditch cut [6015] Part of Recut Ditch Group [6187] – see below

Ditch cut [6017] Part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] – see below

Ditch cut [6019] Part of N-S Ditch Group [6184] – see below

Ditch cut [6021] Part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6185] – see below

Ditch cut [6022] Part of Recut Ditch Group [6187] – see below

Pit [6025] Large truncated pit in the NE sector of the trench, inside confines of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] Bottom fill (6024) contained 51 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6027] large truncated pit in SE corner of the trench, very close to and almost cut by the ditch of N-S Ditch Group [6184] 1.8m x 2m, depth c. 0.35m Contains juvenile crouched inhumation SK24 in fill (6026), radiocarbon dated to 361-167 cal BCE. The fill produced 87 coarse ware early Iron Age sherds and a lot of animal bone.

Ditch cut [6029] Part of N-S Ditch Group [6184] - see below

Ditch cut [6031] Part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186]. Fill (6030) – see below

Pit [6033] large pit cut by ditch cut [6031] which is part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186]. A second smaller pit either cuts or is cut by this pit but this was not excavated. Fill (6032) contained 18 early Iron Age sherds.

Ditch cut [6034] Part of Recut Ditch Group [6187] – see below

Ditch cut [6037] Part of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] – see below

Pit [6039] Large truncated pit on W edge of D-shaped enclosure and cut by it. Fill (6038) contained 32 early Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6041]/[6068] Small pit cut by ditch [6011], the recut of D-shaped Enclosure. Fill (6040)/(6067) contained only 2 small sherds, probably prehistoric.

Ditch cut [6043] Part of N-S Ditch Group [6184] – see below

Ditch Terminus cut [6045] Part of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] – see below

Ditch cut [6047] Southern leg of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] as it appears in the narrow southern extension trench to the main trench – see below

Pit [6049] Small pit situate between the D-shaped Enclosure Group, just on the northern edge of it, [6186] and Enclosure Group [6185]. Fill (6048) contained 21 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6050] Large truncated pit cut by cut [6052] which is part of Enclosure Ditch Goup [6185]. Fill (6051) contained 32 early Iron Age sherds.

Ditch cut [6052] Part of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] – see below

Pit [6055], pit on eastern edge of trench, inside the area of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185]. Fill (6054) contained 54 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6057] Small shallow truncated pit in NE sector of trench. Fill (6056) contained 8 Iron Age sherds.

Ditch cut [6062] Part of Recut Ditch Group [6186] – see below

Pit [6064] Flat-bottomed pit in centre of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186]. Cuts smaller pit [6066]. Fill (6063) contained 21 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6066] Small irregular pit within D-Shaped Enclosure [6186], cut by pit [6064]. Fill (6065) contained 12 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6070] Oval pit cutting N-S Ditch Group [6184] on east edge of trench. Fill (6069) contained 52 Iron Age sherds.

Ditch cut [6072] Part of N-S Ditch Group [6184] – see below.

Pit [6074] Small truncated pit inside D-shaped Enclosure. Fill (6073) contained 24 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6076] Small truncated pit in NE part of trench. Fill (6075). Contained 28 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6078] Irregular heavily truncated pit inside the D-shaped enclosure. Lower fill (6077) and bottom fill (6080) contained 31 Iron Age sherds in total.

Pit [6082] Small oval pit inside Enclosure [6185]. Fill (6081) contained 24 Iron Age sherds

Pit [6088] Large truncated pit in NW sector of trench, cuts pit [6089]. Fill (6086) contained 87 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6089] Large truncated pit in NW sector of trench, cut by pit [6088]. Fill (6087) contained 72 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6091] Truncated pit situated between the D -shaped Enclosure and Enclosure [6185]. Fill (6090) contained no pottery.

Posthole [6093] Situated on E edge of trench within D-shaped Enclosure. Fill (6092)

Ditch cut [6097] Part of Enclosure Ditch Group [6185] – see below

Pit [6105] Irregular small pit inside Enclosure Ditch [6185]. Cut by pit [6107]. Fill (6104) contained three Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6107] Small truncated pit inside Enclosure [6185], cuts pit [6105]. Fill (6106) contained eight Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6112] Large oval truncated pit, to the north of the D-shaped enclosure. Fill (6111) contained 61 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6114] Small truncated pit to north of D-shaped Enclosure, cut by 2 other pits. Fill (6113) contained 47 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6116] Small truncated pit to north of D-shaped Enclosure, cuts pit [6114]. Fill (6115) contained four Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6118] Small pit in south part of the trench, within D-shaped Enclosure. Fill (6117) contained 40 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6124] Small pit in northern part of trench, to East of Enclosure [6185]. Fill (6101) contained 11 Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6125] Small pit to the east of Ditch [6097]. Fill (6102) contained seven Iron Age sherds.

Posthole [6135] Small posthole on E edge of trench. Filled by (6134) which contained no pottery.

Posthole [6153] Posthole inside Ditched Enclosure [6185] in a cluster of other postholes. Contained a whole cow skull in fill (6152) and four Iron Age sherds.

Pit [6181] Small truncated pit cut by Enclosure ditch [6185]. Fill (6133) contained 39 Iron Age sherds.

GROUPS

N-S Ditch Group [6184] max. width *c.* 1m, narrowing to *c.* 0.4m where it skirts by burial pit [6027]. The surviving depth varies between 0.25 – 0.30m. Consists of ditch cuts [6019], [6029], [6043] and [6072].

Ditch cut [6019] Southern part of ditch. Fill (6018) contained ten sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6029] Very narrow section of the ditch, skirting burial pit [6027]. Fill (6028) contained 69 sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6043] Northern part of the ditch. Fill (6042) contained 16 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6072] Northern section of ditch running into the eastern edge of the trench. Cut by pit [6070]. Fill (6071) contained four sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Enclosure Ditch group [6185] runs through the centre of the trench and is positioned just to the east of D-shaped Enclosure Ditch Group [6186]. Consists of ditch cuts [6007], [6009], [6021], [6045], [6052], [6097] The ditch width varies between *c.* 0.6 – 1m and the surviving depth is 0.35 - 0.40m.

It seems to respect the boundary of the D-shaped enclosure, so was either contemporary with it, or was created later than it. However, this ditched enclosure must predate N-S Ditch Group [6184] as it is cut by it. The ditch cuts two earlier pits, namely pit [6050] and pit [6181]. There are a number of circular and irregular shaped pits contained within the enclosure, including a number that were never recorded and excavated (*c.* 16) due to time limitations. Whether these pits were largely contemporary with the enclosure or predated it, is difficult to tell although the enclosure ditch is early Iron Age.

Ditch cut [6007]/[6021] cut of ditch, representing the northern part of Ditch Group [6185] and running through the northern edge of the trench. Fill (6006) contained 12 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6009] cut of ditch, representing a slice though a southern part of Ditch Group [6185]. Fill (6008) contained 17 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6021] cut of ditch in northern sector. Fill (6020) contained 21 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch Terminus cut [6045] possible terminus end of this enclosure. Relationship to N-S Ditch Group [6184] which it intersects with is not clear. It may be cut by ditch [6043] which is part of group [6184] and terminate at this point. Fill (6044) contained 55 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6052], cut of ditch in northern section. Fill (6053) contained 50 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6097], cut of ditch, part of northern leg, cutting pit [6181]. Fill (6096)/(6131) contained 120 sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] is a large irregular shaped enclosure ditch in the SW corner of the trench that was re-cut by Ditch Group [6187], which created a double ditch profile. Consists of ditch cuts [6013], [6017], [6031], [6037], [6047], [6182]and [6183]. The width of this original ditch is obscured by the recut but it probably varied from *c.* 1.2m to 2m originally and the surviving depth varies between 0.4 - 0.6m.

The fact that is cut through a number of earlier prehistoric pits may suggest that the pits 'inside' the enclosure may not necessarily have been deliberately placed inside. Their position within the feature may be coincidental and they may represent earlier activity.

Ditch cut [6013] cut through south end of enclosure ditch on west side. Fill (6012) contained no pottery.

Ditch cut [6017] cut through SE end of ditch as it cuts trench edge. Fill (6016) contained nine sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch Cut [6031] cut through north sector of the ditch. Fill (6030) contained 39 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6037] cut through western leg of ditch. Fills (6036) and (6060) contained 85 sherds of early Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6047] Southern leg of D-shaped Enclosure Group [6186] as it appears in the narrow southern extension trench to the main trench. The plan does not make it clear whether this southern stretch is part of the original cut (Group [6186]) or part of the later recut Group [6187]. Fill (6046) contained eight sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6182] cut through eastern leg of D-shaped Enclosure, cut by Recut Ditch [6022]. No fills registered for this cut through the ditch – see fills (6017), (6031) etc in other cuts though same ditch for dating.

Ditch cut [6183] cut through south-western leg of D-shaped Enclosure, cut be Recut Ditch [6034]. No fills registered for this cut through the ditch – see fills (6013), (6037) etc in other cuts though same ditch for dating.

Re-cut Ditch Group [6187] Consists of ditch cuts [6011], [6015], [6022], [6034], [6062]. This is a recut of the D-Shaped Enclosure (Group [6186]. This recut of the ditch varies in width along its length, ranging from *c.* 0.7m to 1.5m wide. The surviving depth is *c*. 0.5m.

Ditch cut [6011] is a cut through the ditch of Recut Ditch Group [6187] Fill (6010) contained 22 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6015] is a cut through the south end of ditch at east side. Fill (6014) contained 61 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6022] is a cut through the eastern leg of the ditch. Fill (6023) contained 148 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6034] is a cut through the western leg of the ditch. Fill (6035) contained 56 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Ditch cut [6062] is a cut through the north-west leg of the ditch. Fills (6188) and (6061) contained no pottery,

Roman Phase

There are no Roman features in this trench and with only 24 Roman sherds coming from the whole area, the implication is that there was little if any Roman activity in this area. Of the eight Roman coins found in this trench, seven were found in the fills of the Saxon sunken-featured hut. The abundance of Roman coins across the site means that Saxon settlers could have easily come across coins in some areas when digging down, and they were probably prized as relics or items that could be made into jewellery. The lack of any quantity of Roman material in this trench suggests it was outside the limits of temple activity.

Saxon Phase

This trench is situated right on the northern edge of the Roman temple site, but not far away from an area that underwent geophysics to the north where large oblong features that might represent Saxon sunken floored huts can be observed. Only a handful of Roman finds were discovered in this trench but of the eight Roman coins found, seven were discovered in the fills of the only Saxon feature on site, namely the sunken floored building [6003] and the remaining coin was found close by in layer (6098). This Saxon hut is the only Saxon feature found in the trench and abuts the northern trench edge in the north-west corner. The NW corner of this feature disappears into the baulk but most of it was within the trench and was subject to investigation. Though no other Saxon features or finds were found in the rest of the excavated area, it sems unlikely that this Saxon hut existed on its own. It must have been part of an early Saxon settlement, possibly quite small, that was linked to the Late Roman and Early Saxon cemetery revealed in 19th and 20th century gravel quarrying on the other side of the road flanking the Noah's Ark field.

GROUPS

Sunken floored building Group [6003]. Consists of the main cut [6123] and the lower cut for the sunken part of the hut [6122] and two associated postholes [6127] and [6129]. The 'sunken' part of this hut was originally recorded as a secondary cut into the main house cut, but it is now seen to be all part of original the sunken featured hut construction. As are the two postholes found withing the main cut. This was a sub-rectangular shaped feature measuring *c*. 3m by 3.8m with a joint depth (including the 'sunken' part [6122]) of *c.* 0.45m. Like all the prehistoric pits in this trench, this Saxon feature was probably also very truncated by ploughing, so only the lower fills survive. It is positioned in the NW corner of the trench and on the extreme northern edge of our excavated site. The two small postholes were found within the confines of the pit close to its perimeter and were clearly part of its construction. Though multiple fills are listed for both the main cut and the 'sunken' section, most of these are 'same as' fills, representing different sectors of the same few fills. So, for the main house cut there are probably only six separate fills and for the 'sunken' part only three separate fills.

There were numerous finds found in the fills, which all pointed to it being an early Saxon feature and supporting the premise that this is a Saxon sunken floored building. These finds included 404 early Saxon pottery sherds, including the distinctive Saxon 'grass-tempered' fabrics. As small plain Saxon sherds can look very similar to Iron Age pottery fabrics, it may

be that some of the less diagnostic pottery assigned to the Iron Age period might also be Saxon. However, those assigned to the Saxon period in this assemblage do have distinctive early Saxon fabrics or forms. A few stray prehistoric and Roman sherds do also appear in these Saxon fills. Other finds include an early Saxon composite bone/antler double sided comb (SF 489). Also found were seven out of the total eight Roman coins from the whole trench, included two pierced ones (SF 554 and SF 556). The piercing of coins to use as a form of jewellery is a distinctive early Saxon trait. Other finds included a bone awl and a bone needle; two pottery spindle whorls (SF 470 and SF 506); a stone bead (SF560); and a quantity of burnt material. Environmental sampling of the fills inside the feature found eel and frog bones and some eggshell fragments. Perhaps a clue to the diet of the Saxon settlers living on this part of the site?

Main house cut [6123]. Large sub-rectangular cut with rounded corners, representing the main house cut and extent. There are six main fills (each made of multiple numbers where different sectors were dug) by the original top fills may be missing as there is a good chance this feature was truncated by ploughing. The fills in stratigraphic order are (6177)/(6180); (6083)/(6164)/(6166); (6095)/(6165); (6108)/(6110)/(6167); (6120)/(6121)/(6178)/(6179); and bottom fill (6176). The combined total of Saxon pottery from these fills was *c.* 199 sherds.

Top fill (6177)/(6180) produced only 25 Saxon sherds and no small finds.

Fill (6083)/(6164)/(6166) is one of the richer of the upper fills and produced 160 sherds of Saxon pottery, a stone bead, a third century Roman coin and a 4th century Roman coin, a fired clay spindle whorl SF 470, and a complete composite antler comb of Late Roman or Early Saxon date.

Middle fills (6095)/6165) and (6108)/(6110|)/(6167) produced only six definite Saxon sherds plus a pierced 4th century Roman coin (SF 554) that marks a typical early Saxon reuse of Roman metal objects.

Lower fill (6120)/(6121)/(6178)/(6179) produced only eight definite Saxon sherds and one 4th century Roman coin.

Basal fill (6176) produced no finds.

Lower cut [6122] Small sub-oval cut in the centre of the larger cut [6123], representing the lower 'sunken' part of the Saxon 'sunken floored hut'. Filled by top fill (6084)/(6103)/(6143); middle fill (6085)/6109)/(6144)(6146); and bottom fill (6094)/(6119)/(6145)/(6147). The combined sum of Saxon pottery from these fills was 205 sherds, with the majority (102) deriving from the middle fill. Also from the middle fill was a pottery spindle whorl (SF 506), made from the cut down base of black colour-coated Roman vessel. Bottom fill (6147) produced a 4th century pierced Roman coin.

Posthole [6127] is a small round posthole, only *c.* 15cm across with a remaining depth of *c.* 5cm. It is situated on the south-east edge of the main cut for the Saxon feature, namely [6123]

and cuts it. The shallowness of this posthole may be due to the truncation from ploughing affecting much of this trench. Single fill (6126) contained no finds.

Posthole [6129] is a slightly larger deep posthole, measuring *c.* 30cm x 25cm with a depth of *c.* 45cm. It is situated on the eastern edge of cut [6123]. Single fill (6130) contained some charcoal and some burnt stone fragments but no pottery.